

# CRITICAL AREAS SITUATION REPORT

KEY THEMES › RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS AND AID ACTORS

LUHANSK OBLAST (OCCUPIED) › OCCUPIED DONETSK OBLAST › NORTHERN DONETSK OBLAST (GCA)  
› DNIPROPETROVSK OBLAST › ZAPORIZHZHIA OBLAST › KHERSON OBLAST › MYKOLAIV OBLAST ›  
ODESA OBLAST › KHARKIV OBLAST › SUMY OBLAST › CHERNIHIV OBLAST

Kramatorsk suburbs, Donetsk oblast - Alex Zakletsky

















## KEY THEMES

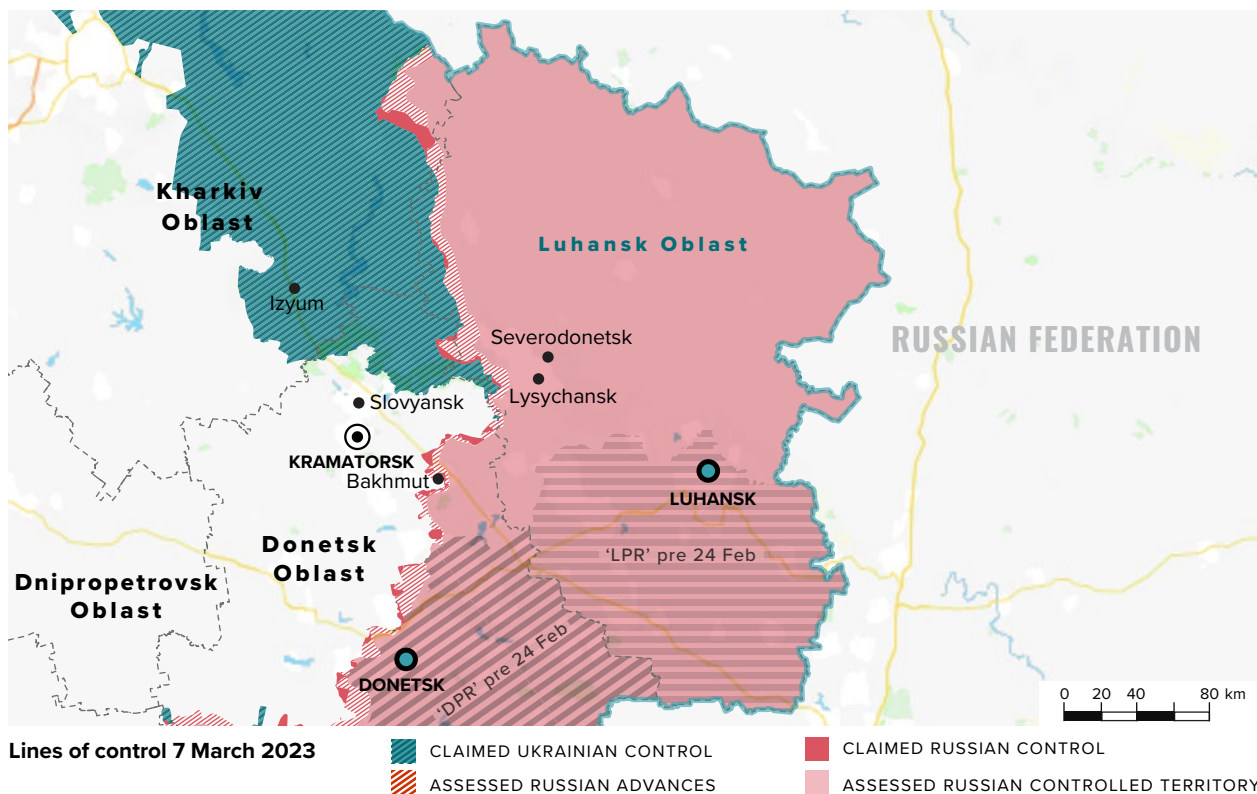
- › In occupied parts of Donbas, the occupying authorities' tactics to pressure residents to take Russian passports may be bearing fruit in some cases: among our pool of respondents in the region, the majority say they have or plan to acquire Russian passports, including some professed opponents of the occupation.
- › Within the locales surveyed, Donetsk and Kherson stand out as major cities whose residents are forced to drastically limit their daily movements in light of kinetic threats. The cities of Kharkiv and Mykolaiv, meanwhile, are notable for their increasing security and improved public morale. Security conditions are deteriorating sharply in northeastern Kharkiv oblast, and will likely worsen in key towns in government-controlled Donetsk oblast if Bakhmut falls.
- › Due to warmer weather and the stabilization of the energy grid in government-controlled areas, respondents in most of the surveyed regions appear less concerned about their homes' supplies of electricity, gas, and heating than at any point since the early fall. With these worries receding, residents are likely to focus more on other quality of life issues, such as unemployment, access to medical care and affordability of medication, and equity of aid and resource distribution. A prompt, transparent response to these issues on the part of authorities can prevent them from becoming sources of public discontent.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS AND AID ACTORS

- › Increase targeting of nondisplaced populations for aid in front-line communities, especially low-income households and pensioners. Consider expanding multi-purpose cash programs where items are available locally.
- › Support public information efforts to raise awareness among residents of highly insecure areas, including northeastern Kharkiv, front-line sections of government-controlled Donetsk oblast, and parts of Kherson along the Dnipro River, about the various forms of financial and housing support available to them should they choose to evacuate.
- › Expand psychological support and training for educational professionals. Increase targeting of nondisplaced school-age children for educational and psychological support, especially in regions like Odesa that remain subject to power outages that disrupt regular instruction.

### MAP LEGEND

 CAPITAL	 OBLAST CAPITAL	 'LPR' / 'DPR' CAPITAL	 NOTABLE SETTLEMENTS
 CLAIMED UKRAINIAN CONTROL	 CLAIMED RUSSIAN CONTROL	 'DPR' PRE 24 FEB	 'LPR' PRE 24 FEB
 ASSESSED RUSSIAN ADVANCES	 ASSESSED RUSSIAN CONTROLLED TERRITORY		



**POPULATION:** 2,102,291 (Ukrainian gov't est. 2022)

**MAIN CITIES:** **Luhansk** 397,677; **Alchevsk** 106,062; **Severodonetsk** 99,067; **Lysychansk** 93,340; **Khrustalnyi** (Krasnyi Luch) 79,533; **Dovzhansk** (Sverdlovsk) 62,691; **Rubizhne** 55,247

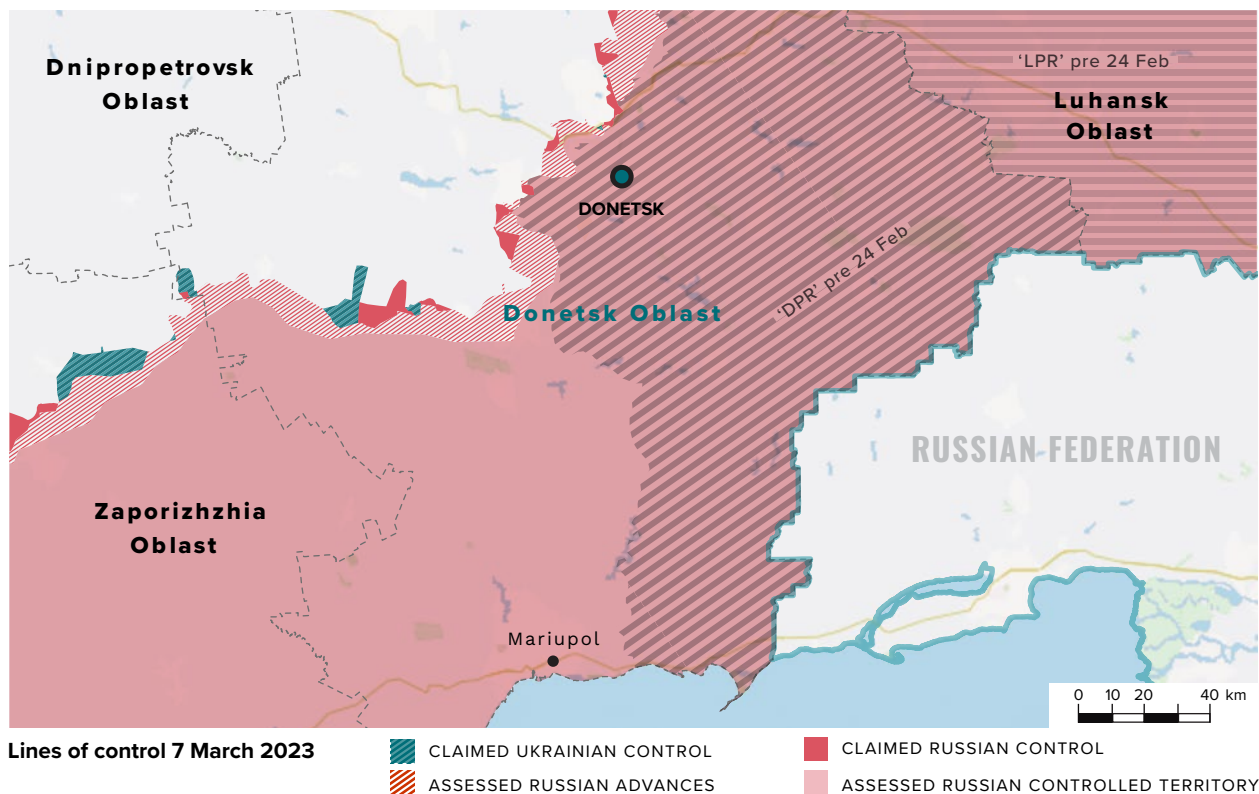
## LUHANSK OBLAST (OCCUPIED)

Fighting remains intense as Russian forces continue to try to retake territory lost during Ukraine's autumn counter-offensive, with **military efforts** remaining centered around the towns of **Bilohorivka** and **Kreminna**. De facto authorities claimed one civilian death in the month of **February**, while the first week of **March** alone saw a further three civilian deaths. **Population centers in various parts of the oblast remain heavily militarized:** a resident of **Almazna**, for example, said **homes there were "packed with soldiers,"** who had moved the furniture outside to make room for rows of sleeping bags.

**New laws** have come into force to shore up the **'integration'** process into the Russian Federation, mainly focusing on bringing social programs in line with Russian provisions, including pensions, social security, and disability and veteran benefits. Among local sources, **the region's 'integration' into Russia was perceived as entailing cumbersome bureaucratic chores, including renewing property deeds and joining months-long wait lists to receive Russian passports.** While all respondents under 30 voiced positive or neutral attitudes toward Ukraine, some also saw the

'integration' process as a necessary evil — a view colored by the belief that Russian rule could not possibly be worse than being governed by the 'Luhansk People's Republic.' Others, especially older respondents, welcomed the changes. As in the previous reporting period, **researchers were largely unable to contact respondents in areas occupied in 2022, due to a combination of connectivity problems and security concerns.**

Despite the continued efforts to incorporate Luhansk oblast into the Russian state, residents reported that major Russian business chains had yet to arrive in the region, limiting economic development. In terms of meeting their basic needs, the most common concern that respondents voiced was the lack of medical workers and the unavailability of certain medicines, alongside ever-increasing prices. In the town of **Voznesenivka** (Chervonopartyzsank), water supply outages and poor road conditions were also reported. Small-scale initiatives led by Russian citizens — often with proclaimed left-wing leanings — continue to provide crucial aid to those displaced both in Luhansk and to Russia proper, but respondents say these organizations do not offer aid to locals.



**POPULATION:** no official estimate

**MAIN CITIES:** **Donetsk** 901,645 (Ukrainian gov't est. 2022); **Mariupol** 425,681 (est. 2022);

**Makiivka** (part of greater Donetsk city) 338,968 (est. 2022); **Horlivka** 239,828 (est. 2022); **Yenakieve** 76,673 (est. 2022)

## OCCUPIED DONETSK OBLAST

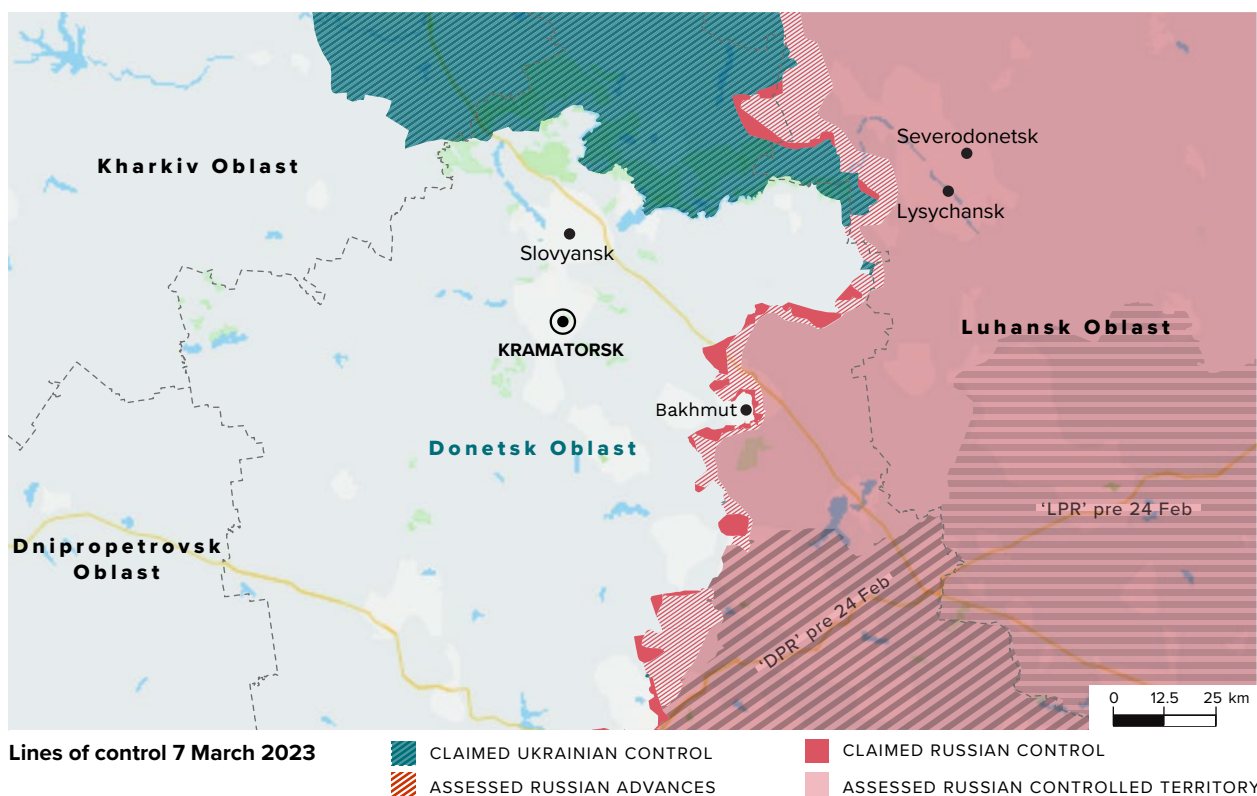
Russian-controlled 'Donetsk People's Republic' authorities **claim** that 16 civilians died from combat-related causes from 16 Feb to 6 March, including two children and **four** emergency medics allegedly treating civilians at the scene of an attack on 23 Feb. **While most of the reported civilian deaths and injuries occurred in the Donetsk city and Horlivka vicinities, the Mariupol area also saw several instances of apparent incoming fire.** Following a 12 Feb strike on a former school building in the Mariupol suburb of **Nikolske**, which Ukrainian officials **say** hit a Russian military base, explosions were heard in the city itself on 22 Feb. These incidents have residents rattled, as one pensioner explained:

There were strong explosions yesterday, more than 10 of them. It was really scary. Then, planes started flying over the city, and you could hear machine-gun rounds. No one knows what happened, but they **said** on the news that air defenses shot down two drones. [We're hoping] military activities don't resume in our city for the 'anniversary' [on 24 Feb]. Recently, Nikolske was fired on, a former school building where Russian forces were stationed. That means they can reach Mariupol too. (Woman, 50s, Mariupol)

Other respondents noted further **signs that Mariupol's status as a rear city was under question.** Per a pensioner in his 60s:

They're saying they've tightened control at the checkpoints at the entrance to the city. They've outfitted new **spots** for snipers next to the checkpoints. That didn't even happen when they'd first taken the city.

Along with safety, **access to livelihoods and passportization were key concerns for all respondents.** In Mariupol, sources said that public servants and port workers were getting paid weeks or months late. In both cities, locals complained that workers at publicly funded entities were being given until the summer to acquire Russian passports, for which lines were long and arduous. "You can spend a few months getting [a passport] in Mariupol," a pensioner in her 50s remarked. Per a Donetsk laborer in his 50s, "I don't want to get a Russian passport, but I'm going to have to. [...] I thought they'd give them out, like in Crimea, but in reality, we have to collect all the papers ourselves." **Among our small pool of respondents, the passportization pressure campaign seems to be working:** three quarters of the Mariupol residents, including one who characterized the occupation authorities as propagandists indifferent to the population's needs, said they had either received or were in the process of receiving Russian passports.



**POPULATION:** no official estimate; roughly 350,000 **remain**, per the governor, as of 6 July

**MAIN CITIES:** **Kramatorsk** 147,145, roughly 50,000 **remain** as of 7 June; **Slovyansk** 105,141, roughly 23,000 **remain** as of 15 June; **Bakhmut** 71,094; **Pokrovsk** 60,127

## NORTHERN DONETSK OBLAST (GCA)

The front lines in Donetsk remain drawn around **Vuhledar** and Bakhmut, with **oblast authorities** registering 35 civilian deaths between 16 Feb and 6 March. For weeks, international media have been questioning the **strategic utility** of holding on to Bakhmut and speculating about a possible **Ukrainian retreat**. Authorities, on the other hand, speak of the need to **redouble efforts to defend the city**: according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the battle for Bakhmut has “yielded some of the **biggest results** over the whole period of the war,” in terms of numbers of enemy troops killed.

A respondent on the ground reported a bleak picture of life in a city where only the economically and physically vulnerable tend to remain:

All the benefits of civilization stopped in September. There’s no electricity, water, gas, or heating. There are only ruins left where the city once was. [...] I’ve been an orphan since childhood. I can’t afford to move wherever my eyes take me. At least here there’s a roof over my head. I don’t think my economic situation would improve if I left. (Woman, 40s, Bakhmut)

The same respondent expressed anger that despite widespread evacuation attempts some parents **refused to grant permission** for their children to leave:

Children spend most of their time in basements. [...] When the mobile internet is cut off (which is quite often) the children can’t study. It’s the conscious choice of parents. They’re not just putting their children’s lives at risk, they’re also responsible for their education.

Respondents in other areas of northern Donetsk, namely Kramatorsk, **Kostyantynivka**, and **Dobropillya**, reported reliable access to electricity, medical services, and heating, alongside improving water supplies. **All respondents continue to praise the quality and availability of humanitarian aid**: on average the response was rated nine on a ten-point scale. While some respondents were aware of the possibility of online registration for aid, most were already familiar with aid access points and relied on a network of acquaintances and homeowners’ associations to learn of new modalities. Online resources were viewed only as a supplementary information channel, particularly given trouble with internet access reported by respondents in areas such as Bakhmut, Kramatorsk, and Kostyantynivka. The use of the Ukrainian language in aid notices was not viewed as a barrier. Despite their gratitude for efficient aid, locals bemoaned the high levels of unemployment, which left many feeling they lacked control over their futures.





**POPULATION:** 3,096,485 (gov't est. **2022**)

**MAIN CITIES:** **Dnipro** 968,502; **Kryvyi Rih** 603,904 (2022); **Kamianske** 226,845; **Nikopol** 105,160; **Pavlohrad** 101,430

## DNIPROPETROVSK OBLAST

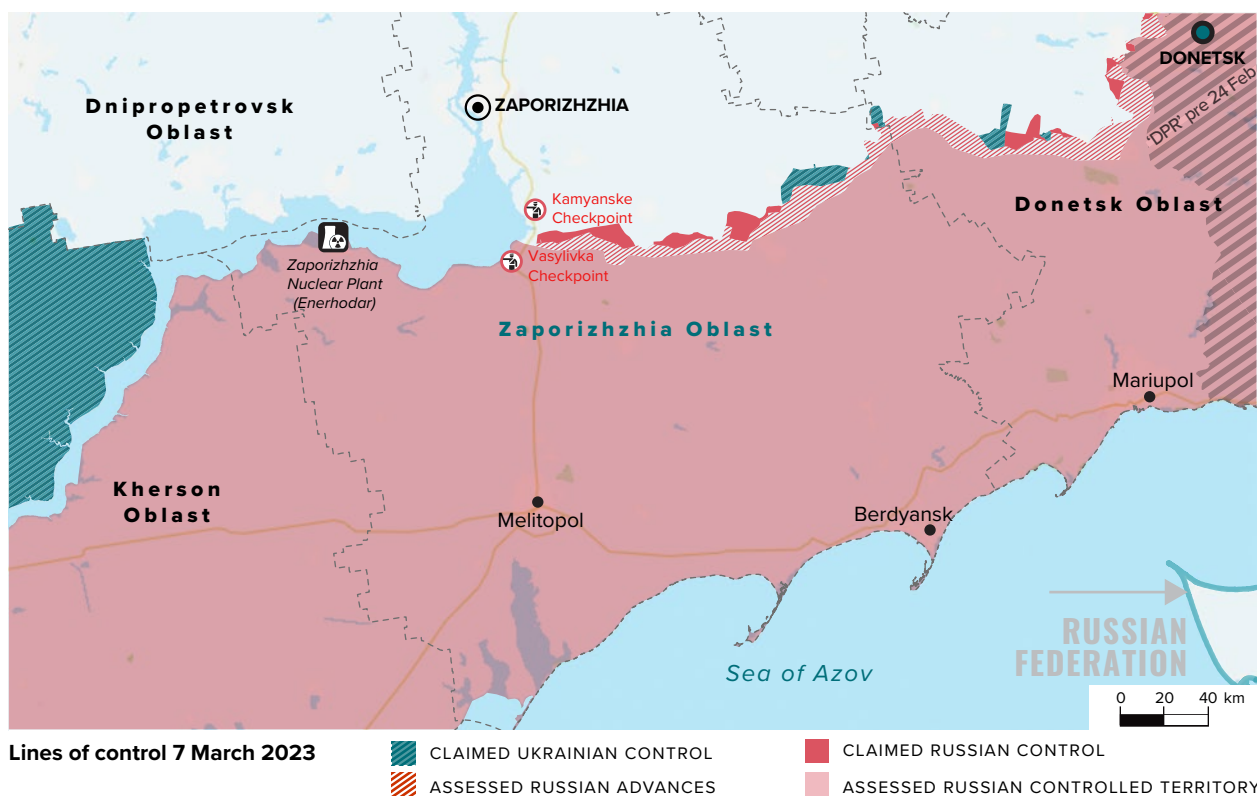
The reporting period saw relative quiet across Dnipropetrovsk oblast, with nightly shelling pausing for as many as three days between 20 and 22 Feb. **Nikopol district** remained in the cross-hairs with attacks on **Marhanets**, **Chervonohryhorivka**, and Nikopol city. The heaviest shelling occurred on the night of 25 Feb, with **nine strikes** on Nikopol and Marhanets damaging 10 five-story buildings, 23 private residences, 12 businesses, three educational institutions, and utility pipelines. The only casualty noted since the previous reporting period occurred on 16 Feb, when **shelling** in Pavlohrad killed a senior citizen and injured seven others.

Respondents spoke of a **return to normalcy almost two months after the Russian Kh-22 missile strike** that leveled a section of a Dnipro apartment building. Some locals praised the authorities' responsiveness; one woman in her 20s noted that the government promptly replaced her broken windows following the strike and made **efforts** to disseminate information about resources for victims, even connecting her to a lawyer. All spoke buoyantly about the **absence of power outages during the reporting period**.

While prices continue to rise, according to sources, most saw an improvement in the local economy,

even if they were less optimistic about their own situation. **Dnipro residents highlighted the ongoing construction of multi-story office buildings, the opening of new restaurants, and leisure activities like a festival at the House of Art.** Respondents also observed that new arrivals have opened small businesses, like the **Little Mariupol** cafe. All local sources agreed that a cessation of hostilities was necessary for broader economic recovery, with some expressing confidence that international assistance would follow. In February, Dnipropetrovsk oblast was ranked **fourth best** in foreign direct investment (FDI) strategy among mid-sized European regions by FDI Intelligence.

A growing civic mindedness was observed among some respondents. While sources spoke of concerns about mobilization among friends, they also reported engaging in collective efforts to raise funds and procure materials for troops. An interviewee in her 20s reported volunteering with a **local clothing maker** to produce thermal wear. As a man in his 30s remarked, "It is difficult to say that there is a plus side to the war, but there's solidarity, civic awareness, and a rise in mutual assistance." Rumors of corruption scandals were met with anger, with respondents incensed by the possibility that officials might steal humanitarian aid when friends of theirs are fighting.



**POPULATION:** 1,638,462 (gov't est. **2022**)

**MAIN CITIES:** Zaporizhzhia 710,052; Melitopol (occupied) 148,851 but fewer than 75,000 remain; Berdyansk (occupied) 106,311; Enerhodar (occupied) 52,237

## ZAPORIZHZHIA OBLAST

Front-line Zaporizhzhia oblast was shelled daily throughout the reporting period, with the deadliest incident occurring on 2 March when a Russian S-300 **struck** a five-story apartment block in Zaporizhzhia city. As of **6 March**, 13 people are known to have died, four remain hospitalized, and two are missing. The missile strike obliterated the upper floors of the building, destroying 25 apartments and damaging 10 additional units. Fighting continued along the line of contact throughout the reporting period without reported changes in control.

There was no significant movement of civilians within the region, as **travel between government-controlled and occupied Zaporizhzhia remains closed**. Respondents report that mobilization is in full swing. "I have seen more people on the streets issuing summons," said a student in her 20s. At the same time, a car salesman in his 40s noted that, despite a precipitous decline in employment in the city, his company has struggled to find qualified personnel because it cannot compete with the higher pay offered by the military.

Most **respondents expressed pessimism about the economy**. Many enterprises work below full capacity because of continued blackouts, with some forced to shut down operations completely.

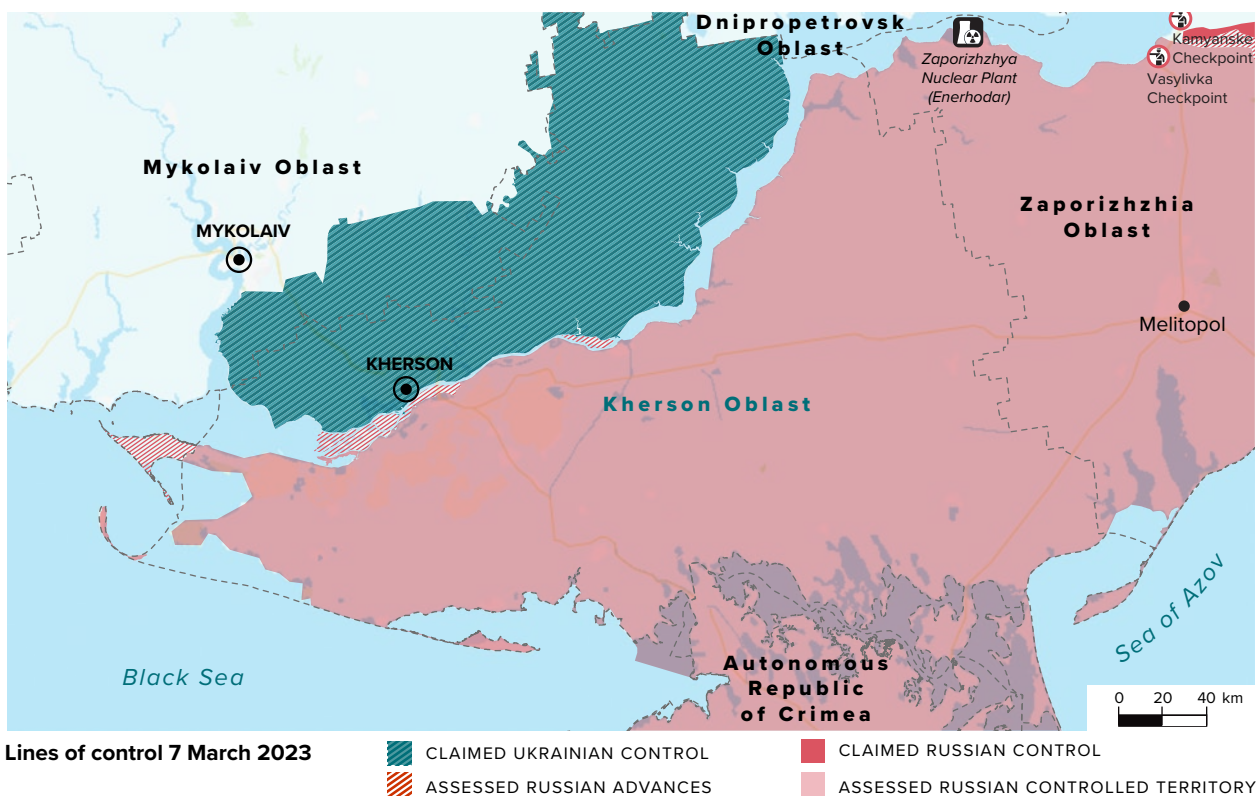
More than 10% of the workforce in **Zaporizhzhia district** is **currently idle**, per local authorities. Employment opportunities for women were said to be limited to work in service industries, including in nail and hair salons. The sharp rise in prices was noted by all local sources. A respondent in her 50s in the village of **Mykhailo-Lukasheve** described the dilemma facing her household:

We divide everything that needs to be bought in half. My husband hasn't worked for six months because the factory [in Zaporizhzhia city] was closed and my salary is 2,800 UAH [Ukrainian hryvnia]. [...] So we buy only the most necessary things.

**Some sources continued to take issue with humanitarian aid targeting, judging that not enough assistance was available to locals experiencing hardship**. A volunteer in her 20s in Zaporizhzhia city provided her perspective:

Absolutely everyone needs humanitarian aid, and most of all pensioners. Pensioners always ask me if they can receive aid [and I can't help them]. [...] I would like to see direct financial assistance that we can decide on our own where to allocate.





**POPULATION:** 1,001,598

**MAIN CITIES:** Kherson 279,131; Nova Kakhovka (occupied) 44,427

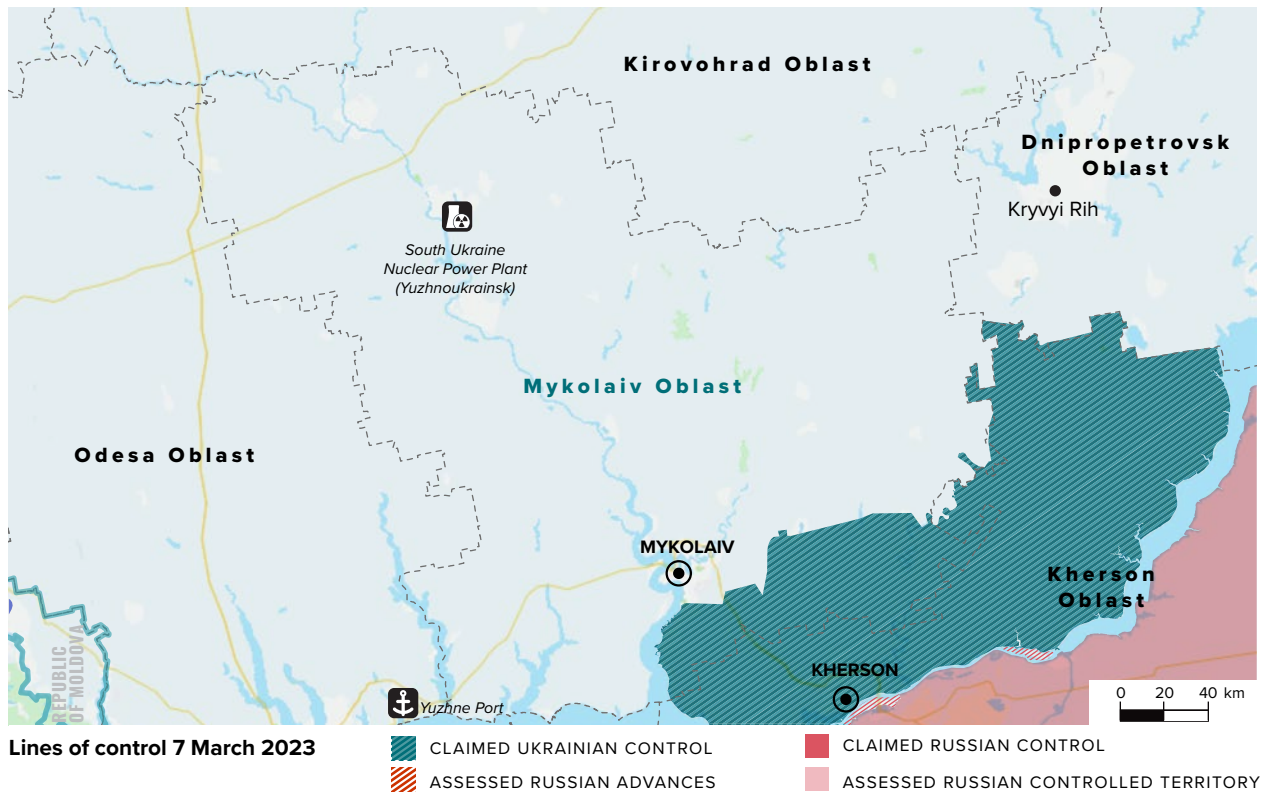
## KHERSON OBLAST

The front line dividing Kherson oblast's Russian-occupied left bank from its liberated right bank remains one of the deadliest places for civilians in Ukraine. During the three-week reporting period, 31 people, including two **children**, were **reportedly** killed by incoming fire in the Ukrainian-held areas alone.

All local sources interviewed during the reporting period were in the oblast center, and all expressed considerable distress at the steady stream of deadly attacks on the city. Other **concerns continue to include poor access to medical care, a problem naturally compounded by the physical dangers of moving around the city.** Security concerns are turning even basic errands into gambles. "Making your way to the store — now that's a task," a woman in her 30s remarked. "Most often, it's just not possible, since they're shooting day and night." **Fears of death or injury keep many confined to their homes**, although some reportedly continue to evacuate, largely to nearby cities like Mykolaiv and Krivyi Rih.

As in previous reporting periods, some Kherson city residents voiced deep disdain for their local authorities, whom they characterized as PR-obsessed and indifferent to constituents' struggles. However, **for the first time since the liberation, some local sources in the oblast center praised authorities' reconstruction efforts.** "Representatives of the local authorities, and volunteers as well, are working constantly, without so much as a break," said the aforementioned woman. She and two other respondents drew attention to the volunteer reconstruction brigades working under the **Army of Renewal** initiative, which was launched by the national government in the fall to address both war-related damage and unemployment. According to one man who had joined such a unit:

*I'm without work for now, so I joined the brigade and I help patch up holes in roofs and board up windows that have been knocked out. We have a lot of work. We've helped at the children's oblast medical center, at stores. [...] The local authorities are also working on that front. I'm not going to rate the quality of their work, but they're working — that's certain. (Man, 20s, Kherson city)*



**POPULATION:** 1,091,821 (gov't est. **2022**)

**MAIN CITIES:** **Mykolaiv** 470,011 (2022), **est.** 230,000 present as of 24 June; **Pervomaisk** 62,426

## MYKOLAIV OBLAST

While the coastal settlements of **Kutsurub** and **Ochakiv** face daily attacks, Russian strikes remain rare in the rest of Mykolaiv oblast.

**The most common complaint among key informants remains inconsistent access to water across the region.** Residents often resort to extreme measures to shore up supplies: an elderly respondent reported going against doctor's orders to lug water up flights of stairs, while another had taken to loading fresh water onto a vehicle, filling up a swimming pool, and gradually draining it for her drinking needs.

A commonly cited inconvenience are long waits, of up to two weeks, for medical appointments:

*The hospitals are overflowing; in order to get a doctor's appointment you have to join the electronic queue 5–8 days in advance. Even if you're not sick, you end up registering, because you don't know what could happen in a week. (Woman, 60s, Mykolaiv city)*

Respondents report that while small businesses such as bakeries, salons, and pizzerias are popping up on every corner, large businesses have yet to come back. Other visual signals of a return to normalcy include increased traffic and busier streets, yet these signals are coupled with

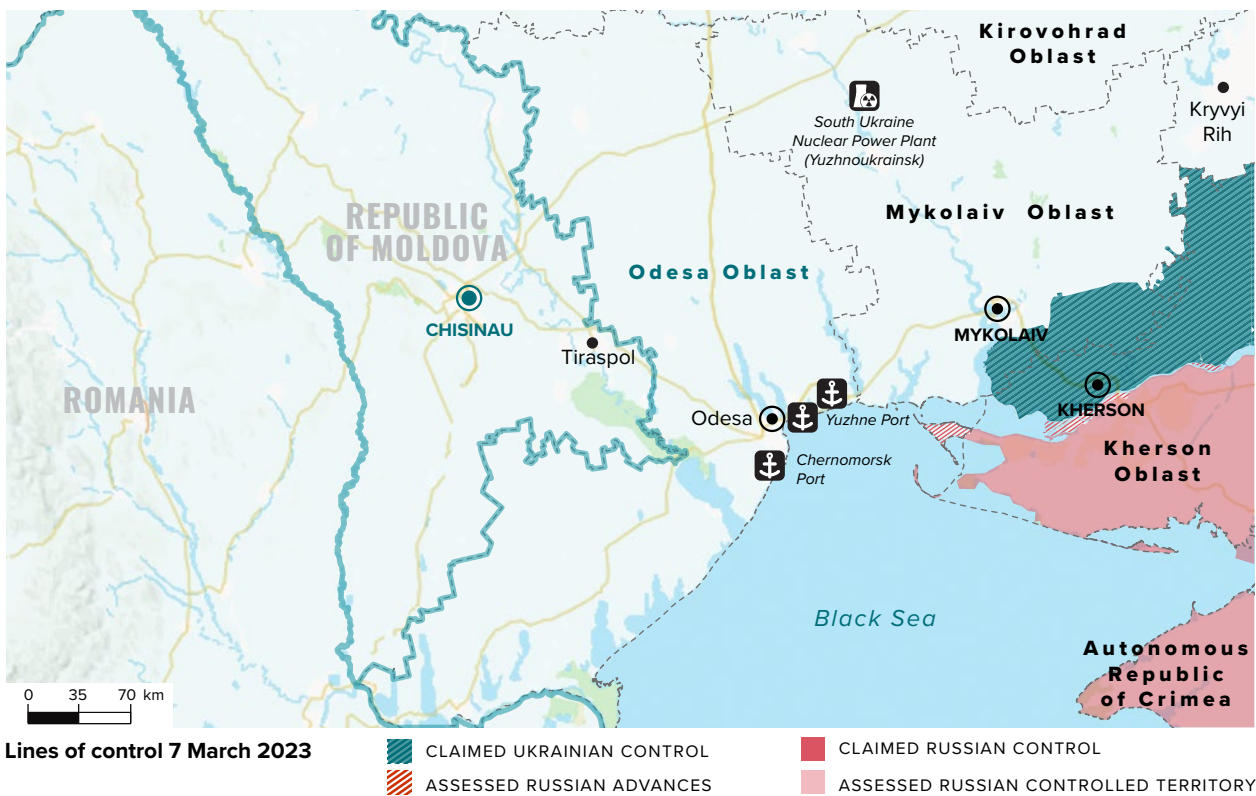
“hard-to-look-at” sights: injured veterans, groups of begging children, and packs of stray dogs.

Electricity access remains stable in the region. **Respondents stated that the consistent power supply has added predictability to their work and study lives**, resulting in greater psychological security and fewer conflicts at home. Between this and the reduction in violence, some respondents felt their lots had improved. “Life's got a bit easier,” a resident of the oblast center in her 60s remarked. “We're not so worried about our own selves.”

Nonetheless, informants reported dread regarding potential future attacks. All respondents worried that the government was underestimating the full risk: “The Russians are not as dumb as they're described to us,” the aforementioned woman observed. A fellow city resident in his 20s predicted significant retaliation for Russia's territorial losses in the fall: “They're sore losers.”

Respondents remained unsatisfied with the provision of humanitarian aid, characterizing it as “repetitive,” consisting mainly of grains, flour and canned foods:

*I don't need any more [of this type of aid]. Why stand in line for three hours to receive the same thing? Why torment yourself? [...] Some people I know stocked up and now they feed their dogs with rice porridge. [...] After all, no one is feeding animals apart from some volunteers. (Woman, 60s, Mykolaiv city)*



**POPULATION:** 2,351,392 (2022)

**MAIN CITIES:** Odesa 1,010,537; Izmail 69,932; Chernomorsk 57,983; Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyyi 47,727

## ODESA OBLAST

Although **sirens** rang overnight in Odesa oblast on 2 March as **Russian ships** launched missiles toward Zaporizhzhia oblast, the reporting period passed with no strikes on the region. **Respondents noted a marked improvement in electricity supply** after the region faced a nearly **week-long blackout** during the previous reporting period. While scheduled energy disruptions **continued** as crews worked to repair battered utilities, the region went almost a **week** without an outage between 28 Feb and 5 March.

The main political news of the period was the **arrest** on 6 March of **Ihor Tkachuk**, the deputy chairman of the Odesa Regional Administration (ODA). ODA head **Maksym Marchenko** announced that an investigation was underway and gave no further details short of a statement that no “illegal activities” would be tolerated. Ukrainian member of parliament (MP) Oleksiy Honcharenko **speculated** that Tkachuk was suspected of taking bribes. Sources characterized local authorities as adequate in interviews that took place before the arrest was made public.

**Respondents raised concerns about rising prices as the oblast continues to see a large inflow of internally displaced people (IDPs) from front-line**

**regions.** Rents in particular have appreciated, with the price per square meter in new buildings **rising 48.4%** during the last year. A pensioner in her 60s from Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyyi noted that comparatively low housing costs in the small port city have attracted a constant stream of new arrivals. While generally pessimistic about the region’s economic prospects, both locals and IDPs offered positive assessments of humanitarian aid. An Odesa-based businessman in his 50s spoke of friends with limited incomes who continue to receive aid, while the aforementioned pensioner reported regularly receiving food, household products, and blankets. A new arrival from Kherson in his 30s described his family’s positive experience with assistance:

*We received help at the railway station when we arrived in Odesa. We got Red Cross bags with food, hygiene products, and stationery for our child. We just showed them our passports, and they gave us aid.*

Respondents spoke of the psychological toll of war as the full-scale invasion reached its one-year anniversary. A civil servant in her 40s noted that the city was on edge as 24 Feb approached, with schools shuttered during the preceding week due to fears of missile strikes. Educational disruptions are having a deleterious effect on family life: “The kids simply aren’t studying,” stated the previously mentioned pensioner, “and the psychological climate of the family is just off.”





**POPULATION:** 2,598,961 (gov't est. **2022**)

**MAIN CITIES:** **Kharkiv** 1,421,125; **Lozova** 53,126

## KHARKIV OBLAST

Front-line and border areas, including **Kupyansk district**, the **Dvorichna** area just to its north, and settlements in the vicinities of **Vovchansk**, **Derhachi**, and **Lyptsi** took heavy fire during the reporting period. It is unclear whether Russian forces have made significant progress in their efforts to advance toward Kupyansk, liberated in the fall following over half a year of occupation: Ukrainian sources suggest occupying troops have made little forward movement **on the ground**, while some Russian military bloggers **claim** their troops are some 3km from the town's outskirts. Regardless, **life in the Kupyansk area is becoming untenable for many civilians**. On 2 March, authorities **announced** the start of mandatory evacuation of certain segments of the population from Kupyansk hromada, where they said 812 children and 724 disabled people were registered as living.

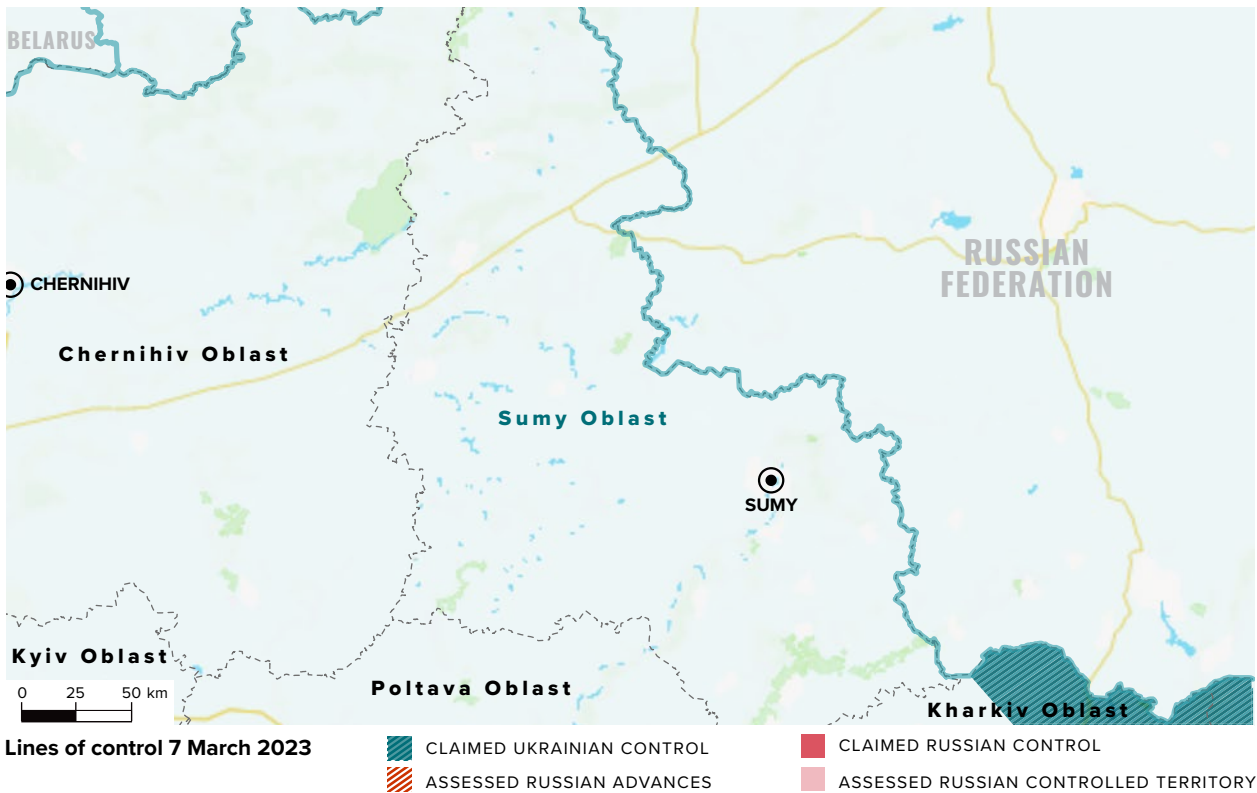
In the oblast center, meanwhile, local sources spoke of weeks of relative calm, in which city life seemed to be continuously improving. In this regard, their comments marked a shift from the previous reporting period, when residents were feeling shaken by a 10 Feb **attack** on energy infrastructure, but were largely in keeping with the positive testimonies from January. Residents expressed relief at the lack of major power outages;

several sources reported that either they or neighbors had recently returned to the city due to the electricity situation having stabilized. On 7 March, city authorities **announced** that streetlights, which had been switched off in the city for over a year, would be **lit** in parts of the center. (In another possible signal of growing normality, a showy **memorial** to the controversial ex-mayor Hennadi Kernes was installed at the city cemetery during the first week of March.)

In keeping with almost all previous reporting periods, key informants in Kharkiv city voiced positive views of the city and regional authorities. Per a teacher in her 50s:

Attitudes toward the authorities are friendly. People notice how they're treated, and the [positive] changes to the city overall.

While key informants' main complaints concerned big-picture issues — namely the sense that there is no end in sight to the war — some older research participants also raised cost-of-living concerns. However, even they suggested help was readily available to fill gaps in their basic needs, although **online sign-up forms for humanitarian aid are a challenge for some** would-be beneficiaries. Yet, as noted in the **16 February Situation Report**, the responsiveness of local authorities could be tested by new waves of displacement from front-line sections of the oblast's northeast.



**POPULATION:** 1,035,772 (gov't est. 2022)

**MAIN CITIES:** Sumy 256,474; Konotop 83,543; Shostka 71,966

## SUMY OBLAST

In recent weeks, the shelling of border areas has intensified, concentrating on rural areas such as Seredyno-Budsky, Bilopilsk, and Esman. On 2 March, authorities reported the highest number of incidents of incoming fire over the course of the war, possibly in retaliation for an alleged cross-border partisan attack on Liubechane in Russia's Bryansk oblast.

**All respondents noted the increase in attacks**, but said they hoped these would account for the worst of Russia's much-predicted 'anniversary of offensive' — i.e., that there would be no further deterioration in the security situation. One respondent had particular reason to hope that no further escalation was in store:

They mobilized my son last week. That's why I hope the offensive has already started. He's in training now and I don't think he'll be thrown to the front line. After all, he's only ever seen a gun in movies or in pictures. He was never in the army and he knows almost nothing about warfare. (Man, 50s, Sumy city)

**Respondents expressed relief at continued stable access to electricity.** They also praised improved medical care, in particular certain free medicines and health services at public hospitals. Nonetheless, informants reported high rates of illness, particularly respiratory diseases. On discovering

that one location of the migration service of Sumy had been sent into **COVID-19 self-isolation**, one respondent described feeling he had been transported back in time.

All but one respondent stated that they had not received humanitarian aid in recent weeks, with most unaware of the possibility to register online. **Those who knew of online aid registration expressed frustration at technical obstacles** such as difficulty uploading documentation or transferring information to a new device. While the content of basic aid packages was generally described as satisfactory, many stated that they did not fall into the predefined demographics eligible for more complex aid packages. One elderly woman joked that her disabled daughter had become the family's "breadwinner," as she received the best aid package. However, **several respondents felt their community members were excessively dependent on humanitarian assistance:**

Everybody is having a hard time. But some try not to drown, and others have already given up. They just hope for the help of volunteers or the government. I don't respect them. (Man, 50s, Shpylivka)

To other, able-bodied respondents, work was an important source of psychological stability:

For me, work is a panacea. The more your hands are busy, the easier it is for your mind. (Man, 50s, Bilopillya)



**POPULATION:** 959,315 (gov't est. 2022)

**MAIN CITIES:** Chernihiv (282,747); Nizhyn 65,830

## CHERNIHIV OBLAST

The northern region of Chernihiv oblast remained under regular shelling throughout the reporting period. The border village of **Yeline** was **shelled eight times** on 26 Feb and a nine-story apartment building in Chernihiv city center was **hit** on 28 Feb in a strike that also damaged a dental clinic.

On 17 Feb, **Dmytro Bryzhynskyi** was **appointed** head of the **newly established** Chernihiv City Military Administration by President Zelenskyy. Bryzhynskyi took charge of the defense of Chernihiv oblast following the full-scale invasion. Local sources expressed mixed reactions to the appointment, which came after former Chernihiv Mayor Vladyslav Atroshenko was found guilty of a conflict of interest and **removed** from office for one year in December. “I think he’ll be fine,” said a source in his 20s, adding, “But people have reacted differently. Some are neutral, some are not very happy. **Many simply don’t understand why this [military] administration was created in the first place.**” A pensioner in his 70s spoke of a generational divide in opinion, noting that the former mayor enjoyed strong support from older residents.

Despite this upheaval, most respondents spoke positively of local authorities’ winterization efforts.

“The city was prepared for winter, even though people were afraid that we would freeze,” said a teacher in his 50s, adding that “the war has shown even more that our government is reliable, and trust has grown.” Others echoed this sentiment, reporting that local authorities took measures like erecting temporary heating shelters. However, a source in his 20s credited volunteer organizations for assisting with home repairs, adding that many impacted by shelling have rebuilt at their own expense, and **lamenting that local authorities have not done more to help.**

Although no respondents mentioned plans to leave the region, all described **hazy economic prospects**. The local labor market was said to be shrinking, with taxi driver and janitor deemed the only readily available jobs by one local — although another noted that new grocery stores, clothing shops, and cafes have opened, and **past research** has suggested that skilled manual laborers such as welders and mechanics are in high demand in the oblast center. Respondents also voiced concerns about rising prices, with pensioners noting that all but the most basic needs like groceries and utilities are beyond their means, especially medicine. **Most characterized humanitarian aid for non-displaced locals as insufficient.** “I think that practically everyone in the city needs [aid],” said a source in his 50s, “but far from everyone can get it.”



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