



TOMASZ SAFJAŃSKI

WSB University Dąbrowa Górnicza,
Poland

ORCID iD: 0000-0003-1775-8857

PIOTR CHLEBOWICZ

University of Warmia and Mazury
in Olsztyn, Poland

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-9553-7665

CHANGING PATTERNS OF CROSS-BORDER CRIME COMMITTED BY UKRAINIANS AND GEORGIANS IN POLAND AS AN IMPACT OF RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR?

ABSTRACT

This article explores the evolving dynamics of cross-border criminal threats of Ukrainian and Georgian provenance in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war and their impact on the internal security of the Republic of Poland. In this study, the authors attempt to present a picture of Ukrainian and Georgian crime in Poland in the wake of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022. The authors discuss the main changes in the structure of this crime that have occurred since the Russian military invasion of Ukraine. The article provides a synthetic analysis of the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the level of Ukrainian and Georgian crime in Poland. Drawing on statistical data of selected categories of crimes detected in Poland in 2013–2023, open-source materials, and scholarly literature, the article provides a synthetic analysis of the changing cross-border crime in Poland. Cross-border crime impacts the very foundations of the EU and its society. It has a double destabilising effect on the EU. It undermines the EU's economy, rule of law and society by generating illicit proceeds, spreading violence, and criminals often serve as proxies for hybrid threat actors, exploiting vulnerabilities to destabilise the EU and its Member States from within. The main threat nodes are illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings, firearms trafficking and hybrid threats materializing by cooperation of organised criminal groups with secret services of countries hostile to the EU (e.g. recruiting random people to carry out acts of violence, including contract killings, arsons and other types of sabotage activities).

KEYWORDS: Russian-Ukrainian war, cross-border crime, ethnic crime, internal security, migration

INTRODUCTION

Crime as a threat to public safety is a multifaceted area of research in criminology and security sciences. In criminology, *crime* is understood to mean a set of acts prohibited by law under penalty, which were committed in a specific geographic area during a designated timeframe (Hołyst, 2022). The primary task of criminal etiology is the study of the causal factors of crime (Mednick&Moffitt&Stack, 2018).

It should be noted that neither the domestic laws of Poland, Georgia or Ukraine nor international law provide a legal definition of the term *cross-border crime*. The point of reference for defining the subject of our discussion is the practice developed within the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), where the inclusion of a given case in police cooperation requires

the cross-border nature of the crime, a practice established by long-standing practice. In this context, a cross-border crime refers to any criminal activity involving more than one country due to the nature of the crime committed (e.g., crossing state borders on a forged passport), its consequences (e.g., the use of firearms smuggled from abroad), the nationality of the perpetrator (e.g., a foreigner committing a common crime), the nationality of the crime victim (e.g., profiting from the prostitution of people of another nationality), or the modus operandi of the criminal or their accomplices (e.g., perpetrators fleeing abroad). For the reasons outlined, the term *cross-border crime* does not denote a specific catalogue of crimes. In this approach, it is not the gravity of the act, but the existence of any cross-border criteria that allows for the recognition that the act falls into the category of cross-border crime. Therefore, crimes committed in the territory of Poland by citizens of Ukraine and Georgia are cross-border crimes (Safański, 2023). The essence of cross-border crime is the physical crossing of a state border – by perpetrators, victims or objects of crime, e.g. drug smuggling across a border, illegal border crossing, human trafficking involving the transport of a victim from one country to another (Fichtelberg& Fox&Lin, 2025).

War creates a natural space for the development of cross-border crime e.g. drugs trafficking, trafficking in human beings, smuggling, property crimes, etc. (Omeličeva& Markowitz, 2021).

The Russian-Ukrainian war has generated a number of new threats not only on the territory of Ukraine, but also in neighboring countries. This raises the assumption that military operations conducted on the territory of Ukraine have negative consequences not only there. Among them, the probability of an increase in criminality threats in countries neighboring Ukraine, which are on the direction of refugee routes, should be noted (Lubiewski& Safański, 2025; Konieczny, 2025; Krylova, 2024; Aranega&Fernandes, 2024; Yagunov&Haverkamp, 2025; Veldhuizen Ochodnicánová& Heys, 2024).

The importance of the issue of so-called crime of foreigners or ethnic crime in Polish criminological sciences is constantly growing, which is undoubtedly related to the global phenomenon of migration, which also concerns Poland (Pływaczewski, 2024). This issue has become the center of public discourse because, on the one hand, the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation

caused the migration of millions of Ukrainians to the West, primarily to Poland, and on the other hand, there is an influx of migrants not only from the post-Soviet area (Georgia, Belarus) but also from Asia, Africa and South America.

The intense politicization of migration issues poses significant challenges for criminological research focusing on ethnic crime. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that such research does not aim to criminalize specific social groups based on nationality or ethnicity, but rather addresses a real problem in the area of criminal policy. This particularly concerns the emergence of various forms of organized crime, which disposes a significant counter-detection potential, enabling organized crime groups to expand into illegal markets (Chlebowicz&Łabuz&Safjański, 2021). The aforementioned counter-detection potential of ethnic crime stems from the strength of norms based on clan and family values within such groups. In this way, group ties ensure the hermetic nature of ethnically based gangs, while cultural factors related to the cultural codes of the North Caucasus nations, such as isolation, collectivism, and traditionalism, further seal such groups against external influences. Finally, these groups are cross-border and mobile: those residing in one country may operate in another, which complicates law enforcement activities.

Closely related to this is the issue of the effectiveness of police actions in detecting perpetrators and exposing crimes committed by perpetrators operating in such groups. Practical problems are identified here, primarily resulting from language barriers (too few translators), insufficient understanding of the structures of this crime, difficult access to personal sources of information, etc. These seem to be universal problems when national police forces confront ethnic crime(Laskowska, 2004, p.166).

Additionally, in the case of Georgian crime, high mobility can be indicated as an important factor enabling the effectiveness of these groups' activities^[1]. The extensive network of contacts within criminal circles operating within Georgian diasporas scattered across European Union member states allows Georgian criminal groups to conduct criminal activities in one country, flee or hide in another, and transfer cash, property, and goods derived from crimes throughout the EU, depending on needs and opportunities. In this context, ethnic crime can be said to be a classic form of cross-border crime. However, from a forensic perspective, the cross-border nature of this crime also influences

certain elements of the *modus operandi*. For example, the targeting of victims or targets in the case of planning a robbery is carried out by members of the group in the Georgian diaspora in Poland, while the robbery itself is committed by other perpetrators who come to Poland and, after committing the act, immediately leave the territory of the Republic of Poland.

When searching for the characteristics of ethnic crime in the literature on the subject, one points to the tendency that the influx of migrants causes the formation of diasporas, i.e. emigrant communities in the country that is the destination of emigration. While diasporas cannot be considered criminogenic, there is no doubt that ethnic crime develops within diasporas. The model of how such crime occurs takes into account the dominant role of ethnic ties, followed by clan and family ties, which is reflected in the fact that the specificity of crime committed by foreigners is determined by nationality, including clan affiliation (Laskowska, 2017, p.581). Hence the conclusion that the phenomenology of *Ukrainian* and *Georgian* crime, especially the areas of activity and *modus operandi*, may have different characteristics.

Georgian criminal groups are multi-criminal in nature, active in such areas as criminal, drug and economic crime. The list of crimes in which Georgian groups specialize is primarily crime against property (car theft, pickpocketing, burglaries), robberies, fraud, drug and weapons trafficking (Laskowska, 2017, p.582).

Ukrainian crime has a more diffuse character compared to Georgian crime. Ukrainian criminal groups are not based on clan ties, unlike Georgian groups. The characteristics of Ukrainian organized crime are similar to those of Russian organized crime. Therefore, one can point to the existence of strong ties between political and economic elites, the use of violence, infiltration of the economy and law enforcement agencies, including through corruption, and multi-criminality. The Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine caused a significant change in the criminal ecosystem of both countries, as Ukrainian groups largely declared loyalty to the Ukrainian state, which meant severing cooperative ties with organized crime in Russia. However, the end of the war may lead to the resumption of these ties (Felbab-Brown&&Garcia).

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the Russian invasion of Ukraine and full-scale war has caused the world's fastest-growing displacement crisis since the Second World War. In 2022, nearly one

third of Ukrainians were forced to flee their homes. By the end of year, an estimated 5.9 million people were internally displaced by the war, while nearly 5.7 million refugees and asylum-seekers from Ukraine were recorded across Europe^[2]. However, the analysis of data from the Office for Foreigners and Social Insurance Institution indicates that the number of Georgian citizens legally residing in Poland increased almost 2.5 times between 2021 (10,653 people)^[3] and 2023 (26,615 people)^[4]. It is estimated that as many as 90 percent of people who fled Ukraine are women and children, i.e. people who are particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of human trafficking^[5].

In parallel with refugee (humanitarian) migration from Ukraine, politically motivated migration pressure from Belarus continued. This pressure had begun earlier, starting in the summer of 2021. Migrants (primarily from the Middle East and Africa) were flown to Minsk and then directed towards the borders with Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. This hybrid approach was linked to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and used as a tool to pressure Poland and the EU.

The Warsaw Enterprise Institute estimates that the total number of immigrants in Poland is approximately 3.5–4 million, of whom 60–75% are Ukrainians.

The Russian-Ukrainian war has led to an unprecedented saturation of the region with all types of weapons – including small arms and light weapons, as well as MANPADS systems, which is already creating a vast black market for weapons, which is *operated* by Ukrainian criminal groups. A separate problem is the demoralizing effect of the war, which affects hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers who will be demobilized after the war ends. There are justified concerns that they will serve as a reservoir of criminal cadres if appropriate social programs are not implemented to enable their reintegration into society (Europol, 2025, p. 87; Jawor, 2024).

METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This article analyzes cross-border crime of Ukrainian and Georgian origin in Poland in connection with the Russian-Ukrainian war. The research question is: to what extent might the Russian-Ukrainian war be a factor intensifying criminal threats in Poland posed by citizens of Ukraine and Georgia?

For this research problem, the study's objective was outlined: to conduct a comparative analysis of the main parameters of selected criminal threats posed by citizens of Ukraine and Georgia. Selected categories of criminal threats were examined through the lens of indicators such as the magnitude of the criminal threat (number of detected crimes, number of suspects), the dynamics of threat growth, the criminal threat rate per 100,000 residents, and the percentage of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of committing a given category of criminal offense among the perpetrators of detected crimes of the same category.

A research hypothesis was formulated: it is assumed that the Russian-Ukrainian war has intensified criminal threats of Ukrainian and Georgian origin.

As part of the adopted research methodology, analyses were conducted based on the main police statistics presenting data on detected crimes, and the research focuses solely on this dimension of crime. The assumption to present criminal threats of Ukrainian and Georgian origin in light of police statistics from 2013 stemmed from the fact that the method of recording data on foreigners suspected of committing crimes was changed in 2013.

The research goal of the analyses was to determine the extent to which the Russian-Ukrainian war exacerbated criminal threats of Ukrainian and Georgian origin, and thus impacted public security in Poland. The analysis was based on police statistics on Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of committing selected crime categories in Poland between 2013 and 2023. The extent of migration from Ukraine and Georgia between 2022 and 2023 was also analyzed, as well as the relationship with selected criminal threat indicators.

Murder was included in the analyzed crime categories, considering them to be the crimes with the greatest potential to impact security due to the gravity of the offense. Property theft is the second analyzed crime category, whose impact on security stems from its widespread occurrence. Human trafficking was also

included in the analyzed crime group, assuming a connection between this threat and forced migrations caused by the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Similarly, a relationship was assumed between threats involving illegal possession, manufacture, and sale of firearms and ammunition and proximity to the theater of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The study used research methods in the form of analysis, comparison, generalization and synthesis, which allowed for the development of data collected in Police databases, data available in the literature on the subject and articles published in the mass media.

Political correctness, understood as a set of norms regulating the permissible scope of public discourse, can indirectly limit research on ethnic crime. These mechanisms do not necessarily involve formal censorship, but operate through topic selection, data limitations, and institutional pressure. The result is a cognitive gap that hinders the formulation of public policies based on a comprehensive and empirically grounded understanding of social phenomena.

THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR AND THE THREAT OF CRIME OF UKRAINIAN AND GEORGIAN PROVENANCE IN POLAND

Analysis of crime dynamics in 2013–2023 indicates a significant increase in the number of Ukrainian citizens suspected of committing criminal offences. Over the 10 years under review, number of criminal crimes increased by over 1,045% (from 416 in 2013 to 4,764 in 2023). The upward trend changed only in 2020, when there was a slight decrease in number of criminal crimes committed by Ukrainians from 2,237 in 2019 to 2,103 (decrease of less than 6%).

Statistical data on the number of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of committing criminal offences in 2013–2023 are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Number of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of committing criminal crimes in 2013–2023*



Source: own study based on National Police HQ data obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

In the years 2013-2023 there was a large increase in the number of Georgian citizens suspected of committing criminal offences. Over this period, the number of suspected Georgian citizens increased by over 2400% (from 82 in 2013 to 2052 in 2023). The upward trend over these years changed slightly only in the years 2014-2015, when the number of suspected of committing criminal crimes Georgian citizens decreased from 82 in 2013 to 57 in 2014 and 42 in 2015.

Detailed data on the indicator of threat of criminal offences in Poland from Ukrainian and Georgian citizens are presented in Table 1.

The highest indicator of threat of criminal crimes in Poland committed by Ukrainian citizens per 100 thousand inhabitants was recorded in 2023 (12.6577570) – the indicator was 12 times higher than in 2013. The highest indicator of threat of criminal crimes in Poland committed by Georgian citizens per 100 thousand inhabitants was recorded in 2023 (5.452081) – the indicator was over 25 times higher than in 2013. In 2023, the indicator of threat of criminal crimes for Georgians was almost two and a half times higher than for Ukrainians.

Table 1. *Indicator of the threat of criminal offences in Poland committed by Ukrainian citizens per 100 thousand inhabitants in 2013–2023*

Year	Number of inhabitants of Poland*	Number of suspected Ukrainian citizens	Threat Indicator**	Number of suspected Georgian citizens	Threat Indicator**
2013	38 496 000	416	1,080631	82	0,213009
2014	38 479 000	531	1,379973	57	0,148132
2015	38 437 000	666	1,732705	42	0,109269
2016	38 433 000	1077	2,802279	57	0,148310
2017	38 434 000	1566	4,074517	100	0,260186
2018	38 411 000	2089	5,438546	281	0,731561
2019	38 383 000	2237	5,828100	576	1,500664
2020	38 089 000	2103	5,521279	607	1,593635
2021	37 908 000	2669	7,040730	909	2,397910
2022	37 776 000	3815	10,09900	1986	5,257306
2023	37 637 000	4764	12,65775	2052	5,452081

* Number of inhabitants rounded to the nearest thousand

** The threat indicator was calculated by dividing the number of citizens suspected of committing a given category of crime in a given year by the number of Polish residents and then multiplying by 100,000.

Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the National Police HQ obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

Detailed data on the percentage of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of committing criminal crime among perpetrators of detected criminal crimes are presented in Table 2.

The highest percentage of Ukrainian citizens suspected of committing criminal crime among perpetrators of detected criminal crime was recorded in 2023 (1.467%). This share was 14 times higher than in 2013. The highest percentage of Georgian citizens suspected of committing criminal crime among perpetrators of detected criminal crime was recorded in 2023 (0.6669%). This share was over 33 times higher than in 2013.

Table 2. *Percentage share of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of committing criminal offences among perpetrators of detected criminal offences in Poland in 2013–2023*

Year	Number of detected criminal crimes	Number of suspected Ukrainian citizens	Percentage of Ukrainian citizens suspected of committing criminal crime*	Number of suspected Georgian citizens	Percentage of Georgian citizens suspected of committing criminal crime*
2013	406 905	416	0,102	82	0,0201
2014	317 847	531	0,167	57	0,0179
2015	275 463	666	0,241	42	0,0152
2016	272 700	1077	0,394	57	0,0209
2017	281 048	1566	0,557	100	0,0355
2018	319 169	2089	0,654	281	0,0880
2019	332 808	2237	0,672	576	0,1730
2020	307 452	2103	0,684	607	0,1974
2021	315 807	2669	0,845	909	0,2878
2022	313 424	3815	1,217	1986	0,6336
2023	324 695	4764	1,467	2052	0,6659

* Provided to three decimal places

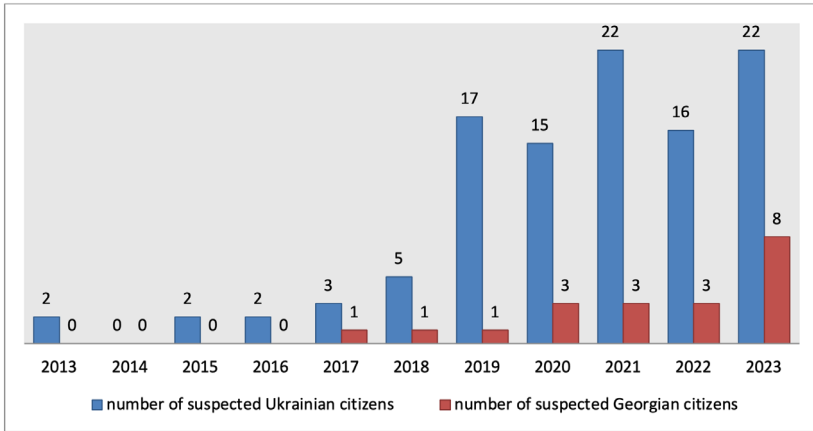
Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the National Police HQ obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

THREAT OF MURDERS BY UKRAINIAN AND GEORGIAN CITIZENS

One of the key crime indicators that is of particular interest to society in Poland and affects the sense of security is the threat of murder. Statistical data on the number of citizens of Ukraine and Georgia suspected of murder under Article 148 of the Criminal Code in 2013–2023 are presented in Figure 2.

In the years 2013–2023, there was a significant increase in the number of Ukrainian citizens suspected of committing or attempting murder. Over the 10 years under review, the number of suspects under Article 148 of the Criminal Code increased by 1000% (from 2 in 2013 to 22 in 2023). In the years 2017–2023, a clear upward trend was noticeable, which changed only in 2020 and 2022 – when a decrease in the number of suspects of Ukrainian citizenship was recorded (from 17 in 2019 to 15 in 2020 and from 22 in 2021 to 16 in 2022).

Figure 2. *Number of citizens of Ukraine and Georgia suspected under Article 148 of the Criminal Code in 2013–2023*



Source: own study based on National Police HQ data obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

Until 2017, there were no murders where the suspect was a Georgian citizen. In the years 2017–2019, one case of murder per year was recorded where the suspect was a Georgian citizen. In the years 2020–2023, three cases of murder per year were recorded where the suspect was a Georgian citizen. In 2023, 8 murders were recorded where the suspect was a Georgian citizen. In the years 2017–2023, there was a significant increase in the number of Georgian citizens suspected of committing or attempting murder. Over this period, the number of Georgian citizens suspected under Article 148 of the Criminal Code increased by 800% (from 1 in 2017 to 8 in 2023).

Detailed data on the murder threat indicator in Poland from Ukrainian and Georgian citizens are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Murder threat indicator in Poland from Ukrainian and Georgian citizens per 100,000 inhabitants in 2013–2023*

Year	Number of inhabitants of Poland*	Number of suspected Ukrainian citizens	Threat indicator from Ukrainian citizens **	Number of suspected Georgian citizens	Threat indicator from Georgian citizens**
2013	38 496 000	2	0,005195	0	0
2014	38 479 000	0	0	0	0
2015	38 437 000	2	0,005203	0	0
2016	38 433 000	2	0,005203	0	0
2017	38 434 000	3	0,007805	1	0,002601
2018	38 411 000	5	0,013017	1	0,002603
2019	38 383 000	17	0,044290	1	0,002605
2020	38 089 000	15	0,039381	3	0,007876
2021	37 908 000	22	0,058035	3	0,007913
2022	37 776 000	16	0,423549	3	0,007941
2023	37 637 000	22	0,058453	8	0,021255

* Number of inhabitants rounded to the nearest thousand

** The murder threat indicator was calculated by dividing the number of citizens suspected of committing murder in a given year by the number of Polish residents and then multiplying by 100,000.

Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the National Police HQ obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

The highest murder threat indicator in Poland from Ukrainian citizens per 100,000 inhabitants was recorded in 2023 (0.05845312) – the indicator was 113 times higher than in 2013. The highest murder threat indicator in Poland from Georgian citizens per 100,000 inhabitants was recorded in 2023 (0.021255) and was almost 3 times higher than in the case of Ukrainian citizens.

Detailed data on the percentage of Ukrainian and Georgia citizens suspected of murder among the perpetrators of detected murders are presented in Table 4.

The highest percentage of Ukrainian suspected of murder citizens among the perpetrators of detected murders was recorded in 2023 (3.921%). This share was 10 times higher than in 2013. The highest percentage of Georgian citizens suspected of murder among the perpetrators of detected murders was recorded in 2023 (1.4260%).

Table 4. *Percentage of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of murder among perpetrators of detected murders in Poland in 2013–2023*

Year	Number of detected murders	Number of Ukrainian citizens suspected of murder	Percentage of Ukrainian citizens suspected of murder*	Number of Georgian citizens suspected of murder	Percentage of Georgian citizens suspected of murder*
2013	549	2	0,364	0	0
2014	507	0	0	0	0
2015	471	2	0,424	0	0
2016	440	2	0,454	0	0
2017	501	3	0,598	1	0,1996
2018	511	5	0,978	1	0,1956
2019	512	17	3,320	1	0,1952
2020	631	15	2,377	3	0,4754
2021	616	22	3,571	3	0,4870
2022	496	16	3,225	3	0,6048
2023	561	22	3,921	8	1,4260

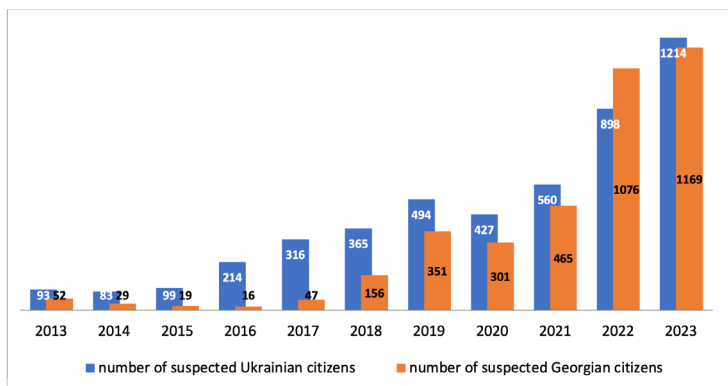
* *Provided to three decimal places*

Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the National Police HQ obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

THREAT OF THEFT BY UKRAINIAN AND GEORGIAN CITIZENS

In the years 2013–2023, there was a significant increase in the number of Ukrainian citizens suspected of thefts. Statistics on the number of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of theft in 2013–2023 are presented in Figure 3.

Over the decade, this number increased by over 1205% (from 93 in 2013 to 1214 in 2023). The upward trend changed only in 2020, when this number decreased from 494 in 2019 to 427 (decrease of over 13%). In the years 2013–2023, there was a significant increase in the number of Georgian citizens suspected of thefts. Over the decade, the number of Georgian citizens suspected of thefts increased by over 2248% (from 52 in 2013 to 1169 in 2023). A noticeable decrease in this category of crime was noted in the years 2014–2016. In 2022, the number of Georgians suspected of theft exceeded the number of Ukrainians suspected of theft. This is all the more crucial because in 2022 there were almost 190 times fewer Georgians in Poland than Ukrainians(!)^[6].

Figure 3. *Number of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of theft in 2013–2023*

Source: own study based on National Police HQ data obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

Detailed data on the theft threat indicator in Poland from Ukrainian and Georgian citizens per 100,000 inhabitants are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *Theft threat indicator in Poland from Ukrainian citizens per 100,000 inhabitants in 2013–2023*

Year	Number of inhabitants of Poland*	Number of suspected Ukrainian citizens	Threat indicator from Ukrainian citizens **	Number of suspected Georgian citizens	Threat indicator from Georgian citizens **
2013	38 496 000	93	0,241583	52	0,135078
2014	38 479 000	83	0,215702	29	0,075365
2015	38 437 000	99	0,257564	19	0,049431
2016	38 433 000	214	0,556813	16	0,041630
2017	38 434 000	316	0,822188	47	0,122287
2018	38 411 000	365	0,950248	156	0,406133
2019	38 383 000	494	1,287028	351	0,914467
2020	38 089 000	427	1,121058	301	0,790254
2021	37 908 000	560	1,477260	465	1,226654
2022	37 776 000	898	2,377170	1076	2,848369
2023	37 637 000	1214	3,225549	1169	3,105986

* Number of inhabitants rounded to the nearest thousand

** The theft threat indicator was calculated by dividing the number of citizens suspected of committing theft in a given year by the number of Polish residents and then multiplying by 100,000.

Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the National Police HQ obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

The highest theft threat indicator in Poland from Ukrainian citizens per 100,000 inhabitants was recorded in 2023 (3.22554933) – the indicator was 13 times higher than in 2013. The highest theft threat indicator in Poland from citizens of Georgia per 100 thousand inhabitants was recorded in (3.105986) – the indicator was almost 23 times higher than in 2013. In 2023 the the threat indicator in Poland from Georgian citizens per 100,000 inhabitants was almost the same level as in the case of Ukrainian citizens^[7].

Detailed data on the percentage of Ukrainian citizens suspected of theft among the perpetrators of detected thefts are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Percentage of Ukrainian citizens suspected of theft among the perpetrators of detected thefts in Poland in 2013–2023*

Year	Number of detected thefts	Number of Ukrainian citizens suspected of theft	Percentage of Ukrainian citizens suspected of theft*	Number of Georgian citizens suspected of theft	Percentage of Georgian citizens suspected of theft*
2013	63782	93	0,145	52	0,081
2014	47424	83	0,175	29	0,061
2015	39924	99	0,247	19	0,047
2016	36664	214	0,583	16	0,043
2017	33333	316	0,948	47	0,141
2018	30990	365	1,177	156	0,503
2019	34759	494	1,421	351	1,009
2020	35917	427	1,188	301	0,838
2021	40485	560	1,383	465	1,148
2022	48949	898	1,834	1076	2,198
2023	51859	1214	2,340	1169	2,254

* *Provided to three decimal places*

Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the National Police HQ obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

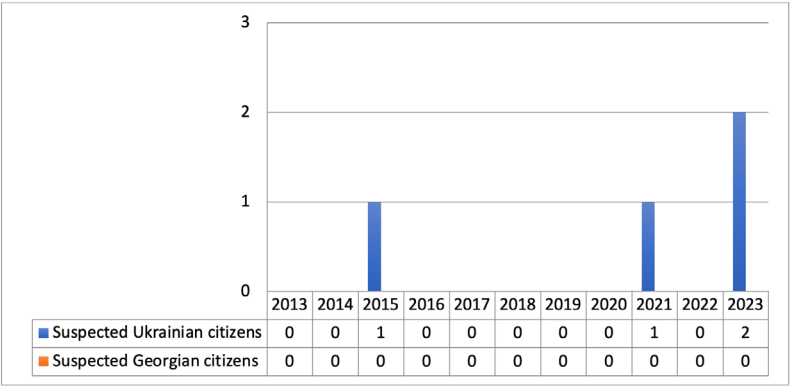
The highest percentage of Ukrainian citizens suspected of theft among the perpetrators of detected thefts was recorded in 2023 (2.340%) – the share was 16 times higher than in 2013. The highest percentage of Georgian citizens suspected of thefts among the perpetrators of detected thefts was recorded in 2023 (2,254%) – the share was almost 28 times higher than in 2013.

THREAT OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING FROM CITIZENS OF UKRAINE AND GEORGIA

Analysis of data on the number of suspected human trafficking cases in Poland indicates that this practice, with respect to citizens of Georgia and Ukraine, has not been a priority operational focus for Polish law enforcement agencies. Over the past decade (i.e., 2014–2023), a total of only four cases of suspected Ukrainian citizens have been recorded—one each in 2015 and 2021, and two in 2023—while no Georgian citizens have been identified as suspected of involvement in human trafficking during this period.

Statistics on the number of citizens of Ukraine and Georgia suspected of human trafficking (Article 189 a of the Penal Code) in 2013–2023 are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Number of citizens of Ukraine and Georgia suspected of human trafficking (Article 189 a of the Penal Code) in 2013–2023



Source: own study based on data from the National Police HQ obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

Between 2013 and 2023, no Georgian citizens were suspected of human trafficking. During the same period, a negligible number of Ukrainian citizens were suspected of human trafficking. Over the decade, the number of Ukrainian citizens suspected of human trafficking under Article 189a of the Penal Code totaled four (one suspect in 2015 and 2021, and two suspects in 2023).

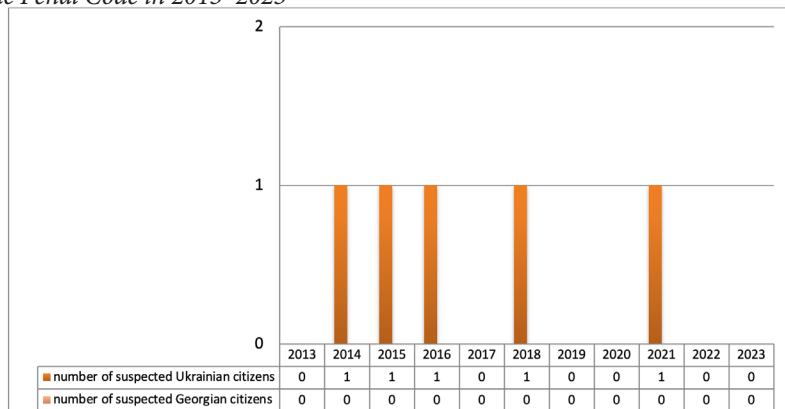
Such a small number of suspects of the nationalities discussed indicates that this problem was not treated as a significant threat from the perspective of the operational priorities of Polish law enforcement agencies. The scale of the actions undertaken, measured by the number of identified suspects, suggests rather marginal interest in this area in operational practice. At the same time, these analyzed data contradict the assessments formulated by international organizations and institutions, such as the International Organization for Migration and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), which consistently indicate that citizens of Ukraine and Georgia constitute a significant group of both perpetrators and victims of human trafficking crimes in Europe. The juxtaposition of these assessments with national data may indicate limited effectiveness in identifying such cases in Poland, insufficient information exchange between domestic and foreign services, or prioritization of other directions of operational activities (Lubiewski&Safjański,2025).

THREAT OF CRIME RELATED TO THE PRODUCTION AND INTRODUCTION INTO CIRCULATION OF FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION AND THEIR ILLEGAL POSSESSION BY CITIZENS OF UKRAINE AND GEORGIA

Between 2013 and 2023, no Georgian citizens were suspected of illegally manufacturing or trafficking in firearms and ammunition. During the same period, a negligible number of Ukrainian citizens were suspected of illegally manufacturing or trafficking in firearms and ammunition. Over the decade, the number of Ukrainian citizens suspected of illegally manufacturing or trafficking under Article 263 § 1 of the Criminal Code totaled five (one suspect each in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2021).

Statistical data on the number of citizens of Ukraine and Georgia suspected of illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms and ammunition in 2013–2023 are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5. *Number of suspected citizens of Ukraine and Georgia under Article 263 § 1 of the Penal Code in 2013–2023*

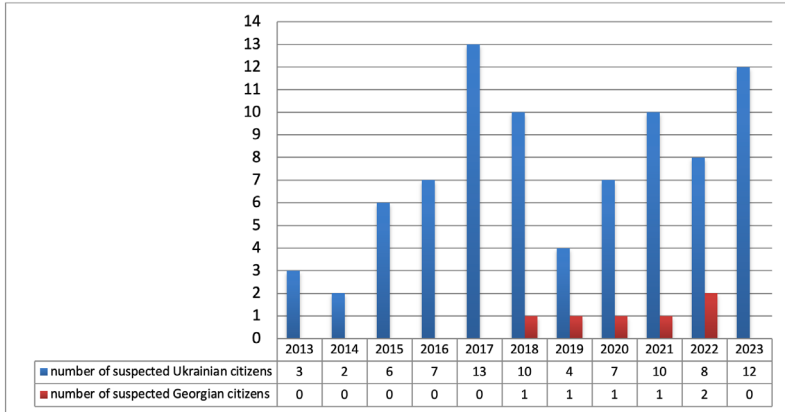


Source: own study based on data from the National Police HQ obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

In 2022–2023, no Georgian or Ukrainian citizens were reported suspected of illegally manufacturing or trafficking firearms and ammunition. These data can be interpreted as indicating that the routes for smuggling firearms and ammunition from across the eastern border to Poland changed following the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war. On the other hand, Europol did not record any cases of large arms shipments being smuggling from Ukraine, emphasizing that the end of the war could reverse this trend. While large – scale detections of weapons smuggled from Ukraine remain limited since the escalation of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, concern persist about Ukraine becoming a significant source of illicit firearms and ammunition (including also the drones developed in this context) in the short to medium-term (Europol, 2025, p. 87).

Statistics on the number of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of illegal possession of firearms and ammunition in the years 2013–2023 are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Number of suspected citizens of Ukraine and Georgia under Article 263 § 2 of the Penal Code in 2013–2023



Source: own study based on data from the National Police HQ obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

Between 2013 and 2017, no Georgian citizens were suspected of illegally possessing firearms and ammunition. Over the decade, the number of Georgian citizens suspected of illegally possessing firearms and ammunition totaled six (one suspect in 2018–2021 and two suspects in 2022). Between 2013 and 2023, the number of Ukrainian citizens suspected of illegally possessing firearms and ammunition increased by 300%. However, this growth dynamic was not continuous. The trend changed three times over the decade. Declines in the number of Ukrainian citizens suspected of illegally possessing firearms and ammunition were recorded between 2013 and 2014 (a 33% decrease), 2017 and 2019 (a 69% decrease), and 2021–2022 (a 20% decrease).

UKRAINIAN AND GEORGIAN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AS A THREAT TO PUBLIC SECURITY IN POLAND

In order to assess the threat to public security in Poland posed by criminal activity of Ukrainian and Georgian origin, the criminalization rate of Georgian and Ukrainian citizens in Poland in 2013, 2022 and 2023 (based on the number of citizens suspected of committing crimes), as well as the year-on-year dynamics of criminal threat indicators, were examined.

Detailed data on the criminalization of citizens of Georgia and Ukraine in Poland in 2013, 2022 and 2023 are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. *The criminalization of citizens of Georgia and Ukraine in Poland in 2013, 2022 and 2023*

Year	2013	2022	2023
Number of Georgian citizens entitled to stay in Poland	405	18195	26615
Number of Georgian citizens suspected of criminal offenses	82	1986	2052
The criminalization rate of Georgians per 1,000 Georgian citizens*	202,4	109,1	77,0
Number of Georgian citizens suspected of theft	52	1076	1169
Theft criminalization rate of Georgians per 1,000 Georgian citizens*	128,3	59,1	43,9
Number of Georgian citizens suspected of murder	0	3	8
Murder criminalization rate of Georgians per 1,000 Georgian citizens*	-	0,1	0,3
Number of Ukrainian citizens entitled to stay in Poland	~ 100.000	~3.400.000	~2.000.000
Number of Ukrainian citizens suspected of criminal offenses	416	3815	4764
The criminalization rate of Ukrainians per 1,000 Ukrainian citizens*	4,16	1,1	2,3
Number of Ukrainian citizens suspected of theft	93	898	1214
Theft criminalization rate of Ukrainians per 1,000 Ukrainian citizens*	0,9	0,2	0,6
Number of Ukrainian citizens suspected of murder	2	16	22
Murder criminalization rate of Ukrainians per 1,000 Ukrainian citizens*	0,02	0,004	0,01

* *The criminalisation rate was calculated by dividing the number of Ukrainian or Georgian citizens suspected of committing crimes in a given year by the number of Ukrainian or Georgian citizens authorized to stay in the Republic of Poland and then multiplying by 1,000. The rate was given to one decimal place.*

Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the National Police HQ obtained on a public information request from March 31, 2025.

The highest criminalization rate for Georgian citizens was recorded in 2013 (202.4). This indicator means that in 2013, statistically, one in five Georgian citizens was suspected of a crime. This occurred when the number of Georgian citizens authorized to reside in the Republic of Poland was the lowest during the period under review. This rate was almost 2 times higher than in 2022 (one in nine Georgian citizens was suspected of a crime) and 2.5 times higher than in 2023 (one in thirteen Georgian citizens was suspected of a crime). The highest criminalization rate for Ukrainian citizens was recorded in 2013 (4.16). This indicator means that in 2013, statistically, one in 240 Ukrainian citizens was suspected of a crime. This occurred when the number of Ukrainian citizens authorized to reside in the Republic of Poland was the lowest during the period under review. This rate was almost 4 times higher than in 2022 (every 909th Ukrainian citizen was suspected of a crime) and almost twice higher than in 2023 (every 435th Ukrainian citizen was suspected of a crime).

CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between criminal threats of Ukrainian and Georgian provenance and the Russian-Ukrainian war is complex and requires caution in interpretation, including taking into account additional statistical data and the broader socio-political context.

The conducted research indicates a clear correlation between the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the increase in such crime indicators as the risk of criminal offenses in Poland committed by Ukrainian and Georgian citizens per 100,000 inhabitants, the percentage of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of committing criminal offenses among the perpetrators of detected criminal offenses, the risk of homicides in Poland committed by Ukrainian and Georgian citizens per 100,000 inhabitants, the percentage of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of committing murder among the perpetrators of detected homicides in Poland, the number of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of committing or attempting murder, the number of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of stealing someone else's movable property, the risk of thefts from property in Poland committed by

Ukrainian and Georgian citizens per 100,000 inhabitants, and the percentage of Ukrainian and Georgian citizens suspected of thefts among the perpetrators of detected thefts. This correlation is based on the fact that the highest values of these indicators were recorded in 2022 and 2023, i.e. after the outbreak of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war.

However, the indicated correlation does not necessarily imply causation. The outbreak of a full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war and an increase in criminal threat indicators involving Ukrainians and Georgians do not mean that one causes the other. This is supported by an analysis of the criminalization rate, which shows the number of suspected Georgian and Ukrainian citizens per 1,000 Georgians and Ukrainians, respectively. In 2013, the criminalization rate for Georgian citizens was twice as high as in 2022 (202.4 in 2013 and 109.1 in 2022). Meanwhile, in 2013, the criminalization rate for Ukrainian citizens was four times higher than in 2022 (4.16 in 2013 and 1.1 in 2022).

Over the decade 2013-2023, the number of Georgian citizens suspected of criminal offenses increased by over 2,400% and Ukrainian citizens by 1,045%, the number of Georgian citizens suspected of committing or attempting murder increased by 800% and Ukrainian citizens by 1,000%, while the number of Georgian citizens suspected of stealing someone else's movable property increased by over 2,248% and Ukrainian citizens by 1,205%. Despite the clear dynamics of the growth indicators of the threat of criminal crime of Ukrainian and Georgian provenance, they are still not a dominant factor in the overall threat of criminal crime in Poland.

The reasons for this are entirely different. In the case of Georgians, their lack of a dominant position in the criminal market stems from the fact that Georgians in Poland constitute a relatively small migrant group. Refugees from Ukraine are primarily women and children, and their arrival in Poland has gained social and political approval. Therefore, Ukrainian migrants do not pose an extraordinary threat to Poland's internal security.

Georgian crime is part of a broader phenomenon of ethnic crime, which, in turn, is not a specific threat unique to Poland. It should be noted that this threat began to grow significantly after 2017, following the introduction of easier entry into the Republic of Poland for Georgians, and further intensified following Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine in 2022. In the

authors' opinion, in the context of assessing the impact of migration from Georgia on public security in Poland, securitization is primarily required for the illegal migration of Georgian citizens, which determines the scale of criminal activity of Georgian provenance, especially in organized forms, and generates the greatest threat to public security. It is worth noting that, at the time of writing, legislative work is already underway to restrict visa-free travel for Georgian citizens (Leśniak, 2025).

Modern criminal threats are increasingly transnational in nature, which means that effective combating of crime requires integrated actions by police forces from various countries. In this context, international cooperation through Interpol is particularly important – an organization of 196 member states whose goals are to improve information exchange, coordinate operational activities, and support states in preventing and combating cross-border crime. Police cooperation between Poland, Georgia, and Ukraine within Interpol is particularly important for several reasons. First, due to their geopolitical location, both countries constitute a key element of the so-called eastern flow of illegal goods, migration, and the activities of organized crime groups. Crime in these regions includes human trafficking, arms smuggling, drug smuggling, vehicle theft, and cybercrime. As a member of the European Union and the Schengen Area, Poland is a natural partner in creating a security chain encompassing the EU's eastern border (Safjański, 2023).

The research also found that the threat of cross-border crime in Poland is more related to the specificity of foreigners than their overall numbers. Based on analyses of data provided by the Office for Foreigners, the Social Insurance Institution, and the Ministry of Interior and Administration, the number of Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland between 2013 and 2024 exceeded the number of Georgian citizens by several hundred times^[8]. In 2013, the criminalization rate of Georgian citizens (202.4) was 48 times higher than Ukrainian citizens (4.16), in 2022, the criminalization rate of Georgian citizens (109.1) was 99 times higher than Ukrainian citizens (1.1), and in 2023, the criminalization rate of Georgian citizens (77.0) was 33 times higher than Ukrainian citizens (2.3). In 2013, the theft criminalization rate of Georgian citizens (128.3) was 142 times higher than Ukrainian citizens (0.9), in 2022, the theft criminalization rate of Georgian citizens (59.1) was 295 times higher

than Ukrainian citizens (0.2), and in 2023, the theft criminalization rate of Georgian citizens (43.9) was 73 times higher than Ukrainian citizens (0.6). Despite the huge difference in population, the risk rate of theft of goods in Poland by citizens of Ukraine and Georgia per 100,000 inhabitants remained at a similar level in 2021-2023.

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ENDNOTES

- [1] In this case, mobility stems from the cooperation of perpetrators operating in diasporas in other countries. The following expert comment illustrates this: *The problem is even more serious because these Georgian diasporas operate in cooperation with their „branches, which operate in various European countries. Therefore, if a robbery occurs in Warsaw, for example, it doesn't necessarily mean that the perpetrators reside permanently in Poland. They could simply arrive here three days before the job, commit the robbery, and then disperse to various neighboring countries where they have their bases of operations. This means they quickly hide, liquefy what they steal, and are difficult to track down* (Buczyński, 2025).
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- [6] It should be estimated that in 2022 there were approximately 3.4 million Ukrainian citizens and at least 18 thousand Georgian citizens in Poland.
- [7] It should be estimated that in 2023 there were approximately 2 million Ukrainian citizens and at least 27 thousand Georgian citizens in Poland.
- [8] It can be generally assumed that during the period covered by the study, approximately 70 to 190 times fewer Georgians than Ukrainians resided in Poland. Before the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war, approximately 150 times more Ukrainian than Georgian citizens resided in Poland. In 2022, there were approximately 190 Ukrainians for every Georgian. In 2023, there were approximately 70 times more Ukrainian than Georgian citizens in Poland.