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July – September 2026

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Key Findings

During July–September 2026, protection monitoring indicates that the protection environment across monitored areas continued to deteriorate, as intensifying hostilities, the expanding use of drones against civilians and vehicles, and deepening housing insecurity compounded existing vulnerabilities. The analysis highlights the following key findings:

- **Displacement is increasingly failing to provide lasting safety.** Mandatory evacuations expanded across Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Oblasts, yet high rents, low incomes, insecure routes and limited accessible transport left many people unable to leave safely, with some evacuating on their own under drone threat. Around 50% of evacuees arriving at Voloske Transit Centre had experienced repeated displacement, while attacks on host communities and unaffordable rents are driving onward movement and returns to unsafe areas.
- **Drone attacks have extended the threat well beyond the frontline.** FPV and other drones increasingly struck roads, vehicles, evacuation points and humanitarian operations. Attacks on energy, health and transport infrastructure left some settlements without electricity for more than two weeks, while gaps in shelters and the collapse of emergency services left mainly older residents exposed.
- **State services are withdrawing from frontline areas.** In Donetsk Oblast, the suspension of migration, administrative and social protection services in Kramatorsk, Sloviansk and Oleksandrivka, and of housing compensation payments from 21 August, forced residents to travel long distances for documentation and remedies. Elsewhere, missing ownership documents, lengthy procedures and legal and notarial costs continued to block access to compensation for damaged and destroyed housing.
- **Housing insecurity has become a central, cross-cutting driver of protection risks.** Verbal tenancies are the norm, reported by 78% of surveyed households living in rented accommodation across all areas nleaving displaced households exposed to sudden rent increases, short-notice requests to vacate and the loss of money invested in repairing rented properties. Housing insecurity is closely linked to discrimination in the rental market, GBV, family separation, returns to unsafe areas and psychological distress.
- **GBV remains significantly underreported and closely tied to housing and economic insecurity.** Lack of alternative accommodation, financial dependency and economic coercion, including pressure to trade property rights for child support, limit women's ability to leave abusive situations, while fear of retaliation and low confidence in police responses deter disclosure.
- **Explosive ordnance contamination is becoming more dynamic.** Remote mining along access routes to Kherson city, unexploded ordnance left after attacks in Donetsk Oblast and 563 items identified in a single week on the right bank of Kherson Oblast show that new hazards are emerging alongside residual contamination. Residents continue to avoid land even after clearance, and survivors have limited awareness of rehabilitation and disability-status procedures.

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 July and 30 September 2026, DRC Protection teams surveyed 244 households corresponding to 538 individuals, of whom 59% were female. Half of the households surveyed (50%) were conflict-affected non-displaced households. 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 71 KIIs, including 16 male and 55 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 73 FGDs reaching 431 participants from the wider community, including 332 female and 99 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 to variations in awareness among respondents regarding various thematic topics and protection terminology.

Context

Institutional, legal and normative landscape

During the reporting period, Ukraine introduced further regulatory changes concerning mandatory evacuation, assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the organisation of mental health and psychosocial support services. These developments aim to strengthen protection mechanisms for conflict-affected populations. However, continued insecurity, limited institutional capacity and shortages of accessible services remain significant obstacles to their implementation.

Mental health and psychosocial support

Ukraine continued implementing the Law on the Mental Health Care System (No. 4223-IX), which became operational in February 2026. The Law establishes a framework for organising mental health services across healthcare, social protection and other sectors, with an emphasis on accessibility, service quality and community-based support. During the reporting period, Cabinet Resolution No. 993 of 6 August introduced requirements for professional supervision of mental health practitioners, including measures to improve service quality, maintain professional standards and prevent burnout. Resolution No. 1018 of 13 August further regulated professional self-regulatory organisations, including their responsibilities for ethical standards and professional oversight.

Community resilience services also received further policy support. In September, the Ministry of Social Policy approved methodological recommendations for coordinating volunteer activities and training volunteers through Centres of Resilience. These recommendations promote community-based support, including psychological first aid, stress management and assistance to vulnerable groups.

While these measures may improve the quality and coordination of mental health and psychosocial support, their practical impact depends on the availability of qualified personnel, functioning referral systems and accessible services at the local level. In frontline and receiving communities, insecurity, transport barriers, displacement and the

disruption of public services can limit access to support, particularly for older persons, persons with disabilities and people experiencing prolonged conflict-related distress. Strengthening the regulatory framework therefore needs to be accompanied by sufficient service capacity and continuity of care.

Evacuation and post-evacuation assistance

The legal framework governing evacuation was further developed during the reporting period. Cabinet Resolution No. 1023 of 13 August amended the national evacuation procedures under Resolution No. 841, clarifying arrangements for mandatory evacuation from areas of active and potential hostilities. The amendments distinguish between general evacuation and measures targeting specific vulnerable groups, including children, older persons and persons with disabilities. They also provide for specialised evacuation teams involving the State Emergency Service and National Police, particularly where security conditions prevent ordinary evacuation services from operating.

Additional safeguards concerning children were introduced through Cabinet Resolution No. 953 of 15 July. The amendments establish procedures for evacuating children without parental accompaniment where parents or legal representatives refuse to accompany them. They also regulate the responsibilities of guardianship authorities and police, temporary placement, needs assessments and subsequent protection arrangements. These measures are particularly relevant to maintaining family unity and ensuring appropriate care after evacuation.

Post-evacuation support was also addressed through changes to IDP assistance. Cabinet Resolution No. 1087 of 3 September allowed eligible IDPs to receive living allowances for an additional six-month period, including automatic extensions for certain recipients. This measure provides additional financial support to displaced households but remains subject to eligibility requirements and does not resolve shortages of affordable and accessible accommodation.

Cabinet Resolution No. 728 of 4 June 2026 introduced additional conditions for continued residence in official places of temporary accommodation, allowing the termination of agreements where unemployed, working-age IDPs fail to meet specified employment-related requirements within three months, subject to exemptions for certain vulnerable groups. Protection monitoring in Sumy Oblast indicates that the application of these provisions may create risks of family separation, particularly where household composition, caregiving responsibilities and applicable exemptions are not adequately considered.

Taken together, these developments strengthen the procedural framework for evacuation and assistance to displaced people. However, the availability of evacuation transport, accessible accommodation and essential services remains critical. The protection monitoring findings indicate that some households continue to face difficulties leaving high-risk areas, while others experience repeated displacement because they cannot secure sustainable accommodation. Effective protection therefore depends not only on the adoption of legislation but also on the capacity of local authorities and receiving communities to ensure safe evacuation, continuity of assistance and appropriate support after arrival.

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 remained high across all assessed areas during July–September 2026 and increased in Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Oblasts, where intensified shelling and the expanding use of FPV drones and guided aerial bombs accelerated displacement while making departure itself more dangerous. In Kharkiv Oblast, localised deterioration was reported in Chuhuivska Hromada. In Sumy and Mykolaiv Oblasts, the risk manifested less through new large-scale displacement and more through the difficulty of sustaining displacement and barriers to everyday mobility. Household monitoring confirms that conflict remains the overwhelming driver of displacement: shelling and attacks on civilians were cited as reasons for leaving by 95% of those surveyed.

The scale of displacement was most evident in Donetsk Oblast, where approximately 18,000 residents, including 1,317 children, left the oblast in September alone. As of 30 September, approximately 77,500 residents remained in government-controlled areas of the oblast, concentrated mainly in Kramatorsk (30,100) and Sloviansk (24,200) Hromadas[1]. Mandatory evacuation measures expanded across all eastern and southern frontline areas. In Donetsk Oblast, mandatory evacuation of children accompanied by parents or legal guardians was extended on 16 September to additional areas of Sviatohirsk, Sloviansk and Novodonetske Hromadas[2]. In Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, measures covered further settlements in seven hromadas of Synelnykivskyi raion, and in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, mandatory evacuation of families with children in Komyshuvaska and Bilenkivska Hromadas was announced on 21 August. In Kherson Oblast, the Oblast Military Administration repeatedly called on residents of high-risk hromadas to evacuate, while Protection Cluster partners raised concerns about the limited capacity of accommodation facilities to absorb additional arrivals in the event of large-scale evacuation.

However, findings from protection monitoring indicate that expanding evacuation measures have not been translated into a corresponding ability to leave safely. Across areas, monitoring identified a widening gap between awareness of danger and the practical capacity to evacuate. In Kherson Oblast, FGD participants displaced from Dariivska Hromada following guided aerial bomb strikes and systematic drone attacks reported the absence of organised evacuation and limited information on available options: ***"We left on our own — using tractors and motorcycles, under the risk of drone attacks."*** — FGD participant, Kalynivska Hromada, Kherson Oblast. In Mylivska Hromada, drone threats and mine contamination meant that residents of riverside villages had to walk independently to a designated settlement before organised evacuation could begin. In Zaporizhzhia Oblast, Protection Cluster partners reported that daily arrivals at the Zaporizhzhia transit centre fell from approximately 250 to 50 people despite continuing insecurity, with some households requesting evacuation only after their homes had been directly damaged[3]. Damage to railway infrastructure on evacuation routes from Donetsk Oblast and between Zaporizhzhia and Dnipro, together with restricted humanitarian access in frontline hromadas, further narrowed options for people unable to leave independently.

[1] https://dn.gov.ua/news/ne-zvolikaite-z-evakuatsiieiu-tse-zberezhe-vashe-zhyttia
[2] https://dn.gov.ua/en/news/u-donetskii-oblasti-rozshyreno-zonu-oboviazkovoi-evakuatsii-ditei-u-prymusovyi-sposib
[3] Protection Cluster Coordination meeting in Zaporizhzhia – July 2026



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Financial constraints remained among the most consistent barriers to evacuation across all areas. In Sloviansk, FGD participants noted that rental accommodation in safer regions may cost UAH 10,000–15,000 per month, while some pensions amount to UAH 3,000–4,000. Despite escalating insecurity, 56% of surveyed respondents in Donetsk Oblast intended to remain in their habitual place of residence. In Kharkiv Oblast, FGD participants described living in a state of readiness rather than having a viable plan to leave: ***"Our bags are packed. If we have to lose the house, then it means it has to be this way."*** — FGD participant, Savynska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast. These findings indicate that decisions to remain are frequently shaped by the absence of affordable and safe alternatives.

Displacement is also increasingly failing to provide lasting safety. Repeated displacement emerged as a challenge, as previously established places of displacement themselves became unsafe or unaffordable. According to information presented at the August Protection Cluster meeting in Dnipro, approximately 50% of evacuees arriving at Voloske Transit Centre had experienced repeated displacement, many having fled Donetsk Oblast to Synelnykivskyi raion before renewed insecurity forced them to move again. Although not directly comparable with household monitoring data, in which 22% of surveyed households reported multiple displacements in April–June, this suggests that repeated displacement is becoming more common among newly evacuated populations. At the same time, approximately 88% of evacuees reportedly self-settled outside collective sites and 84% wished to remain in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, placing additional pressure on affordable housing and services in receiving communities. In Sumy Oblast, IDPs from border areas described relying on proximity to home and existing social ties but feared that few options would remain if insecurity spread:

"The situation in Sumy is not the best. If something happens, there is nowhere else to go." — FGD participant, Sumy.

Loss of accommodation in places of displacement is increasingly driving onward movement and returns to unsafe areas. In Kharkiv Oblast, participants in Iziumska, Savynska and Kharkivska Hromadas described households returning to unsafe areas because they could not sustain rental costs (*see the section on theft, extortion, forced eviction or destruction of personal property*). Similar patterns were reported in Sumy Oblast: ***"After people are evicted from houses because the owners are planning to sell them, many go back home, under shelling, if their houses have not yet been destroyed and are still somehow suitable for living."*** — FGD participant, Buryn, Sumy Oblast. Administrative barriers, including outdated territorial classifications that delayed IDP registration for people leaving parts of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, further undermined sustainable displacement.

For those who remain, freedom of movement is increasingly constrained by the combined effects of insecurity, transport isolation and individual mobility limitations. In Donetsk Oblast, 79% of surveyed respondents reported barriers to freedom of movement, an increase of 46% compared with April–June, and residents of Sloviansk reported restricting movement to essential activities. In Kharkiv Oblast, fear of attacks and explosive hazards prompted avoidance of certain areas and restrictions on children's movement. Attacks on civilian infrastructure also lengthened journeys to essential services; in Velykooleksandrivska Hromada, Kherson Oblast, a key informant reported that a pharmacy and a petrol station had recently been destroyed. Transport isolation compounds these constraints. In Zoloti Prudy, Donetsk Oblast, there is no regular public transport, while in Raivska Hromada, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, public transport operates approximately three times a week at a cost of around UAH 80 to Synelnykove, rising to UAH 200 from more remote villages.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by escalating hostilities, the advancing frontline and expanding drone attacks on housing, energy and transport infrastructure, which compel people to leave while making departure more dangerous. Insecure evacuation routes, strikes on evacuation points and humanitarian vehicles, damaged railways and limited accessible transport disproportionately affect older persons, persons with disabilities and people with reduced mobility, increasing their dependence on assisted evacuation.

High rents, low pensions and incomes, and shortages of affordable, accessible housing restrict households' ability both to leave and to sustain displacement, while territorial classifications that lag behind security conditions hinder IDP registration and assistance. Attachment to homes and livelihoods, and uncertainty about life after evacuation, lead many to delay departure until danger becomes acute. Consequences include prolonged exposure to hostilities, unsafe self-evacuation, repeated displacement, premature returns, family separation and psychological distress. The central challenge is no longer only leaving but reaching and remaining in lasting safety.

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

Attacks on civilians and civilian objects remained very high across all assessed areas during July–September 2026 and increased in Donetsk, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, with localised escalation also reported in Kherson and Mykolaiv Oblasts. The reporting period saw the further expansion of drone attacks targeting vehicles, roads and humanitarian operations, extending the threat beyond immediate frontline areas into transport routes, host communities and places where civilians seek assistance. According to OHCHR, at

least 437 civilians were killed and 2,610 injured in Ukraine in July 2026, a 30% increase in civilian casualties compared to June 2026 (298 killed; 2,041 injured), the highest number of civilians killed since May 2022[4].

The most marked deterioration was reported in Donetsk Oblast, where key informants described intensified shelling, more frequent FPV drone attacks, and an increase in guided aerial bombs over the quarter. In Oleksandrivska Hromada, residents were reported to be leaving daily, and Hromova Balka and Holubivka in the Ocheretyne starostynskyi district were classified as high-risk zones with very few residents remaining, while Myrna Dolyna became completely inaccessible for security reasons. In Sloviansk, a key informant noted: ***"The city has recently been classified as a combat zone."*** In Novodonetske, where most remaining residents are older persons, the majority of buildings have been damaged or destroyed by shelling and FPV drone attacks. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, key informants in Shakhtarska Hromada, Synelnykivskyi raion, and Mykhailivska Hromada, Zaporizkyi raion, reported attacks several times per week, damaging residential areas and civilian facilities, including a gymnasium, an Administrative Services Centre (CNAP) and a village council building.

Attacks on energy, health, commercial and transport infrastructure generated cascading effects beyond immediate physical damage. In Novodonetske in Donetsk Oblast, residents were without electricity for 16–18 days, the hospital is not operating, most shops have closed and there is no public transport. In Mykhailivka, Donetsk Oblast, a missile strike on high-voltage power lines left the village without electricity and water for three days, while in Chuhuivska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast, participants reported outages lasting up to three days after attacks. In Kherson Oblast, the Kherson Combined Heat and Power Plant was critically damaged in August, and the South WASH Sub-Cluster raised concerns that limited alternative heating capacity could disrupt heating services and trigger further displacement ahead of winter. Attacks also damaged supermarkets, shops and a shopping centre in Kherson city, creating challenges for civilians to safely access essential goods. In Mykolaiv Oblast, FGD participants in Ochakivska Hromada reported that regular shelling and drone activity prevented the installation of already-procured modular housing for IDPs.

Attacks are also eroding the systems intended to protect civilians. In the Mykhailivka starostynskyi district of Oleksandrivska Hromada, Donetsk Oblast, a key informant reported that police and firefighters no longer respond to calls, leaving residents to extinguish fires themselves, with only two police officers and one family doctor serving five settlements. Gaps in civil protection infrastructure further increase exposure. In Mykhailivka village, Zaporizkyi raion, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, monitoring identified no designated bomb shelters, while in Zaporizhzhia city older persons and people with reduced mobility in collective accommodation faced physical barriers to reaching available shelters. In Chuhuivska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast, participants described older residents being unable to reach safety as quickly as others. In Sumy Oblast, newly displaced people reported that they lacked information on shelter locations and what to do during air raid alerts: ***"A person needs to know their way around the city. They don't know whether this area is safe or not. What is here, where to run in case of an air raid alert."*** — KII, Sumy.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by intensifying hostilities near populated areas, increased use of guided aerial bombs and missiles, and the expanding use of FPV drones, which reduce warning time and extend the threat to civilians. Attacks on energy, health, commercial and transport infrastructure disrupt essential services, while missing or inaccessible shelters and reduced emergency service capacity weaken civilians' ability to seek safety.

[4] https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/Protection-of-Civilians-in-Armed-Conflict-July-2026

Older persons, persons with disabilities and people with reduced mobility are least able to reach shelter or leave and often remain where services have collapsed. Consequences include destroyed housing, repeated displacement, prolonged power and water outages, interrupted healthcare and livelihoods, self-imposed movement restrictions and sustained psychological distress, progressively eroding households' capacity to recover.

Protection Risk 3: Presence of mines and other explosive ordnance

The risk posed by mines and other explosive ordnance remained high across assessed areas during July–September 2026. Contamination continued to combine longstanding hazards from previous fighting with new and less predictable threats, including remote mining of transport routes and unexploded munitions left by ongoing attacks. The risk was most dynamic in Kherson and Donetsk Oblasts, where active hostilities continue to generate new hazards, and most entrenched in Kharkiv and Mykolaiv Oblasts, where residual contamination of agricultural land, forests and coastal areas continues to shape daily life. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, no specific mine or UXO incidents were identified through protection monitoring, but explosive hazards remained a significant driver of insecurity and displacement. Explosive ordnance was identified as a barrier to freedom of movement by 26% of those surveyed.

In Kharkiv Oblast, fear of contamination (as opposed to actual contamination) remains embedded in daily life even where clearance has taken place. In Chuhuivska Hromada, a key informant noted: ***"Forests are polluted, some areas have been demined."*** Another reported that a humanitarian organisation had cleared previously contaminated agricultural land, yet residents continued to avoid forest belts and plantations **"just in case"**. As one FGD participant explained: ***"We used to go to the forest, but now it's better not to go there at all."*** These findings demonstrate that clearing some areas does not automatically restore confidence in the safety of surrounding land, and that the protection concern extends beyond mines to explosive remnants of war and uncertainty about the safety of routes.

In Kherson Oblast, the risk combined residual contamination in de-occupied areas with new remote-mining incidents. INSO recorded remote-mining and mine-related incidents along access routes to Kherson city in July, illustrating how explosive hazards can emerge suddenly along key transport routes rather than only in known contaminated areas. The scale of residual contamination is also significant: between 3 and 9 September alone, demining teams identified 563 items of explosive ordnance on the right bank of the oblast[5]. FGD participants in Kalynivska Hromada reported mined areas around their settlement, which, combined with transport isolation, further restricted the safe use of surrounding land. In Mylivska Hromada, contamination and drone threats have cut off some villages from regular assistance: ***"Humanitarian organisations are not reaching these areas because their access is restricted by security concerns. Food and fuel for generators are delivered on foot by volunteers, who risk their lives due to the threat of drone attacks and the presence of mines."*** KII,Mylivska Hromada, Kherson Oblast.

In Donetsk Oblast, explosive hazards increasingly overlap with active hostilities. The Donetsk Oblast Military Administration warned that unexploded ordnance and other explosive hazards may remain on roads, in residential yards and inside damaged buildings following attacks, extending the risk into settlements and everyday routes. In Zoloti Prudy, FGD participants reported that they avoid fields and surrounding areas because of regular shelling and the potential presence of explosive ordnance, restricting agricultural activity and livelihoods.

[5] https://khoda.gov.ua/news/rozminuvannia-khersonshchyny-03092026-09092026

In Mykolaiv Oblast, the risk is primarily associated with residual contamination in areas previously affected by hostilities and, increasingly, in maritime and coastal zones. According to the Mykolaiv Oblast Military Administration, explosive ordnance incidents at sea during the summer in Koblivska Hromada resulted in civilian deaths and injuries, confirming that the threat extends beyond agricultural land to coastal and recreational areas.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by past and ongoing hostilities, longstanding contamination, remote mining and repeated attacks that leave unexploded munitions in settlements and on roads. Fear about the risk of recontamination and restricted access for mine action actors in frontline areas compound these hazards, while contaminated roads disrupt transport and humanitarian access. Households dependent on land-based livelihoods have few alternatives to using potentially hazardous land, while older persons, persons with disabilities and people with reduced mobility have fewer options to avoid unsafe

routes. Consequences include restricted movement, loss of livelihoods, delayed or unsafe return, disrupted access to services and psychological distress.

Protection Risk 4: Child and forced family separation

The risk of child and forced family separation remained present across all assessed areas during July–September 2026 and increased in Donetsk Oblast, where intensified hostilities and expanding mandatory evacuation of families with children accelerated staggered household movement. As in the previous quarter, protection monitoring found that the separation of children from their parents or caregivers remained rare. Instead, the risk manifested mainly through the geographical separation of adult family members, older relatives remaining behind, and growing pressure on families unable to relocate or live together. A new administrative driver also emerged in Sumy Oblast, linked to changes in eligibility rules for collective accommodation.

Evacuation patterns were most pronounced in Donetsk Oblast. July saw an annual high of 21,499 evacuees, an increase of 39% compared with June, while a further 8,255 people passed through transit centres in the first half of September[6]. Around 45% of evacuees had limited mobility and children accounted for only around 15%, reflecting a remaining population increasingly made up of older persons and persons with disabilities[7]. The Donetsk Oblast Military Administration announced that the mandatory evacuation of children from 16 villages in Novodonetska Hromada must be completed by 15 October, with families gathered in Oleksandrivka and taken to a reception centre in Lozova, Kharkiv Oblast. In the ten villages of the Novooleksandrivka starostynskyi district, informants reported that only 87 children remain. In Kherson Oblast, mandatory evacuation expanded to additional settlements in Tiahynska and Borozenska Hromadas and parts of Kherson city, while measures in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts are described in the section on freedom of movement and forced displacement.

Mandatory evacuation measures also raise procedural concerns. In Kherson Oblast, the Oblast Military Administration reported in September that some families with children continued to remain in high-risk areas despite evacuation measures, and that cases in which parents or caregivers refused to evacuate were addressed through court proceedings. At the time of writing, no information was available on whether children had been removed from their caregivers as a result of court proceedings. While mandatory child evacuation is intended

[6] Donetska Oblast Evacuation Factsheet - September 2026
[7] Ibid.

to protect children from immediate danger, its implementation requires robust safeguards, individual assessment and family-centred planning to avoid unnecessary separation.

Across areas, families consistently described a pattern of staggered displacement. Informants in Oleksandrivka, Ocheretyne, the Mykhailivka starostynskyi district and Sloviansk, Donetsk Oblast, reported that women and children leave while men remain because of fear of mobilisation, work or the need to protect property. This separation was generally described as voluntary and temporary, with children usually leaving with their mothers; cases where a child is evacuated while both parents remain were described as rare. Similar patterns were reported in Novopokrovska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast, and in Sumy Oblast, where key informants described women with children relocating to safer settlements while other family members remained. In Buryn, a key informant explained how attachment to property sustains this arrangement: ***"Some people continue to travel back to their homes from time to time, even if this involves certain risks. Families often remain effectively separated: some have left, while others have stayed at home."*** KII, Buryn, Sumy Oblast.

Older persons and family members with care needs are increasingly those left behind. In Donetsk Oblast, FGD participants and key informants reported that households headed by older persons make up a growing share of the remaining population as younger people leave. In Kherson Oblast, families described being unable to relocate together because of the care needs of older relatives: ***"My mother will stay here — there is no possibility to take her away."*** — FGD participant, Muzykivska Hromada, Kherson Oblast. Overstretched evacuation capacity compounds this risk. In the Mykhailivka starostynskyi district, Donetsk Oblast, the starosta reported that one evacuation provider limits luggage to two bags, does not transport people with reduced mobility and has a waiting list of three to five days, leaving a single organisation as the only option for residents with reduced mobility. Economic and seasonal factors also delay departure, with many households lacking funds or accommodation elsewhere and some farmers waiting for the harvest to finish.

Shortages of accommodation suitable for large and multigenerational households create additional pressure on families to separate after evacuation. In Zaporizhzhia city, a displaced woman described the difficulties her family faced after leaving Malokaterynivka, Kushuhumska Hromada: ***"We left Malokaterynivka together with the elderly people I care for. We could not find housing because there are many of us, and among us there are bedridden people. We were immediately told that no one would accommodate such a large number of people."*** Although the available evidence does not establish that such pressures resulted in forced separation during the reporting period, landlord restrictions and the lack of accessible accommodation can force families to choose between separate living arrangements and inadequate temporary housing. In Kharkiv Oblast, repeated displacement further strained family arrangements: ***"Where are they supposed to move? They have already moved once, and now they have to start all over again." —*** KII, Savynska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast.

In Sumy Oblast, monitoring identified an emerging administrative risk linked to Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 728 of 4 June 2026. According to the area team, working-age IDPs in collective centres who are unemployed and not registered with an employment centre may lose their right to reside there, a requirement that is particularly difficult to meet in rural communities with limited employment opportunities. One participant described how this threatens to divide her family: ***"They are practically separating my family here. We have all lived together in this collective centre for almost 2 years. And now the situation is that my husband (who has a disability) and my underage daughter can stay, while my older daughter and I have to move out by December."*** — FGD participant, Chapliivka, Sumy Oblast. This illustrates how eligibility rules applied at the individual rather than household level can create new separation risks, including for children and family members with disabilities.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by intensifying hostilities, expanding mandatory evacuation of families with children, mobilisation-related constraints and attachment to homes and livelihoods, which lead family members to make different decisions about leaving. Women and children are commonly prioritised for evacuation, while men often remain because of work, mobilisation fears or protecting property, and older persons and people with reduced mobility may be unable or unwilling to leave.

Limited funds, shortages of accessible accommodation for large and multigenerational households, landlord restrictions and evacuation services unable to transport people with reduced mobility make joint relocation difficult. Separation disrupts caregiving, isolates older persons and persons with disabilities left behind, and increases distress among children and caregivers. Without family-centred evacuation planning and safeguards in applying evacuation and accommodation rules, temporary separation risks becoming prolonged.

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 across all assessed areas during July–September 2026. As in the previous quarter, monitoring found no evidence of systematic or intentional discrimination in access to humanitarian assistance or public services. Unequal access more commonly arose from structural barriers, eligibility criteria and insecurity than from deliberate exclusion. Direct discrimination was reported in the private rental market and in attitudes towards IDPs based on their place of origin. Compared with April–June, when direct discrimination was most evident in employment, findings this quarter point to housing as the principal arena in which displaced people experience exclusion.

Stigmatisation linked to place of origin was reported in several areas. In Donetsk Oblast, isolated cases were documented of residents facing discrimination based on their place of birth or registration when seeking housing or work in other regions of Ukraine, creating additional barriers to safe displacement and integration. In Ochakivska Hromada, Mykolaiv Oblast, FGD participants described prejudice among host community members towards IDPs from Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, linked to stereotypes about their perceived responsibility for the escalation of hostilities, which reportedly hindered their access to rental accommodation. Experiences of rejection in displacement can also drive returns to unsafe areas. FGD participants in Chornobaivska Hromada, Kherson Oblast, reported returning home after encountering hostility while living in Vinnytsia Oblast: ***"You have all come here, go back to Kherson. That is what we heard directed at us."***

At the same time, attitudes are neither uniform nor static. A member of an IDP Council in Sumy Oblast observed that landlords are more willing to rent to IDPs from Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts than in earlier years: ***"Now people in Sumy Oblast understand that occupation and the loss of housing can happen to anyone, and that everyone needs help."*** The same informant described a single mother with young children who was refused accommodation in Poltava but found housing and local support without difficulty after returning to Trostianets, Sumy Oblast, illustrating how acceptance varies across regions. Some displaced people also cited concerns about language when considering further relocation; an FGD participant in Chapliivka, Sumy Oblast, said that, as a native Russian speaker, their family would feel uncomfortable moving to central or western Ukraine.

Exclusion in the private rental market was most frequently linked to household characteristics and care needs rather than financial capacity alone. In Petrykivka, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, FGD participants described landlords' reluctance to accommodate persons with disabilities or reduced mobility: ***"Homeowners are extremely reluctant to agree to settle families that include people with limited mobility or people with***

disabilities. They argue that such residents require constant and more thorough care." In Kharkiv Oblast, a KII in Kharkivska Hromada reported refusals to rent because of IDP status, while FGD participants in Iziumska Hromada described landlords turning away families with young children over concerns about noise or property damage. Households with pets faced similar barriers in Zaporizhzhia city and Sumy Oblast: ***"Today they are already asking our whole family to move out, and nowhere wants to take us with animals."*** - KII, Sumy. These practices interact with high rents (see the section on theft, extortion, forced eviction or destruction of personal property) and with landlords' reported preference for tenants perceived as having greater purchasing power, including military personnel. In Sumy Oblast, participants also reported that sellers offer substantial discounts for cash, leaving holders of state housing certificates at a disadvantage in the housing market.

Despite these pressures, social cohesion remained an important protective factor. In Donetsk Oblast, relations between residents and IDPs were described as friendly, with only 1% of surveyed respondents reporting poor intercommunity relations. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, all surveyed respondents described intercommunity relations as acceptable (51%), good (45%) or very good (4%), and displaced residents in Sofiivka described mutual assistance with childcare and support for neighbours with reduced mobility. However, competition for scarce housing and differences in assistance received between IDPs in collective accommodation and those renting privately, as reported in Sumy, could undermine relationships if left unaddressed.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by prolonged displacement, scarce and costly housing, economic hardship and stereotypes about place of origin, disability and care needs. Competition for rental accommodation strengthens landlords' bargaining power, enabling selective practices that exclude households perceived as more demanding. Informal rentals, the cash-based housing market and eligibility rules tied to categories or documentation further disadvantage people who cannot meet formal requirements, even when they are in need. Exclusion reinforces poverty and inadequate accommodation and can drive secondary displacement or returns to unsafe areas.

Protection Risk 6: Disinformation and denial of access to information

The risk of denial of access to information remained significant during July–September 2026. As in the previous quarter, protection monitoring found no evidence of systematic or deliberate denial of information by authorities in any assessed area. Instead, the principal risk arose from practical barriers that prevent people from obtaining timely, reliable and actionable information. The nature of these barriers differed by context. In frontline communities, disrupted electricity and mobile networks increasingly cut people off from life-saving security and evacuation information. Among displaced populations, the main gaps concerned housing options, entitlements and remedies, as households attempted to navigate unfamiliar service systems after relocation.

In Donetsk Oblast, prolonged power outages disrupted mobile service and internet access and caused the air raid warning system to stop functioning in some areas. In Novodonetske, Nekremenne and Ocheretyne, residents experienced prolonged disruptions or a complete absence of mobile coverage, limiting their ability to receive security alerts, access verified information on evacuation and assistance, and contact emergency services or relatives.

The digital divide continued to determine who receives information. In both frontline and displacement settings, information on services, assistance and housing is increasingly shared through hromada chats, Telegram channels and social media, which many older persons, people with limited digital skills and those without suitable devices cannot use. As one participant in Kherson Oblast explained: ***"I have a basic mobile***

phone, so I am not aware of all the information that others can find out by reading the hromada's chat in the messenger." In Sumy Oblast, a key informant noted: ***"Pensioners often do not know how to use social media, which makes finding housing much more difficult."*** — KII, Shostka. In Donetsk Oblast, older residents who do not use messaging apps rely on neighbours and acquaintances to relay announcements, including on humanitarian aid. This mutual support partially fills the gap but can result in unequal and delayed access to information.

Newly displaced people reported facing particular difficulties obtaining information after evacuation. Participants in Vysochanska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast, described uncertainty about where to turn: ***"They feel abandoned: it is not clear where they should go, who to turn to for information or help."*** In Sumy Oblast, systematic sources of information on rental housing for IDPs were described as virtually non-existent, particularly in rural areas. Displaced people without relatives or acquaintances in safer communities therefore struggle to identify accommodation: ***"There is no housing, it is hard to find, there are no advertisements, and this is already the second time we are moving." —*** FGD participant, Stepanivka, Sumy Oblast. In Zaporizhzhia city, displaced participants dependent on pensions and IDP allowances were unaware of any support for long-term rental accommodation.

Limited understanding of entitlements, eligibility criteria and procedures also restricted access to remedies. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, displaced households reported difficulties understanding state housing compensation mechanisms, including eligibility requirements, documentation procedures and the practical conditions for using housing certificates. In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, awareness of housing programmes for IDPs was low. Some respondents attributed the limited availability of the rural housing programme in their hromadas to inaction by local authorities, without being aware that it excludes settlements in areas of possible or active hostilities or under occupation. This illustrates how unclear communication of eligibility criteria can generate perceptions of unequal treatment. Monitoring in both oblasts also found low awareness among explosive ordnance survivors of procedures for establishing war-related disability status and accessing prosthetic services. In Kharkivska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast, FGD participants reported limited awareness of free legal aid, rental support and assistance for people affected by explosive devices, while a key informant identified lack of information and fear of refusal as barriers to seeking housing assistance. As a KII in Sumy summarised: ***"A person does not know what they can ask a social protection worker or an employee of the Pension Fund. They do not know which organisations are responsible for what."***

No systematic disinformation or deliberate dissemination of false information was recorded through protection monitoring during the reporting period, including in Donetsk Oblast, where conflict-related disinformation was identified as a specific risk in April–June. However, growing reliance on Telegram channels and informal networks, particularly where official channels are disrupted, continues to expose people to unverified content whose origin and accuracy cannot easily be checked. Continued monitoring of disinformation targeting conflict-affected communities therefore remains important.

Where structured local communication mechanisms exist, access to information is notably better. In Myrolyubivka, Raivska Hromada, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, participants described functioning communication through the local starosta, stable internet connectivity and access to some administrative services through remote CNAP arrangements. In parts of Chuhuivska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast, the starosta's office, community chat groups and neighbours shared information about services effectively. In Donetsk Oblast, local authorities and humanitarian organisations prioritised information on evacuation procedures, routes and contacts for residents of deteriorating areas. These examples demonstrate the protective value of trusted local focal points, particularly for people who cannot access digital channels.



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Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by conflict-related damage to energy and communications infrastructure, growing reliance on digital channels, and complex, changing procedures for housing, compensation and social protection. Power outages and lost mobile coverage disrupt warning systems and verified information precisely in the most dangerous locations, while displacement into unfamiliar communities leaves households unsure where to seek help. Limited digital literacy, lack of devices, social isolation and reduced mobility mean that people already facing barriers to services are least likely to receive timely information. Informal networks partly fill the gap but produce unequal, delayed access and exposure to unverified content. Consequences include delayed evacuation decisions, missed alerts, inability to secure housing, missed compensation and rehabilitation, and psychological distress, while unclear eligibility rules erode trust in authorities. Access to information depends not only on availability but also on people's ability to receive, understand, verify and act on it.

Protection Risk 7: Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) remained a significant protection risk during July–September 2026. No marked increase in disclosed incidents was identified in any assessed area, but this should not be interpreted as an absence of GBV. Persistent stigma, fear of retaliation, economic dependency, low confidence in institutional responses and limited access to specialised services continue to suppress disclosure, and GBV is likely to remain substantially underreported. Across areas, findings consistently show that housing insecurity both increases women's exposure to violence and exploitation and traps them in harmful situations by limiting their options to leave.

The clearest evidence of this relationship came from Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, where FGD participants described the lack of alternative accommodation as a key barrier to escaping violence. As one woman in

Arkhanhelske, Kherson Oblast, explained: ***"A woman has nowhere to go if, for example, her husband beats her, if she has no relatives, no savings, and, frankly, nowhere to stay. Before, when things were stable and there was no war, it didn't feel this way."*** Similar concerns were raised in Novopokrovka, Kharkiv Oblast, where participants reported that some women cannot leave their accommodation because they lack alternative housing, work or care arrangements, and that financial dependence on a partner can be used as a means of control. In Sofiivka, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, women similarly described how limited financial resources and housing options could prevent them from leaving potentially unsafe arrangements.

Monitoring also identified economic and legal coercion linked to property and family support. In Pivdennoukrainsk, Mykolaiv Oblast, FGD participants reported cases in which husbands offered to waive claims to a woman's housing only if she gave up her right to child support, and described child support being repeatedly used as a means of pressure and as a condition for obtaining or retaining property rights. These practices undermine women's financial stability and autonomy and illustrate how economic violence can operate through legal and administrative processes. In Sebyne, Mykolaiv Oblast, women reported that fear of eviction pushes them to accept unstable, unsafe or underpaid work, including in areas exposed to shelling, while chronic stress and uncertainty affect the mental health of both women and children.

Conditions in collective and shared accommodation continue to shape women's safety. In Sofiivka, women raised concerns about safety and privacy in shared living environments, including alcohol-related disturbances involving neighbours. In Tsarychanka, predominantly older displaced women living in collective accommodation described limited prospects for independent housing. While no physical threats or sexual coercion were reported within the assessed site, dependence on temporary accommodation and social assistance could increase vulnerability to GBV.

Participants in Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts did not report sexual exploitation or demands for intimate relations in exchange for housing. However, monitoring identified rental arrangements that may increase women's dependence on landlords. In Novopokrovka, Kharkiv Oblast, owners offered free accommodation in return for looking after the house and land, while in Pokotylivka landlords promised low rent in exchange for tenant-funded repairs and then raised it substantially. In Sumy Oblast, no incidents of GBV were reported through household monitoring, but a key informant expressed concern about rental advertisements by male landlords seeking exclusively female tenants: ***"It is not known why he is only interested in female tenants."*** — KII, Sumy. While this does not confirm any incident, it highlights the need for continued attention to potential exploitation risks in informal rental markets.

Safety in public spaces remained a concern. In Novopokrovka, Kharkiv Oblast, women and girls reported feeling unsafe moving alone in the evening, with some citing the large number of newly arrived residents and military personnel as additional factors. In Donetsk Oblast, the presence of military personnel and ongoing population movements were noted as potential concerns, although no related incidents were confirmed.

Barriers to disclosure and help-seeking remained substantial across all areas. In Pokotylivka, Kharkiv Oblast, FGD participants stated that calling the police may worsen a woman's situation, as a perpetrator may be detained for 15 days, return and retaliate. In Sofiivka, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, women described limited availability of qualified service providers, difficulties accessing legal support and negative experiences with service institutions, which reduced their trust and willingness to seek further assistance. In Donetsk Oblast, limited transport, reduced availability of specialised services and financial constraints restrict survivors' access to support in frontline communities. In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, women relied mainly on psychologists and women's networks to cope, but participants noted a lack of recurring group activities and structured safe spaces where women can share experiences and access support.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

GBV risks are rooted in gender inequality and unequal power relations, and are compounded by displacement, housing insecurity, loss of livelihoods and financial dependency. Unaffordable housing, limited shelter places, insecure tenure and informal rentals reduce women's options to leave abusive or exploitative situations, while evacuation-related family separation, household tension and eroding rural incomes increase dependency on partners, relatives and landlords.



"Women Rise" information session on gender-based violence (GBV).© DRC Ukraine, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, Liubymivka, Krystyna Pashkina.

Specialised GBV services, legal aid and psychosocial support remain limited, particularly in rural and frontline areas. Fear of stigma and retaliation, low confidence in police, negative experiences with services, limited information and a lack of safe spaces discourage disclosure, allowing perpetrators to act with limited accountability. GBV and the threat of it contribute to psychological distress, isolation, economic insecurity and acceptance of unsafe work and housing, while restricting women's movement in public spaces. The findings show that GBV is closely intertwined with housing and economic insecurity, underscoring the need for survivor-centred, integrated responses.

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

Barriers to legal identity, administrative remedies and justice remained widespread during July–September 2026 and intensified in Donetsk Oblast, where the suspension and relocation of state institutions from frontline areas sharply reduced access to documentation, social protection and property-related services. Across areas, barriers continued to be primarily practical. The most significant challenges concerned civil documentation, proof of property ownership, insecure tenure and compensation for damaged or destroyed housing. Lengthy

procedures, distance and transport costs, legal and notarial fees, limited information and insufficient institutional capacity prevented many households from translating their entitlements into effective remedies.

Civil documentation and access to administrative services

The most severe deterioration was reported in Donetsk Oblast. According to the State Migration Service, its offices in Sloviansk, Kramatorsk and Oleksandrivka suspended migration-related administrative services from 14 September. Physical reception at the Administrative Services Centre (CNAP) in Kramatorsk was suspended from 25 September, the Kramatorsk Department of Social Protection closed from 1 October, and civil registration offices in Kramatorsk and Sloviansk were also affected. Residents now need to travel to Barvinkove, Lozova or Izium in Kharkiv Oblast to access passport, notarial and other administrative services, creating significant transport and financial barriers for older persons and people with disabilities. Reliance on online services is increasing, but unstable connectivity limits their use; FGD participants in Sloviansk reported that some services operate only in a limited mode and may be unavailable when the internet fails.

Documentation barriers also remained high elsewhere, with 39% of those surveyed reporting barriers to accessing documents. The length of administrative procedures was cited as the principal barrier, followed by their cost. Shelling-related loss of passports, educational records and other personal documents is compounded by destroyed or inaccessible archives and name discrepancies requiring additional proof of identity. Respondents particularly associated lengthy procedures with disability assessments, including the establishment of war-related disability status, and with delays in housing compensation. Administrative classifications and registration practices also affected access to entitlements. In Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, residents displaced from Pysmenne and Manvelivka, Vasylkivska Hromada, struggled to obtain IDP certificates because their settlements were not included in the official list of territories affected by hostilities, creating a gap between their actual circumstances and their eligibility for state assistance. In Tsarychanska Hromada, a KII reported that informal residence arrangements and reluctance among some displaced people, including men of conscription age, to register their actual place of residence made it harder for local authorities to identify vulnerable households and could restrict access to services requiring formal registration.

Housing, land and property (HLP) rights and security of tenure

The absence of ownership documentation continued to prevent households from proving property rights and accessing remedies. In Kharkiv Oblast, HLP concerns centred on lost ownership documents, unresolved inheritance, property registration and unauthorised extensions. In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, the DRC legal aid team observed that where title documents had been lost or destroyed and records were missing from Technical Inventory Bureau (BTI) databases and archives, individuals often had to resort to court proceedings. This added costs and delays amid lengthy judicial procedures and court backlogs. In Donetsk Oblast, the relocation of private and state notaries from Kramatorsk Hromada means residents may need to travel as far as Kharkiv Oblast for property and inheritance procedures. The cost of legal and notarial services was a recurring barrier. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, 29% of respondents reporting barriers to services cited notarial costs. In Sumy Oblast, respondents noted that many people who cannot afford legal and notarial services do not qualify for free secondary legal aid. Missing ownership documentation also affects tenure security for displaced households, as properties without proper documents cannot be rented under formal agreements.

Compensation for damaged and destroyed housing

Access to compensation was further disrupted in Donetsk Oblast following the inclusion of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk territorial communities in the zone of active hostilities, with compensation payments for damaged housing suspended from 21 August. Compensation mechanisms were also directly affected by insecurity: on 27

July, a drone struck a vehicle used by an eRecovery commission. Demand for legal assistance on compensation therefore remained high, with DRC continuing to provide individual consultations on available options.

Across other areas, documentation gaps, commission capacity and the practical value of compensation constrained access. In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, informal property transactions and unregistered inheritance remained key barriers to the eRecovery scheme. The DRC legal aid team also identified cases where housing certificate holders could not use their certificates because a co-owner of the destroyed property was residing in the Russian Federation or in occupied territories, was subject to sanctions, could not be located, or had not formalised an inheritance. In such cases, ownership of the destroyed property cannot be transferred to the state, leaving co-owners who had met all legal requirements unable to exercise their right to compensation. In Tsarychanka, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, households holding housing certificates struggled to use them because of limited affordable housing and additional transaction costs. In Kharkiv Oblast, commission workloads and difficulties inspecting damaged homes prolonged decisions, compensation amounts were reported to be insufficient for full repairs or comparable replacement housing, and some residents had to return to insecure areas because their presence was required to complete documentation. Continuing insecurity also undermines households' ability to plan recovery: ***"How can we know what will happen in 3 to 6 months when we don't even know what will happen tomorrow?"*** — FGD participant, Iziumska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by conflict-related destruction of homes and documents, displacement, the relocation and suspension of state institutions from frontline areas and limited administrative capacity. Hostilities increase demand for documentation, compensation and legal assistance while restricting the work of institutions, commissions and notaries. Pre-existing informal practices, such as unregistered property transactions and incomplete inheritance, become major obstacles once formal proof of rights is required. An additional barrier is the inconsistency in court practice in cases involving the registration of property rights. This can lead to lengthy court proceedings and, in some cases, requires individuals to reapply to the court under a different procedure.

Transport and notarial costs, court fees and technical assessments place remedies beyond the reach of low-income households. Missing documents and unresolved HLP issues delay access to benefits, pensions and compensation, reinforcing poverty, debt and dependence on temporary accommodation.

Protection Risk 9: Theft, extortion, forced eviction or destruction of personal property

During July–September 2026, findings related to this risk centred on the threat of eviction and insecure tenure among displaced households in rented and collective accommodation. Monitoring did not establish a pattern of systematic unlawful forced eviction. However, the near-universal reliance on informal rental arrangements, short-notice requests to vacate, sudden rent increases and the loss of resources invested in repairs leave many IDPs at constant risk of losing their accommodation, with limited legal safeguards or viable alternatives. Destruction of homes and civilian property because of hostilities is analysed in the section on attacks on civilians and civilian objects. No comparable input on this risk was available from Donetsk Oblast, where the only related finding was isolated reports of looting of damaged private houses in Cherkaske.

Informal tenancy is the principal factor exposing displaced households to eviction. Of those renting accommodation, 78% of surveyed households lived in accommodation based on a verbal agreement with the owner. IDPs in Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, and FGD participants in Petrykivska, Tsarychanska and Sofiivska Hromadas, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, similarly described reliance on informal rental arrangements. Some owners do not formalise tenancies in order to avoid tax obligations, while in other cases formal agreements are

impossible because the property itself lacks ownership documentation: ***"There are houses for which property ownership documents have not been properly issued, so it is practically impossible to conclude a formal rental agreement."*** — KII, Buryn, Sumy Oblast. The absence of a written agreement limits tenants' ability to protect their rights and prevents IDPs from accessing government rental compensation programmes. Tenants in Iziumska, Savynska and Kharkivska Hromadas, Kharkiv Oblast, faced the same barrier to rental assistance and utility subsidies, because documentation depended on landlords' cooperation: ***"It is easier to rent out housing verbally and that is all." —*** KII, Savynska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast.

Without written agreements, tenants are at risk of sudden rent increases and requests to leave at short notice. In Kharkivska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast, a KII described cases of sudden rent increases and requests to vacate within a few days in their community, while in Savynska Hromada FGD participants reported one household being given ten days to purchase the property or leave. Accounts were not uniform: a key informant in Savynska Hromada reported no observed coercive evictions and indicated that tenants were generally notified in advance when properties were sold or needed by owners' relatives, and participants in Novopokrovska Hromada described tenancies ending after property sales but no sudden rent increases. Because the legal grounds and procedures in individual cases were not verified through monitoring, these accounts demonstrate insecure occupancy and pressure to relocate rather than confirmed unlawful forced eviction. Similar pressures were reported in Sumy Oblast: ***"There was no rental agreement here, and the property owners suddenly increased the rent. The family could not afford to pay and was forced to leave." —*** KII, Shostka.

A consistent pattern across all areas assessed, apart from Donetsk oblast, was the loss of resources displaced households had invested in repairing rented or abandoned properties. IDPs reported cleaning and repairing damaged or long-abandoned houses at their own expense, only to face rent demands, rent increases or requests to leave once the property became habitable. In Kherson Oblast, one FGD participant explained: ***"My acquaintances, who are also IDPs and live in this hromada, rented a property that had been abandoned for a long time. They cleaned it up and repaired the damage themselves, after which the landlord decided to sell the house, and they were forced to leave."*** — FGD participant, Velykooleksandrivska Hromada, Kherson Oblast. Participants in Sumy Oblast described the same experience: ***"You make repairs so that it is at least possible to live there, and then the owners come and say they are planning to sell the house, or they ask for rent."***—FGD participant, Stepanivka, Sumy Oblast. In Iziumska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast, tenants were asked to vacate after repairing a property, while in Vysochanska Hromada participants reported rent increases after tenants had invested in repairs, as well as the loss of advance payments. In Sofiivka, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, displaced households described investing their limited resources in rented accommodation without any guarantee of continued residence. These practices transfer the cost of restoring housing to displaced households while leaving them with no security in return.

Collective accommodation provides an important safety net but offers limited tenure security. In Tsarychanka, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, residents described uncertainty associated with six-month collective accommodation agreements, while households holding compensation certificates faced difficulties securing replacement housing. In Sumy Oblast, the risk of eviction from collective centres was identified as an additional factor contributing to the deterioration of housing security, including in connection with new eligibility requirements under Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 728 (*see the section on child and forced family separation*). In contrast, residents of collective accommodation in Kehychivska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast, reported renewable agreements and no anticipated involuntary relocation. Municipal authorities in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast faced challenges in maintaining collective sites and identifying sustainable alternatives, while in Kharkiv Oblast the lack of alternative accommodation limited local authorities' ability to assist households under pressure to relocate.

At household level, the threat or experience of losing accommodation forces difficult trade-offs. In Savynska Hromada, Kharkiv Oblast, a displaced family moved urgently into inadequate accommodation after being required to leave: ***"Either we continue living like this, or we end up on the street."*** Some households in Kharkiv Oblast reportedly returned to insecure homes when rent became unaffordable. In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, limited access to affordable housing was reported to constrain households' ability to evacuate or relocate. In Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, unaffordable rent reinforced dependence on collective accommodation and humanitarian assistance and could force families to accept inadequate living conditions or reduce spending on essential needs. Repeated moves disrupt access to care, services and support networks, while dependence on landlords' decisions undermines planning and contributes to feelings of helplessness and psychological distress. As one participant in Sumy summarised the potential consequences: ***"There may be homelessness, debts, loss of belongings, and a feeling of instability and insecurity."—*** FGD participant, Sumy.

Monitoring also identified positive practice. In Vysokopilska Hromada, Kherson Oblast, respondents reported that humanitarian organisations supporting the repair of housing use tripartite agreements between property owners, IDPs and the organisation, providing displaced tenants with additional legal safeguards against sudden eviction.

Drivers and barriers: interactions and compounding effects

The risk is driven by prolonged displacement, a shortage of affordable housing in receiving communities, and rising rents and utility costs. Owners' reluctance to formalise tenancies for tax reasons, and properties lacking ownership documents, leave tenants without written agreements or legal safeguards. Where tenants repair abandoned or damaged properties at their own expense, owners benefit from the improvements while tenants gain no security.

Limited alternative accommodation, time-limited agreements and new eligibility rules in collective centres, barriers to using compensation certificates and the exclusion of informal tenants from rental assistance further narrow choices. Older persons, persons with disabilities, large families and pension-dependent households are least able to absorb rent increases or find alternatives at short notice. Insecure tenure creates a cycle of debt, inadequate living conditions and repeated displacement, sometimes prompting returns to unsafe areas. Uncertainty about continued residence also undermines planning, disrupts access to services and support networks, and contributes to psychological distress.



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Recommendations

Donors and Foreign Diplomatic Missions

- **Provide flexible, multi-year funding** for integrated protection programming in frontline and receiving areas, including case management, legal aid, GBV, child protection, MHPSS and HLP support, with the flexibility to shift to mobile, remote and individual modalities as security deteriorates.
- **Fund accessible evacuation and post-arrival support**, including transport for people with reduced mobility, accommodation suitable for large and multigenerational households, and orientation on services, shelters and entitlements for newly displaced people.
- **Invest in tenure security and affordable housing**, including rental support that is accessible to households with informal tenancies, HLP legal aid for complex compensation and co-ownership cases, and long-term social and affordable housing options.

Protection Actors (Civil Society, UN Agencies and NGOs)

- **Use tripartite agreements between property owners**, tenants and implementing organisations in all shelter repair interventions, and provide legal counselling on tenancy rights, rental agreements and eviction.
- **Expand mobile legal aid, case management and individual psychosocial support** in areas where state institutions have relocated, and ensure child protection and social work support for families during mandatory evacuation and after arrival in receiving communities.
- **Strengthen survivor-centred GBV services** linked to housing and livelihoods support, including confidential referral pathways, information on legal aid and hotlines, and recurring safe-space activities for women and adolescent girls.
- **Continue monitoring eviction practices**, exploitation risks in the informal rental market, community concerns about recontamination of previously cleared areas and conflict-related disinformation.

National and Local Authorities

- **Ensure continuity of documentation**, social protection and compensation services for residents of areas where offices have been suspended, through mobile services, remote procedures and clear public information on relocated service points.
- **Update official territorial classifications** promptly to reflect changing security conditions, so that people leaving deteriorating areas can register as IDPs and access assistance without delay.
- **Apply mandatory evacuation and collective accommodation rule**s, including Cabinet of Ministers Resolutions No. 953 and No. 728, with individual assessment and household-level safeguards to prevent avoidable family separation and loss of accommodation without alternatives.
- **Promote the formalisation of rental agreements**, extend rental assistance to tenants with verbal agreements, resolve co-ownership barriers to the use of housing certificates, and ensure damage assessment commissions are adequately staffed.

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