

# CONTENT

1	HIGHLIGHTS.....	2
2	WHAT? .....	3
3	WHO? .....	6
4	WHY? .....	9
5	WHEN? .....	12
6	WHERE? .....	14
7	HOW? .....	16

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) within the framework of partnership between UNHCR and Right to Protection (R2P) in the project called “Advocacy, Protection and Legal Assistance to the Internally Displaced Population.” The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of R2P and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of UNHCR

# HIGHLIGHTS

- The trend of pensioners prevailing among respondents has been remaining relevant since 2017 (65% of respondents are over 60 years old, forced to regular movement by current legislation in order to receive pensions and social support from the state).
- The older people suffer not only from legal discrimination. The process of crossing the contact line is also much more physically difficult for them. Only 24% of respondents over 60 years old surveyed in the reporting period claimed that they did not have any concerns while crossing the contact line.
- Solving issues with pensions and social payments remained one of the most frequently mentioned reasons for crossing (mentioned by 67% of all respondents) and the number was continuously high throughout the reporting period.
- The number of respondents traveling for vacation increased in the summertime (from 0% in February to 8% in August) and then dropped to 2% in September.
- Respondents from NGCA mostly travel to obtain various governmental and bank services, increasing the pressure on the infrastructure of the localities. 78% of them were travelling to the settlements located within 60 kilometres from the EECs.
- The issue of people fainting in queues at Stanytsia Luhanska EEC, which was extremely urgent in the summertime (more than 80 persons had such problem per day) mostly subsided in September 2019 as outside temperature decreased. By using free transportation (the electric car operated by Proliska on the EEC thanks to funding and partnership with UNHCR and the bus provided by Luhansk Oblast Administration) people do not have to walk a long way between “zero” checkpoint and the EEC itself, which also significantly improved the situation.
- In September the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted Resolution №815 that caused concerns regarding children under the age of 14 as it determined the international passport as the only document that would allow them through the contact line. Both humanitarian actors and governmental structures recognised the risks and by the end of the month were still working on the solution.

# WHAT?

As of September 2019, the armed conflict in the East of Ukraine that ignited in 2014 continues. The contact line, determined in Minsk agreements, separates the government- and non-government-controlled areas (GCA and NGCA). To ensure the access to both sides for civilians, five entry-exit checkpoints (EECPs) are operating in the region: four in Donetsk Oblast (Hnutove, Marinka, Novotroitske, Maiorske) and one in Luhansk Oblast (Stanytsia Luhanska).



As the daily number of people travelling through EECPs is up to 50 thousand, high risks are associated with crossing the contact line. Since the crossing procedure was established, significant efforts were taken by the government, international humanitarian organizations and local NGOs in order to ease the burden on civilians. This includes adoption of orders, reconstruction that began in 2018 (and is still in progress at all EECPs except Marinka that was reconstructed in September 2018), enhancement of transport connectivity, provision of medical assistance, legal support etc. In September the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted Resolution

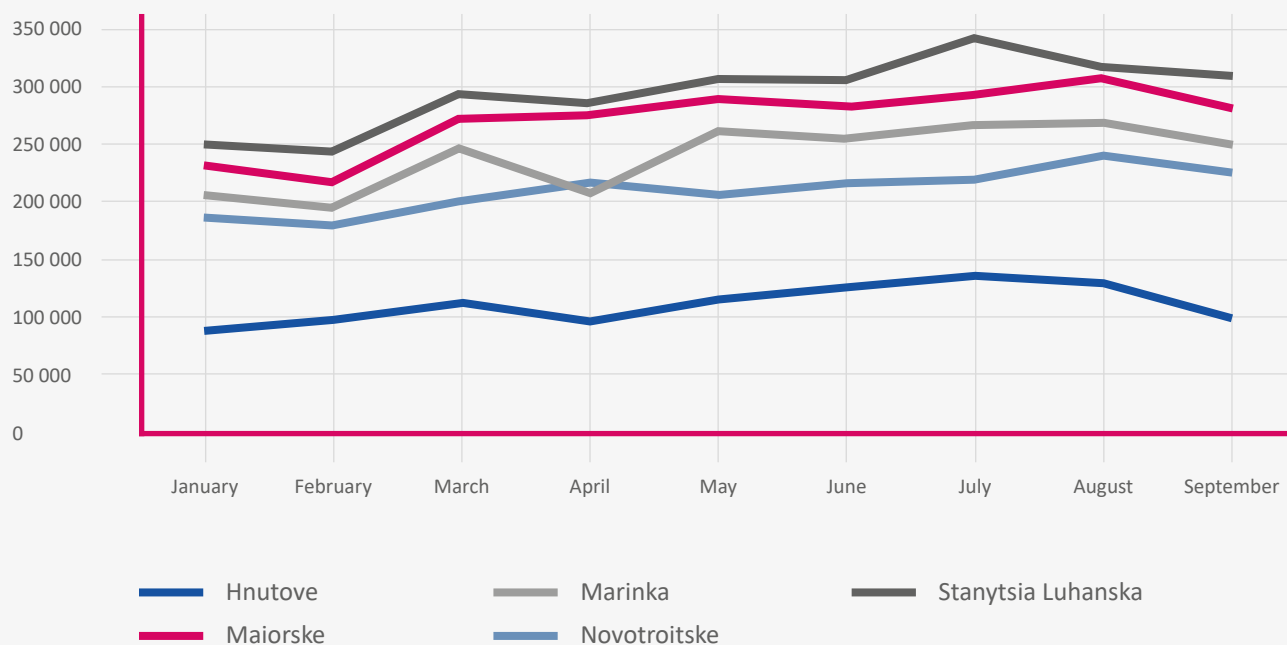
№815 that regulates the procedure for traveling and transporting goods through the contact line between GCA and NGCA in Donetsk and Luhansk oblast. Some of the regulations caused concerns as they determined the international passport as the only document that would allow children under the age of 14 to cross the contact line. Both humanitarian actors and governmental structures (State Border Guard Service (SBGS), Ministry for Veterans Affairs, Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine etc) recognised the risks and by the end of the month were still working on the solution.

”

There are so many people concerned about the upcoming Resolution №815. A woman of 60 years old told me: “My son has five children under 12 years old, how can he get international passports for all of them? It’s already so hard to support them all, he would have to sell his kidney to do so!”

— Marinka EECP, Oleksii Shevchenko, R2P Monitoring Specialist

## Number of crossings by EECp



Since June 2017 Right to Protection has been conducting a survey that explores the reasons and concerns of those travelling across the contact line<sup>1</sup>.

The survey is a part of the monitoring of violations of the rights of the conflict-affected population within the framework of the project “Advocacy, Protection and Legal Assistance to the Internally Displaced Population of Ukraine” implemented by R2P with the financial support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This report covers January-September 2019. During the reporting period R2P surveyed **19,739** individuals<sup>2</sup>.

The data obtained from the survey confirm the stable trend that the majority of surveyed individuals travelling through the contact line are pensioners, forced to regular movement by current legislation in order to receive pensions and social support from the state. Solving their issues would presumably result in a sharp decline in a number of people crossing the contact line, reduction of pressure on the infrastructure of EECps and localities nearby, as described further in the report. According to observations of R2P monitors, the number of complaints regarding crossing process and waiting conditions is much higher during the pick load periods at EECps.

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the survey results should not be directly extrapolated onto the entire population as there is no information on IDPs, GCA and NGCA residents who never travel across the contact line, nor people who do not travel through the official EECps.

<sup>2</sup> More statistical data are available on the Eastern Ukraine Checkpoint Monitoring Online Dashboard – [http://bit.ly/CP\\_Monitoring\\_2019](http://bit.ly/CP_Monitoring_2019).

”

“My husband sustained disability and recently I did as well. But our certificates aren’t recognized here because we were diagnosed and got medical treatment in Luhansk [NGCA]. I don’t even know how to solve this issue” – the woman was almost crying, telling her story to our colleagues. Her friend was even more emotional about their situation: “She was the first one to teach children Ukrainian language in our town, she worked for 49 years as a teacher! And now the government can’t even pay them their pensions!”. We listened carefully to their story, realizing that there is no way we could help them. Indeed, certificates, issued in NGCA aren’t recognized by the government, so the couple would have to travel to Sievierodonetsk and pass the medical commission there to confirm that they have a disability. The only hope was that some changes to the legislation will be adopted in the nearest future to simplify the procedure. Having heard the answer, the woman gave her husband a look full of sorrow and said: “We won’t make it that far...”.

— Stanytsia Luhanska EEC, Daiana Iskander, R2P Junior Data Manager





# WHO?

In order to elaborate a comprehensive approach to addressing issues that occur at EECs, it is necessary to understand, who are the people travelling across the contact line. The needs and worries mostly vary, depending on the age and place of residence of an individual.



Despite the share of women among respondents being almost two times higher than men (66% and 34% respectively), there was no significant difference by gender in the reasons for crossing, concerns etc. in any age group. The proportion of men to women remains relatively stable since 2017.

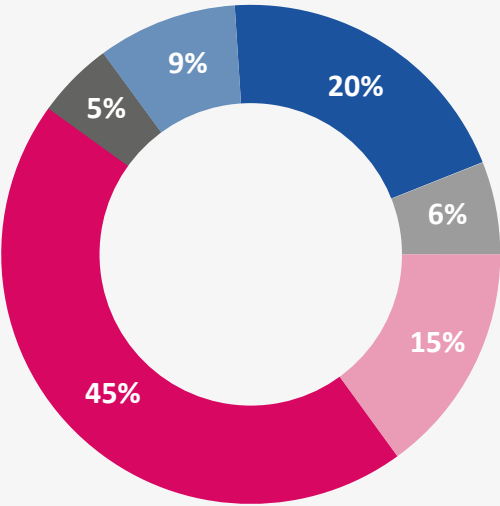
Only 22% of all respondents claimed that they have ever been displaced due to the conflict. This share did not tend to fluctuate significantly neither throughout the nine months of 2019 nor in comparison to the 2018 annual report. Over 80% of these respondents (18% of the total number) later returned to the previous place of residence. The most common reasons for return was the stabilized situation in the previous place of residence (11% of all respondents), fear to abandon the household lest it be looted (9%) and high rent (7%).

Similarly to the previous reporting periods, most people who travelled across the contact line in the last nine months were of older age (65% of respondents were over 60 years old). Such tendency is mostly attributable to the regulations on the process of obtaining pensions by NGCA residents

and IDPs. According to the survey, in the reporting period 90% of respondents over 60 years old were travelling to solve issues with pensions or social payments. At the same time, younger respondents had less reasons to travel across the contact line. They mostly did so to visit their relatives and/or to solve issues with documents. There were no significant changes in the disaggregation of the reasons for crossing.

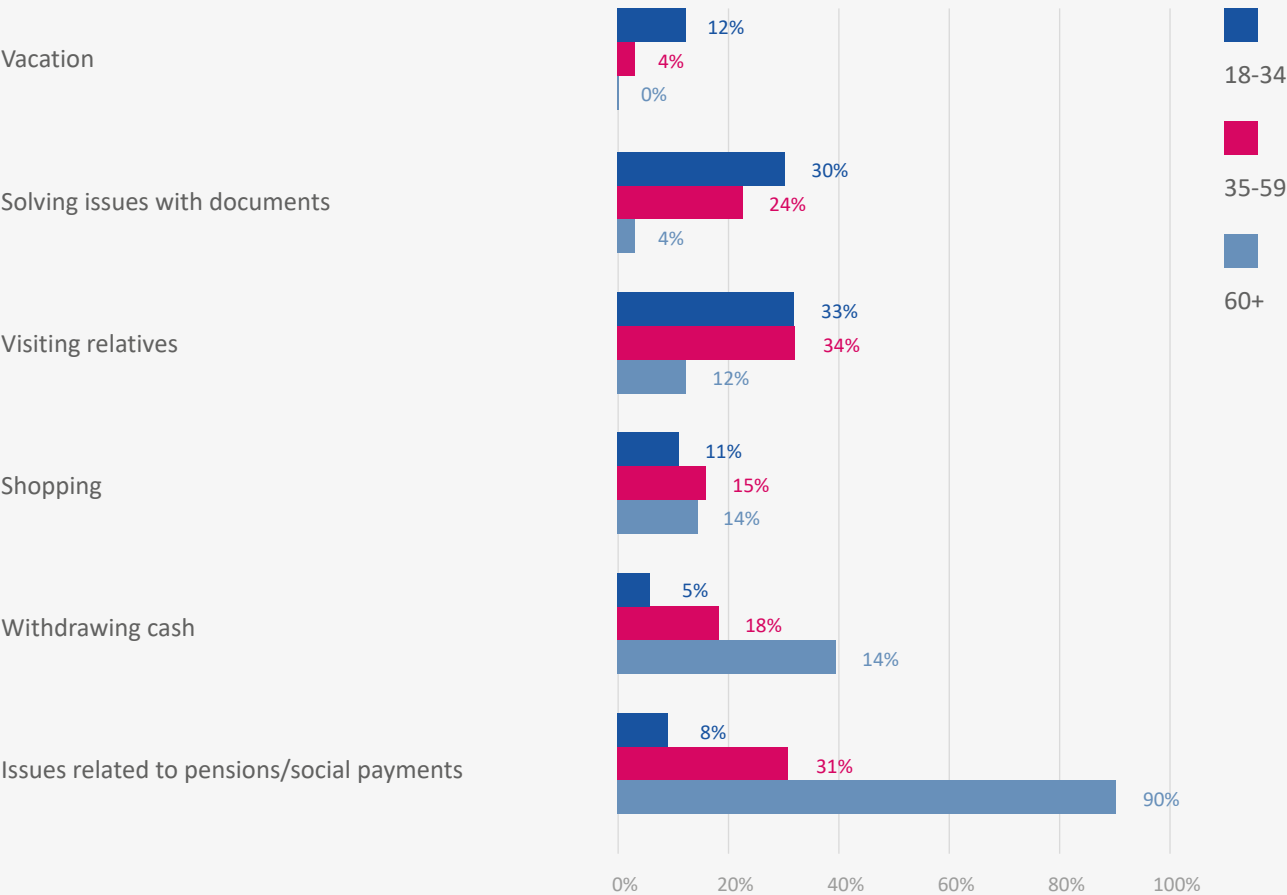


Gender&Age



Women (18-34)	1180
Women (35-59)	2970
Women (60+)	8955
Men (18-34)	900
Men (35-59)	1696
Men (60+)	4038

Main reasons for crossing by age



”

A bus arrived from the “zero” checkpoint and people queued to the passport control. Two women were watching constructors working on the bomb shelter at the EECP: “Look how big the cellar is! They will probably start selling vegetables there...”. I said that it will be a shelter, so in case of emergency everyone had somewhere to hide. The woman nodded her head and added “I just don’t want to get used to the war. And when it’s over, we can use it as a storage for vegetables, right?”.

— Maiorske EECP, Maryna Pukhyr, R2P Monitoring Specialist

The older people suffer not only from legal discrimination. The process of crossing the contact line is also much more physically difficult for them than for the younger persons. Only 24% of respondents over 60 years old claimed that they did not have any concerns while crossing the contact line. At the same time, such share among respondents aged 18-34 was 46%, which is almost two times higher. 65% of those aged 18-34 did not have concerns about waiting conditions, while the share among respondents over 60 years old was 45%.

Such disaggregations correlate with age peculiarities and travel purposes. Older people spend more time at the EECP as they use more services that are located there: passing physical identification in Oschadbank so their pension will not be suspended; applying to the Coordination Group (CG) for a permit if they are unable to apply online, etc. They feel worse, walking a long distance on foot; queuing under the sun with no sheds or places to sit. It is noteworthy, that throughout the whole period of the survey (2017-2019), respondents expressed much less concerns regarding the risk of shelling than the burden of long queues, poor condition of the road or the need to walk a long distance.

”

A woman of older age came up to me to ask how her 20-years-old grandson can obtain Ukrainian passport. The whole time I was providing her with the consultation she kept commenting: “He wants to have a Ukrainian passport. For two years people were trying to talk him out of it, but he still insists! They moved to Russia with his parents, but he returned anyway. He wants a passport and to go study in Kharkiv. How can he do that?”.

— Maiorske EECP, Maryna Pukhyr, R2P Monitoring Specialist





# WHY?

The reasons for crossing have always been very different for GCA and NGCA residents of any age. NGCA residents tend to travel in order to solve particular issues, whilst the reasons of GCA residents are more likely to be based on personal will and emotional attachment to their relatives or the place of origin. Overall, the reasons for crossing the contact line were relatively stable throughout the reporting period. An exceptional tendency was observed, when the share of NGCA residents who travel on vacation increased to 8% in summer, same as in 2018.



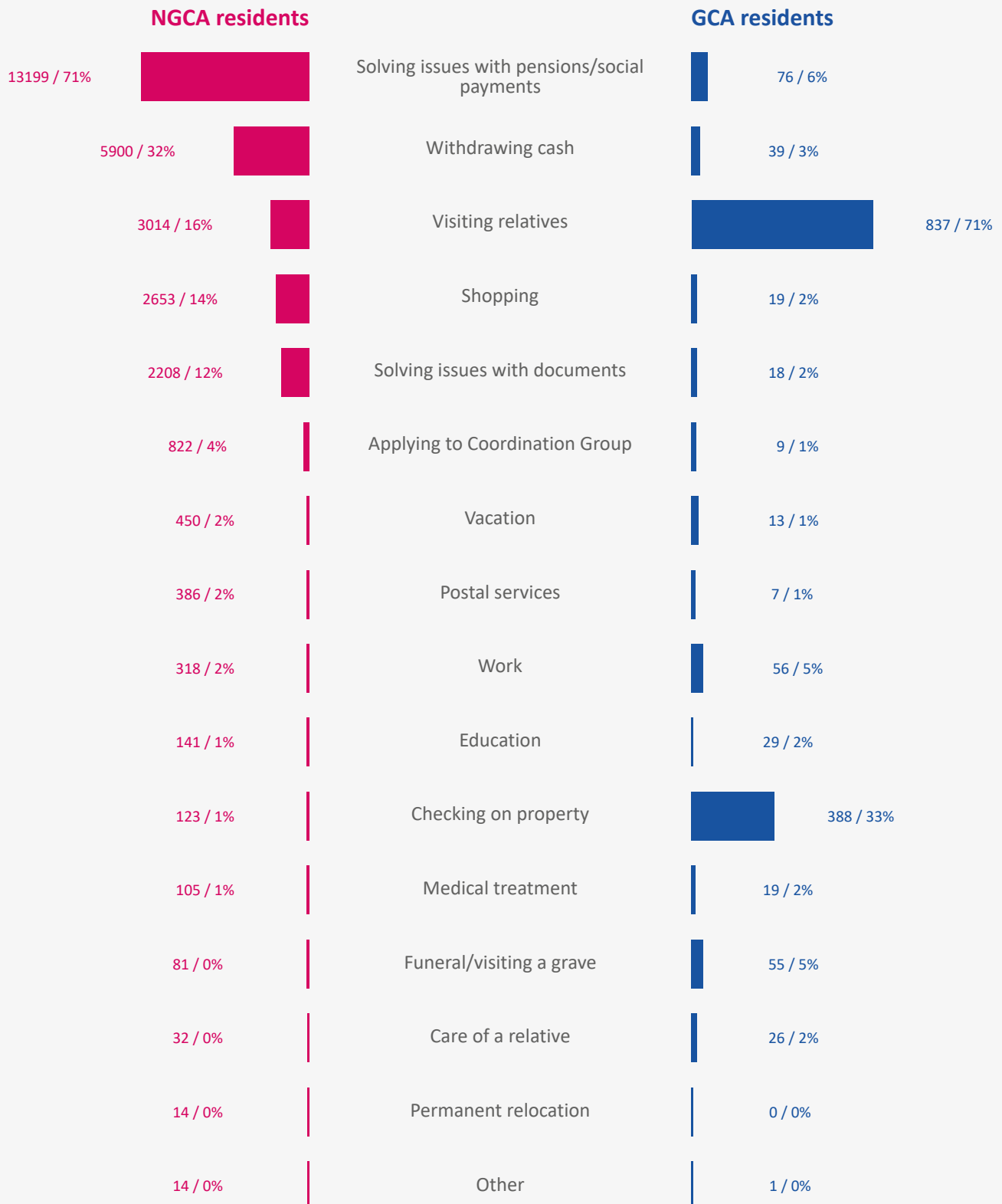
Respondents, who were travelling to solve issues with pensions, mostly aimed to fit into the 60-days limit of being out of GCA (59% of all respondents) and pass physical identification (53%). 8% of all respondents were travelling to apply for pension payments or to reinstate the payments after suspension.

Among issues with documents respondents mostly listed issues with passport (6% of all respondents). 117 individuals (1%) were travelling to obtain birth certificates and 303 (2%) – death certificates. Both of these documents can only be obtained through the simplified court procedure in GCA as Ukraine does not recognize documents issued in NGCA.

11% of all respondents mentioned buying food items as one of their reasons for crossing the contact line. However, it does not necessarily reflect the lack of food in NGCA, rather the price difference or the lack of preferred products. Medicines (6%) was the second most frequently mentioned type of goods.

The reasons for crossing also vary by the EECP. People choose the EECP by several factors such as location, infrastructure at EECPs and in localities nearby, waiting conditions etc. For instance, the number of respondents who were travelling in the reporting period to solve issues with documents was the highest at Hnutove EECP (19%) which is the closest to Mariupol (one of the bigger cities of Donetsk Oblast with developed infrastructure and various governmental entities available) and at Stanytsia Luhanska (15%) as the only EECP in Luhansk Oblast.

## Reasons for crossing (by place of residence)



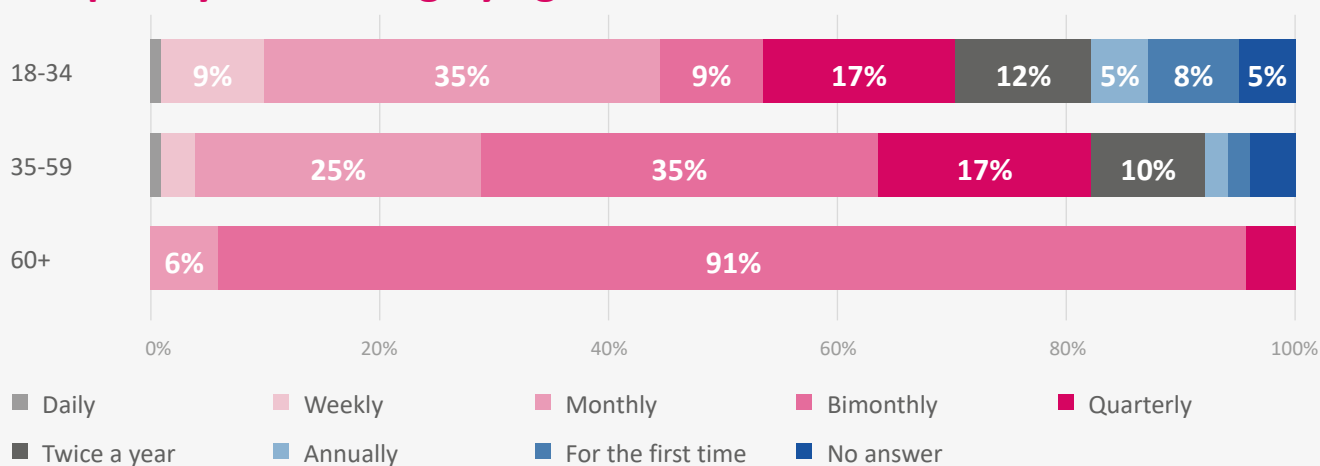


# WHEN?

Current legislation limits the time of being out of GCA for pensioners to keep receiving their payments to 60 days, which determines their frequency of crossing. 69% of all respondents within the reporting period claimed to travel across the contact line once in two months. The share of those who travel bimonthly is predictably the highest among older people (91% of respondents over 60 years old).

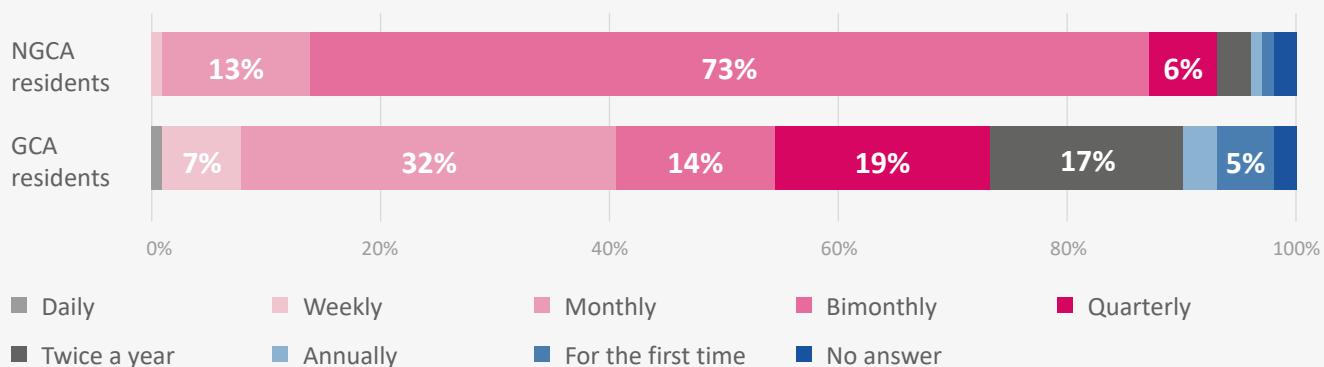


## Frequency of crossing by age



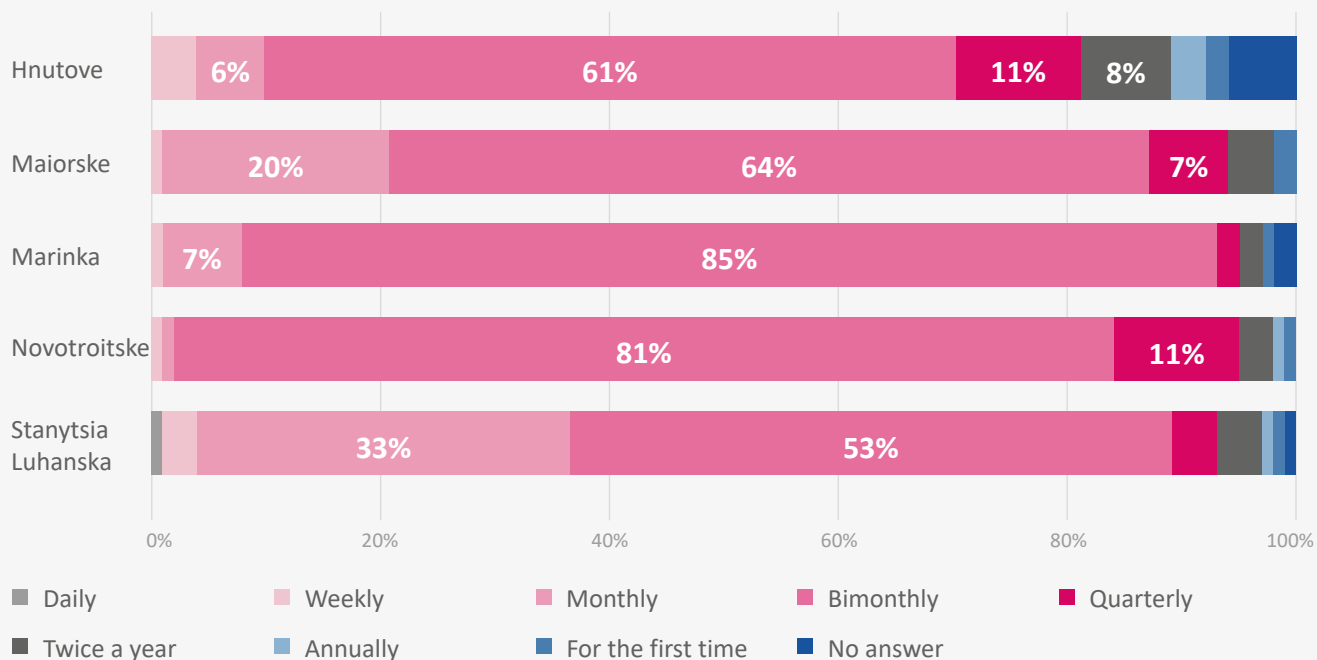
The disaggregation on the place of residence demonstrates the same trend. 73% of NGCA residents cross the contact line once in two months, trying to fit the 60-days limit of being out of GCA in order to avoid the suspension of payments. There were no particular trends in the frequency of travel among GCA residents.

## Frequency of crossing by place of residence



It is interesting to note that the disaggregation of frequency of crossing by EECP was quite different, which is also reflected in the reasons for crossing. Respondents over 60 years old, who were travelling on a monthly basis mentioned solving issues with pensions less often (67%) than those travelling bimonthly (92%). In return, they were more likely to visit their relatives.

## Frequency of crossing by EECP





# WHERE?

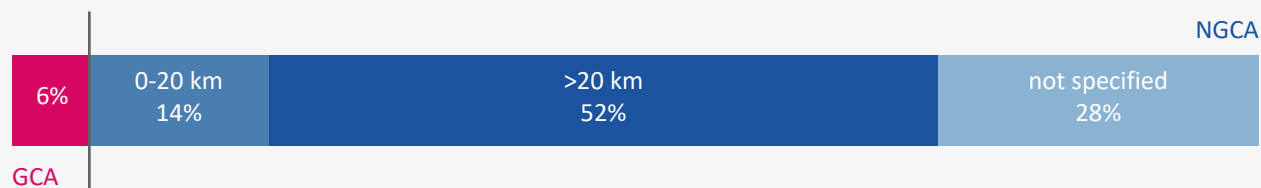
Before the conflict had started, most respondents (97%) resided in NGCA. 3% claimed that they had resided in the territories that are currently considered GCA.



94% of all respondents indicated NGCA as their place of residence at the time of the survey. Even though most respondents in each age category were NGCA residents, the share was higher (98%) among respondents over 60 years, than among those aged 18-34 (84%) and 35-59 (87%).

55% of all NGCA residents resided further than 20 kilometres from the contact line (districts of both Donetsk and Luhansk, the major cities in NGCA are located in that area). 15% of respondents live within 20km from the contact line. 15% refused to answer this question.

## Place of residence



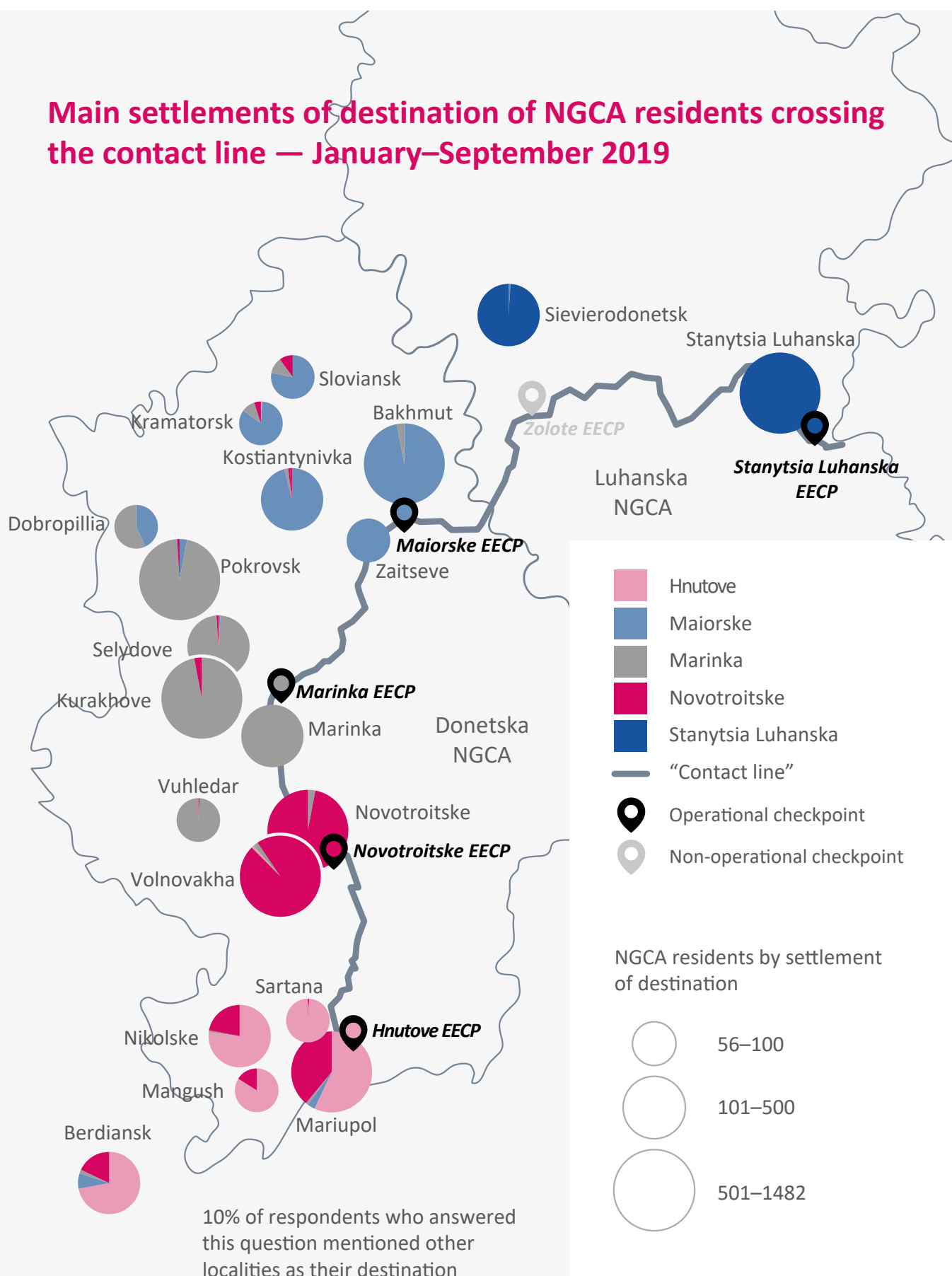
Respondents from NGCA mostly travel to obtain various governmental and bank services. To explore the impact of such movement and the infrastructural needs, we asked respondents what the final destination of their trip was. 41% of all NGCA residents agreed to name the locality they were heading to. Most of them (78%) were travelling to the settlements located within 60 kilometres from the EECs. 83% of respondents who agreed to answer this question were travelling to Donetsk Oblast. 12% were heading to Luhansk Oblast.

However, it is important to highlight that the share of those who answered this question at Stanytsia Luhanska was lower than at other EECs (23% of all respondents from this EEC compared to 43% average at four others).

Mariupol (20%), Novotroitske (14%), Kurakhove (9%), Bakhmut (9%), Pokrovsk (7%) and Stanytsia Luhanska (7%) were the most frequently named among the 176 localities, mentioned by respondents.



## Main settlements of destination of NGCA residents crossing the contact line — January–September 2019



# HOW?

The process of crossing the contact line is heavily affected by internal and external factors, such as the number of people queuing at the EECF, the number of passport control counters operating, weather etc. The impact of the weather became less crucial after the reconstruction began; however, the issue was not eliminated completely.

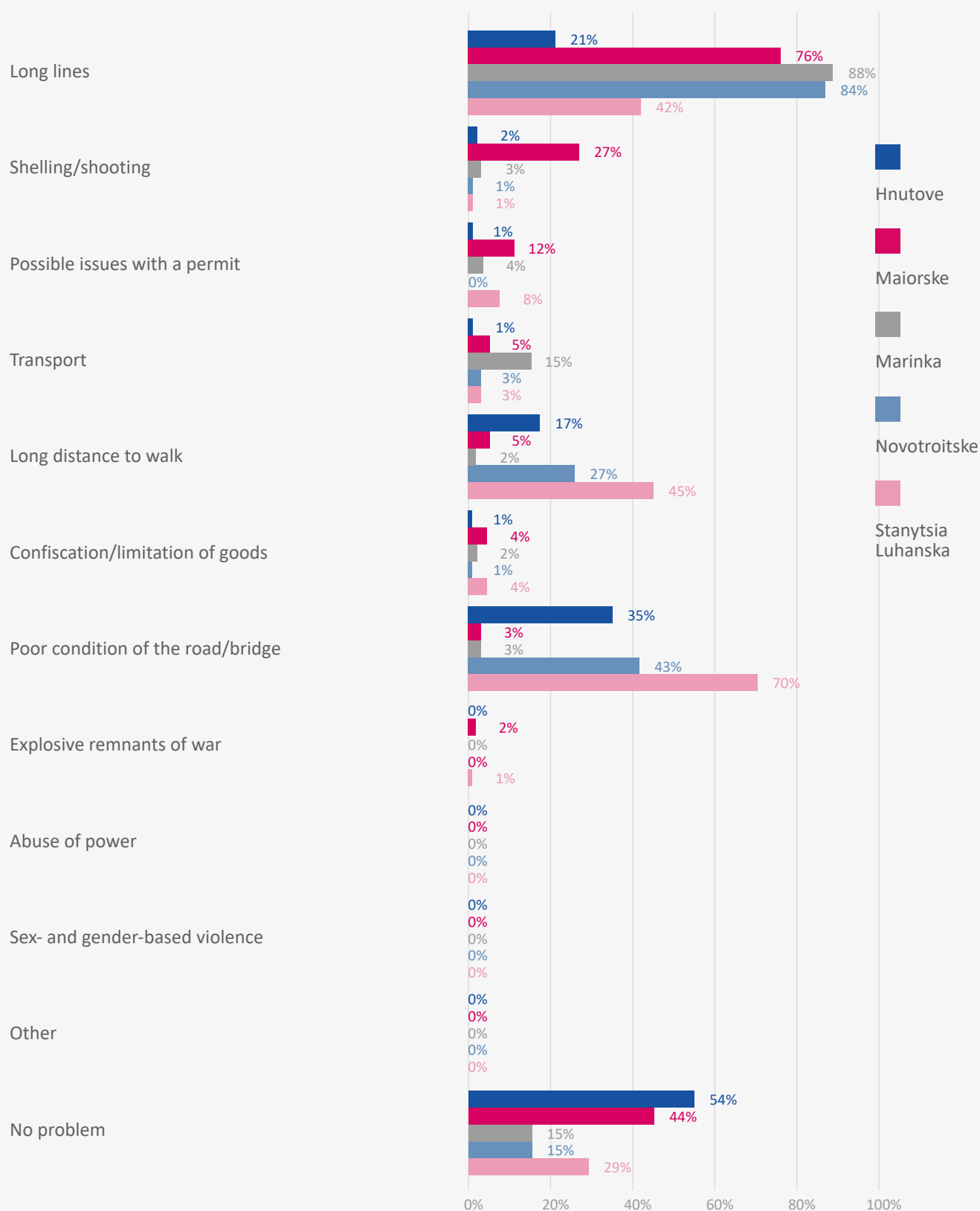


As for the conditions at EECFs, Stanytsia Luhanska stands out as it is the only EECF in Luhansk Oblast and the only one among the five without a road for vehicles. To pass this EECF people had to walk a long way across the bridge that was damaged by an explosion and then to the checkpoint itself, without any shelter protecting from adverse weather condition. In summer 2019 the number of people who were losing consciousness in queues at Stanytsia Luhanska EECF exceeded 80 persons per day. During the summer of 2019 the number of

people losing consciousness in queues at Stanytsia Luhanska EECF exceeded 80 persons a day. These issues partially subsided closer to the end of August after the launch of the free bus provided by Luhansk Oblast administration (LOA) and the free electric car operated by Proliska with the funding provided by UNHCR. In September over 17,000 most vulnerable persons (400 people every day) among whom are elderly, sick, people with disabilities and families with little children benefited from the free transportation by the electric car.



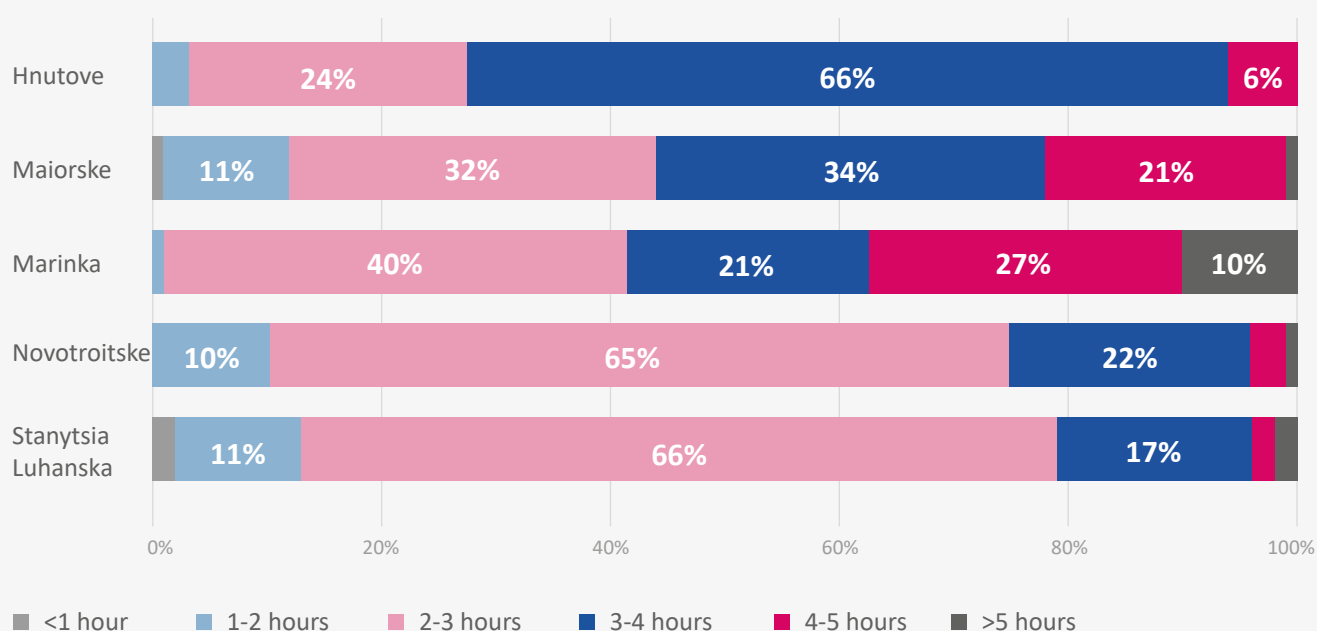
## Concerns while crossing



Even though the condition of EECs has been improved since the reconstruction began, there are other issues that need to be solved. In nine months, 19 people expressed their concerns regarding the abuse of power while answering the questions of the survey: 10 at Marinka, 5 at Stanytsia Luhanska, 3 at Maiorske and 1 at Hnutove EEC. No concerns on that matter were raised at Novotroitske EEC. Most of these respondents reported about disrespectful behaviour from EEC staff towards civilians. There were 15 complaints regarding the GCA staff and 5 about NGCA (one of the respondents complained about both). At the same time, R2P staff highlight that conflicting situations are usually solved quickly, sometimes with the involvement of R2P staff or the EEC chief officer.

Long queues were one of the most articulated concerns at all EECs, except Hnutove. In order to find out, how much time people spend waiting to cross the contact line, monitors asked them a question regarding their previous experience, as they were surveyed while crossing. 80% of respondents (15,766 individuals) agreed to answer it. Over a half (55%) of respondents stated that they spent more time on checkpoints in NGCA. 25% said that the time spent was approximately the same and 18% spent more in GCA. In average, respondents of the survey spent 2 to 3 hours or crossing the contact line, however the share was fluctuating during the reporting period.

## Duration of crossing



”

This man, about 50 years old, arrived at the EECF from NGCA with a Release Certificate (he served a prison term since 2009) as the only identity document. He was travelling to Kostyantynivka with no money on him. While SBGS and SSU were identifying him to allow through the contact line, he was extremely worried: “This is a one-way ticket for me. If they don’t let me pass, I’ll have to get back to NGCA. They’ll send me either to dig trenches or to the battlefield and I don’t want to”. Fortunately, he was granted a permit and the municipal enterprise that carries out passenger transportation from and to the EECF allowed him to get on the bus to Pokrovsk for free. It wasn’t the first time we heard people who served their sentences in NGCA say so.

— Marinka EECF, Kateryna Rachynska, R2P Monitoring Specialist

Over a thousand respondents (6% of the total number) informed the monitors that in 6 months prior to the survey they had at least one incident when they were unable to cross the contact line and had to return. In 823 cases (4%) respondents were not allowed through the contact line as their permit did not appear in the database. On March 28 the system of obtaining permits was upgraded, making the permits termless (old permits become

termless after re-applying for prolongation), which supposes to have a positive impact on this share. However, monitors reported that the exchange of data between the CG and State Border Guard Service was conducted with delays (sometimes up to one month). The issues caused by such delays are more challenging at Novotroitske and Hnutove EECFs, as there are no CG representatives who could solve them.

”

An elderly couple came up to the Coordination Group representative module at Maiorske EECF, holding hands like teenagers. The woman caught that surprised look in my eyes and said: “We’re always holding hands. We did so on our first date and we still do. By the way, we’re celebrating today – 55 years of our marriage! Heading to Kramatorsk [GCA], our children and grandchildren are throwing a party for us. It will be our “emerald” anniversary. All of the good things happened to us in Ukraine, so we decided to celebrate there”. A short time later I came back to the module and saw the woman crying. There was a mistake in her husbands’ permit so he would have to return to Horlivka [NGCA]. He was trying to convince his wife to go and celebrate their anniversary with their relatives, but she kept saying: “I won’t leave you here!”. I had to step in. The man was 85 years old, so it was possible to apply for a permit through an expedited procedure. I explained everything to the CG representative, he filed the documents and in two hours the “newly-weds” were heading over to celebrate their anniversary.

— Maiorske EECF, Maryna Pukhyr, R2P Monitoring Specialist





