Winterisation Needs Assessment

DRC Ukraine

Winter 2026–2027

Table of contents

Background

The Danish Refugee Council's (DRC) Winterisation Needs Assessment aims to assess the impact of the Winter 2025-2026 response while simultaneously mapping out urgent community needs for the upcoming 2026-2027 winter season in six oblasts in Ukraine: Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Sumy and Zaporizhzhia.

Operating both as a direct implementer and in close coordination with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), DRC has leveraged its existing Post-Assistance Monitoring (PAM) data in order to measure eople receiving assistance and the overall sufficiency of the Winter 2025-2026 assistance, while systematically identifying operational gaps to improve future programming. In parallel, a tailored Winterisation Needs Assessment survey, conducted during May/June 2026, allows DRC to further refine targeting strategies and enhance the delivery of upcoming winterisation interventions.

Methodology

To inform this assessment, DRC Ukraine consolidated findings from multiple research and data collection initiatives, enabling a comprehensive analysis of winterisation needs for the 2026–2027 winter season. This approach provides a robust evidence base on households' expected seasonal needs and assistance preferences across Ukraine.

Table 1 presents the survey types and associated sampling methodologies, while *Tables 2* to *5* provide further details on the composition and coverage of each survey.

Survey Type	Coverage (oblast)	Sample	Surveyed period	Scope of Research
Post Assistance Monitoring (PAM) Survey (*Cash for Utilities and Cash for Fuel distribution*)	• Dnipropetrovsk • Donetsk • Kharkiv • Kherson • Sumy • Zaporizhzhia	1,503 HHs	Feb–Apr 2026	• Satisfaction with previous assistance • Preferred modalities for future • Outstanding needs
PAM Survey (*Insulation of sub-standard houses*)	• Dnipropetrovsk • Donetsk • Kharkiv • Kherson • Sumy • Zaporizhzhia	704 HHs	Mar–June 2026	• Satisfaction with repairs • Impact of thermal comfort and living conditions • Outstanding needs
PAM Survey (*Heating Infrastructure, Solarisation/boiler houses*)	• Dnipropetrovsk • Kharkiv • Mykolaiv • Sumy • Zaporizhzhia	39 KIs 6 FGDs (26 participants)	Dec 2025–Apr 2026	• Satisfaction with solarisation assistance • Impact on energy independence, including for winter season • Outstanding needs
PAM Survey (Heating points, Points of Invincibility)	• Donetsk • Kharkiv • Kherson • Kyiv	47 KI	Feb–Mar 2026	• Satisfaction with generators distribution

				• Impact on energy independence, including for winter season • Outstanding needs
PAM Survey (Generator equipment in Health facility)	• Kyiv	8 KI	June 2026	• Satisfaction with generators distribution • Impact on energy independence, including for winter season • Outstanding needs
Winterisation Needs Assessment Survey with Government Officials	• Dnipropetrovsk • Donetsk • Kharkiv • Kherson • Sumy • Zaporizhzhia	155 KI	May–June 2026	• Winter needs, including ○ Cash for Solid Fuel/Utility ○ Insulation works ○ Heating Infrastructure ○ Heating Points (Point of Invincibility) • Additional Vulnerabilities • Local authority capacity

Table 1: Research Initiatives by Survey Type Contributing to this Needs Assessment

Post Assistance Monitoring (PAM): Cash for Utilities and Cash for Fuel

Between February and April 2026, DRC Ukraine conducted interviews with 1,503 households across 13 raions in 6 oblasts to evaluate the outcomes of several projects (funded by the European Union [ECHO], The Ukraine Humanitarian Fund [UHF] and The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC]) which included winter cash assistance components (*cash for utilities and cash for solid fuel*) implemented during the 2025–2026 winter season. As part of the PAM, households were also consulted on their preferred assistance modalities and their expected winterisation needs for the 2026–2027 season.

The surveyed population was composed of long-term residents, who accounted for 78% (1,169 households) of respondents, reflecting the major share of winterisation support directed towards households living in their areas of origin. Internally displaced people (IDPs) represented 19% of the sample, while returnees accounted for 3%.

Oblast	Cash for Solid Fuel	Cash for Utilities	Total
Dnipropetrovsk		62	62
Donetsk	129	176	305
Kharkiv	61	78	139
Kherson	142	142	284
Sumy	382	146	528
Zaporizhzhia		185	185
	714	**789**	**1,503**

Table 2: Post Assistance Monitoring – Number of Households Interviewed by Activity

(Cash for Solid Fuel distribution did not take place in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia).

Post Assistance Monitoring: Insulation of substandard houses

Between March and June 2026, DRC Ukraine conducted interviews with 704 household representatives from 13 raions in six oblasts to assess the beneficiaries' satisfaction with the insulation works, and relevant thermal comfort sufficiency, conducted in the framework of UHF, European Union (ECHO) and SDC funded projects. The survey also focused on the outstanding needs of the communities and households. 75% (526HHs) of respondents were IDP, while 24% represented long-term population, and 1% returnees.

Oblast	Insulation (cash)	Insulation (in-kind)	Total
Dnipropetrovsk	32	99	131
Donetsk	16	90	106
Kharkiv	41	161	202
Kherson	18		18
Sumy	29	168	197
Zaporizhzhia		50	50
	136	**568**	**704**

Table 3: Post Assistance Monitoring – Number of Households Interviewed by Insulation

Post Assistance Monitoring: Heating Infrastructure- Solarisation/boiler houses

From December 2025 to April 2026, DRC Ukraine conducted a PAM survey aiming at evaluating the impact of Solar Power Panels (SPP) installation works carried out in 43 infrastructure sites (including hospitals, water supply entities, etc.) in the framework of a Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (DMFA) funded project and in collaboration with a national implementing partner (EcoClub). In 39 of these facilities, Key Informants (KI) were interviewed, and 26 additional respondents participated in 6 Focus Group Discussions (FGD) in Mykolaiv. The survey covered 16 hromadas in five oblasts (Sumy, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk and Mykolaiv).

Oblast	Number of water objects surveyed	Number of infrastructure objects surveyed	Total	Number of FGDs conducted
Dnipropetrovsk	1		1	
Kharkiv	3	1	4	
Mykolaiv	13	10	23	6
Sumy		7	7	
Zaporizhzhia	1	3	4	
	18	21	39	6

Table 4: Post Assistance Monitoring— Number of KIs Interviewed and FGDs conducted by Solarisation

Post Assistance Monitoring: Heating points—Points of Invincibility and Health facility equipment

During the atypically cold winter of 2026, DRC Ukraine implemented a crisis response, funded by the European Union (ECHO), by supporting 115 Points of Invincibility (PoI) and collective centres (CCs) in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Kherson oblasts. DRC also provided high-capacity generators to eight health facilities in the Kyiv oblast to maintain health facility operations and the continuation of heating. PAM surveys were conducted on both interventions to assess impact and collect information about outstanding needs.

Points of Invincibility: Interviews with KIs and feedback from visitors of POIs/CSs supported by the project were conducted between 24 February and 20 March 2026. A total of 47 POIs/CCs were assessed across the country, and key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with site managers. The data collection modality was mixed: 74% of institutions were visited in-person, while 26% were interviewed by phone due to being in red zones. For data triangulation, DRC staff also carried out a satisfaction survey amongst the visitors of eight POIs/CCs.

Health facility equipment: Interviews with KIs supported by the action were conducted between 8 June and 11 June 2026. All the assisted healthcare facilities were covered by the survey (8 KIIs in total): four institutions in Irpin, and one each in Hostomel, Boryspil, and the villages of Myronivka and Pyrnove in the Kyiv oblast. Originally, the data collection methodology included KIIs with focal points of these institutions (managers of various levels) as well as facility visitors. However, during the data collection process, visitors of the healthcare facilities declined to participate in the survey, focusing instead on their health issues. Consequently, representatives of healthcare institutions served as the primary key informants for PAM.

Winterisation KII Survey with Government Officials

The Winterisation Needs Assessment was conducted between May and June 2026, with 155 government officials interviewed across six oblasts to understand the winterisation needs of the local population ahead of the upcoming winter. To capture information as close as possible to the communities affected by winter hardship, the sampling approach prioritised official representatives at the hromada level, with only 9 of the 155 respondents representing the Raion level.

	Government Official KIs		
Oblasts	**Hromada level**	**Rayon level**	**Total**
Dnipropetrovsk	18		18
Donetsk	8	1	9
Kharkiv	64	8	72
Kherson	22		22
Sumy	28		28
Zaporizhzhia	6		6
	146	9	155

Table 5: Breakdown of Government Official KIs per oblasts

The needs assessment geographical scope covers 70 hromadas of 19 Raions in Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Sumy and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. Initially, the plan was to conduct a minimum of three KI interviews in each hromada; however, during the survey, KI's availability fluctuated, ranging from one to five interviews per hromada.

During the interviews, KIs were asked about the population's needs regarding solid fuel/utility assistance, winterisation of houses/apartments, heating infrastructure (solarisation) and the availability and operation of PoI, local authority capacity, and additional vulnerabilities.

Limitations

The following limitations must be considered when reviewing this report.

- KIIs on winterisation needs were carried out between May and June 2026. While this grants institutional memory of the needs experienced during winter 2025/2026, as well as the potential gaps in the support received, dedicated follow-up assessments closer to the 2026/2027 winter period will be needed, specifically for front-line raions should contact lines move.
- The sampling procedure for the Winterisation Needs Assessment data collection aimed at the widest viable coverage at hromada level for all the six oblasts targeted by this study, aiming at reaching 3 KI per hromada. In several cases this target was not achieved. Furthermore, due to accessibility constraints, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia resulted under sampled, both in terms of KIs contacted as well as of raions/hromadas covered. For these two oblasts findings should be considered as indicative, carrying a wider margin of uncertainty compared to the other oblasts.

Oblast Profiles

The following key findings are organised by oblast to provide a targeted summary of Winterisation Needs Assessment results. The following chapter, "Key Findings", provides an overall presentation of the aggregated results.

Kharkiv Oblast

(n=72 KIs | 7 raions | 38 hromadas)

Cash for Solid Fuel/Utility. Kharkiv records the lowest cost-coverage gap of the six oblasts, with an average 43% of households reported to be unable to cover fuel and utility costs without support (six-oblast mean: 55%), quite in line with the results of the similar assessment conducted by DRC during 2025. Older people (89%), IDPs (76%) and unemployed people (70%) are identified as facing the greatest difficulty. State or local subsidy mechanisms are reported by 94% of KIs, but Kharkiv also records the highest share describing a frontline-coverage gap (12%, against 6% overall), a vulnerable situation already recorded last year. While direct cash assistance is considered realistic by the majority of the respondents (83%), KIs in specific locations (Pervomaiska, Blyzniukivska and Kehychivska hromadas among others) reported in-kind assistance would be preferable.

Insulation. Housing is assessed as adequate by 78% of KIs, close to the overall average, with drafty windows (83%), lack of wall insulation (54%) and damaged or poorly sealed doors (53%) mentioned as the most common thermal deficiencies. A large number of KIs (40%) report that only 0-30% of vulnerable households cannot improve their thermal conditions without external assistance. While representing the most optimistic view on the level of unmet insulation needs compared to other oblasts, extensive uncovered needs (above

60%) are reported in a large number of hromadas, including Kunievska, Blyzniukivska, Savynska and Slobozhanska among others. Financial constraints (99%) and age or disability (94%) dominate the reasons cited, consistent with the overall assessment, and high heating costs (97%) remain the main winter-related challenge, coupled with the deterioration of house in winter (47%).

Heating Infrastructure. Solid fuel stoves (89%) and individual gas boilers (82%) are the dominant systems (in line with overall assessment), with non-negligible reliance on district heating (19%) and centralised gas (18%). Reliability expectations are comparatively more positive than elsewhere (33% KIs expect no major disruptions, the highest share recorded), even though frequent disruptions are still anticipated in some hromadas, including Kharkivska and Kehychivska. Damage from attacks or hostilities is the dominant risk cited (93%), followed by electricity instability/outages (52%). While rapid repair capacity is considered the most impactful support by 59% of the KIs (second highest, after Sumy), roughly one third of them also mentioned fuel reserves, backup power systems and repair of boiler houses and pipe networks.

Heating Points. Functioning community heating points are reported by 99% of KIs (only exception: Dvorichanska), with a sufficient capacity reported by 66% of the KIs. Older people (according to 49% of the KIs), people with disabilities (42%) and people without heating at home (40%) are the population groups most reliant on these points. After the lack of fuel/energy supply, reported by 19% of KIs, accessibility for older people and people with disabilities is the second most cited gap, which is a significant concern, as these are the very groups relying on these points.

Local Authority Capacity. Insufficient funding (72%) and lack of fuel or energy reserves (53%) are the leading operational gaps reported, mirrored by 75% and 56% of the KIs reporting additional budget and fuel/energy supply as the most needed support during winter from higher-level authorities and 96% of them mentioning direct assistance to households as the best support from external organisations. Only 60% of KIs identify specific settlements expected to be hardest to reach during winter (the lowest share among the six oblasts), citing road damage or seasonal inaccessibility (74%) and proximity to the front line (44%) as relevant reasons. KIs reported that no vulnerability-tracking mechanism is in place in Solonytsivska and Dvorichanska (with Sumy, the only oblast with uncovered hromadas) while incomplete or outdated in Rohanska and Malodanylivska.

Additional Vulnerabilities. Unmet winterisation needs are most often linked to sleeping in unsafe spaces (38%) and 78% of KIs have observed an impact of winter conditions on mental health or wellbeing (“depression”, “anger”, “anxiety”). In line with other oblasts, older people (79%) and people with disabilities (52%) are most frequently mentioned as feeling less safe or isolated, while 57% of KIs believe winterisation preparedness encourages return.

Sumy Oblast

(n=28 KIs | 4 raions | 10 hromadas)

Cash for Solid Fuel/Utility. An estimated 61% of households in Sumy are reported unable to cover fuel and utility costs without assistance (overall average: 55%), rising above 75% in several hromadas, including Sveska, Berezivska, Shostkynska and Boromlianska. The most used fuel is firewood (89% hardwood, 75% softwood), which appears to be easily available in the market. All 28 KIs (100%) consider direct cash assistance for fuel purchase realistic, matching with the opinions collected in 2025. A subsidy mechanism is reported absent in Berezivska hromada and fails to reach frontline households in Yampilska hromada.

Insulation. The majority of the KIs (79%) reported houses in Sumy being able to maintain safe indoor temperatures in winter, with substandard homes having thermal deficiency because of drafty or old windows (reported by all KIs, 100%), lack of wall insulation (50%) and poor ceiling or attic insulation (43%). Almost half (46%) of KIs estimate that more than 60% of vulnerable households cannot improve their thermal conditions without external support, with Berezivska and Boromlianska hromadas appearing particularly vulnerable. As in most oblasts, lack of financial resources and older age/disability are the main reasons behind this vulnerability, both reported by all KIs (100%). Beside the unaffordable heating costs (100%), the deterioration of housing during winter appears to be the second main winter-related challenges. While in most of the other oblasts both IDPs and non-displaced households are reported to be equally likely to live in poorly insulated housing, 71% of the KIs in Sumy identified IDPs as the group most affected by insulation related vulnerabilities.

Heating Infrastructure. Solid fuel stoves (82%) and individual gas boilers (64%) remain dominant, though Sumy also reports comparatively high reliance on district heating and centralised gas (18% each). Reliability expectations among the KIs are mixed, with 29% (n=2) expecting frequent disruptions, both in Sumska hromada. Reliance on rapid repair capacity as the most impactful support (71%, against 48% overall) and on fuel reserves (57%, against 39%) is comparatively elevated. This last finding is consistent with the fuel-reserve gap identified under local authority capacity (see below).

Heating Points. Functioning heating points are reported by 96% of KIs, with their capacity rated sufficient by 75% of KIs, above the six-oblast average. Reliance on community heating points by people with disabilities is reported far less often than elsewhere (18%, against 45% overall, the lowest share recorded) while older people (54%) remain the primary reliant group.

Local Authority Capacity. Insufficient funding is flagged as an operational gap by 86% of KIs (the highest share in all oblasts) followed by the lack of fuel or energy reserves (61%), both reflected by 86% of the KIs requesting additional budget from higher-level authorities. The majority (68%) of KIs identify specific settlements expected to be hardest to reach this winter, most often citing road damage or seasonal inaccessibility (63%) and their proximity to the front line / active hostilities (47%). A vulnerability-tracking mechanism appears to cover all surveyed locations, as reported by the vast majority of the KIs (96%).

Additional Vulnerabilities. Unmet winterisation needs lead to sleeping in unsafe spaces for 39% of KIs, who also report (25%) risks related to fires (something already mentioned by KIs interviewed in 2025). Sumy records the highest share (18%, against 12% overall) of KIs reporting winter-related safety incidents (mostly fire), in a number of hromadas, including Shostkynska. 86% of KIs have also observed an impact of winter conditions on mental health or wellbeing ("despair" and "anger" were mentioned), older people (93%) are almost universally cited as feeling less safe, together with the highest share of KIs – alongside Zaporizhzhia – citing single-headed female households among groups feeling less safe or isolated in winter (67%, against 47% overall). Half (50%) of KIs believe people return home regardless of winterisation preparedness, exceeding the 43% who believe preparedness encourages return.

Kherson Oblast

(n=22 KIs | 2 raions | 7 hromadas)

Cash for Solid Fuel/Utility. Alongside near-universal firewood availability, coal (50%) and briquettes (55%) are also reported as available fuel types (20% and 25% respectively), matching their relatively higher consumption (18% and 23%) compared to other oblasts. Kherson records the highest estimated cost-coverage gap of any oblast, averageing 78% of households unable to cover fuel and utility costs without assistance, confirming a vulnerable situation already recorded in 2025. Older people (100%) and unemployed

people (95%) are most frequently cited as facing the greatest difficulty. Direct cash assistance is considered realistic by only 77% of KIs (the second-lowest percentage overall, after Dnipropetrovsk), with negative opinions on this matter recorded in Muzykivska and Vysokopilska hromadas.

Insulation. While 82% of KIs report most houses in Kherson are able to maintain safe indoor temperatures in winter, 73% of them estimate that more than 60% of vulnerable households are unable to improve the thermal condition of their homes without external support, the highest share among the six oblasts, an assessment particularly alarming in Darivska, Khersonska and Velykooleksandrivska hromadas, where all KIs selected this band. Drafty windows are reported by 77% of the KIs, alongside lack of wall insulation (68%) and poorly sealed doors (50%). After high heating costs (100%), health impacts related to cold or damp conditions are cited as a winter-related challenge by 50% of KIs, the second-highest share recorded (against 33% overall).

Heating Infrastructure. Individual gas boilers (73%) and solid fuel stoves (82%) remain the two main heating systems, with reliance on district or centralised networks comparatively low (9% each). Among the five relevant KIs, expectations are notably negative. No KI anticipated no major disruptions, and 40% expect frequent disruptions, concentrated in Velykooleksandrivska and Khersonska hromadas. Backup power systems (60%) are the support most often requested, ahead of boiler-house rehabilitation and rapid repair capacity (both 40%).

Heating Points. All 22 KIs (100%) report functioning heating points, characterised by limited capacities in several hromadas, including Chornobaivska, Velykooleksandrivska. People without heating at home (55%) and older people are the most frequently cited groups reliant on these points.

Local Authority Capacity. Insufficient funding (82%) and lack of fuel or energy reserves (73%) dominate the operational gaps reported by local authorities, both above their respective six-oblast averages, driving a 91% request for additional budget – the highest share recorded. The majority (73%) of KIs identify specific settlements expected to be hardest to reach this winter, most often citing road damage (69%) and front-line proximity (62%). All KIs report a complete vulnerability-tracking registry, with no gaps identified in any hromada.

Additional Vulnerabilities. Sleeping in unsafe spaces is the safety consequence of unmet winterisation needs most frequently cited (59%) and 86% of KIs have observed an impact of winter conditions on mental health or wellbeing, mentioning increased irritability and confusion. Safety incidents (fire) are reported in Velykooleksandrivska and Chornobaivska hromadas and older people (70%) are most frequently cited among groups feeling less safe or isolated. The majority (68%) of KIs believe winterisation preparedness positively influences people's decisions to return home; during 2025 roughly the same proportion (67%) of KIs expressed the opposite view.

Dnipropetrovsk Oblast

(n=18 KIs | 4 raions | 8 hromadas)

Cash for Solid Fuel/Utility. An estimated 53% of households are unable to cover fuel and utility costs without external assistance, with the older people (100%), IDPs (94%) and unemployed people (88%) most frequently cited as facing difficulty. Direct cash assistance is considered realistic by only 72% of KIs (the lowest share among the six oblasts and in line with the findings of the 2025 assessment) with the greatest reluctance recorded in several hromadas, including Pershotravenska where even in-kind assistance does not appear

viable. State or local subsidy mechanisms are reported in place and reaching frontline households by 100% of KIs, the most complete coverage recorded on this indicator alongside Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk.

Insulation. In Dnipropetrovsk only 61% of KIs consider most houses able to maintain safe indoor temperatures (lowest share recorded) and 17% report many households in thermally inadequate housing, with relevant needs particularly high in Zelenodolska and Nyvotrudivska hromadas. Leaking roofs are flagged as a common thermal deficiency by 50% of KIs, the highest share among the six oblasts (overall: 16%), alongside drafty windows (78%). The 30-60% band is the single largest response among Dnipropetrovsk KIs when estimating the share of vulnerable households unable to improve thermal conditions (56%), a more moderate profile than in Kherson, Sumy or Donetsk, where the "more than 60%" band dominates. 72% of the KIs in Dnipropetrovsk identified the IDPs as the group most likely to live in poorly insulated housing, where in most of the other oblast non-displaced household appear to be equally likely.

Heating Infrastructure. Solid fuel stoves and individual gas boilers are equally dominant (89% each), and electrical heating is reported by 44% of the KIs (by far the highest share vs overall average of 15%). Reliability expectations are the most divided of any oblast, ranging from 20% expecting no disruption to 10% expecting major or systemic failures, with disruption most often anticipated in several hromadas, including Saksahanska, Ukrainska, Myrivska and Pershotravenska. Fuel reserves (80%, against 39% overall) and backup power systems are the support most emphasised.

Heating Points. While all 18 KIs (100%) report functioning heating points, capacity is rated sufficient by only 56% of them, with significant limitations in Synelnykivskyi and Kryvorizkyi. Accessibility for people with disabilities or older people is cited as a gap by 44% of the KIs. Heating points are correspondingly described as relied upon heavily by older people (83%) and people with disabilities (78%), both well above the six-oblast averages (57% and 45% respectively).

Local Authority Capacity. Insufficient funding (67%) and lack of fuel or energy reserves (50%) are relatively less pronounced than the six-oblast average, though 89% of KIs still request additional budget from higher-level authorities, alongside fuel and energy supply (56%). 94% of KIs identify specific settlements expected to be hardest to reach this winter, the highest share among the six oblasts, most commonly citing road damage or seasonal inaccessibility (71%), and, distinctively, lack of mobile or internet connectivity (24%, against 8% overall). Pershotravenska hromada is the only area reporting an incomplete or outdated vulnerability-tracking mechanism, against a complete registry reported by 94% of KIs oblast-wide.

Additional Vulnerabilities. Sleeping in unsafe spaces is cited as a safety consequence of unmet needs by 61% of KIs, and 89% have observed an impact of winter conditions on mental health or wellbeing. Single-headed female households (60%) and people with disabilities (60%) are cited as feeling less safe or isolated well above the six-oblast averages.

Donetsk Oblast

(n=9 KIs | 1 raion | 4 hromadas)

Cash for Solid Fuel/Utility. An estimated 60% of households are unable to cover fuel and utility costs unaided, close to the six-oblast mean. Compared with other oblasts, the fuel consumption in Donetsk appears more equally divided among different kinds, all reported available, in particular coal, mentioned by 67% of KIs. Direct cash assistance is considered realistic by 78% of KIs, which represents a drastic shift from last year (73% of the KIs preferred in-kind in 2025). This suggests that, despite the frontline context, cash assistance remains a relevant modality in Donetsk oblast due to the flexibility it provides to households in responding

to changing access, prices and heating needs. In a deteriorating security environment, cash allows households to choose the most appropriate available option to keep their homes warm and may also support those who relocate, enabling them to cover winter heating needs after arrival in a new location. It is worth noting that this optimism drops in Slovianska hromada, where two of the three KIs consider it unrealistic, suggesting in-kind support instead.

Insulation. All nine KIs report drafty or old windows (100%) and lack of wall insulation (100%) as common thermal deficiencies, and 67% estimate that more than 60% of vulnerable households cannot improve their thermal conditions without external support, most acutely in Cherkaska, Slovianska and Oleksandrivska hromadas. Conflict insecurity is cited as a reason households cannot improve thermal conditions unaided by 89% of KIs – more than three times the six-oblast average (27%) – consistent with the oblast's active front-line proximity. Health impacts related to cold or damp conditions are cited as a winter-related challenge by 56% of KIs, among the highest shares recorded (33% overall), alongside the deterioration of housing during winter (56%).

Heating Infrastructure. Individual gas boilers (67%) and, distinctively, district heating networks (33%) and localised boiler houses (11%) feature more prominently in Donetsk than in most other oblasts. Reliability expectations among the 5 relevant KIs are markedly negative: no KI expects no major disruptions, and 60% anticipate frequent or major/systemic failures, concentrated in Kramatorska and Slovianska hromadas. Boiler-house rehabilitation and electrical stabilisation equipment (60% each) are the support types most requested within the oblast.

Heating Points. Donetsk records the highest share rating the operational heating points capacity sufficient (89%). Reliance on heating points is the most uniform of any oblast: older people, people with disabilities, people without heating at home and people in damaged homes are each cited by at least 89% of KIs. No specific hromada stands out as under-served.

Local Authority Capacity. Local authorities in Donetsk prioritise fuel or energy supply (100%) as the support most needed from higher-level authorities, ahead of additional budget (78%). This finding is fully in line with the lack of fuel or energy reserves flagged as operational gaps by 89% of KIs, the highest share recorded. Not surprisingly, front-line proximity is cited by 100% of KIs identifying hard-to-reach settlements as the dominant reason, rather than road damage (17%). All 9 KIs (100%) report a complete vulnerability-tracking registry, placing Donetsk alongside Kherson as the only oblasts at full coverage on this indicator.

Additional Vulnerabilities. Sleeping in unsafe spaces is flagged as a safety consequence of unmet winterisation needs by 89% of KIs, the highest share recorded, and all 9 KIs (100%) report having observed an impact of winter conditions on mental health or wellbeing. No safety or protection incidents related to winter conditions were reported by any of the 9 KIs. Finally, 33% of KIs believe people return home regardless of winterisation preparedness rather than because of it, a significant change from 2025 when most of them did link displacement risks to winterisation.

Zaporizhzhia Oblast

(n=6 KIs | 1 raion | 3 hromadas)

Cash for Solid Fuel/Utility. The estimated cost-coverage gap is the second-highest among the six oblasts (65% of the households vs overall mean of 55%), with even higher peaks in specific locations (95% in Bilenkivska hromada). Besides the older people and IDPs, single-parent households are also often flagged as facing the greatest difficulty affording fuel (83% of KIs vs 25% overall mean). Hard firewood, briquettes and pellets are reported being the most commonly used solid fuel, with a proportion of soft firewood significantly

lower than in most oblasts. Direct cash assistance is considered realistic in most of the cases (83%), with the exception of Shyrokivska hromada.

Insulation. All KIs (100%) report drafty windows and a lack of wall insulation as common thermal deficiencies, and 83% expect further deterioration of poorly insulated housing during winter. Bilenkivska hromada records the most acute assessment of unmet insulation need, with all KIs estimating that more than 60% of vulnerable households cannot improve their thermal conditions unaided. Financial resources (100%) and age or disability (100%) are unanimously cited as the reasons households cannot improve conditions on their own.

Heating Infrastructure. All 6 KIs report reliance on both solid fuel stoves and individual gas boilers, with electrical heating also present in a third of areas. Zaporizhzhia is the only oblast where KIs commenting on centralised or networked heating reliability (n=2, both in Shyrokivska hromada) unanimously anticipate frequent disruptions, alongside unanimous concern over electricity instability and lack of backup power. Backup power systems are the only type of infrastructure support cited by KIs in this oblast.

Heating Points. Heating point capacity is rated sufficient by only 33% of KIs, with insufficiency or partial sufficiency flagged in all three hromadas (Shyrokivska, Bilenkivska and Novomykolaivska). Older people (83%) and people with disabilities (67%) are the population groups most reliant on these points, followed by a consistent number of people without heating at home, mentioned by 50% of KIs.

Local Authority Capacity. Information and data sharing is identified as the support most needed from higher-level authorities by 67% of KIs, far beyond the overall average (9%). Novomykolaivska hromada is the only area in Zaporizhzhia where the vulnerability-tracking mechanism is reported as still in development rather than complete. Settlements are expected to be hardest to reach by 67% of KIs, with lack of mobile or internet connectivity cited by half of them.

Additional Vulnerabilities. Two-thirds of KIs (67%) believe that people return home regardless of winterisation preparedness, the highest share holding this view among the six oblasts, and one of only two oblasts, together with Sumy, where this outlook outweighs the belief that preparedness encourages return. All KIs (100%) have observed an impact of winter conditions on mental health or wellbeing (“fear”), and older people are unanimously cited among groups feeling less safe or isolated, alongside single-headed female households and people with disabilities (67% each).

Key Findings

Cash for solid fuel and utilities

Most commonly used fuel type and availability

Key informants considered the **most accessible fuel types** available from main vendors in their areas are **hardwood (88%), alongside piped gas, centralised heating, and electric heating (85%)**. Softwood ranks third in terms of availability (65%), while coal, briquettes, and pellets were reported to a lesser and equal extent, at 20% each. As the survey allowed for multiple-choice answers, the findings also demonstrated that a **combined heating method is widely utilised within the communities, with piped gas, centralised heating, and electric heating being the prevailing option**. Furthermore, from the perspective of government officials, this combination of piped gas, centralised, and electric heating, which fell under the 'Other' category, is the most in-demand heating source (78%), followed by hardwood (69%) and softwood (50%).

Households unable to cover fuel/utility costs without assistance

KIs estimate that an average of **55% of households in their area are unable to cover the cost of fuel and utilities without external assistance during winter**, with most respondents (97%) confirming that specific vulnerable groups face the greatest difficulties in accessing fuel and/or paying for heating utilities. Among these, the most prominent groups identified are **older people (93%), IDPs (78%), and unemployed individuals (77%)**. Furthermore, in the 'Other' category (selected by 50 respondents), participants provided more specific details regarding vulnerability statuses: nearly half of these responses (48%) referred to large families with many children, while 18% highlighted people with disabilities or individuals with reduced mobility. Additionally, 12% of the responses each noted low-income citizens and families facing difficult life circumstances (DLC).

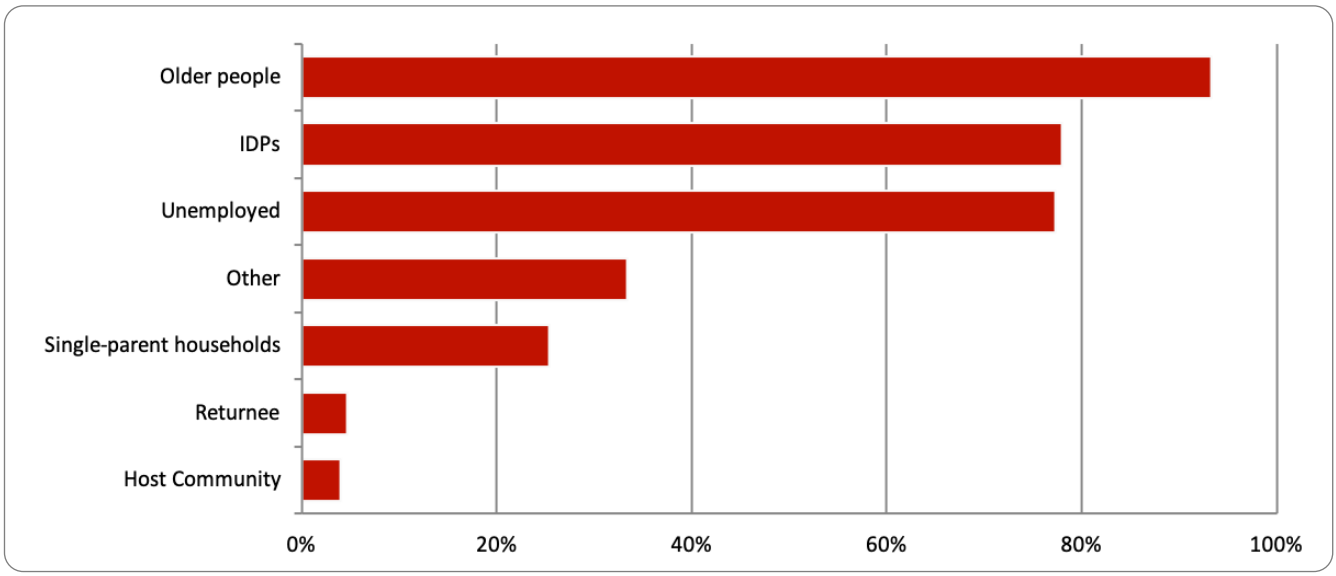

Figure 1: Population groups facing the greatest difficulties accessing/affording fuel and utilities

Cash assistance

The majority (84%) of government officials considered it realistic to provide direct cash assistance to individuals in their areas to purchase their own fuel, with limited differences between oblasts, except in Sumy where 100% of the KIs reported cash being a realistic approach. This marks a major difference when compared to last year, when 37% of KIs reported the in-kind modality more realistic. From a programmatic perspective, these findings support the continued prioritisation of cash assistance where markets are functional, as cash enables faster delivery, broader coverage and greater flexibility for households compared to in-kind fuel distribution. However, modality decisions should remain context-specific, with exceptions considered for vulnerable households that may be unable to procure, transport or store solid fuel independently, including older persons, persons with disabilities, and households in locations with limited market access.

Among the 25 key informants (KIs) who consider cash-based fuel assistance unrealistic for their hromadas, 76% believe it is preferable to provide in-kind support, such as physical fuel (firewood, briquettes, coal, or pellets). Furthermore, when recommending **alternative modalities for fuel assistance, respondents emphasised a localised approach: suggesting in-kind wood distribution for non-gasified settlements and cash assistance for gasified areas**, while strongly advocating for **direct institutional support to facilities housing IDPs** and communities dominated by multi-apartment buildings with centralised heating.

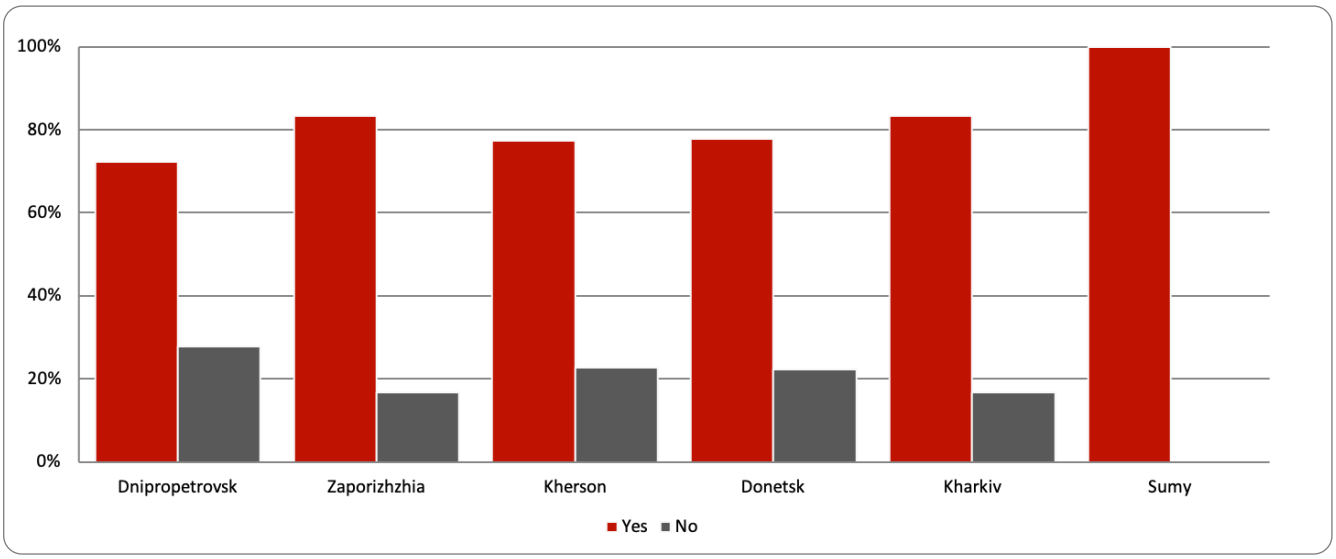

Figure 2: Direct cash for fuel purchase considered realistic (per oblast)

State/local fuel or utility subsidy mechanisms in place

The vast majority of respondents (96%, or 149 KIs) indicated that **state or local subsidy mechanisms for fuel or utilities are currently active in their areas**. Conversely, such mechanisms are reported to be unavailable in six hromadas across the Kharkiv, Kherson, and Sumy oblasts.

Almost all (94%) KIs stated that these **mechanisms successfully reach households within the frontline or high-risk 0–20 km zone**. However, a **critical gap remains** in nine frontline hromadas where these subsidy mechanisms are entirely absent. This includes eight hromadas in Kharkiv oblast (across the Iziumskyi, Chuhuivskyi, and Lozivskyi raions) and one hromada in the Shostkinskyi rayon in Sumy oblast.

* * *

Data collected during the Post Assistance Monitoring (PAM) surveys largely confirms the Winterisation Needs Assessment KI's accounts. Seasoned wood was reported as the most common heating fuel in the community, mentioned by 1,042 respondents (70%). Gas was the second most common source, reported by 52% of respondents. Central heating was used by 16% of respondents, followed by pellets at 9% and other residual sources. Among respondents who received cash assistance for solid fuel, firewood was reported as the most widely available fuel in local markets, mentioned by 702 respondents (99%). Briquettes were available according to 28.3%, while pellets were reported by 13% of respondents. Coal was less commonly available and was mentioned by 3% of respondents.

Coherently with what was reported by the KIs, **most PAM respondents (97%) declared to prefer assistance delivered through cash modality**, with only a few indicating that they would have preferred in-kind assistance. Virtually all of them **highlighted the flexibility cash provides in meeting their heating needs**, allowing them to choose the type and quantity of fuel they needed. Also, households with combined heating systems explained that they use different fuel sources depending on availability, prices, or power outages, and cash allowed them to adjust their spending accordingly.

DRC cash distribution recipients also confirmed the **high level of winter-related needs** reported by the KIs during the Winterisation Needs Assessment. When asked whether cash for solid fuel and utility assistance

received would be sufficient for the entire winter season, 1,052 respondents (71%) reported that it would be enough, nearly one-third anticipated needing additional resources to heat their homes throughout the season. It is worth noting that this finding represents a sharp deterioration when compared to last year, when 97% of solid fuel recipients considered the assistance sufficient for the whole winter, consistent with the atypically cold 2026 winter.

Notwithstanding this major limitation, the vast majority of the households reported that **DRC assistance helped improve thermal comfort or heating during the winter season**, with a total of 97% (1,463) confirming their situation improved and virtually all of them reporting being completely satisfied with the timeliness of the assistance.

Insulation

Safe indoor temperatures in winter and thermal deficiencies

Respondents were asked whether houses in their area are generally able to maintain safe and adequate indoor temperatures during winter. The answers collected reflected their personal perception and are not based on quantifiable technical criteria or verified thermal performance thresholds. Notwithstanding this limitation, the overall picture reported by KIs is nevertheless insightful, with three-quarters (75%, n=117) stating that most houses are capable of maintaining thermal safety. However, a combined 19% of participants highlighted localised vulnerabilities: 16% (n=25) noted that this capability applies to only "some houses," while 3% (n=4) explicitly stated that many households live in thermally inadequate housing. While the broad baseline of winterisation and thermal insulation appears strong, nearly **one in five respondents point to gaps where homes still fall short of maintaining adequate winter warmth**. Such an overall picture appears to be in line with what was reported last year, when 68% of KIs estimated that only 0–20% of assisted households lived in fully insulated housing.

Common types of thermal deficiencies are drafty/old windows (mentioned by 86% of the KIs), lack of wall insulation (59%), damaged or poorly sealed doors (51%) and poor ceiling or attic insulation (36%).

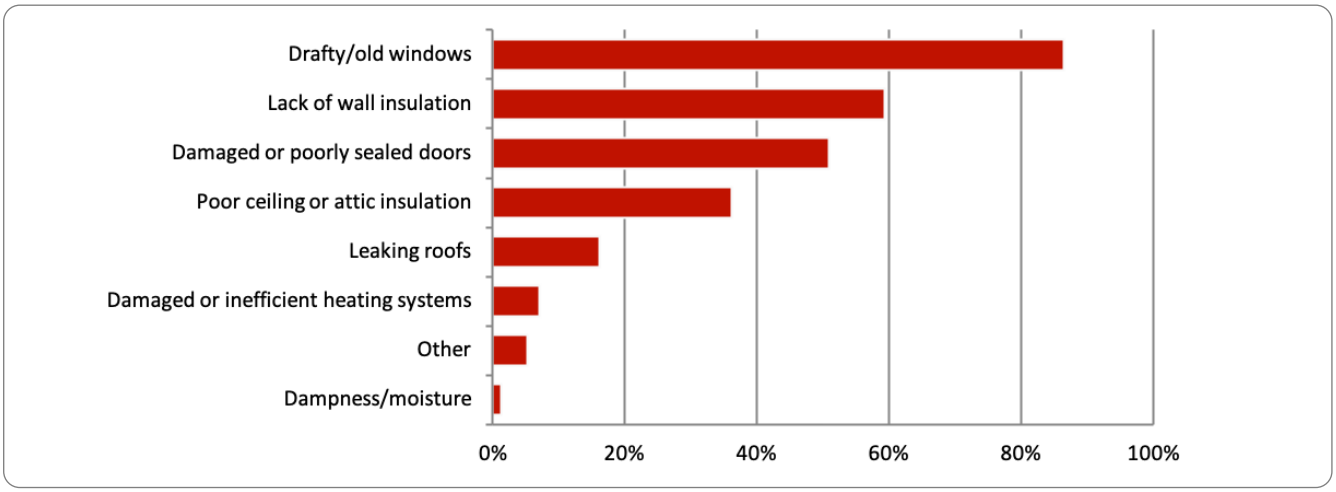

Figure 3: Most common thermal deficiencies observed in houses

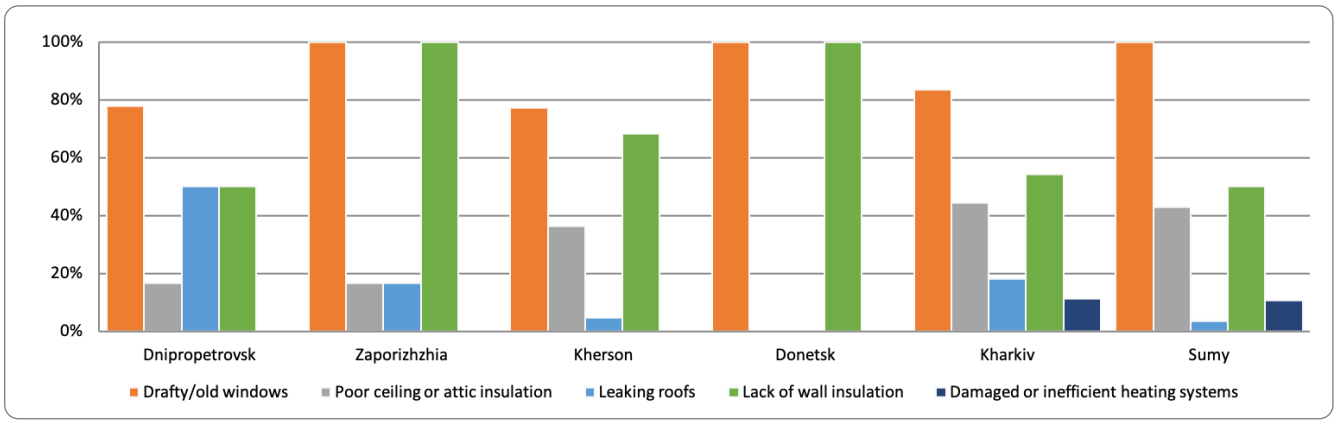

Figure 4: Most common thermal deficiencies observed in houses (per oblast, main categories)

Data collected during 2025/2026 PAM surveys on DRC Insulation interventions are in line with these accounts. Most PAM respondents reported that insulation support was focused on window replacement (71%, 503 households), followed by entrance door replacement (30%) and roof insulation (24%). Smaller shares of respondents indicated attic insulation (10%) and external wall insulation (6%). This shows that interventions were mainly implemented on windows and doors, while a lower proportion of households received insulation of walls, roof, or attic spaces.

Population groups most likely to live in poorly insulated housing

With respect to the **population groups most likely to live in poorly insulated or thermally inadequate housing, 60% of KIs identify IDPs and 40% identify non-displaced conflict-affected households**. This suggests that **while displacement significantly increases exposure to substandard housing, local residents directly impacted by the conflict also face substantial challenges in maintaining safe indoor temperatures**. Also, this distribution appears quite homogeneous among all oblasts, with major differences in Sumy and Dnipropetrovsk, where IDPs are significantly more likely to live in sub-standard conditions.

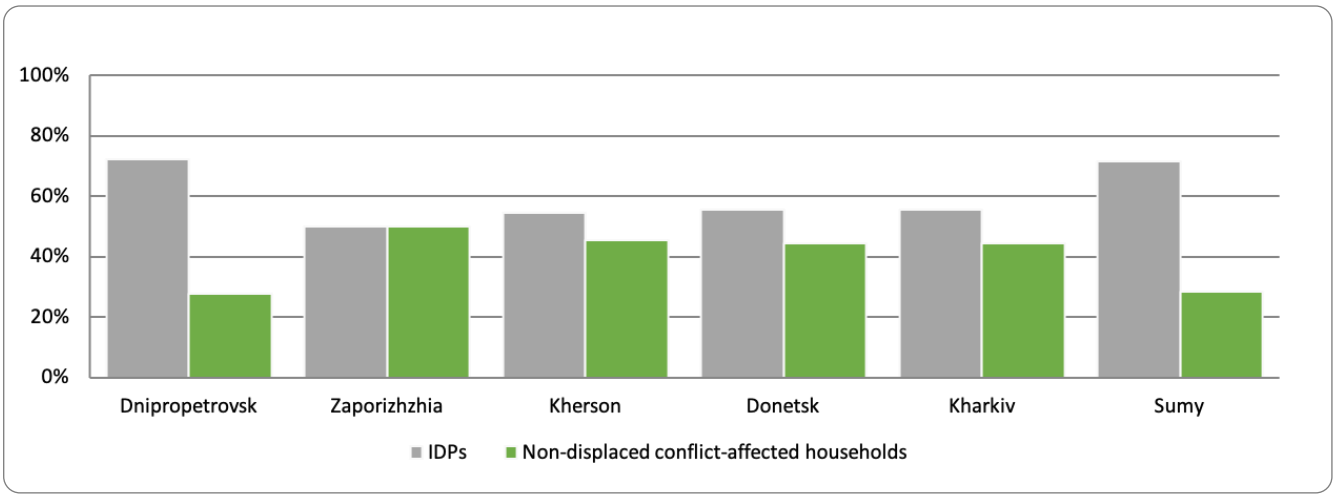

Figure 5: Population groups most likely to live in poorly insulated housing (per oblast)

Vulnerable households unable to improve thermal conditions without support

The findings indicate that **a substantial proportion of vulnerable households are unable to improve the thermal condition of their homes without external support**. Specifically, the largest share of respondents (41%) estimates that 'more than 60%' of vulnerable households face such limitations, followed by 32%

believing that between '30-60%' of vulnerable households are unable to address thermal conditions independently. This average significantly varies among the different oblasts, with Kherson, Donetsk and, in a smaller proportion, Sumy appearing to be the most vulnerable areas.

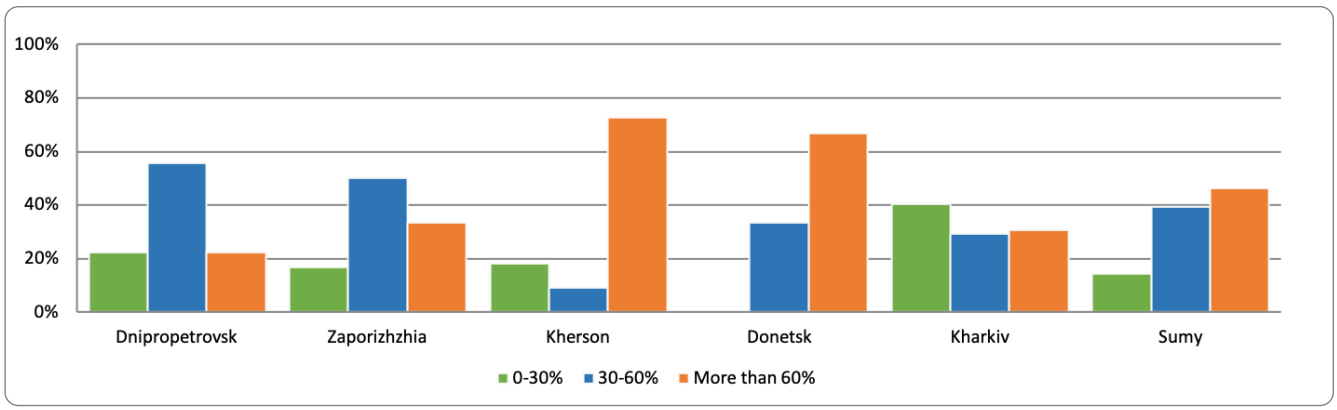

Figure 6: Proportion of vulnerable households unable to improve thermal conditions without support (per oblast)

Overall, the data suggests that in many areas, **a significant number of vulnerable households lack financial resources and technical capacity required to improve thermal efficiency**, common challenges already recorded in 2025. The results indicate that the **primary barriers preventing vulnerable households from improving the thermal condition of their homes are mainly economic and demographic in nature**. The vast majority of respondents (98%) identified lack of financial resources as the key constraint, closely followed by older age and disability (95%), which limit both income-generating capacity and the ability to carry out repairs or upgrades.

Conflict-related factors also play a significant role, with 27% of respondents highlighting insecurity as a contributing factor. Limited access to materials (16%) and skilled labour (6%) further constrain households' ability to undertake improvements, although these are secondary compared to financial limitations. Differences among oblasts are negligible.

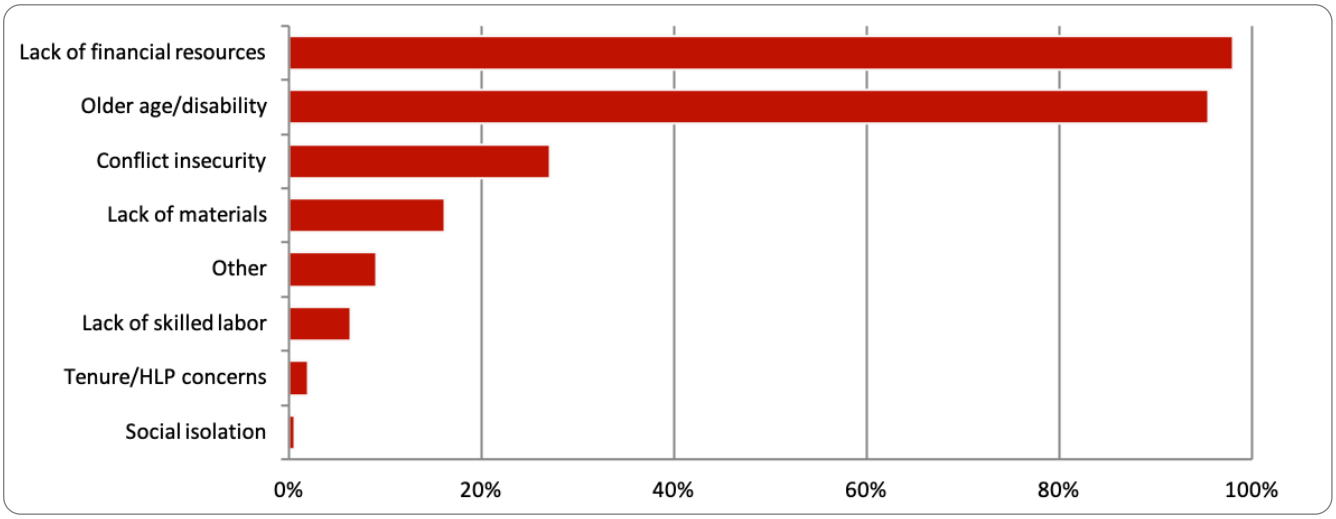

Figure 7: Main reasons households cannot improve thermal conditions unaided

Insights from the "Other" category reinforce these findings, emphasising that economic hardship such as unemployment, low wages, and small pensions remain critical drivers, particularly for single individuals and large families. Additionally, war-related impacts, including the presence of internally displaced people and

proximity to frontline areas, further exacerbate vulnerability. Overall, the data suggests that intersecting financial and security challenges are widespread and significantly limit households' ability to improve their living conditions without external support.

Feedback collected among the recipients of DRC Insulation works carried out during last winter (PAM Survey), confirms the relevance of most of the opinions shared by the Winterisation Needs Assessment KIs about the barriers preventing households from improving their homes when unaided. Very high satisfaction rates were recorded in virtually all dimensions of the assistance, including relevance, sufficiency and timeliness, for both modalities used by DRC: in-kind (contractors carry out the works) and cash (household implement the rehabilitations with technical support granted by DRC).

The main winter-related challenge for households living in poorly insulated housing is high heating costs, reported by 98% of respondents, confirming the findings reported in the previous chapter. Other commonly reported challenges include deterioration of housing conditions during winter (48%), health impacts related to cold or damp environments (33%), and the inability to maintain adequate indoor temperatures (32%).

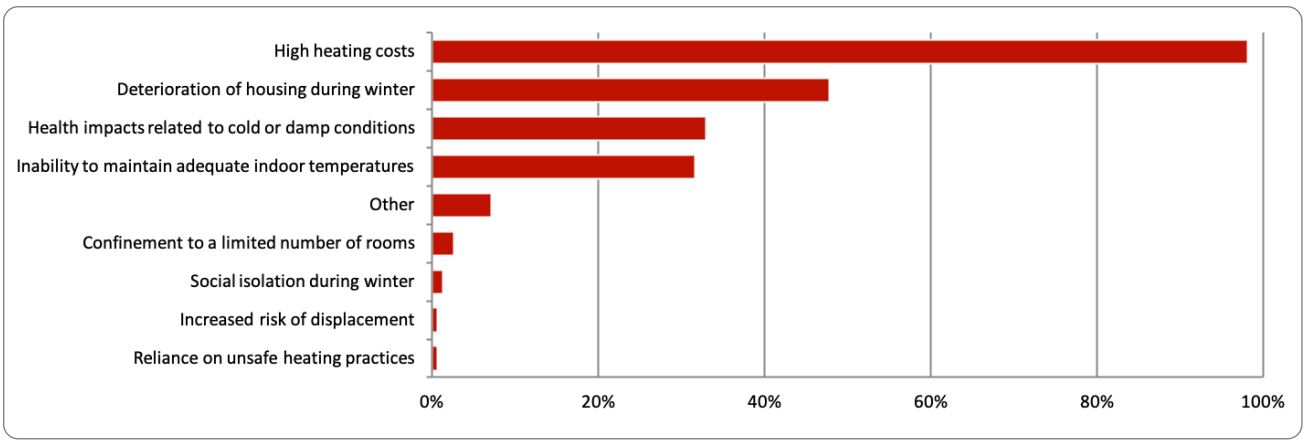

Figure 8: Main winter-related challenges for households in poorly insulated housing

Settlements with particularly severe winterisation needs

Responses indicate that perceptions of winterisation needs vary across locations. A large share of respondents report that **needs are similar across all settlements** within their area. However, where differences are identified, the most commonly mentioned high-need locations include:

- **Settlements close to the frontline or affected by active hostilities**, including recently de-occupied areas.
- **Remote or hard-to-reach settlements**, often located far from administrative centres or main infrastructure.
- **Non-gasified settlements or those lacking centralised heating**, including those relying on solid fuel.
- **Specific small villages**, particularly those with limited populations or infrastructure.

Overall, while many respondents view winterisation needs as widespread, certain settlement types particularly those affected by conflict, remoteness, and lack of energy infrastructure are more frequently identified as having comparatively higher needs.

Heating Infrastructure (Solarisation/Boiler housing)

Heating systems

Answering about the **heating systems most used by households in the researched areas, 88% of the KIs mentioned solid fuel stoves/heating, followed by individual gas boilers (78%)**. Far less common appear to be district heating networks (17%), electrical heating systems (15%), centralised gas heating systems (14%), and localised boiler houses (3%). Those who reported localised boiler houses, district heating networks, and centralised gas and electrical heating systems, provided their insights on reliability of their heating infrastructure during winter. While only 23% of KIs affirm not to expect major disruptions, most of them foresee disruptions to be occasional (39%) or frequent (30%), with KIs in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblasts reporting the hardest conditions.

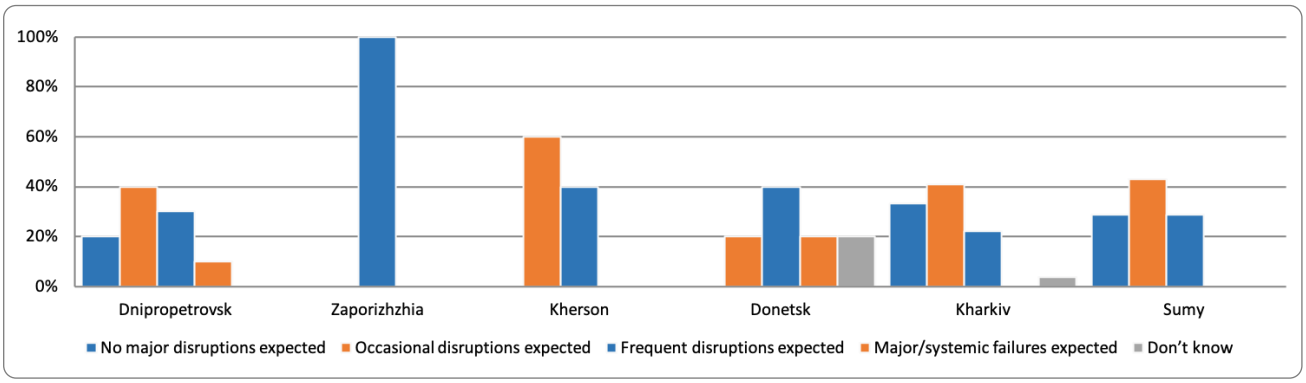

Figure 9: Reliability of centralised/networked heating infrastructure (per oblast)

Concerning the **main risks affecting heating infrastructure** during next winter, virtually all respondents mention **damage from attacks/hostilities (96%), followed by electricity instability/outages (54%) and lack of backup power (36%)**, a trend fairly homogeneous among oblasts.

Support to heating infrastructure with the most positive expected impact

KIs identified several possible interventions for winter preparedness considered critical. Specifically, **48% of respondents emphasised the need for rapid repair capacity, followed closely by backup power systems (43%) and fuel reserves (39%).** Additionally, 29% of informants highlighted the repair or rehabilitation of boiler houses, with a number of alternative solutions mentioned less frequently.

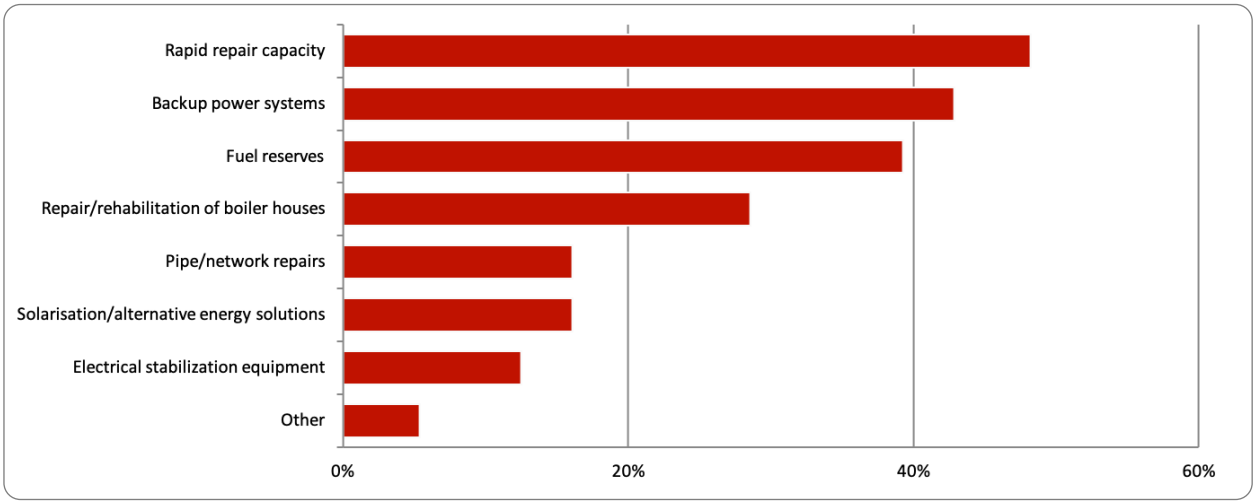

Figure 10: Support to heating infrastructure with the most positive expected impact

Based on the qualitative responses, KIs highlighted boiler houses, local educational institutions, and specific utility infrastructure as the primary facilities where repairs would significantly improve winter heating conditions. Respondents frequently identified boiler houses and central heating systems as critical needs, alongside public facilities such as schools, gymnasiums, and kindergartens. A few entries also noted the importance of supporting electrical infrastructure and bomb shelters to ensure stability during the winter months.

* * *

The centrality of interventions aiming at supporting communities against the risks of frequent/major network disruptions is also confirmed by the feedback collected during a PAM covering the installation by DRC of Solar Power Panels in 39 facilities in Sumy, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhya and Mykolaiv oblasts. Respondents listed a wide range of benefits, including the ability to operate without interruption and maintain services "as usual," and reduced dependence on diesel generators. In most cases, improved energy security, both in terms of reliability and continuity, allowed supported facilities to shift from emergency/reduced operational modes to more stable service delivery. While the overall satisfaction with the assistance received was very high, even after receiving DRC's support most respondents identified several outstanding needs and suggested additional interventions. These include increasing the number of installed solar panels to better withstand prolonged outages and extending the coverage to additional water facilities and social institution departments. Looking ahead, recommendations centreed on scaling up solar panel and battery storage capacity, overall confirming the very high needs mentioned by the KIs contacted during the Winterisation Needs Assessment.

Heating Points / Points of Invincibility

POIs across the assessed regions continue to play a critical role in the provision of basic humanitarian services, with their functional scope and utilisation levels varying significantly depending on the security context and the stability of energy supply. In Kyiv, for example, POIs primarily function as resilient community spaces equipped with backup power solutions (generators, inverters), providing heating, access to charging devices, warming food, conditions for remote work, learning, and social support. In Kherson oblast, conversely, POIs are largely integrated into the network of collective centres and transit hubs for evacuees, including specialised facilities for vulnerable groups. Despite infrastructure damage due to attacks, most facilities demonstrate a high level of operational readiness and adaptation.

Functioning community heating points

In terms of availability of Heating Points, almost all (**99%) KIs report functioning community heating points or points of invincibility in their hromadas**. Only Lebedynska hromada in Sumy Oblast and Dvorichanska hromada in Kharkiv Oblast lack these facilities. Most surveyed areas have active heating points operating now. The typical hromada operates between 1 and 4 heating points. However, several major hubs operate a higher number of facilities:

- **Donetsk Oblast:** Kramatorska hromada operates 55 active heating points, and Oleksandrivska hromada operates 25.
- **Kharkiv Oblast:** Krasnokutska hromada operates 40 active heating points.
- **Zaporizhzhia & Sumy Oblasts:** Shyrokivska hromada and Sumska hromada each operate 30 heating points, while Romenska hromada has 29.
- **Kherson Oblast:** Khersonska hromada operates 26 active heating points.

Despite this relatively wide availability, **only 1 out of 3 KIs (66%) state that existing heating points can accommodate the population in need**, while their capacity is reported as "partially sufficient" by 26% of the KIs and "insufficient" by 3%. The **main challenges affecting the capacity of the heating points are the lack of fuel or energy supply (23% of KIs) and structural barriers limiting their accessibility for people with disabilities and older people (15%)**, followed by residual challenges mentioned by a relatively small number of respondents.

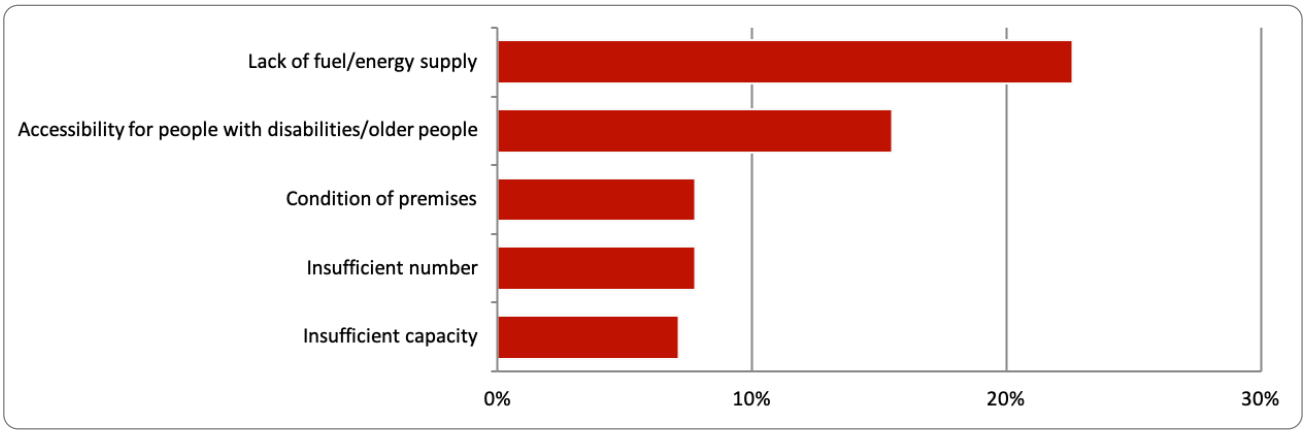

Figure 11: Main gaps or challenges with community heating points

Gaps / challenges with community heating points

The negative feedback collected about the **structural barriers characterising the heating points is particularly alarming** when considering the survey results about the levels of reliance on community heating points among different population groups. **Older people represent the largest group, with 57% of respondents identifying them as most reliant. Individuals without heating at home and people with disabilities follow closely, reported by 47% and 45% of respondents, respectively**. Additionally, 43% of the respondents selecting the "Other" category show an interesting consensus about heating points being universally relied upon by everyone during emergencies or power grid failures, particularly families with young children, socio-economically vulnerable groups, or anyone in need of charging devices or staying warm when electricity is cut off.

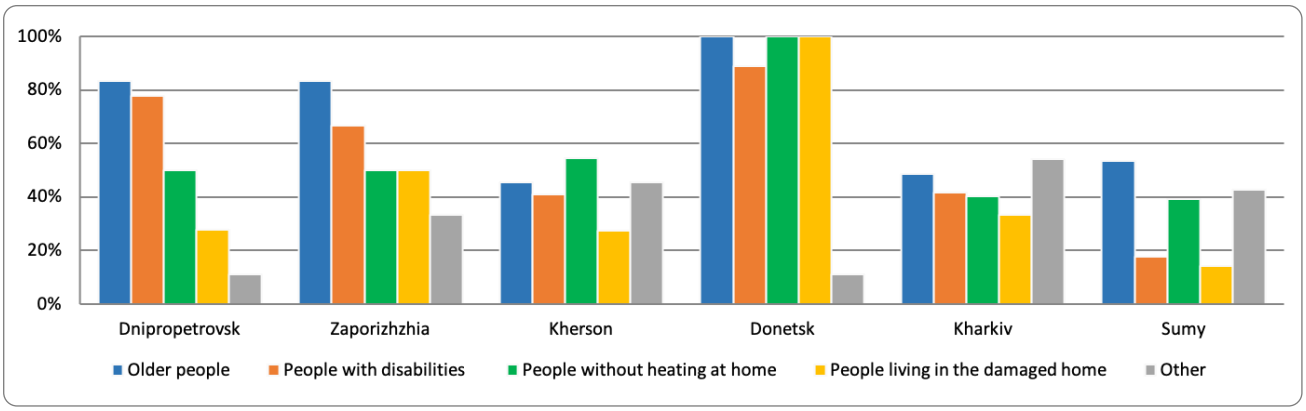

Figure 12: Population groups most reliant on community heating points (per oblast)

* * *

In early 2026, DRC Ukraine provided emergency assistance (crisis modifier under ECHO, GERF) to POIs and Health Facilities during cold winter period and power outages. The assistance delivered to POIs by DRC was not limited to heating solutions but was also aimed at ensuring comfortable conditions for visitors during low

temperatures, including distributions of kettles, microwave ovens, thermopots, hygiene items, snacks and hot drinks. Health facilities, in turn, received support through the provision of high-capacity generators to ensure uninterrupted operation during winter and power outages, including powering administrative and medical equipment as well as heating systems. PAM surveys covering both interventions largely confirm the accounts collected in June 2026 from the KIs contacted during the Winterisation Needs Assessment.

Points of Invincibility

Overall, DRC interventions granted access to basic services, with 100% of the contacted KIs reporting their availability and 85% their full sufficiency. Despite the assistance provided, though, detailed findings also indicate a need to focus on additional energy supply, heating capacity, and infrastructure support, particularly in locations affected by outages and security constraints.

POIs heating capacity, for example, varied across locations. The majority (70%) of POIs reported maintaining heating during outages, while 21% could do so only sometimes, and 9% rarely or never. At user level, 48% reported sufficient indoor temperature, while 52% (mainly in Kherson oblast) reported it as partially sufficient. Power outages lasting up to 24 hours reduce heating capacity, with indoor temperatures dropping to 16–17°C. Where generators (up to 50 kW) are used, diesel consumption can reach 10 litres per hour, which affects regular use especially during long outages.

Operational constraints also affected service delivery. Limited wastewater capacity affects cleaning and laundry while food preparation is delayed due to limited electric stoves, and additional equipment cannot be installed because of wiring limitations, especially in Kherson and Donetsk oblasts.

Most POIs expect higher demand during winter, particularly if outages and cold conditions continue for long periods. Priority winter needs include fuel (diesel and gasoline) for generators, backup power (EcoFlow, power banks), heating equipment (electric heaters, mobile solutions). Additional needs include electrical repairs (to enable the usage of cooking equipment), cleaning materials, and basic items (linens, mattresses, clothing). Some centres also reported the need for fuel storage solutions.

Health facilities

All healthcare facilities assisted by DRC provide a wide variety of medical services for the local population, including primary consultations, emergency triage, chronic disease management, maternal and child health, vaccinations, and referrals, as well as ultrasound scans and health screenings.

In winter of 2026, when extreme winter temperatures compounded by lack of electricity and heating impacted Kyiv, the health facilities faced a severe surge in demand. Patient visits spiked due to seasonal illnesses and residential heating failures, while local communities simultaneously utilised clinics in Irpin and Hostomel as emergency ‘Points of Invincibility’ to warm up, charge devices, and heat food. To cope with prolonged blackouts and maintain medical operations, facilities in Irpin deployed a hybrid power system combining solar panels and generators. In Myronivka, there is a large hospital with 300 doctors. This large facility managed a few surgical operations daily with staff forced to work by candlelight before assistance was secured.

All KIs (100%) considered the equipment provided by DRC sufficient to meet energy-related needs during upcoming peak periods. Although the full testing of the upgraded energy systems was still to be completed at the time of the survey, six health facilities (75%) reported that their capacity to respond to community energy-related needs significantly improved compared to last winter. The remaining two facilities

(25%) indicated that the assistance "somewhat improved" their capacity, confirming the scale of the winter-related needs notwithstanding the external support received.

For several facilities in Irpin, for example, indoor heating is entirely dependent on electric boilers and municipal heating plants. Securing sufficient power to run these heavy electrical loads simultaneously with water pumps remains critical.

Beyond physical infrastructure, health facility staff, particularly from the facility in Hostomel, highlighted the importance of strengthening structured coordination with local government authorities and external humanitarian organisations during crises.

Local Authority Capacity

Main operational gaps local authorities face for winter response and relevant support

When asked about the **main operational gaps local authorities face for winter response**, KIs often referred to **financial and resource constraints**. The most frequently reported issues are insufficient funding (76%) and lack of fuel and energy reserves (59%), followed by insufficient personnel (12%).

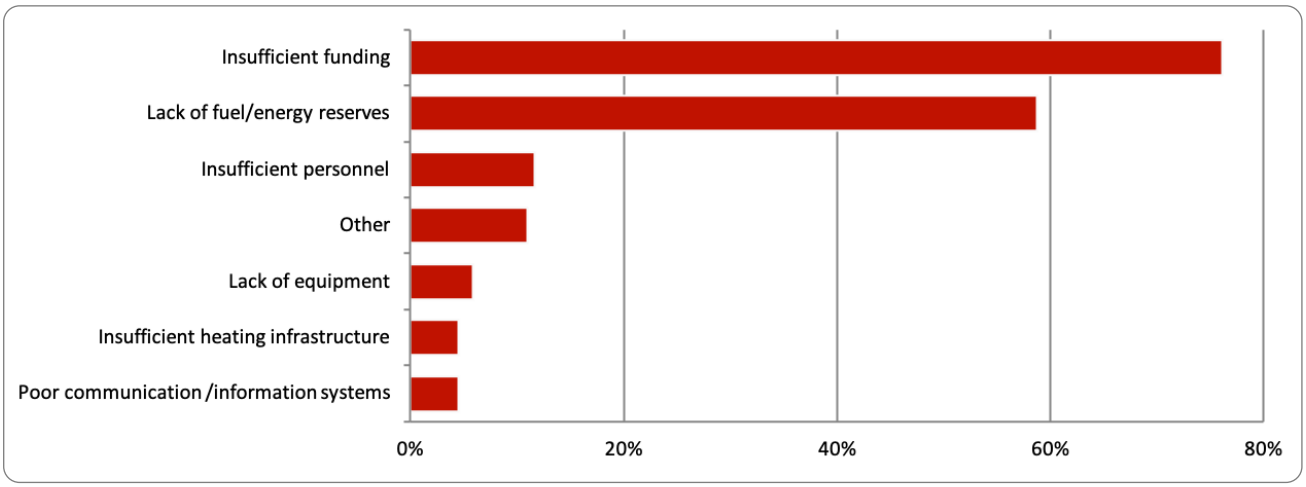

Figure 13: Main operational gaps local authorities face for winter response

Insights from the "Other" category (11%) suggest that, in some cases, respondents do not identify additional gaps or do not have sufficient information to assess them. Where specific challenges are mentioned, they reflect context-specific factors, including the limited role of local authorities in heating provision in rural areas, where households are responsible for their own heating.

Consistent with the funding gap identified above, **the most important forms of support from higher-level authorities to address winter needs are additional budget, identified by 81% of respondents, and fuel and energy supply (60%).** Other forms of support were mentioned far less frequently but remain relevant. These include staff reinforcement (10%), which can support local response capacity, and information and data sharing (9%), which can improve coordination and planning. Technical guidance (4%) was noted by a smaller number of respondents.

Responses under the "Other" category (6%) point to additional context-specific needs. These include requests for infrastructure support, such as protection of critical infrastructure, and equipment for snow clearing. Some respondents also noted the need for more consistent and timely assistance, based on previous gaps in support delivery.

Direct assistance to households is, by a substantial margin, the type of external support local authorities consider would best complement their winter response, cited by 98% of KIs and reaching full consensus (100%) in four of the six oblasts. Other types of support are mentioned less frequently but remain relevant. These include equipment or supplies (12%), which can support service delivery and local response efforts, and capacity building or training (8%), which may help strengthen local implementation capacity.

Hard to reach / vulnerable settlements and local mechanisms

A large proportion (68%) of KIs (105 of 155) identify specific settlements they believe will be hardest to reach or support during winter while 24% reported no such challenges and 8% were unsure. Among the 105 KIs confirming these challenges, **road damage or seasonal inaccessibility (68%) and proximity to the front line or active hostilities (52%) are the two dominant reasons cited**. While no mobile or internet connection and very small or dispersed population are far less cited overall (8%), these challenges appear to be particularly relevant in some specific oblast.

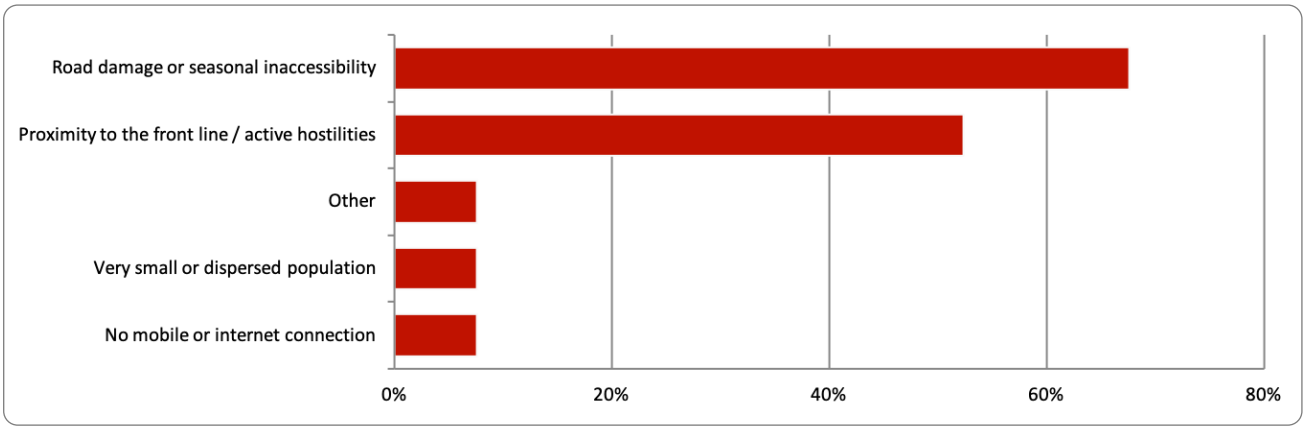

Figure 14: Main reasons settlements are expected to be hardest to reach

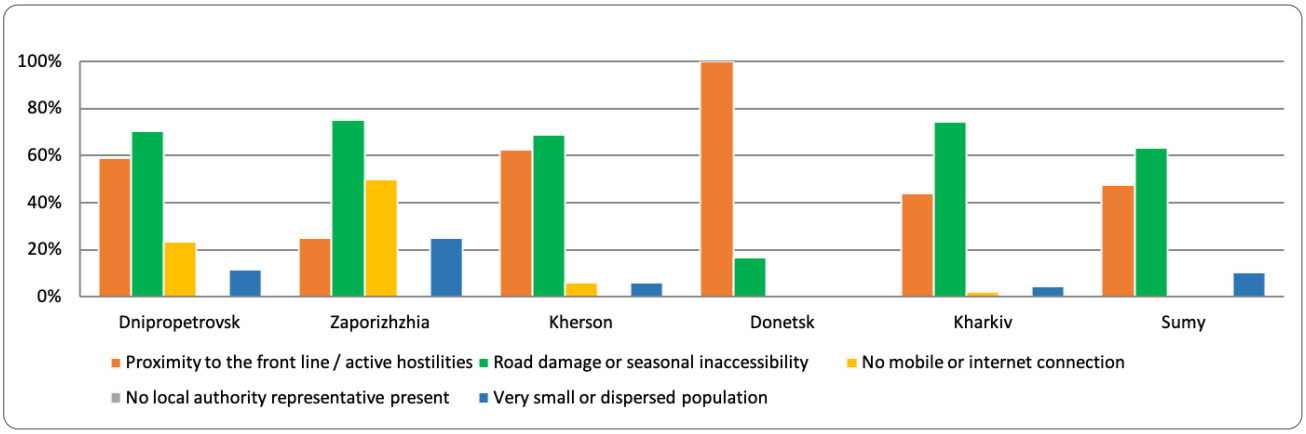

Figure 15: Main reasons settlements are expected to be hardest to reach (per oblast)

Finally, additional insights from the "Other" category (8%) highlight further access challenges. These include **limited transport availability and lack of bus connections**, **remote settlements that may become isolated for several days during heavy snowfall**, and **infrastructure constraints**, such as reliance on a single access road.

The findings indicate that most authorities have an established mechanism to identify and track vulnerable households for winter assistance. **A large majority of respondents (94%) reported using an existing registry or list**, suggesting that systems for prioritisation are widely in place. However, a small proportion of

respondents highlighted some gaps. About 2% reported that their systems are incomplete or outdated (mostly in Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv) and 3% reported no system in place (Kharkiv and Sumy).

Additional Vulnerabilities

Unmet winterisation needs affecting the safety and wellbeing

Asked how unmet **winterisation needs affect the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable individuals**, nearly half of the respondents **(46%) reported that households are forced to sleep in unsafe spaces, and 15% mentioned fire hazards**, linked to the use of unsafe or improvised heating methods. Differences between oblasts are significant.

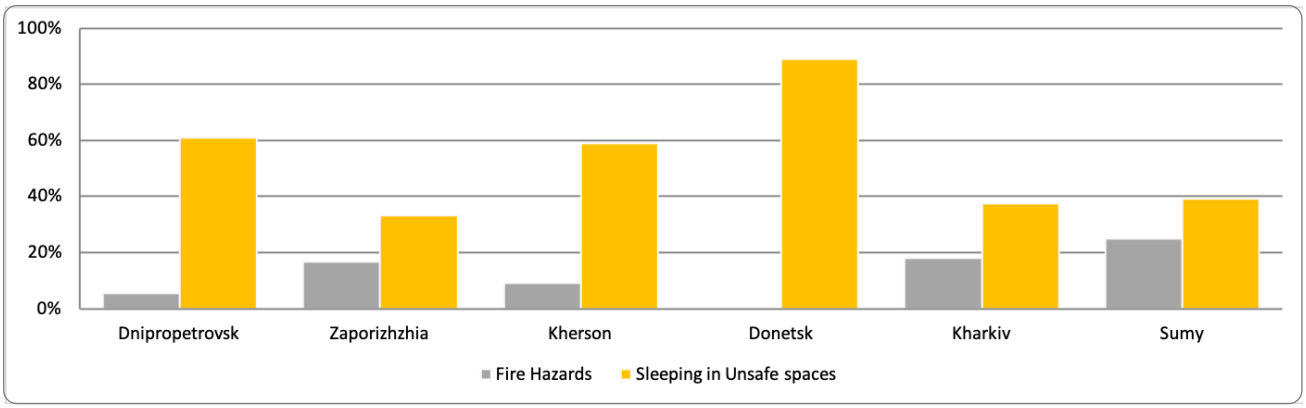

Figure 16: Unmet winterisation needs affecting the safety and wellbeing (per oblast, most common effects)

Further insights from the "Other" category (chosen by 38% of the KIs) highlight a broader range of impacts. These responses point to health-related risks, including increased illness, worsening health conditions, and exposure to hypothermia due to prolonged cold and damp environments. They also underline safety and environmental concerns, such as living in structurally unsafe conditions and increased exposure to general hazards, with a small number of responses referring to protection risks, including heightened vulnerability to violence or abuse. At the same time, a notable portion of respondents indicated no observed impact or uncertainty, stating that such effects have not occurred in their area or that they were unable to assess the situation.

Almost all (84%) KIs (130 of 155) report having observed some impact of winter conditions on people's mental health or sense of safety and wellbeing, a sharp increase since last year (60%). Among those who reported impacts, responses point to psychological and emotional strain, including stress, anxiety, and ongoing worry. Respondents also noted changes in behaviour such as irritability and nervousness, as well as reduced confidence and difficulty coping with daily conditions. Winter conditions are also linked to physical health outcomes, as insufficient heating contributes to illness and the worsening of existing conditions. Cold indoor environments increase exposure to health risks, which in turn also affects overall wellbeing.

Most vulnerable groups during the winter

Roughly half of the KIs reported that **specific population groups appear to be more exposed to the winter season, feeling less safe or more isolated**. In line with what was reported in 2025, **older people are cited most often (77%), followed by people with disabilities (52%) and single-headed female households (47%)**. Interestingly enough, no KI selected men of conscription age or returnees.

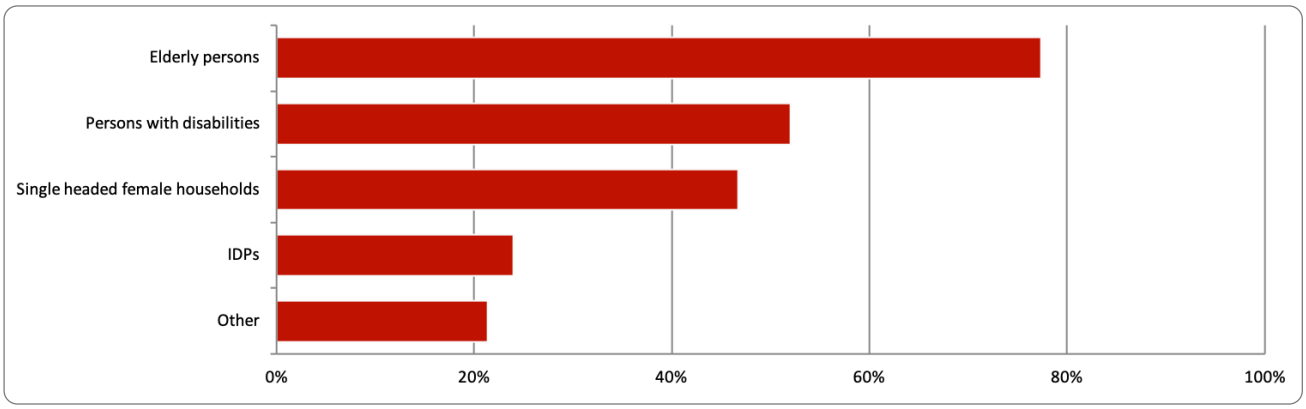

Figure 17: Groups who feel less safe or more isolated during the winter months

Insights from the "Other" category suggest that vulnerability is often broad and context-dependent. **Many respondents noted that the impacts extend to the entire community,** particularly where living conditions, infrastructure, or conflict exposure affect all households. At the same time, some responses highlight specific groups, including children, families with small children, and **individuals living alone**, who may have limited support systems. Economic factors are also identified, with references to **low-income households and unemployed individuals**, indicating that financial constraints shape exposure to winter-related risks. In some cases, respondents indicated that the most affected groups could not be clearly defined.

Asked about the reasons why these specific groups appear to be particularly vulnerable, a lower sense of safety and higher isolation during winter are mainly linked to **low income, limited mobility, and lack of support**. Many respondents report that households struggle to pay for heating and to get or prepare fuel. Another common issue is **limited help from family or services**, which increases dependence on others and creates concern about how to manage during winter. **Access problems are also frequent.** These include difficulty reaching shops or services due to physical limits, winter conditions, or insecurity. This reduces daily activities and social contact. In particular:

Single-headed female households feel less safe or isolated during winter primarily due to low income, limited physical capacity, and lack of support. Respondents described that these households manage all needs alone, including heating preparation. This includes difficulties with obtaining and handling firewood, limited financial resources to cover costs, and absence of family support, with children often living elsewhere. Access to services and supplies is also a concern in some areas.

Older people are particularly vulnerable primarily because of their reduced mobility, low income, and living alone. Many respondents describe older individuals as having limited strength and mobility, which makes it harder to leave the house, especially in winter conditions. Small pensions limit their ability to pay for heating, while absence of family support increases dependence on external help. Distance to services also reduces access to basic needs.

People with disabilities are also affected by limited mobility and dependence on others. Many respondents note that mobility constraints limit the ability to manage daily needs and prepare for winter. Financial constraints affect access to heating and supplies, while limited support from family or services increases reliance on external assistance. Access to services is also more restricted.

Finally, displacement, low income, and uncertainty about the future are the main vulnerabilities affecting the **IDPs, who are often described as** living in unfamiliar or temporary conditions, which affect stability. Limited financial resources restrict access to heating and basic needs, while uncertainty about future conditions

increases concern about coping during winter. Support networks are often weaker compared to host communities.

Winter related safety incidents or protection issues

Most KIs (86%) reported that **no safety incidents or protection issues** related to winter conditions had occurred. However, **12% of them reported safety (shelter-related) incidents**, and **2% reported protection issues**, indicating the presence of specific risks in a limited number of locations.

Reported safety incidents are mainly linked to fires, mentioned in 61% of cases where incidents occurred. These are often associated with heating practices and increased fire risk during the winter period. Other reported incidents include **cold-related health incidents (17%)** were also noted, including hypothermia, general body hypothermia, and frostbite, with one reported death. In addition, **unsafe coping practices (6%)** were recorded, such as burning clothes instead of firewood due to lack of fuel (Kupiansk Raion, Kharkiv Oblast). **Protection issues** are fewer in number but highlight specific concerns. The main pattern relates to **cold exposure linked to alcohol use (67%)**, including cases of hypothermia and frostbite under alcohol intoxication.

Conflict-related protection risks (33%) were also reported, referring to impacts of military activity on safety and access to services.

Winter preparedness influence on movement decisions

KIs responses suggest that the level of winter preparedness can influence people's decisions on whether to return to or leave frontline areas, although views are mixed. A slight majority of respondents (52%) indicate that **people who are better prepared for winter are more likely to return home**, suggesting that access to adequate heating, insulation, and resources can support return intentions. At the same time, 34% of respondents report that **people return regardless of their level of preparedness**, which may reflect other factors influencing decisions, such as attachment to place, property concerns, or limited alternatives. A smaller share of respondents (14%) indicated that they **do not know**, pointing to some variability in awareness or local dynamics.

Additional remarks

Given the possibility to add any relevant comment at the end of the questionnaire, several respondents highlighted several cross-cutting issues related to winter preparedness, service needs, and coordination of assistance.

A key theme is the **importance of winter support**, particularly provision of solid fuel. Respondents note that assistance in previous years has helped households cope, but also highlight **gaps in coverage**, where some households receive support while others in similar conditions do not. This has led to concerns about fairness and the need for **more transparent selection processes and communication with communities**.

Many responses emphasise the need for **earlier delivery of assistance**, especially firewood or financial support, so households can prepare before the heating season. **Delays in aid distribution reduce its effectiveness**.

Another major issue is **financial constraints and limited livelihoods**, particularly among pensioners, unemployed individuals, and families with children. Respondents stress the need for continued **cash or in-kind support** for heating and basic needs.

Several entries also point to **infrastructure and service gaps**, including lack of water supply systems (e.g., *Mala Shesternia and Kniazivka villages*), need for transport and municipal equipment, and declining access to shops and services. There are also requests to support **multi-apartment buildings** and improve accessibility (e.g., installation of ramps).

Specific groups highlighted include **older people with limited mobility**, including those without caregivers, as well as **IDPs**, who require additional attention and support. There are also mentions of **transit centres for IDPs needing heating support**.

Overall, the additional inputs highlight the need for **timely, transparent, and expanded winter support**, combined with attention to infrastructure gaps, service access, and the needs of specific vulnerable groups. They also underline the importance of coordination with communities and local authorities to ensure assistance reaches those most in need.

Conclusions & recommendations

Winterisation needs for the 2026–2027 season remain severe, structural, and relatively similar among the six oblasts surveyed, with the underlying drivers recurring consistently in every region: economic hardship, ageing and vulnerable demographics, conflict-damaged housing and infrastructure, and the persistent risk of energy disruptions.

Direct cash assistance should remain the primary response modality as affordability is the dominant constraint preventing vulnerable populations from preparing for the winter. On average, KIs estimate that 55% of households cannot cover fuel and utility costs without external assistance. Vulnerability is a key factor in needs during the winter months with older people, IDPs and unemployed people identified as the groups facing the greatest difficulty in almost all areas. Cash remains both the preferred and the most feasible modality: 84% of KIs consider direct cash assistance realistic, and 97% of PAM respondents confirmed a preference for cash over in-kind support, citing the flexibility it provides across combined heating systems. Nonetheless, feasibility is not uniform and KIs often recommend a localised approach including in-kind distribution in non-gasified settlements. While subsidy mechanisms are active in 96% of surveyed areas, they remain absent in several hromadas (in Kharkiv and Sumy), leaving some of the most exposed households outside the safety net.

Shelter programming remains essential to address insulation needs especially among vulnerable populations. Although 75% of KIs consider most houses able to maintain safe indoor temperatures, 41% estimate that more than 60% of vulnerable households cannot improve their thermal conditions without support, with Kherson (73%), Donetsk (67%) and Sumy (46%) emerging as the most vulnerable oblasts. Drafty windows (86%), missing wall insulation (59%) and poorly sealed doors (51%) are the most common deficiencies. The barriers are overwhelmingly economic and demographic – lack of financial resources (98%) and older age or disability (95%) – with conflict insecurity an additional driver in Donetsk (89%). IDPs are the group most frequently identified as living in substandard housing, especially in Sumy and Dnipropetrovsk, although non-displaced conflict-affected residents face comparable conditions in most other oblasts.

Repair to ageing and damaged heating infrastructure is increasingly needed in both the shorter and longer-term. Household heating relies principally on solid fuel stoves (88%) and individual gas boilers (78%), but where networked systems operate, confidence in their winter reliability is low: only 23% of relevant KIs expect no major disruptions, with expectations most negative in Kherson, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia. Damage from attacks and hostilities is the primary risk, mentioned by 96% of KIs, followed by electricity instability (54%). Rapid repair capacity (48%), backup power systems (43%) and fuel reserves (39%) are the

interventions expected to deliver the greatest impact. PAM findings on DRC solarisation works corroborate this direction, demonstrating that decentralised renewable capacity improved facilities' energy security while confirming demand for scaled-up panel and battery storage capacity.

Heating points are available, but interventions should mitigate major capacity and accessibility gaps. Even if functioning heating points are reported by virtually all KIs, only 66% consider their capacity sufficient, falling to 33% in Zaporizhzhia and 56% in Dnipropetrovsk. The populations most reliant on these facilities are older people (57%), people without home heating (47%) and people with disabilities (45%), which are precisely those affected by the accessibility barriers reported as a common gap, along with fuel and energy supply. PAM data confirms both the centrality of these facilities during prolonged outages and their operational limits, with very low indoor temperatures during extended power cuts and high generator fuel consumption constraining sustained operation.

Local authorities are under-resourced to fully address winter-related needs to households. Insufficient funding (76%) and lack of fuel or energy reserves (59%) are the main operational gaps, in line with the requests for additional budget (81%) and fuel/energy supply (60%) to higher authorities. These findings underline the continued importance of humanitarian actors in providing direct assistance to vulnerable households, particularly where local resources are insufficient to cover fuel, utilities and other winter-related needs. Particularly acute needs are to be expected by 68% of KIs in hard-to-reach settlements, mainly because of road damage and front-line proximity. Vulnerability-tracking registries are in place in most of the surveyed areas, even if significant gaps exist in specific locations, requiring continued coordination with local authorities and complementary household-level verification.

Protection considerations should be mainstreamed in winter programming as the safety and wellbeing of populations are deeply affected. Unmet winterisation needs force households into unsafe sleeping arrangements (46% of KIs) and elevate fire hazards (15%), while 84% of KIs observe impacts of winter conditions on mental health and wellbeing. Older people (77%), people with disabilities (52%) and single-headed female households (47%) are identified as feeling least safe and most isolated, driven by low income, limited mobility and absent support networks. Roughly half of KIs (52%) consider that winter preparedness positively affects IDPs' decisions to return home.

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