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## Recreation and leisure in forced migration: analysis of leisure time behaviours of Ukrainian citizens living in Poland

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**Abstract:** The objective of this article is to analyse the leisure behaviour of Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland. The study was conducted in 2023 and explored leisure preferences, changes in leisure behaviour after relocation, and the factors influencing the choice of leisure activities. A dual approach encompassing both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies was adopted. The results of the study indicate a clear preference among most respondents for active leisure activities. However, following relocation to a foreign country, there is a general decline in participation in such activities, particularly tourism, fitness, and dance. Concurrently, there is a marked increase in domestic and passive activities, such as watching television and films or listening to music. Several factors have been identified as contributing to a reduced engagement in certain types of active leisure. These factors include economic constraints, language barriers and adaptation difficulties. The study under discussion draws attention to the significance of recreational infrastructure and the psychological aspects of migration in shaping the leisure behaviour of Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland.

**Keywords:** leisure time, recreation, Ukrainians, immigrants introduction

### 1. Introduction

Leisure activities are understood in terms of time available for recreation. It is often emphasised that engaging in such activities represents an individual's choice when organising their free time. Growing interest in the study of leisure organisation stems from the social transformations occurring on a global scale. These changes, which reshape objective reality, are also altering the structure and content of leisure behaviours. Modern conditions bring about new understandings and new frameworks for studying how leisure time is spent.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has forced large numbers of Ukrainians – predominantly women and children—to seek

temporary refuge abroad. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were 5.12 million Ukrainian refugees in Europe in 2023, including 1.56 million in Poland (<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/>). Nearly one million Ukrainian citizens were covered by temporary protection. According to the Central Statistical Office, more than half (64.8%) were women, and due to the armed conflict in Ukraine, the feminisation ratio was 184 women per 100 men arriving from Ukraine. A significant proportion of immigrants (81%) lived in cities (Mieszkańcy..., 2023). In addition to refugees, other groups of Ukrainians currently residing

in European countries include labour migrants, university students, and individuals undergoing medical treatment. All of them have found themselves in unfamiliar environments and were quickly confronted with the need to organise everyday aspects of life: housing, employment, education, and leisure/recreation.

To date, there is still limited knowledge about how Ukrainian migrants organise their leisure time abroad. The main objective of this study is to examine the leisure behaviours of young people Ukrainian citizens living outside their home country, with a particular focus on Poland. Specific aims include: (1) identifying the types of leisure activities preferred by Ukrainians from different age groups and social categories; (2) examining the factors

influencing the selection of leisure activities; and (3) determining whether and how migration has affected leisure practices.

The research focuses on the year 2023 and includes Ukrainian migrants residing in various countries, with Poland serving as the central case study. So far, limited scholarly attention has been given to the leisure behaviour of migrants in Poland. Yet, this topic is highly relevant: on the one hand, leisure can foster contact with the host society – its people and culture – thereby facilitating the integration process. On the other hand, it can provide migrants with a sense of familiarity, stability, and security by enabling them to maintain connections with culturally similar communities (Horolets et al., 2021).

## 2. Theoretical background

Leisure time leads to changes in all spheres of human activity. As one of the spheres of human activity, tourism and leisure influence the development of economic sectors and contribute to the transformation of leisure infrastructure, and its innovative forms result from the social differentiation of modern society. Under conditions of intensification of production and increased tension in the workplace, leisure and free time are becoming increasingly important and attractive, as they create conditions for the realization of creative potential and the satisfaction of cultural needs. To understand the essence of this phenomenon, it is necessary to understand the concept and how it differs from similar concepts. However, there is a general consensus that leisure can be considered as: a component of time-space (a quantitative concept of leisure that assumes the division of human time into working and non-working periods) (Brightbill, 1960; Veal, 1992; Przećławski 1993; Goncharenko, 1997; Busel, 2004); the form of an individual's leisure time, a space for the development of his/her abilities and skills (Murphy, 1981); a

distinct type of life activity (the concept of activity considers human activities in leisure time, which enable the restoration of physical strength and work capacity, the development and improvement of creative abilities) (Clawson and Knetsch 1974; Condor 2006; Alla and Ajibua, 2012); the psychological (emotional, psychological) state of a person concept of an individual's perception of a certain activity. Concepts such as freedom, intrinsic motivation, competence, and positive affect are crucial in determining whether an experience is leisure or not) (Cushman and Laidler, 1990; Bombol, 2005).

It is also worth noting that in contemporary scientific literature the term 'leisure' is often equated with the term 'free time'. Leisure, on the other hand, is defined as "the part of social, non-working time that is freed from pressing matters and is a 'time of freedom', a space for free activity and personal development" (Condor, 2006). As can be seen, in the sphere of leisure time man independently reveals his preferences for activity choice, which is conditioned by the level of a person's

spiritual development and their value needs. Leisure time is directly related to the social conditions of society. The content of leisure time is expressed through the concept of "leisure". Thus, leisure is considered in the context of free time, which is its substantive dimension. The rational use of leisure time is a set of types of activities, their active and passive forms, which more effectively influence the personality of a person, the development of physical, emotional, and intellectual spheres of their life. Leisure relates to activity, leisure activity is a conscious and purposeful active activity of a human being aimed at satisfying the needs of getting to know his/her own personality and the surrounding world, carried out directly and indirectly in the conditions of leisure time. Leisure activity is a certain social space in which a person can express and realise themselves, make their own choices in accordance with their inner beliefs, needs, and values. The Ukrainian Explanatory Dictionary defines recreational activity as "a way of being of a person in leisure time that does not contradict generally accepted social norms, promotes self-discovery, self-determination, self-realisation, self-education and all-round development of the individual" (Busel, 2004). David E. Gray also calls it an activity involving the search for truth and self-knowledge, an act of aesthetic, psychological, religious, and philosophical contemplation (Veal, 1992). According to O. Boyko (2011), leisure activity is a way of existence and development of social reality, a manifestation of social activity, and a reflection and transformation of the world around us. The French sociologist J. Dumazedier considers it as an activity - beyond duties at work, in the family and in society - to which a person turns at will for leisure, entertainment, expansion of knowledge and spontaneous participation in social life, as well as the free use of their creative abilities (Veal, 1992). P. Hills and M. Argyle (1998) define leisure activities as voluntary non-work activities that are performed for pleasure. It

includes activities such as hobbies, the arts, participating in educational activities, reading, watching television, socialising, shopping, listening to music, volunteering, participating in religious activities, participating in political parties, trade unions or environmental groups, visiting the library, cultural events and heritage activities, playing team sports, working together in the community, participating in social clubs. T. Blackshaw (2016) believes that leisure activities are the main driving force behind the human drive to make life meaningful or to give it a sense of passion, satisfaction, and purpose. The Polish pedagogue A. Zandecki (1976) calls leisure spending an important element of 'quality of life'. It should be noted that there are different perspectives on the interpretation of leisure and recreation, which reflect different approaches to leisure as an important sphere of human existence. Their difference lies in the fact that they arise from the perspective of different sciences: cultural studies, medicine, ecology, sociology, economics, pedagogy, psychology, etc.

According to M. Kaplan (1975), leisure activities cannot be reduced to a list of different types of activities aimed at restoring a person's strength but should be understood as a central element of culture that has deep connections with other spheres of life (work, family). An important role in the development of theories and concepts of leisure was played by the ideas and theoretical provisions of the work of the American scientist J. Shivers (1981), who treats leisure time as a natural human need, an opportunity for self-realisation and a motive for work, as well as time for antisocial purposes and waste in terms of structuring leisure time and filling it with cultural content. The distinctive feature that distinguishes leisure activities from other human activities is that they are aimed at restoring mental and physical strength, raising the educational and spiritual level of a person, and performing in leisure time only those activities that satisfy human needs and desires and bring them

pleasure in the activity itself. The choice and content of leisure time activities are very individual, as man is subconsciously guided by his own preferences, social values, and customs. In turn, the essence of leisure-time activities realises a person's life purpose and tasks (e.g. acquiring knowledge, skills and abilities, formation of behavioural norms, assimilation of cultural values, improvement of social activity, etc.).

To summarise the above, it should be noted that the concepts of 'leisure' are not the same and there is no single definition of these concepts. Leisure can be seen as a human time, activity or mental state, and the leisure activities that underpin the realisation of leisure can be interpreted from the point of view of different sciences. Although the term 'leisure' is often replaced by the term 'free time', they are not identical. Leisure is the part of leisure time that is used for necessary social, creative, and other activities and serves the self-discovery, self-realisation, self-development and self-improvement of the individual.

The types and forms of leisure activities can be determined by many factors, including age, culture and ethnicity, psychology, status, personality, activity. The ways in which different age groups and categories of the population (children, adolescents, adults, older people, families) spend their leisure time is one of these factors, as each age group has its own

### 3. Research methods

This study used a multi-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. As a first step, a detailed literature study was conducted to build the theoretical basis for the analysis and to identify key concepts and relationships in the research area. The analysis of available scientific sources, reports and strategic documents (desk research) also enabled the formulation of research hypotheses and the construction of a research tool in the form of a questionnaire.

leisure orientations and needs. The way free time is spent is also determined by socio-demographic factors, such as level of education, occupation or professional activity, as well as economic factors, including financial situation and level and structure of income (Aizlewood et al., 2006; Roman and Roman, 2023). An analysis of factors influencing cultural participation among Italian immigrants shows that the level of education strongly correlates with participation in both 'high' culture (theatre, music) and mass events (Bertacchini et al., 2022). Similarly, the likelihood of participating in sports activities is lower for both migrants and members of the native community with secondary education compared to those with higher education (Schmidt et al., 2025). The income situation of the population affects both the amount of free time and the structure of activities performed during the day. It is worth emphasising the strong interdependence between the two types of budgets operating in households: the monetary budget and the time budget. The management of income and financial resources is closely linked to the management of time — the two spheres are mutually determining and correlated (Kolny 2004). In the context of this research, it should be noted that the process of organising leisure time is one way of mastering the environment, socialising and integrating into the social environment.

The next stage was to carry out empirical research using a standardized survey questionnaire, addressed to a selected group of respondents (the research was preceded by a pilot study). Computer techniques were used in the research process. The data collected by means of the questionnaire were subjected to a process of coding, ordering and analysis using statistical methods. Amongst others, frequency analysis, and measures were used in the analysis. In addition, cross-tabulation analyses

were carried out to identify relationships between variables, which allowed respondents' answers to be collated according to selected categories and the relationships between them to be assessed. Descriptive statistics techniques were used along with graphical

### 3.1. The survey

A categorised interview method was used to achieve the objectives. The data collection method was a one-time online survey. The survey was conducted using the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview) technique. The survey questionnaire was made available electronically, using Google Forms. This method of data collection was chosen because online surveys are faster, cheaper, easier to administer, and provide a high level of anonymity. An interview questionnaire was developed with 17 closed and open-ended questions and a metric. It asked about factors that may influence leisure behaviour (age, gender, occupation, presence of minor children, income level, amount of free time, availability of leisure and recreation facilities). The questionnaire asked about the types of preferred leisure activities (active, passive), changes in leisure behaviour after the move and the reasons for these changes. Qualitative, quantitative and comparative research methods were used to analyse the responses. The organisational plan for the study included: drawing up the research programme, creating the survey questionnaire and its online version (using Google Forms), conducting the pilot study, analysing the data and results of the pilot study, revising the questionnaire according to the results of the pilot study, and creating the final version of the questionnaire. The stages of the study included: (1) coordinating organisational matters, (2) conducting the survey (February - March 2023), (3) preparing the primary data for processing and computer processing (coding), (4) identifying erroneously completed questionnaires, (5) processing the primary data. The study used

presentation of the results obtained. Such an approach made it possible not only to quantify the surveyed phenomena, but also to interpret them in depth in the socio-economic context, considering the specificity of the survey objective.

purposive sampling, which belongs to the group of non-random sampling strategies. This method involves the purposeful selection of participants based on specific criteria relevant to the objectives of the study (Patton, 2002). It allows us to reach people with knowledge or experience that is particularly relevant to the research problem being analysed. The snowball technique, used in geographical research on selected social categories for which there is no appropriate sampling frame (Taylor and Józefowicz 2012), was used. It allows reaching participants who are difficult to reach or dispersed in the social space, thanks to the recommendations of people already involved in the study. The use of a non-representative snowball sampling technique, however, comes with significant methodological limitations. The sample reflects the structure of participants' social networks rather than the general population, which makes it impossible to generalize the findings (Atkinson, Flint, 2001). Recruitment based on respondents' referrals may lead to network bias, resulting in the overrepresentation of certain categories and the omission of more peripheral individuals (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981; Noy, 2008). In addition, the recruitment process is strongly dependent on the so-called starting points, which may restrict the diversity of the sample. In studies using this method, it is also impossible to estimate traditional measures of statistical error, and the collected data often narrow the range of opinions due to the similarity of individuals recruited within the same social network. It is a technique often used in social research, especially in the

context of hard-to-reach or specific populations such as migrants or people with disabilities (Etikan et al., 2016). However, it should be emphasised that it requires caution in interpretation and a clear indication of its limitations. In this study, the core group consisted of citizens of Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland who emigrated from the country after the Russian aggression in 2022. The respondents surveyed are Ukrainians of different age groups and categories who live abroad. Their fields of activity are diverse: education, pedagogy, construction and architecture, marketing, management, catering, sales and distribution, medicine, hairdressing and cleaning services, accounting. The total number of questionnaires collected was 175. Six questionnaires were rejected due to unconstructive answers, and 169

questionnaires were completed correctly. The population under study (immigrants residing in Poland) is estimated at approximately one million people. From the point of view of calculating the sample size in the study, the number of questionnaires collected corresponds to an approximate sampling error of  $\pm 8$  percentage points (95% CI) for the estimation of proportions (at  $p=0.5$ ). The acceptable margin of error is between 4% and 8%, but due to the nature of the study (hard-to-reach group, recruitment through non-representative methods – snowball sampling), limitations and ethical requirements related to recruitment, a decision was made to conduct an exploratory study. The results should be interpreted with caution and not directly transferred to the entire immigrant population.

### 3.2. Characteristics of the sample group

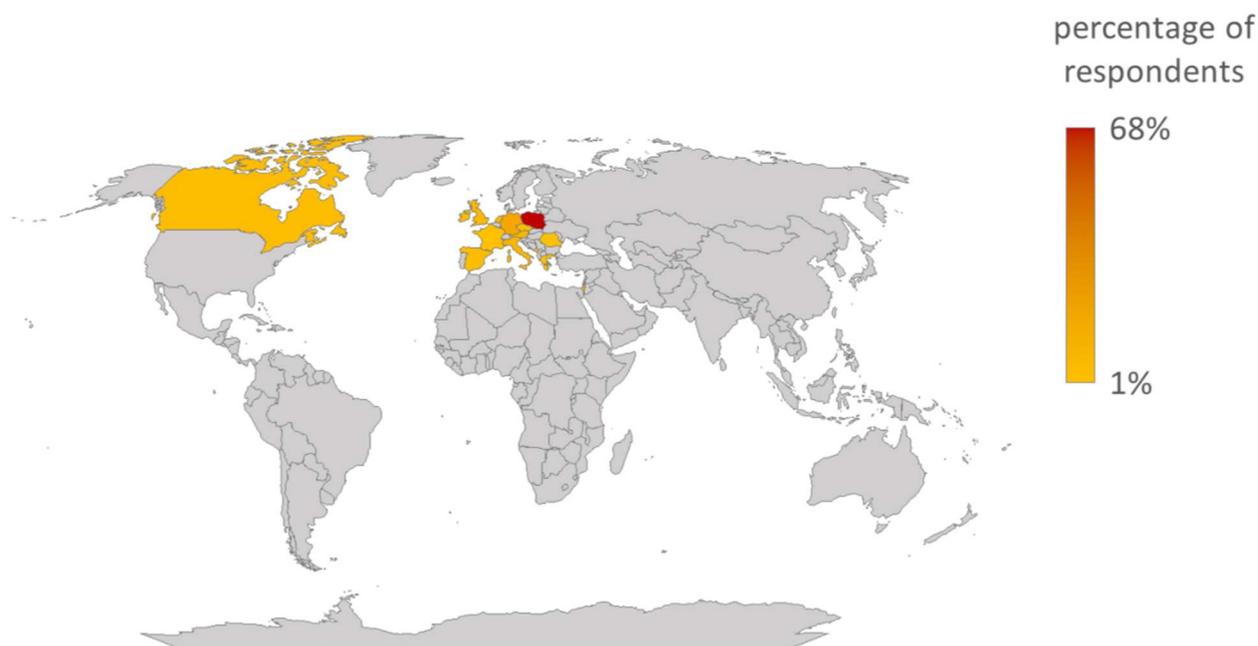
Of the total number of respondents, the vast majority were Ukrainians living in Poland (68%). For temporary stays in this country, they generally chose large cities, which confirms the general trend indicated in the report on Ukrainian citizens under temporary protection (Mieszkańcy..., 2023). The respondents were recruited from the following cities and towns: Bydgoszcz (22.6%), Wrocław (20%), Gdańsk (6.9%), Warsaw and Kraków (6.1% each), Lublin (5.2%), Poznań (4.3%), Toruń (3.5%), Szczecin (2.6%), Łódź, Katowice, Gdynia and Opole (1.7% each), Chełm, Jelenia Góra, Rzeszów, Tarnowo Podgórne, Chrzanów, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Brzesko, Zielona Góra and Mogilno (0.87% each). The remaining respondents resided in countries such as Germany (9.5%), Italy (4.1%), Austria (3.5%), the United Kingdom (2.9%), the Netherlands (2.4%), Spain, the Czech Republic, Canada (1.8% in each country), Ireland (1.2%), Romania, Greece, France, Montenegro and Israel (0.6% in each country) after the outbreak of war (Fig. 1). 7.8% of respondents indicated a country

without their location. Since the analysis focuses on the situation of immigrants residing in Poland, the results concerning persons residing in other countries serve a contextual function, providing background information for identifying the leisure behaviour patterns of the main group under study.

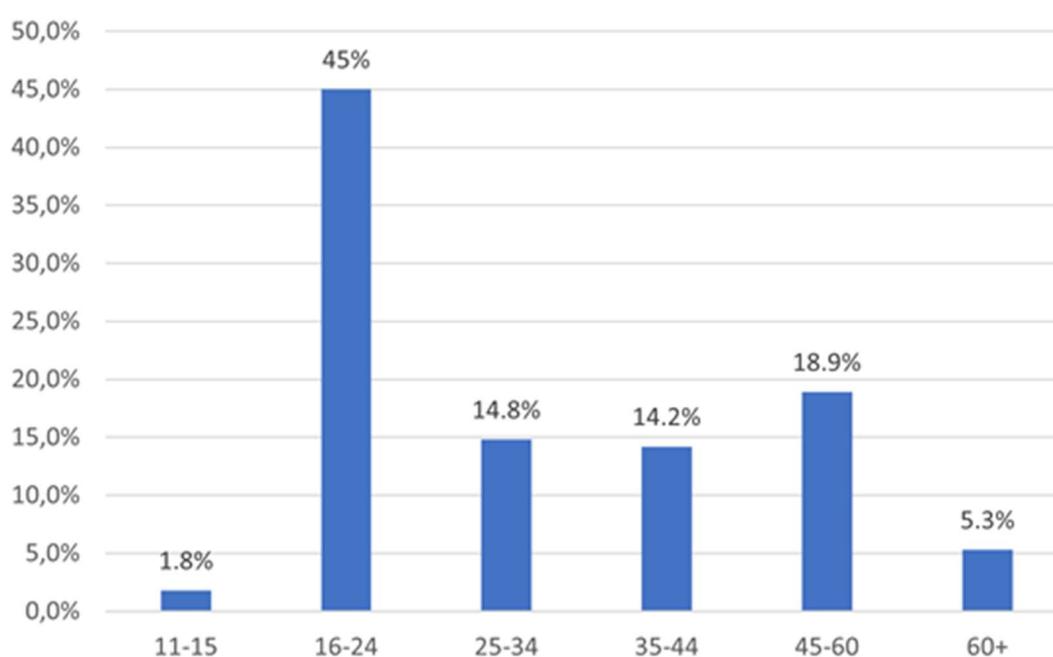
Mostly adult migrants participated in the survey. The largest group (45%) was made up of young people, i.e. aged 16-24, while the smallest number of respondents were children and adolescents and the elderly (Fig. 2). Most respondents were women (83.4%) and only 16.6% were men, with every sixth person surveyed being a parent of a minor child. It should be noted that for a long time now, the Ukrainian immigrant community in Poland has been strongly feminised. According to research by Brzozowska and Grzymała-Każłowska (2014), Ukrainian female migrants accounted for approximately 76% of all respondents. A report presented by the Central Statistical Office shows that in 2023, the majority of immigrants to Poland were also women. Furthermore, existing research shows

that young people dominate the group of contemporary Ukrainian migrants (Stepaniuk, 2020). Nevertheless, due to the methodology used to select the research sample, it should be

emphasised that the results obtained should not be applied to the entire population of Ukrainian migrants in Poland.



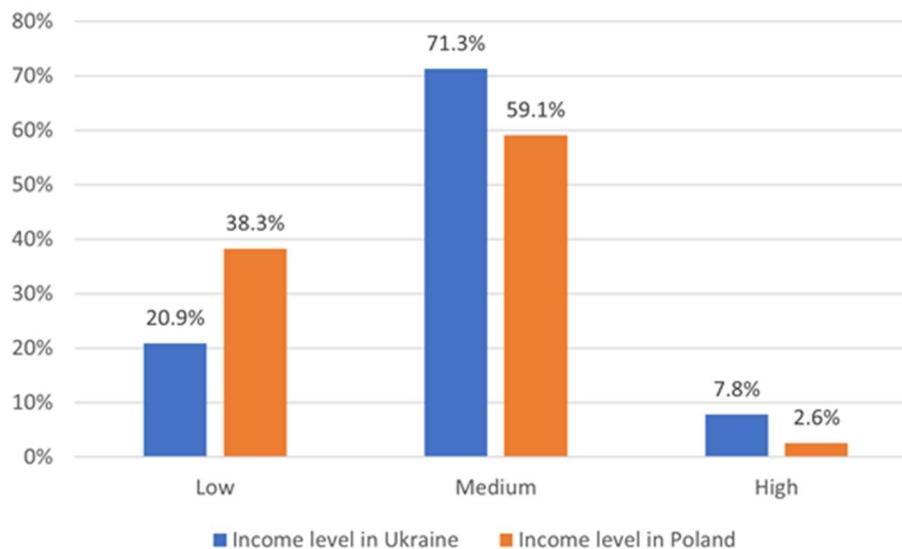
**Figure 1.** Geographical directions of respondents. Source: own elaboration based on survey



**Figure 2.** Structure of respondents by age. Source: own elaboration based on surveys

The way of spending leisure time is influenced, among other things, by the level of income. Analysing the overall results, one notices a decrease in the income of the surveyed population. In the case of respondents currently living in Poland, 38.3% of Ukrainians declared low income, while in

Ukraine 20.9% had such income (about 1.8 times less). There was also a decrease by approximately 1.2 times in the number of those with medium income (from 71.3% to 59.1%) and three times for those with high income (from 7.8% to 2.6%) (Fig.3).



**Figure 3.** Income level of respondents in Ukraine and Poland. Source: own elaboration based on surveys

Slightly smaller differences are observed in the case of migrants who went to countries other than Poland. The number of respondents with low income increased from 31.4% to 40.2%, the number of those with medium

income decreased about 1.2 times (from 62.7% to 54.4%). The number of those with high incomes remained almost unchanged (5.9% and 5.4% respectively).

#### 4. Results

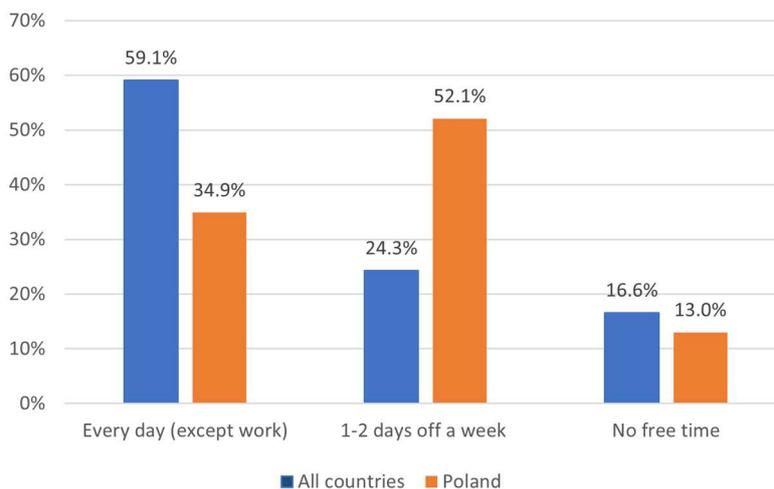
The analysis of the recreational behaviour of Ukrainian citizens living abroad began with an examination of the amount of free time spent on leisure activities. An attempt was made to find out the amount of time on weekdays and weekends free from work, housework, eating, sleeping, and hygiene routines. Of all the respondents, 34.9% of the respondents declared that they have free time every day, one in two think they have it at weekends and 13% of the respondents said they 'have no free time'. Respondent expats living in Poland are more likely to indicate that they have leisure time every day (59.1%), while they are less likely to have leisure time at weekends (24.3%). A cross-analysis showed that in the latter case, this is mainly the case for students taking up casual work outside of their university days. 16.6% of respondents have no free time. These are mostly adults who work hard in various production and service sectors (Fig. 4).

Respondents prefer active forms of leisure (59.8%, for those living in Poland: 56.5%). Most of them are under the age of 44 (47.8%). Passive leisure is preferred by 43.5% of respondents (Fig. 5). The highest percentage choosing these forms is observed among people aged 45-60 (20.9%).

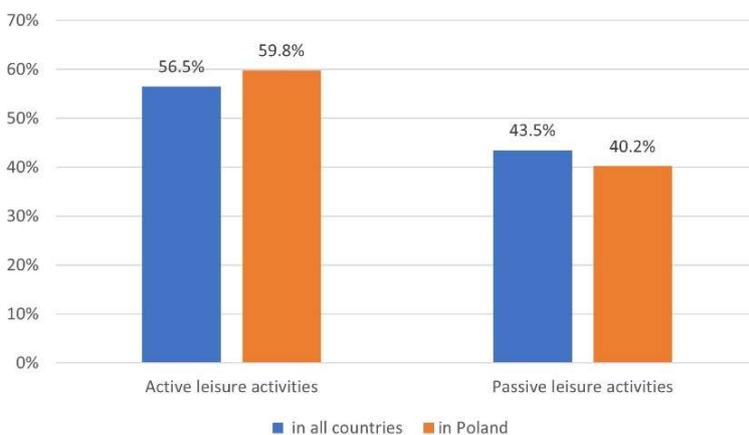
Among active leisure activities, the most frequently indicated was a liking to relax in nature (55.6%). This is particularly significant with regard to the physical and psychological benefits derived from contact with nature. Moreover, this form of recreation does not entail substantial financial or temporal costs, as contemporary cities provide extensive opportunities for everyday leisure in green spaces (Józefowicz and Michniewicz-Ankiersztajn, 2020), including protected areas such as nature reserves. These environments serve multiple functions, encompassing daily recreation, education, and cultural activities. They facilitate interaction with nature, engagement in physical exercise (e.g.,

walking, jogging, cycling, fitness), social encounters, environmental education, and diverse forms of tourism (Michniewicz-Ankiersztajn and Józefowicz, 2019; Gonia and Jezierska, 2022). One in three respondents likes to visit museums/exhibitions (33.1%) and amusement parks (33.7%) and chooses to be active at the gym (29.6%). Several types of

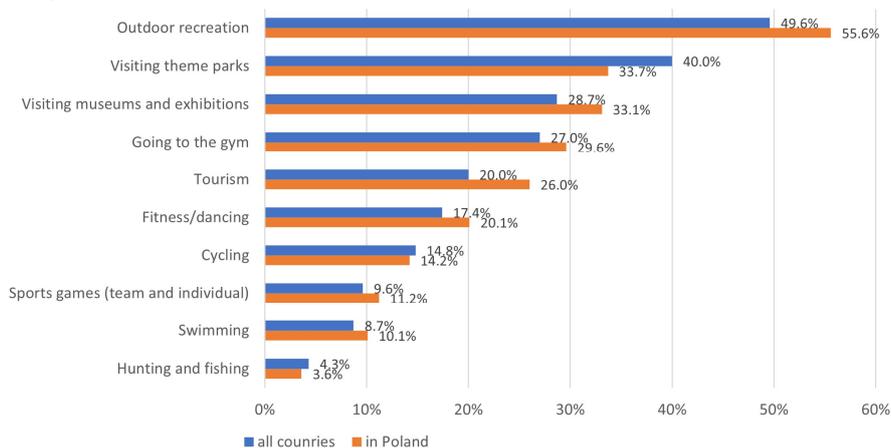
tourism are practised by one in four respondents. Other types of active recreation include fitness/dance classes, cycling, sports games (team and individual) and swimming. The least number of respondents choosing qualified activities are engaged in hunting and fishing (Fig. 6).



**Figure 4.** Distribution of respondents' leisure time. Source: own work based on surveys



**Figure 5.** Types of leisure activities in all countries and in Poland Types of leisure activities. Source: Own study based on surveys.



**Figure 5.** Preferred forms of active leisure in general and in Poland. Source: own elaboration based on surveys

The choice of leisure activities depends on the availability and accessibility of the necessary infrastructure. Infrastructure includes the transport system, hotel and catering, tourist enterprises and attractive facilities (leisure, cultural, recreational, etc.).

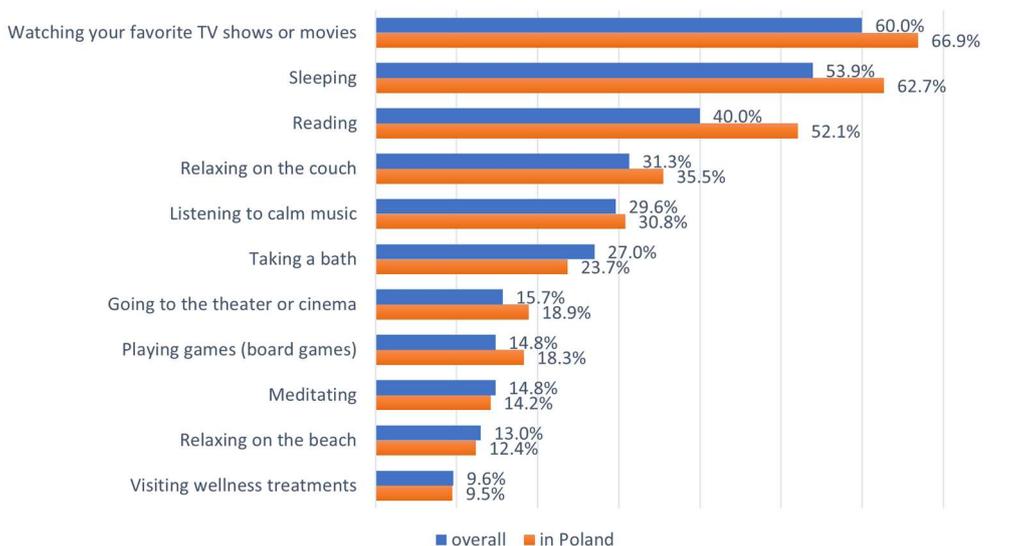
Recreational, cultural and leisure facilities, on the other hand, include museums, galleries, theatres, cinemas, shopping and entertainment centres, clubs, theme parks, sports facilities and other cultural and leisure facilities (Rudakevych, 2011). Respondents were asked to rate the tourism infrastructure at their place of stay (as well developed, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory). Most respondents (60.9%) consider the existing infrastructure as satisfactory, a third of

respondents (30.8%) as well developed and only 8.3% as unsatisfactory. If we distinguish respondents living in Poland, it should be noted that 65.2% of respondents are satisfied with the existing tourist infrastructure, 27% consider it well developed and 7.8% consider it unsatisfactory (Fig. 7).

Among passive forms of recreation, watching TV programmes or films was most often indicated (66.9%). Equally often, regeneration through sleep was chosen (62.75). Half of the respondents choose to read books (52.1%) while every third respondent listens to music or relaxes on the sofa during free time. Among the less frequently chosen forms are cinema, theatre or spa treatments (Fig. 8).



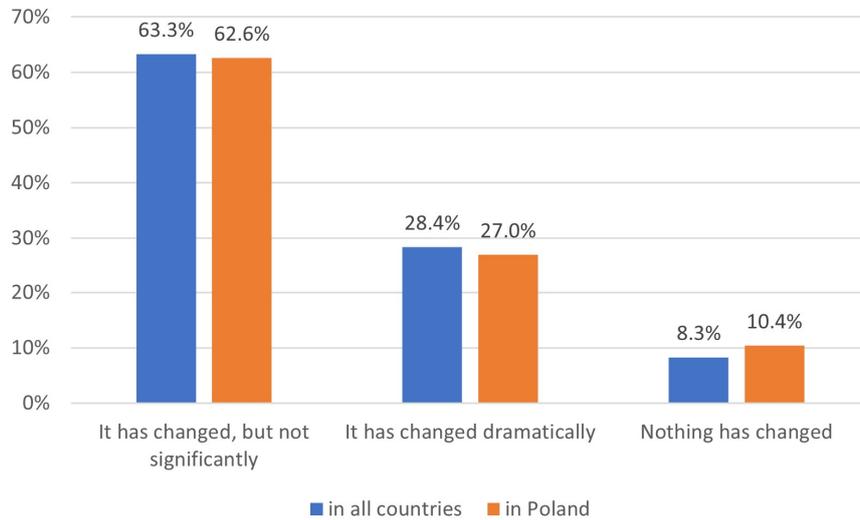
**Figure 7.** Assessment of recreational infrastructure according to respondents. Source: own elaboration based on surveys



**Figure 8.** Preferred forms of passive leisure in general and in Poland. Source: own study based on surveys

To analyse the phenomenon of leisure behaviour of Ukrainian citizens living abroad, and in Poland, respondents were asked to comment on changes in the way they spent their leisure time after moving abroad and to indicate the reasons for these changes. For 63.6% of respondents, changes have occurred,

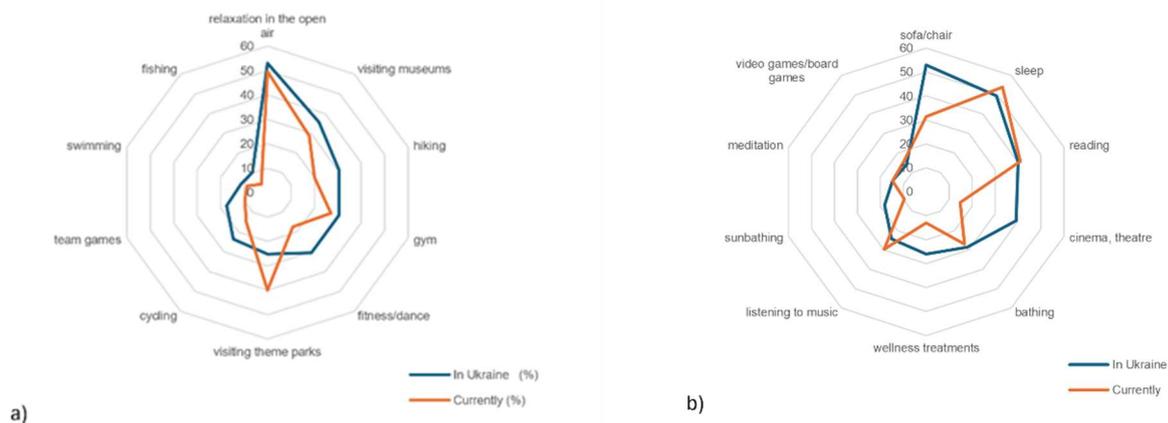
but they are not significant. A drastic change in leisure behaviour was given by 28.4% of respondents; 8.3% of respondents did not change their leisure behaviour at all. No significant differences are observed between respondents living in Poland and in other parts of the world (Fig. 9).



**Figure 9.** Changes in leisure time behaviour in general and in Poland. Source: own elaboration based on surveys

To interpret these changes, the focus was placed detailed on the choice of active and passive leisure activities that respondents engaged in before the move and which they currently prefer (Fig. 10). The analysis of the

collected data on leisure activities in Ukraine shows clear transformations in the ways in which refugees and migrants residing outside the country use their leisure time.



**Figure 10.** Ways of spending leisure time before emigration and nowadays a) active form b) passive form. Source: own elaboration based on surveys

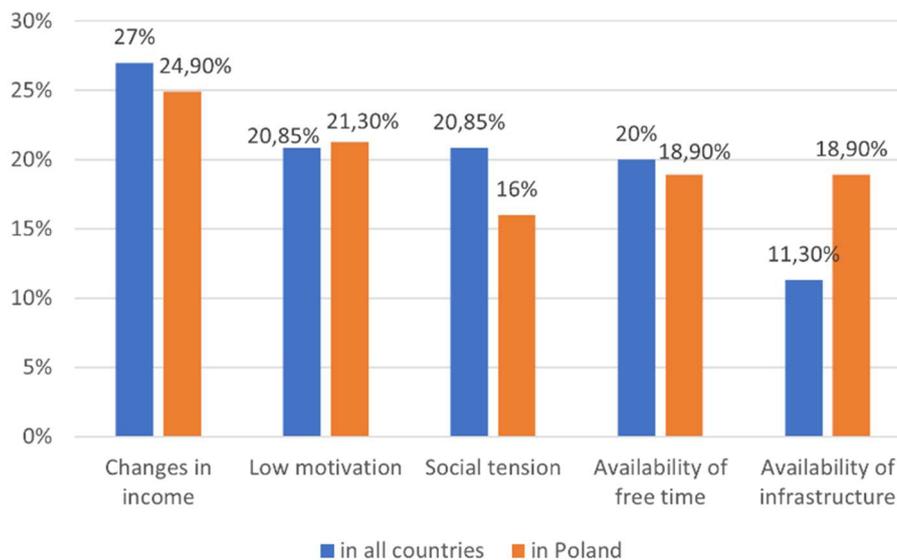
There is a general downward trend in active leisure. The interest in tourism (from 30.4% to 20%), fitness and dancing (from 30.4% to 17.4%), as well as cycling trips (from 23.5% to 14.8%) and sport activities (from 17.4% to 9.6%) has significantly decreased. The latter types of leisure activities are more prevalent among young respondents aged 16-24. The observed decreases can be interpreted in the context of economic conditions (necessary equipment such as skis, bicycles, fishing rods, etc. are left at home, and buying new equipment or renting it is impossible due to lack of funds), or infrastructural constraints. Against this backdrop, visiting theme parks stands out as the only form of activity that has seen an increase in popularity (from 25.2% to 40%). This may reflect the growing importance of organised forms of family entertainment and the commercialisation of leisure time. Unfamiliarity or insufficient knowledge of the Polish language may be an obstacle to the use of fitness or dance classes, while lower sporting activity, especially in the case of team sports, may also result from the breaking of social ties. Relatively small changes are observed in the case of outdoor activities (representatives of different age categories) and those related to museum tourism (mainly young people aged 16-24).

In terms of passive leisure activities, an increase in interest in domestic and passive activities is noticeable. Watching TV programmes and films has become the dominant form of leisure (up from 53.9% to 60%), as has sleeping (from 49.6% to 53.9%) and listening to quiet music (from 24.3% to 29.6%). Reading remains stable (40-41%), while there has been a dramatic drop in interest in visiting theatres and cinemas (from 39.1% to 14.8%) and enjoying wellness treatments (from 26.1% to 13%). There was no change in the number of Ukrainians who continue to read and meditate in their free time (mainly respondents aged 35-44). The observed changes can be explained, among other things,

by the extensive coverage of events in the world and in Ukraine in particular (especially during the initial phase of the war), as well as by the increase in popularity of streaming channels. The above results generally confirm the trends related to passive leisure - every second Bydgoszcz resident surveyed indicates that they mostly spend their time at home watching TV, 49%, or rest passively (answer "I get enough sleep, sit, lie down") (Józefowicz, 2015).

When it comes to attending cultural events, language and economic barriers. Financial constraints, due to falling incomes and job insecurity, reduce the availability of costly activities such as tourism or wellness treatments. Language barriers and adaptation difficulties in the new environment are also important factors, which can limit participation in group and institutional activities (Bridekirk et al., 2018). In addition, migrants often experience the psychological burden of caring for family and loved ones remaining in the war zone and the stress of being forced to relocate (Hynie, 2018). These factors favour the choice of passive forms of leisure in the domestic space, allowing for mental regeneration and a temporary break from difficult experiences.

Comparing their current situation to the pre-war period, the primary factors modifying the respondents' lifestyles are changes in income (24.9%) and a decline in motivation (21.3%), both of which are natural consequences of war-related stress and the necessity of rebuilding financial stability from scratch. Such a shift is understandable, given the respondents' ongoing concerns regarding the safety of their relatives and the fate of their home country. Notably, despite these challenging circumstances, Poland records a relatively low level of social tension (16%). This suggests that the Polish environment is more conducive to integration through leisure activities than the environments in other host countries (Fig. 11).



**Figure 11.** Reasons for the change in behaviour in all countries. Reasons for the change in behaviour in leisure time in total and in Poland. Source: own elaboration based on surveys

It should be noted that a comparative analysis of leisure behaviours before and after emigration reveals a clear correlation between financial standing and the structure of free time. This indicates an evolution from

established patterns of activity in the country of origin toward new, adaptive forms of spending time, determined by novel social and infrastructural conditions, as well as the specific barriers encountered by migrant.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

Leisure time occupies an important place in the structure of the social organisation of life. Particular attention to the study of the organisation of leisure time is due to the changes taking

place in global society. As a social phenomenon, recreation has its own types and forms, principles, functions and character. The basis on which leisure as a social phenomenon is realised is recreational activity. Changes in the content and structure of recreational activity are explained by changes in objective and subjective reality. Recreational activity becomes a decisive factor in the formation of culture. However, whatever modifications occur in the sphere of leisure, there are two necessary conditions for the use of leisure time. Firstly, a place where people can meet and communicate, and secondly, organised leisure activities around which this communication can be built.

The subject of this paper is a study of the leisure behaviour of Ukrainian citizens living in Poland. Chvertko and Kyryliuk (2023) point out that forced displacement leads to profound changes in the lives of traumatised people, affecting their social environment. Living in an unfamiliar environment with a new culture complicates social integration, often leading to a state of culture shock. The process of organising leisure time is one way of social inclusion for people affected by having to flee their country (Horteles, 2012). As M. Kindler (2011) points out, many migrants surveyed indicated the lack of leisure time as a significant problem in everyday life in Poland. Similar findings were obtained by N. Dobroier (2023), who emphasises that a large proportion of surveyed migrants from Ukraine do not engage in leisure activities. This is explained by adaptation difficulties and war trauma. Furthermore, it was noted that refugees are

more likely to engage in events related to Ukrainian culture than Polish culture, which may be due to the need to maintain their identity. Leisure time is conducive to building bonds and social contacts. There is a tendency among migrants to reduce spending on entertainment and to give up on active leisure activities, especially among those for whom economic factors were the main motivation for migration and whose stay in Poland is temporary. This applies, for example, to economic migrants from Asia or Africa. Economic constraints do not only affect migrants, but all marginalised social groups. In the case of migrants, however, the lack of funds for recreation can be particularly acute in the initial period of their stay, when it is necessary to incur additional expenses related to settling in a new place (Hortales, 2012). A different pattern of leisure time consumption is found among migrants who have settled in Poland for a longer period. For example, Ukrainian citizens studying in Poland often spend their leisure time with their relatives and participate in cultural life (Antoniewski and Koryś, 2002). In a study dedicated to this issue, M. Kindler et al. (2022) noted that among Ukrainian migrants in Poland, the most common form of spending leisure time was walking in public spaces (more than half of the respondents), followed by meetings with friends and shopping (about one third). This is a common form of spending leisure time also among Poles (Józefowicz, 2015). Approximately one-fifth of the respondents participated in religious practices or used media (TV, Internet, games). There were noticeable differences between men and women: men were more likely to participate in sports and use media, while women were more likely to go shopping, to church and to read. Ties with Poles influenced activity patterns – those with Polish friends were more likely to take advantage of cultural offerings and travel around the country. The presence of Poles may also have reduced feelings of exclusion in public spaces (Kindler et al., 2022).

The research conducted on the recreational behaviour of Ukrainian citizens living abroad and in Poland allows us to assume that the recreational behaviour of Ukrainian migrants has changed. They pay less attention to some forms of leisure activities (especially those requiring financial outlay or good language skills) and more to others (passive leisure at home). Studies of Spanish immigrants confirm that there are differences in the amount of time devoted to recreational activities and leisure time depending on socio-economic status. Immigrants with a high socio-economic status show greater involvement in recreational activities than immigrants with a medium or low socio-economic status (Berasategi et al. 2023). Furthermore, this the research showed that migrants' participation in sports activities has decreased. Similar patterns were observed in Denmark, where immigrants and their descendants show less interest in participating in sports activities than the native population. Furthermore, the likelihood of participating in clubs decreases with the age of the immigrant after arrival in Denmark (Schmidt et al., 2025).

This negative trend is significant, as sporting activity is an important part of social integration. It increases the sense of control over one's life and helps to teach life skills needed to adapt to life in the host community (Middleton et al., 2021). At the same time, the ranking of recreational activities by age has not changed significantly.

The organisation and spending of leisure time among migrants is determined by both structural factors (such as the availability of resources) and psychosocial conditions related to the migration experience. In the case of Ukrainian refugees and migrants residing in Poland, the choice of leisure activities is influenced by specific factors resulting from their life situation: (1) the limited amount and availability of leisure time, often related to the need to take up temporary work or family care, (2) availability and quality of recreational infrastructure at the place of stay, (3) language

barriers and adaptation difficulties that hinder participation in local group activities and cultural events, (4) a drop in income and job insecurity, limiting the possibility to enjoy costly leisure activities, (5) psychological factors, such as concern for loved ones remaining in Ukraine and stress and anxiety related to the war situation, which encourage the choice of passive, regenerative ways of spending time.

In the context of the above conditions, it should be noted that migrants' leisure time often takes on a compensatory character, performing the function of de-stressing and restoring emotional balance (Stebbins, 2017).

The research was exploratory in nature – its main purpose was to identify patterns of

recreational behaviour among immigrants and to formulate preliminary hypotheses. Due to the limited size of the sample and its non-representative nature, the results cannot be directly generalised to the entire population. The results show differences in recreational behaviour depending on selected socio-demographic characteristics, but do not allow us to conclude whether the observed patterns are common across the entire population. Therefore, further research is needed to verify the observed relationships, assess their strength and significance, and identify moderating factors, as well as to apply qualitative methods to deepen the understanding of barriers and motivations for participation in recreation.

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