



# CHALLENGES OF EMPOWERING WOMEN

IN THE LABOUR MARKET AND  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE CONTEXT  
OF FULL-SCALE WAR AND GENDER -  
RESPONSIBLE RECOVERY OF UKRAINE





REPORT ON THE RESEARCH RESULTS

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## DISCLAIMER

**UN Women** is a United Nations agency that focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering women.

UN Women's activities in Ukraine are focused on three main thematic areas: women, peace, security and gender-based violence; gender-responsive governance, including gender-sensitive recovery and European integration; and humanitarian assistance.

UN Women in Ukraine provides technical support for the development and implementation of sectoral policies, advocacy, social mobilization and capacity-building activities to government authorities at all levels, human rights institutions, women's initiative groups, civil society organizations and the private sector.

Each year, the organization joins various global and national initiatives aimed at overcoming social stereotypes, discrimination and violence against women and girls, and empowering them in professional and public life.

The views expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of UN Women, the United Nations and any of its associated organizations or the official position of the Government of Sweden.

The study was conducted by UN Women within the framework of the project, Transformative Approaches to Achieving Gender Equality in Ukraine, funded by Sweden, in partnership with the Office of the Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy. The study was implemented by the non-governmental organization, the Ukrainian Center for Social Reforms.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CF** - Charitable foundation
- CMU** - Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
- CRSV** - Conflict-related sexual violence
- CSO** - Civil society organisation
- DAC** - Development Assistance Committee
- EPIC** - The Equal Pay International Coalition
- HEI** - Higher education institution
- HIES** - Household socio-economic survey
- IASC** - Inter-Agency Standing Committee
- IDP** - Internally displaced person
- PISA** - Program for International Student Assessment
- SES** - State Employment Service
- SMEs** - Small and medium-sized enterprises
- SSC** - Single social contribution
- STEM** - Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
- UNSC** - United Nations Security Council
- VRU** - Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine
- WEPs** - Women's Empowerment Principles



# 1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The two main aims of the study are:

1. To identify challenges, barriers and opportunities for women's participation in the economy during the full-scale war and in the context of inclusive post-war reconstruction of Ukraine by gathering data on sociodemographic characteristics and existing gender, social, economic and security problems of women through personal interviews and moderated group discussions.
2. To develop proposals for the government, civil society and international partners on ways and tools to expand women's economic and social opportunities and shape Ukraine's recovery in a gender-responsive way.

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To assess national legislation on women's economic empowerment and the extent to which a gender-sensitive approach is taken into account in the national programmes of the Recovery Plan of Ukraine.
2. To study the situation of women in employment and their representation in certain sectors of the economy, with a special emphasis on informal and undeclared labour.
3. To determine the levels of female unemployment and economic inactivity and the possibility of reducing them.
4. To assess the current state and prospects for the development and growth of women's entrepreneurship.
5. To assess the possibilities of developing women's educational and professional potential.
6. To investigate the main stereotypes and specific barriers that women face in realizing economic opportunities.
7. To assess the situation of Ukrainian women who are abroad as a result of the full-scale war and their existing potential, key problems, possible changes in their economic role in the family and prospects for returning to Ukraine.
8. Develop recommendations addressed to the government, civil society and international partners for the gender-sensitive recovery of Ukraine.

## Information base

In accordance with the approved methodology, the information base of the study conducted in from January to July 2024 includes desk work, 9 focus group discussions, 11 in-depth interviews and 2 targeted questionnaires.

The desk study conducted was an in-depth analysis of available gender-sensitive statistical and sociological information including data and information from official statistics, international organizations and partners, state registers, development partners, business associations, and business and sociological surveys conducted in Ukraine and abroad. The objectives of the desk research were to understand:

- Women's economic opportunities in the face of the war
- Changes in economic activity, unemployment and the nature of employment
- Transformation of women's participation in entrepreneurship and corporate business management

The impact of the full-scale war on vulnerable and specific categories of women and the conditions for realizing their economic opportunities.

The study included *9 focus group discussions with 56 female participants*, including women entrepreneurs, women managers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), unemployed women, economically inactive women, women working in specific sectors of the economy, women whose partners<sup>1</sup> are mobilized, women who are abroad as a result of the full-scale invasion, as well *as 7 male participants who are managers*. The purpose of the focus group interviews was to identify the main barriers and stereotypes women face in their lives, including in the realization of their economic opportunities.

*A total of 11 in-depth interviews* were conducted with representatives of state and local governments, the State Employment Service of Ukraine, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that deal with women's issues and implement projects to support women's economic activity. This made it possible to identify the main gender-specific problems faced by women, existing

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<sup>1</sup> This report uses the generic term 'partner' to refer a husband or a partner, as the legal status of the relationship is irrelevant to the findings.

and potential gender-responsive programmes to support them in realizing opportunities for labour market and entrepreneurship, and the risks and barriers that may arise in the implementation of new activities and projects.

*A targeted questionnaire survey of 76 women entrepreneurs was conducted*, which allowed for a more detailed examination of the conditions, losses and challenges of doing business during the full-scale invasion, and clarification of the key barriers and stereotypes faced by women in their business activities. *A targeted questionnaire survey of women whose partners returned from captivity* provided information to identify the main barriers faced by women in this group at different stages of their lives (in particular, during the stay of their partner in captivity and after his return).

**The methodology divides the study into eight interrelated themes:**

- Socioeconomic opportunities for women in the field of employment
- Employment potential
- The position of women in entrepreneurship and in leadership positions in corporate business
- The existing potential of migrant women abroad
- Vulnerable categories of women
- Women's educational and professional potential
- Barriers to women's economic empowerment relating to stereotypes and culture
- Directions and proposals for empowering women in the labour market.

**Restrictions on the information base of the study due to martial law**

There were restrictions to the study in terms of gathering information. Due to martial law, the State Statistics Service of Ukraine suspended the collection of official statistical information and the conduct of national sample statistical surveys.

There was a resulting lack of most gender-sensitive statistics. There was an absence or insufficient details in gender-sensitive data in sociological studies and surveys conducted during the full-scale invasion due to their limited scope. There was a lack of consistency of data registers at the national level, which would allow for more gender-sensitive information and testing of certain hypotheses. Finally, information resources from certain authorities (ministries, departments and regional administrations) were not available, regarding data that, for example, outlines critical aspects of the situation of women in the labour market, in entrepreneurship and in relation to vulnerable categories.

#### **Timeline**

The research methodology was discussed on 8 February 2024 at a validation meeting with representatives of government authorities, international development partners and civil society organizations implementing women's economic empowerment programmes in Ukraine. The results and recommendations of the study were discussed at a validation meeting on 16 August 2024, which was attended by representatives of government partners, international development partners and NGOs.

#### **UN Women Brief and editing**

The report was edited for clarity and concision in October 2024, though there may still be language that is unclear or not understandable to a non-Ukrainian audience. There are errors in the language in the figures. It has also not been fact-checked. From this report, UN Women produced a brief that appears in this report as the Executive Summary, which is available on the UN Women Ukraine website. UCSR is producing a separate summary for the report, which will be available on their website.



## 2. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Ensuring gender equality through the empowerment of women in all spheres of society is an important aim that must be sustained during the war and in Ukraine's recovery. The ability of a society to achieve gender equality goals is a prerequisite for building a rule of law and a democratic state in which human rights and freedoms are guaranteed and ensured. The war has significantly complicated Ukraine's progress towards achieving gender equality, but the challenges it has created could become a catalyst for new processes for women's economic empowerment that will lay the foundation for the country's gender-sensitive recovery.

The full-scale invasion destroyed the familiar world of all Ukrainian women. For the first time in Europe since the Second World War, millions of women were exposed to mortal danger and mass violence, forced to leave their homes and communities, lost loved ones or were sent to war, took on the additional burden of caring alone for children, infirm and elderly family members, and lost their jobs and most of their salaries. However, these challenges did not stop the progress of Ukrainian society in ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in the economy. This study reveals the problems and barriers to increasing women's economic empowerment, but also that there is more understanding of the need to break traditional gender stereotypes in Ukraine and new forces that are ready to do so.

Ukraine has managed to continue to expand women's economic opportunities, and civil society groups continue to advocate for general equality, despite the war, losses and lack of resources. During the war, the country has continued to work on improving national legislation and governmental documents that ensure greater security for women and their increased inclusion in all spheres of life, including through the expansion of women's economic opportunities.

*Despite the challenges of the full-scale war, Ukraine has not abandoned the main norms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>2</sup> and the provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine<sup>3</sup> on the undisputed*

equality of all rights and freedoms regardless of gender. Without exception, the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>4</sup> and its Optional Protocol<sup>5</sup> on the inadmissibility of discrimination against women in any sphere of public or private life without exception remain in force and the obligation of the state to take all necessary measures to ensure the full development and progress of women in order to guarantee their exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Ukraine remains committed to all the provisions of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.<sup>6</sup> Even in times of war, it tries to ensure women's opportunities and access to resources, equal distribution of family responsibilities between men and women and harmonious partnership between them to involve women in economic and social development. It creates conditions for promoting women's economic independence, including employment, providing all women with equal access to productive resources, opportunities and public services, ensuring equal access for women and men to education, land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets.

In December 2022, *significant amendments were made to the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for the period up to 2025* in terms of amending local action plans for the implementation of the resolution by all governmental entities. The content of such local plans should include decisions and actions at the local and regional levels that direct policy towards finding an effective response to new challenges and solving the problems actualized by the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the introduction of martial law and the temporary occupation of new territories of Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

*The Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" continues to be*

<sup>2</sup> [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_015#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_015#Text).

<sup>3</sup> Constitution of Ukraine: Law of Ukraine of 28.06.1996 No. 254к/96-BP. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text>

<sup>4</sup> [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_207#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_207#Text).

<sup>5</sup> [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_794#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_794#Text).

<sup>6</sup> [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995\\_507#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_507#Text).

*implemented and improved in Ukraine.* In 2023, the Law expanded and clarified the list of entities that carry out activities in the field of preventing and combating gender-based violence. An article was introduced that establishes the powers of centres for the provision of free legal aid in the field of preventing and combating gender-based violence.

In view of the growing stress in the lives of families and partnerships during the war, *the Law of Ukraine “On Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence”* detailed the content and list of components of the Unified State Register of Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence, and established rules that expand access to the Register to a wider range of authorized persons. Of particular relevance in the context of limited resources during war are the provisions of the law guaranteeing free legal aid to victims, most of whom are women; facilitating access to social services, medical and psychological assistance; and providing temporary shelters for women and their children. The decline in women's security has called on lawmakers and the government to specify guarantees for women victims, taking into account the practice of the European Court of Human Rights. The powers of centres for free legal aid in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence were expanded.

Despite the challenging conditions of the war, key national stakeholders and decision makers continued to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) in Ukraine. *With the long-term support of UN Women,<sup>7</sup> the government developed and ratified important guiding documents* that will assign actions and responsibilities for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment results to a wide range of stakeholders:

- The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)
- The State Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men until 2030
- The updated National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (NAP 1325) “Women. Peace. Security”
- National Strategy for Reducing the Gender Pay Gap Framework for Cooperation between the

Government of Ukraine and the United Nations on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

- The Framework Law on Regional Policy and Policy of Restoration of Regions and Communities of Ukraine.

An important step in the institutional strengthening of public efforts to expand women's economic empowerment *was the integration of gender-sensitive recovery actions into the National Recovery Plan of Ukraine and the inclusion of a gendered perspective in its various sections.* The plan serves as a key road map for the Government and partners in furthering recovery efforts based on addressing gender inequalities.

Of particular importance for Ukraine's further progress towards gender equality in all spheres of life was the recognition of the country's achievements at the highest international level. In October 2022, the government delegation of Ukraine, headed by the Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine, consisting of the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy, the Deputy Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine and other government officials, defended the ninth periodic report of Ukraine on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified by Ukraine in 1981, at the 83rd session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The UN Committee recognized the legislative, judicial and other measures taken by Ukraine to implement the provisions of the Convention and the progress made in the implementation of its provisions. The Program of Cooperation between the Government of Ukraine and the UN on Combating Sexual Violence and the development of the relevant Implementation Plan were highly appreciated. Also, the Government's position on the need to strengthen the capacity of representatives of various government agencies, international and non-governmental organizations to combat gender-based violence was supported. The official formulation of the UN Committee's concluding observations and recommendations, the mandatory implementation of which will contribute to the accelerated recovery of Ukraine based on gender equality and inclusive development, is important for improving and expanding the efforts

<sup>7</sup> Ensuring Gender Equality in Ukraine in the Context of War: An Update on UN Women's Work in 2022.

[https://ukraine.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Securing%20GE%20in%20Ukraine%20Amidst%20the%20War\\_UA\\_14.03.2023.pdf](https://ukraine.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Securing%20GE%20in%20Ukraine%20Amidst%20the%20War_UA_14.03.2023.pdf)

of all stakeholders in combating gender discrimination and violence.

*The State Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men until 2030*, adopted in 2022, is of key importance for consolidating the efforts and policies of government and international stakeholders to deepen work on gender equality including in the economy. The Strategy clearly states that ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men cannot be achieved only by public authorities and exclusively through legislative and regulatory measures. The Strategy has become a platform for collaboration between government, civil society, international organizations, the private sector and national institutions, agencies and organizations.

International and civil society organizations make a significant contribution. Businesses are reviewing their general and HR strategies, officially recognizing *the principles and values of the Beijing Protocol*, and actively participating in the implementation of training programs on gender empowerment and gender equality.

*Businesses are reviewing their general and human resources strategies, officially recognizing the principles and values of the Beijing Protocol*, and actively participating in the implementation of training programmes on gender empowerment and gender equality. They are also supporting the expansion of the principles of gender equality in Ukraine in the area of women's economic empowerment. They successfully implement practices and case programmes aimed at developing women's entrepreneurship and leadership. They provide grants for development and assistance in business relocation. Two key programmes are the USAID Competitive Economy of Ukraine programme, which resulted in the provision of 50 grants in 2022–2023 for Ukrainian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) managed by women to improve business processes and models, build organizational capacity and develop production; and the UNDP Resilience and Recovery Programme which supports the West Business Hub relocation programme<sup>8</sup> implemented by the Ukrainian Investment and Trade Promotion Centre,

which expands women's economic opportunities by providing assistance to women.

A significant contribution to the economic empowerment of women in Ukraine has been made by the expansion of employment counselling services and the expansion of their professional competence, as well as the organization of job search and interviewing, including the projects the Women For The Future project,<sup>9</sup> implemented by the Happy Monday platform with the support of the UN Women project, “Transformative Approaches to Achieving Gender Equality in Ukraine”, the main goal of which is to develop the technical and communication competencies of women.

*Projects aimed at bridging the gaps in women's professional representation in certain sectors of the economy and areas of work*, as well as grant programmes for women's education, play an important role in gender equality in Ukraine. In particular, ACTED Ukraine and the Embassy of Canada to Ukraine are implementing grant projects to train women in Information Technology (IT) professions, with the main goal of strengthening women's economic empowerment and expanding their opportunities for employment in innovative and better-paid sectors of the economy. Another positive case study is the Reskilling Ukraine project, implemented by Beredskapslyftet with the financial support of the Swedish Government.<sup>10</sup> This project has involved the business and international communities with the aim to increase the level of women's participation in the labour market through retraining.

Projects implemented to support and empower vulnerable women, including IDP women, women with disabilities, and women who have suffered from gender-based violence, are widespread in Ukraine. *Projects include:*

- The She Career and Business Hub, implemented as part of the multi-year project “Break the Cycle” supported by UNFPA with the support of the UK government and other partners, whose key goal is to provide women victims of domestic and gender-based violence with services to improve their professional skills and successful employment.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> West Business Hub project - <http://tradecenter.org.ua/ukr/news/471>

<sup>9</sup> Women For The Future project - <https://women.happymonday.ua/>

<sup>10</sup> Reskilling Ukraine project - <https://reskillingukraine.professionalcenter.se/about>

<sup>11</sup> She Career and Business Hub - <https://vonahub.org.ua/opys-proiektu/><sup>11</sup> West Business Hub project - <http://tradecenter.org.ua/ukr/news/471>

<sup>11</sup> Women For The Future project - <https://women.happymonday.ua/>

<sup>11</sup> Reskilling Ukraine project - <https://reskillingukraine.professionalcenter.se/about>

- The project “Your Opportunities” for women with IDP status, implemented by the Innovation and Development Foundation-Ukraine IDF Reforms Lab with the financial support of the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation and the European Union in Ukraine and aimed at expanding the economic opportunities of women in this group through training and employment assistance, as well as creating a productive community for communication and mutual assistance.<sup>12</sup>
- The project “Z.N.A.M.I.”, implemented by the League of the Strong NGO with the support of UN Women and the UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, aimed at strengthening the voice of women with experience of internal displacement and disability in decision-making<sup>13</sup>.

International organizations promote gender equality in society and support local communities and NGOs to implement relevant projects and activities in this area. *Projects include:*

- A project to create a network of gender think tanks, supported by the European Union in Ukraine, the Fidelity Promotion Centre (Lithuania) and the Partnership Development Centre (Moldova), which aims to strengthen Ukraine's capacity to develop advanced policies, impact assessment and strategic advocacy with a gender-sensitive approach.<sup>14</sup>
- The project “Building a Peaceful, Democratic and Gender Equal Society in Ukraine”, implemented in partnership with UN Women with the financial support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.
- The project “Women, Peace, Security: Local Needs - Local Solutions”, which is implemented with the support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Dutch Gender Platform and the Women's Information and Consultation Centre in Ukraine, to support the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda at the regional and local level in Ukraine.<sup>15</sup>

An important step taken by civil society, business and government with the support of UN Women in

Ukraine is to promote, disseminate and support the implementation of the *Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) in Ukrainian companies*. The WEPs are based on international labour and human rights standards and recognize that business has an interest in and responsibility for gender equality and women's empowerment. Currently, 34 companies are signatories to the WEPs in Ukraine, and their number is constantly growing even during the full-scale invasion. More than half of the WEPs signatories in Ukraine are representative offices of international companies that implement global policies for women's economic empowerment.<sup>16</sup> To increase the number of signatories in Ukraine, the NGO the Ukrainian Investment and Trade Promotion Centre, within the framework of the UN Women project “Transformative Approaches to Achieving Gender Equality in Ukraine” in cooperation with the Office of the Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, provides mentoring support, promotional and training activities to expand understanding of the prospects for implementing WEPs principles in Ukrainian businesses.<sup>17</sup>

*Ukrainian businesses are active in implementing measures related to the establishment and promotion of gender equality*, both within the framework of internal corporate policies and in their external work, mostly implemented by large companies that often work in international partnerships or those that are directly international representatives. The activity of Ukrainian small and medium-sized businesses has also increased in implementing gender equality policies in their operations. The most common practices offered by businesses relating to gender equality are training programmes on gender equality aimed at increasing the representation of women in leadership positions (Coca-Cola Beverages Ukraine Limited, NPC Ukrenergo, DTEK and others), women's leadership programmes (StarLight Media, UKRSIBBANK BNP Paribas Group and others); corporate programmes to support parenthood and caregiving, create a network of children's rooms at enterprises, and provide babysitting services (OKKO

<sup>11</sup> She Career and Business Hub - <https://vonahub.org.ua/opys-proiektu/>

<sup>12</sup> “Your opportunities” project for women with IDP status - <https://idf.solutions.ua/>

<sup>13</sup> Z.N.A.M.I. Project - <https://ls.org.ua/nashi-dosyagnennya-ta-proyekty/znamy/>

<sup>14</sup> The project of creating a network of gender think tanks - <https://uwf.org.ua/konkurs-analitychnyh-tsentriv-eu/>

<sup>15</sup> The project “Women, Peace, Security: Local Needs, Local Solutions”. <https://uwf.org.ua/zhinky-myr-bezpeka-misczevi-potreby-misczevi-rishennya/>

<sup>16</sup> Report on the analysis of best business practices for women's economic empowerment during the full-scale Russian war against Ukraine. [https://ukraine.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/best\\_practice\\_analysis\\_private\\_sector.pdf](https://ukraine.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/best_practice_analysis_private_sector.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> WEPs Women's Empowerment Principles. [https://www.weps.org/about?fbclid=IwAR3ZcuEh0chzW\\_Qq3k-wlDBU6IrLWKhdxglAkKDcoiN4-MIFUtpf5PvWsY](https://www.weps.org/about?fbclid=IwAR3ZcuEh0chzW_Qq3k-wlDBU6IrLWKhdxglAkKDcoiN4-MIFUtpf5PvWsY)

filling stations, StarLight Media, Kyivstar, and others); programmes for training and retraining women, including for traditionally “male” jobs (DTEK, Lika-Comfort, Beetroot, Astarta, etc.); health insurance programmes for employees and family members (Samsung, Shell Retail Ukraine, 1+1, etc.); and employment programmes for vulnerable women (Eldorado, EY, Astarta).<sup>18</sup>

These achievements demonstrate the progress of Ukrainian society, even in times of war, towards ensuring better economic opportunities for women based on gender equality and preventing discrimination and violence against women. However, the current relations and interaction between women and men remains largely problematic. The war challenges, losses and deficits have significantly complicated the situation of most

women and men, and the burden of war and economic survival has been largely unevenly distributed. Solving the problems of women's economic empowerment, both those caused by the full-scale war and historical problems, should be based on a careful evidence-based analysis, identifying all the challenges to women's opportunities in the economy, both obvious and hidden. The results of the study presented here contribute to assessing the current state of women's economic empowerment and the reasons for it for the most vulnerable categories of women. The results serve as a basis for developing strategic recommendations for national policy in response to the challenges of empowering women entrepreneurs and women in the labour market during the full-scale war and recovery in Ukraine.

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<sup>18</sup> Report on the analysis of best business practices for women's economic empowerment during the full-scale Russian war against Ukraine. [https://ukraine.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/best\\_practice\\_analysis\\_private\\_sector.pdf](https://ukraine.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/best_practice_analysis_private_sector.pdf)



### 3. WOMEN'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN UKRAINE

Ukraine started moving towards achieving gender equality in all spheres of life after gaining independence. Public opinion has changed through targeted government policy and numerous projects and programmes implemented by NGOs and international partners, which have spread the practice of using gender-sensitive approaches to policymaking and implementation, and expanding women's economic opportunities. Society's understanding of women's capabilities, roles and prospects for equality is gradually transforming. Legislative and regulatory acts which have established the principles of gender equality in Ukraine have been adopted, the office of the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy has been established, numerous women's foundations and NGOs dealing with women's issues have been created, and international organizations—including UN Women, UNICEF and UNFPA—implementing projects to promote gender equality and gender-responsive governance have begun to work actively in the country. These actions have helped to improve gender equality in the labour market, including overcoming gender pay gaps and expanding opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

However, *the full-scale invasion has interfered with progress on gender equality in Ukraine*, and has significantly worsened women's economic empowerment. At the same time, the military challenges, in particular those related to mobilization and large-scale migration abroad and the corresponding shortage of labour, have led to the emergence of new opportunities for women: women's access to jobs that were previously closed to them, officially or unofficially, and the formation of new groups and categories of women who are ready to work despite family difficulties. Both areas are very important in the context of overcoming the huge labour shortage that is already being observed and will inevitably become more important in the process of economic recovery, and achieving gender equality, not only in the economy, but also in the division of responsibilities within the family, in the assessment of women's economic contribution and economic opportunities, and in

raising the status of women in general. Both directions can become sustainable trends only as a result of increased state and public attention to the development of an effective gender equality policy.

At the same time, this study points to the deterioration of women's employment situation. According to various surveys, the overall level of women's employment in the full labour market decreased in 2023 compared to 2021. The most relevant nationwide sample survey of the socioeconomic status of households shows a decrease in the employment rate of women from 49.3 per cent<sup>19</sup> to 48.7 per cent<sup>20</sup>. The deterioration of officially registered employment is even more dramatic. Modelling results based on the Pension Fund of Ukraine register show women's official employment decreasing: while before the full-scale invasion, the share of women among the total number of officially employed persons was 52.7 per cent, in 2022 it dropped to 50.8 per cent, and in 2023 to 49.8 per cent<sup>21</sup>.

The gender balance among the unemployed has also changed with more women unemployed. The unemployment rate during the full-scale invasion decreased among both sexes, but the reduction was much greater among men than among women: while in 2021 *the unemployment rate in the full labour market* was 11 per cent among women and 10.2 per cent among men, in 2023 it was 8.9 per cent among women and 5.1 per cent among men. In the registered labour market, women generally make up the majority of the unemployed; their share, according to the State Employment Service in 2023, was 72 per cent.

*The destruction and economic losses caused by the full-scale invasion have contributed to an increase in women's informal employment* from 16.2 per cent in 2021 to 18.8 per cent in 2023.<sup>22</sup> Women have traditionally worked less than men in informal employment, and this was not changed by the events of the martial law period. However, informal employment has different meanings for men and women. Informally employed women are much more likely to be self-employed than men,

<sup>19</sup> Estimates are calculated for the age group 15 to 70.

<sup>20</sup> Conducted from December 2023 to February 2024 by the Ukrainian Center for Social Reforms and the Institute of Demography and Quality of Life of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine at the request of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and with the support of UNICEF.

<sup>21</sup> Calculations of this study based on data from the State Statistics Service and the Pension Fund of Ukraine.

<sup>22</sup> Estimates of the authors of this study based on data from the Pension Fund of Ukraine and the results of the nationwide sample survey of the socioeconomic status of households in Ukraine, December 2023 to February 2024.



especially in rural areas. This is typically the hard work of subsistence agriculture, the results of which depend on random factors with no guarantee of sufficient income for subsistence, and which does not relieve women of other responsibilities to serve the needs of other family members. Informally employed women workers suffer from other threats. They are the most common victims of the most dangerous forms of discrimination: mobbing in the workplace, devaluation of contributions and underpayment of wages, fines and non-payment of wages, unjustified dismissals and sexual harassment.

These negative trends have led to a rapid increase *in the gender pay gap*. While in 2021, women earned on average 16.7 per cent less than men, in 2023 it was 41.4 per cent.<sup>23</sup> This gap was especially large among people aged 19 to 29, and a noticeable reduction was observed only after the age of 50, although it remained in favour of men.<sup>24</sup> The gender pay gap is only partially explained by the different industry and professional specialization of women and men. The study has shown the prevalence of discriminatory practices when women are paid less for the same work, justifying this by women's unreliability, careless attitude to education, and focus on family matters. The underpayment of women's labour is observed not only at the initial stage of work; it persists at all stages of career growth. Compared to employees with the same length of service and in similar positions, women's "lag" can reach 20 to 25 per cent. This is more common in companies and teams led by men.

The main problem of gender inequality of economic opportunities in the labour market in Ukraine is the deep differentiation of sectoral and professional specialization. This is deeply rooted in the basic perceptions and stereotypes of the labour roles of women and men. Both men and women see it as natural for men and women to do different work and roles. It is not enshrined in law, but often appears and remains not reflected in departmental or sectoral bylaws, local and formulary laws, and is widely implemented in technical regulations and special standards. This problem has been exacerbated by the prolonged war the increased shortage of men in the labour market, employers' attempts to protect men with reservation status,

and the unrealistic nature of changing technical regulations, which requires significant investment.

This sectoral and occupational inequality between women and men will be a persistent problem as adopting individual laws or other regulations to change it will take a long time for impact. A long-term policy is needed, designed to cover the lifespan of an entire generation, some 30 years. A change in thinking about gender and jobs is needed by the whole of society. Stereotypes on women's and men's roles at work depend significantly on type of settlement, region of residence, and degree of religiosity. More patriarchal behavioural patterns, both at the level of family relations and in the sphere of work and entrepreneurship, are observed in rural settlements and small towns, as well as in regions with larger families and higher proportions of the religious population. Traditional values and gender models are more strongly held and widespread in these regions.

Despite positive developments in overcoming gender inequality in Ukraine, it is still more difficult for women to find and keep a job during the war than for men. *The study revealed three types of employment barriers:*

1. **Non-gendered barriers** which are the most difficult to overcome for women in difficult circumstances or with certain vulnerability markers (age and place of origin – temporarily occupied or controlled by legitimate authorities), lack of job search and interview skills, prolonged periods of economic inactivity caused by discouragement in finding a job or prolonged illness, quality of the education system, and the overall level of competition in the labour market.
2. **Gendered barriers:** These barriers were in force before the full-scale invasion and remain today, including stereotypes, informal social and cultural norms, bylaws and standards, poorer initial economic conditions, educational and economic violence against women at the family level, discrimination against young women due to the possibility of having children in the future, family pressure to choose a "normal female profession", a lack of modern skills caused by the requirement to focus on household chores, low levels of educational, communication and other

<sup>23</sup> The average salary for men in 2023 was estimated taking into account cash benefits. The estimates were calculated by the Institute of Demography and Quality of Life Problems of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, based on modelling data from the Pension Fund of Ukraine and other relevant sources of information for 2021 and 2023.

<sup>24</sup> According to the Pension Fund of Ukraine, 2021–2023.

opportunities for women with low wages, and a lack of technical adjustment of workplaces to perform work by men.

3. *Specific barriers* caused by the war and the danger to lives, including: discrimination against women due to narrower access to economic sectors that provide for job reservations from mobilization; status of an internally displaced person; loss of a partner, especially for women with children, or with the need to support both their parents and their partner's parents; demobilization of women from the Defence Forces due to health or disability; and increased competition between women and men for better and better-paid jobs.

In most cases, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, *women's economic inactivity has increased, exacerbated by a significant deterioration in their living standards*. Among the most common barriers to their entry into the labour market and entrepreneurship are:

- The persistence of the stereotype that women in the family are responsible for raising children, providing household comfort for all family members, and caring for other disabled family members.
- Low level of development of social and market infrastructure for non-home provision of various household services, childcare, sick and the disabled family members.
- Biased attitudes of employers towards the employment of women who have children or are planning to have children.
- Objective loss of skills and competencies due to prolonged involvement in household and family affairs.
- Longer duration of education and training than men, especially in professions that are not in high demand in the labour market.
- Psychological unpreparedness of women to enter the labour market due to a long period of economic inactivity, military status and fear for children and family.
- Agreement to live on the support of their parents' family or male partner.

Internal displacement within Ukraine caused by the full-scale war is on an unprecedented scale. As of 2023, the situation has more or less stabilized. It is women who have borne the brunt of adaptation in a new place, including the adaptation of young, infirm or elderly family members. The number of

IDPs in some regions has increased tenfold, with the majority (about 60 per cent) of them being women. Women in this category note significant changes in the roles they now play in their families, talk about the growing financial burden and the high need to find a job and adapt to a new place. *The problems of IDP women are much more acute* due to the lack of reliable social connections, housing, often unequal conditions of competition for jobs with local residents, limited accessibility of social infrastructure, discrimination in employment opportunities compared to local residents (a significant number of employers refuse to officially employ IDP women or pay wages informally), employers' prejudice against women's possible return to their previous place of residence, and discrimination due to the presence of relatives.

*The onset of the full-scale invasion has also scaled up the need to support the economic opportunities of women whose partners have been mobilized and are defending Ukraine. Research shows that women in this category have faced significant challenges.*

Most of them say that it has become impossible to continue their lives in the usual way. In almost all families in this group, women have taken on greater responsibilities, both in housekeeping and childcare, in decision-making and in providing for the family's economic security. Everything a woman used to do together with her partner, she now has to do alone. Moreover, despite the government's promises to provide adequate support for the military, women have to finance their partners' equipment, and often provide material support to the entire combat unit where they are fighting. At the same time, it is the wives of mobilized soldiers who have become the core of an unprecedented volunteer movement and civic engagement that is shaping new experiences, opening up new opportunities, and will become a powerful factor in the post-war civic and economic activity of these women and the women they engage in cooperation.

*The protracted nature of the war in Ukraine exacerbates the problems of women whose partners are in captivity and women who have been or remain in captivity.* This topic is insufficiently covered in Ukraine. The study clearly showed that limiting attention to only one gender of female prisoners will cause detriment. The suffering and excessive burden of captivity of military personnel and other forcibly captured citizens of Ukraine falls on all members of their families. However, the central person who takes on the burden both during captivity and after returning from captivity is the

person's wife, mother or sister. This situation significantly reduces the chances of Ukrainian women returning from captivity. Such women have a number of specific problems: a high level of psychological tension that does not allow them to think about their own desires and prospects; significant losses of time and money that a woman invests in organizing the search for her partner, and then his rehabilitation and adaptation to a peaceful life; and an increase in the level of burden on women in doing household chores, raising children and caring for their partners.

The study identified a range of problems that hinder the effectiveness of the state's actions for a gender-responsive restoration of Ukraine and the development of gender sensitivity at the level of territorial communities. According to the results of in-depth interviews, the key problem today is the lack of mechanism for supervision and monitoring of gender equality measures and sanctions for non-compliance. It is not enough to declare a commitment to gender equality. There must be tangible actions and measures that can be monitored, to overcome the widespread discrimination found among a wide range of institutions and individuals in Ukraine.

*There are significant gaps in understanding women's economic empowerment and implementing gender-sensitive policies*, which vary depending on the level of state and corporate governance, and the competence and attitudes of decision makers. The study found that the top ranks of management embraced gender equality most strongly, with less acceptance at lower levels of decision-making and implementation. The lowest understanding and acceptance was observed among representatives of small territorial communities, who mostly ignore the issue of gender equality. A clear link was also identified between the success of a business, attempts to pursue a strategic and open corporate policy, a focus on technological development and expansion beyond narrow and local markets, and a readiness to adopt gender-sensitive policies. The less successful, formal and transparent a business is, the less ready it is to adopt a gender-sensitive policy, the more cases of gender discrimination, and the more pronounced gender biases and stereotypes.

The study showed that *civil society organizations play a significant role in implementing gender equality programmes in Ukraine*. They often initiate relevant gender-sensitive projects, especially at the

local level. They create an understanding of the importance and relevance of ensuring gender-responsive and inclusive recovery.

The analysis of the national legislation on women's economic empowerment, as well as the opinions of experts obtained during in-depth interviews, *show a positive trend of making existing norms and laws in Ukraine more gender-sensitive*. Despite the significant risks and barriers to implementing public policy reforms under martial law, Ukraine continues to develop and shape active measures to restore the country, with a focus on gender-responsive approaches in their implementation. The Third Rapid Needs Assessment (RDNA3) made it possible to form an understanding of Ukraine's existing losses in the social and economic spheres caused by the full-scale invasion. The list of these losses has a direct or indirect impact on gender equality issues, as it reduces the opportunities for women to realize their potential, their access to social infrastructure including children's facilities, and their access to education and employment (due to the closure or physical cessation of their previous place of work). In this regard, the consideration of these needs is extremely relevant and should be duly taken into account by the state policy of a gender-responsive recovery of Ukraine.

*A positive step towards a gender-responsive recovery of Ukraine is the Recovery Plan for Ukraine*, which is based on the vision of Ukraine as a strong European country and a magnet for foreign investment. This plan contains a set of measures that balances the development of all spheres of Ukraine's economy and society in the future, and emphasizes improving human development through the modernization of the labour market, ensuring decent and fair employment. This study points out that the Recovery Plan of Ukraine can be in service of gender equality by making all proposed programmes and reforms gender-sensitive, strengthening them with mechanisms to identify violations, implementing necessary sanctions, and strengthening the incentives for voluntary and independent accession of any entities to the strategy of gender improvement of Ukraine.

This study makes it possible to reasonably supplement the Recovery Plan of Ukraine by introducing cross-cutting gender sensitivity in all proposed programs and reforms, strengthening them with mechanisms for identifying gender violations, implementing the necessary sanctions, and strengthening the incentive component for

voluntary and independent accession of any entities to the strategy of gender improvement of Ukraine.

It is impossible to overcome barriers to women's economic empowerment alone, or in isolation from the achievements of gender mainstreaming at the international level. In this regard, Ukraine is and should remain in close dialogue with leading international partners and stakeholders in its gender-responsive recovery. A powerful step of international support for Ukraine's efforts should be the *Alliance for Gender Responsive* and Inclusive Recovery of Ukraine, initiated by the Government of Ukraine and the German Federal Ministry for

Economic Cooperation and Development in partnership with UN Women, which is being built as an effective tool for consolidating efforts to implement gender-sensitive recovery programmes and reforms in Ukraine and can help expand the objectives of the Recovery Plan of Ukraine with new elements and markers of gender sensitivity. It should be possible to identify issues that should be addressed in the development of public policy and projects implemented by partners and international organizations within the Alliance that will contribute to the economic empowerment of women in Ukraine

## 4. STATUS AND SOCIOECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE FIELD OF EMPLOYMENT

### 4.1 Main barriers and challenges to women's employment in Ukraine

**Key changes and challenges in women's employment.** Traveling abroad and the occupation have significantly reduced the number of women in the government-controlled territory of Ukraine. As of the end of 2023, there were 17.9 per cent fewer women aged 15–70 living in the territory than in

2021. This decrease has created a unique situation in the government-controlled territory of Ukraine: the demographic basis of economic activity of women (12.1 million) and men (11.8 million) has almost equalized.

**Table 1. Population of the controlled territory of Ukraine aged 15-70 by gender and age groups<sup>25</sup>**

Population by gender	Population by gender and age	2021	2023	2023/2021
		thousand people	thousand people	per cent
The entire population	Total 15–70	28,039,900	23,841,200	85
	15–29	6,051,000	4,638,400	76.7
	30–49	11,764,000	10,251,200	87.1
	50–70	10,224,900	8,951,600	87.5
Women	Total 15–70	14,707,900	12,080,000	82.1
	15–29	2,940,300	2,107,100	71.7
	30–49	5,928,800	4,912,000	82.8
	50–70	5,838,800	5,060,900	86.7
Men	Total 15–70	13,332,000	11,761,200	88.2
	15–29	3,110,700	2,531,300	81.4
	30–49	5,835,200	5,339,200	91.5
	50–70	4,386,100	3,890,700	88.7

In general, women traditionally predominate in the economically active age population (15–79 years), but while in 2021 there were 1,103 women per 1,000 men aged 15–70, in 2023 there were only 1,027. The largest changes occurred in younger age groups: in 2021, there were 945 women per 1,000 men aged 15–29, and in 2023, there were only 832. The corresponding figures for the 30–49 group decreased from 1,016 to 920. A decrease in the ratio is also observed in older economically active age groups, but is less pronounced. These trends are a direct consequence of the critical increase in external migration and the dominance of women in the number of people who left Ukraine, but such changes in labour supply should have led to an increase, not a decrease, in the employment rate of women. Thus, the gender structure of labour demand has changed, and more significantly, i.e. during the war, the economy requires more male labour than female. This is some evidence of the bias of some employers.

However, the age structure of women of economically active age in 2023 was much less favourable for providing the economy with labour than that of men. Thus, women aged 15–49 account for only 58.1 per cent of the number of women aged 15–70, while among men, this figure is 67 per cent. Women significantly outnumber men only in the age group of 50–70, the age group that historically demonstrates the lowest participation in employment compared to men (along with the group of the youngest women at 15–24). Given the strength of traditional stereotypes, it can be said that the change in the age structure of women who remained in the government-controlled area of Ukraine is a significant reason for the decline in their overall employment rate.

This thesis is confirmed by preliminary estimates of the employment rate of women and men obtained from the most representative survey of households and the labour force in Ukraine after the start of the full-scale invasion, which was conducted by the

<sup>25</sup> Results of the official operational assessment of the size and composition of the population of Ukraine Institute of Demography and Quality of Life of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2023



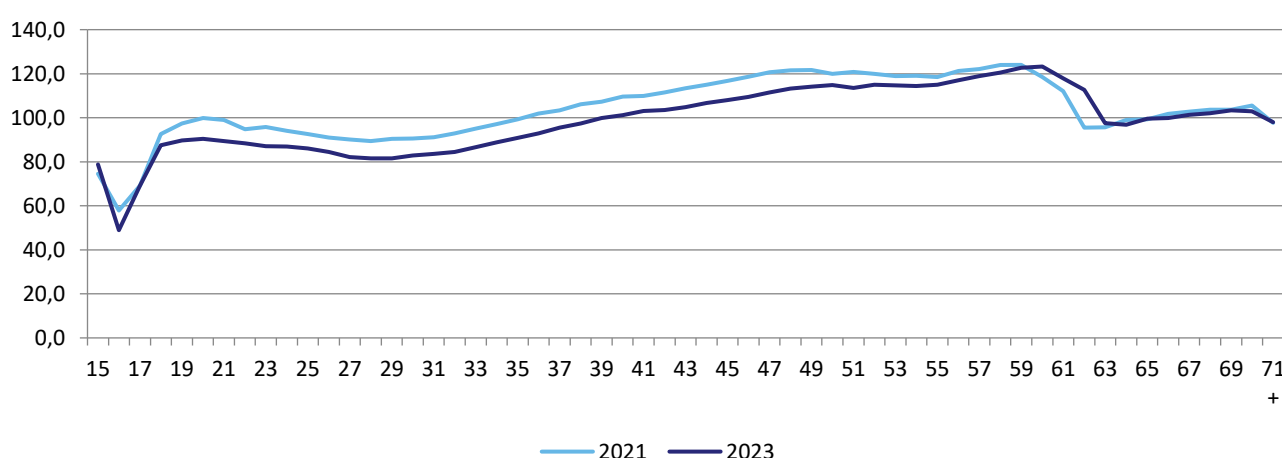
Ukrainian Center for Social Reforms of the Institute of Demography and Quality of Life Problems of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine at the request of UNICEF.<sup>26</sup> According to the study, the employment rate for women aged 15–70 in 2023 decreased from 49.3 per cent<sup>27</sup> to 48.7 per cent in comparison to 2021, while among men it increased from 61.5 per cent to 63.1 per cent. When assessing the size of the gap between the employment rate of women and men, however, it should be borne in mind that the number of employed men includes mobilized servicemen, who, unlike contract servicemen, were not part of the economy's workforce in 2021 (in fact, they were practically absent). The number of men mobilized during martial law cannot be disclosed, but information from open sources is sufficient to suggest that the gender gap in employment rates narrowed during the war, while men's employment remained higher.

Just as before the full-scale invasion, in 2023 the total number of employed women (5.6 million) was lower than the number of employed men (6.7 million). The main reasons are that women have a

harder time finding a job, negotiating higher wages, are more likely than men to lose their jobs by a management decision, and can apply for fewer jobs, as most of the jobs offered on the market are still traditionally reserved for men.

A striking manifestation of the deterioration of women's opportunities in the labour market during the full-scale invasion was the decrease in their presence in the formal sector of the economy compared to men. While before the full-scale invasion, their share of formal sector employment was 52.7 per cent, in 2022 it dropped to 50.8 per cent, and in 2023 to 49.8 per cent.<sup>28</sup> Given that the main flow of people leaving Ukraine due to the war was limited to the first half of 2022, and the line of contact between Ukrainian and Russian troops has been virtually unchanged since November 2022, this trend cannot be explained by the military situation. Nor can the redistribution of some men from the formal to the informal economy to avoid the risks of possible mobilization explain the higher formal employment for men compared to women.

**Figure 1. Ratio of the number of officially employed women and men in one-year age groups in 2021 and 2023, per cent.**



During the period of the full-scale war, there were profound changes in the gender ratio of the number of employed persons by age group. A quantitative advantage of officially employed women in 2023 was observed in half of one-year groups, from 9 to 63 years old and from 66 to 70 years old. In Figure 1, this can be seen from the trajectory of the blue curve, which shows the ratio of employed women

to men in one year group in per cent (more than 100 per cent means a female advantage). This means that compared to 2021, the situation has worsened. In 2021, the predominance of women in terms of the number of employed was observed only in 55 per cent of one-year groups, namely from 37 to 63 years and from 66 to 71 years.

<sup>26</sup> According to the results of a nationwide sample survey of the socioeconomic status of Ukrainian households conducted by the Ukrainian Center for Social Reforms of the Institute of Demography and Quality of Life Problems of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine at the request of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and with the support of UNICEF, December 2023 to February 2024.

<sup>27</sup> Labour Force of Ukraine 2021: Statistical collection - Kyiv: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2022.

[https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat\\_u/2022/zb/07/zb\\_RS\\_2021.pdf](https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2022/zb/07/zb_RS_2021.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Calculations based on data from the State Statistics Service and the Pension Fund of Ukraine, 2022–2023



The gradual deterioration of the economic situation in trade, personal services and the public sector, where most women were employed, was a powerful factor in the decline in women's participation in the formal economy. According to expert opinion and surveys of employers, the National Bank of Ukraine and the State Statistics Service<sup>29</sup>, all sectors of the Ukrainian economy that depend on the effective demand of the existing population (except trade) suffered the most from the decline in population and profound changes in consumer preferences. Structural imbalances in the economic situation would not have had such an impact on the ratio of employment of men and women if it were not for the deep gender-based sectoral specialization in employment, which is almost impossible to overcome by individual efforts.

The importance of assessing the growing gender disparities in the formal sector of the economy, despite the fact that there are little or no data on women and men who work informally, cannot be overestimated. Only when women are officially employed can there be discussion about social protection against discrimination, sexual harassment, fines and non-payment of wages, and unjustified dismissals. There are no levers of influence on these discriminatory practices in informal employment, even at registered enterprises.

The majority of women who are not officially registered to work are in the most difficult jobs, mostly labourers and those with the most basic qualifications. It is entirely up to the employer's decision whether they are paid a salary, their dignity is respected, have career opportunities, are fired without notice, paid sick leave or vacation time. For women who work as self-employed and without formalization, this is often a casual, low-paid and difficult activity, the results of which depend on random factors, which makes it impossible to count

on any insurance mechanisms to smooth out the risks of the market or resource prices. In general, informally employed women were the majority before the full-scale invasion (some 62 per cent), and after its onset, according to the Institute of Demography and Quality of Life Problems of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, this share increased to 68 per cent during approximately a year and a half<sup>30</sup>.

At the start of the full-scale invasion, the rate of women's involvement in informal employment had fallen from 17.7 per cent in 2019<sup>31</sup> to 16.2 per cent in 2021<sup>32</sup>. In 2022–23, these gains were largely lost. A survey of households and the labour force in Ukraine in informal employment conducted by the Razumkov Centre<sup>33</sup> estimates the respective figures at 21.7 and 18.4 per cent<sup>34</sup>. Consolidation of various data on informal employment of women and the application of the micromodelling method allowed the authors of this study to estimate the level of informal employment of women at 18.8 per cent.<sup>35</sup>

Sectoral and occupational specialization is also evident in informal employment. Over the 20-year period of observation of women's informal employment (since 2004), the key sectors are agriculture (mainly in the form of women's informal employment), wholesale and retail trade, temporary accommodation and catering, where jobs and business opportunities have largely been preserved even in the face of war. The preservation of these sectors of the economy compared to others automatically preserves conditions for women's informal employment.

**The problem of gender and sectoral distribution of the Ukrainian labour market.** Traditionally, the sectoral nature of the Ukrainian economy and the established historical traditions of employment have a significant impact on the current conditions for realizing women's labour potential. Over the years, it has been the case that men and women work in different sectors of the economy, and if they

<sup>29</sup> National Bank of Ukraine. <https://bank.gov.ua/>

<sup>30</sup> Results of the official operational assessment of the size and composition of the population of Ukraine. Institute of Demography and Quality of Life of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Labour force of Ukraine 2019: Statistical collection - Kyiv: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2020. [https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat\\_u/2020/zb/07/zb\\_r\\_s\\_2019.pdf](https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2020/zb/07/zb_r_s_2019.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Labour force of Ukraine 2021: Statistical collection - Kyiv: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2022. [https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat\\_u/2022/zb/07/zb\\_RS\\_2021.pdf](https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2022/zb/07/zb_RS_2021.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Due to martial law, official statistics are not available since 2022.

<sup>34</sup> According to the labour force survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre in 2023.

<sup>35</sup> The data used for the modelling were the data of the Pension Fund of Ukraine, the results of the nationwide sample survey of the socioeconomic status of households in Ukraine in December 2023 to February 2024, and the labour force survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre in 2023, as well as the results of the study, *Skills for the Labour Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors (2023–2024)*, conducted by the NGO the Ukrainian Center for Social Reforms within the framework of the programme, Vocational Education in Ukraine/Skills4Recovery, implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, acting on behalf of the Federal Government of Germany.

do work in the same sector, they usually work in different professional groups. Sectoral and professional qualification asymmetry of specialization of women and men is the most significant and cross-cutting factor of most gender imbalances in employment: the gender pay gap, access to jobs, duration of employment, and prospects for women's employment in higher value-added industries.

Gender-based occupational and sectoral specialization is the basis for most of the social stereotypes about women's economic activity identified in the study. Moreover, it is in the area of occupational and qualification specialization that most of the regulations that ignore gender aspects

are concentrated, mostly at the formative and local level, namely legitimate bylaws regulating access, technical and ergonomic conditions of work, performance standards and technological procedures. The vast majority of them are designed and envisage the use of equipment, facilities and ways of connecting them that are adapted to men's physical conditions, although there are no technological barriers to their adaptation for use by women. Gender stereotypes about what a woman of a certain age should and could do are strongly rooted in popular culture and are directly related to gender roles in the family, child-rearing, education, and ideas about the physical and behavioural profile of an “average” woman.

**Table 2. Gender structure of registered employed women and men for whom the unified social contribution was paid in 2021 and 2023, by economic sector, per cent** <sup>36</sup>

Sectors of the economy	2021		2023	
	Share of women	Share men	Share of women	Share of women
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	29,0	<b>71,0</b>	28,7	71,3
Industry	35,3	64,7	38,6	61,4
Construction	19,0	<b>81,0</b>	19,5	80,5
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	<b>56,6</b>	43,4	<b>57,2</b>	42,8
Transportation, warehousing, postal and courier services	33,0	<b>67,0</b>	29,2	70,8
Temporary accommodation and catering services	<b>67,3</b>	32,7	<b>65,1</b>	34,9
Information and telecommunications	36,7	<b>63,3</b>	36,8	63,2
Financial and insurance activities	<b>66,1</b>	33,9	<b>63,8</b>	36,2
Real estate transactions	47,3	52,7	48,2	51,8
Professional, scientific and technical activities	54,4	45,6	<b>54,2</b>	45,8
Activities in the field of administrative and support services	45,6	54,4	44,8	55,2
Public administration and defence; compulsory social insurance	<b>61,6</b>	38,4	47,1	52,9
Education	<b>73,2</b>	26,8	<b>73,8</b>	26,2
Health care and social assistance	<b>79,7</b>	20,3	<b>79,3</b>	20,7
Arts, sports, entertainment and recreation	<b>56,9</b>	43,1	<b>57,7</b>	42,3
Other types of economic activity	64,0	36,0	<b>68,1</b>	31,9
Officially employed in total	52,7	47,3	49,8	50,2

Changes in gender sectoral ratios in the formal sector of the Ukrainian economy during the full-scale invasion became more noticeable, but did not fundamentally change gender differentiation. This is especially true for the simplest types of economic activity: the trade sector, where the share of insured employed women increased from 56.6 per cent in 2021 to 57.2 per cent in 2023, and the “other economic services” sector, from 64 per cent to 68.1 per cent, respectively (Table 2). At the same time, the share of officially employed women in significantly more complex and better-paid economic activities has significantly decreased in

the transport and warehousing sector, information and telecommunications sector, and public administration and defence sector. The women surveyed noted that it is much more difficult to gain access to positions and professions in traditionally male-dominated industries than in the labour market as a whole, in particular due to stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes about the sectoral distribution of “suitable work” are held by both men and women, and put invisible barriers to new employment opportunities. In particular, women recognize that the stereotype of “male” and “female” professions is false, but a significant

<sup>36</sup> Results of the author's modelled calculations based on data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine and the Pension Fund of Ukraine for 2021, 2022 and 2023.

number of them do not want to consider employment opportunities in sectors of the economy where men are predominantly employed. The focus group discussions for this study showed two of the most common positions voiced by women and men regarding obstacles to employment in “male” industries, professions and teams. The first position is associated with the belief of the vast majority of women and many men that a male team will not accept a woman, and that any

woman who does so will either have to physically defend her dignity or submit to being treated as a person who knows less and can do less, and sometimes even face sexual advances. The second position, held by the overwhelming majority of group discussion participants, was that the main conditions for a woman to work in a male environment are gender sensitivity and support from her immediate supervisor, a friendly corporate culture, and the company's success in the market.



*The climate in the team often depends on the attitude and attitude of the management. I have worked in different teams in similar positions. Sometimes, the management directly disrespected women, allowing themselves sexism, unequal distribution of responsibilities and reduced salaries, which led to a dismissive attitude towards women among male colleagues. And sometimes the manager himself promoted equality and his key performance evaluation was the quality of work, regardless of whether it was a man or a woman doing the work.*

*Female mechanic (industry)*



*Harassment in the workplace happens, especially when you are the only woman in a male team. The employer and other colleagues mostly do not pay attention to it or do not want to see it.*

*Woman working in a security company  
(with multiple experiences in male teams)*

Sectoral concentration of men in certain sectors of the economy creates a specific working culture, with its own rules and conditions to which women find it difficult to adapt. In Ukraine, this is typical in the construction, mining, transport, metallurgy and energy sectors and research has shown widespread discrimination in these industries against women, which affects their career advancement and professional development. Discrimination is manifested in areas including work schedules, number of sick days, vacation time, irregular working hours and specific requirements for personal life. In some companies and industries, the unspoken “glass ceiling” sets the level of career growth that a woman can achieve.<sup>37</sup>

These problems clash with in the need to attract more women to employment, including jobs traditionally considered “male”. This situation opens up new challenges and opportunities for women and employers. On the one hand, women

have become more in demand and competitive in the labour market, as evidenced by the expansion of employment opportunities in previously traditionally male sectors of the economy. However, according to the interview responses, both women and employers are unprepared for these changes. The reasons for this include the unwillingness of male colleagues and management to accept women in engineering and technical positions,<sup>38</sup> condescension or indifference to mobbing in the workplace, lack of adaptation of workplaces to women's physical capabilities and ergonomic requirements, and stereotypes that women cannot handle stress or be “pushed” as hard as men. In general, such factors are most evident in enterprises where the working culture, policies and organizational relations are not developed and where the management is dominated by the styles of “manual”, “human” and “emotional” management.

<sup>37</sup> According to the labour force survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre in 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Director of an industrial enterprise in the field of gas production (162 employees): “Well, of course women work for us, but where can they work? It's accounting, human resources, and other administrative and office positions. I won't send a woman to a drilling rig!”



*I have worked at many companies in our industry (manufacturing). It's the same everywhere: if business procedures are not clearly defined, if people don't know exactly what they have to do at any given moment, what the evaluation and payment criteria are, what values the management actually holds, intrigues, squabbles, etc. begin to emerge. In such conditions, both male and female teams are not happy. It is always degradation. Both gender and cohesion depend on a strategic vision, and if there is none, there is no justice and equality in anything!*

*Director of an enterprise, metalworking*

However, it should be noted that some employers are observed to be making progress, existing barriers are gradually being smoothed out, and some employers are modernizing their workplaces to meet the needs of women, although the study found that the process is still quite slow, ad hoc and unsystematic. Results of interviews and group discussions show a growing awareness that women need more flexibility and they have the will to develop themselves and change their field of activity and profession. Men also do not deny the need to revise outdated stereotypes of gender specialization in the labour market. Most of them are confident in their willingness to engage women. Not everyone is confident, but the very willingness to change indicates that changes in attitudes toward women in traditionally male positions are realistic.

There is a clear dependence of women's opportunities on the gender of the manager. Companies headed by women are more likely to have recognized discrimination against women's employment and working hours, remuneration and career prospects. Therefore, women in leadership positions in business is not only a tool for empowering them and their career opportunities, but also can improve the quality of working life of female employees in general. However, there are situations where women are denied promotion, because their achievements and competence are underestimated, arguably due to gender stereotypes.

#### 4.2. Gender pay gaps in labor

Even in the context of the full-scale invasion, Ukraine has still made positive progress towards closing the gender pay gap. In September 2023, the National Strategy for Closing the Gender Pay Gap was approved, which provides for the implementation of a whole range of operational

**Opportunities based on location.** An important study finding is confirming the gap in the understanding of employment relations by women and men depending on the type of settlement. Cities, compared to small towns, towns and rural settlements, have profoundly different stages of awareness and implementation of gender equality. Despite increased access to information and the Internet and increased territorial mobility, discriminatory biases and practices based on so-called traditional values are most concentrated in rural areas or small towns. Most instances of men's obstruction of women's access to the labour market, a superior attitude to their labour abilities and knowledge, discrimination in wages, and rejection of changes in the traditional gender roles in the family are concentrated in these types of settlements.

In addition to subjective factors, women's economic opportunities in rural areas are hindered by the economic decline of small towns and villages and the high level of interregional labour migration of men. For rural women, the issue of significant amounts of unpaid domestic work (including employment on household plots), which they combine with professional activities, is critically important and relevant. These women often work in agriculture in positions dominated by simple manual labour, which is paid significantly lower than the automated work of men who have traditionally worked with equipment and machines.

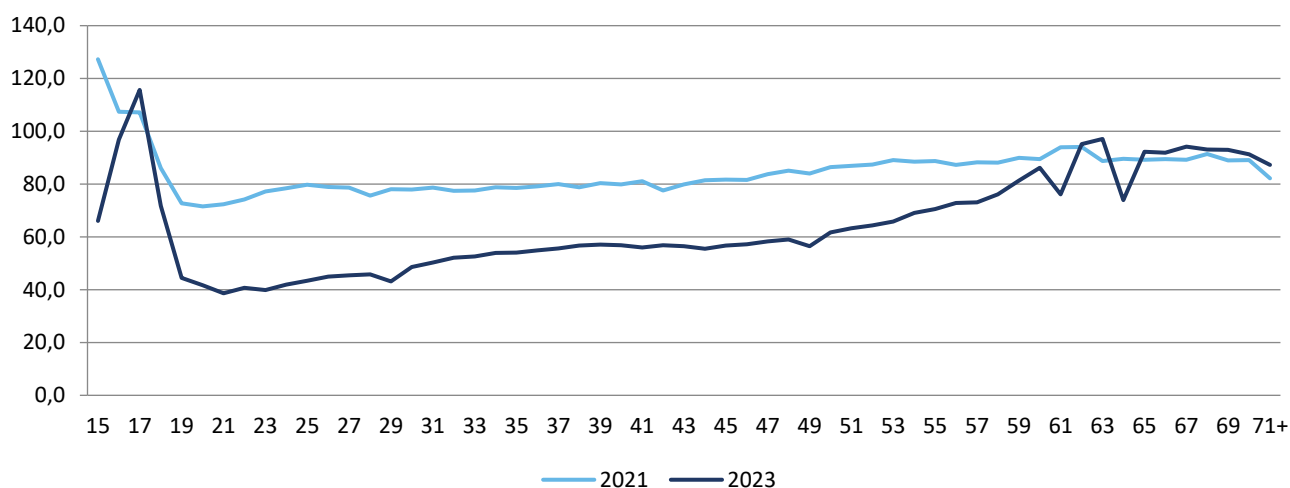
measures including in the field of improving legislation on equal pay, creating conditions for overcoming gender stereotypes and professional discrimination and creating favourable conditions for balancing family and professional responsibilities.<sup>39</sup> The strategy was created to

<sup>39</sup> National Strategy for Overcoming the Gender Pay Gap for the Period up to 2030.

address the significant gender pay gaps in Ukraine, which have persisted in all sectors of the economy for many years. According to the Pension Fund of Ukraine, officially employed women earn significantly less per month on average than registered employed men. This gap was significant even before the full-scale invasion: the average earnings of women were 83.3 per cent of the average earnings of insured employed men, and

after 24 February 2022, the gap increased significantly, and in 2023 was equal to 58.6 per cent. This gap is especially large in the 19–29 age group, and its noticeable reduction begins only after the age of 50,<sup>40</sup> although it remains in favour of men. This gap cannot be explained by different amounts of time worked. For example, although women work more than men after the age of 53, the gap remains.

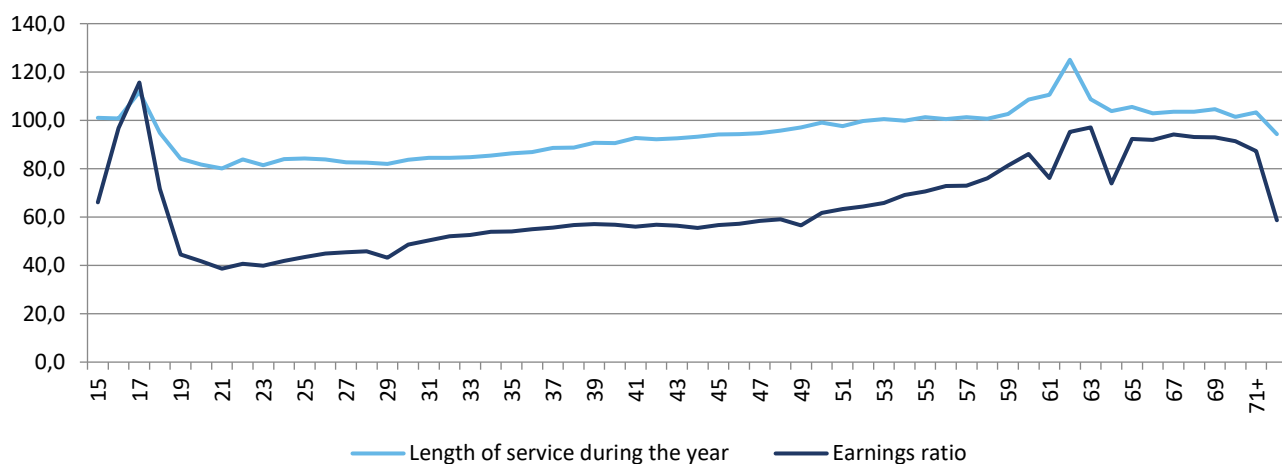
**Figure 2. Ratio of earnings of insured employed women and men in 2021 and 2023 by annual groups, per cent**



Men's insurance record is on average longer than women's (8.7 months vs. 8.1 months in 2023). However, this cannot explain the significant increase in the gender pay gap between insured women and men. However, there is a correlation between the ratio of the length of service of women to men in one-year groups and the ratio of wages: the longer the length of insurance experience of

women compared to men at a certain age, the smaller the gender pay gap. At the same time, despite the fact that women's insurance record increases with age, the gender pay gap persists until the age of 50. Only then does the level of women's pay begin to approach that of men, sometimes even against the backdrop of a decrease in hours worked.

**Figure 3. Ratio of length of service (months) and earnings of insured women to men in 2023, per cent**

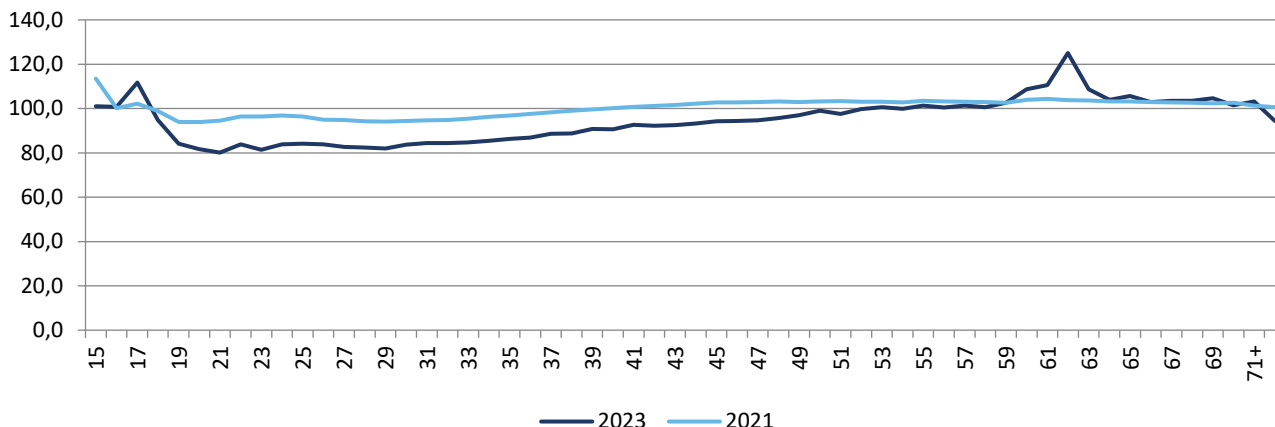


<sup>40</sup> Estimates were calculated by the Institute of Demography and Quality of Life Problems of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine based on modelling data from the Pension Fund of Ukraine and other relevant sources of information for 2021 and 2023.

The gender pay gap before the full-scale invasion cannot be justified by the length of service, as it was higher for women than for men. In 2021, it was 10.2 months compared to 10 months for men. The impact of the full-scale invasion significantly

reduced the length of women's insurance record. It has become lower than men in almost all one-year groups, except for the older retirement age and some one-year groups of young people (16 and 17 years old).

**Figure 4. Ratio of the average length of registered employment for women to men in 2021 and 2023**



The gender pay gap cannot be fully explained by the already mentioned differences by sector, occupation and skill level, although labour specialization has an impact. The study documented the persistence and widespread discriminatory practices when women are paid less for the same work, justifying it by factors such as their unreliability, carelessness in studying and focus on family matters.

In particular, there are cases of artificial underpayment of women not only at the hiring stage, when men are offered higher salaries and better benefits during negotiations and when they send an offer, but also at the stage of career

development or in the process of raising the salaries of all company personnel (sometimes the pay gap can reach 20 to 25 per cent). Most often, such situations are common in companies and teams led by men.

The existing internal and external barriers and stereotypes in labour remuneration also affect women's identification of the value of their labour. In general, women's expectations regarding wages are much lower. 89 per cent of women are ready to accept a salary in the range of UAH 7,000 to 9,000 per month, while 80 per cent of men expect to earn more than UAH 30,000<sup>41</sup>.



*You're going to give birth, so what, I'm going to wait for you for years? You went to college just to get out of the house and get married! That's why you get your lower salary*

*From interviews with women about cases of denial of decent pay*

<sup>41</sup> GIZ, 2024. *Skills for the Labour Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors (2023–2024)*



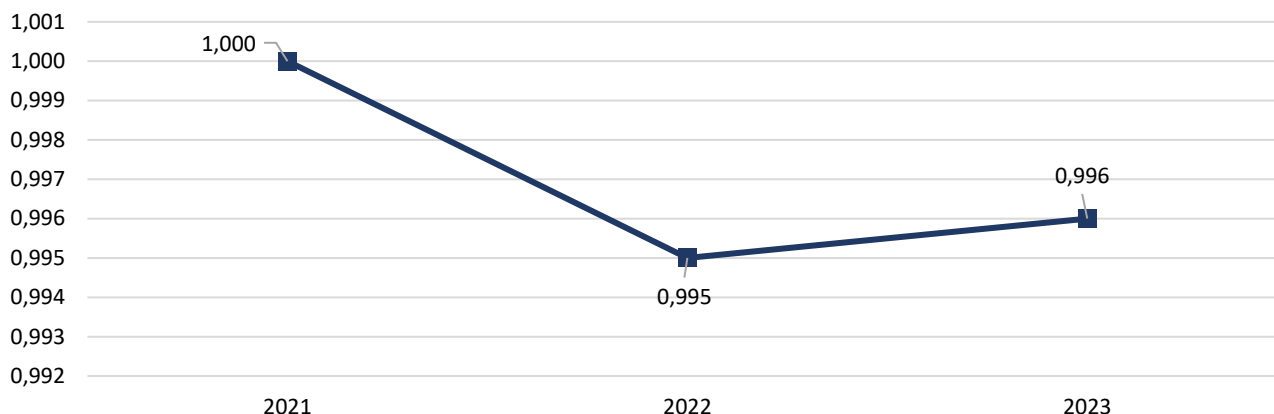
## 5. IMPROVING WOMEN'S EDUCATION

### 5.1. Problems and barriers to women's access to education

Globally, inequality in education impacts women's economic empowerment and employment. Ukraine has traditionally been characterized by a high level of education for both women and men. However, the full-scale invasion has had a significant impact

on the educational opportunities for girls and women, especially for vulnerable groups. According to the Global Gender Gap Report, in 2023, Ukraine ranked 56th among 146 countries on the sub-index "Level of education" compared to 27<sup>th</sup> in 2021.

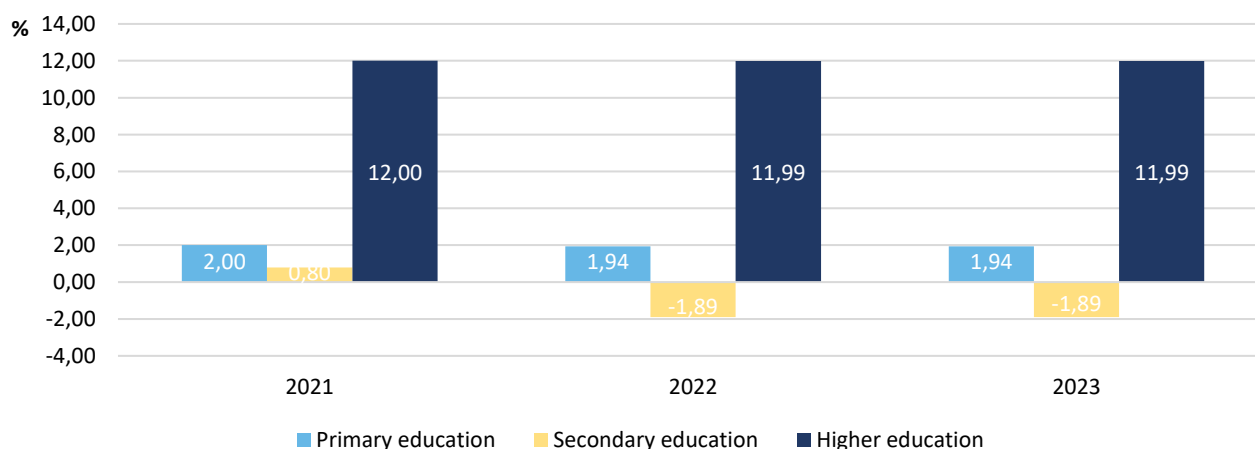
**Figure 5. Subindex "Level of education" for 2021–2023<sup>42</sup>**



Complete general secondary education is a constitutional right of every citizen of Ukraine (Article 53 of the Constitution of Ukraine).<sup>43</sup> In view of this, all Ukrainian children complete general secondary education. After completing secondary education, the vast majority of boys and girls continue their education in higher education institutions, obtaining junior bachelor's, bachelor's or master's degrees, and only a small proportion enter the labour market immediately. The enrolment of girls and boys has traditionally been almost equal and very high. However, the full-scale

war, hostilities and bombing have worsened learning opportunities and led to a decline in the level of education in general, including a decline in enrolment among children over 15: 93 per cent of girls and 91.1 per cent of boys complete primary education, 95 per cent of girls and 96.9 per cent of boys complete secondary education, and 88.8 per cent of girls and 76.8 per cent of boys complete higher education. There is no evidence of gender discrimination. All subjects in Ukrainian higher education institutions and vocational schools are available for both women and men.

**Figure 6. Gender gap by level of education in 2021-2023<sup>44</sup>**



<sup>42</sup> WEF, 2023. Global Gender Gap Report 2023. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf).

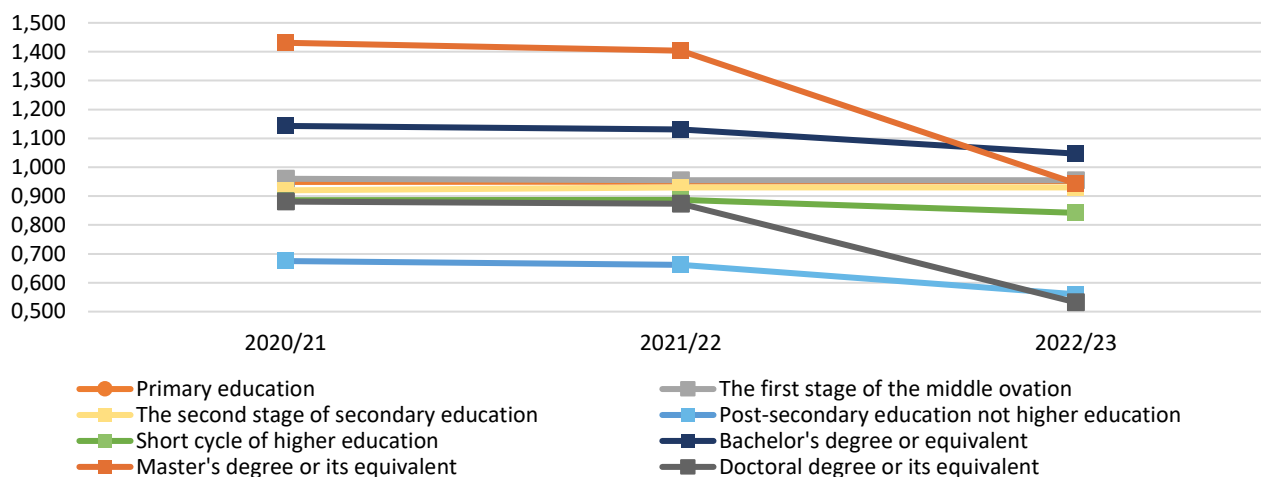
<sup>43</sup> <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text>.

<sup>44</sup> Global Gender Gap Report 2023 // World Economic Forum. - [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf).

However, according to administrative statistics, while gender parity among students of primary, first and second stages of secondary education is maintained, there is a significant decline at the post-secondary non-tertiary, short-cycle higher education and bachelor's, master's and doctoral

levels. This is partly due to men's desire to use vocational and higher education to postpone mobilization. In 2023, the gender parity index exceeded 1 only in bachelor's degrees, and was much lower in vocational pre-university and higher education.

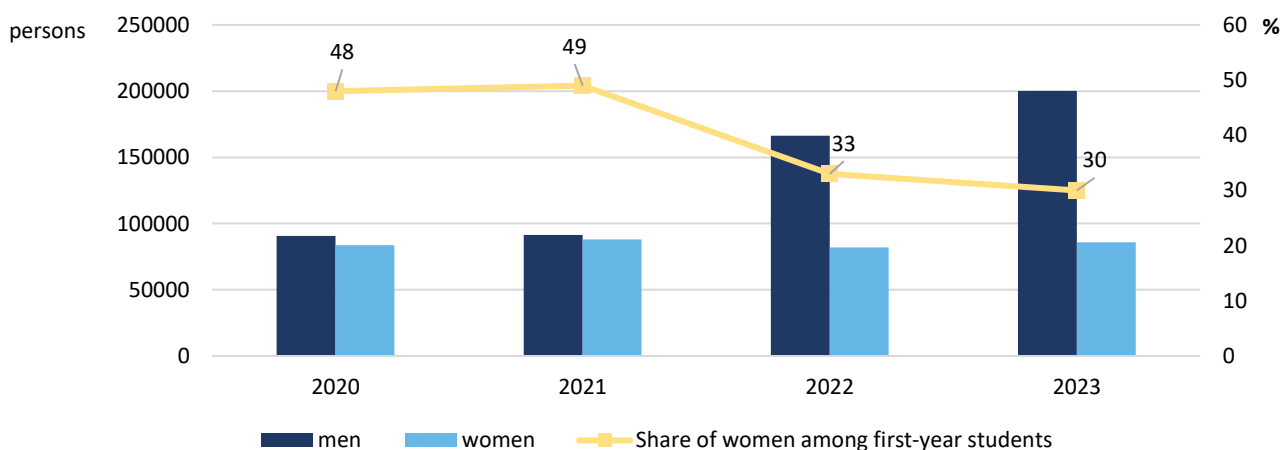
**Figure 7. Gender parity index among pupils, students and trainees of educational institutions in Ukraine**<sup>45</sup>



According to a study by NGL.media, by 2022 almost the same share of female and male high school graduates will be enrolled in higher education. Some 85,000 men were officially postponed in 2022, and about 110,000 in 2023. In 2023, the share of women among full-time freshmen dropped sharply to 30 per cent (in 2021, it was 49 per cent).

The average age of female freshmen remained at the same level, 18 years, as before the outbreak of full-scale invasion, while the average age of male freshmen increased to 27 years as young men reoriented from other fields of activity and went abroad to study.<sup>46</sup>

**Figure 8. Number of first-year full-time students in higher education institutions, by gender**<sup>47</sup>



In general, in Ukraine, vocational and higher education is not equally accessible to all women. There are inequalities in socioeconomic status, place of residence and health status. Obstacles

remain for people with disabilities and older people, especially those of pre-retirement age, who need retraining. Children from Roma families, especially girls, are more likely than others to be unable to

<sup>45</sup> State Statistics Service of Ukraine - <https://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/>

<sup>46</sup> NGL.media (2023). The guys like it. Universities continue to make money on evaders - new wartime records. <https://ngl.media/2023/11/02/hloptsyam-tse-podobayetsya/>.

<sup>47</sup> The boys like it. Universities continue to make money on evaders - new wartime records, NGL.media. <https://ngl.media/2023/11/02/hloptsyam-tse-podobayetsya/>

receive education, even secondary education.<sup>48</sup> However, this is more likely due to family and parental preferences. The main reasons for the limited opportunities to study are the lack of convenient school transportation, the high cost of necessary supplies, and in the case of distance education (because of the COVID-19 pandemic and danger during hostilities) the lack of communication infrastructure and computers.<sup>49</sup>

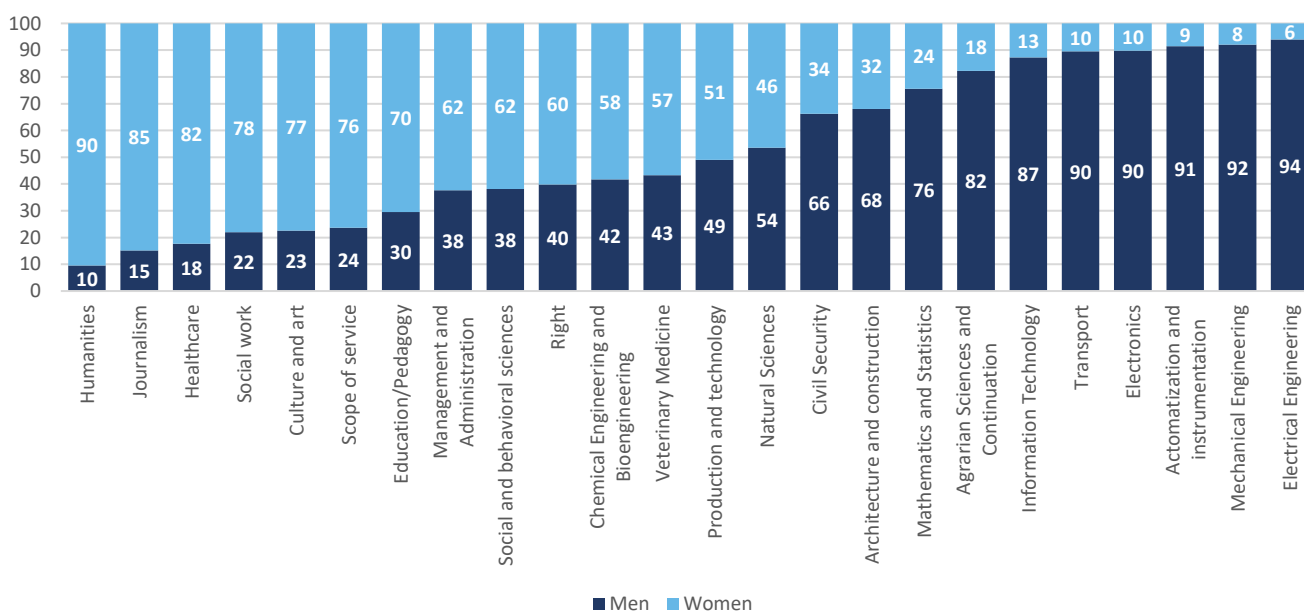
Gender inequality in education is shown from the moment girls and boys choose a profession. Differences in the choice of fields of study, their prestige and competitiveness in the labour market are evident.<sup>50</sup> This then significantly affects the opportunities for economic realization of labour potential. Like the labour market, the field of educational services at the post-secondary and higher education levels is traditionally clearly divided into predominantly female and predominantly male professions. No significant changes in the distribution have been observed in recent years.

Girls traditionally dominate in the humanities (90 per cent), journalism (85 per cent), healthcare

(82 per cent), social work (78 per cent), culture and arts (77 per cent), service sector (76 per cent), and education and pedagogy (70 per cent). Women also predominate among higher education students in such fields as international relations (64 per cent), management and administration (56 per cent) (although high administrative and managerial positions in the labour market remain much more accessible to men), and law (56 per cent).

The closest approximation to gender parity is observed in such fields as veterinary medicine, production and technology, and natural sciences (45 to 55 per cent). The fields of professional higher education where more students are male, from relatively moderate to completely, are civil security (66 per cent), architecture and construction (68 per cent), mathematics and statistics (76 per cent), agricultural sciences and food (82 per cent), information technology (87 per cent), transport (90 per cent), electronics, automation and electronic communications (90 per cent), automation and instrumentation (91 per cent), mechanical engineering (92 per cent), and electrical engineering (94 per cent).

**Figure 9. Gender distribution of students of professional higher education institutions by field of study<sup>51</sup>**



The share of women who are guided by their own desire, personal interests and skills when choosing a profession has increased from 20 per cent in 2021 to 69 per cent in 2023. However, while the influence

of parents on women's career choices has decreased from 42 per cent to 37 per cent, their support (mostly financial) for women's career choices has increased significantly, from 63 per cent

<sup>48</sup> UNDP (2023). Assessment of the impact of war on people. June. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-09/undp-ua-hia-ukr-2.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> UN Women and CARE (2022). Rapid gender analysis of the situation in Ukraine. [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/RGA%20of%20Ukraine\\_UKR-1.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/RGA%20of%20Ukraine_UKR-1.pdf).

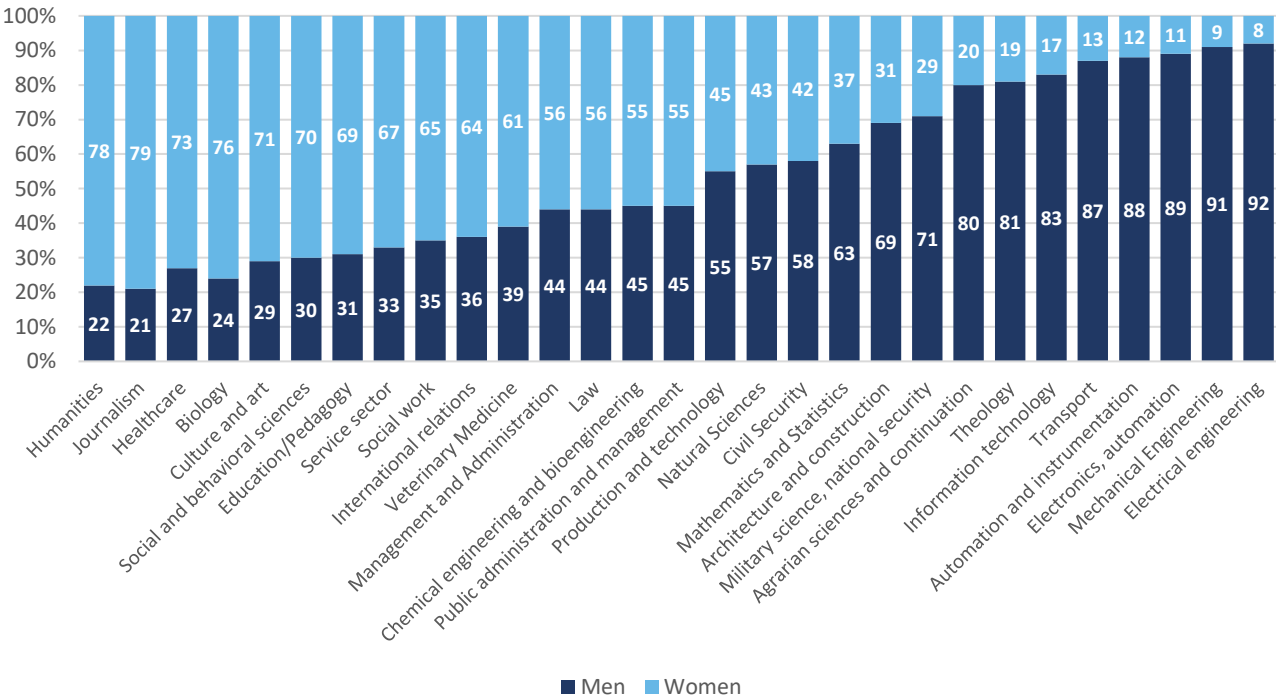
<sup>50</sup> National Institute for Strategic Studies. Gender Disparities in Ukraine during the War. <https://niss.gov.ua/news/komentari-ekspertiv/henderni-dysproportsiyi-v-ukrayini-pid-chas-viyny>

<sup>51</sup> State Statistics Service of Ukraine - <https://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/>

to 84 per cent. Positive trends also include a decrease from 41 per cent in 2021 to 35 per cent in 2023 in the proportion of women who do not work

in the specialty acquired in an educational institution.

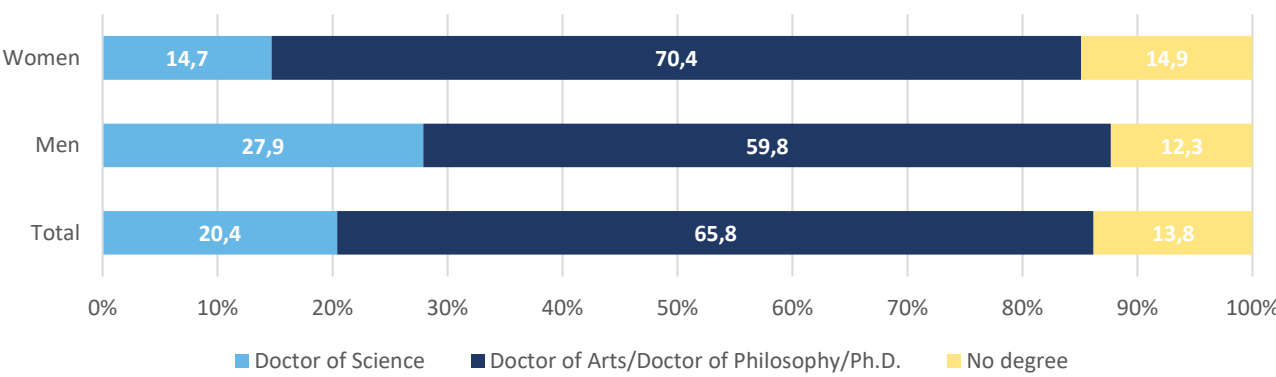
**Figure 10. Gender distribution of students in higher education institutions by field of study**



Cultural frameworks and stereotypes in education create barriers to women's career development and leadership positions in vocational, professional higher education and higher education. In general, women's representation in education is about 78.3 per cent of the total number of people working in this sector. However, the ratio of women to men differs at different levels of the hierarchy and at different levels of education. While women make

up 98.3 per cent of the staff in pre-school education institutions, this percentage is much lower in higher education institutions.<sup>52</sup> According to the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance, as of the beginning of 2024, there were more women in the teaching staff (57 per cent).<sup>53</sup> However, they are less likely than men to have a doctoral degree (14.7 per cent of women compared to 27.9 per cent of men).

**Figure 11. Gender balance of academic degree holders among university staff in the academic year 2023/2024<sup>54</sup>**

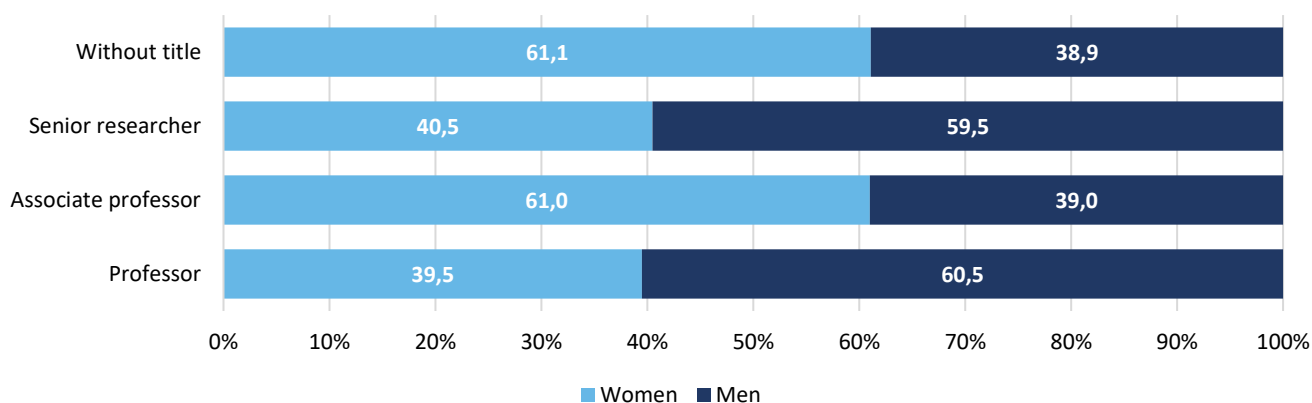


<sup>52</sup> The Strategy for Gender Equality in Education: What it is really about and why it matters. <https://varosh.com.ua/life/strategiya-gendernoyi-rivnosti-v-osviti-pro-shho-vona-naspravdi-i-chomu-cze-vazhlyvo/>  
<sup>53</sup> Report on the quality of higher education in Ukraine, its compliance with the tasks of sustainable innovative development of society in 2023 / 2024 academic year. National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. <https://naqa.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%96%D0%B4%D1%8C-2023-%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BA%D1%83.pdf>  
<sup>54</sup> Ibid

Among Doctor of Sciences, the proportion of men is 58.8 per cent, Doctors of Arts - 76.2 per cent, while among Candidates of Sciences, 39 per cent are men and 61 per cent are women, and among Doctors of Philosophy, the situation is similar - 38.9 per cent are men and 61.1 per cent are women. Among teachers who do not have a degree, 38.3 per cent are men and 61.7 per cent are women. The gender bias is undeniable.

There is also an imbalance among university employees with academic titles: 21.8 per cent of men and 10.7 per cent of women have a professor's certificate, 39.8 per cent of men and 46.8 per cent of women have an associate professor's certificate, 4.3 per cent of men and 2.2 per cent of women have a senior researcher's certificate, and 31.1 per cent of men and 40.2 per cent of women do not have an academic title.

**Figure 12. Gender balance of academic titles among university staff in the academic year 2023/2024<sup>55</sup>**



According to the Institute of Educational Analytics, the share of men among the teaching staff of general secondary education institutions in 2022/23 was 7.6 per cent and a 92.4 per cent share for women. Despite the total predominance of women working in educational institutions, their representation in management is much lower. For example, according to the State Statistics Service, as of 1 November 2023, the share of women heads of preschool education institutions is 99 per cent, primary education is 89.7 per cent, and general secondary education is 74 per cent. However, at the higher levels, the share of women heads is much lower: vocational education at 32.3 per cent, professional pre-university education at 44.5 per cent, and higher education at 26.7 per cent.<sup>56</sup>

In Ukraine, there is a significant discrepancy between a worker's occupation or role in the workplace and their educational qualifications. This can indicate the prevalence of horizontal and vertical gender segregation, which can significantly limit women's economic opportunities. One significant reason for the segregation is the lack of or biased professional and vocational guidance for young women. This can lead to girls and women choosing professions and future employment based on factors such as the influence of parents or the

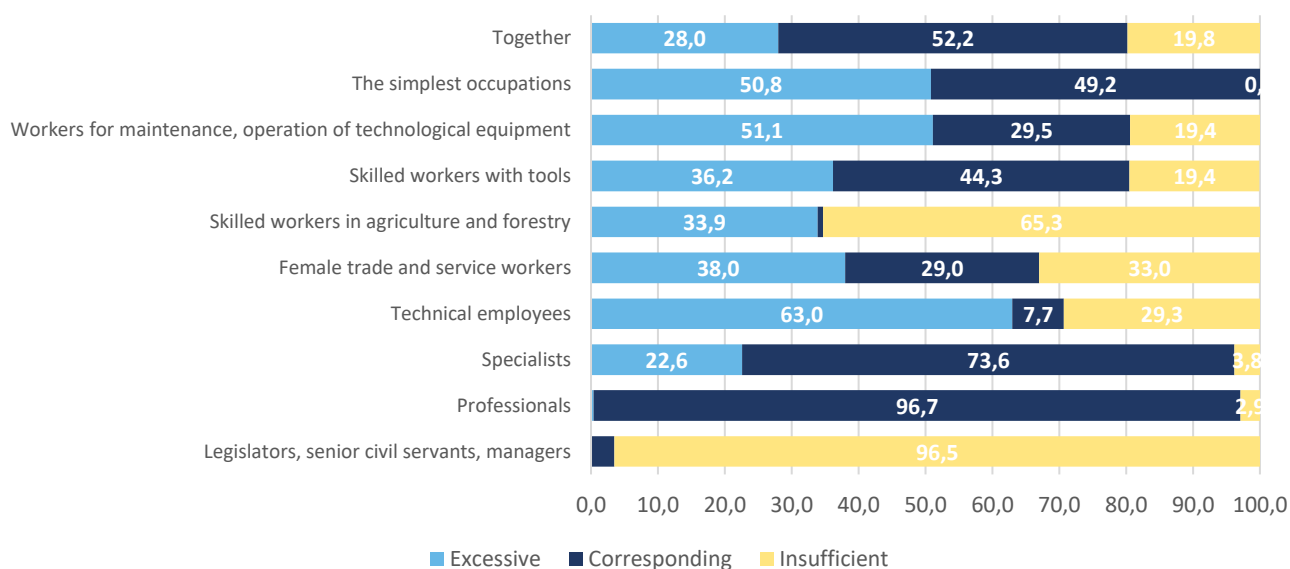
environment, prestige and profitability or even social stereotypes about "female" and "male" professions or activities. This can, in turn, lead to women's rejection of professions and types of employment which they might be interested or excel in.

According to the State Statistics Service, in 2021, 47.8 per cent of female employees had mismatched qualifications, of which 28 per cent were overqualified and 19.8 per cent were underqualified. Among occupational groups, the highest level of matching qualifications was among professionals (96.7 per cent) and specialists (73.6 per cent), due to the high requirements for their professional education and experience. The highest levels of overqualification were observed among technical employees (63 per cent) and representatives of the most basic professions (50.8 per cent), as work in these jobs does not require a high level of professional knowledge and skills, which can be easily acquired directly at the workplace. The extremely high level of underqualification (96.5 per cent) among legislators, senior civil servants, executives and managers (administrators) is explained by the fact that there is no professional training provided for the roles or positions.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Monitoring study on the provision of pedagogical staff with the implementation of the NUS reform [https://iea.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/teaching-staff\\_2022.pdf](https://iea.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/teaching-staff_2022.pdf).

**Figure 13. Level of qualification of female employees by occupational groups and groups of professions and specialties according to diploma (certificate), per cent<sup>57</sup>**



The highest level of concentration of women who are overqualified (38 per cent) or underqualified (33 per cent) is in the trade and services sector. The reasons for this are that, on the one hand, these professions are among the most popular, and on the other hand, they do not require a high level of qualification, and vocational education institutions do not provide the necessary amount of training in this area.

The collecting of official information on the state of the labour market stopped with the beginning of the full-scale war, so this does not allow for a relevant assessment of changes in the structure of the matching of professions and qualifications over the past two years. Based on the data on the graduation of skilled workers by higher and vocational higher education institutions,<sup>58</sup> the dynamics of the number of employed workers by type of economic activity,<sup>59</sup> and taking into account the established reasons that have traditionally influenced the structure of matching professions and qualifications among women, the following can be expected in the short term:

- The preservation of the structure of qualification level matching by such professional groups as

legislators, senior civil servants, executives, managers, professionals, specialists and the simplest occupations; the basic prerequisites for the relationship between relevant and inappropriate qualifications, including the requirements for experience, education and skill development that are specific to these professional groups, will remain unchanged.

- An increase in the share of overqualified technical and trade and service workers due to the lack of a sufficient number of female workers in this group of professions being trained by vocational education institutions.
- An increase in the proportion of women with insufficient qualifications in such occupational groups as skilled workers in agriculture and forestry, fish farming and fishing, skilled tool workers, and workers in the maintenance, operation and control of technological equipment. There is an obvious need to replace jobs from which men were mobilized, which leads to the spread among employers of the practice of training workers in these occupational groups directly at the workplace.

<sup>57</sup> Labour force of Ukraine 2021: Statistical collection - Kyiv: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2022.

[https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat\\_u/2022/zb/07/zb\\_RS\\_2021.pdf](https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2022/zb/07/zb_RS_2021.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Higher and vocational education in Ukraine. [https://ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2021/osv/vush\\_osv/arh\\_vuz\\_20\\_u.html](https://ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2021/osv/vush_osv/arh_vuz_20_u.html)

<sup>59</sup> Number of Employed Workers in Business Entities by Type of Economic Activity (2010–2022).

[https://ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2022/fin/pssg/kzpsg\\_ek\\_2010\\_2021.xlsx](https://ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2022/fin/pssg/kzpsg_ek_2010_2021.xlsx)



## 5.2. Skills accumulation and self-development opportunities for women

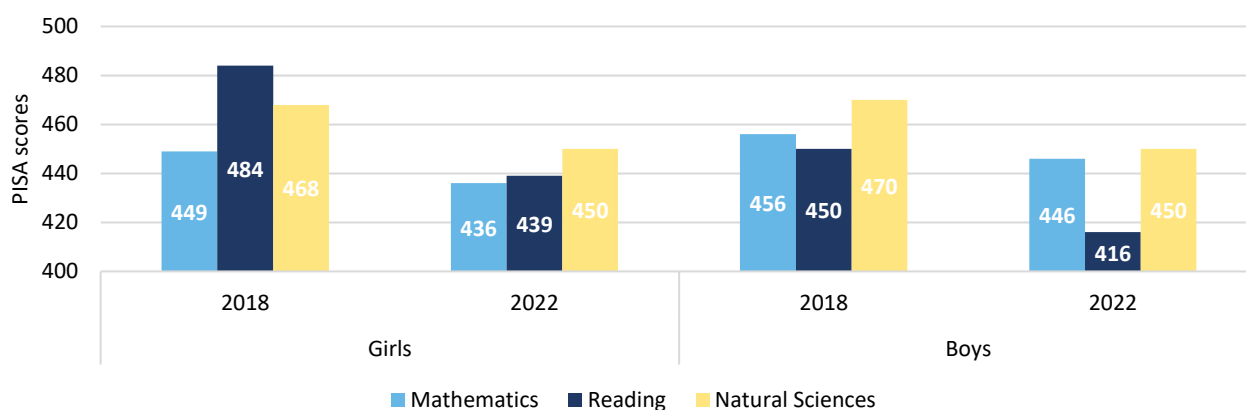
There are changes in the gender differences in learning outcomes in the subject areas of secondary school apprenticeships, which is further reflected in the behavioural patterns of girls and boys in choosing their future profession. In the four years between the 2018 and 2022 cycles of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), student performance in all three subject areas deteriorated for both boys and girls. The decline in reading results is particularly noticeable:



*A long time ago, I read a study that suggested that boys are stronger in math than girls. Girls are the humanities: literature, writing, and boys are stronger in math. But if you look at my classes, and I studied at three schools, the level of girls in the exact sciences was higher than that of boys.*

*Head of the company*

**Figure 14. Average performance of 15-year-olds between the 2018 and 2022 PISA cycles in mathematics, reading, and science in Ukraine, by gender<sup>60</sup>**



Gender gaps in performance remained almost unchanged in most subjects, but narrowed markedly in reading. However, the narrowing of the gender gap in reading (from 33 points in 2018 to 23 points in 2022) is not due to the improved performance of boys but to a decline in girls' performance. It is likely that the large-scale closure of schools, overcrowding in schools with bomb shelters and in settlements with a large number of IDPs, the massive introduction of distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the significant persistence of this practice during war had a greater impact on girls.

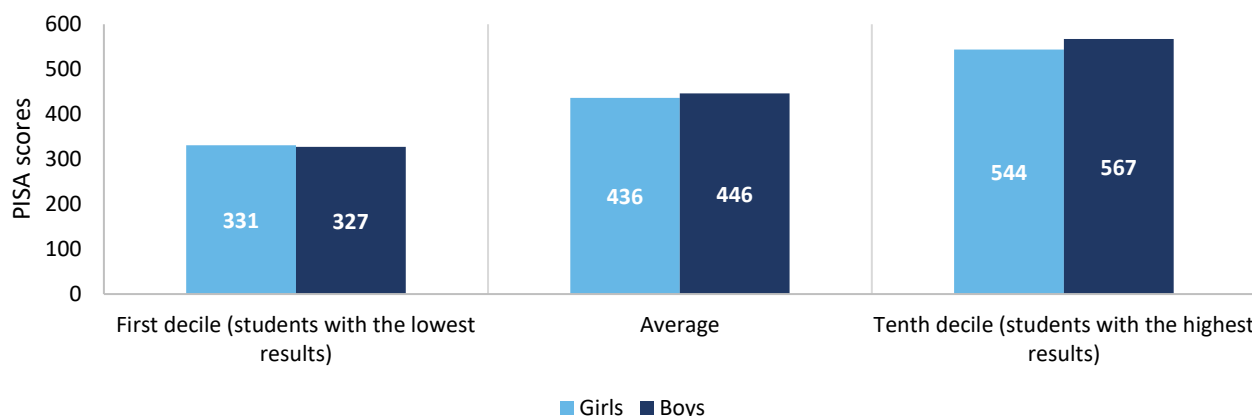
There is virtually no gap in performance in science subjects. At the same time, girls perform worse in

math. This is also confirmed by the data of the national monitoring of the quality of primary education for 2021,<sup>61</sup> according to which the average result in mathematics for boys is higher (446 points) than for girls (436 points). Analysing the difference in scores between the most and least successful students can complement the overall picture. Figure 15 shows not only gender differences in average results, but also differences in the first and tenth deciles of the distribution. The gender gap among the lowest performing students is 4 points, with girls outperforming boys, and among the highest performing students it is 23 points in favour of boys.

<sup>60</sup> National report on the results of the international study of the quality of education PISA 2022. [https://pisa.testportal.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PISA-2022\\_Nacjonalnyj-zvit\\_povnyj.pdf](https://pisa.testportal.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PISA-2022_Nacjonalnyj-zvit_povnyj.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> Report on the results of the second cycle of the nationwide external monitoring of the quality of primary education "State of Formation of Reading and Mathematical Competencies of Primary School Graduates of General Secondary Education Institutions" 2021

**Figure 15. Gender differences in math achievement between the highest and lowest performing students in Ukraine<sup>62</sup>**



According to a survey conducted by the United Nations Population Fund in 2021 on “What Guides Ukrainians in Choosing a Career,” the majority of Ukrainians (56 per cent) believe that there are professions for men or women only. Men are more likely to agree with this (59 per cent) than women (53 per cent). This opinion is shared by half of young people aged 14 to 24.<sup>63</sup> Girls still pay less attention to studying STEM sciences, which is due to various reasons, including stereotypes about women's participation in science and engineering and the attitude of those in the girls' environment (family, school, friends) to these opportunities. However, women are underrepresented in STEM fields not only because they face prejudice, but also because some doubt their ability to work in technical fields.<sup>64</sup>

The results of the in-depth interviews and focus groups also show that there are established stereotypes that influence girls' early educational specialization and their success in technical subjects. It is likely that girls do not choose mathematically intensive majors because of their preferences. An important role in choosing a specialty is played by the professions of parents and other people who are role models. For example, studies in other countries show that girls whose parents (especially mothers) work in science or technical professions choose STEM specialties much more often. “Role models” can also be teachers of science and math at school, and well-known women in business. The presence of successful women in

“non-feminine professions” can break down stereotypes about certain professions to women.

The lack of appropriate infrastructure has a negative impact on the prospects for studying technical disciplines. According to the Institute of Educational Analytics, STEM laboratories are available in only 5.1 per cent of Ukrainian secondary schools.<sup>65</sup> The main reason is lack of funds (85.4 per cent). The greatest help in creating and maintaining these laboratories comes from government subsidies (31.8 per cent) or communities/cities (32.9 per cent). Among institutions with STEM laboratories, only 38 per cent have the necessary teaching staff and 31.8 per cent have the necessary equipment. For the full functioning of STEM laboratories, general secondary education institutions reported the most need for modern equipment, especially those related to virtual reality: virtual reality glasses (84.5 per cent), 3D printers and virtual biology laboratories (62.2 per cent each) and virtual chemistry laboratories (61 per cent), etc.

Women are generally inclined to learn and retrain for other professions and accumulate skills, but current opportunities have deteriorated significantly. The study, *Skills for the Labour Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors*, shows that only 27.7 per cent of women (compared to 32.3 per cent of men) want to work only in the profession they have already had. Instead, the majority of respondents are ready to

<sup>62</sup> National report on the results of the international study of the quality of education PISA-2022. [https://pisa.testportal.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PISA-2022\\_Naczionalnyj-zvit\\_povnyj.pdf](https://pisa.testportal.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PISA-2022_Naczionalnyj-zvit_povnyj.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> United Nations Population Fund, *What guides Ukrainians in choosing a profession: Results of a national public opinion survey on key factors and stereotypes*, UNFPA, Kyiv, February 2021. See here: [https://ukraine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/prezation\\_trampoline\\_eng\\_3\\_1.pdf](https://ukraine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/prezation_trampoline_eng_3_1.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> Gender and STEM: Inequality of abilities or self-esteem? <https://trueua.info/news/gender-i-nerivnist-zdibnostej-chi-samoocinki>

<sup>65</sup> Monitoring study on the readiness of pedagogical staff to implement the New Ukrainian School (information and analytical materials). Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, SSI “Institute of Educational Analytics”, 2023. [https://iea.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/teaching-staff\\_2023.pdf](https://iea.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/teaching-staff_2023.pdf)

learn a new profession or specialty (67.3 per cent of women vs 65.8 per cent of men).<sup>66</sup> In the current context, women use private non-formal education services less, preferring vouchers for training from the State Employment Service, retraining courses at enterprises themselves or educational hubs commissioned by these enterprises. In 2023, more than 18,000 Ukrainians received such vouchers

(most, 72 per cent, were used by women). The most popular specialties among women are psychology, healthcare, education and social work. At the same time, women are increasingly choosing to study to become drivers, security guards, tractor drivers, turners, electric and gas welders, and electric cart drivers.<sup>67</sup>



*I am ready to change my profession. I am also ready to change to a man's profession, if, say, I can physically comprehend and overcome it, then, of course, there are no limits to our capabilities. Am I ready to study now? Yes, we learn all our lives. It can be systematic or unsystematic, but I am definitely open to something new and ready to learn something at some courses. Academic education will most likely not suit me, but in general I am ready to learn.*

*Unemployed woman*



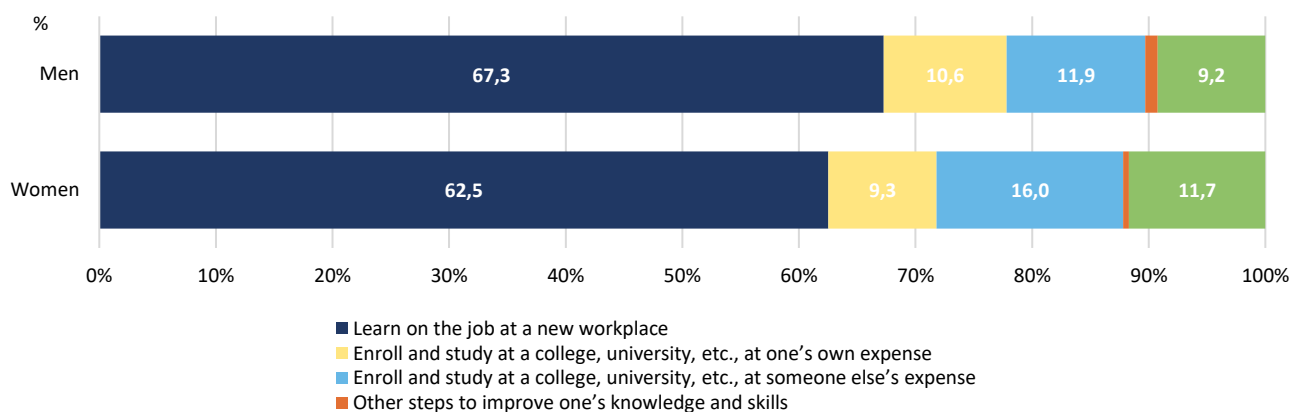
*We had a request from Kyivpastrans that they were short of staff and would be happy to hire women. That's how we came up with the idea to launch an electrician course. It was an intensive month of training: theory and practice. We have 18 graduates. And now we are looking for a place for them to do their internships. Then they will be able to find a job, work as electricians' assistants at first and gain further knowledge in practice.*

*Representative of a civil society organization*

Further results of the study show that almost a fifth of women surveyed are ready to acquire new professions, knowledge, skills and abilities during the full-scale invasion (see Figure 16). The majority of them (62.5 per cent) are ready to study for a new job in the course of their work (67.3 per cent among men). 9.3 per cent are ready to enrol and study at a college or university at their own expense, and 16

per cent are ready to enrol and study at a college or university not at their own expense (among men, 10.6 per cent and 11.9 per cent, respectively). The main reasons that motivate women to learn new skills are lack of money (39.9 per cent) and the emergence of attractive jobs (36.9 per cent). The lack of jobs in their current profession and specialty was mentioned by 17.7 per cent of respondents.

**Figure 16. Gender differences in opportunities and priorities for learning and acquiring new knowledge in adulthood<sup>68</sup>**



<sup>66</sup> GIZ, 2024. *Skills for the Labour Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors (2023–2024)*.

<sup>67</sup> Support for women in business and employment: The Ministry of Economy described the programmes available in Ukraine. <https://espresso.tv/pidtrimka-zhinok-u-biznesi-ta-pratsevlashtuvanni-minekonomiki-rozpovilo-pro-nayavni-v-ukraini-programi>

<sup>68</sup> GIZ, 2024. *Skills for the Labour Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors (2023–2024)*.

Gender aspects are not adequately taken into account in educational policy at all levels, including in the content of curricula. There are two important documents in Ukraine that regulate gender equality in education: *The Strategy for Implementation of Gender Equality in Education until 2030*<sup>69</sup> and *The State Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men until 2030*<sup>70</sup>. Both documents are aimed at improving the mechanisms for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men. One of the main tasks is to create conditions for reducing the influence of gender stereotypes on the choice of future profession for girls and boys. This is to be achieved by expanding opportunities for girls to receive STEM education, using the same curriculum in all subjects, eliminating the publication of textbooks with discriminatory content, and applying positive measures to increase the number of girls in the specialties that are in greatest demand in the labour market.

For six years, primary and secondary education institutions have been teaching according to the New Ukrainian School programmes, and new strategies and requirements for curricula and textbooks are emerging. In particular, discriminatory and stereotypical images and texts are being removed from textbooks, anti-discrimination expertise of educational content is being conducted, and feminist language is being actively introduced into the educational process. However, although there has been a 42 per cent increase in the share of textbooks in general education institutions that take into account the anti-discrimination approach, the quality of such educational materials is not always satisfactory.<sup>71</sup>

Gender-based discrimination remains a problem in subjects such as labour training and defence of the homeland. There is also a low level of gender sensitivity among educators, a lack of a comprehensive system of gender education, and limited availability of specialized training and curricula for educators and education policymakers. Worryingly, textbooks and curricula still pay

insufficient attention to such important topics as gender equality, anti-harassment, prevention of gender-based violence, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Thus, the main problems and barriers to the realization of women's economic opportunities in education in Ukraine are as follows:

- Vertical and horizontal gender segregation in education
- High prevalence of gender stereotypes in the process of raising children, education at school and in the choice of profession
- Low application of gender approaches in the development and implementation of training programmes for students
- Limited access to education for various groups of female students, primarily residents of rural areas, Roma children, people with disabilities, and people of pre-retirement age who need retraining
- Limited access to distance education for low-income families, families with many children, children living in rural areas, children with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups of children and families
- Low share of female students in STEM education
- Lack of an effective system of professional orientation for women, which opens up opportunities for the spread of gender stereotypes regarding the choice of profession, professional training, employment and career building
- Low efficiency or lack of interaction between vocational training institutions and employers in identifying their needs for qualified personnel, which leads to the training of women in professions for which there will be limited demand
- Limited access to professional development or retraining programmes for women who want to change their previously chosen profession.

<sup>69</sup> On approval of the Strategy for Implementing Gender Equality in Education until 2030 and approval of the Operational Action Plan for 2022–2024 for its implementation: Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of December 20, 2022, No. 1163-r. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1163-2022-%D1%80#Text>

<sup>70</sup> State Strategy for Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men until 2030. <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/uriadom-skhaleno-derzhavnu-stratehiu-zabezpechennia-rivnykh-prav-ta-mozhlyvostei-zhinok-i-cholovikiv-na-period-do-2030-roku>

<sup>71</sup> Gender profile of the country Ukraine. <https://euneighbourseast.eu/uk/news/publications/gendernyj-profil-krayiny-ukrayina/>

## 6. THE POTENTIAL FOR WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE LABOUR MARKET

### 6.1. The problem of employment and sustainable employment

The findings of the study on women's employment in the labour market indicate significant problems in the employment and retention of women in the workplace. Even before the full-scale invasion began, the number of unemployed women and the overall unemployment rate in Ukraine had been increasing. According to the State Statistics Service, 841,600 women were unemployed in 2021, while in 2019 the number was 679,800, and the female unemployment rate increased from 7.9 to 10.2 per cent over the same period. The main contribution to the growth of these indicators was the increase in the unemployment rate of women aged 15–24 (increasing from 15.3 per cent in 2019 to 20.3 per cent in 2021) and of women 35–39 (which increased from 8 per cent to 12.1 per cent).<sup>72</sup> These young women have not been able to find a job and stay in the workplace due to lack of experience and employers' biased attitudes towards the prospects of having children and using parental and sick leave. For women aged 35–39, the biggest barriers to employment were likely the need to regain skills after returning from a long leave and the desire to find a suitable job that would allow them to pay more attention to family, childcare and education in conditions of limited access to appropriate facilities.

The curtailment or complete cessation of activities of a significant number of enterprises, large-scale displacement of people from combat zones to settlements with a narrow labour market, and the lack of the required number of pre-school and out-of-school care facilities have significantly limited women's economic opportunities. For example, according to the Confederation of Employers of Ukraine, in 2022 and 10 months of 2023, companies fired almost twice as many women as men (1.5 million women vs 0.78 million men).<sup>73</sup> Some of them started actively looking for jobs, while others, due to despair and lack of real employment

opportunities, turned to a strategy of economic inactivity.

Due to the stopping of official labour force surveys, it is only possible to assess the problem of unemployment among women according to official data from the State Employment Service, which covers only registered unemployment, while the scale of total unemployment among women is much higher. The number of registered unemployed women decreased from 670,300 in 2021 to 348,000 in 2023. However, such changes were not due to a decrease in the likelihood of women being laid off or a reduction in the time it took them to find a job and get employed. The main reasons for this are the occupation of parts of Ukraine where there is no registration of the unemployed and the forced large-scale migration of women abroad. The reduction in the number of registered unemployed women was also influenced by a decrease in the permissible periods of coverage by the State Employment Service and the amount of unemployment benefits.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, against the backdrop of a noticeable decrease in the number of officially unemployed women, their share among all unemployed increased. This is primarily due to the reluctance of men to register as unemployed, as registration required them to provide a note on their military registration.<sup>75</sup>

According to sociological research, the total unemployment rate among women in 2023 is lower than among men: 12.3 per cent compared to 15.7 per cent.<sup>76</sup> This rate is highest among women aged 18–24 (31.4 per cent), 25–29 (15.1 per cent), and 30–34 (14.3 per cent), reflecting the activity of these groups in pursuing economic opportunities, on the one hand, and the existence of significant barriers despite the existing shortage of personnel in the economy, on the other.

<sup>72</sup> Labour Force of Ukraine 2021: Statistical collection. Kyiv: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2022.

[https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat\\_u/2022/zb/07/zb\\_RS\\_2021.pdf](https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2022/zb/07/zb_RS_2021.pdf).

<sup>73</sup> The market has lost more than 2 million people: which businesses have suffered from the mobilization of employees in the Armed Forces.

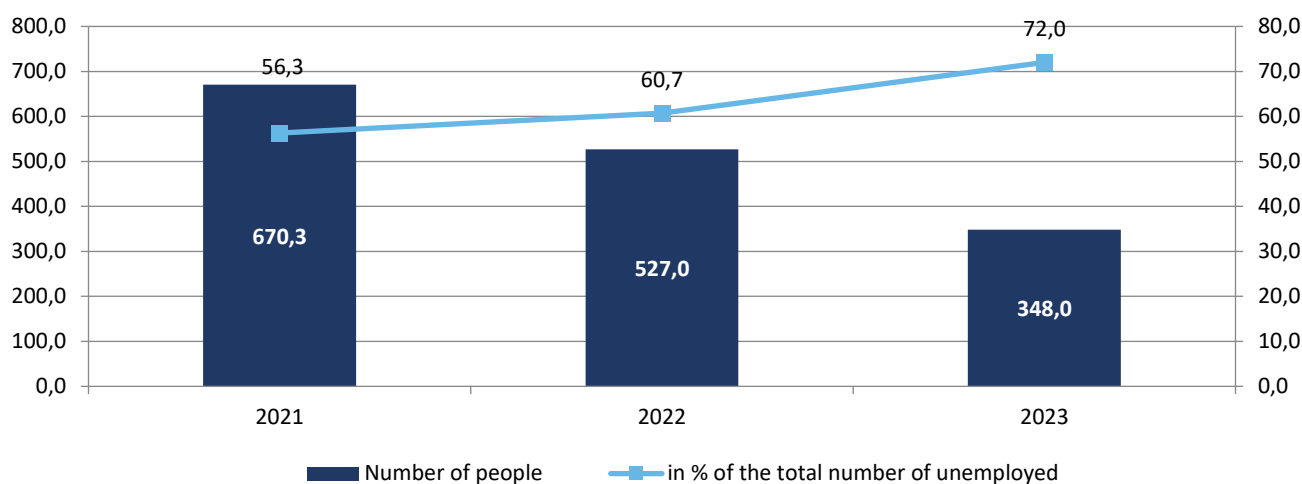
<https://focus.ua/uk/eksklyuzivny/621976-rinok-praci-vtrativ-ponad-2-mln-osib-yakij-biznes-postrazhdav-vid-mobilizaciyi-pracivnikov-u-zsu>

<sup>74</sup> The Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Reforming the Employment Service, Social Unemployment Insurance, Promoting Productive Employment of the Population, including Youth, and Implementing New Active Labour Market Programs" of 21.09.2022 No. 2622-IX - <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2622-20#Text>

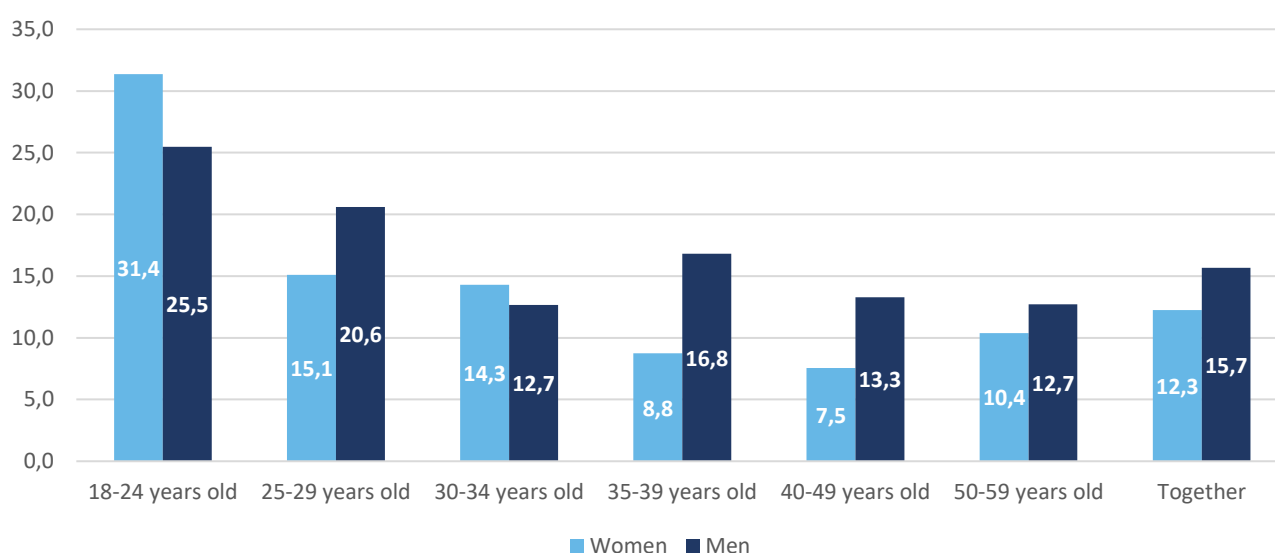
<sup>75</sup> CMU Resolution of December 30, 2022, No. 1487 "On Approval of the Procedure for Organizing and Maintaining Military Registration of Conscripts, Persons Liable for Military Service and Reservists". - <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-zatverdzhennia-poriadku-orhanizatsii-ta-vedennia-viiskovoho-obliku-pryzovnykh-viiskovozoboviazanykh-ta-rezervistiv-i301222-1487>

<sup>76</sup> The results of a sociological survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre's sociological service from 28 September to 4 October 2023.

**Figure 17. Dynamics of the number and share of registered unemployed women in 2021–2023** <sup>77,78, 79</sup>



**Figure 18. Unemployment rates by age among men and women in 2023** <sup>80</sup>



Women's unemployment in Ukraine, both before the full-scale war and now, is long-term: about 34 per cent of women are unemployed and have not been able to find a job for more than a year. In such circumstances, almost 11 per cent of women feel discouraged about their prospects of finding suitable work.<sup>81</sup> This is due to a combination of reasons: first, the structural imbalance of the market; second, the existence of barriers and

stereotypes against women; and third, the pragmatic desire of some women to remain unemployed, in particular to receive unemployment benefits. However, prolonged unemployment has a negative impact on future employment prospects for both economic and psychological reasons, reducing women's overall ability to realize their potential.

<sup>77</sup> Situation on the registered labour market and activities of the State Employment Service in January–December 2021. [https://old.dcz.gov.ua/sites/default/files/infofiles/sytuaciya\\_na\\_zareyestrovnomu\\_rp\\_ta\\_diyalnist\\_dsz\\_12\\_2021\\_0.xlsx](https://old.dcz.gov.ua/sites/default/files/infofiles/sytuaciya_na_zareyestrovnomu_rp_ta_diyalnist_dsz_12_2021_0.xlsx)

<sup>78</sup> Situation on the registered labour market and activities of the State Employment Service in January–December 2022. [https://old.dcz.gov.ua/sites/default/files/infofiles/sytuaciya\\_na\\_zareyestrovnomu\\_rp\\_ta\\_diyalnist\\_dsz\\_12\\_2022\\_0.xlsx](https://old.dcz.gov.ua/sites/default/files/infofiles/sytuaciya_na_zareyestrovnomu_rp_ta_diyalnist_dsz_12_2022_0.xlsx)

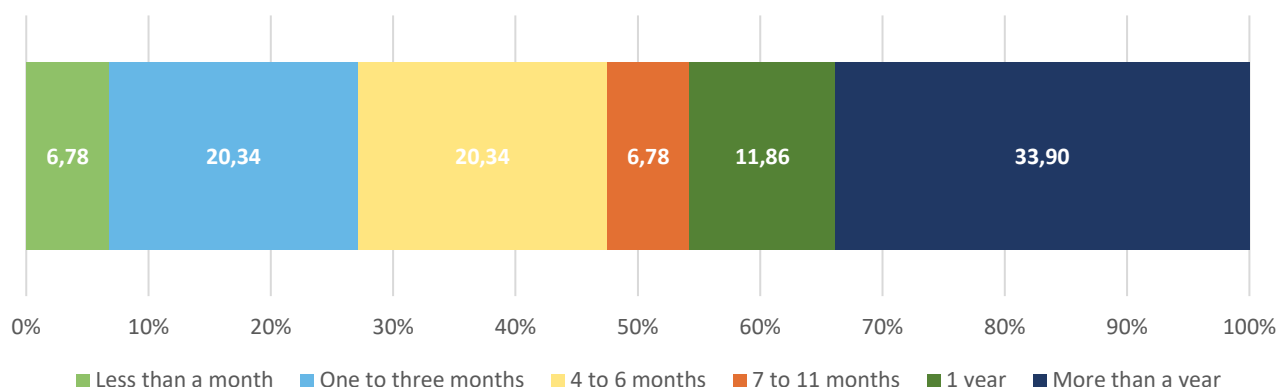
<sup>79</sup> Situation on the registered labour market and activities of the State Employment Service in January–December 2023. [https://old.dcz.gov.ua/sites/default/files/infofiles/sytuaciya\\_na\\_zareyestr\\_rp\\_ta\\_diyalnist\\_dsz\\_12\\_2023\\_0.xlsx](https://old.dcz.gov.ua/sites/default/files/infofiles/sytuaciya_na_zareyestr_rp_ta_diyalnist_dsz_12_2023_0.xlsx)

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.



Figure 19. Duration of female unemployment, according to sociological surveys<sup>82</sup>



The Ukrainian labour market is undergoing significant changes in the context of the war, from a shortage of jobs at the beginning of the full-scale invasion to a steadily increasing labour shortage at the current stage, resulting in some improvement in employment opportunities for and the sustainable employment of women. It is highly likely that this trend will continue due to the withdrawal of a

significant number of men from the labour market for reasons related to military operations, and subsequently, the needs for their physical and social adaptation or rehabilitation, restoration or acquisition of new professional knowledge and skills. In such circumstances, the growing need for labour can be addressed by increasing the involvement of women in economic recovery.

« *Now it seems that women have more opportunities. Employers are hiring women for vacancies where they used to see only men. Many men have stood up to defend the Motherland. There are vacancies, and employers are ready to consider women, give them the opportunity to study, retrain, and do internships to fill these vacancies. Production cannot stop.*

*Representative of the State Employment Service*

However, against the backdrop of growing employment opportunities for women, which have emerged as a response to the decline in the number of able-bodied men in the economy and the shortage of labour, new discriminatory factors and barriers to the realization of women's labour

potential are emerging. Focus group discussions described the increased competition between men and women for quality jobs, resulting in discriminatory hiring practices for high-paying and promising jobs, mostly for men.

« *I've encountered a situation where employers are more likely to choose men when looking for a job, especially when it comes to attractive jobs with a social package and good salary. You go through all the stages of the interview, and already at the offer stage you are rejected, and then I find out that a man was hired for the position, and this has happened many times.*

*Unemployed woman*

There is not always fair competition between men and women in sectors that have the possibility of reserving employees from mobilization (education, science, critical infrastructure and the supply of the

Armed Forces of Ukraine). Women report not only difficulties in finding employment in these sectors, but also illegal dismissal of women or reductions of workload due to the employer's desire to free up

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

jobs for men. Such situations have begun to be observed even in traditionally female sectors in Ukraine, such as education. Other critical

infrastructure sectors, such as the energy sector, which had previously been staffed mainly by men, have become even less accessible to women.



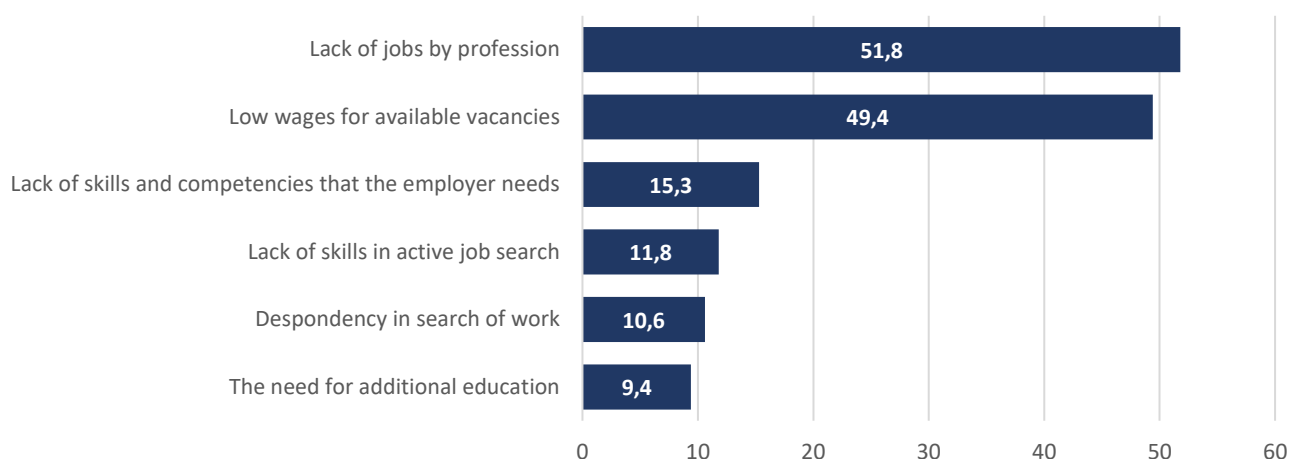
*At the end of this school year, some of the women in our school were fired or had their workload reduced for the next school year. This is all done with a significant shortage of staff at the school. The principal wants to hire men to fill the vacant hours and jobs to ensure that they are booked.*

*Female teacher*

Another challenge for women's employment is the structural imbalance of vacancies, for almost 52 per cent of women, the main reason for their current unemployment is the lack of jobs in their specialty, and for 15 per cent the lack of skills required by their specialty.<sup>83</sup> A significant obstacle is the lack of adaptation of certain jobs to women's physiological

characteristics. Solving this problem often requires additional investments that employers are not always ready to make. This raises the general problems of targeting and implementing educational programmes for women, promoting workplace modernization and giving women more skills.

**Figure 20. The main reasons for the inability to find a job, according to women** <sup>84</sup>



Generally, Ukrainians believe there are fewer gender differences between professions. For example, in 2023, 47 per cent of women believed that there was no distinction between professions in Ukraine, compared to 33 per cent in 2021.<sup>85</sup> However, the influence of internal stereotypes

about certain areas of activity is still significant. In fact, when it comes to personal professional development, women are often not ready to choose new development trajectories in traditionally “male” fields of activity, citing complexity and lack of prestige.



*I think that today the line between 'male' and 'female' professions is blurring. But I'm not ready to go to work at a factory or as a driver now, even if I'm offered a big enough salary, because it's hard and unprestigious.*

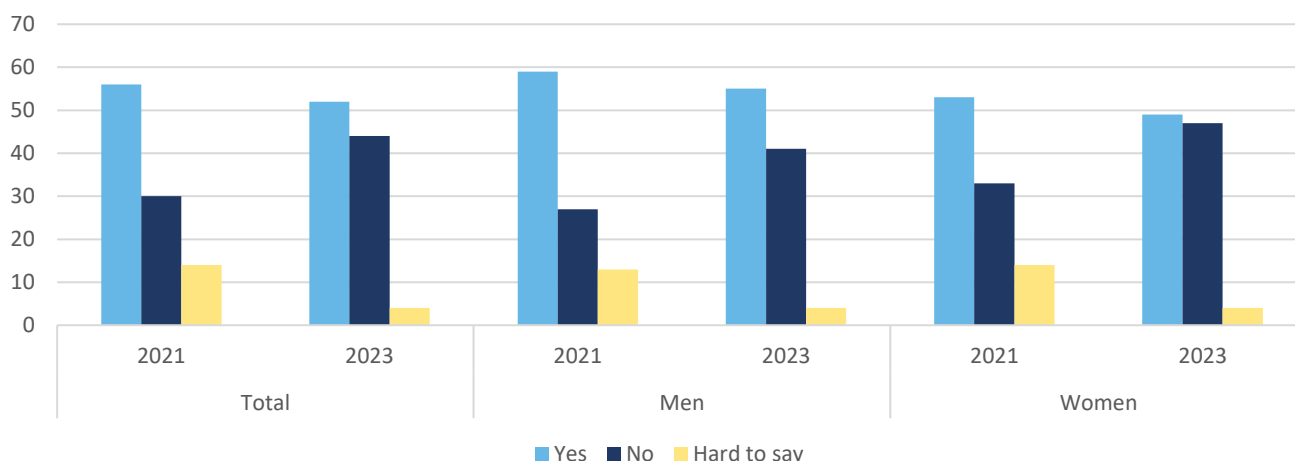
*Unemployed woman*

<sup>83</sup> Results of a sociological survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre's sociological service from 28 September to 4 October 2023.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> The impact of full-scale war on the choice of profession. [https://ukraine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ukr\\_2023\\_vplyv\\_povnomashtabnoi\\_viyyny\\_na\\_vybir\\_profesii.pdf](https://ukraine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ukr_2023_vplyv_povnomashtabnoi_viyyny_na_vybir_profesii.pdf)

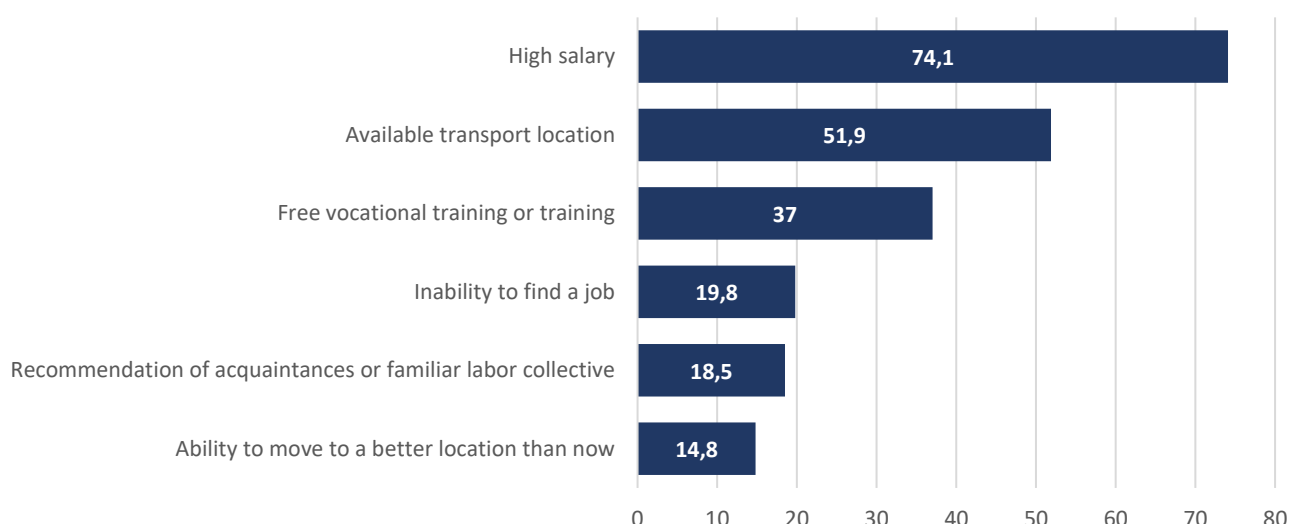
**Figure 21. The existence of a distinction between "male" and "female" professions in the opinion of the population of Ukraine<sup>86</sup>**



Unemployed women say the key factors that could encourage a change in profession are the size of the salary (74 per cent of unemployed women) and the

transport accessibility of the place of work (52 per cent).

**Figure 22. Conditions under which unemployed women would agree to change their occupation<sup>87</sup>**



Women in Ukraine are discriminated against in the labour market by age. The most vulnerable are women under 30 and women over 45. The first restriction is usually artificially created by

employers, due to the probable birth of a child and/or the presence of small children. The second is a classic example of a combination of ageism and gender discrimination.



*When I came to the interview, I was immediately asked if I was planning to have children in the near future, because I am young (I am 26 years old). I said no, not now, but in principle, in the future, of course. They refused, of course, they didn't give me a reason, but it was the same reason.*

*An IDP woman*

<sup>86</sup> The impact of full-scale war on the choice of profession. [https://ukraine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ukr\\_2023\\_vplyv\\_povnomasshtabnoi\\_viyiny\\_na\\_vybir\\_profesii.pdf](https://ukraine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ukr_2023_vplyv_povnomasshtabnoi_viyiny_na_vybir_profesii.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> GIZ, 2024. Skills for the Labour Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors (2023–2024).



*It is very difficult for young people to find a job now, firstly, because they have little experience and employers do not want to hire them, and secondly, because they have prospects of having children, which requires more time to raise them. It's easier for men.*

*Unemployed woman*

The problem of ageism is typical for both sexes, but its combination with gender discrimination inevitably leads to significantly higher vulnerability of women. A woman aged over 45 is three times less likely to be employed than a man of the same age. The main argument for refusing to hire is that employers point to outdated knowledge and skills, which is a subjectively biased attitude. Indeed,

according to numerous skills surveys in Ukraine, women demonstrate a greater willingness to retrain and learn than men of the same age group. In particular, 72 per cent of women are ready to retrain and acquire new skills that would allow them to find a job in case of job loss (compared to 45 per cent of men in the same group).<sup>88</sup>



*If you are already 45 plus, they will certainly not tell you to your face that you are not hired because you are 45 plus or 55 plus. They will find a lot of other reasons to refuse. And they will quietly look for a suitable candidate by age.*

*Unemployed woman*



*You may not see it in statistics or official reports, but we talk to women, and they tell us that it is harder for them to get a job than for men. They are more often rejected. They can be denied an interview because they are women. And if a woman is aged 45 to 55+, these problems are doubled. Yes, this fact is true.*

*Employee of the State Employment Center*

Marital status and the presence of small children are very influential factors in a woman's employment opportunities. First of all, the amount of unpaid household work increases, which becomes a barrier to entering the labour market, working full-time and realizing their professional goals. In today's Ukrainian context, the presence of young children is often a discriminatory factor in hiring, career development and obtaining certain social guarantees. In regions that have a more patriarchal system of social structure (most evident in western and central Ukraine), there are cases when a woman's partner and relatives in conservative families dictate the terms of prioritizing gender roles and fulfilling family responsibilities, and do not allow or put obstacles in

the way of a woman's employment and career growth.

Women's much greater involvement in raising children compared to men results in a real, not just artificial, shortage of modern skills, knowledge and employability skills. Research by the Razumkov Centre has shown that 15.3 per cent of unemployed women face the problem of lack of skills and competencies required by employers when looking for a job.<sup>89</sup> Focus group discussions revealed that these problems are caused by prolonged maternity leave and the loss of relevant knowledge and skills; the desire or need to change the type of activity; and overstated employer requirements for positions and skills.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Results of a sociological survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre's sociological service from 28 September to 4 October 2023.



*I realize that while I was on maternity leave, everything changed a lot. There are new programmes, methods of work that are on the verge of several industries. Even when I look at vacancies that are relevant to my previous experience, I realize that I am not suitable for half of them.*

*Unemployed woman*

Unemployed women have a harder time finding a job than men because of their personal lack of confidence in themselves and their abilities. A common situation in Ukraine is when women unknowingly underestimate their achievements, knowledge and experience when writing resumes

and going through interviews, which makes them look less competitive in the eyes of employers. The reasons for this situation lie in the initial conditions of girls' upbringing and personal prejudices that women have, as well as in their life experience, which has shaped their behavioural patterns.



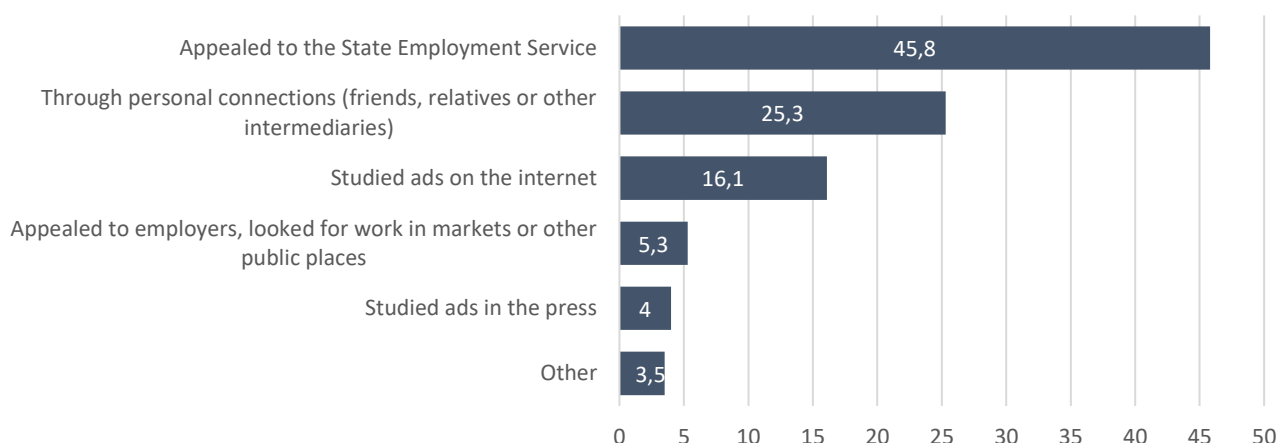
*I face a barrier: I think that I may not be suitable for a certain vacancy, although I have the skills and abilities, but in my head, I am stuck with the idea that 'no, this is not for you, you have wasted your time, you have lost these skills.*

*Unemployed woman*

One of the barriers that prevents women from speeding up the employment procedure is their lack of the necessary skills in job searching, resume writing and interview behaviour. In Ukraine, these skills are partially provided by the State Employment Service at the stage of assistance to the unemployed. However, due to the low level of public trust in this institution, which leads to a low level of registration, women often do not use the

available opportunities to obtain these skills (only 45 per cent of unemployed women surveyed had applied to an employment centre). Unwillingness to register with an employment centre and lack of information about the services it provides also reduces the level of women's participation in retraining programmes and starting their own businesses.

**Figure 23. The main ways unemployed women search for vacancies <sup>90</sup>**



Additional workplace requirements caused by the need to combine work with household responsibilities make it harder for women to find a job and be competitive. The focus group discussions reported the most common reasons for women's refusal to work are inaccessibility of transport to the

workplace (women consider up to 30 minutes by public transport to be the optimal distance to work); lack of flexible work schedules; overtime (which is often unpaid); informal employment; experiences of unfair behaviour of the company with its staff and low wages.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

« Women set additional conditions for work and for employers. Especially if a woman has minor children. It is more difficult for them to find a job because they need either a flexible schedule or a job closer to home so that they can pick up their children, for example, from kindergarten, or somehow control their child's attendance at school, especially if it is junior high school.

Career counsellor at an employment centre

« When choosing a job, I focus on the possibility of a 30-minute commute home. This is of utmost importance to me.

Unemployed woman

Women are more adaptive to change and adapt to a new job faster. They are more open to acquiring new knowledge and skills. This is noted by employers in some studies.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, statistics show that women are more vulnerable to dismissal at the initiative of employers (about 33 per cent compared to 21.5 per cent of unemployed men). This suggests that the problem of women's

dismissals is not their incompetence, but discrimination against women in the workplace, in particular due to established gender roles and stereotypes in society that make a woman's unemployment more acceptable than a man's, who, according to existing stereotypes, should provide for the family.

« They are almost monumental, these stereotypes: a man has to support his family, he has to get a bigger salary, and therefore he has to work more.

IDP woman

« At my previous place of work, there was a downsizing, and the manager chose me, a woman, to be fired, but kept my male colleague in the position, even though his sales performance was much lower than mine.

Unemployed woman

In summary, the following barriers and stereotypes to women's employment and retention in the workplace were identified:

- Discrimination against women due to the narrowing of access to economic sectors that provide for the reservation of jobs from mobilization
- Women's internal unwillingness to work in traditionally "male" positions and the inconsistency of these jobs with women's physiological characteristics
- Increased competition between women and men for higher quality, better-paid jobs, and employers prioritizing men in hiring
- Persistence of ageism towards both older and younger age groups of women
- Lack of proper access to childcare facilities and discrimination against women because they have small children
- A lack of updated skills caused by women's long periods of maternity leave
- Low level of women's confidence in their abilities and competence, which encourages them to seek employment in lower-quality jobs
- Lack of developed skills in job searching, resume writing and interview behaviour
- The need for workplaces to support a work-life balance and recognize women's household responsibilities.

<sup>91</sup> GIZ, 2024. *Skills for the Labour Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors (2023–2024)*.



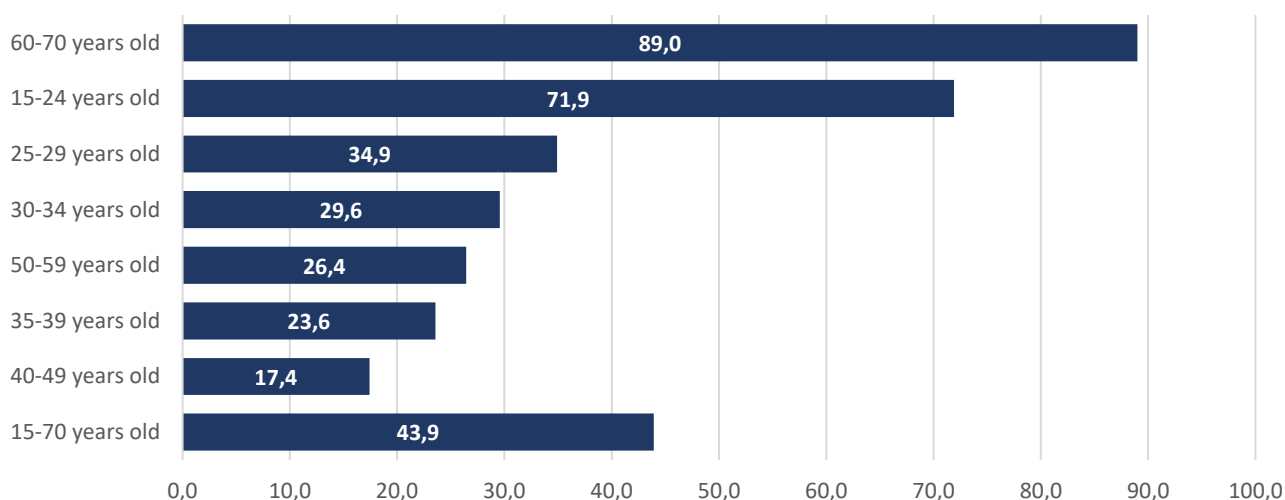
## 6.2. Opportunities and barriers for engaging economically inactive women in employment

Traditionally, Ukraine has a high level of economic inactivity among women. Women who do not offer their labour in the labour market form a significant labour potential for a gender-responsive recovery. The existence of a significant contingent of women who are neither working nor looking for work is due to a number of factors. According to the results of focus group studies, the most influential factors are being in full-time education (both general and vocational), an inability to work due to a physical condition, household duties and especially childcare and raising children, the need to care for disabled family members and the low level of wages.

Prior to the full-scale invasion, there were 3.4 times more women who were neither retired nor in school among the economically inactive population than men (2.1 million versus 0.61 million, respectively). At the same time, there was an

upward trend in both the absolute number and share of this group in the total population of women. Thus, according to official statistics, the total number of economically inactive women aged 15–70 years increased from 6,363,800 to 6,459,700 people from 2019 to 2021, and their share increased from 42.5 to 43.9 per cent.<sup>92</sup> Sociological research data for the period of the full-scale war in Ukraine indicate a high probability of this trend continuing. According to a survey conducted by the sociological group Rating in September 2023, 42 per cent of respondents (aged 18–70) considered themselves economically inactive.<sup>93</sup> It should be noted that this survey did not take into account women aged 15–17, among whom the vast majority are economically inactive, and thus the total economic inactivity of women aged 15–70 is likely to exceed the values obtained before the full-scale war.

**Figure 24. Proportion of women not in the labour force by age group in 2021, per cent of women in the corresponding age group<sup>94</sup>**



The high proportion of economically inactive women in the 60–70 (89 per cent) and 15–24 (71.9 per cent) age groups does not raise significant concerns, as it is associated with leaving the labour force due to retirement age (for the older group) or enrolment in education (for the younger group). However, the labour force participation rate of women aged 25–29 (34.9 per cent) and 30–34 (29.6 per cent) remains problematic, and according to

estimates did not change significantly during the full-scale war.

If focusing on women aged 15 to 60, i.e. the potential labour force, the main reasons for unemployment, according to official statistics in 2021 were domestic (family) responsibilities (53 per cent of economically inactive women) and study (28.6 per cent, most of whom were young women

<sup>92</sup> Labour Force of Ukraine 2021: Statistical collection - Kyiv: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2022.

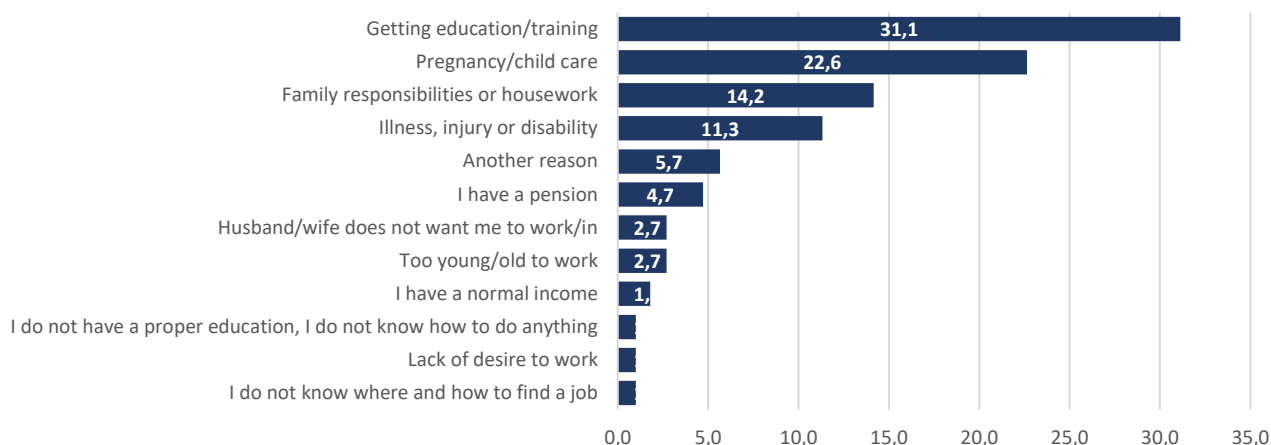
<sup>93</sup> All-Ukrainian survey. September 2023. The survey was conducted by the Sociological Group Rating on behalf of the Centre for Analysis and Sociological Research of the International Republican Institute. [https://ratinggroup.ua/files/ratinggroup/reg\\_files/final-ukr-23-ns.pdf](https://ratinggroup.ua/files/ratinggroup/reg_files/final-ukr-23-ns.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> Labour force of Ukraine 2021: Statistical collection - Kyiv: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2022. [https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat\\_u/2022/zb/07/zb\\_RS\\_2021.pdf](https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2022/zb/07/zb_RS_2021.pdf).

under 24).<sup>95</sup> According to sociological surveys, the situation has not changed much since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. The biggest groups of inactive women who are those pursuing education

or vocational training (31 per cent) and those who perform domestic and family duties, of whom almost 23 per cent are on maternity leave and 14 per cent perform family duties and housework.

**Figure 25. Main reasons for economic inactivity of women aged 15 to 60 in early 2024, per cent of the total number**<sup>96</sup>

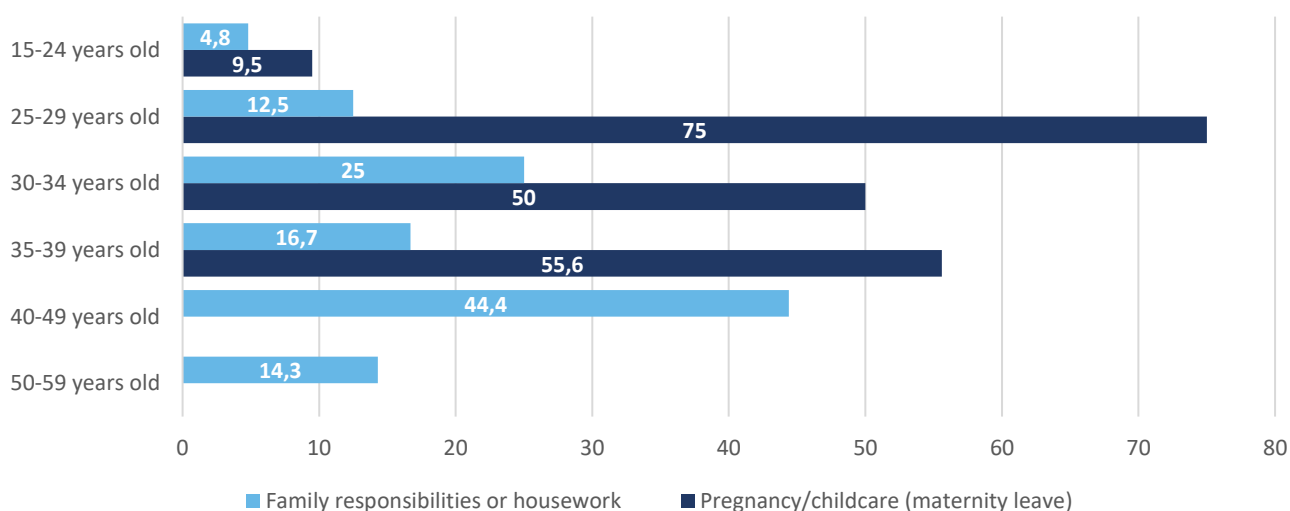


The largest group of women who are neither working nor looking for work due to maternity and paternity leave are age 25 to 29. Unemployment due to family responsibilities and housework is most common among women age 45 to 49.

Ukrainian law establishes a period of 126 calendar days during which a woman is entitled to maternity leave, but it has been and remains a common and customary practice in Ukrainian society to continue to use the right to parental leave until the child

reaches the age of 3. It is clear that a three-year break in employment harms women's opportunities in the labour market. Generally, most of them lose their jobs during this time, despite the rules in the legislation (except for state-owned enterprises that follow the rules). Returning to the labour market after a significant break becomes problematic, as most knowledge and skills become outdated and it becomes more difficult for women to compete for quality jobs.

**Figure 26. Share of economically inactive women aged 15 to 70 who are on maternity leave and/or perform household and family duties, according to the 2024 survey**<sup>97</sup>



<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> The report on the project "Skills for the Labor Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors" was implemented within the framework of the program "Vocational Education in Ukraine/Skills4Recovery", implemented by Deutsche (GIZ) GmbH

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.



*Before my maternity leave, I worked for a private logistics company. When I gave birth and went on maternity leave, the management put me in a position to either return immediately or, if I wanted to take care of my child under 3, resign, because they needed a specialist to work in my place.*

*Economically inactive woman*

Among the main reasons for the difficulty of economically inactive women with young children returning to the labour market is the lack of an extensive network of preschools and dissatisfaction with their services, including a lack of childcare for children under 3 years old, availability of extended day care at school, availability of “on-call” kindergartens and the opening hours of

kindergartens. All of these issues were common before the full-scale invasion, but have worsened in the current situation. In particular, according to a 2023 sociological study, 45 per cent of economically inactive women report a worsening situation, and 17 per cent report a significant deterioration in access to social services (including child education and care).<sup>98</sup>



*For me, a big problem is kindergarten. In our city, this is a big problem. To get into a kindergarten, you need to sign up as soon as your child is born. The groups are very overcrowded, and because of this, children often get sick, and even if I go to work, I will be constantly on sick leave, and who likes that?*

*Economically inactive woman*

Economic inactivity caused by extended maternity leave is often a mutual desire of both men and women in families. This indicates the persistence of stereotypes about gender roles, as well as the greater economic opportunities for men to provide

financially for their families, including better positions, salaries and prospects for long-term employment. This problem is particularly acute in families where the woman had no or little work experience before maternity leave.



*I haven't worked for many years—since I gave birth to my first child, and she is now 15. First, I had one child, then the second, and after a while the third. That's how I stayed at home. The decision was not made entirely personally, it was discussed with my husband, that I would not go to work, but would run the household and take care of the children. It remains so now, even though the children are old enough.*

*Economically inactive woman*

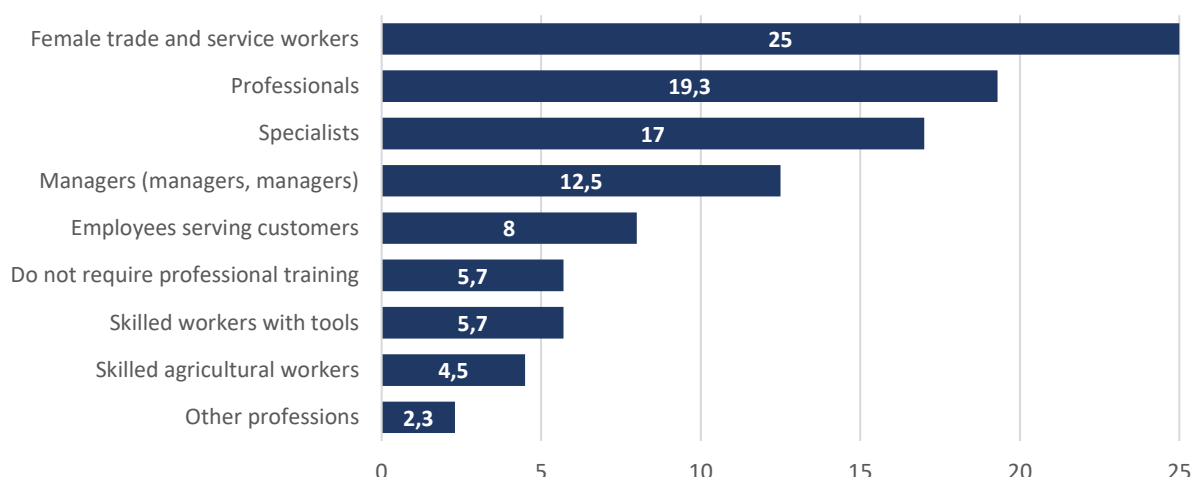
According to research, economically inactive women have significant unrealized educational and professional potential. Almost 75 per cent of these women had professional experience before maternity leave. Among them, there are predominantly trade and service workers (25 per

cent), professionals (19.3 per cent), specialists (17 per cent) and managers (12.5 per cent).<sup>99</sup> In total, a significant number (almost 50 per cent) had professions that required extensive education, training and qualifications.

<sup>98</sup> Results of a sociological survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre's sociological service from September 28 to October 4, 2023.

<sup>99</sup> GIZ, 2024. *Skills for the Labour Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors (2023–2024)*.

**Figure 27. Breakdown of economically inactive women by occupation at their last job in early 2024, per cent of economically inactive women with work experience<sup>100</sup>**



Economically inactive women had work experience in relevant and important sectors of the economy, which creates positive conditions for them to return to economic activity, provided they overcome key social and psychological barriers. The most common sectors of women's previous employment were

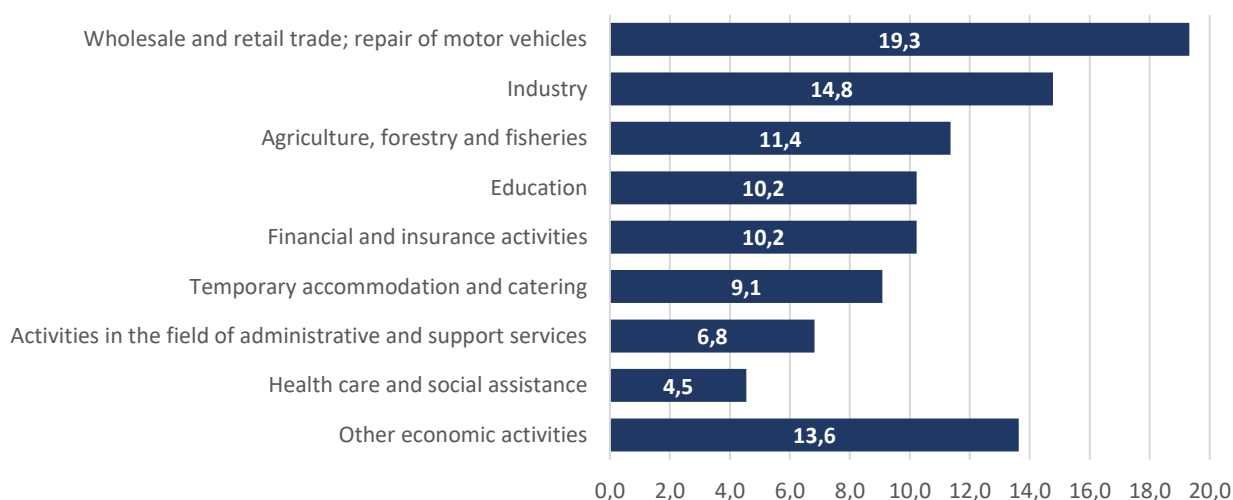
wholesale and retail trade, industry, agriculture, education, finance and insurance. These are sectors that are experiencing a significant shortage of personnel, in particular due to men leaving their jobs as a result of mobilization.



*I have a university degree, and I could go to work, there are a lot of vacancies now, but I feel that during the six years of maternity leave, the knowledge I had has become irrelevant, new programs and methods of work have emerged. Now I want to take some retraining before I start looking for a job.*

*Economically inactive woman*

**Figure 28. Type of economic activity of economically inactive women at their last job, as of the beginning of 2024, per cent of economically inactive women with work experience<sup>101</sup>**



<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

The return of these women to the labour market will have positive consequences both for the woman herself and for the country's economy as a whole, which needs highly skilled workers now and in the future. However, the loss and obsolescence of knowledge and skills during the period of economic inactivity significantly reduces the possibility of their return. An argument for involving

economically inactive women in the labour market and changing professions is their flexibility and willingness to retrain. This is evidenced both by the proportion of economically inactive women over the age of 24 who are enrolled in training (5 per cent) and by the results of focus group discussions that demonstrate women's willingness to learn.



*I had a stable job at an oil company, but I realized that I wanted to develop in another field. Now I'm studying for a master's degree in psychology and I realize that this is what I'm meant to do and I will be in great demand when I graduate. In general, a person should constantly study to stay competitive, even if you are on maternity leave, you can never stop.*

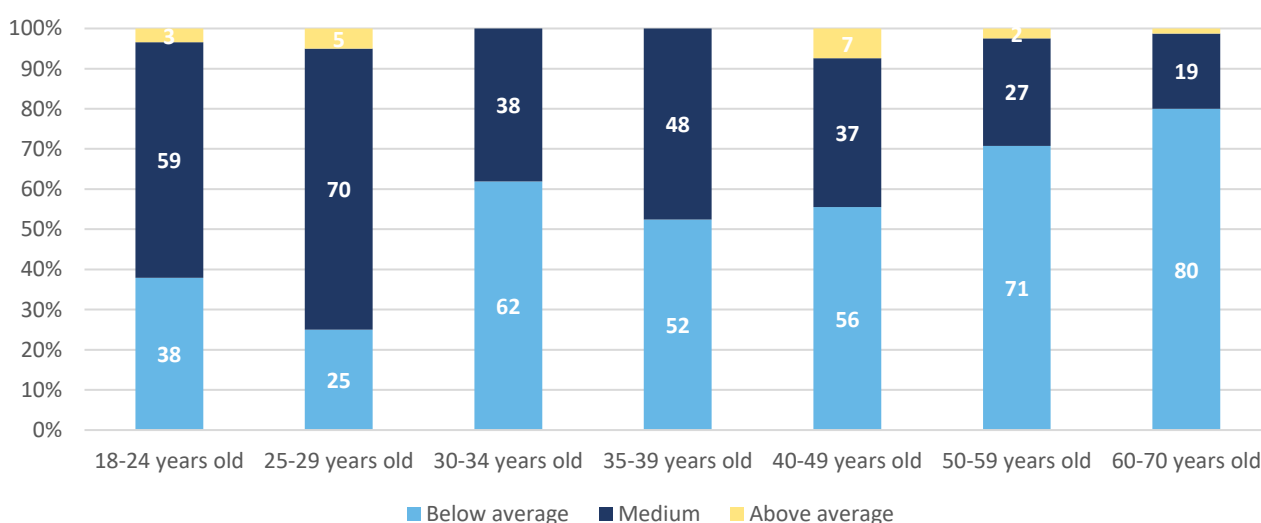
### Economically inactive woman

According to the Razumkov Centre, at the end of 2023, about 66 per cent of respondents rated their income as lower than the national average, and another 31 per cent rated it as average. The main sources of budget for this group of women with low income were their partners' earnings (30 per cent), assistance from relatives (23 per cent), and state social assistance (12.3 per cent).<sup>102</sup> This structure of women's income outside the labour market indicates a high dependence of their well-being on state benefits and assistance from their immediate family. It can be assumed that an increase in wages offered to women, as well as a reduction in the risks of entrepreneurship, could encourage women outside the labour market to make a decision to

seek employment, get a job or start their own business.

During the focus group discussions, economically inactive women noted that the ideal conditions that would encourage them to work are flexible working hours, a short distance from home or the ability to work remotely, good working conditions, a good social and psychological climate in the team, and the possibility of having a good social package, including additional vacations and social guarantees. However, it should be noted that the decisive factor that would motivate them to work is the loss of their current permanent income.

**Figure 29. Estimates of income by economically inactive women by age group<sup>103</sup>**



<sup>102</sup> Initiative "Skills for the Labour Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors"

<sup>103</sup> Results of a sociological survey conducted by the Razumkov Center's sociological service from September 28 to October 4, 2023.

« *It would be great if it was a job with a flexible schedule, and perhaps also remote work. Because even if you send your child to a kindergarten, they often get sick, and it is clear that you need to stay with them, visit doctors, and so on.*

*Economically inactive woman*

« *What conditions would I agree to? First of all, a flexible schedule, when you can mix work with your life to make it convenient and have enough time for everything. I also don't mind if it's a remote job, it would also be very convenient. Or if not remote, then in a good place, with a good team.*

*Economically inactive woman*

There are a number of psychological barriers that prevent economically inactive women from realizing their economic opportunities. After staying at home for a long time, they have a lack of confidence in their ability to realize their career

potential and believe that they will not be able to cope with new working conditions and changes in their status. Some claim that they do not know how to look for a job or where to turn with this issue.

« *I'm not ready to look for a job now. I don't think I can handle it anymore. You know, I have such a fear of search and change.*

*Economically inactive woman*

There are contradictory behavioural patterns of economically inactive women who, on the one hand, claim that they are not ready to go to work because they want to spend more time with their children and pay attention to their family and household, and on the other hand, they say that they feel tired and psychologically depressed due to

the lack of a familiar social circle and the workload of household chores. This situation is also typical for women on maternity leave and older women. This may indicate the existence of externally imposed or internally formed stereotypes about the importance of women's roles in the family and the tasks they should take on.

« *I don't work because I want to spend more time with my children and make my home more comfortable.*

*Economically inactive woman*

« *Recently, I have been feeling constantly tired of being at home, where there is all this routine, the same thing every day, and I want some activity, some changes and communication.*

*Economically inactive woman*

The stereotypical role of women in Ukrainian society is that of caregivers for other family members. Very often, it is women who volunteer to quit their jobs or give up their career prospects to take care of their parents, family members with disabilities, or grandchildren. It is extremely difficult for such women to re-enter the labour market, as they face not only additional problems of losing skills and knowledge, but also stereotypes and ageism that deepen over time. Women on maternity leave consider starting their own business as one of the most affordable alternatives

to overcome economic inactivity. Most often, they are ready to organize microbusinesses related to sales, online business or monetization of hobbies. In their opinion, choosing their own business is more interesting, as it creates greater opportunities for flexible working hours and a successful combination of work and household responsibilities. However, women consider their lack of experience, self-confidence, family support, financial resources and start-up capital to be among the key factors that stand in their way. Thus, there is a contradiction: desire versus opportunity.





*I'm 55 years old, I don't work now, I quit my job because we moved from western Ukraine to the Kyiv region. My daughter lives here, she has two children, my husband retired, and we decided to help our daughter. In principle, I could have gone to work somewhere else, but I got used to my previous team, and I need help with my grandchildren, my daughter can't do without me.*

*Economically inactive woman*

Given the crucial importance of engaging the labour potential of economically inactive women in Ukraine's post-war recovery in the face of inevitable depopulation, population aging and labour shortages, it is one of the cornerstones of the state strategy to understand the real, not declarative, factors of this contradiction and identify prospects for minimizing it. One of the most powerful reserves

for increasing labour supply in the Ukrainian labour market cannot be neglected. At the same time, realizing the opportunities of economically inactive women will also help to overcome gender gaps in employment (and then in wages), change the gender distribution of family responsibilities, and transform public infrastructure through changes in demand.



*I have a very positive attitude towards starting my own business. Of course, it's a very good thing, but there are big risks that, first of all, the war and the situation in the country are not the best for this. And the risk that this business, for example, will not work, and you will lose a lot, and you still have children to raise and educate.*

*Economically inactive woman*



*I have a hobby, I bake very beautiful cakes, I'm good at it, and I would like to create my own mini-business, but I realize that, firstly, I need start-up capital, which I don't have. And, secondly, I need to know how to organize it all, and I don't even know where to start.*

*Economically inactive woman.*

In summary, the following barriers and stereotypes faced by women who do not enter the labour market due to their household and care work were identified:

- Stereotypes about women's ultimate responsibility for raising children, caring for disabled family members, and ensuring the household comfort of the entire family
- Low level of social infrastructure development, in particular, in terms of childcare services
- Biased attitudes of employers towards the employment of women with young children
- Rapid obsolescence of knowledge, skills and abilities formed in the course of previous

experience that have lost their relevance due to a long period of economic inactivity

- Women's psychological unpreparedness to enter the labour market due to a long period of economic inactivity, martial law, and fear for children and family
- Non-compliance by employers with the legal requirement to reserve a woman's workplace during her maternity leave
- A woman's starting salary is lower than a man's starting salary on the labour market, which objectively encourages families to choose a woman to be a caregiver.

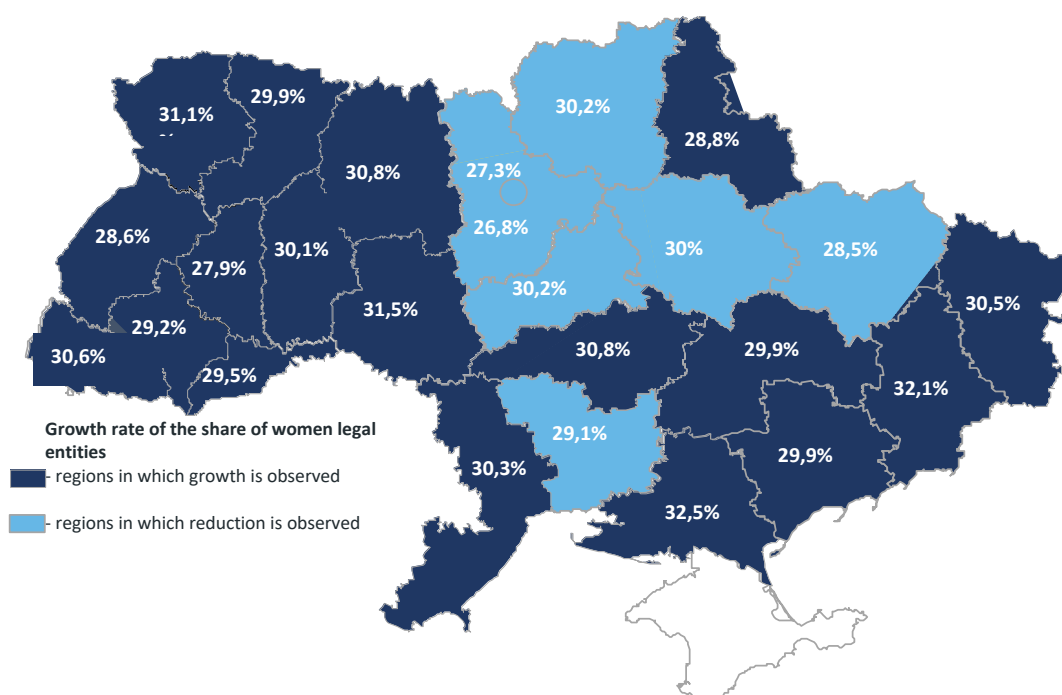
## 7. WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MANAGEMENT ROLES

Ukrainian businesses differ in the forms and sectors of business organization in relation to gender. According to statistics, women are more likely to organize their businesses as private entrepreneurs, involving a minimum number of employees. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to work in medium and large businesses, which may indicate stereotypes and barriers that hinder women's realization in this sector.

The gender composition in legal entity businesses' leadership positions before the full-scale invasion

and now have not changed. As of 1 January 2024, there is a predominance of men in management positions with 70.8 per cent of men vs 29.3 per cent of women. The lowest share of women in business management is observed in the Kyiv region (26.8 per cent), Kyiv city (27.3 per cent) and the Ternopil (27.9 per cent), Kharkiv (28.5 per cent) and Lviv (28.6 per cent) regions.<sup>104</sup> These regions have consistently remained outsiders in terms of women's involvement both before the full-scale invasion and now.

Figure 30. Regional distribution of the share of women among managers of legal entities<sup>105</sup>



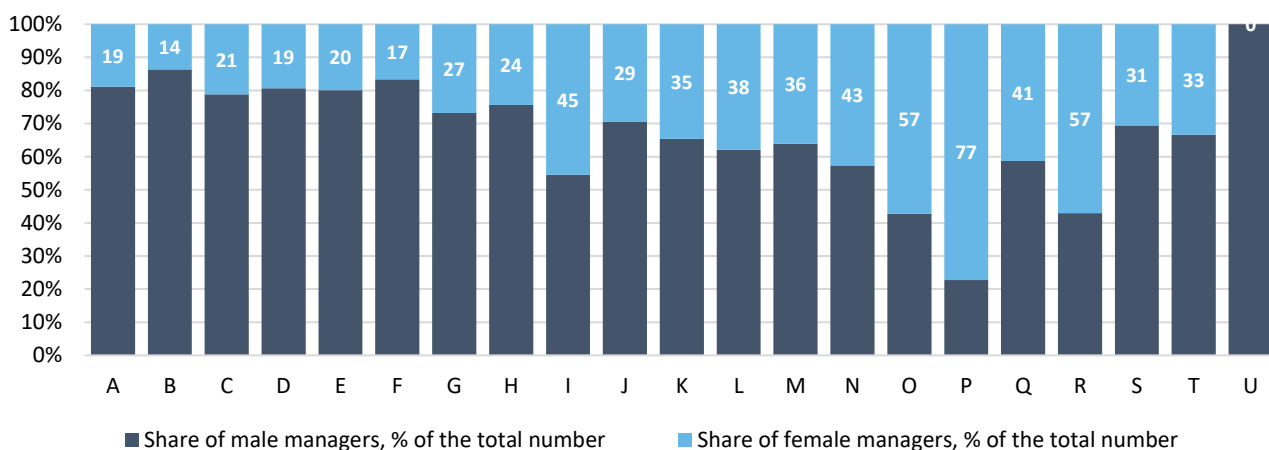
There is a clear distinction between industries where women and men are represented as managers of legal entities (businesses), and this trend has remained unchanged in recent years. In particular, the predominance of women in management is observed in only three industries: education (77.2 per cent); public administration and social insurance (57.3 per cent); and arts, sports, entertainment and recreation (57 per cent). The

lowest share of women in management is observed in mining and quarrying (13.6 per cent); construction (16.6 per cent); agriculture (18.9 per cent); and electricity supply (19.4 per cent). This situation indicates that stereotypes and inequality persist in Ukraine in certain sectors of the economy, as well as a low level of access to business management for women in most of the so-called "non-traditional" sectors of the economy.

<sup>104</sup> The breakdown of legal entities by region and gender of the head. [www.ukrstat.gov.ua](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua)

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 31. Gender balance of women's representation in business (legal entities) by type of economic activity (as of 1 November 2023)<sup>106</sup>**



The existence of significant obstacles in certain industries to women being managers was also noted by respondents in the focus group discussions. They reported that women in traditionally “male” industries have a much harder time getting managerial positions. Once in charge, they often face rejection in their roles and rejection

by the male team, and need more time than men to establish authority and respect for management decisions made by their superiors. Women in these positions are also more likely to face ageism, which becomes an obstacle to their development and formation as a leader.



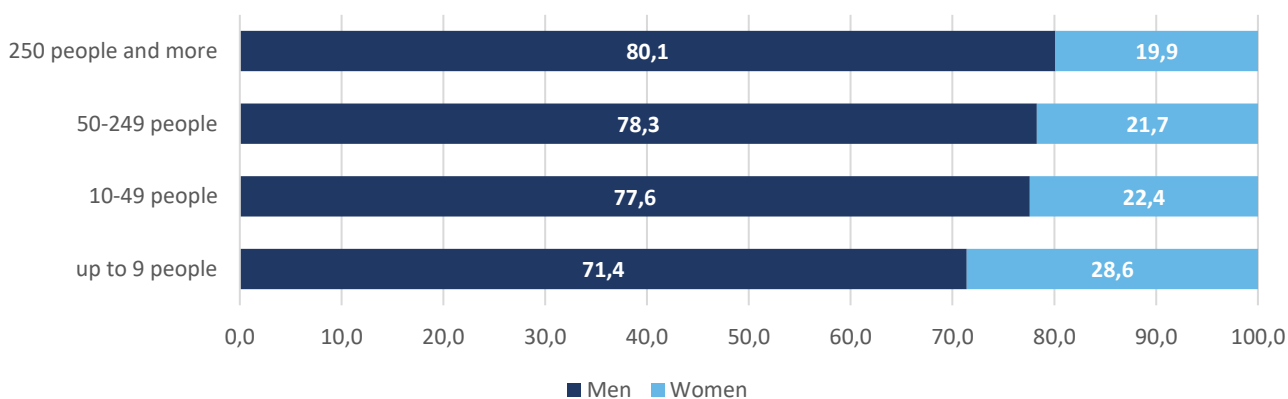
*When I came to work for a transportation company, the barrier I faced was that it was actually a male team. At first, they did not perceive me as a leader at all. I was not perceived as a part of the team at all. There was also an age barrier. They thought I was too young, like: what can you teach us here and who are you here to lead us?*

*Entrepreneur*

Women are a small share of managers in businesses (Figure 32). Female managers are more common in companies with up to 9 employees (28.6 per cent of such companies are managed by women) while the

worst situation is in companies with 250 employees or more (only 19.9 per cent of managers are women, which is 2 percentage points more than before the full-scale war).<sup>107</sup>

**Figure 32. Gender balance of women's representation in business (legal entities) by number of employees (as of 1 November 2023)<sup>108</sup>**



<sup>106</sup> Breakdown of legal entities by type of economic activity and gender of the head. [www.ukrstat.gov.ua](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua)

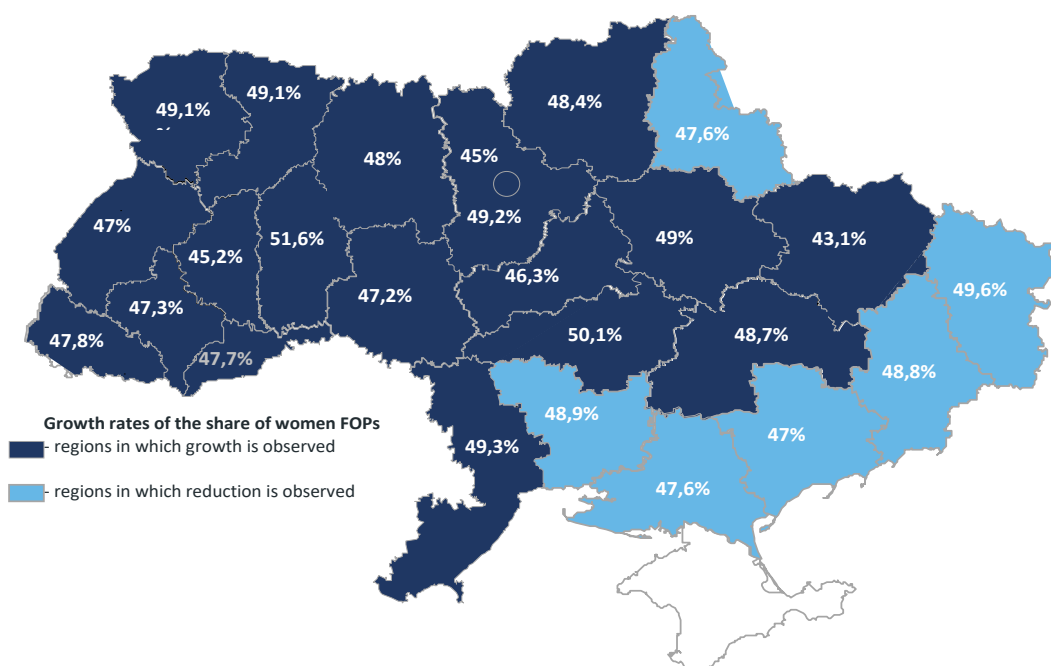
<sup>107</sup> The number of active enterprises by number of employees and gender of the head (as of 1 November 2023). [www.ukrstat.gov.ua](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua)

<sup>108</sup> Distribution of legal entities by type of economic activity and gender of the head - [www.ukrstat.gov.ua](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua)

Women's involvement in entrepreneurship is good not only for women's economic empowerment, but also in the support and development of the country's economy in the future. Private entrepreneurship, that is by individual entrepreneurs, is becoming increasingly common among women. Compared to 2021, the share of women among sole proprietors increased by 1.1 percentage points and was 47.5 per cent of the total number of entrepreneurs at the beginning of 2024. The highest share of women entrepreneurs was

recorded in the Khmelnytskyi (51.6 per cent) and Kirovohrad (51.1 per cent) regions and the lowest in the Kharkiv region (43.1 per cent).<sup>109</sup> However, there are still obstacles to women's entrepreneurship. One issue is tax evasion through the use of a sole proprietorship format by an employee or the widespread practice of re-registering a business from a man to a woman, which has become widespread since the beginning of the full-fledged invasion.

**Figure 33. Regional distribution of the share of women among individual entrepreneurs<sup>110</sup>**



The full-scale invasion has significantly affected the position of women in entrepreneurship. Businesses organized by women before 2022 suffered significant losses, both financial and socioeconomic. About a quarter of women say they have had to close their businesses and restart them over time.

The biggest losses suffered by women are loss of income, loss of financial resources (financial debts, loans, losses), loss of connections (customers, suppliers and sales sources). However, this type of loss is typical not only for the women's community, but also for Ukrainian business in general<sup>111</sup>.



*The hardest time was when my husband went to war, and I had to take over the management of his business. I realized that I would need help with my children, because I simply did not have time for them. I also really lacked applied skills, and had to figure things out on my own, looking for partners and ways out of critical situations.*

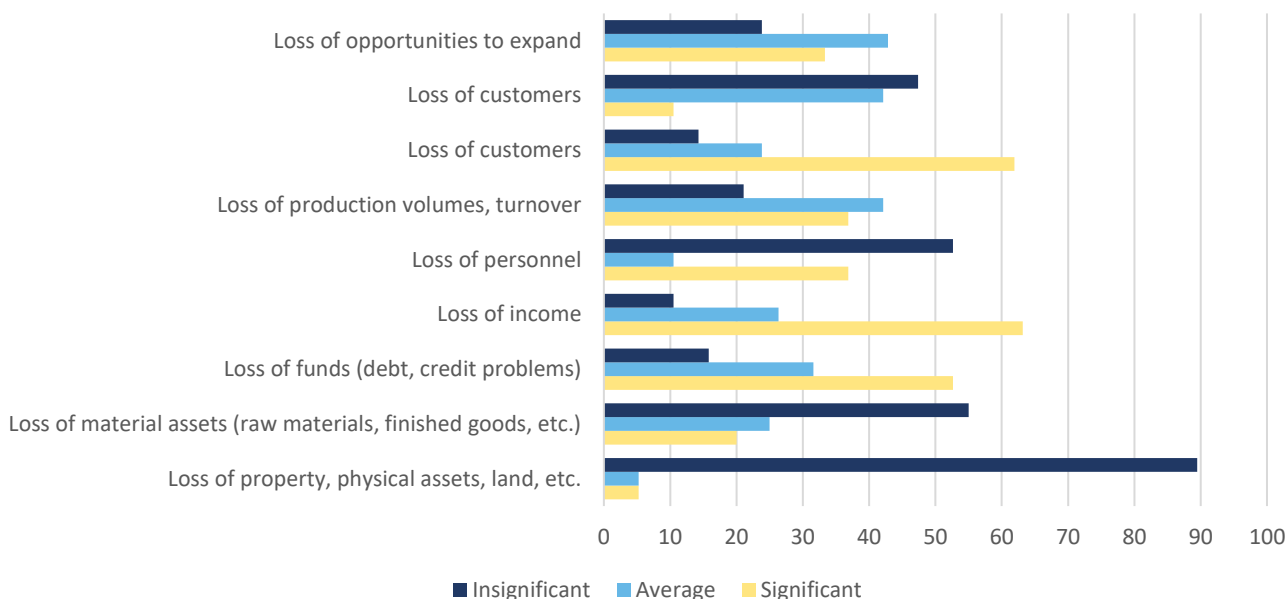
**Entrepreneur**

<sup>109</sup> Distribution of legal entities by type of economic activity and gender of the head - [www.ukrstat.gov.ua](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua)

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"

**Figure 34. Losses of women's businesses during the full-scale invasion**<sup>112</sup>

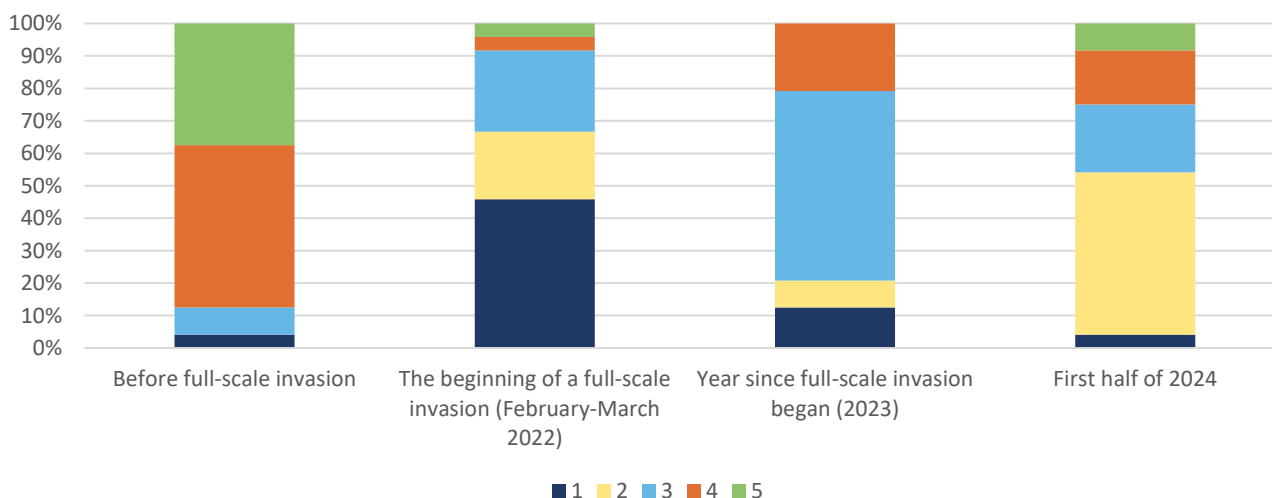


A separate challenge for a number of women was the need to take on some of the business management responsibilities previously assumed by their partners, who had withdrawn from business due to mobilization at the beginning of the full-scale invasion. According to the wives of mobilized soldiers whose partners had businesses, the main challenges for them at that time were not only psychological barriers related to constant concern for their partners' fate, but also social barriers. After all, business began to take up most of the time they used to devote to their family and their own professional activities. During this period of time, they felt a lack of support from their loved

ones, a lack of knowledge and experience necessary for running a business, establishing and maintaining economic ties.

Women's entrepreneurship is gradually recovering. The women interviewed for the study note that the losses suffered by their businesses are partially mitigated by and sometimes countered with new opportunities and challenges. Before the full-scale invasion, the average level of success of their own business was estimated at 4.5 out of 5 possible points; in the first year of the war, it dropped to 3.2 points, and in the current situation they ranked their success at 3.8 points (Figure 35)

**Figure 35. Changes in the success of women's businesses before the full-scale invasion and in the first half of 2024 (on a five-point scale)**<sup>113</sup>



<sup>112</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

Since 2023, there has been an increase in the number of sole proprietorships established by women. In particular, according to official statistics, in 2024, women opened almost 59 per cent of sole proprietorships in Ukraine (compared to 51 per cent in 2021).<sup>114</sup> The most common areas of registration of new sole proprietorships were the provision of individual services, wholesale and retail trade. Entrepreneurship in Ukraine is more often pursued

by women who are confident in themselves and their abilities and consider it as an alternative to employment (as noted by 74 per cent of surveyed entrepreneurs). However, women entrepreneurs are not always ready to scale up their business, expand their staff, and manage a large team due to psychological fears and financial and economic barriers.



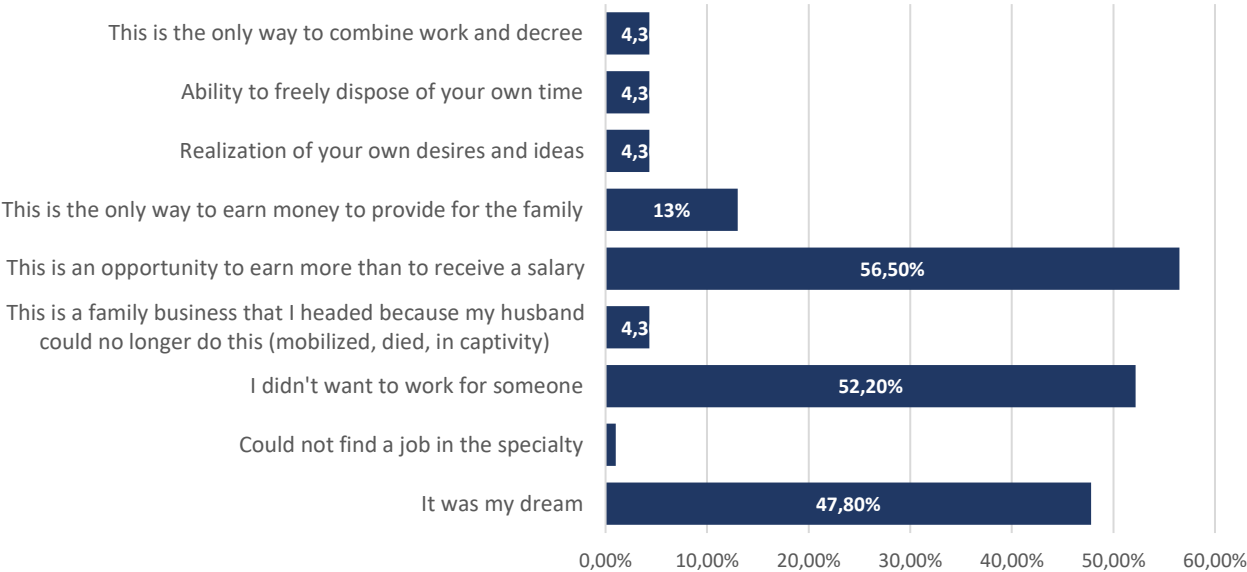
*I feel comfortable in my small business. Today, I would hardly agree to expand and hire more staff. I don't feel I could handle it: it's more responsibility, more financial resources, and more knowledge required.*

*Entrepreneur*

The main motivations for women to start their own business are the opportunity to earn more (56.5 per cent) and the lack of desire to work for an employer

(52 per cent),<sup>115</sup> which is often related to previous negative experiences, discouragement and bias against women in their previous workplace.

**Figure 36. The main motivations for starting their own business** <sup>116</sup>



Women entrepreneurs often provide most of the family budget, changing traditional stereotypes of gender roles. About half of the women surveyed say that their earnings are the main source of income for their families, and therefore they have to work harder, reducing the time they spend with their

children and household chores. For women entrepreneurs, their business is mostly a tool for self-realization (100 per cent of women say so), which allows them not only to earn the income they need to survive, but also to enjoy themselves and to realize their dream (Figures 36 and 37).

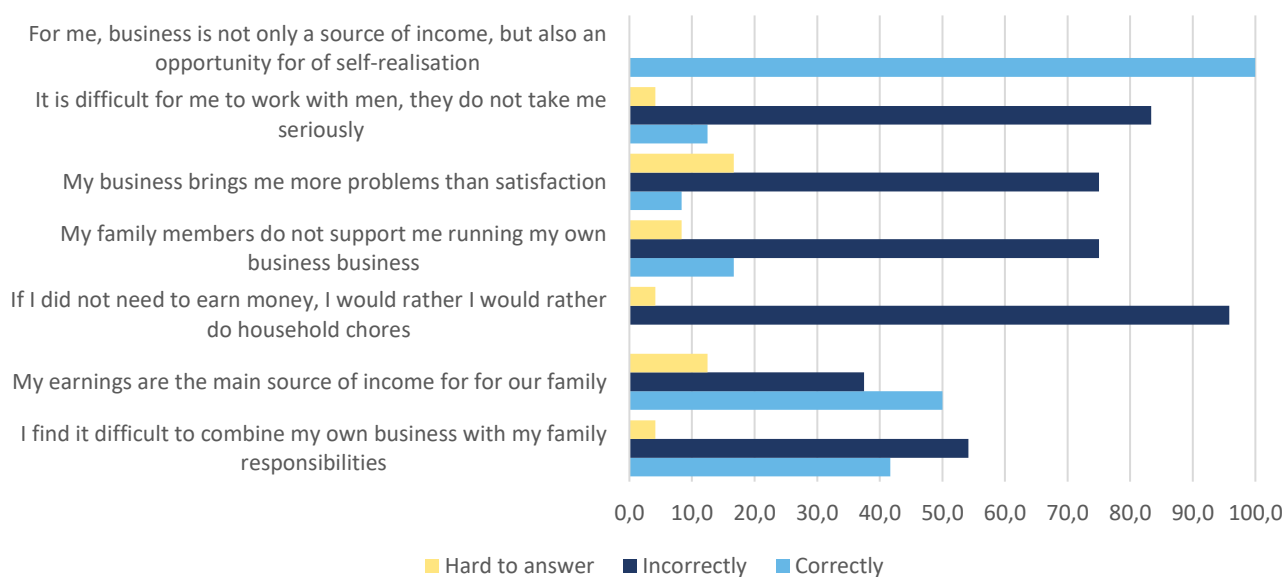
<sup>114</sup> <https://opendatabot.ua/analytics/fops-gender-2024-4>

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"



**Figure 37. Barriers and benefits of doing business according to women<sup>117</sup>**



Women's involvement in running their own business is not always supported by family and friends (16.7 per cent), but this does not become a significant factor in stopping the activity. Some women claim that they sometimes have to hide the type and nature of their activities because of judgement and possible changes in their

communication with others. For many women, the support of their loved ones and their belief in their own strength is very important, especially at the stage of deciding to start a business and the initial stage of its operation, which can sometimes become a barrier to implementation.



*When I turned to my husband with my first problems, he said harshly: I knew you would 'fail'. Close it down, apologize to everyone, give the money back, and that's the end of it. This was the first conditional support, and the second such 'support' came from my family, my parents, and so on, who told me: let's be objective, who will buy this, who needs it at all? I really needed this support and faith in me.*

**Entrepreneur**

The survey identified that the main challenges that prevent women entrepreneurs from growing are mostly in the realm of general economic problems and business rules: lack of necessary funds for business development and scaling (78 per cent), martial law in the country (73 per cent), high level of competition in the industry (69 per cent), and lack of qualified personnel for entrepreneurs who have employees (62 per cent). Women entrepreneurs demonstrate independence and initiative in financing their own business and its development. In particular, research has shown that women are

more open to participating in grant projects and are more likely to consider obtaining money for business development through existing government and international support programmes. Men, on the other hand, demonstrate less confidence in this form of fundraising, preferring development loan programmes. The reason for this may be both different behavioural trajectories and available opportunities. In particular, according to banking experts, loans for business development are more often provided to men than to women.

<sup>117</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"



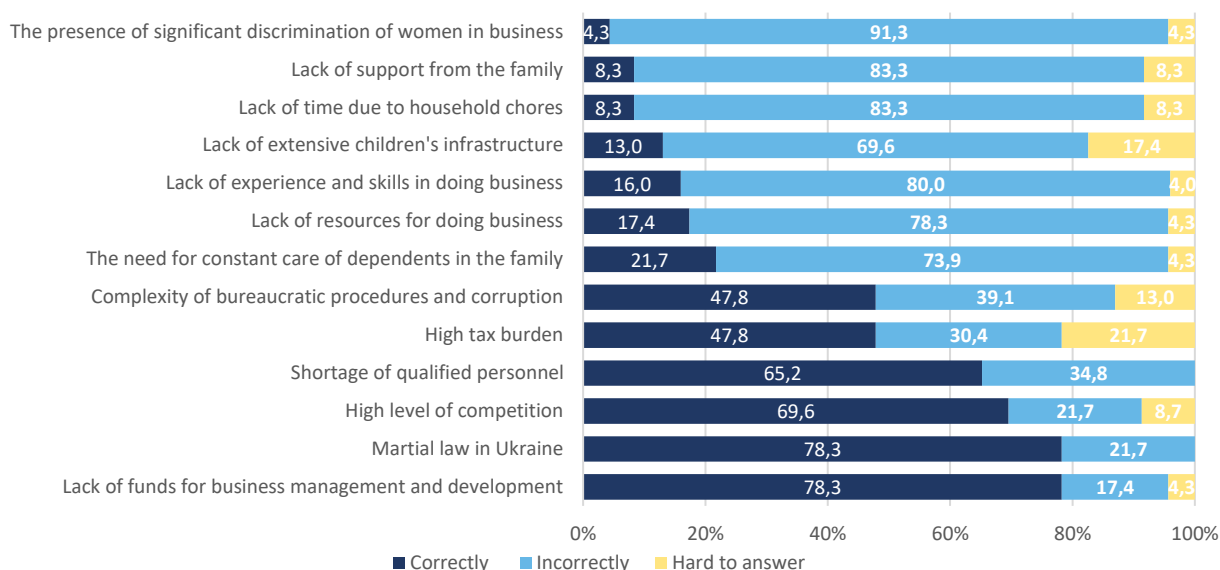
*If we are talking about the support the government is currently providing for entrepreneurs, it is primarily a grant of UAH 250,000 for small and medium-sized enterprises. According to our statistics, women received more grants than men, because they write and apply, while men do not believe in these opportunities, they are used to being conservative and participate in loan programmes.*

*Representative of a civil society organization*

Entrepreneurship does not completely overcome the problems of balancing family responsibilities and professional fulfilment (50 per cent of women surveyed say that business complicates family relationships and the organization of household

duties), but it creates greater opportunities for flexible organization and distribution of responsibilities during the day (70 per cent say that lack of time due to business is not a significant barrier) (Figure 38).

**Figure 38. Main obstacles to women running their own business<sup>118</sup>**



Opportunities for women entrepreneurs vary by region and type of settlement. More urban areas create greater opportunities for women's economic

and educational realization, their professional self-knowledge, as well as ensure better accessibility of social infrastructure, including for child care.



*All my life in our region, men have been working, and the woman's task was to protect the family hearth, she had to raise the children, and he had to bring money. The children grew up, and he was always at work, and this is probably genetically shaped and remains to this day. There is even a dialectical expression 'there are wives and there are men'. That is, these are wives, and these are men.*

*Entrepreneur*

About 40 per cent of the surveyed women entrepreneurs have personally or through close female acquaintances encountered gender stereotypes and prejudices. This is especially true of sectoral segregation, which is observed not only in

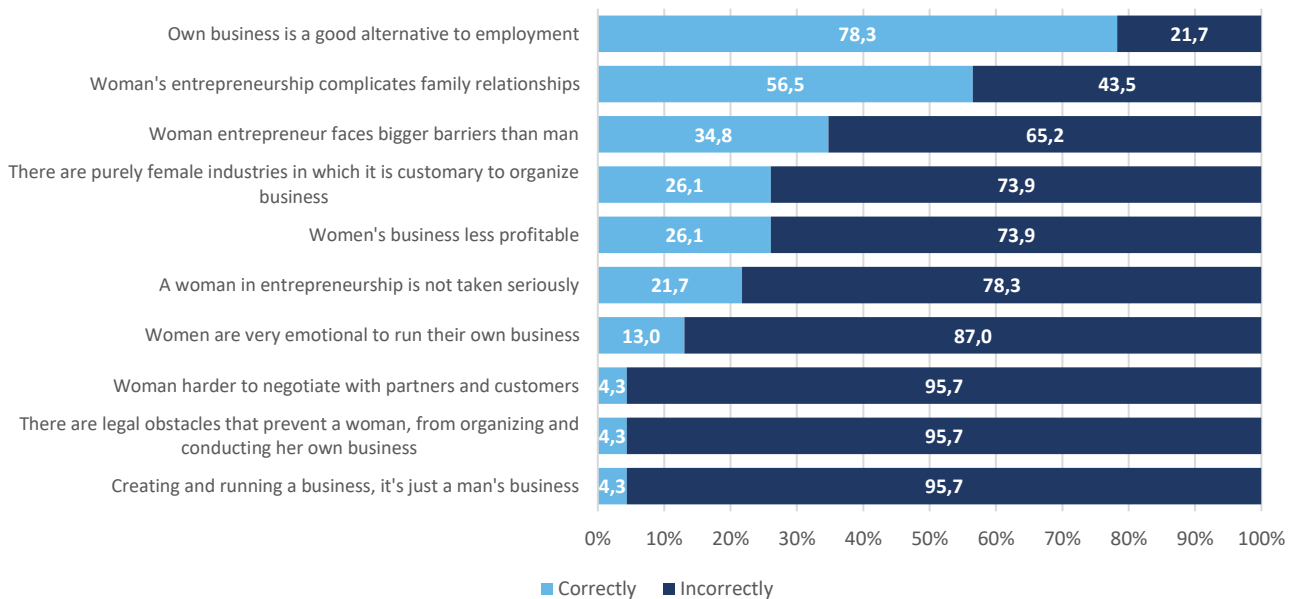
the employment sector but also in entrepreneurship. The focus group discussions and survey reported that women who organize their own business are less susceptible to internal stereotypes and are more willing to go against the

<sup>118</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"

typical behavioural patterns established in society. This is evidenced by the survey where women generally do not hold negative stereotypes about women in business. However, a number of social

stereotypes negatively affect women's internal psychological readiness to realize themselves, in particular when people around them often devalue women's professional achievements.

**Figure 39. Women entrepreneurs' perception of gender stereotypes**<sup>119</sup>



The surveys (questionnaires and focus group discussions among businesses) were conducted and women executives) show that women who are most vulnerable to gender stereotypes in business are those who are at the initial stage of business development or management (when a woman takes over the management of a man's business). It is at this time that a woman needs to form a circle of partners, establish relationships and gain

authority and status among subordinates, partner and suppliers. The most common stereotypes at this stage are that a woman should be engaged in household chores rather than running a business, and that a woman is too emotional and unconstructive to organize and manage a business. Most of these stereotypes are voiced by subordinate men, individual partners and the woman's inner circle.



*I can give you more than one example when a colleague of mine went to our management and asked to be fired. He didn't like the fact that I was working with my child 24-7. While he arrives at work at 10 a.m., has two lunch breaks, and goes home at 4 p.m., I work from 7 a.m. to 12 a.m. with a child in my arms, when she has a fever of 40 or something. But he did not like it very much, because he somehow thought that it might not be very professional.*

*Female manager*

The historical stereotypes about the behaviour of men and women in Ukraine are gradually fading into the background, but their influence is still great and can be observed in the behaviour of both men and women. Among the most common stereotypes identified in a sociological survey among women entrepreneurs include both those shaped by

traditional gender roles in society and those that lie within the spectrum of women's competitive realization. Enterprises and entrepreneurs often suffer from internal barriers to implementation that are shaped by their families and are related to the existing workload of household chores or lack of faith in their ability to succeed.

<sup>119</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"

« To go somewhere for work for 3 to 4 days, I have to do preparatory homework to organize my husband with two children so that he knows what to wear according to the schedule, i.e. what to wear today, tomorrow, etc., prepare food, write a list of where to take the children with addresses and times. There is no help available. If you want to, please do it yourself. If you can't do it, then quit your business, or earn money for cleaning and pay someone else, my husband tells me.

*Woman entrepreneur*

The results of the study suggest that promoting women's entrepreneurship is a means of expanding women's economic opportunities and creating new jobs for women (as studies show that women are

more likely to hire women for their businesses), strengthening the country's economic situation, and serving as a tool to combat gender stereotypes in Ukrainian society.

« Now, in general, my husband says that we have more women in the company than men. When I came, there were more men, much more, and now it's 50-50.

*Entrepreneur*

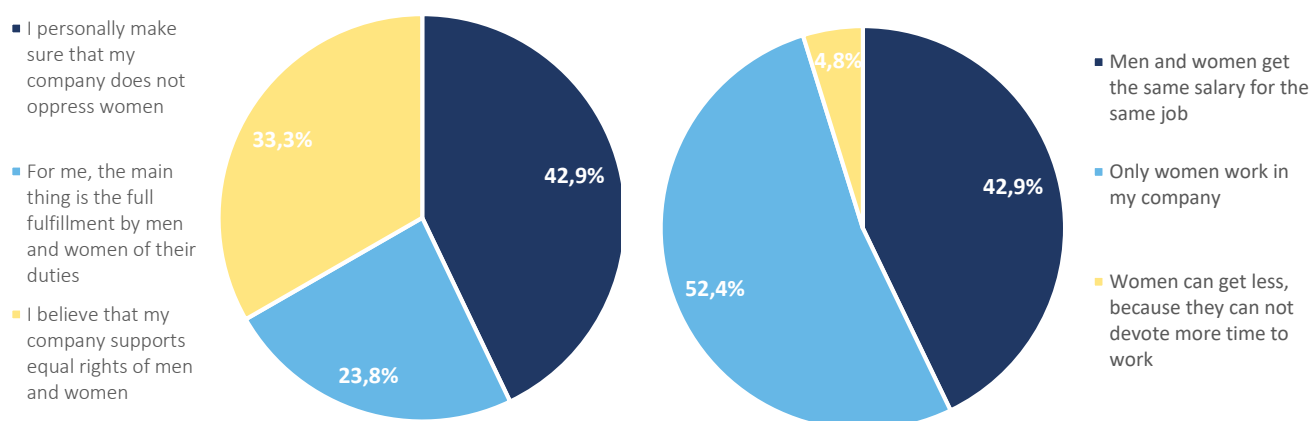
Women's entrepreneurship allows for the development of socially responsible businesses based on gender equality, where management pays maximum attention to staff capabilities, career development, and creates comfortable and flexible working conditions for all, including women, including the growth of labour potential and the expansion of overall opportunities for its realization. Almost half of the surveyed women

entrepreneurs (43 per cent) say that they personally ensure that there are no cases of harassment of women in the company, and another third say they support equal opportunities for women and men. The concept of equal pay for work of equal value is also maintained, with 90 per cent of surveyed businesses run by women and employing both women and men adhering to this principle.<sup>120</sup>

« As a manager, I am still faced with the fact that I am raising the partners of my female employees. I recently had a case. I hired a girl to work and offered her development and a steady income, and when she started bringing this money home, her husband told her that he forbade her to come to work. And this, of course, is terrible.

*Female manager*

**Figure 40. Attitudes toward staff in women-owned businesses<sup>121</sup>**



<sup>120</sup> Summarized results of the survey and a series of focus groups held as part of the study

<sup>121</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"

It is a common practice for a female business leader to stand up for the rights and opportunities of her female subordinates, protecting them from gender stereotypes and discrimination that women face at home.

To summarize the above analysis, the following problems and barriers are identified as experienced by Ukrainian women entrepreneurs in realizing their economic opportunities:

- Maintaining vertical and horizontal segregation in the sectoral distribution of women's representation in corporate business and entrepreneurship.
- The presence of external and internal stereotypes about women's opportunities for self-realization in entrepreneurship.
- Financial, economic and professional barriers that prevent women from scaling up their businesses.
- The need to balance household chores and business management.
- Psychological pressure associated with the lack of faith of relatives and others in the woman's ability to realize her potential in the field of entrepreneurship.
- Widespread stereotypical behaviour towards women leaders and entrepreneurs by subordinates, partners and clients.
- Gender-based differences in approaches to financing business development.
- Inequality in starting opportunities for women to create and run businesses caused by the internal family structure of certain communities.

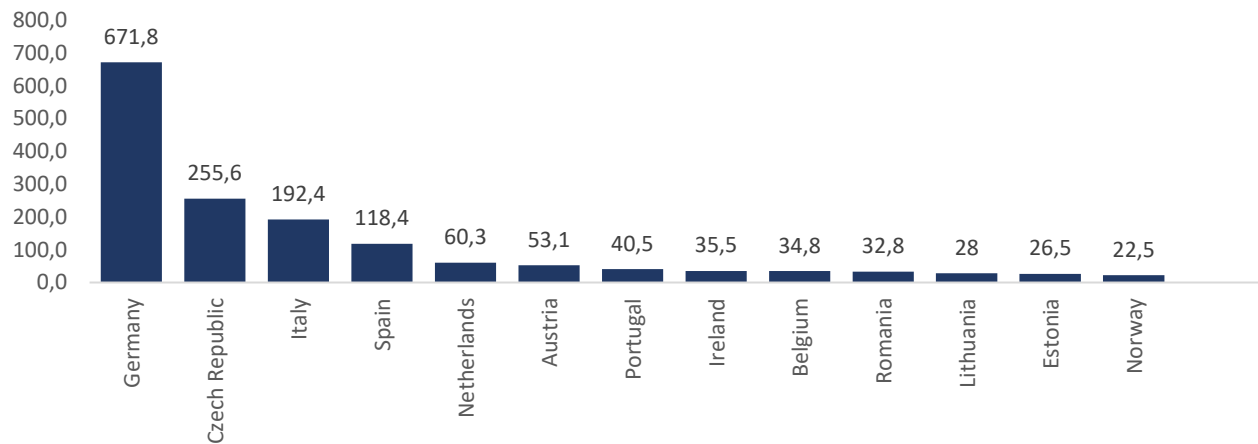
# 8. SITUATION OF WOMEN FORCED TO LEAVE UKRAINE DUE TO THE FULL-SCALE INVASION

## 8.1. Status, main problems and barriers to women's adaptation abroad

The full-scale invasion intensified migration processes in Ukraine. At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the main group of refugees were women with children. The war and violence prompted them to go abroad in search of safe living conditions. According to Eurostat, as of the beginning of 2024, there were 1,862,690 female migrants from Ukraine over the age of 18 in

European countries. The share of women aged 35–64 is 24.8 per cent of the total number of registered migrants from Ukraine. The main receiving countries are Germany (671,800 women), the Czech Republic (255,600 women) and Italy (192,400 women).<sup>122</sup> Each country has different starting conditions for staying.

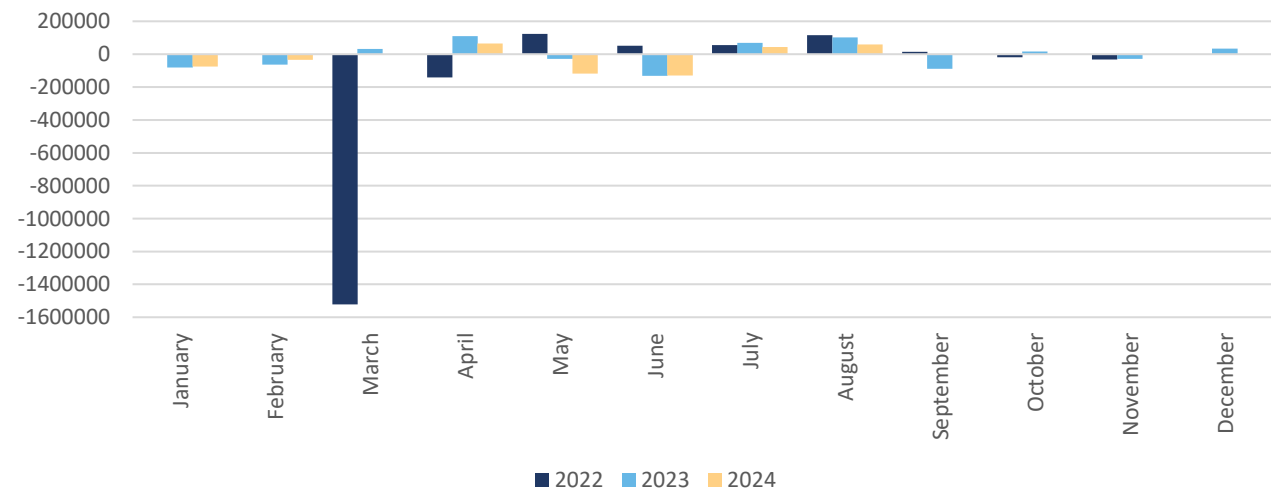
Figure 41. Distribution of Ukrainian female migrants by country of temporary residence<sup>123</sup>



Information on the number and dynamics of migrants in Ukraine is complemented by data provided by the Border Guard Service of Ukraine. In general, it can be argued that the trends of entry and exit from Ukraine have been stable since 2023. In some periods, there is a return of migrants to

Ukraine. In 2023, the migration balance in some months reached 331,000 people, most of whom were women of working age and children. In general, the dynamics of departures has slowed down, and there are cases of women returning to Ukraine, both temporarily and permanently.

Figure 42. Migration balance according to the Border Guard Service of Ukraine



<sup>122</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr\\_asytspm\\_\\_custom\\_10195296/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asytspm__custom_10195296/default/table?lang=en)

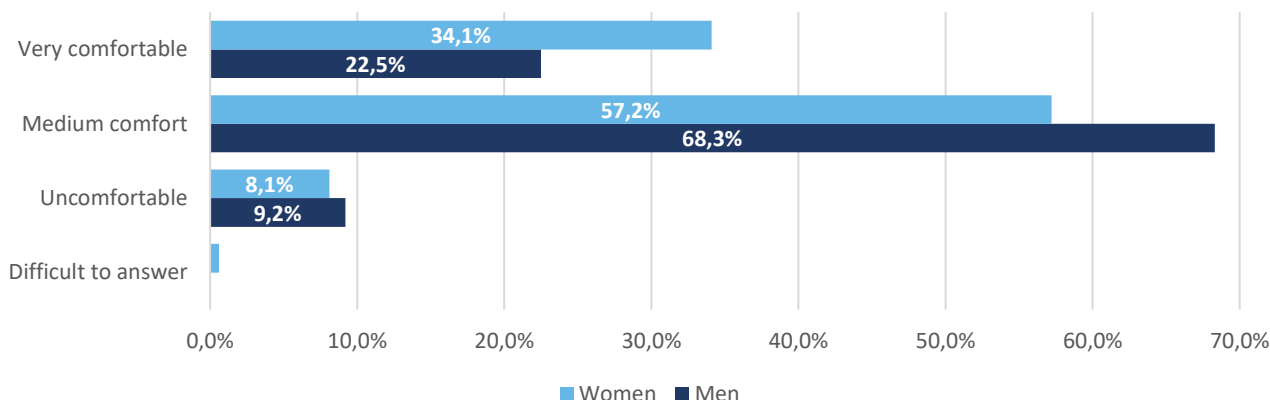
<sup>123</sup> Due to the lack of comparable information on Eurostat, the figure does not include information on the countries (Poland and the United Kingdom) that are among the four leaders in terms of receiving Ukrainian migrants.



In general, Ukrainian women assess the conditions of their stay abroad as comfortable. According to sociological surveys, about 35 per cent of women rate their lives as very comfortable, and 57 per cent as moderately comfortable. Moreover, the level of perceived quality of life does not depend on the length of time a woman has lived abroad.<sup>124</sup> For

most women, going abroad was forced and stressful, and the key motivation was to save themselves and their children, but some migrants had considered emigration earlier, and additional opportunities that opened up with the outbreak of the full-scale war were the impetus for the decision to leave.<sup>125</sup>

**Figure 43. Women's satisfaction with living conditions abroad** <sup>126</sup>



Changes in the quality of life of Ukrainian women and their living conditions in the countries of their current residence depend on two factors: the overall level of quality of life and human development in the country of residence, as well as the national policy on the conditions of stay of Ukrainian refugees (availability and amount of social assistance, possibility of renting and compensation for housing). Important factors include: the development and structure of the local labour market (as noted by 16.7 per cent of female migrants); proximity of borders to Ukraine (31.5 per cent of women); general mentality of the

population in the host country (52 per cent); presence of friends, relatives and acquaintances in the country (45.5 per cent); difficulty of language acquisition and available language training programmes in the country (15.9 per cent).<sup>127</sup> These factors were the primary ones at the initial stage of women's choice of the country in which they sought temporary asylum. In this context, Germany is the leader in terms of financial security and social support, which is now becoming a separate magnet not only for initial refugees from Ukraine, but also for the movement of Ukrainian migrant women within the EU.



*Germany has a strong system of social support for migrants. They provide money for living, and also pay for insurance and housing. That's why we went there with our children, because it gave us the opportunity to adapt and take a break for a while, to start learning the language.*

**Migrant women**

According to sociological studies, women who are temporarily in Germany have, on average, a higher level of income through social assistance or employment. In general, according to the German government, only about 20 per cent of migrant

women registered in Germany are employed, and only a third of them work full-time, while the rest are employed in temporary or part-time jobs. At the same time, more than half of the employed refugee women from Ukraine in Germany are formally

<sup>124</sup> A pan-European study of Ukrainians in Europe. Rating Lab. August 2023.

<sup>125</sup> Razumkov Centre. 2024. Study of the gender specifics of forced migration from Ukraine to the EU in the context of military conflict. Part 1: Forced migrants – a sociological view in the gender dimension.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

overqualified for the jobs they do. As for the level of wages, according to the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, employed women from Ukraine receive wages below the national average.

The main reasons for women's unemployment and economic inactivity in this country are good starting conditions for social security; difficulty in mastering the language, which does not allow women to hold positions at a level corresponding to their qualifications; difficulty in confirming diplomas in most professions requiring higher education; lack of full coverage of children by the education system and kindergartens, which does not allow women to enter the labour market, as in the families of Ukrainian refugees, women are mostly the head; and the presence of isolated manifestations of discrimination based on nationality.

The situation of Ukrainian women in Poland, the country with the second-largest number of migrants from Ukraine, is significantly different from Germany. A significant number of migrant women

do not receive regular assistance from the state and are forced to look for any job that can meet their basic needs. Due to the high level of qualifications of Ukrainian migrant women (about 70 per cent of migrants have higher education) and the specific nature of the labour market, which is experiencing a significant shortage of low-skilled labour and workers in the service and trade sectors, women are forced to accept jobs that do not match their level of education and experience. Overall, Poland has the highest employment rate among Ukrainian refugees (about 70 per cent). More than a third of Ukrainian refugee women work in manual or technical labour, one in five in trade, and 17 per cent in hospitality and catering, i.e. in hotels and restaurants or cafes.<sup>128</sup> At the same time, only 23 per cent of migrant women say that their current employment corresponds to their level of education and qualifications, which indicates that there are significant losses of women's qualifications and limitations to their professional realization by education.



*I have a university degree and extensive experience in marketing, and I have held quite high positions in Ukraine. I want to work and provide for myself and my family, but here the maximum I am offered is unskilled labour as a cleaner, packer or assembler, so I decided to learn languages and look for something better. But many women I know accept such work*

**Migrant woman**

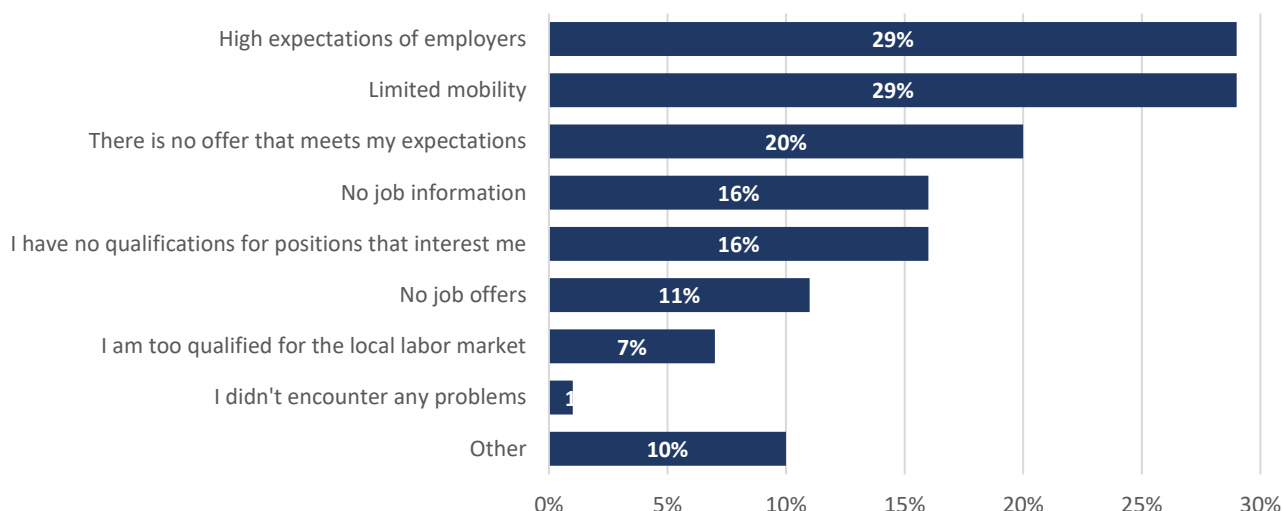
The development of the country's social infrastructure also affects women's economic opportunities: only 38 per cent of migrant women in Poland who arrived after the start of the full-scale invasion consider the existing childcare programmes sufficient to enable mothers to work or look for work. Almost half of the women (48 per cent) experience a significant shortage of jobs and places to work and demonstrate readiness to move to smaller cities in the country if jobs are available. Among the main problems Ukrainian women face when looking for a job in Poland are high expectations of employers (29 per cent), limited mobility (29 per cent) and lack of offers on the labour market that could meet women's expectations (20 per cent).<sup>129</sup>

Ukrainian women migrants in Poland also noted that they have recently experienced a reduction in the conditions for access to and rent of sustainable housing. This is mainly due to the curtailment of support programmes, high rents, lack of stable income for women, and the unwillingness of landlords to rent housing for short periods of time. In general, as of September 2023, 60 per cent of migrant women lived in rented housing, and 55 per cent had an open-ended contract for accommodation. However, women report a lack of stability: in the last 3 months, women most often lost their housing due to the end of programmes (45 per cent) and 21 per cent of women were asked to leave their previous place of residence.

<sup>128</sup> Raport mobilności transgranicznej 2023 badanie socjologiczne – edycja iv obywatele Ukrainy na Polskim rynku pracy nowe wyzwania i perspektywy. <https://ewl.com.pl/> (data on migrants who came to Poland during the war – 93 per cent of the sample were women).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

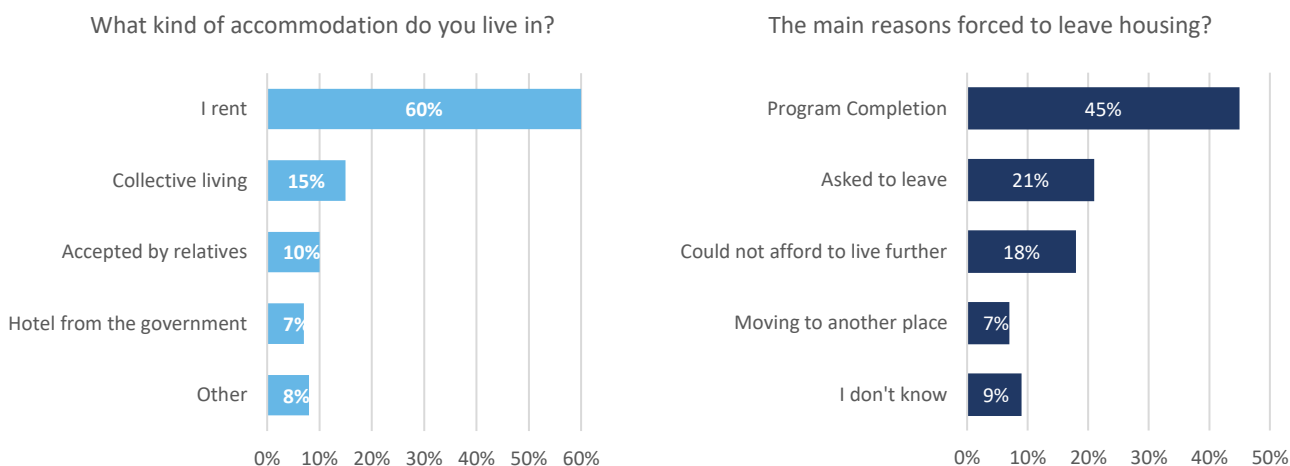
**Figure 44. The main problems faced by Ukrainian women in finding employment in Poland <sup>130</sup>**



Due to the lack of stable housing, women have problems with children's access to the education and healthcare systems (due to the ties of institutions to their actual place of residence). The inability to enrol children in educational institutions not only reduces their level of education and causes educational losses, but also hinders women's

employment opportunities due to the need to care for them (29 per cent of children do not attend educational institutions in the host country). About 30 per cent of women say that they cannot look for a job and work because of family caregiving obligations.<sup>131</sup>

**Figure 45. Prevalence of housing problems among migrant women temporarily staying in Poland, Romania, Moldova and Slovakia**



*For me, one of the biggest problems is the lack of housing in the region where I live now. There are also significant problems with kindergartens. I have a 3-year-old child and I can't go to work because I have no one to leave her with, so we have to live on benefits*

**Migrant women**

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine. Regional protection analysis #3. Trends analysis: Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe, November 2023

There are significant housing problems for families of women in which the woman or other family members have disabilities. In 2023, compared to 2022, the number of such families living in collective housing increased from 13 per cent to 24 per cent.<sup>132</sup> Only 18 per cent of women reported being employed in families with persons with disabilities. The prospects for independent employment of women with disabilities in the surveyed countries are also low (18 per cent). These figures apply to the neighbouring countries of Ukraine, including Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

As for the activity of Ukrainian women in Poland to start their own business, it is insignificant, but quite high compared to other countries where Ukrainian women are located. In particular, 7 per cent of

migrant women surveyed in a study conducted by EWL.pl are considering starting their own business. The most popular types of activities are administration, office work, management and media (33 per cent), hotels and gastronomy, as well as services (17 per cent each).<sup>133</sup>

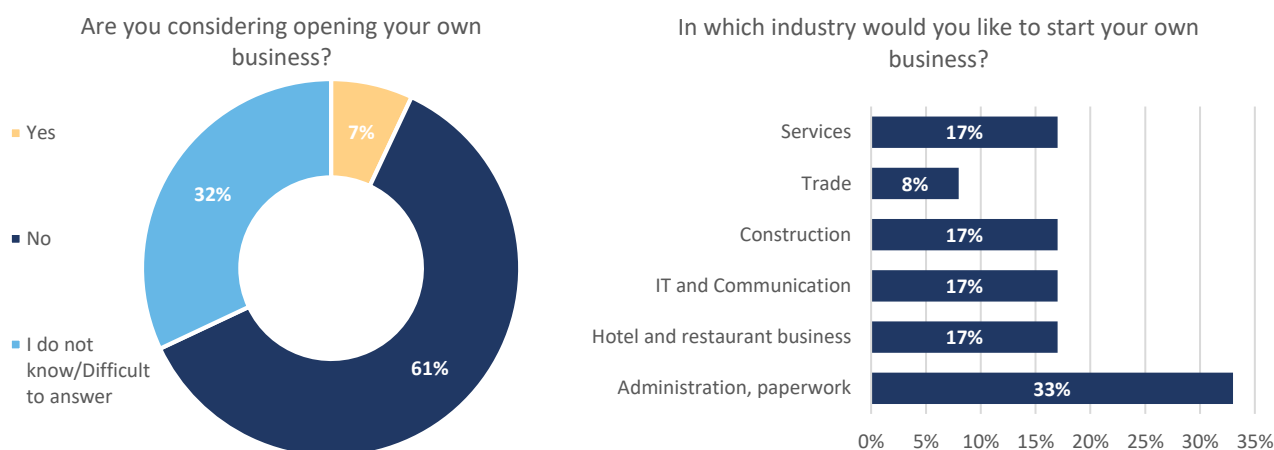
In general, migrant women, especially those who have had experience in organizing and running their own business in Ukraine, assess the general procedural conditions for starting and running a business in a country of temporary residence as much more difficult and bureaucratic. As a result, not all of them decide to enter this field of activity, as they feel insufficiently informed about the rules of the law and do not have enough money to pay taxes.



*In Ukraine, I had a beauty business. After I left, about a month later, I went to work part-time in Ireland. And now a year and two months have passed since I've been here, and I'm planning to open my own beauty salon in Ireland. It is very difficult to do now. It took me five and a half months to document everything, which is a very long time here. There is much more bureaucracy than in Ukraine.*

*Migrant woman*

**Figure 46. Women's openness to starting their own business abroad and the main areas of implementation<sup>134</sup>**



In addition to the place of residence, changes in women's lives are significantly influenced by their previous living conditions in Ukraine, level of education, professional experience, family ties, mental and physical health, loss of social ties, and changes in family income. This reveals the vector of

changes that take place in the lives of Ukrainian women when they move abroad. Women suffered the greatest losses due to migration in terms of living conditions (loss of their own housing and the need to rent or live in collective housing), in the level of use of their existing qualifications (many

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Raport mobilności transgranicznej 2023 badanie socjologiczne – edycja iv obywatele Ukrainy na Polskim rynku pracy nowe wyzwania i perspektywy. <https://ewl.com.pl/>

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

women faced forced unemployment or the need to work in positions that are significantly lower than their education and qualifications), and faced existing barriers, in particular, language and social barriers (most Ukrainian migrants do not know the language of the host country and master it at a basic household level; lack of social contacts) and loss of

opportunities for realization (for many women who came from large developed cities of Ukraine, it is difficult to adapt in rural settlements of European countries due to the lack of usual opportunities for realization in professional life, social communication, changes in the pace of life and restrictions on leisure activities).



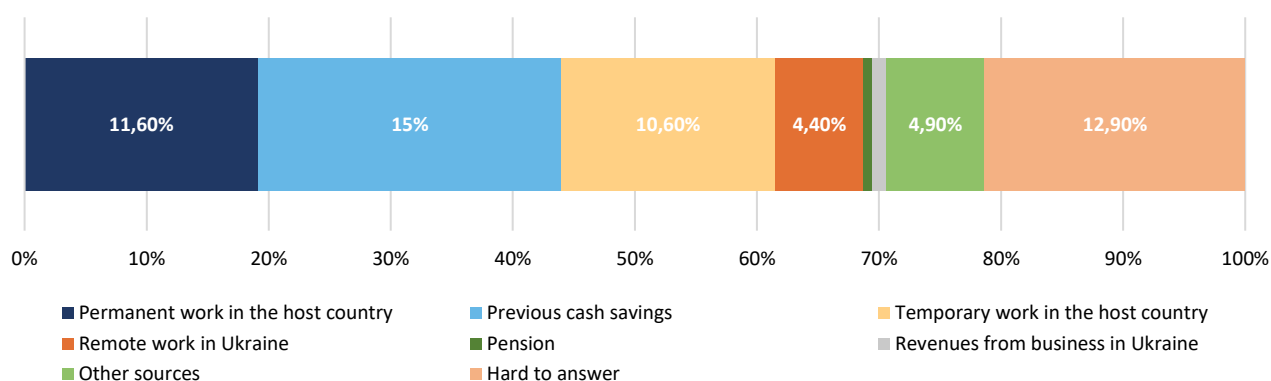
*We came from a big city in Ukraine, and here we live in a small village where there is no opportunity for older children to work or go to school. There is not even a store here. So, psychologically speaking, it's hard for me to adapt and get used to the new life. I feel emotionally stressed every day.*

*Migrant woman*

For 39.5 per cent of women currently living abroad, the main material resource of subsistence is financial assistance from various sources, mostly state aid from the country of temporary residence. Almost 15 per cent live off their previous savings. Income from women's labour activity abroad is not very high and is much lower than income from these sources among men in similar circumstances. In particular, 11.6 per cent of migrant women receive

income from permanent employment, and 10.6 per cent from temporary work. If looking at women's income before moving, it was stable, mostly enough to live on (46.2 per cent of women surveyed) or enough for basic things and food (41.3 per cent).<sup>135</sup> This may indicate minor changes in the financial situation of women, as well as a high level of their dependence on social security.

**Figure 47. Main sources of income for Ukrainian women seeking temporary asylum abroad<sup>136</sup>**



The changes in women's quality of life as a result of moving abroad are significant. Overall, 23 per cent of women say that their quality of life has deteriorated compared to Ukraine. This depends on the current country of residence and previous living conditions and place of residence in Ukraine.

Almost 70 per cent of women among forced migrants experience difficulties in adapting to a new place of residence, and these problems have both

psychological and economic origins (loss of previous economic status; family separation; language barriers; mentality barrier; lack of prospects for development along the trajectory previously established in Ukraine; household adaptation, etc.). The need to postpone life and the abandoned home syndrome are common among women, which exacerbates their psychological problems and prevents them from building a new life and adapting to a new environment.

<sup>135</sup> Razumkov Centre. 2024. Study of the gender specifics of forced migration from Ukraine to the EU in the context of military conflict. Part 1: Forced migrants – a sociological view in the gender dimension.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

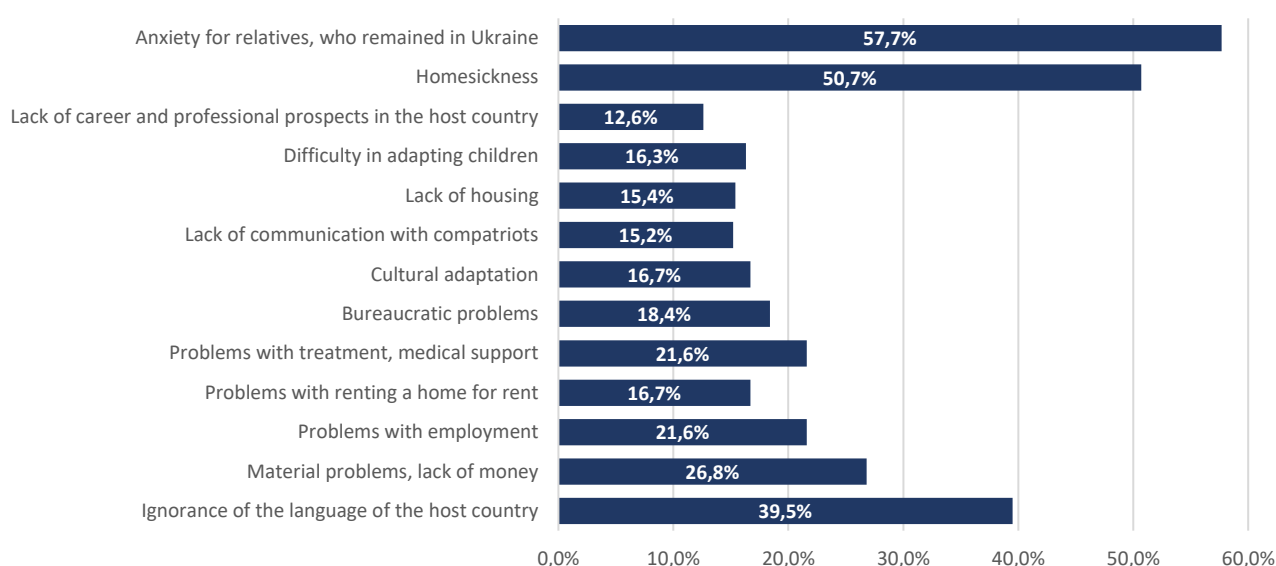
« *I have a feeling that I have put my life on hold and live in constant expectation of the end of the war and the possibility of returning home. Although I realize that I will never have the life I had before*

*Migrant woman*

Among the most common threats and risks faced by women in host countries are psychological problems (anxiety and homesickness for their homeland, relatives and the general situation in Ukraine (more than 50 per cent of women

surveyed); lack of knowledge of the language of the country (39.5 per cent); material problems and lack of money (26.8 per cent); problems with finding a job (20 per cent); and problems with housing and rent (16.7 per cent).<sup>137</sup>.

**Figure 48. Main problems faced by Ukrainian women abroad<sup>138</sup>**



Migrant women also experience certain manifestations of hostile and prejudiced attitudes. In particular, more than half of the women who had experiences from local residents (54 per cent) and local residents of Russian origin (40 per cent)<sup>139</sup>. This was mostly due to the negative attitude of the population towards the provision of social

assistance to Ukrainian women, as well as attitudes towards women's professional preferences (residents of the countries of residence believe that Ukrainian women should accept unskilled labour, without taking into account their previous professional experience and high level of education).

« *Being here offers great opportunities not to work. I know a lot of Ukrainians who did not work because they received financial, food and clothing assistance, plus free housing, and there was simply no need to work. Accordingly, this greatly affects the attitude of local people towards Ukrainians.*

*Migrant woman*

In general, Ukrainian women migrants who have returned to Ukraine assess the local labour market as more attractive than in Ukraine (50 per cent), although only 10 per cent of them had work

experience in the host country. Most likely, this perception is related to higher wages, which creates a false sense of well-being for women.

<sup>137</sup> Razumkov Centre. 2024. Study of the gender specifics of forced migration from Ukraine to the EU in the context of military conflict. Part 1: Forced migrants – a sociological view in the gender dimension.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.



European researchers argue that due to the specific legal conditions of Ukrainian women abroad, their high level of education and previous work experience, their involvement in the EU labour market is much faster than that of refugees from other countries. According to Eurostat, in 2024, there are about 170,000 officially registered unemployed women over the age of 25 in the EU. In some countries (the Netherlands, Lithuania,

Estonia, and the United Kingdom), the employment rate of able-bodied women is about 80 per cent, and according to experts, taking into account short-term and informal employment, this figure is much higher in Poland and the Czech Republic. Despite this, women's employment opportunities abroad are lower than those of men. Sociological surveys show that in general, the employment rate for men is 1.5 times higher than for women.



*Sometimes it's easier for men to find a job, because they don't have childcare responsibilities, but I first need to solve the problem of what to do with them and who will look after them while I work. They are very strict with this; you cannot leave them alone until they are 10 years old. Also, men are more likely to accept less skilled labour, which is abundant here. And for me, this is a barrier.*

**Migrant woman**

The main obstacles to employment mentioned by Ukrainian women migrants include language barriers (almost 40 per cent); the need to care for children or elderly family members (27 per cent); availability of only low-skilled jobs (11 per cent); and the complexity of procedures for confirming educational diplomas and qualifications (9 per cent). Some women openly state that they do not want to work abroad (15 per cent), and that it is economically unprofitable to find a job due to the possible loss of state support (14 per cent).<sup>140</sup>

One of the key problems of realizing women's economic opportunities in European labour markets is the unwillingness of women to lose their qualifications and work in positions that are significantly lower than their previous experience and education. This is a completely logical behavioural model for women who have had significant career achievements and prospects for professional development and who live in Ukrainian cities with developed labour markets.

In addition, various sociological studies indicate that the European population is not ready to see Ukrainian women in highly skilled jobs and positions, viewing them only as cheap labour in low-skilled and unpopular positions among the local population. As a result, women face the inability to compete freely in the labour market. For example, according to the Polish government, about half of Ukrainian migrant women worked in lower-skilled jobs,<sup>141</sup> and the Latvian government says that 40 per cent of Ukrainian women are employed in elementary jobs<sup>142</sup>. The loss of skills of Ukrainian women is also emphasized by the data on the change in the sphere of activity and economic activity status of women moving from Poland to Germany. Thus, all refugee women who were unemployed in Ukraine remained in this status in Germany. Women who worked in managerial positions, had their own businesses and held highly skilled positions mostly become unemployed or work in low-skilled positions in trade and services.<sup>143</sup>



*They benefit from migrants because there is a large shortage of workers in the EU who would be willing to do low-skilled jobs. Locals are not willing to do this, and they can pay migrants much less.*

**Migrant woman**

<sup>140</sup> Razumkov Centre. 2024. Study of the gender specifics of forced migration from Ukraine to the EU in the context of military conflict. Part 1: Forced migrants – a sociological view in the gender dimension.

<sup>141</sup> DIHK (2022), Erst-Check soll Ukraine-Geflüchteten Berufseinstieg erleichtern, <https://www.dihk.de/de/aktuelles-und-presse/aktuelle-informationen/erst-check-soll-ukraine-gefluechteten-berufseinstieg-erleichtern--71286>.

<sup>142</sup> skills.profile.tool.label, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrantskills/#/>.

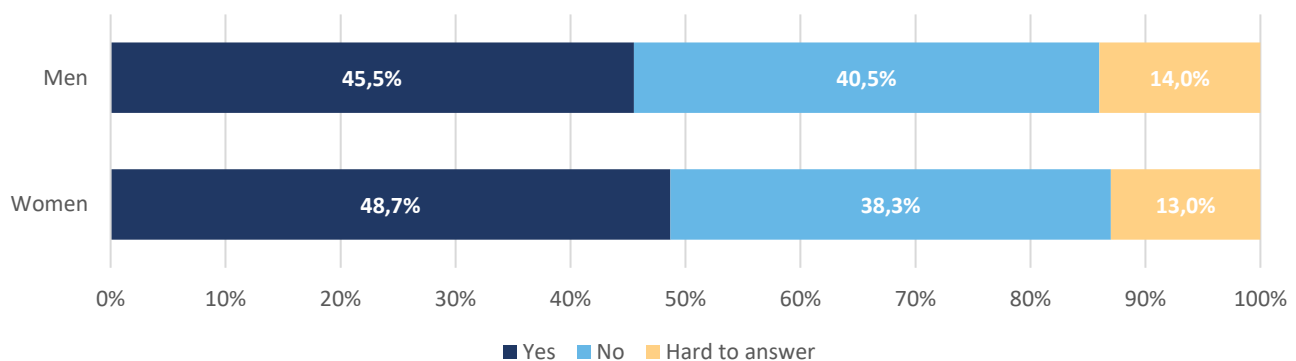
<sup>143</sup> From Poland to Germany, new trends in Ukrainian refugee migration. <https://ewl.com.pl/>

It should be noted that almost all countries where Ukrainian migrant women are located have an extensive system of incentives and assistance in employment. However, due to a number of domestic and economic problems, it does not always work effectively in terms of realizing women's opportunities. Even in countries that are leaders in attracting Ukrainian women to the labour market (the Netherlands, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom), the quality of human capital utilization of Ukrainian women and their overall level of satisfaction with the quality of work remain significantly low.

Both men and women who have migrated from Ukraine report a difference in the prevalence of gender stereotypes in their host country, with 28

per cent of women reporting a significant difference and another 32 per cent reporting a slight difference. Men share a similar opinion with a slight deviation of 2 to 3 per cent.<sup>144</sup> On the one hand, this is a positive trend that encourages Ukrainians to adopt new behaviours. However, surveys show that migrants are not ready to fully adopt them. In particular, gender segregation in the labour market remains a problem among Ukrainian migrants in host countries. Both men and women who have migrated from Ukraine clearly distinguish between male and female professions (45.7 per cent of respondents indicated a clear distinction), which negatively affects the available opportunities for realization and deepens existing stereotypes formed and rooted in the perception of Ukrainians.<sup>145</sup>

**Figure 49. Perception of gender roles in society by men and women (according to Ukrainian migrants)** <sup>146</sup>



With the move, there are minor changes in the perception of gender roles and stereotypes for both Ukrainian men and women. Nevertheless, the general pattern remains mostly relevant. It was found that 65.1 per cent of women and 62.8 per cent of men report that their roles in the distribution of family responsibilities and childcare remain unchanged. The situation is similar in the distribution of “male” and “female” professions and career opportunities for women, with almost 65 per

cent of women and 62 per cent of men reporting no changes in this area.

Women note that when looking for a job in host countries, compared to Ukraine, there are no stereotypes that employers hold when hiring women. There is no discrimination based on age, children, social status or marital status, which greatly expands employment opportunities.



*At the interview here, they didn't ask me how old I was, I didn't put it on my resume. They didn't know if I had children. These factors do not matter at all when it comes to employment.*

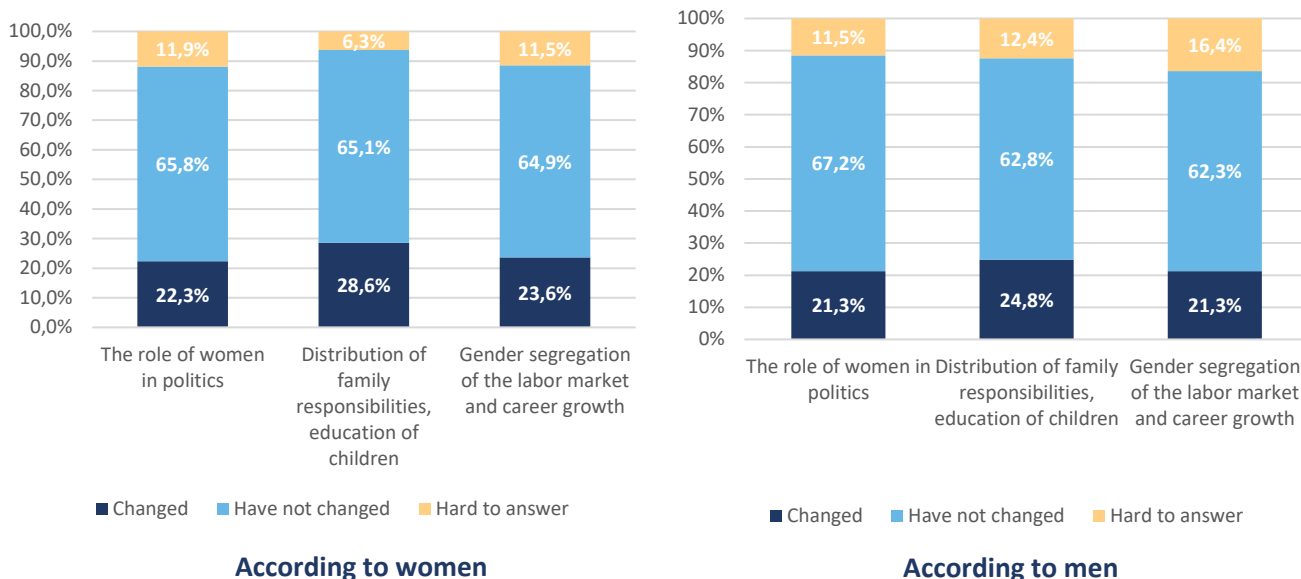
**Migrant women**

<sup>144</sup> Razumkov Centre. 2024. Study of the gender specifics of forced migration from Ukraine to the EU in the context of military conflict. Part 1: Forced migrants – a sociological view in the gender dimension.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 50. Changes in stereotypes of behaviour of Ukrainian citizens temporarily seeking refuge abroad**



In summary, the problems and barriers to Ukrainian women's realization of their economic opportunities abroad include:

- Lack of stability of living conditions, including high risks of losing housing
- Sociocultural and language barriers to women's adaptation
- Loss of qualifications and education due to employment in jobs that do not correspond to the level of education and experience of women
- The unwillingness of the labour market and the population of host countries to freely compete with Ukrainian women for highly skilled jobs
- Manifestations of discrimination and prejudice on the part of both the local population and other migrants (including Russians)
- Unclear legal and bureaucratic system of the host country, which becomes a barrier to employment and starting a business

- Insufficient development of infrastructure for children (e.g. schools, kindergartens, extended day care centres), which hinders employment opportunities and language learning for women
- Psychological barriers of lost opportunities and procrastination
- Low mobility of women, their attachment to small settlements offering limited employment opportunities
- The syndrome of social and economic isolation caused by women's unwillingness to adapt in a new country, establish new social ties and realize their economic opportunities
- Changes in the economic and social roles of women who are abroad without partners and are raising children on their own or taking care of other disabled family members
- The persistence of gender segregation of the labour market in the stereotypical understanding of women and men currently living abroad.

## 8.2. Main problems and prospects for the return of migrant women to Ukraine

The prospects for migrant women's return to Ukraine depend on a range of factors, both security and socioeconomic. The starting point for most women abroad is security, which women associate with the end of the active phase of hostilities and the resumption of peaceful life. However, even this factor is not an absolute guarantee of realizing the desire to return. One of the obstacles to returning is

women's belief that even after the acute phase of the full-scale war is over, the risks of new aggression from Russia will remain, Ukraine will be forced to have a war economy, and most budget resources will be directed not to the social sphere and improving the quality of life of the population, but to increasing defence capabilities and forming a professional army.

« *When the war is over, as they say it will be, our country will be on these 'war rails' forever. I am not ready to live in such conditions, because the most valuable thing for me is freedom. Freedom of movement, freedom when you have your rights, you know them, you can use them.*

*Migrant woman*

The second most important factor in women's readiness to return is the availability of housing in Ukraine. For most women whose housing was destroyed, especially if it was located in the occupied territories, returning to Ukraine becomes a new challenge for rebuilding and adapting to life

in new conditions and on new territory in Ukraine, as well as a risk factor for having further challenges in resettling. Both women who have already returned and those who are abroad speak about this.

« *We are from Bakhmut, and our house was completely destroyed. At the beginning of the war, we went abroad, but we couldn't adapt, so we returned. Now we are trying to live in Ukraine in a new place, but it is also difficult, both financially and psychologically. Among my friends who stayed abroad, the main reason they do not want to return is the lack (destruction) of housing in Ukraine, they believe that they simply cannot afford to build a new life.*

*An IDP woman who returned from abroad*

Important factors in women's return are the length of their stay abroad, living conditions and the degree of ongoing psychological and socioeconomic adaptation (including language skills, social connections and employment). Very often, women

sacrifice their lives, arguing that they want to give their children a better future, opportunities for development and establishment in the host country.

« *Now the situation is like between two worlds. Because here, too, a lot has been accomplished in two years. And I don't want to lose it. That's why I will also try to do my best to stay. I already have a job with a higher salary than in Ukraine. My children have adapted to their new life.*

*Migrant woman*

To a large extent, the prospects for women's return are influenced by men who stayed in Ukraine and do not support their return home. There are several reasons for this situation. First, it is a concern for the safety of their children and wives. Secondly, it is a purely subjective perception of the opportunities, conditions and quality of life in European countries,

as well as a subconscious desire to be in a situation of free border crossing, which is passed onto their families. Thirdly, there are economic reasons related to the reduction of the economic burden on men when their wives and children are abroad, especially in countries with significant social assistance and support.

« *It's hard for me, and I really want to go home, but my husband keeps telling me to stay even longer. He says it's safer for the children here and that he doesn't have a proper job to provide for our family. And here I get at least some help.*

*Migrant woman*

Another factor relating to returning is the availability of employment for women, both in Ukraine and abroad. Very often, employment in a

specialty or profession that satisfies a woman can serve both as a factor in stimulating return to Ukraine (especially for women with a high level of

qualifications who are not ready to work in simple, unskilled jobs abroad) and as a factor in wanting to stay abroad (in the case of women who have found

a job and have an income higher than in Ukraine and a position that satisfies them).



*We came back to Ukraine because my previous employer offered me a higher position and a salary increase. In Germany, even in five years, I won't be able to apply for such a job and compete with the locals.*

**Migrant woman**

The political decisions and laws adopted by Ukraine in all spheres of life also affect the return of women. Women who have lived abroad for a long time have certain established ideas about the development of democracy and equal rights, which they would like

to see in Ukraine. In particular, these are the issues of equal access to social guarantees, prevention of discrimination, and ensuring equal rights and freedoms of citizens.



*The laws that are currently being adopted in Ukraine are not conducive to the return of Ukrainians. Because everyone thinks about their life, their future and a better future. And when laws are passed that somehow close opportunities for people, you think about where to be to be free. Now the most expensive and valuable currency is not money, it is freedom. And it is for freedom that there will be a war in the coming years.*

**Migrant woman**

It should be noted that women's perceptions of the state of affairs in Ukraine, current living conditions, legislative and political changes taking place in the country are often shaped by the information vacuum in which women abroad live, as they cannot assess the real state of affairs. The information they receive from external information sources can very

often be distorted in the direction of negative popularization of the situation and steps taken by the authorities to maintain stability in the country, or not fully covered. This is confirmed by the facts reported by women who have already returned, as well as by their assessment of the overall level of satisfaction with their return.



*When we lived abroad, I was always reading various telegram channels to find out about the situation in Ukraine. But all the news had only a negative color, plus my emotional state was superimposed, and it seemed that everything was bad. But now I'm home and I realize that all that information is not entirely true, because there are a lot of good things happening in the country, even despite the war.*

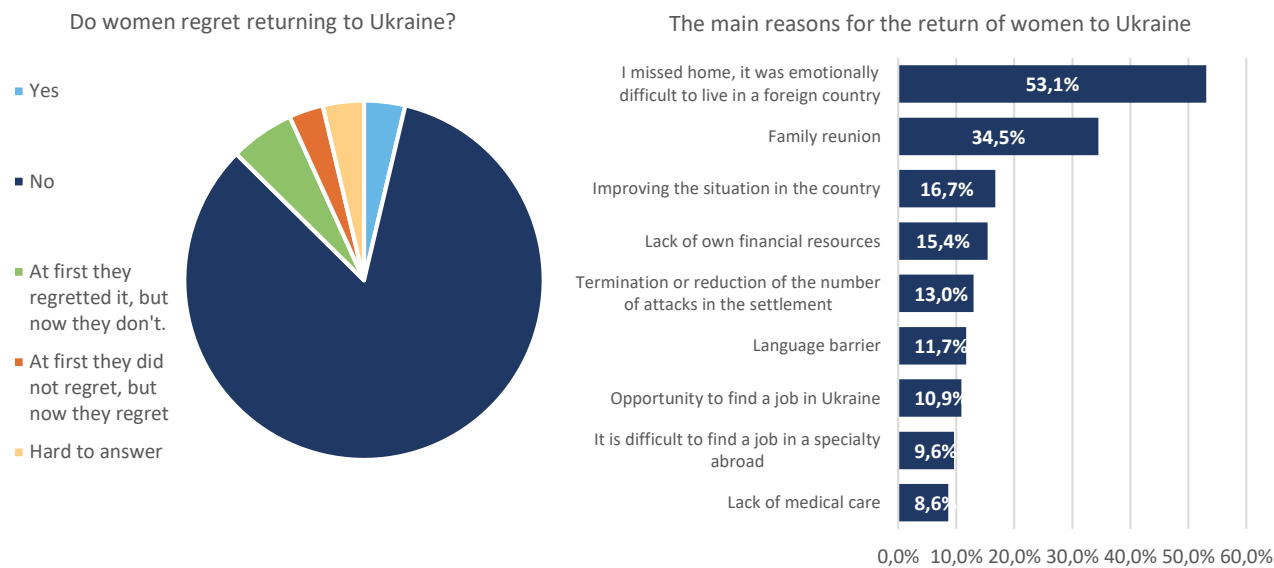
**Migrant woman**

Among women who have already returned to Ukraine after living abroad for a long time, the majority, 83 per cent, do not regret their return. Some of them say that when making the decision to return, they had many arguments, both for and against, but today they are satisfied with their actions. The main reasons for returning, as stated by women, are the emotional difficulty of being

abroad, feeling homesick, desire to return to the old way of life (53.1 per cent); family reunification (return to partner) – 34.5 per cent; improvement of the situation in the country – 16.7 per cent; lack of financial resources – 15.4 per cent; lack of housing abroad; difficulty in learning the language – 13 per cent; and opportunity to work in Ukraine – 10.9 per cent.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>147</sup> Razumkov Centre. 2024. Study of the gender specifics of forced migration from Ukraine to the EU in the context of military conflict. Part 1: Forced migrants – a sociological view in the gender dimension.

Figure 51. The main reasons for women's return to Ukraine and their satisfaction with this decision<sup>148</sup>



Solving the problem of migrant women's return to Ukraine requires from Ukrainian government an immediate response rather than a wait-and-see

strategy. The longer women stay abroad, the less likely they are to return.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.



## 9. THE EMERGENCE OF NEW CATEGORIES OF VULNERABLE WOMEN

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the category of vulnerable women has naturally expanded significantly, with additional obstacles to realizing their economic opportunities. The number

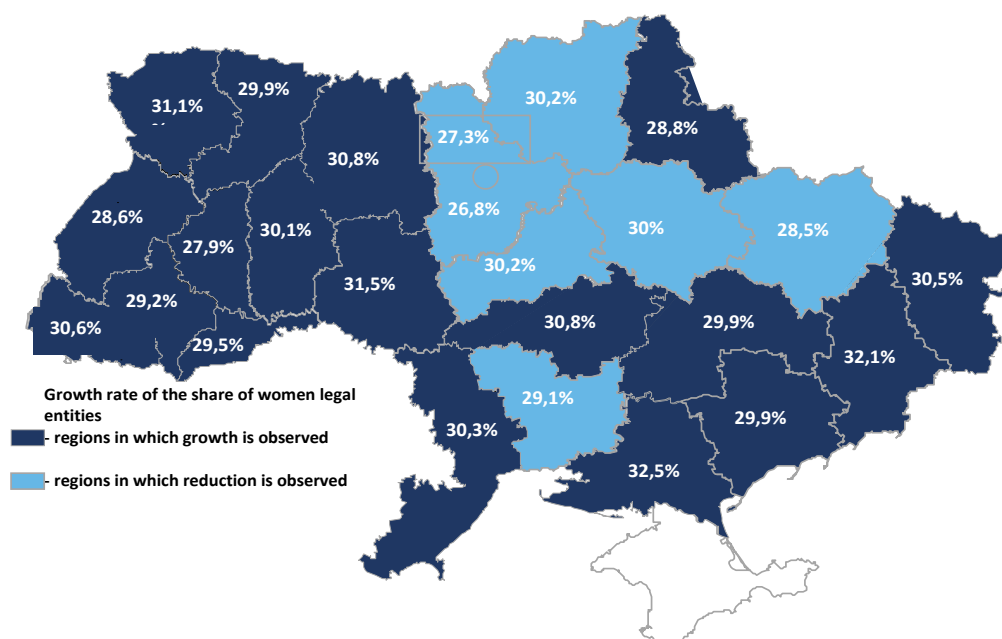
of women among IDPs has also increased, as has the number of wives of military and mobilized personnel, and women whose partners have returned from captivity or are disabled.

### 9.1. Women among IDPs

The hostilities have caused a manifold increase in the scale of internal displacement, which began in 2014 with the invasion of Crimea and the eastern regions by Ukraine. As of March 2024, according to official data, 4,835,000 internally displaced persons were registered in Ukraine, almost 60 per cent of whom were women. As of the beginning of 2024, the number of women aged 18 to 60 with IDP status amounted to 1.53 million, a 4.5-fold increase compared to the beginning of 2021. The largest increase in the number of IDPs occurred in the relatively safe western regions (from 21 times in Lviv region to 44 times in Zakarpattia region). The vast majority of women moved with children under the age of 18, due to the desire to protect children by moving them away from the border with Russia and the area of active hostilities.<sup>149</sup> Such a large-scale increase in the number of IDPs in western Ukraine has become a new challenge for

communities to provide opportunities for IDPs to adapt, provide housing and social services, and create conditions for the realization of economic opportunities, especially for women of working age.

Despite the sharp increase in the number of female IDPs in the western regions, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovska, Kyiv, Kyiv and Donetsk regions remain the leaders in accepting them. This is largely due to better employment opportunities in more developed local labour markets (primarily Kyiv and Kyiv, Dnipro, and Kharkiv regions) and a relatively short distance from their previous (permanent in the eyes of many) place of residence. One of the proofs of the importance of the second motive is the directions of evacuation of residents of Kherson and Kherson region: primarily Odesa and Mykolaiv regions.



**Figure 52. Regional distribution of the concentration of IDP women aged 18-60 at the beginning of 2024 compared to 2021<sup>150</sup>**

<sup>149</sup> According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine

<sup>150</sup> According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine

The scale of registration of women and children is likely to be accurate. There is no reason to believe that women refuse to receive assistance and to have their children attend school or preschool. Another issue is the registration of men, who may refuse to register for fear of mobilization. Accordingly, it seems quite likely that the real gender structure of IDPs is distorted, which is most likely reflected in errors in the assessment of labour supply in local labour markets.

The return of these women to the labour market will have positive consequences both for the woman herself and for the country's economy as a whole, which needs and will need highly skilled workers in the future. However, the loss and obsolescence of knowledge and skills during the

period of economic inactivity significantly reduces the possibility of their return.

According to the research conducted by the International Organization for Migration in the framework of 14 rounds of IDP surveys in Ukraine, there is a gradual increase in the number of women returning to the territorial communities of their previous residence, but this trend, of course, does not apply to the territories bordering the active combat zone or that are temporarily occupied. In general, about 40 per cent of IDPs have been displaced more than once, mostly young women aged 18 to 24. Very often, women who used to live in rural areas move to large cities, which provide more opportunities for economic realization, but also create new barriers to adaptation in a new and unfamiliar environment.

« *It was hard for me to adapt. We are from a village in the Kherson region, and at first, I saw the big city as a new opportunity for development and a new life. But everything is different here. At home, I could solve any issue very easily because I knew everyone. In Kyiv, it's harder because the city is big and crowded, and it's hard to communicate.*

IDP woman

Some women IDPs initially went abroad, although a small number, and 85 per cent of returnees are women who are unable or unwilling to return to their previous/permanent place of residence and are in relatively safe areas of Ukraine.<sup>151</sup> According

to the IOM, most of them report that they have lost their savings or did not have them before going abroad. This puts most women in this category in difficult economic conditions.

« *We are from Toretsk, and at first we went abroad to Poland, but it was hard to adapt and we ran out of money, so we returned to Lviv. It was very hard at first, because we had no money to live on, and people didn't really want to hire me because we were from the East. We were just surviving. That's why we moved to Vinnytsia, where I work now.*

IDP woman

The key issue for IDP women is adaptation in a new place. About a quarter, 22 per cent, of them say that they would like to integrate and stay in the community of their current location. This trend is especially evident among women of working age and families with children. This poses additional challenges for the labour market and economic empowerment of women in their communities of residence. However, and this is of primary importance for IDP policymaking, there are many manifestations of consumerism and expectations of

monetary (and other) assistance, with very limited expectations of employment and income generation. In particular, 50 per cent of women feel the need for finance, while only 10 per cent need to expand opportunities for additional income.<sup>152</sup> Such sentiments are most prevalent among IDPs in Kharkiv region, which is an indirect sign of moving there not so much for employment opportunities as for proximity to their previous place of residence. The peculiarities of the age composition of IDPs in different regions cannot be ignored. In fact, there is

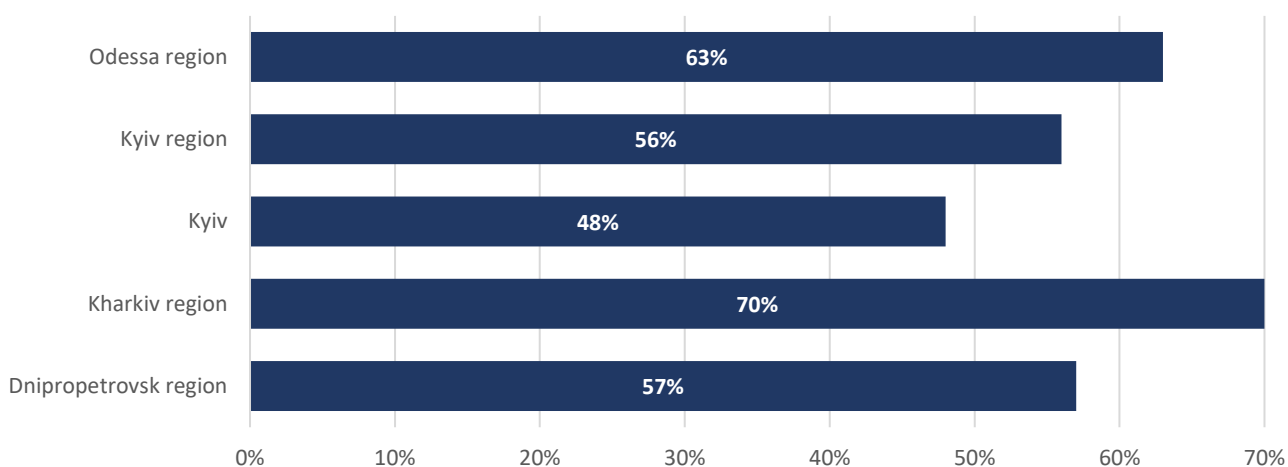
<sup>151</sup> IOM Mission in Ukraine. Report on Internal Displacement in Ukraine. Survey of the general population. Round 14. October 2023

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

nothing wrong with the desire to temporarily settle near one's home, one's settlement, in conditions as close to the usual ones as possible – it is only

necessary to adequately assess the needs of IDPs and formulate policy accordingly.

**Figure 53. Share of IDP women in need of cash assistance, by region of temporary accommodation** <sup>153</sup>

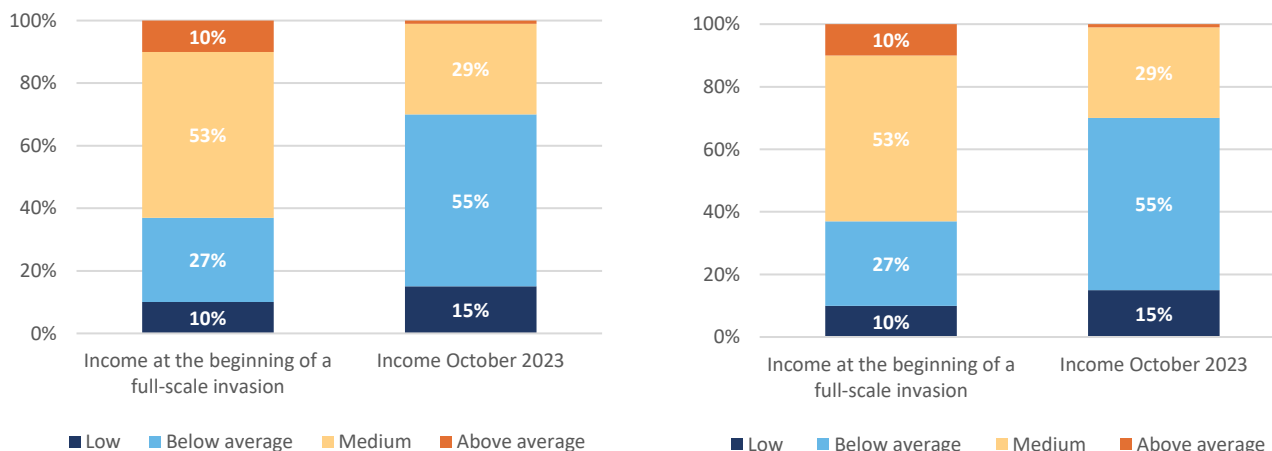


There has been a significant decline in the standard of living of IDP women. While before the full-scale invasion, only 10 per cent said their income was low and 27 per cent said their income was below average, now the share of the former group has increased to 15 per cent and the latter to 55 per cent.<sup>154</sup> The reasons for income losses are related to changing roles in families, women losing their jobs, and the increased costs of moving and adapting to a new place. Overall, 42 per cent of women say that they spend 50 to 75 per cent of their budget exclusively on food and utilities.

The situation of IDP women is characterized by changes in the roles they had to assume in a difficult situation. Sociological surveys of IDP women have

shown that about 40 per cent of women were forced to assume greater financial obligations for family support than they had before the forced displacement. About 45 per cent of women emphasize that their role in family life planning has increased significantly.<sup>155</sup> Expanding the range of women's responsibilities requires them to develop new behavioural models of involvement and search for tools to ensure the financial well-being and life of their families. Because of this, women face the problem of having to do overtime employment and accept jobs that do not meet their qualifications but provide opportunities to earn additional income. They worry about the material well-being of their families.

**Figure 54. Changes in the roles and financial situation of IDP women**<sup>156</sup>



<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Gradus Research Group. 2023. Changes in circumstances, living conditions and roles in Ukrainian families during a full-scale war. Analytical report. September.

<sup>155</sup> Gradus Research Group. 2023. Changes in Roles: How the War Affected Ukrainian Women's Family Life. September.

<sup>156</sup> Changes in Roles: How the War Affected Ukrainian Women's Family Life. Gradus Research Group. September 2023

« Even when I take on a part-time job, I take on a lot of work. Sometimes it comes to me irregularly, so I have to work very hard. Two years ago, I had such cases when I worked for days and slept for two hours or even less. Now I'm trying to get rid of this practice, but it happens because I need to provide for my family.

IDP woman

IDP women also have a high need for access to housing, which increases the total cost of rent for families and necessitates higher earnings. This issue is especially relevant for families in which women are the head and main financial supporters. Very

often, this problem remains unresolved for women who have been granted IDP status since 2014. This fact is also confirmed by the participants of the focus group studies.

« The most acute problem for us today is housing. Even though we moved here 10 years ago, the issue of owning our own home remains unresolved. We constantly live in rented apartments, which takes up most of our budget and also depresses me emotionally. And I realize that I am unlikely to earn enough money to buy my own house.

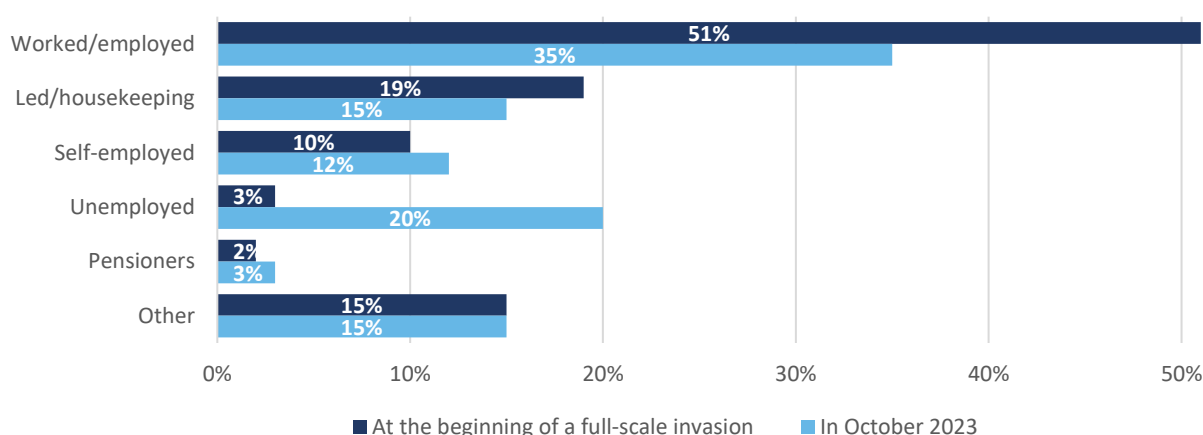
IDP woman

Due to the absence of their own housing and the need to pay rent, which has often increased unjustifiably due to the growing demand, IDP women require higher wages. Therefore, they are forced to accept overtime or unregistered employment, which, although it increases their income, significantly reduces the level of social protection.

The majority of IDP women have lost their jobs, businesses or habitual economic activities since the beginning of the full-scale invasion.<sup>157</sup> The loss of economic activity is caused by women's dismissals, inability to continue working remotely, or the

general destruction and closure of the enterprise(s) where they used to work or have their own business (including family businesses). Women also emphasize that in general, the process of organizing their work has undergone major changes both in their current place of work and in the new one (among women who were forced to change their type of activity). Women claim that they have to work more or combine several activities in order to provide for their families in the new location. In some cases, women accept jobs that do not correspond to their previous level of experience and qualifications, due to the need to earn a living.<sup>158</sup>

Figure 55. Changes in the economic status of IDP women in Ukraine <sup>159</sup>



<sup>157</sup> Research "Women as internally displaced persons in war conditions".

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

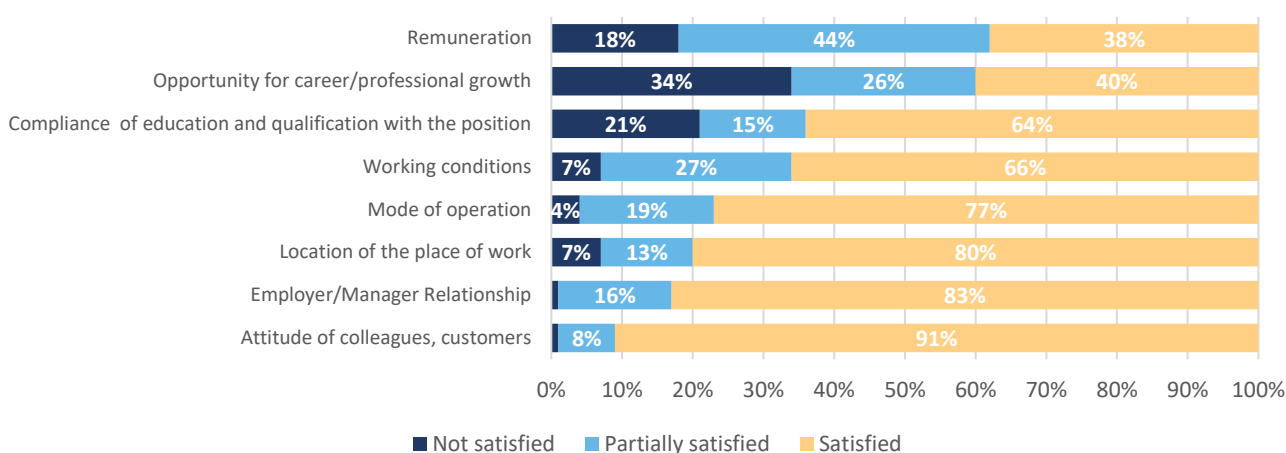
<sup>159</sup> Changes in Roles: How the War Affected Ukrainian Women's Family Life. Gradus Research Group. September 2023

Sociological observations reflect a significant decrease in the employment rate of IDP women (from 51 per cent to 35 per cent) and a corresponding increase in the unemployment rate. The unemployment of IDP women is mostly long-term, and the speed of employment depends on the place of residence and current competition in local labour markets. Women working in banking and finance and catering were the most likely to lose their jobs. The low mobility of employed women within the sectors of economic activity is noteworthy.

The majority of women employees are satisfied with the attitude of their colleagues/clients (91 per

cent) and company management (83 per cent). At the same time, every fifth woman works in a position that does not correspond to her education/skill level. Also, a significant number of respondents are dissatisfied (18 per cent) or partially satisfied (44 per cent) with the level of remuneration. Among all components of labour activity, respondents rated career and professional growth prospects the worst: only 40 per cent are satisfied, 26 per cent are partially satisfied and 34 per cent are dissatisfied.<sup>160</sup> This confirms that the general problems of the Ukrainian labour market are spreading to the category of IDP women.

**Figure 56. Level of satisfaction of IDP women with different aspects of employment**



*At first, I was looking for a job in my profession, I have a lot of experience in PR, but no one wanted to hire me, I was rejected, I spent almost 4 months looking for a job. And then I decided that it was better for me to look for some administrative work, which is less skilled, but there were vacancies and opportunities for it.*

**IDP woman**

IDP women face discrimination and prejudicial stereotypes in the employment process in the same way as other categories of women. This is confirmed by both sociological surveys and focus group discussions. One of the most common problems is the mismatch between women's education,

qualifications and experience and the structure and current needs of local labour markets in the cities of their current residence (51 per cent).<sup>161</sup> This encourages women to look for new employment opportunities, retraining or less skilled employment.



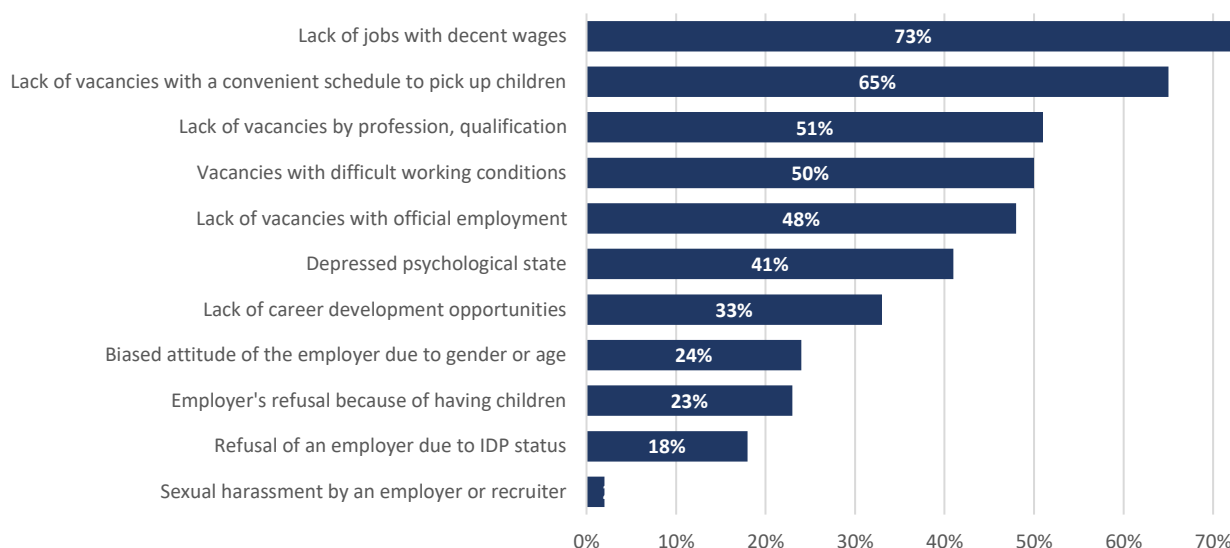
*From the very beginning, I realized that I would not be able to find a job in my profession (I worked as a leading specialist in the civil service in my city), so I was looking for something easier. But I was not hired for these positions (I wanted to work as a secretary), arguing that I was overqualified.*

**IDP woman**

<sup>160</sup> Iryna Demchenko, Iryna Teriukhanova and Nataliia Bulyhaof. 2024. The Effectiveness of the Policy of Supporting Internally Displaced Women's Economic Activity as a Component of Ukraine's Early Recovery. Kyiv: Socioconsulting.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

Figure 57. Main reasons for refusing to hire IDP women <sup>162</sup>



An important barrier to employment for IDP women is their desire to work flexible hours, which is especially relevant for women with young children (65 per cent of women). This problem is even more severe for IDP women due to the low level of adaptation of children to new living conditions, as

well as the insufficient availability of childcare infrastructure, which was overloaded even before the active stage of population displacement, where obtaining a place in a kindergarten required prior registration several years in advance.

« I didn't look for a job in the city. I was looking only remotely, because it is important for me that I am in some kind of condition that I can go to pick up my child, because there are alarms now, and I need to pick up my children, take them, and so on. That's why I was looking for a remote work format. Of course, this minimizes the possibilities.

IDP woman

The problem of ageism in employment is also a concern for IDP women, as noted by 24 per cent of women and the majority of women in the focus

group. Moreover, the issue of ageism is typical for both younger and older age groups, which becomes a significant barrier.

« I posted my resume on Ginnie, and I had several interviews, really, in a row. And when I got to the last one, it so happened that I indicated when I graduated from university, but I graduated from university, well, not right after school. And then, when they asked me my age, almost at the time of the offer, I was very correctly refused. And it was ageism.

IDP woman

The lack of public trust in employment centres hinders the ability to overcome existing difficulties. Given that the state mostly implements programmes to employ and support the competitiveness of IDP women within this institution, a valuable resource for women's development is lost. Thus, according to sociological

surveys, more than 70 per cent of respondents point to the ambiguity of interaction with the State, and every second respondent says that they do not receive the necessary assistance. In general, women's involvement in employment promotion activities is low (52 per cent of women surveyed in the Socioconsulting study did not participate in any

<sup>162</sup>Ibid.



event).<sup>163</sup> Among the most common tools used by IDP women are individual counselling on job searching, resume writing and interviewing (25 per cent); job search trainings and seminars (24 per cent); participation in community service (18 per cent); and training on entrepreneurial skills (12 per cent). The women were mostly satisfied with the quality of services received, although there is a significant number of women who demonstrate radical dissatisfaction.<sup>164</sup> The current situation indicates the need to increase women's awareness of the employment process, their involvement in programmes implemented at the state and non-governmental levels, and to expand the number of

employment programmes implemented by NGOs and international organizations (due to greater public trust in them).

Studies show that IDP women face additional barriers to employment, for example, prejudice of employers related to the possible return of women to their previous place of residence after de-occupation or if the security situation improves. This situation is quite widespread and causes denial of employment and reduces women's economic opportunities, creating discouragement and worsening their economic situation.

« *When I was trying to find a job, I was faced with a situation where I was simply asked a direct question. If the Kherson region is liberated, and it wasn't liberated yet, what will you do? Will you go back home? I said, well, yes, and I was directly rejected because of that. Therefore, in my opinion, this is also discrimination, because I would not have left everything and gone, I would have fulfilled some conditions of the labour contract and so on.*

*IDP woman*

« *When I started looking for a job sometime later, I was faced with the fact that IDPs were not hired because I had relatives in the occupied territory of Kherson region. I was even offered to take a polygraph for this reason. I believe that this is a kind of discrimination.*

*IDP woman*

Discrimination against women in employment due to the presence of relatives and friends in the occupied territory is similar. Employers are afraid to hire such employees because of possible contacts, information leaks and possible ties with the occupation authorities. A common problem for most IDP women is the lack of necessary documents confirming their level of education and work experience, which becomes an obstacle not only in finding a job, but also in obtaining unemployment

status. This problem has been partially resolved with the introduction of educational documents in the Diia system, but not completely. In particular, there are still questions about educational documents obtained before 2000 that are not reflected in the database, as well as educational documents obtained outside of Ukraine. The problem is the lack of verification of the authenticity of copies of documents, even when registering unemployment.

« *When we were running away from constant shelling, I somehow didn't think about my education and work record. But it has become a real problem for me now. Employers don't want to hire without proof of education and experience, and I've been turned down because of this. Also, as it turned out, I could not register at the employment centre without the originals.*

*IDP woman*

<sup>163</sup> Iryna Demchenko, Iryna Teriukhanova and Nataliia Bulhaof. 2024. The Effectiveness of the Policy of Supporting Internally Displaced Women's Economic Activity as a Component of Ukraine's Early Recovery. Kyiv: Socioconsulting.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

A significant barrier to employment is the psychological state of IDP women. Very often, they say that emotionally the first six months they did not want to and could not look for a job or agreed to drastic changes in their activities, but later

regretted it. About 40 per cent of women said that psychological problems hindered their employment.<sup>165</sup> This indicates the need to support them at the stage of adaptation and provide psychological assistance to maintain mental health.



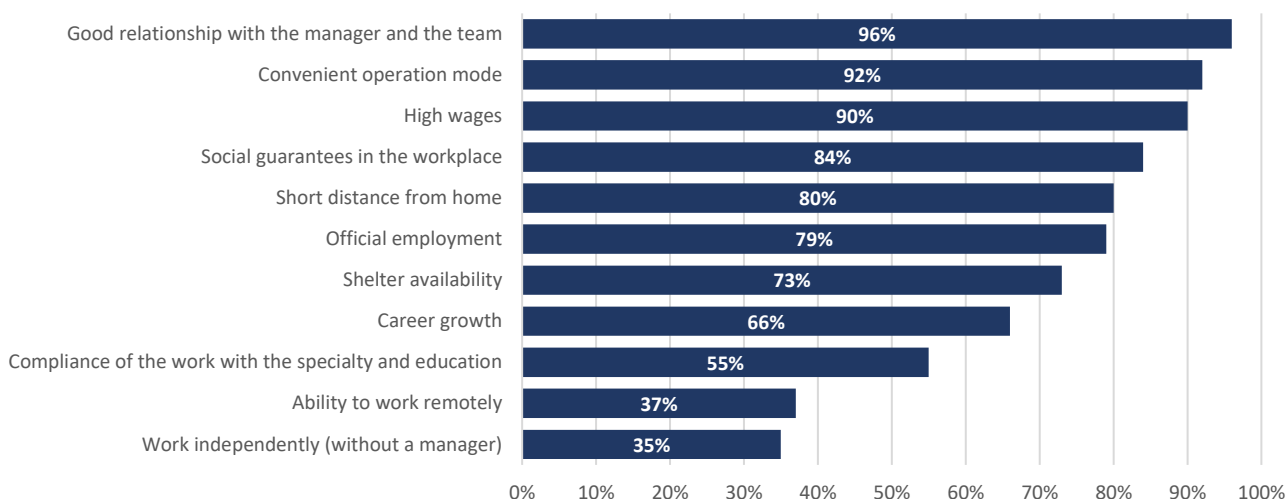
*For the first six months, I didn't want anything at all, I was very depressed. I had neither the strength nor the desire to look for a job and somehow adapt to the new place. But then things started to improve a little bit, and you know, I realized that my family and the job I found later helped me.*

*IDP woman*

Specific characteristics that IDP women use to describe their desired workplace also hinder the realization of economic opportunities. In particular, these are issues related to the sociopsychological climate in the team; a decent level of wages, as well

as the level of organization of working hours, their duration and the total time required to get to the place of work.<sup>166</sup> This trend emphasizes the need to ensure the stereotypical role of women in the family and the need to spend extra time on these duties.

**Figure 58. Important aspects of the workplace for IDP women<sup>167</sup>**



The problem of unemployment for IDP women is more profound, and most of those who fail to find a job immediately end up as long-term unemployed or economically inactive. Unemployed IDP women say that the most effective tools and programmes they need now are training to learn a new profession (57 per cent) and advanced training (47 per cent), as well as training on entrepreneurship and self-employment (33 per cent), which could be one of the proposals to improve the urgent situation of meeting the needs of IDP women and expanding their employment opportunities.

Despite the significant efforts of the state, donors and NGOs to improve the situation of internally displaced persons, the level of coverage by relevant programmes is quite low. This is mainly due to women's lack of awareness of existing programmes and projects implemented in their communities of residence and at the national level. This fact is confirmed by both representatives of civil society organizations and women themselves.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.



*We are implementing a very large number of projects to support women, including IDP women, but the problem is that we are faced with the issue of disseminating information about our projects. Most of the women we work with find out about the opportunities available by chance, and when they come to us for the first project, they stay for a very long time and already spread the word to others.*

*IDP woman*

In general, the situation of IDP women has deteriorated since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, and having IDP status often poses a risk to women's economic opportunities. The main barriers and challenges that prevent IDP women from realizing their economic opportunities in their new place of residence are as follows:

- Different regional structure of labour demand in the new region (there is a problem not only with the general shortage of jobs, but also with the difference in the sectoral structure of the regions of previous and current residence).
- Low wages in the region of current residence.
- The need for higher salaries due to additional expenses, including those related to renting housing and settling into a new workplace.
- Lack of documents required for employment (employment record book, educational documents etc.).
- Lack of a developed system of childcare facilities in the regions of current residence, which means most women cannot work.
- Having IDP status acts as a barrier and discriminatory factor in employment (many employers refuse to officially hire women or pay wages in envelopes).
- The presence of ageism in job search and employment.
- Psychological barriers to adaptation and employment in a new place of residence.
- Prejudice of employers related to the possible return of women to their previous place of residence and discrimination due to the presence of relatives and friends in the occupied territory.
- Lack of local contacts, which are often a significant support for women in their job search.
- Vulnerability to violence in the family and in the workplace.
- Low level of awareness of the content of programmes and projects implemented for IDPs.

## 9.2. Wives of mobilized and military personnel

The full-scale invasion has raised the issue of the economic status and protection of women whose partners are defending Ukraine or have been killed or disabled by the war. Today, due to martial law, there is no reliable information on the number of this category of women, but it is known that their number is constantly growing. Most women face not only psychological problems of adapting to changes, but also economic challenges related to the need to change the role of women in the family and their economic status, a decrease in family income, and the need to spend additional resources

on treatment and care for a disabled family member.

First and foremost, wives of mobilized and military personnel suffer from a range of psychological problems related to adaptation to their new status and constant anxiety about their partners' lives and health. In most cases, it takes six months for women to psychologically adapt to the situation, but most of them emphasize the importance of significant support from psychologists and meetings with women who have been in similar situations.



*It was very emotionally difficult at first. It's a feeling when you are alone without support, and you are constantly waiting for a call from your husband to see if he is okay. I couldn't concentrate even on simple tasks. And women's communities helped me get out of this situation, where we just met and talked. And I realized that I was not alone, and most military wives have the same situation as me.*

*Wife of a mobilized soldier*

Social isolation syndrome is common among women in this category, which arises from the lack of opportunity to discuss their problems and receive support from other people.<sup>168</sup> Very often, they feel rejected and do not understand the behavioural patterns of other people who do not have close

family members in the military. All of this negatively affects women's mental health, belief in themselves and their strength, and leaves a significant mark on their lives and openness to realizing economic opportunities.



*At first, you live in a bubble where there is only you and your problems, and your new life, where you live in constant anxiety. And the people around you don't notice this, they live their lives, relax and have fun, and it was hard at first. But now I realize that there is no other way. You have to live.*

*Wife of a mobilized soldier*

However, it is incorrect to speak of the psychological state of women as a constant barrier to implementation, as a significant number of examples demonstrate, on the contrary, the mobilization of women's main strengths and

capabilities in the realization of economic opportunities and the choice of a strategy of full immersion in work, which helps to effectively reduce the level of accumulated stress.



*I was in a very difficult psychological and emotional situation. But I didn't allow myself to lose heart, I didn't allow myself to cry, because I believed that I had to keep myself in check so that my son wouldn't worry. Because my son was also just crying, wondering why his dad was gone. I started working more, spending time with my child, and it made me feel better.*

*Wife of a mobilized soldier*

An important challenge for the wives of mobilized soldiers is the need for constant support for their children, who are painfully affected by the absence of their father and require more attention and care than before. In some cases, this becomes an obstacle to full participation in the labour market, which reduces women's economic opportunities and the overall well-being of the family.

Due to the absence of a man, the established distribution of roles in the family changes. Women are expected to combine in one behavioural model the ability to maintain the household comfort of the family and at the same time ensure its financial well-being. Situations are becoming more frequent where older children take on some of the household

chores, neglecting their own education and the safety of their psychophysiological development. Women's overtime workload with labour and household duties only situationally helps to maintain the well-being of the family. Women's prolonged psychological and physical strain explosively increases the risk of problems at work and in family relationships, undermines their psychological stability, and harms their health. A majority, 54 per cent, of women whose partners have been mobilized experience changes in their economic role in the family, with additional responsibility for financial support. Women's responsibility for raising children and planning family life is also increasing, with 63 per cent of women reporting an increase in this role.<sup>169</sup>



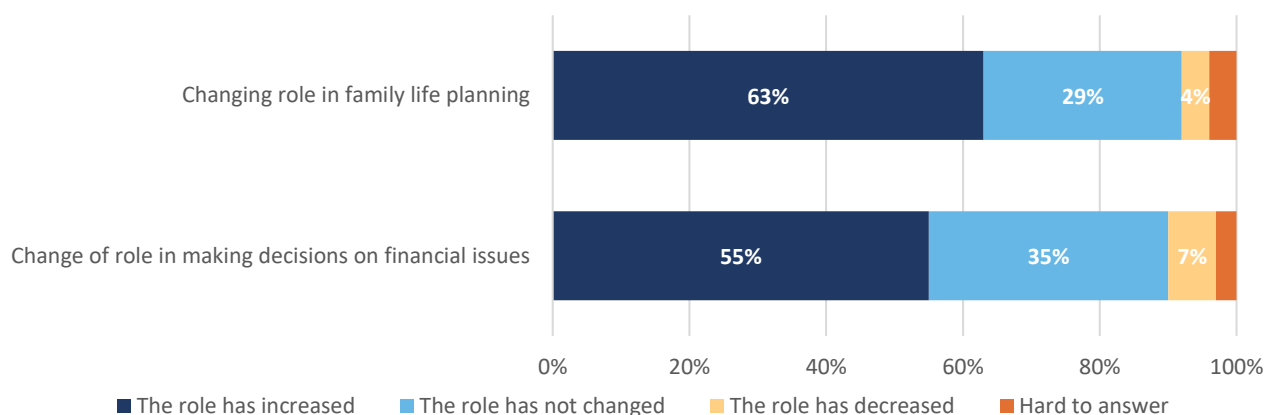
*There are changes, but I think they are inevitable. I mean, we can balance things out, but when there is no man in the household, you rely on yourself anyway. Very often you have to do men's work, learn to repair things, etc.*

*Wife of a mobilized soldier*

<sup>168</sup> Summarized results of a series of focus groups held as part of the study.

<sup>169</sup> Gradus Research Group. 2023. Changes in circumstances, living conditions and roles in Ukrainian families during a full-scale war. Analytical report. September.

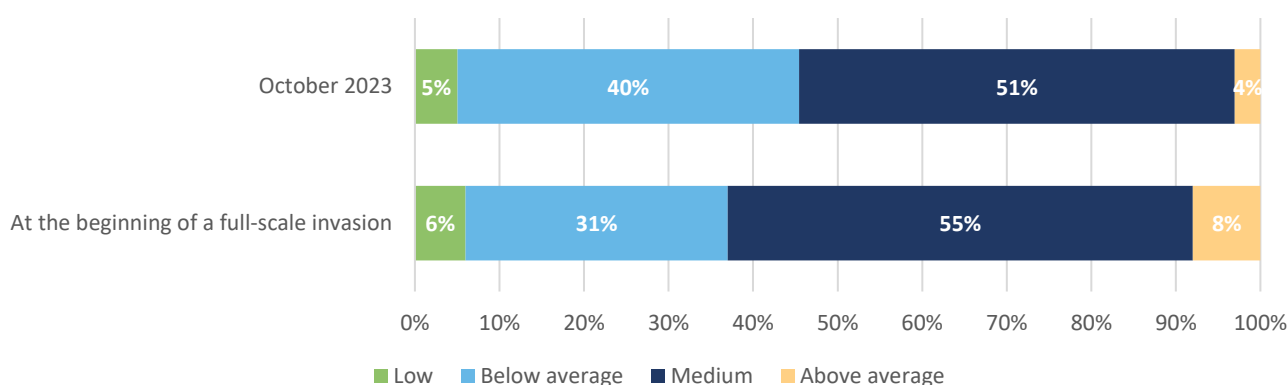
**Figure 59. Changes in the roles of families of wives of servicemen and mobilized personnel**<sup>170</sup>



At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the proportion of women who defined their family's income as low and below average was 6 per cent and 31 per cent, respectively (a total of 37 per cent); by the end of 2023, the proportion of these groups had increased to 45 per cent. At the same time, utilities and food dominated the expenditure structure of 42 per cent of women.

A significant decline in well-being is also due to the increase in family expenses associated with the need to provide men with normal conditions of food, accommodation and uniforms while they are at the front, regardless of their position. Many women confirm that almost all of their partners' earnings are spent for these purposes.

**Figure 60. Changes in the financial level of families of wives of military personnel and mobilized persons**<sup>171</sup>



The situation is similar in the families of war veterans, where the role of the main breadwinner has changed after a man returns from military service. While before the service, 40 per cent of households reported that the veteran was the main breadwinner, after their military service, this figure dropped to 21 per cent. At the same time, if before the man's service, women were the breadwinner in only 7 per cent of households, after the veteran's return, the number of such women increased to 23 per cent.<sup>172</sup>

In total, according to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, as of October 2024, there are 68,290 people in Ukraine who have received a disability of group 2 or 1 as a result of the war.<sup>173</sup> Most of these people are men, whose further support and maintenance is transferred to women (wives or mothers), which significantly affects changes in their economic lives and serves as an impetus for the need to increase family income through women's work.

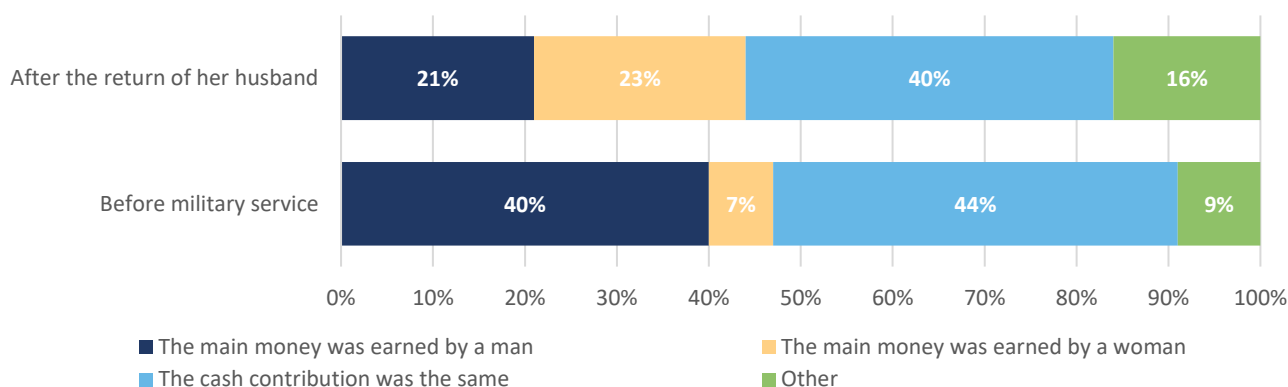
<sup>170</sup> Changes in circumstances, living conditions and roles in Ukrainian families during a full-scale war. Analytical report. Gradus Research Group. September 2023.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Social reintegration of veterans in Ukraine. Final analytical report. International Organization for Migration. November 2023.

<sup>173</sup> Analytical information based on data from the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. <https://data.mva.gov.ua>.

**Figure 61. Changing economic roles in families of war veterans<sup>174</sup>**

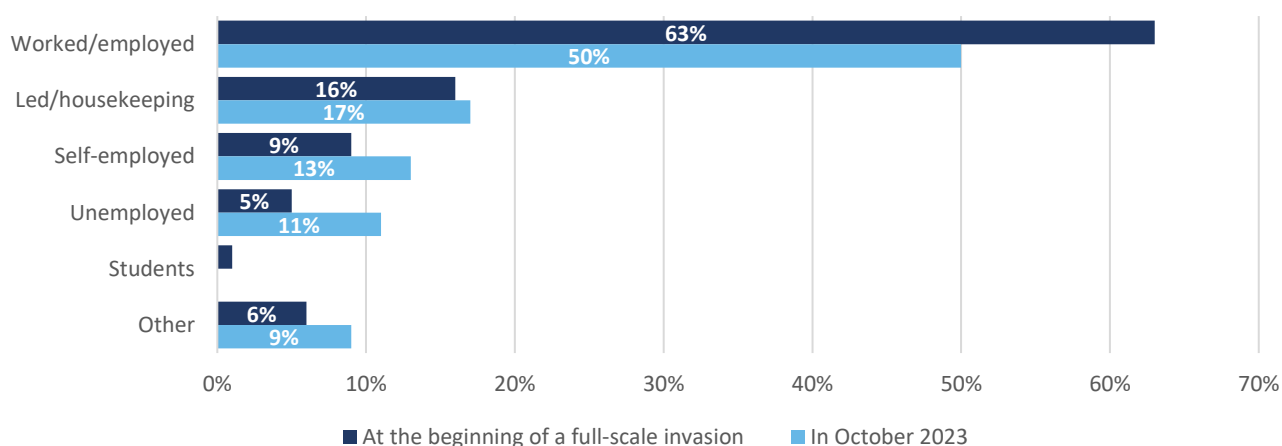


There is an urgent problem of the need to organize care for men who have returned from war with disabilities and psychological trauma. This requires women to focus their attention on the need for care, which, in the absence of appropriate support mechanisms and specialized institutions, makes it impossible for women to fully develop and realize their economic opportunities.

Before the full-scale invasion, 63 per cent of military wives had a permanent job, but by the end of 2023,

this figure had dropped to 50 per cent.<sup>175</sup> At the same time, there has been an increase in the proportion of unemployed and self-employed people. The main reasons for the growth of self-employment among women in this group is the transition of roles in managing family businesses, which can be a separate challenge for women. There was a slight increase in employment in trade and services, education and banking. Also, these are the areas that show the highest involvement of women in the sociological survey.<sup>176</sup>

**Figure 62. Changes in economic activity of women whose partners are in the military or mobilized<sup>177</sup>**



*My husband and I worked so hard that we managed to combine our schedules with the person who would pick up the child. We don't have a huge support group, a bunch of grandparents, so we have no one. We had to figure things out together and support each other. Now, when my husband is mobilized, I simply cannot go to the place where I worked, even to some other position, because it does not provide for an online work format, and I lose my income.*

*Wife of a mobilized soldier*

<sup>174</sup> Social reintegration of veterans in Ukraine. Final analytical report. International Organization for Migration. November 2023.

<sup>175</sup> Gradus Research Group. 2023. Changes in circumstances, living conditions and roles in Ukrainian families during a full-scale war. Analytical report. September.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.



A significant barrier to finding a suitable job is the need for childcare and household organization.

A separate challenge for some women was the need to take on some of the business management responsibilities previously performed by their partners, who stepped aside due to mobilization with the start of the full-scale war. According to the wives of mobilized soldiers whose partners had businesses, the main challenges for them at this

time were not only psychological barriers related to constant concern for their partners' fate, but also social barriers. After all, business takes up a significant portion of the time they used to devote to their family and their own professional activities. During this period, they felt a lack of support from their loved ones, as well as a lack of knowledge and experience necessary for running a business and establishing and maintaining economic ties.<sup>178</sup>



*When we decided to work together three years ago, it was a rather difficult decision, because family is one thing, but when you work together all the time, it's different. Later, when my husband was mobilized, I was faced with the fact that I did not understand many processes. I had to find a person to take his place, but of course, all the processes had to be changed and adapted, because it was an outsider.*

#### *Wife of a mobilized soldier*

Wives of servicemen, or mobilized personnel, are a specific category of women who face greater risks in terms of opportunities for free competitive economic realization, both in employment and entrepreneurship. Their problems are similar to other women's problems, but they are amplified by their status. Common problems and barriers include:

- Changing roles in the family, including shifting responsibility for economic support, which in some cases encourages women to work in areas and professions that do not meet their qualifications and criteria for decent work.
- Insufficient social infrastructure in the form of childcare to support women who are employed.
- High level of psychological, social and economic stress, which sometimes becomes an obstacle to a woman's willingness to work.
- Lack of time due to the need to organize a search for a partner who was taken prisoner or is missing.
- The need for constant psychological and physical support for a demobilized man.
- Increased costs due to the need to rehabilitate the man and adapt him to civilian life.
- Reduction of family income due to the need for additional expenses to create normal living conditions and security for a man who is at war.

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<sup>178</sup> Summarized results of the survey and a series of focus groups held as part of the study.

### 9.3. Women whose partners have returned from captivity

The outbreak of the full-scale invasion has led to problems for prisoners and their families in Ukraine. While before 2022, the number of captured Ukrainians ranged from 150 to 300 people, in early 2022 their number increased tenfold, and as of August 2024, it is about 8,000 people with a constant upward trend. According to the Ukrainian government's estimates, as of May 2024, there were 403 women in Russian captivity. As of August 2024, 3,261 people have been released from captivity.<sup>179</sup> Among them are about 250 women, both military and civilian. The very existence of women in captivity and the problems of women released from captivity are invisible. The reason for this is not only their smaller number compared to men, but also the fact that the enemy does not recognize the fact of captivity, as the taking of women is prohibited by international norms. Concealment of these facts makes it impossible to obtain accurate information about the number of Ukrainian women in captivity, which complicates the process of their return. In addition, the stereotypical understanding of the military as a purely "male" profession that persists in our society, despite the rather large number of women in the military (47,200 people as of January 2024), affects the stereotypical coverage of war issues, including captivity, and thus the subsequent superficial attitude to the problems of these women, their release and adaptation.

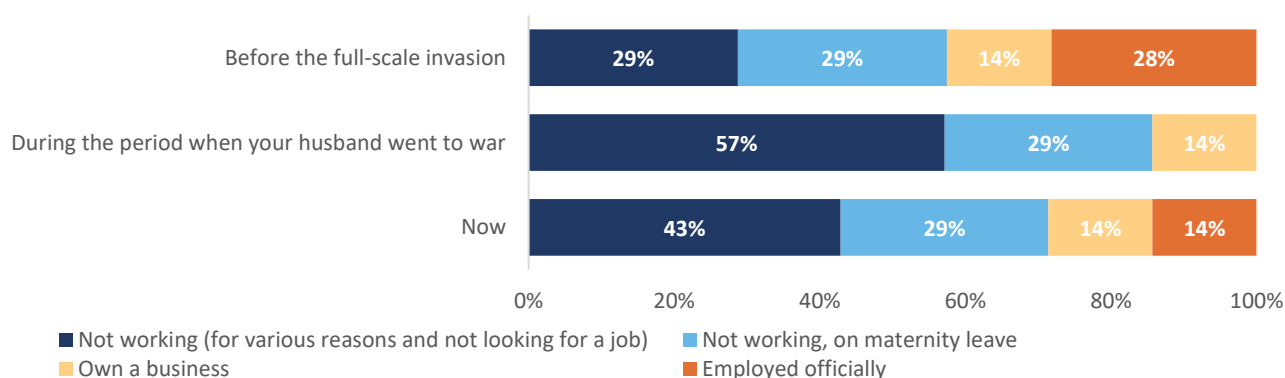
Captivity becomes a challenge not only for the prisoners themselves, but also for their families. According to expert estimates, almost 70 per cent of prisoners are in official or civilian marriages. Women whose partners are in captivity or returning face a wide range of barriers and challenges that

change their social, economic and psychological situation, affect women's opportunities for fulfilment, change conventional family roles, and increase both the economic and social burden of ensuring an acceptable standard of living for families.

The economic activity of the surveyed women whose partners returned from captivity decreased significantly with the start of the full-scale invasion and during the period when their partners went to war. Before the invasion, 29 per cent of women in this group were unemployed; when their partners went to war, this figure increased to 57 per cent, and now it has dropped to 43 per cent. The number of women on maternity leave has not changed, nor has the number of women who run their own businesses. This situation is caused by general economic factors of economic stagnation, which reduced the size of the labour market and reduced the possibility of realizing the population's employment potential, as well as by the factor of changes in roles in family life and the emergence of new obligations, not only household management and child-rearing, but also the need for women to search for their partners.

Responding to the study's survey, 98 per cent of women said that during the period when their partners were in captivity, they mostly felt an increased burden of household duties that they had to perform before. They redirected most of their time to searching for their partners, organizing correspondence, meetings and finding necessary contacts. This leads to shorter working hours and sometimes to voluntary resignation from their previous jobs.

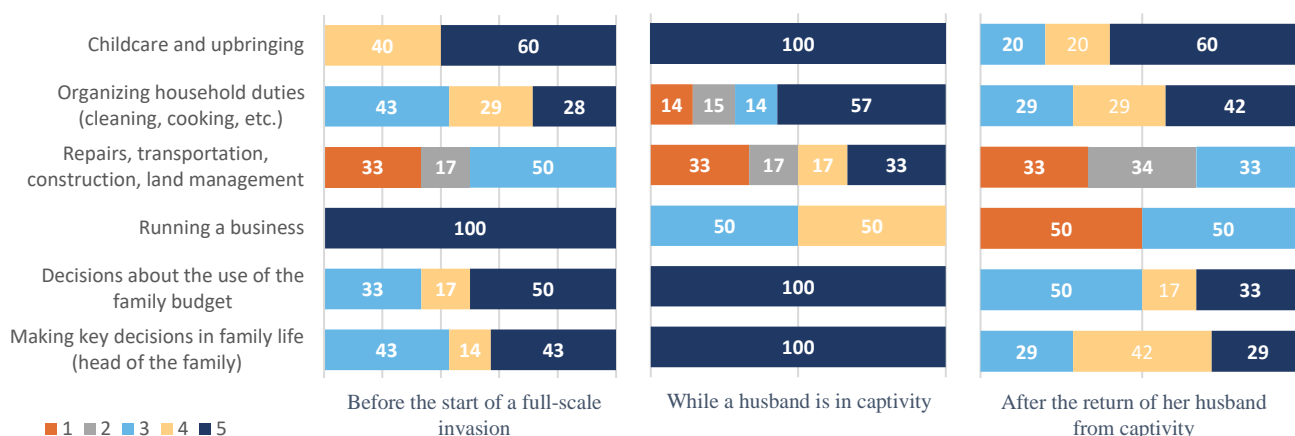
**Figure 63. Changes in the economic situation of women whose husbands returned from captivity<sup>180</sup>**



<sup>179</sup> According to the coordination headquarters for the treatment of prisoners of war: <https://koordshtab.gov.ua/>

<sup>180</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"

**Figure 64. Changes in women's participation in certain aspects of family life<sup>181</sup>**



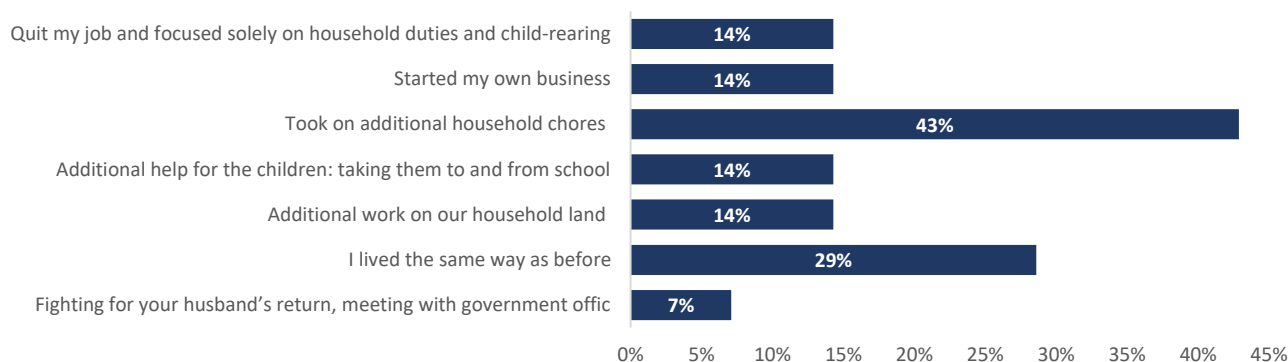
The situation is most acute in the distribution of roles and functions of women in family life. At the stage of a man's captivity, women say that they have fully taken over the process of childcare, decisions on the use of the family budget and key decisions in family life (100 per cent compared to 50 per cent and 43 per cent at the beginning of the full-scale invasion). Women's workload has also increased in terms of household organization, home repairs and land cultivation. Some women report that they even had to leave their previous jobs to take care of the family's agricultural land (which was previously mostly done by their partners).

With the return of men from captivity, families mostly return to the distribution of main responsibilities that they had before the full-scale invasion. However, women often continue to perform functions that were not previously characteristic of them. This is due to both the physiological and psychological characteristics of men and the inert preservation of behavioural patterns that were formed when men were at war and/or in captivity. The most significant

deterioration in the realization of women's rights and opportunities in the families of prisoners of war after their return occurs in the areas of decision-making on the use of the family budget (the situation has deteriorated compared to before the full-scale invasion, from 50 per cent of full participation to 33 per cent) and key decisions in family life (also a significant deterioration, from 42 per cent to 29 per cent). However, the sphere of household organization remains the prerogative of women, with an increase in maximum participation from 29 per cent to 42 per cent.

In general, women say that since their partner went to war and was in captivity, they have had to take on additional responsibilities (only 29 per cent say their lives have not changed much). Mostly, it is housework (43 per cent), additional work on land maintenance, and additional work on childcare (14 per cent). The fight for the return of their partners, meetings with government officials and trips to other cities were added to the list of their new functions.

**Figure 65. Functions for the family that women had to take on when their partners went to war<sup>182</sup>**



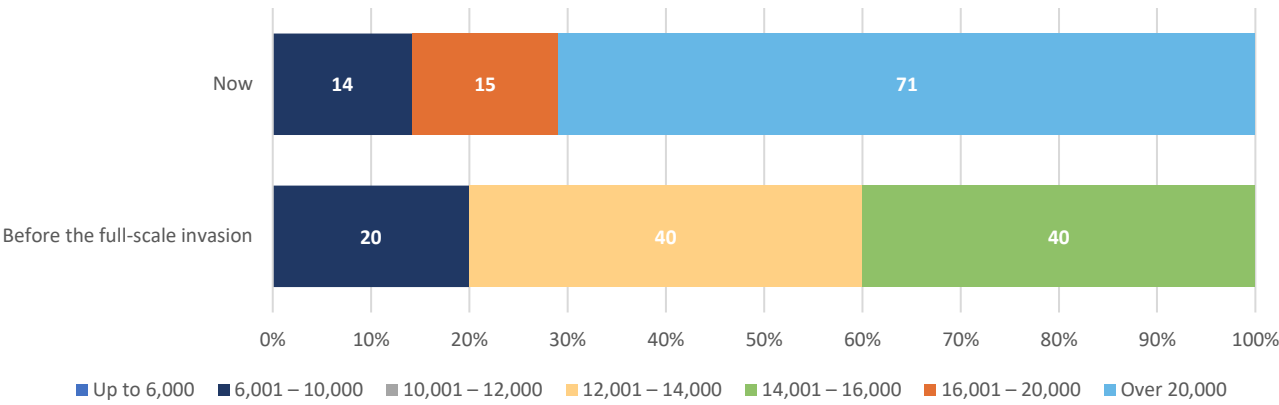
<sup>181</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"

<sup>182</sup> Ibid

During a man's stay in captivity, women mostly experience a decrease in family income (60 per cent of respondents), but this situation changes when their partners return home. Also, women mostly return to their previous economic situation, but with a lower level of burden. In particular, compared to the period before the full-scale

invasion, the level of monthly family income has increased. Prior to the invasion, 40 per cent of families had incomes of UAH 14,001 to UAH 16,000 and 40 per cent had incomes of UAH 12,001 to UAH 14,000. Now, 70 per cent of women receive an average income of over UAH 20,000.

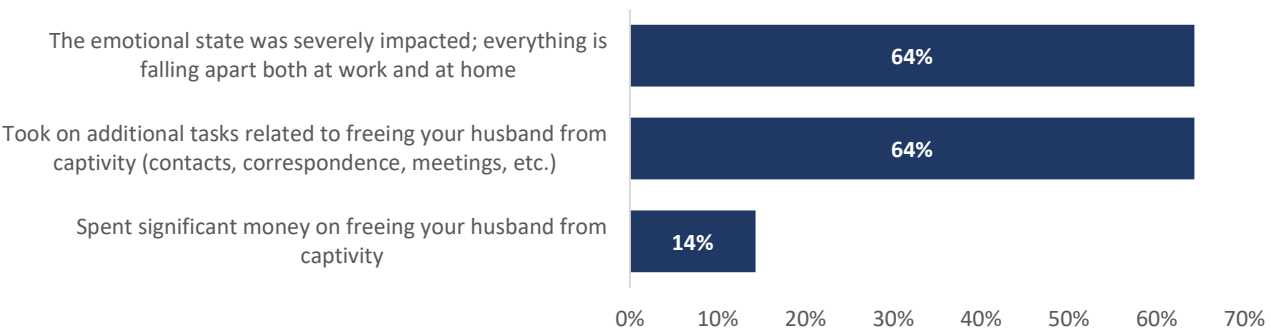
**Figure 66. Average monthly income of families of prisoners of war before and after the full-scale invasion (self-reported)** <sup>183</sup>



The current situation and the process of organizing searches for a partner takes significant psychological and physical strength from women, which negatively affects their mental health, creates disbelief in society and traditional ways of

life, and causes further disbelief in their own abilities, which in the future creates additional internal barriers and stereotypes for them to realize their economic opportunities.

**Figure 67. Aspects of economic life that have become most difficult after the news of women's partners' capture** <sup>184</sup>



Women whose partners have already returned from captivity have slightly different responsibilities. In general, the most common of these are the need for care and psychological support for their partners, the loss of part of their income due to the need to invest in medical examinations and support for their partners' health, and the increased difficulty of combining work with family responsibilities. Even after men return, psychological stress and anxiety

remain a constant problem, preventing women from living as normal.<sup>185</sup> In the majority of families (93 per cent), the man does not work after returning; in one third of them he needs care, which means that women have to reduce their working hours and, accordingly, their earnings; and in some families (21 per cent), the rehabilitation and recovery of the man requires family funds.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

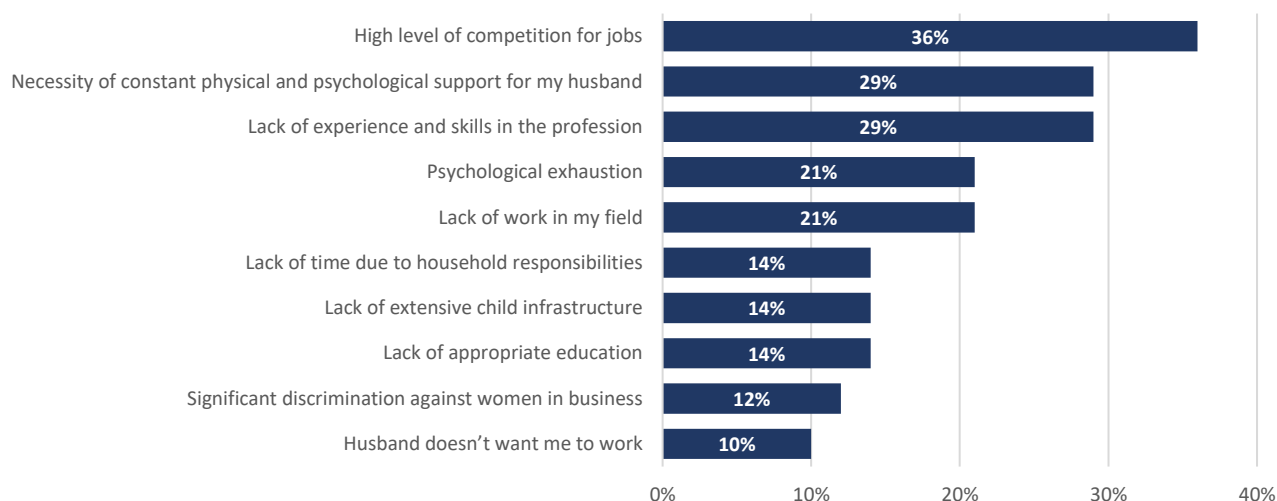
**Figure 68. Factors that led to changes in economic opportunities when a man returned from captivity<sup>186</sup>**



Along with the basic barriers to economic empowerment that most women face, women whose partners are in captivity or have been released face additional challenges and existing ones are exacerbated due to their current situation. About 60 per cent of women say that before their partners returned and the present, they feel a burden of household responsibilities that does not allow them to work freely. At the same time, almost 65 per cent say that work (business) is not only an opportunity to earn money, but also a tool for self-realization, and 75 per cent enjoy the process and results of their activities, which indicates the significant role work can play in their lives. For

unemployed women whose partners have returned from captivity, the most common barriers that prevent them from finding a job or starting their own business are: high level of competition for jobs in the labour market (36 per cent), lack of experience and skills in the profession (30 per cent), the need for constant psychological and physical support from their partners (29 per cent), lack of work in their specialty (21 per cent) and psychological exhaustion (21 per cent). On the positive side, women in this group do not experience any discrimination or prejudice in employment due to their current social status.

**Figure 69. The most common barriers preventing unemployed women whose husbands returned from captivity from finding a job or starting their own business<sup>187</sup>**



The main obstacles to self-realization for working women are similar to those that prevent them from seeking and finding employment in the group of unemployed women: first, the need for constant

physical and psychological support from their partners (43 per cent of women), personal psychological exhaustion (29 per cent), and the workload of household chores (29 per cent). Among

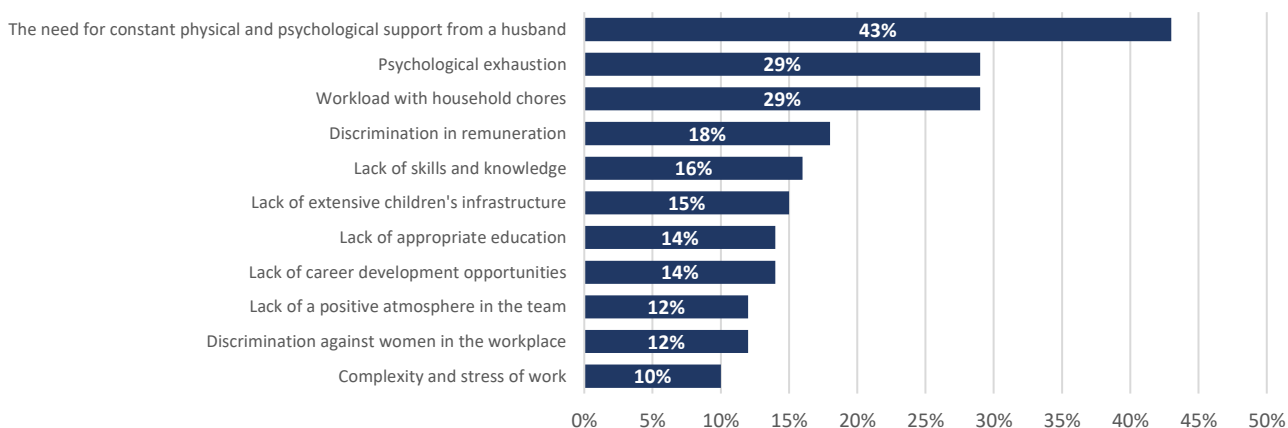
<sup>186</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

the specific barriers that demonstrate the existence of gender discrimination in employment are discrimination in wages, which is reported by 18 per cent of women, and discrimination in the workplace (12 per cent). As in the previous case, the absence of discrimination against women in this group is

positive, as is the status of a military wife, as well as the fact that her partner was released from captivity. In general, about 60 per cent of women have experienced gender-based discrimination either personally or through their friends.

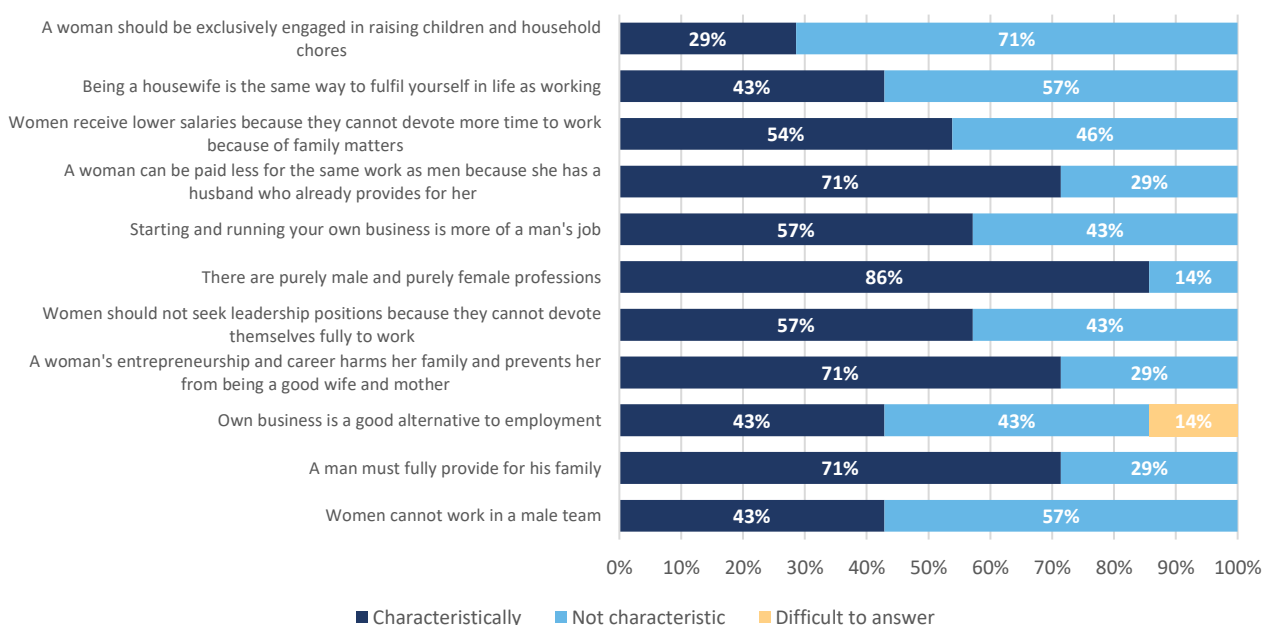
**Figure 70. The most common barriers that prevent working women whose husbands returned from captivity from realizing their professional potential<sup>188</sup>**



Due to significant psychological tension, stress and changes in the understanding of justice, women whose partners are in captivity or have returned from captivity are more prone to stereotypes and internal barriers to realization in employment and entrepreneurship. In particular, among the most common stereotypes of women in this group are the following: entrepreneurship and careers harm

the family and prevent women from being good wives and mothers; there is no need for women to seek leadership positions because they will not be able to devote themselves fully to work; there are no opportunities for women to develop in male professions; and the belief that the main role of men is providing for the family.

**Figure 71. Stereotypical vision of women's role and opportunities in society according to women whose husbands returned from captivity<sup>189</sup>**



<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"

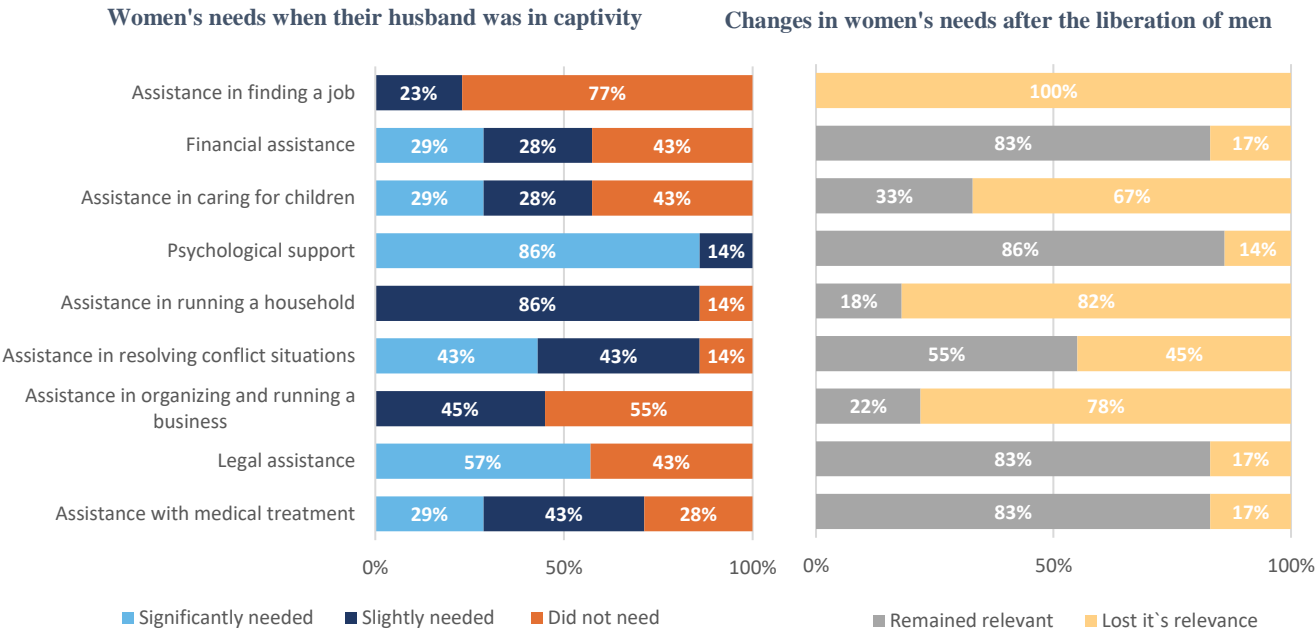


The psychological, social and economic situation of women whose partners are in captivity or have returned from captivity shows that they need help from the state, other social institutions and society in general. The majority of women surveyed said they needed some kind of support, with family and relatives supporting them the most (86 per cent), and more than half received significant support from relatives and friends. Support from government agencies and organizations and non-governmental organizations was mentioned by 14 per cent of women each.

The nature of the assistance women need during the process of releasing their partners from

captivity and upon their return varies significantly. The psychological state of women whose partners are in captivity is extremely difficult. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of women state that psychological support would be most appropriate for them in terms of ensuring economic realization during the period when their partner was in captivity. More than half of the women consider it necessary to provide legal assistance (57 per cent) and help in resolving difficult situations (43 per cent). This is due to the activities of wives to bring their partners back from captivity and the need for counselling on their rights and opportunities.

**Figure 72. Key needs of women during the captivity of their husbands and after their release<sup>190</sup>**



After their partners return from captivity, the need for psychological support remains relevant for 86 per cent of women. There is a growing need for financial assistance (83 per cent) and medical treatment, due to the need to allocate a significant amount of money to restore a man's psychological and physical health. There is still a significant level

of need for help with legal issues and registration of assistance and reimbursement (83 per cent of women still have this need). The findings suggest that the implementation of projects and support for men who have returned from captivity will have a significant impact on the economic opportunities and quality of life of their wives.

<sup>190</sup> According to a sample non-representative survey of women entrepreneurs conducted within the framework of the project "Challenges of empowering women in the labor market and entrepreneurship in the context of full-scale war and gender-responsible recovery of Ukraine"

## 10. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING GENDER-SENSITIVE POLICY

The analysis of national legislation relating to women's economic empowerment, as well as the opinions of experts obtained during in-depth interviews, show some efforts in Ukraine to achieve gender equality. However in practice, there are established patterns of behaviour that cause discrimination against women, including unequal conditions for women's employment and

entrepreneurship. The experts consulted during this study point out that the problem today is not legislative and legal norms, but the lack of effective supervision and control over their implementation. For example, despite the legal prohibition of discrimination, employers refuse to hire women with young children or pay women who hold similar positions to men less.

« *The Ukrainian legislation on gender equality and equal distribution of opportunities for women and men is, in principle, quite good. But we understand that in real life it does not happen as we would like it to, and very often these laws do not work as well and for the purpose for which they were written.*

*Representative of a civil society organization*

« *We see that employers allow themselves to reject applicants on discriminatory grounds, even without specifying the age or gender of the applicant in their job postings. That is, they can refuse you because you are 45+, they can refuse you because you are a woman, they can refuse you because you are a person with a disability, they can refuse you because you are a veteran. We face this and, unfortunately, these shameful cases exist in our society. That is why we see that legislation alone is not enough. This legislation should be backed up by sanctions.*

*Representative of an employment centre*

In Ukraine, there is a significant gap between an understanding of women's economic problems and the implementation of gender-sensitive policies in terms of the level of governance and the competence of specialists. In particular, at the national level, under the influence of European integration efforts, the attention of the international community and the domestic public sector, the approach to gender mainstreaming in

the implementation of reforms in various areas has changed. Gender-sensitive practices and approaches to public policy have been developed and are being actively used. This is evidenced by numerous legislative acts and strategies adopted in recent years in this area. However, research shows that the gender competence at the levels of regional and territorial governance is drastically declining compared to the national level.

« *Today, we have good gender-sensitive practices at the state level, very productive initiatives, but when we go down to the regional and territorial level with our projects, we face a total lack of understanding of the relevance and importance of gender issues and an unwillingness to take them into account when implementing reforms and projects*

*Head of a civil society organization*

In particular, at the level of territorial communities, the understanding of gender issues and the use of gender-sensitive practices remain low. This often makes it impossible to implement gender-oriented programmes and projects, and worsens the economic situation of women on the ground,

especially vulnerable groups. According to the interviews and focus group discussions, the main reasons for this situation are widespread "fake" narratives about gender-oriented policies and programmes in society; stereotypical opinions of local government representatives and the

population; manipulation of the priorities of general economic and social problems in the community that have arisen against the background of the war; lack of a common understanding of the role of gender-sensitive approaches in management decision-making; and a lack of specialists in the development and implementation of gender-

sensitive projects at the community level. Civil society representatives note the lack of consistency in partnerships with the state and territorial communities, which slows down the process of addressing certain gender issues in terms of predictable preventive measures rather than an emergency situational response.

« *Gender mainstreaming is not being implemented because of some fake narratives that are circulating and are very popular in Ukraine regarding gender equality. The anti-gender movements that were very active before the war of Ukraine are not manifesting themselves now, but they will show themselves after the victory. People are still afraid, especially at the local level, of the word 'gender'. It is not perceived very positively, so we need to work and work with local communities.*

*Representative of a civil society organization*

A separate problem for all levels of government in Ukraine is the issue of uneven competence and awareness of government officials on gender issues. Very often, this competence and interest is

declarative and narrow, focusing exclusively on the formal elaboration of external requirements in the framework of public events and documents.

« *I know that large communities are now starting to appoint people responsible for gender issues. If we are required to do so, we will also deal with this issue.*

*Representative of a territorial community*

At the level of territorial communities, there is a significant overall lack of competence of specialists in gender equality issues. In particular, the heads of territorial communities note that they need education and training in this area, and also talk

about the unwillingness and closed-mindedness of older age groups of managers to understand the relevance and spend time on gender-sensitive policies, and that they try to transfer these responsibilities to young people.

« *At the local level, little attention is being paid to this now. There are very few specialists. This needs to be learned, this needs to be realized. And this is done mainly at trainings, at such open events where there is a discussion, where there is a dialogue.*

*Head of a territorial community*

« *Older age groups often have established stereotypes, which can make it difficult to engage them in equality issues. They still have certain stereotypes, especially if they are men. That's why we need to start with young people, because they are our future, and they perceive and realize it more easily.*

*Head of a territorial community*

There are significant differences in the maturity of communities in understanding gender issues depending on their size and territorial affiliation. While large communities are beginning to address gender issues, at least through the establishment of

formal ombudspersons, small communities are largely ignoring them. The reason for this, according to community leaders, is the focus on more urgent needs that require a quick response (which arises from the lack of awareness of the possibility of

incorporating gender-sensitive approaches into the implementation of any social and economic development projects in the community). There is

also a lack of information about possible approaches to gender-sensitive governance and their potential benefits.



*We are too small a community to implement gender equality programmes. And, most likely, if there are such programmes, they exist in cities, in large communities. Rural and settlement communities are currently barely surviving, and they don't have time for that.*

*Head of a territorial community*



*I don't see that we have opportunities to develop ourselves in the direction of gender equality. I am not an expert in this area. I am not a social worker, not a psychologist, I have not worked in this area. I see opportunities in the development of youth policy, but not here.*

*Head of a territorial community*

A significant barrier to implementing gender-sensitive approaches in territorial communities is the lack of gender balance in their governance. Only one third of the heads are women, which not only

indicates a lack of equality in governance bodies but also significantly affects decisions made on gender issues and projects.



*When we work with communities, we can clearly see the vector of action in terms of implementing gender-sensitive projects, depending on whether a man or a woman is the head of the community. For example, the former often invest more in the development of the community's transport and sports infrastructure, without thinking about the need for major repairs and expansion of the kindergarten. Women heads of communities act on the contrary, they are more focused on taking into account the priority needs of women.*

*Head of a civil society organization*

The lack of an effective information support system remains a global problem at all levels of government in the implementation of gender-sensitive projects,

which is becoming a significant obstacle to increasing the level of engagement and dissemination of positive practices.



*It seems to me that everyone should already know about this or that project, but in practice, I find that when I ask them, they are not informed at all. Therefore, information support needs to be strengthened constantly. Talk about all the opportunities in terms of gender equality.*

*Head of a civil society organization*

There is a situation where the understanding of gender issues and problems is concentrated only at the level of responsible persons in this area. This is evident at all levels of state and territorial governance, as well as in the work of institutional support bodies for employment and entrepreneurship in Ukraine. Many heads of organizations (individual units and departments) are not ready to give competent comments on

gender issues, referring it to the designated responsible persons.

The State Employment Service has a clearly defined policy of providing assistance to the unemployed, regardless of gender, age or belonging to vulnerable categories. However, the approach of formalizing the provision of employment assistance sometimes negatively affects the quality of services provided to specific categories of the population that have additional barriers to employment, including

women. Client-oriented practices of serving women and providing them with comprehensive employment assistance, taking into account all the barriers that exist on this path, are not widespread. Most often, the division of powers and information about the client is between a career counsellor

(who provides employment services in accordance with the primary service protocol and offers suitable jobs) and a psychologist (who works directly with the main barriers that women face), with no clear algorithm for close communication and work between these employees.

« *As a career counsellor, I have a primary service protocol that is the same and equal for everyone, regardless of category. If an unemployed person has any additional problems, we refer her to a psychologist, with whom she solves them.*

#### *Career counsellor at an employment centre*

The State Employment Service does not have a clear protocol for checking and auditing the responsibility of enterprises to which unemployed people are referred, in terms of employment conditions, the relevance of the vacancy to the company's actual situation and the presence of cases of gender inequality, which creates an additional risk factor for women to be exposed to discriminatory

conditions. Also uncommon are the practices of supporting and advising unemployed women who have already found employment and are on a probationary period. As a result, employment service workers do not receive feedback on the quality of employment and cannot improve the quality of service provision in the future.

« *No, we do not check companies for discrimination. All employers who want to use the services of the employment service can submit vacancies, and we already refer the unemployed to these vacancies. They only have requirements not to specify gender and age in the vacancy.*

#### *Employment Centre worker*

Among the positive aspects of the State Employment Service's work are the practices of providing services based on a gender-sensitive approach, including the creation of children's rooms where children can stay during a consultation or

seminar held by the centre. Other gender-sensitive programmes are implemented mostly with the participation of civil society organizations that conduct relevant events and trainings, and implement projects.

« *It has nothing to do with gender, it has to do with the characteristics of the people who come. Each employment centre has children's corners. And if a person, a man or a woman, comes with children, we have the opportunity to look after them for the period of time when the consultation is taking place or the client is attending a seminar, for this child, to play with him or her, draw pictures, and so on.*

#### *Employment Centre worker*

Civil society organizations play a significant role in implementing gender-oriented programmes in Ukraine. They often initiate relevant gender-sensitive projects, especially at the local level. They create an understanding of the importance and relevance of ensuring a gender-responsive and inclusive recovery. It is through NGOs that contact

is often established with women and women are often involved in projects aimed at expanding women's economic opportunities. There is also a closer connection and overall level of trust on the part of women in programmes and projects implemented by NGOs compared to projects developed at the state and regional levels.



*It's very difficult to get local communities to prioritize their development in terms of human rights. This is a disaster. We come and talk about priority development projects that will give everyone equal opportunities, not just infrastructure development. In any community, this needs to start only with gender mainstreaming training, because nothing will change until this training takes place.*

*Representative of a civil society organization*

Ukraine is characterized by a fragmented approach to implementing programmes and projects to support gender equality and women's economic empowerment. The lack of a comprehensive strategic approach to these issues negates the

results of individual initiatives, reduces the overall effectiveness of projects, and prevents seeing the overall results of overcoming gender inequality in all areas of social and economic life.



*In order to provide internal support for women, there should be comprehensive approaches. On the one hand, it means motivating women to decide to start their own business and be economically active, and on the other hand, comfortable training should be offered to such women, and additionally, childcare opportunities should be provided during this time. Otherwise, all the resources will be wasted, because women simply won't be able to join in.*

*Representative of a civil society organization*



## 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the depth of gender inequality in the labour market and in entrepreneurship identified in the study, they cannot be solved simultaneously by implementing separate programmes and measures. Ensuring women's economic empowerment requires a comprehensive approach that will help not only mitigate the symptoms of problems but also address their root causes. The policy of women's economic empowerment should include creating a new public perception of the role of women in the labour market, business, leadership positions, and in the family, school and other educational institutions. It should take into account women's desire for professional development and career growth, expand their actual opportunities along the way, and overcome deep-seated gender stereotypes that hinder the equal realization of women and men in the country's economic development and reconstruction processes.

Policies for women's economic empowerment and gender equality should be comprehensive, integrated, holistic and structured. Recognizing that the goals cannot be achieved simultaneously, the actions should be differentiated by tools, those who have influence on implementation and timeline: those that provide a quick result, those that are acts of response to acute or most dangerous challenges, those that should be regular, and those that will have delayed results.

### *The actions will be in the following areas:*

- Social stereotypes, often supported by informal institutions, which impose discriminatory ideas about the role of women in the labour market, businesses and in family.
- Human resource policies of employers and public entities.
- Social infrastructure for domestic and care work services.
- The inclusion of a gender component in the state policy and activities of public institutions in the field of labour relations, child rearing and education, professional orientation, and social protection against employment risks.
- The low level of capacity of civil sector institutions in the area of employment and its

social protection, including labour collectives, associations and organizations of employers and trade unions, NGOs, public funds, project movements and platforms.

- The lack of gender sensitivity of the legal and regulatory framework<sup>191</sup> of relations in the field of employment and entrepreneurship in terms of ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in areas where, despite legislated equality, men are given advantages due to their physiological characteristics, gender stereotypes in society and initial socioeconomic conditions.

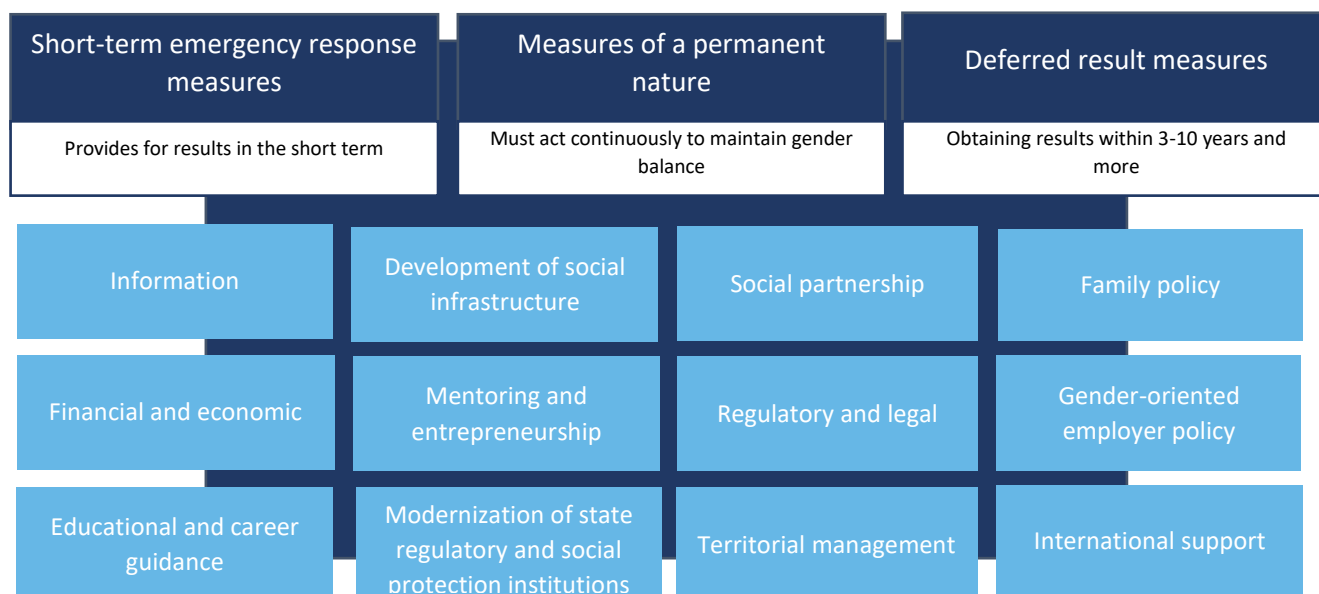
The implementation of a comprehensive policy of women's economic empowerment and gender equality cannot be ensured by the efforts of a single institutional actor or by the state alone. It is necessary to consolidate the actions of the Ministry of Social Policy, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Territorial Reconstruction, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Finance, State Labour Service of Ukraine, State Employment Service, National Social Service of Ukraine and State Financial Monitoring Service. Also, international development partners, business associations, public and private companies, networks of civil society organizations and civic initiatives working to achieve gender equality and prevent discrimination against women in the labour market and in business, associations and organizations of employers and trade unions should be involved in this activity.

The activities of institutional policy actors responsible for achieving gender equality and women's economic empowerment should be integrated and legitimized within the framework of approved strategies in the field of employment and entrepreneurship development, educational and professional qualification policy, social infrastructure development programmes, family and cultural policy, and youth policy. At the same time, these strategies will not be successful without cooperation from the public sector, public and private companies, the academic community and international partners, and without modernization of the expanded social dialogue and partnership.

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<sup>191</sup> Especially at the bylaw and local level, where executive or technical documents that should detail algorithms for the practical implementation of the provisions of laws, strategies and programmes violate the equality of rights proclaimed in the laws, and even more often ignore the need for different regulations for women and men.

**Figure 73. Areas of action and timelines for improving women's economic opportunities**



The areas of action require cooperation from multiple stakeholders, and the suggested responsible parties are provided with each recommendation. The cohesion of the policy of achieving gender equality and women's economic empowerment is ensured by the cross-cutting nature of the most effective means of influence: informational, regulatory, financial and economic, advocacy and administrative. A comprehensive list of recommendations follows:

#### **Application of a gender-sensitive approach in public administration in Ukraine**

*Recommended to the Government of Ukraine, territorial communities, international organizations and partners, and public organizations:*

1. Implement gender-sensitive approaches in all levels of state policymaking and programmes by stakeholders and development partners.

2. Introduce a cross-cutting gender-sensitive approach to the implementation of all reforms in the Ukraine Facility Strategic Plan, particularly related to human development, but also integrating gender-sensitive approaches to:

- The system of remuneration of civil servants and the procedures for selecting specialists for positions
- Public revenue and expenditure management systems, especially in the area of reducing the gender pay gap and undeclared labour
- State regulation in the field of credit policy and capital market development policy to ensure their accessibility for women

- Employment policy and creating equal competitive conditions in the labour market for women and men
  - Development of secondary, higher and vocational education, social protection and healthcare systems
  - Programmes to expand social and mortgage housing programmes to ensure affordable housing for women
  - Increasing women's participation in cultural relations at the international level, intensifying the dissemination of gender equality ideas by representatives of Ukrainian culture and overcoming stereotypes about the suppression of women's economic empowerment
  - Systems for caring for children, people with disabilities and the elderly, as well as reducing the amount of unpaid care work performed by women
  - Developing and implementing a policy for the development of women's entrepreneurship
  - Management processes in communities in order to involve women in decision-making and governance, create conditions for their comfortable living, self-realization and development.
3. Develop mandatory gender markers to assess the incorporation of gender-sensitive approaches in the implementation of reforms, state and regional recovery and development programmes, international and national projects developed and implemented in Ukraine at all levels, the normal functional activities of state structures, as well as

employment contracts, search and employment relations, in particular, the IASC gender and age marker, the UNDP gender marker and the OECD gender equality policy marker.

### **Strengthening legal and regulatory mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment**

*Recommended to the committees of the Verkhovna Rada, the Government of Ukraine, the judiciary, the Pension Fund of Ukraine, the State Labour Service and the State Employment Service:*

1. Conduct a comprehensive audit of the national legal and policy framework in terms of existing progress in compliance with the legal norms and safeguards established by the International Coalition for Equal Pay (EPIC), as well as the degree of its gender sensitivity and ensuring that no forms of gender discrimination are tolerated.
2. Define by law and regulation the forms and manifestations of discrimination against women in employment and tools for their detection and sanctioning. Identify signs of discrimination and formulate legal classifications of their forms and manifestations at the legislative level for further use in the development of regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers, executive authorities, industry and corporate standards, and documents that ensure the implementation of state and non-state strategies, as well as programmes, projects and the litigation of claims regarding gender and other forms of discrimination.
3. Ensure by law the implementation of a system of transparent and fair employment by ensuring that employers are obliged to disclose the starting salary or salary range in job advertisements (in line with the established EU Directives).
4. Create an institutional and organizational mechanism for the full implementation of the Law of Ukraine on Employment of the Population regarding the timely and complete provision of information on company vacancies to the State Employment Service. Create effective sanctioning mechanisms to prevent employers from signing an employment contract for a workplace without first announcing the vacancy in the State Employment Service.
5. Develop a regulatory framework for the creation of a public digital register of jobs in Ukraine. This register—based on information on current vacancies and their history, employment characteristics from the register of insured persons of the Pension Fund of Ukraine, and data from the

State Labour Service on facts and signs of violations of labour and social legislation—will be a reliable and transparent source of information for decision-making by government and analytical structures, as well as for the public to understand the current state of the labour market and its individual professional and sectoral segments.

### **Measures to expand information support for women's economic empowerment policies in Ukraine**

*Recommended to the Office of the President, the Verkhovna Rada, the Government of Ukraine, the State Statistics Service, territorial communities, international organizations and partners, and relevant civil society organizations:*

1. Conduct a representative survey in Ukraine on the realization of women's economic opportunities, in particular to include more detailed information on the conditions and barriers to employment of women depending on their age, place of residence, profession, education and type of economic activity of their current or previous employment.
2. Resume the sample surveys “Labour Force of Ukraine”, “Labour of Ukraine” and “Status and Living Conditions of Ukrainian Households” by the State Statistics Service, which were suspended with the introduction of martial law in Ukraine.
3. Ensure that gender-sensitive approaches are applied in the methodology and practice of collecting statistical and sociological data at all levels, from state to territorial communities and enterprises.
4. Create a procedurally independent system for integrating state registers to accumulate, verify and legally regulate the use of data for regular monitoring of women's economic opportunities and the effectiveness of gender policy, with the possibility of identifying vulnerable categories of women.

### **Measures to ensure access, popularization and dissemination of information on gender equality to overcome stereotypes**

*Recommended to the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Social Policy, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy, international organizations and partners, regional authorities and territorial communities, NGOs, corporate business, and the media community:*

1. Expand the range of information and communication projects at the state and territorial levels to promote positive practices and stories of successful women in male-dominated sectors of the economy and counteract outdated ideas about gender-based professional and sectoral specialization.

2. Strengthen state, international, civil and corporate support for the creation of various information platforms and increase the number of seminars, trainings and courses on expanding women's professional and sectoral opportunities and ensuring equal pay for work of equal value.

3. Focus efforts on stimulating and training stakeholders at the level of territorial units in conducting a local information policy on establishing the principles and guidelines of gender equality in the practical life of local structures and social units, and on the need to use and demonstrate a gender-sensitive approach in the implementation of local policy as an example of leadership in overcoming gender stereotypes. It is advisable to implement such an information policy at all levels, from the education system to the leadership of territorial communities. This policy is especially relevant and needed for communities that are small, rural and led by men, which demonstrate the lowest level of gender sensitivity.

4. Use traditional and new media to promote regular educational channels, projects and programmes that discuss, explain and debate various aspects of gender equality, gender stereotypes in the family and economy, participation in governance and the role of women in Ukraine's post-war recovery, their leadership positions, professional achievements and role in Ukraine's economic and social development.

5. Consolidate the work of the media and civil society organizations to provide broad coverage of the progress and results of humanitarian response activities led by women to emphasize the importance of their participation in decision-making and leadership roles.

6. Create balanced multimedia content on the equally important role of men and women during the war and recovery, which will help overcome future gender segregation in the economy.

7. Ensure internal monitoring and analysis of the gender balance of information materials created and disseminated by the media in terms of reflecting the roles of women and men and their

behavioural patterns to avoid reproducing gender stereotypes.

### **Financial and economic measures aimed at overcoming the existing barriers and stereotypes in Ukraine**

*Recommended to the Government of Ukraine, the National Bank of Ukraine, international organizations, partners and donors, and corporate business:*

1. Develop official long-term economic incentive programmes for companies that employ women in positions and industries that are predominantly male and who adapt jobs and technologies to women's needs: access to tender procurement and other forms of interaction with government agencies, tax benefits, assistance in obtaining investments to modernize workplaces in accordance with women's physiological needs, and creation of childcare facilities and conditions for balancing work and family life.

2. Introduce economic incentives for companies that invest in the creation of corporate social infrastructure for childcare, nutrition, transportation and affordable healthcare services, which help reduce women's unpaid work and their need to stay at home, and expand their professional opportunities.

3. Introduce affordable education loans for women who want to change their profession or develop new competencies and ensure a minimum interest rate on loans at a set rate, with full repayment of interest paid in the event of official employment in a new profession

4. Expand grant and concessional loan support for women who want to scale up and expand their businesses and hire new employees, in order to increase the share of women in large and medium-sized businesses, as well as to support the entry of companies run and owned by women into foreign markets.

### **Educational and career guidance activities**

*Recommended to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, international organizations and partners, the State Employment Service, NGOs implementing projects in the field of education, and private companies providing education and career guidance services:*

1. Promote STEM projects for girls at the national and local levels, starting with primary education institutions.



2. Integrate education for girls and boys and prevent dividing classes between girls and boys.

3. Reform vocational guidance for children and youth to provide early professional guidance and familiarize children with different professions, as well as ways to allow them to adjust their education depending on their professional preferences and abilities. Create career guidance programmes that allow children to develop their individual abilities rather than being pushed to gender-stereotypical roles or professions.

4. Introduce mandatory career guidance excursions for schoolchildren to socially responsible enterprises that promote gender equality in the workplace, which could include placements for acquiring skills.

5. Improve short-term training for women to change professions into industries and workplaces where men are predominantly employed. This will allow speed up and facilitate the training of women and support them in gaining new knowledge and education in a new field that gives them a competitive advantage.

#### **In the field of family policy implementation, raising of children and youth**

*Recommended to the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Social Policy, Ministry of Youth and Sports, international organizations and partners, territorial communities, and the media:*

1. Train parents, caregivers and teachers to raise children on the basis of gender equality and non-discrimination.

2. Promote best practices in raising and educating children to have equal opportunities in all areas of life, without gender stereotyping.

3. Strengthen efforts by students, parents and teachers against bullying, including on the basis of gender and gender identity.

4. Focus on gender equality and non-discrimination in the preschool education system to impact girls' and boys' perceptions at an early age. Develop children's multimedia and game content to promote equal opportunities in professional realization and family life.

#### **Measures to develop social infrastructure and provide social support**

*Recommended to the Ministry of Social Policy, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Veterans Affairs, international organizations and*

*partners, territorial communities, corporate business, and public organizations:*

1. Improve childcare and childcare networks, including at large enterprises. Improve approaches to organizing childcare networks, including developing a network of institutions for younger age groups, expanding the practice of introducing extended learning groups for primary school students, and developing mechanisms to encourage the creation of childcare groups at large enterprises.

2. Stimulate the creation and expansion of a network of children's institutions in regions with a higher concentration of internally displaced persons.

3. Create alternative temporary childcare centres at higher and vocational education institutions, which will improve childcare opportunities and future teachers' and educators' competence.

4. Expand the network of territorial care services for the elderly and people with disabilities that provide modern, high-quality care services, with the possibility of partial compensation for the cost of services, which will expand the opportunities for involving some women who care for their loved ones.

5. Promote and expand psychological support programmes and support groups for all those impacted by the war—family members of defenders who are waiting for their return, release from captivity, or are experiencing loss—and introduce them in all territorial communities with mandatory psychological therapy and legal and social assistance in adaptation.

6. Support women's initiatives in community development and women's entrepreneurship in the field of care services at the territorial level.

#### **In the field of women's entrepreneurship development**

*Recommended to the Government of Ukraine, international organizations and partners, territorial communities, public organizations, and companies providing business advisory services:*

1. Expand the network of centres providing support services (e.g. legal, consulting, accounting, management) at the level of territorial communities to support women entrepreneurs who are starting out in this area. These centres should be locations where citizens can use counselling services, receive training, learn about existing projects and programmes to support small and medium-sized

businesses, join a community of entrepreneurs to share experiences, and participate in events for young people on the basics of starting and developing their own businesses.

2. Expand mentoring programmes for women entrepreneurs, involving current, experienced business owners who can support women who want to start their own business, including in the first stages of implementation. Mentoring and sharing success stories can help women who feel insecure and lack support from families and friends to increase their readiness to start and develop their own business.

3. Promote training programmes for women entrepreneurs and who manage or own companies to develop their competencies in management, scaling up and business development. This is intended to expand existing businesses and increase women's representation in managing medium and large businesses.

4. Insure small and medium-sized enterprises run by women against military risks to support women entrepreneurs and encourage inactive women to start their own businesses by providing partial protection of their businesses from the unpredictable factors of military invasion.

#### **Mechanisms for ensuring gender equality at the level of territorial communities**

*Recommended to the Ministry of Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development of Ukraine, territorial communities, NGOs, international organizations and partners:*

1. Conduct leadership training in territorial communities on the application of gender-sensitive approaches in territorial management, development programmes and financial projects.

2. Conduct systematic gender audits of social and economic programmes using gender-sensitive data, which are regularly collected.

#### **Development of procedures of the State Employment Service in providing services for women**

*The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, the State Employment Service, the Pension Fund of Ukraine, the State Tax Service of Ukraine, and the State Labor Service are proposed:*

1. Strengthen interaction and implementation of integrated approaches between career counselors

providing employment services and psychologists. This can be realized through joint consultations and the use of cross-working protocols to improve the quality and increase the client focus of service delivery.

2. Expand the powers and responsibilities of career counselors at State Employment Centers in terms of mandatory contact and support for employed women during their adaptation period (probationary period). Organize their verification of the declared working conditions against the actual working conditions, and provide feedback to ensure that women stay in the workplace longer and avoid discrimination in the workplace.

3. Conduct a series of trainings for employees of State Employment Centers on the use of gender-sensitive approaches in the provision of employment services by taking into account the special needs of certain groups of the population in this process.

4. Create a system of variable protocols (algorithms) for career counselors to work with the unemployed, depending on the person's belonging to certain categories, identified needs and barriers in the process of registration and organization of job search, taking into account an individual approach.

5. Implement projects in cooperation with the Pension Fund, the Tax Service, and the State Labor Service to monitor working conditions and the state of enterprises, taking into account the legitimacy of social and labor relations, working conditions, existing cases of discrimination, and enterprise policies on gender equality, in order to profile them and further take into account the results of these assessments in offering jobs to women who have specific barriers to implementation.

#### **Development of procedures of the State Employment Service in providing services for women**

*Recommended to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, the State Employment Service, the Pension Fund of Ukraine, the State Tax Service of Ukraine, and the State Labour Service:*

1. Strengthen integrated approaches between psychologists and career counsellors providing employment services. This can be realized through joint consultations and the use of cross-working protocols to improve the quality and increase the client focus of service delivery.



2. Expand the powers and responsibilities of career counsellors at the State Employment Service for mandatory contact with and supporting women during probationary periods to aim for them to stay in the workforce longer and avoid discrimination in the workplace. Organize their verification of the declared working conditions against the actual working conditions, and provide feedback.

3. Train employees of the State Employment Service on the use of gender-sensitive approaches in the provision of employment services and the special needs of some population groups in this process.

4. Create targeted algorithms for career counsellors to improve their work with the unemployed, to address their individual and specific needs and challenges in the process of registration and organization of job search, including because of their characteristics.

5. Implement projects with the Pension Fund, Tax Service and State Labour Service to monitor working conditions and enterprises in relation to women's employment: social and labour relations, working conditions, existing cases of discrimination, and enterprise policies on gender equality, in order to profile the workplaces and offer appropriate jobs to women who have specific needs.

#### **Implementation of social partnership principles in the field of gender equality**

*Recommended to the Government of Ukraine, the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy, international organizations and partners, territorial communities, NGOs, trade unions, and employers' associations:*

1. Create coalitions and platforms for interaction between the government, international development partners, civil society organizations, representatives of local communities, employers and trade unions to develop community development projects and programmes with a gender-sensitive approach, formulate enterprise development strategies based on respect for human rights and gender equality and prevent and combat discrimination.

2. Strengthen the role and work of organizations and trade unions at the sectoral and regional levels in protecting women's rights and defending their labour rights and interests, guided by the principle of respect for fundamental rights and non-discrimination in the workplace.

3. Involve trade union representatives in working groups to discuss gender-sensitive reforms and development programmes, including the implementation of the Strategy and Operational Plan to reduce the gender pay gap.

4. Encourage gender balance and the involvement of women in leadership positions in central, regional and sectoral trade union organizations, which will help to take into account the needs and interests of women when developing internal policies, procedures and programmes at the enterprise.

#### **Attracting international support for the implementation of gender-sensitive programmes and projects**

*Recommended to the Government of Ukraine, international organizations and partners:*

1. Provide priority funding for gender-sensitive projects and programmes that are aimed at achieving gender equality, including in the labour market and in entrepreneurship.

2. Ensure equal participation of women and men in Ukraine's international representative bodies and in programmes and activities implemented by Ukraine and partner countries.

3. Promote the expansion of the Alliance for Gender Responsive and Inclusive Recovery of Ukraine through raising awareness of and gaining support for its principles.

#### **Involvement of employers in the implementation of gender policy**

*Recommended to the Government of Ukraine, business, employers' associations, the media community, and public organizations:*

1. Implement an information policy on the importance and role of employers in ensuring gender equality and implementing gender-sensitive and responsible approaches in business.

2. Promote the implementation of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), expand the number of active signatories, and provide advisory support and mentoring to signatories.

3. Encourage employers to ensure women's participation in decision-making and management processes by promoting them to senior management positions.

4. Develop and implement corporate programmes to promote women's career advancement including in areas and sectors where men dominate.
5. Prevent the use of gender stereotypes in advertising and marketing campaigns to promote products and services.
6. Promote employment that respects gender equality by, for example, showing women's representation in various professions and positions.

#### **Sanctions policy for violations of regulatory and legal requirements for gender equality**

*Recommended to the Government of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada, the judiciary, international organizations and partners, and the State Labour Service:*

1. Develop and approve sanctions at the regulatory level for violations of gender equality requirements by non-state and state actors, for discrimination,

and for negligence in protecting women's rights and opportunities. Create a list of violations that will be subject to sanctions.

2. Enhance the role of the judiciary (where it is proposed to introduce the position of a gender-responsive judge) and the State Labour Service in ensuring gender equality. The State Labour Service has considerable experience in identifying violations of labour and social legislation by employers, consulting and informing enterprises, profiling the risks of violations of protective legislation, and on-site inspection and remedial mechanisms.

3. Implement the full package of European norms on improving labour inspection with additions to promote women's rights at work, including related to women's mobilization at work, their undeclared labour, and gender-based discrimination and harassment.