

# PROTECT

PROTECTING CHILDREN ON THE MOVE



for every child



Funded by  
the European Union

## Our Voice Matters

Results from the U-Report On The Move 2024 polls



The research was carried out thanks to the support of the European Union as part of the PROTECT project

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## Introduction

As also highlighted in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and Adolescence<sup>1</sup> of 2019 and the 13th Update Report on the monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in Italy<sup>2</sup> of 2023, in an international context of increasing mobility and migration, the recognition of the rights of unaccompanied foreign minors (unaccompanied minors) and migrants and refugees in Italy must be at the attention of protection and inclusion policies and programmes.

These observations underlined the need to ensure protection, social inclusion and access to essential services for unaccompanied minors and for all young refugees and migrants, highlighting several **critical areas** on which Italy is invited to act, including:

### ■ Violence against minors, including abuse and neglect:

- There remains a lack of a common system and framework at national level for the protection and prevention of children and boys and girls from all forms of physical and mental violence and of a corresponding monitoring and coordinating body for its implementation.
- CRC References: Article 19 (Protection from all forms of violence).*

### ■ Access to education:

- There are significant barriers that hinder access to educational paths that can guarantee full development and full integration into society for many minors including those with a migrant background, such as the poor application of the legislative devices that protect their right to education.
- CRC references: Article 28 and Article 29 (Right to education).*

### ■ Health and health services:

- Migrant minors have limited access to physical and mental health services, with a scarce availability of support adequate to their specific needs, also dictated by territorial heterogeneity.
- CRC references: Article 24 (Right to health).*

### ■ Non-Discrimination:

- The prevalence of negative attitudes towards minors based on their status, origin, sexual orientation or gender identity is evident.
- CRC references: Article 2 (Non-discrimination).*

### ■ Participation:

- Despite the right of children to be heard, there is a lack of systematic consultation in the process of drafting laws and policies that affect them at national, regional or local level, and the absence of more specific guidelines on their participation in the development of future action plans that affect them.
- CRC References: Article 12 (Right to be heard).*

### ■ Protection systems:

- The lack of adequate information and social activities dedicated to them in the first and second level reception centres for unaccompanied minors,
- The length of the duration of the stay of unaccompanied minors in first-level centres and the delay in the appointment of guardians,
- The lack of durable and adequate relocation solutions for refugees, in particular for children and their families.
- CRC references: Article 20 (Protection for minors without a family environment).*

<sup>1</sup> [1607702021-osservazioniconclusivecsrcitalia2019.pdf](#)

<sup>2</sup> [13°-Rapporto-CRC-VERSIONE-DEFINITIVA-3.pdf](#)

The critical issues highlighted by the Commission, together with references to the articles of the CRC, provide a detailed picture of the challenges facing unaccompanied minors and young refugees and migrants in Italy, highlighting the need for adequate interventions and policies to guarantee their rights.

The CRC particularly emphasized the right of boys and girls to be heard and to actively participate in decisions that affect them, highlighting the need to also involve unaccompanied minors and young refugees and migrants in the definition of policies that affect their lives.

In this context, U-Report On The Move platform, launched by UNICEF in 2017 in Italy, is proposed as a tool to give a

voice to these young people, collecting their experiences and allowing them to actively participate in discussions on issues that affect them. The proposals presented here are the result of an analysis of the results of the polls, also conducted with the direct involvement of the young participants in them. Through this analysis, the critical issues encountered by the respondents will be discussed and proposals will be formulated for the Italian Government to improve public policies and the reception system in Italy, in line with the rights enshrined in the CRC, highlighting how the participatory approach of U-Report can contribute to building a more inclusive future that respects the rights of every child and young person in Italy.



## U-Report platform and youth participation

**U-Report On The Move**, mainly on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), promotes the listening and participation of unaccompanied minors and young refugees and migrants in Italy on issues of interest to them through online polls. All results can be viewed in real time by institutions and operators of the protection and reception system on the [site](#).

To date, more than **18,000** people are registered on the platform (online with more than 36 million subscribers worldwide). In addition to polls, U-Report is a useful tool for the dissemination of information, through info-pills, live chats and podcasts, safe, free and translated into [7 languages](#) on different topics, including well-being and mental health, administrative procedures, access to services and other specific rights and duties for young refugees and migrants in Italy. In addition, since 2022, the platform, through the **Here4U service**<sup>3</sup>, has been offering support and listening to young refugees and migrants,

ensuring that those who access it receive reliable information on legal pathways and mental and psychosocial well-being. Here4U was developed as a response to the growing need for mental health services and psychosocial support among refugees and migrants living in Italy. There is an urgent need to address the acute psychosocial distress and mental health disorders that young refugees and migrants face due to pre-existing conditions, to which is added the potential stress caused by the events that occurred during the journey and upon arrival in Italy.

In the last two years, the U-Report On The Move programme has also been strengthened as part of PROTECT,<sup>4</sup> the project funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), aimed at strengthening protection and inclusion interventions for over 20 thousand refugee and migrant children, adolescents, young people and women in Italy.

3 [Mental Health: over 2,000 refugees or migrants assisted with the "HERE4U" remote digital psychosocial support service | UNICEF Italy](#)

4 [L'UNICEF e la Commissione Europea rafforzano la collaborazione a favore di bambini, bambine e adolescenti rifugiati e migranti in Italia. "PROTECT - Protecting Children on the move" | UNICEF Italia](#)



In **2025**, with a view to youth-led participation, the **U-Report Steering Group will also be activated**, composed and managed by unaccompanied minors and young refugees and migrants with the support of UNICEF for the co-design of the polls, the analysis of the results and their sharing with institutional and non-institutional stakeholders.

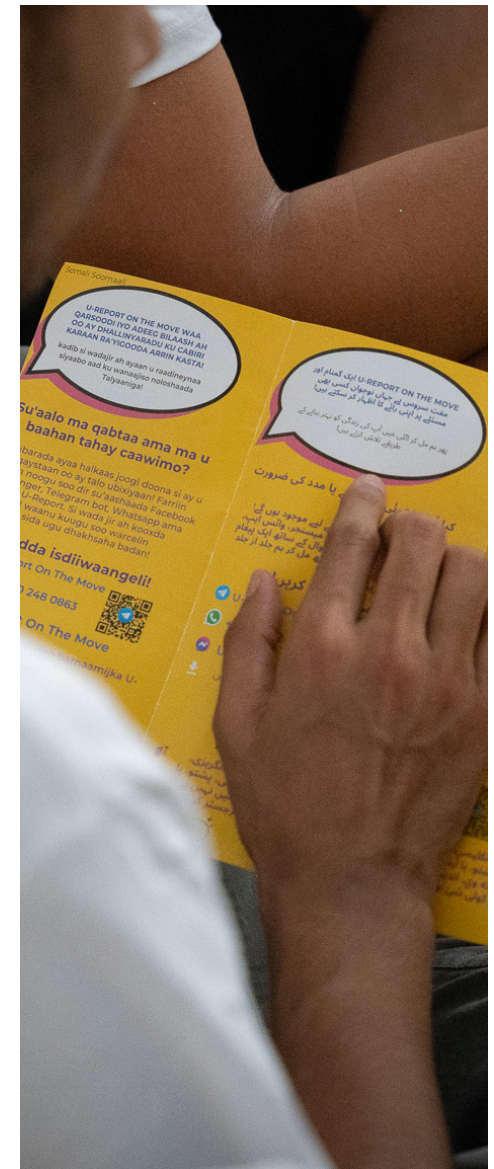
Projects such as U-Report On The Move are essential to give a voice to young refugees and migrants, a population often invisible in public policies. Through this platform, not only is their active participation promoted, but valuable data is collected that can help institutions create more inclusive policies that respond to the real needs of these young people. It is a concrete step towards social inclusion and the empowerment of the new generations.

*"Talking to important political figures has been a privilege and has made me feel that my opinions and concerns as a young citizen are being heard. This experience has had a significant impact on my life, it has made me more aware of the challenges we face as young people in today's society. It also showed me the power we have to make a difference. I realized that I cannot remain silent in the face of the social problems that surround us, but I must act and do my part to create positive change. I learned that even a single individual can make a difference, and every voice counts. No matter how small we may seem, every contribution counts towards building a better world for everyone."*

Mamoudou Traore, 18 years old

*"My journey has truly opened my eyes to the vital importance of young people being right there alongside decision-makers, shaping our future together. Our fresh perspectives, creative ideas, and boundless energy have the power to spark real change and build a society that's inclusive for all."*

Hannah Imordi, 23 years old



## Main polls results

The main objective of this analysis is to provide a concrete and representative basis for formulating proposals for action useful to address the challenges experienced by and to promote more effective support for unaccompanied minors and young refugees and migrants in Italy. Polls on voluntary protection and guardianship, safety and well-being,

intersectional discrimination, combating gender-based violence, mental health and psychosocial well-being, access to quality education and access to health and non-health services collected a wide range of experiences and perceptions of young respondents' experiences and perceptions of services and the context in which they find themselves.

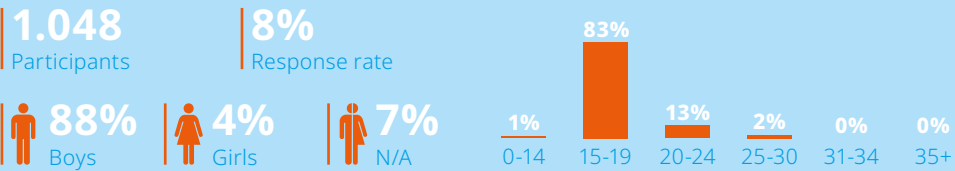
Each result that emerged highlights specific critical issues and potential areas for intervention, ranging from difficulties in accessing essential services to language barriers and lack of information on available services. Through this data, the recommendations do not limit themselves to pointing out problems, but suggest concrete actions, such as

expanding access to more in-depth education, training and support for volunteer guardians, and improving access to psychological and health support services. These interventions are designed to ensure greater inclusiveness and to promote the well-being of unaccompanied minors and young migrants and refugees, in line with the rights enshrined in the CRC.



POLL

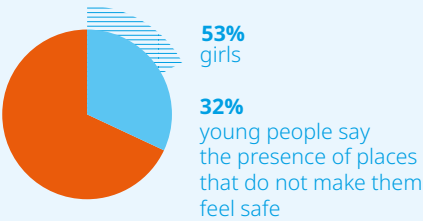
1. Safety and well-being



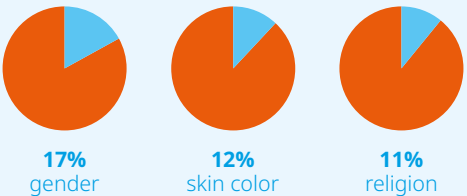
Summary of Results

A [January 2024](#) poll explored the perception of security for young people, showing how the sense of security, an essential basis for well-being, is subjective and influenced by various personal factors, especially gender, religion and skin color:

- **Presence of places that do not make you feel safe:** 32% answered yes, and of this 53% were girls.
- **Factors that have an impact on feeling safe:** 17% answer gender, 12% skin color, 11% religion.
- **Ask for help:** People who participated in the poll report that they would ask for help from the police (23%), family (19%), adults who work where they live (12%).



factors that have an impact on feeling safe



Connecting to the CRC

- **Article 19:** (Protection from all forms of violence): Every child has the right to protection against all forms of abuse and violence.
- **Article 27:** (Right to an adequate standard of living): Security contributes to harmonious development.
- **Article 2:** (Non-discrimination): Safety must be ensured regardless of personal characteristics.

*The Committee's key recommendation focuses on:*

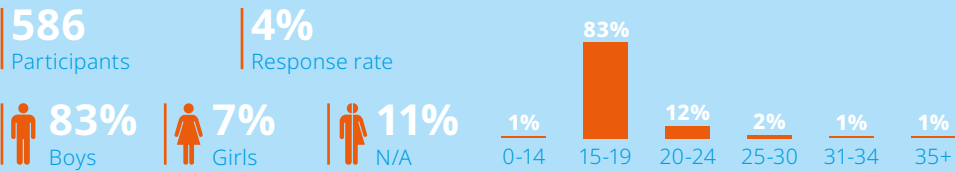
**Protection and safety:** The CRC stressed the importance of ensuring a safe environment for all boys and girls, urging Italy to protect children from all forms of violence and abuse. This requires concrete measures to ensure the safety and well-being of boys and girls, especially those in vulnerable situations such as unaccompanied minors.

*"Feeling safe for me goes beyond just being able to go out of the house without fear of being attacked, followed or harassed. It also includes the possibility of having someone to confide in."*

*Hannah Imordi, 23 years old*

POLL

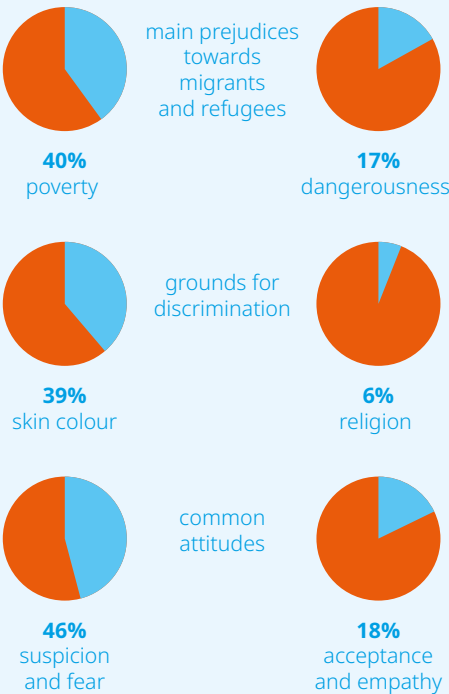
2. Intersectional discrimination



Summary of Results

The February 2024 poll investigated the perceptions of young people regarding attitudes towards migrants and refugees.

- **Main prejudices:** Prevalence of negative stereotypes such as poverty (40%) and dangerousness (17%).
- **Grounds for discrimination:** Differences in treatment based on characteristics such as skin colour (39%) and religion (6%) by citizenship.
- **Common attitudes:** Attitudes of suspicion and fear (46%), with a minority of respondents perceiving acceptance and empathy (18%).



Connecting to the CRC

- **Article 2:** (Non-discrimination): Every child has the right not to be discriminated, regardless of ethnicity, colour, gender, religion, etc.
- **Article 8:** (Protection of identity): Boys and girls must be able to maintain their identity without discrimination.
- **Article 30:** (Minorities): Boys and girls belonging to minorities shall not face discrimination.

The Committee's key recommendation focuses on:

**Non-discrimination:**  
The Commission reiterated the importance of the principle of non-discrimination, urging Italy to actively combat prejudice and discrimination suffered by children and young people on the basis of ethnicity, origin, religion, gender and other characteristics.

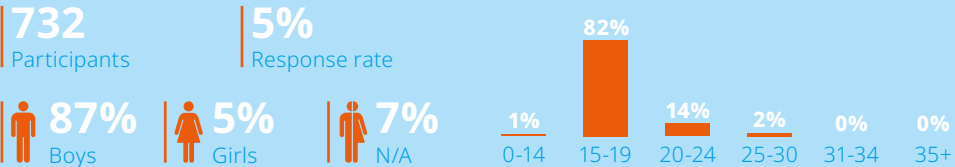
"Suffering the prejudices of those who observe us from the outside, without knowing us and without knowing our cultures, fighting against stereotypes and expectations is nerve-wracking, especially if you have experienced situations that go from outside of what most people can even imagine."

U-Reporter, N/A



POLL

3. Mental health and psychosocial well-being

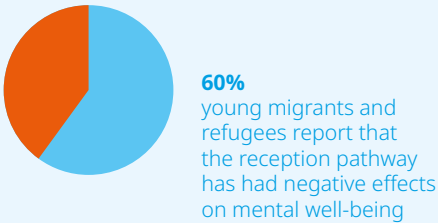


Summary of Results

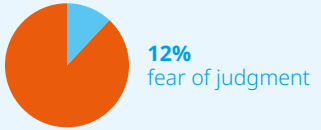
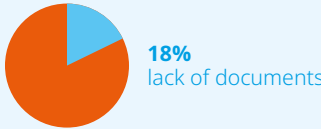
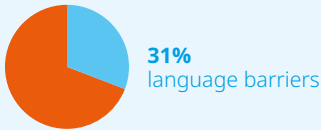
The [March 2024](#) poll collected young migrants' and refugees' experiences and difficulties in accessing mental health services and psychosocial well-being. The main results are as follows:

- **Impact of the reception pathway on mental health:** Almost 60% of young migrants and refugees report that the reception pathway has had negative effects on mental well-being, frequently manifesting anxiety, stress and uncertainty.
- **Limited knowledge of support services:** The majority of people who completed the poll are unfamiliar or only partially aware of the services available (41% uninformed and 20% partially informed). The desire to receive more information was expressed on:
  - What support services are and what they are for (34%),
  - Where to find them (17%),

- How to access it (15%),
  - Which specialized figures work there (8%).
- **Perception about asking for help:** 46% consider it important to ask for help to improve their well-being, and 14% perceive it as a sign of strength. However, only 18% consulted a psychologist, while 42% never sought professional support.



- **Barriers to access to services:** The main barriers are:
  - Language barriers (31%),
  - Lack of documents (18%),
  - Fear of judgment (12%),
  - Economic difficulties, which are a frequent or constant obstacle for 43% of the people interviewed.



Connecting to the CRC

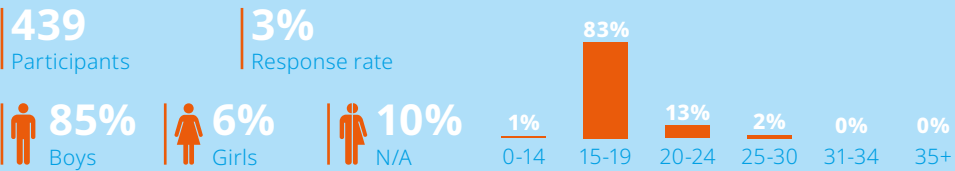
- **Article 24:** (Right to health): Includes support for physical and mental well-being, requiring that services be available and accessible.
- **Article 3:** (Best interests of the child): Stresses the importance of providing services that are inclusive, adequate and attentive to the individual needs of children.
- **Article 2:** (Non-discrimination): All children, regardless of origin, must have access to essential services.

*The Committee's key recommendation focuses on:*

**Health and well-being:** The CRC highlighted the need to ensure access to mental and physical health services for all children, recommending that these services be available and adapted to the specific needs of migrant children and young people.

POLL

4. Protection and voluntary guardianship

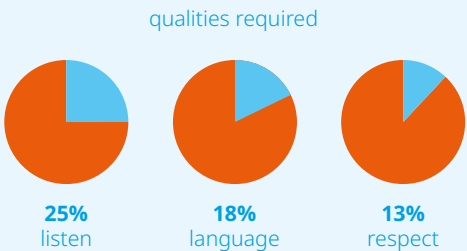
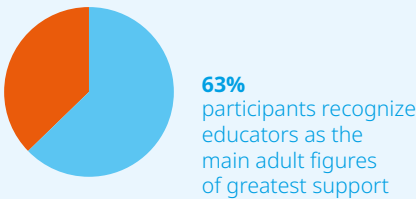


Summary of Results

In [May 2024](#), a poll explored the role of volunteer guardians as reference adults in the path of inclusion and autonomy of unaccompanied minors in Italy. The main results are as follows:

- **Reference figures:** In general, more than half (63%) of the participants recognize educators in reception facilities as the main adult figures of greatest support.
- **Knowledge of the role of volunteer guardians:** Around one third of the participants are unaware of the role of volunteer guardians.
- **Tasks of volunteer guardians:** Over a third (34%) consider guardians essential for obtaining necessary documents, and 30% appreciate their help in finding their way around school and work.

- **Qualities required of guardians:** The most appreciated qualities are the willingness to listen (25%), knowledge of the language (18%) and respect for the personal expression of young people (13%).
- **Perspective on the future:** 60% of the participants want to maintain the relationship with their guardians even after the age of majority.



Connecting to the CRC

- **Article 3:** (Principle of the best interests of the minor): Guardians play a central role, acting not only in terms of legal representation of the minor, but also as guarantors of the child's well-being and participation in all decision-making processes that affect him/her.
- **Article 20:** (Protection for minors without a family environment): migrant and refugee minors without parental references in the territory have the right to substitute protection, which takes into account their needs for continuity in education, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic origin.
- **Article 12:** (Right to be heard): Young participants require their opinions to be listened to and respected, highlighting the importance of an adult who recognises their right to express themselves, especially in all decision-making processes that affect them.
- **Article 5:** (Guidance by adults): Volunteer guardians are guidance and support figures in accessing the rights of minors, with particular reference to protection, inclusion and autonomy paths.

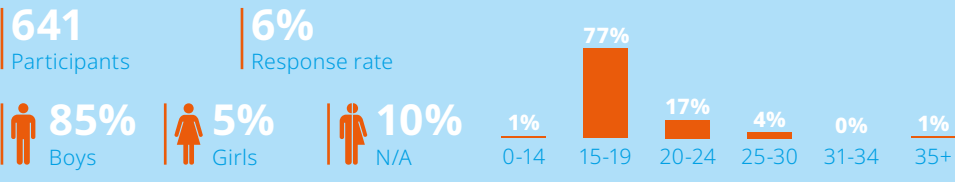
The Committee's key recommendation focuses on:

**Right to a family environment and widespread care:**

*The Commission recommends that the State continue to review its policies on widespread care for children deprived of the environment in order to develop a more integrated, children's rights-based and responsible system that complements the traditional care provided by the extended family, with particular attention to the best interests of the child; and to ensure that the guidelines are applied effectively and appropriately, on an equal basis and to the same extent, in the different regions of the country, taking into account the fact that there are different forms of family-type placement in different regions.*

POLL

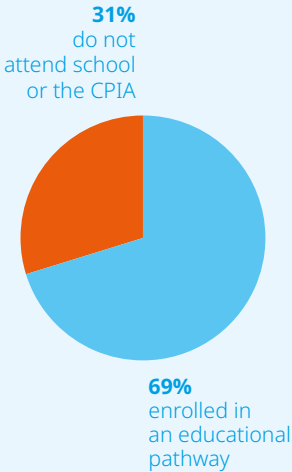
5. Access to quality education



Summary of Results

The [May 2024](#) poll highlighted the challenges and opportunities for unaccompanied minors and young refugees and migrants in accessing education.

- **School participation:** 69% are enrolled in an educational pathway, mostly in the Provincial Adult Education Centers (CPIA). 30% do not attend school or the CPIA.
- **Barriers to access to education:** Waiting lists in schools/CPIAs, waiting for documents required for enrolment, distance and transfers between reception facilities and educational institutions.
- **Enrolment times:** Long enrolment waits slow down school placement: 27% had to wait more than 5 months after arrival before being able to start school.
- **Italian Language:** Considered fundamental for inclusion and job opportunities, but 47% do not start studying Italian before 2 months of arrival.



Connecting to the CRC

- **Article 12:** (Right to be heard): Children have the right to express their opinion and to be heard on matters that affect them.
- **Article 28:** (Right to education): Every child has the right to education without discrimination. This must be made accessible to all children: regular school attendance must be encouraged and school drop-out reduced.
- **Article 29:** (Right to education): Education must have as its purpose the development of the personality, abilities, mental and physical attitudes of the child and respect for the environment and the surrounding people.
- **Article 2:** (Equality and non-discrimination): All rights must be guaranteed to all children, regardless of their origin or situation.

The Committee's key recommendation focuses on:

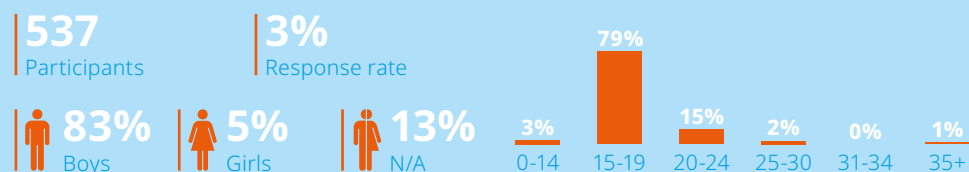
**Right to education:** The Commission highlighted the right of all girls and boys to access education without discrimination. It called on Italy to remove barriers that hinder migrant children's access to education, including problems with out-of-school enrolment, and to promote tools for inclusion, such as dedicated linguistic and cultural support in schools.

"I was lucky because my community has always been by my side, together with my guardian, giving me the necessary information and allowing me to choose what I liked best, but foreign minors do not always have these opportunities."

Klevist, 18 years old

## POLL

## 6. Access to health care and support services



## Summary of Results

In the [September 2024](#) poll, 71% of participating people reported using mental health services, but needs such as more flexible schedules and multilingual access emerged, in addition:

## ■ Use of mental health services:

Mainly through the primary care physician (36%) or a psychologist (21%) to:

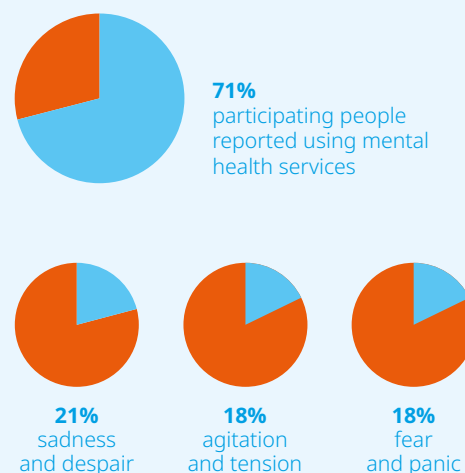
- 21% sadness and despair
- 18% agitation, tension and nervousness
- 18% fear, worry and panic

## ■ Ideal characteristics of the services:

Compatible timetables (24%), barrier-free accessibility (39%) and clear information (14%).

## ■ Skills for professionals: Cultural and linguistic competence (24%), active listening and non-judgement (19%) and knowledge of the specific problems of migrants and refugees (19%).

- **Need for support:** 28% believe that having clear information on the reception process is the most important thing to receive for their mental health and psychological well-being, followed by 21% who think it is to receive listening and quick help.



## Connecting to the CRC

- **Article 24:** (Right to health): Inclusive of physical and mental well-being.
- **Article 3:** (Principle of the best interests of the minor): Services that are inclusive and adapted to the needs of minors.
- **Article 2:** (Non-discrimination): Access to essential services for all boys and girls.

*The Committee's key recommendation focuses on:*

**Health and well-being:** The Committee highlighted the need to ensure access to mental and physical health services for all, recommending that these services be available and adapted to the specific needs of children with a migrant background.

"I feel inadequate"

"I no longer know who to trust"

"I feel alone"

"I don't feel heard"

"I don't know where I'll sleep tonight"

"Tomorrow I turn 18, and I don't know what will happen to me"

"I feel like I'm in limbo"

"I can't express myself the way I'd like to"

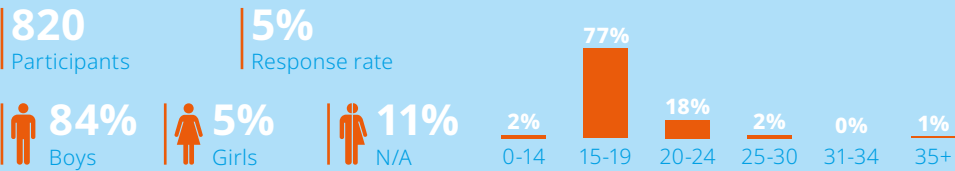
"I still have nightmares about what I went through"

*Some of the requests received through the Here4U project from 2021 to today*



POLL

7. Services and activities that are most important to you

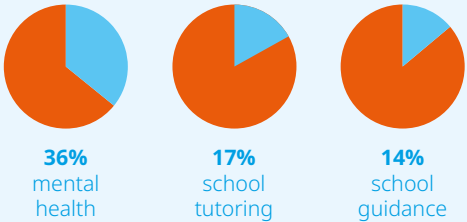


Summary of Results

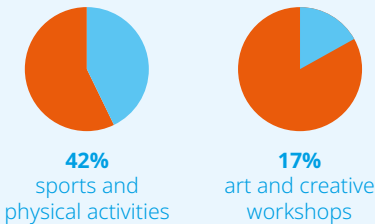
The [October 2024](#) poll identified which services and activities are most important for unaccompanied foreign minors and young refugee and migrant persons in Italy, specifically:

- **Services:** 36% indicate that the most important services are mental health support services, 17% school tutoring services and 14% school guidance services.
- **Activities:** For 42%, the activities they like to participate in the most are sports and physical activities, 17% prefer those related to art and creative workshops; the main places where they would like to do these activities are only school (32%), community spaces (14%) and reception facilities and spaces that enable outdoor activities (10%).
- **Resources:** Resources that would help address issues related to being a boy or girl are youth support groups (36%), role workshops (13%), and safe spaces reserved for open discussions.

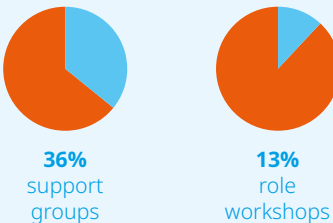
most important services



most favorite activities



resources that would help



Connecting to the CRC

- **Article 24:** (Right to health): The right to adequate physical and mental health services.
- **Article 28:** (Right to education): Access to education for all children, all boys and girls.
- **Article 31:** (Right to play and recreational activities): Participation in cultural, artistic, recreational and sporting activities.
- **Article 12:** (Right to be heard): Promotion of active listening to the opinions of children, girls and boys and girls.

The Committee's key recommendations underline:

**Health and well-being:** The Committee highlighted the need to ensure equal access to mental and physical health services for all children, recommending that these services be available and adapted to the specific needs of children and boys and girls with a migrant background. The Committee also stressed the need to guarantee psychological support programmes for young refugees and migrants, considering the traumatic experiences they have had. The Committee drew attention to the need to ensure safe and accessible spaces for recreational, sporting and cultural activities, to promote psychological well-being and social inclusion.

## Conclusions

U-Report On The Move represents an important initiative to ensure that the voices of unaccompanied minors and young refugees and migrants are heard and to collect meaningful data that can inform UNICEF's policies and programmes. The CRC's observations and recommendations offer a framework to ensure that children's rights are respected, and the analyses of U-Report polls can help achieve these goals, making policies more inclusive and responsive to the real needs of young people. For these reasons, the observations and recommendations provide a crucial framework to improve the protection of children's rights in Italy and emphasise the importance of listening to and integrating the voices of young people, especially those in vulnerable situations. The results of the polls combined with the CRC's guidance suggest the following priorities for action:

- To improve the **inclusion and well-being** of unaccompanied minors and young refugees and migrants, a unified method is key to addressing the main issues that have emerged. Firstly, it aims to inform young people about access to essential services through information initiatives in schools,

reception centres and community centres, as well as to strengthen familiarity with emergency contacts and support options. Creating safe environments where young people can communicate openly and get expert assistance is a vital measure to improve social cohesion.

- To counter **intersectional discrimination**, it is important to promote diversity and education, including through open discussions in the media and schools. Involving young people in social media campaigns can be an effective way to combat stereotypes and prejudices, while collaboration with bodies such as UNAR and local associations would facilitate reports of discrimination and ensure adequate support. Training courses for public staff are essential to raise awareness of unconscious bias and improve the inclusive approach.
- Access to **mental health services** is another priority. It is proposed to expand the accessibility of these services also through linguistic and cultural mediators, flexible hours and inclusive paths for unaccompanied minors and young refugees and migrants. The training of health professionals is essential to ensure

intercultural skills and adequately respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse population.

- To strengthen the **voluntary guardianship system**, it is necessary to promote a greater understanding of the role of guardians through information resources and targeted initiatives. Encouraging a dialogue between guardians, institutions and local operators would help to align expectations and harmonize operational practices. Specialized **training** courses for guardians, focused on psychosocial support, gender-based violence, knowledge of the regulations protecting their educational and labor rights and the transition to autonomy, represent a further tool to ensure that the best interests of the child are at the center of every decision. Finally, the institutionalization of post-18 support could be explored to preserve guardianship bonds beyond the age of majority.
- As far as education is concerned, it is necessary to facilitate the access of unaccompanied minors to ordinary schools, enhancing linguistic and cultural support, and strengthening the role of schools in inclusion

pathways. Programmes aimed at improving school inclusion and reducing territorial barriers, such as transport support, could effectively respond to the needs of young people.

- Finally, encouraging the **active participation** of young people in local communities, through dedicated initiatives and programmes, could reduce social isolation and loneliness and promote resilience and solidarity. Ensuring safe and accessible spaces for recreational, sports and self-expression activities, respecting the dignity and privacy of young people, is a further step towards a more inclusive society that respects the rights of all.

*"[...] We believe that there is still a lot to do to improve conditions for those who arrive, like us, after a long journey. Many of us have lived in reception centers that are often overcrowded; We have waited months - sometimes years - before we could be transferred to places where we can feel at home again, be able to go to school, do sports and recreational activities like all the other boys and girls of our age. Our thoughts go out to all the girls and boys who are now going through the same journey as us.. We would have liked, and we would like for them, a quality reception that would allow them to Face with more serenity the difficulties of the journey and the beginning in a new context, to have the documents, to learn the Italian language, get to know the local culture and access education, training and job opportunities. The lack of this support often represents for us the failure of the migration project, often becoming a cause of great frustration and pain."*

**The U-Reporters**

*excerpt from the letter  
sent to the President of the Italian  
Republic Sergio Mattarella*









# PROTECT

PROTECTING CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

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