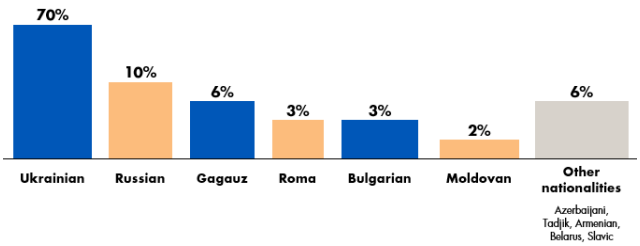
Moldova Monitoring Fact Sheet November-December 2023

Background and methodology: In July 2023, UN Human Rights (OHCHR) in Moldova started protection monitoring as part of a project funded by the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid. OHCHR focuses on the systematic identification of those who are more at risk of protection concerns and human rights violations. OHCHR's methodology consists of individual interviews with refugees from Ukraine and host community members. Respondents are reached through the facilitation of international and national NGOs and local CSOs that work with the most vulnerable groups on both banks of Nistru river. In order to ensure a wide geographical coverage, each month interviews are done in the northern, centre and southern regions of Moldova, including the Transnistrian region. Since the distribution of localities changes from month to month, it may not always be possible to compare data between different rounds of data collection. The analysis presented in the Factsheet refers to the respondents of the month for which it is published, therefore data may not always be representative of the refugee population as a whole. In addition, data reflects the self-reporting by respondents. OHCHR analyses the data, taking into account the existing legal framework and contextual information.

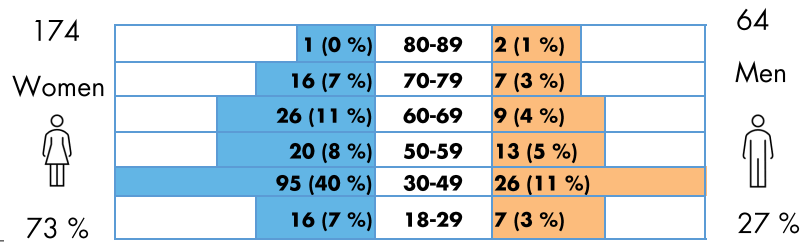
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

In November and December 2023, **OHCHR interviewed 238 refugees from Ukraine** (73 % women; 27 % men). 236 of them were Ukrainian nationals and 2 respondents were Third-Country nationals (1—Tajikistan, 1— Azerbaijan). Respondents reside in various northern, southern, central regions of Moldova, including the Transnistrian region, as indicated in the map below. The largest age group among the interviewed refugees was 30-49 years old, comprising 51 % of the respondents. Respondents from the Transnistrian region stated that their primary reasons for choosing to stay there were the presence of family and friends and the proximity to Ukraine. It was found that those who self-identified as ethnic Russians predominantly live in the Transnistrian region, while ethnic Gagauz and Bulgarian live in UTA Gagauzia. Interviewed refugees on the left bank of Nistru River show a stronger reliance on support from relatives or close friends for free accommodation (54%). Moreover, a notable proportion of refugees on both banks opt for self-rented accommodation (39% on the right bank and 31% on the left bank), indicating a common preference for independent living arrangements. A significant majority of respondents (59 %) arrived to Moldova with children, while 21 % arrived alone.

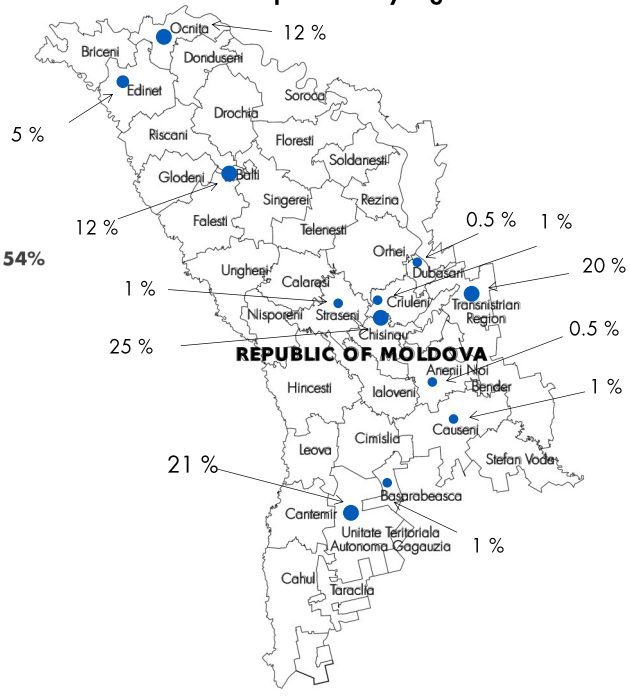
Distribution of respondents by their self-identification of ethnicity



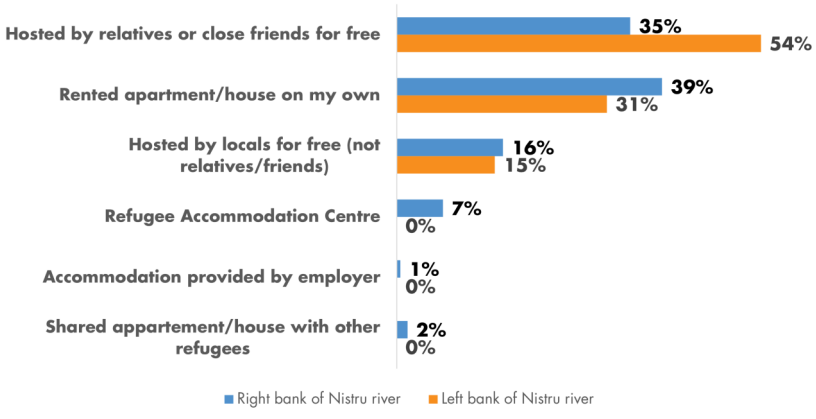
Distribution of respondents by age group and gender



Distribution of respondents by region



Distribution of respondents by accommodation type



IDENTIFICATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The protection monitoring tool included the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning, which obtains information on difficulties a person may have in undertaking basic functioning activities. The tool consists of one question per functional domain: visual, hearing, mobility, cognitive, self-care, and communication (expressive and receptive) impairments. The analysis applies the criterion that a person is considered to have a disability if they respond with 'a lot of difficulty' or 'cannot do at all' for any of the functional domains.

13 % (=30 persons) of the interviewed refugees reported a lot of difficulties or impossibility to perform actions under one (26 persons) **or several** (4 persons) **functional domains.**

Percentage of respondents with difficulties per functional domain

3 % Visual	1 % Hearing	8 % Mobility	1 % Cognitive*	1 % Self-care	0 % Communication

*In the Washington Group Short Set of Questions the cognitive domain includes only remembering and concentrating

The decrease in the number of interviewed persons with disabilities from October until December 2023, as experienced by OHCHR, is primarily attributable to challenges associated with conducting outdoor interviews in cold weather, but also to the changes in the entry points to monitoring, that are NGOs and CSOs.

Distribution of respondents with disabilities by age group

23 Women 13 %

1 (100 %)		80-89	2 (100 %)	
9 (56 %)	7 (44 %)	70-79	2 (29 %)	5 (71%)
19 (73 %)	7 (27 %)	60-69	2 (22 %)	7 (78 %)
14 (70%)	6 (30 %)	50-59	2 (15 %)	11 (85 %)
93 (98 %)	2 (2 %)	30-49	1 (4%)	25 (96%)
16 (100 %)		18-29	7 (100 %)	

7 Men 11 %

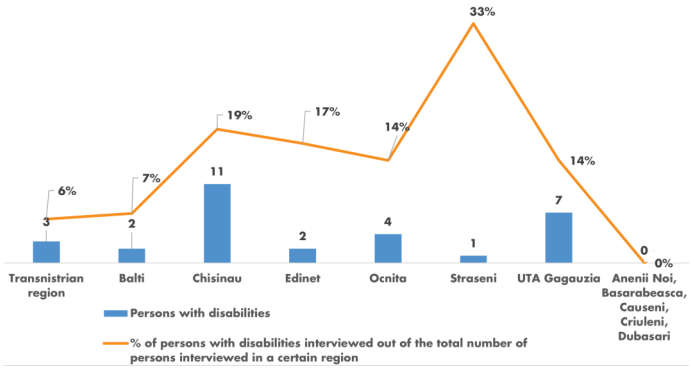
WITHOUT DISABILITY
WITH DISABILITY

⇒ The age group 50—79 show the highest prevalence of interviewed refugees with disabilities, primarily facing difficulties related to mobility.

⇒ Data indicate that functional disabilities occur at similar rates among women and men.

⇒ 53 % of interviewed persons with disabilities are hosted for free by relatives or close friends, while 30 % rent an apartment at their own cost but reside with family members. This could mean that 83 % of interviewed persons with disabilities receive some support in their daily activities and/or expenses.

Distribution of respondents with disabilities by region



EXPERIENCE OF ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

The protection monitoring tool used includes the enhanced questions of Washington Group focusing on the **affect domain** of functioning which involves emotional functions such as feelings of depression and anxiety. Data indicates that **53 % of the respondents experienced feelings of anxiety, worry and nervousness** and **15 % felt depressed** on a daily or weekly basis. 46 % of interviewed refugees reported feelings of anxiety in a high intensity while 63 % expressed a similar intensity in relation to depression. These feelings were reportedly higher among **refugees with functional disabilities (67 % reported having anxiety and 13 % reported feeling depressed) than among other refugees.** A correlation was found between gender and experience of depression among interviewed refugees from Ukraine, with **women experiencing depression 7.8 times more frequently than men**. Anxiety and depression are particularly prevalent among individuals aged 60 and older. When comparing the left and right banks of Nistru River, interviewed refugees on the left bank more frequently reported experiencing anxiety.

Experience anxiety, nervousness, and depression by age groups

	18-29	30-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89
% of total respondents by age group who reported **ANXIETY**	30%	49%	70%	66%	48%	67%
% of total respondents by age group who reported **DEPRESSION**	26%	13%	16%	20%	4%	0%

17 % Affect

Data reveals that **17 %** of interviewed refugees from Ukraine have **difficulties with the affect domain**.

MEDICAL SERVICES: ACCESS AND BARRIERS

40 % of respondents (96 individuals out of 238, including 67 women and 29 men) **reported suffering from serious medical conditions**. These conditions include a wide range of chronic and non-communicable diseases.

Severe medical conditions are predominant among refugees with disabilities, affecting **23 out of the 30 interviewed**. Women and men reported similar rates of health issues. Serious medical conditions are prevalent among **79 % of respondents aged 60 years and older.**

The age distribution of interviewed people with serious medical conditions

	18-29	30-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89
# of respondents reported having serious medical issues	0	25	23	26	20	2
% of total respondents by age group	0%	21%	70%	74%	87%	67%

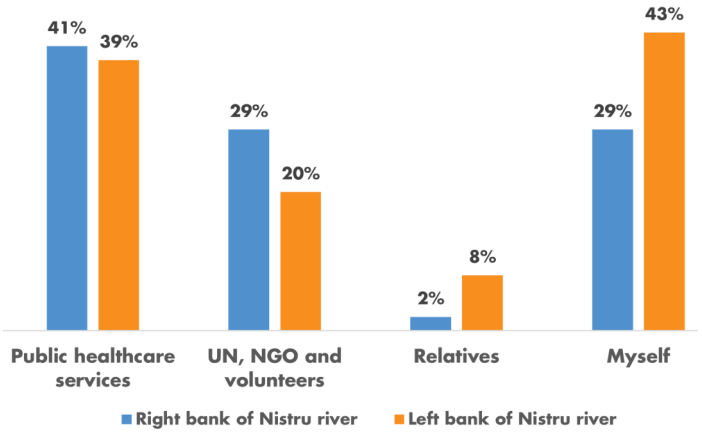
19 % (= 18 individuals) among the interviewed refugees who suffer from serious medical conditions, also expressed difficulties in accessing medical services in Moldova.

Data indicate that the majority of the 96 respondents with serious medical conditions did not face challenges in accessing medical services. However, out of the 18 respondents* who suffer from a serious medical condition and face challenges in accessing medical services, 15 faced challenges with secondary healthcare and 12 with primary healthcare.

94 % of respondents who reported such difficulties reside on the right bank of Nistru river. Notably, no one reported difficulties with obtaining emergency healthcare services. The primary challenge highlighted by respondents is the cost of medical care, predominantly secondary healthcare, and refusals to provide medical assistance. Other challenges included long waiting times, poor quality of medical care, and unavailability of medical facilities or services.

Among the 30 refugees experiencing challenges in one or more functional domains, **10 (8 women, 2 men),** representing 33 %, have **a disability certificate issued in Ukraine**. Majority of them clarified that their certificate did not grant them access to necessary medical services, without providing specific details.

Provision of medical assistance by source and place



The analysis of the data on the sources of medical assistance by location indicates a comparable reliance by refugees from Ukraine on public healthcare between the right and left bank of Nistru river. On the right bank of Nistru river, a notable proportion received assistance from the UN, NGOs, and volunteers, while on the Left bank, a higher percentage was self-reliant. Additionally, interviewed refugees on the left bank are more dependent on relatives for medical support compared to the right bank. These differences may be influenced by factors such as geographical accessibility, the presence of humanitarian organizations, and the strength of community and familial support networks. Understanding these variations is crucial for targeted healthcare interventions based on regional dynamics and available resources.

Almost **half of the interviewed refugees from Ukraine** (49 % =116 individuals) **are registered with a family doctor in Moldova.** This registration is disproportionately higher on the right bank of Nistru River (43%) compared to the Left bank (24 %). Among those who registered with a family doctor, the majority (91 individuals) have a Temporary Protection ID, while the remaining 25 lack that legal status. Their registration with a family doctor may be attributed to having another legal status in Moldova or being registered in private clinics. 6 % of respondents still rely on their connections with family doctors from Ukraine and have not registered with a family doctor in Moldova. Additionally, it is noteworthy that half of the individuals with Temporary Protection IDs are not registered with a family doctor.

URGENT NEEDS

66 % (156 out of 238 respondents, half of whom reported serious medical conditions) identified **medical care as their top priority**, including diagnostics, medicines, and surgery. Notably, 90 % of the interviewed persons with disabilities expressed urgent healthcare needs. With regard to the type of health-care, half of the respondents (50 %) expressed a need for secondary healthcare, followed by primary healthcare (43 %), and emergency medical care (11 %). Data revealed a geographical disparity, with refugees on the right bank of Nistru river, consistently expressing higher needs for healthcare.

Non-food items is the second most urgent need expressed by 23 % of respondents, showcasing a growing demand in recent months. This includes essential winter clothing for adults and children, bedding items to ensure adequate shelter, hygiene kits for maintaining health and sanitation, and diapers to meet the specific needs of vulnerable populations.

Financial assistance emerges as the third most urgent need for 13 % of the interviewed refugees also motivated by changes in cash eligibility criteria (now linked to Temporary Protection). In addition, in the absence of functioning social protection for refugees, cash remains essential to address urgent needs, including food, hygiene items, accommodation, and winterization costs.

Food is still an urgent need for 10 % of interviewed refugees, including meat, fresh fruits, and vegetables.

Information needs of respondents include: **their legal status in Moldova (8%), how to access medical care (8%), job opportunities (6%), how to access education (2%),** and **how to access psychological counseling (1%).**

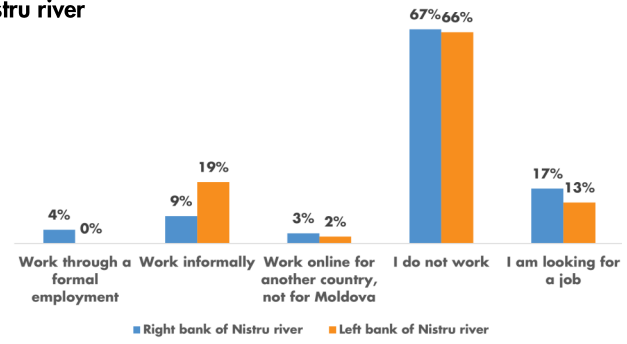
ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

86 % (201 out of 234*) of the interviewed refugees are currently not employed in Moldova. Of the 14 % of the respondents (21 women, 12 men) who are currently working in Moldova, 3 % have a formal employment and 11 % an informal one. Notably, on the Left bank, all employed individuals (18 %) are engaged in informal work, while on the Right bank, 8% work informally and 4% formally, highlighting distinct patterns of employment in Moldova. Those employed are working in diverse sectors, including seasonal work in the field, sales, construction, and the beauty industry.
Among the 201 respondents not currently employed in Moldova, the large majority (156) are not actively seeking employment, 38 (19 %) are actively seeking employment, 7 (3 %) are engaged in online work for another country.
For the 156 respondents not seeking employment, the main reasons behind their decision **NOT to seek employment in Moldova** are:

⇒ **Retirement and Age-Related Factors (Pensioners):** 22% of respondents mentioned being pensioners as the reason for not working.
⇒ **Limited Job Opportunities and Community Perception:** 9% of respondents highlighted the lack of available jobs and the negative perception that the local population has of refugees seeking jobs.
⇒ **Caregiving Responsibilities (Child Care and Care of Relatives):** 19% of individuals (all women) reported not working due to responsibilities related to child care and caring for relatives.
⇒ **Educational and Document-Related Barriers:** 4% of respondents faced barriers such as language issues, lack of required documents, and challenges with education.
⇒ **Recent Arrival to the Area:** 5% of respondents reported not working due to the recent arrival to Moldova, indicating a potential transitional phase for newcomers in the community.

Diversity in employment situation by the banks of Nistru river

The graph illustrates a predominant trend of non-employment among refugees from Ukraine in Moldova, with 67 % on the Right bank and 66 % in the Left bank currently not working. Informal work is more prevalent on the Left bank (19%) compared to the Right bank (9%), indicating potential differences in local economies or opportunities. The disparity in formal employment, with 4% on the right bank and none on the left bank, suggests variations in access to structured job opportunities.



*4 respondents did not provide answers regarding their employment status

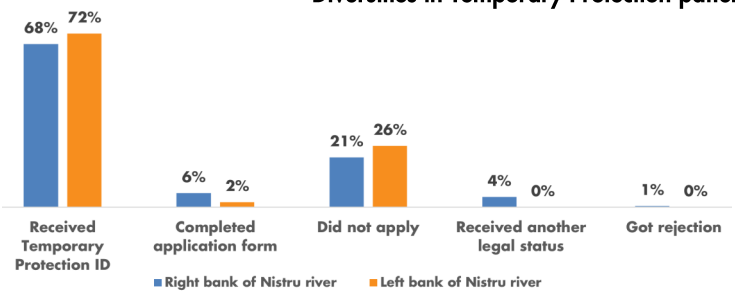
TEMPORARY PROTECTION

Two-thirds of the respondents (75 %, 176 out of 235*) applied for Temporary Protection in Moldova. They include 127 women and 49 men. The data indicates a similar trend in the application rates for Temporary Protection regardless of the respondents' place of residence, with 71 % on the right bank and 75 % on the left bank of Nistru river. This suggests that application rates between the two banks have been converging over the past months. Of the 176 refugees who applied for Temporary Protection, **93 % (163 persons) received the Temporary Protection ID.** The remaining **12 successfully completed the online registration form** and are currently awaiting their appointment at the IGM Office while 1 female respondent's application was rejected but she appealed the decision.

The remaining 25 % of respondents (59 persons) did not apply for Temporary Protection; 8 of them received a Residence Permit in Moldova. Data suggest no specific correlation between respondents' sex, age or ethnicity and their intentions to apply for Temporary Protection.

In December 2023, OHCHR started collecting data about access to rights for refugees who received the Temporary Protection ID. 32 respondents participated in this first data collection round. The majority of them did not report any challenge in accessing rights. Of those who reported challenges, 3 individuals highlighted difficulties in accessing healthcare, 2 in accessing social assistance and/or social services and 1 person mentioned challenges in accessing employment, without specifying further details.

Diversities in Temporary Protection patterns between both bank of Nistru river



The graph highlights differences in the Temporary Protection application process between the Right and Left banks.

While the percentage of Temporary Protection holders is similar, there are more individuals who did not apply on the Left bank (26% vs. 21%). Interestingly, some on the right bank respondents received another legal status (4%), while none on the left did.

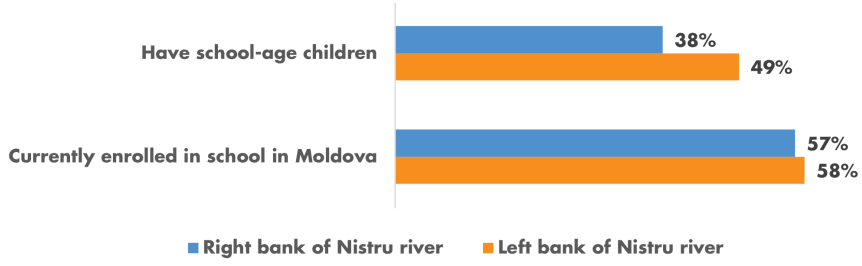
EDUCATION

Among the respondents who have school-age children, grandchildren, or nephews (97 out of 238 individuals), **57 % stated that their children are currently enrolled in Moldovan schools.**

Data did not indicate any disparity in children enrollment rates between the different banks of Nistru river; the enrollment rate on the Right bank increased compared to the previous months. This increase can be explained by the entry into force of the Temporary Protection legal status.

On both banks of Nistru river, most schools selected by respondents for their children offer a curriculum in Russian language, with a few schools offerings education in Romanian on the Right bank and Ukrainian in the Left bank. **95 % of respondents cited the preference for online or remote learning using the Ukrainian curriculum as the primary reason for not enrolling their children in Moldovan schools**.

Distribution by region of respondents with school-age children and enrollment process



The graph illustrates varying enrollment trends on both banks of Nistru river. The enrollment rates in Moldovan schools are relatively close, with 57% on the Right bank and 58% on the Left bank currently having their children enrolled. This suggests a notable presence of families with school-aged children and a comparable level of school enrollment on both banks of the river.

INTENTIONS

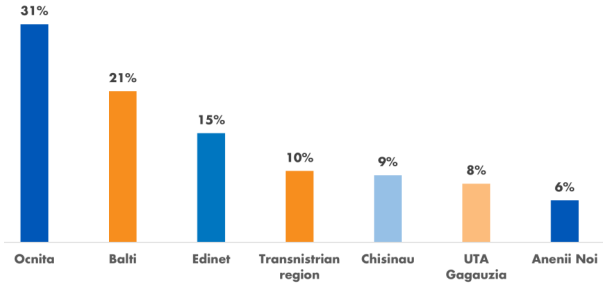
77 % of the interviewed refugees expressed an intention to return to Ukraine in the future; 6 % have no intention of returning, and 17 % remain uncertain.

129 refugees, primarily women, visited Ukraine occasionally or frequently for personal reasons. 70% of these individuals were granted Temporary Protection status in Moldova.

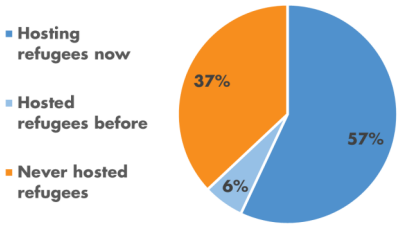
HOST COMMUNITIES

OHCHR interviewed members of the host community in Moldova to assess if and how various spheres of their life, including education, employment, healthcare, and social cohesion were impacted by the arrival of refugees from Ukraine. OHCHR considers as host communities Moldovan citizens, including those hosting refugees from Ukraine in their houses. In November and December 2023, **OHCHR interviewed 85 host community members**, comprising of 55 women and 30 men, representing various regions across the country as indicated in the graph below. The most representative age groups were 30-49 (40 %) and 60-69 (22 %). Individuals self-identifying as ethnic Russians were primarily concentrated in the Transnistrian region and ethnic Moldovan—in Balti and Chisinau, whereas a significant number of respondents in Ocnita considered themselves as ethnic Ukrainians.

Distribution of respondents by region



Local hosting experience



Out of 53 individuals who had hosting experience, 40 accommodated their relatives without charge, while the remaining respondents hosted non-relatives. A significant majority, 41 out of 53 (77 %), mentioned receiving various forms of humanitarian aid or assistance for hosting refugees. This support included cash aid, food packages, gas compensation, and government assistance.

EDUCATION

Among the local respondents, 49 % have school-age children, grandchildren, or nephews; most of them residing in the northern and central regions of Moldova.

98 % of them indicated that they had not witnessed any significant changes in the educational system following the arrival of children from the refugee community of Ukraine.

The remaining respondents highlighted challenges associated with language barriers, and a consequent desire for integration programs.

EMPLOYMENT

65 % of the interviewed representatives of host communities are employed in various sectors, including agriculture (8%), private business (8%), education (7%), government (7%), sales (6%), and other occupations. 23 % are pensioners, and 12 % are presently unemployed.

The majority of interviewed individuals (84 %) reported not noticing any changes in the labor sphere following the arrival of refugees to Moldova.

A very small percentage (5 %) reported job loss for some locals.

HEALTHCARE

The analysis of host community feedback reveals a diverse range of perceptions on the impact that the arrival of refugees from Ukraine had on the healthcare system.

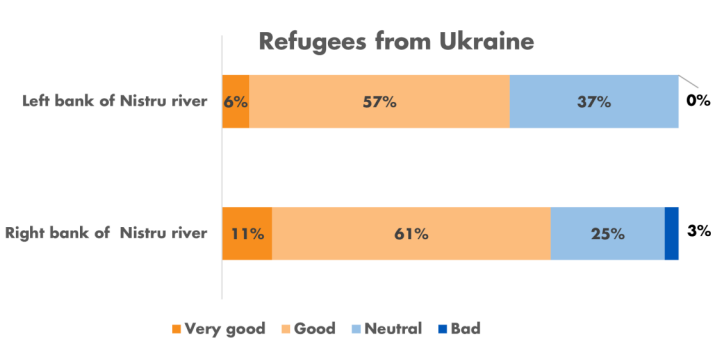
The large majority of interviewed host community members (89 %) perceived no changes in healthcare following the refugees' arrival.

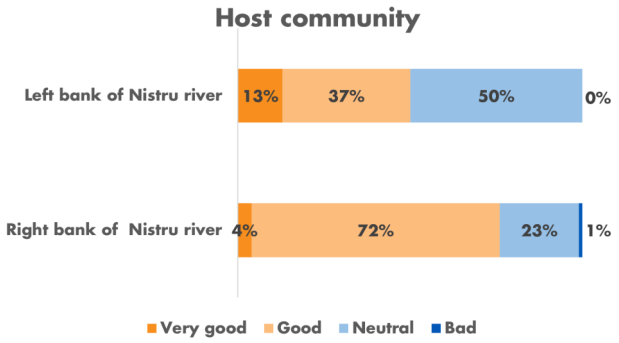
A small number reported challenges such as long waits, increased expenses for visits of medical specialists or procuring the medicines, and concerns about specialist quality.

SOCIAL COHESION: HOST COMMUNITIES AND REFUGEES

OHCHR monitoring includes a component aimed at assessing the level of social cohesion between refugees from Ukraine and the local population, through the perceptions that both groups have on interactions and relationships between them. Data suggest that activities organized by humanitarian actors in Moldova aimed at promoting refugees' integration in the host communities, and social cohesion between the two groups continued to be relevant.

Respondents' perceptions of the quality of the relationship between refugees from Ukraine





PERCEPTION OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE ON THE QUALITY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REFUGEES AND MOLDOVANS

LEFT BANK OF NISTRU RIVER: Most of the interviewed refugees from Ukraine **(64 %) reported a quite positive experience of interactions with the local community**. However, some respondents mentioned tensions arising due to **language barriers** (locals being unwilling to hear the Ukrainian language), **nervousness of the local population** because of the refugees' presence, and **different political views** that influence attitudes towards refugees from Ukraine in the region.

RIGHT BANK OF NISTRU RIVER: The majority of respondents **(72 %) reported positive treatment by host communities**, especially from older individuals. Some respondents expressed challenges related to **housing issues, employment, and overall tiredness due to refugees' presence.** Some respondents felt that the locals believed refugees received excessive aid. A significant part of respondents felt grateful for the reception and assistance received, but they also felt a sense of not belonging, unhappiness, or tensions in the relationship with locals.

PERCEPTION OF MOLDOVANS ON THE QUALITY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE AND MOLDOVANS

LEFT BANK OF NISTRU RIVER: Half of the respondents **(50 %) reported positive sentiments** and another half maintained neutrality towards refugees from Ukraine. While some appreciate diversity and enjoy positive interactions, concerns were raised about **political tensions**, urging refugees to integrate better by understanding local culture and contributing positively to society.

RIGHT BANK OF NISTRU RIVER: Most of respondents (76 %) reported good relationships with refugees from Ukraine. However, several concerns were highlighted, including **language conflicts, perceptions of refugees not integrating, and frustrations over resource distribution.**

Moldovans suggested various approaches for better integration of refugees in Moldova society, including encouraging refugees to learn the local language (Romanian), find a job, understanding local culture, and avoiding political tensions.

People here were nice to me. They helped me find a good school for my child with autism, and my neighbors even gave me some food.
- Woman, 38 years old, Transnistrian region

Diverse political opinions are present, and to avoid potential conflicts, we refrained from discussing the war, especially since some residents hold Russian passports.
- Woman, 48 years old, Transnistrian region

I found an apartment for rent for 200 euros, but when the owner found out that I am a refugee from Ukraine, he raised the price to 350 euros.
- Man, 24 years old, Chisinau

Moldovans are good people, but very poor, they have very low pensions. I receive humanitarian assistance and share it with my older neighbors [from the host community].
- Woman, 77 years old, Balti

In my store, a refugee once demanded that I speak to her in Ukrainian. Some refugees may seem arrogant, but it is important to remember that these traits are about individuals, not the entire nation.
- Woman, 28 years old, Transnistrian region

Refugees received assistance, but we [locals] do not. They [refugees] throw food in the trash, but locals have nothing to eat.
- Woman, 68 years old, Balti

Refugees demand that we speak Ukrainian with them, but we are not obliged! We speak Russian for their sake, but they do not appreciate. Let them learn Romanian then.
- Man, 43 years old, Ocnita

Locals have a good attitude towards refugees, we support them and understand that refugees did not run away to Moldova from a good life.
- Woman, 25 years old, Balti

PATTERNS OF DISCRIMINATION/NEGATIVE ATTITUDE BASED ON PROTECTED GROUNDS

REFUGEE STATUS

Our effort to rent an apartment in Chisinau took an unexpected turn when the local guy's mother, who supports Russia, asked us to leave after several months of renting this apartment because she found out that we were refugees from Ukraine.

- Woman, 52 years, Chisinau

Locals treated us badly and asked us why we, Ukrainians, came here.

- Man, 48 years, Transnistrian region

My child was treated poorly at the school by other children who told him that he is a refugee and should go to his own country.

- Woman, 34 years, Edinet

As I walked through the city centre together with my child who had a Ukrainian ribbon on her wrist after a master class, a man passing by negatively reacted to my child because of the ribbon. Now I am scared to enroll my child in a Russian school in Moldova.

- Woman, 37 years, Chisinau

Once a neighbor where I previously lived called me a homeless creature.

- Woman, 68 years, Balti

85 % of respondents did not report any negative attitude towards them while 15 % of interviewed refugees from Ukraine (28 women, 6 men) reported that they had faced such.

⇒ Respondents from the right bank of Nistru river experienced slightly higher levels of negative attitude (12 %) compared with the interviewed refugees from Ukraine residing on the left bank of Nistru river (10 %).

⇒ A discrepancy in gender was observed regarding negative views on refugees from Ukraine, with men expressing a lower level (9 %) compared to women (16 %), showing a gender dimension in experience of negative attitudes.

⇒ **Verbal and Social Hostility:** Instances of direct insults, negative reactions, and derogatory comments are prevalent, creating an unwelcoming environment for refugees.

⇒ **Healthcare Challenges:** Discriminatory behavior in healthcare settings, such as refusal of medical services and mistreatment, is prevalent, creating barriers to access essential services.

⇒ **Language Barriers:** Communication difficulties because of limited command of the Romanian language, lead to misunderstandings and instances of discriminatory treatment in diverse contexts, such as healthcare facilities and workplaces.

⇒ **Employment and Economic Struggles:** Refugees face difficulties in securing employment due to language barriers, leading to economic hardships and negative stereotypes about their work ethic.

⇒ **Housing and Community Isolation**: Disputes over political views lead to conflicts, housing discrimination, and instances where refugees are forcibly removed from rented accommodations due to political differences.

⇒ **Education and Social Integration:** Children of refugees from Ukraine experience challenges in schools, facing isolation, negative reactions, and difficulties in making friends due to language and cultural differences, impacting their overall social integration.

SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING

The key findings of social media monitoring (Viber, TikTok, Telegram, Facebook) related to perception of refugees from Ukraine by host communities concerned:

⇒ **Jealousy for their financial situation and accusations of financial dependency:**

Online comments suggested a stereotype associating refugees from Ukraine with luxurious living, triggering jealousy and resentment. Additionally, refugees are being accused of not contributing to society and being dependents on benefits.

⇒ **Blaming refugees for economic struggles:**

On various platforms, locals are seen attributing Moldova's economic challenges to refugees from Ukraine, fueling frustration and resentment.

⇒ **Cultural and nationalistic resistance:**

Resistance to perceived Ukrainian cultural influence and calls for Ukrainians to return home indicate nationalistic sentiments.

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For any questions, please reach out Martina Gastaldello, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR Moldova, martina.gastaldello@un.org

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