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## THE IMPACT OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR ON CRIME DYNAMICS IN THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND IN TERMS OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEEISM

## Abstract

The article examines the impact of refugees from Ukraine, from the moment of the beginning of the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine, i.e. from January 2022 to October 2023, on the change in the dynamics of the number of crimes committed in Poland during this period. For this purpose, the arrivals from Ukraine in the Republic of Poland and departures for Ukraine were analyzed. The study also examines the population dynamics in Poland from 2018 to 2023, including deaths and births. The research also takes into account the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the population size in Poland. Such an approach was necessary to conduct a comparative analysis of changes in population dynamics and crime dynamics in Poland in order to determine the relationship between them in the examined period, taking into account national demographic changes. The research shows that the COVID-19 pandemic and migration from Ukraine to Poland have had a noticeable impact on the population of people in the Republic of Poland. In 2021, the population in Poland decreased to 37 750 000 people, which resulted primarily from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a large increase in the number of deaths. In 2022, compared to 2021, a population increase was recorded to the level of 37 766 000 people, as a result of a reduction in the number of human deaths (447 053 in 2022 compared to 518 700 deaths in 2021) as well as the granting of Polish citizenship to 10 122 foreigners in 2022. At the same time, crimes detected in Poland from 2019 to 2023 in the same periods, from January to October, were analyzed. The results obtained from the research allowed to conclude that the wave of refugees from Ukraine caused by the outbreak of war on its territory did not noticeably affect the increase in crime in Poland.

## Streszczenie

W artykule podjęto się zbadania wpływu uchodźctwa z Ukrainy, od roku rozpoczęcia pełnoskalowej inwazji Federacji Rosyjskiej na Ukrainę tj. od stycznia 2022 do października 2023 roku, na zmianę dynamiki liczby przestępstw popełnianych w Polsce w tym okresie Polsce. W tym celu przeanalizowano liczbę wjazdów z Ukrainy do Rzeczpospolitej i wyjazdów do Ukrainy. Badaniu poddano również dynamikę wielkości populacji w Polsce od 2018 do 2023 roku, w tym zgony i narodziny. W badaniach uwzględniono również oddziaływanie na wielkość populacji w Polsce pandemii Covid-19. Ujęcie takie było niezbędne dla przeprowadzenia analizy porównawczej zmian w dynamice populacji raz dynamice przestępczości w Polsce w celu określenia zależności pomiędzy nimi w badanym okresie uwzględniając przy tym krajowe zmiany demograficzne. Z przeprowadzonych badań wynika, że pandemia COVID-19 i migracja z Ukrainy do Polski wpłynęły zauważalnie na populację ludzi w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. W 2021 roku nastąpił spadek populacji w Polsce do poziomu 37 750 000 osób, który wynikał przede wszystkim z oddziaływania pandemii COVID-19 i dużego wzrostu liczby zgonów. W 2022 roku w porównaniu do 2021 roku zaewidencjonowano wzrost populacji do poziomu 37 766 000 osób, podyktowany zmniejszeniem liczby zgonów ludzi (447 053 w 2022 roku w porównaniu z 518 700 zgonów w 2021 roku) jak również nadaniem obywatelstwa polskiego 10 122 cudzoziemcom w 2022 roku. Jednocześnie analizie poddano liczby przestępstw stwierdzonych w Polsce od 2019 do 2023 roku w jednoimiennych przedziałach czasowych łącznie od stycznia do października. Wyniki uzyskane z toku badań pozwoliły stwierdzić, że fala uchodźctwa z Ukrainy spowodowana wybuchem wojny na jej terytorium nie wpłynęła zauważalnie na wzrost przestępczości w Polsce.

**Keywords:** public security, Russian-Ukrainian war, immigration, refugees, crime, COVID-19 pandemic

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** bezpieczeństwo publiczne, wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska, imigracja, uchodźctwo, przestępczość, pandemia COVID-19

## INTRODUCTION

The study outlines a research problem as the question: what impact did the wave of refugees from Ukraine caused by the outbreak of war on its territory have on the crime dynamics in Poland? For the research problem, the research purpose was outlined, which is to determine the scope of changes in the size of the population in Poland between 2018-2023 and changes in the crime dynamics in Poland between 2019-2023. Thus, for the research problem and the purpose of the study, a research hypothesis was outlined: It is believed that the immigration of people from Ukraine to Poland influenced changes in the dynamics of the number of crimes committed in the territory of the Republic of Poland.

Research methods applied in the study are multidimensional comparative analyzes of source data and analysis of the literature on the subject matter.

## ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE ON THE RESEARCH SUBJECT

Undoubtedly, in Europe, but also beyond, the Russia-Ukraine war that started on February 24, 2022 has changed the current geopolitical perspective. It can be assumed that by 2021, European societies had partially forgotten the history of their own wars and had been convinced that a full-scale war in the immediate vicinity of the European Union was unlikely to take place.

The literature points to many causes of the Russia-Ukraine war. Those presented by the Russian side concern the protection of the Russian-speaking population in the territory of Donbas and the fight against the so-called fascism of the Ukrainian government. Another reason was Russia's inability to launch Nord Stream 2, which in turn significantly reduced the inflow of future financial means to the budget of the country (Iwaniak, 2022). The third important factor influencing Russia's attack on Ukraine is the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a situation in which from April to December 2020 the price of a barrel of crude oil was very low and Russia did not receive any income from its sale (Kozicki, Górnikiewicz, 2020, pp. 187-200). It should be emphasized that until 2019, about 70 percent of Russia's budget revenues came from the sale of oil, and in the absence of such a large lack of financial resources, one of the ways to obtain them is to start an armed conflict and strengthen the arms industry. The fourth important factor in the outbreak of the war may be the economic potential (Mizura, Mitkow, Kozicki, 2023, pp. 69-70) of Ukraine, which is important strategically for Russia. This potential, in addition to energy resources and grain, is primarily mineral resources. It is estimated that Ukrainian raw material resources are worth approximately \$26 billion. The most important ones of them include: coal, natural gas, crude oil and, above all, the so-called rare earth metals. These include lithium necessary for the production of batteries for electronic equipment, as well as uranium resources used mainly as an energy raw material in nuclear power plant reactors (Iwaniak, 2022).

The outbreak of the war in Ukraine led to a large increase in migration in Eastern Europe, mainly to the Republic of Poland. From the beginning of the war to the end of April 2022, approximately 3 million Ukrainians fled to Poland. Currently, it is estimated that the total number of immigrants in Poland is 3,5-4 million, of which 60-75% are Ukrainians (Karbowicz, 2023).

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine to February 23, 2023, over 1 100 000 refugees passed through Warsaw (Lach, 2023). Approximately 104 000 Ukrainians are currently living in Warsaw, of which 17,000 are teenagers and children attending kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. In the Warsaw agglomeration, approximately 180 000 refugees received a PESEL number [Polish acronym for *Universal Electronic System for Registration of the Population*] (Dobrołowicz, 2022). and a total of 1 4 million in the Republic of Poland (Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, 2022). About 359 Ukrainian children were born in Warsaw hospitals, and about 50 000 refugees benefited from social assistance. In 2022, Warsaw allocated PLN 52 million to help refugees from local government funds.

The following places in terms of the number of refugees from Ukraine are: Wrocław (44,5 000). Kraków (31 000). Poznań (26 000). Gdańsk (17 000) and Łódź (16 000). A total of 188 000 students from Ukraine attend educational institutions in Poland (Local Government Portal, 2023). The arithmetic mean of the decline monthly in the number of refugees in February 2023 was 30 percent. The largest decline of 38 percent was recorded in Katowice, and the smallest one in Łódź and Szczecin – around 10 percent. Most Ukrainians left, compared to the peak, from the following districts: Podlaskie, Podkarpackie, Lubelskie and Masovia (Business Insider, 2023). At the end of 2022, the number of people employed in Poland was historically high at 16.8 million, with an employment rate of 56.8 percent. The number of unemployed people at that time was 499 000. At the end of January 2023, the registers recorded 1,6 million employed foreigners, constituting 6 percent of the entire Polish labor market, of which 738 000 employees were Ukrainians (Business Insider, 2023).

The visible influx of refugees from Ukraine, despite the initial enthusiastic attitude of Polish society towards helping them, over time causes a growing sense of threat due to the increasing number of Ukrainian citizens remaining on Polish territory (Staniszewski, 2022, p. 32-35). These are not only issues related to the burden on the national social policy system or changes taking place in the labor market. One of the leading concerns about the security is the feeling of being threatened by the increasing crime committed by Ukrainian refugees (Olbrych, 2023, p. 362-379).

The study attempts to analyze multidimensionally the above dependent variables in terms of detecting the regularities governing them and solving the problem adopted at the beginning of the study. Multidimensional comparative analyzes were used to conduct the research based on source data available, among others: Central Statistical Office, Border Guard Headquarters and Police Headquarters. Data collected on border traffic in the Republic of Poland from the territory of Ukraine were compiled in the same months in order to observe their similarities and differences in dynamic and spatial terms. The next stage of the research was the analysis of its impact on the human population in Poland. The last stage was the evaluation of crime dynamics in Poland based on the analysis of the number of crimes detected in Poland from 2019 to 2023 in the same time periods, from January to October.

## Multidimensional comparative analysis of border traffic and human population in the Republic of Poland

The research began with the compilation of data on the border traffic of people in the Republic of Poland from the territory of Ukraine from January 2022 to October 2023 (Fig. 1).

The research shows that from January to March 2022, the highest difference was visible between the arrivals of people from the territory of Ukraine in the Republic of Poland and their departures. However, from April 2022 to October 2023, the number of arrivals and departures is similar and has an uneven oscillatory character. In that period, 37 946 478 people came to Poland and 36 159 960 left. Therefore, 1 786 518 foreigners arrived in Poland. The arithmetic mean of arrivals of foreigners monthly was 1 724 840, and departures 1 643 635.



**Fig. 1.** *Line chart of data on the border movement of people in the Republic of Poland from the territory of Ukraine from January 2022 to October 2023* 

The next stage of the research was to analyze the monthly difference between the arrivals of people from the territory of Ukraine in the Republic of Poland from January 2022 to October 2023 and departures.



**Fig. 2.** Bar chart of the monthly difference between the arrivals of people from the territory of Ukraine in the Republic of Poland from January 2022 to October 2023 and departures

The research shows that the largest difference between the arrivals of people from Ukraine in Poland and their departures was in March 2022 and amounted to 1 670 893 people. The second place was February 2022 with a difference of 438 024, and the third place was January 2022 (a difference of 145 046 people). From April 2022 to October 2023, the difference ranged from 180 667 to 66 205 and showed an irregular oscillatory character. The arithmetic mean of the difference between arrivals and departures was

81 206,6 in the entire research period, and the median was 7 732,5. The standard deviation from the arithmetic mean was 375 562,4.

For illustration purposes, Figure 3 shows the difference between the arrivals of people from the territory of Ukraine in the Republic of Poland and departures from Poland from January 2022 to October 2023 in the group of the dependent variable – years.

**Fig. 3.** Circle diagram of the difference between arrivals of people from the territory of Ukraine in the Republic of Poland and departures from January 2022 to October 2023 in the group of the dependent variable – years



Departures from the Republic of Poland

**Source:** own study based on: https://dane.gov.pl/pl/dataset/2705,dane-statystyczne-dotyczace-sytuacji-na-granicy-z-Ukraina, as of 25.11.2023

The research shows that in 2022, more arrivals in the Republic of Poland from the territory of Ukraine were recorded than departures. The difference between arrivals and departures is 1 896 449 people. However, in 2023 the situation was the opposite. The difference between arrivals and departures reached the level of 109 931 people.

For research purposes, Figure 4 presents data on the directions (border crossing methods/passages) of foreigners' arrivals in and departures from the Republic of Poland from January to October 2023.

**Fig. 4.** Bar chart of data regarding the directions (border crossing methods/passages) of foreigners' arrivals in the Republic of Poland and departures from January to October 2023



**Source:** own study based on:https://dane.gov.pl/pl/dataset/2705,dane-statystyczne-dotyczace-sytuacji-na-granicy-z-Ukraina, as of 25.11.2023

The data in Figure 4 shows that the majority of foreigners arrived from the territory of Ukraine in the Republic of Poland from January to October 2023 and went to Ukraine – a total of 15 495 774 people. Air transport was the second place in the ranking with the total number of arrivals and departures of foreigners in that period amounting to 5 672 588 people, and Belarus was the third place: 2 323 400 people. The lowest among the six groups considered was the Republic of Slovakia with a total number of arrivals and departures of 2968 people.

Then, the differences in arrivals and departures of foreigners from particular directions (border crossing methods/passages) in and from the Republic of Poland from January to October 2023 were examined.

**Fig. 5.** Bar chart of the difference in arrivals and departures of foreigners from particular directions (border crossing methods/passages) in and from the Republic of Poland from January to October 2023



Research shows that the largest difference between arrivals in the Republic of Poland and departures can be noticed as for air travel: 31 790 people. The second place in the ranking was the Republic of Slovakia with a difference of 2968, and the third place by sea with a result of 1591 people. The largest difference between arrivals in the Republic of Poland and departures was visible in the Republic of Belarus and amounted to 79 026, which means that so many people left Poland in that period. A total of 55 870 foreigners left the territory of the Republic of Poland during this time.

The next stage of the research was the analysis of data regarding the directions (border crossing methods/passages) of arrivals of Polish citizens in Poland and departures from the country from January to October 2023.

**Fig. 6.** Bar chart of data regarding the directions (border crossing methods/passages) of arrivals of Polish citizens in the Republic of Poland and departures from January to October 2023



In the period from January to October 2023, the largest number of Polish citizens crossed the border by air: a total of 12 147 538 people. The second direction was Ukraine: 410 329 people, and the third one was the Republic of Belarus: 125 153. The least visible movement of Polish citizens was observed from the direction of the Republic of Slovakia: 73 people.

Figure 7, then, analyzes the data on the difference in arrivals of Polish citizens from particular directions (border crossing methods/passages) in the Republic of Poland and departures from January to October 2023.

**Fig. 7.** Bar chart of the difference in arrivals and departures of Polish citizens from particular directions (border crossing methods/passages) in and from the Republic of Poland from January to October 2023



**Source:** own study based on: https://dane.gov.pl/pl/dataset/2705,dane-statystyczne-dotyczace-sytuacji-na-granicy-z-Ukraina, as of 25.11.2023

In that period, a total of 54 061 citizens left Poland. Most, 50 668, by air. Then by sea transport – 2125. The recorded data show that the difference between arrivals and departures in the Republic of Poland from the Russian Federation was 367, from Belarus 841 and 133 from Ukraine. The only positive difference of 73 people concerned the Republic of Slovakia.

The research shows that a total of 129 694 Polish citizens and foreigners left Poland from January to October 2023.

Then, the number of human deaths in Poland from 2019 to the 42nd week of 2023 was examined.



**Fig. 8.** *Line chart of the number of human deaths in Poland weekly from the 1st week of 2019 to the 42nd week of 2023* 

The research shows that in 2019 the number of deaths in Poland was 407 624. In 2020, as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it increased to 485 604. The highest number of deaths was observed in 2021: 518 700 people. In 2022, there was a visible decline to 447 053 deaths. However, in 2023, 321 378 deaths were recorded until the 42nd week. The data in Figure 8 proves that human deaths in Poland showed four main increases. The first strongest one in 2020 to over 16 000 people per week. Two in 2020, including one at the turn of 2020/2021: up to 14 000 deaths per week. A large increase was recorded in 2022, to around 11 000 deaths per week. However, in 2023, no significant changes in human deaths were recorded in Poland. It can be assumed that this means the limitation of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The last stage of the research was the analysis of the human population in Poland between 2019-2023. The results are summarized in Figure 9.



Fig. 9. Bar chart of the human population in Poland between 2019-2023

Source: own study based on: https://stat.gov.pl/, as of 30.11.2023

From 2019 (population of the Republic of Poland: 37 970 000) to 2021 (population of the Republic of Poland: 37 750 000). the number of citizens of the Republic of Poland showed a decreasing trend with a decrease of 220 000 people. In 2022, the human population in Poland increased to 37 766 000, from 37 750 000 (TVN24, 2023) in 2021. In the period from 2018 to 2023, the largest decrease in the number of people in Poland took place between 2020 and 2021 and amounted to 150 000 people (Kozicki, Zelkowski, Lisowska, 2021, p. 1951-1960 ). This large decrease in the number of people was influenced by the COVID-19 infectious disease pandemic. In 2021, the number of deaths reached a record level of 518 700 people (GUS, 2021). with the number of births 332 000 (TVN 24-Biznes, 2023). and in 2022 it dropped to 447 053, with the number of births 305 000 (Sikora, 2023). It is worth mentioning that from 2005 to 2019, the number of human deaths in most European countries ranged from 0,55 to 1,55 percent of the population of respective countries (Kozicki, Jaśkiewicz, 2021, p. 21-28). The increase in the human population in Poland in 2022 compared to 2021 was also due to the migration from Ukraine to Poland. In 2022, 10 122 foreigners were granted Polish citizenship (Demagog, 2023).

Therefore, did the changes in the size of the human population created in this way have a noticeable impact on changes in the dynamics of the number

of crimes committed in the corresponding period on the territory of the Republic of Poland? In order to answer this question, the dynamics of the number of crimes detected in Poland between 2019-2023 (until October) was examined. The research results are summarized in Figure 10.

**Fig. 10.** Categorized bar chart of the number of crimes detected in Poland from 2019 to 2023 in the same time periods from January to October, along with outlined dynamics indices (constant data on crimes in the same time periods from January to October of the previous year)



Crimes detected in Poland in the period from January to October (scale values - left Yaxis) Chain dynamics index of crimes detected in the months January-October (constant - one-time data from the previous year) (scale values - right Yaxis)

**Source:** own study based on: http://bip.ksp.policja.gov.pl/ksp/statystyki/27830,Pelny-katalog-przestepstw.html; as of 9.12.2023

The analysis conducted allows to conclude that in 2019, the number of crimes detected in Poland from January to October amounted to 62 197 and was higher than in 2018, in which 60 498 crimes were registered in the same period. The increase occurred by 2,81 percentage points. In 2020, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of crimes in the same

period decreased to 57 833, i.e. by 6,94 percentage points. Then, in 2021, as a result, the crime level in the same considered period increased to 61 156, which is 5,65 percentage points more than in the previous year. In 2022, i.e. in the period when there was a huge wave of migration of people from Ukraine to Poland and at the same time the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in crimes detected from January to October to 65 837, i.e. by 7,65 percentage points. As a result of migration, from January 2022 to October 2023, 1 786 518 foreigners from Ukraine arrived in Poland. From January to October 2023, a decrease in the number of crimes was recorded to 62 517, i.e. by 5,04 percentage points as in the same time period in the previous year. The research results indicate that the inflow of immigrants from Ukraine did not influence the increase in the number of crimes committed in the period under consideration on the territory of the Republic of Poland.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The aim of the study has achieved, and the research allowed the hypothesis adopted for its purposes to be verified. However, the hypothesis was falsified. According to the research, in 2021 the human population in Poland decreased to 37 750 000 people, mainly as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a large increase in the number of deaths. In 2022, compared to 2021, an increase in the population in Poland was recorded to 37 766 000. It was mainly due to two factors. First, there was a reduction in human deaths from 518 700 in 2021 (with a birth rate of 332 000) to 447 053 in 2022 (with a birth rate of 305 000). Secondly, the population increase in Poland in 2022 compared to 2021 was also caused by the migration of people from Ukraine to Poland. In 2022, Polish citizenship was granted to 10 122 foreigners. However, this phenomenon did not noticeably affect the increase in crime. As part of their research, the authors of the study assumed that the increasing influx of immigrants from Ukraine resulted in an increase in crime in Poland. The assumption resulted from the natural tendency to increase criminal incidents where the human population increases. The results obtained contradict this assumption. However, a question arises: why does

Polish society feel threatened by the growing crime committed by Ukrainian refugees, despite the lack of clear reasons for this?

It seems that the perception of immigrants as a threat results from the complexity of the relations created in the country of their residence. As a result of security concerns, and undoubtedly the threat of crime is one of the basic areas of safety concerns, the society of the country of residence simply identifies the immigrant community with problems in this area. The functioning of immigrants in countries of immigration often causes social tensions. It is worth remembering that interactions between the population of the country of residence and immigrants coming from areas where the crime rate is higher than in the country of residence take on a special dimension. There are significant differences here, often touching fundamental areas of social coexistence. Conflict often arises between those who clash not only on the social level. Often, individual situations are enough to become a flashpoint, turning a dormant conflict into a confrontation.

The problem with objective evaluation of the threat actually generated by immigrants is that they are foreigners in the country of residence and, to a greater or lesser extent, they will always be considered as such. Many examples have shown that the local community of the country of residence will react differently to a crime committed by their compatriot and by an immigrant, with a clear redirection of negative evaluation towards the immigrant. Stereotypes and prejudices rooted in the local community often arise in such situations, leading to discrimination (Lubiewski, 2020, p. 30-36). The mechanisms of shaping such social attitudes are known to psychology and do not apply only to societies receiving immigrants, but to any other. In this context, Marylinn B. Brewer (Brewer, 1999, p. 210-222) believes that the differentiation of the in-group and the out-group is inherent in all social categorization. The expressiveness of in-group and out-group categorization and its impact on perception depend on the social context. Groups of people are more often perceived in terms of an us-them division than individuals. When a group is classified as in-group or out-group, perceptions about in-group members are likely to be more individualized than opinions about out-group members. As a result, out-group classification interacts with specific stereotypes and promotes the use of category-based knowledge.

This mechanism is eagerly used instrumentally in political discourse, when political capital can be built on the fear of immigrants (Polko, 2022, p. 319-334). It seems that the cure-all for stereotypes is individualizing information about the immigrant as a person, which is a more complex and difficult activity compared to shaping an opinion based on a stereotype.

Stereotypical perception of the threat from immigrants, fueled by political rhetoric, unfortunately breeds intergroup fear. Negative stereotypes consequently lead to avoidance of uncomfortable interaction between the local population and immigrants, which further shapes a wall of division and misunderstanding between communities living next to each other. Given the unfavorable direction in which the problem is developing, anti-immigrant slogans and xenophobia come to the fore. Xenophobia, as a social phenomenon, is caused by fear and prejudice towards the unknown. It is often based on a potential (often imagined) threat that may result from different cultural values of the community, including religious, ethical, etc. Fear and prejudice lead to a kind of social neuroticism. The feeling of hostility towards immigrants can have far-reaching consequences not only for them, but also for the society of the country of residence. The perception of immigrants as uncivilized barbarians and criminals is often presented in the media, creating and reinforcing existing stereotypes in society. It is often noticed that in current public rhetoric immigrants are often considered a threat to local society. On the political level, in many countries, there is a discourse on immigration security, redirecting significant interest in the problem of terrorism only to the part of the area related to Islamic extremism, putting into the shadow the remaining context of terrorist threats whose generators are not immigrants (Lubiewski, 2018, p. 312-326).

Therefore, it is extremely important to shape the sense of security of the society of the country of residence in the situation of a significant influx of immigrants, to objectify the phenomenon, to research and present facts reliably, and not to support its evaluation with stereotypes and to use individual reluctance towards them, also in political games.

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