



DISPLACEMENT PATTERNS, PROTECTION RISKS AND NEEDS OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

Regional Protection Analysis #3

Trends analysis: Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia

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We are grateful for the extensive involvement and support of UNHCR's partners, local authorities, civil society, international organizations, and donors. Most importantly, UNHCR would like to acknowledge the resilience and strength of refugees from Ukraine, who continue to share with us their challenges, fears, and hopes.

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Cover photograph:

Poland. Iryna, a refugee from Ukraine, arrived to Poland together with her three children. Iryna says the assistance she receives from various humanitarian organizations, including Mother's House, is invaluable.
October 2023 © UNHCR/ Anna Liminowicz

Executive summary

Key findings



1 A complex landscape of access to rights in host countries emerges. Over time, refugees from Ukraine have encountered a contrast between positive trends impacting access to rights, including the effectiveness of temporary protection and swift access to employment markets, alongside notable hurdles including in accessing sustainable accommodation and healthcare. The overall picture is influenced by the situation in individual host countries and the socio-demographic characteristics of refugees.



2 Growing difficulties for refugees returning from short visits to Ukraine. The proportion of respondents who experienced challenges upon their return to host countries following visits to Ukraine tripled, **from 6% in Q4 2022 to 18% in Q3 2023**. These challenges include issues such as the revocation of legal status, suspension of social protection benefits, and obstacles when re-entering host countries after visiting Ukraine. Notably, a relatively high proportion of refugees in Poland experienced these challenges.



3 Reduction in the percentage of refugees with missing identity documentation, yet with ongoing challenges. The proportion of refugees reporting missing identity documents decreased in Q2 2023 and Q3 2023 compared to previous periods. Despite this decline, **23% of respondents still reported missing documentation in Q3 2023**, mainly biometric passports, and an increasing number of refugees face difficulties obtaining identity documents in their host countries. Additionally, the necessity to collect documentation continues to drive back-and-forth movements between host countries and Ukraine.



4 Reduced access to key rights amongst refugees with specific needs. Over time, households with individuals who have specific needs - such as older persons, persons with disabilities, and those with serious medical conditions – report lower levels of access to various rights, including identity documentation, long-term housing, healthcare, and employment. This trend highlights a worsening vulnerability among these groups as displacement persists.

Key recommendations



1 **UNHCR recommends against the reduction of support to host countries, host communities and the refugee community.** As safety and security concerns prevent many refugees from currently returning to Ukraine, the focus must remain on supporting people where they are, providing full access to legal status and rights and with a particular focus on the most vulnerable. Refugees should be supported to make free and informed decisions on their future..



2 **UNHCR recommends that refugees' legal status and associated rights in host countries are unaffected by a visit to Ukraine lasting less than three months.** In the event of longer-term travel to Ukraine, UNHCR recommends that hosting countries opt for deactivation of legal status instead of revocation or cancellation – to avoid administrative burdens and facilitate renewed access to protection and assistance if required. The ability of refugees to travel home for short periods can help pave the way for more durable returns in the future, once conditions permit.



3 **UNHCR recommends continued efforts to address administrative or legal barriers which hinder refugees' access to documentation services.** Refugees, particularly those with specific needs, require additional support to replace and issue civil status and identity documentation in host countries, to ensure their access to rights and reduce risks of statelessness.



4 **UNHCR recommends further support for the most vulnerable to access their rights.** 27% of households include at least one individual with a specific need. Challenges faced by vulnerable groups in host countries have the potential to influence return decisions, even in suboptimal conditions in Ukraine.¹ Strategies to include refugees in national systems should strive to address the unique challenges the most vulnerable face in accessing decent work, documentation, social welfare and other rights.

1. UNHCR, Lives on Hold: Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees and IDPs from Ukraine #4, July 2023 available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101747>

Context

The full-scale war in Ukraine has triggered one of the largest displacement crises in the world. As of October 29, 2023, over 6.2 million refugees from Ukraine have been recorded – 94% of whom are dispersed across Europe.²

Since the beginning of the crisis, UNHCR has been closely assessing the protection situation of refugees from Ukraine, notably through the launch of protection profiling and monitoring systems in several countries in Europe. Based on the findings

of the regional protection monitoring exercise, UNHCR has so far released two regional reports ([first report](#), [second report](#)).

This report, the third in the series, explores the trends related to refugees' access to rights in **four countries**: Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. The report is based on **18,501** interviews conducted between October 2022 and September 2023 with refugees who arrived in these host countries during the first half of 2022, in order to identify trends in their access to rights over this period.



*Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. *Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999))*

2. UNHCR, Ukraine Refugee Situation, Operational Data Portal available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

Methodology

UNHCR conducts protection monitoring to systematically gather information on the challenges facing forcibly displaced and stateless persons. Protection monitoring allows UNHCR to conduct evidence-based programming and advocacy, which is informed by the experiences and perspectives of forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

UNHCR and its partners have been implementing a Protection Profiling and Monitoring exercise to regularly collect and analyze data about the protection situation of refugees from Ukraine and monitor changes over time. Interviews are conducted in various locations, including information and assistance points, community centers, collective sites, transit locations and reception and registration centers. Trained enumerators digitally collect data through Kobo Toolbox, which is safely stored in a UNHCR server.

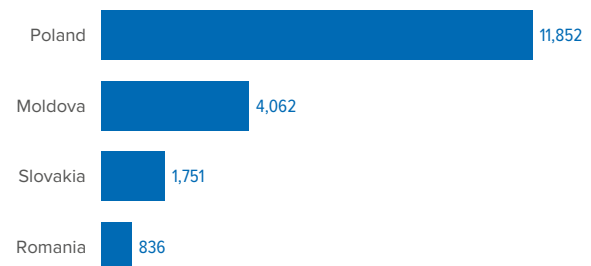
Respondents are identified in the selected locations and asked for their consent to be interviewed using a harmonized regional questionnaire. The results presented in this report must be interpreted according to the limitations of the methodology and the context, particularly:

- While the random selection of respondents and diversification in places of data collection are used to reduce potential bias and ensure the sample covers different segments and profiles of the target population, results cannot necessarily be extrapolated to the population of refugees from Ukraine as a whole, given the non-probabilistic sampling method used.

- The comparison of results across time might be affected by the changes in distribution of interviews by locations across time in the different countries.
- The results reflect refugees' situation and needs at the time of data collection, which may subsequently change depending on a wide range of factors.

With the goal of reducing sampling errors and ensuring regional results are more representative of the overall refugee population, for this regional analysis, post-stratification weights have been applied. The weights were calculated to adjust the sample by two criteria: (i) using the estimated number of refugees recorded in each country to adjust the completed interviews in each country to the true population distribution across countries, and (ii) using estimates of refugee arrivals across quarters to adjust the completed interviews in each quarter to the real distribution of arrivals within each country.

RESPONDENTS BY COUNTRY



Trends analysis: access to rights in host countries

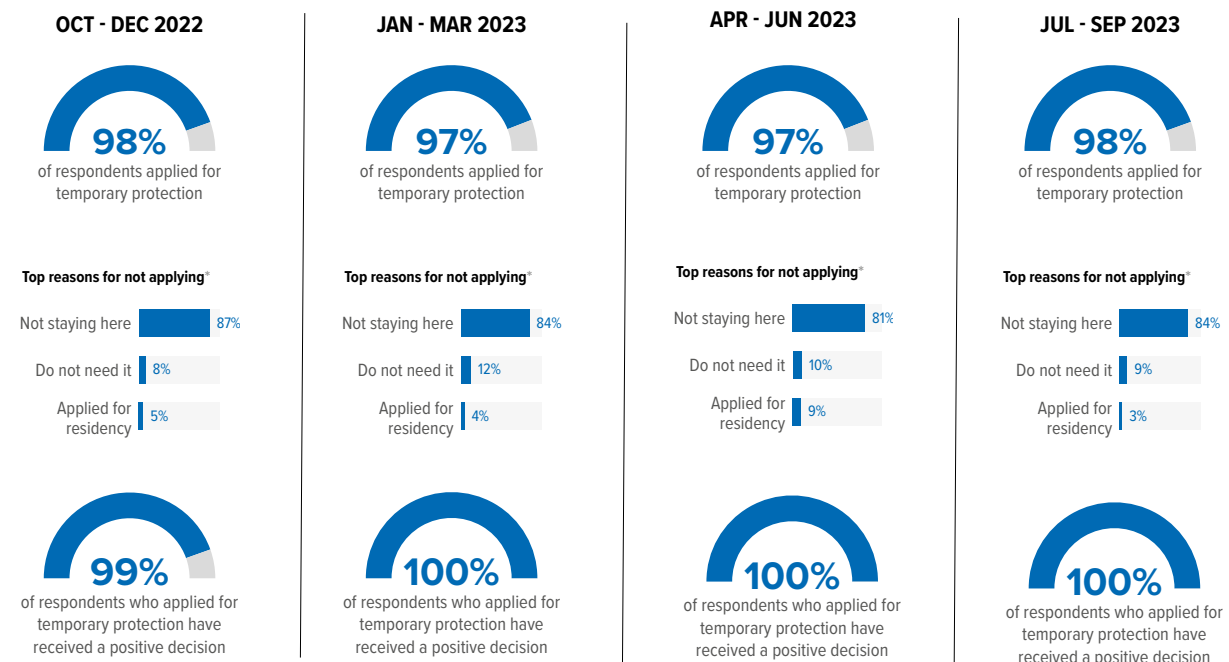
Access to temporary protection³

In response to the mass influx of refugees from Ukraine, the European Union triggered the application of the Temporary Protection Directive – for the first time⁴ – enabling refugees' swift access to rights and protection.

The vast majority of refugees surveyed have both registered for temporary protection and received a positive decision. This demonstrates the practical

efficiency of temporary protection in this context, in managing a mass flow, providing recognition of international protection needs and guaranteeing swift access to safety, documentation and rights. Out of the small portion of refugees who have not applied for temporary protection, most cited not intending to stay in the current host country as their primary reason for not doing so.

ACCESS TO TEMPORARY PROTECTION



*Due to rounding some percent totals do not add up to 100%

- Findings related to temporary protection apply to all countries except Moldova.
- Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?toc=OJ%3AL%3A2022%3A071%3ATOC&uri=uriserv%3AQJL...2022.071.01.0001.01.ENG>

Temporary visits to Ukraine and impact on access to rights

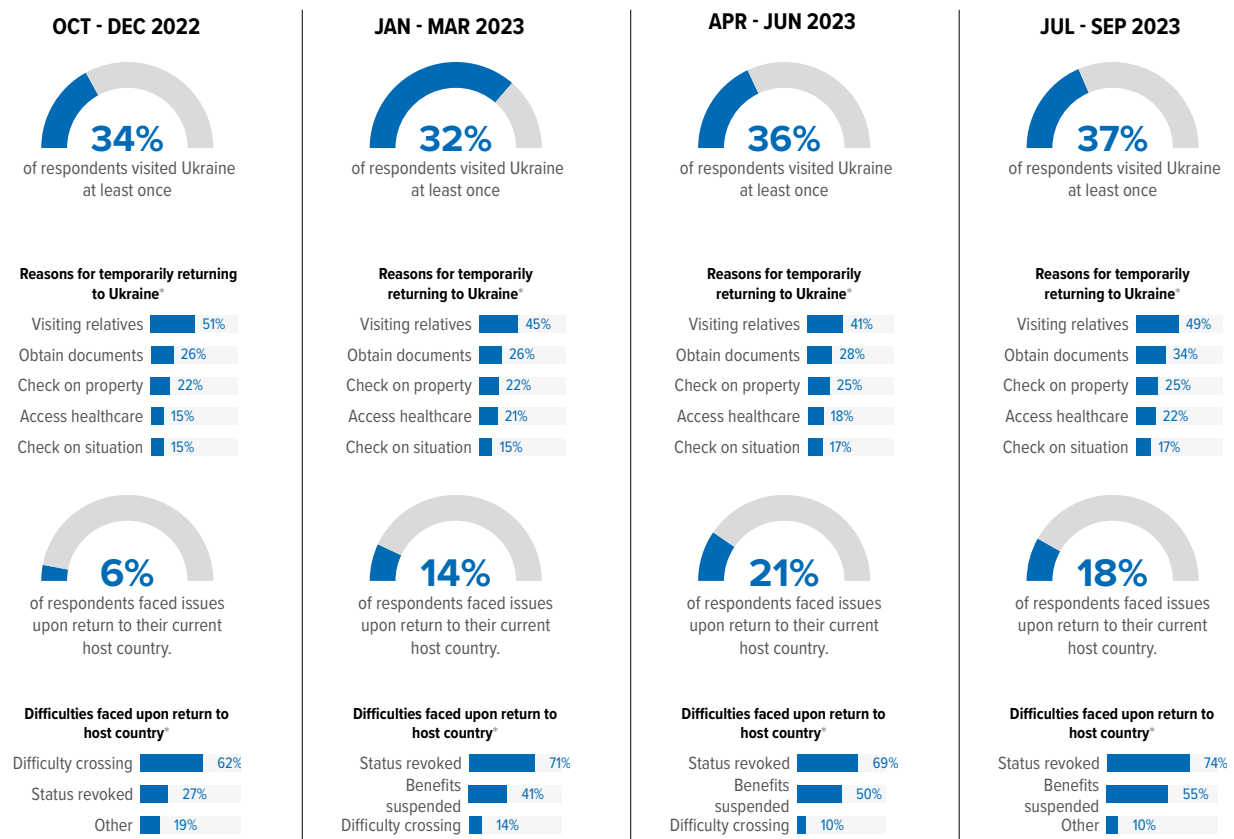
Since their initial arrival to host countries, 37% of refugees surveyed during Q3 2023 have visited Ukraine at least once – a slight increase from the previous three quarters. During all four quarters, the top three reasons for temporarily returning to Ukraine have remained unchanged: to visit family members who stayed behind, to obtain documents, and to check on property.

Upon their return from short visits to Ukraine, some refugees report experiencing difficulties in host countries – from revocation of legal status to suspension of social protection benefits. In fact, when comparing Q4 2022 and Q3 2023, the

proportion of refugees who reported facing difficulties upon their return from Ukraine tripled, jumping from 6% to 18%.

Comparatively, a higher proportion of refugees in Poland reported facing obstacles upon their return from Ukraine. In Q3 2023, out of refugees in Poland who reported visiting Ukraine, 27% experienced challenges upon their return, a significant increase from 7% recorded in Q4 2022. This increase coincides with the adoption of a new law, which stipulates that stays outside of Poland for over 30 days will result in loss of temporary protection status.⁵

TEMPORARY VISITS TO UKRAINE



*Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

5. UNHCR Poland (2023), Protection Monitoring Brief #3 available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102103>



MOLDOVA FOR PEACE

Oferim asistent
persoanelor
din Ucraina
care au fugit
din calea
războiului.



Moldova. Ukrainian refugees work to help fellow citizens in Chisinau. January 2023 © UNHCR/ Colin Delfosse

Access to documentation

As compared to Q4 2022 and Q1 2023, during Q2 2023 and Q3 2023 the percentage of respondents with at least one household member missing identity documentation declined. For instance, in Q3 2023, 23% of refugees surveyed reported having at least one family member missing identity documentation – a drop from 30% recorded in Q4 2022. This decrease is likely linked to the adoption of [resolution 66](#) by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, which expanded the ability of Ukrainian diplomatic institutions to register vital events and issue civil status and identity documents abroad.

Despite the overall decline, however, the proportion of refugees with at least one household member missing identity documentation – mostly a biometric passport – remains considerable: 23% in Q3 2023. Moreover, an increasing number of refugees report inability to obtain identity documentation in host countries. During Q3 2023, out of the 23% of refugees reporting missing documentation, 33% reported that they could not obtain a replacement in host countries, an increase from 27% recorded in Q4 2022. The largest share of refugees who are unable to obtain documentation is recorded in

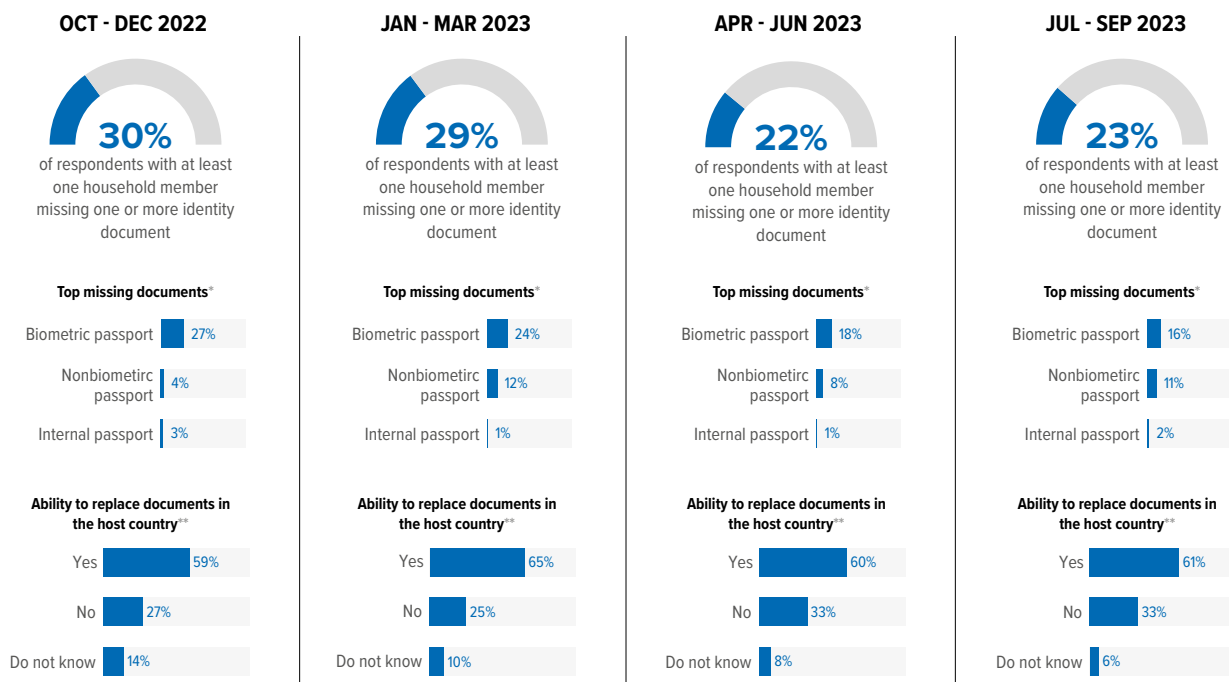
Romania, which may partly be due to long waiting periods to access identity documentation services in the country, reportedly stretching up to six months.

In host countries, numerous factors hinder refugees' access to documentation, including requirements to present supporting documents (which many may have lost during displacement or left behind in Ukraine), long waiting periods, and associated processing fees. Moreover, despite reporting a higher number of household members missing documentation, some refugees who fled areas of Ukraine under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation face additional challenges, such as being asked to travel back to Ukraine to retrieve documents that prove nationality.⁶

UNHCR continues to provide legal services and counselling to support access to documentation amongst the refugee community. In Poland, UNHCR also supports Ukrainian consular offices to enhance their operations.

6. UNHCR Poland (2023), Protection Monitoring Brief #3 available at <https://data.unhcr.org/fr/documents/download/102103>

ACCESS TO DOCUMENTATION

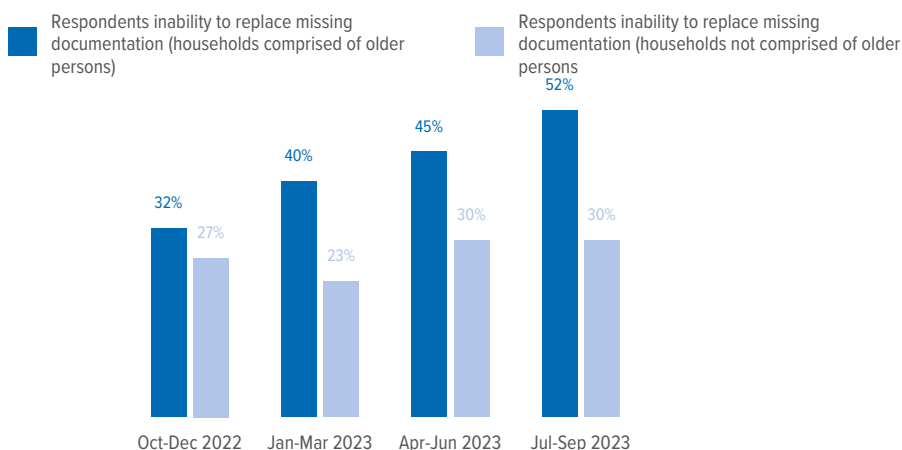


*Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added
 ** Due to rounding, some percent totals do not add up to 100%

In focus: Limited access to identity documentation for older persons

As with other households, over time, the share of households comprised of older persons reporting missing documentation has declined. Concerningly, however, the percentage of older persons who reported that they are unable to obtain documentation in host countries has continuously increased and remains comparatively high. For instance, in Q3 2023, among households comprised of older persons missing documentation, 52% reported being unable to a replacement in host countries, a noticeable uptick from 32% recorded in Q4 2022.

COMPARISON BETWEEN HOUSEHOLDS COMPRISED OF OLDER PERSONS AND OTHERS



Access to accommodation⁷

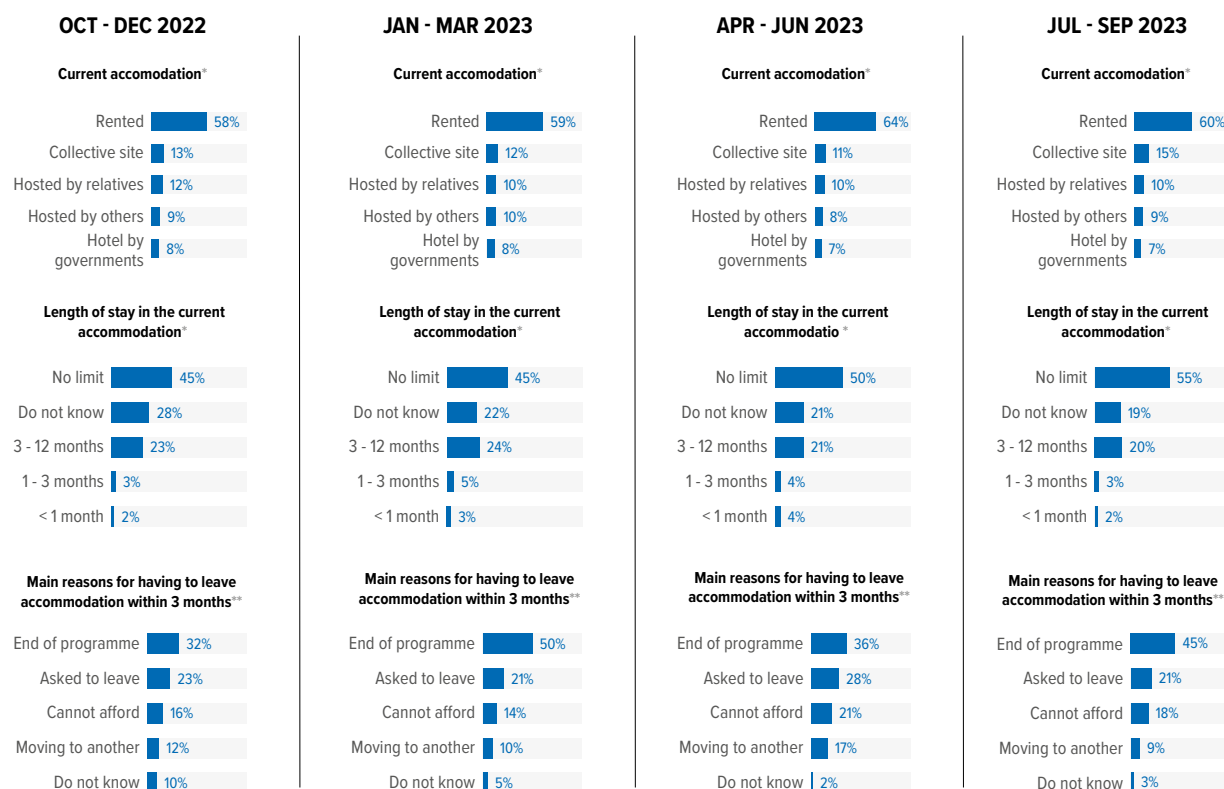
The majority of refugees surveyed reported living in rented accommodation. That said, since the onset of the crisis, many refugees have grappled with limited access to sustainable housing, predominantly due to the short-term nature of accommodation support schemes.

In all four quarters, refugees cited the ending of free accommodation programs as the main reason for having to leave their current housing within three months. Comparatively, during Q4 2022 and the first two quarters of 2023, a higher proportion of refugees in Romania reported having to leave their accommodation within three months. Delays with or a lack of reimbursement for hosting families from the government's assistance programme have purportedly led to the eviction of some refugees in Bucharest.⁸ More recently, in Q3 2023, the inability

of refugees to afford the cost of their accommodation has become a more commonly-reported reason for needing to leave their current housing, which may indicate that financial resources are becoming increasingly strained amongst the refugee community.

Access to private housing markets remains challenging for many, including due to high rental costs and the preference of some landlords for long term tenants. As UNHCR previously noted, the lack of access to sustainable accommodation has a multifaceted impact on refugees and can hinder the enjoyment of their other rights, including education. For instance, some refugees have reported an inability to enroll their children in host country schools because of repeated relocations from different accommodation.⁹

ACCESS TO ACCOMMODATION



*Due to rounding, some percent totals do not add up to 100%

** Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

- On access to accommodation, to ensure that the findings are not affected by place of interview, interviews conducted in collective shelters have been excluded from the analysis.
- European Council on Refugees and Exiles (March 2023), Information Sheet – measures in response to the arrival of displaced people fleeing Ukraine (March 2023) available at <https://ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/ECRE-Update-November-2022-Implementation-of-the-TPD.pdf>
- UNHCR Poland (2023), Protection Monitoring Brief #2 available at [Document - Poland Protection Monitoring Brief #2 \(August to November 2022\)](https://www.unhcr.org/poland-protection-monitoring-brief-2) ([unhcr.org](https://www.unhcr.org))



Slovakia. Ukrainian refugee women answering the call of their compatriots in crisis. March 2023 ©UNHCR/Zoran

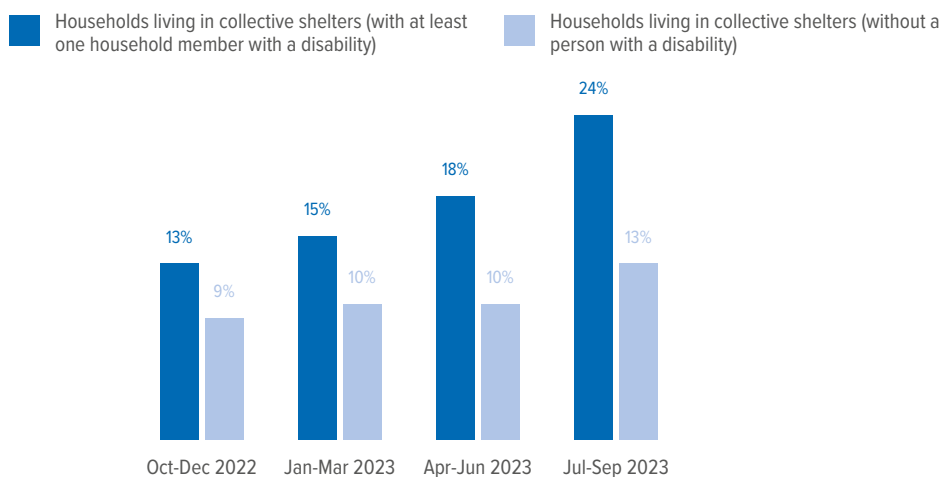
In focus: limited access to sustainable accommodation for households including older persons, persons with disabilities and person with serious medical conditions *

Households comprised of older persons and households with at least one individual with a disability or a serious medical condition were more likely to report that they were living in collective shelters as compared to other households. The percentage of households with at least one person with a disability reporting that they are living in collective sites has also increased from 13% Q4 2022 to 24% in Q3 2023. Conversely, the percentage of other households reporting that they live in collective shelters has remained relatively stable over the same period.

Moreover, a higher percentage of households with at least one person with a disability and households with a serious medical condition reported having to leave their current accommodation within three months – mostly due to the ending of free accommodation programs and inability to afford their current accommodation. This highlights the precarity of their accommodation arrangements as well as the compounded impact of the termination of free housing schemes on these vulnerable groups.

* On access to accommodation, to ensure that findings are not affected by place of interview, interviews conducted in collective shelters have been excluded from the analysis.

COMPARISON BETWEEN HOUSEHOLDS WITH AT LEAST ONE PERSON WITH A DISABILITY AND THOSE WITHOUT

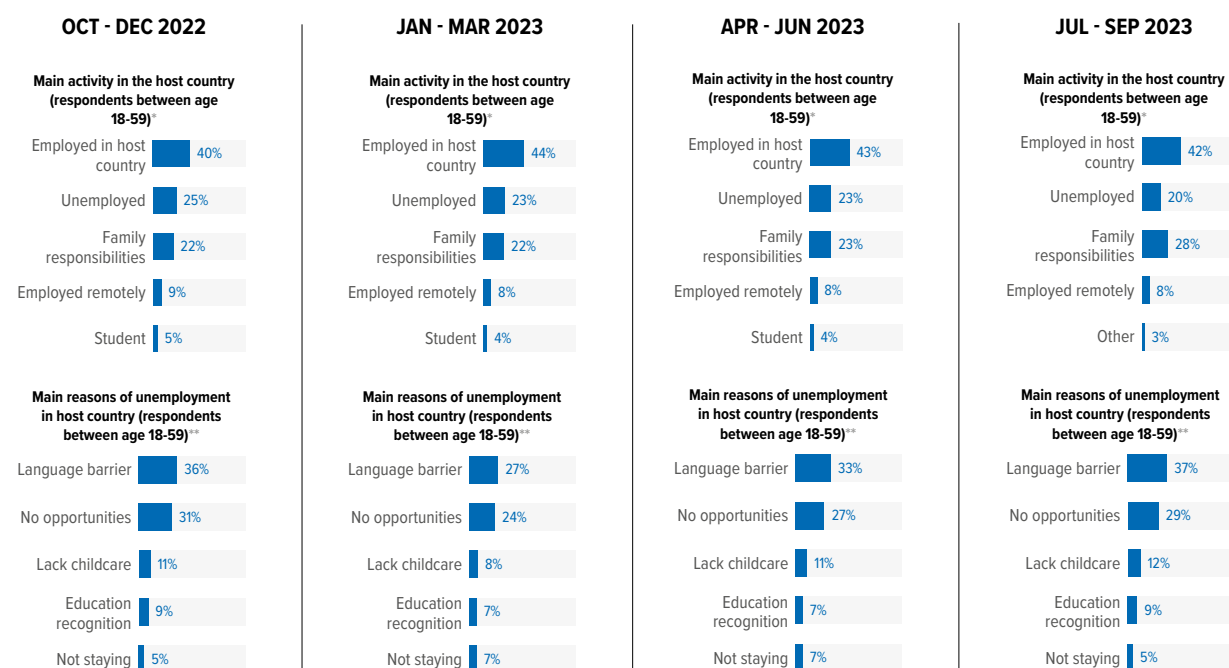


Access to work

Several host countries have introduced measures to ensure refugees' swift inclusion in labour markets – from organizing free language courses to information provision on available job opportunities. In this context, a sizable and a stable portion of refugees aged 18-59 reported being employed in host countries or remotely. It is worth noting, however, that a substantial number of refugees (28% in Q3 2023) are not able to seek employment due to their caring responsibilities.

During all reporting periods, language barriers and lack of opportunities suited to one's skills were the most frequently cited impediments to employment. A lack of access to childcare services is an additional limiting factor: in all reporting periods, nearly half of households with young children (0-4 years old) reported lacking access to childcare services, a challenge that often disproportionately affects the ability of single parents to secure and keep jobs. In addition, the enrolment rates in public schools are still relatively low,¹⁰ and almost 30% of heads of household in Romania and Moldova are full-time caregivers.¹¹

ACCESS TO WORK



*Due to rounding, some percent totals do not add up to 100%

** Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

- UNHCR, Education on hold: almost half of school-aged children from Ukraine missing out on formal education available at <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/education-hold-almost-half-school-aged-refugee-children-ukraine-missing-out>
- UNHCR's fourth intentions survey Micro-data available at [Survey of intentions and perspectives of refugees from Ukraine #4 - June 2023 \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/survey-of-intentions-and-perspectives-of-refugees-from-ukraine-4-june-2023)

In focus: limited access to work for households including people with disabilities and persons with serious medical conditions.*

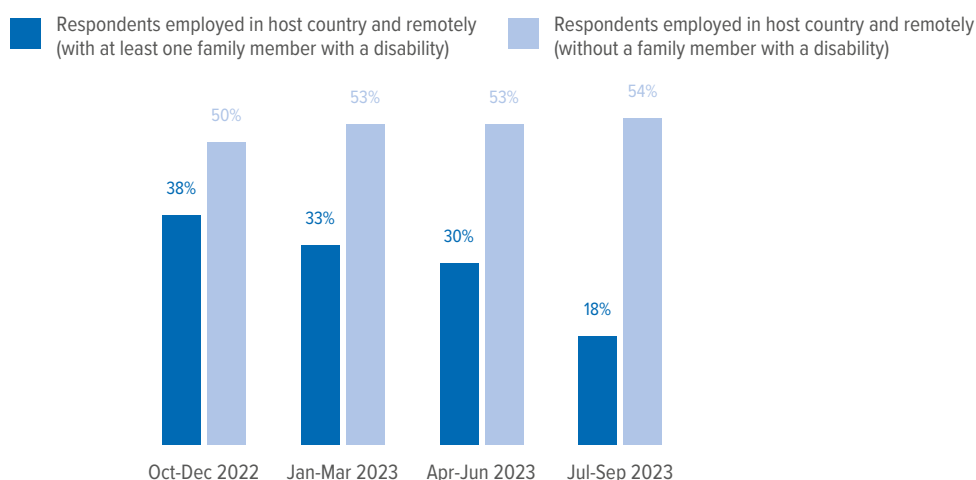
In comparison with others, a significantly smaller and reducing portion of refugees (aged 18-59) from households including individuals with a disability are employed. In Q3 2023, for example, only 18% of respondents with at least one household member with a disability reported being employed, substantially lower than 54% reported by other respondents. Over time, there has also been a steep drop in the share of respondents from households including individuals with a disability who reported being employed – down from 38% in Q4 2022 to 18% in Q3 2023.

Refugees with disabled household member/s often experience heightened challenges finding work, as they may need to stay home to care for their family member/s. This is partly because of the acute lack of access to specialized services for persons with disabilities, including due to lack of early identification procedures and delays with the recognition of disability status.* Furthermore, households with at least one person with a disability routinely report the lack of special education for children, which further reduces their chances of employment.

UNHCR has provided cash assistance to vulnerable sections of the refugee community in neighbouring countries since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, providing bridging support whilst their inclusion in employment and national systems is pursued. Since the beginning of the crisis (and as at the end of October 2023), UNHCR has provided cash assistance to over 530,000 refugees, including persons with specific needs.

* UNHCR Poland (2022), Protection Monitoring Brief #1, available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/97143>; UNHCR (2022) the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive: six months on available at Document - THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEMPORARY PROTECTION DIRECTIVE - SIX MONTHS ON ([unhcr.org](https://www.unhcr.org))

COMPARISON: LEVEL OF EMPLOYMENT BETWEEN RESPONDENTS WITH AT LEAST ONE HOUSEHOLD MEMBER WITH A DISABILITY AND THOSE WITHOUT





Poland. Refugees from Ukraine seek work at Jobs Fairs organized by UNHCR in partnership with City of Warsaw. Ma 2023 © UNHCR/Anna Liminowicz

Access to education

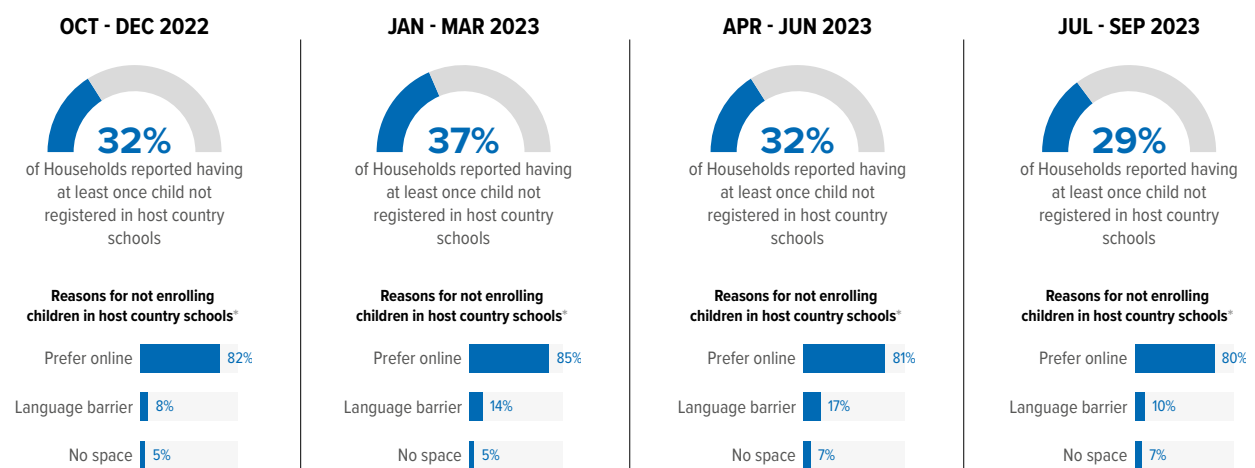
During the reporting periods, the share of households reporting at least one child of school age not enrolled in host country schools remained largely unchanged, staying within the 29-37% range.

At the country level, however, Romania witnessed a sharp decline in the percentage of households who reported having children not enrolled in local schools. During Q3 2023, 39% of households in Romania reported having at least one child not registered in local schools, a marked decline from 70% recorded in Q4 2022. This drop may be associated with the new government assistance

program, which made the enrollment of children in Romanian schools one of the eligibility criteria for receiving assistance.

In all countries – and across all reporting periods – the primary reason cited for not registering children in host country schools is preference to continue online learning through the Ukrainian curriculum. However, as focus group discussions revealed, several factors contribute to refugees’ preference to enroll their children online, including non-admission to host country schools, limited space in schools, and language barriers. In Romania, for instance, language barriers remain an important obstacle to enrollment in local schools.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION



*Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

Access to healthcare

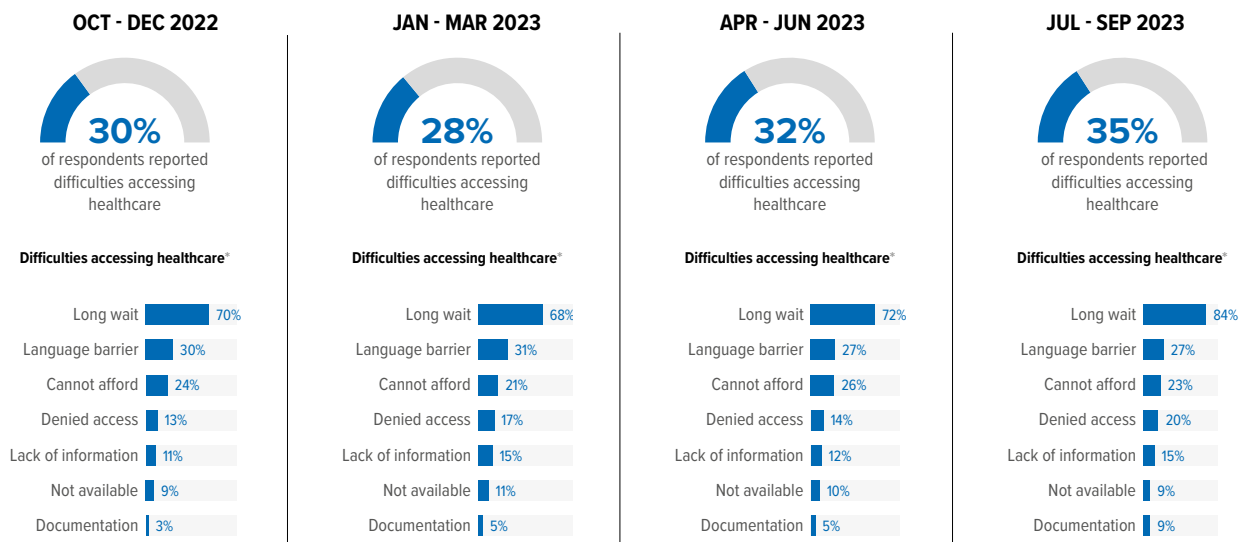
During all four quarters under review, the proportion of refugees who reported difficulties accessing healthcare remained high. In Q3 2023, 35% of refugees surveyed reported experiencing difficulties accessing healthcare, a slight increase from 30% recorded in Q4 2022, 28% recorded in Q1 2023, and 32% recorded in Q2 2023.

In all reporting periods, long waiting times and inability to afford medical fees (and associated fees) were the most commonly reported barriers to healthcare. However, the prevalence of these and other barriers to healthcare varied between

countries. In Poland and Slovakia, for example, long waiting time was the most reported impediment hindering refugees’ access to healthcare, while in Moldova, inability to afford high medical and related costs was the most commonly reported.

Denial of access to healthcare – which often stems from lack of awareness among medical professionals about the extent of refugees’ rights to healthcare – also continues to inhibit refugees’ access to medical care, particularly in Moldova and Slovakia.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

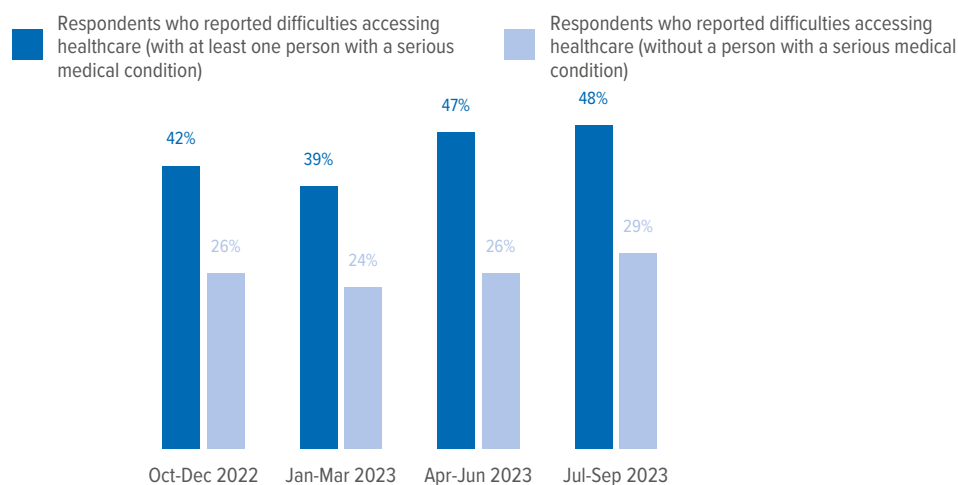


*Multiple responses were possible, so percentages can go over 100% when added.

In focus: limited access to work for households including people with disabilities and persons with serious medical conditions.

During all reporting periods, a comparatively higher percentage of households with at least one person with a disability or a serious medical condition reported experiencing difficulties accessing healthcare than other households, mostly because of long waiting times as well as high medical and associated fees. For instance, in Q3 2023, 49% of households with at least one person with a disability struggled to access healthcare – considerably higher than 32% recorded among other households in the same period.

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH AT LEAST ONE PERSON WITH A SERIOUS MEDICAL CONDITIONS VS OTHER HOUSEHOLDS



DISPLACEMENT PATTERNS, PROTECTION RISKS AND NEEDS OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

Regional Protection Analysis #3

Trends analysis: Moldova,
Poland, Romania, and Slovakia

NOVEMBER 2023



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For further information visit the UNHCR Operational Data Portal for Ukraine:

<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>