

A sociological study

# A FOREIGN EMPLOYEE IN THE PANDEMIC



The report from the sociological study 'A foreign employee in Poland during the coronavirus pandemic' conducted by EWL S.A., Foundation for the Support of Migrants on the Labour Market 'EWL' and the Centre for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw

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## ANDRZEJ KORKUS

EWL S.A. Chairman of the Board

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

*I am pleased to present you with the report from the most recent study, conducted by EWL S.A. and the Centre for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw, which concerns the situation of foreign employees during the coronavirus pandemic. We have analyzed issues such as the current moods of migrants from the East, change of employment conditions during quarantine, concerns about the professional and family situation, plans for the future, expectations and areas where help is needed.*

*The negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic have affected foreigners working in Poland, some of whom had to change their workplace and employment sector or face the reduction in the number of hours worked. But it is encouraging to see that even in the current situation foreigners feel safe in our country and most of them are provided with work. They are positive about the restrictions they have to face on a daily basis and the help they receive from the government, namely the introduction of automatic extension of residence and work permits.*

*Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic no more than 175 thousand of Ukrainian citizens have left Poland, i.e. about 10% of the Ukrainian community. Although it may not seem to be an alarming number, the problem lies not in the decline itself, but the lack of a smooth replacement of employees that had left with new ones. Due to the closure of borders and the suspension of visas issuance by consulates and visa centres in Ukraine, there is no influx of new employees from the East. They are becoming scarcer and there is no one to replace them.*

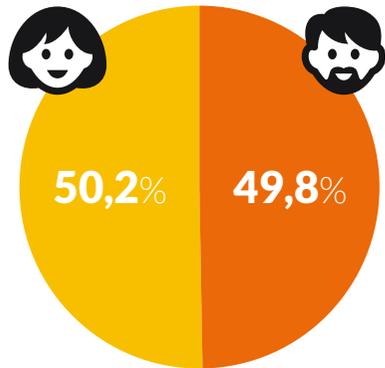
*At the very beginning of the pandemic when some companies ceased their operations, there were still plenty of foreign employees. Finding a new employee was not a big problem for of our clients. However, currently, when companies are gradually resuming production and Polish farmers are preparing for the opening of the season, this lack of manual employees will be severely felt and the path to acquiring them is blocked. This means it is high time for further decisive steps taken by the authorities towards the introduction of special solutions for foreigners working in Poland. All the more so because countries such as Germany, Finland and the United Kingdom have already joined the fight for seasonal employees from the East.*

*Foreigners support our labour market and social security system and their contribution to the development of the Polish GDP in the years 2014-18 is estimated at 11%. It is important that the current situation should not be followed by a crisis caused by the absence of those who left Poland, but cannot or do not want to come back.*

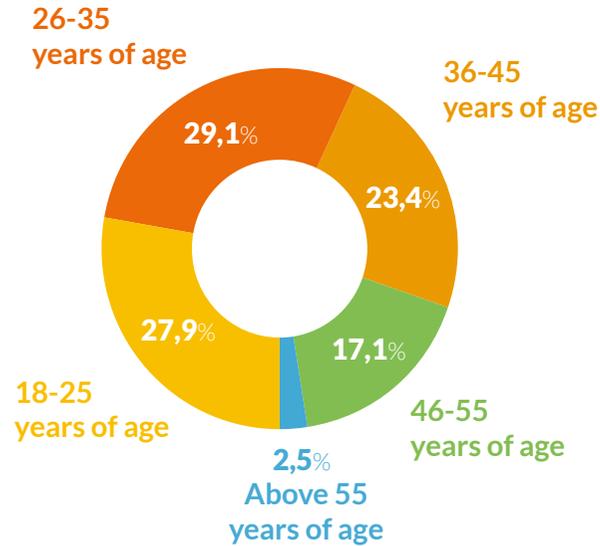
*I invite you to read the summary of the assessment and expectations of foreigners working in our a country in these challenging times.*

## METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENT PROFILE

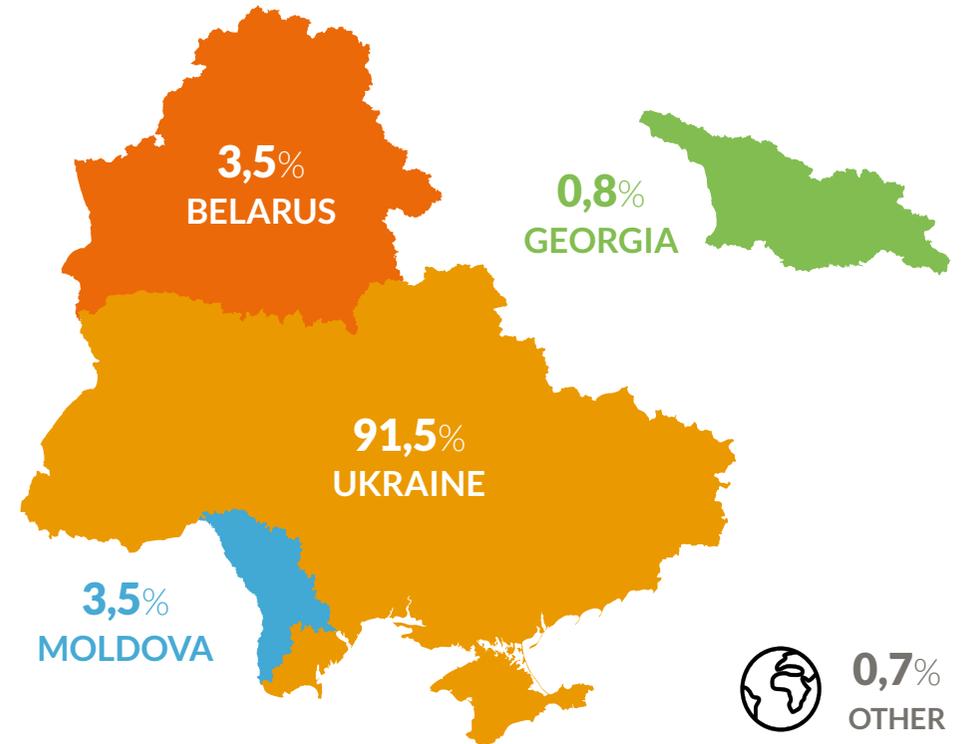
Sex



Age



Country of origin



### METHODOLOGY

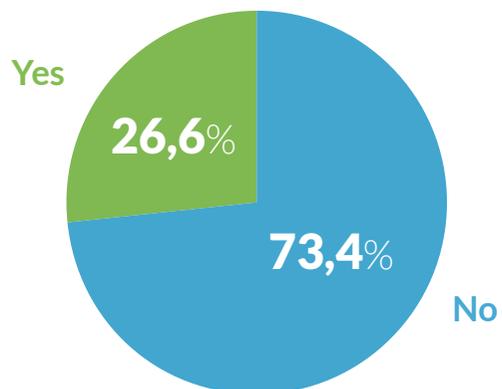
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the study of foreign employees in Poland was conducted using the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) method. The selection of the sample was oriented towards finding respondents representative of the community of foreign employees from beyond the eastern border of Poland. The invitation to take the survey was sent directly to this category of respondents. One of EWL S.A.'s registers of foreign employees was used for the purpose.

The study included foreign employees staying in Poland and experiencing the effects of the pandemic and, like all Polish citizens, being subject to the rigours of the state of epidemic emergency.

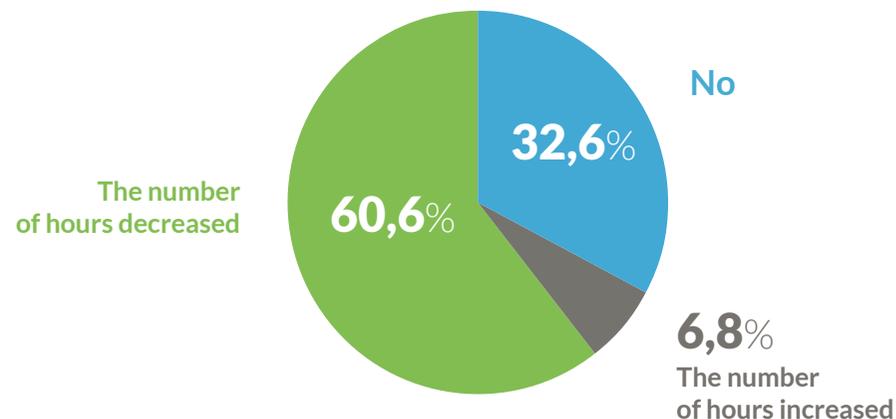
In the period of 9 – 15 April 2020 we received 600 responses. The sample size and its selection ensure adequate representation. It is also confirmed by the characteristics of the respondents, because they included primarily citizens of Ukraine (as well as other countries, mainly Belarus and Moldova), representatives of different age groups and representatives of both genders in equal proportions.

## IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON RESIDENCE AND EMPLOYMENT

Did you have to change the employment sector in Poland due to the pandemic?



Did the coronavirus pandemic affect the number of hours worked?



Did you have to change the place of work in Poland due to the pandemic?



Did you have to change accommodation in Poland due to the pandemic?



The quarantine introduced in Poland due to the coronavirus pandemic affected the situation of foreigners working in our country. One in four had to change the employment sector. For over 60% of foreigners the pandemic meant a decrease in the

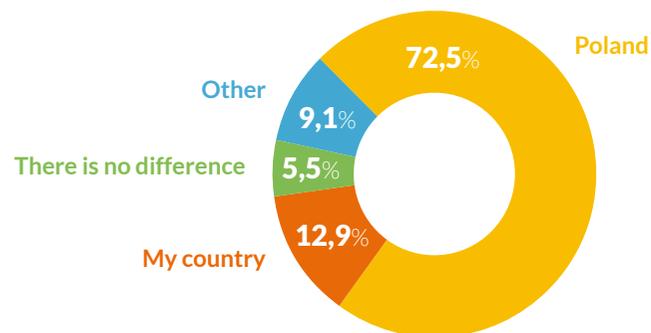
number of hours worked and for 7% of the employees there was an increase. Every fifth migrant from the East employed in Poland declared a change of the place of work and every fourth a change of accommodation.

## FEELING SAFE DURING THE PANDEMIC

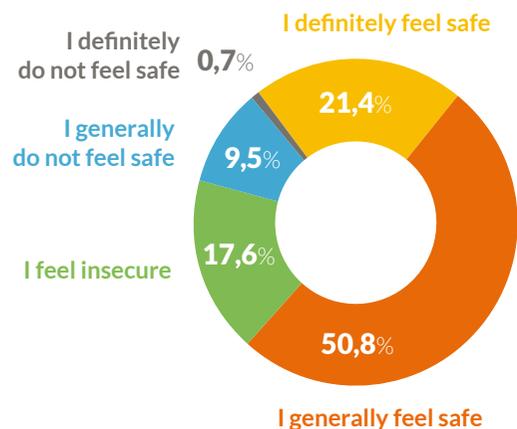
Almost 3/4 of the migrants from beyond the eastern border staying in our country believe that it is safer in Poland during the coronavirus pandemic than in their home countries. Only 10% of the foreigners surveyed do not feel safe here. Among the greatest fears related to the coronavirus pandemic most foreign employees (58%) mention the loss

of employment. More than 1/3 of foreigners are afraid of the economic crisis which will hit the Polish labour market and the vision of no possibility of returning to Poland for a longer time causes more anxiety than the potential impossibility of returning to their homeland. Only one in six respondents is afraid of the coronavirus infection.

Which do you think is safer:  
Poland or your home country?



How would you rate your sense of security  
in Poland during the pandemic?



What do you fear most about  
the coronavirus pandemic?

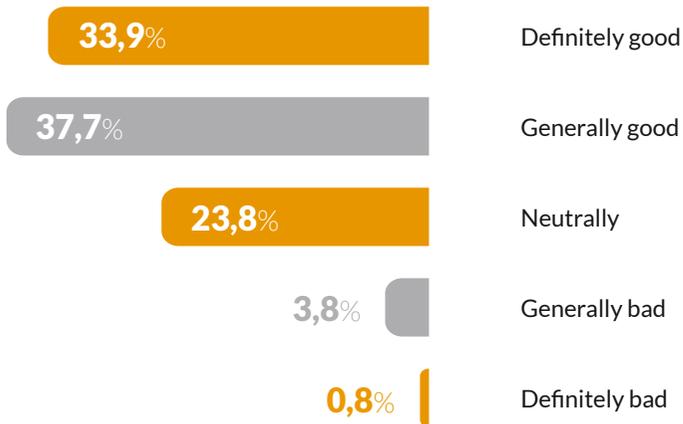


## ASSESSMENT OF PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS

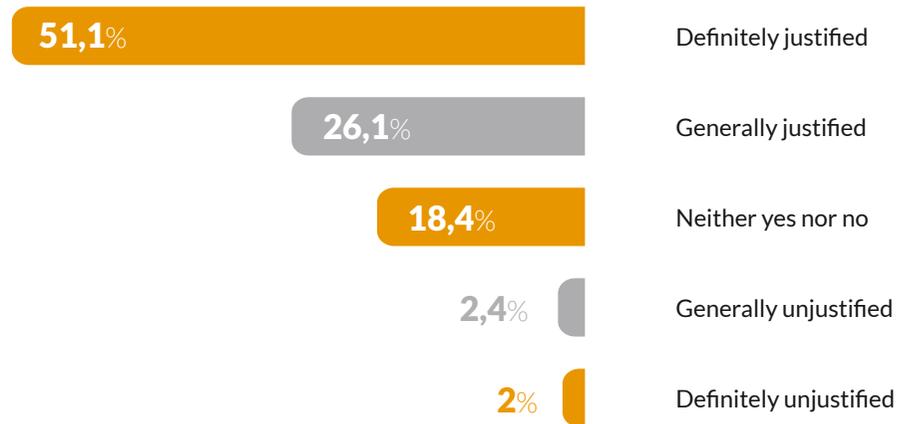
Nearly 3/4 of Ukrainian economic migrants positively assess the restrictions introduced in Poland during the coronavirus pandemic. Over 76% of them consider the restrictions on crossing the Polish border as justified. 22% of respondents feel the negative

consequences of the pandemic, and one in five fears that the current situation will adversely affect their life and work. Tightening quarantine measures will influence the decision about ceasing work in Poland for almost 1/5 of foreigners working here.

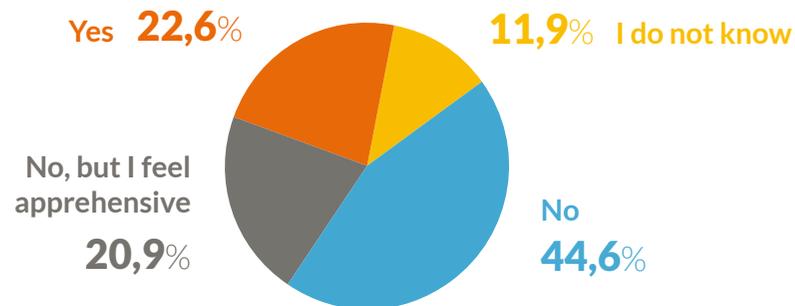
How do you assess the restrictions introduced by Poland in connection with the coronavirus pandemic?



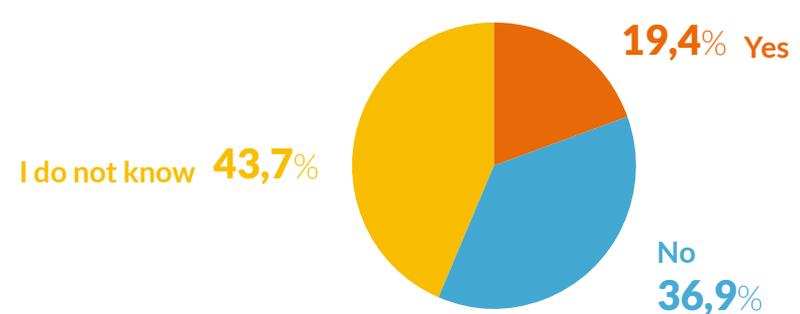
Do you feel the restrictions on crossing the Polish border are justified?



Do you feel the negative consequences of the introduction of the state of epidemic emergency in Poland?

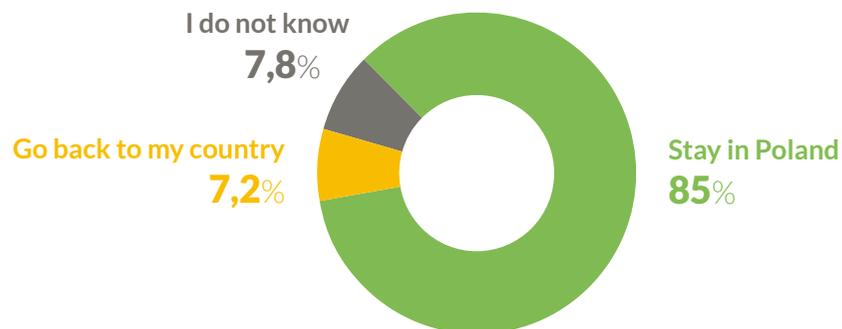


Can the introduction of further restrictions in connection with the pandemic impact your decision to cease employment in Poland?

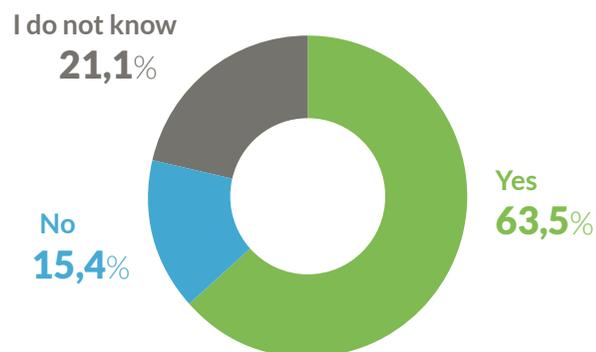


## PLANS OF FOREIGN EMPLOYEES IN CONNECTION WITH THE PANDEMIC

Would you prefer to stay in Poland or return to your homeland for the duration of the pandemic and its restrictions?

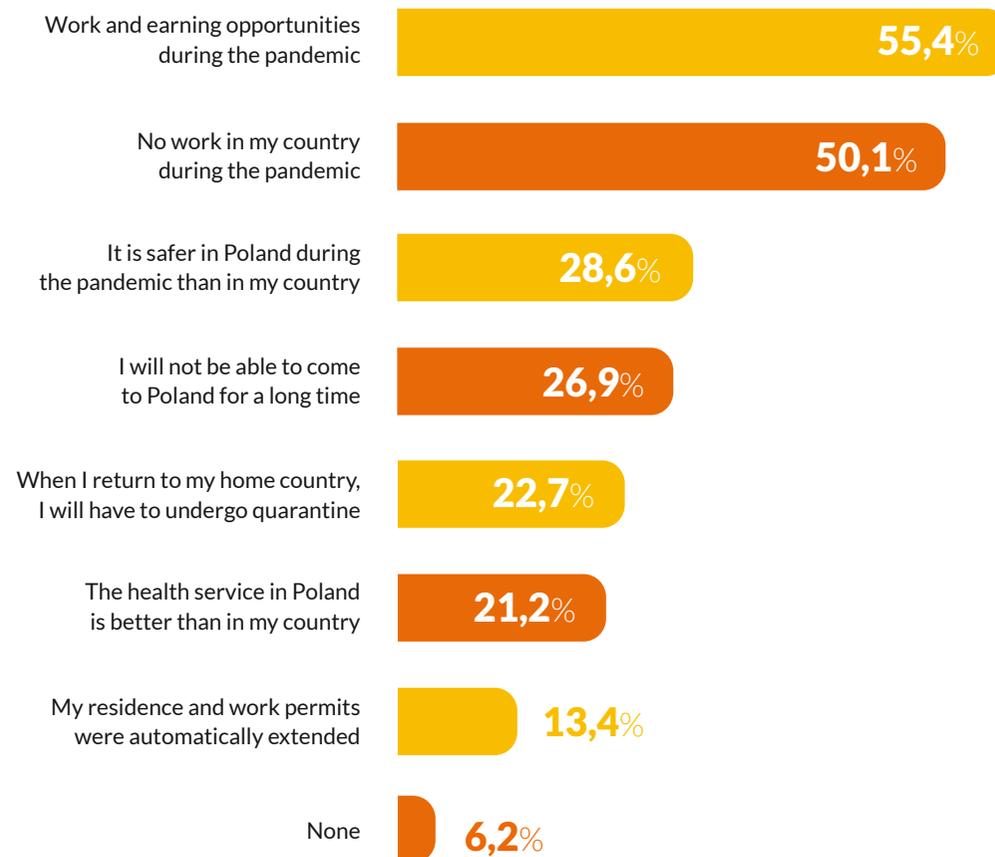


Will you take advantage of the automatic extension of residence and work permits in Poland proposed by the Polish government?



The vast majority of economic migrants consider it right to stay in Poland during the coronavirus pandemic. As many as 85% of respondents decided to stay in our country. The main reasons for this are work and earning opportunities, even during pandemic (55%). In addition, one in two respondents points to lack of employment in their country during the pandemic as a reason for staying in Poland. For 27% an argument for staying

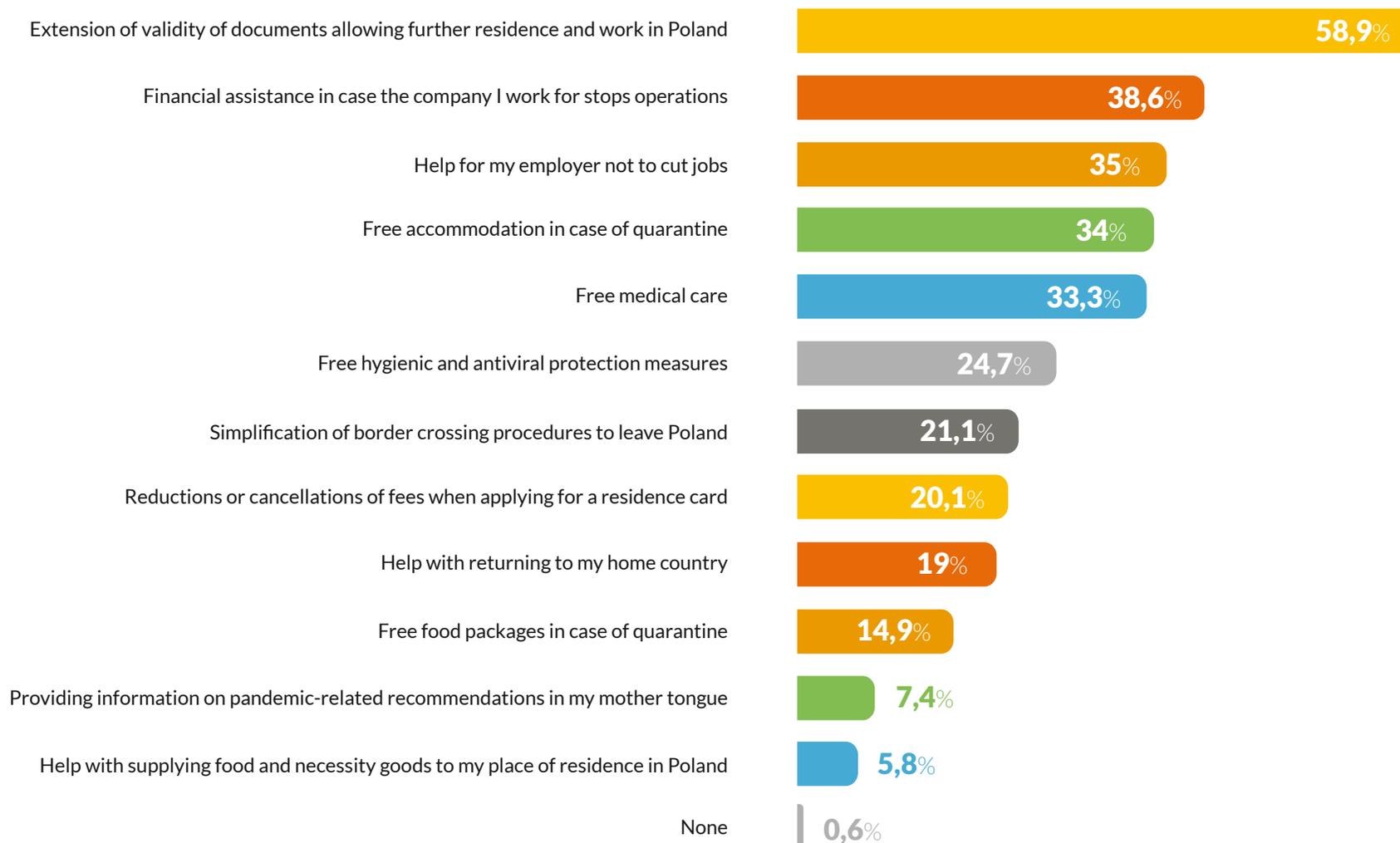
Arguments in favour of staying in Poland during the pandemic



here is the fact that after returning to their homeland they will not be able to return to Poland for a long time. Every seventh foreigner working in Poland was persuaded by the automatic extension of residence and work permits. Moreover, almost 2/3 of foreign employees intend to take advantage of the legal solutions proposed by the Polish government.

## EXPECTATIONS OF FOREIGN EMPLOYEES IN RELATION TO THE PANDEMIC

What support do you expect from the Polish government in connection with the pandemic?

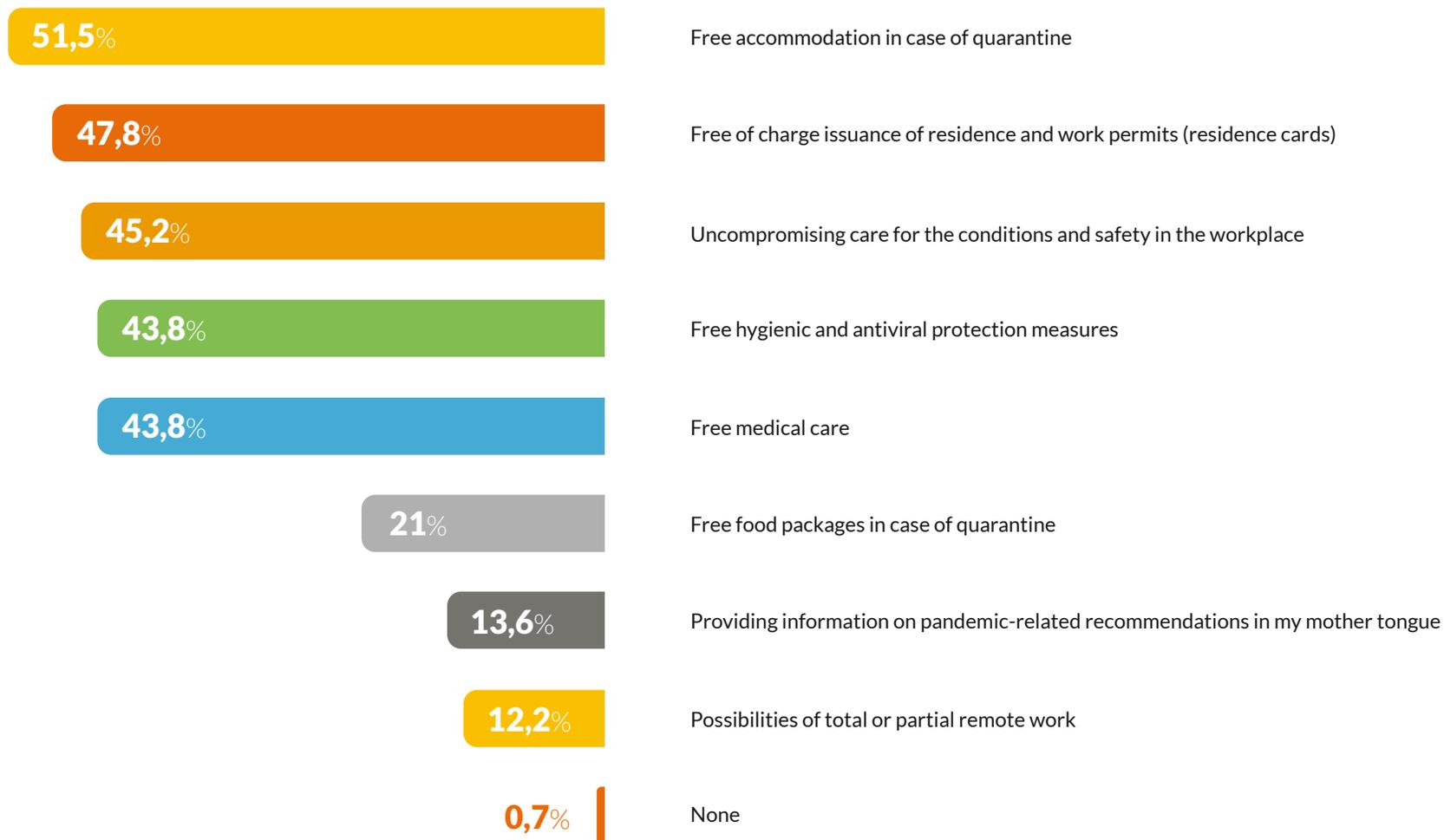


Almost 59% of economic migrants in Poland expect our government to extend the validity of residence and work permits. In the event the company stops operations, 39% of foreign employees would like financial assistance and 35% are in favour of the state helping

employers to avoid job cuts. Reductions or cancellations of fees connected with applying for a residence card are expected by every fifth foreigner working in Poland.

## EXPECTATIONS OF FOREIGN EMPLOYEES IN RELATION TO THE PANDEMIC

What support do you expect from the employer in connection with the pandemic?

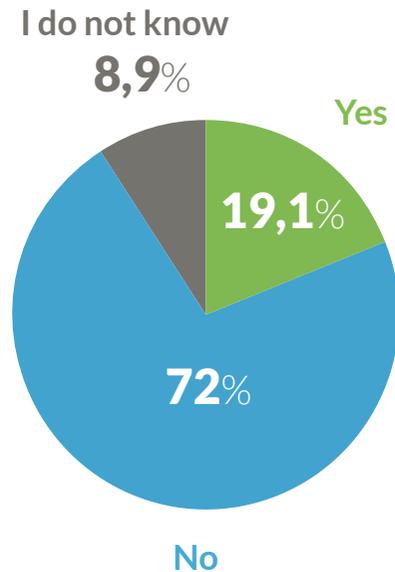


As far as support from employers is concerned, free quarantine accommodation (52%) is first in the expectations of foreign employees. Next is covering fees related with applying for free residence and work permits in Poland, i.e. residence cards (48%). Moreover,

almost every second foreign employee expects the employer to organise the workplace in such a way that it meets safety requirements during the pandemic.

## INFORMATION AND STEREOTYPES DURING THE PANDEMIC

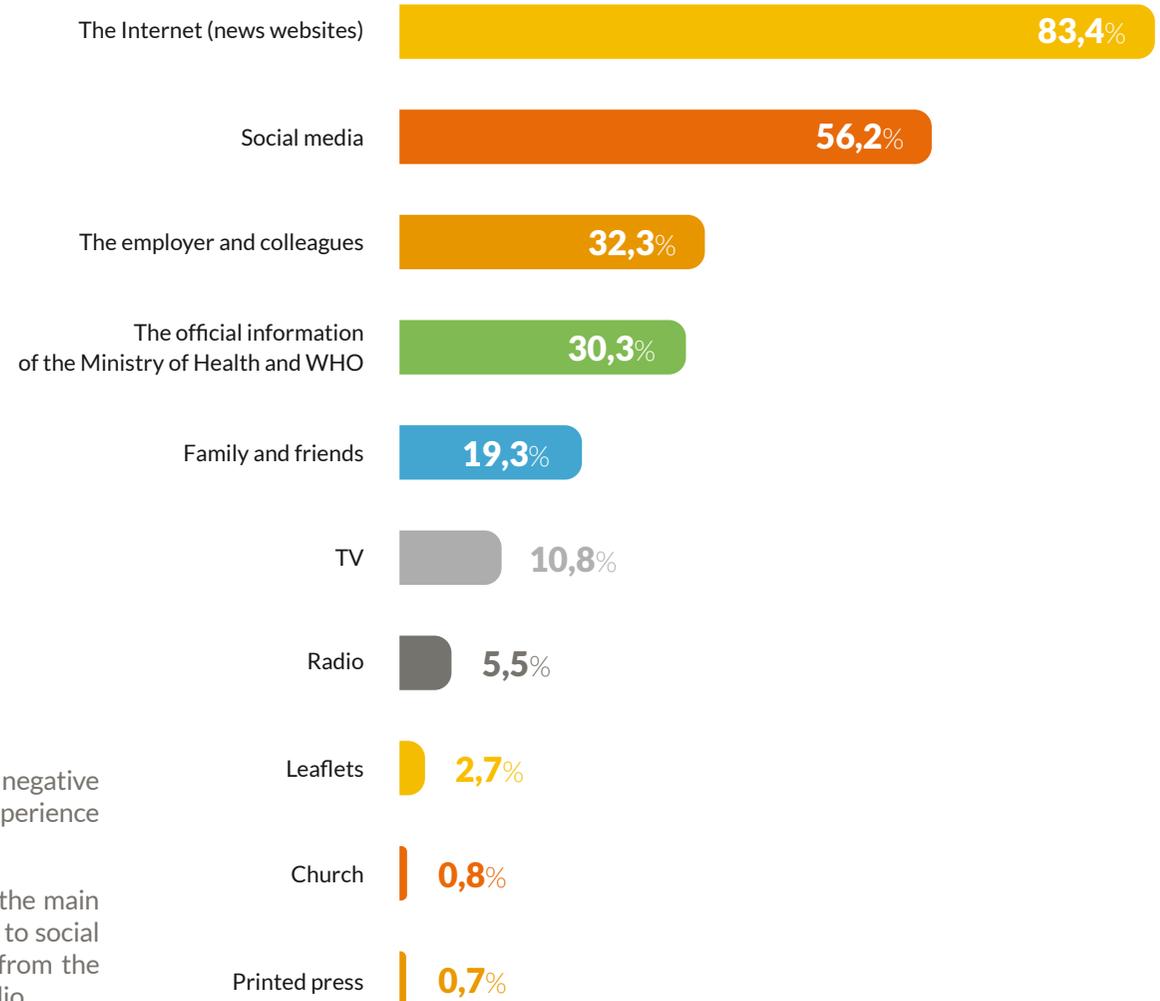
Have you observed the reinforcement of negative stereotypes towards foreigners in Poland in relation to the pandemic?



Almost 3/4 of the respondents say they did not feel the reinforcement of negative stereotypes towards economic migrants in Poland, which they could potentially experience during the coronavirus pandemic. 19% of foreigners are of the opposite opinion.

Almost 85% of economic migrants in Poland listed Internet news websites as the main source of information about the pandemic and more than half of them pointed to social media. Every third respondent gets their information about the coronavirus from the employer. Only 11% watch TV for this purpose, and twice as few listen to the radio.

What sources of information do you use first to find out about the current epidemiological situation in Poland and abroad?



## THE STUDY IN NUMBERS

**84%**

of respondents prefer to stay in Poland for the duration of the pandemic

**63%**

of employed foreigners will benefit from the extended residence and work permits

**55%**

of respondents are spending the pandemic in Poland because of employment opportunities

**72%**

of foreigners feel safe in Poland, even during the pandemic

**72%**

of foreigners believe that it is safer in Poland during the pandemic than in their own country

**71%**

of respondents positively assess the restrictions introduced by Poland in connection with the pandemic

**26%**

of economic migrants had to change the employment sector

**60%**

of respondents complain about the decline in the number of hours worked

**77%**

of respondents consider the restrictions on crossing the Polish border justified

**22%**

of respondents feel the negative effects of the pandemic in Poland

**58%**

of foreigners are most worried about losing their jobs due to the pandemic

**18%**

of foreigners are currently most afraid of the coronavirus infection

**72%**

of respondents did not feel the reinforcement of negative stereotypes towards migrants in connection with the pandemic

**48%**

of respondents expect the employer to provide free residence and work permits

**35%**

of employed foreigners expect the Polish state to support their employers

**600**

foreign employees were surveyed

## THE AUTHORS OF THE STUDY

### EWL S.A.

Founded in 2007, EWL S.A. recruits top-notch specialists from four continents. It is the leader on the Polish market of employment of foreigners in the field of permanent recruitment, employee leasing, outsourcing and servicing the employment of non-EU citizens. The Group provides HR solutions for most sectors of the economy in the European Union, including formalities related to staffing and legalization of stay.

EWL S.A. has 32 branches in 5 European countries (Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the Czech Republic), and in 2018 opened 16 new offices in Ukraine. This is the company's response to the ever-growing demand for qualified employees from the East and the constant improvement of the quality of services provided to candidates. For this

### FOUNDATION FOR THE SUPPORT OF MIGRANTS ON THE LABOUR MARKET ,EWL'

Founded in 2015, the Foundation for the Support of Migrants on the Labour Market ,EWL' aims to initiate and support activities related to the presence of foreigners on the Polish labour market.

Our idea is to raise awareness of rights and obligations and the benefits of legal employment among foreigners, as well as to limit the abuse by dishonest employers. One of the main objectives of the Foundation is to improve multilateral cooperation between employers, government institutions, non-governmental organizations and migrants themselves.

### THE CENTRE FOR EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

The Centre for East European Studies is a unique academic unit in Poland, continuing the traditions of pre-war Sovietological centres – the East European Institute in Vilnius (1930–1939) and the Eastern Institute in Warsaw (1926–1939). The teaching offer of the Centre includes elite Eastern Studies (1st and 2nd degree and postgraduate courses) as well as schools for foreign students. The lecturers are eminent scientists, diplomats and specialists from Europe and the USA.

The Centre annually organizes international scientific conferences and a series of events building positive relations between Poland and the countries of the former USSR. It is also the publisher of numerous books and magazines devoted to the eastern themes.



reason, the company is planning – next to the working branches in Belarus and Moldova – to open further offices in other countries of the former USSR.

EWL S.A. wants to be as close as possible to its foreign candidates in order to look after them from the beginning to the end of the recruitment process and work in the target place. It guarantees the company's clients the recruitment of only matching and loyal staff. Thanks to advanced IT technologies and tools the recruitment process and employee management are getting faster and more automated. The result? A high percentage of orders and a low percentage of turnover of employees recruited by the company.



The Foundation also does charity work addressed mainly to foreigners who are in a difficult life or financial situation. In addition, it works for European integration, active dialogue and the development of contacts and cooperation between societies. The Foundation's activities are directed, among others, to entities involved in migration processes and participants of the global labour market.



In the years 2004–2013, the Centre for East European Studies, under the content-related supervision of Mariusz Kowalski and the general management of Jan Malicki, conducted a series of social studies in Ukraine. The first of them took place in December 2004. A total of about 2,000 questionnaire interviews was carried out, pertaining issues such as political views and preferred directions of international cooperation, with particular emphasis on the place of origin, nationality and language of the respondents' daily communication.



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Source of quoted data: „A foreign employee in the pandemic. A report by EWL”

 EWL Group

**TEAM:**

Anatoliy Zymnin, Mariusz Kowalski PhD (social geographer, content-related supervision), Olena Lytvynenko, Irena Gradowska, Eliza Dąbrowska, Andrii Mahometa, Oleksandr Bondaruk

**CONTACT FOR THE MEDIA:**

Anatoliy Zymnin – PR Manager  
tel. +48 535 888 815  
anatol.zymnin@ewl.com.pl