

# Post Distribution Monitoring | Cash for Winter Needs in 2023-2024

## Summary

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, more than 2.3 million people from Ukraine have entered Slovakia<sup>1</sup> and more than 142,000 registered for Temporary Protection. As of June 2024, the Ministry of Interior has granted 121,558 valid tolerated stays of foreigners in the territory of the Slovak Republic<sup>2</sup>. Out of this number, 31% were children 0-17 years, 47% were women (18+y), 8% were elderly people (60+y) and 60% were people in productive age (18-60y, out of them almost 73% women).

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in agreement with the Government of Slovakia and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MoLSAF) supported Ukrainian families, stateless persons and third-country nationals affected by the war in Ukraine, and other refugees and asylum seekers in Slovakia who face protection risks or who are in a situation of extreme vulnerability. In 2023 and in 2024 UNHCR and UNICEF implemented cash programmes which aimed to support households in situation of extreme vulnerability and those including children respectively, more specifically Cash for Protection, Cash for Development and Education and Cash for Winterization.

**Cash for Winterization**<sup>3</sup> aimed to support Ukrainian families, stateless persons and third-country nationals affected by the war in Ukraine, and other refugees and asylum seekers in Slovakia who face protection risks or who are in a situation of extreme vulnerability. This was a one-time emergency cash transfer for winter expenses in 2023, such as blankets, winter clothes and shoes, meals, utilities, etc. In addition, that the cash assistance for winter needs provided to individuals and families in a situation of vulnerability to minimize protection risks and support their basic needs. The established **eligibility criteria**<sup>4</sup> were the following:

- **over 60 years old** without sufficient family support,
- family member have a **disability** or **serious medical condition**,
- **single parent** or a caregiver,
- **parents of a child/children below three years of age**,
- **single pregnant** or lactating mother.

Priority was given to individuals and families with vulnerabilities supported by the Slovak Labour Office, as well as newly arrived individuals and families (those who got the Temporary Protection or international protection documents after 01 September) under one or multiple stated criteria. The amount was calculated based on the number of family members and their ages and vulnerabilities the number of categories mentioned above one falls in. The provided support amounted to 150 EUR per person, with a maximum of 400 EUR per family. The payment provided by UNHCR and UNICEF to 28,000 individuals via bank transfer in a Slovak bank account or Western Union.

As part of its commitment to monitor quality of support and ensure accountability to affected population, UNICEF and UNHCR conducted a Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) Survey to assess cash effect on various livelihood domains. The survey findings are organized in 10 sections: (1) Methodology of the report, (2) Demographic composition of the sample, (3) Reception and expenditure of the cash assistance, (4) Risk in accessing cash assistance, (5) Problems during receiving/withdrawing or spending the cash assistance, (6) Markets and Prices, (7) Satisfaction, (8) Outcomes, (9) Coping mechanisms, (10) Accountability to Affected Population.

This PDM focused on evaluating the cash distribution for winter needs in Slovakia, implemented between November 2023 and March 2024.

<sup>1</sup> [Ukraine Refugee Situation \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/ukraine-refugee-situation)

<sup>2</sup> [Dočasné útočisko, Ministerstvo vnútra SR - Polícia \(minv.sk\)](https://www.minv.sk/dačasne-utockisko)

<sup>3</sup> [UNHCR & UNICEF will support refugees with vulnerabilities in Slovakia with one-time cash assistance for winter needs](#)

<sup>4</sup> [UNHCR-UNICEF 2023 Cash assistance criteria](#)

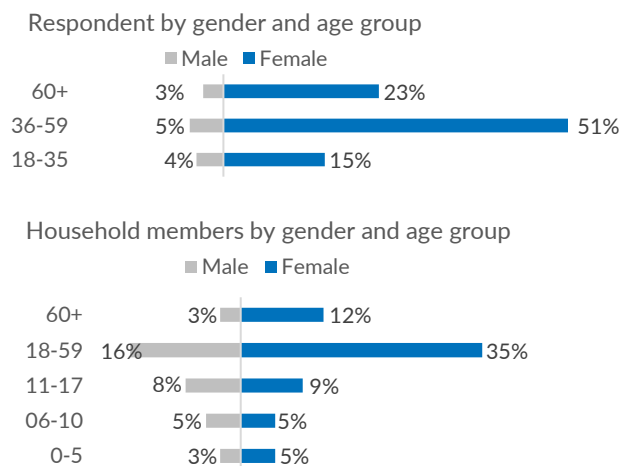
## 1. Methodology

Using a structured survey, UNHCR and UNICEF conducted phone interviews between 16 to 27 April 2024 covering total 424 HH members. The households were randomly selected from UNHCR and UNICEF cash beneficiary database, including a 50%-50% split of beneficiary households from total territory of Slovakia, 8 regions where beneficiaries reside. A buffer of 400 contacts was provided to account for potential non-respondents.

## 2. Demographics<sup>5</sup>

UNHCR and UNICEF conducted interviews with 158 households (HH), covering 424 individuals. Out of the total number of respondents, women represented 88%. A total of 51% of the female respondents were **36-59 years**, followed by 23% of over 60 years old and 15% of 18-35 years old. The majority of the male HH members were between 18-59 years old.

In terms of geographical representation, the largest share of respondents were in Bratislava and Nitra regions, while the largest average HH sizes were in Košice and Žilina regions.



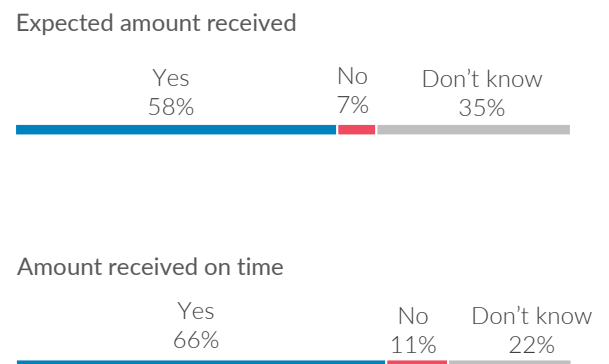
## 3. Reception and Expenditure of Cash Assistance

### Logistics

This section provides details on the reception and expenditure of cash assistance. **Each household received 279 EUR on average.** 35% of respondents did not know if they received the correct amount, similar to the finding of the previous PDM<sup>6</sup>. 7% of respondents reported not receiving the expected amount.

In terms of timing, 66% of respondents reported that the cash assistance arrived on the expected date, 11% reported that the assistance did not arrive on the expected date and 22% did not know.

It is important to acknowledge that **87% of the respondents did not require any help to receive the cash assistance**, while 11% required support. The main requests for support were limited mobility, not knowing



<sup>5</sup> Source of data processed in this report: [Slovakia\\_PDM\\_CBI\\_2024\\_23052024\\_PONTIS - Power BI](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Slovakia UNHCR – UNICEF joint Post Distribution Monitoring – November 2023](#)

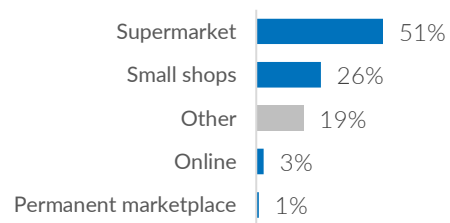
how to use the payment mechanism (IBAN, MTCN code etc.); not understanding instructions to access the money; place of withdrawal of cash not accessible.

Since 2022, UNHCR in Slovakia has taken all the necessary steps to design and determine the scope of Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms (CFM) in the country, conduct the context analysis, select the adequate feedback channels, and allocate sufficient resources before the implementation started. The most important channel of CFM in Slovakia, the joint UNHCR-UNICEF Helpline, is already in place since 15 June 2022 and continues to actively support vulnerable families and individuals to benefit from the cash programmes. Furthermore, UNHCR has established five other channels: an official [UNHCR Help site](#), Helpdesks in its [Registration Centers/Blue dots](#), [UNHCR Telegram](#) and Facebook channels and the official mailboxes ( [svkbrprot@unhcr.org](mailto:svkbrprot@unhcr.org) and [svkbrcash@unhcr.org](mailto:svkbrcash@unhcr.org) ) operating in four languages, as to feed back the programme cycle in order to improve the way CBI is designed, calculated and delivered to the affected populations in Slovakia. Additionally, the Mobile teams enable registration and visits to households or individuals living in rural areas or facing immobility. Furthermore, UNHCR introduced regular community consultations for the community to share information and feedback on the provided services and programs, as well as to support with any inquiries might arise.

### Expenditure

The main two places' respondents chose to spend their cash were: supermarkets (51%); small shops (26%) that were within 15 minutes (28%); 15-30 (39%), 30-60 (20%) minutes of travel from their home<sup>7</sup>. The travel costs were among EUR 0-0.99 for 44% of respondents, which corresponds to an average price of a basic public transport ticket in Slovakia. Travel costs up to EUR 5 reported 85% of respondents. The person collecting the cash was in 89% of cases also the holder of a bank account registered for cash assistance in UNHCR-UNICEF database.

Main locations where CASH was spent



### More than one third of respondents (35%) reported not having any other source of income.

Regarding other sources of income, 28% of respondents received support from NGO/agencies, 23% support from friends or family, and 11% through informal income generating activities, such as seasonal labour. More than half of the respondents (53%) reported a formal income/salary. These results are different from previous PDM observations and are thought to be caused by the demographic profile of the sample, which compiled mostly of working age respondents and HH members.

**Mostly the female head of the HH (58%) made the decision about spending the money**, or the whole HH together (34%), less often (6%) by a male head of a HH, which was expectable considering the typical HH composition (57% being women).

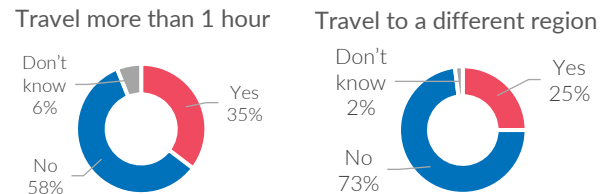
To the question about how the **cash support has impacted the relations in HH**, **85% of respondents said it had a positive impact**, 13% said it did not have any impact, 2% preferred not to say. No case of substantial disagreement regarding the money usage was reported. Almost 4% of persons registered to receive the cash needed help to spend the money. In such cases, an acquaintance friend, neighbor, or a family member provided the help.

<sup>7</sup> This is expected, it is usual spending habit also for local population, as supermarkets are accessible and often cheaper compared to smaller local shops. Travel times 30-60 minutes for 20% of respondents do not seem adequate – deeper analysis would be needed to identify reasons.

## 4. Risk & Challenges

### Registration

In this section, the risk perception and safety concerns of respondents during the registration process and access and use of the cash assistance, were evaluated. More than a third of respondents (35%) reported over one hour travel time to register for the cash assistance, which was noted as part of the reported challenges. It is worth to mention that **mobile teams** were maintained, to facilitate the registration activities in remotely areas.



For most people all questions regarding registration process were answered and they did not experience a negative behavior (92-97%).

### Collecting and Spending Cash

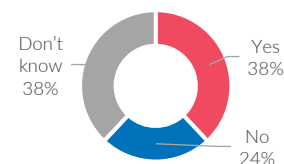
Most of the surveyed HH, **99% of respondents, did not experience any kind of risk while collecting cash**, keeping it at home or spending it, except of one case who reported a language barrier in the shop. Only 3% experienced other type of complications, while 5% reported that salespersons /shop assistants refused to serve them. Main reported reasons were discrimination because of nationality; language barriers; rude staff in a supermarket. On the other hand, **99% of the respondents managed to resolve their problem.**

## 5. Market & Prices

This PDM survey aimed to receive information about the respondents' experiences purchasing goods in the market. **The majority of respondents, 94%, did manage to find products/services in markets/shops<sup>8</sup>, while the 89% were able to find the right quality products.** Only 3% reported that they did not manage to find the right quality of products. Most complaints were about low quality of food and high prices of food, clothes and shoes, medicines; long wait for the doctor's appointment; and a low quality of clothes.

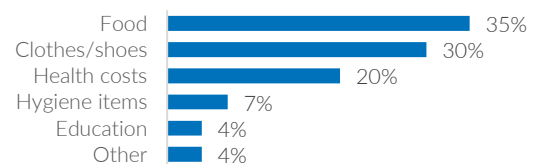
Overall, **38% of respondents reported to feel that products<sup>9</sup> got more expensive during last 4 weeks**, 38% did not know. Interestingly, in Bratislava region, as much as 46% of respondents said they feel that products got more expensive, while the number raised to 64%<sup>10</sup> in Košice region.

Prices increased on the last month



When the PDM examined the items (goods/services) HHS spend more money in order of importance. Respondents confirmed that the top three items they spent the received cash assistance on were food (35%), clothes and shoes (30%),

Main items CASH was spent



<sup>8</sup> One person was not able to get special contact lenses for a child.

<sup>9</sup> Mostly food products, medicines and dental services and clothes and shoes.

<sup>10</sup> This number represents 11 HHs.

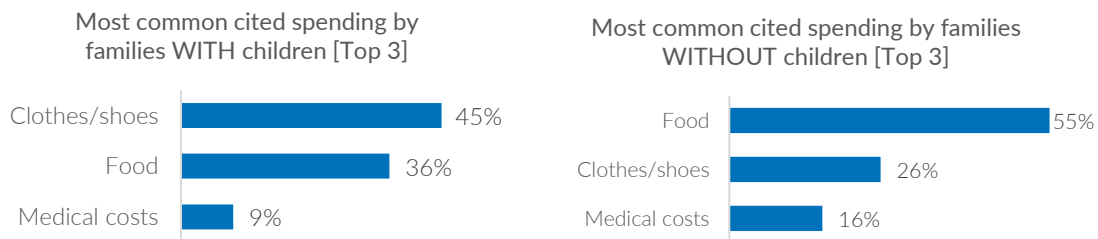
medical costs (20%). We observe a consistency on the main items the HHs spent the cash on, with the previous PDM<sup>11</sup>.

At the time of survey, 87% of respondents reported they already spent all the cash received, 8% did not know, 4% more than a half and 1% half.

### Market & Prices – Children

Most common cited spending by **families with children** were clothing and shoes (45%), food (36%), medical costs (9%). Among families with children, 67% respondents reported to increase spending on children.

**Families without children** reported spending mostly on: Food (55%), Clothes and shoes (26%), and medical costs (16%).



Compared to the previous PDM, where the top priority was clothes and shoes, this time, it was scoped by clothes and shoes for families with children, while food always remains the top expenditure item for all beneficiary groups, as in all previous PDMs.

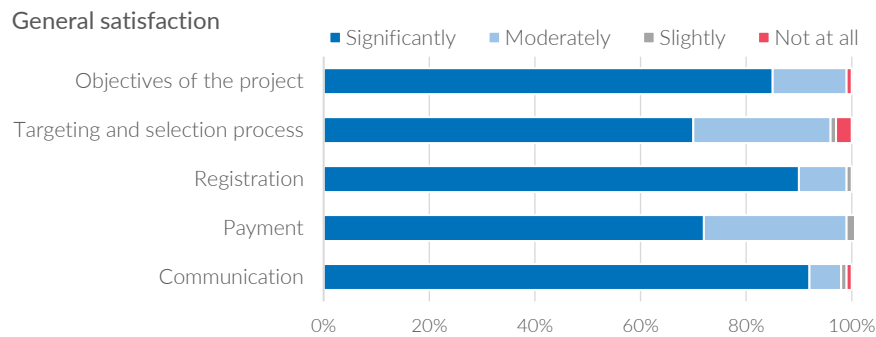
Respondents were also asked on acquire thanks to cash support. Most often reported items were: more food (27%); access better medical care (18%); managed to eat more varied/nutritious food (7%); nothing, the cash support did not have impact on HH (6%).

Only 7% respondents managed to save some money, over 70% of those saved money as a cash at home, only 9% on the bank account.

## 6. Satisfaction

The PDM also assessed the level of satisfaction under five main topics of Cash Assistance provision in Slovakia. **In general, the satisfaction level was very high, as shown by the percentages below.**

<sup>11</sup> [Slovakia UNHCR – UNICEF joint Post Distribution Monitoring – November 2023](#)



It is important to highlight at this point, a few of the main reasons reported dissatisfaction regarding the payment, were mainly addressed different issues and did not focus to the specific cash assistance support that Winterization attempted to provide. The reported issues around dissatisfaction on the **payment**, showed lack of understanding the transfer values under the Winterization cash program and reflected once again the constant agony regarding the medical supplies and the need of financial support. Regarding the **registration** the main reason of dissatisfaction was the lack of adequate support by the staff and the long distance of the Registration Centers from the residence of some cases.

## 7. Outcomes

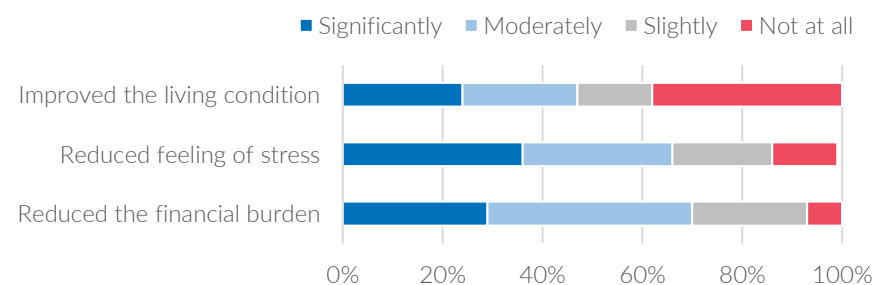
### Short/mid-term impact

The PDM attempt to investigate and receive feedback on the following key areas: improvement of living conditions, reduced feelings of stress and easement of the financial burden of their households. The categorization was done in four levels instead of a close response Yes and No.

Regarding the **living conditions** were reported as significantly improved by 24% of respondents, 23% reported moderately, 15% slightly, 38% not at all improved.

Following with the **feeling of stress** was reported by 36% respondents to be significantly 30% moderately, 20% slightly, 13% not at all<sup>12</sup> reduced.

### To what extent the CASH assistance...



Finally, the respondents replied on how receiving cash assistance **reduced the financial burden** with 29% respondents feeling the effect significantly, 41% moderately, 23% slightly, 7.5% not at all reduced.

<sup>12</sup> Most of respondents feel reduction of stress to some extent as also observed in previous assessments. The regularity of income makes people feel secure they will be able to cover their needs on the following months.

**Cover basic needs** of the respondents, was also another topic examined under the current PDM. According to the respondents, only 13% were able to cover all basic needs, 27% was able to cover more than half of basic needs, 23% could cover half, 15% less than half of basic needs, 22% of respondents did not know.

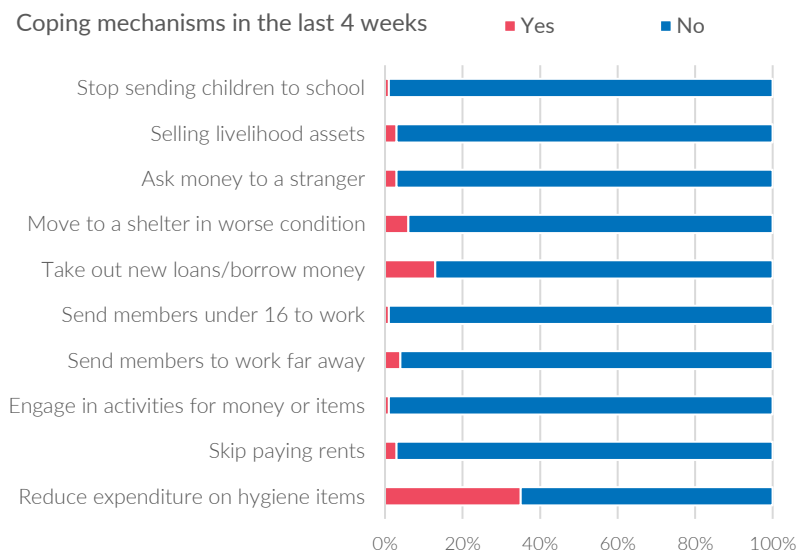
The share of respondents reported to be **able to cover half (or only less than half) of their basic needs was 38%**.

Notably, outcomes of the survey showed, that among the **basic needs that the respondents did not manage to cover**, the top were: **rentals (37%)**, clothes and shoes (23%), medical costs (21%), food (11%), utilities and bills (electricity, water...) (9%). Rentals were reported for the first time since the beginning of the cash program monitoring and the reason was probably the cut made by the government early in March<sup>13,14</sup>.

## 8. Accountability to Affected Population (AAP)

### Coping Mechanisms

This part of the survey focused on exploring whether the respondents in the four weeks prior to data collection have resorted to any coping mechanism in order to meet their basic needs. Overall, a concerning frequency of two negative coping mechanisms were detected. Around 35% of respondents reduced expenditure on hygiene items, water, baby items, health, or education; and 13% of respondents reported taking new loans or borrowing money. Among other coping mechanisms, no alarming levels were observed: 6% (9 respondents) reported moving to a shelter with a worse condition; 3% skipped paying rent/debts; 4% sent a HH member to work far away.



### Food substitute as a coping mechanism

On the questions related to food substitution or saving on food, 50% of respondents had to rely on cheaper products every day of the week; also 50% had to borrow food from relatives every day; and 25% reduced the number of meals daily. No further comments provided under this coping mechanism.

<sup>13</sup> [59/2024 Z.z. - Nariadenie vlády Slovenskej republiky... - SLOV-LEX](#)

<sup>14</sup> It is important to note, that from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 the state housing support is planned to be provided for a maximum of 120 days from the first provision of temporary refuge. Eligible for a longer support would be only the most vulnerable groups of refugees.

### Complaint Feedback Mechanism (CFM)

The PDM results presented that **66% knew how to use the joint UNHCR-UNICEF Helpline**, which remains one of the cornerstones of CFM in Slovakia, since the launch of CBIs in the country. As many as 68% understands how to file a complaint and from those needed to file a complaint 82% did proceed with the action. **Positive feedback that the 89% reported that the information obtained was clear.**

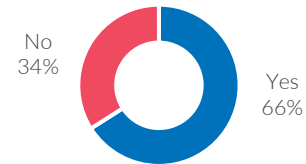
Preferred channel for CFM was a text (SMS) message for 49%, followed by social media (22%), UNHCR help site (11%), UNHCR staff 7%, via relatives (4%).

Regarding respondents' knowledge on how to file a complaint or feedback on the cash support, 37% said they did not get such information. **Preferred channel for reporting feedback and complaints is the joint UNICEF-UNHCR Helpline (52%)**, followed by SMS or similar (23%), UNHCR staff 9%, UNHCR Helpdesk 7%.

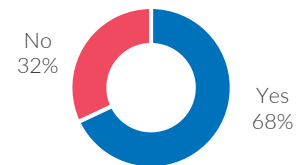
Regarding adequacy of information about cash assistance provided by UNICEF-UNHCR, **77% of respondents said they received adequate information**, 15% said they received mostly adequate information, while 12% said they did (mostly) not get adequate information. 54% of respondents would like to further know, what assistance is coming next, 19% wanted to know eligibility criteria for cash assistance, 17% cash distribution date, time and location, 6% information on other UNHCR services.

**The preferred assistance modality for future cash assistance programs remains in the significant percentage of 85% of support by cash, followed by 11% on a combination of cash and in-kind assistance.** Reason for in-kind support was that the cash amount is not enough to buy the in-kind items. In case of continued cash support, **97% of respondents would prefer the current way of receiving money to be maintained.**

Know about UNHCR-UNICEF Helpline



Know how to file a complain



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