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Key Findings:

During April–June 2026, protection monitoring indicates that the protection environment across the monitored areas continued to deteriorate as intensified hostilities, expanding First Person View (FPV) drone attacks and prolonged displacement compounded existing vulnerabilities. The analysis highlights the following key findings:

- The cumulative impact of conflict is increasingly driving protection risks. Rather than isolated incidents, civilians are experiencing overlapping protection risks, including attacks, displacement, explosive ordnance contamination, housing insecurity and psychological distress, which reinforce one another and progressively reduce households' capacity to recover.
- Escalating shelling, FPV drone attacks and damaged infrastructure continue to restrict civilian movement, while practical barriers, including documentation gaps, transport constraints and limited relocation options, reduce households' ability to evacuate safely or pursue durable solutions. Repeated displacement is becoming increasingly common, with 22% of households surveyed reporting multiple displacements.
- In Donetsk Oblast, conflict-related disinformation was noted as a specific protection risk. Deliberate disinformation campaigns targeting conflict-affected communities undermine access to reliable information, increase confusion and fear, and may influence civilians' ability to make informed decisions regarding their safety, evacuation and access to assistance.
- Psychological distress is increasingly undermining recovery and resilience. Anxiety, fear and prolonged uncertainty remain widespread across all assessed Oblasts with 64% of respondents reporting a fear of being killed or injured during armed conflict, 28% reporting displacement-related stress and 17% reporting worries about their children.
- Explosive ordnance contamination and explosive weapons continue to shape civilian behaviour beyond the immediate threat of injury, with 30% of respondents reporting the presence of explosive ordnance as a barrier to freedom of movement. Mines, unexploded ordnance, remote mining and the increasing use of FPV drones continue to restrict movement, undermine agricultural livelihoods, delay humanitarian access and reinforce prolonged displacement and economic vulnerability. Monitoring also identified emerging concerns regarding dynamic contamination and possible recontamination of previously cleared areas.
- Structural barriers increasingly determine access to rights and services, with 40% of respondents reporting barriers to obtaining documentation. Across assessed Oblasts, protection risks were more commonly driven by inaccessible infrastructure, digital exclusion, administrative complexity, housing shortages and limited-service availability than by deliberate denial of assistance.
- Conflict-related economic hardship is increasing exposure to exploitation and protection risks, with 74% of respondents reporting basic needs gaps.

- Declining livelihood opportunities, prolonged displacement and financial insecurity are increasing reliance on informal employment, insecure housing and negative coping strategies, contributing to heightened risks of trafficking in persons, labour exploitation, gender-based violence (GBV) and repeated displacement.

Methodology

The analysis is guided by DRC's Analytical Framework, which incorporates the Global Protection Cluster's Protection Analytical Framework (PAF). The PAF provides a structured approach to identifying and understanding protection risks, thereby informing strategic responses, programmatic interventions, and advocacy priorities.

Between 1 April and 30 June 2026, DRC Protection teams surveyed 188 households corresponding to 443 individuals. Most of the surveyed households (HH) were conflict-affected non-displaced (51%) households. Of those surveyed, 39% were internally displaced people (IDPs) and 10% were returnees. All the surveyed individuals were Ukrainian citizens, of whom 60% were female.

To complement quantitative data collection, key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia,

Kherson, Sumy, Donetsk and Mykolaiv Oblasts. A total of 90 KIIs, including 11 male and 79 female participants, were conducted; the KIIs targeted representatives of local authorities, community group representatives and community leaders, collective/transit site staff, social workers, humanitarian aid workers, and veterans. DRC also conducted 60 FGDs reaching 549 participants from the wider community, including 487 female and 62 male participants. Convenience, non-probability sampling was used.

Data collected through KIIs and FGDs reflects community perceptions and reported experiences and is not statistically representative. Information is subject to perception bias, and variations in awareness among respondents regarding various thematic topics and protection terminology.

Context

Institutional, legal and normative landscape During the reporting period, Ukraine continued to advance reforms aimed at strengthening the long-term housing framework for internally displaced persons (IDPs). While several important legislative and policy developments represent progress towards more sustainable housing solutions, implementation challenges and continued insecurity mean that many conflict-affected

households remain unable to access safe, secure and durable accommodation.

The adoption of national policy increasingly framed collective accommodation as temporary rather than durable housing. Cabinet Resolution No. 728 of 4 June required written six-month contracts in official places of temporary residence (MTPs), renewable in six-month periods; allowed undocumented residents up to 90 days to regularise their documents; and required four weeks' notice

before planned relocation or a change in the premises' legal status. However, tenure insecurity remains as contracts may be terminated on several administrative grounds, with people given only 15 calendar days to vacate. The four-week rule is not a general eviction notice, and alternative accommodation is not guaranteed. Dormitories or collective sites outside the official MTP framework may face different and weaker arrangements¹.

The approval of the State Strategy on Internal Displacement until 2030² reflects growing recognition that collective accommodation should serve only as a temporary solution rather than a substitute for durable housing. The strategy envisages the gradual transformation of MTPs into longer-term housing solutions, including social housing, supported accommodation and other housing models. While this represents an important policy shift towards durable solutions, these commitments remain dependent on future implementation and do not yet create enforceable housing rights for displaced households.

Implementation of Resolution No. 301 advanced. The 2026 subvention totals UAH 1.5 billion: UAH 1 billion for construction, repair and conversion of MTPs and temporary housing, and UAH 500 million for rural home purchases. Regional envelopes included approximately UAH 21.5 million for Mykolaiv, 107.3 million for Kharkiv, 23.6 million for Sumy and 115.5 million for Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts. However, the availability of financial resources alone is

unlikely to resolve housing needs. Access to accommodation will continue to depend on municipal capacity, procurement processes, documentation, infrastructure, accessibility standards and the long-term maintenance of housing stock. Similarly, the introduction of housing vouchers worth up to UAH 2 million for certain categories of IDPs represents an important expansion of state housing support but initially benefits only a relatively narrow group of displaced people, excluding many long-term IDPs during the first phase of implementation³.

The housing framework broadened, but access still depended on secondary rules, municipal stock and local capacity. Parliament adopted draft law No. 12301 on 1 July. If signed, it would replace the 2014 IDP Law and regulate MTP status at statutory level, covering modular settlements, dormitories, hotels and other habitable premises. For IDP categories to be defined by the Cabinet, free temporary accommodation could not be limited by duration during martial or emergency law and for six months after its termination. This would protect selected residents against expiry based solely on time but would not amount to a universal eviction moratorium or necessarily preclude termination on other lawful grounds. The draft also consolidates housing routes, including ownership, preferential loans, financial leasing, use and rental, and the formation of temporary-housing funds through purchase,

¹ <https://www.msp.gov.ua/press-center/news/zakhyst-vpo-u-mtp> <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/main/728-2026-%D0%BF?utm#Text>

² <https://www.msp.gov.ua/press-center/news/zhytlo-vpo-silksa->

<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/751-2026-%D0%BF#Text>

³ <https://mindev.gov.ua/news/vidkryto-broniuvannia-koshtiv-za-zhytlovymy-vaucheramy-dlia-vpo-z-tot>

rent, construction, dormitory reconstruction, conversion and repair⁴.

Taken together, these developments demonstrate continued progress towards strengthening Ukraine's legal and policy framework for housing and durable solutions. However, the protection monitoring findings indicate that legislative reforms alone are unlikely to resolve the housing insecurity experienced by many conflict-affected households. Access to adequate housing continues to be constrained by insecurity,

housing destruction, limited affordable accommodation, documentation barriers and unequal implementation capacity across municipalities. Without sustained investment in housing reconstruction, social housing, compensation mechanisms and local implementation capacity, many displaced households are likely to remain dependent on temporary accommodation or continue facing difficult choices between prolonged displacement and premature returns to unsafe areas.

Analysis of Protection Risks: Threats, their Effects and Vulnerable Groups

Protection Risk 1: Unlawful impediments or restrictions to freedom of movement, and forced displacement

Restrictions on freedom of movement and conflict-induced displacement intensified during April–June 2026 across eastern and south-eastern Ukraine as escalating hostilities, expanding FPV drone attacks and continued aerial bombardment further constrained civilian movement and accelerated displacement. The most severe impacts were observed in frontline and border communities in Kharkiv, Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Oblasts, while continued insecurity in Sumy Oblast drove further displacement from border areas and contributed to declining livelihood opportunities. Across assessed locations, movement restrictions increasingly resulted from insecurity, damaged infrastructure and practical barriers to displacement rather than formal restrictions alone, leaving many civilians unable to move safely or exercise meaningful choice regarding evacuation.

Protection monitoring indicates that displacement is becoming increasingly complex and prolonged. Data from Protection Cluster partners operating in Voloske Transit Centre in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast indicate a declining proportion of households able to self-evacuate, suggesting that growing numbers of conflict-affected people require organised evacuation support to reach safety. At the same time, repeated displacement is becoming more common, with **22%** of households surveyed reporting multiple displacements as frontlines continue to shift. Documentation barriers, serious injuries, military registration requirements and limited onward accommodation also delayed onward movement for some households, prolonging stays in Voloske Transit Centre and complicating relocation.

⁴<https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/razom/273957.html> <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/45414>

These findings indicate that displacement is increasingly characterised by repeated movements and reduced opportunities to achieve durable safety.

Despite escalating insecurity, significant numbers of civilians remain in high-risk areas. In Nikopolskyi raion, approximately **59,000** people reportedly continued living in settlements affected by repeated shelling and FPV drone attacks. Participants consistently described strong attachment to homes, land, livelihoods and family networks, alongside financial hardship and uncertainty regarding future accommodation, as factors delaying evacuation. In Sumy Oblast, respondents also reported that worsening security and business closures were prompting families, particularly those with children, to relocate permanently to safer regions of Ukraine, while others faced increasing difficulties securing housing and livelihoods following displacement.

The conflict is also fundamentally changing how civilians move within affected communities. Participants reported increasingly adapting daily activities around periods of relative safety rather than moving freely, with FPV drones significantly reducing access to markets, healthcare, administrative centres and humanitarian assistance. In Zolochivska Hromada in Kharkiv Oblast, residents described routine activities such as travelling to a pharmacy or grocery shop as life-threatening because of the pervasive presence of drones. Humanitarian partners similarly reported that access to several frontline settlements in Zaporizhzhia Oblast increasingly required armoured vehicles equipped with drone detection systems. These findings demonstrate that freedom of movement is increasingly constrained by persistent insecurity rather than by physical barriers alone.

Movement restrictions also continue to undermine access to essential services. In Kherson Oblast, respondents described travelling long distances under insecure conditions to access Pension Fund services because outreach mechanisms remained unavailable. Similar barriers affected access to healthcare, administrative services and humanitarian assistance across remote and frontline communities, increasing reliance on humanitarian actors and informal support networks while further limiting civilians' ability to exercise their rights safely.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by the interaction of escalating hostilities, expanding FPV drone activity, damaged infrastructure, transport constraints, administrative barriers and worsening socio-economic conditions. These factors collectively reduce civilians' ability to move safely, access essential services or make informed decisions regarding evacuation. Documentation barriers, limited transport, inaccessible public services and uncertainty regarding relocation assistance frequently delay evacuation, even where households recognise the immediate security risks.

Economic pressures further compound displacement risks. Business closures, declining agricultural production and reduced employment opportunities limit households' capacity to sustain displacement or establish themselves in new locations. At the same time, shortages of affordable housing and livelihoods increase exposure to secondary displacement, homelessness, labour exploitation and other protection risks. Older people, farming households and people with strong social or economic ties to their communities often remain in high-risk areas despite escalating insecurity because relocation would result in the loss of homes, land, livelihoods and support networks.

These interacting factors create cumulative protection consequences that extend beyond displacement itself. Repeated displacement weakens household resilience, disrupts access to services and livelihoods, increases psychological distress and erodes social support networks, while prolonged insecurity limits opportunities to achieve durable solutions. Collectively, the findings demonstrate that freedom of movement is increasingly shaped by insecurity, cumulative displacement and constrained choices rather than individual agency, reinforcing the need for integrated evacuation support, protection services and longer-term recovery assistance.

Protection Risk 2: Attacks on civilians and other unlawful killings, and attacks on civilian objects

Attacks on civilians and civilian objects intensified during April–June 2026, increasing civilian deaths and injuries, damaging homes and civilian infrastructure, disrupting essential services and further restricting humanitarian access across eastern and southern Ukraine. The deterioration was most evident in Kharkiv, Donetsk, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia and Sumy Oblasts, where the expanding use of FPV drones, guided aerial bombs, missiles, artillery and long-range unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) increased both the geographical reach and unpredictability of attacks. June 2026 saw the highest number of civilian casualties since April 2022, with at least 293 civilians killed and 1,990 injured in frontline communities as well as locations further from the frontline such as Kyiv city and Kyiv Oblast Ukraine⁵.

Protection monitoring indicates that civilians in frontline, near-frontline and border communities continue to face the highest levels of risk, while attacks affecting locations previously perceived as relatively safer demonstrate that the threat is expanding geographically.

The growing intensity of attacks is reflected in both household monitoring and contextual data. In Kherson Oblast, most attacks had been concentrated within 0-25km from the frontline, while between April and June there were increasing strikes at distances of up to 40km, exposing a wider area to direct attack and further complicating humanitarian access according to information from DRC security reports. In Donetsk Oblast, repeated strikes caused significant civilian casualties, including attacks on Kramatorsk, Druzhkivka and Sloviansk that resulted in multiple civilian deaths and injuries and prompted the expansion of mandatory evacuation areas for families with children. Household monitoring similarly demonstrates the widespread impact on civilians' perceptions of safety. Bombardment or the threat of shelling was identified as undermining safety by **92%** of respondents in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, **86%** in Kharkiv Oblast and **100%** of respondents in Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts. In Sumy Oblast, **58%** of surveyed households reported feeling unsafe, while **90%** of internally displaced households identified shelling or the threat of shelling as the primary reason for displacement.

The protection impacts extend well beyond immediate civilian casualties. Repeated attacks affecting residential areas, educational facilities, administrative buildings, transport routes, energy infrastructure and public spaces continue to damage the civilian environment and disrupt access to healthcare, education, social protection and humanitarian assistance.

⁵ [OHCHR, Ukraine- Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict- June 2026](#)



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The increasing use of FPV drones has fundamentally altered civilian risk patterns by reducing warning time and increasing the unpredictability of attacks, making routine activities, including travelling to work, accessing markets, attending public services or collecting humanitarian assistance, increasingly dangerous. As summarised by an FGD participant from Zolochivska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast: ***“People are no longer afraid only of shelling. The drones are everywhere, and even going to the pharmacy or the shop feels like risking your life.”*** Humanitarian partners also reported growing operational constraints, with access to several frontline settlements in Zaporizhzhia Oblast requiring armoured vehicles equipped with drone detection systems, reducing the frequency and reach of humanitarian assistance.

Qualitative findings illustrate how repeated attacks are reshaping civilian behaviour. In Kharkiv Oblast, participants consistently described a persistent sense of insecurity and adapting their daily routines to reduce exposure to attacks, including learning to distinguish different drone types by sound and limiting movement outside the home. Similar concerns were reported across Sumy and Mykolaiv Oblasts, where attacks disrupted public transport, interrupted access to government services and created unsafe working conditions because of inadequate shelter infrastructure. In Donetsk Oblast, an FGD participant highlighted the unpredictability of the attacks: ***“It is impossible to prepare for it.”*** Participants described cancelled transport services, workplaces operating without adequate protective measures and repeated interruptions to essential administrative services during prolonged air raid alerts. These findings demonstrate that attacks increasingly restrict civilians' ability to safely access employment, healthcare, education and public services, even where individuals are not directly affected by physical damage.

Attacks also generate multiple and interconnected protection needs. Following a missile strike that damaged more than 100 residential buildings in Zaitsivska Hromada, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, affected households simultaneously required shelter assistance, legal support, compensation, education services and psychosocial support. Similar patterns were observed across assessed Oblasts, where damage to housing and civilian infrastructure triggered displacement, delayed access to legal remedies and compensation, disrupted livelihoods and increased psychological distress. These findings illustrate how a single attack can create cascading protection consequences that extend far beyond immediate physical harm.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by the continued proximity of hostilities to populated areas, the intensified use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects, expanding FPV and long-range drone operations, and repeated attacks affecting residential settlements, civilian infrastructure and transport routes. The increasing geographical reach and unpredictability of attacks reduce warning time and make it more difficult for civilians and humanitarian actors to identify safe periods for movement or service delivery. These threats are compounded by inadequate civil protection infrastructure, including limited shelter availability, inaccessible or poorly maintained shelters and the absence of adequate protective measures in workplaces and public institutions. As a result, attacks increasingly disrupt access to pensions, healthcare, education, documentation and other essential public services.

Protection Risk 3: Presence of mines and other explosive ordnance

The risk posed by mines and other explosive ordnance remained consistently high during April–June 2026, with no evidence of a meaningful reduction across assessed frontline, near-frontline and previously conflict-affected areas. The highest levels of risk continued to be reported in Kherson, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, where longstanding contamination is compounded by ongoing hostilities, repeated shelling, remote mining and the expanding use of FPV drones. Although no confirmed mine or UXO incidents were identified through protection monitoring in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts during the reporting period, explosive ordnance remained a significant concern due to repeated strikes and the potential presence of unexploded munitions following attacks.

Household survey findings demonstrate that explosive ordnance continues to shape civilians' perceptions of safety and restrict freedom of movement. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, **62%** of surveyed households identified landmine or UXO contamination as undermining their sense of safety. In Kharkiv Oblast, **56%** of households reporting movement barriers explosive ordnance, while **14%** identified landmine contamination as directly affecting their sense of safety. In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, explosive ordnance contamination was identified as a protection concern by **28%** and **22%** of respondents respectively. These findings indicate that contamination continues to influence everyday decisions about movement, livelihoods and access to services, even where active fighting has become less frequent.

The nature of the risk varies across assessed Oblasts. In Kharkiv, contamination remains entrenched around agricultural land, forest belts, riverbanks and damaged infrastructure, creating persistent barriers to farming and movement. In Kherson and Mykolaiv, contamination continues to restrict access to agricultural land and transport routes, while the reported use of UAVs to remotely deploy explosive ordnance has introduced new and less predictable threats along roads previously considered safe. In Donetsk, existing contamination increasingly interacts with ongoing shelling and intensified FPV drone activity, further reducing civilians' ability to move safely or access essential services.

The protection impact extends beyond the immediate risk of injury or death. Contamination of roads, farmland, residential areas and civilian infrastructure restricts freedom of movement, delays access to healthcare, humanitarian assistance and public services, and undermines livelihoods by limiting access to agricultural land and other productive assets. Uncertainty regarding whether roads or land are safe also contributes to self-imposed movement restrictions, increasing isolation and reducing access to income-generating opportunities.

Qualitative findings illustrate how contamination has become embedded in daily life. In Oskilska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast, participants reported that people continued to avoid agricultural land and previously affected areas because of ongoing mine incidents. As one participant explained: ***“People are still afraid to move freely in certain areas,”*** referring to repeated incidents in which farmers operating tractors had been killed or injured by mines. In Derhachivska Hromada, participants noted that contamination could no longer be considered separately from broader insecurity, explaining: ***“The country is one, everywhere it is dangerous.”*** These findings demonstrate that civilians increasingly experience explosive ordnance contamination alongside shelling, drone attacks and disrupted transport, creating multiple and overlapping barriers to safe movement.

Protection monitoring also identified emerging concerns regarding the changing nature of contamination. In Kherson Oblast, reported incidents involving civilians and livestock in areas previously considered cleared have reduced community confidence in clearance activities and reinforced perceptions that no area can be considered entirely safe. While the available evidence does not confirm the scale or causes of these incidents, they highlight the importance of maintaining updated risk communication and continued monitoring of suspected recontamination.



© DRC Ukraine, mine warning sign.

Similarly, reports that UAVs may be used to remotely deploy explosive hazards along transport routes illustrate how contamination patterns are becoming increasingly dynamic and difficult for civilians to anticipate.

In Donetsk Oblast, local authorities and community members also reported concerns that FPV drones may in some instances disperse explosive devices onto roads or streets. Although this information could not be independently verified during the reporting period, it represents an emerging protection concern requiring continued monitoring and coordination between protection, humanitarian mine action and relevant authorities.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by the interaction of past and ongoing hostilities, longstanding contamination, repeated shelling, remote mining and the increasing use of FPV drones, all of which create both persistent and newly emerging explosive hazards. The risk is compounded by restricted humanitarian access, incomplete clearance, uncertainty regarding the status of previously cleared areas and limited access to reliable, up-to-date contamination information. Insecurity also limits the ability of mine action actors to conduct surveys, clearance and explosive ordnance risk education in the most affected communities.

Economic pressures further increase exposure. Households dependent on agriculture, livestock or natural resources often continue to access suspected hazardous areas because of limited livelihood alternatives, while damaged transport infrastructure and financial hardship reduce opportunities to avoid contaminated routes or relocate. Older persons and persons with disabilities face additional barriers to accessing risk education and alternative routes, while communication and electricity disruptions can delay the dissemination of information on newly contaminated areas or emergency road closures.

These interacting factors create cascading protection consequences that extend well beyond the immediate threat of injury. Contamination restricts freedom of movement, delays humanitarian access, limits access to healthcare and essential services, undermines agricultural livelihoods and contributes to food insecurity, displacement and psychological distress. As households experience repeated exposure to both explosive hazards and conflict, their capacity to recover diminishes, reinforcing a cycle of vulnerability in which economic necessity increasingly forces civilians to accept unsafe levels of risk.

Protection Risk 4: Child and forced family separation

The risk of child and forced family separation increased during April–June 2026, particularly in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, as intensified hostilities and the expansion of mandatory evacuation measures resulted in more households relocating in stages rather than together. Although widespread separation was not identified across all assessed Oblasts, the risk remained present wherever repeated displacement, mandatory evacuations, documentation barriers and transit arrangements affected households' ability to move safely as a family unit. The highest risks continued to be identified in frontline and border communities undergoing active evacuation, where escalating insecurity increasingly forced families to make difficult decisions regarding who could evacuate, when and by what means.

Protection monitoring indicates that family separation is primarily driven by staggered displacement rather than deliberate abandonment or breakdown of family structures. In Kharkiv Oblast, 28% of surveyed households reported at least one separated family member, while 19% of assessed households in Donetsk Oblast reported that an adult child had relocated elsewhere in Ukraine. Families consistently described women and children evacuating first to access safety and education, while men frequently remained because of employment, mobilisation-related constraints or responsibility for protecting homes, land and livelihoods. Older persons were also more likely to remain behind because of reduced mobility, attachment to their homes or reluctance to adapt to displacement. These coping strategies reduce immediate exposure to hostilities but often result in prolonged separation and weakened family support networks.

Qualitative findings demonstrate that family separation takes multiple forms and should not be understood solely as the physical separation of parents and children. In Zolochivska Hromada, an FGD participant emphasised that bereavement and parental loss also shape children's protection environment, stating: ***“There are families where the father in the family died as a military man.”*** These findings highlight the importance of distinguishing between conflict-related bereavement, temporary evacuation-related separation and longer-term disruption of family support networks, as each requires different protection responses.

In Donetsk Oblast, prolonged hostilities and expanding mandatory evacuation areas increasingly fragmented households as family members made different decisions regarding evacuation. Participants consistently described strong attachment to homes, land and personal belongings as delaying evacuation. As one participant explained, ***This is my home. I do not want to leave the memories and everything I have built throughout my life,***” while another noted that evacuation was often delayed because ***“It requires a lot of money.”*** These findings illustrate how financial constraints, attachment to place and insecurity interact to produce partial household movement, leaving some family members exposed to continued hostilities while others relocate to safety.

Protection monitoring also identified legal, administrative and operational factors that may increase separation risks. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia, Protection Cluster discussions raised concerns regarding the practical application of Law No. 4779-IX, including provisions affecting children whose parents refuse evacuation and the requirement for parents to demonstrate safe residence within six months.² In Nikopolskyi raion, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, only seven of 132 children subject to mandatory evacuation reportedly remained as of June 2026, and families were actively relocating without reported separation incidents. In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, no widespread cases were identified, but repeated displacement and completed child evacuations from several settlements disrupted schooling, family routines and community support networks. In Kramatorskyi raion, Donetsk Oblast, DRC received requests for legal awareness and counselling regarding the application of Law No. 4779-IX related to the mandatory evacuation of children. Mandatory child evacuation measures are intended to protect children from immediate danger; however, their implementation requires robust procedural safeguards, individual assessment and family-centred planning to minimise avoidable separation.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by the interaction of escalating hostilities, mandatory evacuation measures, financial hardship, documentation barriers, limited transport and inadequate accessible accommodation. Conflict frequently requires households to make rapid decisions regarding evacuation, while differences in age, mobility, caregiving responsibilities and legal obligations mean that family members are often unable to relocate simultaneously. Women and children are commonly prioritised for evacuation, whereas men may remain because of livelihoods, mobilisation-related constraints or responsibility for protecting property. Older persons and persons with disabilities may delay or refuse evacuation because of mobility limitations, attachment to their homes or the absence of accessible accommodation and transport. These risks are further compounded by disrupted communications, repeated displacement and weakened community support networks, making it more difficult for separated families to maintain contact or organise reunification. Documentation problems, inaccessible transport and shortages of suitable accommodation may also prolong stays in transit facilities or delay onward movement, increasing pressure on families to separate in order to access safety or services.

The consequences extend beyond physical separation. Family separation disrupts caregiving arrangements, increases psychological distress, interrupts children's education and reduces access to family support for older persons and persons with disabilities. It also increases the need for child protection case management, family tracing and reunification services while reinforcing longer-term risks of social isolation, poverty and dependence on humanitarian assistance. The findings demonstrate that family separation is increasingly driven by cumulative conflict-related pressures rather than isolated protection incidents, highlighting the importance of integrated evacuation planning, flexible case management and family-centred protection responses that preserve family unity wherever possible while prioritising children's safety.

Protection Risk 5: Discrimination and stigmatisation, denial of resources, opportunities, services and/or humanitarian access

The risk of discrimination, stigmatisation and unequal access to resources, opportunities and services remained present during April–June 2026, although its nature varied across assessed Oblasts. Protection monitoring found relatively few reports of systematic or intentional discrimination in access to humanitarian assistance or public services. Instead, exclusion primarily resulted from structural barriers, including inaccessible infrastructure, housing shortages, transport limitations, digital exclusion and limited-service availability, which disproportionately affected groups already facing heightened vulnerability. Direct discrimination was most evident in access to employment and housing, while indirect discrimination arose where services and systems failed to accommodate differing needs.

The risk was most pronounced in areas experiencing prolonged displacement and limited resources, where competition for housing, employment and public services increased tensions between displaced and host communities. In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, IDPs reported negative attitudes from landlords and employers, with respondents linking these attitudes to perceptions that displaced households compete for scarce accommodation, jobs and humanitarian assistance.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, shortages of social and collective housing similarly limited opportunities for longer-term integration, increasing reliance on relatives, informal accommodation and inadequate housing. Accessibility monitoring further demonstrated persistent structural exclusion, with only 21% of monitored collective sites fully accessible to persons with disabilities and 64% lacking accessible sanitation facilities⁶. These barriers continue to limit equal access to shelter, public services and dignified living conditions.



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Employment remained one of the clearest areas where direct discrimination was reported. In Sumy Oblast, participants described age discrimination against people over 45, exclusion of persons with disabilities because of inaccessible workplaces, and discrimination against women with children based on assumptions regarding caregiving responsibilities. One participant from an FGD in Sumy reported that a woman had been told to choose between taking leave to care for her sick child and keeping her job, illustrating how gender roles and caregiving responsibilities continue to create barriers to equal employment opportunities. Monitoring also identified discriminatory recruitment practices affecting members of national minorities, including reports that Romani women were excluded from formal employment or offered less favourable contractual arrangements than other workers. These findings demonstrate how discrimination can reinforce economic vulnerability among groups already at heightened protection risk.

Protection monitoring also identified widespread structural exclusion linked to digitalisation and accessibility. Older persons, persons with disabilities and people with limited digital literacy frequently experienced difficulties accessing public services as administrative procedures

⁶ [Ukraine Protection Cluster- IDP Collective Site Monitoring](#)

increasingly relied on online platforms, electronic identification and digital communication. In Mykolaiv, Kherson and Sumy Oblasts, respondents reported that limited digital skills, poor internet connectivity and lack of appropriate devices reduced their ability to independently access Pension Fund services and other government programmes. An FGD participant from Ochakivska Hromada, Mykolaiv Oblast, similarly stated: ***“I do not consider myself educated or knowledgeable enough to use the Pension Fund's online account.”*** In remote and frontline communities, these barriers were further compounded by limited transport, damaged infrastructure and insecurity, leaving many households dependent on relatives, social workers or humanitarian actors to exercise their rights.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by the interaction of prolonged displacement, economic hardship, limited housing and livelihood opportunities, inaccessible infrastructure, digital exclusion and persistent social stereotypes. Competition for scarce resources can reinforce negative perceptions of displaced populations, while economic pressures may increase discriminatory hiring practices affecting older persons, persons with disabilities, women with caregiving responsibilities and members of national minorities. At the same time, inaccessible infrastructure, limited transport and increasingly digitalised public services create structural barriers that disproportionately affect people with reduced mobility, limited digital skills or those living in remote and frontline communities. Ongoing insecurity further compounds these challenges by restricting humanitarian access, reducing outreach services and limiting safe access to administrative centers.

These interacting factors create protection risks that extend beyond unequal access to services. Discrimination and structural exclusion contribute to reduced access to housing, employment, social protection and humanitarian assistance, increasing the risk of poverty, secondary displacement, unsafe employment and social isolation. Persistent barriers to participation in community life and local decision-making may also reduce the visibility of vulnerable groups' priorities and weaken trust in institutions. Collectively, the findings indicate that discrimination in the current context is more frequently driven by structural inequalities than deliberate exclusion, highlighting the need to strengthen accessibility, inclusive service delivery and equal access to opportunities alongside efforts to address discriminatory attitudes where they occur.

Protection Risk 6: Disinformation and denial of access to information

The risk of disinformation and denial of access to information remained significant during April–June 2026 and became increasingly complex as administrative reforms, digitalisation and deteriorating communications required conflict-affected populations to navigate information independently. Protection monitoring found limited evidence of systematic denial of information by authorities. Instead, the principal risk arose from fragmented official communication, inconsistent guidance, inaccessible digital systems and limited opportunities for people to obtain case-specific information or verify its accuracy. In Donetsk Oblast, conflict-related disinformation was noted as a specific protection risk. These barriers were most pronounced in remote, rural and frontline communities where insecurity, damaged infrastructure and reduced outreach further restricted access to reliable information.

Administrative reforms, particularly the transfer of responsibility for selected social benefits to the Pension Fund of Ukraine, emerged as one of the most significant sources of confusion across assessed Oblasts. Although the reforms expanded digital services and integrated databases, many respondents remained uncertain about institutional responsibilities, application procedures and reasons for delayed or refused decisions. ***“The application is simply returned, but we are not told what is wrong with it. We have to guess what exactly did not meet the requirements.”*** — KII participant, Sumy. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, 50% of households experiencing documentation barriers identified lack of information as a key obstacle. Participants across several Oblasts described being referred repeatedly between Administrative Service Centres and Pension Fund offices without receiving clear explanations, delaying access to social benefits and reducing confidence in public institutions.



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Digitalisation created both opportunities and new forms of exclusion. While online services improved access for some households, older persons, persons with disabilities and rural residents frequently lacked the devices, connectivity or digital skills required to use them independently. Where transport, electricity or telecommunications were disrupted, households became increasingly reliant on relatives, social workers, starostas and humanitarian actors to obtain information and navigate administrative procedures. Monitoring also identified concerns regarding inadequate confidential consultation spaces and inconsistent protection of personal data, further reducing trust in administrative services.

Protection monitoring also identified information-related risks extending beyond access to public services. In Sumy Oblast, respondents reported misleading recruitment advertisements, inaccurate

information regarding salaries and working conditions, and limited understanding of labour rights and employment abroad, increasing vulnerability to labour exploitation and trafficking. In Donetsk Oblast, the information environment was further complicated by reported Russian disinformation activities. The Centre for Countering Disinformation documented the distribution of propaganda leaflets by unmanned aerial vehicles over Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, illustrating the continued use of information operations targeting conflict-affected civilians. Conflict-related disinformation targeting civilians undermines access to trusted information and risks increasing confusion, fear and the risk of unsafe decisions regarding evacuation, access to services and protection assistance. At the same time, residents increasingly relied on social media, Telegram channels and messaging applications to obtain information on security, humanitarian assistance and employment. While these platforms remain essential communication channels, they also increase exposure to misinformation, fraudulent content and unverified information, particularly during periods of disrupted communications.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by the interaction of complex administrative reforms, weak institutional communication, digital exclusion, insecurity and reliance on informal information channels. Fragmented responsibilities between institutions often leave frontline staff unable to explain administrative decisions or processing delays, while applicants struggle to identify where responsibility lies for resolving problems. Digitalisation further compounds these barriers by improving access for digitally connected populations while increasing exclusion among older persons, persons with disabilities and residents of remote communities with limited connectivity or digital literacy.

Deliberate disinformation efforts, including reported Russian information operations in Donetsk Oblast, further complicate the information environment by undermining trust in verified sources and increasing uncertainty among conflict-affected populations.

These interacting factors create protection risks that extend beyond access to information itself. Conflicting guidance, unexplained administrative decisions and deliberate disinformation further undermine trust in public institutions and humanitarian actors, discouraging people from seeking assistance or completing administrative procedures. Collectively, the findings demonstrate that access to information is determined not only by the availability of information, but by people's ability to understand, verify and safely use it to exercise their rights and make informed decisions in an increasingly complex information environment.

Protection Risk 7: Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) remained a significant protection risk during April–June 2026, although reported trends varied across assessed Oblasts. While no marked increase in disclosed incidents was identified in Kharkiv, Donetsk or Sumy Oblasts, this should not be interpreted as an absence of GBV. Persistent stigma, fear of retaliation, economic dependency, confidentiality concerns and limited awareness of available services continue to suppress disclosure and contribute to underreporting. Across assessed locations, GBV risks were closely linked to

displacement, economic hardship, housing insecurity and reduced livelihood opportunities rather than confined to violence within the household.

The most significant deterioration was identified in Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, where monitoring documented heightened risks of sexual exploitation and trafficking affecting displaced women and girls, particularly in transit centres, collective sites, modular settlements and remote frontline communities. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, participants reported continued concerns regarding harassment in public spaces and workplaces, reduced safety for adolescent girls and increasing financial dependency among displaced women. Across assessed areas, the principal risks included intimate partner violence, psychological violence, sexual harassment, workplace exploitation, coercive relationships, trafficking and sexual exploitation. These risks increasingly restricted women's mobility, employment opportunities and participation in community life.



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Monitoring found that economic vulnerability frequently intersected with displacement to increase exposure to exploitation. Women facing high rental costs, limited livelihood opportunities or insecure accommodation were reported to be more likely to accept unsafe employment or accommodation arrangements without contracts or legal safeguards. In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, respondents described exploitative situations in which employment, accommodation, debt and document confiscation were used together to control displaced women. Participants also reported deceptive recruitment for employment elsewhere in Ukraine and abroad targeting women travelling alone or with children, highlighting the close relationship between GBV and trafficking risks. An FGD participant from Sumy described a vacancy advertised as hotel administration that reportedly shifted during the interview towards sexual exploitation:

“A friend of mine applied for a job as a hotel administrator. The vacancy was officially advertised on the Work.ua website. The interview took place in some apartment... They offered her a much higher salary, but in return she would have to entertain men at night.”

Protection monitoring also identified emerging concerns requiring continued assessment. In Kharkiv Oblast, practitioners highlighted possible increases in household violence associated with conflict-related psychological distress, psychological abuse of persons with disabilities by family members and online grooming of adolescent girls through social media and employment platforms. Although these patterns were not confirmed through formal monitoring during the reporting period, they indicate areas requiring continued monitoring. Similarly, in Donetsk Oblast, participants reported that economic dependency may reduce women's ability to leave abusive relationships, although no increase in reported GBV incidents was identified.

Fear of stigma, retaliation and breaches of confidentiality remained among the strongest barriers to disclosure. Participants consistently reported that survivors were reluctant to seek assistance because of concerns about community gossip, family breakdown or perceptions that authorities would not respond effectively. These barriers were particularly pronounced in small or close-knit communities, where maintaining confidentiality was perceived to be more difficult. As a result, GBV is likely to remain substantially underreported despite continuing protection risks.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

GBV risks are driven by the interaction of conflict-related economic hardship, displacement, housing insecurity, loss of livelihoods and weakened social support networks. Reduced access to formal employment increases financial dependency on employers, landlords, family members or intimate partners, limiting women's ability to refuse exploitative arrangements or leave abusive situations. Repeated displacement further compounds these risks by disrupting social support systems, reducing access to childcare and increasing reliance on unfamiliar accommodation and employment opportunities.

These risks are reinforced by limited access to specialised GBV services, particularly in frontline and remote communities where insecurity, damaged infrastructure and transport constraints restrict access to healthcare, psychosocial support, legal assistance and safe accommodation. Limited awareness of confidential referral pathways, combined with fear of stigma and distrust in institutions, further discourages survivors from seeking assistance, while allowing perpetrators and exploiters to operate with limited accountability.

The interacting effects of conflict, economic vulnerability and displacement extend beyond immediate violence. GBV contributes to social isolation, loss of livelihoods, psychological distress, housing insecurity, trafficking and sexual exploitation, while fear of violence also limits women's freedom of movement, access to employment, education and public life. The findings demonstrate that GBV is increasingly shaped by broader socio-economic and displacement-related pressures, underscoring the importance of integrated protection responses that address both immediate protection risks and the structural factors increasing women's and girls' vulnerability.

Protection Risk 8: Impediments and/or restrictions on access to legal identity, remedies and justice

Barriers to legal identity, administrative remedies and justice remained widespread during April–June 2026 and increased in several assessed Oblasts. The most significant challenges concerned access to civil and property documentation, social benefits, Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights, and compensation for damaged or destroyed housing. Across assessed areas, barriers were primarily practical rather than legal, with conflict-affected households facing difficulties accessing rights because of insecurity, distance to services, transport costs, administrative complexity, digitalisation, limited information and insufficient institutional capacity.

Documentation barriers remained particularly acute in Kharkiv and Sumy Oblasts. In Kharkiv, 71% of surveyed households reported barriers to obtaining documentation, while in Sumy 88% lacked documents confirming ownership of their homes and reported that HLP documentation challenges had increased by 33% compared with the previous quarter. Similar barriers were identified in Mykolaiv and Kherson, where transport costs, limited information and lengthy administrative procedures prevented many households from accessing documentation and public services. Across assessed Oblasts, conflict-related loss or destruction of identity and property documents continued to restrict access to accommodation, pensions, compensation and other essential services.

Administrative reforms also created mixed protection outcomes. The transfer of responsibility for administering social benefits to the Pension Fund of Ukraine expanded digital services and integrated databases, improving access for some households. However, monitoring found that increased workloads, unclear institutional responsibilities, processing delays and continued requirements for in-person attendance reduced the effectiveness of the reform, particularly for older persons, persons with disabilities and rural residents with limited digital literacy. Respondents consistently reported long waiting periods, repeated applications and significant travel costs to access Pension Fund offices where local outreach services were unavailable.

HLP issues remained among the most significant legal concerns across all assessed Oblasts. Many conflict-affected households lacked ownership documents, inheritance records, technical passports or other evidence required to access compensation through state mechanisms. Informal property ownership arrangements, common in rural areas before the full-scale invasion, became a major obstacle once compensation and legal proof of ownership were required. Institutional capacity to implement compensation mechanisms also remained uneven. Monitoring identified shortages of qualified specialists to assess damaged housing, inconsistent documentation requirements and high out-of-pocket costs for technical assessments, court fees and replacement documents, leaving many households unable to progress compensation claims despite meeting eligibility criteria.

Monitoring also identified requests for updated technical passports containing QR codes in parts of Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts. As older technical passports remain legally valid, such requests may constitute an unnecessary administrative and financial burden, particularly for older persons, low-income households and people whose documents were lost or left in inaccessible areas. In Donetsk Oblast, households also required legal support to pay court fees, commission expert examinations and restore documentation before compensation applications could proceed.

Repeated displacement and insecurity delayed the collection of evidence and submission of claims, especially for persons with limited mobility.

Protection monitoring also identified barriers affecting other legal rights. Insecurity prevented some households from registering deaths, restoring civil documentation or accessing administrative procedures, with implications for inheritance, pensions and property rights. Participants also reported uncertainty regarding procedures to recognise children as affected by war and armed conflict, creating inconsistent access to associated entitlements. These findings demonstrate that documentation barriers frequently extend across multiple legal rights, with the absence of one document often preventing access to several administrative processes simultaneously.



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Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by the interaction of conflict-related destruction, displacement, administrative complexity, digitalisation and limited institutional capacity. Ongoing hostilities continue to destroy homes and documentation while increasing demand for legal assistance, compensation and administrative services. Insecurity further restricts outreach, disrupts transport and limits access to government institutions, particularly in frontline and rural areas. Although administrative reforms and digitalisation have improved access for some populations, they have also widened inequalities for older persons, persons with disabilities and people with limited digital skills or connectivity. Financial barriers, including transport costs, technical assessments, replacement documents and court fees, often place legal remedies beyond the reach of conflict-affected households. Limited staffing and capacity within Compensation Commissions, Pension Fund offices and local authorities contribute to processing delays and inconsistent implementation.

These barriers delay access to documentation, compensation and social benefits, reinforcing prolonged displacement, housing insecurity, poverty and exclusion from essential services.

Protection Risk 9: Trafficking in persons

The risk of human trafficking and related exploitation remained significant during April–June 2026, with vulnerability increasing across assessed Oblasts as households faced deteriorating livelihoods, displacement, poverty and growing reliance on informal employment. While few confirmed trafficking cases were identified through protection monitoring, qualitative findings indicate an increasingly permissive environment for exploitation characterised by deceptive recruitment, unsafe labour migration, document confiscation, debt-related coercion, labour exploitation and sexual exploitation. The distinction between poor working conditions, labour-rights violations and trafficking was often poorly understood, increasing the likelihood that exploitative practices remain normalised and underreported.

Protection monitoring identified trafficking-related indicators across several Oblasts. The most serious concerns were reported in Sumy Oblast, where respondents described alleged document and bank-card confiscation, forced labour in exchange for food, intimidation by employers, exploitation of homeless persons and child labour. In Kharkiv Oblast, participants reported a known case involving deceptive overseas recruitment and emerging concerns regarding online grooming for sexual exploitation.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, monitoring identified one reported incident involving retention of identity documents to compel repayment of a debt, alongside widespread informal and seasonal employment without written contracts. Although no direct trafficking cases were identified in Mykolaiv, Kherson or Donetsk Oblasts, monitoring found that displacement, unemployment and increasing reliance on temporary or informal work continued to expose households to exploitative conditions. In Muzykivska Hromada, Kherson Oblast, an FGD participant described an exploitative arrangement: ***“A man offered me a job cleaning his properties in exchange for a free room and a small salary. Once I moved my things, he took my documents ‘for registration’ and told me I owed him for the food I ate. When I tried to leave, he told me no one would look for an IDP anyway.”*** Official data indicating recognised trafficking survivors in Mykolaiv and Kherson further suggest that trafficking remains an ongoing protection concern despite limited case identification through community monitoring.

Across assessed areas, exploitation most commonly occurred along a continuum of unsafe employment practices, including unpaid or delayed wages, excessive working hours, undeclared work and verbal employment agreements that left workers without legal protections or effective avenues to seek redress. Approximately 27% of surveyed households in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia reported relying on seasonal or informal work to meet basic needs. Participants consistently linked financial hardship and limited livelihood opportunities to an increased willingness to accept insecure employment despite known risks. In Sumy Oblast, one respondent explained that people were ***“forced to beg, steal, work for food, or provide sexual services”*** to survive, illustrating how severe economic vulnerability can increase exposure to exploitation.

Monitoring also identified emerging risks associated with labour migration and digital recruitment. Participants described workers accepting employment elsewhere in Ukraine and abroad without sufficient information regarding contracts, labour rights or available support. In Kharkiv, respondents reported a known case of deceptive recruitment through an online job offer abroad, while prosecutors also highlighted emerging online grooming of adolescent girls through social media and digital employment platforms. Women and girls were additionally reported to face heightened risks linked to unsafe accommodation arrangements, suspicious job offers and workplace harassment, particularly where financial dependency limited their ability to refuse exploitative conditions. Child labour concerns were also reported in Sumy and Kherson Oblasts, where adolescents were engaged in informal agricultural and market work, warranting further child protection assessment.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk of trafficking is driven by the interaction of poverty, unemployment, displacement, debt and increasing reliance on informal employment. Conflict-related destruction of businesses and declining livelihood opportunities have reduced access to formal work, particularly in frontline and rural communities, leaving households increasingly dependent on seasonal employment, verbal work agreements and other forms of insecure income. These conditions weaken workers' bargaining power, increase dependence on employers, landlords and intermediaries, and limit access to labour protections and legal remedies. Displacement further compounds these risks by separating people from trusted social networks and increasing reliance on unfamiliar employers and recruiters.

Limited awareness of trafficking indicators, fear of retaliation and restricted access to specialised services further reduce identification and reporting. Many respondents viewed exploitative labour practices as an unavoidable coping strategy rather than a potential rights violation, while fear of dismissal, violence or blacklisting discouraged complaints. Limited access to labour inspections, legal aid and specialised anti-trafficking services, particularly in rural and frontline communities, allows exploitative practices to continue with limited accountability. These interacting factors increase exposure to coercion, document confiscation, forced labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking, while also reinforcing debt, homelessness, psychological distress, family separation, child labour and social exclusion. The findings indicate that trafficking often develops along a continuum of exploitation, where seemingly routine labour abuses progressively evolve into more severe forms of coercion through deception, abuse of vulnerability and restrictions on workers' freedom to leave exploitative situations.

Psychological distress as a structural barrier to protection and recovery

Psychological distress remained a pervasive and cross-cutting protection concern during April–June 2026. Continued exposure to shelling, missile and drone attacks, repeated displacement, housing insecurity, economic hardship and prolonged uncertainty has resulted in sustained psychological strain across all assessed Oblasts. While the severity and immediate drivers varied by location, protection monitoring consistently indicates that psychological distress is no longer solely an immediate consequence of conflict but has become a structural factor influencing people's ability to cope, access services, make informed decisions and pursue recovery or durable solutions.

Across assessed communities, respondents most frequently reported anxiety, fear, chronic stress and uncertainty about the future rather than acute psychological crises. In Donetsk Oblast, 84% of surveyed households reported anxiety and 68% reported fear, while in Sumy Oblast 59% reported anxiety and 35% reported fear. Concerns about the future were the leading source of stress in both Mykolaiv (68%) and Kherson (61%) Oblasts. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, 74% of respondents identified fear of being killed or injured by armed violence as their primary source of stress, followed by concerns about property damage and displacement. These findings demonstrate that psychological distress is primarily driven by prolonged insecurity and uncertainty rather than isolated traumatic events.

Psychological distress is increasingly shaping behaviour and protection outcomes. Across assessed Oblasts, respondents described fear and emotional exhaustion influencing decisions regarding evacuation, return, access to healthcare and public services, employment and investment in damaged housing. Persistent insecurity and repeated attacks reduce people's willingness to leave their homes, participate in community life or seek assistance, while uncertainty surrounding compensation, livelihoods and housing undermines long-term planning and recovery. For many households, psychological distress has become both a consequence of conflict and a factor that reinforces other protection risks.

The cumulative impacts extend beyond individual wellbeing. Communities continue to rely primarily on informal support provided by relatives, neighbours, volunteers and community leaders, yet these coping mechanisms are becoming increasingly strained as conflict becomes more protracted.

Participants described reduced participation in community life, increasing social withdrawal and diminished confidence in the future. Local authorities, social workers and community leaders frequently act as the first point of contact for people experiencing psychological distress despite having limited capacity to provide specialised mental health and psychosocial support. In rural and frontline communities, stigma surrounding mental health and the limited availability of confidential services continue to discourage help-seeking and increase reliance on informal coping strategies.

Certain groups experience particularly complex psychosocial impacts. Parents consistently expressed concerns regarding children's safety, disrupted education and prolonged exposure to conflict, while observations from DRC psychosocial support activities in Kherson indicated increasing numbers of people of concern experiencing prolonged distress associated with missing family members. Unresolved uncertainty regarding the fate of relatives was linked to anxiety, sleep disturbances, panic attacks and feelings of helplessness, illustrating the long-term psychological consequences of unresolved protection concerns.

Structural drivers and protection implications

Psychological distress is driven by the interaction of continued insecurity, repeated displacement, housing insecurity, loss of livelihoods, financial hardship and prolonged uncertainty regarding the future. These factors are reinforced by repeated exposure to attacks, disrupted social networks, damaged community infrastructure and limited access to specialised mental health and psychosocial support.

Stigma surrounding mental health, particularly in rural and conflict-affected communities, together with shortages of confidential services, further limits timely access to care and increases reliance on informal coping mechanisms that are themselves becoming increasingly overstretched.

The consequences extend well beyond mental health. Psychological distress increasingly affects decision-making, social participation, access to services, recovery and community resilience. It contributes to reduced trust in institutions, weakened social cohesion, avoidance of public spaces and delayed engagement with humanitarian and government services. At household level, sustained emotional strain reduces people's ability to make informed decisions regarding displacement, housing, livelihoods and recovery, while increasing vulnerability to poverty, social isolation and other protection risks. These findings demonstrate that psychological distress has become a structural barrier to recovery that both reflects and reinforces the wider humanitarian consequences of the conflict. Addressing psychological distress therefore requires not only expanded mental health and psychosocial support services but also integrated action to reduce the underlying protection risks, including insecurity, displacement, housing insecurity and economic hardship, that continue to drive psychological harm.

Recommendations

Donors and Foreign Diplomatic Missions

- **Prioritise flexible, multi-year funding** for integrated protection programmes combining protection monitoring, case management, legal aid, GBV, child protection, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), HLP, shelter and economic recovery to respond to evolving protection risks.
- **Increase investment in integrated Protection–Shelter–HLP** programming to improve access to safe housing, housing repair, compensation and durable solutions.
- **Expand support for livelihoods and economic recovery programmes** that promote safe employment and reduce vulnerability to labour exploitation, trafficking and negative coping strategies.
- **Strengthen support to national and local systems** responsible for housing compensation, social protection, public service delivery and digital government services.

Protection Actors (Civil Society, UN Agencies and NGOs)

- **Strengthen integrated case management and referral pathways**, ensuring timely access to legal aid, GBV, child protection, MHPSS, shelter, livelihoods and specialised services.
- **Expand mobile and community-based protection services**, including social transportation, to improve access for older persons, persons with disabilities and people in remote or frontline communities.
- **Integrate protection risk mitigation across humanitarian programmes**, including shelter, livelihoods, evacuations and early recovery, with a focus on GBV, child protection, trafficking and exploitation.

- **Strengthen community awareness on available services,** evacuation, documentation, compensation, labour rights, safe migration and trafficking risks through trusted local networks.

National and Local Authorities

- **Improve access** to documentation, compensation, social protection and other essential public services through stronger coordination and expanded mobile service delivery.
- **Strengthen identification and referral systems** for people at heightened protection risk, including older persons, persons with disabilities and socially isolated households.
- **Expand accessible housing, community care and public services** while improving the accessibility of public infrastructure.
- **Strengthen implementation of housing compensation mechanisms** and promote inclusive community participation, including through IDP Councils.
- **Improve risk communication through accessible online and offline channels,** ensuring communities receive timely information on services, evacuations, compensation and protection support.



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