



REPORT 1

on digital skills and competencies with recommendations

Israel

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M I N T E

This report summarizes the results of a meta-analysis (mapping) of migrants' digital skills and competencies, focusing on Ukrainian migrants (both olim and refugees) who arrived in Israel in 2022 after the war in Ukraine began on February 24. To conduct this meta-analysis, I examined the sources of information and services available to Ukrainian migrants in Israel, with special focus on the internet space (websites). This report describes how communication with migrants in general is conducted in Israel. In particular, it points to efficient modes of communication with migrants from Ukraine who arrived in 2022.

For this report, I mapped reports on migrants published by Israeli governmental institutions as well as academic publications related to migrants in general. It is important to note that most of the information obtained from official Israeli reports is in Hebrew. To map the information available to Ukrainian migrants in Israel, I examined and analyzed websites of ministries, municipalities, and NGOs.

KEY FINDINGS

01.

Most official Israeli governmental services that specifically target Ukrainian migrants (both olim and refugees) are provided online (e-government services) and are available in Russian. However, many e-government services meant for the general population require Hebrew language proficiency.

02.

Based on previous academic studies in the field, it can be assessed that many of the Ukrainian migrants (olim and refugees) who are highly educated and of working age have digital skills and competencies. The digital gap may be more apparent among elderly migrants.

03.

As Ukrainian olim are Israeli citizens, they have greater access to governmental services than Ukrainian refugees. Ukrainian refugees receive a significant amount of information and assistance from NGOs.

04.

The main information and service provider for Ukrainian olim is the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, whereas the main information and service provider for Ukrainian refugees is a program (Tzav Hasha'a) operated by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs in collaboration with NGOs.

05.

Municipalities play a significant role in providing information and services to Ukrainian migrants, both online and in person.

06.

There are many initiatives and a broad range of information on the internet aimed at migrants from Ukraine, but this abundance may be confusing for migrants who are unfamiliar with the Israeli bureaucracy.

INTRODUCTION

Immigration to Israel - Paths of entrance and basic socio-demographic information on Ukrainian refugees

Immigration to Israel is governed by two main laws: the Law of Return (1950) and the Law of Entrance (1952). The Law of Return (1950) grants prospective migrants with Jewish ancestry (having one or more Jewish grandparent) and their spouses the right to settle in Israel and acquire Israeli citizenship upon arrival. Migrants entering under this law are called olim, and their immigration is called aliyah (Smoocha, 2002). The ministry in charge of the integration of olim in Israel is the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, which provides them with financial support and special services in various fields (such as education, labor market, accommodation). Migrants arriving to Israel under the Law of Return are referred to as olim regardless of their country of origin and immigration circumstances.

During 2022, about 75,000 olim immigrated to Israel. Of these, 15,037 were refugees from Ukraine, while 43,584 were olim from Russia. According to data provided by the Ministry of Aliyah & Integration, in January-February 2022, before the war began, the number of olim from Ukraine was about two hundred per month. This number jumped to 6,005 olim per month in March 2022 and 3,103 in April 2022, and then stabilized to around one thousand olim per month throughout the rest of 2022. The pattern for olim from Russia is different. Whereas the number of olim from Ukraine experienced a major increase in the first two months of the war and then stabilized, the number of olim from Russia did not peak but stabilized at a much higher number. Before the war began, the number was about seven hundred olim per month. Since March 2022, the number has stabilized to around four thousand olim per month. In this report I will focus on migrant olim from Ukraine. However, some organizations provide services to olim from both Ukraine and Russia. The government operation to bring Ukrainian olim to Israel is called "Home to Israel."

Demographic information on olim from Ukraine - Out of the olim from Ukraine in 2022, 39% are men and 61% are women. The median age of these migrants is 35-44, 46% of them are of working age (22-60), 28% are under 22, and 26% are over 60. According to the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, most of the adult migrants have academic educations and professional occupations. They are settling in cities all across Israel: 43% in the north, 33% in the center, and 24% in the south of the country.

The Law of Entrance (1952) regulates the entry and stay in Israel of migrants who are not eligible under the Law of Return (mainly tourists, labor migrants, and asylum seekers). The ministry in charge of the entry of these migrants is the Ministry of Interior, operating via the Population & Immigration Authority. The Law of Entrance grants power to the Minister of the Interior to admit or prohibit the entry and stay of migrants. Following the decision of the Minister of the Interior after the outbreak of the war, a quota of five thousand migrants from Ukraine (refugees) was set, permitting entry on a humanitarian basis for family reunification. According to the Population & Immigration Authority report summarizing 2022: 72,944 Ukrainian nationals (olim+ refugees) entered Israel and more than half of them- 40,490 (most of them refugees) left Israel . The Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs (in collaboration with NGOs) took responsibility for these migrants. According to this ministry's June 2022 report to an Israeli Parliament committee, 14,528 refugees from Ukraine entered under the Law of Entrance from the beginning of the war until the report date, most of them women. The government does not provide official, detailed demographic information about Ukrainian migrants who have entered Israel under the Law of Entrance since the war in Ukraine began.

FINDINGS

Communication with migrants (olim) in Israel - differences between groups

Communication with migrants (olim) in Israel who arrive from various countries is conducted by the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration. This ministry operates at the national and municipal levels, and provides assistance in many areas of integration, such as education, language acquisition, employment, economic support, and housing. The ministry operates through branch offices in main cities and provides information and assistance, as well as special programs to the olim living in the city. Certain cities operate reception centers for olim (mainly from Ethiopia). Cities may also employ designated representatives for certain groups of olim (e.g. from France and North America) according to their proportion of the city's population. The ministry website operates in six languages (Hebrew, English, Russian, Arabic, French, and Spanish). In the ministry's local branch offices, services are mainly provided in Hebrew, English, and Russian. As olim are Israeli citizens, they are entitled to all services provided to citizens.

Over the past twenty years, like many other western societies, Israel has transitioned to e-government services (Dodel & Aguirre, 2018). Many Israeli institutions, including national and local authorities as well as economic and health institutions (such as banks, insurance companies, and HMOs) now provide services online, and these services are also available to migrants. Citizens who wish to access these services must have basic digital competency. A report by the Israel Internet Association based on data from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) found that internet usage expanded over time: whereas a decade ago, only about 68% used the internet, in 2021, 85% of the Israeli population had an internet connection at home and 90% used the internet (mainly through mobile phones). Internet usage was correlated with academic education; however, when analyzing the data by age and religious group, the report identified a digital gap.

While 65% of citizens aged 20+ used online governmental services, nearly a quarter of citizens aged 60+ and about 30% of ultra-orthodox citizens did not use the internet.

Israeli studies point to a digital gap (divide) of migrants (olim) compared to native Israelis and among immigrant groups. A study conducted on CBS data examined the digital gap between migrants from the Former Soviet Union (FSU), Ethiopia, Western countries, and native Israelis in the Israeli society as manifested by internet access and patterns of use (Lissitsa Chachashvili-Bolotin, 2014). Migrants coming from Western countries manifested the highest rates of internet use, followed by native Israelis and FSU migrants. The rate of internet use among Ethiopian migrants was significantly lower compared to the other three groups. After controlling for socioeconomic variables and especially Hebrew proficiency, the differences in internet use between native Israelis and migrants from the FSU and Ethiopia became insignificant. Lissitsa & Chachashvili-Bolotin (2014) conclude that when background factors are held constant, language proficiency explains ethnic variations in internet usage overall and, more particularly, in internet use that increases human capital.

In a recent study, Rosenberg (2020) examined the role of immigration status, gender, and country of origin in the use of e-government services. The findings indicate that immigrant women are disadvantaged in terms of use of e-government services, regardless of their year of immigration. However, when the data are segmented by country of origin, female migrants from the FSU show evidence of a triple disadvantage. Other studies point to a digital gap apparent for elderly migrants from the FSU (Khvorostianov, Elias, Nimrod, 2012; Rosenberg, 2022).

Communication with olim and refugees from Ukraine after the outbreak of war

The appendix provides a table with information on Israeli institutions (governmental and NGOs) and initiatives aimed at facilitating the absorption of Ukrainian migrants (olim and refugees) who arrived in Israel in 2022 due to the war. As mentioned above, most of the Ukrainian migrants are educated and of working age, and thus we may assume that the majority are digitally competent. However, there is no official report confirming this assumption.

According to the mapping done in this study, most of the official Israeli information and governmental services specifically addressed to Ukrainian migrants (both olim and refugees) are provided online (e-government services) and are available in Russian. However, as Israeli citizens, olim also need to use many other e-government services that are provided mainly in Hebrew.

As noted, Ukrainian refugees obtain most information and assistance from NGOs. The main information and service provider for Ukrainian olim is the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration whereas the main information and service provider for Ukrainian refugees is the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs in collaboration with NGOs, operating through the program Tzav Hasha'a. The abundance of information available on the internet may be overwhelming for migrants who are unfamiliar with the Israeli bureaucracy. One volunteer initiative that addresses this problem is TechForChanges, founded by senior members of the high-tech sector to assist both olim and refugees from Ukraine. This organization focuses on identifying migrants' needs and implementing assistance in an effective manner. To meet this goal, TechForChanges organizes information fairs in cities, in collaboration with municipalities, governmental institutions, NGOs, and the private sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

01.

A comprehensive, in-depth examination of Ukrainian migrants' digital competencies and use of e-government services is required to identify the digital gaps more thoroughly within this population.

02.

The government should consider providing training to Ukrainian migrants (and migrants in general) for efficient use of e-government services, with an emphasis on improving digital and Hebrew skills for elderly migrants.

03.

E-government services for citizens in general should be provided in migrants' languages.

04.

The effectiveness of providing information and services to Ukrainian migrants in physical locations through information fairs (such as the TechForChanges model) should be assessed, and if proven successful, this method should be adopted in cities where migrants live.

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APPENDIX

Institutions providing services to Ukrainian olim and refugees

Type of migrants	Institution name	Institution type	Website link	Service provided	Immigrant's language	Social network (in Hebrew)
Olim from Ukraine who are eligible under the Law of Return	Ministry of Aliyah and Integration	Governmental	Ministry of Aliyah & Integration Emergency Aliyah	General information on employment, rights, education, psychological assistance, etc. Hebrew classes (ulpan) in cities. Additional information is provided for aliyah during emergencies. YouTube video in Russian and Ukrainian targeting these migrants, gives general information about absorption in Israel.	Russian + Ukrainian	Facebook
	The Jewish Agency for Israel	Semi-governmental institution	The Jewish Agency	Operates an emergency program to aid the Jewish community in Ukraine in collaboration with the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration and the International Fellowship for Christians and Jews. In charge of absorption reception centers in Israel.	Russian	Facebook
	The International Fellowship for Christians & Jews (Friendship Fund)	NGO, in collaboration with The Jewish Agency and Ministry of Aliyah & Integration	The International Fellowship for Christians & Jews	Operates an emergency program for financial aid to the Jewish community in Ukraine. The aid is transferred to the main Jewish organizations in Ukraine. In addition, they cooperate with the Jewish Agency and the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration on projects facilitating the absorption of migrants in Israel.	Russian	Facebook Instagram YouTube
	TechForChanges	Volunteer initiative - NGO in collaboration with selected municipalities (Haifa, Beer sheva, Netanya)	TechForChanges Website	Runs information fairs connects service providers and migrants. Haifa Fair The website (in Russian) provides information on the available services. The website also describes their assistance in creating partnerships with companies and organizations.	Russian	Facebook Instagram
Refugees from Ukraine who are not eligible under the Law of Return	The Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs + JOINT Israel+ Red Cross	Governmental+ NGOs	Tzav Hasha'ah (the order of the hour)	The website has information regarding education, employment, health, food, psychological help, activities for children, temporary housing, clothing, and equipment. For each of these fields, links (in Hebrew, Russian and Ukrainian) are provided to forms for applying for humanitarian aid. Works in collaboration with other NGOs (TechForChanges and HIAS).	Russian, Ukrainian	
	The Migration Authority – Ministry of Interior	Governmental	Population & Immigration Authority	Information about policy and rights	Russian ⁹	Facebook
	HIAS	NGO	HIAS	International Jewish NGO, offers legal help to refugees. Handles the legal field: commercial law, family law, legal issues related to the Ministry of the Interior, citizenship, notary assistance.	The website is in English. Services are provided in Russian and Ukrainian.	Facebook
	TechForChanges	Volunteer initiative - NGO in collaboration with selected municipalities (Haifa, Beer sheva, Netanya)	TechForChanges Website	Runs information fairs connects service providers and migrants. Haifa Fair The website (in Russian) provides information on the available services. The website also describes their assistance in creating partnerships with companies and organizations.	Russian	Facebook Instagram

⁹ The menu is in many languages including Russian, but the information about services is not provided in Russian.