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To: Delegations

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Subject: Seeking Safety from War: Violence and rights abuses against women  
from Ukraine  
– Report from the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)

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Delegations will find attached the above-mentioned report from the FRA.

The report is also available [online](#).

# SEEKING SAFETY FROM WAR

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# VIOLENCE AND RIGHTS ABUSES AGAINST WOMEN FROM UKRAINE

SURVEY



FRA

Seeking Safety from War:  
Violence and rights abuses against women  
from Ukraine

Vienna, 2026

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# Foreword

The start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 shocked the global community and gave rise to a series of urgent fundamental rights challenges. Over the past four years, much attention has been on the massive destruction caused by the war and its wider impact on all Ukrainians. Yet, we must not overlook the profound personal devastation it has inflicted.

Conflict heightens a woman's risk of abuse and exploitation. Our findings underscore the widespread nature of gender-based violence. They are a reminder that violence is not limited to a time or place, nor confined by geography or borders.

Displaced women from Ukraine report high rates of physical, sexual and psychological violence, not only in Ukraine but also after seeking safety in the EU. Even when trying to escape war, women face risks of exploitation by people offering transport, housing or employment.

This report builds on the findings from the recent EU survey on gender-based violence as well as FRA's earlier survey on violence against women. These large-scale surveys already highlight the impact of violence against women in the EU. But they do not explore the specific challenges faced by women displaced by war. This report fills that gap and answers a critical question: how can we best support women who experienced violence, harassment and other forms of exploitation while fleeing the war so they can rebuild their lives?

The Temporary Protection Directive – activated for the first time to provide Ukrainians with swift assistance and protection – is set to end in 2027. When it does, women who had traumatising experiences of gender-based violence may be left without much-needed protection. The EU can and should set a global standard for how displaced women survivors of violence have their safety and specific needs secured.

Let me end with a personal thank you to the women who participated in this research. Their courage in the face of war and violence demands our utmost respect. Their voices must lead to improvements in protection for women in all circumstances, not only in times of crisis.

**Sirpa Rautio**  
Director

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# Survey in a nutshell

## WHY IS THIS SURVEY NEEDED?

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has resulted in millions of women seeking safety in the EU. These women – when leaving Ukraine or after – may have experienced violence, sexual harassment or other forms of exploitation. This includes women who have experienced violence in the context of the war and therefore need specialised support in the EU Member States where they currently reside.

Under the **Temporary Protection Directive** (Council Directive 2001/55/EC), activated by **Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382** on 4 March 2022, displaced people from Ukraine benefit from a protection status entitling them to assistance and support. Other EU law – in particular the **Anti-trafficking Directive** (Directive 2011/36/EU), as amended by **Directive (EU) 2024/1712**, and the **Victims' Rights Directive** (Directive 2012/29/EU) – affords rights to victims to facilitate their access to justice. The survey results show the degree to which Ukrainian women benefit in practice from the protective provisions contained in these EU legal instruments. They also point to areas where the EU and its Member States need to pay particular attention when taking steps to promote Ukrainian women's successful integration into the EU or their sustainable return to Ukraine in safety and dignity. Some of the findings can also inform how Member States transpose **Directive (EU) 2024/1385** on combating violence against women and domestic violence, which is applicable alongside the Victims' Rights Directive; they can also serve to inform the European Commission's reports concerning the implementation of the **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence** (Istanbul Convention).

As the mandate of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) does not extend to research activities in Ukraine, the Agency designed its survey to interview women who were residing in selected Member States after having left Ukraine since the start of the current war on 24 February 2022. The survey complements other data sources that examine the extent and nature of violence against women – in general – by focusing on women from Ukraine as a group of people who have recently arrived in the EU after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and who need support because of their experiences. The most recent large-scale EU-wide survey collecting data on women's experiences of violence – the **European Union gender-based violence survey**, conducted in 2020–2024 – did not collect data specifically concerning the experiences of women from Ukraine, nor did that survey include questions on conflict-related violence. The FRA survey findings in this report fill this data gap.

## WHO ARE THE RESPONDENTS?

In total, the survey team interviewed 1 223 women who had left Ukraine since the start of Russia's war of aggression on 24 February 2022 and who resided in Czechia (411 interviews), Germany (400) or Poland (412) at the time of the survey fieldwork.

Alongside the survey results, the report includes quotes from women from Ukraine who participated in in-depth interviews that took place separately from the survey interviews. In each of the three survey Member States, 10 women who had experienced violence related to the war were invited to take part in these. The in-depth interviews focused on women's efforts to report their experiences of violence to the police or to seek other support. To identify women who would be ready to share their experiences, the fieldwork teams sought referrals from selected support services, in addition to using their own contacts.

While the survey collected data on women's experiences in Ukraine, the experiences of the women interviewed in the survey may differ from the experiences of women who stayed in Ukraine. Therefore, the results should not be interpreted as representing the experiences of all Ukrainian women (including those residing in the territory of Ukraine or elsewhere, outside the three Member States covered in the survey). Those who left the country after the war started have spent less time in Ukraine during the conflict and have different socio-demographic characteristics from Ukrainian women in general. Annex 2 to this report presents selected socio-demographic characteristics of the women who took part in the survey.

## HOW WAS THE SURVEY CARRIED OUT?

Following an open call for tender, FRA selected Ipsos NV to carry out the survey interviews and the in-depth interviews based on the specifications and survey questionnaire developed by FRA. In each of the three Member States, the survey interviews were conducted between March and June 2024 by local fieldwork teams supported by interviewers from Ipsos Ukraine, while all the in-depth interviews were carried out by the Ipsos Ukraine fieldwork team. Further details concerning the survey methodology are available in Annex 1.

The in-depth interviews with 30 women who had experienced violence followed a semi-structured topic guide, which was prepared with reference to the issues addressed in the survey interviews. The topic guide did not cover all issues covered in the survey interviews, as this would not have been feasible within the time allocated for the interviews (one hour). It was also considered important to limit the interview length to minimise the burden on respondents, who were asked about sensitive and personal experiences. However, many interviews took longer than this due to the wealth of details that participants wanted to share.

## HOW TO ASSESS THE RELIABILITY OF THE RESULTS

Survey results that are based on only a few respondents in the sample (e.g. incidents of violence that few people have personal experience of, or results on reporting to the police, rates of which can be low) or those for certain questions that have a higher rate of non-response should be considered statistically less reliable. Where this is the case, the results from the survey are not published or a note draws attention to their limited reliability. Results are presented in brackets if they are based on 20–49 responses, and results based on fewer than 20 responses are not published. This approach follows standard practice with respect to data reliability and reporting survey results.

## SURVEY QUESTIONS AND THE DATASET

In selected parts of this report, text boxes present the questions asked in the survey, particularly those used to ask about acts of physical and sexual violence and sexual harassment. Questions not covered in the boxes can be

found in the full questionnaire, which FRA will make available in due course, together with the survey dataset (microdata), to allow researchers to carry out their own analysis using the data that FRA has collected.

## STEERING COMMITTEE

During the implementation of the survey, FRA consulted a dedicated steering committee, which was set up to inform the work of FRA and the survey contractor, based on the steering committee members' and their organisations' expertise in supporting women displaced by the war against Ukraine and related engagement with women victims of conflict-related violence. The first meeting of the steering committee took place in Vienna in May 2023; this was followed by two online meetings in 2024 and another in-person meeting in January 2025. At the meetings, the steering committee members commented on the research methodology and the progress updates shared by FRA and the survey contractor, Ipsos NV. The steering committee experts also shared insights based on their work related to the topic of the survey.

Over the course of the four meetings, the following experts took part in the work of the steering committee, alongside members of the FRA project team and representatives of the survey contractor.

**TABLE 1: STEERING COMMITTEE EXPERTS**

| Experts   | Organisation   |
|---|--|
| Serani Siegel   | Consultant expert (part of the survey contractor's team during the survey data collection; independent expert after the completion of the contracted work) |
| Cristina Fabre Rosell                                       | European Institute for Gender Equality   |
| Agata Teutsch   | Autonomia Foundation and Juniper Foundation, Poland  |
| Elmaja Bavcic   | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe   |
| Vincent Briard, Angela Moore and Olga Vorontsova-Mykhailova | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  |
| Claire Healy  | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime   |
| Rosa Logar  | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Austria   |
| Birgitta Hahn   | Terre des Femmes – Menschenrechte für die Frau, Germany  |
|   | European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation   |

Source: FRA, 2026.

## Key findings and FRA opinions

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### Key findings on the impact of Russia's war of aggression on women's life in Ukraine

The experiences women shared in response to the survey concerning their time in Ukraine after the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 show how war permeates the everyday lives of the civilians caught in its midst. Between the start of the war and their leaving Ukraine, around three in four women (76 %) had been forced to take shelter because of a threat of attack, while close to 9 in 10 (86 %) had had their day (or night) interrupted by air-raid sirens or other warnings signalling a threat of bombing or drone attack.

Women who had been living in areas of Ukraine occupied by Russian troops had been stopped and searched on the street by Russian troops. Close to one in five indicated that they had been detained (18 %) and interrogated (17 %) or their house had been searched (18 %). Among those women who had been interrogated by Russian troops, 29 % had felt sexually humiliated by the interrogation process, while the majority (58 %) had felt verbally humiliated. Around two in five women (39 %) from Ukraine were aware of Russian troops using physical and/or sexual violence against women they knew, such as women in their family, their friends or other women in the area where they lived in Ukraine. Many women were also concerned about their children being injured in the war – 80 % were worried that this could happen – and this included concern about Russian troops using sexual violence against respondents' daughters (66 %) or sons (61 %).

Among women in the survey who had experienced **physical violence** while in Ukraine or during their transit journey, 41 % indicated that the perpetrator was a member of the Russian military. Out of all women in the survey who had experienced **sexual violence**, 20 % noted that the perpetrator was from the Russian military (the figure is likely to be higher for women from the areas of Ukraine occupied by Russian troops, but the results for this question are not disaggregated due to the limited sample size). Members of the Russian military were also indicated as the perpetrators of **sexual harassment** by almost one in four (24 %) women from the areas of Ukraine occupied by Russia.

By leaving Ukraine, women who have arrived in the EU have been able to resume their lives free from armed conflict. However, the war remains a constant presence, and it is unclear when these women will be able to return to Ukraine. Those who have left Ukraine behind may also feel a heightened awareness of the various threats against their family members and friends who remain in Ukraine. Furthermore, women who have experienced conflict-related violence in Ukraine or during their transit journey continue to be affected by what happened to them, even when the perpetrators of violence remain behind the border. The impact of violence can persist long after the events that caused physical injuries or triggered psychological consequences, which can compromise women's ability to work, study or take care of their children or other dependent members of the family.

These experiences can have a lasting impact on women from Ukraine living in the EU. This is recognised by Article 13(4) of the **Temporary Protection Directive** (TPD) (Council Directive 2001/55/EC), which, for example, calls on EU Member States to 'provide necessary medical or other assistance to ... persons who have undergone torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence'. The survey results are relevant beyond the specific context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, providing an evidential basis for further examination of the adequacy of the available support measures for people who arrive in the EU displaced by a conflict and who may be vulnerable to a heightened risk of abuse and of plans for eventual transition from temporary protection status to another status.

### **Note on the context of FRA opinions presented in this report**

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) opinions presented here focus on matters within the scope of EU law, including measures to combat trafficking in human beings, the implementation of temporary protection, the rights of victims of crime and combating violence against women (while the Violence against Women Directive is currently in the process of being transposed). These opinions should support EU and national policymakers to implement the necessary protection and support measures for women who arrive in the EU displaced by a war – in the case of this survey, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Where relevant, findings differentiate between women's experiences in Ukraine, during their journey to the EU ('transit') and after arrival in their current Member State of residence – namely, Czechia, Germany or Poland.

It should be borne in mind when reading the findings – for example, the survey results concerning experiences of physical and/or sexual violence and sexual harassment – that some of the women surveyed left Ukraine right after the start of Russia's war of aggression and have stayed in the EU since then. Other things being equal, more time spent in a given location (in this case, the EU) can be expected to be reflected in a greater likelihood of being exposed to negative experiences there (than in Ukraine).

## Over 1.8 million women were under EU temporary protection by the end of 2025. Women must be safe once legal protection ends.

### Ensure international protection for displaced women

The majority of people who have arrived in the EU since the start of the current war on 24 February 2022 are women, alongside their children. As women, they are at a heightened risk of gender-based violence and may have experienced or been exposed to traumatic situations during the war while in Ukraine, during their transit to the EU or when resident in the EU.

One of the key findings of the survey is that around half of the women who were interrogated by Russian forces were physically humiliated in the interrogation process, and 29 % were sexually humiliated. The **report of the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine** confirmed the systematic use of sexual violence by the Russian authorities against male and female detainees (paragraph 75). These experiences have long-lasting effects. Under international refugee law and EU asylum law – including Article 22(2) of the TPD – past persecution or trauma may, in certain situations, provide a compelling reason for refugees not to return home after the end of the situation that led to their displacement.

In addition, around two in three women (66 %) with daughters were worried that their daughter could be sexually assaulted by Russian troops. 61 % of those with sons were similarly worried that Russian troops could sexually assault their son.

In the event of a large number of displaced people coming to the EU, the TPD enables Member States to grant them international protection swiftly. On 4 March 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted **Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382** establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced people from Ukraine. It allowed Member States to grant protection to displaced people from Ukraine, enabling them to stay, live and work lawfully in the EU and entitling them to assistance and support. Under **Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/1460** of 15 July 2025, temporary protection for people displaced from Ukraine has been extended until 4 March 2027.

By the end of November 2025, 4.33 million displaced people from Ukraine were under temporary protection in the EU, of whom 43.6 % were adult women and some one third were minors, according to **Eurostat**.

Displaced people from Ukraine have access to residence rights in the EU under Article 8 of the TPD for the duration of their temporary protection. When that protection comes to an end, under Article 17 of the TPD, beneficiaries must have access to asylum procedures. The survey shows that two in five women from Ukraine (40 %) plan to stay in their current Member State of residence even when the war ends, while 33 % do not know whether they will go back to Ukraine or not. It is not unlikely that a large number of displaced people will apply for asylum when their temporary protection ends. This may put additional pressure on the asylum system.

### FRA OPINION 1

When ending temporary protection, the EU and its Member States should pay due attention to the specific profile of displaced people from Ukraine, 60 % of whom are women and girls.

Member States should reflect on how to address the situation of those displaced women who want to stay in the EU but do not fulfil the conditions to apply for a migrant workers' residence permit.

If future developments allow for the safe voluntary return of displaced people to Ukraine, and Member States consider enforcing returns, they should refrain from forcibly returning women and girls who were victims of traumatising experiences of gender-based violence as there may be 'compelling humanitarian reasons which may make return impossible or unreasonable', as provided for in Article 22(2) of the TPD.

To mitigate this situation, in September 2025, the Council of the European Union adopted **Recommendation C/2025/5129** to facilitate the transition out of temporary protection, encouraging Member States to explore other types of residence status. Some Member States have started to implement phase-out steps primarily for displaced people who are working and meet certain income requirements. Czechia, for example, allows beneficiaries who are employed and have resided in the Member State for over two years to apply for a **special long-term residence permit lasting five years**, provided they meet a certain income threshold. In Poland, there are plans to allow people who have benefited from temporary protection for one year to move to a **special national temporary residence status valid for three years**. No specific measures had been taken in Germany at the time of writing.

## Ukrainian women struggle to access reproductive and mental health care services.

### Provide support in a safe manner

#### FRA OPINION 2

Based on the generally satisfactory way in which the EU and its Member States have addressed the housing, employment and social needs of displaced people from Ukraine, they should review, more generally, reception arrangements for asylum-seeking women and girls from other parts of the world, so as to enable these groups to benefit fully from the rights embedded in the **Reception Conditions Directive (recast)** (Directive (EU) 2024/1346).

As long as displaced people from Ukraine are entitled to temporary protection, Member States must ensure that they fully benefit from the protection and the rights afforded by it. Protection and assistance must be provided in a gender-sensitive manner. Member States should establish mechanisms for periodic checks to verify whether persons under temporary protection are provided with or otherwise have access to housing and means to cover their basic needs in a manner that is designed and implemented to minimise safety risks for women and girls.

Member States should strengthen their healthcare response to enable displaced women from Ukraine to access necessary mental health support and to receive reproductive health care. This should entail the provision of free, confidential and, where necessary, interpreter-supported services. Mental health care needs will remain after temporary protection ends, a factor to consider when transitioning to other residence permits. Mental health services are essential to overcome traumatic experiences.

Under Articles 12 and 13 of the TPD, temporary protection beneficiaries have the right to access housing, employment and social assistance. This has allowed women from Ukraine to access the labour market, find accommodation and receive social support.

Overall, the combination of access to economic and social rights and the level of assistance provided have significantly reduced hardship for displaced women once they have found safety in the EU. Displaced women from Ukraine have not experienced many of the reception challenges affecting asylum-seeking women from other parts of the world, which FRA has described in past fundamental rights reports and its regular migration and asylum updates.

At the same time, the support given to displaced women from Ukraine has not always been provided in a manner that made them feel safe. Concerning housing, for example, many women have been able to transition from temporary accommodation, such as reception centres, to more regular housing. At the same time, 10 % of the women surveyed reported not feeling safe in their current accommodation.

Almost half of the women surveyed were in paid employment, with more women reporting this in Czechia (54 %) and Poland (50 %) than Germany (20 %). In addition to empowering women financially, access to work can help victims of conflict-related violence to regain control of their everyday lives and indirectly help them cope with their earlier experiences. It also reduces the chances of women engaging in activities entailing heightened risks to their safety to cover their basic needs. Nevertheless, only around one in five women surveyed from Ukraine (21 %) were able to make ends meet

(financially) easily or fairly easily. Most women could only make ends meet 'with difficulty' (39 %) or 'with some difficulty' (40 %).

The experiences of war and violence that women recounted point to significant mental and reproductive health care needs. Under Article 13(2) and (4) of the TPD, the assistance necessary for medical care must 'include at least emergency care and essential treatment of illness', as well as provision of the 'necessary medical or other assistance to persons enjoying temporary protection who have special needs, such as unaccompanied minors or persons who have undergone torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence'.

Many interviewed women indicated that their medical care needs had not been met in the EU. Among the women surveyed, 27 % said that they had not been able to see a psychologist, psychotherapist or psychiatrist and 23 % had faced problems with obtaining the reproductive health care they needed. Obstacles are manifold. The most frequent issue was that women did not know where to go or who to contact (35 % for reproductive health care and 44 % for mental health services) or had language difficulties (32 % for reproductive health care and 30 % for mental health services). However, some also reported having no health insurance, their health insurance not covering the costs or being refused access to reproductive or mental health care. Similar results concern access to prescribed medicines. Women living in Czechia or Poland were more frequently unable to access healthcare than women in Germany.

Based on the results of the 2019 European Health Interview Survey, 4.6 % of women in the EU-27 have unmet needs for mental health care services due to financial reasons. This percentage is substantially higher among women from Ukraine surveyed by FRA; 16 % reported having unmet needs for mental health care because they could not afford it.

Finally, as described in Chapter 4, in a few instances, women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by aid workers or medical personnel. Such cases, even if few in number, are particularly worrisome. To counter such forms of sexual exploitation, the **UN has developed a framework** with policies and training materials to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse, including in the context of humanitarian action.

### FRA OPINION 3

There must be zero tolerance for perpetration of physical and/or sexual violence when providing assistance and services to displaced people. Building on UN policies, Member States should ensure that all personnel involved in providing services to displaced people are trained on how to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

## Nearly one in four women from Ukraine have encountered potentially exploitative offers of transport, housing or work.

### Prevent and address exploitation and trafficking in human beings

#### FRA OPINION 4

Member States should reinforce labour inspections in sectors likely to employ newly arrived migrants. When significant numbers of women are displaced, labour inspections should focus on those sectors of employment that tend to employ women.

Labour inspectors should be trained to recognise signs of labour exploitation. They should speak to workers during inspections and inform them about how to enforce their rights and where to file complaints. They should also be trained to recognise and address sexual exploitation that disproportionately impacts women.

#### FRA OPINION 5

Successful awareness-raising and monitoring activities at the national and/or local level, such as municipal contact points verifying that private housing is not exploitative, should inform the drafting of the renewed EU strategy on combating trafficking in human beings (2026–2030) and future EU action to counter exploitative employment situations.

According to Article 12 of the TPD, when they work, temporary protection beneficiaries must be treated in the same way as nationals as regards remuneration, access to social security systems and other conditions of employment. Working conditions that fall short of national standards amount to exploitation.

According to **Eurostat data** (October 2025) covering 2013 to 2023 (i.e. 11 years), Ukrainians are among the top five non-EU nationalities in terms of victims of trafficking registered in the EU. These data point to Ukrainians' vulnerability to trafficking also prior to the start of the current war on 24 February 2022.

According to Article 18(2) of the **Anti-trafficking Directive** (Directive 2011/36/EU) (amended by **Directive (EU) 2024/1712**), Member States must engage in appropriate anti-trafficking awareness-raising activities, which must be gender-sensitive. The **EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator has acknowledged** that Member States' coordinated efforts to protect people fleeing the military aggression against Ukraine have contributed to increased detection of victims of trafficking. The **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime also notes** that the activation of temporary protection and targeted anti-trafficking measures has reduced risks of exploitation and trafficking.

The survey results show that nearly one in four women from Ukraine (24 %) have encountered potentially exploitative offers of transport, housing or work. This was less common in Germany, where the financial assistance women received may have enabled them to reject or ignore many of the offers that were potentially ill-intentioned or exploitative.

The profiles of women who more often received such offers – younger women, women with severe activity limitations (i.e. those who face limitations in doing activities people usually do – a situation about which surveys ask as a proxy measure of disability), women with no more than primary education and those who can only make ends meet with difficulty – point to deliberate attempts to exploit women perceived as more vulnerable.

Some 5 % of women in the survey had received offers of transport, housing or work where they suspected that there was an expectation of sexual favours or where the person making the offer wanted to take away the woman's passport or identity documents. These are both indicators of trafficking in human beings. Considering the large number of women who have arrived in the EU from Ukraine since the start of the current war, the number of women who have encountered offers with characteristics of trafficking is substantially higher than the number of recorded trafficking cases.

Among those women who have been working since arriving in the EU, 36 % indicated that they have had to work without a contract or with a contract that did not cover all their working hours, 29 % have had to work very long hours, 24 % have been underpaid or not paid at all for work they have done

and 12 % have been prohibited from taking any breaks during their working day. Overall, such violations were disclosed in the current survey at a higher rate than in **FRA's 2022 survey on people displaced from Ukraine** (although the two surveys differ in terms of how the data were collected and when the data collection took place, which may limit comparability). In the current survey, these problems were most often experienced by women who worked in the accommodation and food service sector (25 %), manufacturing (14 %) or the wholesale and retail trade or other related services (11 %).

Labour inspectors are essential for enforcing workers' rights and detecting and addressing labour exploitation. However, prioritising worker protection over immigration enforcement, providing dedicated training on labour exploitation and informing workers about redress mechanisms remain key gaps to be addressed. A **joint guide** by FRA and the European Labour Authority helps labour inspectors to identify victims of exploitation more effectively during inspections.

## Women displaced by the war face high rates of physical, sexual and psychological violence, even once in the EU.

### Respond effectively to physical, sexual and psychological violence

Article 35 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) requires Parties to the Convention to criminalise the intentional commission of acts of physical violence against another person. Additionally, the convention sets out various types of sexual violence and requires Parties to the Convention to criminalise them, including when they are committed by the former or current spouses or partners of victims.

Recitals 3 and 11 and Article 11 of **Directive (EU) 2024/1385** on combating violence against women and domestic violence (VAW Directive) recognise the severity of violence against women, including in domestic settings. The VAW Directive also supports the commitments under international law of Member States, including those under the Istanbul Convention. Article 25 of the VAW Directive provides that targeted and integrated assistance, including medical treatment, must be available to victims of violence against women or domestic violence. In Article 34, the VAW Directive obliges Member States to take appropriate measures to prevent violence against women and domestic violence, focusing on groups at heightened risk of such violence.

One in four women from Ukraine (25 %) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the start of the current war (24 February 2022). Compared with available data from general population surveys on violence against women, results from this survey highlight that women displaced by the war against Ukraine are at increased risk of physical and/or sexual violence, considering their experiences both in Member States and in Ukraine. For example, in FRA's general population survey on violence

#### FRA OPINION 6

Member States should ensure that their criminal justice systems criminalise adequately all instances of physical, sexual and psychological violence against women, regardless of the woman's country of origin and status in the EU. The legal provisions should be unequivocal and the punishments provided for should be effective, proportionate and dissuasive.

#### FRA OPINION 7

Member States should provide practical guidance and training to law enforcement officers to support them in effectively identifying and investigating incidents of gender-based violence motivated by hate, which encompasses various grounds such as language and nationality.

#### FRA OPINION 8

Member States should ensure that victims are appropriately treated by medical services to address the severe physical and/or psychological consequences of violence and, at the same time, that cases of violence,

including any conflict-related violence, are well documented with a view to supporting possible future investigations into core international crimes and human rights violations resulting from the war (see opinion 17).

## FRA OPINION 9

Given that women fleeing from the war against Ukraine are at an increased risk of physical and/or sexual violence in the EU, Member States should prioritise specific prevention and early intervention measures targeting women who have arrived in the EU due to being displaced by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

against women published in 2014, 8 % of women in the general population in Czechia and Germany and 4 % in Poland had experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the 12 months before the survey, compared with 15 % of women from Ukraine residing in Czechia and Germany and 12 % in Poland, based on the survey results presented in this report.

One of the key findings of this survey is that, among the victims of physical and/or sexual violence, 62 % experienced it in their current Member State of residence, while 39 % experienced the violence in Ukraine and 9 % during their transit journey from Ukraine to the EU. In addition to the prevalence of violence in different settings, these results reflect the length of time that women have spent in the EU, in Ukraine and in transit since the start of the war, with more time in the EU exposing women to more risk of abuse in the EU. 73 % of women indicated that they avoid certain places or situations due to the fear of being physically or sexually assaulted in the Member State where they now live, with more women indicating this in Czechia (82 %) and Poland (79 %) than in Germany (45 %).

The survey data show that there have been situations where women have been physically or verbally attacked in the EU when heard speaking Ukrainian in public. Since arriving in their current Member State of residence, 54 % of women have been in a situation where somebody has attacked them or otherwise reacted negatively after hearing them speaking Ukrainian in public. These experiences have occurred at a higher rate among women living in Czechia (67 %) and Poland (55 %) than among women living in Germany (31 %). These results indicate that there was a bias motive behind these attacks and negative reactions.

In total, 47 % of women who had experienced sexual violence in Ukraine, during their transit journey and/or in the EU described the perpetrator as someone they had a personal relationship with (e.g. a previous partner, someone they share or shared housing with, a friend). For 22 %, the perpetrator was a stranger or someone they otherwise were not able to identify. Notably, 6 % had experienced sexual violence by a police officer or a border official and 4 % indicated that a support service provider – such as a doctor, other healthcare worker or aid worker – was the perpetrator of sexual violence. This is alarming despite the relatively low overall percentages, as the perpetrators in these cases were those who were tasked with protecting victims of crime and providing support and care.

As for the consequences, almost 9 in 10 women (88 %) who had experienced physical and/or sexual violence reported long-term psychological consequences, such as anxiety, feeling vulnerable or a loss of self-confidence. Of the 37 % of women from Ukraine who had experienced psychological violence by an intimate partner, more than two in three (69 %) indicated that they had experienced psychological problems as a result (e.g. depression, panic attacks, problems with concentration, problems sleeping or eating).

## Nearly one in four women encountered sexual cyber harassment - a higher rate than among women in the EU overall.

### Respond effectively to sexual cyber harassment

Article 7 of the VAW Directive requires Member States to criminalise certain forms of cyber harassment. The types of conduct described in the article include sexual harassment such as the unsolicited sending of material depicting genitals to a person when this is likely to cause serious psychological harm. Other acts described in the article include acts of sexual harassment such as publishing material that contains a person's personal data without their consent (which could include intimate photos or videos). The **Digital Services Act** (Regulation (EU) 2022/2065) requires online platforms to implement systems combating illegal content distribution, including user reporting mechanisms and collaboration with 'trusted flaggers'. The legislation specifically targets very large online platforms distributing pornographic content, requiring them to ensure that victims of non-consensual intimate image sharing can effectively request content removal through expedited processing and prompt action (recital 87). Under Article 34(1) of the Digital Services Act, very large online platforms must also conduct risk assessments examining illegal content dissemination and the potential impacts on human dignity.

The survey data show that the prevalence rate of sexual cyber harassment (e.g. offensive sexually explicit emails and sexually suggestive comments online) reaches nearly one in four women from Ukraine (23 %). This could be considered a high rate compared with the results published by FRA in 2014 concerning sexual cyber harassment in the general population, which showed that 11 % of women in the EU have experienced sexual cyber harassment since the age of 15 (however, this is a substantially longer reference period than the one used in the survey on experiences of women from Ukraine, which covered the period since the start of the current war on 24 February 2022; the questions used to calculate these results also differ slightly between the two surveys).

Overall, 99 % of women in the survey use at least one social media platform. This high rate of social media use highlights the importance of these online platforms for women who want to stay in contact with family members and friends still in Ukraine, receive information about developments in the war or seek information and advice related to life in their new environment in the EU. At the same time, social media use can expose women to offensive and threatening material, including of a sexual nature.

Among women who had experienced sexual cyber harassment, 85 % indicated that this had resulted in long-term psychological consequences – a higher rate than for sexual harassment without a cyber element (75 %).

### FRA OPINION 10

Given the prevalence and consequences of sexual cyber harassment, Member States should prioritise the implementation of the VAW Directive and its provisions on specific criminal offences. Member States should ensure that, in their laws and policies, they effectively address the full spectrum of sexual harassment behaviours, including acts of sexual cyber harassment.

### FRA OPINION 11

Member States and the European Commission should adopt relevant measures in line with existing EU law to prevent cyber harassment, including by holding accountable and, where appropriate, engaging with digital service providers. This includes enforcing the obligations imposed on online platforms under the Digital Services Act with respect to risk assessments under Article 34 and other relevant provisions.

## Many who have experienced violence do not get help or reach out for the support they are entitled to.

### Provide access to effective victim support services

#### FRA OPINION 12

Member States should introduce or further advance specific initiatives to proactively inform women from Ukraine who are victims of gender-based violence about their rights to support and services, including in places where women go and talk about their experiences, such as healthcare clinics and hospitals or faith-based organisations.

#### FRA OPINION 13

Member States should ensure that support organisations are equipped to address the multifaceted trauma resulting from physical, sexual, psychological and other types of violence suffered by women from Ukraine, and the accumulation of trauma when these experiences coincide with an ongoing war.

#### FRA OPINION 14

In cases falling outside of Member States' jurisdiction, victims of certain crimes should still have access to support services, including those pursuant to Article 13(4) of the TPD, according to which Member States 'shall provide necessary medical or other assistance to persons enjoying temporary protection ... who have undergone torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence'. Furthermore, Member States should seek to facilitate the necessary continuity of these services for such victims after the end of temporary protection to guarantee a smooth transition to other legal statuses.

Articles 18–25 of the Istanbul Convention, Articles 8 and 9 of the **Victims' Rights Directive** (VRD) (Directive 2012/29/EU) and Articles 15–21 and 25–33 of the VAW Directive all contain requirements that oblige states to protect and support women victims of violence. In line with recital 40 and Article 8 of the VRD and recital 35 of the VAW Directive, the provision of support services to victims of crime is not dependent on victims reporting a crime (i.e. victims making a complaint with regard to a criminal offence to a competent authority such as the police).

Pursuant to recital 10 of the VRD, Member States should take the necessary measures to ensure that the rights set out in the directive are not made conditional on the victim's residence status in their territory or the victim's citizenship or nationality. In cases falling outside Member States' jurisdiction, victims of certain crimes should still have access to support services pursuant to Article 13(4) of the TPD. In order to facilitate the transition once temporary protection ends, in September 2025, the Council adopted **Recommendation C/2025/5129** on a coordinated approach to the transition out of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine. The recommendation calls on Member States to ensure that, when temporary protection ends, vulnerable groups such as victims of crime continue to enjoy the rights based on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, including dignity and essential support, to guarantee continuity and a smooth transition to other legal statuses.

Over the years, FRA's research has shown that, besides providing emotional and psychological support, victim support services play an essential role in providing victims with information that is often beyond police capacity, for example information about their rights and practical information about their role in any proceedings and what to expect (see FRA's **Proceedings that Do Justice – Justice for victims of violent crime: Part II**, published in 2019). The aforementioned FRA report shows that victims who are unsure about whether or not to report to the police often decide to do so after contacting a victim support service and receiving information and/or support from these services. This is especially important with respect to women who have experienced violence in the context of the war, during their transit journey from Ukraine to the EU or once in the EU, and who therefore need specialised support in the Member State where they currently reside. This is in line with the key UN standards included in the UN Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of

Crime and Abuse of Power (1985) and the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (2005).

Despite the broad set of safeguards and support services offered by Member States and civil-society organisations, many women victims of violence have not had access to support. FRA's research finds that many women displaced by the war who have experienced violence do not get or reach out for the support they are entitled to, despite the safeguards included in the EU legislative and policy framework.

For example, among the 51 % of women in the survey who had experienced sexual harassment since the start of the current war (24 February 2022), only a few victims of sexual harassment had consulted professionals such as organisations in their Member State of residence specialised in offering support to people from Ukraine (3 %), victim support organisations (3 %) or doctors or healthcare workers (3 %). Among victims of physical and/or sexual violence that took place in the EU, 10 % had contacted a healthcare service provider. Some women had contacted other relevant support services, such as social services, women's shelters and helplines or faith-based support.

Uncertainty about their future legal status post temporary protection and related rights, the perception of the war as 'temporary' (especially in its early stages), changes in Member States' social support systems and changes in people's attitudes towards people displaced by the war can further impact victims' willingness to reach out and get the support they need.

**Only 3 % of women who experienced sexual harassment since the start of the war reported the most serious incident to the police.**

#### Facilitate crime reporting

Articles 27 and 28 of the Istanbul Convention, Articles 4 and 5 of the VRD and Article 14 of the VAW Directive all contain requirements that oblige states to adopt targeted measures aiming to facilitate reporting by women victims of violence. The VRD (recital 63) requires Member States to empower victims and encourage them to report crimes to the police, which also includes putting in place measures to enable third-party reporting, for example by civil-society organisations or other bodies that come into contact with victims, such as national human rights institutions or equality bodies. Recital 35 of the VAW Directive stresses the importance of Member States ensuring 'that victims who are third-country nationals, irrespective of their residence status, are not discouraged from reporting instances of violence against women or domestic violence and are treated in a non-discriminatory manner as regards their residence status'. The VAW Directive requires Member States to not only ensure the accessible and safe reporting of violence but also identify specific protection needs of victims. Competent authorities are to assess and identify victims' protection needs in accordance with Article 22 of the VRD.

Data from FRA's surveys over the years have consistently pointed to under-reporting as a major obstacle to the realisation of victims' rights and to the effective investigation and prosecution of crime. This also applies to women from Ukraine who are victims of crime. 13 % of the women surveyed whose most serious incident of physical

#### FRA OPINION 15

Member States should ensure that women from Ukraine residing in Member States have effective access to relevant reporting mechanisms and are encouraged to report crime, including if they are victims of crime falling under the jurisdiction of a Member State (including, when applicable, universal jurisdiction). Given the very low reporting rates evidenced in this survey, Member States should consider alternative structures, such as third-party reporting, to facilitate crime reporting as much as possible.

#### FRA OPINION 16

Member States should ensure that the police and other public services are trained on victim-appropriate responses, to encourage women from Ukraine to report crimes and so that

the authorities are able to identify their protection needs, adopting relevant protection measures accordingly.

### FRA OPINION 17

Member States should consider adopting measures to support women who are residing in the EU after having experienced conflict-related violence outside the territory of the EU. The measures should facilitate women's reporting of their experiences to relevant authorities and sharing of evidence with institutions such as the International Criminal Court. Such measures would also support Member States' prosecution authorities in their efforts to cooperate with each other and relevant EU bodies – such as Eurojust, which has set up the Core International Crimes Evidence Database – with a view to bringing perpetrators of core international crimes to court and, hence, fighting impunity.

### FRA OPINION 18

Organisations that help women to document international crimes and human rights violations should take note of the guidelines put forth jointly by Eurojust, the EU Network for Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes and the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

and/or sexual violence occurred in the EU reported it to the police. 15 % of women whose most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence occurred in Ukraine or during their transit journey reported it to the police. Compared with those who had experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the EU, victims who had not reported their experiences of violence in Ukraine more often indicated that they had not done so because of fear of intimidation or retaliation or because somebody had stopped or discouraged them from reporting. 52 % of women who had experienced physical and/or sexual violence in Ukraine or during their transit journey had been injured, and almost 9 in 10 indicated that the violence had caused one or more psychological consequences, including injuries and psychological trauma requiring care during the women's stay in the EU.

Similarly, out of the 51 % of women in the survey who had experienced sexual harassment since the start of the current war (incidents that took place in Ukraine, during the transit journey and/or in the survey Member State since 24 February 2022), only 3 % had reported the most serious incident to the police. Among women interviewed in Czechia and Germany, only 1 % of victims had reported sexual harassment to the police, while 6 % of victims residing in Poland had done so.

Under-reporting may result in failure to ensure access to justice for all on an equal footing and it undermines the rights of women from Ukraine to support and protection. At the same time, it compromises the effectiveness of national authorities in investigating and punishing crime, as most crime is not brought to their attention. It was in this context – and with a view to further supporting criminal accountability processes for core international crimes and human rights violations resulting from the war against Ukraine – that the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), the EU Network for Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes and the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court **developed guidelines** addressed to civil-society organisations to support their independent efforts to preserve and collect information on international crimes and human rights violations, including gender-based violence. The guidelines note

that documenting such crimes presents specific challenges, as these crimes are often not reported by victims due to stigma, the threat of exclusion from family and/or community, lack of access to justice and support mechanisms, fear of reprisal, the psychological impact of past violence and self-blame.

# Introduction

Armed conflict causes profound human rights harms. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has led to the deaths of thousands of people <sup>(1)</sup>. Three years after the Russian invasion, more than 8 million people remain displaced, with 3.7 million people displaced within Ukraine and 5.1 million people displaced outside the country <sup>(2)</sup>. As of November 2025, more than 4 million people held temporary protection status in the EU, including 2.5 million women and girls registered under temporary protection in EU Member States, while others stay in the EU under other types of residence permits <sup>(3)</sup>.

The Member States with the largest numbers of women from Ukraine registered as beneficiaries of temporary protection include Germany (around 700 000 women), Poland (around 550 000) and Czechia (around 200 000) <sup>(4)</sup>. People who are forced to leave their homes because of a threat to their safety often also find themselves without a job, other resources and social networks, making them particularly vulnerable to rights violations during their journey to safety and upon arrival when trying to re-establish their lives in another country.

All Member States have allowed entry to displaced people from Ukraine (including Denmark, which is not bound by the **Temporary Protection Directive** (TPD) (Council Directive 2001/55/EC) and has adopted a national law that provides similar protections <sup>(5)</sup>). **Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382** of 4 March 2022 activated the TPD (adopted in 2001) for the first time as a measure for dealing with the exceptional mass inflow of displaced people. Most displaced people from Ukraine in the EU obtained temporary protection, which allows them to stay, work, study and obtain medical and social assistance and support with housing. In July 2025, the Council of the European Union decided to extend such temporary protection until March 2027 (**Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/1460**) and stressed the importance of paving the way for a smooth and well-coordinated transition out of temporary protection.

Beneficiaries of temporary protection find themselves under the jurisdiction of the relevant Member States. Therefore, they are covered by EU and national legislation, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. In the context of this survey, the most relevant instruments of EU law are **Directive (EU) 2024/1385** on combating violence against women and domestic violence (VAW Directive), the **Victims' Rights Directive** (VRD) (Directive 2012/29/EU) and the **Anti-trafficking Directive** (Directive 2011/36/EU, as amended by **Directive (EU) 2024/1712**).

This report describes the experiences of women who have left Ukraine since the start of Russia's war of aggression on 24 February 2022 and who are now living in the EU – specifically, in Czechia, Germany or Poland, the three Member States where the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) carried out the survey. The results described in this report show the challenges – including serious human rights violations – that the women have faced in Ukraine since the start of the war, during their journey to the EU and after establishing their residence in the EU. It also focuses on the need for protection and services for women victims of crime, and the role of the EU and its Member States in providing these women with full access to their rights.

Violence against women exists in every society, in the EU <sup>(6)</sup> and elsewhere. Besides the immediate threat war poses to women's security – adding to the existing threats from everyday violence against women – it can create an environment of impunity that increases the risk to victims' safety. War is also highly disruptive to the functioning of society and can involve a shift of priorities and resources, such as the police not being available to respond to the needs of victims of crime. The focus on survival in a society under attack may also mean that violence perpetrated in the domestic sphere is not recognised and victims may be silenced – or feel that they should not speak up – in an effort not to distract attention from the war effort <sup>(7)</sup>. In this way, war can further increase victims' susceptibility to violence, particularly women's vulnerability in such situations. Women who are displaced, up to the point of leaving their home country, may face particular difficulties in reporting violence that took place shortly before their departure or during their journey to the EU. This can involve challenges related to communicating with the authorities that have jurisdiction over the violence, submitting evidence and taking part in proceedings, and getting access to relevant victim support. Women from Ukraine who have experienced violence after their arrival in the EU may not be familiar with their rights as victims of crime in the EU, where to report and what assistance is available to them in their Member State of residence. This lack of awareness of one's rights may lead to under-reporting experiences of violence, which is of particular concern knowing that even in regular circumstances many women do not report violent incidents they have experienced to the police or other authorities and services <sup>(8)</sup>.

The results presented in this report show that many women who have arrived from Ukraine in the EU have experienced violence – including consequences of violence that took place in Ukraine or during their journey to safety and violent incidents that occurred in the EU after their arrival. Despite the broad set of safeguards and support services offered by Member States and civil-society organisations, many women victims of violence have not had access to support, as the survey results show. Uncertainty about their future, their legal status after the end of temporary protection and related rights, changes in Member States' social support systems and changes in people's attitudes towards people displaced by the war further reinforce women's vulnerability to exploitation and violence. FRA's research shows that many women fleeing the war who experience violence do not receive or reach out for the support they are entitled to and/or do not report the offences, despite the safeguards included in the EU legislative and policy framework.

## OTHER RELEVANT FRA STUDIES AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

Since the beginning of the current war, FRA has regularly looked at the fundamental rights situation of all persons (women, children and men) who have come to the EU fleeing the Russian aggression. The results of this work have been presented in FRA's annual fundamental rights reports, starting from the 2023 report (which included a focus chapter on the fundamental rights implications for the EU of the war against Ukraine <sup>(9)</sup>) and three bulletins, the first of which was published shortly after the beginning of the war:

- Bulletin #1: 'The war in Ukraine – Fundamental rights implications within the EU' <sup>(10)</sup>;
- Bulletin #2: 'The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine – The broad fundamental rights impact in the EU' <sup>(11)</sup>;
- Bulletin #3: 'The Russian aggression against Ukraine – Children fleeing Ukraine finding protection in the EU' <sup>(12)</sup>.

In 2023, FRA also published a report concerning the implementation of temporary protection at the local level in the EU and a report on the results of an online survey of displaced people's experience in the EU (13). The current report adds the specific perspective of women who have been displaced by the war and are currently residing in the EU.

The current report is published in parallel with the results of the European Union gender-based violence survey (EU-GBV survey) (results published in 2024), which was carried out jointly by Eurostat, FRA and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and is a general population survey of all women in the EU (14). The EU-GBV survey collected women's experiences of various forms of violence, the impact and consequences of violence, and women's contact with support services and the police. It was based on interviews in all 27 Member States, with a total of 114 023 women interviewed, carried out between September 2020 and March 2024. The survey showed that one in five women have experienced physical violence or threats and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 by a perpetrator other than their intimate partner, and one in three have experienced sexual harassment at work in their lifetimes. The findings update FRA's first EU-wide survey on violence against women (data collected in 2012; results published in 2014), which interviewed some 42 000 women in the (then) 28 Member States (including the United Kingdom, still a Member State at the time when the survey was conducted) (15). In addition to data on physical and sexual violence by partners and non-partners, the EU-GBV survey collected data on women's experiences of psychological partner violence, sexual harassment and stalking and violence in childhood.

The results of this current survey, as reported here, can also be examined against the results of the survey on violence against women in Ukraine that the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) carried out in 2018 (16). The OSCE based its survey on FRA's earlier survey on violence against women (published in 2014), with additional questions included concerning conflict-related violence. The OSCE worked closely with FRA on the implementation of the survey, and FRA also took part in the project's steering committee (Serani Siegel – who was the project manager of the OSCE survey – contributed to the implementation of FRA's survey on violence against women from Ukraine, first as a member of the survey contractor's team and later as a member of FRA's steering committee). The OSCE's survey was conducted a few years after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol in 2014, alongside armed hostilities in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In addition to providing results concerning women's experiences in Ukraine overall, the OSCE survey examined the situation of women who had been internally displaced within Ukraine due to Russian aggression.

Later in this report, selected results from the EU-GBV survey, results published in 2014 from FRA's survey on violence against women and results from the OSCE's violence against women survey are presented for reference to help contextualise the experiences of women from Ukraine interviewed in the current survey.

In addition, FRA has published material on the labour exploitation of non-EU nationals, which is relevant to the current study. The 2015 report *Severe Labour Exploitation: Workers moving within or into the European Union* analyses the legal and institutional challenges involved in detecting and addressing severe exploitation and calls for stronger inspections, enforcement and victim support (17). Building on this, the 2019 report *Protecting Migrant Workers from Exploitation in the EU: Workers' perspectives* presents first-hand accounts from exploited workers across 10 Member States, illustrating the scale and nature of abuse and offering concrete recommendations to improve

prevention, protection and access to justice <sup>(18)</sup>. Back in 2011, FRA published the results of its research on migrants in an irregular situation employed in domestic work, which highlighted the fundamental rights challenges such as abusive and exploitative conditions that migrant domestic workers – mostly women – face <sup>(19)</sup>.

Concerning refugees, FRA's 2020 report *Integration of Young Refugees in the EU: Good practices and challenges* offers lessons learnt on how the EU managed the situation of the large number of young people who arrived in 2015 and 2016 <sup>(20)</sup>.

## Examples of work carried out by Europol, Eurojust and the EUAA related to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

With respect to crimes committed during the war against Ukraine, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) supports investigations into war crimes committed in Ukraine and has established an operational task force for open-source intelligence. The task force assists investigations conducted by Ukraine, other countries and the International Criminal Court into crimes committed during the war against Ukraine. The European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) has established the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. Eurojust is hosting the EU Network for Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes. Both Europol and Eurojust participate in the Joint Investigation Team on Alleged Core International Crimes Committed in Ukraine, consisting of the two agencies, Ukraine, six Member States and the International Criminal Court. The joint investigation team facilitates investigations into alleged core international crimes in Ukraine. Eurojust also participated in the steering committee that provided inputs to FRA concerning the implementation of the survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war against Ukraine.

Another example of the efforts made by EU agencies is the rolling survey of migrants arriving from Ukraine, carried out jointly by the European Union Agency for Asylum, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the company Gradus Research. The survey has collected data on demographic characteristics of people arriving in the EU from Ukraine, experiences related to the war, reasons for leaving Ukraine, experiences during the transit journey and when settling into the host Member State, and future plans and intentions.

Sources: Europol, '[Europol's solidarity with Ukraine](#)', Europol website (accessed 21 January 2026); Europol, '[International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine](#)', Eurojust website (accessed 21 January 2026); Europol, '[Genocide Prosecution Network](#)', Eurojust website (accessed 21 January 2026); European Union Agency for Asylum, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Gradus Research Company, *Voices in Europe: Experiences, hopes, and aspirations of forcibly displaced persons from Ukraine*, 2024.

In this report, the survey results are presented across six chapters.

Chapter 1 describes women's lives in Ukraine after the start of Russia's war of aggression on 24 February 2022 and, in this way, provides the context for the women's experiences presented in the other chapters. Chapter 2 examines access to services set up to meet the needs of women who have arrived in the EU from Ukraine, focusing on access to accommodation, healthcare and employment and women's means of subsistence. Chapter 3 presents the results concerning situations where women have encountered potentially exploitative offers of transport, accommodation or employment, with some of the offers having indications of attempted trafficking in human beings. Chapter 4 turns to women's experiences of physical and/or sexual violence, covering their experiences in Ukraine, during their transit journey and after their arrival in the EU. In addition to showing the prevalence of such violence, the chapter examines the impact and consequences of violence for the victims. In a similar manner, Chapter 5 looks at women's experiences of sexual harassment in Ukraine, during the transit journey and in the EU. Finally, Chapter 6 presents the findings on women reporting physical and/or sexual violence or sexual harassment to the police or other authorities and women's reasons for not reporting such incidents. The six chapters presenting the survey results are followed by the conclusions chapter, which summarises selected concluding points.

## Endnotes

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- (11) FRA, '[The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine – The broad fundamental rights impact in the EU](#)', Bulletin #2, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022.
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- (14) FRA, EIGE and Eurostat, [EU gender-based violence survey: Key results – Experiences of women in the EU-27](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024.
- (15) FRA, [Violence against Women: An EU-wide survey – Main results](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014.
- (16) OSCE, [OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women – Well-being and safety of women: Ukraine results report](#), Vienna, 2019.
- (17) FRA, [Severe Labour Exploitation: Workers moving within or into the European Union](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2015.
- (18) FRA, [Protecting Migrant Workers from Exploitation in the EU: Workers' perspectives](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019.
- (19) FRA, [Migrants in an irregular situation employed in domestic work: Fundamental rights challenges for the European Union and its Member States](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2011.
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# 1

## LIVING IN THE SHADOW OF THE WAR

- ★ More than two in three women (70 %) indicated that they had left Ukraine due to fear for their own safety because of the war.
- ★ Overall, 27 % of women indicated that, while in Ukraine, they had been living in an area where Russian troops were stationed or moving in large numbers; this value rises to 45 % for women who had been living in areas of Ukraine that have been occupied by Russia since the start of the current war. 42 % of women indicated that, in Ukraine, they had been living in an area where Ukrainian armed personnel were present in large numbers.
- ★ Regarding women's experiences in Ukraine related to the Russian military, 15 % of women had been stopped and searched by Russian troops, 11 % had been detained, 10 % had been interrogated (out of which 51 % had been physically humiliated in the interrogation process and 29 % sexually humiliated) and 10 % had had their houses searched.
- ★ A majority of the women in the survey had been very worried about experiencing bombing (artillery fire, missiles, drone attacks – 80 %) while in Ukraine or being physically assaulted (64 %) or sexually assaulted (60 %) by Russian troops.
- ★ Two in three respondents (66 %) who had daughters were very worried that their daughter could be sexually assaulted by Russian troops. At the same time, 61 % of women with sons were very worried that their son could be sexually assaulted by Russian troops.
- ★ Around one in three women (34 %) noted that an immediate family member – and for 19 % their intimate partner – had been involved in fighting in the war.
- ★ Close to one in four women (23 %) indicated in the survey that property belonging to their household had been destroyed or seriously damaged due to the war.

Since the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, constant military action targeting locations across Ukraine has made safety people's primary concern. While leaving the country has helped to ensure women's personal safety, the impact of the war has not gone away. Due to extensive shelling, drone attacks and other military action, many women have lost their homes and belongings in Ukraine, and many have also lost family members and friends. Some women arriving in the EU have injuries and psychological trauma that must be addressed to allow them to re-establish their lives in a new setting or when they return home once peace returns to Ukraine. These experiences can have a lasting impact on women from Ukraine while they are living in the EU.



To understand women's experiences before leaving Ukraine, the survey asked questions on how the war was present in their lives. Traumatic experiences such as those related to the war can result in women needing support and services in the EU. This is recognised in the TPD, which aims to provide immediate, collective protection and rights to people fleeing mass displacement events from non-EU countries. Many consequences of the war can be long-lasting and can greatly hamper women's ability to work and their ability to care for others (the latter of which is a role often both adopted by and expected of women). Many women also have family members or relatives who are still in Ukraine, making it difficult to mentally escape the war and its burden. Women who have experienced violence or sexual harassment after arriving in the EU may find the impact of these experiences heightened, having to tackle the psychological and emotional burden of the war at the same time.

This chapter shows how the military aggression in Ukraine has been present in women's everyday lives, starting with experiences they had while still in Ukraine involving military activity, contact with Russian armed forces and women's awareness of Russian troops using physical or sexual violence against people in Ukraine. The chapter describes women's reasons for leaving Ukraine. It shows that, in addition to feeling the impact of military activities, women who fled Ukraine were also confronted with gender-specific risks, a factor that needs to be taken into account when phasing out temporary protection.

## 1.1. MANIFESTATIONS OF THE WAR IN EVERYDAY LIFE – EXPERIENCES AND CONCERNS

Even before deciding to leave Ukraine, many of the women interviewed for the survey had experienced their personal safety being threatened by war. The most common experiences women mentioned were related to hearing air-raid sirens or other warnings of a bombing, missile or drone attack, hearing gunshots or the sound of bombing/shelling in the area where they lived, and having to go and hide in a cellar, air-raid shelter or similar places because of a threat of or actual attack (Figure 1).

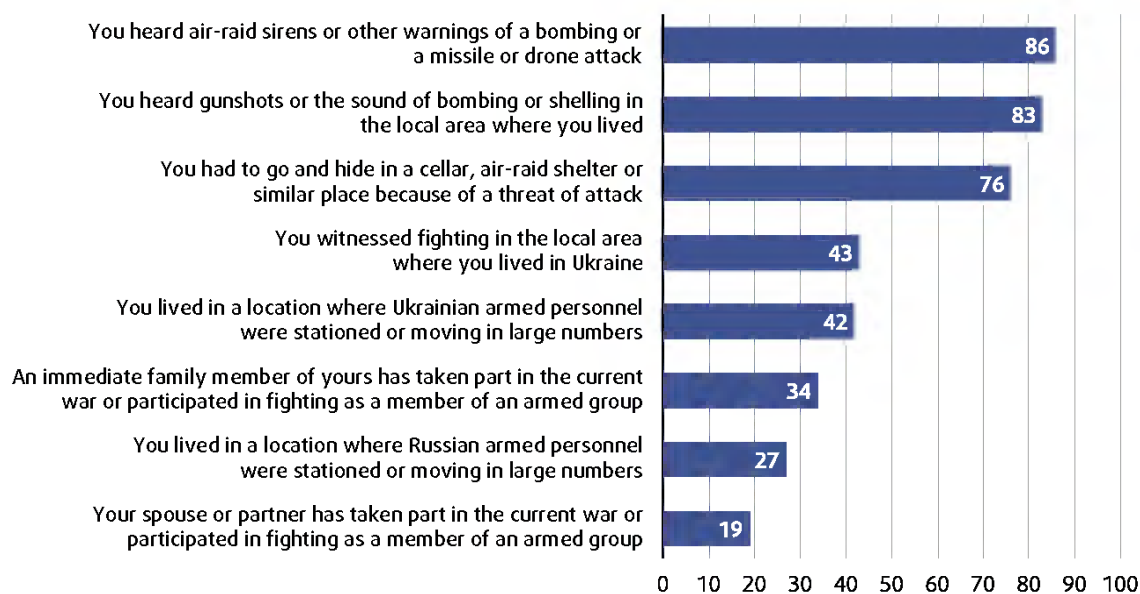
Having military troops move in and operate in areas where people live raises the risk of and concerns about the possible collateral impact of attacks against these troops, in addition to the risk of physical and/or sexual violence or harassment from military troops. Overall, 42 % of women indicated that,

**With the beginning of this war, I don't live. I exist. Memory is erased instantly, you don't remember anything, you just live in this minute ... you don't live tomorrow.**

Interview in Germany, woman aged 39–59

while in Ukraine, they had been living in an area where Ukrainian armed personnel were stationed or moving in large numbers. In total, 27 % had lived in an area where Russian troops were stationed or moving; however, this rises to 45 % for women who indicated that they had lived in an area of Ukraine that was occupied by Russian troops (either wholly or in part, and for at least some of the time since the start of the current war). Around one in three women (34 %) noted that an immediate family member – and for 19 % their intimate partner – had been involved in fighting in the war, highlighting one immediate impact of the war on these women’s family lives.

**FIGURE 1: EXPERIENCE OF MILITARY ACTIVITY IN UKRAINE (%)**



Source: FRA’s survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.



**Note:**

Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States (n = 1 223).

**The war turned my whole world, my life, upside down. I had a very nice house, a very nice family. Everything turned upside down, everything was crossed out. We don’t even have a place to return to.**

Interview in Czechia, woman aged 60–74

Close to one in four women (23 %) indicated in the survey that property belonging to their household had been destroyed or seriously damaged due to the war. This could include their home, car or something else they owned. The question in the survey does not ask the women to specify whether the damage to property occurred before or after women decided to leave Ukraine. However, irrespective of when it happened, women whose homes have been destroyed or damaged in the war may find it harder to return to Ukraine later.

In the survey, women were also asked about their contact with Russian armed forces, beyond having Russian troops moving or stationed in the area where they lived in Ukraine. Out of all the women interviewed, 15 % had been stopped and searched and some 1 in 10 had been detained or interrogated or had had their houses searched by the Russian military. These rates are higher among women from regions of Ukraine occupied by Russian troops (Table 2).

In addition, 47 women (out of the 1 223 survey respondents) indicated that they themselves had taken an active part in fighting the war while they were still in Ukraine.

**TABLE 2: CONTACT WITH RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES FOR WOMEN WHO HAD BEEN LIVING IN AREAS OCCUPIED BY RUSSIA AND ALL WOMEN IN THE SURVEY (%)**

|                      | Women from Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine | All women from Ukraine |
|----------------------|--|------------------------|
| Stopped and searched | 28   | 15                     |
| Detained             | 18   | 11                     |
| Interrogated         | 17   | 10                     |
| House searched       | 18   | 10                     |

Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

Out of the women who indicated that they had been interrogated by the Russian military, 29 % felt that this had been done in a sexually humiliating manner and 51 % had been physically humiliated in the interrogation process. For 58 % of women interrogated, verbal humiliation had been part of their interrogation. 37 % had been coerced into providing information or threatened with consequences if they did not cooperate. Information on women's treatment by the Russian military during interrogation was collected in the survey separately from broader questions that concerned experiences of physical and sexual violence and sexual harassment. Therefore, the results presented here should be seen as complementary to those that will be discussed in Chapter 4 concerning physical and sexual violence and in Chapter 5 on sexual harassment.

In addition to being asked about their own experiences, the women were asked whether they were aware of their female family members, relatives or other women in their community being attacked by Russian troops. Some one in four women in the survey had heard of physical violence from Russian troops against other women in their local area, and one in five had heard about them using sexual violence (Table 3).

**TABLE 3: AWARENESS OF RUSSIAN TROOPS USING PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (%)**

|  | Heard of Russian troops using |                 |                                 |
|--|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
|  | Physical violence             | Sexual violence | Physical and/or sexual violence |
| Against other women in the local area                | 26                            | 21              | 29                              |
| Against other women in the respondent's friend group | 19                            | 13              | 23                              |
| Against other women in the respondent's family       | 7                             | 8               | 11                              |
| Against women in any of the three categories above   | 34                            | 29              | 39                              |

Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.



Note:

Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States (n = 1 223), by area of Ukraine where women were living before leaving the country.

**A Russian soldier dropped my bag on my feet – I was bleeding. Crushed both my legs with this bag. They specifically injured people who were leaving. A bag will be thrown at someone, someone will be scratched with tactical [military] gloves. They know what they are doing.**

Interview in Poland, woman aged 18–34



Note:

Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States (n = 1 223).

## Sexual violence in war

Sexual violence against women has been used in armed conflict as an aspect of psychological warfare and to humiliate, terrorise and demobilise the enemy, to displace populations and to destroy community ties. International humanitarian law recognises the need for special protection of women in armed conflict, and the Geneva Conventions (Article 27 of Geneva Convention IV) and their additional protocols (Article 76(1) of Protocol I) explicitly prohibit rape, forced prostitution and any form of indecent assault.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda discussed rape and sexual violence in the **Akayesu** case. The tribunal set the first definition of rape under international law as 'a physical invasion of a sexual nature, committed on a person under circumstances which are coercive' (paragraph 598) and established that sexual violence can constitute genocide when committed with the requisite intent (paragraphs 730–731).

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has established a rich jurisprudence on sexual violence in war. Article 5 of the **Updated Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia** included rape as a crime against humanity when committed during armed conflict and directed against any civilian population. Furthermore, in one of its landmark cases, **Furundžija**, the tribunal found that rape may amount to torture and thus can be prosecuted as a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions and as a violation of the laws and customs of war. The tribunal has also established **in a series of landmark cases** that rape has been used as a tool in campaigns described as 'ethnic cleansing' and that sexual violence can form part of crimes such as persecution or genocide where the legal thresholds are met.

The **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court** refers to sexual violence and rape as possible instances of crimes against humanity (Article 7) and war crimes (Article 8).

The **report of the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine** provides accounts of sexual and gender-based violence committed in Ukraine by Russian authorities. The victims were girls and women aged from 16 to 83 years old. Victims reported rapes at gunpoint and threats to kill or hurt victims or their relatives. Specific findings of incidents of sexual and other gender-based violence related to the arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Ukrainian civilians by the Russian Federation can be found in the **2024 report of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe on the Moscow Mechanism**.

In the EU context, Eurojust has established the **Core International Crimes Evidence Database**, to which the competent national authorities can submit evidence for preservation and analysis.

To complement data on women's experiences, the survey asked women about the concerns they had had related to safety while in Ukraine, to further examine the psychological burden the war put on women. Similar to the questions on experiences, women were asked about their fears while living in Ukraine after the start of the current war (24 February 2022). A majority of the women in the survey had been very worried about experiencing bombing (artillery fire, missiles, drone attacks – 80 %) or being physically assaulted (64 %) or sexually assaulted (60 %) by Russian troops.

Regarding the concerns of respondents with children, 80 % were very worried that their children would be injured in the war. More specifically, two in three respondents who had daughters (66 %) were very worried that their daughter could be sexually assaulted by Russian troops. At the same time, 61 % of women with sons were very worried that their son could be sexually assaulted by Russian troops.

All women in the survey – including those with children and those with no children – were asked how worried they were about their family members' and relatives' well-being. Most women were very worried about their family members and relatives being injured because of the war (75 %). More specifically, 58 % were very worried about their female family members and

relatives being sexually assaulted by Russian troops, and 48 % were very worried about male family members and relatives being sexually assaulted by Russian troops.

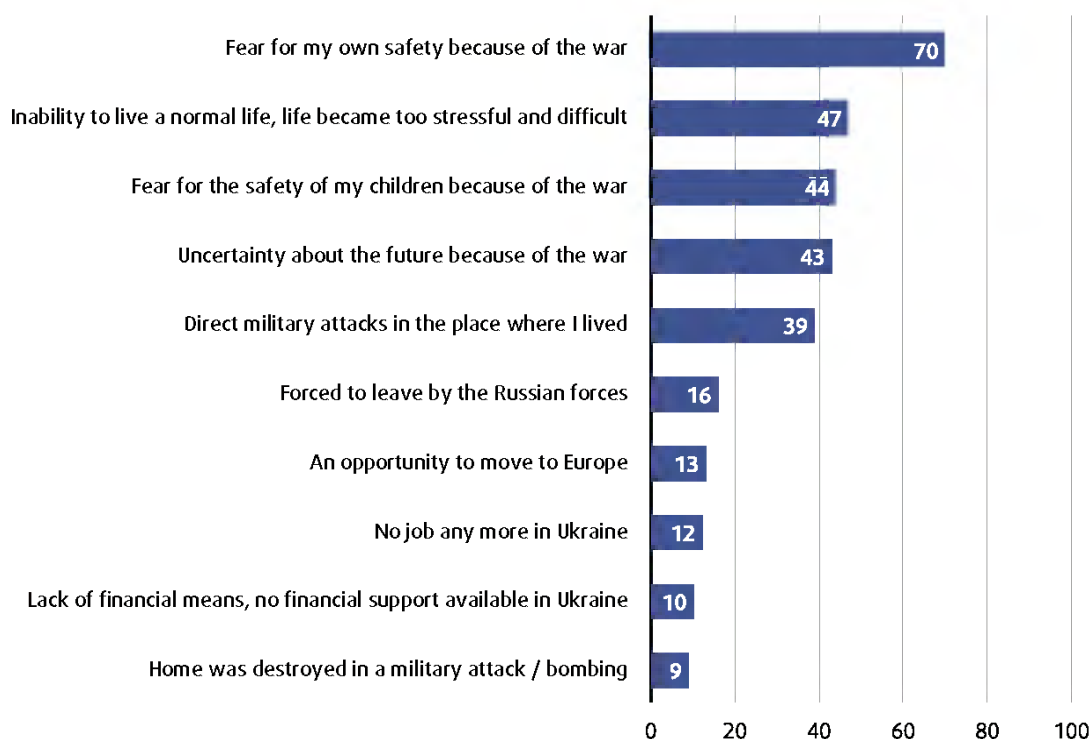
## 1.2. LEAVING UKRAINE

When asked why they had decided to leave Ukraine, most women indicated that they had feared for their own safety because of the war. This was followed by not being able to live their life as usual or life having become too stressful and difficult, and then fearing for the safety of their children because of the war (Figure 2). The decision to leave Ukraine should also be seen in the light of the results presented in Figure 1, which showed that around three in four women had needed to seek shelter from Russian military attacks. In the survey, when answering the question concerning their reasons for leaving Ukraine, women could indicate one or more reasons.

**I had to leave because it was very scary. My children's psyche collapsed, they were very frightened. And I set a goal for myself to leave at any cost, to save their lives. We moved to Czechia ... I really like it here. Here I met my husband ... And somehow it happened that I also gave birth to a little child here – I have a girl and two older boys.**

Interview in Czechia, woman aged 35–59

FIGURE 2: REASONS FOR LEAVING UKRAINE (%)



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

After concluding that they could no longer stay in Ukraine, some women already had in mind the Member State where they wanted to go, while for others the decision concerning their destination was made during the journey from Ukraine or even later. In the survey, women were asked what had made them decide to come to the Member State where they were now residing, instead of going somewhere else. The reasons were in general similar across the three Member States, with the most important factors being family networks, safety and being near Ukraine (Table 4).

Notes:  
 Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States (n = 1 223). Respondents could indicate one or more reasons for leaving Ukraine; therefore, the sum of the results exceeds 100 %.

▶  
Notes:

Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States, by Member State ( $n = 411$  in Czechia,  $n = 400$  in Germany,  $n = 412$  in Poland). In addition to the reasons shown in the table, in the survey, women could indicate that they had had other reasons for choosing their current Member State of residence, such as the services it offers, the language it uses or previous visits to the Member State. Each of these other reasons was selected by less than 10 % of respondents.

**It was difficult in the sense that I didn't know where I was going ... And why exactly to Czechia? I was leaving Ukraine with my mum and the little ones because my mum has a cousin living in Czechia, and we knew that if something went wrong, they would help us.**

Interview in Czechia, woman aged 35–59

**TABLE 4: MOST COMMON REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE DESTINATION MEMBER STATE, BY MEMBER STATE OF RESIDENCE (%)**

|   | Czechia | Germany | Poland |
|---|---------|---------|--------|
| Relatives or friends reside in the Member State | 60      | 49      | 39     |
| Consider it a safe place                        | 19      | 22      | 28     |
| Proximity to Ukraine                            | 17      | 12      | 46     |

Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

While the war resulted in women having to leave Ukraine, 50 % have visited Ukraine since they left, with more women from Czechia (67 %) than Germany (44 %) or Poland (43 %) having visited Ukraine after their departure. Among women who had gone back to visit Ukraine, 45 % had done so once, 48 % two to five times and 6 % more than five times (the remaining respondents did not provide this information in the survey).

One important reason why women had decided to visit Ukraine despite the ongoing war is the fact that 88 % have one or more family members still in Ukraine. This includes various family members such as parents or grandparents (65 %), siblings (40 %) or adult children (12 %).

15 % of women indicated that they were responsible for caring for an adult family member – due to the person's old age or for other reasons – including both dependants living with the women in the EU and those remaining in Ukraine. These results concerning care responsibilities may partly explain why some women decide to visit Ukraine despite safety concerns, although there can also be other reasons, such as needing to access services available in Ukraine (including healthcare services), as will be discussed later in this report in Section 2.4. Some women may also visit Ukraine to spend time with their intimate partners, particularly as Ukraine has placed restrictions on men travelling abroad since the start of the current war.

When asked what they would do when the war ends, two in five women (40 %) indicated that they would stay in the EU in their current Member State of residence. 23 % said that they would return to Ukraine, and 33 % did not know, at the time of the survey, what they would do.

# 2

## SUPPORT AND SAFETY

- ★ Most women from Ukraine were staying in an apartment or house (60 %) or in a shared house with a host family, friends or other people (25 %). Only a small number of women were living in a hotel (6 %) or a reception centre or shelter (5 %).
- ★ 13 % indicated not feeling safe in the neighbourhood where they lived, while 10 % did not feel safe in their accommodation and 8 % said that – in the place where they lived – someone controlled their actions and movements in an intrusive way.
- ★ 45 % of women from Ukraine were in paid employment, with more women reporting this in Czechia (54 %) and Poland (50 %) than Germany (20 %). For 5 % of women, their paid employment was a continuation of work they already had before arriving in their Member State of residence (e.g. teleworking for a Ukrainian employer).
- ★ Only around one in five women from Ukraine (21 %) were able to get by (make ends meet) easily or fairly easily on their household income. Most women could only make ends meet with difficulty (39 %) or with some difficulty (40 %).
- ★ 82 % had been in a situation where they needed healthcare services since arriving in their Member State of residence, such as a general practitioner (GP), reproductive health care, dental care, mental health services, other medical care or a specialised doctor. However, out of the women who said that they had needed healthcare, 34 % had not received it.
- ★ 73 % of women indicated that they avoided certain places or situations due to the fear of being physically or sexually assaulted in their Member State of residence.

Following the sometimes complicated and treacherous journey out of Ukraine and after arriving in the EU, women were no longer exposed to bombing or shelling. Nevertheless, since their arrival, they have had to cope with numerous challenges, such as finding housing, work or educational opportunities in a different country while uncertainty about their future and the war against Ukraine persists.



Most women interviewed had received temporary protection, which is a special status provided for under EU law for displaced people who arrive in large numbers. Temporary protection, as regulated in the TPD, grants the holder a residence permit and a broad set of rights. In this context, the TPD's provisions reflect some of the key principles of the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which all 27 Member States are parties. The covenant requires states to take reasonable measures to ensure the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights for all individuals within their territory, regardless of the individual's nationality or legal status.

The benefits flowing from the TPD's temporary protection are limited in time. Initially activated in March 2022, temporary protection has been extended a few times, with the most recent council implementing decision (**Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/1460**) on the matter extending it to March 2027. With **Recommendation C/2025/5129**, the Council of the European Union has started to prepare for the end of temporary protection, as described in the key findings and FRA opinions in this report.

This chapter describes the experiences of women as regards the enjoyment of the economic and social rights set out in Articles 12 and 13 of the TPD. It also examines differences between the three survey Member States in terms of women's ability to make ends meet and their access to healthcare services, including reasons for unmet healthcare needs.

Overall, the combination of access to economic and social rights and the level of assistance provided have significantly reduced hardship for displaced women once they have found safety in the EU. At the same time, support has not always been provided in a manner that made them feel safe. In addition, as further described in Chapter 4, in a few instances, women have

**I tried not to interfere and did not leave my room so that everyone [could] go to the toilet, shower, eat and leave. I couldn't find a place in this small apartment where I could relax in peace.**

Interview in Poland, woman aged 35–59

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experienced violence by those from whom they had expected to receive support, such as aid workers or medical personnel.

## 2.1. ACCOMMODATION

Under Article 13(1) of the TPD, persons enjoying temporary protection must 'have access to suitable accommodation or, if necessary, receive the means to obtain housing'.

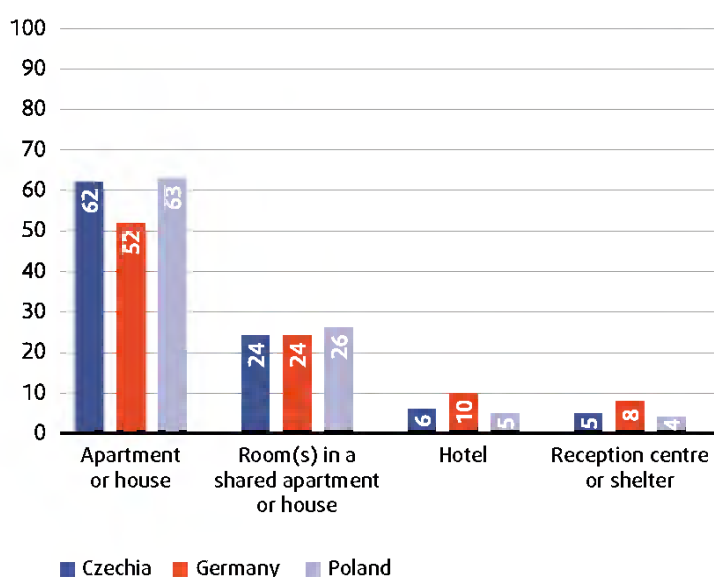
For many women arriving in the EU from Ukraine, finding accommodation was among their priorities. Some faced difficulties in the accommodation they found or that was assigned to them.

The Czech Public Defender of Rights has identified cases where people from Ukraine with temporary protection have not been able to access accommodation, making them vulnerable to exploitation <sup>(1)</sup>. In Poland, many public accommodation centres that opened after the start of the war have since shut down, and state support for private accommodation was repealed in May 2024 <sup>(2)</sup>.

Some 8 % of women had experienced potentially exploitative offers of accommodation after they arrived in their Member State of residence, with this being reported by 11 % in Poland, 6 % in Czechia and 1 % in Germany. Women specified that what made the offer feel uncomfortable or suspicious most often had to do with being asked to do a lot of work in exchange for accommodation (30 %), not trusting the person making the offer (24 %) or not being allowed to see the accommodation in advance (22 %). The results concerning potentially exploitative offers related to housing, transport and employment are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

At the time when the survey interviews were conducted, most women from Ukraine were staying in an apartment or house (60 %) or in a shared apartment/house with a host family, friends or other people (25 %). These results suggest that many women have been able to transition from temporary accommodation, such as reception centres or shelters, to a more regular type of accommodation. However, a small number of women interviewed were living in a hotel (6 %) or a reception centre or shelter (5 %). **Figure 3** presents the results concerning the type of accommodation women were living in, at the time of the survey, by their Member State of residence.

FIGURE 3: TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION, BY MEMBER STATE (%)



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.



Note:

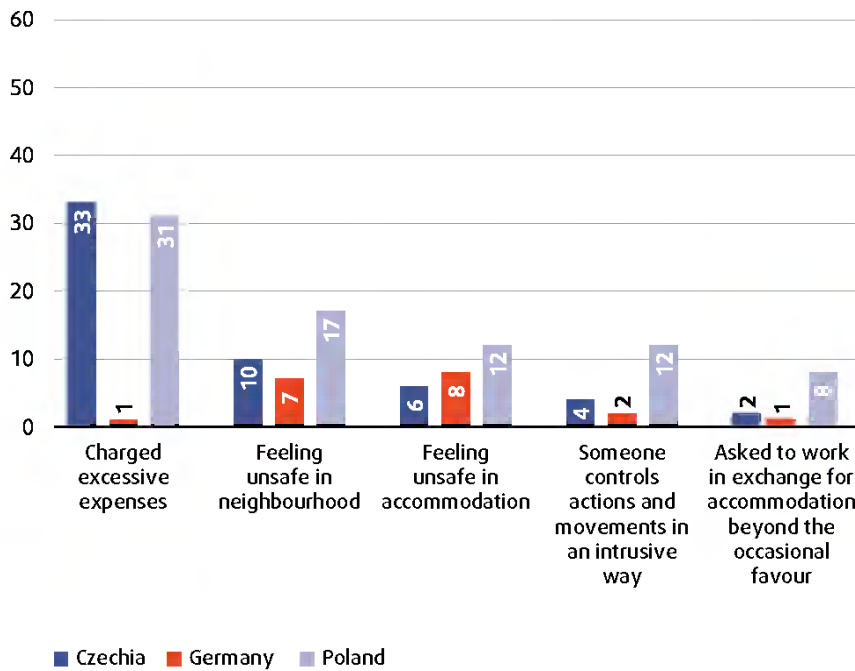
Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States, by Member State ( $n = 411$  in Czechia,  $n = 400$  in Germany,  $n = 412$  in Poland).

Housing costs often take up a large share of people's income, and this can be the case especially when needing to find housing that is available right away, instead of being able to take the time to compare different options. Therefore, while housing is an essential need, the costs entailed can also be a significant stressor.

Large discrepancies can be noted among Member States in the rates of women who were living in their accommodation without having to pay for it. Overall, one in five women from Ukraine (21 %) in the three survey Member States did not need to contribute towards their rental costs; more specifically, 71 % in Germany did not, but only a minority of women in Czechia and Poland did not (8 % in each). Just over 1 in 10 women (11 %) said that they did housework or cared for children or older people in exchange for receiving housing, with 23 % of women in Poland reporting this compared with 6 % in Germany and 1 % in Czechia.

A number of women had experienced issues with their accommodation. First and foremost, close to 1 in 3 women in Czechia and Poland considered that they were being charged excessive expenses, while around 1 in 10 did not feel safe in their neighbourhood (13 %) or in their accommodation (10 %), or were being controlled with respect to what they did and where they went (8 %) (Figure 4). In the survey, women could indicate one or more issues when asked about any problems they faced with their accommodation. Notably, in Germany only very few women indicated that they were being charged excessive expenses related to their housing. This should be seen in the light of the results concerning how women cover their housing costs. Namely, whereas just over 1 in 10 (12 %) women living in Germany pay housing costs fully themselves, rates are much higher in Czechia and Poland, where most women pay for their housing fully from their own resources (71 % and 72 %, respectively, in the two Member States). This may mean, for example, that most women living in Germany have their housing costs paid by government programmes available to support women from Ukraine or that housing is provided by charitable organisations or individuals who privately want to support displaced people from Ukraine.

**FIGURE 4: PROBLEMS THAT WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED CONCERNING THEIR ACCOMMODATION IN THE EU, BY MEMBER STATE (%)**



Source: FRA’s survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

Notes:

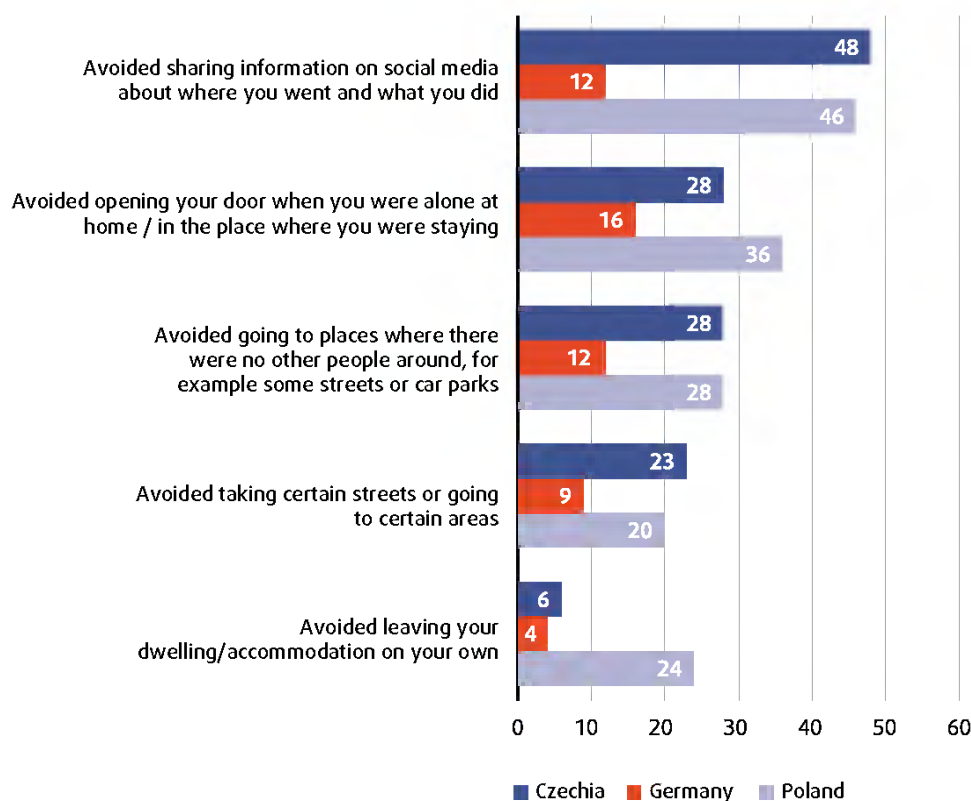
Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States, by Member State (n = 411 in Czechia, n = 400 in Germany, n = 412 in Poland).

Women also responded to questions about whether they avoid certain situations and people in the area where they live in an effort to feel safer. Adopting such an approach may, however, limit the extent to which women are able to participate in activities and access services. In the 12 months before the interviews (conducted between March and June 2024), 73 % of women indicated that they had avoided certain places or situations due to the fear of being physically or sexually assaulted in their Member State of residence, with more women in Czechia (82 %) and Poland (79 %) than in Germany (45 %) indicating this.

Out of the places or situations that women may decide to avoid due to concern for their safety, the most common include avoiding sharing information on social media about where they go and what they do, although differences among Member States were observed (Figure 5). Overall, women living in Germany are less likely to resort to various avoidance measures to help ensure their safety. Women living in Poland more often indicated that they avoided leaving their accommodation on their own due to safety concerns than women living in Czechia and Germany.

Some of the questions asked in the survey concerning situations and places women may avoid due to safety concerns were also included in FRA’s survey on violence against women in the general population (results published in 2014). For example, 16 % of women in the general population in Czechia and 8 % in Poland indicated that they avoided taking certain streets or going to certain areas, compared with 23 % of the women from Ukraine in Czechia and 20 % in Poland. For Germany, the results were similar in the two surveys, with 6 % of women in the general population avoiding certain streets or areas compared with 9 % of women from Ukraine.

**FIGURE 5: ACTIONS WOMEN HAVE TAKEN ('ALWAYS' OR 'OFTEN') DUE TO THE FEAR OF BEING PHYSICALLY OR SEXUALLY ASSAULTED IN THE MEMBER STATE WHERE THEY RESIDE, BY MEMBER STATE (%)**



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

## 2.2. WORK

Under Article 12 of the TPD, Member States must allow 'persons enjoying temporary protection to engage in employed or self-employed activities, subject to rules applicable to the profession'.

After arriving in their Member State of residence, some of the interviewed women started to look for employment and some were able to continue their jobs by working remotely. Women from Ukraine were able to work in the EU thanks to their temporary protection status, which grants immediate access to the labour market, whereas asylum applicants may have to wait for up to nine months under Article 15 of the **Reception Conditions Directive** (Directive 2013/33/EU; as of mid 2026, under the recast Reception Conditions Directive (**Directive (EU) 2024/1346**), this period will be reduced to six months).

At the time of the survey, 45 % of women from Ukraine were in paid employment, with more women reporting this in Czechia (54 %) and Poland (50 %) than Germany (20 %). For 5 % of women, their paid employment was a continuation of work they already had before arriving in the EU. For example, this could involve online or remote work for an employer based in Ukraine, or self-employment. These results can partly explain why a notable share of women in the survey were able to pay for their housing, fully or partly, although government support or other assistance may also have contributed to this.

Note:  
Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States, by Member State (n = 411 in Czechia, n = 400 in Germany, n = 412 in Poland).

While the work provided them with an income and a way to integrate into society, some women had experienced various problems related to their employment. These problems could be due to the type of employment that women felt compelled to accept to cover their costs or due to attitudes towards women from Ukraine (women could indicate one or more issues in the survey). Chapter 3 describes experiences of labour law violations and exploitation.

### 2.3. MEANS OF SUBSISTENCE

Article 13(2) of the TPD obliges Member States to ‘make provision for persons enjoying temporary protection to receive necessary assistance in terms of social welfare and means of subsistence, if they do not have sufficient resources’.

Only around one in five women from Ukraine (21 %) in the survey were able to get by financially (make ends meet) easily or fairly easily on their household income. Most women could only make ends meet with difficulty (39 %) or with some difficulty (40 %). Looking at these results by Member State, women from Ukraine living in Germany have not faced as many problems with making ends meet as women living in Czechia or Poland (Table 5). FRA’s *Fundamental Rights Report – 2024* noted, based on information from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a further problem affecting household finances: some displaced people who have returned to the EU after visiting Ukraine have faced difficulties with access to social protection benefits and with their legal status <sup>(3)</sup>.

**TABLE 5: ABILITY TO MAKE ENDS MEET WITH HOUSEHOLD’S INCOME, BY MEMBER STATE (%)**

|                | With difficulty | With some difficulty | Fairly easily | Easily |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|--------|
| <b>Czechia</b> | 42              | 42                   | 11            | 5      |
| <b>Germany</b> | 14              | 46                   | 32            | 7      |
| <b>Poland</b>  | 39              | 40                   | 10            | 6      |

*Source:* FRA’s survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.



Note:

Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States, by Member State (*n* = 411 in Czechia, *n* = 400 in Germany, *n* = 412 in Poland).

With these numbers, it does not come as a surprise that more women interviewed in Czechia (46 %) and Poland (37 %) had needed to borrow money to cover their expenses (e.g. rent, mortgage, utility bills, transport, food, clothing) than women interviewed in Germany (17 %). Among the women who had needed to borrow money for their basic expenses, 6 % had experienced pressure to do something that they were not comfortable with in order to pay back their debt. These negative experiences were more common among women living in Poland (14 %) and Czechia (8 %) than those living in Germany (2 %).

## 2.4. HEALTHCARE

Under Article 13(2) of the TPD, persons enjoying temporary protection are entitled to medical care. This should include at least emergency care and essential treatment of illness, and the relevant provision should be read in the light of developments in EU asylum law. Article 22(1) of the **Reception Conditions Directive** (Directive (EU) 2024/1346) – which applies to asylum applicants – clarifies that essential treatment of illnesses includes treatment for serious mental disorders and also sexual and reproductive health care ‘which is essential in addressing a serious physical condition’.

Having arrived in the EU, many women from Ukraine were confronted with a different healthcare system than the one they had been used to. EIGE has reported on differences among Member States concerning temporary protection beneficiaries’ access to healthcare (4). EIGE’s report also indicates a lack of guidelines and training on responding to the needs of victims of conflict-related sexual violence.

Out of all the women interviewed in the current survey, 82 % had needed healthcare services since arriving in their Member State of residence. Out of the women who had needed healthcare, 34 % said that they had not received it, with more women in Czechia (48 %) and Poland (34 %) lacking necessary care than in Germany (17 %).

Examining the answers by type of healthcare shows that, since arriving in the EU from Ukraine, 61 % of women have found themselves in need of prescribed medications, 55 % dental care, 45 % reproductive health care, 28 % mental health care (psychologist, psychotherapist or psychiatrist) and 64 % other medical care such as a GP or specialised doctor.

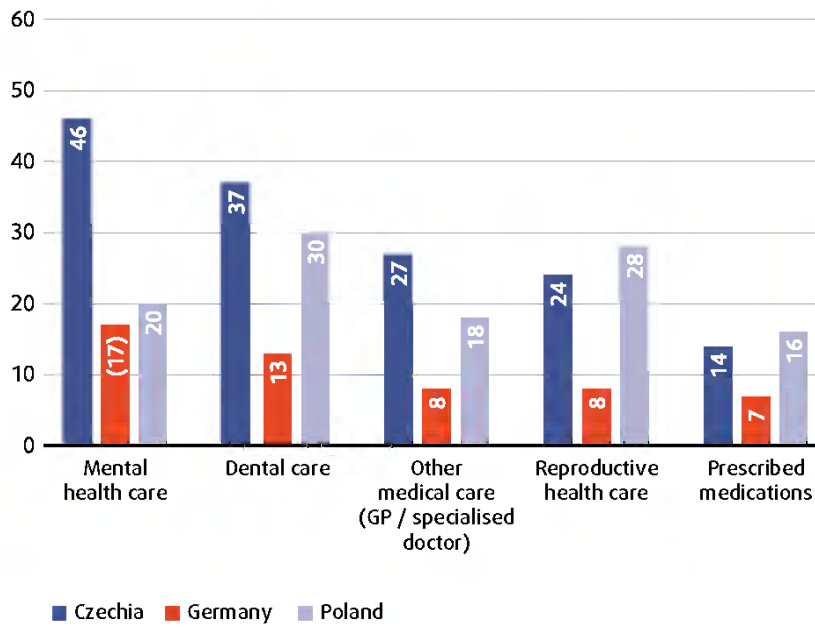
Among those who indicated that their medical care needs had not been met in their Member State of residence, 27 % had not received mental health care and 23 % had faced problems with obtaining the reproductive health care they needed. Some 19 % had faced problems with obtaining other medical care, like consultations with a GP or specialised doctor, while 14 % noted that they had been unable to obtain the prescribed medications they needed. In addition, 28 % had had problems accessing dental care.

Examining these results by Member State shows that women living in Germany have not been confronted with unmet medical needs to the same degree as women living in Czechia or Poland (**Figure 6**).

**It was very difficult emotionally and physically. I was absolutely without things, because we fled for a couple of days, we thought that it would all be over. ... A backpack of documents, and one pair of socks and a change of underwear. ... And this was from April to September, early September. In fact, it was very difficult for me for five months. That is, I was only provided with housing ... but I went for free lunches. It was just so humiliating. ... I didn’t plan for a war to start, or for me to have a financial cushion. ... So, I worked and earned money. ... And all these five months I just cried, I couldn’t believe that this was happening at all, that this was possible.**

Interview in Poland, woman aged 35–59

**FIGURE 6: WOMEN WHO HAVE NOT RECEIVED NEEDED MEDICAL ATTENTION, BY TYPE OF MEDICAL CARE AND MEMBER STATE (%)**



Source: FRA’s survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

Note:

Out of women who did not receive needed medical attention, by Member State (number of respondents analysed varies depending on the health care service needed; *n* = 129–326 in Czechia, *n* = 39–270 in Germany, *n* = 155–247 in Poland). Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Therefore, results based on 20–49 unweighted observations in a group total are noted in parentheses. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

Some of the unmet medical needs, such as those related to reproductive health care or other medical care, such as consulting a GP, would, in many instances, fall under those medical services that the TPD requires Member States to cover. However, others – such as dental care – would not necessarily be included among those services, except in cases requiring emergency care.

**TABLE 6: REASONS WHY WOMEN DID NOT RECEIVE HEALTHCARE SERVICES THEY NEEDED, BY TYPE OF SERVICE (%)**

|  | Reproductive health care | Mental health care | Prescribed medicines | Dental care | Other medical care |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| I have/had no health insurance and was worried about the cost        | 10                       | 18                 | 16                   | 18          | 15                 |
| My health insurance didn't cover the treatment/service that I needed | 12                       | 7                  | 13                   | 32          | 17                 |
| The treatment/service was not available                              | 18                       | 21                 | 28                   | 17          | 14                 |
| I could not afford healthcare  | 9                        | 16                 | 8                    | 40          | 20                 |
| Language difficulties  | 32                       | 30                 | 20                   | 20          | 24                 |
| I didn't know where to go / whom to contact                          | 35                       | 44                 | 25                   | 17          | 17                 |
| I was refused treatment  | 8                        | 7                  | 10                   | 9           | 10                 |
| I was unfairly treated because I'm a foreigner                       | 8                        | 1                  | 4                    | 3           | 10                 |
| Long waiting times for the treatment/service that I needed           | 34                       | 12                 | 14                   | 21          | 47                 |
| I do not trust the local healthcare providers                        | 12                       | 3                  | 4                    | 17          | 4                  |
| Other reason   | 5                        | 13                 | 16                   | 10          | 3                  |
| Prefer not to say  | 3                        | 0                  | 0                    | 1           | 0                  |
| Don't know   | 0                        | 3                  | 1                    | 0           | 0                  |

Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

However, obstacles are manifold. Among women who did not receive the reproductive health care they needed, around one in three did not know where to go or whom to contact (35 %) or experienced language difficulties (32 %) (Table 6). A similar pattern was found for mental health care, as more than one third of women who did not receive this care despite needing it did not know where to go or whom to contact (44 %), while 30 % struggled with language difficulties. Women who did not get access to their prescribed medications most often noted that their treatment was not available (28 %) or they did not know where to go or whom to contact (25 %). Regarding services such as those of a GP or specialised doctor, nearly half of women were unable to access the service due to long waiting times (47 %), while others experienced language difficulties (24 %).

Based on the results of the 2019 European Health Interview Survey, 4.6 % of women in the EU-27 (general population) have unmet needs for mental health care services due to financial reasons<sup>(5)</sup>. In the current FRA survey, 16 % of women from Ukraine with unmet mental health care needs indicated that they had not received care due to not being able to afford it, and 18 % said that they were not insured and therefore had worried about the cost.

Another measure of women's health in the survey comes from a question that asked whether women had experienced limitations in carrying out activities that people usually do, for reasons such as a long-term health problem or a disability. This question is often used in surveys as a proxy measure for disability, and it can be used to disaggregate various other survey results to analyse the experiences of people with disabilities compared with those without disabilities. Out of all the women interviewed, more than half did not experience any activity limitation (57 %) while nearly one in three women (27 %) experienced some degree of activity limitation and 13 % experienced severe activity limitation. The results show that activity limitations are common among women from Ukraine represented in the survey. In comparison, Eurostat

▲  
Note:

Out of women who did not receive medical attention they needed, by type of service (reproductive health care,  $n = 114$ ; mental health care,  $n = 78$ ; prescribed medicines,  $n = 90$ ; dental care,  $n = 197$ ; other medical care,  $n = 150$ ). In the survey, respondents could indicate one or more reasons for not receiving medical care; therefore, the sum of the categories exceeds 100 %.

data show that 7.1 % of women in the EU experienced activity limitations to some or a severe degree in 2024 <sup>(6)</sup>.

The activity limitations that women from Ukraine experience may include limitations that first occurred before the start of the war, as well as limitations that emerged after the war started, including those caused by the war. Out of the women who experienced some or severe activity limitation, nearly one in three women (30 %) reported that their activity limitation had been caused by the war, while almost one in two women (45 %) had experienced a worsening of their activity limitation due to the war.

## Endnotes

- (1) Public Defender of Rights of Czechia, *Zpráva o šetření – § 18* [Investigation Report – Section 18], Brno, 2024.
- (2) European Council on Refugees and Exiles, *Temporary Protection Poland – 2024 update*, Brussels, pp. 42–43.
- (3) FRA, *Fundamental Rights Report – 2024*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024.
- (4) EIGE, *Women Fleeing the War: Access to sexual and reproductive healthcare in the EU under the Temporary Protection Directive*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024.
- (5) Eurostat, *'Self-reported unmet needs for specific health care-related services due to financial reasons by sex, age and educational attainment level'*, data code hlth\_ehis\_un2e, data updated 24 February 2022, accessed 23 October 2025.
- (6) Eurostat, *'Level of disability (activity limitation) by sex, age and income quintile'*, data code hlth\_silc\_12, data updated 8 January 2026, accessed 20 January 2026.

# 3.

## EXPERIENCES OF EXPLOITATION AND POTENTIALLY EXPLOITATIVE OFFERS

- ★ 36 % of women who were working at the time of the interviews or had worked since arriving in their Member State of residence indicated that they had had to work without a contract or with a contract that did not cover all their working hours.
- ★ 29 % had had to work very long hours, 24 % had been underpaid or not paid at all for work they had done and 12 % had been prohibited from taking any breaks during their working day.
- ★ Nearly one in four women from Ukraine (24 %) had encountered potentially exploitative offers of transport, housing or work.
- ★ Women who arrived soon after the start of the war were more likely to have faced potentially exploitative offers (26 %) than women who arrived later (15 %).
- ★ 8 % of women had encountered potentially exploitative offers of accommodation after arriving in their Member State of residence.
- ★ 15 % of women indicated that they had been offered work involving tasks and conditions that made them feel uncomfortable or suspicious about the offer.
- ★ Among those women who had received suspicious job offers, 13 % suspected that the offer involved an expectation to do something of a sexual nature in exchange for work, while 4 % had encountered people who wanted to take their identification documents away in return for the work.
- ★ More than one in five women from Ukraine (22 %) who had encountered potentially exploitative offers of transport, housing or employment had specifically come across offers that involved an expectation of sexual favours or taking away their passport or other identification documents, which can indicate attempted trafficking in human beings.
- ★ More women in Poland who had encountered potentially exploitative offers of transport, housing or employment had been made offers with characteristics of trafficking in human beings (25 %), while fewer women in Germany (18 %) and Czechia (17 %) had been exposed to such offers.
- ★ Of all women in the survey, 5 % had encountered offers of transport, housing or employment with indications of attempted trafficking in human beings. This includes people who wanted to take away their passport or other identification documents and offers where women suspected that they were being asked to do something sexual in exchange.

This chapter covers experiences of labour exploitation, other exploitative offers, and indications of trafficking in human beings.

Under Article 12 of the TPD, temporary protection beneficiaries who work must be treated in the same way as nationals as regards remuneration, access to social security systems and other conditions of employment. Working conditions that fall short of national standards amount to exploitation. As described in a joint guide for labour inspectors published by FRA and the European Labour Authority in 2025, labour exploitation is a continuum ranging from mild labour law violations, which may lead to administrative or civil law sanctions, to more severe violations, which can entail criminal sanctions and, in extreme cases, amount to forced labour <sup>(1)</sup>.



According to Article 18(2) of the **Anti-trafficking Directive** (Directive 2011/36/EU) (amended by **Directive (EU) 2024/1712**), Member States must take appropriate action to raise awareness and reduce the risk of people, especially children and people with disabilities, becoming victims of trafficking in human beings. Awareness-raising activities must be gender-sensitive.

According to Eurostat data (October 2025) covering 2013 to 2023 (i.e. 11 years), Ukrainians are among the top five non-EU nationalities of victims of trafficking registered in the EU <sup>(2)</sup>. Available data show a relatively small number of confirmed trafficking incidents. Trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation are highly likely to be under-reported.

The EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator has acknowledged that Member States' coordinated efforts to protect people fleeing from Ukraine have contributed to increased detection of victims of trafficking <sup>(3)</sup>. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime also notes that the activation of temporary protection

and targeted anti-trafficking measures has reduced risks of exploitation and trafficking (4).

This chapter starts by examining the problems women have faced at work, such as exploitative working conditions. The chapter then moves on to describe incidents where women have encountered offers of an exploitative nature with respect to transport, housing and work and then to situations that included indications of trafficking in human beings. Women’s experiences – as shared in the survey – show that cases of exploitation and trafficking have probably been averted thanks to their alertness regarding the risks, which made them carefully consider offers received and the potential motives behind them.

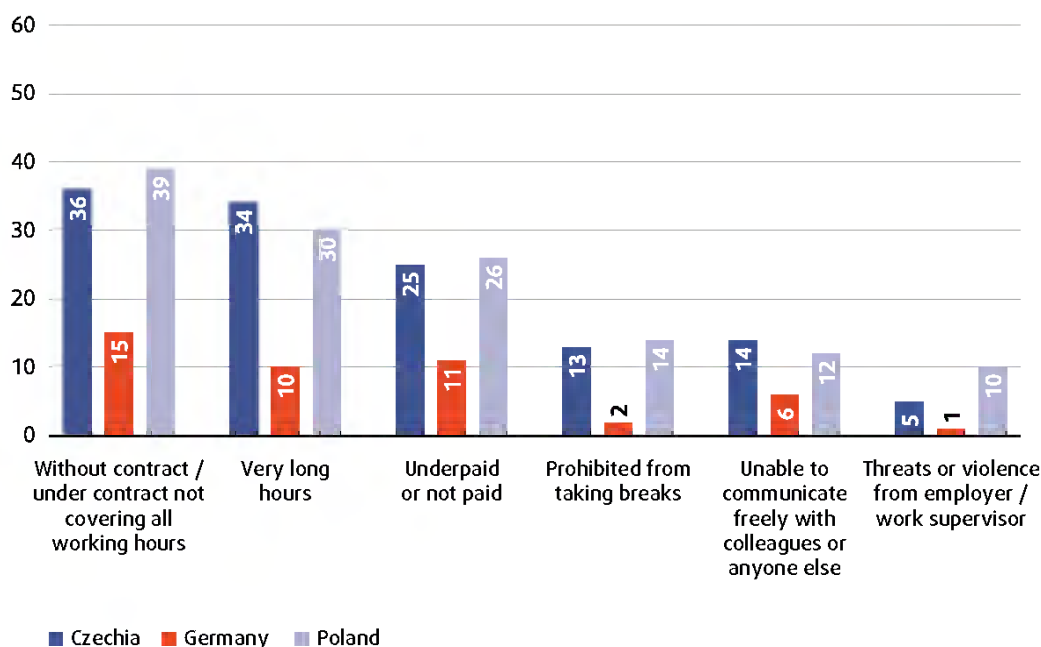
### 3.1. LABOUR EXPLOITATION

A notable share of the women from Ukraine who had done paid work since arriving in the EU reported problems. These problems were most often experienced by women who worked in the accommodation and food service sector (25 %), manufacturing (14 %) or the wholesale and retail trade or other related services (11 %).

Overall, 36 % of women who had done paid work since arriving in their Member State of residence (including those who were working at the time of the interviews) indicated that they had had to work without a contract or with a contract that did not cover all their working hours. Some 29 % had had to work very long hours, whereas 24 % had been underpaid or not paid at all for work they had done. Finally, 12 % had been prohibited from taking any breaks during their working day. Figure 7 presents the results by Member State.

Note:  
Out of women who had done paid work since arriving in their Member State of residence, including those who were working at the time of the interviews (n = 720).

FIGURE 7: PROBLEMS THAT WOMEN HAVE FACED AT WORK, BY MEMBER STATE (%)



Source: FRA’s survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

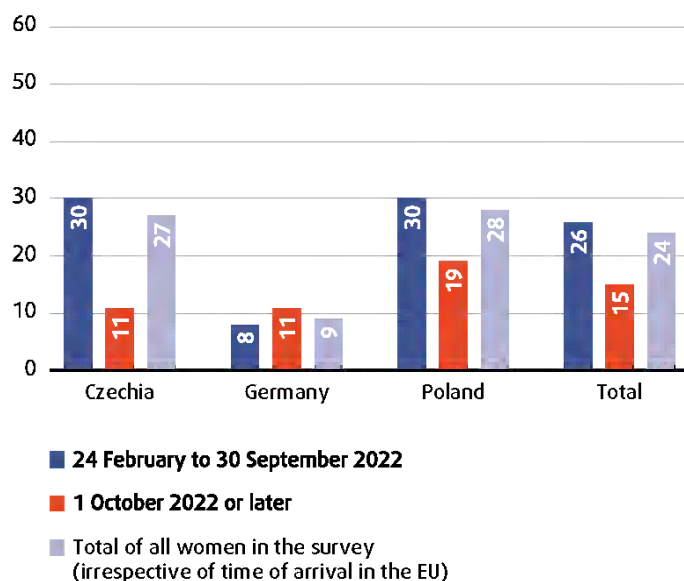
When asked if, since arriving in one of the survey Member States, they had been offered work involving tasks and conditions that made them feel uncomfortable or suspicious, 15 % of women indicated that they had received such offers. These offers were more commonly encountered by women in Czechia (21 %) and Poland (16 %) than in Germany (6 %). These results are discussed in more detail in Section 3.2.

Women who had encountered an offer of work that made them feel uncomfortable or suspicious indicated most frequently that the employment offer involved extremely low wages (39 %), that there had been no written contract (38 %) or that the offer entailed other unusual employment conditions (28 %).

### 3.2. WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES RELATED TO POTENTIALLY EXPLOITATIVE OFFERS

In this survey, women were asked whether they had received offers of transport, housing or employment that made them feel suspicious or uncomfortable. Women who had received such offers could further specify the reasons why these offers had seemed suspicious. Nearly one in four women (24 %) had encountered potentially exploitative offers (Figure 8). The experiences differed across the survey Member States, as 27 % of women in Czechia and 28 % of women in Poland had encountered potentially exploitative offers, but only 9 % of women in Germany had.

**FIGURE 8: WOMEN WHO HAVE ENCOUNTERED POTENTIALLY EXPLOITATIVE OFFERS, BY TIME OF ARRIVAL IN THE EU AND THE MEMBER STATE OF RESIDENCE AT THE TIME OF THE INTERVIEW (%)**



Note:

Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States, by Member State ( $n = 411$  in Czechia,  $n = 400$  in Germany,  $n = 412$  in Poland;  $n = 1\,223$  in total). The results shown in the bar chart are a total of potentially exploitative offers that women encountered related to transport, housing and employment.

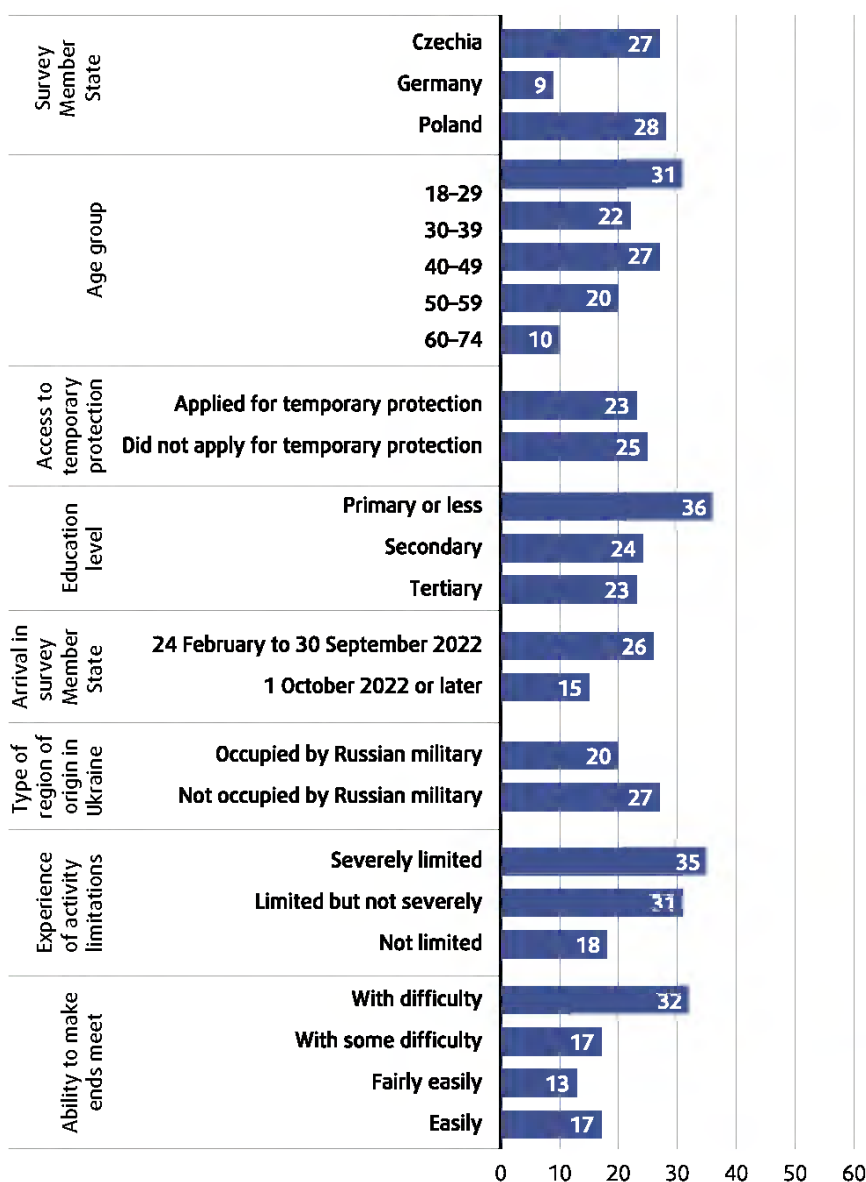
Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

Considering possible reasons for these differences, it is relevant to note that the financial and other support provided by Member States to women arriving from Ukraine has varied among Member States, including in terms of the availability of childcare, language barriers, recognition of foreign qualifications and other administrative measures that can impact women's access to the labour market, housing and other areas of life <sup>(5)</sup>. The financial assistance received may have protected some women from the need to consider potentially ill-intentioned offers of employment or housing. However, some of the support and services that were initially provided to women from Ukraine have since been scaled back.

Women who arrived soon after the start of the war were more likely to have encountered potentially exploitative offers (26 %) than women who arrived later (15 %). These results may reflect how the situation has developed since the start of the war. For example, in the weeks after the start of the war on 24 February 2022, women who crossed the border from Ukraine to Poland, depending on the border crossing point, often encountered individuals offering to take them elsewhere in Poland or beyond <sup>(6)</sup>. Later on, the provision of transport at the border was better organised, with authorities registering transport providers.

With respect to suspicious or uncomfortable offers women had received, those in the youngest age group (in the survey, 18–29 years old) had been confronted with such offers at a higher rate. Other categories of displaced women who had received suspicious offers more often include women with severe activity limitations, women with no more than primary education and those only making ends meet with difficulty (**Figure 9**). These results may point to deliberate attempts to exploit women perceived as more vulnerable.

**FIGURE 9: ENCOUNTERING POTENTIALLY EXPLOITATIVE OFFERS, BY SELECTED SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN FROM UKRAINE (%)**



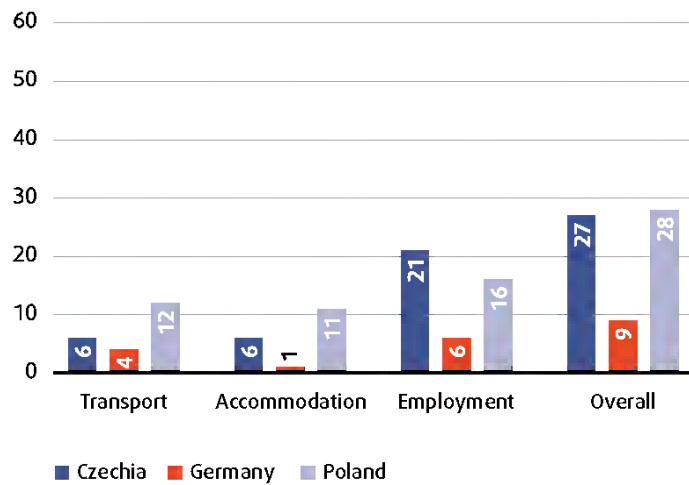
Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

Note:  
 ▲  
 Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States (n = 1 223).

While 24 % of women from Ukraine had received potentially exploitative offers, looking specifically at the context in which the offers were made, 9 % of women had encountered potentially exploitative offers of transport, 8 % of women had experienced such offers concerning accommodation and 15 % of women had experienced potentially exploitative offers of employment. The numbers were lowest for women surveyed in Germany and highest for women surveyed in Poland, except with regard to offers of employment, with the highest rate of suspicious offers found among women surveyed in Czechia (Figure 10). The rates at which women have encountered potentially exploitative offers may partly reflect the extent to which women settling into different Member States have been provided with social support and assistance. For example, women who have to find accommodation on the private housing market may be more likely to encounter a variety of offers,

including exploitative ones, than women whose housing is organised by the state or municipality. The survey did not ask women about their housing provider, but the results presented in Section 2.1 indicate that fewer women were paying their housing costs in full in Germany than women in Czechia and Poland, which may indicate a higher level of support provided in Germany, including the direct provision of housing by municipalities or the state. Women's access to employment may be similarly affected by various issues, such as other financial support available to them, access to childcare, language barriers, recognition of foreign qualifications and other administrative hurdles they need to overcome, which can differ among Member States.

**FIGURE 10: POTENTIALLY EXPLOITATIVE OFFERS, BY SURVEY MEMBER STATE AND THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE OFFERS WERE MADE (%)**



►  
Note:

Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States, by Member State (*n* = 411 in Czechia, *n* = 400 in Germany, *n* = 412 in Poland, *n* = 1 223 in total).

Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

In the survey, women were asked to specify why they considered certain offers of transport, housing or employment suspicious or uncomfortable. The list of reasons that respondents could use when answering the survey included two items with high potential for human trafficking for sexual exploitation or labour exploitation:

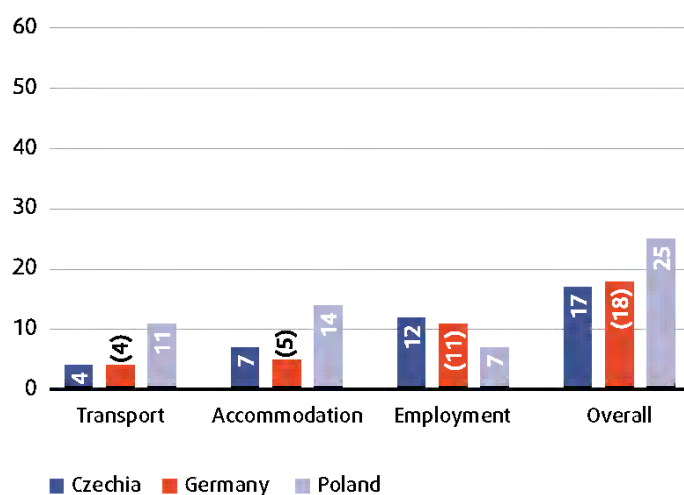
- I suspected that the offer involved an expectation of sexual favours in exchange for transport/housing/work;
- they wanted to take away my passport, identity card or other identification document.

More than one in five women from Ukraine (22 %) who had encountered potentially exploitative offers of transport, housing or employment had specifically come across offers involving one or both of these characteristics. These constitute indicators of exploitation and/or trafficking in human beings. This corresponds to 5 % of all women represented by the survey. More specifically, among the women who had encountered potentially exploitative offers related to work opportunities, 13 % suspected that the offer involved an expectation to do something of a sexual nature in exchange for work, while 4 % had encountered people who wanted to take their identification documents away in return for the work.

Considering that 2.5 million women (7) have arrived in the EU from Ukraine since the start of the war, the overall number of women in this group who have received suspicious or uncomfortable offers with characteristics of trafficking is substantial. Given the low number of recorded cases of trafficking, it can be assumed that in many cases women have avoided trafficking due to their awareness of the risk and their resilience, while some women may have ended up being trafficked or severely exploited but the cases have not come to the attention of the authorities.

More women in Poland had encountered potentially exploitative offers of any of the three types asked about in the survey – transport, housing or employment – with characteristics of trafficking in human beings (25 %) than in Germany (18 %) and Czechia (17 %). More women in Poland had received potentially exploitative offers of transport and housing with characteristics of trafficking in human beings than women surveyed in Czechia and Germany, whereas fewer women in Poland had encountered potentially exploitative offers of employment with characteristics of trafficking in human beings than women in Czechia and Germany (Figure 11).

**FIGURE 11: POTENTIALLY EXPLOITATIVE OFFERS WITH CHARACTERISTICS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS, OUT OF ALL OFFERS ENCOUNTERED, BY SURVEY MEMBER STATE AND CONTEXT IN WHICH THE OFFERS WERE MADE (%)**



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.



**Notes:**

Out of women who had encountered potentially exploitative offers, by Member State and the context in which the offers were made ( $n = 270$ ). Results based on a small number of responses are statistically less reliable. Therefore, results based on 20–49 unweighted observations in a group total are noted in parentheses. Results based on fewer than 20 unweighted observations in a group total are not published.

## Endnotes

- (1) FRA, *Detecting and Addressing Labour Exploitation – A guide for labour inspectors*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2025.
- (2) Eurostat, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the EU: Main findings 2013–2023 – 2025 edition*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2025.
- (3) **Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the progress made in the European Union in combating trafficking in human beings (fifth report)**, COM(2025) 8 final of 20 January 2025, p. 2.
- (4) United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Study on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in the context of the displacement caused by the war in Ukraine*, Vienna, 2025.
- (5) See, for example, Perchinig, B. and Perumadan, J., *New Perspectives: Labour market integration of displaced Ukrainian women – A comparative study of Austria, Germany, and Poland*, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, Vienna, 2025.
- (6) FRA, *'The war in Ukraine – Fundamental rights implications within the EU'*, Bulletin #1, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022.
- (7) Eurostat, *'Beneficiaries of temporary protection at the end of the month by citizenship, age and sex – Monthly data'*, data code migr\_asytspm, data updated 16 January 2026, accessed 20 January 2026.

# 4

## EXTENT AND NATURE OF VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED IN UKRAINE, DURING TRANSIT AND IN THE EU

- ★ One in four women (25 %) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the start of the current war on 24 February 2022.
- ★ Among the victims of physical and/or sexual violence, 39 % experienced the act(s) of violence in Ukraine, 9 % during their transit journey from Ukraine to the EU and 62 % in their current Member State of residence.
- ★ Focusing on women who experienced physical and/or sexual violence in Ukraine or during their transit journey, 34 % of them indicated that the perpetrator was a member of the Russian military.
- ★ Some 23 % of women have experienced one or more acts of physical violence (excluding threats) since the start of the current war – 27 % in Germany, 26 % in Czechia and 20 % in Poland.
- ★ When asked to describe the perpetrator(s) of physical violence in more detail, the women most often referred to the perpetrator(s) as 'someone they did not know' (43 %), 'someone they share or shared their housing with' (17 %) or a 'member of the Russian military' (17 %).
- ★ 6 % of interviewed women had experienced sexual violence since the beginning of the war. Among the victims of sexual violence, around one in five (21 %) described the perpetrator as someone from the Russian military, while 47 % of women indicated that the perpetrator was someone with whom they had a personal relationship (e.g. a person from work, a relative, someone the woman shares housing with). 22 % of women described the perpetrator of sexual violence as someone they did not know or were unable to identify.
- ★ 57 % of women who had experienced sexual violence indicated that it had happened in Ukraine, 52 % said that it had occurred in their current Member State of residence and 4 % said that it had happened during their journey from Ukraine to the EU (the results include women who had experienced violence in more than one situation).
- ★ 6 % of women who had experienced sexual violence indicated that a member of the police / border official was the perpetrator and 4 % indicated that a support service provider (e.g. a doctor, other healthcare worker or aid worker) was the perpetrator.
- ★ 32 % of women in the youngest age group (18–29 years) indicated that they had experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the start of the current war, which is above the average for all women interviewed.
- ★ Almost 9 in 10 women (88 %) who had experienced physical and/or sexual violence reported long-term psychological consequences, such as anxiety, feeling vulnerable or a loss of self-confidence.
- ★ 54 % of women had been physically attacked, harassed or otherwise treated in a negative manner by people in reaction to hearing them speaking Ukrainian in public. These experiences had occurred at a higher rate among women living in Czechia (67 %) and Poland (55 %) than among women living in Germany (31 %).

Violence against women violates core fundamental rights set out in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, including the right to human dignity and, in its most extreme form, the right to life. It is also an expression of inequality on the grounds of gender. During war, occupying troops often purposefully use physical and sexual violence against women to traumatise and disrupt society (see Chapter 1). The consequences of wartime sexual violence and rape can be far-reaching for victims and those close to them <sup>(1)</sup>. At the same time, war creates conditions that can escalate intimate partner violence, as research indicates <sup>(2)</sup>. Even when women are forced to live apart from their partner, psychological violence can continue, or start, due to a partner's insecurity and jealousy, alongside other factors.



EU and international law prohibits violence against women in very clear terms. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) <sup>(3)</sup> is the leading instrument in the wider European context and was ratified by the majority of Member States as well as the EU itself. According to the Istanbul Convention, states are obliged to criminalise, among other things, psychological violence (Article 33), stalking (Article 34), physical violence (Article 35), sexual violence including rape (Article 36) and sexual harassment (Article 40).

In addition to ratifying the Istanbul Convention, the EU has been actively engaged in efforts to combat and eradicate violence against women, including by adopting the VAW Directive. This directive introduces harmonised definitions of relevant offences (Articles 3-9) and penalties (Articles 10-11), including forms of cyberviolence (Articles 5-8), and strengthens victim support for women victims, alongside providing for enhanced data collection and prevention (Articles 14-44). Member States have until 14 June 2027 to transpose the directive. Additionally, victims of all crimes – including violence against women – benefit from the rights granted under the VRD to all victims of crime, irrespective of the victim's gender and other characteristics. This instrument recognises that victims of sexual and gender-based violence require special support and legal protection.

Both the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and the Court of Justice of the European Union have had a chance to adjudicate cases of violence against women. The European Court of Human Rights found violence against women to be a form of discrimination against women and noted that states have obligations to combat and prevent it along with obligations to investigate, prosecute and punish <sup>(4)</sup>. The Grand Chamber of the Court of Justice of the European Union decided that women may qualify for refugee status or subsidiary protection status if they are exposed to gender-based violence in their country of origin <sup>(5)</sup>.

This chapter discusses the instances of violence experienced by women who fled Ukraine after the current war started on 24 February 2022. In addition to incidents of physical and/or sexual violence that women experienced in Ukraine and during their transit journey, they may have experienced such violence in the Member State where they are currently living. This can involve a range of perpetrators, such as people with whom women have shared their accommodation, acquaintances or strangers.

Chapter 1 has already touched on women's contact with Russian troops, including situations where they were physically or sexually humiliated during interrogations, which may have included experiences of violence. Here, further data on perpetrators – including members of the Russian military – are presented. The chapter focuses on answers to specific questions in the survey on various acts of physical and sexual violence, their impact and any action taken by women, such as reporting to the police or seeking other support. These questions were asked separately with respect to women's experiences in Ukraine and during their transit journey and regarding their time in their current Member State of residence.

In addition to considering the perpetrators of violence, the chapter examines women's experiences of violence in terms of the context in which the violence took place and the impact it had on women. The impact of violence was measured in the survey in terms of physical injuries, the emotional response the incident elicited and any long-term psychological consequences. The focus of the survey was on acts of violence involving any kind of perpetrator; however, the chapter also presents results specific to women's experiences of psychological violence where their partner was the perpetrator.

The chapter closes with results concerning verbal, physical and other attacks women have experienced in public – in the three surveyed Member States – as a reaction to people hearing them speaking Ukrainian.

## 4.1. EXTENT AND NATURE OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Women were asked nine questions on experiences of physical violence and four questions on experiences of sexual violence (see **'What the survey asked about physical violence (including threats) and sexual violence'**). In each case, the questions described specific individual acts, instead of asking a general question about whether they have experienced 'violence' or 'abuse' (to which it was felt that women would have been more likely to respond 'no' without considering the whole range of their experiences). This approach is established practice for surveys on violence against women and results in more accurate estimates of the extent and nature of violence. According to the responses to these 13 questions, one in four women (25 %) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the start of the current war (i.e. since 24 February 2022). More women surveyed in Czechia (29 %) and Germany (29 %) have experienced sexual and/or physical violence since the start of the current war than in Poland (21 %).

## What the survey asked about physical violence (including threats) and sexual violence

### Physical violence and threats

Sometimes other people can do things that hurt you physically. Since the start of the current war (since 24 February 2022) until now, how often has someone done any of the following to you? This could have taken place in Ukraine, in [Czechia/Germany/Poland], or anywhere else.

- Threatened to hurt you physically.
- Pushed you or shoved you.
- Slapped you.
- Threw a hard object at you.
- Grabbed you or pulled your hair.
- Beat you with a fist or a hard object, or kicked you.
- Burned you.
- Tried to suffocate you or strangle you.
- Cut or stabbed you, or shot at you.
- Beat your head against something.

### Sexual violence

Since the current war started (since 24 February 2022) until now, how often has someone done any of the following to you?

- Forced you into sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way. By sexual intercourse we mean here forced oral sex or forced anal or vaginal penetration.
- Apart from the above, attempted to force you into sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way. By sexual intercourse we mean here forced oral sex or forced anal or vaginal penetration.
- Apart from the above, made you take part in any form of sexual activity when you did not want to, or you were unable to refuse.
- Or have you consented to sexual activity because you were afraid of what might happen to you if you refused?

Out of the women who had experienced physical and/or sexual violence, 39 % had experienced the act(s) of violence in Ukraine, 9 % during transit and 62 % in their current Member State of residence (Czechia, Germany or Poland). Some women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence in two or more situations (e.g. both in Ukraine and in the EU after their arrival), given that the sum of the rates exceeds 100 %. It should be noted that those women who left Ukraine right after the start of the current war were in the EU for almost the whole period covered by the survey, which partly explains the higher share of incidents of violence occurring in the EU than during their time in Ukraine since 24 February 2022 or during transit, with the time spent in Ukraine or in transit representing a relatively brief period for many.

## Physical and/or sexual violence in the 12 months before the survey

For 13 % of women from Ukraine in the three survey Member States, the most recent incident of physical and/or sexual violence had occurred in the 12 months before the interview (the interviews were conducted between March and June 2024). This includes 15 % of women interviewed in Czechia, 15 % in Germany and 12 % in Poland.

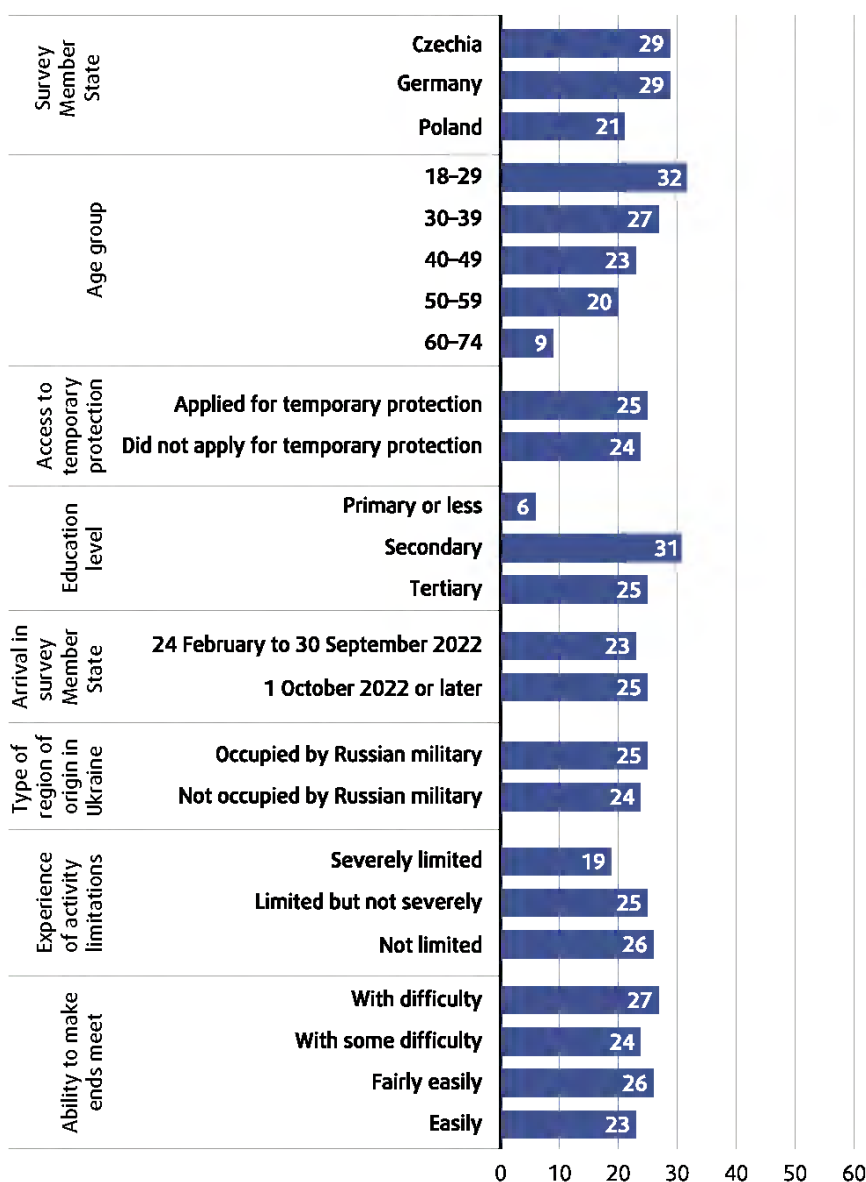
FRA's 2014 survey on violence against women also asked women in all Member States about their experiences of physical and/or sexual violence in the 12 months before the survey. The 2014 survey asked about the same 13 items utilised in the current survey, and the results showed that 8 % of women surveyed in Czechia, 8 % of women in Germany and 4 % of women in Poland had experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the 12 months before the 2014 survey. The results of the 2014 survey refer to the experiences of women in the general population, not women from Ukraine, so these results are provided here to help put the experiences of women from Ukraine in context. The rates found in the 2014 survey are lower than the rates found in the current survey, and this difference could be considered to highlight that women fleeing the war against Ukraine are at an increased risk of physical and/or sexual violence – in Member States or when returning to Ukraine – compared with the general population in these countries.

The 2021 wave of the EU-GBV survey – conducted by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE – also collected the experiences of women in the general population across the EU, including in Czechia, Germany and Poland. The questions used in the survey differ somewhat from the questions used in FRA's earlier survey (results published in 2014) and the current survey, which limits comparisons. For reference, according to the EU-GBV survey, the prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence in the 12 months before the survey was 1.6 % in Czechia and 2.3 % in Germany (there is no result available for Poland).

The survey on violence against women carried out by the OSCE in Ukraine in 2018 found that 11 % of women in Ukraine had experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the 12 months before the survey. Overall, the OSCE survey found that 35 % of women in Ukraine had experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15. Violence by an intimate partner was experienced by 31 % of women whose partner had been fighting in the armed conflict, compared with 15 % of women whose partner had not been fighting in the armed conflict. Overall, 34 % of women who had been affected by conflict indicated that some of the violence they had experienced was connected to the conflict. The OSCE used the same questions as those used by FRA in its 2014 survey to collect women's experiences of physical and sexual violence.

In the current survey, 32 % of women in the youngest age group (18–29 years) indicated that they had experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the start of the current war, which is above the average for all women interviewed. Above-average rates of physical and/or sexual violence since the start of the current war were also found among women with secondary education (31 %) and those with tertiary education (25 %) (Figure 12).

**FIGURE 12: PREVALENCE OF EXPERIENCES OF PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE SINCE THE START OF THE CURRENT WAR, BY SELECTED SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN (%)**



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

Note:  
 Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States (n = 1 223).

#### 4.1.1. Physical violence

Looking specifically at physical violence, 23 % of women from Ukraine have experienced one or more acts of physical violence (excluding threats) since the start of the current war – specifically, 27 % of women in Germany, 26 % in Czechia and 20 % in Poland.

Out of the women who indicated that they had experienced physical violence, 39 % had experienced physical violence in Ukraine, 9 % during their journey from Ukraine to the EU and 62 % in their survey Member State (Czechia, Germany or Poland). Again, some women may have experienced physical violence in two or more situations (e.g. both in Ukraine and in their survey Member State) or by multiple perpetrators belonging to different categories, as the sum of the rates exceeds 100 %. As noted earlier in this chapter, the

**My husband and I fought quite badly. ... The police came, took away my husband to spend the night, as they say, in a 'sobering-up station'. ... Then I had to go to the police and write explanations. [In Czechia,] they take this very seriously. They 'do not welcome' domestic violence. Therefore, they always stand in protection of women and so it came to a point that the matter went to court.**

Interview in Czechia, woman aged 35-59

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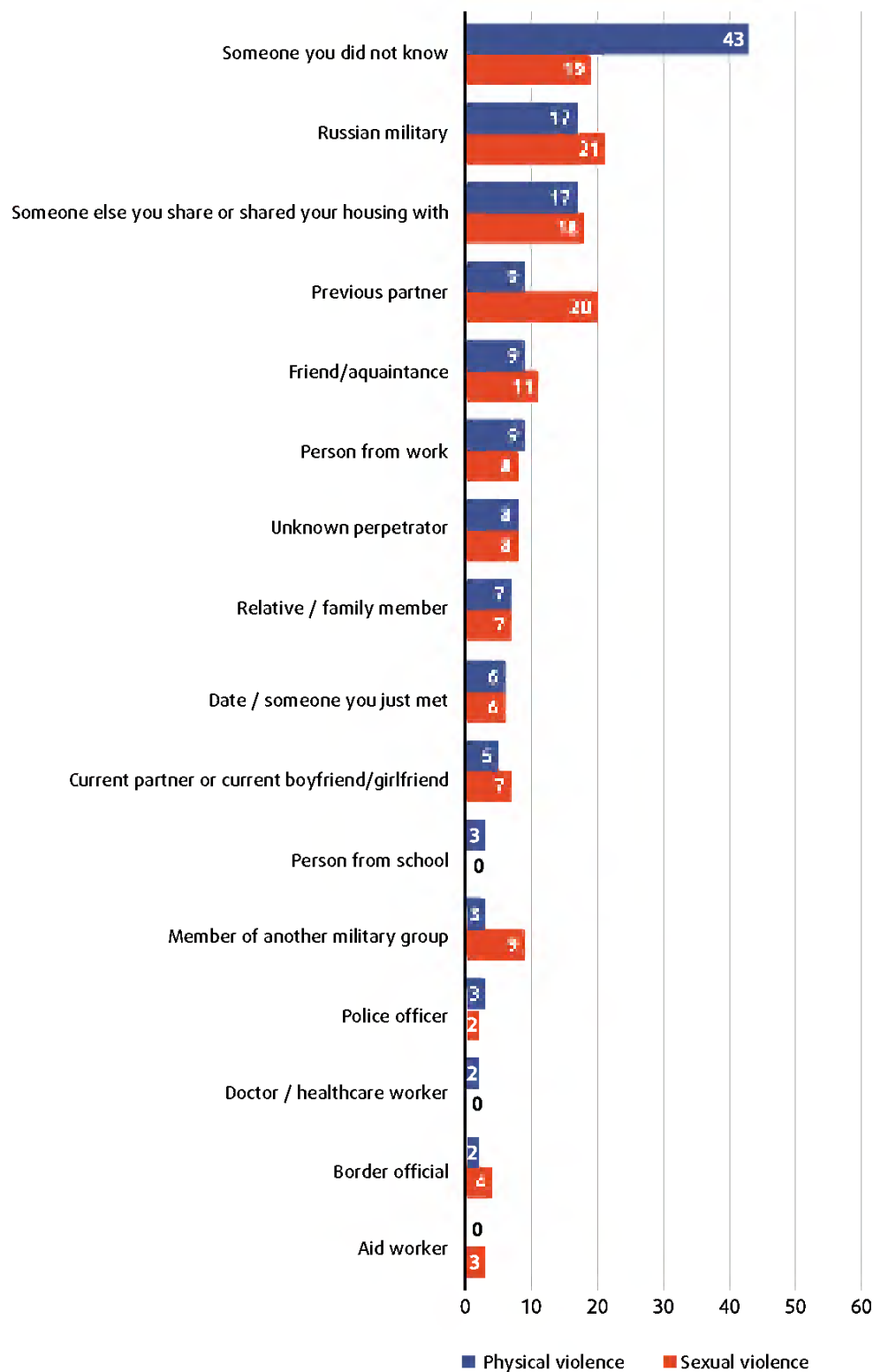
higher share of incidents in the Member States surveyed than incidents taking place in Ukraine or in transit can be partly attributed to the fact that many of the women have spent the majority of the time since 24 February 2022 – the start of the current war – in the EU.

The most common ways of describing the perpetrator(s) of physical violence were 'someone you did not know' (43 %), 'someone else you share or shared your housing with' (17 %) and 'member of the Russian military' (17 %) (Figure 13). Focusing on women who had experienced physical violence in Ukraine or during the transit journey (and excluding incidents that took place in the survey Member State), 37 % indicated that the perpetrator was from the Russian military. Given the short time that some of the women in the survey spent in Ukraine after the outbreak of war, the fact that more than 4 out of 10 women from Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine indicated members of the Russian military as the perpetrators of physical and/or sexual violence underlines the involvement of members of the Russian military as perpetrators of violence in the lives of many women who left Ukraine due to the war.

In the survey questionnaire, the answer category 'someone else you share or shared your housing with' was placed towards the end of the category list, so it can be assumed that answers falling into this category refer mainly to perpetrators other than those presented earlier in the list with whom the respondents may have shared accommodation, such as their current or previous intimate partner or other family members or relatives. By combining some of the categories of perpetrators listed in the survey, it is possible to conclude that, in total, 48 % of women described the perpetrator of physical violence as someone they did not know or were unable to identify, followed by 40 % of women who had a personal relationship with the person who physically abused them (e.g. a person from work, a relative, someone the woman shared housing with). These aggregate categories do not match exactly the sum of the corresponding categories in Figure 13, given that respondents could select more than one perpetrator category. 2 % had experienced physical violence by a service provider (e.g. a doctor, other healthcare worker or aid worker). The perpetrator of physical violence was identified as a police officer by 5 % of victims of incidents in Ukraine or during the transit journey and 3 % of victims of incidents in the survey Member States. A border official was specified as the perpetrator only by victims who had experienced physical violence in Ukraine or during transit, with 6 % selecting this perpetrator category in the survey.

67 % of women who had experienced physical violence identified the perpetrator to be a man (or two or more men), while 25 % said that the perpetrator was a woman (or two or more women) and 19 % said that the incident(s) involved both men and women as perpetrators.

FIGURE 13: PERPETRATORS OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE (INCLUDING THREATS) AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE (%)



Note:  
 Out of women in the three survey Member States who had experienced physical violence (including threats) or sexual violence (physical violence, n = 320; sexual violence, n = 56).

Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

**I went to see this relative, and he offered me food to eat with him. I ate with him and drank. After that I wake up, I am lying in some strange position and I am being raped ... You know, [there is a sense of] permissiveness and some kind of impunity. I do not understand how to explain it correctly. Because I could never even think about it, you understand. Either he didn't care any more; that he would go to war anyway, and he could die ... he does what he wants.**

Interview in Germany, woman aged 18-34

#### 4.1.2. Sexual violence

Among the women interviewed in the survey, 6 % had experienced sexual violence since the start of the current war – 7 % of the women interviewed in Czechia, 7 % in Poland and 3 % in Germany. These results include women who had experienced one or more acts of sexual violence listed in the survey (see **What the survey asked about physical violence (including threats) and sexual violence**). While the first of the listed acts refers to forced sexual intercourse, another two acts relate to non-consensual sexual activity, which can include non-consensual sexual intercourse and other sexual acts.

Out of the women who had experienced sexual violence, 57 % indicated that it had taken place in Ukraine, while 4 % said that it had happened in the course of their journey from Ukraine to the EU and 52 % said that it had occurred in their current Member State of residence (Czechia, Germany or Poland). These results include women who had experienced sexual violence in two or more situations (e.g. both in Ukraine and after arriving in the EU), as the sum of the rates exceeds 100 %. Given that many women in the survey – specifically, those who left Ukraine soon after the start of the current war on 24 February 2022 – have spent most of the time since then in the EU, the share of experiences of sexual violence that took place in Ukraine is disproportionately high.

One in five victims of sexual violence (21 %) described the perpetrator as 'member of the Russian military' (**Figure 13**). While this result is based on all women interviewed in the survey, sexual (and other) violence by members of the Russian military has specifically affected women who were living in areas of Ukraine under Russian occupation. However, due to the limited sample size, separate results for women who were living in the occupied areas of Ukraine are not available. Other common categories of perpetrators of sexual violence are 'previous partner', 'someone you did not know' and 'someone else you share or shared housing with'; each of these three categories of perpetrators was indicated by some one in five victims. By combining some of the categories of perpetrators listed in the survey, it is possible to conclude that, in total, 47 % of women described the perpetrator as someone they had a personal relationship with (e.g. a previous partner, someone they share or shared housing with, a friend), for 22 % the perpetrator was a stranger or someone they otherwise were not able to identify, 6 % had experienced sexual violence by the police / border officials and 4 % indicated that a support service provider (e.g. a doctor, other healthcare worker or aid worker) was the perpetrator of sexual violence. The aggregate perpetrator categories described above do not match exactly the sum of the corresponding categories in **Figure 13**, given that respondents could select more than one perpetrator category in the survey.

Around 9 in 10 women (89 %) who had experienced sexual violence identified the perpetrator to be a man (or two or more men), while 7 % said that the incident had involved both men and women as perpetrators and a few incidents had involved only female perpetrator(s). Focusing on women who had experienced physical violence in Ukraine, 41 % of them indicated that the perpetrator was a person from the Russian military.

## Violence perpetrated by an intimate partner

In FRA's 2014 survey on violence against women, and in the 2024 survey on gender-based violence (carried out jointly by Eurostat, FRA and EIGE), the respondents were asked explicitly – and in detail – about intimate partner violence, covering physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence.

In contrast, the survey interviewing women from Ukraine refrained from an explicit focus on intimate partner violence. This is because many women interviewed in the survey were living apart from their partners, who were not allowed to leave Ukraine due to the war. Some women could also have found the questions concerning physical or sexual violence by their current partner hurtful, potentially feeling as though they cast their partner in a negative light while their partner was involved in efforts to defend Ukraine. However, women could still indicate in the current survey that they had experienced physical or sexual violence by their intimate partner (current partner or a former partner). In addition, a dedicated section of the survey included questions on experiences of psychological violence perpetrated by women's intimate partners. Psychological violence, as asked about in the survey, includes controlling acts that can take place even when the partner and victim are living apart, including messages or calls used to exert control over women's lives, for example where they go and with whom they speak.

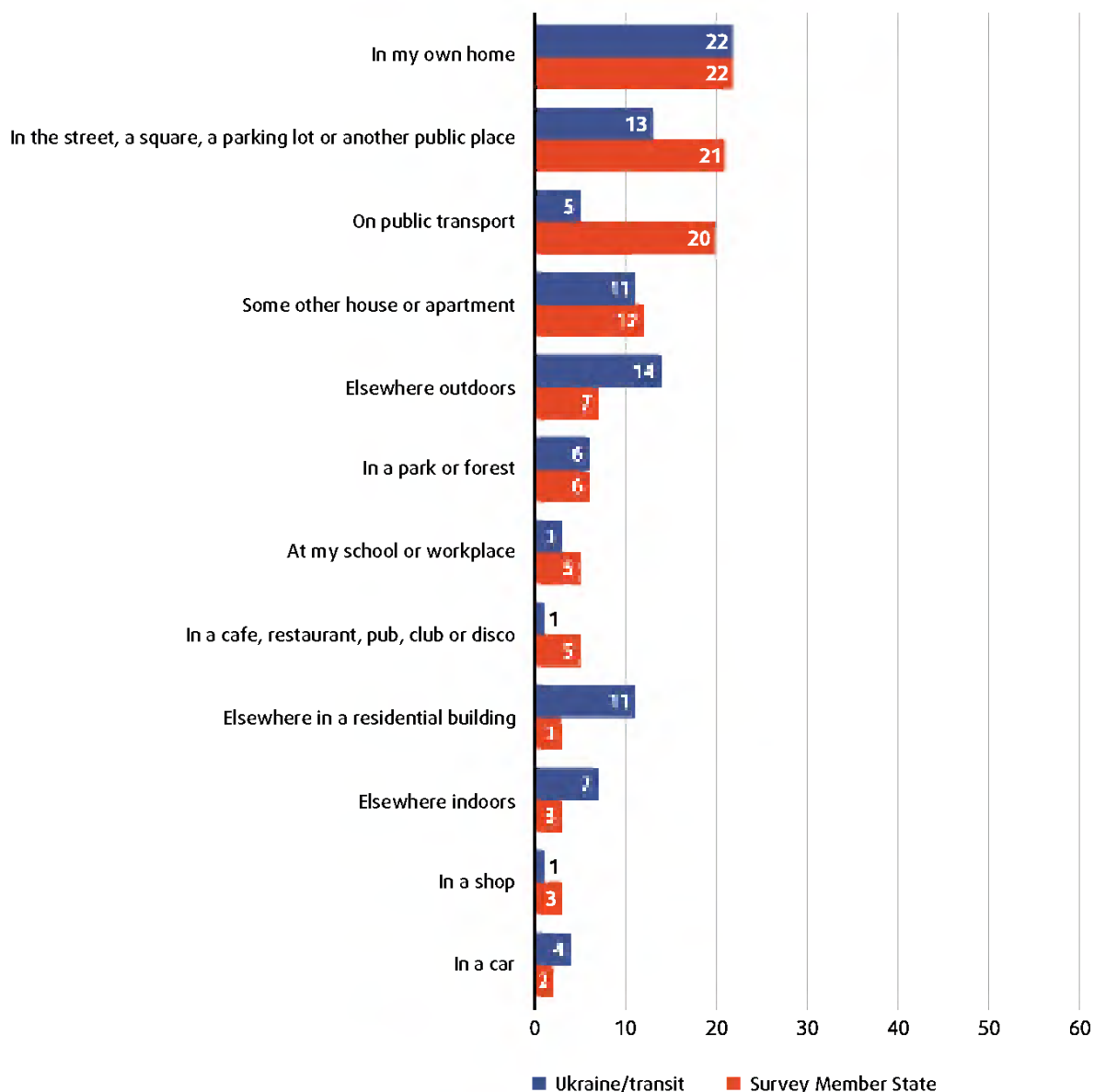
## 4.2. MOST SERIOUS INCIDENTS OF PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Women who had experienced violence were asked to provide further details about the most serious incident. This could be the incident of violence that had had the biggest impact either physically or psychologically, or the specific incident that women had already described if there had been only one incident.

The locations of the most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence range from private premises to public settings. A notable difference between incidents that occurred in Ukraine or during transit and incidents in the survey Member States concerns violence on public transport: this accounts for 20 % of the incidents in the survey Member States, compared with 5 % in Ukraine or during transit (Figure 14). This may be due to differences in women's use of public transport in Ukraine and the survey Member States and differences in terms of the situations that women faced (e.g. aggressive behaviour experienced in the survey Member States when women were heard speaking Ukrainian; this is examined in Section 4.4).

**I tell him that the rules are the same for everyone, as we are standing in line. He tells me: 'Look, it's written in Polish, I'm Polish and you're Ukrainian – so go back to your Ukraine.' I was shocked, and he continues: 'What do you, a whore, dislike? You're nobody here. Why did you come here if you dislike something? Go away further, to the Germans. There's too many of you here. You come here and want everything for free.' ... The next moment he grabbed me by the collar and threw me out of the queue.**  
Interview in Poland, woman aged 35–59

**FIGURE 14: LOCATION OF THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE (INCLUDING THREATS) AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE, AND WHETHER IT TOOK PLACE IN UKRAINE OR DURING THE TRANSIT JOURNEY, OR IN THE SURVEY MEMBER STATES (%)**



Source: FRA’s survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

Note:

Out of women who described in the survey the most serious incident of physical violence (including threats) and/or sexual violence, by place of occurrence (survey Member State, *n* = 215; Ukraine or during the transit journey, *n* = 148).

### 4.3. IMPACT AND CONSEQUENCES OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Physical and/or sexual violence can have various types of impact, ranging from temporary consequences immediately following the incident to long-lasting harm or consequences that surface at a later point in time. The most tangible form of impact on which data were collected in the survey concerns physical injuries like wounds and bruises and also less visible injuries such as miscarriages, internal injuries or sexually transmitted diseases. The impact of physical and sexual violence can also manifest in the form of emotional and psychological consequences. While emotional reactions to the incident describe the state of the victim during the incident and immediately thereafter, psychological consequences – as listed in the survey – highlight how physical and sexual violence can have long-term impact.

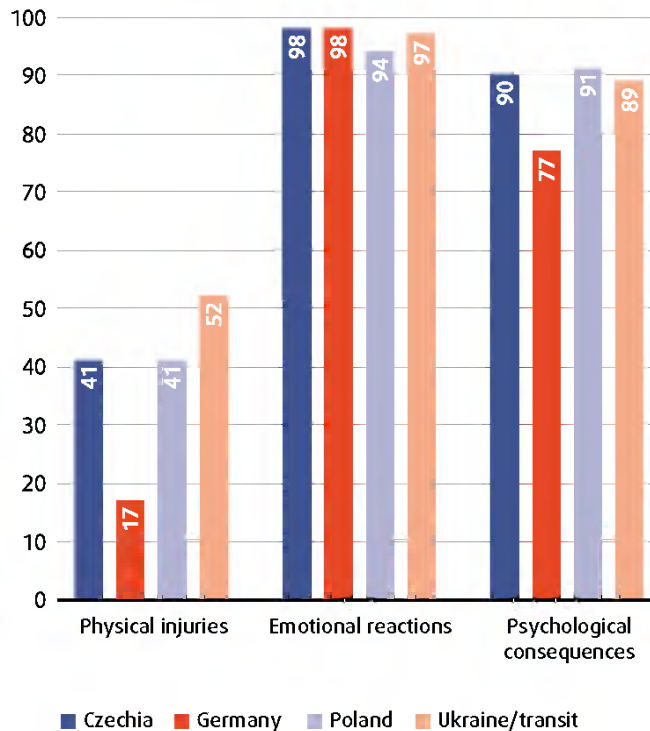
Physical injuries were experienced by 52 % of women from Ukraine whose most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence took place in Ukraine/transit (Figure 15). The most common were bruises and scratches (43 %), followed by wounds, sprains and burns (14 %).

For the women from Ukraine whose most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence occurred in the survey Member State, 36 % suffered from injuries (41 % of women surveyed in Czechia and Poland and 17 % of women in Germany). The most common injuries were bruises and scratches (29 %), other injuries (7 %) and wounds, sprains and burns (4 %).

**He broke my ribs when our child was two months old. With the war in Ukraine, my mother in Germany as a refugee and me unable to stand, I was powerless. I have [various health conditions], so I experience episodes where I can hardly move. ... now realising I had no way out, I felt completely helpless.**

Interview in Germany, woman aged 18–34

**FIGURE 15: CONSEQUENCES OF THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE, BY TYPE AND LOCATION (%)**



**Notes:**  
Out of women who described in the survey the most serious incident of physical violence (including threats) and/or sexual violence, by place of occurrence (Czechia, *n* = 98; Germany, *n* = 60; Poland, *n* = 57; Ukraine/transit, *n* = 148). For each type of impact (physical, emotional, psychological), the survey asked a series of questions. The results presented in the figure refer to women who indicated that they had experienced at least one form of physical, emotional or psychological impact, as listed in the survey.

Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

Practically all women described having some type of emotional response following the most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence. For example, this was the case for 97 % of women whose most serious incident occurred in Ukraine or during the transit journey to the EU. The most common emotional responses that women indicated are fear and anger, with respect to both incidents that took place in Ukraine or during transit and those in the survey Member State (Table 7). In terms of more long-term psychological consequences, the most common are persistent anxiety and feeling vulnerable, again for both places of occurrence. Overall, 88 % of women indicated that they had experienced one or more long-term psychological consequences following the most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence in Ukraine or during the transit journey, or in the survey Member States. Higher rates of anxiety were experienced for incidents in the survey Member States (60 %, compared with 49 % for violence in Ukraine or during transit). This could be related to violent incidents taking place in an environment that women are less familiar with (compared with their home country) and where informal support networks may be limited.

**TABLE 7: PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE, BY PLACE OF OCCURRENCE OF THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT (%)**

|                                  | Place of occurrence of the most serious incident |                            |
|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
|                                  | In Ukraine or during transit                     | In the survey Member State |
| <b>Psychological consequence</b> |  |                            |
| Anxiety                          | 49   | 60                         |
| Feeling vulnerable               | 44   | 43                         |
| Difficulty sleeping              | 37   | 29                         |
| Loss of self-confidence          | 31   | 33                         |
| Panic attacks                    | 31   | 27                         |
| Depression                       | 30   | 30                         |
| Concentration difficulties       | 25   | 19                         |
| Difficulties in relationships    | 12   | 18                         |
| Other                            | 9  | 7                          |
| <b>Emotional response</b>        |  |                            |
| Fear                             | 64   | 55                         |
| Anger                            | 42   | 51                         |
| Shock                            | 39   | 47                         |
| Aggressiveness                   | 36   | 30                         |
| Embarrassment                    | 33   | 35                         |
| Annoyance                        | 30   | 45                         |
| Shame                            | 28   | 17                         |
| Guilt                            | 19   | 11                         |
| Other                            | 7  | 4                          |

Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

After that situation, I closed myself off from people a lot, I realised that everyone fends for himself ... I have this feeling, the impression of indifference of other people, other nations, to everything that is happening now with Ukraine. And my story is a small example – we are being killed, and everyone is just watching.

Interview in Poland, woman aged 35–59

Notes:

Out of women who described in the survey the most serious incident of physical violence (including threats) and/or sexual violence, by place of occurrence (Ukraine or during the transit journey,  $n = 148$ ; survey Member State,  $n = 215$ ). The table presents the results in descending order based on the results for the category 'in Ukraine or during transit'.

#### 4.4. PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE BY WOMEN'S CURRENT INTIMATE PARTNERS

Since the start of the current war (24 February 2022), nearly two in five (37 %) women from Ukraine who have been in a relationship with an intimate partner have experienced psychological violence where the perpetrator has been their current partner. More women interviewed in Poland experienced psychological violence by their current partner (45 %) than women surveyed in Czechia (28 %) and Germany (27 %). Reasons for these differences among Member States are not clear, as they are not aligned with the share of women whose current partners remain in Ukraine (this is the case for 45 % of women in Germany, 32 % in Czechia and 31 % in Poland), as opposed to couples living together in the EU, for example. Therefore, the findings warrant further investigation at the level of individual Member States.

Data on experiences of psychological violence by women's current intimate partners were collected using nine questions, which described specific acts that women may have experienced in their relationships. The questions were selected from a longer set of questions used in FRA's 2014 survey on violence against women. The acts of psychological violence asked about in the current survey can be grouped based on the nature of the acts, for example using the following four categories.

- **Controlling behaviour.** This covers trying to keep the woman from seeing her friends or visiting her family or relatives, insisting on knowing where she is, getting angry if she speaks to other men (or women) and suspecting her of being unfaithful.
- **Economic violence.** This covers preventing the woman from making decisions on family finances or shopping independently or forbidding her to work outside the home.
- **Abusive behaviour.** This covers forbidding the woman to leave the house.
- **Cyber control.** This covers tracking the woman's movements (e.g. via global positioning system (GPS)) or controlling her phone or social media.

The list of acts of psychological violence includes behaviours that might occur when women are sharing the same living space as their partner, such as the partner locking her up in the house/apartment, and behaviours that can continue even in the absence of physical proximity (e.g. technology-facilitated monitoring of her movements or suspecting her of being unfaithful). In the survey, women were considered to have a current intimate partner if, at the time of the interview, they were married or in a civil partnership, living together with a partner without being married, or involved in a relationship without living together (e.g. in a dating relationship).

Among women from Ukraine with an intimate partner, the most common form of psychological violence by their current partner was controlling behaviour, followed by economic violence, abusive behaviour and then cyber control (Table 8). These results include women who have experienced one or more of the four types of psychological intimate partner violence examined here. The frequency of this psychological violence has increased for 39 % of women since the start of the war and stayed the same for 37 % of women, while for others it has decreased or stopped completely. That is, for most victims, psychological violence has either continued unabated or has increased since the war started, even considering that many women are now living apart from their partners, who have not been able to leave Ukraine.

**TABLE 8: PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE BY WOMEN'S CURRENT PARTNER, BY TYPE OF ABUSE (%)**

|  | Czechia | Germany | Poland | Total |
|--|---------|---------|--------|-------|
| Controlling behaviour  | 26      | 22      | 43     | 34    |
| Economic violence  | 12      | 12      | 27     | 20    |
| Abusive behaviour  | 1       | 1       | 20     | 11    |
| Cyber control  | 5       | 2       | 20     | 12    |
| Any psychological violence (one or more of the four types above) | 28      | 27      | 45     | 37    |

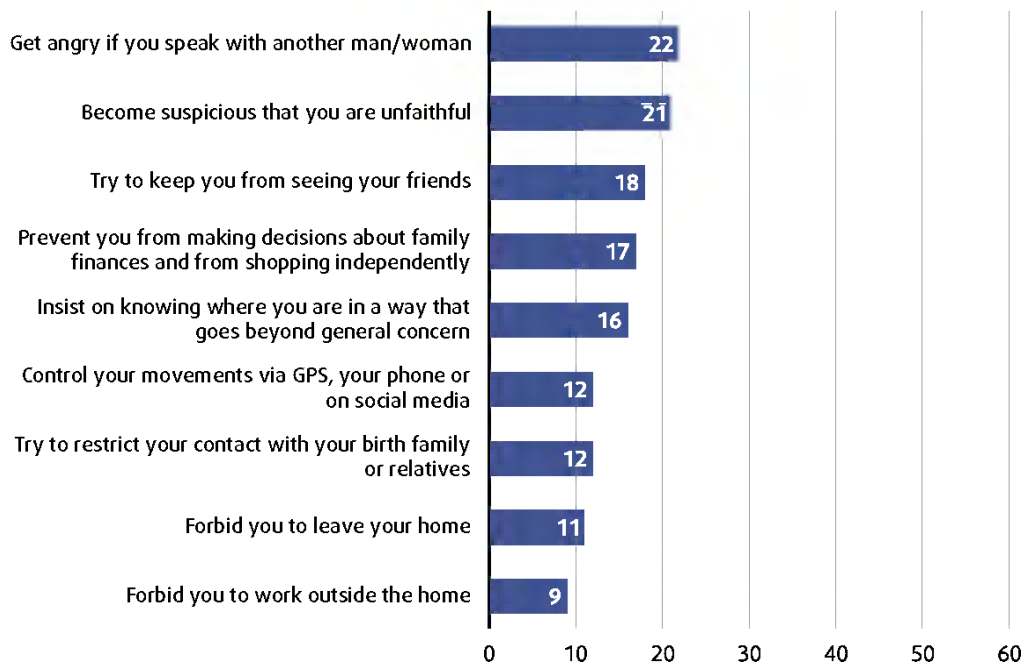
► Note:

Out of women with a current partner, by Member State (*n* = 261 in Czechia, *n* = 243 in Germany, *n* = 276 in Poland, *n* = 780 in total).

Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

Looking at individual acts of psychological violence, the most common acts involved the current partner getting angry if the woman spoke with another person, followed by becoming suspicious that she was unfaithful and trying to keep her from speaking with her family and friends (Figure 16).

**FIGURE 16: PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE FROM THE CURRENT PARTNER (%)**



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

▲ Note:

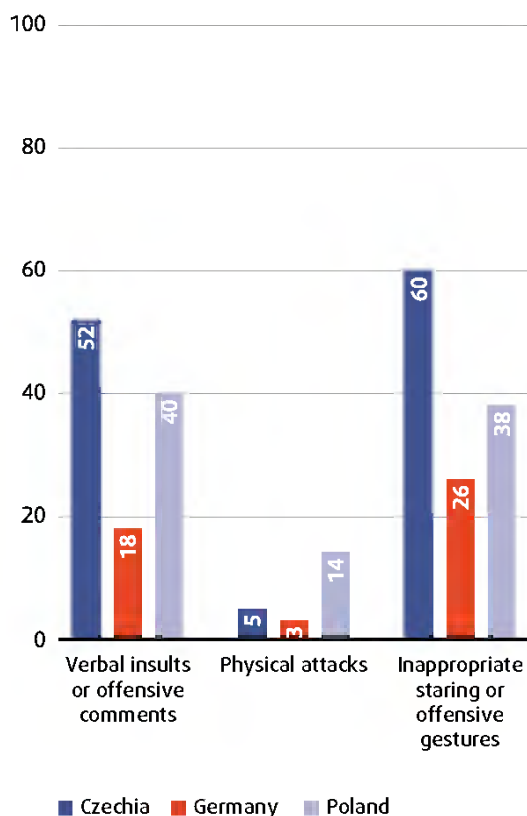
Out of women in the three survey Member States with a current partner (*n* = 780).

When asked if they had ever suffered any psychological problems (e.g. depression, panic attacks, problems with concentration, problems sleeping or eating) as a consequence of psychological violence by their current partner, more than two in three women who had experienced psychological violence by an intimate partner (69 %) indicated that they had experienced these consequences at least sometimes, and two in five had suffered such consequences all the time or often.

## 4.5. VERBAL OR PHYSICAL ATTACKS FOR SPEAKING UKRAINIAN

Women were asked about whether they had felt threatened or been physically or verbally attacked because they had been heard speaking Ukrainian in public. Since they had arrived in their current Member State of residence, 54 % of women had been in a situation where somebody had attacked them or otherwise reacted negatively after hearing them speaking Ukrainian in public. These experiences had occurred at a higher rate among women living in Czechia (67 %) and Poland (55 %) than among women living in Germany (31 %) (Figure 17). These results indicate that there was a bias motive behind these attacks and negative reactions, and that they were therefore hate crimes. A 'hate crime' is 'a criminal offence committed with a bias motive' according to the European Commission's 2018 Guidance note on the practical application of Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law (6).

**FIGURE 17: EXPERIENCES IN PUBLIC PLACES WHEN PEOPLE HEARD WOMEN SPEAKING IN UKRAINIAN, SINCE ARRIVING IN THE MEMBER STATE (%)**



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

I was riding the tram with my son. I always tell him: 'Quiet, we don't talk.' ... And my son says: 'Mum, how many more stops do we have to go?' I say: 'Two, but only quietly.' I always tell him this, wherever we are. And [a man] suddenly gets up, and says: 'Ukraine?' And his wife says: 'Obviously, it's Ukraine.' And he says: 'Why did you come here? Go away from here!' All the people who were sitting in the tram, no one stood up for us ... and he grabs me by the sleeve, raises me up and says: 'Get out.' And I grab my son by the hand, press the button to get the tram to open sooner. And he tells me: 'Leave, go away. You shouldn't be here. You're sitting on my money, you're sitting on my neck, go away.' At the stop I grab my son and fly out of the tram. He really shook me hard. I pushed him away from me, while holding my son. The man was about 120 kg and I realised that I can't do anything. And everyone else, who sat nearby, no one stood up for me, no one said anything.

Interview in Czechia, woman aged 35-59

Note:

Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States, by Member State (n = 411 in Czechia, n = 400 in Germany, n = 412 in Poland).

## Endnotes

- (1) See, for example, **Judgment of Trial Chamber II of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Kunarac, Kovac and Vukovic case** (also known as the Foča case), The Hague, 22 February 2001, JL/PI.S./566-e.
- (2) OSCE, **OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women – Well-being and safety of women: Violence against women in conflict – OSCE: Thematic report**, Vienna, 2020.
- (3) **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence**, Council of Europe Treaty Series, No 210, Istanbul, 2011.
- (4) See, inter alia, the following ECtHR judgments: ECtHR, 9 June 2009, **Opuz v. Turkey**, ECLI:CE:ECHR:2009:0609JUD003340102, §§ 184–191; ECtHR, 28 June 2016, **Halime Kılıç v. Turkey**, ECLI:CE:ECHR:2016:0628JUD006303411, § 113; ECtHR, 22 March 2022, **Yand Others v. Bulgaria**, ECLI:CE:ECHR:2022:0322JUD000907718, §§ 91–110.
- (5) Judgment of the Court of Justice of 16 January 2024, **Intervyuirasht organ na DB pri MS (Femmes victimes de violences domestiques)**, C-621/21, ECLI:EU:C:2024:47.
- (6) EU High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, **'Guidance note on the practical application of Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law'**, November 2018.

# 5

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- ★ Around one in two women from Ukraine (51 %) have experienced sexual harassment since the start of the current war (24 February 2022).
- ★ 40 % of the women who had experienced sexual harassment indicated that it had happened in Ukraine, 15 % said that it had occurred during the transit journey and 86 % had experienced it in their Member State of residence (reflecting, among other things, the length of time women have spent in Ukraine, in transit or in the EU since the start of the war).
- ★ Nearly one in four women (23 %) have experienced sexual cyber harassment since the start of the current war.
- ★ In the 12 months before the survey, 29 % of women from Ukraine had experienced sexual harassment. According to the results of the survey of the general population FRA published in 2014, sexual harassment had been experienced in the 12 months before the survey by 22 % of women in Germany, 21 % in Czechia and 11 % in Poland.
- ★ Around three in four victims of sexual harassment (71 %) described the perpetrator as a stranger or a person they were not able to identify (e.g. in the case of anonymous offensive comments made online). Meanwhile, 63 % indicated that the perpetrator was a person known to them, such as an acquaintance or a colleague (with some women experiencing sexual harassment by more than one perpetrator).
- ★ The most common consequences of sexual harassment include persistent anxiety (46 %), feeling vulnerable (32 %) and losing self-confidence (28 %). Overall, these psychological consequences were mentioned by 85 % of women who had experienced sexual cyber harassment, compared with 75 % of women with other sexual harassment experiences.

**He managed to make advances, but I didn't allow it to escalate to violence. And he was always drunk, his breath smelled unpleasant. And he was rude. Such an unpleasant person. When we were texting and calling before my arrival, he was completely different. He harassed me, but we didn't come there to serve him. We came to escape the war.**

Interview in Germany, woman aged 35-59

Sexual harassment is explicitly mentioned in Article 40 of the Istanbul Convention. Accordingly, parties to the convention are obliged to criminalise or adopt other legal sanctions in respect to 'any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.'



The VAW Directive – which Member States are due to transpose by 14 June 2027 – does not introduce provisions on criminalising all forms of sexual harassment, recognising the application of national laws under the broad definition of violence against women (recital 9). At the same time, Articles 5–8 of the VAW Directive introduce provisions obliging Member States to criminalise non-consensual sharing of intimate or manipulated material, cyberstalking, cyber harassment and cyber incitement to violence or hatred. It is worth noting, however, that Member States that criminalise sexual harassment at work should ensure availability of counselling for victims and employers (Article 28) and that persons in supervisory functions in private and public workplaces receive necessary training to prevent and address sexual harassment at work (Article 36(6)).

Outside criminal law, under EU law, sexual harassment in the context of providing goods and services, at work and in self-employment is considered a form of discrimination on the grounds of sex <sup>(1)</sup>.

The ECtHR has affirmed that online violence, including the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, is a form of gender-based violence that undermines the physical and psychological integrity of women and girls. The court found a violation of the right to respect for private and family life in a case in which an ex-partner disseminated intimate images of the victim <sup>(2)</sup>.

Sexual harassment of women in general is widespread. FRA's 2014 survey on violence against women showed that 55 % of women in the EU have experienced sexual harassment during their lifetimes. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that women from Ukraine who have arrived since the start of the current war are exposed to sexual harassment in their new Member State of residence, in addition to sexual harassment that they may have experienced in Ukraine before leaving the country (the survey asked about women's experiences since the start of the current war on 24 February 2022 – that is, a shorter time span than their 'lifetimes' as indicated above with respect to FRA's 2014 survey; for more details on comparability, see '[Sexual harassment in the 12 months before the survey](#)'). Sexual harassment

often involves an (actual or perceived) imbalance of power between the victim and the perpetrator, such as a hierarchical relationship in the work context. In this respect, women from Ukraine can be perceived as being particularly vulnerable, both in the context of the war and because of their situation after arriving in the EU.

This chapter presents selected findings on sexual harassment experienced since the start of the current war. It focuses on the extent and nature of sexual harassment, details about the perpetrators and consequences for the women. It includes incidents that took place in Ukraine, during women's journeys to the EU (transit) and after arriving in the EU.

## 5.1. MEASURING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The questions used in the survey to ask about sexual harassment are based on the 2014 FRA survey on violence against women in the EU and also OSCE's 2018 survey on violence against women, which collected data in Ukraine, among other countries. Several acts of sexual harassment described in these questions are similar to those included in the EU-GBV survey concerning sexual harassment, although the EU-GBV survey only asked about sexual harassment in the context of work.

The survey on experiences of women from Ukraine listed 11 acts of sexual harassment (**'What the survey asked about sexual harassment'**). The introduction to these questions asked respondents to think about acts that they considered unwanted or offensive, which was further stressed in the description of the individual acts.

### What the survey asked about sexual harassment

Respondents were asked about sexual harassment with the following question.

At times you may have experienced people acting towards you in a way that you felt was unwanted and offensive. Since the start of the current war (since 24 February 2022) until now, how often have you experienced any of the following? This could have taken place in Ukraine, in [Czechia/Germany/Poland] or anywhere else.

- Unwelcome touching, hugging or kissing.
- Inappropriate staring or leering that made you feel intimidated.
- Sexually suggestive comments or jokes that made you feel offended.
- Somebody sending or showing you sexually explicit pictures, photos or gifts that made you feel offended.
- Inappropriate invitations to go out on dates.
- Intrusive questions about your private life that made you feel offended.
- Intrusive comments about your physical appearance that made you feel offended.
- Unwanted sexually explicit emails or text messages that offended you.
- Inappropriate advances that offended you on social networking websites such as Facebook, or in internet chat rooms.
- Somebody indecently exposing themselves to you.
- Somebody making you watch or look at pornographic material against your wishes.

In addition, respondents who confirmed having experienced certain acts of sexual harassment were asked to specify whether the act took place online or not. This follow-up question was asked for those acts of sexual harassment that could have taken place online or offline, and which did not by definition require in-person contact between or the close proximity of the victim and perpetrator.

## 5.2. PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The survey shows that around one in two women from Ukraine (51 %) have experienced sexual harassment (one or more acts listed in the survey) since the start of the current war (24 February 2022). In Czechia, 65 % of women indicated having experienced sexual harassment, while the prevalence of sexual harassment was lower for women interviewed in Germany (52 %) and Poland (44 %).

### Sexual harassment in the 12 months before the survey

For 29 % of women from Ukraine, the most recent incident of sexual harassment had taken place in the 12 months before the interview (the interviews were conducted between March and June 2024). This includes 36 % of women interviewed in Czechia and Germany and 23 % of women interviewed in Poland.

FRA's 2014 survey on violence against women also asked women in all Member States about sexual harassment experienced in the 12 months before the survey. The survey used the same 11 items utilised in the current survey and showed that 22 % of women surveyed in Germany, 21 % in Czechia and 11 % in Poland had experienced sexual harassment in the 12 months before the survey. These results are lower than the results in the current survey, potentially highlighting how women fleeing from war are at an increased risk of sexual harassment in Czechia, Germany and Poland compared with the general population in these Member States.

This increase in exposure to sexual harassment for women from Ukraine is also apparent when comparing the results of the current survey and the OSCE's 2018 survey on violence against women, which utilised the same list of acts as the current survey to measure sexual harassment. In the OSCE's survey, 17 % of women in Ukraine said that they had been sexually harassed in the 12 months before the survey. When comparing these results, it is necessary to take into account that, while both surveys interviewed women from or in Ukraine, the socio-demographic characteristics of the women who have left Ukraine and entered Czechia, Germany and Poland since the start of the war are likely to differ from the socio-demographic characteristics of women living in Ukraine before the start of the current war.

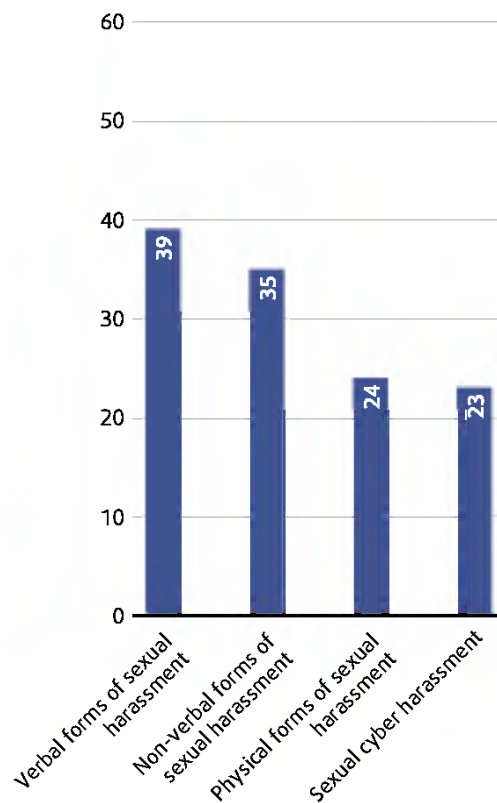
The EU-GBV survey does not provide a measure of sexual harassment overall and only includes results on sexual harassment at work. Therefore, it is not possible to compare the results of the EU-GBV survey with the situation across all three Member States covered in the current survey.

Of the women who had experienced sexual harassment, 40 % indicated that this had taken place in Ukraine, while 15 % said that it had occurred during the transit journey and 86 % had experienced it in their Member State of residence (Czechia, Germany or Poland). Notably, many women had experienced sexual harassment in two or more situations (e.g. both in Ukraine and in their current Member State of residence), given that the sum of the rates exceeds 100 %. Again, it is relevant to note that many women who left Ukraine soon after the start of the war have spent most of the time since then in the EU, which can help explain the high share of their sexual harassment experiences occurring in the EU, as opposed to taking place in Ukraine or during the transit journey.

In its 2014 report on violence against women in the EU, FRA examined acts of sexual harassment in four categories: physical forms of sexual harassment, verbal forms of sexual harassment, non-verbal forms of sexual harassment and sexual cyber harassment. Since the current survey used the same list of 11 sexual harassment acts as those used in the 2014 survey, it is possible to examine women's experiences with respect to the same four

categories. However, the current survey included an additional question to capture instances of sexual cyber harassment in cases where an act of sexual harassment could, in principle, involve online or offline activity. Including this additional detail in the measure of sexual cyber harassment is likely to have led to a higher prevalence rate than in previous surveys. Overall, the results show that women have experienced verbal forms of sexual harassment at the highest rate (39%), while close to one in four women (23%) have experienced sexual cyber harassment (Figure 18). Since some women have experienced more than one type of sexual harassment, the sum across the four types of sexual harassment is higher than the total prevalence of 51%.

**FIGURE 18: TYPE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT EXPERIENCED SINCE THE START OF THE CURRENT WAR (%)**



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

In terms of age, the rates of sexual harassment are the highest among young women aged 18-29, with two in three (67%) having experienced sexual harassment. The rates decrease as respondents' ages increase (Figure 19). When analysing sexual harassment experiences by age, it is particularly relevant to note that, in the survey, women were asked about their experiences since the start of the current war. Therefore, the results refer to women's experiences in the two or so years between the start of the war in February 2022 and their participation in the survey. In contrast, some other surveys asked women about their experiences during their lifetimes, which means that younger and older respondents in such surveys have different reference periods with respect to their (lifetime) experiences.



Note:

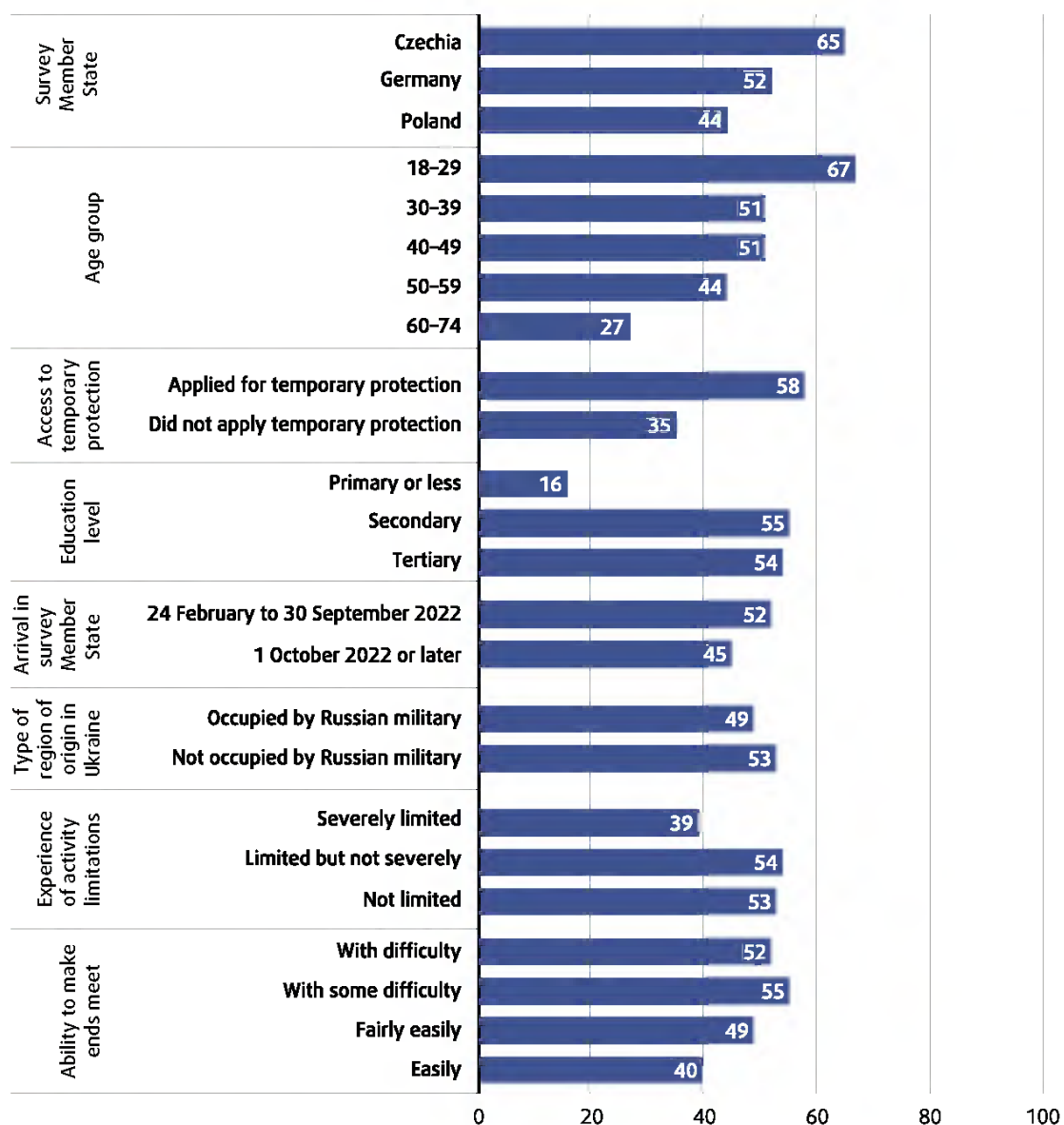
Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States ( $n = 1\,223$ ). The category 'sexual cyber harassment' and the categories 'verbal forms of sexual harassment' and 'non-verbal forms of sexual harassment' are not mutually exclusive. The results for 'sexual cyber harassment' include two specific acts of sexual harassment described in the survey, and any other acts of sexual harassment that respondents indicated took place online. These other acts are also included in the other relevant categories in the bar chart – that is, under 'verbal forms of sexual harassment' or 'non-verbal forms of sexual harassment'.

Also, I had situations at work ... there is this boy who constantly says: 'I can teach you German. ... Come over to my place. We'll have some tea. If you want, not just tea. I know how to give a massage.' I already said 'No' three or four times. And he still continues and continues ... I went to complain to his older brother, who also works [in the same place]. The brother, whom I complained to, stands there, looks me over from behind and says: 'Your back is white.' He starts dusting [it] off and lifts my shirt up. And then he says: 'Wow. Nice ass.' ... It was very unpleasant. I just turned around and left.

For instance, I am doing something, naturally bending over to pick up something from below. I stand up and turn around, and I realise they are all just standing there looking at me – it is very unpleasant.

Interview in Germany, woman aged 18-34

FIGURE 19: EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT SINCE THE START OF THE CURRENT WAR, BY SELECTED SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN (%)



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

Note:  
 Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States (n = 1 223).

### 5.3. PERPETRATORS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND THE CONTEXT OF THE INCIDENTS

In the majority of cases, women identified the perpetrator/perpetrators as a man / men (79 %) or two or more people, with men and women acting together (34 %); a relatively small group of women identified the perpetrator/perpetrators of sexual harassment as a woman / women (26 %). When asked to describe the perpetrator in more detail, 71 % indicated the perpetrator was a stranger that women had not met before or a person they were unable to describe in more detail (e.g. if sexually offensive comments were made anonymously online). The next most common category of perpetrators (63 %) is people with whom women were familiar. This could be an acquaintance, supervisor, colleague or other person known to them. For around one in

seven victims (14 %), the perpetrator was a service provider (e.g. a doctor, other healthcare worker or aid worker). The aggregate results described above combine answers that are presented in more detail in **Figure 20**. The results in the figure do not add up exactly to the aggregate categories due to some women experiencing sexual harassment by more than one type of perpetrator.

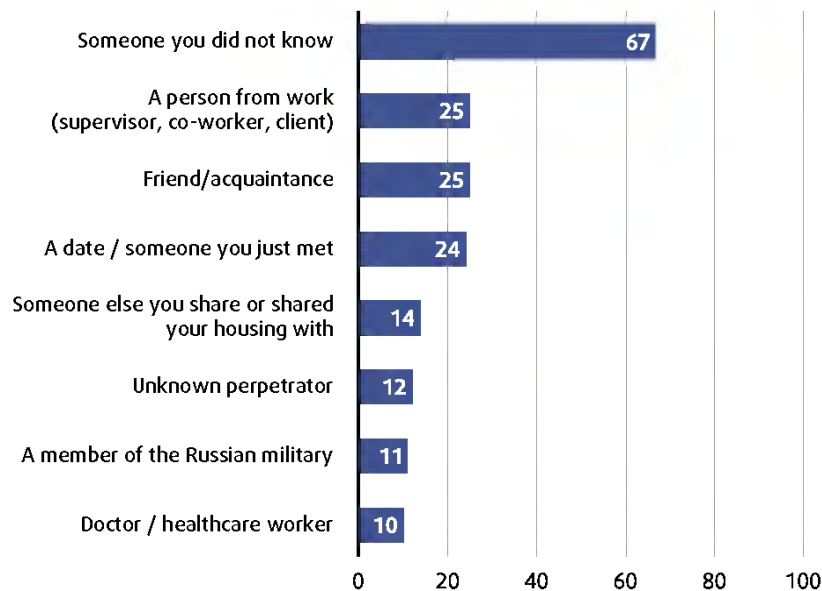
Looking at work as a context of sexual harassment, one in four women (25 %) from Ukraine who had experienced sexual harassment indicated that they did so at the hands of a person from work (supervisor, co-worker or client). Based on the survey, 11 % of women from Ukraine overall had experienced sexual harassment by a member of the Russian military (**Figure 20**). However, this increases to 24 % when examining just those women who referred to sexual harassment that had taken place in Ukraine. In addition to the results presented in the figure – which highlights the perpetrator categories indicated by 10 % or more of the victims of sexual harassment – 8 % indicated that the police / border officials had sexually harassed them. The sum of the results in **Figure 20** exceeds 100 % because some women had experienced sexual harassment in multiple situations, by different perpetrators.

The respondents who indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment since the start of the current war were also asked more specific questions about the context of the most serious incident of sexual harassment. The situations where sexual harassment took place involved most often online activity (e.g. use of social media, various applications, websites, text messages or chats; 18 %), being in the street, a square, parking lot or other public place (16 %) and being at school or in the workplace (8 %).

▼  
Note:

Out of respondents in the three survey Member States who had experienced sexual harassment since the start of the current war (n = 660). The figure shows the perpetrator categories that were most frequently selected by the respondents in the survey, out of the list of categories included in the survey. That is, the results in the figure are for the categories selected by 10 % or more of victims of sexual harassment. In the survey, respondents could indicate one or more perpetrators; therefore, the sum of the categories exceeds 100 %.

**FIGURE 20: PERPETRATORS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN ALL INCIDENTS THAT TOOK PLACE IN UKRAINE, DURING THE TRANSIT JOURNEY AND IN THE SURVEY MEMBER STATES (%)**



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

## 5.4. SEXUAL CYBER HARASSMENT

Article 7 of the VAW Directive provides for the criminalisation of certain forms of intentional conduct using ICT means. The types of conduct described in the article include sexual harassment such as unsolicited sending of material depicting genitals to a person when this is likely to cause serious psychological harm. The article also describes other acts of sexual harassment, for example publishing material that contains a person's personal data without their consent (which could include intimate photos or videos).

The **Digital Services Act** (Regulation (EU) 2022/2065), enacted in 2022, requires online platforms to implement systems combating illegal content distribution, including user reporting mechanisms and collaboration with 'trusted flaggers'. Recital 87 of the Digital Services Act specifically targets very large online platforms distributing pornographic content, requiring them to ensure that victims of non-consensual intimate image sharing can effectively request content removal through expedited processing and prompt action. Under Article 34(1), very large online platforms must also conduct risk assessments examining illegal content dissemination and the potential impacts on human dignity.

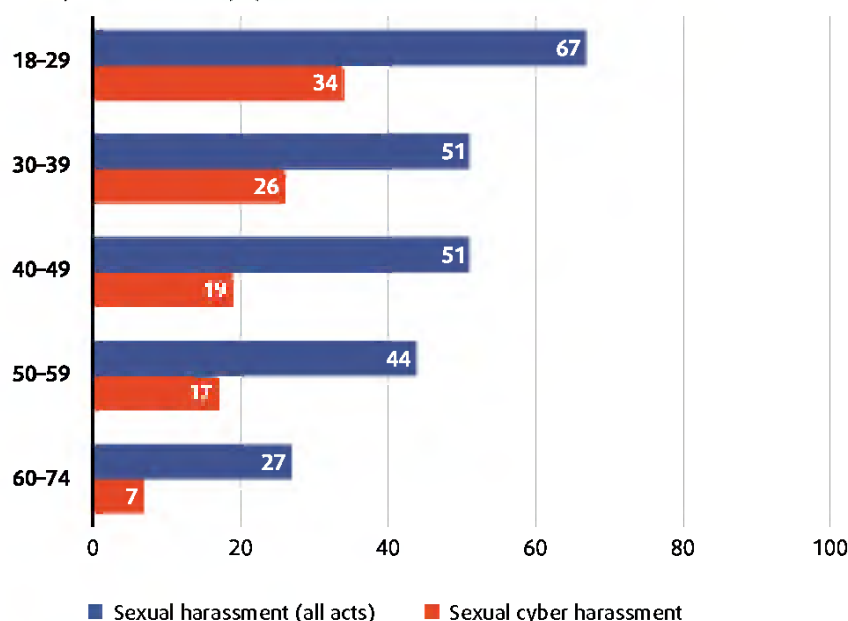
Of the 11 acts of sexual harassment listed in the survey, two acts can be considered to predominantly involve sexual cyber harassment:

- unwanted sexually explicit emails or text messages that offended you;
- inappropriate advances that offended you on social networking websites such as Facebook, or in internet chat rooms.

Based on these two items, nearly one in five women (19 %) had experienced sexual cyber harassment since the start of the current war (e.g. offensive sexually explicit emails, sexually suggestive comments online). For reference, according to the results published by FRA in 2014 concerning sexual cyber harassment against women in the general population, 11 % of women in the EU have experienced sexual cyber harassment since the age of 15 (that is, over a longer reference period than the one used in the survey on violence against women from Ukraine, which referred to experiences since the start of the current war on 24 February 2022) <sup>(3)</sup>.

As described in Section 5.2, the survey also asked a follow-up question to determine if some of the other acts of sexual harassment happened online. When considering the two items above, plus those in the additional follow-up question to capture other instances of sexual cyber harassment, the prevalence rate of sexual cyber harassment rises to nearly one in four women from Ukraine (23 %), as already shown in **Figure 18**. Women interviewed in Czechia indicated experiencing sexual cyber harassment at a higher rate (30 %) than women interviewed in Germany (23 %) and Poland (20 %). Younger women (18–29 years) are more at risk of sexual cyber harassment (34 %), and the prevalence decreases with age (**Figure 21**). Overall, 99 % of women in the survey use at least one social media platform. This high rate of social media use highlights the importance of these online platforms for women who want to stay in contact with family members and friends still in Ukraine, get information about developments in the war and seek information and advice related to life in their new environment in the EU. At the same time, social media use can also expose women to offensive and threatening material, including of a sexual nature.

FIGURE 21: PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT (TOTAL OF ALL ACTS ASKED ABOUT IN THE SURVEY) AND SEXUAL CYBER HARASSMENT, BY AGE GROUP (%)



Source: FRA’s survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

Notes:

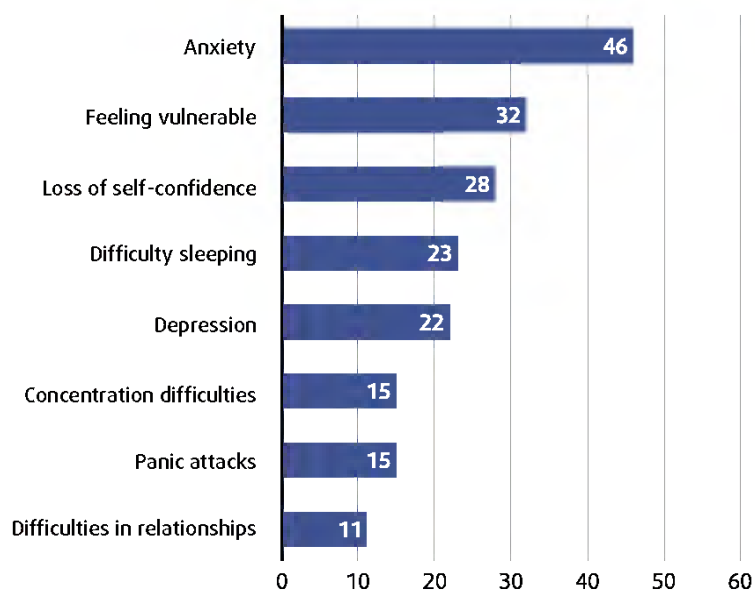
Out of all respondents in the three survey Member States ( $n = 1\,223$ ). The results concerning the prevalence of sexual harassment refer to women who had experienced one or more of the 11 acts of sexual harassment asked about in the survey (see ‘What the survey asked about sexual harassment’). The results on sexual cyber harassment refer to women who had experienced at least one of two specific acts of sexual harassment – that is, those that refer to receiving unwanted and offensive sexually explicit emails or text messages, or offensive and inappropriate advances via social media. In addition to this, the results on sexual cyber harassment include women who had experienced other acts of sexual harassment and specified in the survey that the harassment had occurred online.

## 5.5. IMPACT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Women who indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment were asked about the most serious incident of sexual harassment since the start of the war and how this incident had affected them emotionally and psychologically.

Of the women who had experienced sexual harassment, around three in four (77 %) indicated that the most serious incident had had one or more psychological consequences. The most common consequences include persistent anxiety, feeling vulnerable and a loss of self-confidence (Figure 22). Overall, 85 % of women who had experienced sexual cyber harassment indicated that this had resulted in psychological consequences, compared with 75 % of women who had experienced other acts of sexual harassment. With respect to sexual harassment at work, such consequences could have an adverse impact on women’s ability to carry out their tasks and advance in their careers. On the other hand, the psychological consequences of sexual harassment that takes place in a public setting outside work could leave women less confident with regard to actively participating in society.

**FIGURE 22: PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES FOLLOWING THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT (%)**



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.



Notes:

Out of respondents in the three survey Member States who described in the survey the most serious incident of sexual harassment ( $n = 660$ ). Respondents could indicate one or more psychological consequences as relevant.

Besides asking about the psychological consequences of sexual harassment, which can have a long-term negative impact on the victims, the survey asked women about their reactions immediately following the most serious incident of sexual harassment. Out of the women who described their experiences of sexual harassment, the most common reactions included feeling annoyed, angry or fearful following the most serious incident of sexual harassment (Figure 23). However, around 1 in 3 indicated that they had felt embarrassed (31 %), 1 in 5 ashamed (20 %) and 1 in 10 guilty (10 %) about what had happened. Having these sorts of feelings immediately after the incident may make it more difficult for victims of sexual harassment to take action to assert their rights, such as reporting the incident or seeking relevant support.



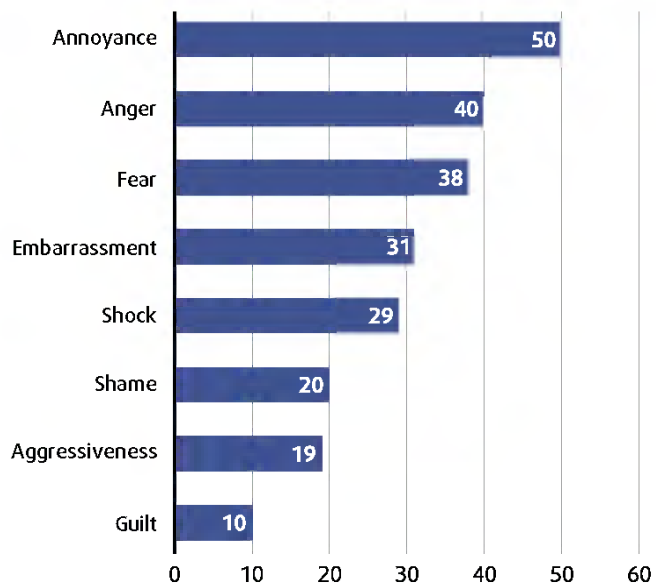
Notes:

Out of respondents in the three survey Member States who described in the survey the most serious incident of sexual harassment ( $n = 660$ ). Respondents could indicate one or more emotional responses as relevant.

**Of course, it had a big impact. Because you understand that you are in a foreign country, you are not protected. Moreover, these incidents may not be physical, but mental, moral. Harassment attempts occurred almost every day or every week. And you are constantly on the defensive. That is, you never relax. You constantly go out, there's a group of these smoking men standing there, and everyone is trying to hurt you, you don't touch anyone ... you are generally uncomfortable.**

Interview in Poland, woman aged 35–59

**FIGURE 23: EMOTIONAL RESPONSE FOLLOWING THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT (%)**



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

## Endnotes

- (1) **Council Directive 2004/113/EC** of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services (OJ L 373, 21.12.2004, p. 37, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2004/113/oj>), Article 4 in conjunction with Article 2; **Directive 2006/54/EC** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast) (OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2006/54/oj>), Article 4 in conjunction with Article 2; **Directive 2010/41/EU** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC (OJ L 180, 15.7.2010, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2010/41/oj>), Article 4 in conjunction with Article 3.
- (2) ECtHR, 3 December 2024, *M.Ş.D. v. Romania*, ECLI:CE:ECHR:2024:1203JUD002893521.
- (3) FRA, *Violence against Women: An EU-wide survey - Main results*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014.

# 6

## REPORTING EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT TO THE POLICE AND CONTACT WITH OTHER SERVICES

- ★ Only 12 % of women who had experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the start of the current war (24 February 2022) had reported the incident to the police.
- ★ 72 % indicated that they had talked to someone about the incident. This could have been the police, other services (e.g. hospitals, faith-based organisations, legal services) or people such as family members or friends.
- ★ For women whose most serious incident took place in Ukraine / during transit, the most common reason for not reporting it to the police was being afraid of intimidation or retaliation from the perpetrator(s) (25 %).
- ★ Among women who had not reported to the police the most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence that took place after they arrived in the EU, around one in five had not reported it because they thought nothing would happen or change (18 %) or they were concerned about not being taken seriously if they reported it (17 %). The most frequently cited reason for not reporting was that women had already dealt with the situation themselves or with the support of their family or friends (27 %; in the survey, women could indicate one or more reasons for not reporting).
- ★ Out of the 51 % of women in the survey who had experienced sexual harassment, only 3 % had reported the incident to the police.

Reporting is the first step in ensuring that justice is done and that victims receive the support they need. The VRD (currently proposed to be revised) is applicable to all crimes committed in the participating Member States and to all victims (including non-EU citizens). It outlines principles of reporting and victim support for crimes committed in the EU. Accordingly, victims of crime should be treated with respect and they have the rights to understand and be understood and to receive necessary information about proceedings and support services. Organisations providing such support – including civil-society organisations – can also play a role in documenting core international crimes and human rights violations <sup>(1)</sup>.



More specifically, in the context of violence against women, the parties to the Istanbul Convention should ensure assistance during reporting, avoid repeat and secondary victimisation and ensure access to support services. The seriousness of these requirements has been confirmed by the ECtHR, which has ruled that falling short of these might amount to the violation of prohibitions of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment <sup>(2)</sup>. Furthermore, the ECtHR has also ruled that the authorities having an insensitive approach when a victim reports sexual violence may constitute secondary victimisation <sup>(3)</sup>.

Articles 14–33 of the VAW Directive set standards for the protection and support of victims and Articles 34–44 contain measures to prevent violence against women and enhance coordination and cooperation. The directive therefore has the objectives of both preventing violence against women and protecting and supporting women victims of violence. The latter is done, for example, by requiring accessible channels of reporting and specialised forms of support for victims of different forms of violence. The VAW Directive requires Member States to ensure the accessible and safe reporting of violence, to identify specific protection needs and to ensure effective referrals to specialist support services.

It is clear that women from Ukraine residing in the Member States should have access to relevant reporting mechanisms and support services if they fall victim to crime coming under the jurisdiction of their Member States of residence (including, when applicable, universal jurisdiction). However, in cases falling outside of the Member States' jurisdiction, victims of certain crimes should still have access to support services pursuant to Article 13(4) of the TPD. According to Article 13(4), Member States 'shall provide necessary medical or other assistance to persons enjoying temporary protection ... who have undergone torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or

**I just connected with girlfriends, and they started throwing me some contacts of organisations. But, honestly, the Soviet mentality didn't let me [contact the organisations]. Whew! And now I talk, and I still have a lump in my throat, meaning I have not worked through everything yet.**  
Interview in Czechia, woman aged 35-59

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**No, I did not seek [help], although I had a headache. But I understood that it was not a concussion. I had bruises, I had a couple of bumps on my head, but I did not seek it. Again, we devalue ourselves. I think that, if it had happened with a Czech woman, she would have sued everyone. But it's such a mentality and plus we are in a foreign country – I was really scared to seek help. Yes, I was scared.**  
Interview in Czechia, woman aged 35-59

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**My grandfather is a colonel. He started yelling at me: 'Why did you go there [to the perpetrator]?' I said: 'What do you mean, why did I go there? I went so he could take me home.' 'He's a man, why did you go there? It's your own fault.' That's what I was afraid of.**  
Interview in Germany, woman aged 18-34

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sexual violence'. Depending on the organisation of national systems, access to support services might be facilitated by reporting to the police.

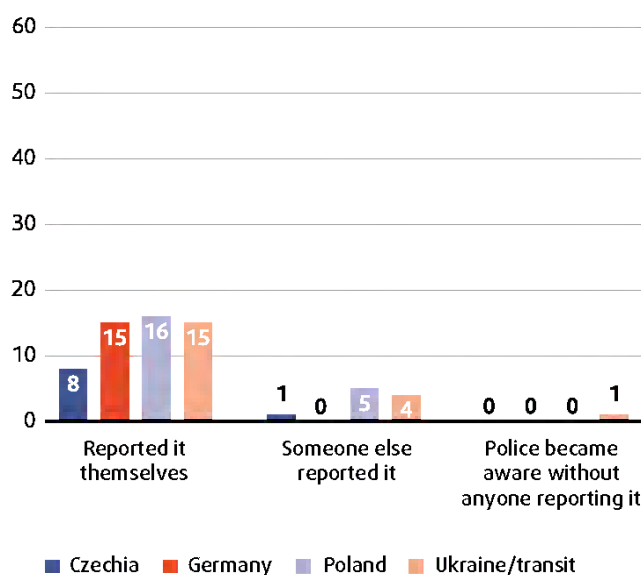
This chapter shows the extent to which women reported violence to the police and the reasons why some decided not to. In addition, the chapter looks at the support women sought from other organisations as a result of what they had experienced and the type of support women would have needed – but did not always receive – to help cope with their experiences. Finally, the chapter examines experiences women shared in the survey concerning sexual harassment, and the services and other support women sought as a result of these incidents.

## 6.1. REPORTING EXPERIENCES OF PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Of the women who had experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the start of the current war (24 February 2022), 72 % indicated that they had talked to someone about the incident. This could have been the police, other services (e.g. hospitals, faith-based organisations, legal services) or people such as family members or friends approached for informal support. Only 12 % had reported the incident to the police. These results refer to the most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence that women had experienced, taking into consideration incidents that occurred in Ukraine or during the transit journey and incidents that took place in the EU.

Out of the women whose most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence took place in Ukraine or during their journey to the EU, 15 % had reported the incident to the police. In a few cases, someone other than the victim reported it or the police came to know about the incident without anyone reporting it (Figure 24). Taken together, 20 % of the incidents that women considered the most serious that they experienced in Ukraine or during the transit journey had come to the attention of the police. Among the women whose most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence occurred in their Member State of residence, 13 % had reported the incident to the police themselves (more women in Germany and Poland had reported the violence than women in Czechia). Accounting for other ways in which the police can become aware of incidents, in total 15 % of the incidents came to their attention (of the most serious incidents of physical and/or sexual violence that happened in the survey Member States).

**FIGURE 24: REPORTING TO THE POLICE THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE, BY COUNTRY (%)**



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

More victims reached out to various other services than reported incidents to the police: 40 % of women who had experienced violence in Ukraine or during the transit journey and 49 % of women who had experienced violence in the survey Member States contacted other services. Among these services, the type of service used most often was healthcare (used by 15 % of women following violence in Ukraine and 10 % after experiencing violence in the survey Member States). Besides healthcare, other relevant support can involve a range of other services from social services to shelters, helplines, legal advice and faith-based support. For example, among victims of physical and/or sexual violence that took place in the EU, 1 % contacted a victim support organisation and 1 % a women's shelter, while 9 % contacted social services and 9 % contacted an organisation specialised in offering general support to women from Ukraine.

The women from Ukraine who indicated that they had not contacted the police were asked why they chose not to involve the police (in the survey, women could indicate one or more reasons for this). For women whose most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence took place in Ukraine or during the transit journey, the most common reason for not reporting it was being afraid of intimidation or retaliation from the perpetrator(s) (25 %). This reason was less often cited by women with respect to violence that took place in the EU (10 %) (Figure 25). Among other things, this could be due to women experiencing violence perpetrated by members of the Russian military or other military personnel while in Ukraine. Of the reasons listed in the survey, the decision not to report violence in the survey Member States was most often due to women being able to deal with the problem themselves or with help from family and friends (27 %). This may include women who were motivated to resolve the situation by themselves because they were having to operate in an unfamiliar environment – that is, a country in which they had arrived only recently.



Notes:

Out of respondents who described in the survey the most serious incident of physical violence (including threats) and/or sexual violence, by the place of occurrence (Czechia, *n* = 98; Germany, *n* = 60; Poland, *n* = 57; Ukraine or during the transit journey, *n* = 215).

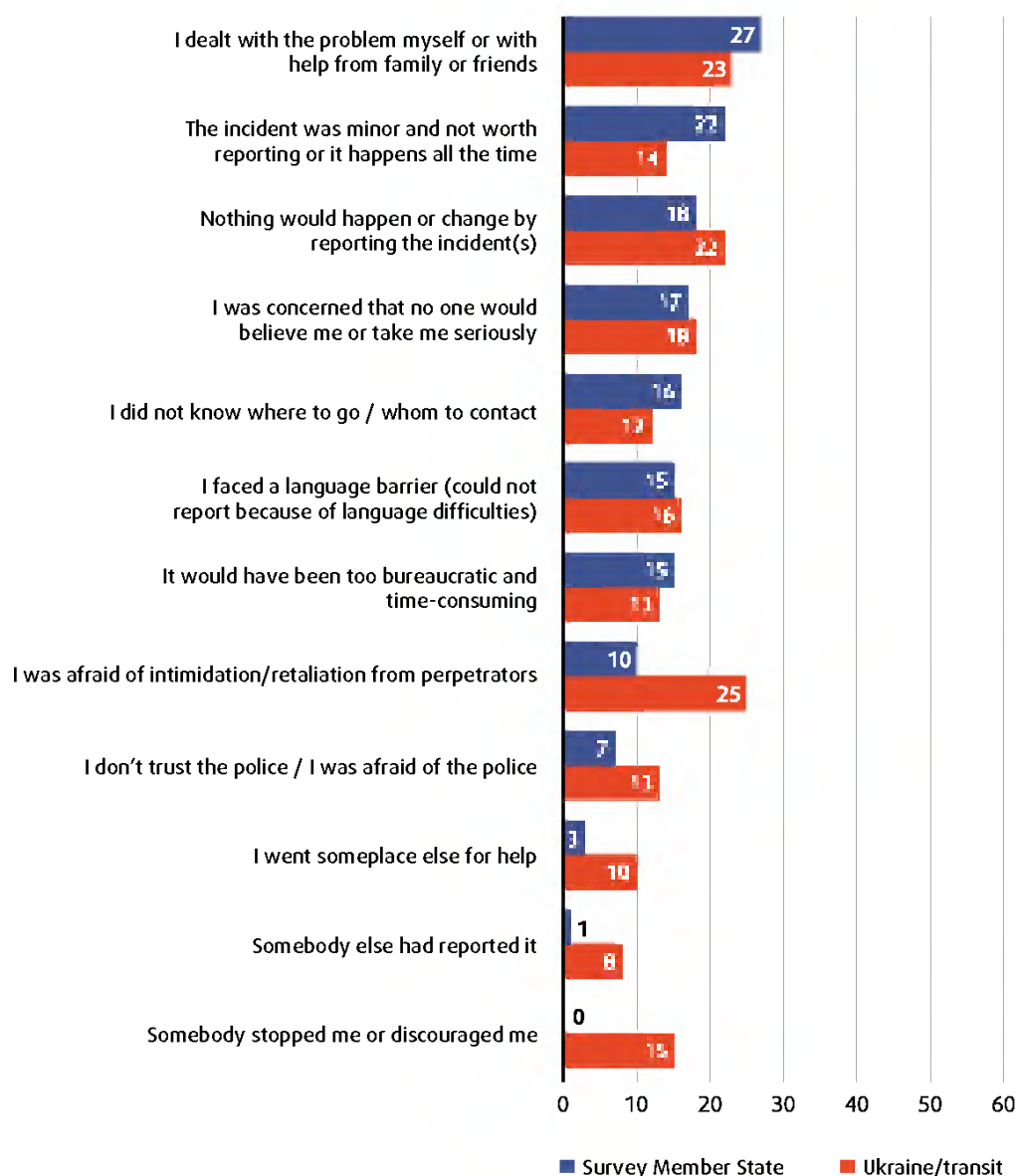
**Now that I have moved away from this situation, I understand what was really going on there. I felt from the very beginning, when I arrived in Poland, that here legally they can really protect you. ... In Ukraine, if you go to the police ... they won't react there at all. And here the police, they reacted very clearly. ... Yes, now I would probably address it [the incident of sexual harassment], bring it up.**

Interview in Poland, woman aged 35–59

**I only had bruises, abrasions, [a] torn ear. But I could treat it myself at home, apply ointments, make compresses. And so, I didn't turn [to anyone for help]. On the other hand – just afraid, if something happens, then I even have nowhere to leave my younger son. I have an autistic boy. I can't even leave him with anyone else, because he does not speak – and no one will understand what he wants.**

Interview in Czechia, woman aged 35–59

**FIGURE 25: REASONS FOR NOT CONTACTING THE POLICE FOLLOWING THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE, BY COUNTRY (%)**



Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025

Note:  
Out of respondents who did not contact the police after the most serious incident of physical violence (including threats) and/or sexual violence, by place of occurrence (survey Member State, n = 186; Ukraine or during the transit journey, n = 124).

**But how do I call [the police]? I am too shy. Well, not that I am shy. Just there was a moment when I was walking in the yard, and a child went missing in Czechia. Six police officers came up to me and asked: 'Is this your child? Show documents for him.' I show them because I always carry documents in my phone. And one police officer tells me: 'Not knowing the language is bad. You must learn the language. Because we came to you, and you cannot say anything to us, you should not live like this.' And after this, I felt even more embarrassed.**  
Interview in Czechia, woman aged 35–59

**I accidentally met a woman from my building in Kyiv on public transport. I shared it [the incident of physical violence] with her. Our generation is so used to enduring things, we are not used to seeking help. I feel like I must tackle this on my own.**  
Interview in Germany, woman aged 60–74

## 6.2. TYPES OF INFORMATION AND SUPPORT WANTED AFTER AN INCIDENT OF PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

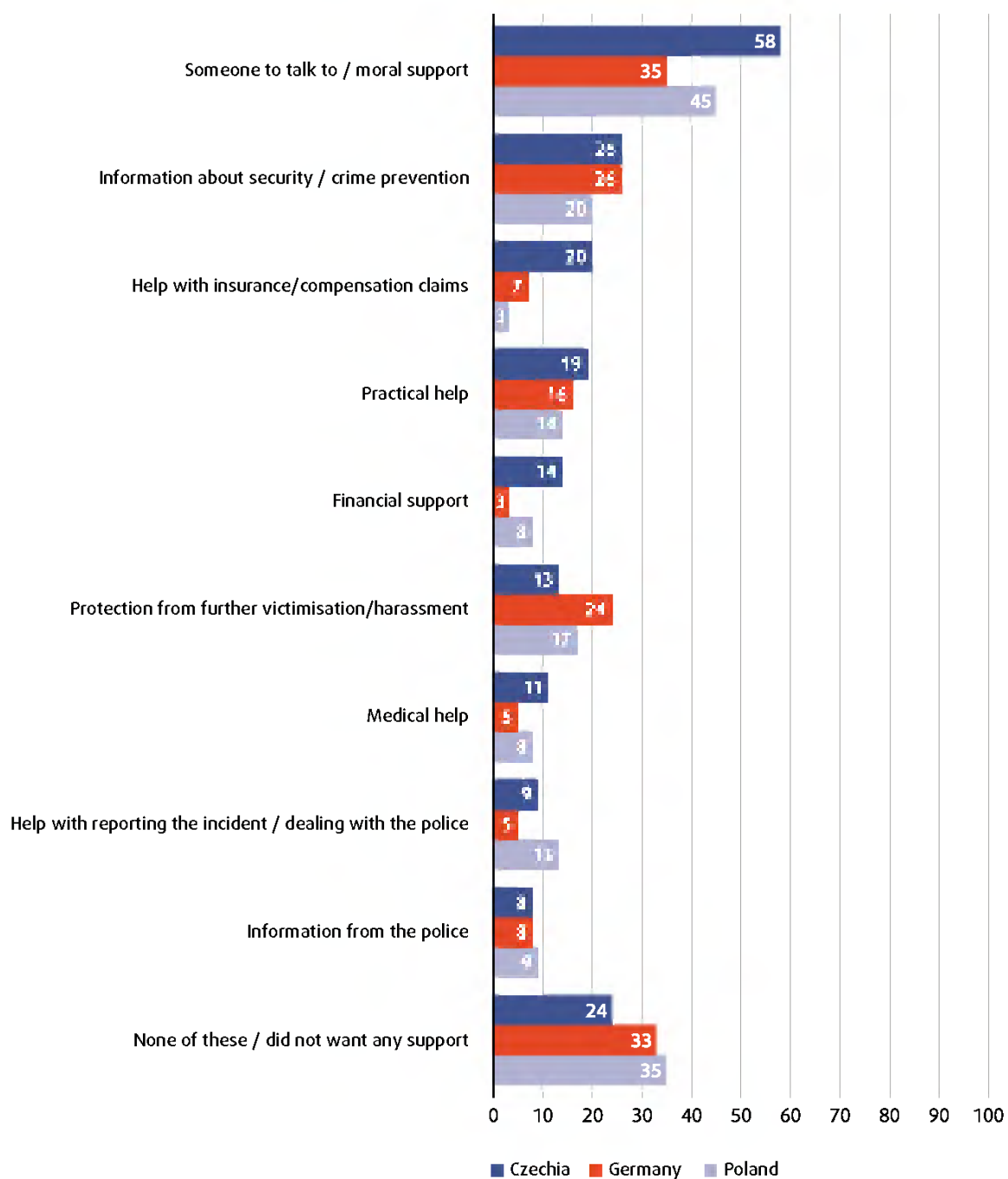
The survey results presented in Section 4.2 show that experiencing physical and/or sexual violence can be deeply unsettling for the victims, with adverse consequences affecting victims' health, including their psychological and emotional well-being. To help them overcome violence, many victims could benefit from various forms of support after the incident, ranging from information about legal advice to medical attention and psychological counselling. As the type of support needed varies based on the individual, the type of violence experienced and the perpetrator(s), women were asked in the survey which type of support they would have appreciated following an incident.

Among women from Ukraine whose most serious incident occurred in Ukraine or during their transit journey, 36 % would have wanted someone to talk to for moral support and 18 % would have wanted information about personal security measures and crime prevention. Overall, 37 % reported that they had not needed any of the services or support listed in the survey. Among women whose most serious incident took place in their Member State of residence, 47 % had wanted someone to talk to for moral support; this was a higher percentage than among women who had experienced violence in Ukraine or during transit, which could be a consequence of many displaced women being disconnected from their 'regular' social networks, which they could have used for support if they had been in Ukraine. Close to one in four (23 %) would have liked to have received information related to personal security and crime prevention. In each of the three Member States, however, informal support – in the form of someone to talk to – was what women most commonly reported being in need of after a violent incident (Figure 26).

**I started visiting a psychologist here at the centre. Sometimes I go there. I began seeing a psychologist – she's from Ukraine – because, for almost six months or so, I've been emotionally and physically unable to cope, because it's hard. And I go to her – and she understands us, and supports, because she knows how it is difficult at the beginning and what nuances there are. I share all that with her.**

Interview in Czechia, woman aged 18–34

FIGURE 26: TYPE OF SUPPORT WANTED AFTER THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE, BY MEMBER STATE (%)



Source: FRA’s survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

Note:  
 Out of respondents who described in the survey the most serious incident of physical violence (including threats) and/or sexual violence, by survey Member State (Czechia, n = 98; Germany, n = 60; Poland, n = 57).

### 6.3. REPORTING EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Depending on the type of sexual harassment, victims may report incidents to the police or another party, such as the national equality body, a labour union or a manager or supervisor at the place where the incident happened. Among the 51 % of women in the survey who had experienced sexual harassment since the start of the current war (24 February 2022), only 3 % had reported the most serious incident to the police. In Czechia and Germany, only 1 % of victims had reported sexual harassment to the police, while 6 % of victims residing in Poland had done so. The survey does not specify whether women who answered questions about the most serious incident of sexual harassment were referring to incidents that took place in Ukraine, during the transit journey or in the survey Member States.

When asked if they had talked to anyone (e.g. the police, a colleague, a doctor, a victim support organisation, one's partner or a friend) about the most serious incident of sexual harassment, 65 % indicated that they had talked to someone about the incident. Most commonly, women had talked about it with people who could provide them with informal support, such as a friend (28 %), a family member or relative (28 %) or their partner or boyfriend (12 %). Only a few women victims of sexual harassment had consulted professionals such as organisations in their Member State of residence specialised in offering support to people from Ukraine (3 %), victim support organisations (3 %) or doctors or healthcare workers (3 %).

Of those who had not talked to anyone about the most serious incident of sexual harassment (34 %), many indicated that they had been able to deal with it themselves (61 %) or that the incident had seemed like a minor occurrence and therefore not serious enough, so talking about it had never occurred to them (20 %). Some one in six women considered that talking about the incident would not have helped (16 %).

**I told my best friend in Ukraine. I have two Ukrainian girls here, my buddies – we met right here. And there is also my Czech friend, who met me, with whom I lived for a year and a half, who is also my boss, with whom I work, who helped me a lot – she's a really awesome woman! And she was the first to come over to see me in Prague from God knows where, saw my bruises, freaked out and said that she would go and kick his face in herself.**

Interview in Czechia, woman aged 35–59

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**I was nervous. I didn't cry. Still, I'm the kind of person who internalises everything. I didn't want to share it. I called my mum and told her. My mum said, 'Oh, better not say anything so nothing comes out, you're in another country. Endure it, avoid it.' That was the general advice.**

Interview in Germany, woman aged 35–59

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**Now I understand that it would be necessary to consult a psychologist, but at that moment there was such great despair, mental pain, which turned into physical pain ... this insult, it destroyed the desire to do something, go somewhere, speak to someone, because it required some actions, and there was no strength and energy.**

Interview in Czechia, woman aged 35–59

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## Endnotes

- (<sup>1</sup>) European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation, *Documenting international crimes and human rights violations for accountability purposes – Guidelines for civil society organisations*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022.
- (<sup>2</sup>) ECtHR, 13 February 2024, *X v. Greece*, ECLI:CE:ECHR:2024:0213JUD003858821.
- (<sup>3</sup>) ECtHR, 27 February 2025, *X v. Cyprus*, ECLI:CE:ECHR:2025:0227JUD004073322, § 123.

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# Conclusions

The survey results presented in this report leave no doubt about the terrors of war that weigh heavily on women in and from Ukraine. In the interviews, women shared how Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has affected them, to the point where the best way for them to ensure their safety – and for many, the safety of their children – was to leave Ukraine. Making the decision to leave was clearly exceedingly difficult due to the unpredictability of the war and having to leave part of one's life behind, often including family members, friends and one's husband or intimate partner. For some, violence perpetrated by Russian forces – or violence by other perpetrators in Ukraine – contributed to the decision to leave. Upon arriving in the EU, these women may be safe from these perpetrators, but they carry with them the consequences of the violence they have experienced. The survey results show that violence can have a significant long-term impact – for example, due to the injuries or psychological harm caused by the acts – which can hamper women's ability to live and work in their new environment.

In the relatively short time that women interviewed in the survey have been in the EU since the start of the war, many of them have experienced physical or sexual violence or sexual harassment in the Member State where they reside. While many Member States have taken measures to provide support for women victims of violence, the women interviewed in the survey can find themselves affected by multiple intersecting factors that heighten their vulnerability to experiences of violence and increase the negative impact of these incidents. These factors can include dealing with the stress of the ongoing war in their home country while at the same time having to navigate and establish themselves in a different country with a different language and institutions, often with access only to strictly limited resources and more limited social networks than they had in Ukraine. While some of the women interviewed in the survey have experienced violence directly caused by troops fighting in the war, it is necessary to recognise that the war has also provided the context in which the women's other experiences of violence – in Ukraine, during the transit journey or in the EU – have taken place, increasing their vulnerability and exacerbating the impact of the violent incidents. While this report is based on the experiences of women from Ukraine, women displaced by armed conflict in other countries face similar challenges after arriving in the EU in search of safety.

Women who arrive in the EU as a result of an armed conflict in their home country are quickly faced with a number of challenges related to finding housing, work and healthcare. Women from Ukraine benefit from the measures that Member States have put in place under the TPD. The results presented in this report should be read in this context, recognising that women arriving in the EU displaced by other conflicts may lack access to important services and accompanying rights. A lack of protection and support can expose women to various forms of exploitation, even trafficking in human beings. Women who arrive in the EU need to be made aware of the support available to them, since many find it difficult to navigate the system and lack knowledge of where to turn to for support, which may be exacerbated by a lack of knowledge of the language of the Member State in question. Member States have a key role in ensuring that women from Ukraine are aware of their rights and the support available to them, including measures put in place under the TPD,

the VRD and – going forward – the VAW Directive. These should include targeted measures designed to address the needs of women displaced by war (including the effects of war crimes that they may have experienced), such as information about reporting crime directly to the police or other relevant authorities or using alternative reporting options.

The survey results also provide indications of violence that can easily cross borders and follow women wherever they go, such as psychological violence perpetrated by an intimate partner. In many cases, women arriving in the EU from Ukraine had been forced to leave their partner behind because they were not allowed to leave Ukraine. This unwanted separation can, in some cases, be an impetus for or exacerbate existing controlling behaviour by a partner. In addition to these indications of cyberviolence between intimate partners, a number of women from Ukraine indicated in the survey that they had experienced sexual cyber harassment. The survey questions described acts of sexual cyber harassment involving sending material directly to women, such as offensive and unwanted messages of a sexual nature.

These results should be examined against the framework that the EU and its Member States have established to support victims of crime, and specifically women victims of violence. The survey provides a detailed picture concerning the extent and nature of violence against women in the context of an armed conflict, including violence taking place outside the EU and within the EU's borders. The results can help in examining whether the existing framework of support in Member States is adequate to meet the needs of victims who have experienced conflict-related violence. In particular, as the temporary protection status that has been provided to people displaced from Ukraine is coming to an end, there is a need to ensure that victims do not lose access to services that have been provided to them under the TPD, including support for people who have undergone torture, rape or other serious violence. The situation of victims of gender-based violence should also be taken into account in the event that Member States consider forced returns in the future when the war has ended, to ensure that women suffering from trauma related to gender-based violence are not forcibly returned.

Irrespective of where violence has taken place, victims have to cope with its negative impact and may find it difficult to put these experiences behind them without adequate support. Without this assistance, women from Ukraine who are victims of violence may struggle to re-establish their lives in a new environment and to put their personal resources and skills to best use, including helping – in the long term – to rebuild Ukraine.

# Annex 1: Methodology

This annex summarises how the survey data collection was implemented, including the complementary qualitative interviews. A detailed description of the survey methodology and fieldwork outcomes will be available in a technical report that FRA will publish in due course.

## POPULATION AND REPRESENTATIVENESS

The survey interviewed women who had left Ukraine since the start of the current war (24 February 2022) and were residing in Czechia, Germany or Poland. Women who, at the time of the interview, were 18–74 years old could take part in the survey. The lower age limit of 18 years was selected in view of the sensitive nature of some survey questions, while the upper age limit allows the results to be analysed alongside and compared with those of other surveys on violence against women that have applied the same upper age limit.

## COVERAGE AND SAMPLING

The survey used a detailed location sampling method to draw a sample of respondents. In each of the three survey Member States, the aim was to interview some 400 women (1 200 interviews in total). The final, achieved sample includes 411 interviews in Czechia, 400 in Germany and 412 in Poland (in total, 1 223 fully completed interviews). In order for the survey to provide results concerning the prevalence of violence that women from Ukraine have experienced, it was necessary to apply a probability-based method of respondent selection (as opposed to, for example, only interviewing women who are known to have experienced violence, as this would not allow for estimating the prevalence of similar experiences in the population).

While Member States register the recipients of temporary protection, it was not possible to access these registers to select a sample for the survey. In addition, some women from Ukraine reside in the EU under arrangements other than temporary protection, so a sample of the beneficiaries of temporary protection would exclude these women. Instead, FRA and its contractor Ipsos NV used a location sampling approach that the Agency has used successfully in the past, for example to sample selected groups for its survey on immigrants and descendants of immigrants.

The location sampling method used in the survey involved a multistage selection process starting with the identification of key cities in each of the three survey Member States based on statistics and estimates concerning the number of women from Ukraine residing in each city. The selection of cities included in the survey was also diverse in terms of the geographical coverage of the survey Member States. At the same time, it was necessary to concentrate the interviews in selected cities in order to make the survey's face-to-face interviews feasible to arrange with the time and resources allocated to the survey.

In each city, the fieldwork teams identified locations commonly visited by women from Ukraine, for example premises of service providers, community

centres, religious institutions, parks and shopping centres. Interviewers then visited these locations, at different times of day, and applied predefined selection rules to carry out a short screening interview to establish the eligibility of respondents and – if they received a positive result – conduct the survey interview.

## **FIELDWORK TEAMS**

All survey interviews were carried out by female interviewers who had experience of conducting survey interviews and who received additional training in the context of the current survey. The interviews were conducted in Russian or Ukrainian, as preferred by the respondents. The fieldwork was coordinated by Ipsos NV and implemented by MindBridge Consulting (Czechia), Ipsos Germany and Ipsos Poland, in cooperation with Ipsos Ukraine.

The interviewer training addressed challenges specific to surveys on violence against women, such as ensuring privacy during interviews, handling interruptions (e.g. to allow respondents to take a break if they need it, or to handle third parties walking in unexpectedly) and showing empathy while also asking the questions in a neutral manner. Interviewers were also provided with a list of support services that they could offer to the respondents at the end of the interviews. This list included details of the counsellors available for respondents to contact if they wanted to discuss their experiences further after the interview. Members of the fieldwork teams could also contact the counsellors selected to support the project if they wanted to talk about the impact the interviews had on them, or any other matter related to their work.

## **METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

All survey interviews took place face to face. Some of the interviews were conducted near the location where interviewers carried out the screening interviews to establish women's eligibility to take part, provided that there was a suitable place available where the interviews could take place in private. Alternatively, interviewers could make an appointment with the respondents to carry out the interview in another place, such as in the respondent's home.

All survey interviews and in-depth interviews were voluntary, and respondents were selected based on their self-defined eligibility to be interviewed as part of the target population of the survey. Respondents were informed that they could stop the interview at any time and were also informed of their data protection rights. At the end of the interview, respondents were offered information concerning support services available for women victims of violence, including dedicated counsellors made available, as part of the survey project, for respondents (and interviewers) who wanted to discuss their experiences following the interviews.

Before the main stage of the fieldwork, a small number of pilot interviews were carried out in each Member State to ensure that the fieldwork tools and procedures were ready for wider use. The main stage of the fieldwork took place between March and June 2024.

## **QUESTIONNAIRE**

The questions in the survey concerning physical and sexual violence, sexual harassment and psychological violence followed closely the questions used in FRA's general population survey on violence against women (results published in 2014) and OSCE's survey on violence against women (2018). However, some changes were made to reflect the impact of the war on women's

experiences and to allow results to be examined separately for incidents that took place in Ukraine or during the transit journey and those that took place in the survey Member States. Additional questions were included in the survey to collect more information about women's experiences related to the war. Some of these additional questions reflect those developed by the OSCE for its violence against women survey.

The questions related to physical and sexual violence were implemented as a self-completion module, to allow women to share their experiences in the survey without having to disclose them to the interviewer. Other questions were administered by the interviewers, who could also support respondents who had difficulties completing the self-completion module using the tablet computer that the interviewers handed to the respondents. FRA will make the survey questionnaire available in due course as part of the survey's technical report.

## **WEIGHTING**

The results presented in this report have been weighted in accordance with data on the survey population in each of the three Member States and the likelihood of them visiting the locations where the survey fieldwork took place. The weights were generated separately for each region included in the survey and then adjusted in proportion to the size of the target population when the regions were combined in the later stage of weighting.

## **QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION**

To complement the survey data collection, 10 qualitative interviews were conducted in each survey Member State (Czechia, Germany and Poland). The qualitative interviews focused on women from Ukraine who had experienced violence since the start of the current war (in Ukraine, during their transit journey or in the EU) and contacted the police or various support services concerning their experiences. This meant that the interviewed women could share their experiences of reporting violence to the police or seeking support and reflect on the adequacy of the support they had received. FRA designed an outline for the semi-structured qualitative interviews, reflecting the broad topics covered in the survey, so that the qualitative and quantitative results could later be analysed in a complementary manner. The qualitative interview outline and the methodology were piloted in each of the three Member States in March 2024, before their use in the main stage of the qualitative fieldwork in May and June 2024.

The interviewees were selected based on quotas that were used to ensure a diverse profile of interviewees, including in terms of age, time of arrival in the EU since the start of the war, whether they self-identified as part of selected minority groups in the population and whether they used to live in areas of Ukraine that have been occupied by Russian forces. The interviewees were contacted in consultation with support services operating in the three Member States covered in the survey, and also the networks of the fieldwork teams. All interviews were conducted by trained female interviewers, in Russian or Ukrainian, depending on interviewees' preferences. FRA's contractor Ipsos NV coordinated the qualitative interviews and provided FRA with interview summaries and quotes from interviewees. Selected quotes are presented in this report alongside the survey results to highlight women's personal experiences and to offer perspectives on experiences that may differ from the typical patterns observed in the survey.

# Annex 2: Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

The survey interviewed women who had left Ukraine since 24 February 2022 (the start of the current war) and, at the time of the fieldwork, resided in Czechia, Germany or Poland. As described in Annex 1, the survey applied a location sampling approach to interview a representative sample of women from Ukraine. The survey results presented in this report were weighted based on the sampling design and on available data and estimates concerning the population. Despite these efforts, it is possible that women from Ukraine who do not live in the catchment area of the locations where the survey fieldwork took place differ from the women represented in the survey in terms of their experiences.

While general population surveys can examine the sample composition against population benchmarks provided by census or other comprehensive population statistics, similar data were not available across all three survey Member States to conclusively assess the coverage of the population. **Table 9** presents the respondents' unweighted and weighted age distribution (by age group) to help assess the impact of weighting that takes into account the survey design and estimates concerning the population.

While the survey collected data on women's experiences in Ukraine, it is relevant to note that the experiences of the women interviewed in the survey may differ from the experiences of women who have stayed in Ukraine. Therefore, the results should not be interpreted as representing the experiences of all Ukrainian women, since those who left the country after the war started have spent less time in Ukraine, and the women who have relocated outside Ukraine may have different socio-demographic characteristics compared with those who have stayed.

**TABLE 9: SELECTED SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS, UNWEIGHTED AND WEIGHTED DISTRIBUTIONS AND UNWEIGHTED NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS, BY MEMBER STATE**

|  | Czechia |     |     | Germany |     |     | Poland |     |     |
|--|---------|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|--------|-----|-----|
|  | U %     | W % | n   | U %     | W % | n   | U %    | W % | n   |
| <b>Age group</b>                           |         |     |     |         |     |     |        |     |     |
| 18–29                                      | 19      | 23  | 79  | 23      | 24  | 90  | 23     | 20  | 95  |
| 30–39                                      | 28      | 29  | 114 | 31      | 31  | 125 | 32     | 33  | 130 |
| 40–49                                      | 30      | 28  | 125 | 22      | 20  | 86  | 25     | 27  | 102 |
| 50–59                                      | 12      | 10  | 50  | 14      | 14  | 56  | 13     | 13  | 54  |
| 60–74                                      | 10      | 11  | 43  | 11      | 10  | 43  | 8      | 8   | 31  |
| <b>Education level</b>                     |         |     |     |         |     |     |        |     |     |
| Primary or less                            | 0       | 1   | 1   | 1       | 1   | 2   | 18     | 15  | 75  |
| Secondary                                  | 17      | 19  | 70  | 10      | 13  | 39  | 13     | 12  | 45  |
| Tertiary                                   | 83      | 81  | 340 | 90      | 86  | 359 | 68     | 73  | 282 |
| <b>Arrival in survey Member State</b>      |         |     |     |         |     |     |        |     |     |
| 24 February to 30 September 2022           | 87      | 83  | 356 | 81      | 79  | 324 | 86     | 84  | 352 |
| 1 October 2022 or later                    | 13      | 17  | 54  | 19      | 21  | 76  | 14     | 16  | 56  |
| <b>Access to temporary protection</b>      |         |     |     |         |     |     |        |     |     |
| Applied for temporary protection           | 97      | 94  | 398 | 97      | 96  | 387 | 50     | 50  | 204 |
| Did not apply for temporary protection     | 3       | 6   | 12  | 3       | 4   | 13  | 48     | 48  | 198 |
| Not stated                                 | 0       | 0   | 1   | 0       | 0   | 0   | 2      | 2   | 10  |
| <b>Type of region of origin in Ukraine</b> |         |     |     |         |     |     |        |     |     |
| Occupied by Russian military               | 49      | 48  | 203 | 54      | 55  | 217 | 50     | 46  | 204 |
| Not occupied by Russian military           | 51      | 52  | 208 | 44      | 43  | 175 | 47     | 50  | 193 |
| Not stated                                 | 0       | 0   | 0   | 2       | 2   | 8   | 4      | 4   | 15  |
| <b>Currently in a relationship</b>         |         |     |     |         |     |     |        |     |     |
| Yes  | 64      | 66  | 261 | 61      | 58  | 243 | 67     | 64  | 276 |
| No   | 36      | 34  | 150 | 39      | 42  | 157 | 33     | 36  | 136 |

Source: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025.

▲  
Note:

*n*, number of respondents; U %, unweighted percentage; W %, weighted percentage. In some cases, the categories listed above do not add up exactly to the total number of respondents in the survey when the corresponding information is not available, for example when a respondent has answered 'Prefer not to say' or 'Don't know' in the survey.

**Table 10** examines the differences in selected socio-demographic characteristics (age and education) of the population in FRA's survey and the OSCE survey on violence against women, which was carried out in Ukraine in 2018 – that is, before the start of the current war. These results highlight how the population of women who have left Ukraine since the start of the current war differs from the population of women in Ukraine overall. Some of these socio-demographic differences can also have an impact on women's experiences as presented in this report.

**TABLE 10: AGE AND EDUCATION PROFILE OF THE WEIGHTED SAMPLE IN FRA'S SURVEY ON WOMEN FROM UKRAINE AND THE OSCE'S 2018 SURVEY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN UKRAINE (%)**

|                 | FRA             | OSCE |    |
|-----------------|-----------------|------|----|
|                 |                 |      |    |
|                 | 18-29           | 22   | 19 |
|                 | 30-39           | 31   | 20 |
|                 | 40-49           | 26   | 19 |
|                 | 50-59           | 12   | 20 |
| Age group       | 60-74           | 9    | 23 |
|                 | Primary or less | 8    | 1  |
|                 | Secondary       | 14   | 55 |
| Education level | Tertiary        | 78   | 44 |

Sources: FRA's survey on violence and related human rights abuses against women fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2025; OSCE, *OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women – Well-being and safety of women: Technical report*, Vienna, 2019.

# Abbreviations

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>ECtHR</b>         | European Court of Human Rights   |
| <b>EIGE</b>          | European Institute for Gender Equality   |
| <b>EU-GBV survey</b> | European Union gender-based violence survey  |
| <b>Eurojust</b>      | European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation                             |
| <b>Europol</b>       | European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation                              |
| <b>FRA</b>           | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights                                       |
| <b>GP</b>            | general practitioner (i.e. a primary care doctor)                                  |
| <b>GPS</b>           | global positioning system  |
| <b>OSCE</b>          | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe                               |
| <b>TPD</b>           | Temporary Protection Directive (Council Directive 2001/55/EC)                      |
| <b>VAW Directive</b> | Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence |
| <b>VRD</b>           | Victims' Rights Directive (Directive 2012/29/EU)                                   |

## Getting in touch with the EU

### In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you online ([op.europa.eu/en/publications](https://op.europa.eu/en/publications)).

### On the phone or in writing

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
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## Finding information about the EU

### Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website ([europa.eu](https://europa.eu)).

### EU publications

You can view or order EU publications at [op.europa.eu/en/publications](https://op.europa.eu/en/publications). Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local documentation centre ([european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us_en)).

### EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1951 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex ([eur-lex.europa.eu](https://eur-lex.europa.eu))

### Open data from the EU

The portal [data.europa.eu](https://data.europa.eu) provides access to open datasets from the EU institutions, bodies and agencies. These can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes. The portal also provides access to a wealth of datasets from European countries.



## PROMOTING AND PROTECTING YOUR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS ACROSS THE EU —

The start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 shocked the global community and gave rise to a series of urgent fundamental rights challenges across Europe. While much attention has focused on the scale of devastation and its wider impact on all Ukrainians, the war has also inflicted profound personal harm. This report sheds light on the violence, sexual harassment and exploitation experienced by women displaced from Ukraine. As conflict heightens women's risk of abuse and exploitation, many women left Ukraine and sought safety in the EU. Despite receiving legal protections in the EU, FRA's findings show that gender-based violence is widespread. Drawing on a survey and in-depth interviews with women from Ukraine, the report documents the prevalence, forms and patterns of gender-based violence and sets out practical measures to improve safety, access to justice and support.



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