



COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS IN PRACTICE: WHAT LOCAL REALITIES TELL US ABOUT FUTURE PLANNING FOR UKRAINE



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Coordination Center, Dobropillya,
Donetsk region, 2026

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Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is an international nongovernmental organisation deploying Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) tools to safeguard lives in conflict zones. Our mission is to protect civilians through unarmed strategies, build peace alongside local communities, and advocate for wider adoption of nonviolent protection in order to safeguard human lives, safety, and dignity.



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COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS: UKRAINE

The Ukrainian public space has increasingly been saturated with speculations about the probability of a ceasefire. The US support to Ukraine is no longer a 'given', replaced by a strong push for an immediate peace deal, with little consideration for its factual or ethical 'costs', or Ukraine's future. Despite the shift in the public domain, there have been limited proactive steps to analyse the potential impact or put in place contingency plans to anticipate and respond to needs that may emerge.

In response to this, NP Ukraine launched a localized "Preparedness and the Future of Community" assessment. It explores key questions about both the present and the future, such as existing community tensions and obstacles to post-conflict transition, framed within a potential ceasefire context. This helps identify current challenges and highlight future barriers that may arise if a ceasefire is implemented without incorporating local perspectives.

The analysis and accompanying interactive data dashboard will be updated periodically to reflect evolving civilian perspectives as the context remains volatile. aims to inform stakeholders of current levels of community preparedness and identify areas where risks, tensions, or gaps may be mitigated through inclusive, evidence-based interventions.

Methodology

Overall, throughout the assessments, 130 KIIs were conducted across the 5 Oblasts and 30 Hromadas. 104 of these respondents being women (predominantly between the age of 31-50), and 26 being men also between the age of 31-50. 69% were host community members; 18% IDPs and 13% were returnees, with 50% either being related to a veteran, someone currently serving, captured, or killed in action, or veteran themselves. The remaining 47% had no current link to the military or veterans' community.

Limitations

Operational constraints also affected data collection. Regional contextual differences, access challenges, and the evolving security situation (particularly in Kharkiv and Donetsk Oblasts) limited engagement with certain population groups (civilians with veteran status for instance). Furthermore, due in part to the escalation of hostilities and associated mobility restrictions, 75-85% of respondents were women. This gender imbalance may influence the perspectives reflected in the data. Lastly, the data sets vary slightly across Oblasts, meaning that the comparative analysis is slightly limited.

Overall, as a humanitarian assessment rather than an academic research project, the primary objective was to gather a wide range of perspectives to inform programming and advocacy, rather than to produce statistically significant findings.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Security perceptions are worsening nationwide, though regional differences remain.** 62% of respondents reported that the security situation is deteriorating. In eastern regions, perceptions of improvement are almost nonexistent—0% in Donetska and below 3% in Kharkiv. Southern regions show slightly more positive perceptions (21% in Mykolaiv, 9% in Odesa), while Kherson recorded the highest share of improvement (46%).
- **Public expectations of a ceasefire are low and closely tied to local security conditions.** Most respondents consider a ceasefire within the next six months unlikely, and 22% reported they could not even imagine such a scenario. Those who perceived improvements in local security were also more likely to believe a ceasefire was possible, suggesting that optimism about political developments is strongly influenced by local security dynamics.
- **Immediate needs are shifting toward a mix of humanitarian, economic, and psychosocial priorities.** Across Ukraine, the most frequently cited current needs are security (24%), housing and infrastructure (17%), and livelihoods and employment (17%). Respondents also emphasised the importance of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and reconciliation initiatives, indicating that communities are increasingly concerned not only with material recovery but also with long-term social and psychological stability.
- **Community tensions are widespread and often linked to competition over limited resources.** 60% of respondents reported existing tensions, most commonly related to competition over resources (18%), political or ethnic divisions (17%), mistrust between authorities and civilians (14%), and tensions between IDPs and host communities (9%). These dynamics suggest that housing availability and employment opportunities will be critical early recovery challenges, as shortages in these areas could exacerbate tensions between host communities, IDPs, and returnees.
- **Return dynamics are closely linked to security, housing, and economic stability.** Respondents identified security guarantees, repaired infrastructure, and employment opportunities as the most important conditions for the dignified return of displaced populations. While many expressed confidence in the capacity of Oblast authorities to manage recovery, respondents widely acknowledged that the key constraints—particularly security and economic guarantees—remain external.
- **Reconstruction efforts are constrained by uncertainty around future security arrangements.** Many respondents expressed skepticism that a potential ceasefire would hold, which contributes to hesitation around long-term investments such as reconstruction. This uncertainty risks slowing recovery efforts, as local authorities may be reluctant to prioritise rebuilding if renewed hostilities could reverse progress.
- **Social cohesion and dialogue will be essential for long-term recovery and reintegration.** A significant share of respondents highlighted the need for community dialogue and reconciliation initiatives to rebuild trust between different population groups and support sustainable reintegration of displaced populations.

PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

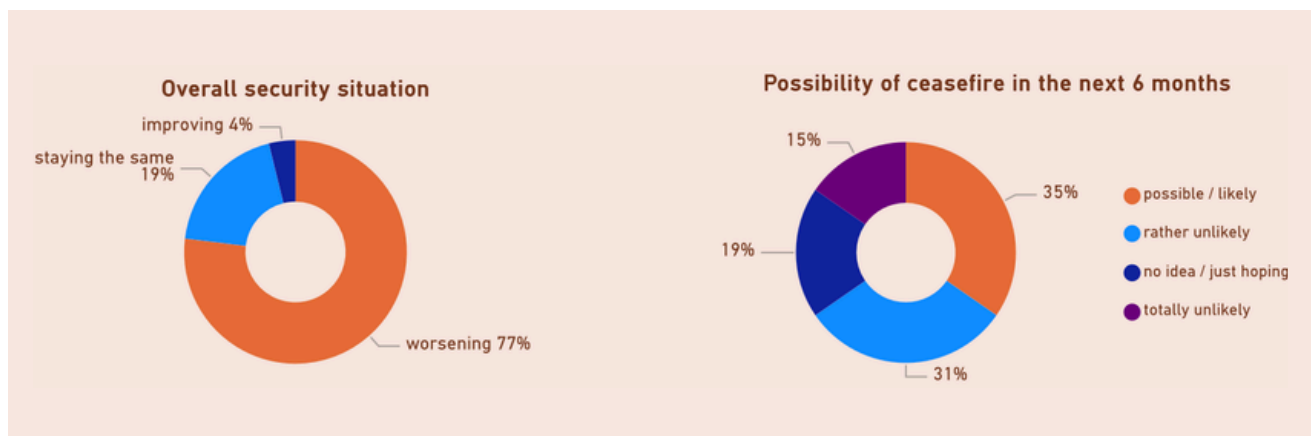
- **Support scenario planning through trusted civil society actors.** While high-level negotiations remain uncertain, CSOs, NGOs, and INGOs are well positioned to begin preparing communities for different future scenarios. Supporting these actors to engage in forward planning can help communities anticipate potential developments and reduce uncertainty. As trusted intermediaries, civil society organisations can also help communicate sensitive policy decisions—such as evacuations—thereby strengthening trust between civilians and authorities.
- **Promote community-level ceasefire awareness and preparedness.** Lessons from the Minsk agreements highlight the confusion that can arise regarding ceasefire implementation, monitoring mechanisms, and humanitarian mandates. Community-level education on ceasefire dynamics, such as roles, responsibilities, and monitoring processes, could help reduce misinformation of what a ceasefire is and strengthen preparedness. Such efforts should involve both civil society organisations and local communities, including local authorities, to ensure widespread understanding and start prior to a ceasefire/halt in fighting is agreed.
- **Establish Oblast-level advisory platforms to capture local perspectives.** Although ceasefire discussions occur primarily at national and international levels, local perspectives remain critical for designing sustainable arrangements. Establishing Oblast-level ceasefire advisory groups could provide a platform for civilians, local authorities, and community representatives to share insights on local needs and concerns. These platforms (supported by donors and facilitated by trusted NGOs) could help ensure that future agreements reflect the realities faced by communities and strengthen public buy-in for potential settlement processes.
- **Emergency/humanitarian funding should seek to build peace during emergencies.** While emergency and acute crisis prevails, it is essential to mainstream social cohesion and dialogue mediation along with the ongoing priority assistance to tackle the existing and exacerbating intra-community tension as early signs of potential unfolding of a post-conflict crisis. Early attention to this will effectively smoothen the future transition while upholding solidarity and shared values as precondition for the successful societal transformation post-war.

COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS: KHARKIV OBLAST

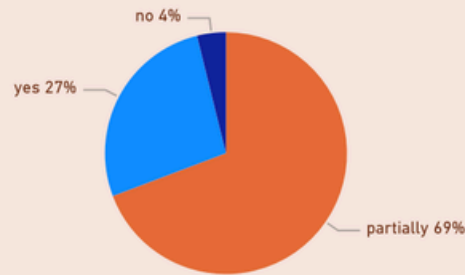
The assessment indicates a marked deterioration in perceived security across Kharkiv Oblast (worse than the July data), with the majority of civilians still not believing that there will be a ceasefire in the coming six months. At the same time, social cohesion has emerged as a rapidly growing challenge, reflecting increased tensions related to resource scarcity, strained host-IDP relations, and political or ethnic divisions. Despite ongoing NGO support, findings suggest a partial mismatch between assistance delivered and communities' most urgent and evolving concerns, particularly as needs shift from immediate humanitarian relief toward longer-term resilience and cohesion.

Looking ahead, respondents anticipate complex and multidimensional recovery needs, with no single priority dominating. Security guarantees, employment, MHPSS, service restoration, and reconciliation efforts are all viewed as critical to sustainable recovery and dignified returns. While most respondents identify external factors as the primary determinants of future recovery and the sustainability of a ceasefire, a majority also express confidence in local capacity to engage in recovery processes.

78% report existing tensions (also an increase from July), most being political and ethnic, but also over access to resources. Given the high level of existing tensions and limited preparedness for a potential ceasefire or sudden demographic shifts, the findings underscore space for creative programming designed to address more prolonged conflict needs.



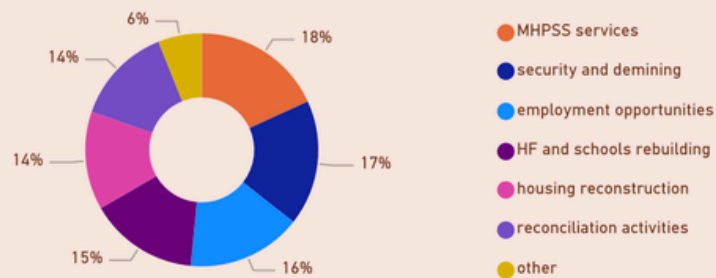
Readiness of the community to begin recovery reconstruction



Are there external risks that could obstruct recovery programs?

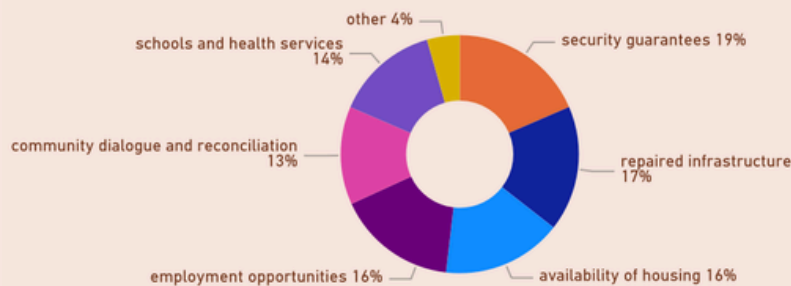


Type of support for future recovery



**Other includes: support for youth, social dialogue and recovery trainings; community development grants; temporary accommodation for vulnerable people and groups; cohesion and non-violence initiatives.*

What could encourage people to return?

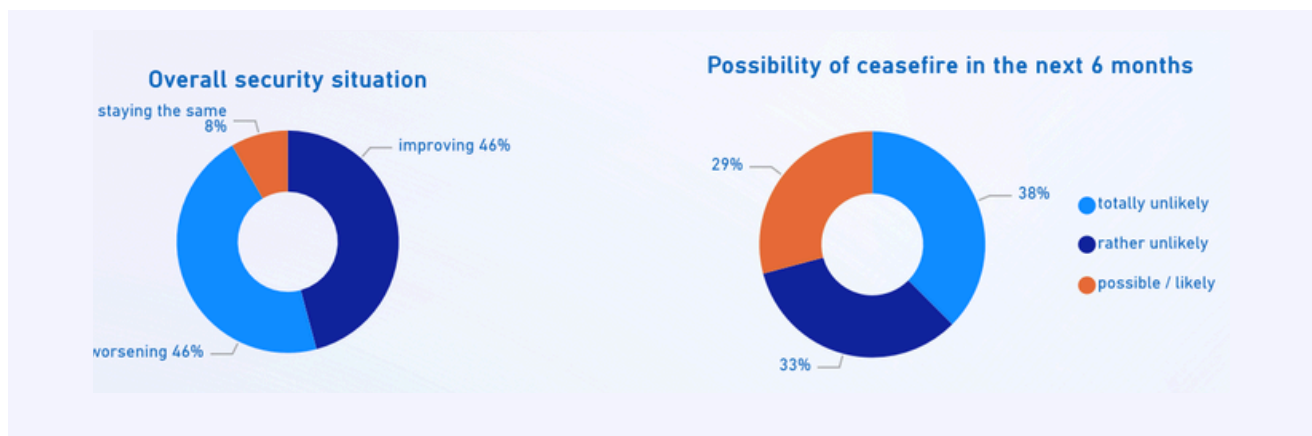


**Other includes: support for community development and business opportunities; cultural restoration with engagement of international organizations; financial incentives to attract medical and other specialists*

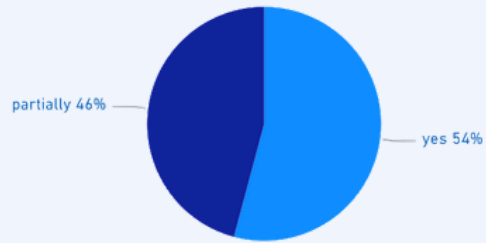
COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS: KHERSON OBLAST

Security perceptions in Kherson Oblast are notably divided, reflecting the Oblast’s highly differentiated context. While security remains the primary concern (28%), followed by livelihoods and housing, respondents are evenly split on whether the situation is improving or worsening—largely depending on proximity to the Dnipro River and active hostilities. Communities closer to frontline dynamics report increasing insecurity due to drone and artillery activity, whereas others describe gradual improvement compared to previous years and the period of occupation. Social tensions are similarly mixed, with just over half reporting strains (primarily between host communities and IDPs, as well as political divisions) highlighting a fragile but not yet fractured social fabric.

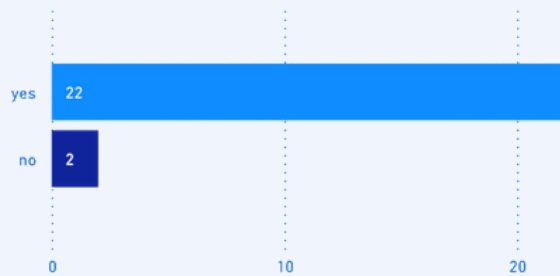
Looking ahead, recovery expectations are comparatively pragmatic and cautiously optimistic. Employment, housing reconstruction, and the restoration of hospitals and schools dominate both recovery priorities and incentives for return, suggesting strong local attachment and conditional confidence in repopulation if material conditions improve. All respondents expressed at least partial confidence in local authorities’ recovery capacity, yet most identified external security and political developments as the main constraint. Kherson’s trajectory therefore appears defined by local willingness to rebuild, tempered by continued exposure to frontline volatility and reliance on credible external security guarantees.



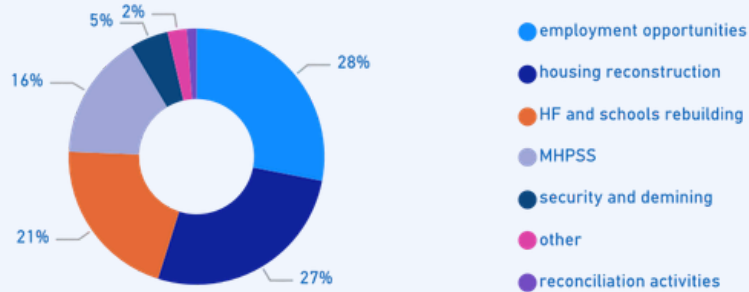
Readiness of the community to begin recovery reconstruction



Are there external risks that could obstruct recovery programs?

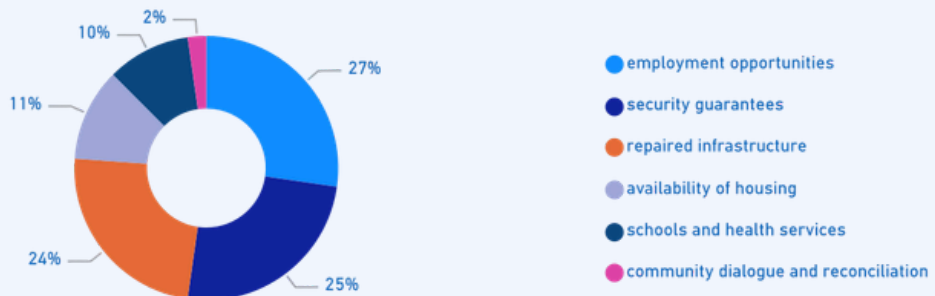


Type of support for future recovery



**Other includes: increase in hromada fiscal budget, offline schooling, complete replacement of the water supply system.*

What could encourage people to return?

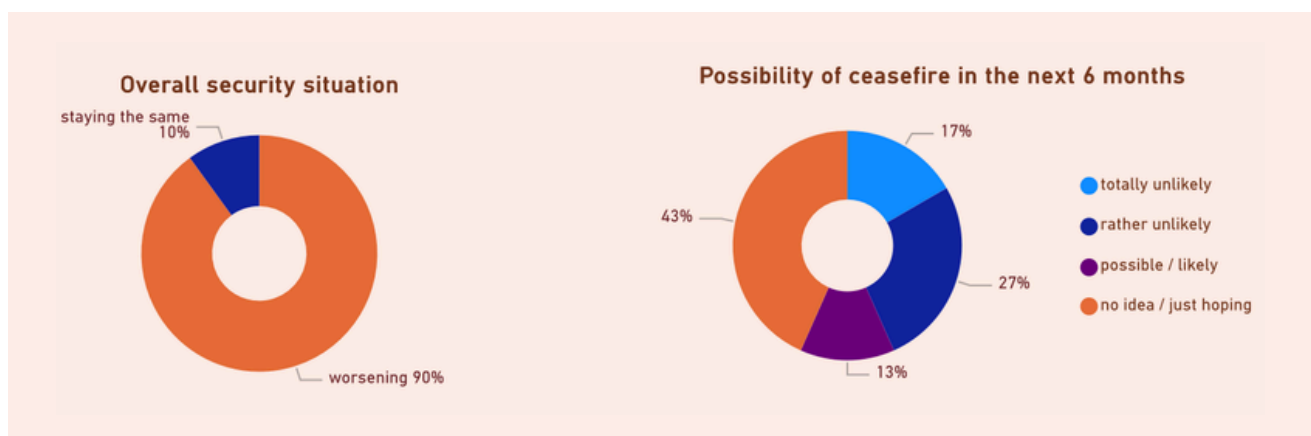


COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS: DONETSK OBLAST

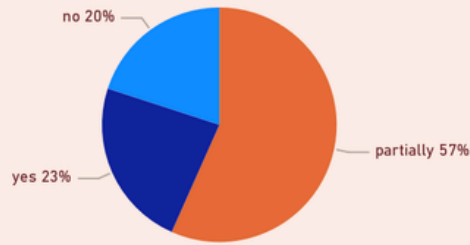
Communities across Donetsk Oblast report that life remains very difficult and challenging, with 90% of respondents noting that the security situation has worsened. When asked about the end of the war, most residents were unable to make any prediction and thought that a ceasefire in the near future was highly unlikely. Security, livelihoods, housing, and access to services remain the main challenges. Looking ahead, respondents prioritise employment, demining and safety, housing reconstruction and MHPSS programming – putting equal emphasis on the need for physical and psychosocial protection.

Most residents believe that their Oblast would be ready for transition to recovery but say real progress depends on improved security and economic opportunities – two factors the majority see as ‘external’. About 33% also report tensions (mainly over scarce resources), but also between community members and duty bearers, as well as along political lines – natural results from living in protracted conflict. This highlights the need for more livelihood support and dialogue to prevent conflict escalation.

Communities also call for better communication, more inclusive decision-making, transparency from authorities, and support from neutral actors. Overall, respondents remain motivated to rebuild their lives but need safety, economic stability, and stronger community cohesion to move forward. These topics can and should be addressed already now, supporting communities to nurture pockets of peace during war.



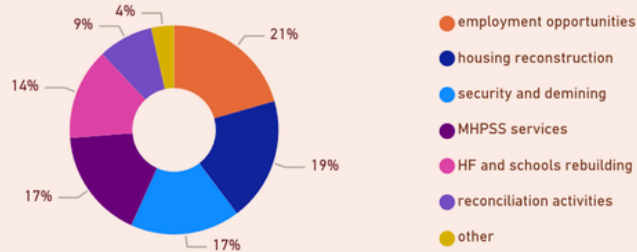
Readiness of the community to begin recovery reconstruction



Are there external risks that could obstruct recovery programs?

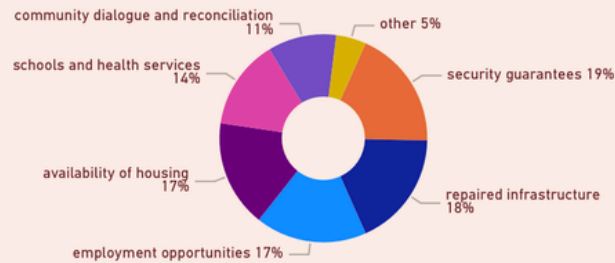


Type of support for future recovery



Other includes: economic support specifically for retired people and IDPs; establishing dialogue between different regions of Ukraine [*South-East affected by the war / North-West remained relatively stable.]

What could encourage people to return?



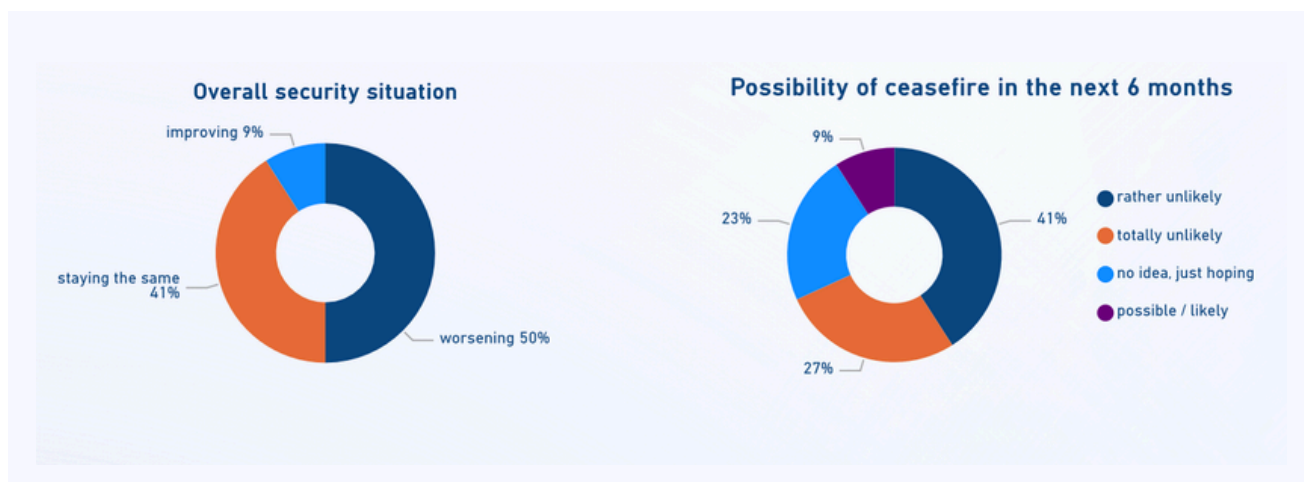
**Other includes: honest and transparent communication from authorities; clear and consistent dialogue with the community;*

***[Many people will never return, since they don't have a place to return to due to occupation / house destruction]*

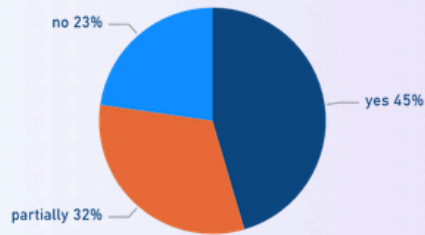
COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS: ODESA OBLAST

Security perceptions in Odesa Oblast reflect a complex context shaped less by frontline dynamics and more by social and economic pressures linked to displacement and prolonged uncertainty. While half of respondents report that the security situation is worsening, concerns extend beyond direct security threats to include social cohesion, housing pressures, and access to livelihoods. Notably, Odesa recorded one of the highest reported levels of community tensions among assessed Oblasts, primarily linked to competition over resources, strained relations between host communities and IDPs, and political divisions. As a major reception and transit area for displaced populations, the Oblast faces unique pressures on social cohesion, particularly within shelters and collective accommodation sites.

Looking ahead, respondents identified employment opportunities, housing reconstruction, and MHPSS services as the main priorities for recovery, alongside a growing recognition of the need for reconciliation and dialogue between different social groups. While many respondents expressed confidence in the capacity of local authorities to engage in recovery efforts, they also emphasised that key determinants, such as security guarantees and economic stability, lie beyond the control of local actors. At the same time, the relative reduction of humanitarian support in Odesa compared to frontline regions may be contributing to perceptions of resource competition and governance gaps. Together, these findings highlight the need for a balanced response that combines targeted economic support and reconstruction with strengthened social cohesion programming, inclusive governance mechanisms, and improved coordination between communities, authorities, and external actors.



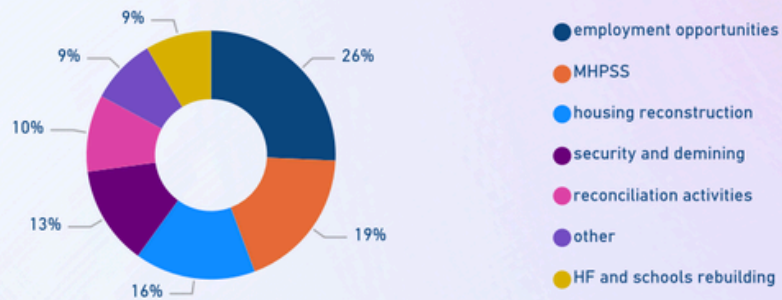
Readiness of the community to begin recovery reconstruction



Are there external risks that could obstruct recovery programs?

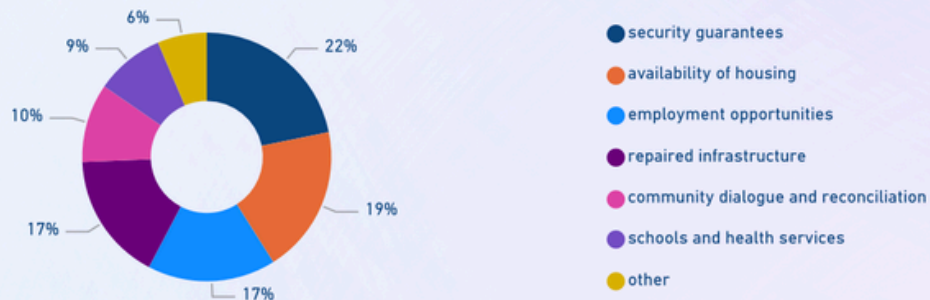


Type of support for future recovery



**Other includes: expanded medical and rehabilitation services; job creation through tourism; development of inclusive social spaces (accessible for elderly and PwD); attraction of investors and businesses.*

What could encourage people to return?

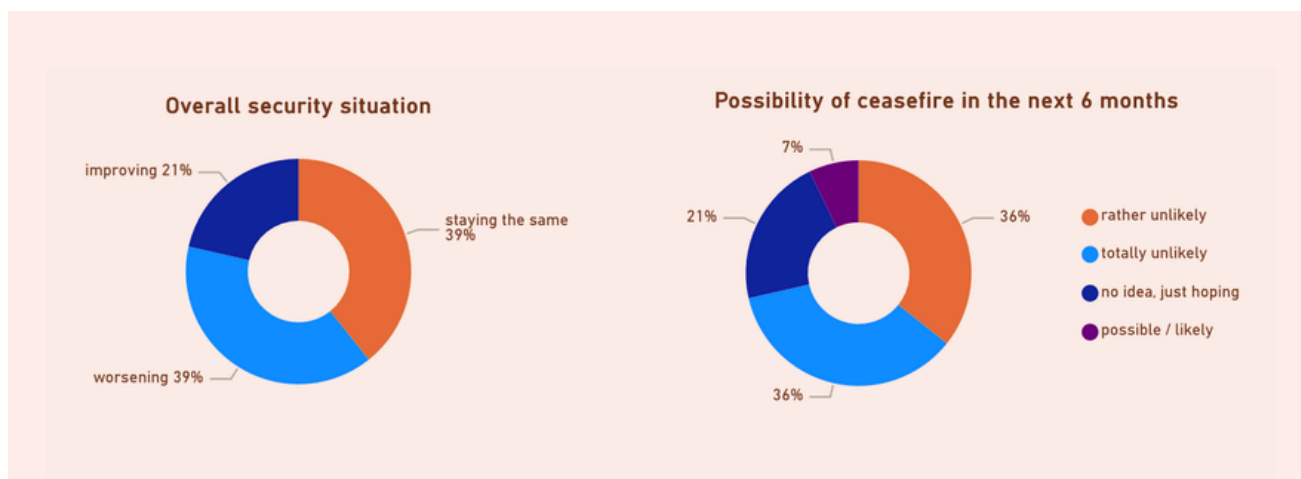


**Other includes: financial assistance; tourism opportunities; availability of accessible and inclusive facilities.*

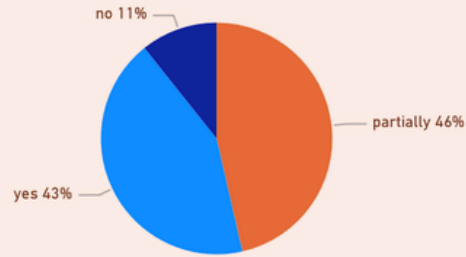
COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS: MYKOLAIV OBLAST

The assessment findings indicate that communities in Mykolaiv Oblast continue to face significant structural and socio-economic challenges despite some stabilisation of frontline dynamics. Housing and infrastructure damage, limited employment opportunities, and continued security concerns remain the most pressing issues reported by respondents. The Oblast also stands out for having the highest proportion of returnees among the assessed regions, which places additional pressure on housing availability and local services. Returnees in particular reported difficulties accessing housing due to destroyed or inaccessible homes and expressed concerns that assistance programmes remain primarily focused on IDPs. While tensions were not widely reported overall, competition over limited resources—especially housing and services—has emerged as a key source of friction within communities.

Looking ahead, respondents emphasised employment opportunities, housing reconstruction, and the restoration of healthcare and education facilities as the primary priorities for recovery. Compared to other assessed Oblasts, security guarantees were mentioned less frequently, suggesting that many communities view the restoration of infrastructure and livelihoods as the most immediate conditions for stabilisation and return. Respondents expressed relatively strong confidence in the ability of local authorities and hromadas to manage future recovery efforts. However, they also widely recognised that the broader conditions for reconstruction, such as security arrangements and economic stability, remain dependent on external factors beyond local control. At the same time, the assessment indicates a gap between the types of assistance currently provided by NGOs and the evolving needs identified by communities, highlighting an opportunity for humanitarian and development actors to better align programming with emerging recovery priorities.



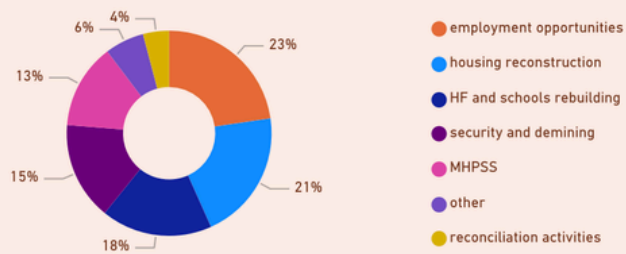
Readiness of the community to begin recovery reconstruction



Are there external risks that could obstruct recovery programs?

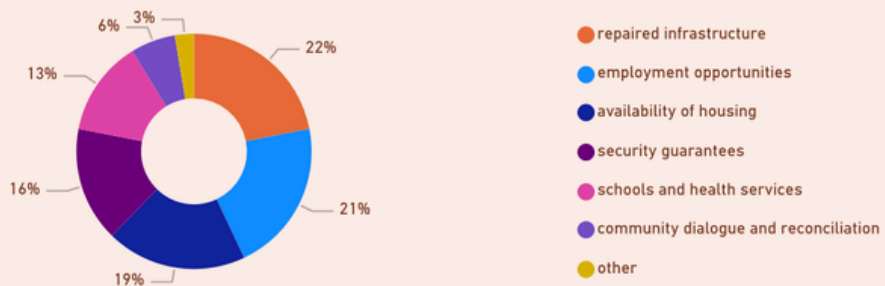


Type of support for future recovery



**Other includes: measures for veterans reintegration and their families, with efforts to reduce stigma; social cohesion initiatives to foster understanding and positive relations among locals, returning residents, veterans, and IDPs.*

What could encourage people to return?



**Other includes: drinking water access and delivery; state social housing; adequate wages comparable to earnings abroad.*



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CONTACT

MARTHA GILLBERG
PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
MGILLBERG@NONVIOLENTPEACEFORCE.ORG

JOACHIM KLEINMANN
HEAD OF PROGRAMMES
JKLEINMANN@NONVIOLENTPEACEFORCE.ORG

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