Protection Cluster
Ukraine

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UKRAINE

Protection Analysis Update

No Quick End. The impact of the war on civilian protection in Ukraine.

SEPTEMBER 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3.5 years after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022, the protection environment in Ukraine been continuously impacted by the war, with implications stretching beyond the emergency and affecting the resilience of Ukrainian society. Since the July 2024 Protection Analysis Update (PAU), the situation along the frontline has shifted with Russian Armed Forces gaining territory resulting in further displacement. The escalation in the Russian Armed Forces' use of drones all over Ukraine has expanded the threat to civilian populations and humanitarian workers. With up to 20% of Ukraine occupied by Russian Armed Forces, the population living in these areas are increasingly isolated and face a human rights crisis, fuelled by changes in Russian policy towards the Occupied Territory. Protection actors have documented the significant strain of the war on the civilian population in Ukraine. In one survey, 55% of people report that they do not feel safe. Thirty-eight percent of people report they are separated from one or more family members, and 43% report a mental health and psychosocial safety concern.[i]

There have been notable changes in the Ukrainian ministries responsible for displacement and the Government's Strategy of State Policy on Internal Displacement is due to expire at the end of 2025. These changes come at a time when the impact of the reduction of international financial assistance to humanitarian actors in Ukraine is beginning to take hold. With no quick end to the conflict, and its impact on civilian life in Ukraine, all actors providing a response to affected people find themselves at cross-roads on how to provide principled, sustainable and effective assistance to those in need.

This report is the third Ukraine Protection Analysis Update (PAU),[ii] covering the period August 2024- August 2025. It provides an analysis of the protection situation in Ukraine, noting key trends and developments in the context, governance and response. It outlines how the situational realities of the war, the availabilities of aid financing and the capacity of the Government of Ukraine to support a holistic response to people affected by the war impacts the protection context and protection response. The PAU highlights the effects of the war on the cross-section of Ukrainian society, including women, men, children and minority communities including the LGBTQI+ and Roma community, applying an Age, Gender and Diversity lens. The report outlines specific recommendations and actions for the Government of Ukraine and International Community.

In addition to protection of civilians' concerns highlighted in the context, protection risks requiring immediate attention in the period covered by this analysis are:

1. Restrictions to Freedom of Movement, Forced Displacement and Returns in Adverse Conditions
2. Children's Physical and Psychosocial Safety and Well-Being Threatened by Compounded Risks
3. Gender-based Violence
4. Presence of Explosive Ordnance
5. Impediments and Restrictions to Access to Legal Identity, Remedies and Justice, including Housing Land and Property Rights

URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED

Urgent action is needed to stop violations against civilians and mitigate the impact of the war and the consequent increase in abuse and negative coping mechanisms that have been identified. It is imperative that those responsible for violations of International Law, including International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law, are held to account. With this view, it is of utmost importance to:

- Ensure the Protection of Civilians by all parties to the conflict, including ending and preventing grave violations against children. Attacks affecting civilians and civilian infrastructure must cease, and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas must be avoided at all costs.
- In line with re-prioritized Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025, resource the provision of principled and life-saving humanitarian assistance to vulnerable IDPs and non-displaced war-affected people and enable their access to essential services, with particular focus on: frontline response, evacuations, response to airstrikes and support to vulnerable IDPs, including those in collective sites.
- Expedite the development of the new State Strategy on Internal Displacement, addressing the identified protection risks affecting IDPs.

CONTEXT

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES	CIVILIANS INJURED	IDPs[iii]	PEOPLE IN FRONTLINE AREAS	NUMBER OF IDPs EVACUATED IN 2025 [ORGANISED][iv]
50,597	36,481	3.76M	4.92M	49,575

July 2025 marked the highest number of civilian casualties in a single month in Ukraine in over 3 years, with 1,388 people injured and 286 people killed across 18 of Ukraine's regions (or oblasts).[v] The steady escalation of conflict and increased use of drones by Russian Armed Forces has shifted the frontlines between Ukraine Armed Forces and Russian Armed Forces and continues the sustained exposure of almost half of Ukraine's 40 million people to conflict-related violence.[vi] The conflict in Ukraine is characterized by forms of violence that include occupation, attacks affecting civilians (and civilian infrastructure), grave violations against children, forced displacement and family separation, and sexual violence.

While there have been several rounds of peace talks to end the war in Ukraine, there is no existing framework to bring a durable resolution to the hostilities. With no resolution on the horizon, Ukrainians continue to grapple with the enduring nature of the war. After years of exposure to conflict, violence and displacement, the capacity of ordinary Ukrainians to cope is showing noticeable signs of strain, as people continue to feel the physical, mental health, economic and social burden of the war. This is particularly acute for people living under active military threat and those who have been displaced. Older people, people with disabilities, single female headed households, families with returning servicemembers, and families with children face very specific pressures.

In 2024 and 2025 there have been significant changes to the key ministries responsible for the protection of displaced people in Ukraine and for the Occupied Territory. The Government of Ukraine's Strategy of State Policy on Internal Displacement 2023-2025 is due to expire at the end of 2025. This occurs at the same time as a decrease in global humanitarian financing, with only 38.9% of the overall requirements for humanitarian funding for the Ukraine response met[vii], and increased evacuations from frontline areas in Donetska, Dnipropetrovska, Sumska, Kharkivska and Khersonska oblasts.

OCCUPATION, CIVILIAN HARM AND DISPLACEMENT

Prior to February 2022, the conflict in Ukraine was centred in parts of the Donetska and Luhanska Oblasts in the East of the country, following Russia's attempted illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in 2014. According to OHCHR and Government sources, between 2014 and January 2022, this conflict resulted in 3,106 conflict-related deaths and 7,000 injuries and forcibly displaced an estimated 850,000 people.[viii] In February 2022 Russian Armed Forces launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, seizing territory in the Donetska, Khersonka, Luhanska, and Zaporizka regions of Ukraine.[ix] Russian authorities carried out a series of illegal referenda across occupied territories as part of their attempts at an illegal annexation of these territories. The United Nations General Assembly has called this act a "violation of the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine"[x], noting that any attempt at annexation of a State's territory by another State by threat or use of force is a violation of the principles of the UN Charter and International Law.

Since February 2022, a total number of 50,597 civilian casualties have been recorded, including 14,116 killed and 36,481 injured. Of these, 3,018 are children. Conflict related violence continues to impact civilians, with 2,533 killed and 12,601 injured between 1 August 2024 – 31 August 2025. It is thought that the actual numbers of civilians killed and injured are likely to be significantly higher. Men account for 44% of civilian casualties and 50% of civilian deaths since February 2022, including due to exposure to explosive remnants of war. In addition to civilian casualties, the full-scale invasion has caused millions of Ukrainians to displace. As of August 2025, there are almost 5.7 million Ukrainian refugees worldwide,[xi] over 3.7 million people are currently displaced within Ukraine.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND THE IMPACT ON THE PROTECTION ENVIRONMENT [AUGUST 2024-2025]

This report highlights six key developments since the publication of the PAU 2024 that impact the protection environment and response in Ukraine.

1. **In 2025, there is an upward trend of new displacement, reversing the trend of return that was seen in 2024**. Escalating hostilities in northern, eastern, and southern regions (such as Sumska, Kharkivska, Donetska, Khersonska, Dnipropetrovska

and Zaporizka oblasts) are driving the displacement[xii], including over 49,000 people evacuated by humanitarian or state actors from frontline areas in 2025, according to CCCM Cluster Evacuation Tracking Matrix. Among IDPs evacuated in an organized manner majority were from Donetska, Sumska and Dnipropetrovska oblasts. Forty-six percent of IDPs registered in transit centers were people with low mobility, mostly older people in need of special care and assistance; children make up 15% of IDPs evacuated through the transit centers[xiii]. At the end of 2024 as many as 70% of IDPs did not envision returning to their homes, and less than 40% of those willing to return would do so before the end of the war[xiv].

2. The **intensified use of long-range drones by the Russian Armed Forces has had an enormous impact on civilian life** and complicates humanitarian access to frontline areas.[xv] Drone warfare has advanced technologically since 2022, and the use of drones is prolific in frontline communities. There has been a reported tenfold increase in long range drone and missile attacks since June 2024. Humanitarian actors particularly note concerns around the use of ''First-Person-View" (FPV) short range drones in frontline communities. These drones are equipped with cameras which provide their operators with a real time view of the area and allows for more deliberate targeting. One report describes the threat of drones as being nearly constant.[xvi] The use of short-range drones in frontline areas is one of the main contributing factors to the high toll of civilian casualties. July 2025 recorded the highest number of civilian casualties from short-range drones since the beginning of the invasion. In August, civilian casualties from short-range drones surpassed those caused by any other weapon type. The threat posed to civilians is so significant that it was described by one protection expert as making daytime life in some areas nearly impossible, as people are forced inside or underground to access underground markets and schools. In some locations, authorities have reported that drones have been used to scatter anti-personnel landmines which are equipped with delayed detonation.[xvii] This use of drones has made the provision of humanitarian assistance and conducting humanitarian-supported evacuation efforts even more dangerous.
3. In occupied territories of Ukraine, the Russian Federation continues to impose its legal and institutional frameworks, in violation of IHL. Access to essential services and healthcare, as well as virtually all social spheres such as work, property or education, continues to be conditioned on individuals obtaining Russian citizenship. Moreover, the population has extremely limited information and communication with the rest of Ukraine due to strict censorship and surveillance measures. Residents also face significant barriers to travel between Government-controlled territory and occupied territory, which prevents them from easily reuniting with family members.
4. Human Rights actors and child protection specialists are reporting an increase in credible allegations that the **Russian Federation is using Ukrainian children in Government-controlled territory to conduct surveillance and transmit information on the Ukrainian military, or to commit acts of sabotage and arson targeting military objectives or public property with links to the military**. The recruitment and use of children in armed conflict is a grave violation of their rights. Children are recruited online and are offered payment or are blackmailed to carry out these acts. The recruitment and use of children exposes them to victimization and risk of detention, where they may face harsh punishments under national security charges. According to Ukrainian legislation, such crimes can carry severe punishments and are applicable from the age of 14.
5. The Government of Ukraine has made **key changes to the ministries responsible for people living in Occupied Territory and for displaced people in Ukraine**. The dissolution of the Ministry of National Unity and the expansion of the Ministry of Social Policy to become a Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity in July 2025, comes after a December 2024 decision to allocate responsibility for internal displacement issues, including the coordination of evacuations, to the Ministry of Development of Communities.
6. The **decrease in foreign aid has had a significant impact on humanitarian operations**, with a particular impact for programming that supports lifesaving interventions for women, girls and LGBTIQ+ communities[xviii], and for MHPSS programming. In one survey of women-led organisations, 73% of the 99 organizations that responded to the survey report significant disruptions, and 93% said they were forced to suspend at least one Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) program.[xix] Protection partners report needing to change the programmes they provide or close offices or programmes. Partners have raised concern about closing programming in western and central Ukraine, given the continued displacement of people from frontline areas to safer oblasts, including oblasts in the West and Center, and the fact that over 3.7M people continue to be displaced. Survivors of violence more commonly reach out for support when they reach safety and feel secure. De-Prioritizing "safer" locations for lifesaving GBV humanitarian responses in the West and Center does not meet the need to contextualize services centered toward survivors of violence.

DIMINISHING SHOCK RESISTANCE OF VULNERABLE AND AT-RISK GROUPS

As the war continues in Ukraine, there is a rapidly diminishing shock resistance of vulnerable and at-risk groups across the country. MHPSS practitioners note the stress the mental and psychological impact of sustained exposure to conflict places on many cross-sections of Ukrainian society. In a survey from June 2025, 43% of people reported mental health or PSS issues,[xx] and this figure is

between 10-20% higher for respondents with chronic illnesses, disabilities and single headed households. One organization specializing in child protection case management released a study stating 43% of children in their programme suffered from psychosocial distress, showing symptoms such as anxiety, fear, moodiness, difficulty concentrating and irritability. Additionally, at least one-third of respondents reported that children over the age of five were showing visible signs of mental health issues.[xxi] Children's vulnerability is compounded by factors such as family separation, interrupted education and isolation from their peers.

Many Ukrainians feel a perpetual sense of insecurity, with 55% of people surveyed in one study feeling unsafe due to the war, with women feeling less safe than men.[xxii] Women and girls across the country feel increasingly insecure when moving outside the home due to elevated risk factors. Electricity cuts; growing substance abuse; displacement and collective living; lack of accessible transport options, particularly in rural areas; and militarized areas contribute to heightened risks of sexual violence in public and shared spaces.[xxiii] For people living within 30km of the frontline, the proximity of the frontline means they must navigate day to day life in this high intensity security environment, while also living under a cloud of uncertainty on decision making on any potential evacuation. The July 2025 study found that only half of people living in this area had clearly taken a decision on evacuating; many of those who were undecided or had no plans to evacuate were concerned that they would not be able to evacuate in this security situation.[xxiv]

The diminished availability of resources and increased cost of living has a driving impact on individual and household shock resistance. Inflation rates, energy prices, and wage growth due to labor shortages caused by migration and military mobilization impact household income. Yet women, who are at a30% higher risk of exposure to these concerns, and people with disabilities, who are at a11% higher risk of exposure to these concerns, are lower paid and face barriers to entering the labour market. Older displaced people who only receive low pensions and do not have their property and garden anymore to complement low pension levels. In 2024, the IDP allowance, the main government programme for IDPs- was modified to provide support to vulnerable IDP groups, with impacts monitored by protection partners who then linked up IDPs who are not eligible for the allowance with other available social protection schemes such as the new rental subsidy for IDPs introduced in January 2025, or livelihood opportunities. Depleting resources and the increasing vulnerability of marginalized households are significantly increasing the coping mechanism of survival sex and increasing the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and sex trafficking.[xxv]

Housing is a major vulnerability for IDPs. In July 2025, the Ukraine IDP Councils participated in a consultation on the risks and challenges faced by IDPs.[xxvi] According to 60% of IDP Councils, the lack of affordable housing in locations receiving IDPs is a critical or high severity issue. IDP Councils also noted an issue of labor market access, including a limited amount of opportunities for jobs that IDPs are skilled in performing, as well as limited adult education opportunities to help IDPs bridge this skills gap. At this point in the war, more than half of the most vulnerable IDPs have accumulated debt to cover their housing needs. In the majority of cases this relates to paying rent. A 2024 study found that 90% of IDPs applying for assistance had exhausted almost all their savings. This raises the possibility that IDPs who have previously never sought humanitarian assistance (particularly those who displaced by their own means from frontlines, including to West and Center) will begin to seek assistance despite having attempted to support their own transition and integration in receiving areas or may consider returning to their damaged or destroyed housing in unsafe frontline areas, as already documented through the Cluster's protection monitoring.

Collective site: islands of vulnerability

Around 70,000 people currently live in over 1,500 collective sites that are used to accommodate IDPs.[xxvii] Since 2022, collective sites have been used as a location to accommodate some of the most vulnerable people who have evacuated from a frontline area and who do not have any alternative accommodation options or do not have sustained access to resources to afford alternative options. The Cabinet of Ministers' adoption of Resolution 930 "*On the functioning of collective sites*" on 1 September 2023 and its subsequent review in 2024 was an important benchmark in strengthening protective environments for people living in collective sites, including strengthening security of tenure, and improvements to living conditions by setting minimum standards. However, the resolution does not fully address key challenges like funding sources for collective sites and transparent settlement procedures. An overall strategic vision for the future of collective sites is currently lacking.

IDPs in collective sites often experience multiple and simultaneous vulnerabilities linked to age, disability, caregiving, and low income that have been exacerbated by their displacement situation.[xxviii] Older people (60+) form the largest group of collective site residents (51%) due to low pension levels. Disability is common, affecting 20% of residents, with higher prevalence in the West and Center (26%) than the East (14%). One-quarter of respondents care for children, and among them, over half are single parents. Reported incomes among collective sites residents remained low and insufficient to cover expenses. Sixty-seven percent of site residents continue to rely on state assistance, such as pensions and IDP allowances and 44% rely on pensions. Access to social services, legal aid, PSS and healthcare stand out as most pressing gaps.[xxix] One study found that only 25% of the collective site managers surveyed confirmed the availability of disability-friendly bathing facilities and 26% confirmed the availability of disability-friendly toilets.[xxx] There is low accessibility of collective sites in general, as many use dormitories on the 2nd or 3rd floor, causing people with low or no mobility to

become isolated. Temporary support measures such as rental support or livelihood support are not suitable options for people who face long term structural barriers to access livelihoods and income, and there is a lack of social workers to provide personal care or individual support to elderly and people with disabilities.

Within collective sites, 17.7% of residents are children.[xxxi]. For these children, displacement is not only protracted but also characterized by exposure to unsafe, overcrowded and often inadequate living conditions. Many face limited access to child-friendly services, and psychosocial support, while their caregivers struggle with caregiving burdens, and lack of alternatives. A significant number of families with children displaced by their own means, rather than availing themselves of the organized evacuation support by humanitarians or state actors in transit centers and collective sites. These families often rely on ad hoc arrangements with relatives, friends, or temporary rented housing, but they face equally severe risks related to limited access to services.

Displacement in collective sites remains largely protracted, with 81% of residents displaced for more than 18 months and 88% indicating that they intend to remain. The primary barrier to leaving is housing affordability, cited by 72% of residents overall, though this challenge is more acute in the West and Centre (79%) than in the East (65%). The continued use of these sites by residents, despite their well-documented limitations, indicates broader challenges for the residents and necessitates a shift towards an integrated approach to collective sites and tailored programming, including stronger linkages with social protection, housing and employment.

While there are ongoing discussions on solutions for people living in collective sites, collective sites still have an important function for IDPs evacuated from frontlines who have no other immediate options. Both 2024 and 2025 were marked by waves of increased evacuation movements, significantly overstretching reception capacities of collective sites in receiving areas particularly in Kharkivska, Dnipropetrovska and Sumska oblasts.[xxxii] This trend is closely linked to IDPs' reluctance to move far from their places of origin, hoping to return home once the security situation stabilizes, or to regularly travel back-and-forth to check on their property, tend to livestock, and maintain gardening activities. It is also combined with local approaches that prioritize settling the population within the oblasts of displacement, rather than arranging alternative options in central and western oblasts. Out of 1,461 sites monitored in April-May 2025 nation-wide, only 1,154 rooms were available, including 894 accessible for people with limited mobility.[xxxiii]

Advocating for a people centered approach to assistance in Ukraine

The underlying premise of a people centered approach to humanitarian action is to support affected people to address the protection risks they face where they are, and to reduce barriers between assistance modalities, such as humanitarian and development assistance and Ukrainian social support systems. The complex and hostile environments created by conflict and violence present multiple challenges for individuals and communities to enhance their own protection. A people centered approach is an essential aspect of protecting people's lives, dignity and physical and mental well-being. People affected by conflict are not passive "data subjects" or categories of people. The first step to enhancing protection is understanding that people hold multiple, overlapping identities that affect their own risk exposure, needs and protection capacities, and that their humanitarian needs are not strictly determined by time in displacement, geography or quantitative vulnerability criteria.

A SNAPSHOT OF INTERSECTIONAL RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES IN UKRAINE

 IDPs	• High % of income allocated to covering housing needs • Heightened severity of various protection risks, including barriers in accessing social assistance, security of tenure, lower levels of home ownership and higher levels of lacking or incomplete ownership documentation, higher levels of housing damage (UNHCR Protection Survey) • Most vulnerable have exhausted savings and accumulated debt • Non-registered IDPs face challenges accessing government programmes • May struggle to produce documents necessary for government schemes such as compensation • Experience of family separation • Experience of direct exposure to violence
 WOMEN	• Heightened risks of IPV/DV; physical violence; psychological violence including bullying; sexual violence, including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), rape, sexual assault, economic violence; • Denial of rights, resources, opportunities, and services • Decreased employment opportunities, income and wages • Emergence of harmful coping mechanism • Risk of trafficking for sexual exploitation • High burden of unpaid care work and additional duties because of the war and gender roles • Labour exploitation of women

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- **Psychological distress identified as the most common risk faced by children**
- Separation from caregivers
- Learning loss due to frequent interruptions and online education
- Exposure to conflict and violence, both inside and outside the home
- Institutionalisation for children in difficult life circumstances: children in alternative care and other children without parental care risk institutionalisation
- Child marriage, primarily in Roma and rural communities
- Secondary victimisation due to overstretched social and children's affairs services

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CHILDREN</td></tr>
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- 85% of people killed in ERW/EO incidents are men
- Eligible for conscription between ages 25-60
- Risk of trafficking for forced labour
- Experience being away from families
- Risk of conflict related sexual violence perpetrated by Russian Armed Forces
- **Some men self-confine, with reported isolation and risk of substance abuse**

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MEN</td></tr>
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OLDER PEOPLE</td><td>

- Disproportionate population % of frontline and collective sites
- Last ones to leave their homes in the face of hostilities in frontline areas
- Low pensions, limited income generation capacity
- Overstretched social service system and limited capacity of up-to-standard care facilities, and risk of institutionalization
- 63% report mental health has been negatively affected because of the war
- Account for 41% of civilian casualties in frontline areas
- Older women receiving lower pensions than their male counterparts, and older persons living with disabilities can need full or part time care
- Breakdown of social support networks when younger relatives or neighbours already left
- Those with higher support needs lack independence when placed in collective sites or geriatric centers and have few options for more dignified and independent living

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PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES</td><td>

- Only 17% of people with disabilities are employed
- Limited disability related social benefits
- Lack of funds for medical or rehabilitation services, including for former combatants with war-related injuries
- Transit centers and collective sites have significant gaps in adaption for people with disabilities
- Lengthy times and complicated procedures to obtain documentation required for disability status
- Insufficient up-to-standard care services options outside of family
- Limited number of non-institutional care options or community care, risk of institutionalization

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- Adolescents experience gendered division of household roles
- Adolescents' increased isolation from peers and negative coping habits, and risks of technology facilitated gender-based violence.
- Adults of all ages face different reasons for having limited income and limited access to resources. People ages 20-30 are often excluded from assistance and there is limited assistance for single people. People in the age group often do not own property. People ages 40-60 experience a more difficult time accessing loans and mortgages, exacerbating their housing vulnerability.
- Adolescents and young adults have reduced access to education and training due to the impact of the war on schools, vocational training, and higher learning.

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ADULTS</td></tr>
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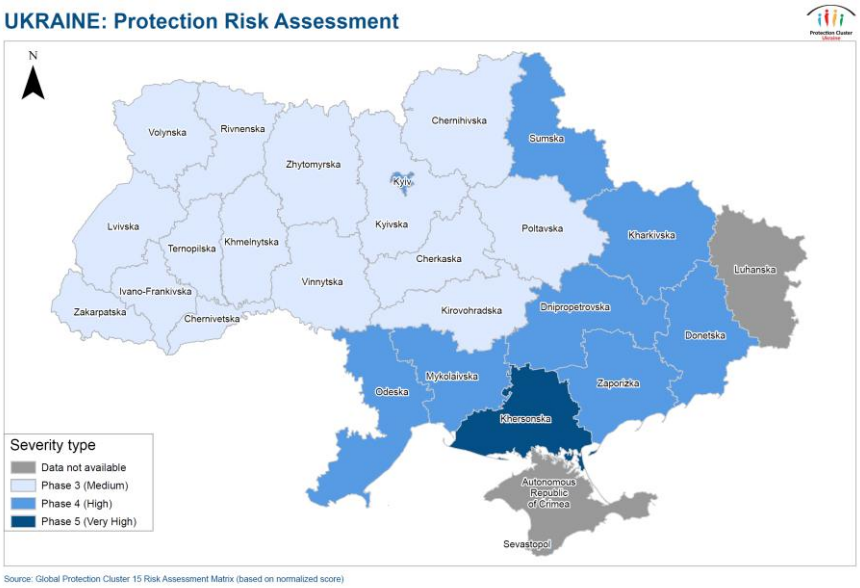
LGBTQ+	• Reduced access to medicine including hormone replacement or Post-Exposure Prophylaxis • Avoid accessing shelters, transit centers or collective sites due to fear of discrimination • LGBTQI+ families do not have same access to state benefits • Can be expected to be carers to older parents (including on frontlines) if they have no children • Trans persons gender may not match state ID, impacting their access to services • Being 'outed' and vulnerable to being blackmailed
ROMA	• Low levels of documentation limit access to services and assistance (10-20% lack documents) • More excluded/isolated community, so lack knowledge on available services • Lower levels of education, literacy and dominant-language proficiency • Systematic isolation and exclusion lead to long standing disparities in access and opportunity, compounding the impact of war for this group

PROTECTION RISK SEVERITY IN UKRAINE



Source: Sub-national protection risk assessment based on Protection Analytical Framework (Protection Cluster Ukraine June 2025)

RISK 1 Restrictions to Freedom of Movement, Forced Displacement and Returns in Adverse Conditions

Since the Ukraine PAU 2024, the security situation in Ukraine has deteriorated, stalling or reversing return movements. As people displace (or re-displace) from frontline areas in Government controlled parts of Ukraine, in areas under the military control of Russian Forces, people's lives are further restricted.

DISPLACEMENT

Protection and Living on the Frontlines

In Ukraine, the term 'frontline' includes the 'contact point' between Russian Armed Forces and Ukrainian Armed Forces and extends to a 20-50km zone beyond this, based on 2026 humanitarian planning. While 2024 witnessed a degree of return movement as Ukrainian Armed Forces regained territory making it possible for people to return home,[xxxiv] this trend has reversed in 2025, where an estimated 49,575 people have been evacuated and more left by their own means from areas where it is considered too unsafe for them to remain. While the needs in frontline areas are agreed to be severe due to extremely restricted access to safe education, health, social services and livelihoods, the primary risk faced by people is their exposure to conflict and violence. This has been exacerbated by the increase in drone warfare, as drones can make even the most basic task of walking to the market or attempting to

access school dangerous and unmanageable. In Ukraine, smaller national NGOs (NNGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and volunteers deliver much of the assistance in frontline areas. The operational risks of delivering assistance, and supporting evacuations, include the exposure to exchange of fire, drones and shelling, and result in frequent and prolonged exposure to high stress environments.

Older people and people with disabilities are known to make up a disproportionate number of people living along the frontlines. In one report, persons aged 60 years and above accounted for more than 39%of the civilian casualties in frontline areas, although they constitute 25%[xxxv]. Protection partners note that older and persons with disabilities along frontlines have more limited access to information and more restrictive mobility issues. Extreme poverty due to low pensions eliminates[xxxvi]resistance, compounded by diminished social support networks after other community members displace, and inability to afford transportation to access basic needs and services. This also affects the willingness and ability of older persons and persons with disabilities to evacuate, as any move takes them away from what limited assets they have, including housing. Many of these same people lack the required documentation to file a compensation claim if their property is damaged, and this further motivates them to stay and protect and monitor their property. If people are unable to take preemptive measures in managing their displacement, they are more likely to evacuate during a crisis point such as the imminent threat posed by Russian Armed Forces, which drastically reduces the potential for a more dignified evacuation and preparation for such a move.

Child protection actors note there is a perception that there are a limited number of children living in frontline areas due to mandatory evacuation orders of families with children. The invisibility of these children in official data exacerbates their protection risks, as they are effectively unaccounted for in evacuation planning and service delivery. Children living in frontline areas face death, injury and psychological harm. From August 2024 to August 2025, OHCHR document that 39 children were killed and 310 injured along frontlines. Despite evacuation efforts, child protection partners report families with children returning to frontline settlements, often due to economic pressure and some families deliberately hide children to avoid mandatory evacuation orders. This results in a significant underestimation of the number of children remaining in high-risk areas, limiting the ability of humanitarian actors to plan appropriately.

Evacuations

The Government of Ukraine uses a system of evacuation orders to notify civilians of potential harm and to have them move away from military activity. This use of mandatory evacuation orders[xxxvii] triggers movements of civilians within their own oblasts and to other regions in the country. In 2025, escalating hostilities in northern, eastern, and southern oblasts (especially in Sumska, Kharkivska, Donetska, Dnipropetrovska, Khersonska and Zaporizka) drove both supported and self-organized displacement, with over 45,000 evacuated and many more displacing using their own means, from border areas and frontline. The picture of how an evacuation takes place can vary considerably from place to place. Household capacity – regardless of their vulnerability - to organize their own movement or to avail of assistance of humanitarian or state actors to facilitate their evacuation varies depending on individual circumstances.

Contrasting experiences stem from several interconnected factors, including the timing of evacuation, the level of social connectivity of individuals, and geographic location. Delays in decision making on evacuation – which is more common for older people and people with disabilities – can result in evacuation in more critical and dangerous circumstances. In contrast, people who choose to evacuate before mandatory orders are issued may not benefit from the same access to transportation support, and people in more remote settlements may not benefit from any organized evacuation effort. [xxxviii]

For people with profound mobility and care needs, moving from their own houses can be its own traumatic event. Older persons are often among the last to leave their homes, since displacement means losing most of their social safety net, composed of a home, personal assets, a pension, and a social network. Others are simply not able to flee at-risk areas by themselves notably due to specialized transportation and continuous care needs and require a pre-identified premise where accommodation and care can continue seamlessly. This includes older people and people with disabilities living in institutions in frontline oblasts.[xxxix] As reported by one of key evacuation actors[xl] :"The shortage of available spaces [for people with limited mobility] in temporary accommodation centers halts the evacuation of people in high-risk areas who could die if not evacuated in time.'' Addressing this complex situation requires a joined-up humanitarian and recovery action, ensuring specialized transportation, social support services and enhancement of disability and age-inclusive reception capacity meeting the deinstitutionalization standards, in line with the Government's strategy adopted in December 2024. Furthermore, the lack of long-term accommodation options means these evacuees stay longer in the few accessible transit centers that exist in Ukraine, thus further delaying the evacuation of other people still in frontline areas. The pressure is on the entire evacuation chain, from transportation up to long-term accessible and adequate accommodation.

Mandatory evacuations in Ukraine often focus on families with children in high-risk frontline areas, with the evacuations in place to reduce people – particularly children's - exposure to hostilities. These measures, enforced by authorities, intensified in 2024 and continued through 2025 as shifting frontlines and rising insecurity placed children at heightened risk. In 2025, new orders were issued in Kharkivska, Sumska, Donetska, Dnipropetrovska, and Zaporizka oblasts. Children in frontline areas living in alternative care are particularly at risk during and following evacuations.

UNDERSTANDING EVACUATIONS

The evacuation policy in Ukraine is based on national legislation and policy, including the Procedure for Evacuation in the Event of a Threat or Occurrence of Emergency Situations, approved by CMU Resolution No. 841 of 30 October 2013. The central-level government coordination forum for evacuations is the **Evacuation Shtab** (Evacuation Cell) chaired by the Ministry of Development of Communities, which oversees evacuations of the civilian population. Oblast administrations are the primary actors responsible for coordinating evacuations at the oblast level.
Humanitarian actors play a pivotal role in supporting the authorities by facilitating humanitarian evacuation movements and the reception of evacuees.
Evacuation is a **holistic and not geographically bound process**, involving actions taken pre-, during and post-evacuation, both in frontline and receiving areas, including in the West and Center of the country.

Evacuees: IDPs who receive support from humanitarian or state actors to relocate from areas where they face heightened risk due to the armed conflict or other forms of violence to locations where they are at lower risk **(sub-group of Internally Displaced People – IDPs**; eligible to register as IDPs)

*Note: the majority of IDPs **displace by their own means,** undertaking the whole displacement journey by themselves (as per UNHCR Protection Survey, 85% of respondents with an evacuation intention can leave on their own or with support of family or neighbours)*

Estimated 49,575 civilians evacuated in organized manner in 2025:

- No centralised government system to track evacuations
- On-going work to establish government system for collective sites
- Organized evacuations are tracked by CCCM Cluster Evacuation Tracking Matrix at transit center and collective sites level
- 17% of the total 49,575 IDPs registered in transit centers in 2025 were referred to collective sites for accommodation. Collective sites in Kharkivska, Dnipropetrovska, and Lvivska received the highest number of IDPs.

As per Ukrainian legislation, **two types of evacuation orders** are issued for areas where authorities are concerned about the security risks: 1) so called mandatory evacuations (de facto voluntary given the option of signing a waiver; 2) mandatory evacuations of children with their caregivers – more on humanitarian engagement in these two scenarios here. Mandatory evacuation orders can be issued for very wide geographical areas or for settlements.

A lot of personal decision making is done on when and how to evacuate. Oblast administration with support of protection and other humanitarian actors **provide information** on evacuation process and services in receiving areas (more here).

Many **people who displace by their own means** have the resources and connections to manage the whole process. But this does not mean they will not need assistance. Some people may choose to leave by their own means if they:

- Want to remain close to their homes. This may discourage people from seeking support at transit centers if they think they would need to relocate further away.
- If they fear discrimination (LGBTIQ+, Roma, have addiction or mental health issues or experience homelessness)

These IDPs can still need assistance at their point of arrival. For example, a person who has legal issues (lacking documentation/seeking compensation), if they are survivors of sexual violence or if they need mental health support, they may seek humanitarian assistance in receiving areas.

Barriers to Evacuations:

- Lack of information – if a person does not have access to a mobile phone or radio, or lives in a remote location.
- Care giving responsibilities – caring for a larger family or a person with specific needs.
- Mobility issues – which can be profound e.g. bedridden
- Lack of resources – e.g. savings or income
- Receiving care in their home location, such as ongoing medical support

What influences / delays a person's decision to evacuate?

- Changes in security situation that give temporary respite
- Negative feedback from other evacuees if the process was not managed well, poor living conditions in collective sites
- Unable to bring items and assets that are important to them, including pets and livestock, personal possessions, food items
- Limited information on what happens next or not knowing where to go
- Lack of information on assistance and services available in receiving areas or conviction they are not sufficient, or misinformation
- Fear of the unknown or losing property
- Abusive control by another person
- Personal, sentimental considerations, e.g. attachment to home
- Caring responsibilities
- Disability, mental health issues
- Access to humanitarian distributions

Older people and people with disabilities are more likely to delay an evacuation decision as they have many personal barriers to evacuation. This increases the likelihood that they will evacuate in more traumatic and less dignified circumstances. Protection actors recommend engaging early on evacuation planning with people and helping them to understand their whole evacuation pathway, while advocating for enhanced disability and age-inclusive reception capacity and continuity of care services in receiving areas.

Over 80% of those who have reached a transit center will leave to stay within communities or with their families. Only some 15% of people will move to a collective site. This is a pathway people with higher levels of vulnerability and those most in need of support in displacement often use. Over 70% of people living in collective sites have lived there for 1.5 years or more, despite concerns on accessibility, security of tenure and poor adaptation for privacy and personal safety.

Evacuation expert organizations estimate that approximately **70% of evacuations are conducted by humanitarian actors**. The increased use of drones by Russian Forces has significantly increased the risks for humanitarian staff engaged in evacuating civilians from the frontlines.

Guidance by Protection Cluster and AoRs on Evacuations in Ukraine:

- Guidance on Humanitarian Evacuations of Civilians in Ukraine with Special Considerations for Children
- Protection of Older Persons, Including Those with Disabilities, in the Context of Evacuations: Advocacy Note for RC/HC
- Overview of Humanitarian Evacuations Process – Humanitarian Operational Coordination Groups – Dnipro and Mykolaiv (based on contribution from Protection and CCCM Clusters)
- Lessons Learned - Evacuation and Support Services in Kharkiv Protection Cluster, Gender-Based Violence AoR and Child Protection AoRs
- Recommendations for GBV and non-GBV actors during evacuations by Ukraine GBV AoR

Caregivers often send their children to safer areas ahead or without them if they cannot or do not want to evacuate. This separates children from their primary caregivers and, although a protective act on their behalf, can still mean that children are at risk of violence, abuse and neglect. Children from institutions in frontline areas, who continue to be evacuated to safer areas inside Ukraine, adding to the more than 2,000 children from institutions evacuated internally or abroad, are also acutely at risk. Due to their lack of parental care, these children face risks of exploitation, abuse, violence and neglect, which only worsen as the period of displacement endures. Moreover, displacement complicates their potential placement into families, prolonging their institutionalization and reducing their chance of being placed in families. Children in need of alternative care placements living in frontline areas, notably because they are at risk of violence at home (see Risks 2 and 3 below), may not be provided with safe family-based options and end up in hospitals or institutions. Both the lack of family-based options and authorities' preference to place children far away from hostilities have an impact on children who would otherwise be able to reunify with their caregivers, but are instead placed far away, prolonging their exposure to violence, abuse, neglect, and family separation.

Despite the issuance of mandatory evacuation orders for families with children in high-risk frontline areas, families do not always evacuate or, in some cases, return to areas following evacuation and deliberately hide children to avoid mandatory evacuation requirements. This leaves an unknown number of children in heavily affected frontline areas highly vulnerable, but as noted above, often invisible in official data.

Returns in Adverse Circumstances

While the overall trend in 2025 is rising displacement numbers, protection partners continue to observe IDP returns to frontline communities. IDP motivations for return are often complex and individual. One study in late 2024 found that IDPs who are returning to locations within 30km of the frontline are rarely motivated by an improving security situation. Among those who had returned from non-frontline to frontline oblasts, 18% reported that the primary driver was their inability to earn an income in their area of displacement, while 25% cited the lack of affordable housing.[xli] Reuniting with family members is given as is a common reason for return as people come to care for an older family member. Another reason for return is people checking their property and assets. A child protection specialist organization noted that this can involve a woman having to leave her children in a safe location to temporarily return to a frontline area, further increasing the fragmentation of family structures and potentially putting children at risk of violence, abuse and neglect. Protection actors have also observed 'pendulum' movements where people leave frontlines for a while to have respite or access services, only to return. Humanitarian protection actors are concerned by any trend that indicates that people move

towards frontlines due to the perception of better access to emergency assistance near the frontlines. A 2024 study did find that decisions on return are – among other push and pull factors - influenced by the presence or lack of humanitarian assistance in both areas of displacement and return.[xlii] These returns happen in a legislative vacuum since there is no established approach on when certain areas are considered by the Ukrainian authorities to be safe.

As of May 2025, over 3,188 children in institutions who were evacuated abroad have reportedly returned to Ukraine, being placed in different forms of care. Most of the children returned (1,650) to various family-based forms of care, including reuniting with their biological parents or other legal guardian, being placed in foster care, or adopted. However, a significant portion of children (1,047) returned to residential forms of care. These children, particularly those returned to institutions continue to face risks and require support from humanitarian actors and service provides to reintegrate into their families and communities.

ISOLATION

The increasing isolation of the Occupied Territory

During this period the human rights and protection environment for Ukrainian citizens living in the Occupied Territory continues to deteriorate. Ukrainian citizens living in the Occupied Territory find their physical and information connection to the rest of Ukraine increasingly cut off. In 2025, the Government of the Russian Federation has accelerated the process of 'passportisation' of Ukrainian citizens of the Occupied Territory in line with the pattern of passportisation that occurred in Crimea since 2014. The term 'passportisation' refers to the practice of extending nationality to substantial numbers of individuals beyond the boundary of the state, including by the forcible imposition of nationality. In 2025, the Russian President instructed that all residents of the Occupied Territory obtain Russian passports by 10 September 2025, leave, or refuse and face consequences. In March 2025, Russian authorities announced that they had issued Russian passports to 3.5 million people in the Occupied Territory. New laws also restrict access of people to Russian state assistance such as healthcare and pensions for people who do not hold Russian citizenship or permanent residency. [xliii]

Men living in the Occupied Territory are at risk of forced recruitment by the Russian Armed Forces. There have been consistent reports of the use of arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as sexual violence. Restrictions on movement and communication have been placed on all residents of the Occupied Territory including men, women and children.[xliv] Children are denied the right to a safe and culturally appropriate education, as Russian authorities imposed its own education system, in violation of IHL. This education also promotes military training and future military service in the Russian forces for Ukrainian children in occupied territory.[xlv]

Russian authorities have placed restrictions on communications between people in Occupied Territory and the rest of Ukraine. This isolates them from communicating with their families and loved ones and restricts their access to basic information on issues affecting their lives from the Government of Ukraine. Humanitarian actors – and private citizens - face a range of physical, legislative, and political barriers to delivering aid to Russian-controlled territories.

Further information on protection risks faced by the population living in the Occupied Territory is limited due to this restricted access and communications. While protection actors work to systematically document violations against civilians, including children, the scale of some of these violations is difficult to determine based on both the sensitivity of the topic and limited accessibility.

Self-Imposed Confinement

All men aged 25-60 in Ukraine are eligible to be recruited into the Ukrainian armed forces unless they have the required exemptions in place. Those who wish to avoid conscription are adopting more severe measures of self-imposed confinement.[xlvi] In one report, 34% of people perceived fear of conscription to be the main threat to safety and security of men.[xlvii] These self-imposed movement restrictions lead men to quit formal employment, avoid routine tasks like grocery shopping, or remain indoors to minimize the risk of being stopped and mobilized.[xlviii] These avoidance strategies restrict people's abilities to seek assistance such as humanitarian services. [xlix] The Ukraine IDP Councils also noted that fear of conscription acted as a deterrent to men registering as IDPs.[l] This self-imposed confinement has a reverberating impact on the wider household, with women then expected to take responsibilities for the family income and household management. Women have also reported a significant increase in intimate partner violence – with the war and self-imposed confinement driving anger, withdrawal and despair.[li] Children living under such circumstances often also face risks of violence, abuse and neglect.

RISK 2 Children's Physical and Psychosocial Safety and Well-Being Threatened by Compounded Risks

The conflict in Ukraine continues to expose children to persistent and escalating physical and psychological protection risks. Analysis of recent assessments highlights the conflict's profound impact on children's mental health, how children are affected by the widespread issue of family separation, and the risk to their physical safety due to the perilous environment caused by continued attacks and explosive remnants of war. In 2025, over 3.1 million children remain in need of humanitarian assistance,[lii] facing both immediate and long-term threats to their physical safety, psychological well-being, and developmental prospects. One study found that one in five children report that they have lost a close relative or friend since the escalation of war, and around 70% now face acute material deprivation, nearly a fourfold increase compared to pre-war levels.[liii] These risks are particularly acute in frontline and border oblasts, including Kharkivska, Donetska, Zaporizka, Khersonska, Mykolaivska, Sumska, and Dnipropetrovska, where recent attacks and displacement patterns have intensified.

Violence Against Children

Children are often direct victims of violence. Since February 2022, 733 children have been killed and 2,285 have been injured. Direct hostilities and the presence of explosive ordnance pose a direct threat to children, yet community awareness of explosive ordnance risks remains mixed. Over half of the respondents in a 2024 child protection survey stated that children knew how to identify ordnance, while 28% of IDP respondents and 21% of non-displaced respondents reported being unsure whether explosive hazards were present in their area. From January to July 2025, 4,476 children were victims of crimes. This indicates a concerning upward trend compared to the same period in 2024, when 4,116 children were victims of crimes. During all of 2024, 6,714 children were victims of criminal offences, including 2,545 children who suffered from severe and extremely severe cases[liv]. This increase highlights the growing demand for specialized services and the need for inter-sectoral collaboration between the justice and social welfare sectors as ongoing hostilities, continued displacement, poverty, loss of parental control, the normalization of violence and aggression, and uncontrolled access to dangerous content create additional risks for children. Frontline regions are particularly concerning from a children protection lens due to the psychological state of children, the influence of immediate environment, and socio-economic conditions.

Violence against children, particularly within homes, remains a pervasive and deeply concerning issue despite legal reforms prohibiting corporal punishment in all settings. Violence as a form of discipline continues to be practiced. Many children are subjected to psychological aggression and physical punishment, often normalized by social norms and increased tensions in the household due to the war. Forty-seven per cent of Ukrainians have high or elevated stress levels based on the Perceived Stress Scale[lv]. Forty-six per cent of Ukrainians report fatigue, tension, fear, anger, and powerlessness. All this impacts how care-givers parent their children[lvi].

The war has also intensified domestic violence, with increased stress, trauma among returning soldiers, substance abuse, and economic hardship contributing to aggression within households. Women and children are often trapped with abusers due to curfews, air alerts, and displacement-related overcrowding. In many cases, children witness or directly experience violence, leading to long-term psychological harm, including anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues.[lvii]

Psychosocial distress and mental health deterioration

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine has inflicted a profound and widespread psychosocial toll on children and their families, leading to significant mental health deterioration across affected oblasts. This is driven by direct exposure to hostilities, displacement, economic hardship, and the disruption of social support systems.

According to a 2025 report, an estimated 1.5 million children are at risk of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).[lviii] In a similar study in 2024 indicated 84% of key informants identified mental and psychosocial well-being as a top risk for children; 68% noted children worrying about the future and 26% reported children are distressed due to separation from or concern for displaced relatives. Distress is magnified by displacement, family separation, repeated exposure to attacks, disruption to education and essential services. In areas within the 50km zone to the frontline, there is widespread exposure to traumatic events, limited access to psychosocial support, and compounding effects of displacement, air raids, and isolation. The need for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services is critical, yet access remains a major challenge due to various barriers, including stigma and lack of specialized personnel.

Many children remain and continue to be separated from caregivers, including fathers who have been conscripted or family members who are refugees in third countries. A2024 study reported 36% of households identified the separation of their families to be an issue for them. This separation or fragmentation of the family unit often occurs during evacuations when children are sent to safer regions ahead of caregivers due to security or logistical constraints. This separation denies children stability and security, whilst exposing them to risks of violence, abuse and neglect. Given the length of the conflict in Ukraine, child protection experts note that prolonged absence

of caregivers as contributing to psychosocial harm and increased vulnerability.

Children who do not have parental care such as those who are in institutional care are particularly vulnerable, especially when living in frontline areas. Frontline areas see a disruption of social protection systems and resource gaps, which potentially reduces the already poor quality of care for these children, exposing them to even greater risks of violence, abuse, and neglect. As of March 2025, almost 26,000 children live in 720 institutions across Ukraine.[lix] The overreliance of the existing alternative care system on institutional care, the insufficient number of foster families (including emergency foster families), and the backdrop of increased levels of violence in the household means the conflict is causing more children to become institutionalized.

A deeply concerning trend has emerged involving the recruitment and use of children through messaging platforms and social media. A 2025 UN report documented credible evidence that the Russian Federation is using children in government-controlled territory to conduct unlawful tasks, including targeting Ukrainian military objects or infrastructure, often in exchange of money. Online recruitment for illegal activities has been explicitly documented, particularly impacting adolescents.[lx] In Kyiv City and Kyivska Oblast, a UN report explicitly states: 'individuals contacted boys and girls over social media and instructed them to set fire to objects such as vehicles belonging to members of the military or railway equipment. They promised to pay the children after receiving video proof of the arson'[lxi]. The recruitment and use of children is highly concerning as it puts them at serious risk and exposes them to victimization and the risk of detention, where they may face harsh punishments under national security charges. Under Ukrainian legislation, such crimes can carry severe punishments and are applicable from the age of 14. The recruitment and use of children is a grave violation of their rights, and children who are recruited and used – including those who may be accused of having committed crimes – ''should be treated primarily as victims of international law.''[lxii]

Families, especially those in frontline and occupied regions, are under immense psychological and financial strain, which heightens their vulnerability to online exploitation. The desperation to find missing loved ones has pushed many onto unverified online channels. Critically, 50% turn to Russian sources in their search, making them prime targets for misinformation and scams, with young people and adolescents being very vulnerable to this form of grooming and coercion. Economic hardships and disrupted services amplify vulnerability to online abuse and exploitation. [lxiii] The general disruption to social support networks also increases the reliance on online communication. Direct online recruitment for illicit activities, the exploitation of desperate families seeking information, and systemic digital vulnerabilities exacerbate existing protection risks. Addressing this requires not only improving digital literacy and access to safe online spaces but also strengthening protective services that can respond to these evolving forms of exploitation.

The shift to online learning, coupled with widespread economic hardship and the desperation of families searching for loved ones, has created fertile ground for malicious actors operating in the digital sphere. Across Ukraine, the reliance on online platforms has surged. RDNA4 indicates that 65% of children in frontline areas are engaged in online schooling.[lxiv]

Persistent attacks on civilian infrastructure have severely disrupted children's lives, with education being severely disrupted. According to UN-verified information, over 1,850 educational facilities have been damaged and destroyed[lxv], resulting in an estimated 1.2 million children missing out on full-time, in-person learning[lxvi]. The high rates of online schooling mean children spend more time unsupervised online, increasing their exposure to online risks.[lxvii] Economic hardship in these frontline regions further pushes individuals, including youth, to seek informal or exploitative online work. One expert group notes that for children with disabilities in Zaporizka oblast, there is a challenge with acquiring devices for online learning, which could mean children use shared or unsupervised devices, increasing exposure risks. [lxviii]

In the Occupied Territory of Ukraine, the online environment is severely restricted. Russian authorities actively block Ukrainian internet providers, television, and media outlets, while simultaneously imposing Russian curriculum and identity. This means children have limited access to verified information and are exposed to online content that can include recruitment propaganda. They also face significant risk and barriers when trying to access and follow the Ukrainian school curriculum.

RISK 3 Gender-Based Violence

With each year of the war, the risk factors for Gender Based Violence in Ukraine are growing and are compounding upon each other.[lxix] In many families across Ukraine, women face the daunting task of being expected to be the sole family care givers. Women face barriers to unemployment at the same time as they shoulder the burden of unpaid care work,[lxx] and many women (and families) are experiencing an increase in intimate partner violence as the strain of conflict and mobilization continues. Conflict-related sexual violence continues to be reported in frontline, occupied, and recently retaken areas, affecting both women and men. Shifts in foreign aid are undermining both the quality and accessibility of safe services for survivors of violence.

Increasing intimate partner violence and barriers to seeking services

Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Violence are often identified as the most common form of GBV and reported to be significantly increasing in the context of the prolonged humanitarian crisis.[lxxi] Children are also directly affected or are witnesses to household violence. In one report, a GBV expert noted the increased fragility of households that are on the edge of separation, and that older female family members can often be expected to take responsibility for children after separation.[lxxii] In 2024, 8,900 domestic violence proceedings were opened, a 30.8% increase of registered domestic violence criminal proceedings over the same period in the previous year. 181,904 domestic violence appeals were made in the same period.[lxxiii] Local civil society organizations believe that gender-based violence has increased but is significantly underreported due to stigma, a culture of silence, lack of services, and police capacity, all of which have been made worse by the ongoing war.

The decision to report intimate partner violence or seek services can be deeply personal and challenging. Wives of servicemen returning from the frontline—whether temporarily or for the long term—may face social pressure or criticism for reporting such cases. In households where men are adjusting to new domestic responsibilities or coping with post-deployment stress, trauma, frustration and demoralization can sometimes result in heightened risks of violence at home.[lxxiv] In this case, a woman is forced to choose between her own safety or alerting authorities to the presence of a husband or other male family member who is avoiding conscription. In one 2025 study, people reported they would not approach the police as they believe the police will not act in cases of domestic violence as they perceive it to be a family matter. In more rural areas where there are often gaps in state services, people can be unsure where they can turn for help.[lxxv]

Women can find themselves with no safety outside of the home and no safety inside the home.[lxxvi] Heightened tension and aggression within households were reported to have increased both the frequency and severity of violence. War-related risks that contribute to family abuse include stress caused by insecurity and displacement, challenging conditions and overcrowding in collective living arrangements. Growing economic pressures and limited job opportunities were seen to intensify stress on men and lead to increased substance abuse. The risk of intimate partner violence was also higher in households where men had restricted mobility due to fear of conscription, as well as among men who had returned on leave or been discharged from military service. [lxxvii]

GBV and Public Spaces

Women and girls reported that the absence of public street lighting significantly heightens their sense of insecurity and restricts their movement, limiting their access to services and assistance. Additional risks of sexual violence were linked to collective housing arrangements where the lack of privacy in shared spaces with unrelated individuals creates vulnerabilities, as well as to the rise of substance abuse within communities. They expressed particular concern about the presence of men and youth under the influence of alcohol and drugs in public areas, on transportation, in collective sites, and during periods of military leave. Increased risks of sexual violence were also noted along evacuation routes and in areas with a heavy military presence.[lxxviii]

Physical violence was reported to have intensified, with growing substance abuse within households and communities cited as a major contributing factor. Overall, violence within both families and communities has escalated, driven by heightened stress and aggression in society, the harmful effects of alcohol and drug use, increased time spent at home, rising economic pressures, and widespread loss of employment.[lxxix] Reports also indicate an increase in labour exploitation and other forms of work-related violence against women. Women's vulnerability to labour exploitation is growing because of rising household financial needs, limited and expensive rental housing, a shortage of employment, family separation, and changing gender roles.[lxxx]

Conflict related sexual violence (CRSV)

There have been documented cases of CSRV against women and girls living under occupation, and men, boys and LGBTQI+ people, particularly under detention. Ukraine's Office of the Prosecutor General reported 349 CRSV cases between 24 February 2022 and 1 April 2025, including: 225 women, 124 men, 18 girls and 1 boy.[lxxxi] Between 1 December 2024 and 31 May 2025, OHCHR documented 106 cases of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) against 94 men, 9 women and 3 girls, perpetrated by members of the Russian armed forces, Russian law enforcement officials, and Russian penitentiary staff. [lxxxii] Given the ongoing nature of the conflict, these figures likely underestimate the true scale of CRSV and the full range of needs among survivors.

In November 2024, the Ukrainian parliament approved two laws which were ratified by the president in December. Law No. 4067, "On the legal and social protection of survivors of sexual violence related to the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and providing them with urgent interim reparations," and Law No. 4071 "On accounting of information on damage caused to personal non-property rights of individuals as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine" are the result of collaboration between the Global Survivors Fund, parliamentarians, government officials, survivor networks, and civil society and international organisations. This marks the first instance of a government offering interim reparations to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence during an active war. However, like government housing compensation schemes, the programs will require adequate financing and must be accessible and navigable for survivors.

Trafficking risks

People in Ukraine face two main forms of trafficking: exploitation within Ukraine and trafficking victims from Ukraine to locations abroad. Fifty-two per cent of the reported victims of trafficking are female and 48% are male, including children. While there is often a focus on trafficking for sexual exploitation, the primary form of recorded trafficking is for labour exploitation (76%) – particularly in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors.[lxxxiii] Trafficking for forced engagement in armed conflict represents 9% of the overall caseload, although experts believe that this is underreported as people may be concerned that they would be perceived to be collaborators if they seek services for forced conscription into Russian Armed Forces. There are also indications of trends of trafficking of people with disabilities abroad, where an individual travels with a person with disabilities in order to avoid conscription.

Survivors often face multiple barriers in accessing safety and justice. The Government of Ukraine has a National Action Plan (2023-2025) to address trafficking concerns, although this is due to expire at the end of this year. While the Government has a legal and policy framework in place, limited funding for victim protection and legal support means many survivors rely on humanitarian assistance to access safety and justice. Support may be delayed — in one example, nearly one in four individuals assisted in 2025 had been trafficked in 2021–2022. There are low budget allocations for victim protection and legal support, which means that many victims of trafficking continue to rely on humanitarian assistance to access safety and legal remedies. There is no specific timeline where an individual seeks support. It can be very difficult to identify and support victims of trafficking. Hotlines and public awareness campaigns remain crucial entry points for reaching survivors, but gaps in identification persist. Hotlines and public information campaigns are two core activities to reach out to trafficking survivors. In a review of the use of the national countertrafficking and migrant hotline between January and June 2025, of 24,542 calls, 21 people were identified as survivors of trafficking. These people were identified as they sought information on other services, and trained operators were able to identify indicators of trafficking.[lxxxiv]

Changing gender roles and exacerbating inequalities in Ukraine

The economic, social and mental health impacts of the war in Ukraine are influencing the gender dynamics in Ukrainian society, particularly in rural and frontline communities. Women often shoulder expanded caregiving responsibilities due to displacement, family separation, and military service of male relatives. In addition to balancing work, household, and childcare duties, women frequently care for other relatives or friends in need. This expanded role also places women at the forefront of critical decisions about family safety, including when and how to evacuate from frontline areas. [lxxxv] However, structural inequalities exacerbate these challenges. Women earn lower salaries than men for similar work and face limited opportunities to re-enter the workforce, particularly where alternative childcare or caregiving arrangements are scarce. These conditions can heighten stress, reduce economic autonomy, and increase vulnerability to gender-based violence and other risks.[lxxxvi]

Social services gap and its impact on GBV and gender specific services

In 2025, 2.4 million people, predominantly women and girls, are estimated to need GBV services and assistance, including 1.1 million internally displaced people and 1.4 million non-displaced war affected people.[lxxxvii] Even prior to the war, the availability of GBV services and other social services, such as social service centers and mobile police units, was uneven, particularly in rural areas, creating a structural disparity between urban and rural communities. As a result, women and girls in frontline and rural areas face significant barriers to accessing timely and adequate support.

Humanitarian actors supplemented state services by providing crisis rooms and shelters, hotlines and other mobile services, and case management support for whole family care. However, many survivors of trafficking and gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, delay seeking support due to competing priorities, safety concerns, or lack of information on available services. As one GBV expert noted, 'a woman is going to make sure her children have shelter before even considering support for herself.'[lxxxviii] This points to a need for consistency in information and for service providers to ensure services are available once people are ready to come forward to disclose their needs. Older women, women and girls with limited mobility, and women and girls in rural areas also face difficulties accessing information about humanitarian services in a timely manner.[lxxxix]

Structural challenges, such as low salaries for state social workers and the human resource drain caused by displacement and mobilization, further reduce the capacity of social services. Without fair compensation and adequate staffing, the transition of humanitarian services to government systems risks leaving survivors without the support they need.

Impact in international funding for GBV programming

In February 2025, 73% of nearly 100 women's rights organizations reported significant disruptions to their operations due to funding cuts in the humanitarian sector and beyond. Thirty-two percent of organizations expected to suspend operations within 6 months while 67% have been forced to lay off staff and more than 50% anticipate additional layoffs by the end of September 2025. The shedding of talent will increase the workload of remaining staff and exacerbate the exhaustion and burnout already experienced by humanitarian responders. The loss of staff is also a loss of technical expertise and institutional capacity, as 60% of women's rights organizations have been forced to reduce or suspend their GBV services, leaving survivors without safe spaces or legal and psychological support.[xc] GBV experts consider it premature to expect state social services to fully absorb the casework previously provided by humanitarian actors, leaving survivors at risk of unmet needs and gaps in protection.

RISK 4 Presence of Explosive Ordnance

As of mid-2025, the scale and complexity of explosive ordnance (EO) contamination in Ukraine continues to evolve. According to the Government of Ukraine, an estimated 138,503 km² of land and 14,000 km² of water, or 23% of the country's territory, remains affected by EO, with approximately 5.44 million people considered at risk of exposure. Contamination is most widespread in the oblasts of Chernihivska, Dnipropetrovska, Donetska, Kharkivska, Kyivska, Khersonska, Luhanska, Mykolaivska, Odeska, Sumska, and Zaporizka. Agricultural land is the most heavily impacted land type, posing serious and sustained threats to food security, rural livelihoods, and Ukraine's economic recovery.

Of 50,597 civilian casualties recorded by OHCHR from February 2022 to August 2025, 1,581 civilian casualties from mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) were recorded resulting in 457 civilian deaths and 1,124 injuries[xci]. These figures underscore the lethal and ongoing threat posed by explosive hazards across much of the country, but they do not capture the full extent of trauma experienced by survivors and their families who often face permanent disability, loss of income, and long-term psychological distress. Men account for the majority of casualties, comprising of85.8% of those killed in mine or ERW incidents, followed by women and children—particularly boys—who are more likely to encounter hazardous objects due to curiosity or limited risk awareness. These incidents reflect the acute and ongoing danger EO contamination poses to daily civilian life, especially in frontline or retaken areas.

Between February 2022 and August 2025, 34 children were killed and 129 injured by landmines and ERW, more than 80% of whom were boys.[xcii] In the Izyumskyy (Kharkivska oblast) and Beryslavskyy (Khersonska oblast) raions, there have been numerous cases of tractors being destroyed by anti-tank mines, resulting in amputations and serious injuries. These incidents restrict safe movement and access to land and livelihoods.

This growing complexity of threats comes at a time when global disarmament norms are under pressure. In a 16 June 2025 statement, UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed grave concern over decisions by several states to withdraw from the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, warning that such actions "risk weakening civilian protection and undermining two decades of a normative framework that has saved countless lives." He urged all states to recommit to humanitarian disarmament principles, emphasizing that the erosion of global norms could further endanger civilians in conflict-affected countries like Ukraine, where the risks from mines and other explosive ordnance are already extreme.[xciii] Despite this, in July 2025, Ukraine informed the UN that it suspended its operation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention until the end of the war, in contravention of the treaty's provisions.[xciv]

The increased use of drones changes the landscape of conflict

While traditional explosive hazards remain widespread, emerging tactics—particularly the use of short-range drones—have further intensified protection risks for civilians. Drones are increasingly used not only to directly target individuals but also to scatter anti-personnel landmines in populated areas, marking a disturbing evolution in the conflict. Between February 2022 and August 2025, 596 civilians were killed and 3,850 injured by drone attacks, with91% occurring in Government-controlled territory, with 56% of attacks in Government-controlled territory occurring in Khersonska oblast alone.[xcv]

Drone strikes in frontline communities such as Antonivka (Khersonska oblast) and Zolochiv (Kharkivska oblast) have severely disrupted critical infrastructure repairs, with utility and emergency workers deliberately being targeted. In early 2025, the threat further escalated as drones began deploying anti-personnel landmines, adding a new, insidious layer of contamination in civilian areas. On 9 March 2025, one such device killed three civilians in a residential yard in Kharkivska oblast.[xcvi]

These alarming developments highlight the urgent need for a multi-track response: immediate mitigation through clearance, risk education, and marking, coupled with long-term resilience-building in communities repeatedly exposed to explosive violence and targeted attacks.

The continuous presence of landmines and other explosive ordinance

According to the Fourth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA4),[xcvii] landmine and explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination continues to severely affect livelihoods, economic recovery, and the environment in Ukraine. Agricultural land remains the most impacted, especially in Suspected and Confirmed Hazardous Areas, limiting farmers' access to their livelihoods and hindering business relocation. The destruction of the Kakhovka Dam further worsened access to farmland due to flooding and mine dispersion.

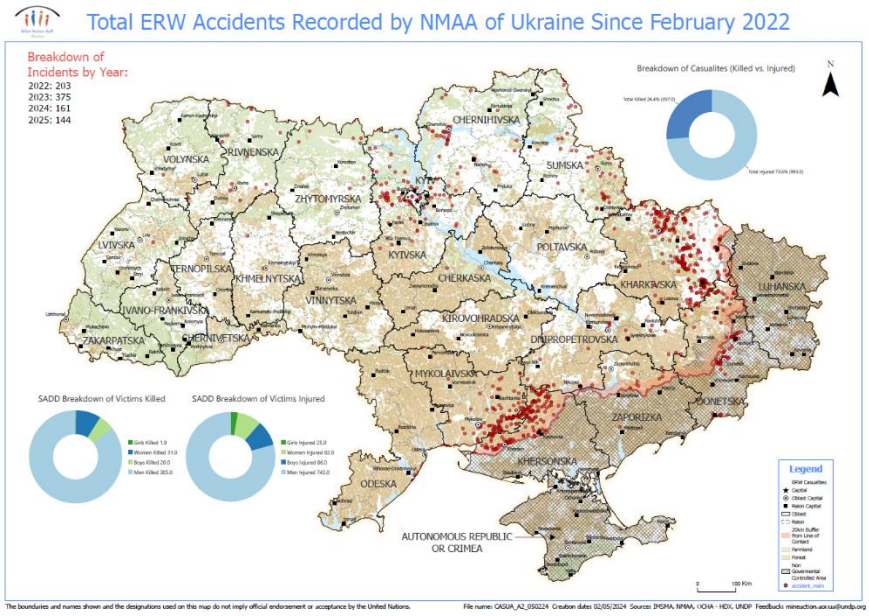
Many areas of farmland, forest strips, and access roads remain uncleared. In rural areas, people often cultivate only small, previously checked plots or conduct informal "self-demining" before planting. These practices put lives at risk, slow down economic recovery, and increase psychological stress. Some children avoid playing outside, and many farmers wait for clearance teams to declare land safe before working in their fields.

The financial cost of clearance in Ukraine remains amongst the highest globally. While updated RDNA4 estimates now place total demining needs at $29.8 billion—$4.8 billion less than RDNA3 due to progress in land cancellation and prioritization—long-term funding remains uncertain.

High-contamination oblasts like Kharkivska, Khersonska, Donetska, and Luhanska will require substantial resources, making mine action a long-term humanitarian, economic, and ecological challenge.

Mine/EO awareness and frontline communities

In February 2025, 84% of IDPs surveyed said that mine contamination was the main factor causing concern about their safety during evacuation or while staying in Occupied Territories.[xcviii] Fear of explosive remnants of war limits return and extends a person's displacement. In another survey, 8.3% of respondents reported that they knew of someone's death due to mines or explosive remnants of war and 6.8% reported widespread contamination.[xcix] Unexploded Ordnances significantly limit access to services and pose a constant threat to farmers, rural populations, and returnees. Yet there is still a gap in risk awareness and engaging in risk-taking behaviour. In one survey, although 97% of teenagers know the basic mine safety rules, 18% still farm in areas they believe might be contaminated. This shows a clear gap between what people know and how they act. These findings underline the urgent need to strengthen explosive ordnance risk education, expand mine clearance, and support communities in transforming mine safety knowledge into safer behavior, especially in high-risk areas and areas of return.



Revisions to the operational approach to humanitarian demining

Ukraine's mine action capacity has expanded rapidly in response to operational demands. As of August 2025, there are 82 Government certified operators active across the country,[c] more than double the number from the previous year. This rapid scale-up reflects a strong institutional commitment and growing international support, but the sector continues to face significant challenges, particularly in areas with intense contamination and limited humanitarian access.

The ongoing military mobilization effort has constrained the available workforce, with many male deminers subject to conscription. This has resulted in staffing gaps, disrupted operations, and increased reliance on alternative recruitment strategies, including the training of women, veterans, and other underrepresented groups. At the same time, prolonged exposure to hazardous environments and growing uncertainty in the field are placing psychological strain on personnel, underscoring the need for dedicated workforce support mechanisms.

The Ukrainian government is actively working to expand the presence of national operators, recognizing the importance of building local capacity to meet long-term needs. Currently, only six international operators are certified to conduct mine action activities in Ukraine. The Government of Ukraine adopted a new 10-year National Mine Action Strategy (2024–2033) and an accompanying three-year Operational Plan (2024–2027) in June 2024. Together, these frameworks articulate three overarching goals:

1. Ensuring the clearance of territories from the risks of explosive hazards for their safe and productive use.
2. Reducing the impact of explosive hazards on the lives and health of the population.
3. Building a strong, sustainable mine action management system.

RISK 5 Impediments and/or Restrictions to Access to Legal Identity, Remedies and Justice, including House, Land and Property Rights

The war has had a profound effect on where people live and their homes. Thirteen percent of the total housing stock has been damaged or destroyed, affecting more than 2.5 million households.[ci] Over 3.7 million people are displaced within Ukraine, living somewhere that was not their original homes, and more people are expected to join them as displacement continues to move people away from the frontline. Collective sites represent the last resort for many vulnerable people who can afford to go no further, and being unable to sustain paying rent is one of the push factors for IDP returns, including to dangerous areas.[cii] While the Government of Ukraine has made efforts to provide assistance to affected people, the procedures are difficult for many people to navigate. For some people, a lack of documentation means that they must start their search for their new lives at the absolute beginning.

Barriers to accessing compensation and assistance

One protection expert described how ''a lack of documentation in Ukraine means you are at a disadvantage for everything in Ukraine.'' Ukraine has a complex legislative system and a highly digitized administrative process. If you are missing a document, you miss the first entry point to assistance frameworks that have been laid out under Ukrainian law.

Ukrainian assistance programs and policies are very frequently updated. The IDP allowance has been the main government assistance program for IDPs. In 2023, this accounted for 40% of all social protection funding provided by the Government. It has been adapted to focus on vulnerable groups in 2023. This created an additional workload for service providers to remain up to date with changes and to be able to follow this implementation down to the community level (for more: Protection Cluster's Update on Changes to IDP Allowance, 2024).

A lack of civil documentation is also a barrier to eligibility for social assistance and pensions. The IDP allowance, pensions and disability allowance are cornerstones of the social protection system. In a June 2025 survey, 63% of respondents currently receive some form of social assistance or a pension from the state, while 10% of respondents receive at least one state social service.[ciii] While the percentage of people facing barriers was relatively low, at 9%, there were barriers related to knowledge gaps in how to apply, missing documents or needing more support (including legal support) to apply. While 9% is an overall low figure, if it is applied across the entire IDP population this is almost 300,000 people who may be eligible for social support but face obstacles to apply.

Housing is a core asset in Ukraine. In 2021, 95% of adults lived in owned homes, and 5% rented.[civ] With war damage and displacement this figure has dropped to 79% living in owned houses.[cv] The Government housing compensation program[cvi] exists to help people whose homes have been destroyed or damaged because of Russian military action since the start of the full-scale invasion. This compensation can be used to repair properties or purchase/construct new properties. IDPs and others with damaged or destroyed residential properties often struggle to provide key documents necessary to apply for compensation, and the process to secure documentation is often long and expensive. Barriers also occur due to the lack of understanding and reported complexity about the process, different applications and interpretation that are given to rules relating to the status and type of building that is damaged, co-owner consent requirements, and the uncertainty whether compensation will be available a second time for damage caused by a subsequent strike on the property in question.[cvii] While these barriers persist, an estimated 34% of Ukrainians that are aware of the Government housing compensation mechanism applied for it, with approximately 220,000 total applications for destroyed and damaged housing compensation as of August 2025.[cviii]

Housing vulnerability are draining IDP resilience

In a survey conducted from April to June 2025, affordable housing remains one of the most pressing concerns for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and conflict-affected populations. A total of 59% of respondents surveyed across all oblasts reported concerns related to their accommodation, an increase of 10% in comparison to the previous reporting period.[cix] Participants reported concerns over the condition of the accommodation, security and safety risks, as well as concerns regarding the risk of eviction.[cx]

Rental payments constitute a significant portion of IDP household expenditures. According to the 2024 MSNA, 60% of the IDP population had rental costs in their monthly expenditures, compared to 16% among returnees.[cxi] 31% of all Ukrainian renters spend more than 70% of their household income on housing.[cxii] More than half of the most vulnerable IDPs have been accumulating debt to cover their housing needs. In most cases this relates to paying rent. In one survey, they found more than 90% of IDPs applying for assistance had exhausted almost all their savings and were accumulating higher rates of debt to family, friends, and financial institutions, therefore IDPs who may have previously been able to live independently, have now begun to ask for further help.[cxiii] In some locations, women report a harder time securing accommodation as they are seen to be less financially stable. Older people and people with limited mobility can be left fearful that they will lose accommodation that they have been able to physically navigate. For people living in collective sites, one of the stated reasons given for remaining in these locations despite the concerns on their overall standards was that residents are unable to sustain long term rental payments.[cxiv] Only 6% of people living in collective sites have any

plans to move to rented accommodation.[cxv]

In a June 2025 survey, only 7% of IDPs had any immediate intention to return to their areas of origin which is in line with broader regional return intentions. Older participants had a higher intention to return, wishing to return to their homes. But overall, there is no serious return movement expected in the immediate future, meaning people will continue to need to rent.[cxvi]

Many people live in rental properties without meaningful legal protections, as verbal or other informal agreements are commonly used. IDPs report that landlords either decline to formalize contracts or demand higher rents when asked to do so. In this environment, people can feel a sense of precariousness that there will be a change that will result in them needing to move out, if homeowners return or there is a change in relationship with the landlord. This also applies to people living in collective sites. In one study covering eight oblasts in the North, East and South of Ukraine, IDPs expressed significant fears of eviction. In Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizka oblasts, over 40% of IDPs surveyed expressed fear of eviction.[cxvii]

In 2025, the Ministry of Social Policy launched a rental subsidy program for IDPs that includes financial assistance, legal protections against eviction, and safeguards for landlords. Though well-intended, the program remains to have limitations in its accessibility with low uptake due to several barriers, notably the physical absence of landlords and their reluctance to sign the required formal lease agreements.[cxviii]

Housing rights and civil documentation for people in Occupied Territory

People living in the Occupied Territory are separated from the rest of Ukraine in physical, communication and administrative ways. While the Russian administration focuses on efforts that erode the cultural and identity rights of people living in the Occupied Territory, people are also severed from assistance and entitlements in Ukraine. People who are displaced from the Occupied Territory face insurmountable barriers to making claims for compensation, such as being able to provide proof of ownership and proof of destruction or damage to property. People living in Occupied Territory may not be able to claim for provisions under birth or death registration, inheritance and compensation depending on the eligibility periods and limitations placed on applications. Moreover, many people displaced from Occupied Territory are losing their property rights because the occupying authorities require people to re-register their property under Russian legislation, which requires them to travel to Occupied Territory under high security risks and a to obtain Russian citizenship.

Investing in human resources alongside physical infrastructure

As of the end of December 2024, Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery needs for ten years were estimated at almost US$524 billion. This is approximately 2.8 times Ukraine's estimated nominal GDP for 2024. A lot of these needs are linked to housing and social protection.[cxix] Access to housing and social protection and services require sustained financial investment, and it also requires suitable human resources to help navigate people through complicated systems in their time of personal crisis. This includes the human resources for legal assistance, social support services and psycho-social support.

RESPONSE

From January to July 2025, over 174 protection partners responded to the protection needs of over 2,5 million people (13% adult men, 47% adult women, 40% children]. Of those reached, 451K are older people and 135k are people with disabilities. 42% of persons reached were from the crescent oblasts. The Protection sector has received $173M USD reported funding for 2025, against an original request of $445M USD.[cxx] Over halfway gain to 2025, this is over 50% less than received last year. The GBV AoR has received only $21.4M USD (or 37%) of its funding request of $57.9M USD. This has catalyzed the necessary reprioritization of financial resources that have been dedicated for the protection response. The Protection Cluster conducts continuous reflections with partners on prioritization efforts. Partners highlight four issues relating to a quality protection response in Ukraine.

Ensuring services where and when at-risk people need them. Protection partners have noted a shift in response capacity from West Ukraine to East Ukraine, as partners consolidate their efforts due to a decrease in funding, and in some cases an ability to phase out services due to local authorities' capacity to take over. Yet, some partners express a concern that they need to close services in locations that receive IDPs, to move responses into more at risk/volatile areas where it is not possible to provide safe services for complex or dynamic cases. This also creates a bottleneck in creating adequate reception capacity and services for IDPs, including evacuees, in safer receiving areas, which may result in unwillingness of people to evacuate or returns of IDPs to unsafe, frontline areas. Furthermore, support seeking behavior does not follow strict timelines. For example, just under 50% of people seeking support from humanitarian actors due to trafficking were trafficked in 2023.[cxxi] Many survivors of violence do not seek services immediately after any incident, which is increasingly challenging, and the pre-existing access barriers are more difficult to surmount given war-related factors. Survivors do not seek support for a range of reasons, from a desire to protect their children and family, a lack of awareness regarding violence and how to access services, and a deprioritisation of GBV related to the war.[cxxii]

Understanding the foundation of protection responses. Information provision, protection monitoring and advocacy, monitoring and reporting on grave violations, and capacity building are all cornerstones of protection response. Ensuring people have access to the information they need is lifesaving. People pay attention to information as they need it, which is why it is important that information provision is continuous and up to date. Importantly, Ukraine has an ever-evolving complex legislative and administrative landscape, where policies and procedures from evacuations to access to government schemes continuously change. Protection monitoring and advocacy feeds into local and national authorities', as well as humanitarian actors' strategies and plans, to make necessary adjustments to better protect the rights of IDPs and address response gaps. Finally, in order to meaningfully link the most vulnerable people with public services, enhance their quality and inclusivity and prevent their disruption due to the war, provision of protection services needs to be complemented by capacity building.

Reflecting on Transition Capacity: While protection partners aim to provide services that link to national social systems, two realities restrict this. Firstly, 2025 has seen changes in Government ministries that are responsible for IDPs and the Occupied Territory. This has caused a reorientation in specific responsibilities and also relationships that are required for national level transition. Secondly, local level transition continues to be restricted by human resource gaps and institutional weakness, including child protection and alternative care systems. A high number of essential service workers, social workers, legal aid providers and carers have been displaced away from frontline communities, including outside of Ukraine, experience burn out or leave due to low salaries that do not meet their basic needs. Those that remain are also often left calculating when they will need to displace with their families. It has not always been realistic to transfer case capacity to overstretched local level human resources in the frontline oblasts and West and Center Ukraine. This is particularly acute when it comes to alternative care for children as placing children, for their protection, in alternative care families, requires the involvement of statutory services from children's affairs services, guardianship authorities (local self-government) and courts. The Government of Ukraine is currently undertaking an ambitious care reform,[cxxiii] however the current system, if not properly accompanied, still places children at a high risk of institutionalization.

Localization is at the forefront of protection response in Ukraine, ensuring strong engagement with the authorities at central, regional and local levels, as well as local NGOs, CSOs, community-based organizations / volunteer groups. Local partners facilitate the cluster's strong engagement on policy issues, and are the main actors in humanitarian evacuations. Drones and other changes in use of weapons have seriously compromised their safety to provide frontline assistance and support evacuations. To support their safety, it is critical that there is strong and principled **duty of care considerations** in place, and that evacuation processes begin earlier and are not disrupted to ensure a dignified and safe evacuation for everyone in need.

ACCESS-RELATED CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS

Humanitarian access in Ukraine has deteriorated throughout 2025, due to continuous shifting of the frontlines between the Russian Armed Forces and Ukraine Armed Forces. This has made locations that were previously accessible to humanitarian actors now inaccessible. Evacuation orders have been issued in Chernihivska, Donetska, Kharkivska, Dnipropetrovska and Sumska oblasts, changing access and response considerations to these locations. Russian aerial attacks continue to affect humanitarian workers operating in frontline areas, causing damage to humanitarian vehicles, premises and human assets. The intensified use of drones increases security risks for humanitarians providing assistance close to the frontlines and border areas with the Russian Federation. In 2025, at least 7 humanitarian workers have been killed and 44 have been injured in Ukraine[cxxiv], including staff from protection organizations. Access barriers for humanitarians also include extreme restrictions to provision of humanitarian assistance in the Occupied Territory.

While there is a reported decrease in access to humanitarian assistance, due to a combination of factors including the security situation and reduced funding, there is no observed pattern of discrimination or a deterioration in the attitude of the local authorities against IDPs. This view is confirmed by the IDP Councils.[cxxv]

Mobilization of humanitarian staff affects the operational delivery of humanitarian responders and constrains the available workforce. This has a significant impact on response areas such as demining, with many male deminers subject to mobilization, as well as other areas of protection response, with support staff critical to services delivery such as drivers being particularly affected. This has resulted in staffing gaps, disrupted operations, and increased reliance on alternative recruitment strategies. This is a particular challenge for NGO operations. While Ukrainian law allows exemptions for NGO staff that are deemed critical, the process is inconsistently applied. NGO actors also note with concern that long-term visa processes for international staff are time consuming and costly, particularly for experts from Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the period covered by this analysis, urgent action is required to stop the recorded increase in violence and exploitation, take all feasible precautions to avoid / minimize civilian harm, mitigate protection risks and advance the implementation of the HCT centrality of protection priorities.

Government of Ukraine

- Designate a clear ministerial lead for internal displacement and durable solutions within the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, to ensure coordination across ministries and alignment of national strategies with the realities of displacement through appropriate resource and capacity allocation. This lead ministry should recognise and support the role of IDP Councils and other community-based mechanisms in recovery governance.
- Expedite the development of the new State Strategy on Internal Displacement, addressing the identified protection risks affecting IDPs in the new strategy.
- Reinvigorate IDP housing programs and initiatives to focusing on the most vulnerable IDPs, including those who are relying on collective sites long-term. The Government of Ukraine should support a new law aimed at assessing available properties for IDP accommodation, improving their accessibility and availability of social services. Additionally, the Government should remove barriers to, and ramp up information provision on, the compensation mechanism for destroyed and damaged housing.
- Enhance the national and sub-national evacuations coordination mechanisms to galvanize relevant state actors to address key challenges and gaps in evacuation. Such coordination mechanisms should strengthen early warning and preparedness, including timely information provision, data collection on people in need of evacuations and those evacuated, and access to information and post-displacement assistance by IDPs who displaced with their own means.
- In close collaboration with the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity and oblast administrations and building on existing mechanisms, scale up capacity for dignified, disability and age-inclusive accommodation. Scale up access to social services for older people and people with disabilities evacuated from frontline areas, including those from institutions.
- Develop amendments to CMU Resolution 930 to better enable durable solutions and integration for IDPs in collective sites, including improved access to public services and community-based approaches.
- Ukrainian ministries are urged to ensure a transparent and timely process for humanitarian staff to access their legal rights regarding exemption from mobilization and visa provision.
- Elevate the prevention and response to Gender Based Violence within Government led humanitarian planning, national initiatives and policies.
- Ensure that children who are recruited or used through social media or messaging apps – including those who may have committed crimes – are treated primarily as victims of a grave violation of their rights. Children should never be charged criminally on the basis of their association alone. Ensure affected children have access to multi-disciplinary and safe specialized services, including free legal aid, psycho-social support, child-sensitive justice approaches, and alternatives to detention. Detention should only be used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time and should be reviewed on a regular basis with a view to its withdrawal. Prevention approaches must be child-friendly and non-stigmatizing and must include access to social service support for vulnerable children and families. The Government should invest in capacity building for law enforcement, security, and judiciary on child friendly approaches.
- The Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity to strengthen its coordination and oversight role to ensure that children who were evacuated from institutions abroad only return safely and voluntarily to family-based care and benefit from reintegration support, in line with their individually assessed best interests.
- Strengthen resilience of communities in frontline areas to provide protection, social services and family-based alternative care when needed for children at risk of violence, abuse and neglect, notably through the government's care reform agenda.

Engagement on Occupied Territory

- UN member states should prioritise high-level engagement with parties to the conflict to explore all ways for humanitarian actors have sustained and meaningful access to provide aid to affected populations in the Occupied Territory, while upholding do-no-harm and risk mitigation approaches.
- Negotiate to open the humanitarian crossing points for the safe movement of civilian population across the frontline, in particular to enable family reunification and allow people to access their property.

- Provide tailored humanitarian support to IDPs entering Government-controlled areas from Occupied Territory, including to adults at risk and children being reunified with caregivers in government-held areas who are in need of community-based reintegration support following their return.
- Advocacy for the Ukrainian Government's strategy for people living in Occupied Territory, in particular on maintaining connections and enabling family reunification, access to services, including education, safe movements to Government-controlled areas and support and integration programmes upon arrival.

Humanitarian Country Team

- Adopt a holistic view of humanitarian evacuations as a continuum that spans from information provision in frontline areas, transportation and social support during evacuation, to post-evacuation multi-sectoral support in receiving areas, including in West and Center areas. This holistic view promotes early engagement with at-risk frontline communities to ensure dignified evacuation and access to information, use of transit centers and collective sites for those with the most limited capacities for self-managed processes, and enabling emergency support to vulnerable IDPs who displaced by their own means.
- In line with Centrality of Protection commitments, support relevant responders to expand their operations to implement the five-point operational model developed in coordination with the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity at greater scale to enable the dignified transportation, reception capacity and continuity of care for older people and people with disabilities in need of evacuation from the frontlines. Prioritize this group in the HNRP 2026 to ensure needed response packages.
- In the 2026 humanitarian planning process, provide support and ensure adequate resourcing for the Strategic Priorities 2 and 4 on Evacuations and Support to Vulnerable IDPs, enabling people-centered, needs-based prioritization and provision of multi-sectoral emergency and transitional assistance to IDPs most at-risk where and when they need it.
- Protection services need to be prioritized under Strategic Priority 4 of the HNRP 2026, including informational and legal services, psycho-social services, social support and community-based protection activities, so as to integrate the most vulnerable IDPs, including those in collective sites and children in alternative care, in the state and community-provided systems. This should be complemented by vulnerability-focused sectoral interventions, e.g. shelter, health and livelihoods.
- Support a diversity of safe entry points for specialized programmes including legal and social support services, GBV, and child protection services, and support for survivors of violence. Increase availability of and access to quality GBV specialized service provision. Attention should be given to the most vulnerable and at risk in Ukraine, regardless of geography and time in displacement.
- Promote the duty of care packages for frontline staff, while ensuring do-no-harm, principled approaches in frontline response. Donors, including UN agencies, should fund comprehensive duty of care packages based on needs assessments and ensure duty of care strategies for frontline staff are a criterion for funding decisions.

Donors and Development Actors

- Increase long-term, direct, and flexible funding to Ukrainian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), including Women's Rights Organisations (WROs), Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), Older People Associations (OPAs), LGBTIQ+, youth-led initiatives and organisations, and other grassroots groups; include CSOs in the ongoing advocacy discussions on social services reform and National Social Services Strategy.
- Scale up long-term resourcing for human resources capacity in essential social and public services in Ukraine to address the widening gap in the availability of skilled social workers, legal aid providers, foster caregivers and professional carers who are needed to provide inclusive support services for IDP communities.
- Support a diversity of modalities for protection responses, including online, mobile and static service provision that allow adapted entry points for children at risk, adolescent girls, older women, women and girls with disabilities, Roma communities, LGBTIQ+ persons, men, and people at risk of violence and survivors of violence. Safeguard funding for existing in-person service provision for locations that receive IDPs and other at-risk people in Ukraine.
- Increase resourcing and elevate prioritization of GBV prevention and response, including expansion of GBV programming for conflict-affected and vulnerable populations through women and girls' safe spaces, GBV case management, and shelters.
- Enable Mine Action actors to adopt a broader scope of work, recognizing not only the risks from landmines and unexploded ordnance but also from new threats such as weaponized drones and other remotely delivered explosive devices, to keep pace with the evolving nature of conflict in Ukraine.

Methodology

The protection analysis uses a framework approach developed by the Global Protection Cluster. In June/July 2025, the Protection Cluster, together with the GBV, CP and MA AoRs, and the HLP Technical Working Group, organised a series of consultations with partners across Ukraine to complete the protection risk prioritization exercise. The data collection was based on the Global Protection Cluster's Protection Analytical Framework and counted with the participation of a wide range of partners. The Protection Cluster and AoR sub-national coordinators also held consultations in July 2025 to review risk prioritization at oblast level. This analysis has been complimented with quantitative and qualitative data from existing secondary data sources, including protection assessments and data from key country-wide protection monitoring and information management tools.

Limitations

Areas under the occupation by the Russian Federation have extremely limited access from the humanitarian community. Relevant information and data have been shared where possible, as no large-scale assessments are available.

Up to date reports and technical data is available at the following links:

- Consolidated protection response
- GBV response
- Mine action response
- Child Protection response

Protection Cluster Ukraine

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