



# NGO Representatives' View of the Social Consequences of Forced Displacement in Ukraine



Photo: Ben Robinson

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## Online survey of experts on IDPs.

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Target audience: NGOs that work with the consequences of forced displacement.

Time of survey: 1 – 12 March 2018.

Total respondents: 138 NGOs from different areas of Ukraine (see Appendix for information about the locations and status of the NGOs)

**The survey was conducted as a part of the project “Ukraine’s hidden tragedy: outcomes of population displacement from the country’s war-torn regions”, which was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council UK with the Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research (grant AH/P008305/1, led by Dr Irina Kuznetsova). More detailed information about the project can be found here: [www.idpukraine.com](http://www.idpukraine.com)**

The answers to the survey question regarding which group(s) of IDPs the respondents intend to talk about show that some of the NGOs specialise in people displaced from the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. As we see on Figure 1, almost 40% of respondents preferred to discuss the situation of IDPs from these territories. However almost 62% were ready to analyse the situation and give more detailed answers about both categories of IDPs – from the annexed Crimea and from occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

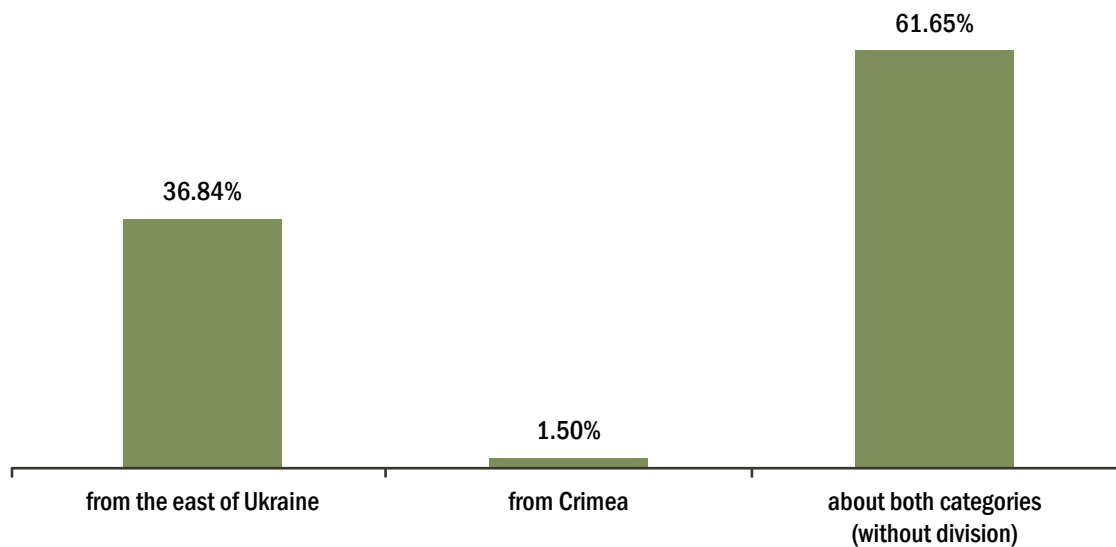


Figure 1. Please select which IDPs you want to talk about, %

The survey question about the services the NGOs provided most often addresses both the supply (meaning the aspect of NGOs activities) and demand for services. If we look at demand through

the prism of services provided, we will see that one of the most acute problems faced by IDPs is the issue of employment. As previous qualitative studies have shown, IDPs are quite demanding in their job search process, in particular in their salary expectations, due to their need to pay the rent. This makes them active in looking for employment, changing qualification, and pursuing additional training. This also is the reason why IDPs decline the jobs offered by employment centres, where the salaries are not enough to cover the rent. Lack of understanding of these issues often creates stigmatisation, where IDPs are accused of being unwilling to work and of wanting to live on support provided by the national and international foundations.

There is also a high demand for psychological consultations, training, and leisure activities. The demand for assistance and consultations regarding renewal of payments (pensions or assistance for IDPs) is quite intense. In less demand are requests for assistance in receiving medical help or educational services. This allows us to surmise that these issues have lessened (see Figure 2).

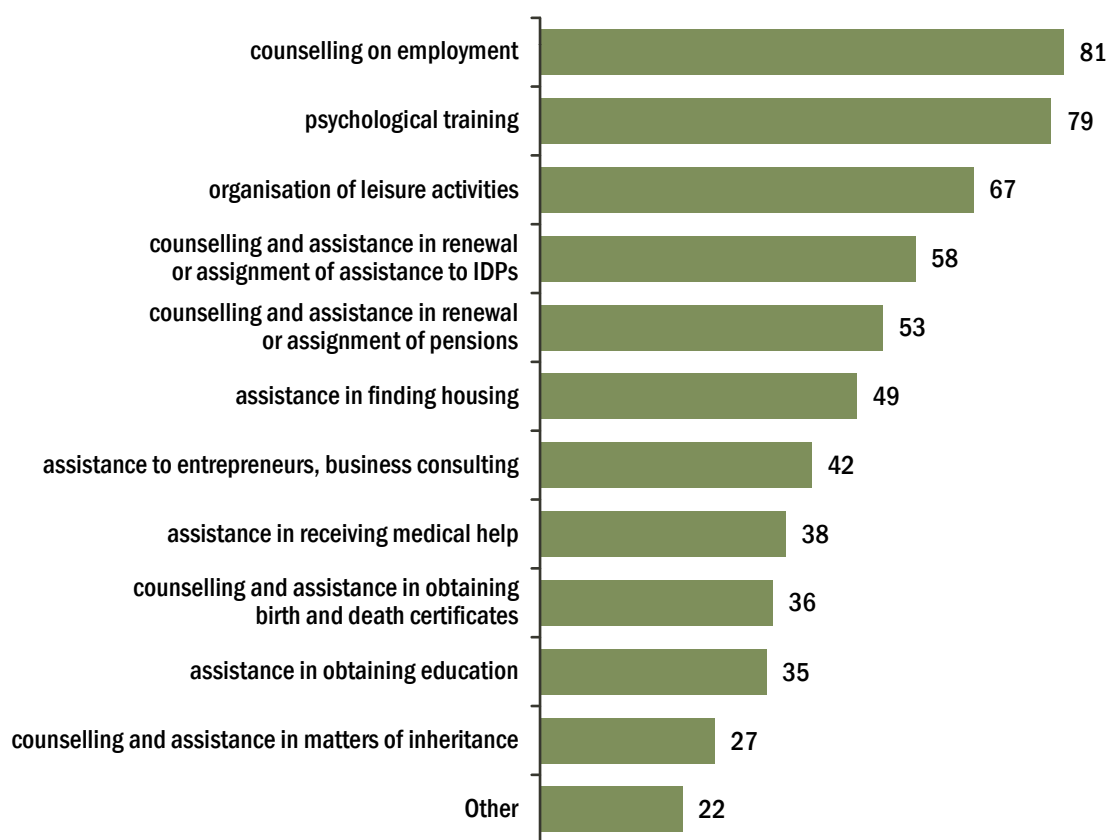


Figure 2. Which of these services did you provide most often to IDPs in 2017-2018? (any number of answers), absolute numbers

In the opinion of respondents, the hardest issue to solve is housing. The complexity of the issue, in the opinion of respondents, is much higher than other issues, which allows us to surmise its key role. The outlook for resolving most of the other issues via NGOs' assistance appears more optimistic. It is quite interesting, that among the answers entered into the section "other", out of 15 responses there were 5 respondents that mentioned housing (but not only in terms of renting or buying, but also selling previously owned properties in the occupied territories, receiving compensation for it, etc.)

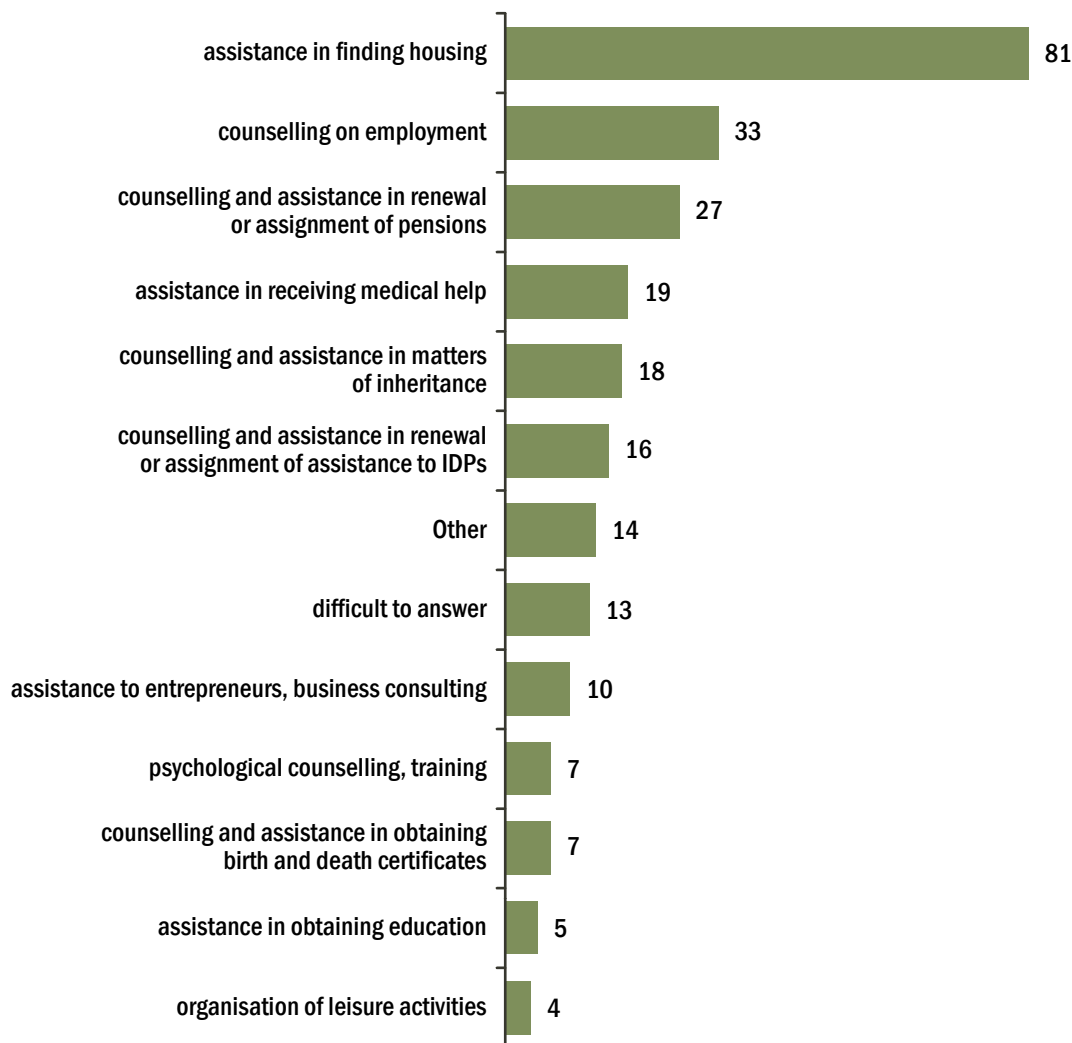


Figure 3. Which of the IDPs issues are hardest to solve? (no more than three answers), absolute numbers

The question about the key issues and their discriminatory character once again confirmed the problem of housing rent as the key one (Fig. 4). In particular it concerns refusals to rent or unjustified increase of rental fees. If we combine the two answers 'often' and 'very often,' we will see that the second biggest problem is verbal intolerance towards IDPs. The problem of non-provision of free medical services is at almost the same level. This last point can be clarified through qualitative research. In the majority of cases, the problem is not about the refusal to provide services, but rather the inaccessibility of a number of medical services due to their commercial basis. In the first two years many IDPs were able to receive a number of medical services thanks to available international and national support. However in recent years, employees of medical institutions are disregarding the IDP status and are servicing clients in a mixed format, combining free services with those on a paid basis. The latter are often inaccessible to IDPS since the majority of their budgets are spent on rent.

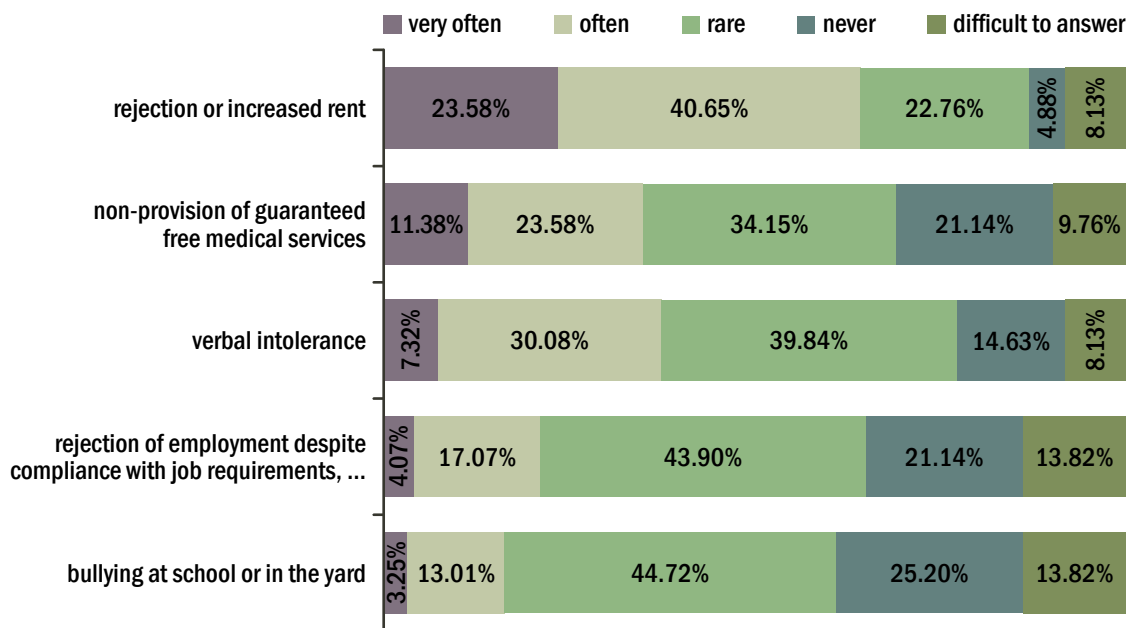


Figure 4. Which cases of IDPs discrimination have you dealt with while working with this category of Ukrainians?, %

The question of paying pensions to elderly living on occupied territories is quite contentious in both political rhetoric and public discourse. In order to receive their pensions, the elderly need to cross checkpoints, face the risk of shellings, and risk their health by standing in long queues and muddle through the changes in procedures of pension calculation and payment. Part of Ukrainian society believes this situation is unfair and blames the state for not fulfilling its obligations towards its citizens. The other part of society, on the contrary, blames the people from the occupied territories for their collaborative attitude and pragmatic use of double pensions from both Ukraine and quasi-states of DNR/LNR.

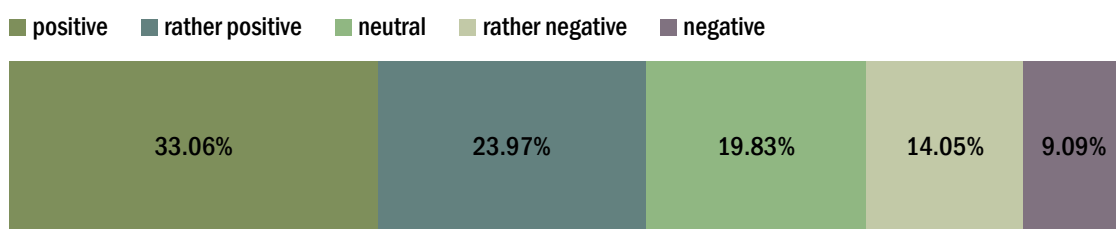


Figure 5. What is your attitude towards the legislative initiative to cancel the requirement to have IDP status to receive pensions by those who live on the occupied territories (one answer), %

The question of forced return is another complicated matter in the history of displacement in Ukraine. Some IDPs who could not find jobs and pay the rent, could not adapt to the new place and had to go back. The main motivation for this return was their own housing on the occupied territories.

In the opinion of the surveyed respondents, if the situation with IDPs remains the same, the process of forced return will remain acute. Almost 40% of respondents foresee intensified return; 33% believe migration flows won't change considerably; and almost 30% are avoiding answering this question directly (Fig. 6).

- number of people returning to occupied territories will increase
- number of people returning to occupied territories will remain the same
- number of people returning to occupied territories will decrease
- difficult to answer

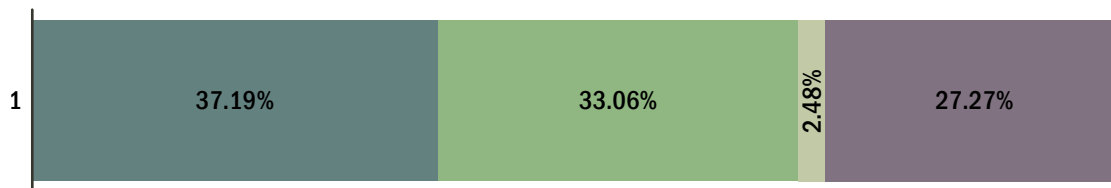


Figure 6. In your opinion, what will happen if the situation of IDPs and legislation remains the same (one answer),%

The respondents' opinion about the role of local authorities in solving key issues of IDPs confirms that the main issue that remains unsolved is the problem of housing. This particular point has the largest numbers for negative assessment of the efforts and achievements of local authorities. Almost 60% view the activities of local authorities in this sphere negatively or rather negatively. There were also negative assessments, albeit much less pronounced than for housing of local authorities' performance in providing counselling and assistance in renewal of pensions payment (28%), assistance to entrepreneurs (28%), and provision of medical assistance (26%). The most positive views were expressed regarding the provision of psychological counselling, training and employment advice, and consultations regarding receiving birth certificates (Fig.7).

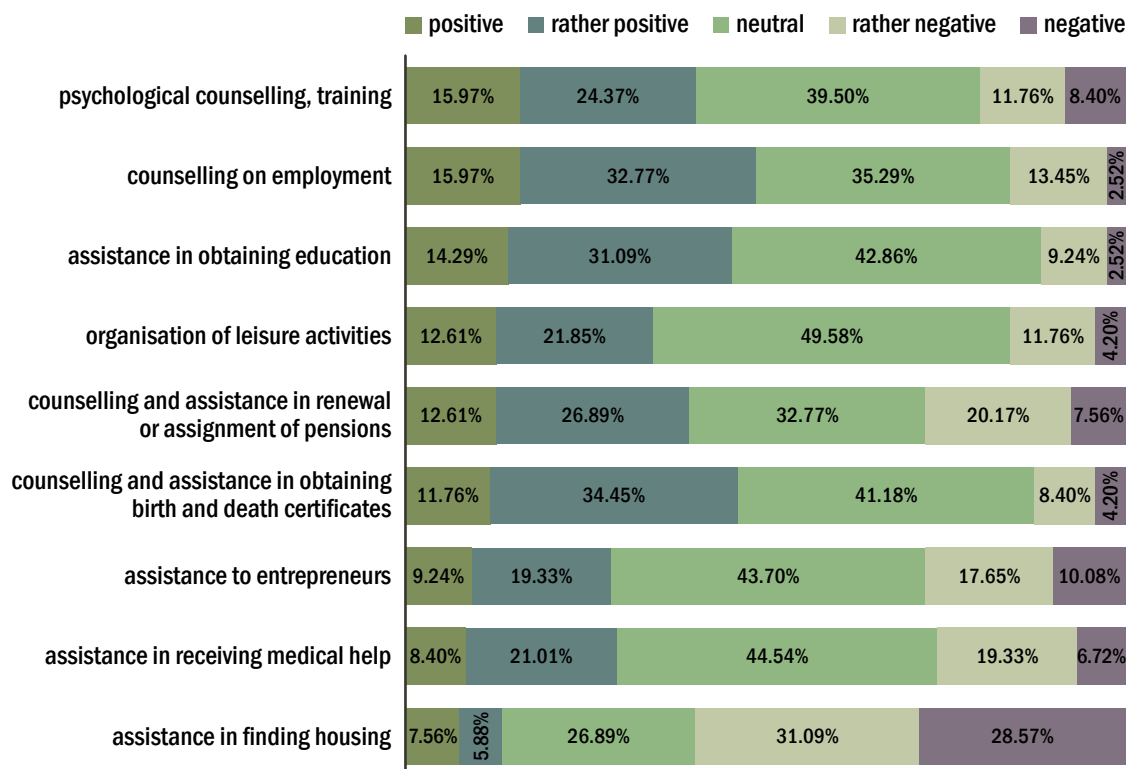


Figure 7. How do you rate efforts of the local authorities towards the following issues of IDPs (one answer per question),%

Almost half of the surveyed experts demonstrate their lack of knowledge about the existence and content of the Migrant Integration Strategy for the period till 2020 (Fig. 8).



Figure 8. Are you familiar with Migrant Integration Strategy for the period till 2020? %

However, even the group of respondents that is familiar with the Strategy don't consider it as a factor that will significantly improve the socio-economic status of IDPs. (Fig. b9).

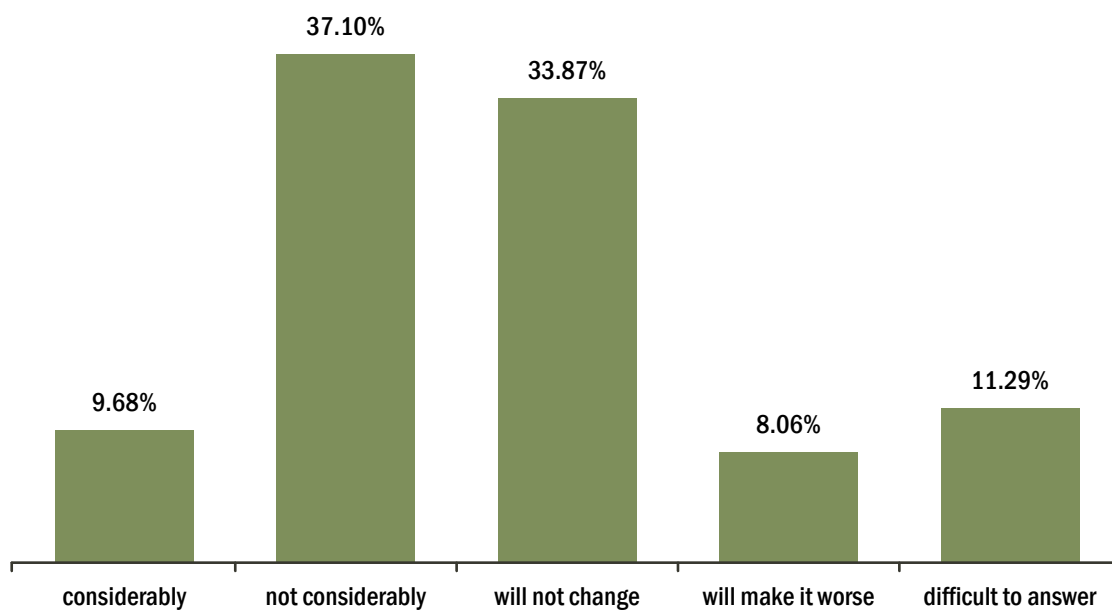


Figure 9. In your opinion, to what extent will implementation of this Strategy improve the socio-economic situation of IDPs?, %

Activities of the overwhelming majority of the surveyed NGOs are aimed at organising work and events in which both the IDPs and local communities participate simultaneously (Fig. 10). From the point of view of ensuring the integration processes of IDPs and local communities, this approach is optimal. In this case, we are talking about joint projects in the field of “active citizenship” (public projects, fighting corruption, etc.), psychological counselling and training, and leisure activities.

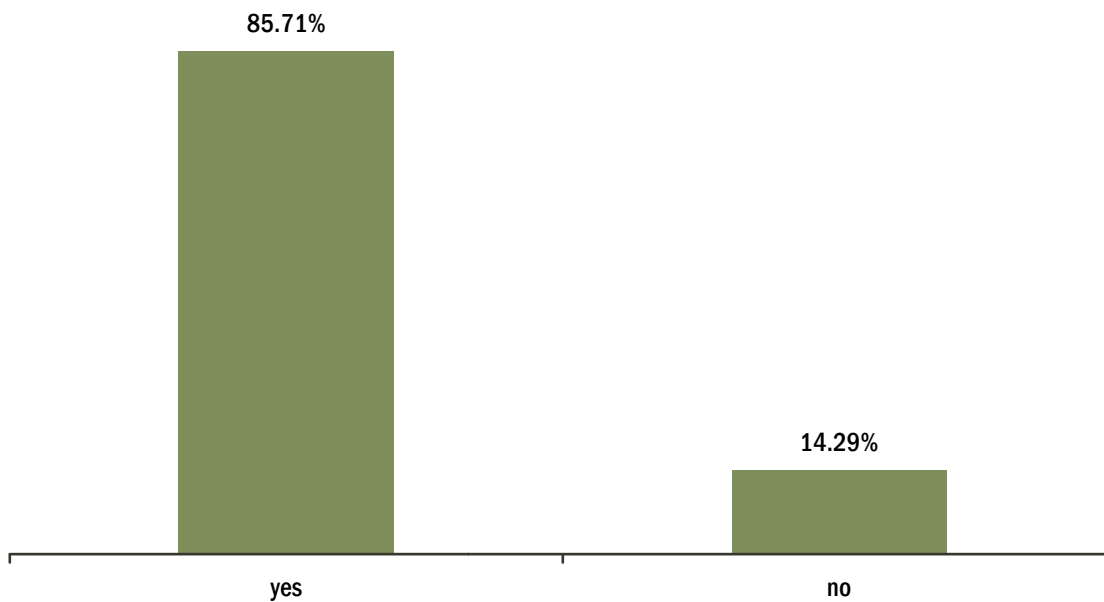


Figure 10. Is your organisation engaged in programs and activities in which both IDPs and local community representatives take part?,%

The question about the sources of funding for IDPs shows that most of them (56.4%) receive funds from international foundations or assistance programs. Private Ukrainian donations make up to 16.4%, state funding is 6.4%. In the comments section to this question respondents often emphasize their own unpaid volunteering activities (Fig.11).

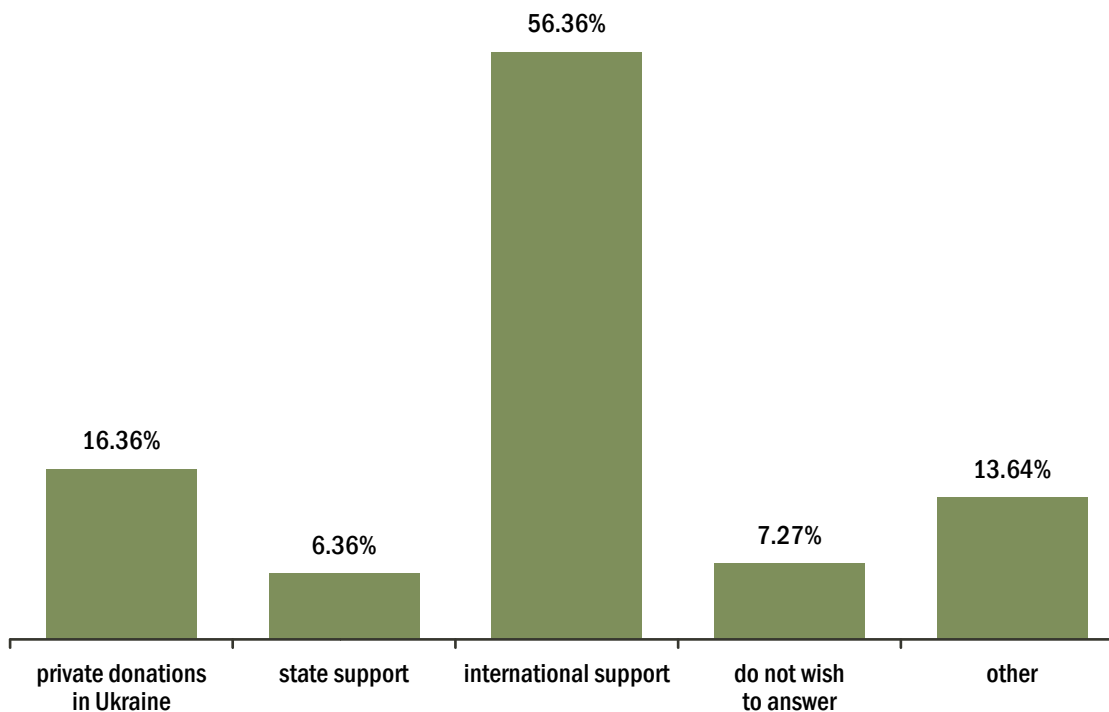


Figure 11. Which sources of funding for activities related to IDPs are predominant in your organisation?,%

Qualitative surveys allow us to explain more deeply the essence of the problem that lies behind these figures. Firstly, we have a situation wherein assistance provided to IDPs depends on the



position and strategies of the international foundations. Secondly, according to activists' estimates, local NGOs, which in the vast majority were founded in the context of the events of 2013-2014, do not have sufficient reputational capital and grant history to allow them to apply for grants with powerful funding without intermediaries. Hence, for the further activity of Ukrainian NGOs, aimed at the development of civil society in Ukraine as a whole, the most crucial issue is the accumulation of reputational capital and the search for internal resources for support of their own activities.

## Conclusions

The answers provided by respondents to open questions allow us to see professional assessments of the policies related to forced migrants. Firstly, respondents emphasise the specific ways in which assistance is provided, to the extent that it ties people to systematically low payments, but at the same time hinders IDP's ability to adapt more quickly, achieve self-realisation, and grow. Also, in the conditions of numerous unresolved issues of various disadvantaged groups in Ukraine, respondents emphasise that assistance focused only on IDPs increases the dissatisfaction of people and determines their negative attitude to displaced people.

Secondly, respondents emphasize the need to stop connecting the status of IDPs with the procedure for assigning a pension. This would allow separating the real internally displaced persons who live in Ukraine and do not have access to their homes in the occupied territories from "swing migrants", who continue to live on the occupied territories and are constantly travelling. The separation of these groups is important for the calculation of the actual number of IDPs and the assessment of real needs for housing.

Thirdly, respondents note that state strategies on IDPs are implemented without using of expert knowledge or the results of IDP surveys, that such strategies are abstract, lack financial support and clarity on tactical steps.

Fourthly, they emphasize a number of communication problems between local authorities and the local community, on the one hand, and the IDPs, on the other. Communication failures are still portraying displaced persons as temporary residents who do not need to seek permanent settlement. According to the respondents, this leads to pushing people back into the conflict zone.

In general, the surveyed NGO representatives have the following expectations in the context of solving the problems of IDPs:

- from the Government of Ukraine: a clear program for solving the housing problem; protection of the political rights of the IDPs and the return of their right to vote in local elections; establishing peace in the country.
- from the local authorities: effective local housing solutions, realistic measures and programs for the integration of IDPs into local communities, and change of the perception of IDPs as a temporary inhabitants.
- from the host communities: to accept IDPs; to be tolerant and avoid dividing people into "us" and "them."

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**Appendix: General information about NGOs, representatives  
of which took part in the survey**

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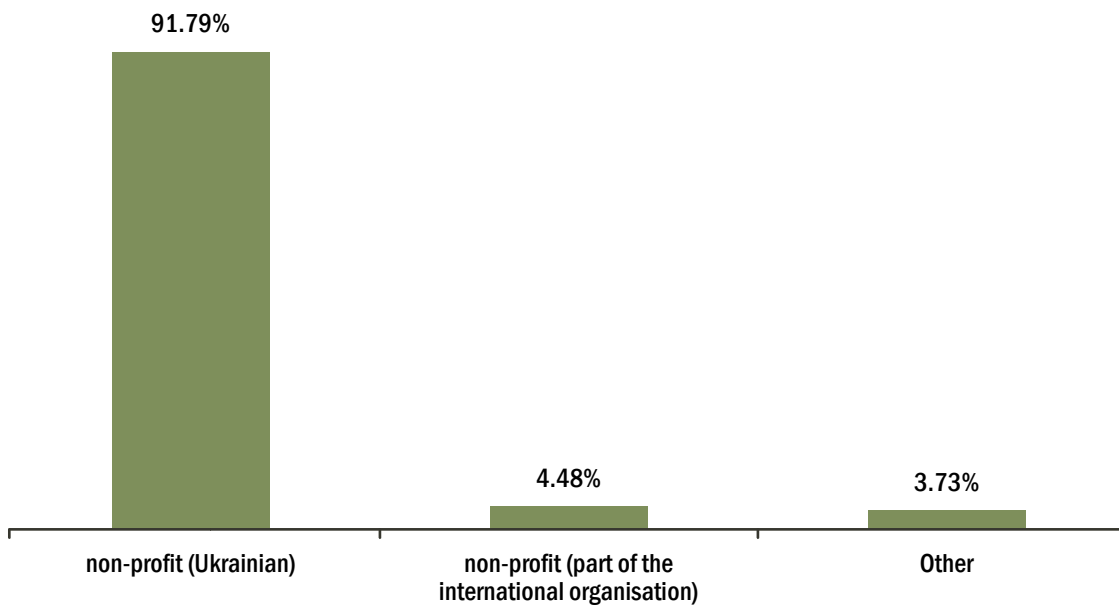


Figure 12. Type of organisation, %

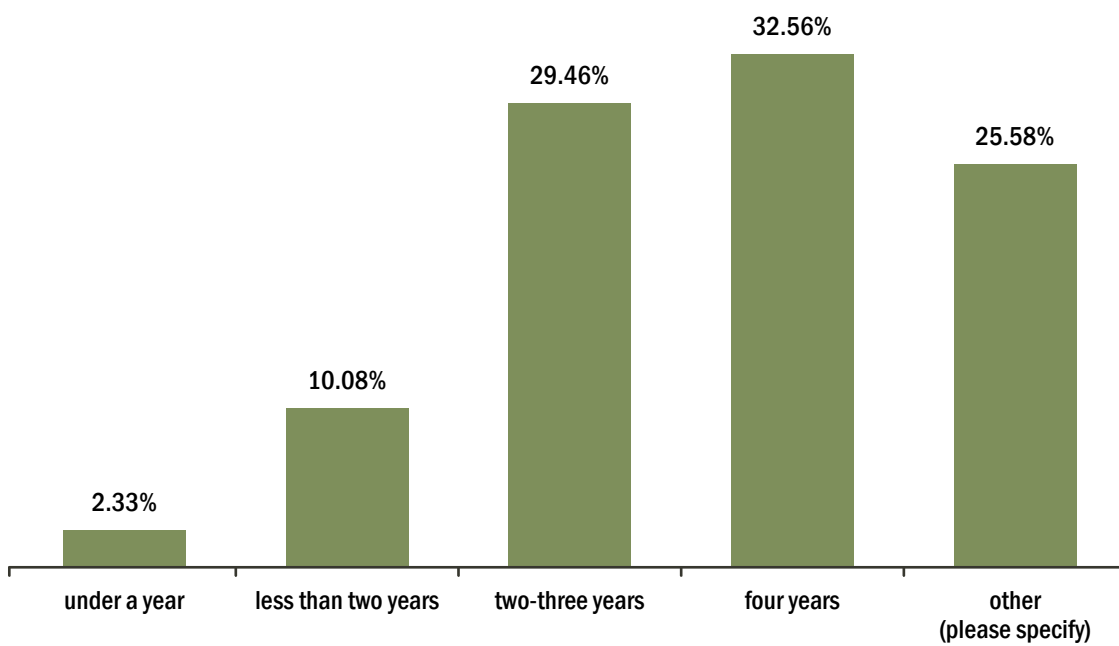


Figure 13. How long have your organisation been operating?, %

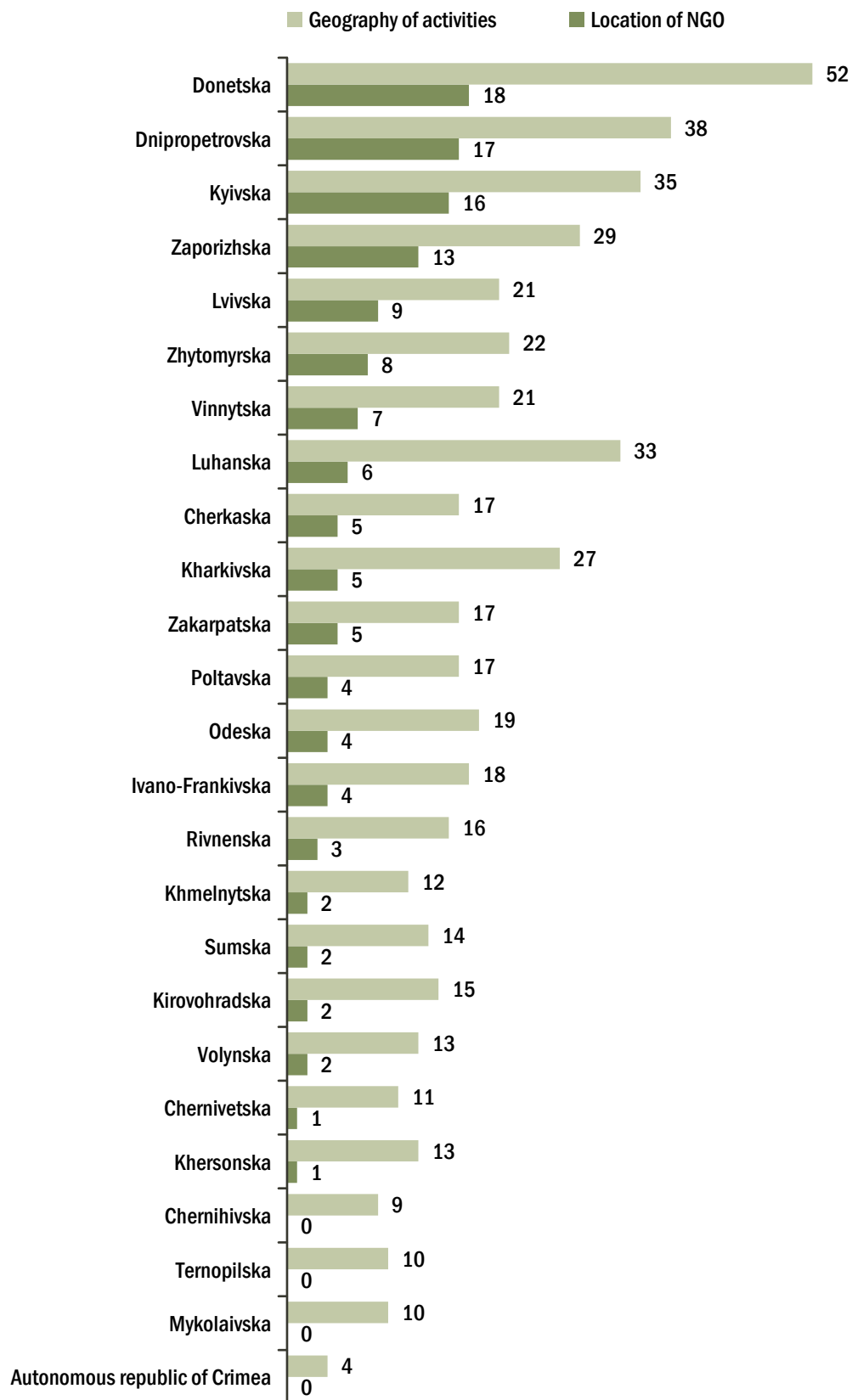


Figure 14. Correlation of the geography of location and geography of activities of the surveyed NGOs, absolute numbers

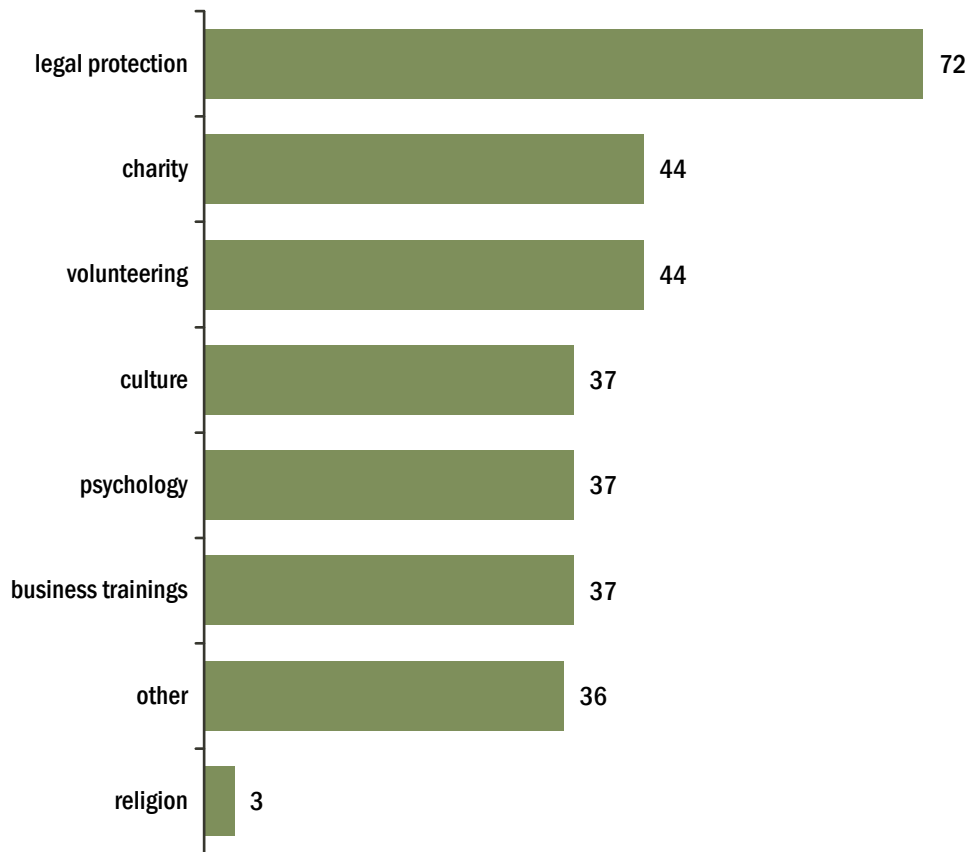


Figure 15. Sphere of activities of your organisation (not more than three answers), absolute numbers