

Hidden Hardship: 1 Year Living in Forced Displacement for Refugees from Ukraine

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Cover photo: Ingrid Prestetun/NRC

Olena, 34, is a mother of two – and a
Ukrainian refugee in Moldova. Her daugh-
ter Anna is only one and a half years old,
while her son Oskar is almost four.

February 2023

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Executive summary

One year after the escalation of the international armed conflict in Ukraine, more than 8 million refugees from Ukraine reside in Europe, the largest single displacement in the region since the Second World War. The majority of people who fled Ukraine and were able to cross into the EU and other parts of Europe are women, children and older persons, largely due to Ukrainian legislation restricting men eligible for military conscription from leaving the country. For many people it has been nearly 12 months since they left behind their homes, lives, family and friends, although people have been leaving Ukraine throughout the last year and continue to do so. The three neighbouring countries Poland, Romania and Republic of Moldova, have been at the forefront of receiving refugees fleeing Ukraine. Forced displacement is likely to continue as the war shows no sign of waning. This raises the question of how people are coping and what kind of support is required.

In order to answer these questions, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Upinion conducted an online survey in January 2023 with refugees from Ukraine living in Poland, Romania and the Republic of Moldova to hear what experiences they have had, what challenges they have faced and what their return intentions are.

Key findings

What has emerged is a raw picture of incredible hosting solidarity within a context of ongoing trauma, family separation and specific and long-term needs that cannot be met by national social protection schemes. Our findings had more similarities than differences between the two EU countries of Poland and Romania, and the non-EU Republic of Moldova.

The majority of respondents (76%, n=1203) have lived for 6-11 months in Poland, Romania, or Moldova, with 89% across the three countries reporting they feel safe and accepted in their current host country. However, 68% of people surveyed said the income and support they were receiving was not enough to meet their basic needs. This rises to 100% for Roma respondents from Ukraine in Moldova. The largest share of people surveyed in Poland said their main source of income was work, but for respondents in Romania and Moldova they were dependent on either personal savings or humanitarian assistance.

Respondents across all three countries reported negative coping mechanisms in order to meet income shortfalls. Eating less nutritious food is reported by the largest single share of respondents in Poland (33%), Romania (30%), and Moldova (32%) as the most commonly applied coping strategy. There are also some differences: more respondents in Poland and Moldova have moved to sub-standard housing in order to

reduce their costs compared to those in Romania, and relatively more people in Moldova have resorted to borrowing money, particularly Roma families in Moldova.

30% of non-Roma survey respondents across all three countries said their children had not attended school at all since leaving Ukraine, with a further 21% indicating they had attended, but with interruptions. Absence from school was highest (64%) among Roma respondents in Moldova.

Unsurprisingly, people with paid work, savings or remittances as their primary source of income are more likely to reside in rental housing across the three countries, which they are more likely to see as affordable. Survey results showed a direct correlation between people's housing situation and access to a sustainable and independent source of income, highlighting access to jobs and labour markets as a key enabler for an independent life and reduced dependency on aid and government support.

Survey findings also indicate that rent in Poland is slowly becoming unaffordable for refugees, and the cost of living is a major factor in why people choose to go to Romania or Moldova rather than other parts of Europe. As inflation rises across the region, countries with lower costs of living (including rent) may see an increase in refugee movement, increasing the burden on countries which are already struggling to finance support for refugees and the communities who host them.

In all three countries the largest share of respondents do not yet know whether they want to return to Ukraine, while approximately one-fifth of people plan to go back permanently in the coming 12 months.

The survey also found that some populations were faring worse than others, particularly the Roma community in Moldova, people living in collective centres, and people without regular employment income, who were more likely unable to meet their basic needs, more dependent on aid and less able to afford housing. The qualitative findings also highlight that mothers and older persons are experiencing particular difficulties with work and making ends meet. Respondents highlighted the need to consider people with disabilities, pensioners, women and children in assistance planning.

These groups of people should be identified and enrolled in social protection safety nets but, for people fleeing an international armed conflict with nothing but what they can carry, national welfare schemes are not enough. There is a clear need for complementary approaches to support vulnerable refugees from Ukraine, continued humanitarian assistance and long-term structural support to ensure refugees can remain where they have chosen to be, without suffering further deteriorations in living standards, depletion of personal savings or dependence on aid.

Listening to refugees is key towards designing solutions that will most directly meet their needs, provide solutions to the challenges they are facing and ensure people are not coerced into making premature decisions to return to Ukraine or engage in negative coping strategies due to a lack of support.

Key Recommendations

To the European Union:

- Ensure member states fulfil commitments on the provision of rights enabled through the Temporary Protection Directive, particularly related to access to housing, education and livelihoods.
- Monitor and publicly report on Member States' compliance with Council Implementing Decisions with regards to refugees from Ukraine in the EU.
- Support and enable EU Member States to start developing strategies for transitioning out of the Temporary Protection system. This could include:
 - Building refugee inclusion into short and medium-term planning and funding for housing, education and labour markets.
 - Developing legal frameworks and pathways for local integration as a durable solution for refugees who may not wish to return to Ukraine in the short to medium term.
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“You bear a strong psychological load. You do not know what awaits you tomorrow.”

Female respondent, 46-55
Pomerania Region, Poland

To International donors and refugee hosting countries:

On inclusion:

- Host governments should continue to prioritise and deepen the inclusion and integration of refugees. Beyond temporary protection, inclusion and integration will be achieved through the fulfilment of rights and access to services.
- Donors and governments should work with humanitarian actors to develop a targeted approach which can complement and support national social protection schemes in the short and medium term. Commit to long term funding of social protection for refugees, as well as ongoing targeted humanitarian assistance to fill gaps until refugees are fully integrated.
- International donors should fund and support national NGOs as critical actors providing sustainable, appropriate, timely responses. This requires systematically incorporating local NGOs into the humanitarian response structure; and supporting (politically and financially) the role of local NGOs to hold their governments to account.

On livelihoods and social protection:

- Host governments and donors should review social protection schemes and, if necessary, adapt them to ensure a sustainable transition from humanitarian cash assistance to national social assistance programmes for refugees.

On education:

- Governments and donors should plan for and appropriately resource the inclusion of all refugee children from Ukraine into national school and education systems, through policy, budgetary allocation and infrastructure development. Solutions should not be temporary, but should instead guarantee adequate funding for local education authorities and be inclusive of different groups of Ukrainian students. This should include (among other measures):
 - Support and resources to allow all refugee children to access and participate in intensive language courses;
 - Provision of dedicated and tailored ‘catch up’ classes to support children to properly integrate and engage with national curriculums;
 - Equipping teachers with tools on how to work with students whose learning capacities are limited because of war and conflict-induced stress and trauma;
 - Ensuring children have access to integrated psycho-social support in classroom settings to decrease war and conflict-induced stress and trauma.

On housing:

- As a priority, host country governments should work to provide viable, adequate and sustainable alternative housing solutions to Ukrainians living in collective shelters.
- Donors and host governments should plan for the longer-term creation of additional affordable housing, increased number and capacity of social renting agencies, and enhanced coordination and communication with all national authorities.

To humanitarian actors, including UN, NGOs and civil society:

- Ensure the structural inclusion of marginalised subgroups of refugee populations in needs assessments, research efforts, and policy debates, such as displaced Roma, people with disabilities, and older persons.
- Shift from provision of multi-purpose cash assistance to a more specific approach which identifies and fills the gaps in government social assistance. This may mean providing sector-specific support for different individuals with particular needs, such as topping up the gap between government cash transfers and shortfalls in rent. Cash actors must coordinate with other humanitarian sectors to link cash transfers to other transfers and services such as referrals, accommodation, employment and protection (social) services whether through direct provision or referrals.

1 Introduction

Of the more than 8 million refugees from Ukraine across Europe, 4.9 million are currently registered for temporary protection or similar protection schemes in 34 countries across Europe.¹ 1.6 million refugees from Ukraine are in Poland, 111,000 in Romania and 109,000 refugees from Ukraine are recorded by UNHCR in Moldova.² These three neighbouring countries to Ukraine have been at the forefront of opening their borders to refugees; after Russia, Poland received the largest number of refugees, while Romania and Moldova have received among the highest per capita movements of refugees from Ukraine into their territories.³ Open borders and open homes in the aftermath of the February 2022 escalation provided immediate shelter and safety to millions of people. However, all countries have struggled with putting structures in place to address the longer term needs of this population – this gap is only expected to increase as the one-year marker passes with no pathways to safe and dignified refugee returns in sight. Furthermore, any dynamic changes to the conflict in Ukraine, could still trigger further forced displacements into Europe.

In order to understand how people are coping and what kind of support they need, the Norwegian Refugee Council and Upinion conducted a survey in January 2023. A total of 1,471 refugees from Ukraine living in Poland, Romania and the Republic of Moldova engaged with the survey, either online or face-to-face.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an international humanitarian organisation which has been assisting people affected by the international armed conflict in Ukraine since 2014. After the February 2022 escalation, NRC significantly scaled up its response inside Ukraine and also established programming to support people fleeing the war in Poland, Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Most of its work supporting refugees in these three countries is with a number of national partners who are experts in their local contexts. Our focus is on supporting refugees to have shelter, access to education, and safety from violence (including through legal protections) to ensure access to rights and services in their host country.

Upinion is an online research platform that allows aid actors to engage online and in a secure⁴ way with people in crisis and in displacement affected countries. We amplify the voices of those affected to gain a better understanding of the factors influencing peoples' decisions, as well as key insights into their current socio-economic situation. To strengthen and promote an evidence-based response, these insights are used to inform the design of programmes and services, policy making processes, and other ongoing debates.



16 March 2022. Siret border crossing, northern Romania. Sonia, 8, and her mother Victoria, 29, refugees from Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine, warm themselves while waiting for onward transport.

Photo: Ingrid Prestetun/NRC

NRC and Upinion engaged in this research to better understand the needs, priorities, and future plans of refugees from Ukraine currently residing in Poland, Romania, and the Republic of Moldova. This study aims to complement NRC's previous study on push and pull factors for refugees returning to Ukraine in 2022,⁵ in order to better understand the situation of people who have decided to stay outside of Ukraine.

This report presents the main results of this study. Based on the findings, complemented by secondary sources, the report ends with a set of policy recommendations for governments, aid actors, and other stakeholders.

2 Methodology

Set up

NRC and Upinion designed an online survey as the primary research tool, using Facebook as the main platform through which to reach people. The survey, designed as a conversation, enabled real-time engagement with refugees from Ukraine in Poland, Romania, and the Republic of Moldova between the 5th of January and the 1st of February, 2023. Respondents to the conversation also received referral information on available services, organisations, and phone numbers relevant to them when they reached the end of the conversation.

The survey was available in Ukrainian, Russian, Romani and English, and was held in a private chat outside of the Facebook environment to ensure respondents' data privacy and confidentiality. .

Target group and outreach

Eligibility criteria for participation in the conversation were as follows: Respondents a) were living in Ukraine before February 24, 2022; b) had fled Ukraine⁶ after February 24, 2022; c) were currently living in Poland, Romania, or the Republic of Moldova; and d) were older than 18 years.

There were 1471 respondents in total, of which 1321 people joined the online conversation. Of this subgroup, 1012 completed the entire survey. A further 150 people completed the survey through face-to-face outreach (Roma refugees). Hence, a total of 1162 finished the entire conversation, while 1471 started it. Of the online group, some people dropped out before answering all of the questions, but the face-to-face Roma respondents all completed the full survey. Where relevant, we have indicated the number of people who answered the question.

Upinion and NRC undertook proactive efforts to enable the Roma community from Ukraine's access to the survey, given the particular vulnerabilities that this group has faced⁷ and their increased risk of statelessness.⁸ To capture the perceptions and needs of Roma refugees, NRC commissioned the "Roma Voice" Coalition to conduct face-to-face interviews with 150 Roma refugees from Ukraine in Moldova, as a modality more trusted and accessible to this community than a social media platform. The Coalition's mobile teams visited eight selected Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs) for Roma in Moldova, mostly in the Central and Northern Region where the largest number of Roma people are located. All 150 respondents they engaged with completed the entire survey.

The data from all 1471 respondents are included in the findings, but some findings are presented as the cross-country sample (Poland, Romania, and non-Roma respondents from Moldova), or the findings from just the Roma population surveyed in Moldova, which would otherwise skew the cross-country sample.

Research limitations

This methodological framework comes with a set of limitations, which need to be considered when interpreting this report's findings.

Firstly, there is a sampling bias. Older persons are underrepresented in the sample due to the lower likelihood of their engagement or access to online social media platforms, and no additional efforts were made to include people with disabilities.⁹ No children are represented in the sample due to NRC and Upinion's 'do no harm' policies to exclude minors from participation in online conversations, where there is not a chance to ensure parental consent. Youth are, however, represented through sampling of 18–24-year-olds, but there was low engagement, potentially as Facebook is less popular with this demographic.

Upinion's experience with surveying indicates it is likely that educated people (secondary school education and above), are also slightly overrepresented in this study, given their general higher inclination to participate in online surveys. People without access to a stable internet connection, a smartphone, tablet or computer would not have been able to participate in the conversation, except for the Roma communities, who the Roma Voice Coalition engaged with face-to-face in Moldova.

Finally, communities with low knowledge or trust in international or humanitarian organisations are also not likely to have engaged. Many of the Roma refugees in Moldova did voice their fear of participating in the conversation but they were willing to engage with a trusted organisation, in this case the "Roma Voice" Coalition. In contrast to the online methodology, the trust between the Roma interviewer and Roma participant seemed to be key in people's willingness to provide answers.¹⁰ Underscoring this point is that, there were only six responses from people identifying as Roma through the online platform in either Poland, Romania, or Moldova.

Second, the online research methodology provides limited space for in-depth research or discussion of politically or emotionally sensitive topics (i.e., domestic or sexual violence) which requires more elaborate explanations, answer options, and/or the possibility of psychosocial support or other aftercare to respondents. The considerable percentages of people who indicated the option 'I prefer not to answer' when addressing certain themes show this limitation.¹¹

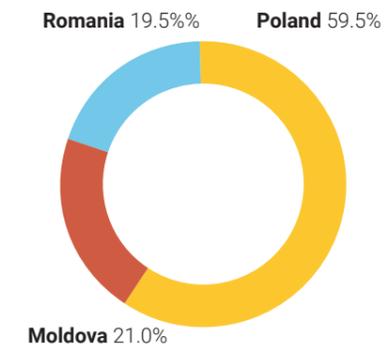
Also, gradual drop-out of respondents was observed throughout the online conversation. Drop-out particularly occurred in relation to questions on the following subjects: the duration of respondents' stay in their current host country, coping mechanisms, respondents' access and need for assistance, and plans for return. Respondents possibly considered these topics sensitive.

Questions with more text seemed to also trigger drop-out. With the high rate of surveys and needs assessments conducted in response to the conflict in Ukraine, it is also likely that people are experiencing fatigue in responding to surveys and therefore drop out before finalising the response.

2.1 Demographics

Target countries

Nearly 60% of the 1471 refugee respondents who started the conversation reside in Poland, with 20% in Romania and in Moldova. This distribution reflects the overall number of refugees in the latter two countries, as 1.6 million refugees from Ukraine are estimated to be currently in Poland, and over a hundred thousand in both Romania and Moldova.¹²



Gender

Across all three countries the respondents consist of 90% women and 9% men.¹³ The large majority of women respondents is consistent with UNHCR and OECD numbers for the refugee population as a whole¹⁴, a dynamic directly resulting from the implementation of martial law and mobilisation in Ukraine which prevents Ukrainian men eligible for conscription (aged 18 - 60 years) from leaving the country. The ratio of male respondents was higher in Moldova, possibly due to the high engagement of Roma men in the survey.¹⁵

Age

The largest age group which responded to the sample across the three countries are aged between 36 and 45-years-old (37%), with roughly 20% of people in the age brackets 26-35, 46-55, and 56 and above. Respondents above 65 or below 25 are only marginally represented in the sample.¹⁶

Ethnicity

Over three-quarters (76%) of respondents across all three countries identify as Ukrainian, 11% as Roma, 3% as Polish, 2% as Moldovan, 2% as Russian, and 1% as Romanian. Respondents also had the possibility to select other ethnicities, such as Jewish or Tatar, but these options were rarely selected. Disaggregation of the data was done for the Ukrainian and Roma subsets only.

Roma community

The Roma respondents surveyed are almost entirely from Moldova (96%, n=156) due to the face-to-face interview component conducted by the Coalition in that country. The composition of the Roma subset skews the cross-country sample slightly: it consists of 83% women and 17% men, and is analysed separately from the cross-country sample due to unique characteristics and challenges. A comparison between Roma and non-Roma respondents in Moldova is included at the end of each section.

3 Situation for refugees from Ukraine in neighbouring countries: main findings

3.1 Displacement journey

Duration in host country

The majority of respondents (76%, n=1203) have lived for 6-11 months in Poland, Romania, or Moldova. This is slightly higher for people currently staying in Poland (81%) and Moldova (71%), than for respondents in Romania (63%).

Over one-third of people currently staying in Romania reached the country more than five months after the February escalation. This could be because some refugees from Ukraine entered Romania after a short stay in Moldova. Another explanation could be that these respondents are largely from the south of Ukraine, which experienced increased hostilities later in the current escalation.¹⁷

Reasons for choosing host country

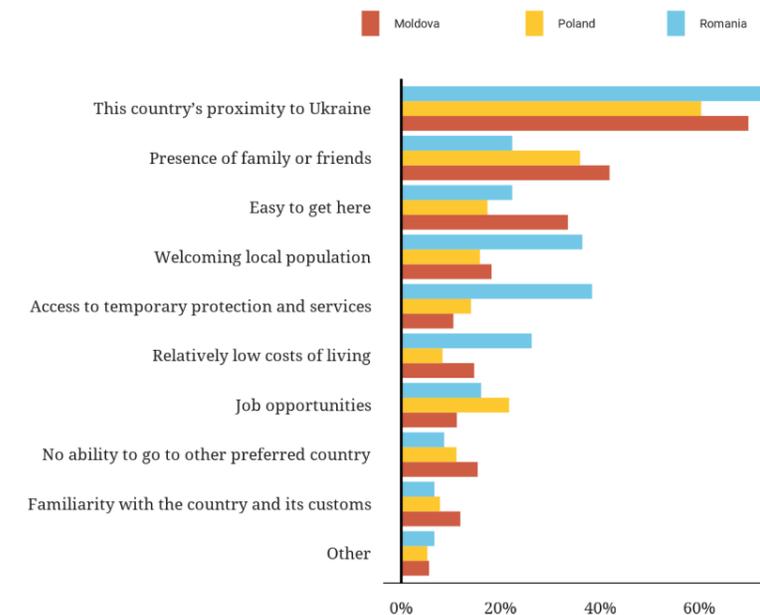
There are interesting differences as well as similarities in the findings between the three countries and subsets of the sample. Proximity to Ukraine is the main reason for respondents who moved to Poland (60%), Romania (73%) and Moldova (71%). Respondents from Romania indicated, relatively more than respondents from the other countries, ‘access to temporary protection and services’ (39%), a ‘welcoming local population’ (36%), and ‘relatively low costs of living’ (26%) as reasons for their choice for this host country. In contrast, the respondents in Poland and Moldova reported the presence of family or friends relatively more.

In Moldova, there was a difference between Roma and non-Roma respondents. Roma participants indicated much more often (67%) that their main reason was that it was ‘easy to get to the host country,’ com-

pared to non-Roma respondents (34%). None of the Roma respondents indicated Moldova’s ‘proximity to Ukraine’, which is in stark contrast with the findings above. Additionally, non-Roma respondents (41%) were more likely to cite ‘presence of family and friends’ as a reason, compared to Roma respondents (18%).

Choice of host country

Why did you decide to move to your current host country rather than another country?



Multiple answers - Poland (n=783), Romania (n=256), Moldova (non-Roma, n=140)

Family members in Ukraine

Amongst respondents in all three countries, 46% still have immediate family members (i.e., siblings, children, spouse, parents) in Ukraine. Reasons for family members to stay behind in Ukraine are, in order of significance:

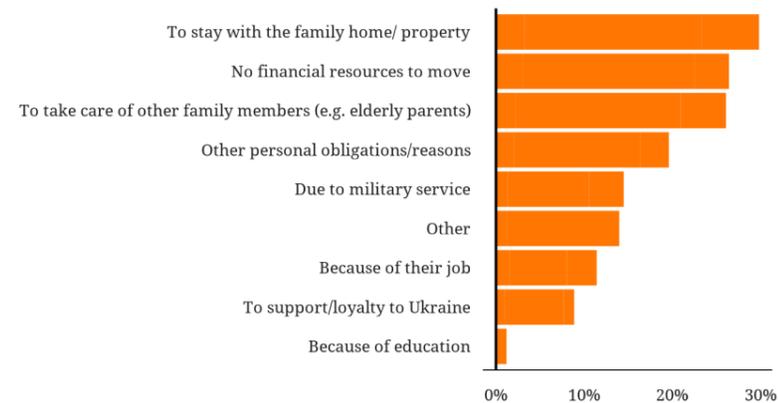
- Staying with the family’s property or home (30%).
- Taking care of other family members (i.e., elderly parents) (26%).
- Lack of financial resources to move outside of the country (26%).

Respondents in Romania only mentioned military service as a fourth key reason for family members to stay, and respondents in Poland and Moldova only as the sixth reason, despite the imposition of martial law and the travel ban that restricts eligible men between the ages of 18 and 60 from leaving Ukraine. A considerable group indicated ‘other personal obligations/reasons’ or ‘other’. It is possible some respondents understood ‘military service’ as on-going or active service and therefore recorded the military conscription travel ban as ‘other reasons.’

In Moldova, the majority of the Roma community do not have any family members left in Ukraine (73%). In contrast, 42% of the non-Roma respondents in Moldova do have one or more family members who have stayed behind, comparable with findings from Poland and Romania. Roma respondents who do have family members left in Ukraine, selected the reason ‘staying with the family’s property or home’ relatively more (51%) than non-Roma respondents in Moldova (31%). Moreover, the non-Roma population in Moldova indicated ‘lack of financial resources to also move outside of the country’ (29%) more than the Roma community (13%).

Family members in Ukraine

Why did some of these immediate family members stay in Ukraine?



Multiple answers - Poland (n=416), Romania (n=109), Moldova (non-Roma, n=62)

3.2 Conditions in host country

Legal documentation

Respondents were asked whether they have faced any documentation issues during their stay in their current host country.

Eight-five percent of the respondents in all three countries reported no issues with documentation. This is slightly less than NRC’s previous assessment of conditions faced by Ukrainians refugees, in which 94% of respondents reported not having faced issues with documentation.¹⁸ In Moldova, a substantial share of respondents (24%) have faced some sort of issue with documentation. Women were more likely to have no issues (84%), compared to men (68%). Men mostly indicated lack of IDs or passports and the inability to obtain civil documentation outside of Ukraine. There was no significant difference when disaggregating the data by age.

In Moldova, issues with documentation are particularly prevalent among the Roma community, of which 92% reported difficulties: 69% lack IDs or passports, and another 23% have lost or damaged legal documents. Particularly the lack of IDs or passports is indicated by more Roma women (72%, n=124), compared to Roma men (54%, n=26).

Registration and legal status

Nearly all respondents in Poland (94%) and Romania (93%) reported they had registered with local authorities in their host country. However, only 49% of those in Moldova reported they have successfully registered. 24% of all respondents in Moldova said they did not have to register. This is consistent with the fact that, until March 1, no registration is required to legally stay in Moldova for people fitting the “refugee from Ukraine” requirements. After March 1, 2023, refugees from Ukraine will have 90 days in Moldova before needing to legalise their stay by completing the temporary protection registration procedure. No significant differences were observed among different gender or age groups, and no correlation was found between having family and friends in the host country and ease of registration.

As of April 1, an amendment will introduce the possibility for some Ukrainians covered by the Special Act to apply for temporary residence permits, but eligible categories of people who can apply are restricted.²²

Box 1. Registration of refugees from Ukraine in Poland, Romania, and Moldova

As of today, at least 4.9 million refugees are registered under the EU’s Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) or similar national protection schemes.¹⁹ On March 4, 2022, the European Council unanimously agreed to activate the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) for the first time in the bloc’s history, giving immediate legal status, access to a range of rights, services and protection and freedom of movement across the EU for Ukrainians fleeing the international armed conflict. In October 2022, the European Council extended the TPD an additional 12 months to March 2024. Eligible individuals fleeing the war in Ukraine need only register in any EU Member State in order to secure access to social welfare assistance, healthcare, education, employment, and banking services there.

The European statistics provider, Eurostat, has revealed that in May 2022, Poland granted the highest number of temporary protection statuses to Ukrainians fleeing their country due to the ongoing war.²⁰ Under a Special Act, Ukrainians can legally stay in Poland for 18 months if they: 1) entered Poland after February 24, 2022 directly from Ukraine; and 2) were registered by the commandant of the Border Service at the border crossing point. The steps of the process are relatively straightforward, and enables access to a PESEL UKR,²¹ (Polish national identification number for Ukrainian citizens and their spouses who entered Poland after 24 Feb 2022 confirming their special status under the TP in Poland). Currently, obtaining a PESEL UKR is left to the discretion of Ukrainians, but does enable access to social benefits, use of state medical services, and the legal right to work and study.²³

As of April 1, an amendment will introduce the possibility for some Ukrainians covered by the Special Act to apply for temporary residence permits, but eligible categories of people who can apply are restricted.²²

Romania transposed the EU TPD into national law on March 18 2022.

extending eligibility to Ukrainian nationals who had left Ukraine and were in Romania before February 24.²⁴ Registering for temporary protection is a simple procedure. Initial delays with processing, particularly in cities receiving many refugees, were just one reason why registration rates remained low in Romania even six months into the war. But, stakeholders' efforts to increase refugees' understanding of temporary protection, as well as critical capacity support from the EU to Romania's asylum authorities have promoted registration. NGOs and UNHCR told Refugees International that refugees now find it quite easy to navigate the process once given the necessary information.²⁵

As a non-EU Member, the Republic of Moldova is not bound by the TPD. In January 2023 Moldova announced a decision to activate temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine, a step that has been praised by UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi.²⁷ Temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine will be introduced starting March 1 for a period of 1 year. The temporary protection mechanism provides legal status, access to basic services, and identity cards for those who enrol.

Prior to this development, the Moldovan government has allowed Ukrainian citizens, their non-Ukrainian spouses, and other third-country nationals who had refugee status in Ukraine to live and work in Moldova for the duration of a rolling 60-day state of emergency, most recently extended until February 4 2023 for another 60 day period.²⁶ Individuals wishing to secure their stay longer-term had the option of applying for a residence permit or for asylum through Moldova's usual asylum process, which takes six months or longer. According to UNHCR, Moldova's Asylum and Integration Directorate (AID) could only process about 100 asylum applications annually and already had a backlog prior to 2022.

In all three countries, refugee reception centres were put up, facilitating refugees' arrival and registration process.

Registration and legal status in Moldova

Did you register with the local authorities in your current host country?²⁸



Roma (n=150) and non-Roma (n=135) respondents

Nearly all respondents in Poland (94%) and Romania (93%) reported they had registered with local authorities in their host country. However, only 49% of those in Moldova reported they have successfully registered. 24% of all respondents in Moldova said they did not have to register. This is consistent with the fact that, until March 1, no registration is required to legally stay in Moldova for people fitting the "refugee from Ukraine" requirements. After March 1, 2023, refugees from Ukraine will have 90 days in Moldova before needing to legalise their stay by completing the temporary protection registration procedure. No significant differences were observed among different gender or age groups, and no correlation was found between having family and friends in the host country and ease of registration.

Only fifteen respondents (1%) across all three countries reported facing barriers to registering, citing unwilling registration offices, a complex registration process, and difficulties with documentation.

In Moldova, 12% of respondents indicated they did not want to register, compared to only 1% (n=150) of the Roma community. 10% of non-Roma respondents chose not to answer the question. It is possible respondents did not understand what registration with local authorities referred to, as registration to stay in the country was not yet required in Moldova at the time of data collection. As such, respondents may have associated the question with registering for assistance from the Districts' (Raion) Directorate of Social Assistance and Family Protection.

Accommodation

Type of accommodation

Half of the respondents in Poland (54%) and Moldova (50%) currently stay in rented accommodation, which is distinct from the available answer options 'staying with family/friends' and 'found host through social media/volunteer' - despite some people having to pay for that as well. While respondents in Poland selected the remaining answer options at nearly equal rates, the second largest group (35%) in Moldova stays with family or friends. In Romania, 32% of respondents have found their accommodation through social media or volunteers, and around a quarter of respondents (26%) rent their accommodation.

According to respondents, non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations play a limited role in housing, with only 3% of respondents across the three countries residing in housing provided by these actors.

There is a small disparity in rented accommodation between age groups, with 18-25 year olds less likely to be living in rented accommodation (32%, n=31) compared to other age groups (around 45%). People in the age group 18-25 have selected a wide variety of housing options, such as housing provided by friends or family (23%) or local authorities (13%).

The above data are in line with other studies³⁴, although the number of respondents in Poland staying in rented accommodation seems to be higher than these assessments conducted several months ago. With

the progression of time, more people may have moved from temporary accommodation to renting.

However, for the Roma respondents in Moldova, the survey was conducted in-person at shelters. Therefore, there was a significantly higher rate of respondents who noted living in collective shelters (87%, n=150), which is in stark contrast with the non-Roma respondents in this survey (5%) and cannot be considered representative. In Moldova as a whole, approximately 95% of refugees are living among host communities and less than 5% are living in collective shelters.³⁵

Box 2. New rules concerning accommodation

Increase in costs in Poland

National and international organisations and aid actors have voiced their concerns about new rules that have come into force as a result of *The amendment to the Special Act on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of this state*. Starting March 1, 2023, some refugees from Ukraine who have stayed in Poland for over 120 days and are living in collective shelters will be required to cover 50% of their accommodation cost in the shelters. As of June 1, the payment will increase up to 75% for some refugees remaining in the country for over 180 days.²⁹

Concerns about accommodation across all host countries

The spontaneous actions of the public have played a significant role in the reception and accommodation of refugees from Ukraine.³⁰ While this may be viewed positively, it presents management and coordination challenges in ensuring efficiency and addressing safety and other safeguarding concerns. Protecting vulnerable groups, particularly Ukrainian women and children, from exploitation and trafficking is a key concern. Government services face difficulties regulating private housing initiatives that operate outside the official system.³¹ UNHCR has cautioned that inadequate oversight of such initiatives could increase the risks faced by women, exacerbating the trauma of displacement, family separation, and violence already experienced.³²

In Romania, survey respondents reported relatively positive feedback about the type and affordability of accommodation. However, refugees from Ukraine are at risk due to weak protections in accommodation arranged by host families, who are not vetted or bound by contracts, potentially leading to exploitation and poor living conditions. Limited visibility raises the risk of harm, including gender-based violence, going undetected.

Moreover, hosts' willingness to welcome refugees is declining due to growing resentment amidst rising inflation and rental rates in Romania and Moldova. In addition, landlords often require leases of at least six months, which some refugees are unwilling to commit to, given the uncertainty of their situation. There have also been reports of discriminatory apartment listings.³³

Affordability of accommodation

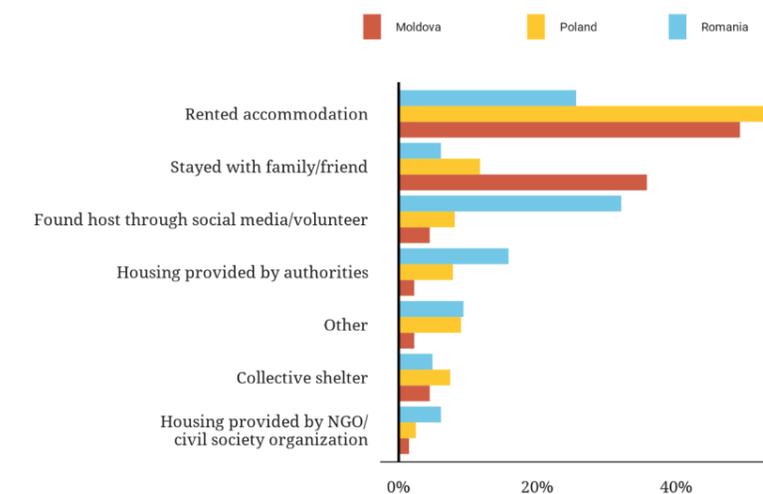
Thirty-nine percent of respondents in Poland and 40% in Moldova considered their current housing to be unaffordable, which is nearly equal to the percentage of those who believe their housing is affordable in both countries, at 36% and 37%, respectively.

For Poland, these findings are in contrast with previous findings by the NRC study of experiences of refugees from Ukraine, in which 70% of interviewed people stated they did not have to pay for accommodation, and for those in paid accommodation less than a quarter claimed accommodation costs were unaffordable.³⁷

In Romania approximately half of the respondents indicated that their accommodation is free of charge (51%), and another 31% considers it

Accommodation type

What kind of accommodation have you stayed in for the majority of your time in your current host country?



Respondents in Poland (n=767), Romania (n=247), Moldova (non-Roma, n=132)

Box 3. Context: Refugee Accommodation Centres

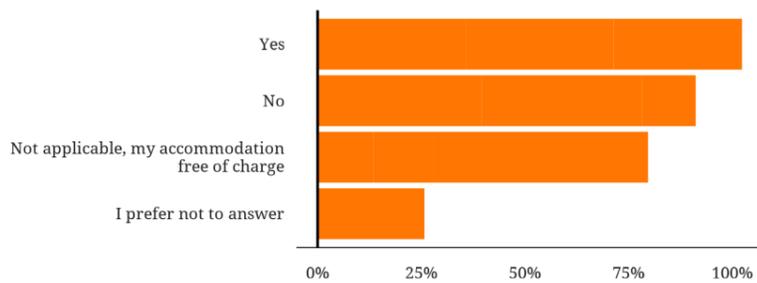
Many non-government organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations have raised concerns about the conditions in some of the Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs) in Moldova, where a large number of Roma refugees from Ukraine have been residing since their arrival in the country. Issues such as lack of privacy, inadequate preparations for the winter season, lack of educational or other structured activities for children, and reported cases of discrimination are among the concerns highlighted.³⁶ This survey corroborated these findings, although satisfaction with the accommodation was higher among those interviewed in the Centre area of Moldova, while a higher number of perceived discrimination cases were reported in the Northern areas of the country. Given the uncertainty of their situation. There have also been reports of discriminatory apartment listings.³³

affordable. This aligns with the reason ‘relatively low cost of living’ that many respondents had for choosing Romania as a host country (see ‘Displacement journey’).

Disaggregation by community in Moldova shows that 88% of Roma respondents are not able to afford their type of accommodation. As collective shelters are free of charge it is likely that a large share of Roma respondents still selected this answer to refer to otherwise high living costs, especially given the poor socio-economic conditions that they repeatedly indicated throughout the conversation.

Accommodation affordability

Is this accommodation affordable for you?



Respondents in Poland (n=764), Romania (n=247), Moldova (non-Roma, n=131)

Livelihoods

Main sources of income

In Poland, the largest single share of respondents (49%) indicated that (adult)³⁸ work has been their main source of income, followed by savings (34%) and humanitarian assistance (27%). In contrast, the majority of respondents in Romania (54%) and Moldova (55%) indicate that they rely on humanitarian assistance. Savings constitute the second most frequent main source of income. Respondents in Romania rely more on host government support than people in the other two countries.

Respondents across the three countries reported child labour and selling assets as a source of income only marginally. Women across the three countries receive remittances more often (23%) than men (10%). Otherwise, sources of income are similar for both genders.

In Moldova, respondents from the Roma and non-Roma community have quite different sources of income. Besides humanitarian assistance (55%), non-Roma seem to rely more on savings (47%), work (30%), and remittances from family members and friends (26%).

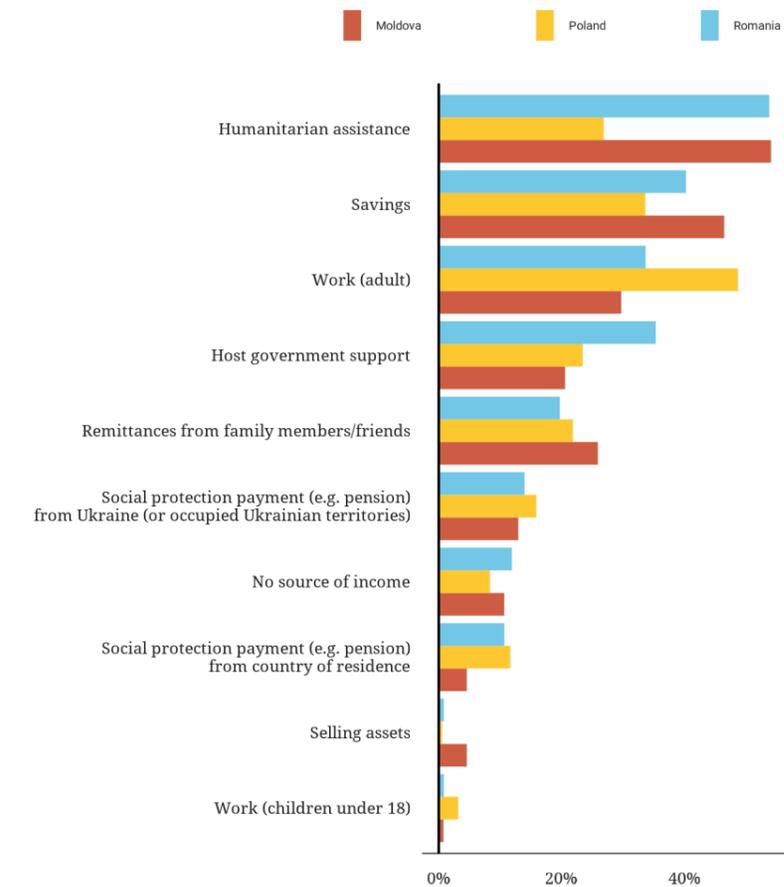
Disaggregation by region reveals that more people living in the Central Region of Moldova reported work, savings, and special protection pay-

Nearly all Roma respondents reported receiving humanitarian assistance as their main means to meet needs (97%), followed by host government support (54%).

ments from Ukraine as their main sources of income, than respondents from the Southern and Northern regions.³⁹ This pattern was not affected by the answers of Roma respondents, who are represented at equal rates in both the Northern and Central Region.

Livelihoods

What have been your main sources of income while outside Ukraine?³⁹



Respondents in Poland (n=754), Romania (n=243), Moldova (non-Roma, n=131)

“It is impossible to work in the profession due to the inconsistency of legal and professional requirements between Ukraine and Poland”

Female respondent, 55-56
Masovia Region, Poland

“I cannot learn the language of the country in which I am, no one helps in that matter. This while employers demand mastering the language.”

Female respondent, 55-56
Masovia Region, Poland

“Without knowing the language, it is sometimes difficult to move on, to find a better job”

Female respondent, 46-55
Łódź Province, Poland

Affordability of housing

People who reported work as their main source of income were more likely to afford their type of accommodation (41%, n=487) and slightly less likely to obtain accommodation that is free of charge (15%), compared to people that have other sources of income.

Amongst those who have savings or remittances as main source of income, or for those who do not have any source of income, the largest share of respondents are not able to afford their accommodation.

Box 4. Sources of income versus accommodation

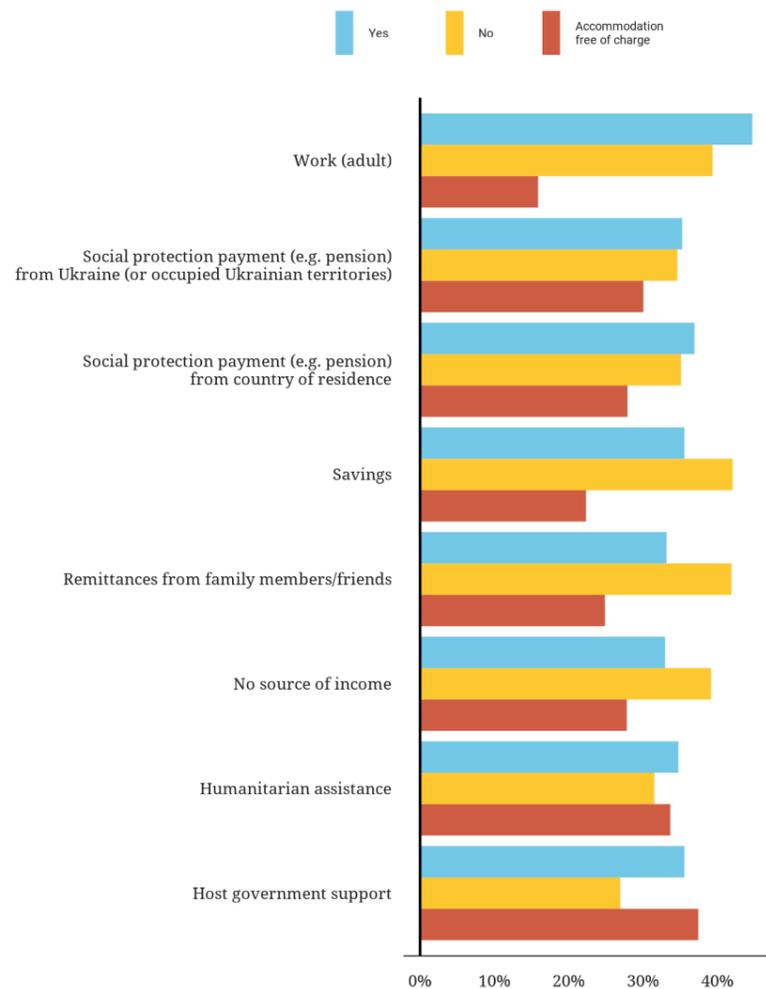
The majority of respondents with work (61%, n=487), savings (54%, n=413), or remittances from family and friends (54%, n=246) as their primary source of income reside in rental housing across the three countries. Considerably less people with host government support (40%, n=291), humanitarian assistance (37%, n=406), or no source of income (25%, n=106) live in rented accommodation. In other words, people's housing situation seems to be correlated with having access to a more or less sustainable source of income.

“There are low wages for Ukrainians. I work 12 hours a day, it is only enough to pay for housing, a minimum amount remains for food. It's hard for a mother with a child.”

Female respondent, 36-45
Lower Silesia, Poland

Housing affordability by income source

What have been your main sources of income while outside Ukraine?
Is your accommodation affordable for you?



Respondents excluding Roma (n=1128)

Challenges in securing basic needs

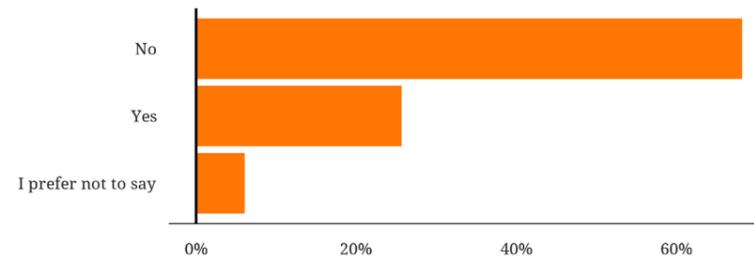
Sixty-eight percent of respondents in all three countries indicate they are not able to cover basic needs (such as food, water, clothing, shelter, sanitation, education, and healthcare). Further analysis shows that 70% (n=382) of individuals who receive humanitarian assistance, are not able to cover basic needs either. These findings support the assumption that receiving humanitarian assistance and/or having access to the social protection system is often not indicative of improved socio-economic conditions.

“I live in Poland with two children, it is very difficult to find a job that coincides with the kindergarten schedule.”

Female respondent, 26-35
Masovia Region, Poland

Basic needs

Is your income sufficient to cover for your basic needs (food, water, clothing, shelter, sanitation, education, and healthcare)?



All respondents excluding Roma (n=1020)

None of the Roma respondents indicate being able to afford basic needs (94% report the inability to do so, and 6 per cent prefer not to answer the question), compared with 22% of the non-Roma population.

Childcare in the way of livelihoods

Although age and gender disaggregation do not highlight any major differences in the ability to cover basic needs, the final open-ended question of the conversation highlights that particularly mothers and older persons are experiencing difficulties with accessing sufficient work in order to meet their basic needs, and balancing this with caring responsibilities:

In Moldova, the data on covering basic needs also show the particular vulnerability of the Roma community.

The fact that Roma populations in Moldova rely heavily on humanitarian aid and Moldovan government support (see 'Livelihoods') high-

“I am the mother of two children up to 3 years old. They don't take the eldest son to the local kindergarten. If you go to a neighbouring city, there is no financial opportunity, there is no opportunity to work, and there are many people who face this situation. We need food, clothes and shoes for the children.”

Female respondent, 46-55
Pomerania Region, Poland

lights the connection between dependence on relief resources and the inability to sustainably access other sources of income through livelihood integration in order to meet their basic needs. This underscores the insufficiency of relief assistance in addressing underlying issues of poverty and inequality.

Debt

Despite the inability to cover basic needs, 55% (n=1118) of all respondents indicated they or someone in their household had not incurred debt. There are no large differences across the three host countries, gender, or age groups. For most people that incurred debt, the amount remained below 2000 euros.

“It is impossible to find a job for age 55+, and if there is any, then it is impossible to live off [the wage of] it.”

Female respondent, 56-65
Wielkopolskie, Poland

Box 5. Hopeful news on labour market integration in Poland, but more work to be done

The findings on sources of income across the three countries are consistent with other studies.⁴⁰ Indeed, access to the labour market for refugees from Ukraine in Poland has increased fourfold and the government has established the «Work in Poland» portal to aid Ukrainian employment.⁴¹ However, there are still considerable gaps in access to the labour market, that respondents of this online conversation also described in their answers to some of the open-ended questions.

There are also challenges for refugees from Ukraine who are already participating in the workforce of their host country. Lack of local language proficiency (65%) was the most frequently reported challenge in a recent UNHCR intentions survey. Despite the fact that a relatively large share of refugees have some knowledge of local languages in Poland (38%) and the Slovak Republic (26%), major gaps remain.⁴²

Family composition, with a majority of mothers with children having fled, and care responsibilities are also posing challenges to labour market integration.⁴³ Further research on training and skills needs is crucial.⁴⁴ Working conditions, type of contract (short-term, flexible, part-time), as well as access to affordable childcare for those with caring responsibilities, should be taken into consideration when assessing the stability and levels of income that employment offers to refugees from Ukraine.

Additionally, older persons (including pensioners) may face more difficulty adapting to the labour market, or excluded from it entirely. Therefore, a purely market integration-driven approach, will not be sufficient to meet all the long-term needs of refugees, given their age and gender profile.

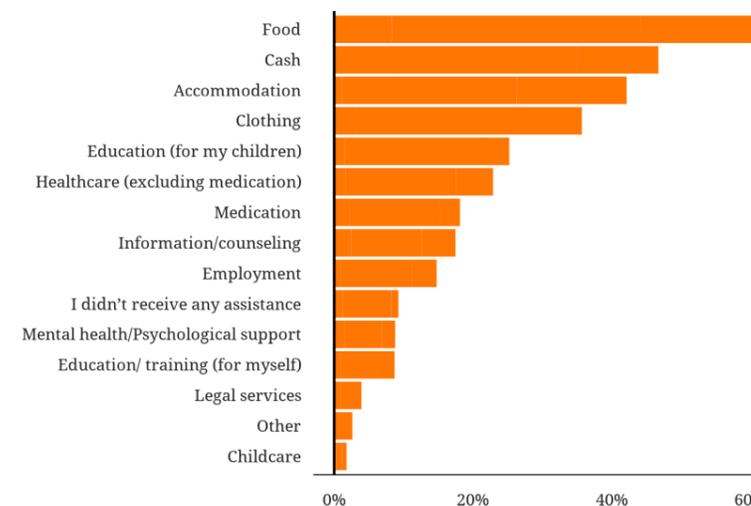
Aid and assistance

Received aid

The majority of respondents in all three countries indicated they had received aid since they had arrived in their host country. In Poland more people had received education assistance compared to the other countries, in Romania more accommodation, and in Moldova, more people had received cash than respondents from the other countries.

Assistance received

Have you received any of the following assistance while being in your current host country?



All respondents excluding Roma (n=1069)

In Romania, most people received assistance with accommodation, which is in line with findings indicated in the section ‘Accommodation’, and in Moldova with cash.

In Poland, 87% of respondents indicated they had received aid since they had arrived in their host country. Of this group, 54% received food, 39% cash, 37% accommodation, and 37% clothing. The main actors that provided this aid included the Polish government (62%) and international NGOs or UN agencies (36%).

In Romania, 91% of respondents indicated they had received aid. Of those respondents, 75% received food, 74% accommodation, and 54% cash. The main actors that provided this aid included international NGOs or UN agencies (67%) and the Romanian government (46%).

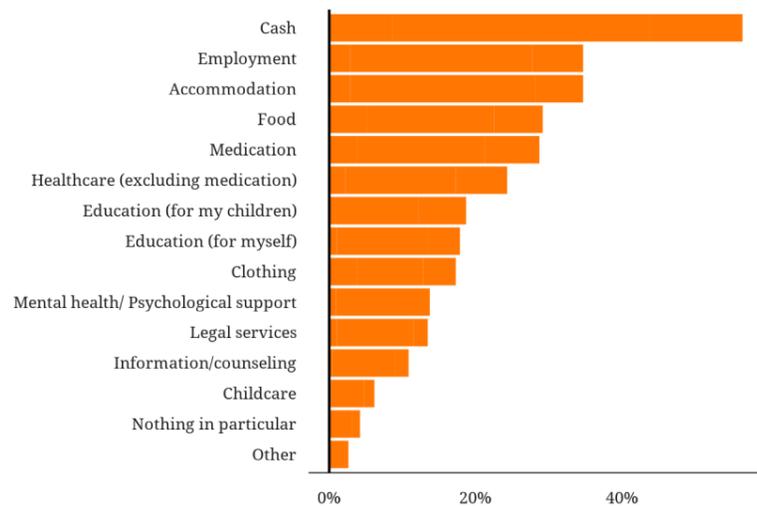
Across the three countries, international NGOs and UN organisations and government entities were the main actors involved in each type of assistance. Particularly in the areas of childcare (41%, n=17), and (adult) education (41%, n=93), local civil society organisations and NGOs play a larger role in providing respondents with assistance than in other fields.

In Moldova, 94% of respondents indicated they had received aid in their host country. The majorities of both Roma and non-Roma respondents received cash and food assistance.

There are also some differences between the Roma and non-Roma communities. More Roma respondents received clothing, legal services, and healthcare than non-Roma respondents. Additionally, the Roma community largely received this assistance from local civil society organisations or NGOs (91%) or - to a lesser extent - from international NGOs or UN agencies (31%). The non-Roma community relies primarily on assistance from international NGOs and UN agencies (82%) as well as government entities (23%).

Assistance Priorities

What (other) assistance would have been helpful?
Please select the three main types of assistance that you are in need of



All respondents excluding Roma (n=1054)

Box 6. The need for language skill building

In an IOM survey in Poland, 43% of the respondents identified language support as one of their main needs, right after financial assistance, accommodation and employment. However, uncertainty regarding the length of stay might keep refugees from engaging in language courses or other training aimed at their integration.⁴⁵

In their conversation with Upinion, respondents who did not feel accepted in their host countries indicated the difficulties they experience due to language barriers, and the (implicit) need for language courses in open-ended questions was evident.

“In the area where we live there are no language courses. Hence, there is a problem with understanding each other 100 per cent.”

Female respondent, 55-56
Lesser Poland, Poland

“It is because of the language barrier. At work there are also different requirements for Ukrainians and Poles. This makes me feel like a person of the second grade, although I have a higher education and I had a better position in Ukraine.”

Female respondent, 36-45
Lower Silesia, Poland

Assistance Priorities

Needs in humanitarian assistance are relatively similar across the three countries, with cash based assistance (57%) being the highest indicated need. More respondents in Moldova than in the other countries selected this answer, particularly among those residing in the Southern Region (84%, n=25). Across all three countries, 63% (n=496) of those who received cash as assistance simultaneously indicated to still need cash assistance. This raises issues around stated reliance on humanitarian assistance and market mismatches, exposing an overall lack and gap for long-term, sustainable support. Short-term, one-off cash distributions are not enough to meet needs, and is not sustainable.

“It is important to improve the support of families with disabilities who require constant professional care.”

Male respondent, 46-55
Łódź Province, Poland

“There are different needs: financial assistance from international funds and organisations is needed for people 58+ who can not find a job easily. Assistance is further needed for people with disabilities, as well as for young people that need help with studying for future employment on the weekends.”

Female respondent, 56-65
Kuyavia-Pomerania, Romania

“I want the rights of children with disabilities, older people with disabilities, people of retirement age, and single mothers to be taken into account when adopting laws.”

Female respondent, 36-45
Romania



Karolina is one of the coordinators at a free shop for Ukrainian refugees in Warsaw.

Photo: Ingebjørg Kårstad/NRC

“Support is needed when a child who goes to kindergarten is sick, and I can't go to work [...]. I have no one to stay with the child, and I don't have additional income either.”

Female respondent, 25-36
Wielkopolskie, Poland

“The greatest need is: financial assistance! This could be money or vouchers. Women with young children and the elderly cannot work fully. We get cereals and canned foods, but for normal nutrition it takes meat, fish, vegetables, fruits, dairy products (...) We receive financial assistance only from the UN, and these payments are insufficient and irregular. There are no payments for January!”

Female respondent, 36-45
Central Region, Moldova

More people in Romania indicated the need for education assistance for children (31%), compared to Moldova (7%). Also remarkable is that people in Romania mentioned the need for assistance in accommodation (32%), even though 74% of this group indicated to have received assistance with the accommodation they are staying in, and of which the large majority (82%) also indicated that they either do not have to pay for accommodation or considers what they pay to be affordable.

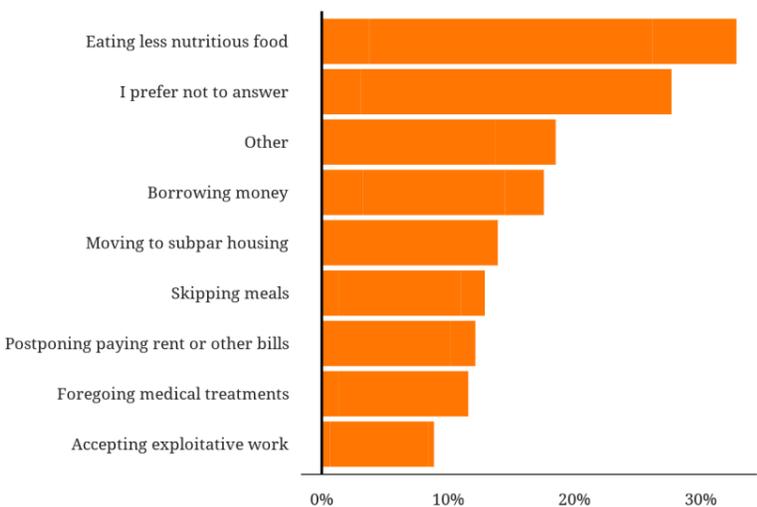
In Moldova, after cash-based assistance, Roma and non-Roma communities prioritised needs differently. While food and medication are the second and third priority for the non-Roma community, healthcare followed by clothing are the second and third priority for Roma respondents.

Non-Roma selected accommodation (24%, n=123) more than Roma respondents (8%, n=150). Breakdown by regions of Moldova shows interesting results: considerably more respondents in the Central Region (31%, n=77) indicated the need for assistance with accommodation than people in the Northern region (8%, n=12) and the Southern Region (16%, n=25).⁴⁶ Furthermore, food is considerably more needed in the Northern Region (83%) than the Central (36%) or Southern Region (52%). As indicated above, in all regions - but most particularly in the South (84%) - cash is mostly needed.

Overall, respondents highlighted the need to consider people with disabilities, older persons, women and children in assistance planning, with tailored support for the needs of these different age, gender and diversity population groups. Moreover, several respondents stressed the absence of a structural and holistic aid response, highlighting the need for organisations to move away from siloed sectoral assistance into more comprehensive assessments of families' needs as a whole.

Coping Mechanisms

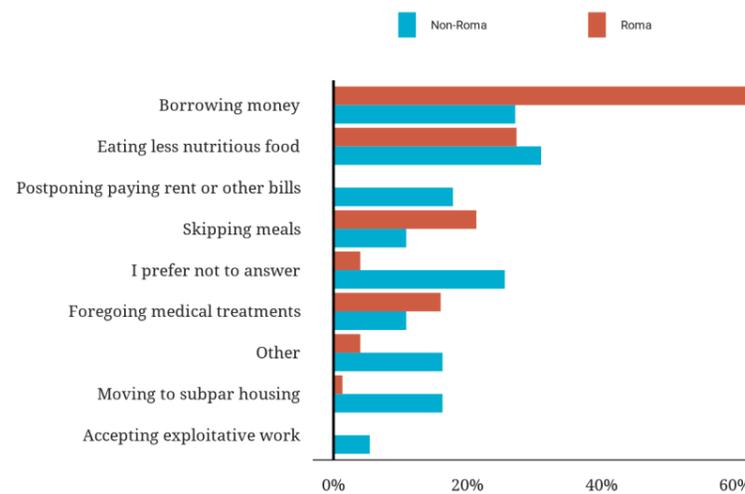
Have you applied any of the following, or other, mechanisms to reduce your overall costs/ to reduce debts?



All respondents excluding Roma (n=1099)

Coping Mechanisms in Moldova

Have you applied any of the following, or other, mechanisms to reduce your overall costs/nto reduce debts?



Multiple answer - Roma (n=150) and non-Roma (n=129) respondents

Coping mechanisms

Respondents across all three countries have selected comparable answer options with regards to coping mechanisms. Eating less nutritious food is reported by the largest single share of respondents in Poland (33%), Romania (30%), and Moldova (32%) and thus seems to be the most commonly applied coping strategy. There are also some differences: more respondents in Poland and Moldova have moved to sub-standard housing in order to reduce their costs compared to those in Romania, and relatively more people in Moldova have resorted to borrowing money.

However, substantial groups of respondents in Romania (35%), Moldova (26%) and Poland (25%) preferred not to answer this question, leaving a gap in our understanding which will require more research.

There are differences between the Roma and non-Roma respondents in terms of coping strategies, with Roma more likely to say they have borrowed money (62 per cent, n=150) to cover costs.

The finding is also in line with the finding that cash-based interventions are mostly needed as humanitarian assistance by Roma (and non-Roma) respondents in Moldova (see section 'Aid and assistance'), and that at least 94 per cent of the Roma respondents in Moldova are not able to cover basic needs (section 'Livelihoods').

“ I am the mother of two children up to 3 years old. They don't take the eldest son to the local kindergarten. If you go to a neighbouring city, there is no financial opportunity, there is no opportunity to work, and there are many people who face this situation. We need food, clothes and shoes for the children.”

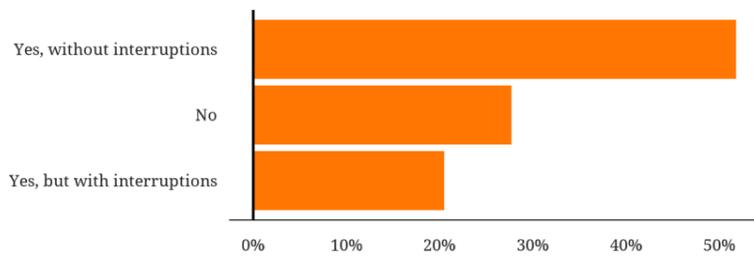
Female respondent, 46-55
Pomerania Region, Poland

Children's access to education

The largest share (48%) of respondents in all three countries indicated that the children in their household (whether their own, or in shared households) were able to attend school without interruptions: 54% in Poland, 46% in Romania, and 47% in Moldova. However, in all three countries, considerable groups also responded that the children in their household had not been able to go to school at all (30%) or with interruptions (20%).

Children's Education

Have your own or the children in your household attended school (remote or in-person) while outside Ukraine?

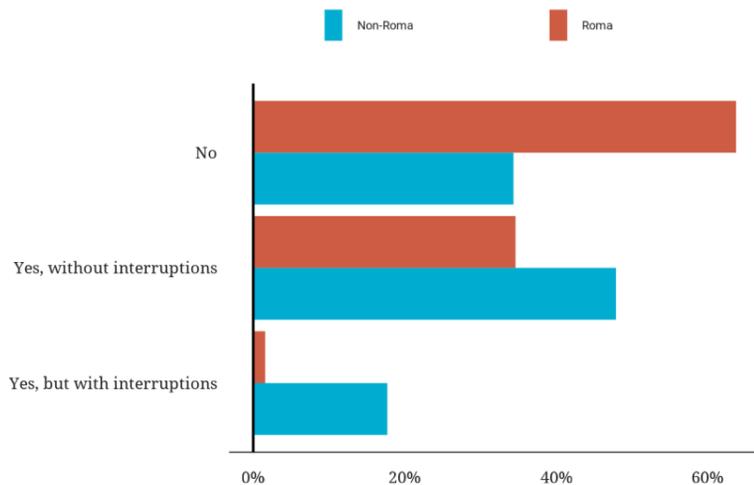


All respondents with children, excluding Roma (n=859)

In Moldova, answers differ greatly between Roma and non-Roma respondents.

Children's Education in Moldova

Have your own or the children in your household attended school (remote or in-person) while outside Ukraine?



Respondents with children in Moldova, Roma (n=127) and non-Roma (n=94)

The majority of the Roma community (64%) reported that the children in their household have not been able to go to school at all since they left Ukraine.

In contrast to what is presented in the box above, 48% of non-Roma respondents indicated that the children in their household have attended schooling without interruptions, leaving a considerable 34% who had not attended at all, and 18% who had, but with interruptions.

Reasons for being out of school

When asked for the reason for why children have not attended school in the host country, the majority of respondents in Poland (86%), Romania (82%), and Moldova (93%) indicate to have 'another reason' or 'I prefer not to say'. It seems that either we did not offer a comprehensive list of answer options (see Figure 18), or that respondents were unwilling to share the reasons with us. Further investigation is necessary to uncover the obstacles preventing children from obtaining education in the host country.

In contrast, nearly all respondents (96%, n=81) of the Roma community in Moldova reported that the main reason is that available schools do not align with their preferences. A briefing paper by Oxfam describes how having the right to access education in theory often does not suffice, and states that Roma refugees need to be informed about their rights and options, as well as receive assistance in overcoming logistical barriers to access in practice. No clear communication lines with authorities, isolation in the Refugee Accommodation Centers, poor internet access and the lack of specialised care for children with disabilities were all indicated as factors contributing to lower enrolment of Roma children in formal education.⁴⁷



Tatjana with her son Miron.

"Everything I do is for my son. I got him away from the war. Now I'm making sure he gets a good education."

Photo: Beate Simarud/NRC

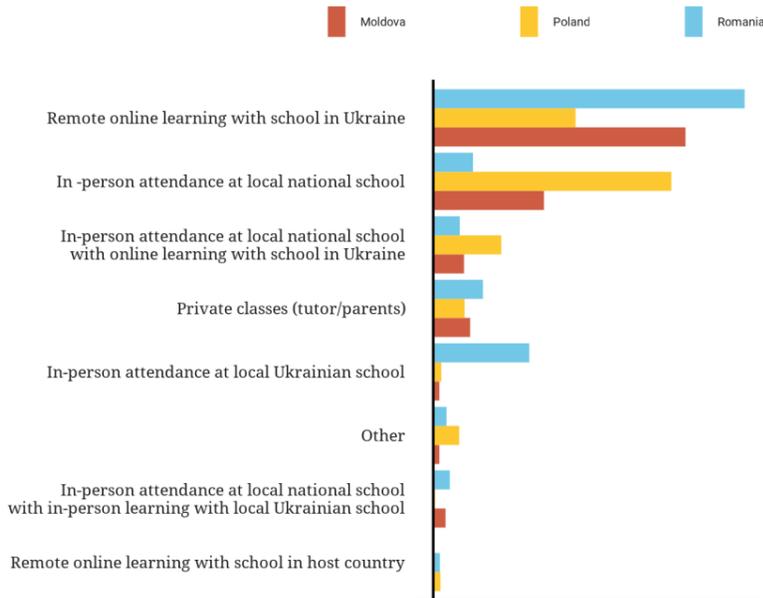
Type of schooling

In Poland the majority of children seemed to have in-person attendance at a local national school (61%), and over one-third indicated that their children are learning remotely with a school in Ukraine.

The large majority of respondents in Romania (81%) indicated that their children are learning remotely with a school in Ukraine.

Schooling type

What type of schooling are they attending?



In Moldova, most respondents reported that their children either only attend remote online learning with a school in Ukraine (65%) or only in-person schooling at a local national school (29%).

In contrast, the majority of Roma respondents indicated that their children follow in-person schooling at a local national school in combination with online learning with a school in Ukraine (76%).

The above findings, including different preferences for type of schooling per host country are in line with other assessments.⁴⁸ However, attending school online could also mean auditing, which means that children may follow the curriculum online but will not receive accreditation at the end of the school year. The Ministry of Education in Romania reported in January 2023, 4361 Ukrainian students were registered in public schools with 3440 as auditors and 921 as students. In Moldova, there were significantly less students registered but they followed a similar dynamic of auditing rather than being students for accreditation with 1165 registered including 441 students and 724 auditors.⁴⁹ In Poland, 150,000 children from Ukraine are enrolled in Polish schools but there are almost 400,000 registered for the Temporary Protection (PESEL UKR) in Poland, meaning that almost 250,000 children of school age are out of the formal education system in Poland.

Box 7. Difficulties in school for refugee children from Ukraine⁵¹

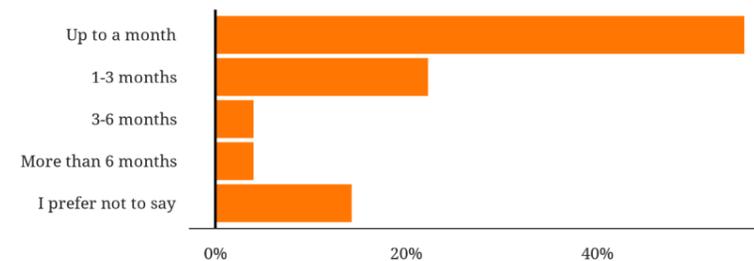
The Centre for Citizenship Education has published some interesting insights into difficulties that Ukrainian children may face in school in Poland. The interviewed students reported feeling isolated, stressed, and struggling with language barriers in their new surroundings. Despite attempts by schools to provide support, including teacher training and language materials, there remains a significant issue with access to course materials and language support. Conflicts between Polish and Ukrainian students were described as occasional, but tensions were noted in statements by Polish students and their parents, and teachers appear to lack the competence to handle such conflicts. The lack of psychological and educational support for Ukrainian students, due to a shortage of specialists who speak Ukrainian or Russian and cultural barriers, is a significant concern. Cultural differences are often overlooked, leading to a lack of interaction and limited participation in parent-teacher meetings due to language barriers.

“We receive all information on schools/registration from Ukrainians in chats. It’s enough. But for less advanced users there is no information/document from authorities, how to act for adaptation in the country and devices in schools, etc.”

Female respondent, 36-45
Nord_Vest, Romania

Education Interruptions

Approximately how long did the interruption/s last in total (or have lasted so far)?



All respondents with children, excluding Roma (n=175)

Duration of school interruptions

For those who reported that their children experienced interruptions in schooling since they had fled Ukraine, the majority of all respondents (55%, n=178) indicated that this happened for no longer than one month.

In Romania, a considerable group of 43% reported that these interruptions lasted between one and three months. In Poland, 20% of respondents (n=119) indicated they prefer not to answer this question.⁵⁰

A warm welcome?

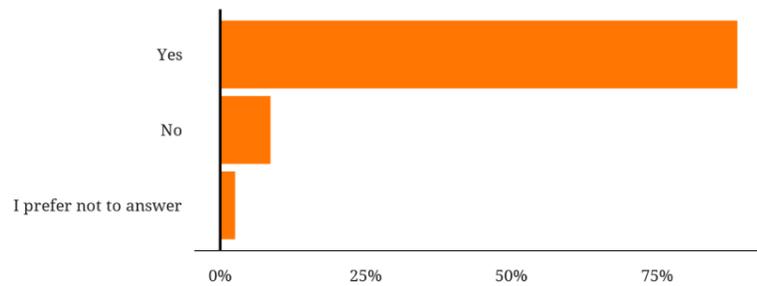
Feeling safe

The large majority of respondents (89%) across the three countries indicated feeling safe in their current host country, which reiterates NRC's previous study among refugees from Ukraine.⁵²

However, across the three countries, most respondents (68%) reported being preoccupied with (traumatising) events in Ukraine as the main reason for not feeling safe. Reasons such as being isolated from friends and family (44%), an unwelcome or hostile atmosphere in the host community (41%), and being worried about the current status in the host country and being forced to return (42%) were also indicated at considerable rates.

Feeling Safe

Have you generally felt safe in your host country?



All respondents, excluding Roma (n=1053)

In Moldova, 16% of non-Roma respondents indicated not feeling safe, which is higher than the group of Roma respondents (3%). The large majority of this subset of non-Roma respondents (80%, n=20) also indicated being preoccupied with (traumatising) events in Ukraine as the main reason, followed by being worried about the current status in the host country and the prospect of forced return (35%). As 40% also indicated there were other, non-specified, reasons, it seems that further conversations are needed to understand all reasons for which refugees from Ukraine might not feel safe.

“There is a friendly attitude from the Poles, and their government. In fact, Ukrainians were equated with Polish citizens in terms of rights and social support. It's very nice, I feel safe, and that's the main thing.”

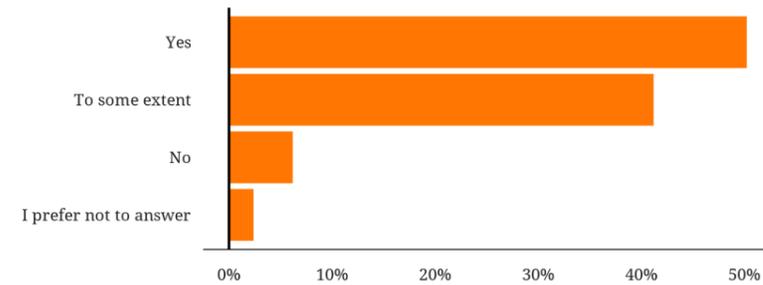
Female respondent, 26-35, Pomerania, Poland

Feeling accepted

While the majority of respondents in Romania and Moldova indicated they feel accepted in their host countries, the largest single group of people currently staying in Poland indicated that they feel accepted only to a certain extent.

Feeling Accepted

Do you generally feel accepted in your host country?

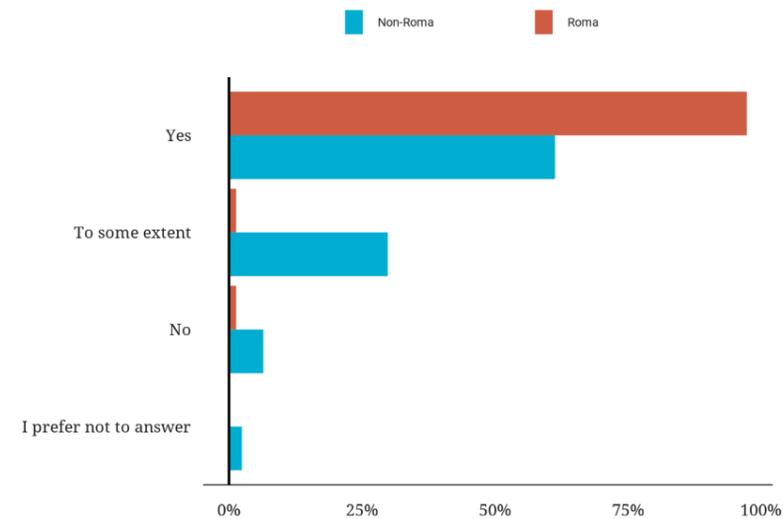


All respondents, excluding Roma (n=1051)

In Moldova, non-Roma people seem to feel less accepted than Roma. More non-Roma indicated that they only feel accepted to some extent (30%), than Roma respondents (1%).

Feeling Accepted in Moldova

Do you generally feel accepted in your host country?



Respondents in Moldova, Roma (n=150) and non-Roma (n=124)

Two-thirds of all respondents that did not, or only to a certain extent, feel accepted, explain how language barriers, financial difficulties, and negative attitudes from local residents are major factors contributing to not feeling accepted. Respondents voicing the first two concerns, are

in many cases also providing examples of challenges in finding (decent) work, as well as mismatches on the labour market and other suboptimal employment conditions. The following quotes provide further insight into these issues.

“The legislation is designed for local residents. I need employment, but refugees do not have any rights. Vocational training needs to be paid yourself (...) even in centres of assistance they will refuse to promote employment.”

Male respondent, 46 - 55,
Kuyavia - Pomerania, Poland

“There are good people here. But we are foreigners. We get the impression that they are already tired. Because there are many [Ukrainians] here. And people are different. It lasts for a long time (the stay of such a large group of Ukrainians). I understand them.”

Female respondent, 36-45
Pomerania, Poland

Respondents frequently voiced the fatigue and fear that comes with the long-term stay outside of Ukraine, when describing the negative attitudes from local residents:

Among the reasons cited for feeling accepted, respondents mentioned support from the local population, government, and international organisations. Additionally, being able to speak the same language is often reported as being crucial for feelings of acceptance.

“I see and appreciate the amount of effort that the country spends to support the Ukrainians who are temporarily here.”

Female respondent, 36-45,
Central Region, Moldova



Olena and Sylwia were colleagues before the war. The company they both work for has sponsored a temporary flat for Olena and her mother for two months, while Sylwia is going out of the way to make them feel at home.

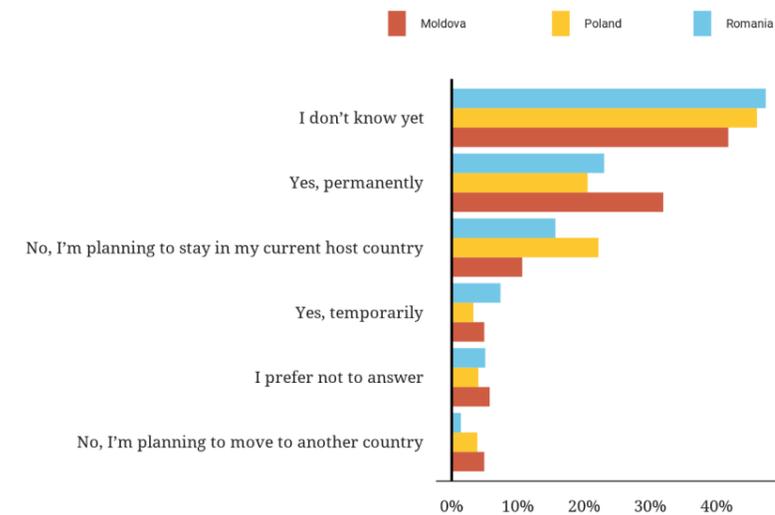
Photo: Ingebjørg Kårstad/Norwegian Refugee Council

3.3 Return intentions

In all three countries the largest share of respondents do not know yet whether they want to return to Ukraine, while approximately one-fifth of people plan to go back permanently in the coming 12 months.⁵³

Return plans

Are you planning to return to Ukraine within the next year?



Respondents in Poland (n=672), Romania (n=217), Moldova (non-Roma, n=122)

Of those respondents who indicated they are planning to return in the coming year, the largest single groups of respondents in Poland (33%), Romania (45%), and Moldova (39%) are unsure about when exactly. Particularly in Moldova, there is a considerable group of respondents (32%) that reported plans to go back within 3-6 months.

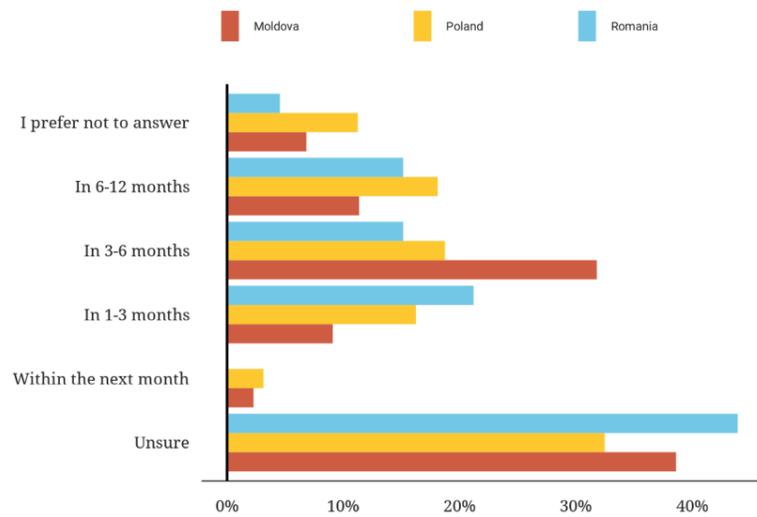
Potential factors correlated with return intentions

Ninety percent (n=227) of the (non-Roma) respondents of all three countries who want to return permanently feel safe in their current host country; 50% feel accepted. These are similar rates compared to people with no intentions to return, hence, there does not seem to be a correlation between feeling safe and accepted on the one hand, and returning on the other. This is in line with other research, suggesting that pull factors play a more prominent role in people's decision to return.

When disaggregating by age, the data show that relatively more people aged above 65 are planning to go back permanently (47%, n=45) than people from other age brackets (around 20%). Also, fewer people in the oldest age bracket (24%) indicate that they don't know yet whether they want to return in the year following the survey than any of the other age brackets (around 45%).

Timing the return

When do you plan to return to Ukraine?



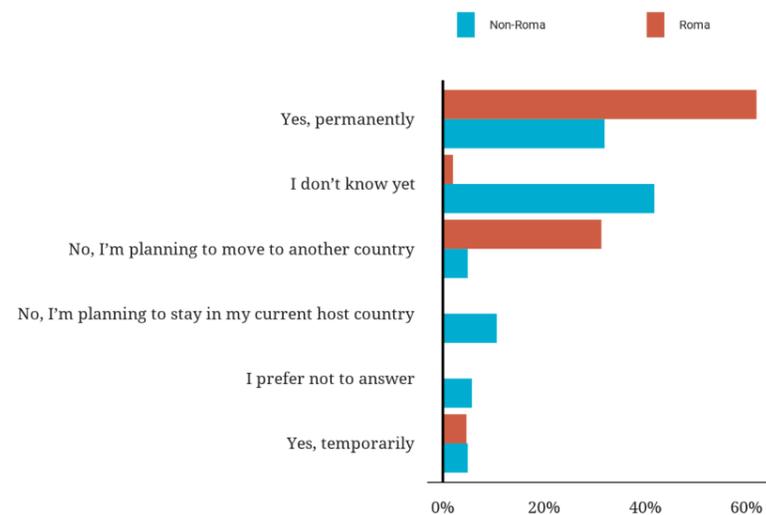
Respondents in Poland (n=672), Romania (n=217), Moldova (non-Roma, n=122)

Return intentions of Roma population in Moldova

In contrast with the respondents in all three countries, a majority of Roma respondents (62%) plan to go back permanently to Ukraine in the coming year. This finding exceeds the numbers shared in the latest UNHCR Intentions Survey, which found that 16% of refugees from Ukraine planned to go back home, and 12% of refugees in Moldova.⁵⁴

Return plans in Moldova

Are you planning to return to Ukraine within the next year?



Respondents in Moldova, Roma (n=150), non-Roma (n=122)

Also, a considerable number of the Roma community plan to move to another country, more than any other group of respondents. The destinations they mention are primarily as follows: Germany, Canada, Belgium, Norway, the Netherlands, and France.

Sixty percent of the Roma respondents in Moldova plan to go back within the next month, compared with only 2% of non-Roma, who tend to be more unsure about the timeframe in which they will return.

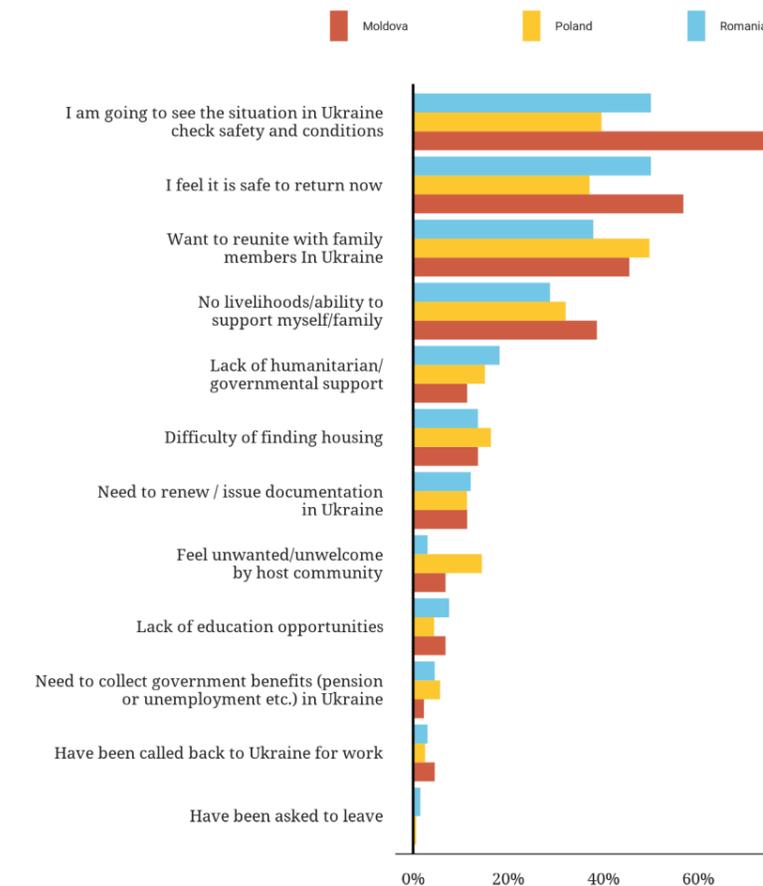
Reasons for return to Ukraine

Respondents from Poland and Romania indicated 'checking safety and conditions in Ukraine', 'I feel it is safe to return now', and 'reuniting with friends and family'⁵⁵ at almost equal rates, while most respondents from Moldova indicated the former option.

Findings from the UNHCR Intentions Survey highlight that improved safety and security conditions in Ukraine would help the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian respondents (91%) in making the decision on whether to return or not, followed by 'confidence in finding work opportunities'.⁵⁶

Reasons for return

What will be your main reason to return to Ukraine?



Multiple answers, respondents in Poland (n=159), Romania (n=66), Moldova (non-Roma, n=44)

In Moldova, non-Roma respondents indicated significantly more often (57%) than Roma respondents (1%) that it feels safe to return now as well as that they want to reunite with friends and family (46% vs 4%). In contrast, Roma respondents' main reasons for returning are the intention to check safety conditions in Ukraine (56%), and the lack of ability to support themselves and their family (35%). The latter is in line with other findings about the socio-economic conditions of the Roma community in Moldova.

Reasons to return in Moldova

What will be your main reason to return to Ukraine?



Respondents in Moldova, Roma (n=100) and non-Roma (n=44)



A mother and daughter in a Refugee Accommodation Center in Glodeni city, in the north of Moldova. Many refugees in this center are from the Roma community.

Photo: Michele Carezis/NRC

5. Recommendations

To the European Union

- Ensure member states fulfil commitments on the provision of rights enabled through the Temporary Protection Directive, particularly related to access to housing, education and livelihoods.
- Support existing ministries, agencies and civil society, where there is considerable expertise on inclusion and social cohesion, to be mobilised and rapidly scaled up, including:
 - Reinforcement of staffing in the units within the European Commission leading on the inclusion of refugees from Ukraine at DG Home and DG Employment and Social Affairs.
 - The activation of inclusion-related policy and coordination mechanisms (e.g., European Integration Network) including coordination with the private sector (e.g., European Partnership for Integration).
- Monitor and publicly report on Member States compliance with Council Implementing Decisions with regards to refugees from Ukraine in the EU.
- Support and enable EU Member States to start developing strategies for transitioning out of the Temporary Protection system. This could include:
 - Building refugee inclusion into short and medium-term planning and funding for housing, education and labour markets,
 - Developing legal frameworks and pathways for local integration as a durable solution for refugees who may not wish to return to Ukraine in the short to medium term.

To the international community and refugee hosting countries

On inclusion:

- Host governments should continue to prioritise and deepen the inclusion and integration of refugees. Beyond temporary protection, inclusion and integration will be achieved through the fulfilment of rights and access to services.
- Temporary humanitarian aid should be separated from the means-tested benefits. Basic government benefits should not be means tested for the most vulnerable refugees.
- Ensure psychosocial support is factored into pathways for social and economic integration. Experiences of violence in Ukraine, the displacement journey and new stresses in host countries can be mitigated through targeted support to improve outcomes for refugee integration.
- Work with humanitarian actors to develop a targeted approach which can complement and support national social protection schemes in the short and medium term. Donors should commit to long term funding of social protection for refugees, as well as ongoing targeted humanitarian assistance to fill gaps until refugees are fully integrated.
- International donors should fund and support national NGOs as critical actors providing sustainable, appropriate, timely responses. This

requires systematically incorporating local NGOs into the humanitarian response structure; and supporting (politically and financially) the role of local NGOs to hold their governments to account.

- Fund and support cross-border legal assistance programming to assist refugees with legal documentation needs in host countries without having to return to Ukraine to do so.

On livelihoods and social protection

- Host governments and donors should review social protection schemes and, if necessary, adapt them to ensure a sustainable transition from humanitarian cash assistance to national social assistance programmes for refugees.
- Governments should facilitate access and validation of certificates and diplomas from Ukraine, including referrals to corresponding Ministries. Support and assist refugees to submit and pay for fees related to translation and validation of diplomas and other needed documentation. Fast track validation of professional certificates.
- Host governments to consider approaches based on Ukrainians retaining their Ukrainian assets and social protection payments, while in forced displacement, to cushion transitioning into new countries.

On education:

- Host governments and donors should plan for and appropriately resource the inclusion of all refugee children from Ukraine into national school and education systems, through policy, budgetary allocation and infrastructure development. Solutions should not be temporary, but should instead guarantee adequate funding for local education authorities and be inclusive of different groups of Ukrainian students. This should include (among other measures):
 - Support and resources to allow all refugee children to access and participate in intensive language courses.
 - Provision of dedicated and tailored ‘catch up’ classes to support children to properly integrate and engage with national curriculums.
 - Equipping teachers with tools on how to work with students whose learning capacities are limited because of war and conflict-induced stress and trauma.
 - Ensuring children have access to integrated psycho-social support in classroom settings to decrease war and conflict-induced stress and trauma.
- Host governments should work closely with relevant education authorities, including the Ministry of Education in Ukraine, to ensure learning undertaken in host countries is recognised, with clear pathways for children who have studied in national systems for potential return and transfer to education systems in Ukraine.

On housing:

- Existing shelters, including collective centres, should continue to be maintained, adhere to minimum standards for shelter and made available to refugee populations for as long as is needed free of charge.

- As a priority, host country governments should work to provide viable, adequate and sustainable alternative housing solutions to Ukrainians living in collective shelters.
- Donors and host governments should plan for the longer-term creation of additional affordable housing, increased number and capacity of social renting agencies, and enhanced coordination and communication with all national authorities.

To humanitarian actors, including UN, NGOs and civil society

- Humanitarian and development actors should coordinate and align support for refugees to overcome financial barriers in securing accommodation through direct cash assistance to support first and last month’s rent and security deposits for accommodation.
- Ensure the structural inclusion of marginalised subgroups of refugee populations in needs assessments, research efforts, and policy debates, such as displaced Roma, people with disabilities, and older persons.
- Donors should support and fund proactive adjustments to cash transfers to ensure they are updated in line with inflation. Humanitarian cash actors should ensure the provision of an updated and appropriate basket of goods and services, in line with fluctuating market rates.
- Shift from provision of multi-purpose cash assistance to a more specific approach which identifies and fills the gaps in government social assistance. This may mean providing sector-specific support for different individuals with particular needs, such as topping up the gap between government cash transfers and shortfalls in rent. Cash actors must coordinate with other humanitarian sectors to link cash transfers to other transfers and services such as referrals, accommodation, employment and protection (social) services whether through direct provision or referrals.

Endnotes

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13. The remaining 1% preferred not to disclose their gender or identified with another gender.
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 28. No accurate answers were captured for this question regarding Moldova due to a misinterpretation of the answer choices. It seems that the concepts of asylum and temporary protection were mistaken. As a result, we have not included these responses. we have not included these responses.
 29. According to the Amendment, social assistance including accommodation and full board, to which Ukrainian citizens covered by the Special-purpose Act are entitled, shall be provided for no longer than 120 days from the date of entry to Poland. After 120 days, assistance can be provided if the Ukrainian citizen (with a PESEL number) pays 50% of the cost of this assistance in advance, not more than PLN 40 per person per day. After 180 days from the date of first entry of a Ukrainian citizen, assistance may be provided if 75% of the costs of this assistance are covered, not more than PLN 60 per person per day. The obligation to bear the costs will not apply: persons with disabilities and persons caring for them, persons who



Tatjana and Mirion in their room in Poland.

Photo: Beate Simarud/NRC

- are 60 (women) or 65 (men) years of age or older, pregnant women, persons raising a child up to the age of 12 months, persons with single custody of more than two children, minors and temporary guardians of minors who arrived in Poland without a factual guardian or who were placed in Ukrainian foster care, others who are in a difficult situation that prevents them from contributing to the cost of assistance. See also, European Commission, Poland: New regulation to promote the social activation of people displaced from Ukraine, 30 November 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/poland-new-regulation-promote-social-activation-people-displaced-ukraine_en
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