



VETERANS' REINTEGRATION IN UKRAINE¹

NATIONAL SURVEY

 **FEBRUARY 2022**

¹ The report presents the results of the survey of the veterans who have served in eastern Ukraine from 2014 until 2021

FORWARD

On 24 February 2022, the country of Ukraine became the target of a widescale military invasion. With this, the number of veterans in Ukraine – as well as veterans who are now refugees outside of Ukraine – is increasing exponentially. While the research found in this report was conducted prior, its relevance may be more important now as the need for evidence-based programming to facilitate the reintegration of veterans into civilian life grows in scale and complexity.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU – European Union

IDP – Internally displaced person

IOM – International Organization for Migration

GoU – Government of Ukraine

KI – Key informant

MHPSS – Mental health and psychosocial support

NGOs – Non-governmental organizations

ATO – Anti-Terrorist Operation [GoU]

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

From 2014 until 2021, the number of veterans of the conflict in eastern Ukraine continuously expanded and with it, the necessity to further understand their needs and challenges at the country-level. In the follow-on to the 2019 IOM research titled *"Life After Conflict: Survey on the Sociodemographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Veterans of the Conflict in Eastern Ukraine and Their Families,"* the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Mission in Ukraine, in coordination with the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine carried out a nationwide survey in 2021 to continue filling in the knowledge gaps at a national scale.

This study was developed within the framework of the project "Enhancing Communities' Resilience through Socioeconomic Support for Veterans" funded by the European Union (EU). The qualitative and quantitative components of the research were carried out from June to October 2021 in 24 oblasts of Ukraine and the city of Kyiv through interviews of a total of 4,286 veterans within the survey sample. In addition to this survey sample component, 40 respondents, including veterans, their family members, and other key informants, participated in in-depth interviews. The views and opinions expressed in this publication do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the EU or IOM.

It is important to clarify that this report focuses on presenting findings related to veterans who had served in eastern Ukraine from 2014 until 2021, before the 24 February 2022 Russian Federation military offensive which led to full-scale war in Ukraine. Due to the gross escalation of conflict across Ukraine², all men and women of Ukraine who meet the established requirements could be called to join the Armed Forces of Ukraine or could join the Territorial Defence Forces of Ukraine³, leading to a significant growth in the number of veterans in the future and changing the socioeconomic situation of veterans and their family members while influencing the reintegration process critically.

² President of Ukraine. [Decree № 2102-IX on implication of the status of war in Ukraine](#), 2022.

³ President of Ukraine. [Decree № 69-2022 on the general mobilization](#), 2022.

For the purpose of this study, the Law of Ukraine "On Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection"⁴ served as the basis for the definition of veterans: a person who has been directly involved in the military operations in the east of Ukraine (Donetsk/Luhansk oblasts) since April 2014 including those who have veteran status and who continue their military service or service in law enforcement.

The following report contains the full analysis of the research findings, focusing on the social and economic situation of veterans and the challenges they face during their return to civilian life. IOM Ukraine hopes that the results of the study provide important lessons learned with regards to veteran needs and may be useful to governmental and non-governmental institutions in developing tailored support programmes for these. The survey findings demonstrated the complexity of the process of returning to civilian life and the related factors, specifically:

Profile of respondents and their households. The majority of respondents were men aged 25-54 living in cities. Almost half of the veterans confirmed having minor children in their households. The share of people with disabilities or illnesses in veterans' households was higher than among the general population.

Military background. One third of the respondents indicated having had more than one tour of duty to the combat zone in the east. Almost two fifths of the respondents stated that they continued their military service⁵ or service in law enforcement⁶ while others resigned from military service. Acting servicepeople were typically from the north, centre, and south..

Social integration, cohesion, and perceived discrimination. Veterans reported that the experience they obtained during their military service became an important aspect of their life. Some veterans noticed an improvement in relations with their families after returning from the east. While others became absorbed by their combat zone experience and lost common ground with their relatives.

⁴ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. [Act No. 3551 of 22 October 1993 on the status of war veterans and guarantees of their social protection](#). 1993.

⁵ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. [The Law of Ukraine N° 2232-XII on military duty and military service](#). 1995.

⁶ The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. [The Resolution N° 114 on service by ordinary and senior staff of internal affairs bodies](#). 1991.

Respondents also stated that they felt that the authorities were indifferent to their problems when transferring into civilian life. The veterans were less likely than the general population to express confidence that the people around them could be trusted. In this survey, veterans interviewed in Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv oblasts, and the city of Kyiv felt less integrated into civilian life than when surveyed in 2019, indicating a worsening of the situation.

MHPSS. The veterans interviewed reported experiencing strong emotional stress (22%) associated with the transition to civilian life and another twenty (20%) per cent had health problems sustained from their service. Of all veterans, 75% believe that psychological support is an acute need after completing military service.

Access to assistance and services. Despite services and assistance in healthcare being critical to veterans, these appear to be less accessible to veterans. The respondents mentioned cases when financing for prosthetic care had been insufficient. In such cases, veterans had to cover these costs at their own expense.

Employment. The level of unemployment indicated among veterans was relatively low, but the employment situation of veterans was rather unstable. Every fifth veteran who completed their military service or service in law enforcement confirmed not having regular employment in the last six months. The respondents reported feeling unsuitable and insufficiently educated or skilled to access regular civilian employment. Others mentioned barriers in employment related to health problems or specifically to their status as veterans.

Attitude towards starting own business. Over one third of the veterans who completed their military service or service in law enforcement expressed their interest in starting their own business. Most respondents reported problems in starting a business connected to the lack of state support, in addition to gaps in local market knowledge and business skills.

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

According to the Ministry for Veterans Affairs of Ukraine, as of February 2021, the number of veterans having served in eastern Ukraine was 405,500 (19,400 of whom were women representing 5 per cent of the group)⁷. As of July 2021, this number increased to 423,076 (including 21,789 women)⁸. In total, from February 2020 to February 2022, the number of veterans serving in the east increased by eight per cent and reached 439,999 (including 24,095 women)⁹.

Upon completion of their service, veterans face challenges during their adaptation to civilian life. Findings of IOM's earlier survey carried out in 2019 in the city of Kyiv and Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Lviv oblasts showed that one third (32%) of those surveyed felt excluded from society. Moreover, a high share of respondents surveyed supported the idea that the veterans' experience can be understood only by those who are at least somehow connected to individuals with a military background. The 2019 survey¹⁰ also showed that almost half of the respondents (49%) reportedly experienced biased attitudes or unfair treatment towards veterans in various spheres of life. The results of the survey among female veterans¹¹ indicated that one fifth of them had reported strong psychological stress during their service, and almost half of female respondent veterans stated that after returning from service they had faced various difficulties in communication with other people. Strong psychological stress, a feeling of being excluded and biased attitude all impede successful adaptation of veterans to civilian life.

In previous years, a number of studies have been carried out to explore various aspects of veterans' reintegration into civilian life. Those studies made a significant contribution to knowledge related to veterans' wellbeing, their employment situation, accessibility of benefits and services and

⁷ The Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. [The number of people in Ukraine with the status of a participant in hostilities](#). 2021.

⁸ NGO Legal Hundred. [Recent statistics on the number of veterans](#). 2021.

⁹ According to the statistics provided to IOM by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine in response to official request.

¹⁰ IOM. Life after conflict: [Survey on the sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics of veterans of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and their families](#). 2020.

¹¹ Ilko Kucheriv "[Democratic Initiatives](#)" foundation. [Research of the Status of Female Veterans and Services Provided to Them](#). 2020.

attitudes towards their usage of services¹². Other surveys explored the foregoing aspects of the reintegration of veterans through a gender perspective¹³. Nevertheless, there have been limited studies that provide a country-wide and inter-regional analysis, as well as a comprehensive approach to reintegration. The objectives of IOM's nationwide survey were to identify the interplay of cross-country and inter-regional trends of veterans' reintegration, including subjective assessment of military experience and perception of exclusion and discrimination, relationship status, civic engagement and cohesion, employment situation and livelihoods, needs, and preferences in receiving MHPSS support, etc. These components of reintegration were considered from the perspective of urban versus rural dimensions, triangulating the veterans' responses versus those of their family and social services, and where possible ensuring the comparison of veterans' situation against the general population.

In the follow-on to the 2019 research carried out in three oblasts, IOM Ukraine, in coordination with the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine carried out a nation-wide survey to continue filling in the knowledge gaps at a national scale on male and female veterans' needs and challenges faced during the process reintegration following military service in the east of Ukraine (Donetsk / Luhansk oblasts). This survey was developed within the framework of the project "Enhancing Communities' Resilience through Socioeconomic Support for Veterans" funded by the European Union (EU). The project also includes other important components, such as support to veterans in their transition to civil employment, development of self-employment and extension of existing veteran businesses, social cohesion activities, as well as psychosocial support.

The research methodology consisted of quantitative and qualitative components, including a sample survey of the veterans of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, and a series of in-depth interviews with key informants comprising veterans, their family members, as well as representatives of the authorities, governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with the veterans. The data collection was implemented from late June to mid-October 2021. In addition to the sample survey data and results of in-depth interviews, this study is also based on data from other sources, including data of the World Values Survey (Ukraine 2020)¹⁴,

¹² NGO Legal Hundred. [Research of needs of veterans of Ukraine](#), 2019.

¹³ Ilko Kucheriv "Democratic Initiatives" foundation. [Research of the Status of Female Veterans and Services Provided to Them](#), 2020.

¹⁴ NGO Ukrainian Centre for European Policy. [Ukraine in World Value Survey](#), 2020.

and other recognized studies and data resources of both veterans and general population.¹⁵

Quantitative component of the study (sample survey)

The sample survey of the veterans was carried out from the end of June to mid-September 2021. The geographical scope of the survey covers 24 oblasts of Ukraine and the city of Kyiv. In this study, the veterans who had been directly involved in military tasks in the east of Ukraine since April 2014 were considered as the survey target group. All potential respondents were screened for the above criteria during the search and invitation to participate in the study. In total, 4,286 veterans who passed the screening questions and were surveyed, were directly involved in the execution of military (duty) assignments in eastern Ukraine starting from April 2014.

The structured interview survey collected information on the veterans' military background, well-being, employment situation, accessibility of benefits, discrimination, social integration, need for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and attitude towards starting a business. A qualitative and quantitative analysis was carried out considering the different characteristics of the veterans, including their sex and age, type of locality of residence, as well geographic location (five macroregions). The oblasts were grouped into five macro-regions according to their geographic proximity. The structure of the macro-regions is reflected in Annex 1 Table 2.

The application of probability sampling was not possible within the framework of the research because the data on locations of the veterans and their contact details are not made available by the GoU for security purposes. Taking this into consideration, the survey was implemented using a snowball sample method. The search for and selection of the respondents was carried out via a telephone database. The database contained contacts of veterans who had previously taken part in surveys and gave their consent to participate in further studies. Contacts for the recruitment of respondents were chosen randomly from the consolidated database of telephone numbers. These initial respondents were used as “seed” respondents who provided the contacts of up to five other potential respondents among other veterans residing in their settlement or other settlements in the 24 oblasts and the city of Kyiv. Additional respondents were found through NGOs and government organizations working with veterans. Each key informant who agreed to participate in the research was asked to recommend other

¹⁵ USAID. [Public opinion survey to assess the changes in citizen's awareness of civil society and their activities](#), 2020

people whose characteristics corresponded to the characteristics of the survey group. The sample was proportionally distributed according to the number of people with veteran status in each oblast and the city of Kyiv. The data were weighed according to the distribution of the persons having veteran status in the mentioned oblasts of Ukraine and the city of Kyiv. The percentages reported are rounded for ease of use.

The survey was carried out using face-to-face interviews assisted by tablets (Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews or CAPI). On average, one interview lasted 40 minutes. Quality assurance was carried out via phone monitoring among fifteen (15%) of the interviews conducted. During the data collection stage, COVID-19 safety requirements were followed: interviewers had been instructed to use masks, gloves, and sanitizers and keep a safe distance from respondents during in-person survey interviews.

Qualitative component of the study (in-depth interviews)

Within the qualitative component of the research, 40 in-depth interviews were carried out in September-October 2021. The interview participants were veterans (15 participants), their family members (spouses, male and female partners, parents) (15 participants) residing both in rural (33%) and urban areas (77%), as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations working with veterans, local authorities and healthcare facilities (10 participants). In-depth interviews were carried out using online video conferencing tools (Zoom, Skype).

Limitations and further comments on methodology

- The study is based on self-reported data provided by veterans and supplemented with findings from in-depth interviews with members of veterans' households (spouses, parents), as well as key informants. Findings should be interpreted accordingly.
- In the Mykolaiv, Luhansk, and Chernihiv oblasts, respondent engagement in the survey was characterized by a slower dynamic due to weak interaction among veterans at the time of the data collection. As a result, this complicated the search for potential respondents, resulting in an adjustment of the sampling strategy. The search and invitation of the respondents were done at the places potentially visited by veterans or people interacting with them (military hospitals, military units, etc.).
- The quantitative survey was conducted through a snowball sampling technique including the usage of contacts of the veterans who interact with the Ukrainian NGOs in this field. Due to this, the veterans who were outside of the veterans' networks and organizations might not have been

fully covered by the survey. Considering the limitations of the sampling method, the number of contacts requested from one initial respondent was limited to five. Additionally, different organizations interacting with the veterans were contacted to ensure the representation of veterans from different locations within each oblast.

- Taking into account the low number of female veterans, the sampling design did not envisage their proportional distribution by particular oblast. The search for female veterans and invitation for these to participate in the survey was done upon their availability regardless of the oblast of their residence. Such limitation should be considered when interpreting the survey results.

1. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS AND THEIR HOUSEHOLDS

The majority of respondents were men aged 25-54 living in cities. Almost half of the veterans confirmed having minor children in their households. One in ten reported that there were people with disabilities or illnesses in their households that affected their quality of life. The sample of veterans shows a slightly higher level of education than the general population. Most often the veterans mentioned that salary was the only income sources of their households. Almost half of the respondents at the time of the survey resided in their own housing.

Demographic characteristics of veterans and their households

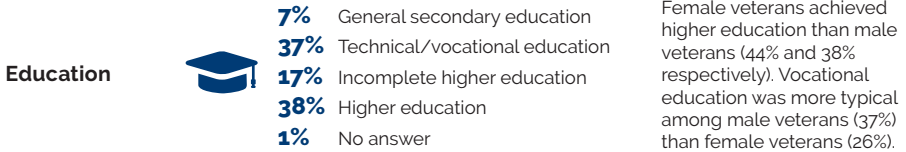
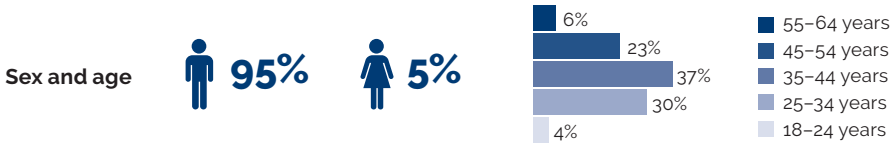
The sampling method applied within the framework of this research was not random, which might have impacted the chances of every veteran being selected to participate in the survey and influenced the representativeness of the sample. The distribution of the characteristics of the interviewed veterans may not fully reflect the characteristics of the general population. Steps to randomize the selection of the respondents were undertaken, including the minimization of the number of respondents invited to the survey via one respondent.

The share of women among the respondents constituted five per cent, which corresponds to the share of women having a veteran's certificate in the country in general. The majority (90%) of the veterans belonged to the age groups from 25 to 54. Whereas among the general population¹⁶ more than two thirds (68%) of the population belonged to the above-mentioned age groups. The veterans surveyed for the purposes of this study resided mostly in big cities while, among the general population, the proportion of those who live in urban areas comprises 70 per cent¹⁷.

¹⁶ To compare the age of veterans and the population as a whole, state statistics data were used. Considering that the majority of veterans surveyed belong to the age group 18-64, the analysis among the general population was carried out on a subsample aged 18-64.

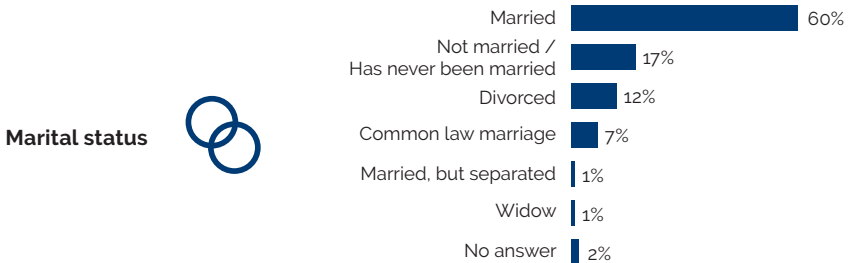
¹⁷ State Statistics Service of Ukraine. [Number of Present Population of Ukraine](#). 2021.

RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS



Experience of displacement

5% of the surveyed respondents were registered as internally displaced persons (IDPs). Most of those who were registered as IDPs resided in Kyiv (17%).



Source: Interviews with veterans

The average size of the surveyed veterans' household was 2.72 persons, which is almost the same figure among the general population (2.58)¹⁸. The share of people with different disability types among the general population of Ukraine was

¹⁸ State Statistical Service of Ukraine, [Social and demographic characteristics of households of Ukraine in 2021 \(according to data of the sample study of households living conditions\)](#), 2021.

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

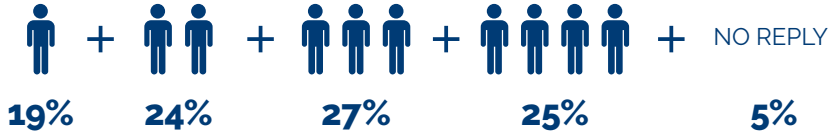
Veteran's household in Ukraine

2.72 persons

Average household in Ukraine


2.58 persons


How many people live in a veteran's household?



How many minor children (under the age of 18) do veterans live with?



 **37%** of veterans' children are under the age of 18

 **14%** of veterans' households include someone living with a disability or chronic disease influencing their quality of life (including respondents)

Source: Interviews with veterans

approximately 7 per cent, while among the veterans, 14 per cent of the respondents confirmed having at least one household member having a disability.^{19,20}

¹⁹ In Ukraine, disability status is assigned by the Medical and Social Expert Commission (MSEC). Depending on the disability severity and the individual's ability to work and care for oneself, persons with disabilities are categorized into three groups (I, II, III). Rasell, M., & Iarskaia-Smirnova, E. (Eds.). Disability in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union: History, policy and everyday life. Routledge, 2013.

²⁰ The State Statistics Service. [The number of people with disabilities in Ukraine](#), 2021.

Socioeconomic characteristics of veterans and their households

Most often the veterans mentioned salary as one of their household income sources in the last 12 months (82%). This indicator was the highest for residents of Kyiv, the north and the south macro-regions (91%, 87% and 86% respectively). Irregular income sources experienced in the last 12 months were more often mentioned by veterans residing in the west (18%) and east (21%) which may be due to the precarious character of their employment. Social assistance and assistance for people with disabilities were the main sources of income for the respondents living in the west of the country. The share of veterans who confirmed using other type of pensions (social pensions) was higher among respondents residing in rural areas than ones residing in urban areas (9% and 6% respectively).

Nine (9%) per cent of the respondents reported that their household monthly income was lower or equal to the amount of the minimum salary for one person in Ukraine (UAH 6,000²¹). During the interviews, veterans were asked to assess the financial situation of their households. In total, 25 per cent of the respondents who live in villages and towns reported that they had money only to buy food or had to save money even on food. About half (54%) of the respondents at the time of the survey resided in their own housing. This percentage significantly differs by age: in the youngest category aged 18-24 only 15 per cent live in their own housing, and in the age group of 55 years and over – 80 per cent.

²¹ Statista Research Department. [Monthly minimum salary in Ukraine from April 2000 to October 2022](#). 2021.

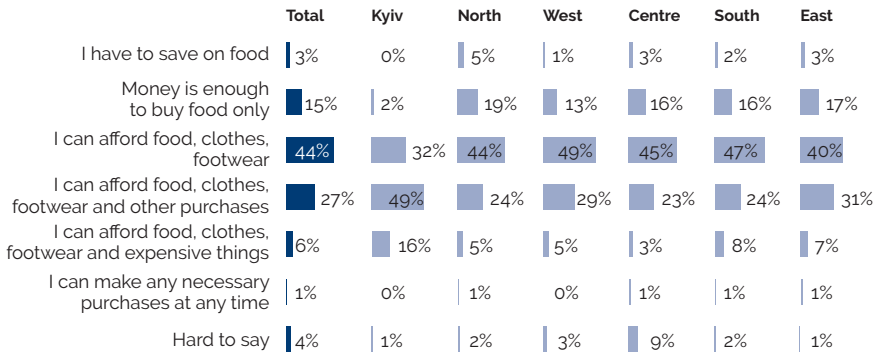
INCOME AND BASIC NEEDS

Income sources of the veterans households in the last 12 months

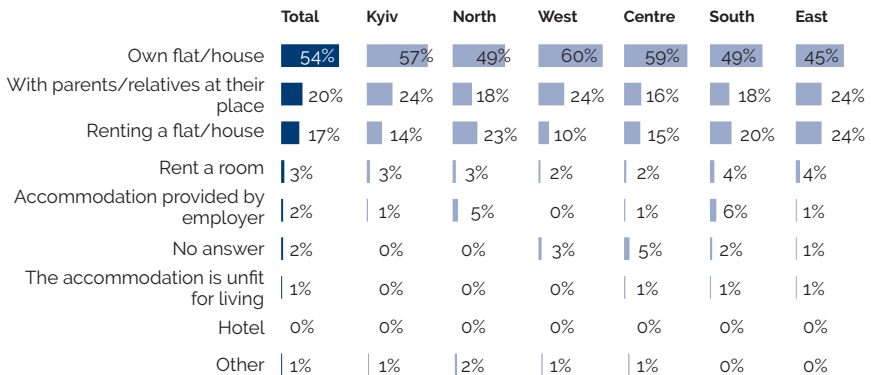


Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

Veterans households' self-assessment of their financial situation



Types of housing where veterans live



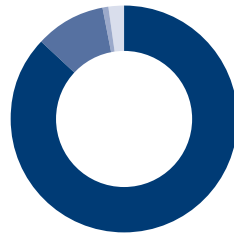
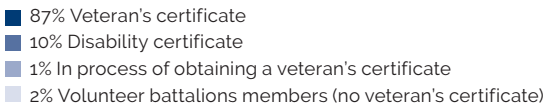
Source: Interviews with veterans

2. MILITARY BACKGROUND

Most of the respondents reported having a veteran's certificate, which is key to access veteran-related benefits. Every tenth confirmed having a disability certificate as a result of an injury during the armed conflict. Almost two fifths of the respondents stated that they continued their military service or service in law enforcement while others resigned from military service. Acting servicepeople were typically from the north, centre, and south. Almost one in three interviewed veterans indicated having experienced more than one tour of duty to the combat zone in the east.

Before being selected to participate in the survey, the veterans were surveyed on their current status, and whether they had a veteran's certificate and/or a disability certificate²². A small number of the respondents were part of the volunteer battalions and did not have a veteran's certificate. One in ten (10%) respondent confirmed having a disability certificate, but almost an additional quarter (23%) of the respondents claimed not having a disability certificate confirming the injuries or illnesses sustained during their military service in eastern Ukraine.

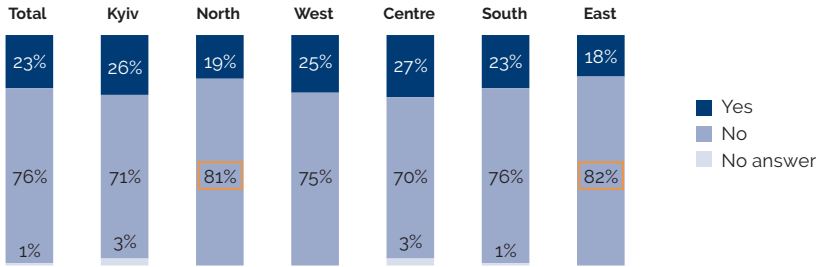
Figure 2.1. Certificates/disability certificates



Source: Interviews with veterans

²² Disability certificate – Article 7 of the [Law of Ukraine "On War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection"](#) provides for a status for persons who have received a disability as a result of participation in hostilities.

Figure 2.2. Injuries among the veterans not having a disability certificate



Source: Interviews with veterans

The veterans who participated in the in-depth interviews stated that the biggest obstacle to obtaining documents confirming disability was the need to interact with a significant number of public authorities and the long-term process of issuing of documents. Other respondents reported the insufficient automatization of administrative processes. The respondents mentioned that they face problems in gathering the documents to obtain a disability certificate. Enhancing the exiting centralized data system would make it possible to accumulate all the data on the veteran's profile, which will accelerate the processing and delivery of documents. The availability of the documentation is key for accessing the veterans' benefits and guarantees.

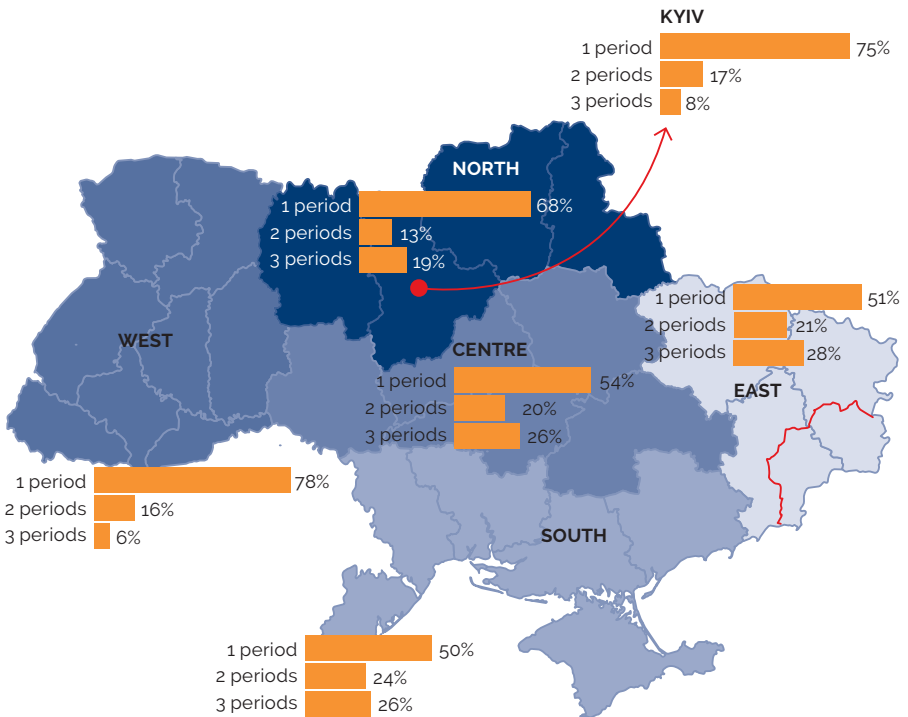
Quote from an in-depth interview with KI (psychologist)

"Sometimes [the veterans] went [to the medical institution to issue documents necessary to obtain disability certificate] three times and complained. Why could they not give the whole list [of required documents] at once? [Veterans were saying] We brought everything they wrote [prepared the package of documents according to the list], but an additional one was required. This document was issued but other had become invalid... Unfortunately, you are no one without a paper here, that is why papers are necessary... document collection is required. And [the authorities] are not always providing high-quality consultation when collecting documents. Therefore, there are NGOs assisting in this sphere."

Quote from an in-depth interview with a veteran

"I formalized everything. These were similar visits, queues, a lot of papers, go here, go there, take one paper there... in short, I went through all of this. Of course, it is very problematic. Alright, I have arms/legs, and for a person who, God forbid, does not have a leg or an arm, I do not know how all this happens. It must be automated somehow. There must be some programme, some database, so that all information is combined there or a unified system so that a person does not deal with all this nonsense. This is the past century!"

Figure 2.3. Number of tours of duty in the combat zone

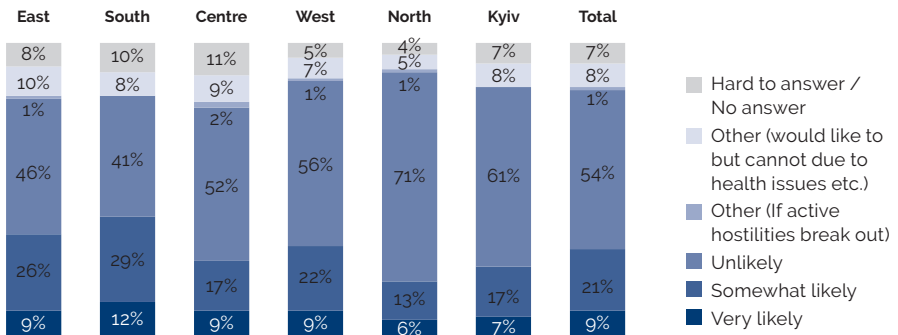


Source: Interviews with veterans

Thirty-seven (37%) per cent of the surveyed respondents stated that they continued their military service²³ or service in law enforcement²⁴ after obtaining their veterans status. Among acting servicepeople and law enforcement employees, there were more veterans residing in the northern (42%), central (43%) and southern (40%) macro-regions. Among women, half of the respondents continued their military service or service in law enforcement (51%). Among youth aged 18-24 (60%) and 25-35 the share of servicepeople were also the highest (41%).

Among respondents who stated that they had already finished their military service or work in law enforcement, one fourth (25%) ceased being servicepeople or working for law enforcement authorities in 2019-2021, almost half (46%) – in 2016-2018, and one third (29%) in 2014-2015. The respondents who completed their military service or service in law enforcement were asked how they assessed the probability of their return to active military service. The probability of returning to service was more often confirmed by youth aged 18-24 (36%). Almost half (54%) of the respondents answered that they were not ready to return to military service. Some veterans mentioned that their unwillingness to return to service came out of a desire to be with their families. Others expressed their dissatisfaction with the conditions of military service.

Figure 2.4. Self-assessment of the probability of returning to military service among those who resigned



Source: Interviews with veterans

²³ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. [The Law of Ukraine № 2232-XII on military duty and military service](#), 1995.

²⁴ The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. [The Resolution № 114 on service by ordinary and senior staff of internal affairs bodies](#), 1991.

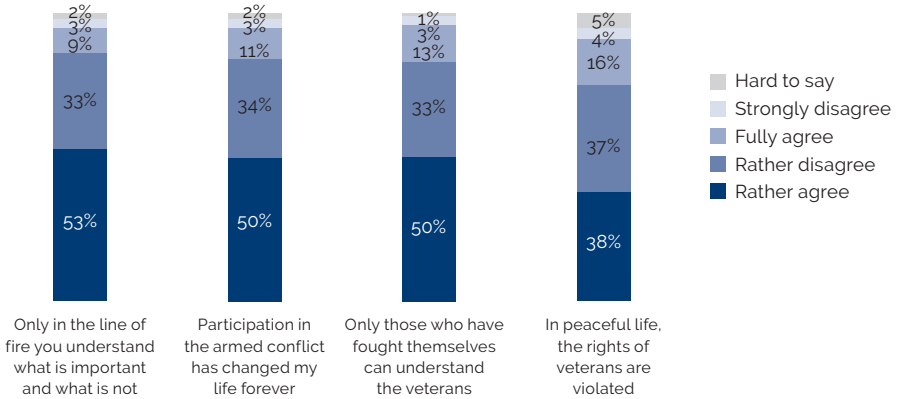
3. SOCIAL INTEGRATION, COHESION AND PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION

The experience obtained by veterans during their military service becomes an important aspect of their life. It impacts the relationships with their family members, friends, colleagues, and community members. A portion of the veterans noticed an improvement of relations with their families after returning from the east. While others, being absorbed by the combat zone experience, lost common ground with their relatives. Respondents stated that they felt that the authorities were indifferent to their problems when they returned to civilian life, while every fifth felt that the local government was unresponsive to veterans' problems. Almost half of the respondents confirmed encountering at least one case of prejudice or unfair treatment of veterans (discrimination) in the last six months in different spheres. The veterans were less likely than the general population to express confidence that the people around them could be trusted.

Sense of integration and values

The veterans interviewed through the in-depth interviews often mentioned that the experience of serving in the east of the country made them change their mindsets, re-assess their values and life priorities. The interviewees stressed that their lives were divided into two parts – before and after serving in the east. Many veterans developed a strong sense of justice following military service which became important for interpreting their relationships with others and life overall. Some veterans interviewed mentioned starting to feel alienated from society. To assess how military experience is connected to a sense of integration, respondents were asked to evaluate a number of statements. These statements are identical to those from the in-depth 2019 IOM survey of the city of Kyiv and Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Lviv oblasts; therefore, comparisons can be drawn from 2019 to 2021. No differences were found between veterans of the military versus law enforcement veterans.

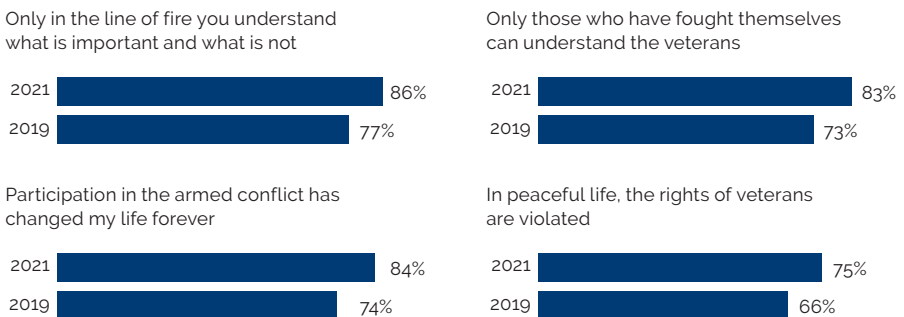
Figure 3.1. Assessment of military experience impact and reintegration



Source: Interviews with veterans

The data obtained in the 2021 nationwide survey showed that the share of veterans living in the locations surveyed in 2019 who supported the statements was higher compared to the previous research. This trend, among other things, may be related to the fact that military experience gained during service in the east becomes especially important for veterans over time. On the other hand, the sense of exclusion felt by respondents might have been compounded by the barriers faced by veterans in obtaining benefits or services during their transition into civilian life from 2019.

Figure 3.2. Assessment on military experience impact and reintegration (2019 and 2021)



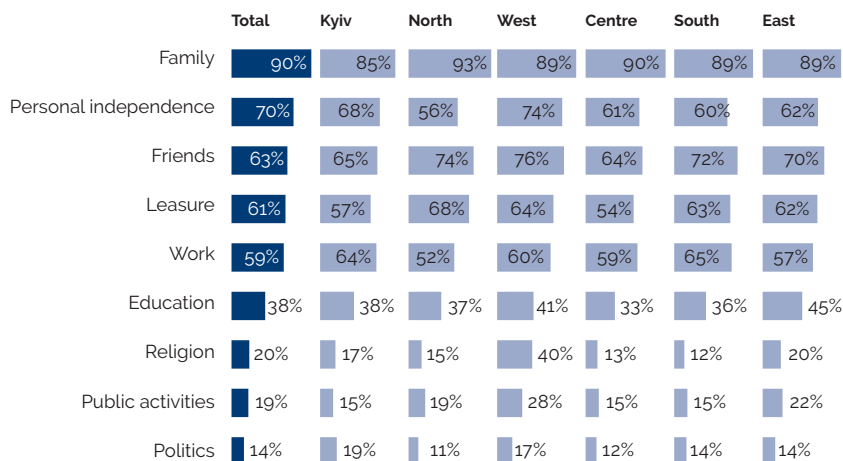
Source: Interviews with veterans

Quote from an in-depth interview with KI (NGO specialist)

"A veteran returns a new person because he [sic] has gained new experience. This experience cannot be just cut out of one's life, it is impossible to rehabilitate in full, it is impossible to become the person whom you used to be before that. It is possible to adapt to one's experience and appropriate such experience, and continue living with it..."

The veterans who participated in the in-depth interviews emphasized that after completing their service in the east, they started feeling the growing importance of families in their life. The sample survey found that the most important aspects of life for the veterans were their families, personal independence, and friends, underlining the importance of involving families and friends in the reintegration of veterans. Personal independence was more often mentioned by the veterans living in the city of Kyiv and in the western 'macro-region'. Activism and religion were more important for those who live in the west of the country.

Figure 3.3. Assessment of fundamental values by veterans, share of those who indicated the importance of different values in their lives



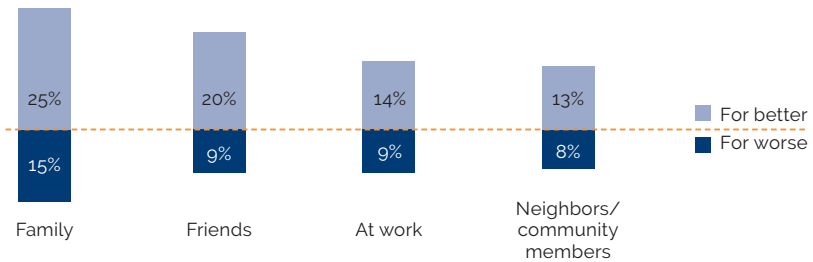
Source: Interviews with veterans
Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

The veterans more frequently stressed the important role that fundamental values had in their lives compared to ordinary citizens.²⁵ The respondents reported more often that family and friends are very important to them. For instance, 86 per cent of the general population consider their family as an essential aspect of life (82 per cent among men and 90 per cent among women). While 90 per cent of veterans agreed with this (90 per cent among males and 93 per cent among females). The study demonstrated the importance of veterans having connections with friends, as they placed this aspect of life third among the most important fundamental values.

Relationships with others

Regarding the interaction with others, those surveyed mentioned that following their return from the east they had noticed changes in relationships with their family members, friends, colleagues, as well as with neighbours and people living in their communities. Those changes were both positive and negative. In the opinion of the interviewed persons, the most significant changes had occurred in relationships with their family members. Cumulatively, about a quarter of respondents (24%) noted a deterioration of relations in at least one area of relationships.

Figure 3.4. Veterans' self-assessment of changes in relationships with others



Source: Interviews with veterans

The family members of veterans noted that the experience of being in a combat zone absorb veterans' attention and detach them from daily life, while this daily routine continues to be significant for other members of their families. The loss of common ground that some veterans experience results in misunderstandings in the family, especially when professional MHPSS support for the veteran is absent.

Quote from an in-depth interview with a veteran's wife

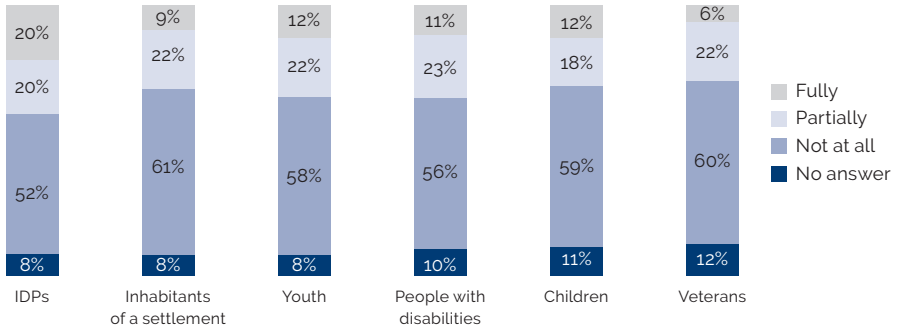
"I believe that their [veterans] values have completely changed. For a veteran's daily routine, for example, something that is important for their family, often becomes invisible, and so small compared to what he faced [during military service]. Ultimately, certain misunderstandings arise. The lack of complex psychological rehabilitation and the non-recognition by veterans that there is a problem such a prolonged depression, and the difficulty of going to work, their unfulfillment, loss of self-esteem is a complex and multifaceted issue. All this, of course, does not affect marriage in the best way. He always repeats: "You do not understand, you have not been, you do not know."

The perception of changes in relationships between veterans and others was felt differently across the respondent group. For young people aged 18–24, their relations with family and friends improved to a higher extent as compared to other age groups: 34 per cent reported improvement in relationships with family and 32% with friends. On the contrary, those aged 35–44 (19 per cent) reported feeling that their family relations had deteriorated, as compared to most of the other age groups. The veterans living in Kyiv (22%), Western Ukraine (18%), and cities with a population of more than 500,000 inhabitants (18%) were more likely to report improving relations with community members since they returned to civilian life.

Responsiveness of government to needs of veterans and community members

Among the surveyed veterans who completed their military service or service in law enforcement, almost one fourth (23%) stated that the most problematic issue they had faced immediately after completion of their service had been the perceived indifference of government officials to veterans' problems. Every tenth respondent believed that the local government is not responsive to the needs of the various community groups. These findings highlight that positive interactions of the veterans with government entities are an important component in the sustainable reintegration of veterans into civil life.

Figure 3.5. Veterans self-assessment of local authorities' response to the needs of various groups

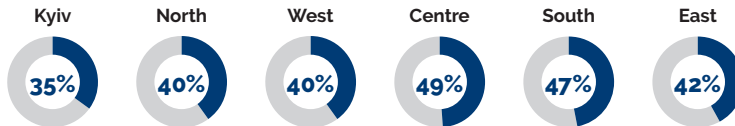


Source: Interviews with veterans

Perceptions of discrimination

The respondents were asked if they had encountered cases of prejudice or unfair treatment of veterans (discrimination) in the last six months in different spheres. Almost half of them (43%) confirmed at least one such case.

Figure 3.6.1. Share of veterans who confirmed encountering at least one case of prejudice or unfair treatment of veterans (discrimination) in the last six months, by macro-regions

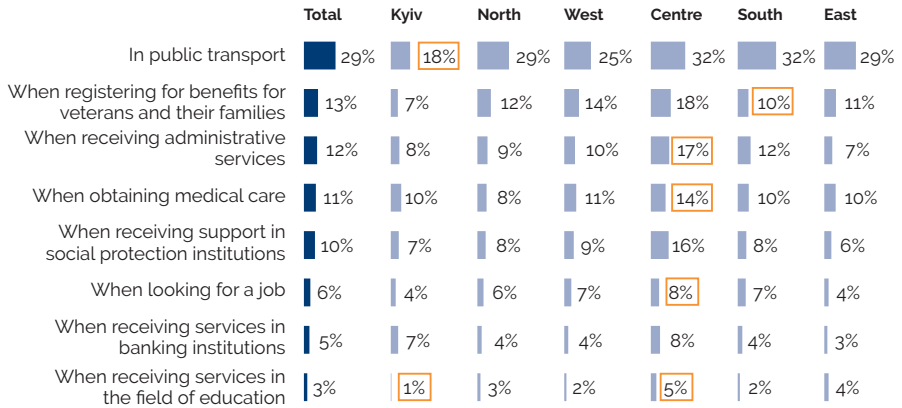


Source: Interviews with veterans

Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

Among the respondents having experience of more than one tour of duty to the combat zone, the share of those who reported perceived discrimination towards veterans was 49 per cent. The veterans who were not regularly employed in the last six months also frequently stated facing unfair treatment towards veterans compared to the rest of the respondents (49% and 42% respectively). More than half of the veterans who had a disability certificate or injury that occurred when serving in the east confirmed that they had a similar experience of facing discrimination (53% and 54% respectively). Moreover, the perceived discriminations were also linked with relationships with members of the community. Among the respondents who reported that their relationship with neighbours and community members had deteriorated, 70 per cent reported cases of discrimination.

Figure 3.6.2. Circumstances in which respondents confirmed facing biased attitudes or unfair treatment, among all veterans



Source: Interviews with veterans

Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

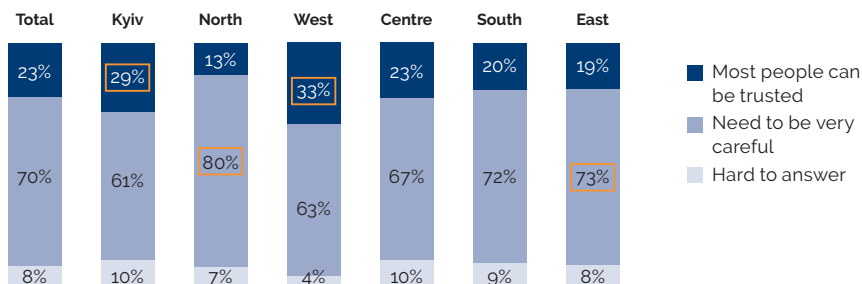
The share of the veterans from Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kyiv oblasts and the city of Kyiv who in the 2019 study confirmed facing at least one case of biased attitude or unfair treatment towards veterans was lower compared to the share of respondents from the 2021 study who confirmed that they face discrimination, with the figure declining from 49 per cent to 40 per cent.²⁶ The decrease was due to a reduced number of surveyed veterans confirming such cases in transport and medical institutions. In almost half (50%) of the cases, the feeling of prejudice or unfair treatment caused a sense of frustration. Meanwhile, forty-six (46%) per cent of respondents reported a feeling of irritation when encountering cases of discrimination. Every tenth respondent among those who completed their military service or service in law enforcement, and respondents who have continued to be active in the military or work in related fields reported that such cases forced them to distance themselves from the civilian population and lower their trust in other people (12% and 10% respectively). The results highlight the perception of stigmatization felt by the veterans and that relevant programmatic interventions, including the provision of MHPSS support to those who face stigma and discrimination can help ensure sustainable reintegration of veterans into civilian life.

²⁶ IOM. [Life after conflict: Survey on the sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics of veterans of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and their families](#), 2020.

Trust in social institutions and groups

The veterans were requested to assess their attitude toward various groups in society, as well as their attitudes to the state and public institutions. Seventy (70%) per cent of the surveyed veterans believe that they should be very careful in relations with people, a finding which is similar to that of the general population. Twenty-three per cent (23%) of the veterans agreed that "most people can be trusted", whereas the general population agreed at a rate of 30 per cent.²⁷

Figure 3.7. Trust in people (in general)

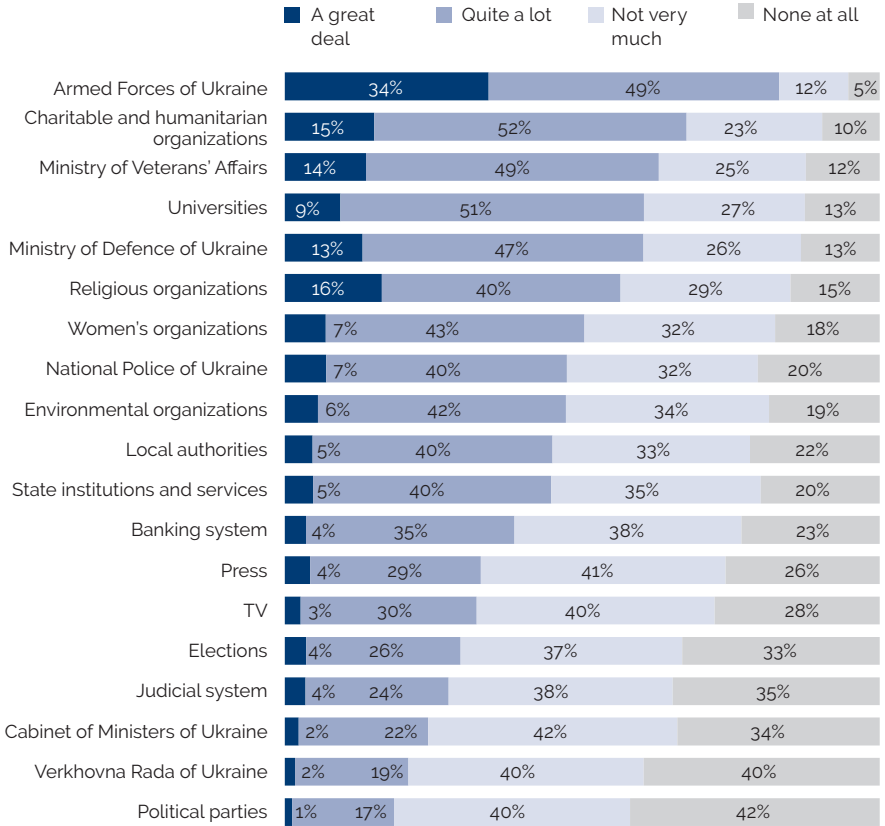


Source: Interviews with veterans

The most trusted social institutions by veterans, among those proposed for this assessment, were the Armed Forces of Ukraine (83%), charitable and humanitarian organizations (77%) and the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine (63%). The veterans have the least trust in political parties (18%). The higher level of trust towards certain institutions can be explained by a stronger interaction and familiarity of respondents with these institutions.

²⁷ NGO Ukrainian Centre for European Policy. [Ukraine in World Value Survey](#), 2020.

Figure 3.8. Trust in social institutions



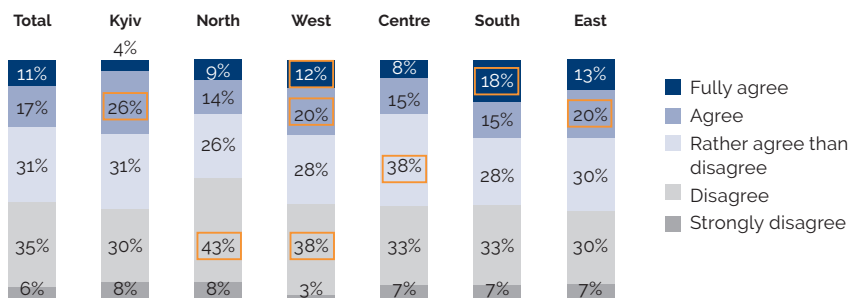
Source: Interviews with veterans

Trust in local authorities was linked to the veterans' assessment of the level of responsiveness of the government to needs of veterans. Among veterans who believed that local authorities were fully responsive to their needs, 70 per cent said they trusted the local government.

Participation in the community life

The veterans were requested to assess their ability to influence community life. The views of residents of the northern macro-region are the most polarized – 23 per cent of the veterans of the veterans there consider that they can influence their community, and 51 per cent – that they cannot ('strongly disagree and 'disagree').

Figure 3.9. Assessment of possibility of veterans' influence on changes in the community



Source: Interviews with veterans

The residents of the West, the centre and the south indicated being ready to be more actively involved in activities of the veteran centres/organizations. Key informants who participated in the in-depth interviews found that civic engagement of veterans and their interaction with NGOs facilitate the adaptation of veterans, support the exercise of their rights, and promote the improvement of veterans' image in the communities.

Figure 3.10. Veterans' readiness to be involved in decision-making (in general)

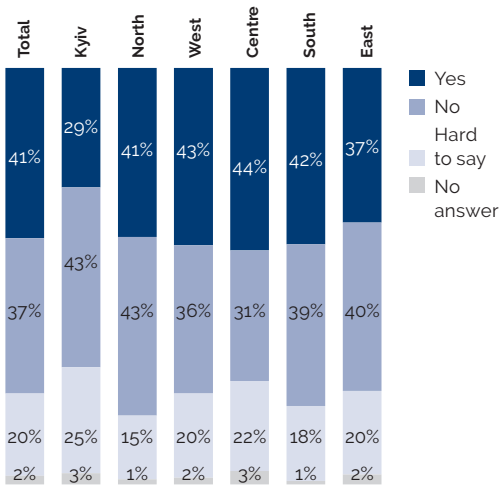
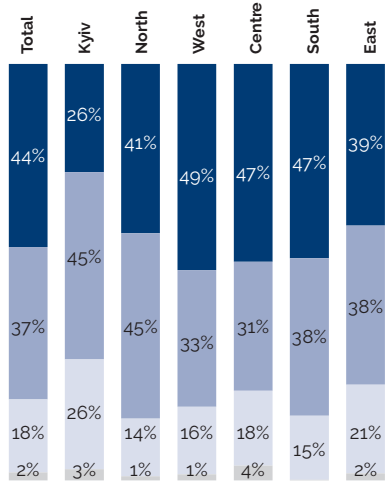


Figure 3.11. Veterans' readiness to be involved in decision-making via veteran centres/ organizations



Source: Interviews with veterans

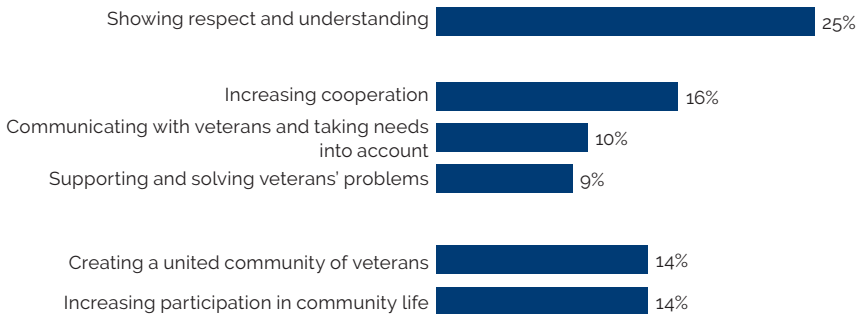
The relatives of the veterans reported that the veteran organizations are significant in some areas. They closely cooperate with the local government; veterans are present in the initiative groups on various issues. Some respondents stated that the veterans are involved in the activities of non-governmental organizations. The veterans' relatives consider the veteran organizations' activities exclusively positive. In the opinion of the surveyed, such organizations facilitate the adaptation of veterans, support exercise of the veterans' rights, and promote the improvement of veterans' image in the communities. At the same time, the respondents mentioned examples when their husbands and veterans whom they knew won respect in the community through personal social activity and supportiveness.

Quote from an in-depth interview with a veteran's wife:

"...They (veterans) become active and are engaged in different activities. They start volunteering, they become active members of movements not in political terms, but more broadly. I have heard such stories when veterans returned and began to actively lead a social life, fight for rights, support other veterans, for instance finding lawyers to help veterans legally."

In the opinion of the respondents, the active cooperation of local authorities with the veterans and the improvement of communication which takes their needs into account will stimulate the participation of veterans in the decision-making of the community life. During the interview, the veterans outlined that they would like to receive more respect and understanding from community members. Meanwhile, 14 per cent of the veterans themselves believe that they have to increase integration of the veterans' community. Another 14 per cent believe that the veterans should expand their participation in community life in general.

Figure 3.12. Veterans' assessment of factors that may increase their participation in decision-making

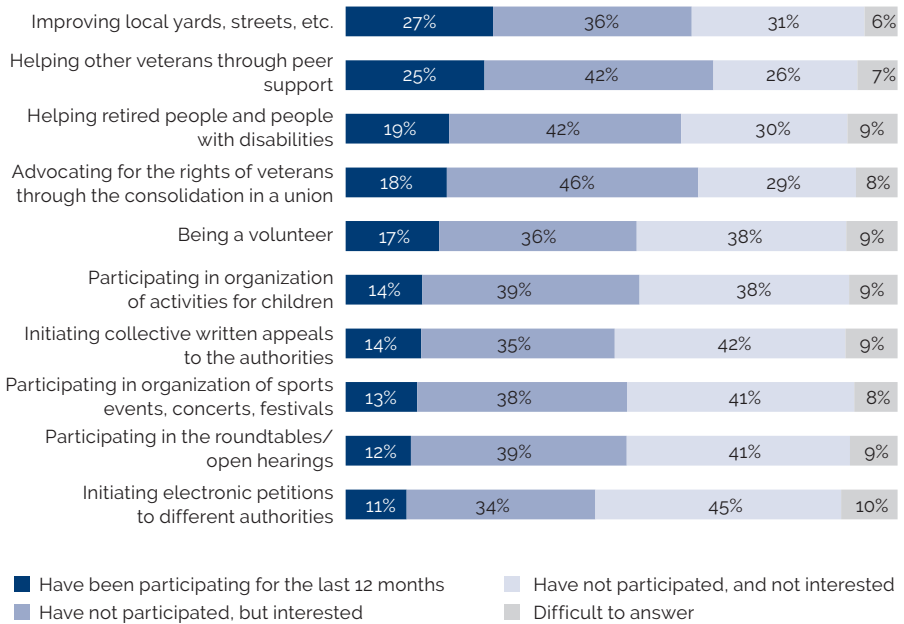


Source: Interviews with veterans

Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

Related to participation in community life, the veterans appear to have been active in different social cohesion activities in the last 12 months²⁸. The sample survey demonstrated that the veterans appeared to be more active in communication with the government compared to the general population among whom only five per cent confirmed using electronic means of communication when appealing to authorities and four per cent mentioned submitting formal information requests to state bodies in the last 12 months²⁹.

Figure 3.13. Experience of veterans participating in various social cohesion events and willingness to join them



Source: Interviews with veterans

²⁸ **Caveat:** The active position of interviewed may be the results of the applied sampling strategy as the respondents were invited to participate in the survey via NGOs.

²⁹ USAID. [Public opinion survey to assess the changes in citizen's awareness of civil society and their activities](#), 2021.

4. MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (MHPSS)

The veterans have experience of strong stressful situations and events, following service in the east. Furthermore, the change they experience when returning to civilian life might be an additional factor influencing their psychoemotional state and complicating the process of adaptation. Of all veterans, 75 per cent believe that psychological support is an acute need after completing military service. Figure 4.2 provides additional details on how help is most often sought by veterans.

Among all the veterans who completed their military service or work in law enforcement, almost every fifth (22%) reported a strong emotional stress related to transition to civil life. Stress was more often mentioned by women (32%) than men (21%)³⁰. Furthermore, every fifth (20%) respondent reported having faced health problems that appeared during the service.

Quote from an in-depth interview with a veteran's wife:

"Psychological issues, for example, have a stronger impact than physical ones. If people have some physical injuries or concerns, this does not affect them as much as psychological trauma. Because a person becomes closed, and you, as a wife, cannot reach out to him, understand what the problem is. There is not always a possibility to contact a specialist because a [veteran] does not want this. And people, who returned, in principle, mostly do not want to receive help voluntarily. After some time, yes, but right away, no one runs straight, so to speak, to be treated, or restore emotional and physical wounds."

³⁰ The interpretation of the results of the analysis was done taking into account the limitations related to the small size of the subsample of women.

The respondents who had disability certificates (88%) or sustained an injury or disease while on active duty in the east of the country (81%), more often than other respondents, reported the pressing need to obtain psychological assistance after returning to a peaceful life. The veterans who perceived discrimination against themselves also more frequently reported that psychological support was an acute need for veterans after returning to civil life (79%). This figure was higher among the veterans who had more than one tour of duty to the combat zone, highlighting the impact of military experience on the emotional state and mental health of veterans.

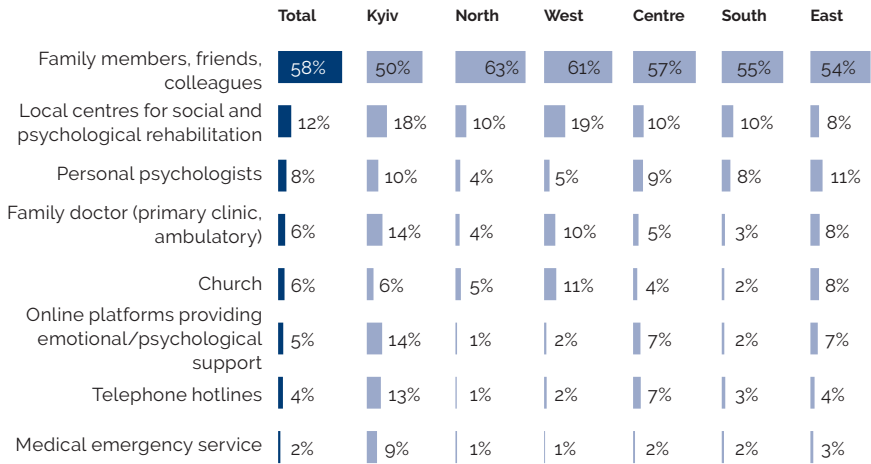
Figure 4.1. The share of those who indicate that psychological support is an acute need for veterans after returning to civil life



Source: Interviews with veterans

Interviewed veterans reported soliciting the help of various people and institutions when looking for counselling and emotional support. The respondents living in villages were more likely to ask for help from their relatives, friends, and colleagues and rarely sought support from specialized hotlines or psychologists. The data did not show significant differences in the shares of those who contacted local centres for social and psychological rehabilitation depending on the locality type.

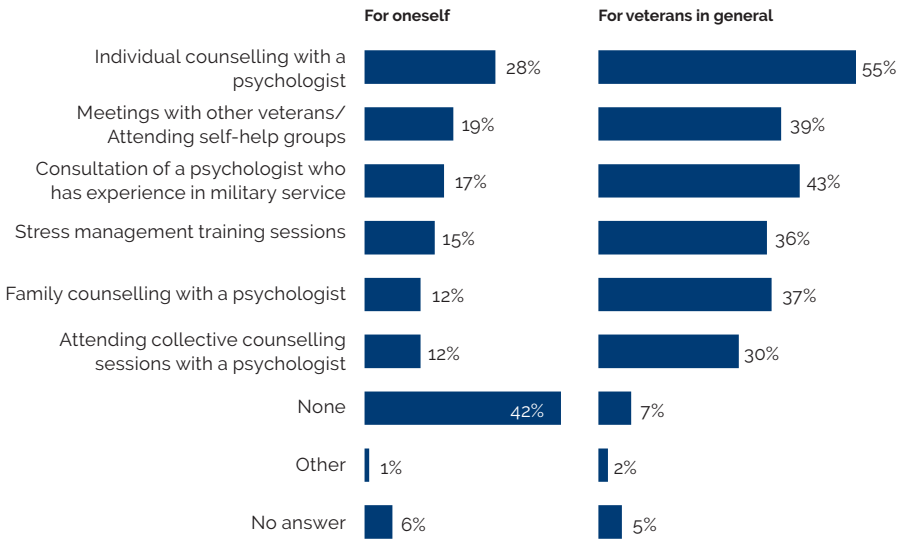
Figure 4.2. Channels that veterans most often use to receive counselling and/or emotional support



Source: Interviews with veterans
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

The participants of the in-depth interviews noted that psychological assistance and social adaptation programmes are crucial for veterans, – this is one of the priority issues and challenges. In the opinion of key informants, most of veterans or even all veterans need certain assistance, being accompanied, especially immediately after returning to civil life. The experts noted that similar programmes should include work with the whole family, and not only work with veterans themselves.

Figure 4.3. Types of psychological support which the veterans would like to obtain and consider necessary for veterans in general

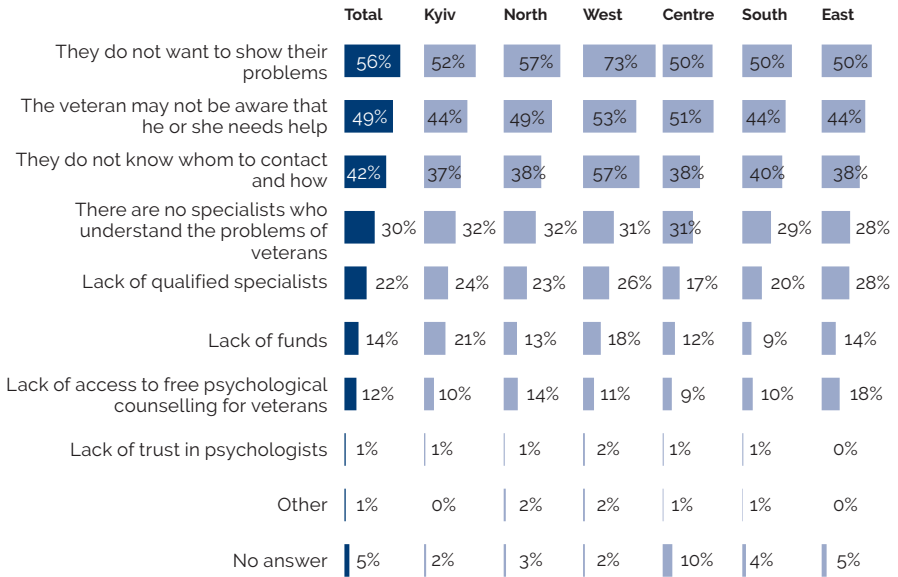


Source: Interviews with veterans
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

Forty-two per cent of the veterans stated that they did not need psychological support, whereas 55 per cent highlighted the need for other veterans to have access to individual counselling with a psychologist. This striking finding can be explained by the fact that veterans are unwilling to show their weakness, to highlight their problems, and that, to a certain extent, they do not realize that they require assistance. They are also unaware of whom to ask for help and how to do so. More than one third (35%) of the veterans, having experience of more than one tour of duty in the east, said that there were no experts who understand the problems of veterans.

Close to one third of the respondents in every macro-region did not know whom to contact and how. However, this figure was the highest in the west, pointing to additional efforts which could be put in place to address this gap.

Figure 4.4. Reasons for which veterans do not seek psychological assistance



Source: Interviews with veterans
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

5. ACCESS TO BENEFITS AND SERVICES

The services and assistance in the housing sector and in the field of health care appeared to be less accessible for veterans. The respondents mentioned cases when financing for prosthetic care had been insufficient. In such cases, they had to cover costs at their own expense.

The provision of benefits and social protection guarantees to veterans is regulated by a number of legal and regulatory documents and laws of Ukraine. The Law of Ukraine "On Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection" is considered to be the key document in this area.³¹³²

General assessment of usage of services or assistance

Most of the respondents were aware of the existence of various services and benefits for veterans. The share of those who answered that they were not aware of certain types of benefits and assistance did not exceed 12 per cent (loans for housing reconstruction and major repair). At the same time, the respondents surveyed via the in-depth interviews noted the lack of mechanisms and structures that would centrally ensure access to benefits and services for their users, as well as information on the procedure for obtaining them. This result echoes the need to enhance the existing centralized data system to expand the veterans' access to benefits and services.

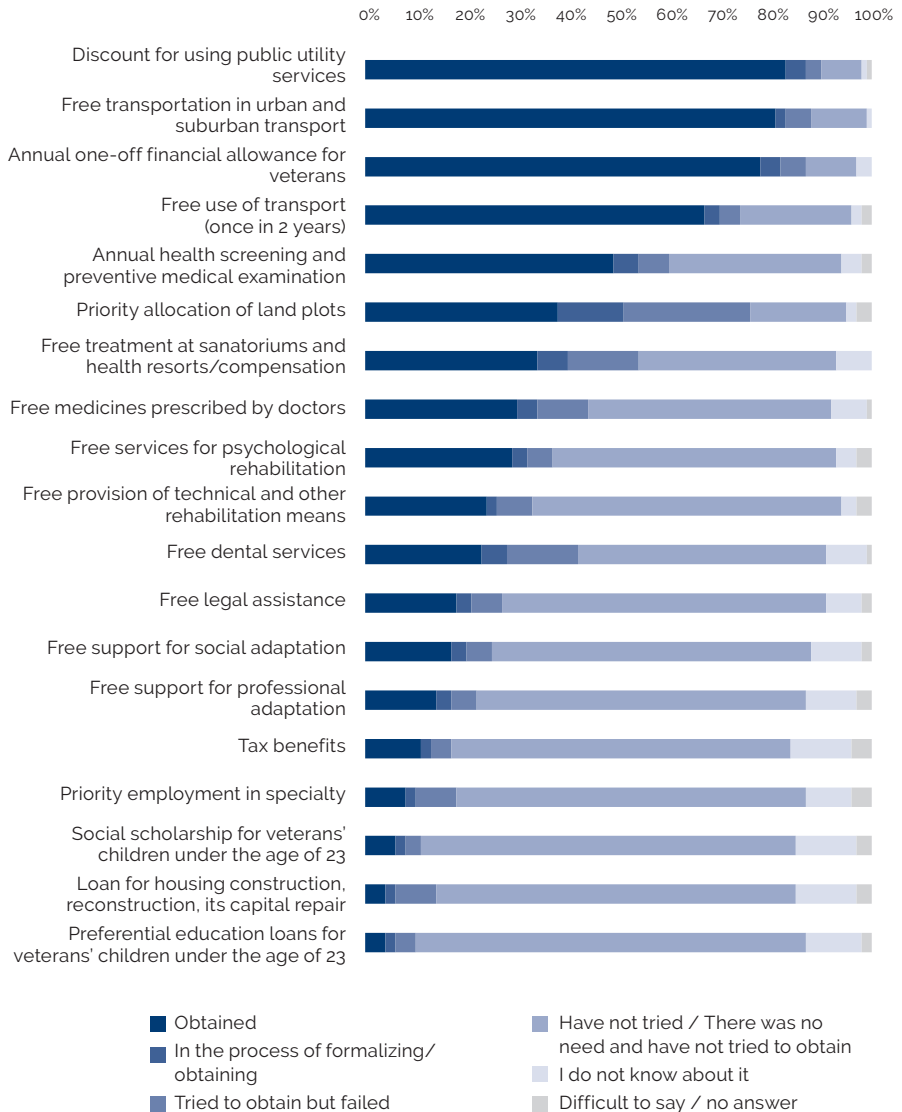
Quote from an in-depth interview with KI (NGO worker)

"No one gives them anything at all [informing about the stages of the procedure for obtaining documents required to gain access to services]. When you enter civil life, you just find yourself with a number of legal issues you need to solve, such as leaving the military service, being registered somewhere [for social protection benefits], being registered in an employment centre. It is a big quest."

³¹ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. [Act No. 3551 of 22 October 1993 on the status of war veterans and guarantees of their social protection](#), 1993.

³² Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. [Resolution No. 1050 of 28 December 2016 on some issues of scholarship](#), 2016.

Figure 5.1. Veterans' experience in using services or assistance

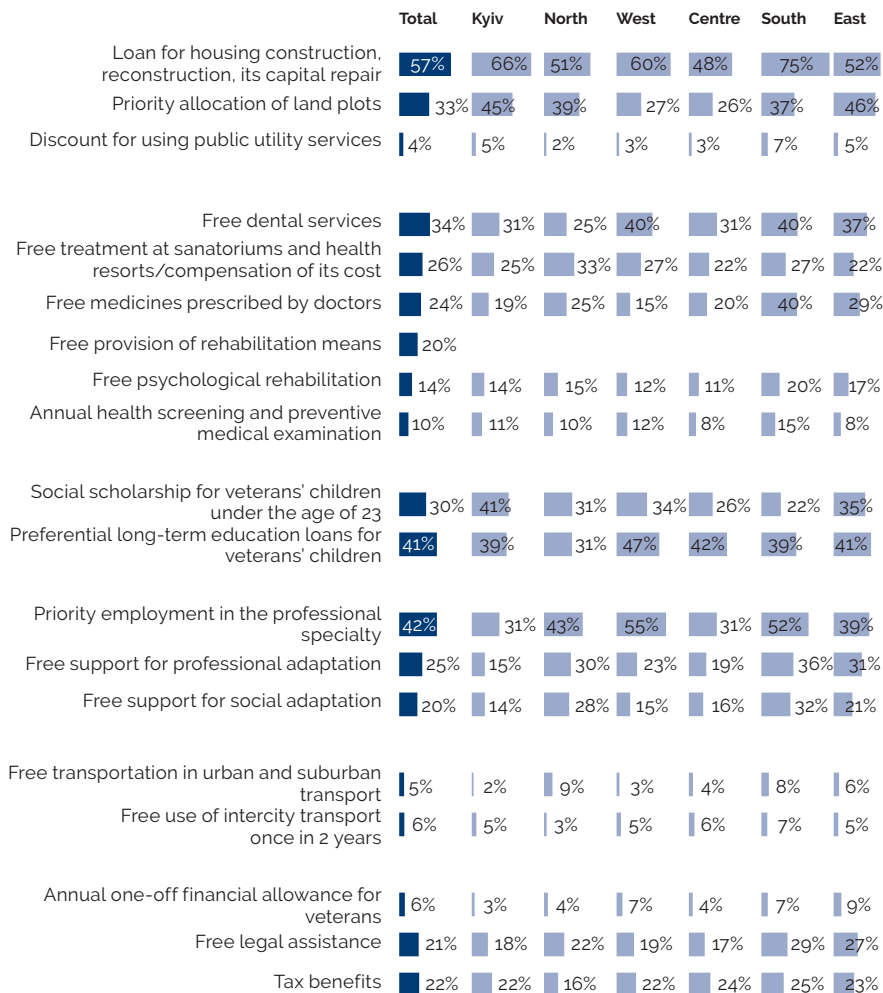


Source: Interviews with veterans

User experience of benefits and services

The respondents were asked if they attempted to obtain services or benefits to be provided by the state to veterans and their families when they had a need for it.

Figure 5.2. The share of veterans who did not obtain services or benefits among those who attempted to do so



Source: Interviews with veterans

Quote from an in-depth interview with a veteran

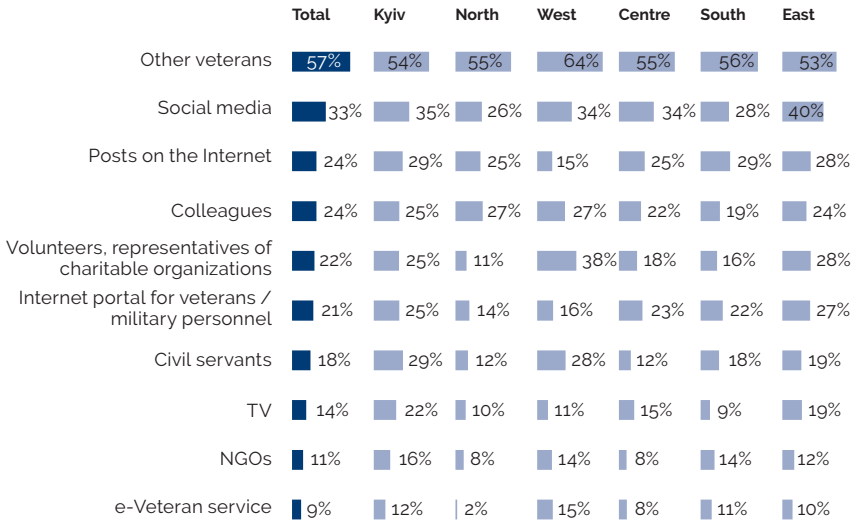
"I am planning to apply for a bionic prosthetic arm, but they are very expensive... I was talking to my prosthetist, so he says that the state unfortunately during the last six years has not changed the amount allocated for such prostheses... they increased the amount, [the price of the prosthesis increased] and our state has not changed the amount, that is why it is very difficult to choose a high-quality bionic prosthesis for the amount allocated by the state. So, I have to supplement the purchase of the prosthetic arm with my own funds."

Quote from an in-depth interview with a veteran

"My fellow [other veteran] had problems with his back and they said: "We can give you aspirin and paracetamol and some ointment. It is necessary to buy everything else."

Information channels to search for information on services and benefits

Figure 5.3. Information channels used by veterans to search for benefits, services, guarantees



Source: Interviews with veterans

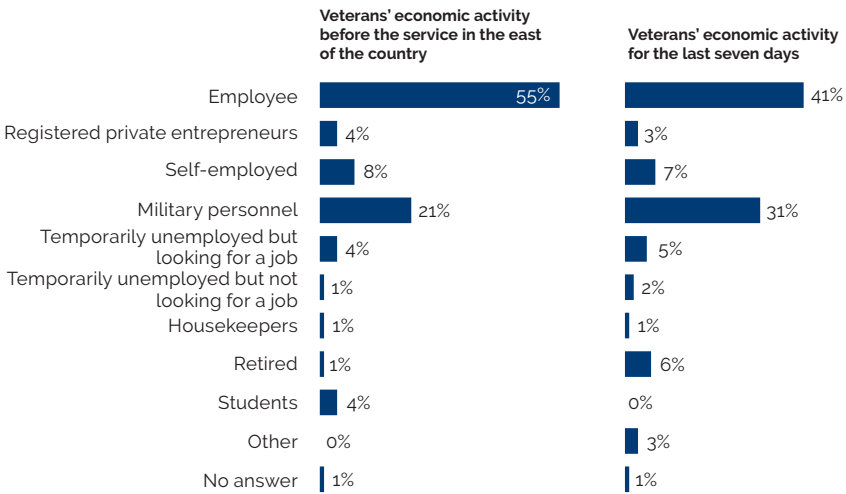
Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

6. LABOUR MARKET SITUATION

The level of unemployment among veterans is relatively low, but the employment situation of veterans is rather unstable. Every fifth veteran who completed their military service or service in law enforcement confirmed not having regular employment in the last six months. The veterans identified various challenges with finding employment related to disability or chronic diseases or veteran status. Others identified their prolonged absence from the civil employment sector as a reason for their decline in employability upon return to civilian life. The NGO representatives cooperating with the veterans stated that veterans often needed retraining. Due to gaining military experience, a person's views and values transform, and veterans start searching for another way for self-fulfillment.

Employment of veterans

Figure 6.1. Veterans' employment statuses before and after military service in the east, among all interviewed veterans



Source: Interviews with veterans

Thirty-nine (39%) per cent of the surveyed respondents who were employed confirmed facing various difficulties in their workplace. Some respondents were concerned about employment problems related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the fear of losing their job due to the quarantine restrictions (12%). Others stated that they had to take unpaid leave due to the pandemic (10%). The respondents also mentioned the need to work on a part-time basis or to work more hours, exceeding a standard working day.

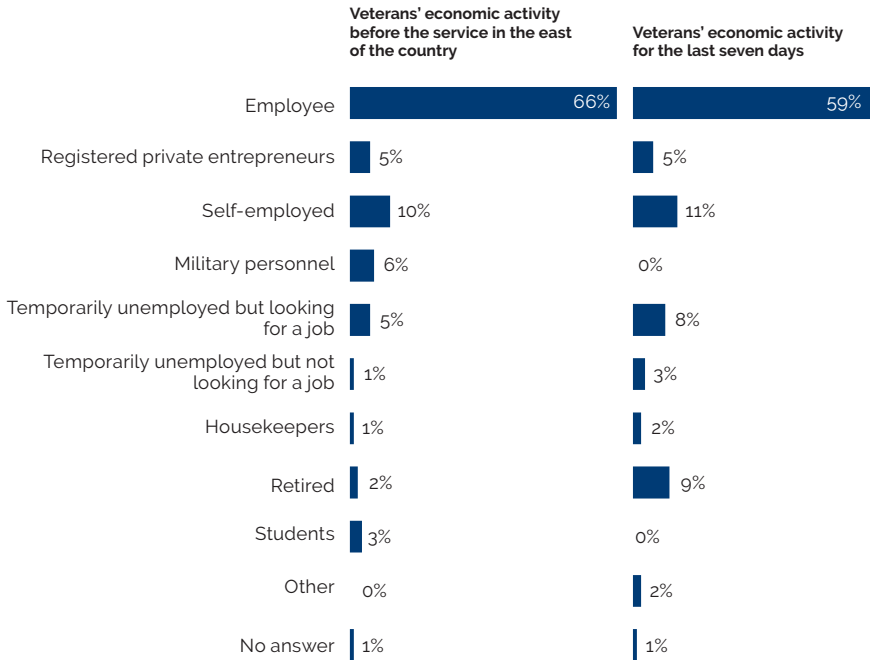
Figure 6.2. Problems experienced in the workplace, among veteran employees



Source: Interviews with veterans
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

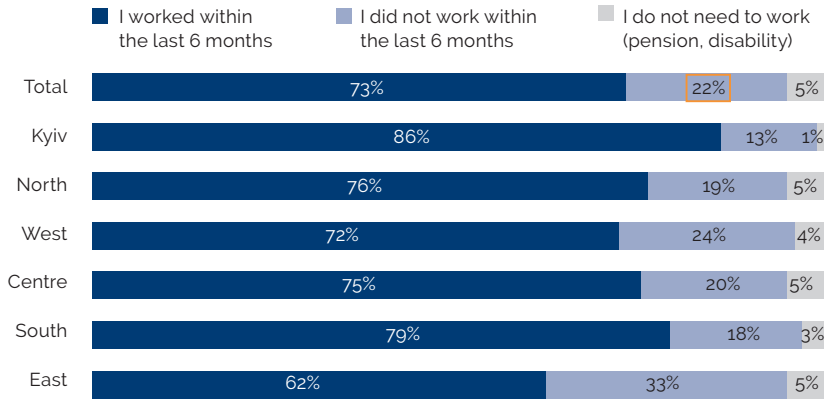
The analysis indicates that veterans were engaged in a variety of livelihood models prior to their first deployment and that the share of veterans employed after their service decreased from 66 per cent to 59 per cent. While the number of unemployed and retired veterans has grown as shown on the figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3. Veterans' employment before and after engagement in the service in the east of the country, among veterans who completed their military service or service in law enforcement



Source: Interviews with veterans

Figure 6.4. Veterans' employment status during the last 6 months, among veterans who completed their military service or service in law enforcement

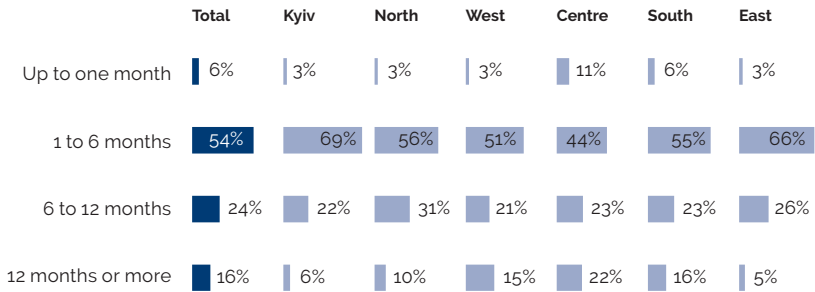


Source: Interviews with veterans

Unemployment of veterans

Forty-three (43%) per cent of those who completed military service or service in law enforcement faced periods of unemployment. The share of the veterans who faced periods of unemployment after returning to civilian life was higher among residents of villages (49%) and young people aged 18-24 (61%). Lack of opportunities to acquire and develop skills in civilian employment at a given age potentially reduces opportunities to seek employment after service. It is possible to improve the situation by setting up appropriate programs for young people, including placement and internship programmes. The periods of unemployment in rural areas may also be related to a lack of skills and experience in the agricultural sector. External factors such as the development of the rural labour market can affect employment as well.

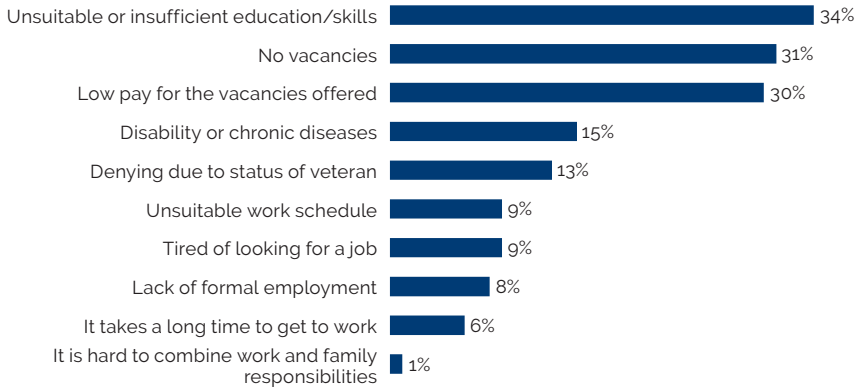
Figure 6.5. Periods of unemployment after completion of military service and service in law enforcement among those who mentioned a period of unemployment/looking for a job



Source: Interviews with veterans

Eight (8%) per cent of the respondents noted that they were unemployed but looking for a job. The respondents looking for employment mentioned the variety of challenges they faced when searching for work, as exemplified by figure 6.6.

Figure 6.6. Difficulties veterans face when looking for a job



Source: Interviews with veterans
 Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

The veterans who participated in the in-depth interviews noted a decline in their employability since returning from military service, including demotion and a loss of skills and qualifications due to prolonged absence from the civil employment sector. The interviewed veterans noted that the positions available in the civil sector often do not correspond to the professions and qualifications acquired during their service. In some cases, the veterans might not have experience in civilian specialties due to being employed most of their time in the military, or due to them not having completed their education, or having a lack of work experience. Thus, the veterans making the transition to a civilian career frequently have to start over from scratch. Besides, the respondents mentioned that some veterans may be reluctant to return to their place of work where they were employed before service in the east because they feel that they need to change their way of living.

Quote from an in-depth interview with a veterans' wife

"My husband is a lawyer, if he wishes to return to his practice, he will have to study all legislation again. This is problematic. Well, to study, to get a second education maybe we should spend some period of time, which we do not have much at our age of forty, for example. That is why yes, there are some problems with employment."

Quote from an in-depth interview with a veteran

"If a person had a job and, for example, their position was preserved, then he will return, but if not... Well, the military has a very big issue with finding a job which is kindred to them, close to their specialty. Since the military has different specialties which do not exist in civilian life. For instance, for shooter-grenade launcher there is no such thing. He has to start all over again or return to the military through signing a new contract."

Quote from an in-depth interview with a veteran

"I was working at the metallurgical plant, the position carried increased risks and as soon as I became a person of a second group of disability I could no longer work there. That is why they dismissed me, offered me a reassignment to a courier position, a lower position, but in general, at least I have something... It became much more difficult for me in everyday life because I had lost my right arm, while I used to be a right-handed person. It just became more difficult, all aspects in which I counted on myself before, now I count more on my wife, my family."

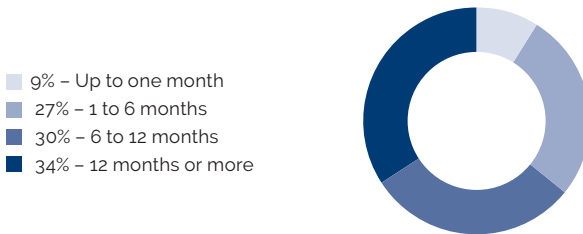
In the in-depth interviews, participants were asked how including their veteran status in a curriculum vitae may influence employment opportunities. The respondents' opinions were not unanimous. Some of them reported that the veteran status might be preferred for a person working in a related field, while other veterans interviewed stated that it did not play any role when looking for a job. At the same time, the respondents mentioned that the veterans might hide their military experience upon employment due to fear of being rejected by prospective employers.

Quote from an in-depth interview with a veteran

"It often happens: you come to work, tell them about your skills, employers say – yes, you fit, and suddenly they say – wait, so are you an ATO [Anti-Terrorist Operation] participant? My friend, guess what? Please go, because we know you, in one, two or three months at best you will have a breakdown, you will start drinking a lot, then something will be switched."

The average job search period for veterans was 12 months. Whereas among the general population, the average duration of the employment search was from 6 to 7 months in 2021.³³

Figure 6.7. Duration of veterans' unemployment among veterans looking for a job

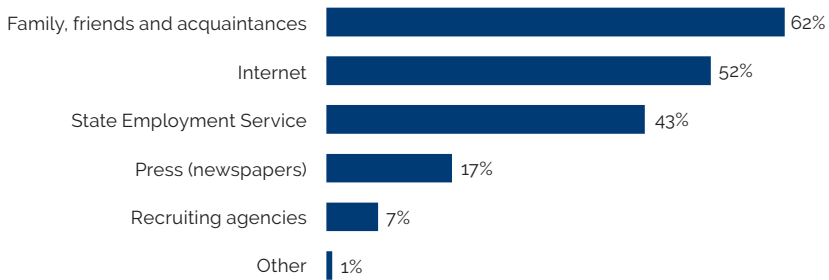


Source: Interviews with veterans

³³ State Statistics Service of Ukraine. [Labor force of Ukraine. Unemployed population by duration of job search, sex and type of locality](#), 2021.

The unemployed veterans stated looking for a job using different channels. More than half of the veterans (58%) stated that they were registered with the State Employment Service, however, the most popular ways veterans look for a job is through family, friends and acquaintances (62%), followed by the Internet (52%), and the State Employment Service (43%). The in-depth interview respondents believe that veterans are more often employed through veteran communities and organizations helping veterans in finding a job or starting a business. Furthermore, the respondents mentioned that groups in social networks (Facebook) have vacancies for veterans.

Figure 6.8. Job search channels



*Source: Interviews with veterans
Note: Respondents could choose more than one option*

The NGO representatives cooperating with the veterans stated that veterans often needed retraining. Due to gaining military experience a person's views and values were transformed. Such a transformation often forces veterans to completely change the direction of their activities, as they no longer see themselves in the profession they accomplished before military service. Survey results show that veterans often emphasize the desirability of retraining or re-education.

Figure 6.9. Types of support aimed at professional adaptation indicated by veterans as desirable



Source: Interviews with veterans
Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

7. ATTITUDE TOWARDS STARTING OWN BUSINESS

Over one third of the veterans who completed their military service or service in law enforcement expressed their interest in starting their own business. Most respondents reported problems connected to a lack of state support, in addition to gaps in local market knowledge and business skills. The main types of support required by the veterans for starting or continuing their own business are financial instruments: non-repayable monetary assistance, credit resources, receiving legal counselling, and information on possibilities for business and grant programmes.

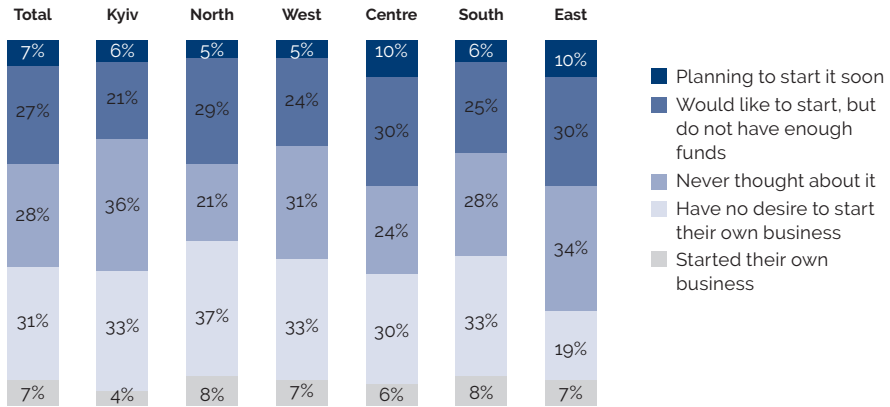
Due to a desire to retrain and work in a new field, veterans are often interested in starting their own business. The results of the analysis reflected in this section are calculated based on the subsample of the veterans who completed their military service or service in law enforcement. Searching for an opportunity to set up a business is a crucial aspect in the transition to civilian life for the veterans.

Quote from an in-depth interview with a veteran

"As you know, if a veteran worked before mobilization or conscription, he returns to his place of work. Here he may already have such an internal conflict, personal – can he further work in this sphere or not? Many veteran people I know, are quitting their jobs and looking for something else because they cannot go back to the life they had before. It is clear that it is a real problem. Again, of course, but if the person did not work where should he go? It is good if he has some access to assistance, and he can receive a pension or something."

The intention to start their own business was more often mentioned by veterans from the centre and north of the country.

Figure 7.1. Veterans who want to start their own business

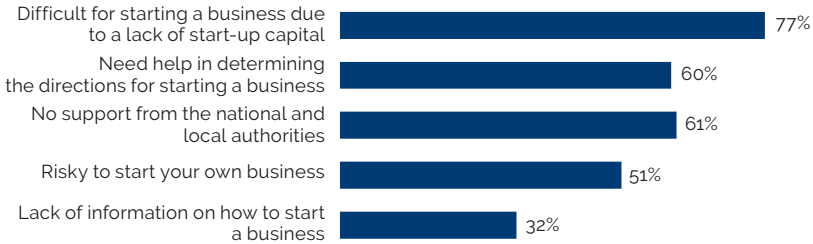


Source: Interviews with veterans

Among those who reported cases of discrimination against veterans, almost a third (33%) said they wanted to start their own business but did not have the opportunity. It is worth noting that the share of those who confirmed that they want to start their own business but do not have such an opportunity among those who faced cases of discrimination in obtaining banking services was 41 per cent.

The respondents interested in starting their business (planning or wishing to do so) were asked to rate statements describing the modalities and barriers which may impact this process. The main obstacle when starting a business was the lack of financial support or start-up capital (77%). Furthermore, the veterans interviewed within the in-depth interviews noted that the COVID-19 pandemic harmed opportunities for starting a business, and outlined specifically the following risks: the number of business niches has been reduced, offline businesses switched to online modalities to operate in a digital environment for customers (delivery of food, goods and services instead of selling them in stores, cafes, or offices), the number of customers decreased due to their shrinking level of income, a lack of tax holidays for businesses during the pandemic restrictions.

Figure 7.2. Assessment of statements regarding the conditions to start a business, among the veterans who would like to start a business or have their own business (fully agree with the statements)



Source: Interviews with veterans

Note: Respondents could choose more than one option

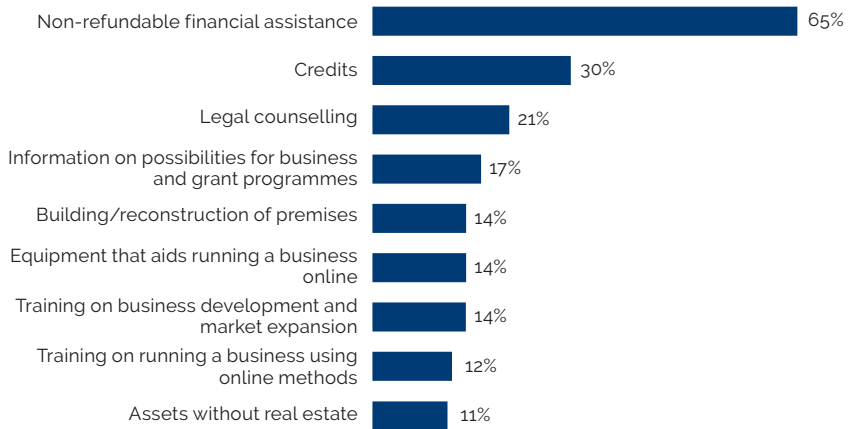
Source: in-depth interview with a veteran's wife

"Well, at present it is difficult to start a business in general, it is especially difficult due to the COVID-19 situation. The difficulty is also that a business that you will start now might fail".

Source: in-depth interview with a veteran's wife

"Many veterans started their small businesses, larger or smaller. It is very cool. Business is such a dynamic thing which is changing very, very quickly, very, very often. And it is very difficult to keep up with. And if a person has already started doing something in some field, he/she must be methodically directed and continuously assisted, at least every six months or once a year in order for the person in that field to start adapting, feeling well, gain some profit and already could see, analyse individually what he/she can and cannot do. That is why such methodological support, recommendations, tips of how and what and when and so on are needed."

Figure 7.3. Support required by veterans for starting business, among the veterans who would like to start a business or have their own business



*Source: Interviews with veterans
Note: Respondents could choose more than one option*

ANNEX 1

Table 1. Distribution of interviews held by oblasts

Oblast	Number of interviews
Vinnycia	259
Volyn	145
Dnipropetrovsk	355
Donetsk	237
Zhytomyr	272
Zakarpattia	54
Zaporizhzhia	160
Ivano-Frankivsk	80
Kyiv oblast (without Kyiv city)	243
Kirovohrad	145
Luhansk	103
Lviv	284
Mykolaiv	114
Odesa	155
Poltava	153
Rivne	144
Sumy	157
Ternopil	68
Kharkiv	194
Kherson	100
Khmelnytskyi	179
Cherkasy	134
Chernivtsi	65
Chernihiv	78
The city of Kyiv	408

Table 2. Structure of macro-regions

Macro-region	Oblast
	The city of Kyiv
North	Zhytomyr Oblast
	Kyiv Oblast
	Sumy Oblast
	Chernihiv Oblast
West	Volyn Oblast
	Zakarpattia Oblast
	Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast
	Lviv Oblast
	Rivne Oblast
	Ternopil Oblast
	Chernivtsi Oblast
South	Zaporizhia Oblast
	Mykolaiv Oblast
	Odesa Oblast
	Kherson Oblast
Centre	Vinnytsia Oblast
	Dnipropetrovsk Oblast
	Kirovohrad Oblast
	Poltava Oblast
	Khmelnytskyi Oblast
	Cherkasy Oblast
East	Donetsk Oblast
	Luhansk Oblast
	Kharkiv Oblast

CONTACTS:

International Organization for Migration (IOM), Mission in Ukraine

 IOMVeteranProject@iom.int

 ukraine.iom.int

 facebook.com/IOMUkraine

 instagram.com/iomukraine

 twitter.com/IOMUkraine

 linkedin.com/company/international-organization-for-migration-iom-ukraine