

MAPPING OF THE ROMA REFUGEES

in the Republic of Moldova

INTRODUCTION

Given the Roma community's high mobility and historical marginalization, recurrent mapping exercises are essential in the Republic of Moldova for understanding the situation of the displaced Roma population, identifying specific vulnerabilities, and adapting targeted interventions accordingly. Following successful mapping exercises in 2022 and 2023, the Roma Task Force in the Republic of Moldova undertook a renewed Roma refugee mapping in 2024 to obtain an updated and comprehensive overview of the current number of displaced Roma from Ukraine, understand their needs, intentions regarding their future, and challenges integrating into Moldovan society. Detailed data was collected, applying an Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approach. The main identified challenges experienced by Roma displaced from Ukraine, as highlighted by this exercise, included unmet basic needs, socio-economic difficulties, and housing insecurity due to an increased reliance on private accommodation, as a result of the closure of Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs) during 2024. A detailed dashboard was developed to visualize and analyze the latest data from the 2024 Roma refugee mapping exercise in Moldova, providing stakeholders with insights on the number, needs, and integration challenges of displaced Roma from Ukraine.

To access: [Interactive Dashboard for the Roma Refugee Mapping](#)

METHODOLOGY

Data collection was conducted collaboratively by Roma Task Force members and the Association for Roma Mediators in Moldova, using a Kobo-based questionnaire. A total of 475 households were surveyed: 372 in private accommodations, 57 in Temporary Placement Centers, and 46 in accommodations provided by the host communities. Household lists were provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP). The data collection exercise covered a total of 24 raions (comprising 24 urban and 38 rural areas), including the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia and the left bank of the Dniester River. During each survey, respondents were asked to report the total number of Roma refugees residing within their household, along with their demographic profile. All the surveys were completed with informed consent from respondents. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of both statistical trends and lived experiences, the analysis combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. The 2024 Participatory

475Households
Surveyed**24**Districts (including UTA
Gagauzia and Left Bank of
Dniester)

1. The total number of surveys conducted in 2024 is significantly higher than in the 2023 exercise, where a total of 57 surveys were applied. In 2023, surveys in RACs were conducted at the facility level, with data collected from RAC managers, who provided the total number of Roma individuals living in each facility. In 2024, data was collected at the household level.



Assessment contributed qualitative insights through five Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), conducted between September and October 2024.^[2] Meanwhile, household surveys conducted between mid-November 2024 and January 2025 provided quantitative data.

MAIN FINDINGS

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION AND HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

The results of the 2024 Roma mapping exercise indicate an estimated 11% increase in the Roma refugee population from the previous year. A significant shift in the Roma population was observed, with more than half of those surveyed nation-wide residing on the Left Bank of the river, compared to one-third the previous year.

Urban areas remain preferred locations for settling (70% in 2024 vs. 72% in 2023), while preferences for rural locations saw a slight increase in 2024 (30% in 2024 vs. 28% in 2023). The data suggests a trend of Roma refugees settling predominantly in urban locations, which may be influenced by factors such as easier access to services, higher employment opportunities, and social infrastructure.

In 2024, the reliance on private accommodation among Roma refugees saw an increase of 75% (considerably higher than the 51% in 2023), while the number of Roma refugees in Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs) dropped significantly, from 44% in 2023 to 18% in 2024. However, the number of Roma refugees accommodated in host communities remained small (7% in 2024 vs. 5% in 2023).

This shift reflects the impact of the RAC closure strategy being implemented by MLSP from 2023.^[3] As a result, available accommodation in RACs in 2024 was considerably reduced, disproportionately affecting Roma refugees, many of whom have reported facing discrimination in securing private housing. The transition highlights the need for long-term housing solutions and targeted support for vulnerable refugee groups.

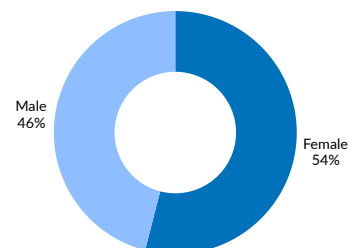
922

Of the Roma refugees that took part in this survey reside on the Left Bank of the Dniester river

GENDER DISTRIBUTION

The gender distribution among Roma refugees remains unchanged from 2023 in adults, with the female population exceeding the male population by approximately 10% (54% are female and 46% are male). This gap increases further in the 60+ age group, where 68% are female and 32% are male. The gender distribution is balanced for children.

GENDER

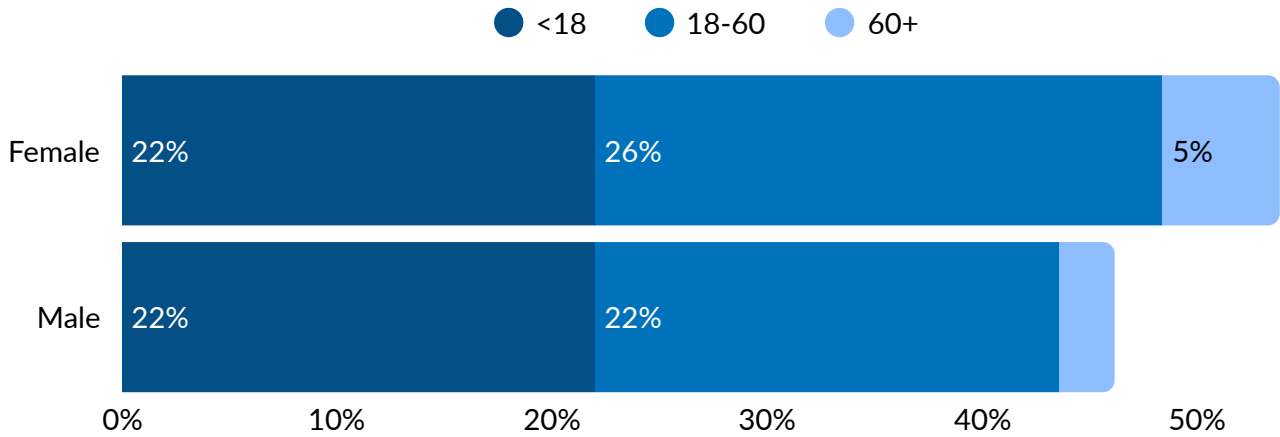


3. The RAC closure strategy initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) in 2023, aimed at consolidating 54 active Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs). Several RACs where a significant number of Roma refugees resided were closed during 2024. This closure particularly affected Roma refugees, as many faced discrimination when searching for alternative housing, making it challenging to secure private accommodation. Vulnerable individuals, including those with disabilities, have required additional assistance in finding suitable housing.

2. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/114769>



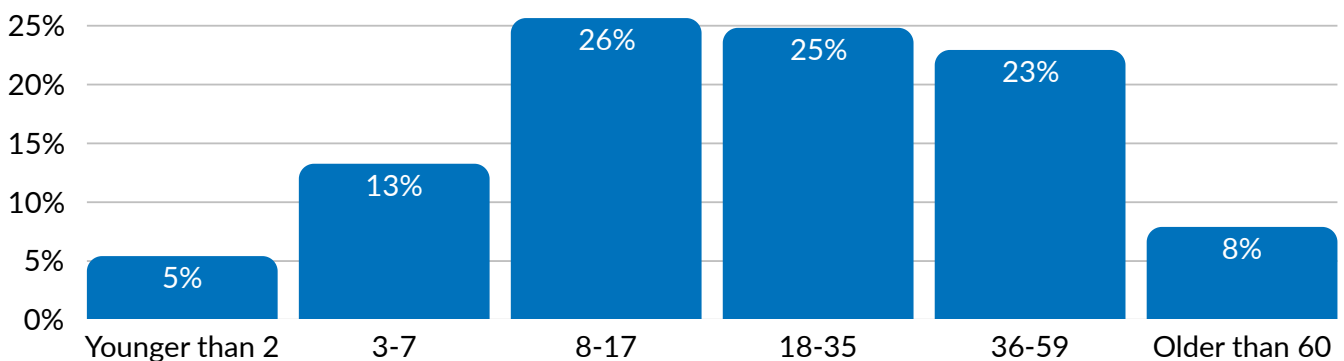
GENDER AND AGE



AGE DISTRIBUTION

The age distribution reveals a predominantly young population, with 44% under 18 years, of which 26% are children between 8 to 17 years, highlighting a significant presence of school-aged children. Young adults aged 18 to 35 make up 25% of the population, while those aged between 36 to 59 years account for 23%, reflecting a significant working-age group population requiring the availability of employment opportunities who may be at risk of facing economic challenges. Older adults (60+ years) constitute only 8% of the total population surveyed.

AGE GROUPS





PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Data collected through the Washington Group Questions suggest that out of the Roma refugee population surveyed, an estimated 7% (similar to 2023) reported having significant difficulties or being unable to perform specific tasks due to health-related issues, impairments, and/or mobility and cognitive challenges. Among children, 31 were reported having a disability, primarily related to mobility and cognitive difficulties. 9 individuals between 18-35 reported experiencing mobility-related challenges, with a lower percentage also facing sensory impairments and cognitive challenges. 37 persons (10%) of those aged between 36-59 years reported having a visual impairment, mobility issues, with cognitive difficulties being the most frequently reported challenge. Among those aged 60 and above, 34 (25%) of individuals reported struggling with health-related difficulties, primarily lower body mobility, visual impairment, and hearing loss. Across all age groups, mobility-related challenges were the most prevalent, followed by visual impairment and cognitive difficulties, highlighting the need for targeted support services for people with disabilities.

INTENTIONS

When asked about their intentions for the future, 56% of households stated that they preferred to stay in the Republic of Moldova, while 32% were uncertain about their plans. A smaller group, 6%, intended to move to another country temporarily (e.g., for winter), and 5% planned to relocate permanently. Additionally, 2% of households preferred not to disclose their intentions. Regarding the duration of stay in Moldova, 46% of households were uncertain about how long they will remain in Moldova or another country, while 31% did not respond to the question. Among the 23% who provided a timeframe, 5% planned to stay in Moldova for 1-2 years, 11% intended to stay for more than two years, 3% expected to stay for 6 months to one year, and 4% planned to move to another country within 1-3 months.

COMMUNITY COHESION

Based on the survey responses, approximately 9% of households described their relationship with local communities as "Very Good", highlighting friendly interactions, strong neighborly ties, and a sense of belonging, particularly for those living in host communities and official RACs throughout Moldova. Around 70% of respondents living in the central region of Moldova and in urban private accommodation rated their relationships as "Good", indicating positive engagement, often mentioning helpful neighbors and good communication. Around 19% of respondents (mostly living on the Left Bank) described their interactions with host community members as "Acceptable", reflecting neutral or mixed experiences, occasional conflicts, or limited connections due to recent relocation. Regardless of geographic location or type of accommodation, only 2% of respondents reported "Bad" or "Very Bad" relationships, citing concerns such as mistreatment of their children at school and perceived discrimination. Overall, most households reported positive integration, despite the challenges that exist for Roma refugee families and the few cases involving social tensions.

LEGAL STATUS

Around 70% of the Roma displaced from Ukraine participating in the survey held Temporary Protection status, granting them legal stay and access to support services in the Republic of Moldova.^[4] Meanwhile, around 31% stated that they had Moldovan citizenship or a residence permit in Moldova, granting them legal security, and a wider range of options for longer-term solutions compared to those under Temporary Protection. However, a small proportion (2%) of respondents were in a more precarious legal situation, with some being stateless, in the process of seeking asylum, or not yet having formalized their legal status within the Republic of Moldova, facing further barriers in exercising their rights and accessing assistance. Lastly, 7% of respondents chose not to disclose their legal status. Given the historic marginalization of Roma communities, these legal vulnerabilities compound existing challenges, including discrimination, difficulties in obtaining documentation, and barriers to employment or social services.



ROMA WOMEN MARCH BY PFR ROMNI DURING THE AMARE AMALA: ROMA CULTURE WEEK 2024.
PICTURE CREDITS: INTERSOS MOLDOVA

MOST REPORTED NEEDS

Both the 2024 Participatory Assessment (PA)^[5] findings and the 2024 Roma mapping results highlighted significant socio-economic challenges affecting Roma refugees living in Moldova, particularly financial insecurity, discrimination, and barriers to essential services. Financial instability was a predominant concern. Households that reported having no concerns accounted for only 10%. Employment, health, and information remained major issues.

4. Art. 85, para. 3 of LP200/2010

5. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/114769>



MAIN CONCERNS

Main Concerns	2024 Participatory Assessment findings (qualitative)[6]	Roma mapping findings (quantitative)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial security 	Roma refugees rely on informal, low-paying jobs unable to cover basic needs	38% reported insufficient cash assistance; 34% unable to cover basic needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment opportunities 	Limited employment opportunities due to language barriers and ethnic-based discrimination	7% cited lack of employment opportunities as a concern
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing stability 	Discrimination in the rental market; affordability issues for those in private housing; anxiety among those in RACs due to government-led RAC closures	Uncertainty about long-term housing situation (no specific % reported)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information access 	For some, unawareness of available assistance programs	7% highlighted a lack of access to information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to health services 	Limited access to healthcare due to financial hardship	6% reported being in need of medical care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to education 	Children face barriers to education related to lack of access to basic needs and school supplies, inability to afford school fees, and language barriers	5% reported difficulties accessing education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrimination 	Roma refugees face discrimination in jobs, housing, social integration, and education	4% mentioned ethnic-based discrimination, especially in the access to employment and education opportunities

6. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/114769>

RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the protection and integration of Roma refugees in Moldova, this mapping exercise identified critical gaps and priority areas where sustained efforts are needed to address persistent needs and reduce existing vulnerabilities.

The findings of this report indicate that Roma households continue to experience considerable financial hardship, with particularly severe challenges observed among households with persons with disabilities, older adults, or single caregivers. Expanding coverage and tailoring financial assistance packages, could play a significant role in ensuring the basic needs of people with specific needs are met.

Economic insecurity remains a key concern, and addressing it is essential to mitigate the adoption of negative coping mechanisms. At the same time, the implementation of targeted livelihood interventions—such as vocational training, language courses, and tailored employment programs—may gradually enhance self-reliance among those capable of working, thereby reducing long-term dependence on financial assistance. These efforts should be accompanied by concrete anti-discrimination measures aimed at improving equitable access to the labor market and fostering inclusive employment opportunities.

Stable housing has emerged as a critical concern in the current context, particularly following the closure of the RACs and the limited availability of affordable private accommodations. To reduce the risk of housing insecurity, rental support programmes targeting Roma refugees and providing support in navigating the private rental market through referral systems, mediation, or facilitating access to legal assistance, should be introduced or scaled up.

Moreover, strengthened legal protections against discrimination are essential for safeguarding the rights of minority groups and marginalized communities, especially in regions with a high concentration of highly vulnerable Roma households. This should be complemented by initiatives aimed at raising awareness and sensitizing public authorities, law enforcement, and the justice system, to deliver fair and effective responses to discrimination cases, and to promote accessible, rights-based pathways to dispute resolution.

Improving access to education for Roma school-aged children is crucial for their long-term well-being. Financial and administrative barriers continue to be a concern, particularly for children lacking the financial means to cover school supplies or adequate clothing, or for children requiring additional language support. Strengthening outreach efforts to engage families and school communities, expanding educational opportunities across different age groups, and identifying affordable solutions to facilitate children's participation in education could help improve school attendance and reduce dropout rates.

Further, Roma refugees continue to face significant barriers in accessing healthcare services, especially when it comes to Roma refugees with multiple or compounded vulnerabilities. Improving access to information about available services in multiple languages and accessible formats is essential. Additionally, sensitizing health care providers on the specific needs of Roma refugees, supporting quality referrals for people with specific needs and specific health concerns, and facilitating access to basic or mobile healthcare options could help eliminate these barriers, ensuring better access while improving quality of care.

Finally, access to information and active engagement with host communities remain fundamental to the integration process of Roma displaced from Ukraine. Strengthening community involvement and enhancing information dissemination through Roma mediators can significantly improve access to essential services, while promoting social inclusion and fostering greater integration.