



# 2023 PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT REPORT

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

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UNHCR Moldova is also thankful for the cooperation of Moldovan authorities at all levels, other UN agencies, the private sector and civil society organizations.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is based on the insights gathered from a Participatory Assessment conducted by UNHCR in the Republic of Moldova in October 2023 in partnership with the Accountability to Affected Population (AAP) Task Force members. The assessment involved refugees,<sup>1</sup> asylum-seekers, and persons applying for stateless status and recognised as stateless. UNHCR expresses gratitude for the extensive involvement and support provided by AAP Task Force members, UNHCR partners, local authorities, civil society organizations, and donors in the completion of this report. Above all, UNHCR acknowledges the enduring resilience and strength of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the Republic of Moldova and is committed to supporting them in building their lives, integrating, and creating and seizing opportunities within their communities.

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[COVER PHOTOGRAPH:]

Girls performing at the opening ceremony of  
Causeni Community Centre.

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## WITH ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO ALL CONTRIBUTORS



## Other partners



Regional Refugee Response  
For the Ukraine Situation

Moldova



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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this report, the term “refugees” includes Ukrainians displaced from and/or unable to return to Ukraine, regardless of the legal status they were granted under Moldovan law, if any. It also includes nationals of other countries who had been granted refugee status in Ukraine and fled the country as a result of war.



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# INTRODUCTION

*As of 31 December 2023, the Republic of Moldova was providing safety to about 120,700 Ukrainian refugees<sup>2</sup>, unable to return to their home country due to the war there. This is in addition to thousands of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons from countries around the world also residing in Moldova. Despite facing challenges such as high inflation, an energy crisis, and the complexities of being a bordering state to a nation in war, Moldova has demonstrated remarkable generosity in welcoming those affected by the war to its territory.*

As part of its ongoing commitment to actively engage with forcibly displaced and stateless people, UNHCR conducted a Participatory Assessment (PA) in October 2023 to gain deeper insights into the protection risks faced by these communities. This assessment aimed to understand local capacities, gather feedback and explore possible solutions to the challenges identified. The initiative involved in-person focus group discussions with a variety of persons in need of international protection, including women, men, girls, and boys from various backgrounds. A total of **261** persons participated<sup>3</sup>, including 33 displaced persons residing in the Transnistrian region. Of the participants, **66% were female and 34% were male**. The discussions covered 18 raions of the Republic of Moldova, with participants living in both urban and rural settings, Refugee Accommodation Centres, the Temporary Accommodation Centre for asylum-seekers, private accommodation, and host families.

On 18 January 2023, the Government of the Republic of Moldova took the significant decision<sup>4</sup> to approve the granting of temporary protection (TP) to refugees from Ukraine, as well as certain third-country nationals. This decision, effective from 1 March 2023, represented a crucial advancement in providing a more secure legal status for Ukrainian refugees, facilitating their integration into the Republic of Moldova.

Temporary protection, valid for one year with the potential for renewal, ensures access to various rights and services, including employment opportunities, temporary housing, emergency and primary medical assistance, public education for children, and social assistance for families with children and unaccompanied minors.

As of 22 January 2024, **31,280**<sup>5</sup> individuals were granted temporary protection. In addition, **6,969** citizens of Ukraine had been granted resident permits, either permanent or temporary. At the same time, **1,156** persons of various nationalities had sought protection in Moldova and obtained other diverse legal statuses: 206 persons had been granted refugee status (including one Ukrainian national), 357 had been granted humanitarian protection (including 166 Ukrainian nationals) and 593 were asylum-seekers (including 129 Ukrainian nationals).



<sup>2</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/MDA>

<sup>3</sup> In the 2023 PA, some participants were originally born in Moldova but had spent most of their lives in Ukraine. Due to their displacement from Ukraine as a result of the war, they do not qualify as 'refugees' under international law. However, their inclusion in the focus group discussions (FGDs) is based on their long-term residence in Ukraine and their unique experiences of displacement.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.legis.md/cautare/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://igm.gov.md/ro/content/>



A focus group discussion was conducted with non-Ukrainian asylum seekers at the office of UNHCR partner organisation Charity Centre for Refugees. © CCR

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

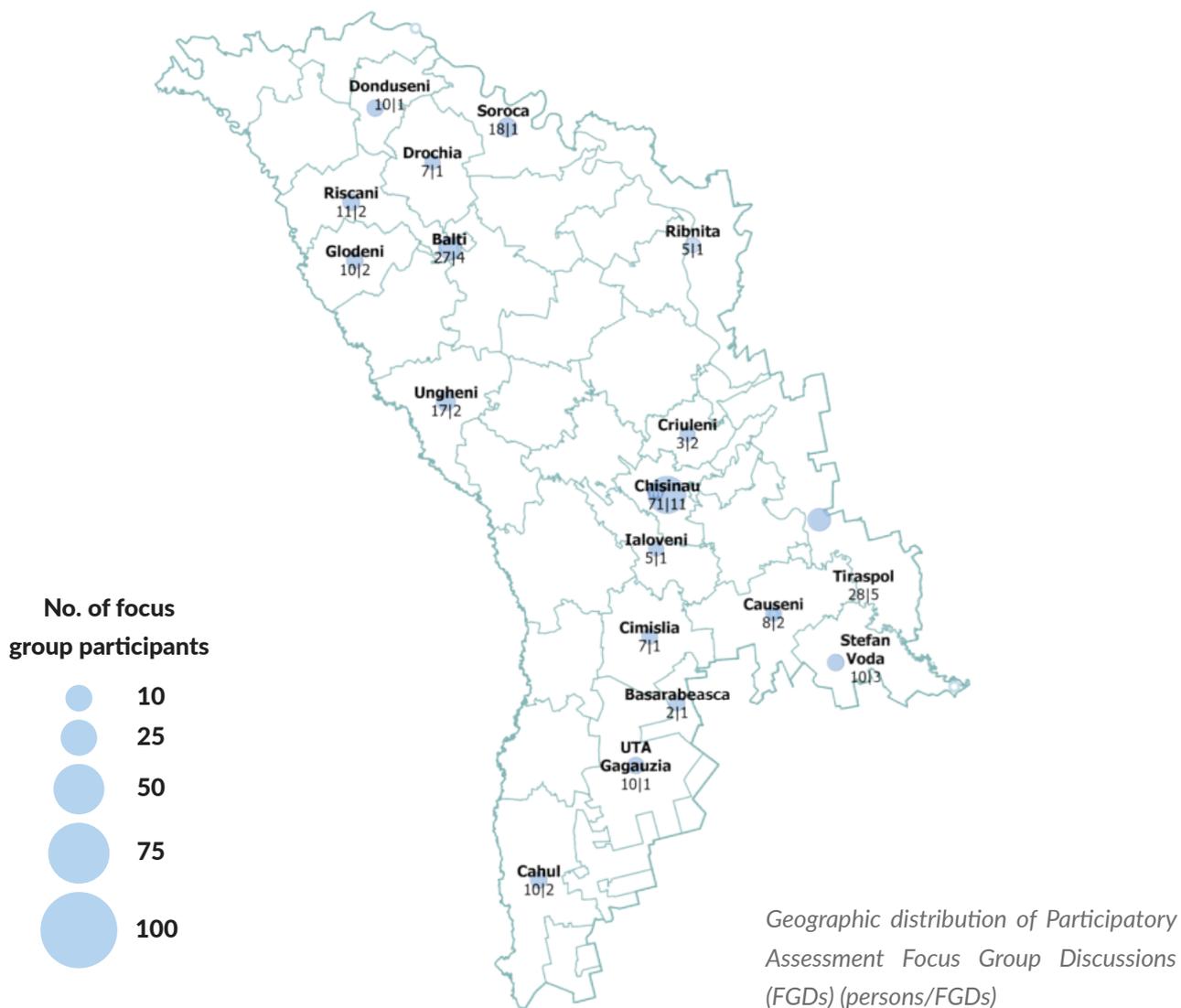


The main focus of the Participatory Assessment was to gain an in-depth understanding of the levels of local integration and inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons in Moldova, as well as to identify barriers for integration and the opportunities to overcome them, as identified by the affected communities themselves.

*The findings of the PA highlight a strong correlation between the legal status of displaced persons in the Republic of Moldova*

The findings of the Participatory Assessment highlight a strong correlation between the legal status of displaced persons in the Republic of Moldova and their prospects for integration and inclusion within the local communities. Those coming from Ukraine who received temporary protection status, for example, demonstrated a higher level of inclusion within their communities and greater access to services provided by the state as compared to asylum-seekers. In particular, this applied to access to healthcare and education services, as well as access to the labour market.

At the same time, according to PA participants, the acquisition of temporary protection did not address other important challenges they faced. In terms of access to the labour market, for example, language barriers, access to childcare, skills mismatches, and low salaries, continued to be cited as impediments to obtaining employment. Despite these obstacles, however, as compared to 2022, more PA participants, from diverse ages and backgrounds, stated that they had been able to find jobs in Moldova or were in the process of doing so.



As with last year’s Participatory Assessment, Ukrainian refugees reported deciding to live in Moldova primarily due to its proximity to Ukraine and the presence of relatives in the country. Unlike last year’s findings, however, participants in the 2023 Participatory Assessment described their stay in Moldova as more established than before with the **expectation of a longer-term stay** in the country. This can be attributed in part to the increased acquisition of legal status in Moldova, for most temporary protection, and improved access to accompanying rights and services. It also reflected, however, the ongoing nature of the war in Ukraine. While most of the Ukrainian participants still planned to return to Ukraine once the war was over, they expressed less urgency in doing so. Some participants expressed the intention to remain in Moldova for the long term, even after the war was over.



Despite intentions and expectations to remain in Moldova for the medium term, many PA participants expressed challenges in accessing certain services. Access to health care remained foremost among these concerns, as in 2022. **Availability, cost, and quality of health care services** were all noted as difficulties in Moldova, not only by Ukrainian refugees but also by asylum-seekers of different nationalities. While temporary protection did bring some improvements in medical care, numerous participants across the country and of different ages and backgrounds reported the non-availability of required medical services and high costs. This was especially true for those residing in urban settings, while those in rural areas in the Transnistrian region cited the lack of specialized doctors as the main concern.



Access to affordable and adequate **housing and accommodation** was also voiced as an increasing problem by participants from various profiles, as highlighted already in 2022. During 2023 people faced additional worries and challenges due to the closure of many Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs), with the rental assistance programmes being offered by partners seen as providing only a temporary solution. With the overall availability of rental assistance from international organizations perceived as shrinking, people found it harder to find affordable housing and stated that they often opted for accommodation that lacked basic commodities or chose to stay with extended families in small, overcrowded apartments or homes. Concerns related to winter needs given the high cost of heating and the need for warm clothes and footwear remained acute in 2023, as they had the year before.



Another notable finding from the Participatory Assessment was reduced trust of refugees in existing **information lines**. In multiple FGDs throughout the country, participants of various ages and backgrounds stated that the existing hotlines were not effective and that the quality of information and services provided by operators was poor. As of last year, the main information sources for services in Moldova of which people were aware, included government and UNHCR websites and call centres (dopomoga.gov.md, the Green Line, UNHCR website). At the same time, participants also noted that help groups on social media, such as Telegram, Viber, and Facebook, were useful and trusted information sources.



With regards to **social cohesion** between Ukrainian refugees and local communities, there were no major changes reported as compared with 2022, with the overall situation remaining quite positive. At the same time, the PA findings from 2023, as in the previous year, confirmed a more complex social cohesion situation in the north of Moldova, where there were identified concerns both between communities (horizontal social cohesion) and between communities and government structures (vertical social cohesion). Important social cohesion concerns were also raised by children and young people in different parts of the country, who mentioned instances of bullying of Ukrainian students in local education institutions.



Importantly, as compared to the previous year, Roma refugees expressed feeling more included in local communities and identified improvements in this regard. However, they still voiced important concerns about discriminatory practices concerning access to certain rights. These concerns, however, were more specific than last year, with clear actions identified that could be taken to address them.



**Asylum-seekers and stateless persons** faced similar challenges as outlined above, however, asylum-seekers and stateless applicants were particularly frustrated by the lack of a secure legal status and accompanying documentation, which they saw as limiting their access to rights and services. As with last year, many participants expressed concerns about the length of the asylum and statelessness determination procedures. Asylum-seekers raised complaints about the quality of legal services provided by the state during appeals from negative asylum decisions issued by the General Inspectorate for Migration. Additional barriers of language and cultural differences were also cited by asylum-seekers from outside the region as impacting on their ability to find suitable employment and to cover their basic needs.



With regards to **education**, there has been some increase in the enrolment of Ukrainian refugee children in Moldovan local schools as compared to last year.<sup>6</sup> For the majority of PA participants enrolled in Moldovan schools, positive experiences were highlighted, although isolated incidents of bullying related to political views were also noted. For some refugees, challenges with the local education system were encountered, including cold receptions from local students and teachers, as well as differences in curriculum, particularly in Russian language and Moldovan history. Some parents adopted a dual approach, enrolling their children both in-person in local schools and online in Ukrainian schools, aiming to balance socialization and improved learning due to language proficiency. For those living in rural areas participation in extracurricular activities was less frequent, with lack of transportation mentioned as a significant barrier to accessing them.



<sup>6</sup> As of the end of the 2022-2023 academic year, 1,815 Ukrainian refugees had enrolled in Moldovan schools. As of the end of October 2023, the number had increased to 2,143 Ukrainian students, according to the Ministry of Education and Research.



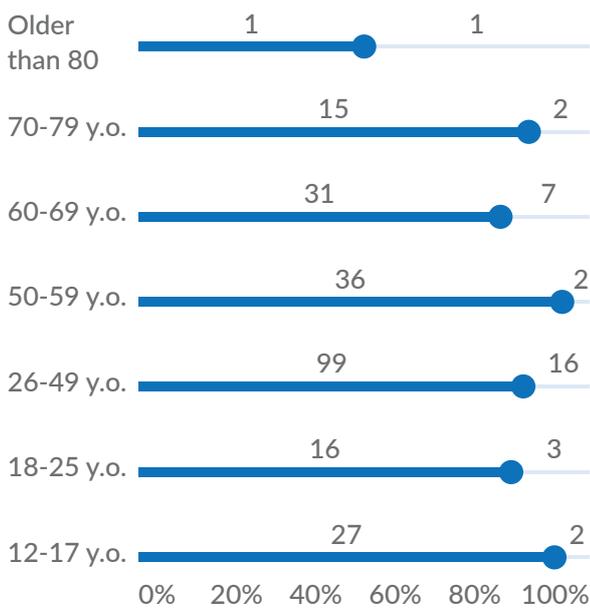
In terms of **social and administrative services**, as last year, a general lack of information was cited about services available to Ukrainian refugees, as well as on eligibility criteria for these services. A small number of people stated that they had received lump-sum support from their municipality upon arrival, and people with disabilities confirmed that their disability certificates issued in Ukraine had been recognized in Moldova. Some older refugees reported getting their pensions from Ukraine, noting that it was the only assistance they were receiving. In general, participants' awareness of social assistance and services primarily revolved around support provided by international organizations, particularly in the form of cash assistance. However, there was a notable observation among participants of reduced availability of aid as compared to the previous year. This suggests a reliance on non-profit entities for support that will be difficult to sustain over the long term, given likely continued reductions in assistance for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova from non-profits and others absent any major changes in the displacement situation overall.



Focus group discussions conducted in the **Transnistrian region** revealed that the situation there is more complicated than elsewhere in the country, similar to the findings of the 2022 PA. Most people noted that job opportunities were few in the region and poorly paid. In terms of **access to information**, people from the Transnistrian region stated that they generally did not feel connected to any of the established information channels for refugees in the country. They called for an information source dedicated to available services, assistance, and developments in the Transnistrian region. In terms of **education**, the Transnistrian region stands out positively, with all participants' children attending local schools and reporting generally positive experiences. On the other hand, participants reported a lack of trust in local doctors, citing concerns about their technical competence. Accessing quality medical care was deemed expensive, and the cost and difficulty of travelling to Chisinau for healthcare were cited as a further obstacle in the region.

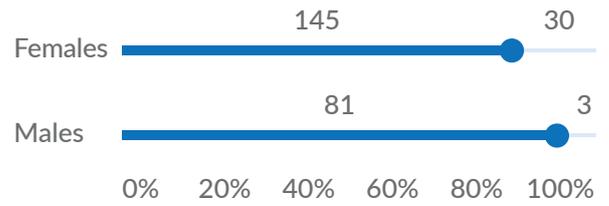


Participants living in the Transnistrian region generally had positive interactions with locals, engaging with them on different occasions. Many benefited from having relatives in the region. However, some noted limitations on their ability to freely express political opinions, which constrained open discourse within the community. The detailed findings from the focus group discussions conducted in the Transnistrian region for the 2023 Participatory Assessment are reflected in Annex 1.



- Right bank of the Dniester river
- Left bank of the Dniester river

Figure II Total number of participants, disaggregated by age group and geographic location



- Right bank of the Dniester river
- Left bank of the Dniester river

Figure I Total number of participants disaggregated by gender and geographic location.



# MAIN FINDINGS

*Note: Prior to the narrative analysis section of each profile, the "main points raised" are included. These points are based on the frequency of particular topics raised by participants during the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).*

## Adults without disabilities



### MAIN POINTS RAISED

- Obstacles in obtaining legal status
- Difficulties accessing financial services
- Concerns related to accommodation
- Difficulties accessing adequate healthcare
- Limited access to formal employment

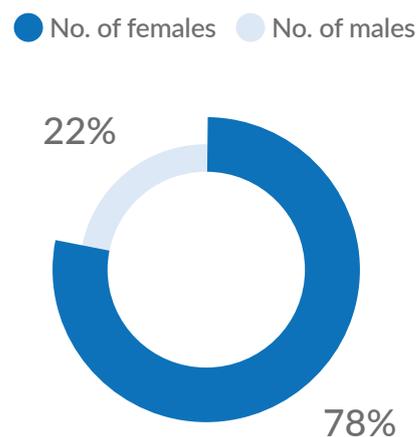


Figure 1 Disaggregation of adult FGDs participants by gender

	# of FGDs	# of people
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>112</b>
Living in private accommodation and with host communities	11	94
Living in RAC	3	18
Living in urban areas	12	94
Living in rural areas	2	18

### GENERAL CONTEXT

As noted above, the refugee population in Moldova is primarily composed of women and children. As of 31 December 2023, 56% of the Ukrainian refugee population were adults. While exact figures are not available on what percentage of adult refugees are without disabilities, the 2023 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) estimates the population to be at about 40% of the overall refugee population.<sup>7</sup> This constitutes a significant proportion of the refugee population, who, if given the necessary conditions and resources, can be self-sufficient.



<sup>7</sup> <https://repository.impact-initiatives.org/document/reach>



*We need Romanian language lessons. Not only for children but also for adults. There are classes at Causeni, but it's too far.*

A refugee woman from Drochia raion

*Ukrainian and Moldovan women participating in one of many activities held in the community service centres supported by UNHCR, Donduseni*  
© UNHCR/Salahaldeen Abdulrahman

## INTENTIONS

All of the participants in these FGDs, regardless of their living arrangements or geographic locations, expressed satisfaction with their current living conditions in Moldova. Most expressed a desire to return to Ukraine when the war concludes, highlighting the importance of the resolution of the war for their potential return. On the other hand, some participants whose homes in Ukraine had been destroyed during the fighting stated that they were considering staying in Moldova even beyond the war's end if only to allow time for reconstruction and the re-establishment of services. People in such circumstances were usually settled in urban areas, living in private accommodation.



### **Participants recommendation:**

- After the conclusion of the war, establish an environment that facilitates the return of those who wish to go home, providing support in terms of benefits and accommodation for those whose houses were damaged or destroyed.

## LEGAL STATUS

Most participants had successfully obtained temporary protection (TP). At the same time, some reported having obtained alternative forms of legal status in Moldova, including residence permits or, where possible, Moldovan citizenship. The process of obtaining TP was generally reported as smooth by those residing in RACs. However, individuals living with host families or in private accommodation reported facing challenges in registering for temporary protection, such as having to go to the General Inspectorate for Migration (IGM) multiple times to present additional documents proving their residence in Moldova.

Despite facing some challenges, participants reported generally positive results from obtaining TP, especially those living in rural areas. They stated that TP enabled their children to fully enrol in local schools, granted them access to essential services and contributed to their overall sense of well-being. However, limitations were also noted, including by urban adults who noted difficulties in obtaining a bank account with TP status, underscoring the need for continued improvements in the legal and administrative processes associated with TP.

## ACCOMMODATION

Participants residing in rural areas had diverse living arrangements, including staying with relatives and being hosted by local community families. While most described their living conditions as comfortable and adequate, with access to basic facilities, many also cited financial challenges, in particular concerning heating and the cost of purchasing wood for the winter period. Some said that they were considering moving to cheaper accommodation during the winter months given high heating costs, emphasizing the need to address these winter-related challenges.

For those living in urban areas, living arrangements also varied. Most reported satisfactory conditions but some noted overcrowding due to living with extended family members and challenges in finding suitable accommodation for their families. People in RACs generally reported decent living conditions but noted limited access to water, sanitation, and health (WASH) facilities, such as toilets and showers.

The cost of winter clothing and footwear was raised by all participants as among the major concerns for the winter period.



### Participants recommendation:

- Increase distribution of wood and winter clothes and shoes for the cold period of the year.

## ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Regardless of where they lived, be it in urban or rural areas, refugees repeatedly reported challenges in accessing health care. This was clearly one of their top concerns. While instances of free urgent medical assistance being provided by responsive doctors were reported, many noted that the high costs of procedures and medicines were obstacles to obtaining the health services that they needed, even after obtaining temporary protection. The unavailability of specialists and specific medicines was highlighted, particularly in rural areas where medical services were described as inadequate.

In Chisinau, the situation was reported as relatively better, but in the rest of the country, the quality of medical assistance was viewed by many as generally poor. One participant described an incident in Soroca when a patient who was experiencing a heart attack had no immediate access to the care that he needed, underscoring the critical need for improved medical services outside of the capital. It bears noting, of course, that some of the healthcare challenges cited by refugees affect Moldovan nationals as well, reflecting problems in the national healthcare system overall.

Participants in the FGDs from the Transnistrian region raised particular concerns about the absence of specialized doctors in the region. As a result, they reported refugees travelling to Chisinau to access medical services, if not returning to Ukraine for medical appointments.

## EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

Employment dynamics in different locations presented distinct challenges for adult Ukrainian refugees. In rural areas, most participants relied on UNHCR financial assistance to cover costs, supplemented by pensions, family support, or savings. Limited job opportunities, often seasonal and informal, as well as childcare constraints, language barriers, transportation issues, and bureaucratic difficulties, were all cited as barriers to securing employment.

In urban settings, especially for those residing in RACs, financial assistance remained the primary income source for most participants, complemented by online jobs in Ukraine or locally, as well as family support and savings.

Many expressed frustration in finding jobs, stating that they were often unaware of job opportunities, that they needed professional courses that were generally unavailable outside of Chisinau, and that jobs that were offered by the National Employment Agency often did not match their background and experience.

On the left bank of the Dniester River, securing employment was seen as even more complicated, with job opportunities described as scarce and poorly paid. At the same time, Ukrainians staying in the Transnistrian region described having to pay elevated taxes imposed by the de facto authorities.



### Participants recommendation:

- Create job opportunities in villages outside of Chisinau and ensure that professional development courses are also available.
- Improve transportation routes in the countryside to give people access to jobs located in other localities.

## SOCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

None of the adults without disabilities who participated in the FGDs and were residing in rural areas stated that they had received or had applied for social assistance in Moldova. They noted, however, that also had not done so when living in Ukraine.



*Yulia (right) with her mother Galina, at their family's accommodation in Botnarestii Noi village in southern Moldova. The family of four is hosted by a Moldovan family.*

© UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

The experiences of participants residing in Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs) in urban areas with social assistance were more varied, with some having received support in Ukraine for single mothers or subsidies for utilities based on low income. The majority of participants, however, stated that they did not require social assistance and therefore had not sought it.

In one location in the north of Moldova, FGDs participants stated that the local authorities, including social workers, seemed to not acknowledge the presence of refugees in their community, they believed to avoid additional work. In particular, participants related that the authorities had not allowed humanitarian organizations that were willing to support refugees to come to the area, arguing that no refugees were living there. The municipality was similarly not providing any social support. FGDs participants stated that this created mistrust between the refugees and the authorities, impeding their inclusion into the local community.

## ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Across accommodation types and places of residence, over half of the participants in the adult FGDs reported having enrolled their children in local kindergartens, schools, or universities. Almost all reported positive experiences in doing so, except one reported case of bullying in school related to political views.

Some FGDs participants reported taking a “dual approach,” enrolling their children in in-person in local schools as well as online in Ukrainian schools. In doing so, the parents hoped to balance the benefits of socialization in the local school with the flexibility of online learning, ensuring language proficiency and securing recognition for academic certificates in case of return to Ukraine.

Some parents reported having opted exclusively for online education for their children. These children were primarily older, pursuing studies in high school or an institute or university, or in locations where Russian-language schools were not available.

With regards to extracurricular activities, while participants in different locations reported their children having various options, those living in villages stated that they faced limited or no opportunities. They noted that although neighbouring villages may have offered such activities, refugees often lacked transportation to take advantage of them.

All the participants residing in the Transnistrian region reported that their children were enrolled in local schools, presumably due to the greater availability of schools with Russian instructions. The availability of schools with Ukrainian language was considered by the participants as an important factor facilitating access to education.

### **ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Most FGDs participants stated that they actively sought information on available assistance and legal support through the website [Dopomoga.md](http://Dopomoga.md), social media platforms, and humanitarian organizations. However, participants living in urban settings noted difficulties with these information sources, citing delayed information about available humanitarian aid which they stated caused them to miss aid opportunities due to programs being full or closed.

Many participants stated that they found the main source of information for the refugee response, the Green Line, ineffective and proposed separate channels for obtaining information and lodging complaints.

### **COMMUNITY COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE**

Most of the FGDs participants living in rural areas, whether in private accommodation or with host families, as well as those living in RACs in urban settings, reported an absence of serious conflicts between refugees and members of the host community, indicating a generally peaceful coexistence between the two. Participants underlined the significance of community connections and interactions, highlighting a positive evolution in their relationships with local Moldovans.

The prevalence of the Russian language in some rural areas played an important role in facilitating communication between the two communities, contributing to smoother interactions and comprehension. The active participation of refugees in community events, with information disseminated through town halls and school channels, demonstrated their eagerness to engage in local activities and contribute positively to community life.

The experiences of refugees residing in urban areas, specifically in private accommodation or with host families, were less uniformly positive, with refugees recounting both positive and negative interactions with the local community. While there were shared positive experiences, there were also instances of negative interactions, in particular in two locations in the north of Moldova. FGDs participants from this location stated the problems were rooted in poor communication between the two communities, as well as the (mistaken) belief by some in the host community that the humanitarian assistance being provided to Ukrainian refugees was being funded by the Moldovan government, rather than by the international community.



”

*In the rural area, people are misinformed. A neighbour said that they [the government of Moldova] gave the Ukrainians 7 million euros. They [Ukrainian refugees] stay and do not work, it would be better to add this money to our pensions.*

A refugee woman from Drochia raion

*Jennifer, 20, a Ukrainian refugee living in the Moldovan capital, Chisinau, sorts through books donated to local NGO Laolalta at the UNHCR-supported Community Centre 151.*

© UNHCR/Colin Delfosse

The group believed that to enhance trust and cooperation between refugees and locals, it was essential that international organizations also support the local population.



**Participants recommendation:**

- Inform local community members about the source of funding for Ukrainian refugees, as well as the support being provided by donors and humanitarian actors to vulnerable Moldovans.
- Include local vulnerable people in humanitarian aid distributions.

# Persons with disabilities



## MAIN POINTS RAISED

- Concerns regarding feedback and complaint mechanisms
- Inaccessible housing
- Inadequate access to healthcare
- Need for accessible registration processes for temporary protection and available mobile teams

● No. of females ● No. of males

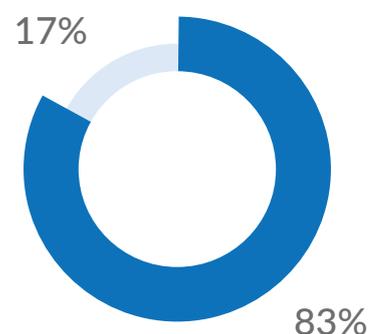


Figure 2 Disaggregation of FGDs participants with disabilities by gender

	# of FGDs	# of people
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>
Living in private accommodation and with host communities	2	5
Living in RAC	1	1
Living in urban areas	1	3
Living in rural areas	2	3

## GENERAL CONTEXT

There are no comprehensive statistics on the number of refugees in Moldova with a disability. The 2023 MSNA found that 6% of those surveyed identified as having a disability and that 13% of households reported having at least one family member with a disability. UNHCR protection profiling conducted in 2023 (January-October 2023) found that 19% of those interviewed had a specific need, including a disability or a serious medical condition, a similar percentage among those receiving UNHCR cash assistance (as of 31 December 2023). Those with disabilities were identified through the use of the Washington Group short set of questions, which ask basic questions of respondents as to their ability to see, hear, walk, remember or concentrate, self-care, and communicate. Regardless of the exact number, the percentage of those with disabilities among the refugee population is significant, necessitating operational and policy responses that meet their particular needs.

## INTENTIONS

Most PA participants with disabilities had been residing in Moldova since 2022, either with host families or in private accommodation. As with other refugees, their shared intention was to stay in Moldova until the end of the war in Ukraine. During the FGDs, they emphasized the importance of friendships they had made in Moldova and the continuous support they had received through community networks as reasons to stay in the country over the medium term.

## **ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

PA participants with disabilities generally reported relying on online media channels for accessing relevant information, with the most recognized sources being Facebook groups and Viber channels. Participants from rural areas also relied on printed information materials disseminated by various NGOs and local authorities. Finally, participants accessed information on specific services available for refugees with disabilities through the hotline operated by the NGO Keystone, a disability rights organization, which is available 24/7.

All participants uniformly expressed dissatisfaction with the Green Line, criticizing its lack of reliable information, unresponsiveness, and the absence of a focal point capable of offering coherent solutions.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

Most people were living with host families, with some renting accommodation. Those renting private accommodation stated that it was difficult financially, but possible due to rental assistance programmes offered by humanitarian actors. Those living with host families expressed uncertainty about the duration of their arrangements. People with disabilities living in rural areas were all living with host families. The living conditions, however, were described as challenging since the houses were often not accessible.

## **LEGAL STATUS**

All people in the FGDs had successfully obtained temporary protection. Those in rural areas emphasized the significant support they had received from a mobile team during the registration process. In the urban context, participants described an effortless application process, with their main motivation for obtaining the TP being the enrolment of their children in the local school.

## **ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE**

FGDs participants with disabilities living in rural areas expressed positive experiences in accessing certain healthcare services, such as family doctors and medicines provided by NGOs. Those in urban settings mentioned support that they had received from non-profit organizations, but described it as insufficient, particularly if they needed expensive orthodontic or surgical care, which humanitarian organizations generally did not cover.

## **SOCIAL SERVICES AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES**

Almost all FGDs participants with disabilities who were residing in rural areas stated that they were not receiving social assistance from Ukraine. Only one individual stated that he/she was receiving a pension from Ukraine. The majority of participants were unsure of how to seek social services in Moldova. Only one respondent stated that (he/she) had received a lump sum from the Moldovan Social Assistance Department upon arrival in the country. Overall, participant awareness of social assistance and services was mostly limited to support offered by non-profit organizations, in particular cash assistance.

FGDs participants positively reported that their Ukrainian disability certificates were recognized by the Moldovan authorities which spared them from additional bureaucratic strains during their displacement. At the same time, recognition of the certificates did not grant access to any disability-related social benefits in Moldova.



”

*Seek and you will  
always find.*

A refugee woman from Criuleni raion

*Maria, a displaced resident from Odesa, sought refuge in Moldova with her daughter due to war. Now, she requires a wheelchair for mobility. At UNHCR, the inclusion of people with disabilities is a priority under our age, gender, and diversity policy.*

© UNHCR/Eugenia Ciurca

## **EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS**

Challenges to employment for participants residing in urban scenarios resembled those cited by able-bodied refugees, including a lack of child-care opportunities for single mothers, and barriers to entering the workforce without a specific professional background. The situation in rural areas was more challenging, with FGDs participants noting limited income opportunities and formidable obstacles in securing employment for those with physical disabilities.

# Persons with serious medical conditions



## MAIN POINTS RAISED

- Unavailability of mobile teams for TP registration
- Concerns relating to housing for those receiving rental assistance
- Inadequate access to healthcare

● No. of females ● No. of males

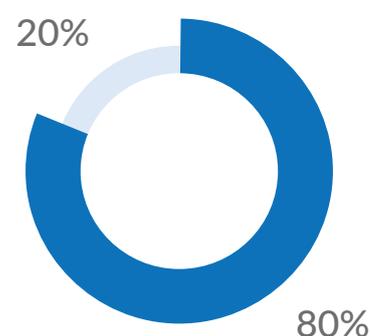


Figure 3 Disaggregation of FGDs participants with serious medical conditions by gender

	# of FGDs	# of people
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Living in private accommodation and with host communities	4	5
Living in urban areas	2	3
Living in rural areas	2	2

## GENERAL CONTEXT

As per UNHCR's protection monitoring data, 12% of Ukrainian households residing in Moldova have at least one family member who has a serious medical condition. 38% of these individuals are older refugees, above the age of 60.

## INTENTIONS

FGDs participants with serious medical conditions were residing in both urban and rural areas and had been living in Moldova since 2022. The general intention of these refugees was to stay in Moldova until the end of the war in Ukraine, with some noting the warm reception they had received in the country. None expressed an interest in relocating elsewhere.

## LEGAL STATUS

While FGDs participants with serious medical conditions residing in urban areas stated that they had obtained TP without any major obstacles, those living in rural areas shared that the unavailability of IGM mobile teams for TP registration posed a serious obstacle for them in obtaining TP legal status.

Positively, there was a common observation among participants that their access to health care had improved after obtaining temporary protection. Some participants had residence permits, which allowed them greater access to health care services than those with temporary protection, in particular access to medical insurance.



Vova, the eldest of three brothers, faced life-altering consequences after a cliff jump at the age of 14, resulting in a spinal injury. Now 22, he fled the war in Ukraine and currently resides in Moldova. Vova expresses eagerness to sit outside and enjoy nature, emphasizing the impact of forced displacement on people with disabilities. "The first thing I'm going to do when I sit in my new wheelchair is go outside. Simply sit outside, see the trees, and breathe," says Vova.

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## ACCOMMODATION

The living arrangements of participants varied between rural and urban settings. In rural areas, all the participants were living with host families. In urban areas, some participants lived with a host family, paying only utilities, while others initially lived with friends before transitioning to a rental arrangement with NGO rental assistance support. All participants stated that they were satisfied with their living conditions, although those in rental arrangements supported by NGOs raised concerns about their

ability to pay their rents once the rental programme support ended (after six months), especially if their rental costs increased.

## ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

FGDs participants had different experiences and opinions regarding access to health care. Those living in urban areas generally reported positive experiences when accessing medical assistance, while those living in rural areas were more divided. Importantly, regardless of location, none of the participants who had obtained TP stated that they had been denied primary or emergency medical assistance. Furthermore, most participants stated that their access to health care had improved after obtaining TP. FGDs participants did note, however, continued unmet medical needs, including, importantly, specialized examinations that were not covered by the government, for example, orthopaedic and eye examinations, as well as access to subsidized medications. As refugees with serious medical conditions, these limitations on available health services were difficult to manage and a source of concern.

## Older persons (60+ years of age)



### MAIN POINTS RAISED

- Concerns relating to housing
- Positive interactions between refugee and local communities
- Easy registration for temporary protection

● No. of females ● No. of males

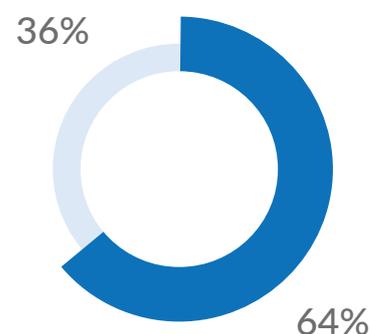


Figure 4 Disaggregation of older FGD participants by gender.

	# of FGDs	# of people
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>36</b>
Living in private accommodation and with host communities	4	33
Living in RACs	1	3
Living in urban areas	5	36

### GENERAL CONTEXT

The government does not maintain data on the number of Ukrainian arrivals in the country broken down by age. That said, of those receiving UNHCR cash assistance, 15% are adults aged 60 and above, with almost 70% of them women. The needs and capacities of refugees in this demographic (aged 60+), of course, are not monolithic. Of those receiving UNHCR cash assistance, most (60%) are between the ages of 60-69 and 30% are between the ages of 70-79. Ten per cent are aged 80 or above.

### INTENTIONS

Older FGDs participants had been residing in Moldova for a few weeks to one year. They decided to remain in Moldova as they had relatives and friends living in the country and were now accustomed to the rhythms of life here. All of the participants planned to stay in Moldova until the war was over. One participant, explaining why he did not plan to return to Ukraine soon, described Ukraine as like a cemetery for him, filled with terrible memories of the war. The deep emotional toll of the war on the participants was evident throughout the FGDs discussion.



”

*We want to return back to Ukraine, the most important thing is to have a place to return to.*

An older refugee woman from Tiraspol (the Transnistrian region).

A focus group discussion was conducted with older refugees (60+) at the Community Support Centre in Cahul.

© UNHCR/HelpAge

## ACCOMMODATION

Older refugees participating in the PA had diverse living arrangements, with some living in RACs and others renting apartments or staying with host families. Those living in RACs were satisfied with their accommodation but had concerns about recent rules regarding entries and departures, stating that they could impact the ability of residents to work late. Some of those living with host families made some payments for their accommodation, while those hosted by family members generally did not. Living conditions with host families were described as generally decent. Participants renting apartments were generally satisfied with their living conditions but expressed concerns about the costs of rent and utilities, which they saw as continuing to increase. While some were benefiting from NGO rental assistance programs, they were concerned about the six-month limitation of the programmes and what they would do after that. Renting houses in villages was generally viewed as more affordable due to lower rental prices.

## **LEGAL STATUS**

All participants stated that they had successfully obtained temporary protection. Except for a few who experienced minor technical issues during online pre-enrolment, no major obstacles were reported. After receiving temporary protection, many participants noted improved access to health care access for their children, as well as a more positive attitude from medical personnel. That said, a significant number of participants also stated that receiving temporary protection had not substantially improved their lives overall and that they continued to struggle with the challenges of daily living.

## **COMMUNITY COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE**

The positive relations between refugees and Moldovans that were described by other PA participants were equally applicable to older refugees. FGDs participants spoke of friendliness and mutual assistance between themselves and their Moldovan neighbours. They expressed gratitude for the support they had received from Moldovans, including help with navigating life in their new country, providing food and other forms of support, and more. The overall sentiment was one of cooperation and support, with no reported conflicts or misunderstandings between Ukrainians and Moldovans. As with other refugee profiles, but perhaps impacting more older refugees, there were language barriers. FGDs participants cited language as an obstacle to communication, suggesting a need for language assistance programs to support this particular profile of refugees in particular. FGDs participants also noted the need for more activities for women and children.

## **ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE**

Older refugees participating in the FGDs who had sought medical help reported both positive and negative experiences. Those living in Comrat, for example, relayed positive interactions with healthcare professionals. Difficulties in accessing medical specialists were noted by many, either because they were not present in areas where they lived, or due to long wait times, for example for ear, nose and throat specialists (otolaryngologists). In addition, the high costs of medicines, an issue of particular importance for this demographic, was cited by many.

## **SOCIAL SERVICES AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES**

Participants stated that they did not receive social assistance from the government of Moldova or the government of Ukraine, although many reported receiving pensions from Ukraine. Most depended primarily on support from international agencies and organizations including financial assistance. The majority of participants stated that they possessed disability certificates and that they were recognized without any problems in Moldova. In Tiraspol, participants were not aware of any social assistance measures available for refugees.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS**

FGDs participants were generally not employed full-time due to their age and primarily relied on cash assistance and, for some, pensions from Ukraine. Some participants stated they were supplementing their income with part-time jobs, as the cash support they received did not meet their basic needs. The reduction or discontinuation of humanitarian assistance by some NGOs was reported as having an impact on their ability to make ends meet.

# Ukrainians and Non-Ukrainians in the asylum system (asylum-seekers and persons granted refugee status or humanitarian protection)



## MAIN POINTS RAISED

- Inadequate salaries to cover basic needs
- Lack of information about rights and opportunities
- Lack of information about job opportunities and need for professional/language courses
- Limited awareness of social services

● No. of females ● No. of males

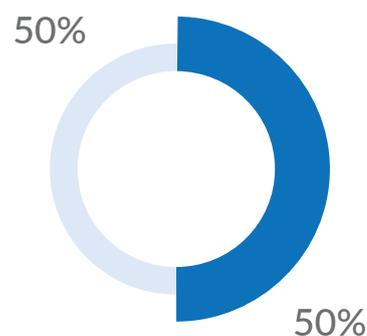


Figure 5 Disaggregation of Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian FGDs participants (asylum-seekers and persons granted refugee status and humanitarian protection) by gender

	# of FGDs	# of people
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>30</b>
Living in private accommodation and with host communities	3	29
Living in Temporary Accommodation Centre	2	11
Living in urban areas	4	30

Nationalities: Morocco, Syria, Uzbekistan, Burundi, The Gambia, Cameroon, Ukraine

## GENERAL CONTEXT

As of the end of September 2023, the total number of asylum-seekers and persons granted refugee status or humanitarian protection in Moldova was 1,419 people, as reported by the General Inspectorate for Migration (IGM). Asylum-seekers in Moldova (771 persons) were from a range of countries, with the largest represented nationalities including Ukraine, Russia, Syria, and Tajikistan. Those granted refugee status or humanitarian protection in the country (548 persons) were primarily from Ukraine, Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Asylum claims are adjudicated by the IGM’s International Protection and Home Country Information Section, under the Asylum and Statelessness Directorate. While most Ukrainians who fled Ukraine after 24 February 2022 enrolled for and received temporary protection, others submitted asylum applications.

## INTENTIONS

PA participants who were in, or had gone through, the asylum system in Moldova included both recent arrivals (2 days prior) and long-term residents (18 years). Participants had different intentions regarding their stay in Moldova depending on their country of origin, as well as their legal status. Most expressed a strong desire to remain in Moldova, find employment, and become self-sufficient. For asylum-seekers, however, the absence of a more secure legal status was considered difficult. Some of the participants stated that they were considering travelling to countries where they had family and/or employment ties. While Ukrainians were interested in returning to Ukraine once the war ended, non-Ukrainian participants did not consider this an option due to concerns for their safety.

## LEGAL STATUS AND ACCESS TO ASYLUM

Non-Ukrainian FGDs participants had varied experiences with the asylum application process in Moldova. While some faced difficulties, others navigated the application process smoothly, ultimately being granted refugee status or humanitarian protection. Those still in the asylum process stated that the absence of a secure legal status had been a significant challenge, causing uncertainty and hindering long-term plans. Rejected applications by IGM and postponed court hearings on appeal contributed to anxiety about their futures. For those whose asylum claims were denied by IGM, many expressed frustration with the state-appointed advocates representing them on appeal. They reported a lack of meaningful dialogue, language barriers, and a sense of disconnect from the legal process. For these asylum-seekers, a secure legal status was key to unlocking economic and other opportunities in Moldova.

The participants desired fair treatment of their claims from the authorities and expressed hope and aspirations for their lives and future in the country.

All of the Ukrainians participating in the FGDs had been granted humanitarian protection, a legal status accompanied by a range of rights, with the possibility to naturalize after eight years.



### Participants recommendation:

- Provide official interpreters for asylum-seekers when discussing asylum appeals with state-appointed attorneys.

## EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

Many of the non-Ukrainian participants, in particular asylum-seekers, were aware of job opportunities but stated that they had encountered difficulties in securing employment. Challenges included, from the employer side, reluctance to hire asylum-seekers due to the short duration of their asylum-seeker certificates,<sup>8</sup> lack of



<sup>8</sup> Under the Law on Asylum, asylum-seeker certificates are valid for 30 days, with the ability to extend them for further 30-day terms until a decision on the asylum claim is made. Law no 270/2008, art. 32(2). In June 2022, under the emergency laws, the Commission on Exceptional Situations extended this period to 90 days. With the end of the emergency laws, however, on 31 December 2023, the period of validity reverted to 30 days.



*Aleksey, a Ukrainian refugee, assisted by the mobile team from the General Inspectorate for Migration, secured a legal status in Moldova (TP) and unlocked access to essential services offered with this document.*

© UNHCR/Eugenia Ciurca

familiarity with asylum-seeker identity documents as proof of work authorization, and non-recognition of diplomas from their home countries. For the asylum-seekers, inability to speak Romanian or Russian was cited as a major challenge. Participants expressed a need for support in finding jobs that aligned with their abilities, experiences and knowledge, emphasizing the importance of upgrading their language skills.

For those jobs where language abilities were not an obstacle, salaries were reported as being extremely low and insufficient to cover basic needs.

Asylum-seekers also expressed an interest in vocational training, as well as a desire to start businesses. Again, however, the lack of a more secure legal status was cited as hindering participants' access to entrepreneurship opportunities.

With regards to Ukrainian nationals in the focus groups, all of whom had been granted humanitarian protection, participants highlighted that their primary income came from humanitarian cash assistance. Only one person expressed an interest in being employed but said that he had not been able to find suitable opportunities.



#### **Participants recommendation:**

- Provide online courses in the evening.
- Disseminate job opportunities that do not require knowledge of Romanian or Russian.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Both Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian FGDs participants gather information from various sources, including official websites and social media. Information obtained is then shared with others within their network. Unlike Ukrainians, however, non-Ukrainians reported a general lack of awareness of specific channels or resources for information about their rights and opportunities. A couple of asylum-seekers noted in particular that NGOs provided useful information related to childbirth and available support.

## ACCOMMODATION

Most of the FGDs participants were living in the Temporary Accommodation Centre (TAC) for asylum-seekers in Chisinau, with a few renting apartments independently. Non-Ukrainian participants shared concerns about the administration and the security personnel of the TAC, in particular about difficulties communicating for those who did not speak Romanian or Russian. They noted that meetings at the TAC were often conducted in Russian or Romanian without translation to English (for those who spoke English). Living conditions inside the TAC were generally considered satisfactory, although non-Ukrainian asylum-seekers expressed concerns about the facility's rules, which they described as rigid, lack of diversity in meals, and overcrowded conditions with up to eight individuals sharing one room. Participants renting accommodation privately decided to move out of the TAC for dietary reasons (diversity of meals in line with religious requirements) and language barriers but also for job-related reasons.

Ukrainian participants shared concerns about the limitations on the length of their stay at the TAC, as people granted refugee status or humanitarian protection can only reside there for six months after receiving status.

Families with children attending nearby schools said they were content living at the TAC and wished to remain there if possible. Their overarching concern was the need for continued accommodation beyond the six months of permitted stay after being granted international protection.



### Participants recommendation:

- Provide translation support during meetings at the TAC and in interactions with the administration.
- Ensure meal diversity, taking into account religious and cultural dietary preferences.
- Limit room occupancy based on the room's size and available space.

## SOCIAL SERVICES AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

FGDs participants had limited awareness of state-offered social services for asylum-seekers and persons granted refugee status or humanitarian protection. However, they were well-informed about available support provided by NGOs through information leaflets, including those distributed by the General Inspectorate for Migration. Some participants who had recently given birth were able to successfully access the monthly allowance offered by the state for post-delivery childcare.

With regards to Ukrainian nationals, none were receiving social assistance from Ukraine, except for one person who was receiving pension benefits.

None of the participants had actively sought social assistance in Moldova and were unaware of how to do so. None mentioned taking part in or being aware of the integration programme offered by IGM to persons granted refugee status and humanitarian protection.

### ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

The majority of FGDs participants expressed positive experiences with free state-provided medical examinations. However, challenges and gaps in access to health care more broadly were noted. Non-Ukrainian asylum-seekers mentioned concerns, particularly regarding medication costs, access to adequate treatment for chronic health issues, and potential administrative hurdles in registering with a doctor for treatment related to pregnancies. Ukrainian participants reported challenges in accessing medical assistance, particularly for non-urgent surgeries and dental services which are costly. However, there was awareness among participants about the availability of free medical assistance for children, regardless of legal status, even if similar services were not available for adults.



#### Participants recommendation:

- Provide free medicines for persons suffering from chronic diseases.

### ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Both Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian FGDs participants reported that their children were attending local schools and kindergartens and that they had not experienced any problems in the enrolment process.

### COMMUNITY COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Non-Ukrainian refugees and asylum-seekers reported generally positive interactions with the local community, with no reported conflicts. They said that they valued sharing their culture with Moldovans and proposed organizing events to strengthen relationships between the two communities. They also noted, however, challenges in communicating with Moldovans due to their inability to speak Romanian or Russian, which also affected their ability to obtain information about local events and opportunities. Overall, there was a clear desire to engage more with local Moldovans and to engage in cultural exchanges with them. Ukrainian respondents reported that their interactions with the local community were generally smooth and positive.



*I think Moldova is a holy country, the only one where we are treated with humanity.*

A refugee man from Stefan-Voda raion

# Adolescents and youth



## MAIN POINTS RAISED

- Proof of residence and cumulative 45 days as main obstacles in applying for TP
- Limited access to housing
- Insufficient income to cover basic needs

	# of FGDs	# of people
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>
Living in private accommodation and with host communities	3	14

● No. of females ● No. of males

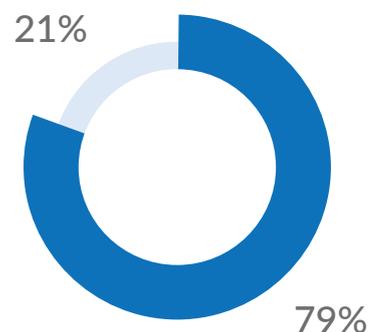


Figure 6 Disaggregation of teenagers and youth FGDs participants by gender

Important note: The participants of the FGDs were between 15 and 25 years old.

## GENERAL CONTEXT

According to UNHCR cash enrolment data, about 10% of the Ukrainian refugee population are adolescents and youth aged 15-25. Among this group, 57% are female and 43% are male. The majority of adolescents and youth receiving UNHCR cash support (45%) reside in Chisinau, with the other main locations of residence being Ocnita, Balti, Stefan Voda, Donduseni, UTA Gaguazia and the Transnistrian region.

## INTENTIONS

As with other Ukrainian refugees, adolescent and youth participants in the FGDs reported that their families decided to live in Moldova during the war primarily due to its proximity to Ukraine, making potential returns easier. Other factors included Moldova's similar culture and mentality, as well as the more affordable cost of living in the country. Youth described challenges with living in Moldova, particularly in finding stable housing, which they said made their future in the country uncertain. While all wished to return to Ukraine after the war, they also expressed concerns about how practically that might happen, noting challenges in transporting their belongings and the potential costs of return. Some participants also reported an interest in studying abroad, emphasizing the complexities of their situations and aspirations beyond Moldova.



### Participants recommendation:

- Organize transportation for returns to Ukraine once the war is over.



”

*When searching for apartments, on the site it is indicated in bold "We do not rent to Ukrainians".*

A young refugee boy from Chisinau

*As part of Refugee Day, children from Ukraine and Moldova participated in a football bootcamp.*

© UNHCR/Salahaldeen Abdulrahman

## LEGAL STATUS

All participants in the focus groups had obtained either temporary protection or residence status in Moldova. Those with temporary protection noted certain challenges during the application process, including difficulties in gathering required documents, technical glitches with the pre-enrolment software, and long queues at IGM offices. The drawback of not being able to leave Moldova for more than 45 days was highlighted by some as a drawback to temporary protection. The residence permit application process was described as time-consuming, taking over a month.

For those who obtained temporary protection, participants reported experiencing no significant changes in their access to services. Some relayed problems in obtaining debit cards from banks, despite having TP status, while others reported that temporary protection had simplified their access to employment, as well as to school enrolment.

## ACCOMMODATION

Several participants reported facing challenges in finding housing in Moldova. Some encountered landlords willing to rent only for extended periods, such as for a year or 18 months, while others noted high prices for apartments and difficulties finding suitable living conditions at lower prices. Discrimination against Ukrainians in the housing market was also highlighted, with some landlords explicitly refusing to rent to Ukrainians or offering to them only inflated prices. The need for connections to find cheaper housing was emphasized. In some cases, participants had to change apartments multiple times, for example, because they were initially living with family members and needed to move out for more space, or because of problems with their landlords, disrupting the stability of their life in Moldova. The rising demand for housing due to the closure of RACs was noted as further complicating the situation.

## EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

Youth in the discussions outlined various challenges in securing employment in Moldova. They noted that language barriers presented obstacles for formal and well-paid positions, particularly for students who struggled to balance work with studies. Part-time job opportunities were often mentioned, such as leaflet distribution, as a way to make money.

Some participants found it easier to work online for employers in Ukraine, as did other family members. Learning the Romanian language was seen as a potential solution to enhance job prospects.

Overall, participants had a general idea of where to look for jobs, utilizing social media and internet channels.

However, there was an expressed need for more information about employment opportunities specifically tailored to Ukrainians.

## ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Participants initially encountered challenges enrolling in Moldovan schools due to the “audience” status that they were given under the emergency laws, with some opting not to enrol. Those who had a resident permit in Moldova found the enrolment process easier. Some adolescents enrolled in local schools described facing a cold reception from local students and teachers and found differences in the schools’ curriculum, particularly in Russian language and Moldovan history, difficult.

University-age participants noted that Ukrainians have access to tuition-free places offered by state universities. They noted, however, a lack of information about internship opportunities which is a compulsory part of higher education for students enrolled in Ukrainian universities.



### Participants recommendation:

- Share information on internship opportunities for Ukrainian students enrolled in Moldovan universities.
- Offer more Romanian language courses.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The favoured means of receiving information among adolescent and youth FGDs participants were instant messages and social networks. They stated that they rely on general Telegram chats, a prevalent social network among Ukrainians, for information, but were unsure about which channels or groups could be trusted. The quality of services and accuracy of information provided by various hotlines were questioned. Participants expressed a particular need for more accessible legal information, especially about available services for those with temporary protection.

Adolescent and youth participants were interested in finding projects and grants for young people, particularly those related to employment and initiatives for organizing events to support refugees. They expressed a keen interest in activities such as mentoring, teaching, and service provision, envisioning a platform where Ukrainian citizens could showcase their talents and offer assistance for the development of others. Additionally, there was a desire among youth for more information on career opportunities, including courses.



### Participants recommendation:

- Create highly targeted, trusted social media channels with basic information for young people coming to Moldova from Ukraine and other countries.
- Create mentoring and teaching activities for refugee adolescents and youth, as well as a service provision platform.

## COMMUNITY COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Participants in the discussion stated that they primarily spent time with fellow Ukrainians in Moldova, with limited engagement with the local population. Community events which bring together refugees and host community members were seen as opportunities to expand social circles and connect with locals. While the overall experience of young people in interacting with the local population was positive, participants shared some instances of hostile remarks of local young people towards them (telling them to return to Ukraine). In addition, participants highlighted the language barrier that exists between them and local Moldovans, as not all Moldovans understand Russian, and most Ukrainians do not know Romanian. Despite these challenges, the FGDs youth participants, particularly those involved in school and volunteering, found it easier to engage with locals and expand their communication circles. Positive experiences were reported, especially through summer camps and events organized by local organizations, contributing to increased friendships and acquaintances.



### Participants recommendation:

- Create a space/safe space for interaction and informal communication between peers, both Moldovan and Ukrainian.
- Organize informal events, focused on cultural learning, debunking stereotypes, and facilitating interaction and experience exchange between Ukrainians and Moldovans.

# Children



## MAIN POINTS RAISED

- Preference for online school in Ukraine
- Language barrier
- Positive experience in Moldova

● No. of females ● No. of males

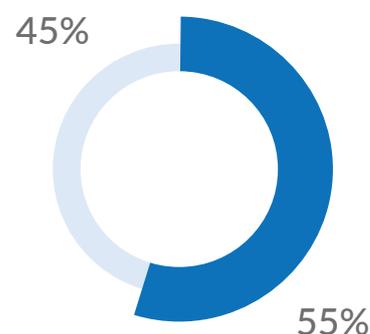


Figure 7 Disaggregation of children FGDs participants by gender

	# of FGDs	# of people
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>
Living in private accommodation and with host communities	3	22
Living in urban areas	3	22

Important note: The participants of the FGDs were between 8 and 14 years old.<sup>9</sup>

## GENERAL CONTEXT

Currently, based on government statistics, about 44% of the refugee population in Moldova are children under the age of 18, with roughly equal numbers of boys (23%) and girls (21%). Based on UNHCR cash enrolment data, it is estimated that children aged 8-14 constitute about 15% of the total refugee population.

## INTENTIONS

Participants had spent varying amounts of time living in Moldova, from two months to 20 months, when the refugee emergency began. Almost all participants expressed the desire to return home once the war had finished. This decision, though, they noted depended on their parents. One child expressed a desire to go to a college in Moldova and further continue his/her studies in a European country. Most participants, especially those who had been in Moldova since the beginning of the war, said that while they liked Moldova, they wanted to return to study at their schools in Ukraine.



<sup>9</sup> Parental consent was obtained through a formal consent process, ensuring they were fully informed about the nature and purpose of the study before granting permission for their children's participation. The FGDs were conducted by specialists with expertise in child protection to ensure a safe and supportive environment for the children involved.



“

*No matter where I am, I know I'm Ukrainian.*

A young refugee girl living in Balti

*Refugee and local children playing a spontaneous game of volleyball in the Causeni community centre. Sports break barriers and induce joy and friendship.*

© UNHCR/Salahaldeen Abdulrahman

The majority of participants lived with their mothers. Only one person lived with a person other than a parent, in that case, an older sister. However, participants maintained connections with their fathers and relatives in Ukraine through online communication. Some of the participants visited their relatives in Ukraine periodically and then returned to Moldova.

### **LIFE IN MOLDOVA**

Most of the children participating in the FGDs felt generally positive about their experience in Moldova, reporting that they had found new friends here and had adapted well. Despite some initial challenges, they were satisfied with their living conditions, whether in Refugee Accommodation Centres or rented apartments. Separation from loved ones during border crossings was remembered by some as very difficult. Some children mentioned encountering long queues for medical services but overall appreciated the healthcare in Moldova.

## EDUCATION

The preference for online school in Ukraine was highlighted by most of the children in the focus groups, who wished to socialize and learn in a familiar environment. Some children were enrolled in Moldovan schools and were happy with their new school environment, citing new friendships and positive experiences. A few participants, however, had had some negative experiences, including instances of bullying. Language barriers posed challenges for learning in Romanian-language Moldovan schools.

A few participants were attending school both in Ukraine (online) and in Moldova (in-person) and faced challenges in finding time for friends and lessons from Ukraine. Some children who were enrolled in local schools expressed a need for warmer interactions with teachers and peers, as well as safe places for gatherings beyond the school environment.



### Participants recommendation:

- Offer Romanian language courses and support for children enrolled in local schools.
- Provide more support for local teachers to help refugee children integrate in local schools.
- Present anti-bullying sessions in schools.
- Develop training sessions, clubs, and thematic workshops to enhance skills and foster community engagement.

## COMMUNITY COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Most of the participants were actively engaged in community spaces, organizations, and youth centres, where they were able to access free services. Their social circles predominantly consisted of friends from Ukraine, with only a few having Moldovan friends. Their information sources, including the Internet and online groups, highlighted a reliance on digital platforms for staying informed about services and opportunities. This suggests a need for targeted online resources and platforms to cater to their information needs and to facilitate integration efforts.



*We do not need to be fed by Government; we need a legal status.*

A non-Ukrainian asylum-seeker living in the Temporary Accommodation Centre

# Stateless persons



## MAIN POINTS RAISED

- Smooth application process to request stateless status
- Lack of formal rental agreements
- Positive experience in accessing medical services

● No. of females ● No. of males

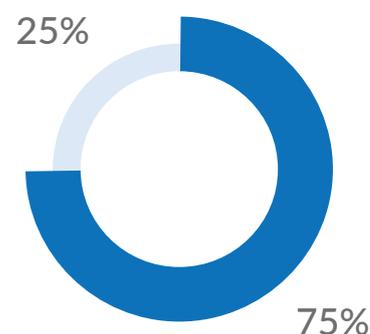


Figure 8 Disaggregation of stateless FGD participants by gender

	# of FGDs	# of people
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
Living in private accommodation and with host communities	1	4
Living in urban areas	1	4

*Important note: FGD participants had either already been legally recognized as stateless or were still going through the statelessness determination procedure. Several participants were represented by their legal guardians as they were minors.*

## GENERAL CONTEXT

According to government statistics, there are 1,901 individuals who have been recognized as stateless in the Republic of Moldova, with nearly two-thirds of them living in the Transnistrian region. Many of these persons were recognized as stateless before formal stateless determination procedures were established in Moldova in 2012. As of September 2023, according to the General Inspectorate of Migration (IGM), there were 277 individuals who had pending applications for stateless status. Applications for stateless status are adjudicated by the Statelessness Section of the IGM Asylum and Statelessness Directorate.

## INTENTIONS

Participants represented different backgrounds and situations, including people who had lived in the country for a long period of time, but were still experiencing documentation challenges, and others whose legal status as stateless had been confirmed and saw themselves as settled in Moldova and who viewed the country as their permanent home. Their arrival in Moldova was often a result of unintentional circumstances, including possible deportation to another country. Despite not all intending to stay in Moldova permanently, some already perceived Moldova as their home. Some stateless participants expressed a desire to visit or live in other countries but said that they could not do so due to their stateless status.



*National Youth Council of Moldova and UNHCR, participating in a social cohesion and inclusion activity in Chisinau.*

© UNHCR/Eugenia Ciurca

## **LEGAL STATUS**

FGD participants were primarily men who were applying for stateless status, along with one woman who had already been recognized as stateless. They became aware of legal assistance services through various channels, such as national and international organizations, as well as through state authorities. Their motivation to obtain stateless status was to ensure access to rights and services, such as formal employment and the opening of bank accounts, as well as to obtain an overall sense of stability and security, including the possibility of family reunification. None of the participants had encountered difficulties during the application process.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

All of the participants lacked formal tenancy agreements, and housing conditions varied, with repairs needed in some and others lacking sufficient living space. Some FGD participants reported facing discrimination based on their race, as well as financial challenges, including delayed payment of salaries, which made it difficult to afford rent. One woman reported that she had been evicted due to her inability to pay rent.

## **ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE**

All participants reported positive experiences in accessing medical services. The participant who had been recognized as stateless reported that she had benefited from cost-free treatments at state medical facilities with this legal status.

## **ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

Participants with children generally expressed positive experiences regarding their children's schooling. However, they reported challenges in enrolling younger children in kindergarten due to a lack of necessary documents beyond the children's birth certificates. Despite these challenges, children were actively involved in various extracurricular activities.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS**

All of the participants indicated that their primary source of income was informal employment. They noted a general lack of information on job opportunities with decent salaries that would enable them to support their families with dignity. Many expressed interest in starting their own businesses but were hindered by documentation requirements in doing so. The need for accessible and well-compensated employment opportunities was emphasized by many.

# Ethnic Roma



## MAIN POINTS RAISED

- Positive experience in obtaining temporary protection
- Concerns about living conditions
- Lack of information about accessing social services
- High cost of accessing healthcare

● No. of females ● No. of males

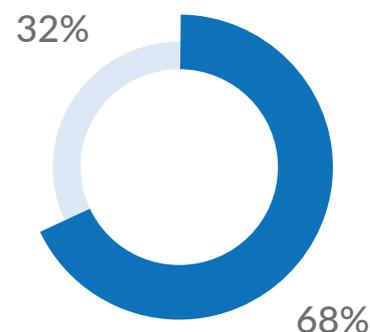


Figure 9 Disaggregation of ethnic Roma FGDs participants by gender

	# of FGDs	# of people
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>
Living in private accommodation and with host communities	1	4
Living in RACs	3	15
Living in urban areas	3	14
Living in rural areas	1	5

## GENERAL CONTEXT

As reported by the Roma Task Force, between June and July 2023 it was estimated that about 1,530 Roma refugees were residing in Moldova, of whom 54% were females and 46% were males. The population was evenly divided between adults (48%) and children (47%), with 5% over the age of 65. The age distribution was generally uniform across Moldova, although the majority of those over the age of 65 (86%) resided in the central region and the Left Bank of the Dniester River.

The majority of Roma refugees surveyed by the Roma Task Force were residing in urban areas, with only 28% living in rural locations. The rural population slightly exceeded the general trend among the Ukrainian refugee population in Moldova, of whom, according to protection monitoring, about 20% had opted to live in rural areas. With regards to accommodation type, 51% of those surveyed were residing in private accommodations, while about 44% were staying in refugee accommodation Centers (RACs). The RAC population for Roma refugees was much higher than for the Ukrainian refugee population overall.

## INTENTIONS

All Roma participants stated that they felt safe in Moldova and that they had arrived in the country with their families. When it came to long-term plans, everyone stated that they wished to return to Ukraine when the war was over, with some people stating that they would need financial assistance to do so.

Only two participants, both residing in a rural area, shared plans to go further to Europe (Switzerland and Germany) as they believed that they would receive more support there in terms of humanitarian aid and financial assistance. However, they also stated that they planned to go back to Ukraine when the war was over.

### LEGAL STATUS

All of the ethnic Roma FGDs participants stated that they had received temporary protection. None reported any challenges in obtaining it (including those residing in the Transnistrian region). Persons residing in Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs) mentioned that free transportation to IGM offices had been provided to register for temporary protection, as well as assistance with pre-enrolment. At the same time, people stated that they had not observed any significant change/improvement in their local integration in Moldova after receiving temporary protection, although one participant mentioned that access to healthcare had become simpler after receiving this legal status.

### ACCOMMODATION

Generally, participants staying in RACs in urban areas were satisfied with their living conditions. They also stated that they did not face any eviction risks. Participants residing in one RAC in a rural area, however, raised concerns about the living conditions there, in particular, the fact that the rooms were crowded as they were hosting up to three families, with illnesses spreading quickly among residents due to the close quarters. These participants expressed their hope to move out of the RAC when possible. All of the ethnic Roma participants from the Transnistrian region resided in private rented accommodation.

They reported multiple problems in securing adequate accommodation, including the reluctance of property owners to rent to Roma refugees and high rental costs.

### ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

In all of the FGDs, there were Roma participants who had sought medical assistance in Moldova at some point during their stay in the country. Several individuals mentioned that they or their family members had had to call an ambulance and had been hospitalized and that the hospital treatment had been provided free of charge. People were generally aware that healthcare services for children were provided for free. Only in one FGDs in a rural area did participants mention that they had been asked to show that they had temporary protection to access medical services.

Among the main challenges cited by Roma refugees residing on the right bank of the river Dniester in terms of access to health care was the unavailability of free dental care for adults and children. People shared that each time they or their children needed to see a dentist they had to pay and that the services were quite expensive. The cost of medicines was also raised as a significant obstacle in accessing quality healthcare.



#### Participants recommendation:

- Continue and expand the provision of vouchers for the healthcare programme.

## ACCESS TO EDUCATION

None of the Roma FGDs participants residing on the right bank of the Dniester River had children enrolled in either Moldovan or Ukrainian schools (in-person or online), even though their children had been attending school when they were living in Ukraine. Discrimination and bullying were the main reasons cited for not enrolling their children into local schools in Moldova. In one location participants mentioned that in 2022 children from the Roma community had started attending a local school but were treated badly by the local children causing them to drop out. In a different location, Roma refugees staying in a RAC stated that there were no Russian-language schools in the area and that they feared that their children would struggle in Romanian-language schools. All the participants who were residing in RACs stated that their children were attending literacy classes provided thereby humanitarian actors. They were generally quite satisfied with these classes and observed that their children were progressing well in learning the Romanian language. Only in one location did Roma children attend extracurricular activities that were provided free of charge by the municipality. None of the participants had children attending kindergarten. This was explained by the tradition within the Roma community of taking care of young children at home.



### Participants recommendation:

- Place Roma community mediators at local schools. This would make parents feel more confident about enrolling their children in school and could help prevent and combat discrimination and bullying.

## SOCIAL SERVICES AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Several participants mentioned that they were receiving social benefits back in Ukraine, mainly child-birth financial support. None of the participants had applied for any social services in Moldova and were generally unaware of the social services to which they were entitled.

## EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

Most ethnic Roma FGDs participants reported that they survived on humanitarian assistance and support from their relatives. On the Right Bank, participants in two locations noted that some (male) family members were officially employed.

However, participants relayed that people generally opted for informal seasonal work in agriculture, with teenagers sometimes also engaging in these income-generating opportunities. The main impediment in obtaining formal employment cited by participants was the lack of employment opportunities in the areas where they resided. Several women in various locations expressed their interest in opening small businesses or engaging in self-employment activities (retail, sewing workshop), but said they would need financial support and education to do so.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION

All the participants from the right bank were aware of the Green Line where they could access information or raise complaints. However, participants noted that they had greater trust in information provided in person rather than through a hotline. As a result, they preferred to get information from representatives of humanitarian organizations who were visiting the RACs or from RAC managers.



”

*We feel good in Moldova, safe and our children are warm in winter, but we dream of the day when we go home.*

A Roma refugee woman coming from Mariupol town in Ukraine (currently, an occupied territory)

*Representatives of refugee communities, host communities, Ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+, youth, older persons, local authorities, and volunteers participating in the Community Forum 2023.*

© UNHCR/Salahaldeen Abdulrahman

## COMMUNITY COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

In all locations where FGDs with Roma refugees were conducted, participants reported positive interactions with the local community and with refugees from other ethnicities. People mentioned that they participated in community events organised in the RACs and in the community and that their children also had friends among the local children. They also had positive interactions and received support from the Moldovan Roma community.

## OTHER CONCERNS

In all locations, people reiterated the need for continued humanitarian aid and financial support and stressed the importance of predictability of assistance.

# LGBTIQ+ refugees



## MAIN POINTS RAISED

- Long waiting period for the asylum interview
- Limited job opportunities and lack of awareness of available learning courses or professional development opportunities

● No. of females ● No. of males

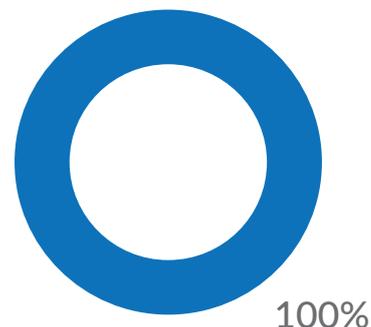


Figure 10 Disaggregation of LGBTIQ+ FGD participants by gender

	# of FGDs	# of people
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
Living in private accommodation and with host communities	1	4
Living in urban areas	1	4

Nationalities: Ukraine and Russian Federation

## INTENTIONS

The length of stay in Moldova of LGBTIQ+ participants varied, ranging from a few weeks to a year. Proximity to Ukraine influenced the decisions of some to come to Moldova. Participants had different plans. Some intended to remain in Moldova over the medium- to long-term and were awaiting confirmation of a secure legal status. Others saw Moldova as a temporary stop, waiting for visas for eventual relocation to countries further west.

## LEGAL STATUS

The LGBTIQ+ group included participants with different legal statuses. Half were asylum-seekers from the Russian Federation, with one still awaiting a decision on his asylum claim one year after his asylum interview. The other half either had temporary protection or were considering applying for it.

## EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

Participants reported different views on employment and their careers. Some were actively looking for jobs, having specific skills like hairdressing, while others were still deciding their next steps. Job opportunities, especially online, seemed limited, and there was a general lack of awareness about potential learning courses or professional development opportunities. One participant who was fluent in Romanian saw his language skills as an asset for further integration in the labour market. The need for more information on job opportunities and education courses was emphasized.



UNHCR partnered with over 40 government, UN, humanitarian, International and national organizations to host a Day at the Park event in Chișinău, featuring educational and recreational activities for refugee and Moldovan families all day long, including musical performances from Moldovans and refugees from around the world.

© UNHCR/Eugenia Ciurca

## COMMUNITY COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

LGBTIQ+ participants highlighted both positive and challenging aspects of their interactions with the local community. Some cited conflicts with neighbours based on their Ukrainian nationality, suggesting instances of discrimination. That said, FGD participants stated that they generally did not experience negative attitudes towards them or have conflicts with the local community due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, although they generally did not disclose this information to others. The participants felt connected to and supported by the local NGOs of LGBTIQ+ persons, recognizing them as an important resource for their local integration.

## ACCOMMODATION

Most of the LGBTIQ+ participants were living in a shelter provided by a local NGO, with some having previously lived in RACs or with relatives. They had decided to change their type of accommodation either to have more personal space or because they were not happy with the RAC management. One participant was renting an apartment and reported having a good relationship with the landlord.

## ACCESS TO MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

FGD participants presented a range of experiences regarding healthcare services. Some participants had had positive experiences and were able to obtain medical care without charges. Others, though, faced obstacles, particularly in obtaining dental care or medical care for their children after being told by a doctor that they needed to present a residence permit. None of the participants, however, or their partners needed more specialized healthcare services.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Participants relied on various sources to gather information, with the Internet being the primary tool. Local organizations working with LGBTIQ+ persons were also recognized as a reliable source. While participants did not cite a particular information source as a primary resource, online platforms were key. Participants noted as well that they were aware of where to seek support for lodging complaints, indicating a level of knowledge about available avenues for assistance and support.

# Recommendations



## GENERAL

- 1.1. Continue and deepen involvement of refugees in their protection, including through community mobilization (Government, RCF Partners).
- 1.2. Disseminate findings of 2023 PA to relevant actors, including participants (UNHCR, AAP Task Force).
- 1.3. Continue and strengthen outreach activities to refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons, particularly outside of RACs (Government, RCF Partners).



## IN THE AREA OF BASIC NEEDS

- 2.1. Continue to provide multi-purpose and targeted cash assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons, and to Moldovan nationals hosting refugees (RFC Partners, Donors).
- 2.2. Make available non-food items to vulnerable refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons, especially during the winter months (RFC Partners).
- 2.3. Provide additional financial support to refugees during the winter months to cover increased energy costs and to buy warm clothes; distribute firewood to the extent possible (Government, UNHCR, Partners).
- 2.4. Increase outreach and assistance to refugees residing in the Transnistrian region, in particular those from vulnerable or marginalized groups, such as ethnic Roma, persons with disability, and older persons, and ensure access to assistance and services in the rest of Moldova (Government, RCF Partners).



## IN THE AREA OF ACCOMMODATIONS

- 3.1. Ensure available spaces at Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs) for vulnerable refugees in light of RAC closures currently underway (Government).
- 3.2. Develop longer-term solutions for refugees unable to afford private rentals, including affordable housing programmes and combine these with employment or income-generating activities. (Government, RCF Partners, Donors).
- 3.3. Ensure appropriate conditions at government accommodation centres, in particular with regards to water and sanitation and room occupancy levels (Government).
- 3.4. Ensure that government accommodation centres are accessible to persons with disabilities (Government, RCF Partners, Donors).
- 3.5. Monitor ability of refugees benefiting from rental assistance programmes to assume accommodation costs once the programme ends and consider extending the programme for individuals as needed (RFC Partners, Donors).
- 3.6. Provide interpretation in main languages when communicating with individuals residing at the Temporary Accommodation Centre (TAC) (Government, RCF Partners).

3.7. Ensure diversity of meals at the TAC meeting religious and dietary needs (Government).

3.8. Monitor discrimination against refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons in the private housing market, in particular, based on nationality and race/ethnicity, and ensure awareness of available complaint mechanisms (Government, RFC Partners).



#### **IN THE AREA OF HEALTH CARE**

4.1. Continue information campaigns for refugees from Ukraine explaining available medical services and encouraging beneficiaries of temporary protection to register with family doctors (Government, RFC Partners).

4.2. Continue and expand information campaigns for health centers and hospitals to explain available services for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons, including those with temporary protection. (Government, RFC partners)

4.3. Include beneficiaries of temporary protection and asylum-seekers in the state medical insurance program, with financial support provided by the international community (Government, Donors).

4.4. In the absence of medical insurance for beneficiaries of temporary protection and asylum-seekers, provide key medications free of charge and expand access to specialized medical services and non-urgent surgeries and dental care; expand the provision of vouchers for medical care in the absence of affordable services (Government, RCF Partners, Donors).

4.5. Support the government of Moldova in expanding specialized health services in rural areas, to the benefit of both Moldovans and refugees (Government, Donors).

4.6. Engage with the de facto authorities in the Transnistrian region on how to increase the availability of specialized doctors in the region; support medical services provided by civil society organizations in the Transnistrian region (Government, RCF Partners, Donors).



#### **IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

5.1. Undertake information campaigns for refugees from Ukraine on available social services and social assistance programmes, as well as eligibility requirements, on both banks of the Dniester River (Government, RCF Partners).

5.2. Provide capacity and financial support to relevant government agencies, at the national and local levels, to include refugees in government programmes (Government, RCF Partners, Donors).

5.3. Expand access of refugees with disabilities to government assistance programmes for persons with disabilities (Government, Donors).

5.4. Ensure that all persons granted refugee status, humanitarian protection or stateless status are aware of integration services provided by IGM; expand access to IGM's integration programme to persons granted temporary protection (Government, RCF Partners, Donors).



## IN THE AREA OF EDUCATION

- 6.1. Promote enrolment of Ukrainian refugees in Moldovan schools (Government, RCF Partners).
- 6.2. Continue to make available dedicated spaces in local schools for children to study together online if accessing studies in Ukraine (Government, RCF Partners, Donors).
- 6.3. Sensitize teachers on the difficulties refugee children face and their role in supporting integration and preventing bullying (Government, RCF Partners).
- 6.4. Pilot a “buddy” system at local schools, pairing new refugee students with Moldovan students already studying in the school. (Government, RCF Partners)
- 6.5. Continue and expand extracurricular activities in Moldovan schools, especially sports and cultural events, and provide transportation to them for children residing in rural areas (Government, RCF Partners).
- 6.6. Increase availability of Romanian language classes for refugee children (Government, RCF Partners, Donors).
- 6.7. Share information on internship opportunities for Ukrainian students enrolled in Moldovan universities (Government, RCF Partners).
- 6.8. Develop training sessions, clubs, and thematic workshops at schools to enhance skills and foster community engagement among refugee and Moldovan children (Government, RCF Partners).
- 6.9. Ensure access to education for stateless persons lacking certain documentation due to their stateless status (Government).
- 6.10. Increase outreach to the Roma community, especially by community mediators, to promote school enrolment among Roman children (Government, RCF Partners).
- 6.11. Engage Roma community mediators at local schools to promote school enrolment and to combat discrimination and bullying (Government, RCF Partners).
- 6.12. Continue to provide literacy and catch-up classes for Roma refugee children (Government, RCF Partners).



## IN THE AREA OF EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

- 7.1. Increase availability of Romanian language classes (Government, RCF Partners).
- 7.2. Increase information-sharing and counselling on employment opportunities (Government, RCF Partners).
- 7.3. Increase access to childcare for refugees with children, including community-based childcare (Government, RCF Partners).
- 7.4. Develop an engagement strategy with the private sector, advocating for the hiring of refugees (Government, RCF Partners).
- 7.5. Undertake an awareness-raising campaign with potential employers on the rights attached to different legal statuses, in particular temporary protection and asylum-seeker status (Government, RCF Partners).

7.6. Provide further support to the National Employment Agency (NEA), both nationally to develop its platform to better target refugees, and at the regional level to undertake job matching between to refugees and businesses (Government, RCF partners).

7.7. Increase opportunities for professional/business development for refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons, especially outside of Chisinau (Government, RCF Partners).

7.8. Support refugees with disabilities and older refugees in identifying and securing employment that matches their experience and abilities (Government, RCF Partners).

7.9. Expand transportation options in rural areas to facilitate employment in other localities, either through expanded public transportation routes or transportation provided by employers or partners (Government, RCF Partners).

7.10. Extend the duration of asylum-seeker certificates to address employer concerns about the duration of legal stay (Government).

7.11. Ensure access of refugees to bank accounts and promote expansion of available financial services (Government, RCF Partners).



#### **IN THE AREA OF LEGAL STATUS AND ACCESS TO ASYLUM**

8.1. Ensure that persons displaced from Ukraine have access to a stable legal status and are aware of how to obtain it (Government, RCF Partners).

8.2. Ensure the availability of IGM mobile teams to register for temporary protection for those unable to travel to an IGM office (Government).

8.3. Amend the decision on temporary protection to allow beneficiaries to travel outside of Moldova for more than 45 days cumulatively (Government).

8.4. Invest additional resources in government asylum, statelessness and naturalization systems to avoid undue delays in adjudications (Government, RCF Partners, Donors).

8.5. Improve dialogue between asylum-seekers and state-appointed attorneys on case appeals, including through more regular meetings and the provision of interpretation (Government).

8.6. Provide training to IGM asylum officers on the adjudication of claims based on sexual orientation or gender identity (Government, RCF Partners).



#### **IN THE AREA OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

9.1. Improve the quality and timeliness of information provided by the Green Line, as well as other information sources regularly accessed by refugees (Government, RCF Partners).

9.2. Continue to use trusted communication channels when relaying information, in particular social media channels such as Viber and Telegram, while recognizing that some refugees will have limited access to them (RCF Partners).

9.3. Improve outreach to non-Ukrainian asylum-seekers and stateless persons on available services and assistance (RCF Partners).

9.4. Consider establishing targeted, trusted social media channels with basic information for young people coming to Moldova from Ukraine and other countries (RCF Partners).

9.5. Create a service provision platform for refugee adolescents and youth, providing information on mentoring and teaching activities and opportunities (RCF Partners).

9.6. Ensure that refugees are aware of complaint/feedback mechanisms and that those who lodge complaints receive a prompt reply (RCF Partners).

9.7. Consider the establishment of a feedback and response channel for refugees residing in the Transnistrian region or facilitate access of refugees residing in the region to existing channels and ensure that information related to services provided on the Left Bank are included; inform refugees residing in the Transnistrian region of these resources (RCF Partners).



#### **IN THE AREA OF COMMUNITY COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE**

10.1. Continue to monitor community relations between refugees and host communities, especially in the north of the country (Government, RCF Partners).

10.2. Ensure that assistance is provided to both refugees and vulnerable Moldovan citizens (Government, RCF Partners, Donors).

10.3. Ensure local community events are publicized in places that refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons frequent (Government, RCF Partners).

10.4. Inform local community members about the sources of funding for Ukrainian refugees, as well as the support being provided by donors and humanitarian actors to vulnerable Moldovans (Government, RCF Partners).

10.5. Organize informal events, focused on cultural learning, debunking stereotypes, and facilitating interaction and experience exchange between Ukrainians and Moldovans, as well as between non-Ukrainian refugees and asylum-seekers (Government, RCF Partners).

10.6. Create a space/safe space for interaction and informal communication between refugee and Moldovan adolescents and youth (Government, RCF Partners).

# Annex 1

## Ukrainian refugees residing in the Transnistrian Region

	# of FGDs	# of people
Total	6	33
Living in private accommodation and with host communities	6	33
Living in urban areas	6	33

### GENERAL CONTEXT

There are no official statistics on the number of Ukrainian refugees residing in the Transnistrian region. UNHCR estimates the number to be between 4,000 and 6,000 people. According to the General Inspectorate for Migration, as of 22 January 2024, 4,178 people residing in the Transnistrian region have been granted temporary protection.

### INTENTIONS

Almost all FGDs participants had been living in the Transnistrian region for more than a year and planned to return to Ukraine as soon as the war was over. Almost all the adolescent and youth FGDs participants, however, stated that they planned to finish their studies in Moldova before returning to Ukraine.

### LEGAL STATUS

All FGDs participants living in the Transnistrian region had obtained or were in the process of obtaining temporary protection. None reported encountering any difficulties with the enrolment process.

### ACCOMMODATION

FGDs participants in the Transnistrian region were predominantly living with host families or in private accommodations. Private accommodations were viewed as cheaper than on the Right Bank. However, Roma refugees expressed experiencing poor living conditions, citing overcrowded apartments, and limited financial resources to secure more suitable housing.

● No. of females ● No. of males

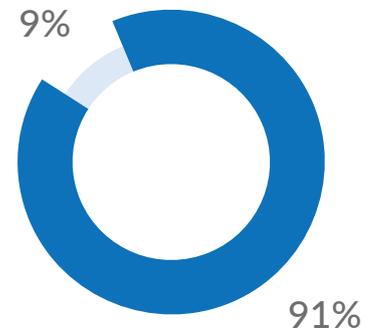


Figure 11 Disaggregation of FGDs participants living on the Left Bank of the Dniestr River by gender.



*War is stupid, it would be better for people to work for the community all together instead of making war.*

A refugee woman in Tiraspol (Transnistrian region)

*Ukrainian Day in Moldova, is an annual event that transcends borders with music, concerts, and a heartfelt promotion of Ukrainian-Moldovan relations. A tradition that began before the war in Ukraine, persisting every year as a testament to the enduring spirit of camaraderie and cultural connection.*

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## EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

In the Transnistrian region, in particular Tiraspol, access to employment was considered easier for FGDs participants who had been born on the territory and later resided in Ukraine, as opposed to those now living in the region for the first time. Those born in the Transnistrian region were considered locals and were more familiar with the region. Several FGDs participants cited concerns about job stability and low salaries as reasons for unemployment, with some stating they were unable to work due to childcare responsibilities. Despite interest in entrepreneurship and small grants, participants perceived more opportunities for such endeavours on the Right Bank of the Dniester River than on the Left Bank. Roma refugees also stated that they did not have access to official employment, noting the same concerns. While male participants expressed that they were considering trying to find employment on the right bank, female participants said that they planned to continue taking care of their children rather than work outside the home.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION

FGDs participants from the Transnistrian region stated that they did not have a single trusted source of information which made them feel disconnected and lost.

### **ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE**

People staying in the Transnistrian region reported a general lack of trust towards local doctors, expressing concern about their abilities. They noted that obtaining quality medical care was expensive and that travelling to Chisinau was also difficult due to cost. Older people (over the age of 60) and Roma refugees residing in Tiraspol mentioned unmet medical needs, as well as a lack of specialized doctors (ophthalmology, neuropathology) for children and adults as their main health care concerns. The high costs of medicines were also emphasized.

### **ACCESS TO SOCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES**

FGDs participants living in Ribnita noted that they were considered foreigners rather than refugees in the region and thus were ineligible for social support available to refugees from local authorities. A woman residing in the Transnistrian region who had registered for social assistance on the right bank of the Dniester River after giving birth there had not yet received any aid after waiting for more than six months. Regardless of accommodation type or place of residence, all participants stated that they lacked sufficient information about available social assistance programs and eligibility criteria in Moldova, either on the left bank or the right bank.

### **COMMUNITY COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE**

Refugee participants living in the Transnistrian region did not report any conflicts or tensions with the local communities, although concerns were expressed about bullying and discrimination against Roma refugee children at a local school.

### **ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

Teenagers and young people attending local schools in the Transnistrian region generally reported positive experiences, including receiving free high-quality hot meals and forming friendships with classmates. The enrollment process was reported as straightforward. Those in graduating classes of secondary school stated that they were continuing their Ukrainian education online as they planned to enter universities in Ukraine and were concerned it would not be possible to do so with a diploma issued in the Transnistrian region.

# PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT REPORT 2023

## REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

February 2024

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