

***Public perception of Cypriots  
about refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants  
21<sup>st</sup> March 2023***

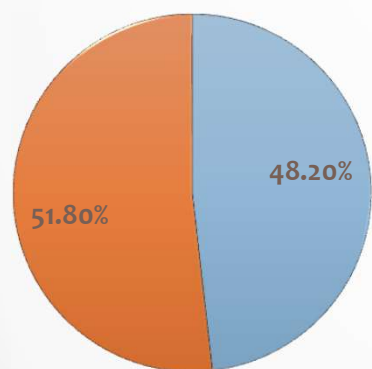
# Methodology of the Study

- \* **Part A. Quantitative Study – Phone survey**
- \* **Part B. Qualitative Study – Focus groups**



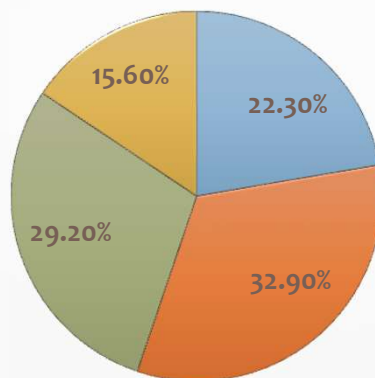
# Main Findings: Demographic characteristics

## Gender



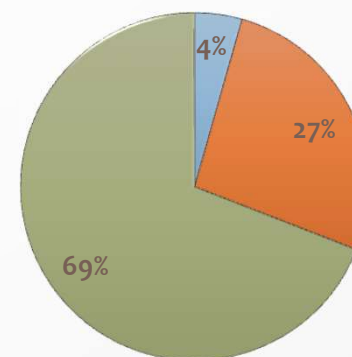
■ Male ■ Female

## Age group (years)



■ 15-34 ■ 35-44 ■ 45-64 ■ 65+

## Educational level



■ Primary (up to 6 years of education)  
■ Secondary (from 6 to 12 years of education)  
■ Higher (over 12 years of education)

Phone Survey

N=1057

Data Collection: 3-26 11/22

CR: 11.7%

# Main Findings: Representation of migrant, refugee & asylum-seeker

## Main Themes Identified

- ❖ Hardships & Suffering
- ❖ Better Life
- ❖ Negative/Threat
- ❖ Work/Economy
- ❖ 1974 War in Cyprus

## ❖ Negative Threat

- ❖ Most negative representation is that of asylum-seekers (630 [37.1%] out of 1698 references)
- ❖ Migrants also record 460 (22,1%) out of 2082 references
- ❖ Least negative one is that of refugees (112 [5.6%] out 2008 references)

## Suffering pattern:

- 1) Refugees
- 2) Migrants
- 3) Asylum-Seekers

## Threat pattern:

- 1) Asylum-Seekers
- 2) Migrants
- 3) Refugees

# Main Findings: Understanding of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants

## Country of Origin of refugees and asylum-seekers :

- Come from African countries: (46.5%)
- Come from Middle Eastern Countries: (32%)

## Main reasons refugees and asylum-seekers come to Cyprus:

- Seeking protection/asylum/refuge: (34.4%)
- Finding work: (23.5 %)

## Perceived numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers living in Cyprus:

- More than 50,000 refugees: overall 30.9%
- More than 50,000 asylum-seekers: overall 16.5%

## Main Findings: Understanding of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants

- ❖ Main need of refugees and asylum-seekers is to have a fast and fair way for their asylum applications to be examined: (86.7%).
- ❖ Pournara First Reception Center: acknowledgment of the hard conditions' refugees and asylum-seekers are facing. First reception centers considered neither safe nor suitable.
- ❖ Ministerial Order for employment sectors:
  - Agree/strongly agree: (56.5%)
  - Neither agree/nor disagree: (19.1%)
  - Disagree/strongly disagree: (24.4%)

## Main Findings: Understanding of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants

- \* **Perceptions on benefits/allowance for asylum-seekers:** One in five respondents (21.3%) believe that €800 or more is provided to an asylum-seeker on a monthly basis
- \* Awareness of the difference between a refugee and an asylum-seeker: YES (68.3%), NO (31.7%)
- \* Main difference: Existence of **war or war related conditions** in their countries of origin.

# Main Findings: Attitudes towards refugees and asylum-seekers

## Daily contact with refugees and/or asylum-seekers:

- \* Never: (42.7%)
- \* Rarely : (16.3% )
- \* Sometimes: (15.5%)
- \* Often: (12.1%)
- \* Very often: (12.9%)

## Interaction with refugees and/or asylum-seekers:

- Not pleasant at all: (15.3%)
- A little pleasant: (20.20%)
- Somewhat pleasant: (44.2%)
- Very pleasant: (20.2%)

## Number of friendships established with refugees and/or asylum-seekers:

- ❖ Do not maintain some kind of friendship: 70%
- ❖ Have one to two friends: 13.5%
- ❖ Have three to five friends: 10.2%
- ❖ Have six to ten friends: 2.4%



# Main Findings: Attitudes towards refugees and asylum-seekers

## ***Main integration obstacles:***

- \* Being dangerous: (76.2%)
- \* Refugees' unwillingness to integrate: (73.3%)
- \* Different culture: (72.7%)

## ***Main concerns:***

- Cyprus' small size: (26.5%)
- Fear of violence and/or criminal (20.5%)
- Possible changes to demographics: (16.5%)
- Health concerns (12.3%)
- Take up jobs from Cypriots: (8.8%)
- Do not have any concerns: (11.1%)

# Main Findings: Attitudes towards refugees and asylum-seekers

## Impact on the economy:

- ❖ Positive spectrum: (18.6%)
- ❖ Neutral : (21.3% )
- ❖ Negative spectrum: (60.1%)

## Impact on cultural life:

- ❖ Enriched : (23.9%)
- ❖ Neutral : (20.7% )
- ❖ Undermined: (55.4%)

# Main Findings: Attitudes towards integration & support for refugees & asylum-seekers

## **Financial resources for development projects:**

- ❖ Equally from EU and Cyprus Government: (51%)
- ❖ Mostly coming from the EU: (36.1%)
- ❖ Mainly from the Cyprus Government: (12.6%)

## **Living conditions of refugees and asylum-seekers:**

- ❖ Live integrated in society: (42.3%)
- ❖ Remain in camps (39.8%)

## **Creation/construction of a new welcome/reception center for refugees and asylum-seekers in their area of residence:**

- ❖ Would not object: (47.4%)
- ❖ Would object: (52.6%)

# Main Findings: Attitudes towards integration & support for refugees & asylum-seekers

## Policies regarding refugees

- \* Agreed/strongly agreed that Cyprus should introduce a limit to the number of refugees and asylum-seekers the country receives: (86.5%)
- \* Agreed/strongly agreed that refugees and asylum-seekers should return to their home countries: (51.5%)
- \* Agreed/strongly agreed transferring refugees and asylum-seekers to other countries: 44.3%
- \* Disagree/absolutely disagree with the idea that refugees and asylum-seekers should be allowed to stay in Cyprus if they wish to: (43.9%)
- \* Disagree/absolutely disagree with the idea that should be allowed Cypriot citizenship if they live in Cyprus for five years: (54%)

# Main Findings: Attitudes towards integration & support for refugees & asylum-seekers

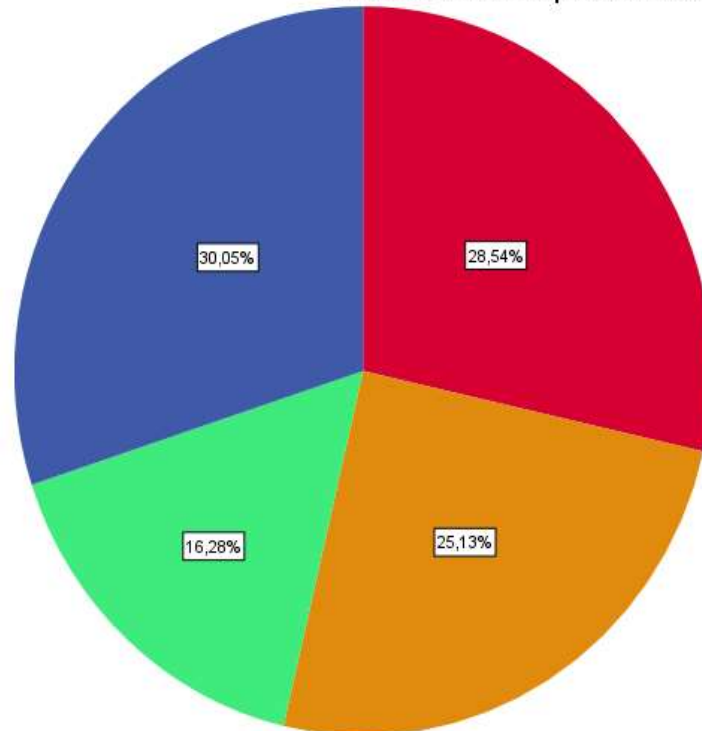
## **Government and its responsibilities towards refugees and asylum-seekers:**

- \* Government does not have the capacity to accept more asylum-seekers or deal with increased arrivals:  
Agreed/strongly agreed (83.4%)
- \* Providing support and assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers living on the island is the responsibility of the Cyprus Government: Agreed/strongly agreed (45.8% )
- \* Cyprus Government is doing enough to support and help refugees and asylum-seekers living here: (56.7% )

# Main Findings: Attitudes towards integration & support for refugees & asylum-seekers

## *The four profiles of the participants in relation to Integration and attitudes towards Immigration*

Pie Chart: The four profiles of the participants



The four profiles

- Put Limits\_Against Immigration\_Against Integration\_Against\_Citizenship
- Put Limits\_Against Immigration\_Pro Integration\_Against\_Citizenship
- No limits\_Pro Immigration\_Pro Integration\_Pro\_Citizenship
- Put limits\_Pro Immigration\_Pro Integration\_Neutral on Citizenship

# Main Findings: Attitudes towards integration and support for refugees and asylum-seekers

## **Offer assistance/aid now or in the past to refugees and asylum-seekers:**

Directly or indirectly help or have helped refugees and/or asylum-seekers:  
(50.4%)

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### **Kind of support:**

- ❖ Donation of food and clothes: (52.5%),
  - ❖ Donating money :(21.4%)
- 

### **Intentions to help in the future:**

- ❖ Definitely Yes: (33.8%)
- ❖ Probably Yes: (49.3%)
  - ❖ Probably Not: (9%)
- ❖ Not possible at all: (8%)

# Main Findings: Visibility and Media

## ***UNHCR's visibility amongst Cypriots:***

- \* Spontaneous mentions of UNHCR : (12.9%)
- \* Directly asked whether they had ever heard of UNHCR before: (91.8%)
- \* Visits to UNHCR website increased since 2018

## ***Media sources on migration:***

Cypriot TV stations: (36%)

Social media and websites: (27.8%)

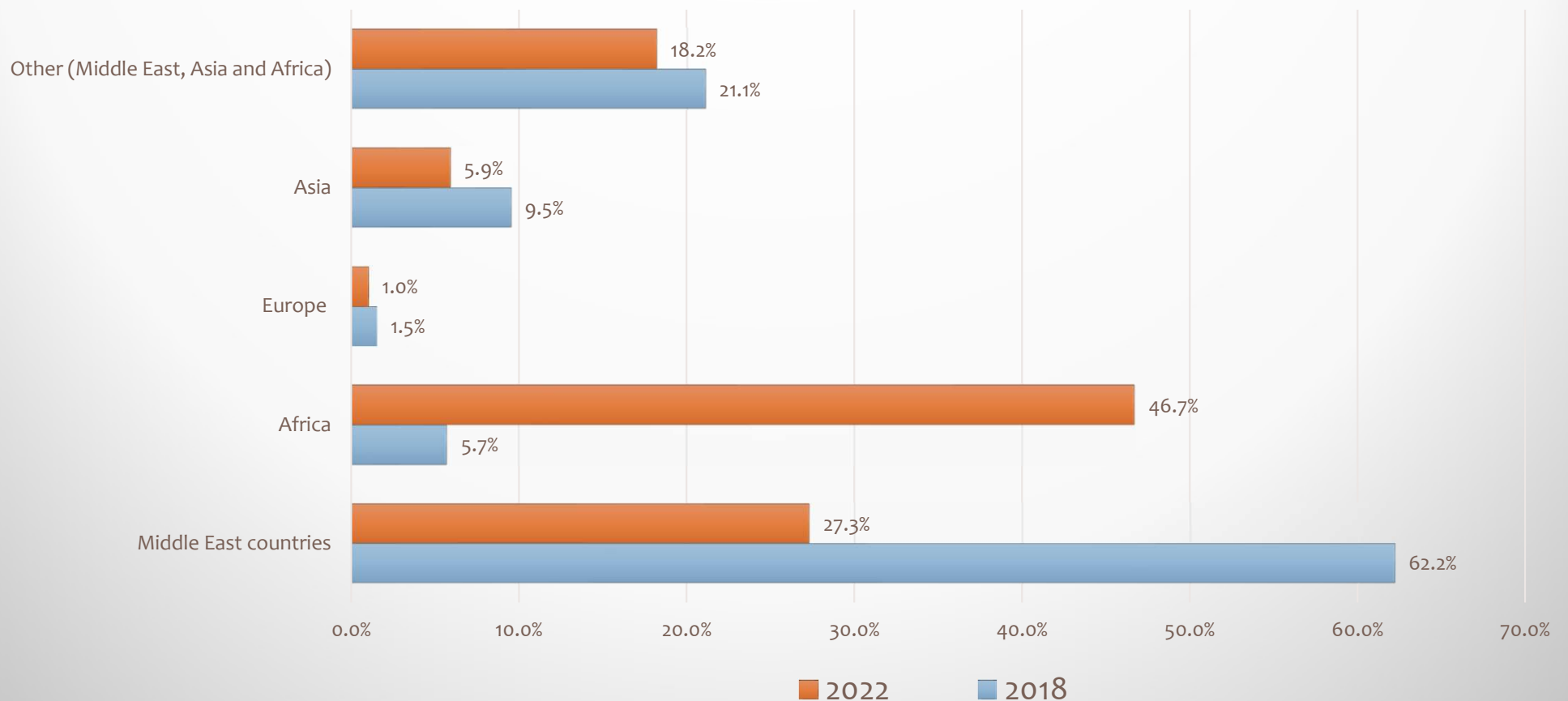
## **Media Trust:**

Trusting the media: (45%) - Neither trust/distrust (30%), Distrustful: (25%)



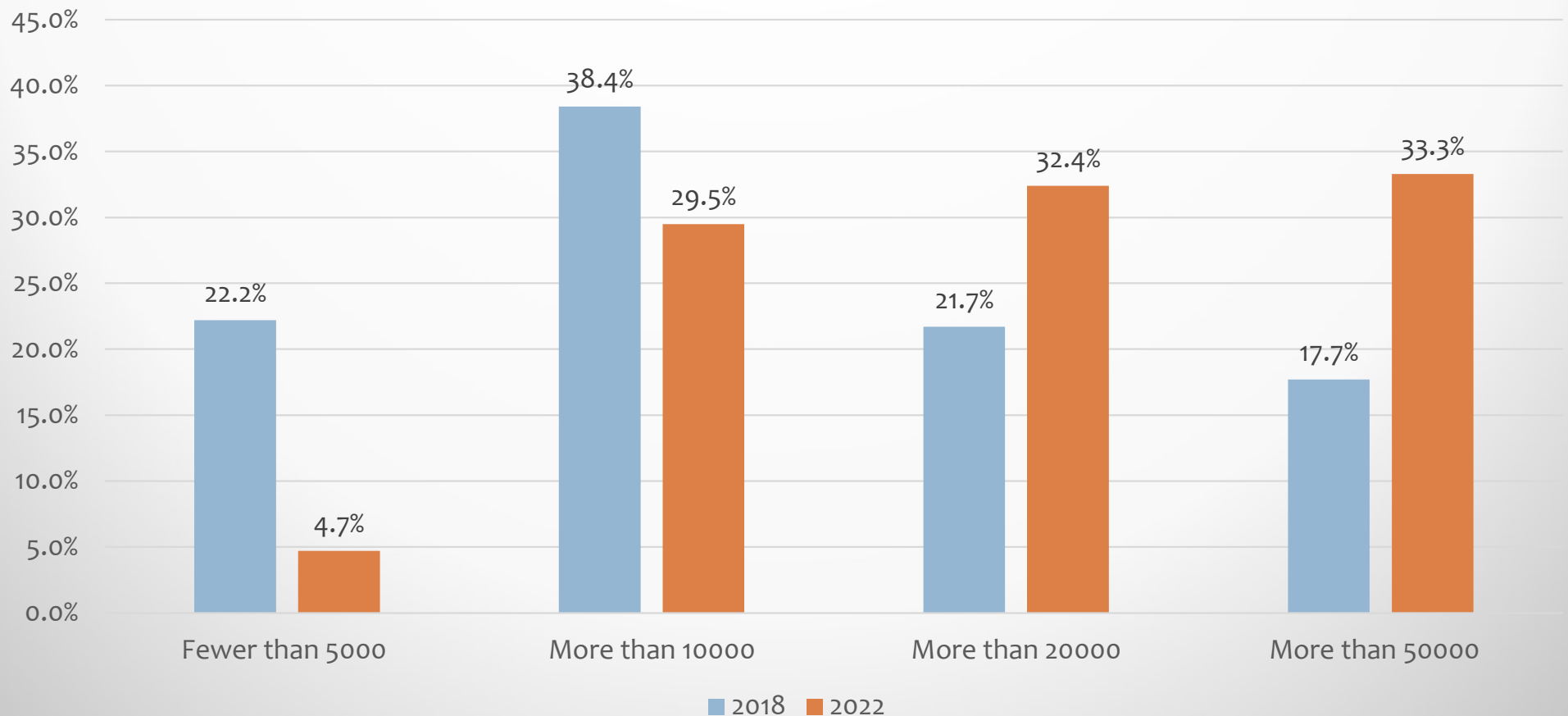
# Main Findings: Differences over time in the opinion of respondents about refugees 2018 - 2022

## Majority of refugees coming to Cyprus from



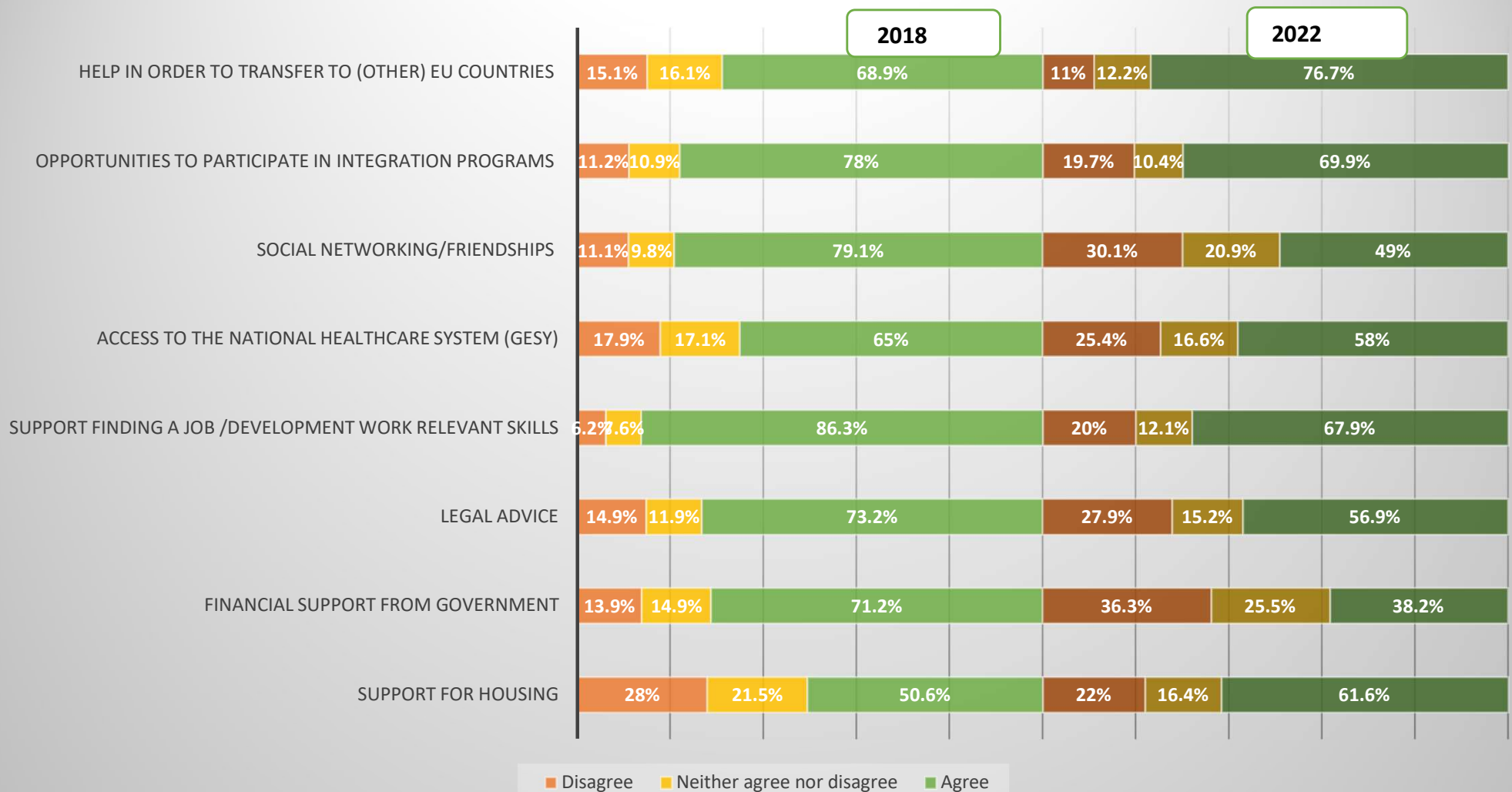
# Main Findings: Differences over time in the opinion of respondents about refugees 2018 - 2022

## Number of refugees do you think live today in Cyprus



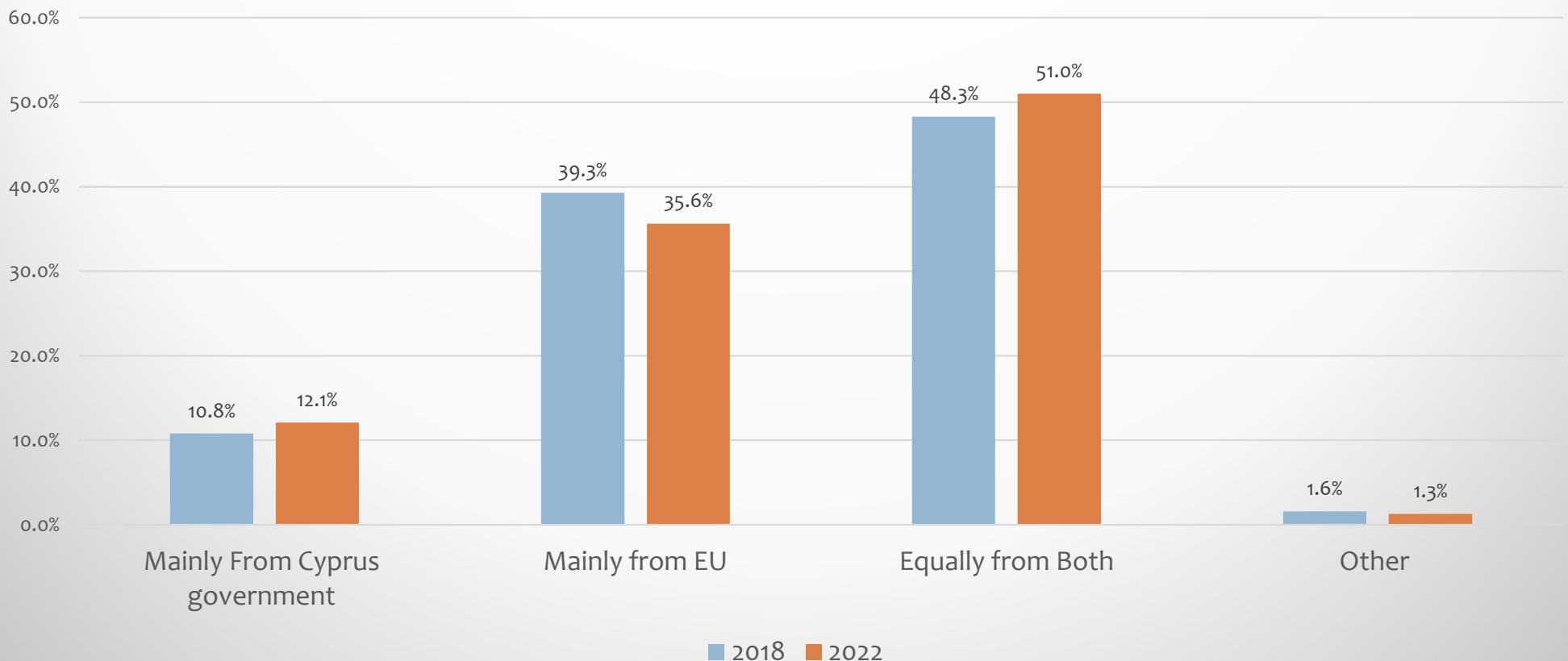
# Main Findings: Differences over time in the opinion of respondents about refugees 2018 - 2022

## More immediate needs of the refugees



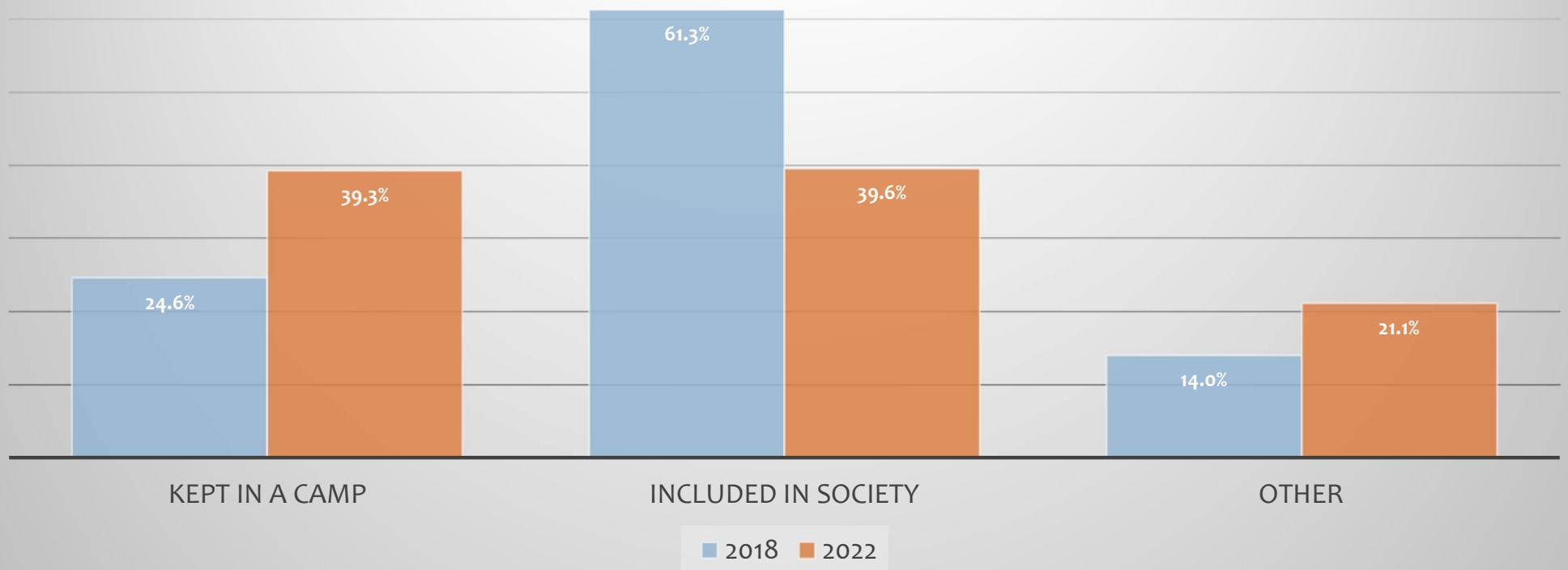
# Main Findings: Differences over time in the opinion of respondents about refugees 2018 - 2022

## Financial resources devoted to the support of refugees



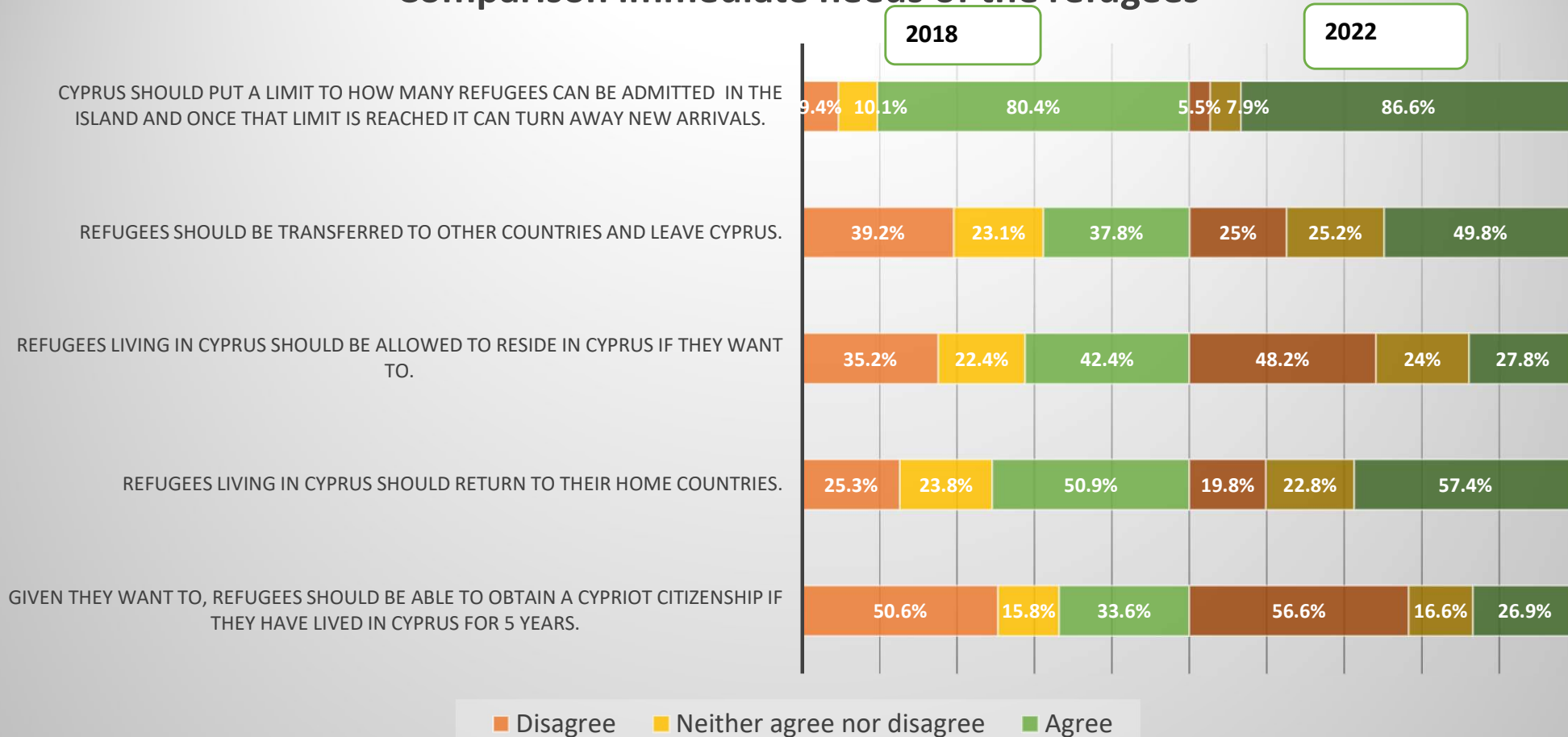
# Main Findings: Differences over time in the opinion of respondents about refugees 2018 - 2022

## Participants' opinion on the living conditions of refugees and where they should live



# Main Findings: Differences over time in the opinion of respondents about refugees 2018 - 2022

## Comparison immediate needs of the refugees



# Main Findings: Differences over time in the opinion of respondents about refugees 2018 - 2022

## ***Main integration obstacles:***

	2018	2022
Considered as being dangerous	79.3%	79.3%
Refugees' unwillingness to integrate	51%	75.3%
Different culture	73.4%	68.5%

## ***Main concerns:***

	2018	2022
Cyprus' small size	61.8%	57.3%
Fear of violence and/or criminal behavior	35.9%	42.5%
Possible changes to demographics	34.4%	39.3%

# Main Findings: Differences over time in the opinion of respondents about refugees 2018 - 2022

- Over time more frequent contact and communication with refugees.
- Quality of contact for 2022 not as pleasant as in 2018 report.

## Impact of integration to the economy:

	2018	2022
Bad for economy	36.8%	59.1%
Neutral	29%	22.7%
Good for economy	34.2%	18.3%

## Impact of integration to cultural life:

	2018	2022
Cultural life undermined	38.3%	56.3%
Neutral	24.3%	19.9%
Cultural life enriched	37.5%	23.8%



# Focus Group Discussions Analysis



# Rationale and Methodology

The voices and views of Greek-Cypriots about migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers were utilised.

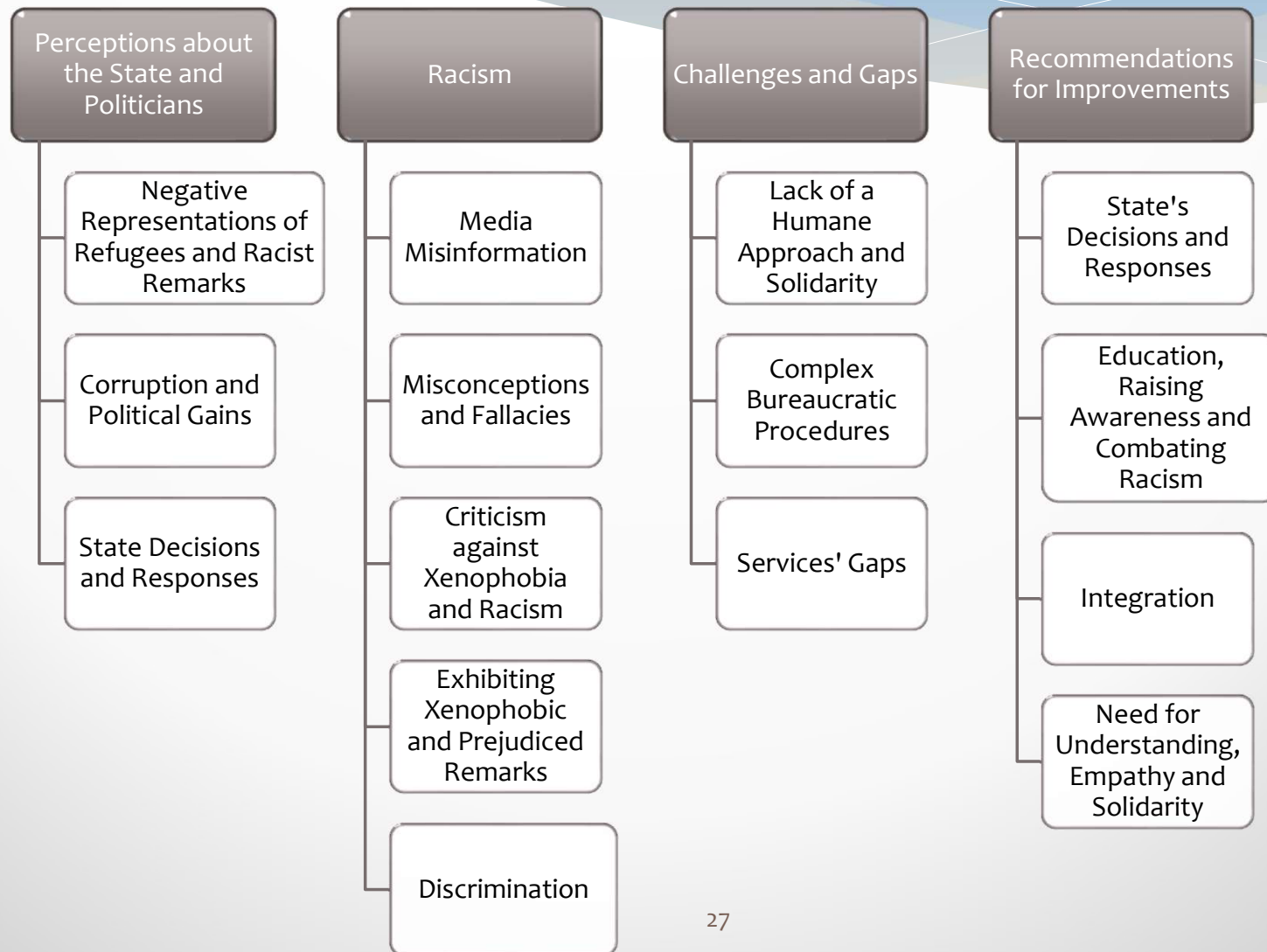
**Inclusion criteria:** age 18 and above; Greek-Cypriot or Greek-speaking permanent residents of the Republic of Cyprus.

Unstructured fgs were conducted (duration: 38 minutes - 2 hours and 7 minutes).

**A direct-realist** approach to knowledge generation was adopted (Willig, 2013).

**A thematic analysis** (Braun & Clarke, 2006) methodology was used.

# Findings: thematic map



## Theme 1: Perceptions about the State and Politicians

"...at the end of the day the state is trying to turn the people against migrants and refugees with all this." (Focus-group 2, Participant 12)

(Greek) «... στο τέλος της ημέρας το κράτος προσπαθεί να μετατρέψει το λαό απέναντι στους μετανάστες και πρόσφυγες με τούτο ούλλο.»

"...Politicians are being populist to win votes..." (Pilot focus-group, Participant 6)

(Greek) «... Οι πολιτικοί λαϊκίζουν για να κερδίσουν ψήφους... »

"... They do the so-called pushbacks..." (Pilot focus-group, Participant 4)

(Greek) «... Κάνουν τα λεγόμενα pushbacks... »

## Theme 2: Racism

"They are funded by the state (the media) to give impressions and wrong information and direction. They brainwash people in one direction..." (Focus-group 3, Participant 19)

(Greek) «..Χρηματίζονται από το κράτος (τα ΜΜΕ), για να δίνουν εντυπώσεις και λάθος πληροφορίες και κατεύθυνση. Κάνουν πλύση εγκεφάλου του κόσμου προς μια κατεύθυνση...»

"...I heard it can go up to 2.000 a person. And if he/she's working, he/she'll make another two, 4.000. And he/she's got a nice big car, he/she takes it for granted." (Focus-group 3, Participant 18)

(Greek) «... Ε άκουσα ότι μπορεί να πιάνει μέχρι και 2.000 το άτομο. Και να δουλεύει κιόλας, να πιάνει άλλα δύο, 4.000. Και έχει και ένα ωραίο αυτοκίνητο που είναι μέχρι εκεί κάτω, το θεωρεί δεδομένο τούτο.»

"...Those who live in Cyprus and are locals do not easily accept difference and also do not accept to see foreigners as equals. They don't want to say 'Oh the black man is as smart as me?'" (Focus-group 2, Participant 14)

(Greek) «... Όσοι ζουν στη Κύπρο και είναι ντόπιοι, δεν δέχονται εύκολα το διαφορετικό και επίσης δεν δέχονται να δουν τους ξένους ως ισότιμους. Δεν θέλουν να πουν 'Α ο μαύρος είναι το ίδιο έξυπνος με εμένα;»

## Theme 2: Racism (continued)

"... Illegal migrants, who are way more and are going to be even more than us, because at the rate they are going... she was three years in the house, she gave birth to three children, in three years. One after the other..." (Focus-group 3, Participant 19)

(Greek) «Οι λαθρομετανάστες, που είναι οι πιο πολλοί και είναι να γίνουν ακόμη πιο πολλοί από εμάς, γιατί με το ρυθμό που πάνε... Τρία χρόνια η κοπέλα μέσα στο σπίτι, μου έκανε τρία παιδιά, μέσα σε τρία χρόνια. Το ένα πίσω από το άλλο...»

"...You don't put the Ukrainian in the camps (ironic tone). Fact." (Pilot focus-group, Participant 3)

(Greek) «... Δεν βάζεις τον Ουκρανό μέσα στα camp (ειρωνική χροιά). Fact.»

## Theme 3: Challenges and Gaps

*"...Because, in effect, we're degrading them as a human species. By only putting them in that hole. And we expect them to live and don't complain." (Focus-group 2, Participant 14)*

*(Greek) «...Γιατί, ουσιαστικά τους υποβαθμίζουμε σαν ανθρώπινο είδος. Μόνο που τους βάζουμε σε εκείνη τη τρύπα. Και καρτερούμε εμείς να ζήσουν και να μην έχουν παράπονο.»*

*"...There is indeed a long process before a decision is made. There are people who have to wait up to 7 years." (Focus-group 2, Participant 12)*

*(Greek) «...Όντως υπάρχει μια μεγάλη διαδικασία μέχρι να παρθεί μια απόφαση. Υπάρχουν άτομα που πρέπει να περιμένουν μέχρι 7 χρόνια.»*

*"... The Welfare Office can no longer serve so many..." (Pilot focus-group, Participant 3)*

*(Greek) «...Πλέον δεν μπορεί το Γραφείο Ευημερίας να εξυπηρετεί τόσους...»*

## Theme 4: Recommendations for improvement

"...to improve Pournara rather than putting them in a hotel. And speed up the procedures. Hosting them in a hotel, well no, for me, it's a bit utopian. Why are we solving some problems by bringing in another idea? What is the problem so that we can fix it so that no other issues arise. Like Pournara, if they made that place a little bit better, safer, and invested in that place, I think there wouldn't be the problem that exists now..." (Focus-group 2, Participant 10)

(Greek) «...να κάνουν το Πουρνάρα καλύτερα, παρά να τουςβάλουμε σε ξενοδοχείο. Και να πάνε πιο γρήγορα τις διαδικασίες. Τώρα να τους πάνε σε ξενοδοχείο, ε όχι, για μένα, είναι λίγο ουτοπικό. Γιατί δίνουμε λύση σε κάποια προβλήματα φέρνοντας άλλη ιδέα; Ποιο είναι το πρόβλημα ώστε να το διορθώσουμε για να μη προκύψουν άλλα θέματα. Όπως το Πουρνάρα, αν εκείνον τον χώρο τον κάνανε λίγο καλύτερο, πιο ασφαλές, και επενδύσουν σε αυτόν τον χώρο, πιστεύω δε θα υπήρχε το πρόβλημα που υπάρχει τώρα...»

"...Do you want to help them? It's about will and putting aside the creeping racism, that supposedly he's black, he's like that... They can't understand certain things." (Pilot focus-group, Participant 5)

(Greek) «...Θέλεις να τους βοηθήσεις; Το θέμα είναι να θέλεις και να αφήσεις στην άκρη τον υφέρποντα ρατσισμό, ότι δήθεν είναι μαύρος, είναι έτσι... Δεν μπορούν να καταλάβουν ορισμένα πράγματα.»



## Theme 4: Recommendations for improvement(continued)



Photo by Antoine Tardy on UNHCR

"...This is very important: the integration plan." (Focus-group 3, Participant 16)

(Greek) «... Είναι πολύ σημαντικό τούτο: το σχέδιο ενσωμάτωσης.»

"...To be treated with humanity." (Focus-group 2, Participant 9)

(Greek) «...Να αντιμετωπίζονται με ανθρωπιά.»

## Comparisons to the previous qualitative research of 2018-2019

- \* Contrary to the findings of 2018-2019 (Psaltis et al., 2019), the current data revealed that participants had somewhat more awareness on the differences between the terms “refugee” and “migrant”.
- \* Participants knew much less about the definition of the term “asylum-seeker”.
- \* In line with the findings of the 2019 report, participants acknowledged that there is a distinction between migrants from European countries and migrants from the Middle East and Africa (MENA) region.
- \* Some pointed out the differential treatment of Ukrainian refugees in comparison to refugees coming from the MENA.
- \* Findings demonstrate that the barriers faced by refugees are potentially related to the maintenance of structures of white privilege.

# Recommendations

- ❖ An enhanced TV and social media campaigns to counter negative stereotypes,
- ❖ Continue with media trainings and briefings,
- ❖ Work with educators to improve critical thinking and media literacy.