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# DRC Quarterly Protection Monitoring Report Ukraine

January–March 2024



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## Introduction

This report summarises the findings of DRC protection monitoring conducted in Ukraine in Lviv Oblast in the West, Chernihiv and Sumy Oblasts in the North, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts in the East, Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts in the South between January and March 2024.

This report seeks to identify trends in protection risks and rights violations, challenges facing conflict-affected populations, and barriers in access to services (particularly for the most vulnerable) across surveyed oblasts during the reporting period. Findings inform ongoing and planned humanitarian response, enable the identification of vulnerable people for individual support, and support evidence-based advocacy on behalf of persons of concern. Findings from protection monitoring are visualized in an interactive dashboard which enables DRC and all relevant stakeholders to easily access this data.

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

### Key findings include:

- The fear of conscription among men of draft age, exacerbated by legislative changes to mobilization laws, has led to heightened apprehension and self-imposed restrictions on movement.
- In areas experiencing the more acute impacts of the conflict, residents express heightened stress and fear due to the frequent sound of explosions and artillery fire, exacerbated by inadequate shelter options during air raids and the challenges around the lack of availability and/or functionality of air raid alarm systems. While some communities exhibit a sense of adaptation to the situation, safety concerns persist, particularly near military training grounds and areas contaminated by unexploded ordnance, posing significant risks to civilian populations.
- The presence of security actors heightens safety concerns for women and girls, increasing the risk of gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation, exacerbated by limited economic opportunities. Intimate partner violence (IPV) has emerged as the primary risk for women and girls. Barriers to help-seeking behaviour include lack of awareness about available services, social norms, fear of stigma, limited service availability, and challenges accessing emergency accommodation and safe shelters, particularly in rural areas.
- As the conflict persists and families continue to displace and return, concerns about the mental health of children and adults grow due to prolonged exposure to violence, isolation from peers, and disruptions to normal life. Symptoms such as insomnia, fatigue, and emotional burnout, exacerbated by fears related to ongoing shelling, as well as increased alcohol consumption continue to be reported.
- Recent changes in IDP allowances under Government Resolution No. 332 are raising concerns among IDP communities, including about the consequences of discontinuing assistance payments.
- Lack of transportation remains a significant barrier to freedom of movement and adequate access to essential services.

## Context update

The end of February 2024 marked two years since the Russian Federation military offensive launched on 24 February 2022 and ten years since the start of the conflict. Between the 24th of February 2022 and 29th of February 2024, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has verified that conflict-related violence has killed at least 10,675 civilians and injured 20,080, while 1,055 educational facilities and 444 medical facilities were damaged or destroyed<sup>1</sup>.

From January to March, Ukraine witnessed a deepening humanitarian crisis marked by devastating waves of attacks that severely impacted civilians and disrupted vital services, particularly during the harsh winter months. Across various oblasts including Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Lviv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Zaporizhzhia, amongst others, civilians endured significant casualties, damage to homes, and destruction of critical civilian infrastructure due to ongoing attacks. The escalation of hostilities in frontline and border communities, notably in Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, and Sumy Oblasts, prompted further displacement as civilians sought safety and protection<sup>2</sup>. According to the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU), 640 people were killed or injured in January, 500 in February and 604 in March<sup>3</sup>. Strikes on critical infrastructure resulted in widespread disruptions to essential services such as electricity, water, and gas, affecting hundreds of thousands of people. The situation on the border with Poland further deteriorated, with Polish farmers organising protests and blockades leading to complicated cross-border movements for civilian populations<sup>4</sup>. This included the blocking of border checkpoints and prolonged waiting times at cross-border points.

## Methodology

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

<sup>1</sup> Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 December 2023 – 29 February 2024, OHCHR, available [here](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ukraine Situation Report, 18 April 2024, OCHA, available [here](#)

<sup>3</sup> Monthly updates on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict from the HRMMU are available [here](#)

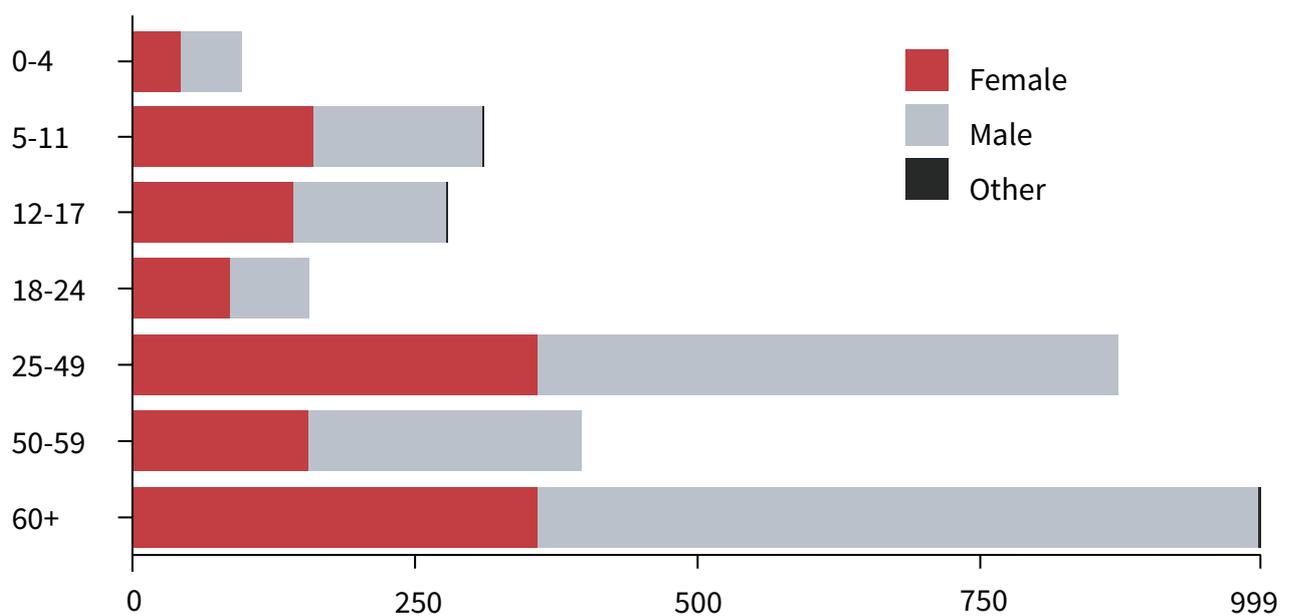
<sup>4</sup> “Polish farmers block roads in new Ukraine imports protest”, 20 March 2024, France 24, available [here](#)

**Figure 1. Household respondents per displacement status**

Non-displaced member	689	58.7%
IDP	343	29.2%
Returnee	139	11.8%
Refugee	1	0.1%
Unable/unwilling to answer	1	0.1%

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> of January and 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2024, DRC protection teams surveyed 1,175 households corresponding to 3,118 individuals. Most of the surveyed households were affected non-displaced (59% – 689 respondents). 29% (343 respondents) were IDPs, 12% (139 respondents) were returnees, and 0.1% were refugees (1 respondent). A total of 99% of the surveyed individuals were Ukrainian citizens, 58% were females, while the average age of surveyed individuals was 43 years old.

**Figure 2: Surveyed households per age and gender groups**



The report also reflects the findings of rapid protection assessments (RPAs) conducted in Mykolaiv, Kherson and Kharkiv Oblasts, and rapid gender-based violence (GBV) assessments conducted in Chernihiv and Sumy Oblasts<sup>5</sup>, as well as in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts<sup>6</sup>. In addition, 147 interviews (including 76 National Protection Cluster KIs) with representatives of local authorities, national organisations and CSOs, members of local/community-based organisations, community group representatives and opinion leaders, teachers, social workers and activists were conducted, as well as 74 FGDs reaching 958 participants.

## Main protection risks and needs

### Liberty and freedom of movement

#### Forced displacement

According to IOM DTM data, there were a total of 3,387,291 registered IDPs in Ukraine as of 31 March 2024, with Dnipropetrovsk hosting the highest number of registered IDPs at 386,396, followed by Kharkiv Oblast, with 361,628<sup>7</sup>. This represents a decrease of over 130,000 since December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023<sup>8</sup>. Most of the oblasts across Ukraine have experienced a decrease in the number of registered IDPs which can be attributed to an increase in the number of returns according to key informants and FGD participants. and potentially a reduction of new IDP registrations stemming from the recent changes in IDP allowance' legislation. The rise of registered IDPs in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts compared to the previous monitoring period can be attributed to heightened conflict activity during the winter months along the frontlines in Donetsk Oblast. This has prompted people to seek refuge in Kharkiv Oblast and safer areas within Donetsk Oblast. Similarly, the slight increase in the number of registered IDPs in Sumy Oblast can be attributed to several factors including Sumy's proximity to the Russian Federation, such that the oblast is serving as a transit point for those displaced from the Kharkiv region, and the potential implementation of mandatory evacuation measures in a 5 kilometre zone. If the conflict intensity continues to increase, further increases in the number of IDPs are likely. Despite the ongoing decrease in the number of registered IDPs in Lviv Oblast, evacuations to the region by trains have persisted, with 2,248 newly arrived IDPs during the reporting period. The majority of these evacuees originated from Sumy and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts.

Consistent with findings from the previous monitoring period, 57% of surveyed IDPs (167 individuals) through DRC's protection monitoring indicated their intention to return to their area of origin. The main factors influencing intentions to return reported by household respondents include an improved security situation (89%, 148 individuals), the cessation of hostilities (72%, 119 individuals), the Ukrainian authorities regaining Non-Government Controlled Areas (NGCAs) (13%, 21 individuals), an increased access to employment opportunities (11%, 19 individuals) as well as repaired infrastructure (11%, 19 individuals).

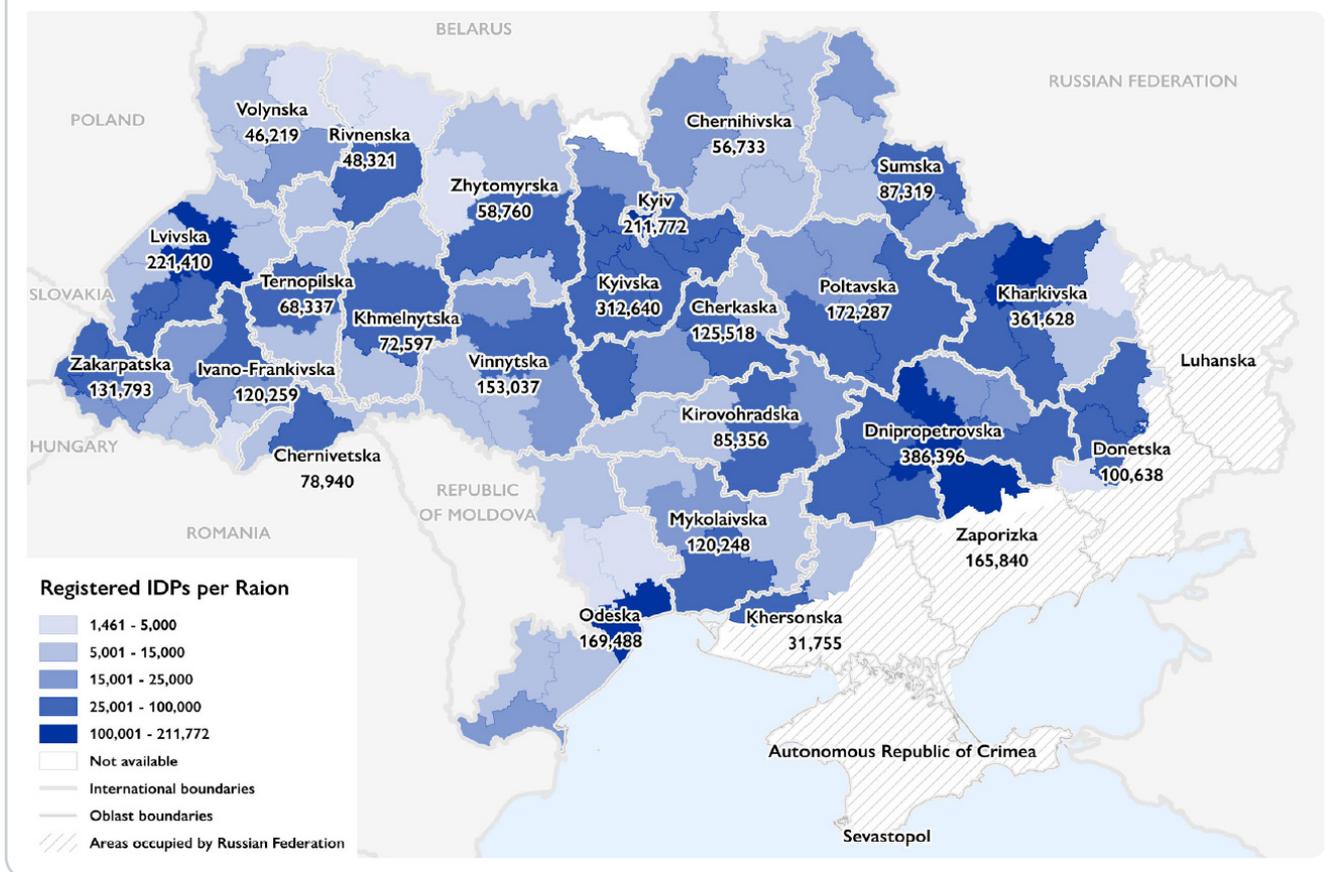
<sup>5</sup> Rapid GBV Assessment, Chernihiv and Sumy Oblasts, DRC, February 2024, available [here](#)

<sup>6</sup> Rapid GBV Assessment, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, DRC, May 2024, available [here](#)

<sup>7</sup> Registered IDP Area Baseline Assessment – Ukraine Round 34 – March 2024, IOM, available [here](#)

<sup>8</sup> Registered IDP Area Baseline Assessment – Ukraine Round 31 – December 2023, IOM, available [here](#)

Figure 3. Registered IDP presence per raion as of 31 March 2024 <sup>9</sup>



KIs and participants in FGDs with returnees in eastern and southern oblasts highlight that the primary motive for returning is the financial strain experienced by IDPs, particularly the combination of high rental costs and limited income opportunities. This finding demonstrates that some return movements are a negative coping mechanism due to the lack of employment opportunity or sufficient state and/or humanitarian support in areas of displacement.

The changes in IDP allowances as outlined in the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine's Resolution No. 94 dated January 26, 2024 have impacted intentions to return to habitual places of residence. Effective from March 1 2024, criteria in accessing/retaining IDP housing allowance (the main state mechanism of support to IDPs) changed significantly as exclusion criteria were introduced which resulted in the majority of those receiving benefits being removed or being required to reapply for benefits. As an example, IDPs residing in rural areas of Lviv Oblast who rely on rented private accommodations indicated being affected, as the IDP allowance serves as their primary source of income. Participants in FGDs held in Novyi Rozdil and Dobrivliany, Lviv Oblast, expressed their fear and anxiety about the discontinuation of the IDP allowance.

<sup>9</sup> Registered IDP Area Baseline Assessment – Ukraine Round 34–March 2024, IOM, available [here](#)

Across surveyed oblasts, 99% of surveyed non-displaced households (669 individuals) and 99% of surveyed returnees (135 individuals) indicated their intention to stay in their place of habitual residence. Non-displaced individuals in both Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts generally agree that they are not inclined to leave their current locations unless there are substantial changes in the security situation.

**“I will simply return home near the front-line as I am not eligible to receive the IDP allowance.”**

FGD participant, Novyi Rozdil, Lviv Oblast

They do not want to relocate within Ukraine or abroad unless absolutely necessary. Those who had intentions of leaving have likely already done so, leaving behind a population of non-displaced individuals who either choose not to relocate or face barriers preventing them from doing so, such as elderly individuals with disabilities or chronic medical conditions.

**Figure 4. Intentions per displacement status**

**IDPs**

Return to the place of habitual residence	257	61.3%
Integrate into the local community	150	35.8%
Relocate to another area in Ukraine	7	1.7%
Relocate to a country outside of Ukraine	5	1.2%

**Non-displaced**

Stay in place of habitual residence	406	99.3%
Relocate to another area in Ukraine	2	0.5%
Relocate to a country outside of Ukraine	1	0.2%

**Refugees and returnees**

Stay in place of habitual residence	88	100.0%
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In Donetsk Oblast, many non-displaced residents are hesitant to evacuate their homes due to fears of looting and unauthorized seizure of property. FGDs in both Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts revealed instances where military personnel in non-government-controlled and frontline areas unlawfully occupied empty private residences, resulting in looting and damage to homes. This experience, recounted in multiple FGDs in Donetsk Oblast acts as a significant deterrent for non-displaced individuals considering evacuation, despite the security risks they face. Similar information was shared in Kherson Oblast, particularly during an FGD in Mala Shesternya village, where participants indicated that the majority of young and able-bodied residents have already moved to safer locations, while the remaining inhabitants are predominantly elderly pensioners who have no intention and limited means of relocating. Concerns about the risk of looting in vacant homes were also voiced.

## Fear of conscription

On January 1 2024, a new draft law on mobilization was registered in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine<sup>10</sup>. The proposed amendments seek to increase the mobilization of men by reducing the conscription age from 27 to 25 years old, and the obligation to update military records for all citizens liable for military service. Among the surveyed households across the oblasts, 27% (318 respondents) reported encountering barriers to freedom of movement. Of these, 15% (47 individuals) identified fear of conscription as a significant obstacle. For male respondents, this percentage increases to 30% within the 32% of those reporting barriers to freedom of movement, including barriers to access assistance and employment. In Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, there is a noticeable trend of men of conscription age limiting their movements, particularly avoiding areas near checkpoints, due to concerns about receiving summons to Territorial Recruitment Centres. This cautious behaviour is more prevalent in both Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts compared to previous months, indicating heightened apprehension among individuals of conscription age following the introduction of the draft law. Recently, an order (although not legally binding) was issued for all military-eligible men residing in Nikopolskyi raion, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, to report to the Territorial Recruitment Centre, as reported in online media<sup>11</sup>. This directive applies even to those who have not received any draft notice and must be complied with by April 30 2024. The impact of such measures on the daily lives and mental well-being of the affected individuals is a critical aspect to consider. The fear of conscription and the resulting self-imposed restrictions, combined with challenges in securing safe accommodation and employment remain significant factors contributing to the distress experienced by men at risk of conscription and exposing them to negative coping mechanisms.

In Mykolaiv Oblast, 28% of respondents reported fear of conscription as a major barrier to freedom of movement, which is notably higher than the rest of the surveyed oblasts. DRC observed an increased presence of Territorial Recruitment Centre personnel in Mykolaiv who check documents and direct men to local military offices for registration and updating personal information. According to a KI from Mykolaiv, many men refrain from leaving their homes to avoid conscription. The requirement for a military ID or certificate of unfitness for military service further limits their access to formal employment. The informant shared his own experience of being unlawfully detained by conscription personnel.

<sup>10</sup> The Law on Mobilization was adopted on 18 April 2024 and will enter into force on 18 May 2024

<sup>11</sup> “In one of the districts of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, all military-eligible men were ordered to appear at the Territorial Centre for Recruitment and Social Support (TCRSS), with a deadline”, Dnipro Operative, 12 March 2024 available [here](#)

He was apprehended at a shopping centre, deprived of the opportunity to secure his belongings, and forcibly taken to the conscription centre. Once there he was detained until the curfew lifted to complete paperwork and undergo a military medical examination. Such incidents are not uncommon in the city, as conscription personnel employ various methods to track men of draft age, particularly following the parliamentary consideration of the draft law.

## Lack of transportation

Lack of transportation remains a significant barrier to freedom of movement, as reported by 24% of surveyed households who indicated facing impediments (76 individuals). FGD and KI participants in both Donetsk and Kharkiv Oblasts consistently highlight the issue of inadequate public transport, albeit to a lesser extent in Kharkiv. Before the escalation, most villages were served by regular bus or taxi services operated by public or private transport companies. However a substantial decrease in population numbers has rendered these services unprofitable, leading to their discontinuation.

Many remote settlements and villages currently lack regular or accessible public transport connections to larger cities or towns, with some villages requiring residents to travel up to three kilometres to reach the nearest active bus stop. Even when buses are available they are often considered expensive, ranging from 80 to 100 UAH one way, and are not suitable for individuals with physical disabilities. In some cases, residents report paying exorbitant fees of up to 1,400 UAH to travel from more distant hromadas to Kharkiv city. This transportation challenge significantly hampers access to essential services, particularly for those living in rural/marginalized areas. Similar concerns were identified through the RPAs conducted in Shevchenkivska hromada, Mykolaiv Oblast, and Vysokopilska hromada, Kherson Oblast, which revealed significant transportation challenges. In Kyslychyvate village within the Tomakivska hromada of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, the cessation of bus station operations since the onset of the armed conflict has been attributed to the local authorities' financial constraints.

Residents expressed dissatisfaction during FGDs, lamenting the loss of convenient inter-settlement transportation, scheduled vehicle movements, and designated waiting areas for buses. This cessation significantly impairs livelihood opportunities, access to services, and overall mobility within the hromadas.

**“Local transportation has daunting elevations that are physically inaccessible.”**

FGD participant, Lviv Oblast

In Lviv Oblast, FGD participants noted that transportation options often fail to address accessibility concerns, rendering them unsuitable for people with disabilities.

## Arbitrary detention

FGD participants from various villages in Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts reported incidents of civilians being arbitrarily detained when villages were outside of the control of the Ukrainian government. Detainees were often held in basements and subjected to various forms of violence, including physical, psychological, and sexual abuse such as beatings, intimidation, and rape.

Former civilian detainees interviewed by OHCHR reported torture, ill-treatment and sexual violence against men and women<sup>12</sup>. Access to basic necessities like food, water, and medical care was severely limited. Some individuals were reportedly targeted and shot due to their familial connections to the Ukrainian military, their influential status in the hromadas, or their support for the Ukrainian government. Russian soldiers stationed in the villages conducted surveillance and monitoring of residents in their homes. These individuals now require individual consultations and assistance to assert their rights regarding arbitrary detention and to access state compensation, as stipulated in the Law of Ukraine “On social and legal protection of persons who have been deprived of personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine, and their family members.” However, many are unaware of the necessary procedures, preventing them from realising their legal entitlements to compensation and accessing medical and psychological support.

## Life, safety and security

### Sense of safety

A total of 38% of respondents (447 individuals) across the surveyed oblasts expressed a poor sense of safety, mainly attributed to shelling or threats thereof (97% of these respondents, totalling 431 individuals). This figure reflects a 2% increase compared to the previous monitoring period. The sense of insecurity is particularly pronounced among residents of certain regions including Dnipropetrovsk (75%), Kherson (64%), Sumy (57%), Donetsk (57%), and Mykolaiv (56%) Oblasts. Residents in rural areas experience a significantly higher prevalence of a diminished sense of safety, with 44% of respondents from rural areas expressing feelings of insecurity, compared to 18% among urban respondents. The notable rise in the reported poor sense of safety among residents of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast compared to the previous monitoring period (+51%) can be attributed to the higher frequency of security incidents, particularly in Nikopolskyi raion.

In Donetsk Oblast, participants in FGDs generally expressed feeling unsafe due to their proximity to the frontlines. The sound of explosions and artillery fire, particularly in hromadas closer to the frontline, contributes to heightened stress, worry, and fear among the local population. As reported by residents of Shevchenkove hromada, Mykolaiv Oblast, the absence of designated shelters for seeking refuge during air attacks, which is commonly reported in rural areas of frontline oblasts including in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, forces residents to rely on insufficient basement spaces that do not meet safety standards. In addition, bomb shelters are often inaccessible to residents, especially when they are located on the outskirts of villages, making it inconvenient for most people to reach them promptly during ongoing air raids. Furthermore, in areas close to the frontlines, explosions are frequently heard before the alarms sound, reducing confidence in the efficacy in the air raid alarm system. In addition, in some conflict-affected areas, there is a notable absence of air raid alarm systems. In Mykhailivka, located within the Mykhailivska hromada of Zaporizhzhia Oblast, local authorities have prepared plans for the installation of an air raid alarm system, but the project’s costs are considered too high, and the local budget lacks the funds to proceed with it.

<sup>12</sup> Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 December 2023 – 29 February 2024, OHCHR, available [here](#)

**Figure 5: Factors influencing the sense of safety**

Bombardment/shelling or threat of shelling	431	96.6%
Landmines or UXOs contamination	58	13.0%
Presence of armed or security actors	49	11.0%
Other	9	2.0%
Criminality	6	1.3%
Fighting between armed or security actors	5	1.1%
Intercommunity tensions	3	0.7%
Risks of eviction	2	0.4%

The lack of a functional air raid alert system heightens residents' vulnerability to the threats of missiles and shelling, especially among those with limited access to smartphones who may remain unaware of impending threats.

In contrast, FGD participants in Donetsk Oblast noted a sense of adaptation, describing safety as “comparative.” Similarly to previous monitoring periods, a significant improvement in the safety perception compared to the situation in early and mid-2022 was reported, mainly linked with a certain level of desensitization towards safety threats. Communities residing near the frontlines have grown accustomed to air alarms and sirens, often exhibiting a greatly diminished response, if any at all. Even in areas where shelters are available, community members rarely utilise them unless they have received explicit information about large-scale attacks targeting their vicinity. In Petro-Mykhailivska hromada, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, there was originally an air raid warning device installed but residents chose to turn it off due to the disturbance it caused, particularly at night. Now, residents depend solely on mobile applications for air raid alerts, which poses a risk as cellular connection in rural areas can be unreliable, and Wi-Fi or wired connection is uncommon, potentially resulting in delayed or missed notifications.

**“Children and people reacted too sensitively. It could sound non-stop for several hours in a row and several times a day or night.”**

FGD participant, Petro-Mykhailivska Hromada, Zaporizhzhia Oblast)

The presence of armed or security actors continues to be reported as a factor influencing a poor sense of safety (11%, 49 respondents). In Donetsk Oblast, residents living close to or around military training grounds express a profound sense of insecurity. The constant sounds of shells and bullets during training exercises cause fear among the local population. Additionally, there are reports of bullets and shells inadvertently entering villages, resulting in civilian injuries. Those residing near military training grounds identify this as their primary safety concern. Despite bringing the issue to the attention of local authorities and the military, there have been no tangible results or improvements reported. According to a KI from Novomykolivska hromada, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, the sizable presence of military personnel poses heightened risks to the local population. Due to its proximity to the conflict zone, the military has designated one of the settlements for setting up military camps aimed at training newly recruited military servicemen.

Contamination by unexploded ordnance (UXOs) continues to be a significant safety concern, with 13% of respondents (58 individuals) expressing feelings of insecurity as a result. Ukraine is currently the most heavily mined country globally, with extensive regions in the South and East, particularly in Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson Oblasts, affected by unexploded ordnances.

According to the HRMMU, 350 individuals were killed and 780 injured by mines and explosive remnants of war since 24 February 2022 <sup>13</sup>. In areas formerly under non-government control, the necessity of demining remains critical, with many residents expressing fear of using the main roads and paths due to the risk of encountering mines. Numerous FGD participants in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts are either personally acquainted with or have heard of individuals being injured or killed by mines, heightening their apprehension. Fortunately, most communities report receiving information about mines and their associated hazards. Caregivers note that children receive risk education through schools and practice safe behaviours. However, despite awareness of the risks, some individuals resort to perilous activities out of desperation and necessity, such as working in potentially mined fields or collecting firewood in hazardous areas (negative coping strategies).

## Gender-based violence

The presence of security actors in some settlements of Zaporizhzhia Oblast has reportedly heightened safety concerns for women and girls, including risks of GBV. This combined with the potential for increased exposure to GBV presents a significant threat to the safety and well-being of women and girls in these communities. This includes the risk of sexual exploitation in exchange for material benefits, compounded by the lack of economic opportunities in these areas. Adolescent girls were identified to be at particular risk, as they may lack the ability to fully comprehend all the risks associated with such situations. In Chernihiv and Sumy Oblasts, when discussing safety concerns for women and girls in the community, intimate partner violence (IPV) emerged as the primary risk, encompassing physical and psychological abuse. Over half of the assessment participants acknowledged instances of GBV within their family, community, or workplace, with intimate partner violence the most frequently cited. This underscores the pervasive nature of such violence in the surveyed areas.

<sup>13</sup> Ukraine: Protection of civilians in armed conflict, February 2024 update, OHCHR, available [here](#)

DRC rapid GBV assessments highlighted various barriers to help-seeking behaviour among GBV survivors in Ukraine. These include lack of awareness about available services, social norms and beliefs surrounding GBV, quality of services, and fear of judgment and stigma. Both community members and service providers agree that survivors are unlikely to report or seek services due to these intersecting factors. There is a widespread lack of awareness about available services and service providers among both service providers and persons of concern. The shortage of services and qualified personnel in rural areas, coupled with limited transportation, acts as a significant barrier to accessing necessary support and services including healthcare and psychosocial support. This shortage is particularly evident in services for male survivors of GBV, representing a significant gap in the support system that must be addressed. Lack of emergency accommodation and accessible safe shelters/crisis rooms pose challenges, especially for survivors of IPV. These services are often located in urban areas, making them difficult for rural survivors to access. In some regions, GBV survivors are temporarily accommodated in local hospitals due to the lack of safe accommodation.

Social norms and harmful beliefs about GBV contribute significantly to survivors' reluctance to seek support, with stigma and feelings of shame being common. In small and rural communities, concerns about confidentiality and the normalization of violence against women further inhibit survivors from accessing services. Furthermore, fear of the perpetrator and concerns about the effectiveness of GBV services further deter GBV survivors from seeking assistance. While the police are often sought in emergencies, there are concerns about their ability to protect GBV survivors. Instances were reported where survivors who sought help were killed by the perpetrator.

## Psychological distress

As families continue to displace and return, and the conflict enters its third year, there is a growing concern among community members about the mental health and psychological well-being of children. With the combined impacts of COVID-19 and the prolonged conflict, some children have never experienced a “normal” life, raising worries within the community about the potential long-term effects on their well-being and social development. Children are significantly impacted by isolation, as many engage in online schooling, hindering their ability to interact with peers and develop interpersonal communication skills. Additionally, children are frequently exposed to the sounds of explosions and shelling, leading to heightened levels of fear and stress.

Observations made during DRC field visits and Mental Health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) awareness sessions in Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts identified heightened levels of distress among community members. They expressed fear for their safety and well-being due to ongoing shelling and the absence of adequate shelters in many hromadas, as well as anxiety about property loss.

Moreover, participants reported a range of symptoms including insomnia, eating disorders, fatigue, apathy, tearfulness, irritability, memory and cognitive decline, emotional burnout, outbursts of aggression, feelings of hopelessness, loss of faith in the future, acute loneliness, and a simultaneous reluctance to engage with others. IDPs in all surveyed oblasts also expressed fear and worries related to the changes in the IDP allowances.

**“We are all stressed out.”**

FGD participant, Kharkiv

As reported by participants of the FGDs in Novopetrivka village, part of Visokopilska hromada in Kherson Oblast, the conflict has profoundly impacted the mental health and psychological well-being of the hromada’s residents. Experiences of occupation, shootings, violence (including physical, sexual, and psychological), occupation of property, threats, and looting have deeply wounded the members of the community emotionally. Moreover, the destruction of homes, schools, kindergartens, and other communal buildings has disrupted daily life, leading to increased stress and anxiety. The absence of proper warning systems during air raids has heightened vulnerability, forcing residents to rely on improvised self-preservation methods. Respondents also expressed a desire for more individualised psychological support, indicating that while they currently attend group psychosocial support sessions, they feel the need for additional one-on-one sessions to address their mental health needs effectively.

**Figure 6: Major stress factors**

Fear of being killed or injured by armed violence	528	47.7%
Worries about the future	500	45.2%
Worries about the children	338	30.6%
Fear of property being damaged or destroyed by armed violence	308	27.8%
Displacement related stress	221	20.0%
Lack of access to employment opportunities	42	3.8%
Lack of access to medical services	33	3.0%
Lack of access to basic services	32	2.9%
Fear of conscription	17	1.5%
Other	17	1.5%
Missing family members	13	1.2%
Stigmatization/discrimination	6	0.5%
Fear of being sexually assaulted	1	0.1%

Many respondents in northern oblasts highlighted the impact of mobilization on the male population, leading to self-imposed isolation and significant psychological distress. KIs in Kharkiv report an increase in alcohol consumption among community members, particularly among men. They attribute this trend to boredom resulting from a lack of employment opportunities and activities, as well as the use of alcohol as a negative coping mechanism for mental health issues. Similar issues were noted in Kherson Oblast, where some residents resort to alcohol as a means of coping with stress, while others rely on sedatives.

During FGDs with returnees in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, there were observations about the noticeable impact of the conflict on the mental health and well-being of non-displaced individuals. Returnee participants highlighted a prevalent sense of depression and psychological distress among the non-displaced population. The psychological state of community members living in areas near the frontline in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts is multifaceted. While some claim to be “fine” and managing, they also express struggles with sleep disturbances, profound sadness, feelings of hopelessness, grief, and even a sense of resignation or acceptance of their fate, as noted in a discussion in Donetsk. This emphasizes the high needs for psychosocial support amongst surveyed populations.

## Civil status, access to remedies and justice

### Access to civil and HLP documentation

Across surveyed oblasts, 20% of household respondents reported facing access barriers to obtain documentation, which represents a 3% increase compared to the last monitoring period. While length and cost of administrative procedures remain among the main access barriers reported (38% and 30% respectively), distance or cost of transportation remains a significant obstacle for 32% of respondents (75 individuals), especially those residing in rural and remote areas where access to transportation options is limited and associated costs may pose a financial burden. For instance, in Donetsk Oblast access to administrative services is primarily concentrated in larger cities like Slovyansk, however the absence of adequate public transportation renders these services largely inaccessible to residents in rural areas. In some rural hromadas of Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, indicate that relevant services are only partially operational. Consequently, individuals outside urban centres often encounter difficulties obtaining essential civil documentation and accessing compensation and social payments. In addition, the lack of information remains a significant barrier (reported by 24% of respondents), and the need for legal services and individual counselling, especially related to civil documentation and government housing compensation, remains high, especially among the elderly population.

From January 1, the law sets a new compensation mechanism for individuals who have repaired damage to their homes at their own expense<sup>14</sup>. This compensation applies to repair works and construction materials that were not supported by any monetary or material assistance from public or international organisations, local self-government bodies, enterprises, institutions, or organisations.

<sup>14</sup> “The committee informs about the enforcement of the Law of Ukraine on compensation for destroyed and damaged housing”, 12 January 2024, Committee of Economic Development of Verkhovna Rada, available [here](#)

## Changes in IDP allowances

The recent implementation of Government Resolution No. 332, effective from March 1, 2024, marks significant changes in the payment of accommodation assistance to IDPs in Ukraine (which has been the predominant benefit mechanism for IDPs since the escalation). The Ministry of Social Policy emphasised that these changes align with the Government's IDP policy objectives aimed at ensuring the gradual integration of IDPs in hosting communities, providing employment stimulus for working-age IDPs, and tailoring social support to the needs of the displaced population<sup>15</sup>. Under this resolution, the eligibility of IDPs is now assessed based on the basis of a set of exclusion criteria.

These include financial considerations (i.e. having less than UAH 100,000 in their bank accounts, real estate purchase for less than UAH 100,000, no vehicle purchase, etc.) and vulnerability categories, and the allowance is being provided for the condition of taking measures for employment.

The IDP allowance is extended for six months automatically only for specific categories of IDPs (including pensioners whose pension does not exceed 9,444 UAH, persons with disabilities of group I or II, orphans and children deprived of parental care as well as foster and adoptive parents). Other IDPs seeking social assistance payments are required to undergo re-registration. The six-month extension of these payments is contingent upon a review of the household's socio-economic status, ensuring that the family income does not exceed 9,444 UAH per person and verifying the registration of unemployed employable household members at employment centres. On 22 March, the Cabinet revised Decree No.94 "Some issues of social support for IDPs and other vulnerable categories" and extended the list of the most vulnerable groups of IDPs<sup>16</sup>.

However, monitoring findings indicates that these changes pose significant burden on administrative services such as in Zaporizhzhia city and other regions of Ukraine. To mitigate the risk of liability due to inaccurate verification of IDPs, the local government in Zaporizhzhia city has opted to restrict the re-registration of IDPs solely to the Department of Social Protection (DoSP), excluding Centres of Administrative Services (CSNAP). This decision imposes further challenges on IDPs, requiring them to endure lengthy queues, thereby impeding their access to services and adding to the workload of DoSP personnel. The Ombudsman of Ukraine highlighted several key concerns, including the government's lack of effective mechanisms to encourage IDPs to find employment, the potential consequences of discontinuing assistance payments leading IDPs to return to hazardous territories or seek refuge in other countries, and the impracticality of investing substantial financial resources in evacuating individuals from conflict zones only to deny them essential support post-displacement, thereby incentivising their return<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> "The government extended the housing assistance payments for IDPs", 26 January 2024, Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, available [here](#)

<sup>16</sup> DRC Legal Alert Special on IDPs: Issue 101, available [here](#)

<sup>17</sup> "The Ukrainian Ombudsman addressed the Prime Minister regarding changes in the mechanism for providing housing assistance to IDPs", 21 February 2024, Ombudsman of Ukraine, available [here](#)

## Conscription exemptions

Concerns have been raised regarding the conscription process, specifically about military medical commissions and exemptions from mobilization. The main issue centers around the commissions' inability to adequately assess the health status of men eligible for conscription, frequently classifying them as fit for service despite health conditions or disability that should exempt them from conscription under Ukrainian law. The Military Medical Commission (MMC) operates within the Territorial Recruitment Centres and holds a crucial role in the mobilization process. Since the declaration of martial law, all individuals eligible for military service (even those previously exempted for health reasons before 2022) must update their data with the MMC. This update includes a medical examination to determine whether a person is fit, unfit, or partially fit for military service. Before 2024, there was no set timeframe for completing the MMC process. Individuals could choose not to undergo an examination to avoid receiving a fresh mark on their military documents, which would lead to immediate mobilization orders. Key changes implemented since January include the establishment of time limits for MMC examinations, with the process of undergoing examinations not to exceed four days (typically completed in 1–2 days in practice). The partially fit category will be eliminated starting from May 4<sup>th</sup>. All individuals who have been assigned disability groups II or III (with a few exceptions) will undergo re-evaluation. After the mobilization law No. 3633-IX comes into effect on May 18, all military-eligible individuals must update their data within 60 days, necessitating passage through the MMC. Anticipated changes involve the removal of certain diseases from the Ministry of Defence's list that governs fitness for military service. Additionally, many diseases currently categorized as partially fit are expected to be reclassified as fit. With the expanded authority of the Territorial Recruitment Centres under the new law, more issues with passing the MMC are expected to arise. Current requests for legal aid predominantly focus on grounds for deferment, requirements for supporting documentation, referrals to the Military Medical Commission for individuals seeking exemption from military service or deferment, and appealing decisions made by the Military Medical Commission.

## Non-discrimination and equality

In both Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, participants in FGDs and KIIs continue to identify elderly individuals living alone (particularly those with disabilities), as the most vulnerable group. This vulnerability stems from various factors, including limited income, health issues, lack of family support due to family members relocating, and feelings of isolation. These vulnerable elderly individuals primarily rely on assistance from government social workers, volunteers, and supportive neighbours.

The lack of access to disability status registration hampers individuals from receiving state allowances and accessing essential assistive devices and social services, thereby exacerbating vulnerabilities. Key challenges for persons with disabilities include limited access to specialized services, financial independence, discrimination in employment and environmental barriers. Additionally, abandonment by family members exacerbates their vulnerability. According to key informant interviews conducted in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, the process of obtaining disability status involves multiple visits to medical institutions located in Zaporizhzhia city, but due to age and health concerns, many individuals do not start this process, which prevents them from accessing essential social services. In addition, surveyed elderly individuals expressed reluctance to apply for disability status, citing concerns such as potential reduction in pension benefits, the lengthy and costly procedure, and the risk of losing eligibility for utility subsidies due to increased family income.

The capacity of governmental social institutions in remote and rural areas of eastern and southern oblasts remains constrained, requiring significant support from and collaboration with humanitarian providers of case management to mitigate challenges around availability/accessibility of services. A KI from Vilnianska hromada, Zaporizhzhia Oblast underscored the difficulty social workers encounter in reaching certain settlements like Lyubymivka village. Despite having sufficient staff, the primary obstacle is the considerable distance between settlements in the community. In contrast, in Shyroktivska hromada, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, FGD participants noted that one social worker in the Starosta district is responsible for supporting up to 14 individuals requiring special attention and care. To improve efficiency and mobility, social workers were provided with electric bicycles, enabling them to quickly reach their clients' homes. Meanwhile, a KI from Mariivka, Bilenkivska hromada, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, highlighted challenges in recruiting social workers due to low salaries and the complex nature of the work. As a result, some elderly individuals who qualify for home care services receive assistance from external sources, with some being supported by their neighbours due to the current shortage of resources. Protection monitoring findings indicate that challenges in access to service is diverse and encompasses challenges such as the availability of personnel, distance and transportation challenges, and recruitment challenges, among others. These issues are compounded by the often complex nature of applying for and accessing social protection assistance.

**“The process of obtaining a disability status is lengthy and requires applying to medical institutions in Zaporizhzhia [city], but due to their age and health condition, such persons and their relatives do not initiate this process. Because of this, they cannot fully receive all the social services that would be provided to them if they had the status of a person with a disability.”**

Key informant, Zaporizhzhia Oblast

Additionally, there is a growing recognition among FGD participants that men of conscription age represent another vulnerable group. This shift in perception is likely linked to increased government conscription efforts, which have heightened concerns within the community about the potential conscription of men in their families or communities. As a result, men of conscription age are increasingly viewed as being at elevated risk. In mid-February, the first Ukrainian Army Recruiting Centre was established in Lviv within the same premises as the Lviv IDP support centre. Following this event, the manager of the IDP support centre communicated a decrease in assistance requests registered from men of conscription age, as they lack the willingness to appear at a location associated with army recruitment activities due to conscription fears.

## Social tensions

The significant influx of displaced Ukrainians has exacerbated pre-existing social tensions, primarily revolving around language disparities and competition for humanitarian aid, services, and job opportunities. Overall, household-level respondents across surveyed oblasts reported that 76% of them had good or very good relationships between communities, while 24% reported acceptable (22%) or bad (4%) relationships. In various localities of Lviv Oblast, including Drohobych hromada and Stryi city, social tensions arose primarily around employment and linguistic barriers, which have contributed to discrimination. Employers are hesitant to hire IDPs, fearing that they will eventually return to their areas of origin.

Further complicating the integration of IDPs into local schools, linguistic differences have led to instances of bullying, causing some IDP children to revert to online education. A FGD participant from Dashava shared that their child faced derogatory remarks from teachers and peers at a local kindergarten for speaking Russian. In Dobrivliany village, FGD participants indicated significant stigmatisation towards IDPs from eastern Ukraine, with local residents often labelling them as ‘muscovites’<sup>18</sup> upon hearing their accents. One FGD participant in Stryi described an incident at a local market where they were corrected aggressively by grocery store staff after requesting vegetables in Ukrainian.

**“To find a job in this area, IDPs have to consider not a high-paying job, e.g. cashier, cleaner. A local opinion is that IDPs do not intend to work and live only on IDP payment.”**

Key informant, Stryiskyi raion, Lviv Oblast

In eastern and southern oblasts, tensions between community members are primarily attributed to the perceived uneven distribution of humanitarian aid, a concern echoed in previous reports. Some KIs express concern that stricter criteria for aid, particularly cash assistance, may exacerbate this issue, leading to worries among community members about future assistance. In Novopetrivka village, part of Vysokopilska hromada in Kherson Oblast, FGD participants highlighted significant fragmentation within their community, mainly stemming from ongoing disputes over the perceived unfair distribution of humanitarian aid. Similar concerns were raised in Shevchenkivska hromada in Mykolaiv Oblast, where residents voiced concerns regarding the uneven distribution of humanitarian aid. These tensions exacerbate societal fragmentation, compounded by unstable employment, unequal resource access, and a lack of psychological well-being among residents.

Meanwhile, community dynamics and tensions in areas affected by conflict and displacement reveal nuanced interactions and concerns among residents. In FGDs conducted in Donetsk and Kharkiv Oblasts, people report no tension or conflict between community members, and communities strive to help each other as much as possible. Improved internet access has facilitated community relations, allowing for easier communication and support through group chats created by village heads. In Chornomorka village, part of Chornomorska hromada in Mykolaiv Oblast, FGD participants emphasised a strong sense of social cohesion within their community, particularly evident in their active engagement in cultural and humanitarian activities.

**“Everyone knows how each of their fellow villagers behaved in the spring and summer of 2022 —but people have enough sense not to stir up conflict on political grounds.”**

Key informant, Kharkiv Oblast

<sup>18</sup> Refers broadly to someone or something associated with Moscow or the Muscovy region of the Russian Federation.

Notably, the community demonstrated remarkable cohesion by technically equipping the school shelter to serve as a multi-functional space for social events. Volunteers are now seeking assistance from humanitarian organizations to further enhance the shelter with leisure amenities like a cinema, gym, and choreography class, as the local government lacks funding for such equipment. However, according to a KI in Kharkiv Oblast, although there is no obvious tension between people, individuals are highly aware of each other's behaviours and stances on the events of February 2022. As a result, people tend to align themselves with those who share similar political views.

## Basic economic and social rights

### Right to housing

#### Forced eviction

Among IDP household-level respondents reporting concerns related to their current accommodation (35%, 120 respondents), the predominant worry remains the risk of eviction, as reported by 45% (52 respondents). This concern is consistent with findings from the previous monitoring period and is linked to both the Resolution #930<sup>19</sup> on the functioning of the collective sites adopted on 1st of September 2023 and the amendments related to the continuation of the IDP Housing Allowance, including Decree №332 of 20 March 2022 “Some issues of payment of accommodation allowance to internally displaced persons”.

During the monitoring period, the protection team in western Ukraine observed several instances of collective centres being closed across Lviv Oblast, resulting in the forced eviction of IDPs who had been residing there since 2022. In January, approximately 30 IDPs residing at a private collective centre in Morshyn, Lviv oblast were evicted. The eviction affected various vulnerable groups including elderly people, persons with disabilities, and single caregivers, who had been living in the centre since March 2022. The centre's administration cited substantial utility debts as the reason for closure and eviction. The IDPs were relocated to a private hotel within the same settlement for temporary residency over two days. Before the eviction, they were provided with a list of other collective centres with available space in Lviv Oblast but were not informed about CMU's Resolution No. 930, which regulates the functioning of collective centres. Although the IDPs had to pay for their hotel stay, the majority chose to remain in Morshyn since they had established social connections and started integrating into the local community. They requested humanitarian assistance to cover their basic needs. In March, the Charitable Foundation ‘100% Life’ reported that the owners of a private collective centre in Lviv, which had cumulatively hosted more than 2,000 IDPs since February 2022, decided not to extend the rental agreement with the Foundation. The Foundation has been running the collective centre, which currently hosts more than 100 IDPs. Additionally, a month before the rental agreement's end date, the property owner disconnected the electricity, restricting people's access to parts of the premises, impeding the operations of the collective centre, and forcing individuals onto the street<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> A new version of the resolution extends the deadline for bringing collective centers' facilities into compliance with minimum standards from March to December 2024

<sup>20</sup> “The controversial Lviv developer is attempting to evict displaced persons from the shelter”, 100% Life, 28 March 2024, available [here](#)

In Dnipro city, IDPs were asked to vacate a private collective site before the winter season ends. This shelter, established by volunteers, has provided refuge for IDPs, including persons at heightened risk, from 12 Ukrainian cities for approximately two years. Presently, the shelter houses around 300 people including 75 children, 40 individuals with disabilities, and 60 animals. The Ministry of Justice has notified the shelter that the building is owned by the Dnipropetrovsk Research Institute of Forensic Expertise and must be utilised for its intended purpose. Consequently, all IDPs have been asked in January to vacate the premises by the end of the heating season. The shelter’s representatives have appealed to the Ministry of Justice for an extension of the lease for the IDPs and are awaiting an official response.

Similar challenges have surfaced in a collective centre located in Koblivska hromada, Mykolaiv Oblast, where concerns regarding overcrowding and the possibility of eviction due to the owner’s financial indebtedness have emerged. In response, IDPs have contributed their social benefits to alleviate the debt, highlighting the importance of community support in addressing housing challenges during crises.

**Figure 7: Concerns about current accommodation**

Accommodation’s condition	167	54.9%
Risk of eviction	70	23.0%
Lack of functioning utilities	37	12.2%
Lack of support for damaged housing	24	7.9%
Overcrowded/lack of privacy	22	7.2%
Security and safety risks	18	5.9%
Lack of connectivity	14	4.6%
Not disability inclusive	4	1.3%
Lack or loss of ownership documentation	4	1.3%

## Right to education

Shelling attacks continue to inflict damage on education infrastructure, especially in frontline hromadas. This damage extends to utility networks, further impeding access to educational institutions. As a result of these challenges, many children are compelled to resort to online learning or a hybrid approach.

Participants in FGDs held in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts highlighted the ongoing challenge of facilitating communication and socialisation among children. This challenge is linked with online schooling and exacerbated by the absence of entertainment and sports programmes, as well as social infrastructure, resulting in children spending most of their free time on the Internet.

Schooling in Donetsk and Kherson Oblasts remains fully online, while in Kharkiv and Mykolaiv Oblasts, it is mostly conducted online. With the return of more families, local authorities and volunteers in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts continue to establish unofficial “education centres” in former school buildings. These centres facilitate access to online education by providing internet connectivity (including Starlink), generators, and computers. The presence of these centres encourages families to return, as reported by some FGD participants. Overall, internet access is described as stable, but in certain remote villages in Donetsk, it is unreliable, affecting children’s ability to access online education.

In Gnarovske village, Zaporizhzhia Oblast, participants in FGDs noted that children have returned to in-person schooling due to parents’ challenges in devoting sufficient time and attention to their children’s education at home. Worries were expressed regarding the children’s limited understanding of the school curriculum while learning online. As a result, community members collectively decided to discontinue online education as an option. The Lviv Oblast administration encourages prioritising support programmes that facilitate in-person schooling to ease integration processes for children hesitant to leave their homes for fully online education. In Drohobych, Lviv Oblast, IDP children transitioned from online to in-person schooling in 2023, fully integrating into the educational process. However, access to education remains challenging for IDP households in Stryi, Lviv Oblast, where initial negative interactions with education department staff or school administration deterred full enrolment of IDP children due to unwelcoming responses.

During an FGD in Kharkiv, residents emphasised the importance of instilling nationalist attitudes toward Ukraine in children. They expressed a desire for children to be educated in a manner that fosters loyalty to Ukraine.

## Right to health

Access to healthcare remains a significant challenge particularly for elderly individuals facing mobility restrictions due to disabilities and limited access to public transportation. In line with the previous monitoring period, 35% (408) of household-level respondents indicated facing barriers to accessing healthcare, including a lack of specialised healthcare services (60%, 243 respondents), a lack of available health facilities (45%, 184 respondents), the distance and lack of transportation means to access existing facilities (41%, 166 respondents), the cost associated with transportation (30%, 123 respondents) as well as the cost of the services provided (26%, 104 respondents).

In Donetsk, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, both FGD participants and KIs highlighted the scarcity of pharmacies outside urban areas, forcing people to travel to larger towns and cities to purchase necessary medications. Additionally, many elderly individuals mentioned that a significant portion of their pension or disability allowance is allocated to cover the high cost of medication, leaving little funds for other expenses.

A pilot project called Ukrposhta Apteka has been launched in Donetsk Oblast and certain border areas of Sumy Oblast, facilitating access to essential medications for marginalised and remote communities, as well as low-income families. The project’s expansion will include the frontline regions of Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Kherson, and Mykolaiv oblasts. This initiative enables Ukrainians to order non-prescription medications and have them delivered by mail free of charge. The Ministry of Health of Ukraine indicated that the project also includes reimbursable medications through the "Affordable Medicines" programme, targeting various health conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases. Currently, the programme offers 515 trade names of medications and medical equipment, which are available by prescription either for free or with a small co-payment. Individuals can place orders by contacting the Ukrposhta contact centre. While this initiative aims at removing financial barriers to healthcare, its free delivery service could mitigate travel time and associated risks, particularly benefiting individuals with mobility issues or those residing in conflict-affected areas.

**Figure 8: Barriers to access healthcare services**

Lack of specialized health care services	98	39.7%
Cost of the services provided/medication	92	37.2%
Distance—lack of transportation means to access facilities	84	34.0%
Lack of available health facility	79	32.0%
Cost associated with transportation to facilities	76	30.8%
Lack/shortage of medication	19	7.7%
Long waiting time	11	4.5%
Not accessible for persons with disabilities	10	4.0%
Other	7	2.8%
Safety risks linked with access to/presence at facilities	5	2.0%
Language barriers	2	0.8%
Requirement for civil documentation	2	0.8%
Discrimination/restriction of access	2	0.8%

While FGD participants in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts generally reported access to primary healthcare and regular visits from doctors and medical NGOs, accessing specialized healthcare and diagnostic tests often requires travelling to larger cities, presenting access challenges due to transportation issues. Moreover, there has been an observed increase in demand for dental services, with FGD participants in Donetsk and Kharkiv Oblasts expressing frustration over the scarcity of dentists and the prohibitive cost of dental care, rendering it inaccessible for many. Similarly, in Novopetrivka village, Vysokopilska hromada, Kherson Oblast, although a nurse is present, she can only offer basic consultations, leaving residents without access to essential medical examinations, tests, or consultations with specialized doctors within the village. As a result, residents are compelled to travel to other cities or districts with operational hospitals or clinics, often journeying to Kryvyi Rih or Zelenodolsk hospitals in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. The lack of public transportation exacerbates the situation, forcing people to rely on private cars for hospital visits. Without available buses or minibuses, residents face additional challenges in accessing necessary medical care. In Vavylove and Kotlyareve villages, Mykolaiv Oblast, while some basic services are available (such as free cardiograms and weekly visits from family doctors), specialised exams and tests require travel to Mykolaiv, incurring additional costs and delays.

The lack of accessible primary healthcare is a significant concern in rural areas, as evidenced from protection monitoring data from Shevchenkivska hromada, Mykolaiv Oblast. Limited local medical facilities, coupled with delayed emergency services, contribute to the challenges faced by residents. Destruction, damage, and the displacement of specialised staff and facilities, notably in the village of Ternovi Pody, have resulted in nearly non-existent medical services due to its near destruction during the period beyond the Ukrainian government's control. Residents must rely on neighbouring villages for basic consultations, exacerbated by limited public transportation between villages. Emergencies are further complicated by delayed ambulance arrivals from Mykolaiv, approximately 1.5-2 hours away, limiting options for residents in need of urgent medical attention. In rural areas, it is common for ambulances to be dispatched from nearby cities, resulting in response times of more than 60 minutes to reach villages.

## Right to work

A significant proportion of surveyed individuals reported at least one household member being unemployed and actively seeking employment, with this figure remaining notably high at 16% (185 respondents) and rising to 22% for IDP respondents. The primary factors contributing to unemployment (consistent with previous reporting periods), include the scarcity of job opportunities (83%), physical impairments or limitations (9%), and responsibilities related to housework and childcare (9%). Additionally, a new factor emerged in the reporting period which indicated that skills do not match the demand in the job market (10%).

Livelihood remains a pressing concern for communities in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts, as protection monitoring data indicates that there are few job opportunities available, discouraging returns and impacting both IDPs and non-displaced individuals. While cities offer more job opportunities, limited public transport and fears of military conscription deter rural residents from accessing these jobs. In the past, many residents in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts were employed in agriculture, but the sector has suffered greatly during the conflict, with agricultural fields often mined, limiting future employment prospects and accessibility to agricultural land. Additionally, the seasonal nature of agricultural work means any available jobs are temporary.

Similarly, in rural areas of southern oblasts, significant unemployment exists due to damage to agricultural machinery and the inability to harvest crops due to shelling or landmines. Before the conflict, Vysokopilska hromada in Kherson Oblast thrived on agriculture, but the sector has been severely affected since, exacerbated by the impacts of the Nova Khakhovka dam environmental disaster. The downturn has led to a lack of employment opportunities, with enterprises relocating or closing down. Extensive mining of territories and fields has made farming impossible, depriving residents of income from land use and gardening. Agriculture was once the primary source of livelihood for many, making the need for demining fields crucial for economic recovery and development.

In hromadas where industries provide employment opportunities, individuals often face barriers such as a lack of experience or qualifications. Furthermore, entrepreneurs are hesitant to hire IDPs due to concerns that they may not stay in their current location, which could affect the stability of their workforce. During an FGD in the village of Kotlyareve, Shevchenkivska hromada, Mykolaiv Oblast, participants highlighted the prolonged control of the hromada's territories by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, which resulted in the closure, relocation, or suspension of enterprise activities, including state institutions that provided employment opportunities. Residents observed a significant economic decline in many villages of the hromada. Additionally, due to the armed conflict, specialists in fields such as medicine or construction left the village. The widespread presence of landmines further exacerbates the situation, making it unsafe for economic activities. Previously, many residents worked in domestic or agricultural roles, relying on crop cultivation for income and sustenance. They emphasised the challenges posed by low purchasing power and increased utility bills, which strain family budgets even further.

**“The employment situation here is difficult. There is almost no work, farmers hire 2-3 people for seasonal work. The municipal enterprise for landscaping employs one person. People also have their land plots and are engaged in growing vegetables. People live off the harvest all year round.”**

Key informant, Novomykolaivska hromada, Zaporizhzhia Oblast

Limited livelihood and economic opportunities have led to a substantial reliance on social protection schemes and humanitarian aid among the Ukrainian population. Continuously, 75% of respondents (865 individuals) across surveyed oblasts identified social protection payments as their primary income source. This reliance is even more significant among IDPs, with 87% relying on these payments as their main source of income, underscoring the critical role of social support in sustaining vulnerable populations. However, due to the changes in IDP allowance as per Government Resolution No. 332, effective from March 1, 2024, some individuals will lose these payments, resulting in the loss of their primary source of income. For some IDPs, housing assistance is crucial for meeting basic needs. While changes in the assistance system may incentivise IDPs to actively pursue employment, they often encounter difficulties in securing well-paying jobs that align with their skills and experience.

**Figure 9: Main source of income**

Social protection payments (pensions, allowances, etc.)	865	74.8%
Salar—formal employment	354	30.6%
Humanitarian assistance (cash or in kind)	217	18.8%
Casual (temporary) labour	86	7.4%
Assistance from family/friends	31	2.7%
Savings	19	1.6%
No resource coming into the household	17	1.5%
Business/Self Employment	7	0.6%
Other	5	0.4%

According to the Law of Ukraine “On the State Budget of Ukraine for 2024,” the subsistence minimum per person per month is set at 2,920 hryvnias starting from January 1, 2024, while the minimum wage in 2024 will be 7,100 hryvnias per month. Despite these legal standards, most households in the surveyed oblasts report an average monthly income ranging from 3,001 to 6,000 hryvnias for an average household size of 2.2 (34% – 379 respondents) or an average monthly income ranging from 6,001 to 9,000 hryvnias for an average household size of 2.9 (25% – 277 respondents). While 45% of respondents (532 individuals) indicated gaps in meeting their basic needs, the main coping strategies reported include spending savings (29%), reducing consumption of food (23%), depending on family/external support (18%) and reducing consumption of essential medicines or healthcare services (17%). Additionally, 22% reported not having any coping strategy in place.

## Recommendations

### To government of Ukraine

- Implement policies and programmes that support increased employment opportunities for IDPs, including through allocating resources for retraining programmes, vocational training initiatives and providing micro-grants to support entrepreneurship among IDPs. Create an enabling environment that encourages businesses to hire IDPs and fosters economic integration.

- Establish clear and accessible processes for accessing compensation mechanisms, and address barriers.
- Increase efforts to raise awareness of available GBV services (including online services).
- Improve access to healthcare and education services by enhancing transportation systems and reducing the costs of specialised medical care, consider establishing social bus/taxi services.
- Support the deployment of mobile health and notarial offices to provide services in remote areas.
- Prioritize addressing the psychological and psychosocial needs of individuals and communities, particularly in rural and remote areas, through allocating increased funding, providing capacity-building to governmental service providers, and increasing the quality of existing services.
- Implement anti-discrimination campaigns and language support programmes in schools to facilitate the social integration of IDP children and minimise barriers to their full participation in education.
- Support local initiatives that foster social cohesion and integration bringing together IDPs and non-displaced community members.

## To the humanitarian community

- Conduct legal analysis and advocate for legislative changes to ensure the inclusion of minority and marginalised groups, including people with minority sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics.
- Provide training and capacity building to service providers, including law enforcement stakeholders and social workers, on working with GBV survivors to ensure services are survivor-centred and provided in line with GBV in Emergencies Minimum Standards
- Integrate GBV prevention activities with Mental Health & Psychosocial Support activities focused on addressing the misuse of alcohol and promoting help-seeking behaviour among men.
- Conduct targeted awareness-raising activities focusing on addressing stigma and social norms that discourage GBV survivors from seeking support.
- Expand legal awareness and legal counselling activities on the newly adopted legislative amendments related to IDP allowances, to ensure affected communities understand the changes and if they belong to the specified vulnerability categories who need to re-apply for the IDP allowance. Provide legal assistance (or refer to relevant partners) when needed to re-apply.
- Provide legal counselling and assistance to individuals who have experienced conflict-related right violations to enable them to realise their legal entitlements to compensation.
- Provide protection case management support for highly vulnerable individuals facing protection risks, addressing gaps in the coverage of the national social protection programme, and ensure case management support is prioritized in areas facing the most acute gaps in access to services.

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- Advocate for increased employment opportunities for IDPs, particularly in light of the recent changes to IDP allowances, including through facilitating retraining programmes and vocational trainings and providing micro-grants to support entrepreneurship initiatives.
  - Expand legal aid services (including on HLP-related matters) to rural areas, addressing the reported physical barriers that residents face in accessing administrative services and documentation outside of the city.

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