

INTER-AGENCY MULTI-SECTORAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY¹

The inter-agency Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) in Bulgaria was conducted from December 2022 to January 2023 to understand the priority needs in each of the key sectors of Protection, Education, Basic Needs, Livelihoods and Socio-Economic Inclusion, as well as Health and Nutrition. A sample size of 1,311 was surveyed through face-to-face interviews in four different sub-samples: those accommodated in state programs, those residing in private accommodations, those accessing services in the Blue Dot Hubs, and those whose children are enrolled in schools in Bulgaria. The findings of the MSNA will inform the interventions of inter-agency and Refugee Response Plan partners for the Ukraine Situation.

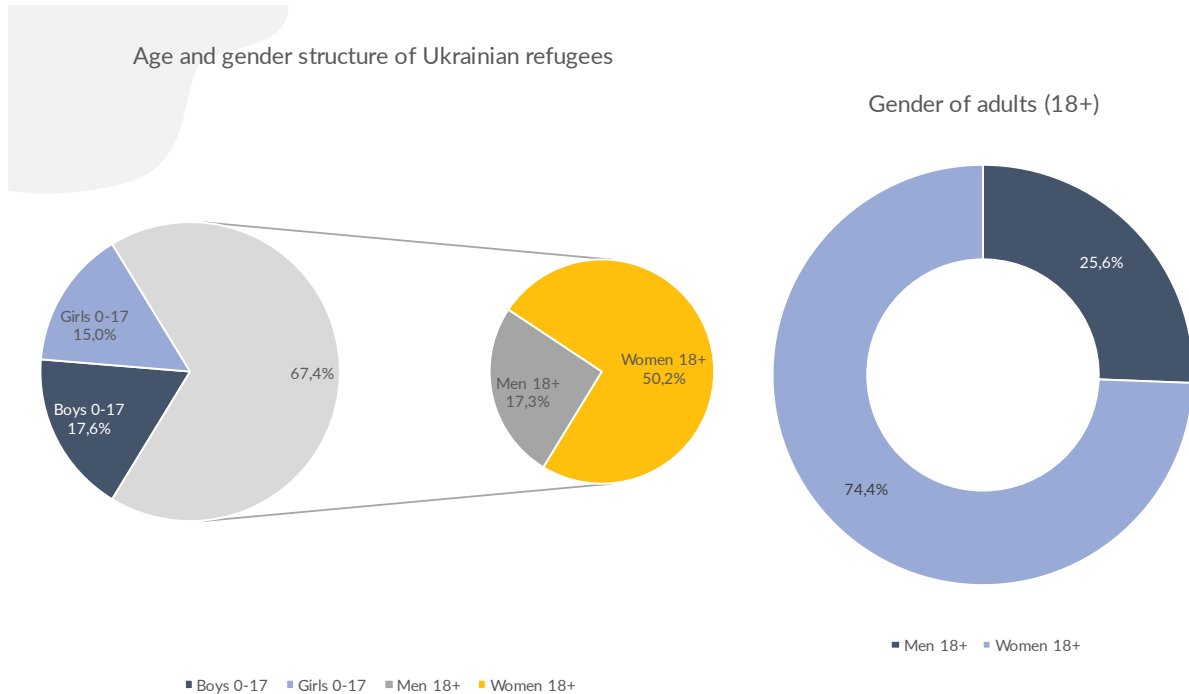
Demographic profile

The average household of Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria is composed of 2.53 people. 53% of households have at least one child and 32.6% of households have more than one child. The family composition is dominated by single women or single elderly people²:

- Single mothers – 28.1% (17.4% single mothers with minors, 3.7% single mothers with minors and teenagers and 7% single mothers with teenagers)
- Single women without children – 21.7%
- Single elderly (above 60) – 15.8%
- Nuclear family – 12%
- Adults (a man and a woman) without children – 10%
- Elderly couple without children – 7.7%
- Extended family (parents, grandparents, and child/children) – 8.2%
- Elderly (60+) persons with children – 2.3%
- Elderly and middle-aged persons (no children) – 7.0%
- More than one woman and child/children – 4.8%

¹ The survey among Ukrainian refugees was conducted between 21 December 2022 – 18 January 2023 with face-to-face interviews with tablets. Total sample size: 1,311; margin of error: $\pm 2.959\%$; Subsamples by recruitment channel: state program – 1,005, blue dots – 153, private accommodation – 267, schools – 75. Some of the subsamples overlap, but the total sample size is 1,311.

² Some groups can overlap and thus the sum of percentages is more than a hundred.



Protection

Around 98% of Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria are granted temporary protection status, while approximately 1% are with refugee status and the other 1% with humanitarian status.

The main concerns adults share regarding their children in the area where they are staying are: risk of losing accommodation (3.3%), deteriorating mental health (2.9%), risk of unhealthy food (2.7%), vulnerability to physical violence (1.3%) and vulnerability to psychological violence (0.8%). Children bullied at school or in other places are around 3-5% of all Ukrainian children.

Access to services: The level of awareness regarding specialized gender-based violence services is around 15% of those surveyed. 1.5% of those surveyed were aware of a Ukrainian community member who experienced or felt at risk of gender-based violence or abuse in Bulgaria. Youth ages 18-24 are less informed of where to access services: only 10% mentioned that they know where they could access specialized services (legal, medical, psychosocial support, shelter). Around 22% answered that they know where to complain if someone in their community experiences sexual abuse or exploitation.

Livelihoods and Socio-Economic Inclusion

The proportion of people working in paid jobs varies in each sample group. In total, 43% of parents whose children go to school work (in Bulgaria, remotely in Ukraine or remotely in another country); 32% of persons who are accommodated in private accommodation and about 10% of persons who are in government accommodation schemes report being employed at any paid job. The highest share of working/employed refugees in Bulgaria is among persons who are in private accommodations (16%) and those whose children are enrolled in a Bulgarian school (21%), while it is only 2.9% of those in government accommodation schemes. The reason for these results is

also that people above 60 and those with the status of pensioners are higher proportion among those accommodated in government schemes compared to the other subsamples.

The main reasons cited for people not working are lack of work available and because they need to take care of children. The language barrier and diploma recognition are also very important factors mentioned by Ukrainian refugees.

The main income sources for households are humanitarian assistance (55%) and social benefits from the Bulgarian government (13%) and from the Ukrainian government (12%). Less than 5% of those living in state recreational facilities or hotels receive income from employment, while among those in private accommodation, 28% of the households receive employment income. Households who don't have any income are around 21.4%.

The main deprivations of households are related to **food, healthcare, essential non-food items, transportation, and communications**. The subsamples differ on what items refugees are not able to obtain as those who are in state and government bases and hotels do not have issues with **utilities and rent**, while these are serious challenges for people who are in private accommodations. People in state and government bases and hotels more often mention transport, while other point out education as something they are not able to afford.

Different needs and priorities are observed among the working and non-working Ukrainian refugees. While working refugees need **language courses and support with transport**, those who do not work need **healthcare, medication and other basic items** (sanitation, clothes, etc.).

Top 12 expenditures refugees reported being unable to obtain over the last 30 days (or since arrival in Bulgaria if this is less than 30 days)	Working	Not working
Cash / vouchers	63.4%	74.4%
Healthcare services	31.0%	44.2%
Food	39.0%	41.1%
Medicines	18.8%	36.3%
Winter clothes	7.0%	15.2%
Sanitation and hygiene products	10.3%	14.4%
Accommodation	13.6%	13.2%
Employment support	11.3%	12.1%
Language courses	18.8%	8.1%
Clothes	9.4%	7.3%
Communication (phone or internet access)	2.8%	3.7%
Support with transport	7.0%	3.0%

In cases of lack of food or lack of money, the main source of relief are savings and reduction of non-essential non-food expenditures. Around 30% of Ukrainian refugees did not have to use any of these coping mechanisms. More home cooked food is more often an option for those who are in private accommodations (56%) while in hotels and state recreational facilities only 35% can use this option. For them less preferred food and reduced quantity is mentioned more often.

Education

The estimation of Ukrainian children enrolled in Bulgarian school is between 14% and 25% depending on the different base and source of information considered. The main reasons for children not being enrolled is because they are attending online classes in Ukraine and due to the language barrier.

What are the reasons your child does not attend kindergarten/school in Bulgaria?

*All answers above 5%

Those in State program		Those in Private accommodation	
Child is attending online classes in Ukraine	82.1%	Child is attending online classes in Ukraine	77.9%
Language barrier	23.8%	Language barrier	18.2%
No slots in the school to attend	7.3%	I do not want to put additional burden on child(ren)	9.1%
Lack of schools in accessible distance	6.7%	I do not want my child to lose one academic year	6.5%

The support that could help parents to enroll their children in school vary among the sub-samples. For those accommodated in the state program, the main support needed is internet, laptops, Bulgarian language classes and school supplies. For those already in school and households living in private accommodation, the main support needed is language classes. School supplies or equipment (bags, pencils, uniforms) are mostly needed for those who are already in school.

Basic Needs

The main issues related to living conditions are food, heating, space and living conditions.

Urgent needs (all mentioned first+ second+ third)

	State program	Blue dot	Private accommodation	School
Cash / vouchers	74.8%	70.2%	76.0%	93.3%
Healthcare services	45.5%	39.9%	39.3%	29.3%
Food	41.9%	54.8%	44.8%	53.7%
Medicines	38.7%	33.6%	21.4%	4.8%
Winter clothes	16.6%	10.1%	8.1%	6.1%
Sanitation and hygiene products	16.5%	8.6%	10.7%	3.2%
Accommodation	13.6%	11.6%	18.2%	10.8%

Employment support	10.3%	14.2%	22.1%	36.5%
Clothes	9.6%	4.2%	5.2%	3.1%
Language courses	9.1%	10.7%	17.2%	38.3%

Food, healthcare and medicine are the main non-cash necessity mentioned by the majority of Ukrainian refugees. These are particularly important for elderly people who have a chronic disease. The most integrated group – those whose children are in school would prefer to be supported also with language courses and employment support.

Health

Access to a personal physician

The proportion of individuals who have access to a General Practitioner varies across sub-populations. Ukrainian refugees whose children study in Bulgarian schools most often have a general practitioner in Bulgaria (68%). About half of those accommodated in private accommodation (51.1%) also have their own personal physician. Those accommodated in a state or municipal recreational facility were the least likely to already use the services of a general practitioner in Bulgaria (21.9%).

84% of Ukrainian refugees in the country, who do not have a personal doctor, have not researched how they can register with a general practitioner.

Ukrainian refugees with children studying in Bulgarian schools, similar to the stronger interest they have in general practitioners, use the services of pediatricians in the country much more often than the rest (79.5%).

Getting health care in case of a health problem

Approximately every second Ukrainian citizen in Bulgaria reports that a family member has sought access to health services in the past month. This happened most often to persons whose children study in Bulgarian schools (57.3%). The health problems due to which Ukrainian refugees sought health care were most often related to the need for preventive consultation or examination, as well as chronic diseases.

It is observed, however, that Ukrainian refugees whose children study in Bulgaria report at lower rates that their relatives benefited from preventive consultations at the expense of more frequent consultations in connection with acute diseases (fever, diarrhea, cough, etc.).

Another trend is the more frequent cases in which relatives of those accommodated in state or municipal recreational facilities sought counseling or medication for chronic diseases (41.9%). They are 10 percentage points more than the relatives of those interviewed in Blue Dot centers who needed this type of health support and 20 percentage points more than the relatives of those placed in private homes who sought the same health support. Relatives of those accommodated in state and municipal bases more often than the others also needed laboratory tests and dental services. The main reason for these differences is the age of the persons in the different places of accommodation – refugees who are in private accommodation are younger and with a higher

economic status, while those in the state bases are more often elderly people (over 60 year) or persons of lower economic status.

Most Ukrainian refugees received the necessary health care they needed. The main reason why Ukrainian refugees did not receive health care on the territory of Bulgaria is the **inability to pay the fees for hospital treatment** (40.7%). Ukrainian refugees also often indicate that they **did not know where to seek health care** (35.8%). Nearly 27% had problems with **the language barrier**, and 21.1% were too far away from the health institution they were supposed to visit. Just over 15% of Ukrainian refugees said that the time they had to wait to receive the service was too long. Refugees were relatively less likely to be hindered by unavailability of needed medicines (9.8%) or refusal by a service provider (8.9%). Lack of trust in local health care providers (4.1%) and lack of time (1.6%) were reported least frequently. 3.3% of respondents reported opting not to seek healthcare and waiting for the problem to resolve itself.

Mental health and mental care

Surveyed Ukrainian refugees report high levels of stress, negatively affecting the daily functionality of at least one person. Parents of children who study in the country much more often declare the presence of anxiety or strong stress for them or their family members.

Most Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria believe that they cannot get professional support for their psychological health. This opinion is most widespread among parents who have already enrolled their children in Bulgarian schools (78.4%). Just over 67% of those accommodated in a state or municipal recreational facility also support this statement.

The main reason why Ukrainian refugees in the country do not receive psychological and psychosocial support is that **they do not know where to get it** (63.1%), as well as the **language barrier** (45.1%). Affordability and distance are also issues for 36.4% and 27.5%.

Physical disabilities

The households in which there are persons with serious difficulties are as follows:

- Households with persons who have a serious visual impairment - 0.4%
- Households with persons who are unable to walk or climb stairs - 0.3%
- Households with persons who are unable to perform self-care tasks - 0.3%
- Households with persons who have difficulty communicating or understanding speech in their own language - 2.3%
- Households with persons who have serious difficulties related to memory - 2.6%

Social benefits for persons with disabilities

Ukrainian refugees who receive social benefits due to disability are 8.4%. Of those who do not receive disability benefits, about 6.5% have applied for and attempted to receive such funding.

Lack of information is the main reason why Ukrainian citizens who have received protection in the country have not applied for the opportunity to receive social assistance for people with disabilities.