

Report Observatory of Multiculturalism and Migration

**Migration and security in the city:
a multidimensional analysis of the
experiences of migrants and selected
institutions in Kraków
Summary**

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I MIGRACJI

Foreigners in the area of activity of the Border Guard Post in Kraków

Checks of legality of stay and residence applications

In 2020-2025, the number of legality-of-stay checks and reviewed residence applications conducted by the Border Guard Post in Kraków increased. These activities mainly concerned adult men of working age and show the growing diversity and visibility of foreigners in migration procedures.



2,483

PEOPLE SUBJECT TO CHECKS



972

CHECKS OF LEGALITY OF STAY



57.5%

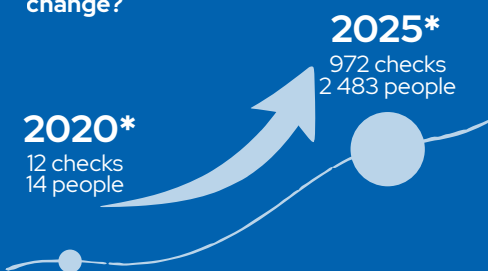
OF THOSE CHECKED HAD A RESIDENCE CARD



865

CASES OF REVIEWING RESIDENCE APPLICATIONS

How did the scale of checks change?



* The Border Guard Post in Kraków began operating in 2020; therefore, data for that year are incomplete.

Who was subject to checks?



People aged 19-30 and 31-50 dominated. People under 18 and over 51 appeared rarely.



Most people had a residence card, visa, or used visa-free movement.



Men predominated, and their share increased to 90.5%.

Change in the citizenship structure of checked people

In 2021



Ukrainians: 510 out of 640 people checked

After 2022



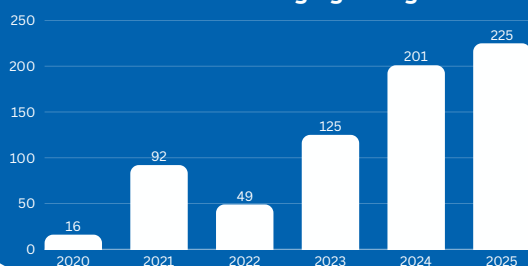
Citizens of India, Nepal, Uzbekistan, and other countries became increasingly visible.



How should the increase in checks be interpreted?

- ✓ Increase in staffing at the post.
- ✓ Expansion of the area of activity.
- ✓ Increase in the number of foreigners in Poland.
- ✓ Regulatory changes after the COVID-19 pandemic and after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

Number of decisions obliging foreigners to return



Total in 2020-2025

708

decisions

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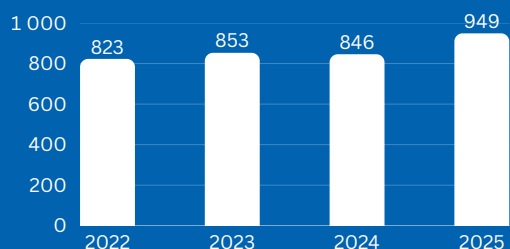


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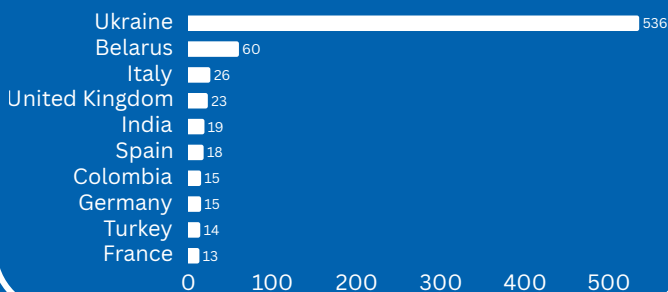
Foreigners as victims of crimes based on data from the Kraków Municipal Police Headquarters and the Kraków City Guard

Data from the Kraków Municipal Police Headquarters show that foreigners appear in police statistics not only as perpetrators, but also as people harmed by thefts, fraud, violence, threats, property damage, and acts motivated by prejudice. In 2025, a significant increase was recorded in the number of foreigners harmed by crimes in Kraków, which shows that migrant safety remains an important urban challenge.

Number of foreigners – victims of crimes recorded by the Kraków Municipal Police Headquarters:



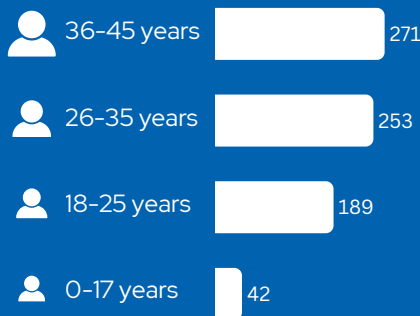
Who was most often harmed?



Most common types of acts

- thefts,
- burglaries,
- fraud,
- computer fraud,
- misappropriation,
- property damage,
- threats.

Age structure of victims



Key conclusions

- ✓ Foreigners are visible in police data not only as perpetrators, but also as victims.
- ✓ Hate speech in public space affects immigrants' sense of security.
- ✓ In hate-related cases, the perpetrators were most often Polish citizens.

Hate speech in public space and the city's response



928

acts of vandalism

connected with illegal graffiti revealed by the City Guard



1,104

illegal inscriptions and scribbles

removed by the City Guard

Selected categories (revealed / removed)

Vulgar



97 / 158

Inciting violence



59 / 69

Antisemitic



43 / 55

Racist



13 / 25

Xenophobic



11 / 11

Homophobic



4 / 4

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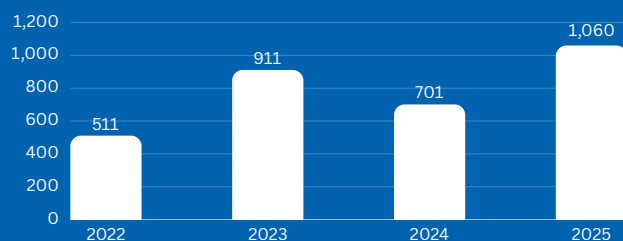


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Foreigners as perpetrators of crimes based on data from the Kraków Municipal Police Headquarters

Data concerning foreigners as perpetrators should be interpreted with caution, because they describe the number and structure of recorded crimes, not the exact number of migrants committing crimes. The increase in the number of recorded crimes involving foreigners may result not only from the intensification of certain phenomena, but also from greater detection, the way cases are classified, and multi-factor cases attributed to one person or group.

Number of recorded crimes involving foreigners in police statistics

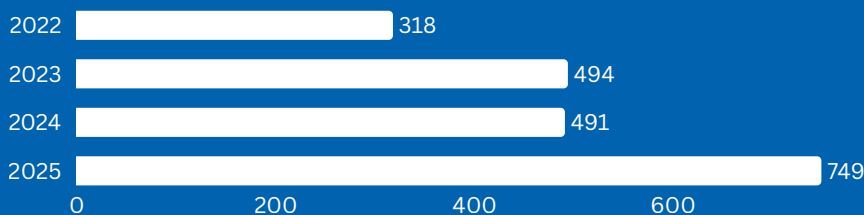


Most common categories of acts








-  thefts and burglaries,
-  fraud,
-  drug-related crimes,
-  traffic offences, especially driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Ukrainian citizens and crime

Number of recorded crimes involving Ukrainian citizens



Change in the number of recorded crimes involving Ukrainian citizens compared with 2024

-  drug-related crimes  **+155**
-  fraud  **+132**
-  thefts  **+47**
-  traffic offences  **-22**

Age structure of Ukrainian citizens committing crimes



Young adults were the most visible group, especially people **aged 21-29**. The increase in the number of acts also concerned the 17-20 and 0-16 age groups, while older age groups remained at a lower level.

This does not mean greater aggressiveness among young migrants, but indicates the need for prevention in the areas of drugs, fraud, “quick money”, so-called “ofisy”, and risky online activities.

Gender structure of Ukrainian citizens visible in police statistics



Key conclusions

-  Foreigners remain a minority segment of the overall number of crimes.
-  Year-to-year changes require cautious interpretation, especially in the context of the changing number of immigrants in the city.

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Foreigners in the area of activity of the Municipal Social Welfare Centre

MOPS data do not show the overall situation of all migrants, but rather the part of the foreign population that came into contact with the social welfare system. After 2022, the increase in visibility concerned primarily Ukrainian citizens, especially in permanent allowance and the “Blue Card” procedure. In the case of the Blue Card procedure, the introduction of Lex Kamilek from 2023 had a very significant impact. This means there is a need to adapt municipal assistance procedures to work with migrant individuals and families, including people who speak another language.



591

FOREIGNERS RECEIVED PERMANENT ALLOWANCE



159

FOREIGNERS WERE COVERED BY THE “BLUE CARD” PROCEDURE



96-99%

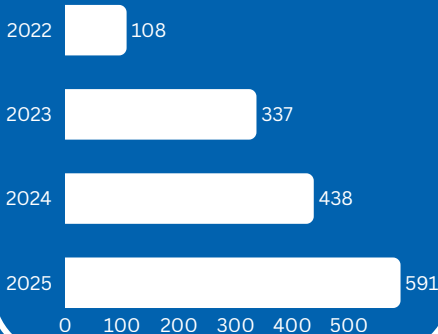
OF FOREIGNERS RECEIVING PERMANENT ALLOWANCE AFTER 2022 WERE CITIZENS OF UKRAINE



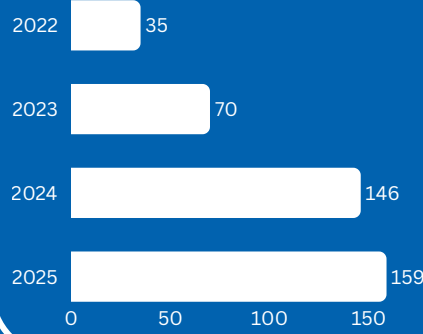
63%

OF FOREIGNERS IN THE BLUE CARD PROCEDURE WERE PEOPLE AGED 0-17

Number of foreigners receiving permanent allowance



Number of foreigners covered by the Blue Card procedure

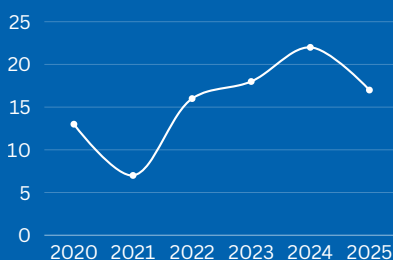


Key conclusions

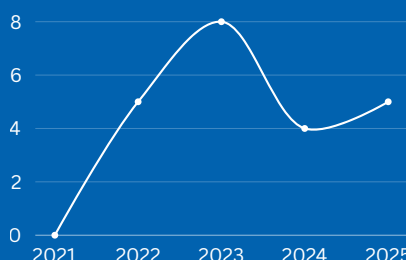
- ✓ MOPS data primarily show the most vulnerable part of the migrant population.
- ✓ After 2022, foreigners' contact with the social welfare system increased clearly.
- ✓ In most analysed categories, the change mainly concerns Ukrainian citizens.
- ✓ Processing Blue Card cases among migrant families requires MOPS employees to have appropriate linguistic and cultural competences.

Homelessness and crisis shelter among foreigners

Homelessness



Crisis shelter



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Migrants' sense of security in Kraków



How was security studied?

The conclusions are based on 14 interviews with migrant women and men living in Kraków and on conversations with 12 experts – representatives of public and municipal institutions and social organisations. The study concerned how migrants perceive security in everyday life: in contact with institutions, in urban space, at work, school, home, online, and in social relations.



How was security understood?

Security did not mean only the absence of crime. The analysis covered its legal, physical, psychological, relational, economic, housing, linguistic, cultural, anti-discrimination, and digital dimensions.



Legal security

- Certainty of residence status gives a sense of stability.
- Long procedures and waiting for decisions are sources of tension.
- Unclear rules and official language can be a problem.
- It is also important to feel that institutions treat migrants as subjects, not objects.



Physical security

Factors that strengthen it:

- the possibility of normal use of the city,
- a calm commute, work, and school,
- confidence that one can count on help,
- predictable everyday life.

Factors that weaken it:

- night and darkness,
- drunk and aggressive people,
- groups behaving unpredictably,
- political tensions and provocations aimed at strengthening hostility towards immigrants.



Key conclusions

- ✓ Security is relational and depends on contact with institutions.
- ✓ Migrants describe Kraków as a rather calm city.
- ✓ Security means the possibility of “normal life” without constant vigilance.
- ✓ Even without a direct incident, tension may be created by legal uncertainty, lack of clear information, or difficulty in contact with institutions.

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Psychological, relational, and anti-discrimination security

Relational security



Relational security is based on support networks: family, partners, friends, acquaintances, neighbours, school, university, work, and first-contact institutions. For migrants, it is important not only whether the city is objectively safe, but whether they know whom to call, where to go, and whom to trust in case of a problem.

Key conclusions:

- Family, partners, and close friends are the first line of security.
- School, university, and work function not only as institutions, but also as places of information, routine, and contact.
- Neighbourly contacts and knowledge of the city reduce the sense of alienation.
- Integration does not mean the disappearance of difference, but the creation of relationships and routines in which a migrant does not have to constantly experience their “otherness” as a problem.

Anti-discrimination, linguistic, and cultural security



Anti-discrimination security means the possibility of being visible without fear that language, accent, symbol, clothing, holiday, or origin will become a reason for comments, suspicion, or aggression.

Key conclusions:

- For some people, their native language is neutral, while for others it becomes a signal of visibility.
- An accent may reveal origin even when a migrant speaks Polish.
- Linguistic security means the possibility of speaking one’s own language without self-silencing, hiding family communication, and anticipating whether the very sound of speech may become a pretext for comments, control, or aggression.
- Cultural visibility is ambivalent: symbols, holidays, cuisine, religion, and events build community, but in random public spaces they may require caution.

Psychological security



For interviewees, **psychological security** meant the ability to maintain “peace of mind”: predictable everyday life, rest, and planning without constant tension. This peace could be disturbed by unclear procedures, waiting for a decision, high living costs, loneliness, housing problems, lack of insurance, and – especially in the case of people from Ukraine – concern for loved ones and the constant presence of war in daily news.

Key conclusions:

- Psychological security does not result only from the absence of violence.
- A “calm day” is one in which children get to school, there are no sudden official matters, and everyday routes and duties are predictable.
- Residence uncertainty has psychological effects: waiting for a decision, fear of making a mistake, and unclear status burden everyday life.
- For some people from Ukraine, the war is constantly present psychologically despite physical safety in Kraków.
- The report describes this state as a fragile balance between what provides support and what reminds migrants of the uncertainty of migrant life.

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Main message

Kraków is usually assessed as rather safe, but migrants’ sense of security depends on relationships, predictable everyday life, language, accent, cultural visibility, and the reactions of the environment. The key issue is not only supporting migrants, but also working with residents: breaking stereotypes, normalising multilingualism, and strengthening the message that different languages, accents, and cultures are a normal part of the city.



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Economic, social, and digital security

Economic security



For interviewees, **economic security** did not mean simply having a job, but the ability to live predictably: to pay for basic needs, medical treatment, transport, and to save even a minimal reserve. Financial stability was closely connected with residence status, legal work, type of contract, insurance, and protection against abuse. The report shows that, for interviewees, economic security was the material basis of “peace of mind”, not an abstract category of well-being.

Key conclusions:

- Work provides security only when it is legal, stable, and connected with insurance.
- Regular pay, a contract, ZUS, and the ability to plan expenses are more important than simply “having employment”.
- High living costs mean that even people who work may function with a very limited safety margin.
- Risks include work without a contract, cash payments, delayed wages, rates below the minimum wage, and dependence on the employer.
- Economic security can easily collapse because of illness, job loss, delayed payment, or rising costs.

Housing security



Housing was one of the central elements of **security**, but it was not only about having “a roof over one’s head”. It was about the ability to pay rent without giving up food, medical treatment, transport, or savings. The report also shows that the rental market is, for migrants, not only an area of costs, but also of selection: some people experienced refusals to rent, reluctance to sign a formal contract, or messages such as “Poles only”.

Key conclusions:

- Housing is an intersection of economy, psychological stability, and a sense of being rooted.
- High rent means that even stable work does not always provide a sense of security.
- The problem is not only the price, but also access to rental housing: refusals, informality, lack of contract, and dependence on the landlord.
- Housing experiences are not exclusively negative — good relations with landlords, neighbours, or support from volunteers clearly strengthen stability.
- Low numbers in homelessness data do not mean the absence of housing problems, because part of housing instability remains outside the formal assistance system.

Digital security



In the report, **digital security** was not the main source of fear, but it was a constant element of everyday functioning. It concerned online fraud, suspicious phone calls, fake links, bank data, BLIK, OLX, messaging apps, and social media. The report emphasises that the digital sphere is not a separate “technical add-on”, but an extension of offline life: work, shopping, payments, contact with family, and searching for information.

Key conclusions

- Interviewees did not describe the internet as particularly dangerous in Poland, but rather as a space where “nowhere is completely safe”.
- The most common risks are fake links, theft of bank data, fraud on OLX, BLIK, suspicious text messages, and phone calls.
- Migrants often choose caution because they do not assume that reporting incidents will be fully effective.
- The phone is both a tool of risk and protection: one can become a victim of fraud through it, but also call for help, document an incident, and stay in contact.
- In the case of young migrants, it is worth connecting digital security with an educational campaign on “quick money”, “ofisy”, transfers, cryptocurrencies, and lending bank accounts.

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Main conclusion

These three dimensions are connected in the everyday experience of security: job loss, rent that is too high, lack of a rental agreement, or online fraud can quickly undermine migrants’ sense of stability, even if Kraków is assessed as a rather safe city.



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Summary



Kraków is most often assessed by migrants as a rather calm city, but security is conditional. It depends on the stability of stay, language, housing, work, finances, support networks, and the comprehensibility of contact with institutions.



Institutional data do not confirm the image of migration as the main threat to the city's security. Foreigners are visible both as victims and as perpetrators in police statistics, but they remain a minority segment of the overall number of crimes.



Migrants' security depends not only on crime, but also on the conditions of everyday functioning: clear information, understandable procedures, stable housing and work, social relationships, protection against discrimination, and the possibility of freely using the city.



Language, accent, and cultural visibility are important elements of security. Some migrants lower their voices, switch to Polish, or limit their visibility. Therefore, security also means the possibility of being present in the city without self-silencing and without fear of others' reactions.

Recommendations



Simpler municipal procedures for foreigners.

Clear forms, instructions, and assistance pathways in schools, MOPS, the City Guard, information points, and online channels. The city does not decide on the legalisation of stay, but it can make it easier for foreigners to contact its own institutions.



Multilingual “what to do when...” instructions.

Short and visible information on where to report violence, online fraud, discrimination, hate speech, a rental problem, abuse at work, a child's school difficulty, or a mental health crisis.



Educational campaign for young people.

Education for all young people about “quick money”, so-called “ofisy”, drugs, online fraud, lending bank accounts, transfers, cryptocurrencies, and the legal consequences of seemingly “technical” tasks - with materials also available for parents and families with migration experience.



Regular study of migrants' sense of security in the city.

Important areas of study: contact with institutions, access to information, language barriers, housing, work, discrimination, cultural visibility, and use of the city - taking into account gender, age, length of stay, legal status, language, and country of origin.



Social bridges and anti-discrimination activities.

Strengthening contacts between new and long-term residents of Kraków through schools, libraries, sport, culture, volunteering, and mentoring, as well as activities showing multilingualism, different accents, and the presence of migrants as a normal part of city life.

Links and multimedia

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Full security report

Check current statistics, analyses, and activities for security in the city.

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Presentation of the security report

Watch the discussion of the report and find out how we take care of security in Kraków.

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