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## ACTIVATION OF THE SOCIAL CAPITAL OF POLES AND BRITONS FOR WAR REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** To present the attitudes, reactions and concerns of Polish and British societies towards refugees from Ukraine based on an analysis of the stock of social capital. It is understood as a network of ties between members of a community based on trust, solidarity and responsibility, and its high level translates into the quality of civil society. Measures of capital include the number of NGOs and volunteers, participation in elections and referendums, trust in the public and private sphere. The benchmark of Polish refugee activism was compared to British society. Its choice was justified by the fact of the UK's high political activity in the international arena in relation to Russian military aggression, as well as British support for the Ukrainian people.

**Results:** The multi-million pound influx of war refugees from Ukraine, observed from February 2022 onwards, has unexpectedly triggered huge amounts of social capital among Poles and Britons. Both societies became involved in helping people in need, although each society to a different extent. The Poles offered direct aid, first at the national border, then at home. The British supported the refugees financially and materially by offering assistance programmes. Both societies feared the conflict in Ukraine, feeling threats to their homeland, including fear, anger, irritation and anxiety.

**Methodology:** The theoretical layer was based on analysis and synthesis and induction and deduction. The empirical layer used nationwide statistical data and the results of our own research, carried out by means of a diagnostic survey using the author's survey questionnaire on a randomly selected research sample of Poles and Britons. The research was conducted in late 2022 and early 2023 in Poland and the UK.

**KEYWORDS:** *armed conflict, war refugees, social capital, Poland, Great Britain.*

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## INTRODUCTION

While forming a community, people interact with each other in certain agreed ways, based on common values and moral norms which enable them to cooperate fairly in partnership, since they are accepted and respected by all members of that community. Networks of reciprocal relations are thus developed, resulting in a certain level of social resources, i.e. social capital. It is identified alongside such forms of capital as human, economic, cultural. Over the last 20 years there has been a significant increase in the number of scientific studies recognising, evaluating and forecasting the role of social capital not only among various social groups, but also in many professional milieus.

Numerous papers on social capital by internationally renowned researchers have been published over the years, including Pierre Bourdieu's (1980; 1986), James Samuel Coleman's (1990), Robert Putnam's (Putnam 2008), Francis Fukuyama's (2000), Alejandro Portes's (1998), Michael Woolcock's (1998). They agree that, generally speaking, social capital should be understood as a source of support and help contained in interpersonal and social networks, and its accumulation is determined by the resources of social interactions (Portes, 1998).

Among Polish researchers active in this field, the works by Janusz Czapiński (2008), Jerzy Bartkowski (2007), Piotr Sztompka (2016) and Katarzyna Sierocińska (2017) are noteworthy. With the development of security studies and the broadening of research horizons both in the subject and object areas, social capital has become a matter of interest for researchers such as Aleksandra Skrabacz (2006, 2023), Andrzej Urbanek (2009) as well as Janusz Gierszewski and Andrzej Pieczywok (2019), whose works are among the first ones to draw attention to its importance for the proper functioning of local communities, including creating security at the local, regional and national levels.

During the analysis of the literature on social capital, the authors pointed out that the works are mainly of the sociological nature, but there is a significant gap concerning the importance of social capital in situations of extraordinary threats, such as the war in Ukraine and the exodus of Ukrainian citizens. There is a lack of studies on this issue in the purely scientific journals, and researchers are left to explain/explore the materials published mainly on web portals/websites. (Rycerska, 2022, p. 65).

One of the scientific publications on the above topic is Monika Wojakowska's article entitled *Local social capital in security management in the context of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine in 2022. – a case study* (2022), in which the author states that *despite being surprised by the scale of the war refugees, Polish society passed the test of empathy, openness and willingness to help* (Wojakowska, 2022, pp. 107-108). Izabela Rycerska discussed the legal aspects of the assistance provided, pointing out that *immediate action was taken by ordinary citizens who, in a more or less organised way, helped the Ukrainians arriving en masse, providing them with food, clothing, shelter, and transport, often to places far from the border, not only in Poland but also in Europe. To those who decided to stay in Poland, Poles made their flats and houses available* (Rycerska, 2022, p. 64). Valuable information is provided by a report on the role of Polish society vis-à-vis wartime migration, in which a team of authors from the University of Warsaw, concludes that the behaviour of Poles was a reflex (imperative) to help in a situation described as very hurtful to the victims of Russian aggression (Fuszara, 2022, p. 9). On the other hand, from the perspective of Ukrainian war refugees, the assistance offered by Poles was well assessed, as indicated by the authors of a study containing the results of empirical research among the Ukrainian population arriving in Poland. Volunteers, people working at reception points at the border and Polish uniformed services were rated highest (Długosz, Kryvachuk, Izdebska-Długosz, 2022, p. 3).

This is confirmed by research carried out as part of the 'Poland-Germany Barometer 2022' project, 77 per cent of Poles were ready to accept refugees from Ukraine (Kucharczyk, Łada-Konefał, 2022, p. 24) and research conducted between 3 and 7 March 2022 by the French Jean Jaures Foundation in cooperation with the Yalta European Strategy institute surveyed residents of Poland, France, Germany and Italy. According to them, as many as 92% of the Poles surveyed were of the opinion that refugees from Ukraine should be helped. The same view was held by 90% of Germans, 89% of Italians and 80% of French (Szpyrka, 2022).

The aforementioned premises implied the research on the activation of social capital in the situation of Russia's armed invasion of Ukraine, the effects of which have spread worldwide. Hence, the purpose of the article is to present the attitudes, reactions and trepidations of Polish and British societies towards refugees from Ukraine, on the basis of an analysis of social capital resources. Drawing

on the literature on the subject matter, the authors understand this concept as a network of ties between members of a community based on trust, solidarity, responsibility and readiness to provide help in an emergency situation. The factors for measuring this capital include the number of NGOs and volunteers, participation in elections and referendums, and trust in the public and private sphere. The comparative perspective (Polish vs British) was to show significant similarities and differences in the conduct of these two societies resulting from the war in Ukraine and the influx of refugees to both countries. The point of reference for the activity of Polish people was the comparison to the British society, the choice of which was validated by the fact of the high political activity of the UK in the international arena related to the Russian armed aggression and the support of the British people for the Ukrainians.

The authors formulate the main hypothesis that the assistance provided by Poles and Britons to Ukrainian refugees resulted from the high level of social capital at the disposal of both societies. Significant differences that can be distinguished between the groups of respondents selected for the survey are likely to be due to the maturity of civil society, different capacities of providing assistance and dangers associated with war situation, due, among other things, to the geographical distance between the UK, Poland and Ukraine. In order to verify the research hypothesis, methodological pluralism was applied. It uses both theoretical and empirical methods. The theoretical layer was based on the analysis and synthesis of the literature on the subject, so as to make induction and deduction and on this basis formulate final conclusions. The building blocks of the empirical layer are the nationwide statistical data and the results of our own research conducted using a diagnostic survey method with the use of the author's survey questionnaire on a randomly selected research sample of Poles and Britons. The research was conducted in Poland and the UK at the turn of 2022 and 2023.

## SOCIAL CAPITAL – THEORETICAL APPROACH

The social capital theory assumes that social interactions are the resources that can lead to the development and accumulation of human capital. For example, a stable family environment can be helpful in the process of gaining education and in the development of highly valued and rewarded skills and qualifications. In evolutionary terms, social capital can be defined as any aspect of a social interaction that has reproductive benefits. Interestingly, the nature of social capital is thought to be essentially neutral, which means that it can be used in a positive or negative way (Barczykowska, 2012).

The foundation for the formation of social capital is the functioning of a person in a social milieu (network) with many links between its members (Schuller, Theisens, 2010, pp. 100-102). These networks are used to solve problems that exist in the community, to improve living conditions, raise welfare levels and take collective actions for the benefit of the whole of the community (Skrabacz, 2023, pp. 90-91). This is the essential value of social capital, that it prioritises the interests of the social group over particular (individual) interests. Such a role of social capital can be discussed in both the social and professional fields. This is because it pertains not only to social (informal) but also professional (formal) networks. Hence, the basic level at which social capital functions is the network of interrelations between people who live and work in a given community. It can be a village, a housing estate, a municipality or a city. It is through these networks between members of a community that societies and companies can function effectively (Szreter, 2002, pp. 573-575). At work, on the other hand, the network is formed by colleagues and managers with whom the individual interacts. The less formalised they are, the higher the level of social capital in a given company, and thus the greater the effectiveness of the staff team. Based on this assumption, in both social and professional areas, one basic principle must be met: the presence of a collective stock of shared norms, values, beliefs, trust, networks, social relations and institutions that facilitate cooperation and collective actions for mutual benefit (Bhandari, Yasunobu, 2009, pp. 482-483).

## **SOCIAL CAPITAL – TYPOLOGY AND MEASURES**

While analysing the links within a community, social capital researchers have distinguished at least several types of this resource, taking into account the interrelations that take place between members of a community (Woolcock, 1998; Putnam, 2008). The most common division is into (Skrabacz, 2023):

- binding social capital, which refers to relationships within or between relatively homogeneous groups whose members are related to each other or live in close proximity to each other;
- bridging social capital, which refers to the external interrelations between people who want to work together towards a common goal;
- linking social capital, which refers to interrelations between people or groups at different levels of the hierarchy, an example of which is the cooperation of residents with municipal authorities in the use of the civic budget.

The level of social capital in societies and access to its resources is often measured by indicators of society's activity in various forms of social and political life and the citizens' declared level of trust in themselves and public institutions (OECD, 2012). There are various ways of measuring social capital in the literature on this subject, and it is difficult to find a compromise. This is mainly due to the choice of criteria and the delicate matter of, for example, measuring levels of trust or altruism. A review of social capital measurement methods allows (Skrabacz 2023) to select measures such as participation in volunteering and NGOs for further research.

## **SOCIAL CAPITAL – A COMPARISON OF THE RESOURCES OF POLISH AND BRITISH SOCIETY**

On the basis of the indicators for estimating the amount of social capital chosen by Fabio Sabatini, and taking into account data from the Better Life Index report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2019), a preliminary comparison of the level of social capital of Polish and British society was made. Thus, considering voter turnout, which is a measure

of citizens' participation in the political process. In Poland, during the parliamentary elections in 2019 61.7% of registered voters cast their votes. In the last election, in October 2023, 74.38% of citizens voted, while in the UK 67.3% of those eligible took part in the elections. The OECD average was 69%. The extent of public involvement in the preparation of legal acts and regulations is another measure of the level of social capital. It is an important factor that indicates peoples' involvement in government decision-making on key issues that affect their lives. In Poland it was 2.6 while in the UK it was 3.1 (on a scale of 0 to 4), which is one of the highest among the OECD countries, where the average is 2.1. Referring to the public sphere, there is a strong sense of community and a moderate level of civic activity in Poland, where 94% of people feel they know someone they can rely on in case of necessity, higher than the OECD average of 91%, while in UK it was 93%. On the other hand the indicators of *How's Life?* report (OECD, 2020) show a worrying trend of declining interactions with the loved ones. People are spending almost half an hour less with family and friends than they had a decade or so ago. What's more, one in persons stated that they had no relatives or friends they could count on. Asked to rate their overall satisfaction with life on a scale of zero to ten, Poles rated it at an average of 4.2, while Britons rated it at 6.4. The average of OECD countries was 6.7.

Making an overall comparison of the level of civic commitment between the two analysed countries and their societies, in Poland this indicator is 6.3 and in the UK it is slightly higher at 7.1. Based on the presented data on the level of social capital and civic commitment, it can be generalised that the indicators for both societies are comparable. There is a significant difference in the area of satisfaction with life and political participation in legislative and opinion-making activities. In the following stage of these deliberations, an evaluation was made of the involvement of the societies of both countries in helping war refugees from Ukraine.



## METHODS

With reference to the key issues discussed in the theoretical part concerning the activation of social capital (Bourdieu, 1985; Fukuyama, 2000; Putnam, 2008), an assessment was made of the attitudes, reactions and concerns of Polish and British society regarding refugees from Ukraine. For the purposes of this article, the following problem questions were formulated:

1. Has the war in Ukraine heightened the sense of security threat to one's own country?
2. What emotions did the Polish and British people feel upon the outbreak of war?
3. What were the forms of help addressed to refugees?
4. What kinds of threats and concerns among the Polish and British public have been caused to the war in Ukraine?

On their basis, the main research hypothesis was adopted: The assistance provided by Poles and Britons to Ukrainian refugees results from the high level of social capital available to both societies.

Specific hypotheses were also adopted:

1. We assume that, in the opinion of the respondents, the war in Ukraine threatens the national security of Poland and the UK.
2. We assume that, Polish and British societies felt strongly negative emotions about the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine.
3. We assume that, the Poles and the British used different forms of refugee assistance, due to their geographical location in relation to Ukraine.
4. We assume that, the concerns of Poles and Britons are similar towards the ongoing war, but that the concerns of Poles are intensified due to the massive influx of refugees and the war taking place in the immediate vicinity of Poland.

In order to verify the research hypothesis, research was conducted using quantitative research methods and a survey technique with the use of a questionnaire that was addressed to a randomly selected research sample of Poles and Britons (using a Google form). The selection used took into account criteria

such as gender, age, education and place of residence. A Likert scale (the so-called Likert scaling technique) was used to evaluate the responses, which made it possible to determine the relative intensity of the different responses (Babbie 2004, p. 192). The stable conditions presented beforehand allow for a reliable and quick analysis of the collected material (Churchill 2002, p. 309). The research tool (questionnaire) is original and was created by the author of the article. STATISTICA software was used in the process of developing the research results.

The questionnaire contained the following nine closed multiple-choice questions:

1. What do you fear most about the ongoing war?
2. In your opinion, does the war in Ukraine threaten the security of Poland/UK?
3. Did you expect Russia to invade Ukraine?
4. What emotions do you feel about the war in Ukraine?
5. What concerns you most about the war in Ukraine?
6. Which of the following actions did you take in relation to the war in Ukraine in the first days after the invasion?
7. Who do you think is helping refugees from Ukraine, and who do you think should help?
8. How do you help the citizens of Ukraine?
9. In your opinion, should your country continue to accept refugees from Ukraine?

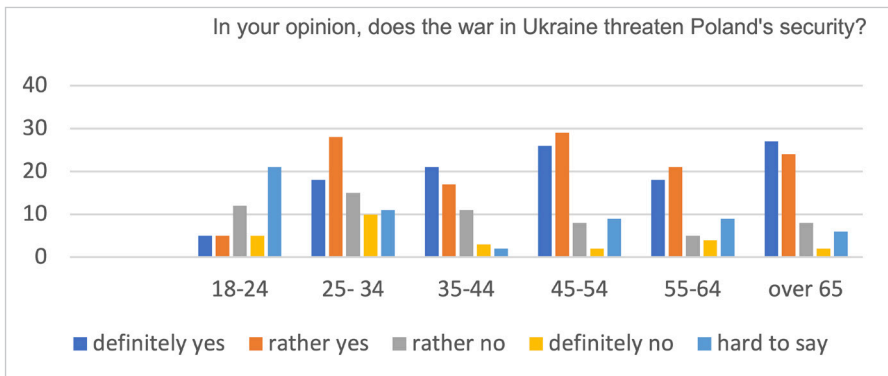
In order to verify the hypothesis, empirical research was conducted by means of a diagnostic survey, with the author's survey questionnaire, on a randomly selected research sample of Poles and Britons (using a Google form). The questionnaire contained nine multiple-choice questions. The research was carried out in Poland and the UK at the end of 2022/2023 (in the months of November – April). 382 Polish and 284 UK residents took part in this survey. The largest group among the Polish citizens were women – 218, that is 57% of the respondents. The most numerous group among the respondents were persons aged 25-34 years (82 individuals, 21.5%). The surveyed respondents were mostly residents of large cities (>500,000 inhabitants). Of

all respondents, 126 (33%) had secondary education and 95 (25%) had tertiary education. Among women, tertiary education predominated (37%), while men most often declared secondary education (35%). On the other hand, the majority of 284 British respondents were men – 165 (58%), women making up less than half of the respondents – 119 (42%). The largest age group, 25-34 years-olds, numbered 153 persons (54%). Respondents were mostly residents of large cities (>500,000 inhabitants). Of all the respondents, 161 (57%) had a university degree and 71 (25%) were secondary school graduates.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The majority of Poles surveyed (57%) believe that the situation in Ukraine poses a threat to Poland's security, with 32% expressing this opinion unequivocally. 17% of respondents do not see a threat to Poland's security from Russia, while 16% have no opinion on this issue. *Rather yes* was declared by the largest number of people aged 45-54 and 25-34. The youngest persons up to the age of 24 were uncertain about their opinion in the matter. *Definitely yes* was declared mainly by older people, those over 65 and those aged 55-64 (Graph 1).

**Graph 1.** *Sense of a threat to Poland's security by age group (%)*

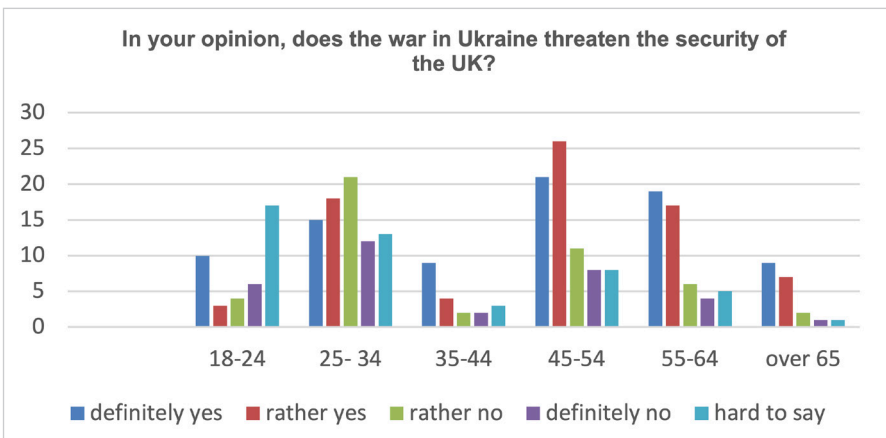


**Source:** own work

In the survey conducted in Poland, 36% of respondents had not considered such a development and 31% had not given it any thought to this problem. 33% of those surveyed declared that they had expected such a situation.

Comparing the results of the survey conducted among British citizens, it can be seen that as many as 72% of respondents think that the war in Ukraine poses a threat to the security of the UK, of whom almost half (36%) express this opinion unequivocally. 21% see no threat to the security of the UK and only 7% have no opinion in the matter. The largest number of people declaring *rather yes* and *definitely yes* are in the 45-54 age group. The youngest people under 24 found it difficult to declare their position. Most of those aged 25-34 do not see a threat to the UK from the war in Ukraine (Graph 2).

**Graph 2.** Sense of a threat to the UK security by age group (%)



**Source:** own work

In the UK, as in Poland, the majority of respondents – 43% had not considered such a development and 23% had not given it any thought to it. 34% of respondents declared that they had expected such a situation.

Despite the passage of time since the outbreak of the war on Ukrainian territory, the research shows that this matter is still relevant to the public. According to our survey the most frequently felt emotion indicated by

respondents, relating to the situation in Ukraine, is anxiety, followed by a sense of uncertainty and then fear and surprise (Table 1).

**Table 1.** *Emotions felt about the war in Ukraine by Poles (PL) and Britons (UK) (%)*

What emotions do you feel about the war in Ukraine?												
Age group	18-24		25 – 34		35-44		45-54		55-64		65 and older	
Society	PL	UK	PL	UK	PL	UK	PL	UK	PL	UK	PL	UK
Fear	19%	13%	15%	12%	26%	13%	35%	22%	49%	19%	43%	21%
Surprise	33%	25%	25%	19%	48%	27%	32%	24%	44%	21%	33%	26%
Anxiety	29%	21%	16%	21%	52%	21%	38%	18%	51%	16%	45%	17%
Anger	10%	13%	17%	6%	33%	14%	23%	10%	25%	17%	22%	14%
Fright	10%	9%	22%	11%	39%	16%	26%	11%	33%	19%	27%	9%
Uncertainty	21%	13%	29%	21%	48%	15%	38%	19%	54%	21%	43%	22%
Sadness	19%	7%	19%	18%	31%	18%	28%	9%	28%	18%	28%	16%
Irritation	31%	14%	22%	13%	37%	10%	32%	10%	35%	22%	18%	9%
Curiosity	31%	18%	15%	3%	41%	12%	30%	13%	37%	11%	24%	19%
Quietude	29%	21%	15%	2%	17%	15%	16%	14%	21%	10%	15%	8%
Indifference	25%	19%	12%	3%	15%	12%	15%	12%	23%	14%	18%	4%

**Source:** own work

Both Polish and British people, in all age groups, felt quite strong negative emotions. When comparing the results of the surveys, higher levels of fear, anxiety, fright and uncertainty were felt by Poles. Only in the youngest age group (aged 18-24) anger was the emotion more often declared by British respondents.

Turning to the analysis of the answers to the succeeding survey question concerning the actions taken by the respondents in the first days after the armed invasion, it can be said that the significant majority of Poles (57%) kept track of on the events in Ukraine, especially those between 45 and 64 years of age. Almost half of the respondents (48%) declared to be involved in helping Ukrainians in need. They were mostly people with higher education, aged between 25 and 44, urban residents. More than half of them (54%) were women. Also, almost half of the respondents (43%) boycotted Russian

products, the majority of them having a secondary or higher education, between 35 and 44 years old, mainly urban dwellers. 35% of respondents declared that they would consider leaving for a safe place in the event of a direct threat to Poland's security as a result of Russia's actions. This group is mainly represented by urban residents, with higher education, aged 35-44. 26% of respondents focused their actions on financial security (cash withdrawal), searching for information on shelters near their place of residence in order to be able to take refuge in a situation of threat to their safety and that of their family (14%), or stockpiling fuel (7%).

Whereas UK citizens, answering the same question, were more often than Poles focusing on listening to information about events in Ukraine (81%), boycotting Russian products (56%), withdrawing cash from banks (29%), seeking information about shelters close to home (18%) and stocking up on fuel. This group was dominated, as in Poland, by people with secondary and tertiary education in the 35-44 age group. Only 29% of Britons in the 35-54 age group with secondary and tertiary education declared their involvement in helping Ukrainians (Graph 3).

**Graph 3.** *Actions taken by the Britons (UK) and the Poles (PL) in the first days after the outbreak of war*

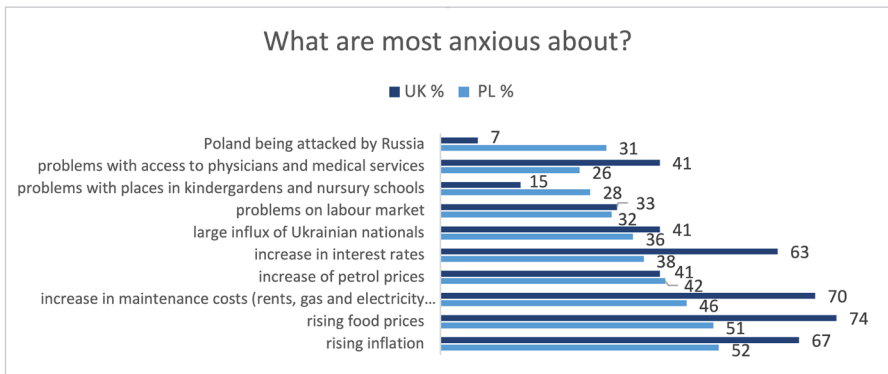


**Source:** own work

Concerns/anxiety arising from the ongoing armed conflict was another surveyed problem. Residents of Poland continue to feel anxious about the threats

related to the war. According to the survey, 31% of respondents are afraid of the war spreading to Polish territory. But, in addition to the threat of an attack by Russia, Poles are far more concerned about the consequences of the situation in Ukraine. The main concerns are rising inflation (52%), rising grocery prices (51%), rising cost of living (46%), further increases in petrol prices (42%), rising interest rates (38%), large influx of Ukrainians (36%), labour market problems (32%), problems with places in kindergartens and nursery schools (28%) and with access to doctors and healthcare services (26%) (Graph 4).

**Graph 4.** *Concerns of the British (UK) and Polish respondents (PL) resulting from the ongoing war*



**Source:** own work

Whereas Britons, answering the same question, are primarily concerned about rising living costs, including groceries (74%) and energy, gas and rent charges (70%). Add to this the worry of inflation (67%) and rising interest rates (63%). The presented results indicate that both societies are struggling with the same concerns. A notable difference, however, can be seen in the Polish public's fears of Poland being attacked by Russia and the problems arising from a lack of places in kindergartens and nursery schools.

As mentioned earlier, 48% of surveyed Polish residents joined in activities to support and help people arriving from Ukraine. 57% donated gifts to organised collections and one in five provided financial support. 6% of those surveyed were active in voluntary work. However, respondents note that

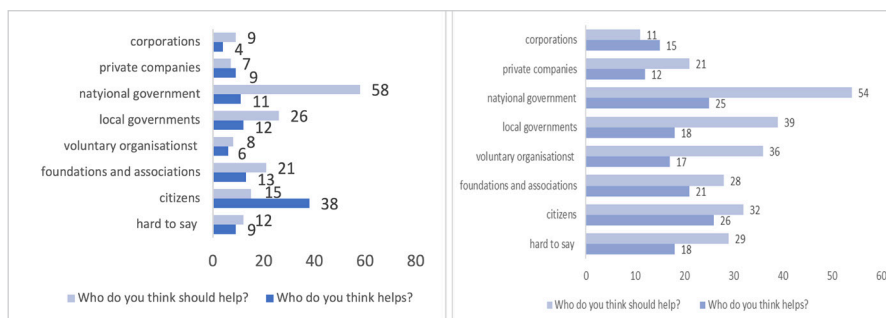
assistance to Ukrainians arriving in Poland is provided primarily by foundations, associations and individuals. This is the opinion of more than 57% of respondents. Also more than 58% of respondents think that aid should be organised primarily by the Polish government (Graph 5).

**Graph 5.** *Entities which should provide support and those actually helping refugees.*

*Who do you think is helping refugees from Ukraine and who in your opinion should help?*

*(replies of Polish responders %)*

*(replies of British responders %)*



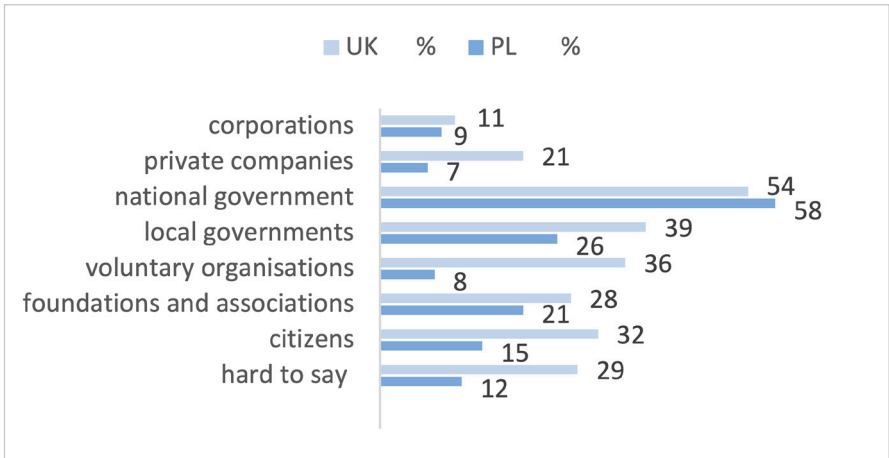
**Source:** own work

Whereas, according to the survey conducted in UK, assistance to Ukrainians is most often provided by citizens (26%), government (25%) as well as foundations and associations (21%). Local governments and voluntary services (18% and 17%) also play an important role in generating involvement and providing help (Graph 5).

Comparing the results of surveys carried out in the UK and Poland, one can see a striking difference in the attitude of the citizens of these two societies towards the issue of providing support. The British respondents are of the opinion that support to refugees from Ukraine should primarily be provided by local governments, volunteers, citizens and NGOs. Poles, on the other hand, most often expressed the view that helping refugees from Ukraine was the responsibility of national and local governments, followed by NGOs, citizens and volunteers. These results show that there are still differences between the two surveyed groups in the level of development of civil society and, unfortunately, they speak to the disadvantage of the Polish society (Graph 6).



**Graph 6.** *Entities which should provide support for the Ukrainian refugees. Who in your opinion should help?*



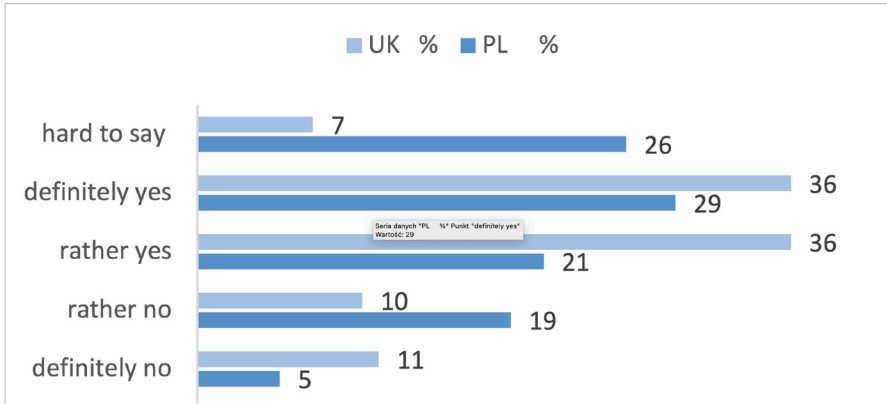
**Source:** own work

Both the Polish and the British society have been and continue to be actively involved in helping Ukrainian nationals. Most often this help takes the form of financial contributions on behalf of Ukrainian refugees. When comparing the answers of the respondents, one can see a significant divergence between the surveyed groups. In Poland, this form of support was declared by 36% of respondents, while in the UK, by as many as 81%. This is probably caused by economic as well as geopolitical factors. In Poland, by the huge influx of Ukrainian citizens in the first months after the Russian invasion, Poles were directly involved in helping refugees (e.g. organising collections). Significant support from both surveyed groups consisted of providing housing for those fleeing Ukraine. Both Poles and Britons got involved in the first months after Russia's attack on Ukraine in preparing parcels for Ukrainians in need and in voluntary services. The Britons (13%), unlike the Poles (only 1%), were also more active in creating workplaces for those arriving from Ukraine.

People supporting Poland's acceptance of refugees from Ukraine constitute the majority in all surveyed socio-demographic groups. 29% of surveyed Poles are strongly positive about the need to accept refugees from Ukraine. 21% of respondents are of the opinion that incoming refugees should rather be

accepted. 5% of respondents are decisively against it and as many as 26% have no opinion on the matter (Graph 7).

**Graph 7.** Britons (UK) and Poles (PL) opinion on accepting the refugees.  
*In your opinion, should your country continue to accept refugees from Ukraine?*



**Source:** own work

The surveyed UK citizens are of a similar opinion, with 36% marking ‘definitely yes’ and the same percentage ‘rather yes’. Overall, 72% of Britons are in favour of continuing to accept refugees from Ukraine. In Poland, 50% of respondents hold the same view. However, more Britons (11%) are decisively opposed to it.

## DISCUSSION

As a result of the research, the main hypothesis and four specific hypotheses were positively verified. More than half of those surveyed in both Poland (57%) and the UK (72%) think that war threatens the security of their country. Of whom, in the case of Poland 32% and in the UK 36% are sure about it. In both Poland and the UK, the youngest people under 24 years of age had a problem declaring their view on this issue. Comparatively, according to CBOS (English: Centre for Public Opinion Research), 85% of Poles are

of the opinion that it threatens the security of the country, with nearly half of them (47%) expressing this opinion unequivocally. For only 33% of respondents, Russia's invasion of Ukraine came as no surprise (CBOS, 2022). Both Polish and British societies in all age groups felt quite strong negative emotions. The most frequently felt emotion indicated by respondents in both Poland and the UK – on issues relating to the situation in Ukraine – was anxiety, followed by a sense of uncertainty and then fear and surprise. Both people in Poland and the UK are almost unanimously continuing to welcome refugees from Ukraine. More than half are attentively following the situation in Ukraine. Attitudes to the admission of Ukrainian citizens have never been as positive as they are today. Support among Polish people for accepting refugees from Ukraine dominates in all analysed socio-demographic groups. Since 24 February 2022, the day of the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, more than 13.5 million refugees from Ukraine, mainly women and children, have crossed the Polish-Ukrainian border. A total of 11,733 million people have returned to Ukraine since the beginning of the war (Border Guard, 2023). In June 2023, there were 872,000 people of Ukrainian nationality living in Poland, 39 per cent of whom were women and 11 per cent men of working age (Ukrainians in Poland, 2023). It ought to be noted that the UK funding for the UN Refugee Agency helped reach 4.32 million people fleeing the war in 2022. In addition, the UK has supported Poland's efforts by sending medical aids and providing psychological health services to refugees from Ukraine ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), n.d.). This shows a rapid development in international cooperation. Half of the respondents in Poland and the UK declared their commitment to helping Ukrainian citizens. In Poland, 77% of adult Poles were involved in relief efforts at that time (Wojakowska, 2022, pp. 107-108). Data contained in a report of the Polish Economic Institute (PIE) lead us to the conclusion that during this period Poles donated around PLN 10 billion in financial support, with 36% of people donating on average between PLN 100 and 499 per person, and 8% donating more than PLN 1,000 per person. It is worth adding that Poles donated PLN 3.9 billion for charitable deeds in the whole of 2021 (PIE, 2022).

In the UK, help to Ukrainian nationals was organised by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), n.d.). It allocated £16

million to local communities in support, sent rapid response equipment, medical tools, specialists, conducted trainings, provided food and offered shelter to the Ukrainians most in need. £4 million was provided to the International Organisation for Migration to deliver generators to Ukraine and £12 million to the World Food Programme for food vouchers and in-kind support.

In addition to financial and in-kind support, both Poles and Britons provided shelter to fleeing Ukrainians in their flats and homes. As of May 2022, around half of Poles declared invariably that they or members of their households were voluntarily and gratuitously helping refugees from Ukraine. (Rycerska, 2022, p. 64). In January 2023, there was a clear break in this trend, with two out of five respondents (41%) declaring that they were providing help to Ukrainian refugees – an 11-point drop compared to December 2022. It can be assumed that this was rather related to the deteriorating economic situation of Polish households, rising food costs and high inflation. All these factors forced Poles to save more, regardless of their attitude towards Ukrainians. Respondents with tertiary education (79%), managers and professionals (83%) technicians and members of middle management (80%), administrative and office workers (75%), respondents with the highest income per person in a household (PLN 3,000 or more – 76%) and residents of the largest cities (73%) were generally more involved in helping Ukrainian citizens. In April 2023, the level of declarations of providing support to refugees from Ukraine increased again – to 46%, a rise of 5 percentage points. However, it still remains noticeably lower than in 2022, which did not drop below the 50% threshold (CBOS, April 2023).

In Poland, since March 2022, persons offering accommodation and food to Ukrainian citizens arriving on the territory of the Republic of Poland directly from the territory of Ukraine in connection with military operations conducted on the territory of that country could receive a benefit in the amount of PLN 40 for each day of providing such help. An actual provider of accommodation and meals was entitled to receive such benefit for the period not longer than 120 days from the date of arrival of the Ukrainian citizen on the territory of the Republic of Poland. Whereas in the UK, in order to encourage the public to accept Ukrainian refugees and to reward the effort put into caring for the migrants, the host received support from the government of initially £350 and then £500 per month. However, the Ukrainian national had to have

been in the UK for at least one and a maximum of two years. Additional programmes have been launched to find housing and help families who have been granted British citizenship, so that they could bring family members to the UK. Thanks to these activities, by February 2023, local governments had helped 163,500 Ukrainians to settle in the UK ([www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk), 2023).

Both Poles and Britons who took part in this survey plan to continue to get involved in helping those arriving from Ukraine, with over 18% in Poland and 9% in the UK declaring even greater involvement than previously. 26% of surveyed Poles and 34% of Britons admit that they do not intend to help Ukrainians in need. By comparing the data presented in the reports of the Centre for Public Opinion Research for the period from May 2022 to April 2023, it is possible to make some estimation and delineate trends in this respect. Thus, the vast majority of Poles (78%) are of the opinion that Poland should continue to welcome Ukrainian refugees.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research undertaken in this article is an attempt to cognise the activation of social capital during Russia's armed invasion of Ukraine on the example of Polish and British public. The research was aimed at presenting the attitudes, reactions and apprehensions of Polish and British societies in regard to refugees from Ukraine based on the analysis of social capital resources. The hypothesis formulated for the purpose of this study, that the help provided by Poles and Britons to Ukrainian refugees resulted from the high level of social capital disposable to both societies, has been verified positively, confirming the role of social capital in people's involvement in activities aimed at helping those in need. It is worth noting that pro-social behaviour is shaped by values such as the civic sense of responsibility and participation in social life, putting the human being at the centre, paying attention to the weakest and most suffering, selflessness in solidarity actions, respect for others, sharing one's own existence with that of others, one's sense of service. Based on these values, it is possible to help those in need, to stimulate public institutions to operate more efficiently and effectively, to create positive civic attitudes and to

successfully intervene through public services, especially in those sectors where state intervention is insufficient.

Thus, the conducted research confirms the assumption that social capital has a direct impact on people's ability to organise themselves in emergencies to help those in need. It is important to note, however, that as the refugee crisis unfolded, the scale, form and intensity of support began to change. In the first period of the conflict, it was mainly the population that offered help, activating layers of informal, bonding capital (families, neighbours, work colleagues). As the situation developed, NGOs, both local and national in scope, stepped in, activating the assets of formal, bonding (through associations, societies) capital. In the subsequent stage, the number of local and state institutions that methodically took over supporting activities gradually increased and consequently the community initiatives undertaken by civic society became less important. The study confirmed, based on the data presented earlier on levels of social capital and civic involvement, that the indicators for the two societies are comparable.

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