

Perceptions tracking project- Main findings from Ukrainian refugees in Poland, Moldova and Romania

Executive summary

Ukraine's millions of internally displaced people (IDPs) and millions who have crossed into neighbouring countries make the fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War Two.¹ Due to the war's intensification, the country has suffered thousands of casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure, forcing people to flee for safety, protection, and support. Since 24 February 2022, nearly 8.1 million refugees from Ukraine have been recorded across Europe. Almost 5 million people have registered for temporary protection and other national protection schemes in Europe.²

The international community responded quickly to the large influx in Ukraine's neighbouring countries, and private initiatives and volunteers have played a key role in responding to the humanitarian crisis in both Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. The media regularly highlight the efforts of volunteers, NGOs, and local municipalities that support people with shelter, food, and transport.

Ground Truth Solutions is supporting the Disasters Emergency Committee's member agencies³ and their implementing partners to demonstrate their Core Humanitarian Standard commitments, listen to Ukrainian voices in surrounding host countries, and improve programming in real time by better understanding the perceptions, priorities, and feedback of affected people and their host communities.

To this end, we have already conducted two rounds of quantitative and qualitative surveys a among affected people in Ukraine (see the [project page on the GTS website](#)). In order to also capture the experiences and perceptions of Ukrainians in the surrounding countries, we conducted a social-media survey from January to February 2023 among Ukrainian refugees in Poland, Moldova, and Romania using community groups and social channels such as Telegram, Facebook, and Viber. We collected a total of 931 complete interviews. We asked people's views on access to assistance, aid-seeking behaviour, information access, knowledge of feedback mechanisms, and fairness.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the administrators of all the groups and channels on Telegram, Viber and Facebook that helped to distribute the survey among Ukrainian refugees in Poland, Romania and Moldova. Special thanks go to Vladyslav Kulikov, administrator of the network of groups "Ukrainians in Poland" and "Help for Refugees".

This data collection is part of a bigger perceptions tracking project funded by the DEC. For more information, find us on groundtruthsolutions.org or reach out to serhii@groundtruthsolutions.org, marina@groundtruthsolutions.org or rieka@groundtruthsolutions.org.



Note! This survey design has limited viability for comparison of data across countries and subgroups within countries for statistically significant differences (see the limitations section at the end of the bulletin for more detail). For this reason, this bulletin focuses on trends in the perception of aid among refugees in Poland, Moldova, and Romania.

¹ Reuters. March 2023. "Ukraine exodus is fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since WW2 – UNHCR chief".

² As of 20 February 2023. Reliefweb. 2023. "NGOs mark one year since activation of the Temporary Protection Directive and call for continued support to refugees from Ukraine".

³ Action Against Hunger, ActionAid, Age International, British Red Cross, CAFOD, Care, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, International Rescue Committee, Oxfam, Plan International, Save the Children and World Vision.

Key findings



Almost all respondents (**94–99%** across Poland, Moldova, and Romania) need aid, despite already receiving assistance. This shows that most people who receive support in Poland, Moldova, and Romania still depend on it.



People list cash assistance, food, non-food items (e.g., hygiene products, clothes, medicine), medical services, and winterisation support as their main needs in all three countries. In Moldova and Poland, Ukrainian refugees tend to mention the need for cash and in-kind products more often than refugees in the other two countries (for whom food and non-food items are more frequently mentioned), while those in Romania tend to need housing and transportation support.



Many Ukrainian refugees rely on potentially harmful coping mechanisms, such as taking loans.

Ukrainian refugees have low expectations of the humanitarian response. Despite this, all their expectations remain unmet. People do not feel informed, have not been consulted on their needs, and do not feel they can influence aid provision.



Although only **33%** of refugees in Moldova have received temporary protection⁴, they are more satisfied with assistance than those in other countries, including with the information they receive and the fairness of aid distribution.



People name the UN and UN-related organisations as the main aid providers, especially in Moldova and Romania. Churches and faith-based organisations (FBOs) also play an important role in providing assistance to Ukrainian refugees, especially in Moldova (**77%** have received aid from religious establishments).



In Poland, people say that local and central governments play a prominent role in providing humanitarian assistance. They mention UN and international organisations less frequently than refugees in Romania and Moldova.



In all three countries, one-third of people have received support from local volunteers and the local community. In Poland, this is the second-most common source of assistance after UN agencies, on par with the local government, highlighting the vital role of local volunteers in supporting the refugee community.



In-person registration (**44–59%**) is one of the most common ways to register for assistance. Some respondents, particularly mothers of young children, express difficulties with the in-person registration process and suggested the adoption of remote registration.



Most people do not know how to ask questions, file complaints, or provide feedback to humanitarian actors, although Ukrainians in Moldova are relatively more aware (**23% vs 7%** in Poland and **13%** in Romania).

Background

We listened to 931 Ukrainians displaced as a consequence of the war who are currently in Poland, Moldova and Romania.

Country

 Moldova: 37% (340)

 Poland: 48% (449)

 Romania: 15% (42)

 Moldova  Romania  Poland

Gender

 men: 4% (14); **11% (16)**; 6% (25)

 women: 96% (326); **89% (126)**; 94% (424)

Age

 18-34: 28% (95); **21% (30)**; 24% (109)

 36-59: 66% (225); **69% (98)**; 70% (312)

 60+: 6% (20); **10% (14)**; 6% (28)

Settlement type

 Capital: 65% (221); **30% (43)**; 10% (45)

 City: 21% (72); **57% (81)**; 74% (334)

 Village: 14% (47); **13% (18)**; 16% (70)

Temporary protection status

 Yes: 32% (110); **97% (137)**; 87% (391)

 In process: 2% (8); **2% (3)**; 11% (48)

 No: 61% (206); **1% (2)**; 1% (3)

Aid recipient

Aid recipient: 99% (337); **99% (140)**; 94% (423)

Non-aid recipients: 1% (3); **1% (2)**; 6% (26)

People in need (PIN)

 PIN: 100% (339); **99% (141)**; 96% (431)

 non-PIN: 0% (1); **1% (3)**; 4% (18)

Social media channels

 Telegram

 Viber

 Facebook

⁴The Government of the Republic of Moldova grants temporary protection to displaced persons from Ukraine. This is an exceptional measure to provide an immediate form of protection, offering access to services to people who meet the eligibility criteria.

Recommendations from affected people based on general findings

- **Make aid delivery more flexible and varied through more targeted planning.** People have diverse needs and request the flexibility to choose the goods they receive. This can be addressed by consulting with people in need, on the kind of support should be prioritised and on how it should be provided as well as focusing on more flexible types of aid, such as cash and voucher assistance.
- **Adopt more flexible registration modes and aid distributions to accommodate the needs of vulnerable groups,** such as remote registration for persons with disabilities and for mothers with small children. Digital vouchers, instead of aid kits, can help reduce long queues at distribution points.
- **Pay more attention to aid delivery in small settlements and rural areas,** which people say are often overlooked. Mobile registration and distribution teams could help reach these areas.

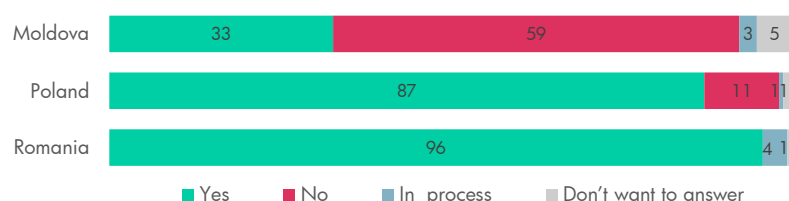
Detailed findings

A profile of people in need and aid recipients in Poland, Moldova and Romania

The target population for this study is Ukrainian refugees in need and who have received humanitarian aid since 24 February 2022, who are residing in Poland, Moldova, and Romania. Most people fall into both categories: they have received assistance and they need (more) support (95%). Only a small proportion of respondents (2%) have received aid but no longer require it, while the remaining 3% indicate need support but have not yet received anything.

Almost all Ukrainian refugees surveyed in Romania (99%) and the vast majority of those surveyed in Poland (88%) have received – or are in the process of obtaining – a certificate with a temporary status. In Moldova, only one-third of respondents hold a refugee status. This may be because there are no restriction policies for Ukrainians to stay in the country, even without temporary protection status.

Do you receive a temporary protection status?



Percentages per country may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

The shares of the countries in the sample differ from the countries' shares of overall numbers of Ukrainian refugees: Poland accounts for 90% of the refugees in these three countries, while Romania and Moldova account for about 5% each (1.5 million Ukrainians were granted temporary asylum in Poland, versus 100,000 in Romania and Moldova). All figures are therefore presented separately for each country.

Refugee response plan⁵

Refugees registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes:

- Poland: 1,583,563;
- Moldova: not applicable;
- Romania: 126,711.

Of the respondents in our sample⁶, 89–96% are women. Most (66–69%) are aged 35 to 59. This survey group was thus largely middle-aged women, which is consistent with the general structure of refugees in UNHCR surveys⁷.

Some respondents were internally displaced before 24 February 2022: in Poland and Moldova, 9%; and 16% in Romania.

Most respondents from Moldova reside in Chisinau, while only 10% of respondents in Poland and 30% in Romania live in the respective capitals.

⁵ UNHCR. 2023. "Ukraine Refugee Situation".

⁶ For more details on the composition of the total sample, see Annex 1 Methodology.

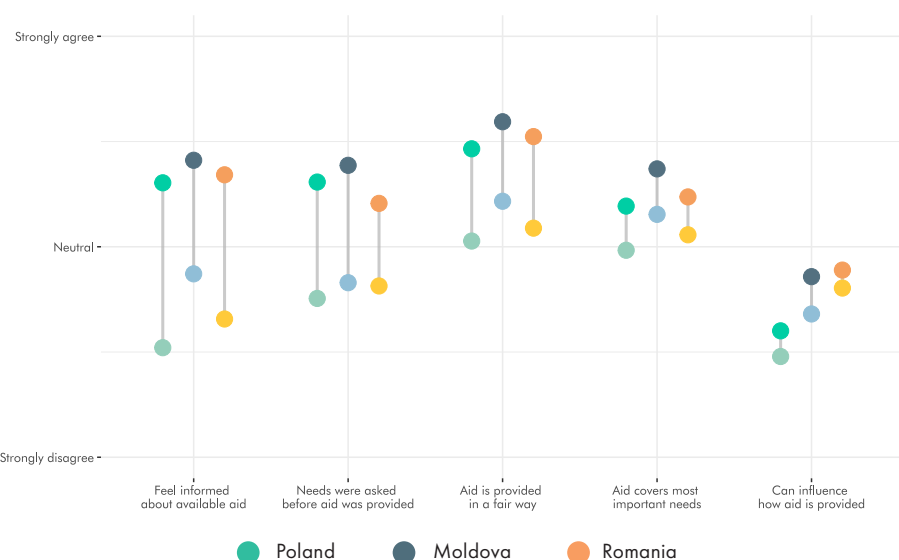
⁷ UNHCR. 2023. "Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine".

Ukrainian refugees have low expectations of the humanitarian response

Ground Truth Solutions uses the same set of questions to measure perceptions of humanitarian responses in different contexts to enable cross-national comparison. These questions derive from consumer satisfaction research and help to identify areas of importance, pointing humanitarian actors to where investment is needed.

Ukrainian refugees in Poland, Moldova, and Romania have relatively low expectations of how humanitarian assistance should be provided. Despite this, their expectations for multiple dimensions of aid provision are not met. The biggest gap between expectations and perceptions concerns information provision: people feel less informed than they expect to be. When asked who has most difficulty receiving aid, people in Poland, Romania, and Moldova list those who lack information in the top three most-struggling groups. People in each country prioritise fair aid provision, but their expectations of fairness are not met.

Most people are somewhat positive in assessing whether aid meets their most important needs. Our study in Ukraine showed that people found aid more relevant than expected⁸. In Poland, Romania, and Moldova, however, this is not the case.



INFORMATION: Do you expect to be informed/Do you feel informed about the aid and services available to you?

FAIRNESS: Do you expect/Do you think that aid is provided in a fair way in the settlement where you live now?

TRANSPARENCY: Is it important for you to/Do you know how aid agencies spend money in the settlement where you live now?

PARTICIPATION: Do you expect/Do you think that people in the settlement where you live now can influence how aid is provided?

Only for aid recipients

RELEVANCE: Do you expect/Do you think that aid covers your most important needs?

NEEDS ASSESSMENT: Do you expect that/ To what extent did aid providers ask affected people about their needs before providing aid?

Why track expectations?

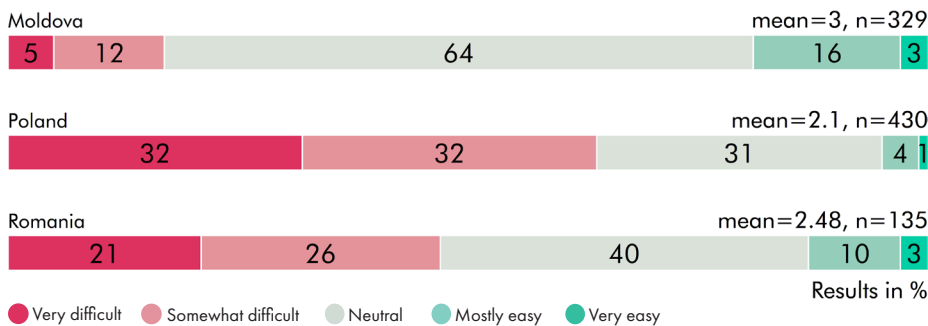
To understand how people experience a response, it is useful to know their initial expectations. Contrasting expectations with perceptions highlights priority areas for action. The graph on the left illustrates the gaps between people's perceived importance and lived realities of certain priorities. The widest gap exists between the expectation of being informed about available aid/services and people's actual level of awareness; the lowest gap is between expectations and perceptions of opportunities to participate in the aid provision process.

⁸ Ground Truth Solution. 2023. "Call for communication, collaboration, and cash: Perceptions of aid in Ukraine".

Access to aid differs but is not easy for anyone

Ukrainian refugees in the three countries perceive access to assistance differently. Ukrainians in Moldova demonstrate the greatest satisfaction, with only 17% of respondents finding aid access difficult. Those in Poland and Moldova paint a more negative picture: 64% of refugees in Poland and 47% in Romania struggle to access aid.

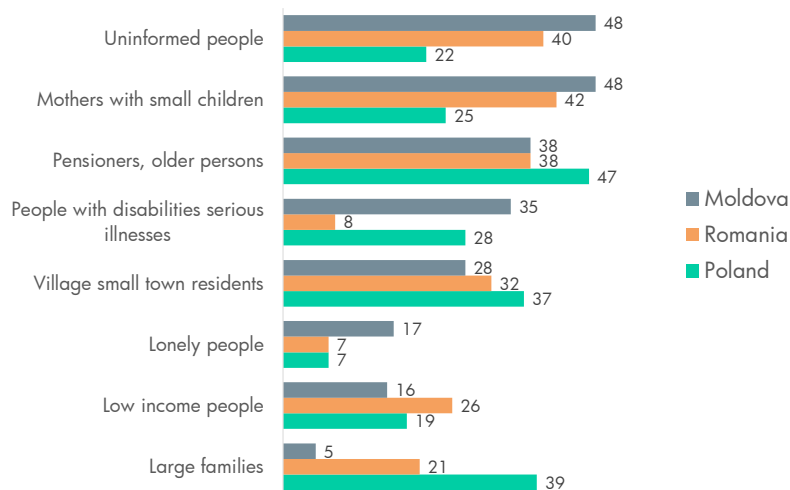
In your opinion, how difficult or easy do you find it to access aid?



Percentages per country may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Ukrainian refugees in Poland mention older persons as having the greatest challenges in aid access. In Moldova, people say that the main access barrier is a lack of information and in Romania, refugees perceive mothers with small children as most challenged. In Poland, respondents say – much more often than those in Moldova and Romania – that large families encounter more barriers to assistance.

Who has more difficulties receiving aid and services?



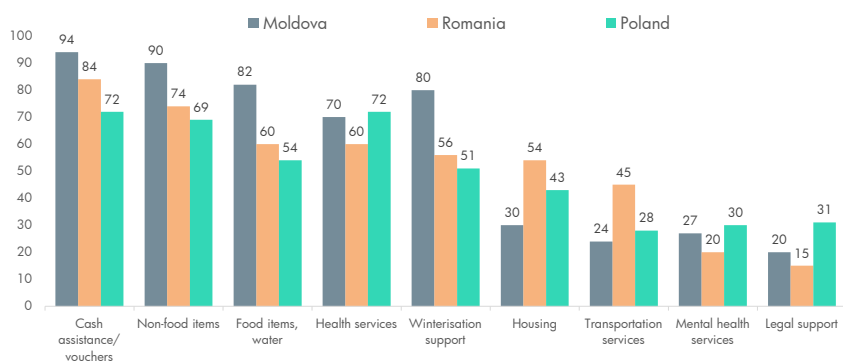
Percentages per country do not add up to 100 due to the multiple-choice question format.

Aid is relevant but insufficient

Although most people have received assistance, a large proportion need additional support. Ukrainian refugees mention cash assistance, food and non-food items, medical services, and winterisation support as their most pressing needs. Non-food items such as hygiene products (56–62%), clothing (50–62%), and medication (53–67%) are particularly in demand, with relatively more need for clothing and medication in Moldova.

In Moldova and Poland, Ukrainian refugees report great need for cash and voucher assistance (CVA), food, and non-food items. In Romania, people ask for more housing and transportation support.

In the last month, have you needed any of the following types of aid or services from humanitarian organisations or the government?



Percentages per country do not add up to 100 due to the multiple-choice question format.

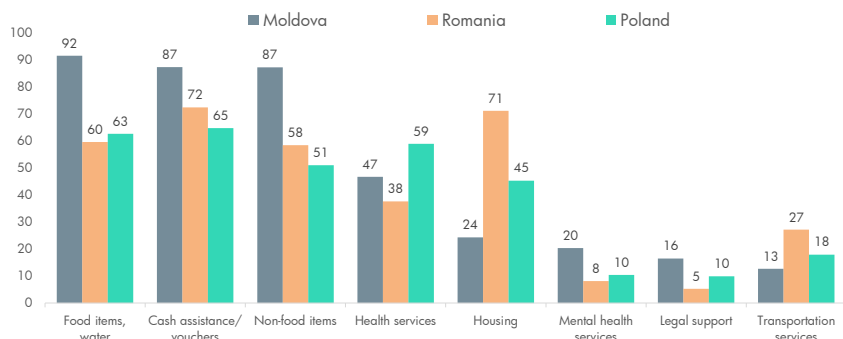
Food, non-food items, and CVA are among the most common aid types in all three countries. However, the very high level of these needs in Moldova coincides with a very high level of assistance received. This indicates that the vast majority of refugees in Moldova are more dependent on assistance than in the other two countries. One reason could be low employment rates. According to the UNHCR survey⁹, only 25% of refugees in Moldova are employed, compared to 35% in Poland and 32% in Romania.

In Romania, 71% of respondents receive housing assistance, likely because the Romanian government and the EU launched the 50/20 Program¹⁰ that supports Ukrainian refugees with housing expenses. In Poland, the majority (59%) receive health and mental health services.

⁹ UNHCR. 2023. "Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine".

¹⁰ DOPOMOHA. 2022. "50/20 Program".

Have you received any of the following types of humanitarian aid since 24 February 2022?

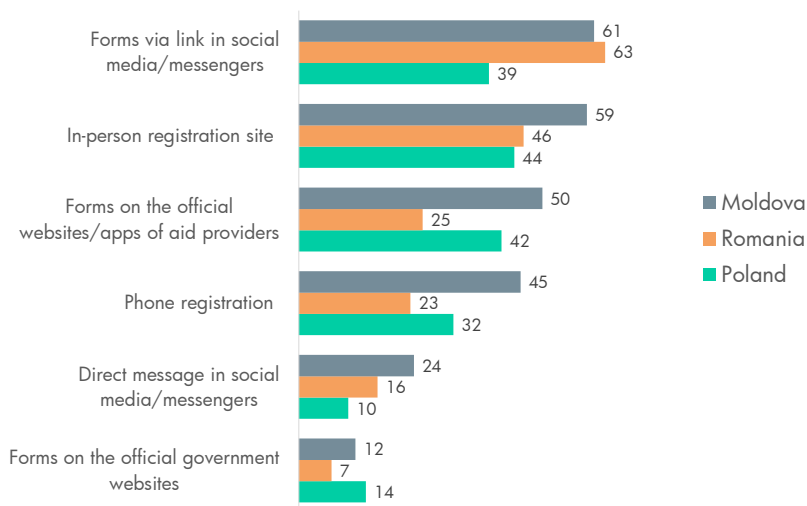


Percentages per country do not add up to 100 due to the multiple-choice question format.

Most people have applied for aid at least once (Moldova, 86%; Poland, 75%; and Romania, 64%). Online applications, through shared links on social networks and media, are most frequent, followed by in-person registrations. In Moldova and Poland, website/app are used relatively more often than in Romania.

People who applied through social media used Viber (90% in Moldova; 48% in Poland and Romania) and Telegram (46–47% in Moldova and Poland; 63% in Romania) most frequently. This aligns with findings from Internews in Romania¹¹, where the vast majority of respondents chose Telegram as their preferred method of receiving information about aid (among online methods), followed by Facebook and Viber.

What channel did you use to apply for aid?



Percentages per country do not add up to 100 due to the multiple-choice question format.

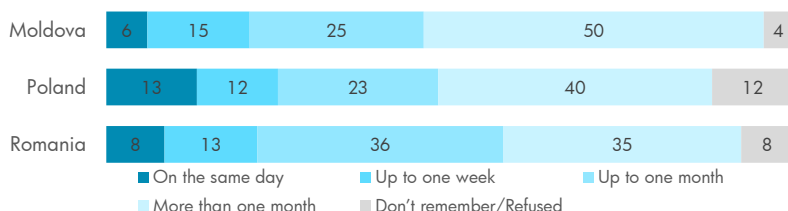
Note! In this context, it is important to keep in mind the limitations of this study as a social media survey, which is likely to bias the survey towards more digitally literate people who are more likely to choose digital methods of registration.

¹¹ Internews. 2022. "Barriers & Bridges: Communication and Information Exchange with Ukrainian Refugees in Romania".

How fast does aid reach refugees?

In each country, one-fifth of people received aid within one week of their arrival and about half received aid in the first month after arriving in the country.

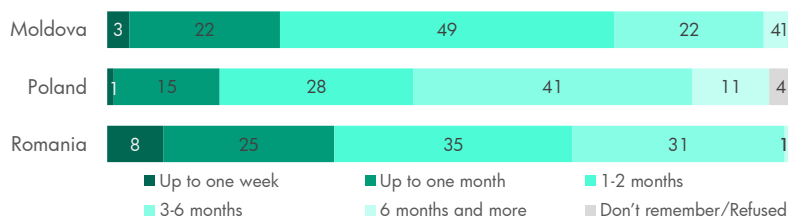
How long after crossing the border of Ukraine did you first receive any humanitarian aid?¹²



Percentages per country may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Refugees in Poland wait longer to receive initial financial assistance (only 16% of respondents received aid in the first month) than those in Moldova (25%) and Romania (33%). Almost 75% of respondents who received financial assistance in Moldova and Romania received it in the first two months, compared to only 44% in Poland. Based on qualitative consultations with refugees in these countries prior to the survey, this seems to be due to the more centralised system of temporary residence registration in Romania and Moldova, where registration centres also offer the opportunity to register for UN cash assistance.

How long after crossing the border of Ukraine did you first receive cash assistance?



Percentages per country may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

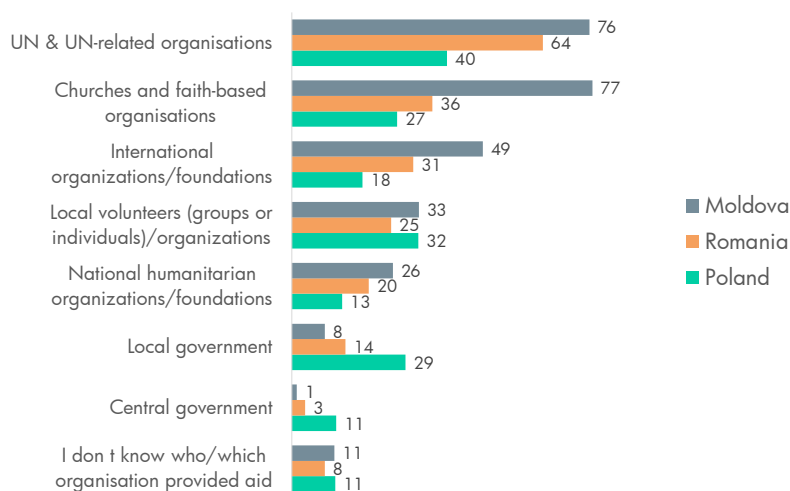
¹² 'Any type of humanitarian aid' is understood as any form of support refugees received regardless of whether from local volunteers, humanitarian, faith-based, or governmental organisations. This includes food assistance, services such as transportation, legal, medical, CVA, non-food items, and so on.

International organisations and local volunteers play an important role in aid provision

In all countries, people name UN and UN-related organisations as the main providers of humanitarian assistance, followed by international organisations. In Moldova, 49% say they received aid from international organisations.

Local volunteers and faith-based organisations play an important role in aid provision as well. Across the three countries, around 30% of respondents identify local volunteers as aid providers. The impact of faith-based organisations is especially evident in Moldova, where 77% of respondents report receiving assistance from them, compared to 27% in Poland and 36% in Romania. In Poland, the third-biggest aid providers are local (29%) governments.

Who did you get aid from?

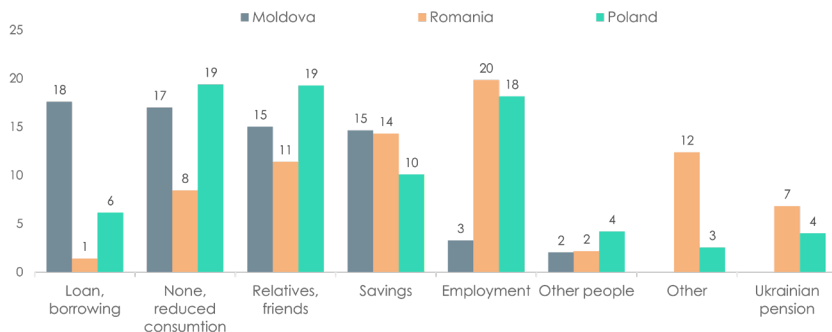


Percentages per country do not add up to 100 due to the multiple-choice question format.

Various coping mechanisms are used to make ends meet

An overwhelming majority of Ukrainian refugees continue to need humanitarian assistance, so it is crucial to focus on coping mechanisms that enable them to live without this reliance. Respondents most frequently mention getting a job (20% in Romania and 18% in Poland), seeking help from family and friends (11–19%, depending on the country), using savings (10–15%), and reducing consumption (8–19%) as coping mechanisms. In Moldova, people also borrow money (18%).

How do you make ends meet when aid does not meet your most important need?

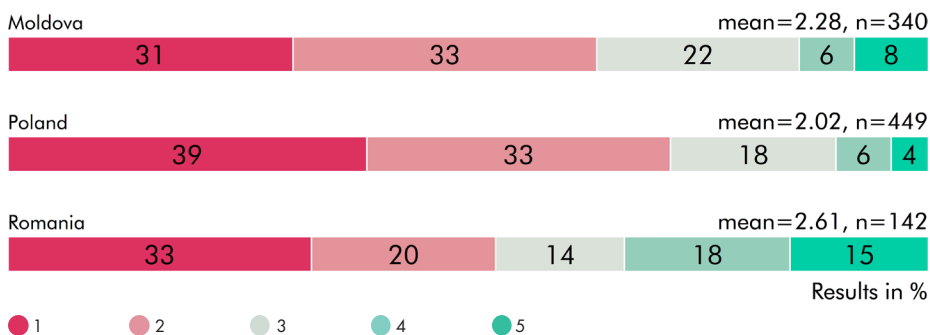


Percentages per country do not add up to 100 due to the open-ended question (coded as a multiple choice).

People require sufficient knowledge of local languages to find jobs. In this respect, Ukrainians in Poland have – in theory – much better employment opportunities, as refugees’ knowledge of Polish is relatively better than their knowledge of Romanian (which is spoken in both Romania and Moldova). Meanwhile, the Ukrainians surveyed in Romania have relatively better knowledge of English. Moldova is where the smallest proportion of refugees is working to make ends meet, potentially due to language barriers.

What is your level of foreign language proficiency?

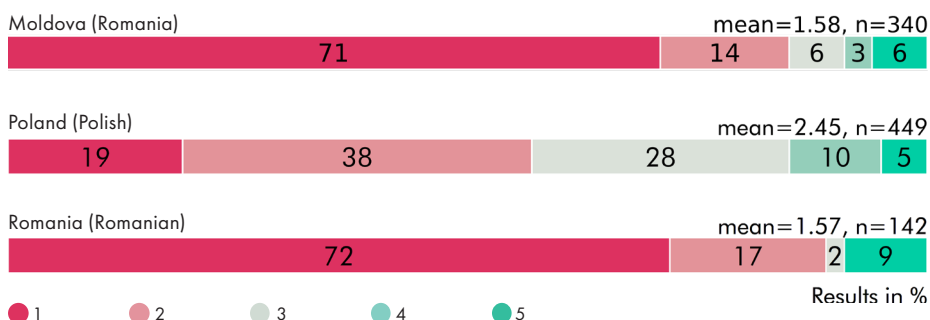
English



Respondents were asked to choose on a scale from 1 to 5 where 0 is “don’t know at all” and 5 is “know very well and can work/study using this language”

Percentages per country may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Local language of the host country

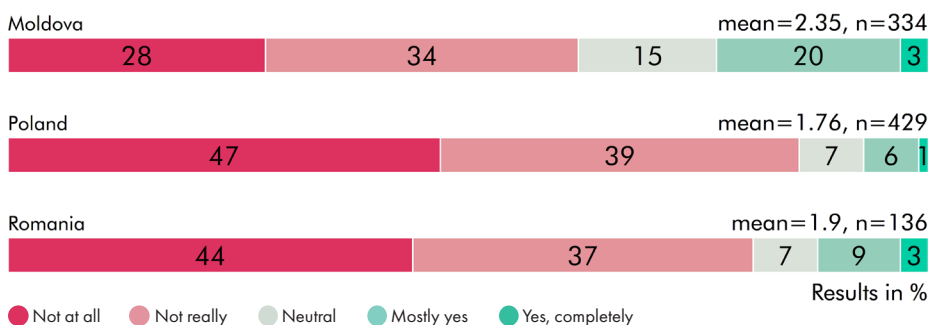


Percentages per country may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Most people do not know how to give feedback; those who know how, rarely do

Most respondents do not know how to ask questions, file complaints, or provide feedback. Ukrainian refugees in Moldova are most aware (23%) and those in Poland are least aware (7%). Of people who know about feedback mechanisms, 28% in Moldova and 20% in Poland have asked a question, filed a complaint, or given feedback at least once.

Do you know how to ask a question, make a complaint, or provide feedback on humanitarian aid or services?

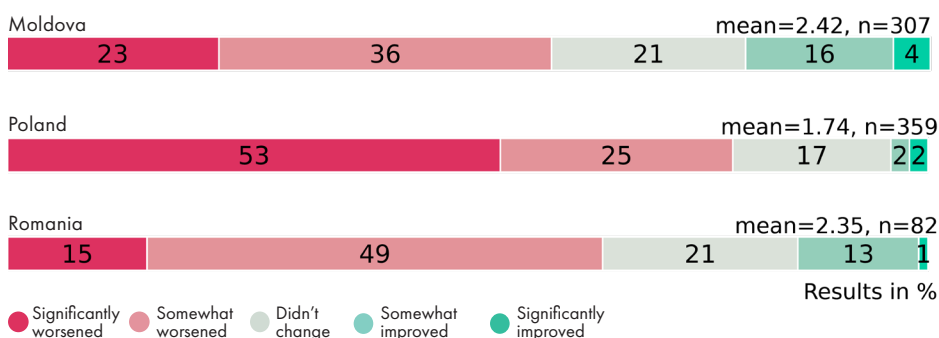


Percentages per country may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Aid provision has deteriorated everywhere

In each country, most respondents say aid provision has deteriorated compared to three months ago. We asked this question in January/February 2023, just when winter is coming to an end. People in Poland are most negative: 78% believe the aid situation has worsened, with 53% saying it has worsened significantly; in Moldova and Romania people tend to say aid has “somewhat worsened.”

Compared to three months ago, how do you think the way aid is provided has changed?



Base: people who moved to the country of current residence no later than November 2022.

Percentages per country may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Why people believe aid provision is deteriorating is unclear from this study. However, funding for the refugee response in Poland, Romania, and Moldova has reduced, and people's savings are exhausted. More than one year into the humanitarian response, long-term solutions are needed to address the needs of Ukrainian refugees and their voices must be included in determining these solutions.

Annex 1: Methodology

This bulletin presents findings and recommendations from a Ground Truth Solutions' survey funded by the Disasters Emergency Committee. We conducted the survey among Ukrainian refugees who fled Ukraine after Russia's full-scale invasion began on 24 February 2022 and who are now in Poland, Moldova, and Romania. In total, we surveyed 931 people in need and aid recipients.

The main objectives of this survey are to deliver critical, real-time perceptions information to response coordinators and managers; and to assess the response's quality and effectiveness over time, through the eyes of affected people and local actors. We try to answer the following research questions:

- Is the humanitarian response accountable to people's needs, priorities, and expectations?
- How can aid be more responsive to the unfolding needs of the affected population in countries around Ukraine?

Target population: Self-identified people in need (18 years or older) and aid recipients among Ukrainians who left Ukraine after 24 February 2022.

Survey mode: Computer-assisted web interviews (CAWI); self-administered online survey using a programmed questionnaire.

Geographic scope: The entire territory of Poland, Moldova, and Romania. We excluded people who indicated another country of residence from the survey.

Sampling approach: Convenience sampling. We sent invitations to complete the survey through groups and channels for Ukrainian refugees on Telegram, Facebook, and Viber. We did not set quotas were set by country or demographic parameters.

Sample size: n = 931 (eligible respondents); Poland n=449, Moldova n = 340, Romania n = 142.

Fieldwork dates: 17 January – 20 February 2023.

Cooperation rate: 41% (COOP1 according to the AAPOR Standard Definitions¹³).

Median length of full interview: 16 minutes, 7 seconds.

Languages: the survey could be completed in Ukrainian or Russian (at the respondent's choice).

Weighting: By gender, age group, and region of residence in Ukraine before displacement. We took the weighting targets from the UNHCR Regional Protection and Monitoring survey¹⁴. Although the UNHCR survey was also not representative, due to its fairly broad coverage and sample size, and the fact that it also covered refugees without temporary protection, its data is the best available option for weighting in the three countries studied.

¹³ American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2023. [Standard Definitions](#).

¹⁴ UNHCR. March 2023. ["Protection Risks and Need of Refugees from Ukraine"](#).

Margins of error:

- Poland: 5.7% for values close to 50% (with a confidence interval of 95% and design-effect of 1.53);
- Romania: 11% for values close to 50% (with a confidence interval of 95% and design-effect of 1.85);
- Moldova: 6.2% for values close to 50% (with a confidence interval of 95% and design-effect of 1.38).

Limitations:

- The survey is non-probabilistic and was conducted using convenience sampling. Given this and the small sample sizes for each country (especially Romania), the possibilities for generalising it to the entire Ukrainian refugee population are limited. Therefore, the data and comparisons presented here should be viewed as trends rather than actual values of parameters in the population.
- Due to the way the sample was recruited, it is likely to be biased towards more digitally literate people.
 - In particular, the sample lacks older persons, who, according to our research in Ukraine, have greater problems and needs. Although we weighted the data by age, which proportionally increases the weight of each person aged 60+ in the sample, it is likely that older persons in our sample are more digitally literate, given the way respondents were recruited (web survey on social media), and thus likely differ from the general population of people aged over 60.
- Men are underrepresented in the study sample, even accounting for the fact that most Ukrainian refugees are women. Therefore, there a bias may also result from the fact the surveyed men differ from the general male population among Ukrainian refugees in the studied countries.

Annex 2: List of social media groups/channels where the survey was published

Country	Group/channel name	Social media
Moldova	Ajutor Ucrainenii în Moldova/SOS Українці Молдова/Помощь Украинцам в Молдове	Facebook
Moldova	Українці в Молдові Нумо Спільно	Telegram
Moldova	Поміч біженцям - Молдова	Viber
Moldova	Чат - Поміч біженцям у Молдові	Viber
Romania	Українці в Румунії / Ucrainenii din România / Ukrainians in Romania	Facebook
Romania	Ukraine refugees Bucharest, Romania; Українські біженці - Бухарест, Румунія	Facebook
Romania	Українці в Румунії Нумо Спільно	Telegram
Romania	Помощь гражданам Украины в Румынии Chat	Telegram
Romania	Поміч біженцям - Румунія	Viber
Romania	Чат - Поміч біженцям у Румунії	Viber
Romania	Украинцы в Бухаресте	Telegram
Romania	Cazare Refugiatii Ucraina	Facebook
Romania	BUCURESTI AJUTA UCRAINA-Бухарест допомагає Україні-Bucharest Help Ukraine	Facebook
Poland	Українці в Польщі	Facebook
Poland	Я в Польщі (Yavr.pl)	Telegram
Poland	Допомога українцям. Польща	Telegram
Poland	Українці в Польщі	Viber
Poland	Українці в Польщі Нумо спільно	Telegram
Poland	Українці у Варшаві / Ukrainicy w Warszawie	Facebook
Poland	Українці в Гданську / Ukrainicy w Gdańsku (Trójmieście)	Facebook
Poland	Українці в Катовіцах / Ukrainicy w Katowicach	Facebook
Poland	Українці в Гданську!	Facebook