

Rapid Winterization Assessment

Due to the international armed conflict that started on 24 February in Ukraine, **more than 5.2 million refugees have crossed the border to Romania, with more than 80.000 remaining in Romania as of 31 December 2023.**

In order to better identify the winter needs of refugees living in Romania and potential negative effects of the cold season, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), in collaboration with the Centre for Comparative Study of Migration (CSCM) and Save the Children Romania, has updated and rolled out the Rapid Winterization assessment conducted in 2022 ([refer to link](#)), to gain a deeper understanding of the situation. This process was further supported by the Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR) through survey dissemination and data collection.

This document presents the findings of the Rapid Winterization Assessment covering the demographics and vulnerabilities, information on refugees' income and expenditure, type of accommodation and heating, and lastly the household needs in terms of core relief items.

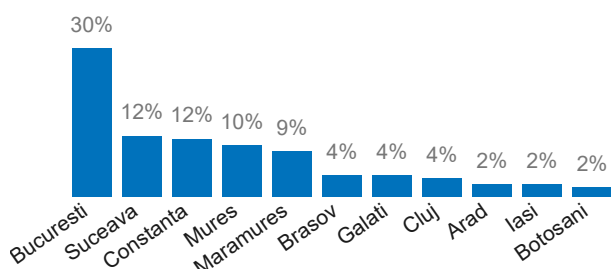
Methodology - During 1 November and 14 December, UNHCR, Save the Children Romania and PATRIR have collected data from refugees via a self-filling form sent by text message (SMS) or e-mail. The sample of 165 households was selected through two methods, random and convenience sampling. The results of this assessments should be regarded indicative only to the people registered with the above mentioned organization for various types of assistance. and should not be extrapolated to the entire population of refugees from Ukraine living in Romania at the moment.

When interpreting these data, it is important to take into consideration the fact that some delays occurred in the disbursement of the government assistance for housing and food during the time of the data collection.

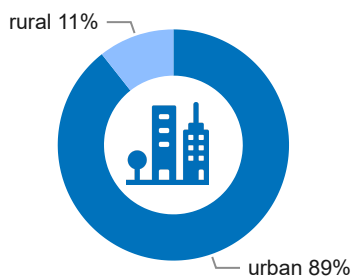
Demographics and vulnerabilities

In the first part of the assessment, the respondents were asked to indicate briefly some demographic aspects and information related to their household. As this part is covered in depths by the [Protection Profiling and Monitoring](#) exercise, the scope of this section was mainly to corroborate the information and validate the diversity of the sample.

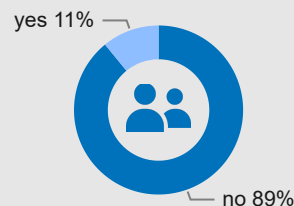
Geographical Dispersion



Area type



Are there any other families/persons living in your quarters?



Average reported household* size

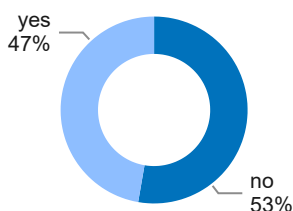
3.35

*household is defined as a group of people that live under the same roof, share expenses and food.

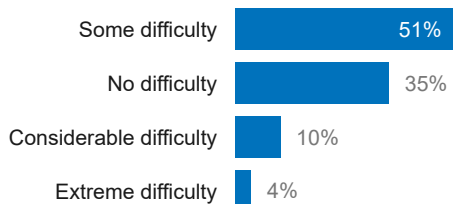
Without ensuring the representativeness of the sample, the assessment aligns with previous data regarding the Ukrainian refugee population in Romania in terms of geographical dispersion. Approximately one third of the population is located in **Bucharest (30%)**, followed by **Suceava and Constanta (12%)**, and **Mureș, Maramureș, Brasov, Galați, Cluj, and Arad**, consistent with UNHCR's earlier estimations. Eleven percent of the respondents indicated they live in rural areas, while the large majority (89%) resides in cities.

Regarding the average household size, the assessment indicates a higher number compared to the 2.5 - 3 average reported in other assessments. This is due to the fact that respondents were asked whether they live with other people (besides their family) in the accommodation, and 1 in 10 responded positively.

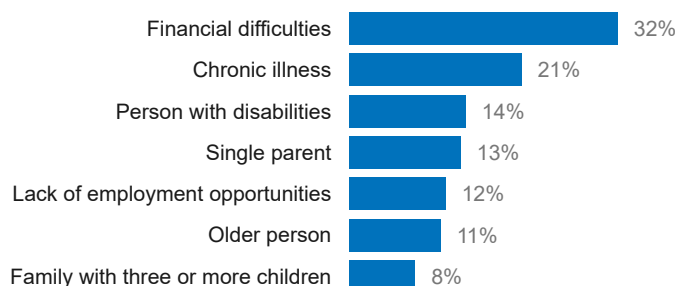
Member of household requiring specific attention



Anticipation of difficulties for school attendance and related costs during winter



Special Conditions - Vulnerabilities



In terms of vulnerabilities, half of the respondents reported that they or one member of their family/household are in a situation that requires specific attention. Among the top situations reported, almost 1 in 3 mentioned financial difficulties, 1 in 5 chronic illness, and others indicated having a family member with disabilities or being a single parent. Additionally, two-thirds of the respondents anticipate difficulties regarding school attendance and related costs during the winter.

Expenditure of income

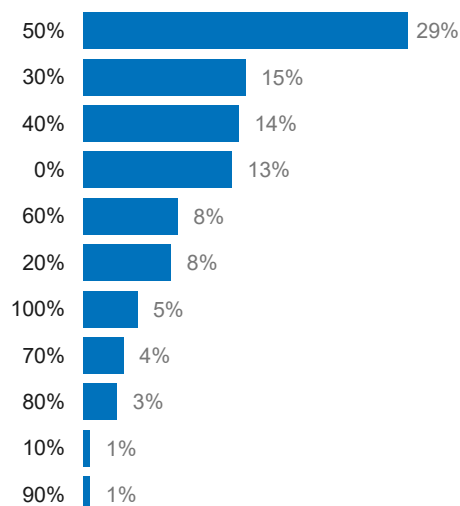
In this next section, the survey evaluates the monthly income of refugee households in RON (Romanian Leu), while also examining the percentage of monthly expenditure across seven categories: Rent, Food, Utilities, Non-food items, Medical expenses, Children's Education, and Other. The charts below illustrate how respondents allocated their income across these expenditure categories, with the value representing the percentage of people who chose each particular option.



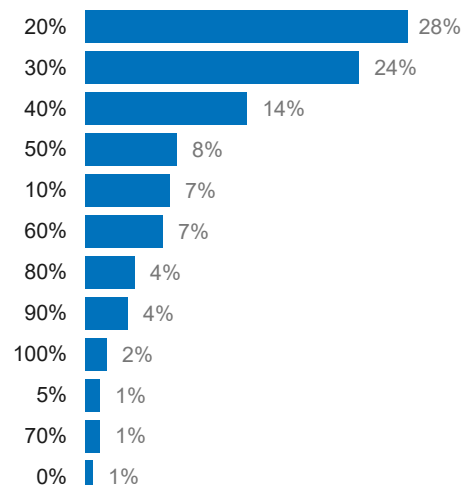
2,757.15

Average of monthly household budget expressed in RON (lei)

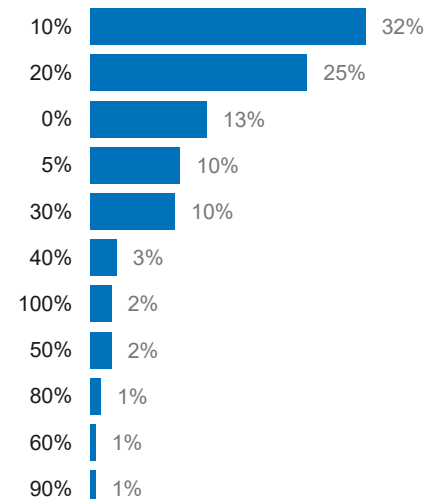
1. Rent



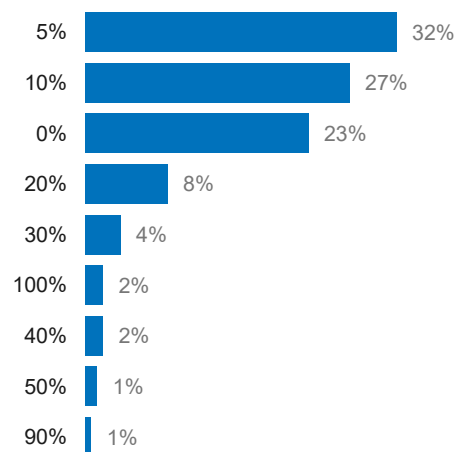
2. Food



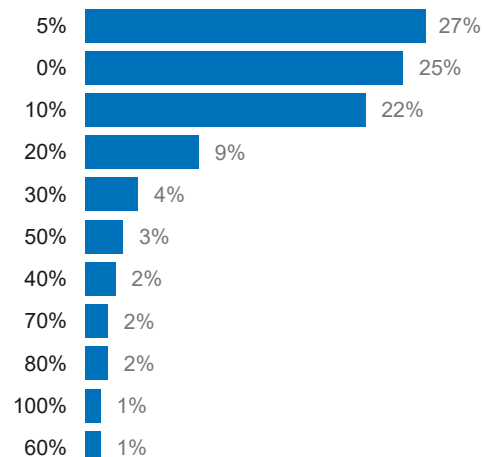
3. Utilities



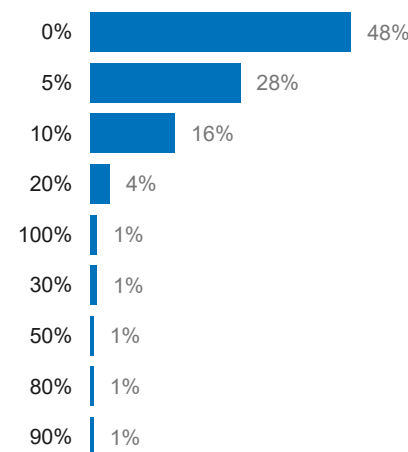
4. Non Food items



5. Medical expenses



6. Children education expenses



The charts above indicate the sectors with the most expenditures. As it can be observed, the sectors for which the refugees spend most of their monthly income are:

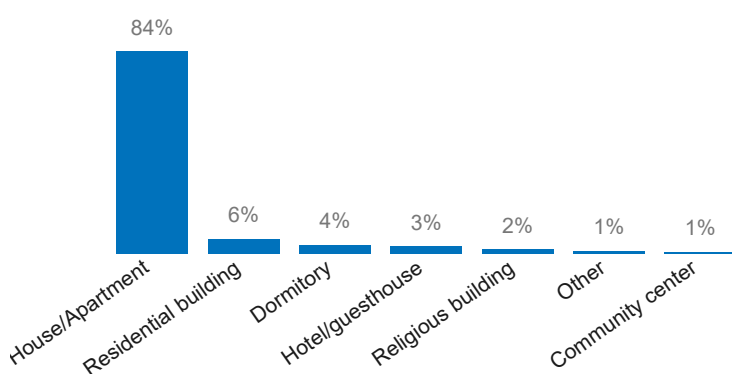
- Rent** - Almost one in three refugees spends half of their income on paying the rent and another 21% more than half, while another third use 30-40% of the income for this expenditure, representing the most important cost category.
- Food** - Half of the respondents reported spending between 20 and 30% of their income on food items. Noteworthy is that 11% reported spending over 70% or even their entire their monthly budget.
- Utilities** - The great majority (80%) spend up to 20% on payment for utilities, while about 15% spend between 30% and 50% of their income on this category.
- Non-food items** - (such as hygiene products, clothing and other consumable household items). More than half of the surveyed refugees reported allocating up to 10% of their income to non-food items. Noteworthy, about 1 in 4 respondents allocate no budget for non-food items.

5. **Medical expenses** - Almost 3 in 4 respondents reported up to 10% of their income allocated for medical expenses, while 1 in 10 spends 20% of the income for such products or services
6. **Children education expenses** - Half of the respondents reported no such expenses, while 4 out of 10 allocate up to 10% for this category.
7. **Other** - Two-thirds of the refugees allocate between 5 and 10% of their budget on other expenses, such as transportation, communications, internet.

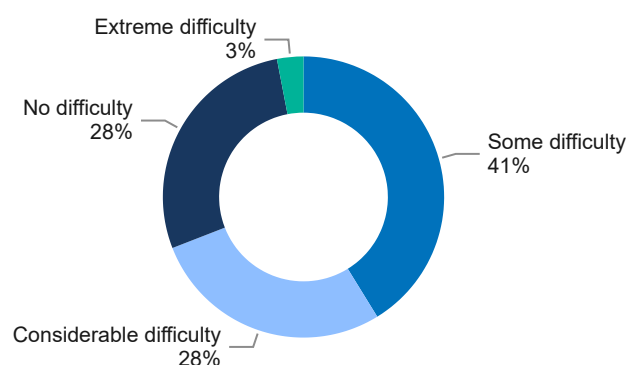
Accommodation type and utilities

72% of the surveyed refugees expect to face difficulties in paying utilities in the following months, while only one third expressed no concerns in this regard. The fact that the biggest share of respondents expressed concern regarding the possibility to cover the payment for utilities indicates a high level of uncertainty and vulnerability of the surveyed group. Most of the surveyed refugees are living in dwellings, with the rest living in residential buildings (6%), hotels (3%) and dormitories (4%) or other types of accommodation (1%).

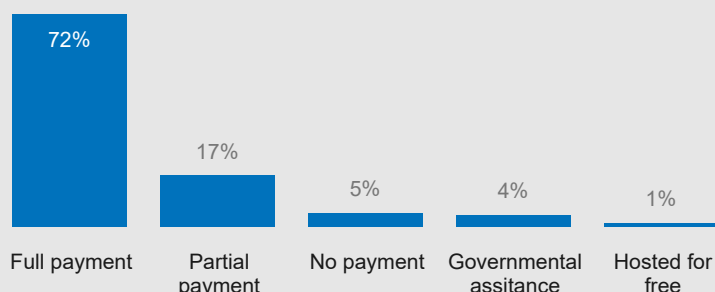
Type of accommodation



Anticipation of difficulty in paying or accessing utilities this winter



Paying rent or utilities



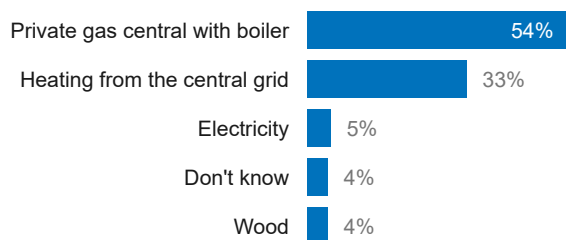
The graph on the left represents the percentage of refugees who reported having to pay for rent or utilities. Only 1% of the respondents are being hosted for free, and 4% receive governmental assistance. On the other hand, **72% reported explicitly full payment**, while another 17% are paying partially. The 5% who reported no payment receive assistance from various institutions or NGOs,

In connection with this, it is important to note that during the time of data collection, there was delay in the disbursement of the government assistance for housing and food.

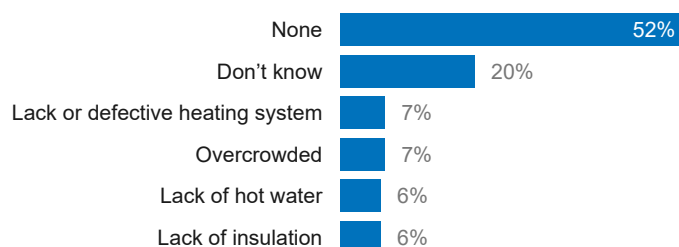
Looking at the type of heating that refugees use in their households, more than half (54%) rely on private central heating systems powered by gas, while another 33% are connected to the municipal heating grid. This indicates that 87% of the surveyed refugees could rely on the heating systems available in their accommodations. However, the increasing winter bills might pose a financial challenge for the refugees.

Regarding accommodation, more than two-thirds (72%) of the refugees reported not having or being aware of any issues with the accommodation. Among those who did report issues, the most commonly mentioned were related to the heating system (7%), overcrowding (7%), lack of hot water (5%), insulation (6%), or inadequate hygiene conditions (5%).

Type of heating



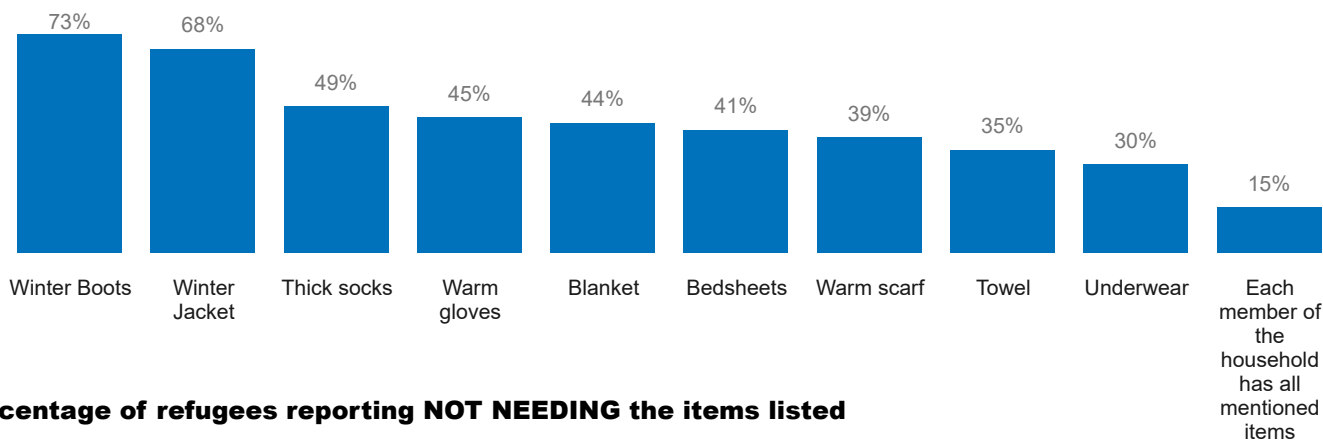
Top 5 issues with the accommodation



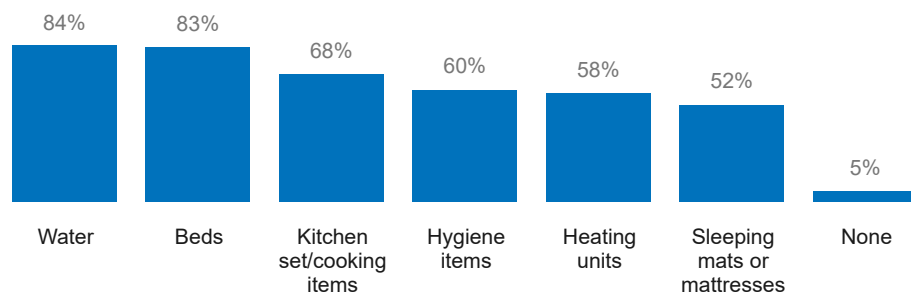
Core relief items - needs

In the last part of the assessment, the needs for core relief items was measured. The first section enquired on the types of items that refugees have for every member of the household or might need changing. As seen below, about half of the households (48%) might not have sleeping mats/mattresses for every person living in their quarters (or they might need replacement) or hygiene items (40%) while 5% reported not having all of the above for each member.

Percentage of refugees reporting to need the below items



Percentage of refugees reporting NOT NEEDING the items listed



Regarding the winter clothing and other winter items, among the most reported needs, winter boots (73%) winter jackets (68%) thick socks (49%) and warm gloves (45%) were the most reported. Beside this, about 1 in 6 of the surveyed refugees (15%) reported to have winter clothing and items for all of the members in their household. In terms of other CRIs, (i.e. underwear, blankets, towels or bed sheets) roughly 30-45% of the respondent reported the need.

In terms of sizes, these would be the reported needs for the following segments (considering the smaller sample of respondents requesting these items, these data should be considered indicative only):

Adult women:
 27% Medium (M)
 22% Large (L)
 11% Small (S)
 9% XLarge (XL)
 6% XXL Large (XXL)
 1% XSmall (XS)
 1% XXXLarge (XXXL)
 23% Other

Girls:
 35% Small (S)
 23% Medium (M)
 22% XSmall (XS)
 9% Small-Medium (S/M)
 3% XLarge (XL)
 2% Large (L)
 3% Other

Adult men:
 27% XLarge (XL)
 27% Medium (M)
 17% Large(L)
 9% XXL Large (XXL)
 5% Small (S)
 2% XXXLarge (XXXL)
 2% XSmall (XS)
 11% Other

Boys:
 30% Small (S)
 23% Medium (M)
 17% XSmall (XS)
 9% Large (L)
 4% XLarge (XL)
 4% XXL Large (XXL)
 13% Other

Conclusion

This rapid assessment shows that the large majority of refugees are finding it more and more difficult to cover their basic needs. High proportions struggle with rent, utilities, and basic necessities like food and medical expenses, highlighting their vulnerability. Moreover, significant proportions lack essential items such as sleeping mats, winter clothing, and hygiene products due to the fact that accommodation is prioritized in terms of expenses. In this context, access to food, winter clothing and other core relief items should still be considered by humanitarian actors. Considering the fact that most of the households have to pay rent and utilities, with the changes in the housing and food assistance program, the situation might become even more concerning.