UNHCR
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RIGHT to PROTECTION
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EECP Survey – 2020

Annual report

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INTRODUCTION



Eastern Ukraine Checkpoint Monitoring Report. January – December 2020.

This report provides the results of observation at all seven Entry-Exit Checkpoints (EECPs) and the survey conducted at five of them (Hnutove, Marinka, Maiorske, Novotroitske EECPs in Donetska Oblast and Stanytsia Luhanska EECP in Luhanska Oblast) in 2020. Due to quarantine restrictions, the report is based on the survey data collected from 1 January to 17 March and from 1 October to 28 December 2020 and on R2P monitors' observation from January to December 2020. The survey is a part of the monitoring of rights of the conflict-affected population including internally displaced persons (IDPs) within the framework of the project "Advocacy, Protection and Legal Assistance to the Internally Displaced Population of Ukraine" implemented by CF "Right to Protection" (R2P) in partnership with and with the financial support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The objective of the survey is to explore the motivations and concerns of the civilians travelling between the non-government-controlled areas (NGCA) and the government-controlled areas (GCA), as well as the conditions and risks associated with crossing the contact line through EECPs during the quarantine period. Detailed statistical data from the survey are available on the 2020 Eastern Ukraine Checkpoint Monitoring Online Dashboard — https://www.unhcr.org/ua/en/eecp-monitoring-2020.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on a survey of civilians crossing the contact line and the results of observations at EECPs. On 10 November, two new EECPs were opened at Shchastia and Zolote on GCA in Luhanska Oblast. The survey was not conducted at these two EECPs due to the absence of any crossing reported there in 2020. However, observations were made on the opening day. Even though the methodology remained the same, quarantine restrictions significantly affected the number of respondents. The survey was carried out in two phases: from 1 January to 17 March and from 1 October to 28 December. The questionnaire was mainly the same, however, in October 2020, it was updated with a set of COVID-related questions. From January to March, the monitoring was done at the five EECP, while from October the monitoring survey was conducted at the two EECP which remained operational. Observations were carried out on a weekly basis throughout the year during visits to each of the EECPs, even when no people were passing through and at those EECPs where the crossing did not resume by the end of the year. On those EECPs where the passage was partially restored after the lockdown (Novotroitske EECP in Donetska Oblast and Stanytsia Luhanska EECP in Luhanska Oblast), R2P monitors were operating during the working hours on the weekdays. Besides surveying, R2P monitors also consulted people about their concerns, assisted with documentation, and helped to set the phone applications for self-isolation. This protection assistance was a valuable source of information for the EECP monitoring. At EECPs where people were not allowed to pass, monitors checked in once a week.

This survey was conducted anonymously and with the informed consent of the respondents. All persons interviewed for the survey were made aware of its objective.



The survey was conducted in the form of personal interviews with people aged 18 and above. R2P monitors surveyed pedestrians queuing at the EECPs waiting to cross the contact line, the survey was not conducted in the vehicle queue and on weekends. R2P monitors approached every fourth person in line with a request to complete the survey. If a person refused to participate, R2P monitors proceeded to survey the next fourth person in line. People travelling both to and from GCA took part in the survey. At no time did R2P monitors cross the "zero" checkpoints into NGCA. The overall share of respondents travelling in both directions was almost even: 53 percent of interviews were conducted with people heading to NGCA, and 47 percent of respondents were going to GCA. It is noteworthy that the survey results should not be directly extrapolated to the entire population travelling through the EECPs, but help to identify the needs, gaps, and trends, while providing an evidentiary basis for the advocacy efforts.



HIGHLIGHTS

► On 12 March, the Government of Ukraine introduced a quarantine and approved a package of anti-epidemic measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, from 17 to 22 March, people could cross only in the direction of their residence registration – NGCA or GCA. On 22 March, EECPs suspended operation. The implementation of coronavirus-related quarantine procedures both by the Ukrainian government and NGCA de-facto authorities caused a dramatic reduction in crossings.[1] According to the State Border Guard Service (SBGS) statistics, there were 13,933,000 crossings in 2019, while only 2,952,000 crossings took place in 2020.

► Due to crossing restrictions, people were unable to receive their pensions, social benefits, birth/death certificates, buy drugs, etc. Family unity and access to the place of residence or treatment are also an issue for many people.

► People who crossed to GCA faced numerous difficulties with installing the app "Vdoma" for self-isolation. In particular, people with older phones and/or Kyivstar sim-cards were troubled a lot with technical issues.

► As in 2019, visiting relatives remained the main reason for crossing in both directions in 2020. Receiving pension or social payments, and cash withdrawal were most prevalent among people crossing from the NGCA side.

► Before the introduction of quarantine restrictions, long lines were a major concern at all EECPs. In contrast, as crossings were made possible again through two EECPs, the majority of respondents cited possible issues with a permit as the main reason for their concern in the fourth quarter of 2020 (52 percent compared to 8 percent of respondents in the first quarter of 2020).

► In the first quarter of 2020, payments and cash-related issues were the main reasons for crossing among NGCA residents, while in the fourth quarter of 2020 visiting relatives took over.

1 For the text of the quarantine measures, see https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-timchasove-pripinennya-roboti-kontrolnih-punktiv-vyizdu-na-timchasovo-okupovanu-teritoriyu-avtonomnoyi-respubliki-krim-i-m-sevastopolya-291140320





► In 2020, at least 3,000 people were provided with help from R2P monitors with installing and running the app "Vdoma". Moreover, R2P monitors have assisted about 800 people in getting permissions for crossing from the Coordination Group.[2]

► R2P monitors reported eight fatalities at GCA at EECPs in 2020 and according to information from public sources one fatality on the NGCA side. The preliminary causes of death in most cases were related to heart health problems.

2 To cross the contact line, people must have an electronic permit issued on the website of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). For those persons who for some reason cannot independently issue an electronic permit, people must contact the Coordination Group that will help in obtaining a permit.

Donetska Oblast

► After the introduced quarantine restrictions, Novotroitske remained the only EECP in Donetska Oblast where it was possible to cross the contact line based on lists established by de-facto authorities in NGCA. The passage of people was conducted every Monday and Friday. The process of crossing: people needed to be placed on a list, compiled by de-facto authorities in NGCA. It entailed a complex procedure of document submission.

► On 16 December, an administrative service centre was opened at Novotroitske EECP in Donetska Oblast with offices of an administrative service centre, Oschadbank, and "Nova Poshta", a baby care room, a pharmacy, a shop, and a paramedic point.

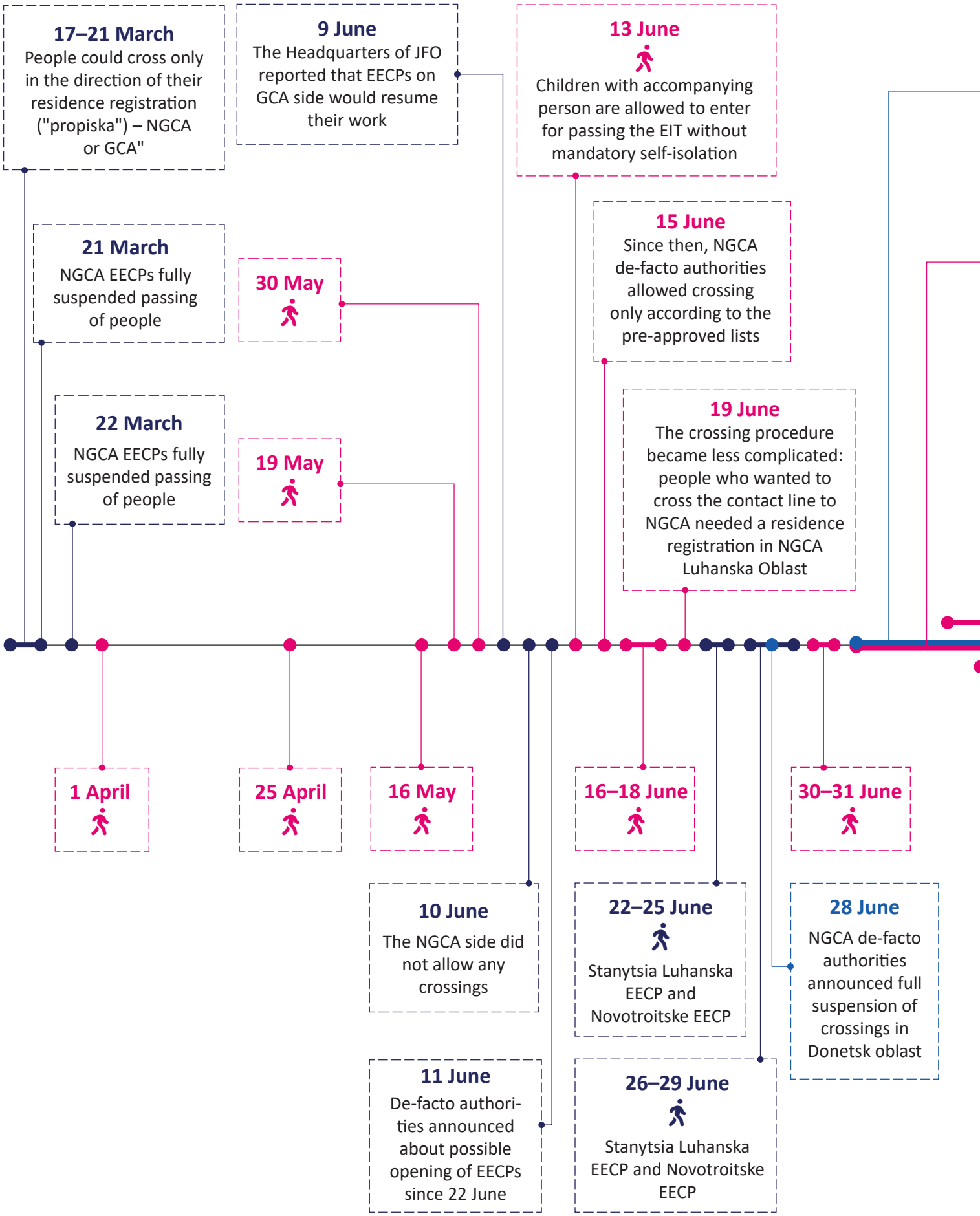
Luhanska Oblast

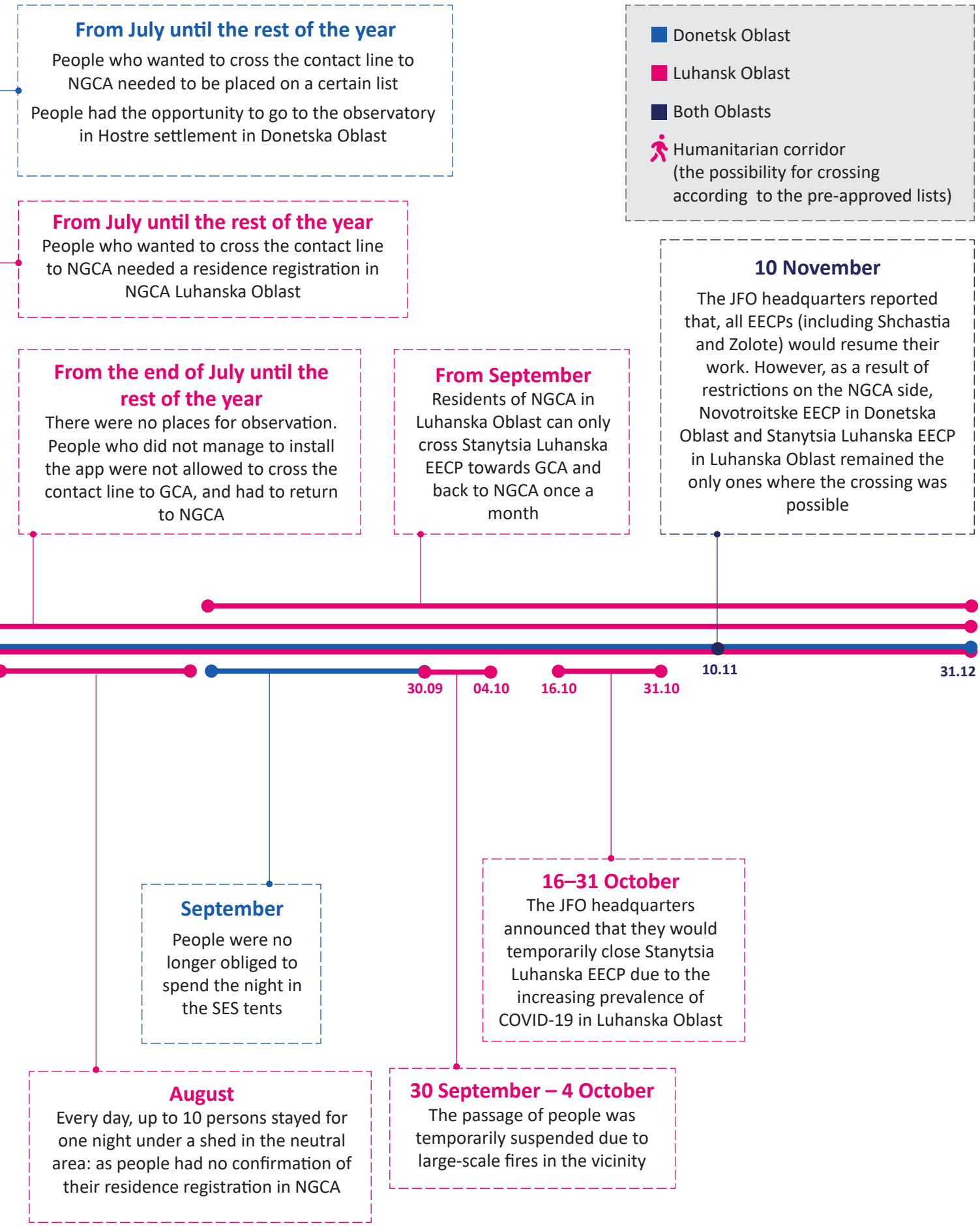
► Stanytsia Luhanska remained the only EECP in Luhanska Oblast where it was possible to cross the contact line: people who wanted to cross to NGCA needed a residence registration in NGCA Luhanska Oblast, as per an interim measure by de-facto authorities. Meanwhile, entry to the GCA side was free.

► On 10 November, two new EECPs were opened at Shchastia and Zolote on the GCA side in Luhanska Oblast. The administrative service centre, bank, and post office were constructed and opened at Shchastia EECP. Despite the preparedness of EECPs on the GCA side, the pass at these EECPs was not carried out, due to the closed EECPs on the side of the NGCA.

► In the period 1 January to 17 March, 67,134 vulnerable elderly persons were provided with transport support at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP by NGO Proliska electric vehicle. As of 17 March, transportation services were suspended due to imposed quarantine measures. In June, e-vehicle services could resume. The total number of people transported in 2020 was 129,720.




17–21 March
People could cross only in the direction of their residence registration ("propiska") – NGCA or GCA"
9 June
The Headquarters of JFO reported that EECPs on GCA side would resume their work
13 June
Children with accompanying person are allowed to enter for passing the EIT without mandatory self-isolation
21 March
NGCA EECPs fully suspended passing of people
30 May
15 June
Since then, NGCA de-facto authorities allowed crossing only according to the pre-approved lists
22 March
NGCA EECPs fully suspended passing of people
19 May
19 June
The crossing procedure became less complicated: people who wanted to cross the contact line to NGCA needed a residence registration in NGCA Luhanska Oblast
1 April
25 April
16 May
16–18 June
30–31 June
10 June
The NGCA side did not allow any crossings
22–25 June
Stanytsia Luhanska EECP and Novotroitske EECP
28 June
NGCA de-facto authorities announced full suspension of crossings in Donetsk oblast
11 June
De-facto authorities announced about possible opening of EECPs since 22 June
26–29 June
Stanytsia Luhanska EECP and Novotroitske EECP


From July until the rest of the year
People who wanted to cross the contact line to NGCA needed to be placed on a certain list
People had the opportunity to go to the observatory in Hostre settlement in Donetska Oblast
Donetsk Oblast
Luhansk Oblast
Both Oblasts
Humanitarian corridor (the possibility for crossing according to the pre-approved lists)
From July until the rest of the year
People who wanted to cross the contact line to NGCA needed a residence registration in NGCA Luhanska Oblast
10 November
The JFO headquarters reported that, all EECPs (including Shchastia and Zolote) would resume their work. However, as a result of restrictions on the NGCA side, Novotroitske EECP in Donetska Oblast and Stanytsia Luhanska EECP in Luhanska Oblast remained the only ones where the crossing was possible
From the end of July until the rest of the year
There were no places for observation. People who did not manage to install the app were not allowed to cross the contact line to GCA, and had to return to NGCA
From September
Residents of NGCA in Luhanska Oblast can only cross Stanytsia Luhanska EECP towards GCA and back to NGCA once a month
30.09
04.10
16.10
31.10
10.11
31.12
September
People were no longer obliged to spend the night in the SES tents
16–31 October
The JFO headquarters announced that they would temporarily close Stanytsia Luhanska EECP due to the increasing prevalence of COVID-19 in Luhanska Oblast
August
Every day, up to 10 persons stayed for one night under a shed in the neutral area: as people had no confirmation of their residence registration in NGCA
30 September – 4 October
The passage of people was temporarily suspended due to large-scale fires in the vicinity

THE IMPACT OF QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS ON WORK OF EECPs

On 12 March, the Government of Ukraine introduced a quarantine and approved a package of anti-epidemic measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 22 March, GCA EECPs fully suspended the passing of people while de-facto authorities did it a day earlier.

This quarantine vastly hindered the mobility of thousands of people including IDPs who are registered as residents on one side but genuinely reside on the other and could not cross the contact line in time. The closure of EECPs blocked thousands of people from accessing their permanent residence, visits or care for family members, collecting social benefits or pensions to which they are entitled, obtaining birth and death certificates amongst other essential needs.

Attempts to cross the contact line during quarantine exposed people to severe hazards, including shelling or mine explosions when being stuck at "zero" checkpoint.

Furthermore, people without sufficient means to arrange their accommodation were compelled to survive however they could manage, by staying at bus stations, cars, State Emergency Service (SES) tents, or plainly outdoors; often without being provided with food, medicine, or basic hygiene products. Most of all, they were facing uncertainty about the crossing procedure due to the lack of coordination from both sides of the contact line and the rapidly changing circumstances.

According to the information received from the beneficiaries, in some cases, people crossing the contact line from the NGCA to GCA were required to sign a document on non-return to NGCA until the end of the quarantine there.

March

► On 15 March, it was announced a few hours before the EECP closure that the crossing of the contact line, from then on, would be allowed only in the direction of person's residence registration ("propiska") – NGCA or GCA or if a person had an urgent issue (family reunion, critical medical condition, etc.). From 22 March, GCA EECPs fully suspended the passing of people, with a very limited number of specific exceptions, while de-facto authorities did it a day earlier. As a result, by the end of the month people were stranded on all EECPs for days, often without having financial means for temporary accommodation.

April

► EECPs continued to operate in a restricted mode. To cross through an EECP, people are required to have special permission from both sides. Albeit, even after getting approval to cross the contact line from one side, the other side might still not allow the crossing. Thus, people submitted requests and waited for a decision. Over 200 attempts to cross the contact line were reported during April. Despite some people had humanitarian reasons, almost all of them were rejected to cross.

May

► Over 160 persons crossed the contact line in both directions during May. Most of the crossings (156 persons) took place at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP according to a pre-



agreed list. There were concerns about the transparency of the formation of this list since this procedure had not been clarified. According to information from the open sources, the number of people from the list was over 700 persons in mid-May. The list focused primarily on families whose members need urgent treatment. The inability of crossing through EECPs made people try illegal ways of crossing. Thus, a 35-year-old female resident of Avdiivka was blown up by a mine near Dokuchaevsk when attempting to cross the contact line by passing official regulations.

June

► On 9 June, the Headquarters of Joint Forces Operation (JFO) reported that from 10 June EECPs would resume their work. Nevertheless, the problem of freedom of movement across the contact line remained unresolved: after several unsuccessful attempts of people to cross the contact line at Marinka and Novotroitske EECPs, it became clear that the NGCA side did not allow entering any people. On 11 June, it became known about the possible opening of EECPs on the NGCA side from 22 June. People who came to the EECPs, expecting that the EECPs would resume their work on 10 June, found themselves in a stalemate: in many cases, people stayed at EECPs, waiting when EECPs on the NGCA side would resume operating. On 22 June, the crossing took place from both sides at Novotroitske EECP. NGCA suspended the crossing of people from 28 June, without indicating when the regular movement would resume.

► On 10 June at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP, SBGS servicemen allowed to cross the first six people through the EECP on the GCA side, but they were blocked on the NGCA side. But as in the previous month, people were allowed to cross according to the previously agreed list on 13-15 June. Since 16 June NGCA de facto authorities have allowed entering to NGCA only after preliminary approval of a list of persons. According to this procedure, people who are waiting for permission to cross at GCA side, make a list of those who are willing to cross the contact line and pass this list physically to NGCA checkpoint. After that, NGCA representatives inform people by phone about permission to cross.

► At Novotroitske EECP, over 40 people were stuck at "zero" checkpoint due to technical issues with installing the app «Vdoma». In general, there was a range of issues with installing the app "Vdoma": (1) improper internet access because of weak (or lack of) Wi-FI and/or mobile connection (mostly Kyivstar sim-cards); (2) a lot of people have push-button phones or older smartphones (mostly Lenovo) that could not support the app; (3) the wrong algorithm of app activation when SBGS representatives required people to confirm the place of self-isolation and upload a reference photo directly at the EECP. Ultimately, it might have subsequently caused issues with geolocation since people could not confirm the actual place of self-isolation later. The last issue was solved by the end of June upon R2P's intervention. Remarkably, persons who could not install the app were placed in SES tent to resolve those issues on the following day or were sent to observation.

► In order to get the opportunity to cross from or to the NGCA side, people needed to be registered on a certain list with a complex procedure for submitting documents and to write an application to the NGCA Emergency headquarters for fighting the spread of COVID-19 via an email or Telegram.

► There were several issues with the crossing procedure at the NGCA side for people who passed through the EECP from NGCA to GCA. In particular, people were supposed to have residence registration



("propiska") in GCA to be allowed to cross the checkpoint. In addition, people were required to sign a document on NGCA on non-return to the NGCA side until the end of the quarantine there (according to people who managed to cross through Novotroitske EECP to GCA).

► This situation prevented NGCA residents from accessing services on the GCA side since they were afraid to get stuck there without the possibility to return home soon. Besides, residents of NGCA upon crossing the checkpoint were to be sent for 2 weeks observation without any alternative options of self-isolation regime.

July

► In Donetska Oblast at Novotroitske EECP, the process of crossing was the same as in the previous month: people needed to be placed on a list, compiled by de-facto authorities in NGCA. It entailed a complex procedure of document submission, including writing an application to the NGCA "Emergency headquarters for fighting the spread of COVID-19" via an email or Telegram.

► In Luhanska Oblast at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP, people who wanted to cross the contact line to NGCA needed a residence registration in NGCA Luhanska Oblast, as per an interim measure.

► On 7 July, NGCA de-facto authorities transferred to GCA the list of persons who were allowed to cross the contact line at Novotroitske EECP from GCA to NGCA. GCA let persons cross the contact line but warned about the non-pass rule for people beyond the list. As a result, 83 non-listed people were stuck at "zero" checkpoint. The military and police forces of NGCA dispersed those people. According to information from open sources, 15 of them were ill-treated. Later, 37 persons moved back to GCA side, and the other 46 moved to NGCA side.

► From July until the rest of the year, people who crossed the contact line from NGCA to GCA in Donetska Oblast, in case if they could not install the app "Vdoma", had the opportunity to go to the observatory in Hostre settlement in Donetska Oblast. In Luhanska Oblast, the situation was somewhat different: previously, people were sent to observatories nearby settlements (Stanytsia, Petropavlovka, etc.). However, from the end of July until the rest of the year, there were no places for observation in Luhanska Oblast. People who did not manage to install the app were not allowed to cross the contact line to GCA, and had to return to NGCA.

August

► All EECPs remained closed with very few exceptions. The process of crossing at Novotroitske EECP in Donetska Oblast and Stanytsia Luhanska EECP in Luhanska Oblast remained the same as in the previous month.

► Every day, up to 10 persons stayed for one night under a shed in the neutral area at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP: they were not allowed to return home to the NGCA by de-facto authorities, as people had no confirmation of their residence registration in NGCA. Later, some of them managed to provide certificates from a house maintenance company confirming their NGCA residence.

September

► From 18 September, people were no longer obliged to spend the night in the SES tents at Novotroitske EECP. Upon the initiative of Donetska Oblast State Administration, people who awaited the crossing in the SES tent were asked to move to a Socio-Psychological rehabilitation centre in Druzhkovka.

► Changes in the rules for crossing the contact line and transportation of goods were introduced by de-facto authorities in Luhanska Oblast. As a result, residents of NGCA in Luhanska Oblast can only cross Stanytsia Luhanska EECP towards GCA and back to NGCA once a month. Also, NGCA regulations on transportation of goods through EECP are similar to GCA rules. Three different categories of goods were defined: allowed

without limitation, allowed with limitation, prohibited. The transportation of goods for commercial purposes was prohibited.

October

► From 30 September to 4 October, the passage of people was temporarily suspended at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP in Luhanska Oblast due to large-scale fires in the vicinity. As a result of the wildfire on the EECP on 30 September and 1 October, the first-aid point and the waiting area were partially damaged. All beneficiaries waiting to cross the contact line were safely evacuated.

► On 13 October, the JFO headquarters announced that they would temporarily close Stanytsia Luhanska EECP between 16 and 31 October due to the increasing prevalence of COVID-19 in Luhanska Oblast. From the moment of closing Stanytsia Luhanska EECP until the end of October, only about 200 people received JFO HQ permission to cross the contact line to NGCA.

► The day after the closing of Stanytsia Luhanska EECP, people who came to cross the contact line to NGCA gathered there: in many cases, people claimed that they were uninformed about the closure of the EECP. Some people stayed overnight at the EECP, waiting for the opportunity to cross the contact line to NGCA, but were not provided with accommodation. Also, there were a lot of older people above 80 years of age.

November

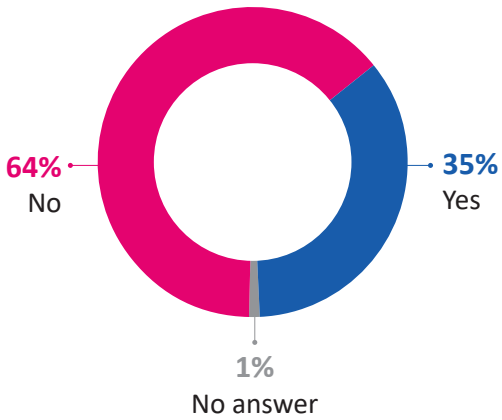
► On 9 November, the JFO headquarters reported that, from 10 November, all EECPs (including new EECPs in Luhanska Oblast – Shchastia and Zolote) would resume their work after a temporary suspension due to the worsened epidemiological situation. However, as a result of restrictions on the NGCA side, Novotroitske EECP in Donetska Oblast and Stanytsia Luhanska EECP in Luhanska Oblast remained the only ones where the crossing was possible.

December

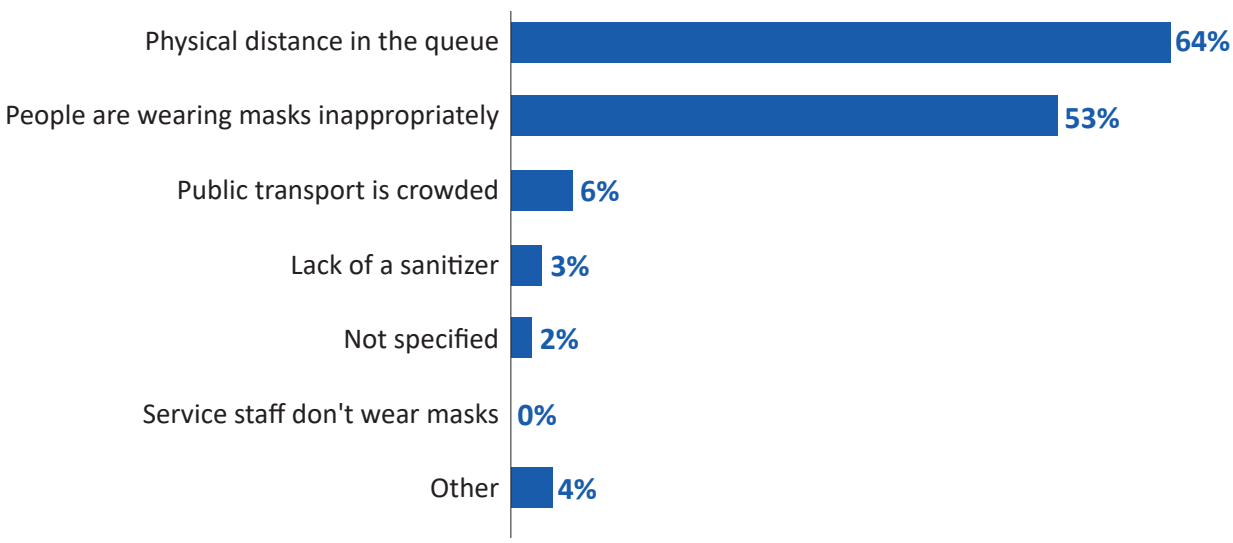
► The situation remained unchanged: Crossing the contact line remained possible only through two EECP (Novotroitske in Donetska Oblast and Stanytsia Luhanska in Luhanska Oblast).

COVID-19 SPECIFIC QUESTIONS (From 1 of November 2020)

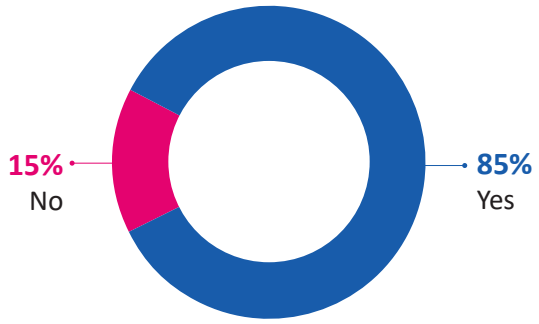
COVID-19-related concerns while crossing the contact line



Types of COVID-19-related concerns while crossing the contact line



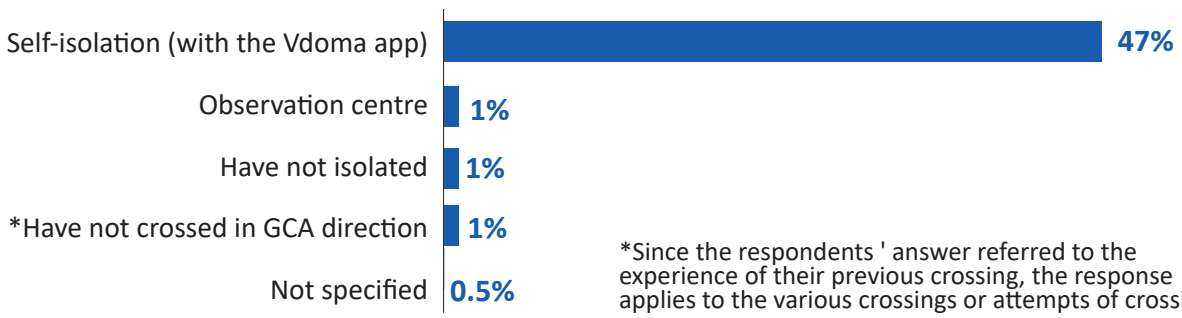
Isolation conducted after crossing the contact line from GCA to NGCA



Options for isolation after crossing the contact line from GCA to NGCA

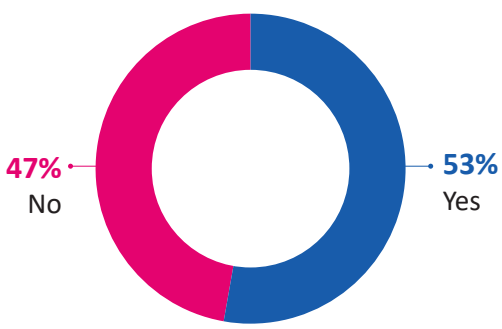


Options for compulsory self-isolation after crossing the contact line from NGCA to GCA

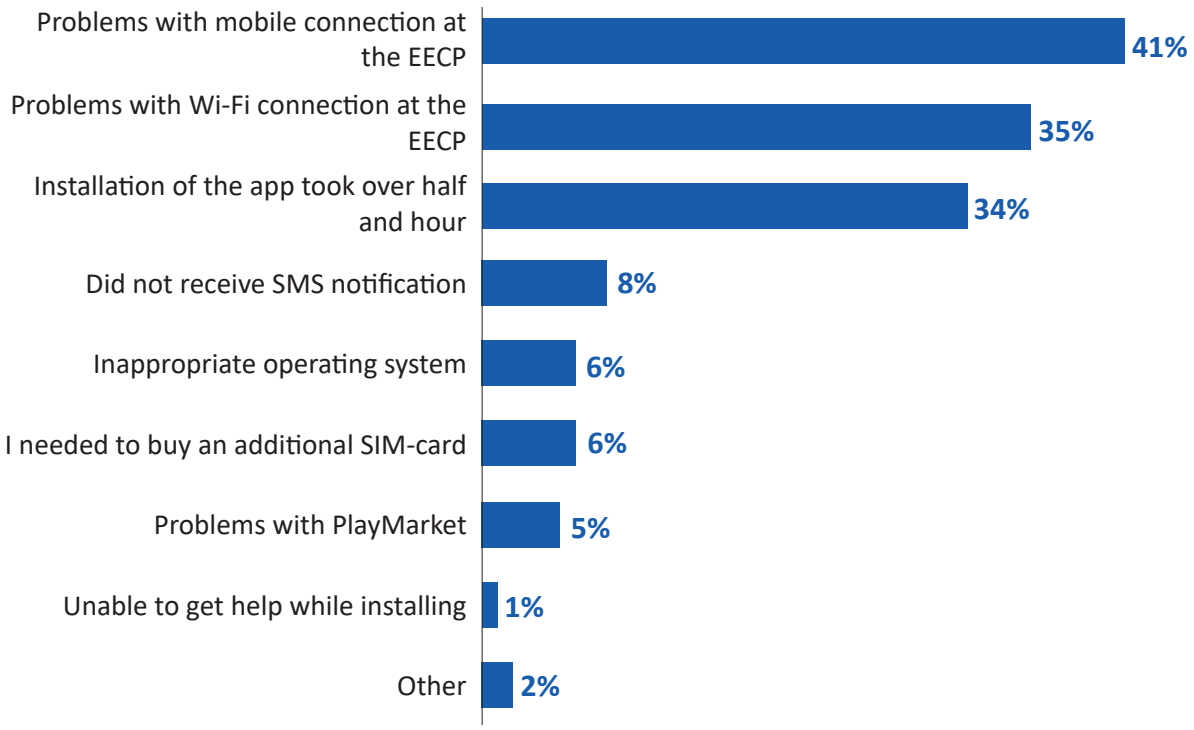


*Since the respondents ' answer referred to the experience of their previous crossing, the response applies to the various crossings or attempts of crossing

Difficulties while installing “Vdoma” app



Types of difficulties while installing “Vdoma” app



1. DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

For the period from January to December, R2P monitors surveyed **7,029 individuals**. Among them, **5,785 people** were interviewed from January until March, when quarantine measures were introduced. The rest (1,244 people) were interviewed from October, at the two EECP still open.

The introduction of quarantine restrictions on movements across EECPs resulted in a drastic drop in the number of crossings. According to the SBGS statistics,[3] **there were 13,933,000 crossings in 2019, while fewer than 2,952,000 took place in 2020.** Since the introduction of the quarantine, there were only 310,000 crossings in the fourth quarter of 2020, compared to 2,642,000 in the first quarter of 2020.

Figure 1.1 Gender of respondents in the first quarter 2020

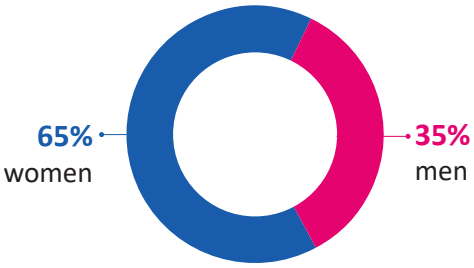
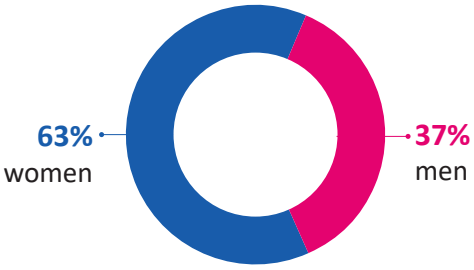


Figure 1.2 Gender of respondents in the fourth quarter 2020



5%

Respondents who traveled with children in 2020

The gender ratio was very similar between the two quarters during which the survey was conducted, fluctuating within a range of 2 percent (see figures 1.1 and 1.2). The age disaggregation also remained approximately the same, fluctuating within a range of 6 percent with older people representing the predominant majority of respondents (see figures 1.3 and 1.4). The overall statistics of the respondents surveyed in 2020 showed the following: the majority (65 percent) of respondents were women and 62 percent of all respondents were over 60 years old. Women over 60 years old constituted 41 percent of all respondents (2,876 individuals). Five percent of all respondents were travelling with children both in the first and fourth quarters of 2020. To a certain extent, the age bias is caused by the survey being conducted among the pedestrians only.

In the first quarter of 2020, the demographic profile was similar at all EECPs, though the share of respondents of older age was higher at Novotroitske and Marinka EECPs (69 percent and 66 percent respectively compared to 55-59 percent at other EECPs, see (the figure 1.5). This difference might be explained by the closer proximity of these EECPs with larger cities of Donetska Oblast NGCA and, consequently, lower transportation expenses. At the same time, Hnutove and Maiorske

3 General statistics on crossings are available at the UNHCR dashboard visualizing data from the State Border Guard Service – https://goo.gl/TZbU8c

EECPs are closer to the larger cities of Donetska Oblast GCA (such as Mariupol, Konstiantynivka, Bakhmut, etc.) with more services available for people of younger age, such as: to solve issues with documents in the administrative service centre, educational centres or some cultural events. The low number of younger respondents may suggest that they had less urgent reasons to cross

Figure 1.3 Gender and age of respondents in the first quarter 2020

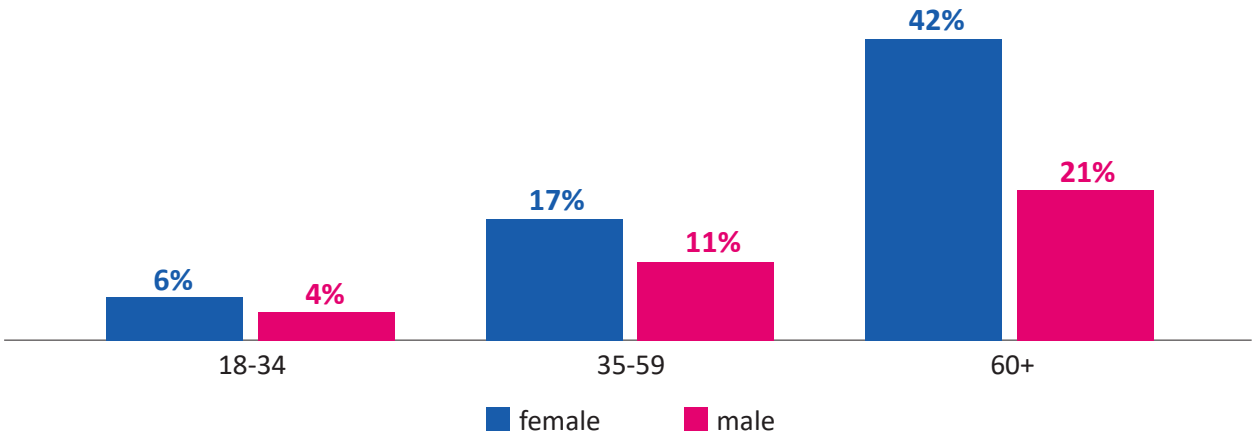
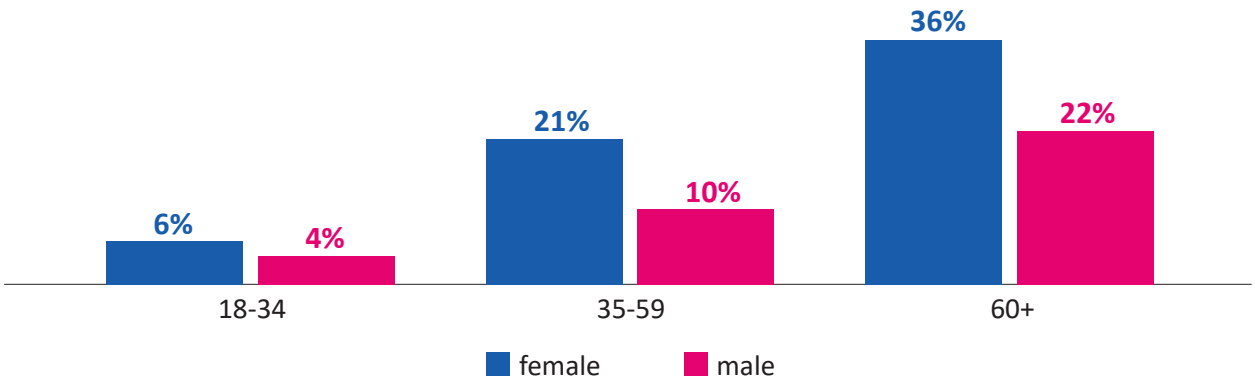


Figure 1.4 Gender and age of respondents in the fourth quarter 2020



the contact line.

During the fourth quarter of 2020, there was a significant difference in the proportion of elderly respondents at Novotroitske EECP, compared to the first quarter (see the figure 1.6). The decrease may be caused by the fact that in order to cross the contact line people needed to be placed on a list, compiled by de-facto authorities in NGCA. It entailed a complex procedure of document submission, including an indication of the humanitarian reason for the crossing and supporting documents. According to statistics, in the first quarter, solving issues with pensions or social payments (83 percent) as well as withdraw cash (47 percent) were the most common reasons among elderly people. But none of these reasons was a qualifying circumstance for obtaining permission to cross.

The overall distribution of respondents in 2020 was almost equal between both directions of crossing: 53 percent of interviews were conducted with people heading to NGCA, 47 percent – with people going to GCA (see figures 1.7 and 1.8).

Figure 1.5 Age of respondents by EECP in the first quarter 2020

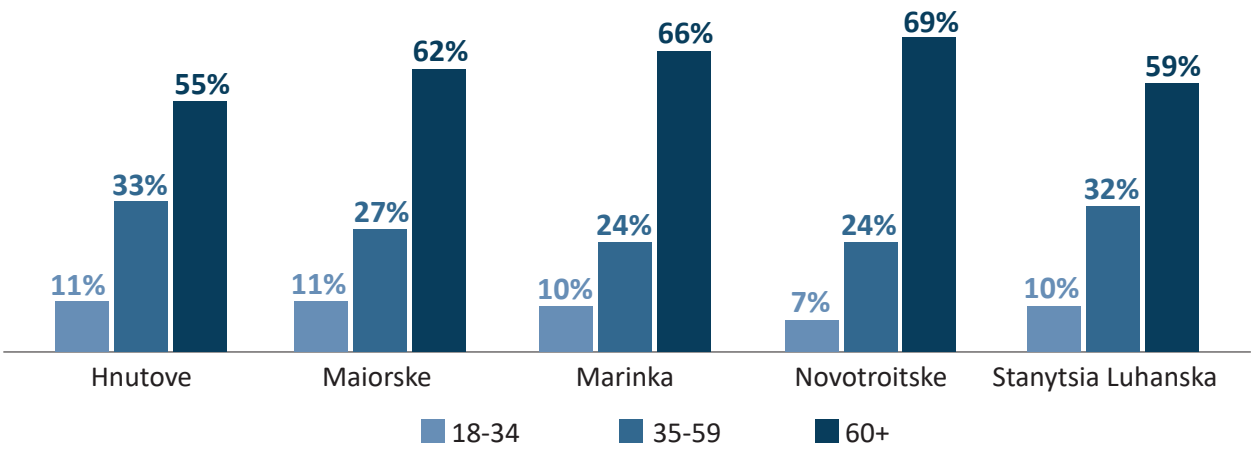


Figure 1.6 Age of respondents by EECP in the fourth quarter 2020

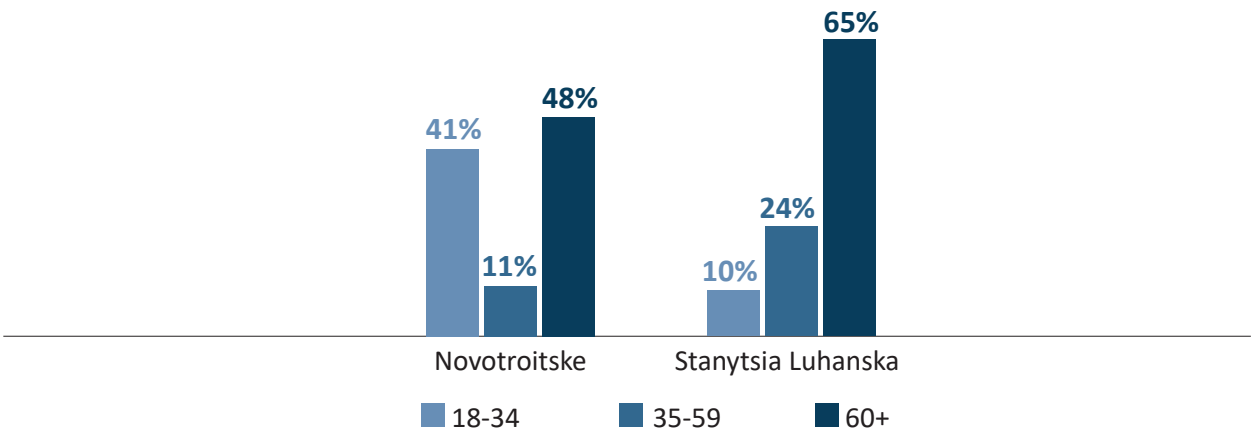


Figure 1.7 Direction of respondents in the first quarter 2020



Figure 1.8 Direction of respondents in the fourth quarter 2020



2. RESIDENCE, DISPLACEMENT, AND RETURNS

Figure 2.1 Pre-quarantine period. Residence before the conflict

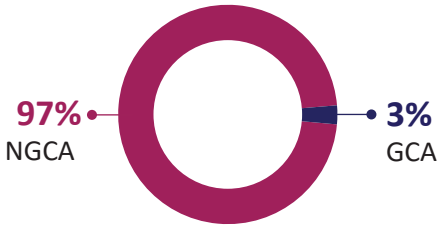


Figure 2.2 Post-quarantine period. Residence before the conflict

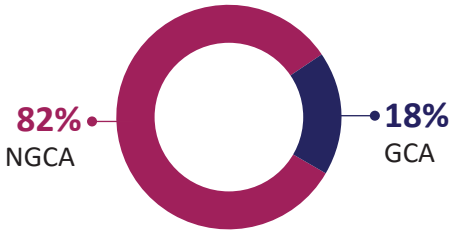


Figure 2.3 Pre-quarantine period. Current place of residence

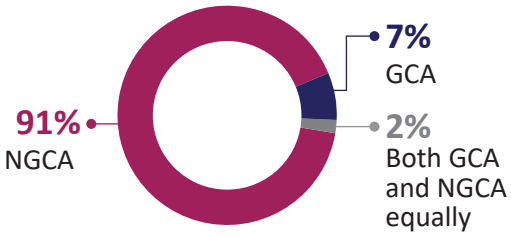
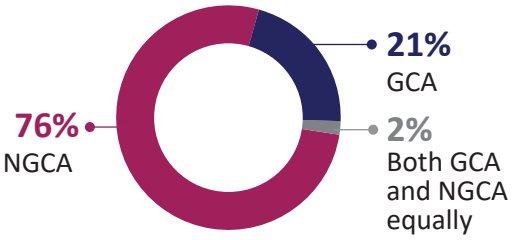


Figure 2.4 Post-quarantine period. Current place of residence



RESIDENCE

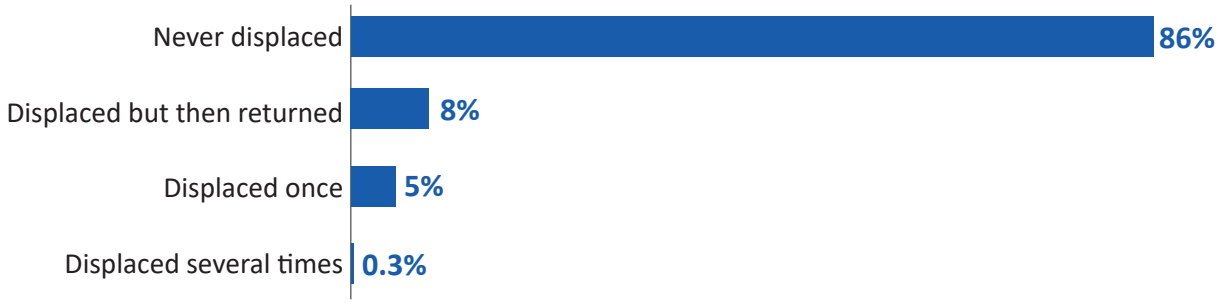
The share of respondents residing in the NGCA at the time of the survey differed in the pre-COVID period and after. In the first quarter of 2020, the majority of respondents (91 percent) stated that they resided in the NGCA, while the share constituted 76 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020 (see figures 2.3 and 2.4). This decrease may be caused by the complicated procedure of crossing, in particular for people with NGCA residence registration and who reside there. According to R2P monitors' observations, respondents with a GCA residence registration were granted permission by the de-facto authorities on leaving NGCA much faster in comparison with NGCA residents. GCA residents applying for crossing to GCA based on authorized reasons, received their permits much faster, while NGCA residents had to provide documents supporting the reason for their leaving of NGCA. At the same time, GCA residents have fewer reasons to visit the NGCA, while people who reside in the NGCA often need services that are unavailable or limited in the NGCA. According to the SBGS data on the number of crossings, the flow of people crossing the contact line throughout the year was lower on days when governmental entities and banks are closed (weekends, holidays, etc.) (for more detail see the section on reasons for crossing below). This explains the reduced share of NGCA residents in the total number of crossings during the fourth quarter of 2020.

Both in the period before and after the introduction of quarantine restrictions, most of the NGCA residents (58 percent and 66 percent respectively) stated that they live more than 20 kilometres from the contact line. About a quarter of the interviewed NGCA residents did not specify the distance from the contact line. There was no significant difference in the reasons for crossing depending on how far from the contact line resides the respondent.

DISPLACEMENT & RETURN

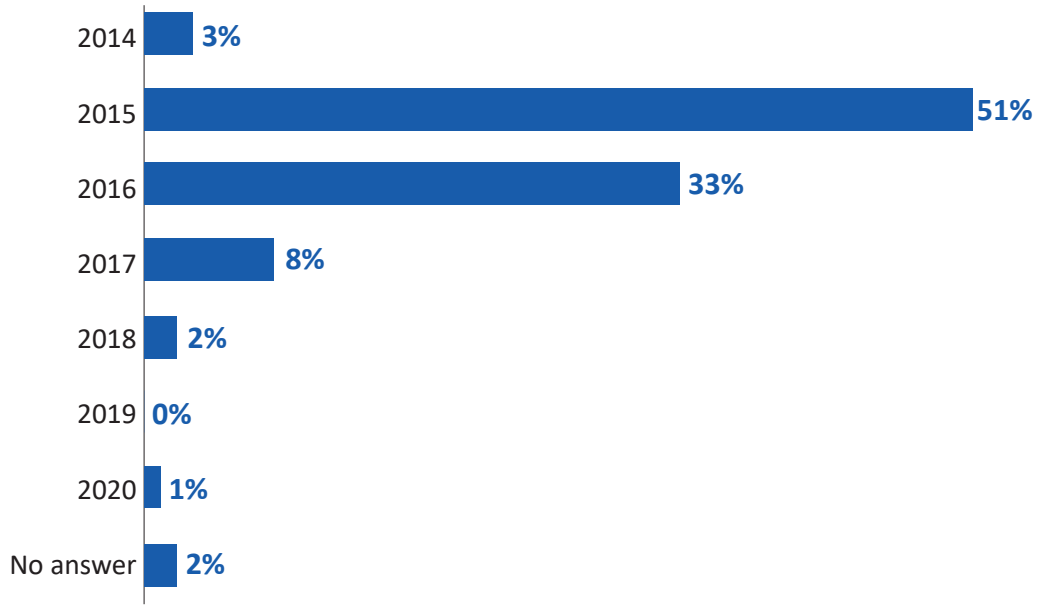
The majority of respondents (without significant difference in age and gender) indicated that they had never moved as a result of the conflict, confirming the assumption that the number of IDPs and returnees was generally low among people who cross the contact line (see the figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5 Displacement



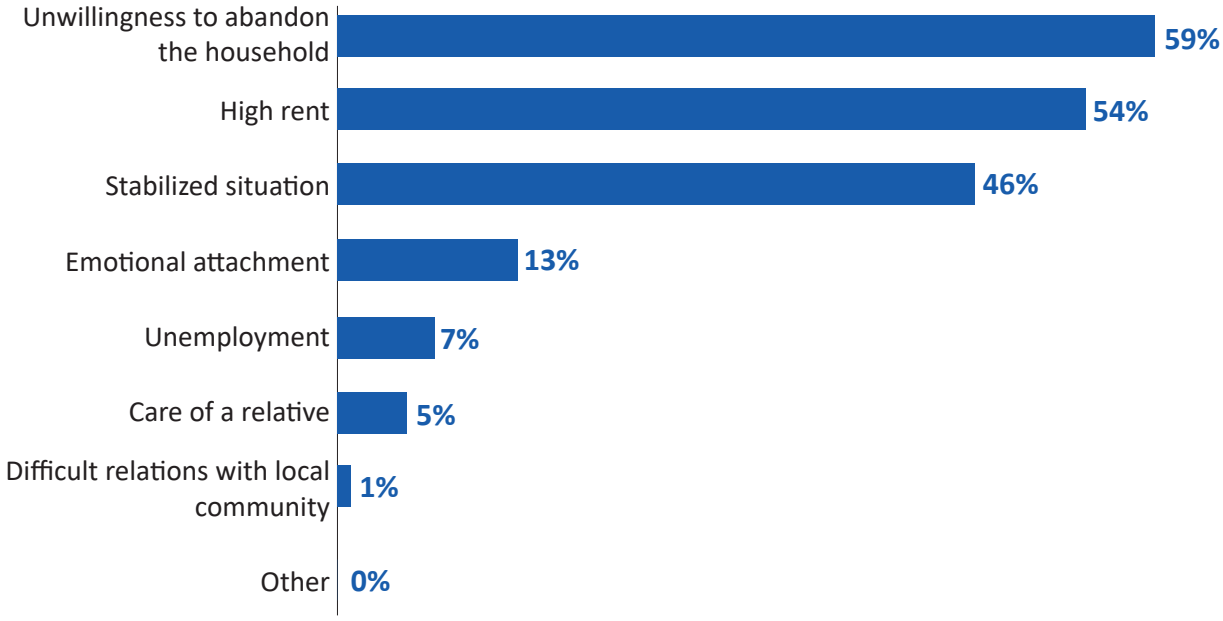
The analysis of the impact of the quarantine restrictions on the displacement, or return history of the respondents is irrelevant since all these movements took place before 2020 mainly in 2015 and 2016 (see the figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6 When returned



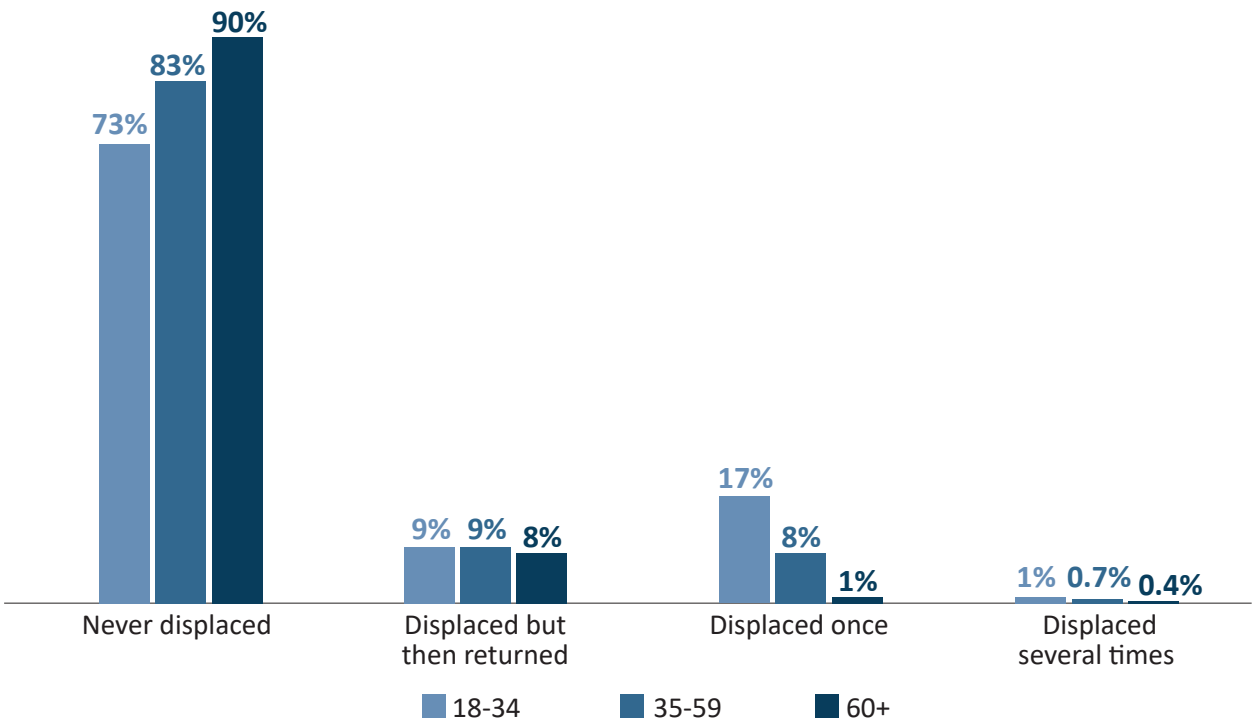
In total, 44 percent of the interviewed returnees claimed that their decision for return was both voluntary and due to the pressure of circumstances. 40 percent stated that their decision was voluntary. 15 percent of the respondents claimed to return solely under the pressure of circumstances. The most common reasons for return were the fear to abandon the household lest it be looted (59 percent), high rent (54 percent), and stabilized situation (46 percent) (see the figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7 Reasons for return among respondents who were displaced as a result of the conflict and went back to their homes



Besides, a quasi-equal share of respondents in the various age groups returned to their place of origin after displacement (see the figure 2.8). No difference between men and women was observed. Although the majority of respondents who were displaced at least once already returned to their previous place of residence, this proportion should not be extrapolated to all internally displaced persons or NGCA residents who do not travel across the contact line at all or who do not do so through official EECPs. It is also unknown what were the settlements respondents were displaced to.

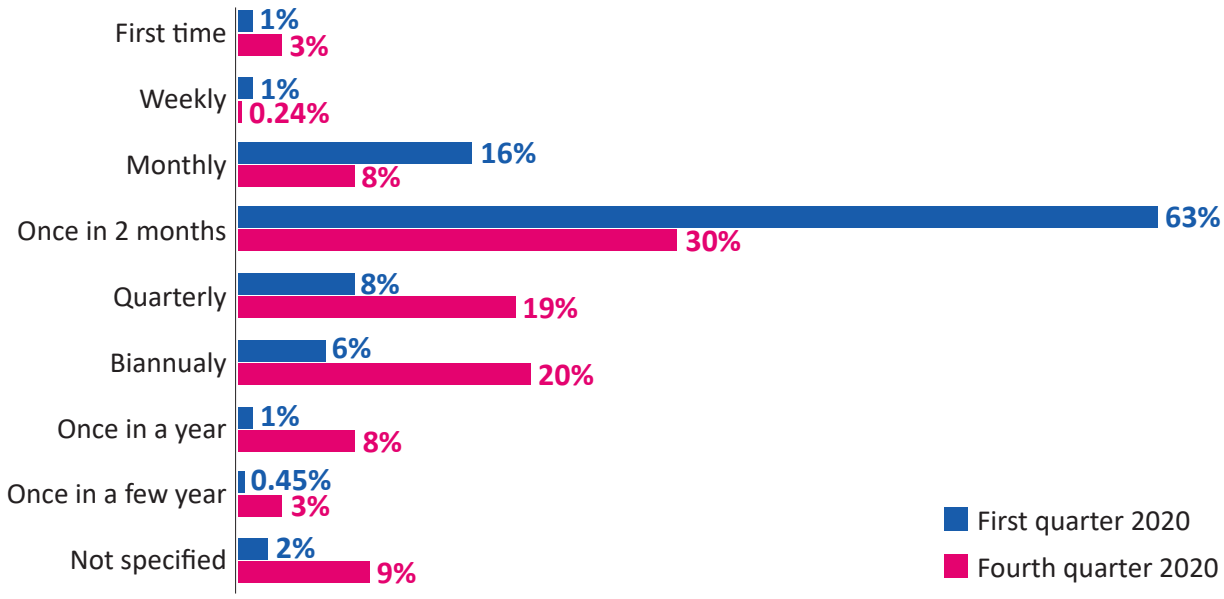
Figure 2.8 Displacement by age group (total data for all six months of the survey)



3. FREQUENCY AND DURATION OF CROSSING [4]

In the first quarter of 2020, the vast majority of respondents (63 percent) crossed the contact line once every two months (see the figure 3.1). This was especially relevant to pensioners (90 percent of older people travelled bimonthly), who need to be within the GCA at least once every 60 days to ensure the payment of their pension. Younger respondents could plan their trips based on their schedules and were not tied to any particular imposed frequency. Besides, in the first quarter of 2020, according to the monitoring observations, NGCA residents tended to make short trips (one or a few days) to solve their issues and return. During the fourth quarter, the question regarding the frequency of crossing was not asked as the quarantine had suspended movements, thereby interrupting the crossing schedules which respondents may have followed before. The duration of crossing significantly varied depending on the EECP and the side of it. In the first half of 2020, the longest duration of crossing (3-4 hours) was most frequently mentioned at Marinka and Hnutove EECPs on the NGCA side. The shortest waiting time (less than half an hour) was mostly mentioned at Maiorske EECP on the GCA side. This may be due to the fact that representatives of the Coordination group were present at Maiorske EECP, and if any questions arose, those could be quickly resolved by contacting the Coordination Group directly. The availability of fast and high-quality Internet at Maiorske EECP also affected the speed of crossing, accelerating application procedure, while the Internet connection quality remained a problem for the rest of the EECPs. Also, according to the observations of our monitors, we can note improved logistics on this EECP after the reconstruction of this EECP.

Figure 3.1 Frequency of crossing the contact line



4 As people were surveyed while they were in a process of crossing the contact line, the questions relating to duration referred to the previous crossing. 54% of all respondents stated that they had previously crossed the contact line within 2020.

After the introduction of quarantine restrictions, the crossing of the contact line remained in the two EECPs still opened took the same amount of time, compared to the first quarter. The vast majority of respondents mentioned it took them 2-3 hours to cross EECP on the NGCA side, and 1-2 hours – the GCA side (see figures 3.2 and 3.3).

Figure 3.2 Frequency of crossings by age in first quarter

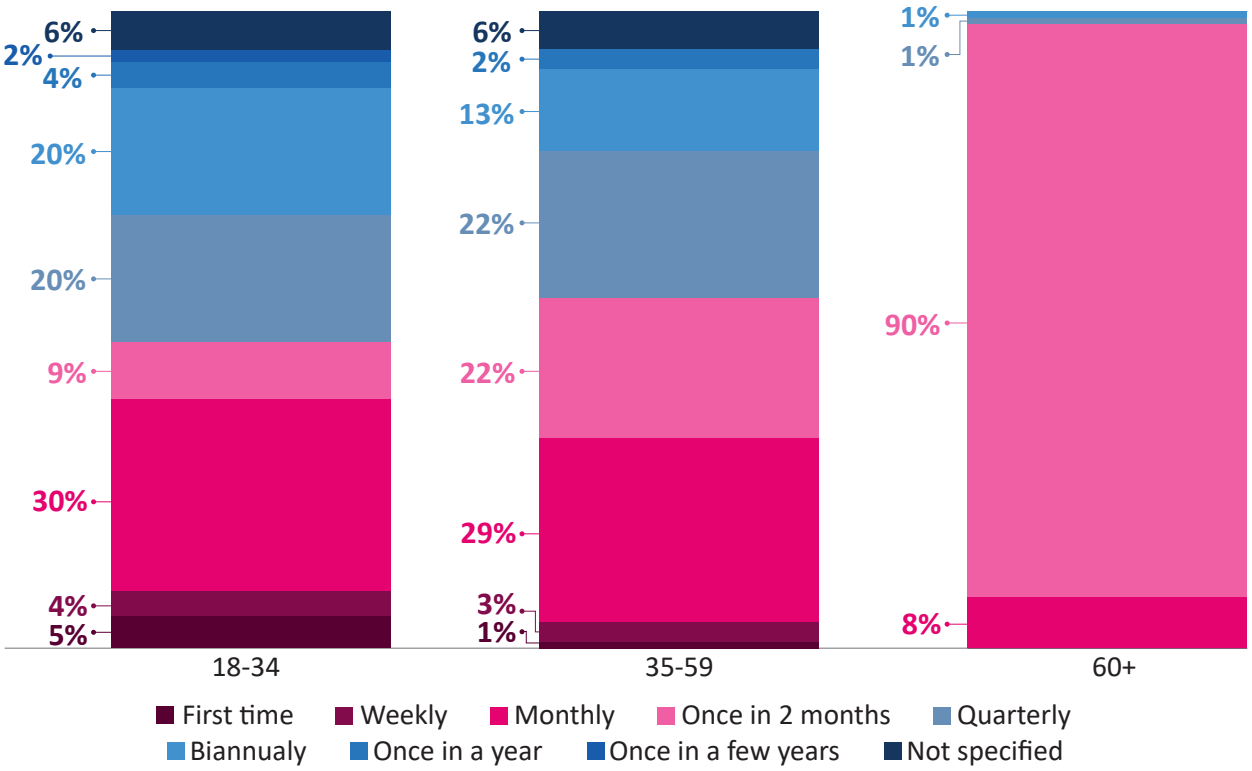
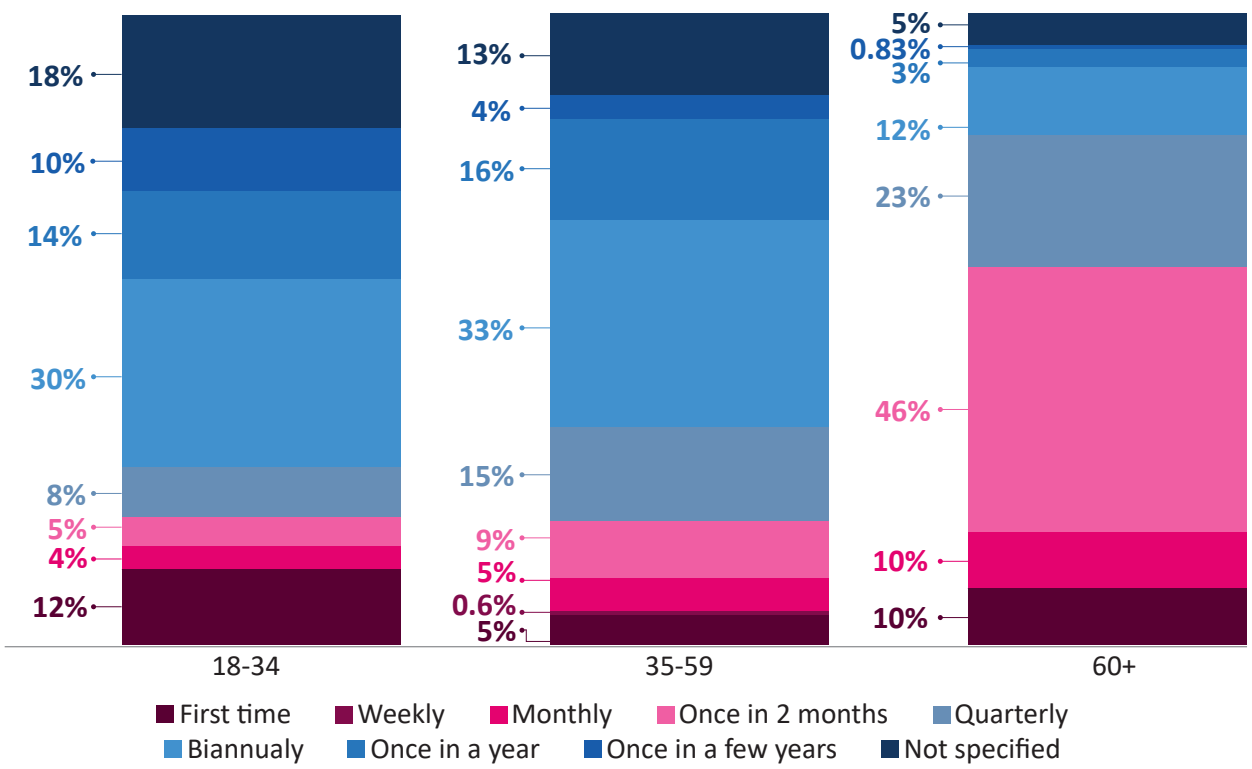


Figure 3.3 Frequency of crossings by age in fourth quarter



5. REASONS FOR CROSSING

Reasons for crossings indicated by respondents varied throughout two reporting periods. However, as in previous years, the reasons differed notably between GCA and NGCA residents (see figures 4.3 and 4.4).

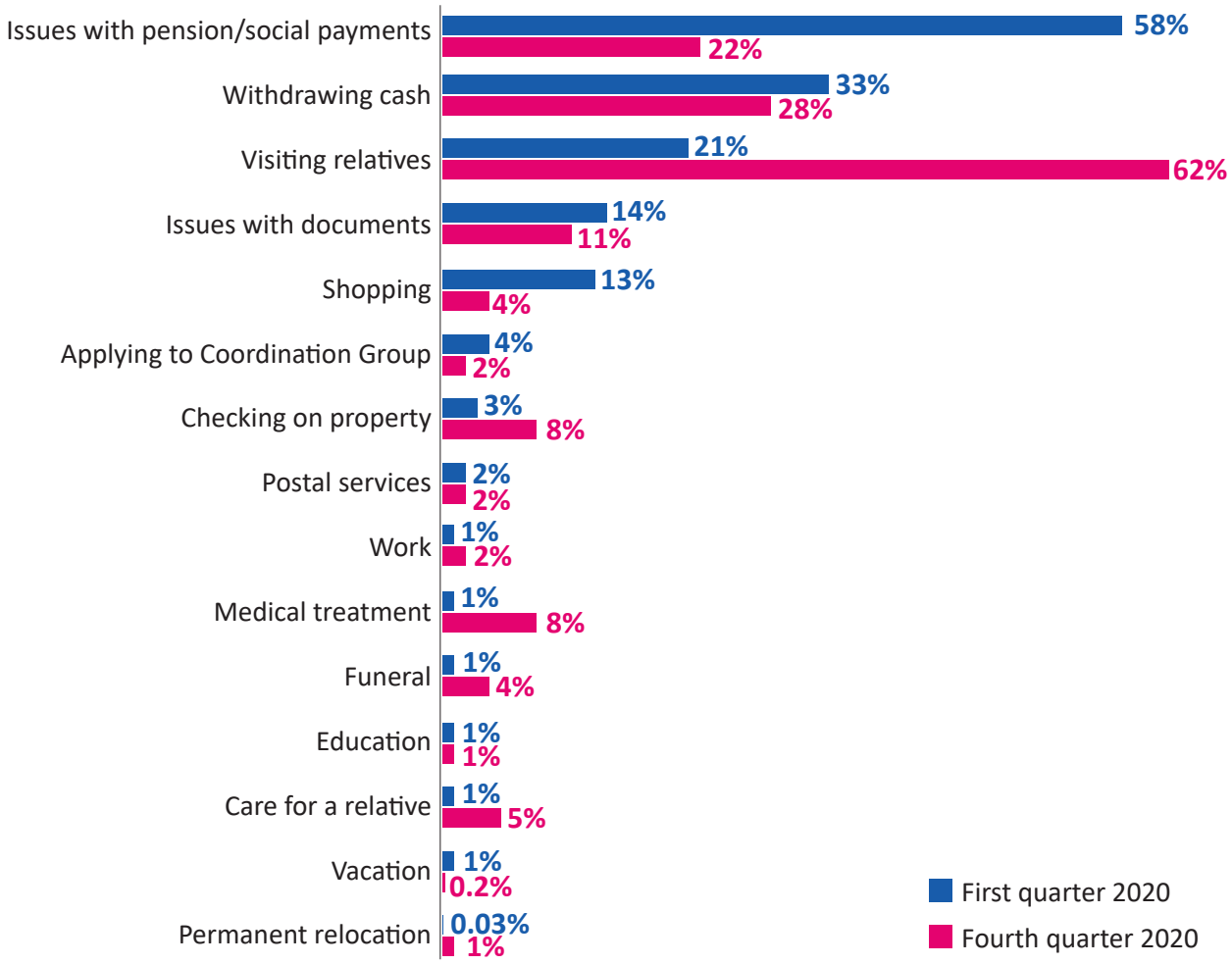
In the pre-COVID period, solving issues with pensions or social payments was the most common reason for NGCA residents. It was also a lot more common among elderly people: 83 percent of respondents over 60 years age mentioned it compared to only 41 percent of the respondents aged 18-34. These issues include avoiding payment suspension due to the 60-day limit of not being in GCA (91 percent of respondents who crossed the contact line from January to March); passing physical identification (74 percent); obtaining or reinstating pensions (8 percent), etc. Younger respondents were more likely to travel for visiting their relatives (41 percent in comparison to 12 percent of elderly respondents) and solve issues with documents (41 percent compared to 2 percent of elderly residents).

In the post-COVID period, the situation changed significantly. Visiting relatives became the main reason for crossing in the fourth quarter of 2020 (see the figure 4.1). The increase influenced all three age groups and was the most tangible among respondents over 60 – 58 percent compared to 12 percent in the pre-COVID period. For younger respondents, the figures were 62 percent vs 41 percent among respondents aged 18-34, and 68 percent vs 36 percent among respondents aged 35-59.

Comparing the two survey periods in 2020, there was no significant difference out of all people who had issues with documents. In total, 47 percent of respondents indicated issues related to passport. Among other documents, respondents mentioned obtaining death (13 percent), birth (5 percent), and IDP certificates (5 percent).



Figure 4.1 Reasons for crossings



In the first quarter of 2020, 13 percent of all respondents indicated shopping as one of their reasons for crossing compared to 4 percent of the respondents in the fourth quarter of 2020. At the same time, comparing the pre-COVID period and the post-COVID period, it should be mentioned that, there was a significant difference in the kind of purchases that respondents bought. Medicine drastically increased, while food and hygiene items dropped (see the figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Shopping: what kind of purchases

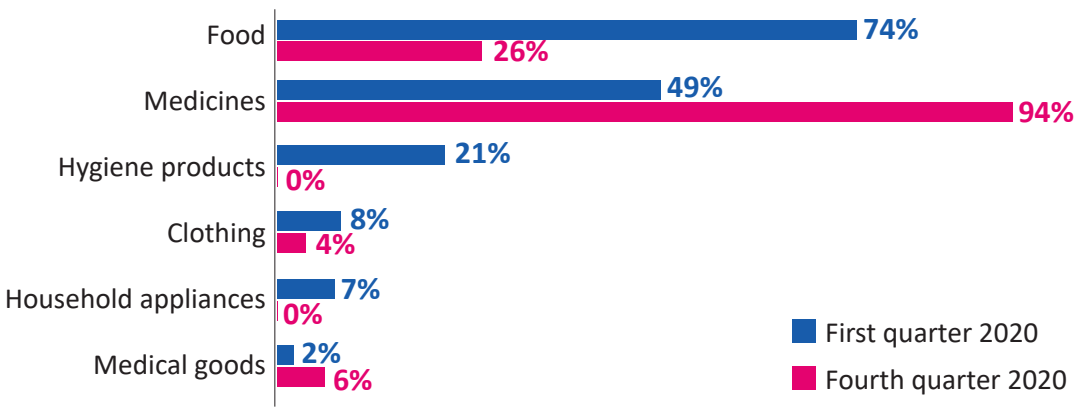
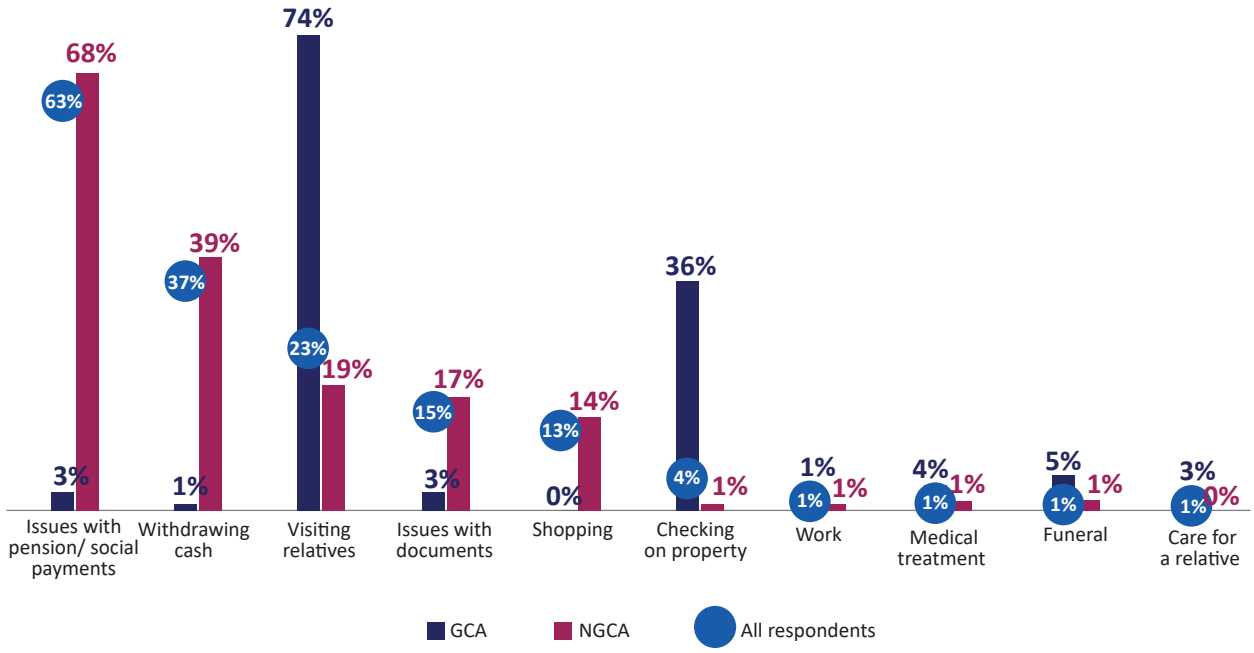
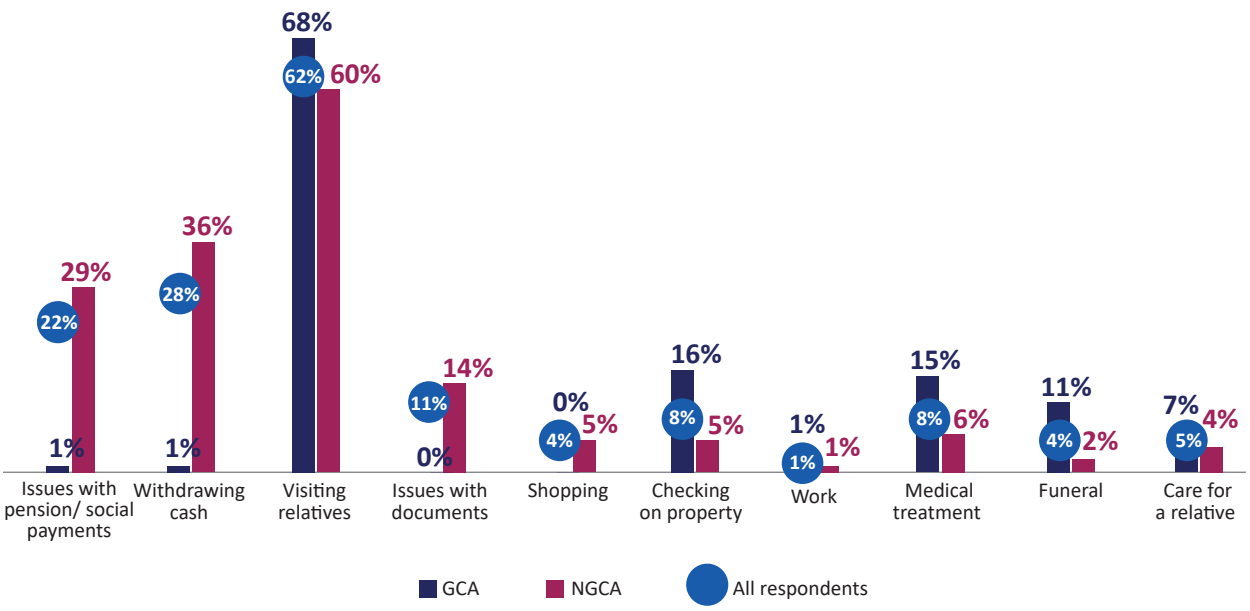


Figure 4.3 Reasons for crossings in the first quarter 2020



Percentages are calculated inside each group (GCA/NGCA). Respondents could indicate several reasons for crossing.

Figure 4.4 Reasons for crossings in the fourth quarter 2020

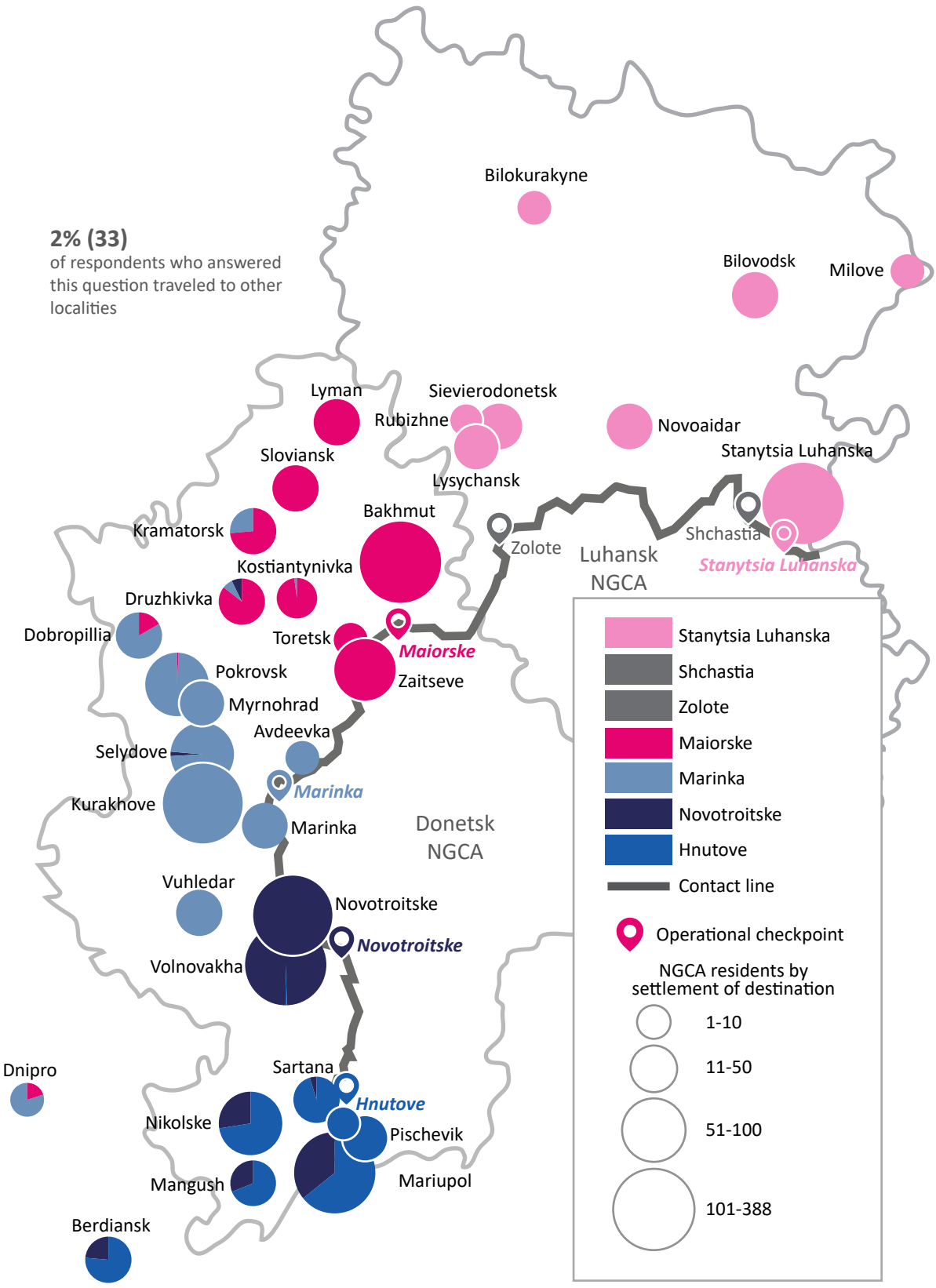


Percentages are calculated inside each group (GCA/NGCA). Respondents could indicate several reasons for crossing.

5. DESTINATION OF THE TRIP

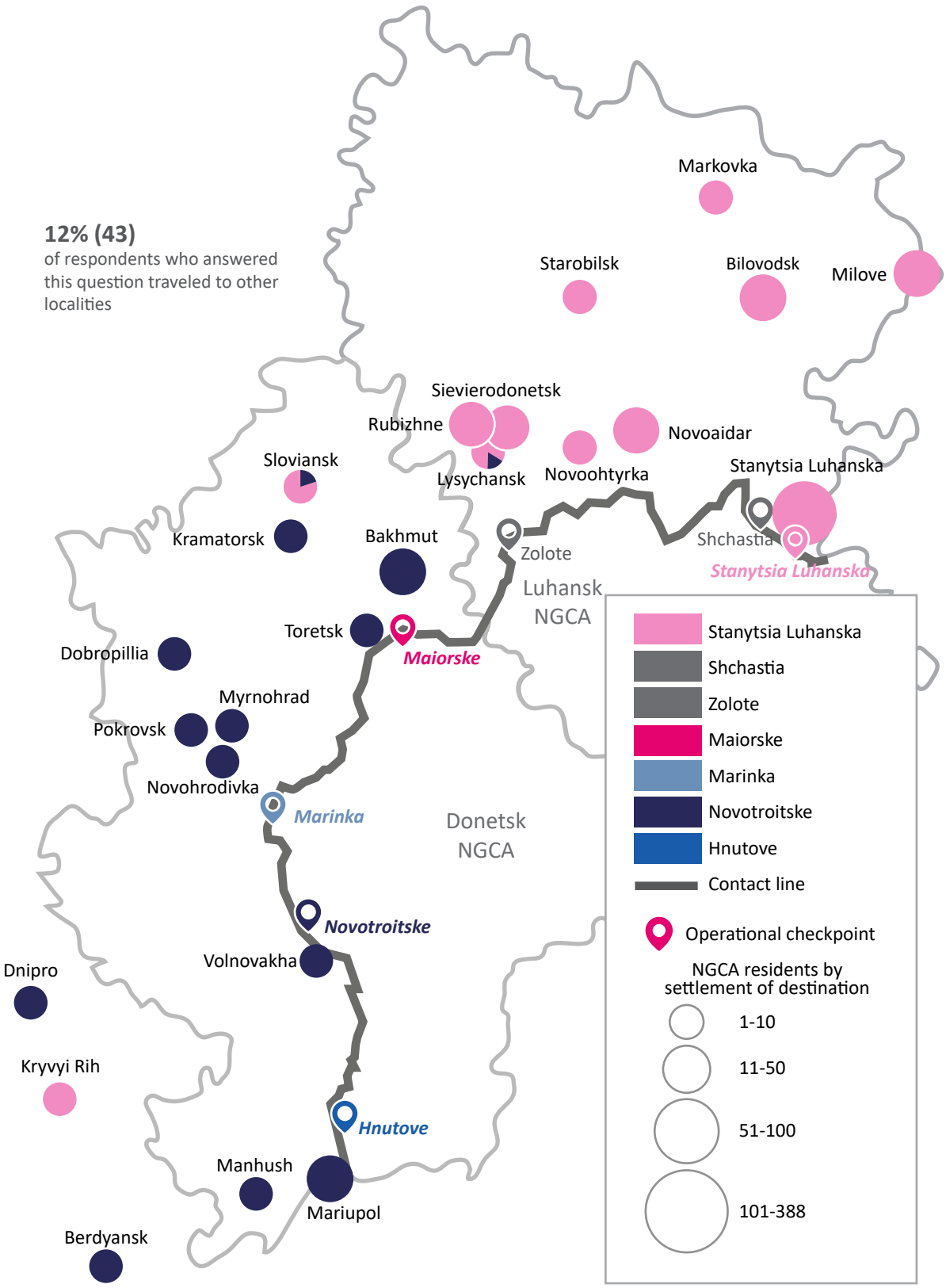
THE MOST COMMON DESTINATION POINT FOR NGCA RESPONDENTS JANUARY – MARCH 2020

2% (33)
of respondents who answered this question traveled to other localities



THE MOST COMMON DESTINATION POINT FOR NGCA RESPONDENTS OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2020

12% (43)
of respondents who answered this question traveled to other localities



6. CONCERNS WHILE CROSSING THE CONTACT LINE

Concerns shared by the respondents regarding the crossing differed significantly between the first and fourth quarters of 2020 (see the figure 6.1).

In general, the share of respondents concerned about the crossing decreased from 49 percent to 35 percent from the first to the fourth quarters of 2020.[5] However, the trends differed between two remaining operating EECPs – Novotroitske and Stanytsia Luhanska (see the figure 6.3). 58 percent was observed among respondents at Novotroitske EECP in the fourth quarter, probably due to the particularly complex procedure for crossing the contact line at this EECP. For instance, 49 percent of respondents noted possible issues with a permit as the reason for their concern at Novotroitske, while only 10 percent share this particular concern at the Stanytsa Luhanska EECP.

Long lines were a major concern at all EECPs in the first quarter of 2020. The share of respondents who mentioned this issue as their concern was different at each EECP, influenced by a multitude of factors such as the number of crossings at the particular EECP, technical issues, number of operating staff, etc (see the figure 6.2).

However, the concerns about long waiting lines dropped in the fourth quarter due to the decreased people flow at EECPs during quarantine restrictions. In the fourth quarter, the majority of respondents mentioned issues of the permit as their main concern (52 percent compared to 8 percent in the first quarter of 2020). Indeed, people faced uncertainty about the crossing procedure due to the lack of coordination from both sides of the contact line and the rapidly changing circumstances after the introduction of quarantine restrictions. In addition, the passage through the contact line depended on permission from the JFO or the de-facto authorities given through complicated procedures. Thus, some people were not able to cross the contact line despite having sufficient and relevant reasons for crossing.

No significant difference in concerns between the various age and gender groups was noted whether during the first or the fourth quarter.

Respondents did not report any concerns about sex- and gender-based violence to R2P monitors. There is a risk that people felt uncomfortable about reporting this type of concern.



5 Respondents could indicate several concerns

Figure 6.1 Most frequent concerns while crossing

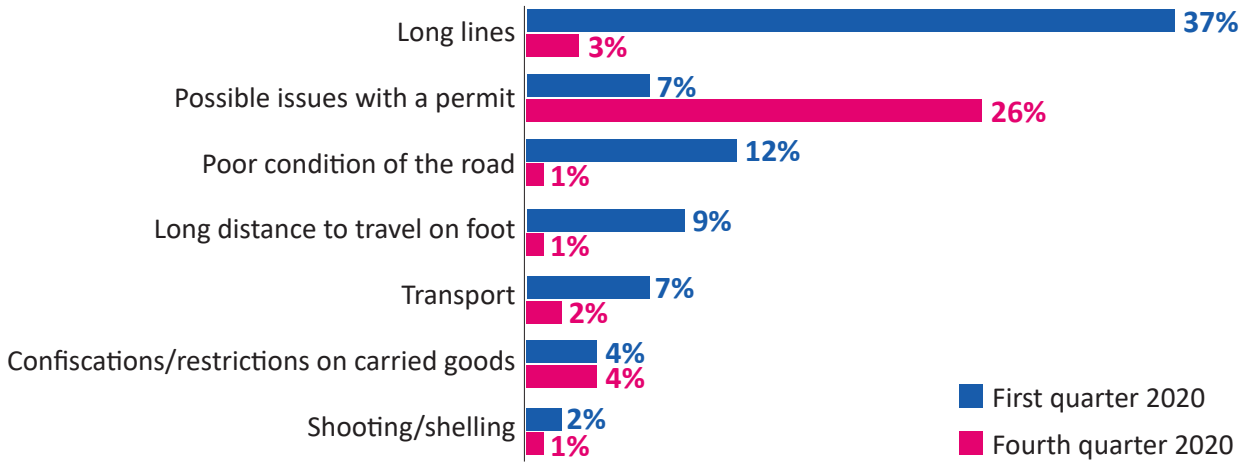


Figure 6.2 Percentage of respondents confirming having concerns when crossing EECPs in the first quarter 2020

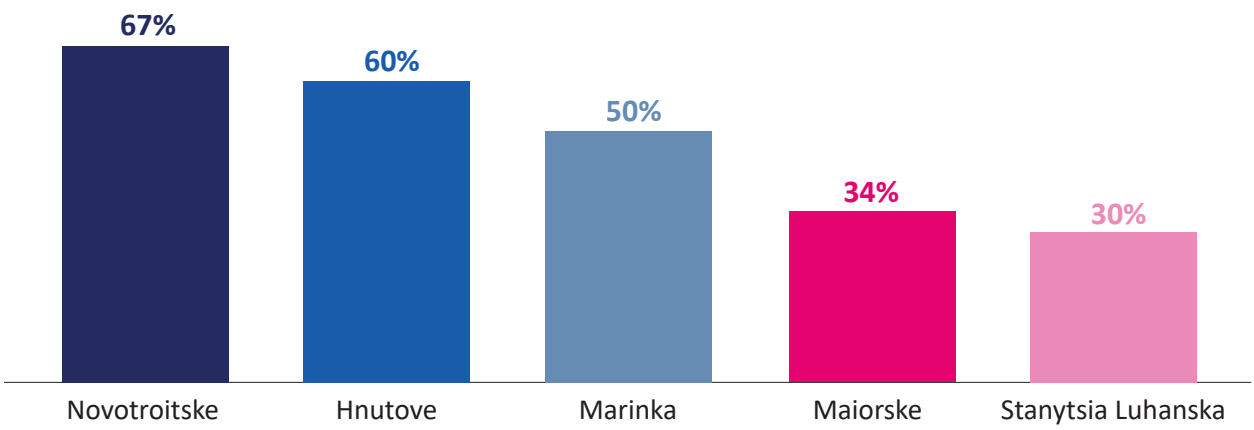
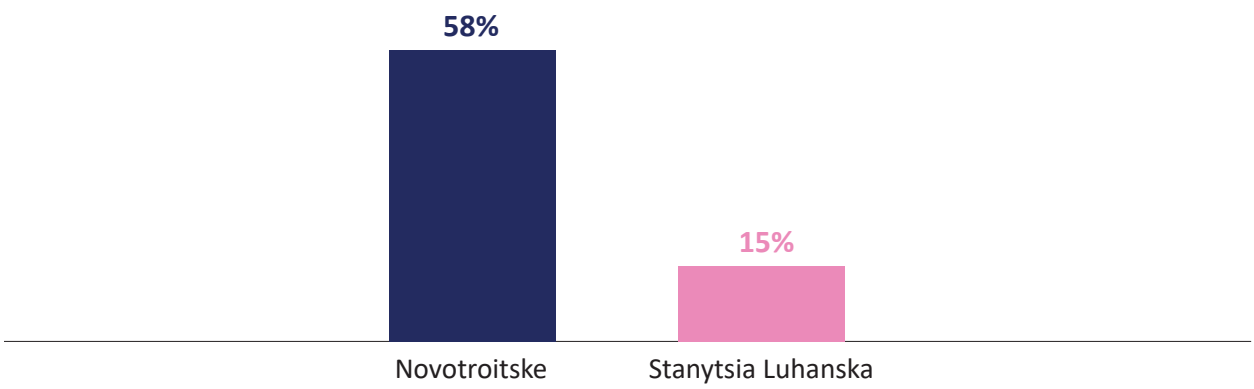


Figure 6.3 Percentage of respondents confirming having concerns when crossing EECPs in the fourth quarter 2020



7. WAITING CONDITIONS

In comparison with the first quarter of 2020, the share of respondents concerned about the waiting conditions decreased from 25 percent to 5 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020 (see the figure 7.1).

This may be due to the fact that in the post-COVID period, the complex and restrictive procedure for crossing led to a decrease in the number of crossings.

In the first quarter of 2020, among the five EECPs, the conditions at Hnutove were the least concerning to the respondents interviewed there. The flow of people travelling through Hnutove EECP was the lowest, which affected the level of concerns among respondents. In contrast, the highest share of concerned respondents was at Novotroitske EECP, which was particularly crowded.

In the fourth quarter of 2020, as the load on the EECP infrastructure decreased considerably on both operating ECCPs of Novotroitske and Stanytsia Luhanska, people expressed much less concern about the lack or poor condition of seats and toilets, and no concern about lack of sheds and medical units.

Figure 7.1 Issues with waiting conditions

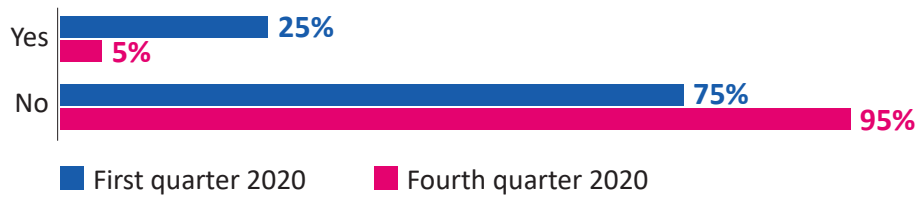
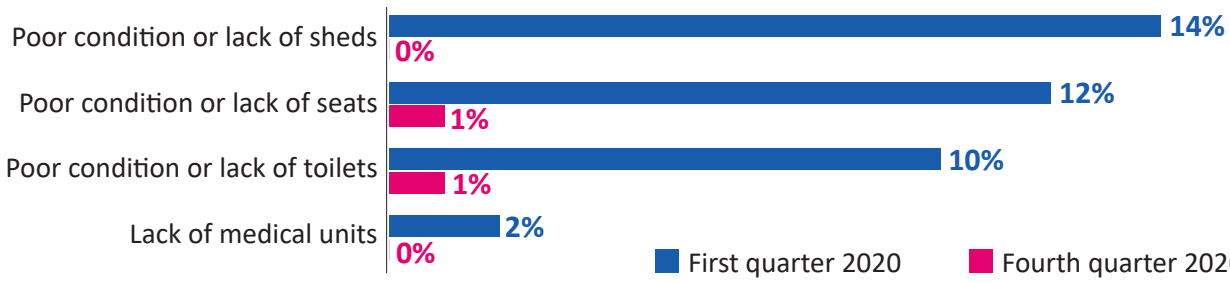


Figure 7.2 Type of issues with waiting conditions



8. AWARENESS OF RESPONDENTS

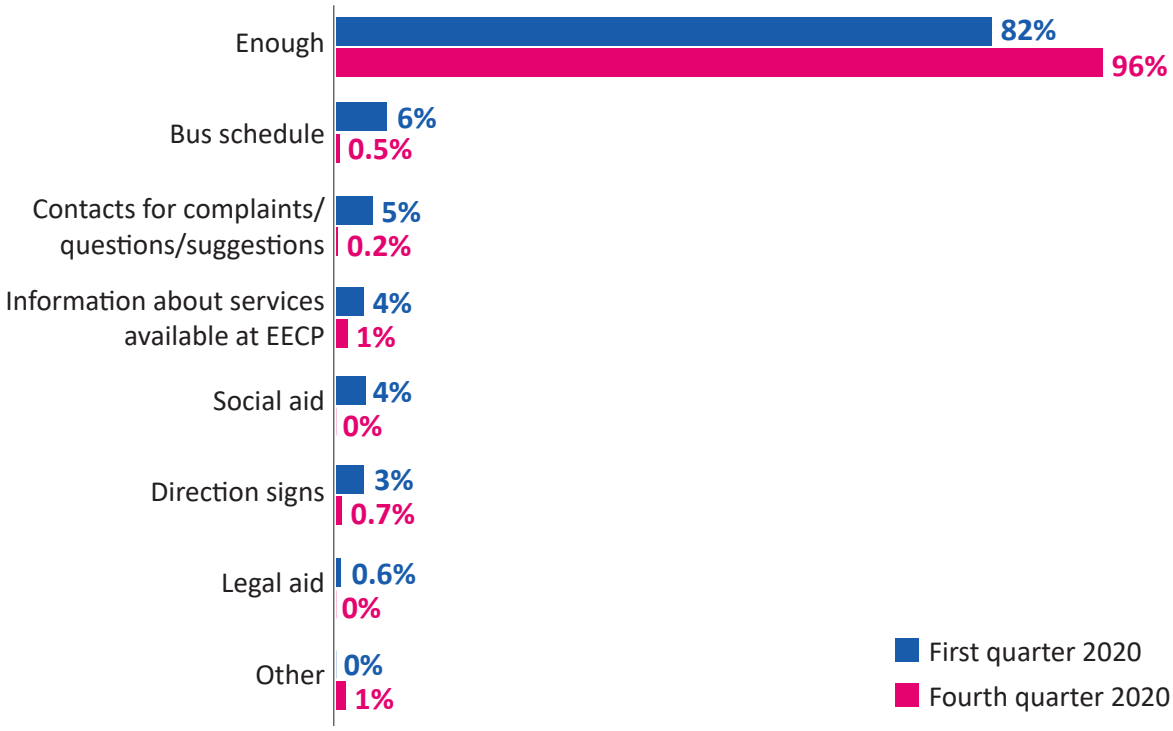
In total 85 percent of respondents did not feel they lacked any information.[6]

However, it should be noted that 5 percent mentioned the lack or poor visibility of contacts of entities where to address their complaints regarding the situation at the EECP (which, can implicitly indicate that they might have such complaints) and lack of information about the bus schedule. The absence of a bus schedule is quite problematic since all ECCPs (with the exception of Stanytsia Luhanska) are located far enough away from any settlements. 3,5 percent of respondents mentioned the lack of information about services available at the EECP (medical aid, water supply, toilets, etc.). The lack of direction signs (4 percent) was also mentioned (see the figure 8.1).

In addition, both in the first and fourth quarter of 2020, Stanytsia Luhanska EECP had the highest percentage of respondents (96-98 percent) who felt the information was sufficiently provided at the EECP.

6 Respondents could indicate several issues

Figure 8.1 Lack of information while crossings




АПТЕКА
САМОЛІКУВАН


UNHCR
ГАРЯЧА ЛІНІЯ
+38 (099) 507-50
+38 (068) 507-
+38 (093) 507-5
Графік роб
9:00-

OBSERVATIONS

In addition to the survey, R2P monitors conducted protection monitoring through direct observation at all five EECPs (GCA side). Observation of monitors was carried out throughout the year during visits to each of the ECCPs on a weekly basis, even in those months when no people were passing through and also at those EECPs where the passage was not resumed by the end of the year. On those EECPs where the crossing was possible (Novotroitske EECP in Donetska Oblast and Stanytsia Luhanska EECP in Luhanska Oblast), monitors were present all weekdays, during the working shift. The information below describes the situation as of December. Tables below list key items and services expected at EECPs and indicate their availability for each EECP.

In the first half of 2020 R2P monitors reported six fatalities that happened near the EECP and two fatalities in the second half of 2020: Two men died at Marinka EECP. Two women died at Maiorske EECP. Three men died at Stanytsia Luhanska. One man died at Novotroitske EECP.

Also, according to the information from public sources, one person died at “Horlivka” checkpoint in NGCA.

- sufficient amount/proper condition/convenient location
- insufficient amount/poor condition or inappropriate maintenance/inconvenient location
- completely absent
- Improvement compared to 2019
- Deterioration compared to 2019



	HNUTOVE EECP			MAIORSKE EECP			MARINKA EECP		
	Amount	Condition	Location	Amount	Condition	Location	Amount	Condition	Location
Waiting area (modules)	!	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sun/rain shed	!	✓	!	!	✓	!	✓	✓	✓
Air conditioning/ ventilation	✓	✓	✓	!	✓	✓	!	✓	✓
Heaters	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	!	✓	✓
Seats	!	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	!	✓	✓
Beds/bed linen (in SES tents)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	!	!
Disposable utensils	✓	✓	✓	!	!	!	✗	✗	✗
Potable water	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Sanitary water	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Garbage bins	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Toilets	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Soap/hand sanitizer	✓	✓	✓	!	!	✓	✓	✓	✓
Toilet paper	!	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transport connection between the “0” and GCA checkpoints	✗	✗	✗	!	!	!	✗	✗	✗
Wheelchairs	!	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

► On 9 November, the JFO headquarters reported that, from 10 November, all EECPs would resume their work after a temporary suspension due to the worsened epidemiological situation, including the new EECPs in Luhanska Oblast: Shchastia and Zolote. However, as a result of restrictions on the NGCA side, Novotroitske EECP in Donetska Oblast and Stanytsia Luhanska in Luhanska Oblast remained the only EECPs where the crossing is possible. Thus, by the end of December, only SBGS servicemen were present in full force at EECPs on the GCA side.

► In anticipation of the possible reopening of the Maiorske EECP, UNHCR installed one shed with benches in front of the Oshadbank branch office there.

	NOVOTROITSKE EECP		
	Amount	Condition	Location
Waiting area (modules)	✓	✓	✓
Sun/rain shed	!	!	!
Air conditioning/ventilation	✓	!	✓
Heaters	✗	✗	✗
Seats	!	!	!
Beds/bed linen (in SES tents)	✓	✓	✓
Disposable utensils	✗	✗	✗
Potable water	✓	✓	✓
Sanitary water	✓	✓	✓
Garbage bins	✓	✓	✓
Toilets	✓	✓	✓
Soap/hand sanitizer	✓	✓	✓
Toilet paper	!	✓	✓
Transport connection between the "0" and GCA checkpoints	✗	✗	✗
Wheelchairs	!	✓	✓

► Since 18 September, people had no longer spent the night time in the SES tents at Novotroitske EECP. With the initiative of Donetska Oblast State Administration, people who awaited the crossing in the SES tent now are asked to move to a Socio-Psychological rehabilitation centre in Druzhkovka.

► People who did not have the ability to install the app "Vdoma", had to go to the observation wards in Hostre settlement in Donetska Oblast. Besides, people had the opportunity to pass a free COVID-test, if it was negative, they could be free from observation. However, a mobile ambulance team from Selidovo arrived only once a week to collect material for the COVID-test.

► On 16 December, an administrative service centre was opened at Novotroitske EECP in Donetska Oblast with offices of ASC, Oschadbank, and "Nova Poshta", a baby care room, a pharmacy, a shop, and a paramedic point.

► Première Urgence Internationale provides medical assistance at the EECP on a schedule (8:00 – 15:30).

	STANYTSIA LUHANSKA EECP		
	Amount	Condition	Location
Waiting area (modules)	✓	✓	✓
Sun/rain shed	✓	✓	✓
Air conditioning/ventilation	✓	✓	✓
Heaters	!	✓	✓
Seats	✓	✓	✓
Beds/bed linen (in SES tents)	✗	✗	✗
Disposable utensils	✗	✗	✗
Potable water	!	✓	!
Sanitary water	!	✓	!
Garbage bins	✓	✓	✓
Toilets	✓	!	✓
Soap/hand sanitizer	✗	✗	✗
Toilet paper	✗	✗	✗
Transport connection between the “0” and GCA checkpoints	✓	✓	✓
Wheelchairs	!	✓	✓

► The situation with observation in Luhanska Oblast: there were no vacant places in observation wards. Thus, in case if person did not manage to install the app, s/he was not allowed to cross the contact line to GCA, and had to return to NGCA.

► There are 2 private laboratories at EECPs, where it is possible to pass a PCR test for COVID-19. The result is automatically redirected to the “Vdoma” app, thereby limiting the need for complete self-isolation to one-day maximum in case of negative tests.

► Medical assistance at the EECP is provided by volunteers of Ukrainian Red Cross Society (with the funding and technical support from ICRC). and the State Emergency Service medical staff.

	SHCHASTIA EECP			ZOLOTE EECP		
	Amount	Condition	Location	Amount	Condition	Location
Waiting area (modules)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Sun/rain shed	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Air conditioning/ ventilation	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Heaters	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Seats	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Beds/bed linen (in SES tents)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Disposable utensils	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Potable water	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Sanitary water	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Garbage bins	✓	✓	✓	!	!	!
Toilets	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	!
Soap/hand sanitizer	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Toilet paper	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Transport connection between the “0” and GCA checkpoints	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Wheelchairs	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

► On 10 November, two new EECPs were opened at Shchastia and Zolote on the GCA side in Luhanska Oblast. An administrative service centre, bank, and post office were constructed and opened at Shchastia EECP. Besides, the road between Zolote EECP and Severodonetsk has been reconstructed. However, conditions at Zolote EECP need improvement.

► Despite the preparedness of the EECPs on the GCA side, the pass at these EECPs was not carried out, due to the closed EECPs on the side of the NGCA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the survey results and monitors' observations, R2P recommends that:

Government of Ukraine:

► Within the framework of trilateral contact group facilitate full, safe and progressive reopening of all EECPs in NGCA, with full adherence to sanitation and anti-epidemic regulations to prevent the spread of COVID-19;

► Amend Regulation on crossing (Resolution 815 of the Cabinet of Ministers) with humanitarian exemptions. Even in the case of full closure of EECPs, authorize people who have humanitarian grounds to cross (e.g. death of a close relative, need for a specialized medical care etc.);

► Amend quarantine related resolutions (e.g. 641 is the current one) to provide for the exemption from self-isolation/observation for people who are coming for 24-48 hours to access administrative services (e.g. identification in the bank; receiving a new banking card; renewing any documents etc.);

► Ensure presence of the Coordinating Group representatives at every EECP;

► Work with Oblast administrations, humanitarian partners and civil society organizations to put in place systems to ensure the timely dissemination of accurate, updated, and accessible information on conditions and requirements for the crossing of EECP. The use of social network and other relevant media should be considered;

► In future while reopening EECPs, ensure regular testing for COVID-19 of the staff involved in prevention and response program at the EECPs, in accordance with the Law of Ukraine "On protection of the population from infectious diseases" (art. 35-1) the law; as a minimum, all civil servants and other personnel working at EECP should be provided with PPE, and sanitizers, and have access to hand washing facilities;

► Ease entry regulations for children aged 16 to 18, who were either not able to obtain an ID due to living in NGCA or had it lost or stolen.



Oblast state administrations:

► Take necessary measures to facilitate the access to essential administrative services/ social services to people crossing EECP towards GCA. In particular, continue to facilitate the deployment of mobile Administrative Services Centres (ASCs) to EECPs in Donetska and Luhanska oblasts, and with the support of international partners; the installation of pharmacies in direct proximity to EECPs should also be encouraged;

► In future while reopening EECPs, review the physical layout and infrastructure at the EECPs to incorporate measures to prevent transmission of COVID-19, such as physical distancing, handwashing, respiratory etiquette and thermal monitoring. The flow of persons through the EECPs should be adjusted to avoid the formation of crowds. Other measures to limit rushes to EECP after their reopening should also be identified, in consultations with relevant ministries and humanitarian partners;

► Encourage banks to install ATMs and for proper servicing of existing at all EECPs;

► Regularly update bus schedules at the terminals and bus stations.

Donetska oblast MCA:

► Negotiate with mobile network operators the improvement of mobile network signal at Novotroitske EECP;

► Reconstruct a bomb shelter at Marinka EECP;

► Ensure sufficient heating in the waiting modules;

► Establish the mechanism for passing rapid antigen test for people who should be sent for observation from Novotroitske EECP or can't install «Vdoma».



Luhanska oblast MCA:

► Provide the possibility to undergo observation for those who cannot install «Vdoma» and ensure decent conditions of accommodation;

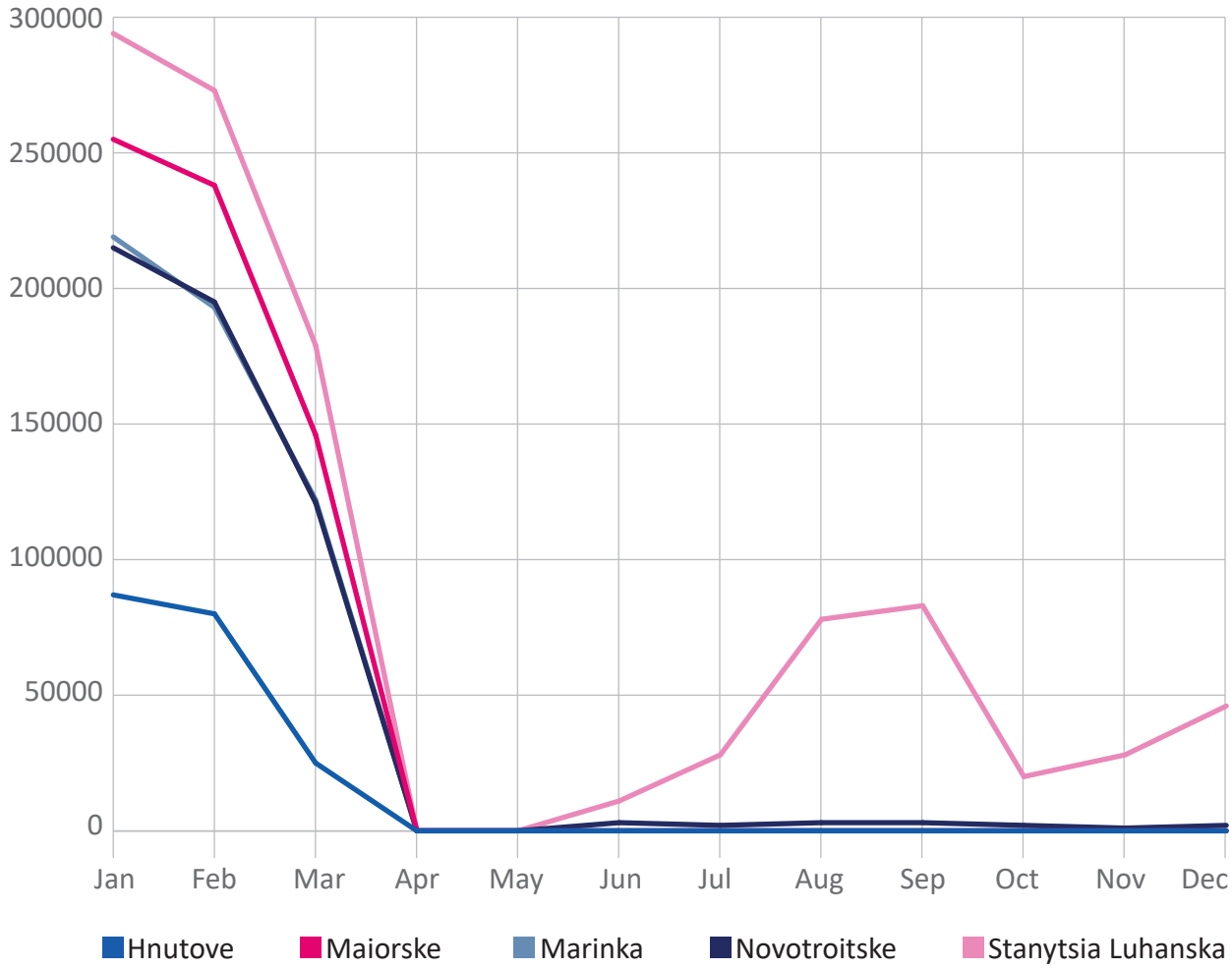
► Open an ASC at Stanytsia Luhanska EECP to provide administrative services directly at the EECP;

► Establish the mechanism for passing rapid antigen test for people who cannot install «Vdoma» and are forced to return to NGCA.

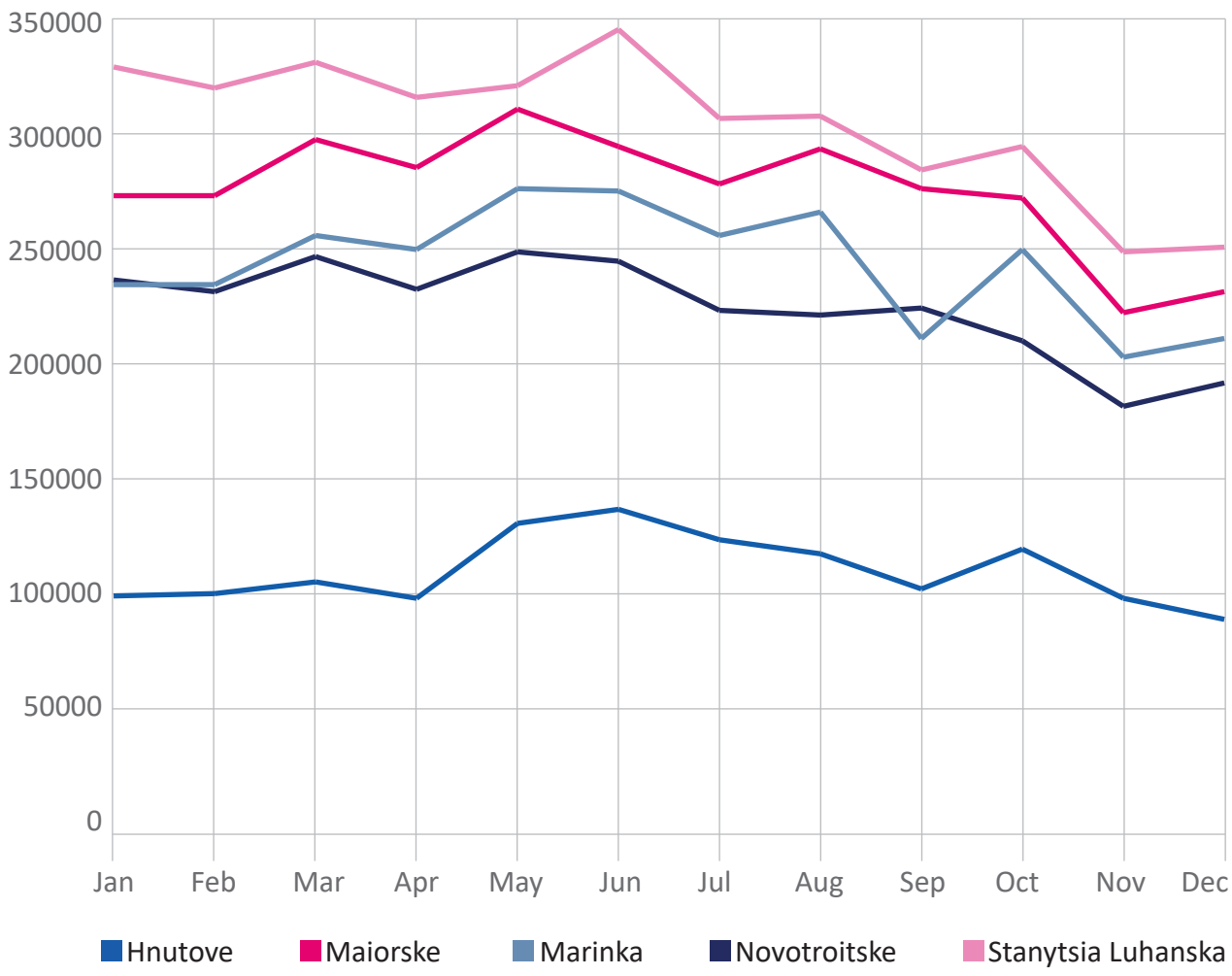
Within a few last years, counting EECPs refurbishment, the conditions of crossing the contact line have significantly improved. However, R2P came up with a conclusion that a lack stable funding and a single coordinating body, which could regulate the functioning of all involved agencies, constitute a bureaucratic impediment and remain a serious challenge along with the security concerns.



ANNEX 1. EECP CROSSINGS DURING JANUARY-DECEMBER 2020



ANNEX 2. EECP CROSSINGS DURING JANUARY-DECEMBER 2019



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