

СОЦІАЛЬНІ РЕАЛЬНОСТІ В ЕМПІРИЧНИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯХ

УДК 316

Kamionka, M. (2026). Intragenerational challenges among Ukrainian students in the context of war & migration. *Sociological Studios*, 1(28), 44–53. <https://doi.org/10.17721/2306-3971-2026-01-41-41>

Intragenerational challenges among Ukrainian students in the context of war & migration

Mateusz Kamionka ✉ –

PhD in Social Science, Assistant Professor, Department of Polish-Ukrainian Studies, Faculty of International and Political Studies, Jagiellonian University, Poland
E-mail: mateusz.kamionka@uj.edu.pl
ORCID: 0000-0002-7316-145X

DOI: 10.17721/2306-3971-2026-01-41-41

The ongoing war in Ukraine and its associated migration have created significant intergenerational challenges among young Ukrainians, particularly among emigrants of the same generation. This study examines the perceptions and experiences of students who remained in Ukraine during the conflict, focusing on their attitudes toward their emigrating peers. Drawing on theories of generational formation and the "years of vulnerability" hypothesis, the study highlights intragenerational differences shaped by historical events, displacement, and digital connectivity. Using an online survey distributed to 742 higher education students in Ukraine, additionally, the open-ended question provided further depth to the analysis. The results indicate that while most respondents expressed sympathy for their emigrating peers, they also reported feelings of loss, sadness, and perceived discrepancies in political and social views. Over 60 % of participants perceived moderate or significant differences between themselves and their peers abroad, reflecting growing intragenerational differences. Qualitative narratives revealed concerns about Ukraine's future, social alienation, and the potential adoption of pro-Russian attitudes by emigrants. Overall, the study demonstrates that postmillennials in Ukraine cannot be viewed as a homogeneous group; migration, war, and prolonged separation contribute to social fragmentation and evolving generational dynamics. These findings underscore the importance of considering intragenerational diversity when analyzing the social and civic impact of conflict-induced migration.

Ключові слова: post-millennials, Ukraine, migration, intragenerational differences, war impact.

Received: March 18, 2026
1st Revision: May 17, 2026
Accepted: June 25, 2026

Каміонка Матеуш. Внутрішньопоколінні виклики серед українських студентів у контексті війни та міграції. Триваюча війна в Україні та пов'язана з нею міграція створили значні міжпоколінні виклики серед молодих українців, особливо серед покоління емігрантів. Це дослідження аналізує сприйняття та досвід студентів, які залишилися в Україні під час конфлікту, зосереджуючись на їхньому ставленні до однолітків, які виїхали за кордон. Спираючись на теорії формування поколінь та гіпотезу «років вразливості», дослідження підкреслює внутрішньопоколінні відмінності, сформовані історичними подіями, переміщенням і цифровою взаємодією. За допомогою онлайн-опитування, проведеного серед 742 студентів закладів вищої освіти в Україні, а також завдяки відкритим запитанням, було отримано додаткову глибину для аналізу. Результати показують, що хоча більшість респондентів висловлювали співчуття до своїх однолітків, які виїхали, вони також повідомляли про почуття втрати, смутку та сприйняті розбіжності в політичних і соціальних поглядах.

Понад 60 % учасників зазначили помірні або значні відмінності між собою та своїми ровесниками за кордоном, що свідчить про зростання внутрішньопоколінних відмінностей. Якісні наративи виявили занепокоєння щодо майбутнього України, соціальну відчуженість і можливе формування проросійських поглядів серед емігрантів. Загалом дослідження демонструє, що постміленіали в Україні не можуть розглядатися як однорідна група; міграція, війна та тривала розлука сприяють соціальній фрагментації та трансформації поколінневої динаміки. Ці результати підкреслюють важливість врахування внутрішньопоколінної різноманітності при аналізі соціального та громадянського впливу міграції, спричиненої конфліктом.

Ключові слова: постміленіали, Україна, міграція, внутрішньопоколінні відмінності, вплив війни.

INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Ukraine, which began with the aggression of the Russian Federation in 2014 and escalated into a full-scale invasion in 2022, has opened a new chapter in the country's history. It is worth emphasizing that during this period a new generation has emerged – one raised on the values of the Maidan – which is now gradually entering adulthood in Ukraine. This is particularly significant given that thirteen years elapsed between 2013 and 2026, constituting half of the generational span, conventionally estimated at twenty-five years (Guerrazzi, 2021). Alwin and McCammon (2003), in *Generations, Cohorts, and Social Change*, argue that “how people think about the social world around them may depend as much on what was happening in the world at the time they were growing up as it does on what is happening in the present”. This perspective provides a point of departure for reflecting on a sense of generational rupture within the same cohorts – groups that experience similar historical stimuli but from different positional and experiential perspectives. In the present study, this divergence is examined from the perspective of students who remained in Ukraine during the ongoing military conflict. The present research seeks to examine whether a generational divide caused by sudden, forced (or voluntary) migration contributes to intra-generational differences. Although many scholars tend to view generations as monolithic social groups, earlier research suggests the importance of considering internal diversity. For instance, Stouffer characterized the post-World War II generation as one defined by “freedom of speech” and the “exchange of ideas” (Stouffer, 1955). Similarly, Ronald Inglehart, who examined post-World War II generations in Western Europe, observed that they emphasized freedom and self-expression, in contrast to pre-war generations, whose primary concerns cantered on economic security and political order (Inglehart, 1977, 1990). Accordingly, the main research question of this study is to examine the attitudes of post-millennial individuals who remain in Ukraine toward their peers who have emigrated. The findings aim to reveal not only patterns of peer-to-peer relations but also potential feelings of grievance, abandonment, as well as forms of intra-generational understanding. The main hypothesis of the article is that young people who remained in Ukraine experience a growing sense of social distance and divergence in values toward their peers who emigrated during the war. These dynamics unfold within a broader context of a deepening demographic crisis in Ukraine, marked by population decline, low birth rates, high mortality, and large-scale migration, all of which pose significant challenges to the country's long-term recovery and national security (Chepurko, 2025). In this regard, the return of migrants, the integration of internally displaced persons, and the development of inclusive social and economic policies have become key priorities, further shaping the experiences and perceptions of the post-millennial generation under study.

1. POST-MILLENNIALS AS A RESEARCH GROUP

In contemporary social science, the rapid development of theoretical approaches makes it difficult to identify a single, universally accepted definition of the concept of “generation” (see Popescu (2019)). For the purposes of this article, it is useful to adopt an understanding of generation inspired by Karl Mannheim's seminal work. Mannheim (1952) conceptualized generations as social formations emerging through shared social processes that affect individuals of a similar age. Members of a generation are shaped by common formative experiences, which contribute to the development of comparable attitudes toward politics, culture, and broader socio-economic or environmental conditions. These attitudes often differ from those of preceding generations. Mannheim elaborated this perspective in his influential study *The Problem of Generations* (1952), in which he emphasized the importance of historical context in generational formation. He argued that biological age alone does not define a generation; rather, generational belonging arises within the social and historical conditions through which individuals experience key events. In this sense, a

generation should be understood not as a purely biological or age-based category, but as a social phenomenon shaped by shared historical and cultural experiences. What unites members of a generation is not simply their year of birth, but their simultaneous positioning in relation to significant political, social, and cultural developments that contribute to a shared generational consciousness. The process of ideological and attitudinal formation is particularly important in generational analysis, especially when considering the period in which core beliefs, values, and behavioral patterns are established. This developmental phase is commonly referred to as the “impressionable years” (IYs) or “critical period” hypothesis, which posits that events experienced in adolescence and early adulthood have a disproportionate effect on attitudes in later life (Schuman, Corning & Schwartz, 2012; Schuman & Corning, 2017).

In Western countries, the first widely recognized generational cohort is the so-called Baby Boomer generation, born between 1943 and 1960 and often described as the “post-war” generation (Zemke et al., 1999). This generation is commonly associated with the period of positive post-war development (Riggs & Turner, 2000). However, in Central and Eastern Europe, their peers lived under communist regimes, which profoundly shaped their experiences. This period was characterized by post-war stabilization and the expansion of mass education, particularly among rural populations and the working class. In the post-communist region, this generation entered professional life in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period associated with major political and social upheavals, including workers’ protests, the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, or the imposition of martial law in Poland in 1981. Additionally, the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 and the economic “shock therapy” of the 1990s – which involved a rapid transition from centrally planned economies to market-oriented systems in Central and Eastern Europe – created serious challenges for this generation in the labor market. The subsequent cohort, Generation X, grew up during the 1970s and 1980s. Filipczak (1994) noted that Generation X was raised in the shadow of the Baby Boomer (post-war) generation. Members of this generation entered the labor market during a period marked by high unemployment, economic instability, and profound systemic and economic transformation across much of the post-communist region (Bejtkovský, 2016). Representatives of Generation X are often described as seeking a strong sense of purpose in their actions while simultaneously valuing cooperation (Stosik & Leśniewska, 2015). These characteristics may shape their vision of the contemporary world, particularly in terms of a preference for stability. During their formative years, members of Generation X often spent considerable time on their own, as both parents – or, in single-parent households, the sole parent – were typically employed. For this reason, Generation X is sometimes referred to as the “latchkey generation,” a phenomenon observed not only in Western societies but also elsewhere (Pohrib, 2017). They also witnessed downsizing and other unforeseen economic changes that radically altered the careers of their hard-working parents and older siblings. Generation Y, commonly referred to as Millennials, followed Generation X. Most scholars define this cohort as individuals born roughly between 1977 and 2000, although specific boundaries vary. For example, Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, and Lance (2010) propose a birth range between 1982 and 1999. Tapscott (2009) adopts a different perspective, using the term “Net Generation” to describe young people who grew up in the digital age, encompassing those born between January 1977 and December 1997. Most Millennials, as members of Generation Y, are the children of Baby Boomers and older members of Generation X (Strauss & Howe, 2000). In Eastern Europe, this cohort represents the first generation that did not directly experience communist regimes and instead came of age during the fall of the Soviet Union (1991) and the Orange Revolution (2004). In Poland and Ukraine, Generation Y encountered new opportunities and freedoms following the fall of totalitarianism and tended to embrace new challenges with the belief that they could achieve greater personal and professional advancement (Krawczyńska-Zaucha, 2021). Wątroba (2019) introduces his own terminology for Generation Y, dividing it into Echo Boomers (large birth cohorts of the 1980s) and Millennials (birth cohorts of the 1990s). The term Echo Boomers emphasizes the demographic dimension of this generation. He also underlines that members of this generation experienced the strong influence of Internet (Wątroba, 2017) development much later in Central and Eastern Europe than in the “Western world”. Research presented in the article focuses on the post-millennial generation, sometimes referred to as Generation Z or the “Net Generation”, which includes individuals born between 1995 and 2010. For this generation, the digital world and the Internet are natural elements of everyday life, and they tend to possess broader global awareness than previous generations (Karácsony, 2019, p. 184; Leskauskas, 2020). This familiarity with digital technologies contributes to

greater mobility and openness to globalization (Tulgan, 2013), which is highly relevant to the research context. Based on these characteristics, Berkup (2024) emphasizes that post-millennials are expected to display traits such as multitasking, efficient use of technology, individualism (including a preference for independent work over teamwork), creativity, a global perspective, and a preference for non-standard and personalized forms of work. As can be observed, the scale of differentiation within the post-millennial generation is substantial and significant. These further underscores the need for research aimed at determining whether a meaningful intra-generational divide is emerging among young people.

2. TEMPORARY PROTECTION AND THE MIGRATION OF YOUNG UKRAINIANS

The latest data from Eurostat (2026) show that as of 31 October 2025, 4.3 million non-EU citizens who fled Ukraine as a consequence of Russia's war of aggression were under temporary protection in the EU. At the end of October 2025, the EU countries hosting the highest numbers of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine were Germany (1,229,960 people; 28.6 per cent of the EU total), Poland (965,005; 22.5 per cent), and Czechia (393,005; 9.1 per cent). The number of people under temporary protection relative to the EU population stood at 9.5 per 1,000 people at the end of October 2025. Among EU member states, the highest ratios were recorded in Czechia (36.0 per 1,000 people), followed by Poland (26.4) and Estonia (25.5) (ibid.). According to research, this number includes approximately 1.4 million school-aged refugee children (Donovan, 2024). In September 2025, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also amended the law, opening the borders to young men aged 18 to 22 (Rzheutska, 2025). This decision significantly affected the statistics in October 2025, when EU countries issued 74,175 new decisions granting temporary protection – the second-highest monthly figure recorded in 2025, after September (79,525) (Eurostat, 2026). The decision was not well received even among some of Ukraine's strongest European allies. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz stated that he had told President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that the number of young Ukrainian men coming to Germany should be reduced, saying, "They are needed there" (Fornusek, 2025). The decision was also widely discussed within Ukraine (Sych & Shevchenko, 2025) and has caused tensions and conflicts domestically. In this context, the growing scale of displacement underscores the urgency of developing comprehensive social integration strategies that operate simultaneously at both the individual and state levels, addressing not only access to services but also fostering a sense of belonging and social cohesion among displaced Ukrainians. Moreover, the diversification of migration experiences shaped by age, gender, and legal status highlights the need for adaptive policies that strengthen transnational ties, support diaspora engagement, and mitigate emerging intragenerational tensions both within Ukraine and across host societies (Plushch, 2025).

3. METHODOLOGY

The empirical material for this study was collected from 742 respondents (that stayed in Ukraine), selected from an estimated population of approximately 899,000 students (according to Stadnyi (2025)) enrolled in Ukrainian higher education institutions during the 2023/2024 academic year. Particular attention was paid to ensuring the inclusion of students from all regions of Ukraine. The largest shares of respondents came from Chernihiv Oblast (12.1 per cent), Kharkiv Oblast (10.9 per cent), Sumy Oblast (8.2 per cent), Poltava Oblast (6.9 per cent), Zhytomyr Oblast (6.3 per cent), Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast (6.2 per cent), and the city of Kyiv (9 per cent). Women constituted 72.8 per cent of the respondents, while men accounted for 27.2 per cent. This gender imbalance represents one of the limitations of the study. In terms of age distribution, the majority of participants (88.7 per cent) were aged between 18 and 21. The remaining 11.3 per cent of participants fell within the 22–26 age range. Consequently, all respondents can be classified as members of the post-millennial generation. It should be noted that the research project was divided into four thematic parts, each addressing a distinct topic and intended for publication as a separate academic article (Intragenerational Relations; Studying in Ukraine; Patriotism and Migration; Youth Visions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine). Data were collected using an online questionnaire consisting of 38 items, including demographic questions. The survey link was distributed via official email channels of randomly selected universities in each oblast of Ukraine that was not under occupation. In addition, emails were sent to academic staff at selected institutions, and the questionnaire was shared in student social media groups associated with these universities. However, due to challenges related to the ongoing armed conflict – such

as power outages (the study was conducted in the first half of January 2026) and the displacement of both students and academic staff abroad – the distribution process ultimately assumed a non-random character and relied on voluntary participation. Moreover, respondents frequently forwarded the survey among themselves, which significantly increased the sample size but further deviated from the initial random sampling design. As a result, the final sample can be described as a non-probability sample, specifically a convenience sample with elements of snowball sampling, arising from the adopted distribution strategy. Consequently, the sample cannot be considered statistically representative of the entire student population in Ukraine. The statistical analyses presented in this article are therefore primarily descriptive and exploratory in nature, aiming to identify patterns and tendencies within the studied group rather than to formulate strict generalizations about the broader population. The study employed the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing) method, which is particularly appropriate in contexts characterized by significant geographical dispersion of respondents and security-related constraints resulting from the ongoing armed conflict. This approach ensured the safety of both participants and the researcher by eliminating the need for direct contact. Furthermore, given that a substantial portion of academic teaching in Ukraine is currently conducted partly online, the CAWI method enabled the inclusion of students from all regions of the country, thereby enhancing the scope and completeness of the collected empirical material. The final survey question was open-ended and formulated as follows: “In your own words, how would you describe the problem of your peers leaving Ukraine during the war?”. Its intentionally broad wording allowed respondents to freely express their opinions and reflections, and the resulting qualitative material was subsequently incorporated into the data analysis. Participation in the study was voluntary and fully anonymous, and all stages of the research process were conducted in accordance with established ethical standards. Finally, several important limitations of the study should be acknowledged. First, the significant overrepresentation of women in the sample may influence the structure of the responses. Second, the qualitative data were derived solely from an open-ended survey question rather than from in-depth interviews, which limits the depth and nuance of qualitative analysis. Most importantly, the study did not include young people residing outside Ukraine. As a result, the perspectives of Ukrainian youth abroad, including their intergenerational and peer relationships, are not captured, and the phenomenon is analyzed exclusively from the standpoint of those remaining in the country. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings, which primarily reflect the surveyed group and can only be generalized to the broader student population in Ukraine to a limited extent.

4. PERCEPTIONS OF PEER MIGRATION AMONG UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

The analysis should begin with the question of how young Ukrainian students assess the departure of their peers abroad. A total of 53.8 per cent of respondents expressed a neutral opinion, 34.4 per cent evaluated this phenomenon positively, and 11.8 per cent negatively. The high proportion of neutral responses (17.4 per cent) may indicate the complexity of the issue under study. Counting the responses marked as “definitely positive” and “positive”, the proportion among male students participating in the study was 64.1 % (with 17.5 % negative responses), while among female students it was 74.1 % (with 8.8 % negative responses). The next question, which allows for a deeper understanding of attitudes toward peers who have left the country, concerned the emotions associated with this phenomenon. Respondents were allowed to select more than one answer. The most frequently indicated emotion was “understanding” (73 per cent). The second most common response was indifference (27.6 per cent), followed by sadness (23 per cent) and disappointment (16.7 per cent). Notably, emotions such as anger (4.4 per cent) and jealousy (1.4 per cent) also appeared. The response “hard to say” was selected by 15.2 per cent of participants. These findings suggest that young Ukrainians, while largely understanding the decisions of their peers, simultaneously experience a sense of loss associated with separation, expressed mainly as indifference or sadness. Consequently, the next question (see Table 1) focused on maintaining contact with those who had left Ukraine. This issue is crucial for analyzing intra-generational cohesion among young Ukrainians. The results, however, offer cautious optimism regarding the persistence of social ties. Regular contact with peers was declared by 28.1 per cent of respondents, while 44.3 per cent reported maintaining contact occasionally. In contrast, 15.6 per cent admitted to rare contact, and 12.4 per cent reported no contact at all. However, the problem may be the time of separation between representatives of the post-millennial generation. This is particularly evident in the changes in worldview among two groups of young

people. Gender differences in the responses are relatively small but still noticeable. Male respondents slightly more often reported maintaining contact regularly or from time to time (29.1 per cent and 46.1 per cent) compared to females (27.8 per cent and 43.2 per cent), while females were more likely to declare rare contact (17.1 per cent vs. 11.2 per cent), suggesting a somewhat weaker intensity of transnational peer ties among young women.

Table 1

Results of the responses to the question: “Do you keep in contact with peers who have gone abroad?”

Response	Overall (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Yes, regularly	28.1	29.1	27.8
Yes, from time to time	44.3	46.1	43.2
Rather no	15.6	11.2	17.1
No	12.4	13.6	11.9

Source: author’s own research.

The question analyzed directly addressed the perceived differences in political and social views between respondents and their peers who had left Ukraine (“Do you perceive noticeable differences in political and social views between yourself and peers who have left Ukraine?” (see Table 2)). As many as 27 per cent of students stated that such differences are noticeable and significant, while 35.4 per cent acknowledged the existence of some differences, though not substantial. Only 17.5 per cent reported that their views remain almost identical, and 18.7 per cent selected the option “hard to say / I do not know”. These results indicate that more than 60 per cent of young Ukrainians are beginning to perceive differences between themselves and peers who have left the country. It should be noted that prolonged separation and the continued absence of returns to Ukraine may, in the future, contribute to the weakening or loss of these relationships, particularly as former classmates complete their studies and enter adulthood. Gender-based differences are particularly evident in the perception of ideological divergence. Male respondents more frequently indicated noticeable and significant differences (33 per cent compared to 24.6 per cent among females), whereas female respondents were slightly more inclined to perceive only minor differences or to report similar views (19.7 per cent versus 12.1 per cent among males), suggesting a somewhat stronger sense of continuity in social and political perspectives among young women. This pattern may be partially related to the issue of military service and conscription, which more directly affects young men and can influence their political and social perceptions. Consequently, it is among men that the greatest difficulties in mutual understanding may arise after the end of the armed conflict.

Table 2

Results of the responses to the question: Do you notice significant differences in political and social views compared to peers who have left Ukraine?

Response	Overall (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Yes, the differences are noticeable and significant	27	33	24.6
Yes, there are some differences, but they are minor	35.4	35	35.5
No, the views are almost the same	17.5	12.1	19.7
Difficult to say / I don’t know	18.7	17	19.5

Source: author’s own research.

Most respondents also believe (Table 3) that their peers will not return to Ukraine (“Are you afraid that many young people who have left abroad will not return to Ukraine?”): 25.5 per cent answered, “definitely yes” [afraid that they will not come back] and 33.2 per cent “rather yes” to this question, compared with 31.4 per cent who expressed the opposite view. Gender differences are also visible in the level of concern about the long-term return of peers. Male respondents more often expressed strong certainty that many young people will not return (28.6 per cent compared to 24.3 per cent among females) and were more likely to select “definitely no” (17 per cent versus 10.3 per cent), suggesting a more polarized outlook. In contrast, female respondents were more inclined toward the “probably yes” option (35.8 per cent compared to

25.7 per cent among males), indicating a more moderate but still cautious expectation regarding future return migration.

Table 3

Results of the responses to the question: Do you fear that many young people who have gone abroad will not return to Ukraine?

Response	Overall (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Definitely yes	25.5	28.6	24.3
Probably yes	33.2	25.7	35.8
Probably no	19.4	20.9	18.8
Definitely no	12	17	10.3
Hard to say	10	7.8	10.8

Source: author's own research.

At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that most respondents plan to link their future with Ukraine (36.8 per cent “definitely yes” and 38 per cent “rather yes”). Only 7 per cent expressed a contrary opinion, while 18.2 per cent remained undecided. This is a clearly positive finding for Ukraine, as it indicates that young people who stayed in Ukraine wish to associate their future with their home country. However, it may also suggest that they feel uncertain about being able to rely on peers who have emigrated when it comes to rebuilding Ukraine after the war.

5. NARRATIVES OF INTRA-GENERATIONAL DIVISION

The final open question (no. 38 in questionnaire), which respondents were particularly willing to answer, revealed two key narratives concerning intra-generational divisions. It's worth noting that the author didn't intend to obtain such a detailed amount of data from the last question. However, the respondents' engagement in answering meant that it could be analyzed as a separate part of the study. The first relates to concerns about the future of the country, while the second reflects a growing sense of misunderstanding between those who left Ukraine and those who remained.

One respondent from Sumy expressed understanding toward the motivations behind emigration, noting that *“many peers leave for safety reasons”* (Sumy Oblast, female), the same as student from Nizhyn *“fear of the future and death”* (Chernihiv Oblast, female). Most of the answers from open question were just like the previous two, but there were some other interesting statements. Youth Ukrainians simultaneously emphasizing that *“this results in prolonged separation, making a shared future increasingly difficult”* (Sumy Oblast, female). Similar concerns were voiced by a student from Kharkiv, who observed that many students who left *“have already managed to assimilate into the countries that accepted them, and most no longer have plans, intentions, or realistic options to return to Ukraine”* (Kharkiv Oblast, female). A respondent from Kyiv echoed this view, describing peer emigration during the war as *“a complex problem: on the one hand, safety; on the other, the loss of youth and a growing sense of social division”* (Kyiv, female). An increasing perception of social rupture is clearly visible in many responses. As one student noted, *“departures create a sense of division: some build their lives abroad, while others stay and bear responsibility at home, which generates misunderstanding and social tension”* (Zhytomyr Oblast, female). This sentiment is further condensed in the brief yet telling statement: *“the loss of social bonds”* (Cherkasy Oblast, male). Such opinions recur frequently in students' comments and are often accompanied by criticism of the perceived lack of support for Ukraine's defense efforts. One respondent remarked that *“after leaving, most people become completely indifferent toward Ukraine and its future; they distance themselves, stop following the news, and do not support the armed forces”* (Kyiv, male). At the same time, some students approach the issue with indifference, adopting a pragmatic stance: *“Those who wanted to leave did so; those who wanted to stay remained. Fewer people – more oxygen. We have our own responsibilities here”* (Poltava Oblast, male). Others argue that this is not a new phenomenon, pointing out that *“even before the war, my peers dreamed of leaving anywhere just to avoid living in Ukraine – now this tendency has only intensified”* (Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, male). What appears particularly troubling, however, is the widespread perception that the worldviews of young people who left Ukraine are increasingly diverging from those who

stayed. As one respondent stated, *“the problem is that their views no longer align with those of the same social group that remained in Ukraine, which leads to differences in opinions and interests”* (Vinnytsia Oblast, female). Many respondents went further, suggesting that some emigrants adopt anti-Ukrainian or even pro-Russian attitudes. A student from Kharkiv noted that individuals who leave often *“change significantly, understand Ukrainians who stayed behind less and less, or even adopt a ‘not everything is so clear-cut’ stance, if not an openly pro-Russian one”* (Kharkiv Oblast, male). Similarly, a respondent from Zakarpattia recalled being harshly criticized by peers abroad, whose only argument was that *“Ukraine has no future”* (Zakarpattia Oblast, female). Several responses explicitly highlighted how life abroad can transform even close relationships. One participant observed that despite initial assurances of returning after the war, their friends’ attitudes changed rapidly as they settled abroad, accompanied by shifts in political views and increasing assimilation. In some cases, contact with Russian diasporas – particularly in countries with weak language barriers – sometimes interpreted by respondents as the adoption of pro-Russian attitudes. As the respondent concluded, among acquaintances who left as early as 2022, *“many began to support the aggressor state or claim that ‘not everything is so clear-cut’”* (Khmelnitskyi Oblast, male). The Russian propaganda narrative increasingly targets young people (EU citizens) on social media, but the same time also youth migrants in hosting countries, who are particularly vulnerable to Russian-language content (Kamionka, 2022). Overall, responses to the open-ended question revealed two dominant narratives of intra-generational division: concerns about Ukraine’s future resulting from the loss of young people, and a growing sense of alienation and misunderstanding between those who emigrated and those who remained. Although respondents frequently expressed understanding for emigration motivated by security concerns, they simultaneously emphasized deepening social fractures, weakened social ties, and increasing divergence in values, attitudes, and levels of civic engagement. Particularly alarming is the belief that prolonged emigration fosters assimilation and ideological change – sometimes perceived as anti-Ukrainian or even pro-Russian – which may lead to a lasting rupture within the young generation.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the war-related migration of young Ukrainians has become a significant factor shaping intragenerational relations among post-millennials. Although most respondents expressed sympathy for their peers’ decisions to leave the country – especially those motivated by concerns about personal safety – the data reveal a growing sense of social distance, divergent worldviews, and weakening peer bonds. These dynamics suggest that the post-millennial generation in Ukraine cannot be treated as a homogeneous cohort, uniformly shaped by shared historical experiences. Quantitative results show that over 60 % of respondents perceive noticeable, or at least moderate, differences in political and social views between themselves and their peers who emigrated. Narratives from open-question further deepen this picture, highlighting concerns about the long-term consequences of youth emigration for Ukraine’s future, including fears of a permanent loss of human capital, the erosion of civic solidarity, and the emergence of parallel life paths among young people. Of particular importance is the belief that long-term stays abroad foster assimilation and ideological transformation, sometimes interpreted as indifference towards Ukraine or even the adoption of anti-Ukrainian or pro-Russian attitudes. While such assessments are subjective and rooted in the perspectives of those who remained, they reflect a strong sense of disappointment, alienation, and symbolic rupture within the same generational cohort. At the same time, the study reveals ambivalence rather than outright hostility. Feelings of indifference and sadness coexist with understanding and empathy, suggesting that the observed divide is not yet fully established but remains a dynamic and evolving process. Importantly, despite skepticism about the return of peers who left, most respondents still see their future in Ukraine, which may further exacerbate the perception of an asymmetry in commitment and responsibility between those who remained and those who emigrated. As well, the gendered patterns further highlight that war-related experiences shape intragenerational perceptions in different ways among post-millennials. They suggest that the emerging social distance between those who remained in Ukraine and those who left abroad is also partly influenced by gender differences.

Overall, the results support the study’s main hypothesis: young people who remained in Ukraine increasingly experienced a lack of understanding from peers who left the country. This intragenerational divide appears to be shaped not only by physical separation but also by differing life experiences, moral

frameworks, and interpretations of responsibility during wartime in other words, different experiences of the “critical period”. The findings emphasize the need to reconceptualize generations not as internally cohesive units but as heterogeneous social formations in which migration, war, and displacement create significant internal ruptures. Future research should incorporate the perspectives of young Ukrainians living abroad to better understand whether these perceived divisions are mutual and to assess the long-term implications of war migration for generational cohesion and postwar recovery. It should be emphasized that, due to the non-random sampling strategy and the convenience-based nature of the sample, the findings cannot be considered statistically representative of the entire population of Ukrainian students and should therefore be interpreted with caution. This observation is consistent with broader research indicating that crises, while experienced across generations, are interpreted differently depending on distinct social, technological, and experiential contexts (Kamionka et al., 2026).

FUNDING

This research received no external funding.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author declares no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Alwin, D. F., & McCammon, R. J. (2003). Generations, cohorts, and social change. In J. T. Mortimer & M. J. Shanahan (Eds.), *Handbook of the life course* (pp. 19–40). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-306-48247-2_2
- Bejtkovský, J. (2016). The employees of Baby Boomers generation, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z in selected Czech corporations as conceivers of development and competitiveness in their corporation. *Journal of Competitiveness*, 8(4), 105–123. <https://doi.org/10.7441/joc.2016.04.07>
- Berkup, B. S. (2014). Working with generations X and Y in Generation Z period: Management of different generations in business life. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(19), 218. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n19p218>
- Chepurko, G. (2025). Challenges and Threats to Ukraine’s Demographic Stability During the War. *Sociological Studios*, 1(26), 58–72. <https://doi.org/10.29038/2306-3971-2025-01-43-43>
- Donovan, L. (2024). Despite progress in accessing education, hundreds of thousands of school-aged refugee children from Ukraine remain out of school. *UNHCR*. Retrieved March 17, 2026 from <https://www.unhcr.org/europe/news/news/despite-progress-accessing-education-hundreds-thousands-school-aged-refugee-children>
- Eurostat. (2026). *Temporary protection for persons fleeing Ukraine - monthly statistics*. Retrieved March 17, 2026 from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Temporary_protection_for_persons_fleeing_Ukraine_-_monthly_statistics
- Filipczak, B. (1994). It is just a job: Generation X at work. *Training*, 31(4), 21–27. Retrieved March 17, 2026 from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ480564>
- Fornusek, M. (2025). Merz asks Zelensky to reduce outflow of young Ukrainian men to Germany. *Kyiv Independent*. Retrieved March 17, 2026 from <https://kyivindependent.com/merz-asks-zelensky-to-reduce-outflow-of-young-ukrainian-men-to-germany/>
- Guerrazzi, M. (2021). How long does a generation last? Assessing the relationship between infinite and finite horizon dynamic models. *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*. Retrieved March 17, 2026 from https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/105641/1/MPPA_paper_105641.pdf
- Inglehart, R. (1977). *The silent revolution: Changing values and political styles among western publics*. Princeton University Press.
- Inglehart, R. (1990). *Culture shift in advanced industrial society*. Princeton University Press.
- Kamionka, M. (2022). Wpływ wojny na Ukrainie na trendy portalu społecznościowego TikTok. *Youth in Central and Eastern Europe*, 9(14), 22–28. <https://doi.org/10.24917/ycee.9636>
- Kamionka, M., Tamara Asboth, E., & Jirka, L. (2026). Perceptions of geopolitical crises by post-millennials in Central and Eastern Europe. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2026.2631462>
- Karácsony, P. (2019). Generational differences in motivation at work in Slovakian small and medium sized companies. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 7, 182–191. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2019.73015>
- Krawczyńska-Zaucha, T. (2021). Generational differences in key values and ethics. *Zeszyty Naukowe. Organizacja i Zarządzanie / Politechnika Śląska*, 151, 287–298. <https://doi.org/10.29119/1641-3466.2021.151.18>
- Leskauskas, D. (2020). Generation Z – everyday (living with an) auxiliary ego. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, 29(3), 169–174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0803706X.2019.1699665>

- Mannheim, K. (1952). The problem of generations. In P. Kecskemeti (Ed.), *Essays on the sociology of knowledge* (pp. 276–320). Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Pliushch, V. (2025). Social Integration Strategies in Ukrainian Society During the Russian-Ukrainian War. *Sociological Studios*, 2(27), 51–59. <https://doi.org/10.17721/2306-3971-2025-02-22-22>
- Popescu, A. (2019). The brief history of generation – defining the concept of generation: An analysis of literature review. *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology*, 10(2), 15–30.
- Pohrib, C. A. (2017). The Romanian “latchkey generation” writes back: Memory genres of post-communism on Facebook. *Memory Studies*, 12(2), 164–183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017709869>
- Riggs, A., & Turner, B. S. (2000). Pie-eyed optimists: Baby-boomers the optimistic generation? *Social Indicators Research*, 52, 73–93. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007079807500>
- Rzheutska, L. (2025). Will young Ukrainians return with borders open again? *Deutsche Welle*. Retrieved March 17, 2026 from <https://www.dw.com/en/will-young-ukrainians-return-with-borders-open-again/a-73816298>
- Schuman, H., Corning, A., & Schwartz, B. (2012). Framing Variations and Collective Memory: “Honest Abe” versus “the Great Emancipator.” *Social Science History*, 36(4), 451–472. DOI: 10.1017/S0145553200010439
- Schuman, H., & Corning, A. D. (2017). The conversion of generational effects into collective memories. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 29, 520–532. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edw012>
- Stadnyi, Y. (2025). Student migration to western universities: How many Ukrainians left between 2008 and 2023—and where. *VoxUkraine*. Retrieved March 17, 2026 from <https://h1.nu/1vib1>
- Stosik, A., & Leśniewska, A. (2015). Innovative solutions of human resources management – adaptation and generational differences perspective. *Studia i prace WNE iZ US*, 39(3), 183–196.
- Stouffer, S. A. (1955). *Communism, conformity, and civil liberties*. Doubleday.
- Strauss, W., & Howe, N. (1991). *Generations: The history of America's future, 1584 to 2069*. William Morrow.
- Sych, M., & Shevchenko S. (2025). “I’m in Poland!”: how Ukrainian young men aged 18–22 use permission to cross the border. Retrieved March 17, 2026 from <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/peretyn-kordonu-khloptsi-biznes/33531982.html>
- Tapscott, D. (2009). *Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing your world*. McGraw-Hill.
- Tulgan, B. (2013). Meet generation Z – the second generation within the giant millennial cohort. Retrieved March 17, 2026 from <https://www.scribd.com/document/450731505/MeetGeneration-Z-The-Second-Generation-within-the-Giant-Millennial-Cohort>
- Twenge, J., Campbell, S., Hoffman, B., & Lance, C. (2010). Generational differences in work values: Leisure and extrinsic values increasing, social and intrinsic values decreasing. *Journal of Management*, 36(5), 1117–1142.
- Wątroba, W. (2017). *Transgresje międzypokoleniowe późnego kapitalizmu* [Intergenerational transgressions of late capitalism]. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego.
- Wątroba, W. (2019). Transgressivity of Value System of Generations Residing in the Contemporary Capitalism. *Folia Oeconomica*, 5(344), 139–157. <https://doi.org/10.18778/0208-6018.344.09>
- Zemke, R., Raines, C., & Filipczak, B. (1999). *Generations at work: Managing the clash of veterans, boomers, Xers, and Nexters in your workplace*. AMACOM.