FACTSHEET

Humanitarian Situation Monitoring in Ukraine

Four years of evolution: From emergency monitoring to frontline prioritisation (2022-2026)

April 2026 | Ukraine

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

More than four years since the full-scale invasion, humanitarian needs in Ukraine have changed in scale, geographic concentration, and severity. Shifting front lines, changing access conditions, and funding constraints have reshaped both the humanitarian landscape and response priorities. Given the dynamic nature of the crisis, continuous monitoring remains essential to assess the severity and distribution of needs and to ensure that humanitarian response planning remains aligned with realities on the ground.

In response to the initial lack of comprehensive information on the scale, scope, geographic distribution of needs, and service access challenges, REACH launched Humanitarian Situation Monitoring (HSM) in March 2022. HSM is a global REACH monitoring tool that is adapted to the specific contexts in which it is implemented. Beginning with a Rapid Needs Assessment, HSM has since completed 25 rounds of data collection, generating settlement-level evidence to address information gaps and track changes in humanitarian needs over time. In 2024, REACH developed the Settlement Vulnerability Index (SVI) to assess the severity of humanitarian needs at the settlement level, enabling comparison across locations and supporting the monitoring of changes in need over time. Drawing on selected HSM indicators, the framework generates sectoral and multisectoral scores to identify the most vulnerable settlements, highlight geographic concentrations of need, and determine which sectors are driving needs in a given area.

As humanitarian programming gradually reoriented toward frontline oblasts (admin-1), and increasingly prioritised the most vulnerable populations and most acute needs, HSM adapted its methodology accordingly. This brief outlines key contextual developments and corresponding methodological adaptations between 2022 and 2026, illustrating HSM's transition from a rapid emergency assessment toward one more targeted frontline prioritisation and strengthened severity analysis. This evolution reflects how a needs monitoring framework can adapt to a changing humanitarian context, helping to fill evolving information gaps and ensure that analysis remains relevant to operational decision-making.

KEY MESSAGES

- **Since 2022, humanitarian needs have remained multisectoral but continue to evolve in terms of their severity and geographic concentration.** For example, while the front line has remained relatively fixed since 2023, unexpected crises, such as the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam in June 2023, and the widespread energy cuts in the 2025 - 2026 winter season, contribute to a dynamic needs.
- **Needs have consistently been most acute in areas closest to the front line, particularly within the 0-to-50-kilometre zone from the front line.** Settlements within 20 kilometres of the front line appear to have the most acute needs, as of December 2025, with Donetska Oblast exhibiting the most severe needs overall.
- **Both areas without front line movements, and those in areas where the front line is more dynamic, have acute needs.** For example, HSM has consistently shown that Khersonska Oblast has similar need levels to Donetska Oblast.
- **Settlement-level multisectoral vulnerability, as measured by the SVI, is increasingly shaped by overlapping protection risks, healthcare access challenges, and economic strain,** underscoring the interconnected nature of humanitarian needs four years into the full-scale war.
- **Continuous monitoring through HSM highlights the importance of sustained data collection in protracted crises,** enabling humanitarian actors to track evolving needs and adapt response priorities over time.

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FOUR YEARS OF HSM FINDINGS

1. NEEDS IN FRONTLINE AREAS

HSM consistently found that settlements located within 50 kilometres of the front line and/or the border with the Russian Federation experienced higher levels of need compared to those situated further away. Distance-based analysis further demonstrated that settlements in frontline oblasts with the most active hostilities faced more acute needs than those oblasts bordering the northern border with the Russian Federation.[1]

In addition to more severe and frequent needs, needs in closer-proximity settlements were also more complex. Within 50 kilometres of the front line, needs were more often recorded in multiple sectors. By contrast, settlements beyond 50 kilometres from the front line were less likely to have needs, as well as more likely to have needs in one sector and needs of lower severity.[2]

In the most recent findings from Round 24 (December 2025) settlements within 20 kilometres of the front line (n=107) continued to have a greater share of residents struggling to meet their basic needs. Notably, in 39% of assessed settlements within this zone, most residents were reportedly unable to access healthcare services in the two months prior. In comparison, KIs in only 5% of settlements located between 20 and 50 kilometres of the front line (n=129) reported the same level of healthcare inaccessibility. Protection-related risks show a stark difference, as well. The presence of unexploded ordnances (UXOs) was reported in 61% of settlements within 20 kilometres of the front line, compared to 14% in settlements located within 20 to 50 kilometres. Restrictions on access to housing or land due to military activity or active hostilities were similarly more common closer to the front line (71% and 8% respectively).

2. PROTRACTED NEEDS

HSM has documented protracted vulnerability in areas with limited territorial change.

Humanitarian needs remain persistent, even in areas where frontline movement has been relatively limited. The HSM Settlement Vulnerability Index (SVI) findings from Round 23 (September 2025) demonstrate that frontline needs continue to be severe in areas with a relatively stagnant front line. For example in Khersonska Oblast, in the aforementioned period, 46% of assessed settlements in Khersonska (13 of 28) were classified as having extreme or higher multisectoral vulnerability, compared to 22% of settlements across all assessed frontline oblasts. This severity of needs in Khersonska Oblast was primarily driven by sectoral needs in Protection (96%), Shelter and Non-Food Items (SNFI) (50%), and Health (46%), reflecting the cumulative and long-term impact of infrastructure damage and service disruption multiple years after the Government of Ukraine regained control of the area.

3. NEEDS IN AREAS WITH FRONTLINE MOVEMENTS

HSM has also documented deterioration in areas facing continued frontline movements. While deterioration can occur in areas with a relatively static frontline, trends analysis[3] indicates that the most significant increases in vulnerability are nonetheless observed in areas experiencing active hostilities alongside shifting frontline dynamics.

For example, HSM recorded the most notable increases in severity of need in Zaporizka and Donetska Oblasts, which have the most dynamic front lines. In Zaporizka, the number of settlements with severe or higher multisectoral SVI scores was 20 (out of 25 assessed settlements) in May 2025 - a period when the front line was particularly volatile. Similarly, in Donetska Oblast, where the front line is typically most active, 24 settlements (out of 35) had severe or higher multisectoral need during this period.

4. KEY DRIVERS OF NEEDS IN FRONTLINE AREAS

HSM suggests that humanitarian vulnerability in frontline areas is increasingly defined by an overlap of protection risks, healthcare access challenges, and economic constraints.

Protection concerns continue to underpin overall vulnerability. The proportion of settlements with severe or higher Protection SVI scores increased from 83% to 91% between December 2024 and May 2025 (n=222),[4] with exposure to armed violence and threats of missile attacks reported in most assessed settlements.

At the same time, economic constraints further exacerbate vulnerability. Livelihoods support was identified as the most frequently reported unmet priority need in roughly one-third of settlements within 0 to 100 kilometres of the front line as of May 2024.[5] Subsequent analyses further confirmed that cost-related barriers, particularly the price of medicines, are driving healthcare inaccessibility, reported in roughly one-quarter of settlements in May 2025 (n=109).[6] Notably, HSM monitoring indicates worsening access to healthcare. The proportion of settlements with catastrophic Health SVI scores doubled from 5% to 10% between December 2024 and May 2025.[7]

Together, these trends suggest that while protection remains the primary driver of severity, economic vulnerability is increasingly shaping multisectoral needs.

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TIMELINE: FULL-SCALE INVASION AND HSM ADAPTATION (2022–2026)

Since the onset of the full-scale invasion, HSM adapted its geographic scope, analytical tools, and prioritisation approach in response to evolving humanitarian needs and operational constraints.

Context Operation environment and challenges

HSM Response How HSM adapted over time

CONTEXT

EARLY-MID 2022

Full-scale invasion begins

Mass displacement and initial chaos.

- Full-scale invasion; mass displacement
- Hostilities begin and escalate; frontlines emerge

MID-END 2022

Stabilisation and hard-to-reach areas emerge

Front lines partially stabilise.

- Initial returnees return
- Newly regained territories

2023-2024

Complex needs crystalise and persist

Protracted conflict and multisectoral impacts.

- Needs concentrate in frontline areas
- Increasing need for geographic prioritisation and prioritisation of needs

2025-2026

Resource contraints and prioritisation

Tighter funding, need for sharper focus

- Global fudning reductions and reprioritisation

HSM RESPONSE

HSM ROUNDS 1-4

- Rapid needs assessments launched.
- Nationwide settlement-level monitoring launched.

HSM ROUNDS 5-7

Shift to structured monitoring

- Access constraints
- Territorial changes

HSM ROUNDS 8-21

★KEY SHIFT

Settlement Vulnerability Index (SVI) introduced.

- Split into Government-controlled (GCA) and occupied territories (OT).
- Categorisation of settlements into 30km, 30-100km and beyond.

HSM ROUNDS 22-25

Strategic focus narrowed to settlements within 50km of the front line.

Updated survey and methodology to improve relevance and operational utility.

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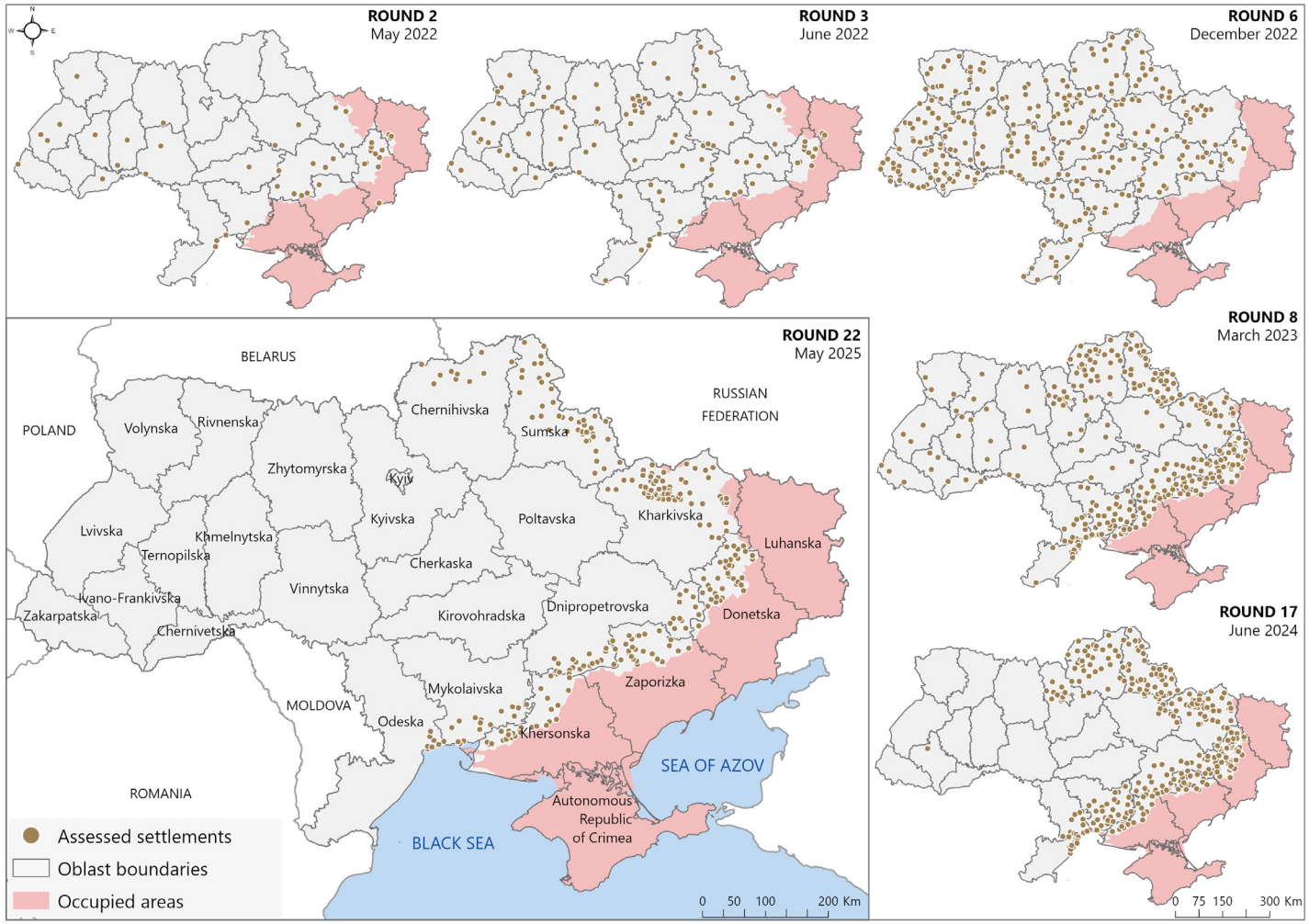
Map 1: Settlements covered by HSM throughout rounds of data collection, starting from April 2022



GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OVER TIME

- This map illustrates the evolution of HSM geographic coverage since 2022, showing both the nationwide sampling approach in earlier rounds and the increasing sample concentration in frontline areas over time.
- As outlined in the timeline (see Page 3), HSM has strategically adapted its scale from countrywide monitoring to prioritising settlements within 50 kilometres of the front line and/or border with the Russian Federation, where needs are most severe and complex, and in line with the evolving priorities of the humanitarian response.
- Between 2022 and December 2025, 199 settlements had been assessed in three or more rounds, supporting monitoring purposes despite operational and access constraints. This allowed HSM to provide unique trends analyses overtime.

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METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

As of Round 25 (February/March 2026), HSM has been redesigned. The redesign makes trends analyses across prior rounds impossible. However, the redesign has strengthened the methodological rigor and the monitoring aspect of HSM, as well as let HSM more accurately respond to the shifting information needs of the humanitarian response post the reprioritisation in early 2025.

Currently, HSM takes place every other month, through key informant interviews via the phone carried out by REACH enumerators. HSM strives to interview the same key informants every round, which include representatives from local government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as public sector workers. Given the sample is unable to be randomised, interviewing the same respondents allows for biases to be understood and better controlled in the sample.

The respondents are asked to provide answers to the same questions every round via a structured quantitative tool, in order to monitor how needs shift across time, as well as according to seasons. Additional questions are added depending on the need of and relevance to the humanitarian response.

Settlements are included in the sample according to the following critiera: settlements which are located within the 0-to-50-kilometre zone of the front line and/or border with the Russian Federation in Government-controlled areas according to LiveUA at the time of sampling (which occurs shortly before every round) AND are 1) either raion (admin-2) or hromada centres (admin-3) which have more than 50 residents or 2) non-administrative centers with more than 1,000 residents according to IOM Frontline Flow Monitoring, or, for those settlements not covered by IOM since August 2025, have more than 1,000 residents according to estimates calculated via using the annual UNFPA Common Operational Dataset on Pouplation Statistics (COD-PS) in combination with the 2022 Government of Ukraine census.

The number of KIs per settlement varies according to settlement size. For settlements with less than 10,000 residents, three are interviewed. For settlements with more than 10,000 residents, five are interviewed.

All KI responses from the same settlement are aggregated to have one data point for each indicator per settlement, based off a Data Aggregation Plan. The Plan varies according to question type (numeric, select-one categorical, select-one ordinal categorical, select multiple) and number of KIs.

The statistics presented in this brief cannot be extrapolated to represent a proportion of the population, and thus should be interpreted as indicative rather than representative. Further information, including on the SVI calculations and the HSM questionnaire, can be found in the Terms of Reference.

ENDNOTES

1 REACH, HSM: Distance from the frontline/border and impact on humanitarian needs, December 2024.
2 Ibid.
3 REACH, REACH HSM: Evolution of humanitarian needs in frontline areas (December 2024 - June 2025), September 2025.
4 REACH, REACH HSM: Evolution of humanitarian needs in frontline areas (December 2024 - June 2025), September 2025.
5 REACH, Humanitarian Situation Monitoring: Evolution of Needs (November 2023-May 2024), July 2024.
6 REACH, REACH HSM: Evolution of humanitarian needs in frontline areas (December 2024 - June 2025), September 2025.
7 Ibid.

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 in-depth 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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