

# SURVEY ON ACCESS TO FUNDAMENTAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC RIGHTS FOR UKRAINIAN TEMPORARY PROTECTION HOLDERS IN MONTENEGRO

April 2023



# 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, more than **13 million** people remain uprooted from their homes, causing one of the largest population displacements in Europe since the Second World War.<sup>1</sup>

As a response to the increased arrival of Ukrainian citizens in Montenegro, and in line with the EU directive as of 11 March 2022, the Government of Montenegro activated the Temporary Protection regime (TP) for all Ukrainian arrivals (citizens of Ukraine, persons without citizenship with the last residence in Ukraine, and persons granted international protection in Ukraine). The TP regime was activated for the initial period of one year, until mid-March 2023, however, due to the protracted displacement, the Government extended the protection regime until 11 March 2024. Besides extending the regime, the Government also expanded the scope of protection to people from Ukraine who had residency status in Montenegro prior to the escalation of the war in Ukraine but were otherwise unable to extend it for any reason. UNHCR considers all people fleeing from Ukraine as refugees due to the displacement situation in Ukraine.

Although Montenegro does not share borders with Ukraine, more than **100,000** Ukrainians entered Montenegro after 24 February 2022. As of 10 April, there were **32,070** Ukrainians present in the country, out of whom **4,589** were under TP protection and the remaining **27,481** were under various residency statuses. This represents over 5% of the overall population of Montenegro, which means that according to its capacities, Montenegro is among the first in the world when it comes to the number of Ukrainian refugees hosted per capita.

Women and children represent the overwhelming majority of those applying for Temporary Protection (**66%** and **28%** respectively), among whom **48** children reside in Montenegro without parents.<sup>2</sup> The majority of Ukrainian refugees in Montenegro reside in the coastal municipalities (Budva, Bar, Herceg Novi, Ulcinj, Kotor, Tivat) and the capital city of Podgorica.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Ministry of Interior of Montenegro, March 2023

## 2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC RIGHTS OF TEMPORARY PROTECTION HOLDERS

As per the Law on International and Temporary Protection of Foreigners,<sup>3</sup> the holders of temporary protection are entitled to the following rights in Montenegro:

- 1) residence in Montenegro;
- 2) suitable accommodation, as well as the necessary assistance and the means of subsistence;
- 3) healthcare;
- 4) primary and secondary education;
- 5) information about rights and duties;
- 6) work;
- 7) family reunification;
- 8) personal documents in accordance with this law;
- 9) the right to apply for international protection.

Unlike refugees and foreigners granted subsidiary protection, temporary protection holders are not entitled to social care.

In close collaboration with the line authorities and affected communities, UNHCR follows access to these rights, ensuring that all temporary protection holders enjoy unhindered access to them.

For the purpose of this survey, UNHCR analyzed the access to four key rights by Ukrainian TP holders: accommodation, employment, education, and healthcare.

## 3. METHODOLOGY OF THE SURVEY

In order to understand the challenges Ukrainian TP holders in Montenegro face when accessing fundamental socio-economic rights (accommodation, employment, education, and healthcare), UNHCR conducted the survey during the extension of TP certificates between 23 February – 20 March 2023, in seven municipalities (Podgorica, Budva, Bar, Herceg Novi, Kotor, Ulcinj, and Cetinje) hosting the largest number of Ukrainian refugees. The survey was undertaken in the Ministry of Interior branch offices, with support from the Ministry and UNHCR's partners, the Red Cross of Montenegro and the NGO Civic Alliance, as well as the volunteers of the Embassy of Ukraine in Montenegro.

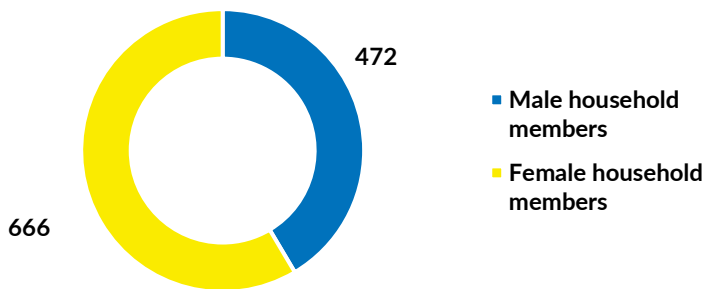
The interviewers used KoBo Toolbox, UNHCR's tool for data collection, inquiring about access to rights, accommodation conditions, special needs, future plans, etc. Heads of households were asked to provide information on behalf of their family members. The findings are based on the responses provided by the TP holders and do not represent an analysis of the national legislation pertaining to the areas covered by the survey.

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<sup>3</sup> OGM, no. 2/2017, 3/2019.

## 4. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

### 4.1 Demographics



During the survey, **445** interviews were conducted with **1,138** household members.

This represents some **25%** of temporary protection holders in Montenegro, out of whom **59%** were female and **41%** male.

Figure 1. Number of men vs. number of women

Most respondents were adult women (**42%**) and men (**29%**). As many as **29%** of respondents are children (**16%** girls and **13%** boys).

Furthermore, **9%** of respondents stated that they have a person with a disability in their household, or conversely some **40** persons with a disability were among the population covered by the survey.

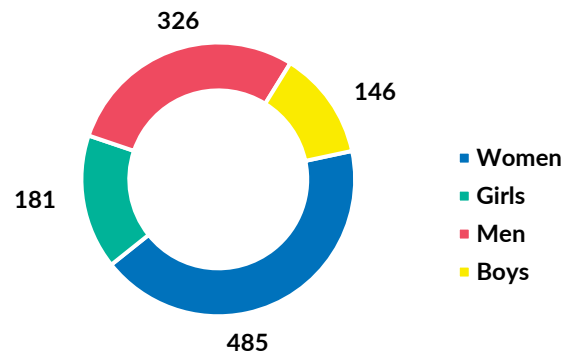


Figure 2. Breakdown by gender and age

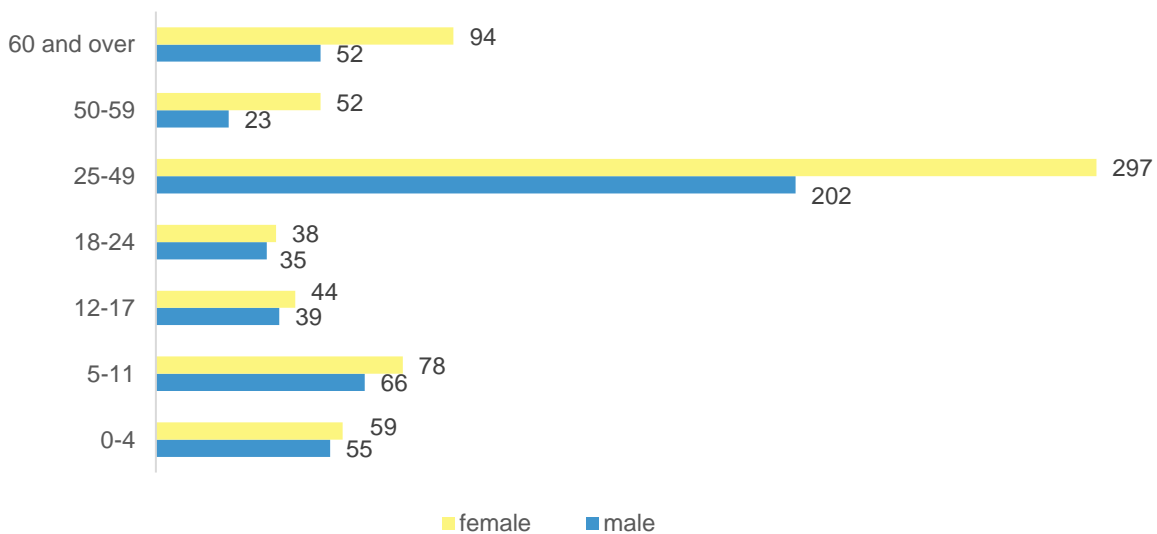
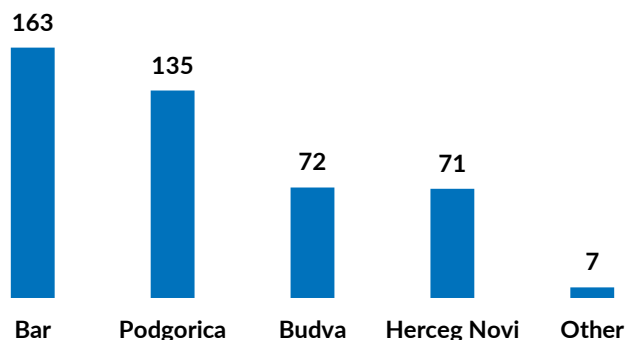
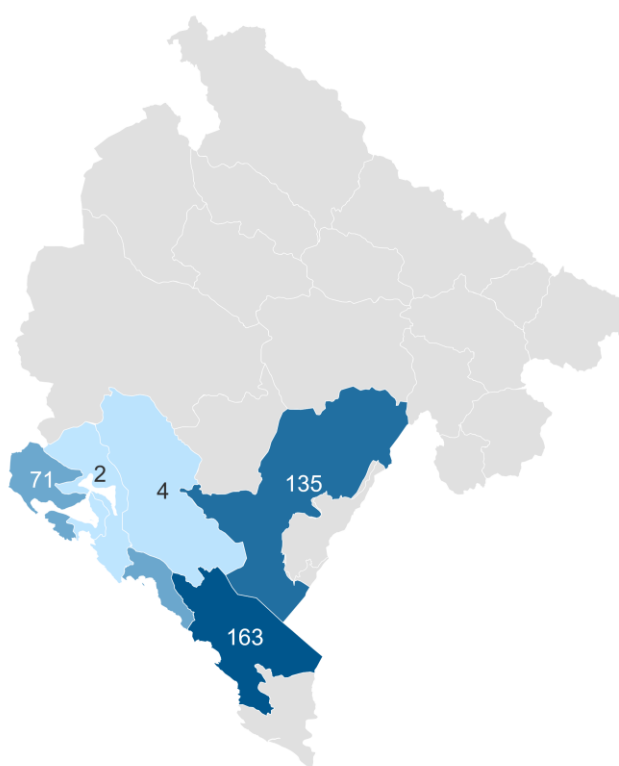


Figure 2.1. Breakdown by gender and age/age categories



The majority of respondents reside in the coastal municipalities and the Capital of Podgorica. This largely corresponds with the general population coverage, with respondents from Bar and Podgorica being slightly overrepresented compared to those from other municipalities.<sup>4</sup>

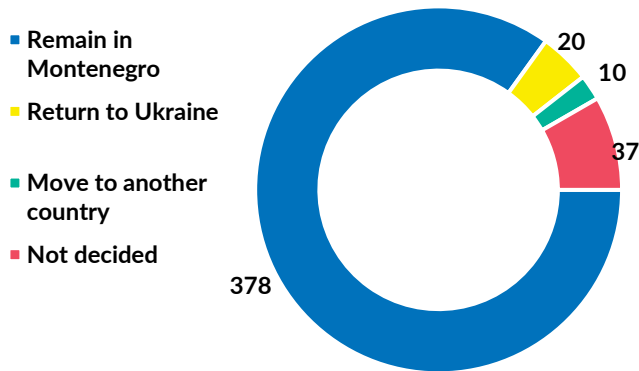
Figure 3. Municipalities of residents of the respondents



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Figure 4. Map of municipalities of residents of the respondents

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR partners in Bar and Podgorica were better positioned to cover the population targeted by the survey due to the logistics and the available capacities in the field



As many as 85% of respondents have said that they plan to stay in Montenegro for the next three months – a slight increase compared to 80% of those who opted to stay in Montenegro in 2022.

The number of those who are unsure about their future plans decreased to 8%, from 16% in 2022.

Figure 5. Intentions and future plans

The percentage of respondents who wanted to return to Ukraine increased from 1.4% in September 2022 to 5% in March 2023. Among those who wanted to move elsewhere, the majority wanted to go to the EU (70%) and the USA (20%).



Photo: ID Documents are a precondition for access to rights<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ukrainian passport with the protection cover

## 4.2 Accommodation

A total of **447** respondents (40%) gave information about the type of accommodation they are using and out of this number, some **78%** live in private accommodation. The survey also included beneficiaries of the state-provided accommodation in Hotel Sato in Sutomore (municipality of Bar), which was rendered available to Ukrainian refugees as of October 2022.

Compared to September 2022 when UNHCR conducted its first comprehensive assessment in the field, the percentage of persons in private accommodation increased to **78%** (previously 75%); those living with relatives decreased to **6%** (previously) 8%, while the percentage of persons owning property increased to **5%** (previously 1.5%). The percentage of respondents residing in Hotel Sato is 8%.

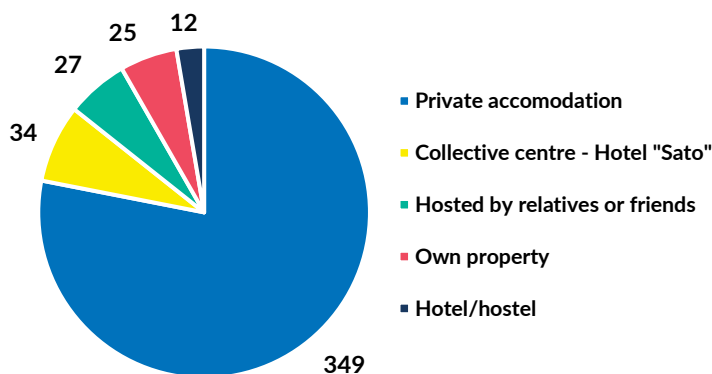


Figure 6. Type of housing used by TP holders

At the local level, the largest number of respondents residing in private accommodation are in the capital city of Podgorica. Concurrently, the most significant share of those owning apartments reside in Budva (**13%**) and Bar (**6%**). Many of them had previously visited Montenegro as tourists and came back when the conflict started in 2022, while some owned property in Montenegro even before the conflict.

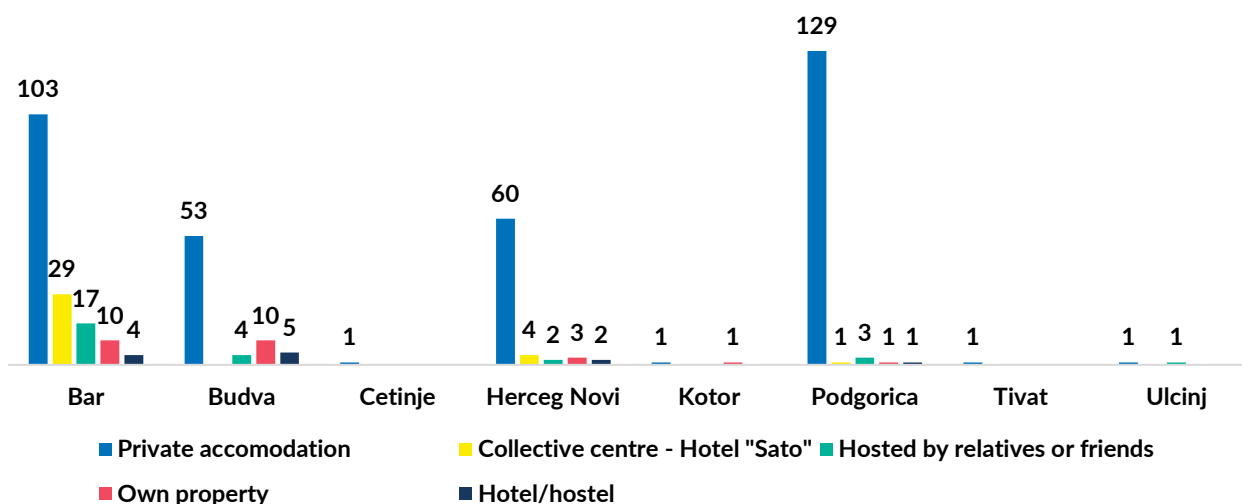
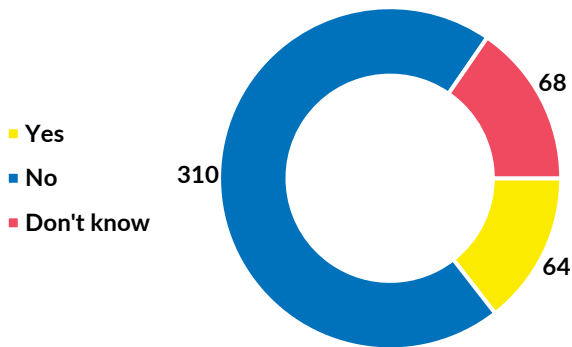


Figure 7. Type of housing per municipality

Most respondents (**70%**) said they do not need housing support in the next three months. An approximately equal share of respondents (**15% each**) said that they either need housing support in the next three months or are still unsure whether they need such support.<sup>6</sup> However, among those who claim they may need housing support, only **28%** would accept being placed in collective accommodation.



The majority (**63%**) of respondents prefer subsidized accommodation, **28%** opt for collective accommodation, while nearly **10%** prefer other types of support (information on rental opportunities, etc.)

Figure 8. Need for housing support in the next three months

### 4.3 Employment

A total of **440** adult persons responded to the questions related to employment. Among them, only **49** (11%) stated that they are employed, out of whom **31%** claim to have faced obstacles during employment.

Furthermore, only **12** persons responded to the question about the availability of information on support with the employment process. Among them, **7** did not know where to ask for support with overcoming these obstacles.<sup>7</sup>

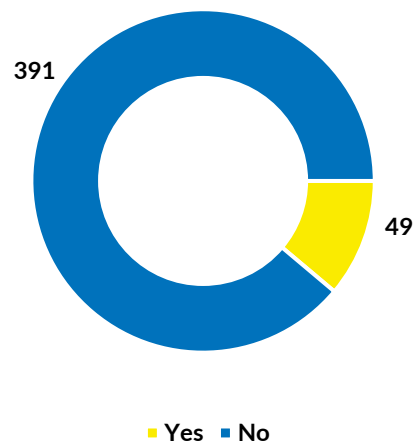


Figure 9. Employment status

<sup>6</sup> Collective accommodation available in hotel Sato in Sutomore and hotel Il Sole in Berane, as of March 2023. The total capacity is 165 beds.

<sup>7</sup> The number of persons who responded to the question of employment status was 440. Among them, 49 are employed. However, 45 persons further responded to the question on obstacles. This number strikingly decreased to 12 when respondents were asked about availability of information regarding employment.





When asked if they were interested in working in Montenegro, **41%** responded positively.

This means that the number of those interested in working exceeds three times the number of those who are legally working in Montenegro.

Figure 10. Interest in work

The majority of employed respondents work in the private sector (**23%**), the IT sector (**17%**), and the hospitality sector (**9%**). Others work in the education and cosmetics sectors.

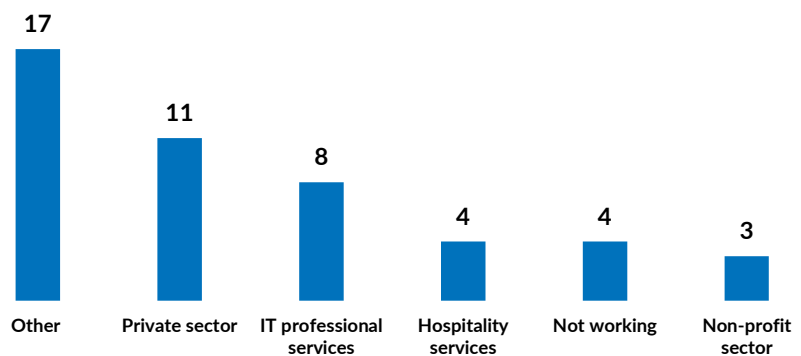
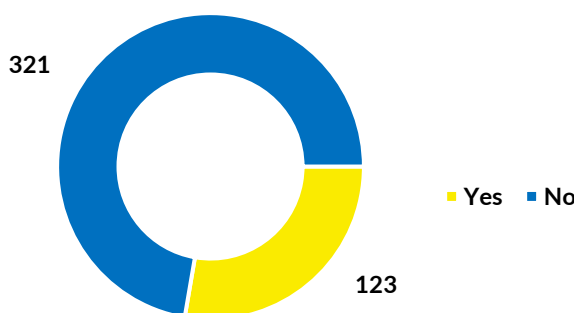


Figure 11. Sectors of employment

Interestingly, as many as **75%** of the employed respondents stated that they have found jobs in their own area of expertise.



Among 444 TP holders who responded to the question related to the opening of bank accounts, **123 (28%)** stated that they have a bank account in Montenegro.<sup>8</sup>

Some **12%** of the respondents needed help with opening a bank account and among them, **3.8%** succeeded to eventually open a bank account.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 12. Possession of a bank account in Montenegro

<sup>8</sup> The number of those who responded to the question on employment status and those who responded to the question of bank account differs in 1% This may be attributed to the incomplete data entry from the side of the numerator and/or unwillingness of a person to respond to the question of employment status

<sup>9</sup> The practices of the opening of a bank accounts vary across different banks and differ in various municipalities. Oftentimes, beneficiaries are requested to prove significant financial means or present a work contract to be able to open a bank account. UNHCR is following up on this issue to ensure access to the full scope of financial services for temporary protection holders.



Photo: Outreach activities of UNHCR partners with the community

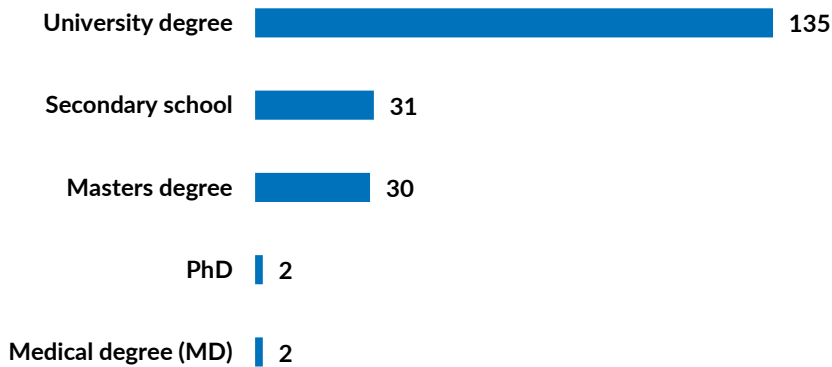


Figure 13. Education profile

Among adults, 200 people responded to the questions related to education. Among them, **67%** have a university degree, **15%** have a master's degree, **16%** have a secondary school degree, and **1%** each PhD and MD.

Among **441** respondents, **62%** claim to have a diploma. Furthermore, among **268** respondents who talked about their plans for recognition of diploma, **25%** want to initiate the recognition process, **23%** are undecided, while **9%** have already done so.

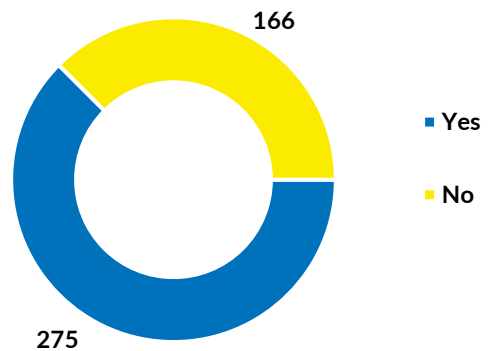


Figure 14. Possession of diploma

Conversely, 43% do not want to initiate the recognition procedure, which may indicate they either do not wish to pursue employment at all in Montenegro. The supposition is very much in line with the finding that 41% of respondents are interested in working, as indicated above in the figure 9.

## 4.4 Education

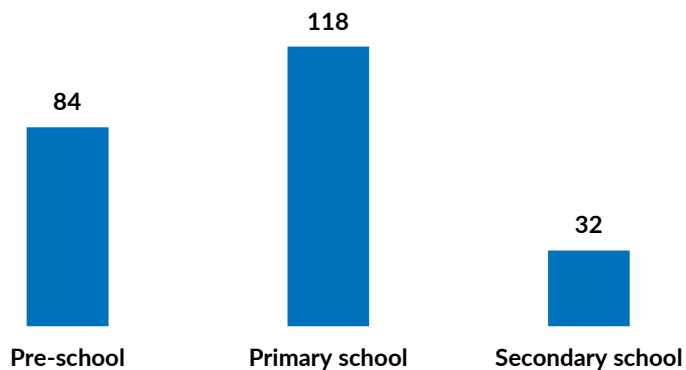


Figure 15. Age of children covered by the survey

About 50% of the children covered by the survey are of primary school age, some 36% are pre-school age, and the remaining 14% are children of high school age.

Among the children of pre-school age, 43% are enrolled in the kindergarten. Among the children of primary-school age, 44% are enrolled in school in Montenegro. More broadly, some 70% of Ukrainian children residing in Montenegro are enrolled in an online school classes organized by Ukrainian government. Some 14% of children attend both regular schools in Montenegro and online schools.

From among the respondents, one child is not enrolled either in a regular school in Montenegro or an online school (a child with special needs).

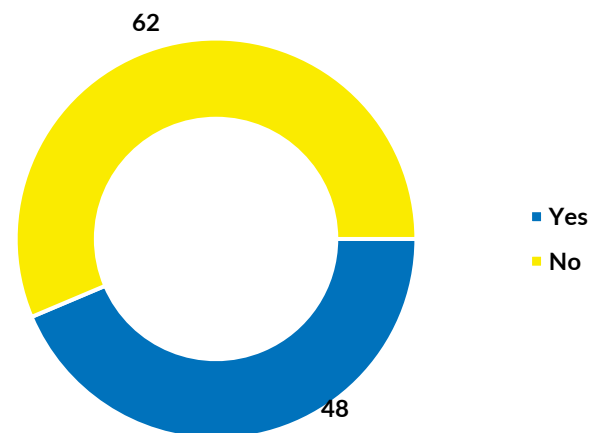


Figure 16. Primary school-age children enrolled in school in Montenegro



Photo: Provision of UNHCR support in access to the temporary protection

Breakdown by municipalities shows that the majority of respondents whose children attend primary school reside in **Bar** (49%), and **Podgorica** (32%). A disproportionately low number of respondents from **Budva** (11%) claim to have their children enrolled in primary school.

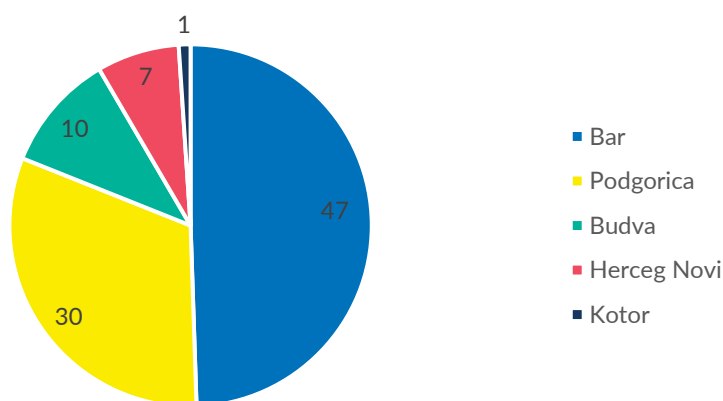


Figure 17. Primary school-age children enrolled in school in MNE by municipality

A total of **32** refugee children of secondary school age have been reached by the survey. Out of this number, **62%** do not attend school in Montenegro, and apart from one child who does not attend high school at all, the rest are attending high school online. Among the children enrolled in high school, **50%** attend both the high school in Montenegro and online classes, while **40%** attend the classes in Montenegro. The data is missing for the remaining **10%** of the respective group.

When asked about the reasons for not enrolling children in school in Montenegro, most parents stated language barriers (**46%**), inadequate education system (**18%**), no support with the curriculum (**5%**), combined language barriers and inadequate education system (**4%**) and other reasons (**27%**), among

which the most important are enrolment in an online school, private plans to move elsewhere, special needs (in two instances) etc.

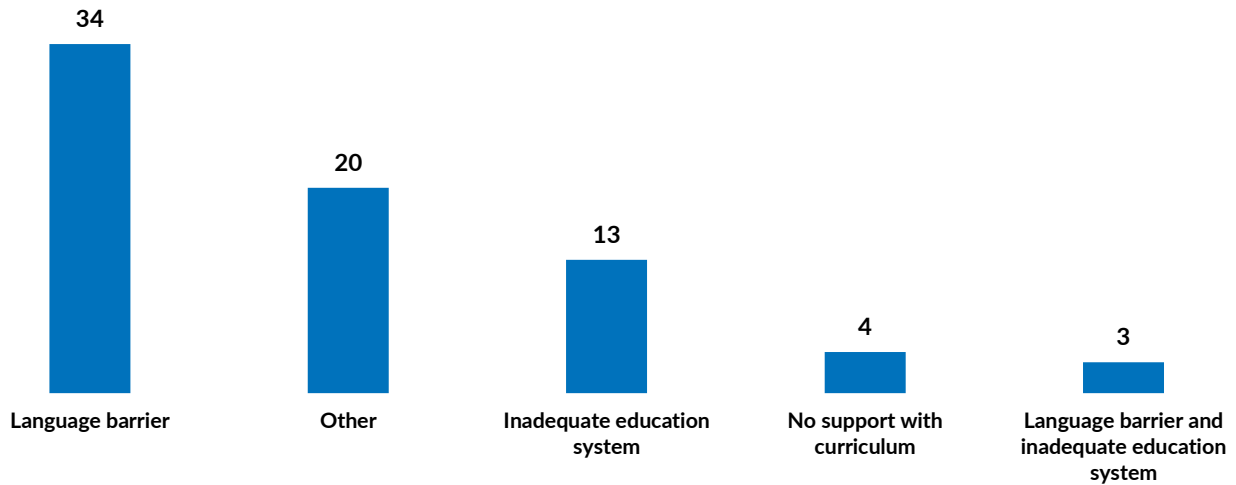


Figure 18. Reasons for not enrolling children in schools

When asked to give a recommendation for improving the education system, the majority of respondents stated the need for better language learning support, an increase of physical space, an improvement of the capacity of teachers, etc.. Some **25%** of the respondents said they were satisfied and had no objections to the quality of the educational system in Montenegro.

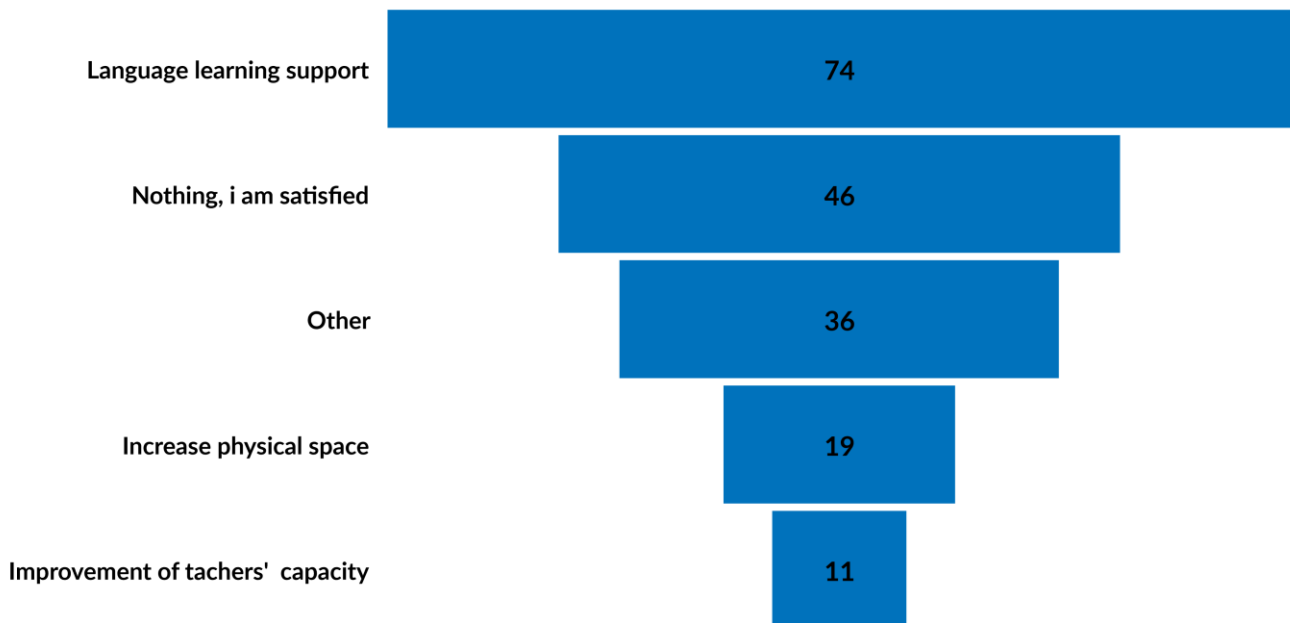


Figure 19. Recommendations for the improvement of education

## 4.5 Health care

In regard to healthcare, **51%** of respondents reported they did not have health issues for which they needed healthcare services since their arrival in Montenegro.



Photo: Elderly population from the collective centre

On the other hand, those who required medical support did so mainly for preventive check-ups, acute communicable disease, dental service, acute minor traumas, chronic medical conditions, and other reasons.

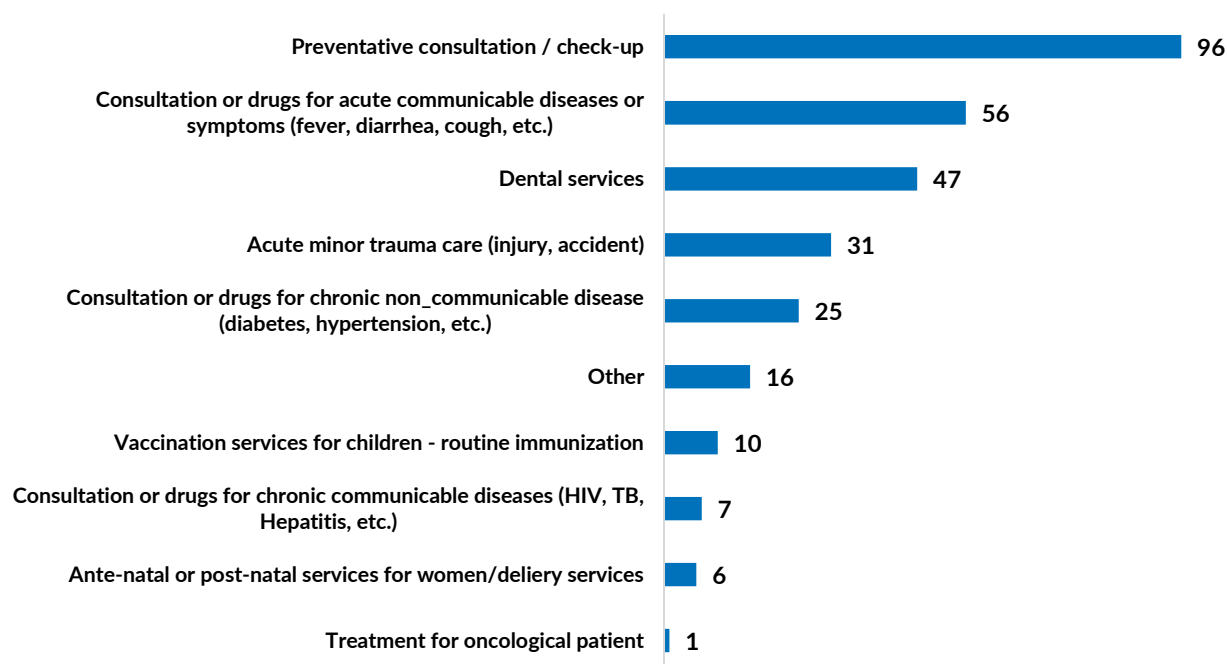
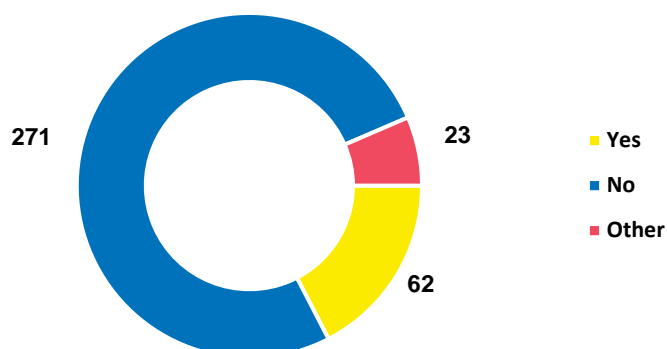


Figure 20. Healthcare services needed by the TP holders



A total of **356** persons responded to the question related to the obstacles in accessing healthcare.

From among them, **76%** did not report any challenges, **17%** said that they had experienced obstacles, while some **7%** said that they had approached private medical institutions for medical care.

Figure 21. Access to healthcare

The main reason for inadequate health care for those who claimed to have had obstacles were language barrier/issues with communication (**45%**), unavailable medicines and treatments (**31%**), the inability of the system to recognize a PIN of temporary protection holders, (**31%**) inadequate staffing in health facilities (**21%**), etc.<sup>10</sup>

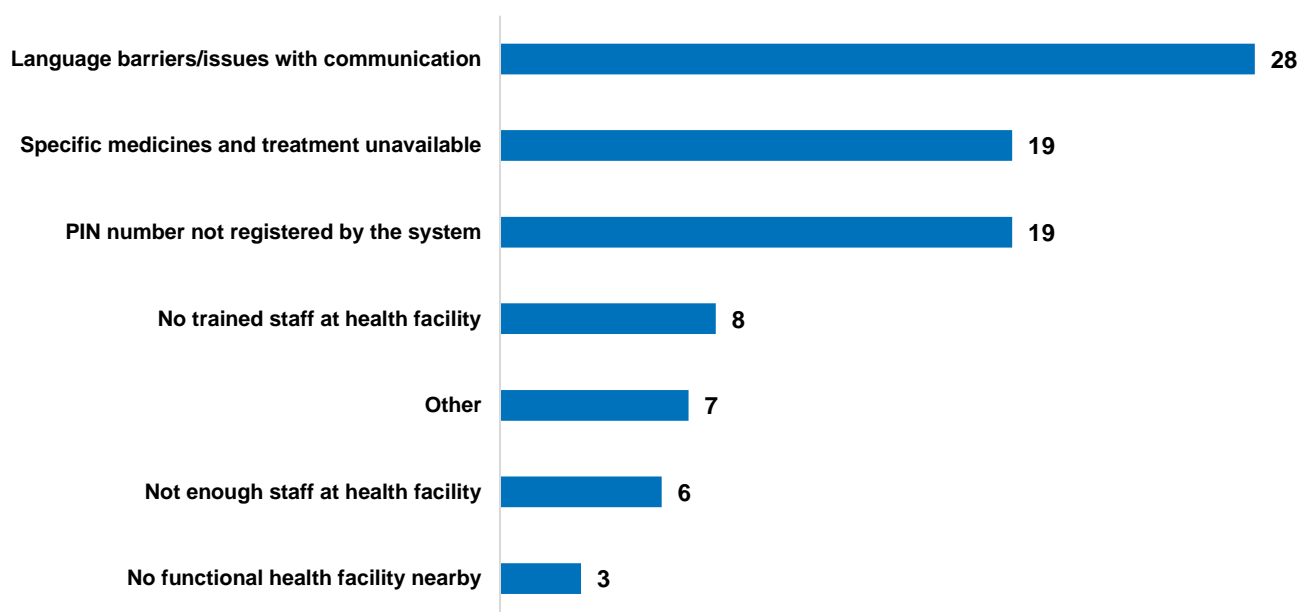


Figure 22. Type of healthcare obstacles

When asked about their views on how the healthcare services can be improved, the majority of **60%** said that improvement of the entire healthcare system is needed, and **5%** said there is a need to improve the recognition of the Personal Identification Number (PIN) of temporary protection holders that will facilitate access to healthcare services. In contrast, most others did not have any concrete proposal for improving the system.

<sup>10</sup> Multiple answers were offered, so the total sum does not amount to 100%

A total of **19%** of those without recommendations for the health care system were satisfied with it.

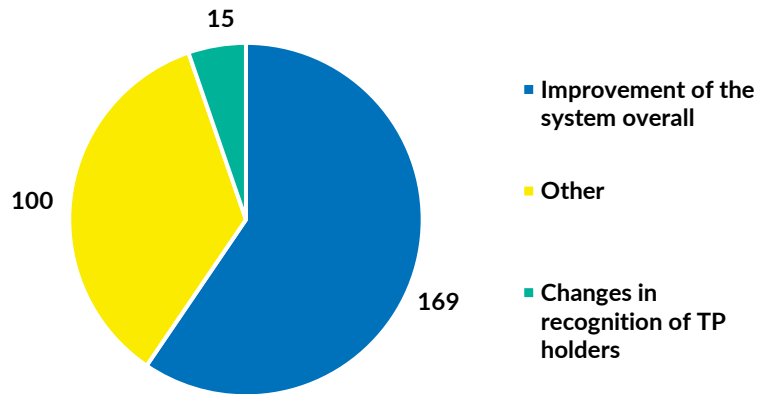


Figure 23. Recommendations for the improvement of healthcare



Photo: Temporary protection holder checking documentation for registration

On the other hand, the majority of respondents stated that healthcare is the most critical area where improvements are needed for effective response and access to rights.



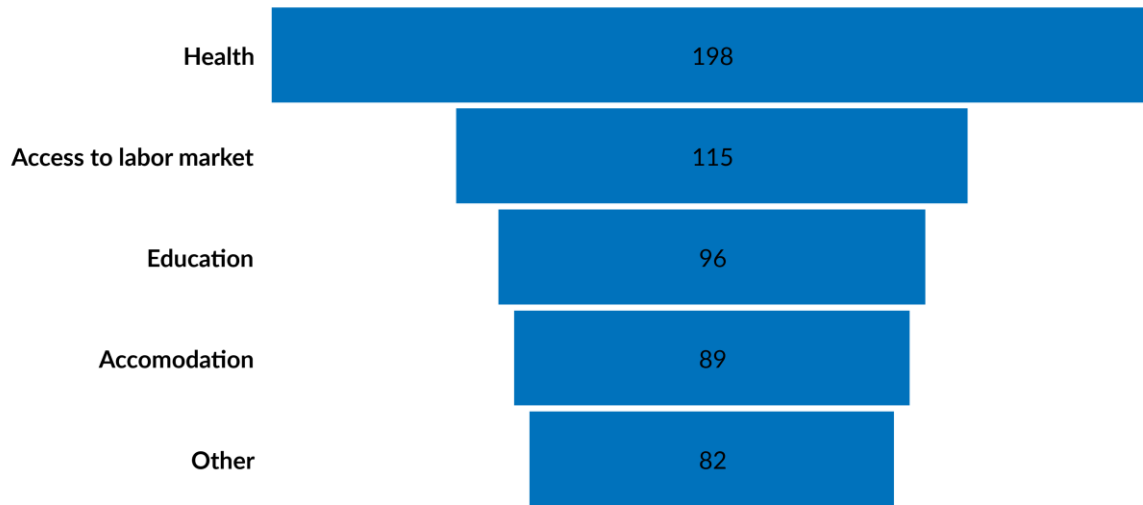


Figure 24. Critical rights and services that need to be improved

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### ACCOMMODATION

- A written procedure regulating the access to state-provided accommodation for Ukrainian refugees needs to be developed by the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and UNHCR, along with the procedure for vulnerability assessment of those applying for accommodation.
- The Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with CSOs and international organizations, should introduce community-based activities at the state-provided accommodation facilities for Ukrainian refugees to help refugees cope with their predicament while facilitating their integration prospects.
- Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the local authorities/municipalities may consider the development of a programme for subsidized rent assistance for Ukrainian refugees to improve refugees' livelihoods.

### EDUCATION

- A sensitization campaign for Ukrainian parents regarding the importance of enrolment in Montenegrin primary schools, conducted by the Ministry of Education, UNHCR, and UNICEF, would greatly contribute to increased enrolment of refugee children in primary schools.
- The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with UNHCR and UNICEF, should develop the prior learning assessment program, in order to ensure that children without certification of their prior education are enrolled in the proper school grade.
- The engagement of Ukrainian mediators in elementary schools could be considered to contribute to a stronger and more comprehensive support network to refugee children facing language and cultural barriers in schools.
- A holistic approach, facilitated by UNICEF and UNHCR, needs to be introduced to ensure that children with disabilities are supported in effective access to education.

### EMPLOYMENT

- The Chamber of Commerce, the Union of Employers of Montenegro, and other relevant stakeholders should organize regular events, including job fairs, thereby facilitating information exchange between potential employers and Ukrainian refugees, regarding employment opportunities.
- Unhindered access to financial services for Ukrainian refugees needs to be ensured by the Central Bank of Montenegro, including through facilitated procedure for the opening of a bank account;
- The procedure for the recognition of diplomas of Ukrainian refugees needs to be accelerated by the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with Ukrainian Embassy in Montenegro.

## HEALTH CARE

- The Ministry of Health should develop a procedure that will enable registration of Ukrainian refugees in the electronic registry of the health care system of Montenegro, thus giving them the status of insured person.

*Due to the time-limited validity of the temporary protection regime in Montenegro, UNHCR Representation in Montenegro is of opinion that all the above-mentioned recommendations should be implemented in 2023, to enable Ukrainian refugees to fully meet their needs, but also to contribute to their host society in line with their skills and capacities, paving the way towards solutions through a whole of society approach.*

## 6. ANNEX – current state of play (including resolved, pending, and newly emerged issues)

In 2022, UNHCR conducted three independent ad hoc surveys (one of which was dedicated to the employability of Ukrainian refugees) and one survey within the UN Framework (in September 2022).

At the time, the burning issues were related to the long waiting times for the issuance of Temporary Protection (TP). The average time for processing of TP applications ranged from one to three months, during which time, the temporary protection applicants did not have access to rights emanating from such status. The lack of a personal identification number (PIN), caused by the inability of state authorities to issue one (relevant in March/April) and the lack of awareness of beneficiaries about the need for PIN for the purpose of exercising their rights in Montenegro. Also, prior to September 2022, the issue of the procedure for school enrollment was not clear in cases where children lacked complete documentation. In relation to access to employment, UNHCR has managed to ensure that administrative procedures are aligned in a way to allow temporary protection holders to effectively verify their work booklet, which is the first step in the employment proceed.

For temporary protection holders to be able to fully exercise their right to employment, effective childcare services need to be ensured. This is because the majority of the working population are mothers with minor children who need to be looked after during their working time. Access to healthcare is still largely unregulated due to legal obstacles and access to healthcare is often ensured on an ad hoc basis and with the facilitation of UNHCR partners. Effective access to education and defining the procedure for prior knowledge assessment and learning outcomes is a work in progress.

In the meantime, the issue of ensuring adequate professional support in education for children and youth with disability among the temporary protection holders is becoming increasingly important. Adequate services from the social welfare system need to be provided systematically, bearing in mind that temporary protection holders do not have access to social protection. In addition, the number of children who are without parental care in Montenegro is still not properly tracked, nor is the uniformity of the custody procedure acquired. This will be among the UNHCR priorities in the ongoing year.

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