



Cedos

The First Days of Full-Scale War in Ukraine: Thoughts, Feelings, Actions

Initial research results

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We ask you to help bring the victory closer by donating to [the Armed Forces of Ukraine](#) and [humanitarian initiatives](#).

[Donations](#) made to support the work of Cedos itself will be used to research and analyze the impact of the war on civilian population. We thank everyone who supports us.

This research was conducted in cooperation with the Prague Civil Society Centre; the International Renaissance Foundation; the Heinrich Boell Foundation, Kyiv Office – Ukraine.

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Introduction ●

On February 24, the day when Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, the majority of our Cedos team were in Kyiv. From the first days of the war, we have been involved in volunteer initiatives. At the same time, we continue our work in those fields where we have the most expertise, i.e., social research and analytics.

At this time, **we decided to focus on the impact war has on the civilian population** by, in particular, conducting this survey **to document people's experiences, thoughts and feelings during the first days of the full-scale war in Ukraine**. While working on this research, research team participants changed their place of stay in search of security, heard air raid sirens several times a day, found new routines and experienced the same emotions as survey respondents.

Because our purpose was to document different experiences, thoughts and emotions, we adopted a **qualitative research approach**. At the same time, given the current martial law situation, we decided to use **a self-disclosure survey as the method of data collection**. The survey was put into Google forms. This variant of data collection supposed to be the simplest and the most convenient one for our potential respondents as it meant that there was no time limit on completing the survey, it was possible to give optional responses and the process of survey completion could be interrupted at any moment. Therefore, this format, under the current research conditions, was generally deemed as friendly as possible with respect to our respondents and their experiences. Information about our research, including a link to the fill-out form, was distributed on Cedos pages on social media, researchers' personal pages and in personal communication.

The survey consisted of six main question blocks as well as introductory and concluding questions. The question blocks concerned the thematic foci of the survey: **the start of the war; respondents' next steps; emotions; volunteering; professional activities and education; everyday routine**. The block of concluding questions examined socio-demographic aspects of the situation.

The survey started from an introductory note clarifying the research goal and containing a disclaimer about the confidentiality of answers. In the introduction section, respondents were warned that the survey included questions regarding the respondents' emotional state since February 24, the start of the full-scale war, and were instructed to answer these questions only if they felt comfortable doing so.

Most questions presupposed self-disclosure responses, so respondents were not limited by predefined answers. This way, we encouraged the informants to give narrative answers and disclose what they experienced.

Before the survey was distributed, we carried out the **pre-testing of research tools**. The pre-testing was conducted among the acquaintances of research team participants. First and foremost, its objective was to find out whether the wording of the questions was clear and whether the way questions were formulated and the process of filling out the survey caused psychological discomfort; additionally, the task was to check how much time, on average, it took to fill out the survey.

The survey was conducted between March 2 and March 7. Within this period, **555 respondents** took part in the survey. The average age of respondents is 29. The youngest respondent is 17 years old, the oldest one 70. Two thirds of all respondents (66%) are of prime working age (25-54)¹, another third (29%) is people of early working age (15-24). Slightly less than 4% of those who filled out the survey have not indicated their age. More than two thirds of respondents (72%) identify as women, while a little less than a quarter (23%) identify as men. Another 1.4% identify outside the above-mentioned categories (in particular, as a non-binary person, as a queer person) or see no need to use gender as the basis of their identification. 4% of respondents provided no answer to this question. More than two thirds (70%) of respondents have higher education, another 7% hold a doctoral degree. 14% said that the highest level of education they obtained so far is secondary education, another 5% indicated that they obtained occupational / vocational education. 4% of respondents did not answer the question.

While conducting the research, we faced a number of challenges related to research methodology and ethics. The responses to these challenges chosen by the team determined the **limitations of the conducted research**.

- Work on the research tools was subject to time constraints, as delayed start to data collection would have significantly influenced the character of data. Our goal was to document people's emotions and experiences in the first weeks of the war as the events actually unfolded, not retrospectively; therefore, we relied on our team's previous experience of working with sensitive topics and conducted a pre-testing of research tools.
- The way the survey was disseminated led to Cedos' audience featuring prominently among the respondents. The socio-demographic characteristics of this group do not reflect the socio-demographic characteristics of Ukraine's adult population as a whole (age and gender distribution, level of education etc.). Moreover, the very method of

¹ According to age group categorization on the basis of their capacity for work as defined in the socio-economic and demographic calculations of UN experts.

collecting data through an online form could have an effect on certain features of the sample (causing, in particular, the senior age group to be underrepresented). Because filling out the survey took time and required access to the Internet, it is reasonable to assume that it could mostly be filled out by those respondents who between March 2 and March 7 were relatively safe and had uninterrupted access to the Internet.

- The self-disclosure survey presupposed documenting one's experience and emotions through writing. Choosing this method has a certain limitation (or consequence): documenting one's own experiences in writing inevitably contributes to a greater narrativisation of the account and encourages the respondent to rationalize the lived experience. We took this into account while analysing the data and believe that the method we chose constitutes a justified compromise in conditions that make it impossible to collect data via interviews.
- Researchers' participation, i.e., the fact that they themselves, to a certain degree, experienced full-scale war and forced relocation, can be considered both an advantage and a limitation of our research. On the one hand, it can encourage greater reflexivity and sensitivity while dealing with the received data as a result of comparing the data to the researcher's personal experiences. On the other hand, it may predetermine certain analytical matrices that affect the interpretation of received data. To avoid cognitive bias or bias caused from pre-existing experience, work on received data was distributed between researchers during analysis and interpretation as well as during peer editing.

The research is not comprehensive. The result features diverse ways in which the war is experienced within a certain timeframe but cannot be extrapolated onto the entire population of Ukraine and the whole period of war, as the totality of war experiences is much bigger and more multifaceted. These experiences demand much further examination: from representative research on national level to research focused on individual social groups.

This text does not constitute an exhaustive report on the results of analysing the collected data; rather, here we present an analytical note containing initial findings and a description of main trends which we have so far discovered.

Section 1 ● The beginning of the war

1.1 Reaction to news about the start of the war

We asked our respondents where they were on the morning of February 24, when the full-scale invasion started². **The majority of respondents were safe:** asleep at their own place or at their relatives' or friends' places in Ukraine. Some were abroad at the time, either in their homes there, on a business trip or on vacation. Some respondents were at work. Some were on the road, going on vacation or on a business trip. One respondent left Kharkiv after seeing, at 2:00 a.m., a news story on Twitter about the sky being closed; the respondent thought that the war had started and was on the road at the time of the invasion. Another survey participant was travelling from the west of Ukraine, where they went the day before, fleeing the threat of the war; however, after the recognition of the "LPR" and "DPR" by Russia the respondent thought that a full-scale invasion was unlikely and was on their way back to Kyiv.

Survey participants learned about the beginning of the full-scale war in different ways. Some were **actually woken up by the sounds of explosions and air raid sirens in their cities**³. Others learned about the events from relatives and friends who called or messaged them. Some respondents were woken up by relatives, close people or friends who at that moment were nearby and informed them about the beginning of the invasion. A part of respondents learned the news about the start of the full-scale war from media or social networks.

In the survey, we also asked the respondents what they first felt when the full-scale war started⁴. Because the question specifically focused on respondents' first emotional responses, they mainly described how they felt briefly, identifying specific emotions or physical sensations without going into details; notably, some respondents simultaneously felt different emotions. A part of respondents reported **a varied spectrum of negative emotions:** fear, panic, anxiety, rage, despair. Some participants of the survey clarified that they **felt fear for their own life and their relatives' lives**. A part of respondents experienced confusion, stupor, shock, disbelief and surprise that the full-scale invasion actually happened. Some others noted, **on the contrary, that they were prepared for such a situation** and thus reacted to it calmly enough. A few respondents mentioned their physical sensations, such as panic attacks, having difficulty breathing, nausea, tachycardia.

² The question was formulated as follows: "Where were you at 5 a.m. on Thursday, the 24th of February, when the full-scale war began? (Name of the locality and other details, for example, at home or at a friends' house, at work, in a hospital, on a work trip, etc.)"

³ The question was formulated as follows: "How did you find out that the full-scale war began?"

⁴ The question was formulated as follows: "When the full-scale war began, the first thing I felt was..."

"[I thought] that it cannot be as serious as my friend was telling me, that it cannot be true. Then I started shaking, was seized by fear, and realized that I really did not want to leave but had to."

"Fear and panic, anxiety. I started shaking violently. Although I felt anxiety during the last pre-war days because of the news, I did not believe until the very last moment that things would go like that. That the war would actually begin."

"I clearly remember there was no fear, because for the last half a year I lived in constant expectation of the war. Rather, I felt like, okay, I knew that it would be like that. And they said I was paranoid!"

Mostly, respondents' first thoughts **concerned their close people and relatives**⁵: they thought about the need to inform them about the beginning of the full-scale war; worried whether their close people and relatives were safe and what had to be done to ensure their safety. Many respondents' first thoughts had to do with **packing an emergency bag** and other things, as well about potential ways of evacuation. Additionally, respondents thought about finding a safe bomb shelter. Some survey participants also thought about their pets and their potential evacuation. Other urgent needs which first came to attention included getting a sufficient supply of water, food and medicines.

Reporting on their first thoughts, some respondents noted, among other things, **the inability to understand what was happening, doubts and denial regarding the events**: "Am I dreaming or is this reality". Some respondents thought: "This actually happened". A part of respondents could not understand what was going to happen next and what they had to do: "What to do? Where to run? I need to call my parents! What will happen next?"

A part of respondents also experienced **anxiety about the future**. In particular, they were concerned that their plans had been destroyed and their lives would never return to what they had been before the full-scale war started. Some also noted they were worried because they could not understand what would happen to their jobs, as they could lose income. Some respondents did not understand whether they should go ahead with their short-term plans, for instance, pay a pre-planned visit to the dentist.

A separate category of answers consists of some respondents' first negative thoughts and emotions with respect to occupiers.

⁵ The question was formulated as follows: "When the full-scale war began, the first thing I thought was..."

1.2 First steps

We asked the respondents what exactly they were doing in the first hours and on the first day of the full-scale war⁶. For most respondents, one of their priorities was **contacting relatives and close people**, informing them about the beginning of the war and making sure they were fine. Many survey participants indicated that “[they] did not lay the phone down all day” and constantly maintained communication with relatives, exchanging news and useful information, pondering the next steps and supporting each other emotionally.

Some respondents reported having **to solve work-related issues** in one way or another: visit the office in order to get some things; hold a meeting with colleagues; read and answer messages etc. Some people needed to decide whether to go to work that day. Several respondents had to make a decision concerning their organization’s work under martial law conditions.

On the first day of the war many respondents engaged in **packing the “emergency bag”**. Most respondents had not packed the bag in advance; in addition, many did not understand what exactly had to be packed. However, both people who planned to leave immediately and those who had no such plan started to pack emergency bags. First and foremost, respondents took documents and a supply of personal hygiene products, medicines, and clothes for several days. One of the survey participants described the chaotic process of packing in the following way:

“Packed the emergency bag. During the day, changed its content several times.”

Some respondents, on the contrary, noted that they had prepared the bag in advance. Several respondents indicated they were generally ready and just needed to add a few things to the bags, which did not take a lot of time. Some had evacuation arrangements with relatives and prepared an algorithm of actions in case of war:

“We packed things because we had a plan: to go to my husband’s relatives in Western Ukraine. The emergency bag was ready, we just had to pack our things.”

Respondents reluctant to leave their place of residence or still pondering further steps focused on **organizing everyday life under new conditions and preparing for active combat nearby**. People tried to predict all possible scenarios. Preparation included such activities as purchasing food and medicines, withdrawing cash, filling all available vessels with water, charging power banks, securing glass in windows with tape, searching for and/or outfitting bomb shelters etc. A part of the respondents noted a great number of queues in stores, at gas stations, near ATMs. Respondents saw them as

⁶ The question was formulated as follows: “During the first war hours and the first war day I...”

characteristic signs of panic and confusion. At the same time, they noted the calm conduct of people in queues:

“It took us just 20 minutes to find all the products we needed for a week [in the store]. We joined the queue. Waited for 3.5 hours. Everyone waited politely, there was no crush or commotion.”

Most respondents reported that they went or travelled somewhere; people had to move around the city: for example, in order to make necessary purchases or visit relatives. Within cities and at the exit from big cities, there were hours-long traffic jams.

In the first days of the full-scale invasion, people **moved around in search of safer places**; this was not limited to leaving the city. For example, some survey participants temporarily moved into relatives' or friends' homes in the same city, for a variety of reasons (desire to be closer to relatives/friends, availability of an equipped bomb shelter etc.). Sometimes people moved from one apartment to another place at first and then, after several days, left the city, heading in the western direction.

Section 2 ● Next steps

2.1 Most important decisions

We asked the respondents about their main decisions during the first days of the full-scale invasion⁷. The respondents described them in a variety of ways. Some mentioned specific steps they had to take, for instance, organizing their relocation to another city or the evacuation of relatives. For some, the most difficult decisions were the personal ones, related to emotions and feelings, for example, accepting the risk of death. Answering this question, some people talked about completed actions and described things they had already done not a long time ago. Others, on the contrary, phrased their replies as questions, as if pointing to the incomplete process of decision-making. Some stated that at the time of filling out the survey they had not had to or had not been able to make any decisions yet. In contrast to this, one respondent concluded that even everyday activities like grocery shopping require determination in war conditions, as they endanger the person.

Among the most important decisions mentioned by respondents, several categories can be singled out.

1. Decisions associated with relocation: moving to another part of Ukraine or abroad; the decision to stay in one's locality; evacuating children, relatives or close people; decision (not) to return to Ukraine from others

⁷ The question was formulated as follows: “What were the most important decisions you had to make since the beginning of the full-scale war until today?”

countries or (not) to return to one's hometown from others parts of Ukraine; moving into the home of relatives or friends.

2. Decisions related to emotions and feelings: to reconcile oneself to the situation, not to panic; to be aware of the risk to one's health and life; to continue living and fighting.
3. Decisions related to being part of the defense forces and volunteering: joining the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, going to the territorial centre of staffing and social support (former military registration and enlistment office); individual volunteering assistance in various areas.
4. The absence of decisions.

Among others important decisions were those related to work, taking care of close people and personal decisions which cannot be readily assigned to the above-mentioned categories, such as decisions about getting married or a personal boycott of Russian culture.

Within the first weeks of the full-scale war, **relocation-related decisions** emerged as the most important. The majority of respondents noted that the most difficult decision was whether “to stay or to leave”. Some respondents formulated their reply as a question: “Where should I be (should I flee from the city/country or not)?” This may indicate that at the time of filling out the survey, they had not reached a final decision. Apart from that, such an answer may mean that the process of arriving at such decisions takes much time and effort.

Describing decisions concerning relocation, the respondents mentioned **loss** (of property, home) and **separation** from family and close people⁸. The respondents often used the word “**home**” while talking about their decision to stay in their locality or leave it.

“Packing all your life into two suitcases, getting your cat and leaving your apartment without knowing whether you'll have somewhere to return to.”

“I had to leave my deaf-mute aunt and her husband, because I had no chance of taking them with me. It's hard to leave your life, not knowing whether you'll ever return.”

Respondents also noted that they felt **guilty** about leaving their cities or going abroad. Some stressed that “the hardest burden” was leaving relatives and friends and this made them feel guilty.

“I decided to take care of myself. Not to worry about my parents and sister. Instead, [I decided] to take care of myself and my own small family... I left my

⁸ According to the [results](#) of a survey by the sociological group 'Rating', as of March 19, about 44% of people in Ukraine had to temporarily part with their family because of the war.

city for the West together with godparents [of my child/children] and my godmother. I was really afraid, blamed myself, had doubts. But I understand now that in such a way I took care of myself and my own family.”

The evacuation of children, relatives, friends and close people also became an important decision. Some respondents reported that they had to depart from their locality or go abroad because they needed to find a safe place for their loved ones. For others, evacuation meant separation from loved ones for an indefinite period. Describing the evacuation of relatives, the respondents stressed the complexity of the process and often used the words “**persuade**” and “**let go**”.

“Persuading my son, daughter-in-law and grandson to leave Kharkiv without us.”

“My mother had constant panic attacks, and I could not calm down knowing that my family, and especially my eight-year-old brother, were in danger. I decided to take my family to Uzhhorod for safety reasons in order to get going and no longer experience the agony of waiting.”

Those respondents for whom the most important decision was to stay in their locality or on the territory of Ukraine sometimes describe it in an emotional and elevated way. They refer to the need to stay “**on their land**” and in Ukraine “**till the last breath**”. To describe the decision, respondents sometimes use the juxtaposition of “running away vs staying” and emphasize that they refused to “run away”. On the other hand, in some cases, the decision to stay in one’s own locality was caused by inability to leave due to lack of resources, the need to care for relatives or the presence of pets that are difficult to transport.

“Staying at home and taking care of my mother, postponing further actions until I can provide her with a stock of medicines and food.”

“Staying at home because I have two cats, a mother who has difficulty walking and my house, which I love.”

For some respondents who remained in their localities during the first weeks of the war, organizing their life during the war became a key issue. Respondents noted that their most important decisions had to do with outfitting a bomb shelter or searching for one, creating a stock of food, preparing their home to withstand possible shelling.

Respondents also said that decisions related to personal emotions and experiences became important to them. According to some respondents, it was hardest to “reconcile oneself” to the new circumstances, to the fact that “life will never be the same as before” and accept this. Some respondents expressed the need to continue living and “fighting”. Many responses mention the need to overcome panic, which can be explained by great emotional strain during the first days of the full-scale war. Another important decision which

belongs in this category was becoming aware of the risk of death and accepting it: “That I am ready to die”.

Among the important decisions the respondents had to make in the first weeks of the full-scale war were those related to participation in the country’s defense as well as decisions regarding volunteering. Male respondents mentioned that they needed to decide whether to join the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and territorial defense in particular, more often female survey participants. For some, going to the territorial centre of staffing and social support (former military registration and enlistment office) constituted an important decision. For both men and women, one of the key decisions was the decision to participate in volunteering initiatives.

Some respondents noted that at the time of completing the survey, they had not yet had to or had not been able to **make any decisions they deemed important**. Some explained this by inability or unwillingness to make plans even for the immediate future. In addition, decision-making could be influenced by one’s emotional state; for instance, some respondents said they could not make decisions due to disorientation. Some respondents said that for them, making important decisions is something that still lies ahead.

“I am still not making any decisions yet. The day has passed, everyone is alive – that’s good enough for me.”

2.2 Leaving the permanent place of residence (city/settlement)

We asked the respondents how they arrived at decisions about staying or leaving and what might change the decision in question⁹. The vast majority of respondents within the study had to decide whether to leave or stay at their permanent place. According to many respondents, this was a difficult decision. Some went through the experience of forced relocation after 2014, which affected their decision-making this time. Some people either prepared a departure plan in advance or decided to leave on February 24. Some respondents had to change their original decision under the influence of various circumstances. A small number of respondents were not in Ukraine at the time of the full-scale invasion, and some respondents had not yet made a decision at the time of completing the survey.

We also asked respondents about their movements since February 24¹⁰. At the time of filling out the survey, slightly more than a half of the respondents

⁹ The questions were formulated as follows: “How did you arrive at the decision to stay in the city/town/village you are currently in / to relocate to another city/town/village? What guided your decision?” and “What can cause you to change your current decision regarding staying or leaving?”

¹⁰ The question was formulated as follows: “How did you move since the 24th of February?”

were in the locality where they lived permanently or recently. At the same time, one third of the respondents left the locality where they lived permanently or recently. A small number of respondents had not been in the locality where they lived permanently or recently during the entire period in question.

Most often, the respondents stated that the decision to leave or stay **depended on the safety-related situation in their locality**. According to the respondents, the feeling of safety was influenced by how close the hostilities were; the effective work of utility systems; the availability of resources required to meet basic needs; the state of the bomb shelter; absence or presence of threats to life and health.

The proximity and active character of hostilities, as well as the settlement's location near the Ukrainian-Russian border, had immediate influence on the decision to leave. Those who witnessed active hostilities described their decision by referring to emotional experiences, including fear and panic. Some of those who remained said that their locality was "**quiet for now**" or "**still quiet**", which is why they continued to live there. At the same time, their decision may change as the safety situation changes.

"When you don't hear explosions, it seems that the war is far away, not near you, and you think that you are safe at home. But when the explosions start sounding very close and more and more often, your nerves betray you; you want to wake up, but this is your reality now. It was very scary to go outside and leave amid explosions and see the tanks of our military forces near the house."

"On the fourth day of shelling, I realized that I was crying every half hour and that my nerves could not stand it. Besides, the fighting had moved from the outskirts of the city to the centre, where I live [in Kharkiv]."

One of the key aspects of departure-related decisions concerned **resources (financial resources in particular)**; the availability of **transport for departure**; the availability of **housing**; the **possibility of working**. Some respondents answered that they stayed because they had nowhere to go and/or no transport was available. Some respondents decided to leave so that to continue working and be able to donate funds to help the Armed Forces or humanitarian initiatives. A small number of respondents received help with evacuation at their place of employment.

The decision to leave was also shaped by the respondents' **close people**, including parents, partners or relatives. Some respondents noted that they made decisions collectively, some changed their decisions after communicating with close people and under their influence. In addition, the respondents' decisions reflected the presence of those for whose life and health they felt responsible: children, pets, close people with disabilities or those in need of care.

"I can't leave my family under shelling and go to a safe place. It will not bring me peace."

Having **contacts and connections**, such as relatives in the western regions of Ukraine or abroad, was also an important aspect when deciding whether to stay or leave. Some respondents reported that even before the full-scale invasion they had drawn up a plan to visit relatives in safer regions of Ukraine.

The state of health, both physical and psychological, influenced the decision to leave or stay. Some respondents decided to leave because they were worried about access to medicines and medical care during the war. At the same time, some respondents stayed due to the state of health of close people, such as older relatives. The need to take care of relatives and the impossibility of evacuating them, in particular because of their disability or restricted mobility, contributed to the decision to stay.

For some respondents, **logistics** issues, in particular the **state of roads or railways**, were the crucial factor. Some explained their decision to stay saying they were unable to leave safely due to the destruction of transport infrastructure or shelling. Additionally, several respondents stated they did not want to overload transport infrastructure, namely to "occupy a seat" in a car or on a train which instead could be used to evacuate people from vulnerable groups.

Being able to help and volunteer coloured some respondents' decisions. A part of survey participants decided to go to a safer place in order to be more "useful" than they could be amid active hostilities. On the other hand, some stayed to help at their place where they lived.

Factors that guided a small number of respondents included advice from the military, intelligence data and expert analysis.

Respondents mentioned various factors that may change their decision about staying or leaving. Firstly, these include **safety-related changes in their locality and an imminent threat to life or liberty**, namely, frontline growing closer, including active hostilities with heavy shelling, street fighting and destruction of urban infrastructure (for example, respondents' homes), capture and occupation of the settlement or the whole country. Some respondents mentioned the threat of a nuclear strike. At the same time, respondents stated that the stabilization of the situation, i.e., the end of the war or its active phase, would allow some of them to return.

Secondly, decisions can be changed in the face of **deteriorating living conditions and a decline in health** due to lack of food, emotional exhaustion, disrupted work of utility systems (electricity, heating, water supply) and a humanitarian catastrophe in the locality. Some respondents said they would leave if their loved ones changed their mind about staying/leaving.

Thirdly, the decision to stay or leave can change subject to such factors as: **a decree or recommendation issued by the authorities** – concerning official evacuation in particular; mobilization or permission to travel abroad for men, the opening of “green corridors” for leaving dangerous places.

Some respondents said **nothing would affect** their decision, or they **did not know** what could affect it.

2.3 Discrimination and prejudice

We asked the respondents if they had personally faced discrimination or prejudice since the beginning of the full-scale war¹¹. Most respondents have not encountered them. Among those who indicated that they have, responses detailing experiences connected with gender identity prevailed. The respondents mentioned **the division into “female” and “male” activities in the military**. For instance, women are expected to make camouflage nets and cook rather than take part in territorial defense. Such activities are related to rear-area work and remote from active hostilities. For women who wanted to participate in patrols, territorial defense and the Armed Forces, this could become an obstacle. One respondent said she was barred from patrolling the streets because she is a woman.

“Well, also, because I’m a woman, I was removed from patrolling the streets. But that’s typical.”

“Well, I heard from the boys in the territorial defense and from local women in the village that girls have no place in patrols and that we should keep low and help with logistics: make Molotov cocktails and nets, cook food etc.”

“Prejudice, based on gender: my parents (56 and 58 years old) are convinced that women should not take part in combat. When I announced my intention to apply for participation in territorial defense forces, they tried to convince me that girls would only be a nuisance there, despite the fact that I attended shooting classes at school.”

According to respondents, **prejudice against women** was manifested in communication. One respondent stated that men did not want to explain technical features of military equipment to her. According to another survey participant, her suggestions on how to outfit a bomb shelter were disregarded by men because of her female gender identity.

“Because I am a girl, they did not always want to explain technical aspects of military equipment to me. Constantly put pressure on me by saying, you’re a girl, you can leave. The rest was as usual.”

¹¹ The question was formulated as follows: “Did you personally face any discrimination or prejudice since the beginning of the full-scale war? If yes, please describe it.”

“In the bomb shelter, when we try to ensure at least minimal comfort and put security measures in place, my friend and I [both women] feel that men do not take our advice seriously. To communicate our opinion to them, we first have to share it with our close male friend, and then he conveys our thoughts, presented as his own, to the male environment. Then men listen and do exactly as we said.”

Some IDPs also stated that they encountered a negative attitude towards themselves. This was especially true for men because of the idea of men as defenders who should fight, not stay in areas where there are no active hostilities. According to the respondents, these prejudiced views created barriers in getting access to housing. **Owners did not always want to rent to men.**

“On Facebook, under ads about renting accommodation, people write that ‘men should go to war’. And in general, if you are a young man, but carry no machine gun, are not in the army, people treat you cautiously. (Even though one can help people in many different ways, and I have no combat experience or experience of serving in the army at all, so I would just disrupt order there.)”

“As for the men who moved to the west of Ukraine, [people say] that they need to defend their homeland and instead, here they are in the west.”

“One landlord told us that ‘they already know you in the city’ and ‘finding a place will be very difficult for you.’ ”

Section 3 ● Emotions

3.1 The experience of relocation

When asked about their decisions regarding where to be¹², some respondents described a range of emotions they felt in connection with relocation or potential relocation. Among these emotions, respondents mentioned **fear, panic, shame and anxiety**. The words “**escape**”, “**run away**” were most often used to describe relocation. Some respondents felt confusion and did not understand what to do next. Several described the decision to leave as forced; one respondent stated that he “accepted the decision to become a refugee”. Some respondents felt guilty for leaving or planning to leave. A small number of respondents spoke negatively about those who left, and one respondent called such people “rats”.

Almost a quarter of respondents described their decision to leave or stay by invoking the concepts of **home, town/city, country, homeland** and

¹² The questions were formulated as follows: “How did you arrive at the decision to stay in the city/town/village you are currently in / to relocate to another city/town/village? What guided your decision?” and “What can cause you to change your current decision regarding staying or leaving?”

identifying with them. The concepts were mostly mentioned by those respondents who at the time of survey completion remained in the place where they had lived before the war. Some of them reported wanting to stay at home “till the last” and protect “their home”, “their country”. For some respondents, “home” is part of their identity: “Who am I without my home?” Some respondents wrote that they felt calm at home. A small number of respondents went “home”, i.e., to the place where they grew up, to their parents or close relatives.

“I did not know where to run. This is my home, no one is waiting for me anywhere else. If bombs fall on my head, I will also have to go somewhere, but I don't know where.”

When deciding whether to leave, the respondents considered **the possibility of returning** and acted on this basis. Some of those who decided to stay described relocation, especially moving abroad, as something that could be permanent. Some respondents thought about returning home, even to localities where active hostilities were taking place at the time, such as Irpin. Some respondents described both their hopes of returning home and their fear of having nowhere to return to.

“[The decision] was driven by fear: I'm afraid to leave home and never come back here again.”

For some respondents, it matters how they will be perceived in places to which they relocate as a result of evacuation. Some respondents explained their decision to stay by saying they were reluctant to be “**outsiders**” and feared they “**would not be welcome anywhere**”. Several respondents said they were staying because “no one is waiting for them” elsewhere.

3.2 Emotional state

We also asked respondents to directly describe their state, emotions and worries at the filling in of the questionnaire (March, 2-7)¹³.

The emotion that the vast majority of respondents experienced to one degree or another was **anxiety**. Anxiety was a rather complex feeling. On the one hand, the respondents spoke about the concern for the safety of their relatives and friends, on the other hand - about the concern for the society and country as a whole, for possible options for the development of war and the future of the country.

¹³ The question was formulated as follows: “How are you feeling now? Please describe your state, emotions and worries.”

"I am worried about my mother, how this war influences her health, about my friends who have left everything behind and are going to Germany with a small child. I don't know if they can come back home."

"Every morning I wait for messages from my relatives and friends. Constant anxiety for the people in Ukraine."

"Worries about the country and our future. [...] Being in the state of anxiety, as if waiting for something bad to happen."

Anxiety was often combined with fear, and these two emotions were described by the respondents as inseparable from each other. However, the responses suggest that anxiety was more often described as a more permanent, background condition, while fear was often an emotion that was more intense at certain times (e.g., air alarms, shelling, etc.).

"I have lost weight, withered, sometimes I fear when I hear shelling or explosions."

"I have had one panic (or hysteric) attack, after that the state stabilized, there are sometimes moments of fear and despair."

"Sometimes I have anger because of bad news or fear when the explosions are close."

"Yesterday evening I had panic and fear when I heard the automatic gunfire. I feel fear and tachycardia when I hear explosions while I'm outside."

Anxiety was often associated with **confusion**, lack of confidence in the future, and the destruction of life plans and guidelines. Many respondents wrote that they did not understand how to live. You can also see the tendency to lose the sense of subjectivity in your own life, the inability to influence it.

"I don't know anything about tomorrow. I'm living for the day. I'm anxious, I don't know what to do now."

"I don't feel the integrity of life. It was divided into "before" and "after"."

For some respondents the reaction to these problems was not anxiety but **apathy**, or apathy which followed the anxiety.

"I don't want to build "a new life" abroad, look for a job etc - I'm not strong enough for this yet."

"I'm constantly feeling tiredness, apathy, petrification. There is no sense in life, no sense in anything. Only the basic needs to survive in this period till the end, keeping physically and psychologically safe."

"Apathy, absence of any understanding of the future."

Another emotion that dominated when respondents were taking the survey was **guilt**. Respondents blamed the fact that, in their opinion, they were not actively involved in the direct defense of their city and / or country or in other volunteer activities. Respondents often accused themselves of lacking psychological or other resources in order to be more active.

"I feel like I'm in a cage. I really want to help with something, to be useful. But I do not have the opportunity to leave my district. And there are no initiatives in the district. [...] I feel guilty for my inaction and I suffer because of it."

"I feel powerless because I can't help it. I feel guilty for this and for not doing anything and living a more or less normal life, when people die in neighbouring cities and are left homeless."

"I feel guilty for my inaction. [...] But when there is an opportunity to volunteer and you need to leave the house and walk two or three kilometres, I'm scared and I don't go. I'm ashamed of my fear."

Also, as mentioned in the previous sections, among those respondents who had to temporarily leave their place of residence, there was a widespread feeling of guilt for making such a decision. In this case, the guilt was often accompanied by shame for being in such a status and the associated need to seek help, for the loss of some self-sufficiency.

"I'm ashamed that now I have the status of a refugee and live at the temporary residence for displaced people."

"I have also taken [abroad] my friend, she feels horrible, she says that she has lost her subjectivity and is thinking of going back."

In general, regardless of whether a person had to leave their place of residence for security reasons, there is a clear tendency among the answers to feel guilty for the fact of being in the safe environment. This also applies to those respondents who were in Ukraine at the time of completing the questionnaire, ie the notion of a safe place was relative.

"I feel guilty because Odessa is a safer place than Kyiv and Kharkiv where I have a lot of friends."

"I feel ashamed that a lot of my friends, groupmates, colleagues are in danger in Kyiv [...], while I'm relatively safe in the West of Ukraine, we almost don't have problems with food and I have the opportunity to sleep in my bed, have breakfast in the morning with my parents."

A significant number of respondents also mentioned the feelings of **anger and hatred**. These emotions are mostly directed against the Russian army and the aggressor state. Sometimes, in their answers, the respondents not only stated their experiences of these emotions, but also tried to reflect on them.

"I feel anxious and angry about the aggressors. I want them to pay for everything they have done."

"I felt angry because of the fear and pain that my people suffer from the enemy I wanted to howl because I could not strangle "him"."

"From day three I was overwhelmed by the greatest hatred I have ever felt."

"The greatest anger and desire is to inflict as much pain and suffering as possible on those who are destroying my country. I am a very gentle person and never in my life have I wished anyone suffering and death. This feeling is frightening."

"Much hatred, very much hatred. I don't know what to do with that hatred."

"I am overwhelmed by anger and hatred, but they tend to encourage me to fucking work rather than destroy anything."

Many respondents described their emotional experiences as a rapid change of various emotional states. Some people's **emotions changed dramatically** during the day, others talked about the gradual change or alternation of emotional states since the beginning of the war. Often it was not possible to single out the most intense emotion - the respondents talked about feeling different emotions at the same time.

"Unstable, from euphoria to despair, it's hard to concentrate."

"I feel a strong emotional swing: from devastation and despair to optimism and confidence in victory in the nearest future. But these are like short-term outbreaks."

"For the first time, I felt that I was not in control of my body. At one point you may start feeling the pain in the chest and back, you begin to feel nauseous. Emotions change from positive (when I'm in a circle of acquaintances) to fear when I remember that my family stayed at home. [...] I can burst into tears all of a sudden."

A vast majority of respondents describing their emotions talked about the **feeling of emotional pain** which can transfer into physical.

"Physically: continuous pain and heavy feeling in the chest, insomnia."

"I do not believe that anyone is capable of this. I feel dull pain and hatred."

"It hurts to look at the cities. The enemy razes them to the ground, people die. All this brings me to tears every day."

"I feel pain for what happened to my house and helplessness because I can't influence the situation globally."

"Sometimes I get excruciating pain when I see the news, especially when we hear about the killed children."

From the answers of many respondents we see that the experience of the described intense emotions, as well as violations of the usual pattern of sleep and nutrition, the mentioned loss of life orientations and inability to plan life also led to exhaustion - both physical and emotional. While some respondents spoke of some normalization of their emotional state towards greater stability in the second week of the war, others spoke of **depletion of emotional resources, devastation and fatigue**.

"I am exhausted. I try to keep a balance between volunteering and my own needs, but I often just want to sleep."

"It's day 8. I have had many different states already. Too many different emotions, but now it's just devastation."

"The feeling that my life is not there, there is simply existence. I'm tired, mentally too, and I have more time to calm down."

"On day 8, the shock passed, chest pressure and fatigue remained."

Often respondents said that they **do not feel any emotions at all** or during significant periods of time.

"After the panic and fear I had anger. After anger - complete emptiness."

"No emotions and feelings - everything seems to be frozen, and I just do what needs to be done."

"I am stuporous. Everything inside seems dead and frozen."

"At first glance, it seems that I have got used to war, but if you listen to yourself more carefully, you understand that it's just the blocking of feelings and emotions. Because I do not want to relive the emotions that were on the first day of the war."

"In general, I feel like I'm stuporous: I can't (and don't want to) cry, get angry, etc. I'm on the kind of a plateau where all emotions are suppressed and "tamed" similar to turning down the volume."

Respondents also often stated that they consciously tried to suppress their emotions or, conversely, to experience certain emotions; talked about the difficulties involved. Moreover, such **manifestations of emotional management** could be aimed only at public manifestations of emotions and the correction of internal experiences.

"I try my best to keep my emotions to myself. I learned not to panic from the sounds of explosions and shootings."

"It is exhausting to maintain a positive mood so as not to frighten or upset the family."

"I'm exhausted, but I try to hold on and not cry, because there are people who are in worse conditions, and our soldiers and the president in general guard our peace, so I have no right to melt down and panic."

"I try to keep my emotions under control and not act impulsively."

Emotions of the positive spectrum were mentioned in the answers of the respondents much less often. In fact, the contrast to negative emotions was a neutral state - **calmness**.

Respondents often said that the feeling of calmness appeared some time after the start of the war, after the first sharp manifestations of emotions were somewhat smoothed out and a certain emotional stability was restored. Respondents often describe calmness and stability through the restoration of the ability to engage in everyday activities, including basic routine actions (eating, sleeping, personal hygiene, etc.), which was interrupted by emotional experiences of the first week. It should be noted that many answers about calmness had adverbs "already" and "now".

"Quite calm, concentration and efficiency have returned."

"I have already calmed down. I was worried that I was not helping the army and the territory defense. Now I've calmed down because I started looking for other ways I can help."

"I already eat, read the news less often, I am distracted by household chores, I watch funny videos and movies; I already feel physically well."

"Stable and better. I am more confident and less worried. I rarely burst into tears or have panic attacks."

"Calmly. At first there was fear and confusion, but now I'm trying to do what I can, and it's reassuring. Worries about the relatives in Kharkiv changed to joy, because they had left and got to safe places."

Calmness also appeared in the responses as a certain emotional state to be pursued, as another goal in the already mentioned management of one's own emotions.

"I'm holding back the panic with all my might, because that's what Putin wants. [...] I monitor my physical condition so that my moral condition does not fall apart."

A part of the respondents that identified their state as calm attributed it to the **hope for positive changes**.

"I feel calm, confident that soon everything will be over."

“Calm, no panic, but the news sometimes adds to the anxiety. But faith in our country, its people and the army is finally reassuring.”

“I believe in our guys, that’s why I’m calm.”

Respondents' responses to emotions often included an attempt to describe their **experiences of feeling a sense of unity** with the people of their city and / or the country. Usually, these experiences were accompanied by the answers of those respondents who felt hope - for the end of the war, for the well-being of their loved ones, for a positive picture of the future in Ukraine.

“I love our people very much and I believe in them. And now when evacuated I feel more than ever the care of every Ukrainian I meet.”

“I am proud of what our country looks like, how people unite, how the acceptance of Ukrainians changes in the world.”

“I feel a lot of guilt for not being in Ukraine, the pain of not being able to be in Kyiv now, [...] deep love for every Ukrainian, great unity.”

However, the experience of this unity, discovering positive traits (mostly courage, bravery, perseverance, willingness to help) in the behaviour of fellow citizens were mentioned by those who generally described their emotions as negative (sadness, offence, despair). Thus, this sense of unity was described as a lifeline that had a stabilizing, encouraging role for the respondents.

“I cried almost constantly for the first two days in Poland. I still feel the "saved syndrome". [...] But in addition to these emotions, I also feel great pride that I am Ukrainian. I am proud of my people, the army, volunteers, doctors, rescuers, the President.”

“I feel dull pain and hatred. What kills me is the fact that one person's decision can take the lives of millions. [...] I am very annoyed by this terrible injustice. [...] At the same time, I often feel terrible elation and happiness from being Ukrainian, I feel pride for my co-sisters and co-brothers, unity with them.”

3.3 The change of life principles

We also offered the respondents questions about how their life principles had changed since the onset of a full-scale war¹⁴. Almost a quarter of the respondents indicated that their life principles either had not changed or the existing values and attitudes had been renewed. Some respondents also noted that they did not have time to reflect on their worldviews.

¹⁴ The question was formulated as follows: “Have your life principles or worldviews changed during these days? If yes, how?”

Among those respondents who pointed out the change in their views on life there was a noticeable **tendency to change the attitude towards Russia as an occupying state**, certain government officials of this country and / or its citizens. These attitudes range from 'hatred to invaders' to the dehumanization of enemies.

"I have started feeling hatred for the Russian government and for some Russians. I was often called a very kind person, and I myself do not remember when I lost my temper, but now it just makes me mad. I've never been so mean to anyone."

It should be noted that some of respondents tended to **re-evaluate human life**:

"I have started loving my country even more. I hate the aggressor. I am happy when enemies die, although it's difficult for me - as it's not natural for me to be happy because of somebody's death."

We also singled out as a separate category the **change in the attitude of respondents to the war as such**. Among the answers provided by the respondents, there was a tendency to reject or rethink their own pacifist views. Respondents also indicated a willingness to take up arms, an interest in war tactics, and a change in attitudes toward murder and violence.

"There has been a new worldview regarding the war: I used to be a desperate pacifist. Now I understand that in such a situation the life of one person is less valuable than the general idea of protecting our statehood. These are forced sacrifices when you fight against evil."

The respondents also noted that since the beginning of the war they have felt the **strengthening of their own Ukrainian identity** - they began to be (even more) proud of belonging to Ukraine, communicate more in Ukrainian. Some respondents also noted that they changed their attitude to going abroad and decided to stay in Ukraine:

"I can no longer see any Russian content. I felt an extreme mad unity with Ukrainians and I am very proud of our state. I used to think about moving, but now I want nothing more than to return to my city and put things in order there."

Some respondents said they **had changed their political views** since the start of the war: many who were critical of the current government and President Zelensky before the war said they now support and respect the actions of officials. The change of the political direction was described by the respondents in the categories of trust and pride. Some respondents also noted that they currently refrain from criticising the actions of the authorities in certain respects, leaving critical assessments for the time after the victory.

Changing personal values and views on life was also a noticeable trend among respondents. Yes, many noted that with the start of a full-scale war,

they realised **the secondary nature of material values**, which were important till February 23 (work, deadlines, social success, control over the situation), and instead began to value the life itself, the opportunity to be safe and communicate with relatives.

“These days you realise that everything materialistic (good looks, clothes, money) is not important when there is no peaceful sky overhead. You understand that the simplest things (the opportunity to sleep peacefully, the opportunity to buy any food, the opportunity to go for a walk in the park, to meet friends) are the most valuable ones.”

“Everything material has become unimportant. I can't say that it was so important to me before. However, we never lived in a war and appreciated our apartment, what we bought there over time. Now it all lies in Kyiv and I don't care about it as long as I and my relatives live, everything else can be rebuilt.”

Some respondents noted that with the start of a full-scale war they were forced **to take on more responsibility** (for example, for the loved ones or pets), or began to **treat time differently**: to appreciate moments spent alone or with the loved ones, and not put off life. Some respondents also said that they had **reconsidered their attitude towards religion** (for example, they began to pray more often) and plans to start a family. In particular, two women said they realised their desire to have children immediately after the war.

Also, some respondents wrote that they had **changed their attitude towards people**: both in a positive way (due to personal experience of mutual assistance) and in a negative way (disappointment in people who support the occupiers or behave selfishly in difficult conditions). Among the responses there was a tendency to strengthen existing social ties and admiration by the altruism of others.

3.4 Communication with relatives and friends

During the survey, we also asked respondents to tell how their relationship with their friends and relatives has changed¹⁵. According to the answers received, the impact was different: in some they improved, in others - on the contrary - worsened or became limited.

Many respondents said that they **began to communicate more often with their relatives or friends**. Respondents explained that **efforts to keep in touch** to make sure that relatives and friends are relatively safe and to check their condition were one of the factors in increasing telephone or social media communication. They also began to communicate more with those who were already in the territory of active hostilities. Some respondents noted that

¹⁵ The question was formulated as follows: “How has your communication with family and friends changed?”

while their relationship with their parents had hardly changed, they began to communicate more intensively with friends or acquaintances.

“Every day I ask several times how they are and if they were bombed. We have even created a group with friends for convenience, where we make a roll call from time to time and discuss the news.”

“Before the war, I talked to my family every day (maybe 2-3 times a day). Now we communicate almost every hour.”

Also, some of the respondents, in connection with the outbreak of war, improved relations or **began to communicate more with those relatives or close ones with whom they had had little or no contact before**. Respondents whose relationships with relatives and friends have changed for the better have shared that the nature of those relationships has changed. In particular, some respondents noted that there were more manifestations of care, attention, cohesion, heart-to-heart talks and exchanges of feelings in their relationships. On the other hand, even among those informants who have improved or increased contact with loved ones, everyday conversations have changed and become more focused on war and security.

“My aunt, who has not spoken to us for many years, is now in Kharkiv. On the first day of the war, she contacted us and has constantly been in touch. We stick together and take care of each other all the time.”

Some of the survey participants also mentioned **factors that, in turn, contributed to the reduction, restriction or deterioration of communication** with relatives and friends. One such factor was the pro-Russian views of relatives, friends or acquaintances and/or their residence in Russia or Belarus.

“All those of my acquaintances and relatives who left for Russia no longer exist for me.”

“My mother has long been influenced by Russian propaganda, so it's very difficult to talk to her.”

“It is disgusting to communicate with them [relatives and friends]. Before the escalation we had many topics to talk about, so politics did not interfere. Now I am minimising contacts and I am going to delete them from my life. I love them, but when they justify killing my friends with some imperial bullshit, I want to disappear.”

Several respondents also noted that they limited communication with their loved ones who had left or lived in safer areas and abroad and recommended them to leave.

“I'm filtering communication with my brother, who lives in Germany and is agitating to go abroad.”

Also, some respondents deliberately distanced themselves from their relatives and loved ones because **they did not have enough moral strength to maintain communication**. One of the survey participants also noted that for some time she did not communicate with relatives because she felt embarrassed because, unlike them, she was safe.

We also identified factors from the testimony of respondents that contributed to the emergence or aggravation of conflicts with relatives and friends. **Tense relations and increasing conflicts** were noted by respondents who lived with them. In addition, the increase in conflict situations and aggravation of relations arose due to general tension and deteriorating emotional states in connection with the war, as well as differences in views on security issues between respondents and their relatives.

“My family and I are constantly together in a small room and the tension is growing every day, because everyone is already tired of it.”

“Staying at home together almost 24/7 is always bad, especially when your day starts and ends with the news. Quarrels with a partner, but a complete understanding of the reasons for such behaviour.”

There were also respondents who noted that their communication with relatives had not changed much. Moreover, this applied both to those who had constant interaction and well-established relations with relatives and friends before the war, and those who had little or no contact with them even before the war.

3.5 Planning the future

We asked the respondents if they were planning their future and, if so, for how long¹⁶. Most often, participants in the study answered that they **did not plan their future**. Respondents attributed this to uncertainty about the future, the inability to make plans when the military situation is constantly changing and there is a sense of threat to life. One of the reasons for the lack of planning was the rapid destruction of long-term and short-term plans due to the war.

“I’m planning to just survive no matter what.”

“Now I’m not planning anything. You can’t think about it when there’s a war. Only when this horror is over, you can continue to live, set goals, and make plans. At the moment, life has stopped for me.”

“I’ve been doing this [planning] all my life, constantly planning, constantly thinking about the future, and I even developed an anxiety disorder. Now I live from day to day, no more plans, the world has turned upside down, the old important plans are no longer of interest. My inner world has changed forever.”

¹⁶ The question was formulated as follows: “Are you planning the future? If so, for what period are you making plans: for a couple of days, a week, a month or more?”

We'll see how it manifests itself after the war, but everything will never be the same for me."

"It's hard to say, I probably don't make any plans. It is difficult to plan, because all my plans have been destroyed, and it is difficult to be sure of anything about new ones."

A significant part of the respondents **had plans for several hours, a day and a couple of days**. This is approximately the period of time in which the respondents were able to relatively control their lives. This is how they planned their work or volunteer activities.

"For a couple of hours. Basically, this is equal to the interval between the air raid sirens."

"I don't plan for more than a day or two. In the morning I make a general list of things that should be done on this day. I do what I have time to do. It is difficult to plan something in the medium term (within a month) due to the variability of the factors that would determine my further actions, and breaking plans gives additional neuroticism. So I have further general scenarios. Rather "vectors" than exact action plans. I don't worry about it in the long term, because on this scale I don't have much influence on the processes in the country, and this is the most important thing and everything depends on it."

"Now it is difficult to understand when it will end, so I plan for 1-2 days. For example, tomorrow I'm going to school to weave camouflage nets, draw animation, and wash my hair. Next - I don't know. Things that could well be plans in the past now seem more like dreams. [...] However, there is one thing I look forward to the most - to find out that the war is over, to open the balcony and shout "Hurray!" and to hear this joy from every house in the city and country."

Some of the respondents still had plans for more than a month. Basically, these are dreams and plans that the respondents **wanted to realise after the war**. Some of them wrote that they dreamed of going on vacation to the Crimea, liberated from occupation.

"I'm planning the summer with my friends. With one We want to go to Odesa with one of my friends. Another friend said that he would teach me and my friend to cook mantis. With another friend, I want to go to the ATB as usual, buy cheese and crab sticks and go watch Berserk. I want another friend to come from Poland, and we will meet for the first time in, probably, 9 months and we will hug. We all hope that this will be the case."

"Yes, I plan for a few months if all goes well. I hope that everything will end soon."

"I'm waiting for all this to end and we will go to rebuild Kharkiv, and after passing our exams we will go to the Crimea!"

The least participants in the study planned **for a month and a week**. This may be due to the fact that short-term plans within one or more days were possible due to the relative controllability of the situation. Long-term plans concerned decisions to move to another city or country, or plans for the post-war period. At the same time, plans for a week or a month could be difficult due to a large number of unpredictable circumstances. The issues of this time period could relate to **housing**.

“Until today (March 7), I couldn't think about the future. But today I have already started thinking for a month, because I will not be able to pay salaries to employees soon, and I do not want to leave them without finances, so I have to turn off emotions and think about the future.”

“I am planning a week, because I will run out of money... then I will have to go to Poland to be able to survive.”

“Hard to say. At first it was uncertain even what we would do in the evening of the same day. Now a new routine has been created. We are planning for a week, because we have agreed on a two-week rental scheme.”

Section 4 ● Volunteering

4.1 The experience of volunteering

We asked if the respondents helped other people or volunteered and, if so, how exactly they helped, what kind of volunteering they did¹⁷. Most respondents had such an experience after February 24. Most of them did so in areas not directly related to their professional activities. Mostly people provided assistance that did not require special competencies and in the choice of volunteering they rather started from the opportunities and needs at that time. We can identify several main areas of such volunteering.

Fight on the “information front”. Dissemination of information from verified sources, signing petitions, blocking resources that published information about military facilities in Ukraine, movement of military vehicles and troops, sending messages to acquaintances from abroad with a call for support, DDOS attacks on Russian propaganda sites.

Physical assistance on the ground. Weaving camouflage nets, arranging shelters, preparing and distributing food to those in need, purchasing necessary medicines and products, sorting out humanitarian aid, first aid at railway stations and resettlement points.

Coordination work, mainly due to the presence of a network of contacts in Ukraine and abroad. For example, some respondents said that they organised

¹⁷ The questions were formulated as follows: “Have you helped other people or volunteered since the beginning of the full-scale war?”, “How and whom did you help? What kind of volunteering did you do?”

the transportation of humanitarian goods, helped people find temporary housing, and generally redirected requests for help to those who could help.

Also, many respondents provided **financial support** to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, territorial defence and charitable organisations. In addition to donations to the army, several informants mentioned helping animal shelters.

A small number of respondents said that they were able to use their own skills and **redirect their professional activities to volunteering**. Psychologists, designers, translators, media workers worked part of their time without remuneration:

“I have a degree in psychology and experience in crisis counselling. I provide free consultations, helping to restore and stabilise the psychological state.”

To provide volunteer assistance, the respondents chose one of two strategies: they joined coordination centres that had already been established (local humanitarian headquarters, resettlement reception centres) or they helped on their own. Volunteering in the centres meant longer involvement, while volunteering in another way could be one-time and more point-based.

4.2 Motivation behind volunteering

We asked why the respondents started helping other people or volunteering¹⁸. The respondents described their own motivation differently. Some saw it as “the least they could do” during the war, for others volunteering was one way to distract from the tragic events and keep calm. Some informants wrote that they felt obliged to help others and briefly said: “Because it is necessary!”

Motivation to help others or to volunteer among the respondents can be divided into several categories¹⁹:

1. Feeling the need to join the volunteer movement to support their own mental state.
2. A sense of solidarity and a desire to help other people.
3. A sense of patriotism and a desire to contribute to the victory in the war.
4. A sense of duty.
5. Availability of opportunities, resources or specific competencies to help other people.

The respondents who started volunteering during the first weeks of the full-scale war described Ukraine’s future victory as a collective one that required both military and civilian efforts. That is why an important motivation

¹⁸ The question was formulated as follows: “Why did you start doing this?”

¹⁹ The categories are not mutually exclusive and often overlap. Some respondents described their motivation briefly, while others, on the contrary, tried to do it as extensively as possible with a lot of details, which made it difficult to generalize their motivation.

for them was the desire “**not to be above the battle**”, to find their place in the joint struggle. The informants often explained this by the inner need to “**be of service**” and make a personal “**contribution to victory**”.

The respondents also pointed out that volunteering was one of the strategies to maintain one's mental state and a way to combat depression and apathy. They appealed to the “activity-inaction” opposition. They noted that any work helped them to remain calm, and inaction, on the contrary, worsened their mental state. For some, volunteering has become a tool for overcoming fear. The informants also stressed that volunteering gave a sense of “**emotional uplift and unity**”.

“It's hard to sit idle. You can go crazy if you re-read all the news, so it's better to act.”

A sense of solidarity and a desire to help others have become another important reason for volunteering. The respondents often referred to the concept of unity and stressed the importance of “**sticking together**” in crisis situations. They mentioned the interdependence of people from each other and emphasised the common problems faced by Ukrainian people. Some described their motivation through sympathy and empathy for others, including those who were left homeless and forced to travel to other parts of the country.

“Otherwise it is impossible! It is important for a person to be in society in difficult times, especially to feel necessary, involved in common work.”

“Because mutual support is important, we all woke up in the war.”

Another reason to volunteer was the **feeling of patriotism**. Some respondents noted that support for the Armed Forces, in particular local territorial defence, or any other volunteering brings Ukraine's **victory** closer. They often mentioned that they were helping the **country**, defending its **freedom** and making a contribution to the **fight** against the aggressor.

“It's important, it's my country, it was attacked with weapons.”

For some respondents, the main motivation for volunteering was a sense of **duty**. They described it as a civic or universal duty. They also noted that other people needed their help and this became an additional motivation. Some respondents noted that the decision to volunteer was unalterable and unanimous for them.

In addition, the respondents mentioned that they were motivated to help others by external circumstances. For example, for one respondent, termination of public transport in the city meant that it became his duty to help people who did not have their own car. For another informant, the obvious **need** was donations to support local volunteers, help friends, family, and “everyone I met along the way”.

“Because it was a necessity I didn't even think about, I just did it.”

Another motivating factor to join volunteer work was the **availability of opportunities, resources or specific competencies**. For example, some respondents stated that they started providing free psychological or legal counselling precisely because they had the appropriate skills and understood that their help was needed. Some respondents who volunteered in the information space (preparing publications on social networks, writing and translating articles, disseminating important information, etc.) emphasised that they did so because they had the opportunity to communicate with a large audience.

Some respondents also wrote that they could not answer what motivated them to help others: “Somehow it went by itself. I'm used to helping everyone if I have the resources and the desire.”

Conclusions ●

On February 24, at 5 am, when a full-scale war in Ukraine began, most of the respondents **were** safe at home or with relatives, friends and acquaintances. Respondents **learned about** the beginning of the invasion in different ways: directly hearing explosions and sirens, from acquaintances, friends and relatives, as well as from the media and social networks. **The first thoughts** of the respondents concerned their safety and the safety of their relatives, the possibility of evacuation, packing an “alarm suitcase” and providing themselves and their family with everything they need (food, medicine, water).

In the first hours and on the first day of the full-scale invasion respondents tried to do something to adapt to a new reality. In particular, many contacted family and friends, resolved urgent work issues, packed the “alarm suitcase”, arranged their lives in an attempt to prepare for war activities nearby and moved around in search of safe places.

During the first days of the full-scale war, the **main decisions** were about relocation: moving or staying in one's place of living, going abroad, or evacuating children and relatives. For many respondents the decision to leave meant the loss of home, property, and separation from family. For those who decided to stay, an important issue was the organization of life during the war: preparing housing for shelling, arranging shelter, providing food supplies. For some respondents, decisions related to emotions and experiences became the most important. They described them as the need to “come to terms with the reality”, to accept “that life will not be the same as before”, and to realize the risk of death. Joining the Armed Forces of Ukraine and volunteering also became important decisions mentioned by the respondents. In addition, in the first days of the war, some respondents said that they could not or did not have

time to make any important decisions. For some, it was due to a difficult emotional state, for others - the inability to plan for the future. However, some mentioned that even everyday affairs, such as shopping for food, can be seen as an important decision in wartime, as they can be dangerous and require courage.

The **decision to leave or stay** in the place of residence at the beginning of the full-scale invasion was impacted by the security situation, the availability of resources, including finances, transport, housing, family, evacuation contacts, health, road or rail connection, opportunity to work or help. This decision mainly caused the respondents to feel fear, panic, anxiety, shame or guilt.

After the start of the full-scale invasion, most respondents **changed their relationships with their relatives**. Some respondents noted an improvement and increase in communication with relatives. Others, on the other hand, wrote that they had a tense relationship or that they deliberately limited it. Respondents often pointed to a reduction or complete restriction of communication with relatives or friends living in Russia or supporting the aggressor state.

Women and men faced **prejudices** related to their activities. In the case of women, there was an expectation that they would not take part in active hostilities, in the case of men, on the contrary, that they would. Some displaced people faced prejudices from local residents, which could lead to restrictions on access to rental housing.

Most respondents in the first two weeks of the war felt **anxious**: for their and their family safety and for the future in general. In addition, many spoke of hatred for the Russian army and attacks of fear for their lives. Respondents' emotions were experienced differently: someone experiences dramatic alternations of different emotional manifestations; someone's intense emotions were replaced by exhaustion and apathy. Some respondents talked about attempts to control and suppress their emotions, some - about experiencing emotions through physical pain. For many respondents the hope for the war ending and the sense of unity with the society helped to cope with anxiety and sadness.

Those respondents who stated that their **life principles** had changed most often stated that they had changed their attitude towards Russia as an occupying state, individual government officials and / or its citizens. These attitudes ranged from "hatred of invaders" to dehumanisation of enemies. Respondents also pointed to a change in their attitude to the war as such (rejection of pacifist views, readiness to take up arms) and a change in political views (mostly in the categories of respect and rethinking attitudes towards the authorities in Ukraine). The respondents also mentioned the devaluation of material values and awareness of the values of communication with relatives and / or unity with the Ukrainian people. The strengthening of national

identity was also a noticeable trend among the changes in the life principles of the respondents.

In most cases, the survey participants did not **plan their future** due to the high level of unpredictability of various circumstances. At the same time, some respondents had plans for what they wanted to do after the war.

Most of the respondents **helped other people** or were involved in some form of **volunteering**. Most of them were engaged in volunteering not directly related to professional activities: information volunteering, physical assistance locally, coordination of requests. Significantly fewer respondents reported using their professional skills to volunteer: psychologists, designers, media professionals, and more. Many respondents helped by sending donations to the military and humanitarian initiatives.

They described their **motivation to volunteer** through their inner need to “be useful” and maintain their mental state; a sense of solidarity and a desire to help people; a sense of patriotism and a desire to contribute to the victory; a sense of duty and an understanding of the need for their help; availability of opportunities, resources or specific competencies.