UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

Moldova

Semiannual Monitoring Fact Sheet

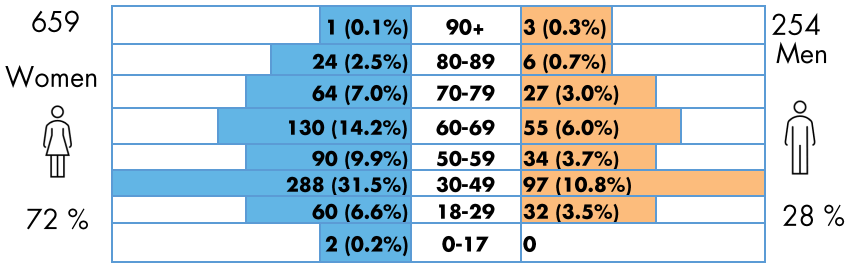
July—December 2023

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

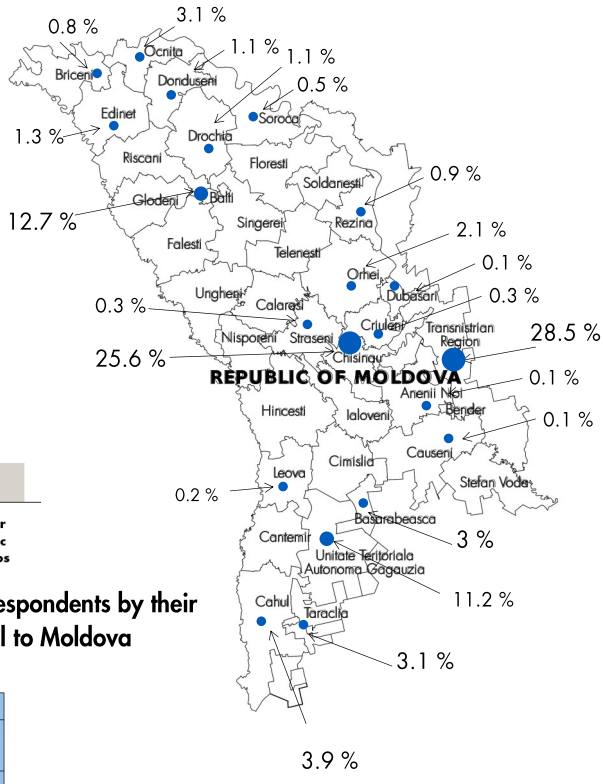
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

From July until December 2023, **OHCHR interviewed 913 refugees from Ukraine** (72 % women and 28 % men). 903 of them were Ukrainian nationals and 10 were Third-Country nationals (4 Russians, 4 Turks, 1 Tajik,1 Azerbaijani). Respondents reside in various northern, southern, central regions of Moldova, including the Transnistrian region, as indicated in the map below. The largest age group among the interviewed refugees, comprising 42 % of respondents, was 30-49 years old followed by the age group 60-69, representing the 20 % of the interviewed people. 70 % of respondents from the Transnistrian region stated that their primary reasons for choosing to stay there were the presence of family and friends, while for 15 % it was the proximity to Ukraine. Data suggest that respondents who self-identified as ethnic Russians predominantly live in the Transnistrian region, while ethnic Roma live in Chisinau, and Gagauz and Bulgarian live in UTA Gagauzia. Interviewed refugees on the left bank of the Nistru River show a stronger reliance on relatives or close friends for free accommodation, compared to those on the right bank (54 %). Most respondents (82 %) arrived in Moldova in 2022, primarily during the first six months. However, 18 % of them arrived in 2023. The findings revealed that 89 % of respondents speak more than one language. Russian (99 %) is the predominant language spoken among respondents, followed by Ukrainian (85 %), Romanian (9 %), and Romani (6%). Interestingly, only 11 out of the 32 refugees who selected Romani as spoken language chose to self-identify as Roma.

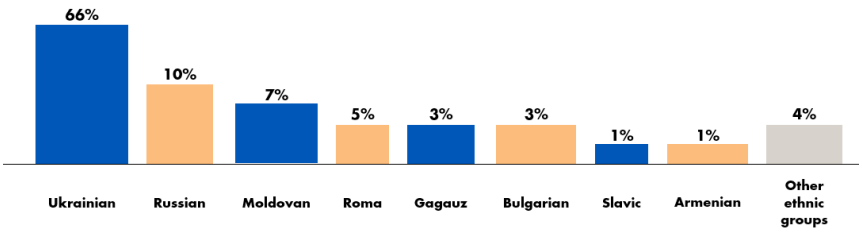
Distribution of respondents by age group and gender



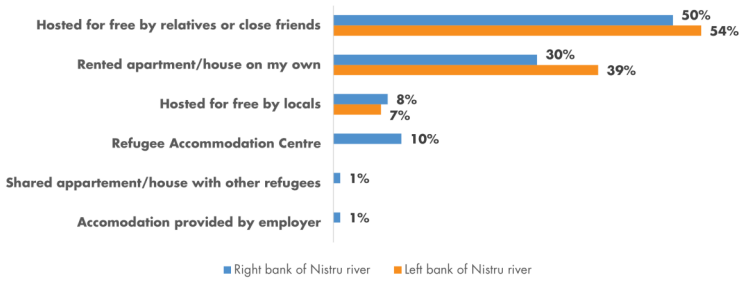
Distribution of respondents by region



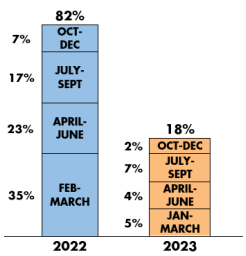
Distribution of respondents by their self-identification of ethnicity



Distribution of respondents by accommodation type



Distribution of respondents by their arrival to Moldova



IDENTIFICATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Disability is an evolving concept that results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities states: ***Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.***

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

20 % (=183 persons) of the interviewed refugees reported a lot of difficulties or impossibility to perform actions under one (140 persons) **or several** (43 persons) **functional domains.**

These figures include 139 women, constituting 21% of all interviewed women, and 44 men, making up 17% of all interviewed men. This suggests that women have a slightly higher rate of disability. The age group [60-69] was the most represented among men and women with a disability, comprising 66 respondents. Women with a disability primarily reported mobility and visual difficulties The most prevalent difficulty among respondents is in the mobility domain, affecting 11 % of interviewed refugees from Ukraine, followed by difficulties in the visual domain. Notably, the highest concentration of persons with disabilities was found in Chisinau and the Transnistrian region, constituting 25 % and 20 % of the total number of respondents in those regions, respectively. Of the interviewed persons with disabilities, 22 % arrived in Moldova alone, while the rest arrived with family members. Additionally, 61 % are hosted for free by relatives or close friends, 21 % rent housing at their own expense, 11 % reside in RACs, and 7 % are hosted for free by host community members.

Percentage of respondents with difficulties per functional domain

8 % Visual	3 % Hearing	11 % Mobility	4 % Cognitive*	2 % Self-care	1 % Communication

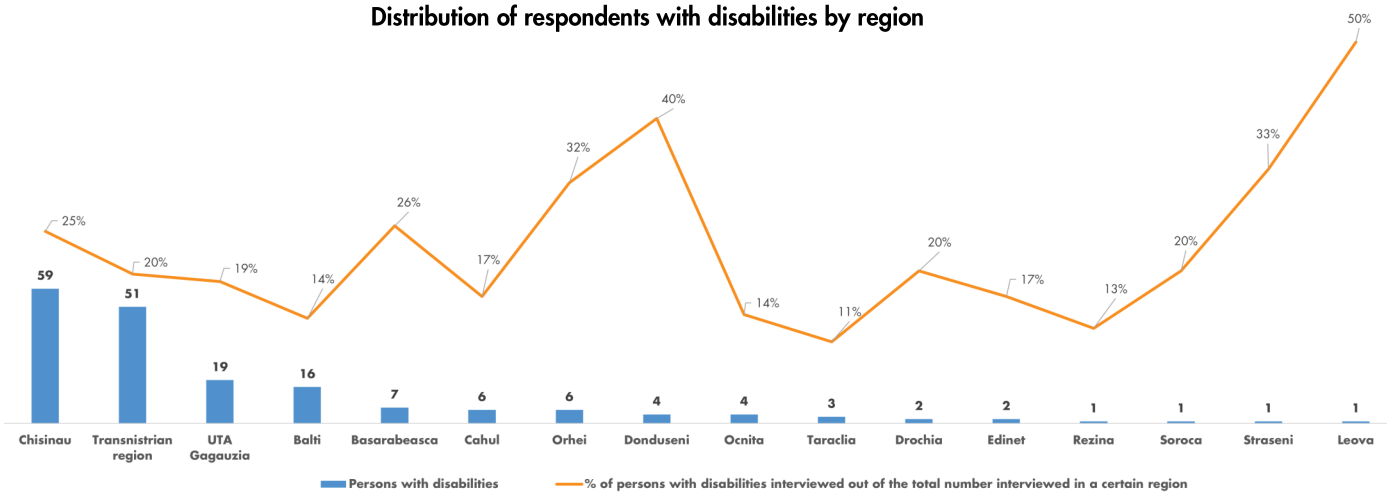
*In the Washington Group Short Set of Questions the cognitive domain includes only remembering and concentrating

Distribution of respondents with disabilities by age group

Women						Men
139	1 (100 %)		90+	2 (67 %)	1 (33%)	44
	6 (25 %)	18 (75%)	80-89	3 (50%)	3 (50 %)	
	31 (48 %)	33 (52 %)	70-79	10 (37%)	17(63 %)	
	77 (59 %)	53 (41 %)	60-69	13 (24 %)	42 (76 %)	
	77 (86%)	13 (14%)	50-59	5 (15%)	29 (85%)	
	268 (93 %)	20 (7%)	30-49	7 (7%)	90 (93%)	
	59 (98%)	1 (2%)	18-29	4(13%)	28 (87%)	
21 %	2 (100 %)		0-17	0		17 %

WITHOUT DISABILITY
WITH DISABILITY

Distribution of respondents with disabilities by region



EXPERIENCE OF ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

The protection monitoring tool used includes the enhanced questions of Washington Group focusing on the **affect domain** of functioning which involves emotional functions such as feelings of depression and anxiety.
Data indicate that **55 % of the respondents experienced feelings of anxiety, worry and nervousness** (and over half of them, the 53 %, experienced these feelings in high intensity), and **21 % feel depressed** on a daily or weekly basis (and the 52 % of them in high intensity). These feelings were reportedly higher among **refugees with disabilities (73 % reported having anxiety and 36 % reported feeling depressed).**
A correlation was found between gender and experience of depression among interviewed refugees from Ukraine, with **women experiencing depression 4 times more frequently than men**. Anxiety and depression are particularly prevalent among individuals aged 60 and older. When comparing the left and right banks of the Nistru River, interviewed refugees on the left bank more frequently reported experiencing anxiety.
The data suggests that ***employment status does not significantly influence anxiety or depression among interviewed refugees from Ukraine***. Of those currently employed (with minor variations between formal and informal engagement), 48 % reported feelings of anxiety, worry, and nervousness. Similar feelings were reported by 56% of those not currently employed and not seeking a job, and by 58 % of those actively searching for job opportunities. Data reveals regional variations in anxiety levels. Urban centers like Chisinau show substantial reports of anxiety levels (60 %), while some rural areas like Orhei have a lower prevalence (21 %). Notably, the Transnistrian region stands out with a relatively high percentage (54 %) of individuals reporting anxiety.

Data reveals that **31 %** of interviewed refugees from Ukraine have **difficulties with the affect domain**.

Distribution of ALL respondents with anxiety and depression by age group

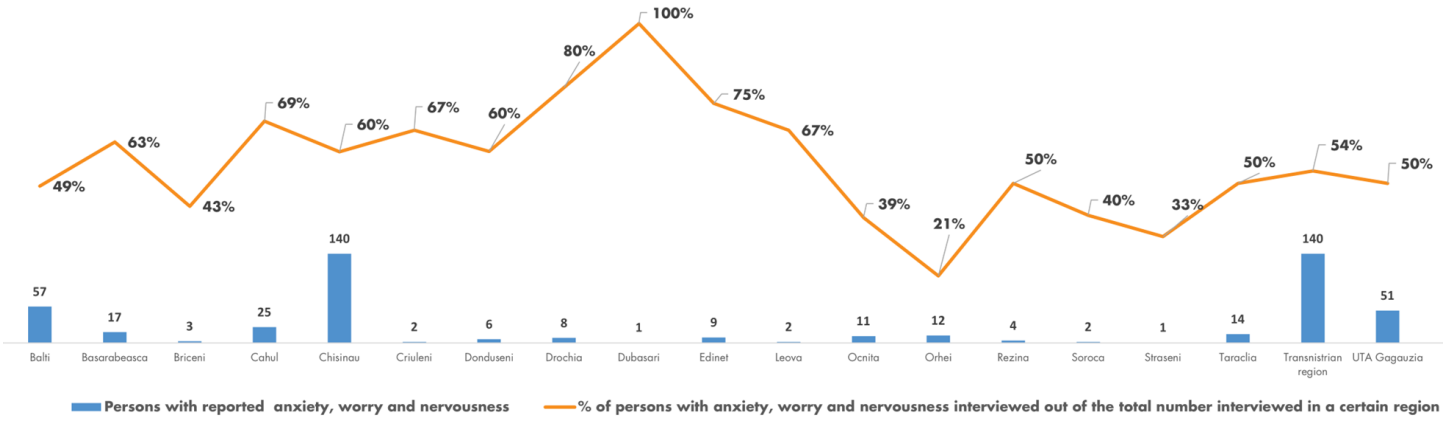
	18-29	30-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90+
% of total respondents by age group who reported **ANXIETY**	33%	51%	65%	66%	57%	73%	75%
% of total respondents by age group who reported **DEPRESSION**	13%	18%	20%	32%	15%	37%	0%

Distribution of RESPONDENTS WITH DISABILITY with anxiety and depression by age group

	18-29	30-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90+
% of total respondents by age group who reported **ANXIETY**	20%	81%	83%	77%	63%	76%	67%
% of total respondents by age group who reported **DEPRESSION**	0%	44%	28%	42%	23%	48%	0%

Data suggest that **feelings of anxiety and depression are particularly prevalent among individuals aged 60 and older**.
However, **for persons with disabilities, age does not significantly influence** the experienced difficulties with the affect domain.

Distribution of respondents with anxiety, worry and nervousness by region



MEDICAL SERVICES: ACCESS AND BARRIERS

53 % of respondents (487 individuals, including 352 women and 135 men) **reported suffering from serious medical conditions. These serious medical conditions affect 52 % of all respondents residing on the left bank of the Nistru river and 66 % of respondents reside on the right bank**. These conditions include a wide range of chronic and non-communicable diseases, primarily concerning the heart, vision and musculoskeletal systems. Severe medical conditions are predominant among **interviewed refugees with disabilities, affecting 87% of them.** Women and men reported similar rates of health issues regardless of their place of residence. 52 % of respondents from the Roma and Russian ethnic groups have reported serious medical conditions, with a similar proportion expressing difficulties in accessing healthcare in Moldova (50 %). Interestingly, all respondents who reported challenges have applied for Temporary Protection. Serious medical conditions are mostly prevalent among **respondents aged 60 years and older (90%).**

Age distribution of interviewed refugees reporting that they suffer serious medical conditions

	18-29	30-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90+
# of respondents reported having serious medical issues	18	129	82	149	77	28	4
% of total respondents by age group	20%	34%	66%	81%	85%	93%	100%

The majority of interviewed refugees with serious medical conditions (81 %) reported no difficulties in accessing healthcare in Moldova. However, **19 % (= 94 individuals) did report challenges** in accessing health care in Moldova, with 21% of them residing in the Transnistrian region.

These 94 refugees* faced the following challenges related to health care:

Availability

of public-health facilities; services; professionals in sufficient quantity and in a timely manner.

Accessibility

- ⇒ physical: all health-care services, facilities, staff are within accessible physical reach for the people, especially those left behind, like those in rural areas and people with disabilities;
- ⇒ economic (=affordability): how services are affordable to the people regardless from the income;
- ⇒ information: how we ensure that it information is accessible to everyone (level of awareness is very important); we need to keep in mind the gender perspective and also information accessible to persons with disabilities;
- ⇒ non-discrimination.

Quality

access to medicine; services; having well-trained medical personnel

Unavailability of medical facility and/or medical services (15 from the right bank, 4 from the left bank)

Fees associated with medical case, medications or transportation (42 from the right bank, 7 from the left bank)

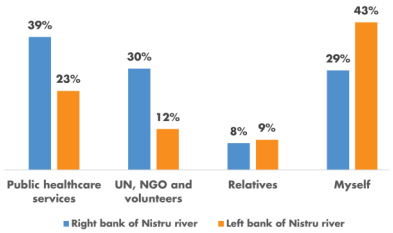
Long waits for medical appointments (13 from the right bank, 2 from the left bank)

Low quality of medical services (5 from the right bank, 1 from the left bank)

Refusals to provide services by medical facilities or service providers (14 from the right bank, 2 from the left bank)

Among the 183 refugees with disabilities, **47 (27 women, 20 men)** (representing the 26 %) have **a disability certificate issued in Ukraine**, with 13 of them residing on the left bank of the Nistru river. Only 18 respondents reported that their certificate so far has granted them access to necessary health care services, while the remaining respondents faced difficultes.

Provision of medical assistance by source and place of residence



Data reveal distinct patterns in access to healthcare including medicines between refugees living on the right and left banks of the Nistru river. On the right bank, 39 % rely on public healthcare, 30 % are supported by humanitarian organizations, while 29 % pay for health care, and 8 % are financially supported by relatives. On the left bank, only 23 % of refugees rely on public healthcare; more individuals (43 %) pay for medical services out of their own pocket. UN, NGO, and volunteers contribute for 12 % of respondents with provision of medical assistance, reflecting a smaller yet significant external support system. Relatives' role remains consistent at 9%.

290 out of 913 (47%) interviewed refugees from Ukraine reported being registered with a family doctor in Moldova.** The majority of them (71 %) have Temporary Protection status. However, as per the Temporary Protection Directive, registration at a family doctor in a public clinic is a prerogative of refugees with Temporary Protection. Therefore, it is possible that the 29% of refugees without Temporary Protection who reported being registered with a family doctor meant that they are registered at a private clinic, or they referred to something else that was not explained. The family doctor registration rate on the right bank of the Nistru River is significantly higher than on the left bank (52% against 26%), indicating a considerable disparity between refugees residing in the two regions.59% of persons with disabilities reported registering at a family doctor. 8 % of respondents did not register because they still rely on their connections with family doctors from Ukraine. With regards to ethnic minority groups, registration with a family doctor was reported at 20 % for Roma, 33 % for ethnic Russians, and 45 % for Gagauz.

*This question allows a multiple-choice answer

** Data on registration with a family doctor was collected between September and December 2023

URGENT NEEDS

41 % of respondents (375 out of 913) identified health care as their top priority, including diagnostics, medicines, and surgery. Primary health care is the main need for most respondents (30%); followed by secondary health care (29%); and emergency health care (10%). Health care needs were expressed more by refugees living in the right bank compared to those in the left bank. Gender was not found to be a determining factor in influencing needs, and neither was belonging to a specific ethno-linguistic group.

13 % of respondents expressed that non-food items was their second most urgent need. This encompasses winter clothing for both adults and children, bedding items, hygiene kits, and diapers.

10 % of the interviewed refugees identify financial assistance as their third most urgent need. Given the absence of an operational social protection system for refugees, financial support remains crucial to address immediate needs, such as securing food, hygiene items, accommodation, and covering winterization costs.

Food remains a **key need for 10 % of the interviewed refugees,** including meat, fresh fruits, and vegetables.

Information needs of respondents include: **how to access medical care (16 %), job opportunities (6 %), their legal status in Moldova (6 %), how to find accommodation (3 %), how to access education (2 %), how to access psychological counseling (2 %).** 6 respondents reported experiencing a lack of access to government services, while 4 respondents faced challenges accessing humanitarian assistance due to missing identity documents. Among these, 2 are Roma, and the rest identify as Ukrainian by ethnicity.

ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

84 % (515 out of 614*) of the interviewed refugees are currently not employed in Moldova. Only 16 % of the respondents (61 women, 38 men) are currently working in Moldova, 6 % with a formal employment and 10 % with an informal. Out of the 99 respondents working in Moldova, 78 are residing in the right bank of the Nistru River, and 21 in the left bank, reflecting a similar employment rate on both banks of the Nistru river. Those employed are working in diverse sectors, including seasonal work in the field, sales, construction, and the beauty industry regardless their type of employment. Regarding ethnic or linguistic minorities, employment rates are 5 % among interviewed Roma, 7 % among Gagauz, and 18 % among ethnic Russian respondents. Among the 515 respondents currently not employed in Moldova, the large majority (416, representing 81 %) are not actively seeking employment, 77 (15 %) are actively seeking employment, 22 (4 %) are engaged in online work for another country.

The 416 respondents who are not seeking employment motivated this decision with the following:

⇒ **Retirement and Age-Related Factors:** 41 % of respondents are pensioners and indicate their age as the reason for not working.

⇒ **Family and Caregiver Responsibilities:** 8 % of respondents (all women) reported not working due to responsibilities related to child care, caring for sick relatives or looking after hosts they live with.

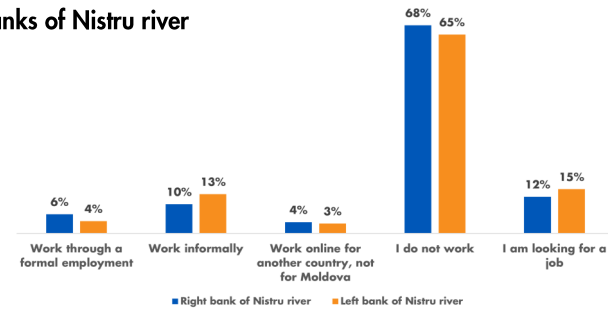
⇒ **Health Issues and Disability**: Various health-related factors, including difficulties in accessing medical consultations and disabilities, emerge as significant barriers to seeking employment for 4% of respondents.

⇒ **Language and Cultural Barriers**: Language barriers, particularly a lack of proficiency in Romanian, pose challenges to employment opportunities, reflecting linguistic obstacles primarily reported by respondents residing in the right bank of the Nistru river.

⇒ **Documentation and Legal Constraints**: Challenges related to mandatory registration documents in the Transnistrian region and specific hiring criteria, particularly the requirement of having Temporary Protection ID on the left bank of Nistru river, limit employment opportunities.

Diversity in employment situation by the banks of Nistru river

The graph illustrates that in both banks of the Nistru river a considerable portion of the interviewed refugee population does not actively participate in the workforce, with 68 % in the right bank and 65 % in the left. Informal work is slightly prevalent in the left bank (13 %) compared to the right bank (10 %), indicating potential differences in local economies and opportunities. In the right bank, a higher percentage is engaged in formal employment (6 %) compared to the



* Data on employment status was collected between September and December 2023.

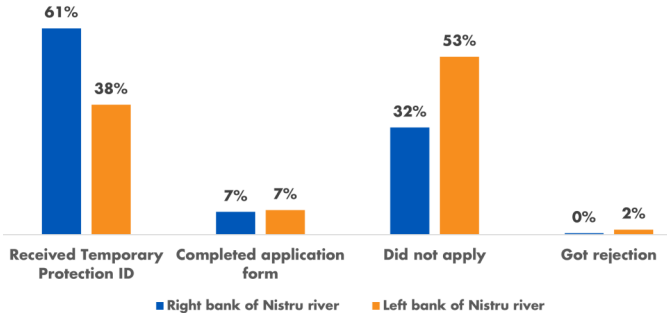
TEMPORARY PROTECTION

62 % of respondents (569 out of 913, including 418 women and 151 men) **applied for Temporary Protection in Moldova.** There is a notable disparity in the application rates for Temporary Protection between the right (68 %) and left banks of the Nistru River (47 %). However, the application rate in the left bank has been regularly increasing since autumn 2023, after humanitarian partners facilitated registration fairs in the region.

The majority of the applicants, **88 % (499 persons), have received the Temporary Protection ID. 63 successfully completed the online registration form** and are currently awaiting their appointment at the IGM Office; while 7 respondents (6 women, 1 men) had their application rejected, with only 1 of them having appealed the decision.

The remaining 38 % of respondents (344 persons) did not apply for Temporary Protection; of them, 43 were granted an alternative legal status in Moldova. This means that the 301 respondents have fallen out of legal status. This group of respondents explained that having Temporary Protection was not a priority for them (16 respondents), or they did not have enough information on the process (19 respondents).

Diversities in Temporary Protection patterns between both bank of the Nistru river



The graph highlights differences in the Temporary Protection application process between the right and left banks of the Nistru river. The right bank exhibits a higher overall application rate for Temporary Protection, with 61 % receiving IDs compared to 38 % in the left bank.

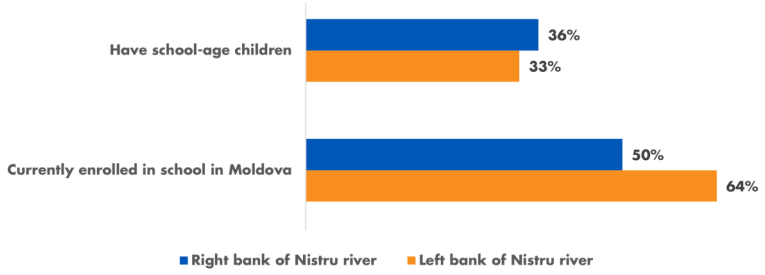
Both banks show that 7 % of respondents are waiting for the application process to be completed.

EDUCATION

Among respondents with school-age children, grandchildren, or nephews (36%, 325 out of 913), **over half (54 %, 127 out of 325 individuals) have children enrolled in Moldovan schools.** Enrollment rates differ between the banks of the Nistru river, being 50% in the right bank and 64% in the left bank of Nistru river. School enrolment in the right bank has increased during 2023, likely due to changes in Temporary Protection regulations for refugees, however it remains lower than in the left bank. Refugees, regardless of their place of residence, primarily selected the schools for their children based on the language of teaching. Most refugees selected schools offering curricula in Russian, while in the right bank, some refugees enrolled their children in Romanian curricula, and some in the left bank, in Ukrainian curricula.

93% (184 out of 198 respondents, whose children do not attend school) **prefer online or remote learning using the Ukrainian curriculum, explaining their choice not to enroll in Moldovan schools.**

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



The graph shows diverse enrollment patterns in both banks of the Nistru River. Although more refugees with school-age children reside in the right bank, a lower percentage of them are enrolled in schools compared to the left bank of the Nistru River.

INTENTIONS

77 % of the interviewed refugees expressed an intention to return to Ukraine in the future, while 8 % have no intention of returning, and 15 % remain uncertain. However, 384 respondents, where 87 % were women, have visited Ukraine occasionally or frequently for personal reasons. 60% of these individuals were granted Temporary Protection status in Moldova.

348 of the interviewed refugees (representing the 42 %) never visited Ukraine after their arrival to Moldova.

MOLDOVAN NATIONALS WHO LIVED IN UKRAINE BEFORE 24 FEBRUARY, 2022

From July until December 2023, **OHCHR interviewed 46 Moldovan nationals** (39 women, 7 men) **who had lived in Ukraine before 24 February, 2022 and who had fled from Ukraine to Moldova after 24 February.** 35 % of them confirmed having Ukrainian citizenship as well. Respondents were located in various regions of north, south, center parts of Moldova, including the Transnistrian region, as indicated in the map below. The largest age groups among the interviewed refugees were those aged 30-49, comprising 54 % of the respondents. The analysis of data collected reveals that the majority (70 %) reside with relatives or close friends for free, 15 % rent housing at their own cost, 2 % are hosted for free by locals, and the remaining respondents did not provide information on this question.

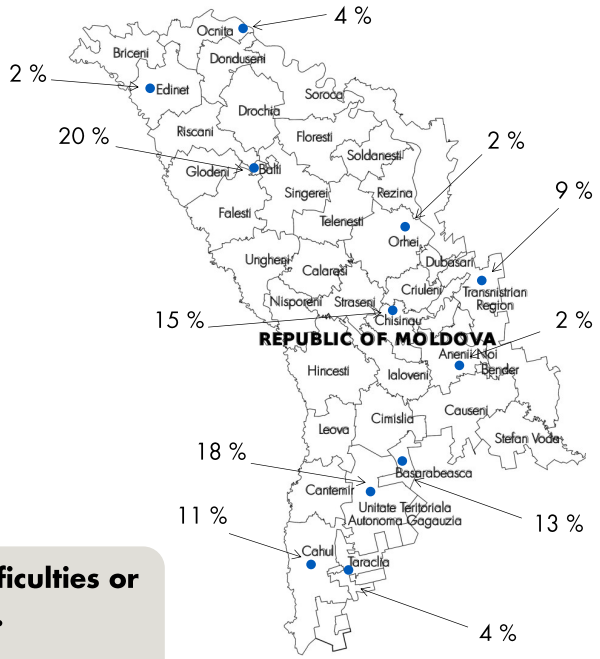
Distribution of respondents by age group and gender

39 Women 85 %

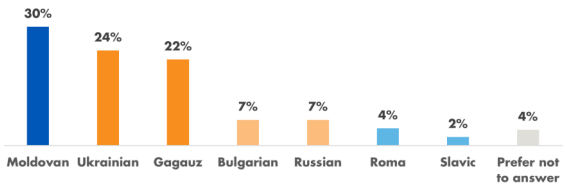
	2 (4 %)	70-79	1 (2 %)	
	4 (9 %)	60-69	3 (7 %)	
	8 (18 %)	50-59	1 (2 %)	
23 (50 %)		30-49	2 (4 %)	
	2 (4 %)	18-29	0	

7 Men 15 %

Distribution of respondents by region



Distribution of respondents by their self-identification of ethnicity



20 % (=9 persons) of the respondents reported a lot of difficulties or impossibility to perform actions under functional domains.

Mobility (5 persons) and Seeing (3 persons) were the most affected domains.

15 % (7 out of 46 respondents, 6 women and 1 man) **expressed facing negative attitudes towards them due to their status as individuals who fled from Ukraine and obtained or tried to obtain the same rights for humanitarian assistance as the refugees from Ukraine.**

"We were denied rental housing because of a newborn child; it is generally difficult to find housing here if you have children".

- Woman, 35 years old, Chisinau

"International organization did not want to provide me help because I am a citizen of Moldova, but I lived in Ukraine for 43 years and I have a permanent residence permit there [in Ukraine], but now [November 2023] the situation has changed, and we received financial assistance.

- Woman, 74 years old, Chisinau, person with mobility disability

"Despite being born in Moldova, residing in Ukraine for 30 years, and holding Moldovan citizenship, I face challenges accessing humanitarian aid due to my Roma ethnicity. The situation is terrible; everything is paid, and the attitude is hostile. I even lack basic necessities like underwear, sharing clothes with a friend for survival. Strikingly, my Moldovan citizenship complicates receiving Temporary Protection in Moldova.

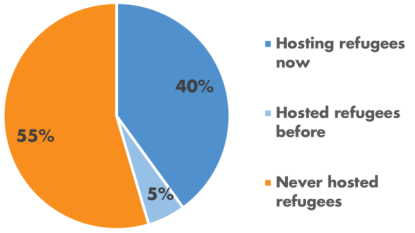
- Woman, 60 years old, Balty, person with vision disability

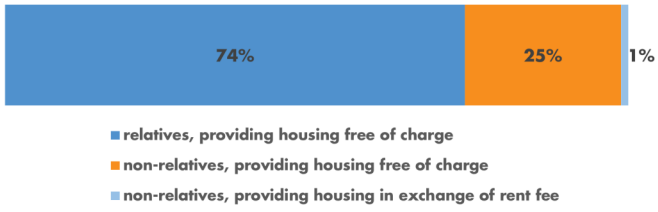
HOST COMMUNITIES

OHCHR interviewed 185 host community members (117 women and 68 men, including Moldovan citizens hosting refugees and those not hosting refugees) across various regions of Moldova to assess if and how various spheres of their life, including education, employment, health care, and social cohesion were impacted by the arrival of refugees from Ukraine. The age groups mostly represented were 30-49 years old (35 %) and 60-69 years old (25 %). Most of the respondents identifying as ethnic Russians live in the Transnistrian region; most of those identifying as ethnic Moldovans live in Balti and Chisinau; and those identifying as Ukrainians, in Ocnita.

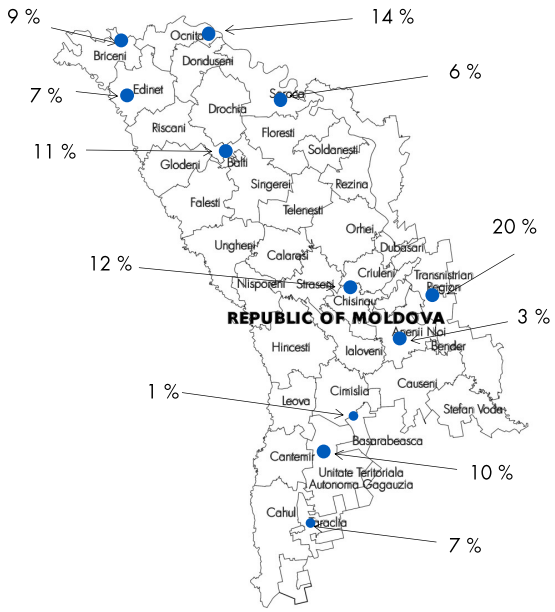
Local hosting experience

The **45 % of the interviewed locals (84 individuals) had an experience with hosting refugees from Ukraine.** 62 of them hosted their relatives without charge, 21 hosted non-relatives for free and only 1 person provided housing in exchange of a rent fee. A significant majority, 64 out of 84 (76 %), received various forms of humanitarian or government assistance for hosting refugees. This support included cash aid, food packages, gas compensation, and government assistance.





Distribution of respondents by region



EDUCATION

Among the local respondents, 45 % have school-age children, grandchildren, or nephews, with the majority residing in the northern and central regions of Moldova.

99 % of them did not observe any significant changes in the educational system as a result of the arrival of children from the Ukrainian refugee community. However, respondents raised concerns linked to language barriers, perceived increases in teacher workload, and a need for integration programs. Notably, many respondents demonstrated a lack of awareness regarding the presence of refugee children in schools where their children are studying.

EMPLOYMENT

The 60 % of the interviewed host community members are employed in various sectors, including private business (10 %), agriculture (5 %), sales (8 %), education (5 %), State (6 %), and other occupations. 29 % are pensioners, and 11 % are presently unemployed.

The large majority of them (86 %) reported not noticing any changes in the labor sphere after the refugees´ arrival, whereas 5 % were of the opinion that the labour market worsened, 3 % noticed some improvements, and 6 % preferred not to answer. Respondents expressed negative observations, focusing on worries about job deprivation, declining labor market prices, and concerns about the competition with refugees for existing or future jobs, especially amid high local unemployment rates and job-seeking challenges.

HEALTHCARE

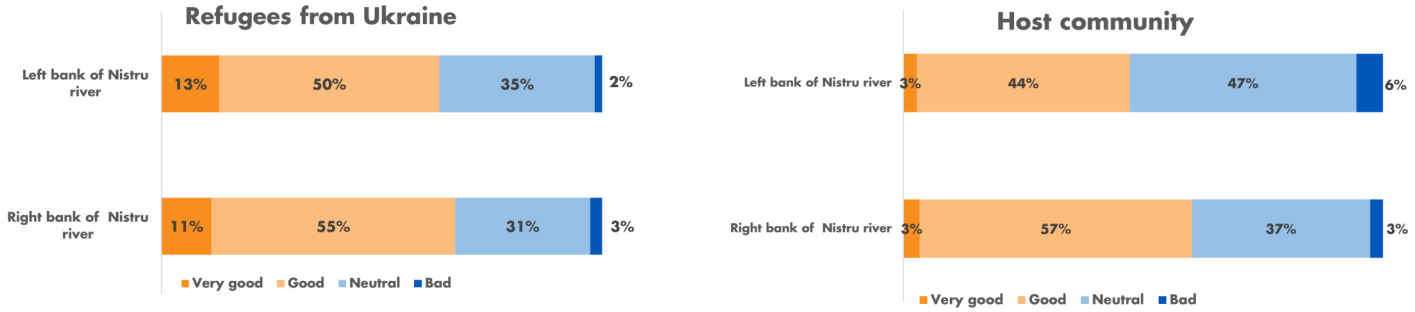
The analysis of host community feedback reveals a diverse range of perceptions on the impact that the arrival of refugees from Ukraine had on health care system. **88 % of the interviewed host community members perceived no changes in health care following the refugees' arrival.**

The most significant impact arising from the influx of refugees from Ukraine respondents has been an increased workload on health care professionals leading to longer queues, higher medical expenses , difficulties in accessing timely care, and worries about the overall decline in the quality of health care services.

SOCIAL COHESION: HOST COMMUNITIES AND REFUGEES

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

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



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

LEFT BANK OF NISTRU RIVER: Overall, most refugees (63 %) **conveyed positive experiences in their interactions with Moldovans**, emphasizing feelings of acceptance and support within the local population. **Instances of friendship, kindness, and support were frequently reported**, particularly in community spaces like libraries and pharmacies. Integration programs, including language courses, art therapy, and support for persons with disabilities, have contributed to foster a positive overall atmosphere. Despite acknowledging **challenges such as language barriers, political differences, occasional economic struggles, and negative interactions**, the predominant sentiment reflects relative harmony. Respondents often expressed gratitude for the support received in their new community.

RIGHT BANK OF NISTRU RIVER: Respondents revealed a diverse range of perceptions concerning their relationships with Moldovans. While **64 % expressed positive interactions, citing support, tolerance, and friendship**, instances of negative attitudes emerged, particularly in regions with a pro-Russian population, with refugees feeling blamed for various issues. **Economic struggles, competition for resources, and language barriers contributed to tensions** with some locals reportedly expressing discontent to refugees over perceived excessive assistance to refugees.

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

LEFT BANK OF NISTRU RIVER: 47% of the respondents reported positive interactions with refugees from Ukraine, highlighting an overall good relationship and a willingness to help. However, concerns were raised about **perceived arrogance of refugees**, particularly in public spaces such as markets. Issues surrounding lack of employment of refugees and receiving benefits were emphasized, and comparisons with the living conditions of locals were drawn. **Some Moldovans suggested that refugees should integrate into the community, find employment, and refrain from imposing political opinions.** Additionally, there is a call for more support for the host community, and a belief that refugees should either integrate or return to Ukraine. While some advocate for providing assistance to refugees in terms of jobs and housing, others underscore the importance of refugees adapting to the local way of life and showing respect.

RIGHT BANK OF NISTRU RIVER: 60% of interviewed hosts expressed empathy and support towards refugees from Ukraine, acknowledging Moldova's hospitable nature. However, challenges such as **economic disparities and occasional rudeness from refugees** were noted. Economic comparisons, frustrations over resource distribution, and concerns about demands from refugees contribute to a complex narrative. Language differences, especially a reluctance to speak Romanian, further strain interactions, leading to conflicts. Despite instances of impertinence, many Moldovans maintain positive relationships, citing successful integration programs and assistance from NGOs. Nevertheless, economic concerns, linguistic tensions, and occasional negative incidents contribute to a nuanced perception of the relationship.

"Locals provided us [refugees] with everything: language courses in English and Romanian, access to psychologists, art therapy sessions, and even a sports area at RAC. What else do we need to ask for?"
- Man, 45 years old, Transnistrian region

"Moldovans reproach refugees for getting help. They do not like us here, Ukrainians are blamed for everything, they say that we are stupid because we do not want to warm ourselves with Russian gas".
-Woman, 60 years old, Criuleni

"Some refugees received humanitarian aid and return to Ukraine. I think they should be more humble; there were instances where they showed a Ukrainian passport and demanded free services at salons".
- Woman, 30 years old, Transnistrian region

"I know that Europe helps them, gives them an allowance of 6000 lei, while I have a pension of 2200 lei - of course this causes misunderstanding among local people, especially older persons".
- Man, 60 years old, Balty

PATTERNS OF DISCRIMINATION/NEGATIVE ATTITUDE BASED ON PROTECTED GROUNDS

REFUGEE STATUS / LANGUAGE / ETHNICITY / CITIZENSHIP / DISABILITY

Discrimination constitutes any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference or other differential treatment that is directly or indirectly based on the prohibited grounds of discrimination and which has the intention or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights.

86% of the respondents interviewed refugees reported not having experienced negative attitudes by host communities, demonstrating an overall acceptance, while **14% (103 women, 28 men) reported having faced negativity due to their refugee status.**

⇒ Respondents from the right bank of Nistru river experienced slightly higher levels of negative attitude (15 %) compared to the those residing in the left bank of the Nistru river (12 %).

⇒ Women (16%) reported feeling as recipients of negative views more than men (11%), indicating a gender-specific dimension in negative attitudes.

⇒ Respondents faced various challenges related to their refugee status, including:

- **negative attitudes from the community** (38 %),
- **refusals of renting housing from landlords** (29 %),
- **tensions with host communities over the perception of the war in Ukraine**(16 %)
- **hostile experiences with health care assistance** (12 %),
- **limited access to humanitarian aid** (11 %)
- **difficulties in finding suitable housing** (11 %)
- **discrimination at work** (8%)
- **instances of verbal abuse in public places** (5%).

These challenges highlighted the complex issues that refugees from Ukraine encounter in their daily lives in Moldova.

> *"At the bus stop, we faced aggressive comments, with locals blaming refugees from Ukraine for their deteriorating lives, resulting in frequent conflicts in transport; we [refugees] are accused of withholding something from them".*
>
> - Woman, 59 years old, Chisinau

"My son was treated badly at school by teachers because we are Roma and refugees".

- Woman, 36 years old, Basarabeasca

"My child with a disability was in a hospital in Bendery, the doctors were rude and eventually kicked him out three days later".

-Woman, 38 years old, Transnistrian region

"The NGO worker consistently rude to me during my visits for medicines, I feel inequality during the distribution of humanitarian aid".

- Woman, 70 years old, Balty

"I encountered conflicts in the clinic as locals reproached me for considering myself a refugee despite knowing the Moldovan language. But I am an Ukrainian citizen".

- Woman, 64 years old, Chisinau

"It is hard to find a job if you are a refugee from Ukraine".

- Man, 83 years old, Transnistrian region

3 % of the interviewed refugees (26 women, 4 men) **reported facing negative attitudes due to their ethnicity.**

Within this group, 14% were ethnic Roma, 3% ethnic Russian, and 3% ethnic Ukrainian. Notably, Roma refugees from Ukraine highlighted instances of unjust accusations, authorities' abuse, difficulties in accessing humanitarian aid, discrimination in health care and housing, mistreatment in education, and an overall pervasive negative attitude solely based on their ethnicity.

3% of respondents (19 women, 7 men) **expressed facing negative attitudes due to their health difficulties,**

with 9 out of 26 individuals residing in the left bank of Nistru River. Interviewed refugees encountered widespread health care challenges, including refusals, payment demands, and unequal aid distribution, highlighting particular issues for persons with disabilities and pregnant women who faced discrimination and encountered difficulties in obtaining services.

SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING

From August to December 2023, OHCHR monitored comments made by local population on various local social media platforms (Viber, TikTok, Telegram, Facebook) regarding refugees from Ukraine. Data reveal:

⇒ **Economic challenges and resentment:**
Discussion on compensation for gas, where some landlords allegedly deceive refugees by applying for compensation for their own residences (as those hosting refugees are entitled to a reduction) instead of those where refugees live, has led to distrust among refugees and raised concerns about the transparency of support systems.

⇒ **Social integration and language barriers:**
Discrimination in access to banking services and resistance to provide information in Russian in different public services exacerbate language and integration challenges, reflected in negative social media comments urging refugees to adapt.

⇒ **Perceived unfair government prioritization:**
Criticisms directed at the government for prioritizing support to refugees from Ukraine over local needs, coupled with skepticism about refugees' contributions to the local economy, underscore concerns about perceived unfairness in resource allocation by government and intergovernmental organizations.

⇒ **Xenophobia and hate speech:**
Social media comments show pervasive hate speech and xenophobia towards refugees from Ukraine, assigning blame for high rental prices, criticizing assistance programs, questioning their work intentions, and cultivating negative sentiments about their lifestyle and impact on Moldovan citizens.

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

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