

# REACH HSM: Evolution of humanitarian needs in occupied areas (December 2024 to May 2025)

September 2025 | Ukraine

## Key Messages

- **The proportion of settlements where some residents were unable to meet their basic needs decreased between December 2024 and May 2025.** Overall, in December 2024, key informants (KIs) reported 33% of settlements had severe or above levels of needs and 30% in February. However, in May 2025 this figure decreased to 27%.
- **Despite need decreasing, it remained more common in settlements closer to the front line.**<sup>3</sup> KIs reported that some residents were unable to meet their basic needs in 61% of settlements within 20 kilometres of the front line<sup>4</sup> in December 2024, 56% in February 2025, and 48% in May 2025. Comparatively, in settlements away from the front line, this was reported in 17%, 14% and 15% of settlements, respectively.
- **Donetska Oblast had the most severe need across sectors, as well as self-reported by key informants.** Nonetheless, there was some indication the situation may be improving.
- **Lack of/insufficient access to healthcare and cash remained the most frequently reported unmet priority needs across geographies.** Cash was reported by KIs as a priority need in 71% of settlements in December 2024, 78% in February 2025 and 85% in May 2025, and healthcare in 72%, 77% and 76% of settlements, respectively.
- **Most sectors did not experience considerable changes from December 2024 to May 2025.** The situation remained stable, with some indication that the situation may be improving.

## Context & Rationale

**The humanitarian situation in the occupied areas of Ukraine remains a matter of grave concern.** The population in these areas, encompassing at least 1 million people in need,<sup>1</sup> continues to face challenges in relation to meeting their essential needs.

**The Humanitarian Situation Monitoring (HSM) conducts quarterly data collection rounds** to monitor and assess the needs of populations living in the occupied areas. It also has a complementary component which focuses on Government-controlled frontline areas.

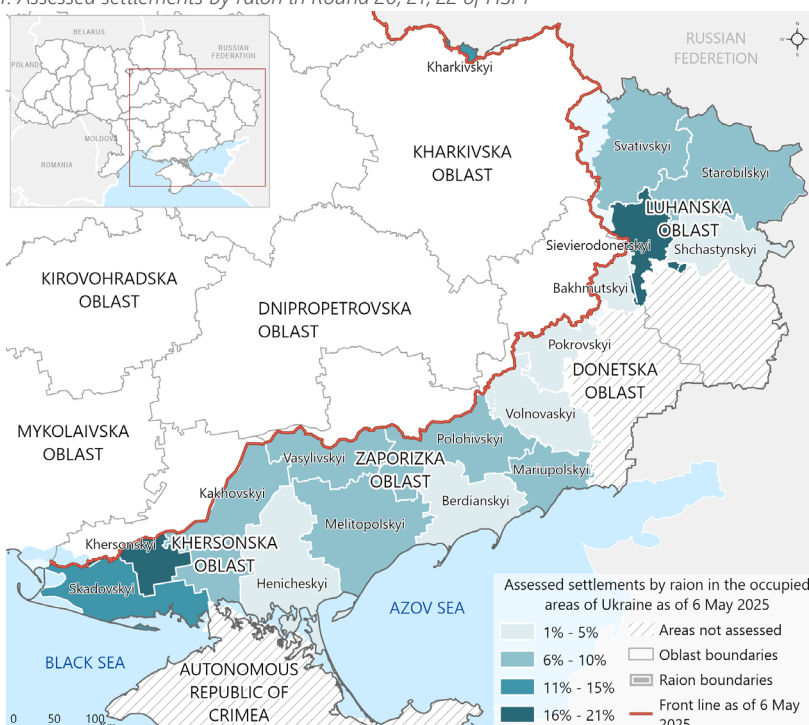
## Methodology Overview

**This situation overview highlights key developments in settlements in the occupied areas of Ukraine** in December 2024 (Round 20), February 2025 (Round 21) and May 2025 (Round 22). Given the sampling changed from round to round, this Situation Overview incorporates data from the 139 settlements that were consistently assessed (see Annex 1 for more details).

**HSM in the occupied areas adopts the Area of Knowledge (AoK) methodology.**<sup>2</sup> The AoK methodology is a remote data collection method used to collect data in areas inaccessible to data collection by interviewing instead individuals (i.e. AoK KIs) who have recently left those areas and/or have regular contact with individuals still living in those areas.

**Given the methodology used in HSM, the data presented is indicative.**

Map 1: Assessed settlements by raion in Round 20, 21, 22 of HSM

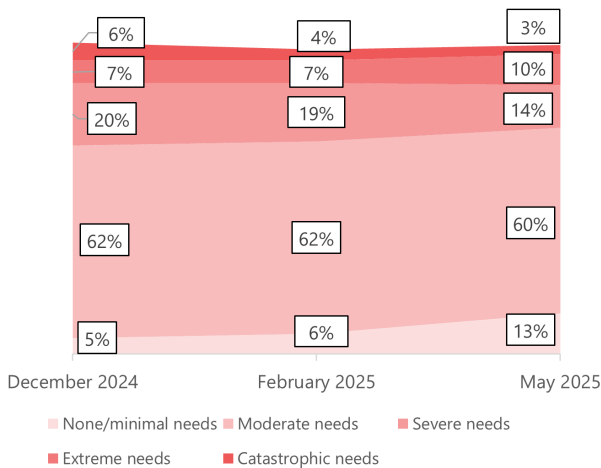


## OVERVIEW OF NEEDS

### Need in the assessed settlements in the occupied areas decreased slightly during the examined period.

For example, settlements where key informants (KIs) on average<sup>5</sup> reported some residents could not meet their basic needs (i.e. severe or higher need) decreased from December 2024 (33%) to February 2025 (30%) to May 2025 (27%).

Figure 1: Percentage of settlements by reported level of residents unable to meet basic needs and by round (n=139)



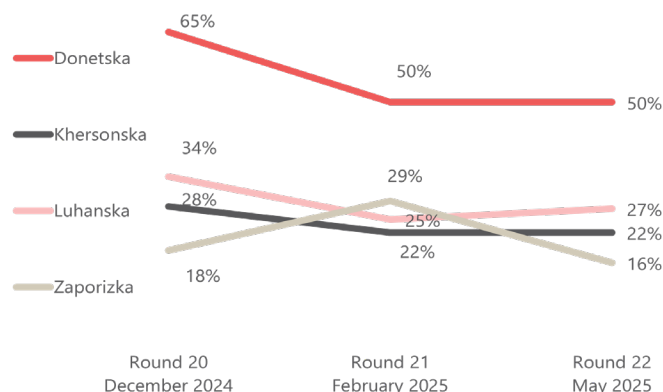
### Needs in the assessed frontline settlements (i.e. within 20 kilometers of the front line) remained common and severe, despite decreasing over the examined period.

Sixty-one percent of settlements in December 2024, 56% of settlements in February 2025, and 48% of settlements in May 2025 were assessed to have severe or above levels of need in the 20-kilometer range.

**Assessed settlements located more than 20 kilometers from the front line were far less frequently reported as having need.** In 17% of such settlements in December 2024, 14% in February 2025, and 15% in May 2025, some residents reportedly could not meet their basic needs.

**Overall, fluctuations in need varied by oblast.** For example, KIs most frequently reported severe need in Donetska Oblast (65%, 50% and 50%, respectively, n=20). However, the situation also improved substantially. In contrast, need in Khersonska appeared more stable (28%, 22% and 22%, respectively, n=36).

Figure 2: Percentage of settlements by reported level of residents unable to meet basic needs and by round and by oblast (n=139)



### Priority needs

**From December 2024 to May 2025, cash and healthcare were reported by KIs as the most frequently priority needs.** KIs reported cash in 71% of settlements in December 2024, 78% in February 2025, and in 85% of settlements in May 2025. Healthcare was reported by KIs in 72%, 77% and 76%, respectively.

**Frontline areas persistently had discrete needs as reported by KIs.** For example, the E-recovery programme and food assistance were more likely to be reported in frontline settlements. Nineteen percent, 17% and 40% of settlements reported these were priority needs, compared to 11%, 9% and 13% of settlements in non-frontline areas. Food assistance was similarly reported more often by KIs in frontline settlements (55%, 48% and 34%, respectively) compared to non-frontline settlements (22%, 33% and 26%, respectively).

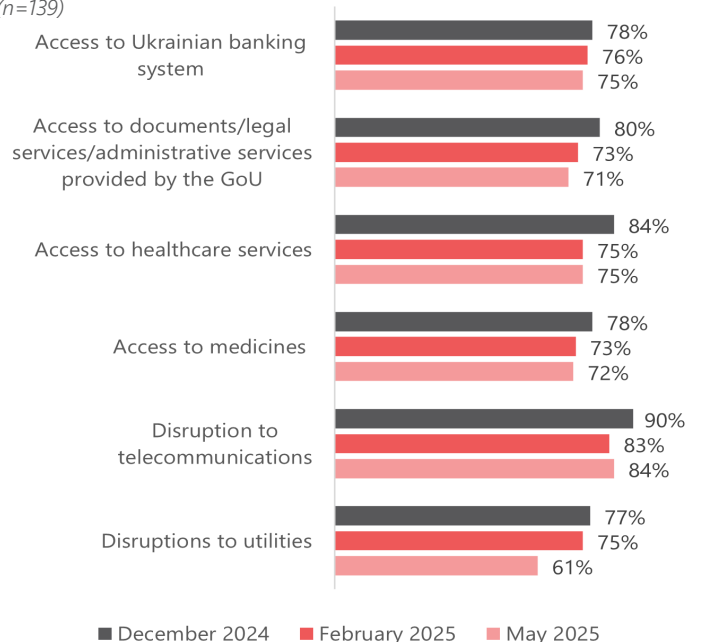
The situation across oblasts varied, with certain rounds indicating oblast-specific priority needs. However, overall, there existed no noticeable difference across oblasts.

### Most reported concerns

**Concerns remained consistent across the examined period, with little variation across rounds (see Figure 2).**

**However, frontline settlements reported a greater variety of concerns, as well as specific concerns.** In particular, WASH concerns, such as access to drinking water (51%, 44% and 42%, respectively), access to non-drinking water (37%, 33% and 32%, respectively) and access to WASH facilities (25%, 31%, and 24%, respectively) were reported substantially more often. Access to food (41%, 40%, and 32%, respectively), access to financial services (63%, 73%, and 64%, respectively) and access to legal services (24%, 37%, and 36%, respectively) were also more often reported by frontline settlement KIs.

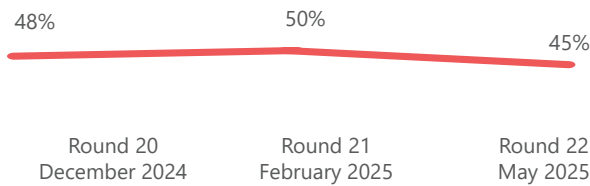
Figure 3: Percentage of settlements by most reported concerns, by round (n=139)



## HEALTHCARE

### Access to healthcare

Figure 4: Percentage of settlements where KIs reported at least 10-24% of the settlement's residents not having access to healthcare during examined period (n=139)

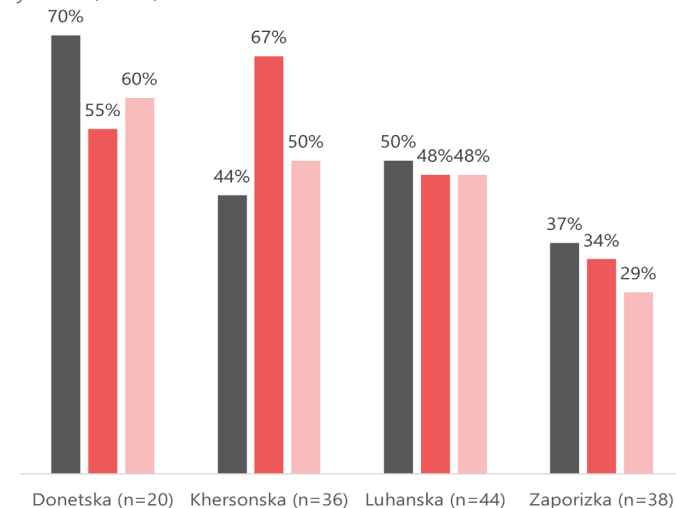


**Between December 2024 and May 2025, access to healthcare in assessed settlements remained generally stable.** KIs reported that 10% or more of residents were unable to access healthcare in 48% of settlements in December 2024, 50% in February 2025, and 45% in May 2025.

**KIs in settlements within 20 kilometers of the front line more often reported residents having challenges accessing healthcare.** However, access challenges were more volatile in this area: 73%, 83% and 58%, respectively. This contrasts with settlements outside this area, where need was less severe and more stable: 34%, 31% and 38%, respectively.

**The deterioration, improvement or stability of healthcare access varied by oblast (see Figure 4).** For example, need in Donetsk and Khersonska Oblasts was more volatile compared to Luhanska Oblast.

Figure 5: Percentage of settlements where KIs reported at least 10-24% of the settlement's residents not having access to healthcare during examined period, by oblast (n=138)



**Of the settlements with healthcare access challenges, the barriers remained consistent across the examined period.** Shortage of medical personnel (68% in December 2024, 58% in February 2025, 66% in May 2025, respectively), lack of functional healthcare facilities (41% in December 2024, 42% in February 2025, 45% in May 2025), non-availability of necessary services (50% in December 2024, 48% in February 2025, 41% in May 2025), and distance to healthcare facilities (39% in December 2024, 33% in February 2025, 50% in May 2025) were most commonly reported.

### Access to specific healthcare services and facilities

**Access to specialty hospital care, laboratory and diagnostic services, and hospital care was limited across many settlements during the examined period.**

When asked which healthcare facilities were unavailable in the settlement, of the settlements with reportedly limited healthcare access, KIs most frequently reported specialty hospital care (77% in December 2024, 94% in February 2025, 82% in May 2025), laboratory and diagnostic services (69% in December 2024, 74% in February 2025, 79% in May 2025), and hospital care (58% in December 2024, 49% in February 2025, 45% in May 2025).

**All assessed healthcare services and facilities were more unavailable in frontline settlements compared with settlements located further from the front line.**

This pattern was observed across all types of categorized healthcare facilities, except for specialty hospital care, which was highly inaccessible in both zones, resulting in minimal differences.

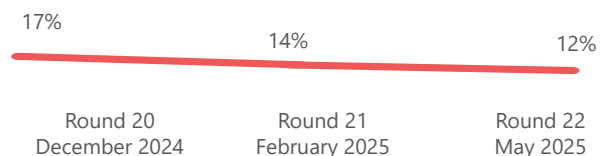
### Barriers in access to medicines

**Barriers to accessing medicines remained consistent over the examined period.** Cost of medicines (66%, 60% and 62%, respectively), low quality of medicines (67%, 54%, and 53%, respectively), and unavailability of sought medicines (41%, 42% and 44% in May 2025) were the most common barriers cited by KIs.

**Barriers to accessing healthcare did not vary substantially by proximity to the front line.** However, lack of pharmacies was more commonly cited by KIs within the front line (45%, 46% and 50%, respectively) than in non-frontline settlements (31%, 36%, and 31%, respectively).

## WASH

Figure 6: Percentage of settlements where KIs reported at least 10-24% of the settlement's residents not having access to water during examined period (n=139)



**Access to water in the occupied areas remained mostly stable between December 2024 and May 2025.** The proportion of settlements where KIs reported that at least 10% of residents lacked access to water ranged from 17% in December 2024 to 12% in May 2025. However, on average, during the examined period, KIs in 75% of settlements did report interruptions to the water supply at least a few hours per day.

Reports currently indicate that at the height of the extremely hot summer of 2025, **Donetska Oblast was on the verge of a humanitarian disaster due to water supply disruptions.** However, as HSM data only covers the period from December 2024 to May 2025, it does not capture these summer months and therefore cannot provide additional insights for that period.<sup>6</sup>

## CASH AND MARKETS

### Access to financial services

**Access to Ukrainian online banking services was severely restricted in the assessed settlements.** In the majority of assessed settlements, KIs reported that most residents could not access Ukrainian online banking services (for the use or transfer of funds) (78%, 73% and 72%, respectively). While this was common throughout all assessed settlements in the examined period, it was particularly severe in frontline settlements (82%, 90%, and 78%, respectively) compared to non-frontline settlements (75%, 63%, 69%, respectively). Access was most restricted in Donetsk, Kherson and Luhansk Oblasts, with the situation less severe, as reported by KIs, in Zaporizka Oblast.

**Similarly, the use of Ukrainian bank cards for payments in stores or shops consistently appeared non-existent.**

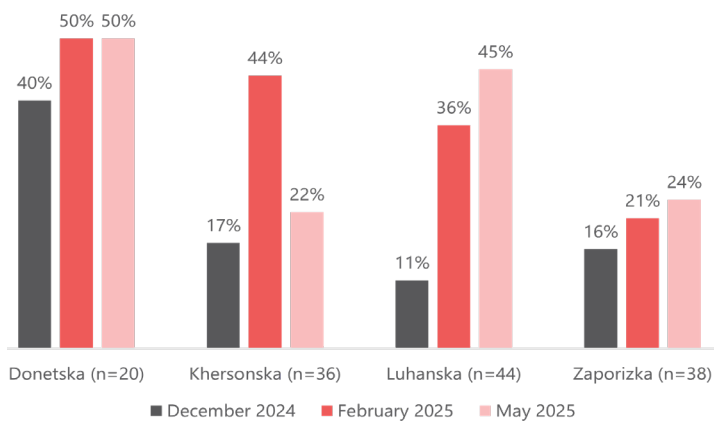
Nearly 100% of KIs reported that most people were not able to use their Ukrainian bank cards. The inability to use Ukrainian bank cards poses significant risks, as some people continue to receive salaries and social benefits through such accounts. For example, on average over the examined period, KIs in 16% of settlements reported lack of digital banking access prevented access to social benefits.

**Access to online banking from the banks of the Russian Federation banks appeared to somewhat decrease over the examined period.**

In 22% of settlements in December 2024, KIs reported that most people could not access such banks, increasing to 34% and 32% in February and May 2025. Access in frontline settlements was more restricted, with KIs more often reporting the majority of residents could not access banks of the Russian Federation (31%, 54%, and 44%, respectively) compared to non-frontline settlements (16%, 22%, and 25%, respectively).

**Access to online banking from the banks of the Russian Federation varied according to the oblast.** For example, access in Donetsk Oblast was particularly restricted.

Figure 7: Percentage of settlements where KIs reported the majority of residents did not have access to the online banking system of the Russian Federation during examined period, by oblast (n=138)



**Residents in the assessed settlements faced moderate, albeit increasingly restricted access, to financial services,** as indicated by limited access to the Ukrainian banking system, and indications that access to the banking

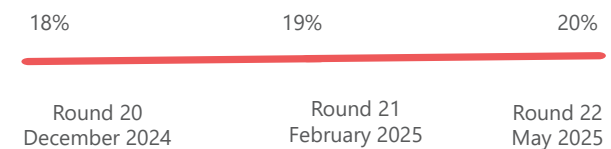
system of the Russian Federation was decreasing.

**The most frequently reported barrier to accessing financial services was the absence of functioning ATMs and banks in the settlement,** cited by KIs in 53% of settlements in December 2024, 60% in February 2025, and 55% in May 2025. This barrier was reported slightly more frequently in settlements within 20 kilometers of the front line (65% in December 2024, 71% in February 2025, and 62% in May 2025), compared to those located farther away (47%, 53%, and 51%, respectively).

Related to absence of functioning ATMs, **access to cash through salaries and social benefits was most commonly reported** (86%, 81%, and 85%, respectively). ATMs were a more common source cited by KIs in non-frontline settlements (49%, 43%, and 54%, respectively), albeit less in frontline settlements (24%, 25% and 42%, respectively).

### Access to markets

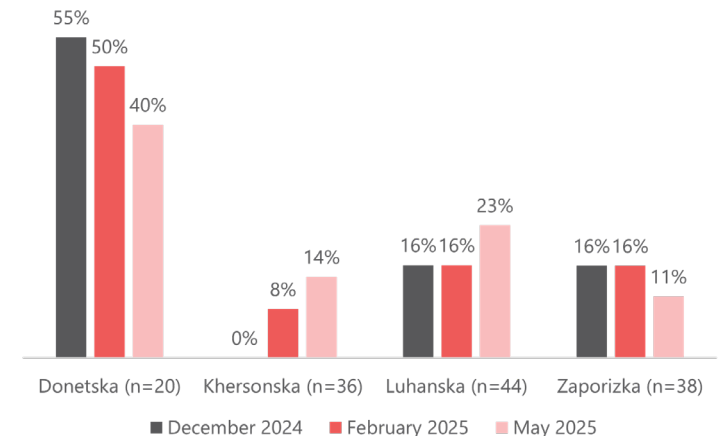
Figure 8: Percentage of settlements where KIs reported at least 10-24% of the settlement's residents not having access to markets during examined period (n=139)



**Access to markets remained stable during the examined period.** KIs in 18% of settlements in December 2024, 19% in February 2025, and 20% in May 2025 reported that at least 10% of the population did not have access to markets.

**The situation was more severe in frontline settlements, although similarly stable.** KIs reported in such areas that at least 10% of residents did not have access to markets more frequently (35%, 37%, and 38%, respectively) than in non-frontline settlements (8%, 9% and 10%, respectively). Access to markets varied by oblast, as well with the situation in Donetsk Oblast particularly severe.

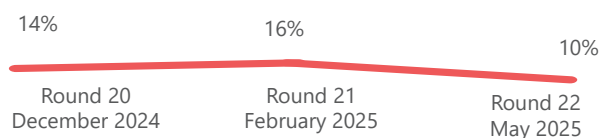
Figure 9: Percentage of settlements where KIs reported at least 10-24% of the settlement's residents not having access to markets during examined period, by oblast (n=138)



**The most commonly cited reason by KIs for limited market access was lack of markets in the settlement,** regardless of geography. Limited transportation was also often cited, indicating that travel to nearby settlements where a market may be available, may also be challenging.

## FOOD SECURITY

Figure 10: Percentage of settlements where KIs reported at least 10-24% of the settlement's residents not having access to sufficient food during examined period (n=139)



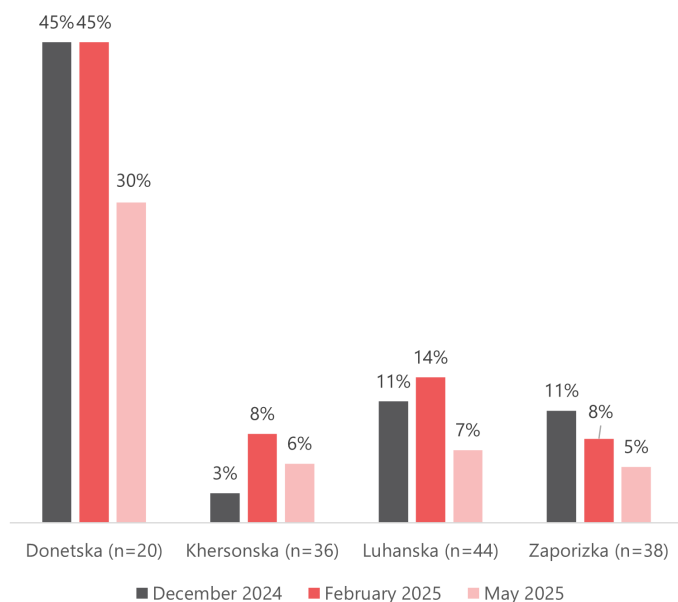
### Access to food

#### Food access remained stable in the assessed settlements during the examined period.

Food access was a severe challenge largely in frontline settlements - albeit there was a slight improvement reported by KIs in May 2025 (in 35%, 33% and 22% of settlements, respectively, KIs reported that at least 10% of residents could not access sufficient food). In non-frontline settlements, KIs reported this substantially less often (2%, 6% and 3%, respectively).

**Food access in Donetsk Oblast was a severe challenge, although the situation had improved in May 2025.** In December 2024, KIs in 45% of settlements assessed that at least 10% of residents had insufficient access to food, 45% in February 2025 and 30% in May 2025.

Figure 11: Percentage of settlements where KIs reported at least 10-24% of the settlement's residents not having access to sufficient food during examined period, by oblast (n=138)

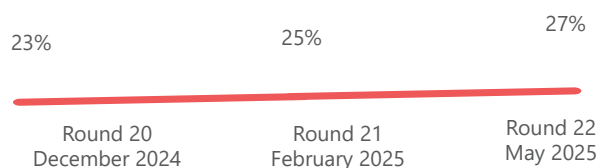


**Overall, high prices and lack of money remained the most common barriers for residents accessing sufficient food - although their frequency decreased during the examined period.** Lack of money was reported by KIs in December 2024 in 62% of settlements, 53% in February 2025, 44% in May 2025. High prices were reported by KIs in December 2024 in 52%, 53% in February 2025, 42% in May.

**In frontline settlements, KIs also cited lack of functional stores (43%, 41%, and 46%, respectively), which mirrors findings on the unavailability of markets in such areas.**

## SHELTER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS

Figure 12: Percentage of settlements where KIs reported at least 10-24% of the settlement's residents not having access to safe and adequate housing during examined period (n=139)



### Access to safe and adequate housing

**In the assessed settlements during the examined period access to safe and adequate housing<sup>6</sup> remained relatively stable.** The percentage of settlements where KIs reported 10% or more of residents could not access safe and adequate housing was 23% in December 2024, 25% in February and 27% in May 2025 (n=139).

**In the settlements located within 20 kilometers of the front line, access to safe and adequate housing appeared considerably more limited compared to settlements located more than 20 kilometers away from the front line.** In December 2024, KIs reported that in 49% of settlements within 20 kilometer of the front line, at least 10% of residents lacked access to safe and adequate housing - compared to 56% in February 2025 and 50% in May 2025. This was a much higher proportion that in non-frontline settlements (8%, 7%, and 13%, respectively).

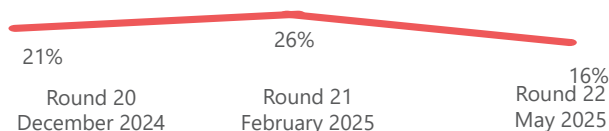
#### In Donetsk Oblast, access to safe and adequate housing appeared more constrained compared to other oblasts.

In December 2024 and May 2025, KIs in 6 out of the 20 assessed settlements in Donetsk Oblast that more than half of the residents could not access safe and adequate housing.

**Between December 2024 and May 2025, the most common reported barriers remained consistent.** Of the settlements with reportedly limited access to housing, KIs reported unsafe shelters in 91% of settlements, 83% in February 2025, 94% in May 2025. Total collapse of shelters was reported by KIs in 36% of settlements in December 2024, 44% in February 2025, 34% in May 2025. There was little variation by geography.

### Access to Non-Food Items (NFIs)

Figure 13: Percentage of settlements where KIs reported at least 10-24% of the settlement's residents not having access to NFIs during examined period (n=139)



**Access to essential NFI appeared to fluctuate.** In December 2024, KIs in 21% of assessed settlements (n=139) reported 10% or more residents could not access sufficient NFIs. This figure increased to 26% in February 2025, and then decreased to 16% in May 2025.

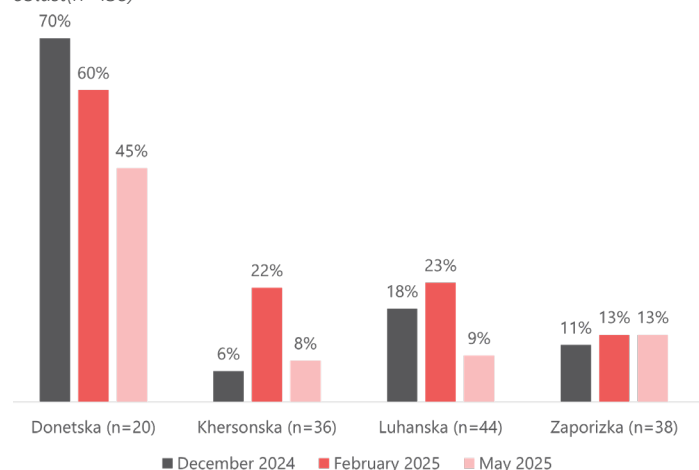
### Those settlements within 20 kilometers of the front line more often had more restricted access to essential NFIs.

In December 2024, KIs reported in 37% of settlements that 10% or more residents could not access sufficient NFIs, increasing to 46% in February 2025, and then decreasing to 30% in May 2025. By contrast, in settlements located further from the front line, the figures were lower: 11%, 14%, and 8%, respectively. This matches other trends identified, whereby market access, access to food, and access to financial services and cash is more limited near frontline areas.

### In Donetsk Oblast, access to NFIs was more severely limited than in other oblasts throughout the reporting period, although it did improve.

In 70% of the assessed settlements in Donetsk Oblast, KIs identified that at least 10% of residents could not access sufficient NFIs in December 2024, 60% in February 2025 and 45% in May 2025. Similarly, this reflects other sectoral trends, particularly access to food and markets, where Donetsk Oblast during the examined period reported the most severe challenges, but also improvement in May 2025.

Figure 14: Percentage of settlements where KIs reported at least 10-24% of the settlement's residents not having access to NFIs during examined period, by oblast (n=138)

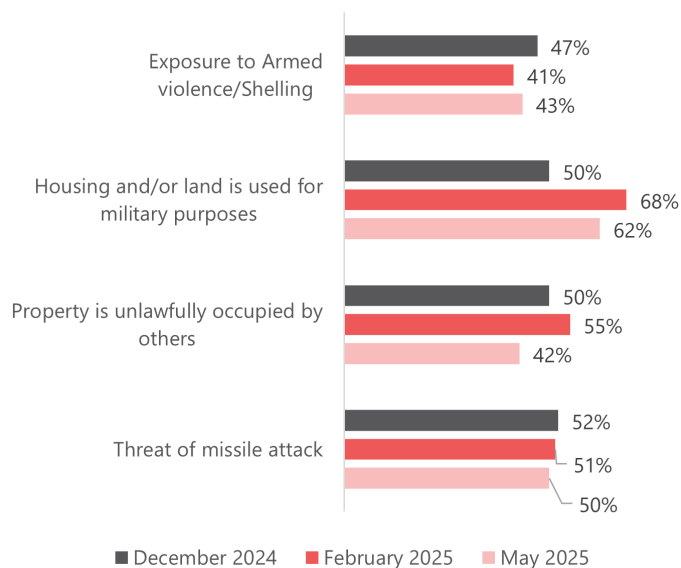


## PROTECTION

**Between December 2024 and May 2025, safety and security concerns remained highly prevalent in the occupied areas.** The most frequently reported concerns included: housing and/or land being used for military purposes, threat of missile attack, exposure to armed violence/shelling, and property being unlawfully occupied by others. Many protection concerns, specifically those speaking to the direct impact of the conflict, were elevated in frontline areas.

**Overall, many protection concerns related to housing, land and property (HLP).** Additional concerns noted by KIs during the examined period were: looting of private property (30%, 28% and 35%, respectively), presence of landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXOs) (27%, 22% and 30%, respectively) and damaged or destroyed property (23%, 19% and 17% respectively). In particular, such HLP concerns were reported substantially by KIs in Donetsk Oblast.

Figure 15: Percentage of settlements by most reported safety concerns during examined period



### The prevalence of safety and security concerns specific to women and girls was lower compared to overall safety and security concerns.

Among the concerns raised, verbal harassment was the most frequently reported by KIs (10% in December 2024, 5% in February 2025, 17% in May 2025, n=139). Many issues related to gender-specific concerns for women and girls are highly sensitive and therefore unlikely to be reported, reflecting a limitation of the assessment. Additionally, AoK KIs are not experts and may not feel sufficiently knowledgeable to report on concerns affecting specific population group. Thus, the actual prevalence of certain concerns may be higher.

**Concerns specific to men and boys were more frequently reported during the examined period.** In May 2025, 36% of settlements (n=139) had KIs reporting no concerns. The most commonly cited issues for men and boys included being conscripted/recruited to the armed forces (reported by KIs in 31% of the settlements in December 2024, 31% in February 2025, 29% in May 2025), along with being detained (17% in December 2024, 20% in February, 15% in May 2025).

### Access to social benefits

**Throughout the three rounds of data collection, KIs in the majority of settlements reported that most eligible people had access to social benefits** (e.g., disability allowances, pensions, child benefits, etc.). KIs reported that access to social benefits was available in 91% of settlements in December 2024, 84% in February 2025, and 93% in May 2025.

**At the oblast level, no major differences were observed, although a notable improvement was documented only in Donetsk Oblast.** In December 2024, only KIs in 60% of settlements reported most residents having access to social benefits and 55% in February 2025. This increased to 95% in May 2025.

**Barriers for accessing social benefits varied over the examined period.** For example, the absence of a Russian

Federation passport was commonly reported in December 2024 (33%) decreased to 19% in February 2025 and to 10% in May 2025. Lack of documents proving eligibility was also increasingly less of a barrier (25%, 12% and 10%, respectively). Other barriers remained more consistent, such as verifying eligibility for benefits from the Government of Ukraine (33%, 24% and 30%, respectively) and lack of availability administrative institutions for registering for benefits (20%, 18% and 27%, respectively).

## CONCLUSION

### **Overall, the situation remained stable throughout December 2024 and May 2025 in the assessed settlements.**

There were no sharp fluctuations in the results of either the overall level of needs analysis or the sectoral analysis. The highest areas of need, where residents did not have access to specific basic needs, was fixed in access to healthcare, access to safe and adequate housing, and access to non-food items.

**In settlements located within 20 kilometers of the front line, the situation was worse than in settlements located further away.** While at times there were discrete barriers identified in these zones, such as lack of markets, at other times barriers and needs were rather exacerbated when compared to barriers and needs in non-frontline areas.

**In Donetsk Oblast, need was more exacerbated than in other oblasts.** However, data from May 2025 indicated that specific sectoral improvement.

### **The HSM trends analysis demonstrates that needs remain severe, but stable in the assessed settlements.**

However, it also points to the need for a targeted response varied by geographic areas, as, at times, needs and barriers diverged and were exacerbated closer the frontline and in specific oblasts.

## ANNEX 1: OVERVIEW OF SAMPLING

Oblast name	Number of consistently assessed settlements per oblast	December 2024	February 2025	May 2025
Donetska	Within 20 km of the front line	9	8	7
	Located more than 20 kilometers away from the front line	11	12	13
Kharkivska	Within 20 km of the front line	1	1	1
	Located more than 20 kilometers away from the front line	0	0	0
Khersonska	Within 20 km of the front line	15	17	17
	Located more than 20 kilometers away from the front line	21	19	19
Luhanska	Within 20 km of the front line	13	13	12
	Located more than 20 kilometers away from the front line	31	31	32
Zaporizka	Within 20 km of the front line	13	13	13
	Located more than 20 kilometers away from the front line	25	25	25

Type of settlement	Number
Rural	99
Urban	40

Distance from the front line		February 2025	May 2025
Within 20 km of the front line	51	52	50
Located more than 20 kilometers away from the front line	88	87	89

## Methodology Overview

**Data collection in the occupied areas of Ukraine was conducted by adopting the Area of Knowledge (AoK) methodology**, which is a remote data collection method used when access to direct, regular primary data collection in a specific settlement is not possible. Between December and May 2025, a total of three rounds of Humanitarian Situation Monitoring (HSM) were conducted. While in each round a minimum of 10% coverage of all settlements in the occupied areas was achieved, the assessed settlements differed from round to round. With this consideration, the current trends analysis focuses on the 139 settlements (towns and villages) that were assessed in all three rounds of HSM.

**The data was gathered through interviews with community key informants (KIs).** Community KIs were either displaced from a settlement in the occupied areas of Ukraine within the 30 days prior to data collection and/or in regular contact with the people still living in the settlement in the 30 days prior to data collection. All KI responses from the same settlement were aggregated to have one data point for each variable per settlement.

**The Data Aggregation Plan** generates one indicator per settlement, applying an average approach to aggregate responses using a severity scale for single-choice questions. In case of multiple-choice questions, the rule was to select all responses that have been reported by at least one respondent if the number of respondents was smaller than five, otherwise two out of five or more respondents.

**These statistics cannot be extrapolated to represent a proportion (%) of the population, and thus should be interpreted as indicative** rather than representative. Given the small and unrepresentative sample, these results only provide an indicative understanding of the situation in the assessed areas. These results should be considered based on coverage; some oblasts/raions can be better covered than others due to the availability of KIs. Furthermore, given that the KIs were selected based on whether they fulfilled the selection criteria, there was no minimum number of KIs set per settlement. Therefore, findings on individual settlements should be interpreted with caution as they are also considered indicative.

## Endnotes

- 1 The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Ukraine-Humanitarian needs and response plan 2025](#), January 2025.
- 2 REACH, [The Area of Knowledge \(AoK\) method for Humanitarian Situation Monitoring: A multi-country validation study of the key informant-based AoK method](#), October 4, 2023
- 3 References to the front line were refer to the front line immediately prior to the data collection. Thus, settlements within 20 kilometers of the front line for Round 20 may be different than those settlements within 20 kilometers of the frontline for Round 22, depending on how drastically the front line shifted between data collection periods.
- 4 Ukrainska Pravda, ["Water shortages push Donetsk Oblast to brink of humanitarian disaster"](#), August 2025
- 5 The average is calculated from average the percentages between the three examined rounds.

## 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).