

Operational Context & Analysis

As of 31 August 2023, approximately 908,000 refugees and third-country nationals (TCN) had arrived in the Republic of Moldova¹ from Ukraine since 24 February 2022, the highest per capita number of Ukrainian arrivals anywhere else in the world. While most continued westward to the EU, some 109,000 Ukrainian refugees and 8,000 TCN chose to remain in the country, of whom 58% were female, 45% were children and 22% were older persons.

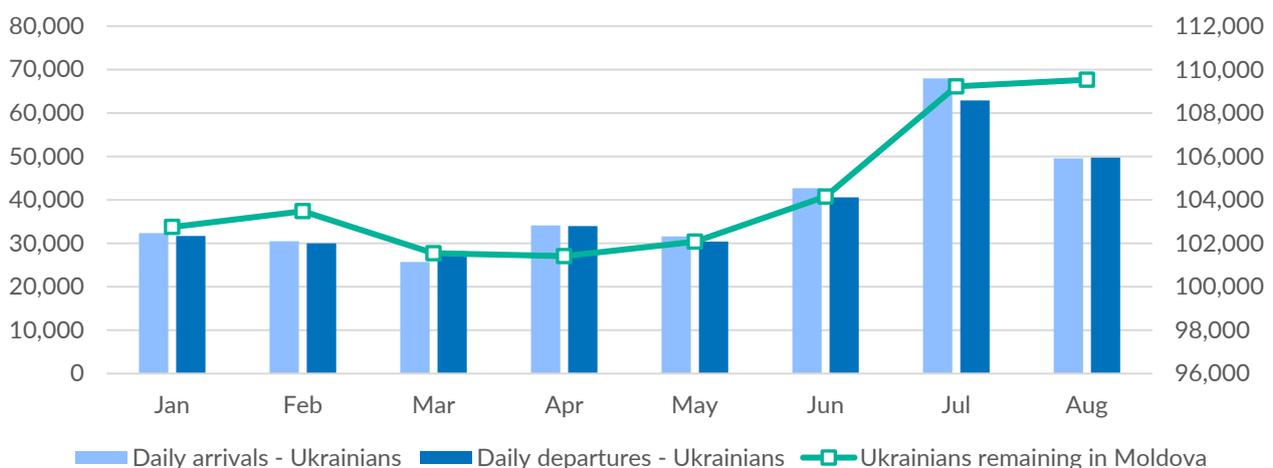
In the face of the most significant crisis in its history, Moldova has displayed remarkable generosity and unity, rallying authorities at every level to address the pressing needs of those seeking refuge from the armed conflict in Ukraine. The government's response has been supported by civil society, international NGOs, the private sector, committed volunteers, and UN agencies, with the goal of ensuring access to protection and services to those forcibly displaced.

UNHCR has been actively engaged in monitoring, documenting, and analysing the profiles, needs, and intentions of refugees, with the aim of enhancing and promoting evidence-based protection interventions throughout the country. Since May 2022, it has been conducting protection profiling and monitoring activities throughout the country, including at accommodation sites, centres for humanitarian aid distribution, Community Service Centres (CSC), and other locations.²

This report encompasses the outcomes of 1,875 interviews, comprising 4,375 household members, conducted between 1 June and 31 August 2023. Reference is also made to Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) that UNHCR conducts with refugees on an ongoing basis, including during the reporting period.

Key Trends & Figures

Cumulative Arrivals & Departures (1 January – 31 August)³



Arrival figures include arrivals of Ukrainians from all border crossing points (land and air)

¹ Henceforth referred to as Moldova

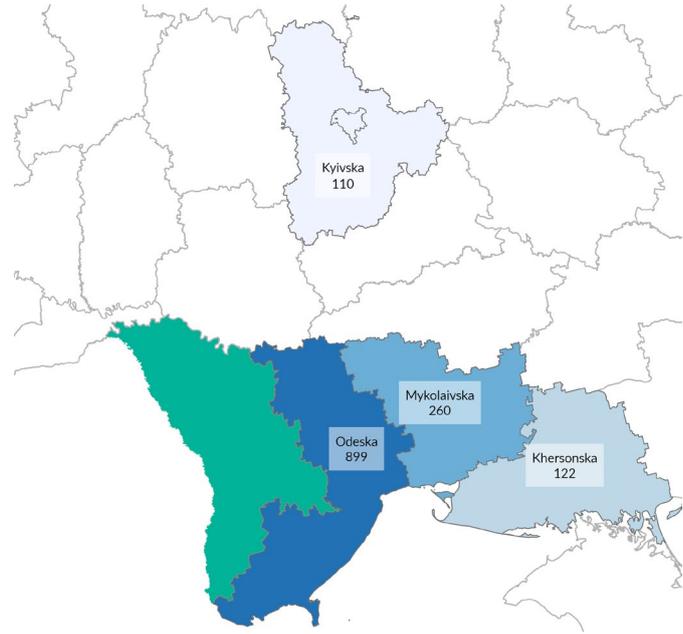
² UNHCR partners are also conducting border monitoring activities at border crossing points and transit hubs using a separate monitoring tool.

³ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/248?sv=0&geo=680>

Profiles & Displacement Patterns

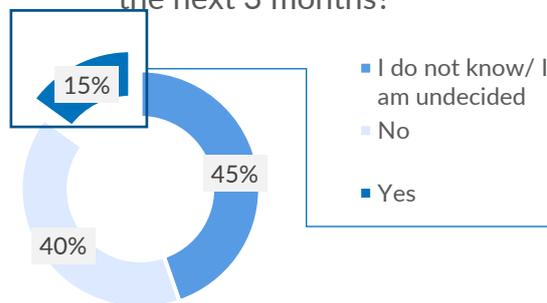
The most common household profile of those surveyed during the reporting period was single adults with dependents (32%). Similar to the general demographic profile of refugees in Moldova, 81% of the households surveyed included women and children. The relatively low number of adult men is generally attributed to their participation in the Ukrainian armed forces.

Out of the 1,875 households surveyed, 3% indicated having children who were separated from both parents, making them either unaccompanied or separated. Many of these children are known to be teenagers between the ages of 16 and 18 who can leave Ukraine without a parent or guardian, but can only enter Moldova after being referred to the Moldovan Guardianship Authority. Persons aged 60 and above constituted 17% of the overall surveyed population, while the number of households who indicated having at least one family member with a specific need, such as a disability or serious medical condition, was 19%. Almost all respondents (94%) stated that they had at least one urgent need, with material assistance⁴ (79%), food (67%), and healthcare (50%) as the most pressing needs identified. Of those with urgent needs, the preferred modality of support was cash assistance (67%).⁵

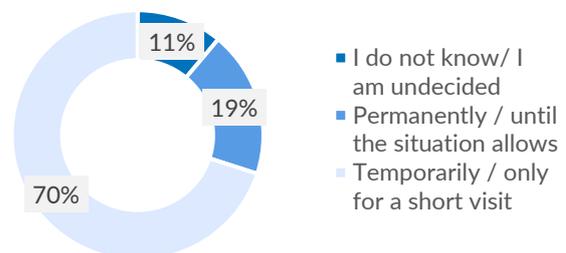


More than one-third (34%) of respondents surveyed arrived in Moldova during the first quarter of 2022 and largely originated from Odeska (50%), Mykolaivska (14%), and Kyivska (8%) oblasts. The number of those surveyed who had arrived to Moldova for the first time was low (6%). The majority, 53% of respondents, cited proximity to Ukraine as the main reason for choosing to come to Moldova, followed by the desire to reunite with family and friends (36%). Similar languages, as well as cultural and social similarities, were also reported as motivating factors to come to Moldova (22% and 10%, respectively).

Do you plan to go back to Ukraine in the next 3 months?



For how long are you planning to go back to Ukraine?



⁴ Non-food items (NFI) such as hygiene and dignity kits, and other relief items.

⁵ Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, over 115,667 Ukrainians have received monthly emergency cash grants (USD 120 per person). As of 31 August 2023, 49,227 individuals were actively receiving cash assistance from UNHCR.

Due to its close proximity to Ukraine, Moldova has continued to see a high degree of pendular movements to and from Ukraine since the onset of the crisis. Data from the protection profiling supports this, with 48% of respondents stating that they had visited Ukraine at least once since their initial departure, primarily to visit relatives (48%), check on property (36%), and obtain documents (32%). The vast majority of those surveyed (98%) are in possession of identity documents, with only 2% indicating a household member missing a biometrical passport, facilitating travel to and from

For which reasons have you been back to Ukraine?



Ukraine. Of those who had temporarily visited Ukraine, 99% stated that they had faced no issues when returning to Moldova.

Protection risks

Access to Temporary Protection

On 18 January 2023, the government of Moldova approved the granting of temporary protection (TP) to those displaced from Ukraine. The TP regime came into effect on 1 March 2023, with Ukrainian nationals and certain TCNs (family members of Ukrainian nationals and those benefitting from international protection in Ukraine). Prior to the TP regime, the presence of those displaced from Ukraine in Moldova was controlled by the government's emergency laws, providing access to the territory and to a range of rights and services.

As of 31 August, 20,603 refugees had pre-enrolled for TP, out of which 15,191 received their TP identity cards.

Data from the profiling and monitoring survey showed that 53% of respondents had applied for TP as of 31 August 2023. According to statistics provided by the General Inspectorate for Migration (IGM),⁶ as of 31 August, 20,603 persons had pre-registered for temporary protection, of whom 15,191 had been issued temporary protection documents. Of those who had not

applied, 69% cited plans to leave Moldova as the reason for not applying, while another 16% stated that they had applied for a residency permit and another 16% stated that they did not need TP.

In considering the number of individuals who have applied for and received TP to date, additional statistics bear consideration. In addition to TP, according to IGM statistics, some 10,000 Ukrainians who arrived in Moldova after 24 February 2022 had obtained another form of legal status in the country, including residence permits (6,980), confirmation of Moldovan nationality (~2,300), and submission of applications for asylum or granting of refugee status or humanitarian protection (~400). The total number of those with legal status and pending applications for TP constitutes 28%

⁶ Government statistics on TP beneficiaries, as well as on Ukrainian nationals with other forms of legal status, can be found here : <https://igm.gov.md/ro/content/statistica-s%C4%83pt%C4%83m%C3%A2nal%C4%83-igm-7>

of the overall refugee population and constitutes 48% of those Ukrainians residing on the territory for more than 90 days (~64,000).

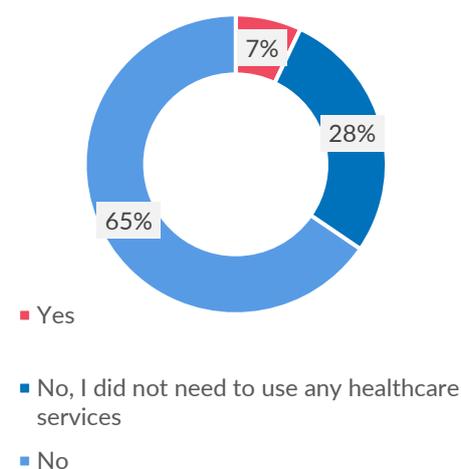
Access to Healthcare

Until 1 March 2023, access to primary and emergency healthcare in Moldova was available to all displaced Ukrainians under the emergency laws in effect at the time. However, once the TP regime came into effect, access to healthcare services was limited to those who had obtained TP status (and since July 2023 to those who had proof of pre-enrolment for TP). Even for those with TP, however, subsidized medications and most specialist care is not covered. Health insurance is also not available unless formally employed.

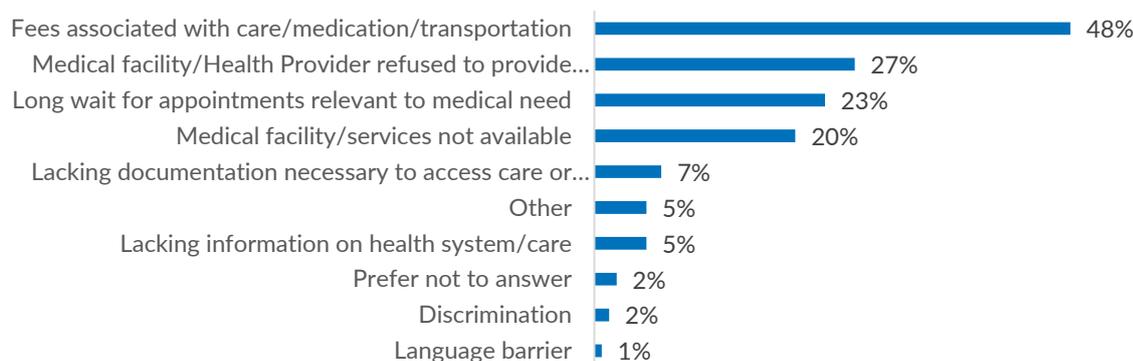
Among those surveyed during the reporting period, healthcare was indicated as the third most urgent need (50%), after material assistance and food. For those aged 60 and above, this percentage increased significantly to 78%. Fourteen percent (14%) of households indicated having at least one family member with a serious medical condition.

Of those who indicated facing difficulties accessing the healthcare system,⁷ over half stated that they could not afford it. Other difficulties included denial of access to services (27%), long wait times (24%), and unavailability of services (21%). Notably, of the 48% of respondents who had visited Ukraine at least once since their initial departure, more than one in ten (11%) indicated that the main purpose of the visit was to access healthcare.

Difficulties accessing Health Services



Which difficulties have you encountered?



The protection monitoring survey results are broadly consistent with UNHCR's Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with Ukrainian refugees.⁸ During these FGDs, participants cited challenges in accessing health care as a significant concern. For refugees living in rural areas, both with host families and in private accommodations, concerns raised included lack or absence of medical facilities in the area, as well as the unavailability of specific medicines for particular medical conditions, especially for people affected by diabetes.

⁷ Interestingly, only 10% of respondents in need of healthcare stated that they experienced difficulties in accessing the healthcare system. This is likely due to many refugees not trying to access the healthcare system due to their ineligibility for services, hesitancy to do so and/or skepticism about the services provided.

⁸ Between March and June 2023, 28 Focus Group Discussions were conducted with refugees living in official RACs, with host families and in private accommodations. The FGDs were conducted in various locations, both in rural and urban settings.

Access to Education

Among the households surveyed, 81% were made up of women and children and approximately one-third comprised single adults caring for dependents. Forty percent (40%) of respondent households had school-aged children, and within this group, 61% indicated that at least one child was not enrolled in school in Moldova. The principal reason for non-enrolment was a preference for online learning (74%). Other reasons reported included plans to leave Moldova (12%) and language barriers (9%).

74%
 stated that the
 principal reason for
 absence from school
 was a preference for
 online learning

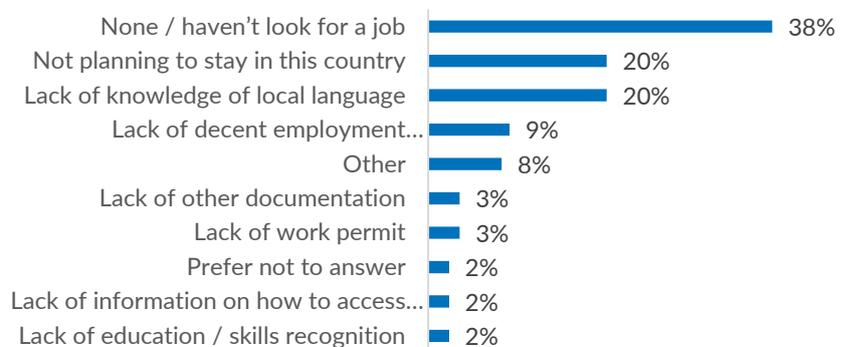
According to data provided by the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) as of 31 August 2023, out of the total number of Ukrainian children (47,550 children) registered and staying in Moldova, only around 4% (1,815) were officially enrolled in Moldovan schools.⁹ The remainder of Ukrainians were believed to have been accessing education primarily through online schooling provided by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education Platform, although this data is not systematically tracked. Overall, factors contributing to low enrollment rates in Moldova

are in line with the reasons provided by those surveyed, which include language preferences for instruction, indecision about whether to stay in Moldova for an extended period, and misinformation about lack of school credits upon returning to Ukraine.

Access to Livelihoods Support & Employment

Survey results confirm that the Ukrainian refugee population in Moldova is well-educated overall, with the majority having worked in Ukraine prior to their displacement. 69% of respondents reported having some form of higher education, including vocational training (28%), a Bachelor's Degree (15%), specialized training (20%), or a Master's Degree or higher (6%). Fifty-seven percent (57%) had been previously employed or self-employed before leaving Ukraine.

Which difficulties have you encountered finding work in this country?



However, of those surveyed, only around 34% were employed at the time, more than one-third of whom (12%) employed remotely. Of those not employed, 25% said that their main activity was family responsibilities, suggesting that access to child care could allow more refugees to enter the labour market. The main reasons cited for unemployment¹⁰ were language barriers (20%), a lack of desire to remain in the country (20%), and limited job prospects (9%).

These results match the findings of UNHCR Focus Group Discussions (FGD), during which refugees noted particular challenges in finding a job in Moldova, including lack of vocational trainings,

⁹ The survey statistics and government statistics are not comparable as the survey does not capture the total percentage of children not enrolled in schools, but rather the percentage of households who have at least one child not enrolled in Moldovan schools.

¹⁰ Refers to the 17% who indicated "unemployment" as their main activity

availability of Romanian language courses, lack of employment opportunities, inadequate salaries, and limited access to childcare services.

According to the National Employment Agency (NEA) of Moldova, only some 1,170 Ukrainian refugees were formally employed in Moldova, with contracts registered with the NEA. This figure, however, does not include those working informally or remotely, or those working formally but whose contracts had not been registered with the NEA by their employer. The survey results suggest that many more refugees are working, even if not captured in official statistics.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensuring access to Temporary Protection: To ensure that all refugees residing in Moldova have a secure legal status, UNHCR recommends targeted outreach addressing particular questions and issues of concern to the refugee population regarding TP, in addition to general awareness raising about the benefits of TP and its importance in accessing rights and services in Moldova.

Improving access to healthcare: Ensuring access to healthcare for all persons displaced from Ukraine, regardless of legal status, is critical. This includes ensuring availability of medication and specialist care. Promoting awareness about available services, both among refugees and medical service providers, and advocating for inclusion in health programmes are vital steps. These measures aim to alleviate financial barriers, and enhance the overall healthcare experience for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova.

Improving access to education: The current enrolment rate in Moldovan schools underscores the need for urgent measures to ensure broad access to education for all Ukrainian children. UNHCR commends the Ministry of Education and Research for the Instruction issued on 4 September 2023 simplifying and clarifying school enrolment for all Ukrainian children, regardless of their legal status. UNHCR recommends that continued efforts are made to work with parents and local communities to promote the enrollment of Ukrainian children in Moldovan schools and to explain the negative consequences on children's social emotional health of prolonged online learning. Additionally, it is recommended that gradual steps are taken to eventually prepare for the inclusion of all Ukrainian children living in the Republic of Moldova in Moldovan schools.

Improving access to livelihoods and employment opportunities: Survey results show that many refugees are working in Moldova, including in the informal sector and remotely for employers in Ukraine, but that more needs to be done to bring other refugees into the workforce. Considering that the majority of Ukrainian refugees are women and children, improving access to childcare, including community childcare opportunities, is critical to ensure women's access to the labor market. Supporting refugees in opening and relocating small- and medium-sized businesses is also needed. Finally, increased support for Romanian language classes and vocational training is necessary to ensure a sustained self-sufficiency and economic resilience.

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