

Results of sociological research

BELARUSIANS IN POLAND, LITHUANIA, GEORGIA: ATTITUDE TO THE WAR, HELP TO UKRAINE, DISCRIMINATION

Oleg Alampiyev, Philipp Bikanau

August 2022



Almost all Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia do not support Lukashenko and strongly oppose Russian aggression in Ukraine.



Ethnic discrimination and hostility have become part of Belarusians' social reality in Georgia, Poland and Lithuania.



Belarusians residing in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia support Ukraine and Ukrainians with concrete actions, despite the discrimination.

Results of sociological research

BELARUSIANS
IN POLAND, LITHUANIA,
GEORGIA: ATTITUDE
TO THE WAR,
HELP TO UKRAINE,
DISCRIMINATION

Index of Contents

1	PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, SAMPLE AND APPROACH TO DATA ANALYSIS	4
1.1	The problem and purpose of the research.....	4
1.2	Methodology: data collection method, sample, limitations.....	5
2	MAIN FINDINGS	8
3	ATTITUDE TOWARDS LUKASHENKO AND THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR	9
3.1	Attitude towards Lukashenko and his government actions.....	9
3.2	Support for parties at war.....	9
3.3	Countries responsible for starting the war.....	10
3.4	Attitude to the participation of Belarus in the war.....	10
4	HELP TO UKRAINE AND UKRAINIANS	11
4.1	Engagement in support to Ukraine and specific ways to help.....	11
4.2	Intention to help in the future.....	12
5	THE PROBLEM OF DISCRIMINATION	13
5.1	Personal experience of discrimination / negative attitude.....	13
5.2	Discrimination / negative attitude towards other Belarusians.....	16
5.3	Importance of the problem of discrimination.....	17
5.4	Statements about discrimination / hostility towards Belarusians.....	17
5.5	The situation of Belarusians in general.....	18
6	RECOMMENDATIONS	19

1

PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, SAMPLE AND APPROACH TO DATA ANALYSIS

1.1. PROBLEM AND PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The ongoing civil and political crisis since 2020 has prompted many Belarusians to change their country of residence. Common reasons for emigration include the risk of political persecution; complete rejection of the political, legal and social situation in the country; economic reasons (pessimistic forecasts, inability to fulfil oneself, etc.); real mental or physical disorders caused by Russia or the Belarusian regime. The full-scale invasion into Ukraine in February 2022 has further deteriorated Belarusians' attitude towards the government, generating a new wave of migration.

The events of 2020 in Belarus showed that the political course of the official Belarusian government is not supported by a significant (possibly predominant) part of the Belarusian society. This leads to believe that the opinion of the Belarusian society regarding the aggression against Ukraine is also not aligned with the position of the official Belarusian authorities.

After the start of the war, the situation changed for the worse, both for those who remained in Belarus and for Belarusian emigrants. Official Belarus, headed by A. Lukashenko, actively assisted the Russian troops in the attack on Ukraine. Although the Belarusian armed forces did not partake in the hostilities on the territory of Ukraine directly, the attack was officially supported by A. Lukashenko, the territory of Belarus — with the consent of the Belarusian authorities — was used by the Russian troops as a springboard for the attack, and Belarusian infrastructure and resources were placed at the disposal of the Russian troops.

Thus, Belarus became an accomplice to Russian aggression against Ukraine, and Belarusian citizens began to be perceived abroad as representatives of the aggressor country.

Soon after Russia's attack on Ukraine with the assistance of Belarus, reports of discrimination and hostile attitudes

towards Belarusians living in different countries¹ started to emerge on social networks and independent media.

Reports regarding discrimination and hostile attitudes are scattered and non-systemic; they describe individual cases, and relate to a wide variety of social situations (from forced closure of a bank account to petty insults and damage to property).

Messages in the media and social networks are often distorted. Information is commonly presented in a figurative, emotional way. In addition, human thinking leans towards generalization of individual cases and perceiving them as patterns, which means that individual cases of hostility may well be perceived as a common phenomenon.

Thus, reports in the media do not contribute to forming any kind of clear big picture about the scope, depth and characteristics of this problem. In reality, the oppression of Belarusians can be both exaggerated and underestimated.

At the same time, this problem cannot be ignored. If there is a problem, it requires a clear understanding so that measures can be taken to resolve it. So, a group of Belarusian sociologists led by Oleg Alampiyev, PhD (Sociology), and independent sociologist Philipp Bikanau, with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, decided to study the problem of discrimination against Belarusians in various countries. The findings are presented in this report.

In this study, we explore three issues:

1. The attitude of Belarusians living in certain countries towards the war in Ukraine.
2. Help from Belarusians living in certain countries to Ukraine and Ukrainians.

¹ In this study, discrimination is understood as the restriction of rights or opportunities of a person or a social group, or an unequal attitude towards them based on their nationality or citizenship, which results in this person or group being put in a less favorable situation compared to another person or social group in comparable circumstances.

3. Discrimination and hostility towards Belarusians living in certain countries after the start of the war in Ukraine.

1.2. METHODOLOGY: DATA COLLECTION METHOD, SAMPLE, LIMITATIONS

GEOGRAPHY OF THE STUDY AND COUNTRY CONTEXT

As a result of the 2020 crisis (the “first” wave of emigration) and the start of the war in Ukraine (the “second” wave of emigration), the number of Belarusians living in Poland, Georgia and the Baltic countries has increased dramatically. According to various sources, Poland alone became the destination for several dozen to several hundred thousand people. For the purposes of this study, we held a survey of Belarusians residing in Poland, Georgia, and Lithuania.

Traditionally, these countries are perceived by Belarusians as “close.” Many Belarusians have family ties with the Poles (this is especially true for the Brest and Grodno regions, which border Poland), which makes it much easier for them to move to Poland (including through the procedure for obtaining Karta Polaka [Polish card]). Proximity of the language, similar culture, reasonable prices also play a big role. After the events of 2020, Poland has taken many steps to attract IT specialists (Poland.Business Harbor program) and is a haven for many Belarusians with international protection status. Poland became a country that received a huge number of refugees from Ukraine after the start of the war, among which there were a significant number of Belarusians. For a long time, Poland has also had a range of educational programs designed to attract students from Belarus.

Most Belarusian expats in Lithuania live in Vilnius. The Russian language is also quite widespread in this city, which means that Belarusians have less trouble with the language barrier. The European Humanities University, whose target audience is Belarusians, is located in Vilnius, too. Other factors of “closeness,” like in the case of Poland, are the proximity to Belarus and a similar culture. Lithuania is the main place of activity of some non-profit organizations from Belarus, which somewhat reduces the difficulties in “acclimatization” for those Belarusians who are in Lithuania.

Despite the absence of joint borders, Georgia is another country that feels “close” to Belarusians. As a rule, in Georgia, Belarusians rarely face the language barrier, they have the opportunity to send their children to schools in Russian or enrol in a Russian-language program at universities. Some factors that make Georgia attractive to many are relatively low prices, favourable tax rates, and relative easiness to obtain a legal status. There is no visa regime between Georgia and Belarus, which makes it relatively easy for Belarusians to leave the country if necessary. In addition, in recent years, Georgia has become a popular tourist destination, which has made this country highly discussed and familiar to Belarusians.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Any research has its limitations. Unfortunately, this study also encountered shortcomings caused by objective reasons. When evaluating the information provided in the report, these shortcomings should be taken into account.

In the case of Belarusians residing in Poland, Georgia and Lithuania, there is no so-called sampling frame² that could be effectively used to select respondents. For this reason, the research team was forced to use other available means.

The sample of this study does not meet strict scientific standards, and therefore we do not have sufficient grounds to assert that the results obtained correctly reflect the real public opinion of Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia.

Data collection was carried out by the method of a computer assisted web interview (CAWI); a link to the questionnaire was distributed using social networks in various groups and communities of Belarusian immigrants. In Poland, the Belaruskі Moladzevy Hub (“Belarusian Youth Hub”)³ was involved in collecting information, and in Lithuania, it was the company Budzma Belaruskі (Batskaushchyna)⁴ — “Let’s Be Belarusians — Homeland.”

Groups and communities in social networks are a necessary component of the social interaction of the vast majority of Belarusians who relocate from Belarus to other countries. In order to exclude the influence of external factors, primarily such as political views or the reasons for immigration, links were distributed in groups and communities of various orientations (including communities for job search, assistance in transporting things from one country to another, etc.). In addition, we asked each respondent to share a link to the study among acquaintances, friends and relatives who also moved from Belarus to one of the countries under study.

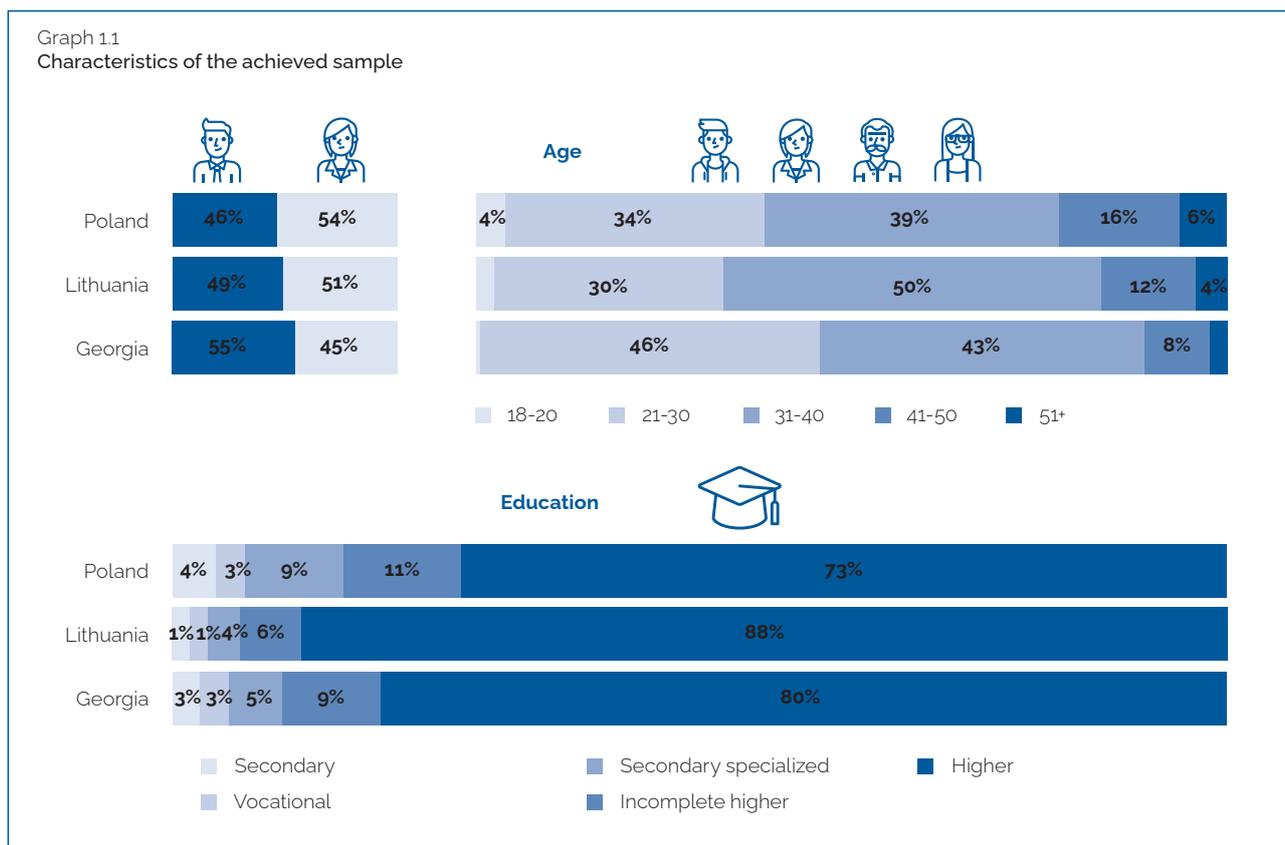
Unfortunately, we can only hope that the features we are studying do not correlate (or do not correlate significantly) with the probability of taking the survey, and thus, the findings will allow us to obtain a fairly adequate picture of the problems studied.

At the same time, based on the analysis carried out and our experience, we believe that **there is no good reason**

² A sampling frame means a reliable source of information about the general population (who/what is being studied?) and the corresponding breakdown by social and demographic characteristics within that population: the general population, breakdown by sex, age, geography, education.

³ Belarusian Youth Hub, [<link>](#)

⁴ Let’s Be Belarusians!, [<link>](#)



to believe that the actual distribution of the studied characteristics is very different from the ones we obtained⁵.

Research database (in the.sav format) can be found at https://fes.kiev.ua/n/cms/fileadmin/upload2/diaspora_survey_-_dataset.sav

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

The data were collected in two waves: first, a study was conducted in Poland, and then, using a similar questionnaire, in Georgia and Lithuania simultaneously. Despite the three-month gap between the two waves of the survey, we believe that the data are comparable: the prevalence of reports about discrimination and hostility against Belarusians in the media decreased over time. However, we cannot rule out that during this time, the number of people who faced discrimination in Poland actually increased (due to less interest in the problem, not the disappearance of the problem itself).

In the absence of a sampling frame and reliable information about the socio-demographic characteristics of the general population (i.e. the Belarusian diaspora in Poland,

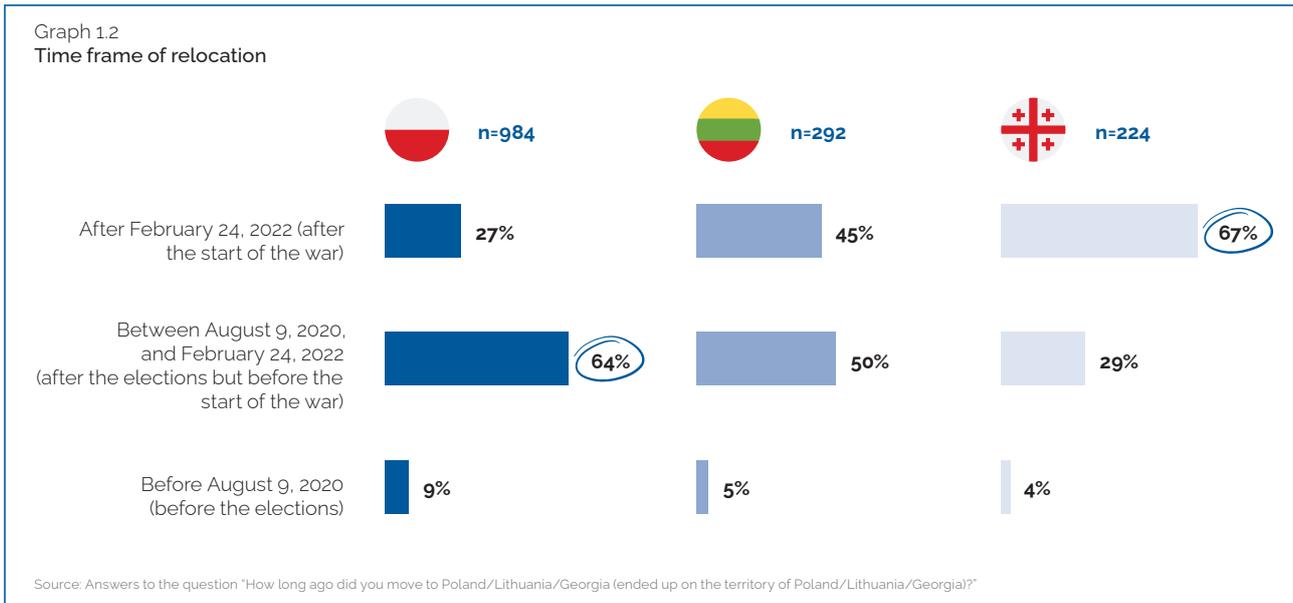
Lithuania and Georgia), it is impossible to check to what extent the obtained distributions of these characteristics correspond to the distributions in the general population. For the same reason, it is impossible to perform sample correction and calculation of sampling error (the exact number of Belarusians who live in any of the studied countries is unknown). **Hereafter, we will draw conclusions based on the data obtained, assuming that the real distribution of characteristics is largely reflected.**

In all countries, the samples included representatives of both sexes, different ages, and levels of education. In all countries, the average portrait of a diaspora representative is a person between 21 and 40 years old with a higher education.

Meanwhile, there are also certain socio-demographic differences between the diasporas. The Georgian diaspora is the youngest: almost half of its representatives are people between 21 and 30 years old (while in Lithuania and Poland, their share slightly exceeds 30%).

The younger age of the Belarusian diaspora in Georgia is partly due to the large number of IT professionals who have migrated there. Some IT companies have relocated their employees to Georgia. In addition, some of those who migrated to Georgia consider it as a temporary place of residence — many are in Georgia waiting to receive a Schengen visa (for example, under the Poland.Business Harbor program).

⁵ To ask any questions about the study, please contact its lead Oleg Alampiyev at alampijeu@gmail.com or project manager Philipp Bikanau, philipp.bikanau@gmail.com



The Lithuanian diaspora is characterised by the highest level of education. This fact is probably explained by the peculiarities of the labour markets in the countries under consideration: while in Poland, there is a great demand for employees without higher education (which became even more noticeable after the start of the war), in Lithuania, the demand for manual labour is not as high. In addition, considering the higher prices of goods in Lithuania, this country does not favour the adaptation of people with lower qualifications.

In Poland, 40% of the respondents live in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship. The capital region is traditionally the largest centre of Belarusian immigration in Poland; in addition, it is located geographically close to the Belarusian border (this fact is important for many Belarusians for logistical reasons). 11% live in Pomeranian Voivodeship, and 10% in Greater Poland. Less than 7% of immigrated Belarusians live in other voivodeships.

In the case of Lithuania, the absolute majority of Belarusians chose the capital region — Vilnius (88%). This is probably mainly due to the greater opportunities in the labour market, a richer social life, a rather big community of Belarusians, and less of a language barrier.

In Georgia, 46% of Belarusians live in Tbilisi and 51% in Adjara (Batumi, Kobuleti). These are the two best-known regions of the country, and Belarusians probably choose them based on their recognisability and well-developed infrastructure.

In all countries, the explosive growth of the diaspora occurred after the events of 2020, but while Poland is dominated by people who arrived before the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine, two-thirds of Belarusians in Georgia arrived following the start of Russia's full-scale invasion into Ukraine. As in the case of age, these differences are probably explained by the ease of relocation (visa-free regime; relatively low prices; perception of Georgia as a country where you can sit out problems in a relatively easy and inexpensive way).

2

MAIN FINDINGS

The diaspora of Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia has grown dramatically after the protests in Belarus in 2020. At the same time, most Belarusians in Georgia arrived there after the start of the Russo-Ukrainian war, while in Poland, there are more people who arrived there before the invasion.

The views of almost all Belarusians who are in exile in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia differ from the actions of A. Lukashenko and his administration, and therefore, it is necessary to differentiate between the views of Belarusians who have emigrated to other countries and the actions of the Belarusian regime:

- More than 98% of Belarusians do not approve of Lukashenko's actions.
- More than 98% oppose the decision to support Russia in the war against Ukraine.

Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia support Ukraine, strongly oppose Russian aggression, but at the same time, many consider Belarus also complicit in the war (an accomplice of Russia):

- At least 94% of Belarusians support the Ukrainian side.
- More than 97% of the diaspora representatives consider Russia to be the main culprit of the war.
- Almost every Belarusian in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia believes that Belarus should not take part in the war and side with Russia, one in three blames Belarus for the war too (as an accomplice).

Belarusians living in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia support Ukraine and Ukrainians with concrete actions:

- More than 70% said that they expressed support in some way; among them, more than 98% did this not only on social networks, but also provided real assistance (for example, transferred money; handed over clothes, food; participated in rallies).
- Belarusians in Poland are more active in expressing their support (83% of participation), which is often explained by simpler logistics (Belarusians in Lithuania and Georgia send money more often, while Belarusians in Poland tend to donate necessary items or become volunteers).

Ethnic discrimination and hostility have become part of the social reality in Georgia, Poland and Lithuania:

- 39% of Belarusians in Georgia, 31% in Poland and 16% in Lithuania stated that they personally experienced discrimination in various forms.
- Some of the cases described relate to interpersonal contact and can be perceived subjectively (insults, threats, etc.), but there are also problems of an institutional nature (denial of service in a bank, in government institutions and commercial organisations, refusal to rent housing).

It seems that Belarusians in general are ready to put up with negative attitudes from the locals, but not from Ukrainians, especially not from Russians and other Belarusians:

- Belarusians are much more likely to face hostility when interacting with Ukrainians than when interacting with locals.
- Belarusians who have faced discrimination from Ukrainians take the problem of discrimination more seriously than Belarusians who have faced discrimination from locals.
- Even cases of hostility towards Belarusians do not prevent them from helping Ukraine.

3

ATTITUDE TOWARDS LUKASHENKO AND THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

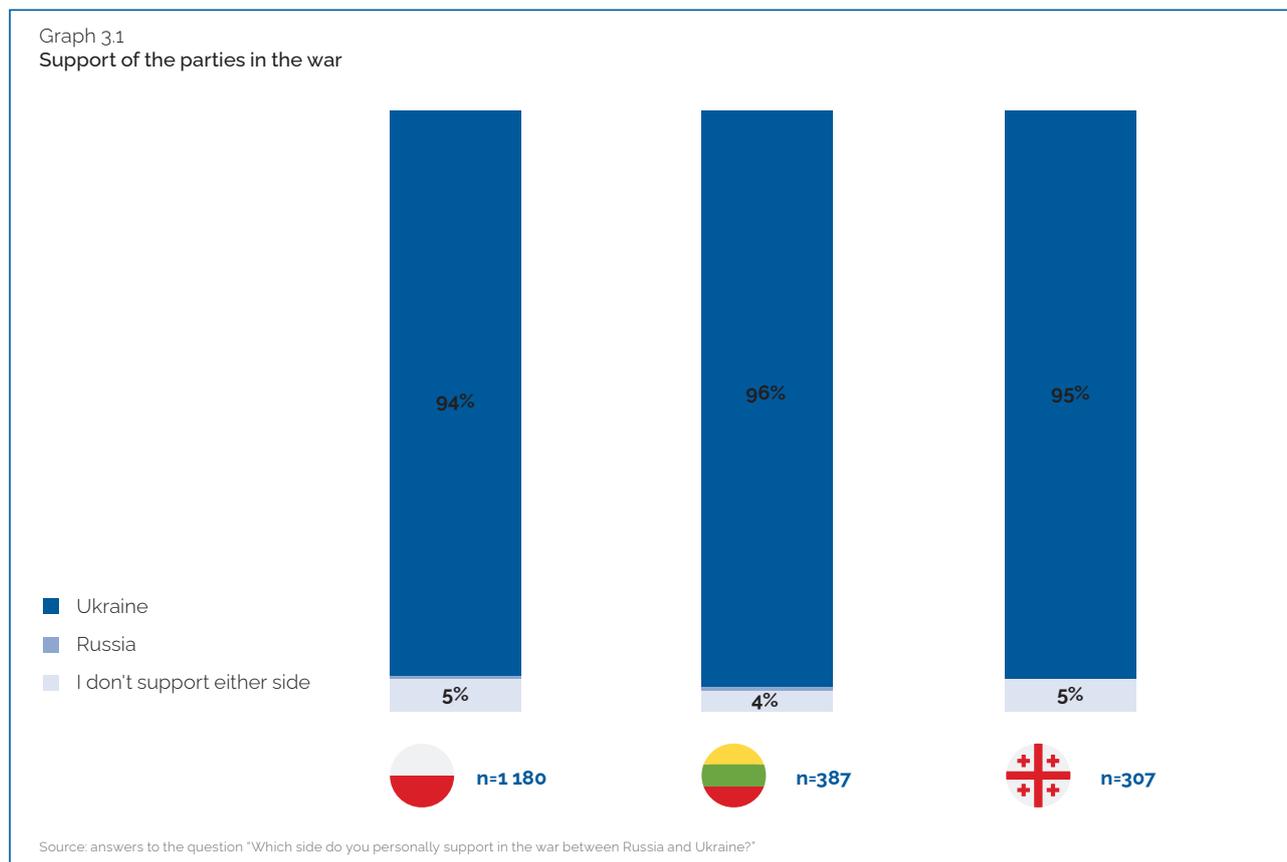
3.1. ATTITUDE TOWARDS LUKASHENKO AND HIS GOVERNMENT ACTIONS

The research findings show that there are almost no people among Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia who would support Lukashenko or the current Belarusian government. **In each of these countries, more than 98% of people said that they do not approve of Lukashenko's actions and do not agree with the decision of the Belarusian government to support Russia in the war.** Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia are mostly people who left the country because of their disagreement with government decisions, and therefore, it is unfair to associate them with the Belarusian regime.

3.2. SUPPORT FOR PARTIES AT WAR

In the war between Russia and Ukraine, Belarusians who emigrated are clearly on the side of Ukraine (more than 94% in each of the three countries). About 5% do not support any of the parties; that is, there is practically no support for Russia at all.

This fact confirms once again that the opinion of the Belarusians living in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia and their attitude towards the war do not at all correspond to the position and actions of the Belarusian authorities.



3.3. COUNTRIES RESPONSIBLE FOR STARTING THE WAR

Almost all Belarusian expats, regardless of the country, believe Russia to be guilty of the war (at least 94%), and Belarus is mentioned as at least partially guilty quite often (at least 34%). In other words, at least a third of those who moved to Poland, Lithuania or Georgia consider their native country also complicit in the war, an accomplice of Russia.

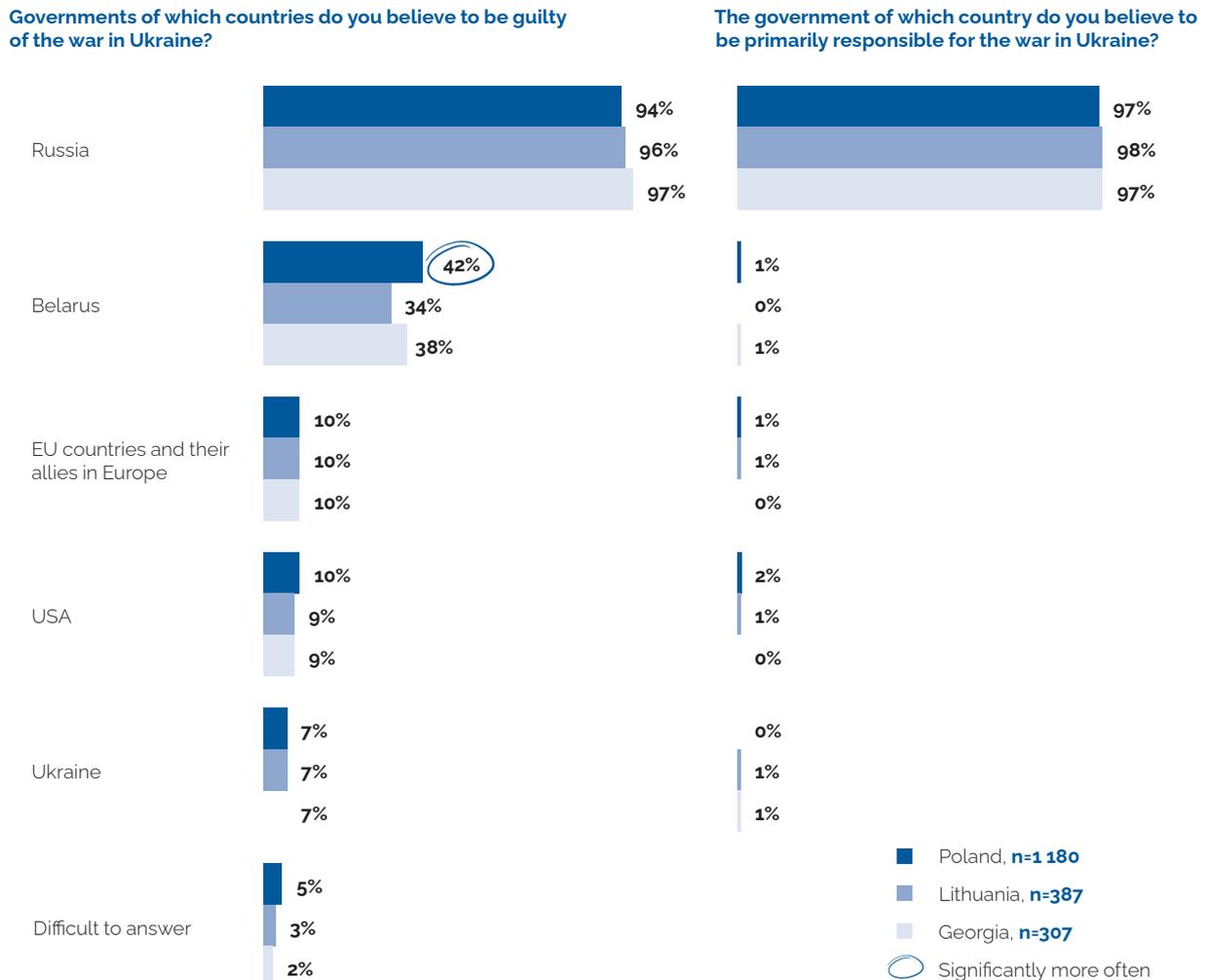
More than 96% of respondents name Russia as the main culprit, and less than 1% name Belarus (in all three countries where the surveys were conducted).

It is important to note that despite the fact that the Belarusians who emigrated were and remain against Lukashenko, at least a third of them still feel guilty of their country's involvement in the war against Ukraine, especially Belarusians in Georgia (44%).

3.4. ATTITUDE TO THE PARTICIPATION OF BELARUS IN THE WAR

Almost all respondents (98% or more) agree that Belarus should not take part in the war on the side of Russia, and condemn the use of Belarusian territory for operations against Ukraine. At the same time, there is no consensus on whether Belarus should remain neutral in the war: about half of the representatives of the diaspora in each of the countries disagree. This means that among Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania, and Georgia, there is a rather widespread opinion that in the "perfect world" Belarus should help Ukraine by military means, and not adhere to "friendly neutrality."

Graph 3.2
Countries guilty of starting the war, according to Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania, and Georgia



Source: answers to the questions: "Governments of which countries do you believe to be guilty of the war in Ukraine?" (multiple answers were possible). "The government of which country do you believe to be primarily responsible for the war in Ukraine?"

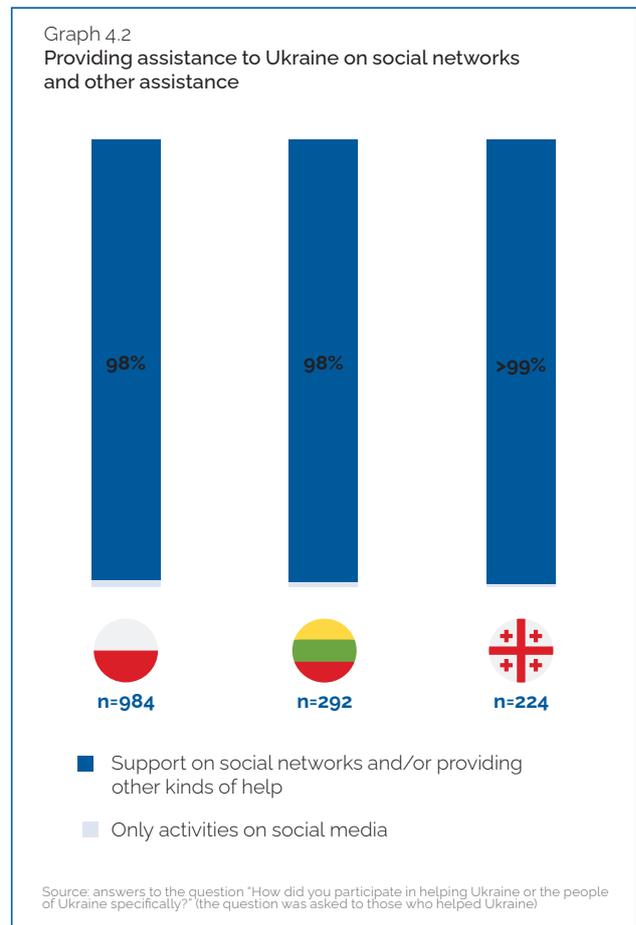
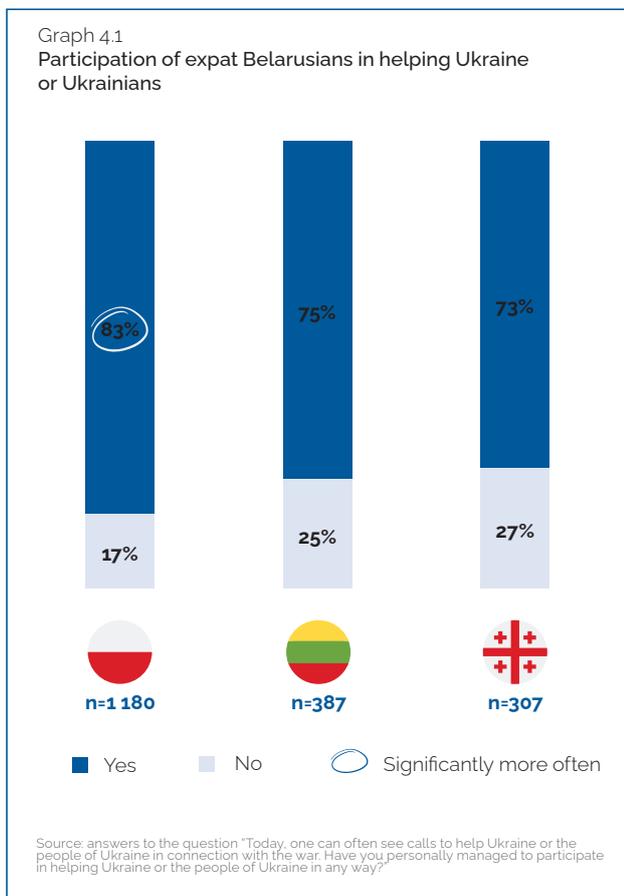
4

HELP TO UKRAINE AND UKRAINIANS

4.1. ENGAGEMENT IN SUPPORT TO UKRAINE AND SPECIFIC WAYS TO HELP

More than 70% of expat Belarusians in each of the countries under study said that they took part in helping Ukrainians in various ways. However, Belarusians did this much more often in Poland (84%) than in Lithuania (76%) and Georgia (73%). This is probably due to the number of Ukrainians currently located in these countries: Poland hosts the majority of Ukrainians who emigrated, with rather few of them in Lithuania and Georgia, in comparison⁶.

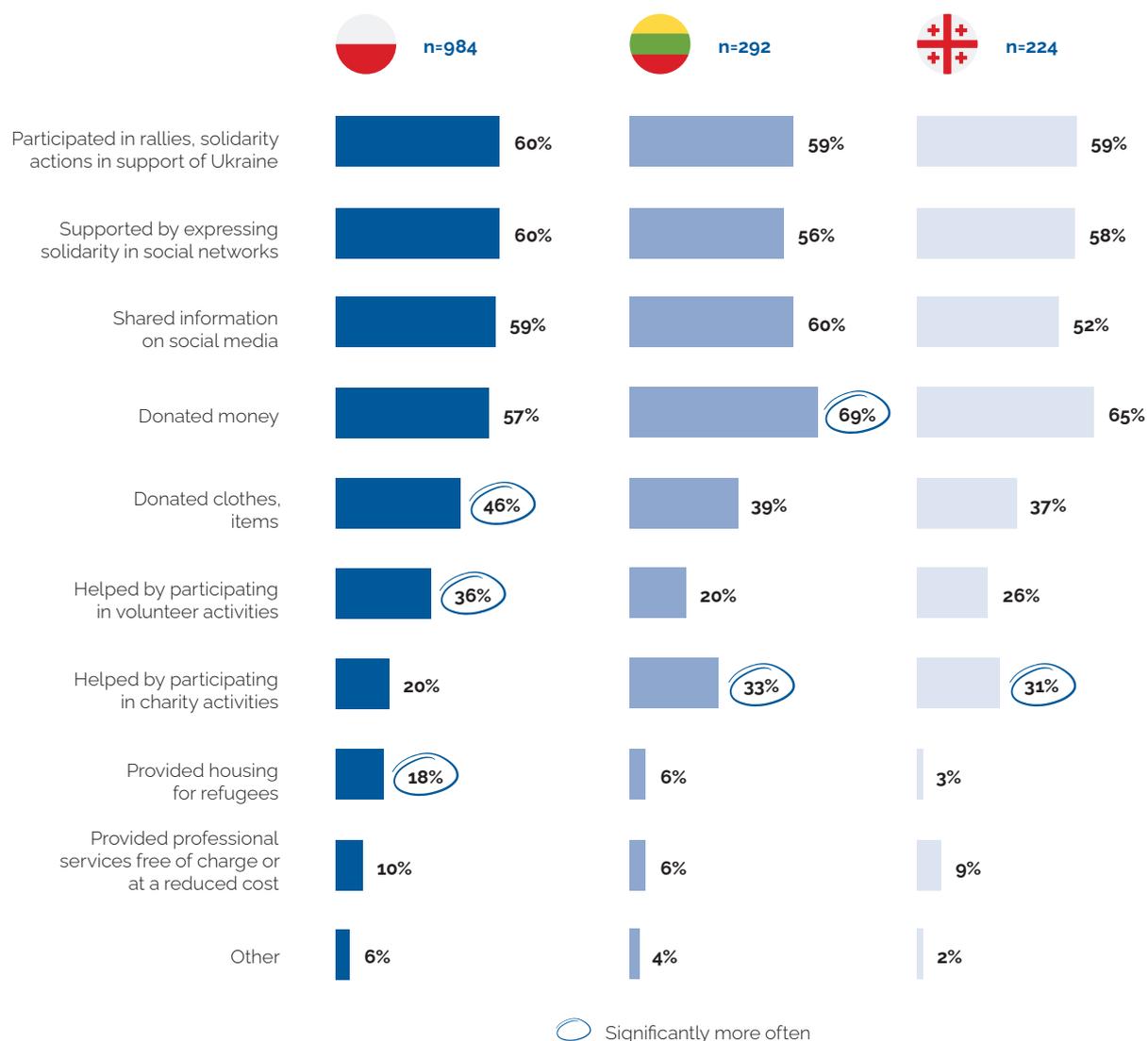
Those who declare their support for Ukraine are not only involved in symbolic activities on social networks; they also help financially and materially or do volunteer work. In Lithuania and Georgia, more often than in Poland, they report having donated money (69% and 65%, respectively).



Belarusians in Poland are more likely to choose direct methods of support, including donation of clothing, items, food, volunteering or providing accommodation. This is due to the large size of the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland, and simpler logistics (Ukrainians enter Poland immediately from Ukraine, which means it is necessary to organise the transfer of items / housing / assistance on the spot).

6 Ukraine refugee situation, UNDP UN, <link>

Graph 4.3
Ways to participate in helping Ukraine



Source: answers to the question "How did you participate in helping Ukraine or the people of Ukraine specifically?" (the question was asked to those who helped Ukraine)

4.2. INTENTION TO HELP IN THE FUTURE

Most Belarusians in all three countries (over 71%) plan to help Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in connection with the war in the future as well.

What is more, the majority of Belarusians in all the countries studied believe that Belarusians did not offer enough help to the people of Ukraine, and that is probably why over 70% are ready to provide such help in the future.

5

THE PROBLEM OF DISCRIMINATION

5.1. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION / NEGATIVE ATTITUDE

39% of Belarusians in Georgia and 31% in Poland reported that after the start of the full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine, they personally faced discrimination due to their Belarusian origin. This indicates a serious problem in these countries. Such high proportions may be related to the support of the Russian aggression by the official authorities of Belarus, which results in some people residing in Poland and Georgia attributing some of the blame to the Belarusians residing in these countries. In Lithuania, the scale of the problem is much smaller, with only 16% of Belarusians reporting having experienced discrimination.

This may be connected with Lithuanians having quite a good understanding of the protest events against

Lukashenko's regime, which started in Belarus in 2020, a big share of the population understanding Russian (60% in Vilnius⁷), and a relatively low number of immigrant Ukrainians.

Most often, Belarusians in all three countries faced verbal abuse, derogatory comments in person from strangers and on the Internet. These are situations of unpleasant interpersonal contact. They are non-institutionalised, random and do not bring direct material harm to Belarusians.

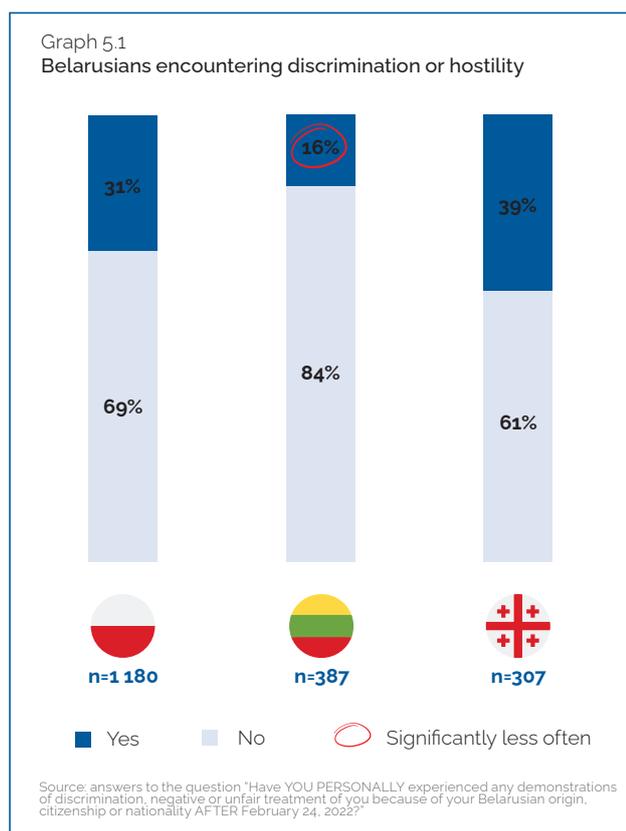
A significantly more important problem is that in Lithuania and Georgia, more than 30% of those who reported discrimination were denied housing, more than 24% and 33% in Poland and Georgia were unable to get services in a bank.

- 25% of Belarusians in Georgia said they encountered overpricing of goods or services.
- 16% in Lithuania reported a denial of service from commercial organisations and businesses.
- 17% of Belarusians in Poland were denied employment, and this is of particular concern.

In this case, the issue is at the institutional level. The lower percentage of reports on this same issue in Georgia is probably due to the fact that Belarusians are less likely to look for a job in Georgia.

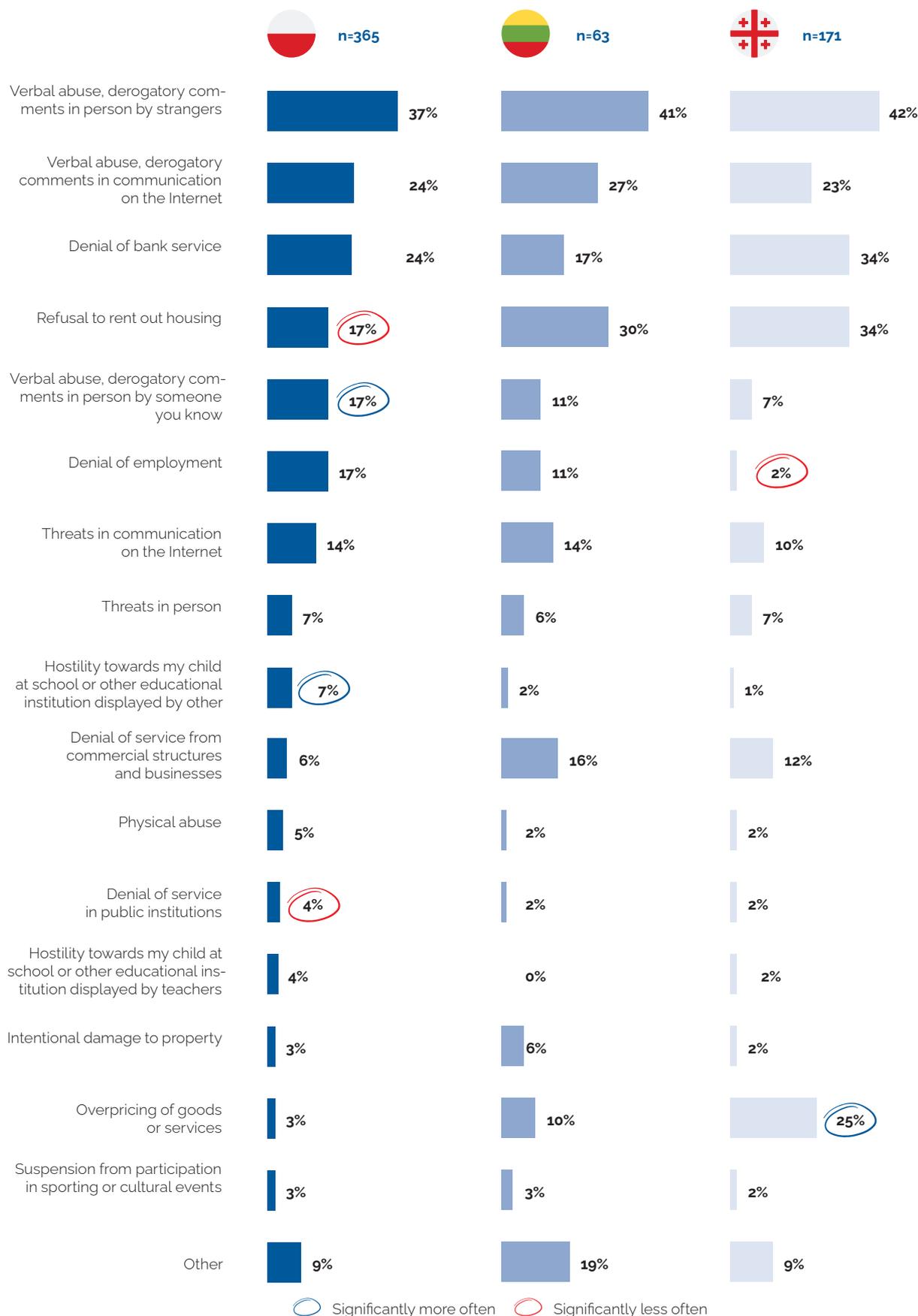
However, some reports of discrimination or hostility should be treated with some scepticism. We do admit that in a number of cases, some respondents could assess unfavourable situations for them as demonstrations of discrimination, while in fact the reason could be different. Situations such as being denied housing or employment are ambiguous and can easily be misinterpreted. In addition, there may have been discrimination but rather than against Belarusians per se, against foreigners or East Slavic people.

However, in most cases, situations of discrimination leave little room for interpretation.



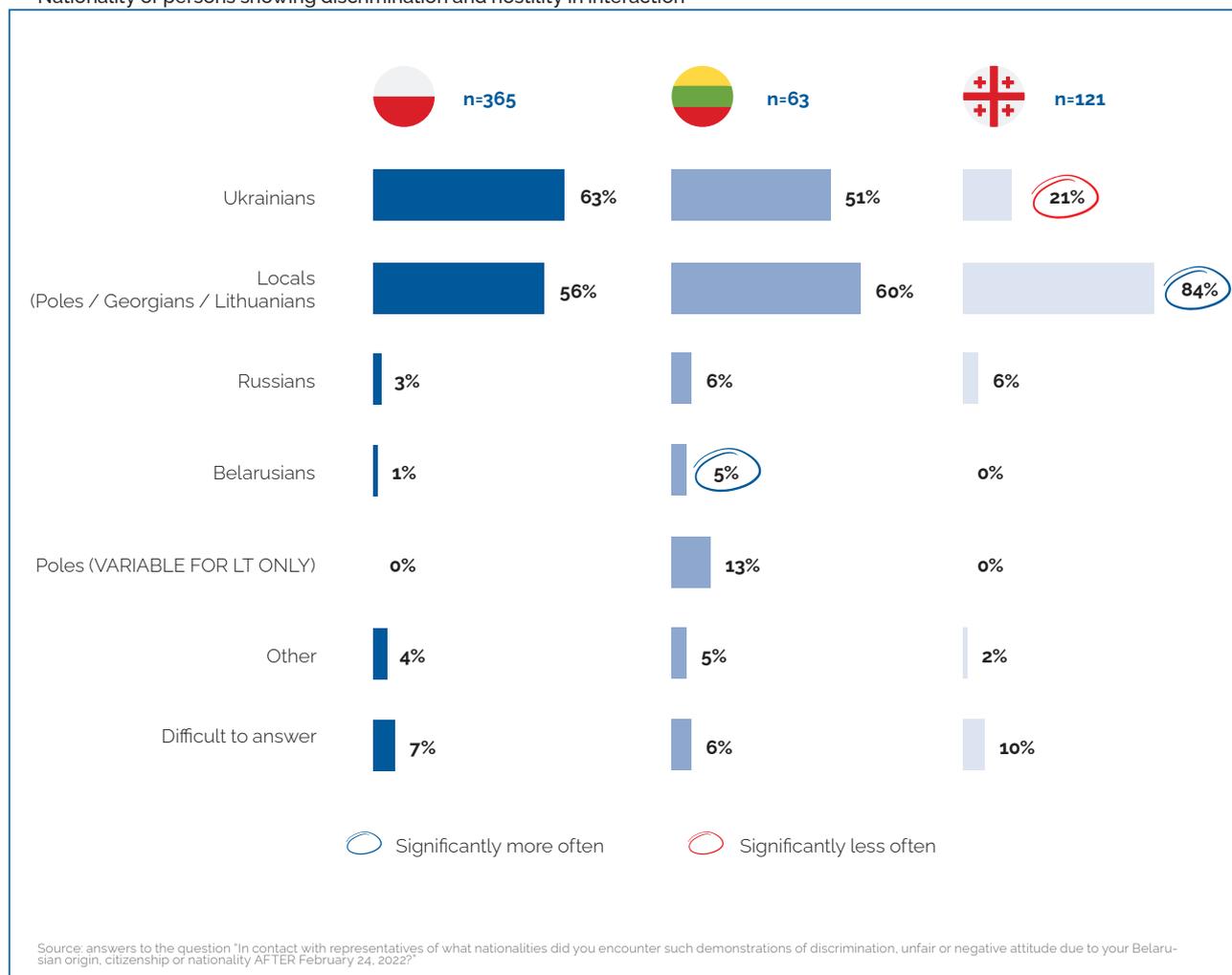
⁷ Statistical research of the nationality, native language and religious beliefs of the residents of the Republic of Lithuania, 2021. Official statistics portal, [link](#)

Graph 5.2
Demonstrations of discrimination or hostility



Source: answers to the question "What demonstrations of discrimination, negative or unfair treatment have you personally experienced (among those who reported discrimination against them) because of your Belarusian origin, citizenship or nationality AFTER February 24, 2022?"

Graph 5.3
Nationality of persons showing discrimination and hostility in interaction



Specific issues by country include:

- In Poland, there are more acute problems than in other countries related to denial of employment, verbal abuse and hostility towards children.
- In Lithuania and Georgia, more often than in Poland, the respondents mentioned refusal to rent housing, denial of services from commercial organisations and businesses, as well as overpricing (the latter is especially relevant for Georgia).

In most cases, the negative attitude comes either from representatives of the local population or from Ukrainians. However, while in Poland, Belarusians tend to face such attitudes from Ukrainians more often than from Poles, in Lithuania, it is most often Lithuanians who show such attitudes. In Georgia, the situation is entirely different: 84% of the reported cases of discrimination are by Georgians and only 22% by Ukrainians. This is most likely due to the fact that there are significantly fewer Ukrainian refugees in Georgia than in Poland or

Lithuania. In addition, Georgians are most likely to be less aware of the Belarusian crisis, which started in 2020^{8,9}

In other words, the farther from Ukraine, the less frequently the negative attitude comes from Ukrainians. This must be tied to the size of the Ukrainian diaspora: since there are more Ukrainians in Poland than in the other countries, that makes it more likely to encounter negative attitudes from a Ukrainian.

There is a significantly smaller proportion of Ukrainians in the Polish and Lithuanian societies compared to the local population. Considering this, a Belarusian is much more likely to encounter hostility from a Ukrainian than from a local.

⁸ An action of solidarity with the people of Belarus in Batumi, Bel-sat, [link](#)

⁹ Residents of Tbilisi express solidarity with Belarusian opposition, [link](#)

5.2. DISCRIMINATION / NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS OTHER BELARUSIANS

Even more Belarusians abroad say that they personally know people (friends, relatives, acquaintances) who have faced discrimination. As in cases of direct experience of discrimination, the fewest such statements come from Lithuania.

Speaking about their acquaintances, the majority of respondents mention specific problems: denial of housing (especially in Georgia), denial of service at the bank (especially in Georgia) and at commercial organisations and businesses. Poland is particularly prominent in terms of intentional damage to property. For other forms of discrimination, the difference is much smaller.

Thirty-four percent of the representatives of the Belarusian diaspora in Georgia who faced discrimination said that it was expressed in the form of refusal to rent housing; and as many as 50% reported they heard about this problem from somebody they know. It is not obvious what exactly causes these differences: either the media effect (this is often discussed in the media), or the wider discussion of these problems.

It is natural that a person would trust the experience and opinion of somebody they know; so it can be expected that this information was perceived with a high level of trust. Thus, even for many of those who did not personally experience any negative phenomena, **discrimination and hostility on ethnic grounds began to be perceived as a significant negative factor, a threat to well-being and**

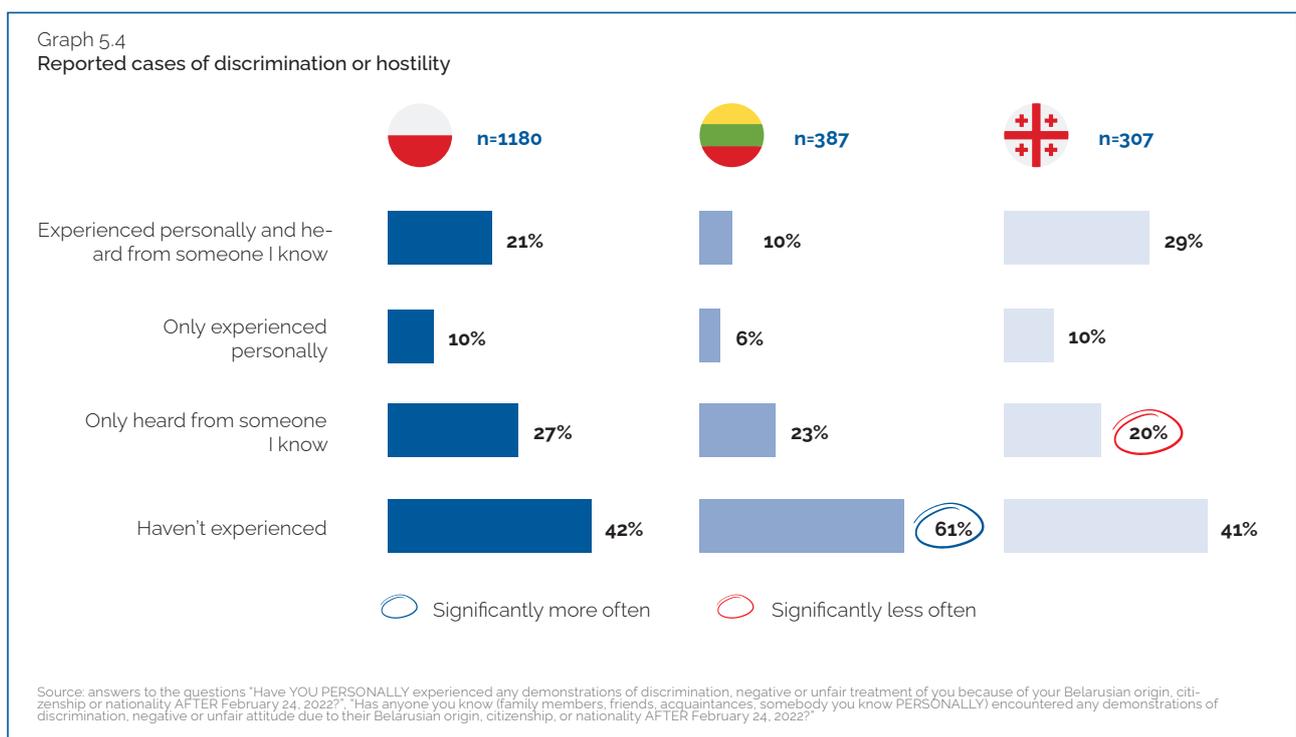
security in the new country of residence. At the same time, of course, it is not always possible to clearly separate real from perceived discrimination or hostility (as in the case of refusal to rent housing). In addition, it cannot be ruled out that in a number of cases, controversial situations could be interpreted as demonstrations of discrimination against the background of widespread rumours about this problem. Such phenomena have become a component in the information space for Belarusians, and even much of what was not previously perceived as demonstrations of discrimination can now be attributed to it. We can then expect Belarusians to be more inclined to assess ambiguous social situations negatively.

It can be concluded that **58% of Belarusians in Poland and 59% of Belarusians in Georgia experienced discrimination personally or heard about it from their friends and acquaintances.**

Such figures indicate that discrimination and hostility based on nationality are an actual fact of social reality for Belarusians in these countries.

In Lithuania, the situation is different: 39% of Belarusians experienced this phenomenon personally or heard about it from friends, while 61% did not feel any negative attitude either personally or from the stories of anyone they knew.

Source: answers to the questions "Have YOU PERSONALLY experienced any demonstrations of discrimination, negative or unfair treatment of you because of your Belarusian origin, citizenship or nationality AFTER February 24, 2022?", "Has anyone you know (family members, friends, acquaintances, somebody you know PERSONALLY) encountered any demonstrations of discrimination, negative or unfair attitude due to their Belarusian origin, citizenship, or nationality AFTER February 24, 2022?"



acquaintances, somebody you know PERSONALLY) encountered any demonstrations of discrimination, negative or unfair attitude due to their Belarusian origin, citizenship, or nationality AFTER February 24, 2022?"

It is critical to understand that even cases of hostility towards Belarusians do not stop people who help Ukraine. More than 78% of Belarusians in all three countries take part in support actions, despite discrimination.

5.3. IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM OF DISCRIMINATION

Belarusians in Poland consider the problem of discrimination to be much more severe and important than Belarusians in Lithuania and Georgia. On a scale from 0 to 10, Belarusians in Poland are much more likely to rate it from 8 to 10, and in Lithuania and Georgia, typical assessment varies from 1 to 3. In addition, the average score in Poland is 5, while in Georgia and Lithuania, it is 3.

Belarusians in general are ready to put up with negative attitudes from the locals, but not from Ukrainians, especially not from Russians and other Belarusians. Negative attitudes from Ukrainians are perceived much worse than such attitudes from the local population. Those who experienced discrimination from Ukrainians in Georgia rate the importance of the problem at an average of 5 out of 10, and from Georgians — at 4 out of 10 (this difference is significant). Given the small number of Ukrainians in Georgia, the problem of discrimination for local Belarusians does not seem significant. In addition, some Belarusians expect to stay in Georgia only for a short period of time (for example, before obtaining a visa under the Poland.Business Harbor program), which also reduces the perceived importance of discrimination.

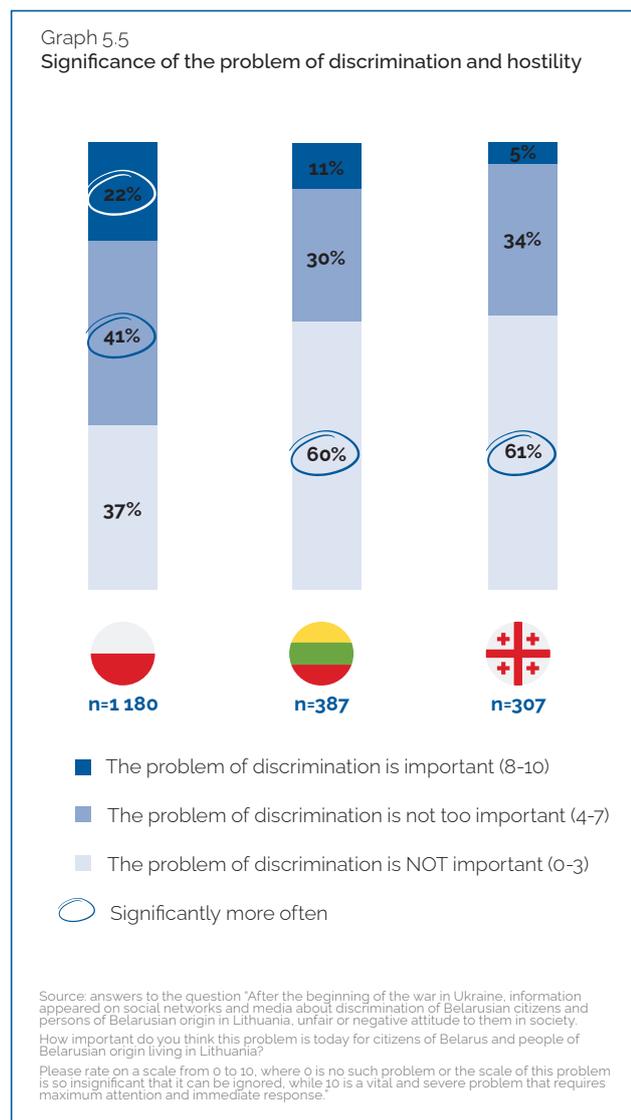
5.4. STATEMENTS ABOUT DISCRIMINATION/HOSTILITY TOWARDS BELARUSIANS

In questions about what demonstrations of discrimination or negative attitudes Belarusians faced, we provided the option "other," where respondents could enter their own answer. Many respondents also spoke out about discrimination and hostility in other open survey questions.

We are providing below some of these responses and statements unchanged, because they constitute a clear illustration of what many Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania, and Georgia are facing.

These quotes help to see the real experience of people behind the figures to look at the situation through the eyes of Belarusians who have faced discrimination and hostility.

At the same time, these quotes can be considered as additional confirmation that real cases of discrimination and open hostility were actually recorded within this study. Such statements cannot be interpreted in any other way.



QUOTES OF BELARUSIANS IN POLAND:

”Problems at work on the part of management. They began to treat me badly; give me the most difficult work. This was not the case before the war. Ukrainian women spread unfair gossip and invent all sorts of nasty things to make me feel even worse. I feel like an outcast. I had not cried so much in my whole life as since February 24. And I cannot go back home due to persecution.”

”My child has repeatedly told me that Ukrainian children in his class treat Belarusian children badly.”

”There were notes with calls to 'go back to your Lukashenko' on the windscreen of my car (in Polish).”

QUOTES OF BELARUSIANS IN LITHUANIA:

” “Biased attitude and hostile communication in the clinic.”

” “When applying for a salary card in Vilnius, a bank employee asked why Belarusians stay in Lithuania and do not go further to other countries, since they decided to leave Belarus anyway, because with the arrival of Belarusians, prices began to rise, and it became less comfortable. Although it was an unpleasant question, the bank employee asked it without overt aggression.”

QUOTES OF BELARUSIANS IN GEORGIA:

” “Access to banking and financial services has become difficult. Brokerage companies refuse to work with citizens of Belarus, even if they are residents of Georgia.”

” “A Ukrainian colleague at work refused to work with Belarusians (the company is European).”

” “They refused to rent out a space to me.”

” “...They raise the wipers on cars with Belarusian licence plates. In the morning, cars in the car park were ‘marked’ like that. It was unpleasant, but not critical.”

5.5. THE SITUATION OF BELARUSIANS IN GENERAL

The majority of Belarusians (over 70%) noted that they look to the future with anxiety, especially Belarusians in Lithuania and Georgia, but this is not necessarily due to discrimination and hostility. It should also be associated with the general geopolitical instability and unpredictability of the future behaviour of Russia and Belarus, and with the very fact of their immigrant status, which in itself is tied to limitations and may reduce confidence in the future. Nevertheless, the fact of the war and its possible negative consequences is certainly the main component of anxiety — more than 55% of Belarusians in Poland and Georgia believe that the war will negatively affect their situation. The reasons for this may be partly the potential discrimination and hostility, but mainly a change in the situation on the labour market and a general deterioration in the state of the countries’ economies in connection with the war. At the same time, Belarusians in Lithuania are much less likely to believe that their situation is worsening (44%), probably due to less discrimination in this country compared to the other two.

More than 70% of immigrated Belarusians are not afraid to mention their origin, while about 20% of Belarusians in Po-

land prefer not to disclose this fact. This again is likely due to the size of the Ukrainian diaspora and the presence of many Ukrainians in the region, since the proportion of such people in Lithuania and Georgia is smaller (13% and 11% respectively). In all three countries, the majority of immigrants continue to speak Russian¹⁰ in the presence of strangers. Nevertheless, a significant proportion (more than 27%) is still afraid to do this, which may be due to the feeling of guilt for the events in Ukraine and the fear of facing a negative attitude.

¹⁰ The vast majority of Belarusians speak Russian in their daily lives.

6

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to reduce the level of discrimination and hostility towards Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia, it is necessary to involve NGOs that support and promote the rights of Belarusians, local activists, media, political representatives of Belarusians (NAU, Office of Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, United Transitional Cabinet). These individuals and organizations have the capacity to implement the recommendations below.

1. It is necessary to further educate Ukrainians and locals about the 2020 protests in Belarus, their consequences, the reasons for Belarusians' migration, and the current situation in their country. This can be achieved in the following ways:
 - Hold events, including cultural events, dedicated to Belarusians, and engage local residents through social networks and media channels.
 - Arrange rallies and demonstrations at the embassies of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus against the war in Ukraine, invite local media to cover such events.
 - Speak out in local media and in media channels dedicated to Ukrainians, as well as on social media, about the activities of Belarusian volunteers in Ukraine, and about guerrillas in Belarus (e.g. covering their personal stories).
 - Organise the publication of a series of human-interest stories in local media describing the experience of Belarusians, first forced to leave their country due to security threats, and then faced discrimination in a new country due to the actions of the regime, from which they personally suffered.
2. Work should continue with the local authorities of cities and countries in the context of advancing the interests of Belarusians, including the adoption of anti-discrimination measures (probably in the form of a law). To achieve this, the following is necessary:
 - Work with local politicians and officials. Inform them about the problems of the diaspora, talk about the opinion of the Belarusian diaspora in the territory about the war, Russia, the government of Alexander Lukashenko, about supporting Ukraine.
 - Inform the authorities about the discrimination problem (which also affects the financial situation of Belarusians). In Poland and Georgia in particular, it is necessary to solve the institutional problem regarding the opening of bank accounts for Belarusians.
3. It is important to establish contacts with local trade unions in various areas, describe the current situation for Belarusians, and ask for help in reducing hostility towards them on the part of decision makers and labour groups.
4. It is necessary to continue to build communication with Ukrainian organisations, in Ukraine itself and in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia, since, in general, Ukrainians abroad tend to discriminate against Belarusians more often than the local population does. Despite the negative attitude on the part of Ukrainians, representatives of the Belarusian diasporas in these countries are actively involved in various initiatives that help Ukraine and Ukrainians, and plan to continue to provide assistance in the future.

The results of this study can be used to confirm the existence of problems (in particular, discrimination) and promote the interests of Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania, and Georgia.

AUTHORS:

Authors:

Oleg Alampiyev

(author of the approach, author of the analysis for Poland)

Philipp Bikanau

(author of analyses for Georgia and Lithuania)

Design: Olena Marchishina, Roman Marchishin

The official Belarus has become an accomplice of the Russian aggression. This has placed Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania, Georgia and other countries actively supporting Ukraine in an ambiguous and contradictory position. Thus, a group of Belarusian sociologists led by Oleg Alampiyev, PhD (Sociology), and independent sociologist Philipp Bikanau, with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, studied the problem of discrimination against Belarusians in various countries.

CONTACTS

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine /
Project Belarus

Christopher Forst | FES Representative for Belarus
St. Pushkinska, 34, Kyiv, 01004, Ukraine

Tel.: + 38-044-234-10-38 | Fax: + 38-044-234-10-39

All texts are available on the website:

<http://www.fes.kiev.ua>

Orders / contacts:

belarus@fes.kiev.ua

Results of sociological research

BELARUSIANS IN POLAND, LITHUANIA, GEORGIA: ATTITUDE TO THE WAR, HELP TO UKRAINE, DISCRIMINATION



Almost all Belarusians in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia do not support Lukashenko and strongly oppose Russian aggression in Ukraine.



Ethnic discrimination and hostility have become part of Belarusians' social reality in Georgia, Poland and Lithuania.



Belarusians residing in Poland, Lithuania and Georgia support Ukraine and Ukrainians with concrete actions, despite the discrimination.