

**MENTALNO ZDRAVLJE
IZBEGLICA
USPOSTAVLJANJE
KOMUNIKACIJE I POVERENJA**

**THE MENTAL HEALTH
OF REFUGEES
ESTABLISHING COMMUNICATION
AND TRUST**

Main goals of psychosocial support in 2016



- **Providing support in reaching “Normal Life”**

Enabling a safe space for working through hardships but at the same time also for empowerment and growth

- **Ensuring support and protection in a participatory manner**

Following beneficiaries’ (not our own) needs by asking for and accepting their opinions and recommendations

Overview of PIN work supported by UNHCR in 2016th



1.320 beneficiaries



9 psychologists



Through cooperation
with more than
20 organizations



10 locations

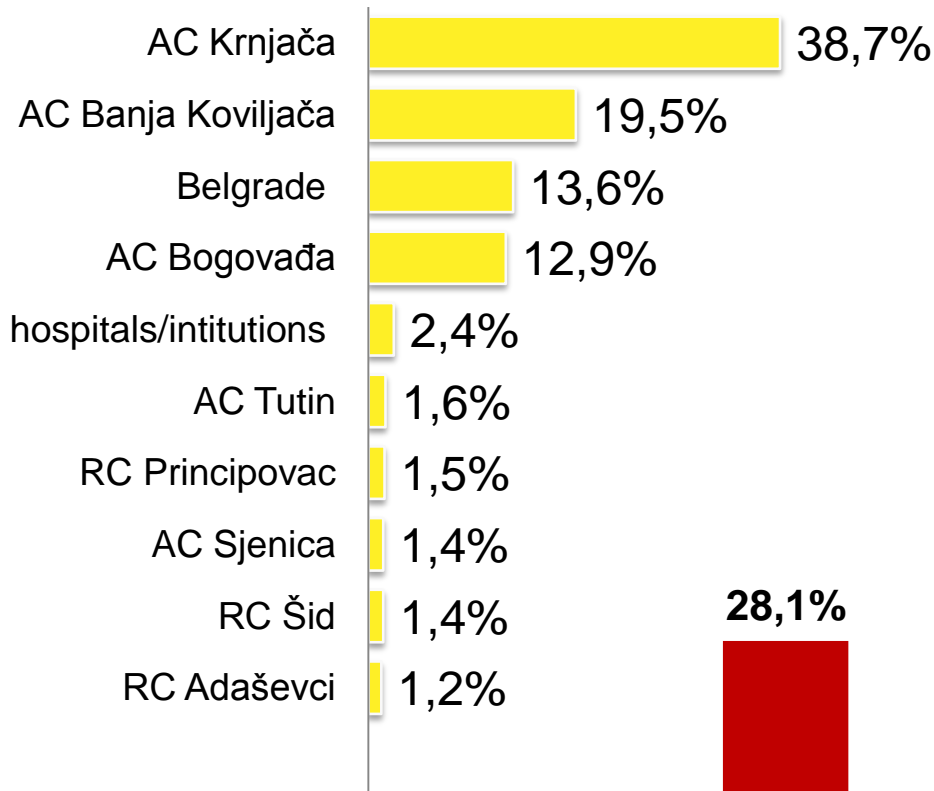


52 200 km

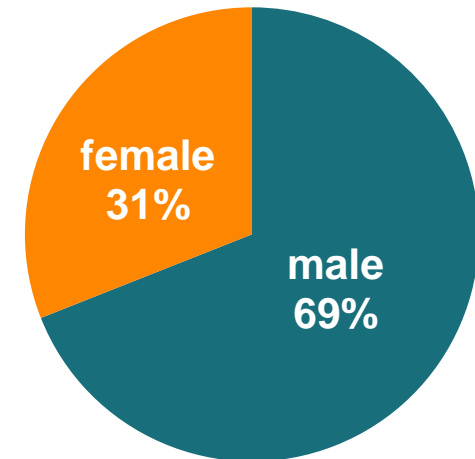
Beneficiaries – Demographics



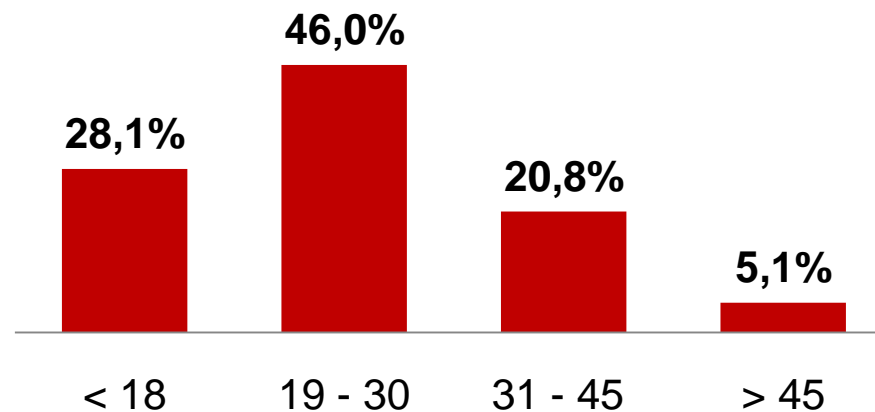
% of beneficiaries at locations:



Gender



Age

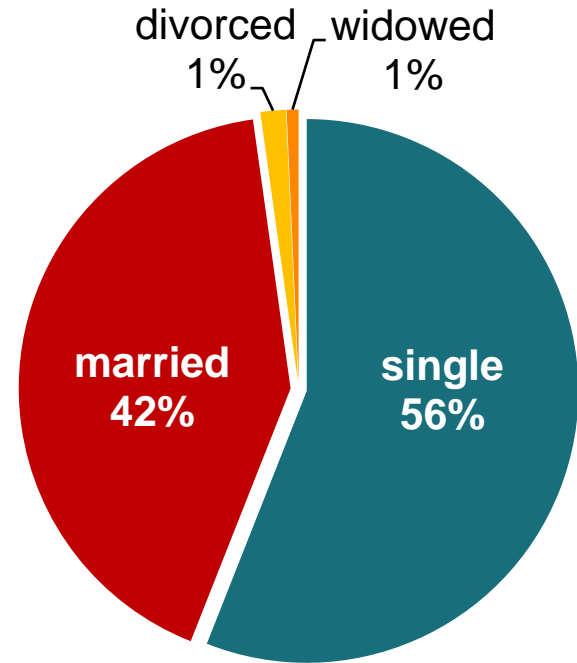


Beneficiaries – Demographics



Average number of years of education is **10** (range 0-19)

mechanic
economist
designer
barber
trainer
journalist
solder
hairstylist
chemist
musician
merchandiser
engineer
programmer
electrician
student
reporter
accountant
driver
baker
worker
housewife
tailor

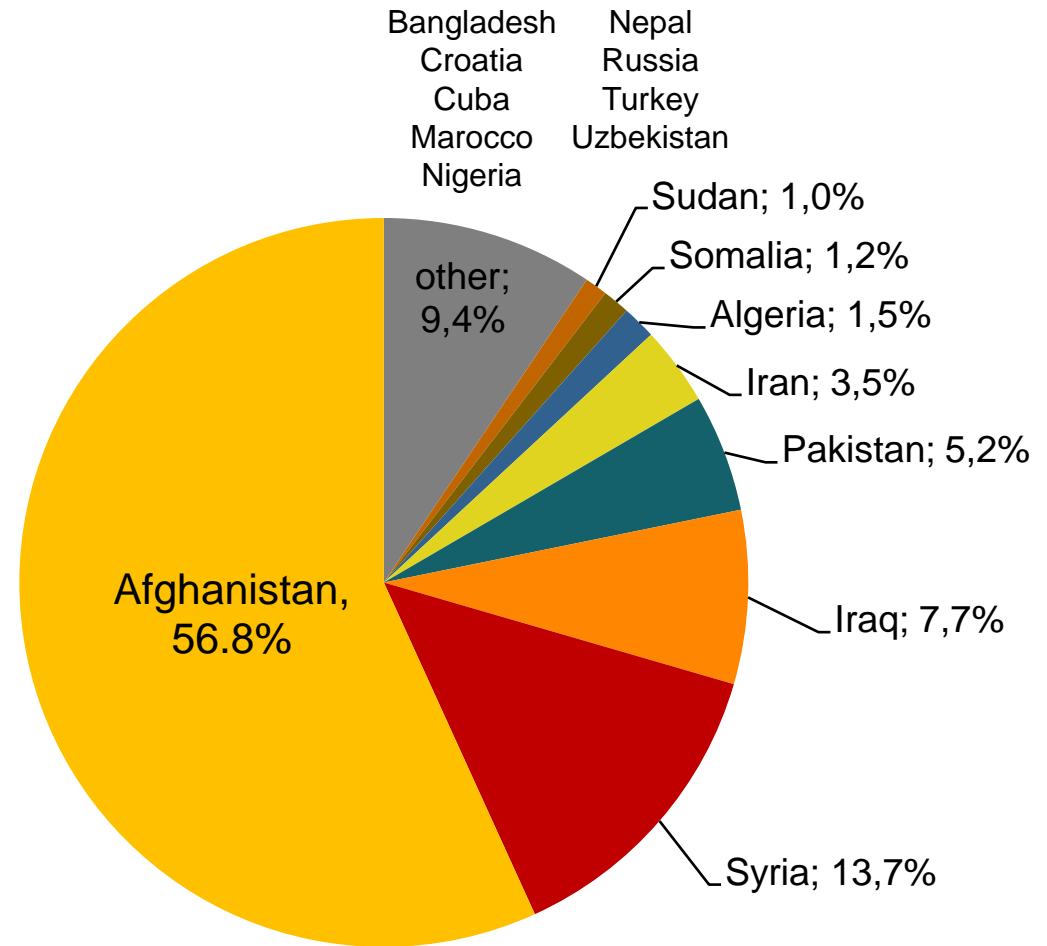


Marital status

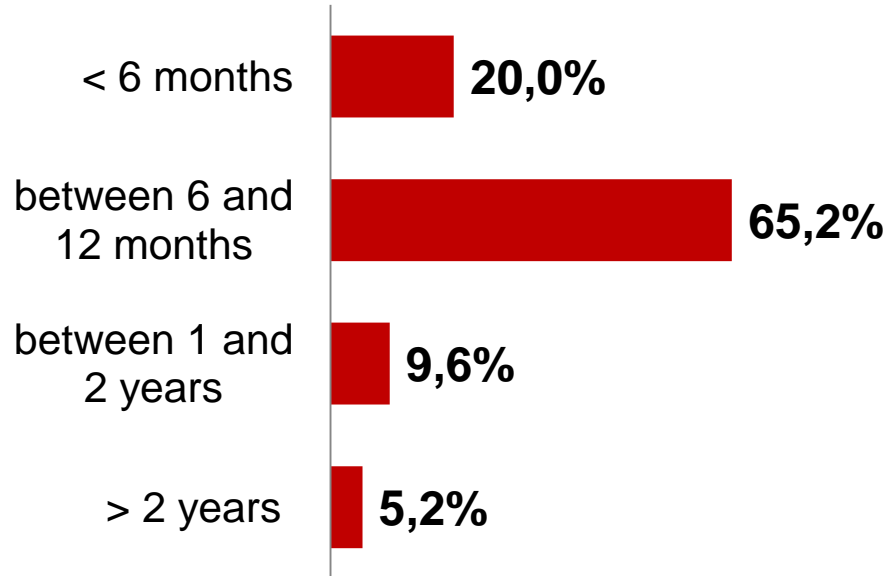
Beneficiaries – Country of origin



- More than 13 countries
- More than 20 ethnic groups
- 93% are of Islamic religious denomination
- More than a **1/2** of beneficiaries are from **Afghanistan, 13.7%** from **Syria** and **7.7%** from **Iraq**

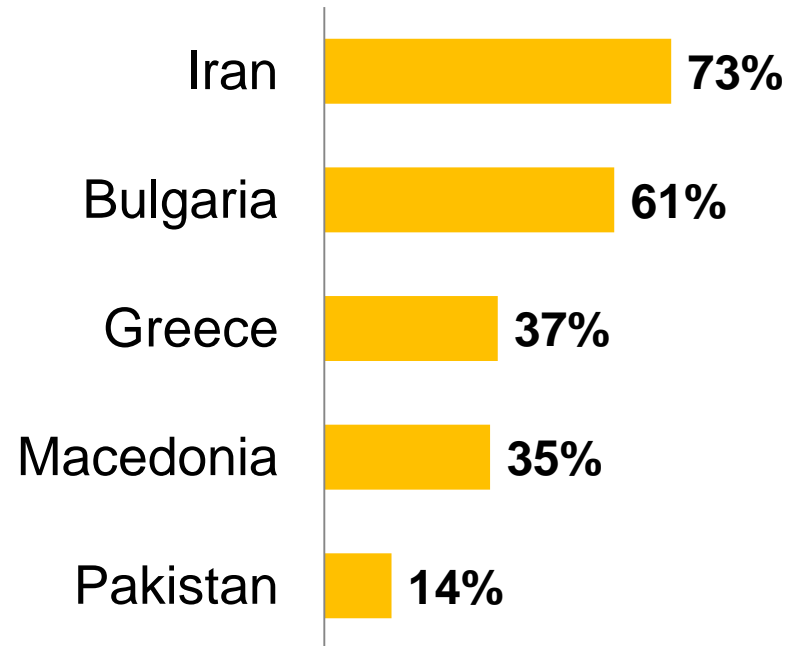


Time since they left the country of origin:



The majority left their country of origin in the past year.

All refugees passed through Turkey, additionally they passed through following countries:



Who are they travelling with?



52.4% of beneficiaries are travelling alone.*

■ spouse
 ■ child
 ■ parent
 ■ sibling
 ■ other family member
 ■ friends
 ■ alone



* 43.7% travels with a friend

14.7% of women are travelling alone.*

■ spouse
 ■ child
 ■ parent
 ■ sibling
 ■ other family member
 ■ friends
 ■ alone



* 12.5% travels with friend

Unaccompanied minors predominately travel with friends or siblings

**REZULTATI
STUDIJE**

**STUDY
RESULTS**

Goals and methodology



- Main goals:
 - Exploring previous traumatic experiences and psychological conditions in order to provide adjusted protection and support programs
 - Ensuring support and protection in a participatory manner

- August – November 2016th.
- 9 locations in Serbia
- Conducted as a part of PIN's regular psychosocial support activities
- 150 refugees and asylum seekers took part
- Interviews lasted for one hour and fifteen minutes on average
- Interviews were conducted by psychologists and trained interpreters
- Questionnaires used in this study:
 - Profiling Questionnaire, developed during study in 2014 - Exploring demographics
 - Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ) - adapted for working with refugees in Serbia during a study in 2014 – Exploring traumatic experiences in country of origin, PTSD and negative self perception of functioning (NSPF)
 - Hopkins Symptom Check List (HSCL) - Exploring depression and anxiety
 - Questionnaire on traumatic experiences during travel, also developed in 2014.

**PRETHODNO
ISKUSTVO I
PSIHOLOŠKO
STANJE**

**PREVIOUS
EXPERIENCES AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL
CONDITION**

Traumatic events in country of origin



Have you experienced any of the following:	YES (%)	Compared to 2014
Being forced to leave your country of origin	88.9	
Witnessing the burning or destruction of housing and uninhabited areas	85.2	↑
Being forced to stay at home or hide due to external hazards	85.2	↑
The murder or violent death of a family member or friend	75.0	
Having no access to medical assistance	73.1	
Witnessing the desecration or destruction of places of worship or other religious objects	69.2	↑
Being body searched	66.7	↓
Witnessing beatings or torture	61.5	↓
Being in a very frightening situation or in a situation where you feel that your life is in danger	59.1	


Traumatic events in country of origin



Have you experienced any of the following:	YES (%)	Compared to 2014
A lack of food or water	57.7	
Being exposed to mine fields, mined buildings or vehicles	55.6	
A family member or a close friend taking part in military action	53.8	
Personal property being taken away, stolen, seized or destroyed	50.1	
Removal of dead bodies	50.1	
Beatings	50.0	
Witnessing mass executions of civilians	50.0	
Being a victim of extortion or robbery	48.1	
A lack of shelter	46.4	
Exposure to frequent or constant sniper fire	46.2	
Family member or a friend being disappeared; getting kidnapped or being taken hostage	46.1	

Traumatic events in country of origin



Have you experienced any of the following:	YES (%)	Compared to 2014
See mutilated or disintegrating corpses	42.3	
Participation in combat	38.5	
Expelled from your home country on the account of your ethnic affiliation or religious beliefs	36.0	
Being compelled to forced labor	32.2	
Someone being forced to betray you, placing your safety/life or the safety/life of your family at risk	26.9	
Being present while someone in your apartment (or place of residence) searches for things or people	26.9	
Being forced to join the army	26.9	
Participation in military actions	23.1	
Witness arrests, kidnapping, torture or execution of religious leaders or other important members of your community	23.1	
Being imprisoned	23.1	

Traumatic events in country of origin



Have you experienced any of the following:	YES (%)	Compared to 2014
Torture - while in captivity did you receive deliberate and systematic infliction of physical or mental suffering	23.0	
Collecting the body of a family member (child, spouse, etc) and were prevented from mourning and burying them	19.2	
Suffering a severe physical injury as a consequence of combat or landmine	15.5	
Being knifed or axed	15.4	
Imprisoned, were you put into solitary confinement, were you prevented from moving, sleeping, relieving yourself, unhygienic conditions	15.4	
Being kidnapped or held hostage	11.5	
Witnessing a family member or a close friend get raped	7.7	
Being forced to betray someone or physically harm them	7.7	
Witnessing rape or sexual abuse	3.9	
Being Forced to destroyed someone else's property and possessions	3.8	

Traumatic events during travel



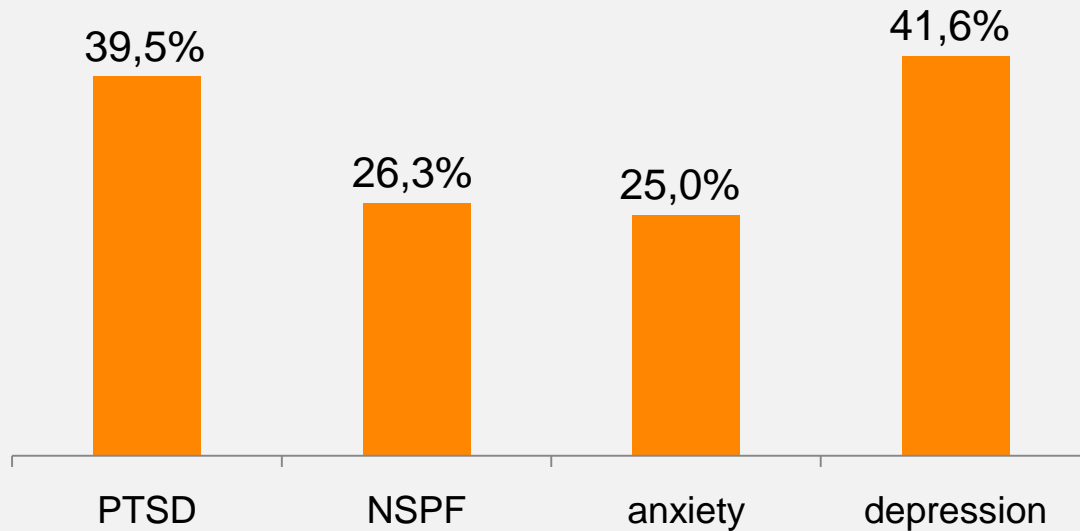
Have you experienced any of the following:	YES (%)	Compared to 2014
Lack of food or water	94.6	↑
Lack of shelter	81.1	↑
Psychological violence	72.7	↑
Deprivation of relevant information by the police	68.4	↑
Threats being made on your life	66.7	
Personal property/money being taken from you illegally/violently	59.5	↓
Getting lost	51.5	↓
Deportation	51.4	↑
Having the smuggler not fulfill the deal (but asking for extra money or not leaving you at the agreed location)	50.0	↑

Traumatic events during travel



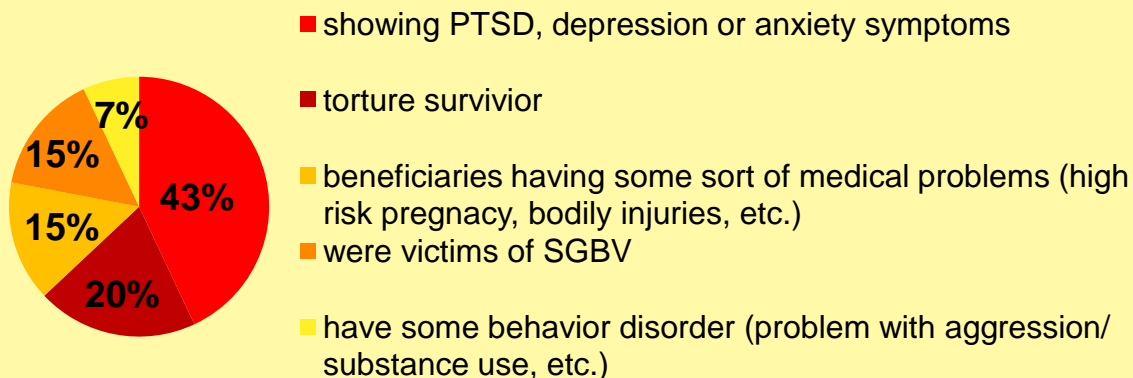
Have you experienced any of the following:	YES (%)	Compared to 2014
Being a victim of discrimination	47.3	↑
Deprivation of your legal rights	44.1	
Physical violence	36.8	
Serious bodily injury	33.3	↓
Becoming separated from family/friends	25.0	↑
Having someone close to you die	14.3	↑
Having the smuggler request additional services (transporting drugs, recruitment of others, presenting other people's children as your own)	5.9	

Psychological condition – Hardships



% of refugees with scores exceeding cut-off values on the scales of PTSD, negative self-perception of functioning, anxiety and depression

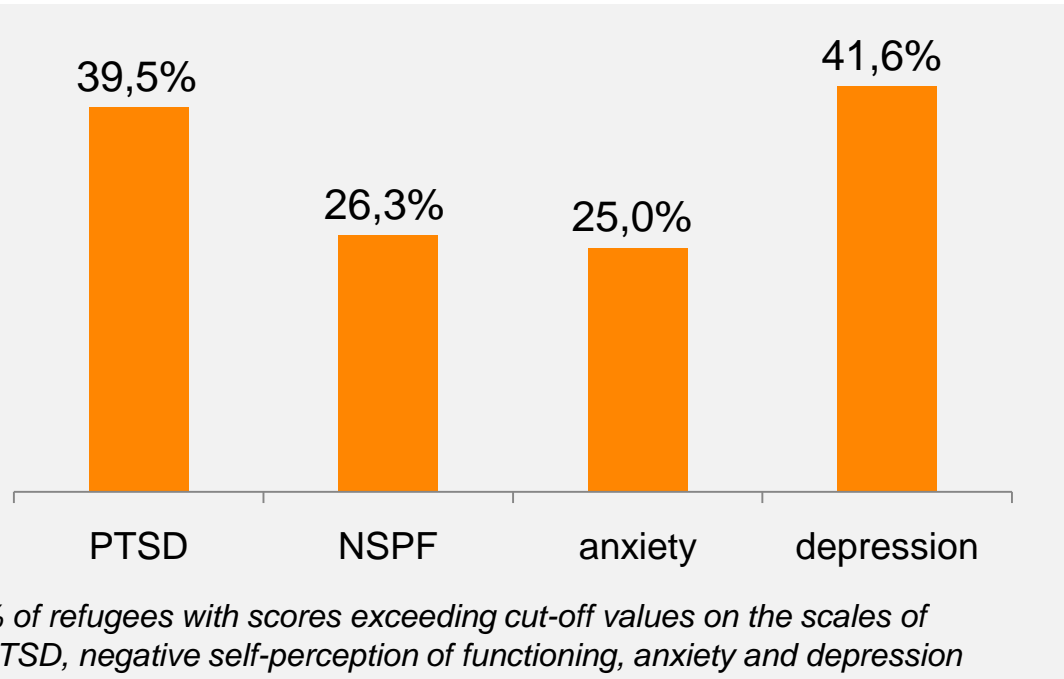
Of the most vulnerable beneficiaries, PIN was providing PSS to those who were



Most pronounced hardships:

- Recurrent thoughts about the most hurtful or terrifying events (PTSD)
- Avoiding activities that remind one of traumatic or hurtful events (PTSD)
- Feeling exhausted and that everything is an effort (depression)
- Feeling tense and always on edge (PTSD)
- Feeling low in energy, slowed down (depression)
- Feeling lonely and sad (depression)
- Feeling tense and keyed up (anxiety)
- Feeling that people do not understand what happened to you (PTSD)
- Feeling a lack of trust in people (NSPF)
- Feeling as if one doesn't have a future (depression)

Psychological condition – Implications



It is very important

- Ensure psychological first aid
- To empower beneficiaries – through control reinitiation, focus on strengths, understanding and support
- Fight against stigmatization and discrimination

Take care of service providers' well-being and prevention of secondary traumatization

Time limitation - the first interview may be the last one - carefully assess the risks of different interventions to avoid overwhelming or retraumatization.

Context – majority is still on the road. Be aware of uncertainty.

Respect differences in **reaction to trauma**

- Understanding **PTSD** - cognitive, emotional and behavioral manifestations
- Be aware of the risk of retraumatization
- Bear in mind that not everyone who has experienced trauma must necessarily have a PTSD or be depressed.
- There are persons who will never ask for help. Offer help and be present, but not intrusive (good intentions and a wish to help are not the measure of someone else's need for help).

**EVALUACIJA
SISTEMA
PODRŠKE**

**EVALUATION OF
SUPPORT
SYSTEM**

Evaluation of support systems in Serbia through the lense of refugees and service providers



We explored refugees' and service providers' assessments of the quality and efficiency of support systems in Serbia.

Why is this important?

- Through exploring refugees' assessments, opinions and recommendations, we ensure their **participation in decision making and advocacy. Hearing and respecting their voice helps to reinitiate the experience of control and appreciation.**
- Through identifying differences in refugees' and service providers' assessments we can **rethink our course of action.**
- By following beneficiaries' (not our own) needs we become able to ensure **adjusted support and protection.**

Evaluation of support systems in Serbia through the lense of refugees and service providers



In order to explore refugees' and service providers' opinions about the quality and efficiency of support systems in Serbia we asked them the following questions:

Please answer the following questions in order to help us try to improve refugee support system in Serbia

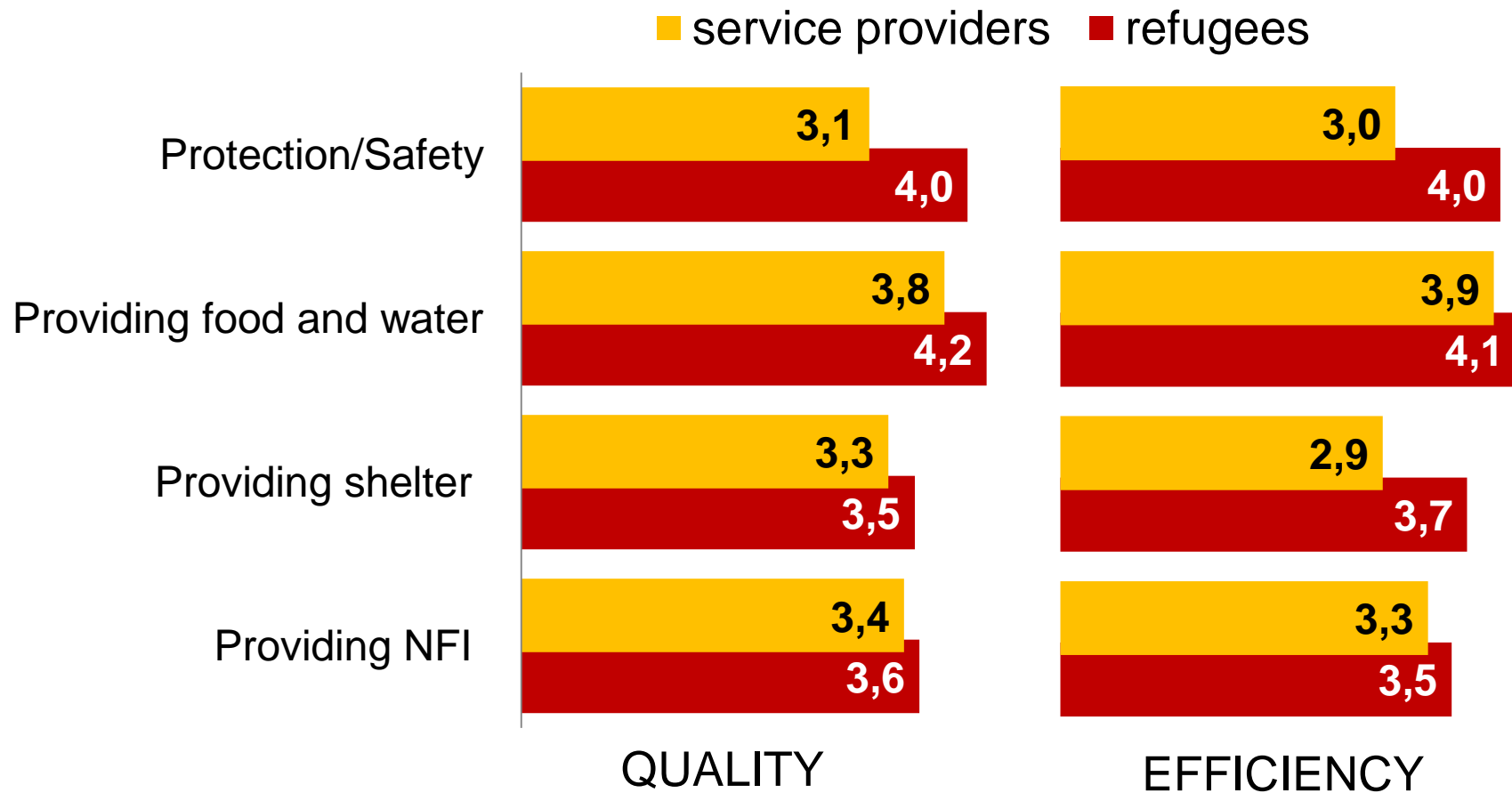
Type of support/help		Serbia				
		1	2	3	4	5
Protection (safeties)	Quality					
	Efficiency					
Medical assistance	Quality					
	Efficiency					
Psychological support	Quality					
	Efficiency					
Legal aid	Quality					
	Efficiency					
Providing relevant information	Quality					
	Efficiency					
Providing food and water	Quality					
	Efficiency					
Providing proper clothes and hygiene	Quality					
	Efficiency					
Providing shelter	Quality					
	Efficiency					
Anything else _____	Quality					
	Efficiency					

1. During transit, which support/help did you find to be the most useful/significant?
2. During transit, which support/help did you find to be insignificant/useless?
3. During transit, did any of support/help cause you harm/offend you?
4. *On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 means the most negative and 5 the most positive mark) please asses type of support/help provided in Serbia and other countries in the region you passed through*
5. Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve support systems for refugees in Serbia?
6. Do you have anything to add?

Evaluation through the lense of refugees and service providers



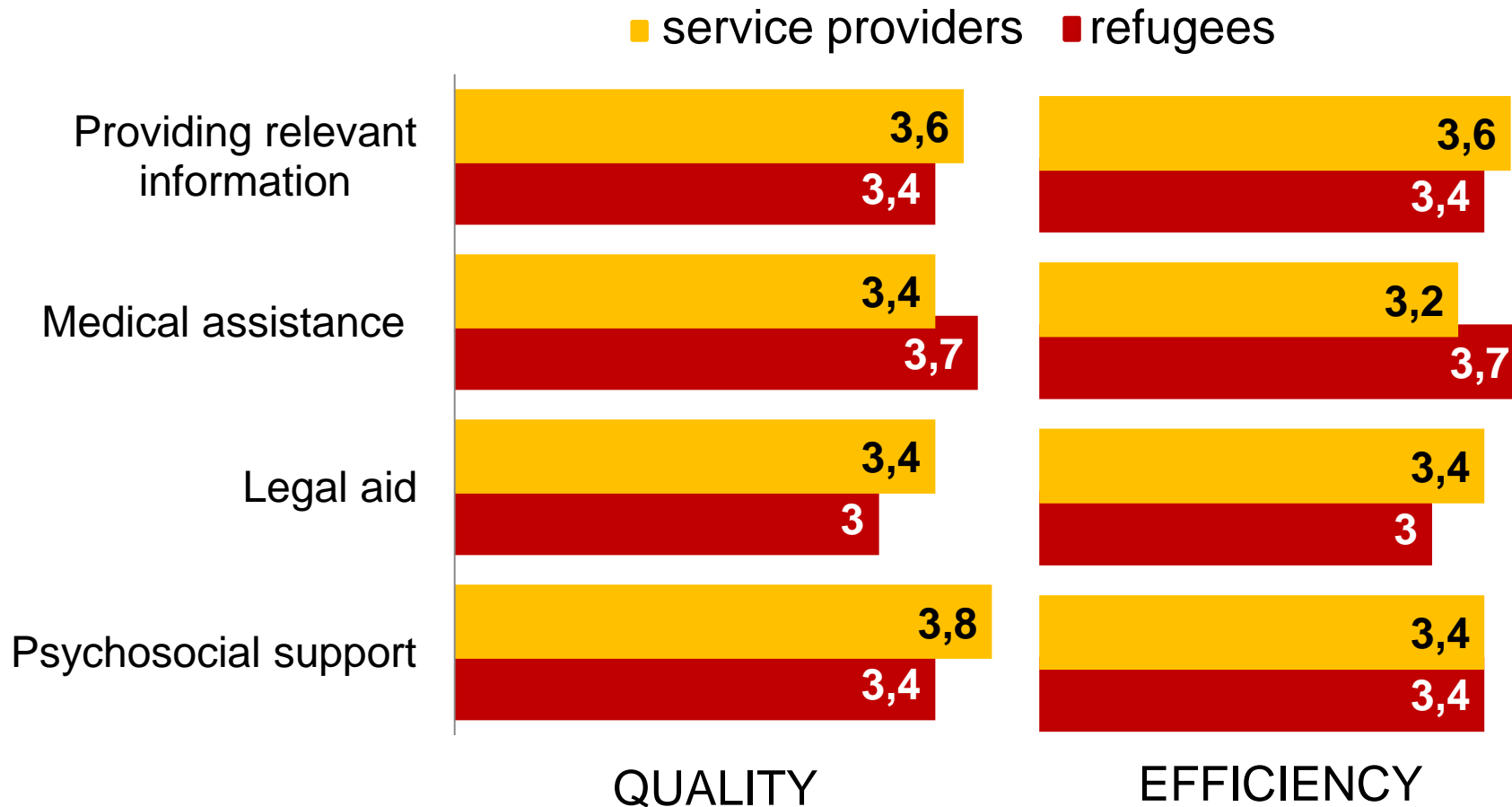
The average estimates of refugees and service providers:



Evaluation through the lense of refugees and service providers

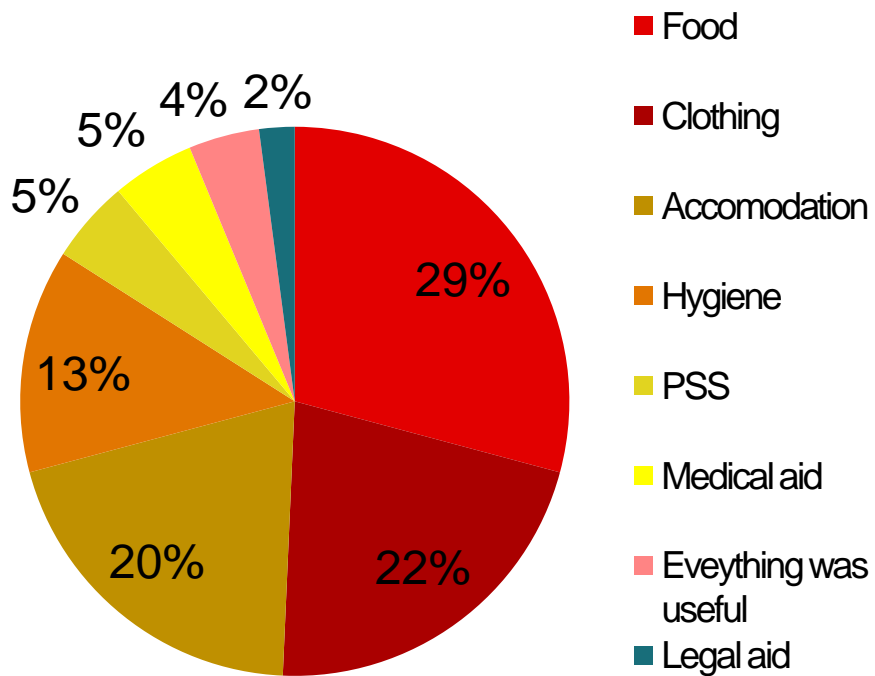


The average estimates of refugees and service providers:

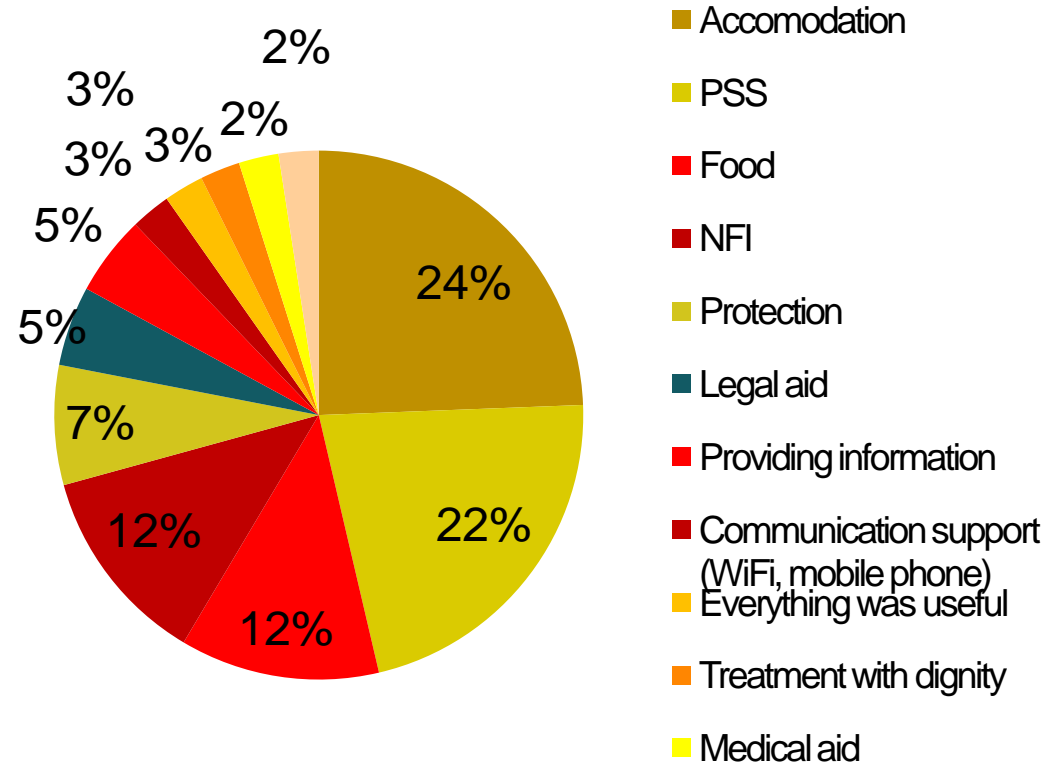


Most useful support

Refugees:

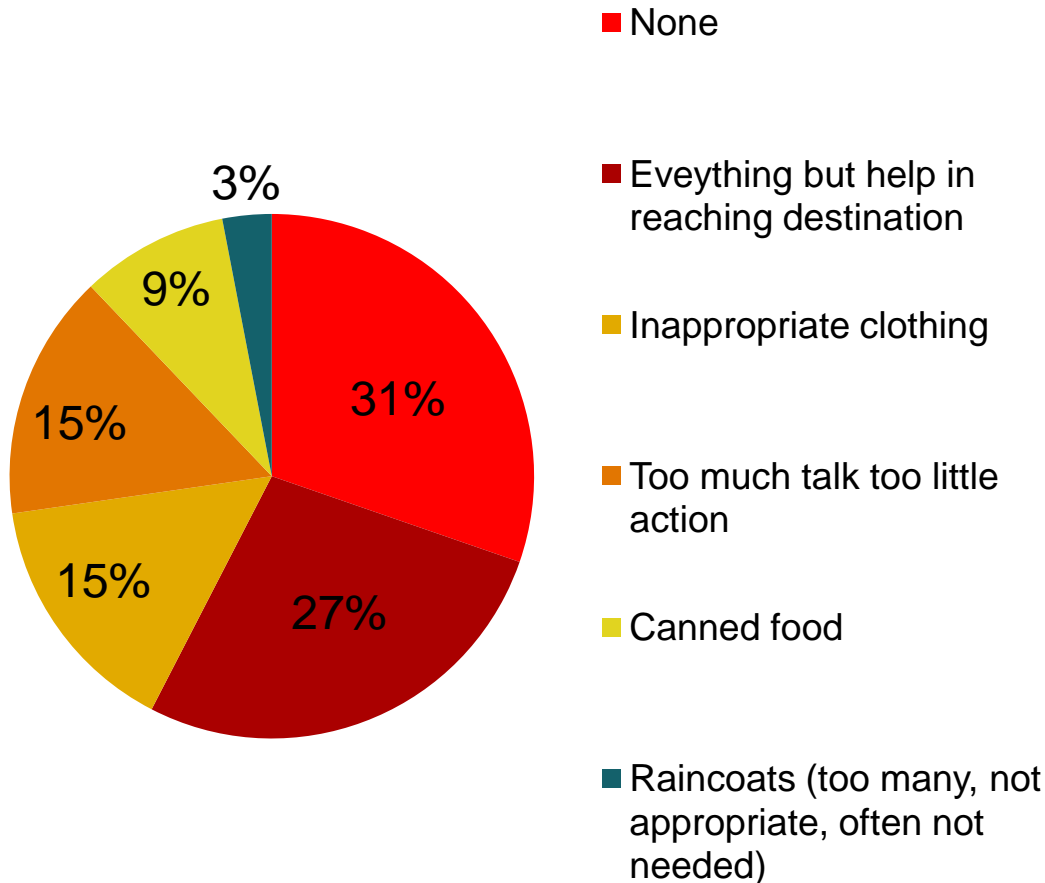


Service providers:

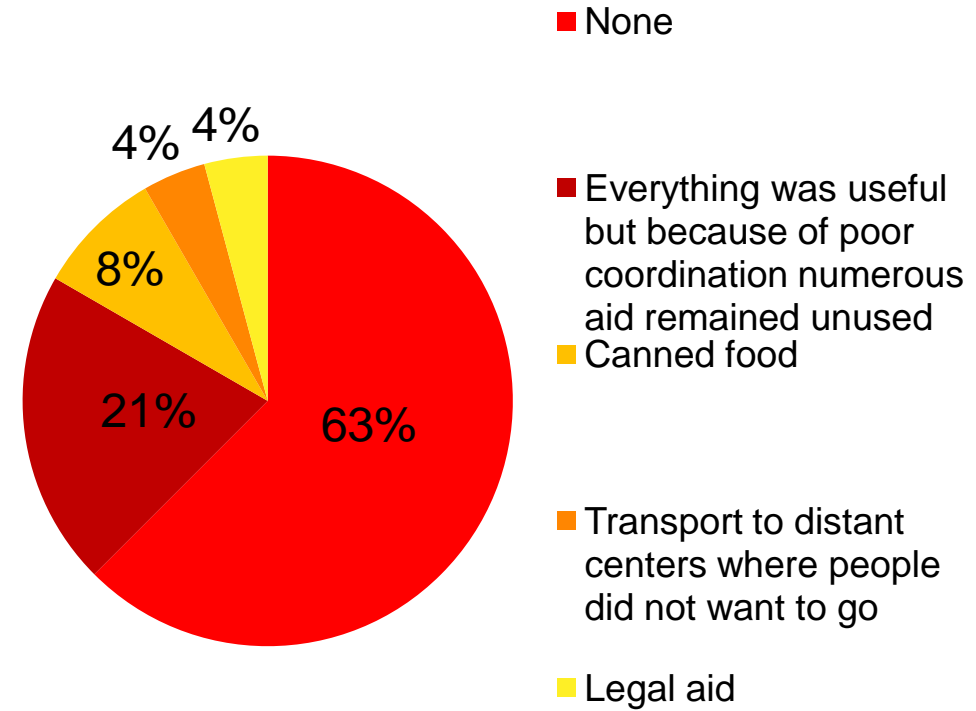


The least useful or unnecessary support

Refugees:

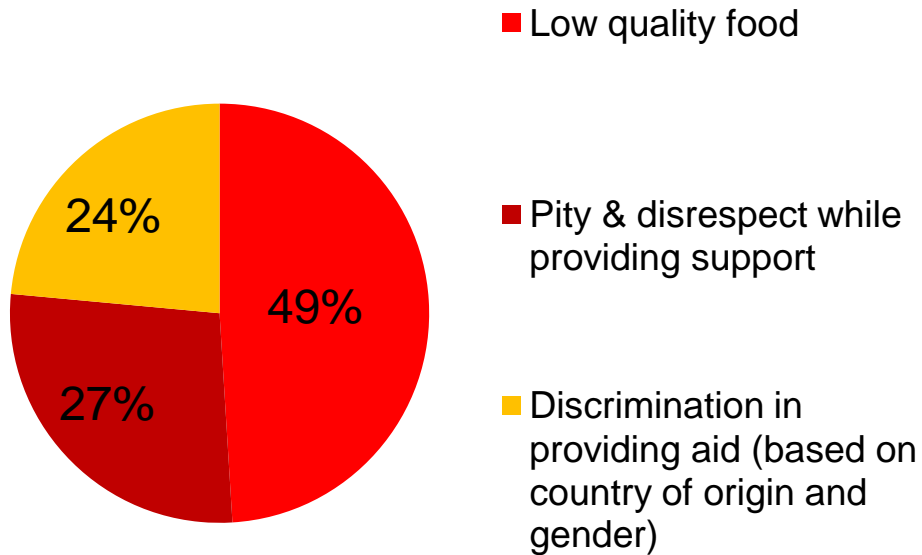


Service providers:

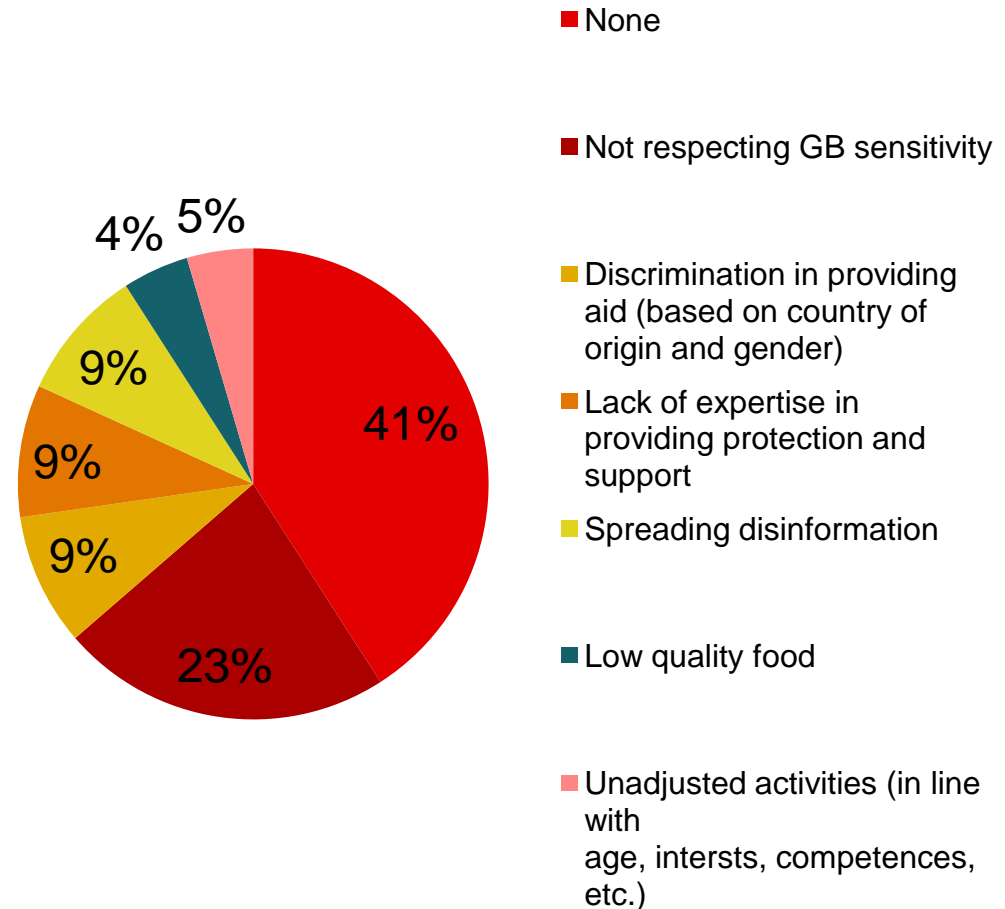


Harmful or insulting support

Refugees:



Service providers:



How to improve the support system



What refugees said:

Travel related help	36%
More efficient administration and registration	10%
Improvement of hygiene conditions	8%
“Serbia is OK but I am moving on”	6%
Improvement in the organization of aid distribution	5%
Integration activities - help in finding a job, language lessons	4%
Increasing food diversity and quality	4%
More appropriate accommodation	4%
More interpreters on the field	4%
Timely distribution of adequate clothes	3%
No discrimination between different nationalities	3%
Educating police how to communicate with refugees	3%
More PSS providers	3%
Provision of some money	2%
More medical staff in the field	2%
More internet access	2%
Easier access to ACs	1%

How to improve the support system



What refugees – considering staying in Serbia said:

Travel related help	36%	
More efficient administration and registration	10%	16%
Improvement of hygiene conditions	8%	13%
“Serbia is OK but I am moving on”	6%	
Improvement in the organization of aid distribution	5%	9%
Integration activities - help in finding a job, language lessons	4%	8%
Increasing food diversity and quality	4%	7%
More appropriate accommodation	4%	7%
More interpreters on the field	4%	7%
Timely distribution of adequate clothes	3%	6%
No discrimination between different nationalities	3%	5%
Educating police how to communicate with refugees	3%	5%
More PSS providers	3%	5%
Provision of some money	2%	4%
More medical staff in the field	2%	4%
More internet access	2%	2%
Easier access to ACs	1%	2%

Evaluation of PSS



74.6% find the PSS beneficial

91.4% do not find PSS to be exhausting, hurtful or pointless

Those who do not find PSS to be beneficial state the main reasons for that as:

“ it is not useful because it can't solve the problem of crossing the border”

“ It is a part of a whole very pesimistic system not offering any concrete solution”

Perceived benefits:

“I see hope because somebody cares”

“I feel relief”

“Somebody cares, asks, takes interest, listens – that means a lot”

“To share with someone what I have been through”

“It calms me down”

“It is important for me to say what I think, so that people know what is going on”

“I have a feeling that somebody cares about us”

“I can say all the things that pressure me that I cannot share with my parents”

ZAKLJUČAK

CONCLUSION

Conclusion



- In the both country of origin and during travel refugees are faced with different and numerous risks and traumatic experiences. As a result significant number of them are struggling with PTSD (39.5%), anxiety (25.0%), depression (41.6%), and negative self-perception of functioning (26.3%). In addition, numerous refugees travel alone thus lack social support (52.4%).
- Majority of refugees (74.6%) finds psychological support beneficial in overcoming hardships and improvement of life quality.
- Overall, refugees positively evaluate help and support provided in Serbia, but see the room for improvement when it comes to efficiency of registration system, administration and organization of aid distribution as well as improvement of hygiene conditions.
- Finally, those who consider staying in Serbia, have a need to actively participate in social life and willingness to be productive member of society. In order to achieve that, it is necessary to provide them with language learning, employment and integration opportunities.

"I know that Serbia has a lot of problems and still finds a way to help us. Thank you for that"

Satar (43 years old) from Syria.

"I miss going to school"

Naim Karzai (12 years old) from Afghanistan



"I love Serbia and I would love to stay here if I could find a job"

Hakmuth (23 years old), from Afghanistan



"I need to cross the border, I just want to join my brother in Germany"

Setajesh (28 years old), from Afghanistan

„We are grateful for everything that you are doing for us. And we understand that the situation is difficult; there are many of us “

Mariam (24 years old), from Afghanistan

"Everybody said I should go to Presevo camp. I would like to go to Presevo but my friend told me he was pushed back from there and I am afraid."

Atikullah Miahel (20 years old), from Afghanistan

"The further I go, the more I see how people are not treated equally. I will get to Germany eventually, but what will happen to all those who are not from Syria?"

Firas Ahmadi (21 years old), from Syria

"I speak four languages; I sure must be able to help you with something."

Zjavbi Hakashimi (25 years old), from Afghanistan

"Find a way so some of us can receive money that can be sent to us. We are already in a difficult situation, and on top off all that we can't use Western Union without an ID, so there must be some other way".

Kayum Hamdad (24 years old), from Afghanistan

"Ask Europe if they have lost their humanity"

Raiz (21 years old), from Afghanistan

"I am not a refugee, I am Masume Ahmadi, 24 year old women from Iraq. My favorite color is red and I want to become an architect."

Masume Ahmadi (24 years old), from Iraq

"I'm freezing and I have nothing to say."

Ebrahim (8 years old), from Afghanistan



Psychosocial Innovation Network

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