



War Trauma in Ukrainian Female Refugees in Poland

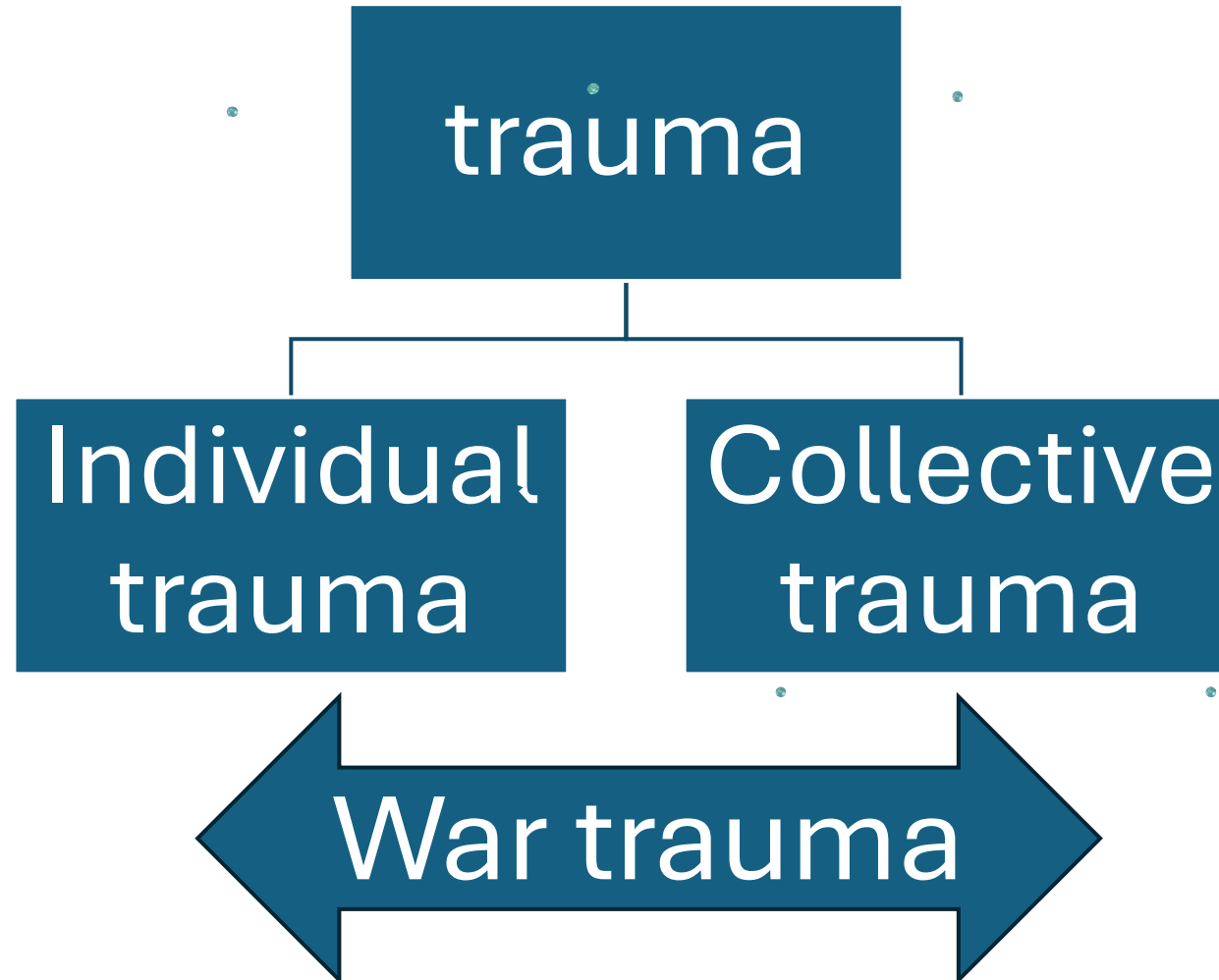
Prof. Piotr Długosz

uker



Definitional Issues

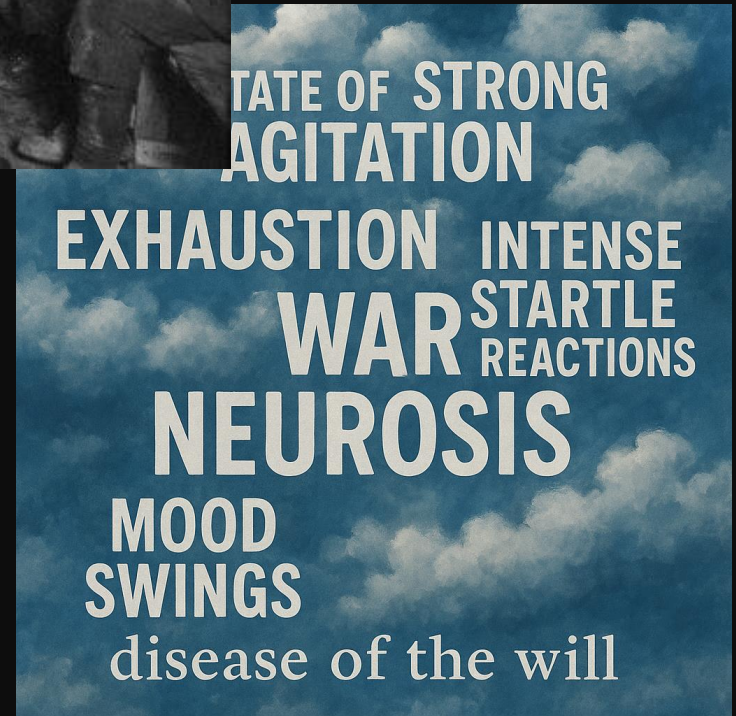
- Trauma thus becomes "an injury, an event or a series of events that leave somatic or psychological traces in a person" (Orwid 2009: 7).



Evolution of the concept

Shell shock during World War I

Trench neurosis (nerwica okopowa) War neurosis (nerwica okopowa)



Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

TRAUMA	SYMPTOMS
LEK	ANXIETY
FLASHBACKI	FLASHBACKS
BEZSENNOŚĆ	INSOMNIA
DEPRESJA	DEPRESSION
OTĘPIENIE EMOCJONALNE	EMOTIONAL NUMBNESS
NADMIERNA CZUJNOŚĆ	HYPERVIGILANCE
POSZMARY NOCNE	NIGHTMARES
DRAŻLIWOŚĆ	IRRITABILITY
TRUDNOŚCI Z KONCENTRACJĄ	DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING
BRAK ZAINTERESOWANIA ŻYCIEM	LOSS OF INTEREST IN LIFE
POCUCIE WINY / WSTYDU	GUILT / SHAME
UNIKANIE PRZYPOMNIEŃ	AVOIDANCE OF
ATAKI ZASKOCZENIA	REMINDERS

Women during the war

„The feeling that death is close to my relatives and friends. I was in the city under fire, in the morning I saw destroyed houses that were still intact yesterday and people were drinking tea... my house is destroyed, my plans are destroyed, and I don't have time to believe it - I keep thinking that I am still in those realities"

Women are exposed to:

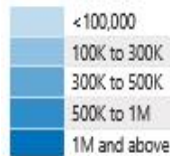
- Sexual violence
- Responsibility for children
- Separation from family



Women war refugees from Ukraine

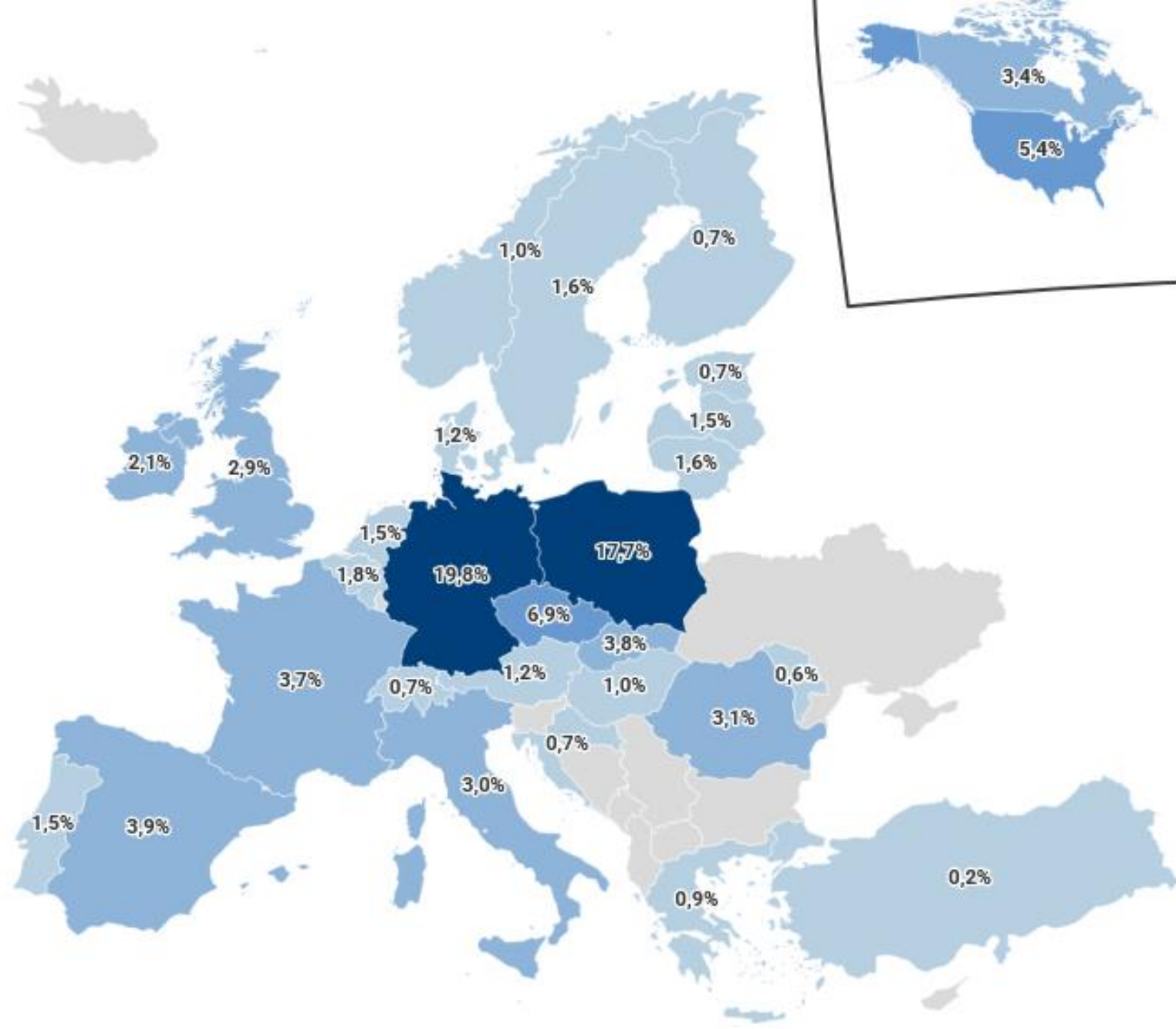
Bulgaria	2025-02-28	77 360	205 480	Not applicable	Not applicable
Czech Republic	2025-03-30	401 350	645 585	Not applicable	Not applicable
Estonia	2025-03-31	42 730	65 950	Not applicable	Not applicable
Hungary	2025-02-28	63 665	50 125	6 397 855	6 034 600
Latvia	2025-02-25	48 555	61 480	Not applicable	Not applicable
Lithuania	2025-04-07	43 835	94 465	Not applicable	Not applicable
Poland	2025-04-07	999 710	1 927 370	27 473 825	25 481 455
Republic of Moldova	2025-03-31	127 785	72 605	1 252 905	1 080 560
Romania	2025-03-01	182 440	196 325	6 255 425	5 393 125
Slovakia	2025-04-13	132 735	165 470	3 038 645	3 006 865
Suma		2 120 165	3 484 855	44 418 655	40 996 610

Refugees from Ukraine
recorded by country



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

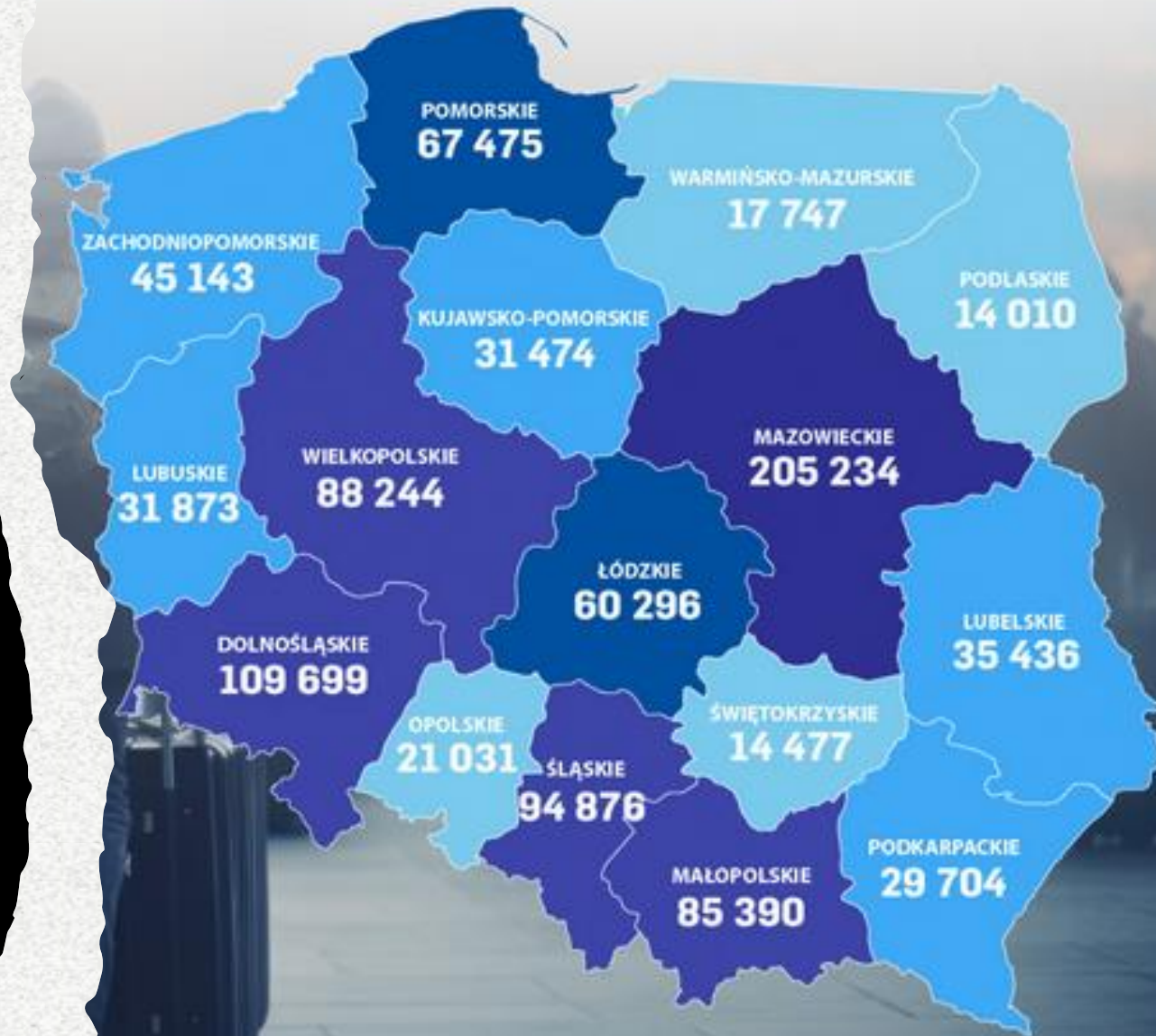




Place of residence in Poland

CZŁA UKRAIŃCÓW KORZYSTAJĄCYCH
/ POSZCZEGÓLNYCH WOJEWÓDZTWACH
OCHRONY W ZWIĄZKU Z KONFLIKTEM ZBROJNYM*

PORTAL
SAMORZĄDOWY



Stan na 13 lutego 2024 r. Źródło: Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców

Research on Ukrainian refugee women

Computer-Assisted Web Interview (CAWI)

1 survey

April-May
2022

N=737

2 survey

November
2023

N=466

3 survey

January-
February
2025

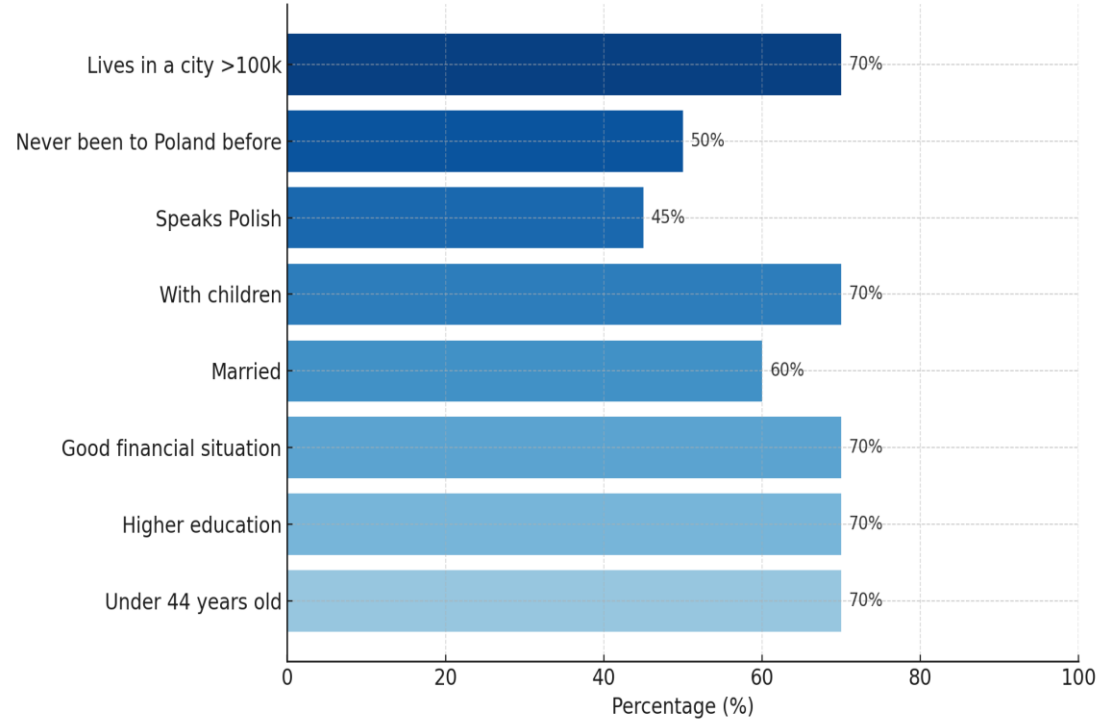
N=200



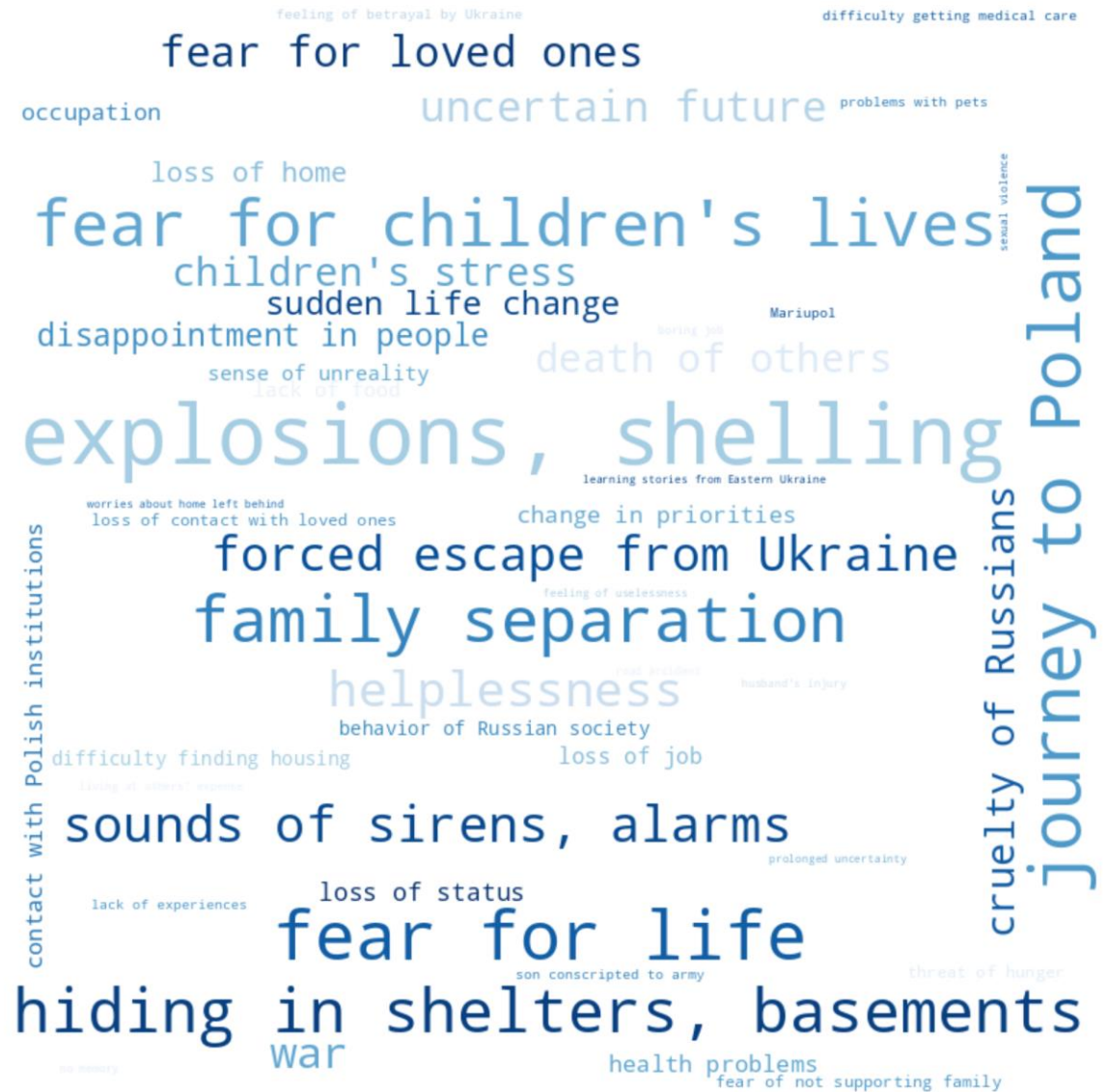
Characteristics of the social demo



Profile of Ukrainian Female Refugees



Traumatic experiences



A word cloud of traumatic experiences, with words of varying sizes and orientations. The most prominent words are 'fear for children's lives', 'explosions, shelling', 'forced escape from Ukraine', 'family separation', 'helplessness', 'sounds of sirens, alarms', 'fear for life', and 'hiding in shelters, basements'. Other visible words include 'war', 'cruelty of Russians', 'journey to Poland', 'sexual violence', 'death of others', 'loss of home', 'fear for loved ones', 'uncertain future', 'problems with pets', 'difficulty getting medical care', 'feeling of betrayal by Ukraine', 'occupation', 'loss of contact with loved ones', 'worry about home left behind', 'change in priorities', 'feeling of uselessness', 'behavior of Russian society', 'loss of job', 'prolonged uncertainty', 'threat of hunger', 'health problems', 'fear of not supporting family', 'son conscripted to army', 'no memory', 'lack of experiences', 'difficulty finding housing', 'living at others' expense', 'husband's injury', 'lost children', 'saying goodbye', 'Mariupol', 'sense of unreality', 'lack of food', 'disappointment in people', 'children's stress', 'sudden life change', 'learning stories from Eastern Ukraine', 'contact with Polish institutions', and 'worries about home left behind'.

feeling of betrayal by Ukraine

difficulty getting medical care

fear for loved ones

occupation

uncertain future

problems with pets

loss of home

fear for children's lives

sexual violence

children's stress

sudden life change

disappointment in people

saying goodbye

Mariupol

sense of unreality

lack of food

death of others

explosions, shelling

learning stories from Eastern Ukraine

worries about home left behind

loss of contact with loved ones

change in priorities

forced escape from Ukraine

feeling of uselessness

family separation

lost children

husband's injury

helplessness

behavior of Russian society

loss of job

difficulty finding housing

living at others' expense

sounds of sirens, alarms

prolonged uncertainty

lack of experiences

loss of status

fear for life

son conscripted to army

threat of hunger

hiding in shelters, basements

war

health problems

fear of not supporting family

contact with Polish institutions

cruelty of Russians

journey to Poland

„Helplessness, seven days spent in a shelter, a life destroyed — all our plans, all our hopes. Separation and pain among loved ones: my husband stayed in Kyiv, my sons are defending Ukraine, my elderly mother remained behind... and I’m leaving for Poland. Everything is painfully connected.”

Ukrainian refugee woman, anonymous testimony



“Bombing near our home. My daughter and I tried to sleep through endless explosions—well, she slept, and I managed 1–2 hours over two days. She kept crying and asking, ‘Are we going to die?’ The explosions never stopped, even when they said our army was defending the territory. Planes were flying over our house. We lived near the airport in the city of Hostomel. It was terrifying to stay, but just as terrifying to leave—because I knew we might die the moment we stepped outside. When we finally left the city, we had only one way out, and it was very difficult. Just days after we escaped, Russian troops occupied our home.”

– Ukrainian refugee mother, anonymous account



PTSD measurement using Refugee Health Screener-15 (RHS-15)

Distress Thermometer

FIRST: Please circle the number (0-10) that best describes how much distress you have been experiencing in the past week including today.

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

1

0

Extreme distress






No distress

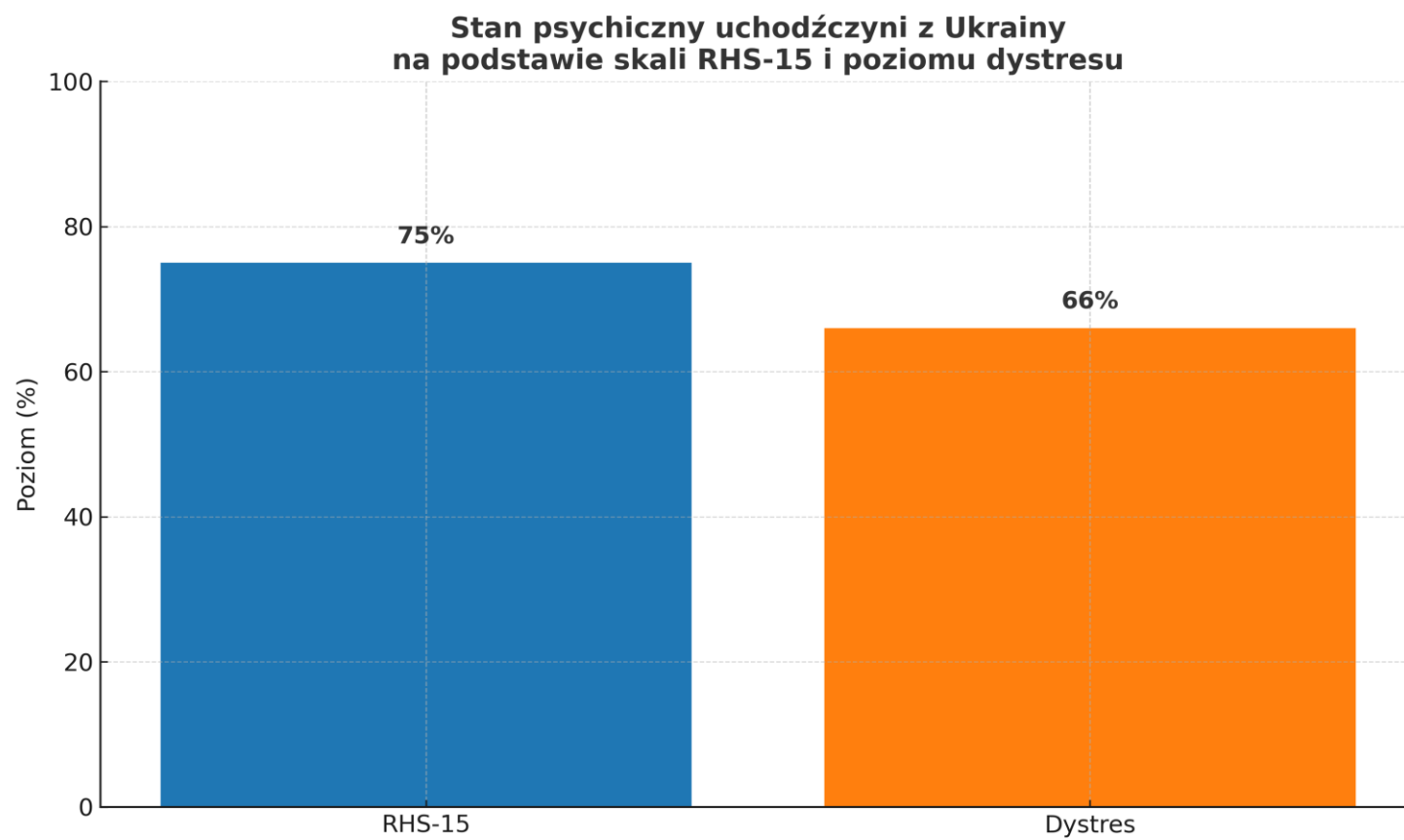
"I feel as bad as I ever have"

↕

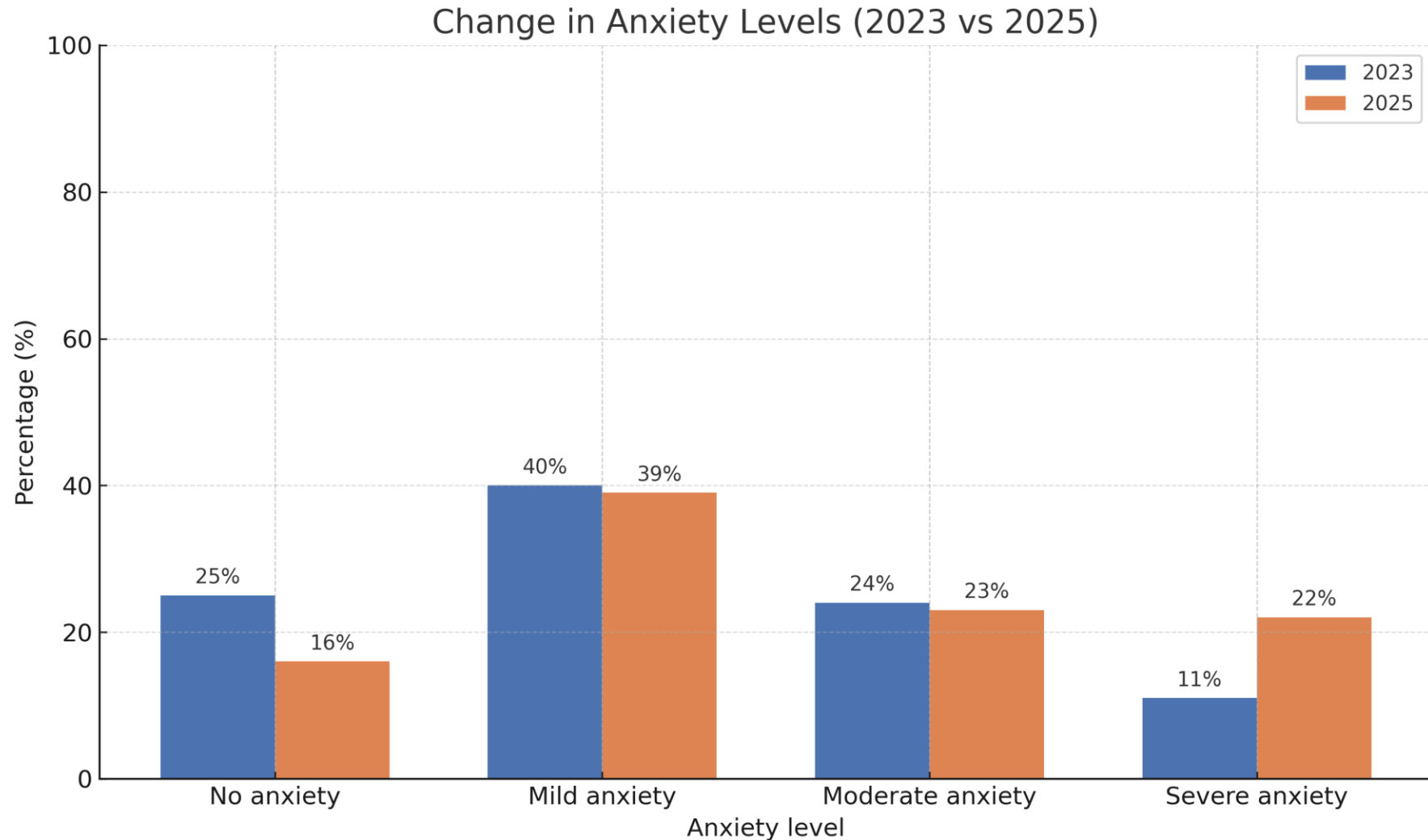
"Things are good"

ADD TOTAL SCORE OF ITEMS 1-14: ____

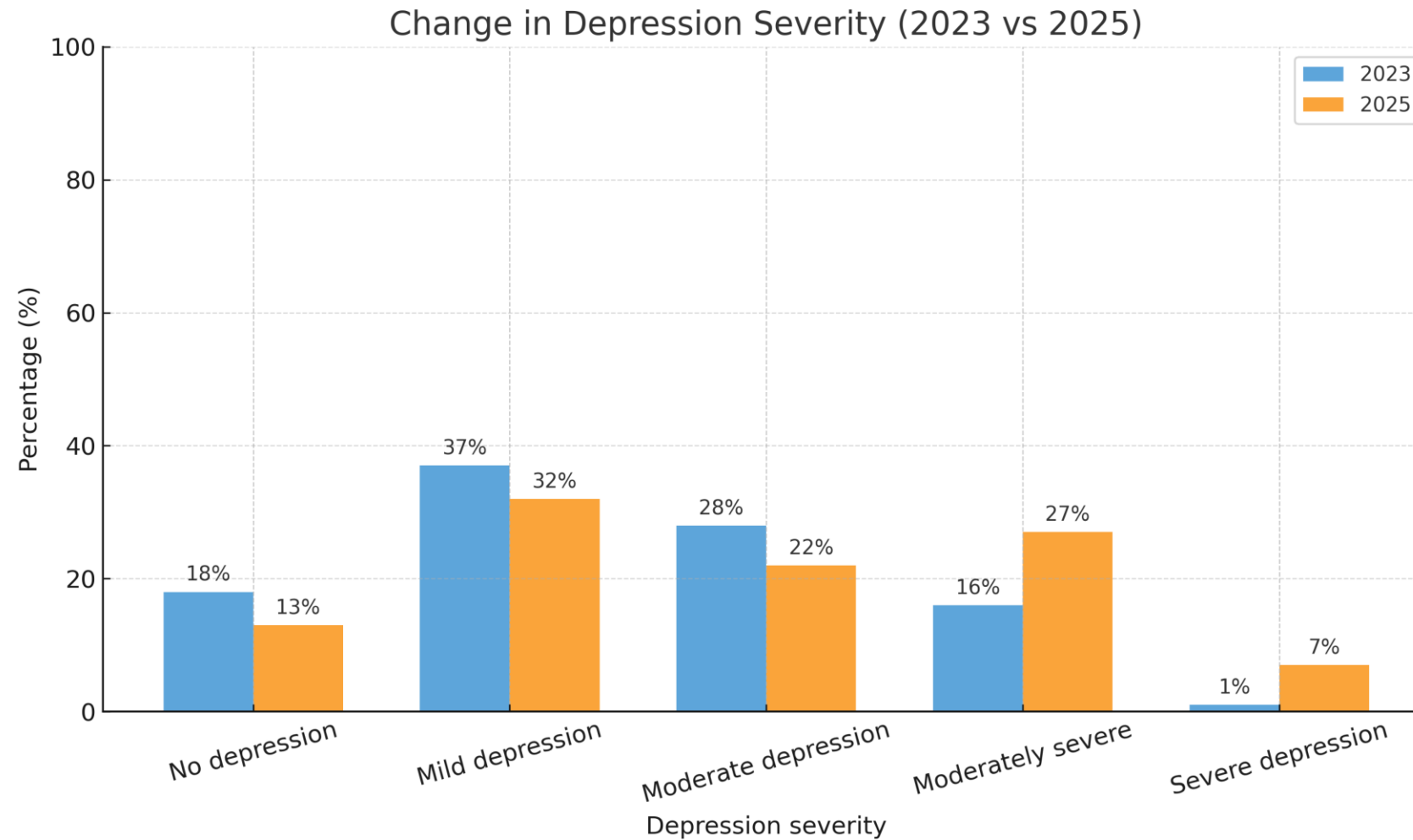
					
SYMPTOMS	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE BIT	MORE THAN A LITTLE	QUITE A BIT	EXTREMELY
1. Muscle, bone, joint pains	0	1	2	3	4
2. Feeling down, sad, or blue most of the time	0	1	2	3	4
3. Too much thinking or too many thoughts	0	1	2	3	4
4. Feeling helpless	0	1	2	3	4
5. Suddenly scared for no reason	0	1	2	3	4
6. Faintness, dizziness, or weakness	0	1	2	3	4
7. Nervousness or shakiness inside	0	1	2	3	4
8. Feeling restless, can't sit still	0	1	2	3	4
9. Crying easily	0	1	2	3	4



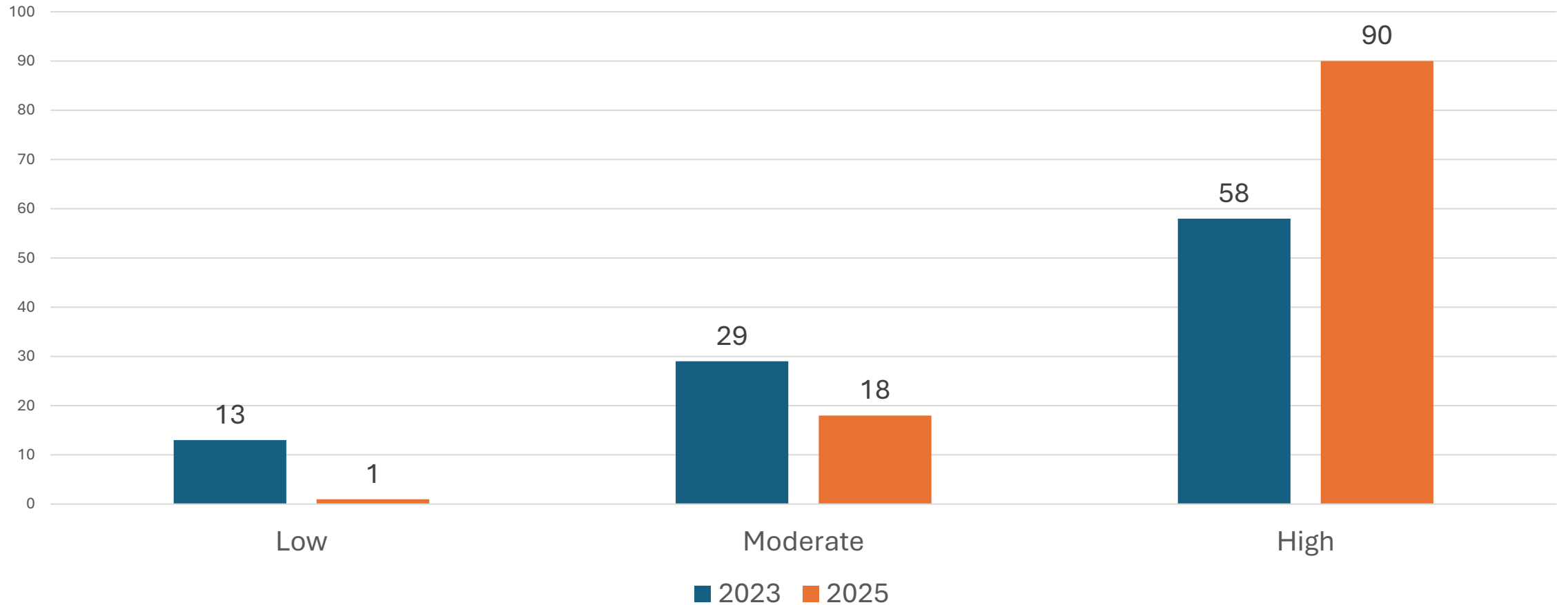
Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7)



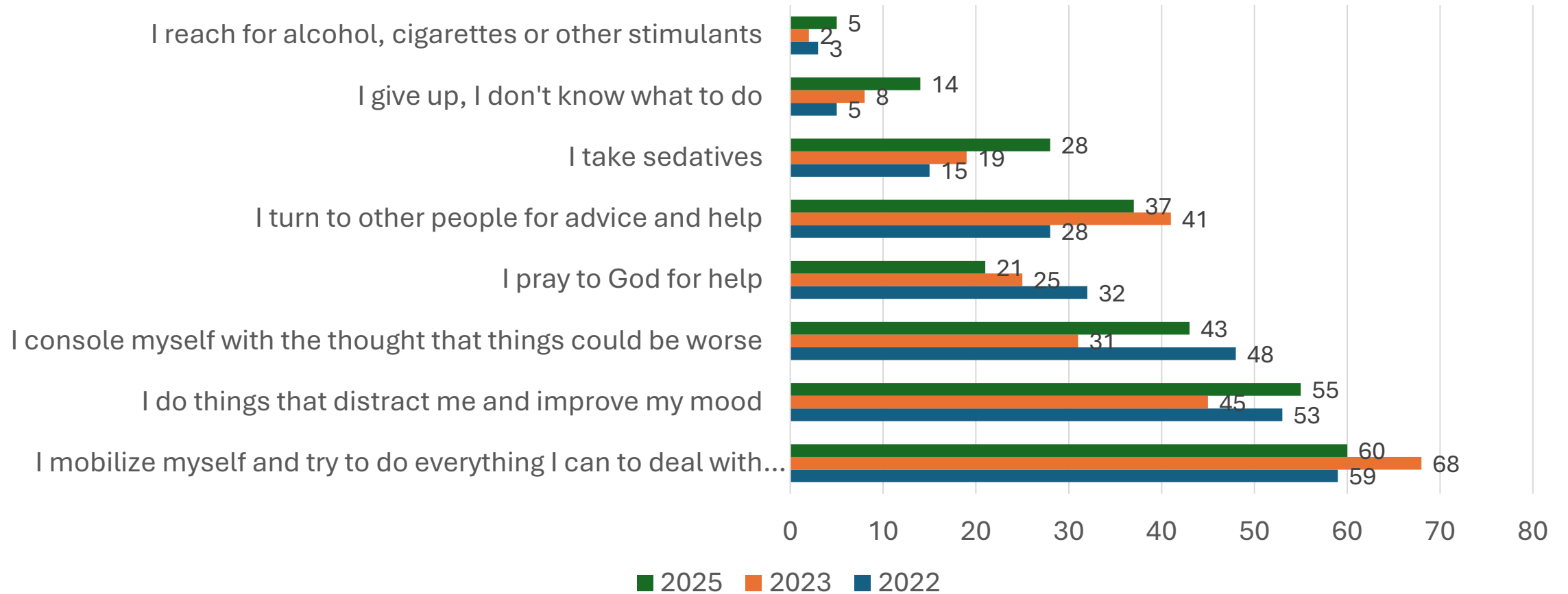
Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9)



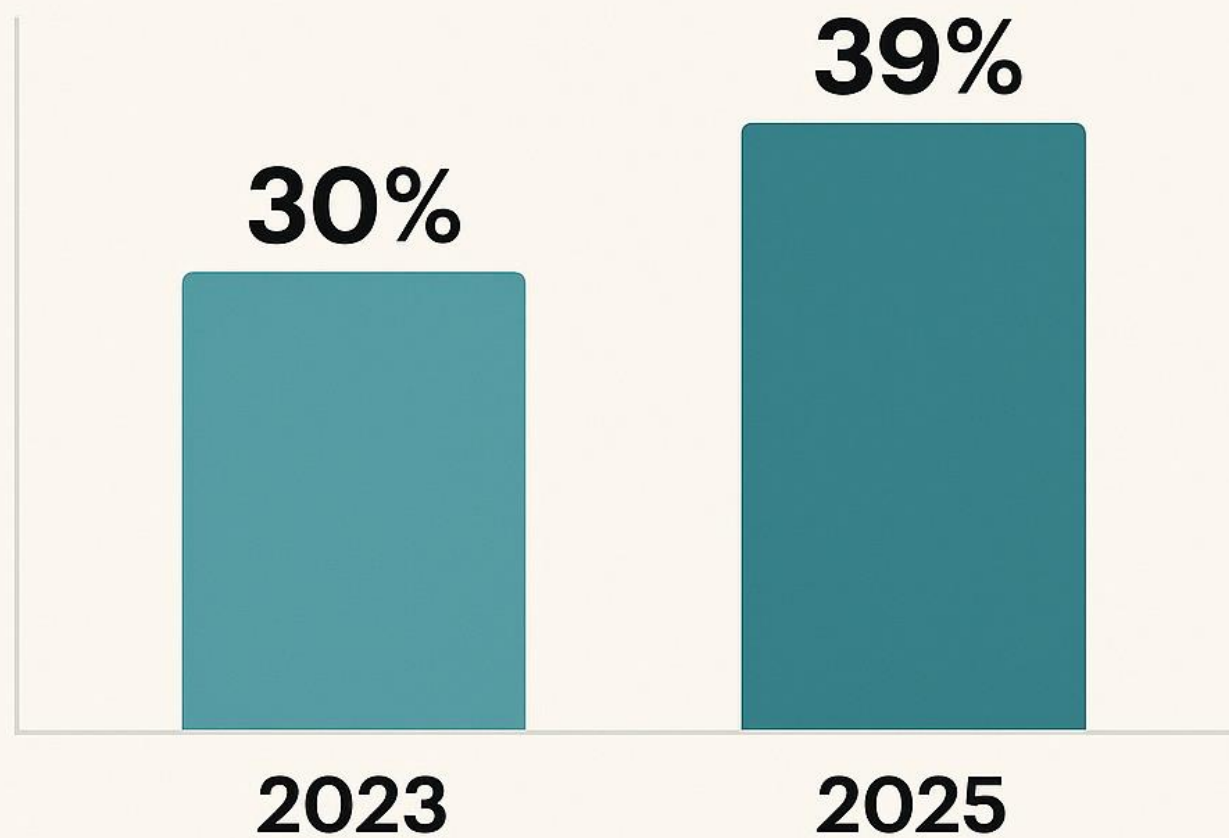
Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)



Coping with stress



Consulted a psychologist among Ukrainian refugee women in Poland



Conclusions



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graph TD; A[Conclusions] --> B[The war in Ukraine has caused deep psychological trauma among many women.]; B --> C[The majority of Ukrainian refugee women who arrived in Poland have exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as measured by the RHS-15 scale.]; C --> D[Even three years after the outbreak of the war, mental health disturbances remain high. Many women are mobilizing themselves to cope with daily challenges, and an increasing number are seeking support from psychologists.]; D --> E[This is a serious and ongoing issue that requires continuous monitoring, comprehensive support systems, and strategic interventions at both the societal and institutional levels.];
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The war in Ukraine has caused deep psychological trauma among many women.

The majority of Ukrainian refugee women who arrived in Poland have exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as measured by the RHS-15 scale.

Even three years after the outbreak of the war, mental health disturbances remain high. Many women are mobilizing themselves to cope with daily challenges, and an increasing number are seeking support from psychologists.

This is a serious and ongoing issue that requires continuous monitoring, comprehensive support systems, and strategic interventions at both the societal and institutional levels.



Thank you very much
for your attention