



**#FreeSpot**

**Private accommodation  
of Ukrainian refugees in  
Belgium**

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# #FreeSpot

## Colophon

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## Summary

### What prompted this study?

Since Russia invaded neighbouring Ukraine on 24 February 2022, more than 7,892,000 Ukrainians have fled their country to European countries. Over 60,000 of them came to Belgium, automatically obtaining temporary protection status as 'displaced persons'. On 28 February 2022, then-Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration Sammy Mahdi launched the #FreeSpot / #PlekVrij / #PlaceDispo campaign, calling on citizens to host Ukrainian refugees at home. Citizens offered more than 22,000 places in a short time. How many host families have actually provided shelter to Ukrainians since then is difficult to estimate.

### What did we study?

The willingness of host families to open their homes was and still is crucial for hosting refugees. Yet to this day, there is still little understanding of who these host families are and what motivated them to accommodate people. How does living together work? What other support – besides housing – do host families provide to the people they host? What needs do host families and their guests experience? And to what extent are they supported in this or do they feel as such?

### How did this research take place?

This report describes the findings of a joint study by the [Social Work Research Centre](#) and the [Centre for Family Studies](#) of Odisee University of Applied Sciences, which focused on these questions. Between 14 June and 18 August, we surveyed host families with an online survey in Dutch, French, English, Ukrainian and Russian. As many as 742 people completed (part of) the survey. This report is based on the 653 respondents who had already effectively hosted Ukrainians or were still doing so at the time of the survey.

### Who are the host families?

The host families clearly have life experience: more than four in five of the respondents are over 40, more than half are over 50, and a quarter are over 60. The majority live with a partner and children (47%) or only with a partner (28,6%). The host families in the survey are predominantly highly educated: as many as 80,4% of the respondents have a higher education degree. Financially, four out of five host families in the survey indicate that they make ends meet easily to very easily on net family income. More than 90% of respondents have Belgian nationality. Ukrainian host families hosting compatriots may have been less reached by the online survey.

## What are the motives for accommodating Ukrainian families?

There is a wide range of complementary motives. The main reason participants provided private accommodation is because they consider it "a moral duty". Other important reasons include "because society is doing too little", "because the government has asked for help", because "one feels connected to Ukrainians", because helping makes one feel better about oneself or because one wants to learn new things through first-hand experiences.

## Who are the people accommodated by the host families?

Through the respondents, we have demographic data on 1,895 displaced people who were or had stayed with them. Most host families offered accommodation to two or three people. 39% of the persons received in the host families in the survey are 18 years old or younger. 34% are men, 66% women.

Two thirds of the guests were in Belgium for less than a week before arriving at their host families. After arriving in Belgium, 60% immediately found a place with their current host family. For three out of the four survey participants, the private accommodation began as early as March or April 2022, the initial period of #FreeSpot. The route to the host family was mainly through the municipality, the CPAS/OCMW and/or through #FreeSpot. A fifth found a host family through personal contacts such as friends or acquaintances.

Most host families (65,7%) did not have a clear idea beforehand about how long they wanted to open their home to Ukrainians. For three-fifths of the families where the accommodation had already ended, the private accommodation lasted less than four months.

## Where were Ukrainians accommodated?

Almost nine out of ten respondents hosted Ukrainians in their own homes. In most cases, people shared spaces in their own homes, such as bathroom, kitchen or living room. Sometimes this was a separate housing unit. Just over 10% received Ukrainian refugees in a second home or in a vacant house.

## How do people live together?

Most host families made arrangements with their guests about living together. This mostly concerns the house key, on which four out of five (80,4%) made agreements. About half of the families also had agreements on financial contributions (51,7%) and privacy (51,1%), on helping out in the household (44,6%) and on the support the host family offers to the refugees (40,2%).

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## What support do host families offer?

The research clearly shows that host families do much more than provide a room or a roof. Host families provide support in many ways. Administrative help is the most frequently offered support, for no less than 86,6% of respondents. Much support is practical in nature, such as accessing medical care (69,4%), education (68,6%) or leisure (60,2%). More than eight in ten respondents also offered a listening ear and/or emotional support.

## And financially?

One in two respondents receive financial compensation for housing Ukrainian displaced persons. Most receive such compensation from the CPAS/OCMW or the municipality (56,6%), and/or from the refugees themselves (42,4%).

## What support needs do host families experience?

Host families experience a great need for support. Most often, they need an overview of the available assistance (70,6%), support in finding a sustainable housing solution for their guests (66,7%), in finding work for their guests (63,2%), administrative support (63%) or an overview of all the things that need to be arranged by/for the people they host (61,7%). But host families' support needs are also high in other areas.

## Where did host families find support? Who could they turn to?

Their own family is crucial: as many as three quarters of respondents found support from their partner or their own family (74,4%). A second important source of support is the CPAS/OCMW (60,1%). Almost four in five of host families describe their experience with the CPAS/OCMW as positive. To a lesser extent, host families also received support from other family members or from the municipality (37,8% and 37,4% respectively), from neighbours (25,3%), from other host families (11,5%) or from volunteers, citizens' initiatives or social organisations. 7.5% indicated that they did not receive support from anyone. More than four in ten respondents did not feel adequately supported.

## How do host families experience the private accommodation?

More than four out of five people in our survey consider their experience as a host family of Ukrainian refugees to be "rather positive" to "very positive". When accommodation had already ended, two in three (66%) were positive. However, the most important factor was compliance with agreements made. The more respondents indicated that these agreements were kept, the higher the satisfaction with the hosting experience. At the same time, people were more likely to rate the private accommodation positively if they felt that they were adequately supported in their needs. The majority of respondents who were still hosting refugees (61,9%) were "rather motivated" or "very motivated" to continue hosting their current guests beyond the agreed length of stay.

This predominantly positive story also deserves nuance. 16,5% of participants found the hosting experience rather negative or even very negative. When the private accommodation had already ended, this was as high as 34%. More than four in ten acknowledged that with the private accommodation, they took on too much responsibility and did not manage to devote enough time to themselves and their own families.

## What does the future hold?

(How) can private accommodation be made more sustainable and structurally embedded in refugee reception and support policies and regulation, without the government shifting its responsibility to citizens and families?

Sustainable use of host families requires prior screening of host families, better matching, stronger support to host families and clear guarantees on the duration of private accommodation. Private accommodation therefore requires a clear embedding in a broader and government-coordinated reception policy, with guarantees that people can easily move on from host families to the regular housing market when a host family wants to end the commitment. That is why this study highlights – once again – the urgent need for flanking housing policy in the regions. There is no perspective for host families, nor for guests, if a sustainable housing solution cannot be considered.

As long as the war continues, the need for shelter will remain for many Ukrainian families. Therefore, it seems likely that the period of temporary protection of Ukrainian refugees under the Displaced Persons Directive will have to be extended beyond March 2023. This means that all host countries, including Belgium, should prepare for a possible longer stay of Ukrainian displaced persons, and for some refugees perhaps even a permanent stay.

The current accommodation crisis for Ukrainian refugees, as well as for other applicants for international protection, necessitates the search for innovative answers to the accommodation needs of refugees and the obligations of the Belgian government in this regard. With stronger and structural support, host families can be part of a reception and asylum policy that can accommodate refugees in a more humane and sustainable manner.

December 10, 2022

## Samenvatting

### Wat is de aanleiding?

Sinds de inval op 24 februari 2022 van Rusland in buurland Oekraïne zijn meer dan 7.892.000 Oekraïners hun land ontvlucht naar Europese landen. Ruim 60.000 onder hen kwamen naar België, en verkregen automatisch een tijdelijke beschermingsstatus als “ontheemde”. Op 28 februari 2022 lanceerde de toenmalige staatssecretaris voor Asiel en Migratie Sammy Mahdi de campagne #PlekVrij / #PlaceDispo, met de oproep om Oekraïense vluchtelingen thuis onderdak te bieden. Burgers boden op korte tijd meer dan 22.000 plaatsen aan. Hoeveel gastgezinnen sindsdien effectief opvang hebben geboden aan Oekraïners, is moeilijk in te schatten.

### Wat hebben we onderzocht?

De bereidheid van gastgezinnen om hun woning open te stellen was en is nog steeds cruciaal in de opvang van Oekraïense vluchtelingen. Toch is er tot vandaag nog weinig zicht op wie deze gastgezinnen zijn en wat hen motiveerde om mensen op te vangen. Hoe verloopt het samenleven? Welke andere steun – naast huisvesting – bieden gastgezinnen aan de mensen die ze opvangen? Welke noden ervaren gastgezinnen en hun gasten? En in welke mate worden of voelen ze zich hierin ondersteund?

### Hoe is dit onderzoek gebeurd?

Dit rapport beschrijft de bevindingen van een gezamenlijk onderzoek van het [Onderzoekscentrum Sociaal Werk](#) en het [Kenniscentrum Gezinswetenschappen](#) van hogeschool Odisee, waarin deze vragen centraal stonden. We bevroegen gastgezinnen met een online survey tussen 14 juni en 18 augustus 2022, in het Nederlands, Frans, Engels, Oekraïens en Russisch. Liefst 742 mensen vulden de survey (gedeeltelijk) in. Dit rapport is gebaseerd op de 653 respondenten die al effectief Oekraïners hadden opgevangen of dat nog steeds deden op het moment van de bevraging.

### Wie zijn nu de gastgezinnen?

Gastgezinnen hebben duidelijk levenservaring: meer dan vier op vijf van de respondenten is ouder dan 40, meer dan de helft is ouder dan 50, en een kwart ouder dan 60. De meerderheid woont samen met een partner en kinderen (47%) of enkel met een partner (28,6%). De gastgezinnen in de survey zijn overwegend hooggeschoold: liefst 80,4% van de respondenten heeft een diploma hoger onderwijs. Financieel geeft vier op vijf van de gastgezinnen in de survey aan dat ze eerder gemakkelijk tot zeer gemakkelijk rondkomen met het nettogezinsinkomen. Meer dan 90% van de respondenten heeft de Belgische nationaliteit. Oekraïense gastgezinnen die landgenoten opvangen werden mogelijk minder bereikt met de online survey.

## Wat zijn beweegredenen om Oekraïense gezinnen op te vangen?

Er speelt een brede waaier aan complementaire motivaties. De belangrijkste reden waarom deelnemers gastopvang verleenden, is omdat ze het aanvoelen als “een morele plicht”. Andere belangrijke redenen zijn “omdat de maatschappij te weinig doet”, “omdat de overheid heeft opgeroepen tot hulp”, omdat men “zich verbonden voelt met Oekraïners”, omdat men zich door te helpen beter voelt over zichzelf of omdat men nieuwe dingen wil leren door ervaringen uit eerste hand.

## Wie zijn de mensen die opgevangen worden door de gastgezinnen?

Via de respondenten hebben we demografische gegevens over 1.895 ontheemden die op dat moment bij hen verbleven of hadden verbleven. De meeste gezinnen boden opvang aan twee of drie personen. 39% van de opgevangen personen in de gastgezinnen in de survey is 18 jaar of jonger. 34% zijn mannen, 66% vrouwen.

Twee derde van de gasten was minder dan een week in België voordat ze bij hun gastgezin terecht kwamen. Na aankomst in België vond 60% meteen een plek bij het huidige gastgezin. Voor drie op vier deelnemers aan het onderzoek startte de gastopvang al in maart of april 2022, de beginperiode van #PlekVrij. De weg naar het gastgezin verliep voornamelijk via de gemeente, het OCMW en/of via #PlekVrij. Eén vijfde vond een gastgezin via persoonlijke contacten zoals vrienden of kennissen.

De meeste gastgezinnen (65,7%) hadden vooraf geen duidelijk idee hoe lang zij hun huis wilden openstellen voor Oekraïners. Bij drie vijfde van de gezinnen waar de opvang reeds ophield, duurde de gastopvang minder dan vier maanden.

## Waar werden Oekraïners opgevangen?

Bijna negen op de tien respondenten organiseerde de opvang in de eigen woning. In de meeste gevallen deelden mensen de ruimtes in hun eigen woning, zoals badkamer, keuken of woonkamer. Soms ging dit om een afgescheiden woonunit. Iets meer dan 10% ving Oekraïense vluchtelingen op in een tweede verblijf of in een leegstaande woning.

## Hoe leven mensen samen?

De meerderheid van de gastgezinnen maakte afspraken met hun gasten rond het samenleven. Dat gaat het meest over de huissleutel, waar vier op vijf (80,4%) afspraken rond maakte. Ongeveer de helft van de gezinnen had ook afspraken rond financiële bijdragen (51,7%) en privacy (51,1%), rond het meehelpen in het huishouden (44,6%) en rond de ondersteuning die het gastgezin biedt aan de vluchtelingen (40,2%).

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## Welke steun bieden gastgezinnen?

Het onderzoek toont duidelijk dat gastgezinnen véél meer doen dan een kamer of een onderdak aanbieden. Gastgezinnen ondersteunen op tal van manieren. Administratieve hulp is de meest geboden ondersteuning, bij liefst 86,6% van de respondenten. Veel steun is praktisch van aard, zoals toeleiden naar medische hulp (69,4%), onderwijs (68,6%) of vrije tijd (60,2%). Meer dan acht op tien respondenten bood ook een luisterend oor en/of emotionele steun.

## Hoe zit het financieel?

Eén op twee respondenten ontvangt een financiële vergoeding voor het huisvesten van Oekraïense ontheemden. De meesten ontvangen die van het OCMW of de gemeente (56,6%) en/of van de vluchtelingen zelf (42,4%).

## Welke behoefte aan ondersteuning ervaren gastgezinnen?

Gastgezinnen ervaren heel wat nood aan ondersteuning. Het vaakst hebben ze nood aan een overzicht van de beschikbare hulp (70,6%), aan ondersteuning bij het zoeken naar een duurzame woonoplossing voor hun gasten (66,7%), bij het zoeken naar werk voor hun gasten (63,2%), aan administratieve ondersteuning (63%) of aan een overzicht van alle zaken die in orde gebracht moeten worden door/voor de mensen die ze opvangen (61,7%). Maar ook op andere vlakken zijn de ondersteuningsnoden van gastgezinnen groot.

## Waar vonden gastgezinnen steun? Bij wie konden ze terecht?

Het eigen gezin is cruciaal: liefst driekwart van de respondenten vindt steun bij hun partner of het eigen gezin (74,4%). Een tweede belangrijke bron van steun is het OCMW (60,1%). Bijna vier op vijf de gastgezinnen omschrijven hun ervaring met het OCMW als positief. In mindere mate vonden gastgezinnen ook steun bij andere familieleden of bij de gemeente (respectievelijk 37,8% en 37,4%), bij burens (25,3%), bij andere gastgezinnen (11,5%) of bij vrijwilligers, burgerinitiatieven of sociale organisaties. 7,5% gaf aan van niemand steun gekregen te hebben. Meer dan vier op tien respondenten voelen zich onvoldoende ondersteund.

## Hoe kijken gastgezinnen naar hun opvang?

Meer dan vier op vijf van de mensen in onze bevraging beschouwen hun ervaring als gastgezin van Oekraïense vluchtelingen als “eerder positief” tot “zeer positief”. Waar de opvang al afgerond was, waren nog twee op drie (66%) positief. De belangrijkste factor was echter of de gemaakte afspraken werden nageleefd. Bij respondenten die aangaven dat de afspraken werden nageleefd, is het waarschijnlijker dat zij positief zijn over hun opvangervaring. Tegelijk was de kans groter dat mensen de gastopvang positief beoordeelden indien ze vonden dat ze voldoende ondersteund werden in hun noden.

De meerderheid van de respondenten waar de opvang nog liep (61,9%), was "wel" of "heel gemotiveerd" om de opvang van hun huidige gasten nog verder te zetten, ook nog na de overeengekomen verblijfsduur.

Dit overwegend positieve verhaal verdient ook nuancering. 16,5% van de deelnemers beschouwde de opvangervaring als eerder negatief of zelfs zeer negatief. Waar de gastopvang reeds afgerond was, ging dit zelfs om 34%. Meer dan vier op tien erkennen met gastopvang te veel verantwoordelijkheid te hebben opgenomen en slaagt er niet in genoeg tijd aan zichzelf en het eigen gezin te besteden.

## Wat brengt de toekomst?

(Hoe) kan particuliere gastopvang worden verduurzaamd en structureel verankerd in het beleid en de regelgeving rond opvang en begeleiding, zonder dat de overheden hun verantwoordelijkheid doorschuiven naar burgers en gezinnen?

Een duurzaam beroep op gastgezinnen vereist een voorafgaande screening van gastgezinnen, een betere matching, sterkere ondersteuning van gastgezinnen en duidelijke garanties over de duurtijd dat gastgezinnen voor opvang zorgen. Opvang in gastgezinnen vereist dus een duidelijke inbedding in een ruimer en door de overheden gecoördineerd opvangbeleid, met garanties dat mensen vlot kunnen doorstromen uit gastgezinnen naar de reguliere woonmarkt wanneer een gastgezin het engagement wil afronden. Daarom wijst dit onderzoek – opnieuw – op de dringende nood aan een flankerend woonbeleid in de gewesten. Er is geen perspectief voor gastgezinnen, noch voor gasten, als er geen duurzame woonoplossing in het vooruitzicht kan worden gesteld.

Zolang de oorlog voortduurt, zal er voor vele Oekraïense gezinnen een nood aan opvang blijven. Het ziet er dan ook naar uit dat de periode van tijdelijke bescherming van Oekraïense vluchtelingen onder de Ontheemdenrichtlijn na maart 2023 verlengd zal moeten worden. Dit maakt het voor alle opvanglanden, en dus ook voor België, noodzakelijk om zich voor te bereiden op een mogelijk langer verblijf van Oekraïense ontheemden, en voor een deel van de vluchtelingen misschien zelfs op een definitief verblijf.

De huidige opvangcrisis voor Oekraïense vluchtelingen, én voor andere verzoekers om internationale bescherming, maakt het noodzakelijk om te zoeken naar innovatieve antwoorden op de opvangnoden van vluchtelingen, en op de opvangverplichtingen die de overheden in België hebben. Een beroep op gastgezinnen kan – mits een sterkere en structurele ondersteuning – een onderdeel zijn van een opvang- en asielbeleid dat op een meer humane en duurzame wijze vluchtelingen kan opvangen.

10 december 2022

## Résumé

### Qu'est-ce qui a motivé l'enquête?

Plus de 7 892 000 Ukrainiens ont fui leur pays vers des pays européens depuis que la Russie a envahi l'Ukraine voisine le 24 février 2022. Plus de 60 000 d'entre eux sont venus en Belgique, obtenant automatiquement un statut de protection temporaire. Le 28 février 2022, Sammy Mahdi, alors secrétaire d'État à l'Asile et la Migration, a lancé la campagne #PlaceDispo / #PlekVrij, appelant les citoyens à offrir aux réfugiés ukrainiens un abri chez eux. Son appel a été répondu en masse : en peu de temps, les gens ont offert plus de 22 000 abris. Il est difficile d'estimer combien de familles d'accueil ont effectivement offert un abri aux Ukrainiens depuis lors.

### Qu'avons-nous examiné?

La volonté des familles d'accueil d'ouvrir leur maison était, et reste à ce jour, cruciale dans l'accueil des réfugiés ukrainiens. Pourtant, jusqu'à aujourd'hui, nous savons peu de choses sur l'identité de ces familles d'accueil et sur ce qui les motive à accueillir des personnes. Comment vivent-ils ensemble? Quel autre soutien – outre le logement – les familles d'accueil offrent-elles aux personnes qu'elles accueillent? Quels sont les besoins des familles d'accueil et de leurs hôtes? Et dans quelle mesure reçoivent-ils ou se sentent-ils soutenus dans ces démarches?

### Comment cette recherche a-t-elle été menée?

Ce rapport décrit les résultats d'une étude conjointe du Centre d'Etude des sciences sociales appliquées et du Centre d'Etude sur les familles de la Haute École Odisee, qui s'est penchée sur ces questions. Nous avons interrogé les familles d'accueil au moyen d'une enquête en ligne entre le 14 juin et le 18 août 2022, en français, néerlandais, anglais, ukrainien et russe. Pas moins de 742 personnes ont répondu à l'enquête (en partie). Ce rapport est basé sur les 653 personnes interrogées qui avaient déjà accueilli effectivement des Ukrainiens ou étaient encore en train de le faire au moment de l'enquête.

### Qui sont les familles d'accueil?

L'âge moyen des répondants est de 53 ans. Plus de quatre répondants sur cinq ont plus de 40 ans, plus de la moitié ont plus de 50 ans et un quart ont plus de 60 ans. La majorité vit avec un partenaire et des enfants (47%) ou seulement avec un partenaire (28,6%). Les familles d'accueil interrogées dans le cadre de l'enquête ont pour la plupart un niveau d'éducation élevé : pas moins de 80,4% des répondants ont un diplôme de l'enseignement supérieur. Sur le plan financier, quatre familles d'accueil sur cinq indiquent qu'ils s'en sortent avec leur revenu familial net assez facilement ou très facilement. Plus de 90% des répondants ont la nationalité belge. Les familles d'accueil ukrainiennes accueillant des compatriotes ont peut-être été moins touchées par l'enquête en ligne.

## Quelles sont les motivations pour accueillir des réfugiés ukrainiennes?

Un large éventail de motivations complémentaires entre en jeu. La raison principale pour laquelle les participants ont fourni des soins d'accueil est qu'ils estiment que c'est "un devoir moral". Parmi les autres raisons importantes, citons "parce que la société n'en fait pas assez", "parce que le gouvernement a demandé de l'aide", parce que "l'on se sent lié aux Ukrainiens", parce que le fait d'aider permet de se sentir mieux dans sa peau ou parce que l'on veut apprendre de nouvelles choses par expériences directes.

## Qui sont les personnes accueillies par les familles d'accueil?

Grâce aux répondants, nous disposons de données démographiques sur 1 895 personnes déplacées qui étaient ou avaient été hébergées chez eux. La plupart des familles d'accueil offraient un hébergement à deux ou trois personnes. 39% des personnes accueillies par les familles d'accueil dans l'enquête ont 18 ans ou moins. 34% sont des hommes, 66% des femmes.

Deux tiers des invités étaient en Belgique depuis moins d'une semaine avant de rejoindre leur famille d'accueil. Après leur arrivée en Belgique, 60% ont immédiatement trouvé une place dans leur famille d'accueil actuelle. Pour trois participants à l'enquête sur quatre, la prise en charge par la famille d'accueil a commencé dès mars ou avril 2022, période initiale de #PlaceDispo. Le chemin vers la famille d'accueil passait principalement par la municipalité, le CPAS et/ou par #PlaceDispo. Un cinquième a trouvé une famille d'accueil grâce à des contacts personnels tels que des amis ou des connaissances.

La plupart des familles d'accueil (65,7%) n'avaient aucune idée précise et préalable de la durée pendant laquelle elles comptaient ouvrir leur maison aux Ukrainiens. Pour trois cinquièmes des familles où l'accueil était déjà terminé, la période d'accueil a duré moins de quatre mois.

## Où les Ukrainiens étaient-ils accueillis?

Près de neuf répondants sur dix ont organisé un abri dans leur propre maison. Dans la plupart des cas, les personnes partageaient des espaces dans leur propre maison, comme la salle de bain, la cuisine ou le salon. Parfois, cela impliquait une unité d'habitation séparée. Un peu plus de 10% ont hébergé des réfugiés ukrainiens dans une résidence secondaire ou dans une maison vacante.

## Comment les gens vivent-ils ensemble?

La majorité des familles d'accueil ont conclu des accords avec leurs hôtes concernant la cohabitation. Il s'agit surtout de la clé de maison, pour laquelle quatre personnes sur cinq (80,4%) ont conclu des accords. Environ la moitié des familles ont également conclu des accords concernant les contributions financières (51,7%) et la vie privée (51,1%), l'aide au sein du foyer (44,6%) et le soutien que la famille d'accueil offre aux réfugiés (40,2%).

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## Quel soutien les familles d'accueil fournissent-elles?

L'enquête montre clairement que les familles d'accueil font bien plus qu'offrir une chambre ou un toit. Les familles d'accueil apportent leur soutien de nombreuses manières. L'aide administrative est le soutien le plus fréquemment proposé, chez pas moins de 86,6% des répondants. Une grande partie du soutien est de nature pratique, comme l'orientation vers une aide médicale (69,4%), l'éducation (68,6%) ou les loisirs (60,2%). Plus de huit répondants sur dix ont également offert une oreille attentive et/ou un soutien émotionnel.

## Et sur le plan financier?

Un répondant sur deux reçoit une compensation financière pour le logement des personnes déplacés ukrainiens. La plupart le reçoivent du CPAS ou de la municipalité (56,6%), et/ou des réfugiés eux-mêmes (42,4%).

## Quels sont les besoins de soutien des familles d'accueil?

Les familles d'accueil ont un grand besoin de soutien. Le plus souvent, ils ont besoin d'un aperçu des aides disponibles (70,6%), d'un soutien pour trouver une solution de logement durable pour leurs hôtes (66,7%), d'une recherche d'emploi pour leurs hôtes (63,2%), d'un soutien administratif (63%) ou d'un aperçu de toutes les choses qui doivent être prises en charge par/pour les personnes qu'ils accueillent (61,7%). Mais les besoins de soutien des familles d'accueil sont également élevés dans d'autres domaines.

## Où les familles d'accueil ont-elles trouvé du soutien? Vers qui pouvaient-elles se tourner?

Leur propre famille est cruciale: pas moins de trois quarts des répondants ont trouvé un soutien auprès de leur partenaire ou de leur propre famille (74,4%). Une deuxième source de soutien importante est le CPAS (60,1%). Près de quatre familles d'accueil sur cinq ont décrit leur expérience avec le CPAS comme étant positive. Dans une moindre mesure, les familles d'accueil ont également trouvé un soutien auprès d'autres membres de la famille ou de la municipalité (respectivement 37,8% et 37,4%), auprès de voisins (25,3%), auprès d'autres familles d'accueil (11,5%) ou auprès de bénévoles, d'initiatives civiques ou d'organisations sociales. 7,5% ont déclaré n'avoir reçu aucun soutien de qui que ce soit. Plus de quatre répondants sur dix se sentent insuffisamment soutenus.

## Comment les familles d'accueil perçoivent-elles leur accueil?

Plus de quatre personnes sur cinq interrogées dans le cadre de notre enquête considèrent que leur expérience en tant que famille d'accueil de réfugiés ukrainiens est "plutôt positive" ou "très positive". Dans les cas où l'accueil avait déjà été effectué, deux sur trois (66%) étaient encore positifs. Cependant, le facteur le plus important était de savoir si les accords conclus étaient respectés. Plus les répondants indiquent que ces accords ont été respectés, plus la satisfaction de l'expérience d'accueil est élevée. En même temps, les gens étaient plus susceptibles d'évaluer positivement les soins d'accueil s'ils avaient le sentiment d'être soutenus de manière adéquate dans leurs besoins. La majorité des répondants où l'accueil était en cours (61,9%) étaient "plutôt bien" ou "très motivés" pour continuer l'accueil de leurs hôtes actuels, même après la durée de séjour convenue.

Cette histoire majoritairement positive mérite également d'être nuancée. 16,5% des participants ont considéré l'expérience d'accueil comme plutôt négative, voire très négative. Dans les cas où l'hébergement avait déjà été effectué, ce pourcentage atteignait 34%. Plus de quatre personnes sur dix reconnaissent avoir assumé trop de responsabilités et ne pas consacrer suffisamment de temps à eux-mêmes et à leur propre famille.

## Que nous réserve l'avenir?

Est-il possible d'assurer la pérennité des services d'accueil privés et de les intégrer structurellement dans la politique et la réglementation, sans que les gouvernements ne se déchargent de leur responsabilité sur les citoyens et les familles?

Un recours durable aux familles d'accueil exige une sélection préalable des familles d'accueil, un meilleur jumelage, un soutien accru aux familles d'accueil et des garanties claires quant à la durée de la prise en charge par les familles d'accueil. L'accueil dans des familles d'accueil nécessite donc un ancrage clair dans une politique d'accueil plus large et coordonnée par le gouvernement, avec des garanties que les personnes puissent passer sans heurts des familles d'accueil au marché du logement ordinaire lorsqu'une famille d'accueil souhaite mettre fin à son engagement. C'est pourquoi cette enquête souligne – une fois de plus – le besoin urgent de politiques d'accompagnement du logement dans les régions. Il n'y a aucune perspective pour les familles d'accueil, ni pour les hôtes, si aucune solution de logement durable ne peut être proposée en perspective.

Tant que la guerre durera, de nombreuses familles ukrainiennes auront besoin d'un abri. Il semble donc que la période de protection temporaire des réfugiés ukrainiens au titre de la directive sur les personnes déplacées devra être prolongée au-delà de mars 2023. Il est donc nécessaire que tous les pays d'accueil, y compris la Belgique, se préparent à un éventuel séjour plus long des personnes déplacées ukrainiennes, et pour une partie des réfugiés peut-être même à un séjour permanent.

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La crise actuelle de l'accueil des réfugiés ukrainiens, ainsi que des autres demandeurs de protection internationale, rend nécessaire la recherche de réponses innovantes aux besoins d'accueil des réfugiés et aux obligations d'accueil qui incombent au gouvernement belge. Le recours aux familles d'accueil – moyennant un soutien plus fort et structurel – peut faire partie d'une politique d'accueil et d'asile permettant d'héberger les réfugiés de manière plus humaine et durable.

10 décembre 2022

## резюме

### Що стало поштовхом для дослідження?

З моменту вторгнення Росії в сусідню Україну 24 лютого 2022 року понад 7 892 000 українців залишили свою країну та виїхали до європейських країн. Понад 60 000 з них прибули до Бельгії, автоматично отримавши статус тимчасового захисту як "переміщені особи". 28 лютого 2022 року тодішній Державний секретар з питань притулку та міграції Семмі Махді запустив кампанію #PlaceFree / #PlaceDispo, закликаючи розмістити українських біженців у себе вдома. За короткий час громадяни запропонували понад 22 000 місць. Скільки приймаючих родин реально надали притулок українцям з того часу, важко підрахувати.

### Що ми дослідили?

Готовність приймаючих родин відкрити свої домівки була і залишається вирішальною у прийомі українських біженців до сьогодні. Проте досьогодні мало хто знає, хто ці приймаючі сім'ї і що спонукало їх розміщувати у себе людей. Як вони живуть разом? Яку ще підтримку, окрім житла, надають приймаючі сім'ї людям, яких вони приймають? Які потреби відчують приймаючі родини та їхні гості? І наскільки вони отримують чи відчують підтримку в цьому?

### Як відбувалося це опитування?

У цьому звіті описані результати спільного дослідження Центру досліджень соціальної роботи та Центру вивчення сім'ї Університетського коледжу штату Odisee, присвяченого цим питанням. Ми опитали приймаючі сім'ї за допомогою онлайн-опитування в період з 14 червня по 18 серпня 2022 року голландською, англійською, французькою, українською та російською мовами. Опитування (частково) пройшли не менше 742 осіб. Цей звіт ґрунтується на даних 653 респондентів, які вже фактично приймали українців або продовжували це робити на момент опитування.

### Хто ж такі приймаючі сім'ї, що приймають у себе українських біженців?

Приймаючі сім'ї вочевидь мають життєвий досвід: більше чотирьох з п'яти опитаних - старші 40 років, більше половини - старші 50 років, чверть - старші 60 років. Більшість проживає з партнером та дітьми (47,0%) або лише з партнером (28,6%). Приймаючі сім'ї в опитуванні є переважно високоосвіченими: 80,4% респондентів мають вищу освіту. У фінансовому плані чотири з п'яти опитаних приймаючих сімей зазначили, що їм скоріше легко або дуже легко зводити кінці з

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кінцями на чистому сімейному прибутку. Понад 90% респондентів мають бельгійське громадянство. Українські приймаючі сім'ї, які приймають співвітчизників, можливо, були менш охоплені онлайн-опитуванням.

## Якими є мотиви прийняття українських родин?

У гру вступає широкий спектр взаємодоповнюючих мотивацій. Основною причиною, чому учасники надавали допомогу приймаючій стороні, є те, що вони вважають це "моральним обов'язком". Серед інших важливих причин - "тому що суспільство робить занадто мало", "тому що уряд закликав до допомоги", тому що "відчуваєш зв'язок з українцями", тому що допомагаючи, відчуваєш себе краще, або тому що хочеш дізнатися про щось нове з власного досвіду.

## Хто ці люди, яких приймають родини?

Завдяки респондентам ми маємо демографічні дані про 1 895 ВПО, яких приймали або приймають у сім'ях, що взяли участь в опитуванні. 39% осіб мають вік 18 років або молодше. 34% - чоловіки, 66% - жінки.

Дві третини гостей перебували в Бельгії менше тижня до прибуття в приймаючі сім'ї. Після прибуття до Бельгії 60% одразу знайшли місце у своїй нинішній приймаючій сім'ї. Для трьох з чотирьох учасників опитування хост-догляд розпочався вже в березні або квітні 2022 року, тобто в початковий період #PlekVrij. Маршрут до приймаючої сім'ї пролягав переважно через муніципалітет, ЦСССДМ та/або через #PlekVrij. П'ята частина знайшла приймаючу сім'ю через особисті контакти, наприклад, через друзів або знайомих.

Більшість приймаючих сімей (65,7%) заздалегідь не мали чіткого уявлення про те, на який термін вони хочуть відкрити свій дім для українців. Для трьох п'ятих сімей, де прийом вже завершився, період проживання тривав менше чотирьох місяців.

## Де приймали українців?

Майже дев'ять з десяти опитаних організували прийом у себе вдома. У більшості випадків люди використовували спільні приміщення у власних будинках, кухню або вітальню. Іноді це стосувалося окремої житлової одиниці. Трохи більше 10% розмістили українських біженців у іншому житлі або у вільному будинку.

## Як люди живуть разом?

Більшість приймаючих родин домовилися зі своїми гостями про спільне проживання. Найчастіше йдеться про ключ від будинку, навколо якого домовлялися чотири з п'яти (80,4%) сімей. Близько половини сімей також мали домовленості про фінансові внески (51,7%) та конфіденційність (51,1%), про допомогу по господарству (44,6%) та про підтримку, яку приймаюча сім'я надає біженцям (40,2%).

## Яку підтримку пропонують приймаючі сім'ї?

Опитування чітко показує, що приймаючі сім'ї роблять набагато більше, ніж просто надають кімнату чи дах над головою. Приймаючі сім'ї надають підтримку в багатьох аспектах. Адміністративна допомога є найсастіше запропонованою підтримкою - її надавали не менше 86,6% респондентів. Значна частина підтримки має практичний характер, наприклад, перенаправлення до лікаря (69,4%), навчання (68,6%) або організація дозвілля (60,2%). Більше восьми з 10 респондентів також пропонували емоційну підтримку.

## А у фінансовому плані?

Кожен другий опитаний отримує грошову компенсацію за житло для українських переселенців. Більшість з них отримують її від ОСМВ або муніципалітету (56,6%) та/або від самих біженців (42,4%).

## Які потреби у підтримці відчувають приймаючі сім'ї та люди?

Приймаючі сім'ї відчувають велику потребу в підтримці. Найчастіше вони потребують огляду доступної допомоги (70,6%), підтримки у пошуку сталого житла для своїх гостей (66,7%), пошуку роботи для своїх гостей (63,2%), адміністративної підтримки (63%) або огляду всіх речей, про які потрібно подбати людям, яких вони приймають (61,7%). Але потреби приймаючих сімей у підтримці є високими і в інших сферах. Оскільки догляд за приймаючою сім'єю передбачає набагато більше, ніж просто надання житла, визнання цих потреб у підтримці має вирішальне значення для органів влади, які звертаються до приймаючих сімей.

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## Де приймаючі сім'ї знаходили підтримку? До кого вони могли звернутися?

Власна сім'я має вирішальне значення: аж три чверті опитаних знаходили підтримку в особі свого партнера або власної сім'ї (74,4%). Другим важливим джерелом підтримки є ОСМВ (60,1%). Майже 4 з 5 приймаючих сімей описали досвід роботи з ОСМВ як позитивний. Меншою мірою приймаючі сім'ї також отримували підтримку від інших членів сім'ї або муніципалітету (37,8% та 37,4% відповідно), від сусідів (25,3%), від інших приймаючих сімей (11,5%) або від волонтерів, громадських ініціатив чи громадських організацій. 7,5% сказали, що не отримували підтримки ні від кого. Понад 4 з 10 опитаних відчували недостатню підтримку.

## Як приймаючі сім'ї оцінюють свій досвід прийому українських біженців ?

Більше чотирьох з п'яти опитаних оцінюють його як "скоріше позитивний" або "дуже позитивний". Там, де прийом вже завершився, двоє з трьох опитаних (66%) все ще перебувають під позитивним враженням. Однак, найголовнішим фактором було дотримання досягнутих домовленостей. Чим більше респондентів зазначили, що ці домовленості були дотримані, тим вищим був рівень задоволення досвідом прийому українських біженців.

Більшість респондентів, які й зараз приймають гостей (61,9%), були "скоріше добре" або "дуже добре" вмотивовані продовжувати це робити навіть після закінчення узгодженого терміну перебування.

Ця переважно позитивна історія також заслуговує на нюанси. 16,5% опитаних оцінили досвід прийому як скоріше негативний або навіть дуже негативний. Там, де догляд за гостями вже був завершений, цей показник сягав 34%. Понад 4 з 10 визнають, що взяли на себе занадто багато відповідальності у допомозі гостям і не приділяють достатньо часу собі та власній родині.

## Що чекає на нас у майбутньому?

(Як) можна домогтися того, щоб приватний догляд у приймаючих сім'ях став постійним і був структурно вбудований в політику і регулювання прийому і консультування, без перекладання урядами своєї відповідальності на громадян і сім'ї?

Стала залежність від приймаючих сімей вимагає попереднього відбору приймаючих сімей, кращого їх добору, міцнішої підтримки приймаючих сімей та чітких гарантій щодо тривалості надання їм допомоги. Це вимагає чіткої інтеграції в ширшу, координовану урядом політику прийому, з гарантіями того, що люди можуть безперешкодно переходити з приймаючих сімей на основний ринок житла, коли приймаюча сім'я бажає завершити виконання своїх зобов'язань. Саме тому дане дослідження вкотре вказує на нагальну потребу у здійсненні відповідної

житлової політики в регіонах. Немає майбутнього ні для приймаючих сімей, ні для гостей, якщо в перспективі не буде запропоновано сталого житлового рішення.

Допоки триває війна, потреба в житлі залишатиметься для багатьох українських родин. Таким чином, схоже, що період тимчасового захисту для українських біженців відповідно до Директиви про ВПО доведеться продовжити після березня 2023 року. Це зумовлює необхідність для всіх приймаючих країн, у т.ч. Бельгії, готуватися до можливого більш тривалого перебування українських переселенців, а для частини біженців, можливо, і до постійного проживання.

Нинішня криза у сфері прийому українських біженців, як і інших заявників на отримання міжнародного захисту, змушує шукати інноваційні відповіді на потреби у прийомі біженців, а також на зобов'язання щодо прийому, які покладені на бельгійський уряд. Опора на приймаючі сім'ї - за умови більш сильної і структурної підтримки - може бути частиною політики прийому і надання притулку, яка дозволить розміщувати біженців більш гуманно і на довгостроковій основі.

10 грудня 2022 року

## Итоги руководства

### Что послужило началом?

С момента вторжения России в соседнюю Украину 24 февраля 2022 года, более 7 892 000 украинцев бежали из своей страны в европейские страны. Более 60 000 из них приехали в Бельгию, автоматически получая статус временной защиты как "перемещенные лица". 28-го февраля 2022 года тогдашний государственный секретарь по вопросам убежища и миграции Сэмми Махди запустил кампанию #PlaceFree / #PlaceDispo, призывающую разместить украинских беженцев у себя дома.

За короткий период граждане предложили более 22 000 мест. С тех пор трудно оценить количество принимающих семей эффективно предоставляющих убежище украинцам.

### Что мы исследовали?

Готовность принимающих семей открыть свои дома была и по сей день играет решающую роль в приеме украинских беженцев. Однако до сегодняшнего дня мало понимания того, кто такие принимающие семьи и что побудило их принять у себя людей. Как жить вместе? Какую еще поддержку - помимо жилья - оказывают принимающие семьи людям, которых они принимают как гостей? Какие потребности испытывают принимающие семьи и их гости? И в какой степени они чувствуют поддержку или их поддерживают в этом? В данном отчете описаны результаты совместного исследования Исследовательского центра социальной работы и Центра знаний по семейным наукам при Университете прикладных наук Одиссе, который сосредоточился на этих вопросах.

### Как проводилось это исследование?

Мы опросили принимающие семьи с помощью онлайн-опросника в период с 14 июня по 18 августа 2022 года, на нидерландском, английском, французском, украинском и русском языках. 742 человека завершили опрос (частично). Данный отчет основан на данных 653 опрошенных лиц, которые уже эффективно принимали украинцев или продолжали это делать на момент проведения опроса.

## Кто же такие принимающие семьи?

Принимающие семьи явно обладают жизненным опытом: более четырех из пяти опрошенных старше 40 лет, более половины – старше 50 лет, а четверть – старше 60 лет.

Большинство живет с партнером и детьми (47%) или только с партнером (28,6%). Принимающие семьи, участвовавшие в опросе, в основном имеют высшее образование: до 80,4% принимающих семей имеют высшее образование.

В финансовом отношении четыре из пяти принимающих семей в опросниках указывают, что они легко или очень легко укладываются в бюджет семейного дохода. Более 90% опрошенных имеют бельгийское гражданство. Украинские принимающие семьи, принимающие соотечественников, возможно, менее охвачены онлайн-опросом.

## Каковы мотивы приема украинских семей?

Это широкий спектр мотивов, дополняющих друг друга. Основной причиной, по которой участники предоставляли помощь, связанную с приемом гостей, является "чувство морального долга". Другие важные причины – потому что "общество делает недостаточно", потому что "правительство обратилось за помощью", потому что "человек считает, что помогая, чувствует связь с украинцами", потому что, помогая, человек чувствует себя лучше или потому что "человек стремится познать новое на собственном опыте".

## Кто такие люди, которых принимают семьи?

С участием опрошенных мы располагаем демографическими данными о 1,895 вынужденных переселенцах, которые на момент опроса или до этого проживали у принимающих семей. 39% проживающих в принимающих семьях, участвовавших в опросе, – 18 лет и моложе.

34% – мужчины, 66% – женщины.

Две трети гостей пробыли в Бельгии менее недели, прежде чем попасть в принимающие семьи. После прибытия в Бельгию 60% сразу же нашли место в своей нынешней принимающей семье.

Для троих из четырех участников опроса, прием гостей начался уже в марте или апреле 2022 года, то есть в начальный период #PlaceFree. Путь в принимающую семью пролегал в основном через муниципалитет, CPAS и/или через #PlekVrij. Одна пятая часть нашла принимающую семью через личные контакты, такие как друзья или знакомые.

Большинство принимающих семей (65,7%) не имели заранее четкого представления о том, на какой срок они хотят открыть свой дом для украинцев. В трех пятых семей, где прием уже закончился, продолжительность приема гостей составляет менее четырех месяцев.

# #FreeSpot

## Где размещались украинцы?

Почти девять из десяти опрошенных организовали убежище в своих собственных домах. В большинстве случаев люди пользовались общими помещениями в своих собственных домах, например, ванная комната, кухня или гостиная. Иногда это подразумевало раздельное проживание. Чуть больше 10 процентов разместили украинских беженцев во втором жилье или в пустующем доме.

## Как люди живут вместе?

Большинство принимающих семей договорились со своими гостями касательно совместной жизни. Больше всего это касается ключей от дома, где четверо из пяти (80,4%) заключили об этом соглашения. Около половины семей также заключили соглашения о финансовых взносах (51,7%) и частной жизни (51,1%), о помощи по хозяйству (44,6%) и о поддержке, оказываемой беженцам принимающей семьей (40,2%).

## Какую поддержку оказывают принимающие семьи?

Опрос ясно демонстрирует, что принимающие семьи делают гораздо больше, чем предложение спального места или крыши над головой. Принимающие семьи оказывают поддержку разными способами. Административная помощь - наиболее часто предлагаемая поддержка, не менее 86,6% опрошенных. Значительная поддержка практического характера, такая как обращение за медицинской помощью (69,4%), образование (68,6%) или досуг (60,2%). Более восьми из 10 опрошенных также предложили выслушать и/или оказать эмоциональную поддержку.

## Как обстоят дела в финансовом отношении?

Каждый второй респондент получает финансовую компенсацию за предоставление жилья украинским переселенцам. Большинство получают его от социальной службы или муниципалитета (56,6%), и/или от самих беженцев (42,4%).

## Какие потребности в поддержке испытывают принимающие семьи и люди, которых они принимают?

Принимающие семьи испытывают большую потребность в поддержке. Чаще всего им требуется обзор доступной помощи (70,6%), поддержка в поиске устойчивого решения жилищного вопроса для своих гостей (66,7%), в поиске работы для своих гостей (63,2%), административная поддержка (63%) или поддержка в обзоре всех дел, которые необходимо привести в порядок людям, которых они принимают. Но и в других областях потребности принимающих семей в поддержке высоки.

## Где принимающие семьи находили поддержку? К кому они могли обратиться?

Их собственная семья имеет решающее значение: до три четверти опрошенных получили поддержку от своего партнера или собственной семьи (74,4%). Вторым важным источником поддержки является CPAS (60,1%). Почти 4 из 5 принимающих семей описывают опыт работы с CPAS как положительный. В меньшей степени принимающие семьи также получили поддержку от других людей от членов семьи или муниципалитета (37,8% и 37,4% соответственно), от соседей (25,3%), от других принимающих семей (11,5%) или от волонтеров, гражданских инициатив или общественных организаций. 7,5% указали, что они не получили поддержки ни от кого. Более 4 из 10 опрошенных не ощутили достаточной поддержки.

## Как принимающие семьи относятся к приему гостей?

Более четырех из пяти участников нашего опроса оценивают свой опыт в качестве принимающих семей украинских беженцев как "скорее положительный" и "очень положительный". В тех случаях, когда прием уже был завершен, двое из трех (66%) все равно высказались положительно. Самым важным фактором, однако, является соблюдение достигнутых договоренностей. Чем больше опрошенных указали что эти договоренности были соблюдены, тем выше удовлетворенность опытом приема. В то же время, принимающие семьи положительно оценивали свой опыт приема, если чувствовали, что получили адекватную поддержку в удовлетворении своих потребностей. Большинство опрошенных, продолжающих прием переселенцев (61,9%), были "довольны" или "очень мотивированы" продолжать располагать их текущего гостя даже после окончания оговоренного срока пребывания.

Эта преимущественно позитивная история также заслуживает нюансов. 16,5% участников опроса считали опыт приема как скорее негативным или даже очень негативным. Там, где прием гостей уже был завершен, этот показатель достигал 34%. Более 4 из 10 признали, что взяли на себя слишком много ответственности в приеме гостей и не уделяют достаточно времени себе и своим семьям.

# #FreeSpot

## Что ждет нас в будущем?

Как можно сделать частный прием гостей устойчивым и структурно встроенным в политику и регулирование в области ухода и рекомендаций, без того, чтобы правительства возлагали эту ответственность на граждан и семьи?

Чтобы устойчиво полагаться на принимающих семей требуется предварительный отбор принимающих семей, лучший подбор, более сильная поддержка принимающих семей и четкие гарантии относительно продолжительности, в течение которой принимающие семьи обеспечивают прием.

Таким образом, прием в принимающих семьях требует четкого включения в более широкую политику приема, координируемую правительствами, с гарантиями того, что люди могут плавно перейти из принимающих семей на основной рынок жилья, когда принимающая семья хочет выполнить обязательства по оговоренным срокам пребывания. Таким образом, данное исследование указывает - в очередной раз - на острую необходимость фланкирующей жилищной политики в регионах. Нет никаких перспектив для принимающих семей, ни для гостей, если не может быть обещано устойчивое решение жилищного вопроса.

До тех пор, пока продолжается война, потребность в жилье будет сохраняться для многих украинских семей. Поэтому представляется вероятным, что период временной защиты украинских беженцев в соответствии с Директивой ВПЛ придется продлить после марта 2023 года.

Это значит, что всем принимающим странам, а значит и Бельгии, нужно подготовиться к возможному более длительному пребыванию украинских переселенцев, а для некоторых беженцев, возможно, даже постоянного пребывания.

Нынешний кризис приема украинских беженцев, а также других претендентов на статус международной защиты, обуславливает необходимость поиска инновационных ответов на потребности в приеме беженцев, а также обязательства по приему, которые есть у бельгийского правительства.

Зависимость от принимающих семей - при условии более сильной и структурной поддержки - может быть частью политики приема и предоставления убежища, которая может разместить беженцев более гуманным и устойчивым образом.

10 декабря 2022 года

## 1 Introduction

After a period of military build-up along the border, Russian invaded its neighbour Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Following the Russian invasion, approximately 14 million Ukrainian citizens – roughly one-third of the pre-war population – have sought refuge in other parts of the country or abroad. The UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) estimates that around 7,892,000 Ukrainian nationals fled their country to European countries between February and November 2022 (UNHCR, 2022). More than 60,000 came to Belgium (Statbel, 2022).

Europe welcomed Ukrainian refugees with an unprecedented hospitality. On 4 March 2022, the EU implemented the 2001 directive concerning minimal standards for the provision of temporary protection to displaced persons.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Ukrainian refugees are automatically entitled to a temporary protection status, which also gives them rapid access to health care, employment or education, and social support. EU member states are furthermore obliged to provide displaced Ukrainians with suitable accommodation or, if necessary, with the means necessary to obtain accommodation.

Like every other EU member state, Belgium also became a host country and had to act quickly to meet the challenge of offering shelter to Ukrainian refugees. Against the backdrop of an overtaxed shelter network for applicants for international protection and a housing market under pressure, the challenge was considerable. As happened in many other European countries (EUAA, 2022), the Belgian state government therefore appealed to private citizens to offer shelter to Ukrainians. On 28 February 2022, the then-state secretary for Asylum and Migration, Sammy Mahdi, launched the campaign #FreeSpot, calling on citizens to host Ukrainian refugees at home. Within just one week the response was overwhelming, with citizens offering no less than 22,000 places.

It is difficult to estimate just how many host families have hosted Ukrainian refugees since then. At its peak, the 'Housing Tool' that offers an overview of available host locations registered 39,733 available places. However, some of these places were registered twice, or turned out to not be available after all or to be unsuitable. It is also unclear how much hosting took place independently of the official channels of the #FreeSpot campaign.

It is however certain that some of the people who fled Ukraine found shelter via the Ukrainian diaspora or with host families offering shelter directly via social media or other platforms.

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<sup>1</sup> In full: Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof. See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32001L0055>

# #FreeSpot

The private accommodation of refugees is not a new phenomenon in Belgium. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors or refugees with a physical or psychological impairment have been able to find (temporary) shelter in a foster or host family since some time, via the foster care organisation [Pleegzorg](#) (Foster care). This was encouraged at the Flemish level from 2016 with the project 'Geef de Wereld een Thuis' ('Give the World a Home'). In 2015, the [Citizen Platform for Refugee Support](#) launched a dynamic system to help refugees find shelter in private homes. Since late 2016, it has also become possible in Flanders to accommodate formally recognised refugees who can no longer stay in the asylum seekers' centre because of their new status, in lodgings made available in private homes. This can be arranged for a maximum period of three years via the so-called '[Melding Tijdelijk Wonen](#)' (Temporary Housing Registration).

Despite these prior experiences with private accommodation, the hosting of Ukrainian refugees is unique for several reasons. Unlike the hosting provided through the Citizen Platform for Refugee Support or Melding Tijdelijk Wonen, this time it was the state government that directly appealed to citizens' sense of solidarity and called on them to open up their homes. This way, citizens' solidarity has become a central component of the hosting infrastructure developed for Ukrainians.

The speed with which the hosting effort was launched typifies the overall approach to tackling the needs of Ukrainian refugees. Thanks to the temporary protection directive, the responsibility to find housing shifted from the federal government to the regional governments. There it quickly became the responsibility of local authorities, which barely had any time to organise private accommodation.

Besides rolling out the private accommodation, several further initiatives to support Ukrainians as well as host families were quick to follow. Public authorities and social organisations joined forces to provide host families with useful information. Existing information and tools were made available in Russian and Ukrainian, and new tools were developed. Several telephone support lines were set up for host families and Ukrainians. A large number of local authorities and citizens' initiatives organised meetups and other activities for Ukrainian refugees and host families. Several solidarity initiatives were launched, also through the Ukrainian diaspora.

The willingness of host families to open up their homes was – and remains to this day – vital in the reception and support of Ukrainian refugees. Nevertheless, to this day it remains unclear who these host families are and what motivated them to take in Ukrainian refugees. We also know little about the actual experiences of both host families and their guests. What is it like to share a home? What other support do host families provide to their guests, aside from accommodation? What are the needs felt by the host families and their guests? And to what extent are they or do they feel supported in these needs?

This report describes the findings of a joint research project performed by the Social Work Research Centre and the Centre for Family Studies of Odisee University of Applied Sciences, in which such questions were key. The research drew on the expertise accrued in these research centres on the themes of migration, refugees, family policy, informal social work, volunteer work and hidden homelessness (see for instance D'Eer et al., 2019; Fournier et al., 2022; Geldof et al., 2022; Groeninck et al., 2019; Schrooten et al., 2015, 2019, 2020).

In mid-June 2022 we embarked on a large-scale effort to survey individuals and families that were hosting Ukrainian refugees, or had done so, or were considering doing so. This report discusses the results of the survey. It offers a first impression of the initial period of the private accommodation of Ukrainian refugees. Our goal is to inform political and societal parties about the needs, possibilities and limits of host families and of the people they host. We will describe what motivates the host families, their experiences, the challenges they faced, and their needs in terms of support.



## 2 Research method

We used an online survey to obtain a picture of the experiences of host families. The survey was developed by an Odisee research team and was checked with various parties in civil society and policy makers. We also consulted with an inter-university team of researchers (KU Leuven, Université de Lausanne and Université Libre de Bruxelles) which was preparing a similar survey for Switzerland.

We used Qualtrics as survey platform. The survey consisted of several components, addressing the following themes:

- The motivation to offer hosting
- The matching between host families and guests
- Socio-demographic characteristics of the host family
- The number of people hosted by the family and their backgrounds
- The duration of the hosting period
- The support offered by the host families, beyond accommodation
- The needs of both the host families and the hosted guests (based on the perceptions and experiences of the host families) and the support they received in this respect
- The general experience of host families with regard to hosting Ukrainian refugees
- Host families' willingness to again make commitments for refugees in the future.

Most questions were of a closed nature, with a number of predetermined response categories. For some of the questions the respondents had the option of choosing "other", and then to provide a further explanation. The survey ended with the open question whether the respondent wished to add anything regarding the hosting of Ukrainian refugees in private homes. Only a few of the questions were marked as mandatory.

The survey was developed in Dutch and subsequently translated into English, French, Ukrainian and Russian. The English and French translations were performed by the research team. For the Ukrainian and Russian translations, volunteers corrected the translations generated automatically by Qualtrics.

The target population consisted of households based in Belgium that were hosting Ukrainian refugees, or had done so, or were considering doing so. The term 'households' refers to single-person households, married and unmarried couples with and without children, single-parent households and other types of households. In this report, the term 'host families' serves as an umbrella reference for all these types of households. The survey was targeted at individual respondents, meaning that just one member of the host family answered the questions. That is why the report refers to the experiences of the respondent or of the participant, rather than the experience of the host family. After all, how the other members of the host family experienced the hosting can differ from the experience of the person who completed the survey.

Since we couldn't make use of a sampling frame of Belgian host families offering shelter to Ukrainians, the invitation to participate in the online survey was disseminated through a wide range of channels.

Municipal authorities were an essential link in contacting host families, as they were responsible for the housing of Ukrainian refugees and the follow-up to the #FreeSpot campaign. Both the Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten (association of Flemish cities and municipalities) and the Union des Villes et Communes de Wallonie (association of Walloon cities and municipalities) and Brulocalis (association of municipalities in the Brussels area) called on local authorities to help distribute the survey among host families in their municipality.

Various public and civil society organisations also helped spread the call to participate, both among the target population and through their own networks.

Additionally, we identified 29 Facebook groups formed by people offering support to displaced Ukrainians. These Facebook groups were usually linked to a certain city or municipality in Belgium. We placed a call to participate in the survey on the pages of these groups. We also contacted the administrators of the Walloon *Plateforme Solidarité Ukraine* (solidarity platform Ukraine) and of Mapahelp, an international platform arranging accommodation for Ukrainian refugees, with our request to invite the Belgian host families on their platform to complete the survey.

After spreading a press release, a number of media channels also reported on the survey. We furthermore made use of Odisee's own channels and networks to reach the target population.

The survey was fielded from 14 June to 18 August 2022. A total of 742 people (partially) completed the survey. Of these 742 respondents, 496 were hosting Ukrainians at the time of completing the survey, and 157 were former hosting families whose hosting period had now ended. Another 44 respondents were candidate hosting family, or were considering becoming candidates. A further 13 people completed the survey who had experience with hosting non-Ukrainian refugees, and 32 respondents indicated that they had no experience with hosting Ukrainian refugees and also did not intend to do so in the future.

This report is based on the 653 respondents from hosting families who were hosting or had hosted Ukrainian refugees at the time of completing the survey. The majority completed the survey in Dutch (n=496), 101 in French, 36 in English, 12 in Russian and 8 in Ukrainian. The main channels through which the participants received the survey were the municipal authority (57.1%), social media (20.1%), personal contacts (11.2%) and other media (5.5%).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Respondents could indicate more than one channel.

# #FreeSpot

Our research design is subject to a number of limitations. Given the lack of a sampling frame, we cannot know to what extent the results are representative for all hosting families who had experience with hosting Ukrainian refugees at the time of completing the survey. As described above, we disseminated the survey through various channels, since no overview of all hosting families exists. People who read the call to participate were free to choose whether or not to do so. Accordingly, the respondent sample was subject to self-selection. This self-selection can in turn have been subject to various elements. Respondents will for instance be people having (access to) a computer, tablet or smartphone and an internet connection, with an interest in (aspects of) hosting displaced persons, with the motivation to complete the survey, with a particular positive or negative experience, and so on. As a result, these respondents may have experiences or views that are not representative for all host families.

Further, whereas the non-response item was very low in the first part of the survey, it clearly increased as the survey progressed. Given the routing of the survey – i.e., the questions presented to respondents depended on how they answered previous questions – and the option of not answering questions, the number of answers per question varies. In our discussion of the findings, we therefore indicate each time on how many answers the analysis is based (through the reference n=, followed by a number that indicates the number of answers).

Despite these limitations, this study is the first to offer a systematic overview of the experiences, motivations and support needs of a sizeable group of host families in Belgium during the first six months of the war in Ukraine.

### 3 Who are the host families and what motivates them?

This chapter attempts to answer who the families are that take in Ukrainian refugees, and what motivates them to do so. We sketch their profile based on a number of socio-demographic variables. This profile is based on the 653 respondents with experience as a host family.

For a number of questions at the end of the survey, non-response rates increased to approximately one quarter or even one fifth of the participants. Therefore, this chapter offers an indicative picture of the host families that is not necessarily fully representative. For example, we suspect that we were less successful at reaching families from the diaspora. This means that the data should be interpreted with some caution. Still, we are convinced that the data offer sufficient ground on which to build the profile of the host families.

**653 participants  
have experience as  
a host family**

In the following sketch of the host families, we present both the features of the host families or households and of the individual respondent who supplied the information on behalf of the host family. Thus, when we refer to the respondents, we are referring to the individuals who completed the survey for the family.

#### 3.1 The host families' profile

The majority of respondents who completed the survey for their family are female (nearly 60% versus 40% males, n=532) and are in age groups from 41 years and up. The average age of our respondents is 53.

Age categories	Number of respondents	Percentage
21 - 30	10	1,9
31 - 40	75	14,5
41 - 50	133	25,7
51 - 60	155	30
61 and older	144	27,9
Total	517	100

Table 3.1: Respondents' age

## 3.1.1 Host families' household composition

The size of the households that offered shelter varies from between one to nine persons. Slightly over one third of the participating host families consists of two people (36.4%). A smaller group consists of three (15.4%), four (19.7%) or five (10%) people.

Number of family members	Number	Percentage
1	68	13,8
2	179	36,4
3	76	15,4
4	97	19,7
5	49	10
6 or more	23	4,7
Total	492	100

**The majority of respondents live with a partner and children**

Table 3.2: Size of the host family (without guests)

In terms of household composition, we see that the majority of respondents live with a partner and children (47%) or with only a partner (28.6%). The proportion of single-person households (15.2%) or single parents with children (3.6%) is more limited within the group of host families.

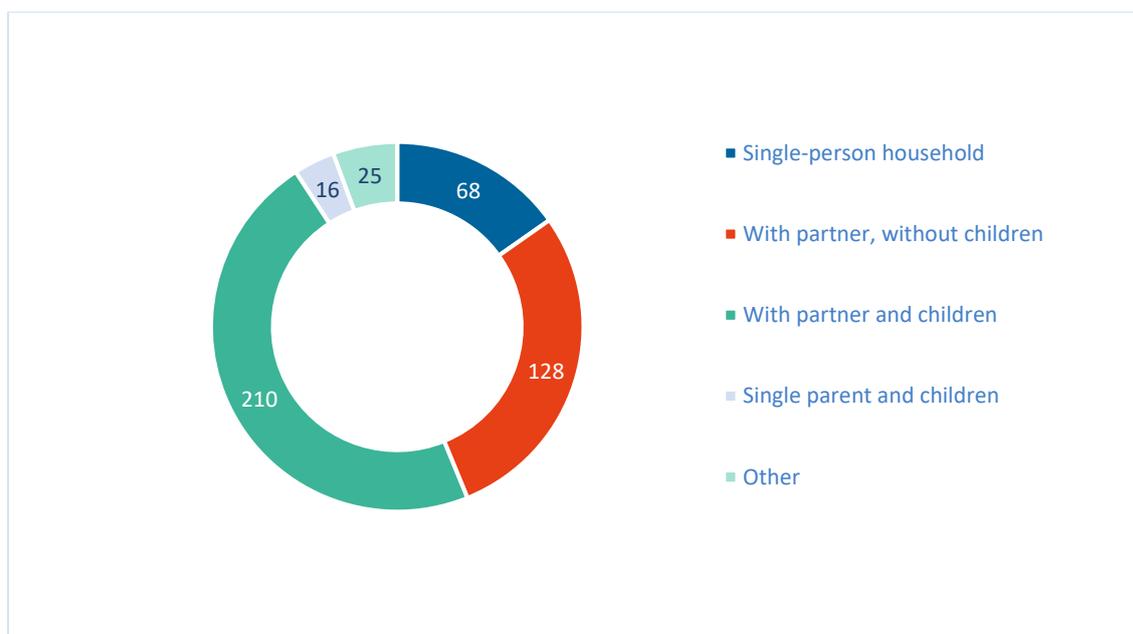


Figure 3.1: Types of households of host families (n=447, numbers are represented)

Of the 226 respondents living with children, 159 respondents have one or more children younger than 18, and 107 have children younger than 12 years.

## 3.1.2 Education, work and income

Within the respondent group we find a strong over-representation of people with a higher education degree, namely 80.4% of the respondents. 14.3% of the respondents had a senior secondary school diploma as highest attained level, and just over 5% had a junior secondary school diploma as highest attained level.

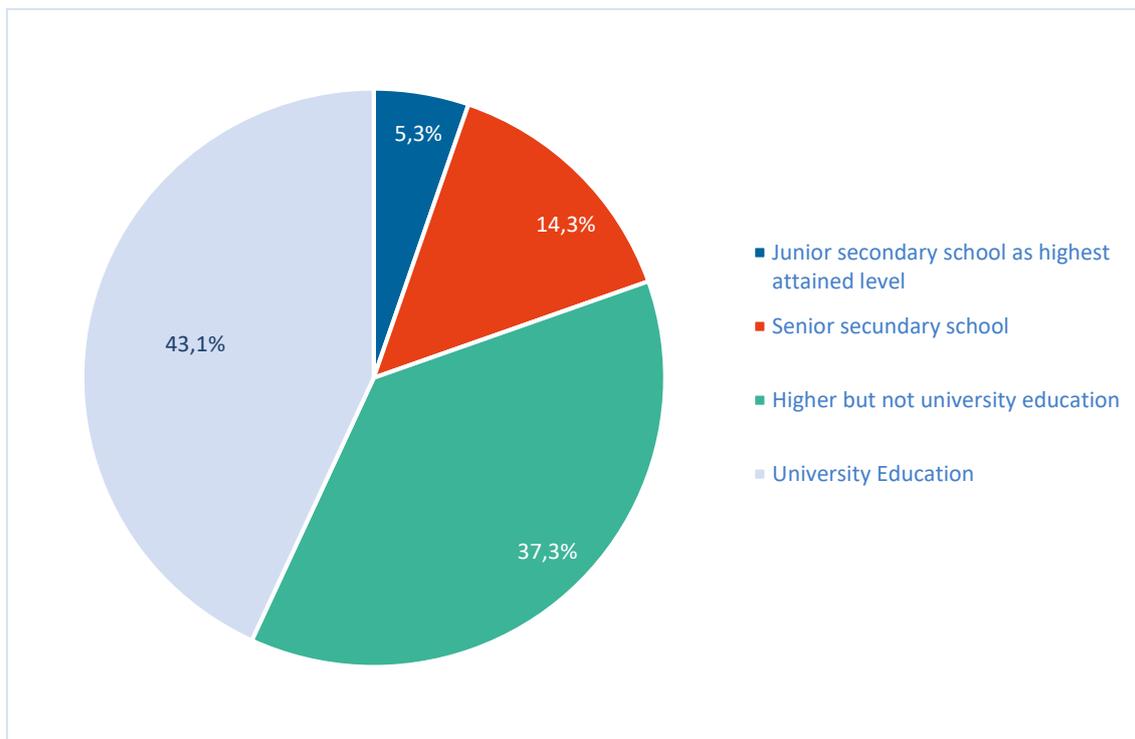


Figure 3.2: Respondents' highest attained level of education (n= 531)

**80% of the respondents  
have a higher education  
degree**

# #FreeSpot

Regarding the respondents' work situation (n=533), over 70% are in employment. Almost 20% are retired. Nearly 10% was not in employment at the time of the survey on account of sickness, career break, education or another reason.

Over 80% of the host families in the survey indicate that they can get by on the net household income rather easily to very easily. Less than 20% find it rather difficult to very difficult to make ends meet. Although nearly one quarter of the respondents did not answer this question, we may note that the large majority of the participating host families are financially comfortable.

Still, a group of around 20% who find it rather difficult to very difficult to make ends meet nevertheless choose to provide shelter to others.

**80% can (rather) easily make ends meet with the net household income**

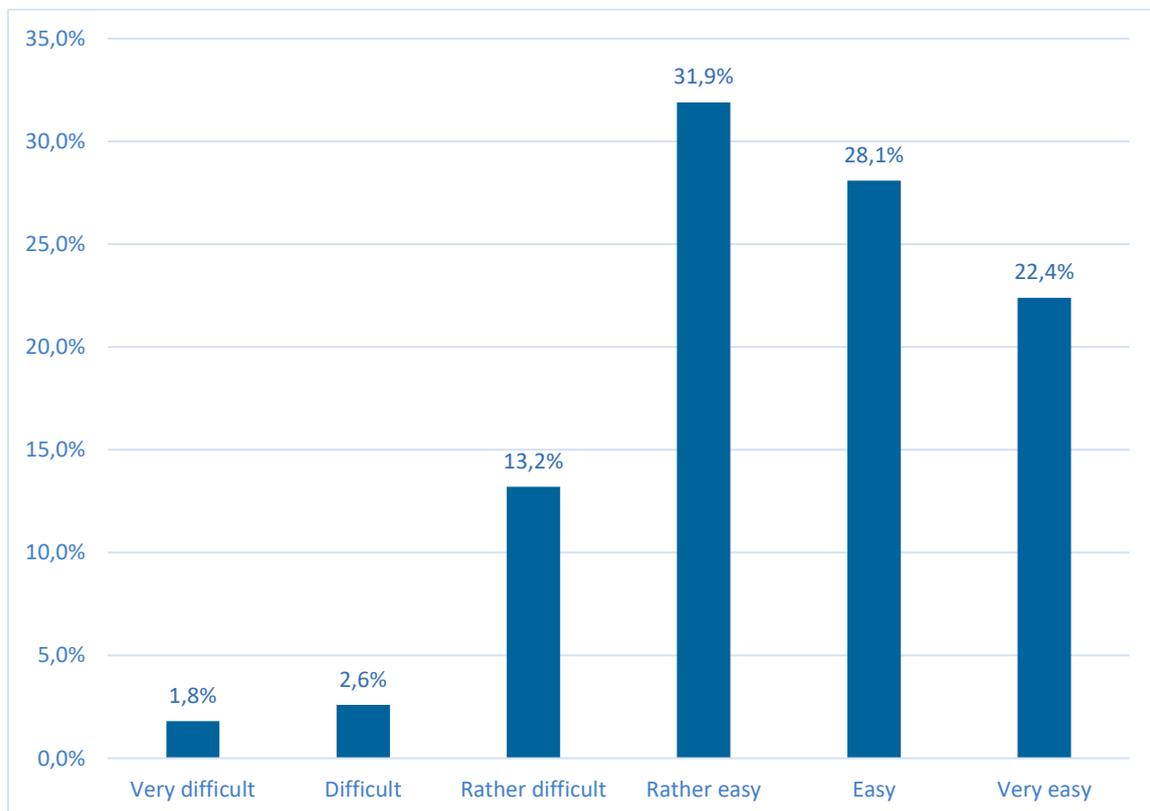


Figure 3.3: Estimation of sufficiency of host families' net income (n=501)

### 3.1.3 Nationality, country of origin and residential abode in Belgium

More than 90% of the respondents have the Belgian nationality (91.1%). Their partners are also predominantly Belgian (86.9%). Only nine of the respondents (1.7%) and fourteen of their partners (3.2%) have the Ukrainian nationality, with two partners having a double nationality (n=531). The picture is similar when considering the country of birth: 86.4% of the respondents and 81.2% of their partners were born in Belgium. Only twelve respondents (2.8%) and nineteen of their partners (2.3%) were born in Ukraine; seventeen respondents (3.2%) and eighteen of their partners (4.1%) were born in the Netherlands (n=528).

90% have the Belgian nationality

These data could indicate that we were insufficiently successful at reaching Ukrainian families living in Belgium that are also acting as host families today (formally or informally), despite having the survey available in Ukrainian and Russian.

To gain a more complete picture of the role played by Ukrainian networks of citizens, organisations and families in hosting refugees would require more targeted field work within these communities.

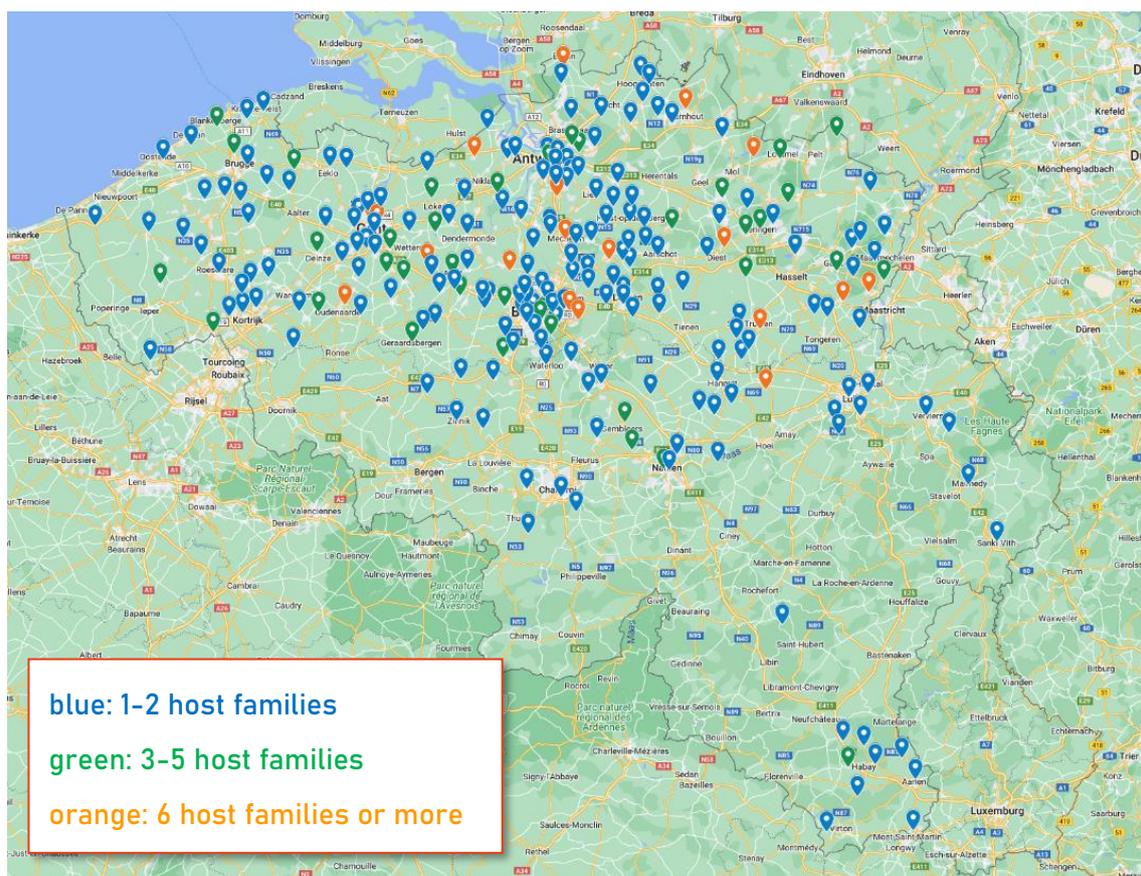


Figure 3.4: Geographical distribution of host families in the survey (n=524)

# #FreeSpot

As regards the host families' residential abode, the respondents hail from all across Belgium. Figure 3.4 shows the geographical distribution based on the respondents' postcodes. We find the largest number of respondents in the provinces of East Flanders and Antwerp, followed by Flanders-Brabant and Limburg (see table 3.3).

Respondents' abode in terms of province	Number	Percentage
Brussels Capital region	28	5.3
Walloon Brabant	6	1.1
Flemish Brabant	78	14.9
Antwerp	105	20
Limburg	73	13.9
Liège	20	3.8
Namur	17	3.2
Hainaut	9	1.7
Luxembourg	13	2.5
West-Flanders	43	8.2
East-Flanders	132	25.2
Total	524	100

Table 3.3: Distribution of host families per province (N=524)

## 3.2 Motivations to host refugees

Just over 5% of the host families in the survey has prior experience offering shelter to people in need. Some of them hosted children following the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl, others have experience in foster care or crisis care. Others refer to hosting exchange students, their own adult children or other family members.

What motivates the host families to provide shelter to Ukrainian refugees? Why do they wish to offer help? We examined their motives with reference to eighteen items (see table 3.4), based on previous research with the Citizen Platform for Refugee Support in Belgium (Roblain et al., 2020) and on the frequently used 'Volunteer Functions Inventory' (Clary & Snyder, 1999). This scale distinguishes six types of reasons:

- 1 Social motives, with host families encouraged implicitly or explicitly by their network (item 5, 6);
- 2 A self-protective function, where the support provided helps host families to forget their daily worries and their own suffering (item 7);
- 3 A self-representational motive that allows family members to feel better about themselves (item 8);
- 4 A career factor, where the voluntary shelter could open doors for a future career (item 13, 14);
- 5 An interest in learning more about asylum and migration and about refugees' experiences (item 9, 10);
- 6 Finally, a motive based on a sense of moral duty (item 11) or a religious faith (item 12).

To these motives from previous research we added two items that examine social critique as a reason to offer shelter (item 15, 16), and three items that refer to a personal connection (item 1) or a sense of solidarity with Ukrainians (item 2, 17). Further, there are two items that examine similar experiences (item 3, 4), and a single item that refers to heeding the government's call as a motive (item 18). For each of the 18 items, the respondents indicated to what extent they contributed to their decision to host Ukrainian refugees on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 4 (to a great extent).

For each item we calculated an average answer score, which we present in the table below along with the frequencies per answer category. Participants were also offered the opportunity to provide another reason through free text entry. 87 participants made use of this option and in that way offered more in-depth information regarding their motives.

# #FreeSpot

		Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	To a great extent	
	Average score	1	2	3	4	n
1 I had a personal bond with my guests from before the hosting period	1.42	80.1%	5.7%	6.4%	7.8%	592
2 I feel a bond with Ukrainians	2.30	28.2%	25.5%	34.8%	11.5%	589
3 I have experienced similar suffering in the past	1.24	84.5%	8.5%	4.9%	2.0%	588
4 Someone helped me in a similar way in the past	1.22	85.8%	7.7%	5.3%	1.2%	586
5 People close to me are also involved in this kind of voluntary activity	1.64	60.1%	20.2%	15.8%	3.9%	584
6 People in my environment encouraged me to get involved in this volunteer work	1.46	71%	15.4%	10.5%	3.1%	589
7 The commitment helps me forget my daily worries	1.55	62.1%	22.9%	12.7%	2.2%	589
8 This hosting experience makes me feel better about myself	2.35	28%	18.5%	44.4%	9.2%	590
9 I want to learn more about asylum and migration	1.91	43.7%	27.2%	23.1%	6%	588

		Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	To a great extent	
	Average score	1	2	3	4	n
10 I want to learn new things through concrete first-hand experience	2.25	30.9%	23.6%	35.1%	10.4%	589
11 I feel a moral obligation to provide humanitarian aid to people in need	3.41	2.7%	4.8%	41.5%	51.1%	603
12 My religious faith calls on me to help others	1.91	55.2%	12.3%	18.9%	13.5%	592
13 I work in the humanitarian sector, or want to do so in the future	1.63	63.3%	16.8%	13.8%	6.1%	588
14 I want to open doors for my future professional career	1.13	90.4%	6.8%	2.2%	0.5%	586
15 I want to help because society is not doing enough for refugees	2.34	26.9%	26.3%	32.5%	14.2%	590
16 My choice to host refugees is a critical act against the way refugees are treated in Belgium	1.67	57.9%	23.5%	12.4%	6.1%	587
17. I can identify with Ukrainian refugees	1.62	61.3%	21.1%	11.9%	5.6%	587
18 The government called on us to help	2.32	33.6%	15.1%	37.3%	13.9%	595
Other, namely:	2.68	32.2%	10.3%	14.9%	42.5%	87

Table 3.4: Motivation for private hosting

# #FreeSpot

Notably, many of the possible motives played barely any role, with the majority of respondents saying that these contributed “not at all” or “very little” in their decision.

The most important reason why participants did choose to provide shelter is because they felt that it was “a moral obligation” to do so (item 11; average score = 3.41). Other important reasons are “because society is not doing enough” (item 15, average score = 2.34), “because the government called on us to help” (item 18; average score = 2.32), because they “feel a bond with Ukrainians” (item 2; average score = 2.30), because they feel better about themselves by helping (item 8; average score = 2.35) or because they want to learn new things through first-hand experience (item 10; average score = 2.25).

As indicated before, the group of people with links to Ukraine is very small in our survey. The handful of respondents who use the option “other” to refer to a personal connection with Ukraine, cite recognition based on personal experience and/or the wish that their own family will also be helped.

Although the number of people who had similar experiences is very small, sixteen participants do refer to a family history in offering shelter to refugees, particularly in the context of the Second World War.

*“During the second world war, my family had to flee and found shelter abroad. Later on, they sheltered refugees themselves.”*

Social motives do not appear to play an important role for the host families in the survey. This finding differs from the study by Roblain et al. (2020) among the members of the Citizen Platform for Refugee Support, which did find clear evidence for the importance of group norms.

A number of interesting observations can be derived through a qualitative analysis of the further reasons provided by the respondents. Several respondents cited the necessity of defending Europe and its values of freedom and democracy:

*“Debt to the one defending European values.”*

*“The Ukrainian men are defending the West against further attacks by the Russians, which many people don’t realise.”*

Additionally, a number of respondents (9) explicitly stated a desire to help – “simply to help”, “I like to help people”, “I can help, so why not?” – or expressed forms of empathy, humanity and solidarity (27):

*“If it were to happen to me, then I would also wish for other people to receive me and provide shelter.”*

*“These people have lives like ours and we would also want to be helped in a situation like this.”*

## 4 What does hosting entail?

In this chapter we examine what hosting means, concretely. Who are the people that were hosted by the families in the survey? How did they find their way to their hosting family? When did the hosting in the families begin and for how long had it lasted at the time of the survey? We will also describe where and how the families accommodated their guests. Since hosting entails much more than just providing accommodation, this chapter also looks at the other ways in which the host families supported the refugees. Finally, we discuss the financial compensation that host families did or did not receive.

### 4.1 The profile of the hosted refugees

Between 10 March and 29 November 2022, the Immigration Office (Dienst Vreemdelingenzaken, DVZ) issued 61,469 temporary protection certificates for displaced Ukrainians. The majority of these displaced people are adult women. Women represented 61.4% of the Ukrainian refugees residing in Belgium at the end of November 2022 (Statbel, 2022).<sup>3</sup> This can be explained in part by the fact that the Ukrainian president Zelensky declared a state of emergency shortly after the conflict escalated in February 2022, prohibiting men between 18 and 60 years old from leaving the country (Willems et al., 2022).<sup>4</sup>

Two out of three Ukrainians awarded the status of displaced person in Belgium are adult (see figure 4.1). Not less than one in three is a minor: this concerns 20,634 children and adolescents, including 1,097 unaccompanied minors.

**The majority of displaced persons are adult women**

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<sup>3</sup> Data by Statbel, consulted on 30 November 2022. This statistical information is made available jointly by the Belgian statistical office Statbel, the National Crisis Centre (NCCN), the Immigration Office (IO), Fedasil and the National Register

<sup>4</sup> There were some exceptions, such as fathers of three or more children or men of poor health

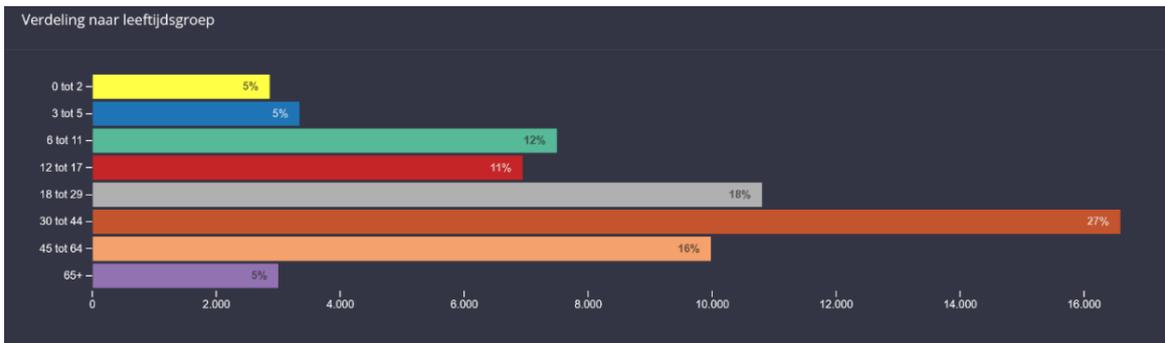


Figure 4.1: Distribution of Ukrainians awarded the status of displaced person in Belgium according to age group (situation on 30 November 2022) (source: Statbel, 2022)

The profile that emerges from the survey more or less mirrors these statistical data. The respondents provided us with demographic information on the 1,895 displaced persons staying with them at that moment, or – if the hosting had ended – had stayed with them most recently. Of the people hosted in the host families in the survey, 39% is 18 years old or younger. The male/female ratio is 34%/66%.

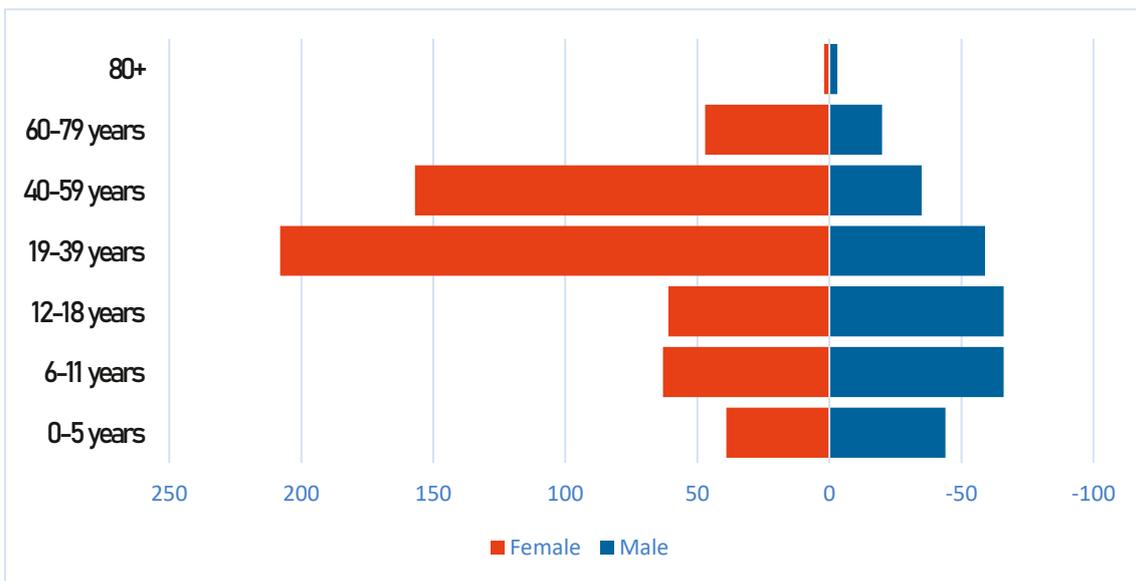


Figure 4.2: Age and gender of hosted refugees

# #FreeSpot

We did not request other demographic information about the hosted Ukrainians such as educational background, work situation, income, and religion or philosophy of life. The risk of obtaining incorrect information would be significant, since it would not be the guests entering the information but their hosts. We did ask the participants to what extent the people they hosted resembled their own family, and then in what respects (n=634). Over half of the respondents indicated that their guests resembled their family in terms of religion or philosophy of life (342) and education (334). Less than half (255) indicated a similarity in terms of work situation. Just 110 respondents saw similarities with respect to income. 150 respondents indicated not to know to what extent the income situation of their guests resembled their own.

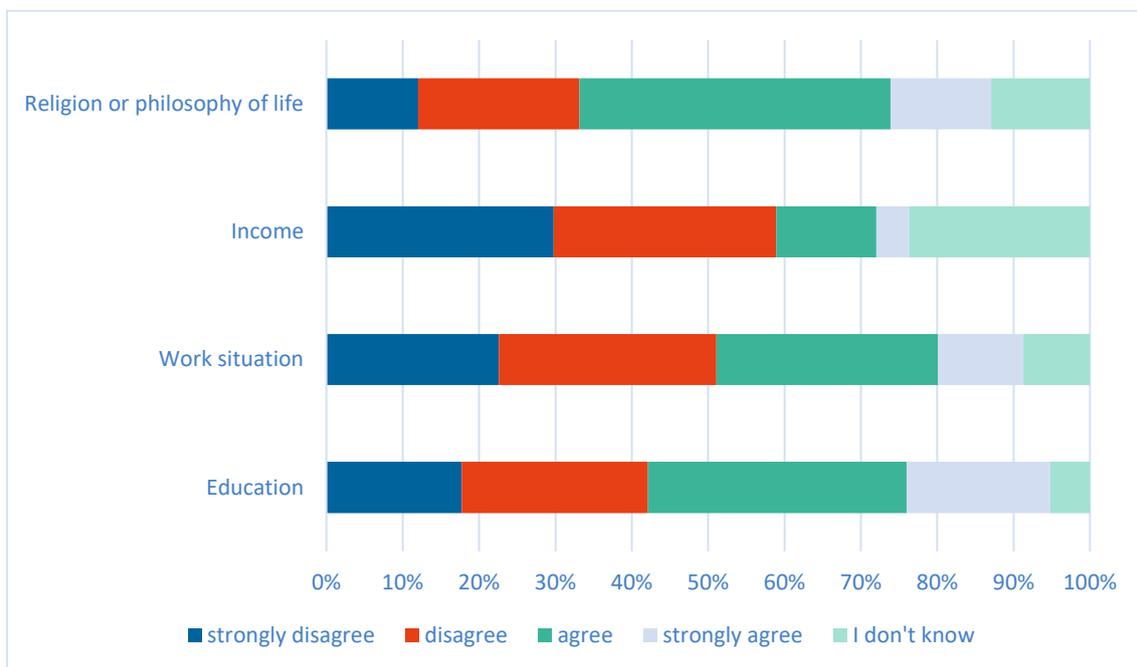


Figure 4.3: Similarities between the host family and the guests (as perceived by the respondents) (n=634)

**50% share religion or philosophy of life and educational background with their guests**

## 4.2 The route to the host family

Two-thirds (420/627) of the people who found shelter with a host family in our survey had spent less than a week in Belgium before moving in with their host family. Following their arrival in Belgium, 60% (371/618) immediately found a place with the current host family. Others first stayed with another host family (127), in a collective facility or hotel (65), with acquaintances or family members (25) or elsewhere (18). Seven people had spent the night on the street before finding shelter with their host family.

The route to the host family mainly ran via the municipal authority, the PCSW (public centre for social welfare) and/or via #FreeSpot (56.6%). One-fifth (22%) found a host family through personal contacts such as friends or acquaintances. Colleagues and volunteers also helped people to find their way to a host family.

People furthermore found their way via Facebook groups or other social media (9.8%). A number of host families found people on their own initiative (5.7%). Host families and guests also found each other through platforms that specifically focus on arranging private accommodation for Ukrainians or other displaced persons. This includes both international platforms (such as MapaHelp or Shelter4UA (5.2%) and local platforms such as the Citizen Platform for Refugee Support (1.9%) or the Walloon Platform Solidarité Ukraine (0.3%). Finally, one-eighth of the respondents indicated other routes, ranging from Fedasil and Foster Care to religious (church community, pastoral newsletter, ...) or socio-cultural organisations (BeforeUkraine, Gave Veste, Steun Oekraïne, ...) with which the host families are engaged to some extent. This question was answered by 631 respondents.

Most of the hosting families provided accommodation to two (243/649) or three (166/649) persons. In 12.3% of the host families (80/649), a single person was hosted. One quarter of the host families accommodated four or more people (160/649). In cases where a host family accommodated multiple people, these people formed a family in nine out of ten cases.

At the same time, many Ukrainian families were separated physically. Of the respondents who had the relevant knowledge (n=389), 34.1% (137) answered that the whole Ukrainian family was residing in Belgium, while 62.7% (252) indicated that this was not the case. If families were spread across different countries, this nearly always meant (231/252) that one or more family members had remained behind in Ukraine. 24 host families reported that one or more family members were residing in another country than Ukraine.

**The route to a hosting family ran via the municipality, PCSW and/or #FreeSpot**

# #FreeSpot

## 4.3 Start and duration of the hosting period

For 488 participants in the survey (74.8%), the hosting period started in March or April, which was the starting period of the #FreeSpot campaign. In the subsequent months, the number of new hosting situations clearly declines (see figure 4.4).<sup>5</sup> Based on the number of temporary protection certificates issued by the Immigration Office (see figure 4.5.), we can determine that our survey captures the period during which the number of certificate awards peaked in Belgium.

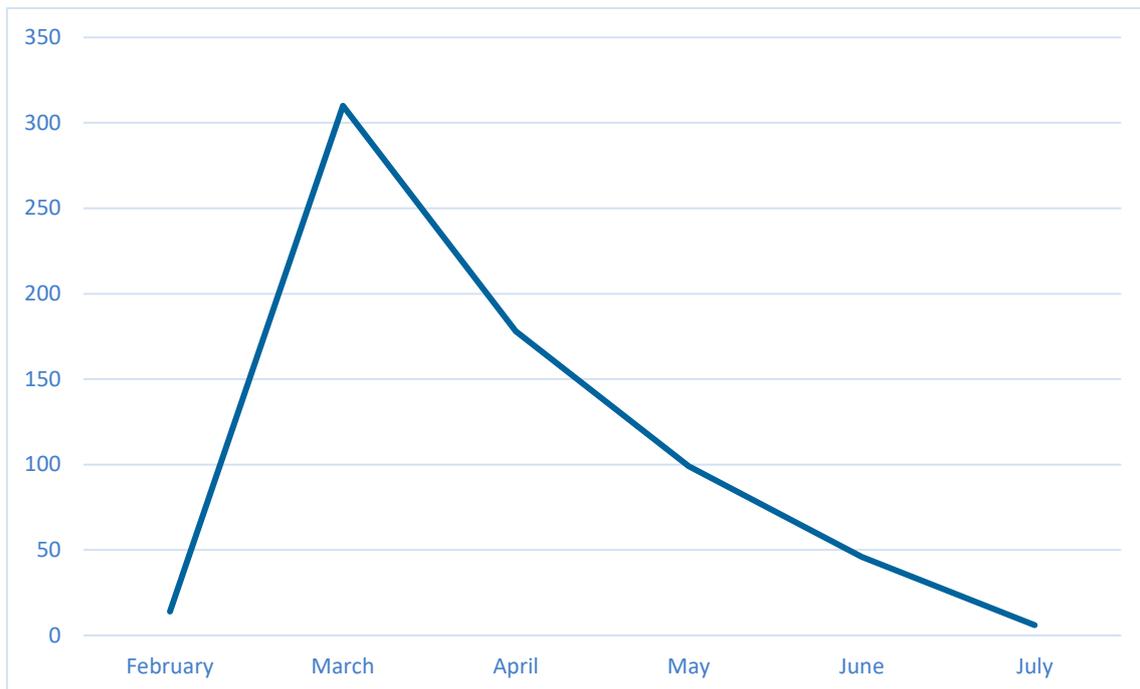


Figure 4.4: Month of arrival of guest(s) in the host family (n=653)



Figure 4.5: Number of temporary protection certificates (source: Statbel, 2022)

<sup>5</sup> The survey was fielded from 14 June through 18 August 2022. For 496 respondents the hosting period was still current at the moment of completing the survey, for 157 it had already ended

To obtain a picture of the average duration of the hosting period, we compared the starting data with information on when the hosting of Ukrainian refugees by the host families ended. Of the 653 respondents, we know that three out of four (496) were hosting Ukrainians at the time of completing the survey. For one fourth of the families (157 respondents) the hosting had already ended. For families where the hosting had already ended, 16.2% of the hosting situations already ended in April 2022.

This figure increases steeply in the months of May and June, reaching 30.4% and 31.1%, respectively. In July it decreases to 14.2% and in August it even drops to 2.7% (see figure 4.6). This means that, for three-fifths of the families where the hosting had already ended, the hosting period lasted for less than four months. At the same time we know that three-fourths of the respondents continued to host guests at the moment of the survey. We are therefore unable to calculate the average duration of the hosting period.

Three-fourths were hosting guests at the time of the survey

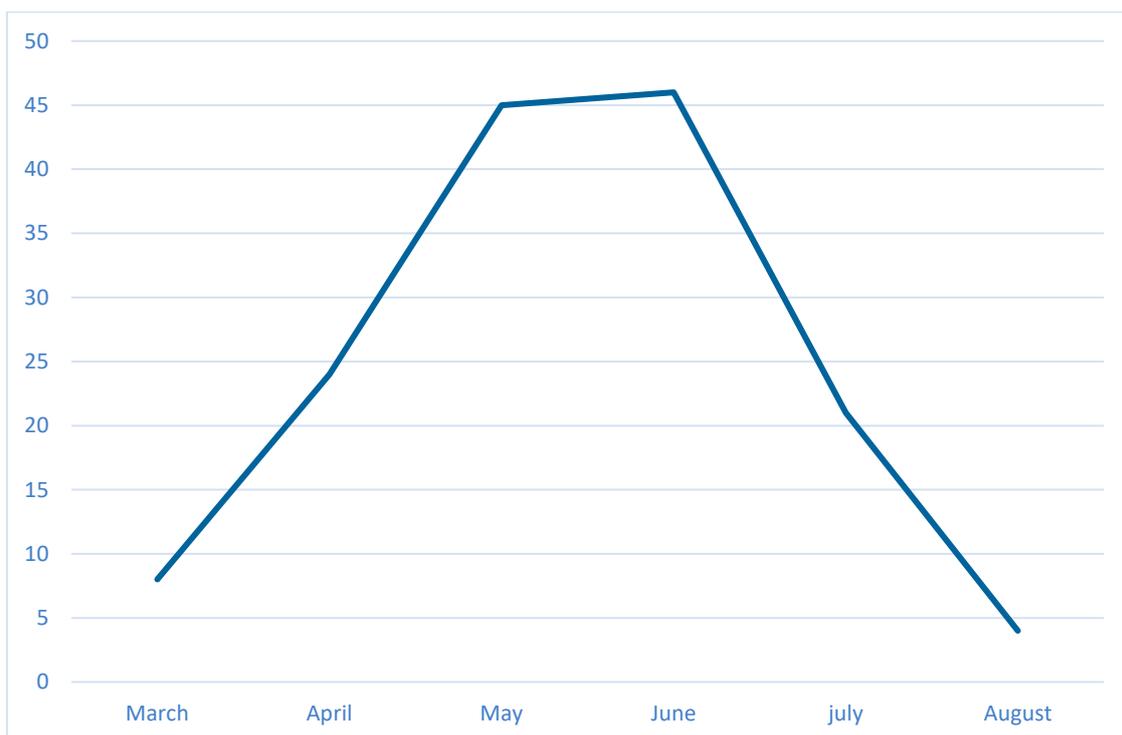


Figure 4.6: Month that the hosting ended (n=148)

# #FreeSpot

It is important to examine the expectations, perspectives and possible arrangements made in the host families about the duration of the hosting period. Most of the host families (65.7%, 406/618) did not have a clear idea beforehand as to how long they wished to share their home with Ukrainian refugees. The families that did have a picture in advance indicated a wide range of periods, from two weeks to one year.

**Most of the host families did not have a prior idea regarding how long they wished to share their home**

The majority of these respondents wished to enter into a commitment for a hosting period of between three and six months. However, some respondents indicated that the hosting period could be unlimited, that is, for as long as the need persisted, for instance until their guests had found a more durable housing solution or were able to return to Ukraine.

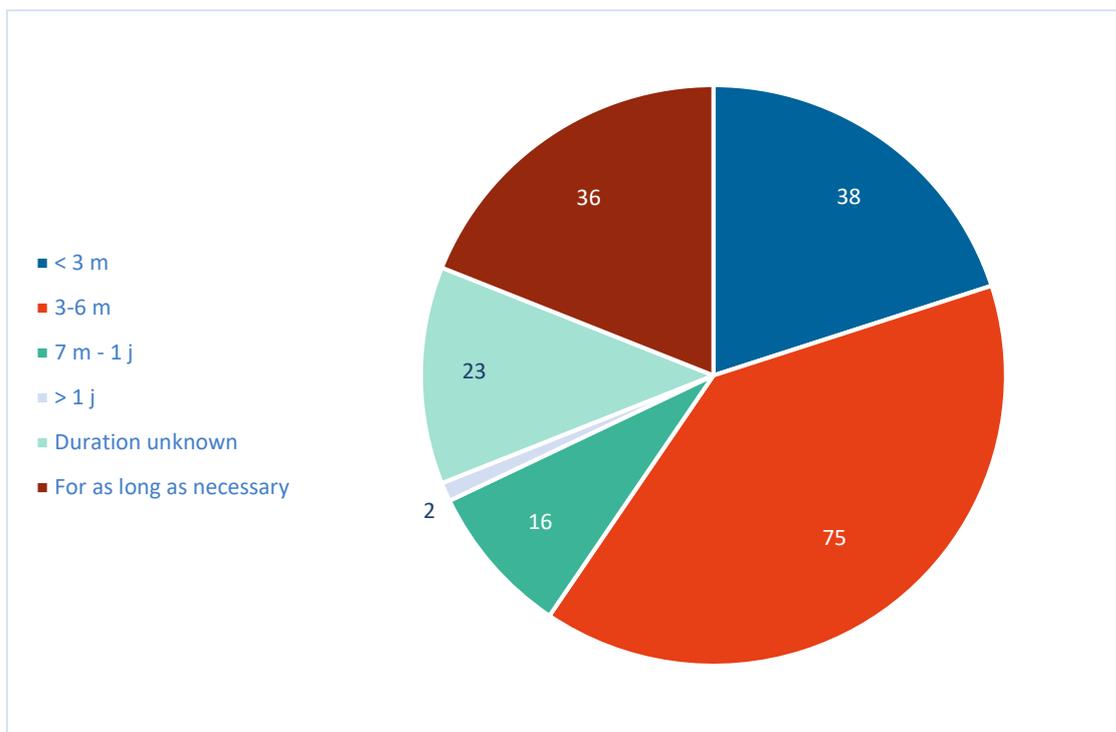


Figure 4.7: Expected hosting period among respondents who had a prior idea regarding how long they wished to host refugees (n=190)

## 4.4 The experience of living together

Of the 653 respondents, almost nine out of ten arranged the hosting within their own home. In most cases the people shared rooms in their own dwelling, including the bathroom, kitchen or living room. In other cases there was a separate housing unit, such as an upper floor that was set up as an independent unit. Slightly over 10% of the respondents hosted their guests in a second home or in a vacant dwelling.

Some host families made arrangements with their guest with respect to living together, or to the hosting in another dwelling than the family home (see figure 4.8). Such arrangements primarily concerned the use of the house key, about which four out of five (80.6%) had made arrangements. Around half of the families had also made arrangements on financial contributions (51.7%) and privacy (51.5%). Another 44.8% of the respondents made arrangements on helping out in housekeeping, and 40.2% on the support that the family provided to the refugees.

In more than one third of the families, arrangements were made regarding joint activities (37.1%), receiving guests (35.4%) or the daily schedule (32.6%). Around one-third of the host families (29.2%) made arrangements with their guests about the duration of the hosting period, in line with their own expectations or possibilities, or according to indicators such as finding their own dwelling or the end of the war.

Just 18.5% of the respondents introduced arrangements regarding the upbringing of the family's own children or those of their guests. Another 13.7% of the respondents made other arrangements, mainly regarding the use of the car or of utilities, but also regarding the treatment of pets.

**9 out of 10  
arranged the  
hosting within  
their own  
home**

**Most of the host  
families felt that the  
arrangements they  
made were respected  
well**

# #FreeSpot

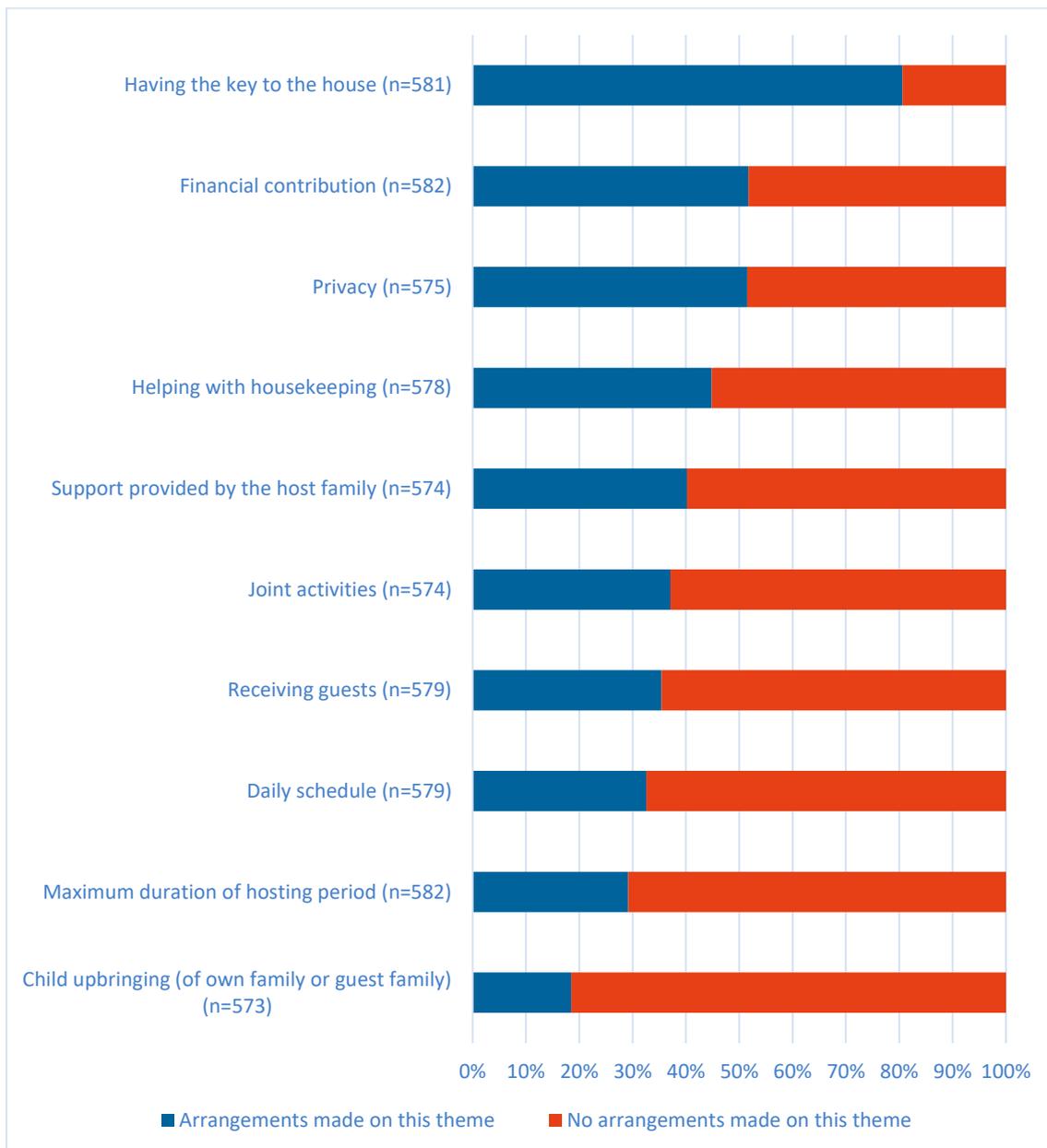


Figure 4.8: Arrangements made between host families and guests

Most of the host families felt that these arrangements were respected well. No less than 41.8% of the participants (242/579) indicated that their guests usually respected the arrangements, 45.8% (265/579) that they always respected the arrangements. However, it means that almost one in ten families (53/579) indicated that the arrangements were rather not respected. And according to 3.3% (19/579), the arrangements were not respected at all.

### 4.5 Support provided by the host families

The most frequently provided support is of administrative and practical nature

Host families were asked: “In addition to shelter, what support do you provide to the people you shelter?” Respondents could then answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to sixteen response options (see figure 4.9). Administrative support was the most frequently provided support, by 86.7% of the respondents (n=618). Much of the other support was also mainly of a practical nature, such as referring to medical help (69.4%), education (68.6%) or leisure activities (60.2%).

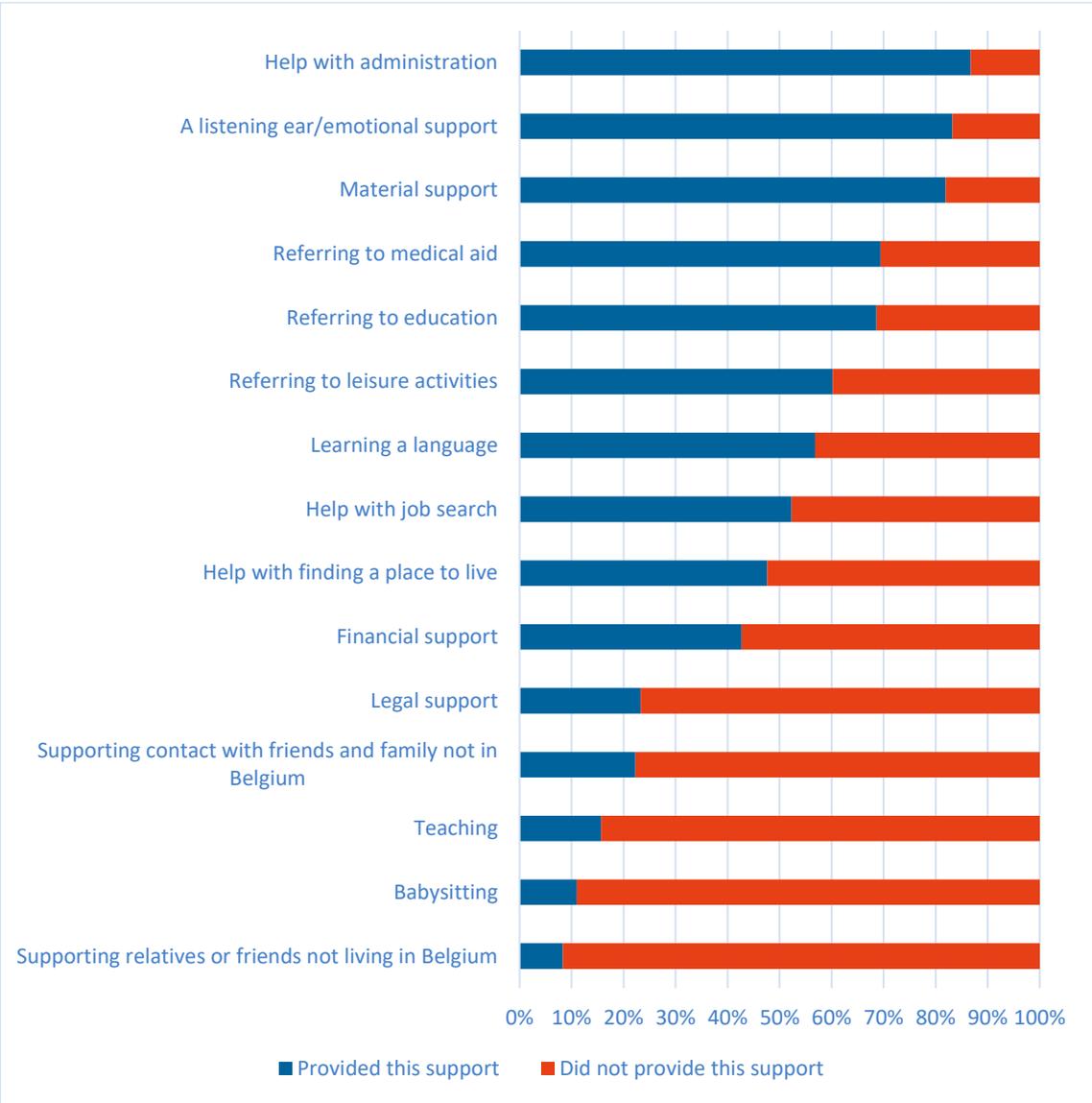


Figure 4.9: Support provided by the host family (n=618)

# #FreeSpot

More than eight out of ten respondents also offered a listening ear and/or emotional support. Financial support was offered in 42.7% of the host families. Material support occurs more frequently, among 81.9% of the respondents.

In response to the open question of “other support”, other forms of support were mentioned such as providing transport, making means of transport available, referring to psychological support, or teaching members of the guest family to ride a bicycle. One respondent said to have underestimated beforehand the wider implications of offering shelter:

*“Driving them everywhere they need to go by car, even to school and back. The area around my home does not have good bus connections, so they are dependent on my car. This is something for any new hosts to take into account, because it takes a lot of energy.”*

Eight respondents explicitly reported that the people they hosted were very independent and did not need or wish for extra support.

**8 out of ten families  
also offered a  
listening ear and/or  
emotional support**

## 4.6 Financial compensation

Host families thus offer a wide range of forms of support. This sometimes comes with implications for the family’s household budget. It is relevant, therefore, to examine if and how families receive any form of financial compensation.

A first question is whether any financial compensation is offered to families hosting refugees. In some countries such as Poland and Czechia, host families were awarded compensation directly (OECD, 2022). This is not automatically so in Belgium.

**50% receives  
compensation for  
housing Ukrainian  
refugees**

One out of two respondents (303/606) indicated that they receive financial compensation for housing displaced Ukrainians. In the survey we asked through which channels they received compensation, with several possible response options. Most of the respondents who received compensation did so through the PCSW or the municipality (56.6%, 171/302). Another 42.4% (128/302) said they received a financial contribution from the refugees as well. Finally, 3% (9/302) received financial support from elsewhere.

*“In the beginning it was a shambles as far as support went, we had to invest a lot of time and energy. I provided them with a house for free during the first two months. After that, they started paying a modest rent fee, and from July onwards they paid for fixed charges.*

*It was a good experience, and the fact that the authorities support the Ukrainian refugees helps facilitate things”*

Once the registration in Brussels has been completed, a Ukrainian refugee is entitled to a subsistence income from the PCSW in the municipality where the displaced person resides. To this end, an PCSW social worker creates a file that is submitted for approval to a Special Committee. Following approval, the subsistence income can be paid out to the displaced person. Flanders drew up guidelines for local administrators to enable them to pay compensation to host families from that subsistence income. Guests can use the subsistence income to pay compensation to the host family. Alternatively, the PCSW can withhold a certain amount from the subsistence income and pay this directly to the host family. The hosted refugees must give their permission for this arrangement, for instance using a standard form. If the parties do not make use of this formula, then the host family and their guests can make direct arrangements by means of a hosting agreement (VMSG, 2022).

Ukrainian refugees are also entitled to children's benefits if they have eligible children. Until 10 August 2022, this applied for 9,216 minors (no data available for older children), according to the progress report by the Flemish Taskforce Ukraine (2022).

Of the respondents who received financial compensation directly from their guests, six out of ten drew up a written agreement to this end. One third of these agreements concerns a hosting agreement (94/277), in 19.1% of the cases (53/277) it concerns a rental agreement. This probably pertains to situations where the guests are accommodated in a separate housing unit. One out of ten respondents (28/277) refers to another type of agreement, without specification, and 36.8% (201/277) indicates that no written agreement was made.

## 5 Support needs and sources

What support needs do host families and the people they host experience? We start this chapter with an overview of the support needs of host families and the places where they were able to obtain support. We reflect on the forms of support that host families received and whether those forms of support effectively addressed the needs that these families experienced. We then discuss the support needs of the Ukrainians who were sheltered by these home families, based on estimations of these needs by the host families.

### 5.1 The support needs of the host families

Host families experienced various needs for support (see Figure 5.1). Most common were a need for an overview of the available assistance (70.6%), support with finding a long-term housing solution for their guests (66.7%), help finding a job for their guests (63.2%), administrative support (63%), and a need for an overview of everything that needed to be handled and organised for and/or by the people they were hosting (61.7%). These were the five most frequently named needs. Each item included in our question was reported as a need by at least one-fifth of the respondents. Because hosting involves much more than merely offering shelter (see Chapter 4), it is crucial for governments that rely on host families to recognise these support needs.

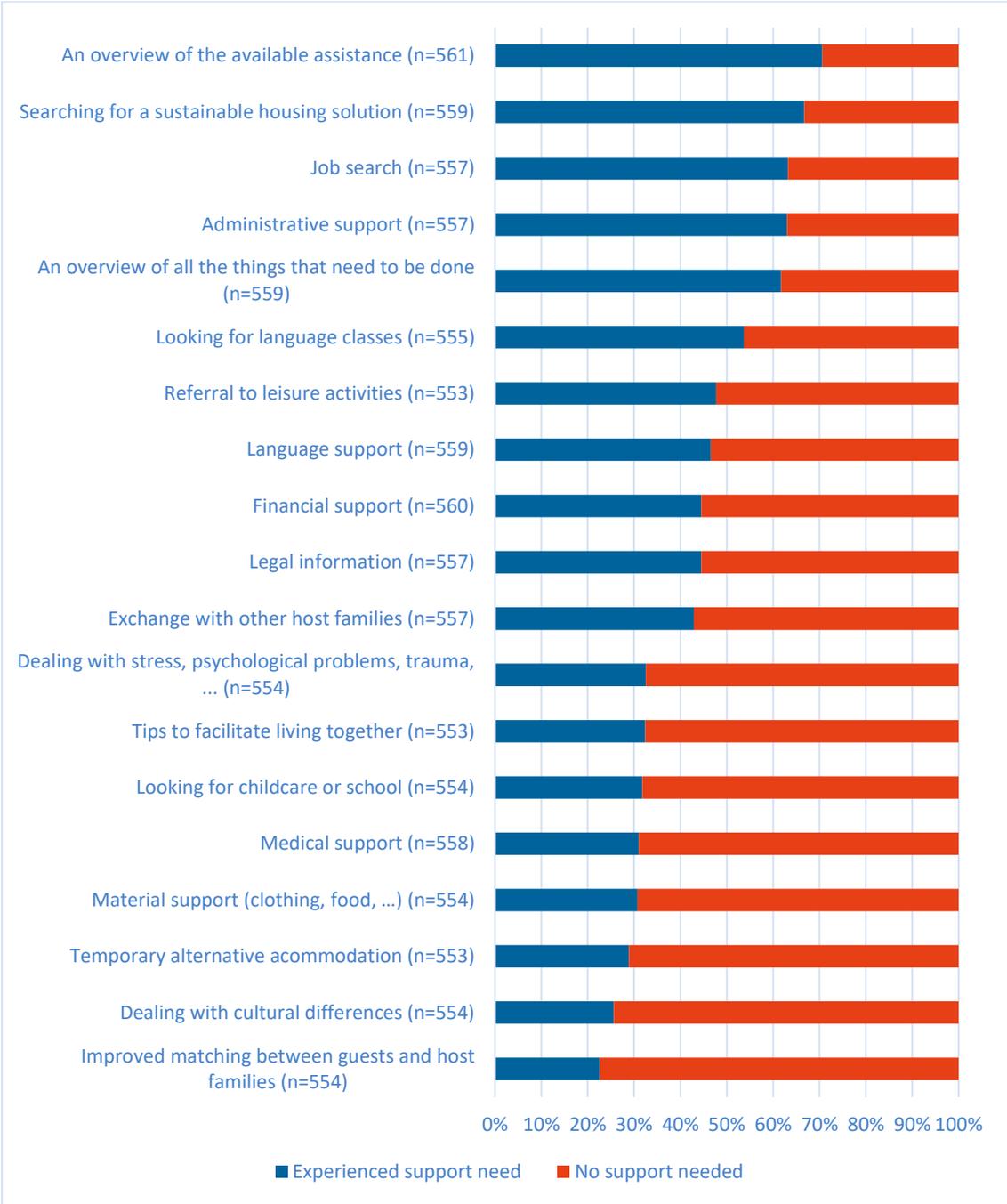


Figure 5.1: Support needs experienced by host families

**One respondent compared hosting guests to having dependent children:**

*“Hosting people in your home is one thing, but having to take care of all these other procedures as well – it’s like having dependent children for whom I have to do everything, without any social support.”*

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The needs reported by the host families may be an indication that the family in question did not receive support in the relevant area. For example, fewer than one in ten respondents received legal support (see Figure 5.3), even though more than four in ten felt a need for such support. This assumption does not always apply, however: a reported need may also be an indication that the support received was inadequate. Various respondents had expected the government to be more effective in addressing their needs.

*“Better communication from the government regarding how to obtain an A card – we spent a great deal of time on this.”*

*“In the end we were able to solve most of our needs faster than the responsible official bodies.”*

We note that the needs of the hosted refugees often become intertwined with those of the host family. For example, when their guests begin to search for a long-term housing solution, many host families support them in this search. If this process proves difficult, the need for assistance in finding a home becomes a shared need. This applies to other support needs as well.

*“Being a good host requires a great deal of availability on your part. Our guests are easy to live with, the mother immediately sought work to ensure that they did not impose on us at all (housekeeping work). They are pleasant and respectful people. I made a lot of effort to help them find their place (school, internships, language classes, meetups, material support, visits to Brussels and explanations of the public transportation system, etc.). That takes a lot of time, and is not viable beyond the short term. The language barrier makes them dependent on you, and the differences in lifestyle can be a source of tension if you don't learn to let go. The municipal council washed their hands of the refugees once they were with us, and we had to fight for them to retake them once the agreed hosting period was over. The municipalities are impotent.”*

What stands out is the extent of the need for information. All items measuring this (e.g. the overview of the available help, administrative support, the overview of matters that need handling, legal information) were reported as support needs by a significant proportion of the respondents (see Figure 5.1). This lack of information can sometimes have financial consequences:

*“All of the rules regarding subsistence income remained unclear until after we had made the mistake of helping the mother find a job straightaway. This turned out not only to disqualify her for subsistence income, but her son as well. That was completely unexpected.”*

Support in the search for more long-term housing is crucial for both host families and refugees. This is illustrated by the following quotes from respondents:

*“Many guests are still staying with the same host family. This does not necessarily mean that the involved parties find this the preferred situation. In practice, terminating a hosting arrangement is not as easy as it might sound. The most important issue is that – unless the refugee has personally found accommodation elsewhere – a new shelter has to be found for them.”*

*“It is difficult to find housing for these people, since their residence permit is only valid until 4 March 2023.”*

## Host families struggle with the search for long-term housing too

A comparable study into the hosting of Ukrainian refugees in Germany also identified challenges with regard to housing (Haller et al., 2022), and other studies have shown that it is very difficult for recognised refugees to find affordable, suitable housing in Flanders (Beeckmans & Geldof, 2022; D'Eer et al., 2019). The problems that Ukrainian guests and host families experience in this area are fundamental in nature and cannot be separated from the shortage in the housing market of Brussels and other Flemish cities. Similar issues have arisen in various other EU countries:

“The rapid influx of Ukrainian refugees to Europe in the wake of Russia’s large-scale aggression against Ukraine happened in the context of significant pre-existing housing challenges, such as insufficient housing supply and rising costs, in many host countries, notably Poland, limiting available options for housing arrivals both in the short and medium-to-long term.” (OECD, 2022, p. 1)

## 5.2 Sources of support for host families

Where did host families find support? Whom could they turn to? In this section, we primarily discuss the support the host families received while they were hosting. However, we also asked whether the government or other organisations had provided the respondents with the necessary information about how to become a host family and what this entailed before they committed to the choice. Only one-third of the respondents (209/591) had received advance information.

Little information about hosting available in advance

During the hosting period, three-quarters of the respondents received support from their partner or their own family (74.4%). As such, partners and immediate family form the primary source of support (see Figure 5.2). A second important source of support is the PCSW (60.1%). The survey did not enable us to determine exactly what the support provided by PCSWs entailed, and this may differ across municipalities.

PCSWs have been assigned and have accepted a large role in the housing and support of displaced Ukrainians. Among others, they assist with finding emergency accommodations, the granting of a subsistence income, obtaining insurance for medical care, offering social support, resolving administrative bottlenecks, organising the aid provided by the large numbers of volunteers, and referring people to jobs or education (VVSG, 2022).

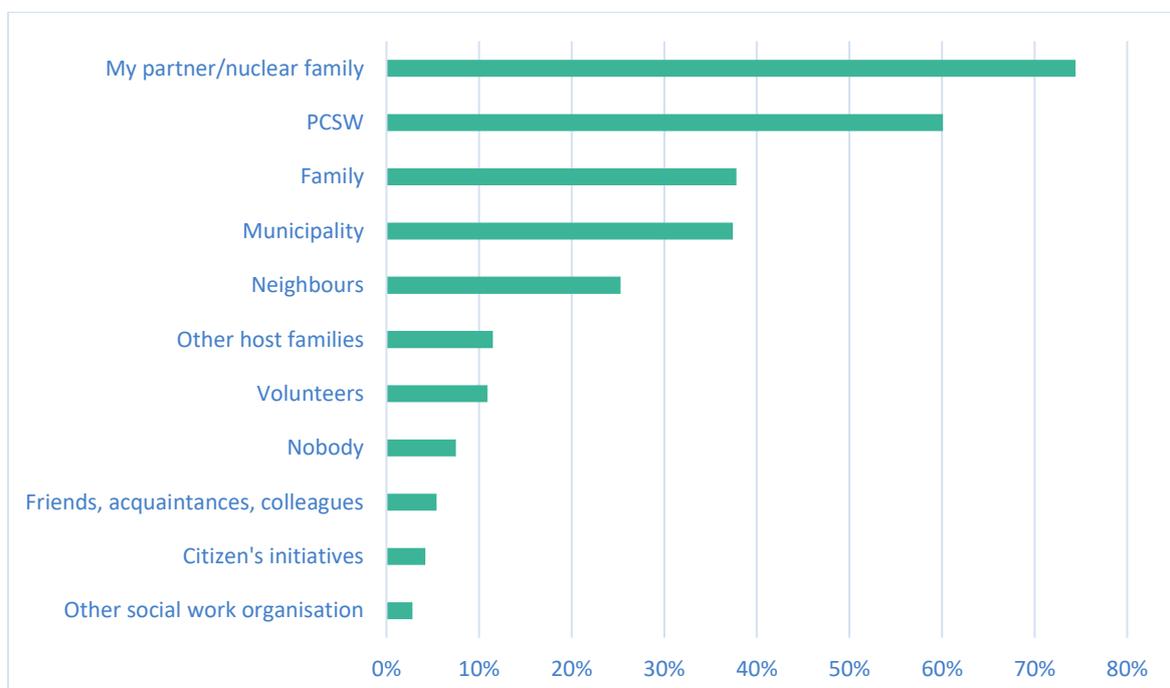


Figure 5.2: Support sources for host families (n=617)

## PSCW is an important source of support

Slightly more than a third of the respondents were able to rely on other family members or the municipality (37.8% and 37.4%, respectively). A quarter was also able to turn to their neighbours (25.3%). Approximately one tenth received support from other host families (11.5%) or volunteers (10.9%). A total of 7.5% indicated that they had not received any help from anyone. The category “other” was indicated by 63 respondents, 35 of whom provided an answer that may be categorised as “friends, acquaintances or colleagues”. The number of respondents who received help from this group was likely much larger, as the option was not included in the survey.

Of all respondents, 4.2% received support from “a citizens’ initiative” and 2.8% were helped by an “other social work organisation”. It is possible that the respondents were insufficiently familiar with these terms, leading them to report help from citizens’ initiatives as help from “volunteers”. Nevertheless, the paucity of support from social work organisations (other than the PCSW) and from non-regulated initiatives that host families experienced is notable. This is perhaps not surprising, given how the hosting was arranged within a short timeframe and in a largely improvised manner.

### 5.2.1 Experiences with services and institutions

We asked respondents to describe any experiences they had with government institutions, private organisations and informal contact persons for the refugees they hosted. The organisations most frequently described in positive terms were PCSWs, the district police and health insurance funds.

Almost four in five respondents (443/567) described their experiences with PCSWs as more positive than negative or very positive. The survey did not allow us to determine exactly what these experiences pertained to. One of the respondents expressed their satisfaction in generic terms:

*“Good cooperation and support from the PCSW and the city’s call centre.”*

Nearly 4 in 5 host families described their experience with PCSWs as positive

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It is unlikely that respondents' experiences with the district police arose from a need for support. Rather, these experiences probably concerned the district police's monitoring role. A [federal circular](#) dated 18 March 2022 mentions "the monitoring of the candidate hosts of persons fleeing the armed conflict in Ukraine". Almost 90% of the respondents for whom the question was relevant were positive about their experience with the district police (393/438).

A total of 374 respondents reported an experience with a health insurance fund. Only one-fifth of those experiences was negative.

Experiences with other services and institutions were reported by far fewer respondents. Whether this means that they did not have any experiences with these organisations cannot be determined on the basis of the survey.

Experiences with the Federal Public Planning Service for Social Integration's General Ukraine Information Line were reported by 203 respondents. A further 91 individuals reported interactions with the information line of the NGO Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen and 49 had experiences with Caritas International's Ukraine Information point. We noted a strong need for legal support among the respondents. Compared to that, the number of respondents that reported experiences with the aforementioned information helplines was low.

**Compared to the strong need for legal support, the number of respondents who contacted helplines was relatively small**

On 4 March 2022, the government launched the website [www.info-ukraine.be](http://www.info-ukraine.be) as well as a helpline to provide information about the situation in Ukraine to both Ukrainians fleeing their country and Belgian citizens.

The [helpline of Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen](#) serves volunteers, host families and citizens with questions about refugees (in Dutch, English and French). A Ukrainian-language helpline is available for Ukrainian refugees (9am to 12:30pm), which can redirect refugees to VZW Solentra for psychological support provided in Ukrainian and to VZW Orbit for specialised questions relating to housing. Up to 8 September 2022, Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen received 3,389 telephone calls, 45% of which from citizens and 55% from Ukrainian refugees. Their questions concerned housing and emergency accommodations (23%), temporary protection (13%), practical financial issues (19%), psychological support (10%) and other topics (35%) (Vlaamse Taskforce Oekraïne, 2022).

Caritas International's [Ukraine information point](#) is a free helpline (1pm to 5pm on weekdays) where legal experts and social workers answer the questions of Ukrainians and the Belgian people hosting them. A WhatsApp helpline has also been set up to offer answers in Ukrainian.

## 5.3 Forms of support received

We also asked the respondents about the kind of support they received (see Figure 5.3). Administrative support and material and practical support were the most common: almost half of all respondents (47.9%) received administrative support, and more than four in ten respondents (43.7%) were given material and practical support, including clothing and food.

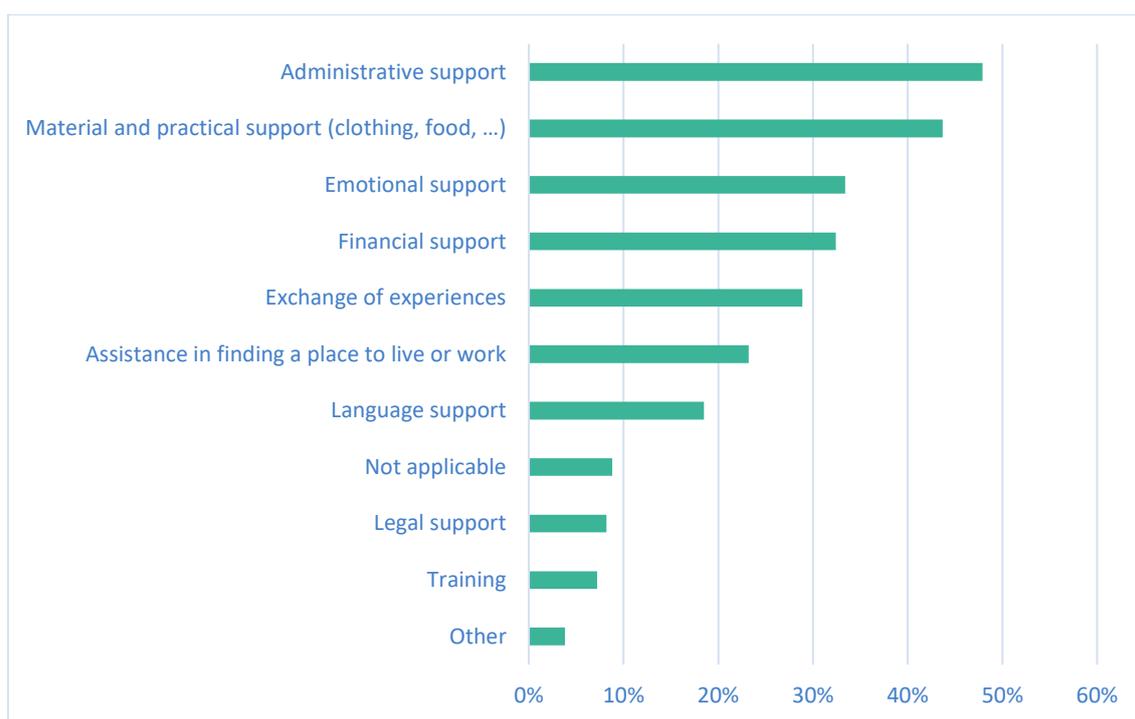


Figure 5.3: Forms of support received (n=599)

A third of all respondents received financial and emotional support and support in the form of sharing experiences with others: 32.4% of the respondents received financial support, 33.4% received emotional support, and almost three in ten (28%) received support through the exchange of experiences. Less than a quarter received help with finding a place to live or work (23.2%), while nearly one in five respondents (18.5%) reported having received language support. Support with regard to training (7.2%) and legal support (8.2%) was much less frequent. Furthermore, 39 respondents checked the category “other”. Several of these respondents mentioned transportation, along with various answers already included in the answer options, such as administrative support, clothing, language support, and so forth.

## 5.4 Do these sources of support address the experienced needs?

To what extent was the support the respondents received adequate? For many it was not. We presented the respondents with the following statement: “I am currently sufficiently supported in the needs I experience in my engagement with refugees.” More than four in ten respondents (182/435) disagreed with this statement.

*“In the start-up phase we received relatively little support from the government (both local and national), even though we did need support and had explicitly asked for it. That support is probably available now, but our refugees have already moved on.”*

We analysed which forms of support host families needed more of (see Figure 5.4). A large number of host families indicated that they needed additional support in various fields, despite the support they had already received. More than two-thirds (383/560) of the respondents needed more help in the search for housing, work or education for the refugees they were hosting.

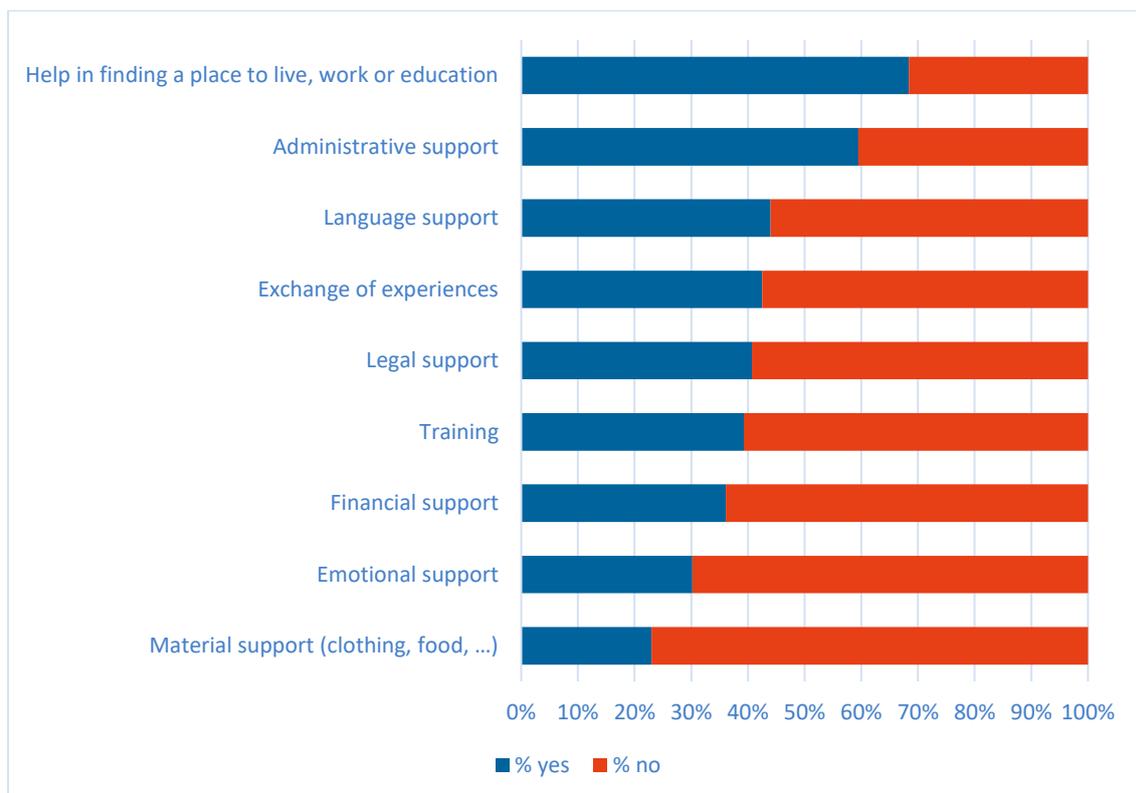


Figure 5.4: Support that respondents needed more of (n=560)

Many host families shared in their Ukrainian guests' experiences of our society's bureaucratic complexity. Despite the fact that administrative support was the most frequently reported form of support received, nearly 60% of the respondents indicated that they had more need of support in this regard. Researchers in Germany and in the Netherlands (Rotterdam) have identified similar needs:

Sufficient  
support?

More than 4 in 10  
say no

“Answers to open-ended questions show that hosts did not necessarily take issue with the fact that they were asked to provide other help on top of offering accommodation. Rather, they became frustrated since they were unaware that providing administrative support was part of their responsibility, and they felt they were not given the resources or knowledge to navigate these procedures.” (Haller et al., 2022, p. 31)

“The fact that Ukrainian refugees encounter issues that still need to be smoothed out (e.g. opening a bank account or obtaining travel documents) can be challenging for the host families, especially because they strive to help their guests in these matters.” (translated from De Gruijter et al., 2022, p. 27)

Language differences also play a major role with regard to both administrative information and general communication. More than 44% of the respondents indicated that they needed help with language and translation (see Figure 5.4). The stronger need for language support was proportionally higher among respondents who had already received language support (55.3%) than among those who did not receive any language support (41%).

*“About 95% of all communication from the government, PCSW and VDAB, diploma recognition body, etc. is in Dutch. This means that we (the host family) have to put in a lot of work to translate all this information using translation software and such. Surely there has to be a better way?”*

Many respondents (42.5%) indicated that they needed more opportunities to exchange experiences with others. Also, 40.7% indicated a need for more legal support (see Figure 5.4).

Did the support needs differ between host families who hosted guests in their own home and families who hosted guests elsewhere? Respondents who cohabited with their guests reported a greater need for help with finding housing, work or education (70%) than respondents who did not share their home with their guests (53.7%). This was also the case with regard to the need to exchange experiences (43% versus 30%), financial support (37.7% versus 25%) and emotional support (30.6% versus 25%). However, we found almost no differences in the need for more support in the areas of training, administrative and legal support, language support and material support.

## 5.5 The support needs of guests

The survey did not present any questions directly to the Ukrainian refugees in host families. However, we asked the host families about the needs they saw in the people they hosted. The respondents reported various needs on the part of their guests (see Figure 5.5), the dynamics of which are similar to the needs of the host families themselves. At least one quarter of the respondents recognised each of the themes as a support need among their guests.

*“During the first few weeks/months these people primarily need rest, administrative/financial and practical support. They need to recover from their trauma and the shock they experienced during and after their flight. After all, leaving their country was not a voluntary choice. In the longer term, they also need emotional/psychological support, I think. They have a lot to process, to grieve, you could say. On top of that, many refugees are women with children who were forced to leave their husbands and fathers behind. Families that have been torn apart, in other words. And who are still regularly getting difficult news from back home.”*

*“They don’t know the language, the country, our culture, or anyone at all for that matter. They have no resources. They need everything, both material and psychological.”*

Here again, the need for administrative support was most pronounced (79.5%). According to the respondents, three-quarters of the guests also found it difficult to get an overview of “all the things that need to be done” (75.8%) and what assistance was available (75.6%). In short, from the perspective of the participants in the survey, the refugees also had a great need for information. We specifically note the need for legal information (60.5%).

**4 out of 5 host families saw a need for administrative support among their guests**

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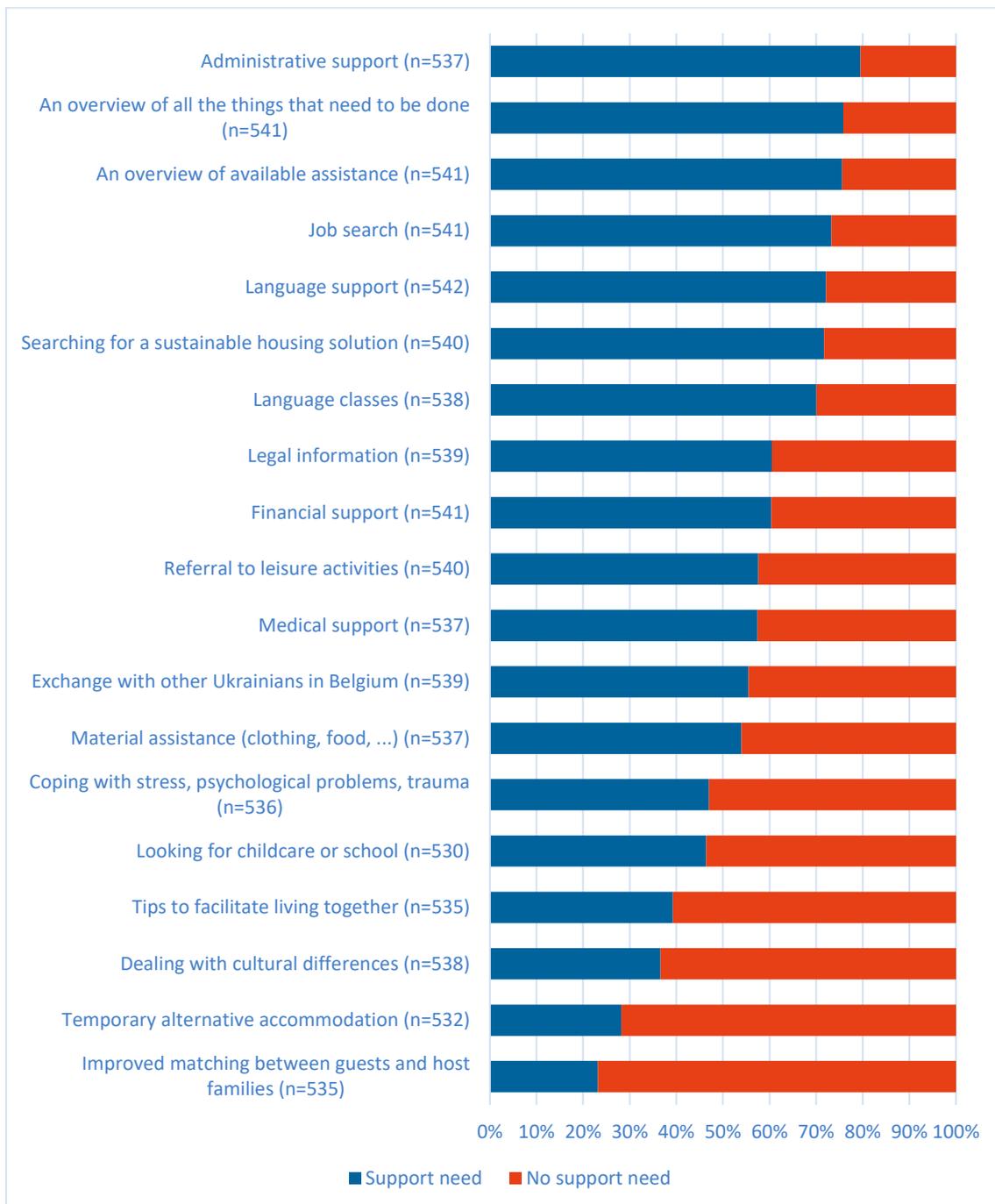


Figure 5.5: Support needs of guests

However, the respondents also saw other support needs in their guests. In addition to the answer options provided in the survey, they also saw a need for communication with family members, friends and acquaintances who remained in Ukraine, for example.

## 6 Host families' evaluation of their experience

In the previous chapters, we discussed the reasons why host families opened their homes to Ukrainian refugees, what the hosting actually entailed, what needs the host families and their guests experienced, and to what extent they received support to address those needs. A question that has not yet been addressed, however, is: how did the participants in the survey evaluate their own experiences as hosts? We will first paint a picture in broad outline.

Since the degree to which respondents were positive or negative about their experiences differed according to whether they were still hosting or no longer hosting refugees, we then go on to discuss the reasons why the hosting activities of a number of families came to an end.

Finally, we take a look at the activities respondents said they were still prepared to commit to in the near future.

### 6.1 Private accommodation: a predominantly positive experience

The vast majority of the persons who participated in our survey described their experience as a host family for Ukrainian refugees as “rather positive” or “very positive” (83.5%, see Figure 6.1). This was especially the case among people who were still hosting at the time of the questionnaire: nine out of ten of these respondents indicated that they found hosting a positive experience. Among respondents who were no longer hosting, two out of three (66%) were positive.

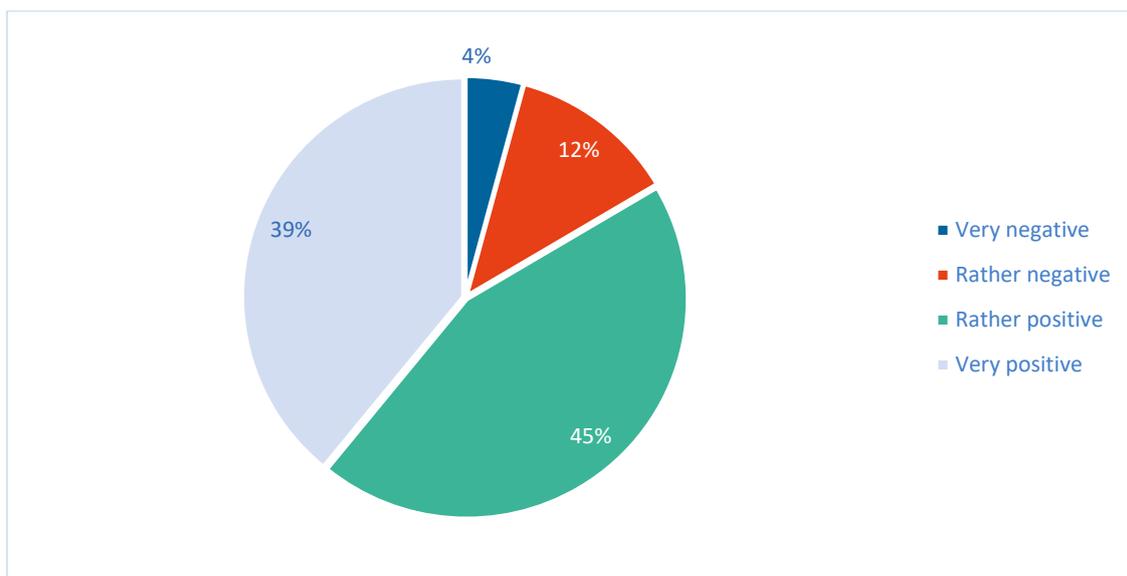


Figure 6.1: The overall experience of respondents with hosting Ukrainian refugees (n=601)

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The vast majority was positive about their experience as a host

Looking at the experiences of all host families, both those still hosting and those who were no longer hosting, we see a clear connection between the nature of the respondents' experience (positive or negative) and a number of other themes addressed elsewhere in the survey. Men were generally more positive (89.3%, 192/215) than women (82.6%, 262/317); retirees were also remarkably more positive (95.8%, 91/95) than working individuals (82%, 319/389).

Respondents who saw similarities between the people they hosted and their own families in the areas of education, work situation, income or religious background were more positive than respondents who felt that their guests differed more strongly from

their own families. The experience also clearly differed based on how the refugees found their way to the host family: of the respondents to whom refugees were referred via personal contacts (acquaintances, family etc.), 90.8% (119/131) were positive about their hosting experience, compared to 81.5% (383/470) of respondents who were matched with refugees in other ways.

However, the most important factor was whether arrangements made with the guests were respected. As described in Chapter 4, many host families made arrangements with their guests regarding various aspects of the hosting relationship, such as the provision of a house key, financial contributions, privacy and helping with household chores, for example. The greater the degree to which respondents indicated that these arrangements were respected, the higher their satisfaction about the hosting experience (see Figure 6.2).

The better the arrangements are respected, the higher the satisfaction

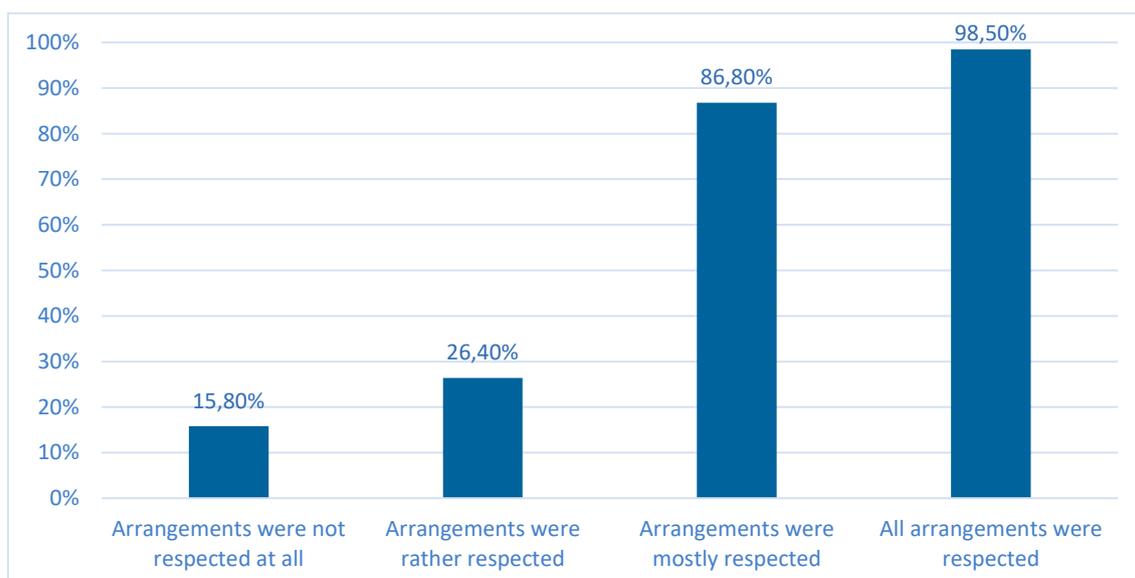


Figure 6.2: Percentage of positive experiences relative to the degree that arrangements were respected

The needs experienced by the host families (see Chapter 5) also clearly related to their general assessment of the experience. For each need the questionnaire asked about, respondents who experienced that need were relatively more negative about their experience than respondents who did not experience that need. Furthermore, people who felt that they received sufficient support for their needs were more likely to evaluate their hosting experience positively.

**People are more positive about hosting when they feel properly supported**

The nature of the support that respondents received also played a role. Respondents more frequently reported a positive experience if they had received administrative support and language support. The source of that support also played a role. Respondents who received support from family members, the municipality or PCSW were significantly more positive than those who did not receive support via these channels. Other potential sources of support, such as respondents' partners or neighbours, were less clearly connected with the general experience of host families.

We see no clear connection with other themes addressed in the survey, such as where the Ukrainians resided (in the same home as the host family or in a separate home), the composition of the host family, or the respondent's education level or their income. Whether or not they received financial compensation for the hosting did not play a decisive role, although among the people who did receive such compensation, the source of the compensation did matter: their experience was more positive when the compensation was paid by the hosted refugees, and less positive when it was provided by the municipality or a PCSW.

## 6.2 A positive picture, but with limits

This predominantly positive picture has its nuances, however. To begin with, 16.5% of the participants in the survey described the experience as “rather negative” or even “very negative”. Among respondents who were no longer hosting, this figure was no less than 34%.

Furthermore, an important issue concerns the supportive capacity of the families. The survey – which only covered the first few months of the hosting and was completed in August 2022 – provided several indications that acting as hosts demanded much of the host families. This is shown more concretely in Table 6.1. The percentages in this table represent the percentage of all respondents who declared that the relevant item applied to them “somewhat” or “to a great extent”.

Statement	Hosting ceased	Hosting ongoing	All respondents
1. By offering shelter, I have taken on too much responsibility	54,2 (77/142)	43,7 (196/449)	46,2 (273/591)
2. I feel enthusiastic about my daily duties as a host family	74,6 (106/142)	72,1 (323/448)	72,7 (429/590)
3. When necessary, I feel able to support my guests	93,0 (132/142)	94,0 (422/449)	93,7 (554/591)
4. When my guests are having a hard time, I cannot react appropriately	21,3 (30/141)	20,9 (93/446)	21,0 (123/587)
5. My guests and I share the space in the house without problems	73,8 (104/141)	74,6 (334/448)	74,4 (438/589)
6. My guests and I have no trouble coordinating our daily routines	56,0 (79/141)	72,8 (326/448)	68,8 (405/589)
7. I find it difficult to agree on the rules of living together with my guests	39,3 (55/140)	20,0 (89/445)	24,6 (144/585)
8. Since I have become a host family, I manage to have enough time for myself and my family	55,6 (79/142)	58,2 (259/445)	57,6 (338/587)
9. By hosting people, I feel I am sacrificing my private or professional life	55,0 (77/140)	39,6 (177/447)	43,3 (254/587)
Statement	Hosting ceased	Hosting ongoing	All respondents

10. The language differences make it very difficult to communicate with the people I host	48,6 (69/142)	42,2 (189/448)	43,7 (258/590)
11. My guests and I have found an effective way to overcome language barriers	87,3 (124/142)	86,0 (387/450)	86,3 (511/592)
12. I have difficulties to make contact with my guests because of cultural differences	26,6 (38/143)	13,4 (60/448)	16,6 (98/591)
13. I learn many things about the culture and habits of the people I host	54,2 (77/142)	65,0 (291/448)	62,4 (368/590)
14. I can count on people around me to help me with my duties as a host family	69,2 (99/143)	53,5 (239/447)	57,3 (338/590)
15. I do not have anyone close to me to turn to if I need help or advice	19,7 (28/142)	21,9 (98/447)	21,4 (126/589)
16. My financial situation is strong enough to take care of my guests	81,8 (117/142)	79,0 (353/447)	79,7 (470/590)
17. Hosting people has a negative impact on my standard of living	25,5 (36/141)	17,6 (79/448)	19,5 (115/589)
18. Before I started hosting, I received all the necessary information from the government or other organisations on how to become a host family	42,0 (60/143)	33,3 (149/448)	35,4 (209/591)
19. Once I started hosting people, these institutions stopped supporting me	36,6 (52/142)	26,4 (117/443)	28,9 (169/585)

Table 6.1: Assessment of hosting experience

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More than four in ten respondents acknowledged they had taken on too much responsibility by agreeing to act as a host. This percentage is in line with the proportion of respondents who indicated they were unable to devote enough time to themselves and their family. Four in ten also felt that hosting refugees had required them to sacrifice their private or professional lives.

*"I do not regret doing it, but I underestimated the emotional complexity of it. You are literally bringing the war into your home, after all."*

At the same time, no less than 73% of all respondents indicated that they were excited about their daily duties as a host family. With regard to the cohabitation, 74% said that they and their guests shared the house without any problems and 69% said they had no trouble coordinating their daily routines. However, 144 respondents had difficulty agreeing rules on how to live together with their guests. More than four in ten respondents had difficulty communicating with their guests due to language differences. Though elsewhere in the survey, 255 host families reported that at least one of their guests spoke a bit of English, many respondents indicated that the fluency of this English was very limited. Nevertheless, 86% of the respondents noted that they and their guests had found an effective way to overcome the language barriers between them. Digital tools, such as Google Translate, were an important source of help in this regard.

**More than 4 in 10 are unable to devote enough time to themselves and their family**

Four in five considered their own financial situation to be strong enough to take care of their guests; this corresponds with the number of people who said that hosting people did not negatively affect their standard of living.

Participants in the survey saw cultural differences more as an enrichment of their lives than as a problem. Only 98 of the 591 who had something to say about this statement reported the cultural differences as a hindrance in the interaction with their guests. Conversely, 368 (of the 590) said they had learned many interesting things about the culture and customs of the people they hosted.

The respondents' assessment of several aspects of the hosting experience was quite similar for families who were still hosting and families who were no longer hosting. However, there were also a number of striking differences, which are in line with the generally more positive assessment provided by respondents who were still acting as hosts. This group more frequently noted that hosting refugees had allowed them to learn many interesting things about the culture and customs of their guests, and they found coordinating their daily routines with their guests easier than other respondents. The group who were no longer hosting, on the other hand, much more frequently indicated that they had been able to rely on people around them for help with their duties as a host family (69.2%) than the respondents who were still hosting.

Among respondents who were no longer hosting, relatively more people found it difficult to communicate with their guests due to cultural differences and to agree rules about how to live together. More than half also indicated that they had taken on too much responsibility, and that they felt that hosting had required them to sacrifice their private or professional lives. Among the group where hosting was still ongoing, these figures were 43.7% and 39.6%, respectively.

## 6.3 Cases where hosting ceased

Of the respondents who completed the survey, 157 were no longer hosting. Of these, 148 provided reasons as to why their hosting activities had ceased. In approximately half the cases, the guests had found a more long-term housing solution (see Table 6.2); 15.6% said that their hosted guests had returned to Ukraine or migrated to another country. In 16.9% of the cases, the guests themselves indicated that they wished to leave.

Reason	Percentage	Frequentie
Guests found a long-term housing solution	46,6	69
Guests returned to Ukraine	8,8	13
Guests migrated to another country	6,8	10
Guests wished to leave	16,9	25
Guests suddenly left without giving reasons	2,0	3
Respondent was no longer able to continue hosting people	15,5	23
Respondent was no longer comfortable with hosting someone	13,5	20
Other reason	23,0	34

Table 6.2: Reasons for cessation of hosting (n=148)

**In 1 in 4 cases, hosting ceased due to a lack of support or feelings of discomfort**

In one in four cases, the hosting ceased due to a lack of support or because the respondent felt uncomfortable with the hosting. All of the respondents in question had indicated elsewhere in the survey that they had received little to no support in various areas (including administrative support, help finding housing, work or education, and exchanging experiences, among others), while they did in fact need such support.

## 6.4 Commitments in the near future

Host families were strongly involved in the Ukrainian refugee crisis. Would they do so again? Are they prepared to host refugees from other countries, or would they commit to other forms of involvement? We asked about their motivation to potentially commit to various activities in the second half of 2022 (see Table 6.3):

- Continue hosting their current guests beyond the agreed length of stay (only for those respondents who were still hosting Ukrainian refugees at the time they completed the survey)
- Host new refugees from Ukraine after the departure of the current guests
- Host new refugees from other countries than Ukraine who have been granted refugee status
- Host asylum seekers or undocumented migrants regardless of their refugee status
- Perform volunteer work for refugee organisations in Belgium
- Donate money or goods for humanitarian corridors to help people fleeing war
- Sign a petition to improve Belgium's shelter and integration policies
- Participate in a public demonstration or manifestation to demand a more humane treatment of refugees in Europe

**The majority of the respondents who were still hosting (61.9%) were motivated to continue hosting their guests beyond the agreed duration of stay**

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Statement	Hosting ceased	Hosting ongoing	All respondents
1. Continue to host the same guests after the agreed period of stay	nvt	61,9 (258/417)	61,9 (258/417)
2. Reception of new refugees from Ukraine	31,3 (40/128)	38,2 (159/416)	36,6 (199/544)
3. Reception of new refugees from countries other than Ukraine who have obtained refugee status	21,9 (28/128)	25,0 (104/416)	24,3 (132/544)
4. Reception of asylum seekers of undocumented migrants, regardless of their refugee status	9,4 (12/127)	15,9 (66/415)	14,4 (78/542)
5. Volunteer work for refugee organisations in Belgium	37,3 (47/126)	34,5 (143/415)	35,1 (190/541)
6. Donating money or goods for humanitarian corridors for the benefit of people fleeing war	64,3 (81/126)	58,8 (245/417)	60,0 (326/543)
7. Sign a petition to improve the reception and integration policy in Belgium	59,5 (75/126)	61,6 (255/414)	61,1 (330/540)
8. Participate in a public demonstration or event to ask for a more humane treatment of refugees in Europe	16,7 (21/126)	20,4 (85/416)	19,6 (106/542)

Table 6.3: Percentage of respondents who were "rather motivated" or "very motivated" to take on further commitments towards the end of 2022

The majority of the respondents who were still hosting (61.9%) were "rather motivated" or "very motivated" to continue hosting their guests, even after the agreed period of stay had passed. One in three said they would also be prepared to host new refugees from Ukraine in 2022.

An important nuance is that we only asked for the respondents' preparedness to commit to these activities around the end of 2022. We have no insight into their longer-term motivation. Some of the respondents who said that they were "rather not motivated" or "not at all motivated" did offer some nuance.

*“It has been a very positive experience for us, but right now we need a moment to unwind – [hosting] is not something to be taken lightly! Perhaps we can host other people in the future.”*

One in four were also prepared to host non-Ukrainian refugees. For the wider group of migrants, regardless of residential status, this proportion was 14%. Furthermore, 60% of respondents were prepared to donate money or goods for humanitarian corridors or sign a petition concerning Belgium’s shelter and integration policies; 35% were motivated to do volunteer work.

This study shows that governments calling on the help of host families ask and receive a great deal of commitment from these families. Furthermore, many families are prepared to commit to further ways of helping refugees after their current hosting activities have ended, in the form of hosting or otherwise. This places an important responsibility on any government that wishes to engage host families. In the final chapter we discuss this issue, based on the question as to what form a sustainable support framework for host families might take.

## 7 Towards a sustainable support framework for host families

At present, as we complete this report, it is early December 2022. The war in Ukraine has entered its tenth month. Belgium has so far awarded more than 60,000 certificates of temporary protection to Ukrainian refugees. Following registration, refugees were able to indicate a need for shelter, after which Fedasil sought an available place that suited their profile. Up to early December 2022, more than 15,670 persons were referred to various accommodations in this manner (Statbel, 2022). A significant proportion of these accommodations were provided by host families.

Our survey among the host families was conducted in the summer of 2022. The context of providing shelter to Ukrainian refugees (both public and private) has since changed in various ways. When our study began, there was an urgent need for help from citizens, which was driven by the campaign #FreeSpot. This call to action took place in the context of policy-based improvisation to deal with the sudden, strong influx of Ukrainian refugees. No plan existed, forcing governments and other social actors to hastily cobble together solutions.

The fact that many private citizens were prepared to host guests is a sign of the solidarity that exists in Belgian society, and was a necessary boon for governments who proved incapable of providing sufficient accommodations in the short term. At the same time, this guest hosting was highly improvised. The EU's decision to grant Ukrainians temporary protection for displaced persons created new roles and responsibilities for existing services and organisations. For example, not all PCSWs have experience with assisting new arrivals to our country who do not know the language and have yet to complete any civil integration programmes, or with the provision of support to host families. With the management of the Ariane emergency centre, Fedasil was also assigned an unaccustomed role in the assistance of asylum seekers.

Despite the increase in the shelter capacity for Ukrainian refugees in the course of 2022, thanks among others to the construction of a number of emergency villages, the need for accommodations currently (late 2022) remains high. Ukrainian families continue to apply for shelter, but the number of new host families appears to be dwindling. According to the Flemish accommodation tool, some 5,300 Ukrainians were living with host families by the end of November 2022, and fewer than 3000 were offered accommodation in citizens' second homes. To what extent these numbers accurately reflect reality is unclear; it is likely that not all hosted refugees are registered in this tool. For Brussels and Wallonia, we have no information regarding the current figures.

**There is a growing  
shortage of  
structural  
emergency  
accommodation**

There is a growing shortage of structural emergency accommodation. While the transitions from the Ariane emergency centre to host families, other accommodations or homes progressed relatively smoothly in the first months, this is no longer the case today. Various media are reporting on the difficulties of finding housing for refugees, as well as on the issues arising in the emergency accommodations in the Ariane centre (ADN, 2022; Radio 1, 2022; Struys, 2022).

In view of the changes in both the shelter context and the shelter crisis today, the insights yielded by this study are all the more relevant. Learning from the experiences of host families who opened their homes to Ukrainian refugees in 2022 is crucial to ensure the continued success of #FreeSpot in 2023. A question that is increasingly being asked is whether private accommodation can also be incorporated into future shelter models for international protection applicants and refugees, as part of the solution for the current shelter crisis. We therefore conclude with a summary of the main points of our report and use these findings, foreign research and the current shelter situation of Ukrainian refugees to reflect on the challenges that such a model would face in the short and medium-long term.

## 7.1 Some key findings

What do the data of the 653 respondents from host families who completed the survey tell us?

The motives of host families are varied, but a sense of “moral duty” stands out. Respondents frequently refer to humanity, solidarity and empathy. Some also stated that they were simply responding to the government’s call and/or believed that “society was not doing enough”. The diversity of the responses shows that there is no single shared explanation as to why help is offered.

The general experience of Belgian host families is positive. The vast majority of the participants in our survey described their experience as a host family for Ukrainian refugees as “rather positive” or “very positive” (83.5%, see Chapter 6). Socially integrated shelter clearly does have potential.

Host families offer much more than just shelter. By offering shelter, they automatically become “buddies” for their guests. They address many of their guests’ support needs, ranging from administrative and practical matters to emotional support.

Eight in ten provide material support, and four in ten also provide financial support. When Ukrainian refugees struggle with things that are not yet properly organised, this can be difficult for the host families, as they strive to help their guests resolve such issues.

**The general  
experience of host  
families in  
Belgium is  
positive**

What host families do or are able to do strongly depends on the support they receive or do not receive. The housing issue is crucial for the throughput of Ukrainian families, but is often the biggest hurdle as well. The respondents also identified needs in other areas that, despite the available support, were insufficiently addressed. Structural support for those needs of host families is therefore essential for the successful continuation of this hosting model.

**Structural support for the needs of host families is essential for successful continuation**

## 7.2 Lessons from neighbouring countries.

Our study of the private shelter possibilities for Ukrainian refugees is not alone in its kind. Other European countries also made use of the possibilities for shelter with private citizens, and the accommodation of Ukrainian refugees by private households was (and remains) crucial to enable the provision of sufficient reception places in a short timeframe. Just as this report studied the experiences of host families in Belgium, we are now seeing the initial results of similar surveys being published in other countries, such as Germany and the Netherlands. These studies help to contextualise the results of our study and add substance to policy recommendations.

German researchers conducted an online survey among 3,251 host families and candidate host families registered with #UnterkunftUkraine, a platform founded shortly after the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine. These researchers reported similar positive experiences: 82% of German host families were positive about their commitment (Haller et al., 2022). Families with less positive experiences were frustrated by a lack of clearly outlined responsibilities and expectations, or became entangled in the process of offering support and were unable to find their way to the help the refugees needed. Of the German host families, 80% were prepared to act as hosts again in the future. As in the Belgian survey, in the majority of cases where the hosting ended it was because a long-term housing solution had been found (55%). However, 20% of the families in the German study saw their hosting activities end abruptly as a result of conflict, an insecure home situation, or a lack of support.

The accommodation of Ukrainian refugees was studied in the Netherlands as well. Researchers focused on the context of Rotterdam, where they conducted 22 interviews with involved parties from the municipality, social organisations, refugees and host families. They also conducted a survey among Ukrainian refugees who had been accommodated aboard a cruise ship (de Gruijter et al., 2022). The experiences of refugees in Rotterdam were very diverse; positive experiences often related to a warm welcome and receiving practical and emotional support. The positive experiences of host families also related to building personal relations and social commitment.

There were also reports of negative experiences. In situations where refugees were received by persons and in locations that were not screened in advance, this sometimes

led to unsafe situations. The Dutch researchers also pointed out that the circumstances of privately provided shelter are not always suited to long stays, especially when space and privacy are lacking. The length of the stay, especially the uncertainty on the part of both guests and host families as to how long the stay will be, is therefore a major risk factor. The significant increase in subsistence costs and energy consumption were also a source of concern for some host families.

## 7.3 Need for a framework for a sustainable private accommodation model

The hosting of the Ukrainian refugees was set up in a very short period of time. Can private accommodation be made more sustainable and permanently incorporated into the policies and regulations around shelter and assistance of refugees? Is this desirable? And how can we prevent governments from shifting their responsibilities onto citizens and families? We argue that this question should not be asked only in the context of the Ukrainian situation, but with regard to all people in need of international protection.

A study by Ran and Join-Lambert (2020) focusing on the hosting of refugees in France (before the Ukrainian war) revealed both advantages and pitfalls in the hosting of refugees by private citizens. Advantages include language acquisition and building bridges between diverse cultural groups; furthermore, hosting families often help refugees find their way to work and education. Private accommodation also has a strong impact on refugees' sense of belonging. However, pitfalls also exist, such as a lack of independence and privacy. Ran and Join-Lambert therefore justly call for caution in romanticising hosting as a one-for-all solution.

We must recognise that formalising guest hosting will create thresholds that may not help expand the capacity of host families. However, if governments wish to continue making use of private accommodation in the coming months and years, it is important to consider a more sustainable framework.

In the following, we discuss a number of fundamental conditions. These conditions are based on our findings, supplemented with insights from other research projects and recommendations from national and international organisations.

We must recognise that formalising guest hosting will create thresholds that may not help expand the capacity of host families. However, if governments wish to continue making use of private accommodation in the coming months and years, it is important to consider a more sustainable framework.

**Can private hosting be permanently incorporated in policy, and is this desirable?**

# #FreeSpot

In the following, we discuss a number of fundamental conditions. These conditions are based on our findings, supplemented with insights from other research projects and recommendations from national and international organisations.

## 7.3.1 Recruitment through a constructive narrative of solidarity

In practice, the first precondition to ensure the sustainability of refugee hosting is to ensure that sufficient citizens are prepared to host refugees. Our data shows that the preparedness of host families to engage in further hosting is declining: approximately 60% of the participants said that they were to a greater or lesser degree prepared to continue hosting their current guests, fewer than 40% were prepared to receive new guests from Ukraine, and 25% were prepared to host refugees from other regions. We also saw that participants were unable to provide a clear, unambiguous reason for their decision to host refugees. If private accommodation is to be made into a permanent, broadly incorporated arrangement, it will be important to invest in a broad narrative of solidarity (e.g. on motives and framing). It is worth examining further exactly what motivates citizens, whether there exist differences in the experiences of citizens with different motivations, and how motivation can be reinforced among the wider population.

## 7.3.2 Screening and matching

In order to ensure sustainable and good accommodation of refugees with host families, an advance screening of host families and their homes is advisable. Such a screening would have two functions: to examine the living conditions in the home and prevent abuse, but also to protect the capacity of candidate host families. A prior screening is also recommended by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA, 2022) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2022).

Better awareness of the possibilities of host families would also enable better coordination of demand and supply, and a better matching of host families and guests. The [European Union Agency for Asylum](#) (2022) suggests to at least consider the family composition and family profile, the size of the home, the number of sleeping places and the languages spoken by the candidate host family and the refugees. It is also preferable for the host families to be able to participate in a preparatory programme that enables them to better gauge the challenges and the support they may receive.

## 7.3.3 Attention for temporality

Private accommodation works better if the demand and tasks are clearly delimited in terms of time and space, a recent French study argues.

“A critical aspect raised from this research lies in the time duration for hosting refugees. [...] Existing research confirms that long-term stable accommodation facilitates refugees’ sense of belonging and security and access to social connection and public services, thence contributing to their independence for future integration. [...] However, some social workers involved in this research suggested that participating in long-term hosting can be a stressful process for both refugees and hosting families. Therefore short-term hosting might benefit refugees more. [...] (W)e posit that neither short-term nor long-term hosting is perfect. Social work practitioners need to know the pros and cons of both hosting patterns and how to apply them in practice.” (Ran & Join-Lambert, 2020, p. 471)

We do not know to what extent a clear end date for the guest hosting was an explicit concern among the host families in our survey. Further research is required in this respect. Nevertheless, we can assert that commitments with a clear time limit offer more certainty and a better idea of what to expect. At the same time, this requires a clear idea of what to expect after this period, and attention for a careful preparation of this transition in cooperation with the guests and host family. In other words, accommodation by host families requires a clear embedding in a broader shelter policy coordinated by the authorities, with guarantees that people can smoothly transition from host families to the regular housing market when a host family and/or their guests wish to end the arrangement.

## 7.3.4 A supportive housing policy is crucial

This study therefore once again emphasises the pressing need for supportive housing policies in the various Belgian regions. Neither host families nor guests have any idea of what to expect without the prospect of a long-term housing solution, and with the growing housing crisis, such a solution is anything but a certainty today. The transition to long-term housing solutions, which can be very difficult, thus forms a bottleneck in the process from arrival to said transition, and the regions are not adequately handling their housing obligations, neither with regard to Ukrainian refugees in host families nor for recognised refugees who are forced to leave collective accommodations. Furthermore, there are general difficulties in the rental market and a shortage of regulated rental homes.

**Private  
accommodation  
works better when  
the demand and  
tasks are clearly  
delimited in time  
and space**

Our study of the private accommodation of Ukrainian refugees is in line with the findings of an earlier study into the housing support of recognised refugees (D'Eer et al., 2019). In addition to a shortage of affordable housing of good quality, there is a lack of concrete policy support in the area of providing support for refugees in their housing pathways. Even though it is in no way the responsibility of host families, it is therefore often the citizens themselves who offer this service.

## 7.3.5 Investing in better support of host families

Based on our study we conclude that a proper framework and support for host families can make the difference between success and failure. After all, host families often automatically take on a broader supportive or “buddy” role for their guests.

Clear, streamlined and accessible information for both host families and refugees is crucial in this context, as is a clear distribution of duties between host families, community-based organisations and authorities. It is significant that more than four in ten respondents indicated that they had taken on too much responsibility by agreeing to act as hosts. This must be avoided in the future if governments wish to be able to continue to rely on this form of informal solidarity. A framework is needed to determine what can reasonably be considered part of a host family’s commitment, and what cannot.

**Organising meetups  
between host families  
to share experiences  
is recommended**

It is also recommendable to organise meetups between host families so that they can share their experiences. The results from the Belgian, German and Dutch studies all reveal this need for exchange. Training and supervision for host families is crucial, as Ran and Join-Lambert (2020, p. 471) indicate as well:

“[T]o ensure a successful hosting process, systematic training for the participants prior to the hosting and ongoing supervision alongside the hosting are needed. Except setting up the principles for multi-stakeholders participating in the hosting, the training should also address major issues identified from previous hosting practices, such as training the hosting family members about how to take care of the hosted refugees’ privacy and respect their independence during the cohabitation. The supervision ought to monitor the ongoing hosting projects in order to support both the hosted refugees and hosting families.”

Considering the similarities between refugee hosting and foster care, the meetups organised by Foster Care may provide inspiration. By way of illustration: Rotterdam organises regular so-called host family cafés (meetups) where host families can ask questions and share their experiences with each other (de Gruijter et al., 2022).

Hosting also has financial implications. Approximately one third of the respondents felt a need for more financial support. The survey was conducted from 14 June to 18 August 2022, a period when the consequences of the energy crisis and the high inflation were still mild. We wish to raise the question as to whether host families should have a right to financial compensation, similarly to foster families, and under which conditions. Presently there exist large differences in the compensation offered to host families, depending on the subsistence income awarded by the PCSW or the arrangements between host families and their guests.

## 7.4 The hosting of Ukrainian refugees: looking ahead

As long as the war continues, many Ukrainians will remain in need of shelter. It currently seems that the temporary protection period for Ukrainian refugees pursuant to the Temporary Protection Directive will be extended beyond March 2023. This makes it necessary for all hosting countries – including Belgium – to prepare for the possibility that Ukrainian refugees will be staying for an extended period, in some cases even permanently. It is uncertain how the influx, integration and return of these refugees will develop, and it is therefore important to consider how governments can support host families who wish to continue to offer shelter to refugees.

For Ukrainians who remain in Belgium, it is important that the authorities continue to work on improving their self-reliance. That means that the *Agentschap Inburgering en Integratie* (Agency for Integration and Civic Integration), the *Bureau d'accueil pour primo-arrivants Bruxelles* (Reception Office for newcomers in Brussels) and the *Centres régionaux d'intégration* (Regional Integration Centres) must take steps to set up formal courses in language education with certificates.

The same goes for language training and other training in the workplace, since a number of people are already active in the job market. Processes and policy must also be set up to assist those who wish to and are able to return to Ukraine.

**As long as the war continues, refugees will need shelter**

## 7.5 Recommendations for further research

This report paints an interim picture of the hosting of Ukrainian refugees by Belgian families in mid-2022. Further research is necessary to form a more detailed picture of the experiences of host families. We suspect that our survey insufficiently captures the hosting provided through the Ukrainian diaspora, possibly because we were unable to properly reach some of those Ukrainian families and citizens' initiatives. Further research into the solidarity within this diaspora may provide a valuable addition to our findings. We also call for in-depth, qualitative research into the experiences of host families. This would make it possible to study various findings from our survey in more depth and to determine how hosting evolves as the duration of the hosting increases.

A second focus we wish to put forward are the experiences and support needs of Ukrainian refugees while being hosted. Our survey only gathered indirect information about these aspects, via the answers provided by the host families. While these estimations by the host families have yielded valuable information about the needs of displaced Ukrainians, follow-up research among the hosted Ukrainian refugees themselves is necessary in order to better understand the experiences and needs of people being hosted by private citizens.

Finally, aside from the host families, the (local) governments, services and institutions played important roles in the rollout of #FreeSpot and the support of Ukrainian refugees and the many volunteers who aided them. How did these organisations address this unique situation? What lessons can be learned from that, both with an eye to the continued sheltering and support of Ukrainian refugees and the potential incorporation of refugee hosting in a future policy model? What role can social work organisations play in a more formalised framework for refugee hosting?

Considering that the hosting of Ukrainian guests is a European phenomenon, we argue in favour of a comparative perspective at the European level for all of these research questions. The current shelter crisis for Ukrainian refugees, as well as other persons requesting international protection, requires us to seek innovative answers to the shelter needs of refugees and the duty of the Belgian and other European governments to provide such shelter. Calling on the help of host families can – provided that solid and structural support is given – be a component of a shelter and asylum policy that enables a more humane and sustainable reception of refugees.

**Refugee hosting  
can be part of a  
humane and  
sustainable shelter  
and asylum policy**

**Further research  
is needed for a  
more detailed  
picture of the  
experiences of  
host families**

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[www.odisee.be/en/social-work-research-centre](http://www.odisee.be/en/social-work-research-centre)

### **Centre for Family Studies**

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