



THE STATE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN THE DE-OCCUPIED TERRITORY OF UKRAINE

ANALYTICAL REPORT

ISBN 978-617-8189-14-3

Analytical Report on the Results of a Public Opinion Survey of Ukrainian Citizens Residing in the Temporarily Occupied Territories. O. Gladunov and N. Bohdanets — Kyiv : Vistka LTD, 2023. — 56 p.

This report presents the results of a public opinion survey conducted among residents of the liberated territory of Ukraine. The data presented in the report is also based on in-depth interviews and desktop research using open sources of information, including resort to 'artificial intelligence' technology (AI). The authors' opinions expressed in this report are their own and may not coincide with the official position of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Ukraine. The report may be useful for government officials and non-governmental organizations involved in providing assistance for the reintegration of Ukraine's liberated and temporarily occupied territories.

© Representation of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Ukraine, 2023



CONTENTS

Introduction: relevance and context	5
Acknowledgments.....	6
Abbreviations.....	7
Summary.....	8
1. Survey methodology	9
1.1 Survey goal and methods	9
1.2 General sample assessment	9
1.3 Desk research.....	11
1.4 Qualitative research: in-depth interviews	12
1.5 Quantitative research	13
2. Survey results	16
2.1 Primary cause: occupation. eyewitness testimonies	16
2.1.1 Civilian population in the zone of armed conflict	16
2.1.2 Occupiers' methods of controlling the local population	19
2.1.3 Resistance to occupiers, both spontaneous and organized.....	21
2.1.4 Instances of cooperation between local residents and the occupiers. Respondents' attitudes to collaboration.....	22
2.2 The situation in the liberated settlements	25
2.2.1 Liberation and the ensuing weeks	25
2.2.2 Problems facing communities in liberated settlements.....	28
2.2.3 Security situation and infrastructure damage	29
2.2.4 Basic needs and humanitarian problems.....	33
2.2.5 Problems related to obtaining social, administrative, and medical services....	35
2.2.6 Self-assessment of financial status of residents of liberated territories.....	37
2.2.7 Problems related to children's upbringing and care	39
2.2.9 Public safety in liberated cities and villages.....	41

2.2.10 Psychological help to residents of liberated territories.....	42
2.2.11 Environmental problems and the consequences of the occupiers' environmental terrorism	43
2.2.12 Issues related to gender discrimination	46
2.2.13 Assessment of the actions of local authorities, charitable organizations, and volunteers	46
2.3 Public opinion in the liberated territories.....	47
2.3.1 People's moods and emotional states several months after the liberation.....	47
2.3.2 Public opinion regarding current socio-political issues	47
2.3.3 Analysis of information impact on residents of liberated territories.....	50
3. Conclusions and recommendations	52

INTRODUCTION: RELEVANCE AND CONTEXT

At the climax of the Russian Federation's aggressive invasion of Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, the aggressor army occupied over 125,000 square kilometers, constituting approximately 20 percent of Ukrainian territory. As noted by the Ukrainian Forbes, since 2014, the Russian army has seized Ukrainian territory exceeding the combined territories of Hungary and Bulgaria.¹ As a result of the Ukrainian Armed Forces' counteroffensive in 2022, however, more than 40,000 square kilometers were liberated.² In 2023, according to information from the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, 270 square kilometers were liberated.³ Official information from the Ministry of Reintegration states that since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, 687 settlements in 87 territorial communities have been liberated. Currently, 2,804 settlements in 144 territorial communities, captured after February 24, 2022, remain under occupation.⁴ Thus, as of September 2023, about 80 percent of Ukraine's settlements that had been occupied since the beginning of 2014 remain unliberated. Based on open-source intelligence (OSINT⁵) data, the authors of this study estimate the number of residents in the liberated territories to be between 0.7 and 0.9 million people.

The duration of the occupation of Ukrainian settlements varies significantly by region, ranging from a few days in the Zhytomyr region to several weeks in the Kyiv region and up to seven months or more in the Kherson and Zaporizhia regions. Depending on the duration of occupation, residents' personal and collective experiences differ. However, both the varying intensity of military actions and the occupying regime's diverse methods of coercion, oppression, and propaganda have inevitably affected these people's daily lives, physical and mental health, and attitudes.

The occupation has caused various mental health problems in the social, economic, political and ecological spheres of lives of people in the liberated territories. The ongoing military actions near the liberated settlements and the overall war-related situation in Ukraine significantly complicate solutions to these issues. Our research was aimed primarily at identifying the specific problems faced by people living in the liberated settlements and assessing the effectiveness of efforts to address these challenges. We also kept in mind that experiences of fully reintegrating our citizens into social life after liberation from occupation could be utilized in the future as our state's sovereignty is gradually restored over the whole of Ukrainian territory, including cities, towns, and villages.

1 "Russia has occupied about 20% of Ukraine's territory." Forbes.

Available at: <https://www.unian.ua/war/rosiya-okupuvala-mayzhe-chvert-ukrajini-blizko-20-teritoriji-novini-vtorgnennya-rosiji-v-ukrajinu-11839503.html>

2 Ukraine has liberated 40 percent of the territories occupied after February 24. The Armed Forces of Ukraine's counteroffensive in numbers.

Available at: <https://forbes.ua/war-in-ukraine/ukraina-zvilnila-40-okupovanih-pislya-24-lyutogo-teritoriy-kontrnastup-zsu-v-tsifrah-14112022-9743>

3 Counteroffensive of the Armed Forces of Ukraine: the Ministry of Defense reported how much territory has already been liberated.

Available at: <https://tsn.ua/ato/kontrnastup-zsu-u-minoboroni-povidomili-skilki-teritoriy-vzhe-zvilneno-2406883.html>

4 School of Political Analysis at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/SPANaUKMA/posts/pfbid0DrUWgYWHdWwBesvWasvQbRadMTLWQDokHmpUyiJGLur7dHWNzHkSdAcpmcR B1Swl>

5 Open source intelligence, MilitaryLand.

Available at: <https://militaryland.net/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude for support and participation in the research to:

Volodymyr Paniotto, PhD, President of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, for granting permission to use certain elements of the KIIS methodologies in this research;

Oksana Chernenko, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor of the Industrial Marketing Department at Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, for her analysis of quantitative statistical data using IBM SPSS software;

Oleh Torkunov, Deputy Head of the Kyiv Regional State Administration (2019–2023);

Violetta Tsarkova, Head of the Department of Culture, Youth, and Sports of the Kherson Regional State Administration;

Ihor Meshchan, Director of the Department of Social Protection of the Kyiv Regional State Administration;

Anastasia Baklan, Program Manager at the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE);

Alla Romanovska, intern at the NGO Rivne Regional Organization of the Ukrainian Marketing Association, for helping to create the registry of liberated settlements in Ukraine.

Interviewers participating in the qualitative research:

Olha Movchan, journalist, scriptwriter, director and producer of films, including some about the resistance movement in occupied territories.

Nataliia Tkachenko, psychologist.

Organizers of the quantitative research in the regions:

Mykola Homaniuk, PhD, Associate Professor at Kherson State University, Head of the Kherson branch of the Sociological Association of Ukraine;

Oleh Sinayuk, Director of LLC New Image Marketing Group;

Anna Verbytska, PhD in Public Administration, Head of the Department of Marketing, PR Technologies, and Logistics at the National University Chernihiv Polytechnic;

Interviewers for the quantitative research:

Oleksii Soloviov, Kherson;

Valentyna Moskalenko, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor at the Department of Marketing, PR Technologies, and Logistics at the National University Chernihiv Polytechnic;

Larisa Babachenko, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor at the Department of Marketing, PR Technologies, and Logistics at the National University Chernihiv Polytechnic;

Iryna Lysenko, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor at the Department of Marketing, PR Technologies, and Logistics at the National University Chernihiv Polytechnic.

Thanks go also to the staff members of institutions relocated from Donetsk region, whose names are not disclosed for security reasons, at their request.

ABBREVIATIONS

FSB	– Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation
IBM SPSS	– Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, a software package used for the analysis of statistical data
KIIS	– Kyiv International Institute of Sociology
LLC	– limited liability company
NGO	– Non-governmental organization
OCU	– Orthodox Church of Ukraine
OSINT	– Open source intelligence
PDNA	– Post disaster needs assessment
PTSD	– Post-traumatic stress disorder
OHCHR	– Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SSU	– Security Service of Ukraine
TOT	– temporarily occupied territories
UNICEF	– United Nations Children’s Fund
UOC MP	– Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate
VPN	– Virtual private network

SUMMARY

The goal of this research, initiated by the Representation of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Ukraine, is to explore the needs and challenges faced by the population in the liberated territories, and to develop recommendations on how to address problems and improve the relevant information policies. To achieve this, the following methods were employed:

- From May until August 2023 desk research and analysis of statistical information and analytical materials were conducted.
- In-depth interviews were conducted in June and July 2023 involving 75 respondents, including experts, journalists, representatives of NGOs, and residents of the liberated territories.
- Structured face-to-face interviews were carried out within the framework of a survey with 1,085 individuals aged 18 or above in cities and villages liberated from occupation. This survey took place in the Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson, and Mykolaiv regions, encompassing 105 settlements. The quantitative research phase lasted from August 1 to August 28, 2023. The statistical sampling error does not exceed 3.1% with a 95% confidence level, excluding design effects.

The analysis of the research results was conducted focusing on the division of Ukraine into macro-regions: Central, Southern, and Eastern. The occupied territories exhibit significant differences based on certain indicators, one of which is the duration of temporary occupation.

The most significant issue for residents of the liberated territories – reported by 73 percent of respondents in the three macro-regions – is the destruction of housing. It is noteworthy that for residents of the Southern macro-region, especially in Kherson city and Kherson region, the most acute problem is shelling and missile attacks, indicated by 85 percent of respondents.

The next most significant issues include landmines (64 percent of respondents) and employment problems (63 percent). Issues related to the destruction of social, administrative, and economic infrastructure were mentioned by 62 percent of respondents. Food and clothing shortages were reported by 3 to 8 percent of respondents, depending on the region. The problem of drinking water is most acute in the southern part of the country (26 percent of respondents), probably associated with the environmental disaster caused by the destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Station. This terrorist act perpetrated by the occupiers has led to an ecological catastrophe that could turn the south of Ukraine into a desert in the coming years.

The research results suggest that a significant number of residents of the liberated territories remain optimistic and understanding regarding the challenges of the war. However, there is some disappointment with the poor performance of local authorities.

The findings also indicate some social tensions in the reclaimed territories, with conflicts arising between individuals accused of collaboration and those who staunchly continued to support Ukraine. There are also conflicts related to the unfair distribution of humanitarian aid.

Qualitative research indicated a deepening of Ukrainian national identity under occupation, while quantitative research demonstrated that a significant percentage of the population still buys into Russian propaganda narratives.

While respondents in face-to-face interviews expressed a strong need for psychological assistance, quantitative surveys confirm that only minority seeks psychological help. This may indicate significant social stigma associated with seeking psychological assistance.

1. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

1.1 SURVEY GOAL AND METHODS

The survey was conducted at the initiative of the Representation of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Ukraine. The goal of the study is a quantitative and qualitative analysis of public opinion among Ukrainian citizens residing in territories liberated from Russian occupation. The objectives include determining the views, emotional state and behavioral patterns of the population in such territories, and identifying their main problems and needs.

Based on the research results, recommendations were developed for public communication and information policies aimed at temporarily occupied and liberated territories in 2022–2023.

The research covered residents of territories that had been temporarily occupied but were liberated by the time of the study; experts, journalists, employees of executive authorities and NGOs, professional psychologists, and journalists working in the liberated territories; and informational materials covering events related to the liberated territory in social media and on information-analytical websites and portals.

To achieve the research goal, the following methods were used:

- (i) Desk research, analysis of statistical information, and analytical materials:

In May–June 2023, monitoring of online posts related to the liberated territories was conducted. Data collection and systematization were performed via the YouScan platform, an AI-based social media analytics platform. In total, 127,238 posts and materials in online media and social media were analyzed, published from June 14, 2022, to June 14, 2023, containing mentions of liberated / liberated territories. Additionally, from May to August 2023, a database of analytical materials on the research topic was created for the purpose of information synthesis.

- (ii) Qualitative research: in-depth interviews with citizens residing in liberated territories, experts, volunteers, representatives of NGOs, and public organizations:

In June–July 2023, 75 respondents aged 18 or above were interviewed. The results of the qualitative research are included in this report and were also used to develop the questionnaire for the quantitative study.

- (iii) Quantitative research in the form of structured face-to-face interviews (survey):

The sample included 1,085 individuals aged 18 or above in cities and villages liberated from occupation in the Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson, and Mykolaiv regions. The field phase of research lasted from August 1 to August 28, 2023.

1.2 GENERAL SAMPLE ASSESSMENT

Official statistical information on the general population – the actual number of residents in the liberated settlements – is currently unavailable. To estimate the population in the liberated territories, a registry of liberated settlements in Ukraine was created within the framework of the study, based on OSINT⁶ data and other open source information. According to the results obtained, as of June 29, 2023, 779 settlements had been liberated. This information differs by 11.8 percent from official statistical data as of September 23, 2023,⁷ which can be explained by discrepancies in information from Ukrainian official sources and OSINT sources in the context of the rapidly changing situation during the ongoing hostilities.

⁶ Map of hostilities. Updating.
Available at: <https://texty.org.ua/projects/106137/karta-bojovyh-dij-onovlyuyetsya/>

⁷ School of Political Analysis at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.
Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/SPANaUKMA/posts/pfbid0DrUWgYWHDWwBesvWasvnQbRadMTLWQDokHmpUyiJGLur7dHWNzHkSdAcpmcR B1Swl>

The structure of the general population was assessed using the KIIS methodology for dividing Ukraine into macro-regions⁸: Western: Volyn, Rivne, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Zakarpattia, Khmelnytskyi, Chernivtsi regions; Central: Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Sumy, Chernihiv, Poltava, Kirovohrad, Cherkasy, Kyiv regions, and Kyiv city; Southern: Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Odesa regions; and Eastern: Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkiv regions. The estimated populations in the liberated settlements are presented in Table 1. The populations of cities and villages are specified according to statistical information⁹ and data available as of January 1, 2022.

Table 1 Population size and structure of the territories liberated in 2022–2023, as of January 1, 2022

Region	Macro-region	Total, according to the State Statistics Service data, 01.01.2022	Population size of liberated settlements (as of 01.01.2022)			Share of the population in liberated settlements in total population of liberated territories
			Total	City	Suburbs	
Zhytomyr	Central	1179032	2621	0	2621	
Sumy		1035772	103805	29425	74380	
Chernihiv		959315	176890	120977	55913	
Kyiv		1795079	217680	74389	143291	
Total, Central macro-region		4969198	500996	224791	276205	33,26%
Donetsk	Eastern	4059372	47818	24570	23248	
Luhansk		2102921	284	0	284	
Kharkiv		2598961	413943	125225	288718	
Total, Eastern macro-region		8761254	462045	149795	312250	30,68%
Zaporizhzhia	Southern	1652489	1018	0	1018	
Mykolaiv		1091821	109933	39664	70269	
Kherson			432107	291548	140559	
Total, Southern macro-region		3745908	543058	331212	211846	36,06%
In total		17476360	1506099	705798	800301	100,00%

According to various estimates, after liberation, the population of these territories is believed to be no more than 30–50 percent of the pre-February 24, 2022 figures. For instance, the head of the Kherson Regional Council, Oleksandr Samoilenko, believes that before the full-scale invasion in the region, there were 1,080,000 people. Currently, the exact number is unknown, but it does not exceed 300–350,000, according to the head of the regional council.¹⁰ According to information from the Office of the President of Ukraine,¹¹ over 2.262 million people left the regions that were partly occupied, temporarily, and about 1.057 million people returned (Figure 1). Thus, we estimate the population residing in the liberated territories to be between 0.7 and 0.9 million people.

⁸ Available at: <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1253&page=1>

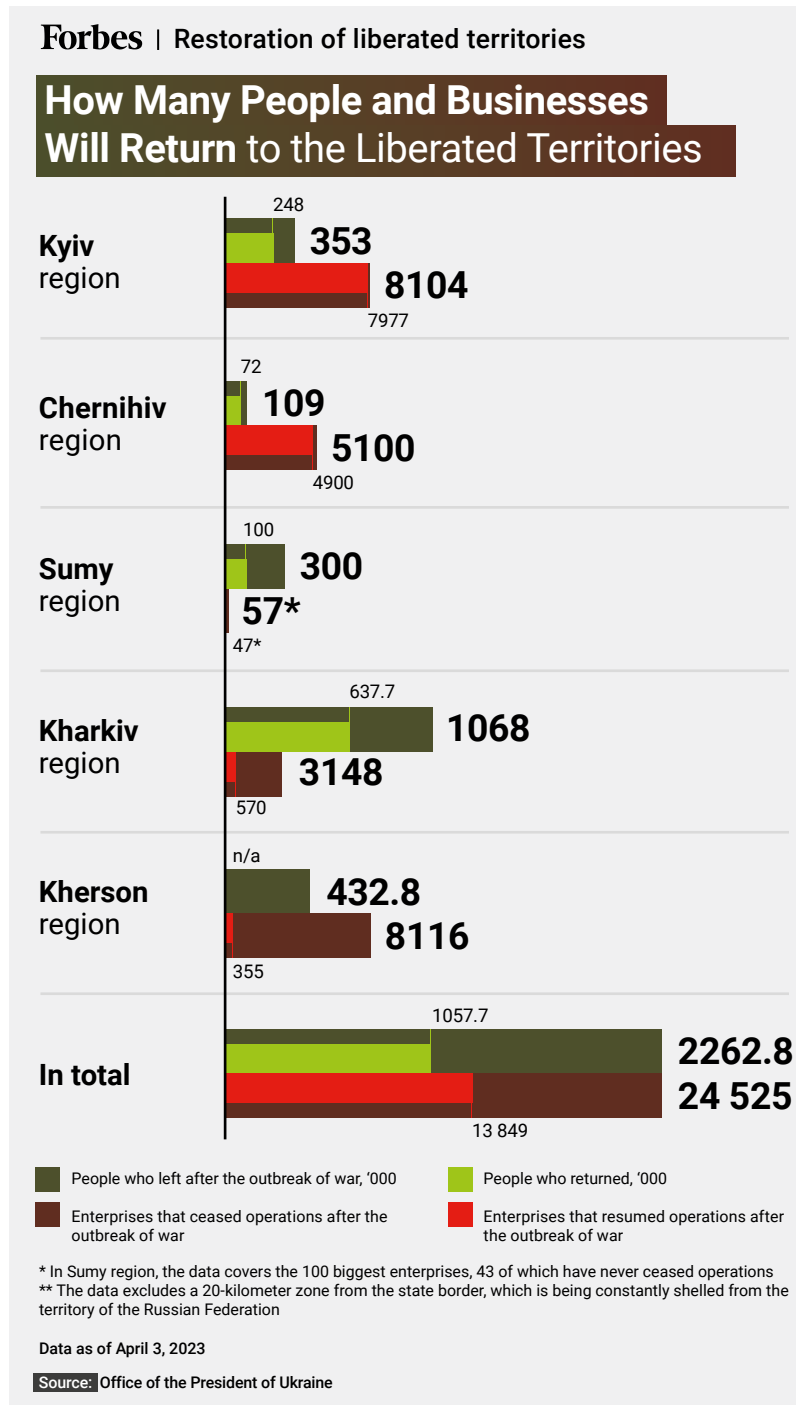
⁹ Population of Ukraine as of January 1, 2021. Available at: https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2021/zb/05/zb_chuselnist%202021.pdf

¹⁰ Many Perished and Departed: What Will Happen to the Population of Southern Ukraine after the War. Available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/novyny-pryzovyya-viyna-katastrofa-hes-khersonshchyna-killist-naselennya-zmenshuyetsya-/32496875.html>

¹¹ How Many People and Businesses Have Returned to the Liberated Territories: Infographics by Regions.

Available at: <https://forbes.ua/news/skilki-lyudey-ta-biznesu-povernulisya-na-deokupovani-teritorii-infografika-po-oblastyakh-04042023-12817>

Figure 1 Number of people who left during occupation and returned to the liberated regions



1.3 DESK RESEARCH

From May to August 2023, the project team analyzed over 270 articles and other analytical materials. The information was used to provide a comprehensive overview of the topics covered in all sections of this analytical report.

1.4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The qualitative research was conducted in the form of in-depth interviews. The interview guidelines were developed based on the hypotheses of the research authors, formed after studying analytical materials on the topic and consulting with experts. The interviewers were experienced professionals in sociology, marketing, psychology, and journalism, with practical interviewing experience.

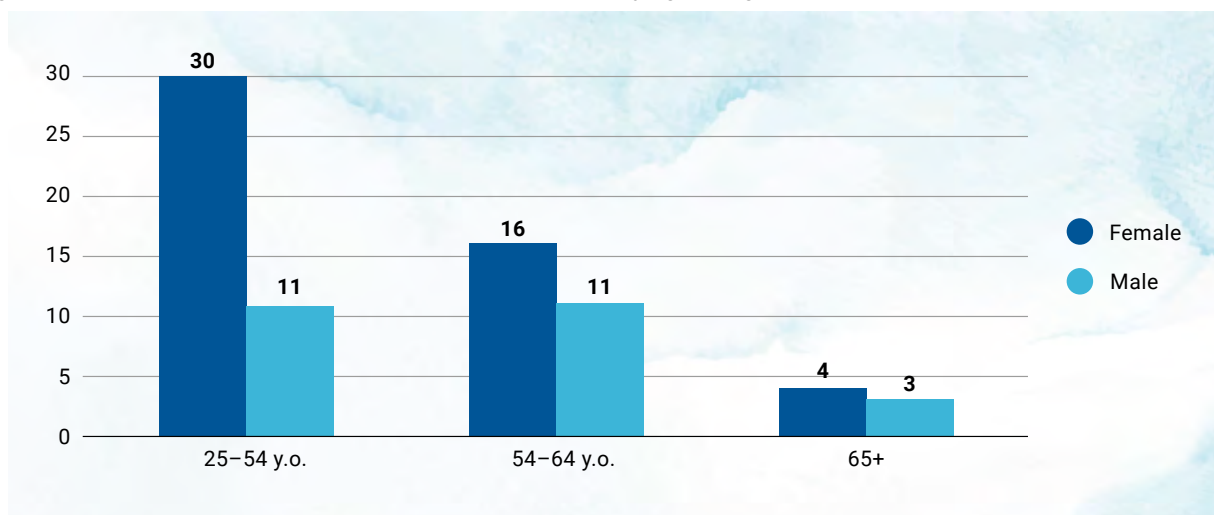
The field stage of qualitative research took place in June–July 2023. 75 respondents were interviewed, recruited in accordance with the “snowball” technique. The distribution of respondents by occupation and geographical location is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Distribution of in-depth interview respondents by occupation and geographical location

Nº	Region	Macro-region	Civil servants, local authority officials	Experts: scholars, journalists, civil activists, volunteers	Residents of liberated territories	In total
1	Zhytomyr	Central	0	0	1	1
2	Sumy		1	0	3	4
3	Chernihiv		1	1	4	6
4	Kyiv		5	1	6	12
5	Donetsk	Eastern	0	1	6	7
6	Kharkiv		2	3	11	16
7	Mykolaiv	Southern	0	1	4	5
8	Zaporizhzhia		0	0	2	2
9	Odesa		0	1	0	1
10	Kherson		5	5	15	21
	In total		10	13	52	75

The distribution of respondents for in-depth interviews by age and gender is shown in Figure 2. In the 25–54 age group, the proportion of women significantly exceeds that of men, reflecting a general distortion in the structure of the population caused by the war. In the age groups 55–64 and 65+, the age structure of respondents corresponds to statistical data as of January 1, 2022.

Figure 2 Distribution of respondents for in-depth interviews by age and gender



1.5 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The quantitative research was conducted in the form of structured face-to-face interviews (surveys), with a sample size of 1,085 individuals aged 18 or above in cities and villages liberated from occupation in the Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson, and Mykolaiv regions, covering a total of 105 settlements.

The field phase of the quantitative research took place from August 1 to August 28, 2023. Different survey methods were applied to different regions in response to significant difficulties in organizing the field phase in areas constantly being shelled by enemy artillery or experiencing missile and bomb attacks.

In Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Kherson regions, interviews were conducted partly in person, with interviewer teams traveling to the liberated settlements, and partly by phone. In Kherson and parts of Kherson region, the survey was conducted using the research panel of the company “New Image Marketing Group.” In Sumy and Mykolaiv regions, the survey was conducted by phone.

In preparation for the field phase, the following tools were developed:

- interview questionnaire;
- interviewer instructions;
- online forms for uploading answers to survey questions for interviewers working in Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Kherson regions, and accounts on the platform <https://survey.lemur.ua> for interviewers working in Kharkiv region and for surveying respondents in Kherson using a panel study approach.

All respondents answered the same questions of the quantitative research questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed using the results of the qualitative research to address the most common issues faced by residents of the liberated territories. To compare the survey results based on the answers of people from liberated territories with the opinions of residents of Ukraine as a whole, three questions in the questionnaire (specifically, questions 12, 17, and 18) were formulated to closely resemble the questions used by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in their 2022 survey. Approval was obtained from the leadership of the KIIS for this purpose.

Field phase supervisors were informed about the demographic structure of the population as of January 1, 2022, and the proportion of residents of the liberated settlements in the macro-region’s overall population (Table 3). Because of the difficulties involved in conducting the survey during wartime, however, this information was advisory in nature.

Table 3. Analysis of the general population structure and recommendations for planning the sample population of the quantitative study

Region	Macro-region	Population of liberated territories by macro-regions			Recommendations on the sample structure in liberated territories by macro-regions		
		Total	Cities	Suburbs	Total	Cities	Suburbs
Zhytomyr	Central	500996	224791	276205	333	149	183
Sumy						45%	55%
Chernihiv							
Kyiv							
Donetsk	Eastern	462045	149795	312250	307	99	207
Luhansk						32%	68%
Kharkiv							

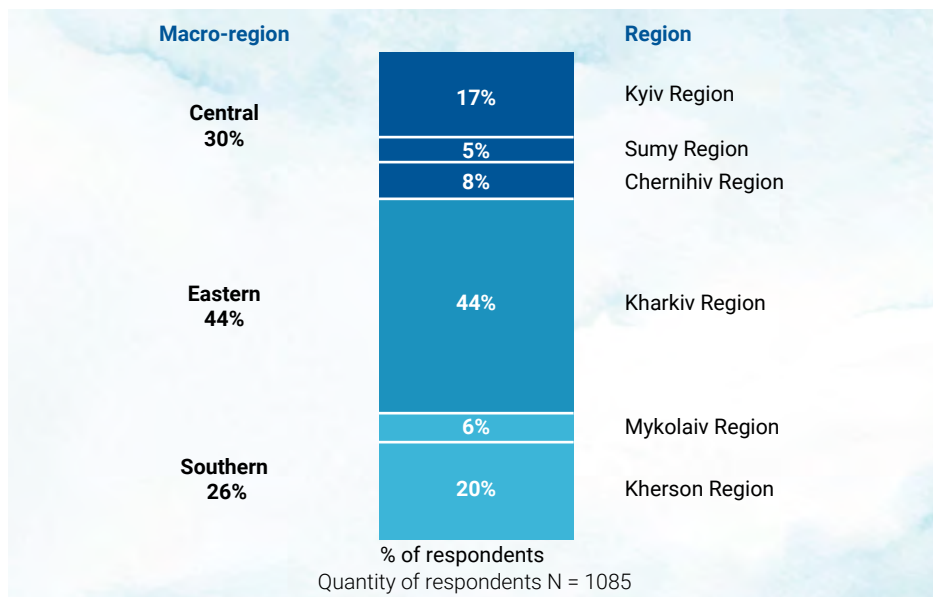
Region	Macro-region	Population of liberated territories by macro-regions			Recommendations on the sample structure in liberated territories by macro-regions		
		Total	Cities	Suburbs	Total	Cities	Suburbs
Zaporizhzhia	Southern	543058	331212	211846	361	220	141
Mykolaiv						61%	39%
Kherson							
In total		1506099	705798	800301	1000	470	533

The selection of respondents for the quantitative research was random. The geographical distribution is provided in Table 4 and illustrated in Figure 3.

Table 4. Structure of respondents in the quantitative study by respondents' place of residence

Macro-regions and regions	Number	Percentage
Central	327	30%
Kyiv Region	189	17%
Sumy Region	56	5%
Chernihiv Region	82	8%
Eastern	480	44%
Kharkiv Region	480	44%
Southern	278	26%
Mykolaiv Region	59	6%
Kherson Region	115	20%
Total	1085	100%

Figure 3 Sample structure by macro-regions and regions



The demographic structure of the sample population is as follows: 44 percent of respondents are male, 56 percent are female. In terms of age, 17 percent of respondents are 18–24 years of age, 56 percent are 25–54 years of age, and 27 percent are 55 years or older. Regarding residence, 47 percent of respondents

live in cities, and 53 percent live in villages. Figures 4–6 show the demographic structure of the sample population by macro-regions. The demographic structure of the sample population in the Southern macro-region differs somewhat. This is explained primarily by the fact that over 60 percent of its residents live in Kherson, a major city and the only regional center in Ukraine that was occupied after the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022. In other macro-regions, the number of village residents exceeds the number of urban residents in the liberated territories.

Figure 4 Sample structure by gender

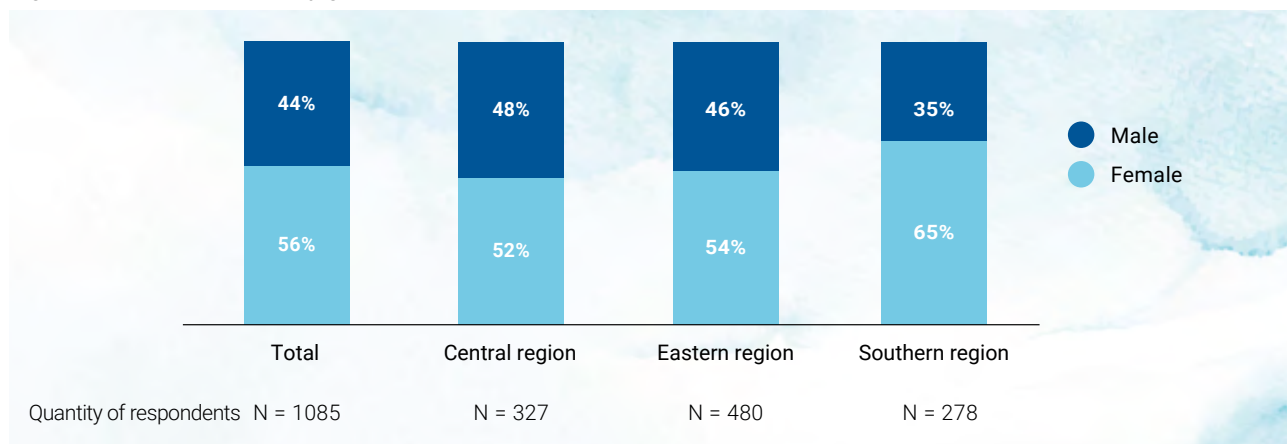


Figure 5 Sample structure by age

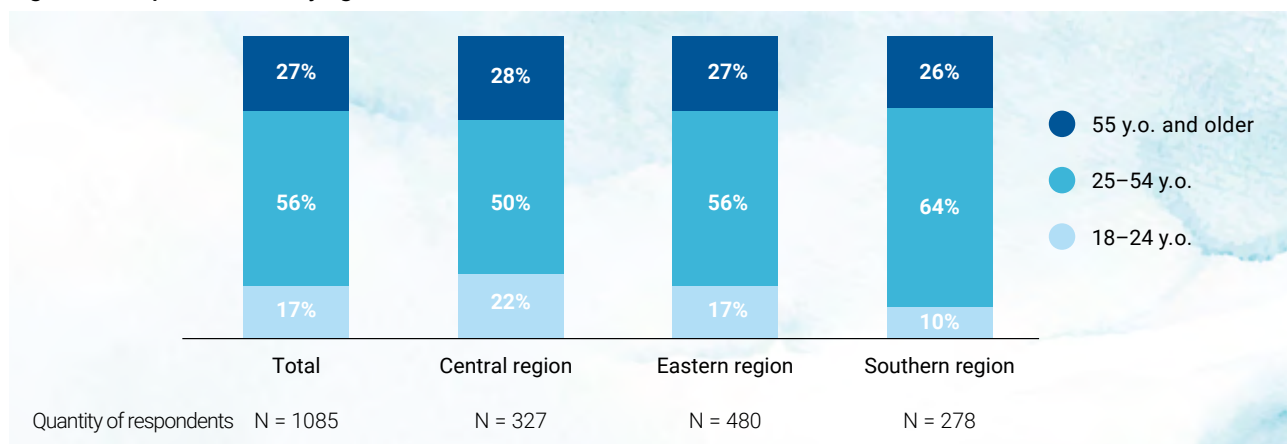
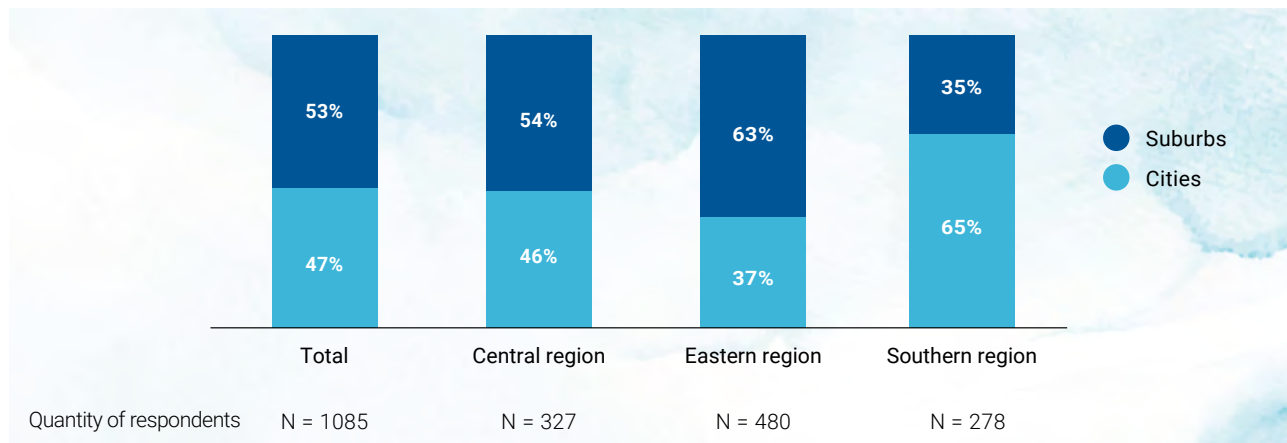


Figure 6. Sample Structure by the type of settlement



The statistical sampling error does not exceed 3.1 percent (with a 95% confidence level, without considering the design effect).

It is worth noting that the design effect error, caused by the application of different survey methods and respondent selection, may be larger than usual in surveys that are not significantly affected by the circumstances of wartime. The methodological challenges war imposes on sociological surveys have been described by experts from the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology.¹² Despite these caveats, however, the researchers consider that the survey results are highly representative.

2. SURVEY RESULTS

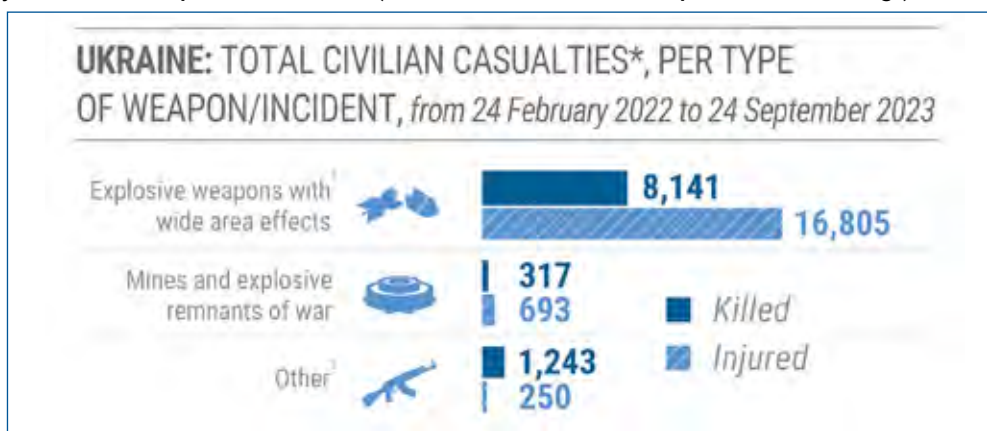
2.1 PRIMARY CAUSE: OCCUPATION. EYEWITNESS TESTIMONIES

2.1.1 Civilian population in the zone of armed conflict

Ex-commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Valerii Zaluzhnyi wrote in a post on his official Facebook page on March 1, 2022: “Killings of the civilian population, shelling of kindergartens, hospitals, and residential buildings, provocation of environmental disasters, shooting of school buses, and blocking ambulances, the use of cruise missiles on residential areas – this is an incomplete list of the war crimes committed by the higher military-political leadership of the Russian Federation. Crimes that have no statute of limitations, and there is no amnesty for their commission.”¹³

Because February 24, 2022, when the Russian Federation launched its full-scale armed attack, and September 24, 2023, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented 27,449 casualties among the civilian population in Ukraine: 9,701 deaths and 17,748 injuries.¹⁴ According to confirmed UN data, among the casualties were 289 boys and 237 girls, as well as 29 children and 1,918 adults whose gender has not yet been determined (Figures 7 and 8). In the temporarily occupied territory, the losses amounted to 5,261 people (2,151 dead and 3,110 injured). More specifically, in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the losses were 3,620 people (805 dead and 2,815 injured); in Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Zaporizhzhia regions there were 1,641 losses (1,346 dead and 295 injured). The OHCHR notes that the actual figures are much higher, as obtaining information from some areas with intense fighting has been delayed, and many reports are still awaiting confirmation. This applies, for example, to Mariupol (Donetsk Region), Lysychansk, Popasna, and Severodonetsk (Luhansk Region), from where reports have been received of numerous casualties among the civilian population.

Figure 7 Total number of casualties among the civilian population, by weapon/incident, Ukraine, from February 24, 2022, to September 24, 2023 (Source: OHCHR website <https://www.ohchr.org/>)

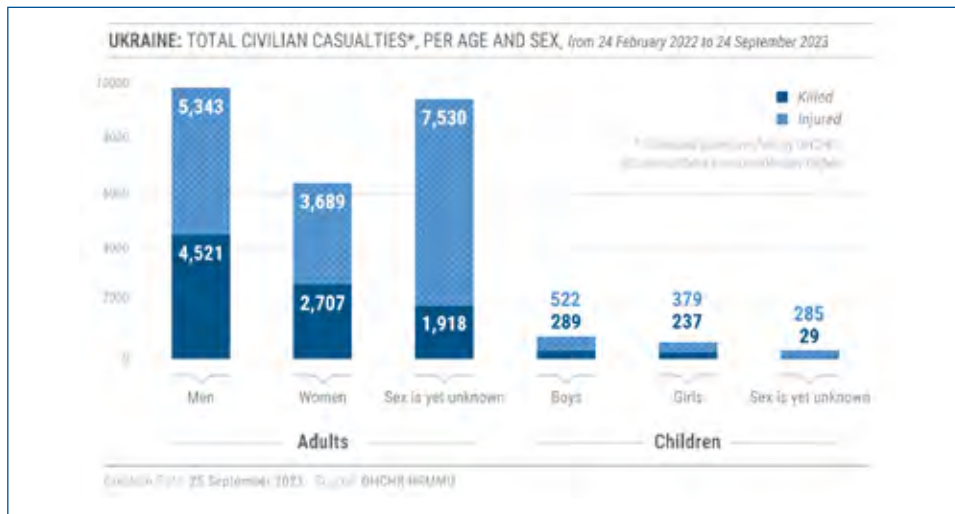


¹² The dynamics of self-assessment of family financial situation after the Russian invasion: February 2022 – May 2023. Appendix 2. Methodological comments on the representativeness of telephone surveys conducted during the war. Available at: <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1256&page=3>

¹³ Available at: https://m.facebook.com/CinCAFU/posts/258786326416860?_rdr

¹⁴ Ukraine: civilian casualty update 24 September 2023. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/09/ukraine-civilian-casualty-update-24-september-2023>

Figure 8 Ukraine. Total number of casualties among the civilian population, by age and gender, from February 24, 2022, to September 24, 2023 (Source: OHCHR website <https://www.ohchr.org/>)



Stories told by residents of the liberated territories describe horrifying details of the suffering of the civilian population. These war crimes perpetrated by the aggressors have no justification from either a military or a moral point of view.

- ” Oleksandr, businessman, Irpin, Kyiv Region¹⁵: “On April 4, 2022, when I was evacuating my children, we were driving down our street, and what we saw... It was shocking! Houses were burning on both sides of the road. They were exploding, shelled... On the road and on the sidewalk, there were mutilated bodies. It was visible that some of them had been run over by vehicles earlier on. Finding no room on the road cars drove right over these bodies. Everyone escaping down that road saw this horror: adults, the elderly, children...”
- ” Veronika, teacher, Kyiv Region: “When the Russians entered the village, they shelled us with cluster bombs. I remember we were outside at the time, but in a different place. That’s how we stayed alive. But at that time, children and adults died...”
- ” Nataliia, psychologist, Dymer, Kyiv Region: “At first, it was a shock; we couldn’t believe that this was happening to us. Then we got used to deaths: people being killed – we got used to it. Wounded being taken to the hospital – we got used to it. From February 25 to March 10, 2022, while we were under occupation, I lost 10 kg...”
- ” Tetiana, Svyatogorsk, Donetsk Region: “I decided not to leave my home, although it was difficult. There was no electricity and gas. Constant shelling. We cooked food over a fire in the yard. The house was significantly damaged by shelling. We could not live there any longer, so neighbors invited us in. That’s how we lived. We cleared debris, extinguished fires – all by ourselves. Food was not delivered, we baked bread in a pan, it looked like pancakes. At one point we didn’t leave the basement for three days; for five people, there were two jars of zucchini ‘caviar’ and a pack of cookies. Animals suffered too. We cooked porridge from flour for them...”
- ” Ivan, pensioner, soldier, Liman, Donetsk Region: “I haven’t been to the occupied territories; at that time, I was in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. My neighbors told me about difficult times: no light, water, gas. It was impossible to leave because the occupiers didn’t want to let people out. I returned to Liman not just as an ordinary resident; we liberated it. We liberated the city in six days. I was deeply saddened by the devastation: approximately 70 percent of it is gone...”

15 Here and below, quotations from the in-depth interviews have been edited, unless otherwise indicated.

” *Yelyzaveta, civil servant, Irpin, Kyiv Region: “The evacuation affected me the most. Only women, children, and elderly people were allowed on the train. Men were left standing on the platform. Pain, tears, despair, uncertainty about whether they will see their loved ones again or were saying goodbye forever... I remembered a young guy standing on the platform in a yellow jacket, and there was a cat sitting in his backpack. He looked hesitantly at the train, hesitating whether to get on or not. In his eyes, I saw everything I felt: the pain of losing family, confusion, uncertainty, non-acceptance, fatigue, fear, and despair. But despite everything – courage and dedication to the country. He said, ‘I’m already 16. Maybe I should stay with the other men and help?...’”*

After the launch of the full-scale invasion the Russian Federation shelled and bombed cities constantly. The aggressors have destroyed residential buildings with their inhabitants, hospitals, schools, critical infrastructure, historical architecture, monuments, churches, and businesses. Experts report damage in the billions of hryvnia, but there are also irreparable losses, namely human lives. The destruction of cities during armed conflicts has a significant destructive impact on the community under attack, which considers the city its own. This prevents or significantly complicates its recovery, undermines the community’s stability and even its very existence.¹⁶ The concept of ‘urbicide’ is a useful term in analyzing such impacts in terms of sociology, political science, and political philosophy.¹⁷

The term “urbicide” means “destruction of a city,” and more broadly, “violence against a city.” But the sense is not so much that the material city is violated, including its numerous structures, but rather the urban way of life of the community. Cruelty towards cities and urban dwellers is a defining feature of the Russian army’s strategy, wherever it operates. In the 1990s–2000s, during the two Russian-Chechen wars, Russians deliberately destroyed the capital of the republic, Grozny. Again, in Syria, the Russian army obliterated the ancient city of Aleppo, where only bare ruins remain. Now, Ukrainian cities are suffering from Russian brutality.

It is important to understand the sense and results of this horrifying consistency of chosen strategy. This will help Ukraine to prevent some of the appalling consequences and also contribute to a more precise articulation of demands for future international legal proceedings against the occupiers. The Russian attacks on Ukrainian cities are aimed not only at the significant concentrations of infrastructure or population in them in an effort to destroy the adversary’s economic potential and life force. Primarily, it is an assault on cities as centers of political, educational, and cultural life for the Ukrainian community. Cities are points of development and implementation of modern technologies, centers of education. Their symbolic role is important, as well as the density there of “places of memory.”¹⁸

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that the Verkhovna Rada issued a statement¹⁹ calling on international institutions, foreign governments, and parliaments to recognize the actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine as genocide against the Ukrainian people. This appeal is gaining increasingly broad support from the international community. The parliaments of Latvia and Estonia have recognized Russia’s war crimes in Ukraine as genocide.²⁰ The official recognition of the Russian occupiers’ actions in Ukraine as genocide will take some time, but it is highly likely that such a decision will be made, as noted by US Deputy Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland in an interview with CNN.²¹

16 Urbicide – a Strategy of the Russian Occupiers in the Russian-Ukrainian War.
Available at: <https://niss.gov.ua/news/komentari-ekspertiv/urbitsyd-stratehiya-rosiyskykh-okupantiv-v-rosiysko-ukrayinskiy-viyni>

17 Martin Kovař and Konstantin Mezentsev: Urbicide is the “killing of a city.”
Available at: https://lb.ua/culture/2022/12/25/540194_martin_kovard_kostyantyn_mezentsev.html

18 Urbicide – a strategy employed by Russian occupiers in the Russo-Ukrainian War.
Available at: <https://niss.gov.ua/news/komentari-ekspertiv/urbitsyd-stratehiya-rosiyskykh-okupantiv-v-rosiysko-ukrayinskiy-viyni>

19 Statement of Ukraine’s Verkhovna Rada on the commission of genocide by the Russian Federation in Ukraine.
Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/how/2188-20#n12>

20 Latvia and Estonia officially recognized Russia’s actions in Ukraine as genocide.
Available at: <https://armyinform.com.ua/2022/04/21/latviya-ta-estoniya-oficzijno-vyznaly-diyi-rosiyi-v-ukrayini-genocyzdom/>

21 In the United States, it has been stated that there is a high probability that Russia’s actions will be officially recognized as genocide.
Available at: <https://www.slovoidilo.ua/2022/04/14/novyna/svit/ssha-zayavyly-vysokoyu-virohidnistyu-oficzijno-vyznayut-diyi-rf-henocyzdom>

2.1.2 Occupiers' methods of controlling the local population

The results of our in-depth interviews, as well as publications by other experts show that the occupiers have used various methods to influence the residents of the temporarily occupied territories with a view to suppressing their individuality, inducing ideological disorientation, and eradicating Ukrainian identity. As US President Joseph Biden has said, "it is becoming increasingly clear that Putin is trying to destroy even the idea of being Ukrainian."²²

Researchers identified the following as the methods most frequently used by the occupiers to put pressure on the local population:

- Intimidation, physical and psychological pressure, abductions, hostage-taking, and blackmail.
- Creating an atmosphere of fear, mistrust, uncertainty, and lack of prospects.
- Blocking access to independent sources of information, deliberate and systematic disinformation.
- Pushing people into poverty and hunger, followed by "solving the problem" with their humanitarian aid shipments.
- Economic pressure, forcing people to obtain Russian citizenship to engage in business activities or receive medical assistance, etc.
- Bribery and other inducements to collaborate.

A significant proportion of qualitative-research participants reported abuse, arrests, torture, and executions of individuals suspected by occupiers of being pro-Ukrainian:

- » *Vika, a photographer in Kherson: "I've been in Kherson all the time, didn't leave during the occupation or afterwards. Lost my job. During the occupation, I helped pack food kits, and the Russians came to that facility. Then they came to my house, saw the embroidery with the abbreviation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and took me to the basement for my pro-Ukrainian stance. They held me for 24 days. Tortured me with electricity. They arrested my mother on the first day, but they released her the same day. How did I endure? I think I have strength of spirit. I am a rebel. And I strongly believed in our protectors, and know that damn Russia will never be on our land."*
- » *Valentyna, a civil servant in Kyiv Region: "We were warned by the Russians not to be outside after 5 pm; in the evening, nobody was supposed to go out, especially men, because they will shoot to kill..."*
- » *Halyna, a retiree in Oskil, Kharkiv Region: "The village was under total blockade. There was no food; once a week, they brought goods by car in the trunk. Sold for rubles, but there were none. The pharmacy didn't work; the hospital either. There were problems with drinking water; the well was far away. Due to constant shelling, most of the time, we were in the basement... One day, a shell hit the garden, damaged the house: roof, walls. Windows were broken and we covered them with blankets. Every three days, occupiers issued bread, but before that, their newspapers. That's why we didn't attend their meetings. Also, on one of those days, they shelled the very place where people gathered; three people were killed."*

Occupiers sought to create an information vacuum for the residents of captured cities and villages. In conditions of restricted access to information from Ukrainian and independent sources, they propagated disinformation and exerted psychological pressure, creating their toxic information field. Television broadcast exclusively Russian channels. Some people, especially the elderly who remembered their youth in the Soviet Union, easily fell under the spell of Russian propaganda. However, the majority of Ukrainians under occupation did not accept what they heard on TV. To eliminate information connections with Ukraine, occupiers deprived Ukrainians of internet access, forced them to change mobile operators, and more.

²² Biden has called Russia's actions in Ukraine genocide. He has repeated this several times. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-61082461>

However, these measures were insufficiently effective, as many Ukrainians used VPN technology to bypass the blockade of the Ukrainian internet.²³

Liberated territories can be conditionally divided into three groups:

1. North, Central (Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Chernihiv regions), where the occupation regime lasted 1–1.5 months. People there experienced all the hardships and atrocities committed by the occupiers and staunchly opposed them.
2. South (Kherson and Mykolaiv regions), where the occupation lasted half a year, and people were under systematic psychological and propaganda pressure.
3. East (including the occupied Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk), where the occupation regime has been in place for many years, and residents have been subjected to targeted propaganda and informational pressure.

The longer the occupation lasts, the more deformation public opinion undergoes. Andrii, an in-depth interview respondent and businessman from Kherson, explained that the enemy was applying so-called “soft” occupation techniques. About 80 percent of shops were open. Some people had Russian sympathies even before the war, saying, “not everything is so simple” [a common phrase used by Russian propaganda and the pro-Russian population, meaning that it is unclear who to blame in the situation – ed.]:

“...So they willingly accepted gifts from the occupiers, received salaries in rubles. Some pensioners received two pensions: one Ukrainian and the other from Russia. The occupiers significantly reduced tariffs for utilities. The gas tariff was reduced to 2 hryvnias per cubic meter, the occupation tariff for water for enterprises was set at 25 rubles. They introduced an artificial exchange rate: 1 hryvnia - 1.25 rubles, so pensioners received a pension of 10,000 rubles in occupation equivalent, for us, it was 8,000 hryvnias. Previous debts for utility payments were also canceled. This way, the occupiers tried to bribe pensioners and business people. Some people without strong pro-Ukrainian feelings “looked the other way,” gradually becoming “soft” collaborators. Another form of influence used by the occupiers was to turn off Ukrainian mobile network providers. Many had to buy SIM cards from Russian operators, registering in the process. So people came under the control of the FSB. Russian TV began broadcasting two weeks after the start of the occupation,” Andrii said.

Respondents mention isolated cases when Ukrainian citizens moved to the territory of Russia, receiving financial assistance (certificates) in the amount of 3-4 million rubles. With this money, they bought apartments, had time to look for well-paid jobs, and more. Unfortunately, these promises were not always honest, as the Ukrainian media shows.

” *Andrii, a businessman from Kherson: “One acquaintance of mine with his family moved to Kakhovka before liberation, then to Russia, to Pskov. They received support in the amount of 100,000 rubles and a certificate for 4 million rubles, with which they bought a 65 sq.m. apartment. Their parents received a certificate for 3.5 million rubles. Another acquaintance of mine acquired an apartment in Krasnodar this way. The information we get from our former acquaintances has a negative impact. The thought comes: I didn’t betray my country, but I lost my business in Kherson, I’m forced to rent housing in Kyiv, and they got apartments for treason. Unfortunately, the Ukrainian state does not have the financial resources to support its citizens now.”*

” *Oleksandr, an entrepreneur from Kherson: “I will always remember the Russians’ strategy to turn the Ukrainian people into a dumb and drunken human mass, like the Russians themselves. Vodka was sold cheap or given for free, a lot of it, in plastic bags, bottles at alcohol distribution spots with the label “sweet vodka,” where they sold it cheaply with snacks. They tried to disperse the market places, but they did not prohibit selling vodka; on the contrary, sales grew. They started organizing kebab stalls on the street, in the road, and people started drinking, and young people began to drink. It was terrible!”*

²³ Total isolation: Why Russia starves the occupied territories of information. Available at: <https://www.unian.ua/society/totalna-izolyaciya-navishcho-rf-vlashtovuye-informacijnyy-golod-na-okupovanih-teritoriyah-12397248.html>

” Alina, primary school teacher, Kupiansk, Kharkiv Region: “Life during the occupation was a real horror story, with constant checks and attempts to manipulate you. In the school where I worked, they told us to switch to Russian education. I refused, and they started harassing me. Some teachers agreed out of fear and lack of money. I couldn’t leave, I was constantly at home... It’s very difficult to remember.”

2.1.3 Resistance to occupiers, both spontaneous and organized

Respondents often understood the notion of “resistance to the occupiers” differently. For some people, resistance means carrying on with everyday activities, respecting Ukrainian traditions, and speaking the Ukrainian language despite threats from the occupiers. It makes sense that even standing up in such ways to the psychological pressures imposed by the occupation regime is a form of resistance. However, even this seemingly innocent resistance could have tragic consequences for individuals. Several years ago, members of the research team had the opportunity to get acquainted and collaborate with the Ukrainian patriot, children’s writer, poet, and translator Volodymyr Vakulenko. Volodymyr was disabled and took care of his underage son, who had been diagnosed with autism. Remaining in the occupied territory of Kharkiv region he could not actively resist the occupiers. But he did not hide his pro-Ukrainian views. For this alone, he was abducted by the Russian military and later murdered. His body was found at the roadside near the village of Kapytoliivka in Izyum district on May 12, 2022.²⁴

” Maryna, a retiree from Kherson: “In the first days, from February 25, 2022, when the occupiers appeared in the city, we started going to protests against the invasion. The rallies took place in Svoboda (Liberty) Square. We went out every day with Ukrainian slogans and the Ukrainian flag until the Russians started shooting people. I witnessed all of this, we came under shelling, under tear gas—all of it. Every day was filled with tension. We went out and were afraid, not knowing how they would react... But we didn’t lose our spirit, firmly believing that we would be liberated, and we supported each other. Only positive people gathered in this way, those who firmly believed in victory and liberation. That’s how we lived through the occupation. There wasn’t just fear but also support, hugs, faith... When the Russian FSB came, it became very difficult to go to rallies; they started hunting activists. And everything faded...”

Analyzing the resistance movement in different regions of Ukraine, Serhii Kuzan, head of the Ukrainian Center for Security and Cooperation, noted that active resistance to occupiers took place in various forms in many areas and cities. In the Sumy region, where there were almost no regular units of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, local residents effectively halted entire columns of Russian armored vehicles and destroyed tanks in collaboration with Ukrainian Special Forces.²⁵

There are cases in which ordinary citizens, with no experience of intelligence work, carried out important tasks for the Security Service, military intelligence, and other Ukrainian special services.

” Olha, a journalist from Kherson: “This is the story of a woman from Kherson, an elderly lady who had never had any experience of special services, intelligence, or acting in the theater. Nevertheless, she proved to be an incredibly brave and conscious Ukrainian and a talented actress. Whenever she came across any information about Russians who were of interest to the Ukrainian Armed Forces she would inform them of his whereabouts so that they could deal with him. For this purpose she dressed in different clothes, put on makeup, and put on accents so that she couldn’t be recognized. She went to the occupation administration, engaged them in conversation, and passed on whatever she learned to the Ukrainian military. The occupiers did not consider her dangerous because they do not perceive elderly people as a threat. She described the occupiers’ attitude as “What do you expect from an old lady? She’s a pensioner, what can she do?”

24 Betrayed by his fellow citizens. How the writer Volodymyr Vakulenko lived and died at the hands of the Russian occupiers. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-63863965>

25 On the resistance movement in the occupied territories: how it manifests itself and what the consequences are. Available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/ruh-opir-okupovana-teritoriya/31869986.html>

It is important to note that the Ukrainian state has laid institutional foundations for the resistance movement by enacting the Law on the Foundations of National Resistance on July 16, 2021.²⁶ Thus, resistance structures have organizational, methodological, and material support from relevant state institutions. This includes the Main Intelligence Directorate, the Special Operations Forces, and other structural units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which play coordinating and organizing roles. Naturally, the resistance movement requires the provision of units, logistics, communications and security for the families of people involved in resistance activities. The law stipulates that such families come under the protection of the state. Many people involved in the resistance movement have sent their families abroad or to the western part of the country (with the assistance of the state), continuing their activities in the occupied territory.²⁷

” *Olha, a journalist from Kherson: “The local resistance movement is a separate story. What are these resistance movements? These are separate groups of people, about 130 of them. And cooperation is established in such a way that if someone was taken away and subjected to torture, the movement will not have to cease its activities. I spoke to people who participated in the resistance movement during the occupation of the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Luhansk regions and then left. In Kherson, I filmed a documentary about participants in the resistance movement in March 2023. Despite the fact that Kherson was liberated, there was constant shelling when I worked in the city: Russian troops shelled with “Grad” rockets because it’s cheap, and they don’t need to waste S-300 [missiles]... The people of Kherson turned out to be very cheerful. They were like that even during the temporary occupation, and after the liberation of the city, their high spirits seemed to double, despite the daily shelling...”*

One respondent emphasized that in the first days of the Russian invasion, the actions of some local law enforcement structures resembled more of a retreat than organized resistance. The heroism of some individuals was intermingled with neglect of their duties by others who were supposed to defend the city.

” *Andrii, a businessman from Kherson: “On March 1, 2022, on the day of the occupation, my wife had a panic attack, so I went to the pharmacy for medication. I live in the center, near the buildings of the Security Service of Ukraine [SSU] and the police. People were loading something quickly into cars near the police department. On March 1, there were no police officers left in the city in uniform. The SSU building looked completely deserted – everyone had left the night before. Border guards from the post near the port fled on February 24. They left their service dogs in cages, set fire to their building, and left. Due to the fire, the ammunition they had left in the building started to explode. Prosecutors left in an organized manner, in a column of cars, at 06:00 on February 24. Therefore, the reaction of the law enforcement agencies left the strongest impression; they didn’t even try to organize resistance and quickly left the city. Instead, unprepared fighters of territorial defense units, National Guard, and civilians with Molotov cocktails tried to stop the occupiers. Many died on March 1 in Buzkiv Park. The husband of my colleague, a lieutenant in the National Guard, died on February 24 on Antonivskiy Bridge...”*

2.1.4 Instances of cooperation between local residents and the occupiers. Respondents’ attitudes to collaboration

Punishment for collaboration is stipulated by Article 111-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. Collaboration includes:²⁸

- (i) Public support for the actions of the aggressor state, armed formations, or occupation authorities, armed aggression against Ukraine, or denial that it is happening (on the internet or through the media). Such actions are punishable by deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for a period of 10 to 15 years.

26 Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1702-20#Text>

27 On the resistance movement in the occupied territories: how it manifests itself and what are the consequences. Available at: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/ruh-opir-okupovana-teritoriya/31869986.html>

28 TOT: What constitutes collaboration and what responsibility for it is envisaged? Available at: <https://reinform.com.ua/6619/tot-shho-vidnosytsya-do-kolaboracziynoyi-diyalnosti-ta-yaka-za-cze-peredbachena-vidpovidalnist/>

- (ii) Voluntary occupation of a position in illegal authorities set up in temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. This is punishable by deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities [for example, to run for office – ed.] for a period of 10 to 15 years with the possibility of property confiscation.
- (iii) Dissemination of propaganda in educational institutions in support of the occupation authorities and actions aimed at implementing the educational guidelines of the aggressor state. This is punishable by corrective labor for up to two years or arrest for up to six months, or imprisonment for up to three years with deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for a period of 10 to 15 years.
- (iv) Providing material resources to illegal armed formations created in temporarily occupied territories and economic activity in collaboration with the occupation authorities. Such actions are punishable by a fine of up to 10,000 non-taxable minimum incomes of citizens (UAH 170,000) or imprisonment for a term of three to five years, with deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for a period of 10 to 15 years, with property confiscation.
- (v) Election to illegal authorities created in temporarily occupied territories, participation in the organization and conduct of elections or referendums in these territories, or public calls for such actions. Punishable by imprisonment for a term of five to ten years with deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for a period of 10 to 15 years, with possible property confiscation.
- (vi) Organization, conduct, or active participation in political events (congresses, meetings, rallies, marches, demonstrations, conferences, round tables, etc.) and joint information disseminating activities with the occupation authorities. Such actions are punishable by imprisonment for a term of 10 to 12 years with deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for a period of 10 to 15 years, with possible property confiscation.
- (vii) Voluntary tenure of a position in judicial or law enforcement agencies created in temporarily occupied territories, as well as participation in the activities of illegal armed formations or assistance to them in conducting combat actions against the Armed Forces of Ukraine or volunteer formations defending the independence of Ukraine. These actions are punishable by imprisonment for a term of 12 to 15 years with deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for a period of 10 to 15 years, with possible property confiscation.

As of March 2, 2023, the State Bureau of Investigation reported investigations of 214 criminal cases related to collaboration. As of March 23, 2023, the Prosecutor General's Office announced the opening of 4,787 investigations under Article 111-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine since the beginning of the full-scale war. In 2022, the SSU investigated over 2,600 cases related to collaboration, with over 300 cases forwarded to the courts.²⁹

In the liberated communities, views are clearly divided between those who collaborated with the enemy and those who did not. People are outraged because often the actions of those they consider traitors are not subject to legal punishment. It can be argued that justice and punishment for collaborators are important societal demands in the liberated territories at the present time.

” Hryhorii, a pensioner from Makariv, Kyiv Region: “Collaboration should only be subject to legal and judicial evaluation. My neighbor betrayed another neighbor who was a radio technician. She not only led “orcs” to him but also pointed out where he was hiding in the reeds. After that, the man was interrogated and tortured. After his release, she carried on as if nothing had happened. The neighbor says he forgives her... But forgiveness is not enough; she must answer for her actions.”

²⁹ Who are collaborators, and what punishment is foreseen for them?
Available at: <https://explainer.ua/hto-taki-kolaboranty-i-yake-diya-nyh-peredbachene-pokarannya-poyasnyuemo/>

” Olha, a journalist from Kherson: “For example, there was a sarcastic group on Facebook created by Kherson residents who made jokes about collaborators. That was a way of letting people know that they shouldn’t communicate with those people. Everyone I talked to demanded that collaboration with the enemy be punished. People need a sense of justice. They demand punishment for collaborators.”

Experts and respondents cite various motives for collaboration.³⁰ For example, Russians tempted people with money: social guarantees, payments, assistance to businesses and farmers, mortgages and housing certificates for people who moved to Crimea or the Krasnodar Krai. Currently, collaborators on the occupied left bank receive disproportionately high payments, even compared with the territory of the Russian Federation.

Another reason for betrayal is the desire for power and higher status. Some former law enforcement officers who were dismissed after the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 continued to feel resentment and wanted to retaliate against the Ukrainian state for their “broken careers” and sided with the Russians.

Coercion was also a factor. Some people agreed to collaborate after threats and torture. Collaborators quickly adopt the narratives of the occupier: “We have to survive here and now,” “There will be no more Ukraine,” and so on. They form groups with similar views.

In in-depth interviews respondents noted that the main factors in treason were ideological beliefs, Soviet-communist ideology, sympathy for the Russian regime, affiliation with political parties in Ukraine that advocated “friendship” with Russia.

Some respondents pointed to Russia’s significant influence on the worldview of some Ukrainians over time through culture and education. Thus, respondents believe that Russians had been laying the groundwork for aggression and collaboration for years.

” Svitlana, a social services specialist in the city of Horlivka, Donetsk Region: “Probably, in the liberated territories there is a residual impact on residents of years of Russians indoctrination, and they started talking about betrayal and such... Even before the occupation, this influence was strong. It was felt especially through culture and education. For example, when our child started first grade, the school offered a choice of the language of instruction, Russian or Ukrainian. We chose Ukrainian because we live in Ukraine, thinking that the child would take exams in Ukrainian... But in response, we heard something like, maybe we should think again, because everyone in Horlivka speaks Russian, so why Ukrainian?, etc. Through education, through culture—music, films—Russian propaganda was spread effectively...”

The population has reacted negatively to the collaboration of teachers who propagate the so-called “Russian world” values to children. People demand punishment for teacher-traitors.

” Oleksandr, a civil servant from the village of Velykyi Burluk, Kharkiv Region: “I know that the occupiers wanted medical workers to submit a statement that they would join the structures of the occupation authorities, but they refused. Practically no collaborators were found in the apparatus of the village council, where about a hundred people worked before the war. Only four switched sides. However, among educators, there were more traitors. Out of ten community schools, three completely refused to work – Pershohnytsky, Pidserednyansky, and Ploshchansky lyceums. There, the staff unanimously told the occupiers that they would not work with them. As for the rest of the schools, there are those where 10, 20, or even 80 percent of the personnel went over to the occupier’s side. So, on September 1, the enemy opened 3–4 schools. Children went because the Russians had threatened their parents that they would take their children away if they did not send them to school. Such parents cannot be considered collaborators. But teachers who cooperated with the occupiers are collaborators.”

³⁰ Meeting of Worlds: How Communities in Kherson Region Resisted Occupiers.
Available at: <https://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2023/06/13/7406627/>

Respondents differentiate between taking on lower-ranking roles during the occupation for survival and actively collaborating with the occupiers. Certain situations may warrant additional scrutiny, such as instances in which individuals performed the duties of a village supervisor in an occupied area while simultaneously supporting Ukrainian patriots.

” Olena, a cultural administrator, Kherson: “I acknowledge that influence might have affected people; some opted to collaborate due to concerns for their loved ones. Even within our team, opinions on collaborators are divided, with some labeling it a witch hunt. My stance on this issue is firm. All such actions should be investigated by the authorities. It’s a matter of civic position, and if you feel pressured and coerced, escape. We all fled, and it was challenging. But I won’t share a stage with collaborators. Collaborators need to be identified and punished according to the law.”

2.2 THE SITUATION IN THE LIBERATED SETTLEMENTS

2.2.1 Liberation and the ensuing weeks

In November 2022, the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers developed an action plan (decree) for the recovery of the liberated territories. The plan includes more than 160 measures.³¹ Key areas include:

- restoring the functioning of local government and territorial units of state authorities;
- resuming treasury services;
- organizing the provision of medical, social, and other forms of assistance, including pension payments;
- rehabilitating infrastructure: electricity, gas, and water supply;
- supplying the population with essential food and medications;
- ensuring the maintenance of law and order.

However, officials emphasize that local government bodies are addressing the challenges of liberated areas based on their own judgment and in consideration of the current circumstances.

” Oleh, a government official, Kyiv Region: “Yes, I have read the directive. However, the plan remains largely formal as the Cabinet of Ministers currently lacks effective governance. All operational functions are centralized and performed by the Office of the President. There’s no singular protocol or clear-cut algorithm for the restoration of liberated territories. Regional and local authorities navigate the situation based on their own assessments, a decentralized approach reflects the variety of conditions across different communities. This approach might be appropriate, echoing the decentralization observed in the military, allowing for initiative and operational decisions at mid-to-lower levels of management.”

The withdrawal of Russian military forces from the temporarily occupied territory unfolded in different ways. In some areas, their retreat was gradual and discreet, while in others, they engaged in the destruction of critical infrastructure, looting extensively. A stark illustration comes from Heorhii Ierko, acting head of the Borodianka community in the Kyiv Region. He reported that occupiers obliterated eight multi-story buildings and inflicted partial damage on 32 others. Additionally, they demolished approximately 500 private residences and about 450 houses were partially or significantly damaged. Tragically, rescue workers recovered the remains of 41 individuals from the wreckage.³²

” Andrii, entrepreneur, Kherson: “When the Russians retreated, I experienced a profound emotional uplift. During their withdrawal, the occupiers deliberately destroyed energy infrastructure, leaving us without electricity, heating, and water for three weeks—only gas remained. Yet, people were saying, ‘Without power, without water... but the main thing is without the ‘katsaps’ (Russians).”

31 The government has developed an action plan for the recovery of the liberated territories. Available at: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/uryad-rozrobiv-plan-dij-z-vidnovlennya-deokupovanih-teritorij>

32 Borodianka. First days after liberation. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtsCW-DOICE>

In the liberated areas, critical issues demanded swift attention, including reinstating local and state authorities, addressing humanitarian needs, safeguarding and defending specific locations with the National Guard of Ukraine, evaluating damage and identifying sites for restoration, resuming the circulation of the national currency, and managing document-related matters and administrative services. Throughout the temporary occupation, life persisted, and occupying authorities ran all bureaucratic processes. According to respondents, the majority of pressing problems were tackled effectively in the initial weeks following liberation.

- ” Oleh, a public servant, Kyiv Region: *“Spring is fortunate timing for the liberation. There were no heating-related issues. This timing provided an extended period for carrying out repairs, reconstructing buildings and infrastructure, initiating planting activities, cultivating gardens, and, overall, fostering optimism. Nature’s rejuvenation combined with the return of Ukrainian authorities contributed to a positive atmosphere. Liberating territories in winter or fall creates additional problems and limitations for restoring normal life in the community.”*
- ” Serhii, a teacher, Snihurivka village, Mykolaiv Region: *“On November 10, 2022, the 131st reconnaissance battalion of the Armed Forces of Ukraine successfully expelled the invaders from Snihurivka. Following this, on November 13, mobile communication was restored, and by the 14th, water supply was reinstated. This marked the end of an eight-month period of living without access to drinking water, making the liberation a source of immense joy for the community.”*

Following liberation from Russian occupation, people experienced a range of emotions. Many felt joy and relief, while others endured stress and fear due to uncertainty about what the future may bring. Above all, the prevailing sentiments were joy and euphoria for the triumphant return of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Ukrainian state.

- ” Svitlana, a pensioner, village of Ozera in Kyiv Region: *“On April 1, 2022, our soldiers entered the basement. It was so unexpected! After the phosphorus shelling, we thought it was the end. That all of Ukraine had fallen. Our village was smoking for days, covered in white smoke like I had never seen before. And then we hear the Ukrainian language, and we can’t believe our ears. I ask, ‘Are you ours?’ And I hear in response that they are. We cried, shouted, and kissed them in joy... Our soldiers gave us phones, and we immediately started calling our relatives. When I reached my children in Hostomel and found out they were alive, it was the happiest day of my life. People heard their loved ones and cried tears of happiness.”*
- ” Violetta, government employee, Kherson: *“On November 11, 2022, the day of liberation, there was no internet. Someone informed me that in the center of the city, our compatriots had raised the Ukrainian flag... The atmosphere was filled with tears, jubilant greetings, and an overwhelming surge of positive emotions! Cars were honking, and a multitude of people gathered for a massive rally in the heart of the city. There was an indescribable feeling of freedom, a moment to breathe unburdened at last.”*
- ” Olena, cultural administrator, Kherson: *“It was profoundly challenging for me to come to terms with the fact that I wasn’t in Kherson when the city was freed. Witnessing Kherson residents embrace our soldiers, a sense of regret gnawed at me for not being there. Despite participating in numerous protests under the barrel of a gun, I couldn’t be present as I had left, taking my child to Odesa... I find myself constantly contemplating what the end of the war means for me. I understand that Putin will never acknowledge defeat. Regardless of how far our soldiers advance, as long as Russia persists with this leader, the war will persist. Only when Russia undergoes dissolution and Putin ceases to exist [will things change]. However, uncertainty remains about what other unpredictable figure might emerge with a capacity for destruction! Ukraine, as a neighbor state, remains under imminent threat as long as Russia exists.”*

The residential multi-story building in the town of Borodianka, Kyiv region, destroyed by Russian shelling. Photo: Yevhen Sukhenko / Pexels.com



” Vladyslav, construction worker, village of Horokhivka, Kharkiv Region: “What struck me the most was that the village was free, everything seemed fine, but the feeling of fear didn’t disappear. Changing the rhythm of life is not easy. During the first weeks, people were still afraid to go out into the streets; neighbors refrained from discussing anything among themselves. Fear of the Russians returning was palpable. We were pleasantly surprised by the significant help and support we received. Additionally, after the liberation of the village, we learned that some residents had fled because they were afraid of our army. After interacting with our military, I decided to volunteer. I am currently undergoing training.”

2.2.2 Problems facing communities in liberated settlements

The problems of communities and residents of the liberated territories, based on the analysis of in-depth interviews, were categorized into three groups:

- (i) issues related to the security situation and the destruction of infrastructure;
- (ii) basic needs and humanitarian problems;
- (iii) problems related to social, administrative, and medical services.

According to the results of a survey of 1,085 respondents conducted in 105 settlements in the liberated territories, the most acute and painful problems include: destruction of housing and infrastructure, shelling and missile strikes on settlements, and the lack of employment opportunities in the liberated cities and villages. This is in line with the findings of the in-depth interviews.

” Valentyna, pensioner, village of Tsyrukun, Kharkiv Region, highlighted the most pressing needs: “Our primary concern now is to restore the housing stock because practically no house has remained unscathed. Sometimes, it seems like a house is intact. Then you walk around, inspect it, and discover that the roof has been breached. Another major issue is the mining of utility networks. About 20 percent of the buildings still lack electricity. Well, at least to some extent, because in neighboring settlements, there has been no power for at least a year...”

” Oleksii, local authority employee, Kharkiv Region: “Nearly every village had some agricultural firms, and currently most of them are non-operational. In the past, many local residents commuted to work in Kharkiv, but now many companies there have closed or relocated. People have lost their jobs, and the community has lost revenue for the budget. The rural council obtained revenue mainly from lease payments for land, but now the land is practically unused. Furthermore, these fields are now mined. We have fertile land, predominantly black soil. Eventually, these areas can be cleared of mines and reutilized for the benefit of the people. However, local experts generally believe that it will take approximately two years to return to pre-war conditions...”

” Oleh, government official, Kyiv Region: “The restoration of infrastructure, water supply, sewage, and power supply occurred within a month after de-occupation. It’s worth noting that in Irpin, for example, 85 percent of the people who left during the invasion returned, and an additional 20,000 internally displaced persons arrived. There is an issue with demining, but it takes time. Main roads have been cleared, but forests and field paths remain mined. However, locals venture into the woods despite the risks, motivated by the need to survive.”

” Oleksandr, businessman, Kherson: “Communication worsened after the flooding, probably due to non-functioning mobile towers. The younger generation is surviving. Right after the liberation, there was nothing: no electricity, nowhere to charge gadgets, [little] food... I went to Odesa. In Kherson, there was constant shelling. No work means no income. Kherson was somewhat behind general Ukrainian standards, but now the occupiers took everything. There’s nowhere to return to: no home, no work. There was a lot of humanitarian aid after liberation, water, electricity, and communications were restored within a month by our efforts. But the Russians started shelling. Before the flooding, less humanitarian aid was brought to Kherson, not everyone received ATB and Silpo (food shop) certificates, there were long queues. It was tough for those who didn’t get them because there’s no work, no money. Now, many volunteers come, distributing water, even to those who have some. Kherson is in the spotlight...”

” *Svitlana, specialist in social protection services, Horlivka, Donetsk Region: “The most pressing issues in the liberated territories are ruined homes, shattered lives, and broken families. Because some people leave, some stay, and some are forcibly taken away... There’s a lack of jobs, [lots of] mined areas...”*

The restoration of life in settlements liberated over a year ago is still ongoing. The stable functioning of the socio-economic infrastructure is gradually being restored. According to the survey results, the destruction of social, administrative, and economic infrastructure remains important for 30 percent of the residents in the Central macro-region. In the Eastern macro-region, by contrast, it is a concern for 79 percent and in the Southern macro-region for 69 percent of the surveyed population.

2.2.3 Security situation and infrastructure damage

According to the survey, the most acute problem for residents of liberated settlements is the destruction of housing: 73 percent of respondents mentioned this issue. Some 64 percent of respondents point to the problem of mined areas, and 62 percent the destruction of social, administrative, and economic infrastructure. Another 34 percent of respondents consider shelling and missile strikes on settlements as among the most pressing issues (Table 5, Figure 9).

The significance of some problems varies for different macro-regions. For the Southern macro-region, the most significant problem is shelling, as indicated by 85 percent of respondents. For the Central macro-region, the share of those most concerned by shelling is 29 percent, while for the Eastern macro-region it is “only” 9 percent. This is because among the cities most affected by shelling, such as Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, and Kramatorsk, only Kherson was (temporarily) occupied and it was among the large cities in which the survey was conducted (171 respondents).

” *Andrii, businessman, Kherson: “The most important thing is to move the front line away from the city. To stop the shelling. They are carried out by artillery systems, the flight time is a few seconds, so the warning system is ineffective.”*

For residents of the Southern macro-region, environmental problems are much more relevant than for the Eastern macro-region (28 percent versus 6 percent). This can be explained by the ecological disaster caused by the Russians’ blowing up the dam of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station. In addition, 35 percent of respondents in the Eastern macro-region and 12 percent in the Southern macro-region indicate a shortage of building materials. We can assume that this reflects differences in the ratio of rural and urban populations: because of Kherson, the share of urban residents in the Southern macro-region is significantly higher than in the Eastern. The restoration of multi-story buildings in the city is being taken care of primarily by the authorities, while rural residents are repairing their houses themselves.

For all macro-regions, the problem of housing destruction is among the main issues frequently mentioned by respondents. Participants in the qualitative study echo this.

” *Svitlana, retiree, village of Ozero, Kyiv Region: “The most urgent problem in our village was the need for housing. The village was severely damaged. Private enterprises helped with restoring windows and doors. However, residents mostly rebuild their homes on their own. The roof of my house is still wrecked. The ceiling constantly leaks. I cannot afford to fix it on my pension... What assistance there is comes mainly from volunteers. I don’t blame the state; we have many problems now... I would like to see help with this from our partners, foreign donors. Many foreigners have come to us. But everyone just looks, promises, and nothing happens...”*

” *Hryhorii, retiree, Makariv, an urban settlement in Kyiv Region: “The first problem is rebuilding houses. I do not know why but those that are completely destroyed are not being rebuilt. Reconstruction of schools, post offices, pharmacies, and stores is needed. There needs to be some assistance or interest-free loans for rebuilding lost businesses to reconstruct pharmacies and stores...”*

Table 5 Distribution of answers to the survey question about problems related to the security situation and infrastructure destruction (respondents could choose several answer options, so the sum of percentages is more than 100%)

Answers	Number of responses				Percentage			
	Total	Central region	Eastern region	Southern region	Total	Central region	Eastern region	Southern region
Destruction of housing	791	183	419	189	73%	56%	87%	68%
Mined territories	692	122	365	205	64%	37%	76%	74%
Destroyed social, administrative, and economic infrastructure	668	98	379	191	62%	30%	79%	69%
Shelling and missile strikes	370	94	41	235	34%	29%	9%	85%
Shortage of construction materials	265	64	168	33	24%	20%	35%	12%
Environmental issues	181	76	28	77	17%	23%	6%	28%
Issues with electricity supply	172	88	44	40	16%	27%	9%	14%
Shortage of workers and workforce	148	54	66	28	14%	17%	14%	10%
Water supply problems	137	60	61	16	13%	18%	13%	6%
Low levels of law and order and public safety	124	67	18	39	11%	20%	4%	14%
Issues with gas supply and other energy sources	63	7	47	9	6%	2%	10%	3%
Overall	1085	327	480	278	-	-	-	-

These testimonies highlight the urgent need for housing reconstruction and the broader restoration of essential infrastructure in the affected regions.

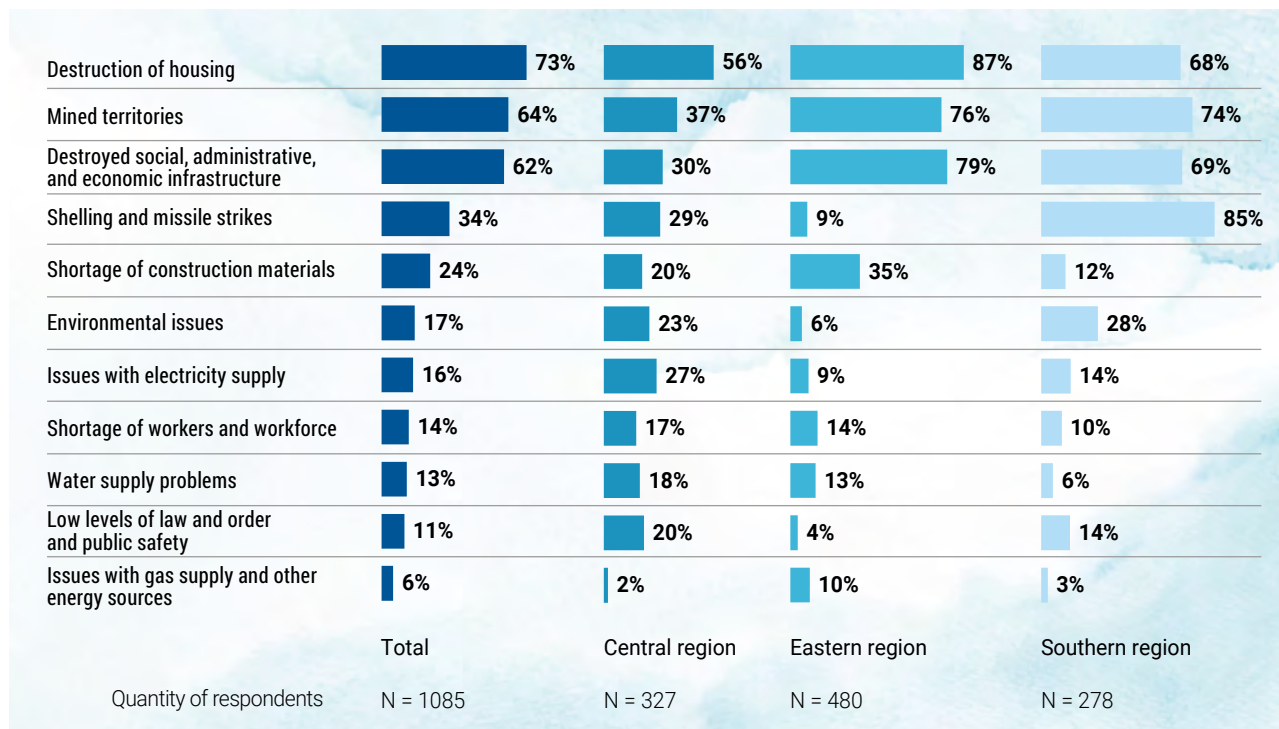
Yurii Honchar points to where he has been reduced to living with tears in his eyes.

It's a tent put up in the garden of his completely destroyed house. August 4, 2023, Kozarovychi village, Kyiv Region.

Photo: Natalia Tkachenko, interviewer, study team



Figure 9 Problems related to the security situation and destruction of infrastructure by macro-regions



It is important to note that the issue of mined areas is possibly the most significant long-term security problem for Ukraine.

In May 2023, the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Emergency Service reported that the Russian invaders have mined 30 percent of Ukraine's territory. Photo: David Peinado / Pexels.com



According to preliminary estimates, as of September 2023, as a result of Russian hostilities, mines and other explosive devices covered approximately 30 percent of Ukraine's territory, or 174,000 square kilometers, including 13,500 square kilometers of reservoirs, rivers and sea. This information was provided by Mykola Didyk, deputy chief of the Pyrotechnic Works Department of the Ukrainian State Emergency Service, at a briefing at the Military Media Center.³³ This area is equivalent to half the size of Germany or a third of the size of France. Thus, Ukraine currently has the highest number of mined areas in the world, surpassing Afghanistan and Syria. Over six million citizens are at risk from unexploded mines and shells. Nearly 800 Ukrainians have already fallen victim to mines, with over 250 fatalities.³⁴

Currently, Kherson Region is considered the most mined: occupiers left a large number of mines of various types as they retreated. Experts predict that it will take at least five years to completely demine Ukrainian territory after the war. Since the beginning of the Russian aggression, the State Emergency Service has collected almost 326,000 explosive objects, and nearly three tonnes of explosives. The Pyrotechnic Department has inspected 93,000 hectares of mined areas and 7,500 hectares of water areas, where 427,000 explosive objects, including anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions, and remotely installed mines, were found and neutralized.

Explosive devices scattered by the Russian army in the soil of cities and villages in Ukraine.
Photo: David Peinado / Pexels.com



³³ Available at: t.me/militarymediacenter/3084

³⁴ Available at: <https://www.me.gov.ua/News/Detail?lang=uk-UA&id=255966a7-29f2-4fb8-862f-d2b7352c5939&title=PritiagtiDoVidpovidalnostiAgresora>

2.2.4 Basic needs and humanitarian problems

Problems arising from basic needs were not a top priority for the residents of the liberated territories. The percentage of respondents indicating issues related to food, drinking water, and clothing ranges from 3 to 8 percent, depending on region (Table 6, Figure 10). The only exception is the Southern macro-region, where 26 percent of respondents pointed out problems with the water supply, mentioning the ecological disaster in the Kherson region related to the Russian destruction of the Kakhovka dam.

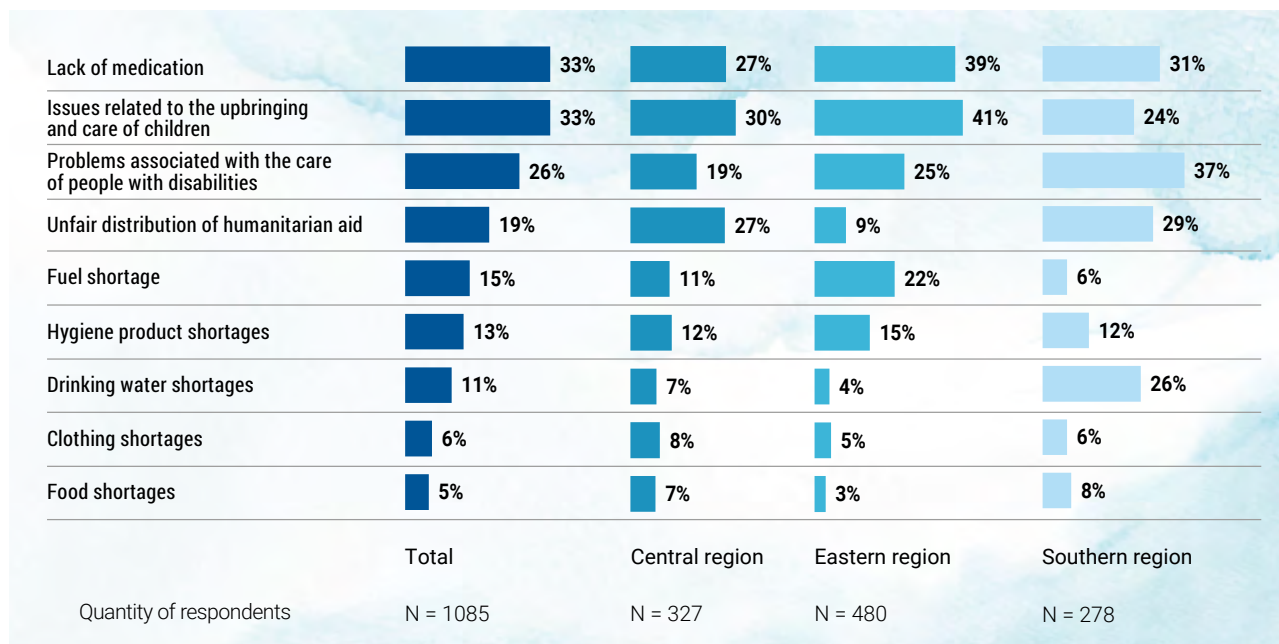
» *Oleh, civil servant, Kyiv Region: “The top priorities—food, water, administrative, and financial services—are generally being met. The most important element of infrastructure is the internet (‘Starlink’), through which communication, financial services, and the like are carried out.”*

The most significant problems related to basic needs and humanitarian issues include a lack of medication (33 percent of respondents), as well as issues related to the upbringing and care of children (33 percent) and problems associated with the care of people with disabilities (26 percent).

Table 6 Distribution of answers to the survey question regarding problems related to basic needs and humanitarian issues (respondents could choose multiple response options, so the total percentage exceeds 100%).

Answers	Number of responses				Percentage			
	Total	Central region	Eastern region	Southern region	Total	Central region	Eastern region	Southern region
Lack of medication	362	88	188	86	33%	27%	39%	31%
Issues related to the upbringing and care of children	362	97	198	67	33%	30%	41%	24%
Problems associated with the care of people with disabilities	285	61	120	104	26%	19%	25%	37%
Unfair distribution of humanitarian aid	210	87	42	81	19%	27%	9%	29%
Fuel shortage	161	36	107	18	15%	11%	22%	6%
Hygiene product shortages	146	38	74	34	13%	12%	15%	12%
Drinking water shortages	116	24	20	72	11%	7%	4%	26%
Clothing shortages	67	27	22	18	6%	8%	5%	6%
Food shortages	59	23	15	21	5%	7%	3%	8%
Overall	1085	327	480	278	–	–	–	–

Figure 10 Problems related to basic needs and humanitarian issues, by macro-region



The fourth significant problem for survey participants is perceived unfair distribution of humanitarian aid. This is especially true for the Southern macro-region (29 percent of respondents) and the Central macro-region (27 percent).

Some respondents described the situation as follows in the in-depth interviews:

” Maryna, a pensioner from Kherson: “In the first month, we didn’t notice any problems because we were finally free. There was great joy, and billboards in our city saying ‘Dear ones, you are free’ lifted the spirits of Kherson residents who were waiting for the Armed Forces of Ukraine. And then problems slowly began to emerge. When humanitarian aid arrived, it wasn’t really properly organized, there was no control. People stood and still stand in long lines. These are pensioners and unemployed young people... When humanitarian aid was distributed, people stood in line, risking their lives. There was shelling in some places where humanitarian aid was distributed, and people died. I hear from many residents that the process is unsupervised in our city. Kherson residents are dissatisfied not with the lack of humanitarian aid but with its improper distribution. Some receive it twice or three times, and also financial aid. Some don’t receive anything at all. Not everyone can get aid, as many people with limited mobility or pensioners cannot run after the cars that distribute humanitarian aid. People are unhappy about this. This problem is relevant for both Kherson residents who experienced occupation and those who are returning.”

There are certain differences in the definition of priority problems between urban and rural residents (Table 7). For instance, 27 percent of city residents point out the unfair distribution of humanitarian aid, while among rural populations the dissatisfaction rate is 12 percent. The shortage of medicines is mentioned as a problem by 42 percent of rural residents but only 24 percent of urban residents. Rural residents are twice as likely as urban residents to mention a shortage of hygiene products (18 percent and 9 percent, respectively). The problem of fuel shortages is more acute in rural areas.

Table 7 Distribution of responses to the question about problems related to basic needs and humanitarian issues by type of settlement (respondents could choose multiple answer options, so the percentage total exceeds 100%)

Answers	Number of responses			Percentage		
	Total	City	Village	Total	City	Village
Lack of medication	362	123	239	33%	24%	42%
Issues related to the upbringing and care of children	362	180	182	33%	35%	32%
Problems associated with the care of people with disabilities	285	143	142	26%	28%	25%
Unfair distribution of humanitarian aid	210	139	71	19%	27%	12%
Fuel shortage	161	60	101	15%	12%	18%
Hygiene product shortages	146	44	102	13%	9%	18%
Drinking water shortages	116	53	63	11%	10%	11%
Clothing shortages	67	22	45	6%	4%	8%
Food shortages	59	24	35	5%	5%	6%
Overall	1085	512	573	—	—	—

2.2.5 Problems related to obtaining social, administrative, and medical services

Findings summarizing responses to the survey questions regarding the receipt of social, administrative, and medical services are presented in Table 8 and Figure 11. The least significant problem for respondents is poor internet access, mentioned by 9 percent. This indicates that at least one communication and information channel is available to over 90 percent of people in liberated areas. The situation is worse for other communication services, such as land-line telephones, mobile telephones and post. For example, in the Central and Eastern macro-regions, 23 percent and 31 percent of respondents, respectively, indicate problems with communication channels. The lack of legal assistance is significant to 12 percent of respondents, but for the Southern macro-region the figure is 20 percent.

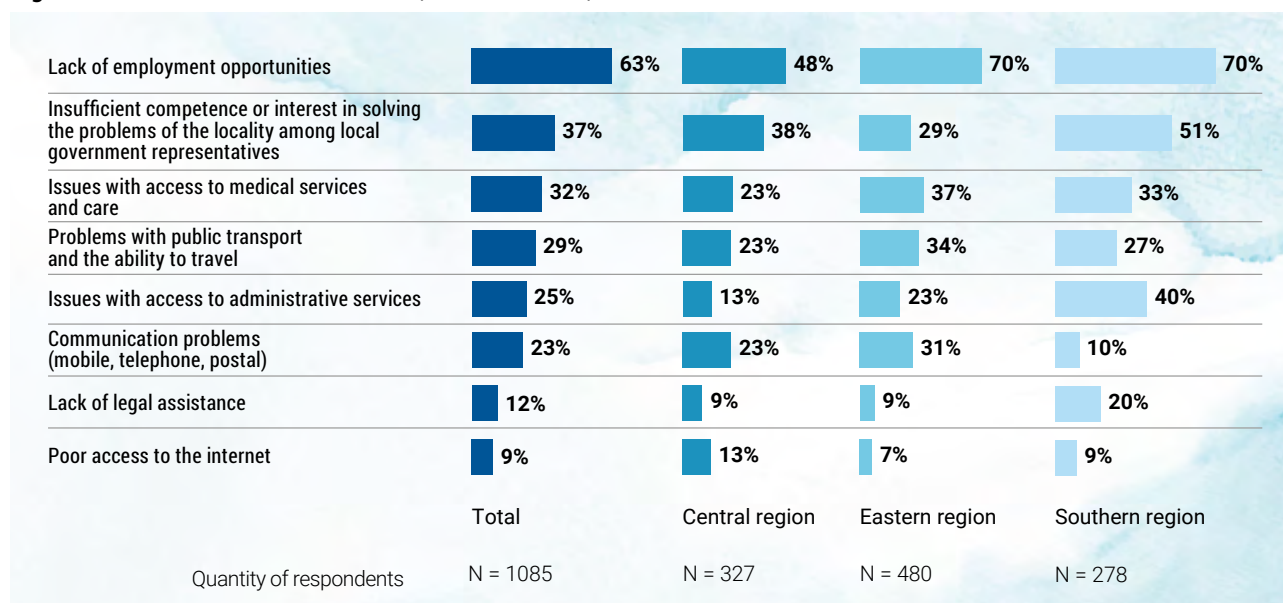
Table 8 Distribution of responses to the survey question about social, administrative, and medical services (respondents could choose several answer options, so the percentage total exceeds 100%)

Answers	Number of responses				Percentage			
	Total	Central region	Eastern region	Southern region	Total	Central region	Eastern region	Southern region
Lack of employment opportunities	687	157	336	194	63%	48%	70%	70%
Insufficient competence or interest in solving the problems of the locality among local government representatives	405	123	141	141	37%	38%	29%	51%
Issues with access to medical services and care	344	76	176	92	32%	23%	37%	33%

Answers	Number of responses				Percentage			
	Total	Central region	Eastern region	Southern region	Total	Central region	Eastern region	Southern region
Problems with public transport and the ability to travel	310	74	162	74	29%	23%	34%	27%
Issues with access to administrative services	267	44	112	111	25%	13%	23%	40%
Communication problems (mobile, telephone, postal)	250	74	147	29	23%	23%	31%	10%
Lack of legal assistance	126	30	41	55	12%	9%	9%	20%
Poor access to the internet	103	43	34	26	9%	13%	7%	9%
Overall	1085	327	480	278	–	–	–	–

A similar disproportion is also evident regarding access to administrative services. This is an issue for 13 percent and 23 percent of residents of the Central and Eastern macro-regions, respectively, while for residents of the Southern macro-region, it is a concern for 40 percent of respondents. Additionally, 51 percent of respondents in the Southern macro-region indicate insufficient competence or commitment on the part of local government representatives to address local problems. It can be assumed that difficult access to administrative services and communication issues are among the reasons for the dissatisfaction with the work of local government representatives. For example, in the Central and Eastern macro-regions, this indicator is significantly lower, at 38 percent and 29 percent, respectively. In this context, it is worth noting that during 2022–2023 the management of the Kherson Regional State Administration changed three times.³⁵

Figure 11 Issues with access to social, administrative, and medical services



³⁵ Available at: <http://surl.li/xcfb>

32 percent of residents view access to medical services and care as problematic, while 33 percent point to “lack of medicines” as a pressing issue. This situation is explained by the destruction of medical infrastructure in all macro-regions. According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Health, 1,449 healthcare facilities were damaged by the occupiers.³⁶ Among them, 190 were completely destroyed and are not capable of restoration. New facilities will be built in their place, if deemed appropriate. Alternatively, medical services in this area will be provided possibly through the modernization or expansion of nearby hospitals. Additionally, 505 pharmacies were damaged, including those operating under the “Affordable Medicines” program. Since the beginning of the war, the Russian army has damaged 103 emergency medical service vehicles and destroyed 253. Another 125 ambulances have been seized. The most significant losses have occurred in medical facilities in the Kharkiv, Donetsk, Mykolaiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Kyiv regions.

The most significant problem identified by respondents is the lack of employment opportunities, with 63 percent giving this response. For residents of the Eastern and Southern macro-regions, the figure is 70 percent.

” Olha, journalist, Kherson: “There are significant problems with work, given the danger in the city. It’s not like in Kharkiv, for example, where everyone knows that the shelling usually happens in Saltivka, so people settle mainly at the opposite end of Kharkiv, where small businesses are being restored, and so on. In Kherson, it’s not the same; no one ever knows which area will be targeted next. It could be anywhere – the center or the hospital. For residents from regions far from the south and east, this sounds terrible, it’s hard even to imagine! But the people in Kherson live under constant shelling; they are always tense. So, talking about recovery or solving problems like employment is premature.”

Issues with employment are, within the margin of error, equally relevant for both men (65 percent) and women (61 percent), for urban (65 percent) and rural (62 percent) residents, and for the groups 18–24 years of age (64 percent) and 25–54 years of age (67 percent). This issue is less significant for people of pre-pension and pension age, over 55 years old (55 percent). Problems with public transport and the ability to travel are significant for 26 percent of city residents and 31 percent of rural residents. Urban residents demonstrate a higher level of dissatisfaction with the competence of the local authorities (51 percent) than rural residents (31 percent). Issues with communication (mobile, telephone, postal) are mentioned by 13 percent of city residents and 32 percent of rural residents.

2.2.6 Self-assessment of financial status of residents of liberated territories

The distribution of respondents’ answers to the question “Which of these statements best describes the financial situation of your family after the liberation of the settlement from occupiers?” is presented in Table 9 and Figure 12.

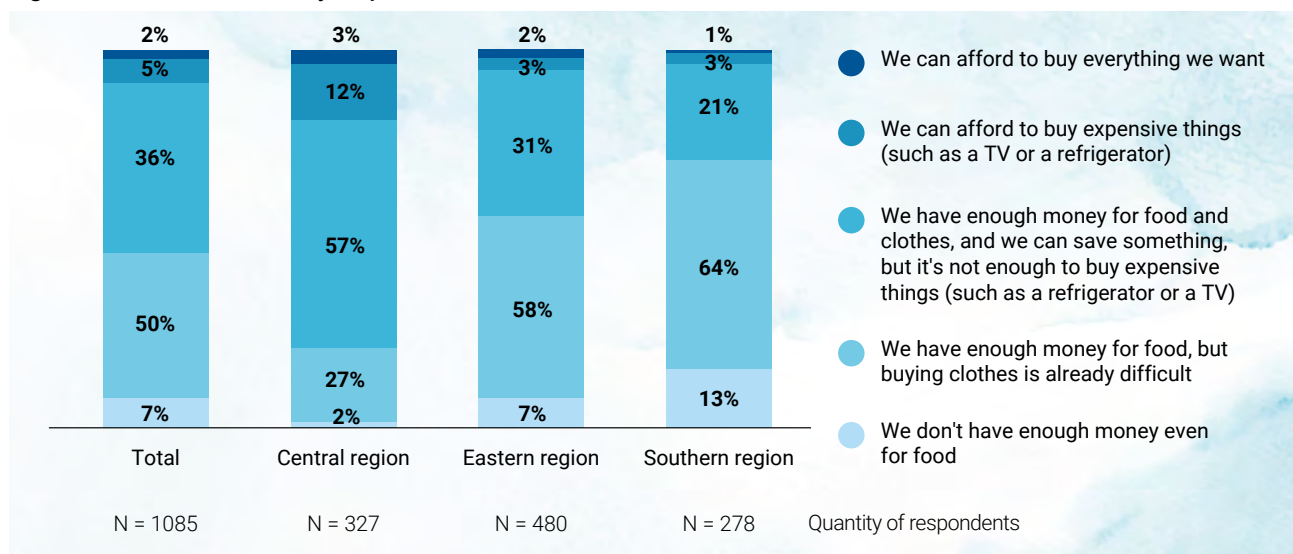
Table 9 Distribution of answers to the survey question regarding self-assessment of financial status

Answers	Number of responses				Percentage			
	Total	Central region	Eastern region	Southern region	Total	Central region	Eastern region	Southern region
We don't have enough money even for food	72	5	32	35	7%	2%	7%	13%
We have enough money for food, but buying clothes is already difficult	540	87	276	177	50%	27%	58%	64%
We have enough money for food and clothes, and we can save something, but it's not enough to buy expensive things (such as a refrigerator or a TV)	394	186	151	57	36%	57%	31%	21%

36 Available at: <https://moz.gov.ua/article/news/za-ponad-pivtora-roku-vijni-rosija-poshkodila-1449-ob%ca%bcektiv-medzakladiv-ta-sche-190-zrujnuvali-vschent>

Answers	Number of responses				Percentage			
	Total	Central region	Eastern region	Southern region	Total	Central region	Eastern region	Southern region
We can afford to buy expensive things (such as a TV or a refrigerator)	58	39	12	7	5%	12%	3%	3%
We can afford to buy everything we want	21	10	9	2	2%	3%	2%	1%
Overall	1085	327	480	278	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 12 Self-assessment by respondents of their financial status



Therefore the financial well-being of residents of the Eastern and Southern macro-regions is worse than that in the Central macro-region. Some 77 percent of residents in the Southern macro-region and 65 percent in the Eastern macro-region lack money for food and clothing, but the same applies to only 29 percent of people in the Central macro-region. Moreover, in the Central macro-region, a significantly higher number of people can afford to buy expensive items or indeed anything they desire (15 percent) than in the Eastern and Southern macro-regions (5 and 4 percent, respectively).

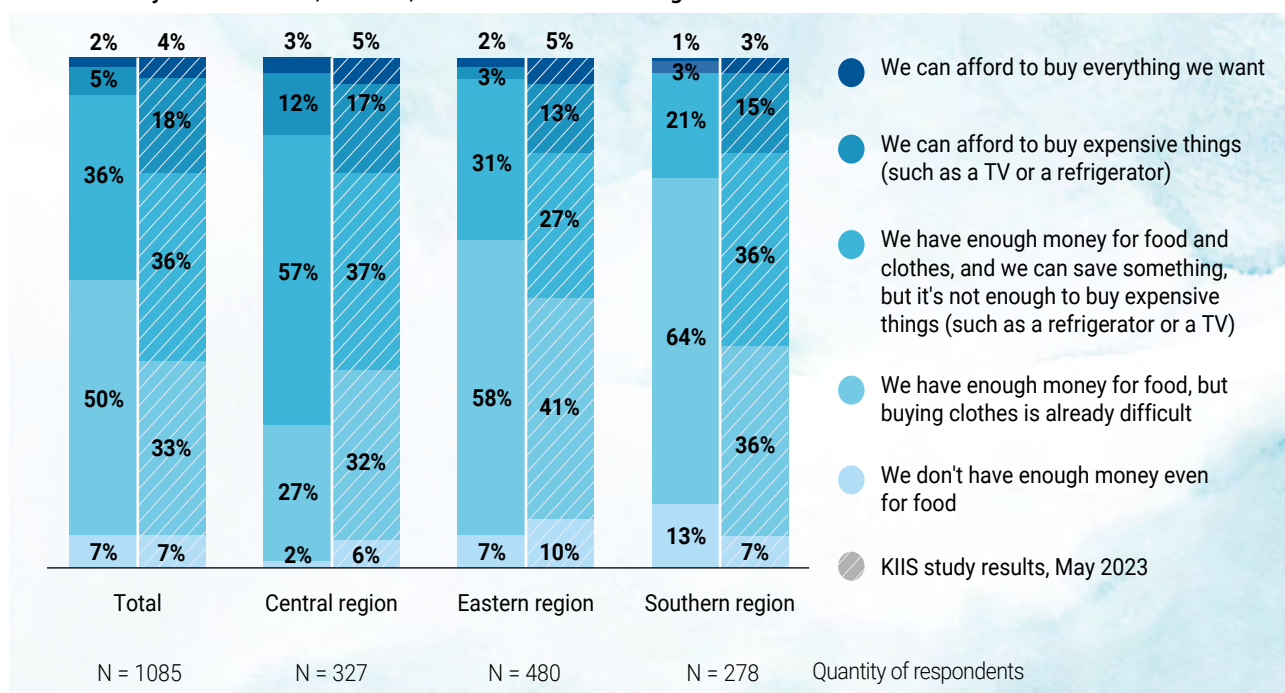
We compared the results of our study, in which we surveyed residents exclusively from the liberated settlements, with the results of the KIIS study conducted in May 2023, reflecting the results of a survey covering the entire territory controlled by the Ukrainian government (Figure 13).³⁷

The share of respondents who lack money for food is 7 percent both in the liberated territories and in the three macro-regions combined. Those who have enough money for food but not for clothing represent 50 percent of people in the liberated cities and villages, and 33 percent in the macro-regions overall. The percentage of people who have enough money for food, clothing, and some savings is the same in both studied populations, at 36 percent. The proportion of those who can afford to buy expensive items is almost four times higher across the macro-regions overall (18 percent) than in the liberated territories (5 percent).

The percentage of those who can afford to buy anything they want does not differ significantly within the statistical margin of error. In the Central macro-region, the share of those who lack money for food is higher than in the liberated settlements, at 6 and 2 percent, respectively. Similarly, a higher percentage find it difficult to buy clothing (32 percent compared with 27 percent).

37 Available at: <https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1256&page=1>

Figure 13 Comparison of self-assessment by respondents of their financial status in the liberated territories and on the entire territory of the Central, Eastern, and Southern macro-regions



2.2.7 Problems related to children's upbringing and care

More than 1,636 children in Ukraine have been affected by Russia's full-scale armed aggression. As of October 7, 2023, according to official information from juvenile prosecutors, 506 children had lost their lives, and over 1,130 had sustained injuries of varying degrees of severity. These figures are not final, as data from the areas of active combat, temporarily occupied, and liberated territories are still being gathered.³⁸

As things stand, the Ukrainian authorities have verified information on over 19,500 children taken from the occupied territories to Russia, but the real numbers are hard to confirm because of the lack of access to the occupied territories.³⁹

Dmytro Lubinets, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada, announced the return of some of the Ukrainian children abducted by Russia. He also mentioned that many countries have expressed a willingness to help liberate Ukrainians who were illegally taken to Russia. Typically, children who manage to escape from Russia return to their families or relatives if parents have not survived. Children from orphanages are returned to foster families.⁴⁰

The war is causing significant trauma, damaging the psychological wellbeing of children caught in such circumstances. Many respondents talk about the psychological traumas experienced by children as a result of the war.

” Natalia, psychologist, Dymer Village, Kyiv Region: “Children with autism become uncontrollable when they hear the sounds of explosions and shelling. Kids’ psychological problems manifest themselves immediately, while some people have symptoms after two months of liberation, others have them after a longer period of time. Recurrences of previous psychological issues, seemingly already worked through, can occur. Children are prone to many different fears: sleeping at night, being alone, and so on. They require long-term therapy.”

38 “506 children killed as a result of Russia’s aggression in Ukraine”, Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine. Available at: <https://suspilne.media/588985-506-ditej-zaginuli-vid-agresii-rosii-v-ukraini-ogpu/>

39 Over 19,500 children were taken from the occupied territories to Russia. Available at: <https://suspilne.media/430455-z-okupovanih-teritorij-do-rosii-vivezli-ponad-195-tisac-ditej-ale-cifra-ne-tocna-upovnovazena-prezidenta/>

40 Lubinets on the return of children from Russia. Available at <https://bit.ly/4bF2mNJ>

” Svitlana, retired, Kherson: “It is very difficult for children with autism to change to a new environment, so we stay. They are used to walking the same routes. We found a library that is open; they organize activities for us. Kids draw, do crafts and speech-development tasks (if they draw a snail, they talk about snails). We have been attending classes since 2016, and at first, they didn’t know what to do with such children, but they somehow found a good approach. But now it’s closed because of the frequent shelling. Every parent tries to create conditions in which their children are comfortable. However, some children are afraid even to leave home now. For example, one boy doesn’t go beyond the fence of his own house because he is afraid of shelling.”

The least protected people in wartime are children from low-income families.

” Olha, journalist, Kherson: “...When I was in Kherson reporting on the events, the residents of one particular building told me about a situation in which they didn’t know how to act correctly. There were two boys, the older is 14. Their mother disappeared at the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the father started drinking after the occupation, and then one day he didn’t come home. The children were left alone in their apartment. The neighbors told me that they didn’t know what was the right way of dealing with the situation, so they just started helping these children, feeding them, and taking care of them as best they could. And these are not isolated cases: people hesitate, often they don’t know whether they can turn to social services... What is the right thing to do if the settlement is occupied? People don’t understand, and sometimes they don’t know the right way of doing things, so they just take matters into their own hands.”

Another issue highlighted by respondents concerns the difficulties involved in resuming children’s education. Currently, it is not known how many children are living in the territories liberated by the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The number is constantly changing as the military continues to liberate new settlements. Children who lived in these territories have been out of school for an extended period and thus suffer from significant educational gaps. Needless to say, during periods of armed conflict, people focus primarily on survival.

Resuming education is possible under conditions of safety and following the directives of the regional military administration. In-person or mixed forms of study are currently not feasible. Distance learning requires several elements, including the establishment of communications, provision of electricity and water, and inspection of the condition of schools used by the former occupiers.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science has prepared step-by-step instructions to restore education after the liberation of the temporarily occupied territories (Figure 14).⁴¹

Figure 14 Algorithm for steps needed for the restoration of educational processes

ALGORITHM OF FIRST-HAND ACTIONS REQUIRED OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AFTER THE LIBERATION OF TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IN ORDER TO RESUME SCHOOL EDUCATION

- 1 Identify location of students and school staff
- 2 Reestablish connection with students and parents who remained in temporarily occupied territory
- 3 Categorize students by place of residence
- 4 Organize a safe environment for education under marshal law; provide necessary explanations to students, parents and staff
- 5 Analyze availability of books, computers and other equipment and tools necessary for education in relation to the number of students and staff
- 6 Conduct an inventory of material and technical equipment at educational facilities
- 7 Bring back whatever was evacuated that is now needed to relaunch school education
- 8 Make changes (if needed) to the education management information system

Online education is recommended for all parts of the educational process in the liberated territories to ensure safety

41 Available at: <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/news/deokupaciya-algoritmi-pershochergovih-dij-organiv-miscevogo-samovryaduvannya-ta-osvityan>

2.2.8 Problems related to caring for people with disabilities

In-depth interview respondents noted that the majority of people with disabilities and serious illnesses were evacuated from the temporarily occupied territories to territory controlled by Ukraine. After de-occupation, they typically remain in their place of temporary residence. The most pressing issues for people currently in liberated cities and villages include a lack of medicines and hygiene products, and an insufficient number of social workers.

- ” Svitlana, pensioner, Ozera village, Kyiv region: “I have health problems that got worse after the occupation. Everything is caused by the constant stress, a cold basement... But we restored the medical center. Doctors from Kyiv come here and provide free assistance. Also, people receive free medicine, and bedridden people are given diapers.”
- ” Violetta, civil servant, Kherson: “There is a shortage of social workers; no one visits people’s homes. People with special needs receive help from relatives and acquaintances. International organizations provide food certificates, medicines. There are disruptions in transportation, which significantly complicates the lives of people with disabilities.”

2.2.9 Public safety in liberated cities and villages

There are no official statistics on criminal activity in the liberated territories. In liberated cities and villages the National Police focus on de-mining land and buildings and re-establishing investigative and operational groups equipped with mobile forensic laboratories. Other key tasks include the identification of collaborators and saboteurs; documentation and recording of war crimes according to type (crime scene protection, evidence preservation, photo and video documentation, witness interviews); investigation of certain types of military crime; implementation of police care measures, taking into account the significant increase in the number of people requiring such measures; inspection of vehicles on roads and at checkpoints; searching for missing persons.⁴²

According to the study 13 percent of respondents (6 percent in the Southern macro-region, 20 percent in the Central region) reported a low level of law and order. About 12 percent of survey participants (20 percent in the Southern macro-region) report problems with access to legal assistance. Overall, these findings suggest that these issues are not a top priority for residents of liberated territories.

Neighborhood Watch is a new public safety measure that can be used effectively in the liberated territories.⁴³ The main idea is that the community itself ensures order and safety in its territory, contributes to strengthening the community, improves safety, and creates a stable living environment. Neighborhood Watch operates on the principle of active communication between residents within their own district, as well as with the police.

The “Neighborhood Watch” project is a set of programmatic, hardware, engineering, technical, and administrative solutions based on a technological core. It involves interconnected and integrated components and services to ensure civilian, technological, environmental, and other types of citizen safety, as well as the provision of various useful services. A particularly important and innovative aspect is the involvement of a large number of people, including randomly formed groups, subgroups, citizens with diverse motivations, law enforcement officers, and various individuals brought together to address common tasks, whether they be personal, collective or public safety-related. Members of the Neighborhood Watch⁴⁴ are not supposed to intervene independently in suspected activities; instead, their task is to inform the police. Based on experiences in the Kharkiv⁴⁵ and Poltava regions,⁴⁶ Neighborhood Watch can become an effective tool to ensure public safety in Ukraine’s de-occupied territories.

42 Specifics of the National Police officers’ work in liberated territories. Available at: <https://univd.edu.ua/uk/news/14335>

43 Implementation of «community policing» in conditions of war and martial law.

Available at: <https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Vprovadzhenia-Community-Policing-v-umovakh-viyny-ta-voiennoho-stanu.pdf>

44 Available at: <http://surl.li/xrgt>

45 Chuhiv: half a year from the “Community Guard”. Available at: <https://sheriffua.org/news/harkov/chugujiv-na-pivkroku-vid-susidskoji-varti>

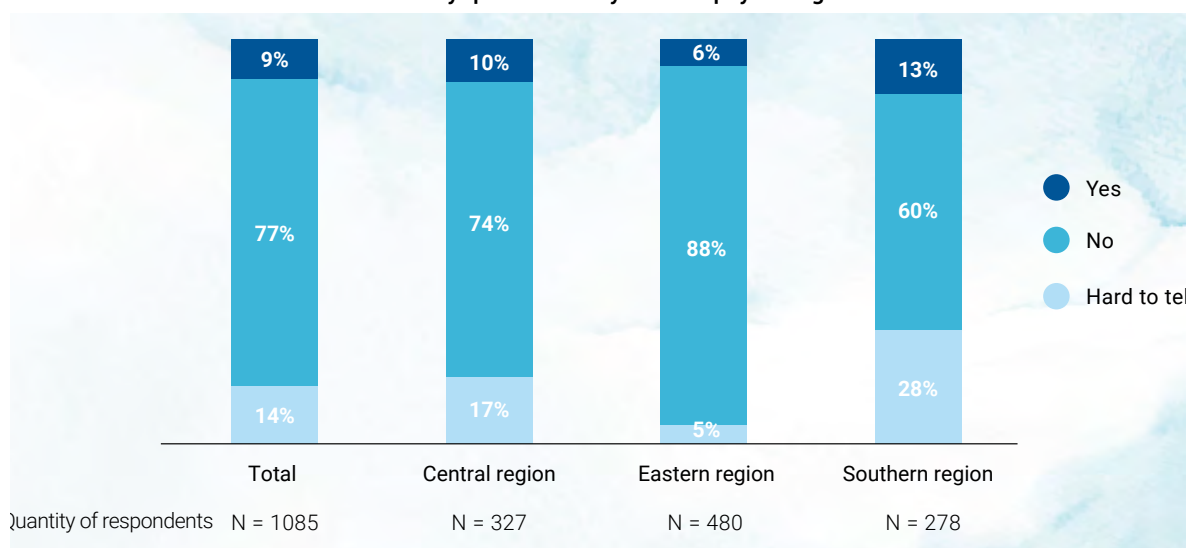
46 Houses in Poltava will be guarded by the Community Guard. Available at: <https://www.0532.ua/news/2013515/budinki-u-poltavi-ohoronatime-susidska-varta>

2.2.10 Psychological help to residents of liberated territories

Professional psychologists believe that there is a significant need for prolonged psychological assistance for people who have been in temporarily occupied territories.⁴⁷ Living under occupation is a complex experience that can have numerous negative consequences for a person's psychological well-being. People under such circumstances have to conceal their emotions and internal state, often for long periods, to put on a "mask" to save their lives. They live in a constant atmosphere of fear. After liberation they therefore want to express themselves, perhaps cry, to release the emotions that they had to hide.

Such needs may be deeply hidden in a person's sub-conscious. In our opinion, this is evidenced by certain discrepancies between the survey results (Figure 15) and the thoughts of respondents expressed in in-depth interviews during lengthy conversations in a confidential setting. According to the survey, only 6–13 percent of respondents indicated a need for psychological assistance, but in the qualitative research most participants mentioned the need for such help, in one form or another.

Figure 15 Distribution of answers to the survey question "Do you need psychological assistance?"



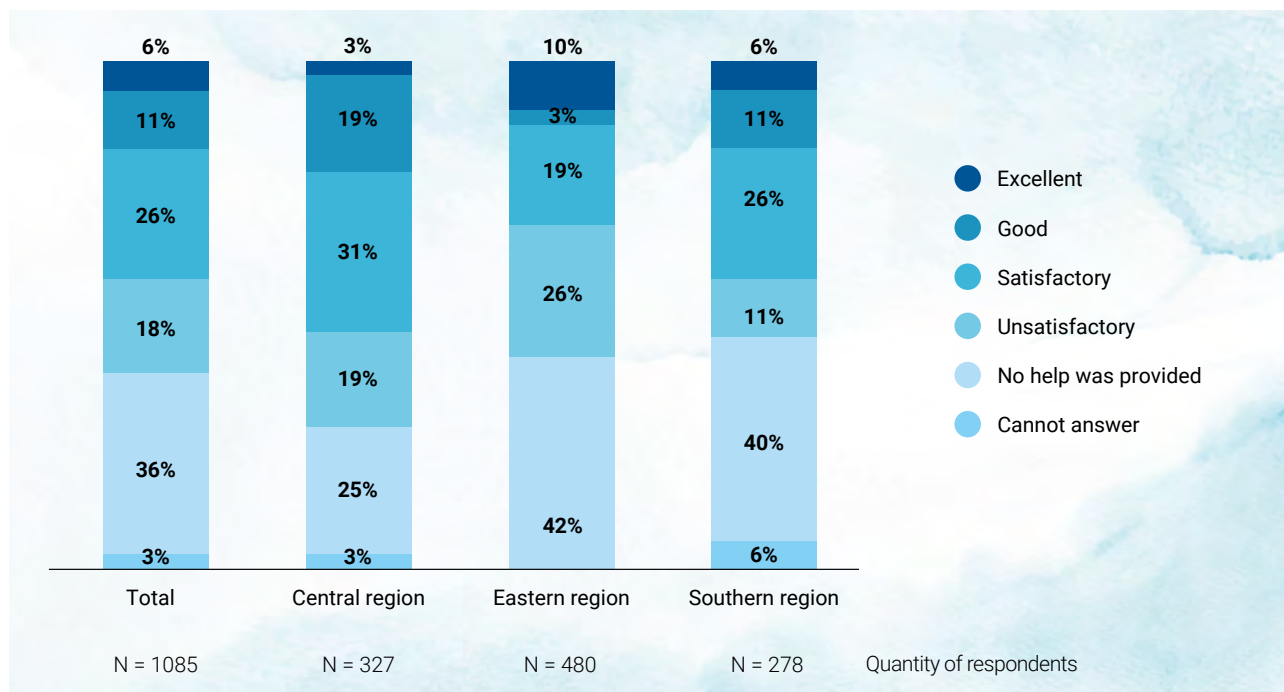
The distribution of answers to the survey question among men and women, residents of cities and villages, and different age groups does not differ significantly from the average indicators.

- ” *Oleh, civil servant, Kyiv Region: “Psychological assistance is needed. It is provided mainly by volunteer organizations. Where local self-government bodies support it (for example, by providing premises), it is effective. If it is not a priority for the local self-government, then assistance is not provided.”*
- ” *Nataliia, psychologist, Dymer settlement, Kyiv region: “Quality assistance is lacking for people in a post-traumatic state. Organizations provide assistance on a one-off basis, for about half an hour, which is insufficient for people dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). One 19-year-old client developed a fear of leaving his home after experiencing PTSD. There are so many people, both adults and children, with various disorders in need of professional help.”*
- ” *Svitlana, a specialist from the social assistance service in the city of Horlivka, Donetsk Region: “I believe that psychological assistance is insufficient. Sometimes, it seems that my clients and even some acquaintances just want to talk. You talk to them, and you understand that they are ready to talk for a long time. I think it's because during the occupation, they didn't talk among themselves about what was distressing them because they all experienced the same thing. And when the territories are liberated or when they move to safer areas, they really want others to hear them...”*

⁴⁷ Psychological assistance for residents of liberated territories. Available at: <http://centre7.org.ua/psykholohichna-dopomoha-meshkantsiam-deokupovanykh-terytoriy/>

Out of all respondents in the quantitative study, only 98 indicated that they needed psychological assistance (Figure 16). Among them, 36 percent claimed that they did not receive assistance, 18 percent rated the assistance unsatisfactory, 26 percent gave it a satisfactory rating, 11 percent rated it good and 6 percent excellent.

Figure 16 Distribution of responses to the question “Please rate your level of satisfaction with the psychological assistance (from 5, the highest level of satisfaction through 3, necessary psychological assistance received... to 1, no assistance provided)”



After talking to experts and based on the results of qualitative research, it can be concluded that some professionals believe that a brigade of psychologists should be sent to every territorial community in the liberated areas. However, there is no answer to the question of where to find all the specialists needed in these communities over a long period, even years, because it is ongoing work, not a one-time consultation. Others are inclined to believe that there are enough specialists in psychological assistance and psychotherapy. However, it is unknown where the necessary funds can be obtained to enable them to help the population. Currently the money is not available for psychological rehabilitation. They believe that more state-level programs and projects focused on psychotherapy are needed. Currently, the question remains open.

According to open source information, psychological assistance is provided for the residents of liberated territories in the institutions of the Ukrainian Ministry of Health and by NGOs within the framework of various grant projects run by international donor organizations.⁴⁸ There are also helplines that provide psychological support by phone or online.⁴⁹ However, information could not be found about a coordinated nationwide system of psychological assistance within Ukraine.

2.2.11 Environmental problems and the consequences of the occupiers’ environmental terrorism

Since the beginning of the Russian Federation’s full-scale invasion damage has been inflicted on Ukraine’s environment on a daily basis. Burned forests, rivers, lakes, and soils contaminated with heavy metals, thousands of animals killed and plants destroyed, mined and occupied nature reserves – these are the

48 Grants for assistance to Ukrainians affected by the war. Available at: <https://houseofeurope.org.ua/opportunity/365>

49 Where can Ukrainians receive free psychological aid? Available at: <https://minre.gov.ua/2023/03/19/de-ukrayinczi-mozhut-bezkoshtovno-otrymaty-psyhologichnu-dopomogu/>

results of Russia's aggression that affect the Ukrainian natural environment. According to State Ecological Inspection estimates, occupiers caused damage to the environment in Kharkiv region alone in the amount of almost UAH 346 billion.⁵⁰

As noted by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Economy Yulia Sviridenko, the approximate environmental damage due to the full-scale invasion is estimated at EUR 55.6 billion. This estimate does not include the damage resulting from the terrorist act at the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Station. Moreover, this figure increases daily by approximately EUR 102 million. In turn, the losses from the blowing up of the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Station, according to preliminary calculations by the UN, the Ministry of the Economy, and the Kyiv School of Economics, amount to almost USD 14 billion.⁵¹

The degradation of the environment and the destruction due to war not only harm nature itself but also exacerbate food and water loss, destroying people's means of existence. Thus, environmental damage threatens the local population's well-being, health, and survival. This will increase their vulnerability for decades. According to official data, over 2,000 cases of environmental damage have been identified in Ukraine since the beginning of the full-scale war. And these are only the crimes that have been documented in areas under control and in de-occupied territories. According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, there is another extremely complex problem that needs to be addressed, namely debris, which, according to recent estimates, has already reached about 12 million tonnes.⁵²

The true environmental catastrophe was the Russians' destruction of the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Station dam. The territories affected by this will be changed irreversibly. Experts from the Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group have categorized a variety of consequences for nature: the consequences of draining the bottom of the Kakhovska Reservoir, of flooding territories below the dam, and for the Black Sea. They point out that even in the short term, the consequences for nature of the dam's destruction will be incomparably greater than the consequences of all military actions since the beginning of February 2022.⁵³

More than 37,000 buildings, predominantly private houses in suburban and rural areas, were affected by the flood, with 15 percent damaged beyond repair, causing total damage of \$1.1 billion USD. While the water is receding, the horrific consequences of the flood will persist for a long time. The destruction of the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Station dam led to the shallowing of the reservoir, resulting in the suspension of water supply to more than 30 irrigation systems in Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia regions, as reported by the Ukrainian Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food.⁵⁴

In the last pre-war year, 2021, these systems provided irrigation for 584,000 hectares of agricultural land. In 2021 alone, four million tonnes of cereals and oilseeds were harvested, amounting to approximately \$1.5 billion. The Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food stated that the destruction of the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Station could turn southern Ukraine's fields into a desert as early as next year. According to the Ministry of Agrarian Policy, approximately 10,000 hectares of agricultural land on the right bank of the Dnipro have already been flooded. On the low left bank, temporarily occupied by Russia, the flooding is several times greater. Some areas may remain underwater.

Water flows inundating cities, villages, and fields carry everything in their path, including waste, hazardous chemicals, or even mines. The surroundings of the dam, controlled by the Russian military, were heavily mined. Now, these mines are drifting in the water, according to Red Cross and Care International warnings.⁵⁵

50 Environmental problems of liberated territories.

Available at: <https://life.znaj.ua/452392-ekologichni-problemi-deokupovanih-teritoriy-derzhkoinspekciya-provela-vijzdne-zasidannya>

51 Available at: <https://www.me.gov.ua/News/Detail?lang=uk-UA&id=255966a7-29f2-4fb8-862f-d2b7352c5939&title=PritiagtiDoVidpovidalnostiAgresora>

52 Environmental damage as a war crime – can Russia be held accountable for ecocide?

Available at: https://lb.ua/blog/mykola_turyk/558050_ekologichna_shkoda_yak_viyskoviy.html

53 Irreversible Changes: How the Destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant Damages Ukrainian Ecology.

Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-65858913>

54 The Russians' destruction of the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Station has caused significant damage to Ukrainian agriculture.

Available at: <https://minagro.gov.ua/news/znishchennya-rosiyanami-kahovskoyi-ges-zavdalo-znachnih-zbitkiv-silskomu-gospodarstvu-ukrayini>

55 Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-65858913>

The left bank of the Dnipro and local farmland will suffer most from this. This will complicate their use in the near future.

The water flow from the Kakhovska Reservoir may contain toxic waste. Deposits left in the exposed part will dry out and be spread by dust storms. In general, because of the dam's destruction, a large amount of fuel and lubricants, toxic to aquatic inhabitants, got into the water, forming a film on the water surface. In addition, the flooding of populated areas, including cesspools, gas stations, and so on, means that an unusually large volume of pollutants has entered the sea. This can affect various groups of living organisms, from plankton to cetaceans in the Black Sea.

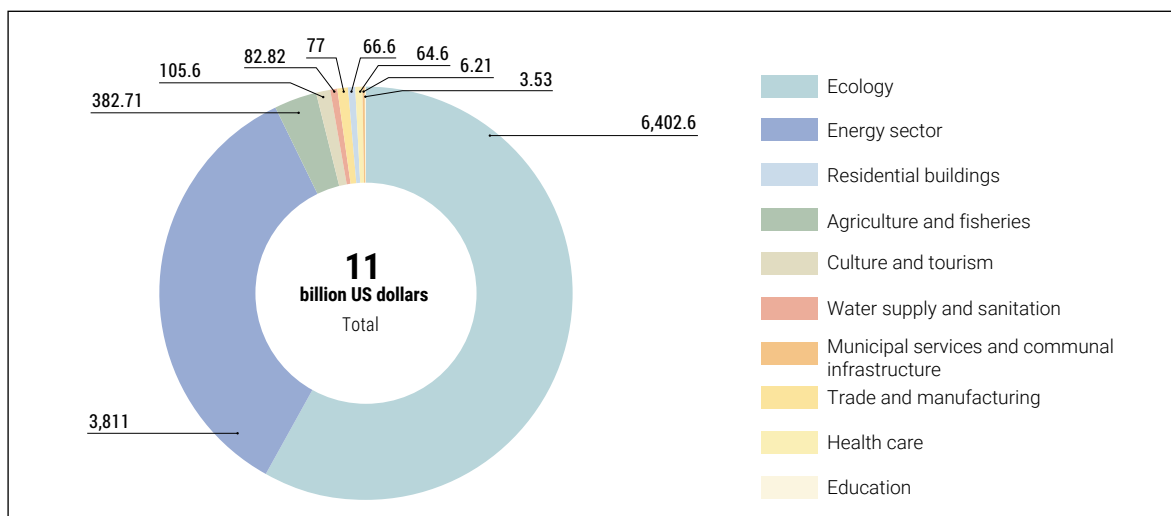
According to Ukraine's Ministry of Agrarian Policy, the destruction of the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Station will result in the loss of at least 43 fish species, 20 of which are commercially important. Losses for the fishing industry from the death of adult fish alone could reach 95,000 tonnes.

- ” Oleh, Deputy Head of the National Environmental Center of Ukraine, Mykolaiv Region: “Currently, locals do not catch, buy, or consume river fish. The fish resources of the region have suffered significant losses. According to ecologists' estimates, fish losses amount to 95 thousand tonnes. Bans on fishing and swimming are in effect in the Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kherson, and Zaporizhia regions. The mud at the bottom of the Kakhovka Reservoir is also hazardous and may contain radioactive elements accumulated due to the Chernobyl disaster. About 50 thousand hectares of forest have been flooded. Half of this forest resource will perish. Pine cannot survive for long in waterlogged areas. The flooding occurred during the breeding period of animals, during spawning. Many young animals and fish perished. Millions of lizards, hedgehogs, newts, and snakes perished. Tens of thousands of large animals died. This is a severe blow to the ecosystem.”
- ” Yuriy, a research fellow at the Institute of Marine Biology of the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences, Odesa: “The construction of the dam was as big a mistake as its destruction. The Kakhovka Reservoir was built to supply water to Crimea and for growing grain. However, this is not very sustainable economic management. People have long lived in these areas. What kind of activities did they engage in? Livestock farming and nut crops, for example. It is thus necessary now to transition to other types of economic management. What about restoring the dam? Restoration will take 10 years. People need to live somehow during these 10 years. Therefore market gardening and livestock farming need to be kickstarted... The restoration of the dam is not so much an ecological issue as a cultural or ethical one. When they created the Kakhovka Reservoir, they destroyed a significant part of our cultural heritage. The Great Meadow, a sacred place of the Zaporizhian Sich, was flooded. On one hand, the dam should not have been destroyed because it was a disaster. But it also should not have been built because that too was a disaster...”

According to the report “Assessment of Needs after the Catastrophe at the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Station”,⁵⁶ prepared jointly by the UN and the Ukrainian government, the most significant damage has been suffered by the energy and environmental sectors, amounting to over \$6.4 billion and \$3.8 billion, respectively. This constitutes over 90 percent of the total damage incurred (Figure 17). According to the Assessment, \$59.5 million will be needed to restore the environment. This sum will be used for de-mining, cleaning, surveying, and evaluating contaminated areas.

⁵⁶ Available at: <https://ukraine.un.org/en/248860-post-disaster-needs-assessment-report-kakhovka-dam-disaster>

Figure 17 Damage due to the destruction of the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Station dam, by economic sectors, million USD



Source: Assessment of Needs after the Catastrophe at the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Station dam, UN and Ukrainian Government.

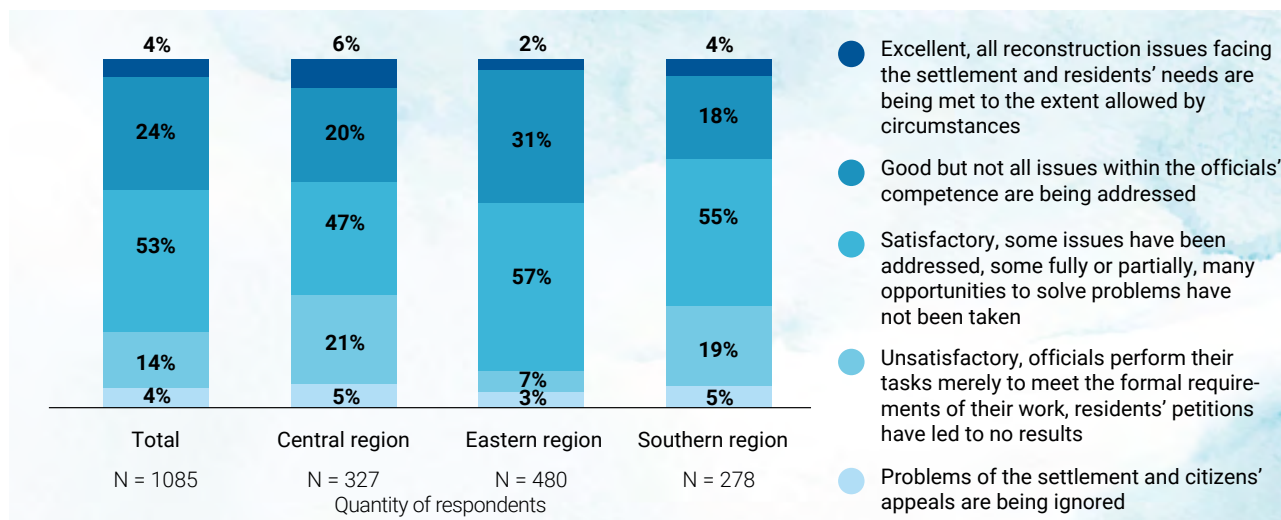
2.2.12 Issues related to gender discrimination

Out of 1085 survey respondents, only three people reported experiencing situations characterized by gender discrimination (gender-based violence, human trafficking, etc.). They include a woman from the Eastern macro-region, and a man and a woman from the Southern macro-region. Approximately 1 percent of respondents were unable to answer this question, and 99 percent responded negatively. One likely reason for such a finding, among others, is people’s insufficient awareness of the nature and possible manifestations of gender discrimination.

2.2.13 Assessment of the actions of local authorities, charitable organizations, and volunteers

Figure 18 presents the distribution of responses to the survey question “Please rate the performance of your local authorities after the settlement’s liberation from the occupiers”. The local authorities’ performance was rated “Excellent” by 4 percent of respondents, while 24 percent rated it “Good”, with the caveat that not all issues within the officials’ competence are being addressed. The response “Satisfactory, some issues were addressed, some fully or partially, many opportunities to solve problems were not taken” was chosen by 53 percent of respondents. Some 14 percent rated the government’s performance “Unsatisfactory,” and 4 percent believe that the problems of their settlements and citizens’ appeals are being ignored.

Figure 18 Rating of local authorities’ performance after the liberation of the settlement from occupiers



2.3 PUBLIC OPINION IN THE LIBERATED TERRITORIES

2.3.1 People's moods and emotional states several months after the liberation

Analyzing the findings of in-depth interviews, it becomes evident that, for many, the initial post-liberation euphoria did not oscillate on a psychological pendulum towards pessimism and dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. Instead, they have approached the challenges arising from the realities of war with optimism and understanding. Nevertheless, there are discernible expressions of disappointment, centered primarily around inadequacies regarding the handling of residents' pressing issues, the lack of a clear patriotic stance on the part of some local politicians, and dissatisfaction with the lack of consequences for collaborators. , Among other concerns there is public demand for answers to questions such as why the enemy managed to capture the Azov Sea region without resistance, and why people did not receive accurate information in the initial days of the war and instead were reassured with comments about its swift conclusion.

” *Nataliia, psychologist, Dnypr, Kyiv Region: “Everyone is very happy to come back. People are rethinking their lives. You rejoice that you can live in your own house, on your own land. For example, I can say that only two children from our class have not returned to our school. One of my friends has not returned yet from Estonia. My sister has not returned from Spain yet. They are waiting for the announcement of victory or the cessation of bombings in Ukraine. Personally, I do not know anyone who wants to stay in other European countries; everyone plans to return after the victory.”*

Based on the findings from the in-depth interviews we can affirm that a pro-Ukrainian stance has been reinforced in the majority of people who have spent time in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Moreover, there is a distinct rejection of the “Russian world” and Russian propaganda among them.

” *Olha, journalist, Kherson: “Probably, in those settlements where the temporary occupation was short-lived, the worldview of the residents does not differ much. It seems to me that people have become more confident in their stance. Although earlier, in Kherson, when questioned in Ukrainian, they would respond in Russian—Kherson was a Russian-speaking city—now everyone, including the protagonists in my work and other people addressed in Ukrainian, respond in Ukrainian in 100% of cases.”*

People who have lived through the occupation feel a certain apprehension towards fellow citizens leading peaceful lives away from the front line. This sentiment can be attributed to a self-awareness cultivated by the awakening of Ukrainian identity and patriotism, a resilience developed under artillery shelling and oppression under occupation. Consequently, it is distressing for these individuals to encounter the attitude of “what difference does it make?,” which persists in some places, notably in large cities and among young people.

” *Veronika, teacher, Kyiv Region: “During winter, we had the chance to take a short trip to Yaremche (in the Carpathian mountains) to relax a bit. It felt as if there was no war. An acquaintance shared her experiences of the occupation with the local residents there. While they appeared to be listening, it seemed as though they couldn't grasp anything at all. It appears that unless you undergo this experience—occupation—you may never truly comprehend those who have lived through it.”*

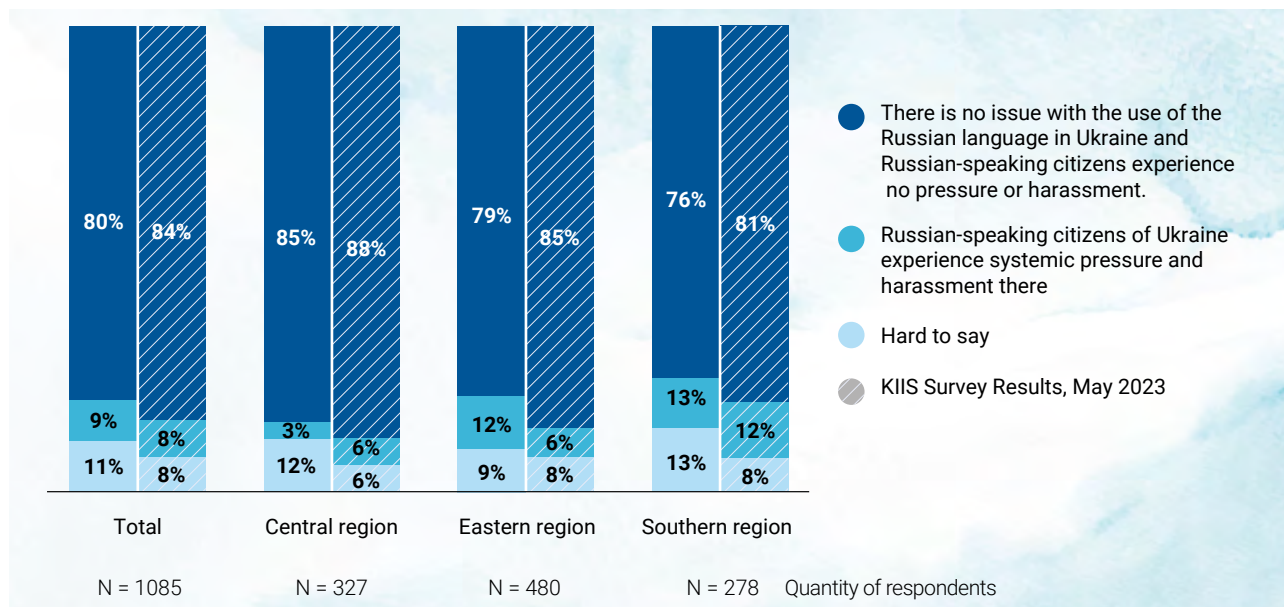
2.3.2 Public opinion regarding current socio-political issues

The quantitative research survey included two questions on issues that the authors believed to be particularly divisive in terms of public sentiment in the years leading up to the war: language and Ukraine's NATO membership. Recognizing the possibility that respondents might withhold their true opinions on these two issues because of the ongoing Russian aggression, the questions were formulated to allow for the selection of alternative answers without causing significant discomfort. Moreover, in coordination with the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) leadership, the wording of these questions mirrored that of KIIS nationwide survey. This alignment provided an opportunity to compare the perspectives of

residents in the liberated territories overall and in each macro-region with the aggregated results of the nationwide survey across Ukraine and its macro-regions.

Figure 19 shows the distribution of responses regarding issues related to use of the Russian language, oppression, and persecution of Russian-speaking citizens in Ukraine. The graph presents the findings from the public opinion research conducted in the liberated territories alongside the results of the KIIS survey conducted in May 2023 across Ukraine and its macro-regions.⁵⁷

Figure 19 Distribution of responses to the question about problems with the use of the Russian language in Ukraine



The survey results for the three macro-regions overall and for the liberated territories within these three macro-regions differ by 1–4 percent, which is within the statistical margin of error. It may be noted, however, that in all three macro-regions, the percentage of people who believe that there are no problems with using the Russian language in Ukraine is lower in the liberated territories than the overall percentage for the macro-region. This difference is particularly significant in the Southern macro-region (76 percent compared with 81 percent) and the Eastern macro-region (79 percent compared with 85 percent).

Figure 20 presents the distribution of responses to the question about attitudes towards ways of ensuring Ukraine’s security. Similar to the previous graph, the results are presented in comparison with the KIIS survey conducted in May–June 2023.⁵⁸

As in the previous question, the responses of residents of the liberated territories are less radical than the aggregated responses of residents of the three macro-regions overall.

Some 51 percent of residents of liberated territories and 58 percent of residents across all three macro-regions support NATO membership as a guarantee of Ukraine’s security. In the Eastern and Southern macro-regions, there is 7 percent less support for NATO membership as Ukraine’s security guarantee in the liberated territories than in the territory of the macro-regions as a whole. In the Central macro-region, 67 percent of respondents support Ukraine’s NATO membership as the ultimate security guarantee, while support for this thesis across the entire territory of the macro-regions amounts to 59 percent.

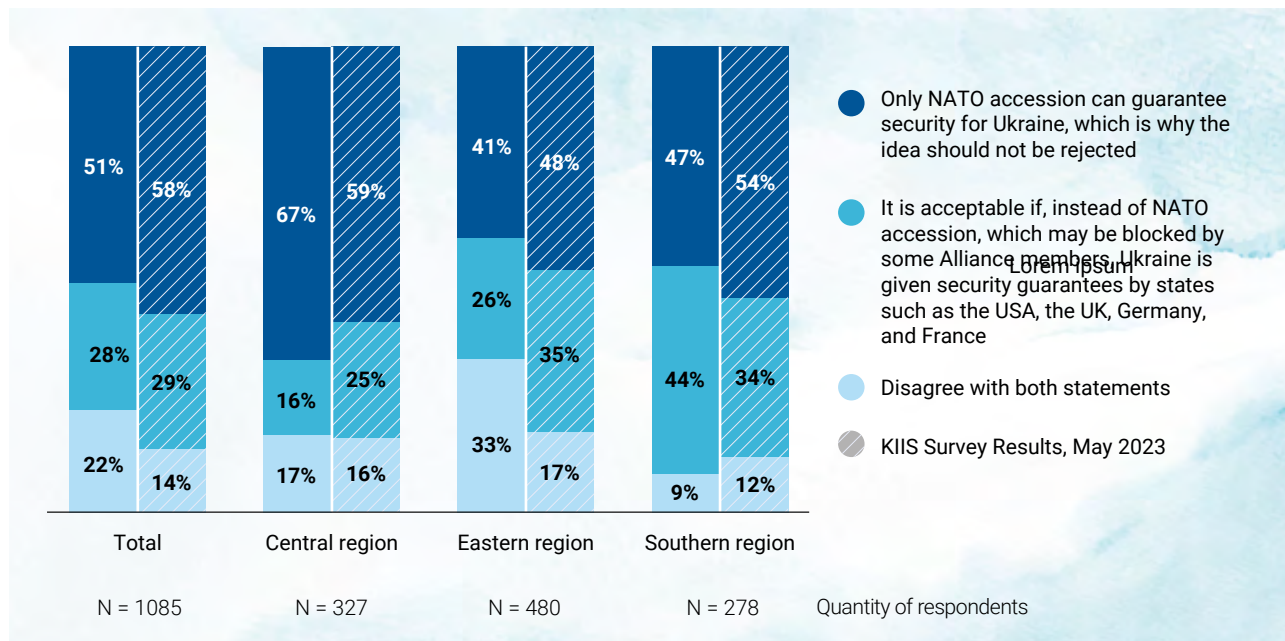
The findings contradict assertions made by participants in in-depth interviews suggesting that residents of liberated territories are more vehemently opposed to the “Russian world” and more supportive of NATO than residents of areas that were not under occupation. This inconsistency might be attributed to the

⁵⁷ Available at: <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1245&page=1&t=10>

⁵⁸ Available at: <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1258&page=1>

recruitment methodology employed for in-depth interviews, which primarily targeted activists, volunteers, experts, and government officials. These individuals may hold perspectives that deviate somewhat from the general public opinion.

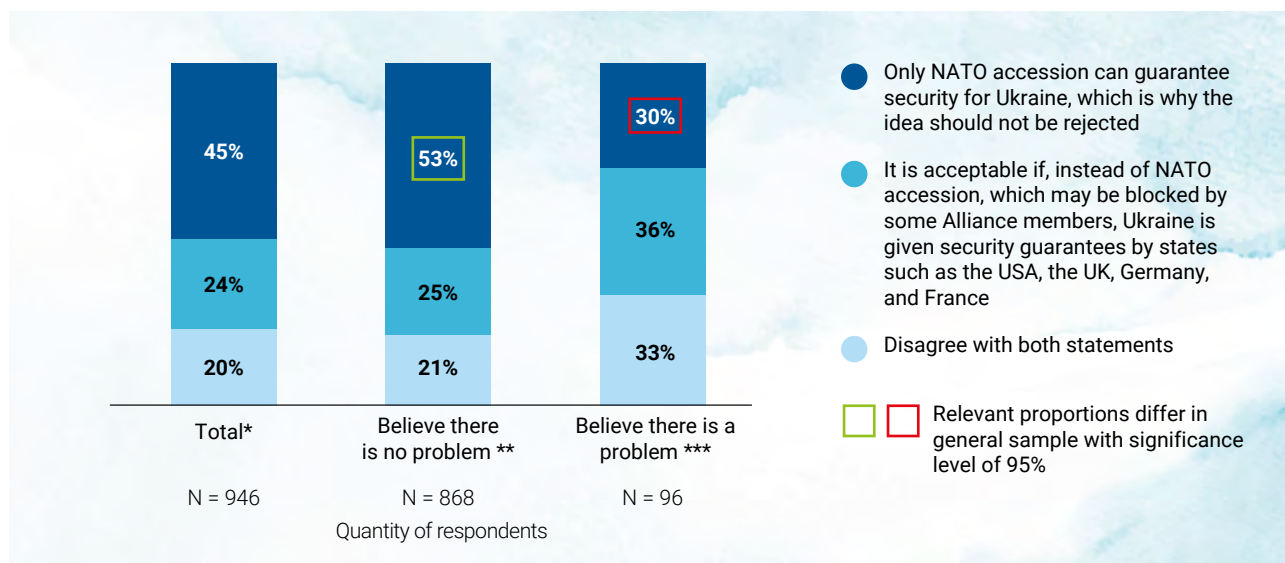
Figure 20 Distribution of answers to the question “Currently, there is a discussion about possible ways to ensure the security of Ukraine. With which of these statements do you agree more?”



The application of statistical analysis tools to survey responses enables us to confidently assert a correlation between respondents’ attitudes toward potential means of ensuring Ukraine’s security and their stance on the language issue. According to the chi-square test, this correlation is significant with a probability of 99%.

Utilizing the Z-test, a statistically meaningful difference was established in the proportion of individuals supporting NATO accession between those acknowledging language issues and those asserting the absence of such issues. The significance level is 95% (see Figure 21).

Figure 21 Attitudes toward potential means of ensuring Ukraine’s security in relation to views on the language issue



* Except for respondents who have not shared their views on the language issue.

** There is no issue with the use of the Russian language in Ukraine and Russian-speaking citizens experience no pressure or harassment

*** Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine experience systemic pressure and harassment in Ukraine

2.3.3 Analysis of information impact on residents of liberated territories

When examining the impact of pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian media on the population, insights from in-depth interviews emphasize the sustained and intensive effects of Russian propaganda spanning many years of Ukraine's independence, particularly during the conflict that commenced in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea. A notable aspect highlighted by interviewees is the role of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) as a tool of Russian propaganda.

” *Oleh, government official, Kyiv Region: “The most influential indirect instrument of Moscow’s propaganda is the UOC MP. In recent months, the authorities have made active efforts to transition Ukraine Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate dioceses to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. This transition is not coercive but rather rooted in ideological principles, based on the notion that, in time of war, an organization controlled from the aggressor-state’s capital has no right to operate in Ukraine. Additionally, a legal mechanism has been devised that allow the lower ranks of the UOC MP to join the OCU.”*

Respondents underscore that, despite its absurdity and falsehoods, Russian propaganda on occupied territories has achieved certain outcomes because of its persistence and the absence of alternative information sources.

When assessing Ukrainian media influence, participants in the qualitative study identify both strengths and weaknesses, occasionally offering divergent evaluations of specific information products.

” *Olha, journalist, Kherson: “I think local media are in demand among the population to learn about local news. I believe that residents of liberated territories need a specific informational product. Even if it may not appeal to them, it’s worth trying. In fact, I’m also engaged in this; I’m making documentaries about people who resisted the occupiers, and also more generally about life during the occupation. What seemed like ordinary life to some was actually a feat of endurance for others. Refusing to use rubles, for example, could have cost the lives of those who refused. It’s important to tell the stories of these people.”*

” *Svitlana, social services specialist, Gorlivka, Donetsk Region: “I believe that it’s crucial to establish the network in the liberated territories so that people immediately receive information about what is happening and have the opportunity to call their relatives. I would like to see interesting—entertaining and educational—projects launched in Ukrainian. When people search for something to watch, they mostly find Russian-language content. We need more content in our own language, including educational programs for children.”*

Overall, Ukrainian information policy has plenty of room for improvement. This applies both to the development of domestic media resources and products, and to countering Russian propaganda. For example, according to reports, on the liberated territories of Kharkiv and Kherson regions, some residents receive signals from Russian TV channels instead of Ukrainian ones through digital broadcasters such as T2.⁶⁰ Russian channels broadcast propaganda, Putin’s speeches, and other anti-Ukrainian information. Signal jamming may be perceived as a violation of freedom of speech, and European partners may express concerns that such methods, though used to combat Russian propaganda, could also be used to suppress other channels that may be inconvenient for the Ukrainian authorities. Therefore, despite the need to protect people against hostile propaganda, such a step should be taken cautiously, observing international freedom of speech standards.

The war has had a significant impact on the cultural life of the entire country and especially the liberated territories. Military invasion and the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 have forced a reconsideration of the historical narratives that are most familiar in Ukrainian society and directly related to the totalitarian past. The large-scale war brought these issues to a new level: wars can change traditions, erase historical memory, and transform cultural customs and values. Therefore, it is crucial to create informational and cultural content

60 Distorted Informational Landscape: Why Russian TV Channels Continue to Broadcast in the Liberated Territories.

Available at: <https://www.unian.ua/society/vikrivleniy-informaciyinyi-svit-chomu-na-zvilnenih-teritoriyah-dosi-translyuyutsya-rosijski-telekanali-12308625.html>

for people living in liberated cities and villages. As already mentioned, 15 percent of respondents in the Central and 24 percent of those in the Southern Macro-regions directly or indirectly support narratives about potential oppression faced by Russian-speaking citizens. In the Eastern Macro-region, 33 percent of respondents do not support Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic economic and military-political integration, as enshrined in the Ukrainian Constitution. The fact that a quarter to a third of the population of the liberated territories backs views on important socio-political issues close to Russian propaganda indicates the need to strengthen Ukrainian informational and cultural influence on the populations of liberated cities and villages. It is important to note that respondents in the younger age group (18–24 years of age) are more likely to believe that Russian-speaking citizens face systematic oppression than respondents in the older age group (55 years of age or older), with figures of 13 percent and 4 percent, respectively (Table 10). Thus, informational and diverse cultural products should target primarily the younger audience.

Table 10 Distribution of respondents’ answers on the language issue in Ukraine by age group

Responses	Number of responses				Percentage			
	Total	18–24 y.o.	25–54 y.o.	55 y.o. and older	Total	18–24 y.o.	25–54 y.o.	55 y.o. and older
Hard to say	121	22	73	26	11%	12%	12%	9%
Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine experience systemic pressure and harassment there	96	23	60	13	9%	13%	10%	4%
There is no issue with the use of the Russian language in Ukraine and Russian-speaking citizens experience no pressure or harassment.	868	135	480	253	80%	75%	78%	87%
Total	1085	180	613	292	100%	100%	100%	100%

Thus, in our opinion, the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation’s funding of cultural projects in Ukraine’s liberated and near-frontline regions is very timely.⁶¹

The issue of the informational and cultural reintegration of the liberated territories is actively discussed in the Ukrainian expert community. For instance, the roundtable “Journalism in the Liberated Territories,” organized on May 31, 2023, at the initiative of the East Ukrainian “Volodymyr Dahl” National University, the Center for Countering Disinformation of the National Security and Defense Council, the NGO “Crimean Tatar Resource Center,” and the NGO “Platform of Student Journalism” emphasized the need to define the main approaches to restoring the media in the territories liberated from Russian occupation. They also outlined the main problems facing the restoration of Ukrainian media coverage in the liberated territories and proposed solutions. Recommendations were also given for training media professionals to overcome the impact of Russian propaganda on the population of the liberated territories.⁶²

One aspect of cultural reintegration in the liberated territories is the return of Ukrainian books to libraries in the deoccupied areas. The occupiers confiscated and destroyed Ukrainian books and looted library collections. In particular, in Kherson, the occupiers took away the largest collection of local history publications, pre-revolutionary works issued in the Kherson Governorate.⁶³ The Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and Information Policy is developing an action plan for the full restoration of libraries in the liberated territories.⁶⁴

61 The Ukrainian Cultural Foundation announces a new competition to support the cultural sphere in the deoccupied and near-frontline regions of Ukraine. Available at: <https://ucf.in.ua/news/26072023>

62 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNeTIB-p8dU>

63 Available at: <https://suspilne.media/316124-vivezli-dorevolucijni-vidanna-rosiani-pograbuvali-naukovu-biblioteku-goncara-u-hersoni/>

64 Available at: <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3758994-derzava-mae-povernuti-ukrainsku-knigu-v-biblioteki-deokupovanih-teritorij-karandeev.html>

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The scale of the challenges in Ukraine's temporary occupied territories has increased significantly since the beginning of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion. Throughout 2022–2023, Ukraine liberated a significant part of the territories occupied since the outbreak of war, restoring Ukrainian governance and the rule of law. Significant efforts should be made to ensure that Ukraine's liberation of territories and citizens constitute a successful example for other countries suffering from occupation.

The human casualties undoubtedly represent the most significant damage inflicted on Ukraine as a result of the full-scale aggression and occupation of part of its territory. This damage can never be recovered, along with the physical and mental suffering of Ukrainians who were and continue to be in those territories. Eyewitness accounts of crimes against humanity committed by the occupiers constitute a substantial part of the in-depth interviews in our research.

The authors of the research have conditionally divided the liberated territory of Ukraine into three groups:

- (i) Central, north (Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Chernihiv regions), where the occupation lasted 1–1.5 months. People there experienced all the hardships and atrocities of the occupiers and opposed them resolutely.
- (ii) South (Kherson, Mykolaiv regions), where the occupation lasted half a year, and people were under systemic psychological and propaganda pressure.
- (iii) East (including occupied Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk), where the occupation regime has been in place for many years, and residents have been subjected to targeted propaganda and informational pressure. Accordingly, qualitative and quantitative research was conducted across 10 regions in three Macro-regions: the Central macro-region – Zhytomyr, Sumy, Chernihiv, Kyiv regions; the Southern macro-region – Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Odesa regions; and the Eastern macro-region – Donetsk and Kharkiv regions.

The most significant problem facing residents of liberated territories is the destruction of housing, as reported by 73 percent of respondents in the three macro-regions. It is worth noting that for residents of the Southern macro-region – primarily those of Kherson and Kherson region – the most acute problem is shelling and missiles, as indicated by 85 percent of respondents.

The next most significant problem, indicated by 64 percent of respondents, is the mines laid in facilities and on land. Currently, more than 170,000 square kilometers of Ukrainian territory are potentially mined. Over 6 million citizens are at risk from mines and unexploded ordnance, which have already injured nearly 800 Ukrainians, including over 250 fatalities. It is important to note that de-mining Ukraine's liberated territory is crucial for economic recovery. A large number of mined agricultural fields and industrial facilities hinder the operation of industrial and agricultural enterprises. Perhaps that is why 63 percent of respondents identified employment issues as important, almost as acute as de-mining. The research results demonstrate that de-mining is a priority for the Ukrainian authorities. Meanwhile, respondents from the Central macro-region, where over one and a half years have passed since de-occupation, indicate this problem as less relevant compared with residents of the Southern macro-region, which was liberated later (48 versus 70 percent of respondents).

Issues related to the demolition of social, administrative, and economic infrastructure are highlighted by 62 percent of respondents. According to respondents, their basic needs are being satisfied fairly well. Complaints about insufficient food and clothing range from 3 to 8 percent of respondents, depending on the region. The most pressing problem concerning drinking water is in the Southern region (26 percent of respondents), evidently linked to the environmental catastrophe caused by the breach of the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Plant dam.

Respondents' self-assessments of their financial situation indicate a notable difference between those in the liberated territories and averaged figures from all three macro regions, taking into account the territories that were under occupation. The percentage of people who assert that they have insufficient funds even

for food is the same for both liberated territories and macro-regions overall, at 7 percent. In the liberated territories, more people have enough funds for food, but purchasing clothing has become challenging, at 50 percent compared with 33 percent. However, an equal number of respondents, both in liberated territories and overall, have enough for clothing and food and are able to save something, at 36 percent.

Professional psychologists recognize a significant need for prolonged psychological assistance for people who have been in temporarily occupied territories. However, only 9 percent of survey participants believe they need psychological help, and of those, 54 percent state that they either couldn't access psychological assistance or have found it unsatisfactory.

The environmental damage caused by the occupiers can unequivocally be labeled ecological terrorism. UN experts estimate the total damage inflicted on the environment at around 70 billion euros, increasing by over 100 million euros every day. The destruction of the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Plant dam by the Russians has become a real environmental catastrophe, and as a result, the affected territories are changing irreversibly. According to expert forecasts, by 2024 fields in southern Ukraine may turn into desert. Therefore, one of Ukraine's urgent tasks is the massive restructuring of the agricultural sector, as cultivating grains and oilseeds without fresh water is impossible. According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Agrarian Policy, the destruction of the Kakhovska Hydroelectric Power Plant has led to the death of at least 43 species of fish, 20 of which have industrial value. Losses for the fishing industry from the death of adult fish alone may reach 95,000 tonnes. According to UN and Ministry of Economy experts, approximately 60 million dollars are needed for de-mining, cleaning, surveying, and assessing contaminated areas in southern Ukraine.

Respondents assessed the performance of local authorities as follows: 4 percent rated it as excellent and 24 percent as good, with the reservation that not all issues within the officials' competence are being resolved. The response "Satisfactory, some issues were resolved, partially or completely, many opportunities to solve problems were not taken" was chosen by 53 percent of respondents. Some 14 percent rated the government's performance as unsatisfactory, and 4 percent believe that people's problems and citizens' appeals are being ignored.

The study's results lead us to the conclusion that a significant number of residents in liberated territories maintain their optimism and understand the problems arising from the realities of the war. However, there have been manifestations of disappointment, primarily concerning shortcomings in addressing residents' urgent issues, the absence of a clear patriotic stance among some local politicians, and dissatisfaction with the apparent impunity of collaborators. There is public demand for answers to questions such as why the enemy could capture the Azov region without resistance, and why people did not receive truthful information in the early days of the war and instead received reassuring comments about its rapid resolution.

It is important to note that 15 and 24 percent of respondents in the Central and the Southern macro-regions, respectively, directly or indirectly support narratives about the alleged oppression experienced by Russian-speaking citizens. In the Eastern macro-region, furthermore, 33 percent of respondents do not support Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic economic and military-political integration, as stipulated by the Constitution. The fact that from a quarter to a third of the population of the liberated territories adheres to views on important socio-political issues that are close to Russian propaganda indicates the need to strengthen informational and cultural influence on the population of liberated cities and villages. Given that respondents in the younger age group (18–24 years) are more inclined to believe that Russian-speaking citizens experience systematic oppression than respondents in the older age group (55 years and older) – 13 percent and 4 percent, respectively – informational activity in liberated territories should target primarily young people.

Based on the research results, the following recommendations were formulated for information policy in the reintegration of the liberated territories:

- restore media outlets in the territories liberated from Russian occupation and provide them with state support, utilizing opportunities provided by international technical and financial assistance, as local media react more promptly to the desires and needs of the local audience;

- implement the demonopolization and decentralization of nationwide media, providing more opportunities for discussions and expressions of alternative viewpoints on crucial socio-economic and political issues, while maintaining restrictions on the dissemination of anti-Ukrainian and collaborationist theses and pro-Russian narratives;
- formulate and approve at the legislative level key approaches to restoring the Ukrainian media space in the liberated territories. The Law of Ukraine on the Basics of National Resistance can provide the basis for this. Develop draft legislation on the fundamentals of national information as regards resistance, including organizational and technical measures to prevent broadcasting by an aggressor country on the liberated and near-front territories;
- support and appropriately finance the restoration of Ukrainian cultural institutions in the liberated territories, such as libraries, museums, and theaters;
- support the creation of special cultural and informational offerings for the residents of the liberated territories, particularly oriented toward young people. Provide special funding in the budgets of Ukrainian state institutions, such as the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, the Ukrainian Cultural Fund, and the State Cinema of Ukraine, to promote a pro-Ukrainian position;
- actively contribute to the creation and dissemination of Ukrainian content, especially for a young audience and children in the media and social networks;
- continue the systematic study of both positive and negative experiences of the restoration of life in the liberated territories and disseminate this information;
- support the creation of information materials about Russia's war crimes in the occupied territories of Ukraine, the heroes of the resistance movement against the occupiers, and shameful manifestations of collaboration, and facilitate the spread of this content in Ukraine and abroad.

AUTHORS

Oleksandr Gladunov, co-founder of and expert at the Analytical Group "Strategiko."

Nataliia Bohdanets, researcher at the Analytical Group "Strategiko."

The publication uses photos provided by participants of the project, as well as taken from <https://www.canva.com>.

The views presented in this paper are not necessarily those of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

The use of information published by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation for commercial purposes without the written consent of the Foundation is prohibited.

