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# SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN GREAT BRITAIN

The article presents an analytical report on the survey results of Ukrainian refugees concerning various aspects of their lives in the United Kingdom, with the aim of identifying priority areas for support. The questionnaire developed for the study is divided into two parts: the first part includes demographic characteristics (such as gender, age, educational level, employment status, and proficiency in English), while the second part consists of questions designed to examine different aspects of the refugees' lives. The sample comprises 74 respondents, including 60 women and 14 men. Statistical methods, including the Mann-Whitney U-test and non-parametric Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, were employed to analyse the survey data. In this study, we use the commonly accepted psychological definition of socialpsychological support as a concept that describes various forms of assistance and support an individual receives from their social environment. The questionnaire categorized social support into subtypes: material (provision of resources such as money or goods), emotional (presence, listening, sharing of emotional experiences, and understanding), informational (provision of advice and guidance), and instrumental/behavioral (practical help to solve problems or achieve goals). The findings indicate that the highest priority types of support for Ukrainian refugees in the United Kingdom are instrumental / behavioral, informational and material support, whereas psychological support was identified as the lowest priority.

**Keywords:** culture shock, discrimination, informational and material support, psychological support, social support, Ukrainian refugees.

# INTRODUCTION

**Problem setting.** According to the National Audit Office, from 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022 to 28<sup>th</sup> August 2023, approximately 131,000 Ukrainians arrived in the United Kingdom under the *Homes for Ukraine* scheme (Investigation into the Homes for Ukraine scheme: Report, 2023). As reported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN Regional Information Centre, 2024), over 6.168 million Ukrainian refugees were registered across Europe by the end of July 2024. The Migration Observatory estimated that, as of 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024, about 160,000 Ukrainians were residing in the UK. Among adults who arrived under the two primary Ukraine resettlement schemes (the Ukraine Family and Sponsorship Schemes) in early 2024, 70% were women, and approximately 27% of all arrivals were children under 18 years old (The Migration Observatory, 2024). O. Malynovska (2024) notes in the analytical report by the Center for Economic and Social Studies

that Ukrainians have faced numerous challenges, particularly in securing stable housing and employment, accessing healthcare, and overcoming language barriers. C. Giosan et al. (2024) in their study evaluating the efficacy of support groups for Ukrainian refugees, note that «premigration and post-migration factors, such as trauma, loss, war violence, separation, lack of support networks, and psychosocial difficulties with adjustment in the host country, have been associated with increased susceptibility to mental health problems and poorer well-being for internally displaced Ukrainian refugees». Given the above, the issue of providing social and psychological support to Ukrainian refugees becomes particularly urgent.

Ukrainian scholars have examined social-psychological and social-pedagogical support for Ukrainians abroad across different countries. O. Kredenzer et al. (2022) explored this issue in Germany, while V. Panok and K. Ostrovska (Ukrinform, 2023), focused on Portugal, A. Dulya and K. Mochalova (2023) – on the Czech Republic.

Additionally, international researchers (A. Newman et al., 2018; K. Alfadhli, J. Drury, 2018 and others) have studied social and psychosocial support for refugees. P. Walawender, D. Liszka and E. Szczygieł (2024) attempted to explore the relationship between social support, self-esteem, and the personal and professional situations characteristic of Ukrainian refugees. The research conducted by international scholars also focused on the issue of Ukrainian refugees' access to healthcare systems in various countries, including the Czech Republic (Kulhánová et al., 2024) and Germany (Davitian et al., 2024).

The article aims to present our original findings on the social and psychological support provided to Ukrainian refugees in the UK. The main objectives of the research were to establish the relationship between the priority types of support for Ukrainian refugees and 1) their potential involvement in Ukrainian organizations or communities, 2) the presence of close relationships with members of the native population, 3) possible experiences of discrimination against them, 4) potential manifestations of cultural shock.

The purpose of the article is to provide an analytical report on survey results concerning various aspects of the lives of Ukrainian refugees in the UK, with the goal of identifying priority areas for support.

## METHODOLOGY

**Research procedure and ethical statements.** This research used a cross-sectional questionnaire survey. Ethical approval was obtained from the ethics committee of Canterbury Christ Church University. The survey was conducted among English language course attendees at this university between 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 and 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023. The questionnaire was pre-tested, and incomplete or problematic questions were removed. All respondents were briefed thoroughly before the survey. Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire independently and anonymously, with assurances that participation posed no risk.

**Survey tools.** The questionnaire used in this survey research comprised two parts. The first section gathered demographic information on participants, including gender, age, educational level, employment status and English proficiency. The second section contained questions aimed at exploring aspects of life for Ukrainian refugees in the UK, such as involvement in Ukrainian organizations or communities, close connections with locals, experiences of discrimination or culture shock and preferred types of support from the host society.

**Statistical analysis.** The survey results were analyzed using the following statistical methods: 1) a hypothesis testing method to assess differences between two samples based on qualitatively measured characteristics (Mann-Whitney U test – a non-parametric statistical test); 2) a non-parametric method to examine the correlation between two ranked variables (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient).

**Demographic characteristics of the research sample.** The sample consisted of 74 participants: 60 women and 14 men, aged 16 to 75 years, with an average age of 46.7 years. The majority (91.9%) have higher education, and 5.4% hold an academic degree (equivalent to a PhD).

However, only 31.1% of the respondents were employed. Our previous publication (Halytska & Hryschuk, 2023) provided a detailed breakdown of the sample by education level, employment status and English proficiency.

# **RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Analytical report on survey results. In this study, we use the commonly accepted psychological definition of social-psychological support as a concept that describes various forms of assistance and support an individual receives from their social environment. The questionnaire categorized social support into subtypes: material (provision of resources such as money or goods), emotional (presence, listening, sharing of emotional experiences, and understanding), informational (provision of advice and guidance) and instrumental/behavioral (practical help to solve problems or achieve goals).

Survey results indicated that the highest priority types of support among Ukrainian refugees in the UK were instrumental/behavioral, informational, and material (see Figure 1).



# Figure 1. Distribution of responses to the question «What type of support from the host society is the most important for you?»

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A descriptive study by Korobanova & Schulzhenko (2022) examined the socio-psychological adaptation process of Ukrainian refugees abroad. This study concluded that during integration into the host society, migrants undergo a process of acquiring new relevant social and communicative roles, where group support plays a significant role. Estrada-Villaseñor et al. (2024) note that key factors affecting well-being of refugees include challenges faced during adaptation to a new environment, the experience of losing one's cultural heritage, and the availability of emotional and practical support systems. Given the aforementioned considerations, we aimed to determine whether our respondents were affiliated with Ukrainian organizations or communities. Our survey results show that 47.3% of respondents participate in Ukrainian organizations or communities in the UK (see Figure 2).



# Figure 2. Diagram of response distribution to the question «Are you a member of any Ukrainian organizations or communities in the United Kingdom?» Compiled by the authors independently

Finally, we compared those who are members of organizations with those who are not, in terms of their need for different types of support. No differences were found between the groups regarding the types of support: material, instrumental/behavioral, emotional and psychological. However, a difference was found on the Information Support scale (Mann-Whitney U = 570, p = 0.18).

Table 1

# Testing hypotheses concerning the mean scores across scales of needed support in groups of those who have joined Ukrainian organizations or communities compared to those who have not joined such groups

Scale	Criterion	Statistic	p-value	Alternative Hypothesis
Information support	Mann-Whitney U test	570	0.180	Participants of organizations ≠ non-participants of organizations
Material support	Mann-Whitney U test	670	0.883	Participants of organizations ≠ non-participants of organizations
Instrumental / Behavioral support	Mann-Whitney U test	666	0.847	Participants of organizations ≠ non-participants of organizations
Emotional support	Mann-Whitney U test	681	0.991	Participants of organizations ≠ non-participants of organizations
Psychological support	Mann-Whitney U test	638	0.622	Participants of organizations ≠ non-participants of organizations

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As shown in the boxplot (Figure 3), those who are members of Ukrainian organizations or communities have, on average, a lower level of need for informational support than those who are not members.



# Figure 3. Boxplots for the Information Support scale in the groups of those who are participants of Ukrainian organizations or communities and those who are not Compiled by the authors independently

The survey results show that 29.7% of respondents have close relatives (family or friends) among the native population. No statistically significant difference was found between those who have relatives among the native population and those who do not, regarding the support types. However, it can be hypothesized that with a larger sample size, differences would appear: the groups could differ in terms of material support (Mann-Whitney U = 426, p = 0.062) and emotional support (Mann-Whitney U = 431, p = 0.085).

Table 2

Scale	Criterion	Statistic	p-value	Alternative Hypothesis
Information support	Mann-Whitney U test	561	0.886	Have relatives among the native population ≠ do not have
Material support	Mann-Whitney U test	426	0.062	Have relatives among the native population ≠ do not have
Instrumental / Behavioral support	Mann-Whitney U test	536	0.640	Have relatives among the native population ≠ do not have
Emotional support	Mann-Whitney U test	431	0.085	Have relatives among the native population ≠ do not have
Psychological support	Mann-Whitney U test	539	0.690	Have relatives among the native population ≠ do not have

Testing hypotheses concerning mean differences between those with relatives among the native population and those without, across scales of support types

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Considering the boxplots (Figure 4), we can hypothesize that those with relatives among the native population have a higher level on the Material Support scale than those who do not.



# Figure 4. Boxplots for the Material Support scale in the groups of those who have relatives among the native population and those who do not

Compiled by the authors independently

We can also hypothesize that those with relatives among the native population have a higher level on the Emotional Support scale than those without relatives (Figure 5).



# Figure 5. Boxplots for the Emotional Support scale in the groups of those who have relatives among the native population and those who do not

Compiled by the authors independently

The results of the study show that a small number of respondents experienced discrimination: none of the respondents were subjected to physical abuse (beating); 1.4% of respondents felt open hatred and prejudice; 16.2% experienced preference given to others without obvious reason in the professional sphere; 6.8% faced unequal conditions and rights; 2.7% experienced psychological pressure; and 4.1% felt avoidance. At the same time, no correlation was found between the scales of discrimination manifestations and the types of support needed.

		Information Support	Material Support	Instrumental/ Behavioral Support	Emotional Support	Psychological Support
Avoidance	Spearman's rho	0.014	0.141	0.07	-0.176	0.155
	р	0.904	0.232	0.554	0.133	0.186
Psychological Pressure	Spearman's rho	0.139	-0.047	0.11	0.018	0.127
	р	0.236	0.692	0.353	0.88	0.282
Unequal Conditions and Rights	Spearman's rho	-0.001	0.036	-0.01	-0.222	-0.011
	р	0.996	0.762	0.932	0.057	0.927
Preference Given to Others in the Professional Sphere	Spearman's rho	-0.064	0.074	-0.042	-0.161	0.107
	р	0.585	0.53	0.725	0.171	0.362
Hatred and Humiliation	Spearman's rho	0.103	-0.059	0.098	-0.082	-0.076
	р	0.384	0.615	0.408	0.486	0.521

# Correlational links between the scales of discrimination manifestations and the types of support needed by the respondents

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The results of our study show that Ukrainian refugees experienced some symptoms of culture shock, among which (Halytska, Hryshchuk, 2023) were: tension caused by efforts needed to achieve socio-cultural adaptation (41.9%); feelings of loss (54.1%); feeling of being unaccepted by representatives of the new culture (9.5%); failure to meet role expectations, values, feelings and self-identity (17.6%); unexpected anxiety and anger due to the awareness of cultural differences (9.5%); feelings of inferiority due to an inability to adapt to the new environment (24.3%); and feeling of being «a stranger» in a new environment (21.6%) (Table 4).

Research findings indicate (Table 4):

«I feel the failure of role expectations, values, feelings and self-identity» positively correlates with the need for informational support (Spearman's rho = 0.327\*\*, p = 0.004).

«I feel inferior due to my inability to adapt to a new environment» positively correlates with the need for psychological support (Spearman's rho =  $0.270^*$ , p = 0.020).

It is worth noting that, according to the results of our survey, only 15 respondents (20%) prioritized psychological support as their highest need (see Figure 1). This finding is concerning, as it is evident that psychological challenges are inevitable for individuals fleeing war. L. Oviedo et al. (2022), in their study, highlight that the lives of refugees escaping war are most frequently affected by post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and emotional-related problems. An intriguing hypothesis was proposed by J. Kovács, C. Csukonyi et al. (2023), suggesting that «sometimes posttraumatic stress may be an inhibiting factor, sometimes a neutral one, and sometimes a facilitating factor in regards to cultural adaptation». Researchers propose «that social support can be related to this relationship. If an individual receives the necessary help, then posttraumatic stress can facilitate participating in the life of the host country». We assume that the results of our survey may be explained either by the relatively high level of resilience demonstrated

by the Ukrainian refugees we surveyed or by their reluctance to acknowledge their psychological issues for certain reasons, which remains a subject for separate research.

Table 4

# Correlational links between the scales of some cultural shock symptoms and the types of support needed by the respondents

		Information Support	Material Support	Instrumental / Behavioral Support	Emotional Support	Psychological Support
I feel tension caused by the efforts needed to achieve socio-cultural adaptation	Spearman's rho	0.153	0.074	0.212	0.096	0.040
	р	0.192	0.533	0.070	0.416	0.733
I feel a sense of loss (friends, status, profession or certain possessions)	Spearman's rho	0.071	-0.055	-0.028	-0.042	0.159
	р	0.549	0.640	0.811	0.721	0.175
I feel unaccepted by representatives of the new culture	Spearman's rho	0.157	-0.143	-0.022	-0.129	0.046
	р	0.183	0.224	0.856	0.273	0.695
I feel the failure of role expectations, values, feelings and self-identity	Spearman's rho	0.327 **	0.003	0.166	-0.007	0.058
	р	0.004	0.977	0.158	0.950	0.622
I feel unexpected anxiety and anger due to awareness of cultural differences	Spearman's rho	0.111	-0.055	0.133	0.196	0.101
	р	0.345	0.643	0.260	0.095	0.393
I feel inferior due to my inability to adapt to a new environment	Spearman's rho	0.144	0.013	0.089	0.024	0.270 *
	р	0.221	0.909	0.451	0.839	0.020
I feel like a «stranger» in the new environment	Spearman's rho	0.054	-0.073	-0.016	-0.126	0.137
	р	0.645	0.539	0.890	0.284	0.246

Compiled by the authors independently

# CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study indicate that the highest priority among Ukrainian refugees in the United Kingdom was given to the following types of support: Instrumental / Behavioral (as indicated by 42 respondents, accounting for 57%), Informational (as indicated by 40 respondents, or 54%), and Material (as indicated by 38 respondents, or 51%), while the lowest priority was assigned

to Psychological support (as indicated by 19 respondents, or 26%) and Emotional support (as indicated by 5 respondents, or 7%), some respondents noted that they had experienced instances of discrimination against themselves.

It was found that participants involved in Ukrainian organizations or communities generally have a lower level of need for Informational support compared to those who are not involved. No statistically significant differences were identified between those who have relatives among the native population and those who do not, in terms of support needs. However, it is suggested that individuals with relatives among the native population show a higher level of need for Material and Emotional support compared to those without.

The prospects for **further scientific research** lie in the study of the socio-pedagogical approach to supporting Ukrainian refugees in the United Kingdom.

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# СОЦІАЛЬНО-ПСИХОЛОГІЧНА ПІДТРИМКА УКРАЇНСЬКИХ БІЖЕНЦІВ У ВЕЛИКІЙ БРИТАНІЇ

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> У статті представлено аналітичний звіт про результати опитування українських біженців щодо різних аспектів їх життєдіяльності у Великій Британії для визначення пріоритетних напрямів підтримки. Розроблений опитувальник складається з двох частин: перша частина містить демографічні характеристики (стать, вік, освітній рівень, професійна зайнятість, рівень володіння англійською мовою), друга – питання, які дозволяли з'ясувати різні аспекти життєдіяльності українських біженців. Вибірка становила 74 досліджуваних, з яких 60 жінок і 14 чоловіків. У досліджені автори оперують загальноприйнятою в психології дефініцією соціально-психологічної підтримки – як поняття, що використовується для опису різних форм допомоги та підтримки, які людина отримує від соціального оточення. З огляду на це в опитувальнику соціальну підтримку було розподілено на підвиди: матеріальну, емоційну, інформаційну, інструментальну / поведінкову (передбачає надання практичної допомоги для вирішення проблем чи досягнення певної мети). Для опрацювання результатів опитування застосовувалися статистичні методи перевірки гіпотез: *U-критерій Манна-Уітні;* непараметричний метод (коефіцієнт рангової кореляції г-Спірмена). Результати дослідження показують, що найвищий пріоритет серед українських біженців у Великій Британії отримали такі види підтримки: інструментальна / поведінкова, інформаційна, матеріальна, найменший пріоритет – психологічна підтримка.

> **Ключові слова:** дискримінація, інформаційна підтримка, культурний шок, матеріальна підтримка, соціально-психологічна підтримка, українські біженці.