

# Rental Market Assessment Round 2

## Key Findings Disability and Age Task Force

Moldova  
February 2024

**REACH** Informing  
more effective  
humanitarian action



Funded by  
the European Union





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01

# Main Objectives

# Main Objectives

This assessment aims to shed light on rental market dynamics, rental housing costs, characteristics, availability and accessibility; the experiences of refugee households currently renting their home; as well as the market dynamics of the rental markets of two urban and two semi-urban locations.

Findings are intended to support the securing of stable, adequate and dignified housing as a medium- to long-term accommodation solution for refugees in Moldova.

- ❖ The objective of this presentation is to report the findings of the qualitative component of the assessment regarding the experiences of HHs with persons with mobility disabilities in the context of the rental market.

# Key rationale for inclusion of disability focus

Round 1 of the Rental Market Assessment\* identified a need to better understand the challenges faced by people with mobility disabilities.


- Key finding in Round 1: There was a shortage of housing equipped with the necessary infrastructure to accommodate individuals with mobility challenges, especially those in older buildings.

## UNHCR Protection Profiling\*\*

- People with disabilities may also be particularly financially instable due to having less resources and additional accommodation needs that come at a cost, further increasing the financial barrier.
- Additionally, reluctance from rental service providers to lease to refugees was reported to be connected to people with disabilities, among other groups.

\*REACH Moldova, ['Rental Market Assessment Round 1 Report', September 2023.](#)

\*\*UNHCR Sept 2023, [Protection Profiling update](#)



# Additional Research Question

## Ukrainian Refugee HHs with Mobility Disabilities

*Q: What difficulties are faced by refugees with mobility disabilities in their access to rental properties and what is the level of suitability of properties for this vulnerable group?*

Findings are intended to **inform tailored accommodation interventions** according to the specific needs of HHs with mobility disabilities by better understanding the **challenges** that HHs face in their access to rental properties as well as the **suitability** of rental properties for this group.

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**02**

# Methodology

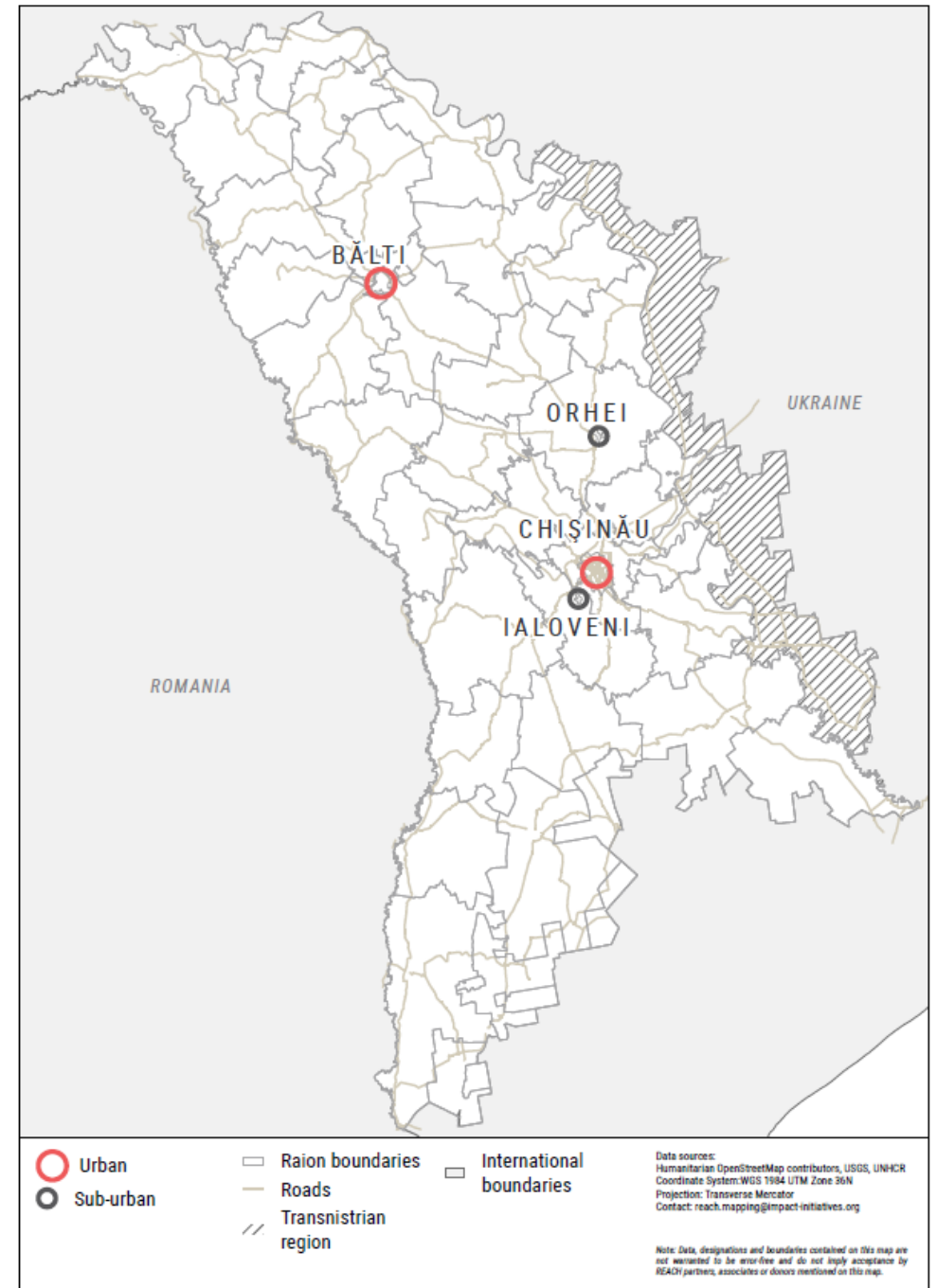
# Locations

Round 2 included the same settlements as Round 1:

- Two urban locations: Chişinău and Bălţi
- Two semi-urban locations: Ialoveni and Orhei\*

\*For semi-urban, the World Bank standard definition of 'semi-dense' settlements was used:

[How do we define cities, towns, and rural areas? \(worldbank.org\)](http://worldbank.org)





# Mixed-Methods

Data collection took place from 31 October to 25 November 2023

## Quantitative



Secondary data review, including gathering data on rental advertisements from one of the most popular rental advertisement websites ([999.md](http://999.md)) from March to November 2023.



Surveys with refugee households who are currently renting.



Key informant interviews (KIIs) with rental service providers (RSPs) - both businesses and private individuals.

## Qualitative\*

Focus group discussions with refugees.

Focus group discussions with host community members.

HH interviews with refugees with mobility disabilities.

Key informant interviews with rental market experts, NGOs working with refugees with mobility disabilities, and NGOs working with refugees in the local context.

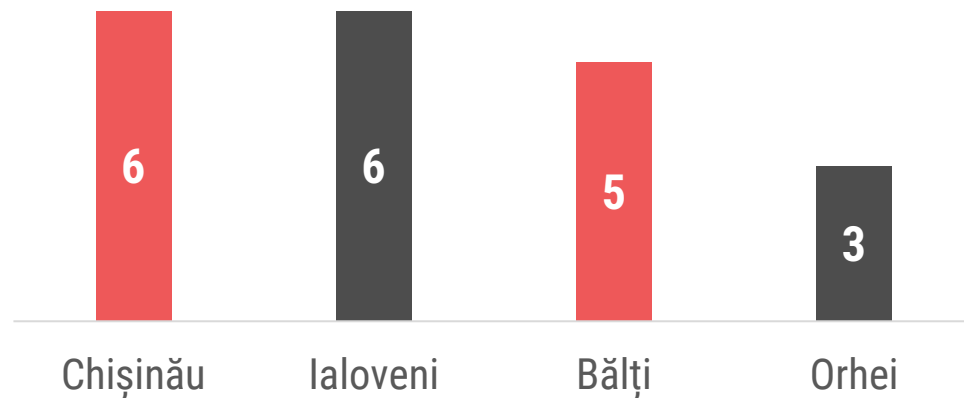
→ \*This presentation presents findings from the qualitative tool only

# Sampling

Sampling was **purposive**. Efforts were made to interview equal numbers of HHs and NGO KIs from each location, as well as to represent each gender during sampling.

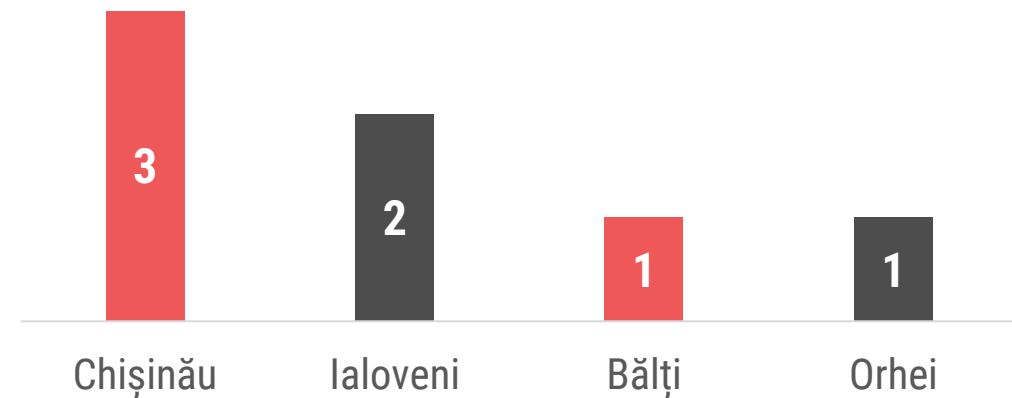
- HHs were identified with the assistance of partner organisations and NGOs working in each location.
- In addition to the tools specific to refugees with mobility disabilities, each qualitative tool included probes related to how the respondent perceived the experience of persons with a disability.

Total number of surveyed HHs with refugees with mobility disabilities per assessed location (n=20)\*



\*red denotes urban, black denotes semi-urban locations

Total number of NGO key informants working with refugees with disabilities per assessed location (n=7)\*



\*red denotes urban, black denotes semi-urban locations

# Discussion points for HH survey

1. Type of housing and suitability
2. Considerations when choosing an accommodation and needs for HHs with persons with a mobility disability.
3. Financial, legal, or social obstacles.
4. Awareness of legal requirements on RSPs renting to persons with a mobility disability.
5. Awareness of any measures taken by the government or organisations to improve access and adequacy for persons with a mobility disability.
6. Willingness of RSPs to rent to HHs with persons with a mobility disability/to make their properties more accessible.
7. Impact of Temporary Protection on the ability to secure housing for persons with a mobility disability.
8. Assistance received from NGOs in adapting housing, or any other needs related to housing, and what support is still needed.
9. What actors should account for when designing and implementing rental assistance programmes for refugees with mobility disabilities.

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**03**

# Limitations

# Limitations

## Purposive sample – findings are only indicative

Due to limited information available on the exact residence of refugees outside of Refugee Accommodation Centres, a purposive sampling approach combined with snowball sampling was used to find refugee tenant HHs. As such, findings cannot be generalised to all refugees with mobility disabilities and are only indicative of the larger situation for this group.

## Difficulty in finding refugee HHs in Orhei

Due to a lower number of refugees in Orhei, it was difficult to find participants for the HH surveys in this area. Therefore, the sample in Orhei is lower than other locations for the HH with disabilities survey.

## Survivorship bias

Only refugee HHs currently renting accommodation were included in the sample of the HH surveys. As such, the difficulties faced by refugee HHs who are potential tenants is not included in this assessment, though it may be quite different than of those that overcame these difficulties and succeeded in securing rental accommodation. This was partially mitigated by exploring these topics in the other qualitative tools - KIIs and FGDs.

- Certain indicators may be under-reported or over-reported due to a respondent bias (subjectivity and perceptions of respondents)
- Non-response to questions asked in interviews can introduce bias in results

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**04**

# Findings

A world map is centered in the background, rendered in a light gray color. The map is overlaid on a complex geometric pattern of thin, light gray lines that form a network of irregular polygons across the entire page. The word "Accessibility" is written in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font, centered horizontally and vertically over the map.

# Accessibility

# Accessibility\*

*Only one Rental Service Provider (RSP) reported having rental properties suitable for people with disabilities.*

## Lack of housing accessible to people with mobility disabilities

All NGO KIs working with refugees with disabilities reported that finding housing accessible for people with mobility disabilities was one of the most common difficulties for this group in accessing rental housing. A lack of suitable infrastructure was reported in NGO KIs, and refugee/host community FGDs.

## Little difference between newer and older buildings

Though newer buildings were reported to be more likely to possess accessibility features such as elevators and ramps, it was reported by NGO KIs that not all of them do and they tend not to qualify as accessible for people with disabilities according to government standards.

## RSPs reportedly believe that it is not worth the cost to adapt their properties for people with disabilities

Several NGO KIs and HHs reported that RSPs would be unwilling to adapt their rental properties, mainly due to it being too expensive and/or they do not want to add any new fixtures to their properties. Some HHs reported that RSPs would be willing if they were paid a higher rent.

\*The Right to Adequate Housing (OHCHR, 2009): housing is not adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalised groups are not taken into account.



# Reported Accessibility Challenges



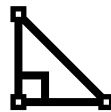
## **Elevators**

Many HHs reported elevators as important accessibility features. Some HHs reported no elevator in their building, and almost all that had elevators reported that they were not properly suited for their use due to it being dysfunctional or too narrow.



## **Ground floor**

Several HHs were specifically looking for housing on the ground floor of rental buildings to make it easier to access their homes.



## **Ramps**

Most NGO KIs reported that there was a lack of ramps to facilitate access to residential buildings for PWDs, and those that had ramps usually did not meet the required standards (too narrow, too steep, no railings, etc.)

# Reported Accessibility Challenges



## **Bathrooms adapted to people with disabilities**

Reported by most HHs as an important consideration. Only some HHs reported that their bathrooms were suitable for their needs. It is rare to find according to NGO KIs.



## **Kitchens adapted to people with disabilities**

Reported as similarly lacking, though fewer HHs reported this as one of their most important considerations when choosing housing.



## **Wide doorways and corridors**

A few HHs reported that their doorways and corridors were wide enough for their needs, one HH reported otherwise. Two NGO KIs in Chişinău reported that wide doorways and corridors were common, though one reported that only front doors are wide and not doors inside the housing.

## **Other reported features needed:**

Low thresholds, living space at the entrance level, handrails around stairs and ramps, designated parking spaces close to the entrance.

# Location Preferences

*Location was an important consideration reported by some HHs*

## Some HHs reported choosing locations close to healthcare services and stores/markets

6 HHs (mostly in Chişinău and Bălţi) reported renting close to healthcare services. 5 HHs reported renting close to stores/markets, while fewer reported renting close to a school or pharmacy.

## Proximity to public transportation not considered important

Some HHs reported that they did not use public transport and instead rely on taxis or rides from family/friends. One NGO KI reported that public transport is not accessible for people with disabilities.



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# Habitability

# Habitability\*

- Most HHs with mobility disabilities reported living in **private/shared apartments** and described the **age of their building as "older"**. Only a few HHs in Chişinău and Ialoveni reported living in a new building.
- Two HHs with mobility disabilities reported discomfort due to issues such as broken fixtures, windows or doors; dampness resulting in an unpleasant smell; and not enough furniture.
- One HH reported that having enough rooms was an important consideration for their HH when choosing rental accommodation.

## Reported suitability of rental accommodation\* \*



**Suitable**

**5 HHs**



**Partially suitable**

**1 HH**



**Unsuitable**

**5 HHs**

**(including all 3 HHs in Orhei)**

\*\*Remaining 9 HHs did not provide responses on the general suitability of their rental accommodation, but instead provided details on the specific accessibility features available.

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# Security of Tenure

# Security of Tenure

Some surveyed refugee HHs with mobility disabilities (n=20) reported legal obstacles to rental housing.

✘ **Faced no legal obstacles**

**12 HHs**

✔ **Faced legal obstacles**

**8 HHs**

Of those HHs who reported facing legal obstacles (8HHs):

- The unwillingness of landlords to provide a registered written rental contract or needing to pay a higher rent to secure one (only reported in Chişinău and Orhei) was a challenge.
- Additionally, before the removal of the need for a written contract as a proof of residence, HHs reportedly faced difficulties applying for Temporary Protection.
- Those HHs that faced no legal obstacles reported being able to provide the required documents, or not needing to provide them to the RSP.

*"Apartments that we could rent with a contract and have legal peace of mind are very expensive, or we need to look for them through real estate agents who also charge high fees, and when we rent a more affordable apartment without a contract, we can't be sure that we won't be kicked out one day." – HH with mobility disabilities in Orhei*

# Temporary Protection Impact

## Impact on the housing market for refugees with mobility disabilities

- Nearly all HHs reported that TP had **no impact on the housing market** for refugees with mobility disabilities.
- Reported positive impacts included:
  - Access to medical treatment in Moldova.
  - Reassurance of having legal status in Moldova.

## Impact on willingness of RSPs to rent to refugees with mobility disabilities

- Most HHs reported that TP had **no impact on the willingness** of landlords to rent to refugees with mobility disabilities.
- Reported positive impacts included:
  - TP provides RSPs a guarantee of stability of refugee tenants (pertaining to their ability to have longer contract durations).
  - TP provides legal certainty on the status of refugees (pertaining to their ability to legally reside in the country).

*"I didn't notice any impact, neither negative nor positive, for me it had a psychological role, I feel more reassured knowing that I have a legal status."  
– HH with mobility disabilities in Ialoveni*



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# Legal Obstacles

# Legal Obstacles

*Despite legal frameworks that protect their rights, people with disabilities continue to face difficulties with physical accessibility and securing employment in Moldova.*

- Some HHs reported a need for **legal changes to make homes more suitable** for people with mobility disabilities, such as building requirements for new construction and adaptations to current housing.

1. **Article 21, 22 and 26 of Law No. 60 on social inclusion of persons with disabilities** includes stipulations for local authorities to ensure that living quarters of persons with disabilities are equipped according to their needs, including obligations on owners of residential buildings to ensure access by persons with disabilities.
2. **Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development** has issued several detailed recommendations on how to design housing and infrastructure accessible to people with disabilities in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

- Some HHs reportedly faced difficulty in **securing a job**. Discrimination against people with disabilities in the labor market was also reported in host community FGDs.

1. **Article 38 of Law No. 105 on promoting employment and unemployment insurance** stipulates the provision of subsidies to employers that hire persons with disabilities.
2. **Article 34 of Law No. 60 on social inclusion of persons with disabilities** stipulates that employers with at least 20 employees should reserve 5% of jobs for people with disabilities.

*"Laws should be drafted that oblige construction companies to build and adapt blocks according to the needs of people with disabilities." – HH in Chişinău*

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# Social Obstacles

# Relationship dynamics

## **A generally positive relationship with the host community was reported by NGO KIs**

- One NGO KI in Chişinău reported that there was a negative relationship with the host community due to the perception that Moldovan people with disabilities are being neglected.
- 8/20 HHs with mobility disabilities reported discrimination **not impeding their access** to rental housing.
- More HHs reported discrimination for being Ukrainian refugees (n=6) rather than discrimination based on their disability (n=4), which was reported by most HHs in Bălţi and one in Chişinău.

**Reported Reasons for  
unwillingness to rent to HHs  
with mobility disabilities**  
(according to HHs and NGO KIs)

Fear of damage to rental property

Distrust in their ability to honour the rental payment

*"I have often come across situations where landlords had some reservations due to fear that I would break something in the apartment and that I would not be able to take care and live in cleanliness."*

– HH in Chişinău

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# Affordability

# Affordability

## High rent and medical expenses

Most HHs reported **struggling to afford rent or high medical expenses** associated with their members' disability. Price was often-reported as one of the most important considerations of HHs when choosing accommodation, especially in Ialoveni and Orhei.

## Reliance on pensions or cash assistance

Most NGO KIs reported refugees with mobility disabilities **relying solely on their pensions or cash assistance** from international organisations. Half of HHs reported that **none of their HH members were employed**, some of these because they were retired or caring for HH member(s) with disabilities.

## Pensions and/or cash assistance insufficient

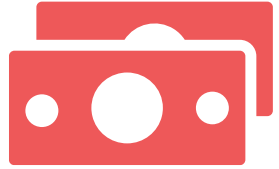
Some HHs reported that their pensions or cash assistance was insufficient to cover their HH's expenses. Some HHs reported **needing to compromise on their diet or other needs just to afford their rent**.

*"This month we have no money to pay the rent because we bought pills and injections for me. I am constantly faced with the choice of either getting treatment and eating or paying the rent." – HH in Ialoveni*

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# Support Needed

# HHs reported support received from organisations



13/20 HHs reported receiving **financial assistance**, including cash assistance (4 HHs), rental reimbursement programmes (3 HHs), compensation of utility bills (4 HHs), vouchers (2 HHs) and their medical tests being paid for (1 HH).



5 HHs reported receiving **food assistance/groceries**.



A few HHs reported receiving **diapers, clothes, an orthopedic mattress, and a toilet** suitable for people with disabilities.



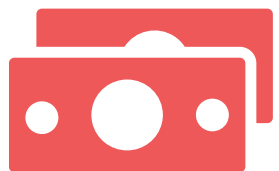
2 HHs reported receiving **medicines**, and 1 HH reported receiving **psychological help**.



7 HHs (1 to 2 HHs in each location) reported **not receiving any assistance** at all.



# HH reported support still needed



15 HHs (all in Bălți and almost all in Orhei and Ialoveni) reported needing **additional financial assistance**. Of these, 7 HHs reported needing it to **help pay their rent** and 3 HHs reported needing it to **pay for adapting their housing** for their HH members' disability.



12 HHs needed **medical assistance or devices** – funds for operation/treatment (5 HHs), medicines (4 HHs), tonometer device\* (3 HHs), vitamins and supplements (1 HH), diabetes tests (1 HH), regular appointments at a rehabilitation hospital (1 HH), and massage chair (1 HH).



4 HHs reported needing **food assistance/groceries**. 2 of these HHs needed food for specific diets such as gluten-free and food suitable for persons with diabetes.



4 HHs reported needing **diapers**.



Other reported needs include a **wheelchair** (1 HH), **furniture/housing appliances** (3 HHs), **heating and hot water systems** (1 HH), regular visits by a **caregiver/nurse** (2 HHs).

\* A device used to measure the pressure in eyes to screen for glaucoma

# Reported points of interest for relevant actors

## Adapt housing according to the individual needs of people with disabilities

9 HHs and 6 NGO KIs reported that actors should focus on adapting current housing to be accessible to people with mobility disabilities, some of these suggesting that adaptation should be tailored according to the specific needs of each individual, such as installing handrails, wide doorways for wheelchairs, etc.

## Increase affordability through financial aid or free social housing

9 HHs emphasised the need to increase the affordability of rental housing for people with disabilities, such as through providing financial aid including housing subsidies, compensation of utility bills particularly in the winter, and public transportation benefits; as well as providing free social housing.

## Increase availability, such as through incentivising landlords

3 HHs emphasised the need to increase the availability of rental housing, such as through incentivising landlords to rent to people with disabilities.

## Help refugees with disabilities find suitable housing

3 HHs and 1 NGO KI suggested that help and support should be provided to refugees with mobility disabilities to find rental housing that is suitable for their needs.

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**05**

# Conclusion



# Conclusion

- Few rental accommodations are accessible or suitable for the needs of people with disabilities.
- Many refugees with mobility disabilities are struggling to afford rent and other needs.
- Many refugees with mobility disabilities have trouble living independently and often must rely on the help of relatives or friends to move around and find rental housing. Many choose to live with relatives/friends for this reason.
- Many HHs reported needing additional financial assistance for rent or adaptive elements for their housing.
- Programs should consider the specific needs of HHs with vulnerable groups when distributing financial assistance.

# Thank you for your attention

## Questions?



[Joanna.filopoulos@impact-initiatives.org](mailto:Joanna.filopoulos@impact-initiatives.org)

[Nadine.frisk@impact-initiatives.org](mailto:Nadine.frisk@impact-initiatives.org)



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