FRONTLINE MOBILITY AND NEEDS MONITORING

MAY 2024

INTRODUCTION

Over two years since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the humanitarian situation, especially near the frontline, has grown increasingly complex. In response, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Data and Analytics unit has developed a frontline monitoring system to track mobility and critical needs of civilians in heavily conflict-affected areas. This system integrates three key components: the Mobility and Needs Assessments (MaNA), frontline settlement monitoring, and flow monitoring in areas undergoing evacuations. MaNA provides information about the estimated population disaggregated by sex and age at the hromada level and the estimated proportion of this population facing acute humanitarian needs. Frontline settlement monitoring provides granular baseline population estimates, as well as primary humanitarian needs in selected settlements within 25 km from the frontline to support scenario-planning and prepositioning of humanitarian assistance. In addition, IOM continuously monitors displacement movements to provide humanitarian partners with data on the direction and scale of movements from selected settlements undergoing evacuation. Each component aims to support the coordination of effective humanitarian response, ensuring the safety and well-being of affected frontline populations.

KEY FINDINGS

Nearly **one million individuals** were reported to reside in the 33 hromadas assessed in Sumska, Kharkivska, Donetska, Zaporizka, Dnipropetrovska, and Khersonska Oblasts along the frontlines, including **120,000 IDPs** and **149,000 returnees**. Importantly, **the ratio of IDPs to the host community in these frontline hromadas was 13 per cent, only slightly lower than the 14 per cent observed in the assessed non-frontline hromadas.** At the same time, the rate of return in the assessed frontline hromadas was 20 per cent, compared to 60 per cent in assessed non-frontline hromadas.

More than half of the assessed hromadas were reportedly being **targeted by shelling and long-range attacks on a daily basis**, and **all of them** were affected by **mines and/or UXOs** presence.

Humanitarian needs were more acute in hromadas closer to the frontline, particularly for livelihoods and shelter. The share of the **population in need within 25 km from the frontline across all sectors was at least twice as high as in areas further away from the frontline** and most severe in the most conflict-affected areas of Khersonska, Dnipropetrovska, Donetska and Kharkivska Oblasts.

Reportedly, the vast majority of the population in assessed hromadas within 25 km from the frontline had access to non-food items (NFIs) and food to meet their basic needs, but **in about half of these hromadas, at least part of the population was facing lack of availability of needed items and/or access to local markets** due to security reasons.
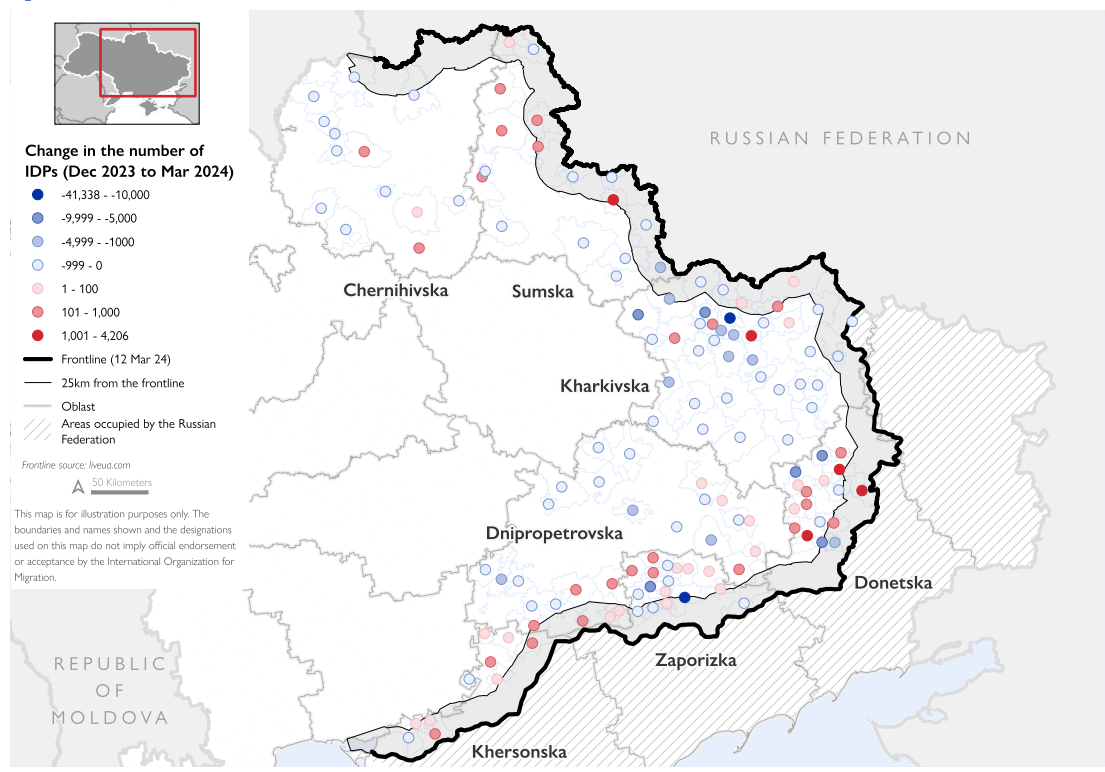
MOBILITY AND NEEDS IN FRONTLINE HROMADAS

POPULATION ESTIMATES

As of March 2024, according to the interviewed key informants, **a total of 946,000 individuals were present in the 33 assessed hromadas located within 25 kilometers from the frontline, including 120,000 IDPs**. From among the assessed hromadas, Sumska and Khersonska Hromada hosted the highest number of IDPs, 28,000 and 21,000, respectively. The highest ratios of IDPs in relation to population were found across the assessed hromadas in Khersonska (17%) and Dnipropetrovska (14%) Oblasts. **Overall, the IDP to population ratio in these frontline hromadas amounted to 13 per cent, only slightly lower than the 14 per cent reported in the assessed non-frontline hromadas**. At the same time, the estimated IDP population in frontline hromadas has decreased by 14 per cent since December 2023.

Map 1: Absolute change in the number of IDPs between December 2023 and March 2024

Map 1 illustrates the absolute change in the IDPs numbers across Chernihivska, Sumska, Kharkivska, Donetska, Dnipropetrovska, Zaporizka and Khersonska Oblasts between December 2023 and March 2024, further validating the key informant perception that displaced populations continue to reside in and near frontline areas.

Moreover, **approximately 149,000 returnees were estimated to be residing in the assessed frontline hromadas.** The highest number of

returnees were located in assessed frontline areas in Sumska (45,000) and Khersonska (37,000) Hromadas. The highest rates of return across the assessed frontline hromadas were observed in Sumska (38%) and Dnipropetrovska (19%) Oblasts, with higher rates reported on average in rural hromadas (24%). Overall, the rate of return in the assessed frontline hromadas amounted to 20 per cent, compared to 60 per cent in the non-frontline hromadas.

SECURITY SITUATION

The security situation in the assessed hromadas was severe, with **more than half of them reportedly targeted by daily shelling/long-range attacks. In all of the 33 assessed hromadas, the presence of mines and/or unexploded ordnance (UXOs) was reported** by key informants, and in 16 of these hromadas - mostly concentrated in Kharkivska, Khersonska and Sumska Oblasts - mines were noted to have a substantial impact on civilian activities. These 16 hromadas were estimated to host around 295,000 individuals, of whom 38,000 were IDPs and 52,000 were returnees.

Despite the significant risks posed by mines and UXOs, the presence of these hazards did not necessarily deter residents from returning to previously occupied areas. Specifically, Novovorontsovska Hromada in Khersonska Oblast was reported to have the return rate of 48 per cent; Tsyrkunivska Hromada in Kharkivska Oblast, a return rate of 41 per cent, and Starosaltivska Hromada in Kharkivska Oblast, a return rate of 42 per cent. Each of these hromadas had been substantially impacted by mines and/or UXOs.
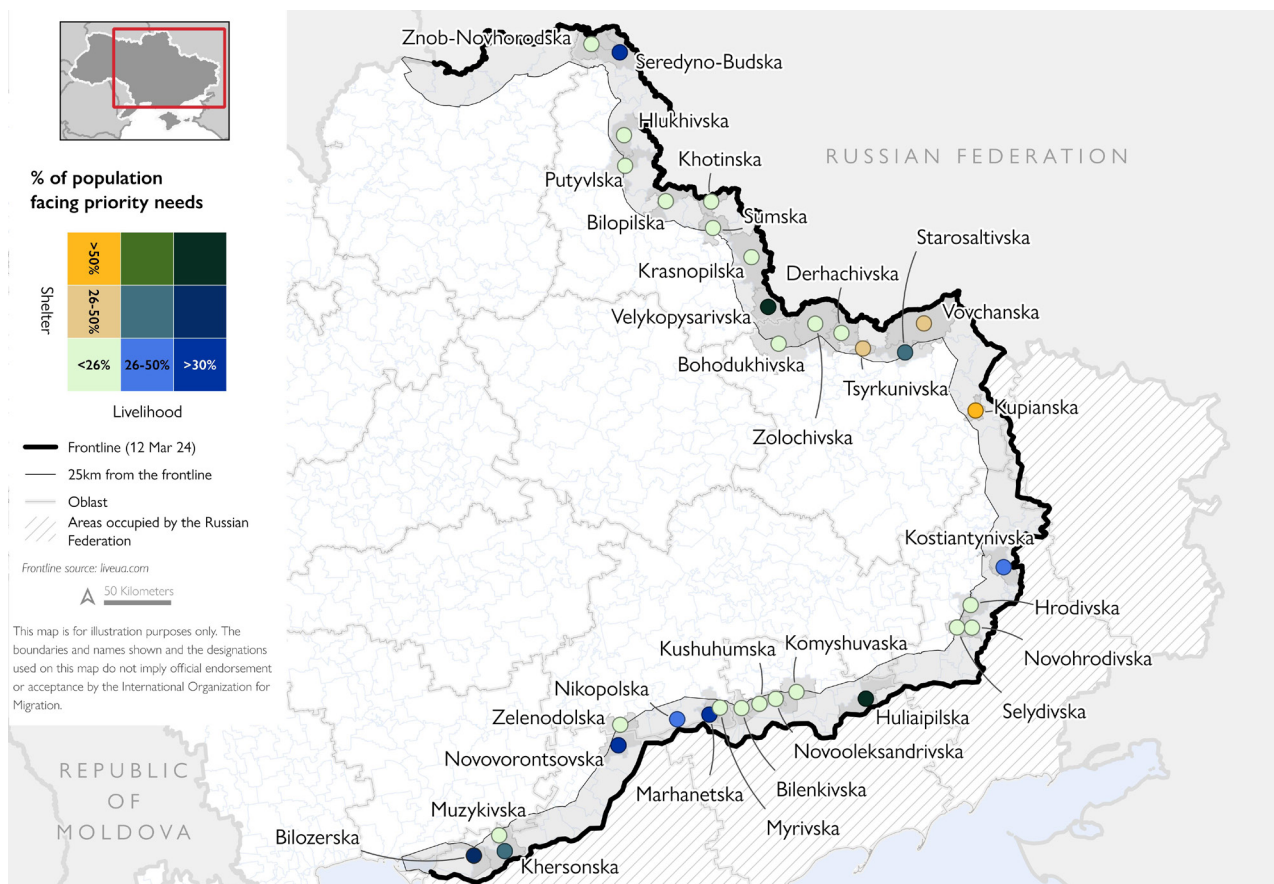
HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Humanitarian needs were more acute in areas closer to the frontline. According to interviewed KIs, **the share of the population in need across all sectors in the assessed hromadas within 25 km from the frontline was at least twice as high as in areas further away from the frontline.** Livelihoods[1] and shelter[2] needs were reported as the most severe in these hromadas, with the estimated population in need amounting to 23 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively. In contrast, in non-frontline hromadas, the estimated population with livelihood and shelter needs was lower, at 8 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively.

Across all the assessed frontline hromadas, the four hromadas located in Khersonska Oblast had the most severe needs reported across majority of humanitarian sectors, especially livelihoods (38% of the population),

shelter (40%) and access to basic services (11%). Similarly, across four hromadas assessed in Dnipropetrovska Oblast, KIs primarily reported livelihoods needs (43% of the population) and shelter needs (8%), while in seven hromadas assessed in Kharkivska Oblast, shelter needs were estimated for 21 per cent of the population, while livelihood needs for 16 per cent.

In Zaporizka Oblast, out of the five assessed hromadas, approximately 16 per cent of the population were reportedly facing livelihood needs, with 10 per cent experiencing basic services and health needs, and 9 per cent struggling with technical water access.[3] On the other hand, assessed hromadas in Sumska Oblast, had the least severe needs across most sectors.

Map 2: Proportion of the population in the MaNA assessed frontline hromadas with acute shelter and livelihoods needs

[1] To determine the livelihood needs, key informants were asked to estimate the share of individuals who are currently not in paid employment, although able and seeking to work.
[2] To determine shelter needs, key informants were asked to estimate the share of individuals who do not have access to safe and adequate housing, i.e. that is not currently damaged because of the war, is of sufficient size to accommodate its occupants and is equipped with heating and sanitary facilities.
[3] To determine needs for basic services, key informants were asked to estimate the share of individuals who do not have regular access to one or more of the following basic services (excepted heating), for reasons related to the ongoing war: wastewater management, garbage collection, road and public infrastructure repair, cash withdrawal services, banking services, mobile network coverage, internet connectivity.

Reportedly, the vast majority of the assessed population within 25 km from the frontline had access to NFIs & food to meet their basic needs, but **in about half of these hromadas, at least part of the population was facing a lack of availability of needed items and/or lack of access to local markets** due to security reasons. The populations of hromadas in Donetska, Kharkivska, Sumska and Zaporizka Oblasts reportedly faced the greatest challenges. Huliaipilska Hromada in Zaporizka Oblast, Vovchanska Hromada in Kharkivska Oblast, Selydivska Hromada in Donetska Oblast and Velykopysarivska Hromada in Sumska Oblast were the most affected, with severe limitations on access to necessary supplies and local markets.

MONITORING OF FRONTLINE SETTLEMENTS

ESTIMATES OF POPULATION REMAINING IN FRONTLINE SETTLEMENTS

As of 31 March 2024 an estimated 122,800 individuals were present in the 243 assessed settlements, with the vast majority (70,900) residing in Kherson city. Nine per cent of the assessed settlements were reported to host no population at all during the period of data collection, while a further 44 per cent was reported to host up to 50 individuals.

More than half of the assessed settlements (55%) reportedly still hosted minors. Specifically, 7,800 children under 18 years old were estimated to be in the assessed area, most of whom (4,800) in Kherson. Additionally, the predominant age groups in these settlements were working-age individuals (52%) and the elderly over 60 years old (40%). An estimated 6,000 individuals with disabilities also remained in these areas (5%).

NEEDS OF THE POPULATION REMAINING IN THE ASSESSED SETTLEMENTS

The most commonly reported needs among the population remaining in the assessed settlements included cash, hygiene products, NFIs, construction materials, generators, and food. These findings highlight the dire situation of frontline settlements, where active hostilities continue to cause substantial material damage to buildings and infrastructure while simultaneously impeding the regular functioning of local markets and obstructing the supply of basic goods. Even when supplies are available, the security situation often poses critical barriers to accessing markets in many areas.
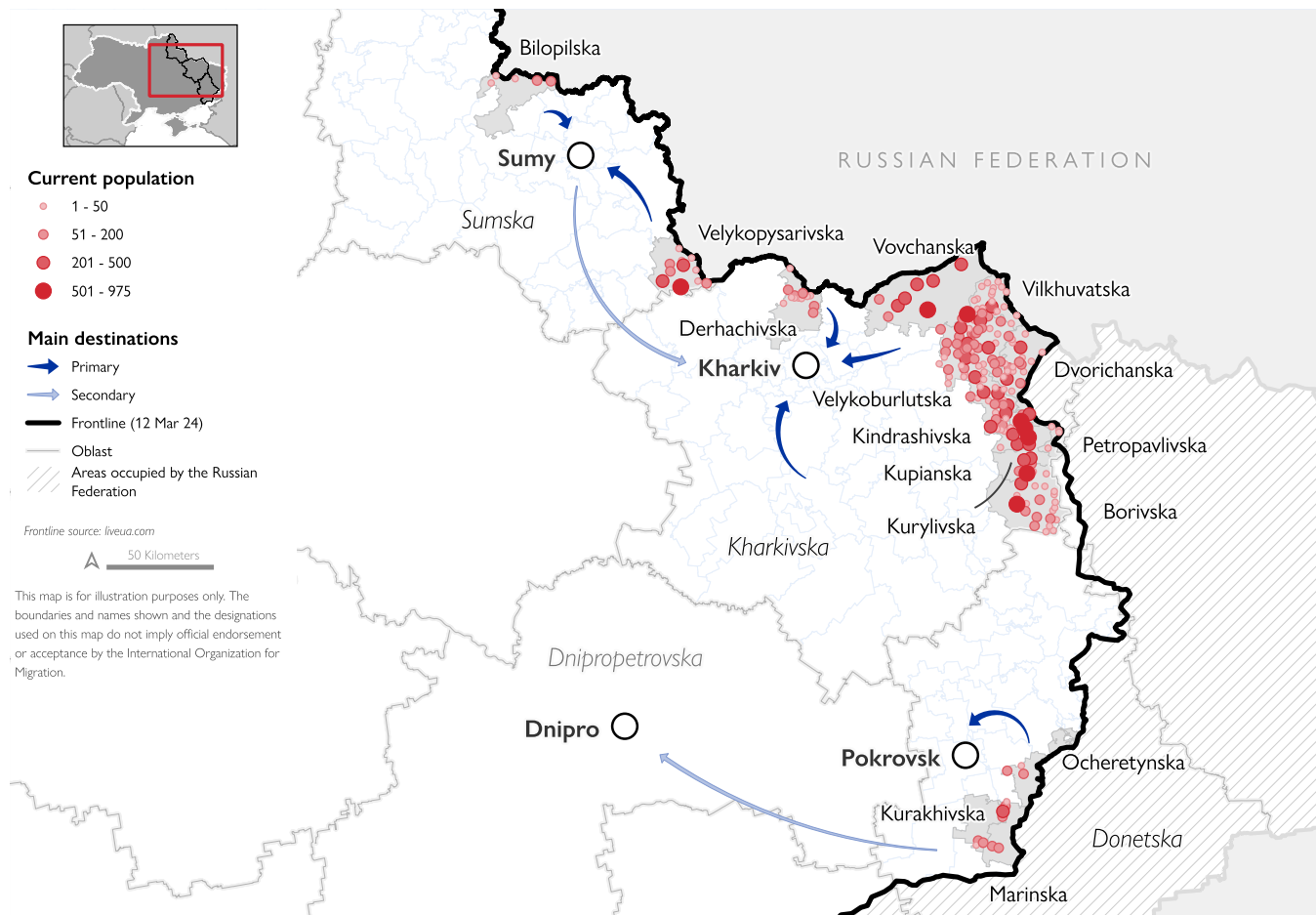
FLOW MONITORING

In 67 of the settlements assessed as part of the frontline monitoring, additional information was collected regarding displacement from areas undergoing evacuations. The target settlements were selected based on the presence of official evacuation orders, population size and previous reports of recent displacement outflows.

In 29 of the assessed settlements, official orders for the evacuation of children and an accompanying adult were in place (14 settlements in Donetska and 15 in Kharkivska Oblasts). Evacuation services and support are generally provided by local authorities in collaboration with volunteer organizations.

The remaining assessed settlements (38) were under mandatory evacuation orders. In these cases, while the local administration generally provides support and facilitates the evacuation of the population, any adult can actively opt-out of the evacuation and stay - along with minors under their responsibility - in their settlement of current residence.

Map 3: Main destinations of the evacuations from the assessed frontline settlements (March 16 to 31, 2024)

ESTIMATES OF THE EVACUEE POPULATION

Reportedly, between 16 and 31 March, an estimated 2,800 individuals evacuated from their settlements, including at least 700 children. The vast majority of evacuees remained within the boundaries of their own oblast, with some moving to neighbouring areas in Dnipropetrovska and Kharkivska Oblasts. Most evacuees, totaling 2,100 individuals, came from Velykopysarivska Hromada in Sumska Oblast. The majority relocated to other settlements within Sumska Oblast, including Sumy, Okhtyrka, Trostianets, and Bilopillya. Only a minor fraction (around 6%) of all those who evacuated between 16 and 31 March have reportedly returned to the assessed settlements by 3 April.

Despite the recent scale-up of evacuation orders and intensification of military operations in some areas, relatively limited displacement flows were observed in many settlements, especially in Kharkivska

and Donetska Oblasts. Moreover, most evacuees reportedly remained either within the same oblast or moved to urban areas where security risks remain substantial, like Kharkiv, Okhtyrka and Pokrovsk. KIs highlighted that despite the ongoing evacuations, displaced individuals were eager to remain as close as possible to their residence, awaiting the possibility to return as soon as the security situation allows for it. While a large share of the pre-war population has already left frontline areas, the remaining population often appears hesitant to evacuate due to a range of reasons, from fear of loss or damage to their property their property to concerns about means of subsistence outside of their residence, and, in some cases - physical impediments to moving due to old age and disability. Among evacuees in the 67 assessed settlements, the most commonly reported needs were cash, accommodation support, food, and hygiene items.

ACCESS TO DATA FROM FRONTLINE MONITORING

The Data & Analytics Unit of IOM Ukraine supports the humanitarian and recovery response in Ukraine with data on population presence, mobility dynamics and intentions, and humanitarian needs. To achieve this, we use a range of complementary approaches at the national, regional, and local levels, relying on a well-established network of data collection experts in the field, a dense network of key informants (KIs) located across all regions (oblasts), as well as on randomized sampling through nation-wide phone surveys. The assessments prioritize gathering data on the flow and size of population affected by displacement, but also cover various thematic issues related to monitoring and forecasting humanitarian and recovery needs as well as durable solutions in locations where IDPs, returnees, and vulnerable conflict-affected populations reside.

Flagship assessments include the General Population Survey (quarterly) at the national and oblast level, the Area Baseline Assessment on Registered IDP presence (monthly) at the hromada level, the Mobility and Needs Assessment (monthly) at the hromada level, and the Conditions of Return

Assessment (quarterly) at the settlement level. To request data extracts for particular themes or geographies of relevance or bespoke analyses from any of these assessments, please write to DTMUkraine@iom.int.

In addition to these assessments, the IOM D&A Unit conducts comprehensive frontline monitoring, providing crucial insights into key movements, evacuation tracking, and baseline estimates of the population and needs in settlements close to the frontline. This initiative serves as a vital evidence base for decision-making at the operational level, enabling effective scenario-planning, resource prepositioning, and readiness. Moreover, it facilitates estimations of affected populations in the event of trigger events. The key findings and datasets from these assessments are routinely shared with OCHA, contributing to a collaborative response effort. Relevant partners involved in emergency response can access this information by reaching out to OCHA representatives at ocha-ukr-im@un.org. They can also contact DTMUkraine@iom.int for further information.

METHODOLOGY

The Mobility and Needs Assessment (MaNA) is a data collection exercise conducted on a regular basis which aims to provide humanitarian and development actors with frequently updated baseline hromada-level estimates on key population and displacement figures, as well as information on the prevalence of priority humanitarian, transition and recovery needs among the population. All the hromadas selected for the assessment are assessed on a monthly basis. They are revisited in every subsequent round to track changes in populations, displacements, and priority needs over time. The findings are based on data collected through interviews with key informants (KIs).

In March 2024, the Mobility and Needs Assessment Round 7 was conducted in 255 hromadas across Ukraine, including 33 out of 83 hromadas located within a 25-kilometer radius[1] from the frontline in Sumska, Kharkivska, Donetska, Zaporizka, Dnipropetrovska, and Khersonska Oblast. These hromadas represent around one-third of all hromadas located within a 25 km range from the frontline and account for around 64 per cent of the pre-war population in the area up to 25 km from the frontline.[2]

To identify populations facing acute sectoral needs, key informants were asked to estimate the proportion of individuals in their hromada facing specific priority needs in given humanitarian sectors - with the exception of security, for which no estimate of the share of population facing security needs is collected. To evaluate security needs in assessed hromadas, key informants are asked to estimate the impact of mine presence on civilian activities and the frequency of shelling and long-range attacks in the month preceding the interview.

Additionally, between February and March 2024, IOM conducted frontline settlement monitoring and interviewed KIs across 243 settlements (Admin level 4) within 25 km from the frontline in Sumska, Kharkivska, Donetska and Khersonska Oblasts.[3] The assessed settlements were selected based on their proximity to the frontline, the presence of forced or mandatory evacuation orders as well as their population size. The settlement monitoring tool collects information on the current population figures, as well as sex, age and disability status shares among the current population, in addition to priority needs. Moreover, IOM's evacuation tracking is used to monitor the direction and magnitude of flows within 67 of the 243 settlements, including those under mandatory evacuation orders for children and accompanying adults.

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[1] Only hromadas under full or partial control of Government of Ukraine at the time of data collection were assessed.
[2] Estimated by IOM based on liveuamap.com
[3] Implemented through IOM own staff and local Ukrainian NGOs. For this particular assessment, data collection carried out by the Relief Coordination Center, often in difficult circumstances, is deeply appreciated.

Limitations: Geographic coverage is limited, meaning that population figures and statistics on needs are not comprehensively representative. Moreover, areas currently under the control of the armed forces of the Russian Federation, as well as areas where security conditions precluded assessments, were not covered. The results obtained through KI responses inherently lack statistical representativeness and should be regarded as informed estimates.
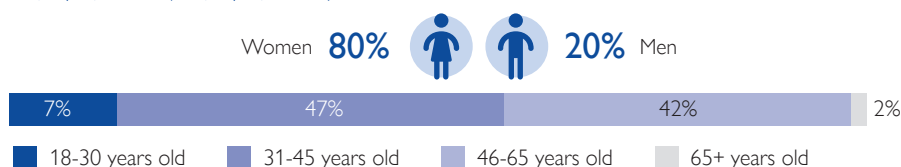
Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The information contained in this report is for general information purposes only. The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the report do not imply expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries. All numbers are rounded for ease of use. Data collection was facilitated by Multicultural Insights.

MANA KEY INFORMANT PROFILES

Table 1: Number of key informants by key informant type, nationwide (# of key informants)

TYPE OF KIS	NUMBER OF KIS	% OF KIS
Employees of administrations/heads of departments/councils	209	24%
Educational staff (e.g. teacher, headmaster)	142	16%
NGO/CSO worker or volunteer (excluding collective center Kis)	132	15%
Employee/ representative of state or communal enterprise, institution (culture, sports, etc.)	114	13%
Health staff (e.g. doctor, nurse)	106	12%
Employee/representative of small business, self-employed individual, etc.	57	6%
Infrastructure employee (Water/gas/electricity/garbade/roads/communication)	35	4%
Local citizen	22	3%
International NGO worker or volunteer	19	2%
Community representative (council deputies, starostas, etc.)	12	1%
Collective center staff	11	1%
Employee/representative of large business	10	1%
Law enforcement	3	0%
Other	7	1%
Total	879	100%

Figure 1: Sex and age breakdown of key informants (% of key informants)

Women **80%** **20%** Men

7%	47%	42%	2%

■ 18-30 years old   ■ 31-45 years old   ■ 46-65 years old   ■ 65+ years old

DEFINITIONS

- For the purpose of this assessment, IOM defines Internally Displaced People (IDPs) as persons or groups of persons who have been forced to flee or to leave their homes or who are staying outside their habitual residence due to the full-scale invasion in February 2022, but have not crossed an international boundary, irrespective of whether they possess an officially registered IDP status (de-facto IDPs).
- The terms "return" and "returnee" are used without prejudice to status and refer to all people who have returned to their place of habitual residence after a significant period of displacement (minimum of two weeks since February 2022), whether from abroad or from internal displacement within Ukraine.
- The definition used in this report of total current population includes IDPs, returnees as well as non-displaced residents (people in assessed hromadas who have not experienced displacement).
- For the purpose of this assessment, IOM defines a frontline hromada as a hromada located within 25 kilometres of the frontline or border with the Russian Federation. Frontline and near-frontline hromadas encompass areas previously occupied or currently experiencing regular direct attacks due to their geographic proximity to the frontline.
- Urban and rural areas are distinguished based on the official administrative definitions used to identify urban and rural hromadas, in alignment with the most recent decentralization law. Hromadas whose largest settlement had a pre-war population of more than, or equal to, 10,000 people are considered 'urban', those less than are considered 'rural'.
- In this report, the displacement rate is defined as the share of the population who lived in a given hromada before the full-scale invasion of February 2022 and has experienced displacement, regardless of whether they were still displaced at the time of the assessment or had returned to their place of habitual residence.
- In this report, the IDP ratio is defined as the proportion of IDPs residing in a given hromada amongst the total current population (see definition above).
- In this report, the return rate is defined as the share of the population who lived in a given hromada before the full-scale invasion of February 2022, was displaced from their place of habitual residence, and had returned at the time of the assessment.

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