

Post Distribution Monitoring - Cash for Winter

Summary

Since the beginning of the full scale war in Ukraine on 24th February 2022, **more than 4.1 million refugees from Ukraine have crossed the border into Romania**, both directly from Ukraine and via the Republic of Moldova. Out of these, more than **139,000 have been issued Temporary Protection** permits in Romania, and as of the end of June 2023, **95,639 refugees remained in the country**. Refugees in transit received vital services, assistance and information upon arrival and while in country

In response to the arrival of refugees from Ukraine in neighboring countries, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency has carried out three-month Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) programme totaling 568 RON per person per month, with an additional protection-based one-month payment for more vulnerable households that met more specific targeting criteria. These rounds of multi-propose cash assistance were part of the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) for the Ukraine situation. This assistance was provided in close coordination with the Government of Romania.

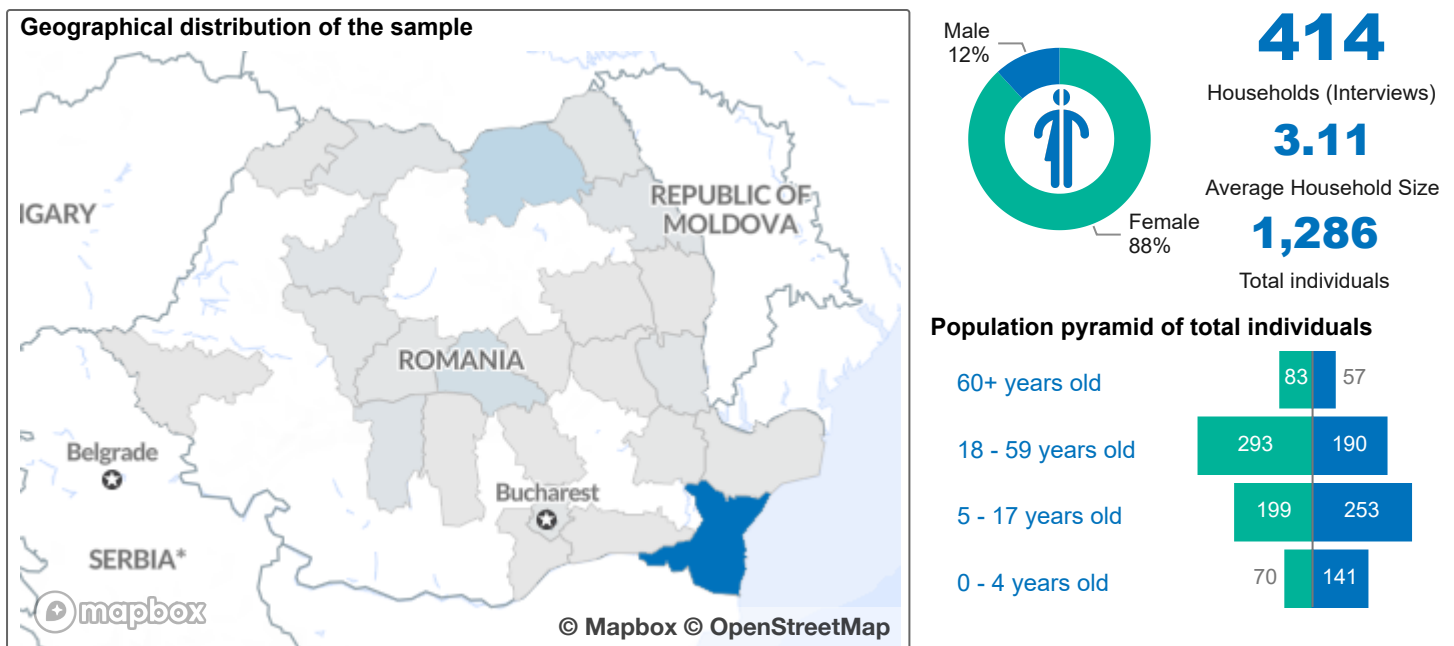
Following the MPCA, the focus of the cash-based intervention shifted towards Winterization, in order to mitigate the adverse impact of a harsh winter, worsened by a general rise in prices, especially energy prices. **The Winterization Cash Top-up** assistance which added up to 653 RON per person, was released to 19,000 individuals. This assistance pack was provided in one instalment to eligible households between December 2022 and March 2023. This programme covered a longer period than the previous ones, and it aimed to cover the winter-specific needs of the refugee population.

As part of the efforts to monitor the quality of service delivery and to ensure accountability to the affected population, UNHCR conducted a Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) survey to assess the cash for winter program in Romania. This document presents the findings of this survey structured in nine sections as follows: (1) Demographic characteristics of the sample, (2) Methodology, (3) Receiving and spending the cash assistance, (4) Risks in accessing the assistance, (5) Problems in accessing and spending the assistance, (6) Markers and Prices, (7) Outcomes, (8) Coping mechanisms and (9) Accountability to Affected Population.

1. Demographic composition

As depicted in the graphs below, the average household of the surveyed sample is composed of 3.1 individuals, totaling 1,286 individuals assessed. Regarding gender disaggregation, out of 414 respondents, 88% were women and 12% were men. Within the 1,286 individuals, the two representative age groups were 18-59 years old (with 293 females and 190 males) and 5-17 years old (with 253 males and 199 females).

Additionally, the sample ensured geographic representation and coverage, with the top refugee hosting counties being Constanta (171), Bucharest (97), Suceava (46), and Brasov (23). In the other counties, the sample sizes ranged between 1 and 20 individuals.



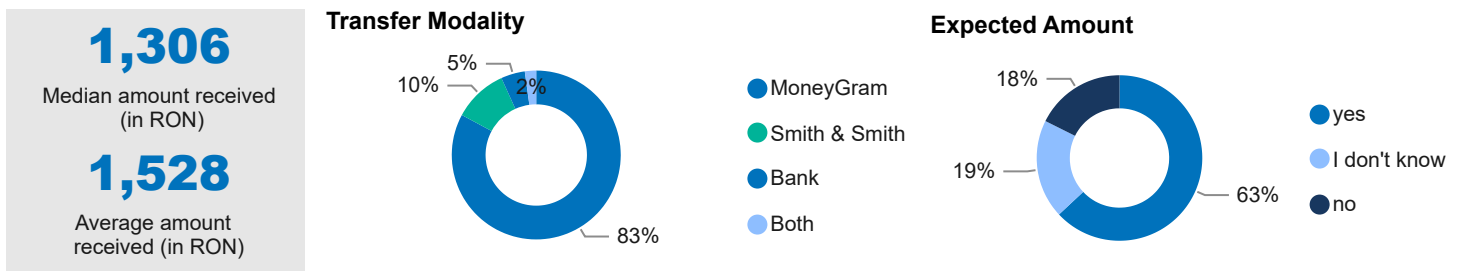
2. Methodology

Using a structured survey, UNHCR conducted self-administered interviews (via SMS) with a total of 414 refugee households from 17 March until the 3rd of May 2023. These households were randomly selected from the UNHCR list of refugee recipients of cash assistance, resulting thus in a population of 1,286 refugees. The sample was selected with a confidence level of 95% and a 7% margin of error. Additionally, a 100% buffer was included in the sample to account for potential non-responses due to the fluidity of the number of refugees.

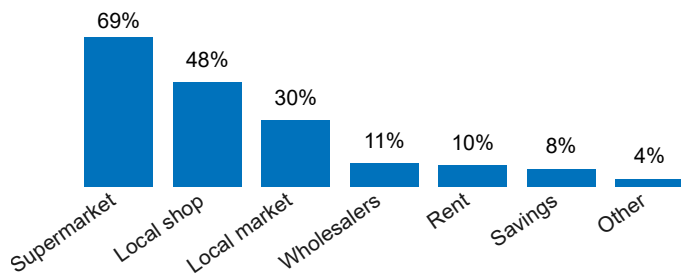
3.Reception and expenditure of Cash Assistance

The third section of the monitoring questionnaire aimed to better understand the reception and expenditure of the assistance. Considering that all beneficiaries were disbursed the same amount of 653 RON per person, the survey asked refugees to report on the amounts received and their perception of this. Reportedly, the average sum received by a refugee household was 1,528 RON, and the median amount was 1,306 RON, with the preferred transfer modality being through MoneyGram (83%). A noteworthy finding regarding the perception of refugees on the amounts received is that 18% of the respondents reported they did not receive the expected amount. This might be linked to the fact that the Winterization programs consisted of a one-off assistance grant, different in amount from the previous grants, as well as the communication around these new programs potentially not being as efficient as in the previous rounds.

In terms of timing, 67% of the respondents reported that the cash assistance arrived on the expected date communicated by UNHCR, 20% reported that it did not arrive on the expected date, and the remaining 13% stated that they did not know. The top three decision-makers, in terms of how the money was used, reported by the respondents were: female head of the household (45%), both husband and wife (24%), and the entire household (18%).



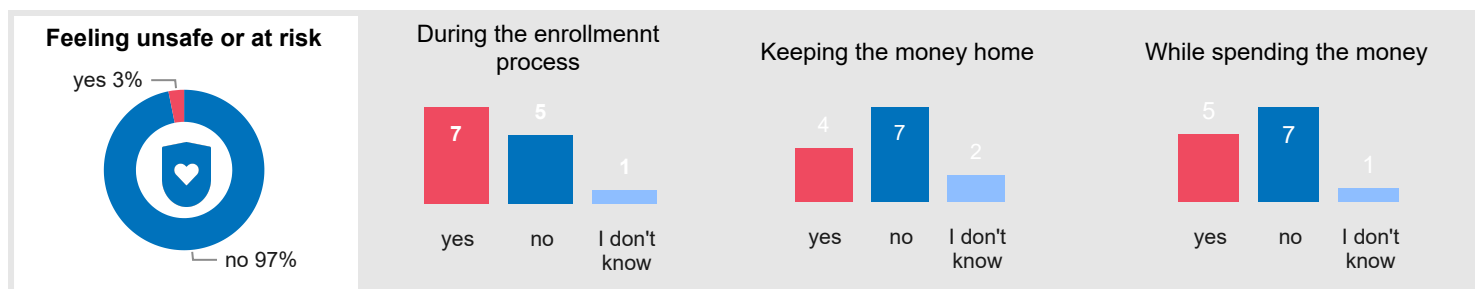
Where was the cash spent*



The top 3 places where respondents chose to spend the cash were (multiple choice answer): **supermarket (69%)**; **local shop (48%)**; and **local market (30%)**. Furthermore, 83% of the respondents reported that they were able to find quality items/services in the market, while only 10% of respondents reported that they were unable to find mostly/not at all items/services in the market. The most frequently reported items /services not found were: Food items (n=13); Medical items (n=8); Household items (n=5); Clothing items (n=5); and Hygiene items (1 respondent). Regarding the duration of the assistance, 91% of the respondents reported that they benefited from a single month of cash assistance.

4.Risks in accessing the cash assistance

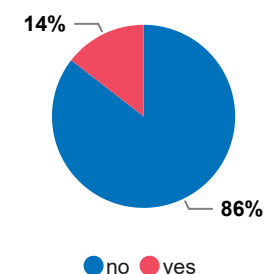
Only 3% of the respondents reported that they felt unsafe or at risk during the distribution. Among them, 7 respondents (out of 414) answered that they felt unsafe or at risk during the enrollment process, 4 respondents reported feeling unsafe or at risk while keeping the money after receipt, and all 5 respondents reported feeling unsafe or at risk while spending the money.



5.Problems in receiving/withdrawing or spending the cash assistance

During the survey, participants were also asked whether they encountered any problems or issues in the process of receiving, withdrawing, or spending the cash assistance. While 86% of the respondents reported that they haven't encountered or are not aware of any problems, 14% reported facing at least one of the following issues: the registered person couldn't access or withdraw the cash (5.5%); poor services from the financial service provider (3.5%); wrong or not valid PIN (1.5%); refusal of services by shop/market owners (2.2%); needing to pay additional money or do favors for other persons to access the assistance (3.6%) - in this case, most of the submissions refer to having to pay for the taxi to get there or other household members; other issues (1.5%).

Encountering problems

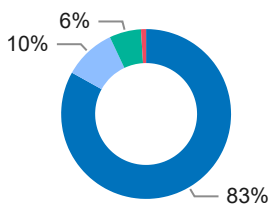


*The results don't add up to 100% because the question allowed for multiple choice

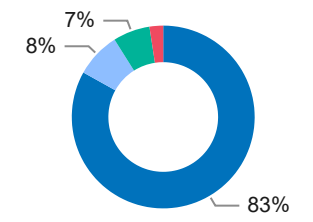
6. Markets and prices

Refugees were also asked about their experiences in the market. The results revealed that the majority, specifically 83% of the respondents, were able to find the items they needed. However, when it came to the price of items and services, the respondents had differing opinions. According to the survey, 38% of the respondents claimed a general increase in the price of items or services while 36% reported that they did not notice any increase in prices. The remaining 26% of the respondents admitted that they did not know how to determine if prices had changed.

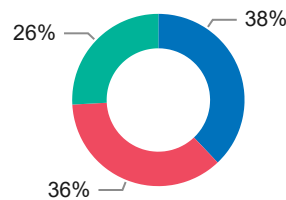
Finding the needed items/services in the market



Finding quality for items/services in the market



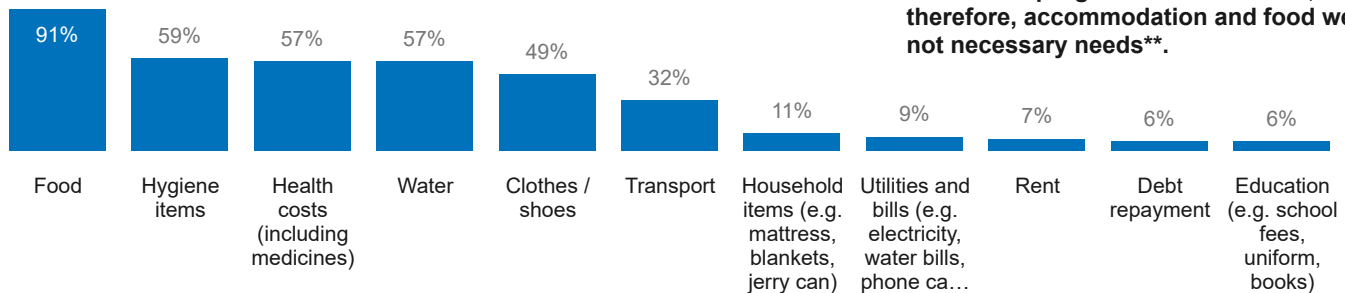
Observing and increase in the price of items or services in the last four weeks



In terms of the quality of items purchased or services accessed, the majority of respondents (83%) found the quality to be satisfactory. Additionally, 8% found the quality of items or services to be mostly satisfactory, and 7% were uncertain about the quality. Only 2% of the respondents reported that they did not find the right quality for items such as medicines, food products, articles of clothing, and hygiene products.

Regarding the allocation of the assistance, the bar chart below indicates the categories. It is noteworthy that the Winterization program took place during the time when the 50/20 Governmental assistance program was still active; therefore, accommodation and food were not necessary needs**.

On what was the assistance spent*



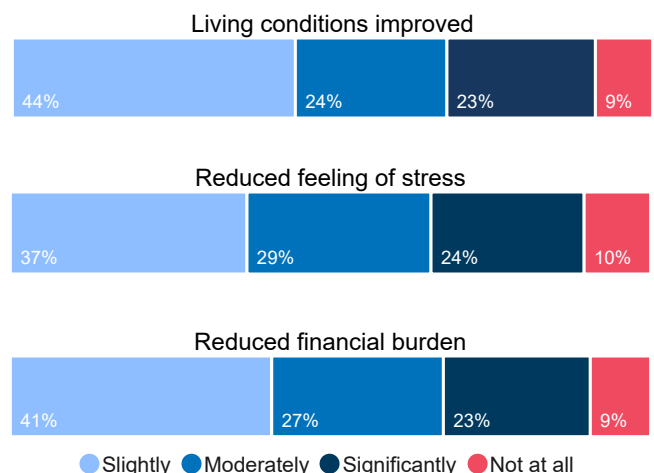
7. Outcomes

The survey also sought to understand the impact of cash assistance on the respondents, specifically in three key areas: improvement of living conditions, reduced feelings of stress, and the alleviation of the financial burden on their households. The respondents' assessments were categorized into four levels of impact: "slightly," "moderately," "significantly," and "not at all." Noteworthy is the fact that the Winterization programme was designed as a complementary assistance to the 50/20 Government assistance programme.

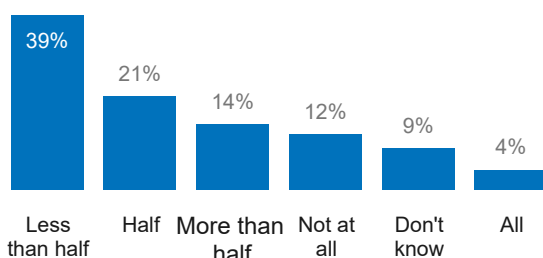
In terms of **living conditions**, 44% reported a 'slight' positive impact, 24% 'moderate,' 23% 'significant,' and 9% 'not at all.'

For **reduced stress**, 37% experienced a 'slight' reduction, 29% 'moderate,' 24% 'significant,' and 10% 'not at all.'

Regarding a **reduced financial burden**, 41% felt a 'slight' effect, 27% 'moderate,' 23% 'significant,' and 9% 'not at all.'



Meeting the households basic needs



The assessment also focused on understanding how well the respondents could fulfill their households' basic needs on their own. The answers were categorized into five levels, each representing different levels at which they were able to meet these needs: "Not at all", "Less than half", "Half", "More than half (but not all)", and "All".

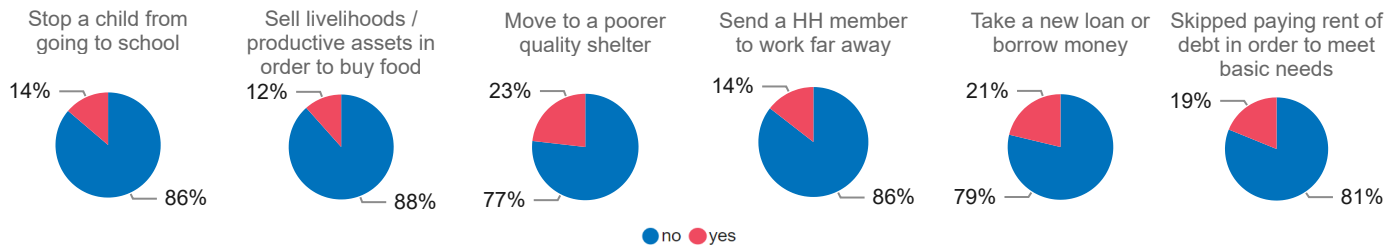
According to the answers, 39% of the respondents reported that they were able to meet at least half of the basic needs of their households and 51% less than half or not at all. Another 9% did not know or were not able to assess this on their own.

*The results don't add up to 100% because the question allowed for multiple choice

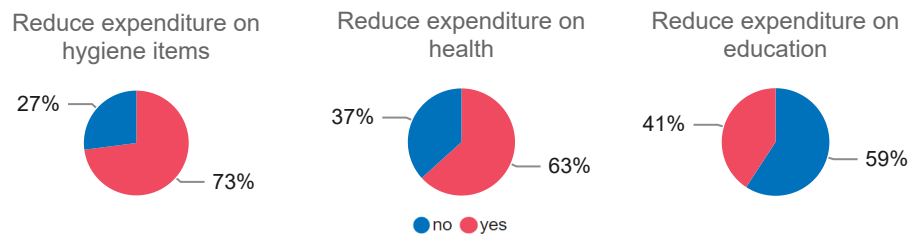
**[Rapid Survey of the 50-20 Programme](#) - UNHCR Romania Thematic Report

8. Coping mechanisms

In this section of the survey refugees were asked whether in the four weeks prior to the data collection they have resorted to any coping mechanism in order to meet their basic needs. 14% reported they had to prevent a child from going to school; 12% had to Sell livelihoods or productive assets; 23% moved to a poorer quality shelter; 14% sent a household member to work far away; 21% took a new loan or borrowed money and 19% had to skip paying rent or a debt.

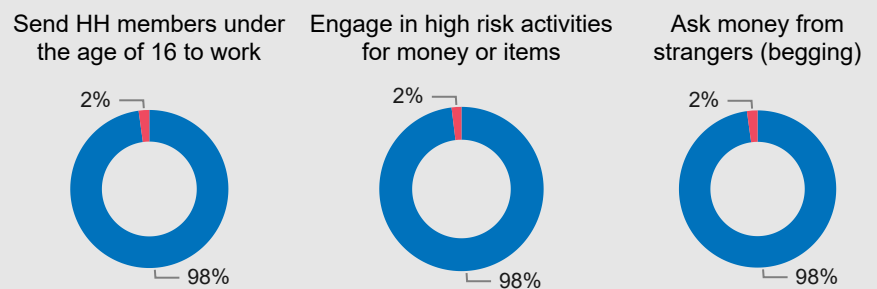


Similarly, some households had to resort to coping mechanisms such as reducing expenditures on hygiene items (73%) reducing expenditure on health items (63%) and reducing expenditure on education items and costs (41%), **in order to buy food.**



Extreme Coping mechanisms

Among the surveyed refugees approximately 2% have also reported resorting to extreme coping mechanisms, such as sending children under 16 to work (n=9), engaging in high risk activities (i.e. (E.g. illegal activities, survival sex, drug dealing, early marriage, joining armed groups etc.) (n=7) or begging (n=8),

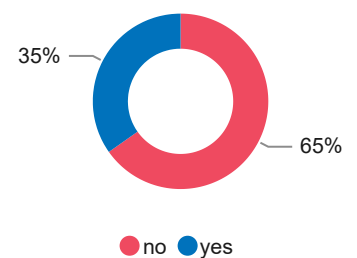


9. Accountability to Affected Population

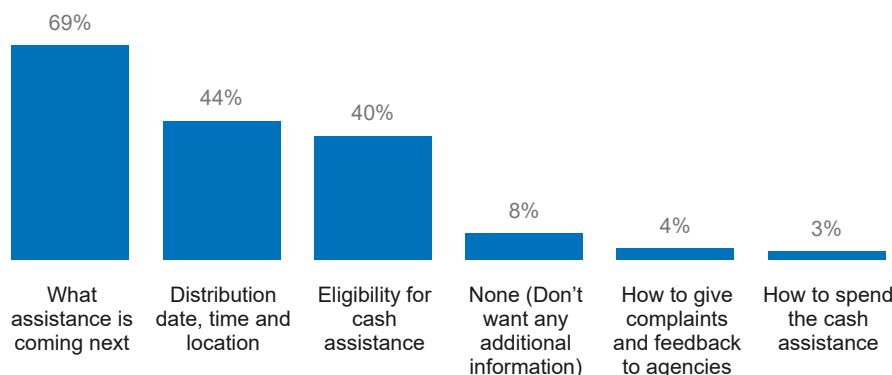
In terms of informational needs, 69% of respondents prioritized information about what assistance is coming next. Additionally, 44% of respondents expressed a desire for information regarding the distribution details, including the date, time, and location of the assistance. Furthermore, 40% of respondents expressed a need for information on the eligibility criteria for cash assistance.

Regarding preferences for assistance, if the program were to resume, an overwhelming 92% of respondents indicated a preference for cash assistance as oppose to other means such as in-kind and food assistance or a combination of the two. When asked about their awareness of reporting complaints and providing feedback on cash assistance from UNHCR, only 35% of respondents answered affirmatively. Among these respondents, 85% indicated that they would use the hotline as the preferred channel for reporting concerns or providing feedback. Additionally, 14% mentioned community mobilizers as their preferred means of communication, while a small fraction of 1% indicated an unspecified channel of preference.

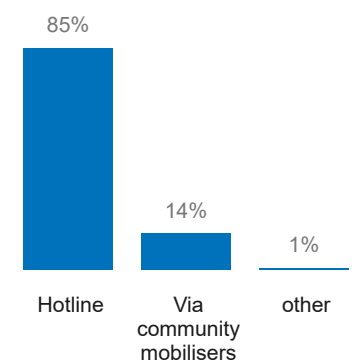
Knowing how you can report complaints and feedback on the cash assistance from UNHCR?



Information provision*



Channel



*The results don't add up to 100% because the question allowed for multiple choice