



EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

War and conflict: What do young people think and how are they affected?

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The views summarised in this report are those of the young people who expressed their opinions and sentiments freely on issues that they consider important. They do not necessarily represent the views of UNICEF.

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Introduction

Young people are often the first victims of war. Over 400 children and young people live in countries affected by violent conflicts. Wars upend the lives of millions of people causing an acute crisis in the lives of children and youth, and destroying hopes, dreams and livelihoods.

Young people are impacted by the effects of wars, even those that exist outside their borders. UNICEF sought to understand how young people think and feel about the wars currently happening around the world and in Ukraine.

Using U-Report, a free, real-time social messaging tool, young people throughout the world expressed their views, worries and fears about the wars happening in the world today, their views on refugees and their opinions on how inclusive they feel their communities are to refugees, and where they get their news about war. Young people were also asked about the Ukraine war specifically, which has wrought devastating consequences for children and young people at a scale and speed not seen since World War II.

Views in this report are a regional selection of results from the global U-Report poll, focusing only on young people in a few countries in UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Region that participated in the poll: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Moldova, and Serbia. The results of the global U-Report survey are available on the UNICEF website.

In addition to national UReport polls, young people answered the poll using the newly launched U-Report Europe. U-Report Europe is targeted at youth-on-the-move, and provides lifesaving and life-improving information to young refugees and their families and support continuous engagement with young people by sharing with them updated information from host countries. It also supports the mobilisation of youth to actively participate in building better societies for children and young people, by sharing their views and opinions on matters that impact their lives. As an open platform, young people can participate in U-Report Europe from anywhere in the region.

This brief report demonstrates that young people who participated in the U-Report poll are greatly impacted by the effects and costs of war, both distant and proximate. The overriding feeling concerning wars is one of deep sadness, followed by anger, then helplessness. Young people are most worried about the loss of life and destruction, followed by the economic impacts such as rising poverty, food prices, unemployment, and inflation.

While many young people say that they are willing and open to helping a refugee that would arrive in their town or city, they are less confident that their fellow community members would do the same. Regarding the war in Ukraine specifically, young people consider themselves to be very familiar with the situation and many get their information through social media, rather than traditional news media. If given the chance, most young people said that they would either work as a volunteer to support children and youth from Ukraine or donate to a humanitarian organisation that is working on the ground.

Q: What would you say to children or young people who are currently being affected by the war in Ukraine?

Držite se djeco, ne predajite se. Budite jedni uz druge, budite zajednica.

Hang in there kids, don't give up. Be there for each other, be a community.

14-18 year old, male, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Our sincere thanks go to the thousands of young people who participated in the U-Report polls, sharing their thoughts and opinions. We hope these voices will be heard and inform dialogue and policymaking processes in the European Union and throughout the region.

Methodology

The voices and sentiments of youth form the basis for this report, collected through a U-Report poll conducted by UNICEF globally in the summer of 2022. The results here are extracted from the global poll and represent 3,716 youth in 7 participating countries in the Europe and Central Asia region: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Moldova, and Serbia. In addition, young people throughout Europe, in particular youth-on-the-move, participated in the open platform U-Report Europe.

The respondents are aged 14-34. The upper age range of respondents who participated in this poll is higher than in the typical U-Report polls. However, given the high interest in this poll among older young respondents aged 25-34 years in the Europe and Central Asia region, their views were also included.

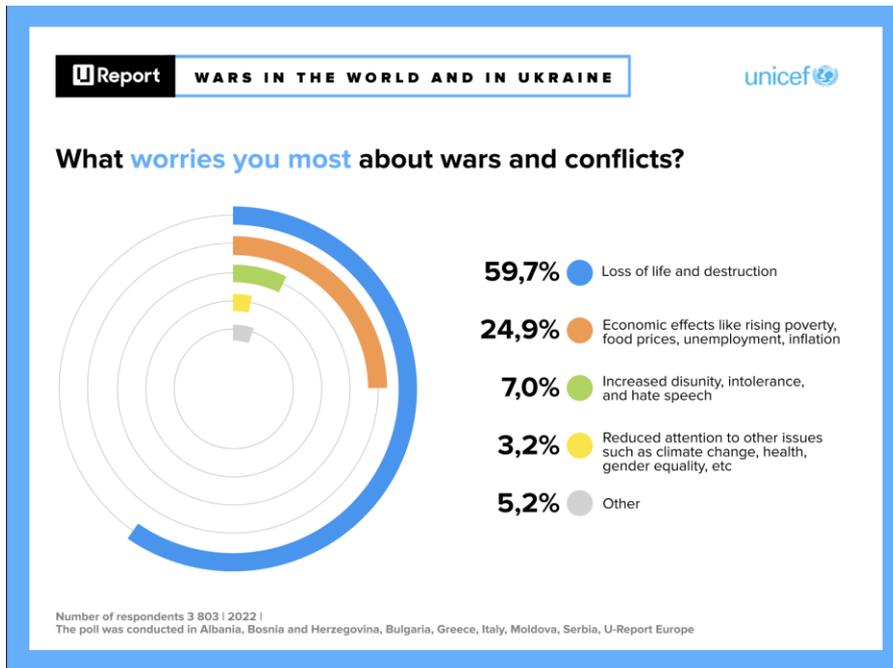
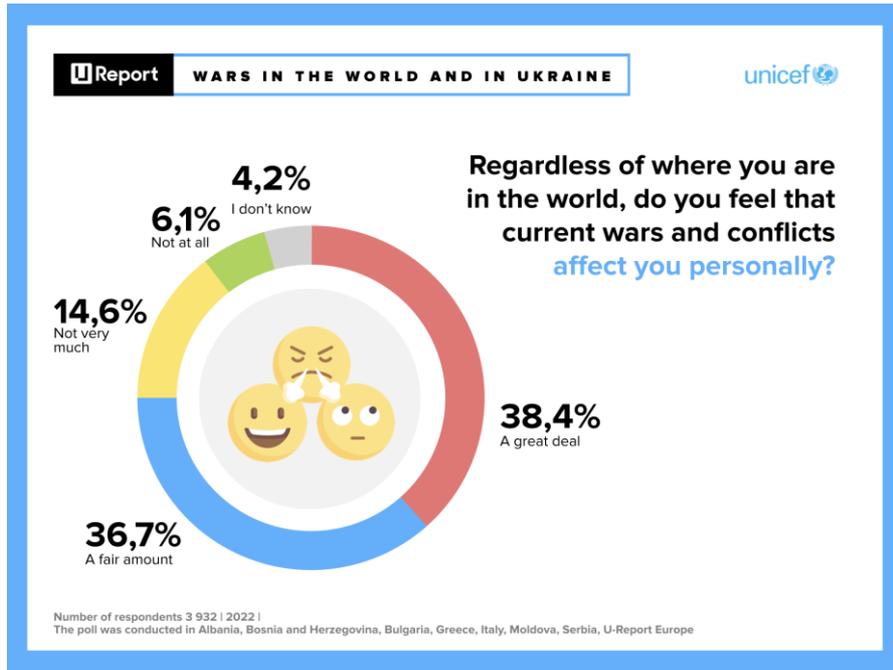
This report presents the responses to the questions asked through the U-report poll. These are real-time quick “snap-shots” providing information on some of the views and sentiments of the young people who responded to the U-Report polls. The graphs below are organised around three main themes:

- Perceptions and feelings about current wars around the world
- Attitudes towards refugees and inclusion
- The war in Ukraine

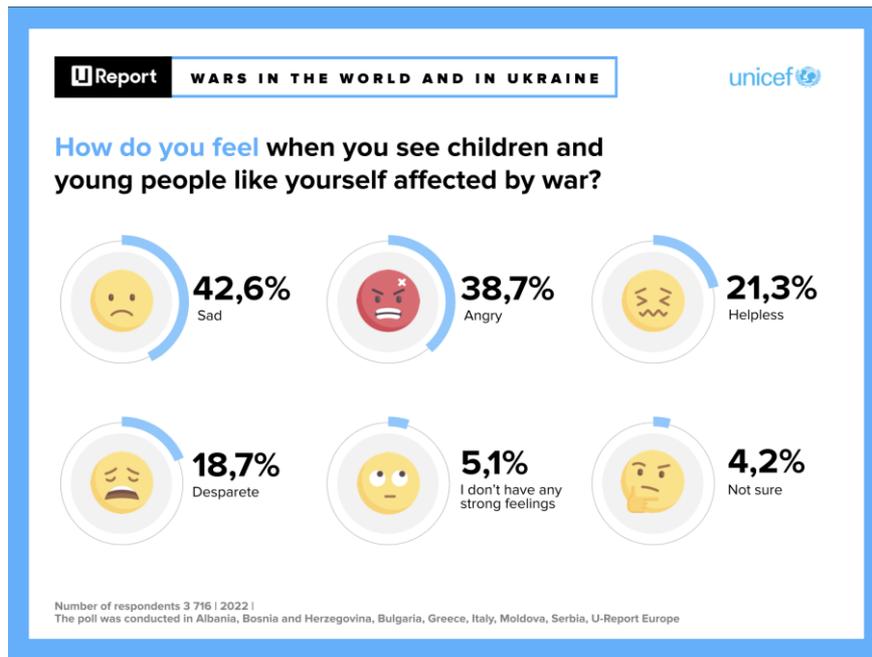
Further in-depth discussions would be needed to unpack and better understand the various aspects of the findings. The findings here represent only the first step in a process of more systematic engagement of young people around the issues that matter to them and their communities. What is clear, however, is that working with young people is key for strengthening solidarity, social cohesion and building safer and more peaceful societies.

Perceptions and feelings about wars around the world

Young people are greatly affected by the wars that are currently happening around the world, regardless of where they are in the world. A vast majority (75.1%) of young people who answered the poll in Europe and Central Asia feel that current wars affect them personally. What worries young people most about wars and conflicts is the loss of life and destruction (59,7%), followed by the economic impacts of war, such as rising poverty, food prices, unemployment and inflation (29,4%).

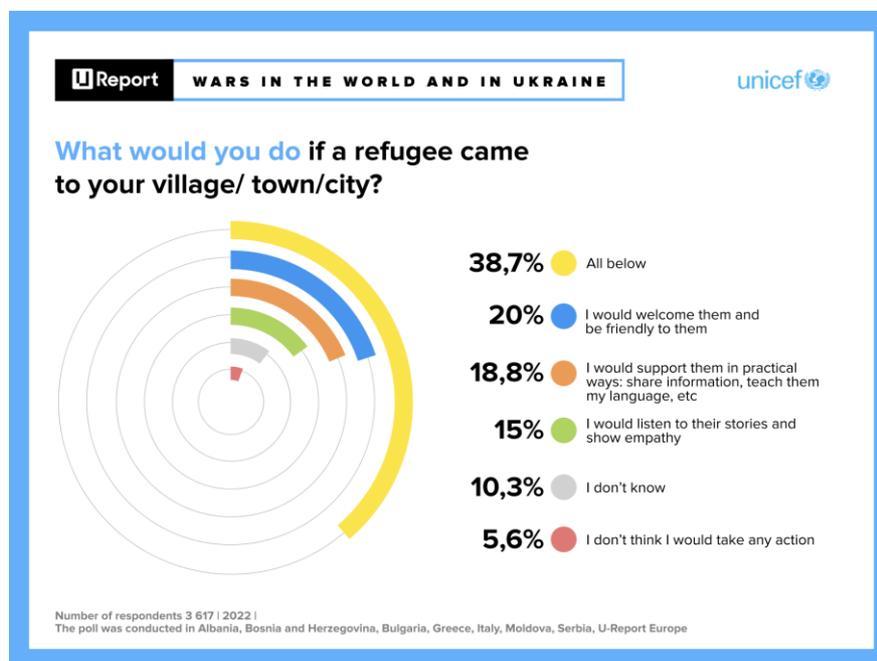


When asked about how they feel when they see children and young people affected by war, the overriding feelings are “sad” (42,6%), “Angry” (38,7%), and “Helpless” (21,3%).



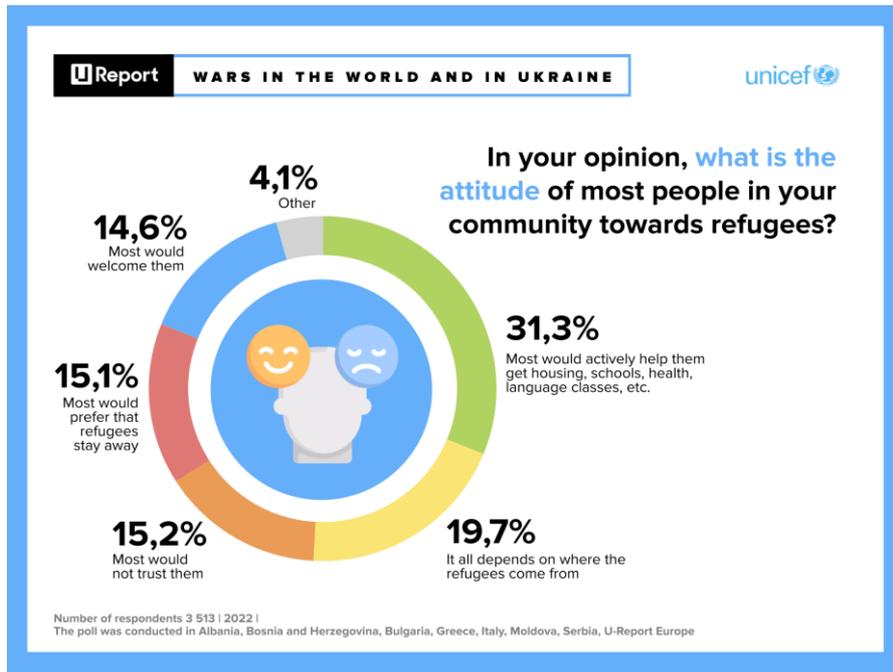
Attitudes towards refugees and inclusion

Young people are open and willing to support those fleeing war. When asked what they would do if a refugee came to their village/town/city, over one-third (38,7%) said that they would do all of the following: welcome and be friendly to them, support them in practical ways (e.g. sharing information or teaching them the language), listen to their stories and show empathy.



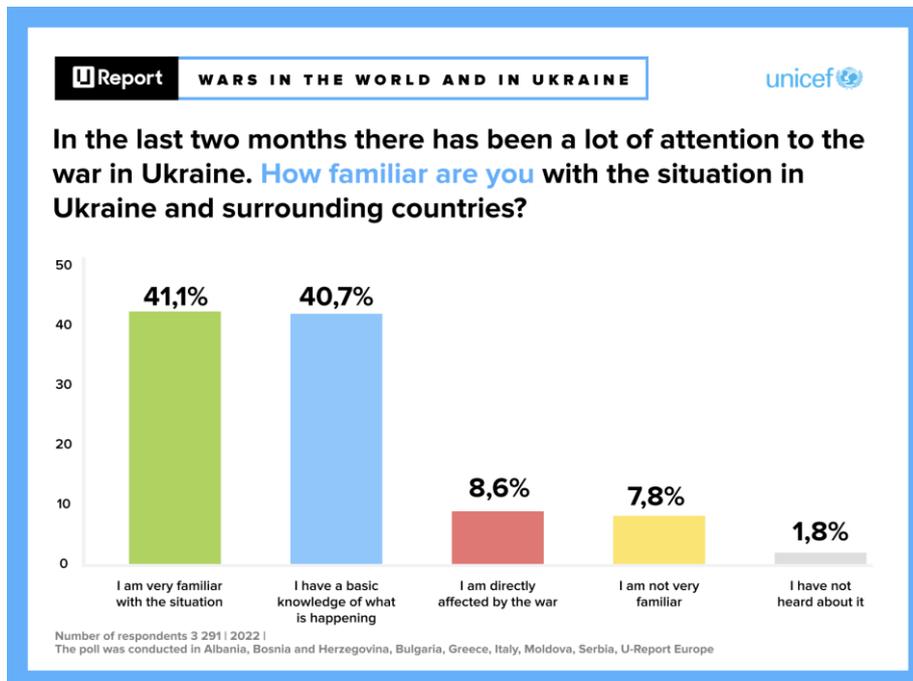
However, young people do not necessarily feel that their welcoming attitudes towards refugees are shared in the community-at-large. While nearly one-in-three (31,3%) respondents think that most people in their community would actively help refugees, close to one-in-five (19,7%) think that it would

depend on where the refugees came from. 15,2% of young people who answered the poll said that most people in their community would not trust refugees.

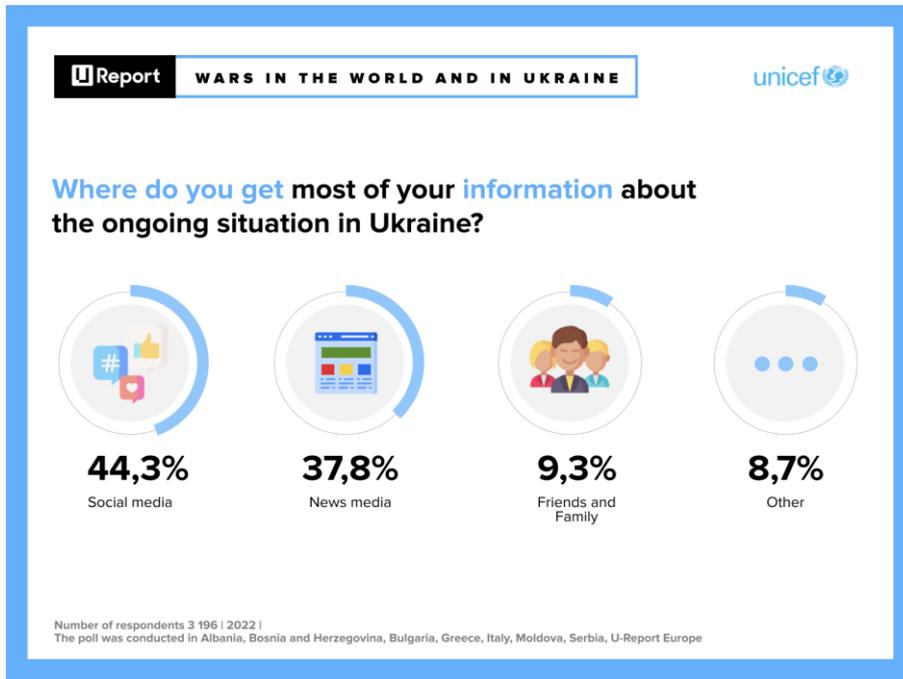


The war in Ukraine

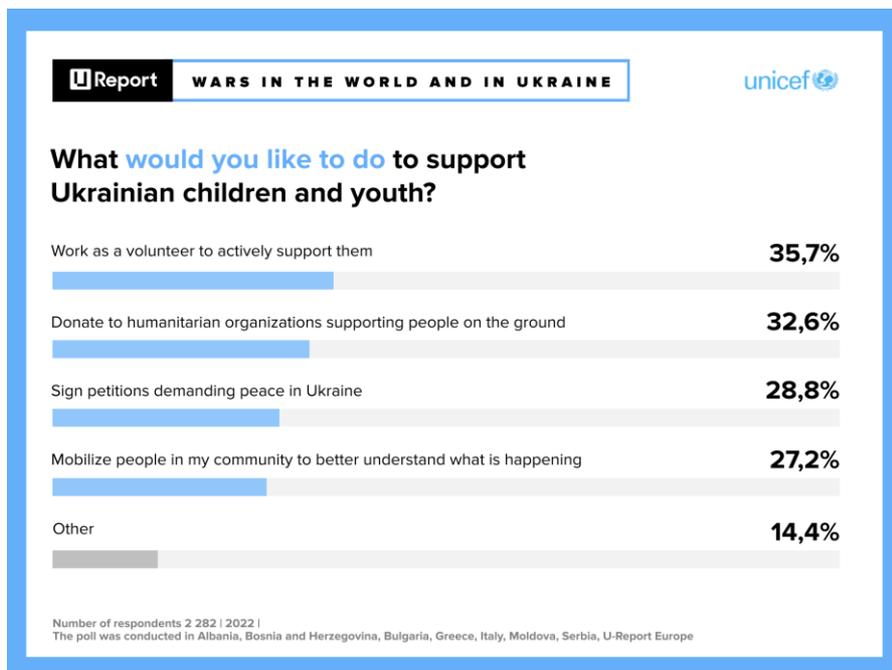
Young people are highly informed about the ongoing war in Ukraine. Most respondents in the Europe and Central Asia region are either very familiar (41,1%) or have knowledge (40,1%) of the situation in Ukraine and surrounding countries.



Young people get their information about the situation in Ukraine from a range of sources, with social media being most popular among respondents (44,3%), followed by traditional news media (37,8%), which could pose challenges in our era of misinformation, particularly during conflict.



Similar to their views on refugees in general, young people who answered the poll stand ready to support children and youth from Ukraine who are affected by the war. Youth shared multiple expressions of solidarity, and 35,7% said that they would volunteer to provide services, 32,6% would donate to a humanitarian organisation working on the ground, and 28,8% would sign petitions to demand peace and an end to the war affecting millions.



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