



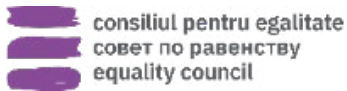
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STUDY ON EQUALITY PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



The study was conducted by [imas] with the support of the Government of Japan through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), as part of the project 'Promotion of Human Security of Ukrainian Refugees, Third-Country Nationals, and Host Communities in Moldova through Socio-Economic Empowerment and Inclusion,' implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of UNDP or the funding organization.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

EB	Eurobarometer
ESS	European Social Survey
EVS	European Values Study
DK/NR	Don't know/No answer
SEPA	Study on Equality Perceptions and Attitudes 2024
EU	European Union
UTA	Autonomous Territorial Unit
WVS	World Values Survey
FG	Focus group

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KEY FINDINGS

This study examines attitudes toward discrimination and equality. It explores how people in the Republic of Moldova perceive and relate to inequalities, whether they seek to avoid such disparities, and identifies groups that may be at risk of discrimination.

The primary data source is the Survey on Perception and Attitude Toward Equality (SEPA 2024), conducted by IMAS with the support of the Government of Japan through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), as part of the project ‘Promotion of Human Security of Ukrainian Refugees, Third-Country Nationals, and Host Communities in Moldova through Socio-Economic Empowerment and Inclusion’, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The study was conducted on a representative sample of 1,100 respondents aged 18 and older, using a multistage stratified probability approach with random sampling at each stage.

The societal conditions in Moldova are characterized by low levels of trust, with only 5% of the population expressing unconditional trust in others—among the lowest rates in Europe. Additionally, sociability appears to be underdeveloped. The average frequency of meetings with friends is 4–5 times per month, and the median number of individuals with whom people can discuss private or intimate matters is 2 – both figures being below European averages.

Perceptions of societal quality are predominantly negative. Most Moldovans believe the Republic of Moldova is a corrupt country, that people are less likely to show care for one another, and that optimism about the future remains moderate. Many also perceive that rights and freedoms are not adequately respected, laws are rarely followed, and those in power seldom tell the truth.

In this resource-limited context, societal attitudes favour a smaller state with limited redistribution, primarily tied to work. Unlike other European countries with available data, the majority shows less support for providing aid to vulnerable groups, such as the elderly or unemployed. Instead, the emphasis is on individual responsibility for one’s well-being. Over the post-Soviet decades, political preferences have shifted from centre-left, traditionally favouring greater state involvement, to the centre and eventually the centre-right, reflecting a decline in social solidarity and a diminished role of the state.

Data indicates that spoken language is often a stronger identifier than ethnicity. However, society is shown to be segmented across multiple criteria. It demonstrates higher levels of rejection—compared to most European countries—toward groups such as the LGBTQ+ community, individuals living with HIV, migrants, immigrants, refugees, alcoholics, and others. Over the past three decades, long-term trends reveal fluctuations, with a recent slight increase in tolerance toward diversity.

Gender equality is strongly supported, especially in the political sphere and access to education, but the labour market remains predominantly male.

People with mental disabilities are often viewed with some reservation, despite a widespread perception that most do not exaggerate or fake their condition. Support for policies aimed

at assisting them remains relatively low. Perceptions of individuals with physical disabilities range from neutral to negative, with negative views being more prevalent. They are more likely to be described as ‘aggressive’ or ‘different’ and less frequently as ‘kind-hearted’.

People with physical disabilities are generally viewed more positively in society, with adjectives like ‘kind-hearted’, ‘different’, ‘harmless’, or ‘unable to work’ often used to describe them. However, societal, state, and employer support for this group is limited, as they are still seen by some as a burden on society.

The LGBTQ+ people are rejected by the majority of the population. Over the past decades, the level of acceptance has remained mostly unchanged. Currently, only about a quarter of Moldovans would accept someone from this community as their neighbour.

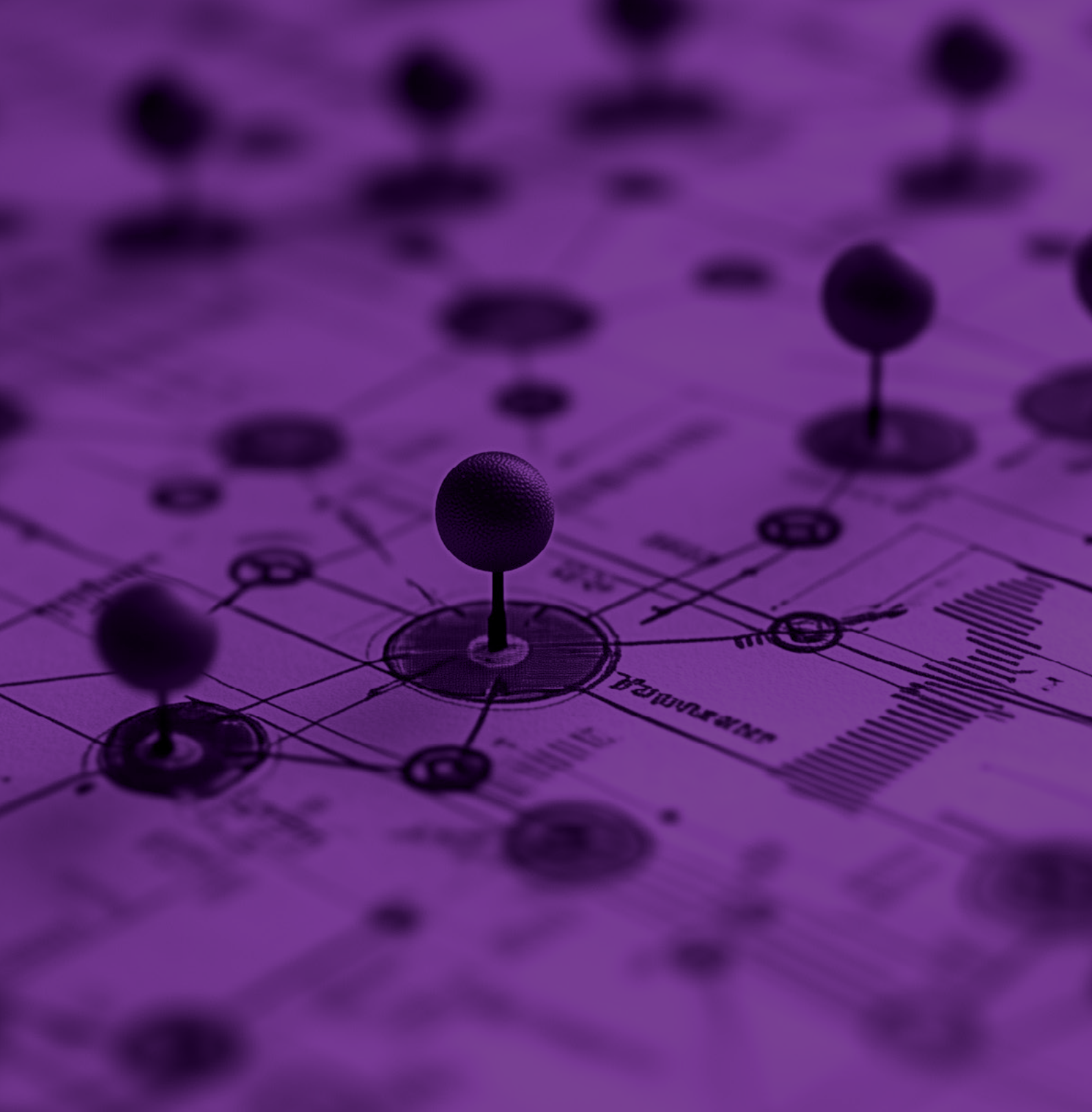
People living with HIV are often viewed with suspicion, but many in society believe in the need to provide them with medical assistance.

Interethnic communication is limited, as respondents’ social circles rarely include individuals from other ethnicities. Russians tend to have the closest connections with Ukrainians, while Gagauz and Bulgarians primarily form strong bonds within their own ethnic groups.

The Roma people face rejection from all ethnic groups and are subject to strongly unfavourable attitudes.

The Republic of Moldova rejects both emigration—viewed as a betrayal of the country and one’s family—and immigration, with the exception of migration to the European Union, as well as refugees.

Differences between respondent categories are rarely linked to deeper factors, such as preferences for welfare state models, social solidarity, political orientation, perceptions of societal quality, trust in others, or sociability. This can be attributed to a shared cultural tendency to reject diversity.



1. INTRODUCTION

This study examines perceptions and attitudes toward equality in the Republic of Moldova, building on the tradition of three previous studies conducted in 2015, 2018, and 2021. The current edition analyses data from a survey and five focus groups, exploring how Moldovans view and position themselves regarding various groups, including ethnic groups, gender groups, migrants, refugees, and people with disabilities.

The report begins by explaining the framework for understanding attitudes toward equality and discrimination. It is based on several major theories. These theories have been tested over time in different societies, including Moldova. They provide the foundation for understanding the results of this report. The theories are not ranked or prioritized, instead, are presented in a natural order.

The intergroup contact theory¹ emphasizes the importance of interaction between groups to build trust-based relationships. For instance, when two ethnic groups are separated by space but share a common border, those living closer to the border are more likely to trust the other group. Social contact acts as a learning process. Closer interactions help people understand each other and predict how members of the other group will behave. Over time, they feel less like strangers and become more trustworthy. In general, maintaining relationships with other groups enhances tolerance, while discriminatory behaviours and attitudes diminish.

The second key theory focuses on how society influences individuals. According to Peter Blau's macrosocial² theory, the structure of society plays a significant role in shaping individual behaviour. In a society marked by significant inequalities—where the wealthy are far richer than the poor—the attitudes and actions of individuals differ from those in a society with less income disparity. In societies with high inequality, people tend to view their primary group as being distinct from others, which fosters less empathy and understanding toward other groups. Here, income disparity not only reinforces economic divisions but also contributes to social distancing across various aspects of life. In essence, the structure of society—the way it is organized—shapes the attitudes and behaviours of its members.

The third key theory is the institutional hypothesis from the sociology of values³. Similar to Peter Blau's macrosocial theory, the institutional hypothesis emphasizes the role of societal rules and norms in shaping individual behaviour. For instance, if you live in a society where trust is a common social norm, you are likely to adopt this attitude and make trust a personal value. Over time, you begin to trust others as a reflection of the prevailing social behaviour. On the other hand, in a society where distrust is more widespread, individuals are more likely to adopt similar attitudes, leading them to distrust others as well.

The main conclusion drawn from the three theories discussed above is that the culture of acceptance toward others is fundamental in shaping attitudes toward equality and discrimination. Based on the theory of intergroup contact, this report will examine the Moldovan tendency to engage with others and trust them. This leads to an exploration of social capital—particularly sociability and trust—topics that will be addressed in Chapter 3. Together, these insights offer a deeper understanding of how Moldovans define their own society, which is a crucial foundation for fostering tolerance toward others.

1 Paolini et al., 2021; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011

2 P. Blau & Schwartz, 2018; P. M. Blau, 1977

3 Arts, 2011; B. Voicu, 2014

According to Inglehart's theory⁴, the orientation toward acceptance, tolerance, and concern for the well-being of others is stronger in societies that have already reduced personal uncertainty⁵. In other words, in societies where individuals experience greater stability—both materially and in terms of personal safety—there tends to be a greater willingness to accept others and demonstrate higher levels of tolerance.

The second part of the results will focus on several key areas: Moldovans' willingness to accept and help others (Chapter 5.1), how they define their identity (Chapter 5.2), and their views on the structure and organization of society (Chapter 5.3). In particular, the analysis will present responses to questions such as: What do Moldovans think about equality in general, including their attitudes toward redistribution? How do they define the nation and view the Moldovan state? Additionally, the concept of 'deservingness' will be explored as it relates to who is seen as deserving of help.

The concept of deservingness becomes more prominent when examining interactions between different status groups (Chapter 6) and when analysing attitudes toward specific groups that may be subject to discrimination (Chapter 7).

The analysis also includes comparisons with the situation in the Republic of Moldova over the last three decades. Various other data sources are explored to better understand the current situation in the context of societal evolution. This helps provide a more accurate assessment of the direction our country is heading. The study is further enriched by international comparisons and an analysis of differences between various status groups. This approach helps explain the mechanisms that may lead to inequality and prejudice. Status groups are defined based on respondents' self-identified characteristics, such as gender, age, and spoken language. These categories reflect the choices made by those who participated, allowing us to examine the differences between groups.

4 Inglehart, 1990, 2018

5 Bogdan Voicu, 2001



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Quantitative Research Component

The quantitative research phase consisted of a national survey conducted with individuals aged 18 and older. Participation was voluntary, and no financial incentives or other compensations were offered to respondents.

[sampling]

A stratified, multi-stage sampling method was used, with questionnaires distributed proportionally based on the population of individuals over 18 years of age in each stratum. The study did not include the population on the left bank of the Dniester River (Transnistria).

The selection of localities, sampling points, and starting points was done randomly. Once the starting point was set, interviewers followed a random route, choosing every third household until the required number of completed questionnaires was reached for each sampling point. If no one was available at a household during the first visit, the household was revisited up to two more times on different days and at different times. All people over the age of 18 in each household were eligible to participate. The person chosen to complete the questionnaire was selected using the Kish grid, with the selection process done by software. The interviewers did not have access to the selection procedure.

Table 1. The socio-demographic structure of the sample, SEPA 2024

Variable	Group	Number of people	Percentage
Gender	male	438	39,8%
	female	662	60,2%
Age	18-24 years	87	7,9%
	25-34 years	172	15,6%
	35-44 years	224	20,4%
	45-54 years	169	15,4%
	55-64 years	196	17,8%
	over 65 years	252	22,9%
Level of education	Secondary incomplete	150	13,6%
	Secondary vocational	500	45,5%
	High school (or post-secondary education/college)	181	16,5%
	Higher	269	24,5%
	No answer	0	0,0%
Occupation	Employed	376	34,2%
	Temporarily not working	196	17,8%
	Unemployed	527	47,9%
	No answer	1	0,1%
Nationality	Moldovan/Romanian	894	81,3%
	Other (Russian, Ukrainian etc.)	202	18,4%
	No answer	4	0,4%
Total		1100	100,0%

■ [maximum sampling error]

The study used a multistage stratified sampling method, with probability sampling applied at each stage and within each stratum. The maximum sampling error was calculated without considering stratification, meaning that precautionary measures were taken (see Table 2).

In general, any estimate has a maximum error of 3% at a 95% confidence level. If the percentage changes, the margin of error adjusts to 1.8% for a 90% or 10% confidence level. For example, an estimated percentage of 30% in the 2024 SEPA indicates that, in 95 out of 100 similar samples, the true value will lie between 27.3% and 32.7% (with an error of $\pm 2.7\%$).

Since estimated errors are applied, the report will avoid using decimals in percentages and long-scale averages. Decimals do not provide additional precision but instead create the illusion of accuracy, making the results harder to interpret.

Table 2. Maximum sampling error for several distributions, sample case, SEPA 2024

Distribution of the dichotomous variable	Estimated maximum error (95% CI)
50%-50%	$\pm 3,0\%$
60%-40%	$\pm 2,9\%$
70%-30%	$\pm 2,7\%$
80%-20%	$\pm 2,4\%$
90%-10%	$\pm 1,8\%$

*Reading mode: If the responses to a given question are evenly split (50% 'yes' and 50% 'no'), the maximum sampling error is $\pm 3.0\%$. In other words, in 95 out of 100 samples with a similar selection method and sample size (1,100 respondents), the proportion of 'yes' answers will fall between 47% and 53%.

■ [data collection]

Prior to the data collection stage, the survey was pre-tested. The pre-test involved 20 participants selected to reflect the structure of a national sample, based on criteria such as gender, age, occupation, etc. The interviews were conducted in the households of those who voluntarily agreed to participate in the pre-testing. Six questionnaires were completed in Russian, with no issues encountered during the process.

To gather feedback from multiple perspectives, interviewers included individuals involved in the project at various stages: the general manager, project manager, researchers, data collection coordinators, verifiers, and operators with varying levels of experience. The pre-testing also served to assess the functionality of the tablets and software, following the translation and programming of the questionnaire.

After the pre-testing stage, a report was prepared outlining observations and recommendations. Based on this feedback, the survey content was finalized.

The data collection phase was supported by 33 operators from the [imas] network, all of whom had previously participated in training sessions. During these sessions, the operators were briefed on the study's main objectives, how to use the tablets and the corresponding questionnaire, as well as the rules for sampling and communication with respondents. The questions in the survey were reviewed, and other administrative aspects were also covered.

The training concluded with a practical exercise, where operators completed questionnaires in pairs. A final meeting was held to discuss key conclusions and recommendations.

The surveys were completed at the respondents' homes using tablets and specialized survey software. Of the total, 37.1% of the questionnaires were completed in Russian, and 62.9% in Romanian. Data collection took place between March 25 and May 17, 2024. Responses were recorded directly into the software installed on each operator's tablet.

■ [data verification]

Due to the length of the questionnaire and the large number of open-ended questions, a thorough verification was conducted for all completed questionnaires. The verification process was comprehensive, addressing both compliance with sampling criteria (e.g., household and individual selection) and proper application of questions, including response scales. As a result of these checks, 4.14% (87 questionnaires) were invalidated for various reasons, such as interviews interrupted or abandoned by respondents, incorrect handling of open-ended questions, non-compliance with household selection criteria, or interviewing individuals not selected by the software.

■ [data processing]

The data collected by the operators were entered into specialized software for questionnaire design and programming. The data were then transmitted to secure servers, with access to the database restricted to authorized personnel and encrypted for added security. No information was stored on the tablets used by the operators. All procedures adhered to strict privacy standards, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, in compliance with legal requirements for the use of personal data.

Specialized software (SPSS) was used to process the data in the database. Before reporting the results, additional checks were conducted to ensure the accuracy of the responses, including the identification of incorrect response codes, missing answers, and inconsistencies. The data were also weighted, using statistical data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.

■ [analysis process]

The data for each chapter are first presented as trends across the entire sample. These trends are then compared to previous measurements conducted in the Republic of Moldova, particularly those from the SEPA 2021, 2018, and 2015 surveys. Additionally, the data are compared to findings from other European countries, using international comparative surveys such as EVS, WVS, ESS, EB, and others, where relevant analyses have been conducted.

The EVS/WVS refers to the European and World Values Surveys, a global research initiative conducted every 4-5 years on nationally representative samples. In the Republic of Moldova, it was carried out in 1995, 1999, 2004, and 2008. The advantage of the EVS/WVS is that it enables comparisons between the results of the 2024 ESPA and those from multiple countries, as well as longitudinal comparisons over time.

The ESS (European Social Survey) is conducted biennially across 30-35 European countries, enabling comparisons with these nations. The EB (Eurobarometer) is carried out multiple times

a year in European Union countries and provides the advantage of allowing comparisons with very recent data. It is important to note that, when comparing with other countries, we often do not have the most up-to-date data. However, considering that cultural change occurs gradually (Inglehart, 2018), diachronic comparisons remain valid even when conducted 5-10 years apart.

At the end of each chapter, we analyse the key segmentation categories, which are described in the following chapter. The analysis uses multilevel causal models with multiple variables (linear prediction, logit, probit, tobit, depending on the type of variables analysed), with respondents grouped by their place of residence. The aim is to identify the main factors that drive differentiation within the population of the Republic of Moldova. Only statistically significant relationships are discussed in the text.

2.2. Qualitative research component

Five focus groups (FG) were conducted. See Table 3 for details..

Table 3. List of group discussions and details about their structure

Target	Location	Number of participants	Age	Spoken language
[FG] Romanian speakers	Straseni	9	30-50	Romanian
[FG] Russian speakers	Chisinau	8	30-50	Russian
[FG] of elderly people	Criuleni	10	60+	Romanian
[FG] of people with disabilities	Chisinau	9	20-40	Romanian
[FG] of Ukrainian refugees	Chisinau	8	30-50	Russian

The participants were selected using a recruitment survey that listed the criteria they needed to meet for each focus group. The moderators followed a guide that was designed based on the study's goals and objectives. During the sessions, participants were made to feel safe and respected, allowing them to freely share their thoughts. The moderators did not judge or correct the participants' opinions but instead encouraged everyone to express their ideas. The focus group sessions were conducted smoothly without any issues.



3. POTENTIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING ATTITUDES TOWARDS EQUALITY

To analyse the data in this report, several classifications were used to better understand respondents' opinions based on their status⁶. These classifications are explained below. They include both individual characteristics, such as socio-economic status, geographical location, and linguistic identity. Additionally, two specific determinants were considered that shape the societal context: people's views on the quality of society and their access to social capital (such as trust and relationships). It is expected that individuals with higher social status, more positive views of society, and stronger social connections will be more likely to accept others and support equality.

3.1. Socio-economic status, linguistic identity and geographical location

The report examines:

- **Gender** (45% male, 55% female);
- **Age** (categorized as 18-24 years, 25-34 years, 35-49 years, 50-63 years, and 64 years and older; categories were selected to reflect typical stages in the family cycle, as well as retirement age; the smallest category contains 87 cases);
- **Marital status** (14% single, 59% married, 4% cohabiting, 10% divorced/separated, and 14% widowed);
- **Ethnicity** (71% Moldovan, 10% Romanian, 5% Russian, 6% Ukrainian, 4% Gagauz, 2% Bulgarian, and 2% other – 16 cases);
- **Language spoken at home** (47% Moldovan, 26% Romanian, 20% Russian, 3% Ukrainian, 2% Bulgarian, and 2% Gagauz – the smallest group, with 16 cases);
- **Language spoken at home with parents** (same categories as above);
- **Change in language spoken at home compared to childhood** (17% yes, 83% no);
- **Education** (35% with 8 or fewer years of schooling, 25% vocational school, 5% high school, 14% incomplete university or post-secondary, 21% with university education);
- **Occupational status** (27% employed full-time, 6% employed part-time, 3% students, 13% homemakers, 30% retirees, 2% entrepreneurs or self-employed, 13% unemployed, 6% other);
- **Sector of activity** (67% not employed, 14% working in the public sector, 19% in the private sector);
- **Number of household members** (minimum 1, maximum 10);
- **Number of minors in the household** (61% with none, maximum of 7 minors);
- **Frequency of internet use** (84% daily, 3% weekly, 13% rarely or never);
- **Location** (23% in urban areas, 20% in other towns, and 58% in rural areas);
- **Region of residence** (27% in the North, 31% in the Central region, 5% in the South, 23% in Chisinau, and 5% in UTA Gagauzia).

⁶ Status refers to a set of characteristics that position an individual within the community they belong to. These characteristics include factors such as age, gender, education, marital status (single, married, divorced, cohabiting, separated, widowed), income, and others.

3.2. Perceptions of society's quality

Positive views on the quality of society tend to encourage support for gender equality, tolerance towards other social groups, and benevolence⁷ (Abbott, Wallace, & Sapsford, 2016).

The survey begins with questions that explore respondents' perceptions of Moldovan society. Table 4 presents the answers.

The results show that Moldovans generally feel that people do not care much about each other. They are rather pessimistic, believe taxes are paid in a corrupt state, and feel that individual rights and laws are not respected. Institutions and authorities are seen as untrustworthy and not working for the benefit of citizens.

Furthermore, leaders are perceived as not being truthful. There is some uncertainty when it comes to whether society is fragmented (item j) and whether there is discrimination (item k). For both of these issues, as well as for the question about whether people care about each other, many respondents were undecided or chose not to answer.

The items in Table 4 were used to calculate a 'positive evaluation score' for society. The goal was to analyse the relationship between this score and attitudes towards discrimination. Item k was excluded from the analysis to avoid creating artificial links between the factors being studied. Additionally, the variables related to corruption (where opinions were too uniform) and paying taxes were also excluded from the calculation⁸.

The analysis of this indicator, based on the individual traits described in the previous section, reveals the following differences between status groups⁹:

- **Ethnic Romanians** are **more satisfied with the quality of society** than Moldovans, Ukrainians, and Russians;
- People who **speak Romanian at home** are **more satisfied with society** than those who speak Moldovan, who in turn are more satisfied than those who speak Ukrainian, Russian, or Bulgarian at home;
- **Graduates of vocational education** tend to have **more critical views on the quality of society**;
- **Residents of Chisinau** are **more optimistic**, while those from the Gagauz Autonomous Region are more dissatisfied with the quality of society.

7 A tendency to care about the well-being of others, which may involve taking action to help them. This concept includes benevolence, but goes beyond it.

8 Factor analysis with single-factor extraction using maximum likelihood was performed. The scree plot shows that a single factor is present. The data structure is suitable for factor analysis (KMO = 0.861). The communalities for the two excluded items are 0.1, while the communalities for the remaining items are higher, with most being around 0.4 or greater. The extracted factor accounts for 38% of the total variance of the item set.

9 The results are based on multilevel models, with respondents grouped by their place of residence and the factors described in the previous section as predictors. Only differences that are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ are reported.

Table 4. Perceptions of the state of society, SEPA 2024 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the overall atmosphere in our country?

In Republic of Moldova...	To a very small extent / Not at all	To a small extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	DK/NA
People care for their peers	17%	40%	29%	7%	7%
People are confident about their own future and that of their children	28%	32%	29%	7%	3%
People pay their taxes to the state	3%	19%	54%	20%	5%
The rights and freedoms of people are respected	30%	40%	23%	2%	4%
There is corruption	2%	8%	45%	41%	4%
Laws are respected	27%	45%	23%	2%	2%
People have confidence in institutions	25%	45%	22%	2%	6%
The authorities work for the benefit of the citizen	36%	38%	19%	3%	3%
The government/those in power tell the truth	45%	33%	15%	3%	5%
There are more things that unite us than those that divide us	14%	35%	37%	5%	9%
Discrimination ¹⁰ is widespread in the Republic of Moldova	12%	34%	36%	11%	7%

3.3. Individual resources

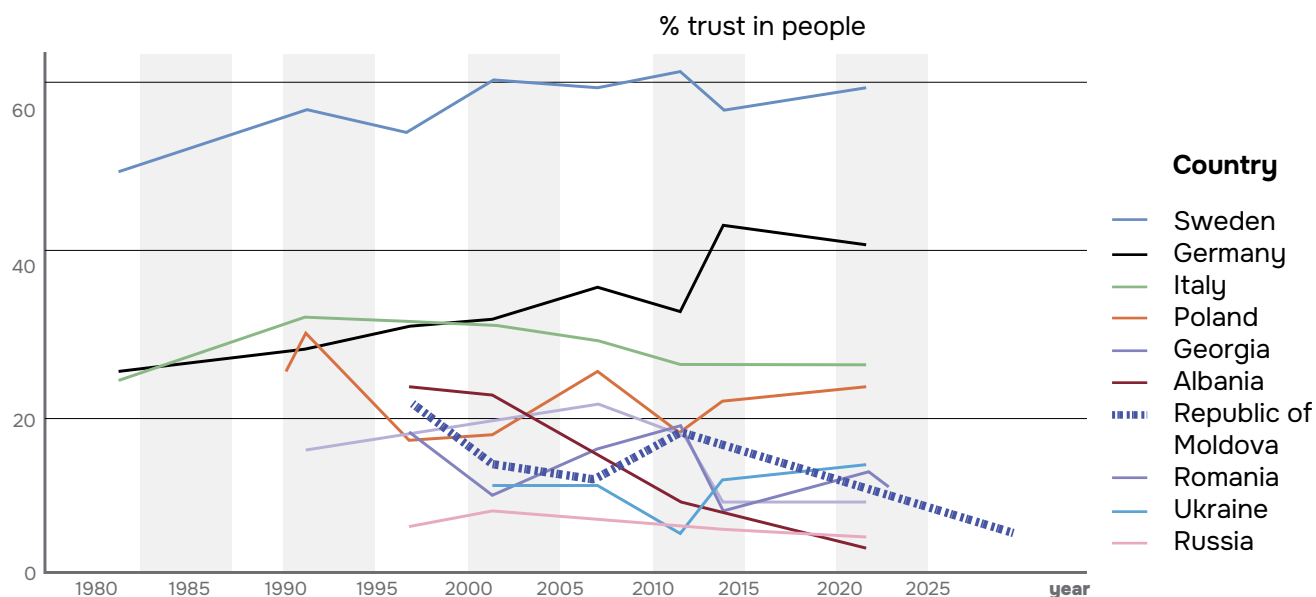
Trust in people: survey results

Trust in people is a key factor influencing tolerance (Dragoman, 2006), attitudes toward gender (Dutta, Giddings, & Sobel, 2022), attitudes toward redistribution (Im, 2018), and other social dynamics. SEPA 2024 incorporates two distinct measures of trust in people: the classic trust scale, widely used globally since the 1940s (Figure 1), and a revised version based on the framework proposed by the World Values Survey (WVS) in the 2000s (Delhey, Newton, & Welzel, 2011) (Table 5).

The analysis of the classic trust scale reveals that 5% of respondents trust people, 94% do not, and 1% did not provide an answer. The trend is negative: the proportion of those who trust people has declined over the post-communist decades, dropping from 22% in 1995 to 14% in 1999, 12% in 2004, and 18% in 2008. This decline is likely influenced by a series of local, regional, and global crises, including the late-2000s recession, the refugee crises, the Russian invasions of Ukraine starting in 2014, political instability, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent economic downturn.

¹⁰ Discrimination was defined for respondents as unequal treatment based on factors such as race, color, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, age, disability, opinion, political affiliation, and other similar characteristics

Figure 1. Dynamics of trust in people across several European countries



Data sources: EVS/WVS 1980–2018, SEPA 2024. Figures represent the percentage of respondents who agree with ‘Most people can be trusted’ compared to those who agree with ‘It is better to be careful in dealing with people’.

The comparison with other societies places the Republic of Moldova alongside other former communist countries that exhibit the lowest levels of trust in people. A similar negative trend is observed in countries like Albania, Georgia, and Armenia. In contrast, EU countries generally show higher levels of trust and a more positive trend overall.

Table 5. Trust in different groups of people, SEPA 2024 – To what extent do you trust people in the following categories?

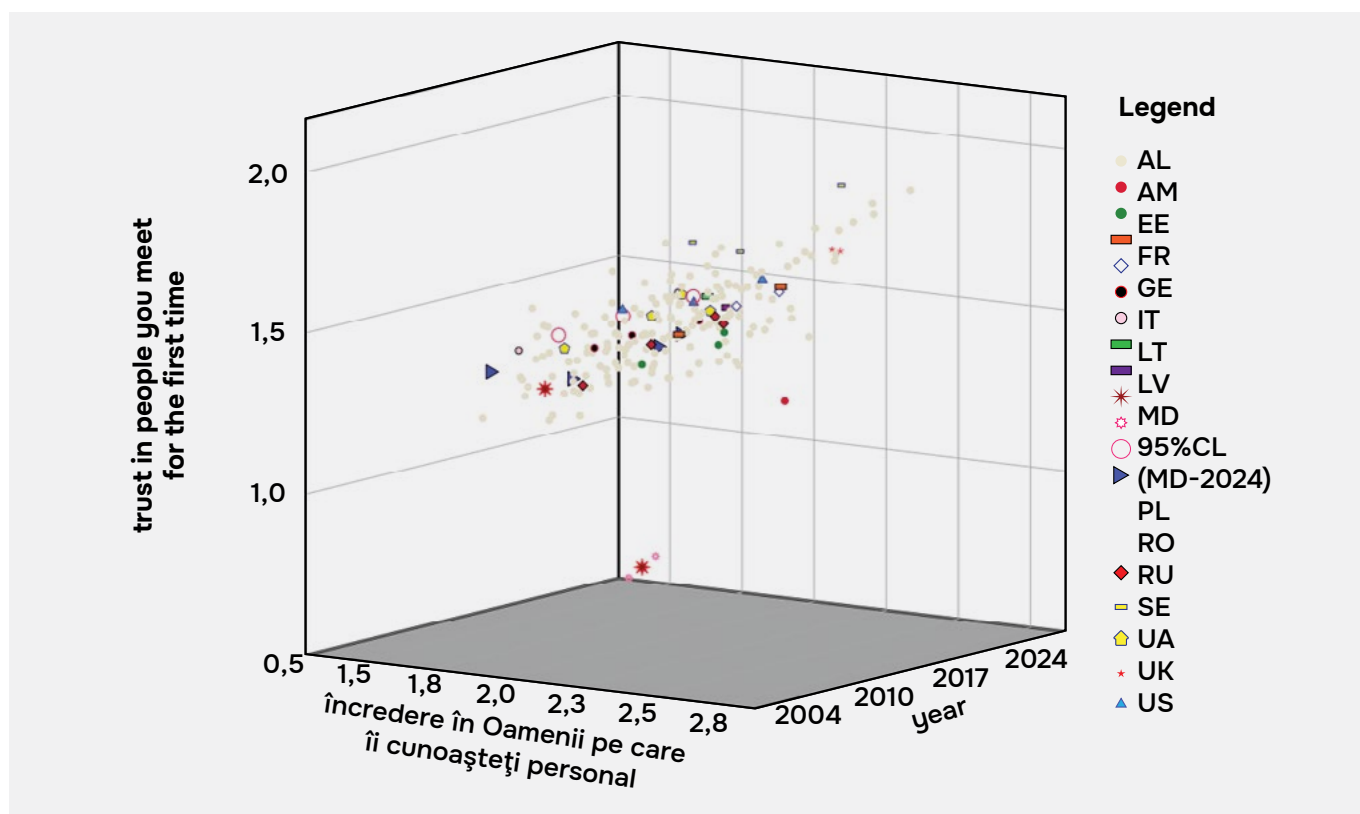
	Very little	Little	A lot	Very much	DK/NA
People in your family	2%	6%	31%	60%	1%
People in your neighbourhood	15%	50%	27%	6%	3%
People you personally know	9%	34%	46%	10%	1%
People you meet for the first time	48%	44%	5%	1%	3%
People of different religions	35%	40%	16%	2%	7%
People of different nationalities	24%	46%	21%	3%	7%

Table 5 reveals different ‘circles of trust’ within Moldovan society. The results confirm there is a high level of distrust. A striking 92% of respondents express distrust toward people they meet for the first time. Only one-third of respondents trust their neighbours, while 43% tend to distrust acquaintances, compared to 56% who trust them. Additionally, religious and ethnic differences contribute to levels of distrust.

The averages for the six indicators in Table 5 were calculated by assigning points: 0 for ‘very little trust’, 1 for ‘a little’, 2 for ‘a lot’, and 3 for ‘very much’, with 1.5 points for those who did not answer. Similar average values were also estimated for other European countries. However, it’s important to note that the scale used in those countries differs from the one in the Republic of Moldova, as it includes a middle option (‘neither much nor little’). Despite this difference, we can still compare the general trends. For the WVS/EVS scale, those who chose the middle option were also given a value of 1.5.

However, we benefit from the advantage of having data from the Republic of Moldova from 2004, allowing us to assess the country’s position in relation to other states. As shown in Figure 1, the results indicate that trust in Moldova is lower compared to other regions in Europe and worldwide. Moldovans generally have less trust in people, whether they know them personally or meet them for the first time. Furthermore, there is a noticeable trend of declining trust over time.

Figure 2. The relationship between trust in acquaintances and first-time encounters, 2004–2024, across various countries worldwide.



Note: The data presented in this figure are derived from SEPA 2024, EVS, and WVS, covering 87 global societies, including 45 from Europe. Each point in the figure (represented by symbols such as circles, squares, or triangles) corresponds to a specific country at a particular point in time along the ‘year’ axis. The trust indicator ranges from 0 to 3, illustrating varying levels of trust in people. This figure displays only the segment relevant to the analyzed countries. Light gray points indicate countries without specific legend assignments, distinct from those with customized symbols and colors. For the Republic of Moldova in 2024, the figure also highlights the lower limit of the 95% confidence interval for the trust indicator.

Three trust-related items discussed in this chapter were combined into a single measure of 'trust in people'¹¹. Similar to the approach taken with societal quality, this score was employed to analyze Moldovans' perspectives on equality across various dimensions. Prior to this analysis, a separate examination was conducted to explore how trust in people differs across various status categories. The findings are as follows¹²:

- **Individuals who speak a different language** at home tend to have higher trust in people compared to those who primarily communicate in Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian, or Gagauz;
- **Trust levels** increase with **age** and are higher among **men**;
- **Greater trust** is linked to positive perceptions of societal quality;
- **No other factor is significantly associated** with trust.

■ Trust in people: results from qualitative analysis

[FG] Romanian speakers

Focus group participants found it challenging to define trust and the contexts in which it applies. For them, trust is a vital aspect of human interactions, forming the foundation of close and lasting relationships. It is rooted in understanding, respect, and is demonstrated through actions. Being trustworthy means not betraying others, while trusting someone implies sharing personal and intimate matters with confidence.

The vast majority of survey participants believe that there is little to no trust among people in the Republic of Moldova.

Trust often develops as relationships grow closer and people get to know each other better. In such cases, they either find compatibility and build a connection, or realize their differences and the relationship does not progress further. Shared interests make it easier to form stronger bonds.

On the other hand, society in the Republic of Moldova is perceived as highly divided, particularly on socio-political issues. Since the country's independence, divisions have persisted because of different opinions. The population spans multiple generations—those born in the USSR, the 1990s, and the 2000s—each seen as having distinct values and principles. Additionally, some believe that certain individuals have lost their moral compass, making it difficult to place trust in them.

In difficult situations, most people said they would first seek help from their spouse or family members, as they are the closest. Few would turn to friends or neighbours, even if they have good relationships with them. At the same time, some mentioned that it can sometimes be easier to ask a stranger for help than a relative. This is often due to knowing that certain relatives may feel envious, which creates a sense of distance.

11 We excluded trust in family, which reflects bonding-type social capital, as well as trust in other ethnic and religious groups, which will be analyzed in a separate chapter. The generalized trust item showed minimal variation, with only 5% of respondents indicating trust. The resulting trust indicator was constructed as a factor score (KMO = 0.655). Maximum likelihood was used for extraction, with communalities of 0.3, 0.5, and 0.6. The factor explains 46% of the total variance.

12 A multilevel analysis was conducted with respondents grouped by their place of residence and using the set of individual – and regional – level variables described earlier in this chapter, along with perceptions of societal quality as predictors.

There is no trust in Moldova! We are all so different, especially because we are such a deeply divided state!

[M2, general public]

Trusting someone means consistency in their actions—they do what they say. Time shows if you can rely on them. And if that someone trusted you and you deceived them, it's not because they were stupid, I beg your pardon, but it's because they trusted you too much and that trust is gone forever. Trust means to understand and to respect each other.

[F3, general public]

[FG] Russian speakers

Russian speakers see trust as relying on someone when you need help, knowing they won't let you down, regardless of nationality or spoken language. For them, trust is measured by actions and deeds, not just words. For some, a person's behaviour and the way of speaking can indicate how much they can be trusted. Trust also means communication. When people communicate regularly and maintain contact over time, trust naturally grows. Most participants believe that nowadays, people don't trust each other much because of social distance—everyone focuses on their own lives. Many participants noted that trust depends heavily on relationships. For example, you tend to trust family more because you spend time together, share experiences, and have a close bond. On the other hand, it's hard to trust people you don't meet or communicate with.

If they needed help, Russian speakers, like other survey participants, would first turn to family, friends, and relatives. However, if those close to them were unable to assist, some respondents mentioned that, out of necessity, they would also seek help from strangers or people they don't have a close relationship with.

According to one female participant, there is a certain level of trust in people with authority or status, such as doctors or police officers—those responsible for the lives and safety of the citizens.

Trust means that someone won't abandon you in a difficult situation when you need them.

[M1, individuals discriminated against based on language]

Trust is part of communication. One cannot exist without the other. Everything is connected. Even with distant friends, there is still some level of trust—not as close, but it's there. Trust is tested over time.

[F1, individuals discriminated against based on language]

Maybe trust isn't shown only through basic actions. When you talk to someone, you can already tell if you can trust them—through how they speak, the words they choose, and their behaviour.

[M2, individuals discriminated against based on spoken language]

[FG] of older adults

For this group, trust means confiding in someone and knowing they won't betray you. It also means being able to rely on someone, especially during hard times. Most participants said trust is very hard to earn, and many believe it is missing in today's society. When they open up to others, they often feel disappointed or betrayed. Relationships have become distant because of envy in society. This envy comes from people's struggles, daily hardships, and the desire to have what others have or even more. Some people have become bitter and petty, taking satisfaction in others' difficulties. They may even spread false information to harm those around them.

When in need of help, people first turn to neighbours, family, and relatives. Some respondents mentioned relying only on neighbours because their children or other family members are either living abroad or far away.

People are not so honest and open. Everyone is for themselves. The closest people have left. The children have scattered and live elsewhere... And then, if at some point you let a word slip, shared a trouble, and two days later it was heard that it had been 'exaggerated'—turned into a 'whole flowerpot' of supposed problems—then they say, 'That's it, I'm done! No more.'

[F1, older adults]

I turn to neighbours, although I have children and relatives, but they are far away. And just talking on the phone doesn't help at all.

[F2, older adults]

[FG] people with disabilities

People with disabilities define trust as not being refused when you're in a difficult situation or when someone keeps their promises. Trust also means being punctual, sincere, and responsible. Some participants believe trust is shaped by the education they received in childhood. A child raised in a loving environment with good values, encouragement, and support is more likely to trust others as an adult. On the other hand, children who face trauma or don't get support from their families may find it harder to trust people.

Respondents believe that trust levels are quite low today. People don't trust each other for many reasons. Some are rooted in historical events such as communism, wars, famines, and deportations. Others are caused by the current low level of trust, fueled by media coverage of crimes, corruption, and disappointment in the political class.

In situations where they need help, people with disabilities would most often turn to their family. However, they mentioned that there are times when they cannot rely on family members or prefer not to involve them. In such cases, they would seek support from close friends or various specialists. They avoid turning to people who have betrayed them or those with whom they've had conflicts.

I would say that, for me, trust is measured by... I don't know, the feeling and sense that I can entrust certain secrets to someone. But also, through punctuality, responsibility, and a fair attitude toward me... and I, in turn, toward the person I trust and can call trustworthy.

[F2, people with disabilities]

For example, citizens have very little trust in the authorities or the administration, always thinking that those are stealing. When social benefits or humanitarian aid arrive, social assistance distributes them to their relatives instead of the people who truly deserve them. Issues like corruption and injustice are always being talked about, and this lowers trust. I, for one, would never turn to someone I once considered a friend but who later betrayed me.

[M3, people with disabilities]

[FG] Ukrainian refugees

Ukrainian refugees define trust as a sense of peace and security, when confiding in someone without fear of being judged. They believe trust is built over time. Even though they now live in the Republic of Moldova, they say trust is not influenced by geography or nationality. For them, trust depends on a person's character, behaviour, and upbringing. Similar to people with disabilities, Ukrainian refugees view trust as something shaped by life experiences and influenced by the environment. When asked about trust in the Republic of Moldova, responses varied based on personal experiences. Some expressed a high level of trust, having encountered kind and helpful people, even strangers. Others reported low trust, sharing experiences of being lied to or taken advantage of, for example when they were searching for rental housing and found themselves in a difficult time.

If they need help, they would turn to family, relatives, or friends, just like the other respondents.

Trust is when you believe in the person next to you, someone who supports you every minute. It could be friends or acquaintances you don't fully trust, but that doesn't mean you can't share something with them. For me, trust is when I feel comfortable enough to talk about certain topics. You can count on your fingers the people who truly understand and listen to you without expecting anything in return.

[M2, Ukrainian refugees]

From my personal experience, when I was looking for a rental, two landlords started blackmailing me, demanding money and even threatening to damage my car because I didn't want to rent their apartment. But others were very kind. It's a 50/50 situation.

[F3, Ukrainian refugees]

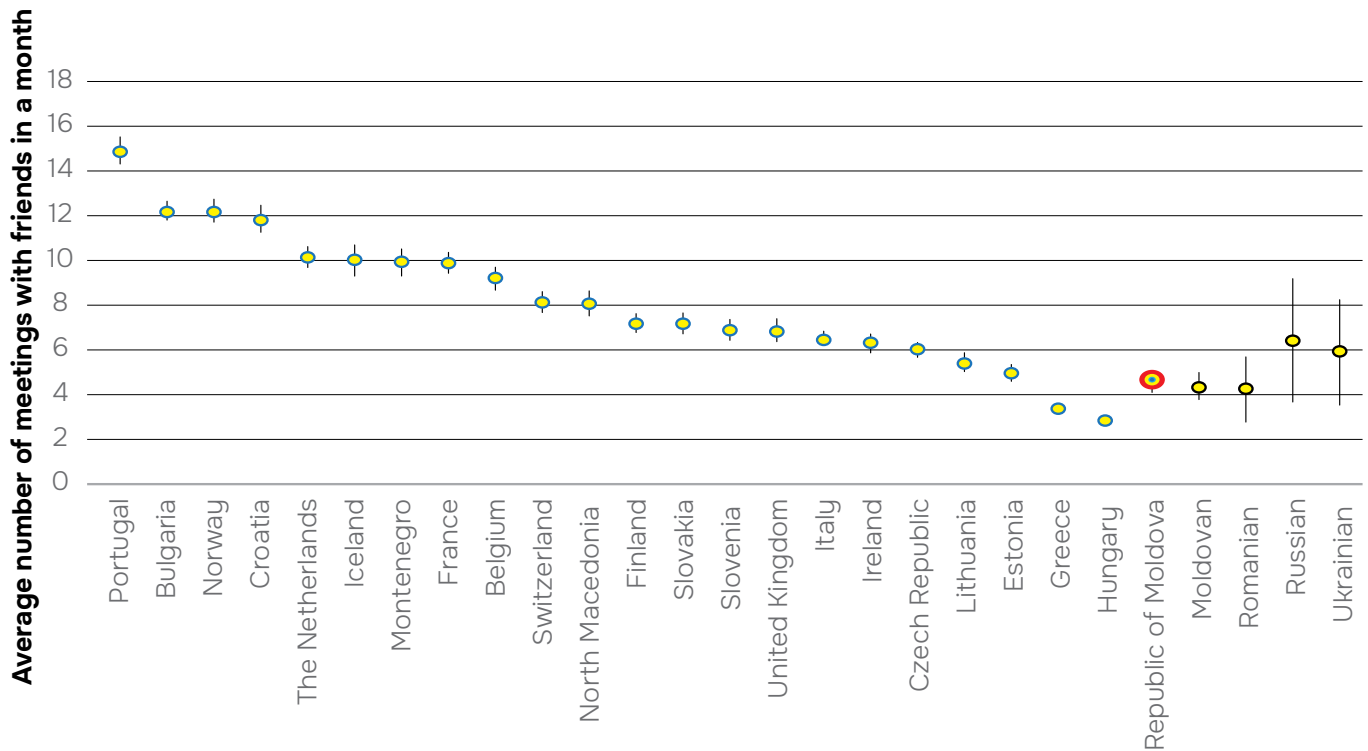
For me, trust is when you can talk to someone about different topics. It's when you feel that this person is close to you, that you're on the same page, and there's no tension in your relationship with them. I love people. I consider myself a very kind person when it comes to communication.

[F4, Ukrainian refugees]

Sociability

The theory of social contact has shown, over the past four to five decades, strong evidence that interacting with different groups of people helps reduce prejudice and intolerance¹³. To create these interactions, the habit of socializing is essential. This brings up the need to measure relational social capital¹⁴. In the SEPA 2024 survey, one item, adapted from the ESS, asked: ‘How often do you meet with friends, relatives, or colleagues to spend time together—not for work or responsibilities?’ According to the answers: 8% meet their friends daily, 9% several times a week, 15% once a week, 13% several times a month, 27% less often, 6% never.

Figure 3. Sociability of Moldovans compared to several European countries



Note: The figures in the chart represent the average number of monthly meetings with friends, relatives, or colleagues to spend time together, not for work or obligations. The circles indicate the estimated average, and the bars represent the 95% confidence intervals.

By converting the categories into an approximate number of monthly social interactions, we calculate an average of 4.7 meetings per month. On the right side of Figure 3, ethnic groups are compared, showing no significant differences among those identifying as Moldovan, Romanian, Russian, or Ukrainian (as the confidence intervals overlap). Data from the ESS 2020-2022 allowed for a comparison with several European countries. It was observed that sociability in the Republic of Moldova is higher than in Greece or Hungary, similar to Estonia and Lithuania, but lower than in other countries analyzed. For instance, the estimated averages for monthly meetings are 12.2 in Bulgaria, 11.8 in Croatia, 7.2 in Slovakia, and 6.1 in the Czech Republic—examples from post-communist Europe.

Moreover, in these countries, the lower limit of the 95% confidence interval (representing the range where the mean would fall in 95 out of 100 similar samples) is considerably higher

13 Paolini et al., 2021; Pettigrew et al., 2011

14 Bogdan Voicu, 2010

than the upper limit for the Republic of Moldova (5.1). Specifically, a conservative estimate shows a minimum of 11.7 meetings per month in Bulgaria, 11.2 in Croatia, 6.7 in Slovakia, and 5.8 in the Czech Republic, while an optimistic estimate for Moldova indicates an average of 5.1 meetings per month.

Meetings with friends are especially valuable when they provide an opportunity to discuss personal matters. The SEPA 2024 survey included the question: 'How many people can you talk to about personal or intimate matters?' Respondents could choose from the following options: 'no one,' 'one friend,' '2, 3, 4, ... 9,' or '10 or more.' The results showed that 27% of participants have no friends they can talk to about personal topics, 26% have one friend, 18% have two, and 11% have three. The percentages decrease as the number of friends increases. On average, respondents reported having 2.0 friends they can confide in.

A comparison with ESS 2020-2024 data reveals that the Republic of Moldova is on the same level as North Macedonia (average 1.7, with overlapping confidence intervals), Bulgaria (2.0), Slovakia (2.0), and Lithuania (2.1). However, other countries show significantly higher averages. For example, Hungary averages 2.4, Finland 3.0, Belgium 3.2, and Switzerland, with the highest in the dataset, 3.7.

The multivariate analysis of the data for the Republic of Moldova highlighted several significant differences:

- **Men socialize more often** than women (meeting friends more frequently);
- **Younger generations** tend to have **more frequent meetings** with friends;
- The number **of meetings is higher** among individuals identifying as '**other ethnicity**' compared to those from more common ethnic communities (Moldovan, Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz, Bulgarian);
- **Gagauz and Bulgarian speakers socialize with friends more often** than those who speak Moldovan;
- **Individuals of 'other ethnicity' have significantly more close friends** (with whom they can discuss personal or intimate matters) than those from the Moldovan and Romanian ethnic groups;
- **Rare Internet use** is associated with a **lack of close friends**.

The overall picture reveals a society where people are relatively isolated, with a significant percentage preferring limited contact with others. Differences between status categories are minimal, reflecting a sense of coherence and uniformity in Moldovan society from this perspective.



4. LIFESTYLE AND REPRESENTATIONS ON EQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION: RESULTS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

This chapter examines the insights gathered from focus group discussions, exploring how various groups within Moldovan society live. It provides an in-depth analysis of the general population, older adults, people at risk of discrimination, and individuals with disabilities.

4.1. [FG] Romanian speakers

The daily lives of individuals in the general public category, particularly Romanian speakers, follow a relatively consistent routine. Usually, the workday starts in the morning. For those with children, responsibilities are often shared with their partner. Evenings are usually spent at home, either with family or in solitude.

Weekends are dedicated to rest or activities that bring joy to the participants, such as walks, spending time with children, or engaging in sports. If there are activities they cannot afford to do, the most common obstacles are a lack of time and money.

Most individuals in the general public group believe they don't have problems, just situations that need to be addressed. However, those who admitted to facing challenges in their daily lives pointed to a lack of money and time for family and children as their main issues.

The majority of respondents mentioned that they have many friends, some of whom they have known since adolescence. A significant number consider their family members to be their best friends, other people are just acquaintances. Community relations, most of the time, rely on small groups of people. In some regions, interactions are limited to simply saying hello, while in others, neighbours work together to keep their neighbourhoods clean, support one another, and offer advice. Survey participants expressed a desire for stronger community connections and greater involvement in addressing local issues.

At home, we wake up, have a cup of coffee, freshen up, and head to work. During the day, I'm constantly interacting with people from different age groups. After my additional activities, I spend time on my phone or on the internet—something like that.

[F5, general public]

Besides my usual activities, I prefer to ride my bike. That's what I do on Sundays.

[M1, general public]

In our society, there are many situations where people feel they are not treated equally or that their rights are not respected. Focus group participants in this category were able to accurately identify and explain the concept of discrimination. In their view, people are most often **discriminated against based on the following criteria:**



gender

women are more frequently discriminated against



social status

socially vulnerable individuals or families, as well as children from low-income families



belonging to the LGBTQ+ group



ethnicity

roma people are often subjected to discrimination



age

Respondents mentioned that one reason for discrimination is the education people receive at home, often rooted in traditional upbringing. They also mentioned observing situations where wealthier individuals discriminate against those who are less affluent. Among children, this behaviour often manifests as bullying in schools.

Instances of discrimination against elderly people, particularly in the medical field, were highlighted. Some participants shared cases where older adults received discriminatory responses when calling the 112-emergency service. Additionally, these cases were reportedly not given priority simply because the individuals were elderly.

A person shared situations when he was asked to speak in Russian, and he refused. He felt discriminated against but was eventually forced to speak in Russian.

The more vulnerable families are, the greater the pressure they face.

[F3, general public]

On the contrary, they often receive rude replies – ‘You’re old, what do you want? What more do you expect at your age?’ – something like that. I would say that basic human treatment here has somewhat degraded.

[F5, general public]

4.2. [FG] Russian speakers

The lifestyle of Russian-speaking people is similar to that of other groups. Like others, they balance routine with activities that bring them satisfaction. Their day typically starts with breakfast. Parents take their children to kindergarten or school before heading to work, while evenings are spent on household duties. Students attend university and then work, while those without a fixed work schedule organize their time based on daily tasks. For everyone, the day ends with dinner and preparing for sleep. In addition to family and work responsibilities, participants dedicate time to activities they enjoy, such as jogging, tennis, studying IT, watching movies, taking walks in the park, or traveling. They would like more personal time for themselves but find it difficult to achieve due to work, traffic, and helping their children with homework. If they had more time and financial resources, they would like to pursue activities such as swimming, taking psychology courses, learning foreign languages, or playing sports.

All participants have friends and try to stay in touch to keep their relationships strong. Some meet up often because they enjoy communication and socializing, while others do so less often because they don't have enough time or prefer to spend more time with their family. Most participants have friends from childhood, while others made new friends later in life at events, work, or other situations.

The main problems Russian speakers face are financial—they want to earn more to have a decent standard of living and a better quality of life.

Russian speakers do not feel like a minority and note that there are no specific events organized for their group. They consider themselves part of the broader community. When asked if they feel closer to other Russian speakers, they answered positively. However, they also don't feel discomfort when interacting with Romanian speakers, as most Romanian speakers communicate with them in Russian.

Instances where Romanian speakers insist on speaking Romanian out of principle are rare. When such situations arise, Russian speakers often turn to their colleagues for help with translation. Some participants have a basic understanding of Romanian but prefer to express themselves in Russian. Similarly, their interlocutors might understand Russian but respond in Romanian. Naturally, Russian speakers feel more at ease in environments where their language is predominant, such as within Russian-speaking communities in neighbourhoods, workplaces, social circles, or regions of the country where Russian is commonly spoken.

My day starts like this: I wake up, go to university, attend my classes, and after that, I go to work. This is how five days of my week usually go.

[M1, individuals discriminated against based on spoken language]

I wake up and take my older child to school. While he's at school, I spend time with my younger daughter. Then I pick him up from school, we go for a walk together, and then come home to do homework and get ready for school. We have dinner and get ready for bed.

[F4, individuals discriminated against based on spoken language]

I feel the same—I really love swimming, but work takes up so much time that I can't make it to practice. I wish I had more time for sports.

[M2, individuals discriminated against based on spoken language]

I don't have many close friends. I can meet with acquaintances every day, but with my closest friends, we go out to relax. We have two new close couples we spend time with. True friends, the kind who would really help you in a life situation, are few, but we have many acquaintances.

[F2, individuals discriminated against based on spoken language]

I feel these kinds of connections. I live in Chisinau, but if I go, for example, to the north of Moldova, where people speak more Russian, I feel much more comfortable, like I've found my community, my place. Or if there is someone who speaks Russian in a predominantly Romanian-speaking group, I feel a closer connection with them.

[M2, individuals discriminated against based on spoken language]

According to the participants, Russian speakers, discrimination occurs when a person's rights are restricted, and they are treated unequally or as inferior compared to another person.

Discrimination begins with individuals—ordinary people—and often appears from fear, lack of knowledge, outdated thinking, or limited resources. The groups most affected by discrimination are the Roma and people with disabilities. Like other participants, Russian speakers shared their own experiences of discrimination.

For example, during the hiring process, some were denied jobs because they didn't speak Romanian, even though they met all other criteria. In state institutions or banks, documents were issued only in Romanian; one bank employee rudely told a participant to 'use Google Translate' if they didn't understand the documents. In healthcare, medical staff often used Romanian medical terms, making it difficult for them to understand diagnoses or follow treatment instructions. According to one participant, discrimination against Russian speakers also happens at a higher level. On various state authorities' websites, information is available only in Romanian and English. Additionally, some political parties publish leaflets, newspapers, and electoral programs exclusively in Romanian.

In pharmacies and stores, there is still discrimination against the Russian language. Even if you come with a prescription written in Russian, and they know all the terms, there is still an issue, especially for pensioners born in the USSR. Most of them are Russian speakers and never had the chance to learn the state language. Additionally, on many government websites, translations are provided in English, but Russian is not even an option.

[F3, individuals discriminated against based on spoken language]

Lately, I've noticed how the state is actively working to suppress the Russian language. In the past, we, as Russian speakers, felt free, but now we feel like a group that is ignored. Many people won't even listen to us. Even political parties that publish newspapers, they no longer print them in Russian. There are no websites in Russian. On state websites, if you ask a question in Russian, you might get an answer, but sometimes they intentionally ignore you, which feels like discrimination. Another issue is the lack of knowledge—people don't know the language, the laws, or that it's unacceptable to discriminate against others just because they don't know certain words in a language.

[M2, individuals discriminated against based on spoken language]

4.3. [FG] older adults

The lifestyle of older adults revolves around household chores, tending to animals and birds, and working in the garden or fields. A few respondents who are still employed balance these responsibilities with their jobs. However, they feel social pressure and are often labelled as 'greedy' (saving too much or trying to get rich) and are criticized for taking jobs that should belong to younger people or for simply getting in the way.

Although they have a strong desire to stay as productive as possible, their physical condition and health often prevent them from maintaining a fast pace in their activities. Activities that bring them satisfaction include working in the fields, watching television (historical films, entertainment shows, and news), reading, talking with their children, and spending time with

their grandchildren. Many expressed a wish to travel, especially to visit their children and grandchildren abroad, but their financial resources are insufficient. For some, the current pension barely covers the cost of necessary medicines and utility bills.

I wake up like a soldier, at six o'clock, and sometimes even earlier if I can't sleep. Quickly, as Mrs. Ludmila says, I take care of things around the house, and my wife prepares breakfast for me—I have breakfast and then head to work!

[M1, older adults]

We want to work, but we don't have the strength; we are sick. We want to work, but we don't have the energy, so we just sit here, as it is.

[F3, older adults]

I don't know, this is just my personal opinion, but when someone works after the age of 60, people say, 'Isn't she ever satisfied?'... As if they shouldn't be working anymore. But that's not true. Either they're not a specialist, or they do it for the pleasure of going out and socializing. It's not about being insatiable for work! Well, that's just how people talk. It's another kind of stereotype.

[F5, older adults]

Financial difficulties and poor health are the most commonly mentioned challenges faced by older adults. For some respondents, loneliness is also a significant issue—either because they have lost their life partners, their children have emigrated, or they feel useless and isolated after losing their roles in society. As a result, participants expressed a wish for greater support from the state, including higher pensions, access to free services, and the organization of workshops or community meetings at the district or local level. These gatherings would give them an opportunity to connect, talk, spend quality time, and momentarily forget their worries.

Having reached an older age, participants noted that their circle of friends has narrowed to a few neighbours, former classmates, and family members. While they had many friends in their youth, these connections have faded over time due to various circumstances. Additionally, not working anymore has limited their chances to interact with others.

When asked about their relationships with community members, participants shared that they know most people in their area and maintain respectful relationships. However, they observed that people mostly keep to themselves. Events to strengthen community ties or work on common causes are not organized. A few times a year, they meet at festivals and concerts, to spend time together. Elderly participants would like events in their localities that allow them to socialize and break their routine.

We want more communication with others. To talk, because loneliness is very difficult to bear. Now, we can only go out to visit our grandchildren occasionally. There are few neighbours left; they are either busy with work or have moved away. You can really feel that the village is abandoned. It's a sad feeling... There used to be children playing on the streets late into the night, you could hear people talking, and there was noise, but there was so much joy! Now, everyone stays in their own little space, locked in their yards, with the gates closed...

[F3, older adults]

As Grigore Vieru said, when weeds grow over the path to your neighbours and parents, it means there is no life left. People don't visit like they used to. They used to gather for Sunday work parties, for Saturday work parties, helping each other... But now, because so many have left, those beautiful Sunday gatherings where people met are gone. Now, everyone stays behind their gates and focuses only on their own needs.

[F1, older adults]

We are hurt by the expression: 'You've lived your life, you've eaten your share of cornmeal!'

[M1, older adults]

The elderly described discrimination as situations where a person is humiliated, and their rights are not respected. They highlighted three groups as being the most discriminated against. According to their answers, most marginalized groups are (1) the Roma people, labelled as dirty, and often perceived as beggars or thieves. The second group is LGBTQ+ individuals, who are viewed as sectarian and treated unfairly. Lastly, Moldovans who live in the Republic of Moldova and speak Romanian also face discrimination. Some Russian speakers criticize them directly, telling them to speak 'humanly, in a normal language', referring to Russian.

There is a perception that discrimination happens at a high level, within Parliament and Government, through the behaviour and language politicians use toward one another. Those who discriminate are often people in positions of power, with high social status, who see themselves as superior to others. They also tend to discriminate against those who are uninformed or lack education. To solve this issue, we need to focus on education and invest in it to change how society thinks and reduce discrimination.

Some respondents shared experiences they considered discriminatory. For example, one person recalled facing discrimination as a child due to vision problems, being treated unfairly by other children. Another example involved seeking medical services, where they were spoken to harshly and told to wait because 'they had time', with priority given to younger people or children.

Those who think they hold the knife, the bread, the power—everything—and believe no one is at their level. Meanwhile, ordinary people live with the little they have.

[F1, older adults]

The Roma are called unclean. I spent a few years in Sorooca—not living there, but going there for school—and I saw how they were treated. They weren't allowed in the city center. Even our own people—Romanians, Moldovans—would beat them. So, they stayed only in their area up on the hill. And it all comes back to language.

[M5, older adults]

When I was a child, at four years old, I had an injury to my left eye. I underwent surgery about four times, but I was embarrassed to wear glasses, so I didn't. I was called 'one-eyed' and many other names... but I don't pay attention to what people say anymore.

[M5, older adults]

4.4. [FG] people with disabilities

At a first glance, the daily routines of people with disabilities are similar to those of other groups. Most participants are employed, and their day revolves around their work schedule. Those with children also include their kids' activities in their routine.

The main differences from other groups appear in activities outside of work. Most participants have jobs adapted to their disabilities. However, finding suitable options for free time or recreation is a challenge. For example, some would like to swim, but the city only has one pool adapted for people with mobility disabilities, and it is too far for many to access.

People with disabilities often face problems related to their disabilities. One of the most common issues is inaccessibility. In many cases, ramps for people with limited mobility are either missing or unusable. Access to public transport is also a challenge, as trolleybus drivers don't always park in a way that allows wheelchair users to board. Those who drive face difficulty finding parking spaces, as designated spots are often taken by other drivers.

A visually impaired participant mentioned objects, signs, or holes in areas where sidewalks for pedestrians should be, in some parts of the city. These issues make movement much slower and less safe—a visually impaired person can get injured if obstacles are not properly marked. Another challenge is the lack of financial resources. Even though most participants work, they struggle to cover the costs of rehabilitation, specific procedures for their disabilities, or purchasing medicines and equipment.

When asked about their friends and community relationships, respondents shared that many of their friends are former classmates from school or college, with whom they still maintain close connections. They also mentioned having friends with disabilities, whom they met at work or through events and centres they attended. While specific meetings for people with disabilities are not organized, they do not see the need for such events, as they believe it could reinforce stereotypes. Instead, they suggested that inclusive events with mixed groups would be more beneficial for sharing experiences and fostering integration.

My daily routine is similar to everyone else's. In the morning, we wake up as a family and play with our little one. I'm married and have an 11-month-old baby. After playing, I head to work, then come home to help my wife a bit. Then it's bedtime, and the same routine repeats every day. On Saturdays, we go to parks or take walks after work, usually after 6 PM, then come back home for dinner. It's the same cycle.

[M5, person with disabilities]

In terms of sports or cultural activities, there are very few institutions in Chisinau that are fully accessible. For instance, as of now, I know only one theater – the Chekhov Theater – that is fully adapted for people with disabilities. But if you want to go elsewhere it is often not possible, for wheelchair users it's difficult. The same issues exist with swimming pools, for example.

[F1, person with disabilities]

When you see a ramp built just for the sake of being there, with a steep angle or designed so poorly that you wonder: who approved it and if they even considered it from a professional or human perspective. Then it becomes a more painful topic. From what I've observed, there's also a lack of competence among public transport drivers. I'm not saying this applies to all, but lately, it feels like many forget where to park to make things more accessible and convenient.

[F2, person with disabilities]

As a person with a visual impairment, I have often injured myself in public spaces because I've bumped into sharp, jagged objects that shouldn't have been there, like panels placed too low or unmarked holes on sidewalks, and so on.

[M3, person with disabilities]

Among all participant groups, people with disabilities showed the best understanding of discrimination, gave the clearest examples of it. In their opinion, discrimination is slowly decreasing but still remains deeply rooted in society. One reason is that people are unwilling to learn or change their views. Even with awareness campaigns and educational efforts, many still rely on old beliefs passed down from previous generations or based on hearsay. A lack of interaction with certain minority groups also keeps stereotypes alive, leading to ongoing discrimination.

According to the participants, the LGBTQ+ community and the minority religious groups are the most discriminated against, mostly due to existing prejudices. People who discriminate often see themselves as superior, lack proper information or education, or were raised with outdated values that discourage questioning opinions. Discrimination most commonly happens in state medical institutions, workplaces, schools, and even in public spaces.

Practically all respondents with disabilities shared experiences where they faced discrimination:

- **At the doctor's office** – a woman was criticized for becoming pregnant, because she would not be able to care of a newborn baby due to her physical disability; a man was not directly informed about his diagnosis and treatment, even though he was present in the doctor's office. Instead, the doctor communicated the information to the person accompanying him, claiming that the man, who had a visual impairment wouldn't understand;
- **At work** – they were denied jobs even when they met all the requirements. For example: **'We can't offer you the job because you are only allowed to work six hours a day by law, but we have a heavy workload, and you won't be able to manage'**;
- **At school** – They were not enrolled, excluded from certain activities, ignored, or seated at the back of the class without attention. One participant mentioned being denied admission to driving school because of their disability: **'Just look at yourself!'**;
- **In transportation** – They were forced out of minibuses by drivers, even when seats were available, or/and drivers intentionally avoided stopping.

An attitude through which, intentionally, you reduce a person's chances of obtaining certain things appropriate for them, prevent their development, or isolate them.

[M3, people with disabilities]

For example, I was discriminated against by a doctor when I wanted to apply for a driver's license, and he said: 'Look at you, how you are!'

[M4, people with disabilities]

If we think about it, discrimination is everywhere: at the doctor, on the street, and even at home.

[F3, people with disabilities]

For example, I came to Chisinau, and I was told to go back to Orhei. I got on the Chisinau-Orhei minibus, and although it was somewhat full, the driver let me in. Then he started yelling and kicked me out of the minibus.

[M4, people with disabilities]

I mentioned earlier that, in my opinion, medical institutions are at the top when it comes to discrimination, and I still hold that view. Discrimination is most prevalent in state medical institutions, employment, and education. I have even heard of cases where people with disabilities were treated in medical institutions as though they were second-class citizens. I think this reflects a significant level of discrimination, because many employers are not informed about the work abilities of people with disabilities and do not believe in their potential. Even though the law requires them to accommodate workplaces for people with disabilities, not all employers are willing to make these adjustments or provide such opportunities.

[F1, people with disabilities]

4.5. [FG] Ukrainian refugees

Most Ukrainian refugees begin their day with breakfast, followed by work, and return home in the evening for dinner and family time. Some have secured official employment in Moldova, while others rely on part-time jobs without social benefits to manage life challenges. Those with children take them to kindergarten or school and often accompany them to extracurricular activities. Weekends are typically reserved for personal time and family-oriented activities.

Ukrainian refugees enjoy walking in parks, visiting different places in Moldova, and try to make their days off more diverse. Activities that bring them joy include cooking, walking their pets, cycling, embroidery, and spending time in nature. Some participants also take courses or attend master classes to learn skills like creating handmade items. However, many expressed a wish to go to the gym, take English classes, or enrol their children in various activities, but financial constraints make these goals difficult. Additionally, they mentioned that prices in Moldova are significantly higher compared to Ukraine.

Friends hold an important place in the lives of Ukrainian refugees. In addition to their old friends from Ukraine, most have made new friends in Moldova, including both fellow Ukrainian refugees and Moldovans. Since arriving in Moldova, the Ukrainian refugee community has become more friendly and open to communication. Participants shared that they feel a sense of care and responsibility to help those around them, even with simple advice, as they are united by the same tragedy.

I will start first. On a typical day, I wake up, we have breakfast, and I take my child to school. At the same time, we walk the dog. Then I go to work until 6 PM, come back, spend time with my family, have dinner, and watch a movie—something like that. On weekends, we go to the park or relax somewhere. We usually have a coffee, enjoy some ice cream.

[M1, Ukrainian refugees]

I enjoy attending master classes where we make handmade brooches. I've been doing this for a year now. It's a pleasure for me when I can spend some time on myself. My day is like everyone else's—mornings with the kids, walking the dog, going to work—but I make sure to take moments just for myself. Even at home, I enjoy embroidering.

[F2, Ukrainian refugees]

I've also made new friends here from Ukraine. Back in Kharkiv, we didn't meet, but we did here. I have friends both from my community and friends here in Moldova already.

[F3, Ukrainian refugees]

Of course, we are united by the same tragedy. The main goal is to help one another, especially if you know someone's problem—you try to help and find solutions.

[F1, Ukrainian refugees]

The majority of Ukrainian people are helpful, but there are also individuals who, regardless of nationality, have poor manners, wrong attitudes, and these people exist.

[F3, Ukrainian refugees]

The problems Ukrainian refugees face are mostly financial. Most of them rent homes, which has become a significant burden because rent prices have gone up recently. Some refugees are forced to take on multiple jobs and work without receiving any benefits. Another issue is healthcare, as medical services are not free and can be very expensive.

While first aid and some medical services are free, refugees are unhappy with the attitude and competence of medical staff. As a result, many turn to private clinics, which can be very expensive. One respondent also brought up the issue of enrolling children in schools. She shared that, after waiting a long time at an educational institution, she was told there were no available spots. Even when refugee children are accepted, they are often neglected and left out in class, with the blame placed on the teacher. According to one participant, this happens because Ukrainian children are believed to be more skilled than Moldovan children, which some teachers may find difficult to accept.

Like the other groups of participants, Ukrainian refugees also defined the concept of discrimination.

In their opinion, the most discriminated groups in the Republic of Moldova currently are:



the Roma people

because they do not have access to education



people with special needs

because infrastructure and public transportation are not adapted to their needs



people over 60 years old, or even 45+

because they are denied employment opportunities

Discrimination often comes from the state, because opportunities and conditions are not created for these groups of people.

Most respondents feel that they, as Ukrainian refugees, face discrimination in the Republic of Moldova. Since arriving, they have encountered various challenges, such as being offered only unofficial jobs, being unable to obtain health insurance, having their children refused enrolment in schools, or facing difficulties opening a bank account. Additionally, they are required to pay taxes for their vehicles. Even though these aspects involve certain responsibilities and fiscal obligations toward the state, Ukrainian refugees perceive them as discriminatory acts, given the situation they are in.

Since arriving in Moldova, Ukrainian refugees have faced situations where they felt discriminated against because they are refugees. For instance, one participant shared that a passerby on the street told him to go back to Ukraine, saying Moldova is already a poor country and struggling to support its own people. Another example involved a refugee politely asking someone to clean up after their pet but received an aggressive response and was told to return to their own country and clean up there.

The respondents concluded that discrimination is connected to people's level of education. When someone has less education, they are more likely to discriminate. This is not just a problem in Moldova but happens everywhere in the world.

Disrespect for people's rights.

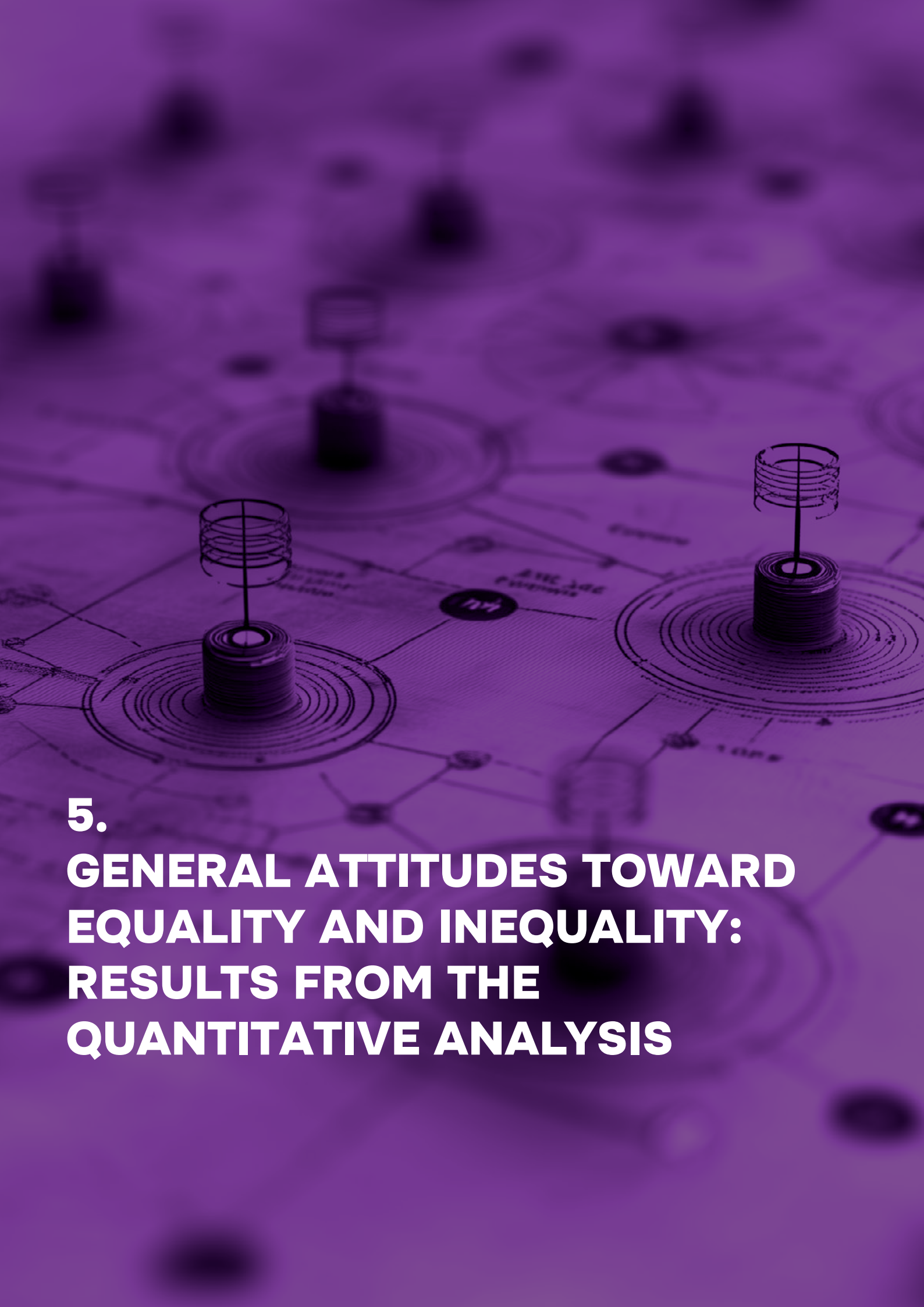
[F2, Ukrainian refugees]

Even the Roma community, in Moldova, faces discrimination. They are a group that actively defends their rights and has a unique culture. However, they often refuse to integrate their children into schools. One respondent added that not having health insurance feels like discrimination, as well as being required to pay the vignette, car license fees, and customs charges. 'We are not here voluntarily', they emphasized.

[F4, Ukrainian refugees]

For example, I'm a very responsible person. When I walk my dog, I always clean up after it. But when I see other dog owners in the park who don't do the same, I call them out. Their response? 'Go back home and demand your rights there.' Is that discrimination? Also, when dog owners walk their pets without a leash, they insult me and tell me to go back home—again, discrimination. Some people follow the rules, while others don't.

[F4, Ukrainian refugees]



5.
**GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD
EQUALITY AND INEQUALITY:
RESULTS FROM THE
QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS**

The previous chapters discussed the factors that influence attitudes toward equality (Chapter 3) and illustrated different perspectives on equality and inequality based on group discussions (Chapter 4). This chapter adds to that foundation by focusing on general attitudes either supporting or opposing equality. The following sections explore how Moldovans view equality on a broader, principle-based level, without associating it with specific minority groups. First, the chapter examines the major principle of resource redistribution and equality, including how society is organized and the role of the state in shaping modern civilizations. Then, it looks at international relations and identity choices as a reflection of these organizational principles.

5.1. Attitudes toward redistribution

Contemporary societies rely on redistribution, using taxation as a tool¹⁵ to redistribute resources within society. Redistribution is the financial expression of social solidarity on a macro level, as it typically transfers resources from wealthier groups to disadvantaged ones. Therefore, understanding the legitimacy of actions aimed at supporting these groups becomes essential, as it reflects broader attitudes toward equality. This also highlights the importance of understanding views on redistribution and sharing wealth with others—commonly referred to as ‘attitudes towards the welfare state’¹⁶.

Inequality and redistribution

To begin, the study will assess whether respondents believe that responsibility for well-being lies with the individual or should be shared with others. It will also examine whether they support income equality or prefer income differences based on merit and effort.

Respondents were asked to evaluate two options—income equality and responsibility for well-being—using scales from 1 to 10. According to the SEPA 2024 data, 75% of respondents believe that income should reward effort (with responses between 8 and 10, and 63% selecting 10 as their answer). Meanwhile, 5% were undecided, 15% chose mid-range values (between 4 and 7), and 9% favoured equality (values between 1 and 3, with most selecting 1 – 8%). The calculated average was 8.3, higher than similar results observed in Moldova during the EVS/WVS studies conducted in 1995, 1999, 2004, and 2008.

When it comes to responsibility for redistribution, SEPA 2024 data shows relative stability near the middle of the scale (with the midpoint being 5.5). In previous decades, Moldovans strongly relied on the state and implicitly on redistribution. The averages were 7.7 in 1995, 6.9 in 1999, and 6.7 in 2004, decreasing below the midpoint of the scale in 2008 (4.8) and now returning to 5.8¹⁷. This shows a probable fluctuation near the middle of the scale.

Figure 4 illustrates both a longitudinal (over time) and cross-country comparison for the two options analysed. Compared to the other countries included in the analysis, Moldova shows a strong preference for less equal incomes but also for a more responsible state. At first glance, this positioning may seem contradictory: favoring income inequality reflects a preference to avoid taxation, yet the state can only ensure individual well-being if it redistributes tax

15 Polanyi, 1944

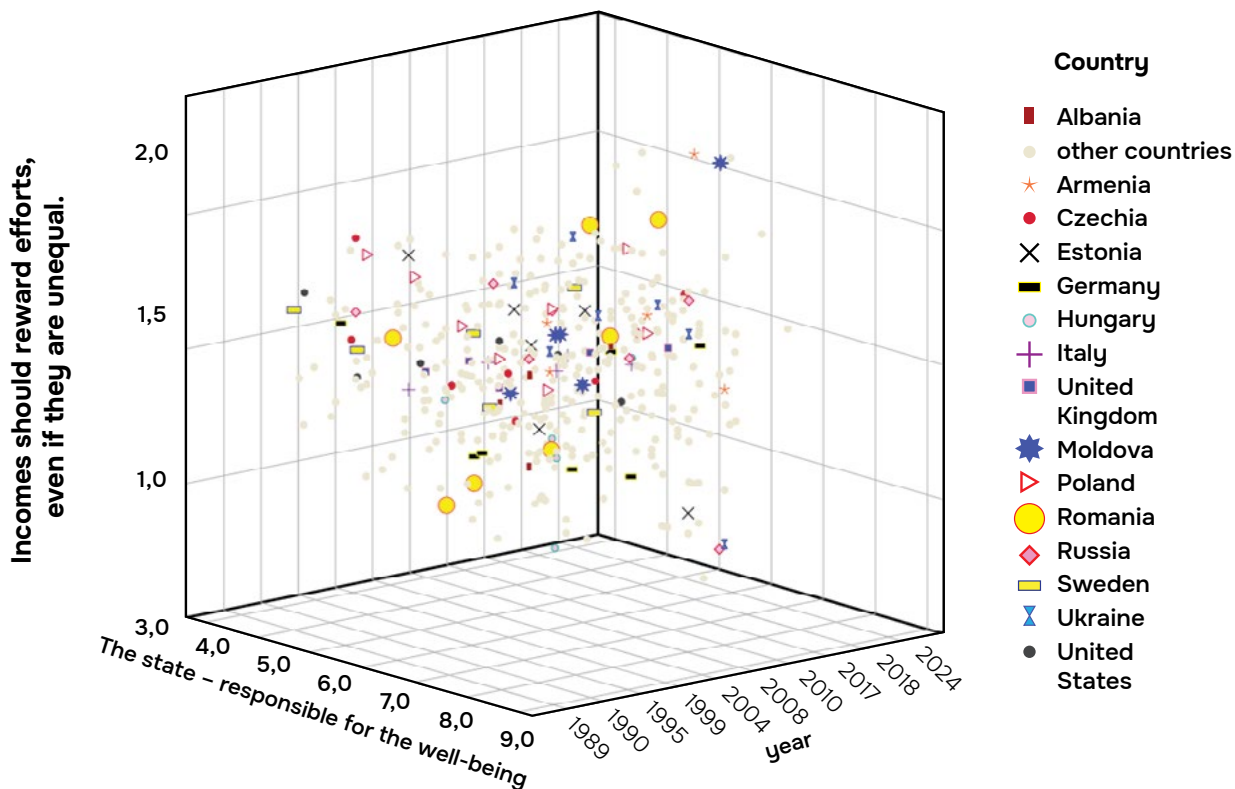
16 Bean & Papadakis, 1998; Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Lewin-Epstein, Kaplan, & Levanon, 2003; Roosma, Gelissen, & Van Oorschot, 2013; Svallfors, 2004; van Oorschot, Roosma, Meuleman, & Reeskens, 2017; Bogdan Voicu & Voicu, 2011

17 The 95% confidence interval is 5.6–6.0.

revenues to those in need. This situation is not entirely new. For example, it was documented in Romania in the 1990s¹⁸, explained by a lack of understanding of redistribution and social assistance mechanisms.

It's important to note that the share of undecided respondents is higher than in most European countries but similar to former Soviet states. Many people either avoided answering or said, 'I don't know'. This shows the need for more discussion about how the state is funded and whether or not income should be redistributed to help those in need.

Figure 4. General positions on income equality ('incomes should reflect work, even if it leads to inequality') and responsibility for redistribution ('the state should take more responsibility for everyone's well-being').



Note: The graphical symbols represent country and year averages for two 10-point scales: Responsibility for well-being contrasts 1 = 'Each individual should take more responsibility for their own well-being' and 10 = 'The state should take more responsibility for everyone's well-being.' The question about income contrasts 1 = 'Incomes should be more equal' and 10 = 'There should be greater rewards for individual effort'. Respondents could also choose intermediate points. Refusals to answer ('No response') and indecision ('Don't know') were treated as missing values. Data sources: EVS/WVS 1989–2018, and SEPA 2024 for the Republic of Moldova. Most of the countries represented are in Europe, but the chart also includes societies in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Australia.

18 Frunză & Voicu, 1997

■ Maximum minimal state

An adapted scale from ESS was used to measure the extent of state intervention in ensuring well-being (Table 6). The scale effectively captures attitudes toward the level of state involvement in society¹⁹, specifically how much wealth should be redistributed through social policies and programs.

Table 6. Opinions on the state’s involvement across various dimensions of social policies.

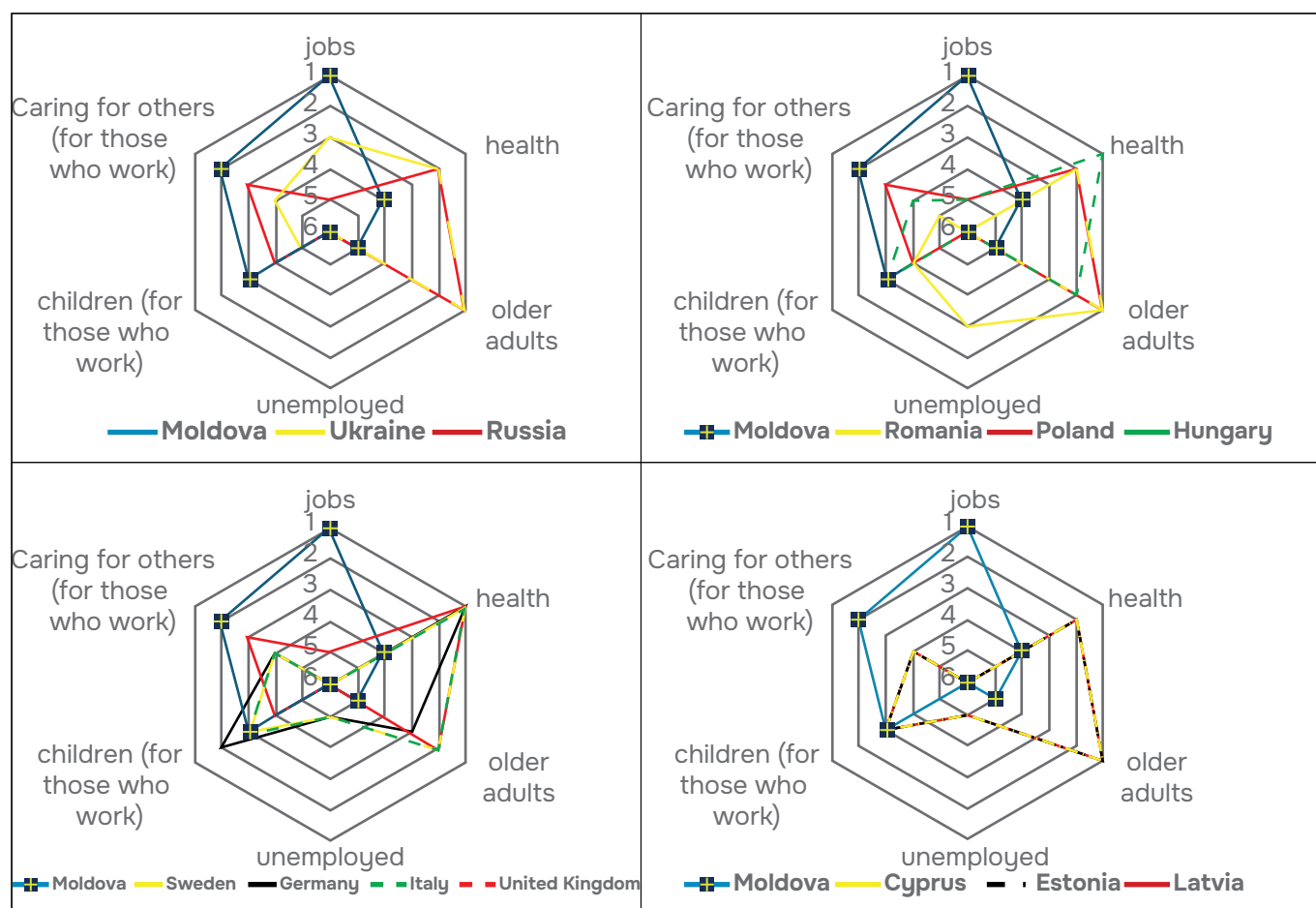
To what extent do you think the Government should ensure that...?	To a very small extent / Not at all	To a small extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent	DK/NA
There are jobs available for everyone	13%	15%	38%	33%	2%
The sick receive adequate medical care	17%	29%	31%	19%	3%
The elderly have an adequate standard of living	29%	31%	20%	18%	3%
The unemployed have an adequate standard of living	28%	29%	21%	12%	9%
There are enough childcare services for working parents	12%	27%	37%	15%	9%
Those who care for sick family members can take paid leave from work	12%	19%	40%	17%	12%

The six questions from the SEPA 2024 survey highlight Moldovans’ support for the state’s role in creating jobs (71% support such measures to a large or very large extent), along with providing benefits for those who work and care for family members (57%). However, opinions are more mixed on health insurance and childcare, and there is less support for the state helping the elderly or unemployed. Overall, Moldovans favor a basic welfare system that focuses on helping people who are working, with little focus on redistributing wealth. This view is similar to many former Soviet states and some Eastern European countries like Romania²⁰.

19 Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2015; Van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012; Van Oorschot, Reeskens, & Meuleman, 2012

20 Bogdan Voicu, 2019

Figure 5. Ranking (importance) of social domains in public preferences: Republic of Moldova and several other European countries



The figures represent the rankings of each domain: 1 is the highest (the most important domain), and 6 is the least important. The data comes from SEPA 2024 for the Republic of Moldova and from ESS 2008-2009 for the other countries (ESS 2008 was selected because ESS 2016 does not include all six domains; it is also worth noting that ESS uses a 10-point scale, compared to the 4-point scale used in SEPA 2024).

The comparison with other European countries highlights Moldovans' specific expectations from the state (Figure 5). While Moldova focuses mainly on benefits linked to work, such as job security and family care leave, other European countries prioritize healthcare and support for the elderly. In the countries compared, all six areas of social support are rated above the midpoint of the scale, often by a significant margin²¹. However, in Moldova, only job security and family care leave exceed this midpoint. This difference shows a more limited focus on social support in Moldova compared to broader priorities seen in other European countries.

²¹ The same applies to the figures recorded in ESS 2016-2017.

Using the six indicators, an index was created to measure attitudes toward the state’s role in taking responsibility for individual well-being²². Multivariate analysis shows that there are practically no differences between status groups regarding their position on this index. Only two relationships are significant:

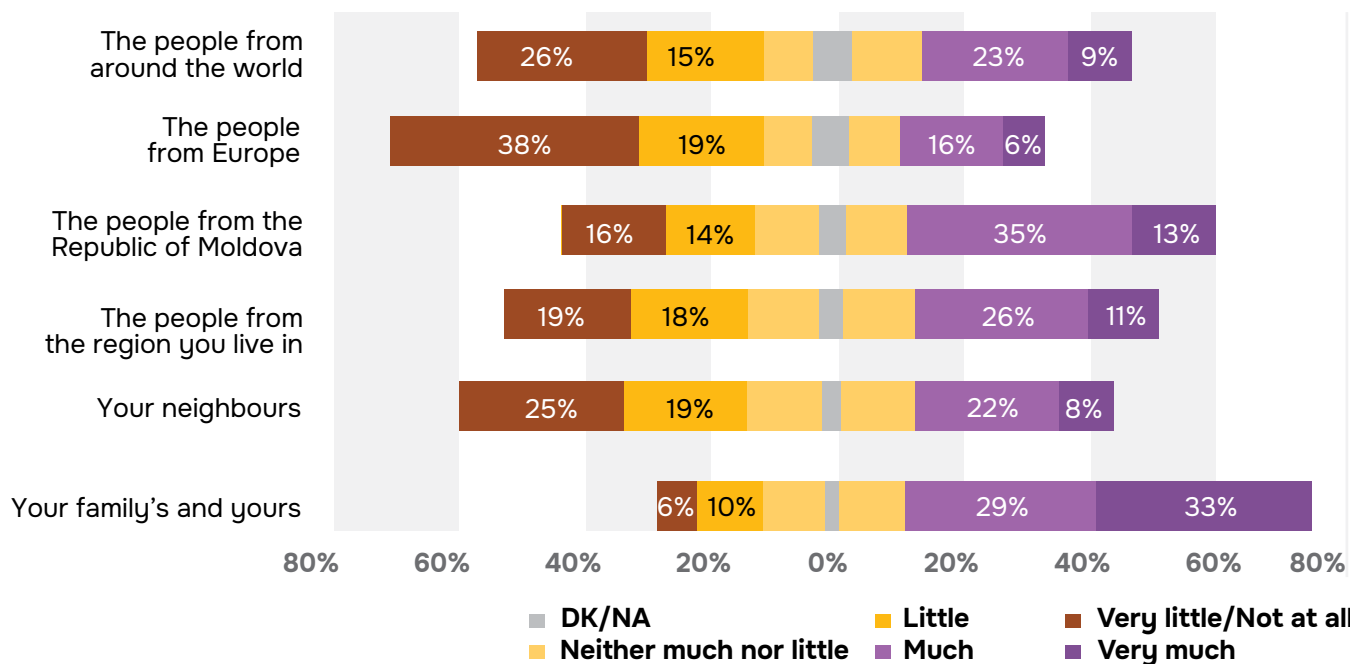
- People who have a positive view of the quality of society (see Chapter 3.2) are more likely to trust the state to take on greater responsibilities for individual well-being.
- Those who usually speak a different language than the one they spoke in childhood tend to be more cautious about the role of the state.

■ Social solidarity

The item module in Figures 6 and 7 records attitudes about social solidarity and was adapted from the EVS surveys. Existing studies show that this module measures people’s underlying tendencies to show solidarity with others²³. It was used in the 2024 SEPA survey, replicating the EVS question set, but with modifications: family was added as a control factor, one item (solidarity with immigrants) was removed, and it was replaced with solidarity with Ukrainian refugees. Unfortunately, these changes prevent the use of evidence on measurement invariance²⁴ and the construction of a comparable indicator with those calculated for other European countries based on EVS data from 1999, 2008, and 2017, and for Moldova in 2008.

Figure 6. Social solidarity.

How much or how little are you concerned about the living conditions of...



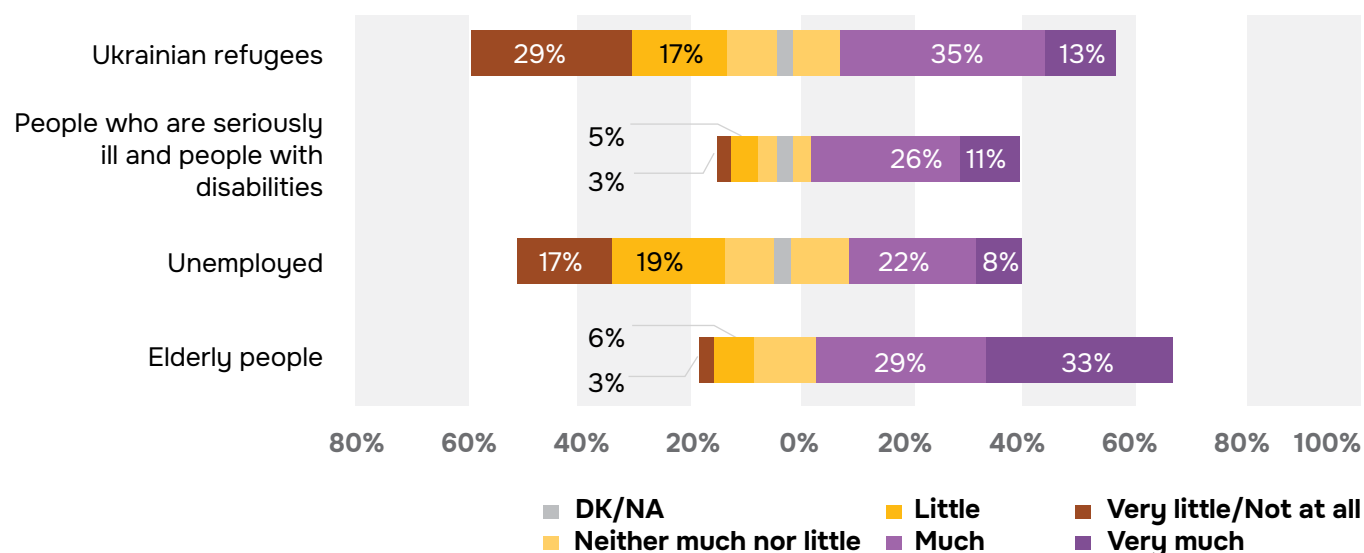
22 Factor analysis was performed with the following results: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy = .881, the lowest communality = .266, explained variance = 56%, and the scree plot indicated a single factor. The extraction method used was maximum likelihood.

23 Kankaraš & Moors, 2009; Lomazzi, 2021; Rusu & Bejenaru, 2022; Bogdan Voicu et al., 2021; Bogdan Voicu, Rusu, & Coșă, 2023

24 Kankaraš & Moors, 2009; Lomazzi, 2021; Bogdan Voicu et al., 2023

On the other hand, there is the same low concern for the unemployed, less interest in people who do not live in the Republic of Moldova, and lower local and regional solidarity compared to national solidarity. A comparison with data from the 2008 EVS for the Republic of Moldova shows a negative trend in solidarity with all these groups: the extent to which Moldovans are concerned about the fate of each group is lower in 2024.

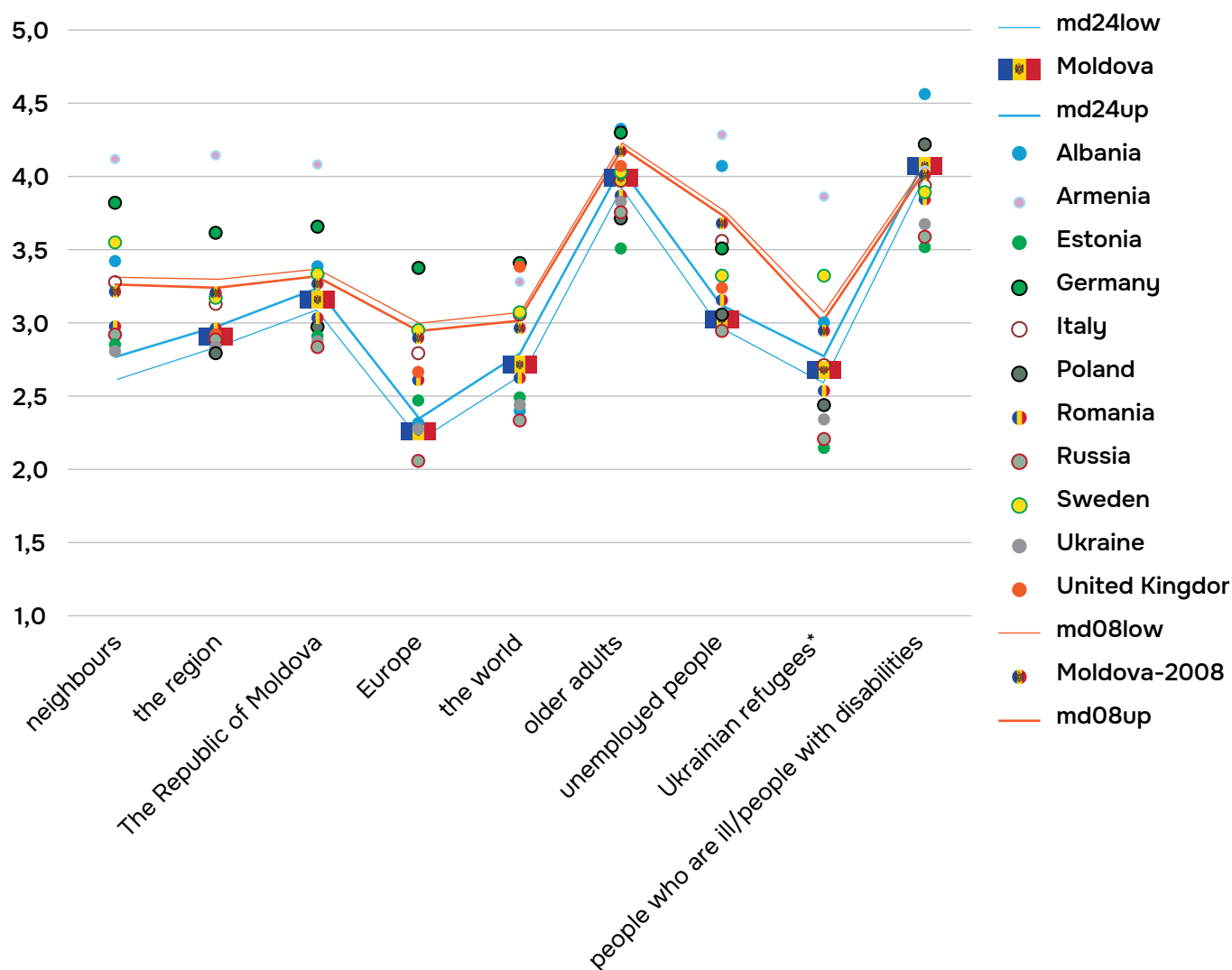
Figure 7. Social Solidarity – How much or little are you concerned about the living conditions of the following groups living in the Republic of Moldova?



Compared to the levels observed in other countries in the EVS 2017-2018 survey and based on SEPA 2024 data, Moldovans:

- They are generally **less concerned about the well-being of their neighbours** (only the British and Finns have scores that are not significantly higher);
- They **are similar** to about half of the European countries in terms of **concern for people in their region** (the rest have higher scores);
- They rank **around the European average** when it comes to solidarity with people in **their own country**;
- They are at **the lower end of solidarity compared to Europeans** (at the same level with Russia, Azerbaijan, Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine, Albania, Belarus—all non-EU countries);
- They rank in the **lower-middle range for general solidarity with people worldwide**, above most non-EU countries (and also above Romania, the Netherlands, Hungary, and Estonia) but below most EU countries;
- They are **in the middle range of solidarity** with the **elderly**;
- They rank at **the lower end of solidarity** with the **unemployed**;
- Their solidarity score for **refugees** is in the **middle range** compared to other countries' solidarity with **immigrants**;
- They are in the **upper range** of concern for those who are ill or have **disabilities**, surpassed only by Croatia, Bosnia, Austria, Germany, Portugal, Albania, and Georgia.

Figure 8. Average solidarity in the Republic of Moldova and several European countries



Data sources: EVS 2008, EVS 2017-2018, and SEPA 2024. The shaded bands around the values for the Republic of Moldova represent 95% confidence intervals.

Overall, the picture reveals rather low to average solidarity, with certain areas where concerns are more pronounced.

Similar to previous sections, a synthetic indicator of social solidarity was constructed using all items, excluding solidarity with family and Ukrainian refugees²⁵. Analysing the variation of this indicator²⁶ revealed several significant differences:

- Social solidarity is **higher among those who have greater trust in people;**
- Social solidarity **increases significantly with age;**
- Social solidarity **decreases among those who speak a different language at home than they did in childhood.**

25 Factor analysis was used (KMO = .810, communalities greater than 0.1, explained variance is 42%, the scree plot indicates a single factor, and the extraction method was maximum likelihood).

26 As usual, multilevel regression models were used, with respondents grouped by their place of residence and employing the same set of predictors as in the previous sections.

■ Political positioning: left-right

Political positions, whether on the left or right, are often associated with stronger support for solidarity, a larger role for the state, and opposition to inequality. While today's political landscape also includes debates between populism and democracy, the left-right divide remains a key factor. In this study, respondents were asked to place themselves on a left-right political spectrum using a 10-point scale. This scale was chosen to align with previous studies conducted in Moldova, enabling comparisons over time.

First, it is necessary to compare Moldova's results with ESS data regarding the percentage of respondents who chose not to position themselves on the left-right political spectrum. In the 2020-2022 wave of ESS, refusal rates ranged from 5% to 10% in Nordic countries, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, the UK, and Estonia. These rates were higher, around 15%, in countries like the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Croatia, Ireland, Slovenia, and Slovakia. However, they rose significantly in Portugal (21%), Italy and Lithuania (both 26%), and Montenegro and North Macedonia (both 32%). According to SEPA 2024, Moldova's refusal rate is 22%—higher than in many European countries but not unusually so.

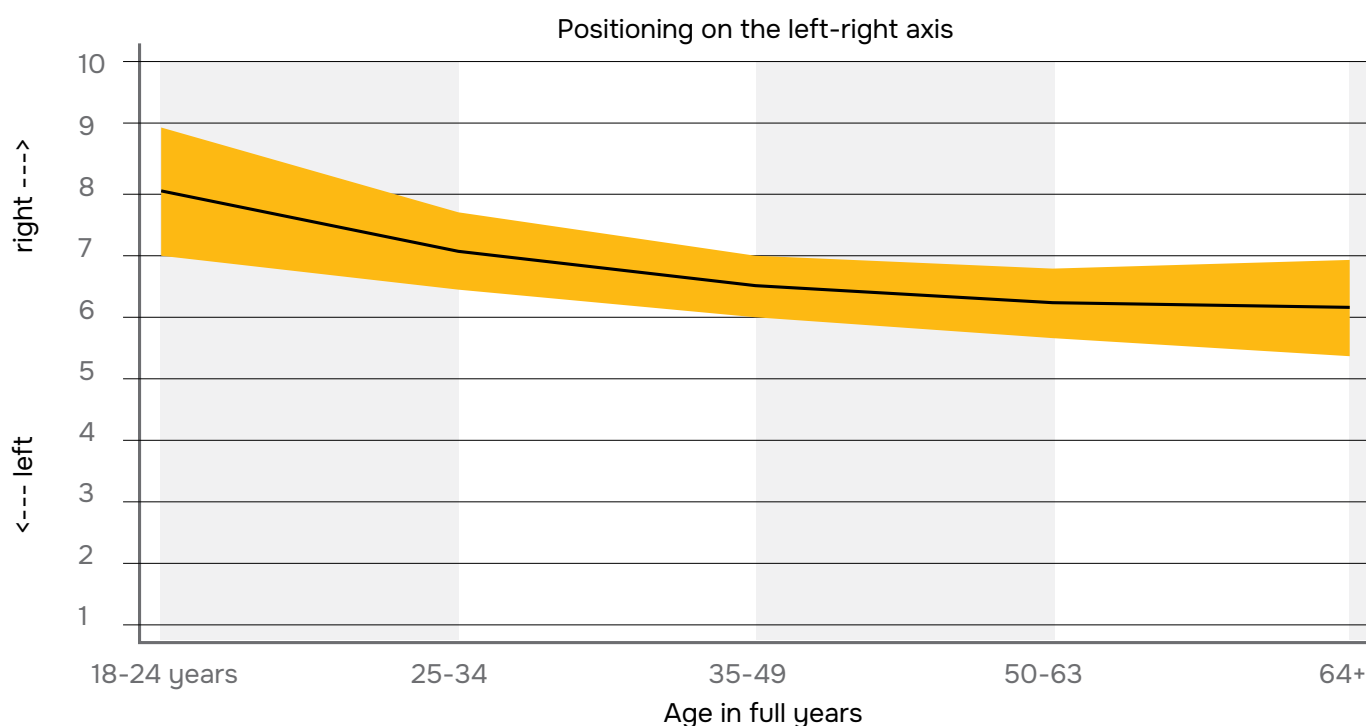
Data from EVS/WVS for Moldova show that the percentage of respondents who did not position themselves on the left-right political spectrum was 20% in 1994, 33% in 1999, 22% in 2005, and 44% in 2008. The 22% recorded in SEPA 2024 is not surprising in this context and does not indicate any specific trend.

If the 10-point scale is segmented into four categories – left (1-3), centre (4-7), right (8-10), and unclassified (those who did not position themselves) – and the unclassified group is excluded, the centre has been dominant at all points in time for which data from EVS/WVS are available. The centre accounted for 45% in 1994, 29% in 1999, 31% in 2004, and 47% in 2008. By 2024, 26% positioned themselves in the centre. The left has steadily declined, dropping from 22% in 1994 to 6% in 2008, but rebounded to 17% in 2024. Conversely, the right has followed an opposite trajectory: starting at 12% in 1994, rising to 21% in 1999 and 2004, 19% in 2008, and reaching 36% in 2024. This shift reflects a transformation in political preferences, moving from centre-left towards the centre and, by 2024, leaning from the centre towards the right, excluding the unclassified group, which tends to cluster around the centre.

When the unclassified group is excluded, variations in political positioning can be observed across different status groups:

- **Younger respondents tend to lean more to the right** than older ones (Figure 9), which is the opposite of the trend in Europe;
- People with **positive perceptions of the quality of society** are more likely to align with **right-leaning positions**;
- Respondents from the **Central and Southern regions** are **significantly more right-leaning** than those from the Northern region.

Figure 9. Estimated average position on the left-right political spectrum based on multivariate analysis, by age



The coloured band represents the 95% confidence interval. Estimates are based on SEPA 2024 data.

It is worth noting that orientations toward a minimal state positively correlate with positioning on the left-right scale, while the left-right scale and orientations toward a minimal state negatively correlate with social solidarity. Although these correlations are small (0.1-0.2), they are significant, confirming the coherence of the indicator system used.

5.2. Personal and national identity

Identity definition is closely tied to how we perceive and construct ‘otherness’. This chapter explores various elements that shape identity, highlighting potential areas where discrimination and social tension may arise.

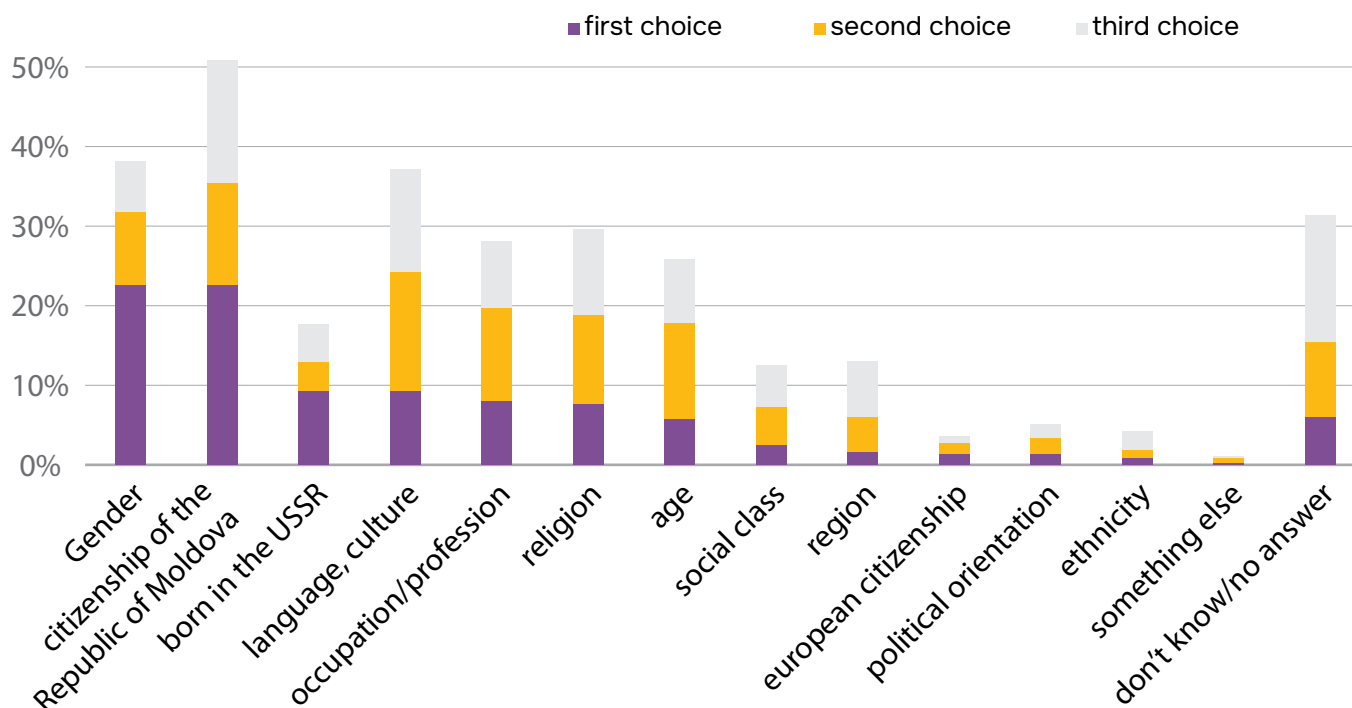
■ Vectors of identification

The SEPA 2024 survey asked respondents to identify three characteristics that define their identity. The options included: gender, age, social class, occupation and profession, political orientation, religion, language and culture, ethnic group, region, Moldovan citizenship, European citizenship, being born in the USSR, other options, refusal to answer, and indecision (with the last two categories not distinguished from each other). Due to the sequence in which the options were presented, the responses may reflect list and halo effects (the influence of serial positioning). In other words, options presented at the beginning or end of the list might have been chosen more frequently. However, this potential bias is minimized when considering the cumulative selection of three characteristics across the sample, aligning with the Q-Sort methodology .

Figure 10 illustrates the findings. Moldovan citizenship emerges as the key identity element,

mentioned by half of the SEPA sample. Additionally, language and culture are important to nearly 40% of the respondents, while religion matters to about one-third. Gender and age also hold significant shares, influenced by the seriality effect mentioned earlier. Notably, elements often linked to societal tensions—such as ethnicity, religion, social class, and region—are mentioned less frequently. The same applies to political affiliation.

Figure 10. Identity choice vectors: top three choices defining respondents' identity, SEPA 2024



Note: The response options were ordered based on the most frequently mentioned choices.

For individuals who chose each of the mentioned identity vectors, separate analyses were conducted, using multilevel multivariate analyses. Significant associations are outlined below:

- **Trust in people** is slightly associated with a **lower probability of choosing the region of residence or being born in the USSR as key identity markers**;
- **Positive evaluations of the quality of society** are linked to a **higher probability of identifying based on gender** and a **lower probability of identifying with the USSR**;
- **The likelihood of identifying by gender decreases with age, is higher for those who speak Russian at home** compared to those who speak Moldovan, **tends to increase with education**, and is **lower for unemployed individuals** compared to homemakers and full-time employees;
- **The probability of identifying through age** ('I am old' or 'I am young') **is higher for those who predominantly speak Ukrainian or Russian** compared to those who speak Moldovan or Romanian, higher for **part-time employees** compared to full-time workers, and for those who **use the internet more frequently**. However, it decreases with the size of the locality;
- **The likelihood of identifying with Moldovan citizenship** is **higher among those who speak Moldovan** or another minority language at home, compared to those who speak **Ukrainian or Russian**. Additionally, identification with the Republic of Moldova varies regionally, with individuals in the Central region being more likely to choose this identity

compared to those in the Northern region. Similarly, Moldovan identity is stronger among **divorced** or separated individuals compared to single ones, among **ethnic Russians** compared to ethnic Moldovans, and it decreases as the size of the locality increases;

- **The likelihood of identifying with Europe slightly decreases with age** (although the trend is very weak). Interestingly, **the likelihood increases among ethnic Ukrainians and Russians** compared to Moldovans and Romanians. This apparent contradiction can be explained by the fact that Moldovans and Romanians are already closer to the European alternative through holding or obtaining Romanian citizenship;
- **The likelihood of identifying with the USSR increases with age** (though this is likely partially due to a generational effect, as younger generations were born after the USSR ceased to exist). Identification with the USSR is **less common in Chisinau** compared to the Southern, Northern, and Central regions. Additionally, **Russians, Ukrainians, and Gagauz people** are significantly more likely to identify with being born in the USSR than Romanians and Moldovans. **The larger the locality**, the stronger the identification with the USSR, reflecting long-term patterns of Soviet-era migration, where newcomers settled in urban areas, while smaller localities were predominantly inhabited by descendants of pre-Soviet residents. Furthermore, single individuals are less likely to identify with being born in the USSR;
- **The likelihood of identifying through the language spoken increases among those who use the internet more frequently**, is higher among **Gagauz and Bulgarians** compared to Moldovans, **rises with higher levels of education**, and is lower in smaller localities;
- **The likelihood of identifying with ethnicity is higher among Ukrainians and Russians** compared to Moldovans and increases with **more frequent internet use**;
- **The likelihood of identifying with religion decreases among Ukrainian speakers** compared to Romanian, Bulgarian, or Moldovan speakers. Additionally, **ethnic Romanians** are less likely to identify religiously compared to Moldovans, Ukrainians, and Gagauz, while Moldovans are less likely to identify religiously compared to Ukrainians;
- **The likelihood of identifying politically is higher among Ukrainians and Russians** compared to Moldovans and increases with more frequent internet use.

To rephrase the findings in terms of status groups:

- **Women** tend to **reject identification through politics** and are **less likely to associate with international relations options** (such as identification with the USSR or Europe). However, these associations are weaker, being statistically significant at $p < 0.10$, but not at $p < 0.05$;
- **Older age** decreases the likelihood of identifying with **gender, age, social class, spoken language, ethnicity, region, Moldovan citizenship, or European citizenship**. However, it increases the probability of identifying with being born in the USSR, likely due, as mentioned earlier, to the fact that younger generations could not have been born during the Soviet era;
- **Ethnicity highlights the contrast between Ukrainians/Russians and Romanians/Moldovans**, with the first group identifying more often with Europe compared to the latter. Gagauz and Bulgarians identify more frequently with their spoken language than Moldovans. Russians and Ukrainians identify more often ethnically than Moldovans. Ukrainians also identify regionally more frequently than Romanians and Moldovans. Additionally, Russians and Ukrainians identify more often politically than Moldovans. Overall, Ukrainians do not differ significantly from Russians, and Romanians do not differ from Moldovans;

- **Language** – **Russian speakers are more likely to identify with gender** and less likely to identify with class, language (significant at $p < 0.10$), and the Republic of Moldova. Romanian speakers identify less frequently with their region but more often with their language. Those who predominantly speak Ukrainian or Russian are less likely to identify with age compared to speakers of Moldovan or Romanian. There are almost no differences within the Romanian-Moldovan or Ukrainian-Russian pairs;
- **Education** – Higher education **reduces the likelihood of identifying with gender** while increasing the likelihood of identifying with language;
- **Regional differences:**
 - The **Central region** identifies **more frequently with the Republic of Moldova** compared to the Northern region;
 - The **Southern, Northern, and Central regions** identify **more often with the USSR** than those from Chisinau;
 - **Locality size** – smaller localities show a slight **decrease in the likelihood of identifying with language, age, the USSR, ethnicity, and class.**

■ What does it mean to be Moldovan?

Starting from the strong identification with the Republic of Moldova, it becomes essential to clarify what it means to be Moldovan. In this context, SEPA 2024 used a scale adapted from the EVS/WVS surveys, as illustrated in Figure 11. The data shows that being Moldovan is strongly tied to respecting the institutional system, speaking the language, and sharing the culture. To a lesser extent, being born in Moldova or having ancestors from the country also contribute to this sense of identity.

Compared to the EVS 2008 data for the Republic of Moldova (Figure 11), there is a noticeable decrease in the importance of birthplace as an identity factor. This is accompanied by an increased emphasis on respecting the law and knowing the state language (the question about culture was not included in the 2008 survey).

Figure 11. Defining Moldovan Identity, SEPA 2024

Some people say that the following aspects are important to truly be Moldovan. Others say they are not important. What do you think?

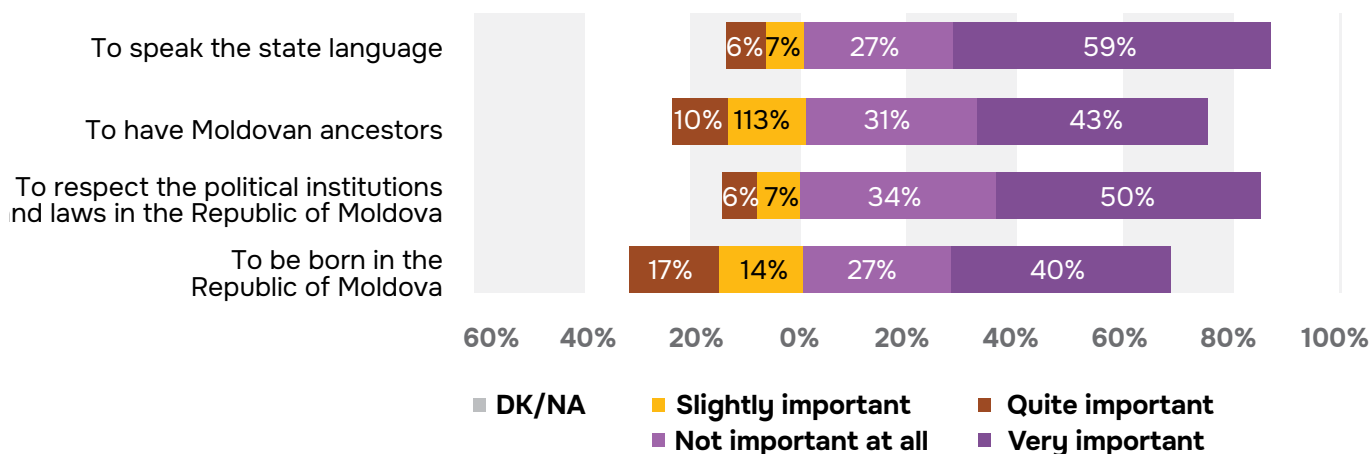
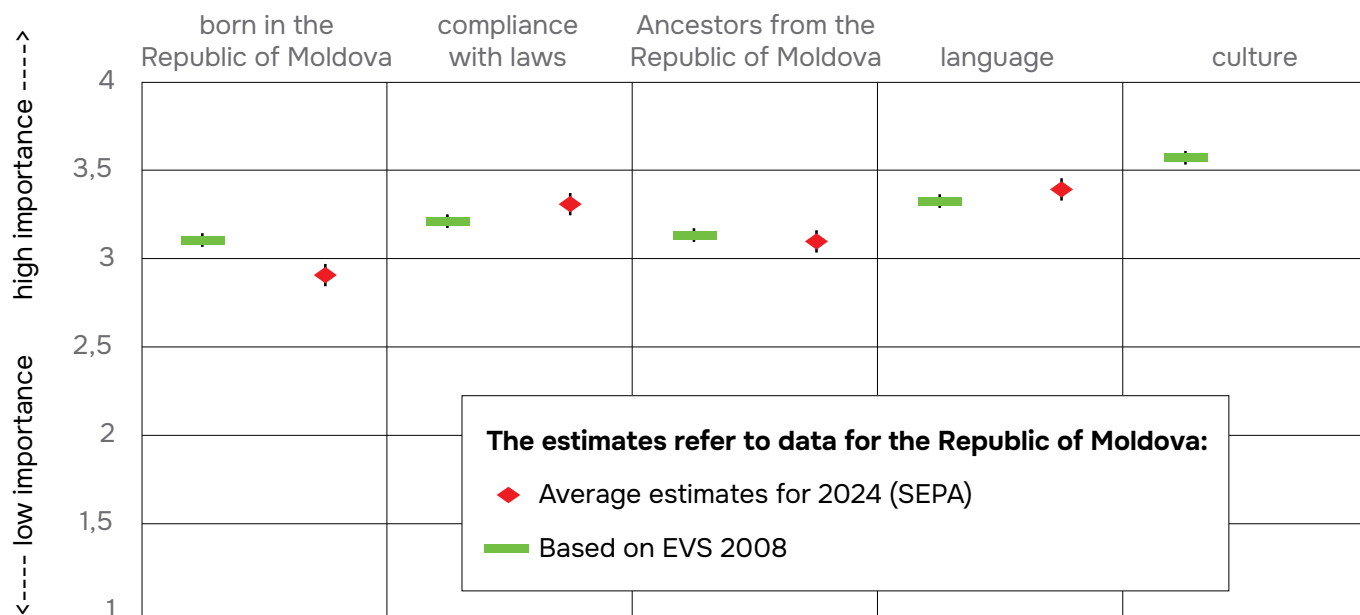


Figure 12. What is important to be Moldovan: dynamics 2008-2024



The figures represent averages calculated on a four-point scale (1 = very unimportant; 4 = very important) for each of the five items considered in the two surveys. The EVS did not include ‘culture’.

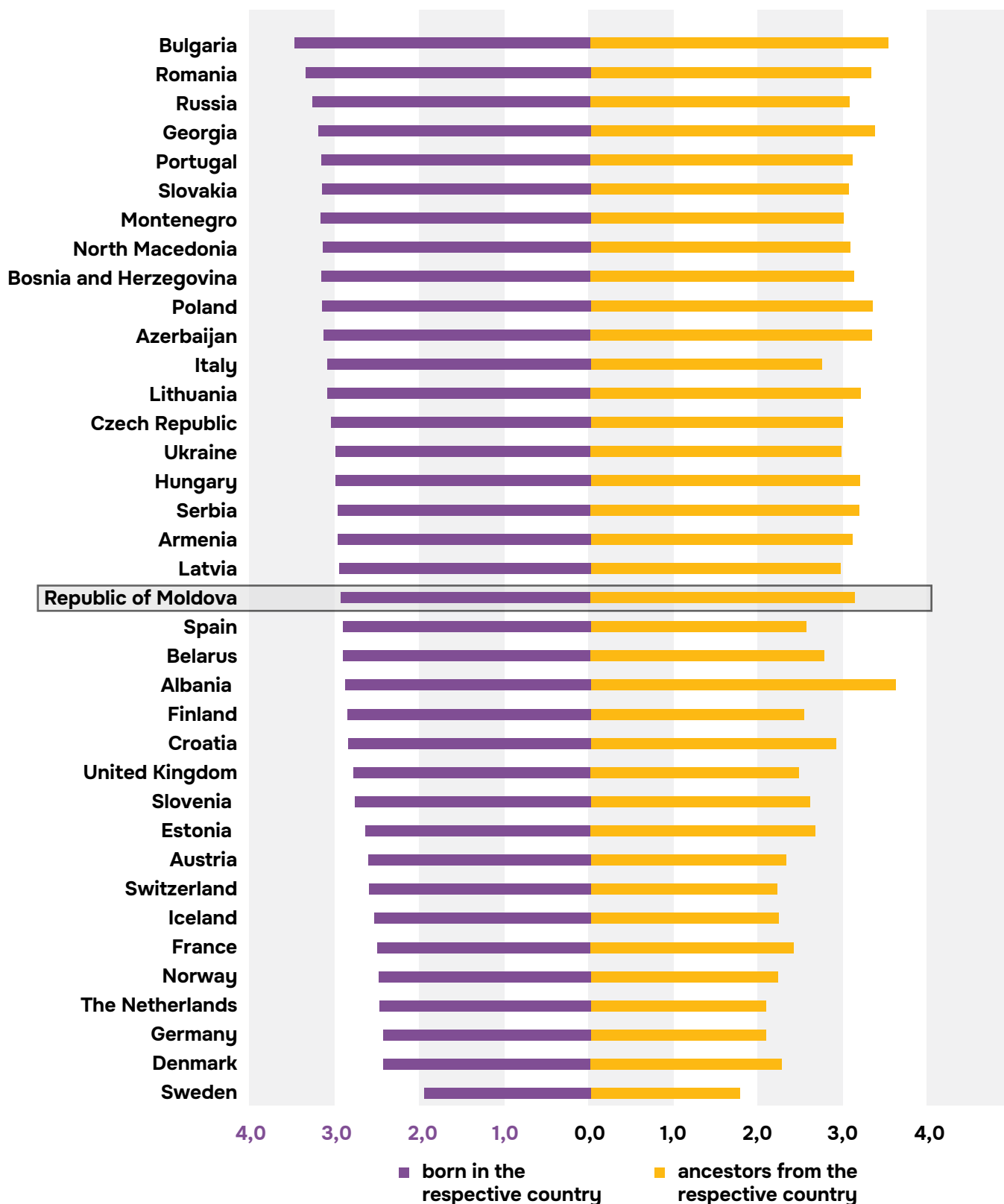
The figures from the EVS 2017-2020 (Figure 13) allow for a comparison of the Republic of Moldova’s positioning relative to other European societies. From Figure 13, it can be observed that the Republic of Moldova is positioned around the European average on both dimensions. Countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, and Georgia place much higher emphasis on *jus soli* (the importance of place of birth) than those in the northwestern part of the continent, where the importance of place of birth becomes lower.

The same applies to the conditioning of **jus sanguinis** (having ancestors from the respective country). But, in this matter, the Republic of Moldova aligns more with countries (generally in the East) that strongly support the significance of this criteria.

When it comes to the importance of respecting laws and speaking the language, people in the Republic of Moldova are less strict than those in most European countries. Although these two conditions remain strong, Moldova is seen as more permissive compared to others. For example, Moldova shares similar views with countries like Belarus, Poland, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, and Russia on following laws, while countries like Albania, Bosnia, Montenegro and Armenia have much lower importance placed on these factors.

Similarly, our country is more like Spain, Armenia, or Serbia when it comes to giving less importance to the language, while Finland, Ukraine, Bosnia, and Montenegro are even more relaxed about this.

Figure 13. The importance of conditions for being considered from the country you are in

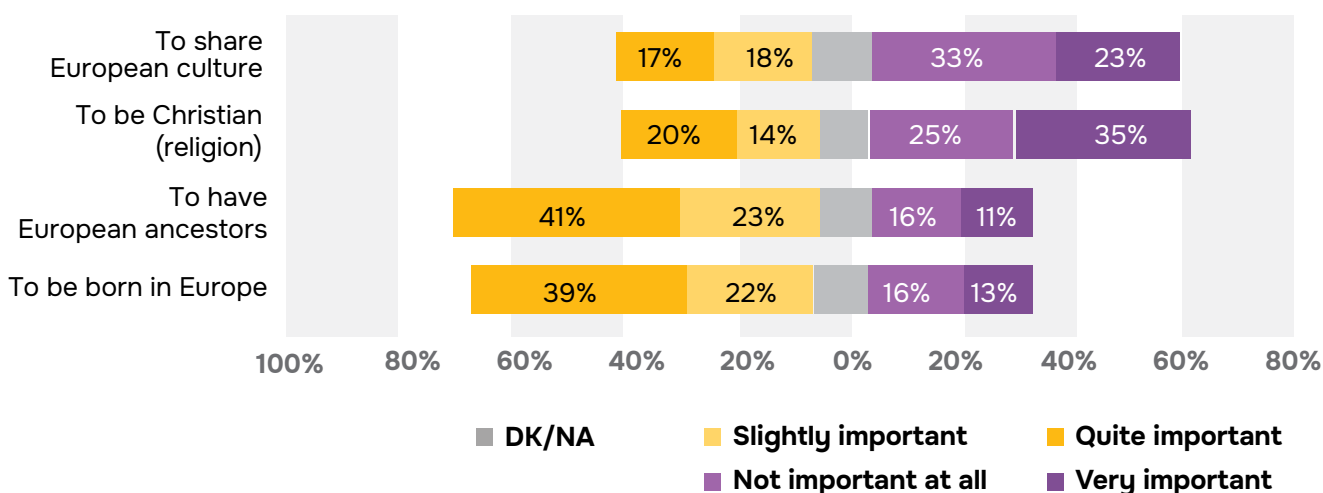


Sources: For Moldova – SEPA 2024, for other countries – EVS 2017-2020. The longer the bar (to the left or right), the greater the importance of the respective condition.

Based on the SEPA 2024 data, an indicator was created to rank respondents according to how strongly they believe that certain criteria define someone as Moldovan. Using this indicator, differences between status groups were examined through multilevel multivariate regression analysis. The results showed several significant differences:

- **Trust in people** and **positive views about the state of society** are linked to stronger insistence on the **criteria for being considered Moldovan**;
- **Younger people** tend to be **more tolerant**; tolerance increases as people get older;
- People who primarily speak Russian or Ukrainian are significantly **more tolerant** than those who speak Romanian or Moldovan;
- **Ethnic Moldovans and Romanians** tend to be **stricter compared to Russians, Bulgarians, and Gagauzi**, and Moldovans are stricter than Ukrainians as well;
- **Tolerance decreases** with **higher education levels** and in **smaller towns** (people with higher education and those from smaller localities tend to be more strict).

Figure 14. Defining European Identity, SEPA 2024 – People have different opinions about what it means to be European. In your opinion, how important is each of the following criteria to being European?



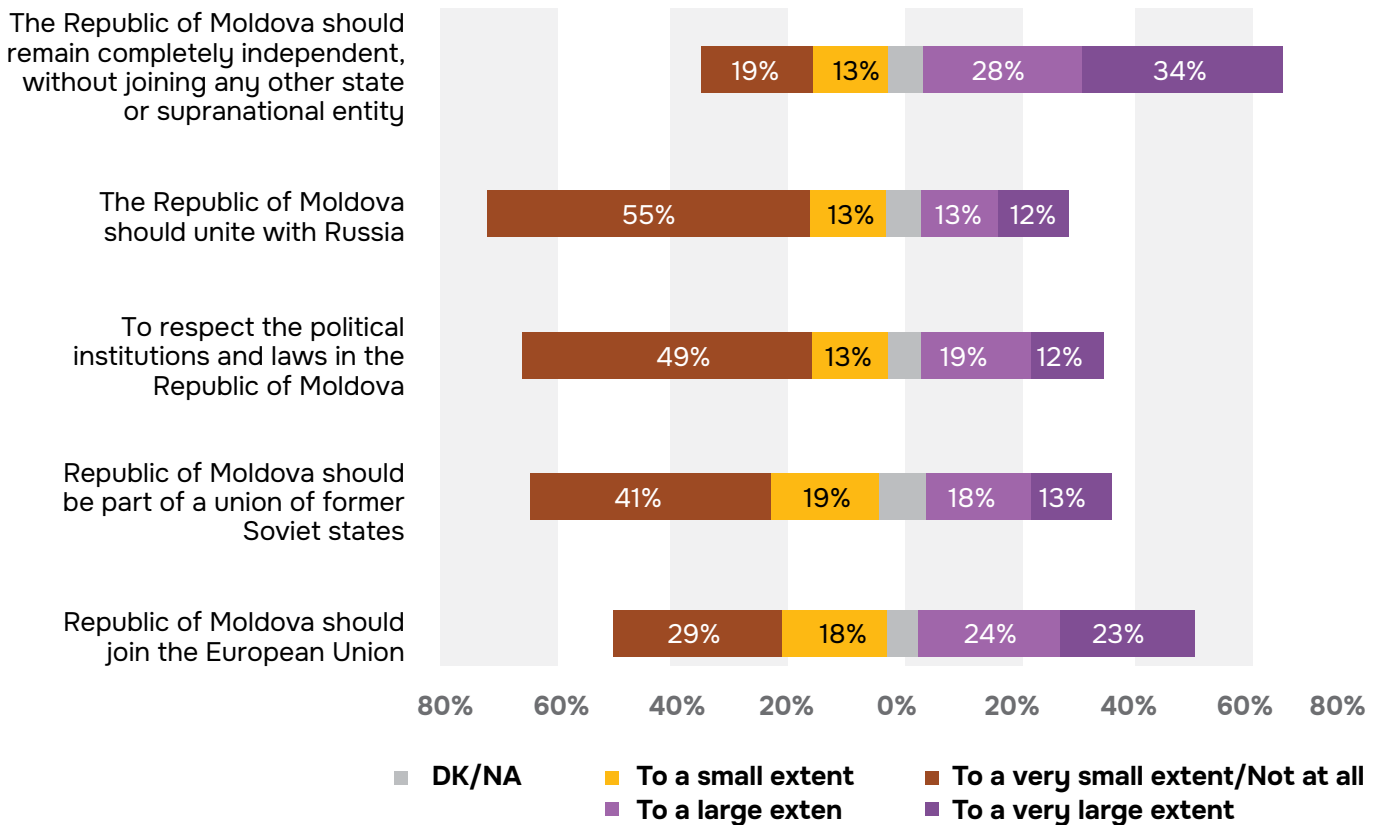
In line with the questions about what it means to be Moldovan, the SEPA 2024 also includes a series of questions about what it means to be European, taken from the EVS surveys. Unlike the criteria for Moldovan identity, the factors of jus sanguini (descent) and jus soli (birthplace) are not considered here. Instead, being Christian and sharing European culture are emphasized. Additionally, it is notable that a relatively large number of respondents chose not to answer. Compared to the rest of Europe, the criteria for being European are less strict in SEPA 2024.

To measure the strictness of the criteria for being European an indicator was also created. This indicator is strongly correlated with the one related to the strictness of the criteria for being Moldovan (the Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.31, significant at $p < 0.0005$). This suggests that tolerance or strictness in evaluating membership in a national group is not as dependent on the subject of evaluation (as a Moldovan or as a European).

5.3. State options of the Republic of Moldova

The question about the state options of the Republic of Moldova does not lead to a general consensus regarding joining the EU. A majority believes that the Republic of Moldova should remain independent and rejects the idea of union with other countries (such as Romania, Russia, or any structure inheriting the Soviet legacy). The significant number of refusals to answer indicates a need for public debate on these issues.

Figure 15. Options Regarding the Moldovan State, SEPA 2024 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



The factor analysis of the items reveals one key indicator that explains 43% of the differences between respondents, which measures the pro-European and pro-Russian/Soviet orientations. Specifically, the factor is strongly positively related to the preference for European integration and less (but still significant) with the wish to unite with Romania. On the other hand, it shows a negative connection with the pro-Russia option, the support for a post-Soviet structure, and (with a somewhat weaker association) the preference for independence.

The pro-European stance is stronger among those who have a stronger orientation towards a maximal state, social solidarity, and a position on the left. Additionally, the pro-European option is associated with stricter criteria for being considered Moldovan or European.

The multivariate analysis shows that the pro-European option:

- **Is positively associated** with **positive representations of the state of society**;
- **Is stronger** among those who **speak Romanian** compared to others, and among those who generally speak Moldovan compared to those who generally speak Russian;
- **Is stronger** among **pensioners** compared to full-time employees, and among full-time employees compared to unemployed individuals;
- **Is stronger** in the **Central and Southern regions** than in the Northern region;
- From an ethnic perspective, it **is stronger among Romanians** compared to all others, and among Moldovans compared to Russians and Ukrainians;
- **Increases** with the **level of education**;
- **Increases** with the **size of the locality**;
- **Decreases** with the **number of children**.



6. CONTACT AND SOCIAL DISTANCE

This chapter continues exploring attitudes towards discrimination and equality, going deeper into the topic by discussing the interactions with minority groups.

6.1. Contact with various groups

Table 7 provides initial information about the population's contact with various minority groups²⁷. The most notable finding is the lack of contact with many groups. Apart from Russians, Ukrainians, Romanians, non-state language speakers, and people with disabilities, the level of contact with other groups is below 33%. For some groups, this is largely due to their small representation in the population. When a group's share in the population is low, contact with that group tends to be limited. For instance, the Gagauz stand out as a visible example of this dynamic.

Comparisons with population proportions are significant: rounding the figures for easier comparison, people with disabilities are also more visible than their proportion in the population²⁸. The reported contact (35%) is more than double their presence in the total population.

The percentage of alcoholics in the Republic of Moldova is not precisely estimated, but it can be measured based on data from other countries. In the United States, about 6-7% of the population struggles with alcoholism (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2023). In Europe, the percentage is likely similar, but the Republic of Moldova has one of the highest alcohol consumption rates on the continent (World Health Organization, 2022a). It's estimated that alcoholics make up at most 15% of Moldova's population (probably less, but we're using the higher estimate for this argument). This means alcoholics are much more noticeable to people (29%) than their actual proportion of the population.

Table 7. The contact of Moldova's population with various minority groups, SEPA 2024.

To what extent do you think the Government should ensure that...?	Sample distribution (total = 100%)			The proportion of those who have contact ... (percentage of those who did not answer 'Don't know/ No answer')			
	At least one contact	No contact	DK/ NA	In the family	Among relatives	Among friends	Among acquaintances
Russian	59%	41%	0,2%	16%	30%	25%	27%
People who do not speak the state language	49%	49%	1,1%	13%	19%	25%	34%
Ukrainians	47%	53%	0,5%	11%	25%	16%	20%
Romanians	46%	54%	0,1%	11%	20%	18%	21%
People with disabilities	35%	65%	0,3%	11%	14%	7%	12%
Gagauz	30%	70%	0,7%	8%	11%	14%	18%
Alcoholics	29%	71%	0,3%	3%	6%	8%	22%

27 The group 'Moldovans' was not included in the survey.

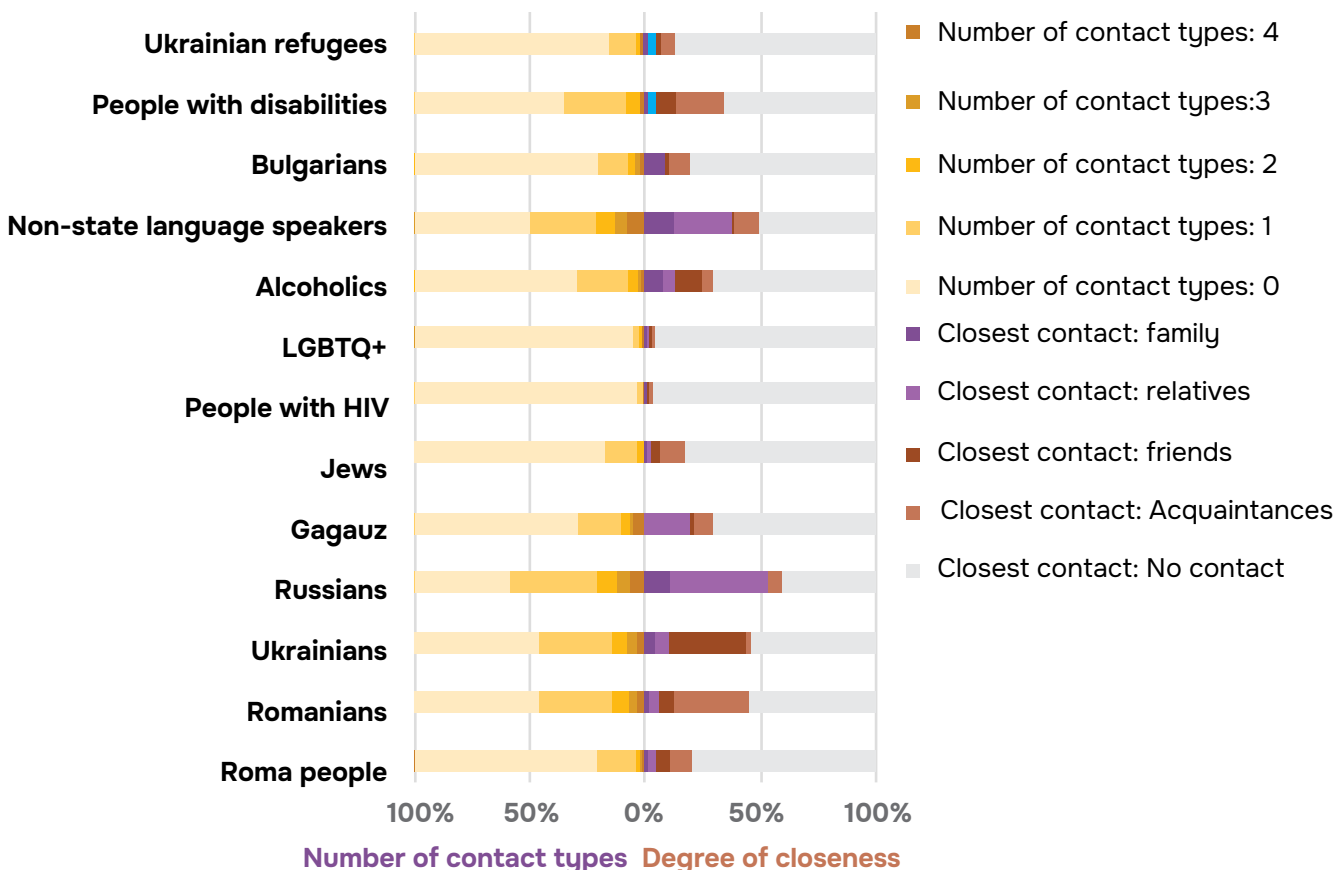
28 People with disabilities make up approximately 15% of the population in modern societies

Bulgarians	20%	80%	0,3%	4%	7%	10%	11%
People of Roma ethnicity	20%	80%	0,2%	2%	4%	7%	12%
Jews	17%	82%	0,9%	1%	3%	6%	10%
Ukrainian refugees	14%	86%	0,2%	1%	5%	5%	7%
LGBTQ+ individuals	5%	93%	2%	0%	0%	1%	4%
People with HIV	4%	92%	4%	0%	0%	1%	3%

Notes: DK/NR = ‘Don’t know/No response.’ ‘At least one contact.’ Summing the figures in the first part of the table (left) leads to a total of 100%. For the right half of the table, summing is not meaningful: any respondent could have contacts in multiple categories at the same time—within the family, among friends, among relatives, etc. For the LGBTQ+ group, the questionnaire also specified: ‘lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals’, to prevent non-responses due to unfamiliarity with the term.

In terms of ethnic groups, Russians and Ukrainians constitute about 5-6% of Moldova’s population. Among respondents, 59% say they have Russians in their social networks, and 47% mention Ukrainians. Russians are the most present group in terms of contact at the level of family members, relatives, friends, or acquaintances. The Gagauz make up about 4% of the population, but contact with them is much lower – 30%. This lower contact is mainly due to their geographical separation from other ethnic groups.

Figure 16. Closeness and distance to social groups, SEPA 2024.



The right side of the figure illustrates the number of contact types, ranging from 0 (no contact) to 4 (all types: family, relatives, friends, acquaintances). A higher number of contacts or a greater degree of closeness is represented by bars closer to the main axis of the graph. Bars farthest from the main axis indicate 0 contacts (on the left side of the graph) and 0 degree of closeness (on the right side). The highest degree of closeness is experienced when a person in the respective group is identified as a family member.

Beyond visibility, it is important to consider both the number of contact types and the average social distance determined by the type of contact. For each respondent, the number of network types where they have people from each group was calculated. The four types of networks are: family, relatives, friends, and acquaintances. For a specific group, such as the Roma, a respondent might report having no contact with people from that group (80%, based on the data in the first row of Table 7), contact in one type of network, in two types (e.g., ‘family’ and ‘friends’), in three types, or in all four. The distribution of this measure of concentration of contact is shown on the left side of Figure 16.

Relationships with Russians, and to a lesser extent with other ethnic groups, tend to include multiple types of contact. Among those who have relationships with people from these groups, most have all four types of contact, and only a few have limited interactions.

This is also evident on the right side of the figure, which shows the closest type of relationship with each group. It becomes clear that relationships with the Gagauz are predominantly familial, while those with Russians are mostly based on ties with relatives.

Table 8. Average closeness to certain groups, SEPA 2024.

Among your friends, acquaintances, or relatives, are there...?	Average number of contact types		Average closeness (closest type of contact)	
	Entire sample (min=0, max=4)	Only those with at least one contact (min=1, max=4)	Entire sample (min=0, max=4)	At least one contact (min=1, max=4)
Russians	0,19	1,66	1,77	2,7
People who do not speak the state language	0,29	1,82	1,39	2,4
Ukrainians	0,39	1,54	1,07	2,7
Romanians	0,32	1,51	0,67	2,6
People with disabilities	0,28	1,28	0,52	2,7
Gagauz	0,14	1,74	0,89	2,4
Alcoholics	0,22	1,35	0,74	1,8
Bulgarians	0,12	1,64	0,49	2,3
People of Roma ethnicity	0,16	1,26	0,38	1,9
Jews	0,14	1,22	0,25	1,8
Ukrainian refugees	0,11	1,26	0,31	2,1

Among your friends, acquaintances, or relatives, are there...?	Average number of contact types		Average closeness (closest type of contact)	
	Entire sample (min=0, max=4)	Only those with at least one contact (min=1, max=4)	Entire sample (min=0, max=4)	At least one contact (min=1, max=4)
LGBTQ+ individuals	0,04	1,14	0,12	1,4
People with HIV	0,04	1,03	0,08	1,6

Note: For the proximity indicators, the types of contact are quantified as follows: 0 – no contact, 1 – acquaintances, 2 – friends, 3 – relatives, 4 – family. Each respondent was assigned the value corresponding to the closest type of relationship with each group, and the averages in the table were calculated. How to read: In the entire sample, according to the columns on the left, the average number of contacts with Roma is 0.16. For respondents who have at least one contact with Roma, their average number of contacts is 1.26. This shows it is rare to have more than one type of contact with Roma. The columns on the right calculate the average proximity to each group. For example, the average proximity to Russians is 1.77, meaning that the majority of respondents have at least one contact with Russians, typically classified as acquaintances or friends. Among those who have at least one contact with Russians, the average proximity is 3.7, indicating relationships closer to relatives. The higher the average number of contacts and proximity coefficients, the more likely the group is to have relationships with the majority of the population.

We can also summarize these findings, as shown in Table 8. By calculating the average number of contact types, in the case of interactions with Roma, we arrive at a figure of 0.16 (first row, first column of Table 8). The highest intensity of contact is observed in relationships with Ukrainians, Romanians, and those who do not speak the state language. For these groups, typical interactions include more than one type of contact. For other groups, interactions are usually limited to a single type of contact, such as family, relatives, friends, or acquaintances.

Relationships with Russians, Gagauz, and those who do not speak the state language often occur within closer circles, such as family and relatives. In contrast, relationships with others take place in more distant circles. For example, people with disabilities, Romanians, and alcoholics are more commonly found in the circle of acquaintances. Meanwhile, people with HIV, LGBTQ+ individuals, Bulgarians, Jews, and Ukrainian refugees are more likely to be people you know but have limited contact with. However, as indicated in the last column of Table 8, even for these groups, if you establish one type of contact, it is very likely that you will also develop contact of another type.

6.2. The distance between ethnic and linguistic groups

Contact with these groups may depend on various individual characteristics (gender, age, education, etc.), including identity elements (ethnicity, spoken language) and geographic location. Factors that affect how many contacts people have with each ethnic group²⁹, or how close those contacts are, were analysed. Below are the results related specifically to language and ethnicity:

- **Each group tends to have stronger relationships within its own group.** For example, ethnic Romanians are more likely to have closer relationships with other Romanians than with people of different ethnicities. This pattern is mostly automatic, as it is typically assumed that individuals have at least one close relative of the same ethnicity, which leads to a stronger perceived association. Therefore, only results that reveal

29 Except for 'Moldovans', which the questionnaire did not specifically ask about to avoid confusion with 'citizen of the Republic of Moldova'.

meaningful associations are included in the list below. In this context, associations indicate affinity. For example, if members of ethnic group X have as many types of relationships with members of their own group as they do with those of ethnic group Y (with no significant differences), it suggests that ethnic group Y is very close to ethnic group X. However, the reverse is not necessarily true (i.e., ethnic group X may not be equally close to group Y);

- **Changes in the language spoken** (from the one spoken at home during childhood to the one spoken at home now) **do not have a significant impact on the types of interactions with the various ethnic groups** considered;
- **Romanians:**
 - The number of contacts with Romanians **does not vary** significantly by **ethnicity**;
 - Only those who **speak Moldovan** have **significantly fewer contacts with Romanians** than Romanians themselves; all other linguistic groups do not differ significantly from Romanians;
 - **In terms of closeness** (acquaintances, friends, relatives, family) in **relationships with Romanians, ethnic Russians and Gagauz do not differ from ethnic Romanians**;
 - For **all linguistic groups**, the **closeness of contact is similar to that reported by those who speak Romanian at home**;
 - Those who **speak Bulgarian at home** report **closer contacts** than those who speak Moldovan at home.
- **Russians:**
 - **The number of contacts with Russians does not vary significantly** by **ethnicity**;
 - **Gagauz** are more likely to have **contacts with Russians**, which do not differ significantly from their own group;
 - Those **who speak Ukrainian, Gagauz, or Bulgarian** **do not differ** significantly from Russian speakers in terms of having **relationships with Russians**;
 - In terms of **the closeness of contact** with ethnic Russians, only **ethnic Moldovans differ from ethnic Russians**;
 - For **all linguistic groups**, the **closeness of contact is similar** to that reported by those **who speak Russian at home**, except for those who speak Moldovan or Romanian.
- **Ukrainians:**
 - **The number of contacts with Ukrainians does not vary significantly** by **ethnicity**;
 - **Gagauz and Bulgarians** are more likely to have **contacts with Ukrainians**, which do not differ significantly from their own groups;
 - **Those who speak Russian, Gagauz, or Bulgarian** do not differ significantly from Ukrainian speakers in terms of **having relationships with Ukrainians**;
 - **In terms of the closeness of contact with ethnic Ukrainians**, only **ethnic Moldovans differ from ethnic Ukrainians**;
 - For **all linguistic groups**, the **closeness of contact is similar** to that reported by **those who speak Ukrainian at home**.

- **Those who speak Russian** have **closer contacts with Ukrainians** than those who speak Romanian or Moldovan.
- **Gagauz:**
 - **The number of contacts with Gagauz varies** depending on **ethnicity**;
 - **Bulgarians** have **more frequent contacts with Gagauz** than any other ethnic group and do not differ significantly from Gagauz themselves;
 - **Those who speak Ukrainian** do not differ significantly from Gagauz speakers in terms of **having relationships with Gagauz**. However, the estimates for Ukrainian speakers are imprecise. Furthermore, they do not differ from any other ethnic group in terms of relationships with Gagauz. On the other hand, those who speak Russian at home have more frequent relationships with the Gagauz than speakers of Romanian, Moldovan, or Bulgarian;
 - In terms of the **closeness of contact with ethnic Gagauz**, there are **no differences between ethnic groups**, not even compared to Gagauz themselves;
 - For **all linguistic groups**, the closeness of **contact is similar** to that reported by those who **speak Gagauz at home**;
 - Those **who speak Russian** and those who speak Ukrainian at home **have closer contacts with Gagauz** than speakers of Romanian or Moldovan.
- **Bulgarians:**
 - **The number of contacts with ethnic Bulgarians** varies depending on **ethnicity**;
 - **Gagauz have more frequent contacts with Bulgarians** than any other ethnic group;
 - However, the impact of the spoken language is reversed: **those who speak Gagauz at home are less likely to have contact with Bulgarians**. Beyond this, there are no significant differences between Bulgarians and other ethnic groups, but Russian speakers have more frequent contacts with ethnic Bulgarians than speakers of any other language except Bulgarian;
 - In terms of the **closeness of contact with ethnic Bulgarians**, there are **no differences between ethnic or linguistic groups**.
- Overall, there is a **greater distance** between those **who speak Romanian or Moldovan** from any ethnic group (except for ethnic Romanians). Similarly, ethnic Romanians tend to maintain more distance from other groups. In contrast, other ethnic and linguistic groups, particularly Russians, are more likely to develop frequent relationships outside their own ethnic or linguistic group;
- Analysing interactions with **Jews and Roma**, **no significant differences** are observed between ethnic or linguistic groups;
- **Ukrainian speakers interact more frequently with those who do not speak the state language**, likely as a result of interactions related to assisting refugees, which involve international intervention. Russian speakers have more contacts with those who do not speak the state language compared to those who speak Romanian or Moldovan at home;
- **Ethnic Gagauz, Bulgarians, and Russians have interactions with a wider variety of people who do not speak the state language** compared to Moldovans or Romanians. Additionally, Gagauz interact more frequently with these individuals than Ukrainians do.

6.3. The social distance scale

Since 1920, the Bogardus³⁰ scale has been used in the social sciences to measure social distance between different groups of people. Until recently, it was considered the standard method for analysing social distance between groups³¹. In its classic form, which was also used in previous SEPA editions (2015, 2018, 2021)³², the scale asked respondents to categorize various groups of people (e.g., individuals of different ethnicities, alcoholics, or people living with HIV) based on the level of acceptance, essentially indicating the distance at which they accept these groups.

As family members	As relatives	As friends (close)	As immediate neighbours	As neighbours in the neighbourhood	As citizens of the country
1	2	3	4	5	6

The scale has circulated and continues to circulate in various forms, with some categories being added or removed depending on the preferences of those using it in different studies. Its purpose was to place each relevant group at a certain distance and then compare the groups with one another. In the questionnaires from previous surveys commissioned by the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality in the Republic of Moldova, the scale was adapted to include categories such as relatives by marriage, friends, neighbours, work colleagues, citizens, or visitors to the country. More extreme options were also added: ‘not even a visitor to the country’ in 2015 and ‘I would exclude them from my country’ in 2018.

The figures beneath each of the groups mentioned above represent measures of the distance to that group. However, these figures become irrelevant in contemporary, non-normative societies with high social and spatial mobility³³, where there is a variety of lifestyles and preferences. For instance, the ratio of relatives to friends: some people prefer friends over relatives. As a result, the figures under these categories do not hold the same meaning for every respondent and, therefore, cannot be used to produce accurate statistics. In modern societies, where normativism has become outdated, the scale loses its relevance—this has been observed even in more traditional regions such as India and North Africa³⁴.

SEPA 2024 opted for a simplified scale, asking respondents whether or not they would accept people from various social groups as neighbours. This approach allowed, on the one hand, the preservation of comparisons with previous waves (2015, 2018, 2021), where respondents were asked about accepting these groups as neighbours, and on the other hand, an increase in the number of groups and a reduction in the completion time.

This solution was adopted by EVS and WVS in 1980 and is still used today. It allows for comparisons between the Republic of Moldova and other countries. For example, in the most recent wave of EVS/WVS, which combined covers the period 2017–2022, the value surveys

30 Bogardus, 1933

31 Parrillo & Donoghue, 2013

32 See the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality in Moldova, OHCHR Moldova, and UNDP Moldova (2015), Magenta Consulting (2018), and [imas] (2021)

33 Castles, 2002; De Haas, Castles, & Miller, 2019

34 Ladini & Biolcati, 2023; Weinfurt & Moghaddam, 2001

asked about the acceptance of alcoholics, drug addicts, people of another race, homosexuals, Christians, Muslims, Roma, and so on, as neighbours. One of the few studies comparing the long and short scales found that the short scale (focused only on ‘neighbours’) gives a good estimate of social distance, but the classic scale is better at spotting smaller differences³⁵.

Table 9 shows the raw results. For each of the 24 groups considered, it displays the percentage of people who accept them as neighbours, those who reject them, and those who did not answer. The final column includes an Index of Dominant Public Opinion (IDPO), which is calculated by subtracting the percentage of those who reject the group as neighbours from those who accept them and then weighting it by the sum of the two groups. The resulting index ranges from -100 (complete rejection) to +100 (complete acceptance).

The IDPO calculation is important because there are several groups for which a significant share of respondents did not express an opinion. For instance, 5% of respondents are unsure about people of a different religion, and another 5% do not express an opinion about atheists and agnostics. A similar trend is seen with people who have been detained or individuals from African countries. The high number of refusals to provide a clear opinion often reflects either the lack of discussion about these topics on the public agenda or an intentional strategy to avoid answering sensitive issues where the majority holds strong, non-negotiable views.

The IDPO framework allows the inclusion of those who avoid answering by treating them as if they hold neutral opinions.

For each group, the results show that at least one in five respondents expresses rejection attitudes (with the exceptions of those in cohabitation and Russians, who are still rejected by 17%, very close to the 20% threshold). Strong rejection is observed for drug addicts, alcoholics, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with HIV, former prisoners, and people with disabilities. Ethnic groups, on the other hand, are generally more likely to be accepted than rejected.

Table 9. Acceptance or rejection of different status groups, SEPA 2024 – The following list includes various groups of people. Please select the groups of people you would not want as neighbours.

(an answer for each group)	I would like them as neighbours	I would not like them as neighbours	DK/NA	IDPO
Russians	81%	17%	2%	63
Unmarried couples living together	79%	17%	4%	60
People who speak a different language than you	79%	18%	3%	59
Ukrainians	76%	22%	2%	53
People with physical disabilities	76%	22%	2%	53
Romanians	75%	22%	3%	51
Bulgarians	74%	23%	3%	49
People who do not speak state language	74%	23%	3%	49
Gagauz	70%	27%	3%	42
People who have a religion different from yours	69%	26%	5%	41

35 Kummetat, Leonhard, Manthey, Speerforck, & Schomerus, 2022

(an answer for each group)	I would like them as neighbours	I would not like them as neighbours	DK/NA	IDPO
Ukrainian refugees	66%	30%	4%	35
Jews	64%	31%	4%	31
People of a different race than you	63%	33%	4%	29
Foreigners (without Moldovan citizenship)	56%	38%	6%	17
Muslim individuals	48%	48%	4%	0
Roma	48%	49%	3%	-1
People from African countries	47%	48%	5%	-1
Atheists/agnostics	44%	51%	5%	-7
People with mental and intellectual disabilities	33%	63%	4%	-29
People who have been detained/imprisoned	31%	64%	5%	-31
People living with HIV	26%	69%	5%	-41
LGBTQ+ individuals (lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender)	17%	80%	3%	-61
Alcoholics	16%	83%	1%	-66
People dependent on drugs	7%	91%	2%	-82

Table 10 presents a comparison with previous waves of surveys initiated by the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality in the Republic of Moldova, as well as with the EVS/WVS surveys conducted in the Republic of Moldova. This allows us to observe the dynamics of acceptance of certain groups over nearly 30 years. Data is not available for all groups in every year, but the analysis of the table highlights some interesting trends.

First, the 2024 survey shows a relative increase in the level of acceptance for most of the groups considered. There are a few categories where the acceptance percentage decreased after 2010, but now they are returning to the initial levels of acceptance: Muslims, Roma, Jews, people from African countries, and foreigners.

Table 10. Dynamics of acceptance as neighbours of certain status groups. Republic of Moldova, 1995-2024

	EVS/WVS				SEPA			
	1995	1999	2004	2008	2015	2018	2021	2024
People who have a religion different from yours	84%		75%					69%
Muslim individuals		56%		62%	38%	42%	41%	48%
Other religious minorities					58%	60%	54%	
Atheists/agnostics								44%
Russian					83%	81%	78%	81%
Ukrainians								76%
Romanians								75%
Bulgarians								74%
Gagauz								72%

	EVS/WVS				SEPA			
	1995	1999	2004	2008	2015	2018	2021	2024
Jews		75%		77%	57%	57%	53%	64%
Roma				51%	41%	36%	38%	48%
People who speak a different language than you				84%				79%
People who do not speak the state language						68%	63%	74%
Russians speaking individuals					84%			
Ukrainian refugees								66%
Foreigners (without Moldovan citizenship)					56%	59%	48%	56%
People from African countries					42%	43%	38%	47%
People with physical disabilities					61%	67%	59%	76%
People of a different race than you	92%	89%		76%				63%
People with mental and intellectual disabilities					32%	48%	39%	33%
People living with HIV	27%	34%	31%	35%	20%	15%	32%	26%
Alcoholics	22%	15%	19%	18%				16%
People dependent on drugs	14%	9%	13%	12%				7%
Unmarried couples living together			83%					79%
People who have been detained/imprisoned	19%	17%		33%	31%	36%	33%	31%
LGBTQ+ individuals	23%	23%	30%	19%	8%	15%	20%	17%

*The percentage of those who do not state that they do not want the group as neighbours or avoid answering the question about each group listed in the rows.

Based on the SEPA 2024 data, two scores were calculated³⁶. The first score measures general acceptance, reflecting the tendency to accept people from any of the groups listed in Table 9 as neighbours. The second score explains the variations in the level of acceptance towards the most excluded groups, including alcoholics, drug addicts, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, former prisoners, and people from other ethnicities. In other words, we have one factor for general acceptance and another that highlights discrimination based on ethnicity, while focusing on the acceptance of marginalized groups. Although the differences between respondents³⁷ are relatively small, **they do exist and reveal the following:**

- **Russian speakers** have a **higher level of general acceptance** than Moldovan and Romanian speakers, while Bulgarian speakers are significantly more likely to accept different groups than those who speak Moldovan;
- **Gagauz speakers** are **less likely to accept individuals from marginalized groups** compared to those who speak Romanian, Moldovan, or Russian;
- **Acceptance of marginalized individuals and rejection based on ethnic criteria** is low among those **aged 18-25**, but increases in the 25-34 age group, then decreases with

36 Exploratory factor analysis, KMO=0.914, the scree plot visually indicates two factors, extraction was performed using maximum likelihood, all communalities are greater than 0.2, Varimax rotation was used, and the extracted factors explain 42% of the total variation.

37 Investigate with multilevel regression models, similar to those in the previous sections.

age;

- **General acceptance** increases with **age**;
- Those who have **never been married** are more open to **accepting marginalized individuals**;
- The overall tendency for acceptance grows with **education**;
- Acceptance of marginalized individuals is lower among those who **do not use the internet**, in Chisinau (compared to other regions), but increases in rural areas compared to cities and towns;
- **General acceptance is higher** in **Chisinau** compared to the Northern region;
- **General acceptance increases** with a focus on **social solidarity**;
- **Acceptance of marginalized individuals** is **positively associated with sociability**.

6.4. Differences between people vs. equality

■ [FG] Romanian speakers

In the first stage, survey participants believed that people differ based on social status, economic criteria, ethnicity, religion, political views, and values. These differences were seen as a disadvantage because they often lead to misunderstandings between people. When there are too many differences, it can lead to envy and hatred. However, discussions helped participants realize that differences between people can not be avoided: there are men and women, and people of different ethnicities and cultures. What makes these differences not feel like a threat is, first, acceptance, and second, showing respect when expressing those differences.

People are equal, even if they are different. Equality means everyone has the same rights: to speak, to act, to have access to healthcare and education. Some participants emphasized that equality involves both rights and responsibilities. The family is the primary environment where education about equality, rights, and responsibilities begins. Children will follow what they see from their parents.

People who are not equal to others belong to a different religion, have a different age, or different interests. In the Republic of Moldova, people are not equal as they should be. They break rules and laws. According to the law, people in our country are equal. However, in reality, they do not treat each other as equals. A frequently mentioned criterion for defining equality is economic well-being. People judge you based on how you're dressed, what car you drive, what house you have, and so on.

Participants from the general public category mentioned ethnic differences. People with origins in Russia who have lived in the Republic of Moldova for many years do not want to learn the Romanian language. Many people believe that in this case, differences lead to conflicts, and on top of ethnicity, there are also the distinct values of these individuals.

There must be differences, but they should be healthy ones!

[M1, general public]

I express myself respectfully through my culture, through my education. If I cross the other person's boundaries through my way of approach and treatment: woman, man... Here, somehow, these boundaries, if they are not crossed...

[F5, general public]

Namely, equality allows us to have different opinions. For example, I come across many situations where, depending on ethnicities... Why did I refer to ethnicities? I have acquaintances who are newcomers, from Russia, from Belarus, with deep roots in the former Soviet Union. And they don't want to learn either the language or the culture, absolutely nothing! They have very narrow views on the entire situation taking place. And this leads to various conflicts. I wouldn't even call them conflicts, but there are differing opinions, and their behaviour is more aggressive. Yes, they are very aggressive.

[F3, general public]

There is an old saying that goes, 'My freedom ends where another's freedom begins'. So, if there are limits in everything and mutual respect...

[F3, general public]

■ [FG] Russian speakers

In the opinion of this group of participants, people living in the Republic of Moldova differ based on the following criteria: social status, spoken language, nationality/ethnicity, political preferences, and the level of education. The existence of these differences is seen as completely normal. What bothers and affects them are the differences based on the spoken language, which are quite noticeable in the country. These differences create divisions between people. Furthermore, the survey participants mentioned that they experience the effects of these differences directly. Because they do not speak the state language, they are often labeled, called derogatory names, find themselves in the midst of conflicts, and are criticized.

Like other groups, the respondents referred to both legal and social equality. For them, equality means being treated the same as everyone else, regardless of social status or the community you belong to, and that the laws apply equally to all. For some participants, equality means having the same conditions as the rest. Because there is no equality, the standard of living is different. This leads to envy among people and possible various conflicts. When asked where equality cannot exist, the respondents mentioned individuals with different statuses: politicians versus ordinary citizens, directors versus regular employees.

Based on political preferences. One of the strongest.

[M2, individuals discriminated based on spoken language]

There are criteria for differentiation all over the world. What bothers me more is the distinction between Russians and Moldovans. But differences exist everywhere, especially political ones, it's something normal.

[F1, individuals discriminated based on spoken language]

They are not equal. First of all, they are not equal in terms of financial resources, then in terms of the political elite, others are at the very bottom, so there is no equality. That's the situation of ordinary people. In our country, human rights are not respected.

[M2, individuals discriminated based on spoken language]

Before the law, everyone is equal, that how it's being said.

[F3, individuals discriminated based on spoken language]

In our country, only those who have the right connections/relatives, where it's important, are equal.

[F1, individuals discriminated based on spoken language]

If we were equal, maybe life would have been simpler, there would be fewer bad people. Many people envy, and that's how problems arise.

[M4, individuals discriminated based on spoken language]

■ [FG] older adults

Older adults think that people differ based on social status, education level, religion, ethnicity, and spoken language. The participants had divided views on these differences. On one hand, they saw it as a positive thing when people differ, viewing it as a natural aspect of life – not everyone reaches the same social level, education, etc. This can motivate people to improve and develop continuously. Moreover, it makes life more diverse, as everyone has their own contribution, perspective, and way of acting – there's no room for boredom. On the other hand, these differences can lead to conflicts, which result in the segregation of citizens. As a consequence, various forms of discrimination emerge.

For this segment of respondents, equality means a good life, equal opportunities for development, and equal rights to education and healthcare. Even though people are different, they are all equal, at least in what they say. Legally, everyone has the same rights. However, the survey participants stated that what they observe in everyday life, in society, makes them believe the opposite. The fact that the law is not applied equally to all categories of people upsets them. They concluded that people with a higher social status are favored. For example, if two individuals commit the same crime but have different statuses, the one with the higher status will receive a lighter punishment, because of corruption.

There is equality between spouses, children, and people of the same age or religion. However, there cannot be equality between people with different social statuses, such as between an employee and employer, between people of different ages (because they have different interests), or between ethnicities or nationalities (due to different views and cultures).

The proverb says: 'There are five fingers on one hand, and they are all different!' Each to their own.

[M5, older adults]

If we were all equal, life wouldn't be interesting.

[M4, older adults]

But of course, we have the same rights! Who doesn't have the right to work, the right to education, the right to rest!? If I have the right to go to the store, the other person also has the right to buy. If I have the right to study, the other person also has the same right. Opportunity is something else, but equality in rights exists. We use it as we see fit.

[F1, older adults]

We are all equal in rights, but we can't all be on the same level. One person worked harder and has more, and that's their right. Another person stole, didn't work, but still has more because they got lucky, somehow it worked out for them, but the other person sees this and feels upset.

[F1, older adults]

Equality means everyone is living well.

[M4, older adults]

■ **[FG] people with disabilities**

According to people with disabilities, social status, religion, education level, political preferences, physical appearance, ethnicity, and place of birth are criteria by which people are differentiated. Differences between people have always existed and will continue to exist. There are many minorities in the Republic of Moldova, and this should be appreciated. It makes us different as a nation. Respondents mentioned that differences should not be seen as either positive or negative; they simply exist and must be accepted. It all depends on how each person views these differences. If they lead to discrimination, the outcome is negative.

Equality is understood as having the same opportunities and access to services, regardless of status, ethnicity, religion, and so on. In their opinion, this definition is currently not valid for the Republic of Moldova due to outdated mentalities, existing stereotypes, lack of information, and low education. Based on personal experiences, survey participants shared that people with disabilities do not experience equality. They have fewer employment opportunities and are not treated equally compared to other candidates.

Social status is a key factor in determining equality. Politicians and business people will never be considered equal to salespeople or teachers, for example. For them (politicians and business people), there will always be greater opportunities and more accessible paths in any situation.

Religions. Yes, level of education. Maybe even certain preferences. I don't know. For example, those who love reading and those who don't, and so on...

[F2, person with disabilities]

I believe that diversity is truly beautiful. Whether we're talking about diversity from the perspective of people with disabilities or those of different ethnic, religious, or other backgrounds, we are diverse in many ways. However, there are far more things that unite us as humans. That is what we should value above all.

[F1, person with disabilities]

This is part of human life. We are all different. In the end, we are unique. If differences lead to discrimination, it becomes a problem. If differences do not lead to discrimination or to the violation of the rights of certain individuals or groups, then differences are not a problem. It all depends on how you approach them.

[M3, person with disabilities]

Equal opportunity means the ability to access services on the same level as others. Equality means having the quality of life that you desire. Regardless of differences, right?

[F1, person with disabilities]

People with severe disabilities, however, do not have equal opportunities. Of course, there are exceptions. There are individuals who are completely bedridden, unable to communicate, and require constant care. In their case, we cannot talk about equal opportunities for development, as we do for others. Their only opportunity for equality is to have access to care services that improve the quality of their life in some way, helping them to cope more easily with their situation.

[M3, person with disabilities]

■ [FG] Ukrainian refugees

Like other groups of people, Ukrainian refugees that noticed that people differ in social status, education, language, and political views. According to survey participants, social status and level of education are linked. People with higher status often show better behaviour, demonstrate better education, and are less likely to discriminate. However, the fact that people are different can lead to conflict and misunderstandings. For this reason, they say it is not ideal for these differences to exist, but they understand that they are part of life.

When asked about their understanding of equality, Ukrainian refugees gave similar answers to other groups. For them, equality means having the same rights and opportunities, regardless of ethnicity or other factors. It also means not being restricted or pressured about what to believe, how to vote, or what choices to make. Since arriving in the Republic of Moldova, some respondents have faced situations where they felt treated unequally compared to local citizens, even though they pay taxes. They attribute this to not knowing the Romanian language, which limits their job opportunities, despite having strong CVs. Additionally, one participant mentioned a case where two people having the same role received different salaries.

Some respondents believe there is no equality between women and men, as women have fewer opportunities to hold certain positions. Similarly, they feel there is no equality between Ukrainian refugees and Moldovan citizens.

If we were to compare ourselves, the refugees, with the people of the Republic of Moldova, the language barrier is a factor. We face difficulties in finding jobs because we don't know Romanian. That alone makes us unequal. Until we learn the state language, we cannot be equal. It feels like we are just guests here.

[M3, Ukrainian refugees]

For me, equality means a person's social status in society. It means having their own vote and opinion, which no one has the right to suppress. It also includes faith—people should not be judged or treated differently based on their beliefs. Everyone has the right to believe in what they choose.

[M2, Ukrainian refugees]

I believe equality means equal rights for everyone, regardless of whether they are citizens or refugees like us. We should have the same rights in all aspects of life, including at work, but many face situations where Ukrainian salaries are lower for the same responsibilities. For example, citizens earn 10,000 lei, while Ukrainians earn 8,000 lei. That is not equality. There is also the language barrier—if you don't know Romanian, you cannot get hired. For us, there are no equal rights. Additionally, based on social status, some people are seen as higher, while others are seen as lower.

[M4, Ukrainian refugees]



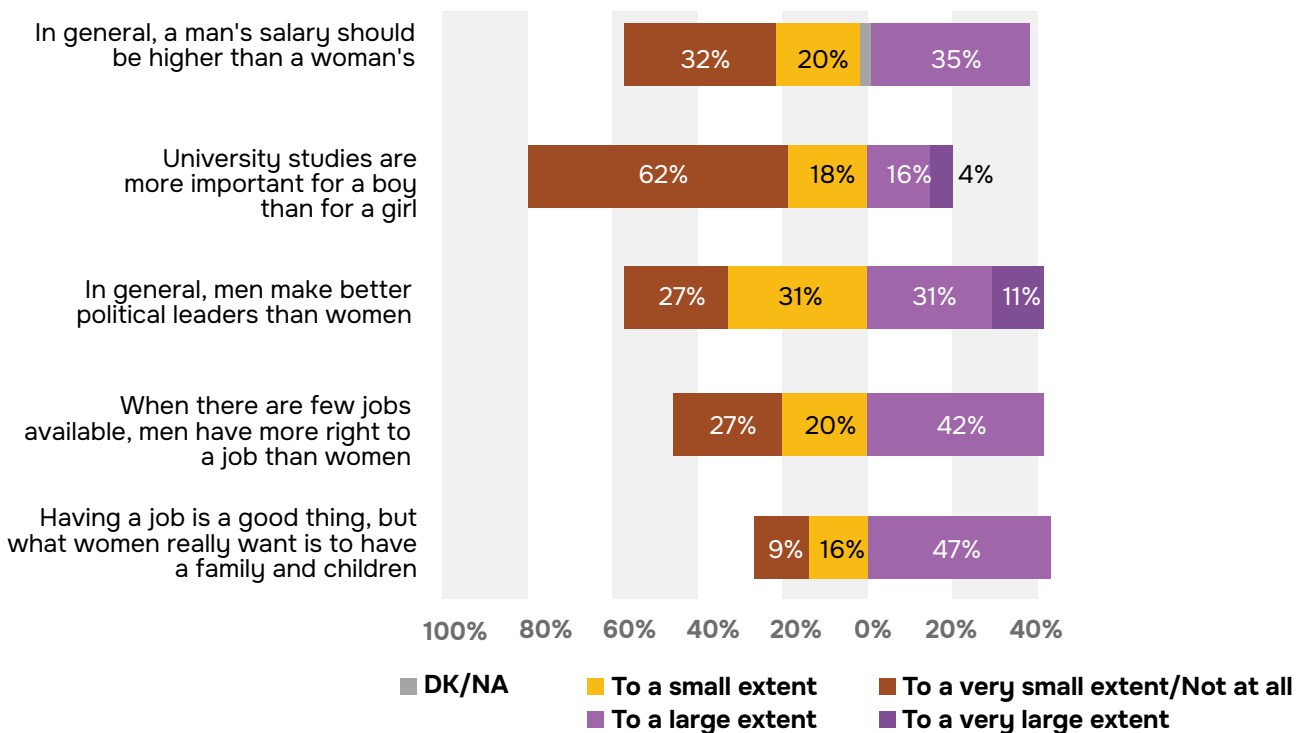
7. SPECIFIC GROUPS

The study also explored attitudes toward specific groups to identify where discrimination and social conflict might occur. Survey data was complemented with insights from focus group discussions. During these discussions, participants worked together on an ‘Axis of Normality’ exercise, where they decided how to classify different minority groups on the axis. This activity encouraged active engagement and teamwork. In most cases, participants used similar principles when classifying minority groups on the axis. In the ‘normal’ category, they included women, people over 60, individuals with physical disabilities, and Ukrainian refugees. Groups such as people living with HIV, Roma, and former prisoners were placed by some participants in the middle of the axis, while others categorized them as ‘normal’, leading to minor disagreements. LGBTQ+ individuals and those speaking a language other than the state language were predominantly placed in the ‘abnormal’ category. In regard to women and people over 60, participants had no additional comments, adding that these groups are inherently normal and should not be questioned. They emphasized that women are essential to life and noted that aging is an inevitable stage for everyone.

7.1. Gender equality

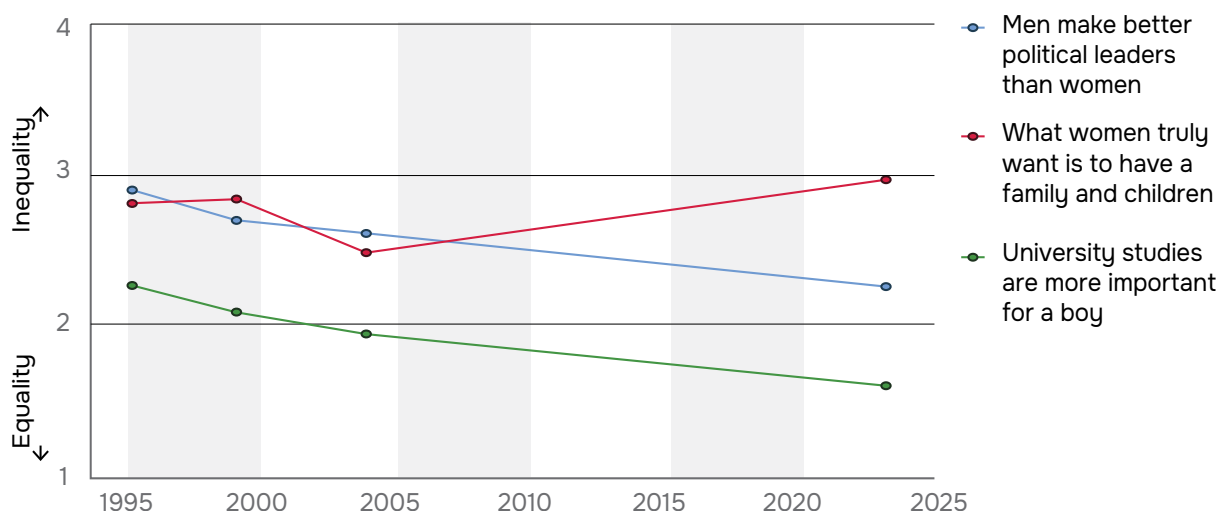
Gender relations have been under society’s attention for decades. The SEPA 2024 study looks at this topic through five key items, shown in Figure 17. The results show that Moldovan society explicitly prioritizes men in the job market but also supports women’s involvement in public life, including politics and education.

Figure 17. Attitudes toward gender equality, SEPA 2024 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Statements about family, children, and gender equality in politics and education allow for comparisons over time, as they are part of the EVS and WVS surveys. Figure 18 shows growing support for gender equality in access to university education. Opinions about women as political leaders remain stable. However, more people now believe women prioritize family and children over having a job.

Figure 18. Dynamics of gender attitudes in the Republic of Moldova, 1995–2024



Note: The figures represent the averages from the national samples of WVS 1995, EVS/WVS 1999, WVS 2004, EVS 2008, and SEPA 2024. A score of 1 indicates total rejection of the statement, while a score of 4 indicates total acceptance. The full wording of the items is shown in Figure 17.

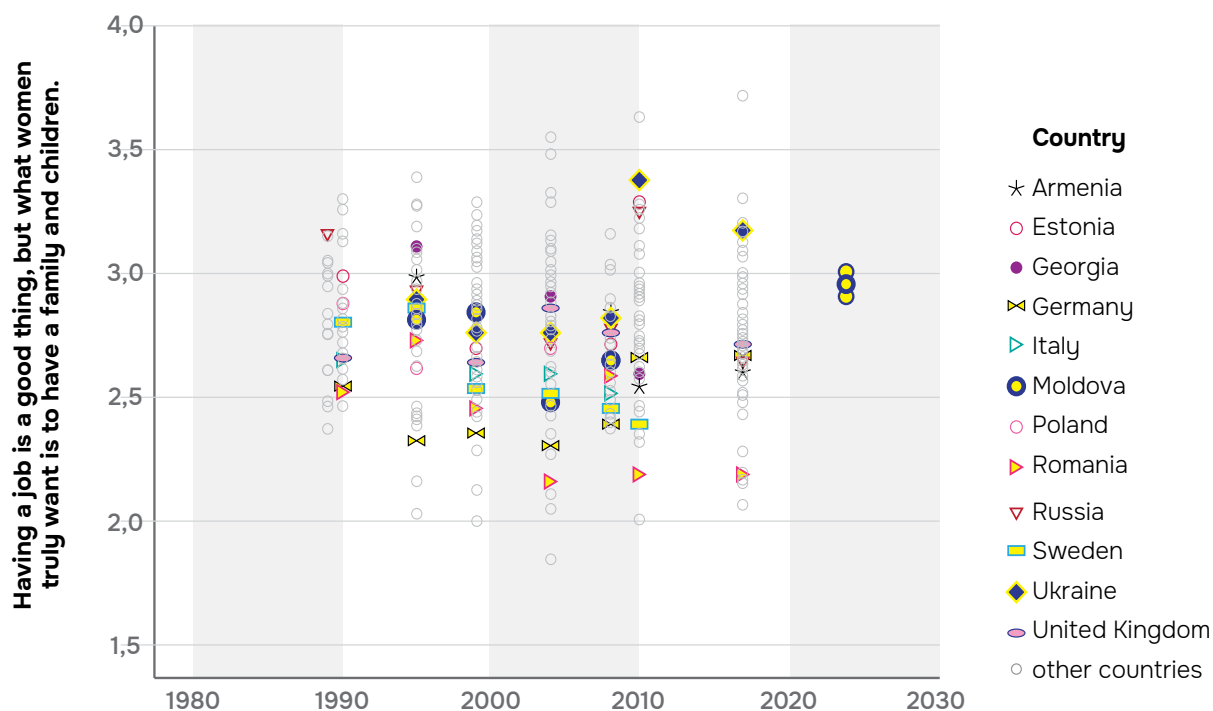
The comparison with EVS/WVS data shows that Moldovans place a higher value on the role of women as mothers and housewives than almost any other society (Figure 19). In 2018, societies with less progressive views in this area than Moldova in 2024 included Myanmar, Ukraine, Puerto Rico, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Hong Kong, Jordan, and the Philippines. Moldova’s score is comparable to countries like Tunisia, Japan, Iran, Bolivia, Taiwan, Indonesia, and Northern Ireland. Beyond these countries, most others, including European nations (except Northern Ireland and Ukraine), place less emphasis than Moldova on prioritizing women’s domestic roles over employment.

Regarding the legitimacy of women as political leaders (Figure 20), this is moderate in the Republic of Moldova. It is similar to Estonia, Serbia, Romania, and Poland, stronger than in countries like the Czech Republic, Latvia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Armenia, and Russia, but lower compared to Nordic, Western, and Southern European countries, as well as Hungary, Bosnia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and others.

Figure 21 compares the Republic of Moldova with other countries in terms of support for equal access to university education. Moldovans are less supportive in this area than most Western European countries, such as Germany, Sweden, Austria, Finland, Norway, Spain, and the Netherlands. Countries with similar levels of support include the United Kingdom, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, and Estonia. Former Soviet states and many Eastern European countries, including Ukraine, Russia, Romania, and Poland, as well as some Southern European countries like Italy and Portugal, show less support for equality than the Republic of Moldova.

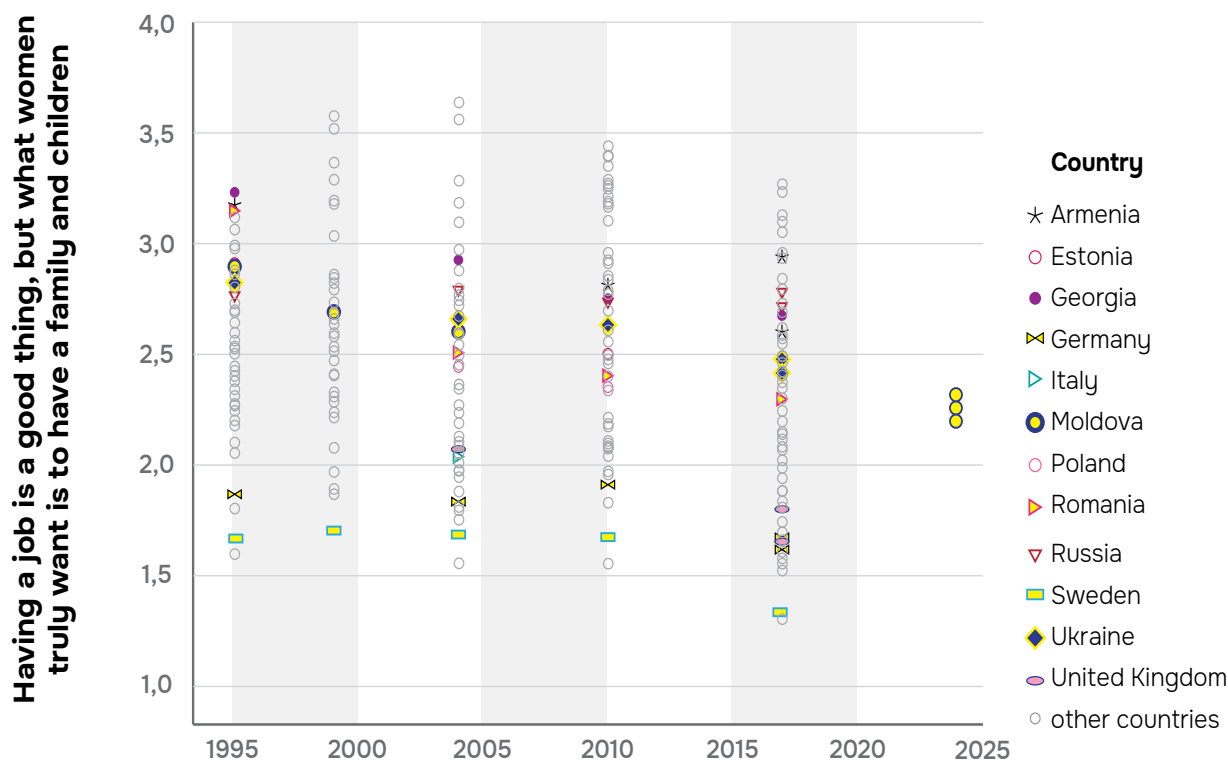
Overall, in 2024, our country’s position is likely around the European average, showing strong support for women’s presence in public life, including decision-making roles, but with hesitations regarding income equality and a strong emphasis on the role of women as mothers and wives.

Figure 19. Dynamics of the indicator regarding women’s desire to be homemakers: 1990–2024



Sources: EVS/WVS 1989–2019 and SEPA 2024. Each data point represents a country at a specific point in time on the horizontal axis. The chart includes 118 societies. For the 2024 data from the Republic of Moldova (top right), the 95% confidence interval is also shown.

Figure 20. Dynamics of the indicator on women’s participation in political life: 1990–2024

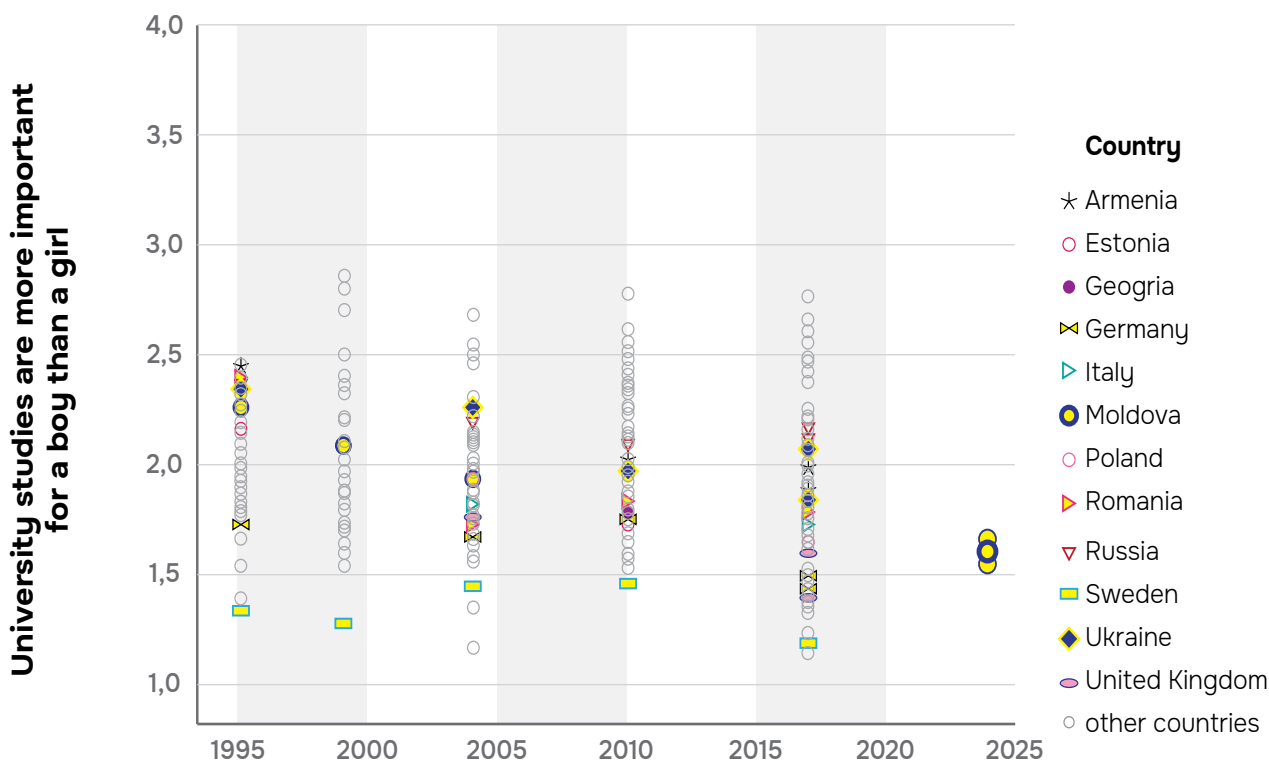


Sources: EVS/WVS 1989–2019 and SEPA 2024. Each marker represents a country at a specific point in time on the horizontal axis. The chart includes 118 societies. For the 2024 data from the Republic of Moldova (top right), the 95% confidence interval is also indicated.

To construct a unified score³⁸ that ranks SEPA 2024 respondents based on their orientation toward gender equality, the five items from Figure 17 were used. Analysing the variation of this score and its association with other respondent characteristics revealed that:

- There is a **negative association with perceptions of societal quality**: those who are more critical of the quality of society tend to be more **supportive of gender equality**;
- Respondents who **speak Romanian or Russian at home** are more **oriented toward gender equality** compared to those who speak Moldovan;
- **Support for gender equality increases** with the **level of formal education**;
- **Support for gender equality is higher** among those who **use the internet**.

Figure 21. Dynamics of the indicator on women’s access to university education: 1990–2024



Sources: EVS/WVS 1989–2019 and SEPA 2024. Each data point represents a country at a specific point in time on the horizontal axis. The chart includes 118 societies. For the 2024 data from the Republic of Moldova (top right), the 95% confidence interval is also shown.

38 Factor analysis using maximum likelihood extraction was conducted, and the analysis was suitable for the data (KMO = .760, all communalities above 0.100, and explained variance at 37%). Additionally, the scree plot of factor loadings indicates the presence of a single factor.

7.2. Attitudes toward people with disabilities

People with mental disabilities

To assess respondents' attitudes toward people with mental disabilities, SEPA 2024 presented a list of 23 attributes. Respondents were asked to select up to three attributes that best reflect their perception of this social group.

Figure 22 illustrates the responses, providing an overall picture of how the population perceives people with mental disabilities. Two attributes stand out: 'aggressive' and 'different'. The first reflects rejection, the second is neutral. These are followed by a positive attribute - 'kind-hearted'.

In the SEPA surveys conducted in 2015, 2019, and 2022, this question was open-ended. The closed list of attributes used in 2024 was developed based on the analysis of responses from previous surveys. The results will serve as a basis for comparisons in future SEPA studies.

In the SEPA surveys from 2015, 2019, and 2021, the most common attributes were also negative or neutral. The first positive attribute appeared much later compared to SEPA 2024. This could suggest a more positive trend in attitudes toward people with disabilities.

Figure 22. How people with mental disabilities are defined, SEPA 2024, Q-Sort Methodology



Survey participants answered the question: 'Which of the following attributes do you associate with a person with mental and intellectual disabilities?' They could select up to three options from a predefined list. 6% did not respond. In the chart, the size of each attribute is proportional to the percentage of respondents who selected it.

The closed list of attributes used in SEPA 2024 includes adjectives and adjectival phrases that reflect three types of positioning:

- **(N) NEGATIVE:** stupid, aggressive, abnormal, crazy, dangerous, illogical, lazy, unstable, uncontrollable;
- **(P) POSITIVE:** brave, respectful, normal, pleasant, innocent, unlucky, pitiful, kind-hearted;
- **(E) NEUTRAL:** poor, talkative, disabled, unemployed, discriminated against, different.

The list of ‘positive’ attributes also includes terms that express compassion or empathy toward the assessed social group.

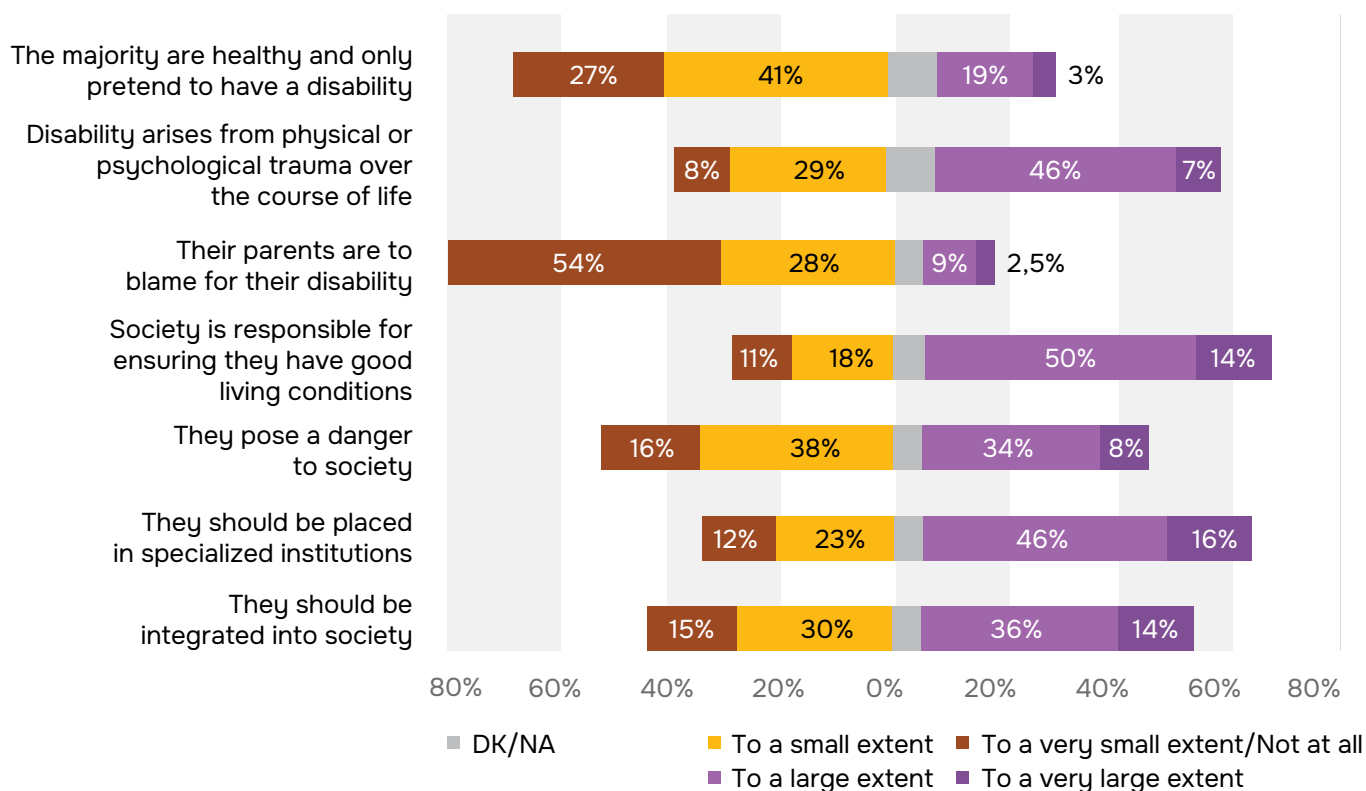
A positioning score for attitudes toward people with mental disabilities was calculated as the difference between positive and negative attributes (P-N), divided by the total number of options selected (P+N+E). The index ranges from -1 (total rejection) to +1 (completely favourable attitude). The average score is -0.04, which is significantly lower than 0 (the theoretical midpoint of the scale). This indicates that society’s overall attitude toward people with mental disabilities is neutral, with a slight leaning toward the negative.

The multivariate³⁹ analysis highlights few significant associations:

- **The preference for positive attributes over negative ones increases with higher levels of education and age;**
- **Ethnic Ukrainians are more favourable toward people with mental disabilities compared to ethnic Moldovans;**
- **In rural areas, the selected attributes are more favourable.**

To evaluate public opinions on policies for people with disabilities, the 2024 SEPA replaced the semantic differential method used in the 2021 SEPA with a series of seven items, shown in Figure 23. Similar to the findings in 2019, the results reflect a traditionalist perspective on intervention methods. People have mixed opinions about integrating this group into society. There is no clear agreement on whether they are seen as a danger. However, most agree that society has a responsibility to support them and believe that most people do not pretend to have a disability.

Figure 23. Opinions on the integration of people with mental and intellectual disabilities, SEPA 2024 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about people with mental and intellectual disabilities?



39 A multilevel regression analysis was conducted, similar to the models used in previous sections.

■ People with physical disabilities

The group of people with physical disabilities was analysed in a similar way to the group of people with mental disabilities. First, the overall attitude toward this group was identified (Figure 24), followed by an analysis of attitudes regarding intervention methods (Figure 25). The list of attributes provided to respondents was identical. However, the results primarily highlight neutral or positive attributes, with negative ones being mentioned very rarely. In fact, negative attributes are mentioned so infrequently compared to positive or neutral ones that they are nearly indistinguishable in Figure 24.

Figure 24. Consensual definition of people with physical disabilities: SEPA 2024, Q-Sort Methodology



Survey participants answered the question: 'Which of the following attributes do you associate with a 'person with physical disabilities'?' They could select up to three options from a predefined list. 6% did not respond. In the chart, the size of each attribute reflects the percentage of respondents who selected it.

By calculating the positioning indicator, as in the previous section, an average score of 0.26 was obtained (on a scale from -1 to +1). This score is significantly higher than zero and much higher than the score for the group of people with mental disabilities.

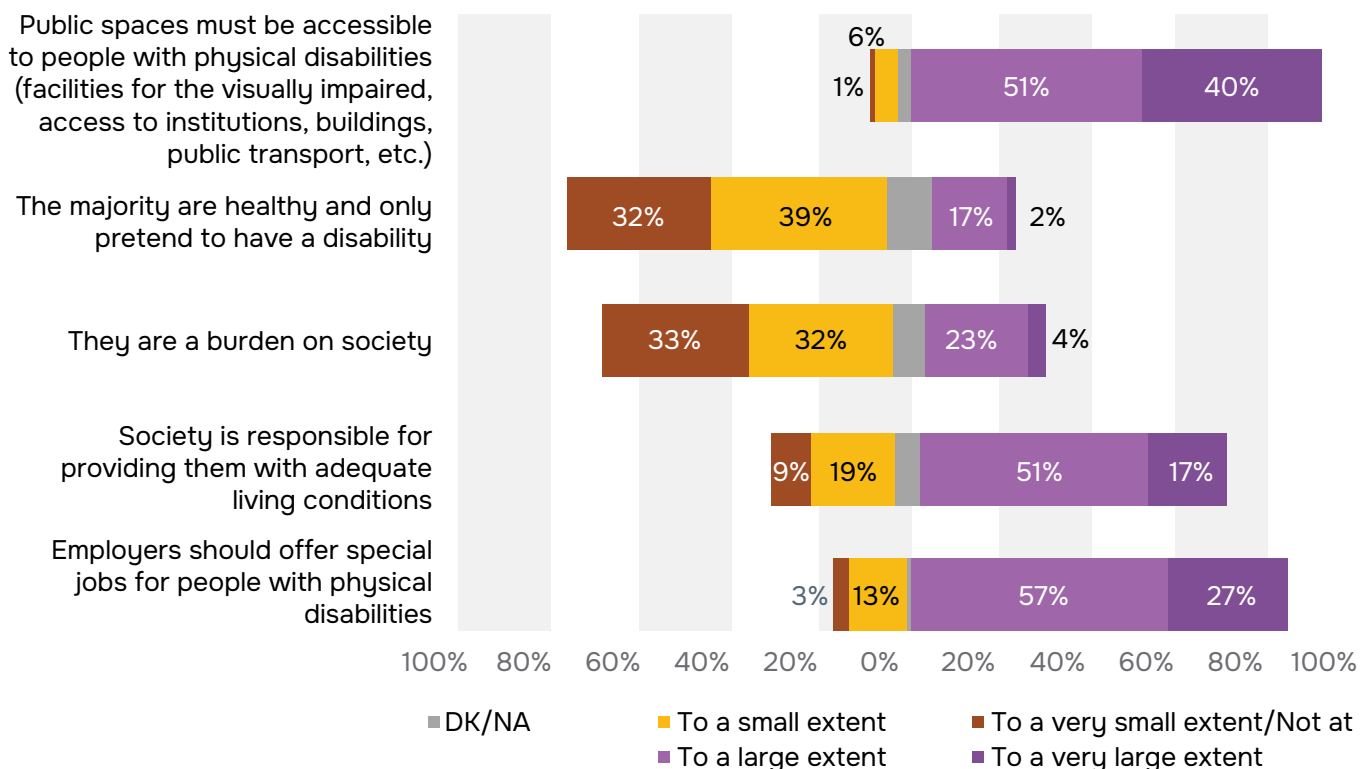
The multivariate analysis shows that:

- **Pro-European** views are associated with a more favourable score for attributes assigned to people with **physical disabilities**;
- **Russian speakers** are more likely than Moldovan speakers to use **favourable descriptors for this group**;
- People from the **North region** are more **supportive of individuals with physical disabilities** compared to those from the Central region.

Respondents showed general agreement that society has a responsibility to support this disadvantaged group, though not strongly. Most believe that people with physical disabilities do not fake their condition, have the right to access public spaces, and should be offered special jobs by employers. However, they are still seen as somewhat of a burden on society.

These results are similar to those from SEPA 2021, showing stable opinions over time.

Figure 25. Opinions on the integration of people with physical disabilities, SEPA 2024 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about people with physical disabilities?



All focus group participants placed people with physical disabilities in the ‘normal’ category. Whether from birth or acquired later, they agreed that having a disability is not the person’s fault. Participants also expressed compassion, recognizing that anyone could end up in a similar situation. Overall, they showed empathy and care for this group. However, one participant from the Russian-speaking group mentioned feeling uncomfortable around people with disabilities on public transport, disliking certain behaviours, and avoiding interaction with them.

While some people may discriminate against or not accept individuals with disabilities, participants agreed this is not typical for society. They felt it is ‘abnormal’ when the state fails to provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Some Russian-speaking participants believed that individuals with severe disabilities, especially those who lack full mental abilities, cannot be fully considered ‘normal’. They suggested that certain rights, like voting or making decisions, might need to be limited for these individuals.

They are normal people, a normal group, they didn’t bring this upon themselves. I mean, they are aware, and so are we, of their disability. It’s nothing abnormal! God made them this way! He/she is a person with the same rights as me. They are the same as anyone else.

[M2, general public]

Disability is normality, as strange as it might sound.

[M2, people with disabilities]

Empathy, but it depends on how much this case affects you personally. If we hear shouting or see frustration, it's very hard to handle, even for those with physical disabilities. Sometimes, I lose patience too; on the trolleybus, it can cause discomfort.

[M2, people discriminated against based on language spoken]

From a physiological perspective, it is not the norm, but it is from a social perspective. These people need to be socially integrated. Today, many children are born with autism or personality disorders, and these can vary in severity. The issue is that society is not ready for them yet. Working with such children is very expensive—6,000 lei. It's not normal for it to cost so much, but it is normal that these children exist.

[F4, Ukrainian refugees]

At the end of the discussions, participants from all groups expressed their hope for an educated society where discrimination has no place. Although they acknowledged that this is a challenging and time-consuming process, they remain hopeful and choose to start the change with themselves and their families. **Additionally, the participants proposed several solutions and recommendations to help reduce discrimination:**

- **Investments in education** – Updating school curriculums and introducing subjects that focus on developing tolerance and reducing discrimination, starting from kindergartens and continuing through gymnasiums, high schools, and universities;
- **Organizing awareness-raising events** (seminars, training sessions) – Educating parents and grandparents so they can pass on knowledge to children and apply it, raising new generations in a more tolerant, non-discriminatory manner;
- **Improving the economic situation of citizens** – When people are satisfied, they are less likely to judge, discuss, or discriminate against others; everything starts with envy and struggle;
- **Promoting examples of success** – Showing the achievements of various minority or discriminated groups to demonstrate that they, too, can be role models for society

I believe every mother should teach her child at home about the good deeds they should do and the bad ones they should not do.

[F4, general public]

I also believe that promoting more success stories would help. If we highlight people with disabilities who have achieved great things—becoming counselors, mayors, or local leaders—and share success stories from various socially vulnerable groups, it will certainly have a positive impact. People will start to see that these individuals are just as valuable as anyone else. Given opportunities, they can improve not only their own lives but also the lives of others.

[F3, people with disabilities]

Poverty should be eliminated, and people should have better incomes. When the quality of life gets better, then there's a different way of looking at things. You're no longer just thinking about what you'll eat today or how you'll survive—you start thinking about your standard of living and about others, about how to create equal opportunities for everyone. That shift makes a difference.

[F1, people with disabilities]

■ Social integration

The analysis of item modules on potential measures for people with mental and physical disabilities revealed a predominantly positive attitude toward those with physical disabilities, while attitudes toward those with mental disabilities are generally more negative.

The same trend is observed when considering aspects such as education and family life (Table 10). Policies or programs for people with physical disabilities are more widely accepted than those for people with mental disabilities.

Table 11. Integration of people with disabilities into the educational system and the possibility of starting a family

	Statement 1	Mean and 95% confidence interval			Statement 2	Median
Children with physical disabilities should be educated...	In schools separate from those without disabilities	5,5	5,8	6,0	In regular schools	6
Children with intellectual and mental disabilities should be educated...		3,4	3,6	3,8		1
People with physical disabilities...	They can't start a family	7,9	8,0	8,2	They can start a family	10
People with intellectual and mental disabilities...		4,4	4,6	4,8		4

7.3. LGBTQ+

General positioning

For LGBTQ+ individuals, the SEPA surveys from 2015, 2019, and 2021 revealed consistent attitudes of rejection. The same trend is observed in the SEPA 2024. The list of attributes is similar to that used for people with disabilities but does not completely overlap:

- **(P) POSITIVE:** kind at heart, like everyone else, brave, intelligent, normal, pleasant, respectful, traumatized;
- **(N) NEGATIVE:** aggressive, abnormal, deranged, debauched, disgusting, lazy, crazy, stupid, dangerous, debauched, opportunist, evil;
- **(E) NEUTRAL:** sick, different, discriminated against, misunderstood, pitiful, talkative.

Figure 26. Attributes associated with LGBTQ+, SEPA 2024, Q-Sort methodology



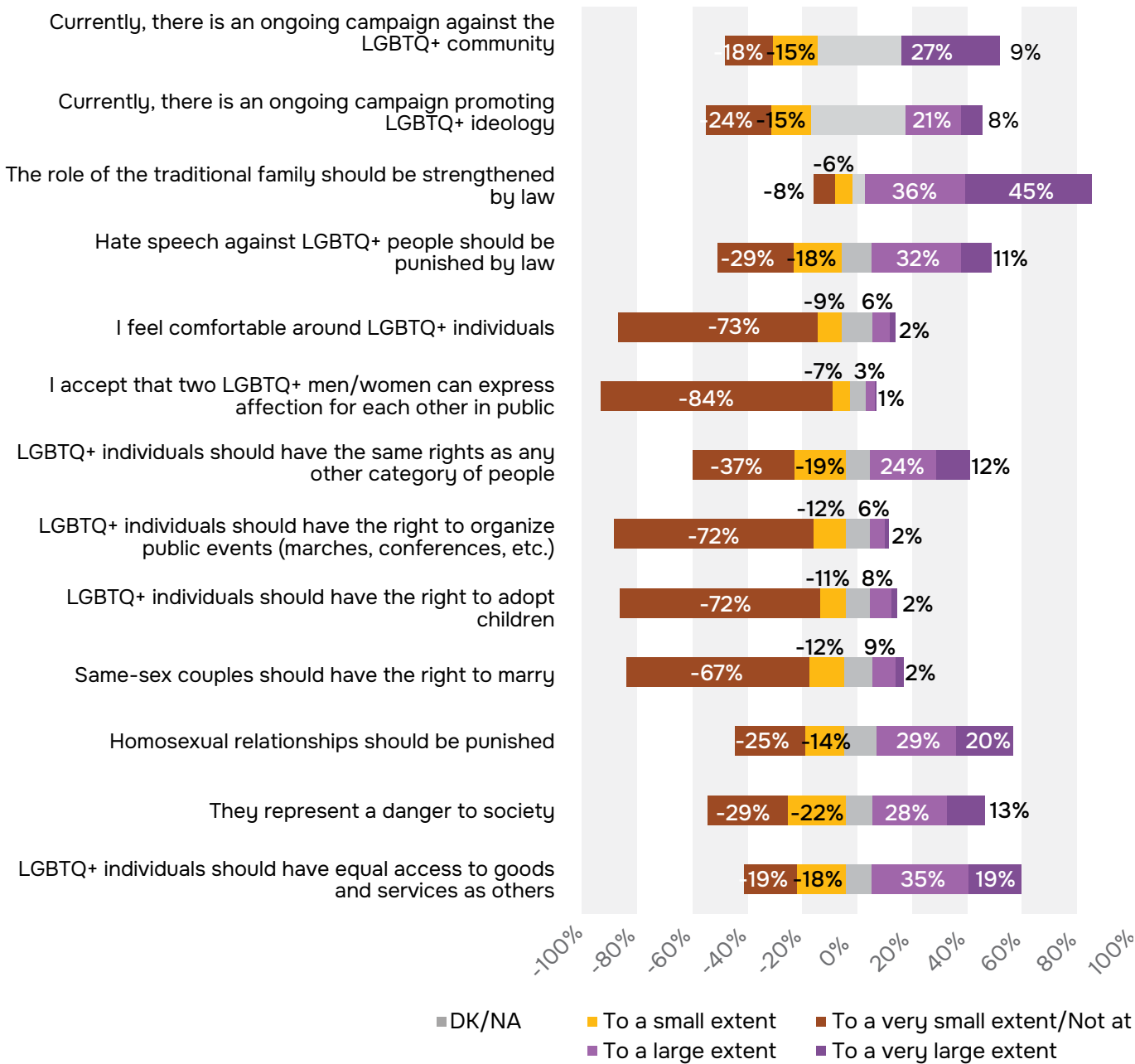
Survey participants were asked: 'Which of the following attributes do you associate with LGBTQ+ individuals?' They could select up to three options from a predefined list. 11% did not respond. In the chart, the size of each attribute reflects the percentage of respondents who selected it.

One in nine survey participants (11%) did not respond to the question about attributes associated with LGBTQ+ people. Among those who did answer, negative and neutral attributes dominated (Figure 27), resulting in an average positioning indicator of -0.34. This indicates a strong tendency toward negative perceptions, rejection, and non-acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals.

The multivariate analysis of this score shows that:

- Those with a **more optimistic view of society's quality** tend to have **more positive attitudes toward LGBTQ+** individuals;
- **Women** are **more accepting of LGBTQ+** individuals than men;
- **Acceptance increases** in **larger households**;
- People who **speak Russian or Bulgarian at home** are **less negative** than those who speak Moldovan;
- **Internet usage** increases the level of acceptance;
- **Residents of Chisinau** are more likely to have positive views of LGBTQ+ individuals compared to those from the North region;
- **People in rural areas** are less harsh in the attributes they associate with LGBTQ+ individuals.

Figure 27. Attitudes toward LGBTQ+ issues, SEPA 2024 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about LGBTQ+ individuals (lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, etc.)?



The results in Figure 27 highlight the same widespread rejection of LGBTQ+ individuals as observed in the 2019 SEPA, reflected in the attributes respondents associated with LGBTQ+ people. Specifically, 54% would restrict their access to goods and services, 41% view them as a danger to society, 49% believe they should be punished, 79% say they should not have the right to marry, 83% think they should not have the right to adopt children, and 84% believe they should not have the right to organize public events. Despite this, there is no majority consensus indicating that current campaigns either promote or condemn LGBTQ+ people.

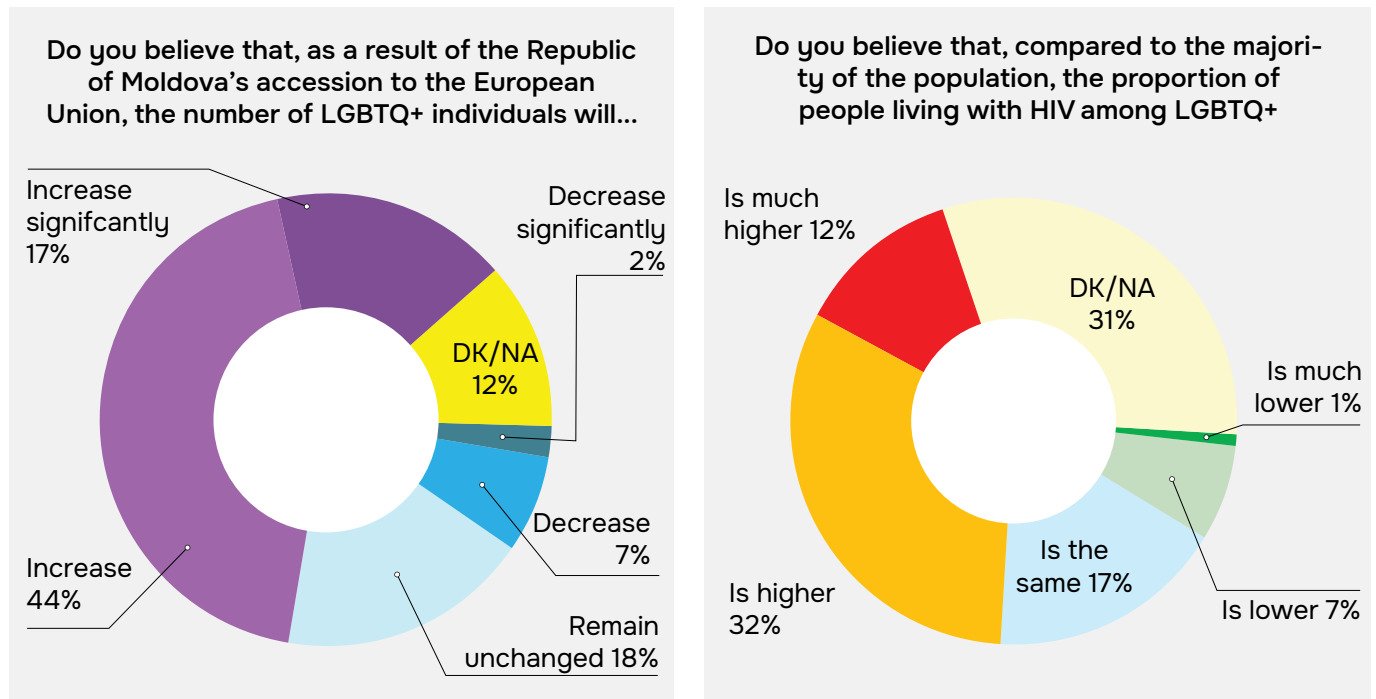
When looking only at questions directly related to attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people—excluding those about the traditional family, LGBTQ+ discourse, or campaigns—a positive score for LGBTQ+ attitudes is found. This score strongly aligns ($r=0.54$) with the results from the adjective-based analysis, confirming the earlier findings.

Potential topics related to LGBTQ+ individuals (SEPA 2024)

In previous years, discussions about LGBTQ+ individuals were often accompanied by claims that the number of LGBTQ+ people would increase with Moldova's EU accession and that the LGBTQ+ population had a higher incidence of HIV.

In the SEPA 2024 survey, 17% of respondents believe the LGBTQ+ population will increase significantly as a result of the country's EU accession, 44% believe it will increase, 18% think the proportion will remain unchanged, 7% believe it will decrease, 2% think it will decrease significantly, and 12% either avoided answering or did not know how to respond.

Figure 28. Potential issues related to LGBTQ+ individuals, SEPA 2024

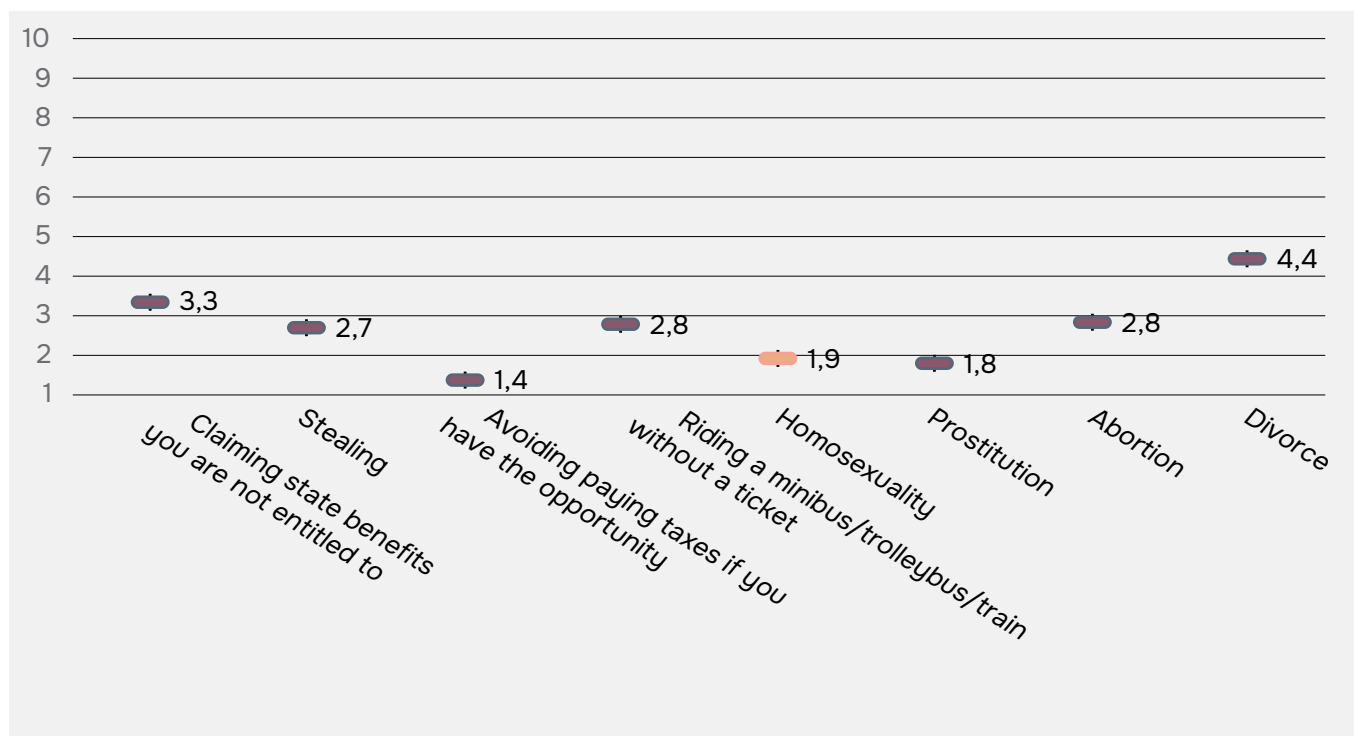


A third of the population does not know whether HIV incidence is higher or lower among LGBTQ+ individuals. However, 44% are convinced that the incidence is higher, 17% believe it is the same, and 8% think it is lower.

Tolerance Towards LGBTQ+

To compare LGBTQ+ acceptance with other familiar topics, questions from the EVS questionnaires were used. Respondents were asked how justified they think certain actions are (Figure 29). These included clear violations of rules (e.g., stealing), actions often tolerated (e.g., riding without a ticket, tax evasion), and common societal issues (e.g., abortion, prostitution, divorce). The term 'homosexuality' was used for LGBTQ+ attitudes to allow international comparisons (Table 12).

Figure 29. Degree of acceptance of various phenomena, including homosexuality, SEPA 2024



Source: SEPA 2024. The question was: ‘For each of the following statements, please rate on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means they are never justified, and 10 means they are always justified’. The chart shows the averages (thick horizontal line) and the 95% confidence intervals (thin vertical line).

Most respondents believe that ‘stealing’ is not justified. ‘Homosexuality’ and ‘prostitution’ are almost equally rejected, with much higher rejection rates compared to other issues. In Moldova, homosexuality is one of the most strongly rejected behaviours.

Table 12 shows how acceptance of homosexuality in Moldova compares to other countries over time. The data reveals that acceptance is very low and has recently decreased further, now being similar to levels in some Muslim and African countries.

Table 12. Acceptance of homosexuality in the Republic of Moldova and worldwide: 1989–2024

Source	EVS/WVS							SEPA
Year	1981-1984	1989-1993	1994-1998	1999-2004	2005-2010	2010-2014	2017-2022	2024
Albania			1,8	1,5	2,1		2,0	
Algeria				1,3		2,2		
Andorra					8,2		8,0	
Argentina	2,3	3,0	4,5	4,3	5,3	5,6	5,6	
Armenia			2,0		1,2	1,1	1,4	
Australia	3,8		4,6		5,6	6,9	7,4	
Austria		3,3		5,4	5,3		7,1	
Azerbaijan			1,4			1,2	1,3	
Bangladesh				1,1			1,7	
Belarus		1,9	2,2	2,9	2,6	2,4	2,5	
Belgium	3,0	3,9		5,4	5,8			

Source	EVS/WVS							SEPA
Year	1981-1984	1989-1993	1994-1998	1999-2004	2005-2010	2010-2014	2017-2022	2024
Bolivia							3,3	
Bosnia and Herzegovina			1,9	2,0	1,7		1,8	
Brazil		2,4	3,2		4,2	4,6	5,0	
Bulgaria		1,8	3,3	2,6	3,3		2,5	
Burkina Faso					1,8			
Canada	3,1	4,1		5,4	5,7		7,7	
Chile		1,8	3,3	4,0	4,9	5,7	5,0	
China		1,2	1,4	1,1	1,6	2,2	2,3	
Colombia			2,7		3,7	3,4	4,1	
Croatia			4,0	2,4	2,4		3,3	
Cyprus					3,2	4,0	3,9	
Czech Republic		4,4	6,9	5,5	5,0		6,5	
Denmark	5,2	4,7		6,6	7,3		8,8	
Dominican Republic			3,3					
Ecuador						2,9	3,7	
Egypt				1,0				
El Salvador			2,0					
Estonia		2,0	2,4	3,0	2,4	3,2	3,8	
Ethiopia					1,5		1,6	
Finland	3,4	4,4	4,5	4,9	6,3		7,3	
France	3,2	3,9		5,3	6,0		6,8	
Georgia			1,6		1,1	1,2	1,4	
Germany	3,5	4,3	6,5	5,7	6,1	5,9	7,7	
Ghana					1,8	1,4		
Greece				4,9	3,9		4,7	
Guatemala					3,1		3,7	
Haiti						3,4		
Hong Kong SAR					3,6	4,2	4,9	
Hungary	1,4	2,7	3,5	1,4	3,6		3,8	
Iceland	3,3	5,4		7,2	8,3		9,0	
India		1,2	1,7	3,1	3,0	1,6		
Indonesia				1,1	1,3		1,6	
Iran				1,3	1,5		1,6	
Iraq						1,7	2,3	
Ireland	2,7	3,1		4,3	5,2			
Israel				4,9				
Italy	2,5	3,6		4,8	3,3		6,1	
Japan	2,5	2,4	3,5	4,4	4,8	5,1	6,7	
Jordan				1,1	1,0	1,3	1,3	
Kazakhstan						2,2	2,2	
Kenya							3,0	

Source	EVS/WVS							SEPA
Year	1981-1984	1989-1993	1994-1998	1999-2004	2005-2010	2010-2014	2017-2022	2024
Kosovo					1,3			
Kuwait								
Kyrgyzstan				1,8		1,9	1,5	
Latvia		1,8	2,9	1,9	2,4		3,3	
Lebanon						3,0	2,3	
Libya						1,9	1,1	
Lithuania		1,4	1,9	1,9	2,0		2,8	
Luxembourg				5,9	6,3			
Macau SAR							5,3	
Malaysia					3,0	2,4	3,6	
Maldives							1,3	
Mali					2,9			
Malta		1,7		2,6	4,1			
United Kingdom	3,4	3,5	5,2	4,9	5,6		7,6	
Mexico	2,3	2,9	2,9	3,6	4,5	4,2	4,4	
Mongolia							3,7	
Montenegro			2,0	1,5	1,7		1,8	
Marrocco						1,3	2,8	
Myanmar							1,7	
The Netherlands	5,6	7,2		7,8	7,5	7,9	8,8	
New Zealand			4,7		5,4	5,9	7,3	
Nicaragua							3,3	
Nigeria		1,8	1,6	1,5		1,9	1,5	
North Macedonia			1,7	1,9	2,0		2,2	
Northern Cyprus					2,1			
Northern Ireland	2,0	2,4		4,0	4,4		6,8	
Norway	3,6	4,1	5,7		7,4		8,4	
Pakistan				1,1		1,5	1,6	
Palestine						1,5		
Peru			3,4	2,6		3,7	2,8	
Philippines			3,8	3,9		4,5	4,5	
Poland		1,8	2,8	2,9	2,9	3,6	4,0	
Portugal		2,3		3,2	4,3		4,8	
Puerto Rico			2,8	3,5			5,6	
Qatar						1,3		
Republic of Moldova			1,9	2,3	2,0			1,7
Romania		1,5	2,3	1,9	2,1	2,3	2,2	
Russia		1,4	1,8	2,2	2,3	2,5	2,5	
Rwanda					1,5	1,5		
Saudi Arabia				1,4				
Serbia			2,3	2,0	3,0		2,8	
Singapore				2,6		3,5	3,5	

Source	EVS/WVS							SEPA
Year	1981-1984	1989-1993	1994-1998	1999-2004	2005-2010	2010-2014	2017-2022	2024
Slovakia		3,3	5,3	4,9	5,1		5,1	
Slovenia		3,1	3,8	4,6	4,6	5,2	5,5	
South Africa	2,3	2,3	2,6	3,2	3,0	4,2		
South Korea	2,2	1,6	2,1	2,8	2,8	3,3	3,2	
Spain	2,8	3,8	5,5	5,8	6,3	7,1	7,0	
Sweden	4,4	4,5	7,0	7,7	8,1	8,2	8,7	
Switzerland		4,2	6,5		6,8		7,7	
Taiwan ROC			2,1		3,8	4,7	4,4	
Tajikistan								
Tanzania				1,2				
Thailand					3,1	2,9	4,3	
Trinidad and Tobago					1,9	1,7		
Tunisia						1,1	1,4	
Turkey		1,6		1,6	1,6	1,7	2,1	
Uganda				1,2				
Ukraine			2,0	2,3	2,0	2,5	2,6	
United States of America	2,4	3,1	3,7	4,8	4,6	5,4	6,2	
Uruguay			4,0		5,7	6,3	6,6	
Uzbekistan						1,6		
Venezuela			2,0	2,4			4,2	
Vietnam				1,7	1,9		5,6	
Yemen						1,5		
Zambia					2,6			
Zimbabwe				1,1		1,8	1,7	

The topic of LGBTQ+ people sparked heated discussions during the focus groups. Most participants placed LGBTQ+ people at the far end of the axis, labelling them as ‘abnormal’, expressing feelings of rejection toward this group. Only a few placed the LGBTQ+ group in the middle. Several participants mentioned that LGBTQ+ people create discomfort for others when organizing rallies and parades, considering them extravagant and disturbing.

Some participants believed that LGBTQ+ people should be free to live as they wish in their private lives, but they should not draw attention to themselves or try to set an example for others. Others stated that they would not oppose laws that grant sexual minorities equal rights, acknowledging that they are taxpayers like other citizens. However, they felt that such laws should not be discussed too openly to avoid stirring up the rest of the citizens. For example, participants expressed that they would not want LGBTQ+ individuals to serve as examples for children.

Several participants felt that LGBTQ+ people are normal if they are born that way. However, they did not consider it normal, as LGBTQ+ individuals want to get married, adopt children, or dress in clothes of the opposite gender, especially when interacting with children.

Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with how LGBTQ+ people dress and behave in ways that they perceive as vulgar or attention-seeking. Others noted that this behaviour is mainly seen during demonstrations where sexual minorities demand equal rights.

The general view about the LGBTQ+ group is that these individuals have every right to live their lives as they choose, without interference from others. However, they should not spread the practices or model of their community to the broader society.

Some participants with disabilities noted that, due to mass media coverage of this group and the promotion of LGBTQ+ rights worldwide, traditionalists are starting to feel uncomfortable and even discriminated against. 'If I declare myself as a man, I risk discriminating against someone who doesn't feel like a 'man'. There is a perception that there is excessiveness in this regard.

LGBT, who exactly do you mean? If it's a person dressing in the opposite gender's clothes, then more to the right, in the 'abnormal' category.

[M2, Ukrainian refugees]

As for LGBT, if they go to protests, they say 'we are like this, we are the norm'! Is that how they position themselves? Personally, for me, I consider it not to be the norm. The norm is a woman and a man.

[F3, people discriminated against based on language spoken]

I will put it this this: we are not interested in anything related to them, what they do, what laws are made for them, as long as it doesn't affect us. That's generally how it is. We don't want things to be imposed on us that would cause us discomfort.

[F5, general public]

Basically, my colleague started saying exactly what I wanted to say. The idea is: as long as they respect our boundaries and don't overstep, don't interfere with the education we've had for thousands of years, and don't create any discomfort for us... We're not interested in those who have a different orientation, or what they do in their own homes.

[F5, general public]

I don't like certain exaggerations happening in some countries, where these changes have been adopted earlier. People have been given the right to express themselves freely, regardless of sexual orientation. For example, if I declare myself as a man, I risk discriminating against someone who doesn't feel like a man. This idea of choosing your gender—male, female, or another option, and a few other variations—sometimes leads to situations in certain countries where you risk no longer feeling comfortable. If you declare yourself a certain gender or are a woman-man, in some way, you indirectly discriminate against others.

[M3, people with disabilities]

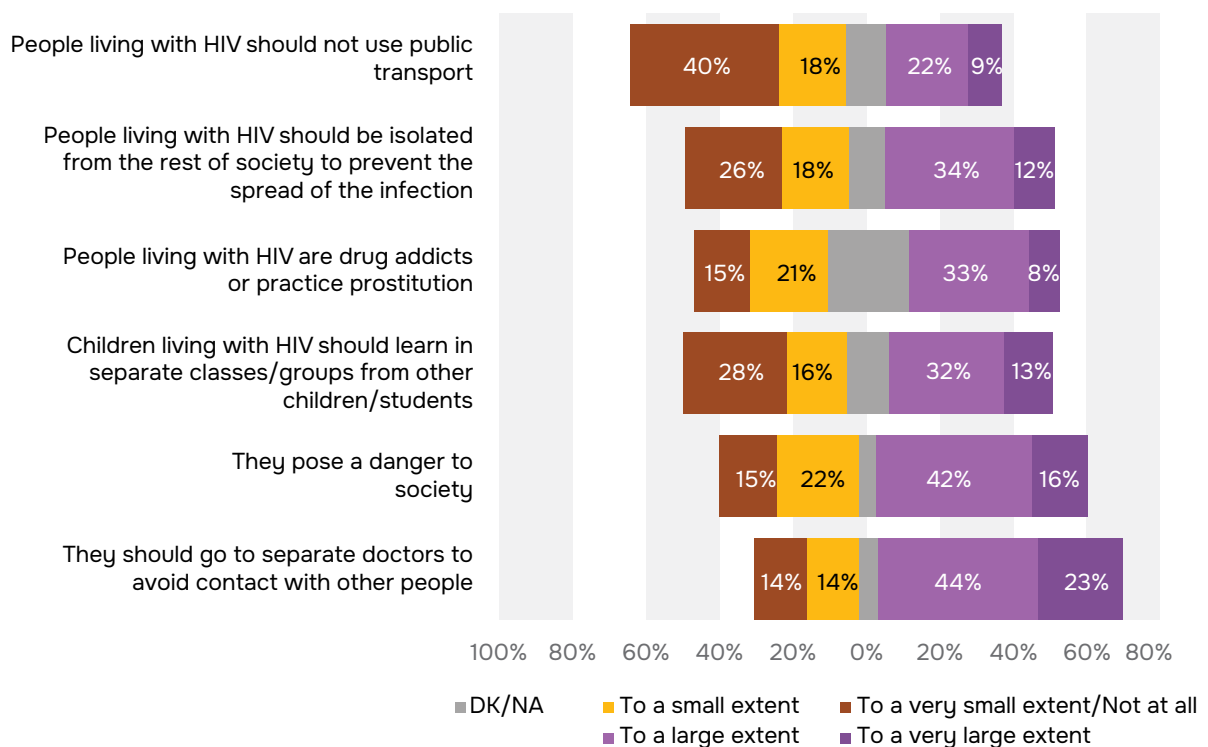
7.4. People Living with HIV

Attitudes towards people living with HIV remain mixed, similar to 2021. Compared to the 2021 SEPA, the reformulated questions reveal the fears of the population. The statements about the risk of infection are likely what lead the majority to believe that these individuals should be isolated from society.

Regarding access to services, two-thirds (67%) think that people living with HIV should see separate doctors, and just over half (58%) view them as a danger to society. However, more than half (58%) believe that people living with HIV could use public transport (though it's possible that the negative phrasing of the question might distort this answer, and in reality, the majority might be against this).

Opinions are also divided regarding school access for children living with HIV, with 45% in favour of school segregation and 52% supporting attending the same schools. There is also debate about criminalizing people with HIV who are prostitutes or drug addicts. A notable percentage of undecided individuals is observed (22% on the last question, 10-11% on the other three), indicating a clear need for more information on this topic.

Figure 30. Attitudes toward people living with HIV, SEPA 2024 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about people living with HIV?



Respondents were asked to rate, on a 10-point scale, whether ‘The state should not provide medical assistance to people living with HIV’ (value 1) or ‘People living with HIV should receive proper medical care from the state’ (value 10). The majority supported providing medical assistance to people living with HIV, with the average score being quite high: 8.5.

The longitudinal perspective was already discussed in Chapter 6.3 (Social Distance Scale), where Table 10 shows how the acceptance of people living with HIV as neighbours has fluctuated over the last three decades, ranging from 15% to 35%, without a clear pattern. In the 2024 SEPA, the acceptance rate is only 26%. This means that three-quarters of the population do not want HIV-positive people as neighbours. When compared to other countries worldwide, the Republic of Moldova is ranked among the least tolerant societies in this regard.

Using the items from Figure 30, an acceptance indicator for people living with HIV⁴⁰. **The analysis of the variation in this indicator⁴¹ reveals several significant associations:**

- **Women** are more likely to **accept people living with HIV** than men;
- **Acceptance increases** among those who use the **internet more frequently**;
- **Bulgarian ethnic groups are more hesitant** to **accept HIV-positive people** compared to Romanians and Moldovans;
- **Romanian, Russian, and Ukrainian speakers** are more likely to **accept HIV-positive people** than those who speak Moldovan at home;
- **Acceptance of people living with HIV** decreases with age, particularly among those over 65;
- As **education levels increase, acceptance also increases.**

Most focus group participants considered people living with HIV to be 'normal'. Only a few participants in the Russian-speaking group placed this group in the middle, between 'normal' and 'abnormal'.

During the focus groups, some participants contradicted themselves about how people living with HIV got infected: whether it was due to their own actions or because of others. According to them, if the infection happened because of the person's own actions (like drug use or sexual intercourse with same-sex partners), they are viewed negatively, with contempt. If it happened due to others (like medical tests or interventions), they feel pity and compassion. For some participants, these two factors determine if someone living with HIV is considered normal or abnormal. If the person was infected by mistake, then why should they be blamed? But if it was due to reckless behaviour, like addiction, and they infected others, it is seen as unacceptable.

Some participants mentioned that most people don't know the details of this infection and form opinions based on incorrect information, without checking the facts. Others admitted that they, too, are part of this group. This is where fear, discrimination, and social rejection of people living with HIV come from

If he doesn't pose a danger, if he's a victim... He may have got a vaccine, had a tooth removed, and got infected. The person is not to blame! But those who live with reckless sexual behaviour...

[F1, older adults]

40 Exploratory factor analysis, using maximum likelihood extraction, showed a KMO of 0.847, with all communalities above 0.3. The total explained variance is 51%, and the scree plot indicates the presence of a single factor.

41 Multilevel regression, similar to the models used in the other sections of this report.

They are normal people. They simply have an infection that... if they can manage it, it's just like any other infection that any of us could have. Hepatitis B, C, a virus, or whatever. If you manage it correctly and don't intentionally try to infect someone, you are an absolutely normal person.

[M3, people with disabilities]

They say it's not dangerous, but somehow, I feel afraid to be around them.

[F4, people discriminated against based on language spoken]

There hasn't been much discussion in details about this disease, and probably for this reason, people are afraid. Here, in Chisinau, we have a day dedicated to the fight against HIV, but very little is communicated about it.

[F3, people discriminated against based on language spoken]

Again, it depends on where the disease came from. If it was from a blood transfusion, the person is not to blame. Or rape. But if it's an addict who, through his choices, ended up living this way, then why should it be considered normal?

[F1, Ukrainian refugees]

7.5. Ethnic and linguistic groups

Matrix of relationships between major ethnic groups

Using the data from the social distance scale (Chapter 6.3), we can create a matrix showing the proximity between ethnic groups. The first analysis looks at contact with other ethnic groups. Table 13 shows these figures, but they should be taken with caution because they are based on small sample sizes.

In general, the average number of contacts between ethnic groups is low. Contacts within the same ethnic group are also limited. The only exceptions are Bulgarians and Gagauz, who tend to form larger networks within their own groups.

Moldovans, however, do not mention having strong contacts with any other ethnic group.

Romanians tend to have contacts with Ukrainians and Russians (on average, 0.8 contacts with Ukrainians and 0.7 contacts with Russians), but Ukrainians and Russians report slightly less frequent contacts with Romanians (0.5 contacts each), even though these figures are close to the ones reported by Romanians.

Table 13. Social proximity matrix by ethnic groups

		Average number of types of contact with...				
		Romanians	Ukrainian	Russian	Gagauz	Bulgarians
Ethnicity	Moldovan	0,6	0,5	0,8	0,3	0,2
	Romanian	1,7	0,8	0,7	0,3	0,2
	Ukrainian	0,5	1,2	2,4	0,7	0,4
	Russian	0,5	1,8	1,6	0,5	0,3
	Gagauz	0,3	0,9	1,6	3,6	0,8
	Bulgarian	0,3	0,9	1,4	1,6	3,2

The maximum number of contact types is 4 (family, relatives, friends, acquaintances). The minimum number is 0.

The groups that are closest to each other are Ukrainians and Russians.

Gagauz and Bulgarians report interactions with Ukrainians, but especially with Russians. However, the reverse is not true: only Ukrainians report contacts with Gagauz, not with Bulgarians, and Russians do not report interactions with either of the two ethnic groups.

■ Roma people

Attitudes towards Roma people are common in analyses from Europe⁴². This ethnic group is often subject to discrimination and, as a result, draws attention.

Analysing the results of the social distance scale, as in the previous subchapter, it can be observed that only 20% of the sample report having contact with Roma people. The indicator described in Table 13, which examines relationships between groups, shows that no ethnic group interacts frequently with Roma people. For all groups included in the table, the affinity indicator for Roma people ranges between 0.2 and 0.4, which is close to no contact at all. With no doubt, the low share of Roma people in the total population of the Republic of Moldova may explain this lack of contact.

Similar to the case of other minority groups, respondents were asked to assign attributes they associate with Roma people from a predefined list, which included 13 negative, 12 positive, and 5 neutral attributes:

- **(N) NEGATIVE:** aggressive, abnormal, beggars, thieves, irresponsible, lazy, illogical, liars, dirty, uneducated, dangerous, opportunistic, stupid;
- **(P) POSITIVE:** adaptable, wealthy, kind-hearted, civilized, brave, hardworking, pleasant, hospitable, respectful, compassionate, talented, cheerful;
- **(E) NEUTRAL:** different, discriminated, normal, poor, talkative.

42 Kende et al., 2021; Kende, Hadarics, & Láštiová, 2017; Sam Nariman et al., 2020; Servidio, Musso, Bartolo, & Costabile, 2020; Visintin, Green, Pereira, & Miteva, 2017.

For the analysis, we followed the same approach as with people with disabilities or LGBTQ+ individuals. First, we examined the attributes most frequently associated with Roma people and then calculated a representation score for them. It is important to note that this score ranges from -1 to +1, with negative values indicating a predominance of negative attributes.

In the case of Roma people, the score is -0.23, similar to the score for LGBTQ+ individuals, reflecting the rejection of Roma people by the general population. Given that negative attributes dominate, the result is unsurprising: 40% of respondents identified the attribute 'beggars', 22% 'thieves', 18% 'liars', 13% 'aggressive', and another 13% 'lazy'. The list is rounded out by 'different' (27%), 'rich' (19%), and 'kind-hearted' (12%).

Figure 31. The consensual definition of Roma people, SEPA 2024, Q-Sort methodology



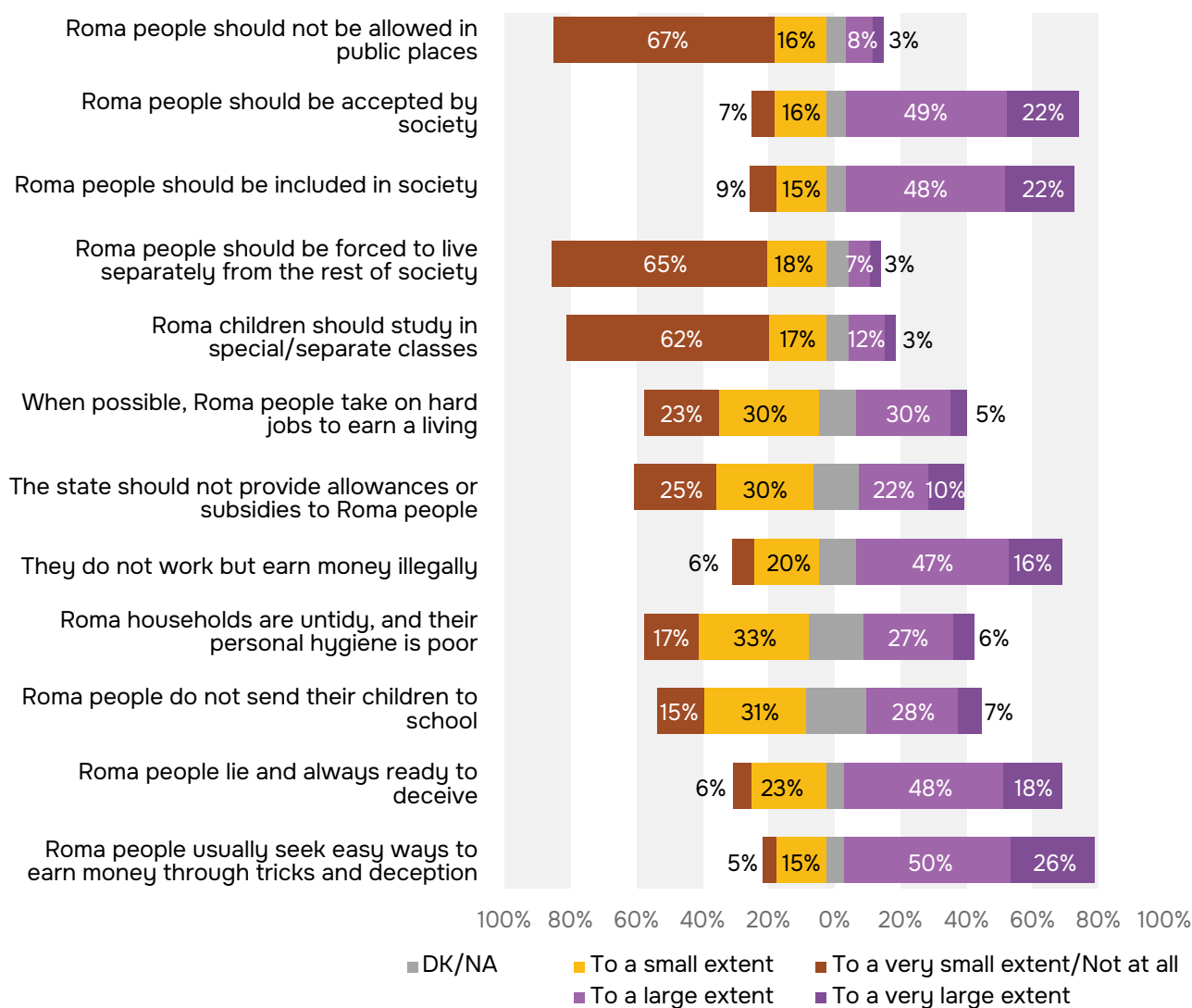
The survey participants responded to the question: 'Which of the following attributes do you associate with 'Roma people from the Republic of Moldova'?' They could select a maximum of three options from a predefined list. 4% did not respond. In the chart, the size of each attribute is proportional to the percentage of respondents who selected that attribute..

As in the previous sections, we analysed the differences between groups in attributing characteristics to Roma people. Several significant differences were identified:

- There is a slight positive association between **trust in people** and **positive attitudes towards Roma people** ($p < 0.10$);
- There is a (surprising) slight negative association between those who **support redistribution and their attitudes towards Roma people** ($p < 0.10$);
- **Gagauz speakers** are significantly more reluctant towards Roma people than those who speak Moldovan at home;
- Negative attitudes are stronger among those with **lower levels of education** (up to secondary school) and those with higher education (university graduates), while they are less pronounced among high school graduates.

The more detailed opinions about Roma in Figure 32 confirm the negative stereotype attributed to them: they are 'prone to cheat and steal'. Opinions on hygiene are divided. Ideas of segregation are rejected, while the implementation of social integration programmes is supported.

Figure 32. Attitudes towards Roma people, SEPA 2024 – To what extent do you agree with the following statements about people of Roma ethnicity?



Most participants in the group discussions described Roma people as ‘normal’. Only Russian speakers described them as ‘abnormal’. The majority agreed that Roma are just like other citizens—they are human. However, due to stereotypes, Roma are often seen as beggars, thieves, lazy, and dirty. Recently, participants noticed that more Roma families are enrolling their children in school, pursuing education, and seeking jobs. While most participants see Roma as normal, they acknowledge that stereotypes persist in society. Many people remain cautious, keep their distance, and label Roma based on these stereotypes.

Participants mentioned that Roma people are like everyone else, and some of them are educated, cultured, honest, sincere, hardworking, and Russian-speaking. Despite this, people still feel fear and distrust towards them. Many participants recalled hearing negative phrases about Roma in childhood, where they were portrayed as threats or accused of kidnapping. At the same time, due to Roma beggars and thefts committed by some individuals, people tend to generalise, which has led to social distancing from them.

The same person just like me!

[M1, general public]

I have a question for everyone. For example, I understand that Roma people are also human and have the same rights as everyone else, but I have a deep fear of them, I don't trust them, it's been like this since childhood. There are Roma people engaged in cultural activities, but when I see those walking on the street, I wouldn't leave my bag unattended—I'd be cautious. As people, they have rights, but personally, I don't trust them.

[M2, people discriminated against based on spoken language]

I agree. Since childhood, parents have warned about Roma people, saying things like, 'Don't go there, they'll kidnap you'. I understand that in society they can be like everyone else, but deep down, I still have certain fears.

[M1, people discriminated against based on spoken language]

Everyone is afraid of Roma people, even shopkeepers share this fear. They're afraid they will be lied to or cursed by them. But they brought this upon themselves. I've never seen a Roma person help anyone; they're all such... so no!

[F3, people discriminated against based on spoken language]

It's something usual, a minority, a nationality just like the Turks, Jews, Tatars, etc.

[F4, Ukrainian refugees]

People who do not speak the state language

People who do not speak the state language are described in mixed terms, without a strongly dominant characteristic (Table 14).

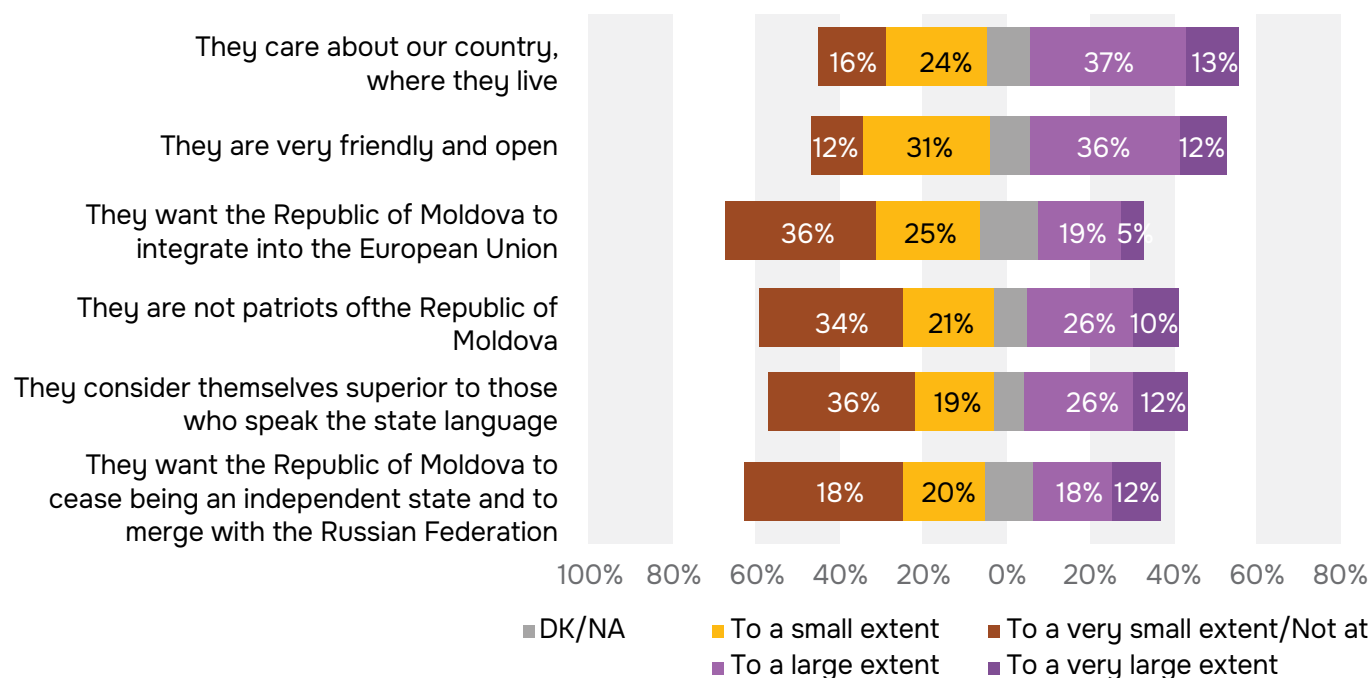
Table 14. Attributes associated with people who do not speak the state language, SEPA 2024, Q-Sort methodology

Attribute	Percentage
Ambitious	14%
Well-raised	16%
Indifferent/Apathetic	6%
Well-educated	11%
Selfish	15%
Indifferent/Cold	22%
Lazy	15%
Uneducated	12%
Disrespectful/They do not respect us	22%
Normal (ordinary people)	31%
Unwilling to learn the state language	41%
Proud/Arrogant	11%
Foreigners/Newcomers	9%

The survey participants answered the question: ‘Which of the following attributes do you associate with people who do not speak the state language of the Republic of Moldova?’ They could select 0, 1, 2, or up to a maximum of 3 responses.

The ANSWERS in Figure 33 reveal a variety of opinions, ranging from appreciation to rejection. The situation remains almost unchanged compared to the SEPA from 2021.

Figure 33. Opinions about people who do not speak the state language, SEPA 2024 – To what extent do you agree with the following statements about people who do not speak the state language of the Republic of Moldova?



Using the items in Figure 33, an attitude score was calculated for people who do not speak the state language. The score compares positive attributes (such as being friendly and caring for the country) with negative ones (such as not being patriotic, considering themselves superior, or supporting a fusion with Russia)⁴³. An analysis of the score revealed the following⁴⁴:

- **negative** labels for people who don't speak the state language are linked to a **pro-European stance**;
- **attitudes are more positive** among **people who now speak a different language at home than in childhood**;
- **negative attitudes are more common** among **those who speak Moldovan, Romanian, Bulgarian, or Gagauz**, compared to Russian speakers;
- **Romanian speakers are more critical** than Moldovan speakers;
- **negative attitudes increase with age** but are less common among high school graduates;
- people on the **left of the political spectrum** are more critical than those in the centre.

43 The item about the EU is not part of the same dimension, as shown by the exploratory factor analysis. After excluding this item, all communalities are above 0.2.

44 Multilevel regression, similar to those in the other chapters of this report.

Participants in the group discussions viewed people living in a country without knowing its official language as 'abnormal'. Not knowing the language is seen as a sign of disrespect toward the host country and its citizens. Some participants mentioned Moldovans working abroad as an example, highlighting that they learn the local language even if they don't live there permanently. Ukrainian refugees in the discussions stated that everyone has the right to speak their language at home or in their community. However, when dealing with state institutions, they must follow the rules and speak the state language. Additionally, they argued that you cannot claim to be a citizen of a country if you have lived there all your life without learning the state language.

Participants were bothered that they often have to switch to Russian when speaking with Russian speakers who have lived in the Republic of Moldova for a long time, instead of the other way around. Some believe that Russian speakers mock those who try to speak Romanian with them. Participants think that as long as society tolerates this behaviour, it will not disappear but will grow worse.

In this context, Ukrainian refugees who learn Romanian and make an effort to speak it were fully appreciated by the participants. The group of Russian speakers categorised this group of Ukrainian refugees as 'normal'. They believe everyone has the right to choose which language to speak, especially since, due to Moldova's history, most people understand and speak Russian. However, some Russian speakers feel discriminated against because institutions often provide documents only in Romanian.

But we try to speak and to explain things to them, even struggling in Russian or in English. They don't make any effort to learn our language.

[F5, older adults]

They even laugh at you, mock you.

[M5, older adults]

It's about the state, first and foremost, about the country. If I go to Italy, France, or anywhere else, I have to speak their language, even if I'm there for just two months for work. But they were born here, come on now! If you're born here – respect the country! Respect me, your fellow citizen. That's all.

[M2, general public]

My apologies, but do you understand that we are these people? It's me, it's you—people who don't speak the state language. How can we be placed below what's considered normal?

[F1, people discriminated against based on spoken language]

It's not okay. If you were born and live here, you are obligated to understand and speak the state language. If you speak Russian or another language at home, then in state institutions you are required to speak the state language. All documents are completed in the state language—that's the norm. It's the same in our country.

[M4, Ukrainian refugees]

If you live in this country, it's your choice whether or not you want to learn the language. However, I believe that people working in state institutions are obligated to know the state language. Forcing someone to learn it, though, doesn't seem right to me. I think people should want to do it themselves, to respect their country and their language. Because if you don't know the language, you marginalise yourself and end up living in a very narrow world.

[M2, Ukrainian refugees]

7.6. Attitudes towards former prisoners

The category of former prisoners sparked intense discussions among focus group participants. Some viewed them as ordinary people, just like everyone else, since they have served their sentence. Others, while acknowledging their rights and obligations as ordinary people, felt that former prisoners should still be approached with caution. There is a belief that someone who has done something wrong once, might repeat their actions. Several participants mentioned knowing former prisoners and even having friendly relationships with them. They described them as no different from their other friends and even noted their zest for life and desire to do good. Participants assumed this positive attitude comes from their unpleasant experiences in detention, which they do not wish to repeat.

However, participants with disabilities and those in the refugee group expressed fear and distrust towards former prisoners. This is largely influenced by media reports highlighting cases where former prisoners continue to break the law and commit crimes.

The majority of participants stated that their attitude towards former prisoners depends on the crimes committed. If someone was convicted for corruption (like taking bribes) or for minor thefts (such as stealing a chicken), they are generally accepted, and participants maintain a neutral attitude. However, those convicted of serious crimes, such as murder, rape, or other severe offences, are not accepted. Another factor influencing their attitude is whether former prisoners admit what they did, understand their mistakes, and show a willingness to make up for them.

They've served their sentence, but people still keep an eye on them.

[F3, general public]

It also depends on what they did in the past. Some were convicted for corruption or stealing a chicken or a pig. But there are others who committed violent and aggressive acts. Somehow, these people are, I don't know how to say it... At least for me, I am afraid of those who have a history of aggressive behaviour, especially if it caused someone physical harm.

[M3, people with disabilities]

Former prisoners are people who have already served their sentence and are citizens like everyone else—closer to being considered normal. There are those who commit certain actions intentionally and end up in prison for it, and others who did not act intentionally and want a social life afterwards. If someone understood their mistake and took responsibility for it,, they have the right to live a normal life.

[F4, Ukrainian refugees]

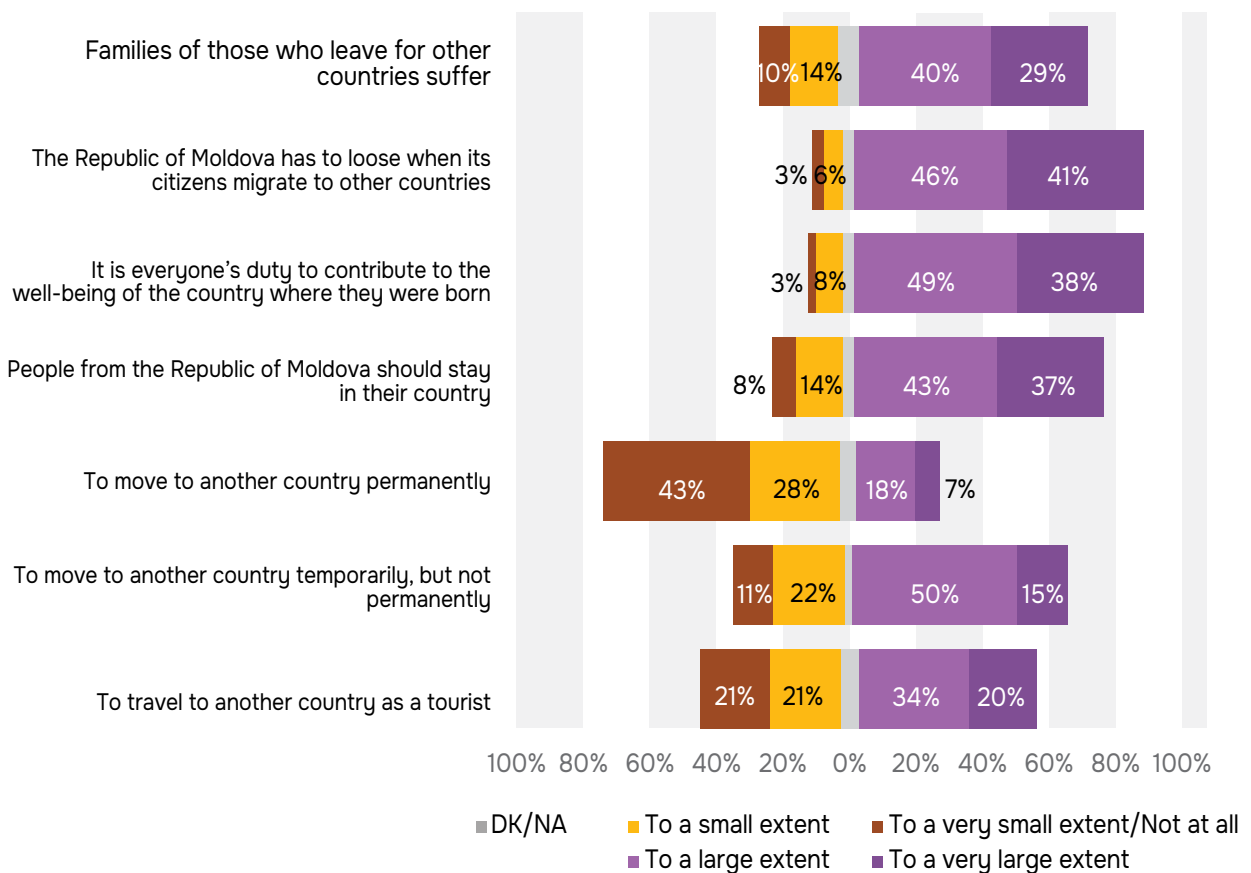
7.7. Attitudes towards migration and migrants

Attitudes towards emigration and emigrants

Attitudes towards emigrants and emigration are not widely studied globally but are very relevant for the Republic of Moldova. SEPA uses a set of questions developed by the Romanian team of EVS/WVS.

Figure 34 shows that most people have a negative view of permanent migration. Even tourism is questioned, with 54% accepting it and 42% rejecting it, not probably due to financial constraints. Temporary migration is more accepted, with 65% agreeing to leave the country temporarily, but this is mostly for economic reasons.

Figure 34. Attitudes towards emigration and emigrants, SEPA 2024 – Here are some opinions about moving to another country. Please tell us how justified you think it is...?



Equivalent data for Romania shows that SEPA 2024 respondents are more decisive in rejecting migration.

The analysis of data for the Republic of Moldova highlights two key factors explaining the results in Figure 34: one related to the consequences of migration and the other to the willingness to migrate⁴⁵. Analysis of the responses for the second factor⁴⁶ revealed that:

⁴⁵ The two factors, extracted using maximum likelihood with EQUAMQX rotation in the exploratory factor analysis, explain 41% of the total variance. KMO = 0.701, and all communalities are greater than 0.2.

⁴⁶ Multilevel regression, as in all other chapters.

- **pro-Europeans are more supportive of emigration;**
- **support for emigration decreases with age**, as older people are more opposed to any form of migration;
- **those who favour higher redistribution are less supportive of emigration.**

■ Attitudes towards immigration, immigrants, and refugees

Unlike attitudes towards emigration, attitudes towards immigration and immigrants are a highly studied topic globally, and particularly in Europe⁴⁷. SEPA 2024 adopted a set of items from the Eurobarometer, providing insights into Moldovans’ attitudes towards immigration.

Figure 35. Attitudes towards immigration, SEPA 2024 – Please think about people who want to come and live and/or work in our country, the Republic of Moldova. Based on where the migrants come from, would you say such immigration is more of a problem or an opportunity?

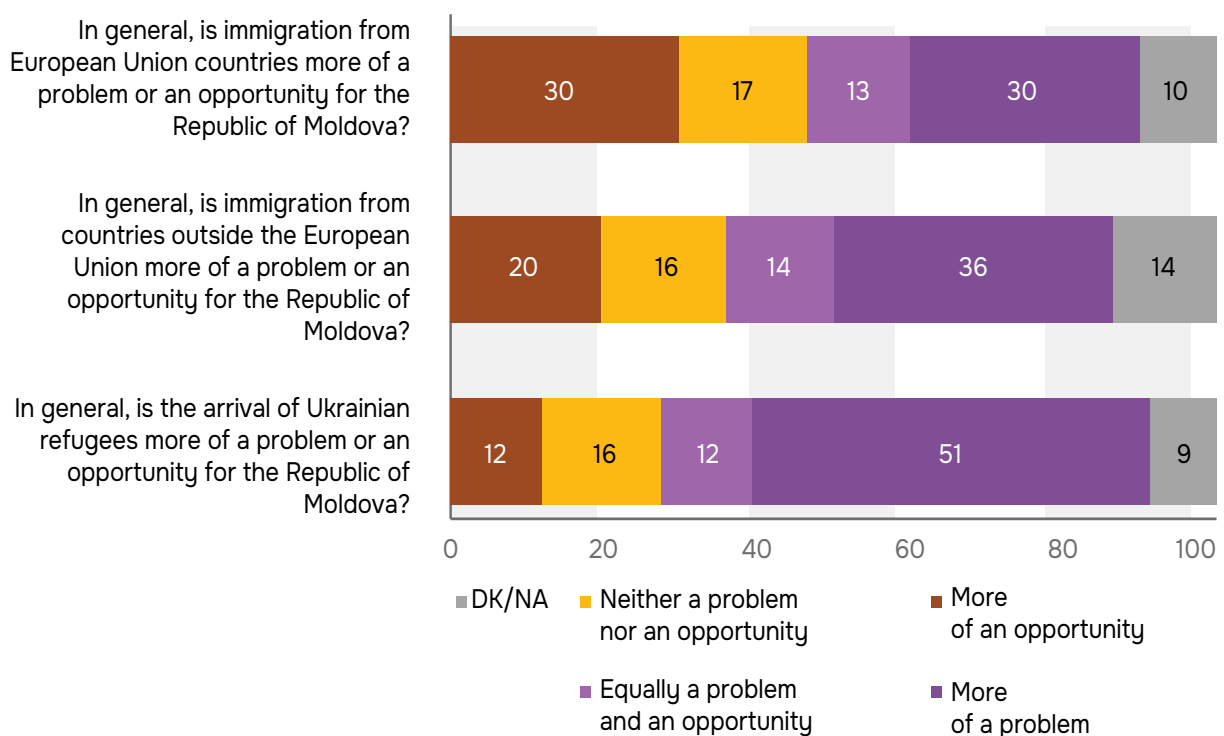
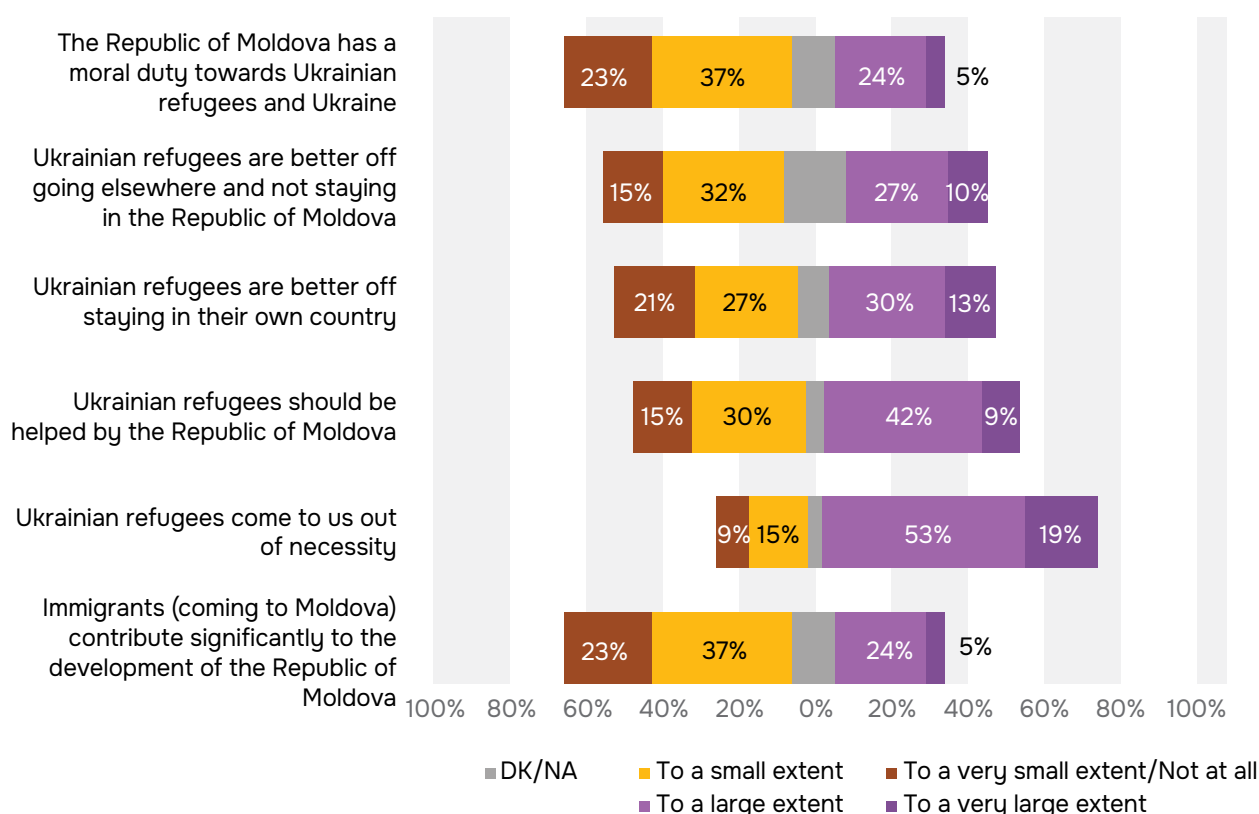


Figure 35 shows that immigration is mostly rejected, but opinions about immigration from the EU are mixed, with no clear agreement on whether it is good or bad.

Figure 36 analyses opinions about the role of immigrants in general, as well as attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees. It confirms a negative attitude towards immigrants and a reserved, mostly negative, attitude on accepting Ukrainian refugees.

47 Abdelaaty & Steele, 2022; Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010; De Coninck, 2020; Ferrin, Mancosu, & Cappiali, 2020; Fussell, 2014; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; O’rourke & Sinnott, 2006; Vogt Isaksen, 2019; Bogdan Voicu, Rusu, & Comşa, 2022.

Figure 36. The role of immigrants, SEPA 2024 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about people who want to come and live and/or work in the Republic of Moldova?



SEPA 2024 also asked respondents what they believe the Republic of Moldova should do regarding refugees. 37% say that all refugees should be accepted, 21% say the majority should be accepted, 23% say only a few should be accepted, 13% say none should be accepted and 7% avoided answering.

Additionally, 20% believe that the Government of the Republic of Moldova treats refugees much better than its own citizens: 43% believe refugees are treated better, 24% believe they are treated the same, 4% believe they are treated worse, 1% believe they are treated much worse, while 10% avoided answering.

By analysing the last two questions mentioned and some items from Figure 36, a synthetic indicator of attitudes towards refugees was constructed⁴⁸:

- the **attitude towards refugees** is more favourable among **respondents who trust people**;
- **ethnic Moldovans** are **more willing to accept refugees** than Russians;
- people **who speak Russian or Bulgarian at home** are **more open to refugees** than Moldovan speakers;
- the **attitude towards refugees** is slightly **more favourable among those who have a better perception of the state of society**;
- the **attitude towards refugees** is more favourable **among pro-European individuals**;
- the **attitude towards refugees** is less favourable **among those with at most a high school education**;

48 Factorial analysis, maximum likelihood, KMO = 0.751, all communalities are above 0.1, the explained variance is 32%.

- the attitude is **more favourable in the Northern region** than in the Southern region;
- the attitude is **more favourable** among those in the **centre of the political spectrum** than among those on the left;
- attitudes towards **refugees** and **emigration** are closely related.

All participants from all groups viewed Ukrainian refugees as 'normal'. In their opinion, refugees are just like other citizens, only their current status is different. Many have followed the rules of the Republic of Moldova and are making efforts to integrate in the society, including learning the state language. This is seen as a sign of respect for the host country and gratitude for the help they receive. Even though some refugees may act arrogantly or complain about certain services, participants overlook these behaviours, understanding the difficult situation they are in. Furthermore, the refugees believe that Moldovan citizens should accept them, and that the state should create and support conditions for their adaptation and integration. Participants empathize with the refugees and feel sadness when thinking about their situation. However, some Russian speakers find it 'abnormal' that Ukrainian refugees drive luxury cars around the Republic of Moldova and live off the country, consuming from the Moldovan state budget.

Looking from the perspective of the reason that led them to leave their country, this is not a socio-political norm. However, society should accept this and extend the helping hand, to create conditions for adaptation and social integration. In that case, this is a norm.

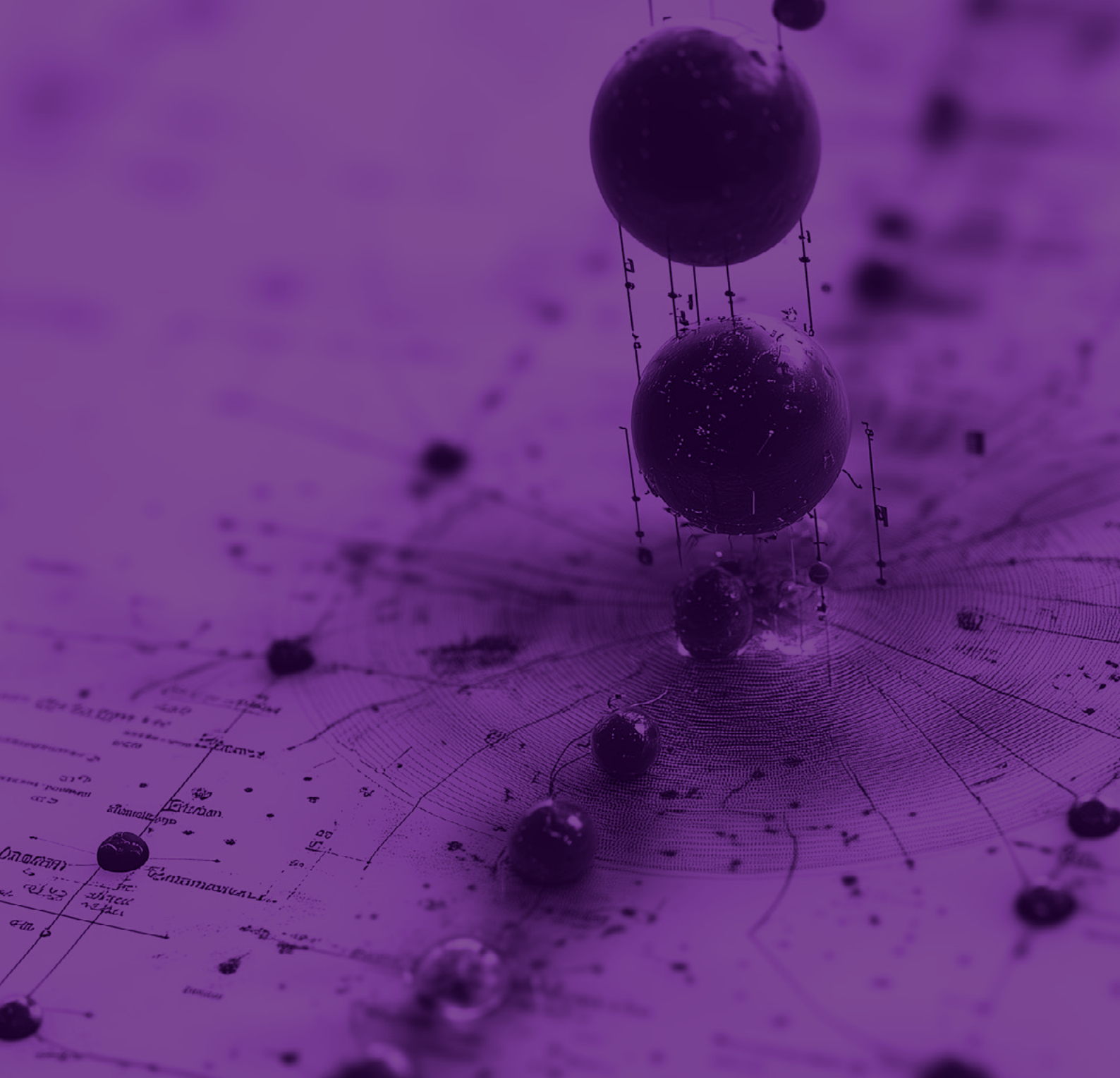
[F4, Ukrainian refugees]

As far as I know, many of them came, sought refuge, and got jobs. Many even attend evening classes to learn Romanian. So how can you not consider them normal, only because they came to another country...?

[M2, general public]

I share feeling of suffering and empathy with some of them, but not for those who drive luxury cars.

[F3, discriminated individuals]



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