

## THE STATE OF UKRAINIAN WAR VETERANS IN 2025

### Introduction

Since the onset of Russian aggression in 2014, Ukraine has witnessed a significant increase in its veteran population. These individuals, having served in various capacities, now face multifaceted challenges in reintegration, health, and societal recognition. This newsletter delves into the current state of Ukrainian war veterans, highlighting key statistics, challenges, and support mechanisms in place as of 2025.

### Demographics of Ukrainian War Veterans

As of May 2024, Ukraine has officially registered 1.2 million veterans in the national database. However, this number is projected to rise significantly. According to Maksym Kushnir, Deputy Minister for Veterans Affairs, the total number of individuals eligible for veteran-related support—including both former service members and their family members—could reach between 5 and 6 million once the war concludes. He emphasized that many men and women currently serving on the front lines have yet to be granted official veteran status.

Kushnir also noted that approximately 70% of those who are now veterans had formal employment before being mobilized, and more than half are likely to need job placement or support in re-entering the labor market once their military service ends.

As of 2025, the number of Ukrainian war veterans has surged, with estimates suggesting that up to five million individuals may be eligible for veteran status by the end of the conflict. This includes those who served since 2014 and the subsequent full-scale invasion in 2022. The veteran population predominantly comprises working-age individuals, with a growing representation of women, who now constitute approximately 22% of the armed forces.

## The State of Ukrainian War Veterans in 2025

### Disabilities Among Veterans

The war has led to a significant increase in disabilities among Ukrainians. In the first 10 months of 2022 alone, over 45,000 individuals acquired disabilities, a figure 3.5 times higher than the previous year. These disabilities range from physical injuries, such as amputations and musculoskeletal injuries, to psychological conditions like PTSD and depression.

### Three Years into the War: The Impact on Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine

Among the most affected are the more than 3 million persons with disabilities living in Ukraine, whose lives have been upended in deeply disproportionate ways.

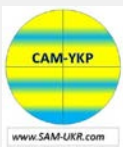
### Three Years into the War: The Impact on Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine

From the earliest days of the invasion, people with disabilities have encountered unique and life-threatening barriers. Many faced severe challenges evacuating due to inaccessible transportation and shelters. Critical support services, including healthcare and social assistance, were disrupted or halted altogether—leaving countless individuals without essential care and protection.

Recognizing these urgent needs, we and our partners acted quickly to support disability-led organizations across Ukraine. Together, we helped deliver life-saving aid and advocated for disability-inclusive policy and service reform. Our collective efforts have so far reached more than 70,000 people, including tens of thousands with disabilities, and continue to promote inclusive approaches in emergency response, recovery, and long-term development.

### The Humanitarian Crisis in Numbers

- 300,000 individuals have sustained war-related injuries resulting in long-term disability.
- 1.8 million persons with disabilities are in need of humanitarian assistance.
- 3.9 million people in Ukraine are estimated to suffer from moderate to severe mental health conditions, with persons with disabilities particularly at risk.
- 50% of displaced households living in collective shelters include either older persons or people with disabilities.



## OUR RESPONSE EFFORTS

At the heart of our efforts are two major initiatives:

- “Empower Ukraine”

“Ukraine Crisis – OPD-Led Disability Inclusive Response and Recovery”

These programs are supported by the German Federal Foreign Office and CBM International and bring together 15 partner organizations across 8 countries. Notably, two of these are national Ukrainian disability organizations: the National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities of Ukraine and the League of the Strong.

While initially focused on Ukraine, these efforts also extended to neighboring countries—especially Moldova and Poland—to assist families who fled the country during the initial phase of the conflict.

### Key Achievements So Far

Over 70,000 people supported, including at least 36,000 persons with disabilities.

Of those identified:

58% are women with disabilities

13% are children with disabilities

11,500+ individuals received cash assistance and assistive devices.

€850,000 distributed directly to affected individuals and families.

8,000+ persons with disabilities and family members received transport services, mainly for medical appointments.

10,500+ people benefited from inclusive mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS), including psychological first aid, disability-inclusive training, and one-on-one counseling.

## Looking Ahead: Inclusion in Recovery

As Ukraine begins to envision post-war reconstruction, inclusion must be central to every stage. The European Disability Forum (EDF) and its partners continue to call for:

- Barrier-free reconstruction, with a focus on inclusive design for health, education, employment, and housing infrastructure.
- Full deinstitutionalization, moving away from segregated care facilities toward community-based, independent living arrangements.
- Sustained funding and strong policies that prioritize disability-inclusive humanitarian aid and social services.
- Participation and leadership of persons with disabilities in all decision-making processes—because lasting change requires their lived experience and expertise.

## Stories of Resilience

Behind these numbers are powerful stories of endurance, resistance, and leadership by Ukrainians with disabilities. As the nation continues to stand firm and plan for the future, the inclusion of persons with disabilities is not just a humanitarian necessity—it’s a measure of the country’s justice and humanity.

### Empowering Daily Life and Independent Living

Restoring Independence: Oleksandr’s Story

Oleksandr, a veteran and former biker from Kyiv, sustained a spinal cord injury in 2022 during the war. With support from a disability-inclusive recovery programme, his apartment was redesigned to meet accessibility standards—transforming his everyday experience. Thanks to expert modifications, Oleksandr regained his independence and dignity. His case is one of over 52 similar interventions across Ukraine that have helped individuals with disabilities live more comfortably and autonomously.

### Practical Mobility: Bicycles for Social Workers

To support frontline care providers in rural Ukraine, the programme has supplied bicycles to social workers operating across dispersed and often remote villages. While this may seem unusual from an urban perspective, these professionals must cover long distances to deliver vital items—such as hygiene kits, food, and medications—to dozens of households. The bicycles have significantly enhanced their ability to serve clients efficiently. Due to their impact, demand for this simple yet effective solution remains high.

### Advocacy and Systemic Change

### The Riga Academy: Strengthening Disability Rights Leadership

One of the programme’s flagship achievements is the Riga Academy, a series of in-person trainings that bring together disability activists and Ukrainian government representatives.



## LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Ukraine has established a legal framework to support its veterans, primarily through the Law of Ukraine "On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection." This legislation outlines benefits, including healthcare, housing, and education. Additionally, initiatives like the Council of Europe's "Rights of Veterans and Personnel of Armed Forces in Ukraine" project aim to bolster human rights protections and support mechanisms for veterans)

### Rethinking Ukraine's Veterans Policy: From Soviet Legacy to Present Needs

For many years, Ukraine's approach to veterans policy was shaped by Soviet-era practices. The Soviet system—while not necessarily effective—was broadly inclusive, offering standardized support in areas like healthcare and housing, often as a symbolic form of recognition rather than as a response to real needs. The definition of "veteran" in that context was also ambiguous, encompassing not only war veterans but also "labor veterans."

This legacy carried over into the early decades of Ukraine's independence. Veterans policy remained largely ceremonial, focused on commemorative events rather than practical support. It wasn't until the outbreak of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) in eastern Ukraine in 2014 that veteran care began to gain real urgency.

## Legal and Institutional Framework

Since then, and particularly after the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, the number of Ukrainian veterans has grown significantly. Yet, as of 2023, the state still lacks a coherent and comprehensive policy framework for veterans and their families. Current support systems are fragmented and outdated, with benefits often delivered as isolated incentives rather than as part of an integrated strategy. Some services are no longer relevant—like the free installation of landline telephones—while others are difficult to access in practice.

Coordination among government agencies remains weak, and the overall policy environment does not adequately reflect the evolving needs of veterans or the scale of the challenge. Without urgent reform, there is a growing risk of social discontent and a failure to ensure the effective reintegration of veterans into civilian life.

This analysis is part of a broader research initiative aimed at evaluating both Ukrainian and international veterans policy models. In this initial phase, the focus is on the historical evolution of Ukraine's veteran support systems, the legal framework underpinning them, and the institutional roles involved. It also examines the specific tools of social support that have been deployed to date.

Ultimately, the goal is to inform the development of a modern, well-coordinated, and needs-based veterans policy for Ukraine—one that ensures respect, dignity, and real support for those who have served.

## Key Findings from Engagement with Ukrainian Veterans and Support Networks

Through in-depth conversations with Ukraine's veterans and those who assist their transition to civilian life, several critical issues have emerged across four main areas:

### Identity and Social Dynamics

**Multiple Veteran Identities:** Ukrainian veterans live complex lives, combining their military roles—such as combatants, volunteers, religious leaders, government officials—with civilian identities. These overlapping roles affect how veterans see themselves, their expectations, political views, and their post-war life trajectories.

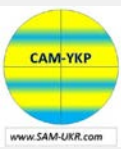
**Social and Economic Divides:** Tensions arise from differing social backgrounds. Wealthier individuals sometimes avoid conscription by leaving the country, while less affluent citizens face compulsory service, deepening social inequalities and causing stress that affects veterans' willingness to serve again.

**Training Shortfalls:** Due to urgent recruitment needs, many service members lack proper training, especially medical personnel. This creates distrust among veterans, who feel that some peers are inadequately prepared, weakening cohesion and trust within the forces.

### Generational Differences

**Diverse Veteran Experiences by Age:** Older veterans who joined after establishing their lives aim to return to stability, while younger veterans, conscripted before starting their education or families, must rebuild everything from scratch.

**Challenges for Younger Veterans:** Many younger conscripts feel a loss of control and experience betrayal. They face frustrations, mistrust in authorities, and risks like substance abuse. While some dream of entrepreneurship, few manage to succeed.



## WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE

1. **Women's Active Participation:** Women have taken on crucial combat and leadership roles. For example, one woman in an assault unit returned to active duty after pregnancy and joined the Special Operations Forces. Yet, they face practical barriers like inadequate uniforms, limited career progression, and lack of formal recognition.
2. **Persistent Stereotypes and Rights Issues:** Harmful stereotypes undermine women's contributions, such as assumptions that women join the military to find husbands or prefer desk jobs. There is a shortage of specialized healthcare and psychological support to address gender-specific challenges like sexual assault and discrimination.
3. **Insufficient Gender-Sensitive Support:** Female prisoners of war often receive inadequate medical and family support after release. Reintegration programs must consider both female and male spouses to improve mental health care readiness.
4. **Need to Strengthen Gender Policies:** The UN's Women, Peace, and Security agenda requires deeper integration into Ukrainian institutions to support women veterans and civilians involved in military, political, and community roles.

### Physical Injuries and Medical Needs

1. **Ongoing Difficulties in Medical Care for Wounded Soldiers:** The study highlights major challenges in treating injured soldiers, with widespread mistrust of Ukraine's healthcare system—especially military hospitals. The shortage of civilian doctors, many of whom have either been mobilized or have left the country, worsens the problem and forces some soldiers to seek medical treatment abroad.
2. **Insufficient and Risky Frontline Medical Support:** Combat medics often lack adequate medical kits, and paramedics receive insufficient training. The use of painkillers carries a high risk of addiction, leading to calls for the Ministry of Defense to reconsider which medications are allowed on the front lines.
3. **Bureaucratic Barriers to Disability Benefits:** Veterans face significant red tape, corruption, and impersonal procedures when trying to access disability status and benefits, making the process difficult and demoralizing.

## Economic Reintegration

1. **Private Sector Needs to Improve Accessibility and Compliance:** A major obstacle for veterans seeking employment is the lack of accessible workplaces and limited job options. The private sector must prepare better and be held accountable for accessibility standards.
2. **Peer Support Networks as Valuable Resources:** Veterans supporting each other through peer networks can be very effective, but those who act as case managers need adequate psychosocial support to prevent retraumatization. Communication difficulties and trauma must be addressed for these networks to succeed.
3. **Translating Military Skills to Civilian Jobs:** Veterans have many useful skills gained from service, but struggle to apply them in civilian careers. More training programs that help transfer these skills, including language and business education, are needed.
4. **Entrepreneurship Education and Mentorship:** Structured business training and mentorship programs can empower veterans to launch and manage their own businesses. Despite limited resources, some organizations have made strong progress providing veterans with entrepreneurship training alongside psychological support.
5. **Agriculture as a Focus Area for Veteran Entrepreneurship:** Farming is a promising sector for veteran-led ventures. Competitions and funding opportunities for agricultural projects support veterans' economic reintegration, provide therapeutic benefits, and help strengthen local communities.

## Challenges in Accessing Support

Despite existing frameworks, veterans face challenges in accessing healthcare, rehabilitation, and daily support services. Bureaucratic hurdles, geographic disparities, and limited resources often impede timely and adequate care. Many veterans report difficulties in navigating the system to receive the benefits and services they are entitled to

## Veteran Rehabilitation in Ukraine Still Faces Major Challenges

March 15, 2024, 22:25

After speaking with several wounded Ukrainian soldiers, journalists from NV have concluded that Ukraine's current military healthcare system is still unable to provide veterans with the full rehabilitation support they need.

One such veteran is 46-year-old Roman Ivanenko from Kyiv. Before the war, he worked in the film industry and even collaborated with Volodymyr Zelenskyy when he was still an actor.

Everything changed for Ivanenko after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. He joined Ukraine's 53rd Mechanized Brigade as a combat engineer, but his time on the front lines was short-lived. In August 2022, he was seriously injured by tank shelling near Bakhmut, Donetsk Oblast. Fortunately, fellow soldiers managed to evacuate him from the battlefield.



## UKRAINE STRUGGLES TO FULLY IMPLEMENT VETERAN REHABILITATION DESPITE NEW INITIATIVES

Ukrainian Health Minister Viktor Liashko told NV that he is aware of the urgent need for rehabilitation programs tailored to those injured in the war. His ministry looked to Israel's veteran care system as a model while shaping Ukraine's approach. Initial plans estimated that to provide full rehabilitation services, the country would need around 3,500 beds in specialized facilities equipped with multidisciplinary teams. That figure was later revised to 7,800 beds.

The initiative was officially launched in June 2023. The Health Ministry selected so-called "cluster hospitals" in each region—medical centers that already had departments for surgery, traumatology, and stroke care—and instructed them to establish rehabilitation wards with 30 to 60 beds. These hospitals were also directed to hire the necessary medical and therapy personnel. According to Liashko, the government has committed to covering the cost of these rehabilitation cycles through the state budget.

Depending on the severity of the injury and the complexity of the rehabilitation, the state compensates from UAH 17,000 (\$439) to UAH 42,000 (\$1,086) per patient.

"This was the right decision," Liashko said, adding that most of these hospitals now have rehabilitation departments and trained teams, and they are receiving funding under the state's medical guarantee program.

The program is scheduled for a full review in June 2024 to evaluate its effectiveness. According to Liashko, more than 230,000 patients—including both civilians and military personnel—received rehabilitation services last year.

However, the situation on the ground paints a less optimistic picture.

There are still serious gaps in care, especially regarding medical equipment. For example, former Azovstal defenders undergoing rehab were in facilities without proper eye-testing tools or MRI scanners. In some cases, surgeries were carried out on patients with multiple shrapnel fragments without proper imaging.

Vitaliy Nadashkevych, head of the Poland Helps Ukraine charity, also highlighted the lack of crucial tools such as microsurgical microscopes needed for brain operations—equipment essential not only for saving lives but also for successful rehabilitation. His foundation has donated such microscopes to hospitals in Zaporizhzhya, Kharkiv, and Lviv.

One partial solution lies in an EU-funded program that allows severely wounded individuals to receive treatment in European hospitals. This program is free for both Ukraine and the patients, Liashko noted.

### Veterans' Evaluation of Support

Surveys indicate mixed satisfaction levels among veterans regarding government support. While some appreciate the available services, others highlight gaps in delivery, especially concerning medical services, financial assistance, and psychological rehabilitation.

### Nationwide Survey Highlights Public Perception of Veterans in Ukraine (Survey conducted March 2–5, 2024)

A nationwide public opinion survey, the 27th of its kind, was carried out by the Sociological Group "Rating" at the request of the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation, part of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs.

The results show that 55% of Ukrainians have close family members who took part in military actions within Ukraine between 2014 and 2021. Additionally, 70% of respondents reported that they have relatives or friends who are currently serving or have served at the front since the full-scale invasion began on February 24, 2022. Compared to earlier surveys, there has been a noticeable rise in the number of people with close ties to individuals now serving on the front lines.

When asked about the possibility of becoming veterans themselves, 41% of respondents said they see this as a real possibility, while 53% disagreed. The idea of possibly becoming a veteran was most commonly mentioned among residents of western Ukraine, younger people, men, and those with relatives who have fought since 2014 and continue to serve today.

The military continues to enjoy exceptionally high trust from the public. According to the survey:

- 96% trust veterans of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) who are still in active service.
  - 94% trust the Armed Forces and veterans currently engaged in the ongoing war.
  - 84% trust ATO/Joint Forces Operation veterans from 2014–2021 who are no longer on active duty.
- This high level of trust is consistent across all age groups and regions.

When considering the challenges veterans may face upon returning from service, respondents identified the following top concerns:

- Psychological and emotional trauma
- Physical health problems
- Limited access to medical care
- Lack of inclusive environments and accessible workplaces for those with disabilities

Bureaucratic barriers in accessing social benefits.



# ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION PROSPECTS

Economic reintegration remains a significant challenge. Programs like IREX's Veteran Reintegration aim to improve access to employment and vocational training. However, societal stigmas persist. A study revealed that 52% of Ukrainian employers harbor concerns about the psychological well-being of disabled veterans, viewing it as a barrier to employment.

The Veterans Reintegration Program, launched by IREX in 2019 with funding from the U.S. Department of State, was originally designed to support veterans of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) who served in the formerly occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the program has broadened its scope considerably to assist a much larger group of veterans.

The IREX Veterans Reintegration Program is designed to enhance both the quality and availability of support services for Ukrainian veterans as they move from military to civilian life. To accomplish this, the program focuses on building the capacity of government and civil society organizations involved in veteran support. Its key goals include increasing access to psychological and physical rehabilitation, as well as strengthening vocational education, retraining, and job placement efforts—particularly for veterans who are part of vulnerable or at-risk groups.

## Broadening Job Prospects for Veterans

### Professional Training and Retraining:

The program backs initiatives led by partners that deliver targeted training aimed at enhancing veterans' professional qualifications. One such example is the Praktyka project by Veteran Hub, which offers tailored employment counseling for both veterans and employers.

### Skill Development:

The program also awards individual scholarships to veterans and their family members to help them acquire new professional skills. Since the launch of the Hard Skills initiative, nearly 150 individuals have received these educational grants.

## Expanding Access to Mental Health Support

### Professional Development:

IREX offers training programs for specialists—such as social workers—who work directly with veterans and their families, helping to ensure they are better equipped to address mental health needs.

### Digital Mental Health Services:

IREX contributes to the launch and growth of online psychological support platforms, including emergency services like MARTA and Baza.

### Rehabilitation for Veterans and Their Families:

The program also partners with organizations that deliver psychological rehabilitation, such as the Veteran Hub hotline, to provide essential mental health support to both veterans and their loved ones.

## Social Standing and Public Recognition

Public perception of veterans is generally positive. A December 2024 survey found that 71% of Ukrainians had close relatives who had fought or were fighting at the front since February 24, 2022. Trust in the military and veterans remains high, with 94% expressing confidence in the Armed Forces and veterans of the current war .(ratinggroup.ua, ratinggroup.ua)

### 41% of Ukrainians Believe They Might Become Veterans in the Future – Survey Findings

According to the fourth nationwide survey titled “*Image of Veterans in Ukrainian Society*”, conducted by the Sociological Group “Rating” in collaboration with the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation, 41% of Ukrainians think they could become veterans one day, while 53% believe the opposite.

## Concerns About Declining Trust and Social Stigmatization

Ruslana Velychko-Tryfoniuk, Acting Executive Director of the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation, expressed concern over a noticeable drop in trust toward veterans of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) and Joint Forces Operation (JFO). She warned that this trend could reflect increasing stigmatization and difficulties in veterans' reintegration, potentially impacting today's active-duty soldiers once they return home.

## Public Respect for Veterans Still High, and Unchanged

Despite more families being directly affected by war, public trust in the military and veterans is gradually declining. According to Lyubomyr Misiv, Deputy Director of the “Rating” group, 76% of respondents currently believe society respects veterans—a figure that remains mostly unchanged from September 2023 (79%). However, 18% now say the opposite, especially among young people and residents of western Ukraine.

## Top Challenges Veterans Are Expected to Face

The survey revealed that 67% of Ukrainians believe veterans will struggle with a lack of understanding from society. A related January 2024 survey by the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation found that 63.3% of veterans themselves also anticipated this issue.

Yulia Kirillova, Head of the Foundation’s Educational and Analytical Department, noted a growing gap between public perceptions and veterans’ own views. For instance, while 86% of the general public foresee psycho-emotional challenges for veterans, only 50.5% of veterans themselves consider this a major concern.



## WHAT IS PTSD?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that can develop after someone experiences or witnesses a traumatic event—such as war, a natural disaster, a serious accident, or violent assault.

Ukrainian war veteran Stanislav Hibadulin, originally from Moldova, was diagnosed with PTSD in 2020. He describes the experience as feeling like his body had returned home from the batt Hibadulin said his mental health struggles severely affected both his personal relationships and his education. The only treatment that helped him, he shared, was psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy—a highly debated approach to treating PTSD that is banned in Ukraine but permitted to some extent in certain Western countries.

Millions impacted?

There's no official data available that shows exactly how many Ukrainian soldiers and veterans are dealing with PTSD. According to the Ministry of Health, the number of diagnosed cases rose sharply—from 3,167 in 2021 to 12,494 in 2023. However, it's not clear whether these figures include members of the military.

Experts estimate that around 30% of service members and veterans may experience PTSD. The likelihood of developing the condition depends on several factors, such as where the person was deployed, their gender, how much combat they were exposed to, and other personal circumstances.

According to the Health Ministry, approximately 1.8 million Ukrainian service members and veterans may need psychological assistance.

However, there are doubts about the country's ability to meet this demand. A review conducted by the Ukrainian NGO Barrier-Free last year found that although numerous mental health programs and services exist, they remain fragmented and have not yet been integrated into a cohesive, functional mental health care system.

Ukrainian soldiers and veterans have access to a limited number of psychological rehabilitation centers run by the Ministry for Veterans Affairs and the Health Ministry, most of which are located in the Kyiv region. They can also seek support at local public or private clinics.

Oleksii Kruhliachenko, a Ukrainian psychiatrist and psychologist with a private practice, told the Kyiv Independent that one of the most pressing issues is the shortage of professionals trained in evidence-based

## Psychological support in the military

Viktoriia Bilous, a senior officer responsible for moral and psychological support in one Ukrainian brigade, noted that her commander has generally respected and followed the mental health recommendations. However, she acknowledged that due to the shortage of military personnel—especially experienced professionals—other brigades may not have adequate psychological support in place.

According to Bilous, awareness of the importance of mental health in the military is gradually growing, and the number of military psychologists within Ukraine's Armed Forces is on the rise.

However, the army still lacks a sufficient number of experienced mental health professionals. Research published by the NGO Barrier-Free in February 2023 revealed that there is only one psychologist for every 400 to 500 Ukrainian service members — a stark contrast to the Israeli military, where the ratio is one psychologist per 70 to 90 soldiers.

## Role of Non-State Actors

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are crucial for supporting veterans, playing a key role in rehabilitation, reintegration, and community recovery. They offer various support programs tailored to veterans' needs, including policy development, advocacy, and services addressing physical and mental health, employment, and legal aid.

### Focus on Needs:

NGOs work to understand the diverse needs of veterans and provide targeted support, including physical and mental rehabilitation, and reintegration into civilian life.

### Comprehensive Support:

They offer services like vocational training, employment assistance, and mental health support, helping veterans transition into new roles.

### Community Integration:

NGOs facilitate community integration by providing peer support, social activities, and connections with community organizations, helping veterans build social networks.

### Ukrainian National Foundation for Veterans and Victims of War ([uaveterans.org](https://uaveterans.org)):

This foundation focuses on rehabilitation, reintegration, and community recovery, providing policy development, advocacy, and various support programs for veterans.

Бажаючи Допомогти (Willing to Help):

This NGO provides legal advice, representation in court, and assistance in solving social issues for veterans.

### Фонд "Здорові рішення" (Foundation for Healthy Solutions):

This foundation offers research and support for veterans, focusing on their rehabilitation and reintegration into civilian life.

### Український ветеранський фонд (Ukrainian Veterans Foundation) <https://veteranfund.com.ua/en/about-the-fund/>:

This foundation is a platform for the development of veteran opportunities.

## KEY FINDINGS – VETERANS OVERVIEW

A total of 593 veterans participated in the survey, complemented by five semi-structured interviews (SSIs) to provide deeper qualitative insights. Women made up slightly under 5% of respondents, which is consistent with IOM's 2022 veteran survey.

### Geographic Distribution

The veterans surveyed came from various regions, with the highest representation from Kyiv (202 respondents), followed by Kyiv Oblast (118), Dnipropetrovsk (72), Mykolaiv (40), and other oblasts in smaller numbers. For example, Lviv accounted for 16 respondents, Kharkiv 11, Odesa and Kherson 8 each, with fewer participants from Cherkasy, Luhansk, Poltava, Rivne, and Zhytomyr.

### Demographics

- Gender: 568 of the veterans surveyed were men (95.77%), and 25 were women (4.23%).
- Disabilities: 182 participants (30.80%) reported living with a disability.
- Residential Areas:
  - 55.8% lived in large cities with populations over 500,000.
  - 29.7% lived in mid-sized towns (51,000–500,000 residents).
  - 14.5% resided in small towns or villages.

### Age Breakdown

The majority of participants were aged between 25 and 55, especially those in the 35–44-year age group, aligning with veterans who served after the 2014 annexation of Crimea. This demographic pattern is consistent with IOM's previous surveys.

- 18–24 years: 2.5%
- 25–34 years: 24.5%
- 35–44 years: 41.3%
- 45–54 years: 25.6%
- 55–64 years: 4.4%
- 65 and over: 1.7%

### Household Composition and Marital Status

Most veterans lived with others, though 17.4% lived alone.

- 25.4% lived with one other person
- 30.3% with two
- 18.4% with three

## In terms of relationships:

- 52.3% were in officially registered marriages
- 19.8% were in unregistered civil unions
- 14.2% had never married
- 7.6% were divorced
- 3.2% were married but lived apart
- 1.9% were widowed

## Education Levels

- 36% had completed higher education (bachelor's, master's, or academic degree)
- 29.4% held technical or vocational qualifications
- 28.1% had partially completed higher education (e.g., junior bachelor or specialist degrees)
- 5.8% had finished upper secondary school
- 0.5% had only lower secondary education
- 0.2% did not respond
- **Displacement and Relocation**  
Most veterans were still living in their original communities at the time of the survey.
- 62.9% had not been displaced
- 8.9% reported being forced to leave their homes
- Only 2.4% had officially registered as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), slightly less than the 5% reported in IOM's 2022 survey
- However, 36% were living outside their usual place of residence, suggesting that some moved voluntarily, often for economic reasons—particularly to Kyiv, where employment opportunities are perceived to be greater despite rising housing costs. These relocations, while not always seen as displacement by the individuals, still pose integration challenges. Cities receiving large numbers of newcomers, like Kyiv, are experiencing rising housing prices, making it difficult for financially vulnerable veterans to secure stable housing.

Between January 15, 2023, and July 15, 2024, IOM is running a project titled "Path of Resilience: Enhancing Ukrainian Resilience through Strengthened Capacities of Psychosocial Support for Veterans," funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. As part of this project, IOM partnered with SREO Consulting in June 2023 to conduct research aimed at understanding the factors that support or hinder veterans' reintegration into society and their active participation in community life.

The study involved a national survey of veterans—including women, individuals with disabilities, as well as families of veterans and those who lost their lives in service.

A total of 1,000 surveys were conducted: 593 with veterans (including 25 women and 182 individuals with disabilities) and 407 with family members of veterans and the fallen. The qualitative component comprised 50 KIIs, 3 FGDs, and 5 SSIs.

The results show that veterans—particularly those living with disabilities—require robust support systems that address not only their medical and psychological needs but also their social and economic well-being.



## REGIONAL, GENDER-BASED, AND SOCIOECONOMIC DIFFERENCES

Veterans' experiences vary based on region, gender, and socioeconomic status. Female veterans, for example, may face unique challenges in reintegration and accessing support services. Additionally, those from rural areas or lower socioeconomic backgrounds often encounter more significant obstacles in obtaining necessary resources and support.

As Ukraine marks the third year of Russia's full-scale invasion, the number of demobilized service members continues to grow. Yet, despite the increasing participation of women in the Armed Forces, there remains a lack of state programs tailored to the specific needs of female veterans. Current reintegration efforts—both social and psychological—tend to apply a one-size-fits-all model that overlooks the distinct challenges women face when transitioning to civilian life. These challenges are shaped by traditional gender roles, societal expectations, and the unique experiences women endure during and after military service.

### Mental Health Challenges

Many veterans are dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and often struggle to access effective mental health care. For women, this is compounded by experiences of sexism and public hostility, which intensify psychological trauma. Ukraine's mental health infrastructure is underfunded and lacks the resources to deliver gender-responsive care. There is also a shortage of psychologists trained to support women veterans specifically, limiting their access to appropriate support.

### Employment and Economic Reintegration

Female veterans face multiple barriers to re-entering the workforce. To improve employment outcomes, there is a need to expand upskilling and retraining programs tailored to women, and to educate employment service providers on how to communicate sensitively and respond to the specific challenges faced by women returning from military service.

### Persistent Gender Inequality

Recognition of military service remains unequal. While men's contributions are more publicly acknowledged, female veterans often feel undervalued and overlooked. This lack of recognition hampers their reintegration and can lead to further isolation and frustration.

Women who served in Ukraine's defense are essential to the country's recovery. Their reintegration must be made a national priority. Achieving this will require coordinated action from the government, civil society, and international allies to establish a more inclusive and responsive support system.

### Key Recommendations for Improvement:

1. Strengthen Mental Health Services
2. Raise Public Awareness
3. Push for Structural Reforms

In partnership with global stakeholders, the PanteonX Charitable Foundation hosts educational trainings, seminars, and hands-on events to support the psychological and social well-being of veterans.

### Conclusion

As Ukraine continues to navigate the complexities of war and its aftermath, addressing the multifaceted needs of its veterans remains paramount. The reintegration of those who served—physically, mentally, and socially—requires more than generic support; it demands a holistic, inclusive, and long-term strategy backed by coordinated national and international efforts.

Veterans, especially women, individuals with disabilities, and families of the fallen, face distinct challenges that must be met with tailored responses. From accessible mental health care and stable housing to professional retraining and community reintegration, every aspect of support must be designed with empathy, equity, and dignity at its core.

Society plays a critical role in this process. Public understanding and recognition of veterans' sacrifices—not just in times of conflict but throughout their reintegration—are essential for fostering a culture of respect and inclusion. Breaking down stigma, challenging stereotypes, and celebrating all those who defended the country will help rebuild not just lives, but the social fabric of Ukraine itself.

Government institutions, local authorities, civil society organizations, and international partners must continue to collaborate, share expertise, and invest in resilient support systems. Only through such united action can Ukraine truly honor its veterans—not just in words, but in meaningful change that ensures their well-being and empowers them to contribute fully to the country's recovery and future development.

Let us move forward with the recognition that veterans are not just recipients of aid, but key agents in Ukraine's long-term resilience and rebuilding. Their strength, experience, and leadership are essential to shaping a stronger, more inclusive, and more hopeful Ukraine.

For further inquiries, insights, or collaboration opportunities, please visit our website or reach out directly:

 [www.sam-ukr.com](http://www.sam-ukr.com)