



The assessment was made possible with the coordination and support of **Coalitia Vocea Romilor (The Roma Voice Coalition)**.

Background

The Roma population is an ethnic minority group in the Republic of Moldova. Estimated to make up about 0.3 % of the total population, the Roma communities are represented by 1 Baron (i.e. formal leader) and 43 officially appointed community mediator, known as *mediator comunitar* (MC). Each MC is employed by local public administration and represent a community of at least 100 Roma individuals. The main obligations of MCs are to assist the Roma people to obtain relevant public and social services.

This report summarizes the findings of a needs assessment conducted by Acted and provides insights into the profiles, status, challenges and needs of Roma community in Moldova.

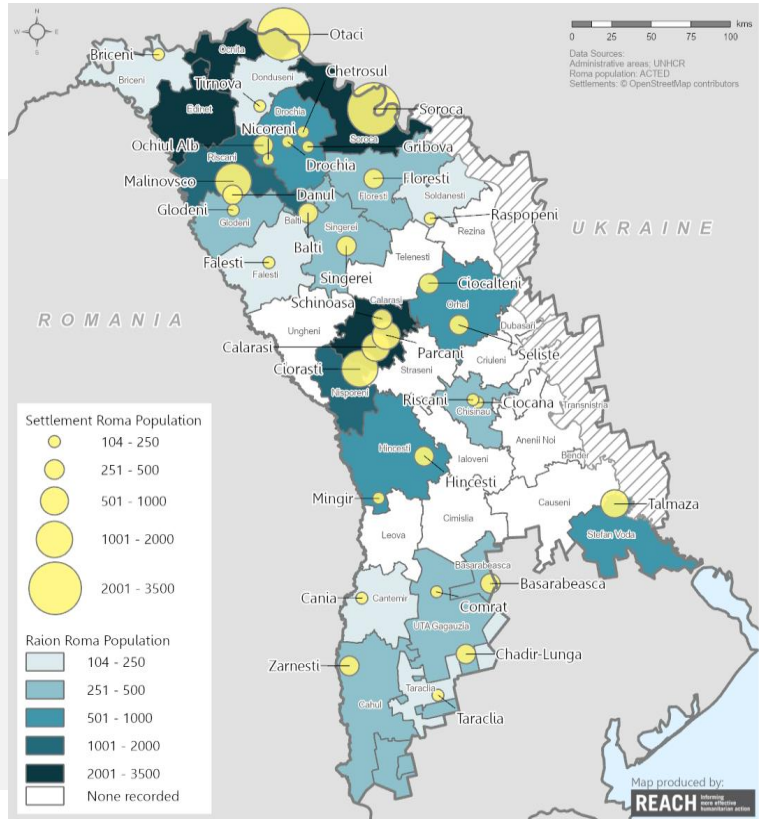
Methodology

Data was collected in November 2022 through structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with 35 MCs, 20 female and 15 male. Invitation to participate in the assessment was shared with all MCs, of which 8 were not available to participate.

Challenges and limitations:

Total population estimates of Roma population in Moldova vary greatly. Depending on the source, the number ranges from 9,000 (Population Census, 2014) to 100,000 individuals (KII). A known population size of the Roma population in Moldova is therefore difficult to determine.

Disaggregate numeric data (e.g. individuals by age group, people living with disabilities, gender, shelter status) was mostly provided as total numbers but occasionally supplemented with estimated percentages. The demographic and vulnerability data is therefore based on calculations considering both numerical and percental data. Similarly, data on gender proportion for adults (18-59) was gathered while other age groups, namely children (0 – 17) and elderly (60+), was not and therefore estimated based on Moldovan average (52.14% female / 47.86% male).



Map 1. Locations and size of Roma populations in Moldova.

Source: KIIs collected by Acted MEAL team, November 2022. Map produced by REACH.

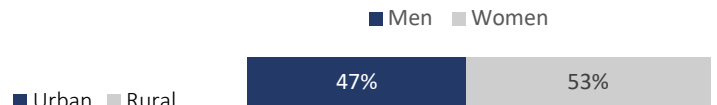


Figure 1. Proportion of men and women

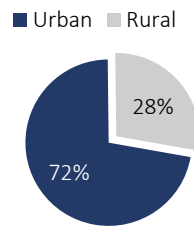


Figure 2. Urban and Rural Roma populations

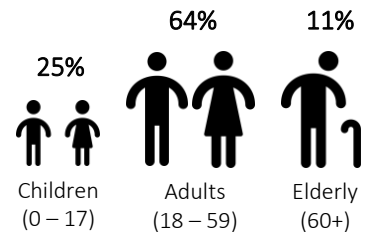


Figure 3. Age groups

Demographics

The MCs engaged in the assessment represent **20,570 Roma community members across all regions in Moldova** (Map1, or Table 1 on next page). Based on the data, the findings show that the ratio of male to females is 0.9:1 (Figure 1). Additionally, the majority of the Roma populations live in Urban locations (Figure 2) and are adults (Figure 3). *cont. on next page.*

Demographics

The vast majority of the Roma population is concentrated in the north of Moldova, with **nearly three out of every four Roma individual residing in northern raions**. The population numbers of the Southern and Central regions are similar, while only a small share living in Chisinau region (Table 1). Data also shows that **accessibility to the Roma community is high** across the seasons (i.e. winter November – March, and summer April – October) and geographical areas (e.g. rural/urban, regions).

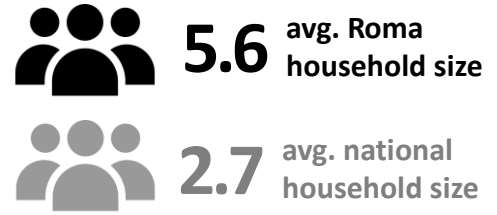


Figure 4. Average number of people per households

Region	Raions	# total ppl.	% total ppl.
North	20	15,259	74%
Center	6	2,929	14%
South	7	2,022	10%
Chisinau	2	360	2%
Total	35	20,570	100%

Table 1. Roma population represented in assessment

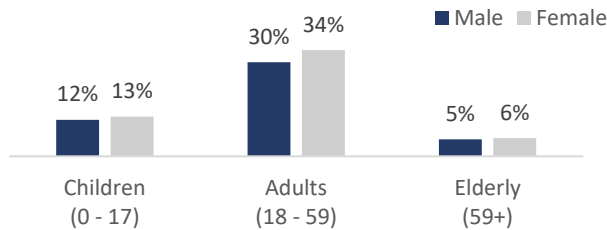


Figure 5. Percent of population by age and sex

Vulnerabilities

The average household size among the Roma is **more than twice that of the national average** household size (Figure 4). Considering demographic data, **70% are either children, elderly or adult women** (Figure 5). This corresponds to an estimate of more than 14,300 individuals characterized by age and/or gender vulnerability/ies.

Additionally, data show that among the Roma represented in the assessment 5% are people living with disabilities (PWDs). Moreover, the number of Ukrainian Roma refugees (n=736) is reflective of 3% accrual in total Roma population (n=21,306). This finding indicates that **several individuals in the Roma communities could have combined vulnerabilities**, for example children with disabilities or female Roma refugees from Ukraine.

Other potential vulnerabilities, such as women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, individuals with chronic illness or income levels have not been explored. The extent to which the Roma community members have combined vulnerabilities can therefore not be concluded.

Prioritizing needs

Food and shelter related assistance are the most important needs faced by the Roma population (Figure 6). Specifically, food and utility assistance, is mentioned as the primary need in one third of Roma communities respectively, followed by wood, rent and material needs such clothing and NFIs. Since the assessment was conducted at the outset of the cold winter season, the emphasis on the need for wood is consistent with winterization needs, since 90% of the population rely on wood for heating.

Other needs, mentioned on average as first, second or third most important in less than 10% of the communities is water, documentation, utilities (connections) and accommodation. *cont. on next page.*

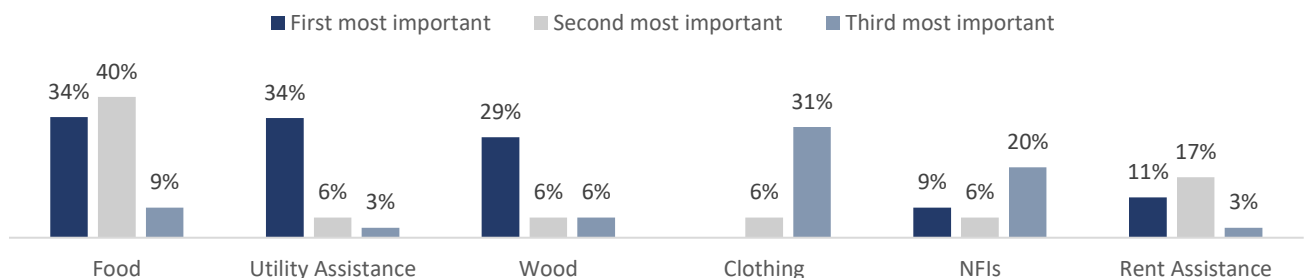


Figure 6. The most important needs as identified by first, second and third priority

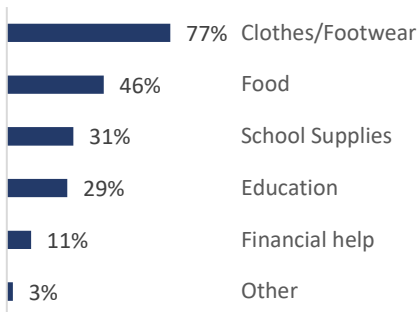


Figure 7. Children needs

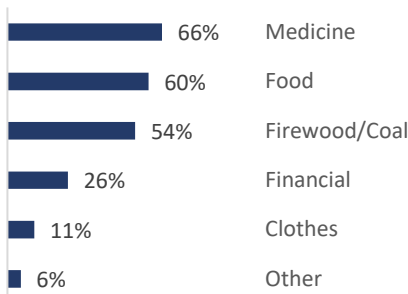


Figure 8. Elderly needs

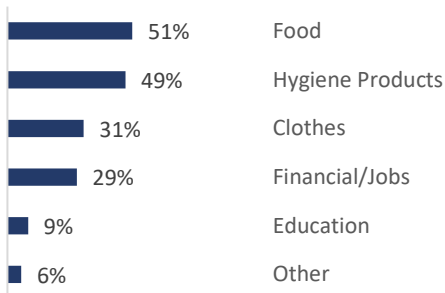


Figure 9. Women needs

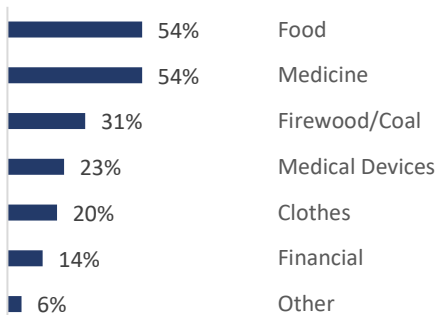


Figure 10. PWD needs

Prioritizing needs

Cont. from previous page. Among vulnerable groups the most pressing needs differ, as could be expected (Figure 7 - 10). Notably, a majority identified food as a most pressing need for all vulnerable groups.

Concurrently, food assistance is the most important kind of assistance desired in the Roma communities, considering frequency of mentioned need (Figure 11). This is followed by material assistance (i.e. wood, NFIs) and social services.

All other types of assistance (e.g. legal, water, home repair and financial) were ranked low ($\leq 3\%$ average across seven levels of priority).

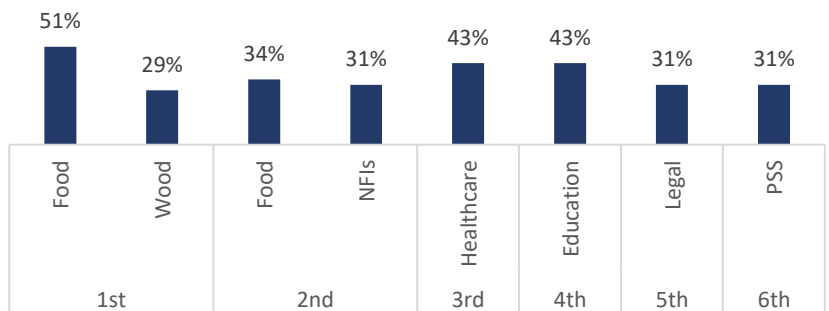





Figure 11. Most important assistance by priority, based on frequency of mention ≥ 10




For children, other needs are hygiene kits, school meals, heating and sport equipment, mentioned once respectively.



For elderly, other needs are hygiene kits mentioned twice, blood pressure machine and day center, mentioned once respectively.



For women, other needs are medicine, firewood and cleaning products mentioned twice respectively, and clean water mentioned once for Schinoasa, Calarasi Raion.



For PWD, other needs are hygiene products (including diapers) mentioned three times, access to information, ramps in city and car fuel mentioned once respectively.

Shelter status

The findings considering the shelter status among the Roma community indicate that while a **majority of households live in largely secure shelter arrangements** (i.e. not paying rent and owning their accommodation), a considerable proportion are still vulnerable to shelter insecurity.

Particularly, on average, **more than one out of every four Roma household live with possible shelter insecurity** (Figure 12). Specifically, a considerable share of household live without ownership of the accommodation they reside, of which about half also have to pay rent. Additionally, while on average a small percentage of the population experience homelessness, in one community in Chisinau half of the households were reported to not have a formal place to live (Table 2).

The Northern, Southern and Central regions have similar percentages across the shelter status

categories explored, with Chisinau being an exception. Specifically, **over half of the Roma households in Chisinau pay rent, which is more than three times more compared to other regions** (Figure 13).

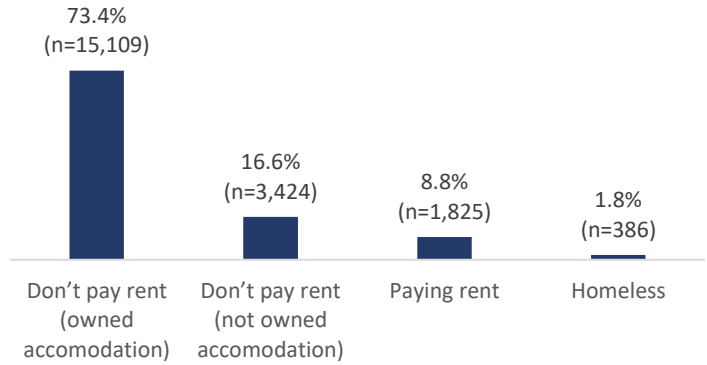


Figure 12. Percent and count of estimated households by shelter status

	Don't pay rent (owned accommodation)	Don't pay rent (not owned accommodation)	Paying rent (not owned accommodation)	Homeless
Max	100%	98%	70%	50%
Average	72%	15%	14%	2%
Min	2%	0%	0%	0%

Table 2. Highest, average and lowest prevalence of estimated shelter status across Roma communities

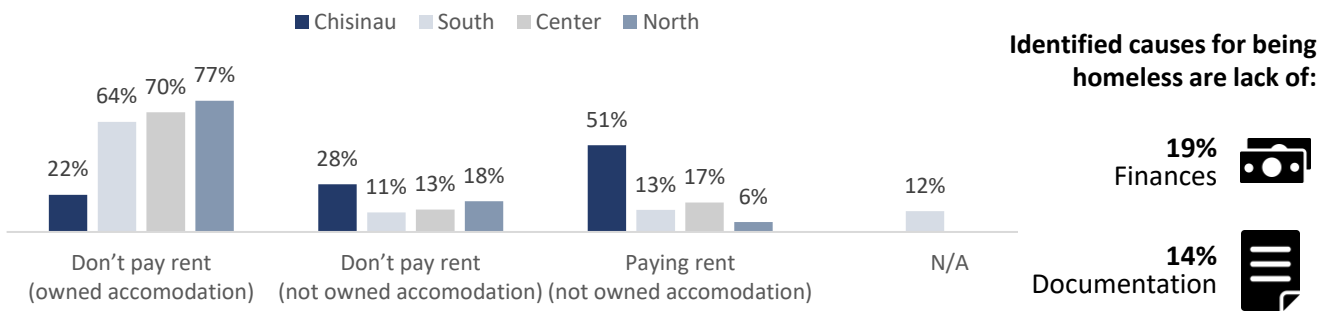


Figure 13. Shelter status estimated across regions

! Given the data collected, the total percentage of households categorized by shelter status (i.e. owned accommodation not paying rent / paying rent, renting, homeless) exceeds 100% by 1%. The discrepancy can be explained by the fact that some numbers reported on homelessness in the community corresponds to the number of households reported to not own their accommodation and pay no rent, while in other instances the number of homeless reported represented a share of the households reported to not own their accommodation and pay no rent.

Shelter types

Most commonly, Roma households live in houses or apartments that are characterized as finished / enclosed structures (Figure 14). However, **substandard housing, characterized as unfinished / non-enclosed structures is more common than living in an apartment.** Notably, a considerable percent of households shelter types have not been accounted for, due to the limitation in the assessment methodology. Examples of other shelter types were not recorded in the data.

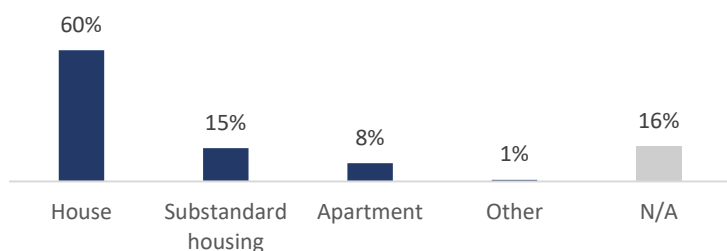


Figure 14. Proportion of household living in respective shelter type

Type	Monthly average cost	Percent of HHs use
Wood	3,892 MDL	90%
Gas	6,000 MDL	5%
Electricity	N/A	4.9%
Central heating	4,500 MDL	0.4%
Coal	4,000 MDL	3%

Table 3. Monthly average utility expenditure (MDL) and percent use

Shelter infrastructure conditions

While most households live in proper housing, **defects and damage are prevalent characteristics of shelter infrastructure across all Roma communities** (Figure 15). Primarily, lack of insulation is the most identified issue and particularly concerning considering that average monthly utility expenditures ranges between 3,892 MDL to 6,000 MDL depending on the heating solution used (Table 3).

The Roma communities in the Northern region of Moldova have the highest number of shelter defects and/or damage identified to affect their shelters, however this could possibly be because the region has the highest concentration of the Roma population.

Additionally, considering the high degree to which various coping strategies are adopted to deal with household needs during winter (Figure 16), repairing shelter defects and damage could contribute to greater security and protection of lives and basic needs.

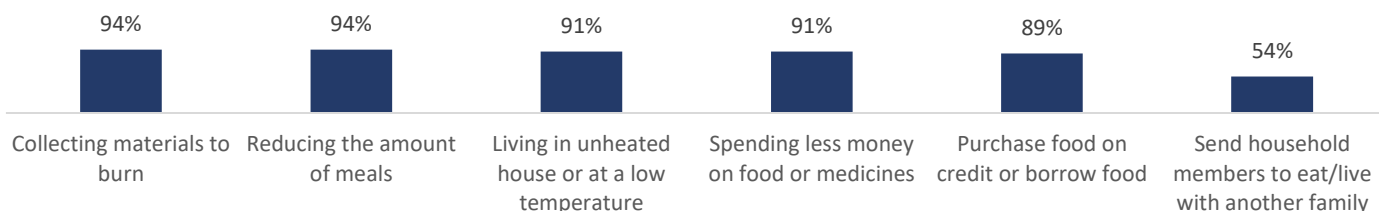


Figure 16. Coping strategies adopted in communities during winter

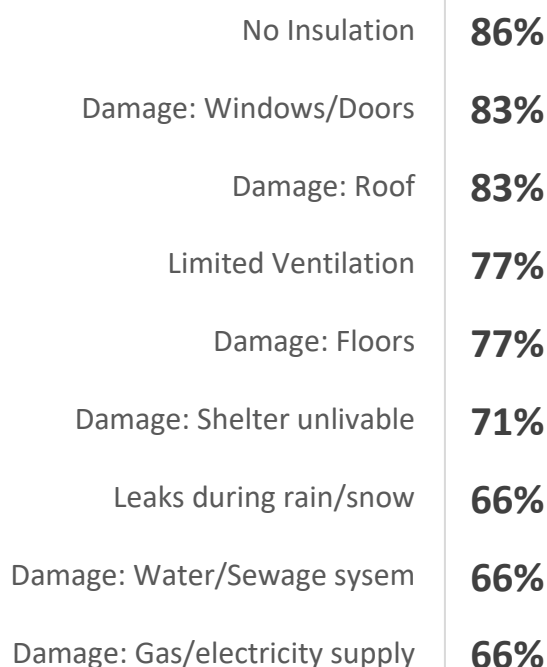


Figure 15. Share of community mediators that identify shelter defects and damage present in the community

71% Live in shelters considered unlivable by community mediator

Education

Access to education and schools is lacking among a substantial share (44%) of the Roma population in Moldova. This includes low school enrollment rates for children, high numbers of adults without basic education and high rate of illiteracy among elderly (Figure 17).

Across regions, Chisinau has the lowest proportion of Roma population with educational status (i.e. Enrolled / Finished school / Literate), while Center has the highest (Figure 18). However, considering the size of the population, most Roma with lacking education reside in the North (36% of total Roma population).

Male Roma community members are more likely to have, or have had, access to education across ages, while females are less likely to have corresponding educational status (Figure 19), with exception for literacy rates among the elderly.

Notably, every other Roma child (53%) is not in school. Based on the population figures established in the assessment, that correlates to an estimate of **2,681 children missing out on education**. The share of children out of school is largely similar (+/- 11%) across regions.

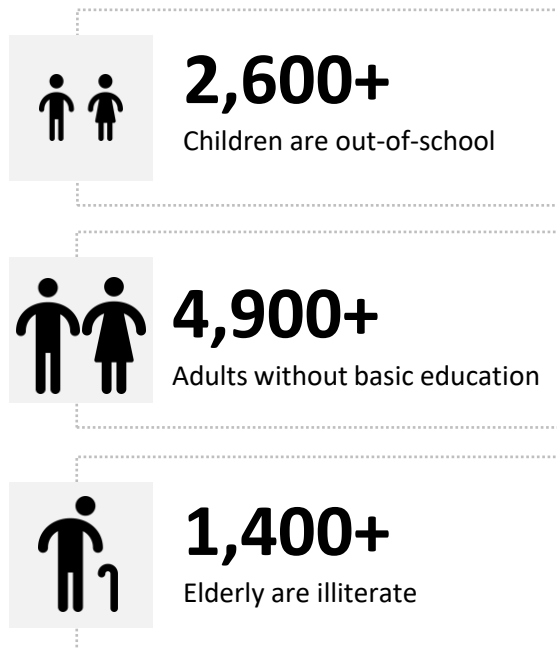


Figure 17. Proportion of population in/with education

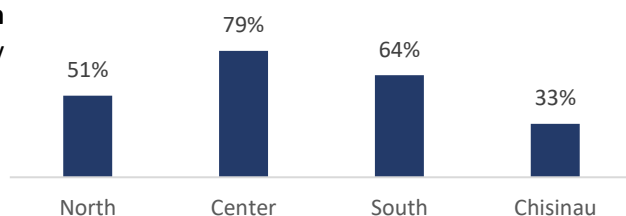


Figure 18. Proportion of population with/in education by region

Barriers in access to education

In two thirds of the Roma communities (66%), barriers to access education are present. A combination of two barriers, specifically tensions and discrimination, was most commonly mentioned by the community mediators (29%). At most four different barriers were mentioned to be present (6%).

Specifically, **family and community dynamics are reported the most common barriers preventing Roma population in Moldova to access education, followed by discrimination** (Figure 20).

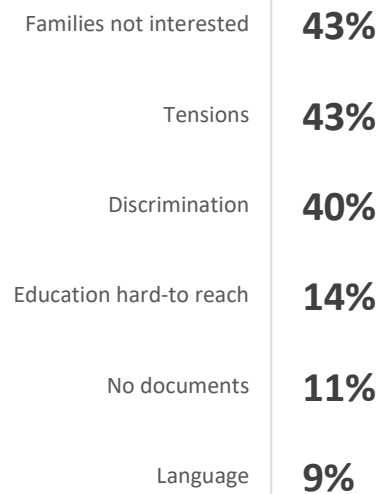


Figure 20. Education barriers

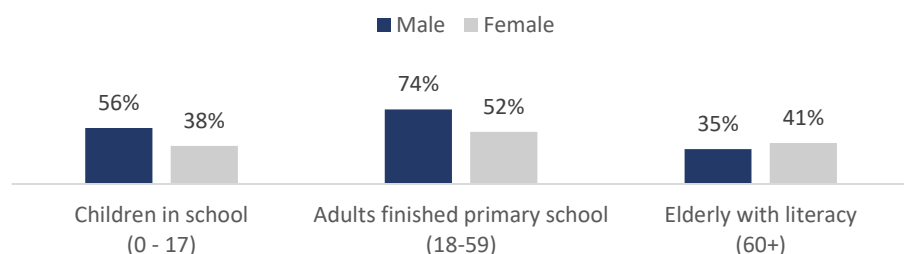


Figure 19. Educational status relative to age and gender

Livelihoods

Formal employment is uncommon among the Roma population in Moldova, rather the main source of income is predominantly characterized by a reliance on social support (e.g. assistance, remittances) or atypical work (e.g. casual / occasional work, trading) (Figure 21). Other sources of income (e.g. own business, salaries, government work, own business) were mentioned by three or less community mediators ($\leq 9\%$). The low employment rate among Roma community is in stark contrast to employment rates among the general labor force (working population) in the Republic of Moldova. Particularly as informed by the National Bureau of Statistics, based on the Labour

Force Survey (LFS) of Q3 of 2022 which reports an unemployment rate of only 2.5% among the general labor force.

In most Roma communities (57%), there is no difference reported in main source of income. However, in the remaining communities (43%), the main source of income reported for males and females is different.

One fifth of the Roma population (22%) are reported to work in season agriculture. Seeking social assistance is the most mentioned coping strategy for agricultural workers during off-season.

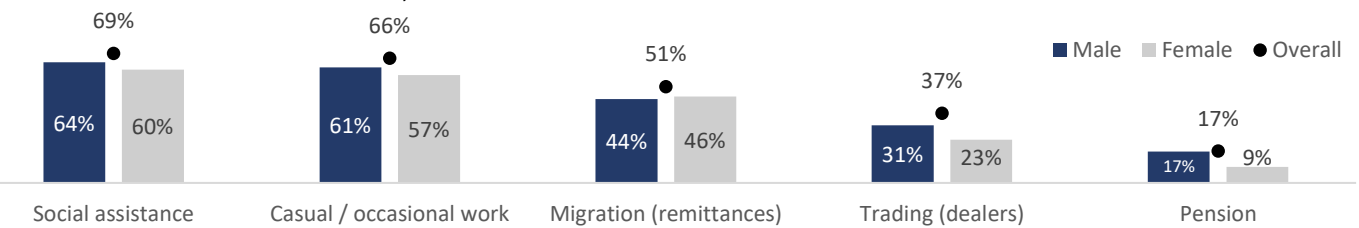


Figure 21. Main source(s) of income by gender and overall

Employment barriers and challenges

In all Roma communities, barriers to employment and occupation exist. In most communities (94%) females experience the same challenges as men in terms of getting or keeping a job. Only in two communities do reported barriers differ.

The most common barrier in limiting employment opportunities for Roma population are socioeconomic issues (Figure 22). Other barriers and employment challenges (e.g. lack of childcare facilities, transport, low/no salary, no documentation, health issues) were mentioned by two or less community mediators ($\leq 6\%$).

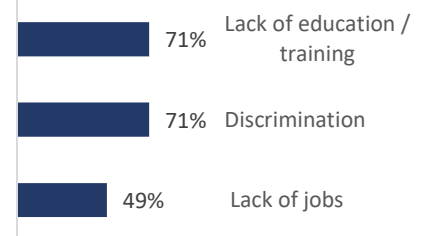


Figure 22. Employment barriers

Opportunities

Considering potential involvement in different work sectors, the findings suggests that the Roma community in Moldova has varied interest and opinions on the topic. Specifically, **40% of the community mediators perceive that there is no work sector available for the Roma population to enter**, while 14% maintain that there is not an interest in entering any work sector.

Still, among the potential work sectors identified, industrial sectors are most mentioned, followed by service work (e.g. beauty, driving cleaning) (Figure 23). Other sectors (e.g. woodwork, any sector) were mentioned by one community mediator respectively ($\leq 3\%$).

Notably, in terms of relevant trainings, including courses, most frequently mentioned types related to service sectors (Figure 24), in contrast to the more industrial sectors identified as potential for work. Other trainings and activities identified to increase employability (e.g. higher education, management/entrepreneurship, driving, mechanics, computer, hospitality) were mentioned by three or less community mediators ($\leq 9\%$).

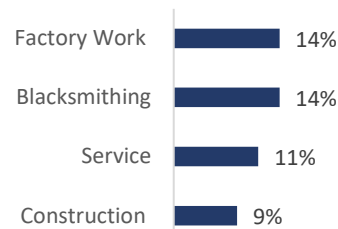


Figure 23. Potential work sectors

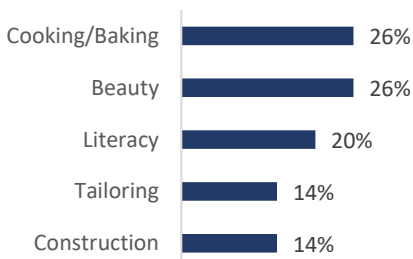


Figure 24. Relevant trainings/courses

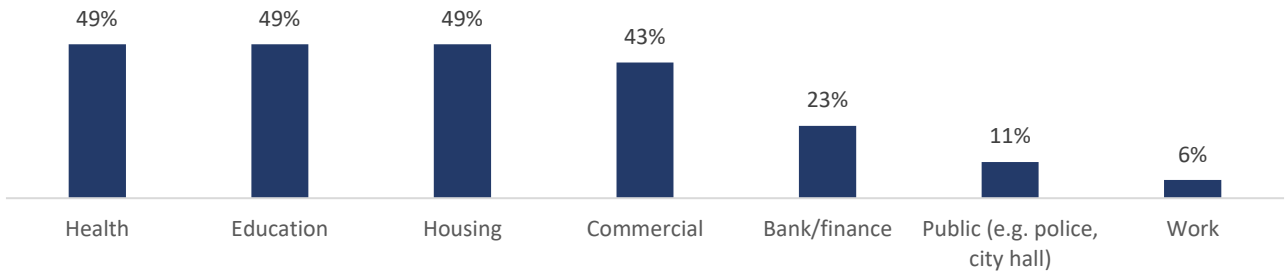


Figure 25. Institutions where Roma community are underserved

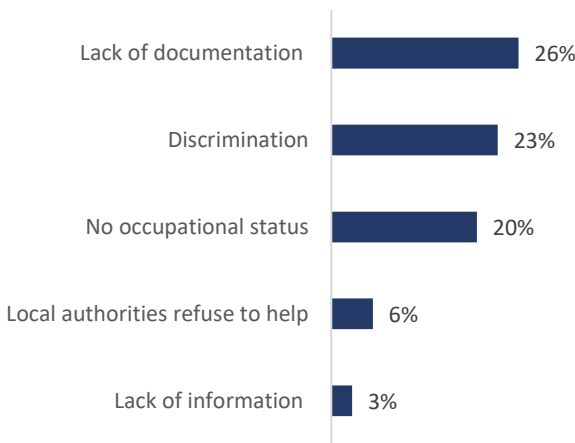


Figure 26. Barriers faced in accessing social services

Social access and inclusion

Nearly three out of four (74%) of Roma community mediators perceive Roma population to be underserved by various institutions. Specifically, health, education and housing are the predominant areas where Roma community members experience challenges (Figure 25).

Additionally, a slightly lower share (71%) identified barriers hindering Roma population in accessing social services. Specifically, lack of documentation is recognized by most, followed by discrimination (Figure 26). Findings suggest that the challenges faced by the Roma population are structural and the effects interconnected. For example, lack of education contributes to employment insecurity which in extension affects access to social services.

Community wellbeing

Social issues, both at community and household level, is found to affect the Roma population at large. Specifically, domestic violence (69%), internal or communal conflict (63%) and substance abuse (60%) are social issues affecting the Roma community wellbeing.

Issues are generally resolved internally, however engagement of community leader to resolve disputes across both community and household level is frequently practices.

In three out of five (60%) Roma communities, both institutional challenges and community issues are reported prevalent.

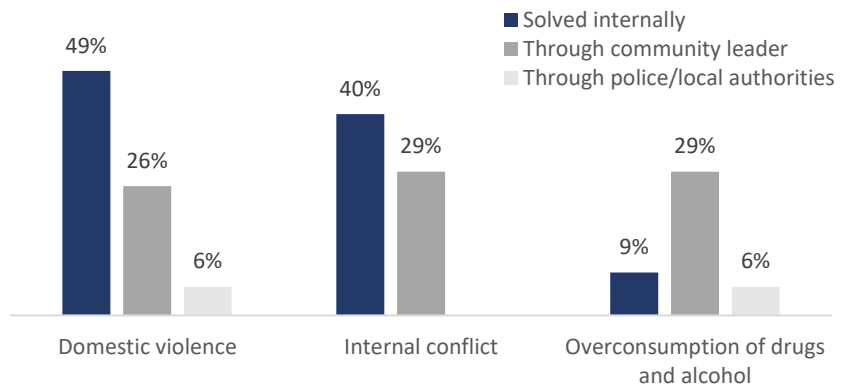


Figure 27. Resolution mechanisms used in community issues

Individual wellbeing

A vast majority (86%) acknowledge that there are mental health problems in the Roma community. While most are believed to have access to psychosocial services as needed, a significant share (17%) might not have access and may face barriers in accessing appropriate mental health support. *cont. on next page.*

Individual wellbeing

Cont. from previous page. The main coping mechanism reportedly used among Roma community members to address psychosocial needs is through local social relationships, specifically community leader followed by family doctor (Figure 28). Seeking professional support is not commonly practiced.

Other ways mentioned included practicing hobbies, social gatherings, social assistance or solved internally, mentioned by one community mediators (<3%).

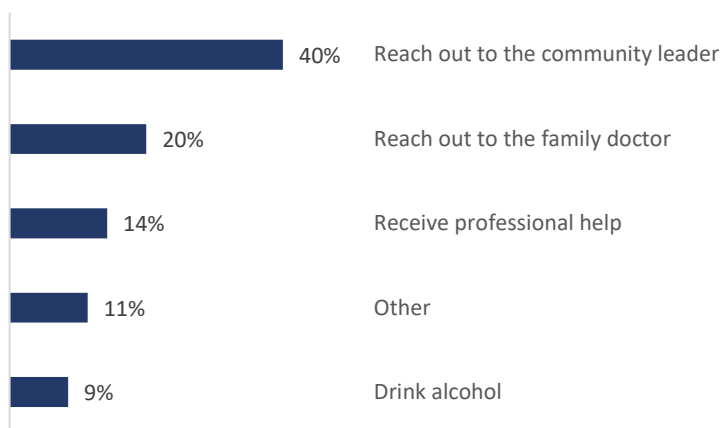


Figure 28. Mental health – coping mechanisms

Preferred methods of information dissemination



69%
Community



46%
Phone / SMS



26%
Social networks / internet

Preferred communication channels to disseminate information (e.g. assistance) is through local community relations, specifically leaders or mediators. Digital methods, such as phone or online are also commonly mentioned. Other methods includes through mobile teams (20%), flyers (11), TV (9%), service centers and newspapers (3% respectively.)

Conclusions

The Roma communities in Moldova faces significant challenges in terms of access to basic needs, primarily food and heating during winter, while living in substandard shelters and conditioned by various vulnerabilities.

The Roma population is relatively young, with a smaller share of elderly people compared to adults and children. Additionally, the average Roma household is more than twice the size compared to the national average in Moldova. While the vast majority of the represented population live in raions in the North, most also live in urban areas. The preference for urban settings could be by virtue of access to better opportunities and services.

While most households across Moldova live in largely secure housing arrangements (i.e. not paying rent and owning their accommodation), a considerable proportion are vulnerable in their current shelter due to defects and damage to infrastructure.

Combined vulnerabilities, such as food and shelter insecurity among the Roma community is particularly concerning given the prevalence of adopting coping strategies to secure needs during the winter when most households rely on wood for heating.

In addition to urgent needs, the Roma population is a marginalized and disadvantaged group challenged with structural barriers to realized rights. Particularly, Roma populations largely miss out on education and training opportunity, have limited access to employment as well as public benefits.

Roma communities tend to rely on internal resolution of issues or guidance by community leaders, with limited engagement with outside authorities or resources, this suggests a strong sense of community and a preference of self-reliance, but may also indicate a lack of access or trust in other resources.

Recommendations

In order to address the needs of the Roma community in Moldova and provide relevant assistance, considering the findings of the assessment, the following sectors are recommended to focus on:

Shelter:

- A significant proportion of the Roma population in Moldova live in substandard housing with poor infrastructure. Efforts should be made to improve shelter conditions. Focused assistance could include to provide shelters with proper insulation and repairing damaged and/or defected infrastructure (e.g. windows, doors, roof, floor).
- Utility costs for heating (e.g. wood, gas, coal) contribute to a considerable amount of household expenses. Assistance to cover utility costs through bill payments and/or cash transfers, can contribute secured household needs and reduced pressure to adopt negative coping strategies during the winter.

Food:

- Food is identified as the most immediate need in the Roma communities, both as a first and second priority. Food programming to secure household food and nutritional needs are important to ensure basic needs are met.

Education and vocational training:

- Provision of support in term of education (e.g. after school activities to help children with schoolwork, improving community/family attitudes towards education) can contribute to greater enrollment and completion of children in primary education.
- Advance access to relevant skill-based training with certification/diploma of completion, could support of working age individuals to find employment opportunities and secure incomes. Moreover, considering the low involvement in formal work, encouragement of entrepreneurship (e.g. through micro-finance), could help create job opportunities and improve well-being.

Social cohesion and resilience:

- Considering current gaps in available information, specifically of disaggregate numeric data on vulnerabilities (e.g. prevalence of disability or chronic illness across age/gender, income levels, Ukrainian Roma Refugees), there is a need to conduct further data collection and to increase awareness and understanding of the Roma population in Moldova. In order to do so, household level surveying can contribute to more comprehensive insights of profiles, status, challenges and needs of Roma community in Moldova.
- In order to anchor solutions locally and build resilience, the Roma community should be involved in the development of relevant solutions to meet the populations' needs. A platform for the population to voice concerns and needs could contribute to inclusive participation and encourage the Roma population to participate in decision-making processes that extend to implementation of programs that affect the community.
- Efforts to promote social inclusion and equality across societal levels (i.e. from household and community through institutions and policy) are needed to reduce the prevalence of experienced discrimination and exclusion.
- Using culturally appropriate methods of communication and engagement (e.g. local language, outreach through community representatives) can contribute to greater acceptance and interest to engage by the Roma population. Additionally, encouraging community-based capacity building (e.g. for conflict resolution, civic engagement) can benefit from the group belonging and social relations within the Roma communities.