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# DRC Quarterly Protection monitoring Report

July–September 2025





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## Introduction

This report summarises the findings of DRC protection monitoring conducted in Ukraine across Sumy in the North, Kharkiv, and Donetsk Oblasts in the East, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia in the Southeast, and Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts in the South, between 1 July and 30 September 2025. This report seeks to identify trends in protection risks and rights violations, challenges facing conflict-affected populations, and barriers on access to services (particularly for the most vulnerable) across surveyed oblasts during the reporting period. Findings inform ongoing and planned humanitarian responses, enable identifying vulnerable people for tailored support, and support evidence-based advocacy on behalf of persons of concern. Findings from protection monitoring are visualized in an interactive dashboard, enabling DRC and all relevant stakeholders to easily access this data.

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

## Key Findings

- Displacement remained widespread and cyclical, with **secondary displacement** increasing due to insecurity and unaffordable rent. Many IDPs continued living in **informal or unsafe housing**, often without contracts, leaving them ineligible for state aid. Returns were minimal and mostly driven by necessity rather than improved conditions.
- Mine and UXO contamination continued to restrict civilian movement and agricultural activity, especially in **Kherson, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, and Donetsk oblasts**.
- Across all oblasts, communities reported **chronic stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion** due to prolonged hostilities, displacement, and insecurity. Veterans and their families faced acute psychosocial distress linked to post-traumatic symptoms and reintegration challenges. Stigma and limited access to MHPSS services hindered help-seeking.
- GBV risks—especially **intimate partner violence**—remained high and in some areas worsened. Tensions within veteran families and overcrowded living conditions in collective centres exacerbated risks. Survivors faced barriers to accessing confidential services, particularly in rural areas and small communities, where fear of stigma or Territorial Recruitment Centre (TRC) involvement discouraged reporting.
- Households faced significant obstacles in restoring civil and **housing, land, and property (HLP)** documents, citing financial costs, long procedures, and digital exclusion. In **Mykolaiv and Kherson**, missing ownership papers prevented access to eRecovery housing compensation. In **Zaporizhzhia**, remote assessments and digital claims showed some progress but remained limited in scale.
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## Methodology

### Overview

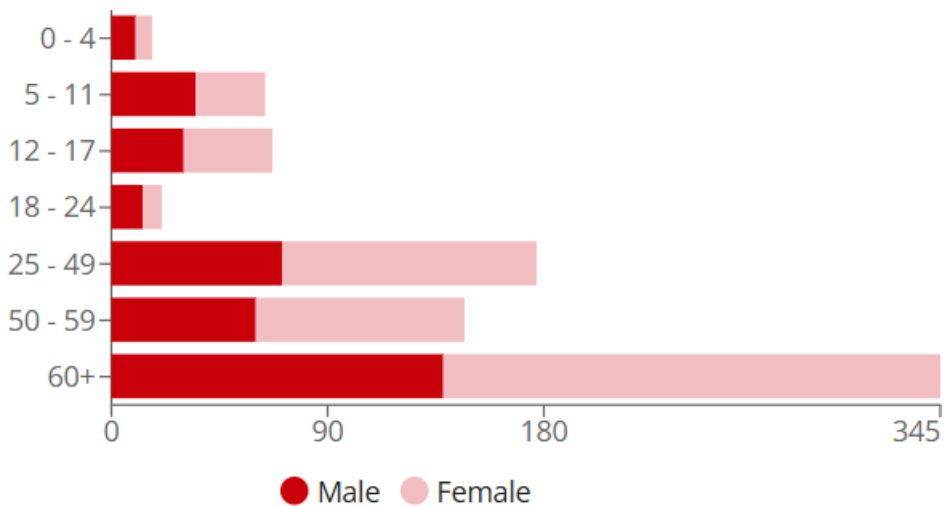
Protection monitoring data has been gathered through a mixed methodology approach, including in-person household surveys, key informant (KI) interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and direct observation. The DRC uses a mixed methodology of random and targeted sampling to identify participants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

Graph 1. Household respondents per displacement group

|                      |     |       |
|----------------------|-----|-------|
| Non-displaced member | 221 | 57.3% |
| IDP                  | 128 | 33.2% |
| Returnee             | 37  | 9.6%  |

Between 1 July and 30 September 2025, DRC Protection teams surveyed 386 households corresponding to 838 individuals. Most of the surveyed households were affected, non-displaced (57% - 221 respondents). Of those surveyed, 33% were IDPs (128 respondents) and 9% were returnees (37 respondents). All the surveyed individuals were Ukrainian citizens, of whom 57% were females. The average age of surveyed individuals was 49 years old. The average household size of those surveyed was 2.2 people. To complement quantitative data collection, KIIs and FGDs were conducted across all regions. A total of 101 KIIs 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 41 FGDs reaching 364 participants from the wider community, including 295 female and 69 male participants. Specific thematic area-level topics were conducted focused on the impact of explosive ordnance on communities, the availability of services for survivors of explosive ordnance and protection needs of elderly people.

Graph 2. Age and gender of surveyed household members



## Context Update

The security context in Ukraine continues to evolve significantly in comparison with previous periods. Given the fluid situation it is challenging to cover all the developments across the country, however the key issues are outlined below.

On the afternoon of 4 September, two Danish Refugee Council staff members were killed, and several others injured when one of its humanitarian demining sites was struck by a missile in Chernihiv. Since then, a number of aid organisations have been directly impacted by Russian Armed Forces (RAF) strikes including one incident on 15<sup>th</sup> of September in which a Ukrainian Red Cross vehicle was apparently directly impacted by a UAV in Kherson.

In the third quarter of 2025, 1,868 airstrikes were recorded across Ukraine, a 25% increase from the previous quarter's 1,491 incidents (INSO Ukraine). This escalation reflects intensified Russian air operations in the east and south, alongside expanded targeting of critical infrastructure such as water, electricity, and gas facilities. Attacks on railway infrastructure also rose sharply, with over 220 incidents reported compared to 150–170 in the second quarter. While impacts on military-linked rail assets remain unclear, civilian routes have been increasingly disrupted. In one incident on 4 October in Shostka, Sumy Oblast, an attack caused delays and resulted in 30 injuries and one death. Continued strikes on infrastructure are expected to increase further as winter approaches.

Humanitarian access further deteriorated in frontline oblasts during the third quarter of 2025, largely due to advances in drone (UAV) technology and extended operational range. The M14 route between Mykolaiv and Kherson remained highly insecure, forcing NGOs to suspend movement for nearly two weeks on the advice of local authorities. Since early

September, attacks along this route have decreased, likely due to the deployment of anti-drone measures and the reported destruction of a UAV launch site in RAF-controlled Hola Prystan. Access along the M03 motorway from Izium to Sloviansk also declined, as the route now falls within FPV drone range, prompting many NGOs to use alternative routes via Barvinkove. Similarly, the Sumy–Bilopillia P44 road continues to be assessed as unsafe due to short-range drone activity. During the same period, RAF territorial gains were recorded in Donetsk Oblast (over 400 sq km in June–July) before the offensive slowed by September. Additional advances were reported in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, moving toward Velykomykhailivka, and in southern Zaporizhzhia, while UAF forces regained areas north of Sumy City following RAF redeployments to Donetsk.

## Key legislative changes

In addition to the changing security situation, several legislative and policy measures were also introduced during the reporting period which will impact persons of concern access to social protection mechanisms and availability of support.

### Access to pensions

As of July 2025, the Pension Fund of Ukraine (PFU) manages 29 social benefits previously handled by local social protection departments to reduce duplication and improve efficiency<sup>1</sup>. The PFU's centralized electronic system enables extraterritorial processing, and applications submitted anywhere (via PFU offices, the Diia app, or ASCs) enter a national queue and can be handled by any available Pension Fund specialist. This approach distributes workloads evenly, shortens processing times, and improves accessibility and transparency. However, as of May 2025, 570,211 applications submitted between May 2022 and December 2024 remained pending in the Unified Social Sphere Information System, indicating continued administrative strain. In addition, since 2022, the Pension Fund of Ukraine (PFU) has expanded its role beyond pension verification to include the physical identification of all individuals receiving social benefits<sup>2</sup>, including those whose payments were automatically extended in areas affected by active hostilities or occupation. This measure aims to ensure that benefits are delivered only to verified recipients and to reduce the risk of fraud.

There is no recent open-source data on the number of social benefit recipients in areas of active hostilities or occupied territories. The latest available estimate, from the Ministry of Social Policy in June 2022, indicated approximately 2.6 million recipients. Since physical identification procedures cannot be completed in these areas, up to 2.6 million people may lose access to social benefits under the worst-case scenario. Persons with disabilities are particularly at risk; according to the head of the Luhansk Regional Administration, about

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<sup>1</sup> [Provision of Certain Types of State Social Assistance by the Pension Fund of Ukraine, decree № 695 of 11 June 2025](#) and [appointment and payment of state social benefits and social scholarships by the Pension Fund of Ukraine, decree № 765 of 25 June 2025](#).

<sup>2</sup> Physical identification includes identification via PFU web portal that is available online if person has electronic signature.

169,000 persons with disabilities living in temporarily occupied territories may lose pensions or benefits due to the inability to undergo mandatory medical re-evaluations.

### Home Based Care

Throughout the current reporting period, major social protection reforms were also conducted in Ukraine that impacted home-based care services. Starting from 1 July 2025, the PFU took over administration of social assistance from local social protection offices, including disability benefits and care allowances. Changes expanded access points for applications through PFU's 500+ nationwide service centers and digital platforms. However, they also introduced a new requirement for beneficiaries – such as persons with disabilities, single parents, low-income families or covering other vulnerability categories – to undergo personal identity verification initially by 1 October. The deadline was later extended to 1 November due to respective amendments to the Decree in the beginning of October. Those who fail to complete a one-time identification (via PFU video call, online cabinet, or in-person) by the deadline will have their payments suspended, creating urgent challenges for many older people and people with disabilities who often needed caregivers' help to navigate the process and gather documentation.

Further regulatory changes on 17 September 2025 (CMU Decree №1172) revised compensation procedures for family caregivers, requiring medical certification and multidisciplinary assessment. While aiming to better target those most in need, the new rules may exclude households previously eligible for assistance. Additionally, a pilot initiative launched under Decree №1169 provides recently evacuated IDPs with up to 30 days of free medical nursing care and integrated social support. This experimental service helps stabilize evacuees' health at transit points and connects them with further rehabilitation, social services, and housing assistance in host communities. The social service authority is conducting an eligibility selection of the applied healthcare facilities, to implement the pilot programme, with no clear timeline for the pilot. Overall, while the reforms strengthen the institutional framework for delivering home-based care, they also risk straining vulnerable groups and informal caregivers who must now navigate added requirements to maintain essential assistance.

## Main protection risks and needs

### Liberty and Freedom of Movement (including displacement, returns and intentions)

Across all monitored oblasts - Mykolaiv, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Sumy - protection monitoring during the third quarter of 2025 continued to identify persistent patterns of displacement driven by insecurity, shelling, and destruction of housing, property and infrastructure, with regional variations in intensity and population movement trends. While findings from protection monitoring indicated that some areas such as Sumy saw limited returns amid deteriorating security conditions, others - particularly Dnipropetrovsk and Kherson - experienced continued or secondary displacement due to prolonged hostilities and lack of adequate housing solutions.



Overall, protection monitoring in Q3 2025 indicates that while displacement drivers remain consistent, coping capacities among displaced and host populations are increasingly strained.

Graph 3. Factors influencing displacement

|                                                                  |     |       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Shelling, attacks on civilians                                   | 115 | 91.3% |
| Destruction or damage of housing, land and/or property d...      | 53  | 42.1% |
| Lack of access to essential services (health, water, educatio... | 24  | 19.0% |
| Infrastructure damage/destruction                                | 17  | 13.5% |
| Lack of access to safe and dignified shelter                     | 16  | 12.7% |
| Lack of access to livelihoods, employment and economic o...      | 12  | 9.5%  |
| Occupation of property                                           | 12  | 9.5%  |
| Exposure to UXOs/landmines                                       | 8   | 6.3%  |
| Seeking family reunification                                     | 4   | 3.2%  |
| Criminality                                                      | 2   | 1.6%  |

Monitoring in Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts found no major change in displacement patterns since the previous quarter. Shelling and attacks on civilians continue to be cited by all respondents as the primary cause of displacement, alongside destruction or damage to housing. Many IDPs in rural areas report that they continue to reside in informal arrangements - living with relatives or acquaintances without formal rental contracts - leaving them ineligible for state housing subsidies or compensation. Such arrangements are unstable, and participants expressed concerns over potential secondary displacement should property owners return or sell their homes. In Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts limited housing options have also forced some IDPs to remain in partially destroyed or unsafe dwellings, highlighting a persistent gap in access to safe and dignified shelter. Respondents emphasized the need for alternative housing solutions, including modular homes and collective centres, to support longer-term integration.

Sumy Oblast experienced a marked deterioration in the security situation during Q3 2025, with daily drone, missile, and artillery strikes extending beyond border areas into central

raions. This led to renewed waves of displacement, particularly from Sveska and Hlukhivska hromadas. Mandatory evacuations were reintroduced, yet a notable trend of returns to insecure areas has emerged (*please see for below section on returns for more information*).

In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, displacement levels remain high and continuous, particularly in frontline raions such as Kupianskyi, Pokrovskyi, and Kramatorskyi. The drivers of movement remain unchanged but increasingly severe: destruction or damage of housing (73%), shelling (46%), and loss of access to essential services (36%) dominate, with occupation of property and UXO contamination cited as additional factors. The demographic profile of displaced households continues to include older persons, persons with disabilities (PwDs), and low-income rural families. Secondary displacement remains common, with households reportedly moving from frontline zones to ‘safer’ locations before relocating again.

Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts continued to function as major transit and hosting regions, with more than 460,000 IDPs officially registered in Dnipropetrovsk alone, including 88,000 children and 27,000 persons with disabilities, according to Dnipropetrovsk Oblast General Coordination Meeting held in August. Escalated hostilities in Synelnykivskyi raion triggered additional evacuations, and as of August 2025, approximately 16,500 civilians remained in areas of high insecurity, including 300 PwDs requiring evacuation support. Transit centers (TCs) reportedly experienced increased pressure and overcrowding, prompting relocation and reopening of facilities. Protection monitoring found that economic constraints and limited housing options shape current displacement patterns in Dnipropetrovsk. Many IDPs face prohibitive rental costs, leading to prolonged stays in collective centers or secondary movements to other oblasts. As one IDP woman in Pavlohrad TC explained, families are reluctant to leave behind possessions or commit to permanent relocation, while another highlighted that **“renting accommodation is very expensive and difficult to find.”** These findings point to a growing cycle of temporary and secondary displacement, as IDPs relocate multiple times in search of safety, affordability, and stability.

## Evacuations

From 1 June to 12 September 2025, more than 89,000 people were relocated to safer regions, including over 9,400 children and 2,900 people with limited mobility. Most evacuees originated from Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Sumy, Kherson, Kharkiv, and Zaporizhzhia regions. Across all monitored regions, evacuations continue to be driven by active hostilities, and destruction of housing, property, and infrastructure, though the pace, coordination, and population profiles varied significantly between oblasts. Across all oblasts, evacuation patterns in Q3 2025 were shaped by a combination of persistent insecurity, uneven access to safe routes, and limited capacity of hosting areas.

Although the main procedure for the evacuation of the population has remained unchanged, the Decree No 979 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 13 August 2025 introduced several important updates. It allows the relocation of evacuees to other regions

if they cannot be accommodated within a single region. Funding for evacuation measures can now come not only from the state and local budgets but also from additional sources such as international technical assistance, EU grants, and donor institutions. The role of the Coordination Headquarters has been expanded, as it now approves evacuation between regions and is responsible for organising temporary accommodation facilities. Furthermore, the creation of a state information system is planned to ensure coordination of the entire evacuation process, from the moment people leave dangerous areas, to their placement and integration in new host communities.

In the South, the safety situation in Kherson Oblast - and along key access routes from Mykolaiv - remained volatile, with a notable escalation of shelling in early August that temporarily limited humanitarian access. Despite heightened insecurity, there was no large-scale population outflow, and most residents opted to remain in their communities. Slight increases were observed in relocations toward safer oblasts, reflecting both continued exposure to risks and the population's limited coping options. The profile of evacuees has remained consistent, dominated by older persons, individuals with disabilities, people with limited mobility, and families with children; these groups require targeted assistance due to restricted resources and mobility barriers. The evacuation process continues to be coordinated by the Oblast Military Administration (OMA), which manages a dedicated hotline for evacuation requests. While some movements are organised by humanitarian organizations, a significant share of evacuations is self-organised, often relying on private vehicles and informal arrangements.

In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, evacuation operations intensified following renewed hostilities and territorial advances along the front line in July and August. The Donetsk OMA expanded mandatory evacuation orders for families with minors across multiple hromadas, including Dobropil'ska, Bilozerk'a, Druzhkivka, and Andriiv'ska, affecting approximately 1,150 children. Local authorities coordinated movements with the support of civil society organisations, while many households continued to self-evacuate using private transport under fire, exposing themselves to significant risks. Compared with the previous quarter, evacuation pressure increased in Donetsk oblast and access restrictions near the frontline became more frequent due to active shelling and road disruptions, such as the closure of the Dobropillia–Kramatorsk route. The demographic profile of evacuees remained consistent, encompassing older persons, people with disabilities, and low-income rural households. Persistent challenges were reported for individuals with low mobility, who faced difficulties securing transport or physical assistance during evacuation. According to monitoring data from Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, 64% of households reported security concerns during evacuation, a 7% increase since Q2. The most common risks included shelling or missile attacks (86%), followed by harassment at checkpoints, arbitrary detention, and hate speech (each reported by 14% of respondents). These findings confirm that violence, movement restrictions, and insecurity during transit remain primary protection threats for civilians evacuating from frontline areas. Upon arrival in Kharkiv oblast, evacuees also faced barriers in accessing adequate shelter, healthcare, and legal aid, highlighting systemic gaps in safe evacuation pathways and post-arrival support.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, evacuation efforts continued under a multi-stakeholder coordination framework led by government authorities in partnership with civil society organizations, the CCCM Cluster, and specialised law enforcement units such as the White Angels. Humanitarian partners played a crucial role in ensuring multi-sectoral coordination, registration, and provision of non-food items (NFIs) at Transit Centers (TCs) and Collective Sites (CSs), while Protection Cluster partners offered protection services to newly arrived evacuees. Mandatory evacuation orders remained in place across frontline hromadas of Synelnykivskyi Raion, including Mezhyvska, Velykomykhailivska, Malomykhailivska, and Pokrovska. These areas experienced persistent shelling, aerial bombardments, and loitering munitions, prompting time-bound evacuations, particularly for households with children. Alongside organised movements, self-evacuation remained widespread, with families relocating independently—often repeatedly—before reaching safer destinations. The demographic profile of evacuees reflects broader displacement trends: predominantly women, children, older persons, and people with disabilities. FGDs and CCCM updates indicated that 46% of arrivals at transit centers were persons with limited mobility, underscoring the need for tailored assistance and accessible facilities. However, significant logistical and administrative constraints persist, including overcrowded transit sites, insufficient transport capacity, delays in registration and documentation, and barriers to healthcare and livelihood opportunities in destination locations.

Psychological distress remains acute among evacuees arriving in Dnipropetrovsk oblast, with widespread reports of stress, fatigue, and trauma linked to repeated displacement and uncertainty. While most families continued to relocate within Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, some moved onwards to Kyivska, Rivnenska, and Kirovohradska oblasts. Findings show many respondents opt for informal accommodation arrangements or rental housing, often facing financial strain due to high costs. Authorities and partners have sought to expand reception capacity, including relocating Pavlohrad TC to larger premises and reopening the Voloske TC to address the growing caseload.

## Returns

Across all monitored oblasts, return movements remained limited, gradual, and largely driven by necessity rather than improved conditions. Overall, intentions among IDPs remain largely cautious: most displaced persons are not ready to make final decisions regarding return or permanent integration, citing safety, livelihoods, and housing as key determining factors. While some residents continued to trickle back to their places of origin, particularly older persons and individuals with limited means, the overall trend suggests a stronger inclination toward local integration among displaced populations. The decision to return remains highly conditional on the security situation, restoration of services, housing availability, and livelihood opportunities, with distinct regional variations in both motivations and barriers.

Graph 4. Intentions per displacement status

IDPs

|                                           |    |       |
|-------------------------------------------|----|-------|
| Integrate into the local community        | 73 | 65.2% |
| Return to the place of habitual residence | 34 | 30.4% |
| Relocate to another area in Ukraine       | 3  | 2.7%  |
| Stay in place of habitual residence       | 2  | 1.8%  |

Non-displaced

|                                     |     |       |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Stay in place of habitual residence | 211 | 95.9% |
| Relocate to another area in Ukraine | 9   | 4.1%  |

Refugees and returnees

|                                     |    |       |
|-------------------------------------|----|-------|
| Stay in place of habitual residence | 36 | 97.3% |
| Relocate to another area in Ukraine | 1  | 2.7%  |

In Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, no significant increase in returns was observed during the reporting period. Returns reportedly continue at a slow, individual pace, with most displaced households adopting a “wait-and-see” approach. As one KI in Kherson noted, **“Those who wanted to return have already done so.”** Returnees were primarily older persons and low-income households with limited resources to sustain displacement elsewhere. Younger people, by contrast, were reported to rarely return due to the absence of stable employment and prospects for personal or professional development. Intentions to return remain low: only 8% of surveyed IDPs expressed readiness to return. However, respondents noted that IDPs with family ties, employment, or stable housing in host communities were more likely to consider local integration as a durable solution.

Respondents in both Kherson and Mykolaiv oblasts consistently identified improved security and cessation of hostilities as the decisive factors enabling return. The restoration of housing, functioning social infrastructure, and access to livelihoods were also cited as important preconditions. However, the lack of employment opportunities remains the most critical obstacle to sustainable return. Many large enterprises in Kherson remain closed or only partially operational, prompting younger residents to seek work in neighbouring oblasts such as Mykolaiv. Poor transport links and infrequent public

transportation further limit mobility and access to employment, discouraging returns to rural areas.

As one participant in Mykolaiv explained, **“The transport issue effectively limits residents’ ability to return to the village, and many remain far from their homes.”** Communities in Kherson oblast also highlighted that social infrastructure, particularly schools and kindergartens, are symbols of stability that could encourage families with children to return. In one village of Velyka Oleksandrivska hromada, residents expressed hope that reopening the local school would mark the beginning of recovery, though no funding had yet been allocated. As one participant noted, **“It is proposed to set up a modular school so that the educational process can continue during the repair or reconstruction of the main building.”** The situation illustrates how the absence of basic services and infrastructure can delay both returns and community recovery.

In Sumy Oblast, a pattern of returns to still insecure areas such as Sveska and Hlukhivska hromadas was observed, mirroring trends noted in previous quarters. These movements are largely driven by economic hardship rather than improved safety, as displaced persons struggle to sustain themselves in host locations. A KI from Svesa explained, **“People return because they don’t have enough money to continue living elsewhere.”** Despite insecurity, intentions to return to the area of origin remain high in the longer term: over 27% of respondents wish to return once conditions allow, and three-quarters plan to do so after hostilities end. In Sumy Oblast, the profile of returnees is similar to that seen elsewhere: predominantly older persons and individuals with limited resources, while younger and economically active people tend to remain displaced. In several localities, such as Ryzhivka village (Bilopillia raion), only a few residents remain, often older adults or people without fixed housing. The case of one retired couple who returned despite previous evacuation from the location illustrates the high level of risk and uncertainty under which returns are taking place.

In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, it was reported that return movements remain limited and often short-term, with some returnees later re-displaced due to insecurity or uninhabitable housing. The main profiles of those returning include older adults, persons with disabilities, and partial households managing care burdens or attempting to salvage property. The primary motivations for return remain consistent with earlier periods - the cessation of hostilities (80%), rehabilitated or compensated housing (60%), and improved security (60%), followed by restoration of services and livelihoods (40%). However, most of these conditions have not been met, resulting in minimal sustainable return. Intentions among IDPs mirror those in other regions - most plan to integrate locally while maintaining conditional hopes of return dependent on safety, service restoration, and housing reconstruction. Field observations and FGDs, such as those conducted in Izium, reveal strong emotional attachment to home and a widespread desire to return as soon as conditions allow. As one participant expressed, **“IDPs dream of coming back home as soon as possible.”** Yet, the persistence of insecurity, damaged infrastructure, and limited public services continues to prevent returns.

In several cases, those who did attempt to return were subsequently displaced again, underscoring the cyclical and fragile nature of returns in eastern oblasts.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, return movements also remain minimal, with the majority of IDPs choosing to remain and integrate locally. Approximately 70% of IDPs interviewed during protection monitoring indicated their preference for long-term integration within host communities rather than returning to their areas of origin. Returnees continue to be primarily older persons, persons with disabilities, and families with children, whose decisions are influenced by safety, access to services, and economic factors such as retrieving property or resuming livelihood activities. However, multiple barriers to safe and sustainable return persist, consistent with findings from previous quarters. These include ongoing hostilities and insecurity, insufficient healthcare infrastructure, limited livelihood opportunities, and legal or bureaucratic challenges - especially regarding civil documentation and property restitution. The high cost and scarcity of rental housing in areas like Pavlohrad further constrain both long-term integration and return planning, while continued shelling and lack of basic utilities in frontline zones make return unfeasible. Local authorities and humanitarian partners participating in Protection Cluster Coordination meetings in Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia emphasised that willingness to return exists among some IDPs, but the structural, safety, and service-related constraints remain too significant to enable widespread movement. As such, returns remain isolated, small-scale, and predominantly driven by personal or economic necessity rather than genuine recovery conditions.

### **Freedom of movement**

Across all monitored oblasts, freedom of movement remained constrained during the third quarter of 2025, though the nature and intensity of restrictions varied regionally. While no new formal restrictions were imposed by authorities in most areas, civilians' mobility was significantly affected by security risks, infrastructural damage, economic hardship, and individual coping behaviours shaped by fear and uncertainty. The main impediments to movement included continued hostilities, contamination with explosive remnants of war (ERW), lack of accessible transport, and self-imposed confinement linked to mobilization fears or safety concerns.

In Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, freedom of movement remains highly restricted due to a combination of physical, economic, and psychological barriers. The most frequently reported constraints were transportation and financial difficulties (44%), limited mobility caused by health conditions or disabilities (32%), and self-imposed restrictions among men fearing military conscription (28%). The presence of explosive remnants of war (24%) - particularly in rural areas of Kherson and northern Mykolaiv - further limits safe mobility. According to the September 2025 Protection Analysis Update, Mykolaiv remains one of the oblasts most heavily affected by contamination<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> [Article] [Ukraine Protection Cluster, September 2025. Protection Analysis Update: No Quick End: The impact of the war on civilian protection in Ukraine](#)

The fear of mobilization continues to be a critical and sensitive protection concern for men of conscription age in the assessed locations. FGD participants described how anxiety about possible enlistment leads many men to avoid public spaces, refuse job opportunities, and even forgo essential medical visits. As a result, self-isolation continues to be used as a common coping strategy, with broader social and economic implications for affected communities. One participant shared: ***“I have a mine-explosive injury. To obtain disability status, I need to undergo medical examinations in Velyka Oleksandrivska, but this is impossible because of constant checks by the Territorial Recruitment Centre. There have even been cases where men with visible injuries were declared fit for service.”*** Such fears not only restrict individual mobility but also undermine local service delivery and infrastructure functionality. In one hromada in Mykolaiv Oblast, residents reported that the community bus remains unused because no driver is willing to take the position due to mobilisation risks. This example illustrates how the consequences of self-imposed movement restrictions extend beyond personal safety to affect the continuity of local services, community functioning, and access to livelihoods.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, it was reported that authorities largely respected freedom of movement, and no new administrative restrictions were reported. Existing curfews in urban centres such as Pavlohrad were viewed by communities as reasonable security measures rather than limiting interventions. However, mobility remained unevenly accessible across population groups due to infrastructural barriers. FGDs revealed that for many evacuees, particularly older persons, persons with disabilities, and caregivers of small children—functional rather than legal restrictions limit mobility. For instance, participants from Voloske Transit Centre noted that the only available bus to Dnipro operates once per day, forcing people to return the same day and severely constraining access to administrative services, healthcare, and employment. The lack of accessible transportation and adaptive infrastructure thus creates indirect but significant obstacles to mobility, particularly for vulnerable groups.

## Life, safety and security

Across all assessed oblasts - Sumy, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, and Kherson - the reporting period was marked by persistent insecurity and continued exposure of civilians to hostilities. According to the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, at least 3,839 civilian casualties (708 killed; 3,121 injured) were reporting within this monitoring period<sup>4</sup>. Based on data verified by HRMMU, July saw the highest overall number of civilian casualties since May 2022<sup>5</sup>. The nature and intensity of threats, however, varied across regions, shaping distinct protection dynamics and coping mechanisms among affected populations.

<sup>4</sup> [Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine: Protection of civilian in Armed Conflict](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine – Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict – July 2025](#)

Graph 5. Factors influencing the sense of safety

|                                            |     |       |
|--------------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Bombardment/shelling or threat of shelling | 196 | 95.1% |
| Landmines or UXOs contamination            | 31  | 15.0% |
| Presence of armed or security actors       | 13  | 6.3%  |
| Fighting between armed or security actors  | 6   | 2.9%  |
| Risks of arbitrary arrest/detention        | 3   | 1.5%  |
| Other                                      | 2   | 1.0%  |
| Risks of eviction                          | 1   | 0.5%  |

In Sumy Oblast, 98% of respondents cited bombardment or the threat of shelling as the primary factor affecting their sense of safety — the highest level recorded nationwide- and the main factor limiting freedom of movement. The region witnessed a marked shift in the nature of attacks, with the use of long-range drones increasing fourfold, expanding the reach of strikes to previously ‘safer’ rear areas, including Sumy hromada. Meanwhile, frontline communities in Svesa, Hlukhiv, and Bilopillia remain highly contaminated with mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), with local authorities imposing strict restrictions on movement along rural roads. Residents reported a pattern of civilian deaths and injuries, including incidents where individuals were killed while attempting to assist others following an initial strike.

Residents reported high levels of fear and avoidance behaviours, especially in public or crowded areas. One participant explained: ***“We live in constant fear because we never know where or when the next strike might happen. Many people are afraid to use public transport or go to markets or shops.”*** As a result, people shared that they are visiting hospitals and administrative buildings less frequently, considering them potential targets, while public spaces such as parks, stadiums, and squares reportedly remain largely deserted. Key informants described growing anxiety and a widespread tendency to limit outdoor movement: ***“It’s difficult to work because of FPV drones. The population limits their movement,”*** reported a service provider from Bytytsia. Physical access barriers compound these fears. Public transportation to several settlements remains suspended due to security risks, damaged roads, and destroyed bridges. Villages such as Marchykhyna Buda (Sveska hromada) have had no public transport for two years, while routes to Poloshky (Hlukhivska hromada) were recently cancelled. In September, a bridge in the Bytytskyi Starostat near the city of Sumy was damaged by shelling, isolating residents from nearby settlements.

The security situation in Kherson Oblasts remained highly unstable and unpredictable, and the vast majority (87%) of respondents indicated that shelling most strongly affects their sense of safety — a 13% increase from the previous quarter. Communities described daily

sightings of missiles and drones and frequent explosions damaging homes and infrastructure.

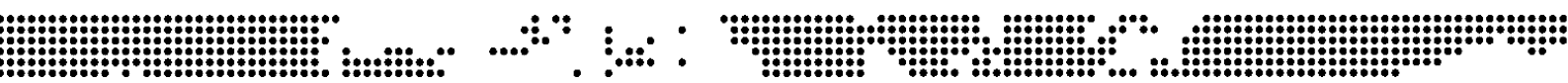
Residents in Kherson and Mykolaiv report that they rely heavily on self-directed risk avoidance; **“There are no maps of contaminated areas in the village, so everyone relies on themselves,”** - FGD participant, Kherson Oblast. It was reported that civilian injuries and fatalities from mines remain common, especially among farmers, children, and residents forced to enter contaminated areas to gather firewood or graze livestock. Humanitarian organizations do not conduct demining of private yards, and for the State Emergency Service (SES) to respond officially, a request must first be submitted to the police or the village council. **‘There is an unexploded piece of ammunition in my yard. I covered it with stones, but no disposal measures have been taken, which poses a potential threat,’**— FGD participant, Kherson oblast.

In Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, communities continue to experience routine shelling near the contact line, with UXO/ERW contamination restricting access to agricultural land and forest belts. A participant from Derhachi summarised: **“People cannot walk where they want to; they can only walk where they are allowed to.”** While August saw a temporary dip in national casualties, short-range drones became the leading cause of civilian harm, reflecting a tactical shift in attack patterns. The restriction of mobility - compounded by damaged transport links and closed social taxi services - disproportionately affects older persons, people with disabilities, and single women, increasing dependency and isolation. From an MHPSS perspective, residents describe persistent anxiety, hypervigilance, and avoidance behaviours due to security risks. Sirens and drone sounds trigger panic responses, and people often retreat to interior rooms or cellars during strikes. **“During shelling, I run under the bed - it calms me down. I am safe there,”** said a participant from Kharkiv.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, continuous missile and loitering munition (kamikaze drone) attacks led to 64% of households reporting a poor sense of safety. Despite a 41% national decrease in recorded civilian casualties in August (208 killed; 827 injured)<sup>6</sup>, the overall rate of civilian harm remained higher than at the start of 2025, confirming a sustained high level of threat. Many residents expressed frustration with the lack of accessible shelters - **“People risk their lives every day when they go out, because no mobile shelters were installed in the city until July,”** said a KI from Dnipropetrovsk. In frontline and high-risk areas such as Nikopolskyi Raion and Zaporizky Raion fear of aerial attacks and FPV drones remains the dominant factor restricting movement. One KI explained: **“The constant threat of shelling has significantly affected people’s freedom of movement. In coastal villages, FPV drones fly over regularly. People try to leave early in the morning and return late to protect themselves.”** Similarly, an FGD participant from Komyshevukha shared: **“We leave for the night with the whole family and sleep in the car because it’s too dangerous to stay home.”** In Vasylykivka, residents reported avoiding

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<sup>6</sup> [Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine – Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict – August 2025](#)



central streets, agricultural fields, and previously targeted areas due to the risk of unexploded ordnance and debris, often taking longer routes to avoid exposure.

### Explosive Ordnance Contamination and Risk Awareness

According to information shared by FGD participants in Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts, residents receive information on how to respond to potential threats through various channels. The main sources include awareness sessions conducted by the State Emergency Service (SESU) and humanitarian organizations, information provided by local authorities, printed information materials, and SMS alerts. Additional sources of knowledge about hazardous areas include warning signs installed by deminers, stories shared by residents who remained during the occupation, as well as personal experiences and incidents, such as livestock detonations or human casualties. In Mykolaiv Oblast, participants highlighted that EORE, and safety messaging activities are conducted by multiple actors, ensuring broad coverage and access to information. In Kherson Oblast, EORE is primarily delivered by SESU and local community groups, as humanitarian organizations face restricted access to certain areas, particularly those near the frontline. Across both oblasts, participants indicated that awareness of state compensation and victim assistance programmes remains insufficient, especially among individuals who have not personally experienced incidents. This gap between eligibility and awareness increases the risk of people in need missing available support.

In Sumy, extensive border contamination has rendered many rural roads impassable, and SES operations are prohibited within a 20-kilometre buffer zone near the border, leaving communities effectively without formal clearance support. In Kharkiv and Donetsk, agricultural workers reported abandoning fields due to UXO, while others continue to farm at personal risk. Similarly, in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia, 26% of respondents cited UXO as negatively affecting their safety, and lack of transparent information or mine maps was a recurring concern: **“Perhaps the military know, but we do not,”** a key informant noted.

### Access to Alerts, Shelters, and Emergency Response

The functionality of early warning and shelter systems was reported to be uneven across oblasts. In Kherson oblast, the centralized air raid alert system is not operational in all settlements within the surveyed hromadas. Residents often rely on mobile applications; however, not everyone owns a smartphone, and elderly people frequently use basic-feature phones. Mobile network coverage is weak, and calls are challenging due to signal jamming, complicating communication and response during emergencies in some hromadas. In addition, many frontline villages lack proper shelters, forcing residents to use the basements of their own homes. *‘There is an urgent need for a mobile concrete shelter here, but so far no measures have been taken,’* — FGD participant, Kherson Oblast.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia, shelter accessibility and maintenance were highlighted as major concerns. Many existing structures are locked, poorly lit, or located too far from residential areas. Residents expressed scepticism over newly installed fortifications: **“Gabion shelters have started to appear, but we don’t understand how**

**much they will protect a person.”** In Sumy, some assessment participants reporting constructing individual shelters and maintaining local social media alert groups.

Despite continued exposure to violence, respondents across all oblasts reported strong community solidarity as a key coping mechanism. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia, 60% of households rated intercommunity relations as good or very good, attributing this to mutual support networks and collective adaptation. Similar trends were noted in Sumy, where residents reported community-driven protection solutions, such as mutual alert systems and collective risk mapping. However, unequal access to information and assistance risks deepening vulnerability, particularly among isolated elderly residents and those without digital access.

### Gender Based Violence

During the reporting period protection monitoring across revealed persistent and, in some areas, worsening risks of gender-based violence (GBV), including intimate partner violence (IPV). While the visibility of such incidents varies across oblasts, common drivers noted by assessment participants include protracted insecurity, displacement, socio-economic stress, and the psychosocial impact of war-related trauma. Regional differences in awareness, institutional response, and survivor trust in services highlight both emerging good practices, and significant protection gaps.

In southern oblasts, GBV and family conflict risks were increasingly discussed in the context of veterans' reintegration. Key Informants in Mykolaiv reported cases of domestic tensions linked to post-traumatic stress, emotional instability, and disrupted family dynamics following demobilisation. As one respondent noted, **“Veterans return to families where everything has changed — but they haven’t. Explosive tempers, aggression, and lack of understanding from loved ones often lead to conflict. But most of them are not abusers — they are traumatised individuals who didn’t receive the help they needed in time.”**

Protection actors identified IPV linked to psychosocial distress as an emerging protection risk requiring closer coordination between GBV, MHPSS, and veteran support services. Discussions during DRC's GBV Response Community of Practice workshop in Mykolaiv oblast in September 2025 with GBV support service providers, further revealed that service providers in rural and under-resourced areas face serious barriers in assisting survivors. The main challenges include limited availability of safe shelters, confidentiality risks in small communities, and fear among survivors of police and Territorial Recruitment Centre (TRC) involvement. These dynamic produces complex and sometimes contradictory coping behaviours: some women deliberately request TRC intervention to have perpetrators removed, while others minimise or conceal abuse to protect their partners from disciplinary consequences. Service providers also emphasised unequal enforcement of domestic violence laws, particularly when perpetrators are members of the military or hold leadership positions, eroding survivors' confidence in formal reporting channels.

In Sumy Oblast, protection monitoring identified indirect indicators of family strain and psychological distress. While communities often describe incidents as “quarrels” rather than violence, local service providers noted growing signs of emotional withdrawal, conflict, and relationship breakdowns within families of returning servicemen. **“It is difficult for families to adapt to the veteran. And it is difficult for the veteran to adapt to family life,”** a key informant in Sumy explained. Although explicit GBV disclosures remain rare, this reflects underreporting rather than absence of risk, particularly given prevailing stigma and social pressure to maintain family unity. The tendency to normalise emotional and psychological violence underscores the need for preventive engagement and psychosocial support for veterans and families

In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, findings from ongoing protection monitoring and case management show a continued rise in intimate partner violence, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach communities. The convergence of displacement, economic strain, and prolonged conflict is intensifying family tensions and contributing to increased emotional, psychological, and physical violence. Respondents from Chuhuiv (Kharkiv) and Kramatorsk (Donetsk) reported that survivors often refrain from seeking help when perpetrators are military personnel or local officials, citing fear of retaliation and lack of trust in police responsiveness. As one key informant noted, **“Survivors rarely report domestic violence if the perpetrator is a serviceman or a representative of the authorities. They don’t believe that the police or state services will actually help.”** Financial dependence on perpetrators was noted as a factor that further traps women in abusive relationships. Communities also identified widows of missing servicemen and women in frontline settlements as groups at heightened psychosocial risk, given grief, economic insecurity, and the absence of accessible psychological assistance.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, DRC saw increased requests for capacity building from Local Self-Government (LSG) authorities for staff in Resilience Centers and community-based facilities in GBV. This reflects growing institutional recognition of GBV risks affecting women and adolescent girls, particularly in displacement-affected and frontline areas. Requests for Women Rise and Girl Shine training demonstrate local authorities’ willingness to institutionalise survivor-centred practices and strengthen municipal response capacity. Nonetheless, protection monitoring confirms that GBV risks remain elevated, especially in collective sites, temporary shelters, and rural settlements, where overcrowding, lack of privacy, and limited access to services heighten vulnerability. Gaps persist in confidential referral mechanisms in newly established or relocated transit centres, requiring continued coordination between LSGs and humanitarian actors.

### Psychological distress

Across all monitored oblasts protection monitoring findings reveal high and persistent levels of psychological distress among conflict-affected populations. While the sources of stress vary slightly between regions, a common thread is the chronic exposure to insecurity, displacement, and uncertainty about the future, combined with limited access to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services.

Graph 6. Major stress factors

|                                                          |     |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| <u>Fear of being killed or injured by armed violence</u> | 209 | 57.4% |
| <u>Fear of property being damaged by armed violence</u>  | 160 | 44.0% |
| <u>Worries about the future</u>                          | 121 | 33.2% |
| <u>Worries about the children</u>                        | 88  | 24.2% |
| <u>Displacement related stress</u>                       | 69  | 19.0% |
| <u>Lack of access to specialized medical services</u>    | 22  | 6.0%  |
| <u>Lack of access to basic services</u>                  | 9   | 2.5%  |
| <u>Lack of access to employment opportunities</u>        | 9   | 2.5%  |
| <u>Fear of conscription</u>                              | 7   | 1.9%  |
| <u>Other</u>                                             | 3   | 0.8%  |
| <u>Stigmatization/discrimination</u>                     | 1   | 0.3%  |
| <u>Fear of being sexually assaulted</u>                  | 1   | 0.3%  |
| <u>Missing family members</u>                            | 1   | 0.3%  |

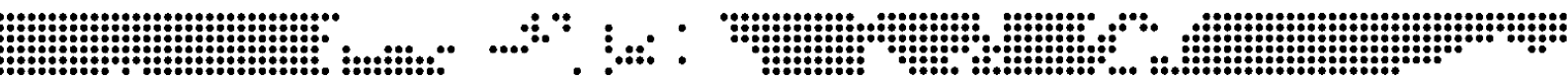
In southern oblasts, the dominant stress factors remain uncertainty about the future (63%), concern for children (37%), and fear of injury or death due to ongoing hostilities (32%). Communities in front-line areas described constant anxiety caused by missile and drone attacks, especially at night. As one participant from Mykolaiv shared, **“I feel intense anxiety when I hear the sound of a missile or drone. After being injured, I am afraid it might happen again.”** Such experiences reflect chronic hypervigilance and cumulative trauma, typical in areas under continuous threat.

Veterans emerged as a particularly affected group. Many face psychosocial distress linked to post-traumatic symptoms, social alienation, and feelings of unrecognised service. Manifestations range from sleep disturbances and nightmares to aggressive outbursts and avoidance behaviours. Key informants described this as a “cry for help,” often misunderstood by others as hostility rather than a symptom of trauma. Despite growing needs, stigma and mistrust toward civilian psychologist’s limit help-seeking behaviours.

It was reported that veterans tend to rely on military psychologists or peers, indicating a strong need for veteran-led and trust-based support models. In Mykolaiv Oblast, promising community initiatives, such as veteran-organised sports and archery competitions, have demonstrated positive psychosocial outcomes by fostering social connection and emotional regulation. Family engagement was repeatedly identified as a protective factor, helping veterans regain psychological stability and reduce self-isolation.

In Sumy, psychological stress remains acute but has shown a slight decline in intensity, potentially indicating adaptation rather than improvement. The proportion of respondents citing fear of being killed or injured decreased from 62% in the previous quarter to 43%, which may reflect a desensitisation to constant danger rather than a true reduction in threat. At the same time, stress related to children (39%) and uncertainty about the future (36%) increased, suggesting a shift from immediate fear to sustained anxiety about long-term wellbeing and stability. DRC MHPSS teams in Sumy observed widespread fatigue, apathy, and emotional exhaustion, particularly among adults who have endured years of insecurity. As one key informant explained, **“Residents of the community live in constant fear because of the unpredictability of shelling.”** Children and older persons were identified as the most psychologically affected. Reports of children developing enuresis and fear of attending school, and of elderly people afraid to sleep alone, illustrate the deep psychosocial imprint of chronic insecurity. Veterans and their families in Sumy also face unmet psychological needs. Health professionals reported that many former servicemen continue to experience nightmares and intrusive memories, with limited availability of specialised trauma support.

In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, psychological distress remains among the highest nationally, driven by the ongoing intensity of hostilities and the proximity of many communities to the front line. Fear of being killed or injured (71.1%) and fear of property damage (64.4%) were the two most reported stressors, followed by anxiety about the future (31.1%) and displacement-related strain (28.9%). Emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and social withdrawal were widespread, particularly among elderly persons, women-headed households, and people with disabilities. Respondents described living in a state of constant tension and unpredictability. **“Now every resident is in a difficult psychological state because of the shelling,”** reported a key informant from Sviatohirivka, Donetsk oblast. Conflicts between civilians and military personnel were occasionally reported, reflecting high stress levels and strained community relations. The availability of MHPSS services remains extremely limited. Many frontline settlements lack psychologists, and service providers face burnout and mobility restrictions. Stigma also prevents residents from seeking help. Key informants noted that children, particularly in rural and frontline hromadas such as Shevchenkove and Velkyi Burluk, show growing signs of isolation and hopelessness due to remote schooling and lack of socialisation opportunities. The need for localised, community-based psychosocial support is particularly urgent in these areas, where institutional services are minimal and residents are cut off from formal care.



In the Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, protection monitoring data confirm widespread and chronic psychological distress, with fear of property damage (82.5%) and fear of being killed or injured (80.8%) dominating the responses. Ongoing shelling, mine contamination, and damage to critical infrastructure have created an environment of constant anxiety. As one informant from Vasylkivska hromada explained, **“It’s mentally difficult because you’re in a constant state of anxiety. You live every day thinking something may happen.”** Older persons, persons with disabilities, and women were identified as the most affected groups, often facing prolonged isolation and lack of access to psychosocial care. Residents in rural settlements repeatedly emphasised the absence of available psychologists and called for free community-based support groups, particularly for older adults.

## Civil status, access to remedies and justice

### Barriers to accessing documentation.

Across all monitored oblasts access to civil documentation and housing, land, and property (HLP) papers remains a persistent protection concern. While the specific challenges differ across regions, common obstacles include financial barriers, lengthy administrative procedures, transport limitations, and digital exclusion. The cumulative effect of these barriers prevents affected populations from exercising basic rights, accessing assistance, and restoring their livelihoods.

In Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, households continue to face widespread challenges in obtaining or restoring HLP documentation, particularly property ownership certificates, inheritance papers, Bureau of Technical Inventory (BTI) certificates, and lease agreements. These difficulties are compounded by financial constraints: 41% of respondents cited the cost of administrative procedures — such as notary, court, or registration fees — as a barrier, a significant increase from 24% in the previous quarter. In Kherson Oblast, findings from the Rapid Protection Assessment of Vysokopilska hromada corroborate this trend, with respondents identifying the lack of financial resources as the main reason they cannot complete documentation processes. Transportation costs and limited public mobility options further exacerbate the problem: half of respondents (50%) cited distance and transport costs as a key constraint, while 37.5% pointed to lengthy administrative procedures. FGDs across Mykolaiv and Kherson highlight the intersection of physical and economic barriers. Poor road conditions, contamination risks, and destroyed transport infrastructure isolate many rural residents from Administrative Service Centers (ASCs).

Administrative barriers are particularly severe for individuals seeking disability recognition due to war-related injuries, including veterans and civilians injured by shelling. Respondents described the process as lengthy, confusing, and overly bureaucratic, often requiring repeated visits between institutions. **“In our village, one veteran had to travel on crutches between various offices for a year and a half before finally obtaining disability status,”** reported a key informant in Mykolaiv Oblast.

Limited awareness, inconsistent application of eligibility criteria, and perceived bias against applicants contribute to distrust in the system. Many veterans reportedly avoid applying altogether, citing exhaustion, perceived stigma, or lack of confidence in civilian specialists.

In the Sumy, shelling-related injuries and fatalities have led to increased demand for disability status and compensation documentation, both among civilians and veterans. However, access to information and support remains inconsistent. Families of deceased service members reported major obstacles in navigating the system and understanding which authorities to contact. **“It has been two years, and my sister still cannot obtain compensation for her husband’s death — there is no clear chain of command or instructions,”** said one FGD participant from Shostka.

For injured veterans and civilians, it was reported that basic information is more available, primarily through family doctors, local government representatives, and informal community groups (e.g., online Messenger chats in Svesa and Shostka). Despite these local support mechanisms, the documentation process itself remains complex and exhausting, with multiple medical examinations, redundant paperwork, and slow processing due to staff shortages and excessive workloads. Service providers in Sumy described an environment of chronic bureaucracy and emotional fatigue, both for staff and applicants. Cases of unprofessional or dismissive treatment from medical commissions were reported, contributing to mistrust in institutions. As one internally displaced man from Obrazhivka recounted, **“Doctors told me that the shrapnel in my head was not an obstacle to normal life.”** This suggests both inconsistent medical assessments and a lack of trauma-informed approaches. While the government has simplified some procedures since February 2025, the system remains overburdened and under-resourced.

In the Donetsk and Kharkiv blasts challenges are both widespread and multi-layered, particularly among older persons, people with disabilities, and displaced households. Data show that 75% of households in Kharkiv and 41% in Donetsk oblasts reported difficulties obtaining essential civil or HLP documents, including passports, pension papers, disability files, and property ownership certificates. The most frequently cited obstacles were long administrative procedures (72%), transportation costs and distance (38.9%), and distrust in authorities (44%) in Kharkiv; and in Donetsk, procedural delays, fees, and lack of information (33–44%). The shift toward digital-by-default services, such as eDiia applications, has created new inequalities: while digital systems increase efficiency for some, they exclude older people and those without smartphones, digital skills, or reliable internet access. As a result, many remain unable to apply for pensions, housing compensation, or disability recognition — increasing their dependency and protection risks. Participants repeatedly emphasised the need for mobile outreach, including mobile ASC days, legal clinics, and community-based “safe digital access points” where staff can assist with online applications. **“We know this help exists, but we don’t know exactly where to go — and it’s hard to travel there,”** explained an FGD participant from Donetsk oblast.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia, civil documentation and HLP challenges persist, although the scale and profile of affected groups differ slightly from the east and south. Documentation loss continues, mainly due to evacuation, destruction of homes, or displacement, but the proportion of respondents missing key documents (e.g., IDP certificates, passports) remains relatively low — 1% for passports and 0% for IDP certificates. However, delays in processing and access barriers to government offices continue to affect timely restoration of rights and access to social assistance. HLP documentation remains the most problematic. Four percent of respondents reported missing property-related papers, primarily ownership certificates (60%) and inheritance or land titles (40%). The main barriers are restricted physical access to ASCs (57%), the cost of administrative fees (29%), and limited awareness of updated procedures. Physical and digital access constraints mirror those seen elsewhere. Older persons and people with limited mobility struggle to reach administrative offices or navigate online platforms. Many administrative buildings have been damaged or remain closed in frontline areas, prolonging waiting times for document reissuance. **“Without my papers, getting any help feels impossible,”** said a displaced man in Pavlohrad. During FGDs in Zaporizhzhia oblast, respondents also highlighted gendered access barriers: women caring for injured relatives or children reported being unable to travel to administrative offices due to safety concerns or lack of childcare. Men of conscription age, meanwhile, described hesitation to renew or replace documents for fear of being detained or mobilised.

### **Housing, land and property issues linked to documentation and compensation**

Across all monitored oblasts protection monitoring findings confirm that damage and destruction of housing remain among the most critical legal and protection challenges facing conflict-affected populations. The loss of property, documentation barriers, and complex compensation procedures continue to restrict affected individuals’ ability to claim their rights and recover. While legislative reforms and digital mechanisms under the state eVidnovlennia (eRecovery) program are gradually expanding access, significant regional disparities persist due to variations in security conditions, administrative capacity, and public awareness.

In Mykolaiv and Kherson, the absence of formal ownership documentation continues to be the main barrier to accessing compensation for damaged or destroyed housing. Many residents acquired homes through informal arrangements such as handwritten receipts rather than notarised contracts, leaving them without legally valid proof of ownership. Even among those who obtained eRecovery certificates, respondents reported being unable to use them due to associated expenses for notary services and other administrative fees. Furthermore, the amount of compensation is perceived as insufficient to cover full reconstruction costs, as payments are calculated based on 2022 material prices and exclude labour or contracting expenses. As a result, many households resort to partial, self-funded repairs, prioritising the most urgent needs while leaving other structural damage unaddressed. **“The compensation amount was not enough. We could buy building materials, but we couldn’t afford to hire contractors, so we are doing the repairs ourselves,”** explained one respondent from Kherson Oblast.

Reports of perceived irregularities and corruption risks—including alleged requests for bribes during damage assessments or deliberate manipulation of claims—were raised by respondents in both Kherson and Mykolaiv. While unverified, these perceptions signal gaps in transparency and accountability within the compensation process. Recent legislative changes, notably the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 815 (7 July 2025), introduced the option for remote assessments of destroyed housing using satellite or drone imagery to improve access in insecure areas. However, by the end of the reporting period, no cases of implementation were confirmed in Mykolaiv or Kherson by DRC. Simultaneously, IDPs and vulnerable residents in rural areas in Mykolaiv and Kherson remain at risk of eviction due to informal rental arrangements. Many continue to live with relatives or rent housing without formal lease agreements, limiting their access to subsidies or legal protection. Uptake of the state rental subsidy program remains very low, largely due to owners' reluctance to formalise contracts and the lack of adequate, accessible accommodation. Collective Centres hosting older persons and persons with disabilities remain overcrowded and poorly adapted to their needs, further undermining housing stability and safety.

In the Sumy oblast, compensation for damaged and destroyed housing remains one of the most frequently reported legal concerns. A key issue identified is the lack of clear and consistent information about application procedures. Many residents described confusion regarding where to apply, and which documents are required: **“There is no step-by-step algorithm on where to go for help. At first, you sit and think about where to start,”** explained an IDP from Chapliivka. While local authorities insist that information is available—through online channels and periodic visits by administrative service staff—field findings reveal uneven outreach and inconsistent awareness between communities. Moreover, the security situation and contamination risks often prevent housing commissions from visiting affected settlements. As one service provider in Bilopillia noted, **“Social protection workers are forced to work in conditions of constant danger, and access to remote villages is complicated by mined roads.”**

It was reported that the process is further hindered by staff shortages in Sumy, with some hromadas relying on a single specialist for all housing inspections. Residents in high-risk areas are often reluctant to apply for partial compensation, preferring to wait until total destruction occurs to avoid repeated procedures. In addition, many applicants lack title documents or the financial means to restore them; the proportion of respondents citing cost of administrative procedures as a barrier rose to 51%, up from 40% in the previous quarter. These findings underscore the need for a transparent, unified communication system for compensation procedures and broader use of remote damage assessments to expedite claims and reduce risks for inspection teams.

In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, households reported extensive loss of property and documentation, often due to shelling or fires that destroyed archives and private homes. The inability to prove ownership or register damage continues to delay compensation and reconstruction. Damaged or mined access routes prevent property owners from visiting sites for verification, and limited contractor availability further impedes recovery. The digital-by-default nature of the compensation system—while efficient in some contexts—

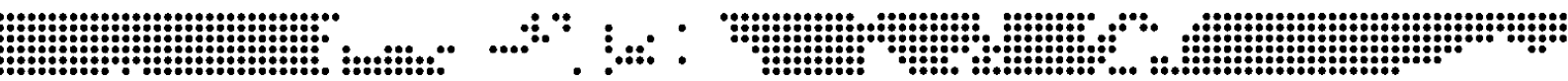
has created new barriers for older persons, people with disabilities, and low-income households who lack smartphones, digital literacy, or funds to travel to administrative centres. As a result, many eligible individuals do not apply for compensation, heightening their risk of secondary displacement or eviction. In some communities in Donetsk oblast, informal occupation of abandoned houses by IDPs or impoverished residents has led to tension and fear of eviction, particularly when owners return or seek to sell their property. **“Often IDPs renovate abandoned houses on their own but are later evicted—like puppies on the street,”** shared a participant from Donetsk oblast.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia, HLP challenges persist, particularly around compensation for destroyed housing and tenure insecurity among IDPs. Despite these challenges, authorities have made notable progress in operationalising Resolution No. 815, enabling remote inspections in areas affected by active hostilities. By the end of September 2025, Zaporizhzhia Oblast authorities had issued 26 housing certificates (23 in Orikhivska and 3 in Huliaypilska hromadas) based on remote assessments using satellite imagery and drone footage. The eVidnovlennia program continues to expand: 7,600 applications for damaged or destroyed property were submitted, of which 3,900 were approved for damaged housing and 342 for destroyed housing, totalling over 727 million UAH in compensation and housing certificates. These results demonstrate a positive institutional capacity trend in Zaporizhzhia oblast compared to other locations. However, delays, inconsistent communication, and high documentation costs persist, particularly for rural populations and older persons. Cases of informal renting without contracts remain common among IDPs, perpetuating insecurity and exclusion from formal support programs.

## Non-discrimination and equality

Across all monitored oblasts, protection monitoring identified that open hostility remains limited, subtle social and structural forms of exclusion continue to affect veterans, IDPs, older persons, and PwDs, shaping both community relations and access to rights. The dynamics vary significantly across regions, influenced by local demographics, the scale of displacement, and institutional capacity.

In Mykolaiv and Kherson, monitoring revealed growing tensions and stigma surrounding veterans’ reintegration into civilian life. Key informants reported that veterans often experience social prejudice, misunderstanding, and feelings of isolation, exacerbated by post-traumatic stress and the lack of structured psychosocial support. **“Veterans often experience psychological pressure and a lack of acceptance from society. Some people treat them with apprehension, which reinforces feelings of isolation,”** noted one key informant in Mykolaiv Oblast. Similarly, in Sumy oblast, some participants described fear of interacting with veterans due to concerns about unpredictable behaviour, especially among those with trauma-related conditions. **“I’m afraid to talk to my son-in-law. He’s shell-shocked. I’m afraid he might become aggressive,”** shared a participant from Shostka.





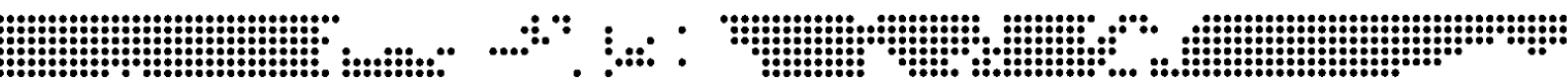
Instances of micro-discrimination in daily life, such as negative reactions to veterans exercising their right to free public transport, highlight the fragility of social acceptance. While many communities express respect and gratitude, sporadic cases of prejudice and discomfort persist, reflecting a wider societal struggle to reconcile perceptions of veterans as both heroes and potential sources of instability. These tensions underscore the need for community dialogue and awareness initiatives aimed at building understanding between veterans and civilians.

In Kherson Oblast, respondents also raised concerns about perceived inequality in the distribution of humanitarian assistance. Targeted aid programmes prioritising specific categories likely due to funding reductions, such as persons with disabilities, large families, and older persons have unintentionally fostered resentment among those who do not meet the eligibility criteria but still face hardship, particularly middle-aged adults (40–60). Such perceptions of unfairness reportedly contribute to community tensions and mistrust toward humanitarian actors, emphasising the importance of transparent communication and inclusive targeting criteria in aid delivery.

In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblast, protection monitoring identified layered patterns of social and economic exclusion, particularly affecting IDPs, older persons, and PwDs. Residents reported unequal access to assistance and entitlements, especially among single-parent families and households without digital access. **“A single mother cannot count on payments as an IDP,”** reported one participant in Izium, reflecting inconsistencies in aid eligibility and implementation. Limited digital literacy, reliance on word-of-mouth information, and the high cost of travel to administrative centres such as Sloviansk and Kramatorsk further deepen inequality. These barriers create a cycle of exclusion, where those with the fewest resources face the greatest difficulties in claiming support or accessing protection services.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, relations between IDPs and host communities were generally described as positive and cooperative, with respondents emphasizing mutual support and solidarity. **“They don’t divide us into ‘yours’ and ‘ours’; if there is a need, they help,”** shared a participant from Pavlohrad, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. Unlike in southern or northern regions, overt social stigmatisation was rarely reported. However, systemic and structural challenges affecting older persons, PwDs, and low-income households persists. Respondents described prolonged queues, staff shortages, and limited access to specialised medical care, particularly in rural and coastal areas. These challenges have been exacerbated by the transfer of social benefit administration to the PFU as of 1 July 2025, which centralised 39 types of benefits previously managed locally. While intended to streamline services, this reform has inadvertently produced new bureaucratic obstacles, such as payment delays, misfiled documentation, and reduced access to in-person consultation.

A key informant from Nikopolskyi raion noted, **“Residents who used to come to the Department of Social Protection for advice now have nowhere to turn. There are queues in the PFU, and employees can’t handle the workload.”**



The reform's unintended consequences have reinforced feelings of exclusion and institutional distrust among vulnerable groups. In addition, physical inaccessibility remains a major barrier. Few public buildings or shelters meet national accessibility standards, limiting participation and safety for people with mobility impairments. **“If an alarm goes off while I’m outside, I can’t get to a shelter quickly, and they’re not even adapted to my needs,”** shared a woman from Kryvorizkyi raion. Such conditions highlight how environmental inaccessibility translates into de facto discrimination, even in otherwise socially cohesive communities.

## Basic Economic and Social Rights

### Right to Housing

Across all monitored oblasts access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing remains a critical and unresolved protection concern. The reporting period confirms that widespread damage, limited compensation opportunities, and a saturated rental market continue to drive housing insecurity, displacement, and social vulnerability. While the drivers of inadequate housing vary by region, common trends include a shortage of habitable housing, bureaucratic and financial barriers to compensation, and unequal access to state and humanitarian support mechanisms.

Graph 7. Concerns about the current place of residence

|                                         |    |       |
|-----------------------------------------|----|-------|
| Accommodation's condition               | 96 | 42.7% |
| Security and safety risks               | 93 | 41.3% |
| Lack of functioning utilities           | 32 | 14.2% |
| Risk of eviction                        | 15 | 6.7%  |
| Lack of support for damaged housing     | 9  | 4.0%  |
| Lack or loss of ownership documentation | 7  | 3.1%  |
| Not disability inclusive                | 5  | 2.2%  |
| Overcrowded/Lack of privacy             | 4  | 1.8%  |
| Lack of connectivity                    | 4  | 1.8%  |

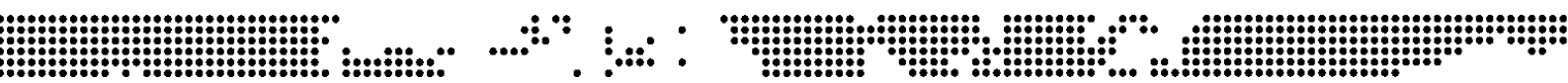
In Mykolaiv and Kherson, the scale of housing destruction and secondary displacement remains severe.



IDPs and individuals whose homes were damaged or destroyed continue to represent the groups most affected by inadequate housing conditions, often living in partially repaired or unsafe dwellings due to the lack of affordable alternatives. Findings indicate that large-scale destruction, deteriorating security conditions in Kherson City, and the limited availability of housing stock in nearby areas have forced many families to remain close to their areas of origin despite ongoing hostilities. Elderly persons and people with disabilities were identified to be disproportionately affected, as mobility restrictions, chronic health conditions, and low incomes prevent them from repairing or relocating. **“My house was destroyed. I am currently living in a small outbuilding known as a summer kitchen — it lacks basic living conditions but survived the destruction,”** said one FGD participant in Kherson. DRC also observed that collective centres for IDPs are not fully accessible to persons with disabilities due to bureaucratic admission requirements, such as mandatory medical certifications confirming their ability to live in shared environments.

In the Sumy Oblast, repeated attacks and cross-border shelling continue to devastate residential areas, which impacts access to safe and secure housing. Settlements within 5–10 km of the border remain particularly vulnerable to aerial bombs, artillery, and drone strikes. In Bilopillia, **“not a single multi-storey building was left undamaged — all 100 buildings were damaged or destroyed,”** reported a key informant. Displacement dynamics in Sumy remain fluid: while many residents initially evacuated, economic hardship and high rent prices have forced some to return to damaged homes. **“About 50% left, but some are now coming back because they don’t have enough money to pay for housing,”** explained a service provider from Svesa. This situation highlights a growing need for rent subsidies and access to affordable state housing, particularly for IDPs and low-income households. However, current housing programs remain limited in scale and accessibility. The destruction of homes has also strained host communities, with many households accommodating relatives or neighbours despite limited space and resources.

In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, protracted displacement and market saturation have created acute housing pressures. Most displaced families reside in informal or undocumented rentals, often under precarious conditions. DRC’s Monitoring data show that 100% of households in Kharkiv oblast renting accommodation lacked formal lease agreements — two-thirds with no documents at all and one-third based only on verbal terms. Respondents expressed concerns about unsafe housing conditions (72%), risk of eviction (17%), and inaccessible infrastructure (17%). For vulnerable groups such as women-headed households, older persons, and persons with disabilities, these barriers often lead to repeated displacement or returns to unsafe areas. **“We rent without a contract; the owner can ask us to leave at any time,”** explained a participant from Donetsk. The quality of available housing remains poor, with broken windows, damaged roofs, damp stairwells, and lack of insulation. These conditions heighten risks of injury, illness, and psychological distress, particularly during the winter months. Households caring for older or disabled relatives report added strain from inaccessible buildings and the absence of ramps or safe rooms: **“My mother uses a cane; there’s no ramp, and the entrance has no handrail — so we can’t look for other housing,”** said a respondent from Kharkiv.





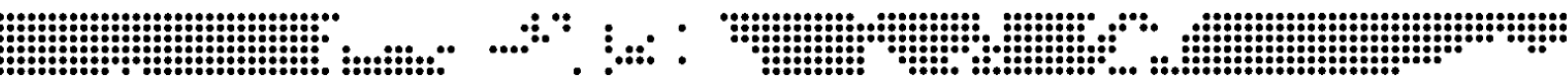
In the Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, housing insecurity among IDPs remains widespread, driven by inflated rental prices, limited availability, and declining humanitarian support. Monitoring data show that 59% of respondents identified security and safety risks in their accommodation, while 37% reported concerns about structural conditions and 5% feared eviction. Nearly half of households described their housing as partially damaged (48%), and a small but significant proportion (5%) reported living in severely damaged dwellings. With few affordable options, many displaced families continue to live in collective centres, transit sites, or substandard rented housing. **“All IDPs looked for housing on their own, paying rent from 4,000 to 12,000 UAH plus utilities,”** explained a participant from Pavlohrad. Overcrowding, lack of privacy, and poor accessibility are common in collective sites, while evacuees with livestock or property often refuse relocation due to limitations on what they can bring.

The rental market remains heavily strained, forcing some local authorities to redirect evacuees to other regions such as Rivne and Zakarpattia due to insufficient capacity. Although the Government’s eOselia mortgage program and eVidnovlennia compensation scheme have expanded during the reporting period, their practical reach remains limited. High property prices, strict eligibility criteria, and administrative barriers exclude most low-income and displaced households. **“Even with the 3% loan, it’s impossible – apartments cost more than the loan allows,”** noted a respondent from Dnipro. The cumulative effect of these factors leaves many IDPs without access to durable housing solutions, exposing them to secondary displacement, eviction risks, and long-term dependence on humanitarian support.

## Right to Education

Across all monitored oblasts the reporting period confirmed that children’s access to safe and continuous education remains critically constrained by ongoing hostilities, displacement, and the destruction of educational infrastructure. Despite localised efforts to restore facilities and expand remote learning, barriers to education persist, with significant implications for children’s protection, psychosocial well-being, and future resilience.

In Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, monitoring findings - including data from rapid protection assessments (RPA) - show widespread damage to educational facilities, including schools, kindergartens, and playgrounds. Entire communities lack safe and functional spaces for children’s learning and recreation. **“The school, which was completely new, has been destroyed. The kindergarten was damaged,”** reported an FGD participant in Mykolaiv, while another in Kherson noted that **“the village is home to 50 children, but there is a lack of safe communal spaces.”** Where possible, education continues primarily online, with blended formats introduced only in schools equipped with functioning shelters. However, limited public transportation and ongoing security risks prevent many children from attending in-person classes even where facilities are operational.



Families frequently cite education access as a key factor influencing displacement, with many moving to safer hromadas to allow their children to study.

In the Sumy oblast, repeated shelling and targeted attacks have devastated educational infrastructure. In Bilopillia alone, every multi-storey building and several schools were reported damaged or destroyed, while strikes on Sumy State University rendered parts of the campus unusable. **“Schools, colleges, and vocational institutions operate exclusively online,”** reported a service provider from Bilopillia. Most schools in Sumy now operate fully remote or hybrid models, depending on shelter availability. In urban centres such as Hlukhiv, hybrid learning is feasible for limited groups, but in rural areas, only primary-level classes are conducted in person — often in inadequate shelters described as **“damp and wet.”** Parents’ fear for children’s safety remains high, contributing to prolonged absences and learning gaps. Displacement and trauma further hinder educational participation. Families who have relocated multiple times struggle to re-enrol children, and teachers report increased stress and behavioural problems among displaced pupils. As one mother explained, **“We didn’t join classes right away; my son was under such stress he developed enuresis.”**

In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, the education system continues to operate under chronic insecurity, displacement, and infrastructure loss. Although online and blended learning remain the norm, frequent power outages, connectivity disruptions, and siren alerts repeatedly interrupt classes. For children with disabilities or those living with older caregivers, digital learning is often inaccessible. Teachers and parents describe declining quality of education, low motivation, and emotional withdrawal among adolescents. **“Children sit at home without communication, without school, and start to fall behind,”** shared an FGD participant from Kharkiv. Schools that have managed partial repairs or established shelters offer some hope, but coverage remains inconsistent, especially in smaller or frontline settlements. Protection monitoring indicates that education barriers are reinforcing social inequality: IDPs, children with disabilities, and those in rural or low-connectivity areas continue to face deeper exclusion.

In Zaporizhzhia Oblast, access to safe and quality education remains uneven, especially in frontline or high-risk areas. Hostilities have caused significant damage to schools and kindergartens, forcing many institutions to suspend operations or revert to remote learning. **“The school in Komyshevukha had a shelter and is now totally ruined,”** noted an FGD participant from Zaporizhzhia Oblast. In Dnipropetrovsk oblast, information from the General Coordination Meeting in August states that although 1,832 educational institutions remain operational, one in five lacks a functioning bomb shelter, posing persistent safety concerns. Zaporizhzhia oblast, by contrast, has emerged as a leader in constructing underground schools - an approach welcomed by local communities - yet risks during transit to and from schools remain high, particularly in rural areas. Authorities report that 85% of students can currently study in person or through hybrid formats, depending on parental consent and local safety conditions. Educators and caregivers consistently link educational disruptions to children’s mental health, citing increased anxiety, stress, and loss of motivation.

**“The transition to distance learning reduces the availability of quality education,”** observed a key informant from Synelnykivskyi raion. Despite these challenges, communities continue to emphasise that education remains central to children’s resilience and recovery.

Findings reaffirm that access to education is both a protection and resilience priority. The destruction of schools, displacement of teachers and students, and unsafe conditions for in-person learning have profound implications for children’s psychosocial well-being, safety, and long-term development. Disrupted education not only deprives children of learning opportunities but also erodes social connections, stability, and hope: core elements of resilience in protracted crises.

## Right to Health

Across all monitored oblasts, access to healthcare remains one of the most pressing protection concerns. While health systems in government-controlled areas continue to function, they operate under severe strain due to infrastructure damage, workforce shortages, and ongoing insecurity. The findings reveal that geographical isolation, economic barriers, and inconsistent service delivery are common obstacles across regions. Persistent barriers to medical and rehabilitation services disproportionately affect those already at risk — including older persons, persons with disabilities, explosive ordnance survivors, and displaced households — reinforcing cycles of exclusion, dependency, and deteriorating health.

Graph 8. Barriers to access to health services

|                                                                     |     |       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| <u>Lack of specialized health care services</u>                     | 141 | 69.1% |
| <u>Safety risks linked with access to/presence at facilities</u>    | 64  | 31.4% |
| <u>Cost of the services provided/medication</u>                     | 63  | 30.9% |
| <u>Distance - lack of transportation means to access facilities</u> | 53  | 26.0% |
| <u>Cost associated with transportation to facilities</u>            | 51  | 25.0% |
| <u>Lack of available health facility</u>                            | 38  | 18.6% |
| <u>Lack/shortage of medication</u>                                  | 12  | 5.9%  |
| <u>Long waiting time</u>                                            | 6   | 2.9%  |
| <u>Not accessible for persons with disabilities</u>                 | 4   | 2.0%  |



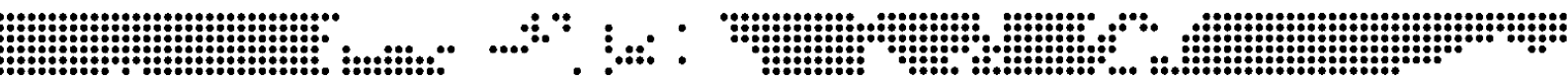
In the Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, the combined effects of conflict, displacement, and destroyed infrastructure continue to limit access to both primary and specialised medical care. Nearly all respondents reported a shortage of specialised doctors, particularly dentists, gynaecologists, traumatologists, endocrinologists, and ophthalmologist.

Many healthcare facilities operating on reduced schedules. In remote or frontline settlements, medical support is primarily delivered by mobile clinics, while family doctors travel from larger towns only once a week.

Transportation and cost barriers remain critical. Over 30% of respondents cited lack of transport as a major obstacle, and nearly 28% reported that medical care and medicines were unaffordable. These constraints particularly affect older people, those with disabilities, and residents of isolated rural areas. As one elderly woman in Kherson oblast explained, **“We have to hire a car to reach the hospital — it costs 400 UAH one way.”** The process for obtaining disability status, especially for those with mine or war-related injuries, remains highly bureaucratic and inconsistent. Many respondents described limited awareness of entitlements, unclear procedures, and long waiting periods. One participant shared that her husband, who sustained severe war injuries, **“was granted disability due to a general illness - not the shelling - and the court upheld the decision.”**

In the Sumy, frequent shelling and targeted attacks on medical infrastructure have severely disrupted healthcare delivery. Over 50 facilities - including hospitals in Shostka and a neuropsychiatric centre - have been damaged. Ambulances are unable to operate within the 5 km border zone due to security risks, forcing residents to rely on neighbouring communities for care. **“Ambulances go only as far as Svesa; beyond that, they no longer travel,”** explained a key informant. While primary healthcare remains available in most rural areas, access to secondary and rehabilitation services is limited. Long queues and a shortage of specialists leave people with disabilities and injured civilians without adequate follow-up or assistive devices. **“There are not enough rehabilitation centres; there are always long queues,”** reported a service provider from Obrazhiivka. Despite free access to emergency and basic treatment, hidden costs and social barriers persist. Respondents reported cases of discrimination against IDPs and emotional burnout among healthcare workers, leading to tense interactions and lower quality of service. One mother shared, **“Local doctors don’t want to accept IDP children — they tell us to go to private clinics.”** These findings demonstrate that Sumy’s health system, while still functioning, operates under extreme stress, with front-line areas experiencing both security and accessibility constraints.

In Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, healthcare facilities remain formally operational but unevenly accessible. Rural and frontline communities such as Mykolaivka, Cherkaske, and Bylbasivka reported chronic shortages of medicines, diagnostics, and rehabilitation services. Even where clinics exist, staff rotations, power cuts, and supply disruptions reduce availability. **“Clinics halt when doctors take leave at the same time,”** one respondent in Donetsk noted. Older people and persons with disabilities face the most significant barriers, especially when consultations are conducted by phone only or when home visits are unavailable.



**“Older people cannot call a family doctor to their home — everything is by phone,”** said a key informant from Mykolaivka. Residents expressed mixed feelings about humanitarian mobile medical visits - while valued, they are often unpredictable, short-term, or poorly coordinated with state services. Key concerns include inconsistent follow-up, unequal coverage, and lack of communication about schedules or eligibility. The region also shows critical gaps in rehabilitation and assistive devices, especially for survivors of explosive ordnance incidents.

Mobile medical teams, including those from humanitarian organisations, play a crucial role in bridging service gaps, particularly for isolated settlements. **“We are informed about their visits through the community’s Telegram channel,”** explained a participant from Komyshevsk Hromada (Zaporizhzhia oblast). However, residents reported long queues, safety concerns, and out-of-pocket expenses even at state hospitals, including for EO-related injuries. Economic hardship remains a defining factor: many households cannot afford medicines or private care, despite the existence of state programs like ‘Affordable Medicines’. Vulnerable groups such as women, older persons, and people with disabilities face heightened risks, with some unable to reach hospitals or evacuation points without assistance.

Although the dedication of medical staff was widely commended, respondents consistently cited unequal access to specialists, long waiting times, and fear of shelling when attending clinics. One woman from Marhanetska hromada (Dnipropetrovsk oblast) shared, **“It is scary to sit in line at the doctor’s — munition could hit at any moment.”** The findings indicate that healthcare access in central oblasts is increasingly dependent on mobile services, humanitarian support, and personal networks, leaving significant gaps in continuity of care, trauma rehabilitation, and chronic disease management.

## Right to Work

Across all monitored regions, access to sustainable livelihoods remains severely constrained, with the ongoing conflict, displacement, and widespread destruction of infrastructure eroding people’s right to work and undermining community resilience. Although the specific drivers of economic insecurity vary by region, the overall picture is one of limited job opportunities, declining income, and growing dependence on social benefits or humanitarian assistance.

Graph 9. Main sources of income

|                                        |     |       |
|----------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Social protection payments             | 274 | 73.5% |
| Salary – Formal Employment             | 95  | 25.5% |
| Casual (Temporary) Labour              | 20  | 5.4%  |
| Savings                                | 12  | 3.2%  |
| Humanitarian Assistance                | 8   | 2.1%  |
| No resources coming into the household | 7   | 1.9%  |
| Assistance from Family/Friends         | 5   | 1.3%  |
| Other                                  | 3   | 0.8%  |
| Business/Self Employment               | 1   | 0.3%  |
| Debt                                   | 1   | 0.3%  |

In the Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts, livelihoods have been impacted by mine contamination, destroyed infrastructure, and a lack of safe agricultural land. Previously, livestock farming and small-scale agriculture provided the backbone of local economies, but these activities have been affected due to unsafe pastures and limited access to markets. **“Before the full-scale invasion, the village had four herds of cows that served as the main source of income. Now there is almost no livestock left because the grazing lands are mined,”** explained a resident of Kherson oblast. As a result, social benefits and pensions have become the main sources of income for most families (74%), while opportunities for formal employment are rare and often low-paid. Residents reported increasing reliance on relatives’ support, loans, or reduced consumption to meet basic needs. Youth outmigration is accelerating due to a lack of employment and education prospects, deepening the demographic and economic decline of rural communities. It was reported that veterans face distinct barriers to reintegration, including unemployment, declining mental health, and discrimination from employers. Limited access to vocational rehabilitation or targeted support programmes leaves many veterans and their families economically and socially marginalised.

In Sumy oblast, livelihood opportunities have been decimated by continuous shelling, mine contamination, and restricted access to agricultural land, particularly within 5–10 km of the Russian border. **“Our forests are toward the border, and people no longer go there. All agricultural and forestry activities are banned,”** a service provider in Svesa reported.

It was reported that IDPs in Sumy face particular challenges in finding employment in host communities, where vacancies are scarce and mobility restricted by insecurity. For women with children and single caregivers, employment outside the home is nearly impossible due to safety concerns and lack of childcare. Many families previously relied on labour migration, but cross-border restrictions and security risks have closed this coping pathway. The combination of disrupted livelihoods and displacement appears to have driven a sharp increase in basic needs gaps (up to 61%) and a rise in negative coping mechanisms such as depleting savings or reducing food and healthcare expenditure.

In the Kharkiv and Donetsk oblasts, displacement, ongoing hostilities, and proximity to the frontline have collapsed local job markets, especially in rural and industrial areas. Many enterprises remain closed or operate at reduced capacity, and transport and documentation barriers prevent IDPs from accessing available vacancies. Women-headed households, older persons, and people with disabilities are among the most affected due to limited mobility and caregiving responsibilities. Informal and short-term work dominates the labour landscape, exposing workers to exploitation and unsafe conditions. **“Before the conflict, almost the entire village worked at the soybean factory – now it’s completely destroyed,”** said a key informant in Kharkiv oblast. Households now rely primarily on social payments (82%), with formal employment accounting for less than a quarter of income sources. Over half of households reported monthly earnings below 6,000 UAH, leading to widespread debt, food insecurity, and reduced access to healthcare. Digital-by-default employment services was noted to further exclude older persons, those without internet access, or IDPs lacking documentation.

In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, the livelihood crisis is driven by the closure of industrial and agricultural enterprises, disrupted supply chains, and rising living costs. Once-thriving factories and agricultural equipment producers have been destroyed, leaving communities with few viable job options. **“Until 2022, powerful enterprises operated here... but they were all destroyed,”** reported a key informant from Komyshevskaya hromada in Zaporizhzhia oblast. Agricultural production — traditionally a key source of income — has been severely disrupted by contamination, insecurity, and reduced access to fuel and markets. Farmers in frontline communities described working under constant threat of shelling: **“Tractor drivers are under continual fire in the field... but the harvest must be collected because this is people’s income.”**

In Dnipropetrovsk oblast, local governance and public institutions face severe staffing shortages, as qualified personnel migrate to safer areas or abroad. Public sector jobs often offer low salaries and high bureaucratic requirements, further deterring candidates. The result is weakened service provision and increased strain on already overstretched social systems. Household coping mechanisms are increasingly fragile across both Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts: only 17% of households still rely on personal savings, while 81% report having no viable coping strategies, marking a sharp deterioration since the previous quarter.

The findings confirm that livelihood deprivation is both a driver and a consequence of protection risks across Ukraine's conflict-affected areas. The loss of income and employment not only fuels economic insecurity but also increases exposure to exploitation, family separation, negative coping mechanisms, and psychological distress.

## **Recommendations**

### **To the authorities**

#### **Improve Access to Civil Documentation and Compensation**

- Local administrations are encouraged to improve public awareness of compensation, rental subsidies, and support programs through coordinated information campaigns.
- Minimise administrative and documentation barriers by deploying mobile service teams, simplifying procedures, and providing affordable legal aid.
- Expand rental and social housing options, ensure accessibility for people with disabilities and older adults, and increase transparency in eligibility and compensation procedures.

#### **Invest in sustainable, Inclusive Infrastructure and Basic Services**

- Improve public transport connectivity for remote settlements and enforce national accessibility standards across public buildings and shelters.
- Support the development of mobile medical units and ensure equitable access to affordable medicines and rehabilitation services.

#### **Enhance Livelihood Opportunities and Local Integration/ Social Cohesion**

- Promote livelihood recovery through vocational training, small business grants, and inclusive employment incentives for IDPs, veterans, and people with disabilities.
- Support veterans' reintegration and community cohesion through awareness campaigns, psychosocial support, and targeted employment initiatives.

## To the humanitarian community

### **Legal Assistance and Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) Support**

- Expand HLP legal aid and outreach to assist households in restoring documentation, securing property rights, and accessing compensation and recovery programs, including support for renters, informal occupants, and veterans.
- Advocate for the inclusion of administrative and legal costs (e.g., notary, court, and documentation fees) within housing assistance and compensation schemes.
- Ensure transparency and community awareness on selection criteria for assistance, promoting fairness, feedback, and accountability mechanisms to mitigate social tension.

### **Enhance Community Safety Awareness**

- Continue and expand mine risk education for adults and children, prioritising rural and agricultural communities, and adapt messaging for specific groups such as older people and farmers.

### **Strengthen Engagement and Social Cohesion**

- Facilitate community dialogues, awareness sessions, and joint initiatives to promote understanding, preparedness for veterans' return, and social cohesion at the local level.
- Raise awareness among communities regarding humanitarian assistance selection criteria to prevent social tensions and perceptions of inequality among programming.

### **Expand Mental Health, Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and GBV Services**

- Scale up tailored community-based psychosocial interventions addressing conflict-related stress and fatigue, including peer-support groups, structured recreational activities, and targeted support for children, veterans, and older people.
- Ensure the existence and/or continuation of safe spaces and survivor-friendly infrastructure in shelters, transit sites, and community centers and integrate services specifically supporting survivors of gender-based violence.

### **Promote Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion**

- Promote livelihoods recovery and economic inclusion through vocational training, small business grants, and cash-for-work programs, ensuring equal participation of women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups.
- Link livelihood interventions with local recovery and agricultural rehabilitation, ensuring alignment with safety and demining priorities.



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