

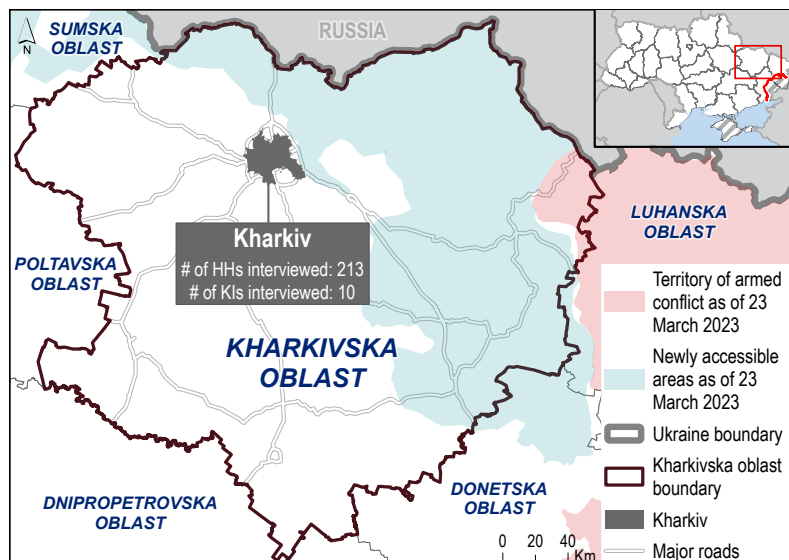
# Arrival and Transit Monitoring: Situation Overview in Kharkiv

March 2023 | Ukraine

## CONTEXT & RATIONALE

As Ukraine's second largest city in close proximity to the Russian Federation,<sup>1</sup> **Kharkiv's volatile security situation has prompted diverse movement trends following the escalation of hostilities in February 2022.** In mid-September 2022, the oblast's Oskil river has divided both Ukrainian and Russian areas of control,<sup>2</sup> resulting in over 170,000 individuals living in areas beyond the Government of Ukraine's control within Kharkivska oblast<sup>3</sup> and continued calls for evacuation.<sup>4</sup> Since then, critical and residential infrastructure has been the target of massive missile strikes,<sup>5</sup> resulting in continued blackouts across the city.<sup>6</sup> Despite this, residents of Kharkiv have returned, leading to diverse needs for both internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees. To inform the humanitarian response, **Round 7 of REACH's Arrival and Transit Monitoring (ATM) assessment provided a Situation Overview in Kharkiv.** This overview strives to inform the programmatic and operational response regarding population movement, as well as challenges that households faced in accessing humanitarian assistance upon arrival and long-term (re)settlement.

**Map 1.** Number of assessed households and key informant interviews in Kharkiv.



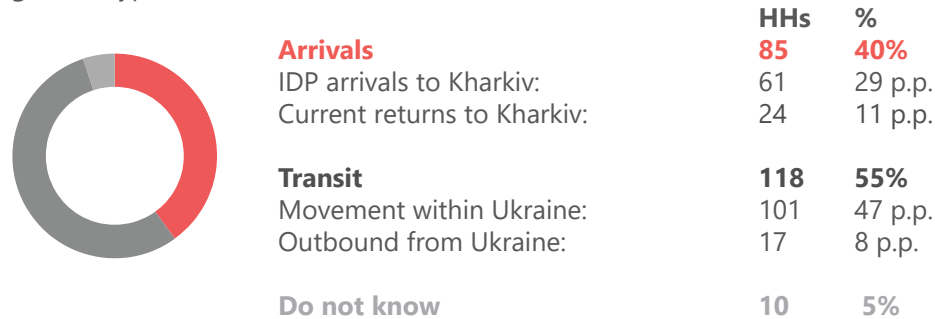
## KEY MESSAGES

- **Kharkiv continues to serve as an IDP hosting area and a transit point for those having been displaced due to the escalation of hostilities in the east.** Majority of KIs indicated an influx of IDPs who intended to settle in Kharkiv, as echoed by 40% of assessed households. Overall transit through Kharkiv city to other settlements (47%) and abroad (8%) are observed.
- **Following more than a year since the full-scale war, displacement trends for recently arrived households in Kharkiv varied.** Majority of those with a longer duration of displacement had resettled in other areas within Ukraine prior to arriving to Kharkiv (88%). Of those, left to reunify with relatives (53%) or due to a loss of access to services (35%).
- **In the past month prior to data collection (April to March), returns to Kharkiv was the predominant movement type** as reported by all 10 KIs. Though only 11% of assessed households indicated their return, contributing factors included perceived safety, and a desire to reunify with relatives. Temporary returns were also reported, with households intending to retrieve belongings including food, clothing, and medication.
- **While diverse humanitarian needs were identified for all households upon arrival to Kharkiv, an acute level of needs were observed for IDPs.** Overall, 43% of assessed households reported not always being able to meet their daily needs, as access to healthcare services, provision of medicines, food items and access to accommodation for both IDPs and returnees were required upon arrival.
- **Various challenges to access humanitarian assistance and services, specifically for vulnerable groups are observed for both IDP and returnees.** Main challenges included access to employment services and a general lack of information primarily due to electronic dissemination.

## METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

To inform the humanitarian response, REACH provided an indicative overview of the situation in Kharkiv along side Round 7 of REACH's ATM assessment. Between **the 10th and the 25th of March 2023, REACH enumerators interviewed 2,134 recently arrived<sup>7</sup> IDP and returnee households (HHs)**, including **213 interviews conducted in Kharkiv**. To accompany ATM's assessment, **10 key informant (KI) interviews** were conducted with volunteers and representatives of non-government organisations (NGOs) and local organisations. Through this overview, additional information pertaining to the barriers and challenges for IDP/ returnee households, including those travelling with a person(s) with a vulnerability are presented.

**Figure 1.** Types of intended movement, % of households.



## POPULATION MOVEMENT AND DISPLACEMENT

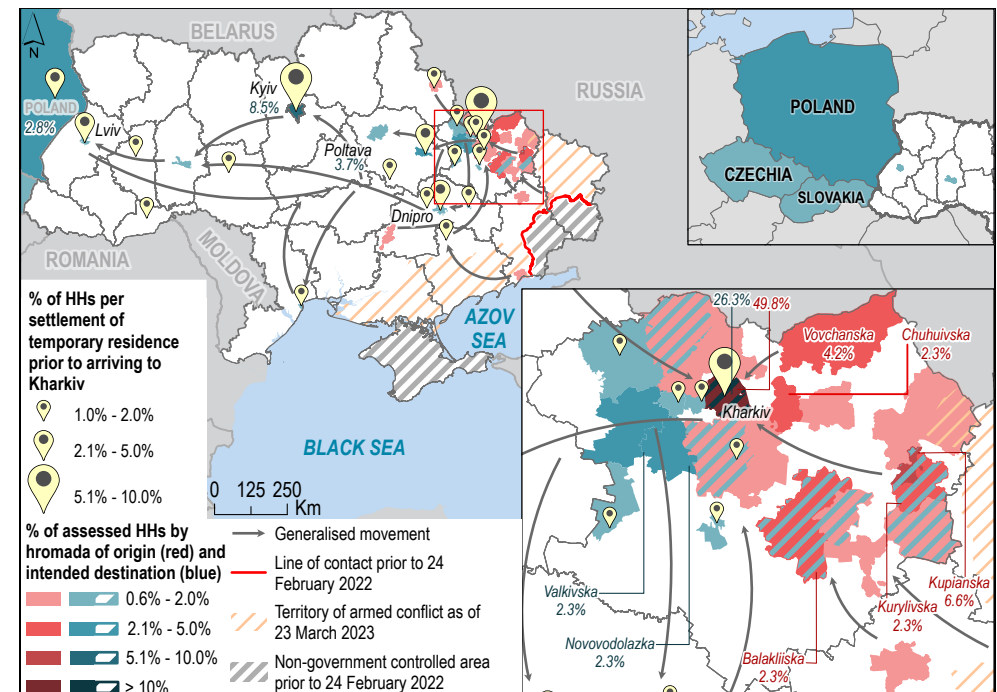
### Displacement from Kharkivska oblast and recent IDP arrivals

According to Ukraine's Ministry of Social Policy, as of 20 June, the number of registered IDPs within Kharkivska oblast totalled 490,699, making it one of the top three IDP hosting areas of Ukraine.<sup>8</sup> ATM findings show that as an eastern urban settlement and capital of the oblast, **Kharkiv city, has been both a destination and transit point for displaced households**, with over half of households (55%) reported to have transited through and 29% reported their intended destination within Kharkiv. **The city has primarily experienced an inflow of IDPs**, as the vast majority of households interviewed in Kharkiv (89%) reported their place of habitual residence within Kharkivska oblast. Authorities have reported an increase in the stock of IDPs in Kharkiv city once surrounding settlements became newly accessible following five months of non-government control.<sup>9</sup> From February to March, half of KIs (5 out of 10), reported a consistent number of IDPs arriving to Kharkiv, as planned evacuations from areas within the oblast continue, particularly evacuations from Kupiansk hromada

due to daily shelling.<sup>10</sup> Within the past six months (October 2022 - March 2023), the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine indicated over 24,000 people evacuated from newly accessible areas within Kharkivska oblast to other safer regions.<sup>11</sup> ATM findings indicate that displacement was driven by security concerns, including threat to personal and family safety (55%) and shelling in or near the settlement (47%).

In comparison to other assessed settlements, **households interviewed in Kharkiv experienced a longer duration of displacement** as 88% of households were initially displaced in 2022. Of those, 79% reported leaving their area of origin from February to July and 10% from August to December. As such, these households have temporarily resettled in other settlements prior to arriving to the interview location. Map 2 shows Kharkiv and Kyiv as settlements of temporary residence, while resettlement to the east and west, as well as Poland is observed. A desire to reunify with relatives (53%) and loss of access to services (i.e., medical) (35%) were of the most commonly reported push factors out of these areas. For IDP households intending to remain in Kharkiv (29%), pull factors included the presence of relatives or friends (34%), as well as employment and livelihood opportunities (23%). A longer duration in Kharkiv is noted, as over half (51%) reported their intention to stay in Kharkiv until the war was over.

**Map 2.** Reported hromadas of origin, settlements of temporary residence and hromadas of intended destination, % of households.



## Displaced households in transit

As the oblast's capital, **Kharkiv has been a major transit hub in addition to an IDP hosting area** as indicated by 4 out of 10 KIs. According to ATM findings, over half of households (55%) reported being in transit at the time of the interview. Most travelled through Kharkiv due to its convenience for the rest of their travels (36%) and in most cases, the only route available (31%). Over half of households (60%) reported staying with relatives or friends during their transit journey in Kharkiv, while others were staying for a shorter duration and did not require accommodation (30%). Indeed, two KIs indicated that transit through Kharkiv tends to be quite short, while households plan the rest of their movement.

**Movement from Kharkiv to other settlements remained most common**, as close to half of households indicated their intention to travel to another settlement (47%), mostly to other areas within Kharkivska oblast (32%). A lower proportion of households intended to travel outside of Ukraine (8%), with Poland being a primary destination abroad (35%) (see Map 2).

## Returns to Kharkiv

According to the IOM's Conditions of Return assessment, observed hromadas of Kharkivska oblast including Chuhuivksa (61-85%), Kharkivska and Balakliiska (41-60%) saw the highest rate of returns.<sup>12</sup> Recovery of agriculture, disruptions to electricity, residential damage, as well as safety and security were of the critical concerns to return. ATM findings show that only 11% of the interviewed households returned to Kharkiv. Despite this, all 10 KIs indicated **households returning to Kharkiv was the predominant type of movement in the month prior to data collection (March to April)**. Security was an important factor influencing returns (4 out of 10 KIs), as many KIs have noted an observed increase in the population of Kharkiv city in recent months. Contrary to KIs having noted the perceived safety in comparison to the previous year, Kharkiv continues to experience aerial bombardment, as over 40 missiles were reported to have hit Kharkiv from January to March 2023 alone.<sup>13</sup>

*"The current situation is clearly different from a year ago, because there are fewer incidents of attacks on the city, less panic, and we can see that people who were leaving in large numbers a year ago are now returning [to Kharkiv]."*

– Local organisation representative

Furthermore, **majority of those returning to their place of habitual residence (88%) indicated a permanent return, while 12% did not know the duration of their stay**. A desire to reunify and support relatives was the most commonly reported reason to return to Kharkiv (50%). As 11% reported their return to Kharkiv, additional 7% of households reported a temporary return. Most primarily intended to stay for less than a week to retrieve supplies, including but not limited to food, clothing, and medicines.

## DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 2. Sex and age distribution of household members assessed in Kharkiv.

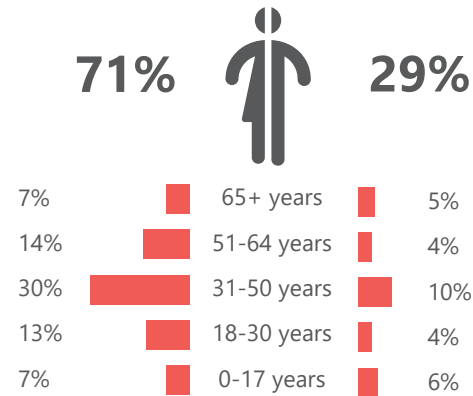
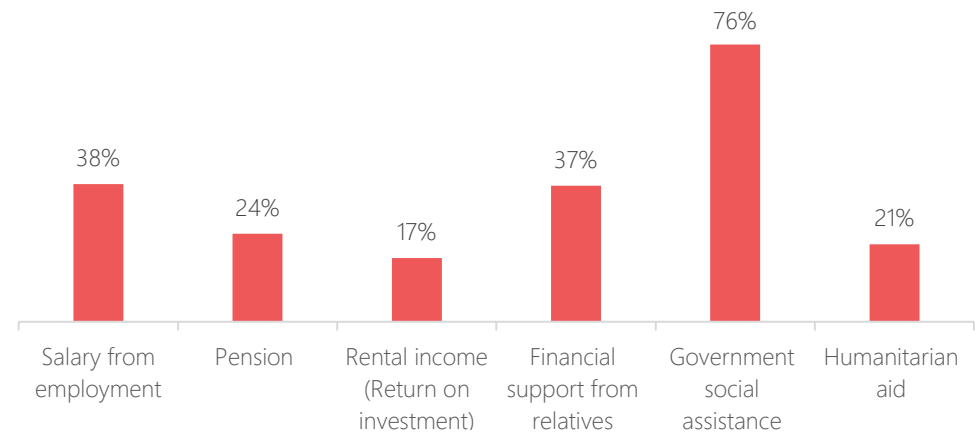


Figure 2 shows that the **majority of household members arriving and transiting through Kharkiv were women**, with an observed higher percentage of adult women aged 18-64 years compared to men. Of those households travelling with members of a vulnerable group, 28% reported travelling with women and children, with a smaller percentage including a single-parent with children (12%). Other vulnerable groups of concern were households travelling with a person with a chronic illness (21%) and an older person age 65 and older (15%).

As shown in Figure 3, the majority of surveyed households in Kharkiv relied on various types of assistance as a source of income. However, **government social assistance was relied on by over half of assessed households (76%)**. Yet, 38% of those in Kharkiv indicated salary from employment as a source of income. According to the Kharkiv Regional Employment Centre, as of March, the number of registered unemployed persons in Kharkivska oblast decreased by 30%.<sup>14</sup> Though employment within Kharkivska oblast job landscape has been competitive, ranging around 16 individuals for 1 position.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 3. Sources of income, % of households.



## HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Following the escalation of hostilities on the eastern front since January 2023, IDPs and returnees interviewed in Kharkiv, particularly those arriving from newly accessible areas of Kharkivska oblast, have diverse level of needs. While **over half of those interviewed in Kharkiv reported their ability to always or most of the time meet their everyday needs, 43% of households indicated that they are not always able to do so** (Figure 4). Despite this, KIs noted the acute level of needs specifically among IDPs in Kharkiv, particularly those with a vulnerability. The level of needs was defined as “very high” or “high” (two KIs, respectively), as KIs observed households arriving with minimal belongings.

**Figure 4.** Reported ability to meet their everyday needs, % of households.



### Healthcare services and medicines

Access to healthcare services (22%) and provision of medicines (21%) were of the prioritised needs for those interviewed in Kharkiv. At the same time, over half of KIs (6 out of 10) reported medicines as an immediate need, and 1 KI mentioned the need for access to healthcare services. Rather than the availability of medicines, **high cost of medication is suggested to be a barrier for households**, as REACH's Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) reported 90% of customer KIs reported full availability of medicines within Kharkivska oblast.<sup>16</sup> Yet, under the state programme, “Affordable Medicines” in newly accessible areas, prescription medication can be obtained at no cost for residents including IDPs.<sup>17</sup> Figure 5 shows that medicines was specifically a prioritised need for households travelling with a person with a chronic illness, with a disability and an older person, suggesting possible barriers to access for those with low mobility. Moreover, **access to healthcare services was reported as a priority need for each vulnerable group**. Since February 2022 to January 2023, a quarter of attacks on medical facilities in Ukraine were in Kharkivska oblast, totalling 83 healthcare facilities.<sup>18</sup> The most attacks on medical facilities in the oblast were recorded in Kharkiv city, accounting for 26 cases of damage to hospitals, other medical infrastructure objects and emergency medical services vehicles.<sup>19</sup>

### Food items

ATM findings show that food items were a prioritised need for 16% of households interviewed in Kharkiv, while half of KIs (5 out of 10) reported a need for food assistance. Figure 5 demonstrates that this was among the top humanitarian needs for

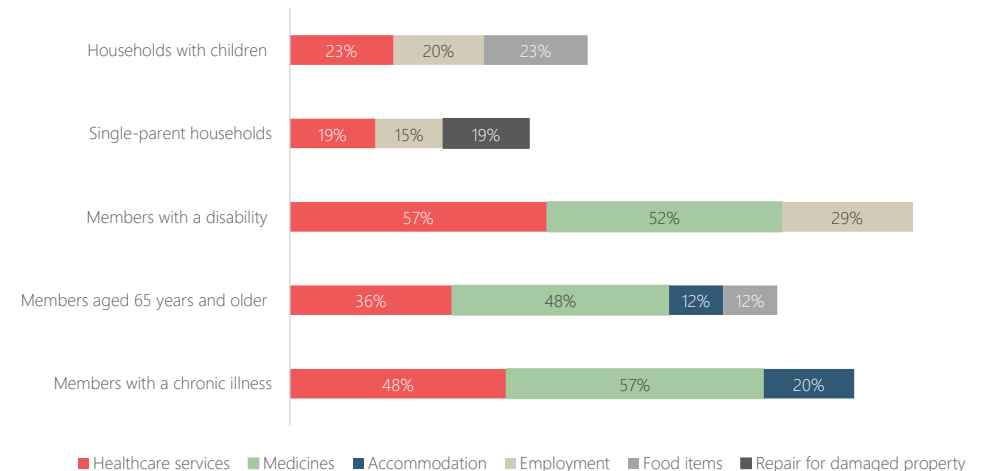
households travelling with children or an older person (65+ years). According to the Kharkiv Oblast Statistics Department, **in March 2023 the price for food items and soft drinks rose by 2.4%**, with the price of vegetables having increase the most at 17%.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the cultivation of land in Kharkivska oblast has been particularly difficult, as 30% of the region is potentially mined.<sup>21</sup> For example, farmers were only able to gather 40% of grain compared to the pre war's harvest in Kharkivska oblast.<sup>22</sup>

### Accommodation

Among all interviewed IDP and returnee households, 14% reported requiring assistance with accommodation upon arrival, as echoed by half of KIs (5 out of 10). Despite this, seven KIs noted Kharkiv's collective sites' do have the capacity to host, though there are concerns regarding the city's ability to provide accommodation to IDPs in the future. Moreover, 17% of households reported the need for repairs for damaged property. In February 2023, the Mayor of Kharkiv reported more than 4,500 apartment buildings in Kharkiv have been destroyed to some extent, thus impacting the availability of suitable accommodations.<sup>23</sup> In response to this, the Department of Social Policy of the Kharkiv City Council introduced compensation to Kharkiv residents who have been able to house IDPs, which has sheltered 3,544 individuals in April 2023.<sup>24</sup> Despite this, there are **concerns regarding accessibility for those with low mobility** as identified in Figure 5. One KI noted this as a limitation for providing suitable accommodations for individuals specifically residing in multi-story buildings.

*“As for people with limited mobility or those who need permanent care, unfortunately, all places in dormitories on the ground floors in Kharkiv are already occupied and it is not easy to provide housing...” - NGO Representative*

**Figure 5.** Top reported needs, % of households with a vulnerable member.





## CHALLENGES ACCESSING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES

In addition to humanitarian needs, **various challenges and barriers, specifically for vulnerable groups, are observed for both IDP and returnee households accessing humanitarian assistance and services in Kharkiv city.** ATM findings show that of those interviewed in Kharkiv, close to a quarter of households (22%) reported having experience difficulties in accessing assistance.

**Figure 6.** Reported difficulties in accessing humanitarian assistance, % of households.



### Access to employment services

According to ATM findings, 19% of households required assistance accessing employment services and opportunities. At the same time, half of KIs (5 out of 10) observed this as a primary challenge, specifically for IDPs. Employment assistance was also **most commonly reported among households travelling with children (17%) and those travelling with a person with a chronic illness (17%).** Corroborating factors could include the need for childcare and/or caregiver services. Despite this, the number of unemployed individuals registered with the employment service in Kharkiv decreased from 4,300 to 1,800 from the previous year,<sup>25</sup> signalling improvements in accessibility of the labour market. Though the labour market in Kharkiv is argued to be competitive (see page 3), state-funded programs within Kharkivska oblast have been implemented to provide employment support. For example since January 2023, over 2,000 individuals joined the "Recovery Army" which aims to provide paid opportunities to those unemployed to rebuild the region.<sup>26</sup>

### Access to humanitarian assistance and services

Reported challenges to access humanitarian assistance and services has been a concern, particularly for those travelling with vulnerable groups. Close to half of households (42%) noted **long wait times at distribution points for humanitarian assistance.** Additionally, 32% of surveyed households experienced challenges accessing humanitarian assistance and services as they **do not meet the eligibility criteria.** Indeed, this is particularly a concern for households returning, as they are no longer considered an IDP, thereby limiting their eligibility for humanitarian assistance. The Kharkiv Regional Military Administration has issued warning for those residents of abusing IDP status.<sup>27</sup>

Challenges in receiving information on humanitarian assistance and services was observed by 4 out of 10 KIs. In addition, 26% of households reported **not knowing where to register or access humanitarian assistance.** Indeed, KIs indicated two primary concerns regarding access to information, which is related to the location of where IDPs are residing, as well as their main modes of communication. One KI indicated that **those residing in collective sites can easily receive information from volunteers and/or organisations compared to those who do not.**

*"People who arrive through organised evacuation and settle in collective sites have better access to this information [about humanitarian assistance] than those who arrive on their own and live in rented accommodation. The reason for this is that volunteers and organisations are working with collective sites and at IDP arrival sites and provide all the necessary assistance with registration, accommodation, and addresses of humanitarian centres." - Local organisation representative*

Additionally, seven KIs described the **information surrounding assistance is often disseminated electronically, therefore creating additional barriers for those without smartphones or who are not informed of the accurate social channels upon arrival.** Often, KIs (5 out of 10) have indicated this as a primary challenge for older persons or those with low mobility. Despite majority of households having received information electronically via social channels (73%), information shared through word of mouth is also widely relied on (71%). Despite this, four KIs have informed of volunteer efforts to provide this information during evacuation and upon arrival.

*"...[accessing information] can be a problem for people who do not have a smartphone or are unable to use the Internet. People with limited mobility may also have difficulties with this." - NGO Representative*

### Disruption to Utilities

**Damage to and ongoing reconstruction of critical infrastructure has caused disruptions to energy providers in Kharkiv during March 2023.** Targeted attacks on thermal power plants and transformer substations resulted in a temporary loss of heating, water and power, with reports of critical facilities including medical facilities having to rely on generators.<sup>28</sup> Of those who arrived in Kharkiv and stayed in the city for at least one day, **79% of respondents reported disruptions in the operation of utilities,** the most notable of which were interruptions in electricity (98%), heating (69%) and centralized cold water supply (62%).

## SUPPORT FOR LONG-TERM SETTLEMENT

### Integration for IDPs

There is an **observed anticipation that IDPs within Kharkiv will return home when they have the opportunity to do so**. The vast majority of KIs (8 out of 10) reported that IDP households intend to settle in Kharkiv. ATM findings show that of the 29% of households who intended to stay in Kharkiv (29%), many reported to remain until the war is over (41%) and only 10% of households intended to resettle to Kharkiv permanently. Many KIs also cited security factors as the defining factor for IDPs settling, due to assistance that may not be prevalent in their areas of origin.

Despite the intention of IDPs to leave Kharkiv in the future, durable solutions are necessary to support their integration for long-term settlement. When IDPs in Kharkiv were asked to name the type of external support they need to overcome all displacement-related vulnerabilities and fully integrate in Kharkiv, **access to long-term housing solutions was identified as a priority support required** (45%). This was also reiterated by two KIs, citing concerns of possible closure of collective sites in the future.

*"The main challenge in terms of IDP integration is housing. We realise that collective sites will not be able to accommodate and provide IDPs with free housing for a long period of time." – NGO Representative*

In addition to long-term housing solutions, half of KIs (5 out of 10) indicated **support for employment would be required for IDPs**. Though, KIs did mention that information is provided to IDPs regarding vacancies and access to social workers are frequently provided within collective sites, thus reiterating the notion that **IDPs residing in collective sites have higher access to information regarding employment support compared to those that do not**. Yet, KIs mentioned much of this is dependent on the IDPs' willingness to become employed in Kharkiv. Despite this, assistance seeking employment or becoming requalified was reported by 23% of IDPs in Kharkiv (Figure 7). Conversely, ATM findings show that 32% of IDP households in Kharkiv did not require external support for long-term settlement.

*"Those who remain [in collective sites] are those who are unable to work for health or age reasons, or those who are not motivated to work and prefer to stay on the humanitarian needle and are happy with that. And this is a big issue." – NGO Representative*

*"Many households have received free housing, benefits, clothing, food, even medicines and do not consider it necessary to go to work because they do not need to. [...] Obviously, when people arrive in the city, they need help with food, clothes and money, and they are very grateful when they receive it. But they get used to it very quickly." – NGO Representative*

**Figure 7:** Reported external support required for integration, % of IDP households.



### Reintegration for returnees

With the anticipation of ongoing returns to Kharkiv city, concerns for reintegration for these households remain. **Almost a third of households having returned identified assistance with employment opportunities as a primary need** (31%), which is observed as a priority in both the short and long term. This was also echoed by majority of KIs (8 out of 10), as they observed returnees having spent savings during their displacement, thus resulting in insufficient funds to meet their daily needs. In addition, more than 200 companies were reportedly relocated from Kharkivska oblast,<sup>29</sup> raising concerns about opportunities to reintegrate into the labour market, especially for returnees with specialised positions and having been employed by these companies previously. Additionally, two KIs reported that **households returning would have challenges accessing financial services**. Concerns were raised as households would ultimately lose their IDP status, and thus any associated benefits.

*"People who are returning need jobs. While people were away, they lived somewhere and spent their savings. There is work in Kharkiv, but it's not much. There is a shortage of specialist workers in Kharkiv (for example, HVAC specialists). Some have moved away, some are fighting at war, some have been killed." – Local organisation representative*

In addition, it is suggested that **mental health and psychosocial support is a concern for households returning to Kharkiv** following one year since the full-scale war. Close to half of KIs (4 out of 10) reported psychosocial support for households returning, especially those returning from relatively safer areas. Kharkiv's City Council noted that the return to the Kharkiv is at the discretion of each family, citing the uncertainty of the city's preparedness for returnees as it's close proximity to the front lines will always be of grave concern for safety.<sup>30</sup> Despite this, mobile clinics are reported to be reaching those in need. As announced by the First Lady of Ukraine, psychosocial support has been provided to residents of Kharkiv and Kharkivska oblast,<sup>31</sup> as well as a support centre for children based in Kharkiv.<sup>32</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>26</sup> [English translation] Kharkiv Regional Military Administration, [Almost 2,000 people joined the “Recovery Army” in Kharkiv Oblast](#), 24 April 2023.
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