



Oleksandr Korniaikov, photo from exhibition "Unconquered Kherson"

# Mapping Ukraine's democratic space

**Civic activist perspectives on  
conditions in 40 localities**

Research Report

Analysing data collected from March – August 2023

Valentyn Hatsko, Myroslava Savisko,  
Andrii Darkovich, Khrystyna Petrynka

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### **Research Report**



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The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) is a research consortium led by the University of Edinburgh Law School. Our research is rethinking peace and transition processes in the light of changing conflict dynamics in the 21st century.

### **PeaceRep's Ukraine programme**

PeaceRep's Ukraine programme is a multi-partner initiative that provides evidence, insight, academic research and policy analysis from Ukraine and the wider region to support Ukrainian sovereignty, territorial integrity and democracy in the face of the Russian invasion. PeaceRep's Ukraine programme is led by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) partnering with the Kyiv School of Economics (KSE) in Ukraine, the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS) in Germany, the Institute of Human Sciences (IWM) in Austria and Jagiellonian University in Poland. Through our collaboration with KSE we work closely with researchers, educationalists and civic activists in Ukraine to ensure that policy solutions are grounded in robust evidence and are calibrated to support democratic outcomes.

## **Background**

Mapping Ukraine's democratic space research project aims to provide granular insight into the evolution and impacts of the war on Ukraine in different local geographies. It also aspires to identify spheres and groups of people crucial for resilience. The research focuses on the following spheres: (a) economic wellbeing and access to social infrastructure; (b) security; (c) governance and civiness. The selection of these spheres and the concurrent adoption of a framework incorporating three distinct criteria are motivated by the recognition that the most significant transformations within Ukrainian society are manifesting within these specific domains. Such a strategic approach is designed to facilitate a nuanced understanding of the evolving dynamics and the far-reaching implications of the war within Ukraine, contributing to a thorough grasp of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities facing the society and activists.

## **About the Authors**

The Authors are researchers of the Centre for Sociological Research, Decentralization and Regional Development of Kyiv School of Economics Institute. The Centre aims to provide high-quality academic and policy research in the topics of local governance, resilience, and development.

Website: <https://kse.ua/kse-impact/center-for-sociological-research-decentralization-and-regional-development/>

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## Executive summary

The full-scale war in Ukraine has posed significant economic, security and social challenges, differing by scale and type depending on the locality. The effects and disparities caused by these issues could affect the social stability in Ukrainian society and therefore, influence Ukraine's resilience. Moreover, municipal authorities have proven to be one of the keys to Ukraine's resilience. With decentralisation reform being the key to foster local decision-making and autonomy, therefore, resilience, it is vital to observe the changes in the local governance during martial law. Hence, the report aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted impact of the ongoing war and identify gaps where the support is most needed and crucial for resilience of specific localities.

The report draws on data from a network of 118 local activists in 40 territorial hromadas. The data was captured via survey and in-depth interviews in March and August 2023 respectively. The report provides insights on the existing challenges and coping mechanisms (if present) in the three key domains: (a) the economic wellbeing and access to social infrastructure; (b) security conditions; and (c) an investigation into governance structures and civic engagement. The data does not claim 'representativeness' of the Ukrainian population but rather offers granular insights from local experts with knowledge bases as activists grounded in their locality. It is an adapted and developed form of expert interview method. In our usage and development of this method we seek to link the meso and macro levels of analysis through developing a cross-country network of activist-experts. As this implies we also utilise an inclusive, encompassing definition of the 'expert' as someone active within their local hromada that has accumulated overtime site-specific knowledge bases of the context and its dynamics.

This applies a methodology originally introduced by the LSE Syria team to gather data and insight on local conditions in Syria. In wartorn countries in general and Ukraine in particular surveys that claim representativeness of the population as a whole should be treated with caution. Millions of Ukrainians are internally and externally displaced and it has been more than two decades since Ukraine's last national census. In this context, researchers need to experiment with new innovative methodologies. Utilising Ukraine's dense networks of activists draws on their insights into local conditions, while also supporting civil society.

We identify some gaps in socio-economic wellbeing and security all over Ukraine, that make some areas particularly vulnerable:

- Hromadas affected by the direct military actions, de-occupied and/or close to the frontline and border with Russian Federation and Belarus. The localities from this group have shown bigger problems with access to economic opportunities and social infrastructure, resulting in their higher reliance on social support networks. These hromadas face a significant challenge when major humanitarian organisations that provide initial assistance and then withdraw their support leave the hromadas to rely on local initiatives. Although hromadas' representatives have a better grasp of the specific issues and context, combatting all issues can still be challenging without initial support from larger organisations. High rocket and direct military threats together with low access level to shelters also makes them least satisfied with the security situation. In localities where occupation took place there is lower trust to local authorities and police as efficient providers of security.



- The South macroregion stands out here as the region with the biggest number of issues with regard to infrastructure access.
- Small (predominantly rural) hromadas. These hromadas have higher dependency from oblast (regional) centre initiatives and Regional Military Administrations. There is also a higher risk of further deepening of pre-war rooted problems specific for rural areas. While for urban areas the biggest infrastructure issues are war-related - lowering phone and Internet connection, electricity issues, for rural areas the infrastructure issues are intensified pre-war problems with roads/public transport and waste management.

On the other hand, the war catalysed new initiatives and partnerships in response to the challenges posed by the wartime conditions.

- There is a pivotal role of networks and citizen collaboration during wartime in Ukraine. These networks function as indispensable conduits for resilience, enabling communities to effectively navigate the challenges posed by the war, coordinate collective efforts, and address the myriad difficulties that arise. One of the examples of such networks could be neighbourhood collaboration, particularly in hromadas that experienced occupation or were close to the frontline. Citizens have joined forces to assist their neighbours who have been left without food or unable to access humanitarian aid. In smaller hromadas where civic organisations were previously absent, such initiatives have the potential to evolve into institutional associations.
- A considerable number of new non-governmental organisations (NGOs) appeared, distinct in its “not just large urban geography” observed during 2014-2015. To sustain these new initiatives, institutional support, particularly financial backing, is crucial. Nevertheless, the issue of activists experiencing burnout and the compelled redirection of organisational efforts toward military support, thus neglecting prior civilian activities, requires attention. Furthermore, the establishment of trust between local activists and authorities remains a challenge, compounded by pre-existing trust deficits and instances of nepotism and corruption.
- There are some positive changes in the collaborative dynamics between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local authorities within selected hromadas. Concurrently, local activists have been proactively leveraging this situation to bring about constructive transformations.

# Intro

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine has caused unprecedented challenges to Ukrainian society: mass displacement of people, destruction of housing and infrastructure, severe economic decline and many others. These and other problems cause new and deepen existing disparities. The greater the inequalities there are, the higher the chances of social stability within society being undermined. Therefore, in the long run, the resilience of Ukraine and its ability to resist Russia significantly depends on how these inequalities are handled by the authorities, civil society organisations and the everyday activity of citizens themselves.

The report aims to provide granular insight into the evolution and impacts of the war on Ukraine in 40 different local geographies. The research focuses on the following spheres: (a) economic wellbeing and access to social infrastructure; (b) security; (c) governance and civiness. The report also aspires to identify gaps where the support is most needed and crucial for resilience of specific localities.

The report pays significant attention to the questions of governance and democratic practices. This is a conscious choice for two reasons. Firstly, there is a widespread argument that war results in democratic decline within the state during and after the war. Our research project (including the future rounds of the survey that we plan to do) seeks to contribute data in real-time that offers insight into whether and, if so, to what extent, this is happening in Ukraine at the level of local governance. Secondly, highly democratic nations tend to exhibit a strong correlation with resilient and forward-looking economies, vital for combatting inequalities.

Incorporating the framework of decentralisation, it is noteworthy to emphasise the pivotal role it plays in bolstering resilience within local hromadas, even among civic activists. Our research is particularly significant in this regard as it uniquely encompasses the perspectives of these civic activists, which has been somewhat overlooked in previous studies that primarily centred on challenges and the perspectives of local authorities. This multifaceted approach enriches our understanding of the dynamics at play within Ukrainian hromadas and underscores the significance of our research in shedding light on the critical linkages between decentralisation, civic engagement, and resilience.

The report is constructed within the following structured framework: it commences with a detailed exposition of the survey approach employed and sample characteristics in “Methodology” part, followed by a presentation of the key findings pertaining to each of the designated spheres — “Economic wellbeing and access to social infrastructure”, “Security”, and “Governance and civiness”. Within each designated sphere, the report provides distinct sections dedicated to the “Status-quo” and “Coping Mechanisms”. These sections serve to expound upon the prevailing conditions within hromadas, delineating the challenges encountered by citizens as ascertained through survey data and in-depth interviews and examination of the strategies and practices employed by residents in hromadas to navigate and address these challenges effectively. Consequently, these findings undergo a thorough analysis and critical discussion, which leads to the creation of a comprehensive “Summary” for each sphere. These summaries provide a concise overview of the key insights pertaining to each sphere. In addition, a “General Summary” and conclusion are presented at the end of the report, offering a consolidated perspective on the overall research outcomes.

Methodologically, the report uses insights from a network of local activists from 40 selected hromadas in Ukraine. The survey and in-depth interviews on which the findings are based were conducted in March and August 2023, respectively.



# Methodology

## Survey

For our survey, we decided to build a network of local activists for regular data capture. This approach was chosen for several reasons: a) the challenges of conducting representative sampling in situations of all-out-war; (b) the need for granular insights into local conditions which are hard to capture from large-n sampling alone; (c) the need to combine qualitative and quantitative methods to develop textured knowledge of the conditions in Ukraine's diverse geographical localities.

We sought to build and develop a local research network of activists providing data points on their localities through surveys and interviews. We looked for local activists from hromadas who would be able to assess the socio-economic and security situation in their hromadas, as well as the governance practices of local authorities. The primary requirement for respondents was that they had lived in hromada for at least 2-3 years (at least one year before the invasion) and had actively participated in hromada life, such as social, volunteer, or other projects. To ensure that we recruited the most suitable respondents, our screener questions also included queries about their occupation and their affiliation with civil non-governmental organisations and networks. The aim was to build a network which drew together activists with local knowledge bases and experiences. These expertise — these grounded, expert insights on their localities — would then be fed into the research project for cross-national analysis. In light of this it was essential to our methodology that the local experts met these criteria and had a verifiable record of engagement with their local hromada in one form or another.

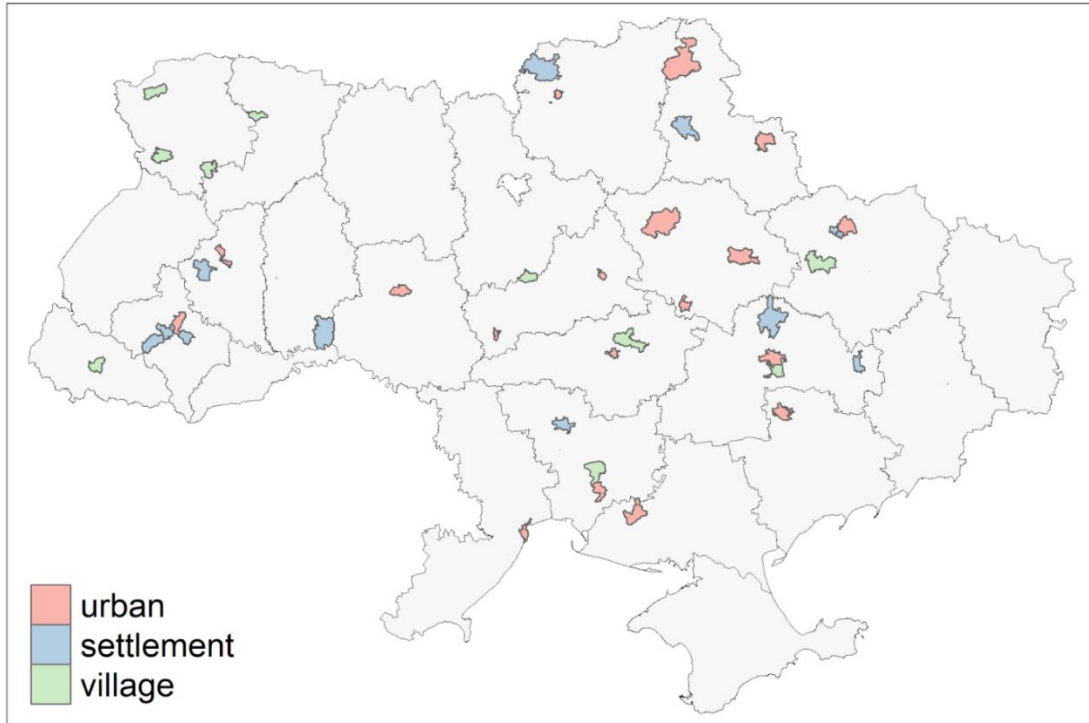
The screener for respondent recruitment was distributed through various channels, including Facebook, networks of non-governmental organisations, and the network of youth centres in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Volunteer Service, GoGlobal initiative (Global Office NGO), NGO Building Ukraine Together, and Anti-Corruption Research and Education Centre (ACREC) were the organisations that assisted in recruiting respondents. These channels were chosen due to their broad network of local activists in both urban and rural hromadas, and their credibility among those activists, which increased their willingness to participate in the survey.

The additional recruitment was conducted using the snowball method, in which respondents who passed the screener recommended other people in the hromada who might meet the requirements. Additionally, in rural and settlement hromadas, we approached lyceum directors who recommended local activists.

The survey questionnaire included 50 questions divided into three main blocks: (1) economic well being and access to social infrastructure; (2) security; (3) governance and civicness. The survey was conducted online via KoboToolBox platform in March 2023.

## Sample characteristics

Map 1. Hromadas in which the survey respondents reside.



The final sample consists of 118 respondents from 40 hromadas, representing 19 out of 25 oblasts from all regions of Ukraine. A slightly lower percentage of hromadas from the southern and northern regions participated in the survey, comprising 13% and 15% of hromadas, respectively.

Table 1. Regional distribution of hromadas answers

Oblasts	Number of hromadas in oblast	Share of hromadas in oblast	Share in the general population of regions in Ukraine (prior to the invasion)
Poltava oblast	3	8%	
Kirovohrad oblast	2	5%	
Cherkasy oblast	2	5%	
Vinnytsia oblast	1	3%	
Khmelnyskyi oblast	1	3%	
<b>Center</b>		<b>24%</b>	<b>20.7%</b>
Dnipropetrovsk oblast	4	10%	
Kharkiv oblast	4	10%	
Zaporizhzhia oblast	1	3%	
<b>East</b>		<b>23%</b>	<b>19.5%</b>
Sumy oblast	3	8%	
Chernihiv oblast	2	5%	
Kyiv oblast	1	3%	
<b>North</b>		<b>15%</b>	<b>16.9%</b>
Mykolaiv oblast	3	8%	
Odesa oblast	1	3%	

Oblasts	Number of hromadas in oblast	Share of hromadas in oblast	Share in the general population of regions in Ukraine (prior to the invasion)
Kherson oblast	1	3%	
<b>South</b>		<b>13%</b>	<b>13.4%</b>
Ivano-Frankivsk oblast	4	10%	
Volyn oblast	3	8%	
Ternopil oblast	2	5%	
Zakarpattia oblast	1	3%	
Rivne oblast	1	3%	
<b>West</b>		<b>28%</b>	<b>29.5%</b>

When discussing urban and rural distribution, we notice a slight overrepresentation of urban hromadas in our sample, with 45% in the survey compared to 28% in the general population. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the majority of Ukraine's population resides in cities, with 70% being urban.

Table 2. Distribution of hromadas answers by hromada type

Hromada type	Number in survey	Share in survey	Share in Ukraine
City	18	45%	28%
Village / rural settlement	22	55%	72%

The majority of respondents are females aged between 35 and 50 years. Most of the participants work in the education and public sector. The high proportion of education workers in the sample can be attributed to the respondents' recruitment channels. Screening was, in particular, distributed through NGOs in the field of education, with additional recruitment taking place in rural and settlement hromadas through representatives of lyceums. The education category comprises teaching and administrative staff, including principals, from schools, lyceums, gymnasiums, and universities. The public sphere is represented by heads, regular members, and volunteers of civil organisations, mainly international, youth, local organisations and charity funds. The "other working field" category includes individuals working in medicine, finance, cultural institutions such as museums and centers for culture and leisure, and social support.

Table 3. Distribution of hromadas answers by security considerations

Hromada type	Number in survey	Share in survey	Share in Ukraine
Rear hromadas	82	69%	65%
Hromadas close to frontline or border	36	31%	6%
De-occupied hromadas	9	8%	6%
Hromadas that are occupied, surrounded or where active hostilities are ongoing	-	-	23%

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of respondents

	Share in survey
Male	34%
<b>Female</b>	<b>66%</b>
18-34 y.o.	27%
<b>35-50 y.o.</b>	<b>49%</b>
50+ y.o.	24%
<b>Work in education</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>Work in non-governmental sector</b>	<b>34%</b>
Work in public service	3%
Work in socially responsible business	3%
Other working fields	6%

### In-depth interviews

We conducted 14 in-depth interviews, which were carried out by phone or online video communication platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet. The respondents were survey participants, including entrepreneurs, heads of NGOs, individuals from de-occupied and war-affected areas. Besides, one of the selection criteria was too low or high assessments on economic and security matters. Additionally, we considered respondents who indicated a conflictual relationship between local authorities (LAs) and NGOs. This diverse group of participants allows for a comprehensive exploration of various perspectives and experiences, and we specifically aimed to delve deeper into interesting cases during our research. The interviews were conducted in August 2023.

## Key challenges identification. Overall assessment.

The aftermath of the invasion has left many hromadas grappling with a host of challenges that require urgent attention from the government. If grouped by key words, the respondents point out such biggest challenges to them (more than 30 unique respondents):

1. Infrastructure (including roads, water and sewage, education and healthcare facilities)
2. Economic challenges (lack of employment opportunities, loss of investments, lowering support to SMEs)
3. Security (shelling, lack of shelters, mines, proximity to the frontline or border)
4. Internally displaced people (adapting to new environments, finding work, and securing housing)

Some other highlighted issues are ineffectiveness of authorities, problems with education, lack of attention to youth policies, human capital loss, social support, ecological issues, corruption etc.

When looking into regional peculiarities of challenges it is seen that:

- Along the southern front line hromadas (mostly recently liberated) extensive shelling has disrupted basic services such as water and electricity supply in hromadas, leaving residents in dire need of reliable energy capacities and independence.
- In all hromadas that were under occupation in 2022 and/or remain close to the frontline, significant destruction in private and public facilities have led to decreased access of social infrastructure, particularly hospitals and schools.
- In rural areas, the longstanding issue of inadequate transportation infrastructure and road coverage has become even more pronounced, with some hromadas experiencing a shortage of public transportation in the wake of the invasion. Respondents have also pointed to the pre-existing problem of poor road quality in many rural areas, underscoring the need for urgent action from the government.

As for resources/actions needed from the central government to solve these challenges, the respondents most often name the support programmes for the damaged spheres or groups. Interestingly, to ensure greater accountability and transparency in governance, respondents have called for the introduction of better tools to track budgetary spendings to prevent corruption.

# Part I. Economic wellbeing and access to social infrastructure

Economic wellbeing and access to social infrastructure constitute foundational pillars for a nation's development and resilience. They directly influence the quality of life, stability, and prospects for the citizenry. In the context of Ukraine's ongoing shocks of war, understanding the dynamics of economic wellbeing and access to social infrastructure becomes essential, as they underpin the capacity of hromadas to withstand and recover from the challenges of war, ultimately contributing to the broader democratic landscape.

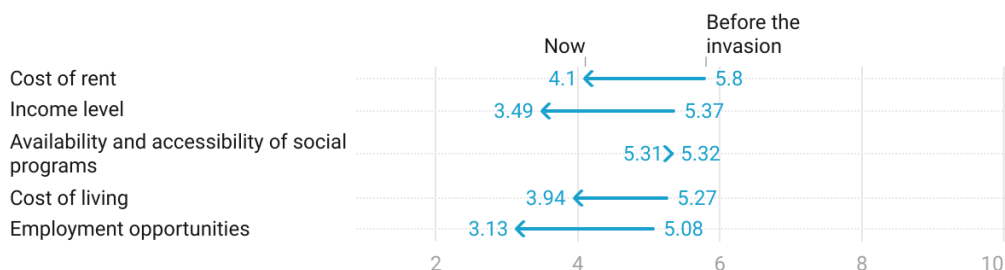


## 1.1. Status-quo

1.1.1. Employment opportunities and the level of wages have decreased the most, the only thing unchanged – availability of social support programs.

In this study, respondents were asked to evaluate various economic conditions in the hromada both before the invasion and at the time of the survey. These conditions included the cost of living (excluding rent), rental costs, availability of employment opportunities, wage levels, and accessibility of social programs and services. **Prior to the invasion, all economic aspects of the hromada were rated as mediocre**, with renting costs receiving the highest score. **However, after the invasion, scores significantly decreased for all aspects except for the availability of social programs, which remained stable.** Currently, the availability of hromada's employment opportunities and wage levels are rated the lowest.

Figure 1. Comparison of economic conditions rating (from 1 to 10, where 1 — very poor, 10 — very good)



Created with Datawrapper

In open questions, the respondents mentioned that reasons for lower number of employment opportunities are: damaged or closed enterprises, problems with transportation cost to get to enterprises or other economic opportunities. Moreover, local activists say there is a problem of personnel shortage due to migration or mobilisation. The lack of male workers in certain male-dominated industries was specifically highlighted in in-depth interviews.

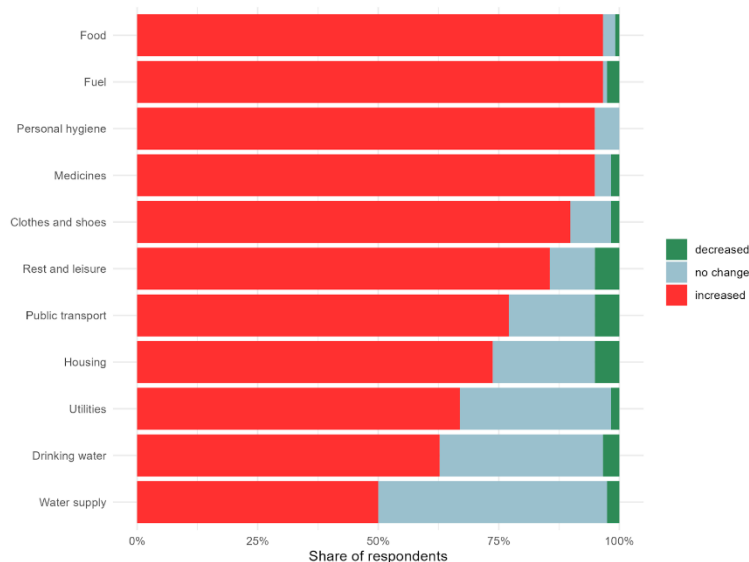


### 1.1.2. Rising Costs: Perceptions of Price Increases for Products and Services, with Regional and Rural-Urban Differences

Based on the responses received, it was found that the majority of respondents felt an increase in prices for all the products and services that were inquired about, except water supply. Most respondents perceived a significant rise in the prices of food, fuel, personal hygiene, medicine and clothes. However, the prices of public transportation, housing, utilities, water supply, and drinking water have been estimated to have increased comparatively less.

Figure 2. Changes in the price of goods and services.

"How would you rate the COST of the following goods and services in your hromada NOW compared to what it was before a full-scale Russian invasion?"



When analysing the differences within service/infrastructure groups we found out that the perception for:

- the housing prices mostly increased in the West and Center, with least in the South
- the utilities prices grew in the North utmost and East — the least
- the drinking water prices enlarged in the South and East — the least
- the public transportation prices increased in rural areas more than in the urban

Interviews suggest that **the issue of increased prices often stems from inadequate infrastructure that has a knock-on impact on supply and distribution.** For instance, with drinking water the old or destroyed water supply infrastructure result in absence of quality water in taps and/or higher provision costs. Hence, the residents need to 1) access free water distribution points to have the water for free; 2) buy drinking water by their own funds. These could lead to both increase in prices as perception and in reality.

**A lot of regional price change differences are linked to the war experiences of hromada, its proximity to the frontline or number of IDPs.** For example, an increase in the price of drinking water occurs mainly in the South, where the water

infrastructure is being continuously destroyed, leaving most of the population without access to drinking or cooking water. The problem is likely to remain until the liberation of the left bank of Kherson oblast. The problem with prices on housing in the West and Center has strikingly risen in the last year, in some cases by 225% (Zakarpatska oblast). There is also a larger (but not substantially) share of respondents from de-occupied hromadas and frontline/border hromadas than an overall sample that mentioned increase of prices for medicine, personal hygiene items, fuel, clothes and shoes.

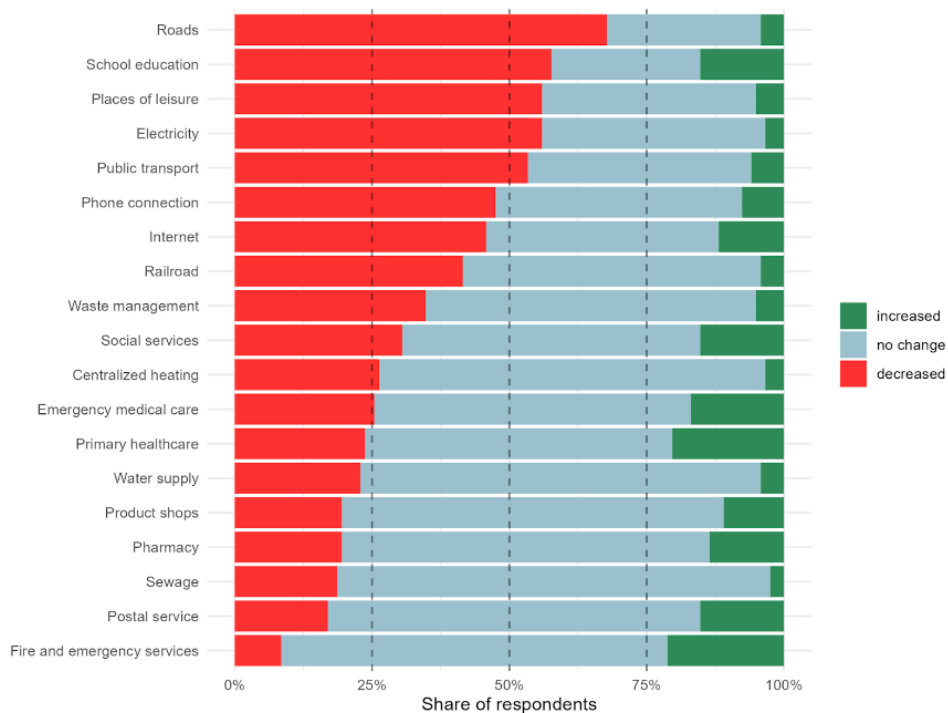
**Some pre full-scale war divergences (urban/rural) have remained unchanged.** Our survey shows not as strong an urban/rural divide in the perception of prices. However, there are some issues that have a long-lasting history. For instance, respondents from rural hromadas perceive an increase in prices for public transportation more severely (83% vs 70% in urban hromadas) than those from urban. The regular transport connection was 10 times worse in rural hromadas than urban in 2015. The situation has only worsened with the war as private transport provisioners diminish the number of trips per day due to the lower level of overall demand.

### 1.1.3. General access to services and infrastructure declined, in the South — the most

More than half of respondents noted that accessibility and availability after the invasion dropped for roads, school education, places of leisure, electricity and public transport.

Figure 3. Changes in accessibility (availability and affordability) of the infrastructure and public services.

"How would you rate the ACCESSIBILITY (availability and affordability) of the following infrastructure and public services in your hromada NOW compared to what it was before a full-scale Russian invasion?"



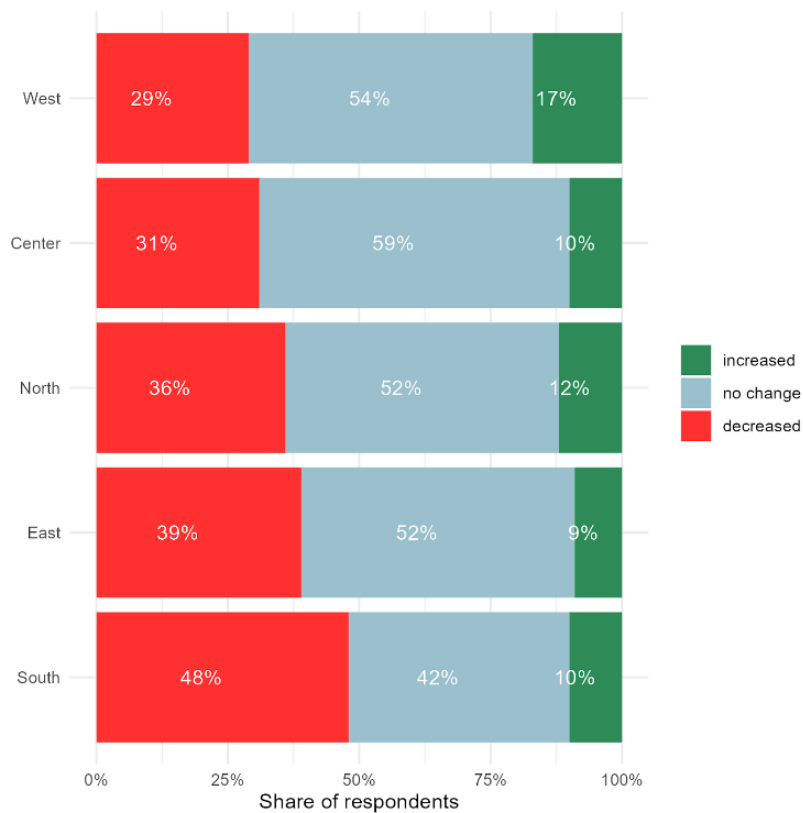
Regional differences

The issue of accessibility is a significant concern across all regions, although **the South region has a higher percentage of people reporting a decrease in accessibility and availability of various services.**

Specifically, 86% of respondents in the South region reported a decrease in accessibility and availability of **railroad services, followed by social services at 71%, emergency medical care at 57%, water supply at 57%, and waste management at 57%.**

As for the North region, the most significant declines are in accessibility of roads and public transport (78%). In terms of internet accessibility, the Center region reported the highest decrease at 59%, followed by the North region at 56%, and the East region at 52%.

*Figure 4. Changes in accessibility (availability and affordability) of the infrastructure and public services, average by region.*



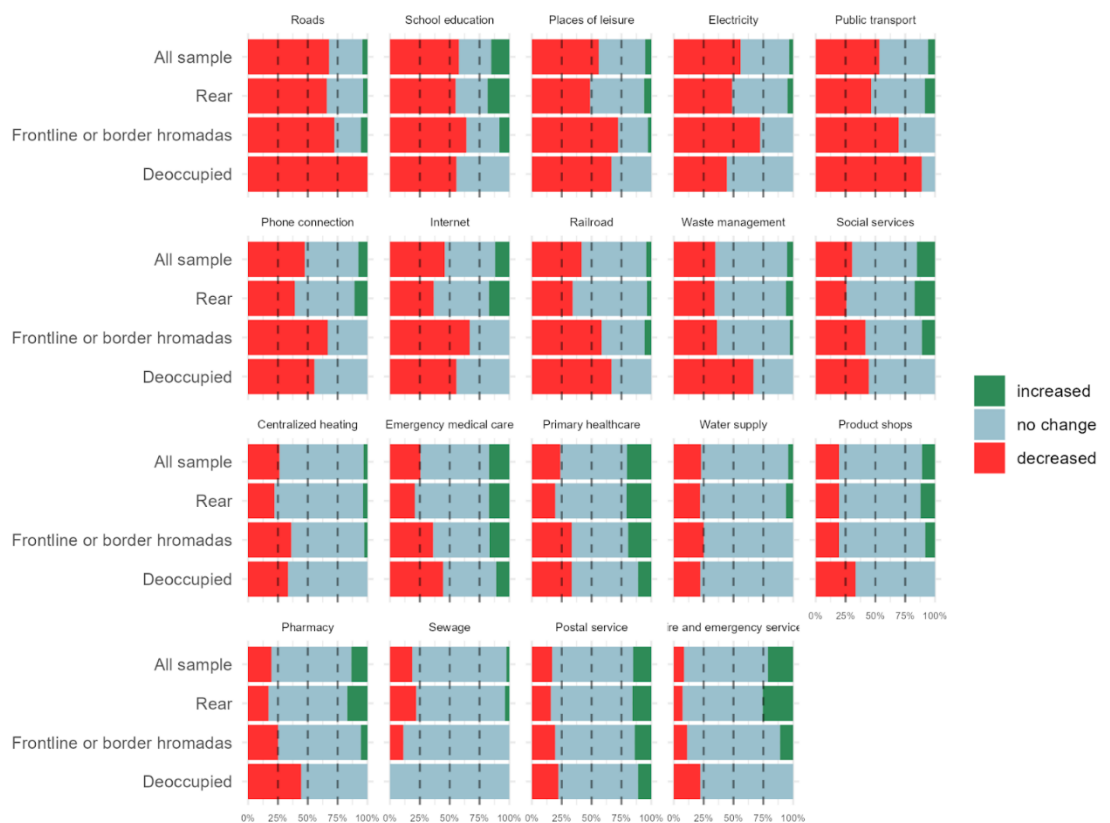
Frontline/border vs rear

A higher percentage of people residing in border and de-occupied hromadas reported a decrease in accessibility of various types of infrastructure. Specifically, in frontline/border hromadas, a larger proportion of respondents reported a decrease in accessibility of school education, places of leisure, electricity, public transport, phone connection, internet, and railroad services. In deoccupied hromadas, a higher percentage of respondents reported decreased accessibility for public transport, railroad services, and waste management.

The open questions in the survey revealed several key concerns among respondents from occupied and frontline cities. Reconstruction of destroyed homes due to military actions emerged as a significant issue, **with many individuals highlighting the urgent need for rebuilding efforts to be prioritised**. Additionally, respondents from frontline hromadas expressed a worry over the **shortage of personnel in various sectors, especially in specialised medical fields**. This personnel shortage is believed to have been worsened by security issues that have led people to leave their communities. These findings underscore the need for concerted efforts to address the infrastructure and personnel deficits in these regions, particularly in the wake of the conflict.

Moreover, distance education has emerged as a significant challenge, with the majority of students starting studying online due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The respondents voiced concern over the quality of education and the potential impact on communication skills among young people. The lack of suitable accommodations or access to school buildings for internally displaced individuals was identified as a major issue that needs to be addressed.

Figure 5. Changes in accessibility (availability and affordability) of the infrastructure and public services of frontline/border vs rear

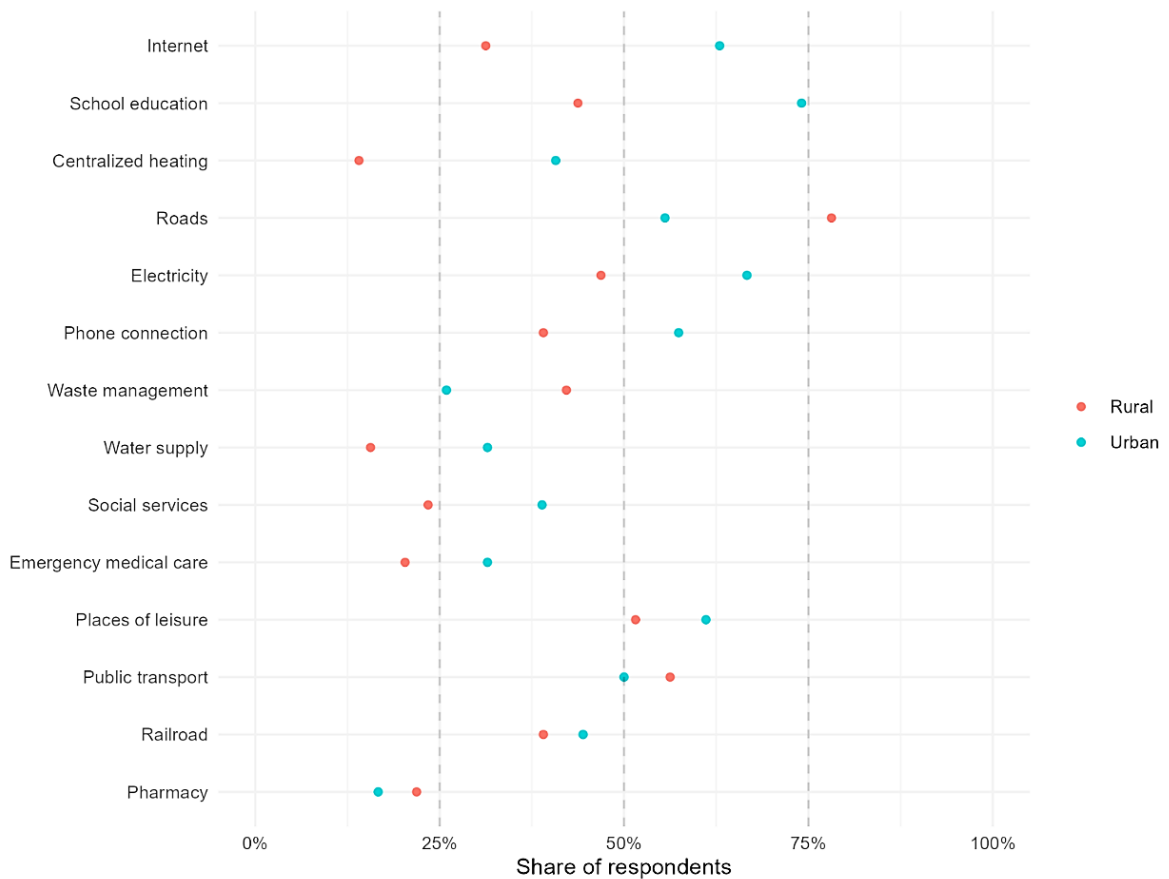


### Urban/rural differences

Differences between urban and rural were observed in terms of reported decrease in availability and accessibility of various services. **In urban hromadas, a higher percentage of people reported a decrease in availability and accessibility of the internet (63% vs 31%), school education (74% vs 44%), phone connection (57% vs 39%), and electricity (67% vs 47%).**

On the other hand, in rural hromadas, a more pronounced decrease was reported in the availability and accessibility of roads (78% vs 56%). Additionally, a slightly higher percentage of rural respondents noted a decrease in waste management (42% vs 26%) compared to their urban counterparts.

Figure 6. Share of respondents in urban and rural hromadas that reported decrease in services accessibility sorted by difference. Only categories where differences higher than 5% are shown.



The evaluation of changes in the quality of infrastructure is almost identical to the evaluation of access. Therefore, we will not go into depth about it. It appears that respondents were unable to clearly distinguish between the issues of quality and accessibility of infrastructure, and thus rated them identically.



## 1.2. Coping mechanisms

We are examining the grassroots networks and cooperation with local authorities as an important part of coping mechanisms of hromada citizens. The nuanced understanding derived from this exploration seeks to inform policymakers and practitioners, offering effective strategies for fostering hromada resilience amidst protracted crises. Ultimately, this research recognizes survival networks and strategies of cooperation with local governments as indispensable elements that, when comprehensively analysed, can significantly contribute to understanding hromada survival, adaptation, and recovery in the face of enduring conflict.

### 1.2.1. Survival networks

Networks and citizen collaboration have proved to be vital in dealing with numerous socio-economic challenges of this war. Networks serve as vital conduits for resilience, that organise and/or coordinate collective efforts, search and share resources and by this confront the numerous challenges that arise. In times of crisis, such collaborative networks become indispensable pillars of support, fostering hromada cohesion and facilitating the adaptive responses necessary to navigate the complexities of conflict.

In the in-depth interviews we tried to focus on examples of existing formal and informal support networks and factors that contribute to the sustainable operation of these networks.

#### (International) humanitarian organisations

During the interviews, respondents first mentioned receiving assistance from (international) humanitarian organisations.



*There are payments from various international organisations, such as IOM. There are many different organisations that give payments to people. Every month they receive some money. Now many funds have opened to help. **There are 7 thousand people on our (local organisation) lists.** And we **are constantly finding donors.** We work with **Germany and the Czech Republic.** There are foundations such as "People in Need". We work with them, and they provide us with food, medicine, and hygiene.*

There is an issue with localities that are seen as no longer in a critical condition, as newly liberated territories become a priority for emergency assistance. The level of assistance reduces even though the economic opportunities do not tend to reappear quickly. This creates a significant challenge for sustainable economic development, and underlines how aid is still tending to focus on immediate relief rather than investing in human and social capital over the longer term. This is especially problematic in the context of Ukraine's extremely difficult economic environment which sharply poses the need to raise the productive capacity of the workforce.



*We had a lot of humanitarian aid, now there is a certain curtailment of humanitarian aid, and this is definitely a challenge... **There are volunteer organisations, but now everything goes to Snihurivka and Kherson. Well, it is logical.** They need it. I understand this very well, because **Kherson is constantly under fire,** and we were too until November. But this is really the problem... A lot of people have returned, but there is de facto nowhere to go, we are an industrial city...*

In the realm of hromadas, local volunteer initiatives and religious organisations play a pivotal role in the sustenance of the populace. Their contributions towards the overall wellbeing of the hromada are indispensable, and their efforts serve as a lifeline for many residents.



### New civil society organisations

The main networks of citizen interaction are **volunteer associations that are starting to be institutionalised**. It has become evident that there is an emerging trend of increased civic engagement in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and voluntary activities, which may surpass even the levels observed following the Revolution of Dignity in 2014-2015.

Small communities responding to full-scale invasions have created self-help networks, which have transformed into activist organisations with institutionalisation. These organisations are notable in that they represent a wide variety of population groups that have never been represented in the non-governmental sector before, including older age groups, and those with no prior experience in civic activities. This grassroots phenomenon has emerged without external funding or support from the local hromada. Institutionalisation is emerging as these previously volunteer run networks go through the process of applying for donor funding to sustain their activity.



*I was the manager, choreographer, and director. At first, we just volunteered with friends. Then we started our own foundation, a charity, with the guys. And now we are still engaged in helping the military, helping IDPs. I don't think we earn anything here, since we are a non-profit organization.*

The primary distinction between the recent wave of NGO initiatives following the full-scale invasion in Ukraine and the preceding wave in 2014-2015 lies in their origins and focus. The new NGOs have predominantly emerged as grassroots movements initiated by concerned citizens on the very day of Russia's invasion, initially aimed at volunteerism and mutual assistance within smaller hromadas. Subsequently, the most successful among them have transitioned into institutionalised entities actively seeking both institutional and financial support. In contrast, the earlier wave of NGOs that emerged after the 2014-2015 Revolution of Dignity were primarily concentrated in oblast centres and larger urban areas, demonstrating a different geographical and operational orientation. This phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that in larger hromadas, citizens often had pre-existing organisational structures such as NGOs, foundations, or hierarchical business and municipal setups that enabled a more coordinated response to the initial shocks of war. Conversely, in smaller hromadas, the absence of such established structures necessitated the self-organisation of individuals and communities, leading to the emergence of grassroots initiatives in the face of this severe adversity and violence.

### Neighbourhood initiatives

Neighbourhood cooperation also became an important survival network, especially in hromadas that experienced the occupation. Citizens united to help their neighbours who were left without food or could not receive humanitarian rations. These initiatives can also grow into institutional associations in small hromadas where there were no civic organisations before.



*Then we began to see that bread was being delivered, and even this fourth part was no longer enough. And some people started quarrelling with each other. Especially the elderly people... **And then we decided, we took a list of streets, people living on the streets, counted who was there, we knew who was not... We set up two shifts, two people were assigned to each street, who were on duty at the stall when the bread was delivered and until the last piece of bread was given away.** They made sure that everyone got as much as they needed." — This cooperation led to the formation of an NGO in this village hromada, which has now won a two-year project from UNDP.*



*At first at the start of the full-scale invasion, I knew for sure that in multi-storey buildings, **more chats were created, like neighbourhood chats**, where information was exchanged, discussions about shelters were held... Even neighbourhood chats were created.*

### Self-sufficiency

In some cases, it is the self-reliance of people and their closest family members that helps them cope with the difficult economic situation.



*Well, in fact, we have returned to vegetable gardens. In the sense that **everyone is planting gardens**, and this is if last year, for example, last year, you know, you don't know, there was a large potato harvest that no one needed later. Because no one knows what will happen. But the vegetable gardens, I'm sure, everyone is slowly planting and maintaining them. **Because, well, fear is fear. You don't know what will happen tomorrow.** And we need to provide ourselves with food.*



*There are markets, there is a lot of sales from private households, and they are full. **People sell what they have grown themselves. There is such a revival. People are so active [in gardening].***



*I'm surprised, but from the moments, for example, on the OLX [ukrainian web-market], now in [city name], a week ago I looked there, and **there is a section "Help for free"**, it is called somehow like that, and I saw two ads from women, and one of them is an IDP, the other one I did not understand, maybe the other one is an IDP. **They asked me to help them with food, whatever I could spare.** She said, "I'm ready to pick it up from the post office, if you just send it to us. I just know, well, I saw both of these women, because I helped them. Because I helped one of them in the winter, I don't remember what month, in the winter of twenty-three. I remember delivering potatoes and carrots. Something else, I delivered nuts. Now I bring her oil that my father made himself.*



*In those families where someone joined the Armed Forces, the income from the Armed Forces allows them to make ends meet. If you joined the Armed Forces, you get a decent salary. Those who don't, I don't know how they live at all. Retail chains have opened up, but there are issues... there is a very strong stratification in society, those who have the opportunity to buy these expensive goods and those who do not.*

Some examples of activities conducted by these networks:



*We are also launching a new project now. **For young mothers who come to us and have no place to go.** They need to find a job because they have small children. Our kindergartens are not working now. Only a private kindergarten costs 600 hryvnias for one day. Therefore, they can't afford it. ... That's why we want to create classes here so that mothers can bring their children. We would work with them. And they could go out and find a job. We will also provide them with a room with computers and everything to teach them. And we think that now there is also one project. The Institute of the Third Age. **To train people in their 40s and 50s so that they can do something online.***



*The first project, let's just say, we had it before. It is as informal as possible, as light as possible. **We hold, for example, game libraries every two weeks, where young people come to socialise, play board games, and everything else.** We emphasised and emphasised that we invited internally displaced youth to come and make new acquaintances and friends. Because in order to gain a foothold in a hromada, it is not always enough to be given a place to live, food to eat, and clothes to wear. **You need some social connections.** That's the first one, we organize every two weeks, where more than 80-100 people come, both internally displaced persons and local people, to play games to get to know each other, to communicate and find friends, so that you can create connections in the new hromada and feel that you belong here*



*One of the initiatives is to retrain employees and move to online. Some jobs are online. They teach some new areas of activity. So that they can work somewhere. But there are a lot of unemployed people.*

### Factors that influence the capacity of these networks

**Institutional support** is important for newly created networks, especially financial support. The challenge at hand pertains to the recurrent pattern observed in the assistance provided by major humanitarian organisations to hromadas. Typically, these organisations extend initial aid and subsequently shift their focus

to other newly liberated hromadas. Consequently, following the initial phase of humanitarian support, hromadas often find themselves reliant only on local initiatives that have a nuanced comprehension of the contextual intricacies and specific challenges, particularly when confronted with subsequent shocks and focus all their work on this hromada.



*We can't hire a person who can physically be in the space to ensure that it works not only a few times a week for young people, but every day. Because we all work at our main jobs to feed our families, and many of us have children. And no one wants to go to work when you have a job from project to project, when there may be several months between them.*

Importantly, the capacity of local networks is also affected by both the availability of **international experience** and the willingness to integrate with local networks. Thus, some respondents mentioned the importance of exchanges of international experience, which have shown to motivate them to continue hromada development.

Another practice respondents mentioned was seeking greater **integration of IDPs** into hromada activities and mutual assistance.



*[organisation] 'I am Mariupol' is based in our Dnipro, and there people from Mariupol help other people from Mariupol.*



*With the International Republican Institute, we held a format called 'Dialogues with Internally Displaced Persons,' where we invited, there were three dialogues, where we invited 20 people each, 10 people were local people, women residents, and 10 people were internally displaced persons.*



*It is important to integrate IDPs not only into business but also into politics. Because we have a very large number of them in the hromada from different cities, and they are planning to stay here, so they should also be integrated into decision-making, and not be marginalized.*

### 1.2.2. Local self-governments dealing with economic issues

Local governments can boost the local economy in several ways. They can invest in critical infrastructure, like roads and utilities, and ensure a business-friendly environment. By utilising hromada resources wisely, they can generate revenue, which can be used to support essential services and hromada development. Additionally, strategic planning can help attract investments through incentives like tax reductions, streamlined permits, and support for startups and small businesses.

## Evaluation of Local Authorities economic efficiency

***Unfortunately, there is an observed decline in perceived effectiveness of local authorities in creating economic conditions, particularly in the frontline/border hromadas.***

The findings indicate a decline in the perceived effectiveness of local authorities in creating economic conditions and managing budgets in all regions, with a more pronounced decrease in the North and South regions. Notably, the evaluation of local governments in the East and West regions is comparatively high.

*Table 5. Evaluation of LA economic efficiency (from 1 to 10, where 1 — completely ineffective, 10 — very effective)*

*"How effectively do you think the local government created the conditions for economic development and managed the local budget BEFORE THE FULL-SCALE INVASION / NOW?"*

Group	Before the invasion	Now	Change
All sample	4.97	4.33	-0.64
Center	4.37	3.89	-0.48
East	5.26	4.74	-0.52
North	4.89	3.89	-1.00
South	4.50	3.36	-1.14
West	5.47	5.03	-0.44
Rural	5.61	5.23	-0.38
Urban	4.20	3.26	-0.94
Deoccupied	5.33	4.00	-1.33
Hromadas close to frontline or border	4.83	3.92	-0.92
Rear	5.08	4.50	-0.51

Respondents from the rural hromadas **tend to assess the economic efficiency of their local government higher than those from urban, both before and after an invasion.** Besides, rural hromadas experience a lower decline in the economic efficiency of their local government after an invasion.

**Frontline/border hromadas have rated local government efforts in creating economic conditions for development and budget management lower both before and after the invasion than the sample in general.** They have seen a sharper decrease after the invasion, from 4.8 to 3.9 out of 10. Additionally, the evaluation of local government efforts in de-occupied hromadas has also dropped significantly.

Despite the rich insights provided by the open-ended responses, the survey did not capture any discernible differences in the ways that local authorities support small businesses across different regions. It is important to note, however, that the question was specific to local businesses, which may not be well represented in the sample and resulted in a lack of regional variation in responses. Nevertheless, this finding underscores the need for further research to explore the nuances of local business support policies in different regions and to identify best practices that can be shared across hromadas.

## Best and worst practices from local authorities that affect their effectiveness

In order to understand why in some communities the effectiveness of local government in creating economic opportunities in the hromada is rated higher, in the interviews we selected respondents from communities with the highest or lowest efficiency rating. We focused on practices that promote or, on the contrary, reduce the effectiveness of local authorities in the field of solving economic problems in the hromada.

### Practices affecting the negative evaluation of the effectiveness of local authorities:

1. Absence/lack of quality communication with business.

The problem concerns both **top-down communication from local governments to businesses** about available government support programs and **collection/lobbying of business needs by local governments** to address them at the local or state level.



*There are programs, but businesses don't know about them.*



*But as the chairman of the public council, I have no precedents of communication or correspondence between the RMA and me, or actual support measures to create jobs, I don't see any communication with the business environment, medium or small businesses, I don't see it.*

As a result, there is a **gap between what the state and local governments offer in terms of business support measures and what businesses actually need.**



*There may be such government support measures, but there is a gap between what the government offers and what businesses need. For example, retraining of employees. There are specialists in the labor market who are in the Armed Forces, and it is among them that there is the greatest staff shortage. We have just opened [company name] and food processing companies, and there is a need for staff. There is also a need for working specialties at utility companies. We need a retraining program - this includes the employment service, the public sector, the chamber of commerce and industry, and business — and **there is a gap in communication about what is needed and what is being done.***

This mismatch between government offerings and business needs underscores the importance of aligning support programs with the specific needs of local businesses.



2. Inaction of local authorities and/or lack of adaptability of local authorities to new conditions and challenges.

In particular, entrepreneurs complain that they have not been granted any special benefits in the crisis. In addition, there is **a need for targeted local programs** that work directly with businesses to provide comprehensive support.



*Because the **business was not granted any special benefits**. There were **no discounts on rent or electricity**. There was nothing like that. And besides, in fact, they just ignored us. There was a moment with heating, and they didn't help. It was critical. We have two thermal power plants in [city]. One of them raised the price dramatically. And it raised the price dramatically in the context of [enterprises]. Well, it's okay for citizens, but there's a huge difference. There is a threefold difference. And **the government did not help, but created the illusion that it was trying to figure it out. In the end, it did nothing**. And the government did not provide any help. That is, there were no benefits for electricity, heat, or any internal benefits, even in terms of unified social tax, or any other support at all, and even legal support was not provided.*



***We do not have a targeted program that works with business at the level of Sumy.** There are targeted programs at the regional level, some of them are not good, but they exist. And I know about them, others know about them, you can try, there is some influence, somehow unifying, yes. But not at the city level.*

3. Nepotism, lack of transparency and trust.

This problem will be discussed in more detail in the challenges of local authorities' interaction with other actors, but it should be noted that business decisions are often made behind closed doors, providing preferential conditions to some and not others.



*If it were for me, I would ask myself about **the possibility of opening and renting premises somewhere**. For me, there is really not enough of a resource where you can see that you can rent this or rent that, in terms of communal property. Why? Because usually what is in communal ownership, in local authorities, is hidden. Then it is quietly leased by someone, and then quietly privatised. Well, it's being equipped and privatised. And at this point, everything seems to be finished. But it's a bit difficult to lease it honestly in a competitive environment.*



*There is a regional development agency that operates on the basis of the regional state administration. They are now slowly starting to get involved, I can already see some programs, I can already see improvements, but it is not enough. They **still select certain communities in which we work, other communities are not included in these competitions, some programs**.*

### Practices that have a positive impact on the assessment of local government effectiveness:

1. Institutionalisation of dialogue practices and bodies that systematically communicate and support business



*There is a moderator, there are deputies, there are entrepreneurs. It is worth sitting down together - starting a conversation - writing down our agreements (there are witnesses) and implementing them, this is the only way we can restore trust. If there are mistakes, let's sit down and discuss them.*



*Well, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry supports the business and works closely with it. The Regional Development Agency, they directly create programs, and they are created on the basis of the regional state administration. So, in principle, this tool works... [On a separate structure under the local government] No, there is none.*

2. Supporting grassroots initiatives



*...You organise an event for the hromada, you try, then some other event, then they [local authorities] didn't even give you a welcome word, we were not even mentioned in the newspapers, as a result we picked a different place where there is more support.*



### 1.3. Summary

Economic wellbeing and access to social infrastructure has overall decreased among respondents from all over Ukraine. With regard to economic opportunities, the need is most pressing in the hromadas that suffered from occupation or direct military actions. Damaged or ruined enterprises, lack of transportation options to get to work result in almost full dependency on support networks and/or social support from the government. With respect to infrastructure, special attention is needed towards hromadas in the south, where access to infrastructure has decreased the most.

With economic opportunities declining and cost of living increasing, the support networks as well as well-elaborated actions of local and central governments become crucial. The various grassroots initiatives and organisations require institutional (specifically financial) support in order to continue their smooth functioning. On the side of the government, there should be better coordination of suggested support programmes with needs as well as a developed system of local bodies that regularly communicate and support businesses in the application to the government and non-state programs.

## Part II. Security

In the midst of war, local-level security in hromadas emerged as a crucial element in protecting civilians, preserving societal order, facilitating efficient evacuations and shelters, galvanising local resources to bolster national defence, and securing the welfare of residents. This cohesive local security apparatus forms the bedrock of a nation's resilience and stability. In part II we examine shifting security perceptions, identify pressing issues, assess bomb shelter availability, analyse drug and arms trafficking, evaluate local authorities and the police, and scrutinise the role of local media in countering disinformation.



### 2.1. Status-quo

2.1.1. **Decrease in Security Perception: with the most significant drop in North and South.** Occupation and proximity to the frontline/border are important factors.

There has been a noticeable decrease in security perception everywhere, as expected. The West region rates safety higher than other regions both before and after the invasion. The South and North regions have seen a greater drop in security perception after the invasion than other regions. Interestingly, rural hromadas rated safety higher than their urban counterparts before the invasion. Another finding is that urban areas have experienced a more pronounced drop in safety levels since the invasion. This is likely to reflect the greater risk of these areas being targeted by Russian bombs and drones. Additionally, de-occupied and border hromadas have experienced a much greater decrease in safety despite being rated the same as the rear prior to the full-scale invasion.

Table 6. Evaluation of safety in communities (from 1 to 10, where 1 — very dangerous, 10 — completely safe)

"How safe do you think your hromada was before the full-scale invasion? / how safe is your hromada now?"

Group	Before the invasion	Now	Change
All sample	7.83	5.18	-2.65
Center	7.48	5.37	-2.11
East	7.78	5.00	-2.78
North	7.56	4.00	-3.56
South	7.21	3.64	-3.57
West	8.59	6.50	-2.09
Rural	8.06	5.91	-2.16
Urban	7.56	4.31	-3.24
De-occupied	7.44	3.11	-4.33
Hromadas close to frontline or border	7.53	3.56	-3.97
Rear	7.96	5.89	-2.07

2.1.2. Rocket attacks, shelling, fire hazards and forced displacement are the most important security issues in hromadas, generally estimated higher in urban hromadas.

Table 7. Most important security issues in hromadas.

"What are the MOST IMPORTANT security issues facing people in your hromada RIGHT NOW?" No more than 3 options could be selected. The values are given in percentages

	All sample	Urban	Rural	West	East	Center	North	South	Deoccupied	Rear	Frontline or border hromadas
Rocket attacks	69	89	53	41	78	81	67	100	56	67	75
Threat of direct military attack or shelling	43	54	34	22	59	33	67	50	89	32	69
Fire hazards	33	28	38	38	26	44	28	21	22	39	19
Forced displacement	33	33	33	28	44	41	22	21	22	34	31
Petty crimes	19	6	31	25	22	19	6	21	0	26	6
Area mining and unexploded ordnance	19	31	9	9	15	0	50	50	56	5	53
Cybercrime	17	19	16	22	7	26	11	14	11	21	8
Drug trade	13	13	13	13	7	22	6	14	0	16	6
Domestic violence, sexual harassment	8	7	9	16	0	4	22	0	22	9	8
Illegal arms trafficking	8	7	8	13	4	15	0	0	0	10	3
Natural disasters, catastrophes	7	2	11	22	0	0	6	0	11	6	8
Organized crime	4	4	5	3	7	4	0	7	0	5	3
Violent crimes	3	2	3	3	4	4	0	0	0	4	0

The most important security issues are all related to the on-going war:

- Rocket attacks are considered a major threat in all regions, affecting both rear and hromadas that are close to the frontline and border with Russia and Belarus.
- The threat of direct attack and shelling is recognized as the most important issue in deoccupied hromadas. Area mining is more important in urban hromadas in the North and South, as well as hromadas that are close to the frontline and border.
- Forced displacement is more significant in the East and Center regions.
- Petty crimes appear to be a problem mainly in rural rear communities, while overall most security issues related to war are more prominent in urban hromadas.

2.1.3. The biggest change in security perceptions are connected to threats connected to the war. Urban hromadas struggle more.

In accordance with the previous question, more importance has been placed on war-related security issues. Additionally, fire hazards when attempting to heat homes have become a more pressing concern, likely due to damages to heating systems caused by rocket attacks on critical infrastructure during the winter 2022-2023. Illegal arms trafficking, drug trade, and human trafficking have also become more prominent issues for respondents. However, the perception of respondents is that traditional crimes such as petty crime, organised and violent crime have

shown no change as a result of the full-scale invasion. Interestingly, when examining specific regions, violent and organised crimes have become less salient issues in the West and South.

Figure 7. Changes in importance of security issues.

"How has the IMPORTANCE of the following security issues changed in your homada compared to the situation BEFORE THE FULL-SCALE INVASION?"

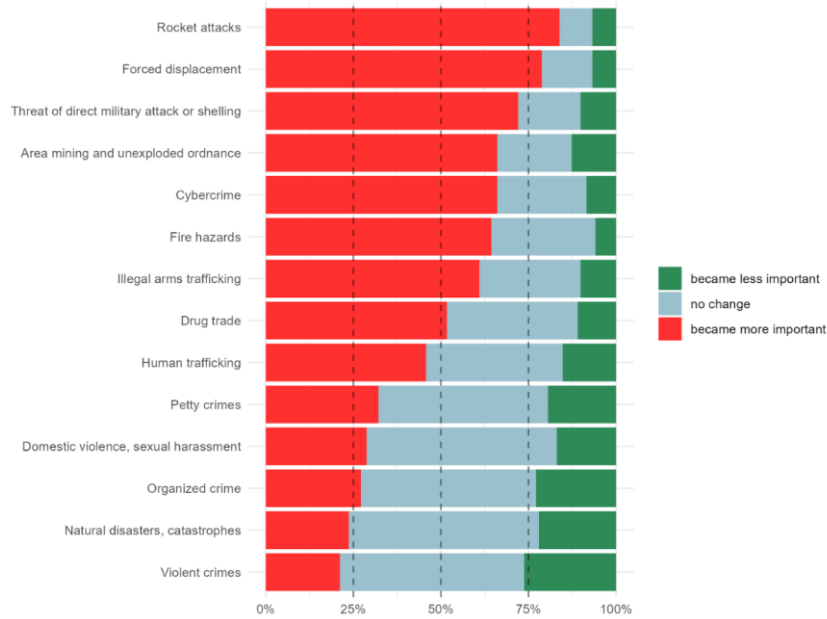
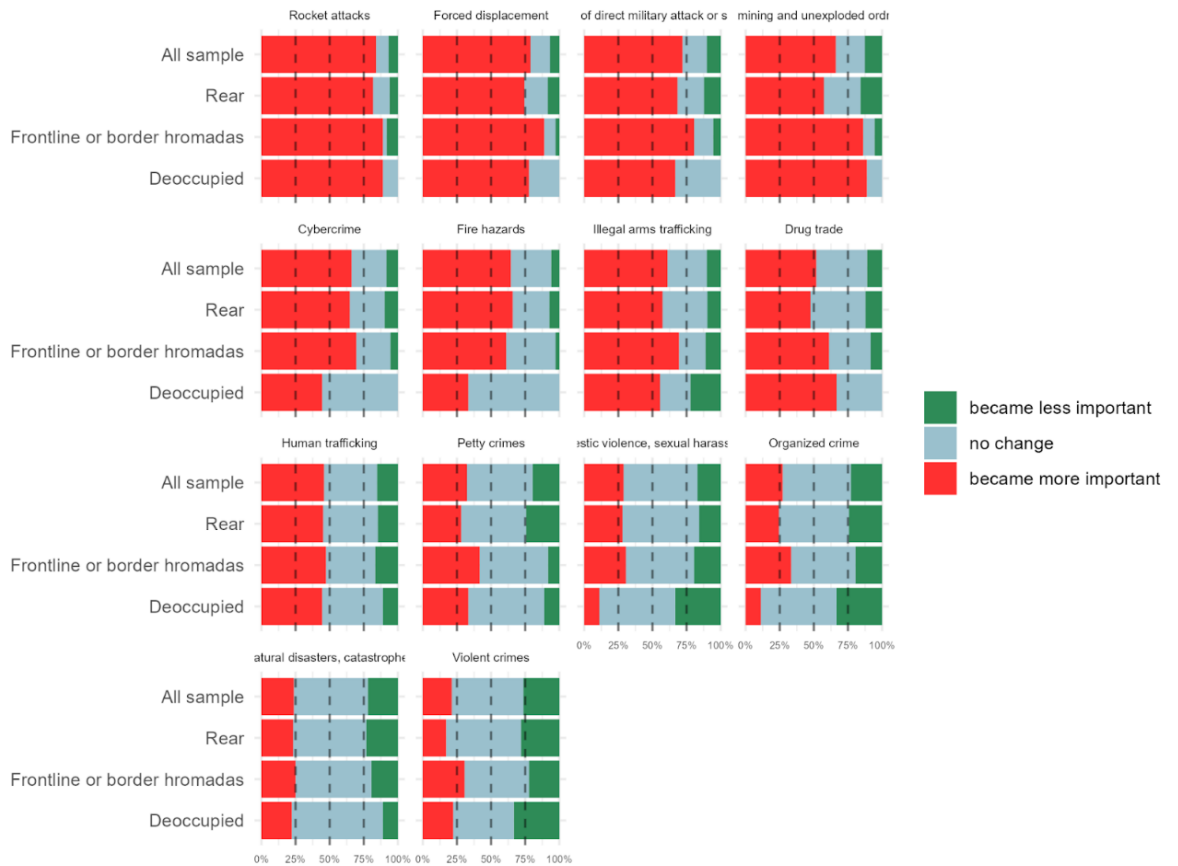


Figure 8. Changes in importance of security issues by region.



Figure 9. Changes in importance of security issues of frontline/border and rear.



2.1.4. Lack of bomb shelters and the low quality of existing as the common problem for all hromadas, with most despairing situations in the frontline or de-occupied hromadas.

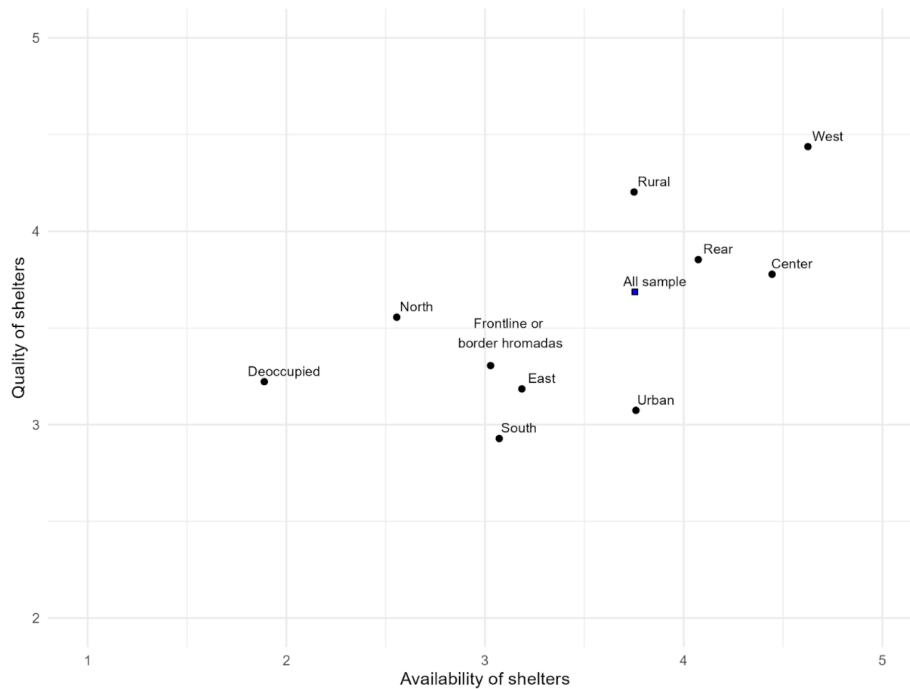
The availability and quality of bomb shelters have been rated poorly in the entire sample, with both availability and quality scoring lower than 4 on a scale from 1 to 10. The most severe situation was observed in de-occupied hromadas, with not much of an improvement in hromadas close to the frontline or border in the north, south, and East regions. Although rural and urban hromadas rate the availability of bomb shelters the same, rural areas report higher quality of shelters.



Figure 10. Scatter Plot of hromadas on assessment of availability and quality of shelters.

On the horizontal scale: How would you assess the availability of shelters/bomb shelters within walking distance for residents of your hromada ? (Where 1 means "No shelters/bomb shelters" and 10 means "Many shelters/bomb shelters, enough for every resident of the hromada")

On the vertical scale: How would you rate the quality of the shelters/bomb shelters in your hromada ? (1 - no seats, no heating and need for repair; 10 - there is a toilet, drinking water, telephone connection, internet and the ability to charge devices)



### 2.1.5. Insights into drug and arms trafficking

A notable finding from the survey is that respondents reported a significant increase in drug and arms trafficking. We therefore took a closer look at these problems. While the national police have reported a decrease in overall criminal statistics during the war, some experts and analysts have identified several key factors contributing to the rise of drug- and arms-related criminal activities in the post-war period.

#### Drug trafficking

In Ukraine, data from the general prosecutor's office indicates an increase in criminal offences related to the **distribution of illegal drugs, rising from 29,587 cases in 2021 to 34,398 cases in 2022**. According to a recent anonymous online survey conducted by the Institute of Psychiatry, Forensic Psychiatric Examination, and Drug Monitoring of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, a majority of respondents reported having used drugs at some point in their lives (63%), with a third of them having done so in the past 12 months (31%). The most commonly used drug was cannabis (98%), followed by MDMA (42%) and hallucinogens (41%).

Before the full-scale Russian invasion, Ukrainians ranked the problem of drug trafficking and usage as a top priority for law enforcement agencies to address.

Moreover, this issue exhibited **the largest disparity between its perceived importance and the assessment of law enforcement's efforts.**

Upon closer examination of the drug trafficking issue, participants of our in-depth interviews have noted several significant developments. They have observed an increase in the presence of drug couriers (zakladchiki), visibility of drug addicts on the streets and proliferation of graffiti advertising drug shops.

Respondents attribute these trends to factors such as **rising unemployment and a shrinking number of employment opportunities.** Unemployed individuals may resort to drugs as a means of coping with their burdens, while drug trafficking itself can present a job opportunity when other employment options are limited. Additionally, some commentators in the media have pointed out the same issue in the military, where individuals facing psychological challenges in military service may make use of drugs. Notably, medical commissions do not conduct drug tests before drafting individuals into the military, reflecting a recognition that drug use is widespread in the general population.

- *You indicated in the questionnaire that drug trafficking has become a more urgent problem in the hromada. How does it manifest itself?*

- *Yes, a lot. Recently, **we have had a lot of drug stashes. Telegram channels appeared**, somewhere on the walls they write about drugs. And a lot of people who have already taken drugs are walking the streets.*

- *What do you think is the reason why it is everywhere now?*

- *Probably because **there is no work. And everyone wants to earn somehow, and they are already going for different things.***

This issue illustrates the importance of a holistic approach to Ukraine's security, which combines the necessary military expenditures with a programme of public investment that sustains the 'home front', including job creation programmes as part of reconstruction as well as healthcare and education spending to ensure general wellbeing. It also shows the dangers of social breakdown and dysfunction that Ukraine faces from its very poor economic position, and how this can drive alienation and foster criminal networks.

### Arms trafficking

In the beginning of the war Ukrainian authorities actively armed civilians to aid in the defence efforts. As early as March, a law on the participation of civilians in the

defence of Ukraine was implemented, which granted civilians the right to receive firearms and ammunition during martial law and to use them to repel and deter the armed aggression of the Russian Federation. Later, on June 25, 2023, a law was passed to improve the procedure for obtaining, declaring, and handling firearms. Moreover, in June, the electronic Unified Firearms Register was launched in Ukraine. Since then, citizens have been able to submit applications for permits to purchase, store, or carry weapons, report changes of residence in the context of the place of storage of weapons, and apply for permit extensions online. Collectively, these legal developments reflect Ukraine's concerted efforts to formalise, regulate, and enhance control over civilian access to firearms, indicating a proactive approach to addressing the issue of illegal arms during the ongoing conflict.

Considering western military support, The Global Initiative has highlighted that the diversion of supplied arms at the onset of the invasion was not as extensive as initially anticipated by experts. Reports regarding missing weapons from those supplied by Western nations have been relatively scarce. This can be attributed, in part, to the proactive implementation of mechanisms aimed at countering arms diversion, both by Ukraine and other involved countries.

However, the situation differs when it comes to Russian weapons that were abandoned during the conflict. In such cases, these weapons are occasionally collected by local villagers, but predominantly they are surrendered to the Ukrainian army. This highlights the complex dynamics surrounding the handling of arms in the aftermath of the conflict, with varying levels of diversion and accountability for different types of weaponry.

Respondents that mentioned the rise of arm trafficking have indicated that they have heard from their social circles that the **acquisition of firearms has become alarmingly accessible** in their communities. This accessibility is attributed to the **surplus of arms left behind in areas affected by combat actions**. Moreover, respondents underscore a **prevailing societal need for a sense of safety and security**, but they also acknowledge that not everyone possesses a legal right to access such means of protection.

“

*There is such a problem, but, first of all, time has already passed. Secondly, I heard a lot about the fact that **you can buy a weapon just like that**. And many acquaintances use it, so I noted that there is such a problem.*

“

*Yes, because **you can still find weapons somewhere in some house after the occupation**, for example. It has also become more necessary, that is, **people feel the need to protect themselves** and cannot always legally pick up a weapon, roughly speaking. Well, probably these are the main reasons.*

Despite the mentioned legal developments aimed at broadening access to legal arms, respondents may not be fully aware of these changes. As a result, they perceive the distribution of arms as an alarming trend within their communities. This suggests that there might be a gap in awareness regarding the efforts to regulate civilian access to firearms, potentially contributing to these concerns.



## 2.2. Coping mechanisms

### 2.2.1. Assessing the Effectiveness of Local Government Security Efforts in Hromadas

Local government plays a pivotal role in ensuring the safety and security of its constituents. Local government's responsibilities in the sphere of security encompass a wide range of activities:

- Ensuring public order and cooperation with the police.
- Civil protection activities. This includes providing shelters and developing comprehensive disaster response plans to safeguard residents during emergencies and natural disasters.
- Functioning of municipal police.
- Operation of a video surveillance system.
- Authorization for road infrastructure: approving road signs, pedestrian crossings, speed bumps, and decisions related to the modification of green spaces to enhance road safety.
- Granting permissions for the establishment of trade facilities in the service sector and approving their operating hours.
- Activities in the field of landscaping. Local governments are responsible for enhancing the physical environment to promote safety.
- Handling stray animals.

**All hromadas have rated the local authorities' security efforts higher than before the invasion, except for the de-occupied hromadas, which have reported that the local government's handling of security has worsened since before the invasion. However, most have rated it as mediocre, with only rear, west, and rural hromadas rating it higher than 6.**

The West and East regions have rated the handling of security by the local government as the best before the invasion, while the North and South regions rated it as the worst (4.3 out of 10). All regions have shown an increase in their ratings since the invasion, with **the North region having the most significant improvement in the evaluation of local government's efforts towards security**. As a result, the North region is now rated higher than the Center and South regions.

*Table 8. Assessment of LA's handling of security issues (from 1 to 10, where 1 — completely ineffective, 10 — very effective)*

*"How effectively do you think the local government handled security BEFORE THE FULL SCALE INVASION / How effectively does LA handle it NOW?"*

Group	Before the invasion	Now	Change
All sample	5.33	5.92	0.59
Center	4.70	5.26	0.56
East	5.74	5.96	0.22
North	4.33	5.56	1.22

Group	Before the invasion	Now	Change
South	4.36	4.79	0.43
West	6.50	7.16	0.66
Rural	6.09	6.58	0.48
Urban	4.43	5.15	0.72
De-occupied	4.56	4.22	- 0.33
Hromadas close to frontline or border	4.75	5.36	0.61
Rear	5.59	6.17	0.59

Open responses highlighted that local self-governments have limited capacity to address major security issues. Respondents indicated that the most effective security concept is the implementation of security by environment design, which included measures such as increasing police patrols, installing video surveillance and lighting systems. Notably, around 20% of respondents emphasised the importance of a hromada -based approach to crime prevention, which involved promoting cooperation through meetings, discussions, and informational campaigns.

## 2.2.2. Assessing the Work of Police in Hromadas

**Police work has been rated higher now compared to before the invasion in all hromadas, except for the de-occupied area, where it has seen practically no change.** Police work before the invasion was rated much lower in the North than in other regions, and now it is also rated the lowest. The most significant increase in police assessment is observed in the South region, from 5.8 to 6.8. Urban hromadas rated police work lower than rural areas before the invasion, but now the assessment is the same.

*Table 9. Assessment of the work of the local police in maintaining public safety and order (from 1 to 10, where 1 — very poor, 10 — excellent)*

*"How do you rate the work of the local police in maintaining public safety and order before a full-scale invasion? / How do you rate it NOW?"*

Group	Before the invasion	Now	Change
All sample	6.06	6.69	0.63
Center	5.96	6.85	0.89
East	6.37	6.78	0.41
North	5.00	5.39	0.39
South	5.79	6.79	1.00
West	6.59	7.16	0.56
Rural	6.22	6.67	0.45
Urban	5.87	6.70	0.83
Deoccupied	5.89	5.78	- 0.11
Hromadas close to frontline or border	5.64	6.06	0.42
Rear	6.24	6.96	0.72

### 2.2.3. Assessing local media and official information channels in refuting disinformation

The Russian government has made extensive and systematic use of information manipulation and disinformation. This serves as an operational weapon in its ongoing assault on Ukraine. Countering this disinformation is vital to protecting the integrity of Ukrainian society and safeguarding the nation's security.

Interestingly, our findings reveal that most respondents perceive local media efforts in refuting disinformation as subpar, with an average score of 3.21 across the sample. Notably, the lowest evaluations of local media's effectiveness in countering disinformation were recorded in de-occupied hromadas, with a mean score of 3.00, in contrast to rear areas (3.13) and hromadas close to the frontline or border (3.39). Moreover, within de-occupied hromadas, official channels of local government information dissemination were found to be less effective in informing the population about potential threats and emergency plans.

*Table 10. Assessment of the local media and official information channels (from 1 to 5, where 1 — completely ineffective, 5 — very effective)*

Group	How effective are the LOCAL media in refuting disinformation?	How effective are the official channels of information of local governments in informing the population about potential threats and emergency plans?
All sample	3.21	3.42
Center	3.04	3.30
East	3.41	3.63
North	3.17	<b>2.94</b>
South	3.07	3.21
West	3.28	3.72
Rural	3.20	3.45
Urban	3.22	3.39
De-occupied	3.00	2.89
Hromadas close to frontline or border	3.39	3.19
Rear	3.13	3.52

The open-ended inquiries reveal a concerning pattern wherein local media outlets not only struggle to dispel misinformation but are also found to be among the sources perpetuating it. Respondents have opined that local media ought to attain greater autonomy from governing authorities, enhance their professionalism and efficacy, and diversify their content offerings. Regrettably, a lack of financial backing presents a significant obstacle in realising these goals.

With regard to official communication channels, respondents have emphasised the need for a more comprehensible and accessible discourse, characterised by reduced jargon and formality. Additionally, the communication should be more timely, covering local events and activities, and where necessary, created from scratch.



## 2.3. Summary

The perception of security has significantly decreased with the outbreak of the all-out-war. Shelter availability and quality should be prioritised, specifically in areas with higher risks - urban hromadas, liberated hromadas, and those close to the frontline or border with Russia and/or Belarus. Rocket attacks are the most significant security threat. Additionally, illegal arms trafficking and the drug trade have become more prominent issues for respondents. Before and after the war, drug trafficking remained a significant concern in Ukraine, with interviews pointing to factors like unemployment and a lack of job opportunities as contributing factors. The desire for safety has led civilians to acquire firearms, contributing to illegal arms trafficking. As most of the security issues directly linked with the war there is often little the local authorities or police could do. The increased evaluation of local authorities and police efforts in safety provision but not in the de-occupied hromadas could potentially imply decrease of trust among residents to any official entity.

All above mentioned challenges highlight the urgent need for a holistic security strategy in Ukraine, which includes not only military expenditures but also public investments aimed at creating jobs, facilitating reconstruction, and improving healthcare and education.



## Part III. Governance and civiness

Amidst the ongoing Russian invasion in Ukraine, the pivotal role of inter-local government collaboration and local governance emerges as indispensable for communities grappling with the profound shocks of war. These networks and administrative bodies serve as essential pillars in fostering resilience, assisting citizens in uniting, and effectively addressing the diverse challenges wrought by conflict. Their significance lies not only in facilitating immediate responses but also in establishing the bedrock for long-term recovery and hromada stability during times of profound adversity. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that interaction with these authorities is not devoid of risks. Historical issues related to corruption, nepotism, and attempts to centralise power remain persistent concerns on the political horizon.



### 3.1. Status-quo

#### 3.1.1. Risks of centralization are considered low but with some nuances.

The majority of respondents do not perceive any significant risks associated with centralization. Nevertheless, a few concerns were expressed, including the potential threat in case the war continues for longer as well as the possibility for conflict between the central and local authority. Additionally, respondents noted that decreased financial capacities resulting from business losses and military expenses pose a threat to the decentralisation reform's sustainability. Furthermore, a significant wave of migration among young and active hromada members presents a potential problem. Another intriguing issue that was raised is the implicit threat of local power usurpation.

There are a few observations noticed from the in-depth interviews.

1. Different orientation to Regional Military Administrations' (RMAs) instructions depending on the size/type of hromada.

Representatives of some hromadas noted that city authorities may be guided by the oblast level in their actions and public statements. This is especially true in small communities and communities where the head of the hromada is politically affiliated with the head of the oblast.



*At critical moments, when some extraordinary event occurs in the hromada, when it is urgent to tell people something, that it was this, be afraid or not afraid, **the local authorities step back and wait for either instructions or wait for the first comment from the regional head, and then either duplicate it or add their own.** – a respondent from an urban hromada that is not a regional centre.*

Radically different patterns of cooperation can be observed in communities in regional centres or with greater resources. There, the regional and city levels do not openly confront each other, but there is competition and conflict between them.



*We had a Youth Day on August 12. Before August 12, we organised a regional youth forum in my organisation, together with the RMA, there. And we had some agreements with the local authorities, the youth center of [city name]. We were counting on their presence, expecting them, and they just didn't come, even though we had an agreement. So, let's just say they take responsibility, we agree on something, but **they just sabotage the process**. Publicly, we don't put spokes in each other's wheels there, but **I don't feel confident and safe in cooperation with them**, because I expect any moment of sabotage or something like that." [Respondent on cooperation with the city authorities on an event affiliated with the RMA].*

2. Problems in cooperation between local governments and Regional Military Administrations (RMAs) can also be due to the party affiliation of the local authorities.

Representatives of the RMA are appointed by the president, as are the heads of military administrations in the communities. Some respondents noted that party differences cause competition between the representatives of the RMA and local authorities.



*There is competition between the local authorities and the party, well, in short, between the two parties. The first party is the local party, in fact, it is the [name of the local party], and the second party is the party of the President. And it turns out that most people in the regional state administration are from the president's party. And the local authorities - the local council - are a regional party, and that's it. And the city military administration is, again, the party of the President. **And it somehow forces out the regional party**. That is, our mayor was removed, something else is happening, a city council meeting is disrupted, and so on.*

It is important to note that the patterns of interaction do not differ within oblasts but differ within regions, therefore, we can assume that the interaction depends on the personalities and affiliations of the heads of the RMA and local government.

- 3.1.2. Average evaluation of decentralisation reform but with higher results in earlier created hromadas.

Decentralisation is considered more effective in delivering administrative services than in other areas such as corruption eradication. Additionally, we can observe a slightly higher level of effectiveness in hromadas-pioneers, which were merged

during 2015-2018. This suggests that the benefits of amalgamation are visible in the long term.

Figure 11. Assessment of results of decentralisation reform.

"How effective was decentralisation reform in achieving the following results in your local hromada?"

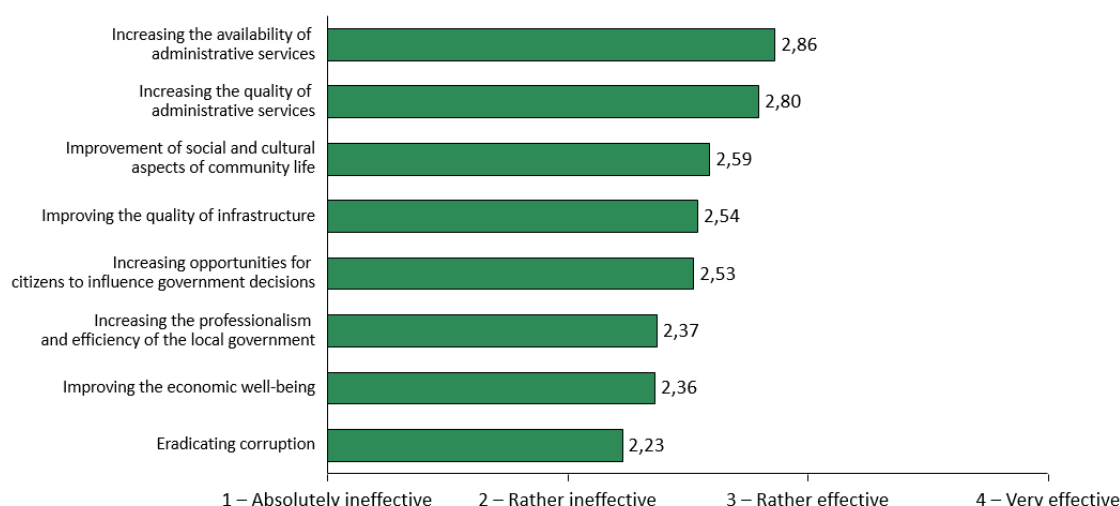


Table 11. Assessment of the decentralisation reform (from 1 to 4, where 1 — completely ineffective, 4 — extremely effective)

"How effective was decentralisation reform in achieving the following results in your local hromada?"

Group	Increasing the availability of administrative services	Increasing the quality of administrative services	Improvement of social and cultural aspects of hromada life (education, culture, sports, leisure)	Improving the quality of infrastructure	Increasing opportunities for ordinary citizens to influence government decisions	Increasing the professionalism and efficiency of the local government	Improving the economic wellbeing	Eradicating corruption
All sample	2.86	2.80	2.59	2.54	2.53	2.37	2.36	2.23
<b>Non-pioneer</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>2.78</b>	<b>2.56</b>	<b>2.49</b>	<b>2.47</b>	<b>2.35</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>2.15</b>
<b>Pioneer</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>2.82</b>	<b>2.67</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>2.41</b>	<b>2.51</b>	<b>2.38</b>
Rural	2.89	2.80	2.58	2.56	2.50	2.44	2.45	2.42
Urban	2.83	2.80	2.61	2.52	2.56	2.30	2.26	2.00
Center	2.96	2.93	2.56	2.41	2.63	2.48	2.41	2.22
<b>East</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>2.89</b>	2.63	2.48	<b>2.56</b>	2.30	2.33
<b>North</b>	2.78	2.61	<b>2.39</b>	<b>2.28</b>	2.67	2.17	<b>2.06</b>	2.22
<b>South</b>	<b>2.57</b>	<b>2.57</b>	2.64	2.71	2.43	<b>2.07</b>	2.43	<b>1.93</b>
West	2.84	2.72	2.47	2.66	2.44	2.38	2.53	2.28
De-occupied	2.44	2.22	2.33	2.11	2.33	2.11	2.00	1.89
Frontline or border hromadas	2.78	2.67	2.56	2.50	2.50	2.33	2.22	2.17
Rear	2.90	2.85	2.61	2.56	2.54	2.39	2.43	2.26

Despite average assessment the interviewed activists see the value in decentralisation reform, mainly because of new rules and available resources (Arends et al, 2023).



*I think decentralisation has had an impact. And it **had a positive impact**. Still, despite all the risks and so on, it had a positive impact because when we allow the locals to do things the way they need to, **there may be some problems at first, but then it will be better when they learn**. And the **first time has already passed**.*



*For example, when there was a district (previous level of administration division before reform), what **were the finances, where did they go?** And now, practically, **most people, if they want to know, they will know, and they will see, and yet**. And here, you know, the hromada is smaller. And here, if you allocated **10 thousand for the construction of some benches or something, and wrote that you put up five of them and put up one, then in a minute everyone will know and ask where you took the money, you know?***

Respondents have also highlighted several positive aspects of the ongoing reform process, including an increase in the hromadas' budget through the implementation of local taxes, greater accessibility to governing authorities, increased independence from central players, improved speed and efficacy in addressing local challenges, and a surge in the growth of local active society. On the other hand, hromadas and the Central Government had huge debates about reallocation of "Military" PIT from local budgets to the state budget for defence purposes.

With the difference in assessment **potential explanations for the difference in decentralisation effectiveness perception could be the following:**

1. **The elected head of hromada and his team has not met the expectations.**  
As a result the residents are generally unsatisfied with the outcomes of the reform.



*To be honest, most people in the village **are not happy with this government at the moment**, but you know, **we elected them**, and now we are waiting for something to happen, maybe re-election, but we see that people, unfortunately, do not care as much as they should.*

2. **Low level of understanding of the reform and its consequences among the population**



*While decentralisation has gained some understanding among people, it is still not widely used and many are not familiar with its implementation. In some regions, there is a misconception about decentralisation, with questions like "What is it?" and "What has it accomplished?" "We still live badly". However, there are still those who have embraced decentralisation and are using it effectively.*

### 3. The outcomes might be more visible in the longer term



*In the first period, there may be mistakes, there may be failures, perhaps budgets were not allocated professionally enough, and so on, but the hromada needs it. And so the hromada can still, as we did, influence the public outcry, can say that no, we don't need this, **we don't need a fence for 4 million hryvnas**. Like, we need this, and **it's easier to make these changes at this level, at the local level**. And when, even in our example, when the 2023rd year was approaching and we said everything, the target program is no longer the same, **it does not meet the requirements of our hromada**, we did not go to change the law, we came and **changed the local program**. And this is about respect for our local citizens.*

#### 3.1.3. Positive changes in perception of corruption but more negative in monopoly and nepotism

All three practices are rated as fairly common among respondents from our civic network of local activist-researchers. The practices are reported to be:

1. **less spread in the West** and more common in the center and south.
2. generally **rated higher in urban settings** than in rural ones.

The full scale invasion has resulted in a slight drop of corruption and nepotism but with almost no significant change by region or hromada type.

Interestingly, occupation and proximity to the frontline or border have positively affected the perception of monopoly and nepotism in the hromadas.

*Table 12. How widespread are unethical practices in hromadas (from 1 to 4, where 1 - not common at all, 4 - very common)*

*"Please rate how common the following phenomena were in your hromada BEFORE the full-scale Russian invasion / How common is it NOW?"*

	Group	Before the invasion	Now	Change
Corruption	All sample	2.90	2.78	-0.12
	Center	3.26	3.19	-0.07
	East	2.74	2.59	-0.15
	North	3.06	2.94	-0.11
	South	3.21	3.07	-0.14
	West	2.50	2.38	-0.13
	Rural	2.41	2.20	-0.2
	Urban	3.48	3.46	-0.02
	Deoccupied	2.78	2.44	-0.33
	Hromadas close to frontline or border	2.97	2.86	-0.11
	Rear	2.87	2.74	-0.12
Monopoly	All sample	2.68	2.68	0
	Center	3.00	3.04	0.04
	East	2.67	2.63	-0.04
	North	2.67	2.72	0.06
	South	2.79	2.79	0

	Group	Before the invasion	Now	Change
Nepotism	West	2.38	2.34	-0.03
	Rural	2.33	2.33	0
	Urban	3.09	3.09	0
	Deoccupied	2.44	2.33	-0.11
	Hromadas close to frontline or border	2.75	2.64	-0.11
	Rear	2.65	2.70	0.05
	All sample	2.81	2.78	-0.03
	Center	3.04	3.07	0.04
	East	2.63	2.63	0
	North	3.06	2.94	-0.11
	South	3.14	3.07	-0.07
	West	2.47	2.44	-0.03
	Rural	2.39	2.33	-0.06
	Urban	3.30	3.31	0.02
	De-occupied	3.00	2.67	-0.33
Hromadas close to frontline or border	2.92	2.81	-0.11	
Rear	2.76	2.77	0.01	

With some positive tendencies in corruption and nepotism perception data, we decided to inquire for potential reasons for such changes in the interviews. The findings show divergent outcomes that will either be explained by decline in corruption and nepotism in the second wave of survey or will require additional research.

**Explanation 1. The corruption level has decreased because of war. Support for the war-effort introduces changes in behaviour that are unfavourable to corruption.**

Intolerance to corruption and social activity among the population is raising awareness of good governance practices and improving scrutiny of the authorities. In various hromadas, we have recorded successful cases of cancelling scandalous procurements or monitoring their implementation.



*In my opinion, and only in my opinion, **the perception of corruption** among the population **has decreased very seriously**, because, well, I think it's because of the war, and the population, I talked to many people, all say that our **state cannot be the same as it was before February 24**. Previously, sometimes people themselves **initiated corrupt actions** to make life easier... now they say that it **would be better to go to the budget and use it to buy a drone, or some clothes for the military**, or to make some improvements.*



*But there are more changes now than there were before the war. Why? Because now **people who are not indifferent are starting to**, I don't know, **support each other, support everyone, and do something**, and not let the authorities sit idly by.*

**Explanation 2. The corruption level has not changed, the reason for corruption tolerance decline is the “immunity” of authorities to critique during martial law. The society is focused on survival, help to the militaries, and not on control of budget expenditures.**

““

*Now, some things can be hidden under **vultures secretly**. There are certain procurements and there are risks here, including at the local level. There are risks, and it seems to me that society is focused a little bit not on controlling what is happening, but on saving the country, hromada, family, and so on. And when society is not focused in that direction, there are risks that someone with corrupt thoughts will take advantage of this.*

““

*Often we hear, I don't know, I'm guessing, but where do all **these narratives** come from, like "it's not the time, **it's not the time for this control, it's not the time to figure out whether the drones that are being purchased** are okay or not, it's not the time to raise an internal quarrel when we **need to focus on the external enemy**.*

““

*If we are talking about local authorities, all that has changed because of martial law is that **there are no longer**, as you said, tools of public democracy, **no petitions, there is no possibility to organise rallies or any acts of protest**. But if we talk about the trend, in general, the attitude of the authorities and their behaviour, it is not related to martial law. It has been like this since she took this position, the position of the mayor, the position of the mayor. In this sense, nothing has changed, the only thing that has changed is that they have political benefits in the form of being able to say that **if it weren't for them, everyone in [city name] would have died**, died, and no one could have moved here, and it's all thanks to them, they are the only ones who are cool, and everyone should thank them, and they are taking the blame for everything.*

**Explanation 3. Nepotism has declined but not everywhere. The perception differs: at the local level it has definitely decreased, but not on the level of presidential hierarchy in oblast administrations.**

““

*There is 60 percent transparency, because if we are talking about the local authorities, well, **in [name] hromada nepotism is decreasing there**, as I said. And if we are talking about the **region, on the contrary**, this issue of being my friend or my enemy and so on **has intensified**. And, like, when **aid is distributed**, it may **not be very transparent**... Well, there are conflicts of interest, let's say, when distributing certain things in hromadas*

#### 3.1.4. Positive changes in cooperation between local authorities and activists

Increased levels of cooperation between local governments with state and civil society actors due to full-scale invasion, but some conflictual relations remain with non-government organisations.

The full-scale invasion also motivated the local government to engage more actively with different stakeholders. The cooperation with Armed Forces,

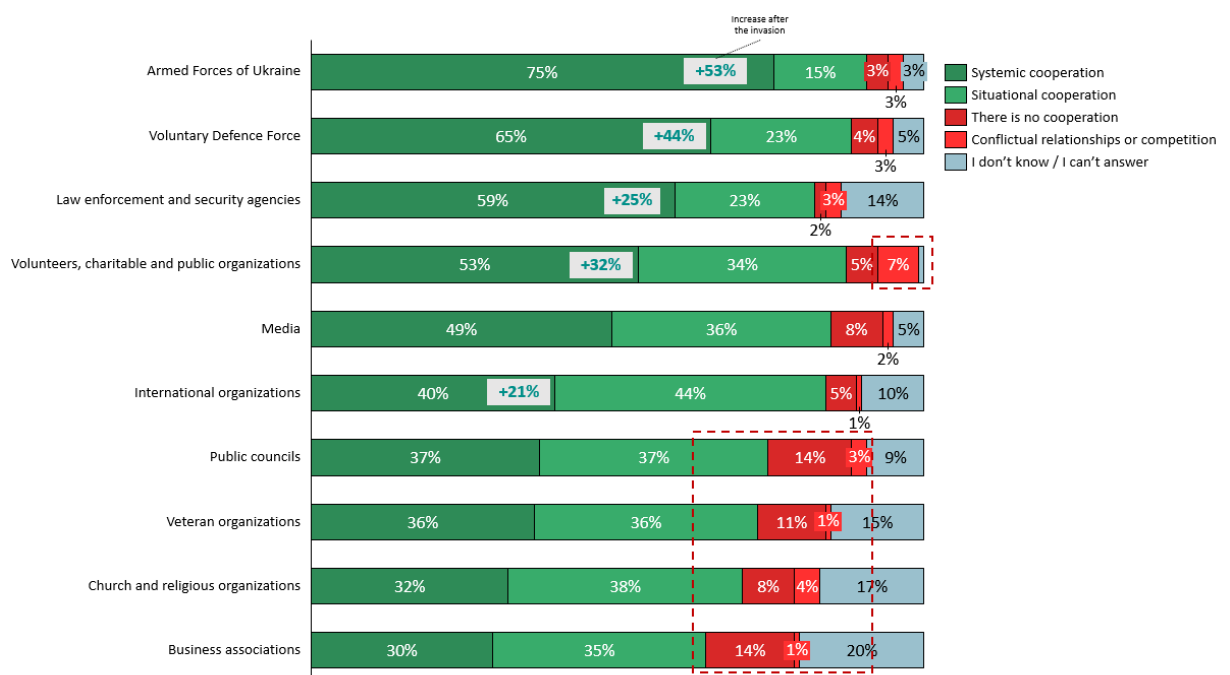


Voluntary Defence Forces has grown threefold (from ~20% respondents indicating systemic cooperation between local governments and the latter to more than 60%) in comparison to a full-scale invasion outbreak. Except for the organisations that deal with security, the cooperation has also improved with public and international organisations.

However, respondents report that there is still some conflict or competition between local authorities and public organisations that has not changed after the invasion. Additionally, **local authorities could engage more with public councils, veteran organisations, church and religious organisations, and business associations.**

Figure 12. Change in the degree of cooperation between the local government and following actors.

"How would you rate the level of cooperation between the LOCAL GOVERNMENT and the following entities in your hromada prior to the invasion and after ..."



In open questions, respondents have highlighted **several significant impediments** stemming from governing authorities, including **a lack of transparency and engagement, corrupt practices, and a fear of competition with civil society over service provision.** Additionally, respondents have noted that volunteers often face difficulties with collaboration due to a deficiency of knowledge in cooperative techniques and trust issues. Furthermore, both parties face challenges regarding differing viewpoints, prior conflicts, and divergent approaches.

In light of these issues, respondents have recommended that local governments alter their approach, moving beyond merely informing citizens of decisions and instead engaging in pre-discussions and dialogues while promoting participatory tools with transparency and openness. In turn, local civil society activists and groups should be prepared to collaborate more extensively with authorities instead of seeing themselves as in opposition/competition.

Volunteers and law enforcement entities

We specifically addressed the question of cooperation between volunteers and law enforcement entities taking into account a few prominent cases of conflicts between the two since the full-scale invasion outbreak. However, the responses have not shown any significant difference in comparison to other actors. The findings could be limited due to the high “I don’t know/I can’t answer” response rate.

Figure 15. Degree of cooperation between the volunteers and following actors.

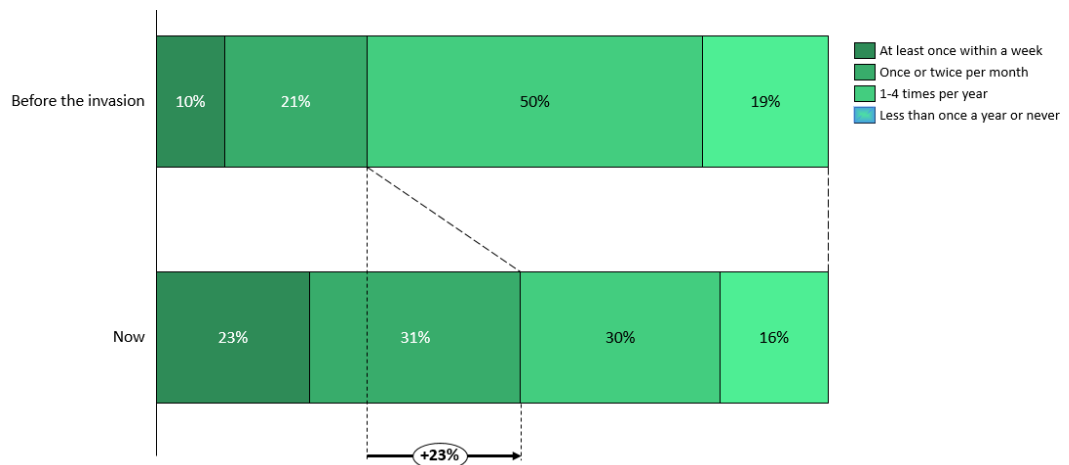
"How would you rate the level of cooperation between VOLUNTEERS and the following subjects in your hromada NOW?"

**Involvement of civil society organisations now happens more often, with informing being the most spread method.**

Local authorities are now more willing to cooperate with civil society organisations compared to before the invasion. For instance, the share of respondents that report that communication between local authorities and civil society organisations occurs at least once a month has increased from 31% to 54%.

Figure 13. Frequency of communication between the local government and civil society organisations.

"How often did local authorities and civil society organisations communicate or meet in an official format BEFORE the Russian invasion in February 2022? / How often do local authorities and civil society organisations communicate or meet in an official format NOW?"



Most hromadas have involved **businesses or the public in dealing with the problems caused by the full-scale invasion, with 85% of respondents reporting this. This was more commonly reported in rural communities and in the West, and less so in the North and South.** The most widely adopted method of involvement was through the act of **informing stakeholders**, which was nearly twice as prevalent in the sample compared to the next most common form of involvement involving them as executors or coordinators. In urban communities, there was a slightly higher percentage of respondents who reported that local government actively involves stakeholders in consultations. However, it's worth noting that consultation, the collection of proposals, exchanging views on solutions to the problem, and feedback mechanisms were relatively rare, reported in only about one-fifth of the hromadas surveyed.

Figure 14. Involvement in solving critical problems of the hromada.

"Did the local government involve business or the public in dealing with the problems caused by the full-scale invasion?"

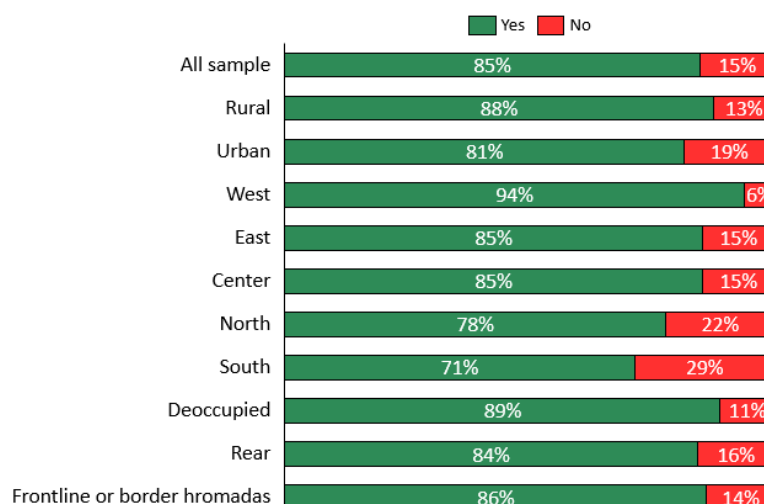


Table 11. Involvement in solving critical problems of hromada

"Think of one of the critical problems that a local government involved the public or business in solving during an all-out war. Thinking about this problem, indicate how exactly you participated in solving it?"

Group	We received information from the local hromada about the problem and familiarise ourselves with it	You actively drew the attention of the local authorities to the need for consultations with you regarding this problem	The local authorities initiated the collection of proposals for solving the problem after your request	The local authorities and you exchanged views on solutions to the problem systematically (more than two written or oral discussions)	Your feedback has influenced the way we solve the problem	You participated in the implementation of the decision as an executor or coordinator
All sample	61%	21%	19%	20%	18%	31%
Rural	64%	14%	19%	23%	16%	33%
Urban	57%	30%	20%	17%	20%	30%
West	63%	16%	19%	25%	19%	31%
East	56%	15%	22%	22%	15%	30%
Center	63%	30%	26%	19%	22%	30%
North	56%	17%	11%	17%	17%	50%
South	71%	36%	14%	14%	14%	14%
De-occupied	56%	22%	33%	0%	11%	44%
Rear	62%	21%	21%	20%	16%	23%
Frontline or border hromadas	58%	22%	17%	22%	22%	50%

The questions on the involvement in solving critical problems of the hromada were taken from Huss and Keudel survey on the Needs and Priorities of Local Authorities of Ukraine: The Provision of Services in Times of War and Post-War Recovery to compare the perception of these involvement from the side of local residents and members of local NGOs. The limitation is that communities in our research differ from those in Huss and Keudel. A noticeable pattern emerges that local activists tend to perceive that their input receives less attention compared to

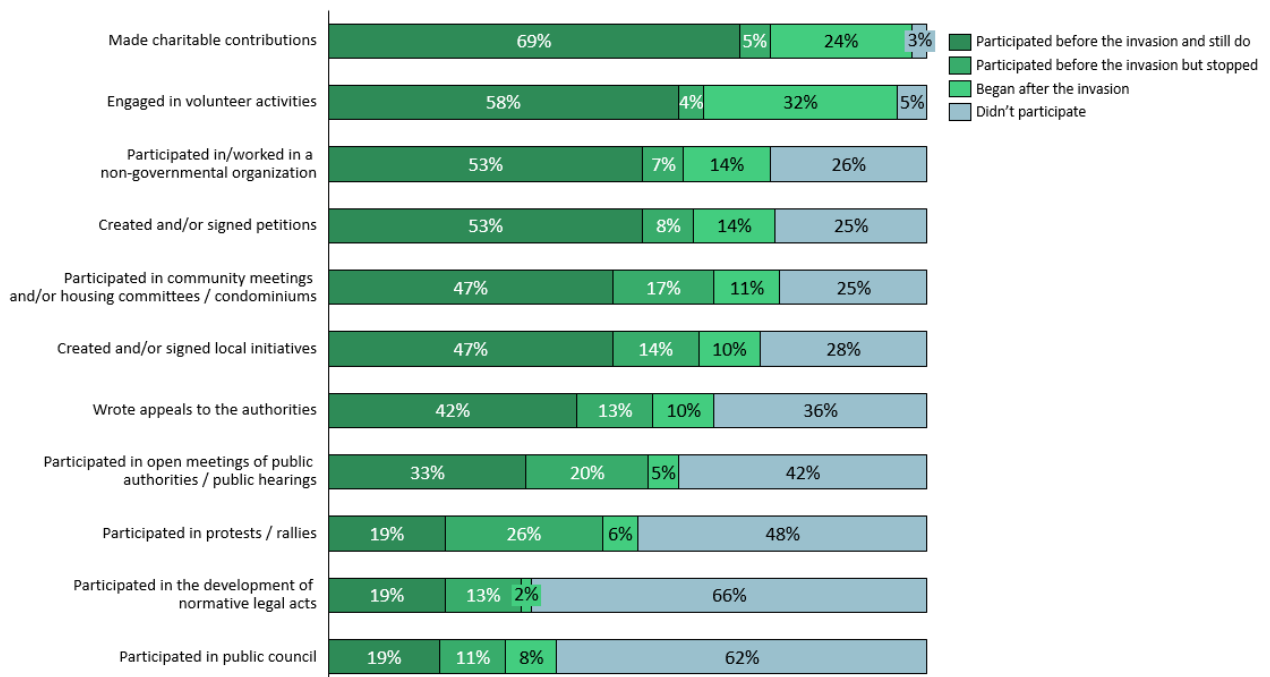
local authorities. Additionally, a discernible trend emerges in terms of the frequency of exchanging perspectives. Fewer local activists report engaging in systematic discussions about problem-solving with local authorities, in contrast to the representatives of local authorities.

**Significant increase of civil activities participation since the outbreak of a full-scale war, with some decline in activities that restricted - public protests and open meetings**

A significant share of local activists reported that they **stopped participating in protests and rallies after the full-scale invasion** (as protests are banned under martial law), as well as in **open meetings of public authorities and public hearings** (some local councils have introduced additional restrictions on the participation of citizens and media in plenary meetings and meetings of permanent deputy commissions).

Figure 15. Share of participation in various civil activities before and after the invasion.

"What civil activities did you participate in?"



As expected, the most popular democratic practice is local elections, where 85% of respondents reported that citizens in their hromada are rather or very likely to participate. The second cluster of democratic practices, which 55-60% of respondents say are rather or very likely to participate in, includes voting for participation in budget projects, general meetings of citizens, creation or signing of electronic petitions, and local initiatives. **The least participation is seen in the submission of public appeals, public hearings, and public councils.**

**Participatory budgets were not among choices in the survey** because most communities have not resumed such activity since the placement of martial law, mostly because such expenditures are considered to be capital expenditures. However, the in-depth interviews show there is request for such practices of residents involvement even despite the war:



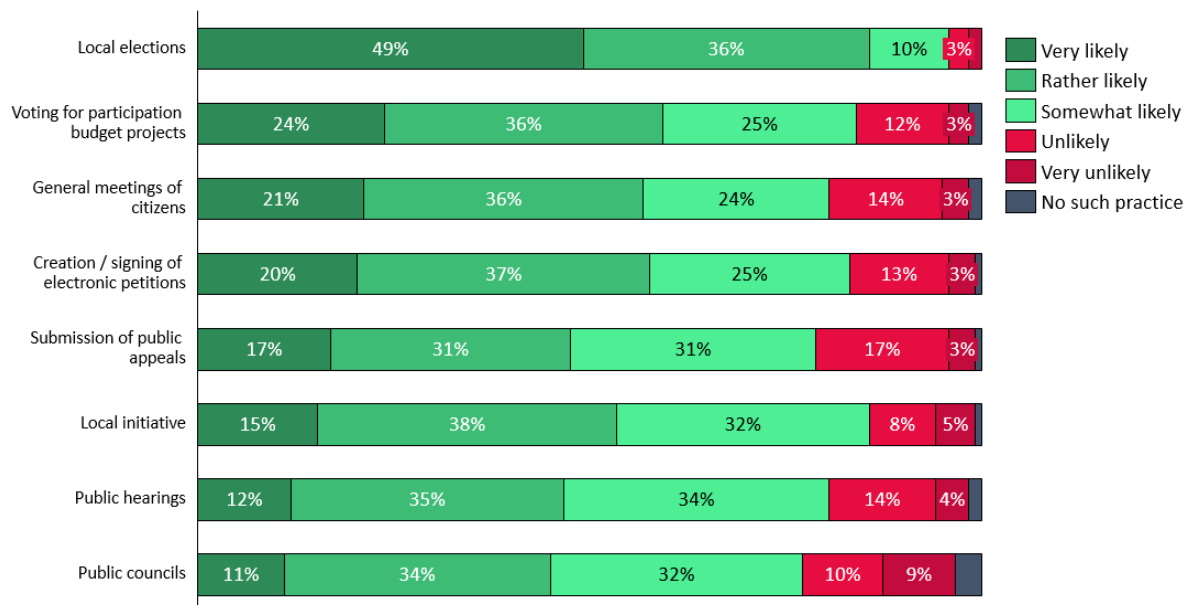
*And one of the most upsetting things is that the initiative of public participatory budgeting has been lost. It's completely dead. There are no funds for it, no one holds any meetings. And there is something to it. In the sense that there is no use for that budget when you need to spend on weapons and other things. ... And of course, it's a small budget, but our public budget will be 18 million. It was supposed to be 18 million, for large and small grants. But it is not there. And perhaps I should start working on this topic, because it is to some extent my topic. I am involved in it. I believe in this idea because it is a grassroots initiative. And these tools have been lost for grassroots initiatives, for the population itself.*

Lviv City Council is currently working on making changes to its participatory budget considering the circumstances of wartime, the idea is to limit the areas of projects that residents could propose to accessibility and inclusiveness of urban spaces, critical repair or procurement in schools, kindergartens or other urban areas institutions, etc. As well as granting some of the city budgets to the volunteer organisations that support militaries, IDPs, etc.

With respect to public consultations the local authorities are said to manipulate the provision that prohibits the mass gatherings, in such a way omitting the requirement for public consultations.

Figure 16. Share of residents participating in democratic practices.

*"How likely are residents of your hromada to participate in.."*





## 3.2. Coping mechanisms

In order to understand why local authorities have the most conflicting relations with civil society organisations, we interviewed respondents from communities who mentioned this problem least and most often in-depth interviews.

1. In some hromadas the war has become a catalyst for fostering positive changes as local authorities become more open to initiatives of local activists.



*You know, it has become both softer and not softer. Why? **This first humanitarian headquarters, which was there, thanks to the authorities, they helped to support it and open it.** This must be recognized. And thanks to the authorities, to a certain extent, this headquarters was opened. And the secretary of the city council helped there. In fact, there are volunteers who cooperate with the authorities on various issues.*



*In my opinion, in our hromada, in the [name] region, there are improvements only due to the fact that CSOs are working, and they have started to work closely with the authorities, that is, **the authorities have started to be open to cooperation with CSOs.** And this synergy of this cooperation provides some social services for the population and so on.*

This may, in part, be due to the increase in overall cohesion noted by respondents.



*People have **become more open-minded.** I remember when we first started, it was the second or third day of the war, and they told us that we needed sandbags, to fortify the board, to make fortifications and everything else. And we started doing that. People even came there in the latest Mercedes, in BMWs, just went out, took shovels and dug in these sandbags. Everyone was bringing food, you know. People were so united that I think it got better. People just changed a little bit.*



*We had people living on the streets who, for example, I didn't know, we would pass by and not say hello. And here, **everyone united**, everyone, you know, became, I can't say one hundred percent, but **all those who wanted to be useful, all united, and this is a huge part.***

2. In other communities, in addition to the negative previous experience, there are new cases of monopolisation of the humanitarian sphere, assistance to the army and volunteering, which reduces the level of trust, makes people want to be apolitical and not cooperate with local authorities.

Local authorities can monopolise volunteerism and assistance to the army because they understand its impact on future public support and popularity.

Therefore, there is an arising challenge of creating a public sphere that is able to overcome patronage politics.

“

*To put it briefly and directly, local authorities do not cooperate with anyone except those organisations that are directly selected by them. There are, let's say, those close to the local authorities, such as the [city] Youth Council, the [city] Youth Center, and all the NGOs that are built on these two, let's say, institutions. **It monopolises volunteering. The city, it closes in on itself and thus fences itself off from anyone, preventing them from getting to the "trough"** as they see it, although I have a different vision. And that's why with the local authorities, they have their own political ambitions, which they are trying to close or use. And, unfortunately, their political ambitions are where this activity ends.*

“

*This is in cooperation with these organisations, and this is where the difficulties arise, because the local authorities, in particular, in the person of the mayor [name], have **monopolized the work in the volunteer sphere** and are trying to stifle anyone who tries to do volunteer work, to put it simply. If we are talking about some kind of global level, of course, no one forbids us to weave nets, to transport humanitarian aid from ourselves as an organisation, but there is no cooperation and no support to speak of.*

“

*Promoting yourself on the Armed Forces is very good, I understand that, but [name] is a blogger, not the head of the MA (military administration).*

In this type of hromadas, it is good that CSOs **are trying to maintain their autonomy from politics and not be co-opted by local authorities.** Frequently, it rather means that they do not want to damage their reputation, compromise their goals and be used by local authorities.

“

*If we need something like that, we can go there and negotiate, and it's fine, it can help. But in some political matters, we don't get involved at all. **If we can do it without the local government, we do it ourselves.** If not, if we need some kind of permission, for example, to hold a charity concert or something else, we need the city to give us permission to do it. Then we go, write a letter, and deal with it. There are public organisations that cooperate, but **most of them try to be non-political and have nothing to do with it.** We don't get involved at all. Yes, we cooperate, they sometimes help us.*

“

*At the moment, I can say that we are in a public..., **the city and us are trying not to interfere with each other,** so when we talk about trainings and everything else, they do not interfere with us, they do not try to influence us, in this particular area, in working with young people. **We just, let's say, keep neutral and do each thing, each in our own way, the only thing is that we simply cannot expect these projects to be joint.** At least not yet.*



Local activists in hromadas with negative experience in cooperation, started trying more actively to work with accountability of local authorities.



*The first thing that came to mind immediately was that at every session of the city council we ask a question of how **hromada deals with the issue of allocating aid to the Armed Forces of Ukraine**. We have a military unit nearby, some aid is directed to this unit, some to the territorial defence forces, some is directed directly to the troops stationed somewhere else. This is from the city budget.*

**In cases where local authorities are more closed to interaction or there are conflicts, more active cooperation with RMA** is followed, especially in regional centres.



*If we are talking about the region, it is easier to work with the region in the sense that they are not managers of large funds, they do not have any political tricks, so from this side, let's say, they are easier to communicate with. Again, we can also talk about the different levels of work with the regional government, and this can also be a little different. I am told that work with the regional sports department and work with the head of the Regional State [now military] Administration directly, again, these are different things, but at the same time the **head of the Regional State Administration, for example, even if we talk about him, it is still easier to negotiate with him, because in general it is some kind of dialogue about joint work, than with the city government.***



*We tried to work before the war, we submitted to a project competition with the region. We didn't pass, because the region wanted so that it was closer to the very center of the region, to [oblast center], so that they could come and monitor, the delegation. It is very far from us. We are 270 kilometers from [oblast center], that is, it is a four-hour drive, it is very far. And for us, they want to see all the projects for the development of [oblast center] and what is near [oblast center].*

*We are on the border, we are after all the comments and questions we were asked at the project competition, then it was just before the war, in January. Therefore, as you know from the movie "Tayozhnyy roman", where we live in the forest on the outskirts, that's how we felt when we returned home.*



*In the end, after I personally and another girl from our team, **we went to the session of the council of our district local deputies**, spoke there, succeeded, found this premises. Now, just when this case already has such publicity, because at first we appealed only to the local authorities, then **when we went so slightly beyond the limits, something shifted a little already from this place.***



*Not only that, I was told by my friends, who said that maybe **we should bypass it and go straight there, to [oblast center]**, and when we just started, and it was April of this year, then friends told about this project there, in [oblast center], just in a private conversation, and they said that they were very interested in it happening there. That's why they advised that maybe we should go there, but, you know, **you don't want to overleap**, so we somehow tried here on our own.*

3. As a general trend in all hromadas, activists encounter various challenges such as **burnout, difficulties in establishing rapport with authorities, limited resources, and the need to change their focus** due to the large-scale invasion. As a result, many activists are **now prioritising support for military assistance and the adaptation of internally displaced persons** in their communities.



### 3.3. Summary

The war has become a catalyst for positive changes in local governance: interaction between local authorities and different stakeholders improved and intensified; there is a general increase in civil activities and participation that members of our network either observed or participated in; some positive changes in nepotism and corruption perception.

The war, however, still holds some risks to local governance and democracy:

- Centralization may be a potential threat to decentralisation reform as there is strong orientation on Regional Military Administrations, specifically in smaller hromadas.
- New cases of monopolisation of the humanitarian sphere further reduces the level of trust from NGOs to local and regional authorities, lowering the chances of their cooperation and overall resilience.
- Manipulations of some authorities prohibiting open meeting and public discussions and general switch of the majority of activists to military support may cause difficulties in local control and monitoring.

# CONCLUSIONS

The full-scale war has significantly affected all Ukrainian communities, in all spheres:

- In economic wellbeing the biggest change is observed in the rising cost of living (specifically food, hygiene items, medicine, fuel) and lowering income costs. The unaffordability of basic needs urges people to appeal to existing support networks in their hromadas (when available), or in more negative scenarios turn into illegal activities and informal employment. The latter is the only option for male workers to avoid mobilisation.
- In social infrastructure accessibility the problems are particularly noticeable in the spheres of school education, electricity, transportation and leisure activities. The two former are more likely to be connected with direct military actions, while the latter two with the rising costs and decreasing incomes.
- In the security field, most of the biggest issues are war-related - rocket attacks, shelling, forced displacement, fire hazards. With little ownership of local authorities and police on this matter, shelter availability and quality become of primary focus. Unfortunately, they receive very low evaluation, specifically in urban hromadas, liberated hromadas, and those near the frontline or border with Russia or Belarus.
- In the local governance area, although it is assumed that martial law would significantly reduce democratic practices and involvement of different actors, the situation seems to be mixed. On one hand, there are improved and intensified interactions between local authorities and stakeholders, increased civil participation, and reduced nepotism and corruption perceptions. However, potential risks include centralization tendencies, monopolisation of humanitarian efforts, and manipulative actions by authorities hindering open discussions and shifting activists towards military support.

Some areas or groups of communities that happen to be more affected by the full-scale war than others are:

- Hromadas affected by the direct military actions, de-occupied and/or close to the frontline and border with Russian Federation and Belarus.
  - The localities from this group have shown bigger problems with access to economic opportunities and social infrastructure, resulting in their higher reliance on social support networks.
  - They face a significant challenge when major humanitarian organisations that provide initial assistance and then withdraw their support leaves the hromadas to rely on local initiatives, which, despite having a better grasp of the specific issues and context, can still be challenging without initial support from larger organisations .
  - High rocket and direct military threats together with low access level to shelters also makes them least satisfied with the security situation.

- In localities where occupation took place there is lower trust to local authorities and police as efficient providers of security.
- The South macroregion stands out here as the region with the biggest number of issues with regard to infrastructure access.
- Small (predominantly rural) hromadas.
  - These hromadas have higher dependency from oblast (regional) centre initiatives and Regional Military Administrations risks.
  - There is also a higher risk of further deepening of pre-war rooted problems specific for rural areas.
- For urban areas the biggest infrastructure issues are war-related - lowering phone and Internet connection, electricity issues, for rural areas the infrastructure issues are intensified pre-war problems with roads/public transport and waste management.

To sustain the observed resilience there is a need to support actors that solve or mitigate the existing problems. Below there are identified gaps that could affect further operation of these actors.

Actor's name	Identified gaps
Local authorities (similar gaps could be attributed to regional military administrations)	Communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of transparency in communication (result in low trust)</li> <li>• Informing as the dominant communication strategy with NGOs</li> </ul> Management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low adaptability to arising risks and challenges</li> <li>• Lack of institutionalised support to local initiatives and businesses (for instance, in application to state support programmes)</li> </ul>
Local activists	Institutional and financial sustainability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of support cause short turnover, burnout and closure of initiatives</li> </ul>
(International) humanitarian organisations	Management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of transition period process from humanitarian aid to hromadas' and its residents' self-sufficiency before humanitarian aid closure or convolution</li> </ul>

# Annex

Table 1. Full sample of hromadas

oblast	hromada name	type	respondents
Vinnytska oblast	Vinnytska	urban	3
Volynska oblast	Boratynska	rural	3
Volynska oblast	Dubechenska	rural	3
Volynska oblast	Zymnivska	rural	3
Dnipropetrovska oblast	Dniprovka	urban	3
Dnipropetrovska oblast	Magdaliniivska	rural	3
Dnipropetrovska oblast	Novooleksandrivska	rural	3
Dnipropetrovska oblast	Petropavlivska	rural	3
Zakarpatska oblast	Dovzhanska	rural	3
Zaporizka oblast	Zaporizka	urban	3
Ivano-Frankivska oblast	Bohorodchanska	rural	3
Ivano-Frankivska oblast	Ivano-Frankivska	urban	3
Ivano-Frankivska oblast	Otinivska	rural	3
Ivano-Frankivska oblast	Solotvynska	rural	3
Kyivska oblast	Medvynska	rural	3
Kirovohradska oblast	Kropyvnytska	urban	3
Kirovohradska oblast	Subotzivska	rural	3
Mykolayivska oblast	Kostiantynivska	rural	2
Mykolayivska oblast	Mykolaivska	urban	3
Mykolayivska oblast	Oleksandrivska	rural	3
Odeska oblast	Odeska	urban	3
Poltavska oblast	Kremenchutska	urban	3
Poltavska oblast	Lubenska	urban	3
Poltavska oblast	Poltavska	urban	3
Rivnenska oblast	Polytska	rural	2
Sumska oblast	Dubovyazivska	rural	3
Sumska oblast	Sumska	urban	3
Sumska oblast	Shostkinska	urban	3
Ternopil'ska oblast	Kozivska	rural	3

oblast	hromada name	type	respondents
Ternopilska oblast	Ternopilska	urban	3
Kharkivska oblast	Vysotchanska	rural	3
Kharkivska oblast	Pisochynska	rural	3
Kharkivska oblast	Starovirivska	rural	3
Kharkivska oblast	Kharkivska	urban	3
Khersonska oblast	Khersonska	urban	3
Khmelnytska oblast	Novoushytska	rural	3
Cherkaska oblast	Umanska	urban	3
Cherkaska oblast	Cherkaska	urban	3
Chernihivska oblast	Ripkynska	rural	3
Chernihivska oblast	Chernihivska	urban	3

Table 2. Share of respondents in different groups

group	respondents	Share (% of sample)
Center	27	23%
East	27	23%
North	18	15%
South	14	12%
West	32	27%
Urban	54	46%
Rural	64	54%
Rear hromadas	82	69%
Hromadas close to frontline or border	36	31%
Deoccupied hromadas	9	8%

Table 3. Share of unoccupied and border hromadas in regions

Region	Hromadas close to frontline or border	Deoccupied hromadas
Center	0%	0%
East	44%	0%
North	83%	33%
South	40%	20%
West	9%	0%

## About PeaceRep

PeaceRep is a research consortium based at The University of Edinburgh. Our research is re-thinking peace and transition processes in the light of changing conflict dynamics, changing demands of inclusion, and changes in patterns of global intervention in conflict and peace/mediation/transition management processes.

PeaceRep: The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform

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Cover Image: Oleksandr Korniyakov, photo from exhibition "Unconquered Kherson"

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