

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

GENERAL POPULATION NEEDS AND VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT ROUND 1



NOVEMBER 2023 - JANUARY 2024



**World Food
Programme**



GLOBAL DATA INSTITUTE
**DISPLACEMENT
TRACKING MATRIX**

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and of the World Food Programme (WFP). The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the report do not imply expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM or WFP concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

This publication was made possible through the support provided by German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO).

Publisher

International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Regional Office for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia
Dampfschiffstrasse 4/10-11, 1030 Vienna, Austria
+43 1 581 22 22
Website: <https://rovienna.iom.int/>
Contact: ROViennaDataResearch-Newsletter@iom.int

International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Country Office in the Republic of Moldova

Le Roi Business Center, Strada Sfatul Tarii 29, 9th floor, Republic of Moldova
+373 (6) 800 33 11
Website: <https://moldova.iom.int/>
Contact: IOMMoldovaDTM@iom.int

World Food Programme (WFP)
Country Office in the Republic of Moldova

United Nations House, Strada 31 August 1989 131, Republic of Moldova.
Website: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/moldova>
Contact: moldova.secretariat@wfp.org

This report was issued without formal editing by IOM and WFP.

Cover photo: Social cohesion event "Glory of a woman", Cahul, Republic of Moldova. © IOM Moldova 2023

Citation: International Organization for Migration (IOM) and World Food Programme (WFP), June 2024. "General Population Needs and Vulnerability Assessment Round 1". November 2023-January 2024. IOM, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova.

For more information on terms and conditions of DTM reports and information products, please refer to: <https://dtm.iom.int/terms-and-conditions>

Release date: August 2024

© IOM 2024

Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 IGO License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/) (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IGO).*

For further specifications please see the [Copyright and Terms of Use](#).

This publication should not be used, published or redistributed for purposes primarily intended for or directed towards commercial advantage or monetary compensation, with the exception of educational purposes, e.g. to be included in textbooks.

Permissions: Requests for commercial use or further rights and licensing should be submitted to publications@iom.int.

* <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/legalcode>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	4
DEFINITIONS	4
SCOPE & OBJECTIVE	5
KEY FINDINGS	6
INTRODUCTION	8
SAMPLING	10
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS	11
FOOD SECURITY	14
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	21
NEEDS AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	25
SOCIAL COHESION	26
MOBILITY AND INTENTIONS	27
METHODOLOGY	28

ACRONYMS

ATU	Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia
CARI	Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security
CATI	Computer Assisted Telephone Interview
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GPS	General Population Survey
HH	Household
HOH	Heah of Household
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KII	Kye Informant Interview
rCSI	Coping Strategies Index
LCS	Livelihood Coping Strategies
MDL	Moldovan Leu
MoLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
RDD	Random Digit Dialling
WFP	World Food Program

DEFINITIONS

Active on the labour market – *Person of working age who is either working or is looking for a job.*

Inactive on the labour market – *Person of no working age or person of working age who is not looking for a job.*

Raion – *administrative unit in the Republic of Moldova.*

Returnee – *Any person returning to his/her country of origin after having moved away from his/her place of habitual residence and crossed an international border.*

SCOPE & OBJECTIVE

The General Population Needs and Vulnerability Assessment (GPS) is the quarterly representative survey assessing the situation of the local population of the Republic of Moldova and is conducted to identify changes and trends in their vulnerabilities over time. The study has specific core objectives as follows:

- Determine the status of livelihood sources (income and food) of the target population in the Republic of Moldova.
- Measure the levels of food insecurity among the Republic of Moldova's population.
- Estimate the levels of vulnerability among the people facing food insecurity.
- Understand the coping mechanisms adopted by households during periods of food insecurity.

- Explore the underlying causes of food and nutrition insecurity in the target population.
- Understand what are the needs and intentions of the local population.
- Understand of household's situation regarding employment, sources of income, vulnerabilities in terms of disabilities, chronic illnesses and social cohesion within the community.
- Analyse key trends to understand the impact of the refugee influx on the local population.

To achieve these objectives, data collection for the initial round was conducted by a research firm Multicultural Insights from November 2023 to January 2024.



IOM General Director and IOM Moldova's Chief of Mission meeting Border Police authorities at Palanca Border Control Point ©IOM 2024 / Ana Gnip

KEY FINDINGS

Demographics

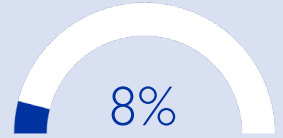


Language

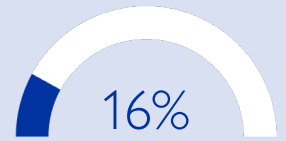
70% Romanian

30% Russian

HH composition



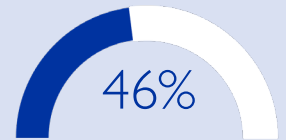
live with at least one infant (0-23 months)



live with at least one child (2-5 years old)



live with at least one child (6-18 years old)



live with at least one elderly person (over 60 years old)

Average HH size: 2.8



23% One member



47% Small HH (2-3)



23% Medium HH (4-5)



23% Large HH (6+)

HH breadwinner

48% Male

28% Female

24% Both

Standard of living*

Improving 13%

Unchanged 44%

Worsening 43%

* perception compared to the same period last year

Health

32% had a chronically ill person in their household

18% had a person with disabilities in their household

Food consumption



Cereals are the most consumed food.

80% of HH consume cereals seven days a week



19% are food insecure



37% used emergency & crisis coping strategies

Coping strategies



55% of HH had to adjust to less preferred food



12% of HH had to borrow money or rely on friends to afford food



22% of HH had to reduce number of meals per day

Employment



85% employed



15% unemployed

Top 5 needs

36% Improve HH income



12% Health & services



7% Food Products



6% Solid fuel for heating



3% Employment or job



Multiple answers possible

Income

54% of HH had more than one adult member earning an income



14% of HH receive remittances

19% of HH receive social assistance



Moving abroad

9% of respondents planned to move to another country

13% had HH members planning to move to another country



Migrant owner of an Albanian restaurant in Chisinau cooking. ©IOM 2024 | Riccardo Severi

INTRODUCTION

In 2024, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has entered its third year, persistently causing the displacement of populations both within and beyond the borders of Ukraine. The Republic of Moldova, as an immediate neighbour, has been significantly affected by the conflict. Over one million refugees have fled Ukraine, and since February 2022, there are 120,548 of them present in the country.¹

As a result, refugees have become an integral part of the local everyday life. However, the prolonged crisis, coupled with a series of macroeconomic challenges that have affected the Republic of Moldova's growth, and rising prices due to fluctuations in the rate of inflation, diminished the capacity of internal stakeholders to manage the cumulative consequences of the war.² In addition, these factors had the potential to increase polarization, inequalities, and competition for opportunities and resources, impacting social cohesion in the country. Consequently, it is crucial to gather strong and relevant information that can form the basis for evidence-based interventions, effective policy formulation, targeted humanitarian assistance, and preparedness for future scenarios.

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) conducted a General Population Needs and Vulnerability Assessment, targeting the local population residing in the Republic of Moldova except from the Transnistrian region. The surveys were conducted from November of 2023 to January 2024. Over the period, 3,035 respondents were interviewed to understand their needs, vulnerabilities, and intentions in the context of the war in Ukraine.

By considering the ramifications of the crisis and its influence on the vulnerabilities faced by households and communities, the report aims to shed light on the socio-economic challenges, safety and security issues, and obstacles in accessing vital services encountered by the population of the Republic of Moldova. This study provides an overview of the unique challenges faced by the Moldovan population and is a part of a series running over 12 months. The study is a joint initiative of IOM and the World Food Program (WFP) with inputs to the questionnaire also coming from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MoLSP).

Participants were selected through random sampling using Random Digit Dialling (RDD), which involves contacting randomly generated numbers. The sampling method is detailed in the methodology section of this report. The assessment tool included questions on household demographics, vulnerabilities, needs, intentions, employment status, social cohesion, food consumption patterns, as well as coping strategies. Food security and coping strategies questions were developed in partnership with the World Food Program (WFP) in the Republic of Moldova, based on standard food security indicators.³

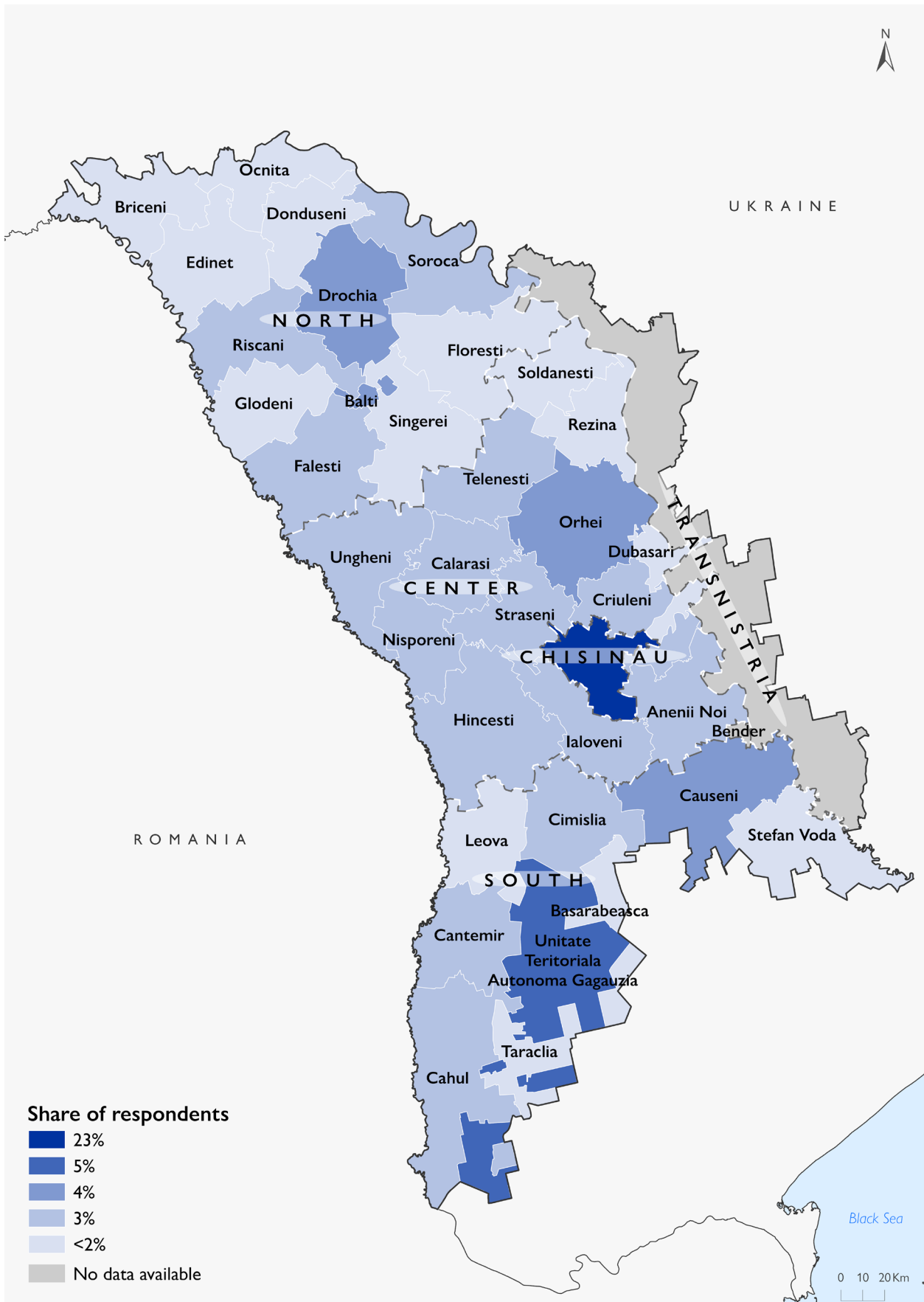
Food insecurity levels were assessed using Food consumption scores (FCS) and the reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI). Similarly, the household's coping capacity was measured through a Livelihood-based Coping Strategies (LCS) indicator. The combination of these categories was used as a proxy indicator to estimate the household's food security status and identify the profile of the food insecure population.



Interview with an Ukrainian painter from Transnistrian region, who was assisted by IOM. ©IOM 2024 / Gabriela Crudu

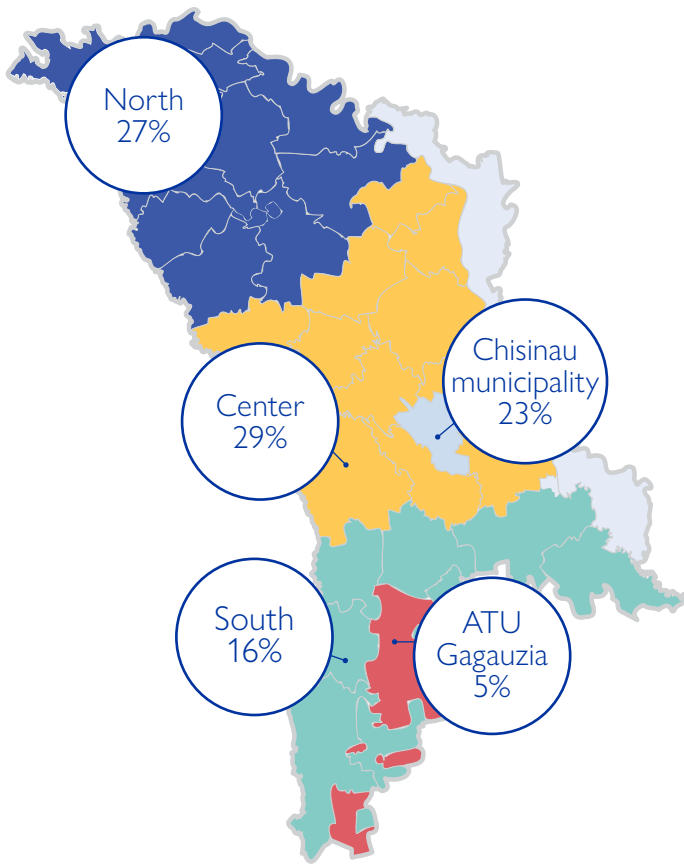
1 The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), (Geneva, 2024). "[Operational Data Portal](#)", accessed 27 May 2024.
 2 National Bank of Moldova, (Chisinau, 2024). "[Annual inflation](#)", accessed 27 May 2024.
 3 The World Food Programme (WFP), (Rome, 2021). "[Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security \(CARI\) – Third Edition 2021](#)".

Map 1: Republic of Moldova, regional distribution of surveyed households, November 2023 - January 2024, n=3,211



This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

SAMPLING



This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

The majority of the respondents (58%) identified as living in rural areas, while the remaining 42 per cent lived in urban areas.

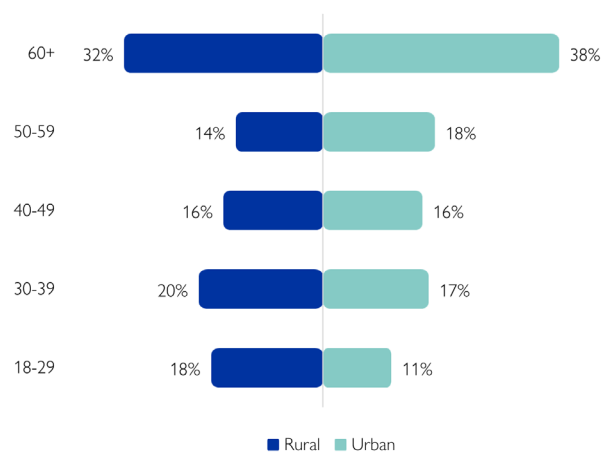
It was observed that a higher proportion of younger respondents tended to reside in urban areas. As illustrated in the chart below, 18 per cent of those living in urban areas were aged between 18 and 29, compared to 11 per cent of respondents in the same age category living in rural areas. Conversely, 56 per cent of those residing in rural areas were 50 or older, being aged between 50 and 59 years (18%) or 60 or older (38%).

Over a period of two months, from 10 November 2023 to 19 January 2024, a total of 3,211 telephone calls were made for the purpose of conducting interviews. During this period, interviewees consented to participating in the survey. However, 152 interviews could not be completed due to respondents not meeting the selection criteria. Specifically, some respondents were outside of Moldova at the time of interview (35 cases), permanent residents outside the country (47 cases), or minors (70 cases). Additionally, 24 surveys were interrupted because the respondents were not citizens of the Republic of Moldova (14 Ukrainians, 4 citizens of the Russian Federation, 1 Estonian, 1 Turkish, 4 preferred not to answer).

A total of 3,025 interviews were successfully conducted. To enhance representativeness, 91 per cent of interviews were with mobile phone users, while the remaining nine per cent specifically targeted landline users. This approach ensured the inclusion of participants who did not possess mobile phones, such as elderly individuals and those residing in remote areas with limited mobile phone availability.

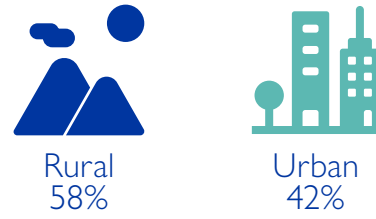
Quotas were further established based on the Republic of Moldova's subdivision in regions of development (North, Centre, and South), the Municipality of Chisinau, and the Autonomous Territorial Unit (ATU) of Gagauzia.

Figure 1. Settlement type by age (%), n=3,025



As illustrated in later sections of this report, considering age and territorial dimensions are significant for understanding vulnerabilities and social inequalities.

Similar to other post-communist countries where ownership is prevalent, 84 per cent of respondents reported living in a house or apartment they owned.⁴ This percentage was slightly lower in urban areas (80%) than in rural areas where 86 per cent of respondents owned their residences. Twelve per cent of respondents in urban areas were renting their accommodation, which was six times higher than respondents in rural areas (2%).

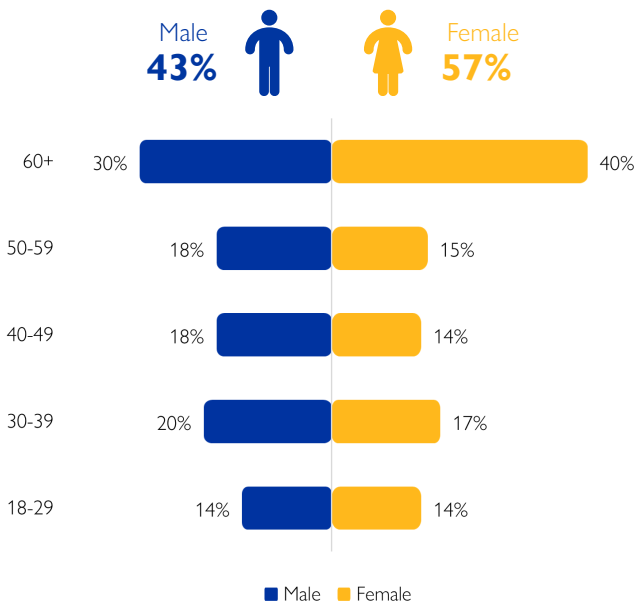


SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS

GENDER AND AGE

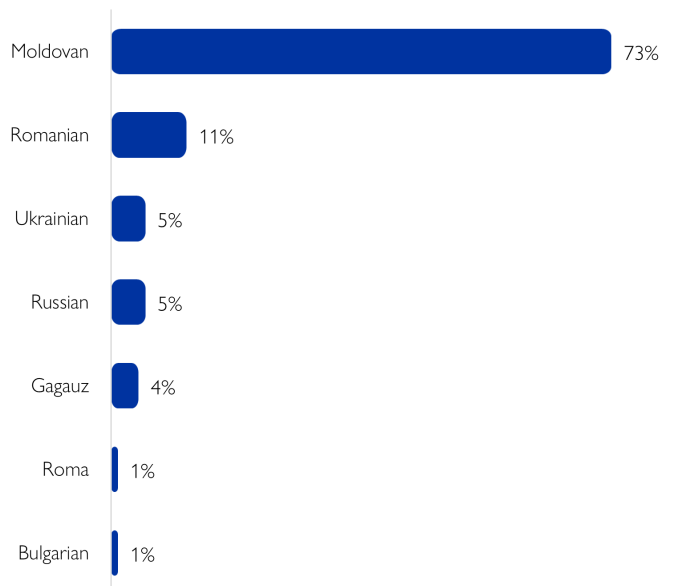
The majority of the survey respondents were women (57%) while 43 per cent were men. The under representation of male respondents in the sample can be attributed to the fact that women, particularly those older than 60 years, are more likely to participate in surveys, especially in CATI surveys, such as the one used to collect data for this assessment.⁵

Figure 2. Age distribution by gender (%), n=3,025



The General Population Survey targeted only citizens of the Republic of Moldova among which more than two-thirds (73%) were ethnic Moldovans, followed by 11 per cent who were Romanian, while Ukrainians, and Russians comprised five per cent each. Four per cent were ethnic Gagauzian, while ethnic Roma and Bulgarians comprised one per cent each. This highlights the multi-ethnic composition of the population.

Figure 3. Ethnicity (%), n=3,025



4 Peter Huber, P. J. Montag, (2020). "Homeownership, Political Participation, and Social Capital in Post-Communist Countries and Western Europe". Kyklos. 73. 96-119.
 5 Smith, W., (2008). "Does Gender Influence Online Survey Participation? A Record-Linkage Analysis of University Faculty Online Survey Response Behavior".

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

The average household size was 2.8 members. Almost half of the respondents (47%) were from small households. Medium sized households accounted for 23 per cent of the respondents, while seven per cent were a part of a household with six or more individuals. The remaining 23 per cent of respondents lived in a single person household.

Among the 2,329 respondents that were a part of a household with more than one member, eight per cent reported to be living with at least one infant aged between zero and 24 months. Additionally, 16 per cent lived with at least one child aged between two and five years, and 39 per cent lived with a minor aged between six and 18 years.

Average HH size: **2.8**

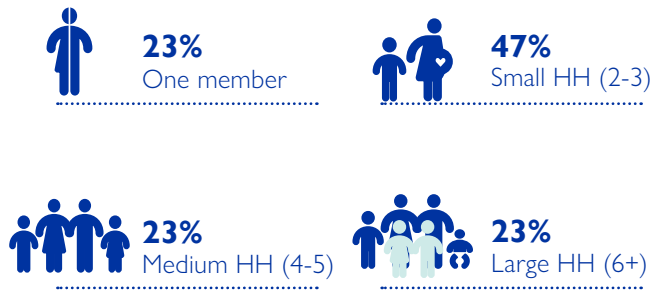
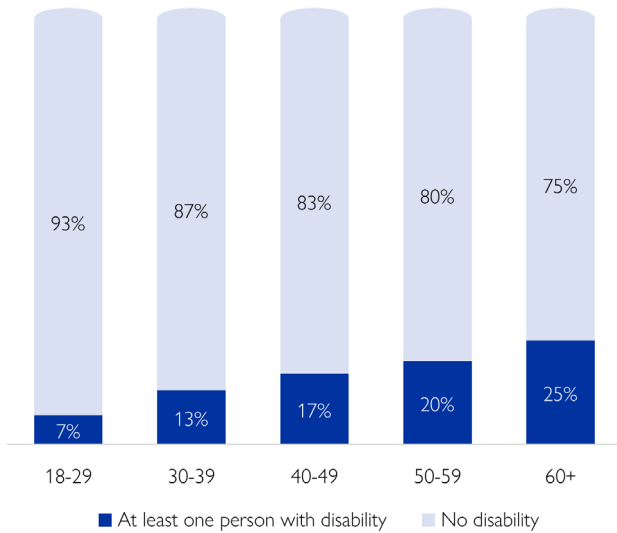


Figure 4. Presence of at least one person with disability in household by age of HOH (%) n=3,025



VULNERABILITIES

Nearly one-fifth of the respondents were living with at least one member with disabilities. Additionally, 32 per cent reported the presence of at least one chronically ill member in their household.

Notably, 25 per cent of respondents who were with someone with a disability in their household were aged 60 years and older. This was lower in younger age categories. Figure 4 highlights the presence of people with disabilities among households disaggregated by age of the head of household (HOH).

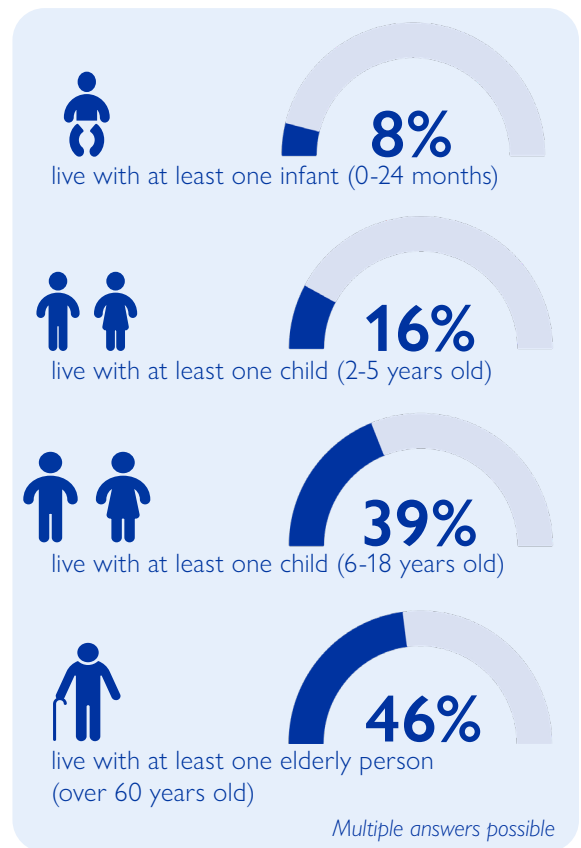
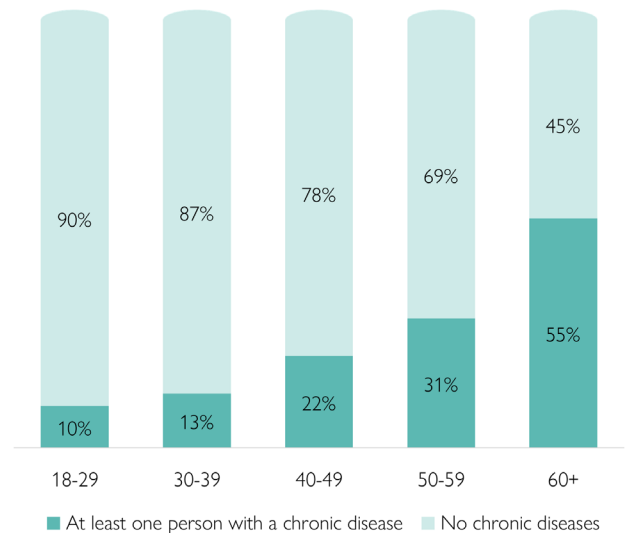
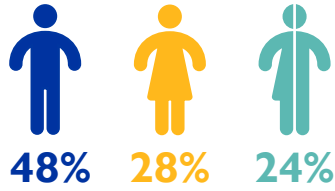


Figure 5. Presence of at least one person with a chronic disease in households by age of HOH (%) n=3,025

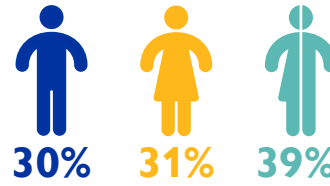


HOUSEHOLD STATUS

SEX OF HOUSEHOLD BREADWINNER



SEX OF HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKER



The data shows that 48 per cent of households had a male breadwinner while 28 per cent had a female breadwinner. Twenty-four per cent indicated that they had both a male and female breadwinner in the household. While decision making

was the sole responsibility of one person in 61 per cent of households, in 39 per cent of the cases, the decision-making processes were shared equally between the male and female members of the household.

STANDARD OF LIVING

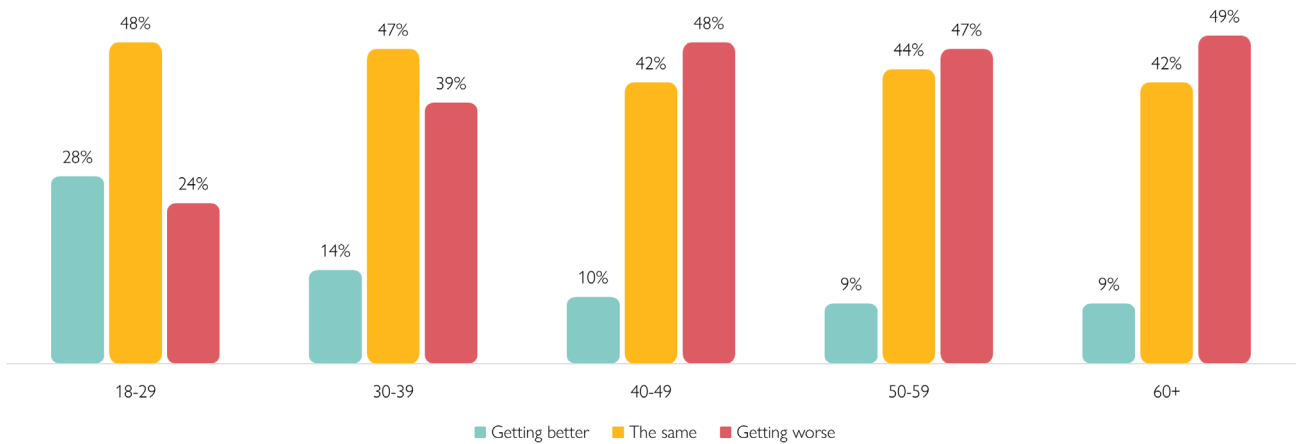
People's living conditions had shifted over the time, especially since the start of the war in Ukraine. For 43 per cent of the respondents believed that their living conditions worsened, comparing with the previous year. Additionally, 44 per cent reported no significant changes and the remaining 13 per cent reported an improvement in their standard of living.



While no significant differences in this regard were highlighted when disaggregating by gender or by settlement type, there were differences based on age groups. Younger respondents had a more positive outlook of the status of their households, with 28 per cent of those aged between 18 and 29 years indicating an improvement in their standard of living from the previous year. This percentage decreased gradually among the older respondents. On the contrary, 24 per cent among the younger age categories reported a deterioration in their standards of living, which nearly doubled for respondents in the categories above 40 years of age.

These findings could be due to younger individuals, on average, exhibiting greater optimism about their circumstances and future prospects compared to older individuals.⁶⁷ An alternative explanation could be related to the increased vulnerabilities among older respondents mentioned in the previous page. In addition to older respondents, households with at least one person who had a disability, chronic illness, or was pregnant or lactating also reported a higher perception of a deterioration in the standard of living. As demonstrated in the following section, the same demographic categories had experienced lower levels of food consumption and had adopted more coping strategies.

Figure 6. Changes in standard of living (Household) by age (%), n=3,025



6 The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), (New York, 2021). "Changing Childhood Project".
 7 The World Economic Forum, (Cologny, 2022). "Children have better lives but worse mental health than their parents, say young people".

FOOD SECURITY

The Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI) facilitates the creation of a comprehensive profile of food security.⁸ In particular, the 'Current Status' domain is obtained from two indicators, the Food Consumption Score (FCS), which captures the household food consumption patterns, and the reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) which assesses the level of stress endured due to food shortages. This subsequently related with the Livelihood Coping Strategies (LCS), a framework utilized to comprehend the specific coping strategies adopted by a household. This, in turn, determines their level of vulnerability.

According to the Food Consumption indicator, nearly one-fifth (19%) of the respondents were classified as food insecure (moderately/severely food insecure). At the same time, the share of the participants who reported having adopted emergency or crisis coping strategies was considerably high (respectively 11% and 26%). This might indicate that the proportion of respondents with an acceptable food consumption level, had achieved it through severe coping strategies, thus diminishing their resilience to future shocks.

Additionally, 32 per cent of the respondents were marginally food secure. These households have managed to achieve acceptable food consumption levels, but have a reduced coping capacity, putting them at risk of food insecurity.



19% are food insecure



37% used emergency & crisis coping strategies

Figure 7 below presents the results of the classification of respondents' food security levels based on their Food Consumption Scores and their coping capacity (Livelihood Coping Strategies). No Food Security Index was further developed due to the unavailability of economic vulnerability data. As illustrated in latter sections of this report, considering age and territorial dimensions are significant for understanding vulnerabilities and social inequalities.

Figure 7. Classification of respondents according to food security indicators (%), n=3,025

		Proportion of migrants classied according to food security indicators			
Food security dimension	Food security indicator	Food secure	Marginally food secure	Food insecure	
				Moderately food insecure	Severely food insecure
Current status (food-related behaviours)	Food Consumption Score (group)	49% Acceptable consumption & good coping capacity	32% Acceptable consumption & reduced coping capacity	13% Borderline consumption	6% Poor consumption
Coping capacity	Livelihood Coping Strategie	35% None	28% Stress strategy	26% Crisis strategy	11% Emergency strategy

8 The World Food Programme (WFP), (Rome, 2021). "Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI) – Third Edition 2021".

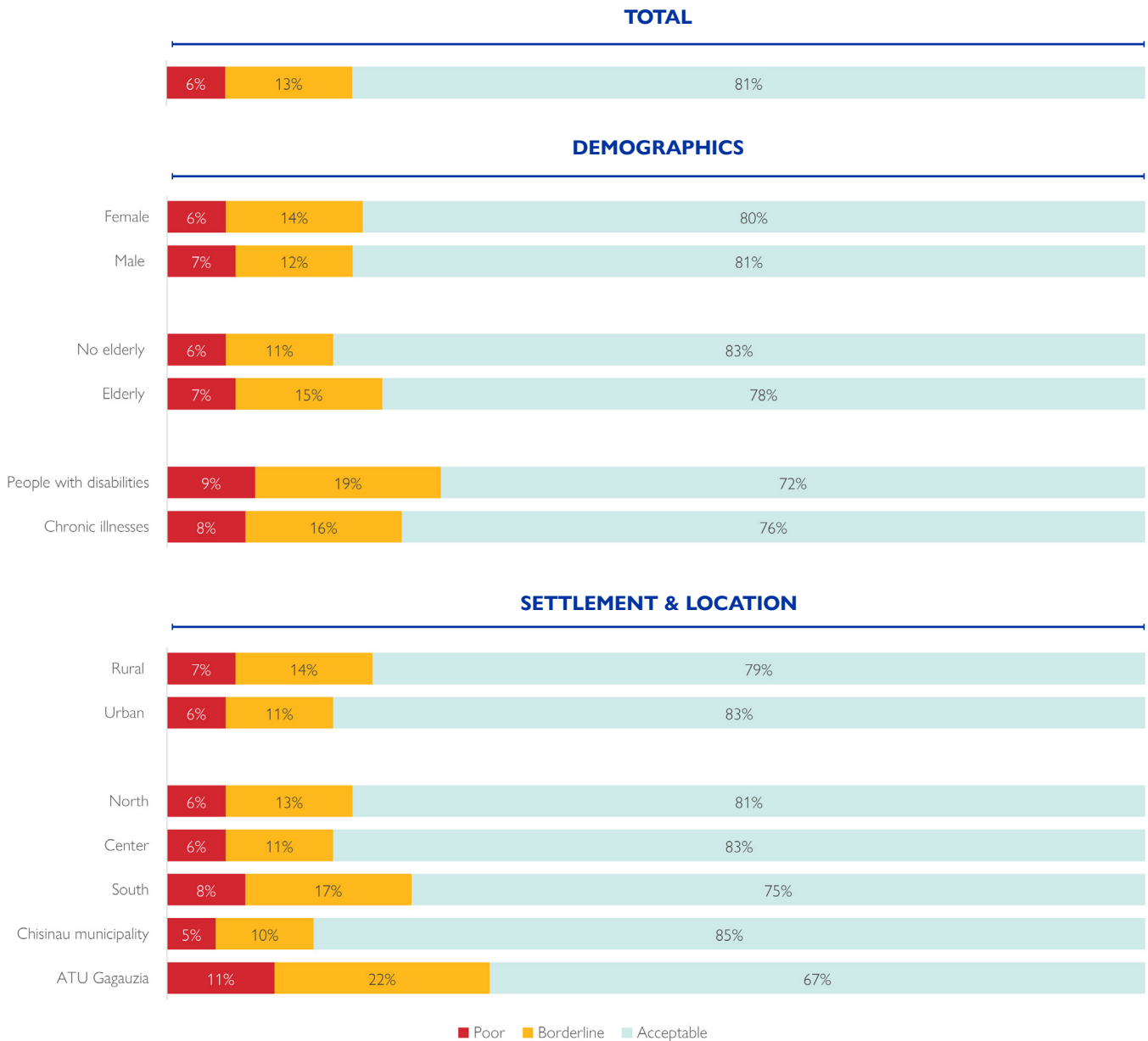
FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORE (FCS)

Out of the total 3,025 interviews conducted, 127 respondents were unable or unwilling to answer questions about their food consumption patterns in the preceding seven days, consequently, those entries were omitted from the scores.

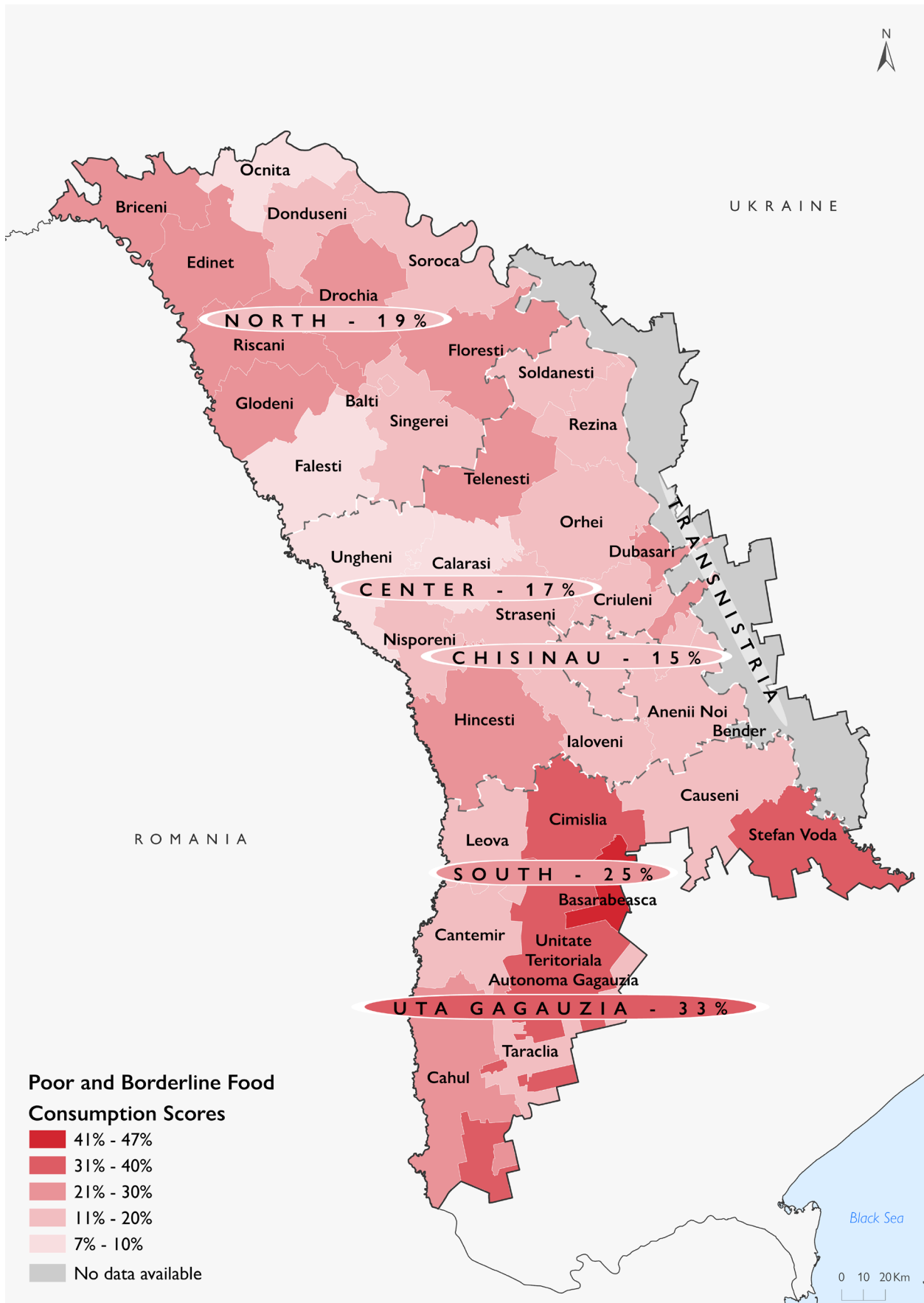
From the considered entries, 81 per cent of respondents shared that their food consumption levels were deemed adequate with an acceptable frequency and diversity of consumed foods. Despite this, six per cent of the households had poor food consumption levels over the seven days prior to the interview, while an additional 13 per cent had borderline food consumption.

Figure 8 demonstrates how poor and borderline food consumption was higher among households that had at least one member with vulnerabilities such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and people with chronic diseases. Furthermore, lower FCS scores were observed in rural areas, particularly in the Southern Region and in ATU Gagauzia, highlighting the territorial dimensions of food vulnerabilities in the Republic of Moldova.

Figure 8. Food Consumption Scores by socio-demographics and location (%), n=2,908



Map 2. Raions with poor or borderline FCS (%), n=2,908



This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

REDUCED COPING STRATEGIES INDEX (RCSI)

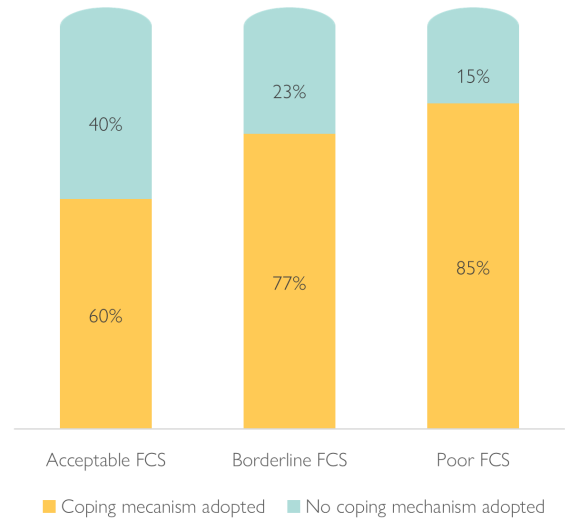
The possibility of high degrees of vulnerability is confirmed by the adoption of food-related coping behaviours to mitigate food challenges. Similar to the FCS, in the rCSI, 140 respondents who lacked knowledge or preferred not to answer were subsequently excluded from the final analysis. This resulted in a final sample size of 2,768.

A total of 64 per cent of the interviewees reported using food-related coping mechanisms. The adoption of coping behaviours is higher among respondents with poor and borderline food consumption levels. The vast majority of respondents (85%) who reported poor food consumption levels had to resort to at least one food coping strategy in the week preceding the assessment. The proportion was lower among those with borderline food consumption (77%), and acceptable food consumption (60%). It is important to highlight that, despite having an acceptable FCS, a majority of respondents employ coping strategies to maintain adequate food consumption, this could indicate potential vulnerabilities. Should the crisis and associated macroeconomic challenges persist or intensify, there is a risk that individuals may experience food insecurity.

The most common coping strategy was a dietary change which consisted of the consumption of less expensive or less preferred foods, reported by 55 per cent of the respondents. Other frequently adopted strategies were related to rationing food, either by limiting portion sizes or by reducing the number of meals, reported by nearly one-quarter of the respondents (23% and 22% respectively).

64% use food-related coping strategies

Figure 9. Adoption of food consumption coping mechanisms per food consumption levels (%), n=2,768



A majority of respondents employ coping strategies to maintain adequate food consumption, thus indicating potential vulnerabilities.

Figure 10. Distribution of respondents by the adopted coping strategy (%), n=2,768 (More than one answer possible)

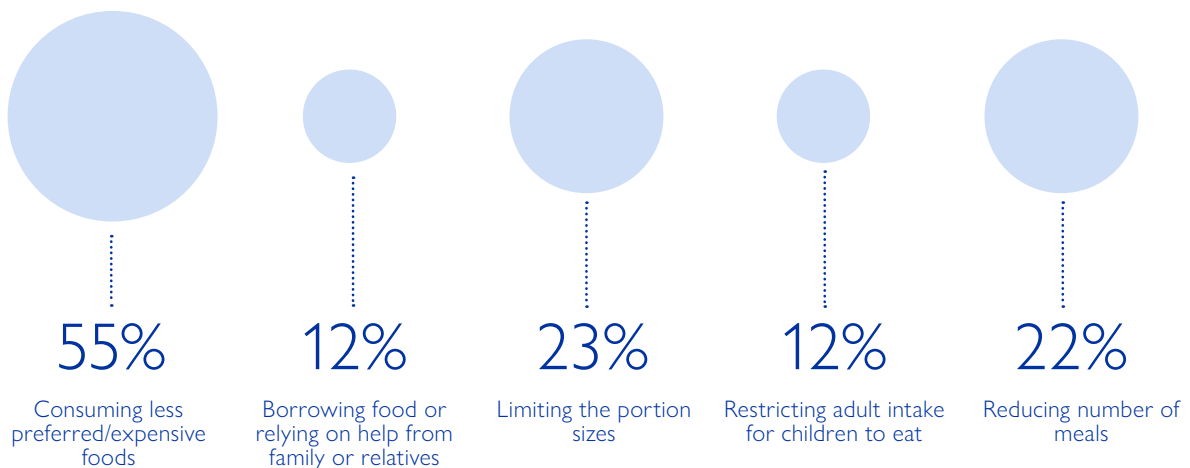


Figure 11. Adoption of coping strategies by region (%), n=2,768

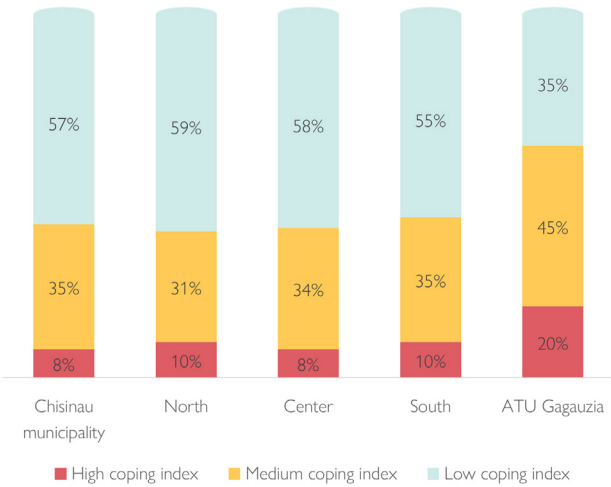


Figure 11 presents the proportions of households relying on low, medium, and high coping indexes, measured based on the severity and frequency of the strategies applied. The largest incidence of high coping strategies was in the South of the Republic of Moldova, particularly in ATU Gagauzia (20%) and in its main city Comrat (23%). Other southern Raions with high coping index values were Basarabesca (19%) and Cahul (16%). The Northern development region scored high in the rCSI, with Edinet and Rezina averaging 17 per cent and 16 per cent respectively of respondents with a high coping index.

LIVELIHOOD COPING STRATEGIES

The LCS indicator for food security helps analyse a household’s ability to manage food needs and coping capacity not only at the time of assessment, but also in the medium to long term future. This process involves a series of questions that assess the adoption of coping strategies implemented in the 30 days prior to the survey in response to food scarcity.⁹

The coping mechanisms described span various degrees of severity, ranging from stress to crisis and emergency. The adoption of any of these mechanisms not only offers a better understanding of the circumstances but also delineates medium and long-term response capacity. This enables a better and more nuanced understanding of the results obtained from the FCS and rCSI.

In particular, while the FCS and rCSI did not reveal any significant difference in food consumption between genders, the LCS indicator highlights how a greater proportion of male respondents compared to female respondents did not adopt any livelihood-based coping mechanism (40% versus 31%). Conversely, a notably higher share of female respondents adopted crisis coping strategies (32% versus 19% of male interviewees).

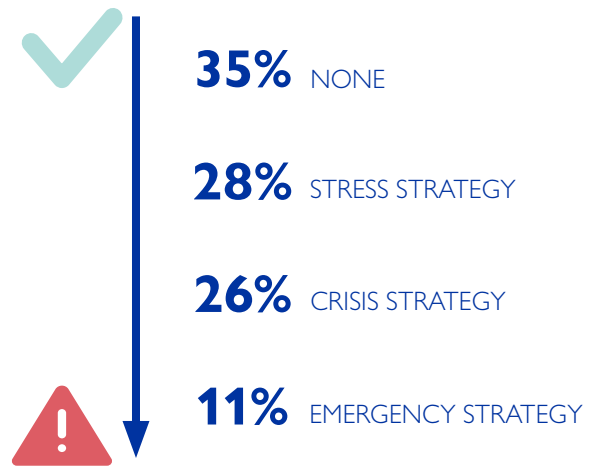
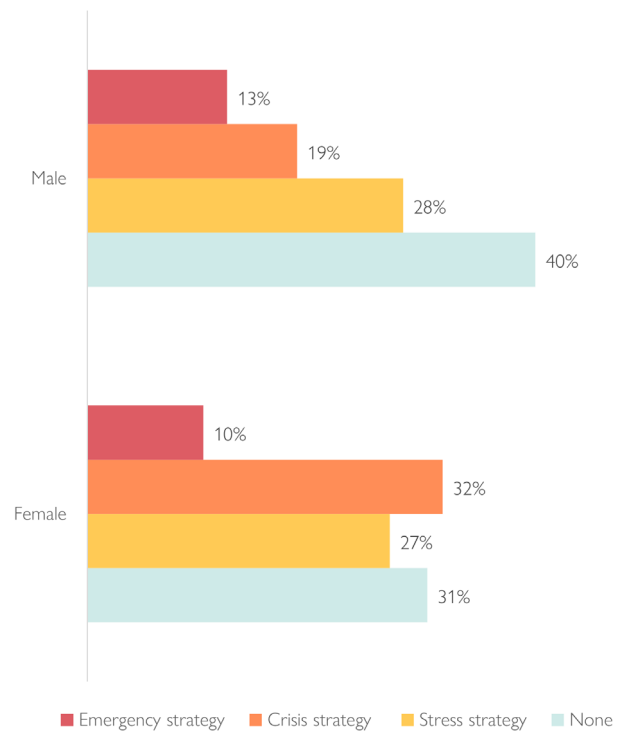


Figure 12. Livelihood-based coping strategies by gender (%), n=3,035

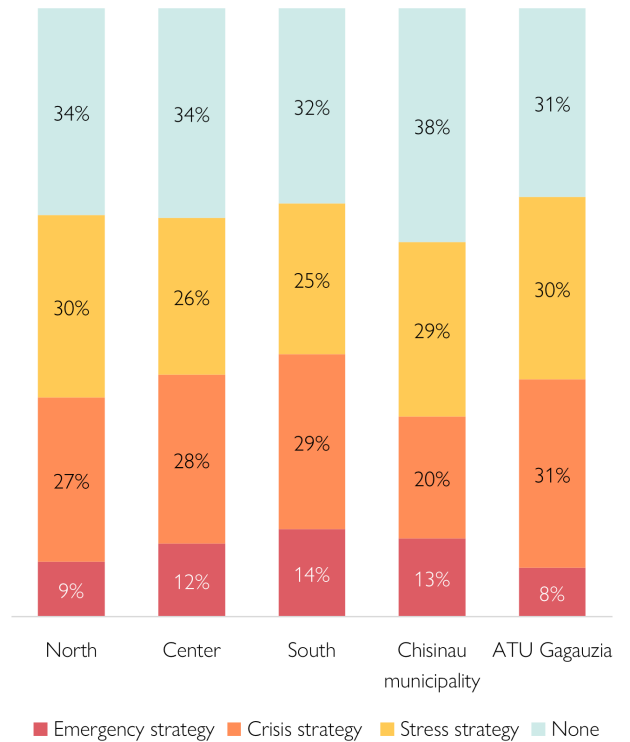


⁹ The World Food Programme (WFP), (Rome, 2021). “Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI) – Third Edition 2021”.

When the data is disaggregated by region, the LCS indicator presents a different perspective compared to that of the FCS and rCSI. Whilst, the initial indicators (FCS and rCSI) demonstrated how ATU Gagauzia had lower food security scores and a higher coping index, the LCS findings indicate a contrasting outcome. Specifically, the Southern region emerges with the highest adoption rate of emergency strategies (14%), while ATU Gagauzia exhibits one of the lowest rates (8%).

Notably, the Municipality of Chisinau has one of the highest adoptions of emergency strategies (13%) and the highest proportion of respondents who did not resort to any coping mechanism (38%). This highlights another facet of the relationship between vulnerability and territorial location. While the share of food-insecure respondents was lower in urban areas, inequality was higher in cities.

Figure 13. Livelihood-based coping strategies by region (%), n=3,035



While the share of food-insecure respondents was lower in urban areas, inequality was higher in cities.



Preparing local meal as activity during a Social Cohesion event in Cahul, Republic of Moldova ©IOM 2024 / Gabriela Crudu

As illustrated in Figure 14, the LCS underscores the prevalent use of livelihood based coping mechanisms within larger households. This is important as it indicates that, despite most households having a high food consumption score (88%), they may have achieved this by adopting a series of more or less severe coping mechanisms which reduces their ability to deal with future shocks.

In line with the food consumption scores, the LCS indicator revealed an increased adoption of coping strategies among specific vulnerable categories. Almost one-third (27%) of single-headed households reported resorting to emergency coping mechanisms. Furthermore, 42 per cent of households with at least one elderly member implemented crisis or emergency strategies. For households with at least one minor, this proportion was 37 per cent. Finally, more than half (56%) of the respondents who were with at least someone with a vulnerability in their household (such as individuals with disabilities, chronic diseases, or pregnant and lactating women), adopted severe coping strategies.

ACCESS TO FOOD

Eighteen per cent of the respondents reported that in the three months prior to the assessment, their household could not access some food items that are usually part of their diet. This was mainly due to financial constraints (82%), or due to significant increases in prices of food and other items (9%).



18% of respondents had limited access to food in the three months before the survey

Figure 15. Limited access to food in the three months before the survey (%), n=3,035

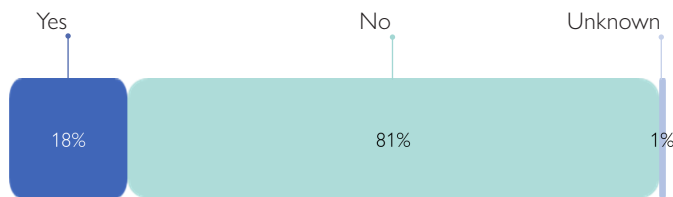


Figure 14. Livelihood-based coping strategies by HH size (%), n=3,035

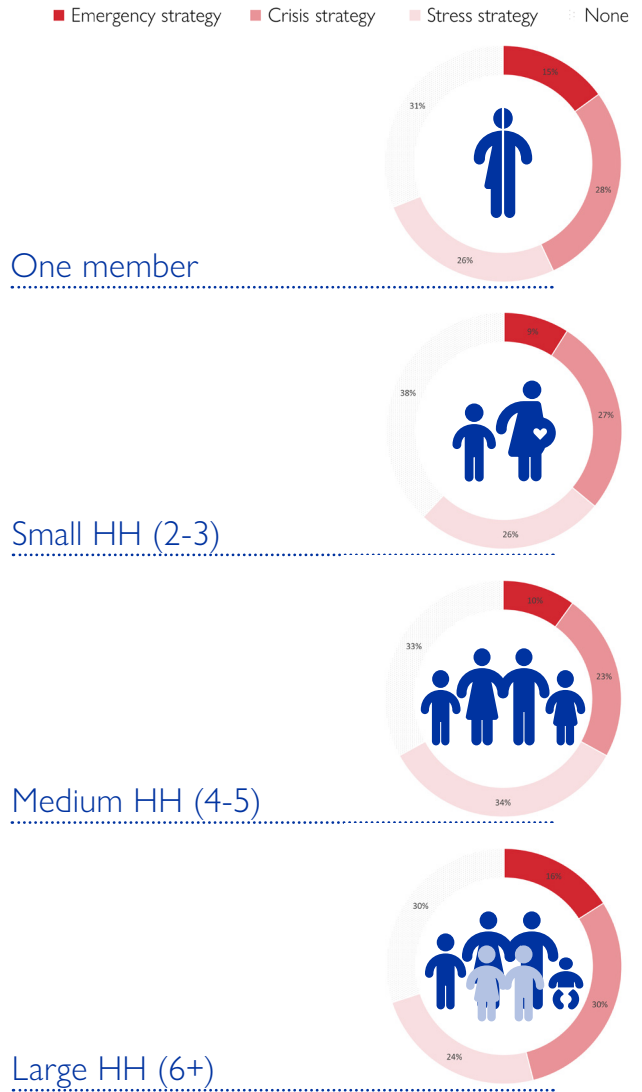
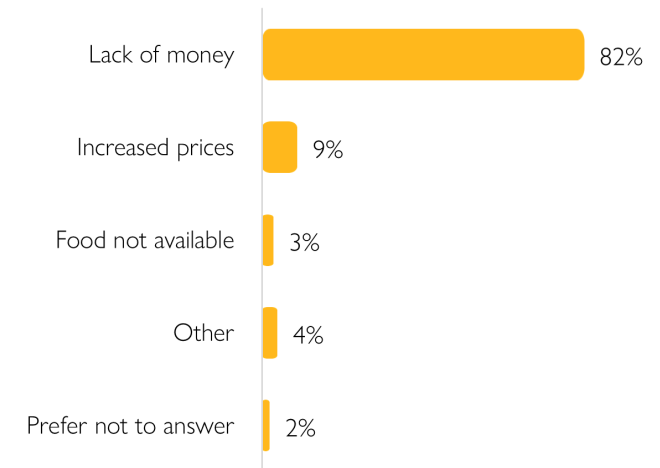


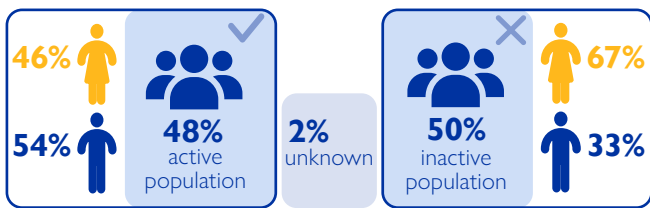
Figure 16. Reasons for limited access to food (%), n=549



EMPLOYMENT STATUS

The employment status of respondents was also considered for the last 12 months. Respondents were categorized into “active” and “inactive” population for the purposes of employment status consideration. The terms active and inactive are defined in the [Definition](#) section. Consequently, 48 per cent of the respondents were actively engaged in the labour force, as they reported being either employed, self-employed, being apprentices, or unemployed and looking for a job. On the other hand, 50 per cent of the respondents were part of the inactive population, as they were either retirees, students, on parental leave, or unemployed and not looking for a job. The remaining two per cent (n=73) preferred not to answer and were therefore excluded from this analysis.

The majority (67%) of the respondents in the inactive population were female. This could be attributed to a higher proportion of female respondents being older than 60 years old.

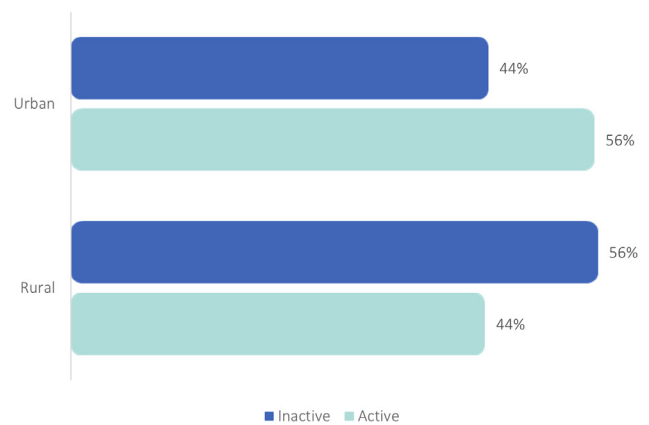


ACTIVE POPULATION

Among the active population, the vast majority (85%) were employed. This included 68 per cent in regular employment, 12 per cent self-employed individuals, four per cent pensioners who were also employed, and one per cent who reported being apprentices. The remaining 15 per cent were unemployed. Upon examining the data by gender, it was observed that

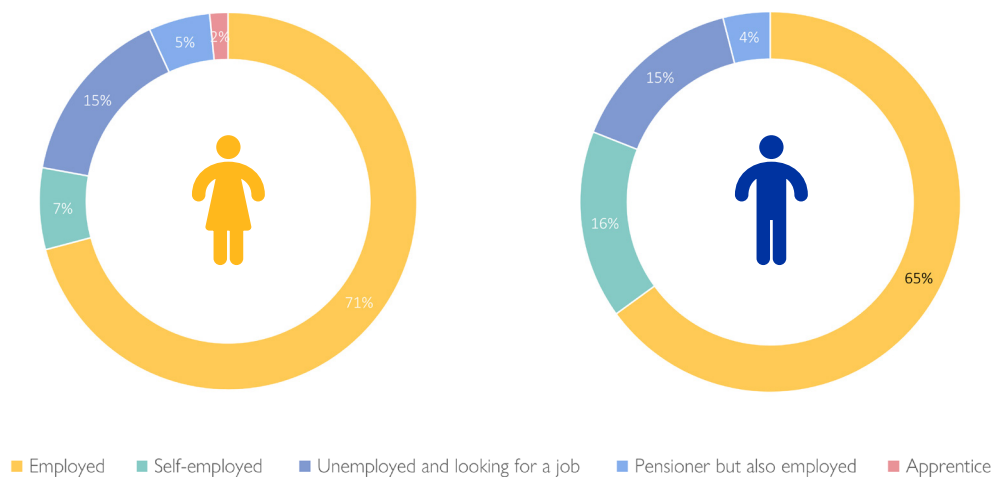
Figure 17 shows that the majority of respondents in rural areas (56%) were not actively involved in the labour market. However, the majority of those in urban areas were actively participating in the workforce (56%). This might be due to several factors, including the relatively higher average age of the rural population and the scarcity of employment opportunities in these areas.

Figure 17. Employment status by settlement type (%), n=2,960



a larger percentage of female respondents were in regular employment (70% compared to 65%). Additionally, the proportion of employed pensioners (5% versus 4%) and apprentices (2% versus less than 1%) was also higher among females. The number of self-employed male respondents was more than double that of female respondents. (16% versus 7%).

Figure 18. Employment status within active population, by gender (%), n=1,449



Regarding employment sectors, the largest share of respondents worked in the services sector (16%), followed by wholesale and retail (12%), agriculture, fishery and forestry (10%), as well as education and science (8%).

Clear differences emerged from the gender disaggregation of the employment sectors. Specifically, almost one-fifth of male respondents worked in construction and building, whereas only one per cent of female respondents were in this sector. In contrast, 18 per cent of female respondents worked in the services sector, compared to 14 per cent of male respondents, and 16 per cent of females worked in education and science-related fields, compared to 2 per cent for their male counterparts.

Figure 19. Top 5 employment sectors (%), n=1,213

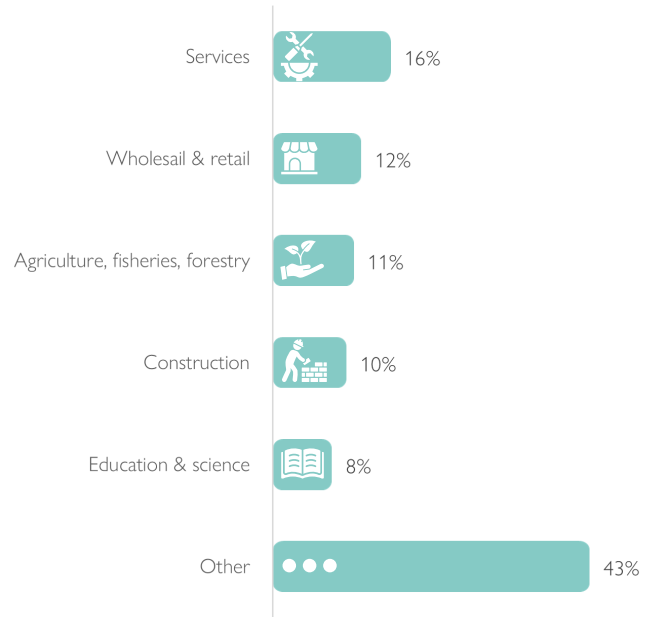
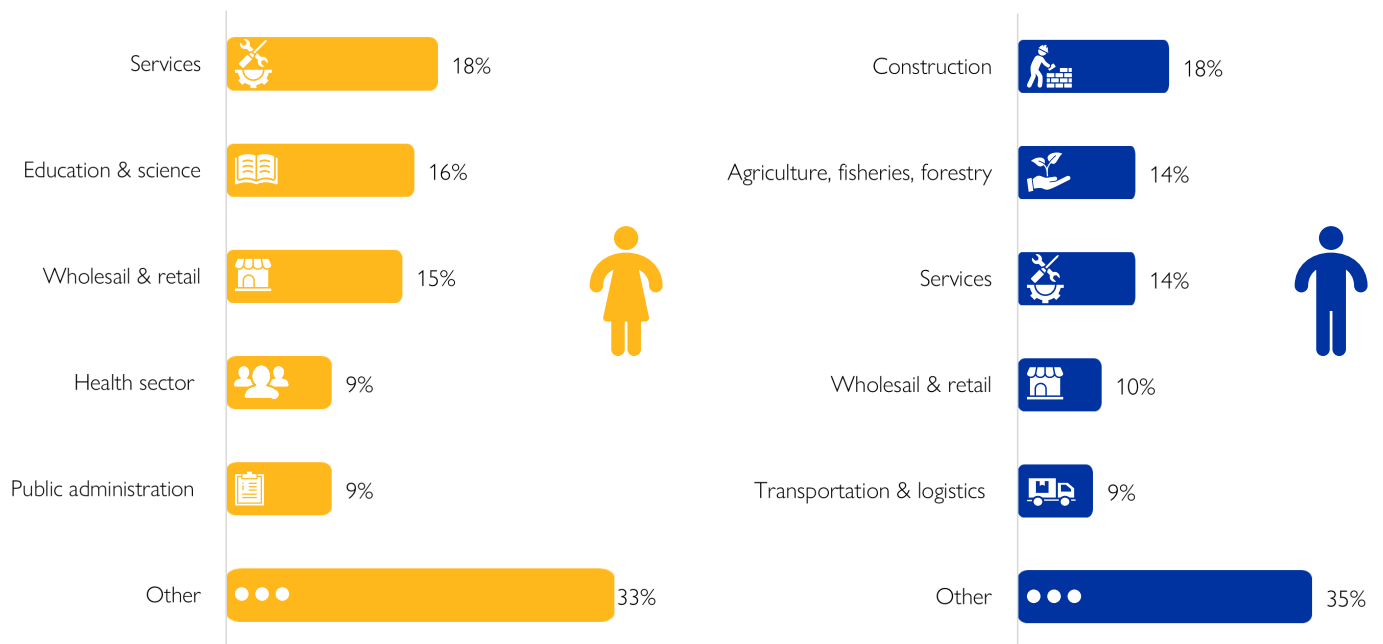
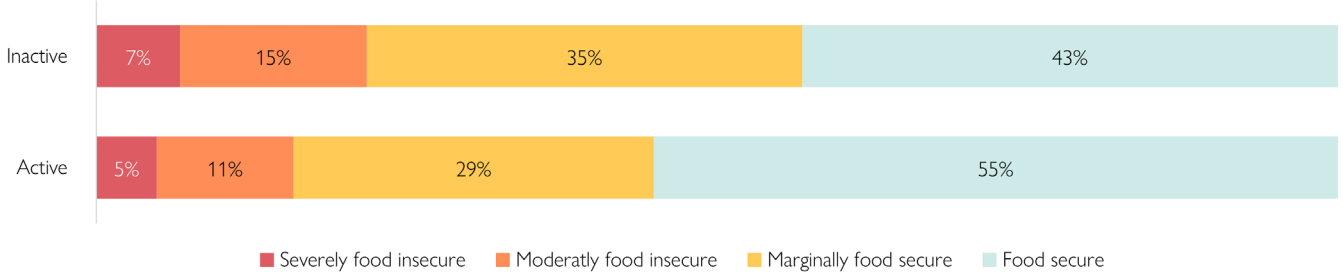


Figure 20. Main sector of employment, by gender (%), n=1,213



EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND FOOD SECURITY INDICATORS

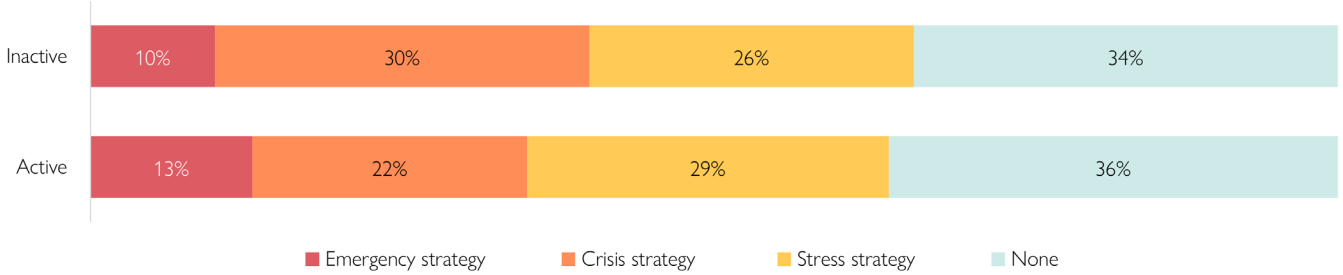
Figure 21. Current status (Food Consumption Index) by employment status (%), n=2,960



A noticeable difference was highlighted when examining the food consumption indicators for the active and inactive population. A higher proportion of the inactive population were moderately (15%) or severely (7%) food insecure compared to those actively involved in the labour market (11% and 5% respectively).

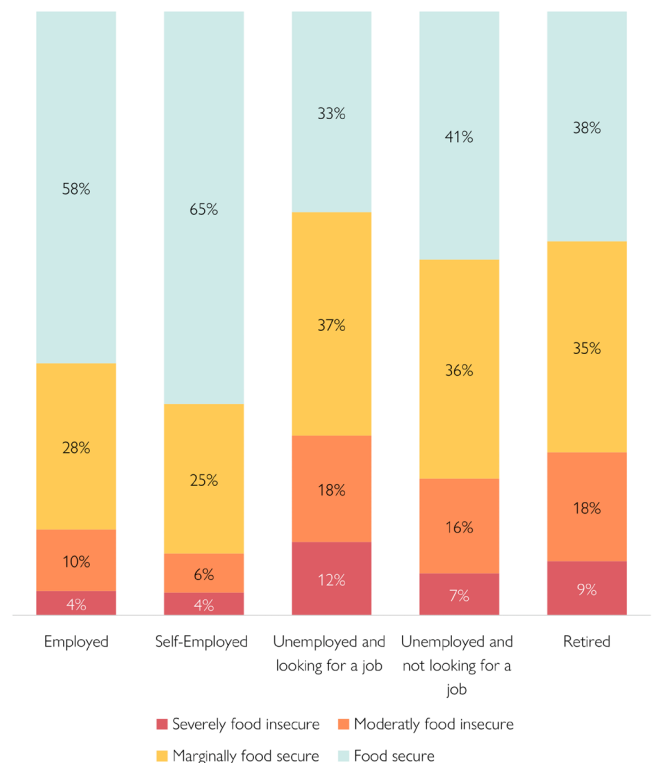
The LCS indicator showed that a higher proportion of the active population did not require livelihood-based coping strategies (36% compared to 34%). On the other hand, a third of the inactive population (30%) resorted to crisis strategies, further exposing them to food insecurity.

Figure 22. LCS by employment status (%), n=2,960



When disaggregated by specific employment or unemployment categories, it is evident that those who are unemployed and looking for a job had the highest level of moderate or severe food insecurity, where 30 per cent were food insecure. This is higher than the percentage of those who were unemployed and not looking for a job (23%) or those who were retired (27%).

Figure 23. Current status (Food Consumption Index), by employment/unemployment category (%), n=2,471



Ukrainian refugee working in Ungheni, Republic of Moldova ©IOM 2024/ Riccardo Severi

More than half (54%) of the respondents who were unemployed and looking for a job reported having already adopted a crisis or emergency livelihood-based coping mechanism. Furthermore, at least one-third of the respondents in any employment or unemployment category reported resorting to these strategies.

This trend warrants close monitoring in subsequent iterations of this assessment. As previously mentioned, crisis and emergency coping strategies are among the most severe and increase the vulnerability of those who adopt them, particularly in cases of escalating insecurity or a further crisis in the Republic of Moldova. Ultimately, this could result in a greater number of citizens facing food insecurity.



54% of those unemployed and looking for a job adopted emergency and crisis coping strategies. This trend warrants close monitoring in subsequent iterations of this assessment as these strategies are among the most severe and increase the vulnerability of those who adopt them.

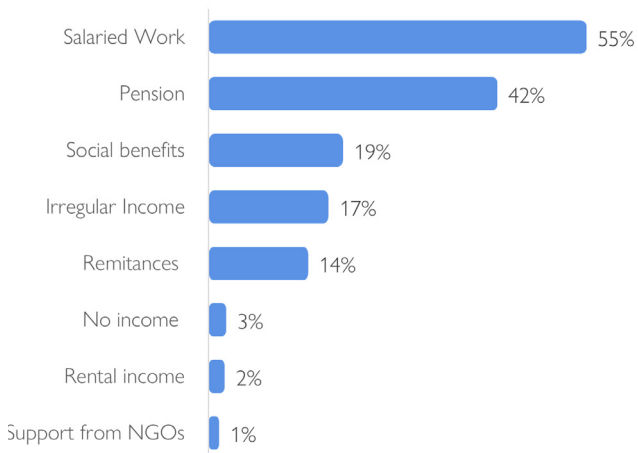
Figure 24. Livelihood-based coping strategies, by employment/unemployment category (%), n=2,675



HOUSEHOLD INCOME

More than half (54%) of the respondents reported that at least two people earned an income in their household, while for another 28 per cent, only one person earned an income. In two per cent of cases, households reported not having any income at all.

Figure 26. Type of income (%), n=3,025



Multiple answers possible

Figure 25. Number of adult HH members earning an income (%), n=2,307

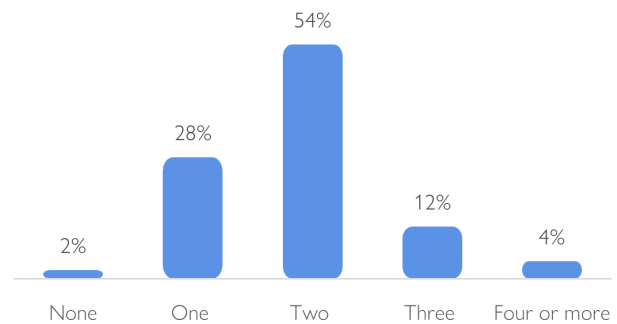


Figure 26 highlights the types of income sources available to households. On average, the households interviewed had two types of sources of income. However, this range expanded in some instances, with certain households reporting up to six different income streams. More than half (55%) reported salaried work as a source of income, followed by 42 per cent who received a pension. Another one fifth of the interviewees received social benefits or allowances (19%) or an irregular income (17%). Finally, 14 per cent of the respondents reported receiving remittances from family members living abroad.

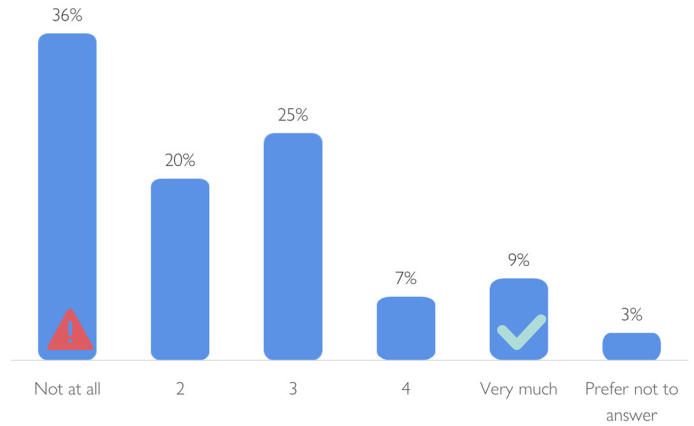
NEEDS AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

In total, 589 respondents reported benefiting from some type of social assistance. They reported receiving amounts ranging from a minimum of 100 Moldovan lei (MDL) to up to 77,400 MDL. On average, the households that benefited from social assistance reported receiving a total of 7,279 MDL (approximately 360 EUR) in the three months prior to the interview.

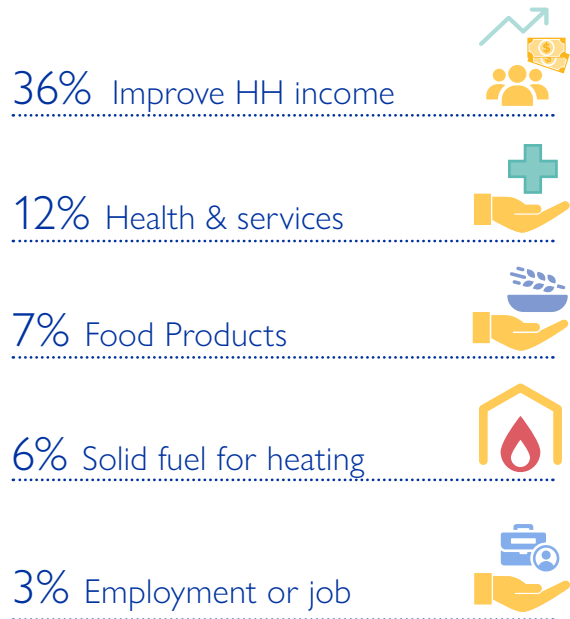
The respondents who reported receiving social benefits (n=589) were asked to rate in a scale from one to five, where one is not sufficient at all and five is very sufficient, how much did social assistance help cover their basic needs. Fifty-six per cent reported that the social assistance they received was not sufficient or barely sufficient to cover their households' basic needs. Only a minority (9%) were satisfied with the assistance as it consistently helped them cover their basic needs.

Figure 27. How much does social assistance help cover HH basic needs (%), n=589



MAIN NEEDS

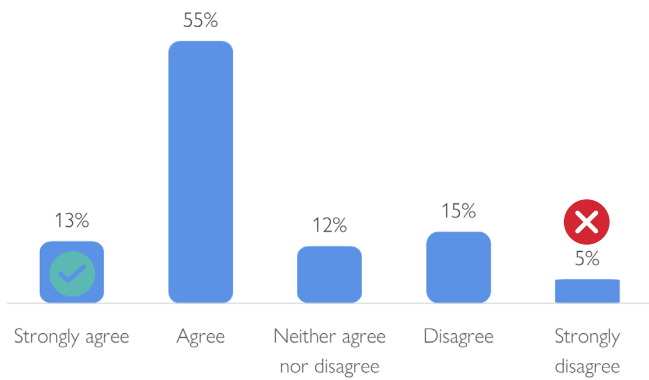
Regarding the top five most reported needs, over one-third of the respondents (36%) reported that they did not have enough money and therefore needed financial assistance as way to improve their household income. This was followed by 12 per cent of the respondents who needed assistance with medicines, health products or access to health services. The third most common need was for food products, reported by seven per cent of the respondents. The need for solid fuels for heating was cited by six per cent of the respondents, although this may have been due to surveys being conducted during the winter period. Finally, employment was a need indicated by three per cent of the respondents.



SOCIAL COHESION

The surveys also sought to identify any concerns about the future of the country among the population. This also included questions about social cohesion between refugees and host communities as well as within communities. A high proportion of respondents (40%) indicated some pessimism about the future of the economy. Around one third (33%) of respondents had a more positive outlook, either being optimistic or very optimistic. While the difference between those with a more positive outlook and those with a more negative outlook is not considerably high, it is useful to understand the variability of responses. Only two per cent of the respondents had the most positive outlook on the future of the economy in the Republic of Moldova, while only one-fifth (17%) indicated some despondency about the future.

Figure 29. Willingness to help their neighbors (%), n=2,884



The majority of the respondents had an optimistic view of relations between various groups in their local community, with 68 per cent agreeing that members of the local community are willing to help their neighbours in need. Moreover, 84 per cent affirmed that their community had good levels of coexistence among people with different ethnic, religious, or linguistic backgrounds. Detailed information about social cohesion within the communities is contained in Annex I, Qualitative report on the GPS.

Main problems of the community

- 23%** Roads
- 15%** Low incomes (salaries & pensions)
- 13%** Lack of services (water, gas, etc.)
- 9%** Lack of jobs, unemployment
- 7%** High prices
- 7%** Poverty

Figure 28. How do you feel about the future of the economy in the Republic of Moldova (%), n=2,684

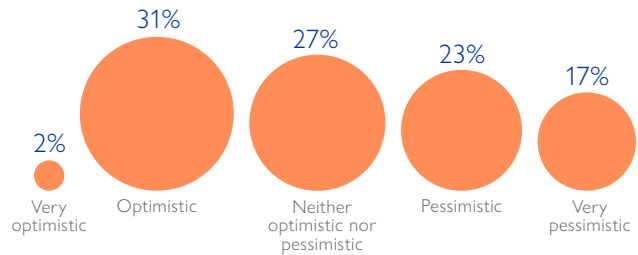
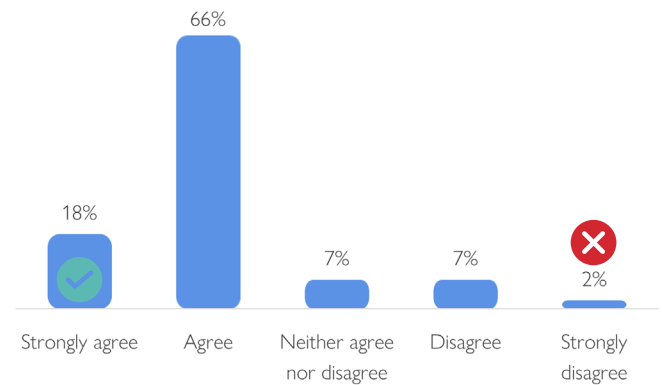


Figure 30. People with different national, ethnic, or religious backgrounds living in the community coexist well (%), n=2,840



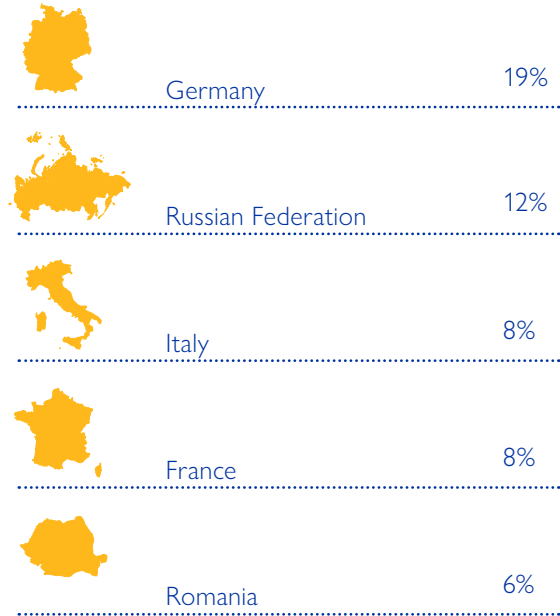
Other aspects that were considered in trying to establish whether communities faced any challenges that might lead to disharmony were to do with access availability and access to public services. A larger proportion of the respondents reported that their communities had challenges related to the lack of adequate infrastructure. One-quarter of respondents (23%) cited the lack or poor conditions of the roads as a concern within their community. Furthermore, 13 per cent reported the lack of municipal services such as a connection to water, sewage, and gas networks as a problem within their community. Other matters that were cited as potential problem causes within the communities were insufficient incomes (15%), lack of jobs (9%), high commodity prices and poverty (7% each).

MOBILITY AND INTENTIONS

The approximated local population represent 2.5 million, the Ministry of External Affairs of the Republic of Moldova projected an additional 1.11 million Moldovans living abroad.¹⁰ Recent crises have indicated that it's economy is much more affected and feels the consequences of recessions a lot stronger in relation to other countries in the region. Labour productivity, expressed in GDP per employed person is close twice lower than the average of the countries the central and eastern European area.¹¹ Although there are initiatives and incentives for Moldovans abroad to return home, multiple studies suggest that the population of Moldova would continue to decline due to various factors including emigration. For example, the United Nations estimated that the population dropped by more than three per cent from 2022 to 2023 and will continue to drop for the coming years.¹² In that regard, the study also sought to estimate any movements of Moldovans going out of the country with intentions to settle or work. One in ten respondents (9%) expressed their intention to leave the Republic of Moldova and move to another country. On the other hand, the vast majority (88%) of respondents intended to remain in the country. Among those intending to leave, the majority (55%) planned to do so with other members of their household. Among them, one-third intended to leave in the short term. Therefore, from 275 respondents, 22 per cent intended to leave within three months, while 10 per cent planned to leave within six months. A high percentage (40%) also reported that they planned to leave the country within one year from the time of the interview.

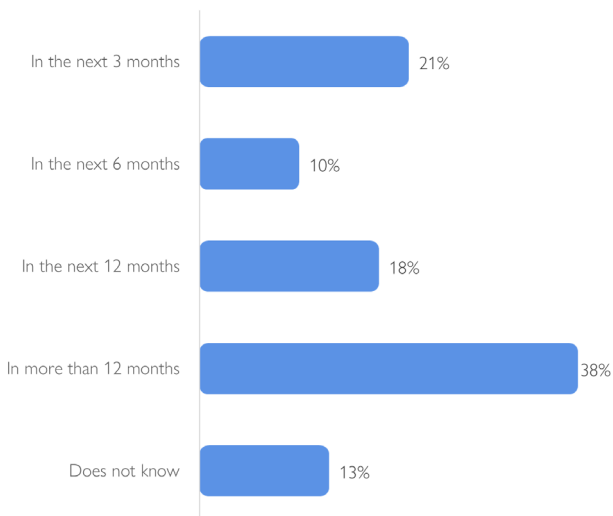


Figure 31. Top 5 countries of destination (%), n=275



The most popular destinations mentioned by the respondents were Germany, indicated by almost one-fifth of respondents (19%). This was followed by the Russian Federation (12%), Italy and France (8% each), and Romania (6%). In a separate study at the beginning of 2023, IOM/DTM in Moldova conducted the study “The Impact of the War in Ukraine on the Moldovan Returnees from Abroad” which established that the highest number of Moldovans living abroad were in Germany, Italy, France and the Russian Federation.¹³ The main drivers of emigration among respondents were economic, aligning with the results from previous IOM assessments, such as the surveys conducted with Moldovan returnees. Specifically, those respondents planning to depart from the Republic of Moldova were motivated by the expectation of higher earnings (42%), or by the prospect of improved living conditions in their destination countries (29%). Another nine per cent also mentioned the increased cost of living as motivation for their intention to leave. Finally, family reunification in the country of destination, access to better health services and infrastructure were each mentioned by four per cent of respondents.

Figure 32. How soon will you leave the Republic of Moldova (%), n=275



10 Eurasian Research Institute, (Almaty, 2022). “Emigrant Moldova and the Changing Concept of Migration”, accessed on 27 May 2024.
 11 Expert Group Independent analytical center and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), (Chisinau, 2023). “Country status report: Moldova’s economy in the context of European integration”
 12 United Nations Population Division, (New York, 2024). “Data Portal”, accessed on 27 May 2024.
 13 International Organization for Migration (IOM), (Chisinau, 2023). “Republic of Moldova — The Impact of the War in Ukraine on the Moldovan Returnees from Abroad (Feb-Jun 2023)”.

METHODOLOGY

The surveys were conducted on behalf of The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP) by an independent service provider, Multicultural Insights. The outcomes of these surveys will guide IOM's shift towards a development-oriented approach and inform government policies, aid agencies such as the WFP in their programming as well. This concerted effort aims to address the multifaceted challenges faced by the Republic of Moldova and its population. The surveys were conducted using both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

SAMPLING DESIGN

Sampling frame: Random digit dialling (RDD) method was used to generate a nationally representative sample of the population in Moldova, excluding the Transnistrian region. The precise proportion of the excluded people (those with no access to mobile/landline) remains unknown. The mobile phone numbers were randomly generated with equal distribution between "roots" that are available for each mobile phone company. The landline numbers were randomly and proportionally selected for each Raion. The decision to use landline numbers was made in order to improve the representativeness of the study by including people who do not own mobile phones. As a result, 91 per cent (2,774) of interviews were completed using mobile phone users, and nine per cent (261) of total questionnaires were completed using landline users.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

After generating phone numbers, the numbers were checked for duplicates and uploaded in the CATI system. This procedure of removing the duplicated numbers ensured that there were no duplicate phone numbers in the final sample, which could bias the results.

Sampling Limitations: The surveys scope encompassed the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova, except for localities falling under the jurisdiction of Transnistrian region, which constitutes approximately 13 per cent of the excluded population.

Target Groups: adults, civilians, 18+ years old residing in the Republic of Moldova.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was drafted by all parties involved and interested in the study, that included IOM, WFP as well as inputs from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Once

the questionnaire draft was finalized. The service provider also provided guidance and suggestions based on their previous work experience. The survey questionnaire was translated into Romanian and Russian languages. Consequently, 70 per cent of interviews were conducted in Romanian, while 30 per cent were conducted in Russian. The screening section of the survey encompassed inquiries pertaining to age, citizenship, and place of residence.

TRANSLATION

Two professional translators were assigned to translate the questionnaire into each target language. A professional with an expertise in survey research methods revised the translation. To ensure consistent and high-quality translations, Multicultural Insights provided instructions to the translators, which included guidelines on the use of specific expressions and terminology.

COGNITIVE INTERVIEWS AND PRETESTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

To ensure the quality of the questionnaire, 22 cognitive interviews and 10 pretest interviews (5 for each language) were conducted. Using "verbal probing" and "thinking out loud" techniques, the research team mainly focused on the following:

- Ensuring that each question and instruction is understood in the same way by all respondents and interpreted in the way it was intended.
- Identifying any terms in the questionnaire that need to be explained to respondents.
- Checking if respondents can easily match their responses to response options provided.
- Identifying very sensitive questions that cannot be asked or need to be moved to the end of the questionnaire.

The pretest interviews phase involved checking the questionnaire flow, accuracy of skip patterns, accuracy of translation, sensitivity of questions, and length of the interviews.

PROGRAMMING OF QUESTIONNAIRES AND TRAINING INTERVIEWERS

CATI script was programmed using Vision software, a solution offered by a specialized research company from Romania. Prior to the data collection, CATI manager and interviewers went through a training program. Trainings were organized in person between 8-9 November 2023.

FIELDWORK STAGE

Interviews were conducted using the remote CATI method. All the numbers that were generated were uploaded into the software.

DATA SECURITY

All computers in which the data entry system was installed and used, were password protected. In addition to this first layer of protection, access to the data entry system was protected by a control panel designed to limit the use of the system during training and data collection. Once the designated end date was reached, the panel disabled all access to the data entry system. All the data was encrypted and restricted for interviewers or any other unauthorized person.

DATA COLLECTION

During the fieldwork phase, supervisors maintained constant communication with interviewers, and provided with the following support:

- Assigning work hours to each interviewer
- Addressing any questions or technical issues that arise
- Providing prompt feedback from the team in charge of quality control, which is shared with all team members

Interviews were conducted using the remote CATI method and 3 call design was implemented. However, in order to increase the response rate, up to 8 calls were made in some cases. Calling interval was 9 a.m. - 10.30 p.m.. The results of the data collection activities, as well as the calculation of the response rate are presented above.

Total generated sample	75 000 mobile numbers
Completed questionnaires	3 056
Cancelled (after quality control)	21
Non-active numbers	51 945
No replies	3 255
Busy line	483
Rescheduling, out of quota	2 334
Answering machine/voicemail	4 199
Refusal	9 758
Eligible numbers	20 721
Response rate	15%
Average length	19:06 min
Minimum interview length	11:44 min
Maximum interview length	47:50 min
Language of interview (selected by respondents)	Romanian: 70% Russian: 30%

DATA PROCESSING AND CLEANING

Preliminary datasets were used to create all the English labels for questions and answers, and to analyse and prepare post codification phase for open questions. In total, 3 databases were delivered to IOM team: 2 partial datasets (470 and 1,542 observations respectively) and one final dataset (3,035 observations).

WEIGHTING MODEL

The next step was to analyse and produce a weighting model and coefficients considering the differences between national statistics offered by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and

the sample structure obtained after the data collection phase. The National Bureau of Statistics recalculated the usual resident population, and they revised the demographic indicators.¹⁴ According to this new methodology that was applied, the total population which is present on the territory of the Republic of Moldova is 2,512,758. The sample population (18+ years old): 1,974,246 people. The weighting model used takes into account an average between statistics offered by NBS and the gender structure obtained in our sample. The resulted weighting coefficient was for males = 1.070403755624090, and weighting coefficient for females = 0.952220460093608.

¹⁴ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, (Chisinau, 2024). "Populatia cu resedinta obisnuita pe varste, medii si sexe, la inceputul anului, 2014-2023. Population with usual residence by age, background and sex, at the beginning of the year, 2014-2023", accessed on 27 May 2024.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Between 6 and 28 December 2023, in line with the research objectives, 10 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and 10 Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs) with General Population (including people with disabilities or their caregivers) were conducted. The discussion guides for KIIs and FGD were developed in collaboration of IOM and MI teams. The KIIs and FGDs were conducted by 2 experienced qualitative researchers. Language of discussions Romanian and Russian. The transcripts were delivered in the language of discussions.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Target people:

- Social workers activating to community level
- Community leaders and leaders of humanitarian organizations (e.g., Red Cross)
- Leaders of organizations fighting for people's rights (e.g., Organization for disability people)
- Leaders of other local organizations
- Other prominent members of the community

The KIIs were conducted online, by phone, or face-to-face, based on respondent availability and the average duration of calls was 33 minutes.

FOCUS GROUPS

Target people: Adult people 18+, including crisis-affected population Groups. The groups were heterogeneous in terms of:

- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Employment status
- HH income level
- Beneficiaries of social services and benefits (Including disabled persons or their caregivers)

After the first four FGDs were conducted, due to the very long duration of the interview (over 2.5 hours), resulting in the lack of respondents' focus, the following decision was made by IOM and Multicultural Insights team: the Social Cohesion and Mobility and Intentions modules were asked alternatively for the remaining focus groups. These were conducted face-to-face with an average duration of 143 minutes.

DTM

Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is a system to track and monitor displacement and population mobility. The survey form was designed to capture the main displacement patterns of refugees of any nationality fleeing from Ukraine because of the war. It captures the demographic profiles of respondents and of the group they are travelling with, if any; it asks about intentions relative to the intended destinations and prospects in the country of displacement; it gathers information regarding a set of main needs that the respondents expressed as more pressing at the moment of the interview.

Since the onset of the war in Ukraine, several IOM's DTM tools were deployed in countries neighbouring Ukraine and in other countries particularly impacted by the new arrivals of refugees from Ukraine.

For more information, please consult:

<https://dtm.iom.int/responses/ukraine-response>



**World Food
Programme**