

Rationale

This report assesses the extent, severity, and socio-economic impacts of conflict-related damage to the built environment on population and basic services in Kharkiv City, as of July 2024. These insights are intended to provide context to inform humanitarian and governmental decision-making. The assessment is based on key informant interviews, focus group discussions and a review of secondary data.

Kharkiv is divided into nine districts (in Ukrainian, "raion", район), as shown in the methodology section below. The assessment is based upon data collected from residents and key informants across these nine districts, offering a comparative outlook on how damage impacts are distributed in this large urban area.

REACH produced a Damage Assessment of the Saltivkskyi district in September 2023, and a Damage Impact Analysis published in February 2024.¹² In May 2024, a workshop was held in the city to discuss the findings of these earlier reports with representatives of local authorities, civil society organisations, humanitarian actors and residents. During this workshop, a need was identified for an in-depth assessment of damage impacts across the city, with a focus on Kharkiv residents' expected needs during 2024/25.

The city also features in REACH's Humanitarian Situation Monitoring. In HSM's sixteenth round from May 2024, the city's overall level of humanitarian need was rated "High".³

About REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and indepth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT)

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Key Findings

- 1. There is city-wide building damage. The most intensely impacted districts were northern Kyivskyi and Saltivskyi, and southern Industrialnyi. There is also intense damage along the ringroad and near trainlines.
- 2. Electricity is the most affected utility, with widespread disruptions across all districts, significantly impacting daily life. Although other services faced varying degrees of disruption, utility outages were reported throughout the city.
- 3. After a sharp decline early in the invasion, Kharkiv's population has partially rebounded, with heavily damaged districts like Saltivskyi experiencing the highest growth. Research participants expect the population to remain stable over the next six months, though concerns about safety and reliable utilities—especially during winter—could prompt further displacement.
- 4. Vulnerable groups, especially in areas with unstable utilities and safety concerns, are more likely to consider displacement in the next six months. Families with children, the elderly, and those in districts with unexploded ordnance are at higher risk, as access to housing, utilities, and financial support strongly influences their decision to stay or relocate.
- 5. The availability of housing and essential utilities are critical factors influencing population movement in the next six months. Housing is the strongest pull factor (70%), while 58% of respondents identified utility disruptions as a primary push factor. Additionally, reliable access to utilities (36%) encourages people to stay or relocate, reflecting the overall importance of stability in infrastructure for population retention.
- 6. As Kharkiv prepares for winter, respondents prioritized cash assistance for heating (40%), followed by support with replacing windows (23%) and insulation (17%). Vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and low-income households, are especially reliant on financial support. While some buildings are prepared, improved insulation and heating are critical for ensuring comfort and safety during the winter months, when daily high temperatures may remain below 0 degrees C.



Methodology Overview

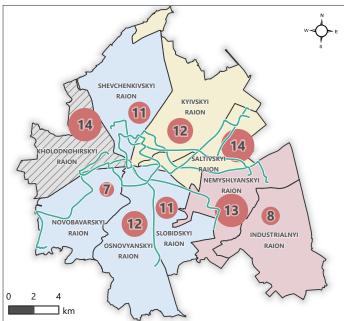
Qualitative and quantitative data was collected in Kharkiv between 16th and 31st July, and on 19th August 2024.

Three focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with between four and eight residents, with each session aiming to represent different parts of the city. A fourth, participatory mapping session was held with residents from across the city on the 19th August 2024.

Seventeen participants were selected for the semistructured key informant interviews (KIs) according to their organisation and professional role. There were nine KIs from the city council, four from NGOs or charities, and a representative from municipal waste management, district heating, an Invincibility Point, and a building surveyor.

Quantitative data derives from 102 structured interviews with purposively-selected condominium association^a representatives, who provided insight into the district they work in, the conditions in the buildings they manage and their perspectives on their residents' needs and views. These results are not representative, and should be interpreted as indicative of the situation in these districts.

Map 1: Participants by group and location



Number of Condominium Association representatives (structured interviews)

13 - 14

Mapping Focus Group Discussion participants daily routes

Dates for Focus Group Discussions

23.07.2024

24.07.2024

25 07 2024

No participant from raion

Explainers

- ^а A <u>condominium association</u> (Ukrainian acronym: *ОСББ*) is a group of co-owners in an apartment building, formed to simplify property management and resolve issues affecting all residents. The board handles routine matters on behalf of residents, protects co-owners' interests with management companies and contractors, and can choose service providers for building maintenance, ensuring better service and pricing options.
- ^b eRecovery (aka eVidnolennia, єВідновлення) із а governmental scheme for compensating people affected by war damage.⁴ The final compensation is up to 500,000 UAH. The program is seen as innovative. However, there are noted limitations, with concerns about the speed with which compensation can be delivered, the geographical reach, limitations on the parts of buildings which are eligible, and the applicant's ability to furnish correct documentation.⁵
- ^c Diia is a mobile application, web portal and brand for Ukraine's digital governance, developed by the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine. It is used to store and process personal documents, including in connection to property ownership and applications for compensation schemes.
- d 1562 is a "dispatch service" for Kharkiv city. It is used for communication between the city council, utilities companies and residents. People can register their problems, and receive updates on public works. The service is accessible as a web-platform, a mobile app, and a telephone hotline.
- ^e Invincibility Points are a network of public spaces and commercial enterprises which offer free access to a generator and some other services in the case of a power

Direct quotations

Direct quotations from the key informant and focus group interviews are included throughout the report. These are presented in boxes, as below.

"Before the war, I bought a two-room apartment in the North 5 microdistrict, renovated it [and] lived there for two months. The house was badly damaged. I did not leave the city, at first I lived in the basement, in the subway. We were taken from the subway and settled in a dormitory on [a certain] Street, where I live now."

- Focus group participant

"My home practically did not suffer any damages. There were several missile strikes in our area; there are damaged houses. One house has been repaired, but there are still problems - the beams are sinking. The repairs are not welldone, and people are afraid to return to their homes"



Context

Conflict dynamics

Kharkiv, Ukraine's second city, has been severely impacted since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation starting on the 24th February 2022. Whilst experiencing military attacks, the city has been a destination or transit point for displaced people. Its infrastructure has been damaged, resulting in disruptions to essential services and utilities.

By the 25th February 2022, battles were reported between the Ukrainian and Russian armed forces on the northern outskirts of the city, and near to an outlying village, Tsyrkuny.⁶ By the 27th February, it was reported Russian military vehicles had entered the city in the northern Shevchenkivskyi and Kyivkskyi districts, and the eastern Industrialnyi district.⁷

Human Rights Watch reported that cluster munitions were used on Kharkiv on the 28th February 2022. Buildings, roads and vehicles were damaged.⁸ Amnesty International reported that there had been "almost daily" strikes on residential areas until late April, and by May there was already damage across the north, centre and east of the city.⁹ ¹⁰

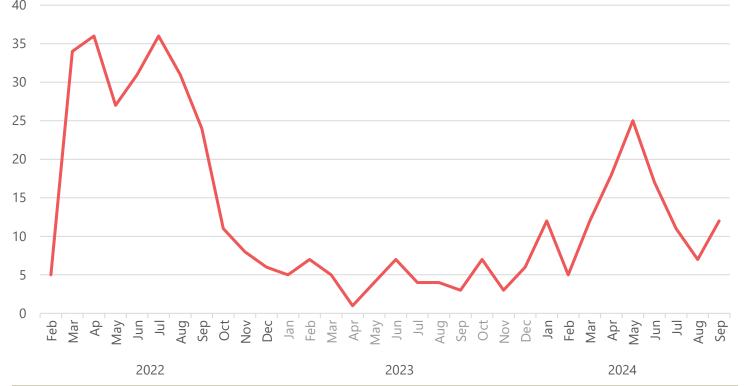
Graph 1: Records of "Explosions/Remote Violence" in Kharkiv, Armed Conflict Location Event Database

The DeepState monitoring group shows territory close to the city of Kharkiv under Russian military control until the 6th May, at which point it was gradually brought under the control of the government of Ukraine.¹¹ On the 13th May 2022, the Institute for the Study of War judged that the Russian military had withdrawn.¹² Nevertheless, strikes on the city continued.¹³

The Armed Conflict Event Database (ACLED) shows that there were frequent aerial attacks on Kharkiv city until October 2022, at which point a relatively lower frequency of monthly incidents were reported until September 2023. After this, the number of records has increased steadily, with a spike in May 2024.¹⁴

In May, the Russian Federation incurred into the border communities of Lypetska and Vovchanska, north of Kharkiv. Consequently, evacuees began arriving in Kharkiv city. At the same time, renewed bombardment included notable strikes on a printing house and a shopping centre. 16 17

Frequent aerial attacks persisted, with June, July and August all seeing more event logs than the 2022 peak of 7 per month. Air raid alerts were reportedly in place for 16 hours per day on average.¹⁸ The city was reportedly targeted five times in a single day, on the 24th July.¹⁹



"In 2022 and 2023, everything was fine with my housing, but on January 25th, 2024, a bomb struck a neighbouring building. During the explosion in my apartment, the balcony frame flew through two rooms into the hall, all the interior doors folded, we were lucky that we were not at home, the glass from the windows was all on the beds. Thanks to the utilities, on the same day, all the refuse was removed, and windows were boarded up."



Population

Kharkiv has been a site of both displacement and arrival. By March 2022, it was reported that the population fell from 1.8 million to 500,000.²⁰ The population of the city was reported to have risen to 1.1 million people on 31st January 2023, and another news report put it at 1.3 million by May 2024.²¹ ²²

The displacement dynamics are complex. In November 2022, Kharkivska oblast was both host to the largest number of registered internally displaced people (IDPs), and one of the top three oblasts from which people had *become* displaced.²³ In the seventeenth round of the International Organisation for Migration's General Population Survey from August 2024, it was found that 28% of the oblast's population were returnees, and 18% were hosted IDPs.²⁴

The oblast was host to the second highest number of IDPs in Ukraine as of 31st December 2023, with registration in Kharkiv city driving the oblast to have the greatest monthly increase in IDP numbers.²⁵ On 21st May 2024, a UNHCR spokesperson reported 200,000 IDPs in the city.²⁶

The International Organisation for Migration reported that between June and August 2024 displacement from frontline areas in Kharkivska oblast was limited. Where people were displaced, they tended to relocate to Kharkiv city, but their decision making was reportedly driven by concerns around housing affordability and jobs.²⁷

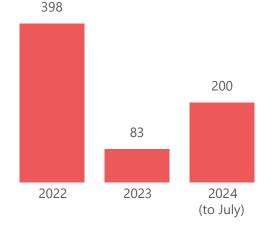
By March 2024, the Danish Refugee Council had found that:

"Non-displaced individuals in both Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts generally agree that they are not inclined to leave their current locations unless there are substantial changes in the security situation [...] They do not want to relocate within Ukraine or abroad unless absolutely necessary. Those who had intentions of leaving have likely already done so, leaving behind a population of non-displaced individuals who either choose not to relocate or face barriers preventing them from doing so".²⁸

"There were several missile strikes in our area; there are damaged houses. One house has been repaired, but there are still problems - the beams are sinking. The repairs are not well-done, and people are afraid to return to their homes"

- Focus group participant

Graph 2: Records of damage to civilian infrastructure, in the Kharkivskyi raion, ACAPS



Damage

The ACAPS "Civilian Damages" dataset records 681 damaged non-residential buildings or facilities in Kharkivskyi raion, which includes Kharkiv city, from the start of the war.²⁹ This makes it the third most affected raion in the dataset, following Khersonskyi and Nikopolskyi. Reflecting the pattern in the ACLED data, the majority of these records were made in 2022, but there has been a marked increase in the rate of recorded damage from 2023 to 2024. By July of 2024, there were already 2.4 times as many records as for the whole of 2023.

Energy

Energy infrastructure was targeted nationwide in March and April 2024.³⁰ By July, more than half of Ukraine's prewar generating capacity was reportedly lost.^{31 32} A period of peak demand in excess of the remaining supply that month led to nationwide power outages.³³ Nevertheless, a degree of recovery in power generation meant that electricity exports were planned to resume at the end of August 2024.³⁴ On 26th August, however, a further large-scale attack targeted energy infrastructure, provoking renewed outages and raising questions for the energy grid's long-term resilience.³⁵

The Kharkiv energy company, "KharkivObloEnergo", had already introduced scheduled power cuts to manage local demand exceeding supply in March 2024, and noted that emergency shutdowns were still necessary.³⁶ These emergency outages reportedly lasted up to 12 hours.³⁷

According to a REACH analysis of KharkivObloEnergo's published schedules, the scheduled disconnection period covered 18 hours per day until the 26th May, growing to 19 hours per day until the 29th June. After this, a 24-hour schedule was instated. Throughout July, each distribution block group was scheduled to have between 4 and 6 hours of outage per day on average, with an additional 7.25 average hours of operational switching where connection could be intermittent. The schedule was ramped down from 29th July until 31st July, on which day there were no scheduled hours of disconnection. However, the schedule was reinstated on the 3rd August, and exacerbated by the attacks on the 26th August.³⁸ ³⁹

The city has introduced schemes to promote small-scale, decentralised energy generation.^{40 41} This is intended to increase resilience during the winter, when demand is expected to exceed the centralised generation of electricity and provoke blackouts.⁴²

"For the last two weeks, we have been without electricity for 6 hours a day, there is water and gas supply. There is a schedule, but sometimes it does not coincide with the actual power outage"

- Focus group participant

"If there is no electricity again this winter, then this is a big problem for our area, it is almost all without gas supply, the stoves in the apartments are electric."



Population

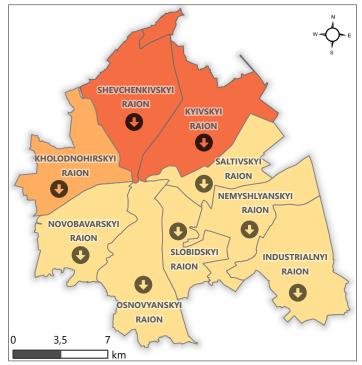
Reported population change, retrospective

The majority of condominium association representatives reported that their district's population was either "much lower" (36%) or "slightly lower" (48%) compared to January 2022. When comparing the current population size with July 2023, 48% reported that the population was "about the same", and 29% reported that it was higher.

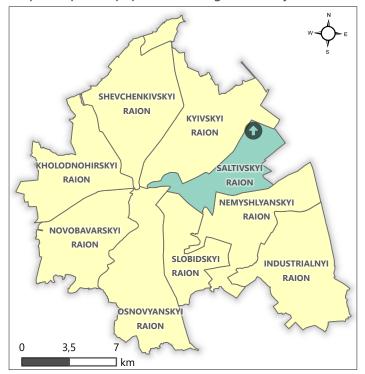
Legend for maps 2, 3 and 4



Map 2: Reported population change in the district since before the full-scale invasion

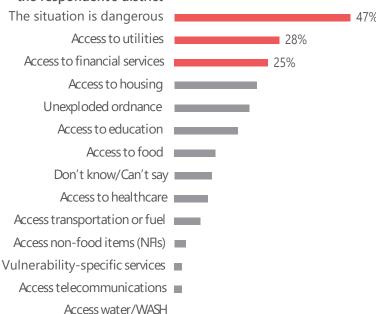


Map 3: Reported population change since July 2023



Both key informants and focus group participants reported an overall increase in population since the initial displacement following the full-scale invasion. One KI used the rise in household waste processing to illustrate a substantial population increase, whilst others pointed to the number of cars on the road.

Graph 3: Main reasons for past population changes in the respondent's district



47% of condominium association respondents cited perceived danger as a key factor driving population changes. This feeling of danger was also brought up in all of the focus groups.

Both key informants and mapping focus group participants described the population changes as dynamic, with residents making temporary decisions based on rapidly changing push and pull factors. Shelling incidents or escalation at the frontline were seen as key factors for sudden population movements, both inward and outward.

Although the population has reportedly increased, KIs also observed vacancies across sectors such as utilities, healthcare, and construction. Some attributed these vacancies to the effects of conscription, and others highlighted how displacement affected recruitment.

Some KIs noted that business closure or relocation is further straining the job market. A cycle was described whereby the initial shortage of workers discouraged business

"One family, a neighbour, went to the Ternopil region to visit their grandmother in 2022, but returned very quickly. In Kholodnohirskyi district, in Zaliutyne, there were acquaintances who left at the beginning of the war in March 2022 for Chernivitsi and have not returned yet. [...] There are many IDPs in Industrialnyi district, because apartments there are cheaper than in Shevchenkivskyi. In that district, IDPs mainly live in dormitories; renting an apartment in Shevchenkivskyi district is expensive"

- Mapping focus group participant



investment, further reducing economic opportunities and prompting displaced people to remain in more stable parts of the country.

It was noted that certain groups - such as university students, medical workers, logistical staff, and entrepreneurs - had left the city, resulting in noticeable shortages in those sectors. Specific examples included fewer available dentists, efforts to recruit women for roles like driving heavy vehicles, and falling educational enrolment. The latter was said to have led to fewer teaching positions, itself a push factor for education professionals.

Some participants shared experiences of people moving between the city and their summer homes, or to stay with family members elsewhere. Others mentioned intracity migration, with people reportedly moving from more war-damaged areas, like northern Shevchenkivskyi and Saltivskyi, to safer districts like Novobavarskyi. Slobidskyi, Nemyshlyanskyi, and Industrialnyi were described as offering more affordable rental options.

Drivers of further population change

The seventeenth round of IOM's general population survey found that, of the approximately 698,000 people who had returned to Kharkivksa oblast, 8% had done so in the previous three months. Further, just 5% of the population overall were planning to relocate within the next three months. However, amongst people who are internally displaced, only 33% reportedly planned to settle and integrate, and 19% planned to remain temporarily, without settling or integrating.⁴³

In most districts of Kharkiv city, condominium association representatives expected that building occupancy rates would remain stable over the next six months. Shevchenkivskyi district was an exception, where a slight decrease was chosen most frequently (by 4 of 11 respondents). In Industrialnyi, the majority (5/8) were uncertain about future occupancy changes, with only a few expecting stability (2/8).

Asked to predict likely push and pull factors in the next six months, the availability of housing was considered the biggest draw overall, selected by 70% of respondents. Reflecting the general factors driving decision making identified above, respondents picked access to utilities as another key factor. These findings align with insights from qualitative discussions with residents and key informants. 58% believed that if utilities were not functioning, it would drive people to leave, while 36% thought that reliable access to utilities would encourage people to stay or move to the area.

"People can temporarily leave for another area if there are relatives or acquaintances. Now, in the summer, many people have gone to their summer houses and live there. As soon as it gets cold, everyone will go back."

- Mapping focus group participant

Map 4: Anticipated change in occupancy of the buildings the respondent manages, next six months to January '24



Graph 4: Top 5 pull factors, next six months

Access to housing

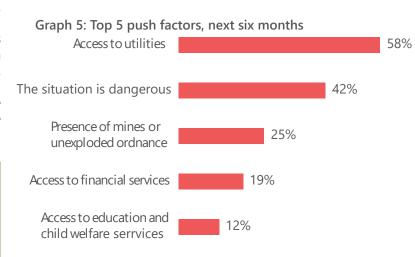
Access to utilities

Access to financial services

Access to food

Access to healthcare services and medicine

22%





Access to financial services was also selected as a top consideration, with 35% noting the accessibility as a push factor in their district. In the qualitative interviews, participants expressed frustration that services including banks and social services are not accessible during air alerts. This is also reflected in the Joint Market Monitoring Initiative data for Kharkiv, where around half of respondents in each round in 2024 have reported that banks are "unavailable during air alerts".

In Industrialnyi district, unexploded ordnance emerged as a key push factor. While 25% of all respondents mentioned it as an issue, it was a concern for 7 out of 8 respondents in this district.

Three main themes regarding expected future population changes emerged from FGDs. One group believed that displacement would no longer occur. Others suggested that families with young children were more likely to leave, while older residents were more likely to stay. It was generally agreed that people who have moved away from the city are less likely to consider returning. This was linked to two factors: their participation in IDP resettlement schemes elsewhere, and a consideration of the likely availability of heating in Kharkiv. While older residents were described as less concerned about reliable district heating, some suggested that displaced people would consider returning if heating services were assured.

In all focus groups, people agreed that Kharkiv, as a whole, still feels unsafe to live in, which echoed the primary concern highlighted by condominium association respondents. This sense of unpredictability was also mentioned by some Kls, who observed that people's plans were often temporary and sensitive to external factors.

Both key informants and focus groups observed that women with children were the primary groups leaving the city, while older people tended to stay. Despite men being unable to leave the country, KIs noted fewer men were visibly present in Kharkiv. Focus groups also reported that women and children were gradually returning, though some were considering leaving again before winter.

Furthermore, around a third of key informants believed that younger residents, particularly those with remote work opportunities or better prospects elsewhere, were more likely to leave. Some KIs noted that job vacancies and training opportunities may attract residents back. One KI described how their organization is already employing displaced people and army veterans, suggesting that over time, such opportunities may help draw more people to the city.

"[I]f I remember correctly, we now have an average salary of about 18 thousand UAH, without deduction of taxes. In western Ukraine, the salary is around 25 thousand UAH. Accordingly, people stay where they are paid more. [...] Plus, it's calmer there, let's be honest."

- Key informant, NGO

"[J]obs are slowly emerging. People learn new work skills, study, perhaps take some courses, acquire a certain profession. There are jobs and people are coming to inquire about opening their own stores."

- Key Informant, City council

"We have about 20 people working for us, IDPs [...] we hire them. There are guys who have already been demobilized, and after being wounded, we also employed them"

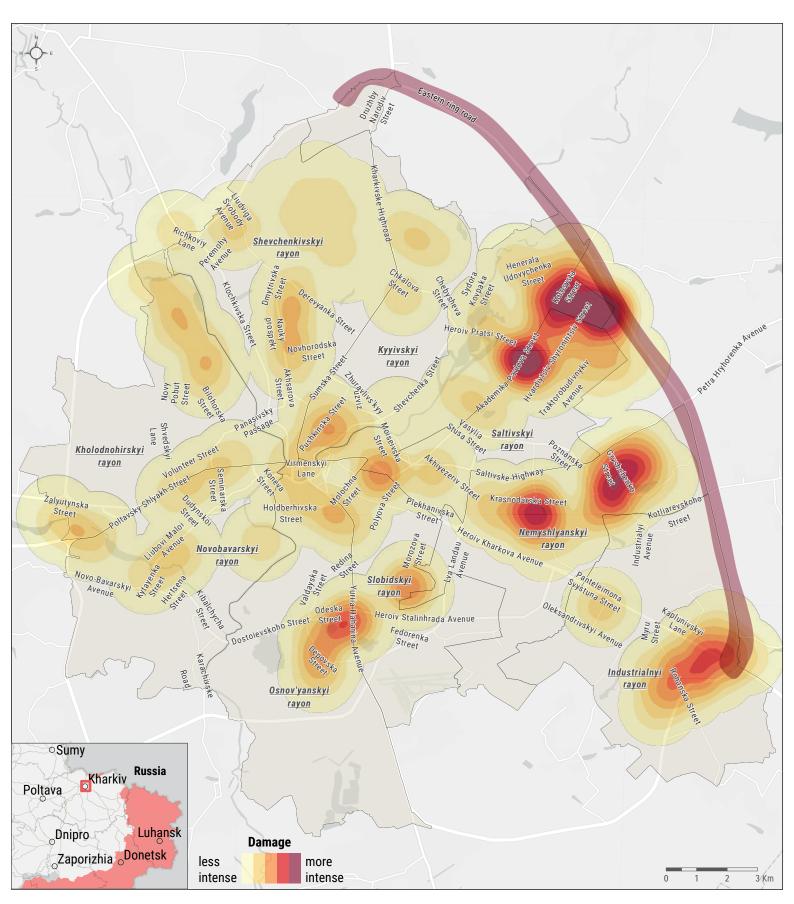
- Key Informant, Municipal waste management

Image 2: Damaged housing in Kharkiv, July 2024 (REACH field team)



Damage to housing and repairs

Map 5: Extent and intensity of damage, as described in the participatory mapping session, August 19th 2024.





Overview

The illustration above shows a qualitative depiction of damaged parts of the city, as perceived by mapping focus group participants. The most intense damage is clustered along the eastern ring road, between Saltivskyi and Industrialnyi, and in the Osnovyanskyi district.

Reflecting on the human consequences of damage to housing, the majority of the KIs acknowledged the heavy emotional toll which people face. Focus group participants described the personal and social consequences of damage to housing.

Some expressed pessimistic views. Some were concerned that people were facing challenges without adequate support, and called for greater transparency regarding available funds and assistance schemes. Others mentioned acquaintances who are in the process of making compensation claims, whilst at the same time already undertaking repair work independently. Still, others saw that repairs were happening, and noted that there was visible economic activity and social life even in the most heavily affected districts.

Reported damage and repairs by district

A pattern emerged amongst survey respondents when reporting the proportions of damaged and repaired residential buildings. In these questions, the following range was defined:

None of the buildings 0
A few of the buildings Up to 1 in 10
Some of the buildings Up to 1 in 4
Many of the buildings Up to 1 in 2
Most of the buildings More than 1 in 2

Most condominium association representatives in Shevchenkivskyi (7/11) and Kyivskyi (7/12), and two-fifths in Saltivskyi (6/14) observed that either 'many' or 'most' residential buildings were damaged in these areas, a view echoed by a KI from the city administration housing department.

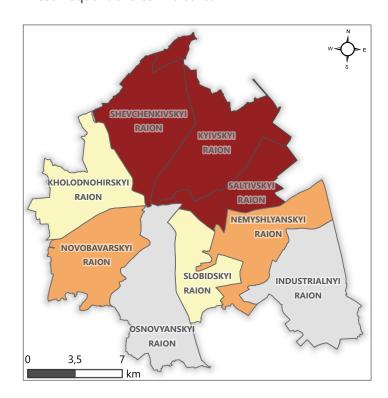
"If we talk about Northern Saltivka two years ago, no one went further than Druzhby Narodiv street, because there was a lot of destruction and few people remained there. Now [...] for example, the store 'Klass' has been opened, markets are functioning, public transport is running, repairs are being made and houses are being restored."

- Mapping focus group participant

"Nemyshlyanskyi district is the safest area in Kharkiv at the moment and since the start of the war. There are not many hits in this area. [...] All of the destruction has been repaired. [In Kholodnohirskyi] the windows are clogged with plywood, and so basically, it is as it was. Nothing has changed in two years, I do not see that repair work has been carried out."

- Mapping focus group participant

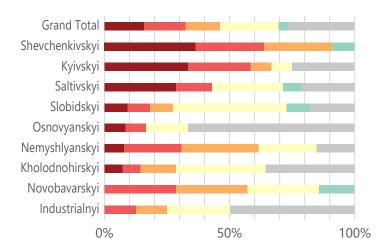
Map 6: Reported proportion of damaged buildings, by most frequent choice in district



Legend for graph 6 and map 6

- Don't know / Can't say
- Some of the buildings
- Most of the buildings
- A few of the buildings
- Many of the buildings
- None of the buildings

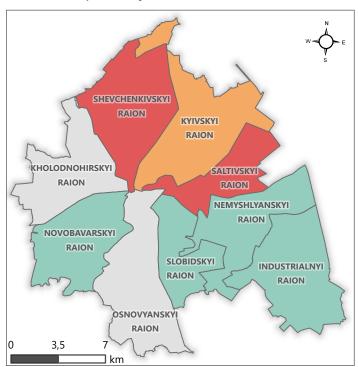
Graph 6: Reported proportions of damaged buildings



In contrast, "a few" or "some" buildings were most often reported damaged in Kholodnohirskyi (7/14), Nemyshlyanskyi (7/13), Novobavarskyi (4/7), and Slobidskyi (6/11). This view was also corroborated by a KI speaking from the city administration housing department. In Industrialnyi, where residential buildings are fewer due to the district's industrial nature, most respondents (4/8) indicated uncertainty about the extent of damage, although the area was identified as heavily affected in the participatory mapping session.



Map 7: Reported proportion of damaged buildings that have been repaired, by district



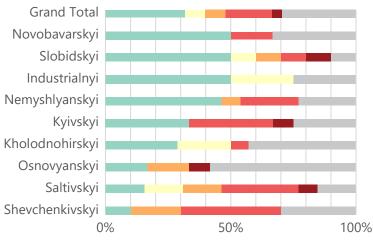
Legend for graph 7 and map 7

- Don't know / Can't say
 Some of the buildings
- Most of the buildingsA few of the buildings
- Many of the buildingsNone of the buildings

In the districts where damage was reportedly most intense, either "none" or "a few buildings" were most often reported to be repaired— by 4/10 survey respondents in Shevchenkivskyi and 5/13 in Saltivskyi. Opinions in Kyivskyi were split, with equal numbers reporting that either a few buildings were repaired or that most buildings had been. In less heavily damaged districts, a greater proportion of buildings were more often reported as repaired.

Non-residential building damage was reported across all districts. Educational and commercial buildings were mentioned in every district, and industrial and governmental buildings in all but Osnovyanskyi. Road damage was also a common issue, highlighted both in focus groups and the survey.

Graph 7: Reported proportions of repaired buildings in the respondent's district (n = 98)



Organising repairs

While repairs are progressing in various parts of the city, some buildings remain only partially repaired or perceived as unsafe even after work is completed. One participant suggested that a construction company was prioritizing military projects, leaving less capacity for residential projects. However, few condominium association representatives (11%) reported labour shortages as a barrier to repair.

A complex range of needs for home repairs persists. Some residents can arrange repairs autonomously, but need financial or special assistance. Others were said to be unaware of their options. In these cases, affected people may struggle because they don't understand the intermediate steps for documenting a claim, or might not know which schemes are relevant. In cases where people are not eligible for governmental schemes, they may also not know about NGO or charitable pathways.

It was noted that older buildings, especially in the city centre, were liable to be left unrepaired for longer. The main explanation for this is that complex legal issues such as ownership disputes or heritage considerations can slow projects down.

"A large number of people do not have documents, for instance. That is, the house or apartment is not included in the State Register of Real Property, which makes it impossible for people to receive compensation for the restoration of their houses. In this case, they are looking for some other ways to restore housing by attracting some international charitable organizations or contacting departments or architects. Inclusion in the State Register is possible, but it requires time and the physical presence of other co-owners. In some cases, a co-owner may be in another country [...] or moved abroad and people have lost contact."

Key informant, city council

Participant 4: People need financial assistance to restore their houses and they will be able to make repairs themselves.

Participant 2: There are people, elderly people, who do not know how to make repairs on their own. Such people need the help of construction companies that will come and do everything, but there will always be unconscientious contractors who want to deceive the elderly.

Participant 4: I heard that now they give certificates. The woman's apartment was damaged, and she was given a certificate. Within a month, she needed to buy an apartment. But she did not have time to use it [...] due to the fact that she did not find anyone willing to sell housing for a certificate, and it expired.

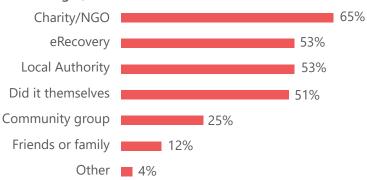
Participant 3: I would like my apartment to be renovated, I need help with materials.

- Focus group discussion



Among the survey respondents, 65% (i.e. 66/102) reported that the buildings they managed were damaged. 57 of these respondents (86%) confirmed that the residents they represent sought outside help.

Graph 8: Outside help that residents were reported to have sought, overall %

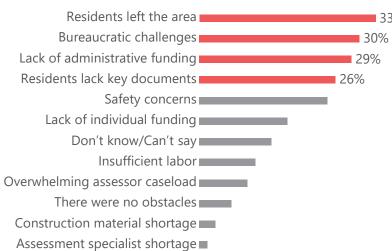


From a multiple-choice selection, 65% saw residents turning to charities, and 53% to local authorities and the eRecovery^a scheme. Nevertheless, 51% saw residents carrying out repairs themselves, whether or not in combination with other support. In the qualitative interviews, concerns arose that those who start repairs independently may miss out on compensation opportunities later.

"People who can afford it [...] cope with everything themselves. Sometimes we called and asked what, how, did they succeed in doing repairs or not? They did everything quickly themselves, if there was minimal damage. And then, there are people who can't even afford to buy a window."

- Key informant, city council

Graph 9: Barriers for residents to repair their residences



The three most frequently reported barriers preventing residents from repairing homes, as identified by condominium association representatives with experience of war damage (n = 66), were that residents were no longer living in the area (33%), bureaucratic challenges (30%), and a lack of administrative funding (29%). These concerns were often reflected in the qualitative component.

Whilst the lack of key documents was reported as a barrier by just more than a quarter of survey respondents, this was often the top concern amongst the key informants. Two key issues were raised.

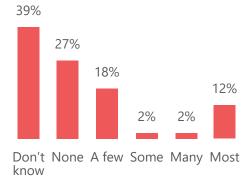
First, key informants were concerned by cases where properties were not in the State Register of Real Property, as this blocks applications to governmental or charitable schemes and deters construction workers. Second, some key informants were concerned that people did not know how to correctly document each stage of their application for support. A further issue, in connection to these, was that whilst the services are digital-first, some people still only have paper documentation.

Only two condominium association representatives indicated a shortage of construction materials. None reported a shortage of construction tools. Just one mentioned a shortage of assessors. However, key informants had an opposite opinion. City authority workers, NGOs, and a surveyor complained of labour shortages. They described how during periods of frequent air strikes, the amount of new damage was overwhelming, in terms of casework and emergency response.

"Last winter was very difficult in terms of the fact that there was a lot of shelling, there was shelling about every week, [...] every day, it was hard. [...] our office was damaged [...] There was no direct hit, but it was very badly damaged. But we did not stop working from the very beginning of the war [...] We have always worked non-stop, we have night-shifts"

- Key informant, city council

Graph 10: Estimated proportion of rejected applications



Amongst the 51 condominium association representatives who confirmed residents had applied for official compensation, 39% were unsure about the rejection rate when their residents applied for assistance to the local authority, while 45% reported either "none" or "a few" applications had been rejected. Half of the respondents who said that "most" applications were rejected were in Industrialnyi (n = 3).

Reasons for rejections most often related to a lack of understanding about the compensation mechanism (chosen by 20% of respondents) or legal issues, such as coownership (18%) or unregistered properties (16%).



"I see that windows are installed in neighbouring houses, but not everywhere, most likely only for those people who live in the house. In our house, the people who lived there at the time when the windows were installed, got them installed. In my apartment, the balcony frame is damaged, I need to submit documents for compensation through Diia^b. But our apartment is not registered in the real estate register, it must first be registered there. I don't know if I'm going to do it, because it takes money."

- Focus group participant

"My uncle's house was destroyed, he received a certificate for the purchase of a new housing and they bought an apartment."

- Focus group participant

Elderly residents, particularly those in heavily damaged areas, were said by qualitative interviewees to face particular challenges in accessing help and navigating the complex restoration processes. Some lacked the necessary documents or struggled without smartphones, further complicating their efforts to secure aid.

Focus group participants suggested improving access to information and simplifying the application process to help more people. They expressed frustration over the need for each individual in a damaged apartment block to file separate claims, which they found cumbersome and limited access to support. They also suggested that **the initial costs, such as visiting a notary, were a barrier.**

The strike on the Epicenter hypermarket in May 2024 was brought up several times by respondents. This store had participated directly in the eRecovery scheme, and it was possible to purchase building materials there in accordance with the compensation process. With the damage to the building, customers reported needing to travel further to procure materials.

"Here is the Epicenter – I have just started doing repairs, I received money through eVidnovlennia [eRecovery] and the Epicenter specifically worked under this program. There is no Epicenter now and I need to go to the other end of the city."

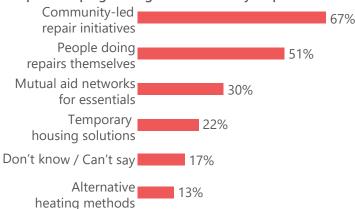
- Mapping focus group participant

Coping strategies for damaged housing

Many respondents from communal services or local government described how they see services and service users working together to find solutions. One asserted that people receive assistance when their cases comply with legal frameworks. However, respondents from nongovernmental organisations were more ambivalent about how accessible available support was. Many mentioned that residents lack awareness of available programs, including eRecovery, despite its perceived effectiveness.

The '1562' hotline was referred to positively by Kls.^c Whilst it was said that volunteers contributed by proposing creative solutions, such as redistributing food and materials, some Kls from the local authority recognized that there are still some people in need who miss out on help.

Graph 11: Coping strategies witnessed by respondents



Several KIs pointed out that residents often handle light repairs themselves if they can afford it, or rely on volunteer support. Two-thirds of the condominium association respondents overall reported that they were aware of community-led repair initiatives in their district, while 52% reported that they were aware of individuals undertaking repairs by themselves. However, heavy damage is harder to manage, and requires outside assistance. In particular, damage in multi-story buildings was noted to create challenges for unaffected apartments, as repairs to shared infrastructure, such as plumbing, are often needed to restore livability across the entire building.

Although the logistics for light damage are more straightforward, KIs from NGOs observed that securing financial compensation for buildings with heavy damage was often simpler. In contrast, gaining compensation to address lighter damage was described as complicated; it involves more assessment and documentation, and there are different pathways. Whilst trying to gain compensation for lighter repairs, some people reportedly took out loans for repairs as a quick fix, though the amounts were often insufficient to fully cover the repair costs. Some expressed concern that residents who repair their homes themselves may miss out on compensation due to inadequate documentation of expenses.

Informal organizations, often coordinated through social media, were noted for their role in supporting affected people. A third of condominium association representatives were aware of residents forming mutual aid networks for securing essentials. The majority of respondents (74%) judged that community coping strategies were either very effective (56%) or somewhat effective (18%) in mitigating the effects of damage and service disruption.

"I haven't heard of any cases [of eligible people missing out on assistance]. It seems to me, on the contrary, people are not informed on the government programs, which provide funds to help people rebuild their homes and return there."

- Key informant, city council



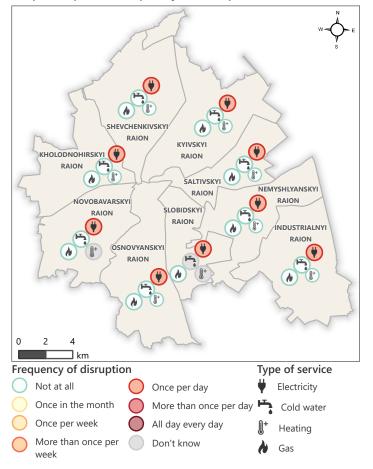
Service disruption

Overview

The ongoing conflict has significantly disrupted essential services in Kharkiv, due to the destruction of key infrastructure. The situation with household utilities is mixed, with electricity heavily affected, whilst perceived impacts on cold water, heating and gas have been more variable. The provision of services has been disrupted by air strikes throughout the year. In April 2024, the water supply was described as frequently disrupted.⁴⁴

Despite persistent service disruption, resilience among the local population was a common theme. This was expressed both as faith in local people's ability to manage, and in terms of effective mitigations that organisations have put in place. However, there was uncertainty about how severe

Map 8: Reported frequency of disruptions to utilities



"I pay rent for an apartment in the amount of 3 thousand and pay for electricity and cold water and for hot water, which is not available. I don't have a hot water meter counter, so I am charged a total payment, but I don't understand why I have to pay for nothing."

- Focus group participant

the impacts of utility disruption would be in the coming winter.

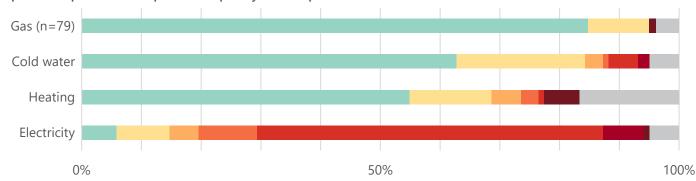
Overall, survey respondents indicated that the provision of electricity was highly disrupted in the buildings they managed, whilst gas, heating and cold water were less so. 57% of respondents reported that their buildings had been disconnected from electricity "once per day".

Across the key informant interviews and focus group discussions, centralised hot water was a source of frustration, with residents saying they were paying for hot water but not receiving it. In the structured survey, 54% of respondents overall reported that hot water had been disconnected from the buildings they managed "all day, every day" in June 2024. A KI from the city council mentioned that hot water was unavailable in many buildings during summer 2024 due to ongoing repairs to the water supply system after it was damaged. This issue was expected to be temporary.

By contrast, the greatest proportion of respondents indicated that there had "not at all" been disconnection from cold water (62%) and gas (84%, amongst the 79 respondents who managed buildings connected to gas pipelines) in June 2024. Likewise, 54% of respondents reported that heating was not disrupted in February 2024, the last month of the heating season.

However, 21% of respondents reported that cold water was disconnected 'once in the month', and 17% cumulatively reported that heating was disrupted either 'once in the month' (13%) or 'once per week' (4%).

Graph 12: Proportions of reported frequency of disruption to different utilities

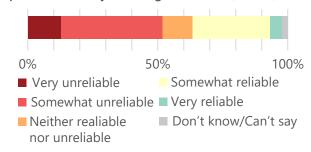




85% of respondents confirmed that they were aware of the schedule for planned power cuts. However, there was ambivalence about its reliability.

Among those who knew the schedule (n = 87), 39% considered it "somewhat unreliable", while 30% found it "somewhat reliable" and more than half judged it to be unreliable overall. In focus group discussions, many participants perceived the outages as unpredictable, and some believed there was no schedule at all. This created frustration, with people voicing concerns about the ways that unpredictable outages can affect the most vulnerable.

Graph 12: Reliability of outage schedule (n = 87)



"The problem is that when the lights are turned off [i.e. a power cut], the elevators do not work. I live on the 11th floor, it is difficult to climb the stairs with a small child. Mostly elderly people live in our house, for them it is a problem to climb the stairs"

- Focus group participant

Despite these frustrations, focus group participants generally believed that emergency utility outages were resolved quickly. Participants felt that the municipal services and the city authorities were responsive and the '1562' hotline service was again mentioned as an effective example of communication between citizens and local authorities.

"If the missile hits directly into critical infrastructure, then gas, electricity and water are turned off, but they are repaired quickly. The longest time when we were without electricity was two days."

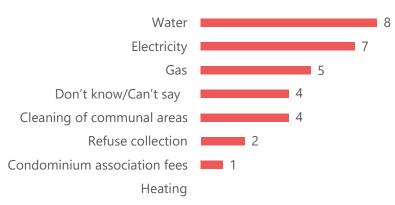
- Focus group participant

Utilities bills issue

Mischarged utilities bills are a concern in the city. Amongst the 66 condominium association representatives who confirmed there were buildings in their association that had been damaged, 20% (13 respondents) reported being aware of cases where residents received utility bills despite their homes being uninhabitable.

This issue was most frequently linked to water services (8/13 respondents), followed by electricity (7/13 respondents) and gas (5/13 respondents). In such cases, seven respondents indicated that residents generally did not pay these bills. Focus groups participants also highlighted this issue, with

Graph 13: Services which respondents say mischarged their residents (n = 13)



one participant noting that it happened "very often" for people to be charged for utilities even after a building is destroyed. Some participants gave anecdotes relating to their friends or acquaintances, whilst others described it happening to people they do not know personally.

Other services

Focus group participants also discussed interruptions to other services and public infrastructure. As with utilities, there was a general perception that services were functioning, with gradual improvements since the start of the conflict. However, participants reported specific issues, underscoring the fragility of the situation.

There were some frustrations with organising medical appointments, which participants believed were disrupted by shortages of staff and problems with administrative processes.

The International Rescue Committee reported that financial barriers continue to prevent people from accessing medical care, despite its availability.⁴⁵ Despite these concerns, participants acknowledged that doctors and ambulances continue to work during power outages and air alarms.

Image 3: Damaged public infrastructure in Kharkiv, July 2024 (REACH field team)





Preparing for winter: challenges and solutions

As Kharkiv prepares for the approaching winter, the city's capacity to ensure access to essential services like heating, electricity, and shelter remains a critical concern.

This section examines the steps being taken to prepare for the cold season, focusing on infrastructure repairs, energy solutions, and community-level initiatives. It also highlights the role of Invincibility Points^d and explores the coping strategies adopted by residents, underscoring the urgent need for continued support and coordinated humanitarian efforts to mitigate the impact of a potentially severe winter.

Challenges in winter 2023/24

Almost all KIs reported that in 2023/2024, the primary challenges during winter were largely driven by exposure to the conflict. Private and public properties, including residential buildings, utilities, and healthcare facilities like clinics and a maternity hospital were damaged. The water supply, heating networks, and the city's energy company, KharkivObloEnergo, also faced disruptions. Despite this, some KIs noted that utility services managed to avoid major failures, in part due to backup generators. Heavy shelling in January led to a surge in repair work. However, challenges like a lack of experienced specialists and resource limitations in emergency shelters complicated recovery efforts.

Several KIs highlighted that the coordinated efforts of social services, resource allocation, and efficient communication through the mayor's hotline further contributed to overcoming the challenges.

Focus group participants described how they learnt new ways to cope with winter challenges. Common strategies included canning food to avoid reliance on freezers, purchasing battery-powered devices, and utilising Invincibility Points for support.^b People also described stockpiling furniture as a reserve of firewood.

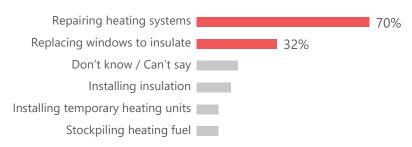
Preparation for winter

Throughout the research, people in the city were described as resilient and able to find solutions to their problems with the right support. This attitude was also taken with regards to the upcoming winter.

Key informants reported that emergency response capacity and energy decentralisation needed to be supported. In their account, this would give the local administration, services and NGOs the resilience they need to support the community. Community engagement and social cohesion efforts were also seen as part of this resilience picture. There was enthusiasm for more engagement with condominium associations to achieve this greater resilience.

Although several KIs raised concerns about the stability of the electricity supply and district heating, the majority expressed optimism about the city's overall resilience. It

Graph 14: Preparations associations are making for winter 2024/25



was noted that there were already mitigations in place from previous winters, such as the installation of generators and stoves. However, some KIs predicted a challenging winter due to reduced energy capacity and logistical challenges in delivering solid fuel. The most frequently cited logistical challenge was that makeshift stoves are impractical in multistorey buildings. Most key informants discussed firewood, but one raised a concern about briquettes being susceptible to moisture. In the case of firewood, one KI emphasised that people could buy on the open market provided they had sufficient means to do so, whilst another discussed the need to coordinate with the forestry commission on the grand scale.

Overall, there was a consensus on the importance of continued winterization efforts.

A minority of KIs mentioned concerns about a lack of trust in governmental authorities and funding shortages in energy infrastructure, while others mentioned potential decreases in service availability during winter. In line with broader discussion of access to utilities above, district-level electricity availability was described as a push/pull factor for internal migration.

Nevertheless, participants believed that some people will stay in inadequate housing with disconnected utilities by choice. KIs anticipated difficulties in implementing alternative energy solutions and managing internal migration as people relocate in response to the availability of services like electricity and heating.

Condominium association representatives reported a range of measures being implemented in their buildings ahead of the heating season. The most prevalent was repair work on buildings' heating system (reported by 70% of respondents overall). Other types of building modification were the two next most frequently reported actions, with window replacement chosen by 32% and the installation of insulation by 14%. The stockpiling and distribution of heating fuel were reported by 9% and 8% of respondents respectively.

"[T]here is [an invincibility point] in Northern Saltivka [...] We went there and they fed us. There is a food point in [a school] and you can charge your phone around the clock, [...] there are extension cords and 50 people can charge phones at the same time."



82% of the respondents reported their belief that 'most residences' (more than 1 in 2) under their associations' management were well-prepared for the heating season. Nevertheless, they reported a range of assistance that would help residents to better prepare for the winter.

Regarding needs, cash for heating was by some way the most frequently chosen form of assistance (40%). Focus group discussion participants emphasized that financial support is most crucial for the elderly, disabled, and low-income individuals, regardless of their location in the city. Reflecting the reported actions that were already underway, the provision of windows (by 23%) and the installation of insulation (17%) were indicated next most often. This is in alignment with the Shelter sector's goal of enhancing thermal insulation and reducing heat loss in damaged or substandard homes.

Amongst the "social" needs that were reported, 14% of respondents reported that residents need better connections with the local authorities, 13% that they need better connections with NGOs, and 11% that residents need help with paperwork. As has already been noted, there are well-regarded communication channels, such as the 1562 helpline, and key informants from the local authority consider the support mechanisms to be effective when accessed. However, it was noted across the qualitative discussions that public awareness about available schemes could be further strengthened.

Key informants and focus group participants noted the problem that damages anywhere on a multi-story building

Graph 15: Residents' top needs ahead of winter, as judged by condominium association representatives

Distribution of cash for heating Window repair Repair of houses Installing insulation Repair of electrical infrastructure Better connecting with local authorities Repair of heating infrastructure Better connection with NGOs Distribution of solid fuel Help with paperwork Distribution of gas cannisters Purchase of generators Don't know / Can't say No assistance is needed Repair of water infrastructure Distribution of blankets Distribution of warm clothing Repair of district gas infrastructure Installation of stoves

will negatively affect the heat retention for the whole building. Although participants reported taking steps to prepare for the winter, they also discussed resorting to negative coping strategies, including cutting back on expenditure or staying home near to a stove for warmth rather than going out.

"It will not be possible to save on food to pay for utilities, since we eat very modestly."

- Focus group participant

Invincibility points

23%

20%

Considering lessons learnt from previous winters, focus group participants discussed the opportunity to visit the Invincibility Points in the city. In the participatory mapping session, people identified a variety of places for support, including schools, metro stations, and a fire station, not limited to the formally recognised list of Invincibility Points. Whilst two participants had used these points, others expressed varying awareness. Overall, the Invincibility Points were viewed positively, particularly for short-term support during power outages. One participant suggested that they would only be needed in "extreme cases", implying they afford a good level of resilience.

However, another raised concern that in the case of a multiday power outage, the Invincibility Point network would not be able to cope. Similarly, a KI coordinating an invincibility point voiced concerns about their limitations, noting "we cannot physically and financially afford all the costs".

40%



Conclusion

Kharkiv city continues to face severe impacts as a result of the ongoing conflict, with widespread damage to infrastructure, essential services, and housing across all nine districts. Electricity, water, heating, and other utilities have been heavily disrupted, and while the population is gradually increasing after an initial decline, the city remains in a precarious state.

The assessment reveals that the most heavily damaged districts—such as Kyivskyi, Saltivskyi, and Shevchenkivskyi —were perceived to have seen limited repairs. Despite challenges, it is notable that the community perceives itself to be resilient. However, challenges engaging with processes, and workforce shortages, continue to affect individual outcomes, particularly in areas heavily affected by shelling.

Despite the community's sense of resilience, the situation remains highly fragile at the start of the 2024/25 winter. The city's energy infrastructure is at risk, with frequent power outages and uncertainties around heating and fuel supplies. Key informants express concern about the impact of continued air strikes and power shortages on the most vulnerable populations, including the elderly and displaced persons, who may struggle to cope during the cold months.

Efforts to prepare for the winter have included repairs to heating systems and securing alternative energy generation, but gaps remain. It is critical that the winterisation response addresses these issues, providing targeted support for heating, shelter, and utility restoration to ensure the resilience of Kharkiv's residents during the harsh winter months.

To mitigate these risks, ongoing humanitarian and government efforts should prioritize the stabilisation of essential services, efficient communication with residents regarding support programs, and a continued focus on addressing the barriers to housing repairs and compensation.

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