ANTILIMBO SURVEY RESULTS OVERVIEW-
UKRAINIAN YOUTH SITUATION
IN LATVIA
autumn 2025

87 answers were received in Latvia. **55 people answered in Ukrainian (63.2%)**, **32 in Russian (36.8%)**, nobody in English (0%). Respondents: **20 persons over 18 years old (23.0%)**, **36 aged between 15 and 18 years old (41.4%)**, **31 under 15 years old (35.6%)**. **57 girls (65.5%)**, **27 guys (31.0%)**, **3 preferring not to identify gender (3.4%)**.

10 people do not study (11.5%), all of them over 18 years old. **53 (60.9%) study in local educational institutions**, **2 (2.3%) study online in a Ukrainian school**, the rest **22 (25.3%) study both in local schools and online in Ukraine**.

32 respondents (36.8%) have a strong connection to local people, **42 (48.3%) feel neutral**, and **13 (14.9%) report a poor connection**. In terms of friendships, **32 people (36.8%) have many friends among locals**, **48 (55.2%) have some**, **4 (4.6%) do not have friends**, and **3 (3.4%) are not interested in having friends** — the last two do not seem to correlate with age or gender.

Speaking about friends, Ukrainian youngsters have strong ties with their friends left in Ukraine (**36 respondents or 41.4%**) and local friends with Ukrainian roots (**50 respondents or 57.5%**), as well as just with local youngsters (**45 people or 51.7%**). It is rare to have only local friends (**less than 10 people or under 11.5%**) and rare to stay in touch only with Ukrainian friends in Ukraine (**under 10 people or under 11.5%**). In most cases, it is a combination of both, and there is a tendency to search for friends with the same origin. **20 people (23.0%) have mostly online friends**, even though some of them also have others, and **17 people (19.5%) admitted they do not have so many friends at the moment**. In general, it seems that youngsters feel pretty integrated, especially those under 18 years old. Those who said they are not interested in friends are actually those who either have only online friends, no friends, or only Ukrainian friends in Ukraine.

What makes them feel like at home in Latvia includes: friends, family, ability to speak in Ukrainian or Russian, school (especially Ukrainian school), kind supporting local people, and events organized for the Ukrainian community. **9 people (10.3%)** said “nothing” or that they “do not feel like home”.

When it comes to **interests**, only **3 people (3.4%)** had a one-type interest (**1 in music, 2 in sports**), all the rest have multiple and diverse interests. The most popular combinations are nature, history and travel (together), or music and travel. The top favorites are definitely **music (53 respondents or 60.9%)** and **travel (50 or 57.5%)**, followed by **arts (38 or**

43.7%), **pop culture and fashion (36 or 41.4%)**, and **sports (34 or 39.1%)**. Less popular are **nature (21 or 24.1%)**, **history (21 or 24.1%)**, and **literature (20 or 23.0%)**. Almost all girls voted for music, almost all guys for music and sports. People over 18 are more interested in arts and nature, under 15 mostly prefer music and sports, while those over 15 have more diverse interests, mostly including music, sports, travel, and pop culture.
39 respondents (44.8%) play online games every day, and **18 people (20.7%) several times a week**. This habit does not depend on whether they have strong or poor connections to locals, nor on gender; the majority are under 18 years old, and their main interests are music and sports. They are mainly interested in adventurous, plot-based, and simulation games. **17 people (19.5%) play sometimes**, **12 (13.8%) rarely** — notably, these people prefer puzzle and strategic games — and **7 (8.0%) never**, mostly being those interested in music, literature, history, nature, and arts.
Regarding **game preferences**, **46 people (52.9%) choose plot-based games**, **34 (39.1%) prefer adventurous games**, **31 (35.6%) simulations**, **29 (33.3%) puzzles**, **29 (33.3%) strategic games**, **22 (25.3%) role games**, and **11 (12.6%) social games**.
In the **open-ended question about what makes a game good**, respondents highlighted: interesting plots, the ability to play with friends and communicate, good graphics and visual appeal, engaging challenges (quests), as well as emotions and ease of use.
Most of the people value **kindness and friendship in others**, as well as **reliability**, **less responsibility**, and a **sense of humor**.

In response to the open question **"What would you like local people to understand about you and your culture?"**, many did not know what to answer, but many others shared responses such as: our culture is not just borscht and vyshyvanka, but a great history, literature, and mentality; we lived a good life in Ukraine before and arrived here because of war, not for other reasons; it is difficult to learn Latvian; we are diverse, and each of us has a unique personality.

To the question about **what they discovered in the new country**, answers included: rules work and are respected, many processes are based on trust, people are calm, there's a peaceful atmosphere, respect for nature, and kind people. Still, **34 people (39.1%) said "nothing"**.
Motivation mostly comes from **family and friends**.

Among the **suggested ideas for the game**: solving social dilemmas, addressing youth worries (e.g., depression), strategic games focused on gaining allies and successful communication, group work as an essential element, and positive reinforcement. Many comments asked for the inclusion of **psychological advice and emotional support**, and one mentioned the idea of **prize vouchers or gift cards**.
The **feelings to promote** through the game include: **safety**, **kindness**, **light**, **support**, **not being alone**, and **hope**.

CONCLUSION

Based on the survey findings, Ukrainian youngsters in Latvia appear largely active, socially engaged, and moderately well integrated, especially those under 18, while simultaneously living in a clear "in-between" or limbo situation. They maintain strong ties both to Ukraine and to local communities, combining friendships across origins rather than replacing one with another. Language and education pathways strongly shape their sense of belonging: younger respondents often juggle Latvian and Ukrainian school systems, while older youth are increasingly forced to make future-oriented decisions by learning Latvian for higher

education or work. Interests are broad and dynamic, with music, travel, sports, and arts playing a central role, and digital gaming serving as a major social and emotional space regardless of local integration levels. Overall, feelings of home and motivation are driven primarily by relationships—family, friends, and supportive environments—while the expressed desire for safety, kindness, connection, and hope highlights the importance of inclusive, interactive, and psychologically supportive activities.
In this context, a well-designed educational game could be a highly effective engagement tool—particularly if it is **plot-based**, includes **group interaction**, and allows for **emotional expression** and **peer communication**. The game should avoid focusing on strict knowledge and instead emphasize **exploration**, **cultural exchange**, **social dilemmas**, and **creative strategy**. Preferences show a clear interest in games that are visually appealing, easy to use, and rich in **real-life relevance**—offering not only entertainment, but also space for reflection, learning, and connection across diverse identities and experiences.

When comparing the survey results with the insights provided by youth workers, a clear and coherent picture emerges: Ukrainian youngsters in Latvia are navigating a complex emotional and social landscape, yet show high levels of adaptability, curiosity, and motivation when supported in the right way. Both sources highlight the importance of active participation, group-based engagement, and the youth's strong desire to maintain cultural ties while building new connections. Youth workers emphasize the youngsters' openness, energy, and preference for excursions, physical activity, and creative formats, which aligns closely with the survey findings pointing to music, travel, sports, and arts as top interests. Similarly, both sources confirm the importance of friendships—whether with locals, peers from Ukraine, or online—and the barrier that Latvian language still represents, especially for those unsure about their long-term future in the country. Crucially, both the youth and youth workers express a need for flexible, interactive, and emotionally supportive environments, reinforcing the idea that tools like games can effectively combine education, integration, and wellbeing if they are designed with empathy, cultural sensitivity, and space for personal expression.

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