

PROTECTION BRIEF #8

UKRAINIAN SITUATION
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

July 2026

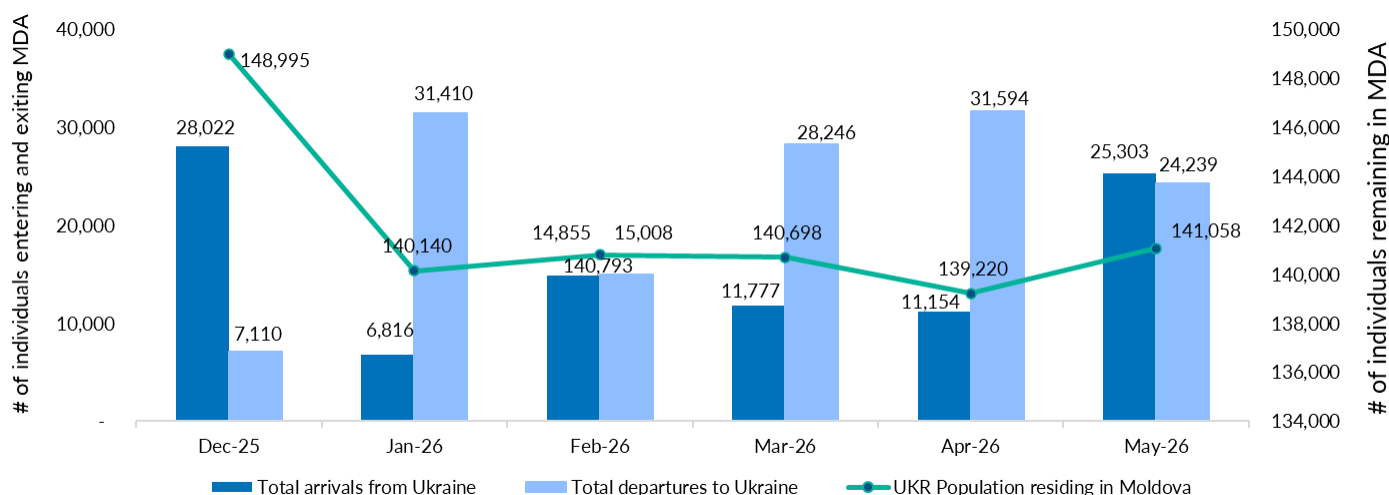


Operational Context & Analysis

As of 31 May 2026, more than 1.25 million refugees had arrived in the Republic of Moldova¹ from Ukraine since 24 February 2022. While most continued westward to the EU, around 140,000 Ukrainian refugees, of whom 64% were female, and 48% were children are in the territory of Moldova.

To enhance and promote evidence-based protection interventions throughout the country, UNHCR has been actively engaged in monitoring, documenting, and analysing the profiles, needs, and intentions of refugees through ongoing protection monitoring in accommodation sites, centres for humanitarian aid distribution, Community Service Centres (CSC), and other locations.²

This report encompasses the findings from 248 interviews conducted with Ukrainian refugee households, comprising 426 household members, conducted between 1 April and 30 May 2026. Reference is also made to the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted by UNHCR and its partners over the same period.³ This report also draws from the sector discussions within the Protection Working Group⁴, and the Inclusion and Solution Working Group and the labour market analysis on refugee participation conducted in 2026⁵.



Key Trends & Figures

30,921 people arrived from Ukraine over the reporting period	66% of respondents were women	33% of households indicated having at least one member with a disability	16% of households indicated having at least one member with a serious medical condition
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¹ Henceforth referred to as "Moldova."

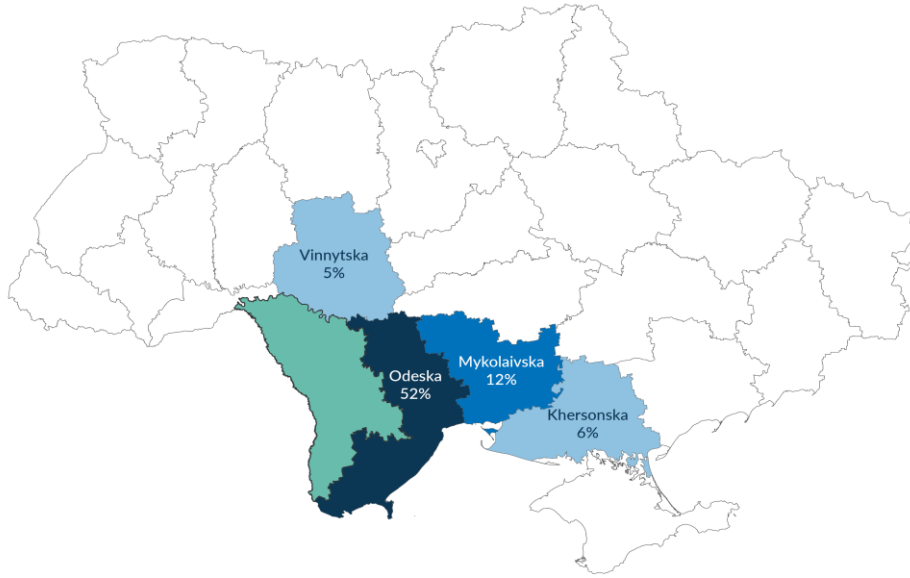
² UNHCR partners are also conducting border monitoring activities at border crossing points and transit hubs using a separate monitoring tool.

³ From February to May 2026 (Q1 - Q2), UNHCR and its partners conducted 13 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 109 participants across different profiles. The official report will be launched by the end of July 2026.

⁴ Minutes from the Protection Working Group meeting on Post-TP Analysis March 2026, accessible at [Document - Ukraine situation: Moldova: Protection Working Group - Meeting Minutes on Post-TP Analysis \(March 2026\)](#)

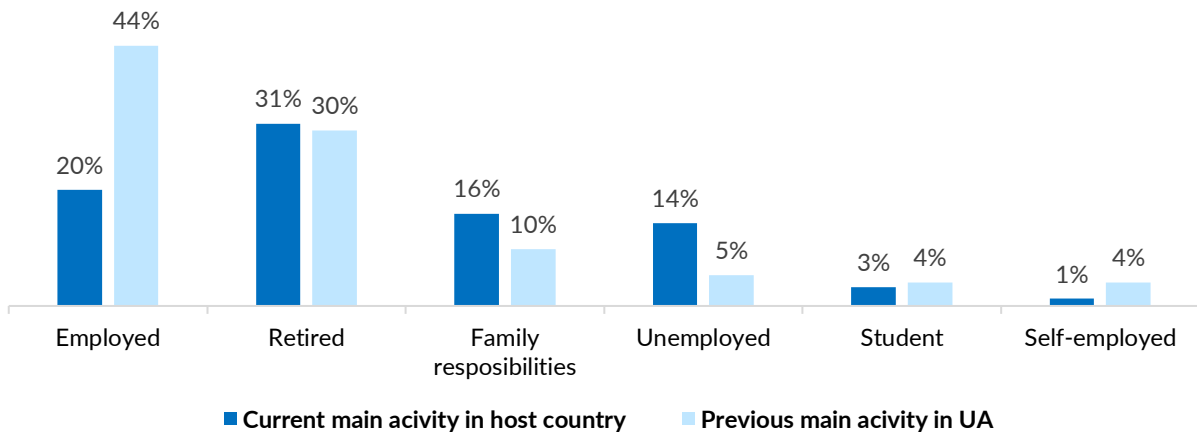
⁵ Presentation from the Inclusion and Solution Working Group meeting 17 February, accessible at [Document - Ukraine Situation - Moldova: Inclusion and Solutions Working Group Presentation \(17 February 2026\)](#)

Profiles & Displacement Patterns



Household composition and demographic patterns have remained stable, similar to the previous reporting period⁶. The surveyed population is largely represented by working-age adults (66%). Single adults with dependents accounted for 37% of respondents, followed by older persons with or without dependents (33%), and single adults without dependents who represented 29% of all households. As in the previous rounds, Odeska oblast remained the primary area of origin for respondents (52%). Despite the increase in shelling across Ukraine during the reporting period, no significant changes were observed in mobility patterns, with 30% of respondents reporting travelling to Ukraine at least once since their initial departure. These trips to Ukraine were primarily short stays of under two weeks duration, mainly to check on property (36%), assess the situation (25%), visit relatives (24%), or obtain documents and access healthcare (5% each). Most respondents continue to maintain strong family links in Ukraine, as 74% still have immediate family there, yet more than one-third of them (39%) reported challenges in reuniting. The largest obstacles to reuniting with family members were the restriction on departure of military-aged adult males (76%), followed by the ongoing security situation (40%), and the medical condition or disability of their relatives preventing them from travelling from Ukraine (8%).

Socio-Economic Profiles of the Respondents



⁶ Protection Brief #7 is available online available at [Document - Ukraine Situation - Moldova : Protection Working Group - UNHCR: Protection Brief #7 December 2025 \(ENG\)](#)

The pre-displacement profile of respondents provides key insight into present needs and risks faced by the displaced population. Before leaving Ukraine, up to 44% of respondents were employed, around 30% were retired, and 10% were engaged in family care. The proportion of retired respondents remained stable at around one-third, reflecting the broader refugee demographics, as many older people chose to stay in Moldova due to its proximity to Ukraine and cultural ties. In comparison, a share of those previously employed or self-employed (27%) reported unemployment or family responsibilities as their main activity in Moldova, suggesting reduced access to livelihood opportunities and increased caregiving demands in displacement.

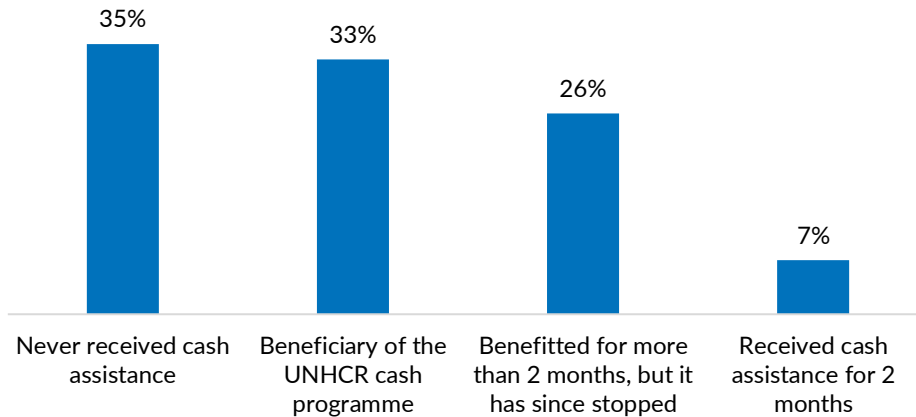
For households with children (29% of all households), education plays a significant role in their decision-making processes and their future planning. More than two-thirds (69%) reported that their school-aged children were enrolled in education in the host country. Among those who had not enrolled their children in Moldovan schools (31%/ 17 HH), over half (58%) preferred to continue with online learning following the Ukrainian curriculum. Additionally 18% indicated that they were considering enrolling their children in local schools for the upcoming academic year. The overall increase in enrollment in local schools may be attributed to the extensive campaigns throughout 2025 and 2026 conducted by the Ministry of Education and Research and partners, including UNHCR, UNICEF and Female Support Force. These initiatives included targeted outreach and discussions with refugee parents and educational institutions, promoting the benefits of in-person enrollment.

Respondents were either hosted by Moldovan host families or relatives (44%), or residing in private accommodation (40%), while only a small portion lived in collective accommodation sites (14%). For those living in private accommodation, nearly two-thirds (64%) had an official rental contract with their landlords, while 30% were renting without a formal contract. For respondents without an official rental contract (30 HH), the main reasons were equally split between landlords refusing to formalise the contract and respondents who did not know or refused to answer (40% each). The lack of a formal rental agreement exposes displaced persons to increased protection risks, as it puts them in a vulnerable situation without adequate legal protection against potential exploitation or eviction by landlords. Findings from FDGs indicate that many vulnerable groups of refugees, particularly older persons and persons with disabilities, continue to rely on refugee accommodation centres due to their limited self-sustainability/employability. Working age adults raised issues with high rental costs and low income in Moldova, and many have to resort to sharing accommodation with other refugees.

“In general, the mentality in Moldova is somehow similar to that in Ukraine. My children are here making new friends, they are easily integrating, and we have opportunities to meet and socialise.” - FGD participants in Q2, 2026

Since the onset of the refugee response, many beneficiaries have relied on UNHCR’s Multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) programme as a key mechanism to meet their basic needs. Between 2024 and 2026, the programme underwent a series of reductions aligned with the strategy to transition the program to National Systems, and more recently due to persistent funding constraints. As a result targeted verification exercises were introduced to reprioritise and focus on the most vulnerable refugee groups, resulting in refugees being discontinued from cash assistance despite their ongoing vulnerabilities. Findings from protection monitoring indicate that 65% of respondents have benefited from UNHCR cash assistance at some point since the beginning of the war. Among those who continue to receive cash assistance (33%), many belong to at least one high-risk category. Specifically, more than half (60%) were older persons and persons with disabilities (59%), while 27% were families with children and 26% were households with at least one family member with a serious medical condition. This reflects that the prioritization strategy managed to target a portion of the most vulnerable households residing in Moldova.

Cash assistance



Discussions with refugees also revealed significant concerns about the discontinuation of cash assistance and their capacity to cover essential needs. These concerns are also reflected in the *Impact Analysis of Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance*⁷ conducted by UNHCR, where more than 70% of respondents who were discontinued from cash assistance in November 2025 reported that their living conditions had significantly deteriorated. The report also points to a growing use of negative coping strategies among households excluded from cash assistance to meet their basic needs (e.g. skipping rent payments, taking loans or borrowing money, reducing food portions, and limiting healthcare spendings), underscoring the impact of reduced support on daily life.

Protection risks

Legal Status

Starting in 2026, the Government of Moldova extended the Temporary Protection (TP) status until 1 March 2027. Unlike in previous years, the extension process required beneficiaries to submit an online application through the government's website to formalize their extension. The application window was open from February till end of April 2026 with the aim of collecting updated data on the number of TP beneficiaries currently residing in the country. For those who did not manage to apply in time, an option to reapply for TP status remains open.

Notably, 99% of monitored respondents had either obtained a TP card or had a pending application. Among respondents with TP, 80% applied for the extension, with the majority (68%) submitting their application during the first two months of extension (February – March 2026). During the application process, approximately 10% of applicants reported difficulties, mainly related to long waiting times for the issuance of decisions or the need to seek support from CDA legal counsellors to complete the online application.

According to data from the General Inspectorate for Migration (IGM), as of 27 April 2026, a total of 92,324 individuals had been issued TP documents since March 2023, including 20,656 children. Out of those who hold TP cards approximately 47,599 individuals (51%) applied for the TP extension between February to April 2026.

⁷ The Impact analyses of the Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance used a statistically representative sample of 90 households selected from the population excluded from the cash assistance as a result of the reprioritisation exercise in November 2025. More findings are available at [Document - Ukraine Situation - Moldova: Inclusion and Solutions Working Group Presentation \(6 May 2026\)](#).

There were also 319 Ukrainians registered in the asylum system: two with refugee status, 247 as beneficiaries of humanitarian protection, and 70 as asylum applicants.⁸

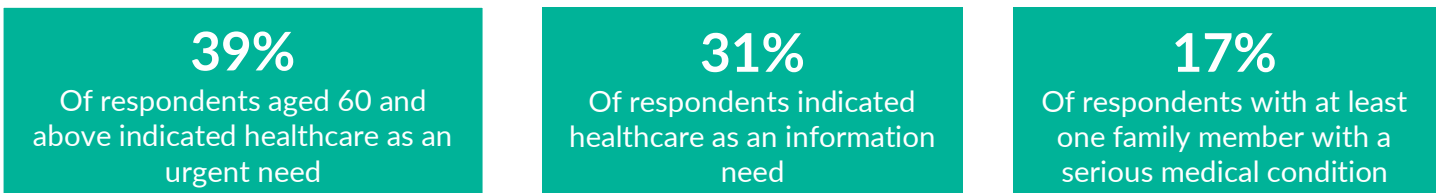
“We all have Temporary Protection as it is easy to obtain. There have been no issues with extending the status”
 - FGD participants in Q2, 2026

As findings from FDGs and protection monitoring indicate, the majority of displaced persons from Ukraine continue to rely primarily on TP as their preferred legal status in Moldova. While TP provides a secure legal status for stay until March 2027, it remains a temporary solution. In this context, ongoing consultation with the Government and civil society continue to explore a transition from Temporary Protection arrangements and to develop pathways for refugees to access simplified, longer-term residence options, including for refugees in vulnerable situations.

The preliminary options emerging from protection sector consultations⁹ include transition towards already existing legal pathways, such as residence permits, as a viable option for able-bodied individuals who meet employment or income requirements. However, such options may not be suitable for a significant portion of the displaced population, including older persons, persons with disabilities, individuals with caretaking responsibilities, and other vulnerable groups who may face difficulties in meeting the standard eligibility criteria for alternative pathways.

At the same time, alternative scenarios are being explored, including the potential development of a special derogatory legal status with simplified procedures, as well as the use of existing protection mechanisms like humanitarian protection or refugee status. To date, no final decision has been taken for the transition from Temporary Protection framework; however, there are continuous discussions with all stakeholders, including the refugee-led organisations to ensure participatory decision-making.

Healthcare

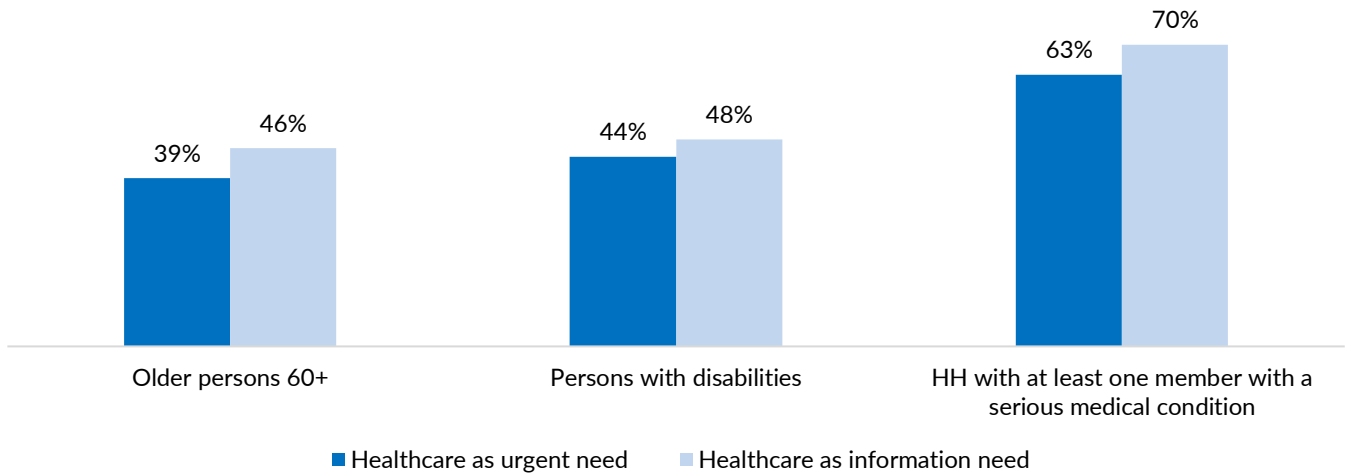


Healthcare remains one of the key concerns for the displaced population in Moldova, with 20% of surveyed households identifying it as an urgent need and 31% reporting the need for more healthcare information. Protection monitoring findings show that 63% of households with at least one person with a serious medical condition report urgent healthcare needs, a significant increase compared to the previous reporting period (52%), while an even higher proportion (70%) expressed the need for healthcare information. Similarly, among households with persons with disabilities, both the urgent need for healthcare (44%) and the information on medical services (48%) were widely reported. For households with older persons, healthcare also remains a major concern, with 39% reporting it as an urgent need and 46% highlighting the need for more information.

⁸ At the end of April 2026, 6,383 Ukrainian nationals held valid residence permits in Moldova, including 3,825 temporary residence permits and 2,558 permanent residence permits. This was consulted with IGM on 30 April 2026.

⁹ On 2nd March 2026, the Protection Working Group (PWG) held a dedicated ad hoc meeting on Post-TP analysis. The discussion provided a platform for discussion of potential legal statuses available for displaced persons from Ukraine after the end of Temporary Protection in March 2027. More information about the discussion can be found at [Document - Ukraine situation: Moldova: Protection Working Group - Meeting Minutes on Post-TP Analysis \(March 2026\)](#)

Reported Healthcare needs by vulnerable groups



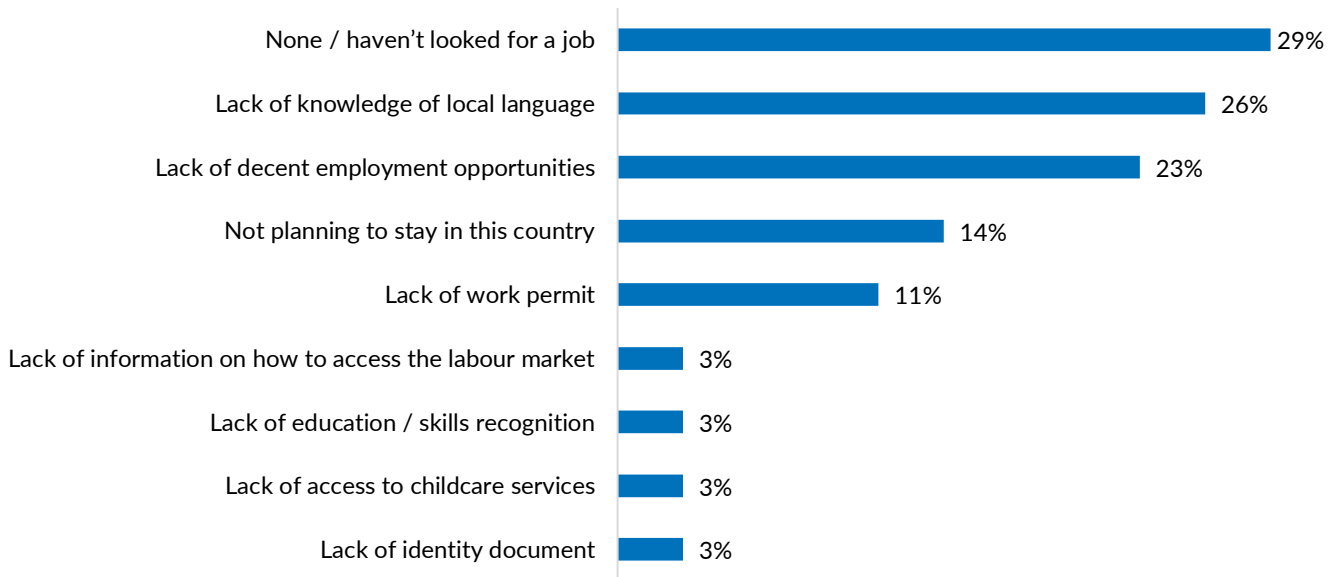
Since the start of 2026, the range of free-of-charge healthcare services available for TP holders in Moldova has further narrowed due to a discontinuation of complementary and specialized health services provided by humanitarian partners and limited access to specialised healthcare services. FDG findings reflects the significant reduction in available healthcare services, the discontinuation of the cash assistance and a lack of medicine vouchers, often used to cover medical needs. TP card holders note having access to emergency healthcare services and family doctors; however, they are required to pay out-of-pocket for more specialised medical care.

Employment

Employment findings point to continued challenges in accessing quality job opportunities for displaced persons from Ukraine, with only 20% of respondents currently employed. Among those who were employed, almost half (45%) were working in jobs that matched their professional background. The share of respondents who reported being overqualified for their current role has decreased from 50% in the previous reporting period to 20% in the current one, suggesting a significant improvement in job matching.

The share of respondents who are unemployed (14%) and those engaged in family or caretaking responsibilities (16%) highlights challenges in labour market participation. Among those who are unemployed, the main reasons are largely structural. The most frequently cited barriers are the Romanian language, the lack of suitable job opportunities, and work permits. Additionally, 14% of unemployed respondents indicated that they do not plan to stay in the country. At the same time, the share of respondents engaged in family responsibilities points to persistent structural barriers to employment, affecting particularly women, who often take on caregiving roles. These traditional expectations, combined with limited access to childcare or flexible work arrangements, limit their ability to seek employment. Protection monitoring also reflects a very low number of self-employed respondents (1%).

Barriers in accessing employment (n=35)



These findings are consistent with the labour challenges and priorities observed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection for 2026¹⁰, which highlights ongoing challenges related to labour market inclusion, skills mismatch, and access to decent work opportunities. PA also echo similar challenges observed across all profiles. Overall, refugees show a strong willingness to work and become self-reliant, but continue to face multiple barriers including low wages, limited job opportunities, skills mismatch, and language barriers. Older persons have particularly limited employment prospects, and often rely on their pension combined with UNHCR cash assistance to cover their basic needs. Those seeking additional sources of income look mainly at seasonal or temporary employment opportunities. Similarly, persons with disabilities face difficulties in accessing suitable job opportunities and appropriate working arrangements. For Roma participants, access to the labour market is often constrained by stigma and discrimination, with many preferring to seek employment within their own community. Moreover, younger people and youth show strong interest in vocational training and language classes to improve their chances in the labour market. Many adults of working age also expressed interest in starting their own business; however, they face structural and legal barriers as well as limited access to start-up capital.

“We do not have enough capital to start a business. Especially for a single mother, it is difficult to manage everything at once, children and a business.”

- FGD participants in Q2, 2026

¹⁰ The presentation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection on labour priorities during the Inclusion and Solution Working Group meeting 17 February accessible at [Document - Ukraine Situation - Moldova: Inclusion and Solutions Working Group Presentation \(17 February 2026\)](#)

CALLS TO ACTION

Pursuing long-term legal status: Findings from both the protection monitoring and refugee consultations show a strong reliance on TP as a preferred legal status, underscoring the need to extend the TP regime or ensure a timely transition to alternative legal pathways. While existing options, such as residence permits, may be suitable for some, they remain largely unreachable for many vulnerable groups of refugees. Authorities and partners should prioritise the development of an inclusive, rights-based legal status, aligned with the European standards. Moreover, any transition from Temporary Protection should be developed in consultation with the refugees and refugee-led organisations to ensure all their needs and concerns are reflected.

Improve access to healthcare: While access to basic healthcare services remains available to all TP card holders, an increasing gap in the provision of specialised healthcare and essential medication is emerging. The withdrawal of many humanitarian organisations and their healthcare programmes further exacerbates these challenges. Targeted action is needed to strengthen equitable access to healthcare for Temporary Protection (TP) holders and ensure that any future legal status covers the same or an extended range of healthcare services. This includes facilitating refugee inclusion within the national health insurance scheme, from which they are currently excluded, as well as expanding access to social assistance for persons with serious medical conditions and adults with disabilities.

Strengthen access to employment & livelihood opportunities: In light of high unemployment rates and prevalent caregiving responsibilities among the refugee population, targeted efforts are needed to improve access to employment and sustainable livelihood opportunities. Given the significant barriers posed by language, continued investment in language programmes (including the advanced-level courses) is necessary to boost refugee employability in Moldova. Furthermore, reducing administrative barriers to acquiring entrepreneurship/freelancer status and improving access to start-up capital will significantly strengthen refugees' self-reliance and contribution to the host country's economy and tax revenue. Additional measures should be introduced to tailor support for caregivers, such as the availability of flexible working hours and part-time arrangements to accommodate family responsibilities for women.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the extensive involvement and support of UNHCR's partners in this Protection Monitoring Brief, in particular the Law Center for Advocates (CDA). We are also grateful for the support of local authorities, civil society, international organizations, and the European Union. Most importantly, UNHCR would like to thank refugees from Ukraine, who continue to share with us their challenges, fears, and hopes.

For more information:

Sara Sivkova, Associate Protection Officer, Email: sivkovas@unhcr.org;

Yurii Arnautov, Information Management Officer, Email: arnautov@unhcr.org