

**‘In our cities we have metros’
Ukrainian refugees and the
deficiencies of Irish employment
policy**

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Outline

- Ukrainians and the Temporary Protection Directive
- Integration successes: social welfare, education
- The blockages: housing, childcare, transport/mobility
- Conclusion: the well-known (but ignored) barriers to inclusion in the Irish labour market

Sources

- Presentation based on report for Mutual Learning Programme – Peer review on the effective labour market integration of displaced persons from Ukraine (Warsaw, September 2023)
- Published data from CSO and Ukrainian Action surveys
- Interviews with Ukrainian refugees

Temporary Protection Directive

- Developed in response to Syrian refugee crisis
- Allow specific group(s) of refugees into member states without normal asylum application procedures
- Activated across EU immediately after Russian invasion of Ukraine

Ireland: Ukrainian inflow 2022-2023

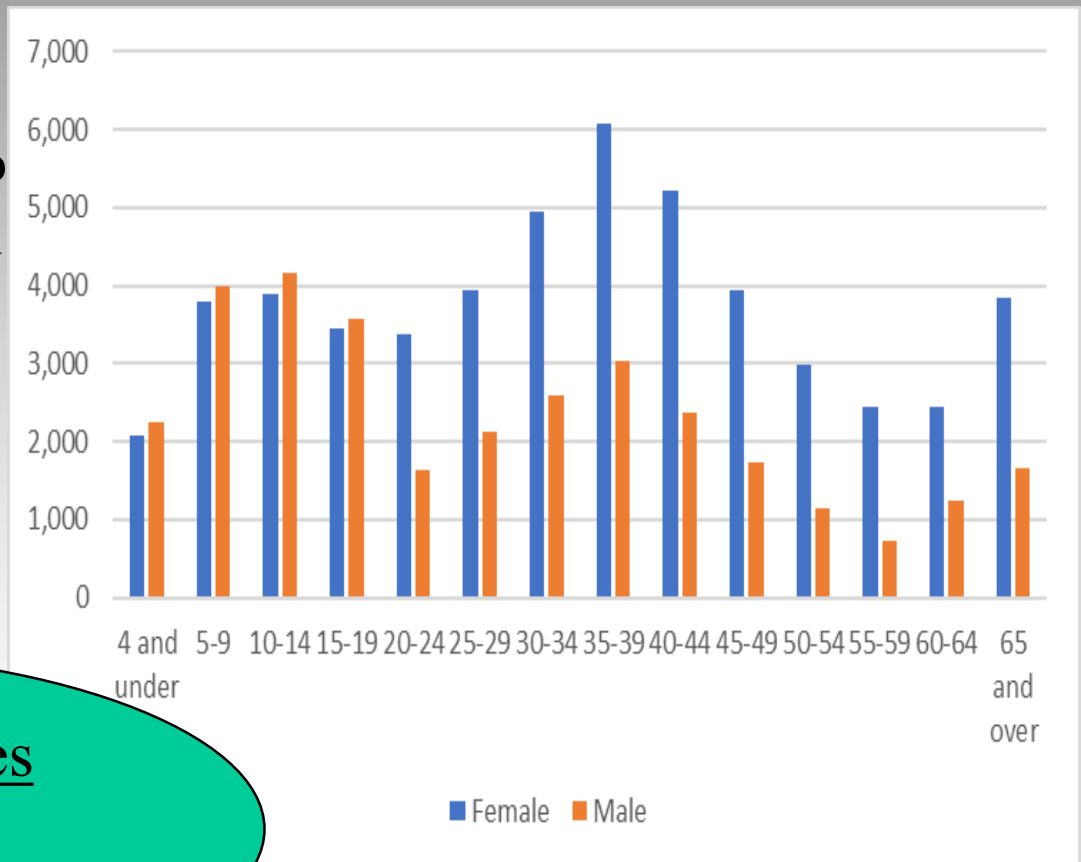
- Initially about 2,000 Ukrainians in Ireland
- Flow peaked March/April 2022 but continued
- By June 2023 cumulative total arrivals >83,000



The 'right' refugees?

- Overwhelmingly women and children
- Working age (20-64) women comprise 40.1% of Ukrainian population in Ireland
- Well-educated: about half of adults have at least undergraduate degree

Arrivals (cumulative) June 2023: age and gender



So the sort of refugees
who really do need
protection!

Employment

- By April 2023 approx. 13,000 employed
- Mostly in unskilled jobs in hospitality; low earnings
- As of September 2023 only about 20% adult women and 26% adult men in gainful employment (CSO data)
- Consistent with findings of Ukrainian Action survey 2023
- This when labour shortage in Ireland!

Comparison with Polish inflow

Between 2004 and 2009 approx. 500,000 arrivals from New Member States (300,000 from Poland)

All had higher employment rate than indigenous population

Predominantly young adults, few children

Able and willing to take any job below qualification level

Mobile across Ireland

Integration into social welfare

- On arrival issued with PSN and 'yellow letter' certificate of right to temporary residence
- PSN gives access to state services including health and education
- PSN gives access to social welfare payments and public employment services

Educational integration

- Accelerated recognition of teaching qualifications: Ministerial decision that evidence of teaching in Ukraine enabled initial registration for Teaching Council qualification
- Teachers employed as teaching assistants in Irish schools; some now taking up teaching posts (mostly temporary)

Housing

- Context: national housing crisis driven by ‘financialisation’ and refusal of state to directly build housing
- Most housed in temporary serviced accommodation from commercial suppliers; disproportionately in areas of high tourism
- Only tiny minority (8%) in rented accommodation; compared to other European countries low involvement in private housing market
- Consequences: Away from possible jobs where qualifications relevant; Frequent moving makes difficult to build up ‘career’

Training

- ❑ Further education and continuous learning less extensive in Ireland than many EU countries
- ❑ Decline of apprenticeships in traditional skilled jobs
- ❑ Immediate need for English language learning; by 2023 over 14,000 in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- ❑ Education and Training Boards tasked with providing English language training, but overall not positively evaluated
- ❑ No use of extensive for-profit language schools – extensive but no disseminated expertise in ESOL

Childcare

Ukrainians have same access to ECCE as other Irish residents but Irish childcare notoriously expensive and sparse

Over half of all parents of children aged 0-4 reported no involvement in any formal childcare (Ukrainian Action 2023)

Compared to Ukraine, Irish school hours short, Irish school holidays long, Irish children assumed to need more adult supervision; less access to grandparents and other relatives compared to Irish parents

Consequence: Mothers choice of jobs very limited, restricted access to jobs commensurate with qualifications

“I don’t know how Irish mothers have jobs”

(Interview 21/09/2023)

Irish car dependency

- » Ireland one of most car dependent societies in Europe
- » Car dependency means car a necessity not a life-style choice
- » Most people (63%) travel to work by private car especially outside cities
- » Access to car essential for labour market access

(Im)mobility

□ Mobility in Ukraine:

- » Despite rapid motorisation after 1989, car often for additional mobility rather than routine travel to work;
- » Most Ukrainians live in cities with extensive public transport; **“In our cities we have metros”**

□ Mobility in Ireland

- » Of survey respondents only 8% had an Irish driving licence;
- » Getting a job can require a car, especially if the location of the job itself changes: **“In Ireland if you work you have to have a car”** (Interview, substitute teacher)

Conclusion

- Ukrainian refugees different to earlier wave of NMS immigrants and contemporary asylum seekers
- Policy objective (integration into the labour market) ignores that of all comparative groups they are most in need of those labour market supports where Ireland deficient (housing, childcare, training, transport)

Further information

James Wickham,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376032680_The_labour_market_integration_of_Ukrainian_refugees_in_Ireland_new_successes_and_old_problems_A_report_for_DG_Employment_Social_Affairs_and_inclusion_Mutual_Learning_Programme_on_the_effective_labour_