UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

DISPLACEMENT PATTERNS, PROTECTION RISKS AND NEEDS OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

Regional Protection Analysis #6 | Trend Analysis

Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe

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Cover photograph:

Vulnerable Ukrainian refugees receive vital support at Bielawa Centre run by American School of Warsaw, with assistance from UNHCR.
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Key findings

Temporary protection remained the predominant legal status for Ukrainian refugees across all reporting periods, with only one to two percent transitioning to other legal statuses.

The proportion of refugees reporting challenges upon returning to their host countries after short visits to Ukraine steadily declined. Across all reporting periods, the most commonly cited issues were the suspension of benefits and legal status in the host countries, though both became less prevalent over time.

The share of refugee households reporting missing identity documents dropped, while the ability to replace or renew documents in host countries declined over time. International passports remained the most commonly missing document.

Across all reporting periods, households including members with specific needs applied for social protection benefits more than other households, yet faced greater challenges accessing them. In many cases, access was hindered by practical and administrative barriers, and in Hungary, by legal frameworks under which temporary protection beneficiaries are not recognized as eligible recipients of social protection benefits.

Refugees in collective accommodation, many of whom have specific needs, continued to face precarious access to housing due to the phasing out of free accommodation schemes.

Refugees consistently reported high levels of urgent needs, including for healthcare and accommodation, as well as information needs on financial aid and job opportunities. The types of needs varied by host country and household composition.

Background

The war in Ukraine has led to one of the largest displacement crises in the world. Since February 2022 – and as of July 2025 – over five million Ukrainian refugees have been recorded in Europe alone, with an additional 560,000 displaced to other parts of the globe.[1]

Since the onset of the crisis, UNHCR has closely monitored the protection situation of refugees from Ukraine, particularly through the implementation of protection profiling and monitoring systems across several European countries. Between October 2023 and March 2025, a total of 18,783 interviews were conducted with Ukrainian refugees across 11 countries: Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.

This trend analysis examines refugees' access to rights in these countries over time, dividing the reporting period into three six-month intervals: the first reporting period (October 2023 to March 2024), the second reporting period (April 2024 to September 2024), and the third reporting period (October 2024 to March 2025). This analysis is based on interviews with refugees who arrived in their host countries between 24 February 2022 and 31 October 2023, enabling a more accurate assessment of how access to rights has evolved over time.

1. Operational Data Portal, Ukraine Refugee Situation https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine

Access to legal status

In response to the large influx of refugees from Ukraine in early 2022, the European Union activated its Temporary Protection mechanism for the first time.[2] This measure has since been extended four times, most recently through March 2027.[3] Temporary protection has provided refugees from Ukraine with swift access to rights, including employment, education, and housing.

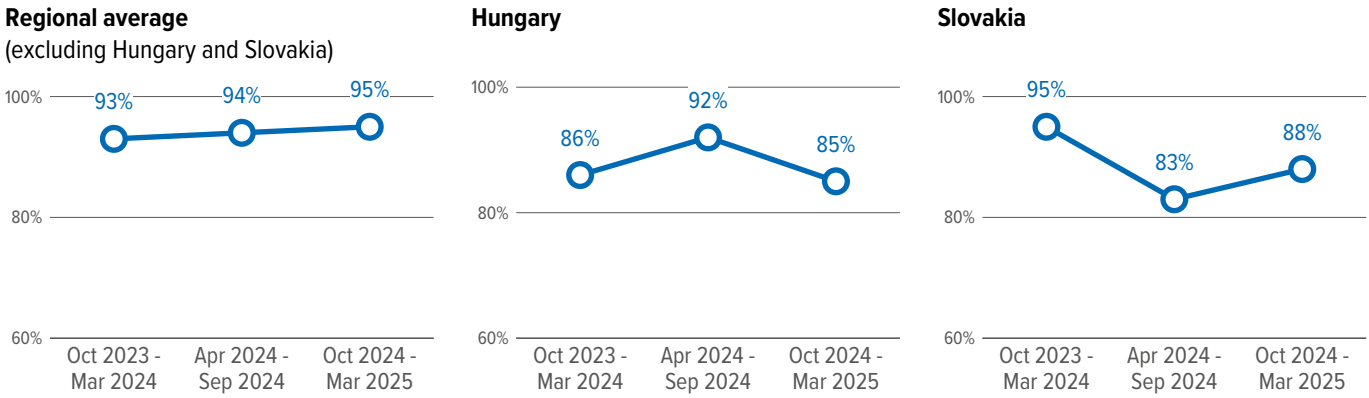
In this context, temporary protection remained the most common legal status among Ukrainian refugees across all reporting periods. In the first and second periods, 93% and 94% of respondents respectively reported having obtained temporary protection, rising slightly to 95% in the third.[4] However, some national variations emerged. In Hungary, the share of refugees with temporary protection increased from 86% in the first period to 92% in the second, before falling to 85% in the third. The lower figure in the first period may be explained by a higher proportion of interviews conducted at the border, before individuals had the opportunity to register for temporary protection. In the third period, many refugees in Hungary reported applying for residency permits instead of temporary protection.

Similarly, in Slovakia, the proportion of individuals who had obtained temporary protection declined from 95% in the first period to 88% in the third. As of August 2024, the number of people receiving temporary protection in Slovakia has decreased, as reflected in official data. This decline is partly attributed to reduced registration capacity: the Foreign Police shortened opening hours for temporary protection registration and introduced an appointment-based booking system due to limited resources. As a result, refugees face long waits to obtain temporary protection, limiting their access to essential services such as healthcare, accommodation, and education.

During the three reporting periods, a negligible share of Ukrainian refugees transitioned from temporary protection status to other forms of legal stay in host countries, primarily through short-term and long-term residency permits. Specifically, 1% of respondents made this transition during the first period, and 2% during both the second and third periods. Whilst approximately a fifth of respondents during UNHCR's 6th round of intention survey reported that they were planning to change their legal status from temporary protection to other kinds of residency permits within the next 12 months, protection monitoring results do not yet demonstrate evidence of these changes happening at scale.

Both UNHCR and the European Commission have urged host states to prepare to transition temporary protection beneficiaries to alternative forms of legal status.[5] The slow uptake of other forms of legal status amongst the Ukrainian refugee community indicates much work remains to be done in this regard.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WITH A TEMPORARY PROTECTION IN HOST COUNTRY



2. Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection available at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2022/382/oj/eng ; in Moldova, temporary protection was first activated in March 2023
3. Council of Europe, Press Release https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/06/13/eu-member-states-agree-to-extend-temporary-protection-for-refugees-from-ukraine/
4. Regional average excluding Hungary and Slovakia
5. https://www.refworld.org/policy/countrypos/unhcr/2025/en/150064 ; EUR-Lex - 52025DC0649 - EN - EUR-Lex

Temporary visits to Ukraine

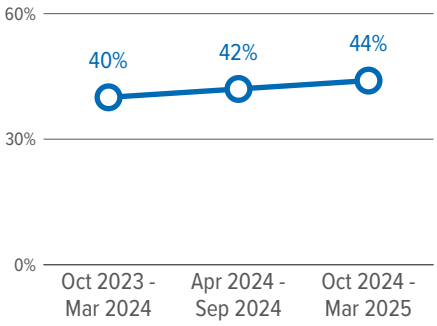
There was a gradual increase in the proportion of Ukrainian refugees temporarily visiting Ukraine, rising from 40% in the first reporting period to 44% in the third. The primary motivations for these visits remained unchanged: visiting relatives, accessing healthcare, and obtaining documentation.

Encouragingly, the percentage of refugees who reported encountering challenges upon return to their host countries steadily declined, from 12% in the first reporting period, to 10% in the second, and 6% in the third. During all reporting periods, the most frequently reported challenges were the suspension of benefits and legal status in the host country due to their travel to Ukraine, though both became less prevalent over time.

Compared to other host countries, refugees in Poland reported consistently higher rates of such challenges – 21%, 17%, and 11%. While these figures show a downward trend, they remained above the overall average across all periods. In Poland, refugees' absences longer than 30 days result in the loss of temporary protection status.[6] UNHCR has also documented cases in which refugees' protection status was deactivated even though they were away for less than 30 days or had not left Poland.[7]

UNHCR has welcomed the flexible approaches demonstrated by several host states towards short term visits to Ukraine, which can help inform decisions on permanent return to the country.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO VISITED UKRAINE AT LEAST ONCE SINCE THEIR INITIAL DEPARTURE

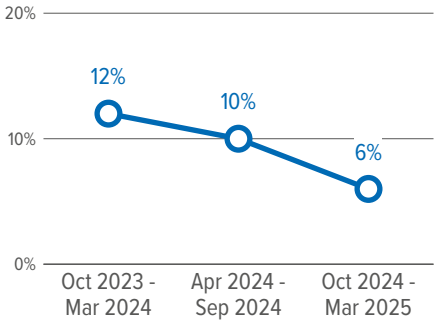


MAIN REASONS FOR TEMPORARY VISIT*

Oct 2023 - Mar 2024		Apr 2024 - Sep 2024		Oct 2024 - Mar 2025	
Visiting relatives	45%	Visiting relatives	47%	Visiting relatives	45%
To access healthcare	14%	To access healthcare	14%	To access healthcare	16%
Obtain documents	13%	Obtain documents	12%	Obtain documents	10%
Check on property	9%	Check on property	9%	Check on property	10%
Check on situation	6%	Check on situation	6%	Check on situation	6%

* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTIES UPON THEIR RETURN TO HOST COUNTRY



MAIN DIFFICULTIES FACED UPON RETURN TO HOST COUNTRY

Oct 2023 - Mar 2024		Apr 2024 - Sep 2024		Oct 2024 - Mar 2025	
Benefits suspended/removed	55%	Legal status suspended/revoked	65%	Benefits suspended/removed	45%
Legal status suspended/revoked	50%	Benefits suspended/removed	51%	Legal status suspended/revoked	41%
Difficulties re-entering	28%	Difficulties re-entering	19%	Difficulties re-entering	25%
Other	9%	Other	8%	Other	13%
Prefer not to answer	2%	Prefer not to answer	4%	Prefer not to answer	3%

* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

6. UNHCR Poland Protection Brief #1 https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/97143; UNHCR Poland Protection Brief #2 https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99574 , UNHCR Poland Protection Brief #3 https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102103
7. Ibid

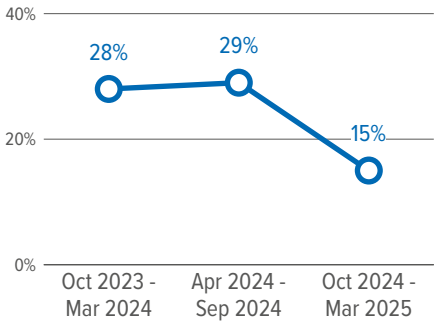
Access to documentation

The percentage of refugees reporting that at least one household member is missing one or more identity documents remained stable at 28% and 29% during the first two periods, before dropping significantly to 15% in the third. However, this overall positive trend masks increases in certain countries. In Hungary, the share of refugees reporting missing documentation rose steadily from 21% to 31%, and then to 33%. In Belarus, it increased from 7% to 9%, and then to 19%. Across all reporting periods and countries surveyed, the most commonly missing document was an international passport.

Among surveyed refugees, the ability to replace or renew documents in host countries declined over time, with the proportion of those missing documentation reporting an inability to do so increasing from 17% to 19%, and then to 30%. While most countries experienced this upward trend, Moldova and Slovakia were exceptions. In Moldova, the share steadily declined from 18% to 16%, and then to 10%. In Slovakia, it initially rose from 8% to 16%, before falling significantly to just 2% in the third period.

Regionally, the most commonly reported barrier to replacing identity documents was the inability to afford associated fees. However, the nature of challenges varied by host country. For example, in Hungary, refugees frequently cited long waiting times; in Poland, cost-related barriers were most common; and in Belarus, the primary issue was unavailability of services.

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD WITH AT LEAST ONE MEMBER MISSING ONE OR MORE IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

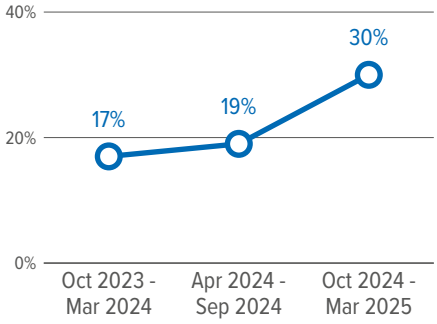


TOP MISSING DOCUMENTATION*

Oct 2023 - Mar 2024		Apr 2024 - Sep 2024		Oct 2024 - Mar 2025	
International passport	24%	International passport	26%	International passport	86%
Internal passport	4%	Internal passport	4%	Internal passport	18%
ID cards	2%	ID cards	1%	ID cards	5%
Refugee certificate	< 0%	Refugee certificate	< 0%	Refugee certificate	< 0%
Stateless residence	< 0%	Stateless residence	< 0%	Stateless residence	< 0%

* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO ARE UNABLE TO REPLACE/RENEW DOCUMENTATION IN THE HOST COUNTRY



MAIN REASONS FOR INABILITY TO REPLACE/RENEW DOCUMENTATION IN THE HOST COUNTRY

Oct 2023 - Mar 2024		Apr 2024 - Sep 2024		Oct 2024 - Mar 2025	
Can't afford	52%	Can't afford	38%	Can't afford	39%
Long wait	24%	Service unavailable	31%	Service unavailable	24%
Service unavailable	19%	Long wait	25%	Unable to update military registration data	15%
Unaware of the procedure	10%	Other	13%	Other	15%
Other	10%	Unaware of the procedure	13%	Long wait	15%

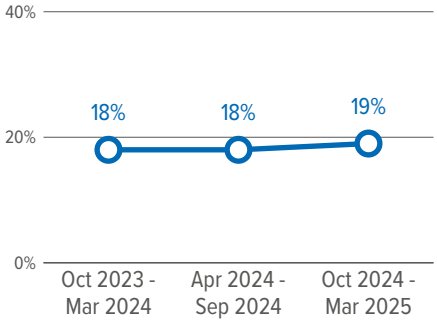
* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

Access to civil registration

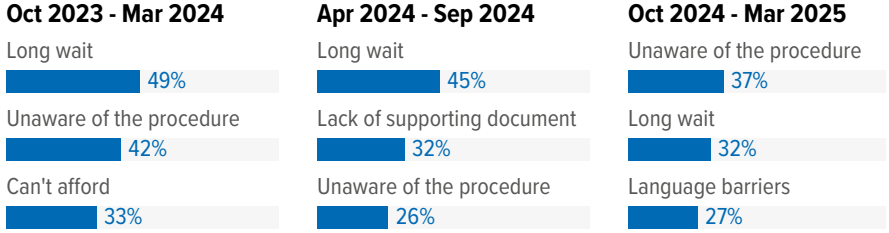
During all reporting periods, 12% of refugees reported changes to their family composition since leaving Ukraine, due to events such as birth, death, marriage, or divorce. The share of refugees facing difficulties registering these events in their host countries remained relatively stable: 18% in the first two periods to 19% in the third. Despite this regional trend, some host countries recorded more noticeable upticks. In Hungary, for example, the percentage of refugees reporting registration challenges remained steady at 41% during the first two periods before rising sharply to 53% in the third. A likely reason is that Hungarian authorities typically require original documents, apostilles, and certified Hungarian translations, standards that are often difficult to meet for temporary protection holders due to logistical and financial constraints.

Regionally, the primary challenge reported during the first and second periods was long waiting times. In the third period, however, the most frequently cited issue shifted to a lack of awareness about registration procedures. That said, reported obstacles varied across host countries. For example, in Czechia, long waiting times remained the most frequently reported obstacle to civil registration, while in Hungary, it was the lack of supporting documents.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO REPORTED CHALLENGES REGISTERING VITAL EVENTS WITH THE AUTHORITIES OF THE HOST COUNTRY



MAIN CHALLENGES FACED*



* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

Access to social protection benefits

Across the three reporting periods, a high share of Ukrainian refugees reported applying for social protection benefits, with a slight increase from 79% in the first period to 81% in the second, and 82% in the third. The most commonly reported types of benefits refugees applied for were grants for vulnerable groups and cash assistance for food and accommodation.

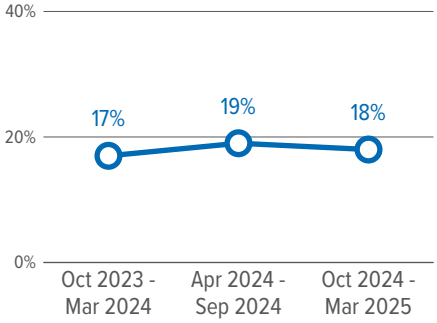
The share of refugees who reported barriers to accessing social protection remained relatively stable at the regional level – 17% in the first period, 19% in the second, and 18% in the third. However, trends varied at the country level. In Hungary, the proportion of refugees reporting difficulties increased steadily, from 15% in the first period to 16% in the second and 23% in the third. The main barrier to social protection in Hungary is that the Social Act does not include temporary protection beneficiaries in its scope, preventing them from accessing essential financial and in-kind support.[8] Similarly, in Poland, the share reporting challenges rose from 19% to 22% between the first and subsequent periods, with language barriers and lack of information identified as key obstacles.

In contrast, some countries saw improvements. In Czechia, for example, the percentage of refugees reporting difficulties slightly declined from 20% in the first two periods to 15% in the third. In Lithuania, the percentage increased from 10% in the first reporting period to 20% in the second, before declining to 9% in the third.

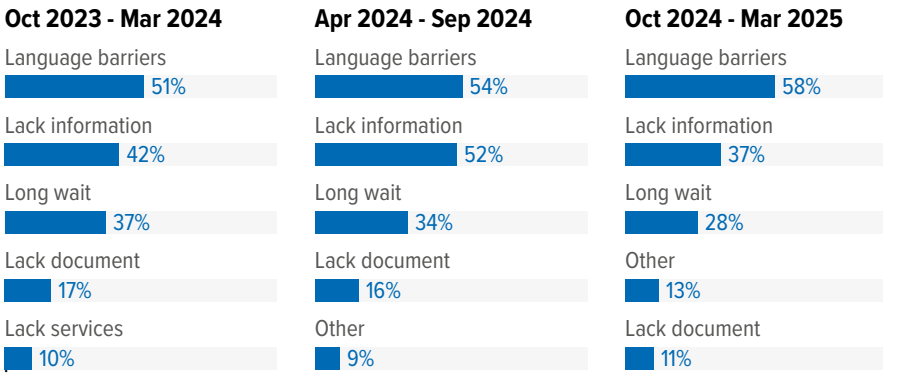
Regionally, refugees most often cited language barriers and lack of information as the main obstacles to accessing social protection. However, challenges varied by host country, and included ineligibility, long waiting times, and a lack of documentation.

8. UNHCR Hungary Protection Brief #1 https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/107231

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO EXPERIENCED CHALLENGES ACCESSING SOCIAL PROTECTION BENEFITS



MAIN CHALLENGES FACED*



* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

In focus: access to social protection benefits for households with specific needs[1]

Households including at least one member with a specific need applied for social protection benefits at higher rates – 84%, 86%, and 88% across the three periods – compared to 73%, 74%, and 74% among those without specific needs. However, despite having higher application rates and likely greater reliance on social protection benefits, more vulnerable households also encountered increased challenges in accessing these benefits. Among households with a person with a specific need, 19%, 23%, and 21% reported difficulties accessing social protection benefits across the three periods, while among households without a person with a specific need, the share was consistently lower at 15%, 14%, and 14%, respectively. Persons with specific needs, particularly those with disabilities, face various challenges in accessing social protection benefits across different host countries. While some legal frameworks include refugees with disabilities, practical and administrative barriers often prevent meaningful access to support.

In Bulgaria[2], for example, temporary protection beneficiaries with disabilities are entitled to disability benefits under the Law on Persons with Disabilities. However, they must undergo an assessment in Bulgaria, which includes registration with a general practitioner. Refugees have reported that the procedure is complex and that the cost of completing it often exceeds the value of the assistance received. Moreover, benefits may be granted for only three months at a time, after which a new assessment is required. In Slovakia, refugees with severe disabilities are eligible for a disability allowance, which provides essential support to them and their families. However, as noted by the Slovak Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, access can be challenging due to strict eligibility criteria and the lack of legal recourse for those who are denied.[3]

In Poland[4], refugees with disabilities are also eligible for specialized services, yet discrepancies between Polish and Ukrainian disability classifications, along with the need for document translation and verification, often result in long delays. In Hungary,[5] the situation is even more restrictive, as temporary protection beneficiaries are not explicitly included in both the Disability Act and other key support laws, such as the Social and Family Support Acts. This legislative gap leaves families with disabled members without access to vital support like home care or increased family allowances.

1. See also UNHCR's report on the situation of vulnerable refugees from Ukraine https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/113808
2. UNHCR Bulgaria Protection Brief #2 Document - Bulgaria - Protection Profiling and Monitoring Brief
3. UNHCR Slovakia Protection Brief #3 https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/110255
4. UNHCR Poland Protection Brief #1 https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/97143
5. UNHCR Hungary Protection Brief #1 https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/107231

Access to accommodation

During all three periods, the majority of refugees reported living in rented accommodation, with a gradual increase from 60% in the first period to 64% in the second and 66% in the third. Among those renting, 15% in the first period and 14% in the second and third, reported not having a rental contract. The main reasons cited were that the accommodation was rented by someone else and that landlords refused to provide a contract. In some contexts, the absence of rental contracts has reportedly led to arbitrary rent increases and hindered access to social protection benefits, among other challenges.

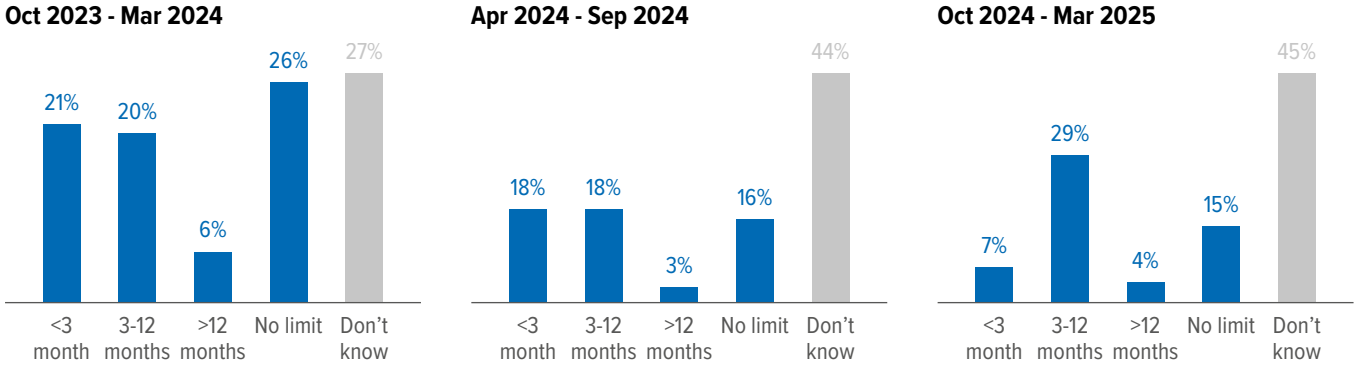
The share of refugees reporting that they would need to leave their current accommodation within the next three months declined slightly – from 7% in the first period to 6% and then 4%. However, this overall trend obscures important differences by housing type. Refugees residing in collective shelters were significantly more likely to report short-term stays due to the planned end of free accommodation schemes. For example, during the first reporting period, 21% of those in collective accommodation said they would need to leave within three months – compared to just 4% among those in rented housing. This indicates that while overall housing stability has slightly improved, refugees in collective accommodation continue to face precarious access to housing and remain more vulnerable to eviction.

Given that the majority of refugees residing in collective accommodation are individuals with specific needs – such as older persons, persons with disabilities, or single parents – they are likely to be the hardest hit. During the third reporting period, 14% of individuals with specific needs were residing in collective accommodation, compared to just 5% of other households. An incident in Poland illustrates this reality: in March 2024, the closure of a collective accommodation in Podkarpackie, primarily hosting vulnerable Roma refugees, forced many residents to return to Ukraine.[9]

Moreover, an inter-agency survey found that refugees living in poverty are over three times more likely (27% vs. 8%) to live in collective accommodation[10], and losing this accommodation often means they cannot afford to rent. As a result, many face no option but to return to Ukraine.

Overall, the termination and narrowing of access to free or subsidized accommodation for refugees is a major concern for refugees. For instance, in Hungary, legislative changes resulted in approximately 2,700 Ukrainian refugees losing their entitlement to subsidized housing, prompting some to return to Ukraine or seek refuge elsewhere.[11] Similar concerns have been raised in other countries, including Bulgaria[12], Czechia[13], Moldova, Poland[14], Romania, Slovakia[15] where the scaling back of accommodation support is creating additional pressure on already limited housing options and leading to premature returns to Ukraine.

LENGTH OF STAY FOR THOSE RESIDING IN COLLECTIVE ACCOMMODATION**

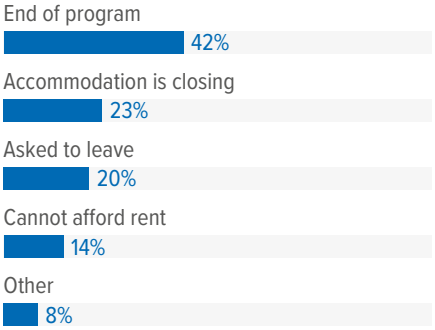


** Due to rounding some percent totals do not add up to 100%.

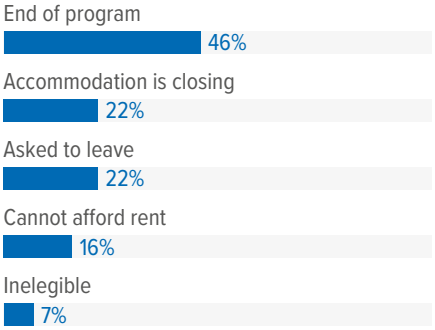
9. UNHCR Poland Protection Brief #4 https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/109112
10. High employment rates, but low wages: a poverty assessment of Ukrainian refugees in neighbouring countries https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115013
11. UNHCR Hungary Protection Brief #2 Document - UNHCR Hungary - Protection Brief - December 2024
12. Bulgaria Protection Brief Document - Bulgaria - Protection Brief on the Implementation of the New Humanitarian Assistance Programme
13. UNHCR Czechia Protection Brief #2 https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/110878
14. UNHCR Poland Protection Brief #1 https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/97143
15. UNHCR Slovakia Protection Brief #3 https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/110255

MAIN REASONS FOR HAVING TO LEAVE COLLECTIVE ACCOMMODATION WITHIN THREE MONTHS*

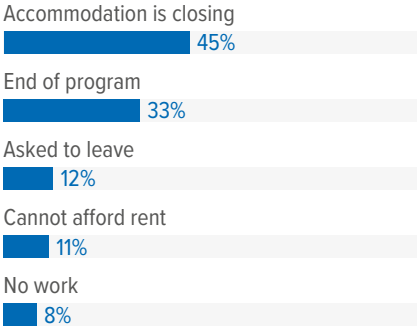
Oct 2023 - Mar 2024



Apr 2024 - Sep 2024



Oct 2024 - Mar 2025



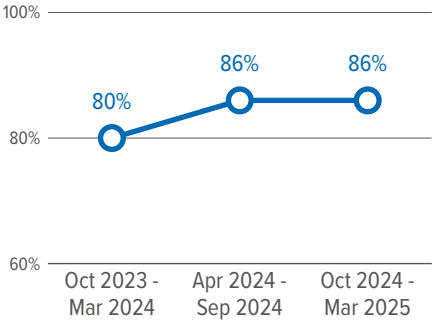
* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

Urgent needs

Across the three reporting periods, the proportion of respondents reporting at least one urgent need remained high, with an increase from 80% in the first period to 86% in both the second and third periods.

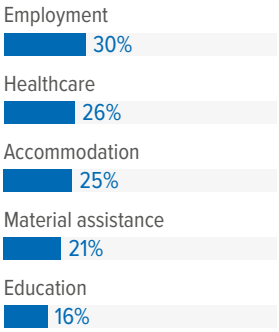
In terms of the type of urgent needs, regional patterns shifted over time: employment was the most reported urgent need in the first period, while healthcare became the top concern in the second and third. However, differences were observed both by household composition and host country. Households that included at least one person with a specific need reported healthcare as their most urgent need across all periods, whereas other households identified employment. At the country level, Bulgaria consistently reported material assistance as the top need, while in Estonia, employment remained the most reported urgent need. These findings highlight the importance of tailoring responses not only to national contexts but also to the specific profiles of households.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE AT LEAST ONE URGENT NEED

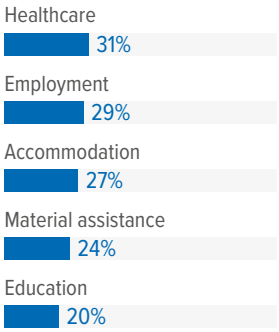


MAIN URGENT NEEDS*

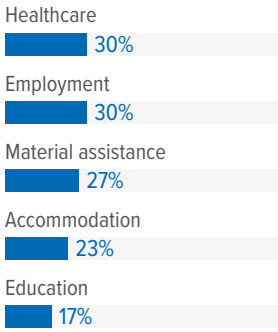
Oct 2023 - Mar 2024



Apr 2024 - Sep 2024



Oct 2024 - Mar 2025



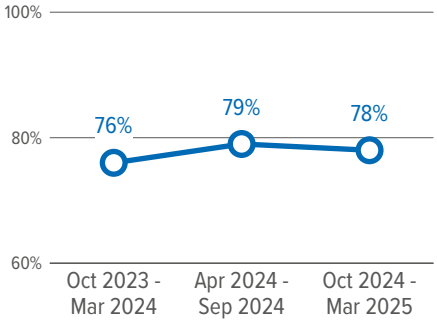
* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

Information needs

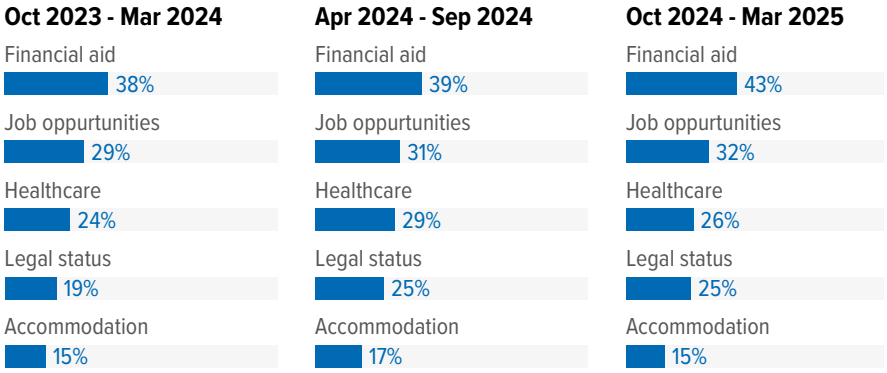
Information needs remained high during all reporting periods (76% in the first, 79% in the second, and 78% in the third). Across all periods, financial aid was the most frequently reported information need, followed by job opportunities and healthcare.

However, both host country and household composition influenced these needs. While information on financial aid was the top need in most countries, in Estonia, for example, information on job opportunities was rated highest during all reporting periods. Similarly, households that included at least one person with a specific need regularly prioritized information on financial aid, while other households indicated a higher need for information on job opportunities.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE AT LEAST ONE INFORMATION NEED



MAIN INFORMATION NEEDS*



* Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

Methodology

UNHCR conducts protection monitoring to systematically gather information on the challenges facing forcibly displaced and stateless persons. Protection monitoring allows UNHCR to conduct evidence-based programming and advocacy, which is informed by the experiences and perspectives of forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

UNHCR and its partners have been implementing a Protection Profiling and Monitoring exercise to regularly collect and analyze data about the protection situation of refugees from Ukraine and monitor changes over time. Interviews are conducted in various locations, including information and assistance points, community centers, collective sites, transit locations and reception and registration centers. Trained enumerators digitally collect data through Kobo Toolbox, which is safely stored in a UNHCR server.

Respondents are identified in the selected locations and asked for their consent to be interviewed using a harmonized regional questionnaire. The results presented in this report must be interpreted according to the limitations of the methodology and the context, particularly:

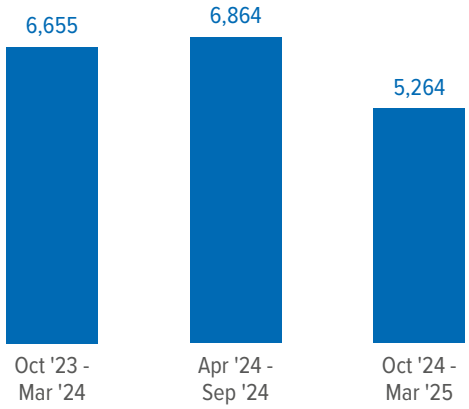
- While the random selection of respondents and diversification in places of data collection are used to reduce potential bias and ensure the sample covers different segments and profiles of the target population, results cannot necessarily be extrapolated to the population of refugees from Ukraine as a whole, given the nonprobabilistic sampling method used.
- The comparison of results across time might be affected by the changes in distribution of interviews by locations across time in the different countries.
- The results reflect refugees' situation and needs at the time of data collection, which may subsequently change depending on a wide range of factors.

With the goal of reducing sampling errors and ensuring regional results are more representative of the overall refugee population, for this regional analysis, post-stratification weights have been applied. The weights were calculated to adjust the sample by two criteria: (i)

using the estimated number of refugees recorded in each country to adjust the completed interviews in each country to the true population distribution across countries, and (ii) using estimates of refugee arrivals across quarters to adjust the completed interviews in each quarter to the real distribution of arrivals within each country.

This analysis is based on interviews with refugees who arrived in their host countries between 24 February 2022 and 31 October 2023, enabling a more accurate assessment of how access to rights has evolved over time.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS



HOST COUNTRIES WHERE INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED

DISPLACEMENT PATTERNS, PROTECTION RISKS AND NEEDS OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

Regional Protection Analysis #6 | Trend Analysis

Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia

AUGUST 2025

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The UN Refugee Agency

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For further information, visit the UNHCR Operational Data Portal for Ukraine:
https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine