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# PIN Protection Monitoring Report

January-March 2025

Eastern and Southern Ukraine

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Contextual updates.....	2
Key Findings .....	3
<b>Research methodology .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Priority needs and access to services .....</b>	<b>5</b>
The situation of older persons and persons with disabilities .....	7
The situation of women .....	8
The situation of children .....	8
<b>Freedom of movement and restrictions on mobility.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Civil status and documents .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Standard of living .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Housing, land and property .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Social services .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Safety and security .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Annexes .....</b>	<b>18</b>

# Introduction

This report aims to describe the findings from the first round of protection monitoring conducted from 1 January to 31 March 2025 in the east of Ukraine in Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv oblasts, as well as in the south in Mykolaiv oblast.

The aim of protection monitoring is to identify trends in the protection situation, determine the risks and threats that directly impact the well-being and safety of the civilian population, highlight the main challenges faced by the affected population, and identify key obstacles for access to critical services in the regions.

The data enables the identification of the most critical protection gaps, taking into account the priorities and urgent needs of the affected population, in order to inform ongoing and new programming, and to contribute to strategic humanitarian planning and decision-making.

The areas and regions covered by the protection monitoring activities remain among the most vulnerable in the context of the humanitarian crisis caused by the full-scale war. Constant shelling, destruction of infrastructure, population displacement and limited access to basic services create serious challenges for the protection of human rights and humanitarian protection<sup>1</sup>.

## Contextual updates

As of the first quarter of 2025, the security situation in the three regions remains difficult. In Kharkiv oblast, despite a certain decrease in the intensity of shelling of the city itself, the overall intensity of hostilities on the border and eastern directions has increased. In this regard, the mandatory evacuation zone was expanded. According to official figures, at the end of March, the number of people killed in the region was 42, and the number of people injured was over 300 since January. The reporting period saw an increase in the number of attacks involving artillery, short-range drones and aerial bombs in Dnipropetrovsk oblast; this puts a significant strain on civilian, medical and social infrastructure. As hostilities moved closer to the administrative boundaries of the region, shelling in frontline communities intensified, making it harder for people to access basic services. In urban centres, barrage munitions were used to hit residential areas and facilities providing medical and humanitarian assistance, including places of accommodation for internally displaced persons. There have also been attacks with ballistic missiles on civilian and administrative facilities, resulting in significant casualties: 85 killed and about 470 wounded. In the southern region, a new threat has been identified - stealthy new types of combat drones, which often attack without warning, increasing the risks for civilians and humanitarian workers. Cases of pre-alarm strikes have resulted in injuries and damage to critical infrastructure. There have also been difficulties in the humanitarian response, with power outages, disruption of logistics routes and reduced time to respond safely limiting response effectiveness. Changes in donor policies, including a reduction in support from key international partners, are an additional challenge, which has already led to a reduction in humanitarian programmes, staff and services.

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<sup>1</sup> **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).** (2025, January). *Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025*

## Key Findings

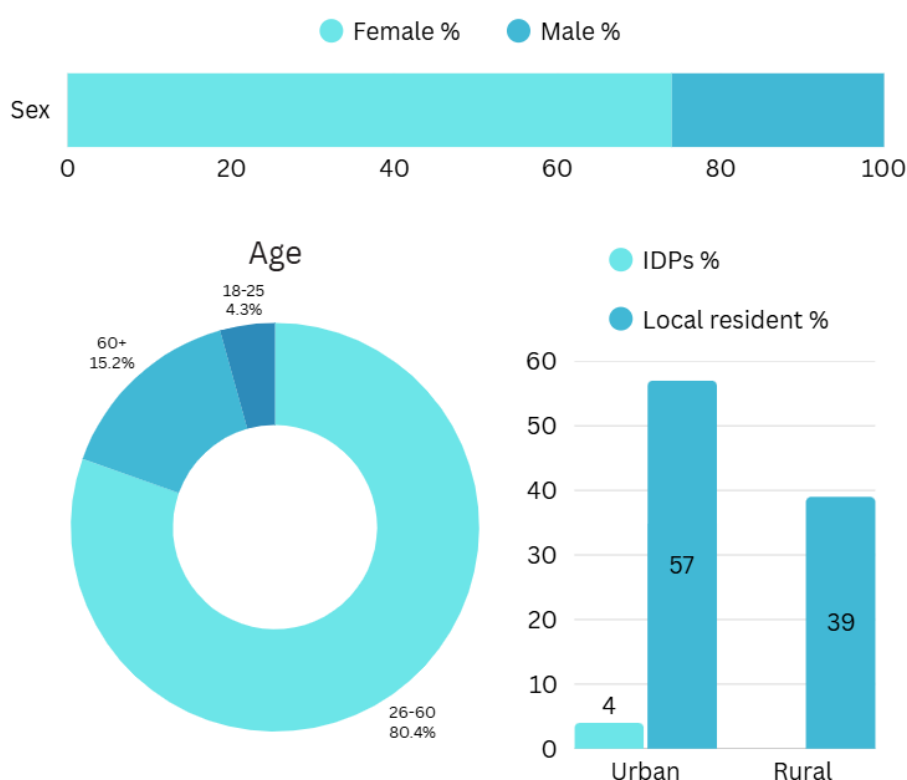
- Many **social and administrative services** remain **hard to access** due to **low awareness** among the population, **a lack of qualified specialists**, **excessive workload on institutions**, and **transportation difficulties**, which is especially relevant for **remote communities**.
- There are growing concerns about **gender-based violence** in the context of the **ongoing war**. Key informants link this trend to **men returning from military service** who may be struggling with **mental health issues** and **trauma**, likely driving **changes in behaviour** with **negative consequences** on gender-based violence.
- The issue of **restricted movement of men of conscription age** is becoming increasingly relevant due to the intensification of **mobilisation measures**, which leads to a **deterioration of men's psycho-emotional state** and directly affects their prospects of finding **formal employment**. The inability to fulfil traditional gender expectations and **increased stress in relation to unemployment and movement restrictions** may result in **heightened risks of GBV**. Furthermore, this increases **pressures on women** to take on **additional responsibilities** in order to contribute to the income of the household in addition to their existing responsibilities.
- **Women**, who are already facing **increased pressures** to contribute to household income due to **mobilisation** or **men staying at home** due to risks of mobilisation, face additional **gender-barriers** in accessing **employment** due to a lack flexible forms of employment, as well as lack of access to **vocational training** and **retraining programs**.
- **The inadequate level** of comprehensive **support for children affected by the hostilities** remains an **urgent problem**. The **lack of** a sufficient number of **safe educational institutions** and **recreational spaces**, as well as limited access to **social interaction** due to the nature of **online learning**, create **barriers** to their **healthy development** and is negatively affecting their **well-being**.
- Among the pressing issues are the **absence or lack of public and social transport**, further complicating **access to services** for many **vulnerable groups** of people. The **high cost of private transportation** also makes it **difficult** for people from **rural areas** to access **urban healthcare facilities** and **administrative institutions**.
- A large number of **private and administrative buildings** have been **damaged** as a result of the **active hostilities**. People are often unable to find appropriate **places to live**, especially in the regions receiving the biggest influx of **IDPs**. **Rehabilitation of infrastructure** and **financial support** for accommodation remain **critical issues**.
- Concerning the **security situation**, the **destruction of infrastructure** due to **shelling** and **attacks on residential areas** remain major problems in all three regions. Another major concern is **the inaccessibility or limited functioning of protective shelters** particularly **educational institutions**.
- One of the urgent needs and problems identified during the monitoring is **inadequate access to water supply**. This concerns the limited access to both **technical and drinking water** due to **repeated shelling** and **damage to critical infrastructure**, as well as **environmental problems** in certain hromadas in Mykolaiv and partially Kharkiv oblasts, including, **pollution of rivers and other bodies of water**.

# Research methodology

Protection monitoring data was collected using a questionnaire developed internally within PIN. Data was gathered through key informant interviews (KIIs) with representatives of the city authorities (52%), non-governmental organisations (26%), health and education professionals (20%) and others (2%). The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions, enabling the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. Data was triangulated by reviewing secondary sources including the results of coordination between various stakeholders involved in the regions assessed.

For the protection monitoring, a total of 46 key informant interviews were conducted between 1 January and 1 March 2025. The majority of interviewees were non-displaced persons (96%), with 4% (2 respondents) being internally displaced persons. Interviews were conducted across three oblasts: 22 in Dnipropetrovsk, 14 in Kharkiv, and 10 in Mykolaiv. Detailed demographic characteristics of the individuals are shown in Figure 1.

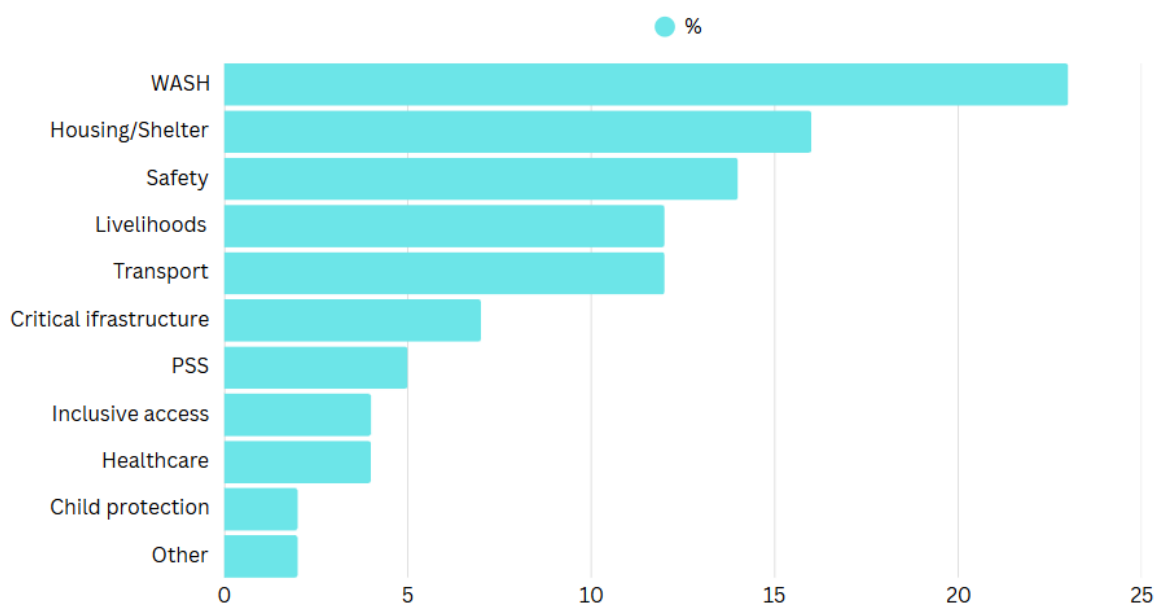
*Fig 1. Demographics of key informants*



## Priority needs and access to services

In Mykolaiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kharkiv oblasts, key informants identified priority needs for their communities across several sectors. Of these, 23% mentioned WASH, 16% shelter, 14% safety and security, 12% livelihoods and 12% transport (Fig. 2). These percentages represent the share of respondents who included each sector among their priority needs.

Fig 2. Priority needs and access to services



In Mykolaiv oblast, the situation is aggravated by the pollution of water bodies and rivers, driving an increased demand for clean water (27%). The water supply situation has been dire for the region since 2022, when the main water pipeline was damaged<sup>2</sup>. It was not until March 2025 that construction began on a new pipeline that will draw water from the Southern Bug river, scheduled to be finished in August 2025. Currently, water is supplied to the region from Lyman and is suitable only for technical purposes.

In Kharkiv oblast, respondents drew additional attention to the need for inclusive access to services for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups (14%). The remaining needs are consistent across all three oblasts.

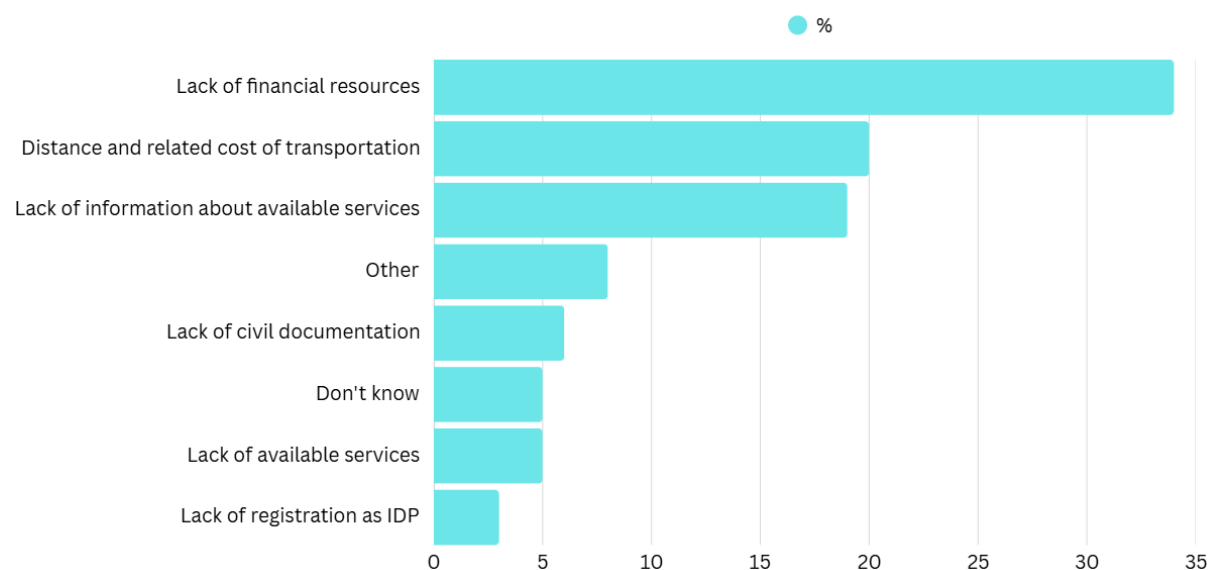
The main barriers to accessing essential services (Fig. 3) for all three regions are financial difficulties (34%), transportation problems (20%), and inadequate information about available services (19%). Regarding transportation problems, the key obstacles are reduced functioning of public transportation driven by a shortage of drivers, particularly due to mobilisation, and vehicles used for transport that has been destroyed, damaged or handed over to the military.

<sup>2</sup> Snizhko, S., Didovets, I., Shevchenko, O., Yatsiuk, M., Hattermann, F. F., & Bronstert, A. (2024). Southern Bug River: Water security and climate changes perspectives for post-war city of Mykolaiv, Ukraine. *Frontiers in Water*, 6, 1447378

As a result, there remains a problem with transport to and from remote areas within the region.

Limited access to information about available social programmes and services remains a challenge, particularly for individuals without internet access or those recently evacuated or relocated. While information sessions are sometimes held in Collective Sites (CSs), those living outside such locations often face significant barriers to receiving timely and accurate information.

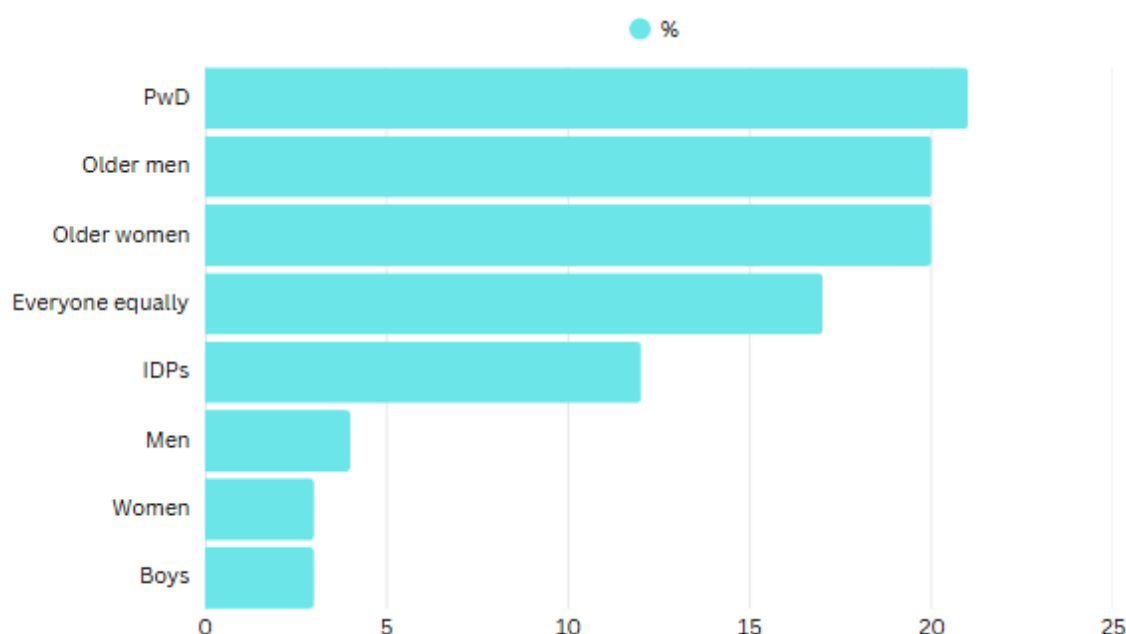
*Fig. 3. Main barriers to accessing essential services*



Key informants report that barriers related to financial and logistical difficulties and inadequate access to information are most common for persons with disabilities (21%, PwD), older people (20%) and internally displaced persons (12%, IDPs) (Fig. 4). Internally displaced persons, in particular, face significant challenges in finding temporary housing and integrating into new hromadas, which makes their situation even more difficult.



Fig. 4. Social groups most affected by barriers



### The situation of older persons and persons with disabilities

Older people and persons with disabilities in all three regions face significant and similar obstacles. According to key informants, the biggest challenge for older people is access to necessary financial resources (24% of responses), 24% lack of family support (24%) and accessing care (15%), which risks to contribute to social isolation and may further exacerbate social, medical and economic vulnerabilities of this group, as they rely solely on social benefits from the state, which in many cases are insufficient to cover even basic needs.

Transportation is critical for this group (mentioned by 14% of KIs), especially in terms of medical and social protection services, which remain difficult to access. In addition, there are problems with the provision of in-kind assistance (food, clothing, hygiene products, medicines all noted by 13% of key informants), and access to short-term accommodation, especially in the event of evacuations. Many older people do not have access to palliative or residential care, which is an important aspect of ensuring their dignity and well-being.

It should be noted that persons with disabilities face similar problems. One of the main challenges is the lack of access to financial resources, reported by 20% of key informants. In addition, 18% reportedly face problems in accessing assistive devices, and 15% cannot obtain the necessary care. These figures may also indicate insufficient awareness of existing programmes implemented by state social protection institutions.

For persons with disabilities, in addition to difficulties accessing transportation (15%), the provision of short-term accommodation (11%) and medical rehabilitation (10%) are also key issues. Issues related to palliative care, social support and assisted living also remain important. These specialised services are limited due to a critical shortage of qualified personnel and facilities, and existing options are often unknown to people.



## The situation of women

According to key informants, women's most pressing needs are employment (43%), securing personal space (14%), overcoming financial constraints (14%), and tackling gender-based violence (9%). It is becoming more common for women to work in traditionally male-dominated industries due to shortage of workers caused by mobilisation measures. Whilst this opens up more opportunities for women, they also experience gendered barriers to employment. These include difficulties combining professional activities with childcare, arising due to limited access to childcare services, further complicated by the specificities of online learning which require school-age children to stay at home, – and given that childcare falls predominantly on female caregivers due to traditional gender norms, exacerbated by the absence of male caregivers due to mobilisation, displacement or death. The combination of these factors creates significant barriers to women exercising their right to full socio-economic and professional self-fulfillment and to personal space.

In addition, several key informants mentioned gender-based violence as an issue in their community gender-based violence, particularly in Mykolaiv oblast. This may be due to a number of factors, including men returning from the frontline with complex physical and psychosocial needs, the effects of prolonged family separation, and problems with readjustment to civilian life, as well as tensions in families where men stay at home to avoid mobilisation. This agrees with an assessment by the DRC (January 2025)<sup>3</sup>, which notes an increase in cases of domestic violence, sexual harassment and psychological pressure. Women report a lack of access to services, distrust of the police and fear of social stigma. Especially in rural areas, survivors are often left without support. Social isolation, increased substance abuse among men, and economic instability exacerbate these risks. These circumstances form a complex, interconnected context that requires special attention from both local authorities and specialised organisations.

## The situation of children

Key challenges for children include, first and foremost, security risks, which result in the displacement of families, including children, as well as the lack of shelters in educational institutions. This, in turn, forces the educational process to switch to a remote mode, which is accompanied by many difficulties: a lack of necessary technical means for online learning, frequent relocation of families, emergency power cuts, etc. In addition, distance learning leads to an almost complete absence of extracurricular activities and leisure time for children, alongside an absence of quality in-person learning and social contact with teachers and peers, which negatively affects their socialisation, emotional state and psychological health.

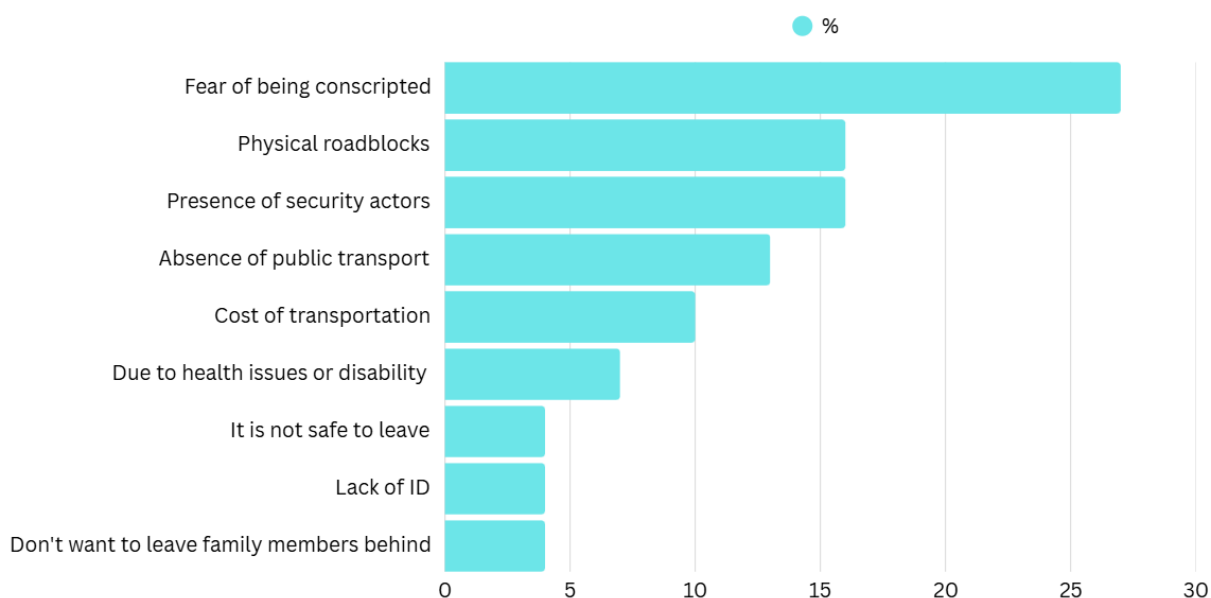
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<sup>3</sup> Danish Refugee Council (DRC). (2025, January). *Rapid GBV Assessment: Mykolaiv and Kherson Oblasts*.

# Freedom of movement and restrictions on mobility

Protection monitoring data indicates that the main obstacles to freedom of movement are economic, physical and security factors. The lack of public transport in many hromadas is one of the biggest problems, as it limits the possibilities of movement, especially for those who may require mobility assistance. The cost of hiring private transport to visit social, administrative and medical institutions is very high. The presence of checkpoints and fears of possible mobilisation are serious barriers to movement (Fig. 5). This mostly concerns men of mobilisation age (25-60 years).

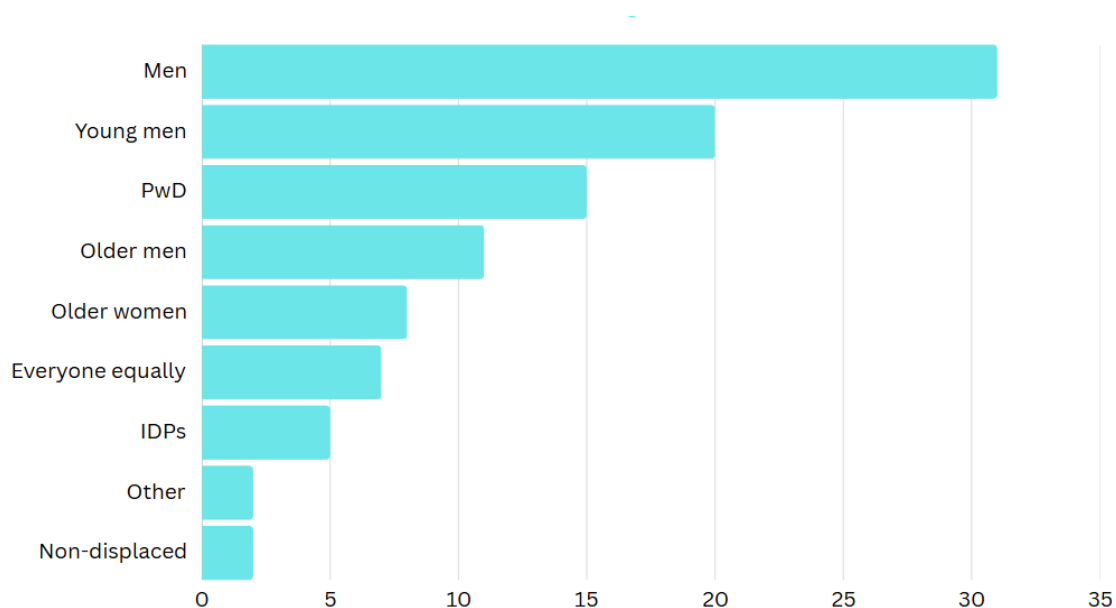
*Fig 5. Obstacles that restrict free movement and mobility*



Key informants noted that fears of mobilisation issues, led many men to avoid traveling, even within their oblast and location. Such a situation constitutes an additional stress within families and, according to several informants, contributed to interpersonal tensions that may heighten risks of gender-based violence. As shown in Figure 6 men and young men were most frequently named as the groups the most impacted.

Persons with disabilities (PwD) and older persons were also widely mentioned, due to reliance on accessible transport and support services.

**Fig 6. Social groups most affected by restrictions of movement**



Poor road conditions, especially in remote areas, also create additional challenges for movement. This applies to all social groups, but especially those who depend on transport to access basic services.

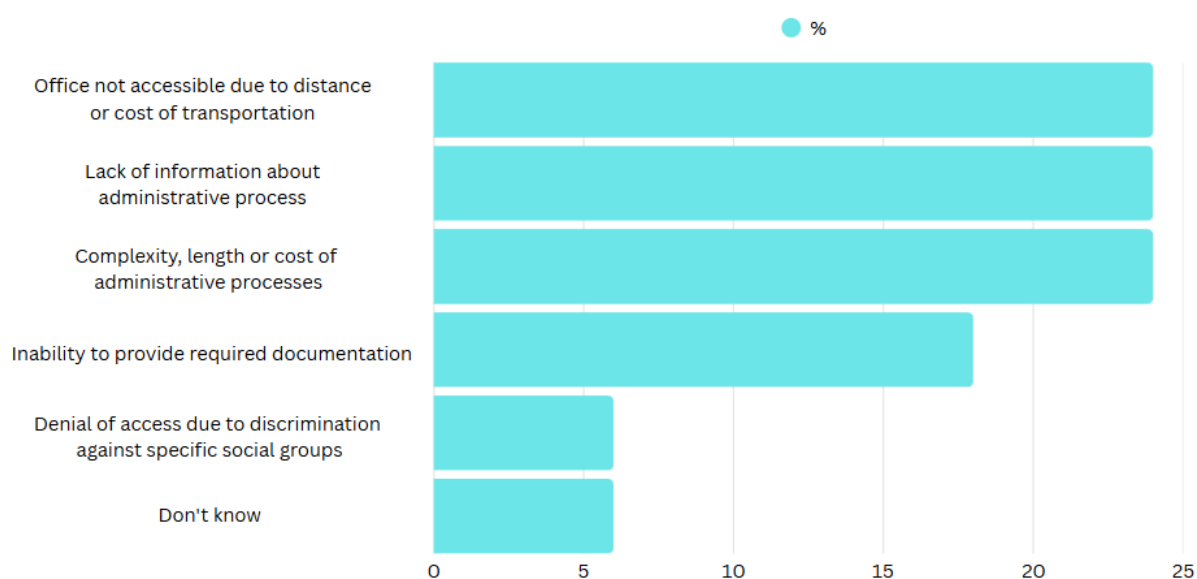
Thus, logistical problems, high costs of individual travel, the security situation, and mobilisation measures are the main factors that limit the freedom of movement for many persons living in the monitored oblasts. This complicates access to social, medical and administrative services, and increases the financial burden on families.

## Civil status and documents

The situation with obtaining and renewing personal documents varies across the regions. Most respondents reported that problems with documents arise rarely (22%) or not at all (35%). Only in isolated cases do people have difficulties obtaining or renewing civil documents, for example passports, especially when they have old versions of documents or, for certain reasons, cannot apply to the relevant authorities, which is typical of frontline areas or territories with limited access to administrative institutions.

The main barriers to obtaining documents are difficulties accessing the necessary transportation, low awareness of available services, and complexity of administrative processes especially for remote rural communities (each reported by 24%, respectively) (Fig. 7). For Mykolaiv oblast, an additional problem is the inaccessibility or closure of document issuance centres due to security concerns, particularly in areas of active combat or in areas with a critical security situation.

*Fig 7. Main barriers to obtaining documents in rural areas*



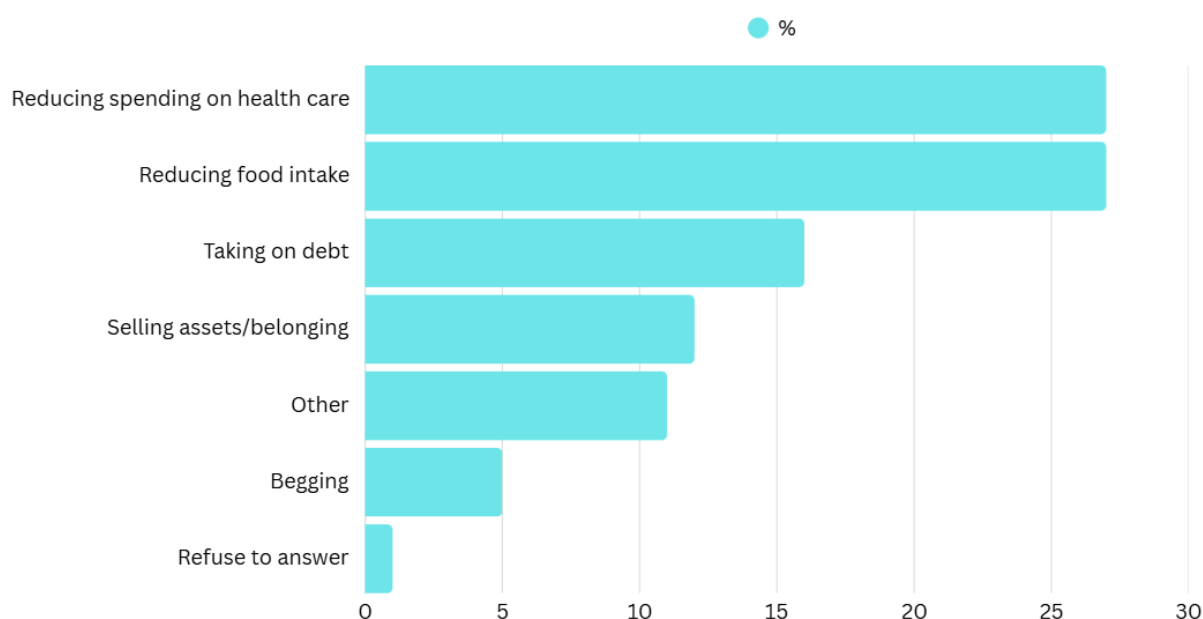
The lack of legal professionals and inadequate equipment in social institutions also significantly complicates access to services. In such cases, people seek alternative options, such as mobile social services, whose capabilities are also limited, or try to obtain documents in other regions. Problems with the lack of necessary documents, such as HLP-related documents for confirming ownership rights, also create additional difficulties. If people cannot renew or obtain documents, this can have serious consequences, including refusal of access to state and humanitarian assistance (80% of responses in Mykolaiv region), inability to receive social benefits and find formal employment.

For those who encounter this problem, the main solutions are to reapply to other institutions or to turn to non-governmental organisations that can provide legal assistance to help navigate the administrative procedure or cover administrative costs.

## Standard of living

Most key informants believe that people in their communities are generally satisfied with their standard of living, with 70% stating that basic needs are met at an average level. Even so, for many this requires considerable effort and sometimes forces them to resort to negative strategies to secure the necessary resources, particularly for vulnerable groups such as older persons or PwD (Fig. 8).

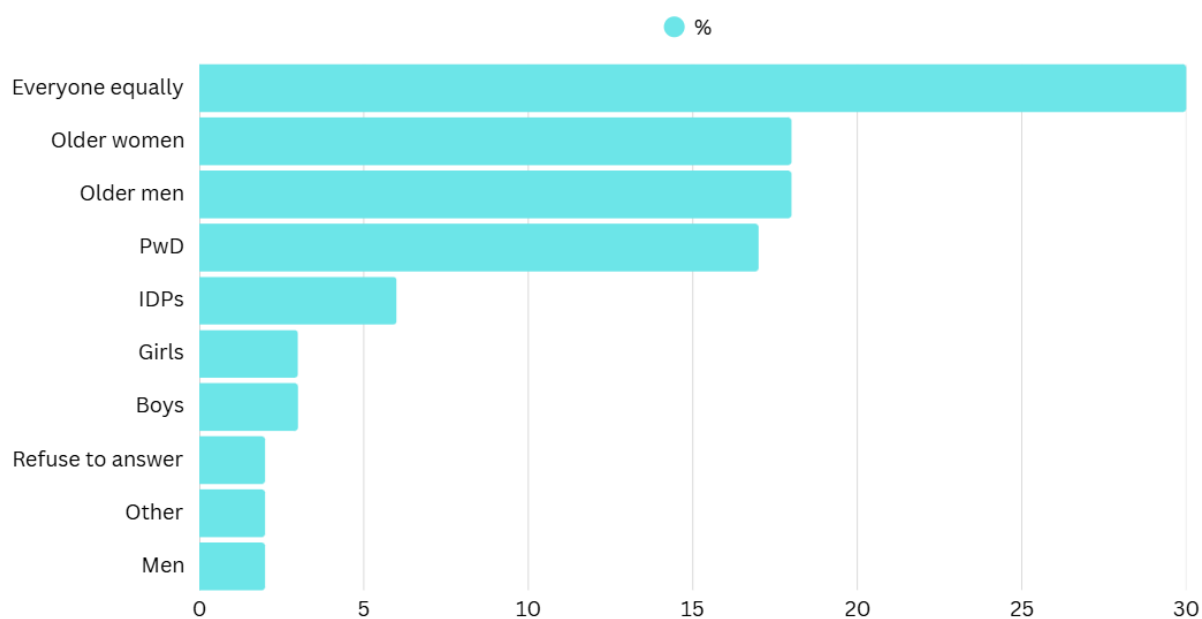
*Fig. 8. Negative coping strategies*



Accordingly, 27% of respondents noted that people in their communities are reducing their spending on medical services and their food intake, and 16% reported that individuals are being forced to take on debt. These figures underscore the high level of financial distress and instability of the economic situation, which severely limits the population's ability to meet even basic needs. Another negative coping strategy is the sale of personal assets or belongings, further indicating that many people do not have sufficient resources to cover their current expenses.

Although these difficulties affect all social groups to a greater or lesser extent, older people (18%) and persons with disabilities (17%) are the most affected according to the respondents (Fig. 9). These groups face particularly severe difficulties due to problems accessing social benefits and health services, as well as physical and social circumstances that affect their ability to find stable sources of income or seek assistance. Older people often have low pensions, forcing them to make significant cuts in essential needs such as food and healthcare, exacerbating even further vulnerabilities linked to their age and needs.

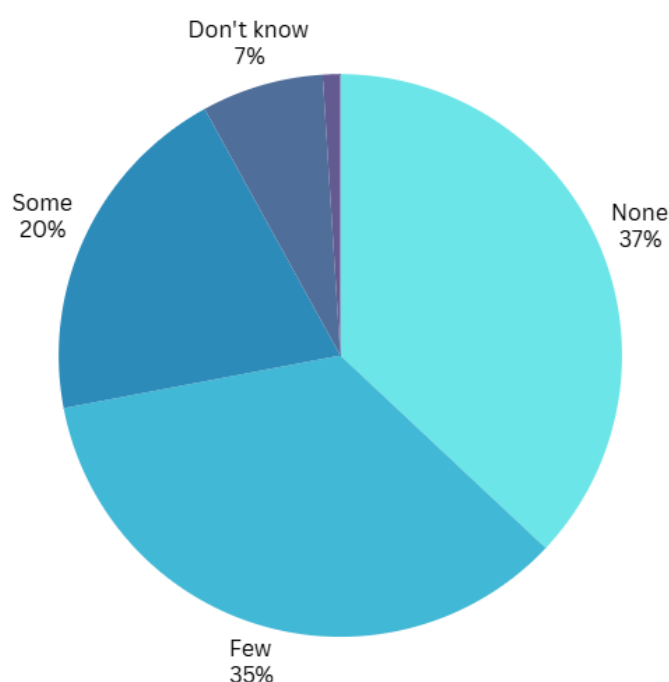
*Fig. 9. Social groups most affected by difficulties related to lack of essential resources*



## Housing, land and property

According to the monitoring results, most key informants reported their communities are living in relatively stable conditions. 37% said that there were no destroyed buildings in their hromadas, and 20% said that such cases were rare (Fig. 10). At the same time, 55% of key informants reported that 'some' or 'a few' people in their communities were living in destroyed or uninhabitable buildings, highlighting that there are persons in the majority of assessed communities in need of support. The most challenging circumstances were reported in Mykolaiv oblast, where 70% of key informants said that “few” people in their hromadas have access to safe housing, indicating a severe situation in this region. At the same time, it is important to note that the situation may vary significantly depending on geographical proximity to the contact line. In communities located further from the combat zone, problems with access to safe housing are less pronounced, indicating the diversity of conditions in different parts of the regions.

*Fig. 10. People living in destroyed or uninhabitable buildings*



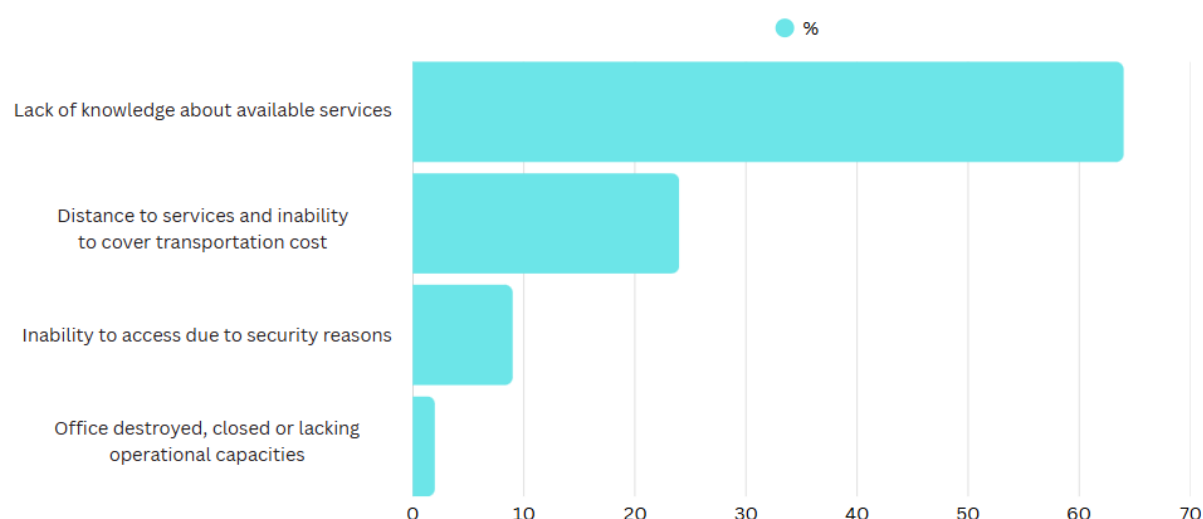
As for receiving financial compensation for damaged or destroyed housing, most respondents know how to obtain such compensation. The highest level of awareness was noted in Mykolaiv oblast (89%), confirming the relevance of the issue for this region. The main challenge when obtaining compensation is the absence or loss of documents confirming ownership of property (54%). The most relevant solutions to these problems are attempts to restore housing at one's own expense or applying to other housing restoration/repair programmes.



## Social services

In the three surveyed regions, it was found that access to social state provided services, such as legal, psychological, medical and humanitarian services, is available but limited by barriers in both rural and urban hromadas. The biggest obstacle limiting the effective use of social services (Fig. 11) is insufficient awareness of the population about available services (64%). This problem is particularly pronounced in Dnipropetrovsk oblast, where residents often lack information about social support options. In addition, in rural areas, where service delivery locations may be remote, access to assistance is hampered by distance or transportation costs.

*Fig. 11. Main barriers to accessing social services*



In Mykolaiv oblast, in addition to insufficient awareness, there is also a more pronounced problem of remoteness from service centres, which makes access to necessary assistance, especially in rural areas, more difficult and unsafe. However, in some hromadas, the availability of mobile social services partially solves the problem, improving the situation for remote settlements.

The situation is similar in Kharkiv oblast, but there are additional security related challenges. Hostilities and instability limit access to social services for certain social groups. In addition, there is a shortage of social service workers, which also negatively affects the overall situation.

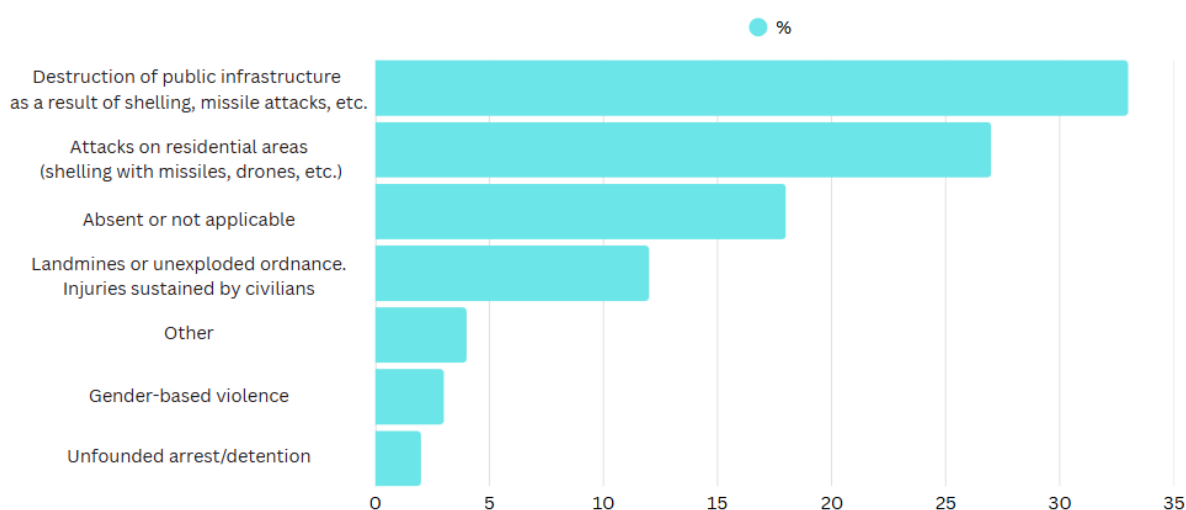
Overall, poor communication about social services in all three regions leads to a decline in living standards, an increase in relocation, and growing isolation, especially among older people.

## Safety and security

Overall, 67% of respondents reported that the general security situation in their hromadas was satisfactory, and in the hromadas of Mykolaiv oblast that it is relatively safe. 15% of the total responses indicated a critical security situation.

The biggest security challenges for the regions are infrastructure damage caused by shelling (33%) and attacks on residential areas (27%) (Fig. 12).

*Fig. 12. Main security issues in the hromada*



In Mykolaiv oblast, the situation is aggravated by the presence of a significant amount of unexploded ordnance, although this is a pressing issue in all three oblasts. According to respondents, the situation in Kharkiv oblast is the most critical: destruction of infrastructure, attacks on residential areas, and threats posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance are key problems people face.

In terms of access to shelters, certain regions, particularly Kharkiv oblast, face significant challenges. 79% of Kharkiv oblast respondents said that they would not be able to quickly reach a shelter in case of danger. This is especially challenging for persons with disabilities and older people, for whom access to such shelters is very difficult. Similar difficulties were also reported by respondents from other regions.

## Recommendations

- Develop **awareness-raising programmes** for the population about **available social services**, as well as for people experiencing difficulties in renewing their **HLP documents**.
- Ensure **humanitarian service provision** incorporates **mobile approaches** to reach individuals facing **transportation challenges**, particularly in **remote and rural communities**.
- Enhance **psychosocial support programmes** aimed at reducing **stress and emotional tension** related to **war, economic hardship** and other challenges, with a particular focus on supporting **families, ex-soldiers, and children** affected by the **war**, in order to prevent the development of **mental health disorders** (e.g. **PTSD, depression, anxiety**), and **social tensions** within communities.
- Due to the incidence of **GBV**, it is advisable to ensure that **response services** are **available and accessible to survivors**, and that survivors are aware of how to access them. **Coordination** with the **Protection Cluster** and relevant **working groups** is recommended.
- Focus on improving **access to transport** for the most **vulnerable social groups**, including **persons with disabilities** and **older persons**. This may include **financial support** to cover the **costs of transport** to the nearest **healthcare, administrative and social services**.
- Expand the infrastructure for **supporting children** by opening and supporting existing **safe educational and recreational spaces** and introduce **social adaptation** and **psychological support programmes** for children, especially those who have been **displaced** because of the **war**.
- Conditions for **flexible employment for women** should be created, in particular by supporting **part-time employment** and **professional retraining**, in addition to providing **capacity building** and **support for employers** to improve **accessibility** and **inclusion** at work (e.g. providing **child-care facilities, flexible working hours**). Access to **vocational training** programmes should be ensured to promote their **economic independence**.
- Ensure **cooperation with local authorities** and **humanitarian organisations** to establish an increased number of **accessible protective shelters**.
- Support initiatives aimed at **rehabilitating infrastructure**, particularly in **Mykolaiv oblast**, where significant **difficulties** in **accessing water supplies** and **safe housing** persist. Ensure consultations on mechanisms for obtaining **financial compensation** for **damaged housing** for persons affected by the destruction who are unable to obtain compensation through **state programmes**.

# Annexes

## List of acronyms

Acronym	Full name
<b>GBV</b>	Gender based violence
<b>BHA</b>	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>DRC</b>	Danish Refugee Council
<b>CSs</b>	Collective Sites
<b>ASC</b>	Administrative Service Centre
<b>PTSD</b>	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

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