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DRC Quarterly Protection Monitoring Report Ukraine

July–September 2024



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Introduction

This report summarises the findings of DRC protection monitoring conducted in Ukraine in Chernihiv and Sumy Oblasts in the North, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts in the East, Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts in the South between July and September 2024. This report seeks to identify trends in protection risks and rights violations, challenges facing conflict-affected populations, and barriers in access to services (particularly for the most vulnerable) across surveyed oblasts during the reporting period. Findings inform ongoing and planned humanitarian response, enable identifying vulnerable people for individual support, and support evidence-based advocacy on behalf of persons of concern. Findings from protection monitoring are visualised in an interactive dashboard, enabling DRC and all relevant stakeholders to easily access this data.

To view the Protection Monitoring dashboard summarizing the main findings for the reporting period, click [here](#)

Key findings include:

- Evacuation efforts in conflict-affected areas, including Donetsk and Sumy regions, face significant challenges, including lack of timely information, inadequate communication channels, and accessibility issues for individuals with disabilities. The influx of evacuees in areas like Sumy and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts has significantly increased the workload of social protection and administrative services, resulting in longer processing times for applications and delays in service delivery.
- Increased mobilisation efforts and the implementation of mobilisation laws have further restricted movement for men at risk of conscription, leading to widespread fear and anxiety, and have increased financial strain on families as men often avoid public life, impacting their ability to work.
- The ongoing conflict has heightened gender-based violence (GBV) risks, especially for adolescent girls. Factors contributing to this include limited access to education, increased military presence, and rising household responsibilities for girls as male family members are mobilized. Reports indicate a rise in cyber-harassment and exploitation, along with a lack of access to sexual and reproductive health education, further exacerbating vulnerabilities.
- The emotional toll of the conflict is severe, affecting both children and adults. High levels of anxiety and distress are prevalent, particularly among internally displaced people (IDP) and families of military personnel. Concerns for children's safety and well-being are prominent. The isolation from traditional support networks and societal stigma surrounding mental health services hinder access to necessary psychological support.
- Displaced individuals face severe challenges in securing stable and affordable housing, often relying on temporary solutions such as staying with locals host community populations or in damaged homes. The financial strain, exacerbated by rising rental costs and the cancellation of IDP payments (for individuals no longer eligible for IDP benefits after the change in legislation), has forced many to return or live in precarious situations.

This instability contributes to heightened anxiety and uncertainty among displaced populations, particularly affecting vulnerable groups such as older individuals and single parents.

- Access to healthcare remains a critical challenge for households, particularly for older individuals and those with disabilities. The absence of specialized services further impacts vulnerable populations, leading to increased reliance on family members for care. Financial strain, particularly following the cancellation of IDP allowances, has made it increasingly difficult for many to afford necessary medical expenses, contributing to further health risks and social isolation. Additionally, fear of conscription has deterred men from seeking medical care, compounding existing healthcare challenges.

Methodology

Protection monitoring data has been gathered through a mixed methodology approach including in-person household surveys, key informant (KI) interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and direct observation. The report also reflects the findings of protection monitoring carried out at the level of the Protection Cluster community, which alongside other protection partners, DRC supports using structured KI interviews. The diversity of data collection methods allows for gaining richer information and more in-depth insights into individuals’ and groups’ perceptions of needs and capacities. This collection of data and information is complemented by secondary data review and information shared during coordination meetings at local, regional and national levels. DRC protection monitoring activities target a variety of groups including IDP, returnees and non-displaced people directly exposed to and affected by the current armed conflict in both rural and urban areas.

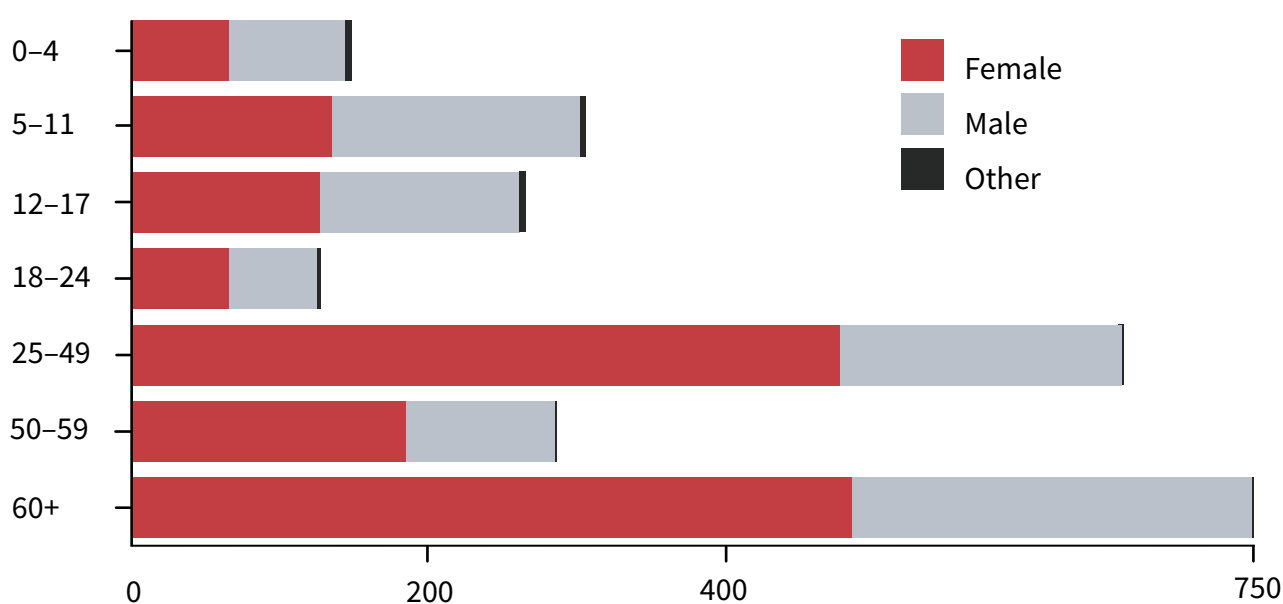
Between the 1st of July and the 30th of September 2024, DRC protection teams surveyed 497 households corresponding to 1,338 individuals. Most of the surveyed households were affected non-displaced (65%—322 respondents). 26% (129 respondents) were IDPs and 9% (44 respondents) were returnees. A total of 99% of the surveyed individuals were Ukrainian citizens, 58% were females, while the average age of surveyed individuals was 42 years old.

Figure 1. Household respondents per displacement status

IDP	510	50.6%
Non-displaced member	409	40.6%
Returnee	87	8.6%
Refugee	2	0.2%

The report also reflects the findings of one rapid protection assessment (RPA) conducted in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast following the escalating frontline fighting in Donetsk Oblast and subsequent evacuations, as well as a rapid GBV assessment conducted in Kharkiv Oblast¹. In addition, 144 interviews (including 52 National Protection Cluster KIIs) with representatives of local authorities, community group representatives and community leaders, collective/transit sites' staff, social workers and humanitarian workers were conducted, as well as 49 FGDs reaching 509 participants.

Figure 2: Surveyed households per age and gender groups



Context Update

The escalation of hostilities and shifting front lines in Ukraine's hardest-hit oblasts has had a severe impact on civilians and essential infrastructure, triggering new displacements and restricting humanitarian access. Between 24 February 2022 and 29 February 2024, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) verified that conflict-related violence resulted in the deaths of at least 11,743 civilians, with an additional 24,614 injured. The violence also caused widespread damage to civilian infrastructure, including the destruction or damage of 1,358 educational facilities and 580 medical facilities, significantly hindering access to essential services such as education and healthcare². Civilian casualties surged between June and August 2024, with a 45% increase compared to the previous three-month period. The majority of these casualties occurred in the eastern oblasts of Donetsk and Kharkiv, with Donetsk being particularly affected.

¹ Rapid GBV assessment, Kharkiv Oblast, June 2024, available [here](#)

² Treatment of prisoners of war and update on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 June 2024—31 August 2024, OHCHR, available [here](#)

July 2024 was the deadliest month for civilians since October 2022, largely due to a large-scale attack by Russian armed forces on 8 July, which targeted Kyiv city, Dnipro city, Kryvyi Rih (Dnipropetrovsk region), and Kyiv region.

Attacks on critical energy infrastructure continued throughout during the reporting period. A major attack on 26 August targeted power substations and transmission networks for nuclear plants, leading to widespread power disruptions across the country. Rural populations faced difficulties in accessing freshwater for irrigation due to non-operational water pumps lacking electricity. Attacks also impact humanitarian workers and assets, disrupting operations across various regions of the country—from Sumy Oblast in the north to Kharkiv city and Donetsk Oblast in the east, and Kherson Oblast in the south—thereby hindering the ability of humanitarian organisations to provide assistance³.

While hostilities persisted along the entire front line, Russian forces gradually shifted their offensive operations from northern Kharkiv to Donetsk Oblast, leading to intensified fighting in the region and a corresponding increase in civilian casualties. As a result of continued advances by Russian forces, Ukrainian authorities initiated a mandatory evacuation of families with children from Pokrovsk city and surrounding areas in mid-August. On 6 August, regular units of the Ukrainian armed forces launched a cross-border incursion into Russia's Kursk region, which borders Sumy region in Ukraine. The recent intensification of hostilities in this area prompted mandatory evacuations on both sides of the border⁴. On the Ukrainian side, mandatory evacuations were announced for 23 settlements in five hromadas. By the end of September, over 35,000 individuals had been evacuated, with authorities considering expanding evacuation measures to additional settlements due to escalating conflict.

Main protection risks and needs

Liberty and Freedom of Movement

Forced displacement

In August 2024, IOM estimated that 3,669,000 de facto IDPs and 4,396,000 returnees reside in Ukraine. The main IDP hosting oblasts are Kharkiv (467,000, 13%) and Dnipropetrovsk (455,000, 12%) Oblasts. The highest proportion of IDPs originate from Donetsk Oblast (24%). The largest flow of intra-oblast displacement was identified in Donetsk (90%), Kharkiv (85%) and Zaporizhzhia (83%) Oblasts⁵. Notably, Kharkiv has the highest ratio of IDPs to the non-displaced population, where 18% are registered IDPs. Several factors drive displacement beyond deteriorating security, including destroyed housing, lack of essential services, and limited livelihood opportunities. KIs in eastern oblasts reported that younger populations are leaving to seek better security and employment, while older residents prefer to stay close to their homes despite the risks.

³ Ukraine Situation Report, 7 October 2024, OCHA, available [here](#)

⁴ Treatment of prisoners of war and update on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 June 2024 – 31 August 2024, OHCHR, available [here](#)

⁵ "Ukraine Internal Displacement Report, General Population Survey, Round 17", IOM, August 2024, available [here](#)

“ No matter how difficult it is, we are staying in our homes. If the security situation significantly worsens, then we will decide what to do next.

KI, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast ”

In line with findings from the previous monitoring period, 51% of surveyed IDPs (51 individuals) expressed a desire to return to their habitual residence. The key factors influencing their decision include an improved security situation or cessation of hostilities (65%, 33 individuals), repaired housing (47%, 24 individuals), and restored infrastructure (24%, 12 individuals). A KI from Oskilska hromada in Kharkiv Oblast noted that many individuals displaced during the Russian occupation returned to their village after it was recaptured by Ukrainian forces, intending to rebuild their homes.

However, a massive forest fire forced them to evacuate once again, with support from social workers and local authorities. On the other hand, 47% of IDPs indicated their preference to remain in their current location, citing access to employment opportunities, safe and dignified housing, and essential services as the primary factors aiding their integration.

Figure 3. Intentions per displacement status

IDPs

Return to the place of habitual residence	255	61.4%
Integrate into the local community	148	35.7%
Relocate to another area in Ukraine	7	1.7%
Relocate to a country outside of Ukraine	5	1.2%

Non-displaced

Stay in place of habitual residence	402	99.3%
Relocate to another area in Ukraine	2	0.5%
Relocate to a country outside of Ukraine	1	0.2%

Refugees and returnees

Stay in place of habitual residence	88	100.0%
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When security conditions permit, IDPs tend to visit their homes in areas with active hostilities in order to check on their property or address urgent repair needs. In areas closer to active hostilities, such as villages in frontline communities of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, a pattern has emerged among local residents who tend to stay in their homes during the day but relocate to safer nearby areas or neighbouring hromadas at night.

The conflict has also led to increased family separations, with 18% of households reporting members living apart. Many displaced families are separated, with husbands or older parents often remaining behind while younger family members and mothers with children relocate.

“ The family had to separate, with the husband and parents staying behind to tend to the house and the cattle.

KI, Sumy Oblast **”**

The separation is driven by concerns over property alongside economic pressures and, in some cases, mobilisation. In FGDs held in southern oblasts, displaced individuals recounted their experiences of family separation due to the conflict, which has been one of the most painful aspects of their resettlement. Many have lost contact with loved ones, intensifying feelings of loneliness and helplessness, especially as they lack support from relatives remaining in dangerous areas.

“ My husband remained home to take care of the house. Our eldest son also remained behind, mainly due to the risk of mobilisation.

KI, Sumy Oblast **”**

In eastern oblasts, an interesting trend observed is the return of those who had fled abroad early in 2022. A KI from Tomakivska hromada, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, reported that most residents who had left for European countries have now returned. In villages like Kyslychuvata (Tomakivska hromada) and Sofiivka (Sofiivska hromada) in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, nearly all those who had left have come back. A KI from Kyslychuvata noted that many locals, registered as IDPs, are returning home as long as adequate housing is available, with the primary driver being the end of IDP payments, which many can no longer qualify for under new legislation introduced in March 2024. In Chernihiv Oblast, returnees face difficult conditions, with limited access to employment, and concerns about safety. Despite these challenges, fatigue from displacement is prompting many to return. However, escalating hostilities, as seen in Sumy Oblast, and fears of a second occupation in Chernihiv Oblast are influencing return decisions.

Evacuations

Since August 15, there have been active evacuation efforts around Pokrovsk in Donetsk Oblast due to the escalation in frontline fighting. The evacuation plan in Donetsk Oblast has become increasingly complicated, as the train station in Pokrovsk was closed to civilian evacuations on September 5 due to deteriorating security conditions. Thousands, including children, remain in the city, while evacuations have shifted to Pavlohrad's train station in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, located approximately 100 kilometres west of Pokrovsk. Local administrations have since been responsible for organising bus transport for civilians wishing to evacuate, though volunteer evacuations continue to operate under limited capacity.

Participants in FGDs from Dobropilliya, a locality in Donetsk Oblast, reported that local authorities have recommended families with children and persons with disabilities to evacuate due to the potential for future attacks. However, the instability and uncertainty of life in new locations deter both host populations and IDPs from leaving, even as fears of escalating conflict persist. Some respondents from Donetsk Oblast expressed concerns about the likelihood of needing to evacuate again, citing the unpredictable shifting of frontline areas. Others voiced a reluctance to relocate or evacuate due to a lack of information regarding potential relocation routes and destinations.

Participants in FGDs and KIs noted significant challenges in the evacuation process. Many evacuees reported poor organisation and inadequate communication about evacuation procedures, with crucial information (including points and times) often shared only two hours before departure. This created difficulties for those without vehicles, individuals with limited mobility, and older residents living alone. Furthermore, the existence of multiple hotlines for different groups did not facilitate quicker contact with evacuation services, and a lack of stable mobile communication hampered effective communication. While sufficient transportation options exist for evacuations, challenges remain for individuals with disabilities, who struggle to find accessible transport. Approximately half of interviewed evacuees opted for self-evacuation, citing the restrictive baggage policy of organised transport and a lack of timely information regarding departure times. In rural areas, the inability to transport domestic animals and agricultural equipment further complicated evacuation decisions. While those utilizing government-led evacuations received better support and information about housing options, self-evacuees often found themselves without guidance. Additionally, the recent changes to the IDP allowance scheme couples with the challenges related to job availability and higher costs of living have reduced financial capacity, leading to increased reliance on humanitarian assistance⁶.

The escalation of the conflict in border communities of Sumy Oblast has prompted new evacuations, with evacuees noting that the shelling in August 2024 was significantly more intense and destructive than in previous years. Participants from Svesa expressed that they were compelled to evacuate due to relentless shelling, which made staying no longer an option. Many evacuees mentioned that they had left on their own a few days before the shelling intensified, while those who remained often did so because they lacked the financial means or a place to go. Some evacuees mentioned spending several days confined to their basement due to heavy shelling. The pervasive fear made it impossible for them to sleep, resulting in complete exhaustion.

“ I left Yunakivka on 6th August by own car. When in the morning the heavy shelling by guided aerial bombs started without ceasing, it was clear that I had to pack belongings. I did it quickly, because there was no time.

KI, evacuee, Sumy Oblast **”**

“ Before leaving the village, I spent 4 days with my wife in the cellar. There were constant mortar and artillery attacks, drones and guided aerial bombs.

KI, evacuee, Sumy Oblast **”**

⁶ Rapid Protection Assessment, “Evacuations from Donetsk Oblast”, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, September 2024

Sumy Oblast local authorities issued several mandatory evacuation orders starting on August 7, targeting 23 settlements across five hromadas (Krasnopilska, Mykolaivska, Yunakivska, Khotynska, and Myropilska). These evacuations primarily focused on vulnerable groups, including families with children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. By September 26, over 35,000 individuals, including 5,000 children, had been evacuated from high-risk areas. However, the evacuation process faced significant challenges.

KIs emphasized the necessity for better communication regarding evacuees' rights, highlighting a critical need for improved information dissemination to enhance awareness among displaced individuals.

“ We need more information on where to go and what to do in Sumy.

KI, evacuee, Sumy Oblast **”**

Many evacuees arrived in Sumy confused and uncertain about their next steps, seeking guidance on available services and assistance. This underscores the urgent need for comprehensive information and support systems to assist evacuees, addressing their immediate physical needs and helping them cope with the psychological toll of displacement.

“ At home, people are scared because of the shelling and the presence of military equipment. And here, in Sumy, they are confused. They need information support on what to do next.

KI, evacuee, Sumy Oblast **”**

Self-imposed confinement and restrictions of movements

KIs and FGD participants across surveyed oblasts continue highlighting that changes in the mobilisation law have significantly restricted movements and access to essential services for men at risk of conscription, with many hiding or limiting their public outings to avoid detection by military authorities. Routine activities, such as grocery shopping or medical visits, have become sources of anxiety, as men fear encountering representatives from the Territorial Recruitment Centre (TRC). KIs and FGD participants in Chernihiv Oblast also expressed concerns about the unequal application of mobilisation laws, with some groups, such as rural residents, facing stricter enforcement than others.

“ The rural population suffers the most because everyone knows each other, and there's nowhere to hide. In the villages, the situation is catastrophic. There are not enough people, and women have to take on more work because the men are gone.

KI, Chernihiv Oblast **”**

FGD participants in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast raised concerns about coercive mobilisation tactics by the TRC, including summons being delivered on weekends when men are at home and instances of individuals being forcibly returned to the TRC by police after evading conscription. In addition, illegal practices were reported, such as medical commissions overlooking prior health records and cases of men with serious medical conditions, such as strokes, being mobilized and subsequently injured due to negligence.

Many men are hesitant to take legal action against injustices, fearing that doing so could lead to conscription or increased government surveillance. This fear discourages individuals from challenging mobilisation orders or seeking legal recourse. The complexity of mobilisation laws, coupled with inconsistencies in their enforcement by local authorities, makes navigating the legal system particularly challenging for those without adequate legal support. Many are unaware of their rights or the channels through which they can seek justice.

The heightened mobilisation efforts continue to maintain a pervasive atmosphere of fear for men at risk of conscription and their families. A KI from Chernihiv Oblast stated that men live in constant fear, anxiety, and depression, hiding at home and avoiding daily activities to escape detection. Many have resigned from jobs, further destabilizing family incomes and causing financial strain.

Men also fear their employers may submit their personal information to military authorities, exacerbating concerns about receiving conscription notices. The impact on women is also profound, as men's avoidance of public life due to mobilisation laws leaves women bearing the brunt of family and financial responsibilities.

“ **Now my husband is not working because he is hiding from mobilisation, so I have to work even though I am seven months pregnant.** ”

FGD participant, Chernihiv Oblast ”

“ **Women are afraid for their sons and husbands. They are afraid they will be sent to war or killed.** ”

FGD participant, Chernihiv Oblast ”

Many resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as seeking deferments through informal caregiving or guardianship and bribing, to evade conscription. Men also avoid seeking medical care to escape detection, resulting in untreated health issues. The psychological strain of mobilisation laws has also contributed to an increase in domestic violence, substance abuse, risky behaviours, and even self-harm, including self-inflicted injuries to avoid being drafted. A KI in Sumy Oblast, reported cases of self-inflicted shootings and noted that the psychological burden has become too much for many to bear.

“ **The increasing societal tension pushes individuals to pursue both legal and illegal strategies to evade conscription.** ”

KI, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast ”

Life, safety and security

Sense of safety

Across the surveyed oblasts, 34% of respondents (157 individuals) reported a poor sense of safety, with the majority (94%, or 147 individuals) attributing this primarily to shelling or the threat of it. While this reflects a 1% decrease from the previous monitoring period, the sense of insecurity is notably higher in urban households (44%) compared to rural ones (30%). In particular, the sense of safety is particularly low in Zaporizhzhia and Mykolaiv Oblasts, where 60% and 63% of respondents respectively expressed feeling unsafe, largely due to an increase in shelling attacks during the monitoring period.

Figure 4: Factors influencing the sense of safety

Bombardment/shelling or threat of shelling	242	95.3%
Presence of armed or security actors	28	11.0%
Landmines or UXOs contamination	20	7.9%
Criminality	6	2.4%
Fighting between armed or security actors	3	1.2%
Risks of eviction	3	1.2%
Intercommunity tensions	1	0.4%
Other	1	0.4%

The security situation in Sumy Oblast deteriorated significantly due to the ongoing conflict between Ukrainian Forces and Russian Forces (RF), particularly following Ukraine’s military incursion into Russia’s Kursk Oblast on August 6. This operation prompted a notable increase in cross-border attacks by RF, leading to an unprecedented number of incidents recorded during the reporting period. In August, conflict intensity reached its highest point since early 2022, with a significant increase in attacks across several communities, including Krasnopilska, Velykopysarivska, and Bilopilska. These assaults, involving artillery, airstrikes, and missile strikes, caused civilian casualties and extensive damage to infrastructure, particularly in Sumy City, where NGO operations were also disrupted. The situation remained critical into September, with continued attacks on energy facilities, further endangering civilians and damaging essential infrastructure.

Interviews with KIs reveal a heightened sense of insecurity among evacuees in Sumy. Despite relocating to what they hoped would be a safer environment, many continue to feel unsafe due to constant alarms, shelling, and airstrikes.

The persistent threat, even in their temporary places of residence, has left evacuees in a state of fear and distress, with the trauma of living under the constant threat of violence continues to affect them, even after displacement.

“ **People do not feel safe here. At first, when it was calm, it was easier. But now, there are explosions. Adults and children are scared.**

KI, evacuee, Sumy Oblast

“ **People do not feel safe in Sumy because of constant alarms, shelling by the guided aerial bombs, and airstrikes. They rush to shelters whenever alarms sound.**

KI, evacuee, Sumy Oblast ”

“ **It is also not quiet here. There are also explosions here. However, it was also scary at home. At home when a shell hits, you don't have time to hide. You just have to fall to the ground.**

KI, evacuee, Sumy Oblast ”

In eastern oblasts such as Kharkiv and Donetsk, proximity to the frontline further influences perceptions of safety. FGD participants and KIs emphasized the constant threat posed by shelling, artillery fire, and the possibility of evacuation, which has left many people feeling insecure. Fear of property destruction and looting, coupled with traumatic experiences from previous evacuations, has led to a reluctance among some to leave their homes, while others hesitate to return after displacement.

“ **Safety means not hearing constant explosions and artillery fire.**

FGD participant, Kharkiv Oblast ”

Access to safe shelters remains a critical issue in these oblasts, as inadequate bomb shelters leave residents vulnerable. Despite the presence of air raid systems, many individuals stay home during attacks, having grown accustomed to the explosions.

“ **The hromada has an air raid warning system and bunkers. People hardly use it, though, since they grow used to explosions and feel safer at home.**

KI, Kharkiv Oblast ”

The absence of warning systems in remote areas of Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts poses a significant challenge in alerting residents about missile attacks and providing timely safety information. In these locations, people primarily rely on the Telegram mobile app for alerts, but this creates a barrier for those without newer mobile phones capable of installing the app or in cases of mobile network disruptions. Loudspeaker systems remain the most reliable and effective method of notification. In Grechanopodivska hromada, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, the local leader revealed that an air raid warning system is currently being installed. Initially, residents opposed the use of the same loud sirens used in urban areas, fearing it would heighten their stress and anxiety. However, after consulting with the community, it was agreed that loudspeakers would be used to signal the start and end of alerts. As the community head noted, “Given the frequent alarms in our region and the existing anxiety, a loud siren could further deteriorate people’s psychological well-being. Installing loudspeakers, following community approval, is a balanced and safer solution.”

In Chernihiv Oblast, the presence of military personnel in local villages has also contributed to feelings of insecurity, as residents fear that military bases may become targets for Russian strikes, with civilians, particularly women and children, being at greater risk due to the potential for increased violence and negative coping mechanisms among military personnel.

Gender-based violence

Rapid GBV assessments focusing on risks faced by adolescent girls in Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia and Chernihiv Oblasts highlighted that the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, limited access to offline education, increased military presence, and the mobilisation of men from families have significantly heightened the risk of GBV for adolescent girls. In administrative centres in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, recreation spaces and sports clubs are available, but smaller villages lack these resources. This leaves adolescent girls without regular places to socialize and can increase their isolation and vulnerability to GBV. Frequent shelling and a visible military presence in frontline hromadas have resulted in heightened anxiety, stress, and fear among adolescent girls. This emotional strain makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, as they are cut off from peer support and social networks. Caregivers participating in FGDs in Chernihiv Oblast expressed worries about the negative impact of the conflict on teenagers' wellbeing, particularly as online learning can lead to isolation and diminished social interactions. Service providers noted that adolescents experiencing heightened stress and anxiety often resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as smoking, sleep disorders, and eating disorders.

The combination of isolation and reliance on online communication has also led to a rise in technology-facilitated GBV, including instances of sexual harassment through social media platforms, with adolescent FGD participants reporting receiving inappropriate messages from older men, including military personnel. A lack of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education is another factor increasing the risks of GBV. Many girls rely on the internet for SRH information due to inadequate coverage of these topics in schools. This inconsistent access to reliable information leaves them ill-informed about their rights and how to mitigate and respond to issues of harassment and abuse, as well as exposes them to the risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

The burden of household responsibilities is also growing for girls, particularly in families where male members have been mobilized. In such cases, girls are taking on significant duties, which exposes them to exploitation and abuse. FGD participants in Chernihiv Oblast also highlighted the heightened risk of child abuse due to caregiver burnout.

Evidence suggests that individuals associated with the armed forces experience unique stressors, which can heighten vulnerability factors and contribute to a rise in intimate partner violence (IPV). In Kharkiv Oblast, women reported that men returning from the frontlines seem “mentally broken” and show greater aggression toward their spouses than they did before the conflict or their mobilisation. This aggressive behaviour is often exacerbated by alcohol consumption. Participants of an FGD in Mykolaiv Oblast shared the story of a family where a man returned from the war with severe psychological injuries. Lacking access to specialized care and social reintegration support, he turned to alcohol, which worsened his condition and resulted in aggressive outbursts, particularly towards his mother, who now fears for her safety. While conflict-related trauma and the challenges of reintegration lead to social isolation, increased tension, and aggressive behaviour, a significant emotional burden is placed on relatives, particularly women, who often bear the brunt of these psychological struggles. Similarly, in Chernihiv Oblast, the restricted access to the workforce for men, coupled with financial hardships, has led to more family conflicts, prompting some men to adopt negative coping strategies that can contribute to IPV.

In one hromada of Chernihiv Oblast, local authorities reported a threefold increase in requests for support from GBV survivors compared to the previous year, largely due to the return of former and active combatants. However, the community faces a critical shortage of shelter spaces and specialized support services for survivors.

Additionally, in all assessed oblasts, the military presence in conflict-affected areas has directly increased risks of sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation, including for adolescent girls. In Kharkiv Oblast, there have been reports of conflict-related sexual violence, where women have been sexually exploited by male community members and soldiers, in exchange for work or assistance while their communities were outside Ukrainian government control. KIs also noted that sexual exploitation continues in communities that have returned to government control, stressing that these cases often remain concealed due to the associated shame and stigma.

Psychological distress

The ongoing shelling, destruction, and displacement are severely impacting communities, particularly those in frontline areas, with serious repercussions for their mental health and well-being. Both children and adults are experiencing significant emotional distress, highlighting the urgent need for mental health support.

“ **Everyone! Each of us is impacted. From new-borns to older persons, how can we classify the suffering?**

FGD participant, Bohodukhivskyy Raion, Kharkiv Oblast ”

In Sumy Oblast, the psychological toll is widespread. IDPs, families of military members, and those with relatives in captivity are facing heightened anxiety, nervousness, and emotional exhaustion. A service provider from a transit centre expressed that evacuees from Bilopilka hromada displayed anxiety and fear due to the constant shelling and air strikes. Other respondents echoed these concerns, noting that families of military members are particularly anxious, especially when communication with their loved ones is disrupted.

The stress associated with mobilisation is contributing to long-term psychological effects on families. The fear of conscription not only affects men but also places additional burdens on women, who now face both emotional and physical stress, and increased family tensions.

Women are taking on more responsibilities due to the absence or restricted movement of men, whether from mobilisation or self-imposed limitations.

“ **Fear of being called up does not allow men to go on with their lives.**

FGD participant, Chernihiv Oblast ”

For IDPs, the abrupt loss of financial support has caused deep emotional distress, leading to feelings of abandonment and exclusion. A sense of disenfranchisement is growing among IDPs, who feel their needs are being overlooked by the state.

“ Psychologically, it’s hard to take. We were left with nothing, and then our payments were taken away.

FGD participant, Chernihiv Oblast ”

High levels of anxiety and other mental health issues are prevalent across all demographics due to the ongoing conflict.

**“ I believe that no one needs me.
The state has abandoned me**

KI, Chernihiv Oblast ”

Children, in particular, are deeply affected, with signs of fear, regression, and behavioural changes becoming more common. Night-time explosions disrupt their sleep and affect their emotional stability. The shift to online education due to security concerns has further isolated them, with parents expressing concern about their children’s social skills and emotional fragility. Across surveyed oblasts, worries about the children remains one of the major stress factors reported by household respondents (40%, 182 individuals), right after fear of being killed or injured by armed violence (48%) and worries about the future (42%).

“ Children already know they need to hide when alarms sound. They are exhausted, cannot play outside, and cannot attend school. Many children are born without fathers who are either at war, killed, or captured.

FGD participant, Sumy Oblast ”

Adults, too, are struggling. Many families in Donetsk Oblast are separated, with women left to care for children alone as the fathers are either fighting on the frontlines or have died. Both FGD participants and KIs in eastern oblasts observed the widespread difficulty in accepting the new reality and coping with the uncertainty of their situation. Older individuals, in particular, are facing heightened levels of loneliness, especially those who have been left without family members. Key informants from Mykolaivska and Pavlohradska hromadas of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast reported cases where older individuals were abandoned by their families, as they were perceived as burdens during displacement and the search for housing. This abandonment further isolates older persons, worsening their psychological well-being, hindering social support, and restricting access to even basic services. According to the deputy head of Mykolaivska hromada: “There is a big problem with the elderly. Often, sons and daughters relocate with their parents but then leave them behind in shelters or hospitals.”⁷ Consequently, older individuals left behind are increasingly dependent on support from state institutions or non-governmental organisations for social services.

“ The emotional toll is immense. We left everything behind—our homes, jobs, and communities. It’s hard to stay positive when your whole life is upended.

FGD participant, Donetsk Oblast ”

Although some humanitarian actors are providing psychological support in certain areas of Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, few residents have accessed these services. In some hromadas of Sumy Oblast, even when mental health services are available, societal stigma remains a significant barrier.

⁷ Rapid Protection Assessment, “Evacuations from Donetsk Oblast”, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, September 2024

KIs noted that many people avoid seeking psychological help due to fear of being labeled as mentally ill.

“ People have prejudices that if you go to a psychologist, you are sick.

KI, Okhtyrka hromada, Sumy Oblast ”

Figure 5: Major stress factors

Worries about the future	552	59.1%
Worries about the children	320	34.3%
Displacement related stress	276	29.6%
Fear of being killed or injured by armed violence	239	25.6%
Fear of property being damaged or destroyed by armed violence	134	14.3%
Lack of access to employment opportunities	30	3.2%
Lack of access to specialized medical services	26	2.8%
Other	22	2.4%
Lack of access to basic services	18	1.9%
Missing family members	16	1.7%
Stigmatization/discrimination	8	0.9%
Fear of conscription	7	0.7%

“ Often people can stamp that you go to a psychologist, so you are a psycho.

KI, Lebedynska hromada, Sumy Oblast ”

Coping mechanisms vary among those affected by the conflict. Some immerse themselves in work or social activities, while others rely on community networks for support. However, the stigma, limited access to services, and fear of seeking help continue to prevent many from getting the support they need.

Participants in Chernihiv Oblast also pointed out poor internet and phone connectivity as significant barriers to accessing information and services that further isolate the elderly and people with disabilities, exacerbating their feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression, and making it harder for them to seek the assistance they need.

Civil status, access to remedies and justice

Access barriers to documentation

In the surveyed oblasts, 21% of household respondents (99 individuals) reported experiencing barriers in accessing documentation. The primary types of missing documentation reported include national passports, birth certificates, national tax numbers, and property ownership documents for both housing and land. Although this marks a 3% decrease from the previous monitoring period, IDPs are significantly more affected, with 36% of IDP household respondents indicating access barriers—an increase of 10% from the last period. This trend highlights the escalating challenges displaced populations, including evacuees, face in securing their civil and property rights amid the ongoing conflict. While cost and length of administrative procedures remain among the main access barriers reported (42% and 29% respectively), distance or cost of transportation remains a significant obstacle for 20% of respondents, especially those residing in rural and remote areas where access to transportation options is limited and associated costs may pose a financial burden. In addition, the lack of information remains a significant barrier (reported by 36% of respondents), and the need for legal services remains high.

“ **There are barriers regarding documents. For example, the cost of obtaining a passport. This includes the cost of the document itself and the cost of transport to Okhtyrka.**

FGD participant from Hrun village, Okhtyrskiy Raion, Sumy Oblast

Barriers linked with the lack of transportation options, especially in remote areas, continue to be reported as a significant issue, severely limiting residents' ability to access social and administrative services, including for the acquisition of essential documentation. Access to social and administrative services can be facilitated through local authorities at the starostynskiy okruh level, which helps residents obtain the necessary services without traveling to distant locations. For instance, local authorities in Tomakivska, Myrivska, Sofiiivska, and Hrechano-Podivska hromadas in Dnipropetrovska Oblast, as well as Novomykolaivska hromada in Zaporizka Oblast, are actively working to ensure that residents can access social benefits, allowances, and subsidies through their respective starosta okruhs, using specialized software from the Unified Information System of the Social Sphere to assist residents in processing the required documentation. However, while residents can receive various certificates, these documents often lack an official seal or signature. In addition, many services, including notary services, obtaining a national tax number, and filing claims for various state assistance, require individuals to travel to towns and cities. In Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, many individuals must depend on distant cities like Kharkiv or Dobropillia for accessing administrative and social services.

Consistent with findings from the previous monitoring period, 20% of household respondents across the surveyed oblasts reported lacking housing, land, and property (HLP) documentation. In Sumy Oblast, this figure rises to 27%, reflecting a significant 13% increase from the previous quarter. The issue is even more pronounced among IDPs, with 39% reporting missing HLP documents—a 28% increase compared to the previous quarter. Evacuees also face numerous legal and administrative challenges, particularly in obtaining compensation for damaged property and resolving inheritance issues, due to the high costs associated with notary services combined with the loss of ownership documents.

Access to social protection services

The influx of evacuees in Sumy and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts is significantly impacting the workload of the social and administrative services, resulting in longer processing times for applications and delays in the provision of services. According to a KI from the social protection department of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, the number of new arrivals and the volume of applications for social benefits and subsidies have risen sharply in the village of Prosiana, Malomykhailivska hromada, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. Approximately 200 individuals arrived in Prosiana village in August, accounting for one-third of the total registered IDPs in the area.

“ **It is very difficult for me to work alone, as the population of Prosiana is approximately 5,000 people. With the arrival of evacuees, the workload has drastically increased, causing delays in service delivery. My responsibilities have increased as I must process applications for subsidies while also accommodating newly arrived IDPs.**

KI, Social Protection Department, Malomykhailivska hromada, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast ”

The amendment to Resolution 332 on IDP allowance, which came into effect on March 1, introduced substantial changes to the IDP allowances scheme, leading to automatic payment extensions for some categories of vulnerable IDPs, while others were required to re-register if they met certain criteria. This resulted in an influx of re-registration requests in March and April 2024, which, combined with issues in the Unified Information System of the Social Sphere, overwhelmed social protection services. In some hromadas, the workload became unsustainable. While some representatives from social protection departments expressed concerns about a potential surge in re-registration requests starting in September, following the expiration of payments at the end of August, this did not occur. The government extended payments for eligible individuals for an additional six months, until February 2025. As a result, IDPs whose allowances were set to expire in August will continue receiving their payments, provided their circumstances remain unchanged.

The new allowance system has also caused significant confusion among IDPs, with many unaware of their rights or options due to poor communication. FGDs in Chernihiv Oblast revealed that many IDPs rely on unofficial sources of information, such as news channels and social networks, leading to misunderstandings and mistrust. Additionally, participants reported receiving inadequate support or encountering rude attitudes from local social protection offices, further complicating their efforts to navigate the system. The lack of support and barriers faced discourage many IDPs from seeking legal recourse or voicing their concerns. FGD participants also described legal processes, particularly regarding allowance eligibility, as complex and inaccessible.

Many IDPs lack the resources or knowledge to engage with these legal mechanisms, limiting their access to justice and undermining trust in local authorities.

“ There are many violations and injustices.

KI, Chernihiv Oblast **”**

Social cohesion

Returnees from eastern oblasts reported experiencing discrimination while displaced in western Ukraine. During FGDs in Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts, they shared how they faced bias in job opportunities, community integration, and cultural differences. Many felt unwelcome, primarily due to linguistic and cultural barriers, which made them feel like outsiders and eventually led them to return to the eastern part of the country. They noted that employers in the west often prioritized local residents over displaced individuals, further compounding their difficulties in securing work.

“ When we first evacuated to the west, we faced constant discrimination. People there treated us as if we were invaders, taking their jobs and resources. The tension was unbearable, and it got to a point where we had to leave. We couldn't feel at home.

FGD participant, Kramatorsky Raion, Donetsk Oblast **”**

In contrast, participants in FGDs conducted in Donetsk Oblast expressed feeling much more comfortable and accepted in the eastern oblasts, where they could speak freely in their first language without fear of judgement. They found the community in the east more understanding of their experiences and challenges, offering support during the initial displacement phase. This sense of safety and familiarity, combined with the absence of the stigmas they faced in the west, encouraged many to return or remain in the eastern region, where they no longer felt like strangers.

“ In the east, we feel safer and more accepted. People here know what we've been through, and they don't treat us like strangers. It's a huge relief.

FGD participant, Kramatorsky Raion, Donetsk Oblast **”**

“ Everyone knows someone who has been affected by the war, so there is more empathy here. You are not looked at as an outsider but as someone who is part of the community.

FGD participant, Kramatorsky Raion, Donetsk Oblast **”**

On the other hand, tensions between IDPs and host communities were observed in other regions, particularly in Mykolaiv, Chernihiv and Kharkiv Oblasts. In Mykolaiv, conflicts arose in settings like geriatric boarding houses, where local residents felt resentment toward IDPs, who received free accommodation and social benefits, unlike locals. This created a sense of injustice and competition for limited resources, further straining relationships between the two groups.

In Kharkiv Oblast, while many host communities actively supported IDPs, including providing basic necessities like clothing and toys, financial tensions and conflicts occasionally arose. Some IDPs failed to pay their utility bills on time, leading to disputes, while cases of competition over the distribution of humanitarian aid were also reported. This sense of competition, if left unaddressed, could escalate hostilities. Additionally, KIs in Kharkiv Oblast noted that some IDPs made little effort to integrate into the local community, further weakening social cohesion. Problematic behaviours such as selling humanitarian aid for alcohol, also pose long-term risks to social unity.

The reduction in IDP allowances further exacerbated the challenges faced by displaced individuals. In Chernihiv Oblast, FGD IDP participants felt excluded and treated unfairly, with many expressing frustration over what they perceived as unevenly administered support. Older IDPs, especially those nearing retirement age, faced significant difficulties in finding employment, reflecting a broader climate of discrimination that failed to account for their specific needs. Moreover, some NGOs have shifted their criteria for distributing humanitarian aid, focusing on vulnerabilities such as disability or low income rather than displacement status. As a result, many newly arrived IDPs including evacuees no longer had access to the assistance they once relied on, intensifying their financial struggles and their ability to meet basic needs. Across the surveyed oblasts, the primary stress factor reported by IDPs was concern about the future, with 48% (47 individuals) identifying it as their main source of stress. This represents a 7% increase from the previous monitoring period, where displacement-related stress was the most significant concern.

Basic Economic and Social Rights

Right to Housing

Across surveyed oblasts, 36% of households expressed concerns about their accommodation, with the most common issue being poor housing conditions (42%). KI interviews in Kharkiv Oblast reveal that many affected individuals have sought refuge with locals whose homes remain undamaged, moved into vacant houses, or continue living in damaged homes lacking basic amenities. A strong desire to remain in their place of origin, particularly among older residents, persists, as they feel they lack the resources or energy to start anew elsewhere. In Donetsk Oblast, housing conditions are similarly dire, with many homes damaged or destroyed, and a lack of alternative accommodation. Access to government compensation is hindered by bureaucratic challenges, including the need to travel to other regions for documentation and the high cost of transportation. While some displaced people manage to find temporary housing through local authorities, many seek temporary shelter independently, with some staying rent-free but covering utility costs.

“ **After relocating from Bakhmut, we ended up in impoverished conditions. The lack of affordable housing and the need to pay for utilities have left us financially strained. Humanitarian aid is inconsistent, forcing us to prioritize essential expenses over other needs.**

KI, Donetsk Oblast

Figure 6: Concerns about current accommodation

Accommodation's condition	166	55.0%
Risk of eviction	70	23.2%
Lack of functioning utilities	37	12.3%
Lack of support for damaged housing	24	7.9%
Overcrowded/lack of privacy	22	7.3%
Security and safety risks	17	5.6%
Lack of connectivity	14	4.6%
Not disability inclusive	4	1.3%
Lack or loss of ownership documentation	4	1.3%

The difficulty in receiving government compensation for damaged or destroyed properties adds to the housing crisis. IDPs in particular face substantial challenges in formalizing inheritance and ownership documentation. In addition, the compensation programme excludes areas under occupation, while compensation commissions in charge of evaluating the level of damage cannot access areas of active hostilities. For instance, areas such as Chervonohryhorivska and Myrivska hromadas in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, where 80% of housing requires repairs due to shelling, are listed by the Ministry of Reintegration as territories with potential or active hostilities. As a result, compensation commissions cannot access these areas, excluding them from the e-Recovery programme and leaving residents dependent on local or NGO assistance. The Register of Damage for Ukraine (RD4U) has helped facilitate compensation claims, with over 10,000 submissions for damaged or destroyed housing⁸. The Register, established to document all eligible claims for compensation related to the widespread damage, loss, and injury caused by escalation of the conflict, plays a crucial role in enabling individuals, businesses, and the State of Ukraine to seek reparations under international law. Claims have so far been submitted for properties in 621 cities, towns, and villages across 20 regions of Ukraine (19 oblasts and the city of Kyiv). Donetsk Oblast accounts for the largest share of claims at nearly 35%, with Mariupol leading Ukrainian cities, registering almost 1,150 claims.

⁸ “Over 10,000 Claims for Damage or Destruction to Residential Housing Submitted to the Register of Damage for Ukraine”, Register of Damage for Ukraine, 1st October 2024, available [here](#)

All Ukrainians whose housing was damaged or destroyed—including those who haven't registered their ownership rights, haven't applied to the e-Recovery programme, or whose homes are in zones of active hostilities or NGCAs—can submit a claim to the Register.

As in previous monitoring periods, IDPs continue to face considerable challenges in securing housing following displacement, primarily due to high rental costs and the limited availability of affordable or social housing. Across the surveyed oblasts, 53% of IDP respondents (54 individuals) expressed concerns about their current accommodation, with the primary issue being the risk of eviction (46%). This marks an 18% increase in IDPs reporting housing-related concerns compared to the previous period. Rising rental prices, fuelled by the influx of newly arrived IDPs, have made it increasingly difficult for many to secure affordable and stable housing. The shortage of adequate housing further aggravates the financial strain and mental health challenges faced by IDPs, particularly older individuals, single parents, and people with disabilities. The cancellation of IDP payments for many previously eligible households has increased financial pressure, forcing some families to return to unsafe areas or relocate to rural regions. The Ministry of Social Policy is in the process of developing a rental subsidy programme aimed at addressing these challenges. The programme will be tailored to the specific needs of each IDP family, taking into account social housing standards, income levels, and rental costs. However, its implementation remains pending. The “Prykhyostok” programme, established by Cabinet of Ministers Resolution #333 on March 19, 2022, which provided compensation to property owners housing IDPs, ended in August 2024, and without new funding, many IDPs face increased rental costs and eviction. In Myrivska hromada, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, over 300 property owners participated in the programme, but the compensation provided (450 UAH per IDP) was insufficient to cover rising utility costs, according to KIs.

In Sumy Oblast, evacuees expressed concerns about the temporary nature of accommodation, with many unsure of how long they could stay and fearing eviction. Several evacuees raised concerns about the lack of clear and effective communication regarding available services, noting that they were unaware of the duration of their stay in temporary accommodation centres. The hybrid education model also poses challenges, as families require stable internet access for online learning but struggle to afford housing that meet these needs. The stress stemming from financial instability and substandard living conditions significantly contributes to anxiety among displaced populations. A service provider at a temporary residence highlighted the discomfort of reminding residents that their stay is temporary. As individuals become accustomed to their surroundings and find a sense of calm, they are often met with sudden notices to seek alternative housing, which adds to their stress. The service provider emphasized the need for social protection representatives to monitor the situation, engage with evacuees about their housing searches, and offer viable alternatives.

“ **I am satisfied with the living conditions, but I am worried about where I will live once asked to leave the temporary accommodation. It wasn't explained how long I could stay in the centre, what to do afterwards, where to go, where to live. This uncertainty weighs on my mind.**

KI, evacuee, Sumy Oblast

“ **People can live here until they receive their first IDP payments. Then they must look for other accommodation. The shelter is temporary.**

KI, temporary residence service provider, Sumy Oblast ”

Right to Education

Children in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts are continuing their education online, primarily remaining affiliated with their pre-displacement schools. However, KIs from Kharkiv and Bohodukhiv Raions, Kharkiv Oblast, reported that not all families can afford high-speed internet access, which negatively impacts the quality of education. Many children rely on their phones for classes, leading to adverse effects on their eyesight.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, hromadas with relatively stable security conditions plan to conduct the upcoming school year either through traditional in-person learning or a hybrid model, depending on the availability and capacity of bomb shelters. KIs noted that this blended approach aims to enhance socialization and communication among children. In both oblasts, renovations are currently underway to either construct or upgrade bomb shelters within school basements, in order to facilitate a return to in-person classes. In Tomakivka city and Hrechanypodivska hromada, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, local authorities plan to implement hybrid learning for several grades starting in September, although a significant concern remains the lack of supplementary gadgets for students. However, the ongoing conflict has forced various hromadas in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts to adopt online and hybrid learning models due to inadequate shelter facilities. For example, in the village of Vysoke, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, students are learning online due to the absence of a bomb shelter. In addition, some IDP children prefer to remain affiliated with their original schools through online learning. Hromadas with unstable security conditions plan to continue online learning. For instance, in Kyslychuvata village, Tomakivska hromada, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, although a basic shelter exists, frequent security alerts have necessitated continued online learning for 130 students.

During FGDs in Storcheve, Novomykolaivska hromada, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, concerns were raised about the impact of remote learning on children’s development and the challenges faced by parents balancing work and childcare. Participants expressed that children are missing out on their childhood by spending all their time at home with gadgets. Several mothers noted that remote learning and the non-operational kindergarten prevent them from working, as they need to care for their children. Many lack the option of leaving their kids with grandparents and cannot leave them alone at home due to their needs for assistance with online lessons. There is a collective hope among parents that children will soon be able to return to school and interact with their peers.

Right to Health

Access to healthcare remains a significant challenge particularly for older individuals facing mobility restrictions due to disabilities and limited access to public transportation. Across the surveyed oblasts, 39% (178) of household respondents reported facing barriers to healthcare access.

The most common issues included a lack of specialised healthcare services (78%), a lack of available health facilities (31%), the cost associated with transportation (29%), the cost of the services provided (28%) as well as the distance and lack of transportation means to access existing facilities (26%). These challenges were even more pronounced in rural areas, where 48% of respondents reported difficulties in accessing healthcare.

Figure 7: Barriers to access healthcare services

Lack of specialized health care services	97	39.6%
Cost of the services provided/medication	90	36.7%
Distance—lack of transportation means to access facilities	82	33.5%
Lack of available health facility	79	32.2%
Cost associated with transportation to facilities	74	30.2%
Lack/shortage of medication	19	7.8%
Long waiting time	11	4.5%
Not accessible for persons with disabilities	10	4.1%
Other	7	2.9%
Safety risks linked with access to/presence at facilities	5	2.0%
Language barriers	2	0.8%
Requirement for civil documentation	2	0.8%
Discrimination/restriction of access	2	0.8%

In eastern oblasts, primary healthcare is generally accessible in nearby cities or collective centres. However, residents in rural or isolated settlements often face long journeys to access specialized care, including consultations and tests, with transportation and distance being significant obstacles. The cost of travel also remains a significant barrier, especially for individuals with limited resources.

In addition, the lack of family doctors, pharmacies and inadequately equipped first-aid posts continue to be reported as barriers to accessing healthcare in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts. In hromadas like Novomykolaivska and Tomakivska, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, NGO-provided mobile medical teams have significantly improved healthcare access. For example, monthly visits from family doctors in villages like Vysoke and Tomakivka have reduced the need for residents to travel for medical care. In collective centres, the demand for healthcare often exceeds available resources, with some residents unable to register for medical services due to the overwhelmed system. For instance, in Donetsk Oblast, KIs noted that residents frequently face long wait times due to increased population pressures. Awareness of government health programmes, including those that cover primary, emergency, and rehabilitation care, remains low. FGD participants in Novomykolaivska hromada, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, expressed dissatisfaction with the “Affordable Medicines” programme, citing that prescribed medications are often expensive and not included in the list.

Specialized services for older people and individuals with disabilities, including home-based care, geriatric care, and assisted living, remain largely unavailable. In southern oblasts, KIs highlighted the lack of specialized care for these populations, which, coupled with a shortage of social workers, has worsened their conditions. As a result, their care often falls to relatives or neighbours. Moreover, social isolation is prevalent due to barriers in accessing services, public facilities, and employment opportunities, further limiting their inclusion in public life. A key informant from Myrivska hromada, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, highlighted the pressing need for palliative care, which provides medical, psychological, and domestic support to improve the quality of life for individuals with severe illnesses. Many of these individuals suffer from neglect due to the lack of mobile palliative care services, which would enable them to receive treatment and support in their own homes. The hromada faces significant challenges in addressing this issue, as it struggles with limited financial resources and a shortage of specialists for home-based palliative care.

Many men avoid seeking medical care due to the fear of conscription, as local military recruitment offices are often stationed near hospitals. This has deterred numerous men from accessing essential healthcare services, even when faced with serious medical conditions, further contributing to health risks among this population. Access to healthcare for IDPs has been worsened by the cancellation of IDP allowances. Without these allowances, a growing number of IDPs are unable to afford the rising costs of healthcare, leaving them with few options for addressing their medical needs.

This financial strain has forced many families to adopt coping mechanisms, such as reducing their food consumption and cutting back on necessary medical expenses.

“ **The pension alone is not enough.**

KI, Chernihiv Oblast ”

Right to Work

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine, particularly in Kharkiv, Donetsk, Sumy, and other affected regions, has severely disrupted local economies. The destruction of infrastructure, industry closures, and widespread contamination of agricultural land have drastically reduced employment opportunities, pushing many into unemployment or informal work.

Similarly to previous monitoring periods, a significant proportion of surveyed individuals (16% - 74 respondents) reported at least one household member being unemployed and actively seeking employment. This figure is rising to 25% for IDP respondents. The primary factors contributing to unemployment (consistent with previous reporting periods) include the scarcity of job opportunities (57%), physical impairments or limitations (15%), and responsibilities related to housework and childcare (15%).

In rural and frontline areas, where the local economy has been hardest hit, the lack of jobs is a major concern. Many businesses have either shut down or are operating at reduced capacity, leaving people to seek employment in larger cities like Kharkiv, but poor public transportation makes commuting difficult. In Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts, employment prospects remain limited. Many households rely on state allowances, though recent legislative changes have reduced the availability of IDP payments, leaving many families without their main source of income. In some rural areas, like Novomykolaivska hromada, the arrival of military personnel has expanded the retail network, creating additional job opportunities, but overall employment prospects remain limited due to the dominance of agriculture, which increasingly relies on modern machinery that reduces labour demand. This situation leads many younger workers to migrate to urban centres in search of better employment, leaving behind an aging rural workforce. Agriculture, traditionally a key sector for rural employment, has been heavily impacted by landmines and infrastructure damage. Farmers are often reluctant to submit official demining applications, fearing restrictions on their land use. Some turn to private companies, but these services are unreliable and unsafe.

Moreover, fears of mobilisation force many men to avoid formal employment and instead seek informal or precarious work. Increased mobilisation efforts have created significant challenges for men, including those working in transportation. Military checkpoints frequently stop men of conscription age, and many are mobilized directly from their workplaces, making it difficult for them to continue working. In southern oblasts, increased mobilisation efforts have led to a shortage of transport workers, which has decreased the number of available transport services and subsequently impacted local economies. Restricted movement due to ongoing mobilisation efforts, loss of employment opportunities, coupled with uncertainty about the future, intensify feelings of hopelessness among men and significantly deteriorate their psychological well-being, leading to heightened stress and anxiety.

“ **Men have limited access to economic opportunities and the ability to meet basic needs. To get a job, one must first register with the military enlistment office and undergo a medical examination. Not everyone wants to register. So, they cannot get a job.**

KI, Sumy Oblast

As men avoid formal employment, women are increasingly taking on roles traditionally held by men, such as operating machinery and volunteering for local services. Participants in FGDs in Yuzhnoukrainsk village, Mykolaiv Oblast, shared that women are increasingly learning to drive buses, trolleybuses, trucks, and tractors to support their families. Women are also volunteering in unloading and delivering humanitarian aid. One participant noted that, while she had basic driving skills before, her husband and father typically handled transportation. Now, without outside help, she has had to improve her driving skills and manage everything herself. Similarly, in Muzykivska hromada, Kherson Oblast, women have taken on physically demanding jobs at a plant previously dominated by men.

In regions like Pokotaylivka in Kharkiv Oblast, women hold about 85% of the jobs. However, many women face difficulty re-entering the workforce due to limited access to affordable daycare. Participants in a FGD in Muzykivka hromada, Kherson Oblast, reported that women are often required to constantly supervise their children's participation in online lessons, ensure a stable internet connection, keep devices charged, and assist with homework. The challenge is further complicated by children's lack of focus, as they are easily distracted by other activities. With children studying online, many women are forced to balance child-care with work, while finding flexible job opportunities is difficult.

“ It’s particularly hard for women like me with children. There’s no one to look after my child while I work, and employers aren’t flexible. They expect you to work full hours, even if your situation doesn’t allow it.

FGD participant, Donetsk Oblast **”**

Older workers (particularly those over 50) face discrimination, as employers prefer younger, more adaptable workers, exacerbating their economic marginalization. Similarly, many displaced individuals feel marginalized and struggle to find work. Changes in IDP allowances under government legislation have further worsened the economic situation for many households, increasing the competition for jobs, pushing displaced populations to take physically demanding or precarious work, and forcing people to rely on coping mechanisms like reducing expenses or selling assets.

“ I had a decent job before the war, but here, it’s been impossible. Employers don’t seem to trust us; they treat us like outsiders. I applied for several positions, but either they say there are no openings or that I’m overqualified. I feel like my skills don’t matter anymore.

FGD participants, Donetsk Oblast **”**

“ Changes in IDP payments have led to increased risks for both women and men. People are forced to take up physically demanding jobs and engage in work that involves fraud. Participants also said there are risks for men who, in search of part-time jobs, take on unofficial work, and the employer delays or withholds pay.

KI, Sumy Oblast **”**

Across the surveyed oblasts, 71% of respondents (330 individuals) identified social protection payments as their primary income source, a figure consistent with previous monitoring periods. Consistent with the previous monitoring period, the reliance on humanitarian assistance has dropped to 12%, while 40% of respondents report salary from formal employment as a main source of income. Despite these sources of income, 50% of respondents (238 individuals) have reported gaps in meeting their basic needs. Household surveys revealed notable shifts in the strategies families use to meet their basic needs. Across the surveyed oblasts, the proportion of families relying on savings dropped to 20%, an 8% decrease from the previous period. In Sumy, the decrease was even more significant, with a 14% drop (from 43% to 29%). This decline suggests that many households have exhausted their savings or were unable to build reserves due to prolonged financial pressure.

Meanwhile, the percentage of families borrowing money from formal lenders or banks rose to 11%, a 7% increase from the previous quarter, underscoring a growing reliance on loans as families struggle to meet basic needs amid worsening economic conditions. Similarly, the percentage of families reducing their food consumption has risen by 3%, reflecting growing hardships. Notably, 24% of respondents reported having no coping strategy in place, highlighting the increasing vulnerability of households as they face mounting financial pressures and limited options to manage their basic needs.

Figure 8: Main source of income

Social protection payments	746	74.9%
Humanitarian assistance	345	34.6%
Salary—formal employment	256	25.7%
Casual (temporary) labour	59	5.9%
Savings	23	2.3%
No resource coming into the household	22	2.2%
Assistance from family/friends	20	2.0%
Other	5	0.5%
Business/Self Employment	5	0.5%

Recommendations

To the authorities

- Improve communication strategies regarding evacuation procedures and rights, ensuring that information is disseminated well in advance of evacuations. This should include clear and accessible messaging about evacuation routes, timings, and support available for evacuees.
- Allocate more social workers to high-demand areas to meet the growing need for social services. Reduce administrative barriers to social protection services by simplifying processes, improving outreach to remote areas, and expanding mobile service delivery options.

- Provide accessible legal assistance to individuals affected by mobilisation laws, ensuring that they are aware of their rights and legal channels to challenge conscription orders. Ensure medical evaluations are thorough and consistent, and penalize any coercive or negligent practices.
- Improve healthcare access for vulnerable populations, especially the elderly and those with disabilities, by deploying mobile medical units and telehealth options, by recruiting family doctors in rural areas and by improving access to transportation.
- Increase awareness of government health programmes, particularly those targeting vulnerable populations, and ensure that medications included in programmes like “Affordable Medicines” are accessible and affordable.
- Strengthen the outreach of specialized services for older individuals and persons with disabilities, including home-based and palliative care. Create targeted programmes that provide assistance to older individuals and persons with disabilities left behind due to displacement (e.g. involving home visits, meal deliveries, and social activities to combat isolation).
- Implement initiatives aimed at fostering mutual understanding and cultural exchange between displaced individuals and host communities, to reduce tensions and discrimination against displaced individuals.
- Expand and enhance affordable housing programmes for IDPs and provide support to evacuees in their housing searches.
- Develop and implement policies and programmes aimed at enhancing employment opportunities for IDPs by investing in retraining and vocational training initiatives, offering micro-grants to support entrepreneurship, and creating a supportive environment that incentivizes businesses to hire IDPs and promotes their economic integration.

To the humanitarian community

- Provide logistical support for transportation, especially in rural areas, to assist individuals with disabilities and older persons in accessing evacuation services. Collaborate with local authorities to ensure clear and accessible information on evacuation procedures through radio broadcasts, flyers, and posters, using simplified language to reach older and vulnerable populations.
- Establish comprehensive psychosocial programmes for evacuees, offering immediate psychological first aid at transit points and long-term mental health support, especially for children and older populations.
- Expand legal assistance and information campaigns, including through mobile teams, to help displaced populations, including evacuees, access documentation and social services, including through helping them navigate complex administrative procedures and facilitating access to compensation mechanisms.
- Expand cash-for-rent programmes as an interim measure to mitigate housing challenges.
- Increase the availability of mental health and psychosocial support services for men and their families, and implement targeted programmes to address the psychological impacts of conflict-related trauma and stress-related behaviours. Efforts should also include campaigns to reduce stigma associated with seeking mental health support, making these services more accessible and accepted.

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- Enhance outreach efforts by disseminating information widely through various channels to improve awareness of available services for all genders. Ensure meaningful access by offering transportation support and remote/mobile services. Efforts should target building trust with communities and addressing toxic masculinity through tailored activities for men.
- Collaborate with local health authorities to establish financial assistance programmes that enable low-income families to afford healthcare services and medications.
- Create and promote job readiness and vocational training programmes tailored for displaced individuals and women seeking to enter or re-enter the workforce. Focus on flexible training schedules to accommodate those with childcare responsibilities.

This report was created by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the European Union, and the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF). The views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the BHA, the European Union, or the UHF. Neither the BHA, the European Union, nor the UHF bear responsibility for them.