



Area-Based Assessment

Brasov, Romania
November 2023

About UNHCR

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organisation dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. UNHCR leads international action to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people. It delivers life-saving assistance, helps safeguard fundamental human rights, and develops solutions that ensure people have a safe place called home where they can build a better future. UNHCR also works to ensure that stateless people are granted a nationality.

About CSCM

Founded in 2011, **Romanian Centre for Comparative Migration Studies** (Centrul pentru Studiul Comparat al Migratiei/CSCM) is a think tank officially connected to Babes-Bolyai University in Braşov and which investigates and directs applied projects around an extensive catalogue of topics concerning all stages of migration and its dynamics. From CSCM, Alexandra Porumbescu, UCV; Kyrychenko Viktoriia, UBB; Anatolie Cosciug, ULBS; Livia Dana Pogan, ULBS; Andriana Cosciug, CSCM researcher, have contributed to this report.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to The Migrant Integration Centre in Braşov (Centrul de Integrare pentru Migranţi Braşov) for conducting surveys among the Ukrainians and the host community in Braşov.

Contact us:

UNHCR Representation in Romania
Information Management Unit
e-mail: rombuim@unhcr.org

Area Based Assessment – Braşov, Romania

As of 30 November 2023, over **6.3 million refugees from Ukraine** were recorded globally. To this date, Romania has recorded more than 5.1 million border crossings of refugees directly from Ukraine and via the Republic of Moldova. Among them, 149.000 refugees have applied for Temporary Protection and approximately **81.000 remained in the country**. Furthermore, over 6.000 refugees have obtained Temporary Protection (TP) in Braşov.

The **Area-Based Assessment (ABA)** provides a comprehensive overview of the humanitarian situation in Braşov. This location was selected for in-depth analysis due to Braşov's status as one of the cities with a high level of economic development and cosmopolitan outlook, making it an attractive destination for refugees from Ukraine. The city's appeal is further enhanced by its broad access to educational institutions and promising employment prospects.

Considering the evolving situation, updated information regarding the living conditions, needs and access to services of refugees from Ukraine, living outside of collective sites, including those who have left such sites, is needed to inform humanitarian programming and long-term strategies. Consequently, UNHCR, through its partners, the Romanian Centre for Comparative Migration Studies (CSCM), affiliated to Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj Napoca and The Migrant Inclusion Centre in Braşov, conducted this ABA to provide information for an area-based response by authorities, humanitarian organisations, and development actors. The focus of this assessment is to understand the needs and priorities of refugees in Braşov, their access to services, social cohesion in the city, and the impact of refugee arrivals on the local economy and service accessibility for the host population. This approach aims to enhance the understanding of the city's dynamics and challenges, enabling stakeholders to respond more effectively and address gaps in the refugee response.

This report presents findings related to access to services, humanitarian assistance, employment, living conditions, host-refugee relationships, and priority needs across Braşov.

The assessment employed a mixed research methodology, namely the collection of primary data from community members and key informants (KIs), along with the examination of secondary data from local sources and online references. This primary data was obtained through quantitative surveys with refugees and host community representatives, interviews with key informants (KIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs). Data collection took place between 1 September and 11 November 2023 in Braşov, and five data collection methods were employed, as explained further.

Methodology



Refugee household survey

A household-level quantitative structured questionnaire was administered to 152 refugees (face-to-face) residing in both private accommodations and collective sites. The survey aimed to assess their profile, priority needs, access to services, as well as social cohesion and movement.



Host community survey

A household-level quantitative structured questionnaire was administered to 96 individuals from the host community. The survey aimed to observe the effects of refugees' arrival in terms of social cohesion, impact on the local economy, and access to public services.



Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Two FGDs were organised, conducted in Romanian, Ukrainian and Russian. One with refugees and one with members of the host community. These FGDs aimed to provide a qualitative insight into the economic ramifications of refugees' arrival in the city, its effects on service access, and the dynamics between refugees and their hosts. These discussions followed a semi-structured interview guide. Each group was designed to include six to eight participants from various socio-demographic groups. The FGDs were conducted by a facilitator and assisted by a note-taker. They were recorded along with written notes taken by the interviewers. Subsequently, the data from these discussions were transcribed and translated for analysis.



Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Ten key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted in Romanian and English, involving stakeholders relevant to the refugee response in Braşov. The objective was to gain insights into the impact of the refugee crisis on specific services, understand the response efforts made thus far, and explore how various stakeholders collaborated. A semi-structured questionnaire guided these interviews. The selection of KIIs was purposeful and followed an initial exploration of local stakeholders. All KIIs were recorded; subsequently, the data from these interviews were transcribed for analysis.

Challenges and limitations

- **Quantitative Surveys**

Because there was no pre-existing data on the number of refugees residing outside of collective sites in Braşov and the total number of households that hosted refugees, the sample selection process was purposive during data collection. Therefore, the findings should not be regarded as representative of the entire population of interest but rather indicative.

- **FGDs with the Host Community**

Ten representatives from the host community actively participated in the discussion. The moderators, in turn, ensured that each participant had the opportunity to express their opinion during the deliberations.

- **FGDs with Refugees**

The focus group discussion with refugees gathered nine participants. However, the moderator ensured that all participants had an opportunity to speak. The discussion was recorded, ensuring that the analysis covered all the information mentioned.

- **Timing of Assessment**

It is crucial to highlight that the data collection occurred from September to November. Owing to modifications in the government program, a majority of potential respondents were actively seeking employment or engaged in the labour market. A noteworthy proportion of Ukrainians declined participation in the survey, citing constraints on their time, particularly those associated with caring for children or other family members requiring special attention.

- **Context of Assessment**

The research was conducted in an area that has already participated in other types of studies related to the situation of Ukrainian refugees, which determined some possible respondents to be reluctant to participate.

Key Findings



Movements - Most Ukrainians residing in Braşov (80 %) expressed that their long-term plans involve staying in their current residence as long as possible. In the medium term, around 63% expressed a desire to stay in their current accommodation for the subsequent six months. Among those planning to change their place of residence within the next six months, the most common reasons cited were security concerns in Ukraine, around 93%, while 41 % declared that the possibility of finding work or getting better income might force them to leave their current accommodation.



Housing - While 92% of respondents live outside collective centres, housing still emerged as a critical challenge for refugees in Braşov. The difficulties stemmed from changes in the government's housing and food assistance program and delays in the disbursement of funds. The conclusion of the 50/20 program left many refugees unable to cover rent costs, resulting in some returning to Ukraine, relocating to refugee centres, or facing eviction.



Education - The primary educational choice for 69% of Ukrainian refugee children in Braşov was Romanian schools. Local authorities and the Ministry of Education have been supportive, and families are encouraged to enroll their children in schools and kindergartens. Inclusion activities, which could support the relations between refugees and host communities in the educational environment, are little known or do not exist. In contrast, extracurricular activities were seen as a potential solution for socialisation.



Health - Healthcare was identified as a top priority, with 72% of respondents highlighting its importance. Ukrainian refugees commonly identify the language barrier, the absence of interpreters, and the inability to register with a family doctor or specialist as primary challenges within the healthcare system. The high variability of medical services is also noted as a concern. Moreover, extended waiting times, particularly in critical situations, pose a potential risk of adverse outcomes, including fatalities. It is essential to highlight the distinct challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. However, it should be emphasised that among those representatives of the Ukrainian community who did utilise medical services, they reported being satisfied with the level of service provided.



Humanitarian Assistance - Refugees were generally content with the humanitarian assistance programs (Local Authorities, NGOs and UN Agencies), with around **71% expressing satisfaction**. However, there was a noticeable decline in aid levels and engagement throughout time. Coordination issues among non-governmental organisations (NGOs) led to service duplications and inefficient resource allocation. Critics highlighted the need for a more organised and systematised approach to aid, particularly for single mothers and groups with specific needs.



Livelihoods - A substantial portion of **refugees relied on humanitarian assistance (66%) and social support from the Romanian state (55%) for income**. Language barriers and the lack of right opportunities were significant barriers to employment. Additionally, 8% reported that their households had no source of income, double from the pre-conflict situation (4%).



Refugees-Host Community Relationship - **Around 80%** of respondents perceived the **relationship between refugees and the host community as "good" or "very good"**. Regarding qualitative data analysis, it's important to note that the information was rather ambiguous. There were observations of quite mixed data among refugees and hosts, indicating a diversity of perspectives and experiences within the surveyed groups.



Public Authorities - Ukrainian refugees faced **delays in receiving financial aid** from the Romanian government, leading to frustrations. Public institutions in Braşov provided various forms of assistance, including accommodation, sustenance, children's activities, and language courses. However, key informants noted that the overall support from local authorities may be somewhat limited, suggesting a need for increased collaboration and resources at the local level.

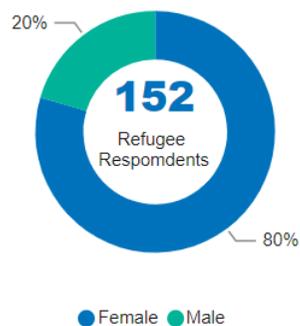


Coverage and demographics

This Area-Based Assessment encompasses the entirety of Braşov, situated in the central part of the country. Notably, Braşov ranks among the top three cities in Romania hosting refugees from Ukraine. The city's location related to the border crossing points with Ukraine holds significance since it is not in immediate proximity of the borders, but, as explained, attracts important groups of Ukrainian refugees. The reason resides in the fact that, as highlighted by a majority of Ukrainians, they perceive Braşov as a pleasant place to live, which was the primary reason for choosing it as their residence.

The most significant share of participants in the refugee survey is female (80%), which is consistent with the general gender breakdown of the Ukrainian adult refugee population in Romania. The average age of the respondents is 40.5 years. The data collected shows that 51% of the Ukrainian families residing in Braşov were separated due to the conflict, thus increasing the vulnerability of the refugee group. The average household is composed of approximately two and a half people, and with an average of under one child per household, indications of an adult female caregiver profile is emerging within the population.

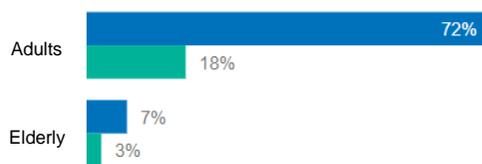
Gender distribution



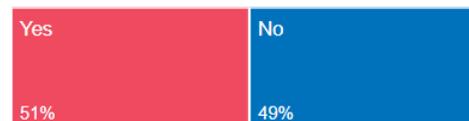
2.48
Average household size

0.77
Average number of children in the household

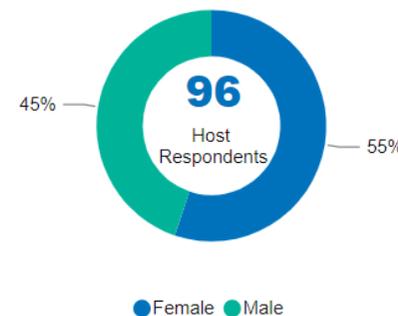
40.59
Average age



Family separation due to the conflict



Gender distribution

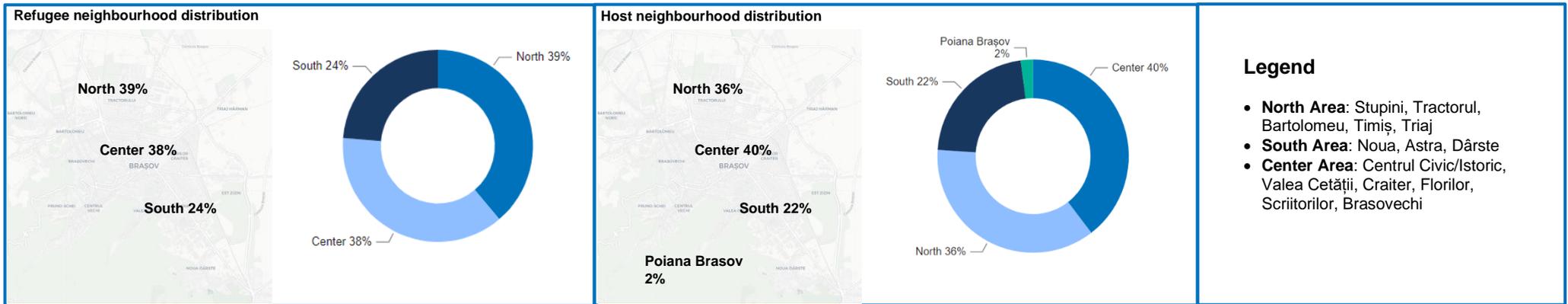


3.56
Average number of refugees hosted

2.94
Average number of people in the household

43.67
Average of Age

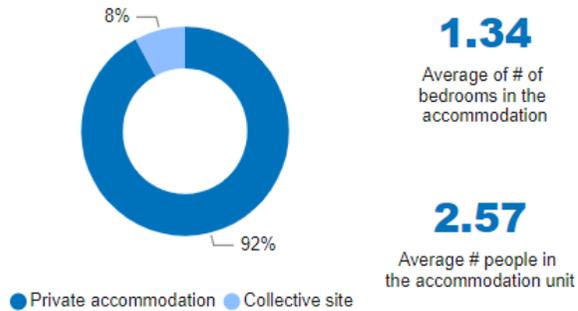
The host community survey reveals an average of almost three and a half people hosted, more than the number of individuals in the host household. In the survey, a total of 96 people participated, with a nearly equal gender distribution – 45% male and 55% female. In terms of hosting neighbourhood distribution, the largest share is in the central part of the city, where 40% of the accommodations are located, followed by the Northern neighbourhoods with 36%. This distribution matches the refugee distribution, where the centre comprises 38% of the accommodations and the Northern part of the city 39%.



Housing conditions

Accommodation was regarded as one area that has become more problematic for the refugee community, as indicated by participants in focus group discussions (FGD) and key informants (KIs). This situation is largely attributed to the changes in the governmental program that provides financial support for housing and to the delays in the disbursement of the funds, reported both by the KIs and the refugees. However, most of the refugees indicated that the reason for choosing a specific accommodation was that it was affordable or it was just one option which they could find.

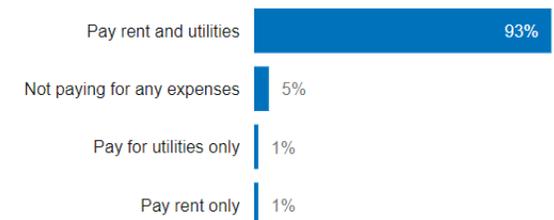
Situation of the accommodation of refugees



Time of arrival in current accommodation



Payment for accommodation



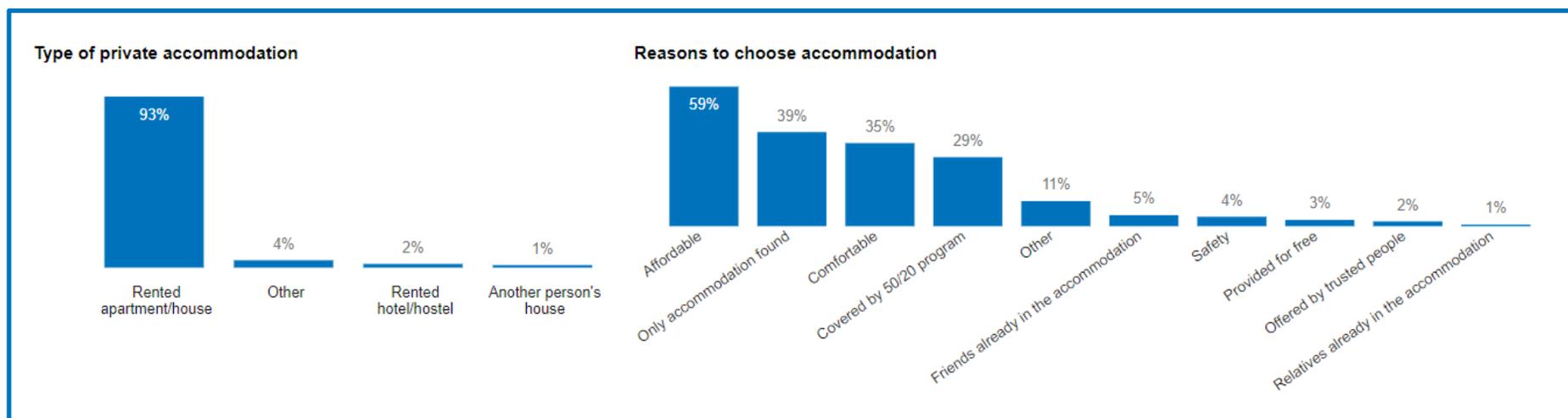


Out of the 152 respondents, 92% indicated that they reside in private accommodation, while the remaining 8% live in collective housing. On average, approximately two and a half people inhabit each dwelling. The average number of bedrooms per dwelling is 1.34 units. Approximately 45% of respondents arrived at their current location during the year 2022, with most arrivals concentrated in the last two quarters of that year, while the most significant share, of over half of the respondents, arrived in 2023. Among those surveyed, a significant 93% indicated that they cover the costs of their own accommodation and all associated utility expenses.

Of the total number of respondents living outside collective centres, 93% reside in private houses or apartments, 2% are accommodated in hotels or hostels, 1% live in the same house as the owners, and 4% did not specify the type of place where they currently live. Among those surveyed, 59% stated that the primary reason for choosing their housing was affordability, followed by that this was the only accommodation they could find. Another discovery is that the vast majority of respondents, namely 80%, express their intention to stay in the chosen housing for as long as possible, indicating a long-term commitment to remain in Braşov.

Among all those surveyed, 84% reported having submitted the necessary documents to receive financial support from the government's program for accommodation and food. It is also worth noting that 80% of respondents stated that they had received financial support.

The majority of the interviewed KIs believe that reliance on state support is deemed unreliable due to delays in rent payments and other assistance. The financial assistance provided is insufficient to meet the living needs of refugees, particularly for families with multiple children. Overall, the changes in the 50/20 program have created challenges in housing affordability and access to adequate financial support for the refugee population. The new program, while aiming to address verification and potential abuse concerns, is seen as more restrictive than helpful or stimulative.





KIs confirm that non-governmental organisations are doing everything possible to address critical situations, such as providing temporary accommodation, assisting with housing searches, negotiating with landlords to reduce housing costs, and supplying hot meals to vulnerable populations. However, this still does not enable a global solution to the situation.

Hosts perspective

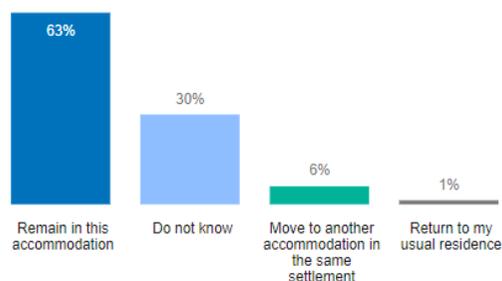
The main incentives to accommodate refugees from Ukraine were reported to be economic as well as the desire to help. Nonetheless, for some hosts, the most important incentive was the fact that they enjoyed meeting new people. Regarding the possible reasons that might lead the community to reconsider hosting refugees in the future, 40% of the hosts indicated that it might be conflicts or misbehaviour from the refugees' side, while 33% reported this question as not applicable to them. Asked for how long they were planning to host refugees, the majority (87%) of the respondents said that they planned to do it for as long as it is needed, with 2% of the hosts specifying that this was contingent on the continuation of the housing programme, as they could not afford it otherwise.

Movements

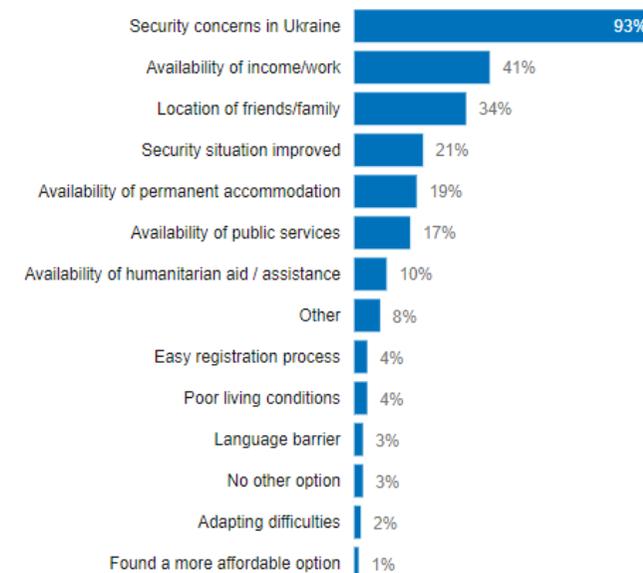
While the quantitative household survey indicated that, in the short term, most refugees had intentions of staying in Romania, in the same accommodation, the qualitative data revealed a significant level of uncertainty regarding their medium to long-term plans. This uncertainty stemmed from the lack of information about when the war in their home country would come to an end.

During the focus groups discussion (FGDs), some participants expressed their desire to return to their usual places of residence as soon as the security situation permitted. At the same time, others said that their financial situation did not allow them to stay in Romania, and their home in Ukraine was destroyed, so they had nowhere to go. However, given the ongoing insecurity in Ukraine, refugees find themselves with limited options but to stay in Braşov for an uncertain duration. The most important reason to move again in the following six months appears to be the security concerns in Ukraine, followed by the availability of work and the desire to move closer to their friends or family location. Adapting difficulties and availability of more affordable options appear less important in this regard. This uncertainty surrounding the refugees' length of stay in Braşov has implications for various aspects covered in this report, including their

Intention to move again in six months



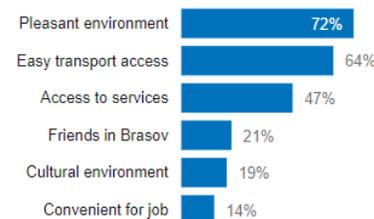
Reasons to move in the next six months



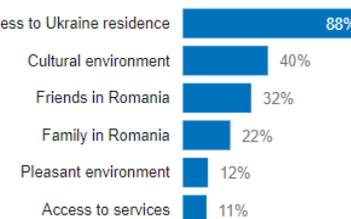
willingness to seek employment, learn the Romanian language, and engage in inclusion activities.

In addition, we can mention here that the main reason for choosing to stay in Romania was the closeness to the residence in Ukraine. This factor proved to be important for about 88% of the respondents, whereas in the second place, the cultural environment came up (40%), and in the third place, the friends' presence influenced the decision (32%). Additionally, when selecting Braşov as a temporary residence, 72% of Ukrainians considered the pleasant living environment, while 64% considered the relatively accessible transport links.

Reasons to choose Brasov



Reasons to chose Romania

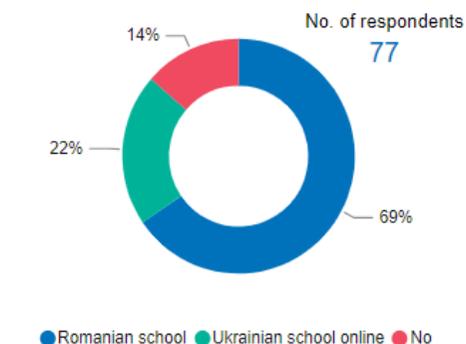


Education

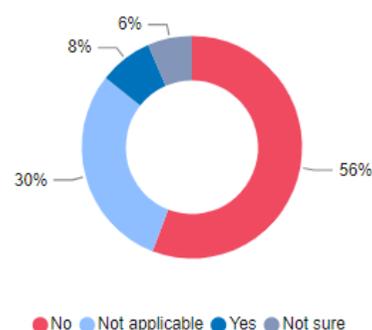
The survey results reveal a notable preference for Romanian schools. This preference can be driven by the advantage of allowing children to attend classes physically, thus facilitating their inclusion trajectories. The focus group discussions toned this result through some mentioned challenges related to communication and inclusion.

Regarding inclusion activities, most survey respondents are not aware of such opportunities. Only a small percentage, 8%, indicate that they are familiar with any inclusion activities in the Romanian schools. This suggests a generally low level of awareness and engagement among the surveyed parents regarding initiatives designed to facilitate inclusion and a relatively low level of interest in the public schooling system regarding the inclusion of Ukrainian children.

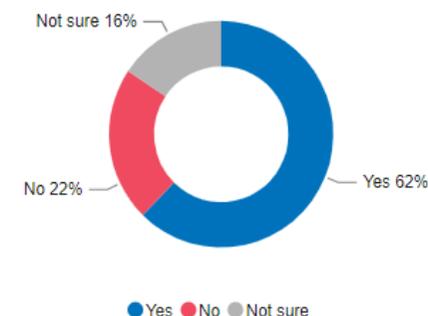
Access of children to formal education



Inclusion activities in Romanian schools



Non-formal education activities for children available in proximity



In terms of non-formal education activities, approximately 62% of respondents are knowledgeable about these activities, and they confirm their availability in the area where they reside. This indicates a significant awareness and accessibility of non-formal education opportunities for the surveyed population, contributing to a holistic educational experience beyond formal schooling.

On the other hand, several KIs report that according to the new eligibility criteria of the updated governmental assistance programme for housing and food, Ukrainian children must be enrolled in school and prioritised as refugees. Furthermore, a KI in education explained that Ukrainian children assist as *listener* until their original educational documents, which must be translated and legalised, are provided, so obtaining the student status can take a long time. Thus, the estimated number of children enrolled in the Romanian schools in Braşov is around 600-700, as audients, but there is no clear data on how many attend classes. In Braşov, educational hubs are approved by the County school inspectorate, where teachers can teach Ukrainians the alphabet and writing work.

While some KIs mentioned success for children who already spoke Romanian or for younger children whose education was play-based, others highlighted the challenges faced by refugee students. During the host FGD, it was noted that the arrival of refugees did not impact Romanian children's access to education, and colleagues and professors received the Ukrainian students well.

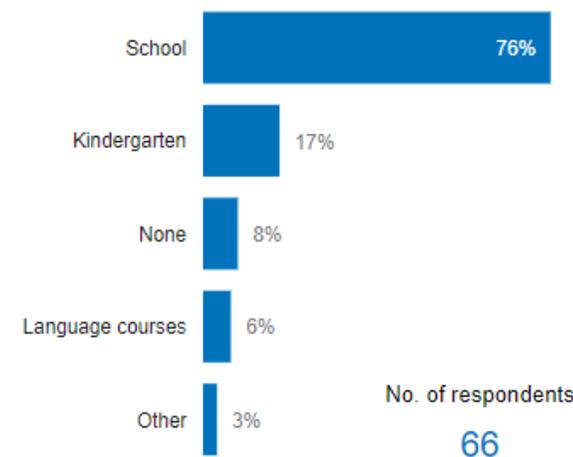
In summary, Romanian schools were the primary educational choice for Ukrainian refugee children. Local authorities and the Ministry of Education have been supportive, and families are encouraged to enroll their children in schools and kindergartens. Inclusion activities, which could support the relations between refugees and host communities in the educational environment, are little known or do not exist, while extracurricular activities were seen as a potential solution for socialisation.

Adult education

In terms of adult education, it was noted that there are special places for Ukrainian refugees in the University, but it is unknown if they have any special status. However, a significant impediment arises in the form of a language barrier, with proficiency in English and Romanian proving essential for seamless navigation of the system and successful enrolment as full-time students.

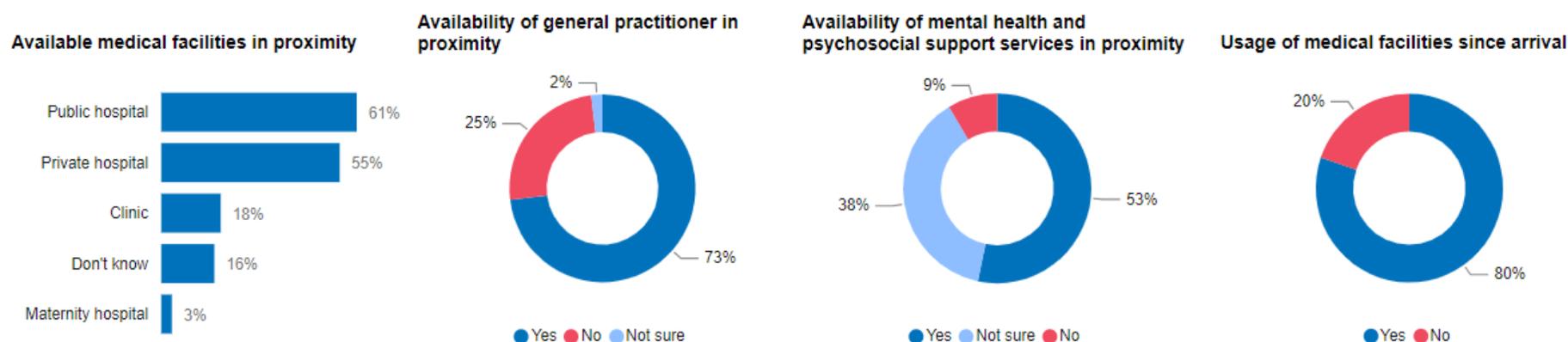
In stark contrast to the high level of interest generated by the discussions related to children's education, neither the FGDs nor the interviews with the local KIs revealed much information about adult education. On a positive note, refugees have access to a variety of courses aimed at learning different professions, offering alternative educational pathways.

Available in person education facilities in proximity



Healthcare

Healthcare emerged as a priority need among survey respondents, with 72% mentioning it, and it was also among the most frequently mentioned needs in focus group discussions (FGDs). Participants in these discussions highlighted that they perceived healthcare as a very challenging type of assistance to access, but 80% of the refugee survey respondents reported having used medical facilities since their arrival, and 61% of them were aware of available Romanian public medical services. Notably, significant numbers of respondents were aware of the availability of general practitioners providing basic medical care in proximity (73%) and the availability of mental health and psychosocial support services in proximity (53%).



Despite having access to the Romanian healthcare system with the same rights as insured Romanian nationals, both key informants (KIs) and Ukrainian refugees pointed out several persistent barriers. As reported by participants, the most mentioned barrier was the difficulty in registering with a Family Doctor (FD), which is essential for general consultations, obtaining prescription medication, and accessing specialist care within the public sector. KIs participants confirmed that few doctors were accepting Ukrainian patients since it implied more paperwork that needed to be completed. It is important to recognise that this issue is partly specific to the Romanian public health system, as even some Romanian nationals encounter difficulties in finding an available family doctor. An additional issue mentioned by both KIs and FG respondents was the bureaucratic process of obtaining disability certificates due to the differences in assessment between Romanian and Ukrainian legislation.

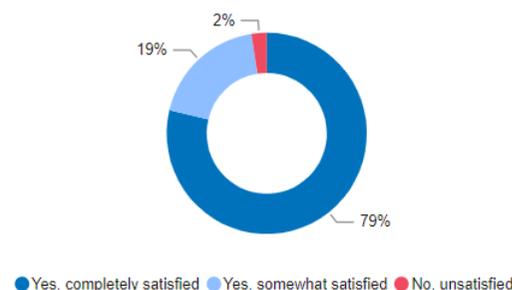
Another significant barrier to accessing health services was the language barrier, as reported by refugees in the FGDs and confirmed by KIs. All in all, 79% of the surveyed refugees who used Romanian healthcare services declared themselves to be completely satisfied, and 19% were somewhat satisfied with the medical facilities and services provided.



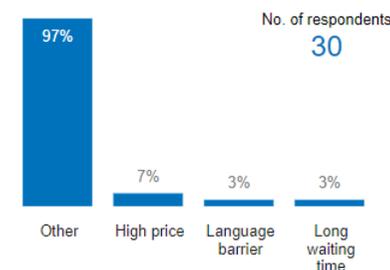
Psychological counselling

Several KI participants mentioned that the situation with the war in Ukraine causes fear and uncertainty, and that, at the local level, there are available various psychological services for both adults and children. Many of the KIs emphasised the importance of providing psychological support that will help the refugees in the long term, regardless of their decisions to remain and integrate in Romania or return to Ukraine. Some of them also mentioned refugees' dependency on such support services and considered building their resilience and encouraging them to "stand on their own".

Satisfaction with the medical facilities and services



Reasons for dissatisfaction with the medical facilities and services

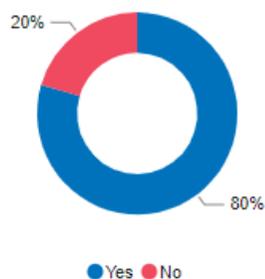


Social services

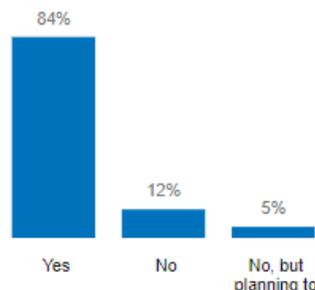
Nearly all participants (84%) in the survey reported having applied for the housing and food assistance program, and only 2% experienced difficulties in the process. The difficulties encountered were related to the lack of interpretation services and the lack of information regarding the procedure. Notably, 80% of respondents revealed that they benefit from the programme.

According to the key informant interviews (KIIs), situations, when locals hosted refugees for a lower price, were mentioned, as well as cases of accepting delays in payment. On the other hand, refugees participating in the FGDs complained about the difficulties in accessing the housing programme and about insufficient financial assistance, and some of them consider the conditions in the collective centres to be poor, with insufficient food.

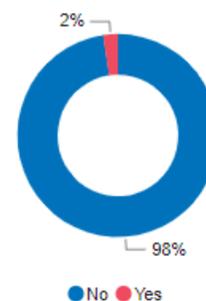
Beneficiaries of the new government assistance programme for housing and food



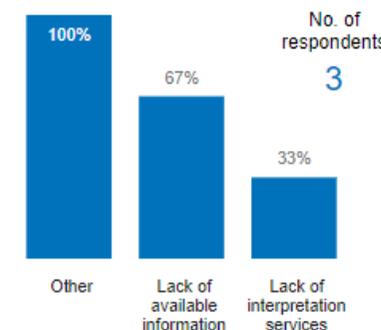
HH applied for the new accommodation/food expenses programme



Difficulties in applying for the accommodation/food expenses programme



Type of difficulties in applying for the accommodation/food expenses programme





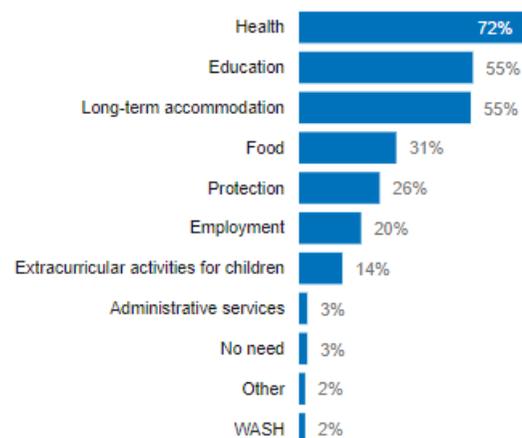
Needs

The most mentioned needs in the refugee focus group discussions (FGDs) included access to education for both children and adults, like professional training, after-school facilities and separate classes according to the Ukrainian curricula. The survey results partly confirm such findings. Health issues appeared to be in the first position in terms of top three priority needs, with 72% of the survey respondents mentioning it, followed by education and long-term accommodation (55%).

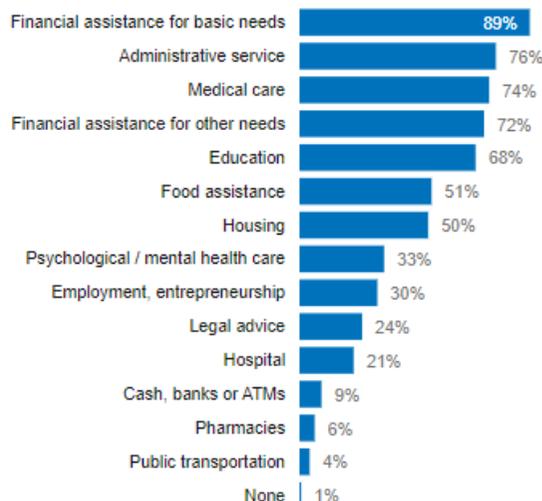
According to survey responses, refugees' most pressing service needs are centred around financial assistance for basic needs, with 89% of respondents highlighting this as their primary requirement. Following closely, 76% of refugees identified general administrative services and medical care as their second most common needs. The survey also revealed that 72% of respondents consider financial assistance for other needs to be a significant category of services. Finally, education emerged as a notable service, with 68% of respondents recognising its importance in meeting their needs. On the other hand, local KIs suggest that an influx of people is expected back in winter due to the lack of utilities in Ukraine, and in this context, it could be useful to offer differentiated support based on the individual's needs and circumstances, such as mothers who cannot work, which would lead to more reasonable support distribution.

In terms of information needs, the refugees indicated that the services they are most interested in are financial assistance and humanitarian assistance registration, followed by healthcare and employment, and they prefer receiving information from community groups or phone/ SMS and social media. Official websites, in return, are among the least preferred information channels, being chosen by only 9% of the respondents.

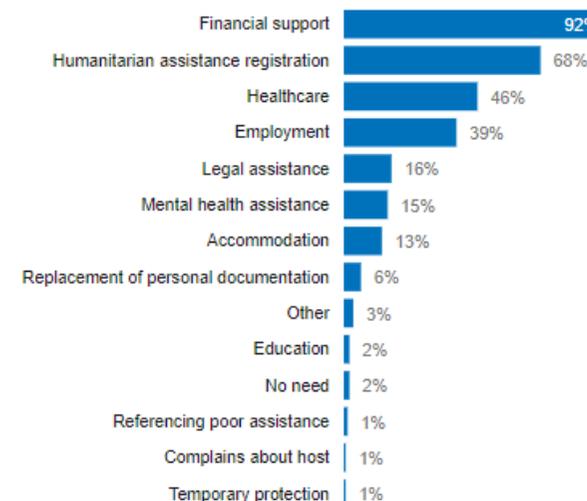
Top 3 priority needs



Service needs



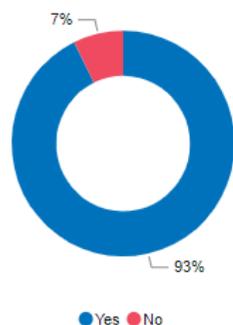
Information needs



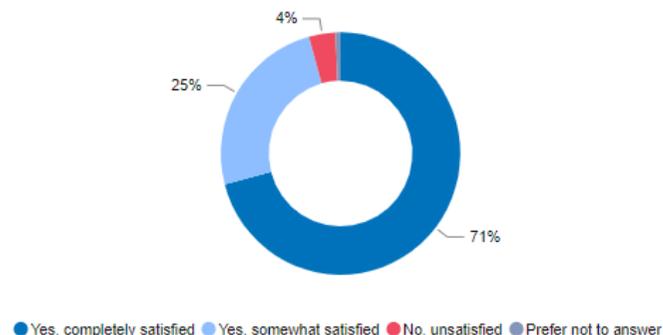
Humanitarian assistance

Nearly all participants in the focus group discussion (FGD) acknowledged that they had benefited from humanitarian aid in Braşov, with a significant emphasis on cash assistance and the provision of food and non-food items (NFIs). A diverse range of organisations and entities provided support, including local authorities, international and local NGOs, religious organisations, and volunteers. However, KIs note that there is a need for close collaboration between authorities, NGOs, and the local community to reach out to refugees directly, provide personalised support, and address their unique needs. On the other hand, Ukrainian refugees need to better understand the legal framework and how certain institutions could assist them.

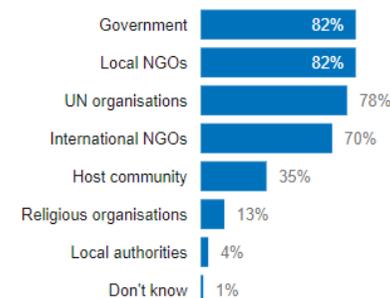
Beneficiaries of assistance in crisis response



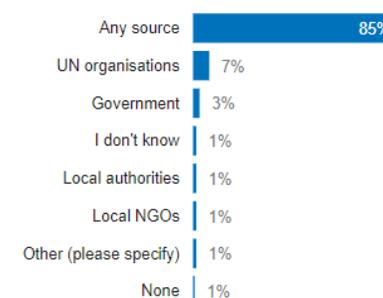
Satisfaction with crisis assistance provided



Provider of assistance in crisis response



Preferred source of assistance

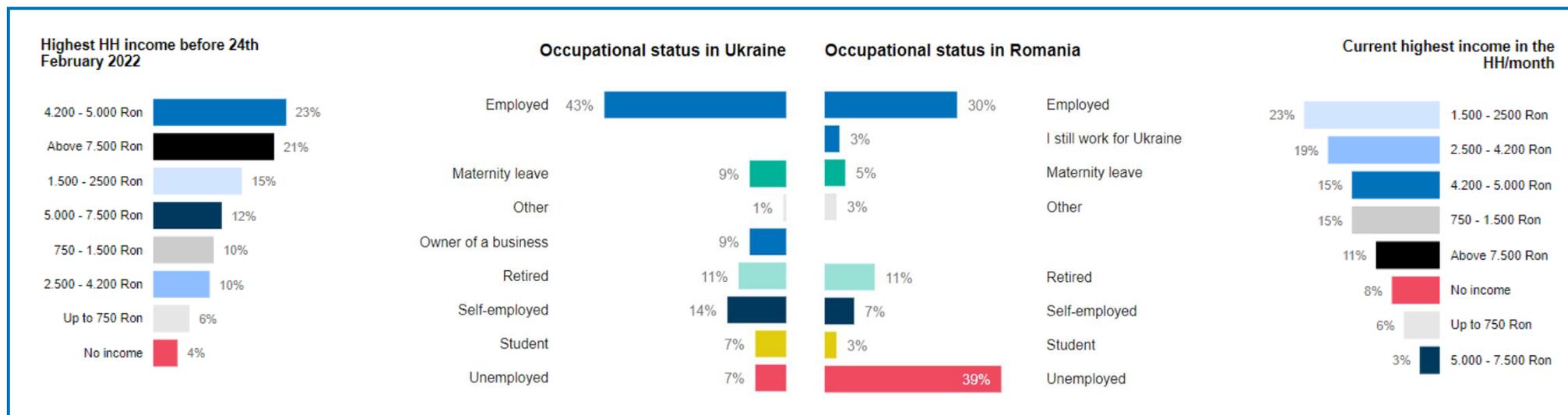


The survey results indicate that almost all respondents who had received humanitarian assistance reported being either completely or partially satisfied with the aid they had received.

The sudden influx of thousands of refugees in Braşov, requiring humanitarian assistance, presented challenges for both national and local authorities and the humanitarian sector. FGD participants identified decreasing aid levels as their primary grievance regarding humanitarian assistance, similar findings were highlighted also by the KIs. This decline in aid could be attributed to various factors, such as the early assistance provided by private individuals and NGOs with limited resources, who could no longer sustain the same level of material support, some of them running out of funds. Furthermore, KIs highlighted a critical issue related to the necessity for ongoing support, particularly in light of the relatively low level of government financial assistance targeting the refugees. Despite the persistent high demand for support services, there is a notable decline in available financial resources. Several KIs expressed concerns about the inadequacy of resources, pointing to the challenges in meeting refugees' evolving and growing needs in the coming months. This shortage poses a significant obstacle to adequately addressing the multifaceted needs of the refugee population and underscores the urgency for increased resources and sustainable support mechanisms.

Livelihoods

The employment landscape for respondents underwent a notable shift before and after 24 February 2022. Before this date, 43% of respondents were employed, whereas currently, only 30% are. The pre-existing employment base was primarily concentrated in the education sector, retail, or business, with 11% of respondents engaged in each field and IT (10%). 15% of respondents reported working in industrial manufacturing in Braşov, while 15% were in the IT/computer technology domain.



Furthermore, the data indicates a decrease in entrepreneurship, with 7% of refugees identifying as self-employed, compared to the previous 14%. This shift may be attributed to challenges navigating through legal and bureaucratic operations and accessibility of entrepreneurial opportunities in Braşov. Even so, some individuals explore entrepreneurial endeavours as an alternative.

The income dynamics among respondents have undergone significant changes. Before February 2022, 22% of respondents reported having an income ranging between 4200 and 5,000 RON per month. However, the current scenario reveals that 8% of respondents currently have no income. This is a notable shift, especially considering that only 4% of respondents were without any income back in Ukraine. Examining the sources of income in Romania, a substantial number of respondents rely on employment (51%) as a primary source, while others depend on savings (39%) and pensions (15%). Notably, more than half of the respondents rely on humanitarian aid support (66%) and social support from the state (55%). These findings emphasise the economic challenges faced by the refugee community, with employment opportunities being a critical factor in the financial stability of approximately half of the respondents and reliance on humanitarian aid.



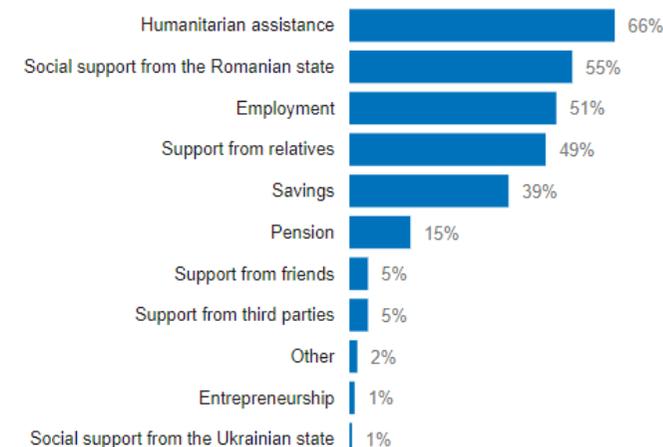
The combination of household members losing their jobs, relying on assistance and savings, and experiencing a decrease in income could potentially heighten the vulnerability of Ukrainian households in Braşov. Given the protracted nature of the crisis, the issue of livelihoods may become a more pressing concern in the coming months.

Several key reasons were cited for the lack of employment of the respondents who are currently unemployed (39%). The primary factors identified include lack of proficiency in language skills, challenges in accessing childcare, and lack of qualifications. Interestingly, only a small percentage (3%) of refugee respondents declared that they are not actively seeking employment, emphasising the overall motivation and desire within the refugee community to secure employment opportunities. Furthermore, participants in FGDs and key informants (KIs) pointed out similar impediments.

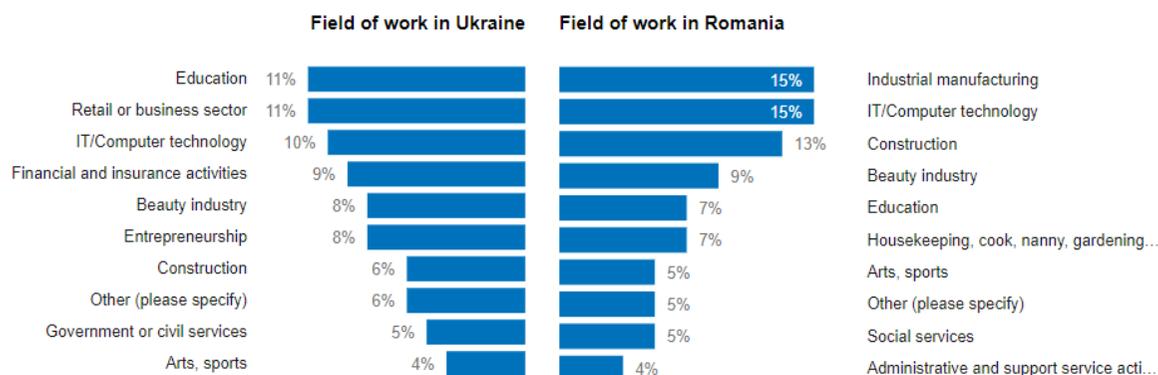
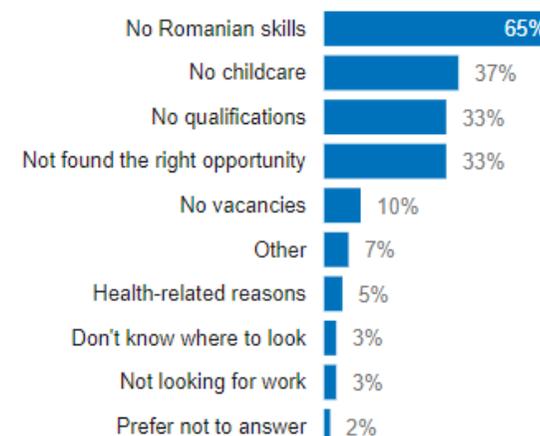
The qualitative data aligns with the household survey findings, as a more significant proportion of FGD participants and KIs identified the primary obstacles to employment as the language barrier and the lack of childcare. On the other hand, KIs reported that employers face difficulties due to the low retention rate and additional costs for healthcare, safety, and training.

Additionally, a significant issue highlighted throughout the interviews and host FGD is that Ukrainian qualifications are not recognised in the EU. KIs offered examples of companies in Braşov that hired many Ukrainians and situations when English- or Romanian-speaking refugees were hired to help employers interact with Ukrainian employees who have language issues. Also, a plan for employment inclusion, involving discussions with companies, mapping the job market, and career guidance to match individuals with suitable jobs was suggested.

Main sources of income



Reasons for unemployment





Economic impact on the host community

In both the focus group discussions (FGDs) and the household survey, hosts generally acknowledged a rise in housing prices and prices in general in Braşov since the arrival of refugees. However, nearly all of them attributed this inflation to the escalation of hostilities in February 2022, and other domestic and international developments rather than attributing it to the refugees themselves. The rental market was the only sector of the economy where a price increase was reportedly linked to refugees. Furthermore, one of the key informants (KIs) noted that The Ukrainian refugee community brings with them experiences, skills, and knowledge, which are transferred to the host community. This knowledge exchange can enhance services offered in various sectors.

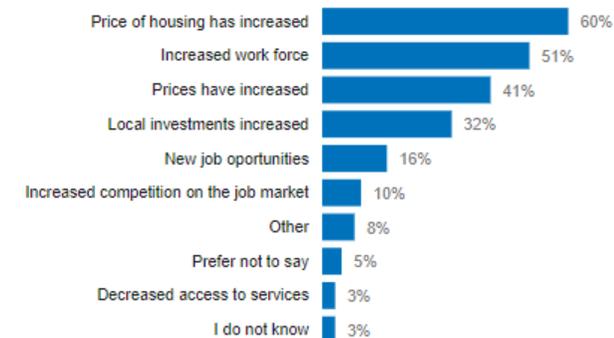
KIs noted that there was no sudden surge in demand following the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Braşov. The increase in demand resulting from more individuals residing in the same area appeared to be so minimal that it went largely unnoticed by the local population. Additionally, most individuals reported that the local economy had remained relatively unaffected and that the local labour market was little impacted.

Regarding professional status, 72% of hosts were employed during the survey period, 7% were the owner of a certain business, and 6% were self-employed. The remaining 14% were retired (7%) or preferred not to answer. In this context, the KIs explained that the employment of refugees had minimal impact on the labour market, but positively appreciated their input in terms of diversity, skills and social capital.

Also, both the KIs and the hosts noted that the housing program has benefited landlords, while services such as cleaning and maintenance have seen increased demand. When asking the landlords about their intentions to host refugees, even in the period of the new governmental support program, the vast majority, 87%, stated that they continue providing accommodation to refugees, 9% were planning to stop hosting, whilst the remaining respondents were uncertain. Several KIs, along with members of host communities, observed that a portion of the refugee population had significant economic resources. They viewed this as an opportunity for investment that had the potential to stimulate economic growth, as noted by host community members.

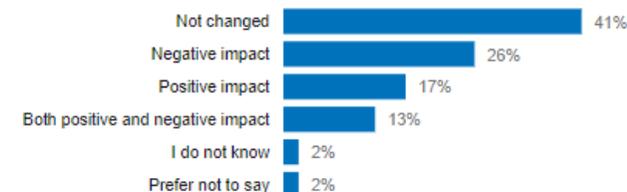
All in all, for the host population in Braşov, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees is estimated to have both a positive and negative impact (28%), or a positive impact (25%), rather than a negative (13%).

Effects of refugee arrival on local economy



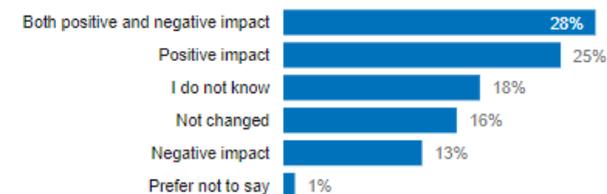
Influence of the conflict on host family

Host perspective



Economic impact of refugee arrival

Host perspective



Inclusion

Based on the survey data, more than half of the refugees (96%) and a significant share of the hosts (71%) reported being aware of formal inclusion events. Furthermore, 79% of the refugees surveyed declared they had participated in inclusion events, while less than half of the hosts participated in inclusion events (45%).

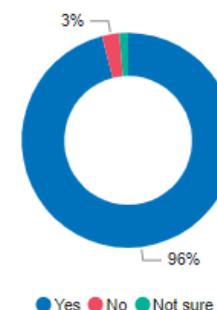
As mentioned earlier in the Movement Intentions section, during focus group discussions (FGDs), many of the refugee respondents expressed their intention to return to Ukraine at some point and uncertainty regarding the duration of their stay in Romania. On the other hand, one KI noted that the Ukrainians are moving away from the hope of a quick return to their homeland and are more willing to integrate into Romanian society. Although the language is reported as the main impediment to inclusion, several KIs report that Romanian language courses are in certain cases unattended since some people don't see Romanian as an essential skill to develop or that language courses are being held, but they are not really accessible for people with small children.

Challenges with childcare have also been reported to limit participation during the refugee FGD. They also mentioned that inclusion initiatives they have attended include church events, recreational activities, and volunteer centres. Cultural events have also been recognised as a positive approach to inclusion by multiple host community respondents and KIs, as they help facilitate mutual understanding and learning between the two communities.

In addition to this, children's activities are seen as crucial for inclusion, as many respondents are mothers with young children. On the other hand, KIs note that efforts have been made to integrate the Ukrainians, like providing psychological assistance or organising activities for children.

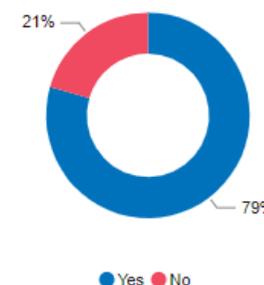
Awareness of formal inclusion initiatives

Refugees perspective



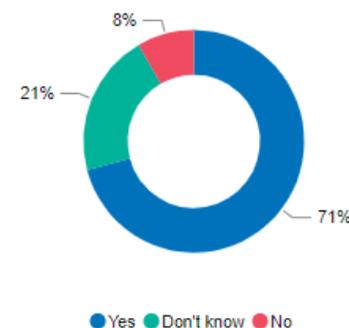
Participation in inclusion events

Refugees perspective



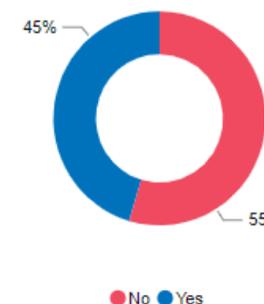
Awareness of formal inclusion initiatives

Hosts perspective



Participation in inclusion events

Hosts perspective





The dynamic of the refugee-host community relation

Based on the surveys, the perception of the relationship between refugees and host communities was consistent, with around 85% describing it as "good" or "very good," while only 1% of the refugees consider it to be "bad" or "very bad," and the rest either unsure or considering it neutral.

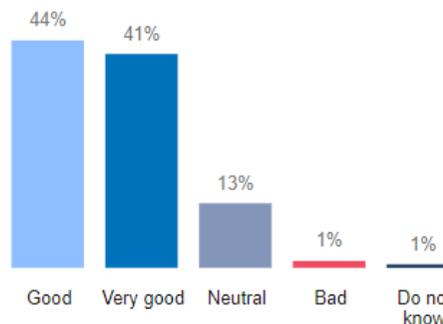
Several key informants (KIs) noted that when Ukrainian refugees initially arrived in Braşov, the local population responded highly positively, displaying significant interest and involvement in the refugee situation. However, the number of refugees has decreased lately in Braşov. Respondents from the host community also observed a shift in local attitudes compared to the early days of the conflict when everyone was eager to assist. Aside from this, some participants in the refugee focus group discussion (FGD) reported that they had problematic experiences with landlords due to financial instability and delays in payments in the housing program, while similar issues were reported in the host community FGD.

Across both household surveys and qualitative data, the language barrier emerged as one of the most frequently mentioned issues. As indicated below, communication difficulties were the primary source of tension for refugee respondents and the second most common concern for the host community. The language barrier creates a sense of distance between refugees and hosts, as they often struggle to understand each other and lack a shared language for effective communication.

Regarding the evolution of the relationship since the beginning of the conflict, almost a third (29%) of the hosts report no changes, while 24% believe it improved and 21% that it got worse. However, there are some similar findings between the survey results and the insights gathered from focus group discussions and interviews. In the qualitative data, the host community members and KIs depicted the relationship as neutral, characterised by limited interactions and occasional tensions.

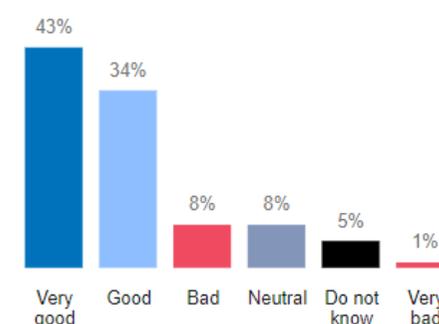
Relationship between the refugees and host community

Refugees perspective



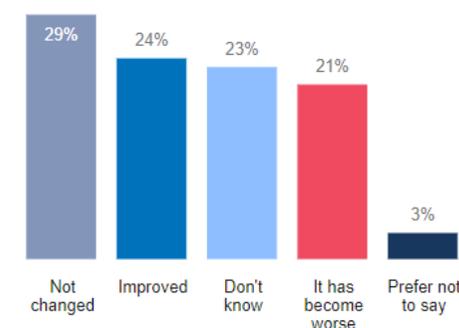
Relationship between the host community and the refugees

Hosts perspective



Evolution of host community-refugee relationship

Hosts perspective





Relationship with public authorities

During focus group discussions (FGDs) refugees expressed concerns and frustrations regarding delays in receiving financial support from the Romanian Government. Delays in financial assistance can have significant consequences for refugees, who may be in vulnerable situations, making it essential to streamline the support process. Both FGDs and KIs included reports of shortcomings and discrepancies between the submission of documentation and the receipt of allowances, and they argued that discrepancies can create confusion and frustration among refugees and underscore the importance of efficient administrative processes.

Public institutions in Braşov have provided various forms of assistance, including accommodation, food, children's activities, and language courses. This reflects the multifaceted approach taken by public institutions to address the needs of refugees comprehensively. KIs also noted the support offered by local authorities, such as Braşov City Hall and the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, in organising facilities for refugees. However, they also suggested that the overall support from local authorities may be limited, indicating a potential need for increased collaboration and resources at the local level.

KIs and refugees also raised concerns about complicated paperwork processes and difficulties in contacting and cooperating with local authorities. These challenges may hinder the efficiency of support delivery and highlight the importance of improving communication and collaboration between NGOs and governmental bodies.

The KIs also emphasised the lack of coordination among authorities and stakeholders, which results in a fragmented inclusion approach, where each institution interprets and implements policies differently.

The complex nature of supporting refugees in Romania is underscored, involving multiple stakeholders, administrative processes, and challenges that need to be addressed to ensure that refugees receive the assistance and protection they require in a timely and efficient manner. Coordination, communication, and streamlined administrative procedures are essential for improving the support system for refugees in the country.

Conclusions

The crisis in Ukraine has resulted in a significant influx of refugees into neighbouring nations, including Romania. Braşov, situated in the centre of Romania, has become home to a substantial population of Ukrainian refugees. This comprehensive evaluation delves into various facets of the Ukrainian refugee encounter in Braşov, encompassing their movements, housing, education, healthcare, humanitarian aid, livelihoods, association with the host community, and engagement with public authorities. While most of the participants in the study do not intend to move in the long term, the long-term plans of Ukrainian refugees in Braşov are characterised by substantial uncertainty. In addition to this, the prospects for the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees into the host community remain limited due to an uncertain outlook.



The primary obstacle to inclusion, employment, and access to healthcare and education services for Ukrainian refugees in Braşov, as in other parts of Romania, has been the language barrier. In this context, healthcare emerged as a top priority, with 72% of respondents emphasising its significance. Challenges encompassed difficulties in registering with a Family Doctor, acquiring prescribed medications, acquiring a disability certificate, and accessing specialist care.

Although the relationship between the host community and refugees remains positive, there has been a perceived decrease in community involvement, likely attributed to some degree of fatigue. Housing has emerged as a significant challenge for Ukrainian refugees in Braşov, linked to the changes in the housing and food programme. Notably, a significant portion of refugees, accounting for 8%, indicate that they lack any source of income, or their income is less than 750 lei per month (6%), thus being exposed to severe poverty. Furthermore, the biggest share of respondents relies on humanitarian assistance or social support as main source of income. With the ongoing and protracted nature of the crisis, livelihood concerns may become increasingly pressing in the coming months.

The intricate nature of providing support to refugees in Romania is underscored, involving numerous stakeholders, administrative complexities, and challenges that must be addressed to ensure timely and efficient assistance and protection for refugees. Improved coordination, communication, and streamlined administrative procedures are extremely important to strengthen the support system for refugees within the country.



AREA-BASED ASSESSMENT

Brasov, Romania

November 2023

Contact us:

UNHCR Representation in Romania

Information Management Unit

e-mail: rombuim@unhcr.org