Socioeconomic assessment of labour force capacity in Odeska oblast (Ukraine)

April — May 2024

KEY MESSAGES

- The majority of respondents were officially employed, almost equally among women and men, however, women were more likely to report being unemployed including doing unpaid domestic work. IDPs were also twice as likely as locals reported being unemployed. Younger respondents and men were more likely to be unofficially employed. Most survey respondents did not work in the specialty in which they received their education. Meanwhile, more than two-thirds of respondents, regardless of gender and residence status, reported a significant deterioration in their economic situation and ability to make savings. However, residents of rural areas felt financial constraints to a greater extent.

- Younger respondents were more likely to look for work and were more flexible in their job search, indicating an openness to change place of residence, specialization and work schedule requirements. Across all segments of the population, salary was the most important criteria when looking for a job, with most respondents focusing on the average salary range for the region. At the same time, men were more likely to focus on higher salaries. There was a clear sectoral division in the preferred job specializations between the surveyed women and men.

- Respondents living in rural areas faced more severe problems in the labour market. They were less likely to be employed than urban respondents, and they also expected lower wages and cited living in rural areas as a barrier to finding a job. Furthermore, rural residents were more likely to mention the lack of vacancies in their area as a challenge and the lack of educational institutions in their area as an obstacle to accessing vocational (re)training.

- A small portion of respondents had taken professional training courses in the previous year. However, more than a third of the respondents were willing to attend retraining and advanced training courses to meet the requirements of employers. In particular, the most interested groups were women, urban residents, IDPs, and those already employed. The main barriers were the high cost of training and lack of time.

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Since 2022, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has significantly impacted the country's economic landscape. In part due to the outflow of millions of workers abroad, mass displacement within the country, and the mobilisation of men to the military, Ukraine's labour market faces several issues, including a shortage of qualified labour. Additionally, the education system has struggled to adapt workforce training to the evolving demands of the economy. Informal employment has also grown, particularly among men seeking to avoid mobilisation, further distorting labour market dynamics. These challenges, combined with sectoral and geographical imbalances in economic recovery, have contributed to an increasingly complex employment landscape. In this context, this assessment aimed to examine key trends and opportunities for the recovery of the labour market, profile the labour force in assessment regions, and consider needs, barriers, and strategies of jobseekers and employers. With the assistance of Global Affairs Canada, REACH conducted a series of socioeconomic assessments to provide informational support to Acted's implementation of the Securing Women's Economic Empowerment for Recovery and Development (SEED) project. From late 2023 until the present, REACH Ukraine has conducted research in four oblasts: Odeska, Mykolaivska, Vinnytska and Chernihivska.

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SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF SAMPLING
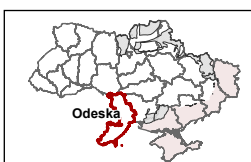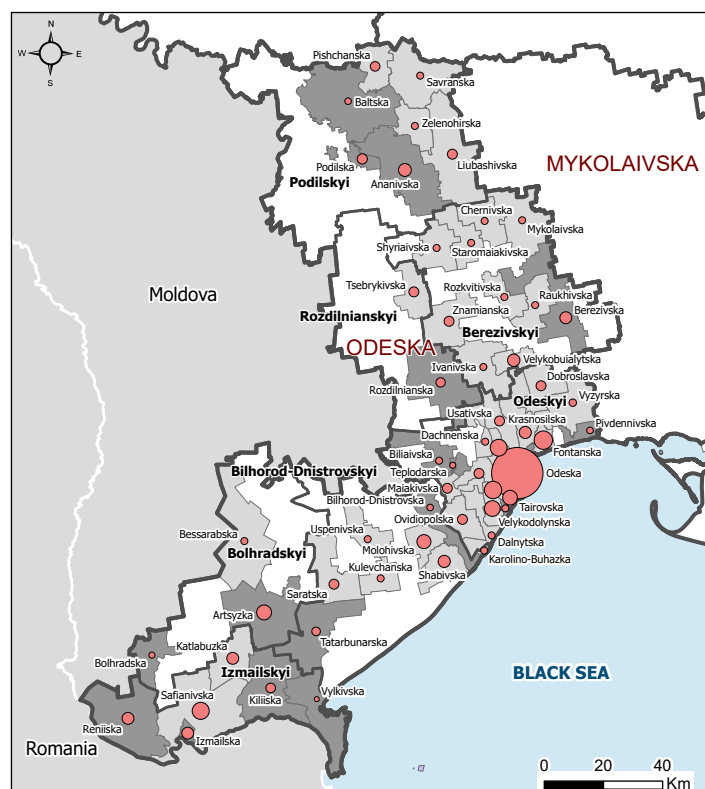
Number of interviews per hromada
- < 10
- 11 - 55
- 428

1359 Total number of interviews

671 Number of interviews in Urban hromadas

688 Number of interviews in Rural hromadas

Data sources
Administrative boundaries: OCHA

Total number of interviews
1,359

Gender		Location	
Women	**60%**	Rural	**59%**
Men	**40%**	Urban	**41%**

Age

18-25	**9%**	51-55	**9%**
26-30	**6%**	56-60	**9%**
31-35	**8%**	61-65	**10%**
36-40	**13%**	66-70	**7%**
41-45	**12%**	71-75	**4%**
46-50	**11%**	75+	**2%**

Displacement status

IDP	**7%**
Local resident	**92%**

Family characteristics

Have children aged 0-14	**28%**
Have dependents who need care	**16%**

Employment status

Employed	**92%**
Unemployed	**8%**

* Of the 1,359 individuals in the sample (all aged 18+), 1,010 were part of the labour force, defined by the sum of employed and unemployed people. Respondents were considered employed if they answered that they were currently employed, and unemployed if they answered that they were not currently employed and also that they were currently looking for work (this differed slightly from self-reported unemployment). The percentage shown of employed and unemployed respondents used those respondents who were part of the labour force as the denominator.

Assistance

Did not receive any assistance in the past year	**74%**
Received assistance from INGOs in the past year	**11%**
Received assistance from NNGOs in the past year	**3%**

Vulnerabilities

Member of family with many children	**4%**
Single Parent	**2%**
Veteran	**4%**
Person with a disability	**6%**
Pensioner	**23%**

Highest level of education received

Primary education	**0,6%**
Basic secondary education	**9%**
Complete secondary education	**20%**
Professional (vocational) education	**34%**
Higher education (uncompleted)	**6%**
Bachelor's degree	**8%**
Master's degree, Specialist	**22%**
Doctoral degree (PhD)	**0,4%**

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EMPLOYMENT & INCOME

% of respondents by reported employment situation (single answer, N=1359)

Employment status

Status	%
Officially employed with a permanent job (annual/monthly/weekly wage)	33,70%
Informally/unofficially employed with cash or in-kind-payment	16,34%
Retired not working	14,72%
Unemployed	9,12%
Entrepreneur, self-employed person	7,95%
Retired but still working (to receive additional income, or just prefer working)	4,86
Doing housework, looking after children or other persons (unpaid)	4,49

Male	18,82%	Locals	16,47%	Urban	15,54%
Female	14,69%	IDPs	16,33%	Rural	16,90%

Male	7,38%	Locals	8,27%	Urban	7,50%
Female	10,28%	IDPs	19,39%	Rural	10,26%

Line chart by age group (18-25 to 75+):
- Officially employed with a permanent job: 31% (18-25) ... 44% (51-55) ... 3% (75+)
- Unofficially employed with cash or in-kind-payment: 22% ... 20% ... 0%

Legend:
— Unofficially employed with cash or in-kind-payment
— Officially employed with a permanent job (annual/monthly/weekly wage)

% of respondents reporting different sources of income (multiple choices, N=1359)

	Women		Men
Official salaried employment	44%		41%
Pension (age and military service)	22%		26%
Government social benefits and assistance	8%		5%
Loans and debts (incl. from family and friends)	11%		7%
Remittances	11%		5%
Income from own business or commerce	11%		14%
Informal employment	11%		15%
Irregular employment (e.g., daily wage labour)	5%		10%
NGO or charity assistance	1%		1%
Income from renting out one's property/land	1%		2%
Selling household assets	2%		4%
Illegal or socially degrading activities	2%		1%

% of respondents reporting an increase or decrease in their income (single answer, N=769)

	Overall	Rural	Urban
Increased	21%	14%	28%
Decreased	71%	76%	64%
No change	4%	5%	3%

The decrease in income had the greatest impact on men, age groups 26-65 with a peak decrease in the 46-50 age group, the unemployed and entrepreneurs/ self-employed, and had an equal impact on IDPs and locals.

Almost equally, both women and men were in financial difficulties, as well as IDPs and locals. However, residents of rural areas felt financial constraints to a greater extent.

Informants' negative perceptions of their financial situation increased with increasing age, with maximum values at the age of 60-70.

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JOB SEARCH

12% of respondents reporting currently looking for a job

Vulnerable groups of the population who were looking for a job

18% — Persons with many children
24% — Single parents
4% — Pensioneers
11% — PwDs
4% — Veterans
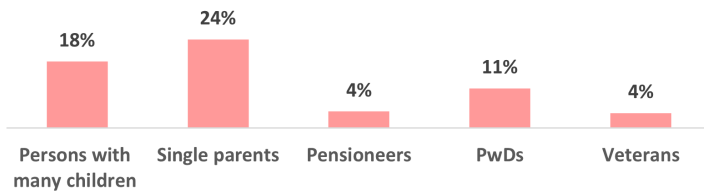
Equally, both women and men had plans to change job. IDPs were 3 times more often to think about changing jobs compared to locals. People aged 18-25 were 2 times more likely than others considering changing jobs.
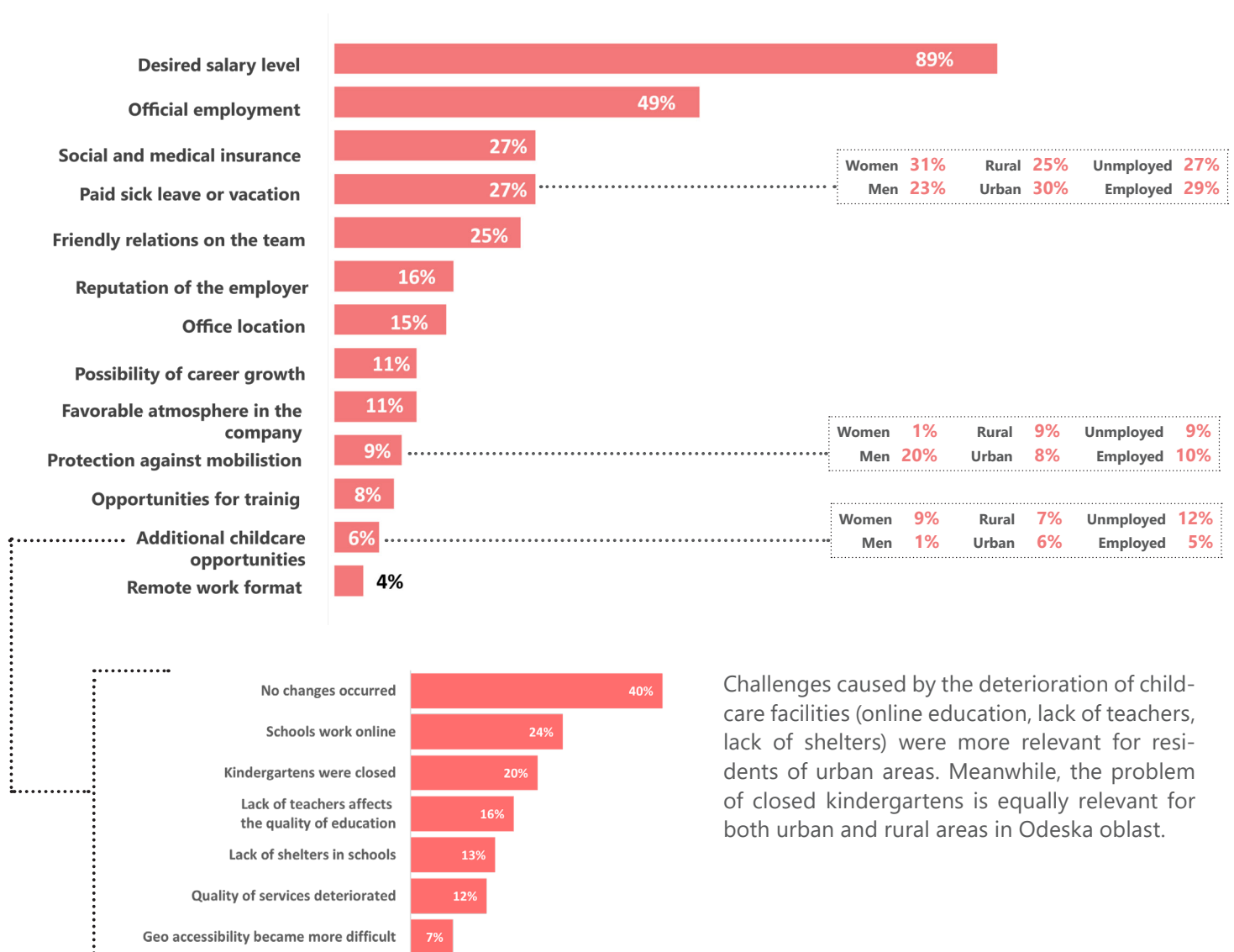
Salary level was the most frequently reported criterion for choosing a job across also strata and was mentioned by 53% of respondents overall.

% of respondents looking for a job reporting desired salaries, across six salary bands (single answer, N=159)

- 15,000-25,000 UAH — 33,96%
- less than 5,000 UAH — 0,63%
- 10,000-15,000 UAH — 24,53%
- more than 40,000 UAH — 10,06%
- 25,000-40,000 UAH — 19,50%
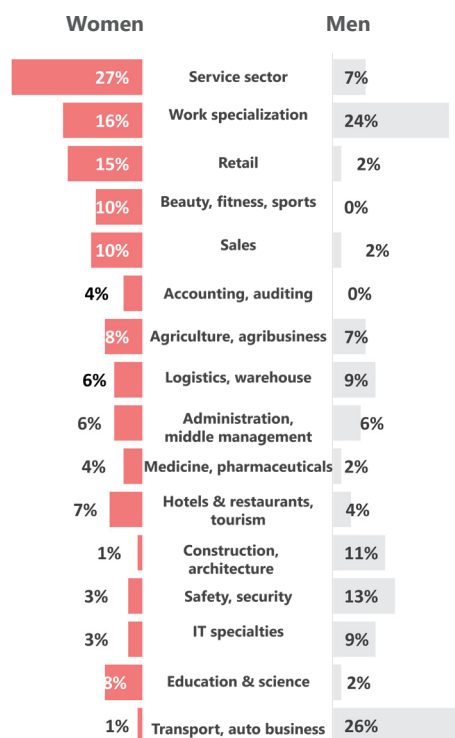- 5000-10000 UAH — 11,32%
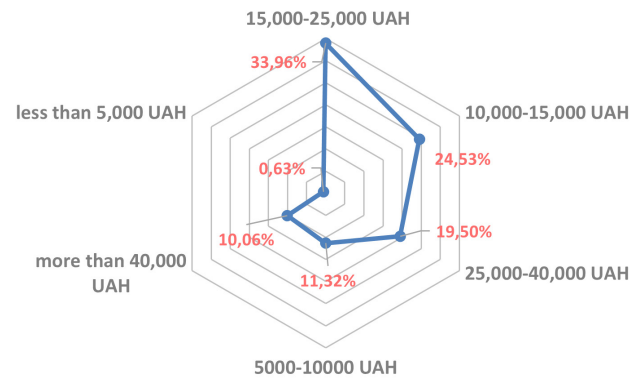
Men were almost twice as likely as women to expect to receive a higher salary level of UAH 25,000-40,000 (30% of men vs. 14% of women). At the same time, women were more likely than men to agree to a salary level of UAH 10,000-15,000, which is lower than the regional average (29% of women vs. 17% of men).

% of respondents reporting most important criteria for choosing a job (multiple answers, N=1357)

- Desired salary level — 89%
- Official employment — 49%
- Social and medical insurance — 27%
- Paid sick leave or vacation — 27%
- Friendly relations on the team — 25%
- Reputation of the employer — 16%
- Office location — 15%
- Possibility of career growth — 11%
- Favorable atmosphere in the company — 11%
- Protection against mobilistion — 9%
- Opportunities for trainig — 8%
- Additional childcare opportunities — 6%
- Remote work format — 4%

Women	31%	Rural	25%	Unmployed	27%
Men	23%	Urban	30%	Employed	29%

Women	1%	Rural	9%	Unmployed	9%
Men	20%	Urban	8%	Employed	10%

Women	9%	Rural	7%	Unmployed	12%
Men	1%	Urban	6%	Employed	5%

- No changes occurred — 40%
- Schools work online — 24%
- Kindergartens were closed — 20%
- Lack of teachers affects the quality of education — 16%
- Lack of shelters in schools — 13%
- Quality of services deteriorated — 12%
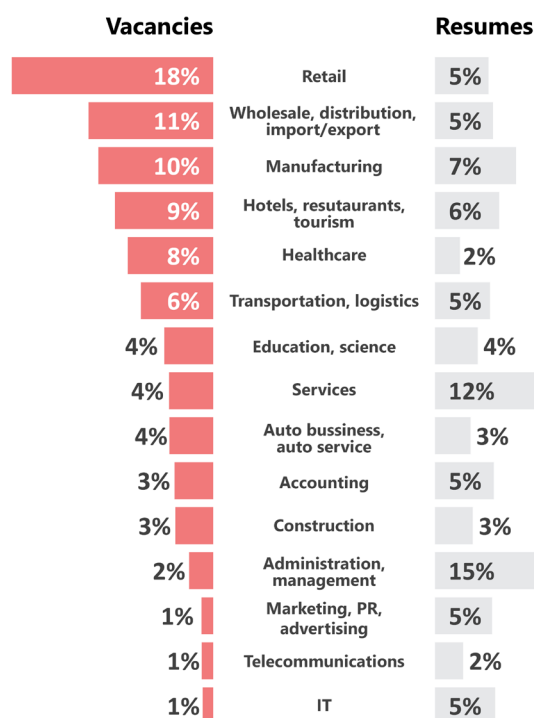- Geo accessibility became more difficult — 7%

Challenges caused by the deterioration of childcare facilities (online education, lack of teachers, lack of shelters) were more relevant for residents of urban areas. Meanwhile, the problem of closed kindergartens is equally relevant for both urban and rural areas in Odeska oblast.
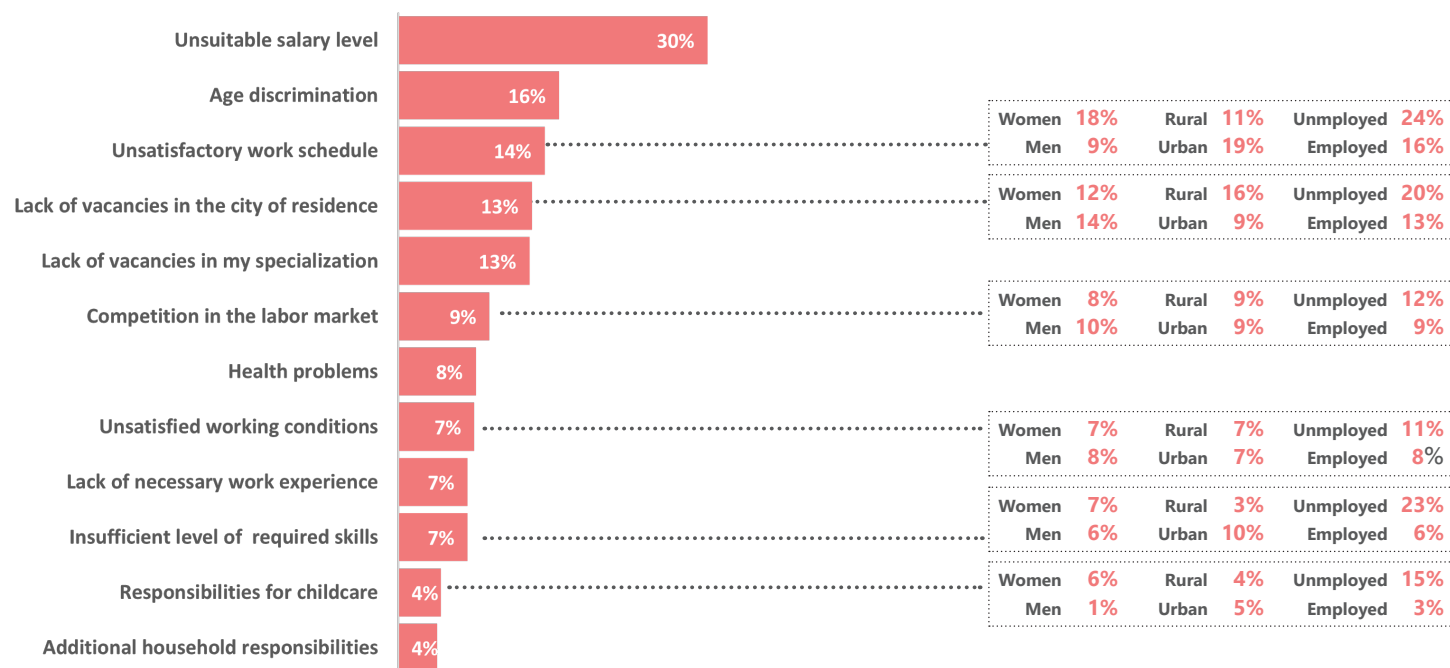
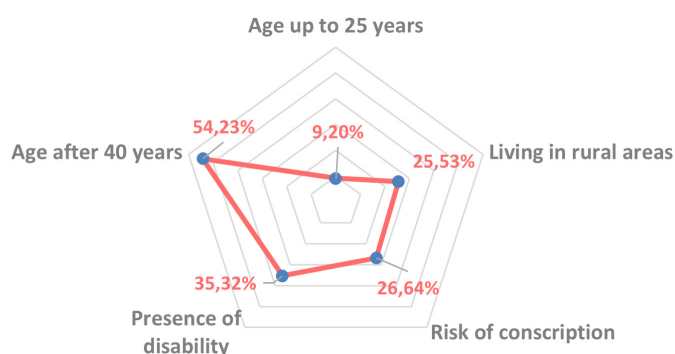## % of respondents reporting job sectors they targeted (multiple answer, N=159)

	Women	Men
Service sector	27%	7%
Work specialization	16%	24%
Retail	15%	2%
Beauty, fitness, sports	10%	0%
Sales	10%	2%
Accounting, auditing	4%	0%
Agriculture, agribusiness	8%	7%
Logistics, warehouse	6%	9%
Administration, middle management	6%	6%
Medicine, pharmaceuticals	4%	2%
Hotels & restaurants, tourism	7%	4%
Construction, architecture	1%	11%
Safety, security	3%	13%
IT specialties	3%	9%
Education & science	8%	2%
Transport, auto business	1%	26%

Number of vacancies and resumes in Odeska oblast posted on work.ua job portal, by sector (Nov 2024)

	Vacancies	Resumes
Retail	18%	5%
Wholesale, distribution, import/export	11%	5%
Manufacturing	10%	7%
Hotels, resutarants, tourism	9%	6%
Healthcare	8%	2%
Transportation, logistics	6%	5%
Education, science	4%	4%
Services	4%	12%
Auto bussiness, auto service	4%	3%
Accounting	3%	5%
Construction	3%	3%
Administration, management	2%	15%
Marketing, PR, advertising	1%	5%
Telecommunications	1%	2%
IT	1%	5%

% of respondents reporting obstacles to finding a new job (multiple answer, N=1359)

Obstacle	%						
Unsuitable salary level	30%						
Age discrimination	16%						
Unsatisfactory work schedule	14%	Women 18%	Men 9%	Rural 11%	Urban 19%	Unmployed 24%	Employed 16%
Lack of vacancies in the city of residence	13%	Women 12%	Men 14%	Rural 16%	Urban 9%	Unmployed 20%	Employed 13%
Lack of vacancies in my specialization	13%						
Competition in the labor market	9%	Women 8%	Men 10%	Rural 9%	Urban 9%	Unmployed 12%	Employed 9%
Health problems	8%						
Unsatisfied working conditions	7%	Women 7%	Men 8%	Rural 7%	Urban 7%	Unmployed 11%	Employed 8%
Lack of necessary work experience	7%						
Insufficient level of required skills	7%	Women 7%	Men 6%	Rural 3%	Urban 10%	Unmployed 23%	Employed 6%
Responsibilities for childcare	4%	Women 6%	Men 1%	Rural 4%	Urban 5%	Unmployed 15%	Employed 3%
Additional household responsibilities	4%						

% characteristics perceived as making it more difficult to find a job (multiple choices, N=1359)

Age up to 25 years — 9,20%
Living in rural areas — 25,53%
Age after 40 years — 54,23%
Presence of disability — 35,32%
Risk of conscription — 26,64%

Respondents considered being aged over 40, living in rural areas, presence of a disability, and being at risk of conscription as characteristics that make it most difficult to find a job. Women were more likely than men to list being aged 40+ (59% vs 46%). While only 5% of overall respondents considered IDP status to complicate getting a job, 29% of IDPs believed that it was the case. For vulnerable groups, the main obstacle was the age over 40: parents with many children (56%), single parents (61%), people with disabilities (67%), and veterans (24%).

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% of respondents considering looking for a job in another town or region (N=159)
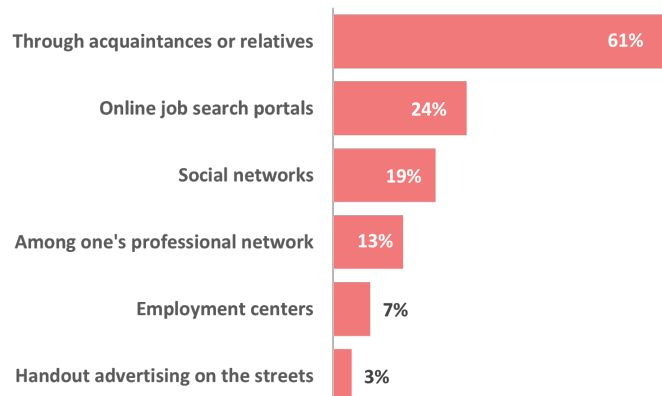
Overall **36%**

Women **31%** Rural **49%** Unmployed **26%**

Men **46%** Urban **26%** Employed **48%**

IDPs were more likely than locals to look for work in another city (45% vs. 34%).

According to the age of respondents, the age group of **26-30 years was the most open to looking for a job in another area** (56%). However, at the same time, it would be wrong to assume that mobility was more typical for younger people, as respondents aged 31-35 (23%) were the least ready to look for a job in another locality compared to, for example, respondents of pre-retirement age 51-55 (37%).

% of respondents reporting usage of types of job search channels (N=1359)

Through acquaintances or relatives	61%
Online job search portals	24%
Social networks	19%
Among one's professional network	13%
Employment centers	7%
Handout advertising on the streets	3%

Urban residents were more likely to use online platforms like job portals (39%) and social media (27%) than rural residents (14% and 13%, respectively). Only **4%** of respondents reported using the services of private recruiting agencies.
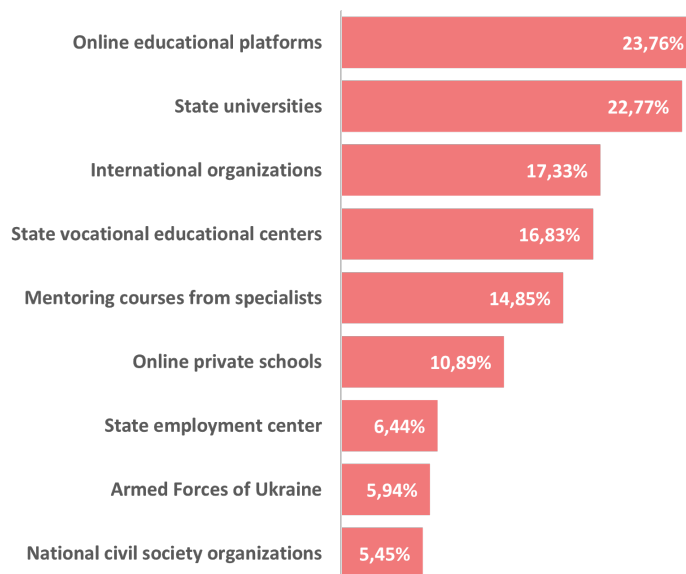
JOB TRAINING

% of respondents who had taken continuing education or training courses in the past year (N=1359)

Overall **15%**

Women **14%** Rural **11%** Unemployed **17%**

Men **16%** Urban **21%** Employed **19%**

IDPs **29%** Locals **13%** Returnees **44%**

% of respondents reporting type of provider of recent continuing education/training courses (N=202)

Online educational platforms	23,76%
State universities	22,77%
International organizations	17,33%
State vocational educational centers	16,83%
Mentoring courses from specialists	14,85%
Online private schools	10,89%
State employment center	6,44%
Armed Forces of Ukraine	5,94%
National civil society organizations	5,45%

% of respondents reporting recent types of continuing education/training courses used (N=201)

Advanced training in my specialisation **70%** Language courses **13%**

Psychological training **19%** IT courses **4%**

Retraining for a new specialisation **13%** Business start-up training **4%**

% of respondents willing to take advanced training courses to meet employers' requirements (N=1339)

Overall **34%**

Women **37%** Rural **28%** Unemployed **62%**

Men **29%** Urban **43%** Employed **38%**

IDPs **51%** Locals **33%** Returnees **42%**

% of respondents who felt the need for retraining or other courses to improve their qualifications (N=1359)

Overall **16%** Unemployed **32%** Women **19%**

Employed **19%** Men **12%**

% of respondents reporting specific job training sectors they wanted to target (multiple answer, N=220)

Women	Sector	Men
15%	Trade and commerce	17%
25%	Foreign languages	18%
15%	Beauty industry	2%
17%	Financial literacy	17%
11%	Medical specialisations	6%
6%	Hotel and restaurant business	3%
6%	Agricultural specialisations	5%
8%	HR	3%
12%	Business planning Project management	12%
11%	Legal literacy	11%
8%	IT specialisations	22%
1%	Construction specialisations	6%
5%	Technical specialisations	20%
0%	Driver training	11%
5%	Logistics	5%
1%	Machine/automobile repair	11%

% of respondents reporting preferred training modalities (single answer, N=220)

Offline **30%**
Online **31%**
Combined **39%**

Women **25%**
Men **42%**

Rural **33%**
Urban **30%**

Unemployed **27%**
Employed **32%**
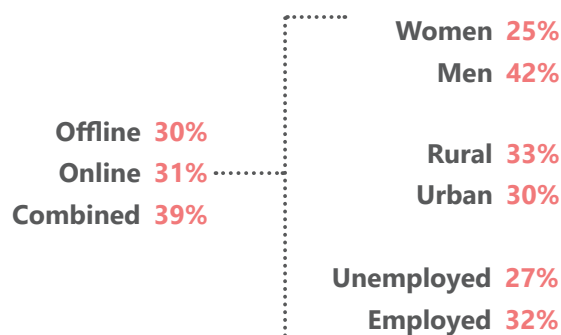
% of respondents whose employers offered free training (single answer, N=839)

Overall **22%** Rural **18%**
Urban **27%**

% of respondents reporting barriers to accessing job training (multiple answer, N=220)

Barrier	%		
High cost of education	46%		
	Women **54%** Rural **44%** Unemployed **38%**		
	Men **29%** Urban **49%** Employed **49%**		
Lack of time	36%		
	Women **36%** Rural **39%** Unemployed **27%**		
	Men **35%** Urban **33%** Employed **38%**		
Lack of educational institutions in my area	14%		
	Women **16%** Rural **23%** Unemployed **23%**		
	Men **8%** Urban **5%** Employed **13%**		
Lack of information about opportunities	9%		
Limited offer of online training	5%		
	Women **6%** Rural **7%** Unemployed **15%**		
	Men **3%** Urban **4%** Employed **4%**		
Lack of personal desire	5%		

% of respondents registered at employment centres (single answer, N=1359)

Overall **21%**

Women **23%** Rural **22%** 18-35 **3%**
Men **19%** Urban **21%** 36-60 **13%**

23% of **unemployed** respondents, **31%** of **PwD, 45%** of **single parents** respondents, **20%** of **veterans** reportedly were registered at employment centres.

18% of respondents reported that they used retraining courses offered by employment centers. In particular, they studied business planning (9%), financial literacy (9%), project management (7%), as well as courses in construction specializations (7%).

% of respondents reporting services used at employment centres (multiple answer, N=292)

Service	%
Search for jobs	65%
Receive financial aid for unemployment	41%
Information services	23%
Professional training/retraining	14%
Individualised career guidance	6%
Employment for public works	4%

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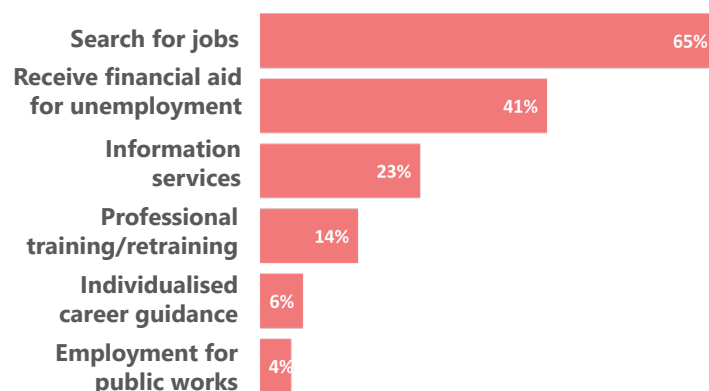
POINTS OF ATTENTION

The assessment of the labour force profile in Odeska oblast demonstrated that at the time of the survey, most of the informants were employed, with 31% of respondents in a situation of underemployment (including self-identified unemployed, people doing unpaid domestic work, childcare, non-working students and non-working pensioners). At the same time, when assessing the category of labour force as defined by the ILO (unemployed and currently looking for work), 8% of respondents were found to be unemployed. Considering job search intentions and strategies, the following key points should be highlighted:

- The most important criteria during the job search were the desired level of salary, official employment, social and health insurance, and paid vacation and sick leave.

- Among the dominant barriers to employment, informants prioritized unsatisfactory salaries, age discrimination, unsatisfactory work schedules, lack of suitable vacancies in the area of residence, and lack of vacancies in the required specialization.

- The most vulnerable categories in the labour market were rural residents, job seekers over 40, and specific vulnerable groups such as single parents, parents with many children, and people with disabilities. In cases of childcare needs, women become a separate vulnerable category. It should be noted that these vulnerability characteristics can be coupled in one person, which significantly increases the risk of unemployment and reduces employment opportunities.

- The training and education component seems to be important strategies to increase competitiveness in the labour market for specific categories of jobseekers. A significant part of the respondents considered additional educational opportunities as a tool that will help increase the chances of employment. It is worth noting that it was the unemployed, women and residents of urban settlements that include the training component in their strategies for responding to requests from employers. Training requests were slightly different for women and men, as was the training format (men prefer online training). But it was worth emphasizing that one of the main barriers to access to training was the high cost of training, which was more often indicated by women.

METHODOLOGY & LIMITATIONS

The socioeconomic assessment of labour force capacity was conducted using data collected between 15 April and 14 May 2024. Quantitative data was gathered on a single Kobo tool for structured interviews with 5,385 adult residents of four oblasts, including 1,359 respondents in Odeska oblast. The sample size was based on population,* stratified by urban/rural, at a 97% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. Qualitative data was obtained from 68 individual interviews (IIs) with representatives of educational institutions and human resources (HR) departments in businesses, including 21 IIs in Odeska oblast (qualitative findings were not reported in this factsheet).

Additionally, data on resumes and vacancies published on online job portal work.ua was scraped using scripts developed in RStudio, providing a quantitative picture of labour market dynamics, including demographics of jobseekers and sectoral trends. The data gathered from the work.ua portal reflects only the number of published vacancies and resumes during one month of scraping, and limitations may also be manifested in the representativeness at the level of hromadas, raions, and is not an exhaustive list of all the vacancies in demand by specialization/sector in assessment areas, as some employers might use other channels to find employees. A two-stage random sampling approach was applied separately for both urban and rural strata. Randomizing the selection of each HH within the PSU was implemented through GIS-based approach. At the initial stage of the sampling, areas close to the front line as well as other no-go-areas were excluded, which may limit the representativeness for some areas.

*Accurate population data in Ukraine is complicated by the outdatedness of the last census (conducted in 2001) and mass displacement. Sample calculations were conducted using a combination of census data and Oxford Estimate Data from April 2023. Areas deemed inaccessible during security reviews were excluded from the sampling frame.

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