

Summary

**on the results of quantitative and qualitative research among
Ukrainian refugees**

Carpathian Foundation – Hungary

June 2024

The study has been completed as is part of the Horizons Full of Hope: A Year-long Support and Solidarity for Refugees in Hungary project in 2024.

The project will be implemented from February 2024 to December 2024 under the coordination of the Carpathian Foundation with the support of UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

This study does not necessarily reflect the views of UNHCR, the project sponsor.

Responsible publisher: Carpathian Foundation-Hungary, 3300 Eger, Felvégi út 53.

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1. Introduction

The Carpathian Foundation – Hungary "*Horizons Full of Hope: A Year-long Support and Solidarity for Refugees in Hungary*" project, between March and May 2024, we investigated the situation, difficulties and needs of refugees from Ukraine in three counties of the North-Hungarian region, Hajdú-Bihar, Heves and Szabolcs-Satmár-Bereg counties. During the research we used quantitative and qualitative methods, on the one hand we conducted a questionnaire survey among refugees, on the other hand we conducted structured interviews with professionals, NGOs and volunteers working with refugees, and we organised focus group discussions with refugee persons.

1.1. Characteristics of the quantitative research (questionnaire survey)

The aim of this non-representative quantitative study, which aimed to reach the target group of the project (refugees over 18 years of age) as comprehensively as possible, was to obtain detailed, analysable information on the main characteristics of the interviewees and their families, their background, their living conditions, as well as their difficulties, necessities and requirements. Three types of questionnaires were used in the research:

- **A personal questionnaire** was recorded with refugees aged 18 and over who were potential target groups for the project. We aimed to reach the target group in full; we committed to 120 individual questionnaires, and ended up with 163 personal questionnaires, representing 82% of the target group of around 200 people (over 18 years old). In developing our personal questionnaire, we have taken into account and used the UNHCR questionnaire of September 2023 to a large extent.
- Respondents to the personal questionnaire were also asked to provide key information about their current household in the **household questionnaire**. We asked one person aged 18 and over from a household about the household and household members, and we also had this questionnaire taken by people living alone, i.e. in a single person household in Hungary. The exception to this is the 40 people living in the college, with whom only a personal questionnaire was completed. A total of 73 households were surveyed, so that means that, not counting the 40 people, the 123 adults surveyed by the personal questionnaire live in this number of households of varying sizes.
- Information on children aged 0-17 living in the households was collected through the **children's questionnaire** from a parent or other adult household member (i.e. the questionnaire was not taken with children). In total, we received information on 81 children.

The questionnaires with the refugees were recorded personally by the project staff. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous, and staff informed respondents in advance. Both Hungarian and Ukrainian speakers were able to read the questionnaire in their mother tongue/the language they speak and the questions were asked in the language of their choice (with the help of an interpreter in the case of Ukrainian). The questionnaires were processed anonymously and in aggregate (using SPSS.)

1.2. Characteristics of the qualitative research (structured interviews, focus groups)

The aim of the qualitative research was, on the one hand, to get information from professionals and volunteers working directly with refugees about the results and difficulties of professional activities, the situation of refugees in general, the differences between the chances and opportunities of Roma and non-Roma refugees, and the situation of refugee women and children. On the other hand, in the focus groups, refugees were asked about their background, experiences in Hungary, difficulties, cases of discrimination and plans for the future.

- The project staff conducted twenty structured interviews of an average of 40-50 minutes with professionals, NGOs and volunteers working with refugees from Ukraine.
- With the help of an external researcher, three focus group discussions lasting almost two hours were conducted, one each in Heves, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Hajdú-Bihar counties, with the participation of seven to nine participants. The participants were adults and young adults from the project's target group (plus some children), and the groups were organised by local project staff.

2. Main characteristics of refugees

2.1. Characteristics of refugee persons

A total of 163 respondents were interviewed, 53 per cent of them male, 47 per cent female and one non-binary respondent. A third (34%) are aged 18-24, nearly half (49%) are aged 25-50, and 17% are aged 50+ (including two aged 70+). More than half of the respondents (56%) lived in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, one third (34%) in Heves county and one tenth (9%) in Hajdú-Bihar county (9.2%, 15 persons) at the time of the survey. One fifth (22%) live in a dormitory, one third (33%) in other collective accommodation, 12% in rented accommodation, 11-12% in private accommodation or other accommodation, and 9% in courtesy-use flats. 39% of respondents have at most completed primary education, one fifth (20%) have a secondary school leaving certificate, one quarter (25%) have a vocational qualification and 14% have a degree. In the spring of 2024, 44% were working, nearly a quarter (24%) were studying, 17% were inactive (childcare at home, retired, disabled, having a long-term illness), and just over a tenth (12%) were unemployed.

44 percent of respondents are Ukrainian citizens, 41 percent are Ukrainian-Hungarian and 15 percent are dual Russian-Ukrainian citizens. At home, within the family, nearly half of them (46%) speak Hungarian, a third (34%) Ukrainian and/or Russian, and a fifth (20%) Ukrainian and Hungarian. One third (33%) declared themselves to be of Roma/Gypsy origin, all of them came from Transcarpathia, with no Roma/Gypsy among those from other areas. In our sample, 43 percent of the refugees from Transcarpathia are Roma/Gypsy. Although our small sample survey is not representative, so comparisons are limited, the gap in educational attainment is visible. 91 percent of Roma respondents aged 18 and over have at most completed primary education, 2 percent have a high school diploma, and none have a degree. Among non-Roma, 14 percent have at most completed primary education, 29 percent have secondary school leaving certificate and 22 percent have a degree.

Two thirds (64%) of the refugees in the sample arrived in Hungary immediately after the outbreak of the war or in the first half of 2022, one tenth (10%) in the second half of 2022, 15% in 2023, and another 6% had been living here before the war, having arrived between 2018 and 2021. The vast majority of respondents (72%) are from Transcarpathia, a tenth (10%) from Donetsk, 6 per cent came from the Kharkiv region, the rest from different regions of Ukraine (ten other regions in total).

Almost all (97%) of respondents have some form of valid ID, the vast majority have more than one. General identity documents (91%) and the international biometric passport (78%) were the most frequently mentioned, followed by the asylum certificate issued by the Hungarian authorities (22%), the international non-biometric passport (15%) and the residence permit issued to stateless persons (15%). More than a third (35%) of refugees are asylum seekers, 5% have refugee status; one person was waiting for a decision on refugee status in March 2024. Seven per cent of them each have a permanent/long-term residence permit or a visa or a study permit; 38 per cent are dual Ukrainian-

Hungarian citizens.¹ Half of those with asylum status (51%) have been granted the status in up to one month, a quarter (23%) in two months, and the rest in three to seven months.

44% of respondents had received accommodation-related placement or housing support. More than a third (36%) received/receive subsistence allowance, a fifth each in an employment service (21%), a health insurance allowance (19%) and a cash allowance (19%). Of those who had applied for and/or received some form of support, most (33%) had experienced administrative difficulties in the application process. Almost a third of them also reported lack of information (31%) and long waiting times (29%) in relation to opportunities and eligibility conditions, a quarter (25%) reported difficulties in contacting administrators and service providers, and a fifth (22%) reported problems and rejections due to lack of a registered address.

In the structured interviews, we asked specifically about the situation of women. According to the experience of interviewees in Hajdú-Bihar and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties, Roma refugee women in Transcarpathia have much more difficulty finding work or can only access to the worst labour market positions, typically undeclared. In addition to low education and child-rearing, their situation is not made easier by the fact that, although they speak Hungarian, they do not speak it nearly as well as Ukrainian; they do not understand at all or have difficulty understanding many things, especially when it comes to administrative matters. One of our interviewees was typically dealing with women who were homemakers in Ukraine, at home with young children or pregnant; in Hungary they are largely living from seasonal work, day labour, working undeclared. Another interviewee said that the women also had mostly casual jobs and low-skilled jobs in Ukraine, and typically do similar work here. However, one of our interviewees from Heves county pointed out that refugee women of Ukrainian origin were mostly educated, in good positions in the labour market or were entrepreneurs in Ukraine with their families.

2.2. Household characteristics

In total, 73 household questionnaires were completed, i.e. the 123 adults interviewed with the personal questionnaire live in so many households, as the 40 personal questionnaires taken at the dormitory did not include household questionnaires. The total number of people living in the households of the sample is 232, with an average household size of 3.2 persons. Eighteen per cent of households are single-person households, a quarter (25%) are two-person households, and around a fifth (19-22%) are three or four-person households. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of households have children aged 0-17, with an average of two (1.9) children of this age. A quarter (25%) of the household members other than the respondent (159 persons) are the respondent's spouse/partner, more than half (55%) are children, and the others are the respondent's parents, siblings, grandchildren, other relatives or non-relatives. According to the respondents' answers, 94% of household members have some form of valid ID or document. Nearly half of them (48%) are granted asylum status, 6% have refugee status and a third (31%) are dual Ukrainian-Hungarian citizens.

At the time of the survey, a quarter of all household members each were either in education (25%) or in paid employment (24%), and just over a tenth each were employed in casual work (14%), unemployed (13%) or not yet school-age (10%).

¹ The share of Ukrainian-Hungarian dual citizens above is 41 percent. The 3 percentage point (5 persons) difference is due to the fact that 41 percent (66 respondents) said they are dual Ukrainian-Hungarian citizens when asked about their citizenship. In the case of the question on legal status, where there were several (nine) possible answers, five of those who had previously identified themselves as dual citizens chose a different answer, so the proportion of dual citizens is 38 per cent (61 persons).

Half of households (49%) live in collective accommodation, 15 percent rent their own accommodation, 14 percent in workers' accommodation, a tenth (10%) with relatives or friends, 3-3 percent in a hotel/hostel provided by the municipality, in shared accommodation with other refugees or in other forms of property provided for them in March 2024. The majority of households (69%) arrived in Hungary in the first half of 2022, a tenth (11%) in the second half of the year, and the rest in 2023.

Income data are available for two thirds of households (64%, 47 households), with an average monthly net income of HUF 172,000 and a monthly net income per person of HUF 61,000. One third (32%) of households have a net monthly income of between HUF 10,000-30,000, while around one fifth (19%) have a net monthly income of between HUF 30,000-50,000 and HUF 50,000-70,000 thousand per person. The monthly income per person is 51,000 for families with children aged 0-17 and 84,000 for households without children. One third of households have income from a full-time job (32%) and/or Hungarian state/government social allowances (30%) and/or benefits after children (33%). The former represents an average net monthly income of HUF 215,000, the latter two sources represent an average monthly net income of HUF 28,000 and HUF 24,000 respectively. Two thirds of all households (66%) have no savings, and one tenth (10%) have savings up to of HUF 500,000 or less (but portion of non-respondents is a significant 25%).

2.3. Characteristics of refugee children

In the 73 households sampled for the questionnaire survey, there are 87 children (aged 0-17), 93% of whom (81 children) were asked about in the children's questionnaire (always asked from an adult household member, family member, mostly the parent). 28% of the children are aged five or under, almost half (46%) are aged 6-13, and a quarter (26%) are aged 14-17. A quarter of them (24%) are in lower primary school, 30% in upper primary school, 9% in kindergarten and 6% in secondary school. One third (32%) do not attend an institution, and they are typically, but not exclusively, in the youngest age group. For children both over and under the age of six, we asked the parent (adult respondent) why the child does not attend an institution. Ten children (the youngest, typically 0-2 years old) do not attend because their parents are at home with them and do not want to enrol their child in an institution yet. For two children each, lack of necessary vaccinations and language barriers were cited, for one child lack of necessary documents, and for one child not planning to stay in Hungary was cited as the reason. Four of the children over the age of six are not in school because of language barriers; one is seven years old, the other three are 16-17 years old, and all live in a county town. The situation of two of them, aged 17, is complicated by the lack of the necessary documents.

The responses show that the basic necessities of the vast majority of children are met. Of the 14 deprivation items listed in the questionnaire, the most lacking items are daily fresh fruit and vegetables (36%), followed by sports opportunities (17%), a desk (16%) and two pairs of warm shoes (15%). The necessities are largely provided by parents, but in many cases the role of the managing, accommodation and other organisations is also significant (e.g. in providing a place to study, a desk, meals, leisure/cultural programmes, learning support).

Parents were asked whether they think their child is receiving adequate care in key areas and is in a safe environment in Hungary. Overall, parents perceive their child or children to be largely well cared for and in a safe environment, with moderate to full coverage. Ten children, however, are perceived by their parents to be in an inadequate/unsafe environment in terms of access to justice, eight in terms of housing and six in terms of social services. The majority of children (57%) have never experienced discrimination, violations or inappropriate treatment, 8% have experienced it once, a third (34%) a few times and one per cent regularly.

Our interviewees' experiences of the situation of refugee children and their institutional care are mixed. According to our kindergarten teacher and teacher respondents, children receive adequate support in kindergarten and school, helping them to integrate and catch up (but often in a way that they are taught separately from other children in school). However, several of our respondents pointed out that it was very difficult to get children into kindergartens and schools because of the institutions' negative attitudes, unpreparedness and language barriers, and that children are often taught in isolation in schools, which makes it very difficult for them to integrate and be accepted.

2.4. Refugees' plans, future

More than a third of households and families (36%) plan their future in Hungary, 29% would move back to Ukraine, 5% would move to another country; 30% could not/would not answer the question, which presumably indicates uncertainty about the future. Focus group participants were also asked about their future plans. The participants of the groups from Hajdú-Bihar and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties (the majority of them Ukrainian-Hungarian dual citizens) typically and mostly out of necessity - plan their future in Hungary, but several of them also spoke about their homesickness. Many of the participants already have strong ties to the country (jobs, children's school, secondary school, university studies, property purchased) and some have specific plans for Hungary (employment, professional, further education). Many of the young participants in the Heves county group, who are Ukrainian citizens and mostly speak English, would like to return to Ukraine, but - as there seems to be little chance of this - are planning their future (in terms of further education, employment) in Hungary and/or Western Europe in the short term.

According to the experience of our interviewees, those who had the resources had more or less managed to integrate, at least to find work and housing (although housing is often precarious) in Hungary, or - typically Ukrainian, i.e. non-Ukrainian-Hungarian dual citizens - had moved on to the West. The type of citizenship (also) plays a decisive role here, as dual citizens (due to their Hungarian citizenship) are not accepted or treated as refugees in other countries. Several interviewees pointed out that those stayed in Hungary who did not have the opportunity to move on, but many clearly stayed because they want to return to Ukraine, even if their livelihood and future there (also) is uncertain; among the latter there are both Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians (mostly Roma). Some reported that some had moved on but returned to Hungary because of various difficulties. Some of our interviewees also said that the Hungarian state should do more to ensure that the fate and future of refugees in Hungary is adequately managed.

3. Cases of discrimination, incidents

It is a general experience that while the questionnaire survey revealed less cases of discrimination and incidents of this type in Hungary, the interviews and focus group discussions revealed them more prominently. More than a tenth (13%) of the 163 people surveyed reported verbal abuse, the vast majority of them living in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county. 8 percent of respondents had experienced discrimination or inappropriate treatment in everyday situations (e.g. on the street, in shops, on public transport), 5-6 percent each in healthcare or when looking for a job or at work, and 4 percent each in education, training or official procedures. Equally, 2 per cent each reported being exploited at work, having their property taken/destroyed, or being physically assaulted or physically abused. Overall, 12 percent of respondents had experienced discrimination or incidents in one, 7 percent in two and 4 percent in more (three to six) areas; 76 percent of the sample had not experienced such situations or practices. There may be some overlap between the different response options (in terms of their interpretation), but the most common types of discrimination and/or inappropriate treatment experienced by respondents were from strangers (15%), members of the host country or community (10%) and other informal persons (9%). 6 percent of the sample were

discriminated against in some way by healthcare workers, 4 percent by other officials and their own compatriots, and 1-2 percent by border guards, social workers and NGO staff.

The majority of participants in the focus groups in Hajdú-Bihar and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties experienced discrimination and inappropriate treatment. Several highlighted that the administrators of the various offices and institutions are unhelpful and often even hostile towards them, both because of their refugee status and because of their Roma origin, which is presumably a more frequent and stronger dimension. Most common are negative experiences in the health sector. Some of these stem from a lack of documents and/or a registered address in Hungary, others from prejudice and language difficulties and problems of interpretation. Often, when a child is ill, the family doctor does not examine the child and therefore does not give a certificate, leading to an increase in unjustified absences at school. Many reported that it was difficult to enroll their children in kindergartens and schools in Hungary, and that there was frequent mocking, ridicule and ostracism of refugee children, especially, but not only, Roma children, which teachers did not do much about; some teachers were not welcoming and did not help refugee children to integrate. There are schools where children are mostly taught separately from the other students, on specific days (three times a week), and even go out at different times from the others for the break.

The majority of our interviewees consider that the refugees are facing the greatest difficulties in accessing employment, language, housing and services, especially healthcare. Several interviewees spoke about the problems in educational institutions, the segregation of children and inadequate education. Half of the interviewees had experienced numerous cases of discrimination, many of them serious incidents, in the course of their work. These are very mixed, and not necessarily limited to Roma refugees, but are exacerbated by Roma origin, as several interviewees pointed out. They faced discrimination and unacceptable treatment at the border (where one of our subjects reported serious police abuse), when using various services - mainly healthcare, when dealing with administrative procedures, when looking for accommodation and jobs. One of them pointed out the rejectionist attitude of the mayor and the local government, and several of them also mentioned the general rejectionist attitude of Hungarian society and domestic institutions towards Roma, which is even stronger in the case of the Roma refugees from Transcarpathia.

4. Necessities

According to our interviewees, overall, a relatively large number of refugees work, typically not in the same jobs and positions as in Ukraine, and their employment prospects are largely determined by their knowledge of Hungarian. However, due to their low education level, lack of skills, prejudices and discriminatory practices, Roma refugees from Transcarpathia typically have access only to casual, seasonal, day labour, undeclared work, which means they are constantly insecure and vulnerable.

In the personal questionnaire of survey, 16 necessities were listed. Of these, food (81%), income, financial resources (79%) and housing (71%) were the most important necessities identified by respondents. Information on different opportunities and services is (would be) very important to two thirds of respondents (66%), employment to 61%, and medical treatment and legal advice to just over half of them (52-53%). Education and schooling of children was cited as a very important need by 37% of respondents, while education and training for themselves was cited by a third (33%). Two-thirds (68%) of respondents did *not* consider childcare, kindergarten or nursery important at all, while half (52%) did *not* consider it important at all to find family members (56%) and evacuate them from Ukraine. The detailed results are summarised *in Table 1* in descending order according to the number of "very important" responses.

In Hajdú-Bihar county, food and accommodation are very important necessities for almost all

respondents. In Heves county, the most pressing necessities - mostly unmet - are income, material resources and food, and in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, food, income, accomodation and employment.

Table 1: Importance of each need, distribution of respondents (personal questionnaire), %

Necessities	Not important at all	Moderately important	Very important	Total
Food	8	10	81	100
Income, financial resources	8	13	79	100
Accommodation	11	19	71	100
Information on facilities and services	16	17	66	100
Employment	20	18	61	100
Medical treatment, medical devices	28	19	53	100
Legal advice	31	17	52	100
Uniting with family members outside Ukraine	26	26	48	100
Mental, spiritual support, help	44	13	43	100
Traffic, transport	39	19	42	100
Overcoming language barriers	49	12	39	100
Education, school for children	51	12	37	100
Education, training for myself	43	24	33	100
Evacuation of family members from Ukraine	52	18	30	100
Seeking out family members	56	15	29	100
Childcare, nursery, kindergarten	68	10	22	100

We also looked at the areas where respondents would like more information and knowledge. The most frequently mentioned were access to social services and benefits (51%), availability of help and support from NGOs (48%), job search and job opportunities (46%), and access to medical care (44%). A fifth of respondents (19-21%) would need (more) information about institutional care for children, psychological and mental counselling, protection against discrimination and contact with family members not residing in Hungary. The detailed data are presented *in Table 2* in descending order of yes responses.

Respondents from Hajdú-Bihar county mentioned, in order, access to social services, legal status and obtaining documents, while those from Heves county mentioned access to NGOs, social services, legal status, medical care and job search. Respondents in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county would need information on job search, NGOs, medical care, social services the most.

Table 2: Percentage of respondents (yes answers) who wanted more information on each area (personal questionnaire), %

Information areas	Yes responses, %
Use of social services and benefits	51
Contact details of NGOs, access to their services	48
Job search, job opportunities	47
About medical care options	44
Legal status in Hungary	39
How to obtain documents and related rights	36
Education, training for themselves	35
Education, school for children	26
Information on applying for asylum status	25
Contacting family members and relatives not in Hungary	21
Protection against discrimination, legal remedies	20
Psychological, mental counselling and support	20
Institutional care for children (nursery, kindergarten)	19
Information on applying for right of asylum	18

The household questionnaire also asked whether the respondent and/or other household members or family members would need help or support in different areas. The most frequently mentioned were the purchase of necessary medicines (52%) and leisure, cultural and community activities (51%). Nearly a quarter of households would need help with finding a job (27%), applying for official documents (26%), tutoring children (25%), around a fifth would need help with dental and eye care (21-22%), mental health and spiritual support (19%), and 14-16 households would need some help with treatment. The detailed results are presented in the *table* in descending order of yes responses.

Table 3: Percentage of yes answers for each need area where the household would need help (household questionnaire), %

Areas of the necessities	Yes responses, %
Obtaining necessary medicines	52
Leisure, cultural, community programmes	51
Finding a job	27
Application and administration of official documents	26
Helping children learn, tutoring	25
Dentist	22
Ophthalmology	21
Mental health and spiritual support	19
Language learning, language course (Hungarian)	15
Protection against discrimination, legal assistance	15
Provision of sports opportunities	15
Finding and securing a school for the children	14
Gynaecology	14
Other specialist services	14
Hairdresser	14
General paediatrician	12
Family doctor	11
Finding and securing a nursery or kindergarten for the children	8
Provision of special meals	7
Post	7
Library	7

Areas of the necessities	Yes responses, %
Nurse	5
Banking	5

5. Summary

- On the one hand, the research allowed us to have quantitative data collected in several ways and detailed information on the refugees targeted by the project. On the other hand, it has greatly helped to establish contacts with refugee people and families, and to lay the foundations for joint work.
- The sample is almost equal in the proportion of Ukrainian citizens and dual Ukrainian-Hungarian citizens (44% and 41% respectively). The percentage of those who identify themselves as Roma/Gypsy is 33%, all of them from Transcarpathia. One of the findings of the research is that Ukrainian-Hungarian dual citizens are unable to travel to Western Europe or qualify as refugees because of their legal status, which limits their options. The other experience is that Roma refugees are also much worse off than non-Roma (of Ukrainian origin) refugees in terms of education, labour market status and, in most cases, housing quality. These structural disadvantages are compounded by prejudice against refugees, especially Roma refugees, which are known to affect Roma in Hungary to a large extent as well.
- The majority of respondents live in collective accommodation of some kind, around a quarter live in rented or other private accommodation, and a significant proportion have no registered address. The lack of this often causes difficulties and often leads to them being denied various state and municipal supports and other opportunities.
- Almost 44 percent of respondents are working in some form, with almost 25 percent in education, but the overall share of inactive and unemployed is high, altogether at 30 percent. The average monthly net income in refugee households is HUF 172,000, with an income of HUF 61,000 per person per month. Overall, it appears that refugees' housing, jobs and incomes are in most cases precarious, and many of them are vulnerable in terms of work and accommodation, with no long-term, appropriate solutions in any of the integration dimensions (work/income, housing/accommodation). In many cases, the lack of a registered address causes difficulties for refugees, who are often deprived of various state and municipal benefits (especially family allowances) and other opportunities.
- Cases of discrimination and mistreatment are not only present in everyday life, but also in the state system, and Roma refugees are particularly affected by prejudice and exclusionary practices. These were less represented in the questionnaire data, but focus group participants and our interviewees reported a number of such cases, particularly in the areas of employment, housing, administration and health care.
- The practice of schools is not always inclusive, and refugee children often do not have access to quality education, often taught in isolation from others. Several interviewees and focus group participants reported inadequate education, exclusionary attitudes of the institution or a teacher, or that children are discriminated against at school and not helped to integrate and be included.