



**IMPACT OF THE WAR ON THE LABOUR
MARKET FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS IN SIX
LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

Summary report

May - June 2023

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Introduction

The full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine had various negative effects on the Ukrainian population, intensifying internal migration and emigration flows. This led to significant imbalances in the labour market. However, vulnerable groups, whose employment opportunities are more limited also in peace times, inadvertently suffer from consequences of the war even more. In order to assess the extent of the negative impact of the war on employment opportunities of vulnerable groups, IOM conducted the rapid study: Impact of War on the Labour Market Opportunities of Vulnerable Groups.

The study was conducted under the Human Security Solutions in Ukraine project and assessed the employment situation within six territorial communities at which the Project is being implemented; these are Chernihiv, Pryluky, Poltava, Kremenchuk, Bila Tserkva, and Ivankiv communities. The impact of the war was assessed for the following vulnerable groups:

- a. Internally displaced persons (IDP);
- b. returnees;
- c. people with disabilities;
- d. survivors of human trafficking, GBV, exploitation, and other forms of abuse;
- e. veterans;
- f. family members of veterans;
- g. family members of fallen combatants;
- h. military-age men; and
- i. families/persons in difficult financial circumstances.

The primary goal of the assessment is to conduct a rapid multi-sectoral gender-sensitive study on the war's impact on human security and labour market outcomes, and its effects on social cohesion in the targeted communities. The secondary goal is to identify the areas for further research due to limitations inflicted by the rapid nature of the study and territorial coverage.

The assessment uses context-driven and participatory approaches to provide a brief analysis of the economic and labour market situation in each of the target communities, barriers and amplifiers for enhancing employment opportunities of vulnerable groups, and to prepare the informed actionable recommendations for sustaining and stimulating employment and skills development at oblast-level, reinforcing social cohesion and inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. The secondary data was collected through desk research, while in-depth interviews of key informants were used as the primary data collection instrument. Key informants consisted of the following community stakeholders: local Departments of the State Employment Centre of Ukraine, local Departments of Social Protection of Population, large employers, and NGOs specialized in assistance to vulnerable groups.

Executive Summary

The Team experienced some problems in the process of data collection at both primary and secondary data collection stages. One of the difficulties with the secondary data collection were related to the fact that just five out of nine target vulnerable groups are tracked by the official statistics and employment services of Ukraine. Another one is the direct consequence of the war, as martial law introduced by the state authorities limits access to statistical data at both state and local levels. Also, there are specifics of statistical data collection and distribution at the level of cities and communities. Primary data collection issues include limited opportunities of the representatives of Departments of Social Protection of Population to comment on employment as it is beyond the mandate of these institutions, and limited information coming from NGOs involved in assisting vulnerable groups on the community context of problems they are dealing with because they do not have community-specific data.

Currently, there are significant barriers to employment on both sides: employers and representatives of vulnerable groups. Employers do not have positive experiences of cooperation with representatives of vulnerable groups and they are unwilling to change their business processes. Moreover, they try to avoid any additional efforts/costs associated with the employment of people from vulnerable groups. Representatives of the vulnerable groups, for their part, often do not believe in their own abilities, do not have sufficient qualifications or work experience, and, for various reasons, are unable to work full-time as expected by employers.

Although there are some local specificities in the select communities, there are three major factors of the war impacting the employment opportunities of vulnerable groups. These are damages to infrastructure, curtailing operations of businesses, and lack of highly skilled workers. The first two restrain the recovery of the labour market, while the third one imposes additional cost on employers related to training of new personnel. Also, it is worth mentioning that employers provide few opportunities for employment of vulnerable groups: less than 5% of vacancies offer the possibility of remote work, less than 10% offer part-time work, and less than 5% of vacancies indicate that they are ready to hire a veteran or a person with a disability.

Specific characteristics of each of the target vulnerable groups cause specific difficulties with their employment and need special treatment. In particular, IDPs and returnees face difficulties because of the need of enrollment into/withdrawal from the IDP status. They also may face difficulties with employment because of different economic specialization at the new place of residence as compared to the previous one (in case of IDPs) or at their previous place of residence due to structural changes upon return (in case of returnees). Physical health conditions are determinant for employment opportunities of people with disabilities. They usually can apply to a limited number of vacancies not involving hard physical work and need to consider to what extent working conditions of a particular employer are suitable for them. Veterans usually do not consider employment as their top priority and need to complete all the necessary paperwork upon release from the military. Military-age men are either mobilized or try to avoid mobilization and, therefore, prefer informal employment.

There are several state employment stimulation programmes information about which is distributed by the local Departments of SEC among the other communication channels. This includes “Vlasna Sprava”, “Army of Restoration”, and “yeRobota” among others. Furthermore, representatives of SEC consider those programmes

as sufficient to stimulate employment. Other survey respondents mentioned also the number of local employment initiatives of local authorities, international organizations, and private businesses.

Despite existing employment stimulation programmes, there is a need to revisit the approach of the state to vulnerable groups due to their growth caused by the war. This process needs extensive changes in the employment data tracking and development of the new targeted assistance programmes. In the meantime, efforts on improvement of the labour market conditions for vulnerable groups could be coordinated by community-based mediator organizations represented by trusted NGOs specialized in provision of assistance to vulnerable groups.

Considering limitations of the study in terms of coverage, scope, and time, more research initiatives are needed to assess the influence of the war on employment of vulnerable groups. The research initiatives should involve wider representations of the state and local authorities, scientific institutions, and other important stakeholders. It should also have wider geographical coverage allowing more thorough study of the issue of vulnerable groups' employment and overcoming the rapid study limitations.

Methodology

The study methodology involves primary and secondary data collection. Both methods were used to inform a comprehensive labour market analysis and prepare recommendations based on the actual situation and historical population trends in target communities.

Secondary data collection

The secondary data was collected through a substantive desk research aiming at: 1) drawing up a socio-economic portrait of the target communities; 2) analyzing the labour market situation in target communities in general and identifying requirements for candidates and employment opportunities for representatives of vulnerable groups in particular.

Data for the socio-economic portrait of the target community was collected from open sources which included databases of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU) and its local divisions, international organizations, publicly available databases, and local researchers.

Labour market data was collected mainly from the SSSU and its local divisions, State Employment Centre (SEC) and its local divisions. At the same time, other open sources were used as an additional source of information (international organizations, job search platforms, and local researchers).

Primary data collection

The main purpose of the primary data collection was to obtain evidence-based information on factors driving the dynamics of employment of representatives of vulnerable groups, including barriers to employment, existing measures to overcome these barriers, and targeted employment stimulation programs of different stakeholders (the state, international organizations, donors, and other institutions).

Mainly qualitative methods were used to collect primary data with some quantitative data analysis for two vulnerable groups (IDPs and returnees). 30 in-depth interviews (IDI) were conducted with key informants in target communities:

- 6 IDIs with representatives of local departments of SEC;
- 6 IDIs with representatives of local Department of the Social Protection of Population (DSPP);
- 12 IDIs with the largest local employers;
- 6 IDIs with organizations working with vulnerable groups.

IDIs with the representatives of SEC were the main source of primary data because SEC receives information from both employers and job seekers and, thus, has the most comprehensive picture of employment trends. IDIs with representatives of the DSPP and organizations working with vulnerable groups were used to complement the received data with specifics related to needs of vulnerable groups. Employers provided information on their experience related to employment of vulnerable groups and the impact of war on such employment. IDIs were conducted in the form of phone/online interviews. Different scripts containing 7-12 questions were prepared for each group of respondents.

Results of the previously conducted study on IDPs' Employment and Labour Market Challenges were used to complement the picture regarding IDPs and returnees. The study had two components: 1) primary data

collection through the all-Ukrainian survey of 1,000 IDPs and returnees and IDIs with 54 employers and 2) secondary data collection through desk research.

The selected study approach allowed for the collection of data necessary to analyze employment of representatives of vulnerable groups on the side of both supply and demand:

- The demand side analysis was informed through:
 - studying the characteristics of available vacancies in the target communities aimed at identification of types of works and requirements of job candidates commonly requested employers;
 - IDIs with two of the ten largest employers in each target community to identify employment barriers representatives of vulnerable groups face and possible ways to overcome these barriers;
 - Results of IDIs of 54 employers conducted within the IDPs' Employment and Labour Market Challenges Study.
- The supply side analysis was informed through:
 - IDIs with representatives of SEC and the DSPP in the target communities to obtain insights on the employment situation of vulnerable groups, existing barriers to employment, current support programs, and necessary further steps to increase the involvement of vulnerable groups into the workforce.
 - IDIs with representatives of organizations working with vulnerable groups to deepen our understanding of the needs and barriers specific to each of the vulnerable groups.
 - results of the all-Ukrainian survey of IDPs and returnees to understand the barriers to employment of representatives of these two vulnerable population groups.

Limitations

Type of the research (pilot study) and security situation in Ukraine due to the war (martial law) were the major factors causing limitations for the study. Among the key limitations are the following:

- **Martial law restrictions on disclosure of information by state authorities:** Many state services ceased their operation or continue working with restrictions under martial law because of the potential threat to the interests of the national security. The limitations cover also statistical data from state authorities.
- **Scope:** Because of security reasons and in order not to scatter limited resources allocated to a pilot study, it was decided to concentrate on the largest settlements in each of the target communities which reduced the community coverage and, in some cases, the reduction was significant (Ivankiv community). In the case of Pryluky community, however, there was no reduction in coverage, since Pryluky community consists solely of the city of Pryluky.
- **Absence of relevant statistical data:** Most of the selected vulnerable groups are not tracked by the official statistics in Ukraine. Because of this and the above-mentioned restrictions on statistical data disclosure, the team could not structure the sample for the survey of vulnerable groups properly and was forced to abandon the survey completely. The Project Team tried to find databases of vulnerable groups of UN system organizations in Ukraine and other international organizations in order to include vulnerable groups surveys into any future full-scale employment studies.
- **Representativeness:** One of the goals of the study was to test the possibility to hold such type of research under conditions of martial law. Therefore, it was decided to hold a limited number of interviews with employers in target communities. This significantly lowered the representativeness of the study. At the same time, many similar responses in relation to employment barriers of vulnerable groups, recommendations to overcome those barriers, and existing employment stimulating programs

and their effect received from all groups of respondents prove that most of the identified issues are common for vulnerable population groups across the targeted communities.

- ***Duration of the interview:*** The optimal length of phone/online interview is 20-25 minutes interval¹. Increasing the length of the interview leads to a higher rate of unfinished interviews. Such time constraints lower the number of questions which can be asked and also limit the opportunities for application of open-ended and multi-choice questions.

¹ The actual duration depends on the level of expertise of a respondent in a subject under discussion.

General observations

Through the process of conducting the study, the team made a number of observations related to all the target communities. These observations can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of those characterizing the data collection process, while the second is directly related to the main subject of the research – impact of war on employment in general and on employment of vulnerable groups.

Data collection process

It turned out that not all the survey's target vulnerable groups were tracked by the official employment statistics even before the war, not mentioning the current situation when martial law imposes additional restrictions on collection and disclosure of statistical data. Therefore, the assessment of the influence of war on employment of vulnerable groups is based only on the evaluative data from alternative sources (data obtained through KIIs from stakeholders in the field). In particular, state authorities involved in the process of collecting the official employment statistics (which include SEC) do not track the following vulnerable groups:

- a) survivors of human trafficking, GBV, exploitation, and other forms of abuse;
- b) family members of veterans and military servants who are currently in service (employers provided info on cases observed but do not consider such people as a separate employment category);
- c) family members of fallen combatants (employers provided info on cases observed but do not consider such people as a separate employment category);
- d) families/persons in difficult circumstances (same for employers);

As a result, SEC and its local divisions have no information about the problems and needs of these groups in relation to employment and, as a result, they cannot make proper adjustments to their employment-related services.

Returnees is a special case in this respect. Collection of data on them stops after termination of their IDP status. However, since there is a time gap between their return and actual termination of the IDP status, some data is being collected.

Another issue, somewhat related to the previous one, is that, apart from targeted employment programs, there are very few vacancy announcements specifically mentioning the possibility of hiring IDPs and returnees in contrast to those focused on people with disabilities and veterans. Such a situation is a result of the objective labour market developments. The share of employed people with disabilities is set by the law, while veterans as a separate population group exists in the country for almost 10 years. At the same time, such employment categories as IDPs and returnees emerged after the beginning of the full-scale war with the Russian Federation. According to interviews held with employers of different sizes, most companies don't consider IDPs and returnees as peculiar employee groups and don't have any targeted programs for these groups. Similarly, employers do not track and do not provide special treatment to representatives of vulnerable groups which are not tracked also by the state institutions. At the same time, employers are more flexible than the state institutions and are ready to adapt their remuneration and recruitment processes to the needs of these groups when cases involving representatives of such groups emerge.

Access to the local level employment statistics is limited not only due to martial law restrictions but also due to specifics of collection and disclosure. In particular, employment statistics provided by the official SSSU portal predominantly has breakdowns by oblast and not by cities. Regional divisions of the SSSU which includes city

departments of statistics are obliged to publish data on quite a limited number of indicators without further breakdowns. Therefore, most of the labour market related data is typically self-reported by city authorities and does not have uniformity and universal structure.

Representatives of the Departments for Social Protection of Population in select communities generally could not provide evidence-based answers to questions related to employment as employment issues are beyond these organizations' mandate. In some cases, personal opinions on employment of vulnerable groups were shared during the interviews, but these opinions could not be backed by statistics or hard evidence.

It was difficult to find NGOs specialized in assistance to survey's target vulnerable groups in select communities. At the same time, all-Ukrainian specialized NGOs were not able to provide any specifics related to employment of vulnerable groups in select communities and provided information on the situation in the country in general. Most NGOs claim that problems of the vulnerable groups are universal across the country and the differences between cities are relatively small. In most cases NGOs don't collect statistics of employment of the vulnerable groups.

Impact of the war on employment

One of the most obvious consequences of the war is closing of businesses all over Ukraine. The most common reasons of closing businesses are physical damage from shelling, breakage of logistics chains leading to shortage of production resources or difficulties with sales, or both, and displacement of personnel fleeing from hostilities. Closing businesses had a negative impact on the labour market in two ways. On the one hand, the actual unemployment level increased in communities. On the other hand, the number of job vacancies dropped significantly (by 30-45% depending on the community). The number of vacancies started to recover but is still below the pre-war level in some target communities.

Representatives of local SEC departments pointed out that, despite the increase in actual unemployment, the official number of unemployed dropped significantly as compared to the pre-war level. This is the result of legal changes introduced by Law No. 2622-IX, adopted on 1st September 2022. In particular, new regulations caused the decrease in the size of unemployment benefits and in terms during which these benefits are paid which incentivize people to find new jobs more actively, on the one hand, and reduces motivation even to register as unemployed for some people.

Both employers and representatives of local SEC departments admitted that there is a shortage of experienced specialists in the labour market. This forces employers to be more actively involved in training of specialists in need but also to be more flexible in terms of vacancy requirements. The latter is the result of another observed trend in the labour market – many jobseekers do not want to retrain, specifically among IDPs (discussed in subsection on barriers to employment of vulnerable groups in more details).

Despite the negative impact of the war on communications, neither employers, nor representatives of local SEC department consider lack of information about job vacancies as a problem in the labour market. Despite the war and the increase in the number of representatives of the two vulnerable groups tracked by SEC (veterans and people with disabilities), the number of job vacancies specifically indicating a possibility to hire candidates from these vulnerable groups remain very low. The same is true also for the number of vacancies with flexible working

options, such as telecommuting and part-time employment, which can satisfy the employment needs of vulnerable groups if provision of special treatment in terms of their employment is impossible.

The conducted survey identified the following barriers to employment of vulnerable groups:

- **IDPs:**

1) Unwillingness to find a job.

There are two main reasons why IDPs have low motivation to find a job at a new location: 1) anticipation of return to their previous place of residence in the near future and 2) absence of own housing for long term stay, while salaries commonly offered are insufficient to cover apartment rental.

2) Absence of relevant vacancies (this barrier is also topical for returnees).

There are many cases of relocation of people from industrial regions to agricultural ones and vice versa. As a result, job vacancies do not match with the professional background of job seekers. At the same time, IDPs mostly do not want to retrain, as was mentioned earlier.

3) Expectations of higher wages.

This issue is common among IDPs who relocated from large cities (Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro, etc.) to smaller settlements and those who relocated from industrialized regions in the East of the country to rural areas in the West.

4) Registration problem.

There are a lot of cases when IDPs already relocated back but did not register in the employment services system after relocation. This introduces discrepancies into the employment statistics and imposes additional pressure on the state financing because commonly people do not register changes in their residence in order to preserve the IDP status and continue receiving the correspondent benefits from the state.

- **People with disabilities:**

1) Physical health issues.

Many agricultural and manufacturing businesses seek personnel for hard physical work vacancies or vacancies with harsh working conditions. People with disabilities, specifically with pathologies of the musculoskeletal system, cardiovascular or oncological diseases, are not suitable for such vacancies.

2) Low educational level.

There is the following trend in Ukraine – the higher the level of education, the lower the level of enrollment of people with disabilities (due to stigma, health issues, inaccessible infrastructure, and other reasons). As a result, the share of people with disabilities having higher education or specific training is very low, which significantly decreases employment opportunities.

3) Fictitious employment.

Businesses often cover the mandatory requirement for workers with disabilities through fictitious employment schemes. Therefore, they do not open vacancies for actual people with disabilities narrowing already limited opportunities for employment of such people.

- **Veterans:**

1) Low number of veterans seeking jobs.

Most of veterans who obtained their status after participation in the ATO/UOF, returned to military service. As a result, the number of veterans seeking a civilian job dropped dramatically as compared to the pre-war level. However, even before the war, veterans in their job searching activities relied more on military comrades than on state or private employment services.

2) Employment is not the top priority for veterans.

Because of martial law, there is no demobilization in Ukrainian military now. A person can be dismissed from the military and become a veteran only on health conditions. Therefore, prior to seeking a job, such people need to undergo physical and psychological rehabilitation. In addition, they have to obtain all the documents confirming their veteran status and taking part in hostilities to receive the benefits they are entitled to, which takes much time because of bureaucracy and increasing number of such people in the country.

- **Military age men:**

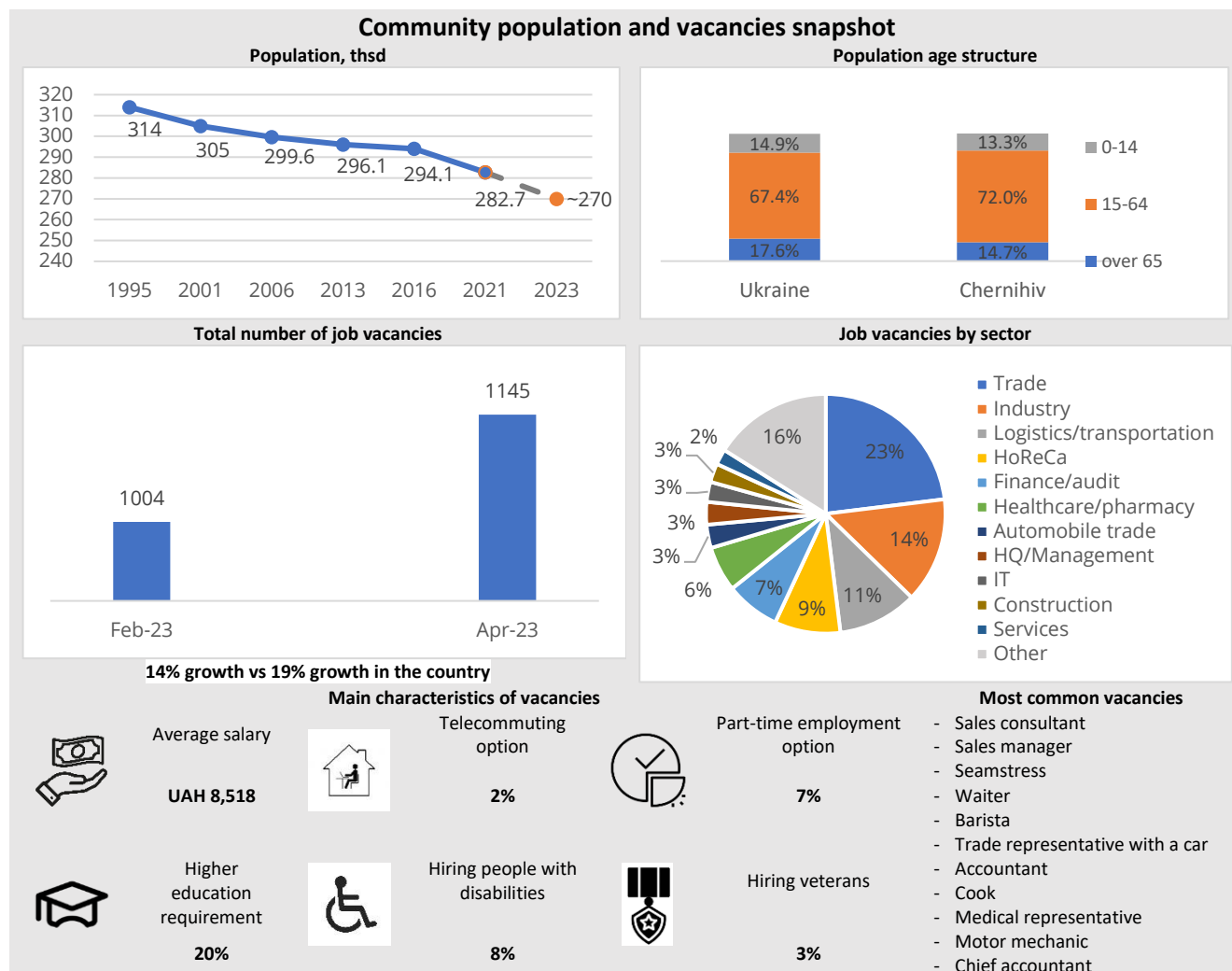
1) Decreased number of men in the labour market.

On the one hand, a lot of men were mobilized because of the war. On the other hand, those men who do not want to be mobilized avoid official employment and provision of their residence data to local Recruitment and Social Services Centres.

There are employment stimulation programmes established by both state and private institutions in Ukraine now. Respondents mostly mentioned the all-Ukrainian employment stimulation programmes established with involvement of SEC. In particular, the most frequently mentioned programmes are: “Vlasna Sprava”, “Army of Restoration”, “yeRobota” (specifically its component of grants to veterans and their family members), and voucher training programme from SEC. Furthermore, representatives of local SEC departments responded that existing programmes are efficient and cover most of the employment barriers experienced by vulnerable groups (officially tracked ones) and no additional programmes are needed.

Overview of local communities

Chernihiv



Source: SSSU, KSE, SEC vacancies database

Economic situation and major employers. Chernihiv was not an industrialized city before the war. Agriculture and forestry played a very important role in the economy of Chernihiv community. The Russian invasion led to a reformatting of the community's economic activities making trade and services the key sectors of the economy. The main industrial employers in Chernihiv, such as Desna Brewery and Ukrainian Cardan LLC, have not fully resumed operations and are not posting vacancies.

Impact of the war. Chernihiv sustained significant damage and destruction because of hostilities. Major damages were inflicted during the period when Chernihiv oblast was partially occupied from 24th February 2022 until 2nd April, 2022. The city of Chernihiv was surrounded by the Russian military but was not occupied. Instead, the city was constantly shelled during the mentioned period. Active hostilities caused significant damages to community infrastructure which includes 27 bridges and overpasses (including a bridge over the Desna River connecting Chernihiv and Kyiv) and 3.5 thousand buildings. As of June 2023, the restoration of damaged infrastructure and buildings was underway.

During the active phase of hostilities, up to 70% of the city's residents fled the city, but more than 90% of them returned home in 2022-2023.

The city's major industrial facilities were damaged to the tune of hundreds of millions of hryvnias. The industry has not yet fully recovered from the shelling by the Russian army. Therefore, the largest industries are not hiring people actively as 45% of the city's enterprises did not resume operation as of January 2023, according to the survey held by the Chernihiv SEC Department. The same survey also showed that the number of job vacancies dropped by 30% in year-over-year terms in 2022.

Community specific barriers to employment of vulnerable groups.

1) IDPs:

- Only 20% of people are searching for a job through SEC (own survey of Chernihiv Office of SEC);

2) Returnees:

- Many returnees want to return to their previous job and wait their previous employers to recover businesses and start operation. In many cases this requires a lot of time or is even impossible.

3) People with disabilities:

- Local SEC department admitted that many vacancies employers open are related to physically difficult working conditions. At the same time, most of the registered people with disabilities have issues with musculoskeletal system, cardiovascular diseases or oncological diseases and physically are not suitable for most of the available job vacancies.

4) Survivors of human trafficking, GBV, exploitation, and other forms of abuse:

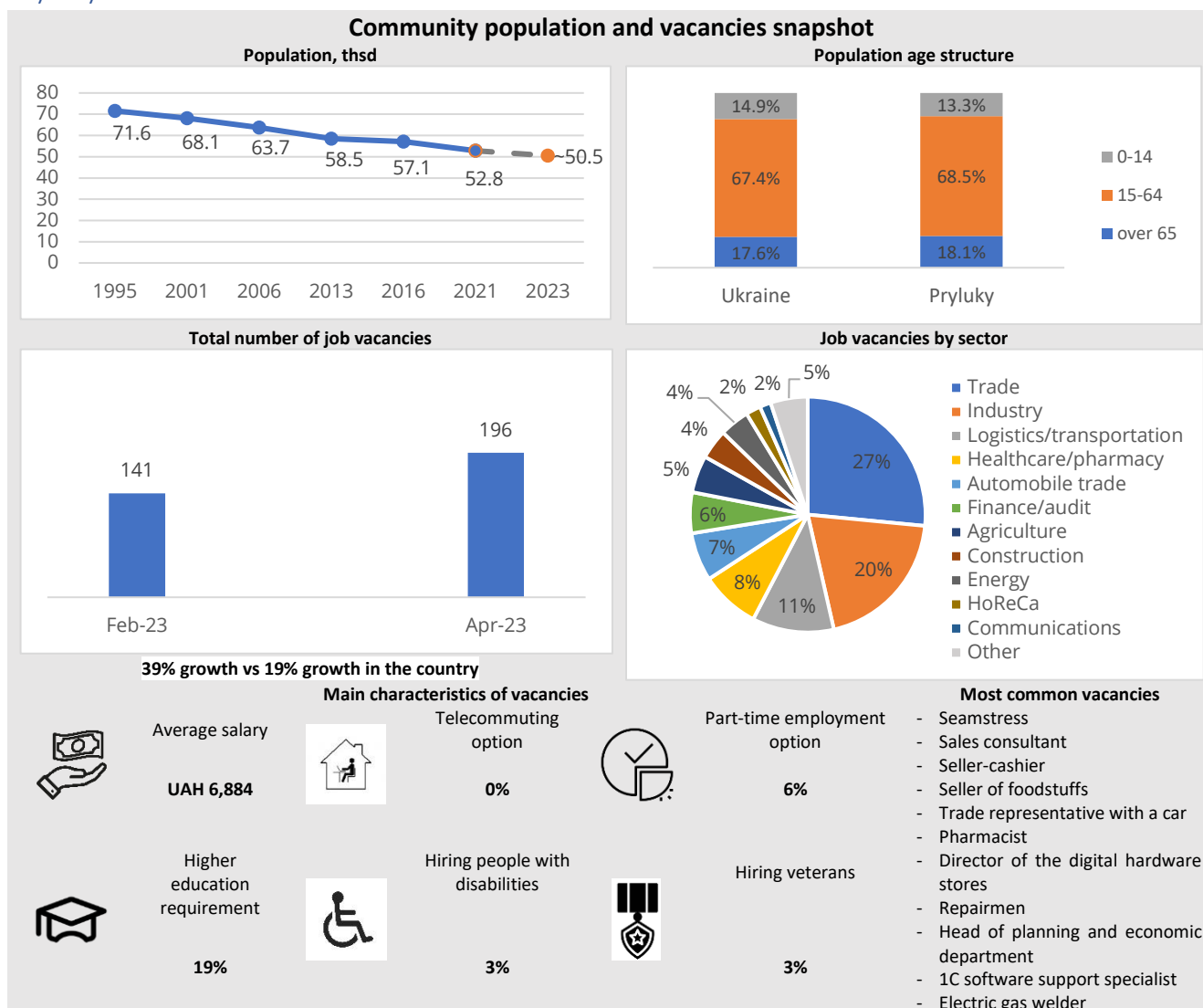
- An organization helping victims of the GBV and labour exploitation mentioned that their clients are mostly females who were financially dependent on their male partners. Therefore, they often have low educational level and low, if any, working experience.

According to Chernihiv Department of SSFU, level of wages in the Chernihiv community is too low which influences employment choices not only of vulnerable groups but of the whole employment age population of the community. Low salaries incentivize people either to seek for a job in communities with higher salaries or receive benefits and financial assistance from the state and international organizations.

Employment stimulating programs.

In addition to the all-Ukrainian employment stimulation programmes, respondents also mentioned the Employment Programme of Chernihiv Oblast for 2021-2023.

Pryluky



Source: SSSU, KSE, SEC vacancies database

Economic situation and major employers. Pryluky is one of the leading industrial centers of Chernihiv oblast, producing approximately one-third of the oblast’s industrial output. The volume of industrial production per capita in Pryluky was almost five times higher than in Chernihiv. The largest industrial employers in the city are Ukrnafta (there are gas fields near Pryluky) and the tobacco company V.A.T. - Pryluky. These companies, which employed more than 4,000 people before the war, suspended operations during the active hostilities in Chernihiv oblast and have not yet reached the pre-war level of business activity.

Impact of the war. There were no active hostilities in the town in 2022, although the Russian army cut the main road connecting Pryluky with Nizhyn and the regional center of Chernihiv. Missile attacks caused damages to at least three buildings in the town.

Many businesses significantly curtailed their operation which led to a decline in new job openings. Employers often did not fill the vacancies for positions which became free because of mobilization of workers to the military. Employers became more loyal to the needs of workers in terms of working experience and are ready

to train new workers themselves. At the same time, telecommuting is not widespread because of the type of business activities most common in the community (manufacturing, agriculture). There is an imbalance between demand and supply of the labour force due to significant decrease in the number of vacancies, making employment of vulnerable groups even more problematic as employers consider them less for the job openings.

Community-specific barriers to employment of vulnerable groups.

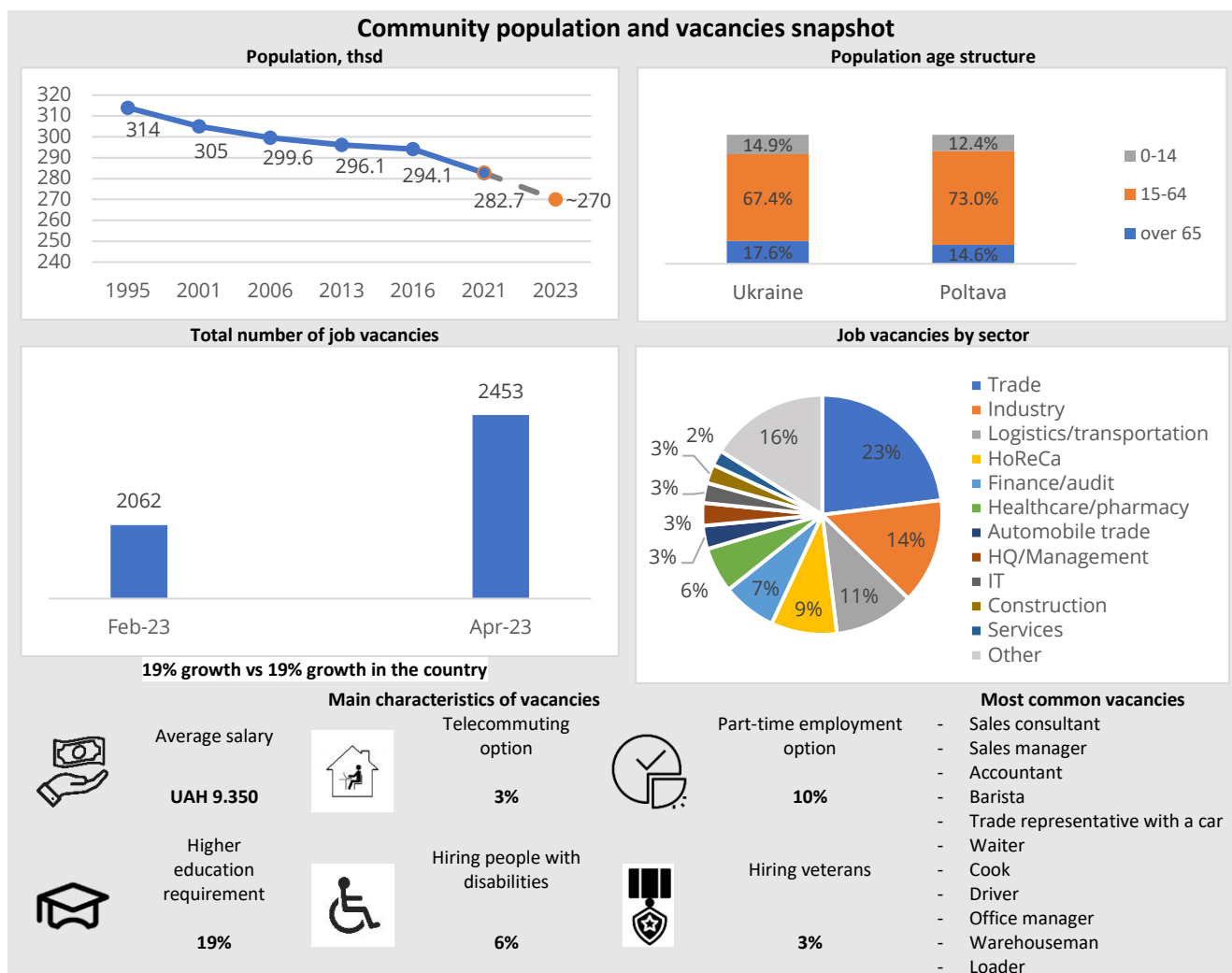
- 1) IDPs:
 - IDPs from Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts have very limited official service record.
 - IDPs of 55+ years of age have no motivation to find a new job or retrain to obtain service record for pension.
 - Absence of the social housing stock for IDPs.
- 2) People with disabilities:
 - Low level of activity and motivation in search for a job.

Employment stimulating programs.

In addition to the all-Ukrainian employment stimulation programs, respondents also mentioned the following initiatives:

- Local initiative of the IOM on training courses provision to IDPs in need of social assistance.
- Training program for part-time employment for seamstresses provided by PJSC “Pryluky Garment Factory”.

Poltava



Source: SSSU, KSE, SEC vacancies database

Economic situation and major employers. Poltava produces approximately 30% of the industrial output of Poltava oblast and has a diverse industrial production sector. However, the share of vacancies in Poltava's industry is only 11%, which is significantly lower than in more industrially oriented cities (e.g., Kremenchuk has a share of 18%). The largest industrial employers in Poltava, such as Poltava Oil Extraction Plant and Poltava Turbo Mechanical Plant, are operating and actively looking for workers.

Impact of the war. There were no active hostilities in the city in 2022. It was relatively far from the front line and sustained only several missile attacks. Those attacks caused damages to at least seven buildings.

However, the number of job vacancies decreased by 30% after the beginning of the war as many enterprises either curtailed operation or ceased completely (mainly manufacturing companies) due to breakage of logistical chains and labour force movements. Manufacturing enterprises also suffered from mobilization of men to the military and had to hire women in occupations traditionally dominated by men, or leave vacancies closed and lower production output. At the beginning of 2023, the situation started to improve in relation to job openings

in general and almost returned to the pre-war level. However, the problem with the shortage of men in the labour force remained unsolved.

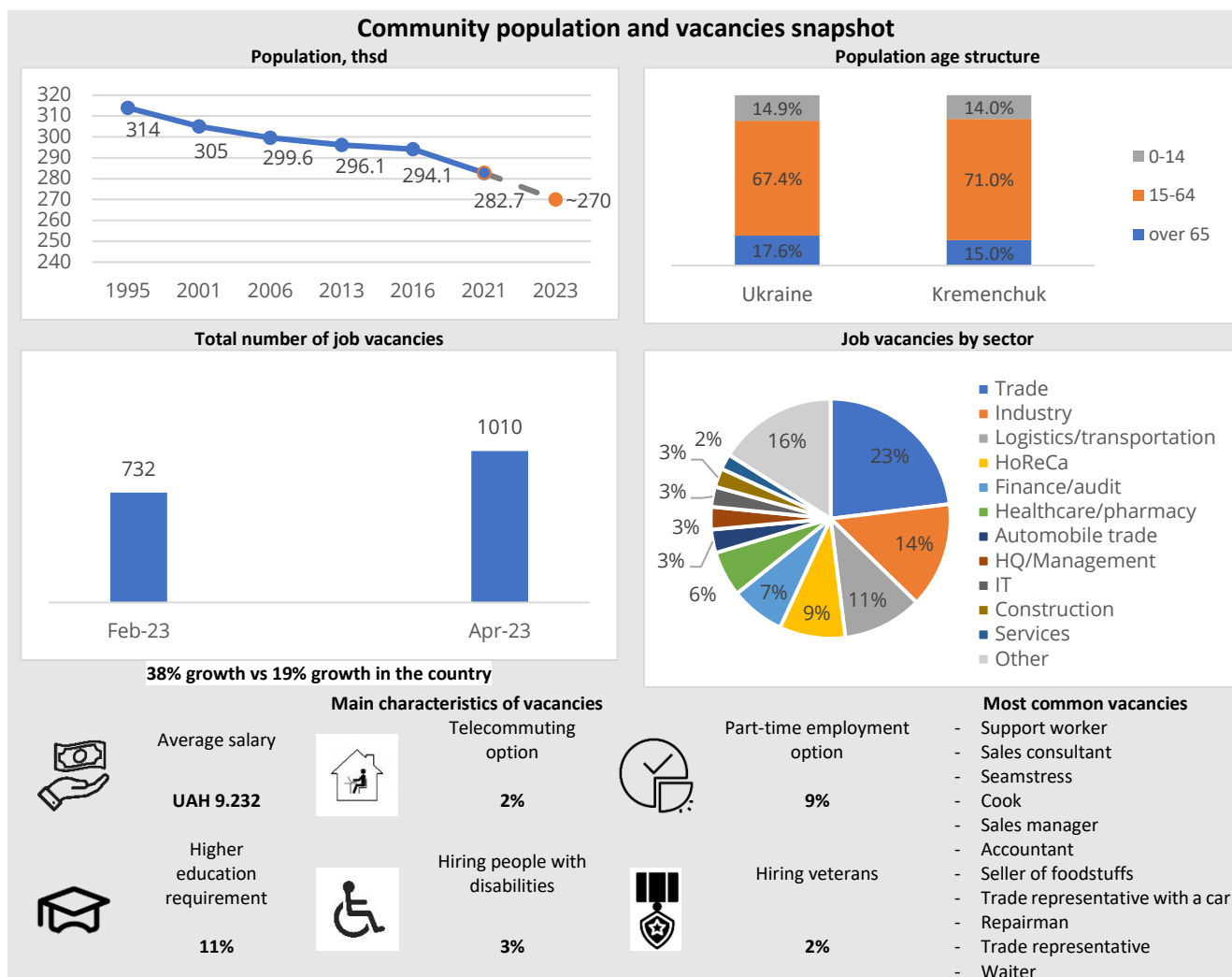
Community specific barriers to employment of vulnerable groups.

- 1) IDPs:
 - Numerous reports about inability of female IDPs to work full time due to the need of childcare.
- 2) People with disabilities:
 - Low level of activity and motivation in search for a job.
- 3) Survivors of human trafficking, GBV, exploitation, and other forms of abuse:
 - An organization helping victims of GBV and labour exploitation in Poltava mentioned almost identical problems as the organization in Chernihiv: financial dependence of female-victims on male partners-abusers; low educational level and low, if any, working experience of victims. The only difference mentioned was the need for psychological support of female victims, especially if they have children. Also, the organization representatives mentioned that they try to provide seamstress training courses for their clients but with little success (not so many women want to participate, and they are difficult to teach).

Employment stimulating programs.

Respondents do not know about any other employment stimulation programs than all-Ukrainian ones.

Kremenchuk



Source: SSSU, KSE, SEC vacancies database

Economic situation and largest employers

Kremenchuk is an industrial center with a number of large production facilities. Job vacancies of the Industrial production sector account for 18% of the total number of vacancies, which is significantly higher than the average in the country.

The impact of war.

During the war, the city's largest enterprises (Kremenchuk Oil Refinery) employing over 4,000 people was destroyed through several missile attacks. Another large production facility (Kredmash) was significantly damaged, same as the CHP plant. Many businesses are still significantly below the pre-war level of operation.

Similar to the situation in other industrial centers, the dynamics of the labour market reflected the negative impact of three main factors: movement of the labour force due to security reasons, breakage of logistical chains, and mobilization of men to the military. Breakage of logistical chains had a significant impact because a

large share of goods produced in the city were exported to CIS countries through the Russian Federation before the war. Movement of locals was partially compensated at the expense of IDPs from the neighboring oblasts. However, this was a temporary effect because IDPs started to return back to their home oblasts starting in May 2022, while Kremenchuk locals were not that active in returning home. In order to fill vacancies, employers became more flexible in terms of employment and started to provide opportunities for telecommuting and part-time employment.

Community specific barriers to employment of vulnerable groups.

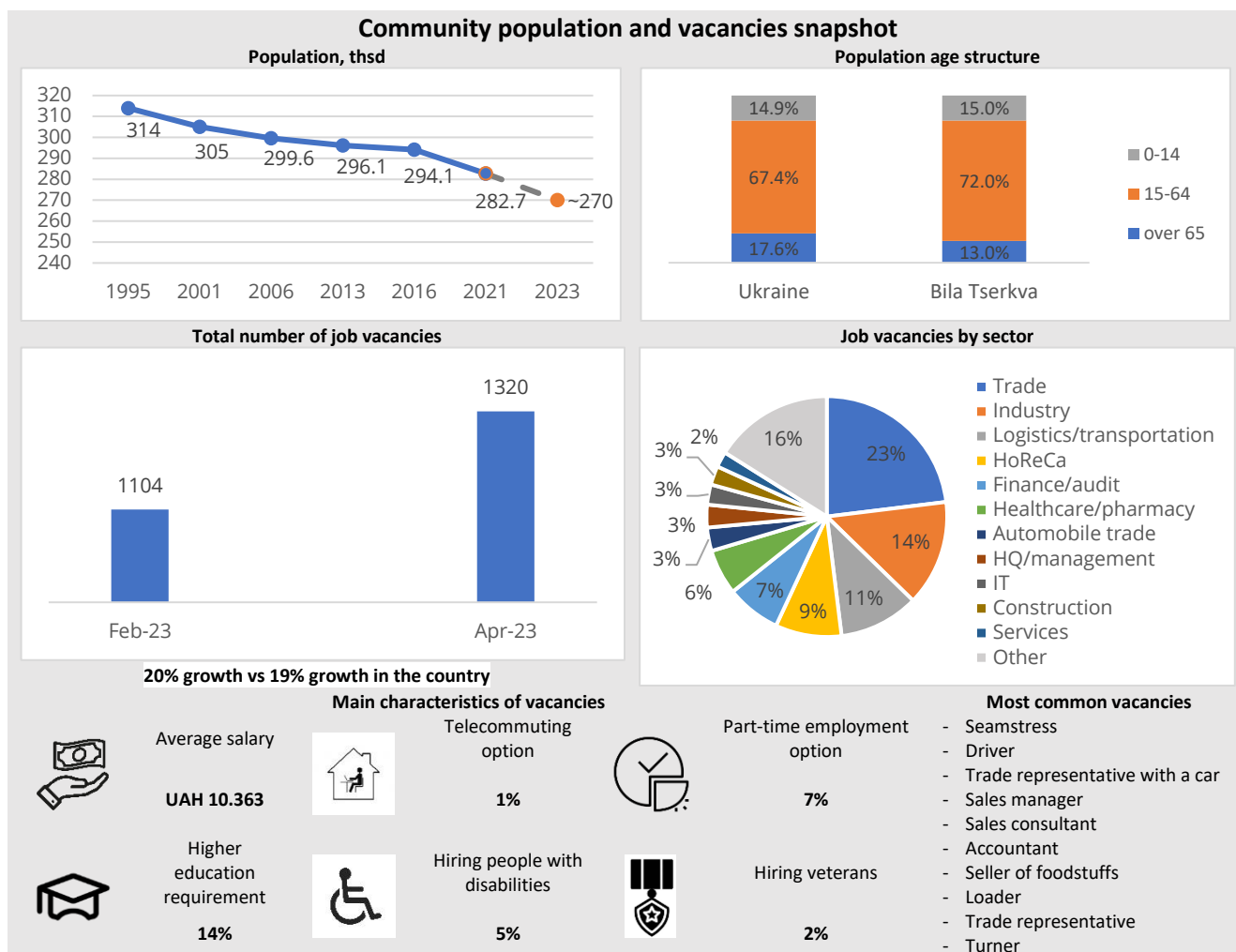
1) People with disabilities:

- Vacancies are posted but actual people with disabilities are not being hired, as employers circumvent the legally set requirements through fictitious employment.
- Difficulties with firing people with disabilities prevent employers from hiring such people.
- Infrastructure of many enterprises lacks adaptation to the needs of people with disabilities. Owners of those enterprises do not invest in infrastructure changes as they consider this as too high and unnecessary cost.

Employment stimulating programs.

In addition to the all-Ukrainian employment stimulation programmes, respondents also mentioned the local initiative of IOM on provision of training courses to IDPs and people in need of social assistance.

Bila Tserkva



Source: SSSU, KSE, SEC vacancies database

Economic situation and largest employers. Even though Bila Tserkva is not a big city, it has several large enterprises from different sectors of the economy. Therefore, the war led to significant reformatting of the community economy despite absence of active hostilities and significant damages.

The impact of the war. The town experienced several missile attacks and attacks of the loitering munitions leading to damages to buildings, infrastructure objects, and enterprises. However, the city's main production facilities were not affected by the missile attacks.

Several large enterprises in the city were dependent on imported raw materials and seaports and suffered from breakage of logistical chains. They were forced to significantly lower production. Most of them were not able to recover their production volumes to the pre-war levels yet. Some enterprises sold a significant part of their goods to the Russian and Belarusian markets, of course, they lost both markets because of the war. Major industrial employers in the city, such as Rosava, Ukrinterm, and Biopharma, currently have only a few open positions in Bila Tserkva.

Since the largest employers of the community significantly curtailed their operation, the number of job openings also dropped significantly. However, the major problem is the fact that only around 20% of registered job seekers are males and 80% are females, while almost all open vacancies are in occupations requiring hard physical work and traditionally employing men.

Community specific barriers to employment of vulnerable groups.

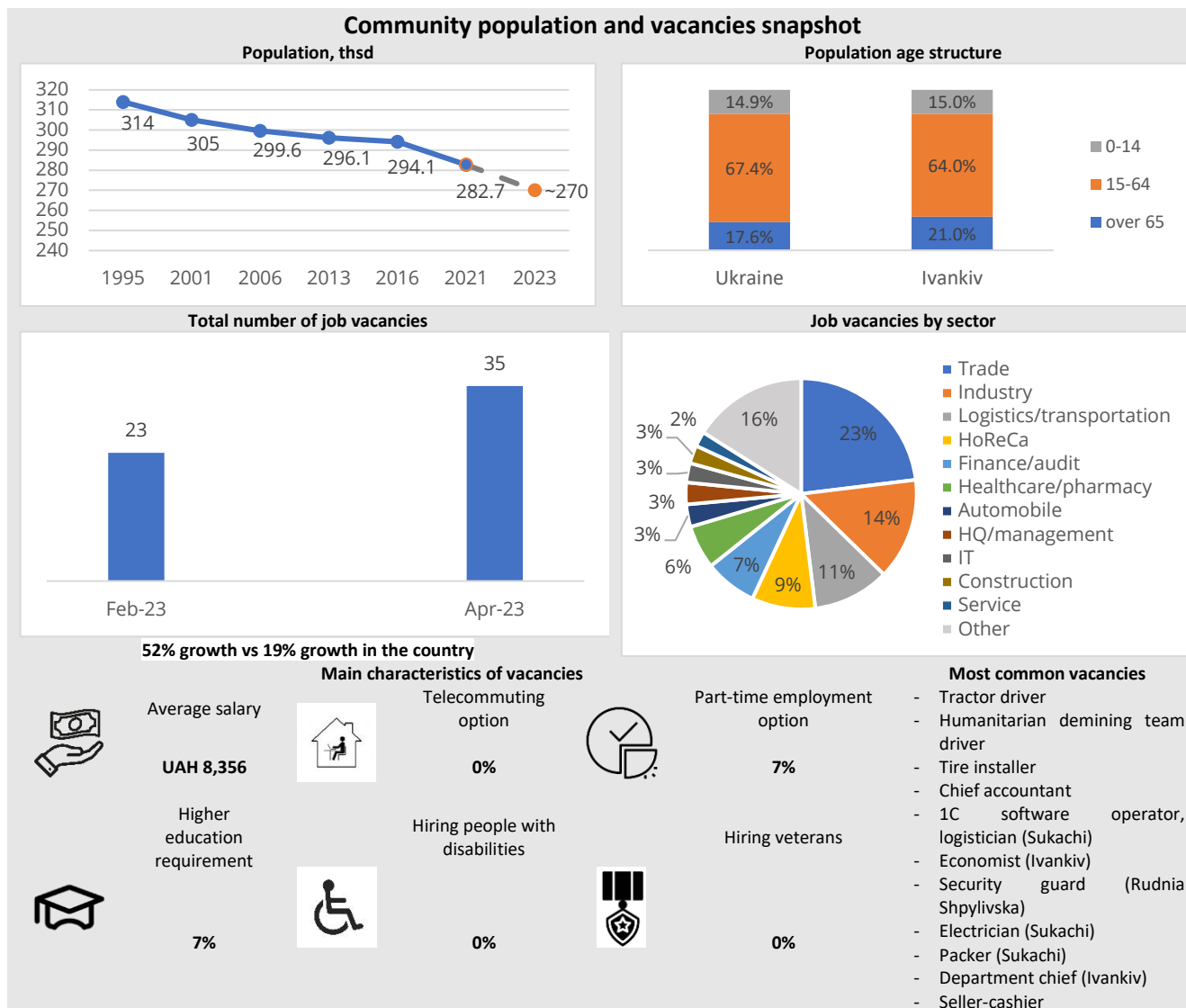
- 1) People with disabilities:
 - Very low number of vacancies for people with disabilities.
 - In many cases job vacancies are opened by enterprises from industries with working conditions unsuitable for people with disabilities.

- 2) Veterans:
 - Unwillingness to work for hire.
 - In case of currently not mobilized ATO/OUF veterans, employers often decide not to hire candidates considering high risk for them to be mobilized.
 - Employers mentioned that in some cases veterans need flexible working hours which is related to the programs of their rehabilitation or psychological support. In cases, when flexible working hours cannot be provided due to specifics of a company's operation, this may be a barrier for employment of veterans.

Employment stimulating programs.

In addition to the all-Ukrainian employment stimulation programmes, respondents also mentioned the local program "Professional adaptation for IDPs" providing training financed by the local budget.

Ivankiv



Source: SSSU, KSE, SEC vacancies database

Economic situation and largest employers

Ivankiv community is one of the largest communities in Ukraine as it includes the whole Exclusion Zone of Chernobyl NPP. The community consists of over a hundred small settlements with the center in the urban-type settlement Ivankiv. The community is involved mostly in industries related to agriculture, forestry, and wood industry but there are also large enterprises from the industrial production sector such as machinery building JSC Promin producing aviation equipment for the aircraft producer Antonov. Also, many people from the community work at the Chernobyl NPP.

The impact of war. Ivankiv community was almost fully occupied by the Russian military in 2022. The occupation lasted a bit more than a month but caused significant damages to the town. During the battles for Ivankiv, many infrastructural objects and buildings were destroyed, including the Ivankiv Museum of History and Local Lore together with about 20 works by the famous Ukrainian artist Maria Prymachenko.

Local businesses suffered greatly from the war and occupation, and some have stopped operations altogether. The above-mentioned Promin JSC has had almost no orders since the war began. Agricultural enterprises cannot recover their operation as many fields still need demining. Also, several state enterprises working in the Exclusion Zone, significantly curtailed their operation, went through reorganization, and were relocated to Ivankiv because of the occupation and inflicted damages. As a result, the number of job vacancies significantly decreased. At the same time, many professionals fled the community. Therefore, it is difficult for employers to fill in the vacancies which are for niche specializations, while the situation with working professions is much better.

Community specific barriers to employment of vulnerable groups.

- 1) IDPs:
 - There were problems with personal documents requiring additional time to resolve.
- 3) People with disabilities:
 - Insufficient number of vacancies.
 - Majority of people with disabilities in the community obtained this status due to illnesses related to the accident at Chernobyl NPP. Therefore, their health conditions do not permit them to work.
- 4) Veterans:
 - Employers mentioned that in some cases veterans need flexible working hours related to their programs of rehabilitation or psychological support. In cases when flexible working hours cannot be provided due to specifics of the company's operation, this may be a barrier for employment of veterans.

Employment stimulating programs.

Respondents do not know about any other employment stimulation programs than all-Ukrainian ones.

Conclusions and recommendations.

Data collected within the survey led to some general conclusions and conclusions taking into account the specifics of the target communities. Conclusions and other supporting information were used to inform practical recommendations concerning actions which can be implemented at both central and community level to improve the employment situation of vulnerable groups, help introducing sustainable employment practices, and boosting community engagement into these processes.

The major general conclusion is that too little attention is paid to the vulnerable groups in relation to employment in Ukraine. Many of the vulnerable groups are not tracked by the state employment and statistics authorities at both central and community level. As a result, the interests and barriers related to employment of a significant share of people belonging to vulnerable groups are not taken into account, further limiting their employment opportunities. This is especially topical now because the size of vulnerable groups in general is increasing continuously due to the war. Interests of such vulnerable groups as people in difficult living conditions and survivors of human trafficking, GBV, exploitation, and other forms of abuse constitute a special case, since they suffer even more due to extensive underreporting caused by the shift in priorities of both population and the state during the war.

To improve the situation, the state employment authorities should expand their programs on omitted vulnerable groups. In order to inform their programming, the mentioned authorities need to deepen exchange of information with the state social protection bodies and conduct further research to identify the needs of vulnerable groups from the employment perspective. The research can be conducted in close collaboration and with financial assistance of international organizations and donor institutions specialized in assistance to vulnerable groups.

In the meantime, communication campaigns targeting both employers and vulnerable groups are needed to improve the situation with vulnerable groups' employment within the existing framework. Communication campaigns targeting employers should be pointed at understanding their social responsibility towards vulnerable groups. The goal of the campaign should be to stimulate employers to improve their infrastructure and, when possible, their working modalities, considering the needs of vulnerable groups², open more vacancies for vulnerable groups, and enhance application of flexible employment options (particularly telecommuting and part-time employment) as they also enhance vulnerable groups' employment opportunities. In relation to vulnerable groups, there should be communication campaigns focused on enhancing the level of vulnerable groups' participation in the labour force and communication campaigns focused on lifting the self-inflicted restrictions to employment of specific vulnerable groups. Campaigns focused on reducing the fears of stigma and inferiority complex in relation to employment can serve as an example of campaigns targeting vulnerable groups in general. At the same time, communication campaigns explaining to IDPs the impossibility of quick return to their permanent places of residence or stimulating IDPs and returnees to retrain to expand their employment opportunities can serve as examples of communications campaigns targeting specific vulnerable groups.

² This may be a component of the state or local programs for creation of an inclusive environment at the central and community levels. Such programs can be developed on the basis of the world best practices and include partial compensation of the investments into infrastructure made by employers on the side of the state or international donors.

The observation that all the communities lack workers of specific specialization leads to the conclusion that there is a need for educational and training programs targeting local labour market needs. In this respect, local state employment authorities should cooperate with leading institutions of higher education and vocational training to:

- conduct surveys of the labour market needs and
- use the results of such surveys to adjust the existing educational and training programs to the labour market needs.

Under conditions of lack of financing for such activities due to different priorities of the state and local authorities, local state employment authorities and educational institutions can actively attract financing from IFIs and other donors.

During the time when suggested surveys will be conducted and state and local employment programs will be developed, it is proposed to establish mediator organizations in each of the target communities to solve the issues raised and help vulnerable groups to overcome the employment barriers they may face through assistance in communication between the interested parties. The mediator organization must have a deep understanding of the needs and specifics of people from a particular vulnerable group and enjoy their respect and trust. On the other hand, such an organization should have experience of cooperation with the state authorities and employers. There are no state structures that meet the mentioned requirements as of now. Therefore, NGOs specialized in helping vulnerable groups is a natural choice for the mediator organizations in question. However, in case of necessity, state bodies with the correspondent mandate can be established. One of the tasks for the mediator organizations would be collection of success stories of existing local initiatives on expanding employment opportunities for vulnerable groups and replicating such experiences in their communities. As the practice shows, vulnerable groups are more likely to become involved in initiatives having success stories with visualization of results. In addition, the survey showed that there are cases of successful involvement of private businesses into initiatives on enhancing employment opportunities of vulnerable groups (seamstress training courses of the PJSC “Pryluky Garment Factory”, vocational retraining courses of the Poltava Mining and Processing Plant).

All the target communities suffered from three main factors in relation to employment in general and employment of vulnerable groups in particular. These are damages to infrastructure, curtailing operation of businesses, and lack of highly skilled workers. The state can contribute into mitigating the impact of all these factors. In particular, the state authorities may intensify the restoration of communities’ infrastructure through allocation of more financing and other resources. The state can also assist in recovery of business activities through placing of orders from the central or local authorities to enterprises from target communities whenever possible. It is possible also to stimulate people to participate in vocational training courses organized by the local SEC departments and encourage those who are not interested to participate in the state temporary job initiatives such as “Army of Restoration”.

There are also communities facing specific problems in relation to employment. In particular, Chernihiv and Ivankiv communities both suffered significantly from occupation. One of the consequences of occupation is extensive mining of agricultural fields and forests which restrains the recovery of agriculture, forestry, and wood industry enterprises. Thus, an obvious solution is to intensify demining activities in the communities. Also, Ivankiv community inhabitants would appreciate efforts on improvement of commuting opportunities within the community as there are a lot of short-term auxiliary work opportunities for unqualified workers which requires travelling between different settlements.