

# CONCEPT OF THE PUBLIC VETERAN POLICY

Expert review and recommendations  
of the Coalition of Civil Society  
Organisations

2025

This project was made possible with the support of the UK Government, provided through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, within the Concept of Ukraine's Public Policy on Veterans and Their Families project. It is implemented by the following civil society organisations: Veteran Hub, Pryncyp, Legal Hundred and Space of Opportunities. The information presented in this material does not necessarily reflect the views of the UK Government.

# Abstract

This Concept presents a shared vision of four civil society organisations working with veterans and their families. We have combined our experience in service provision, research, and advocacy to propose a framework for future public policy that is responsive to the real-life conditions of veterans. The document outlines the core principles of veteran policy, examines the current regulatory framework, and explores the mechanisms behind its development.

This Concept will serve as a resource for all parties involved in shaping and implementing policies, including government bodies, analytical and research teams, and service providers. Its aim is to offer a systemic vision of veteran policy as a dynamic, flexible, and fair support mechanism that can be adapted to real-world conditions and effectively respond to them.

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The document is the sole responsibility of its authors and may not represent the opinions or positions of the donors or partner organisations.



# About the Authors

**Veteran Hub** is a sustainable support network for veterans and families of service members. Established in 2018, the organisation provides legal advice, psychological support, career and vocational counselling, and personalised case management. The network comprises physical spaces in Kyiv and Vinnytsia, as well as mobile offices that provide home service delivery in Kyiv and Vinnytsia Oblasts, along with a national Support Line available by phone at 067 348 28 68.

Drawing on its daily experience of working with veterans and their families, the organisation conducts in-depth research, advocates for improving their well-being, develops information and media projects, and helps various stakeholders in the field better support service members and their loved ones.

Website: [veteranhub.com.ua](http://veteranhub.com.ua)  
Facebook: [fb.com/VeteranHubUa](https://fb.com/VeteranHubUa)  
Instagram: [instagram.com/veteran\\_hub](https://instagram.com/veteran_hub)

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**The Human Rights Centre for Military Personnel and Veterans “Pryncyp”** is a civil society organisation dedicated to human rights protection, advocacy, and analytics within the military and veteran sectors. Its priority goals include a human-centric approach to personnel policy within the army, strengthening the military justice system, establishing a framework for transitioning from military to civilian life, and ensuring protection of human rights. The organisation has a developed network of pro bono lawyers who advise service members with injuries and runs training programmes for both service providers and the military/veterans.

Website: [pryncyp.org](http://pryncyp.org)  
Facebook: [fb.com/pryncypua](https://fb.com/pryncypua)

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**Legal Hundred** is a nationwide human rights organisation that has been supporting service members, veterans, and their families, including families of the fallen, prisoners of war, and those missing in action, since 2014. Its mission is to ensure systemic legal protection in the context of military service and to establish sustainable mechanisms for veterans to adapt to civilian life.

The organisation has initiated and contributed to the development of more than 20 adopted laws and state programmes in the fields of veteran policy, social protection and security. It co-founded the Project Office for the establishment of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, developed the Handbook for Participants of the Russo-Ukrainian War, which provided comprehensive legal information for defenders, and implemented the Instruction on Countering Harassment in the Security and Defence Forces. Legal Hundred also operates a nationwide hotline that processes over 3,000 inquiries every month.

Website: [legal100.org.ua](http://legal100.org.ua)

Facebook: [facebook.com/yursotnya](https://facebook.com/yursotnya)

Instagram: [instagram.com/yursotnya](https://instagram.com/yursotnya)

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**Space of Opportunities** is an innovation lab in the field of veteran policies and an expert organisation involved in the development and localisation of veteran policy.

Its expert team partnered in launching the Veteran Support Specialist project by developing professional standards, primary and backup documentation, and a training course and preparing both trainers and support specialists.

The organisation also coordinates the Coalition of Veterans' Spaces – a network of 26 service organisations and veteran hubs across different regions of Ukraine. The Coalition includes 8 mobile teams, each staffed with a lawyer, psychologist and social worker.

Website: [pm.in.ua](http://pm.in.ua)

Facebook: [facebook.com/place.of.opportunities](https://facebook.com/place.of.opportunities),

Facebook of the Coalition of Veterans' Spaces: [facebook.com/vetprostory](https://facebook.com/vetprostory)

# Team of authors

## **Authors of the idea and leaders of the Coalition's civil society organisations**

Ivona Kostyna – Veteran Hub  
Liubov Halan – Pryncyp  
Yuliia Morii – Legal Hundred  
Oksana Koliada – Space of Opportunities

## **Management**

Viktoriiia Zrazhevskia – Senior Manager  
Yelyzaveta Kanievskia and Kateryna Korniiichuk – Managers

## **Analytics**

Kateryna Skorokhod – Chief Analyst and Supervisor of the Analytical Department  
Mariia Kudelia, Anna Kostenko, Yuliia Nazarenko – Senior Analysts  
Tetiana Pavliuk, Anastasiia Kostenko, Yelyzevata Khomovska, Marta Khoma,  
Iryna Netrebko – Analysts

## **Legal**

Anna Pashkina, Olha Termeno, Oksana Nechai and Iryna Dmytrenko – Lawyers

## **Editorial team**

Eleonora Chornomorchenko – Editor-in-Chief  
Yuliia Panchenko – Senior Editor  
Mariana Doboni, Anhelina Oliinyk, and Daryna Mudrak – Editors  
Valentyna Lavreniuk – Proofreader

## **Design**

Viktoriiia Denysova – Art Director  
Anastasiia Skokova – Designer and Layout Artist

# Participants in working meetings

## **Veteran Hub**

Ruslana Yermolycheva – Assistant to the Head of the Board  
Halyna Alomova – Communications Director  
Olena Zhylun – Community Manager  
Olha Kucher – Head of Services  
Kateryna Timakina – Network Mental Health Specialist  
Kseniia Dubych – Psychologist  
Ilia Myhun – Network Senior Legal Specialist  
Ivanna Stets – Senior Partnerships Manager  
Yuliia Shpinoва – Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist

## **Pryncyp**

Tina Polek – Anthropologist, Analyst  
Denys Sultanhaliiev – Project Manager  
Bohdana Mahdych and Oksana Yavorska – Lawyers  
Kateryna Kuptsiv – Project Manager  
Alina Denysenko – Head of Communications

## **Legal Hundred**

Yuliia Zasoba, Mariia Zviahintseva, Iryna Pidreza, Nataliia Shmarko,  
Olha Marko, Diana Bezverkhna, and Khrystyna Kovtsun – Lawyers

## **Space of Opportunities**

Yaroslav Pavlovskyi – Board Member  
Vitalii Tolmachov – Veteran, Lawyer  
Stanislav Kuts – Veteran, Project Manager  
Maksym Yermokhin – Veteran, Head of the Supervision Department  
of the Community Support Centre  
Yana Islamova – Communications Director  
Daria Bura – Media Coordinator, Journalist

## **Other institutions and organisations**

Viktor Baidachnyi – First Deputy Minister for Veterans Affairs  
Anastasiia Bobrova – Director of Cedos Analytical Centre,  
Curator of the Ukrainian Urban Forum  
Oleksandr Bondarenko – Communications Group Director  
of Sumy Oblast TRSSC

**Viktor Bosorysiuk** – Project Manager at FCDO

**Andrii Brodskyi** – Head of the Veteran Development Centre at the State University “Zhytomyr Polytechnic University”

**Mykhailo Vynnytskyi** – Associate Professor at Kyiv Mohyla Academy National University, Adviser to the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine

**Ihor Volchetskyi** – Social Work Specialist at the Centre for Resilience “Rodyna 4.5.0” (Fastiv)

**Roman Hlovatskyi** – Head of the LTAVA Centre for Civil Initiatives PO

**Stanislav Hreshchyshyn** – Deputy Head of the Division for Strategic Planning and Institutional Development of the Department for Strategic Planning and Interaction with Public Authorities of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs

**Yuliia Huliuk** – Deputy Head of the Department for Veteran Policy of Rivne Oblast State Administration

**Nataliia Humeniuk** – Director of the Social Policy Department of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs

**Maksym Dudarev** – veteran, person with Disability Resulting from War

**Yuliia Diachok** – Deputy Director of the Social Policy Department of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs

**Nataliia Kalmykova** – Minister for Veteran Affairs

**Yuliia Kirillova** – Deputy Minister for Veterans Affairs

**Oleh Kobylinskyi** – Director of the Department for Veteran Policy of Lutsk City Council

**Viktor Kobylianskyi** – one of the authors of the Land Code of Ukraine

**Yana Kolomiets** – Specialist at the Veterans’ Space Unconquered of the Krasnopilska Territorial Community

**Serhii Kubakh** – Head of Land Reform, US Government-funded AGRO Programme

**Pavlo Kulynych** – Legal Adviser, US Government-funded AGRO Programme

**Oleksandr Kurii** – Deputy Director of the Social Policy Department of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs

**Kateryna Lutsyk** – veteran, civic activist, Director of the Veterans’ Space Municipal Institution of Khmelnytskyi City Council

**Dariia Marchak** – First Deputy Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine

**Mykola Marchuk** – Head of the Board, State Fund for Support of Youth Housing Construction

**Oleksandr Mykytiuk** – President of the Citizen Charity Foundation

**Olha Moroshchuk** – Support Specialist for Veterans and Demobilised Persons, Municipal Institution Centre for Social Services of Subottsi Village Council, Kropyvnytskyi Raion

**Mykyta Nikitenko** – President of the RAZOM.UA NGO  
**Zoia Pysmenna** – Director of the Municipal Institution Centre for Social Services of Lesky Village Council,  
**Ruslan Prykhodko** – Deputy Minister for Veterans Affairs  
**Inna Sovsun** – Member of Parliament, civic activist, Former Deputy Minister of Education and Science  
**Oleksandr Solontai** – Head of the Board, Agency for Recovery and Development  
**Vira Starychenko** – Head of the Emergency Response Department, Kyiv Military Hub  
**Iryna Strupova** – Lead Social Work Specialist, Ivankiv Centre for Social and Psychological Rehabilitation  
**Oleh Tsizdyn** – Coordinator of Support Specialists for Veterans and Demobilised Persons  
**Oleh Yuriev** – Support Specialist for Veterans and Demobilised Persons, Smila City Centre for Social Services  
**Elina Yurkchenko** – Head of the Policy Analysis Centre “Zmist”  
**Taras Yurchenko** – Project Manager, Union of Responsible Citizens PO

### **Reviewing the Land Subsection**

**Serhiy Kubakh** – Head of Land Reform Direction, AGRO Program, Chemonics International

# Opening Remarks

The development of an independent veteran policy marks a significant milestone in Ukraine's history. It signifies that, as a nation, we have finally attained enough freedom to honour those who fight for the independence of our state and reclaim the right of our society to honour its heroes, defenders, and veterans.

Never before in Ukraine's history has such an opportunity existed. Even the veterans of World War II did not receive recognition or proper support from the Soviet authorities. Those who fought in Afghanistan faced a lack of understanding of their experience from society and insufficient state support, while the OUN (Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists) and UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) veterans were granted official recognition only in 2017. Thus, the ability to shape veteran policy today is a crucial stage in the creation of the Ukrainian nation and our identity as citizens of Ukraine.

Due to the Soviet occupation, the protracted Russo-Ukrainian war, the broader historical background that fostered Russian influence for centuries, and the absence of sustained independence, Ukraine never developed a unified public policy on veterans. At its essence, its formation is now a process of reforming the legacy inherited from the period of Soviet occupation.

Veteran policy affirms the state's commitment to the well-being of Ukrainian warriors throughout their entire lives, as well as of every individual who will take up military service in defence of Ukraine against any form of aggression.

Until recently, the state lacked the institutional capacity, legal framework, and conceptual foundation to address and integrate the veterans' experience across all public services, programmes, and forms of support. The growing number of people acquiring this experience (and those who will in the days to come) requires a radical

and comprehensive reform that enables the state to recognise and understand these individuals, and to respond adequately to their needs.

In 2023, in the absence of a public veteran strategy and clear policy vision, expert civil society organisations in the field of veterans' affairs – Veteran Hub, Pryncyp, Legal Hundred, Women Veteran Movement, and Space of Opportunities – joined forces to propose the first version of the Concept of the Public Policy for Veterans and Their Families<sup>1</sup>. It emerged directly from daily work with veterans and their families – as service providers, researchers, and subject-matter experts.

This first version of public veteran policy received support from the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. The logic of the Concept and its key provisions served as the basis for the **Veteran Policy Strategy**, adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on 29 November 2024<sup>2</sup>.

Over the past two years, we have worked to deepen both our own and the state's knowledge and understanding of the experience service members and veterans gain during the war and in defence of the country. This updated version of the Concept expands on aspects that were not addressed or known when drafting the original version. In particular, we were able to explore in more detail the needs that veterans may have depending on their broader, non-combat life experience across different domains of well-being. We also provided additional expert recommendations in the areas of health, housing, and material needs of veterans. As part of this work, we also collaborated with the Ministry of Veterans Affairs on **drafting the new law "On the Foundations of Public Veteran Policy for Veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian War"**<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Veteran Hub, Pryncyp, Space of Opportunities, Legal Hundred, Veteranka. (2023). Concept of the Policy for Veterans and Their Families. Expert Guidelines for Developing the Updated Public Policy for Veterans and Their Families. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/polityka-shchodo-veteraniv-ta-ikh-simey.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/polityka-shchodo-veteraniv-ta-ikh-simey.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On Approving the Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030 and the Operational Action Plan for Its Implementation in 2024–2027," No. 1209-r (29 November 2024). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-#Text)

<sup>3</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. (25 August 2025). Draft Law on the Fundamental Principles of the Public Veteran Policy concerning veterans who took part in repelling the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine (No. 13696). [itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/57192](https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/57192)

and developed a target model of financial support to assess the actual level of assistance the state can provide to veterans. Another significant achievement is the introduction of the new Concept of the Public Policy for Veterans' Families<sup>4</sup>.

Veteran policy consistently remains an integral part of the national security and defence strategy. This policy is not social assistance or charity. It concerns strong individuals who have walked an extraordinary path, gained difficult, complex, and valuable experience, and are capable of continuing to live lives of dignity. The state's task now is to ensure that such a life is possible within the conditions and realities Ukraine faces today.

We invite you to read and delve into the Concept of the Public Veteran Policy. It is grounded in in-depth work with experts from different domains of well-being, diverse target groups, and multiple levels of veteran engagement. This document, along with the needs of veterans it highlights and the recommendations it offers for strengthening their support, should serve as a starting point for advancing our understanding of how we, as a state and society, can and must honour and recognise those who have defended our security and independence for years.

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<sup>4</sup> Concept of policy on veterans' families. [veteranspolicy.org.ua/family](https://veteranspolicy.org.ua/family)

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# Who This Concept Is For

**The Concept will be useful for those who develop, shape, and implement policy, develop and provide services, and create spaces, environments, and opportunities to improve the well-being of veterans:**

- Representatives of state institutions and bodies at the national level
- Representatives of local governments
- Representatives of charitable, civil society and volunteer organisations that support warriors, veterans, and their families
- Warriors and veterans
- Families of veterans and their close relatives
- Providers of public services
- Scientists, analysts, and researchers
- Business representatives
- The international community and donors
- The general public, the media, and anyone else interested in the public veteran policy

# How to Read This Concept

This document comprises five sections that encompass conceptual, analytical, and practical components. They may be read sequentially or selectively, depending on your tasks and needs. We recommend that all readers begin with the first two conceptual sections to understand the logic behind the proposed support for veterans, and then proceed to the specific thematic parts of the Concept that are most relevant to you.

## What Each Section Covers

### **Section 1. Challenges and Historical Background.**

This section is an entry point into the Concept. It explains the current state of veteran policy and its historical foundations, why it needs improvement, and what specific changes are necessary.

### **Section 2. Policy Goals and Principles.**

This section outlines the overall logic, values, and guidelines of the new public policy. It is key to understanding the structure of the following sections.

### **Section 3. Profile of the Target Audience.**

This section is a cornerstone for the proper veteran policy targeting: what is important to know about veterans in order to design effective measures (the diversity of experiences and conditions, sociodemographic characteristics, journey stages, and environments of policy implementation). This section concludes with a needs algorithm that offers a comprehensive perspective for developing veteran-oriented solutions and programmes.

### **Section 4. Well-Being Needs of Veterans.**

This section presents an analytical framework for developing specific programmes based on five components: Health, Housing and Physical Environment, Material Needs, Vocation (education, employment, entrepreneurship), Relationships and Recognition. It can be read

selectively, depending on the policy area or programme you are interested in or working with.

### **Section 5. Stakeholder Map.**

This section presents all actors involved in and responsible for shaping and implementing veteran policy. A practical tool can be used, in particular, for filtering stakeholders by level, audience, and type of activity.

#### **For quick navigation**

##### **To find more about:**

- **veteran policy**, read Sections 1 and 2;
- **veterans and beneficiaries of the veteran policy**, refer to Section 3;
- **supporting veterans in different areas with due account for their needs**, see the relevant well-being component in Section 4;
- **who should shape, develop, implement, and enforce veteran policy** – see Section 5.

# Glossary

This Glossary brings together our own definitions of terms used in the Concept. All terms are listed in alphabetical order.

When creating the Glossary, we employed a human-centric approach, focusing on the idea that the person, their experience, and their needs must come first. We believe this principle should also underpin public policy and legislative definitions.

Our terms and definitions may differ from those established in public documents, as some regulatory acts require updates, which can be challenging to implement due to the complexity of legislative changes, especially during martial law.

**Accessibility**

Equal access to support, services, infrastructure, and opportunities regardless of status, physical or social characteristics.

**Adaptation**

The process of adjusting to life conditions and circumstances following a significant change in those conditions or circumstances.

**Beneficiary**

A person or another entity that receives benefits from a certain activity.

**Benefits**

Special rights, guarantees, benefits or discounts provided by the state to citizens to improve their financial situation, well-being, living conditions and quality of life, and to provide support.

**Care**

Protecting the personal rights and interests of people who cannot look after themselves and need support. In the context of veteran policy, care means ensuring the physical, psychological, social, and material well-being of veterans and their family members.

**Caregiving**

Helping people who need support in their daily lives due to age, illness or disability.

<b>Civilian capital</b>	The assets, property, and income that a veteran possessed in civilian life before service.
<b>Combat experience</b>	Direct participation in combat operations.
<b>Commemoration</b>	Official and public recognition of the significance of the contribution of the fallen or events of the past, expressed in actions aimed at showing respect and gratitude and preserving their memory.
<b>Compensation</b>	Providing compensation or financial assistance to people who have suffered damage or loss due to certain circumstances. This may include compensation for the loss of health, property, employment, or other resources resulting from governmental or social changes or circumstances, such as war or disaster.
<b>Concept of public policy</b>	A general approach or framework that sets out strategic directions for the development of public policy and the state's approaches in a particular area, and defines the main goals, objectives, and mechanisms for achieving them.
<b>Condition</b>	A dynamic, changing situation that may last for a certain period of time, cease, or recur. It depends on personal experience and affects needs, but is temporary or potentially changeable. A condition may accompany a status but does not define it; it requires situational responses from the support system.
<b>Cross-sectoral approach</b>	An approach that ensures veterans and their family members are represented across all spheres and have access to all programmes and services implemented by the state, non-governmental institutions, and businesses.
<b>Demobilisation</b>	The process of transitioning the Armed Forces and other military formations from wartime to peacetime status, as well as the discharge of service members.
<b>Difficult life conditions</b>	Situations that worsen a person's life, health, or development, or the functioning of their family, which they cannot overcome on their own.

**Discharge from service** The completion of military service and return to civilian life.

**Experience** A set of events, circumstances, and inner changes that a person experiences in connection with various life situations, for example, military service or participation in combat operations. Experience shapes one's perception of reality, system of needs, and ways we interact with the environment.

**General conscription pool** The status assigned to all citizens liable for military service, including those who have not completed military service.

**Guardianship** A form of human rights protection, where a person cannot exercise their rights and represent their interests for certain reasons, such as age or health. A guardian makes decisions regarding medical treatment, education, property management, and daily life of the person under their guardianship.

**Human capital** A set of knowledge, skills, experience, health, and motivation possessed by citizens of the country, which can contribute to its economic growth and social development.

**Human-centricity** An approach whereby public policy, decisions, initiatives and programmes are geared towards human needs, the protection of human rights and concern for human well-being.

**Identity** A person's awareness of belonging to a particular social, cultural, national, or professional group.

**Inclusiveness** Taking into account the diverse needs of all groups of citizens in policy development and implementation.

**Integration** The process of adaptation when veterans return to civilian life with new experiences and needs, while society acknowledges these changes and creates conditions to meet them.

**Internal displacement** The forced need to leave one's permanent place of residence and relocate within the country due to external circumstances (war, threat of occupation, violence, or human rights violations).

<b>Legal framework</b>	Documents establishing rules, principles, characteristics of various types of activities and their results.
<b>Military reserve</b>	Citizens liable for military service who may be called up to serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. It consists of <b>operational military reserve</b> , which includes <b>combat reserve, build-up reserve</b> and <b>territorial reserve</b> (persons liable for military service who have already completed military service or training and are ready to quickly return to the army in the event of mobilisation or if units need to be replenished), and <b>mobilisation reserve</b> (all conscripts who may be called up and are not part of the operational reserve).
<b>Military service</b>	A special type of public service where people who are suitable in terms of age and health, professionally defend the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.
<b>Mobility</b>	The ability to move freely; one of the basic human needs. Mobility is part of the broader concept of a barrier-free environment.
<b>Multiplicity of experiences</b>	A combination of various life conditions that affect the well-being of veterans and their families, including combat experience, health status, family status, employment, place of residence, and experience of internal displacement. Veteran policy must take these factors into account comprehensively to ensure flexible and adaptive support.
<b>Need</b>	The demand for something that ensures a comfortable and safe life and a high level of well-being.
<b>One-off financial assistance</b>	State financial support provided to veterans after completing military service.
<b>Payments</b>	A general term for any material support, financial assistance, or compensation provided by the state to its citizens. Current state support for veterans includes the following payments: disability benefits, post-service benefits, pensions and allowances, and annual payments on Independence Day.
<b>Pension provision</b>	A system of financing designed to provide citizens with regular payments after reaching a certain age, losing working capacity, or in the event of the loss of a breadwinner.

<b>Periods of heightened attention</b>	Periods of key changes in the journeys of veterans, when challenges may be particularly complex. During these critical periods, veterans interact most with the state, and the burden on the support system is at its highest.
<b>Policy implementation environment</b>	A legal, organisational, and infrastructural framework for applying the provisions and norms of policy.
<b>Prevention</b>	An approach that focuses on the early identification of risks to the well-being of veterans and their families, as well as on preventing adverse trends in their lives.
<b>Psychological support</b>	A set of methods and approaches that help people improve their emotional state, promote self-development, stress resistance and adaptation to change.
<b>Public policy</b>	A set or system of government actions aimed at addressing specific social issues.
<b>Public veteran policy</b>	The declared and described approach of the state to supporting veterans and their families, which sets out the purpose of such support, its target audience, implementation means and mechanisms, and the tools for measuring effectiveness.
<b>Recognition</b>	Expressing gratitude and showing respect for the contribution of veterans in defending the country; providing comprehensive state support for restoring their well-being throughout their lives, and dignified commemoration of the fallen and deceased warriors.
<b>Recovery</b>	The process of physical, psychological, social and professional adaptation of veterans after completing their service and returning to civilian life.
<b>Rehabilitation</b>	A system of measures aimed at restoring a person's physical and mental health.
<b>Reinventing oneself</b>	Part of the Civilian Life phase of the Journey of Veterans, the creation of a new identity built upon the entirety of one's experience (before, during, and after military service) and the search for new meaning, career opportunities, and ways of self-fulfilment.

<b>Rooting</b>	Part of the Civilian Life phase of the Journey of Veterans; a stage during which veterans can make important, long-term decisions consciously and with sufficient inner readiness.
<b>Security and Defence Forces</b>	A collective term for all military formations and bodies that protect Ukraine's sovereignty, including the Armed Forces, the Security Service of Ukraine, the National Guard, the State Border Guard Service, and the National Police.
<b>Service</b>	A specific action or set of actions that the state, through its authorities, institutions or authorised organisations, provided to citizens to meet their needs or resolve life situations.
<b>Social support</b>	Assistance from the state or other organisations to individuals or groups in need. It may take the form of financial, legal, or psychological aid, or various services and benefits aimed at improving living conditions and well-being and ensuring social protection.
<b>Stakeholders</b>	All stakeholders involved in the development, implementation, financing, evaluation and support of measures aimed at ensuring the rights, interests and needs of the target audience of public policy. These include the responsible Ministry, other governmental authorities, the public sector, communities, international donors and organisations, and businesses.
<b>State social guarantees</b>	Minimum standards of financial support for citizens established by law. These include salaries, pensions, social assistance, benefits, and other payments regulated by laws and legal acts.
<b>State strategy</b>	An approved official document and instrument that defines long-term goals, objectives and measures of public policy in a particular area and the main ways to achieve them.
<b>State support</b>	Assistance provided by the state to its citizens, companies, or organisations to improve their social or economic situation.
<b>Status</b>	A stable, legally recognised position of a person that defines their social rights and guarantees, obligations, and access to support. It depends on experience, remains relatively constant over time, has a lifelong impact, follows clear criteria, and usually changes only through an official decision or new circumstances.

**Subsidies** Financial support from the state provided to cover part of the costs of housing and utility services, healthcare, education and other social needs.

**Support** Actions aimed at promoting well-being and improving the quality of life of specific individuals or social groups.

**Taking Care of Yourself** Part of the Civilian Life phase of the Journey of Veterans, when veterans' needs become their primary focus. This manifests across all domains of well-being, particularly through striving for greater comfort, prioritising personal time, and focusing on personal interests.

**Target audience** A group of people at whom certain activities, initiatives, programmes, or policies are aimed and for whom they are intended.

**Target Audience's Profile** The characteristics of the group of people targeted by a policy, programme, or initiative. It includes key parameters such as age, gender, health status, social conditions, place of residence, professional status, education level, and experiences or needs related to the specific policy area.

**The Journey of Veterans** The Veteran Hub's study on the experiences of Ukrainian ATO/JFO veterans, based on which a map of the journeys of veterans has been created.

**The Journey of the Wounded** A study by Pryncyp, Gradus Research, and Terra Ukraine on the experiences, needs, and challenges of wounded service members and veterans of the Russo–Ukrainian war at all stages of their journey and interaction with various services.

**Trajectory of the veteran's journey** The individual life path of a veteran. We distinguish between a positive and a negative trajectory. A positive trajectory refers to a journey where a veteran, despite challenges, finds the strength to adapt after returning and maintain a good quality of life. A negative trajectory refers to a situation in which a veteran does not integrate and exhibits deviant behaviour, such as dependency.

**Transition** The process of adaptation for veterans as they return to civilian life after service, including physical and psychological recovery, integration into a new social environment, job seeking, and mental health support. This is a transitional stage that may last from one to one and a half years or longer.

**Veteran** A person who directly participated in combat operations to defend the Homeland or took part in combat operations on the territory of other states if such participation was part of Ukraine's international commitments.

**Veteran entrepreneurship/business** A business founded or run by veterans and their families.

**Veteran of military service** Under current legislation, veterans of military service are persons with more than 25 years of service, regardless of combat experience.

**Veteran's family member** A person who has family/kinship ties with a veteran. These ties can be based on blood relation, conscious choice, shared household, and financial and emotional bonds.

**Veterans' affairs** A set of affairs, actions, and issues related to the protection of the rights of veterans and their families and the provision of services and support, guided by the public veteran policy strategy.

**Vulnerable populations** Groups of people who have an increased need for support due to difficult social conditions and life circumstances.

**Well-being** Categorisation of various human needs, necessary for a comprehensive analysis of a person's condition, functionality and the level of satisfaction with various aspects of their life. We distinguish between **military** well-being (during service) and **civilian** well-being (in civilian life). Well-being consists of the following six components: health, relationships and recognition, vocation, material needs, housing and the physical environment, life skills and spirituality. In this Concept, we focus in detail on the first five components, as the sixth – life skills and spirituality (including resilience, long-term planning, and spirituality) – is a cross-cutting component that manifests within all the others.

# List of abbreviations

<b>AFU</b>	Armed Forces of Ukraine
<b>ATO/JFO</b>	Anti-Terrorist Operation and Joint Forces Operation
<b>CEA</b>	Central executive authority
<b>CMU</b>	Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
<b>DLC</b>	Difficult life conditions
<b>EIE</b>	External independent evaluation
<b>HEI</b>	Higher education institution
<b>HUS</b>	Housing and utility services
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>IE</b>	Individual entrepreneur
<b>LGBTQI+</b>	People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, asexual, pansexual, and intersex individuals, queer and non-binary people, as well as people with other sexual orientations that differ from heterosexual one or gender identities that differ from cisgender one, or those whose sexual orientation or gender identity is unidentified (LGBT)
<b>Ministry of Education and Science</b>	Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
<b>Ministry of Health</b>	Ministry of Health of Ukraine
<b>Ministry of Internal Affairs</b>	Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine
<b>Ministry of Social Policy</b>	Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine
<b>MMC</b>	Military medical commission

<b>MoVA</b>	Ministry of Veterans Affairs
<b>NACP</b>	National Agency on Corruption Prevention
<b>NHSU</b>	National Health Service of Ukraine
<b>NMMC</b>	National Military Memorial Cemetery
<b>NMT</b>	National Multi-Subject Test
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>OMA</b>	Oblast Military Administration
<b>PMG</b>	Programme of Medical Guarantees
<b>PTSD</b>	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
<b>Russia</b>	Russian Federation
<b>SBN</b>	State Building Norms
<b>SESU</b>	State Emergency Service of Ukraine
<b>SSU</b>	Security Service of Ukraine
<b>TRSSC</b>	Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Centre
<b>UMS</b>	Unified Medical Space
<b>UN</b>	United Nations

# SECTION 1

## **Challenges of State Support for Veterans and Historical Background**

# Abstract

Section One of the Concept outlines the current challenges of state support for veterans and draws on historical models of veteran policy to analyse how past experiences have shaped today's approaches and practices in Ukraine.

## **Scope of research:**

- historical background of the current public veteran policy and different generations of veterans;
- the need to develop a public policy on veterans;
- current issues and challenges in shaping Ukraine's state veteran policy;
- recommendations for building a more effective, human-centric system of state support for veterans.

# Introduction

Since the onset of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2014 and its full-scale phase in 2022, the issue of supporting veterans in Ukraine has become particularly pressing. The public policy, intended to assist veterans in returning to civilian life and to ensure their rights and well-being, remains underdeveloped, unsystematic, and poorly adapted to current challenges.

Despite numerous programmes and declarations, barriers to effective support persist due to the lack of a holistic approach, excessive bureaucracy, and coordination gaps between stakeholders. Many of these issues stem from Ukraine's Soviet legacy. However, reforming state-veteran relations is crucial at present, as supporting veterans is a matter of national security, preserving human capital, and shaping historical memory.

In 2023, we prepared the first draft of the public policy concept on veterans and their families<sup>5</sup>, outlining the challenges of state veteran support and providing recommendations to address them. The government later acknowledged the need for change, and on 29 November 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030<sup>6</sup>. Moving forward, changes require a systemic approach and consistent implementation. It is essential not only to adopt strategic documents but also to ensure their execution, proper funding, and coordination among all stakeholders to achieve tangible changes that meet the needs of veterans.

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<sup>5</sup> Veteran Hub, Pryncyp, Space of Opportunities, Legal Hundred, Veteranka. (2023). Concept of the Policy on Veterans and Their Families.

[veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/polityka-shchodo-veteraniv-ta-ikh-simey.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/polityka-shchodo-veteraniv-ta-ikh-simey.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, "On Approving the Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030 and the Operational Action Plan for Its Implementation in 2024–2027," No. 1209-r (29 November 2024). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-#Text)

# Challenges of State Support for Veterans: Where We Are and What Needs to Change

Today, over one million<sup>7</sup> Ukrainian service members stand in defence of Ukraine in the war unleashed by Russia, which has now lasted for more than a decade. Through their daily acts of bravery, they ensure our nation's security and survival. They gain military and combat experience while defending the country's independence and sovereignty.

Although at the time of writing this Concept, Ukraine has not yet initiated official demobilisation since February 2022, some service members are already returning to civilian life<sup>8</sup>. We understand that after the official demobilisation is announced (particularly with its first wave) and after the war ends, the number of veterans returning and adapting to civilian life will increase. Additionally, future service members who may be called up to defend Ukraine and gain combat experience will need a transparent and consistent policy to rely on.

We believe that the journeys of veterans begin the moment they decide to enlist, and their return to civilian life is a continuation of the war ordeal, not an immediate relief from it. The challenges veterans face in civilian life often stem from their unique military and combat experiences. These challenges can escalate into problems when the social environment and broader society fail to fully understand their needs, grasp the specifics of what they have endured, or provide adequate support.

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<sup>7</sup> Shenderovskiy, N. (16 January 2025). "A Completely Different Figure": Ukraine's Armed Forces Reveal the Actual Number of the Military on the Front Line. UNIAN. [unian.ua/war/skilki-lyudey-voyuye-v-ukrajini-u-zsu-rozpovili-pro-realnu-kilkist-viyskovih-na-fronti-12885759.html](https://unian.ua/war/skilki-lyudey-voyuye-v-ukrajini-u-zsu-rozpovili-pro-realnu-kilkist-viyskovih-na-fronti-12885759.html)

<sup>8</sup> According to Article 26 of the Law of Ukraine "On Military Duty and Military Service" (as of 2025, when this Concept was drafted), service members may be discharged on the following grounds: upon reaching the age limit (over 60); based on a military medical commission's conclusion declaring them unfit for military service (permanently or temporarily, with reassessment required in 6–12 months); due to disability (Groups I, II, or III); due to criminal proceedings; following liberation from captivity; for family or other valid reasons (e.g., pregnancy, caring for a child or relative with a disability, or the death or disappearance of a military family member). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text)

Despite all the difficulties, the majority of veterans overcome the challenges of settling back into civilian life<sup>9</sup>. However, some may require additional support. At the same time, public policy must go beyond crisis intervention alone – it should also focus on recognising and honouring their contributions, creating opportunities, and ensuring a fulfilling life after military duty.

## Need for a Public Policy on Veterans

The government policy concerning veterans aims to provide veterans with the opportunity to establish civilian or military well-being based on the environment they re-enter<sup>10</sup>. Such support is an expression of gratitude and respect for their decision to risk what is most valuable – their dreams, civilian careers, and time with loved ones – for the sake of defending the country.

Recognising their contribution and showing respect at the state level should facilitate their successful return to civilian life. Ultimately, the creation and implementation of veteran policy are closely tied to national security and defence, socio-economic development, human capital restoration, and the shaping of historical memory, even in times of war. Below, we explore these ties in detail.

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<sup>9</sup> Elnitsky, C. A., Blevins, C. L., Fisher, M. P., & Magruder, K. (2017). Military service member and veteran reintegration: A critical review and adapted ecological model. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 87(2), 114–128. [doi.org/10.1037/ort0000244](https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000244), 2017

<sup>10</sup> In this Concept, we adopt a broad definition of well-being, combining subjective and objective factors that contribute to high life satisfaction. We distinguish between military well-being (during service) and civilian well-being (in civilian life). See Section 3 for more details.

## National Security and Defence

Supporting veterans is not just a matter of justice but a strategic necessity. Veterans form the backbone of the Security and Defence Forces due to their up-to-date combat experience, which makes them the foundation of Ukraine's operational military reserve<sup>11</sup>.

Even after the war, the risk of renewed hostilities persists, and Ukraine must maintain a high level of readiness to defend itself. In such a scenario, veterans who left service for various reasons will be the first to rejoin the ranks.

Therefore, an effective public policy on veterans should support them across all contexts – in civilian life, during continued military service, or as members of the military reserve. This ensures their readiness and capability to fight again if needed.

An effective veteran policy also enhances the prestige of military service, assuring future warriors that they and their families will receive proper support during and after service. Therefore, over the long term, the military reserve and, eventually, the troop in general will be supplemented not only by veterans from past generations but also by new service members. Rather than returning to service, veterans will have the opportunity to develop their own civilian well-being.

Thus, supporting veterans after their return to civilian life is one of the cornerstones of **national security and defence**.

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<sup>11</sup> The military reserve refers to individuals who are obligated to undergo relevant training and are the first to be mobilised if needed. This is distinct from the general conscription pool, which encompasses all individuals liable for military service, including those who have never served before.

## Restoring Human Capital and the Socio-Economic Development of the Country

Amid the critical worsening of Ukraine's demographic crisis and labour shortages, veterans returning to civilian life can rejoin the workforce, strengthening the country's **human capital** and economic stability, even in the short term. At the same time, at least some veterans will require support during this transition, particularly in restoring functionality

and health, adapting to new working conditions, and securing guarantees in case of renewed military service or reserve duty.

An effective public policy on veterans and their families will ensure that veterans **contribute** to the country's socio-economic development and choose to live and work in Ukraine.

Thus, the current task of the state is to provide proper and necessary support and recognition to veterans by developing and consistently implementing effective policies.

# Historical Background

To understand the current veteran policy in Ukraine, it is important to examine the historical background and previous policies on which it is based.

After declaring independence in 1991, Ukraine inherited Soviet legislation, which it had to adapt and reform. Unfortunately, the legislation on veterans' affairs in independent Ukraine long remained Soviet in essence. For example, terms like "(war) invalids" and "Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945" were only removed from the Law of Ukraine "On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection" in 2017<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, Ukrainian society did not instantly change its attitude toward veterans after independence, continuing to rely on previous experience and established practices.

This section provides a brief overview of the features of veteran policy in the USSR during the second half of the 20th century and in Ukraine, both before and after 2014.

## World War II Veterans

### **1945–1947: The First Wave of Legislative Support for Demobilised Military**

By the end of World War II in 1945, there were over 25 million people<sup>13</sup> in the former USSR who held the public status of "frontline heroes." This group included only veterans who fought in the Soviet army.

During the USSR era, especially during World War II, members of the OUN (Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists) and UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) also engaged in the armed struggle. Since the goal of this

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<sup>12</sup> Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine" No. 2249-VIII. (19 December 2018). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2249-19#n87](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2249-19#n87)

<sup>13</sup> Edele, M. (2017, 27 January). Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group, 1945–1955. *Slavic Review*, 65 (1), 111–137. P. 120. [doi.org/10.2307/4148525](https://doi.org/10.2307/4148525)

struggle was Ukraine's independence, the Soviet state did not recognise this group of veterans. However, even later, in independent Ukraine, members of the OUN and UPA<sup>14</sup> were not granted official recognition of their status.

### **1945 (June 23): The Demobilisation Law**

The first post-war legislative act addressing social support for veterans was the USSR Law "On the Demobilisation of Older Age Personnel of the Active Army," dated 23 June 1945<sup>15</sup>. According to this law, thirteen older age groups of military personnel subject to demobilisation were to receive a one-time financial assistance. Additionally, the law obligated heads of city enterprises, organisations, and institutions to offer returning demobilised personnel employment at their place of residence, "taking into account the experience and speciality they gained in the Red Army, but not lower than the job they held prior to being drafted, and to provide them with housing and fuel." Collective farms and local executive committees were instructed to assist demobilised rural residents in securing employment "by all available means"<sup>16</sup>. Also, demobilised service members were to be provided with uniforms, footwear, and transportation to their place of residence.

The Praesidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet referred to this list of "material and household provisions"<sup>17</sup> in its subsequent decrees regarding further waves of demobilisation. Overall, the demobilisation campaign lasted until 1947<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> The term refers to the activities of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN, founded in 1929) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA, active from 1942 to 1954) during World War II, particularly their armed struggle for Ukraine's independence.

<sup>15</sup> USSR Law "On the Demobilisation of Older Age Personnel of the Active Army" (23 June 1945). [ecriptorium.karazin.ua/items/909bcb12-8bc4-4a03-b244-fe8ddb607cdd](https://ecriptorium.karazin.ua/items/909bcb12-8bc4-4a03-b244-fe8ddb607cdd)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet "On the Demobilisation of the Second Group of Red Army Personnel" (25 September 1945); Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet "On the Demobilisation of the Third Group of Ground and Air Force Personnel" (20 March 1946).

<sup>18</sup> Lysenko, O. (2004). Post-war Demobilisations in the Soviet Republics and the USSR from 1921 to 1924 and in the USSR from 1945 to 1947. Smolij, V. (Ed.-in-Chief). Encyclopedia of the History of Ukraine. Scientific Thought. [history.org.ua/?termin=Demobilizacii\\_povoenni](https://history.org.ua/?termin=Demobilizacii_povoenni)

## **1947: Cancellation of Benefits and Increasing Restrictions**

Basic benefits for veterans awarded with medals or orders were maintained until the end of the demobilisation period. However, the Decree of the Praesidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet dated 10 September 1947<sup>19</sup> abolished financial assistance for those awarded USSR orders and medals. Veterans also lost their right to free travel on railways, waterways, and trams. The preamble to the decree stated that the abolition of payments and benefits was carried out “in response to numerous suggestions from recipients of USSR orders and medals to cancel payments for decorations and some other benefits.”

The abolition of benefits did not touch small pension payments for veterans with disabilities. However, even veterans with Group I disabilities were required to undergo annual medical re-evaluations to confirm their disability status. Failure to do so meant losing their status as “invalids,” the official Soviet term for persons with disabilities<sup>20</sup>. Group III (lowest category) included veterans with disabilities who had lost a limb or organ but could still work in their previous job or under normal working conditions. Pension payments for working persons with disabilities were reduced<sup>21</sup>.

## **1944–1950s: Employment and the Gradual Ban on Self-Employment**

The abolition of payments and benefits might have had a less devastating impact on WWII veterans’ well-being if not for widespread post-war employment challenges. As early as 1944–1945, during the Soviet-German war, special resolutions were issued on the employment

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<sup>19</sup> Decree “On the Benefits and Privileges Granted to Those Awarded Orders and Medals of the USSR” (10 September 1947). Collection of Laws of the USSR and Decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. 1938 – July 1956, edited by a PhD in Law, Y. Mandelshtam. State Publishing House of Legal Literature, 1956, pp. 300–301.

<sup>20</sup> People’s Economy of the USSR in 1958: Statistical Yearbook. (1959). Gosstatizdat.

<sup>21</sup> Edele, M. (2006). Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group, 1945–1955. *Slavic Review*, 65 (1), 111–137. P. 125. [doi.org/10.2307/4148525](https://doi.org/10.2307/4148525)

of veterans with disabilities<sup>22</sup>. Veterans with officer ranks or relevant pre-war experience could secure positions such as heads of cultural centres or teachers, which also involved ideological work<sup>23</sup>. However, most veterans seeking work ended up in manufacturing or collective farms<sup>24</sup>. Another part of veterans were able to secure leadership positions after the war, such as in local government or party hubs. Nevertheless, this opportunity was primarily available to officers rather than soldiers.

A segment of the population, including veterans, who turned to self-employment or industrial cooperation<sup>25</sup>, was only able to pursue such activities until the early 1950s, when they were outlawed<sup>26</sup> as contradictory to the Soviet totalitarian regime. However, people still had to find ways to earn a living, so many of them continued to engage in entrepreneurship illegally, fully aware of the risk of criminal prosecution.

From 1948 (after the demobilisation was completed) until 1978, veterans (except for “frontline invalids”) did not legally exist as a distinct group of citizens in the Soviet Union<sup>27</sup>.

Notably, Soviet authorities entirely overlooked or ignored female veterans, leaving them without specialised policies or support programmes.

With the state neglecting their needs and not legally recognising their status, veterans attempted to organise grassroots informal networks

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<sup>22</sup> Resolution of the Council of People’s Commissars of the TSSR on Approving the Plan for Employment and Vocational Training of Invalids of the Patriotic War for 1945 (21 April 1945). Archive of the Council of Ministers of the TSSR, Official records, file 220, sheets 3–4. [economics.kiev.ua/download/ZakonySSSR/data04/tex16373.htm](http://economics.kiev.ua/download/ZakonySSSR/data04/tex16373.htm)

<sup>23</sup> Military Personnel of the Soviet State in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 (1963). Voenizdat. P. 441.

<sup>24</sup> Edele, M. (2006). Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group, 1945–1955. *Slavic Review*, 65 (1), 111–137. P. 119. [doi.org/10.2307/4148525](https://doi.org/10.2307/4148525)

<sup>25</sup> Industrial cooperation refers to a form of economic activity in which enterprises or individual producers unite to jointly manufacture goods or provide services. In the post-war USSR, it included artels (production cooperatives), some of which were designated for individuals who were considered “invalids.”

<sup>26</sup> History of the Cooperative Movement in Ukraine (Beginnings) (28 February 2017). Corporate Academy. [coop-academy.com.ua/istoriya-kooperatyvnoho-rukhu-v-ukrayini/](http://coop-academy.com.ua/istoriya-kooperatyvnoho-rukhu-v-ukrayini/)

<sup>27</sup> Edele, M. (2006). Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group, 1945–1955. *Slavic Review*, 65 (1), 111–137. P. 111. [doi.org/10.2307/4148525](https://doi.org/10.2307/4148525)

and veteran associations<sup>28</sup>. Such citizen self-organisation and the creation of civic organisations outside of full state control directly contradicted the Soviet regime's policies. The only short-lived exception was the Republican Commission for Assistance to Officers with Disabilities of the "Great Patriotic War"<sup>29</sup>, established in Kyiv. By 1950, it had 105,000 members; however, the Soviet authorities disbanded it in 1951, despite resistance from its participants.

Veterans tried to maintain informal networks, but they were sporadic and unstable. In the post-war Soviet society, veterans were unable to establish a stable network of social connections among themselves. This was obstructed by limited mobility and the authorities' distrustful attitude towards veterans: those attending veterans' gatherings could be detained on accusations of anti-Soviet activities. The lack of grassroots organisations and the atomisation of Soviet society also hindered the formation of such networks.

### **1956: Creation of the First Veterans' Organisation**

The first veterans' organisation, the Organisation of Soviet War Veterans, headed by the Soviet Committee of War Veterans, was only established in 1956, after the beginning of the Khrushchev Thaw and more than a decade after the end of World War II. However, the organisation was not allowed to create local branches<sup>30</sup>.

### **1978: Legal Recognition and Limited Benefits**

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<sup>28</sup> Edele, M. (2006). Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group, 1945–1955. *Slavic Review*, 65 (1), P. 121. [doi.org/10.2307/4148525](https://doi.org/10.2307/4148525)

<sup>29</sup> In the original work, the commission is titled as the Republican Commission for the Assistance of Invalids of the Patriotic War of Officer Rank.

<sup>30</sup> Borovyk, M. (8 May 2013). Veterans in the Making. *The Ukrainian Week*. [tyzhden.ua/veterany-po-radiansky/](http://tyzhden.ua/veterany-po-radiansky/)

It was not until 1978 that the Soviet Union legally formalised the status of veterans and granted them a set of benefits<sup>31</sup>. These included the chance to buy a ticket within the USSR once a year at half price, the entitlement to an interest-free loan for building a personal house, annual leave at a suitable time, and an additional two weeks of leave at your own cost. Furthermore, veterans were granted the right to sanatorium treatment, priority access to garden cooperatives, and private telephones<sup>32</sup>.

One of the reasons for legally defining veteran status and granting benefits might have been the significant decrease in the number of veterans by 1978, allowing the state budget to allocate funds for certain benefits. Recognising veterans as a separate group was also driven by the desire to gain political loyalty from this segment of society, rather than a genuine effort to address the needs of people with combat experience<sup>33</sup>. The Soviet state did not consider support for veterans as one of its responsibilities.

<b>1945 (June 23)</b>	USSR Law on Demobilisation of Older Age Groups from the Active Army (demobilisation lasted until 1947)
<b>1947 (September 10)</b>	Decree of the Praesidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, abolishing monetary rewards for holders of Soviet orders and medals
<b>1956</b>	Creation of the first Organisation of Soviet War Veterans, led by the Soviet Committee of War Veterans
<b>1978</b>	Legal recognition of veteran status and the granting of benefits

<sup>31</sup> Resolution of the CPSU Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers "On Measures for Further Improvement of the Material and Living Conditions of Participants of the Great Patriotic War" No. 907 (10 November 1978). [economics.kiev.ua/download/ZakonySSSR/data02/tex13940.htm](http://economics.kiev.ua/download/ZakonySSSR/data02/tex13940.htm)

<sup>32</sup> Borovyk, M. (8 May 2013). Veterans in the Making. The Ukrainian Week. [tyzhden.ua/veterany-po-radiansky/](http://tyzhden.ua/veterany-po-radiansky/)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

## Veterans with Disabilities

From 1945 to 1978, veterans (except for “frontline invalids”) did not legally exist as a separate category of citizens in the Soviet Union

Soviet authorities used various methods to remove people with disabilities, including veterans, from the public space. Even during the German-Soviet War, an NKVD (the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs) circular dated 26 January 1945 instructed military censors reviewing private correspondence to confiscate photographs of persons with disabilities and, in some cases, the letters themselves<sup>34</sup>. The Soviet state claimed that images of veterans with disabilities could be sent by “hostile individuals as acts of provocation.”

In 1949, on the occasion of Joseph Stalin’s 70th birthday, the Soviet police launched a mass campaign to clear cities of veterans with disabilities. Many were resettled to remote regions or even sent to GULAG camps<sup>35</sup> – all to ensure that persons with disabilities on the streets would not undermine the ideological image crafted by Soviet propaganda.

Due to the lack of state support, neglect, and even violent actions by the government, veterans with disabilities struggled to achieve well-being in various areas of life after returning from the war. They often struggled to find or keep jobs, faced difficulties starting families, and were left without adequate housing. As a result, some had no resources at all and were forced into begging.

In 1951, the Soviet government issued a Decree “On Combating Anti-Social, Parasitic Elements.” Over the next three years, around half a million people were arrested for begging. Up to 70% of them were

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<sup>34</sup> Lytvynenko, V., Ohorodnik, V. Departments of Military Censorship and Political Control of the NKVD–NKGB of the USSR in the Red Army and Navy (late 1930s – March 1946) // From the Archives of the VUChK–GPU–NKVD–KGB, No. 1 (42), 2014, pp. 274–275.

<sup>35</sup> The GULAG (Main Administration of Camps; Russian: Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) was the USSR’s unified camp system, part of the NKVD from 1934 to 1956, which managed correctional labour camps, labour settlements, and places of imprisonment.

veterans with disabilities<sup>36</sup>. Many were then placed in closed camps for veterans with disabilities, set up across the USSR.

In 1956, as part of a pension reform, the Soviet Union standardised legislation for different categories of “invalids”<sup>37</sup> and increased pensions for some of them. Military “invalids” saw their pensions raised again in 1959 and 1964<sup>38</sup>, with further increases in 1965, 1967, 1973, and 1975. In 1975, this group of people with disabilities also received benefits for using public transport, medical services, housing, utility payments, and access to specially equipped private vehicles<sup>39</sup>.

Overall, Soviet policies and public discourse left no place for people with disabilities and veterans with disabilities in particular. The Soviet leadership believed that people with disabilities did not fit the paradigm of a “healthy socialist nation.” This hypocritical and inhumane approach was illustrated in 1976, when the USSR officially responded to an inquiry from the International Paralympic Committee with the statement: “There are no invalids in the USSR”<sup>40</sup>. The first and only Paralympic Games in which the USSR participated were held in 1988, during the period of perestroika (“restructuring” in Russian)<sup>41</sup>.

Veterans with disabilities were unwelcome in public spaces, received no adequate state support, and were denied inclusive infrastructure. Although one of the most widely circulated Soviet novels, “How the Steel Was Tempered” (1934) by Nikolai Ostrovsky, portrayed an idealised image of a civil war veteran who overcomes adversity and builds

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<sup>36</sup> Report of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee “On Measures to Prevent and Eliminate Begging” (10 February 1954). [alexanderyakovlev.org/almanah/inside/almanah-doc/1007415](http://alexanderyakovlev.org/almanah/inside/almanah-doc/1007415)

<sup>37</sup> The term was commonly used in the legislation and official documents of that time (see source 4).

<sup>38</sup> Borovyk, M. (8 May 2013). Veterans in the Making. The Ukrainian Week. [tyzhden.ua/veterany-po-radiansky/](http://tyzhden.ua/veterany-po-radiansky/)

<sup>39</sup> Resolution of the CPSU Central Committee of the USSR Council of Ministers “On Additional Benefits for Invalids of the Great Patriotic War and Families of Fallen Service Members” No. 304 (18 April 1975). [docs.cntd.ru/document/901746102](http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901746102)

<sup>40</sup> Shcherbina, V. (3 December 2020). “There Are No Invalids in the USSR!..” How People with Disabilities Fought for Their Rights in the USSR. Istorychna Pravda. [istpravda.com.ua/articles/5fc8c9ecd42df/](http://istpravda.com.ua/articles/5fc8c9ecd42df/)

<sup>41</sup> Russia: 11 facts on the Sochi Paralympics. (2014, March 2). Paralympic.org. [paralympic.org/feature/russia-11-facts-sochi-paralympics](http://paralympic.org/feature/russia-11-facts-sochi-paralympics)

his life without any medical or social assistance from the state. This idea starkly contrasted with reality and served as a rebuke to anyone who failed to live up to that ideal. Veterans' problems were framed as personal failures rather than societal neglect.

<p><b>1945</b> <b>(26 January)</b></p>	<p>The NKVD issues a circular obligating military censors to remove any photographs of people with disabilities from correspondence to prevent their use for “provocative purposes.”</p>
<p><b>1949</b></p>	<p>For Stalin’s 70th birthday, a mass campaign was launched to clear cities of veterans with disabilities; they were relocated to remote regions and even to GULAG camps.</p>
<p><b>1951</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The USSR government issues a Decree “On Combating Anti-Social, Parasitic Elements.”</li> <li>■ Over three years, around 500,000 beggars were detained, 70% of whom were veterans with disabilities.</li> <li>■ Veterans with disabilities were placed in closed camps.</li> </ul>
<p><b>1956</b></p>	<p>A pension reform was carried out: legislation for all categories of “invalids” was unified, and pensions were increased for some of them.</p>
<p><b>1959, 1964, 1965, 1967, 1973, 1975</b></p>	<p>Gradual increase in pensions for military “invalids.”</p>
<p><b>1975</b></p>	<p>Veterans with disabilities were granted benefits: transportation, medical care, housing, utilities, and the purchase of special vehicles.</p>
<p><b>1976</b></p>	<p>The USSR rejected the International Paralympic Committee, declaring: “There are no invalids in the USSR.”</p>
<p><b>1988</b></p>	<p>The USSR team participated in the Paralympic Games for the first and only time (during the Perestroika period).</p>

## Afghan War Veterans

Veterans of the Afghan War (which lasted from the Soviet invasion in 1979 until the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989) experienced a largely similar fate and became the first post-World War II generation subjected to weak and inhumane veteran policies.

This generation of veterans faced additional challenges because the end of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan coincided with the collapse of the USSR, which also concealed the true consequences of the war from society. After their service, they received no proper support or recognition from the Soviet regime and encountered further difficulties as their return coincided with Perestroika and Ukraine's path to independence. They also faced misunderstanding and rejection from society, often hearing the statement: "We didn't send you there."

In 1989, just as after World War II, the Soviet Union had no systems of rehabilitation, support, or social services for veterans. As a result, Afghan War veterans had to rebuild their well-being on their own, not always successfully. Many found themselves in dire living conditions, struggling with psychoactive substance addiction (alcohol and drugs), losing family ties, breaking the law, and ending up in prison<sup>42</sup>.

The development and implementation of policies for Afghan War veterans became the responsibility of independent Ukraine. The state inherited several Soviet laws and regulatory documents, including the Law of Ukraine "On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection," adopted in 1993. Among other benefits, this law provided Afghan veterans with free health resort treatment and free public transportation.

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<sup>42</sup> "We didn't send you there." Our 30. (2021). [90.in.ua/afhanska-viyvna](https://90.in.ua/afhanska-viyvna)

## From Independence to the Present Day

Beyond Afghan war veterans, Ukraine's Law "On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection" laid the groundwork for shaping state support for various generations of veterans. In 1995, veterans of Ukraine's peacekeeping missions in Yugoslavia, Georgia, Kosovo, Iraq, Lebanon, Congo, and other countries were officially recognised as combat veterans<sup>43</sup>. This recognition granted them access to the same set of social protections and benefits as earlier generations.

By contrast, veterans of the OUN and UPA waited until 2018 for equivalent recognition and associated benefits<sup>44</sup>. Prior to that, a 2015 Ukrainian law had recognised them as fighters for Ukraine's independence in the 20th century<sup>45</sup>. The law mentioned potential social guarantees, services, or payments to the fighters, but it did not specify them in detail.

Following the killing of the Heavenly Hundred on 18–20 February 2014, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula and launched an invasion of Ukraine, leading to the temporary occupation of parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. In 2022, the invasion escalated into a full-scale war, engulfing the entire country.

Until that point, independent Ukraine had no experience with active combat operations, aside from limited peacekeeping missions. Its troops were largely made up of conscripts and career officers, insufficient to repel the Russian invasion and counter a military threat of that scale. Starting in 2014, apart from the Armed Forces, Ukraine's Security and Defence Forces included the National Guard, National

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<sup>43</sup> Law of Ukraine "On Amendments and Additions to the Law of Ukraine 'On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection' No. 488/95-VR (22 December 1995).

[zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/488/95-bp#Text](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/488/95-bp#Text)

<sup>44</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (7 December 2018). The Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine signed the law amending the Law of Ukraine "On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection" to enhance social protection of participants in the struggle for Ukraine's independence in the 20th century. [rada.gov.ua/news/Povidomlennya/165579.html](http://rada.gov.ua/news/Povidomlennya/165579.html)

<sup>45</sup> Law of Ukraine "On the Legal Status and Honouring the Memory of Fighters for Ukraine's Independence in the 20th Century" No. 314-VIII (29 April 2015).

[zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/314-19#Text](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/314-19#Text)

Police, State Border Guard Service, and other agencies not traditionally involved in direct combat.

In 2014, the state offered veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian war the same set of Soviet-era entitlements: health resort treatment, priority access to land plots, and a range of discounts and benefits. In other words, modern public policy once again failed to account for and recognise the unique combat experience of veterans or to reflect their specific needs.

From 2014 to 2018, the public policy on veterans was implemented by the State Service of Ukraine for War Veterans<sup>46</sup>. It operated under the coordination of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine through the Ministry of Social Policy. It was not until December 2018 that a dedicated Ministry of Veterans Affairs was established and began its work.

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved a relevant regulation on this ministry<sup>47</sup> and tasked it with shaping and executing public policy in the field of social protection of veterans. However, in September 2019, it merged with the Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine, forming a single entity: the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, Temporarily Occupied Territories, and Internally Displaced Persons.

This resulted in an expanded remit: beyond supporting veterans and their families, the new ministry now had to handle issues related to IDPs, residents of temporarily occupied territories, and peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

In March 2020, the merger was reversed, and the Ministry of Veterans Affairs returned to its original focus of shaping and implementing public policy on veterans and their families.

From 2014 onward, Ukrainian civil society underwent significant evolution, and the country experienced a surge in civic and charitable organisations. They supplemented state efforts, offered policy solutions,

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<sup>46</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (10 September 2014). Resolution No. 416 "Certain Issues of the State Service of Ukraine for War Veterans and Participants of the Anti-Terrorist Operation". [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/416-2014-n#Text](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/416-2014-n#Text)

<sup>47</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (27 December 2018). Resolution No. 1175, "Regulation on the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine." [mva.gov.ua/polozhennya-pro-ministerstvo-u-spravah-veteraniv-ukraini](http://mva.gov.ua/polozhennya-pro-ministerstvo-u-spravah-veteraniv-ukraini)

provided support, and sometimes filled gaps in meeting the needs of different groups of people.

In the veteran sector, these organisations provided legal and psychosocial services, assessed the veterans' needs, and developed support models to facilitate their transition from military service to civilian life.

Between 2018 and 2025, the Ministry of Veterans Affairs saw five different leaders, including ministers and acting ministers. For a long time, the ministry's work lacked coordination with other central executive authorities.

**During the formative years of the ministry, its approach to engaging with its target audience was marked by several key features and risks, including:**

- paternalism in interactions – the state unilaterally defined veterans' needs and support mechanisms without real engagement with veterans or other key stakeholders;
- non-substantive guarantees – social guarantees and benefits often existed only on paper;
- lack of or minimal focus on long-term support initiatives aimed at enabling veterans to independently manage their well-being;
- uncoordinated stakeholder efforts/initiatives – with no unified public policy, central government bodies implemented fragmented and uncoordinated programmes for veterans, creating gaps in some areas and duplication of services in others.

These shortcomings became critically exposed after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, as the veteran population surged and the lack of a cohesive national policy grew more acute.

In August 2023, members of parliament introduced draft law No. 9637<sup>48</sup>, proposing a revised framework for defining the status of war veterans. This included new terminology to define the status of combatants (defenders and defendresses), categorisation of veterans' experience based on service duration, and expanded grounds for revoking the status. The draft law also lacked realistic and adequate funding mechanisms for the proposed support systems.

Expert veteran-focused NGOs opposed the draft law and, through a joint appeal, called on lawmakers to withdraw it<sup>49</sup>. The draft law remained stalled in parliamentary review. Instead, five veteran-focused NGOs<sup>50</sup> came together to form a Coalition and drafted an alternative Policy Concept for Veterans and Their Families<sup>51</sup>, presented on 31 October 2023.

In August 2024, the Coalition signed a memorandum and launched cooperation with the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. The first major outcome of this joint effort was the development of a new **Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030**, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on 29 November 2024<sup>52</sup>. The Strategy is rooted in the Coalition's first concept of national policy.

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<sup>48</sup> Draft Law on amendments to the Law of Ukraine "On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection" regarding the regulation of the procedure for granting statuses (their categories) to veterans, No 9637 (21 August 2023). [itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/42571](https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/42571)

<sup>49</sup> Pryncyp. (2023). We urge the retraction of draft law No. 9637 concerning the update of veterans' status. [pryncyp.com/news/zaklykayemo-vidklykaty-proyekt-zakonu-E284969637-pro-onovlennya-statusiv-veteraniv](https://pryncyp.com/news/zaklykayemo-vidklykaty-proyekt-zakonu-E284969637-pro-onovlennya-statusiv-veteraniv)

<sup>50</sup> Legal Hundred NGO, Veteran Hub, Human Rights Centre for Military Personnel and Veterans "Pryncyp," Ukrainian Women Veteran Movement, and Space of Opportunities NGO.

<sup>51</sup> Veteran Hub, Pryncyp, Space of Opportunities, Legal Hundred, Veteranka. (2023). Concept of the Policy for Veterans and Their Families. Expert Guidelines for Developing the Updated Public Policy for Veterans and Their Families. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/polityka-shchodo-veteraniv-ta-ikh-simey.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/polityka-shchodo-veteraniv-ta-ikh-simey.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On Approving the Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030 and the Operational Action Plan for Its Implementation in 2024–2027," No. 1209-r (29 November 2024). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-p#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-p#Text)

This marked a significant milestone in the public policy on veterans. However, despite the adoption of the Strategy, **much remains to be done to refine and strengthen the implementation mechanisms of veteran policy.** Primarily, it is crucial to legally define the status of veterans and to ensure that government support reflects the current realities and needs of its beneficiaries. Current legal definitions may diverge from public perceptions of who qualifies as a veteran, and many state support programmes fail to address veterans' needs. Access to guarantees or benefits is further hampered by a host of barriers: bureaucratic hurdles, an underdeveloped legal framework, a lack of clear guidance, disorganised service-receiving pathways, delayed decision-making, and logistical barriers.

Policy refinement and support programme development **must also be balanced with the realistic capacity of the state.** While current legislation guarantees extensive support on paper, underfunding leaves many programmes and services to remain largely symbolic, denying beneficiaries practical access.

<b>1995</b>	Veterans of peacekeeping missions (Yugoslavia, Georgia, Kosovo, Iraq, Lebanon, Congo, etc.) were granted combatant status
<b>2014 (February)</b>	Killing of the Heavenly Hundred. Russia annexed Crimea and launched a war in eastern Ukraine
<b>2015</b>	The law recognising fighters for Ukrainian independence in the 20th century (OUN, UPA), opening access to social guarantees
<b>2014–2018</b>	Veteran policy administered by the State Service for Veterans Affairs under the Ministry of Social Policy
<b>2018</b>	Establishment of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs
<b>2018</b>	OUN and UPA veterans officially granted combatant status
<b>2019</b>	The ministry merges with the Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories, forming a single ministry with an expanded mandate
<b>2020 (March)</b>	Merger reversed; the Ministry of Veterans Affairs reinstated as independent
<b>2022</b>	Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine
<b>2023 (August)</b>	Draft law No. 9637 registered, proposing updated veteran statuses (new terms, categories, expanded grounds for revocation), though facing public opposition
<b>2023 (31 October)</b>	A Coalition of five NGOs presented its own Policy Concept for Veterans and Their Families
<b>2024 (29 November)</b>	The government approved a new Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030, based on the Concept

# Conclusions

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**1** The journey of veterans is the path of warriors, and returning to civilian life is not an escape from the trials of war, but rather their continuation. The challenges veterans face in civilian life often stem from their unique experiences. These challenges can escalate into problems when their environment and society fail to fully understand their needs, grasp the specifics of what they have endured, or provide adequate support.

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**2** Following its independence, Ukraine inherited several laws and regulatory documents from the Soviet Union. They include the principles of the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection.” As a result, in 2014, the Ukrainian state offered modern veterans much the same as the USSR once did: health resort treatment, priority access to land plots, and a patchwork of benefits and discounts. In reality, this Law does not reflect the real needs of veterans and fails to offer meaningful support in their military-to-civilian transition.

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**3** In November 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030. It was based on the Policy Concept for Veterans and Their Families. This move marks a first step toward recognising veterans’ experience and shaping a cohesive support strategy. Yet, the state’s relationship with veterans has been defined by paternalism, empty social guarantees, and uncoordinated efforts of different stakeholders.

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**4** With proper support, most veterans successfully transition to civilian life. However, when that support is lacking, their well-being deteriorates, which in turn affects society at large. To adequately address the needs of veterans, there is an urgent need to improve and refine the mechanisms through which public veteran policy is implemented. Primarily, it is crucial to legally define the status of veterans and to ensure that government support reflects the current realities and needs of its beneficiaries.

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**5** Effective and comprehensive policy requires inclusive collaboration, engaging the state, civil society, beneficiaries, and local communities. Yet, clear institutional leadership is essential: a single body must be appointed to develop, coordinate, and oversee the implementation of the veteran policy and also lead the efforts of all state institutions involved in veterans' affairs.

# SECTION 2

## **Goal and Principles of Public Policy on Veterans and Their Families**

# Abstract

Section Two of this Concept outlines the core aspects, purpose, guiding principles, and approaches of the public policy on veterans and their families. It lays the ideological foundation for rethinking the role of veteran policy in supporting those who have walked the path of war and recognising their contribution to strengthening Ukrainian statehood.

## Primary goal of the policy

To build a systemic support framework for veterans, facilitating their adaptation, reintegration into society, and the utilisation of their experience to bolster Ukraine's defence capabilities.

## Key objectives within this goal

- Recognising the contribution of veterans and their families
- Ensuring their social and economic well-being
- Supporting national defence capacity

## Guiding principles

- **Cross-departmental approach** – equal access to public services for all veterans and their families.
- **Humano-centricity** – the priority is a person, their rights and freedoms.
- **Proactive and long-lasting approach** to providing support.
- **Realism** – support must be provided considering actual state resources.
- **Respect** – the veteran policy must recognise the contribution of veterans and their families.

# Introduction

The ongoing war in Ukraine has reshaped society and created unprecedented challenges for public policy. A critical priority is maintaining high defence readiness while ensuring veterans and their families receive adequate support, not merely as a gesture of gratitude but as a strategic investment in national security and stability.

Public policy on veterans and their families must be systemic, comprehensive, and long-term in scope. To achieve this, the state must clearly define the purpose of such a policy and enshrine the principles and approaches that will serve as a value-driven and conceptual framework for future actions.

A unified public policy should be understood as a formalised approach of the government to supporting veterans and their families, encompassing the goals of such support, its target audience, implementation mechanisms, and tools to measure its effectiveness.

The current leading view among experts is that the state's greatest asset lies in its people. Thus, when discussing the consequences of the end of the war and the future of national recovery and modernisation, we must first and foremost focus on restoring people and their well-being.

The development of an effective and comprehensive policy requires an inclusive process that engages the state, civil society, beneficiaries, and the public sector. Yet, clear institutional leadership is essential: a single body must be appointed to develop, coordinate, and oversee the implementation of the veteran policy and also lead the efforts of all state institutions involved in veterans' affairs.

**In our view, an effective public policy on veterans and their families should rest on several key pillars:**

Recognition	Understanding	Actions
of the unique experience of veterans and a clear definition of their status	of the impact of veterans' experience on their well-being and of the needs resulting from this experience	identifying what kind of support veterans need at each stage of their journey
	of the goal and ways of supporting veterans and their families	establishing standards for delivering such support
		coordinating efforts of state institutions, civil society, and the international community

We now turn to what a modern national veteran policy should look like and will examine its key components, institutional mechanisms, and principles of implementation.

# The goal of public policy on veterans and their families

In 2023, we introduced the first Concept of the Public Policy for Veterans and Their Families, outlining its goals and guiding principles. This vision was later incorporated into the new public Veteran Policy Strategy:<sup>53</sup>

“The goal of the Strategy is to duly honour veterans’ contributions to the defence of the Homeland, provide comprehensive state support for restoring their well-being (taking into account the effects of combat experience) and the well-being of their families, and ensure cross-sectoral, lifelong assistance tailored to their individual needs. It also aims to strengthen the national defence capabilities by enhancing the prestige of military service and recognising veterans’ pivotal role (particularly in military reserve) and their potential for the economic development of the country.”

This goal rests on several critical components. The public policy on veterans and their families is inseparable from national defence and security strategies, which makes it directly tied to the country's existential survival.

By joining the Security and Defence Forces, veterans assume immense risks to their lives and well-being. Upon returning from service, they carry hard-won combat experience, expanded tactical knowledge, and refined defence expertise. Should Ukraine face future threats to its sovereignty after the Russo-Ukrainian war, these veterans, the bearers of battlefield-tested experience, will form the backbone of the national Security and Defence Forces.

Veteran support policy must be grounded in dignity and respect, recognising their experience not just legally but also socially and serving a proactive purpose of inspiring future warriors. When military service is viewed as honourable and life afterwards is seen as stable and

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<sup>53</sup> Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, “On Approving the Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030 and the Operational Action Plan for Its Implementation in 2024–2027,” No. 1209-r (29 November 2024). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-p#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-p#Text)

state-supported, citizens are more likely to join the Security and Defence Forces. For veterans from the military reserve and the general conscription pool, the policy must provide transparent guarantees and prospects.

Comprehensive state support must focus on restoring human well-being. Serving in wartime conditions can have deep physical, psychological, social, and economic consequences for veterans. Thus, support must be systemic, covering healthcare, psychological care, access to education, employment opportunities, housing, and legal assistance. These services must be tailored to the individual experiences and needs. Support should not be time-limited after service ends, but instead adapt across the life course.

Veteran policy should also acknowledge the experiences of veterans' families that endure their own battles during their loved ones' service: emotional strain, economic hardship, and shifting family dynamics. Thus, support should extend to families: partners, children, parents, and other loved ones.

Veterans are not just combat-experienced defenders but active contributors to the economy. Many seek to launch businesses, pursue studies, and transition into new careers. Public policy should enable these ambitions through targeted opportunities.

Goal component	Definitions	Objective
1	Honouring veterans' contributions to national defence and recognition of the roles of their families	Guarantee public recognition of the journeys of veterans and their families
		Express public gratitude for fulfilling civic duty and defending the interests of the state: its people, values, governance, and territorial integrity
2	Provision of comprehensive state support for restoring their well-being	Restore justice and equal opportunity in civilian life, compensate for measurable losses suffered by veterans and their families, especially the families of fallen or missing warriors
		Provide opportunities, resources, and support for veterans to independently choose their civilian path and live the life they want
		Ensure a positive trajectory in civilian life through cross-sectoral support throughout life
3	Strengthening of the national defence capacities and recognition of the central role of veterans, their families, and their potential in the economic growth of the country	Promote the prestige of military service and national defence
		Safeguard the well-being of warriors and their families, and the economic stability of the country

# 1

## Component One Honouring veterans' contributions to national defence and recognition of the roles of their families

### Objectives

- Guarantee public recognition of the journeys of veterans and their families.
- Express public gratitude for fulfilling civic duty and defending the interests of the state: its people, values, governance, and territorial integrity.

Respect and gratitude begin with dignifying the contributions of warriors and the profound impacts that military service has on their lives. Equally important is the recognition of the role and journey of their families, as well as the experiences they have during and after their loved ones' service. Only those who have stood side by side on the battlefield or have lived through similar trials can fully understand the experience of veterans or their families. Civil society and the state can and must create an environment where veterans and their families feel supported and their contributions receive the due recognition they deserve.

# 2

## Component Two Provision of comprehensive state support for restoring the well-being of veterans and their families

### Objectives

- Restore justice and equal opportunity in civilian life, compensate for measurable losses suffered by veterans and their families, especially the families of fallen or missing defenders.
- Provide opportunities, resources, and support for veterans to independently choose their civilian path and live the life they want.
- Ensure a positive trajectory<sup>54</sup> in civilian life through cross-sectoral support throughout life.

While in service, service members often lose the opportunity to invest in their civilian well-being, such as developing a civilian career, nurturing relationships with family and loved ones, or securing stable housing. At the same time, the longer they serve, the more opportunities they have to build military well-being by advancing in rank, gaining additional knowledge, skills, or specialisations. This military well-being is harder to translate into civilian life. Thus, one of the core functions of the public veteran policy is to support the transition of this knowledge and experience into the civilian domain, facilitating employment of veterans.

The rebuilding of civilian well-being does not happen immediately upon returning to civilian life<sup>55</sup>, it typically follows a period of transition or recovery. However, the veteran's ability to sustain that well-being also

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<sup>54</sup> We distinguish between positive and negative trajectories in the journey of veterans. A positive trajectory refers to a journey where a veteran, despite facing challenges, finds the strength and support to adapt after returning and maintain a good quality of life.

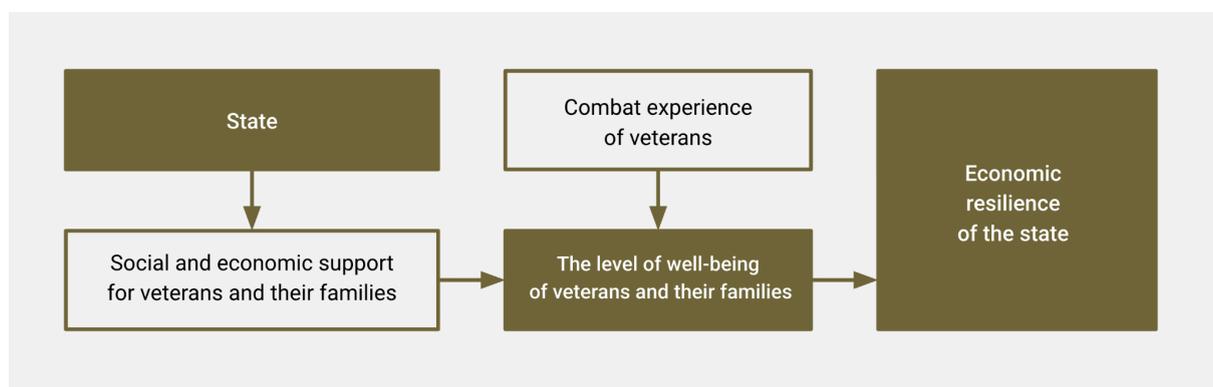
<sup>55</sup> For more details on the Well-Being Model and the stages of Veterans' Journey, see Section 3, subsection "Approaches."

depends on the duration of their civilian life. The more call-ups a veteran undergoes, the longer their time in service is; the shorter the civilian intervals between deployments, the fewer opportunities they have to rebuild quality civilian well-being.

Combat experience leaves a lifelong imprint. That is why we believe dignified support for veterans should be aimed at restoring their well-being throughout their entire lives and based on a professional approach to designing policies and programmes that reflect their real needs. Just as vital is the state's responsibility to fulfil its declared guarantees, as supporting veterans cannot be merely a formality; it must provide real opportunities for a fulfilling life after service.

The families of veterans also experience profound impacts on their well-being during their loved ones' service. These effects may manifest in physical and mental health, as well as family dynamics, due to shifting roles. In cases where a warrior is killed, missing in action, or captured, their family will require additional state support.

As the ones who have made a conscious choice in favour of the collective good over individual interests, veterans and their families are the foundation of Ukraine's human capital. Their military and combat experience influences their well-being, which in turn impacts the economic resilience of the state. In this sense, supporting veterans and their families means strengthening the economy.



**Accordingly, public veteran policy must include socioeconomic support, specifically:**

- providing assistance in building well-being during and after service;
- creating opportunities for rapid restoration of civilian well-being, its growth, and protection in case of repeated service;
- protecting veterans' rights to reintegration and fair participation in social and political life and government affairs;
- facilitating access to education, employment, or entrepreneurship.

# 3

## **Component Three** **Strengthening the national defence capacities and recognition of the central role of veterans, their families, and their potential in the economic growth of the country**

### **Objectives**

- Promote the prestige of military service and national defence.
- Safeguard the well-being of warriors and their families, and the economic stability of the country.

Veterans and their experiences serve as role models for future defenders. A sense of belonging to a respected and state-honoured force is a powerful motivational factor for those who may consider military service.

How the state and society treat veterans and their families will influence whether new warriors are willing to sacrifice their time, health, and even lives to defend the country. And veterans – whether to remain in service after the end of active combat operations.

For veterans transitioning to civilian life during or after the full-scale invasion, support in rebuilding their well-being ensures they can, if needed, defend the nation again and contribute to Ukraine's long-term defence capabilities.

That is why veteran policy is inseparable from the defence planning and shaping of the prestige of military service, which should become a driver for future enlistment.

Key aspects of this policy include adaptation, recognition, respect, and commemoration. Implementing these initiatives helps unite society around a respectful attitude toward its warriors, while encouraging new generations to join the Security and Defence Forces of Ukraine.

Additionally, acknowledging and supporting veterans through government policy can lay the foundation for bolstering national identity and societal morale, as well as enhancing citizens' trust in state institutions. This consequently enables the country to respond more efficiently to both internal and external crises.

# The principles of public policy on veterans and their families

To design an effective public policy that truly serves veterans and their families, it is essential to adhere to consistent principles built on respect for human dignity, rights, and interests.

This section outlines the core guiding principles for ensuring effective state support and opportunities for veterans and their families. These principles have already been incorporated into the **Veteran Policy Strategy**<sup>56</sup>.

1. Cross-sectoral approach	2. Human-centricity	3. Prevention
4. Long-term commitment	5. Realism	6. Respect

## 1 Cross-sectoral approach

As stated in the Strategy:

“Veterans and their family members, as citizens, must be represented across all sectors and have access to all programmes and services implemented (or provided) by the state, businesses, and local communities. No state action or decision should result in the exclusion or discrimination of veterans or their family members.”

<sup>56</sup> Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, “On Approving the Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030 and the Operational Action Plan for Its Implementation in 2024–2027,” No. 1209-r (29 November 2024). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-p#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-p#Text)

Regardless of their environment (military service, reserve duty, or civilian life), Ukrainian veterans continue their path as full-fledged citizens of Ukraine. **As such, they are entitled to:**

- an honest public dialogue;
- a clear understanding of service prospects and life planning;
- accurate information on the scope of state support they can count on;
- accessible and understandable support mechanisms.

Their needs must be fully represented, with equal access to all state, business, and community services and programmes. No action or decision by the government should ever result in exclusion or discrimination against veterans or their families.

The state must ensure that its support policies remain effective regardless of the conditions in which a person finds themselves. Even if a veteran finds themselves in prison or other places of detention (penitentiary<sup>57</sup> system), this should not restrict their access to state support designated for veterans.

## 2

## Human-centricity

As stated in the Strategy:

“Public policy should prioritise the life and well-being of the person and the exercise of their rights and freedoms, not their status. Every person acquires a unique life experience shaped by time and context, which impacts their well-being in different ways.”

Recognising the diversity of human experience and statuses, public policy should focus on people, not statuses. That means that support

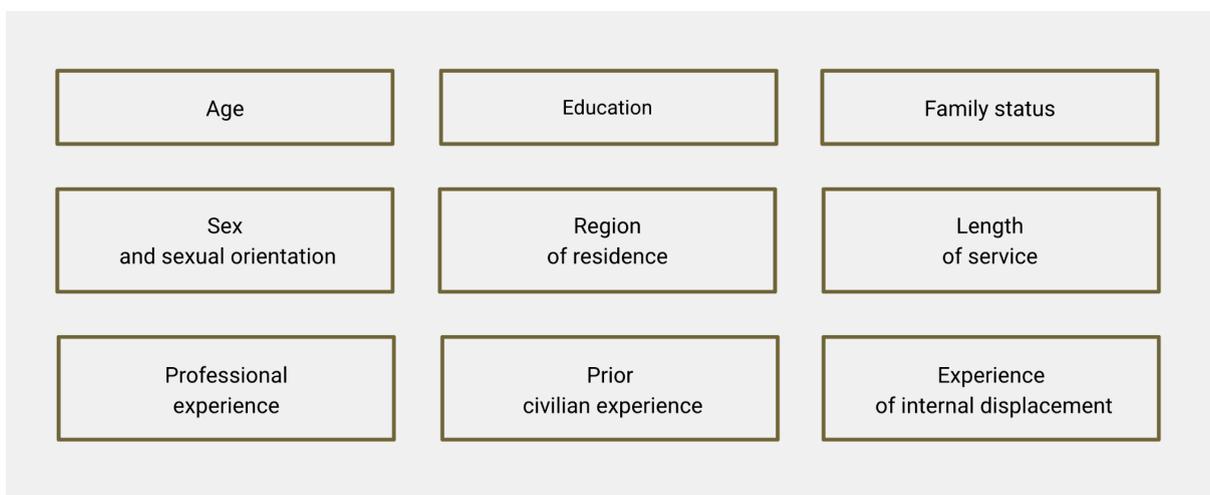
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<sup>57</sup> The penitentiary system refers to state-authorized bodies and institutions responsible for shaping and implementing public policy in the field of criminal penalties and probation.

provided to veterans and their families should be shaped by their actual needs, not solely by their legal status.

Public veteran policy should reflect various needs of veterans and their families – those stemming from military experience as well as individual factors affecting their well-being. It should be inclusive and account for the diversity of veterans and their families. Further accumulation of sufficient data will allow identifying trends based on demographic and other characteristics, enabling more precise state support offers.

#### Signs/factors influencing the well-being of veterans



### 3

## Prevention

As stated in the Strategy:

“The core approach when developing support tools should focus on early identification of risks to the well-being of veterans and their families, as well as prevention of adverse trends in their lives. Analytics, forecasting, and prevention should be the key priorities of public policy on veterans and their families.”

Understanding the needs of veterans and their families enables the development of not only reactive but also strategic and preventive

solutions. For instance, the study “The Journeys of Veterans”<sup>58</sup> shows that combat involvement can create additional needs for the warriors. These could include needs related to the effects on physical and mental health, retraining, the use of new skills, and financial assistance.

With sufficient data and expertise, predicting challenges and issues veterans and their families may face is entirely possible for the state. Prevention should be a cornerstone of public policy.

## 4 Long-term commitment

As stated in the Strategy:

“Public policy on veterans and their families should prioritise consistent support throughout all stages of life, including end-of-life care. The support system should be accessible, user-friendly, and tailored to the specific needs of all beneficiaries.”

Returning to civilian life takes time. Each veteran progresses at their own pace, facing individual challenges. Veteran policy should acknowledge the lifelong impact of military and combat experience on their well-being and ensure a dignified quality of life. This means that support cannot be provided just once, immediately after service. It should be guaranteed throughout the entire life of veterans.

Veteran’s family members need the most support during their loved one’s service. However, they also should receive the necessary support in the event of their loved one’s death, captivity, or missing in action.

Military service and combat experience leave a lasting imprint on their well-being. Like all people, veterans face other life challenges: illness, accidents, and ageing. Regardless of circumstances, veterans require support at all life stages, including end-of-life care.

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<sup>58</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

Care for veterans and their families is not only about honouring the past. It is about ensuring quality living standards, acknowledging the unique challenges and needs they may face as they move through life.

## 5

## Realism

As stated in the Strategy:

“State support should focus on the swift restoration of the civilian well-being of veterans and their families by providing them with the resources and opportunities necessary for successful return to civilian life, based on the capabilities of the country.”

While the war affects the entire nation, an inefficient mobilisation and rotation system creates stark disparities in the opportunities of those who have served during the war and those who have not. Similarly, the system has a lasting impact on the well-being of veterans’ family members during and after their loved one’s service.

Upon return, veterans have to compete in civilian environments with those who faced no career interruptions, did not lose time, and were able to develop their civilian potential. In response, state support should aim to restore civilian well-being for veterans as quickly as possible.

### **This includes:**

- offering necessary resources and opportunities for veterans to compete fairly in civilian life;
- ensuring equal conditions for developing the professional potential of veterans.

As we redefine a new vision for public policy, our message is clear: veterans and their families are invaluable human capital for Ukraine’s future. This means the goal of public policy is to elevate their well-being and expand competitive opportunities, regardless of the setting in which the policy is implemented.

As stated in the Strategy,

“Public policy guarantees the recognition of the combat experience of veterans. Their heroic service must become part of a renewed modern concept of the Ukrainian nation.”

When service members take up arms in defence of the country, they risk paying the ultimate price for the safety of Ukraine. Since 2014, thousands have fallen in battle. Their brothers- and sisters-in-arms, families, and friends will carry their memory forever. The duty of the state is to respect, honour, and remember every name and every contribution made by fallen Ukrainian warriors and care for their families.

# Conclusions

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- 1** An effective policy on veterans and their families is a key element of Ukraine's security and existential survival.  
It holds strategic importance for Ukraine's resilience during the war and postwar recovery.
- 

- 2** To implement this effort, we propose that public policy on veterans and their families centre around three core objectives:
    - public respect and gratitude for fulfilling their civic duty and defending the state interests of Ukraine: its people, values, governance, and territorial integrity;
    - strengthening national defence and security capacity;
    - enhancing the well-being of warriors and the economic resilience of Ukraine.
- 

- 3** Principles of an effective public policy on veterans and their families:
  - veterans are citizens of Ukraine and, as such, are entitled to high-quality services and support from all providers;
  - the focus of public policy is the person, not their status;
  - the actions of the state should be preventive, not reactive;
  - support for veterans should be lifelong;
  - veterans are invaluable human capital for Ukraine; public policy should empower them to fully realise their potential;
  - public policy guarantees the recognition of the life journeys of veterans.

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**4** For this policy to become a reality, Ukraine needs a unified, coordinating institution. The development, implementation, and oversight of the policy should be carried out by an authorised body that ensures effective cooperation among all stakeholders: the state, local communities, civil society, and veterans themselves.

# SECTION 3

## **Target Audience's Profile**

# Abstract

Section Three of the Concept outlines the profile of modern Ukrainian veterans. Amid the full-scale war and the growing number of people with combat experience, there is an increasing need for a new comprehensive approach to shaping public policy that goes beyond legal status and is grounded in a deep understanding of the actual experience and post-service needs of veterans.

## **Thus, this Section:**

- defines methodological approaches to constructing a profile of veterans, including through the lens of life stages, social roles, and changing circumstances;
- highlights the multiplicity of experiences and conditions that shape veterans' well-being, such as health status, employment, geographic location, family situation, and internal displacement history;
- argues for the need for differentiated legal statuses and the creation of policies that align with veterans' actual experiences;
- examines various environments veterans may return to: military service, reserve or general conscription pool, and civilian life;
- identifies the needs and available social and demographic characteristics of veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian war;
- presents a comprehensive algorithm of veterans' needs to serve as a tool for targeted planning and support initiative development.

# Introduction

Effective public policy and state support should prioritise the well-being of citizens and create opportunities for their growth. Veterans are granted their status through participation in combat, an experience that leaves an imprint on their entire lives. Yet, like all citizens, veterans inhabit multiple roles that generate further needs for support.

Combat participation is only one of many experiences a person accumulates over a lifetime. A veteran may also be a family member, a spouse, a parent, an employee, a student, or an entrepreneur; they may live in a city or a rural area, be internally displaced, or live with a disability or injury. These identities and roles shift, evolve, and often coexist with one another. For that reason, public policy should account for the evolving nature of life experiences and statuses, rather than reducing a person to a single social role or life situation.

The past eleven years of the Russo-Ukrainian war provide powerful evidence of the formation of a new Ukrainian national security system rooted in the combat experience of warriors. The ongoing need to defend against Russian aggression reshapes our understanding of military service and underscores the civic duty of defending the state.

Today, Ukraine faces a challenge greater than merely supporting those who have already returned from the frontline. It should create conditions for a high quality of life for people with combat experience and establish a long-term veteran policy. This policy should encompass the entire life cycle of service members who have gained combat experience in recent years, as well as those who may do so in the future, from the moment they decide to enlist to their old age. Doing so will not only provide real support to those in need but also strengthen public trust in the state and ensure the future appeal of military service.

To ensure effective support for veterans (whether they return to civilian life, continue their military service, or transition to the reserves), the state and all stakeholders should have a clear understanding of the profile of policy beneficiaries

In this section, we aim to address some of the most pressing questions: Who are Ukrainian veterans, what challenges and needs do they face, what paths have they already traversed, and what lies ahead? What kinds of support might they require at different stages of their journey? Understanding these aspects is a crucial step toward crafting a policy that truly sees and acknowledges the experiences of our country's defenders.

# Approaches to Constructing a Veteran Profile

A protracted war demands a new perspective (one that is holistic and attentive) on the experiences and needs of veterans to ensure that public policy addresses real challenges. This requires taking into account not only their combat experience but also the many other life-shaping factors: stages of their journey, well-being needs, social roles, health status, geographic location, and additional life conditions.

Currently, only the state can compile a comprehensive and representative profile of veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian war, as data on service members and veterans remains classified due to ongoing hostilities. Yet, the creation of effective public policy requires reliable data and a clear understanding of the sociodemographic characteristics of veterans, along with criteria for analysing their needs and designing support mechanisms. This document outlines a veteran profile based on representative studies conducted prior to 2022, supplemented by several non-representative but important surveys conducted in 2023–2024.

**Overall, Ukrainian veterans can be grouped into several generations:**

- 1) veterans of World War II;
- 2) veterans of the Ukrainian National Republic (UNR), the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA);
- 3) veterans of the war in Afghanistan;
- 4) veterans of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO)/Joint Forces Operation (JFO);
- 5) veterans who enlisted after the full-scale invasion of Russia in 2022.

It is also crucial to recognise that veterans may span multiple generations: for instance, they could be veterans of Afghanistan,

ATO/JFO, and re-enlist in the troop following the onset of a full-scale invasion.

The renewed public policy on veterans primarily focuses on the last two generations – veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian War. The first of these generations consists of those who enlisted after the outbreak of hostilities in 2014 and took part in the ATO/JFO. This group often includes individuals who joined volunteer formations and may have had minimal prior military training. However, the terms of their service were more clearly defined, as mobilisation occurred in waves alternating with demobilisation.

Although most of the first generation of veterans returned to civilian life after serving, the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022, the changing nature of hostilities, and the growing number of service members gave rise to a second generation. The experiences of veterans from this generation also differ significantly from those of previous generations due to the scale and specifics of modern warfare.

Given that the Russo-Ukrainian war continues to evolve through various phases and levels of intensity, new generations of veterans will likely emerge in the future, while previous ones may once again be called to service. For this reason, the state and society should clearly understand for whom veteran policy is being created and what the needs of its beneficiaries are.

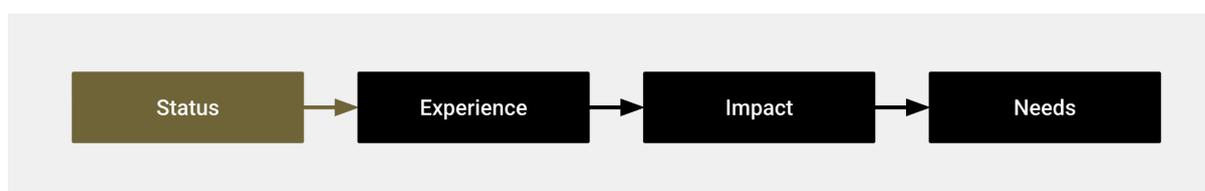
Next, we will outline the methodological framework that underpins our work and is an essential foundation for shaping an effective veteran support policy.

## Recognising Status Through Experience

### Experience defines status

For public veteran policy to be effective and just, it must be grounded in the understanding that every status reflects a unique experience. Status is not merely a legal or administrative designation, but a representation of what a person has endured. **It is the experience that gives meaning to the status, not the other way around.**

Combat experience or military service exerts a profound and multilayered **impact** on a person – physically, psychologically, socially, and economically. This impact shapes certain **needs**, which may be immediate or long-term. Beyond the threat to life, gruelling conditions, and other challenges, veterans face the complex journey of settling back into civilian life, which requires a specialised and comprehensive model of support, distinct from that of people without combat experience. Therefore, granting veteran status should not only acknowledge the lived experience and the needs it creates, but also ensure access to the necessary support.



In the first concept of public veteran policy<sup>59</sup>, we emphasised that any assignment of status should primarily take into account a person's actual experience. This approach helps understand how that experience affects their well-being and enables the provision of appropriate and quality support. For veterans, **combat experience** is central, as it has the most significant long-term physical, psychological, and emotional impact.

<sup>59</sup> Veteran Hub, Pryncyp, Space of Opportunities, Legal Hundred, Veteranka. (2023). Concept of the Policy on Veterans and Their Families. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/polityka-shchodo-veteraniv-ta-ikh-simey.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/polityka-shchodo-veteraniv-ta-ikh-simey.pdf)

The document also outlines international approaches<sup>60</sup> to defining veteran status:

- in the **United Kingdom**, veteran status is granted to anyone who has served in the military;
- in **Croatia**, it is limited to those who served during specific historical periods, such as particular wars or conflicts;
- in **Estonia**, different statuses are assigned depending on the military branch;
- in the **United States**, veterans are those who served under combat conditions.

We lean toward adapting the U.S. model and argue that Ukraine should define veteran status based on actual combat experience rather than merely on service within set time frames.

At the same time, the state has a duty to duly recognise the experience of all service members while acknowledging that **different conditions of service lead to different post-service quality of life and different needs**:

- **service in peacetime** has a lesser impact on well-being after discharge;
- **service during war or emergencies** can deeply alter a veteran's physical, psychological, and social state.

This impact should be reflected in differentiated statuses so that individuals with military or other experiences receive distinct recognition and become beneficiaries of appropriate public policies.

The **Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030**,<sup>61</sup> adopted in late 2024, enshrines this new state approach to defining veteran status, aligning it with our

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<sup>60</sup> Castro, C., Dursun, S. (2019). Military Veteran Reintegration. [sciencedirect.com/book/9780128153123/military-veteran-reintegration](https://www.sciencedirect.com/book/9780128153123/military-veteran-reintegration)

<sup>61</sup> Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On Approval of the Veteran Policy Strategy for the Period Until 2030 and the Operational Action Plan for Its Implementation in 2024–2027" No. 1209-r. (29 November 2024). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-p#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-p#Text)

recommendations from the first concept version and linking status to the performance of combat tasks:

**“A veteran is a participant in combat operations, a person with a disability resulting from war, a person with outstanding service to the Homeland, or a fallen (deceased) Defender of Ukraine who carried out combat missions to protect Ukraine, its independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.”<sup>62</sup>**

Meanwhile, it is crucial to continue to legislatively establish, approve, and regulate a precise definition of **“combat experience”** to specify the particular types of combat missions undertaken by veterans and clearly identify the beneficiaries of the veterans' policy.

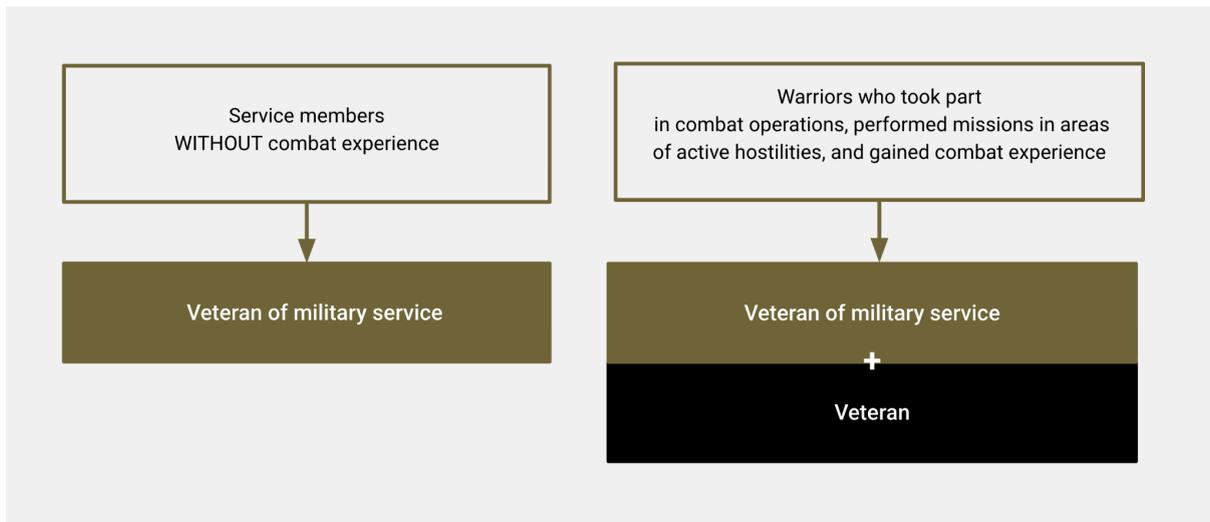
**It is equally important to recognise and emphasise the contributions of individuals who were part of the service but did not directly engage in combat.**

The experience service members gain during military service through performing various tasks has a lasting and profound impact on their well-being and creates different needs after the service ends. This is why we suggest distinguishing these two groups and awarding the status of **military service veteran** to those who joined the troop without engaging in combat. And warriors who took part in combat operations, carried out duties in the combat zone, and acquired combat experience should be awarded **veteran status** alongside the status of a **military service veteran**.

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<sup>62</sup> This status can be granted to individuals across various branches of the Security and Defence Forces based on their participation in combat operations.

## Proposed status changes



The Law of Ukraine “On the Status of Veterans of Military Service, Veterans of Bodies of Internal Affairs, Veterans of the National Police, and Some Other Persons and Their Social Protection”<sup>63</sup> also requires amendments, particularly in rethinking and defining the **status of veterans of military service**. This status recognises the importance of the service and contributions of service members who did not directly participate in combat operations but ensured the readiness of the Ukrainian troops and carried out various tasks under wartime conditions, including in combat zones (e.g., evacuating civilians or clearing debris).

## Recognising the experience of other groups and their support

After gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine inherited the Soviet system of defining veteran status, where “war veterans” often included not only combat participants but also rear workers, individuals who served during wartime without participating in battles, and even those affected by war, such as victims of bombings. This broad approach was enshrined in the legislation of independent Ukraine, particularly in the 1993

<sup>63</sup> Law of Ukraine “On the Status of Veterans of Military Service, Veterans of Internal Affairs Bodies, Veterans of the National Police and Certain Other Persons and Their Social Protection” No. 203/98-VR (24 March 1998). <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/203/98-BP>

Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection,”<sup>64</sup> which became the foundation for supporting various generations of veterans. Since the document interprets the defence of the Homeland broadly, over time, its beneficiaries have come to include persons with diverse experiences, regardless of their direct participation in combat.

**Article 4** of this law defines **war veterans** as follows:

**“War veterans** are persons who took part in the defence of the Homeland or in combat operations on the territory of other states. War veterans include **people with combat experiences, persons with disabilities resulting from war, and war participants.**”

**Article 5** clarifies the definition **of people with combat experiences:**

**“People with combat experiences** are persons who participated in combat missions for the defence of the Homeland as part of military units, formations, associations of all types and branches of the Armed Forces of the active army (navy), in partisan detachments and underground groups, and other formations during wartime or peacetime.”

Thus, **people with combat experiences** also include persons who did not directly participate in combat missions. These are, for instance, “persons who, during World War II, were part of units and formations of the active army and navy as **sons and trainees of the regiment or young sailors** until they reached the age of majority, as well as **workers of cultural service of the fronts.**”

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<sup>64</sup> Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection” No. 3551-XII (23 October 1993). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3551-12#Text](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3551-12#Text)

The law does not define the status of a **person with disability due to war**, but provides a list of individuals who are entitled to it.

**They include those people whose disability is not always related to participation in hostilities.**

**1) Service members and civilian employees** whose disabilities resulted from injuries, illnesses, or health damage sustained during:

- the liquidation of the consequences of the Chornobyl disaster, nuclear accidents, or nuclear testing;
- participation in military drills involving nuclear weapons;
- other incidents involving exposure to nuclear materials;

**2) Officers and rank-and-file members** of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Security Committee of the former USSR, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, the Security Service of Ukraine, the Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine, and other military formations, whose disabilities resulted from injuries, illnesses, or health damage sustained during:

- the performance of official duties;
- the liquidation of the consequences of the Chornobyl disaster, nuclear accidents, or nuclear testing;
- participation in military drills involving nuclear weapons;
- other incidents involving exposure to nuclear materials.

**3) Civilians and service members** whose disabilities resulted from combat operations during the Civil War or World War II, including those injured as minors during wartime or in the postwar years;

**4) Civil defence workers** suffered during the Chornobyl disaster response;

**5) Participants in the Revolution of Dignity** who sustained injuries or health damage that resulted in disability.

**Article 8** of this law clarifies who qualifies as a **war participant**:

**“War participants** are service members of the Armed Forces of the former USSR during wartime, as well as rear workers and other persons provided for by this Law.”

This category also includes persons without combat experience, such as **“those who, during World War II, voluntarily provided material, financial, or other assistance** to military units, hospitals, partisan detachments, underground groups, other formations, and individual service members in their struggle against Nazi invaders, as well as **workers of cultural service of the fronts.”**

The first version of the Concept<sup>65</sup> analysed this state approach to defining **veteran** status and emphasised that it complicated the creation of targeted policies for those who took part in combat operations. This is because it groups together persons with different experiences and, therefore, different needs.

After the adoption of the new law on veteran policy, it is crucial to ensure that other groups of people previously granted the status of **war veterans** receive updated statuses and are covered by corresponding public policies, since their experiences also matter and deserve recognition and fair, targeted support. Next, we will examine new approaches to defining these various statuses.

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<sup>65</sup> Veteran Hub, Pryncyp, Space of Opportunities, Legal Hundred, Veteranka. (2023). Concept of the Policy on Veterans and Their Families. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/polityka-shchodo-veteraniv-ta-ikh-simey.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/polityka-shchodo-veteraniv-ta-ikh-simey.pdf)

## People with the status of war veterans who do NOT have combat experience

### Persons with disabilities resulting from war

Service members and civilians involved in civil defence whose disabilities resulted from injuries, illnesses, or health damage sustained during the Chernobyl disaster response, nuclear accidents, nuclear testing, or participating in military drills involving nuclear weapons, as well as from exposure to nuclear materials

Employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Security Committee of the USSR, the Security Service, intelligence services, and other military formations whose disabilities resulted from injuries, illnesses, or trauma sustained while performing official duties, liquidating the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster or other nuclear incidents, participating in military drills involving nuclear weapons, or as a result of exposure to radioactive materials

Civilians and service members whose disabilities resulted from combat operations during World War II, including those injured as minors during wartime or in the postwar years

Participants in the Revolution of Dignity who sustained injuries or health damage that resulted in disability

### People with combat experiences

Sons of the regiment or young sailors who served in the army or navy as minors during World War II

Workers of the cultural service of the fronts

### War participants

Persons who, during World War II, voluntarily provided material, financial, or other assistance to military units, hospitals, partisan detachments, underground groups, other formations, and individual service members

Workers of the cultural service of the fronts

## Employees of the National Police and the State Emergency Service

Under current legislation, employees of the National Police of Ukraine and the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) can receive the **status of people with combat experience** when working in combat zones. This status recognises that they performed their duties under difficult conditions, with elevated risks to their lives and health. Despite the importance of their work of evacuating civilians from combat zones and clearing debris from bombed buildings, this experience is not, in fact, participation in combat operations.

For this reason, we **propose granting** these National Police and SES employees a **separate status** within a dedicated policy to properly recognise and support their unique experience. If they participated in combat operations and carried out combat missions, they should also receive veteran status.

## Civilians Affected by Hostilities

Under current legislation, the right to **war veteran** status, including for **persons with disabilities resulting from war**, also extends to persons who acquired disabilities due to injuries from explosives, munitions, or military weaponry, both during wartime and in the post-war period.

These people undoubtedly suffered as a result of the war and require state support. However, they are not combatants and did not take part in defending the Homeland. We believe that equating them with warriors is incorrect and unjust. For this reason, the statuses and support mechanisms for civilians affected by hostilities should be defined by separate legislation and public policy, distinct from those for veterans. We propose to differentiate between the status of **persons who facilitated combat operations and persons affected by hostilities**.

The Draft Law of Ukraine “On the Foundations of Public Veteran Policy”<sup>66</sup> no longer entitles people affected by hostilities to war

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<sup>66</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. (25 August 2025). Draft Law on the Fundamental Principles of the Public Veteran Policy concerning veterans who took part in repelling the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine (No. 13696). [itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/57192](https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/57192)

veteran status. However, their experience and needs **should be properly recognised through a separate public policy and corresponding regulatory documents.**

### **Injured Participants of the Revolution of Dignity**

The Revolution of Dignity, which took place in Ukraine from November 2013 to February 2014, is undoubtedly a pivotal moment in the history of independent Ukraine. Its significance, as well as the contribution of its participants, particularly those who perished during the revolution (the Heavenly Hundred), should be acknowledged at the state level. This includes identifying the injured, supporting families of the fallen, and ensuring quality state and societal assistance. However, the Revolution of Dignity was not part of the combat operations of the Russo-Ukrainian War. The armed aggression against Ukraine began on 20 February 2014 with a military operation of the Russian forces to seize part of Ukrainian territory, the Crimean Peninsula.

While the contribution of the participants of the Revolution of Dignity is significant, their experience is not linked to wartime actions, and thus, they cannot hold the status of persons with disabilities resulting from war. We propose to introduce separate statuses **for participants of the Revolution of Dignity who were injured and for those who acquired disabilities as a result of these events.** These statuses would acknowledge their role and contribution to Ukraine's history of resistance and independence, while also establishing special mechanisms of social protection that do not duplicate veteran benefits.

The **Draft Law of Ukraine "On the Foundations of Public Veteran Policy"** does not establish the status of persons with disabilities resulting from war, meaning injured participants of the Revolution of Dignity will also not qualify for this status. However, their experience and needs **should receive proper recognition through a separate public policy and corresponding regulatory documents.**

## Persons with Disabilities Resulting from the Chornobyl Disaster Response

It is crucial to acknowledge the contribution of the liquidators to the consequences of the explosion at the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant on 26 April 1986. Those who took part in extinguishing fires, decontaminating the area, and evacuating residents lost their health, and some – their lives. Yet the consequences of man-made disasters cannot be equated with the conditions of war; they are fundamentally different in nature, in lived experience, in their impact on people, and in the support required.

The Chornobyl disaster liquidators and victims should unquestionably be provided with support concerning the aftermath of this tragedy. However, their needs are not caused by the war and are of a different nature. They require a dedicated, specialised system of state support.

The status and social protection of those affected by the Chornobyl disaster are regulated by the Law of Ukraine “On the Status and Social Protection of Citizens Affected by the Chornobyl Disaster.”<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, support for those who participated in the disaster response and acquired a disability should be regulated by specialised legislation, while their experiences should be recognised through a distinct status as a person with a disability resulting from participation in the Chornobyl disaster response.

The Draft Law of Ukraine “On the Foundations of Public Veteran Policy”<sup>68</sup> does not establish the status of persons with disabilities resulting from war, meaning persons with disabilities resulting from the Chornobyl disaster response will also not qualify for this status. However, their experience and needs **should receive proper recognition through a separate public policy and corresponding regulatory documents.**

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<sup>67</sup> Law of Ukraine “On the Status and Social Protection of Citizens Affected by the Chornobyl Disaster” No. 796-XII (28 February 1991). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/796-12#Text](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/796-12#Text)

<sup>68</sup> Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Draft Law of Ukraine “On the Foundations of Public Veteran Policy.” [mva.gov.ua/gromadskosti/category/193-consultations-with-the-public/proekt-zakonu-ukraini-pro-osnovni-zasadi-derzhavnoi-veteranskoj-politiki](http://mva.gov.ua/gromadskosti/category/193-consultations-with-the-public/proekt-zakonu-ukraini-pro-osnovni-zasadi-derzhavnoi-veteranskoj-politiki)

The table below compiles definitions of various statuses under current legislation, along with proposals for their formulation and interpretation. These proposed changes to statuses will help better structure veteran policy and ensure more effective targeted support for veterans. This approach can also resolve legal conflicts and simplify the process of granting these statuses.

Status under the current law	Justification for proposal	Proposed status name
<b>Beneficiaries of public veteran policy</b>		
Combatant	Identical to the status of a veteran	<b>Veteran</b>
A person with a disability resulting from war	If a disability is established, a veteran will hold dual status, entitling them to enhanced state support	<b>Veteran</b>
<b>Beneficiaries of other public policies</b>		
War participant	Since most who qualify as “war participants” are civilians, we propose separating them into those facilitating combat operations and those affected by them. Their statuses and support should be regulated by separate legislation	<b>A person who facilitated combat operations</b>  <b>A person affected by combat operations</b>
Veteran of military service	We propose to legally enshrine and recognise the experience of service members who served under conditions of martial law or a state of emergency but did not gain combat experience (under the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of Veterans of Military Service,” taking into account service during mobilisation and shorter service periods)	<b>Veteran of military service</b>

Status under the current law	Justification for proposal	Proposed status name
<b>Beneficiaries of other public policies</b>		
Injured participants of the Revolution of Dignity Persons with disabilities resulting from war (participants of the Revolution of Dignity who acquired a disability)	The significance of the Revolution of Dignity should be recognised in a separate law. This law should also regulate the status and social protection guarantees for injured participants of the Revolution of Dignity who acquired disabilities	Injured participants of the Revolution of Dignity  Injured participants of the Revolution of Dignity with disabilities
Persons with disabilities resulting from war (those involved in the Chernobyl disaster response)	The status and social protection of citizens affected by the Chernobyl disaster are regulated by the Law of Ukraine “On the Status and Social Protection of Citizens Affected by the Chernobyl Disaster.” Support and guarantees for disaster liquidators who acquired disabilities should also be governed by specialised legislation	Persons with disabilities resulting from the Chernobyl disaster response

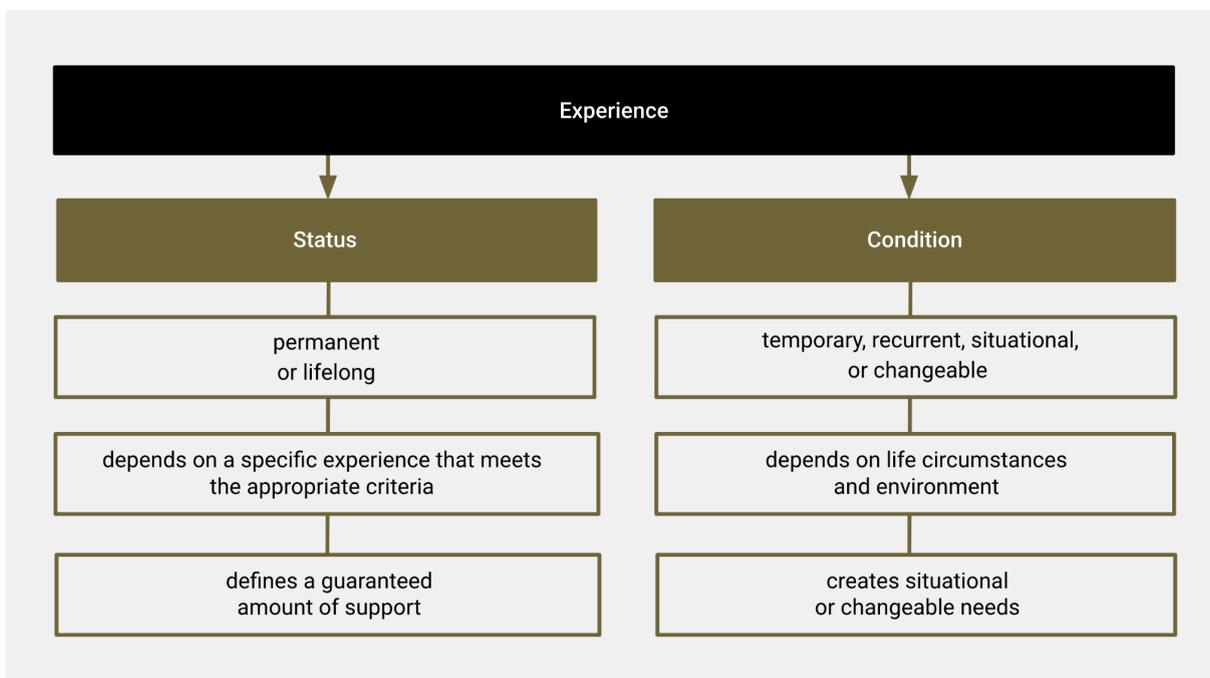
## Multiplicity of Veterans’ Experiences

While combat experience undoubtedly shapes the lives of veterans, not all of their needs stem solely from it – many are linked to other social **statuses** or **conditions**. In this Concept, we distinguish between statuses and conditions, as they influence a person’s life differently, determine the level of state support, and require different response mechanisms.

**Status** is a more **stable**, legally recognised position of a person that defines their social rights and guarantees, obligations, and access to support. It depends on experience, remains relatively constant over

time, has a lifelong impact, follows clear criteria, and usually changes only through an official decision or new circumstances. **Veteran status** should be granted to those who directly participated in combat operations and remain with them regardless of other life conditions.

In contrast, a **condition** is a more **dynamic, changeable** situation that may last for a certain period, end, or recur. It also depends on personal experience and affects needs, but is temporary or potentially changeable. A condition may accompany a status but does not define it; it requires situational responses from the support system.



This distinction between statuses and conditions is crucial for building targeted support: while a status is relatively stable and allows for long-term interventions, conditions are more fluid, demanding a flexible policy approach that takes into account a person's situation at a given moment in their life.

Within this Concept, we also identify several conditions that may create additional or priority support needs, regardless of veteran status. These include health, disability, geographic location, internal displacement, employment, family and economic circumstances, and difficult life situations. Below, we examine some of them in detail.

### **Health: Physical and Psychological Conditions**

Health is a critical factor influencing the quality of veterans' lives. In shaping this profile, we particularly highlight conditions of veterans who have disabilities resulting from injuries or chronic illnesses, including cancer.

Veterans in an acute physical condition after injury may require **intensive medical care, and during rehabilitation or the long process of recovery**, relevant programmes, prosthetics, and accessible environments.

Chronic illnesses may require **regular medical supervision and flexible working conditions**; mental health disorders necessitate **psychological and psychiatric support and crisis interventions**; **comorbid conditions**<sup>69</sup> require **comprehensive medical and psychosocial care**.

Veterans with chronic conditions or disabilities have a pressing need for **qualified professionals** who can provide quality treatment or rehabilitation. When speaking about the healthcare system, multiple studies (including "Between Military and Civilian Medicine: Exploring the Journey of Service Members with Cancer" by the NGO Pryncyp<sup>70</sup>) indicate that veterans require real, not just on paper, coverage of diagnostic, treatment, and medication costs. Another acute need is **proper awareness** of available benefits, services, and treatment or rehabilitation opportunities.

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<sup>69</sup> Comorbidity is the presence of two or more interacting health issues (illnesses, disorders, or conditions) that affect the person's general health condition.

<sup>70</sup> Pryncyp. (2025). Exploring the Journey of Service Members and Veterans with Cancer. [pryncyp.org/analytics/doslidzhennya-shlyahu-vijskovosluzhbovcziv-z-onkologichnymy-zahvoryuvannyamy](https://pryncyp.org/analytics/doslidzhennya-shlyahu-vijskovosluzhbovcziv-z-onkologichnymy-zahvoryuvannyamy)

Veterans with disabilities may also have additional accessibility-related needs across all areas of well-being. This includes adapted housing, personal adapted transport, or other mobility-related services. They may also require workplace or educational environment adaptations.

#### Additional needs based on physical and mental health

Healthcare	Housing and physical environment	Information	Work and education
availability of qualified professionals capable of providing quality treatment or rehabilitation	adapted transport and housing	proper awareness of benefits, available services, and treatment or rehabilitation opportunities	workplace arrangement and adaptation

### Geographic Location and Internal Displacement

The place of residence of veterans can change, but even temporary living in near-front zones or territories close to the border with Russia or to near-front zones<sup>71</sup> affects their well-being.

Primary concerns here are safety and the accessibility of infrastructure for daily needs. Veterans with injuries living in near-front zones may have fewer medical facilities available, which complicates their rehabilitation. The unstable safety situation also reduces the number of specialists available to provide support.

The place of residence may require greater **financial assistance**, as people from near-front/border/liberated regions are more likely to need housing reconstruction or relocation, and have fewer employment opportunities. These challenges, in turn, impose greater **psychological strain**, increasing veterans' need for support. Additionally,

<sup>71</sup> As of July 2025, Sumy, Chernihiv, Mykolaiv, and Odesa regions are considered border areas due to their proximity to near-front zones, the Russian border, or potential invasion routes of the Russian troops.

returning to civilian life in near-front or border regions may not feel like a true return to civilian life, as the ongoing security threats make the war an ever-present part of daily life.

Region	Near-front zone	Liberated territories	Remote settlements
Needs	healthcare	reconstruction	online services
	evacuation	return	mobile support groups
	housing support	employment	

Veterans who have experienced internal displacement may face additional social and economic challenges. Regardless of whether they hold the IDP status, they may have lost access to their previous homes, making **housing and physical environment a priority need**. They may also require **support in the realm of legal security**, including restoring lost documents, accessing entitled benefits, and obtaining compensation for lost property.

Another urgent need is restoring well-being in terms of social relationships and recognition, as veterans with IDP status may struggle to build strong connections in their hosting communities, which often overlaps with the broader challenge of settling back into civilian life.

#### Needs of Veterans with Internal Displacement Experience

Housing and physical environment	Material needs and vocation	Legal security	Relationships and recognition
Finding new housing	Securing employment and income	Restoring documents, applying for benefits, and claiming compensation for lost property	Building social ties in new communities

## Employment

Employment status significantly impacts veterans' economic stability, their need for retraining and employment assistance, and their access to social protection. Unemployed veterans may require special **employment programmes, professional training, and entrepreneurship support.**

Employed veterans might need additional adaptation programmes or consultations to ensure a successful return to a civilian working environment, especially if they are dealing with health or social challenges. In addition to rehabilitation, veterans with severe injuries or disabilities may need workplace adjustments or tailored **employment programmes that consider their physical capabilities.**

Veterans seeking to start their own business may need expanded support in the form of **grant programmes, tax relief, and professional consultations.**

Veterans pursuing education while balancing other responsibilities require special attention. **They may need:**

- **flexible schedules** to combine work, studies, and family duties;
- **financial assistance**, such as scholarships, grants, or tuition reimbursements;
- adapted academic programmes **in educational institutions.**

Employment type	Primary needs
Unemployed	Job placement programmes, retraining courses, entrepreneurship support
Employed	Workplace adaptation, psychosocial support, and assistance when returning to work
Training	Flexible schedules, financial support (scholarships, reimbursements), and adapted academic programmes
Entrepreneurs or self-employed	Grants, benefits, and business development consultations

## Family Status

A veteran's family status shapes their access to emotional support, financial stability, and the need for additional social services. We place a particular focus on individuals who may require support due to their family conditions.

Widows and widowers frequently need **psychological and legal support, along with specialised programmes for single parents**. Veterans undergoing divorce often require additional legal consultations, particularly regarding social guarantees and benefits for ex-spouses, which becomes especially relevant when underage children are involved.

Single veterans without spouses or children may require support during their return to civilian life (particularly if they are injured and need care), as well as in rebuilding **emotional support systems, forming new relationships and social connections, and maintaining bonds with fellow service members**.

Children have an impact on the rights and responsibilities of a person, and when it comes to veterans, on their needs and well-being. Children of veterans (both minors and adults) often require additional **financial support**, as well as access to educational and social programmes.

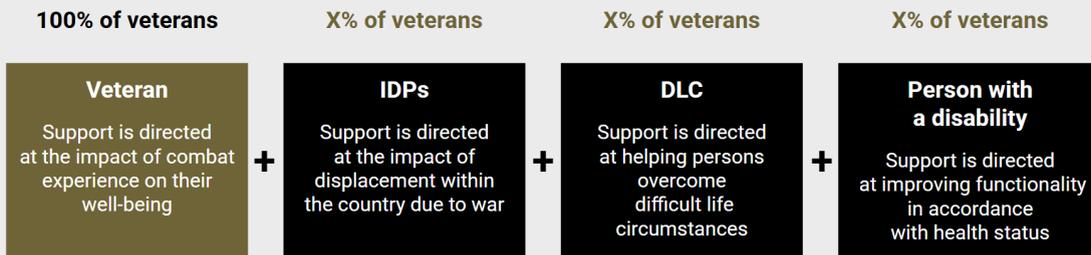
Their parents returning from service may also need **psychosocial assistance**. Large veteran families may need additional social benefits and payments beyond standard veteran entitlements to properly support their children.

Family Status	Primary needs
Widow/widower	Psychological support, consultations on benefits, and support for single parents
Divorce	Legal advice on social guarantees
Single (without a partner/children)	Social assistance, help with caregiving in cases of illness or injury, support for relationships, and community integration
Large family	Additional benefits, financial aid, and social and educational programmes

### Caregiving for Loved Ones

The responsibilities of caring for a loved one impose emotional and physical strain, often necessitating additional attention, support, and a range of accompanying services. This includes **social services, financial compensation, and temporary care options**. Veterans, especially in the early stages of readjusting into civilian life, require time for recovery and adaptation, as well as processing documents, obtaining official status, and attending to their health needs. However, if they also need to care for their loved ones, they may lack the necessary resources to address their immediate challenges.

The needs of veterans arising from their experience should be addressed by granting appropriate statuses. At the same time, veteran status can provide advantages or priority within other statuses.



It is essential to ensure the cross-cutting identification of veterans within the social policy system, record the multiplicity of statuses they may hold, and document the type of support provided under each specific status.

## Analysing the Journey of Veterans and Different Policy Environments

Combat experience does not simply vanish with the end of service or return from the front lines. It stays with people for life, shaping their identity, relationships, career choices, vocation, as well as their needs in healthcare, education, and social support.

To better understand the stages veterans go through, we draw on the methodology of the Journeys of Veterans research conducted by the Veteran Hub. The experience and the journey of each veteran are unique. Yet, the research team managed to identify key stages, along with the specific needs that arise at each stage.

**The Journeys of Veterans** is a comprehensive study of the experiences of veterans and a model that maps their trajectory from the beginning of service through its end and the challenges they face in civilian life.

The original concept of this model, presented as a map, was developed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs<sup>72</sup>. In 2020, the Veteran Hub team created an adapted Ukrainian version of this map, and in 2021, conducted research and a series of in-depth interviews with ATO/JFO veterans<sup>73</sup>. This made it possible to gain important insights into the challenges they face during service and after returning to civilian life.

It includes five critical phases of the veteran's journey: **Before Enlisting, Service, Transition, Civilian Life, Retirement, and Ageing.**

Understanding the journey of veterans is essential for developing effective public policy. This journey is not a one-time event, but a long process. It starts not after returning to civilian life, but with the choice to enlist in the military.

Thus, analysis of challenges veterans face post-service requires understanding what happens at every stage, starting from the moment they enlist, and accounting for the conditions under which they join the military. It is also important to consider the legal and external circumstances of their service and discharge, whether in peacetime, under a special period<sup>74</sup>, or during martial law<sup>75</sup>.

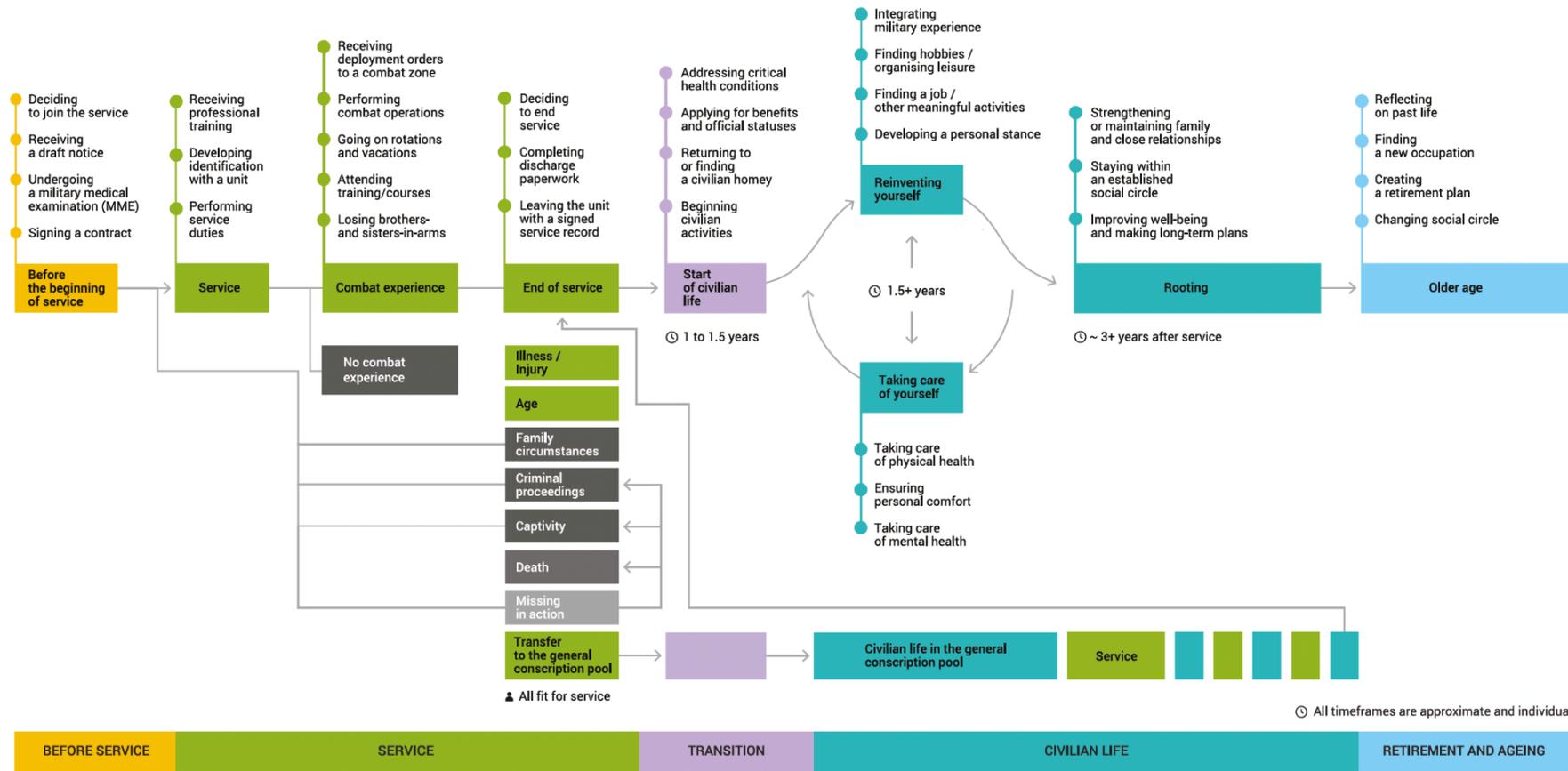
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<sup>72</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2024, April). Veteran journey map (2016). Veterans Experience Office. [department.va.gov/veterans-experience/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/04/veteran-journey-map-2016-508-V4.23.24.pdf](https://department.va.gov/veterans-experience/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/04/veteran-journey-map-2016-508-V4.23.24.pdf)

<sup>73</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

<sup>74</sup> A special period refers to a time when the state switches to an emergency mode of operation due to war threats or active hostilities. It begins with mobilisation or the declaration of martial law and lasts until the end of hostilities and demobilisation. During this time, government bodies, enterprises, and the military operate under special regulations, and citizens may be called to defend the country.

<sup>75</sup> Below, we present an excerpt from an analysis by the Human Rights Centre "Pryncyp" on the regulatory framework governing military service in the reserve forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.



Map of the veterans' journey

## Beginning of Service<sup>76</sup>

In **peacetime**, a person can become a service member in several ways:

- by enlisting for basic military service (formerly known as conscription);
- by enrolling in a higher military educational institution;
- through conscription as reserve officers;
- by signing a contract with a specific military formation within the Security and Defence Forces, including the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard, or the State Border Guard Service.

It is also possible to obtain an initial reserve officer rank while studying at a military department within a higher educational institution. Military liable persons with this rank may later be called up for active service.

During a **special period** or **wartime**, a person can enlist:

- through conscription during mobilisation or from the reserve;
- by signing a contract with a specific military formation, including the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard, or the State Border Guard Service.

## Discharge from Service

Upon **discharge**, service members are removed from military registration and are no longer subject to conscription.

**This group includes individuals who:**

- have reached the age limit for being in the reserve (60 years for most, 65 for senior officers);

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<sup>76</sup> While preparing this section, the team used analytical work by the Pryncyp Human Rights Centre for Military Personnel from the study "Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life: Contexts, Experiences, Solutions." [pryncyp.org/analytics/perehid-vid-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-do-cyvilnogo-zhyttya-konteksty-dosvidy-rishennya](https://pryncyp.org/analytics/perehid-vid-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-do-cyvilnogo-zhyttya-konteksty-dosvidy-rishennya)

- have been deemed unfit for service by the military medical commission (MMC) due to health reasons (during martial law, they may be deemed temporarily unfit, with reassessment scheduled in 6–12 months).

Removal from military registration also occurs in cases of loss of Ukrainian citizenship, death, a person being declared missing<sup>77</sup>, or declared deceased.

People subject to military service who are not currently serving may be transferred to the **reserve**, but they can be called up if needed.

**This group includes:**

- service members (under contract or mobilised) who have not reached the age limit and have not been deemed unfit for military service by the MMC;
- those discharged from basic military service;
- military pensioners under the age limit for reserve status (60 or 65 years);
- service members who completed conscripted officer service;
- cadets who completed studies at higher military educational institutions;
- students who completed training at military departments;
- persons liberated from captivity;
- persons with disabilities who have not been officially declared unfit by the MMC.

Some of them are assigned to the **operational military reserve**, which is designated to reinforce the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations. During a special period or martial law, all individuals discharged into **reserve** are automatically enrolled in the operational

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<sup>77</sup> A person may be declared missing by a court if, for one year, no information is available about their whereabouts at their place of permanent residence.

military reserve. In such cases, they are not listed as persons subject to military service but as reservists.

### What Is the Reserve?

It is important to distinguish the **military reserve** from the **reserve**. The reserve is a status assigned to all persons liable for military service, including those who have never served. In contrast, reservists are obligated to undergo training and are among the first to be called up in the event of mobilisation. Therefore, a person discharged from military service to the reserve may either not serve in the military operational reserve or be included in it.

Since 2024, the **military reserve** has been structured as follows:

- **operational military reserve (combat reserve, territorial reserve, and augmentation reserve)**, which consists of persons liable for military service who have already undergone military service or training and are ready to promptly rejoin the ranks in the event of mobilisation or when there is a need to reinforce units;

Combat Reserve	Augmentation Reserve	Territorial Reserve
Reinforcement of combat units	Staffing of non-combat units	Reinforcement of Territorial Defence units
veterans and people with combat experiences	veterans and people with combat experiences	reservists and people liable for military service aged 45 and older
	people who completed basic military training or took part in training assemblies	

- **mobilisation human reserve** – all persons liable for military service who may be called up and are not part of the operational reserve. This structure is less specific, as it does not depend on prior experience or specialisation<sup>78</sup>.

#### **Joining the operational military reserve is possible:**

- **in peacetime**, only by signing a contract. If a service member does not sign such a contract, they are placed on the military register as a person liable for military service;
- **during a special period or under martial law**, mandatory enrolment in the reserve upon discharge is carried out by the military unit or the Territorial Centre for Recruitment and Social Support (TCRSS).

#### **Reservists are not considered part of the employed population in Ukraine. Therefore, according to employment legislation, they may:**

- be officially recognised as unemployed and registered with the State Employment Service;
- combine civilian employment with reserve service and retain labour protections during training or when performing reserve duties.

Veterans who enter the **reserve** after completing their service are obligated to return to service if called up. In peacetime, they may be summoned by the TCRSS to participate in reservist training. Even without mobilisation being declared, they may be involved in military tasks in the military reserve for up to three months per year during peacetime or special periods.

Veterans discharged into **the general reserve**, rather than the operational one, may also be called up by the TCRSS for training, inspection, or special assemblies.

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<sup>78</sup> Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 895/2024 (31 December 2024). "On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine." [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#Text)

**Veterans who are completing their service during a full-scale war and returning to civilian life may be brought back into military service through:**

- enrolment in the reserve;
- summons for training or inspection assemblies;
- being tasked with various duties;
- re-mobilisation.

## **Completing Military Service**

Veterans may complete their service through various trajectories. These trajectories significantly impact the following stages of their journey, the nature of their return to civilian life, and the types of support required after service.

**Law of Ukraine “On Military Duty and Military Service”<sup>79</sup> defines several options for service completion:**

- due to health reasons;
- upon reaching the age limit;
- due to family conditions;
- following release from captivity;
- due to contract expiration;
- due to a court conviction, sentencing to deprivation or restriction of liberty.

Each involves very different experiences, including the transition from military to civilian life and, accordingly, to the different needs of veterans. Effective public policy must take into account these diverse pathways

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<sup>79</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (1992). Law of Ukraine “On Military Duty and Military Service,” No. 2232-XII, dated 25 March 1992. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12)

and understand the type of support required for veterans with varying experiences of reintegrating into civilian life.

Public policy must ensure a holistic approach to veteran well-being. Physical, psychological, and social aspects of well-being must be considered together, not in isolation. Next, we will explore specific challenges and solutions in each area of well-being, helping to build a support system that covers all life stages and various return environments.

## Injury

Veterans who complete their service due to injury or trauma undergo a dramatic shift in their lives, losing physical capabilities or functions and having to adapt to new conditions and bodily states. During this stage, the need for accessible, long-term, and high-quality treatment and rehabilitation becomes especially urgent.

The study “From Injury to Return: Ethnographic Research of the Path of Veterans and Their Relatives” by NGO Pryncyp<sup>80</sup> details the experience of injured veterans and outlines their needs. Among the specific needs are the proper **training of medical personnel and doctors in treating combat injuries and amputated limbs, as well as ensuring the accessibility of these services**, including the availability of sufficient facilities in relevant institutions and specialised departments. The same needs arise during the rehabilitation stage: veterans require enough time for treatment and recovery, support from qualified specialists, and properly equipped facilities for rehabilitation and prosthetics.

A similar situation applies to psychological rehabilitation. Injured veterans require **psychological recovery**, but do not always have access to these services in medical institutions.

Another critical need for veterans after injury is **legal aid, access to information, and support** in this area, as they must navigate numerous stages to obtain documents, status, and ultimately, benefits.

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<sup>80</sup> Pryncyp. (2023). From Injury to Return: Ethnographic Research of the Path of Veterans and Their Relatives. [pryncyp.org/analytics/vid-poranennya-do-povernennya-etnografichne-doslidzhennya-shlyahu-veteraniv-ta-yihnih-blyzkyh](https://pryncyp.org/analytics/vid-poranennya-do-povernennya-etnografichne-doslidzhennya-shlyahu-veteraniv-ta-yihnih-blyzkyh)

In addition, the study shows that injured veterans require **financial assistance and employment support**, as they are not always able to return to their previous workplaces due to the consequences of their injuries or trauma.

## Age Limit

Veterans who are discharged from service due to reaching the age limit experience a different journey than their younger brothers and sisters-in-arms. For them, the transition and beginning of civilian life coincide with age-related stages such as ageing, retirement, or the end of active employment.

In addition to the general needs relevant to all veterans completing their service, those reaching the age limit may face **additional health-related needs**. Particularly, the need to maintain physical health in the context of chronic conditions or specialised medical care. At this stage of life, veterans may also require more **opportunities to wind down from active duties and dedicate time to themselves and their families**<sup>81</sup>.

## Captivity

Veterans who are discharged from service after being held in captivity go through a recovery and adaptation process that may be complicated by the effects of physical exhaustion, psychological trauma, prolonged isolation, lack of basic resources, and continuous stress.

Beyond critical conditions and exhaustion, chronic illnesses may also resurface after release. At the same time, physical and mental health are deeply interconnected, and physical conditions can intensify psychological ones and vice versa<sup>82</sup>. For this reason, the primary need is **comprehensive support for both physical and mental health**.

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<sup>81</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. P. 220–224.  
[veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> Medvedenko, L. (2023, 23 October). How a person changes after captivity. Army Inform.  
<https://armyinform.com.ua/2023/10/13/yak-zminyuyetsya-lyudyna-pislya-polonu/>

## Criminal Proceedings

Veterans ending their service because of a final court conviction sentencing to imprisonment or restriction of liberty, encounter a distinct and frequently stigmatised transition to civilian life. This stage involves multiple crisis factors – possible loss of identity, being under investigation or incarcerated, and social isolation. For these veterans, the transition to post-service life is complicated by legal uncertainty, social judgment, and limited access to available support mechanisms.

As with other forms of discharge, they may still require **medical, psychological, and social support**, especially related to their combat experience, traumatic events, and physical and mental well-being.

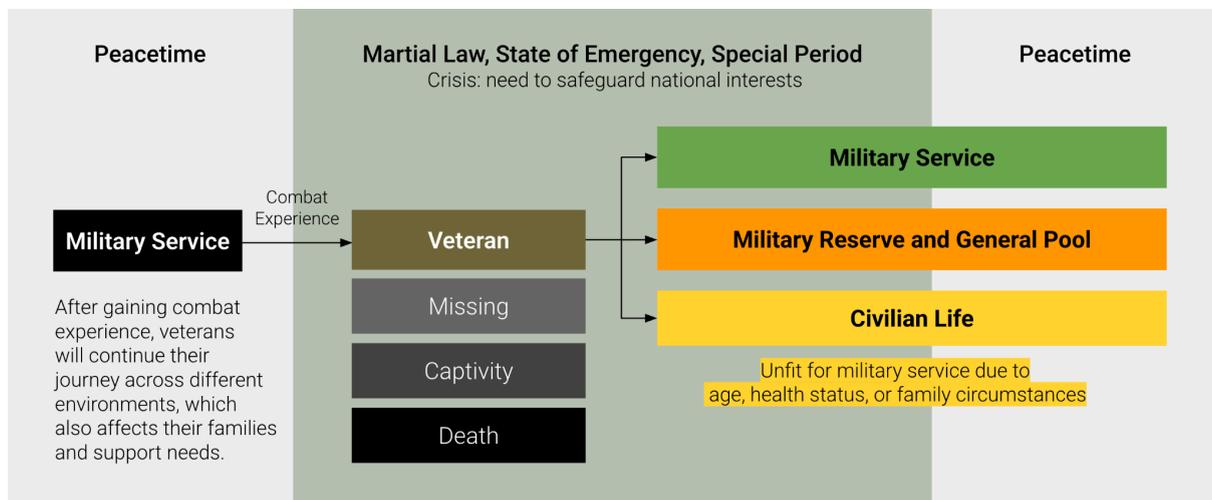
Although further research and information are needed to fully understand the specific needs of veterans in this journey, one key issue is the preservation of their veteran status. In our view, a criminal offence or imprisonment does not erase a person's military experience or contribution to the defence of the country. Therefore, veterans should retain their status even when facing criminal proceedings.

The only reasonable exception for revoking veteran status is a verdict of conviction involving crimes against national security or high treason. All other veterans discharged due to criminal proceedings must remain visible to the state, and their combat experience and related needs do not disappear because of court cases or imprisonment.

## Returning Environments and Implementation of the Veteran Policy

After completing service, only a small group of veterans – those declared unfit due to health conditions or those who have reached the age limit – will return to civilian life without the prospect of remobilisation. The majority will either join the reserve or general pool or continue their professional path in military service.

We identify three primary policy environments for veteran policy, depending on where their journey continues after gaining combat experience: **Military Service**, **Military Reserve and General Pool**, **Civilian Life**.



Although the stages of veterans’ journey are generally similar across all three environments, the ability to meet their needs, priorities, and goals outlined in the public policy varies depending on the specific environment. However, the state has so far failed to communicate these differences effectively, and many veterans lack a clear understanding of their future prospects. Some are forced to build their lives amid uncertainty, between periods of mobilisation, with no clear strategy or opportunities for sustainable development.

At the same time, the current state approach creates a misleading image of veterans as people who have permanently left service and now only require support for adaptation to civilian life. As a result, all veterans are treated as a single category in public discourse, regardless of whether they realistically face the prospect of returning to service.

Based on research into the experiences of veterans of the ATO/JFO<sup>83</sup>, we know that for some, the transition and rooting<sup>84</sup> in civilian life during

<sup>83</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

<sup>84</sup> Rooting — a stage in the veteran journey when a person is able to make important long-term decisions consciously and with sufficient inner readiness. To some extent, this state serves as an indicator that the person is on a positive returning trajectory and has essentially rebuilt a new civilian life in which they feel confident and independent.

wartime, even under the most favourable conditions (support and moderate challenges to health and well-being), lasted at least three years. In some cases, this period extended to five to seven years or more. This means that a large number of veterans in the operational reserve were mobilised again during the full-scale invasion, almost immediately after civilian life became comfortable for them. As a result, they lost the progress they had made in civilian life and were forced to restart the entire adaptation process.

Given the security threats faced by Ukraine, the demographic situation, and the state of the security and defence sector, it is reasonable to assume that the journey of today's generation of veterans will differ from previous experiences. Holders of combat experience represent a key resource for Ukraine's defence capacity. Their knowledge, skills, and competencies are essential to the security sector. Therefore, it is expected that the state and the Security and Defence Forces will make every effort to retain them in military service or in the operational military reserve.

We forecast that over the next decade and beyond, a significant portion of veterans will continue their journey primarily within two environments: military service and the reserve. Only a relatively small group will fully return to civilian life due to injury or reaching the age limit.

## **Environment 1 Military Service**

**Key stakeholders:** Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Security Service of Ukraine, other actors in the Security and Defence Forces, and the Ministry of Veterans Affairs.

**Public policy objective:** To strengthen national defence capacity, preserve the experience and competencies of veterans through continued service after the completion of their mobilisation term.

During the full-scale invasion, Ukraine's troops mobilised an unprecedented number of service members. As was the case

during the ATO/JFO, these military personnel became the core bearers of combat experience.

As of 2020, up to 30% of ATO/JFO veterans remained in the Security and Defence Forces for three or more years after demobilisation<sup>85</sup>. If this trend continues, a substantial portion of veterans will continue their military service. At the same time, many of them already have veteran status, combining it with active military service. This means that all stages of their veteran journey take place under the jurisdiction of security and defence agencies.

## **Environment 2 Military Reserve**

**Key stakeholders:** Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Veterans Affairs, Security Service of Ukraine, other security and defence agencies, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Policy, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education and Science.

**Public policy objective:** To maintain combat readiness of the reserve and to restore human capital.

Following the end of the war and demobilisation, veterans who do not continue a military career and have no legal grounds for exclusion from the military registration will be enrolled in the reserve. According to Ukrainian legislation, from 2024 onward, during a special period or under martial law, all individuals discharged into the general pool are automatically enrolled in the operational military reserve. This means that all veterans who complete their service during martial law without being removed from military records or declared unfit for service will also be placed in the reserve.

Before Russia's full-scale invasion, the reserve primarily consisted of veterans of the ATO/JFO. They were the first to be mobilised to defend the country and formed the backbone of the armed

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<sup>85</sup> IREX. (2020). Veterans' Reintegration Survey: Methodology. [irex.org/sites/default/files/Veterans-Current-Employment-Conditions-Ukrainian.pdf](https://irex.org/sites/default/files/Veterans-Current-Employment-Conditions-Ukrainian.pdf)

resistance. The study “Journeys of Veterans”<sup>86</sup> also showed that after demobilisation, veterans in the operational reserve retained high motivation to defend the country and actively prepared for a possible return to service even before the full-scale invasion.

Today, a significantly larger number of service members have combat experience, creating the foundation for an operational military reserve that could include more than one million people. The country’s defence capability will therefore directly depend on the effectiveness of public policies related to the military.

These people will spend a significant amount of time caught between two worlds – military and civilian. Their planning horizon will be shorter, which may result in unequal opportunities for stable and sustainable adaptation to civilian life while serving in the reserve.

A well-prepared, cohesive reserve is one of the key components of Ukraine’s defence capability. For this reason, the Security and Defence Forces are interested in ensuring a high level of well-being for reservists.

**However, the experience of 2015–2022 shows that insufficient legal regulation and the lack of a systemic approach to the reserve have negatively affected:**

- life prospects of veterans;
- their actual readiness to return to service;
- the preservation of their combat competencies.

**Within the reserve veterans, we can distinguish two main groups, whose experiences will vary greatly over the next decade:**

- 1) ATO/JFO veterans who were mobilised repeatedly during the full-scale invasion;
- 2) first-time mobilised veterans during the full-scale invasion.

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<sup>86</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

We anticipate that the levels of civilian well-being of these two groups will differ. ATO/JFO veterans may start out with lower well-being, compared to those mobilised for the first time.

Understanding future prospects, the possibility of re-mobilisation before reaching the age limit, as well as the conditions and benefits of serving in the reserve, are essential for veterans.

It is crucial to develop a comprehensive policy for veterans in the reserve and to update the legal framework so that it reflects both the real challenges faced by beneficiaries after discharge and the state's priorities in this area.

### **Environment 3 Civilian Life**

**Key stakeholders:** Ministry of Veterans Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Social Policy, Ministry for Communities and Territories Development, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, Ministry of Education and Science, etc.

**Public policy objective:** to restore human capital and to reduce the impact of the demographic crisis.

One of the consequences of Russia's aggression is the catastrophic deepening of the demographic crisis in Ukraine. The population has dropped from 52 million in 1991 to approximately 34 million by 2024<sup>87</sup>. Depopulation had already intensified long before Russia's open aggression, as a result of its hybrid warfare and was constantly accompanied by anti-Ukrainian propaganda, socio-economic destabilisation, and active poaching of Ukraine's labour force to the aggressor state.

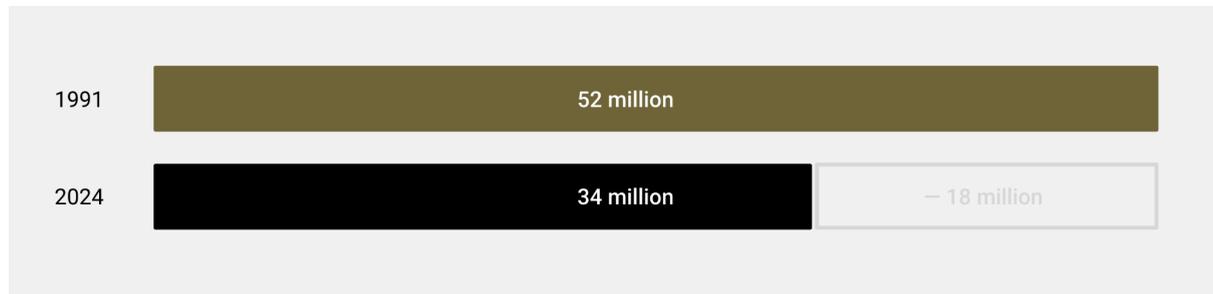
Today, the loss of human capital is not only a socio-economic issue, but also a matter of national security. Access to a skilled workforce was once one of Ukraine's key advantages in the eyes of foreign investors.

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<sup>87</sup> Chernovol, K. (25 December 2024). How many people live in Ukraine as of 2024: A demographer's estimate. UNIAN. [unian.ua/society/naselennya-ukrajini-silki-lyudey-prozhivaye-v-krajini-v-2024-roci-12865014.html](https://unian.ua/society/naselennya-ukrajini-silki-lyudey-prozhivaye-v-krajini-v-2024-roci-12865014.html)

Today, the absence of millions of professionals poses a serious obstacle to rebuilding the country's infrastructure.

Estimated population of Ukraine



Based on the analysis of age structure and demographic trends, Ukraine is expected to experience significant population ageing in the coming years. This will increase the social burden on the working-age population and complicate economic recovery.

This environment will currently include the smallest share of veterans compared to military service or the reserve. Only those who have reached the age limit, are no longer fit for duty due to health reasons, or face significant family conditions are unlikely to return to service.

The core objective of public policy regarding veterans should be to preserve and strengthen human capital by ensuring the effective and dynamic return of people to active economic and social life in Ukraine.

**This requires a comprehensive approach, including:**

- developing educational and retraining programmes;
- creating employment opportunities for veterans and their families;
- supporting veteran entrepreneurship.

There is also a need to transform and modernise educational, cultural, and other public policies that may affect veterans as beneficiaries.

Upon returning to civilian life, veterans become users of the full range of public, private, and community services. They require the same level of access and support as any other citizens. Efforts to meet veterans' well-being needs should focus on raising the competence of experts

rather than creating entirely new, unique services. Upon returning to civilian life, veterans will typically rely on their own experiences and knowledge to meet their needs. This means they are most likely to seek help from institutions and professionals with whom they had positive interactions prior to their service.

Therefore, all professionals – doctors, teachers, social workers, employers – who will interact with veterans and their families must improve their competence in working with this group of citizens.

Given the demographic crisis and economic challenges, in our opinion, copying or imitating foreign models of veterans' affairs systems is neither realistic nor appropriate for Ukraine. Instead, it is important to develop solutions that can be effectively integrated into Ukraine's legal system and economic context.

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Considering the environments to which veterans return after gaining combat experience is a crucial methodological approach in designing support measures. In peacetime, veterans may choose their own journey: to continue their military careers and remain in the Security and Defence Forces, to be discharged from service and assigned to the military reserve, or to transition to civilian life.

In wartime or during a special period, however, most veterans will continue their journey within the military reserve, since enrolment in the reserve occurs automatically upon completion of service. This will impact their ability to establish civilian well-being and their experience and needs during the transition back to civilian life.

The experience will also differ between veterans who choose to remain within the military environment and those who completely retire from military service and remain in the civilian environment.

# What Data on Veterans Do We Currently Have, and How Can It Be Taken into Account

The majority of warriors who already have, or will eventually receive, veteran status are still serving in the military. This is why more specific socio-demographic information about this generation of veterans will only be known once the war concludes. Nevertheless, the data currently available already allows us to form a general profile of the beneficiaries of the public policy.

In our view, the regular and comprehensive collection and analysis of data is a critical prerequisite for developing effective veteran policy, one that is not only reactive but also preventive.

## Data on Veterans' Needs Based on the Journey and Well-being

Veterans are different people with unique experiences and needs. Public policy must recognise these needs and respond effectively. We believe that clearly identifying and meeting the needs of veterans not only helps ensure their successful adaptation to civilian life but also strengthens the resilience of Ukrainian society in the spheres of security, economy, social, and political stability.

The “Journeys of Veterans” study<sup>88</sup>, conducted by the Veteran Hub team, examined the stages that veterans undergo and the challenges they face in civilian life. We will now examine each stage in more detail and discuss the potential challenges that may arise during it.

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<sup>88</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

In analysing veterans' experiences and needs, the team also used the Well-being<sup>89</sup> model – a framework that categorises various human needs essential for a good quality of life. It includes six components or domains: health, material needs, relationships and recognition, vocation, life skills and spirituality, housing and the physical environment. Later in this concept, we explore each of these domains and areas in more detail using the Well-being model.

At each stage of the journey, veterans have different well-being priorities: what was essential during the initial settling back into civilian life may fade into the background as they enter the stage of reinventing themselves.

We also single out **periods of heightened attention or key transitional phases** in the journeys of veterans when the state should concentrate its resources on communication and interaction. These are the times when challenges may be particularly complex, interaction with state institutions is most frequent, and the burden on the support system is at its peak. During these critical phases, the state should respond promptly to the needs of veterans, reinforce existing support mechanisms, and tailor them to individual conditions.

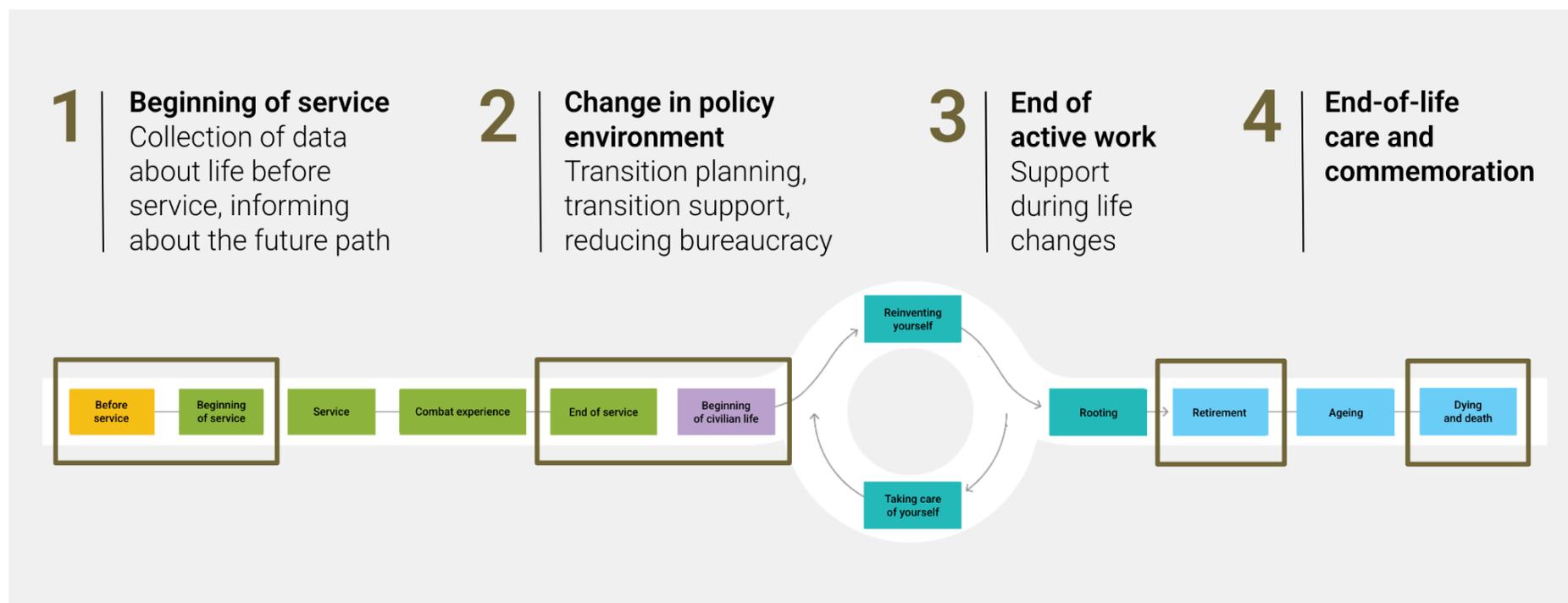
At the same time, support for veterans **must be comprehensive and provided throughout their entire lifespan**, not just immediately after returning from service. This requires acknowledging the consequences of military service and applying a **predictive approach** to support. Planning should be based on life expectancy projections for veterans, taking into account potential complications arising from their military and combat experiences.

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<sup>89</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Concept of Veterans' Well-being. [veteranhub.com.ua/dobrobut](https://veteranhub.com.ua/dobrobut)

Although the journey is complex, most veterans will successfully navigate the challenges and restore civilian well-being. To offer timely assistance to those who might encounter difficulties, it is crucial to pinpoint **heightened attention periods** – times of significant change when the challenges veterans face may become more complex. We further provide our version of what these “heightened attention periods” might be, which requires further refinement through data analysis and a deeper examination of the experience of Ukrainian veterans and their families.

### Public policy’s heightened attention periods



## Stage 1. Beginning of Civilian Life

According to the “Journeys of Veterans” study, Ukrainian veterans undergo a **transition phase** after their service as they begin their civilian lives. During this time, they return home, address urgent health concerns, rest from service, apply for state benefits, and resume or begin civilian activities.

**Health restoration** is often a top priority during the transition to civilian life. Even those who did not sustain injuries during their service may face health consequences upon their return. Respondents in the study often mentioned issues with back, leg, vision, and hearing impairments, as well as dental problems, as factors that significantly impacted their quality of life.

The return from the service and combat conditions can also affect veterans’ mental health. While not all veterans will experience long-term or severe mental health consequences, many will need support for specific symptoms and conditions, such as sleep disturbances, fatigue, stress reactions, or living with loss.

Another key need during the transition to civilian life is **rebuilding relationships**. Relationships and communication patterns often shift during and after service, creating challenges. At this stage, veterans need acceptance and understanding from those closest to them, as well as support in re-establishing family roles and communication. Contact with brothers- and sisters-in-arms becomes less frequent, though it remains an essential need for veterans, as it allows them to share combat experiences, adaptation challenges, and feel understood and recognised for their journey.

Another key priority for veterans during the transition phase is **meeting their material needs**. This includes financial stability at the outset, transitioning back to civilian life, legal security, and access to state support through benefits and streamlined documentation processes.

The need for **housing well-being** also becomes a top priority, as veterans’ civilian living environments may have changed during their time in service. However, the study suggests that the issue

is not so much about owning a home, but rather about clarity regarding their living conditions.

Other key priorities at this stage include **sharing combat experiences, taking time to adapt, understanding the stages of reintegration into civilian life, planning ahead, and regaining a sense of purpose**<sup>90</sup>.

## Stage 2. Taking Care of Yourself

The next phase of the Journey, **civilian life**, consists of several stages, including taking care of yourself. During this period, veterans continue to require support in maintaining their physical health, including the diagnosis and treatment of chronic conditions, improving sleep patterns, and establishing healthy habits. There is also a strong need to **prioritise mental health and replenish inner resources** in order to rebuild life and well-being.

Another key priority for veterans at this stage is the **need to have their own space or housing**. However, sometimes they lack the necessary resources, especially financial ones, and may require additional support.

At the stage of taking care of themselves, veterans also focus on learning to **meet their own needs** and making time for rest or personal activities<sup>91</sup>.

## Stage 3. Reinventing Yourself

At the stage of reinventing themselves, veterans are in a period of searching and change. This is particularly true of their relationships with loved ones – they may seek **opportunities to strengthen and improve communication with family and those close to them**.

Another priority is **establishing their own circle of contacts**, especially with others who share similar experiences – veterans may need

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<sup>90</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. P. 124–161.

[veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. Pp. 172–183.

a veteran community, space, and opportunities to communicate with one another.

There is also a strong **need in the area of vocation – to study, retrain or change careers, seek employment** that better aligns with new interests or experience, or continue their previous work<sup>92</sup>.

The stages of reinventing oneself and taking care of oneself may unfold simultaneously or gradually, but both are marked by self-focus: attending to one's physical and mental health and comfort, reshaping one's social circle, integrating combat experience, and finding hobbies and work.

Due to the suspension of U.S.-funded international programmes, Veteran Hub was unable to complete the study of the experiences of veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian war after the start of the full-scale invasion. As a result, we currently lack data on whether these stages of journeys are fully reflected in the experiences of veterans who joined the military after 2022.

At the same time, based on the experience of organisations that provide services to veterans, it can be assumed that returning to a military environment and service may occur during these stages, either through repeated conscription or as a chosen professional path.

## Stage 4. Rooting

The rooting stage for veterans marks the period when civilian life becomes more established and settled. They are capable of **making important long-term decisions, planning for the future, and feeling satisfied with it.**

At this point, they need opportunities to **make long-term plans**, such as nurturing close relationships and possibly starting a family, including having children. It is also important to have space for self-fulfilment – to run their own business or pursue activities that bring them fulfilment<sup>93</sup>.

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<sup>92</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. P. 187–205.  
[veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

<sup>93</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. P. 212–216.  
[veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

**In addition to outlining distinct stages and well-being-related needs, the study also yielded several key insights and observations essential for understanding the journeys of veterans.**

### 1. Returning to civilian life takes time

While each veteran's journey may differ in length, veterans of the ATO/JFO typically require up to 1.5 years to complete the transition phase, rest after service, and begin civilian activities. About another year and a half were spent in the stages of reinventing oneself and taking care of oneself. Only after three or more years following the end of service did veterans reach the rooting stage, where they focused on improving their well-being and making long-term plans. This suggests that veterans may need the most support in their way to rooting within the first 1.5 to 3 years after returning to civilian life.

### 2. The perception of time and planning horizon shifts across stages

During military service, warriors have a limited planning horizon. Only by the time they reach the rooting stage do they gain the capacity to plan long-term and follow through.

### 3. The trajectory of journeys may be positive or negative

The duration of transition to civilian life, reinventing oneself, and rooting indicated on the veterans' journey map holds true in the case of a positive trajectory. This means that veterans who received timely support after service, experienced a high level of well-being, and could steadily transition into civilian life, did so over three or more years. At the same time, the research also revealed cases of a negative trajectory.

## Socio-demographic profile of veterans

To build a socio-demographic profile, it is essential to understand the scale of the veteran generation shaped by the Russo–Ukrainian war.

Over the course of more than eleven years of war, the number of veterans has grown to 1.2 million people with official combatant status (as of July 2024<sup>94</sup>). According to projections by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine, the total number of people with combat experience, their family members, and families of fallen warriors could exceed five million people<sup>95</sup>.

**As of 1 July 2022 (the most recent publicly available data at the time of writing this concept), the total number of veterans and their family members stood at 851,068. Of which:**

- ATO/JFO veterans – 438,834;
- people with disabilities resulting from the Russo–Ukrainian war – 7,072;
- family members of fallen veterans – 111,530<sup>96</sup>.

As stated by Ruslan Prykhodko, former Deputy Minister of Defence, Ukraine had 1,300,000 veterans as of 25 July 2024, of whom 80% were active service members<sup>97</sup>. In February 2025, the President of Ukraine stated that 46,000 Ukrainian warriors had been killed, tens of thousands were missing in action, and around 380,000 had sustained injuries<sup>98</sup>.

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<sup>94</sup> Kryzhnyi, A. (28 May 2024). Following the end of the war, the number of veterans is expected to reach 5–6 million people – Ministry of Veterans Affairs. *Ekonomichna pravda*. [pravda.com.ua/news/2024/05/27/714276](https://pravda.com.ua/news/2024/05/27/714276)

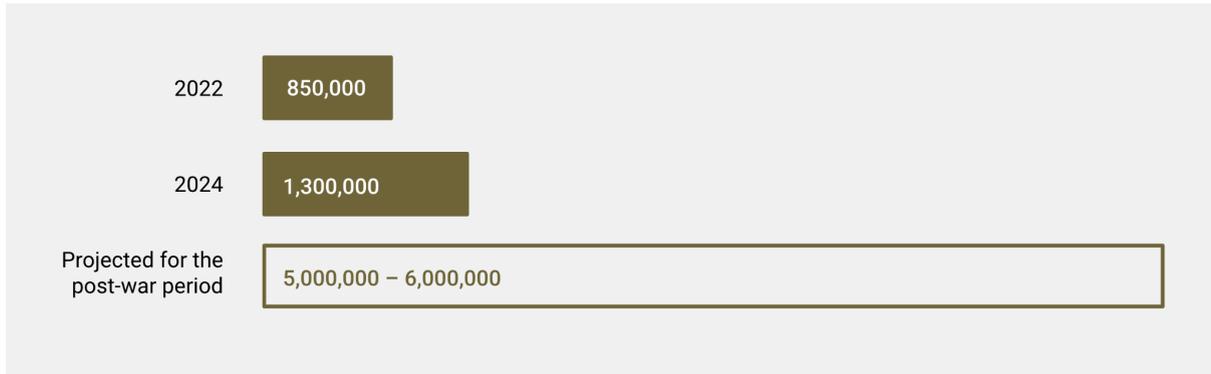
<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ukrainian Veterans Foundation (2022). Portrait of a Veteran in Russo-Ukrainian War 2014–2022. [veteranfund.com.ua/analitics/portret\\_veterana/#elementor-toc\\_heading-anchor-3](https://veteranfund.com.ua/analitics/portret_veterana/#elementor-toc_heading-anchor-3)

<sup>97</sup> Burtseva, A. (2024, 25 July). There are 1.3 million veterans in Ukraine: How are they supported? *Suspilne News*. [suspilne.media/798951-v-ukraini-1-miljon-300-tisac-veteraniv-ak-ih-pidtrimuut](https://suspilne.media/798951-v-ukraini-1-miljon-300-tisac-veteraniv-ak-ih-pidtrimuut)

<sup>98</sup> Sobenko, N. (16 February 2025). Over 46,000 killed: Zelenskyi names Ukraine's war losses. *Suspilne News*. [suspilne.media/949947-ponad-46-tisac-zagiblih-zelenskij-nazvav-vtrati-ukraini-u-vijni](https://suspilne.media/949947-ponad-46-tisac-zagiblih-zelenskij-nazvav-vtrati-ukraini-u-vijni)

## Approximate number of veterans and their family members



## Number of wounded, missing, and fallen warriors (as of June 2025)



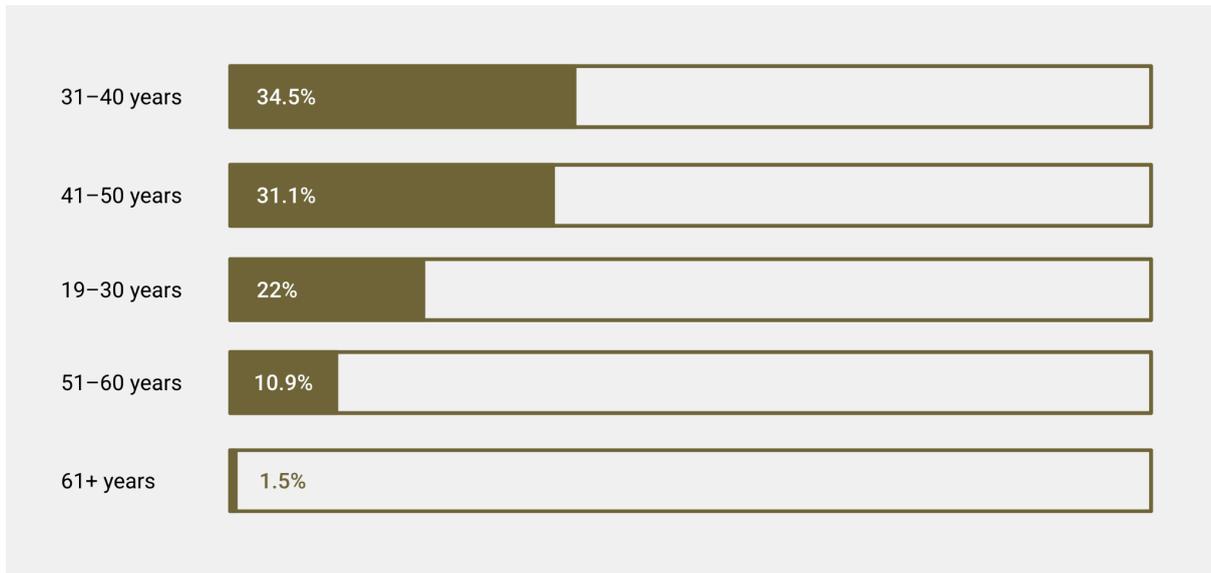
In addition to overall figures, veteran status and conditions, stages of veteran journeys, and needs across all domains of well-being, it is crucial to consider the core socio-demographic characteristics that strongly influence veterans' lived experiences. Below, we outline the currently available data and explain why these characteristics matter when shaping a profile of veterans.

## Age

According to data from the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine collected prior to 2022, around one-third of veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian war were aged 31–40 (34.5%), and another third were 41–50 years old (31.1%). Approximately 22% were young people aged 19–30. The smallest age group was those aged 61 and above, representing just 1.5%<sup>99</sup>.

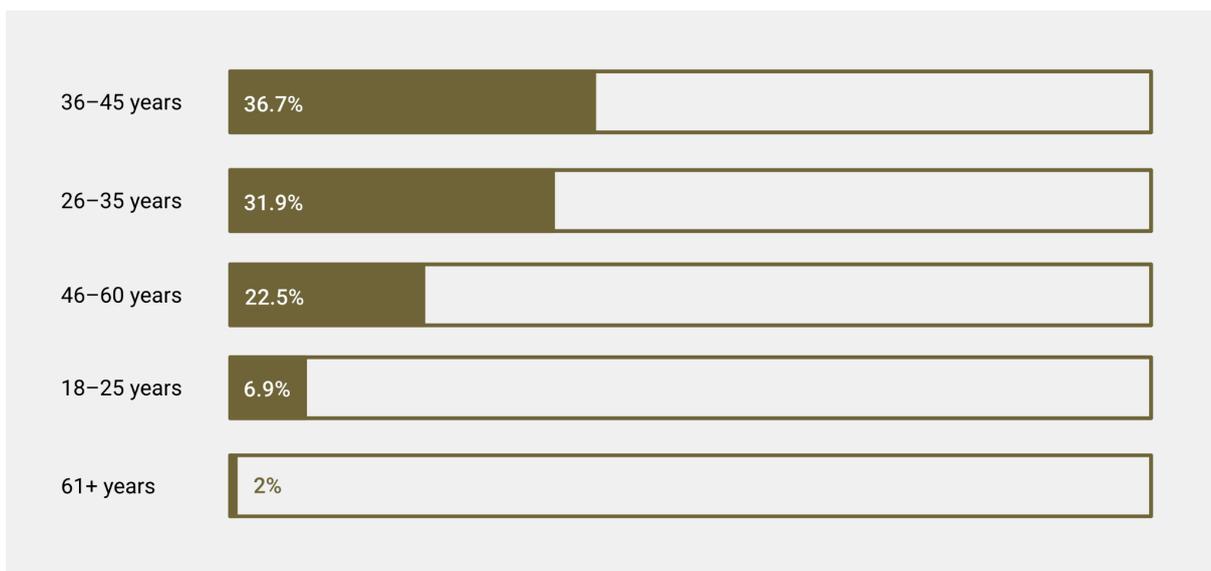
<sup>99</sup> Ukrainian Veterans Foundation. (July – August 2022). Portrait of a Veteran in the Russo-Ukrainian War 2014–2022. [veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/portret\\_veterana/#elementor-toc\\_heading-anchor-3](https://veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/portret_veterana/#elementor-toc_heading-anchor-3)

Age distribution of veterans prior to 2022,  
according to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine



The 2023 survey conducted by the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation revealed that most surveyed veterans fell within the following age ranges: 18–25 years old – 6.9%; 26–35 years old – 31.9%; 36–45 years old – 36.7%; 46–60 years old – 22.5%; and 61 years old and above – 2%<sup>100</sup>.

Age distribution of veterans according to the 2023 survey  
by the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation



<sup>100</sup> Ukrainian Veterans Foundation. (September – October 2023). Portrait of a Veteran. [veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/portrait-of-veteran/](https://veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/portrait-of-veteran/)

In July 2024, the Ministry of Veterans Affairs reported that, based on data from the Unified State Register of War Veterans (USRWV), the average age of a veteran was between 35 and 45<sup>101</sup>. Overall, we can state that the majority of veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian war are young to middle-aged individuals.

Age is a crucial factor in shaping a veteran's profile and identifying the types of support required. It directly affects experiences and challenges and determines both physiological and social needs.

In addition to the age limit, which marks one possible endpoint of a military career, we propose segmenting veterans into five age-based groups.

**The 18–23 age group** includes those who were students or recent school leavers when they began their service. It is likely that they had not yet had the opportunity to build civilian well-being, such as completing their education, discovering a vocation, starting a family, forming a stable social circle, finding employment, securing a steady income, or beginning a career. These well-established components of well-being could facilitate return.

**Thus, the less time and opportunity a person had to build a civilian life prior to their military service, the more support they may require afterwards.**

**The 24–35 age group** includes veterans who may have joined the military as early as 2014. At that time, they were in a similar life stage as the first age group. However, they may have already chosen a career path, found a direction for their future, achieved financial independence, or built strong social connections.

**The 36–44 and 45–60 age groups** have similar characteristics. When referring to this group, we assume they had already established their lives before entering military service, with stable employment or a chosen vocation, hobbies, a family, and a well-rooted social circle.

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<sup>101</sup> Ministry of Veterans Affairs (16 July 2024). Facebook. [facebook.com/mva.gov.ua/posts/803170715328423](https://facebook.com/mva.gov.ua/posts/803170715328423)

As a result, their return to civilian life may be easier due to the already established well-being in civilian life.

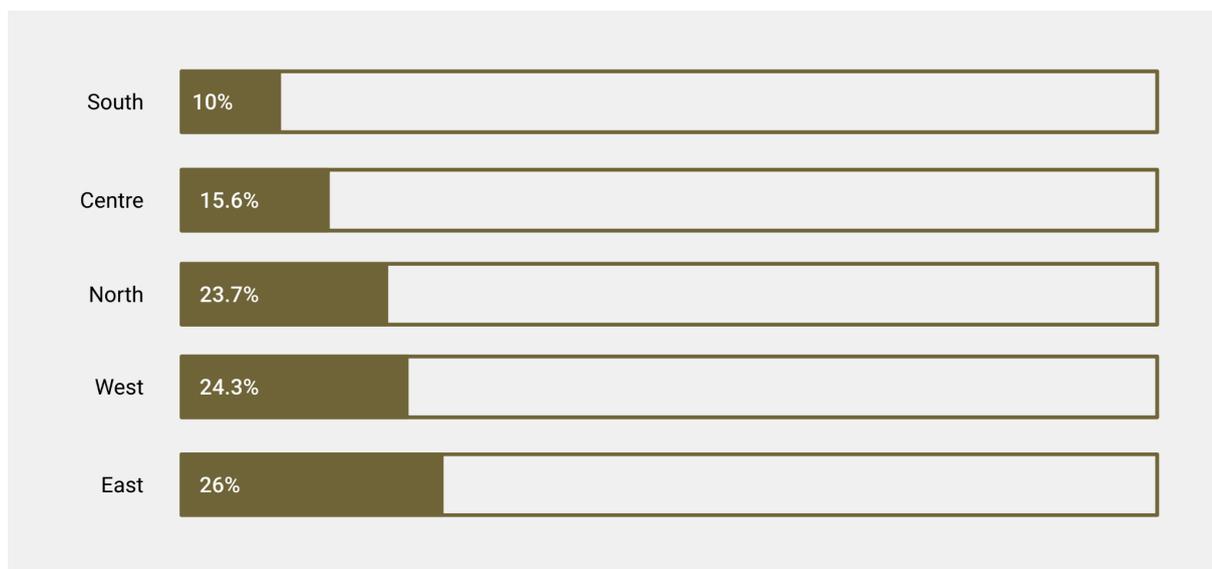
However, those in the 45–60 group may already have more needs related to physiological age-related changes in health, and additional barriers to employment.

We therefore emphasise the importance of differentiating additional needs related to social integration, employment, career opportunities, and access to healthcare services, as determined by age-specific characteristics.

## Geography and Place of Residence

According to data from the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine (as of 2022), approximately one-quarter (26%) of veterans were originally from eastern Ukraine, with the highest concentration in Zaporizhzhia. 24.3% of veterans lived in the western regions, 23.7% in the northern regions, 15.6% in central Ukraine, and only 10% in the southern part of Ukraine<sup>102</sup>.

Regional distribution of veterans prior to 2022



These figures suggest that at least some veterans may have lost their homes following the full-scale invasion and the subsequent expansion

<sup>102</sup> Analytical information according to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. [data.mva.gov.ua](https://data.mva.gov.ua)

of the front line, due to the occupation of their local communities by Russian forces. According to a 2024 survey conducted by the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation, 9.2% of veterans reported having internally displaced person (IDP) status<sup>103</sup>.

Place of residence has a significant impact on well-being, particularly in terms of access to services, support, and infrastructure.

Individuals living in localities that vary by size and level of urbanisation often face differing levels of access to healthcare, education, social services, and mobility. For instance, those residing in the capital city, regional or district centres have more opportunities to independently build their well-being or access veteran support. Larger cities typically offer more developed infrastructure for veterans, including medical institutions and NGOs, as well as job opportunities and inclusive public spaces.

In particular, based on the results of expert discussions held by the coalition working on this concept, it reveals that veterans living in smaller towns tend to face more challenges related to mobility. They are more frequently required to travel between cities in order to access certain services.

Moreover, even issuing discharge papers, certificates, or IDs (often among the first steps upon return from service, and key to further state support) can be significantly more complicated for those living in rural areas. This is because most service-providing institutions are located in district or regional centres, requiring individuals to travel at their own expense, which demands both time and financial resources.

In addition, smaller settlements may offer fewer opportunities to build their veteran communities, even though such peer groups can become a supportive environment for veterans in the process of returning to civilian life.

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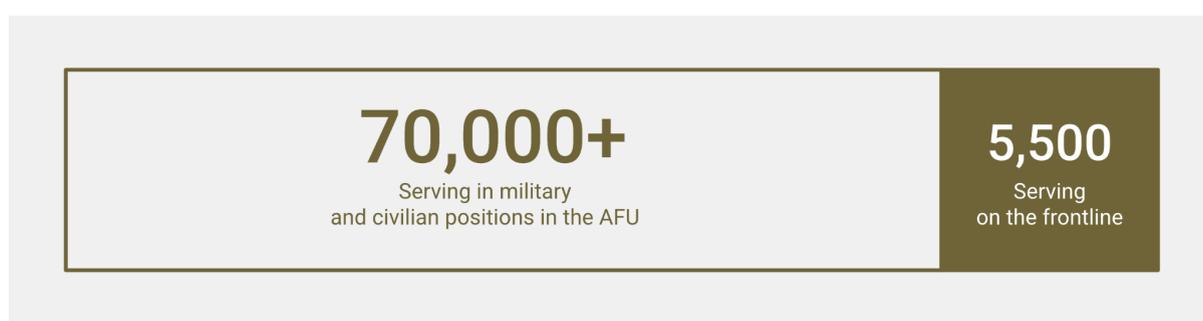
<sup>103</sup> Ukrainian Veterans Foundation. (15–25 January 2024) Online survey among veterans and active military personnel: “Current needs and vision of opportunities for career and professional growth of veterans.” [veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/aktualni-potreby-ta-bachennia-mozhlyvostey-dlia-kar-ierno-ho-i-profesiynoho-zrostantia-veteraniv](https://veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/aktualni-potreby-ta-bachennia-mozhlyvostey-dlia-kar-ierno-ho-i-profesiynoho-zrostantia-veteraniv)

## Gender

Although most warriors are men, as of June 2025, over 70,000 women were serving in civilian and military positions in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Among them, 5,500 women were deployed directly on the front line<sup>104</sup>.

Since women have been officially allowed to serve in combat positions since 2018, the number of those who already hold veteran status is quite substantial. In 2021, there were 16,700 women with this status – approximately 4% of the first-generation veterans at the time. By January 2024, there were already 13,487 women with veteran status<sup>105</sup>. This number is likely to grow as the war continues.

The number of women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine as of 2025



Gender plays a critical role in planning and shaping support systems for veterans, as it influences the experience of military service, the process of returning to civilian life, societal expectations, and access to resources.

For example, women veterans may face double discrimination upon their return to civilian life. They are more likely to experience stigmatisation due to persistent stereotypes of service, especially in combat positions, as “a man’s job.” Their combat experience may be undervalued, and their needs – overlooked in veteran support policies, due to a lack of research. Second, women often encounter gendered expectations

<sup>104</sup> Over 5,500 women serve on the front lines today – Serhiy Melnyk. (8 March 2025). Ministry of Defence of Ukraine.

[mod.gov.ua/news/ponad-5-500-zhinok-sogodni-sluzhat-na-peredovij-sergij-melnik](https://mod.gov.ua/news/ponad-5-500-zhinok-sogodni-sluzhat-na-peredovij-sergij-melnik)

<sup>105</sup> Barsukova, O. (8 March 2024). The Ministry of Defence has revealed the number of women serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine as of 2024. Ukrainska Pravda. Life.

[life.pravda.com.ua/society/skilki-zhinok-sluzhit-u-zsu-statistika-minoboroni-2024-300413](https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/skilki-zhinok-sluzhit-u-zsu-statistika-minoboroni-2024-300413)

to resume traditional caregiving roles (motherhood, family care), which can complicate their adaptation to civilian life. This creates a gap between needs and responsibilities, societal expectations, and a person's self-expression, leading to frustration.

In addition, healthcare services are often tailored to the male combat and military experience, meaning fewer specialists are available to address female veterans' physical and mental health needs. Access to specialised care, such as reproductive health services, may be limited. Therefore, women veterans may require additional specialised healthcare, including services related to pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood.

Non-binary individuals may also face stigmatisation due to not conforming to traditional gender roles. They may also face additional challenges because their experiences do not always fit traditional and established perceptions of military service and veterans. As with women, their needs as part of the veteran community remain "invisible," making it difficult to find support and a safe environment.

Male veterans, on the other hand, often face pressure from gender stereotypes about being the family's "breadwinner" and are expected to quickly resume economic activity, regardless of their physical or mental condition. This applies to both men and women, depending on their role in the family, though men are more often subject to such stereotypes. At the same time, veterans may lack the resources or opportunities to quickly return to their previous roles.

This is especially true for veterans with severe injuries, who are often unable to work immediately. It is therefore essential to address financial needs and provide employment support to ensure that veterans do not feel pressured to resume their previous role as the family breadwinner, when returning to that role may not be possible.

Focusing on gender diversity within the veteran community is essential for identifying and addressing the needs related to rebuilding social roles and civilian identity for individuals returning from service. This includes

access to mental health services and additional support for vulnerable groups.

One of these groups is LGBTQI+ veterans. There is no official data on the number of LGBTQI+ service members and veterans in Ukraine. However, general demographic estimates on the share of LGBTQI+ people in society<sup>106</sup> suggest the number could be between 2% and 7%.

Being both a veteran and part of the LGBTQI+ community also creates certain needs. They might encounter further discrimination, stigma, and issues connected to their identity. Their experiences may not always align with traditional notions of military service or veteran identity. Additionally, access to services may be limited for them, particularly in terms of physical and mental health. They may encounter bias or prejudice from professionals they turn to for support, along with a lack of understanding or consideration for their needs.

#### Gender-related Challenges among Veterans

Male veterans	Female veterans	LGBTQI+
Pressure to conform to gender stereotypes related to being the “breadwinner” and expectations of a swift return to economic activity	Invisibility of needs and undervaluation of combat experience	Stigmatisation
	Limited access to specialist care that addresses the impact of service, particularly in the area of reproductive health	Lack of visibility
		Need for inclusive services

Ensuring legal protection, access to inclusive medical services, and psychological care for LGBTQI+ veterans is a crucial consideration in developing veteran policy.

<sup>106</sup> Ipsos. (2021). LGBTQ+ Pride 2021 Global Survey Report – US Version. [ipsos.com/sites/default/files/LGBT+Pride 2021 Global Survey Report – US Version.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/LGBT+Pride%2021%20Global%20Survey%20Report%20-%20US%20Version.pdf)

## Health

Data and research on the health status of veterans can help identify the most prevalent injuries, conditions, or illnesses and inform where to prioritise resources.

According to U.S. estimates<sup>107</sup>, around 120,000 Ukrainian warriors sustained service-related injuries or wounds in 2023. In that same year, approximately 230,000 individuals underwent rehabilitation in Ukraine. Meanwhile, official sources reported that by February 2024, 40,000 Ukrainians – most of whom were veterans – had at least one limb amputation<sup>108</sup>. This magnitude highlights the urgent need for a systematic approach to healthcare, rehabilitation, and prosthetics. In the future, data and research on veterans' health should form the foundation for effectively planning government programmes and funding.



<sup>107</sup> Ukrainian veteran advocates for national-level rehabilitation and patronage service similar to SSFB's. (7 April 2024). NV. [english.nv.ua/nation/lucky-urges-for-patronage-service-creation-for-ukrainian-military-at-national-level-50407896.html](https://english.nv.ua/nation/lucky-urges-for-patronage-service-creation-for-ukrainian-military-at-national-level-50407896.html)

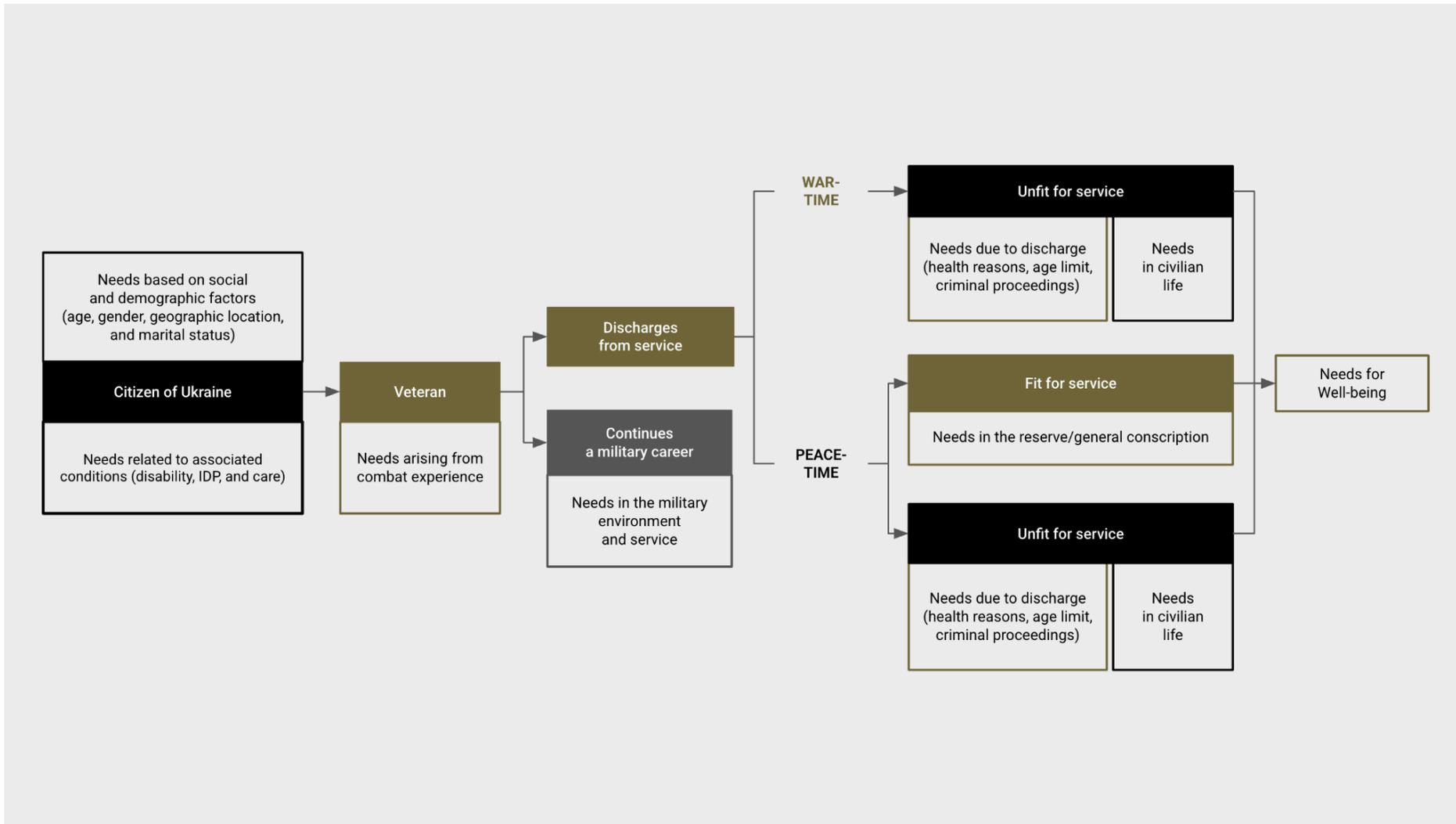
<sup>108</sup> Between Frontline and Home Front Reintegration, Resilience and Participation Strategies for Ukraine's Veterans (2024). [pisyasluzhby.org.ua/uploads/admin/Project\\_Report\\_-\\_Between\\_Frontline\\_and\\_Home\\_Front.pdf](https://pisyasluzhby.org.ua/uploads/admin/Project_Report_-_Between_Frontline_and_Home_Front.pdf)

## Veteran Needs Algorithm Accounting for Diverse Approaches and Data

Combat experience is not the only factor shaping the needs of veterans. To shape fair and effective public policy, additional life conditions that influence well-being must also be considered, such as health status, employment, family ties, displacement experience, and the environment in which the policy is being implemented.

We propose using a comprehensive and flexible approach that incorporates these factors alongside military experience. A **high-level needs analysis algorithm** is appropriate for this, as it integrates the aforementioned approaches and enables a systematic comparison of a person's needs with their experience, conditions, and status. This algorithm helps customise support based on the veteran's life stage and current environment.

The selected categories are not arbitrary – they reflect conditions that have a significant impact on veterans' lives, needs, and situations. Government institutions, public organisations, and other stakeholders can use the analysis algorithm to assess the complexity of veterans' experiences and to develop support programmes that account for these factors.



Veteran Needs Algorithm Accounting for Diverse Approaches and Data

# Conclusions

In the context of the full-scale war, there is a pressing need to rethink veteran policy, not only due to the growing number of people with combat experience but also because of the increasing complexity of their journeys. Effective support must be based not only on formal status but on an understanding of veterans' actual experience and their multiple roles in society.

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## **1 Approaches to building a comprehensive profile of veterans**

A comprehensive profile of veterans must take into account both combat experience and socio-demographic characteristics, health status, and life conditions. While only the state has the capacity to build a representative sample, it is already crucial to recognise the diversity of veteran generations and the differences in their service and settling back experiences.

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## **2 Recognising Status Through Experience**

A key principle is that experience should shape status. Approaches to determining veteran status must change: combat experience, not merely formal service, should be the primary criterion. Support should reflect the nature of what they have lived through, not just the legal record.

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## **3 Recognising the experience of other groups and their support**

People who served but did not engage in combat, or who were affected by the war in other ways, also deserve support, but within distinct statuses and policies. This helps avoid confusion, ensures fair allocation of resources, and enables more precise targeting of support.

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## **4 The diversity of veterans' experiences**

A veteran's life cannot be reduced to a single status. Their well-being is shaped by factors such as changes in health, place of residence, employment, or family status. Veteran policy must account for these dynamic life conditions to ensure flexible and responsive support.

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## **5 Analysing veteran journeys and policy environments**

A veteran's journey encompasses the periods before enlistment, time in service, and after service. Return to civilian life requires sustained support. Public policy should address all stages and environments, ensuring continuity of support.

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## **6 Algorithm for analysing the needs of veterans**

Veterans' needs are multidimensional, ranging from medical and housing to social, psychological, educational and economic domains. A multi-component analysis of various needs can help develop a systemic, targeted support model grounded in real-world experience rather than formal status.

# SECTION 4

## **Well-Being Needs of Veterans**

A quality and comfortable life requires a person to satisfy a range of needs, from basic physiological ones to social, psychological, and spiritual ones. The subjective sense of life satisfaction may vary for each individual depending on different factors. Still, for many, it can be built upon standard foundations such as good health, safe and comfortable housing, stable and sufficient income, a sense of community, and the support of loved ones.

All these aspects are interconnected and form a holistic system of human well-being. For instance, good physical and mental health gives a person the energy and strength to work, maintain an active social life, and pursue self-fulfilment. A stable income allows a person to provide for themselves and their family with necessary resources — food, medical care, and comfortable housing. Safe housing creates conditions for rest, peace, and stability, which have a positive impact on both physical and mental well-being.

Support from loved ones and a sense of belonging to a community provide emotional support, help cope with stress and life challenges. Social relations motivate, give meaning to life, and strengthen a sense of self-worth. The absence or disruption of any of these elements can negatively impact the others. For instance, unstable income and lack of safe housing can worsen physical and mental health. At the same time, isolation or the loss of social support may lead to emotional burnout or loss of motivation.

Understanding this interconnection and the multifaceted nature of human needs is especially important in the context of supporting veterans. Military service and participation in combat operations have a profound impact on a person's well-being, affecting their physical and mental health, social relationships, financial stability, career prospects, and inner resilience. Bodily injuries, psychological and emotional stress, the loss of loved ones, identity shifts, the need to find new income sources and rebuild life after returning — all of this can significantly complicate the fulfilment of basic needs.

To understand and analyse the possible needs across different aspects of veterans' lives, this concept utilises the Well-being Model. We define

well-being as a combination of subjective and objective factors that contribute to high life satisfaction. In other words, it is equally important to understand whether a person is satisfied with their living conditions or state of health, rather than simply assessing the availability of housing or objective physical health status.

This model is based on the concept of veteran well-being used in the USA and Canada, as well as the work of international researchers David Pedlar and James Thompson<sup>109</sup>. In 2023, the Veteran Hub team developed its own veteran well-being model<sup>110</sup>, which serves as the foundation for this document and informs the shaping of public policies on veterans.

**We view veterans' well-being as a multidimensional phenomenon consisting of the following key components:**

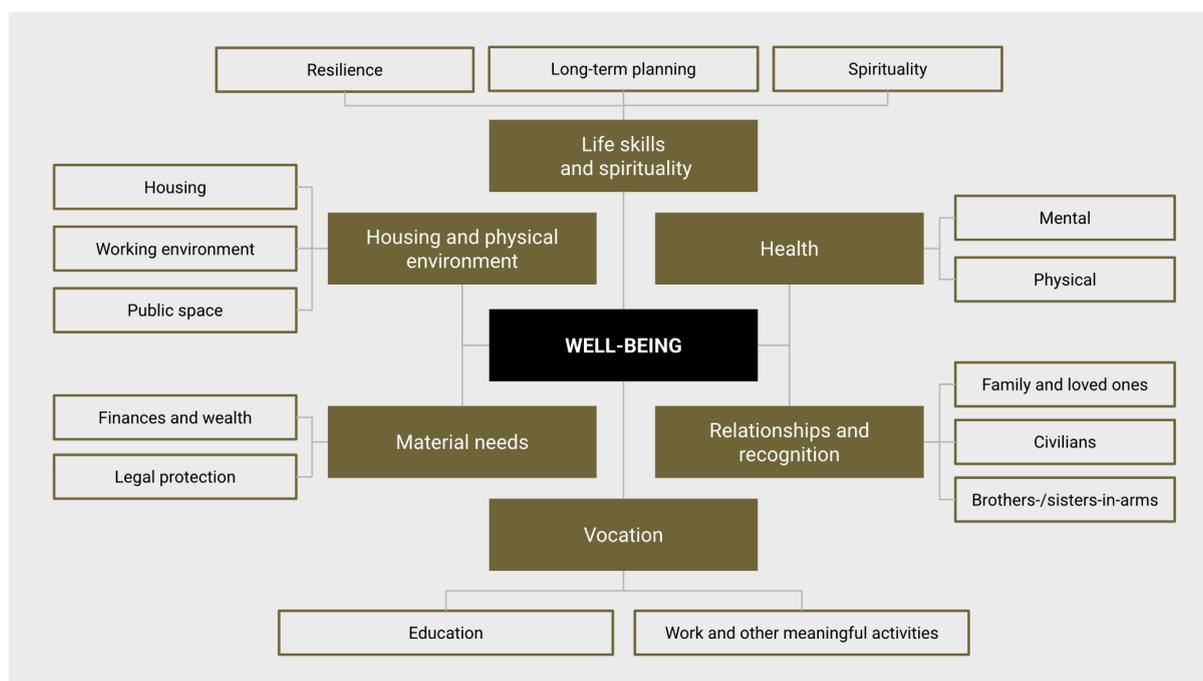
- health (physical and mental);
- material needs (finances, income, legal security);
- relationships and recognition (relationships with loved ones, family, civilian environment, brothers- and sisters-in-arms, recognition of experience and contribution, commemoration);
- vocation (education, work, or other meaningful activity such as hobbies or activism);
- life skills and spirituality (resilience, long-term planning, and spirituality);
- housing and physical environment (place of residence and housing, work environment, and public space).

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<sup>109</sup> Thompson, J. M., Vogt, D., & Pedlar, D. (2022, 7 April). Success in life after service: A perspective on conceptualizing the well-being of military Veterans. *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*. [doi.org/10.3138/jmvfh-2021-0037](https://doi.org/10.3138/jmvfh-2021-0037)

<sup>110</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). Well-being of veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/dobrobut\\_-opys-skorochoeno.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/dobrobut_-opys-skorochoeno.pdf)

## Visualisation of the Well-Being Model



Although the categories of needs remain constant throughout life, their content and priority shift at different life stages. Military service and war have a profound impact on the well-being of veterans and their families, so relevant policies should address their entire life journey.

The well-being needs of veterans may also vary depending on the environment they return to after combat operations – whether it is continued military service, reserve/general conscription, or civilian life. Active-duty veterans require stable service conditions, opportunities for professional development, and support within the system. Veterans in the reserve or general conscription pool should transition back to civilian life while remaining ready to return to service, necessitating flexible support and clear guarantees. Warriors permanently transitioning to civilian life (due to health status or age) require broader transitional support, including medical and psychological care, daily life adaptation, career redirection, and rebuilding everyday life outside the military system.

We also distinguish between civilian and military well-being – a level of satisfaction of needs that can differ depending on the environment (military or civilian). Based on our work with veterans and the Journeys

of Veterans study, we observe that the longer a person serves, the more they develop military well-being (through connections, status, and skills that make military life more comfortable). At the same time, their civilian well-being declines and does not immediately recover post-service, often continuing to decline for some time. Upon returning, it may take significantly more effort to rebuild civilian well-being than it did to maintain it before service.

Veterans who reenlist multiple times may experience a recurring decline in their civilian well-being. ATO/JFO veterans often required three years or more to reestablish themselves in civilian life to the point of rooting<sup>111</sup>.

The well-being model categorises the diverse human needs essential to a quality life and addresses veterans' requests without prioritising some over others as more important or more serious. Instead, it helps track how these needs naturally evolve throughout life. For policymaking, the model may serve as a tool to analyse and understand veterans' needs in critical life areas, enabling the development of a reliable and effective support system that functions throughout their lives and across the different environments they return to.

In this section, we examine the specific components of well-being and their importance, explore the range of challenges veterans face in daily life, analyse the current state of public policy in each area, and provide expert recommendations to meet those needs.

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<sup>111</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)



**Component 1**

**Health**

# Abstract

This section outlines how military service and combat experience affect the physical and mental health of veterans and offers recommendations for incorporating their needs into strategic healthcare policy and long-term medical support.

**It also addresses several key areas by:**

- analysing how the health system in Ukraine functions today and why it is critical to consider veterans' experience and integrate medical support for them into the national healthcare framework, rather than creating a separate, parallel subsystem;
- justifying the need to systematically gather and analyse data on how combat participation impacts veterans' health and general condition;
- analysing the systemic changes needed in the healthcare sector, including strengthening rehabilitation services, building a long-term care system, and adopting a mental health approach that ensures quality and accessibility of services and specialist training;
- providing recommendations on adjusting the Programme of Medical Guarantees to reflect the realities of combat-related injuries, prosthetics, reproductive health, and palliative care;
- emphasising the need to ensure that veterans are well-informed about their health status and the services available to them.

# Introduction

Military service and direct involvement in combat operations mean prolonged exposure to harsh and exhausting conditions. Basic living standards, no access to clean water or heated shelter, excessive physical strain, disrupted sleep schedules, drastic changes in diet, heavy gear, constant stress, and exposure to pollution and hazardous chemicals – all these contribute to vision and hearing impairments, spinal and joint issues, and disorders of the cardiovascular, digestive, and respiratory systems. Besides combat injuries, service members face the same range of health conditions as the civilian population. However, there is often a lack of time and resources for timely and quality healthcare amid the war.

Mental health is also profoundly affected, both during and after service. Experienced stress, constant life-threatening situations, high-risk combat missions, the loss of brothers- and sisters-in-arms, shifts in self-perception and relationships – all these burdens of war can lead to various problems. These include sleep disorders, decreased libido, altered self-image, and the onset or worsening of mental health conditions.

According to the 2023 study on veterans' needs, 53.8% of respondents stated they either already required or would require health support after their service ended<sup>112</sup>. The most in-demand services include treatment for complex injuries and illnesses, prosthetics, support for PTSD and acoustic trauma, and access to health resort treatment<sup>113</sup>.

The flawed mental health system and outdated psychological screening methods during recruitment and service mean that neither service members nor their commanders often have full awareness of their own or their subordinates' mental health status.

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<sup>112</sup> Kirillova, Y., Znoviak, V., Kazanska, A. (2023). The Needs of Veterans 2023. The Ukrainian Veterans Foundation. [veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/needs-of-veterans-2023/](https://veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/needs-of-veterans-2023/)

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

Military service and combat operations affect both the physical and psychological health of service members during and after their service. Disrupted sleep patterns, irregular nutrition, and prolonged physical and mental strain can lead to health consequences that may not manifest until much later. Like anyone else, veterans experience changes in their health over a lifetime, from the beginning of their service to old age. Currently, the healthcare system cannot anticipate the challenges a veteran might face one, five, or ten years after service. Ukraine has neither established a system to collect and analyse health data specific to veterans, nor conducted predictive studies to assess how illnesses might develop in people with combat experience.

Today, the state (particularly the healthcare system) lacks a clear understanding of how military service and combat experience affect veterans' health, despite this being crucial to make informed decisions at the systemic level. Although we can draw on the experience of other countries, the nature of the war, its specific combat characteristics, and the weaponry used in the Russo-Ukrainian War are unique. This means health outcomes for Ukrainian veterans are also likely to be different, so any effort to forecast their physical and mental health needs should be based on research into their specific experiences.

This is not about tracking health outcomes of every individual veteran. Instead, it's about developing a comprehensive picture of the likely needs veterans may face after returning, as well as the health effects of combat experience, and using that data to inform treatment protocols and plan appropriate services.

Understanding the health effects of combat experience will also allow veterans themselves to be better informed about potential health risks and related needs, as well as the warning signs they should monitor throughout their lives.

As Ukraine's veterans transition back to civilian life, they will rely on the same healthcare services as the general population. It is important to remember that the full-scale Russian invasion has worsened the overall

health of the population<sup>114, 115, 116</sup>, altered healthcare needs, and increased the burden on the medical system. This demands a re-evaluation of how healthcare services are delivered, taking into account the long-term effects of war.

It is necessary to ensure accessible, high-quality healthcare support that is sensitive to the needs of a million<sup>117</sup> veterans. This approach should not mean building a parallel medical system for veterans, but instead integrating their needs into the national healthcare infrastructure through its strengthening, adaptation, and expansion. This will not only guarantee equal access to healthcare for all citizens but also build a resilient infrastructure within the overall system.

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<sup>114</sup> How War Is Impacting the Health of Ukrainians: Blood Pressure, Alcoholism, and Mental Health (14 December 2024). BBC News Ukraine. [bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c1j0xkn3j9no](https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/c1j0xkn3j9no)

<sup>115</sup> Human Impact Assessment (12 June 2023). [undp.org/uk/ukraine/publications/otsinka-vplyvu-viyny-na-lyudey](https://undp.org/uk/ukraine/publications/otsinka-vplyvu-viyny-na-lyudey)

<sup>116</sup> Effects of War on Patients with Type 2 Diabetes in Ukraine: Research Findings (15 January 2025). [amnu.gov.ua/vplyv-viyny-na-pacziyentiv-iz-czukrovym-diabetom-2-typu-v-ukrayini-rezultaty-doslidzhennya](https://amnu.gov.ua/vplyv-viyny-na-pacziyentiv-iz-czukrovym-diabetom-2-typu-v-ukrayini-rezultaty-doslidzhennya)

<sup>117</sup> How Ukrainian Society Views Its Veterans (20 December 2024). Ukraine Crisis Media Centre. [uacrisis.org/uk/yakym-ye-obraz-veteraniv-v-ukrayinskomu-suspilstvi](https://uacrisis.org/uk/yakym-ye-obraz-veteraniv-v-ukrayinskomu-suspilstvi)

# How the Healthcare System in Ukraine Works Today

Veterans are, first and foremost, Ukrainian citizens. Unlike their counterparts in many Western countries, most Ukrainian veterans had significant civilian life experience before service, as they are not career military personnel. It means that the majority have likely used civilian healthcare facilities and continue to do so, both during and after their service. A better understanding of the health challenges and needs of veterans starts with an overview of Ukraine's healthcare system and its key components.

Since 2016, Ukraine has been undergoing a health sector reform aimed at creating a transparent, integrated, and patient-centric system. One of the updated reform principles concerns the funding model: rather than allocating fixed budgets to hospitals, the state applies the principle of "money follows the patient" and pays it for actual medical services used by patients<sup>118</sup>. Funding is directly tied to the volume and nature of patient visits, which is designed to improve cost efficiency and the quality of services.

As part of the reform, Ukraine has established a dedicated institution to coordinate the financing and delivery of medical services – the National Health Service of Ukraine (NHSU). This is a financial and technical operator, which signs contracts with healthcare providers, allocates funding based on services delivered, and ensures quality control, reporting, and fulfilment of obligations. The Ministry of Health of Ukraine (MoH) is the key stakeholder in the sector, responsible for developing healthcare policies, legal frameworks, and medical care standards.

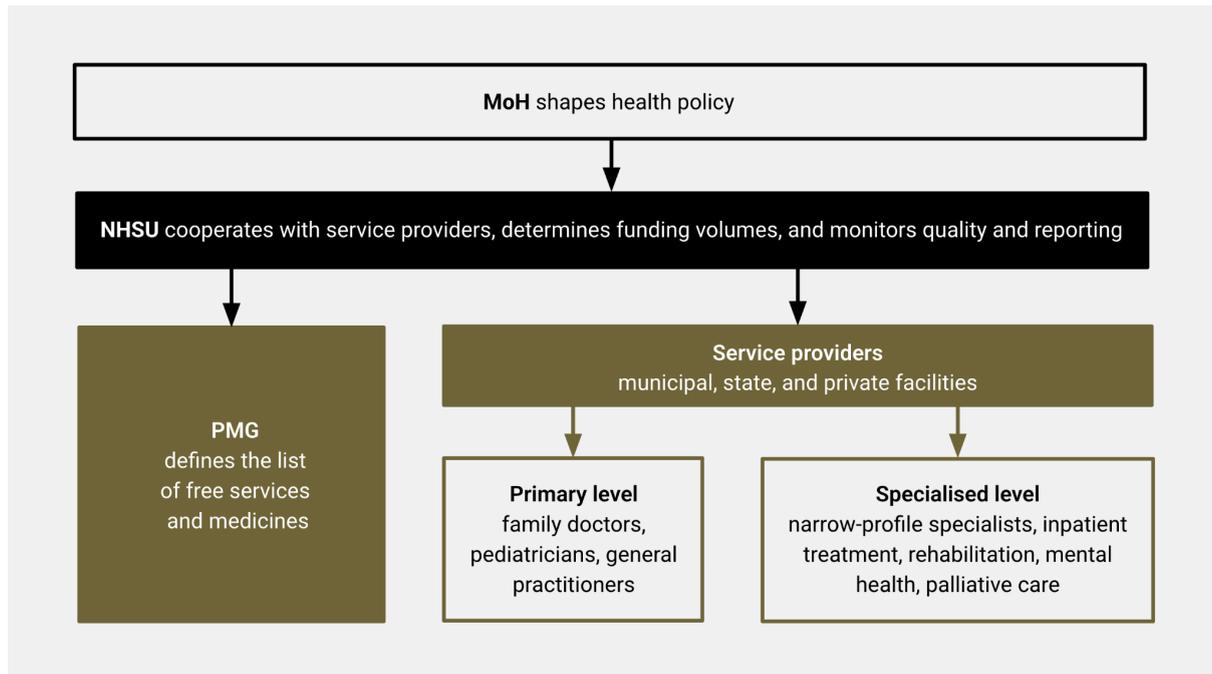
Another component of the reform is the Programme of Medical Guarantees (PMG), developed and approved by the government to ensure free access to a wide range of medical services.

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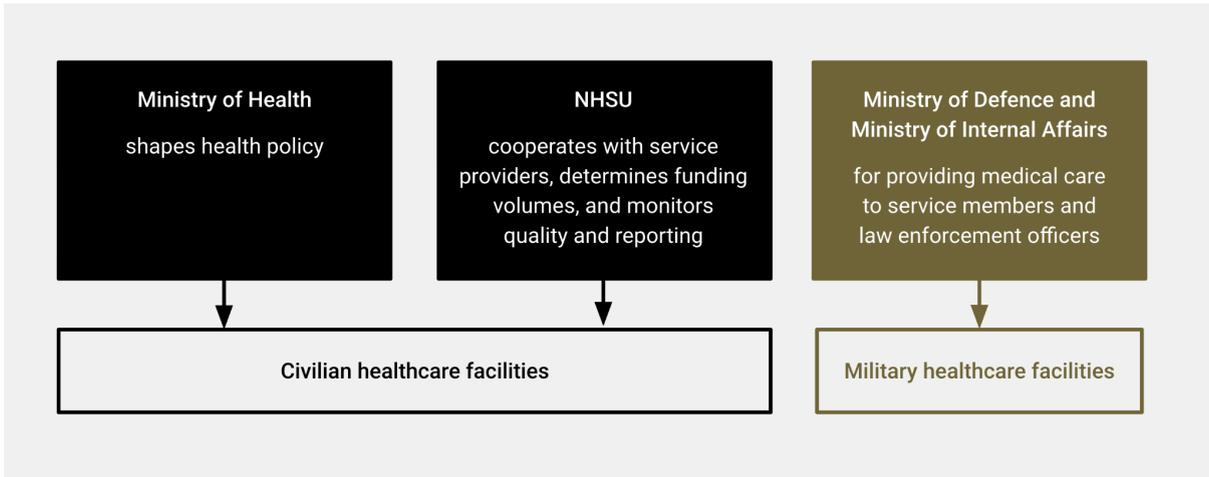
<sup>118</sup> Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On Approving the Concept of Healthcare Financing Reform," No. 1013-r (2016). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1013-2016-p#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1013-2016-p#Text)

These services are divided into two main tiers:

- **primary care**, which includes services provided by family doctors, general practitioners, and paediatricians;
- **specialised care**, where services are delivered by highly specialised experts. It also encompasses inpatient treatment, fields related to rehabilitation, mental health, and long-term palliative care.



Separately, apart from the civilian system, a departmental military health care system operates in Ukraine. Departmental medical institutions fall under the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Security Service of Ukraine, whereas civilian ones are governed by the Ministry of Health and the National Health Service of Ukraine.



Since the onset of the full-scale invasion, the burden on the healthcare system has increased. Hostilities have forced some military medical institutions to scale down, relocate, or shut down entirely. As a result, civilian and military healthcare systems partially merged, forming a Unified Medical Space (UMS)<sup>119</sup>.



Within UMS, service members and veterans can access care through both military hospitals and civilian medical facilities. This integration enables the broader utilisation of civilian healthcare resources, including enhanced infrastructure, increased personnel capacity, and improved funding.

Since veterans currently receive treatment in the same medical facilities as the general population, the future development of a separate healthcare system exclusively for veterans is neither economically viable nor qualitatively justified. The optimal approach is to strengthen the existing healthcare system and integrate veteran-specific services

<sup>119</sup> Petrenko O., Danyliuk O., Zhumadilov A. Human and Military Medicine – A Comprehensive Perspective. Kyiv: Health Solutions for Open Society, 2023. P. 47. [healthsolutions.ngo/library/analitichnyy-zvit-liudyna-i-viyskova-medytyna-kompleksnyy-pohliad](https://healthsolutions.ngo/library/analitichnyy-zvit-liudyna-i-viyskova-medytyna-kompleksnyy-pohliad)

tailored to their needs. This approach will also raise the overall quality of medical care for both service members/veterans and civilians.

Healthcare policies should be developed in close coordination with the military institutions, while the medical systems of these institutions should be reformed and partially integrated into the general healthcare system. This approach ensures continuity of medical care for service members transitioning to civilian life. Integration also helps align treatment and rehabilitation standards, prevents duplication of functions, and optimises the use of resources.

Another key stakeholder in this field is the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. Its role includes facilitating veterans' right to access medical services, safeguarding their mental health and that of their families, and (in coordination with the Ministry of Health) defining the scope of medical services available to them.

Despite the creation of the unified medical space and expanded access to healthcare for service members and veterans, Ukraine's healthcare system is still not fully adapted to their needs. Below, we examine systemic and specific challenges identified by a Coalition of organisations and offer a set of recommendations to address them.

**Important:** This is not an overview of the healthcare system but rather a focus on potential solutions the state can implement to meet veterans' needs, determined through analysis of existing data and information. These needs were identified through an analysis of available data and information.

The recommendations presented are the result of collaborative efforts by a Coalition of organisations with expertise in veterans' affairs, informed by insights from healthcare professionals. We acknowledge that this work does not cover the full spectrum of challenges and solutions and emphasise the need for further research.

# Systemic Changes

## Systematic Study and Forecasting of the Health Impact of Combat Operations

The foundation of an effective medical system is its ability to meet the physical and mental health needs of Ukrainian citizens. The state should understand these needs and how they evolve over time. **Collecting data on the impact of military service and combat exposure on physical and mental health is critical for providing proper support to veterans.**

**It includes:**

- the health status of veterans after service;
- potential long-term war-related consequences they may face;
- health risks veterans should be informed about.

This information is essential for **proactively anticipating veterans' needs** one, five, or even ten years after service, allocating funding for relevant programmes, treatment protocols, and service packages, and **developing preventive measures against potential health issues.**

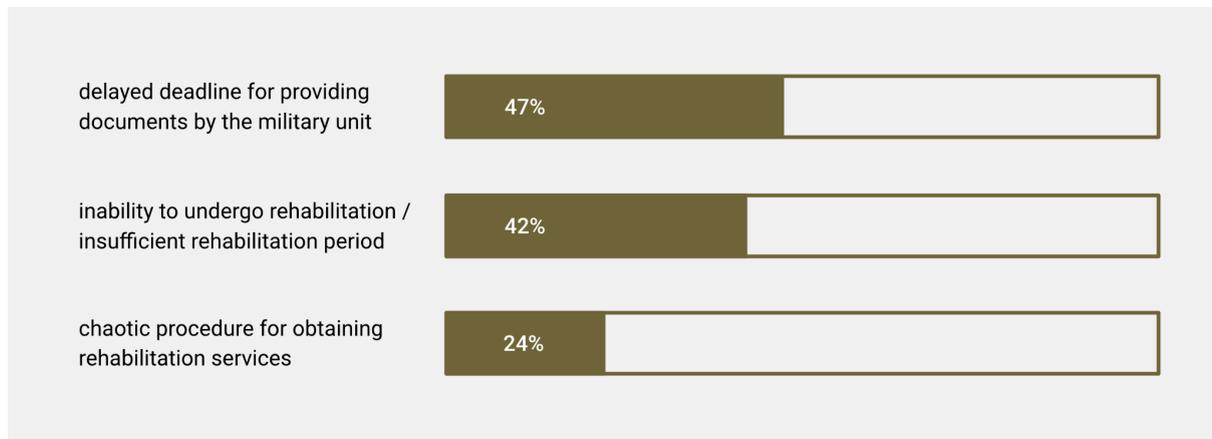
Systematic data collection on the health impact of combat operations will **improve both civilian and military healthcare systems.** It will enable government agencies to develop treatment and prevention protocols tailored to the unique realities of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war.

## Coordinated and Comprehensive Approach to Rehabilitation Assistance

Rehabilitation is a vital component of recovery from wounds, injuries, illnesses, and other health consequences of military service and combat operations. However, Ukraine's current rehabilitation system remains fragmented, creating significant barriers for veterans seeking high-quality services.

According to the 2023 study, "The Path of the Wounded: Needs, Challenges, and Visions for the Future"<sup>120</sup>, 42% of surveyed service members reported organisational challenges in rehabilitation, mentioning either the inability to access rehabilitation or its insufficient duration. Nearly half of the respondents encountered difficulties during the rehabilitation process itself, while 24% described the process of obtaining services as chaotic.

### Organisational challenges in rehabilitation

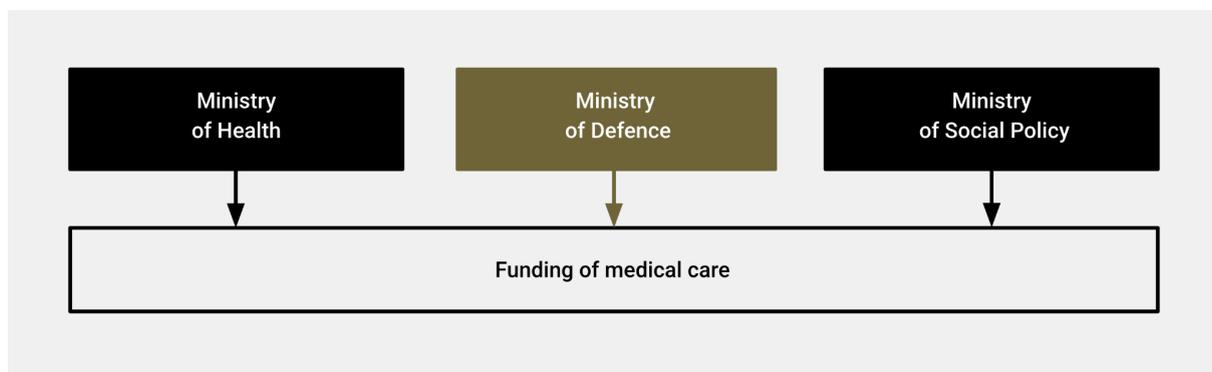


One of the major obstacles in rehabilitation is the division of medical facilities among different government agencies. Some rehabilitation centres fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Internal Affairs, while others operate within the civilian

<sup>120</sup> Pryncyp, Gradus Research, Terra Ukraine. (2023). The Journey of the Wounded: Needs, Challenges, and a Vision for the Future. [pryncyp.org/analytics/socziologichne-doslidzhennya-shlyah-poranenogo-potreby-problemy-ta-bachennya-majbutnogo](https://pryncyp.org/analytics/socziologichne-doslidzhennya-shlyah-poranenogo-potreby-problemy-ta-bachennya-majbutnogo)

healthcare system managed by the Ministry of Health. Additionally, the Ministry of Social Policy oversees its own network of rehabilitation centres.

Financial support for medical services comes from multiple state institutions, hindering coordination and oversight. Alongside the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Social Policy is involved in financing, particularly in ensuring the provision of free prosthetics and rehabilitation aids. Due to an inefficient bureaucratic system, state funds often remain underutilised, forcing veterans to seek assistance from charities or pay for services out of pocket<sup>121</sup>.



The lack of a comprehensive approach in healthcare begins as early as during active service and leads to disruptions in treatment and rehabilitation continuity. For instance, access to broader rehabilitation services at different medical facilities may require transferring patients from one facility to another. This process is logistically and organisationally burdensome and often relies on informal agreements between facilities or the personal efforts of veterans and their families<sup>122</sup>.

The available rehabilitation service packages frequently fail to reflect modern challenges. For example, support programmes and services for individuals dealing with addiction to psychoactive substances remain out of step with the types of drugs commonly used today. While the

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<sup>121</sup> Pryncyp. (2024). Rehabilitation of Ukrainian Military and Veterans: Navigating Systemic Gaps. [pryncyp.org/analytics/rehabilitation](https://pryncyp.org/analytics/rehabilitation)

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

National Health Service of Ukraine provides opioid substitution therapy, it offers no equivalent treatment package for those addicted to modern synthetic drugs.

## Expert Recommendations

- **Continue developing a comprehensive system of physical and psychological rehabilitation for Ukrainian citizens.**

Rehabilitation may serve not only as a tool for physical and mental recovery but also as a vital component in the adaptation and return of veterans. Future reforms in the healthcare system should therefore recognise the role of rehabilitation within a comprehensive, interagency, and cross-sectoral approach.

### **Specifically, we recommend:**

- shifting the approach to rehabilitation – access to services should be based on medical indications and individual needs, rather than a person’s formal status;
- introducing unified standards for the provision of rehabilitation services;
- training rehabilitation specialists with a focus on the needs of veterans;
- ensuring specialised rehabilitation programmes are available in higher medical education institutions;
- making rehabilitation accessible at all levels – from hospitals to in-home care;
- establishing an effective monitoring system to track rehabilitation outcomes and effectiveness.

## Continued Development of a Unified System of Long-Term and Palliative Care and Rehabilitation for People with Functional Impairments

Veterans with severe injuries, amputations, brain function disorders, chronic illnesses, or polytraumas<sup>123</sup> may require more than occasional medical intervention – they often need long-term, systematic care and support. In some cases, full functional recovery may be unattainable, necessitating continuous, uninterrupted care that extends beyond standard medical services.

Particular attention must be paid to veterans who have survived captivity. They may require a combination of long-term medical, psychological, and social support.

Currently, the responsibility for the treatment, medical support, long-term care, and rehabilitation of veterans is divided between two key ministries: the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine. However, these ministries operate independently, with limited interagency coordination and underdeveloped mechanisms for collaboration. Consequently, the long-term care system is fragmented: some services are duplicated, and others may not be covered. This results in restricted access to essential support.

A large part of the care and ongoing support for veterans frequently becomes the responsibility of their families. Long-term care and rehabilitation encompass more than just medical procedures or functional recovery. They also include assistance with daily activities such as grocery shopping, cooking, transport to medical facilities, walks, or other routine tasks.

Since some services are provided by the healthcare system, others by social services, and some are not available at all, veterans and their families frequently face limited access to essential support.

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<sup>123</sup> Polytrauma refers to the simultaneous injury of two or more anatomical regions or organ systems, posing a life-threatening risk to the patient.

The current system of social and medical services also fails to fully address the specific needs of veterans with disabilities. Existing mechanisms provide only a limited response to a broad range of needs related to both medical treatment and everyday challenges.

## Expert Recommendations

- **Continue developing a system of long-term care and proper rehabilitation for veterans with disabilities**

Developing such a system will ensure not only continuous medical support but also facilitate social adaptation, maintain a decent quality of life for people with health disorders, and reduce the burden on family members who often serve as primary caregivers<sup>124</sup>. Within this framework, **specialised programmes may be established for veterans with severe physical injuries** to ensure lifelong comprehensive care and support for their caregivers. This will also enable tailored responses to individual needs related to both medical treatment and daily challenges, such as household tasks, mobility, and employment.

- **Improve palliative care programmes for veterans with disabilities, focused on improving their quality of life**

It is crucial to improve a holistic support system for veterans suffering from severe chronic or progressive illnesses (physical or mental), disabilities resulting from combat injuries, or those requiring palliative care to alleviate symptoms.

It can be achieved by providing accessible medical care through multidisciplinary specialised teams, which will also enable a better response to individual needs related to both medical treatment and daily challenges such as household tasks, mobility, and employment.

**Additionally**, such programmes could, when necessary, **provide** veterans with **lifelong nursing care**. Where a person's condition requires regular

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<sup>124</sup> For more details on the challenges faced by veterans' families and proposed solutions, see the Concept of Public Policy on Veterans' Families.

medical procedures, observation, or care, such services are critical to maintaining stability and preventing complications. The systematic introduction of nursing care could also reduce emergency hospitalisations and improve health outcomes.

### ■ Ensuring Comprehensive Medical and Psychological Rehabilitation for Liberated Prisoners of War

People who endured captivity have suffered severe psychological and physical trauma<sup>125</sup>. Harsh conditions of imprisonment, such as prolonged malnutrition, dehydration, lack of medical care, cold, and unsanitary environments, take a toll on physical health, often causing or worsening illnesses. After release, timely medical diagnostics and treatment are critical to prevent complications. Special attention must be given to injuries, wounds, fractures, and internal organ damage, as improper treatment during captivity may lead to chronic conditions, irreversible bodily changes, and loss of functionality.

Traumatic experience leaves deep marks on the mental and emotional state of veterans. They may struggle with memory and concentration, suffer from painful flashbacks, nightmares, loss of existential trust, and personality disintegration. Prolonged trauma can result in depression, anxiety, fear of death, panic attacks, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

For these reasons, it is vital to provide guaranteed basic support within the first month after release, including rehabilitation to restore psychophysiological functions, work capacity, and social activity, as well as preventive healthcare measures and wellness programmes.

**Additionally**, organise local social and professional adaptation activities for liberated veterans in their places of residence or temporary stay.

The experience of captivity may also affect social adaptation, return to work, and social engagement. Veterans may require support from family, friends, and the community, so it is essential to ensure access to local resources and assistance upon their return.

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<sup>125</sup> People Who Survived Captivity. Ethic of Interaction (30 October 2023). Olena Zelenska's initiative "Barrier-Free." [bf.in.ua/combat\\_exp/liudy-i-aki-perezhyly-polon-shcho-varto-vrakhuvaty-pry-vzaiemodii/](https://bf.in.ua/combat_exp/liudy-i-aki-perezhyly-polon-shcho-varto-vrakhuvaty-pry-vzaiemodii/)

Local adaptation initiatives can help rebuild social connections and reduce the risk of social isolation. Support should also include professional adaptation, retraining where needed, and assistance in re-entering the labour market. This support will help restore economic stability, which is essential for the overall recovery and well-being of veterans.

Adaptation should occur in a convenient environment (within communities where veterans live or temporarily reside), without requiring long-distance travel or visits to central institutions.

## Reforming the Mental Healthcare System

In February 2025, the Law of Ukraine “On the Mental Healthcare System”<sup>126</sup> came into force, marking a significant milestone in building an effective, unified mental healthcare framework. This legislation is the first to formally define key terms, including “mental health,” “mental health services,” “mental health service providers,” and “mental health professionals.” It also categorises various types of support, including psychosocial, psychological, psychiatric, psychotherapeutic, and psychological rehabilitation.

Before the reform, Ukraine’s mental healthcare system was fragmented and inefficient. Obstacles to developing a high-quality system included the lack of legal regulation for psychotherapy services, insufficient qualification standards for providers, and weak oversight of professional ethics and the protection of all parties involved. The new Law introduces a systematic approach to qualifications for mental health professionals, including mandatory professional development and certification.

Even before this Law came into effect, Ukraine had already taken necessary steps to regulate and reform its mental healthcare system. In December 2023, the Ministry of Health issued

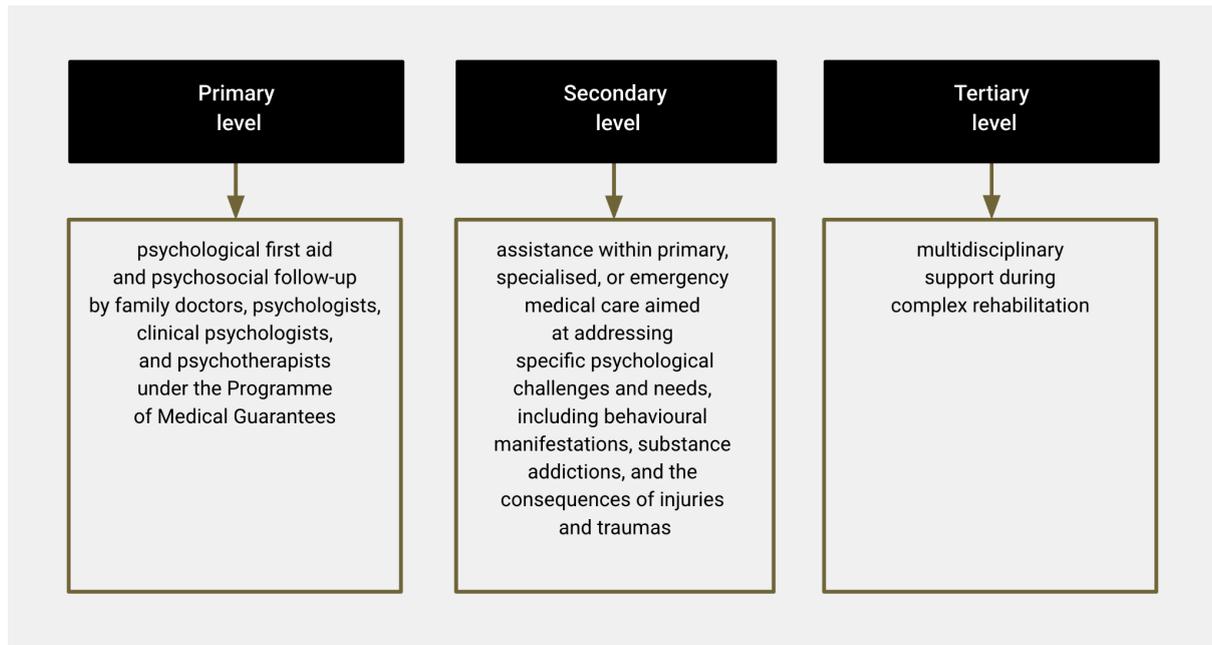
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<sup>126</sup> Law of Ukraine “On the Mental Healthcare System in Ukraine,” No. 4223-IX (2025). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4223-20#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4223-20#Text)

an Order “On the Organisation of Psychosocial Assistance to the Population”<sup>127</sup>, which established guidelines for delivering mental health and psychosocial support services.

Under these guidelines, psychosocial assistance is offered at three levels: **primary, secondary, and tertiary.**

#### Levels of psychosocial assistance



Depending on individual conditions, including life stage and prior experiences, veterans may require psychological services at different levels of psychosocial assistance.

At the **primary level**, the focus is on psychological first aid: basic emotional support, stabilisation of mental and emotional state, and creation of a safe environment. This stage is often critical in reducing distress immediately after traumatic events or returning from the front line.

The **secondary level** may involve psychosocial follow-up, including regular mental health support, counselling, and assistance in adaptation after military service. For some veterans, professional psychological

<sup>127</sup> Order of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine “On the Organisation of Psychosocial Assistance to the Population,” No. 2118 (2024). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0126-24#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0126-24#Text)

assistance is essential to address specific challenges such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), experiences of captivity, the loss of brother- and sister-in-arms, and emotional regulation difficulties.

At the **tertiary level**, multidisciplinary support plays a crucial role during medical or psychological rehabilitation. It helps restore functionality, adapt to change, settle back into civilian life, and ensure comprehensive recovery.

We believe it is essential for veterans to have access to quality mental health support within the general healthcare system. The state should focus on building an effective mental healthcare sector that addresses the challenges of wartime and meets the specific needs of veterans.

Even with the rapid expansion of mental health services, the next decade is likely to see a shortage of qualified professionals able to provide support to everyone who needs it. High demand, a limited number of service providers, and rising costs could lead to a shortage of accessible services for those in need.

**In addition, several systemic barriers in the mental health sector significantly affect the quality of psychological and psychotherapeutic services:**

### **1. Access of professionals to the service market**

Ukraine currently offers no licensing procedure for psychologists or psychotherapists to assess their qualifications, experience, and competency levels. As a result, even a basic higher education diploma grants the right to conduct diagnostics, consultations, corrective interventions, or therapy.

### **2. Lack of comprehensive data on the impact of war, military service, and combat operations on the mental health of both the general population and veterans**

This gap makes it impossible to build an effective mental healthcare system focused on prevention and the development of systemic support solutions.

### 3. Lack of a clear referral system for mental health services

This can lead to an uneven distribution of requests, where access to professional support goes to those who happen to face fewer barriers in obtaining it, rather than to those with the most urgent need.

These challenges require a comprehensive approach, as they impact the entire system of mental healthcare across various levels of medical assistance, in multiple formats, and at multiple stages. At the same time, targeted solutions should already be implemented to improve veterans' access to necessary services and facilitate the rapid rollout of larger-scale changes.

#### Expert Recommendations

- **Enhance the quality of mental health services by regulating access to the service market**

The Law of Ukraine “On the Mental Healthcare System in Ukraine”<sup>128</sup>, adopted in January 2025, provides for the creation and operation of the National Commission on Mental Health. Its responsibilities include certifying mental health professionals who provide services to clients.

As of June 2025, the Commission has yet to begin operations, but its role in verifying the qualifications of specialists is already critically important. Regulating the entry of specialists into the service market should help improve the quality of mental health care available to Ukrainians.

- **Increasing the capacity of the system to deliver quality services through additional training for current mental health professionals and first psychological aid training for all state health service providers**

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<sup>128</sup> Law of Ukraine “On the Mental Healthcare System in Ukraine,” No. 4223-IX (2025). Article 20. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4223-20#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4223-20#Text)

Such training should focus on understanding the specifics of mental health and potential conditions arising in the context of modern warfare for the general population and veterans with combat experience.

When it comes to improving access to mental health support, first psychological aid training is equally essential for all state health service providers, social workers, National Police officers, and operators of hotlines 102 and 112. These are often the first people to interact with individuals in acute crisis or those in need of psychological support or assistance. The goal is to ensure that primary-level psychosocial aid can be provided not only by mental health specialists but also by those already interacting with individuals at this stage. Such training will reduce the workload on mental health specialists and ensure that people receive support when they need it most.

First psychological aid training for all state health service providers will also enable them to provide assistance at any level of medical care, with the option of referring the person to specialised professionals when necessary.

- **Provide the possibility of state compensation for the provision of psychotherapeutic services**

With the potential rise in service costs, it is crucial not only to focus on the professional development of medical staff but also to ensure veterans have access to support. The state compensation programme by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, which provides free psychological assistance to veterans, their families, and the families of the fallen warriors<sup>129</sup>, has already made psychotherapy more accessible and tailored to individual needs. Continuing this programme will allow more veterans to receive high-quality mental health support.

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<sup>129</sup> Become a provider of psychological assistance for war veterans, their families, and the families of the fallen warriors and receive payment for your services from the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. (11 February 2025).

[mu.gov.ua/news/stante-nadavachem-posluh-iz-psykholohichnoi-dopomohy-dlia-veteraniv-viiny-chlena-m-ikhnikh-simei-rodynam-polehlykh-ta-otrymuite-oplatu-za-posluhy-vid-minveteraniv](https://mu.gov.ua/news/stante-nadavachem-posluh-iz-psykholohichnoi-dopomohy-dlia-veteraniv-viiny-chlena-m-ikhnikh-simei-rodynam-polehlykh-ta-otrymuite-oplatu-za-posluhy-vid-minveteraniv)

# Accessibility and Quality of Medical Services

## Addressing the Specific Needs of Veterans under the Programme of Medical Guarantees

The Programme of Medical Guarantees (PMG), funded by the National Health Service of Ukraine, defines the range and scope of services guaranteed by the state to all Ukrainian citizens. However, the full-scale war has forced a significant rethinking of the priorities and operational mechanisms of the Programme.

Hostilities throughout the country have led to a significant increase in the number of patients suffering from combat injuries, wounds, and mental health disorders. This necessitates expanding PMG packages and enhancing the reimbursement system to cover costs for medicines and medical services.

Currently, the PMG still falls short in addressing the specific needs of veterans, who often require long-term rehabilitation, complex surgeries, and recovery after injuries. One reason is the lack of data on how military service and combat operations impact their physical and mental health. Without this data, the National Health Service cannot accurately predict which conditions and illnesses, including chronic ones, are already common or may become common among veterans, nor determine which service packages will be needed to meet their needs.

**Comprehensive health diagnostics, covering both psychological and physical status**, including identifying the effects of traumatic brain injuries, may be critical after returning from service. After limb loss, hearing impairment, or other injuries, veterans may need prosthetics or costly additional materials to restore and maintain functionality. Combat injuries, environmental hazards, harsh conditions, medication, and stress may also impact reproductive health.

This is not a complete list of possible consequences. **Therefore, research on the health of veterans and the general population should form the basis for revising and updating medical packages, as well as ensuring proper funding for critical services.**

## Expert Recommendations

- **Continue transforming the Programme of Medical Guarantees to meet wartime healthcare challenges**

It is essential to conduct regular audits of the PMG to assess the actual demand for medical service packages and identify priority areas for expansion that reflect current needs and challenges.

A gradual transformation of the PMG, taking into account wartime realities, will make the healthcare system more responsive to the pressing needs of veterans and the broader population. Auditing the PMG will help optimise the existing resources by focusing on high-demand areas critical to health recovery.

### What we offer:

- **Introduce regular health check-ups after demobilisation/discharge**

Every veteran should receive a one-time certificate for a **comprehensive medical examination** after demobilisation or discharge. It will help them understand their health status in the early stages of returning to civilian life and take care of themselves according to their individual needs.

Veterans should also have the opportunity for **regular follow-up check-ups** with a reduced set of services to ensure the timely prevention and detection of health problems that may have gone unnoticed during combat operations/high-stress conditions, or that have developed afterwards.

- **Expand the reimbursement programme for outpatient medications**

Outpatient treatment often requires long-term medication use, leading to continuous expenses. Expanding reimbursement to cover individual costs for complex treatment cases reduces barriers to uninterrupted care, eases the financial burden on patients and their families, and improves access to essential services and medicines. Regular access to the necessary medication also lowers the risk of chronic condition flare-ups.

We propose expanding the reimbursement programme in psychiatry and neurology, as some psychiatric and neurological medications are vital for stabilising conditions but are costly. Over time, the list of reimbursable drugs could be further extended.

- **Establish a mechanism for individual funding of expensive medical supplies and ensuring full coverage of their cost**

Veterans with severe injuries may require endoprotheses, hearing aids, plates for osteosynthesis, metal osteosynthetic screws, and other high-cost materials. These items are often prohibitively expensive, yet essential for successful treatment, rehabilitation, and the restoration of mobility and functionality.

Using high-quality medical supplies also significantly reduces the risk of complications and the need for repeat surgeries. For instance, the timely installation of an endoprosthesis or metal structures after injury can preserve limb mobility.

An individual funding mechanism will ensure that veterans have access to these materials, accounting for each patient's specific needs, including anatomical features, type of injury, and medical indications. The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine should define the list and scope of services, as well as the mechanisms for their implementation.

# Information Accessibility and Support

## Raising Veterans' Awareness of Available Medical Services and Their Health Status

After discharge from military service, veterans may face healthcare challenges, one of which is insufficient awareness. Upon returning to civilian life, they may be unaware of their rights, available services, or how to access medical care.

The civilian healthcare system is not always adequately prepared to support veterans during their transition from military to civilian life. Existing packages under the Programme of Medical Guarantees cover a wide range of needs – from preventive check-ups to psychological counselling. Yet, in some cases, potential beneficiaries may not be aware of or understand that such services exist.

Since the start of the full-scale invasion, relevant ministries, particularly the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, have launched both pilot and permanent projects focused on veterans' healthcare. These include dental prosthetics<sup>130</sup> and expanded primary care that incorporates comprehensive screening and psychological counselling<sup>131</sup>. However, it is equally important to ensure that veterans are informed about these programmes.

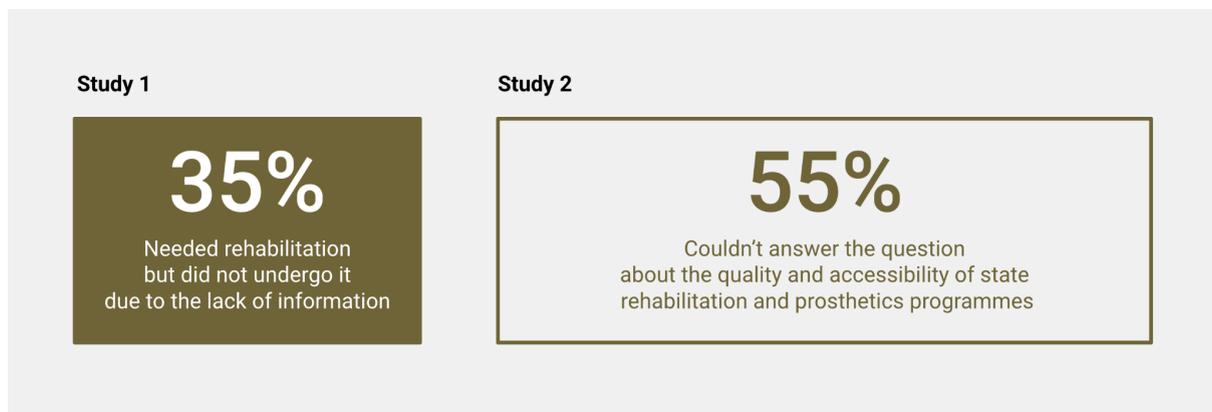
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<sup>130</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (27 February 2024). Resolution No. 212 "Certain Issues Concerning the Implementation of a Pilot Project on Dental Prosthetics for Certain Categories of Persons Who Defended the Independence, Sovereignty, and Territorial Integrity of Ukraine."  
[kmu.gov.ua/npas/deiaki-pytannia-realizatsii-pilotnoho-proektu-shchodo-zuboprotezuvannia-okremykh-katehori-osib-iaki-zakhyshchaly-nezalezhnist-suverenitet-ta-terytorialnu-tsilisnist-ukrainy-i270224-212](https://kmu.gov.ua/npas/deiaki-pytannia-realizatsii-pilotnoho-proektu-shchodo-zuboprotezuvannia-okremykh-katehori-osib-iaki-zakhyshchaly-nezalezhnist-suverenitet-ta-terytorialnu-tsilisnist-ukrainy-i270224-212)

<sup>131</sup> National Health Service of Ukraine (4 March 2025). Announcement on concluding contracts for medical care for the population within the package "Expanded Primary Care Services for Certain Categories of Persons Who Defended the Independence, Sovereignty, and Territorial Integrity of Ukraine" under the Programme of Medical Guarantees.  
[contracting.nszu.gov.ua/kontraktuvannya/kontraktuvannya-2025/ogoloshennya-2025/ogoloshennya-za-paketom-rozshireni-poslugi-z-pervinnoyi-me99](https://contracting.nszu.gov.ua/kontraktuvannya/kontraktuvannya-2025/ogoloshennya-2025/ogoloshennya-za-paketom-rozshireni-poslugi-z-pervinnoyi-me99)

According to a study on the rehabilitation experience of Ukrainian service members and veterans, 35% of respondents who needed rehabilitation did not receive it because they were unaware of such opportunities<sup>132</sup>. Another study on veterans' needs revealed that 55% of respondents struggled to assess the quality and accessibility of state rehabilitation and prosthetics programmes for people with disabilities<sup>133</sup>. It may indicate a lack of awareness or complete ignorance about such state initiatives.

#### Awareness of service members and veterans about rehabilitation programmes



One possible reason for this lack of awareness is insufficient coordination between the policies and strategies of the Security and Defence Forces, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Policy, and the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, particularly regarding the health of service members and veterans. The absence of consolidated information on available services, programmes, and opportunities creates additional barriers for veterans in accessing quality care.

For this reason, it is essential to **develop systemic awareness-raising efforts that will help increase** veterans' awareness of their own health, available services, symptoms to watch for, and mechanisms for seeking help. It should involve not just one-off information campaigns, but the **introduction of a permanent, comprehensive system of communication,**

<sup>132</sup> Pryncyp. (2024). Rehabilitation of Ukrainian Military and Veterans: Navigating Systemic Gaps. [pryncyp.org/analytics/rehabilitation](https://pryncyp.org/analytics/rehabilitation)

<sup>133</sup> Kirillova, Y., Znoviak, V., Kazanska, A. (2023). The Needs of Veterans 2023. The Ukrainian Veterans Foundation. [veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/needs-of-veterans-2023/](https://veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/needs-of-veterans-2023/)

both within healthcare facilities and via dedicated platforms that inform veterans about the services available to them.

Primary care doctors can play a key role in this process, provided they have the necessary training and clearly defined responsibilities. Their tasks may include distributing basic information on mental and physical health, identifying potential challenges related to military service, conducting voluntary initial health screenings, and providing guidance on next steps in treatment, as well as referrals to specialised professionals when needed. This approach can help identify risks early and build trust in the healthcare system among veterans.

Publicly accessible awareness-raising programmes should also be introduced in the form of easy-to-understand informational materials or online campaigns. Such initiatives would help veterans independently recognise signs of psychological distress or disorders, overcome personal barriers, stigma, or stereotypes about seeking help, and develop self-care skills to maintain their well-being.

It could significantly improve the efficiency of the healthcare system, encourage veterans to take care of their own health, and increase the use of existing opportunities. Accessible information about how the system operates should help veterans navigate it and promptly seek the necessary services.

# Conclusions

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## **1 The need for systematic study and forecasting of the health impact of combat operations**

The lack of data on how participation in combat operations in the Russo-Ukrainian war affects physical and mental health hinders the effective operation of the healthcare system.

A systematic and consolidated collection of such information would enable the state to design preventive programmes, assess the short- and long-term health consequences of war, and integrate these findings into medical protocols and service packages.

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## **2 Integrating veteran support into the general healthcare system and strengthening its capacity**

Veterans should receive services within the existing healthcare system, tailored to the challenges they face after military service. Medical support for veterans should be based on actual needs identified through empirical research.

The healthcare system requires continued fundamental reforms and development, including the creation of a comprehensive rehabilitation and psychological assistance system. Its mission should be to fully adapt to the war-related impacts on the physical and mental health of the population, addressing the medical needs of all citizens rather than creating a separate subsystem exclusively for veterans.

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### **3 Strengthening the rehabilitation system**

Rehabilitation is a vital component of recovery from wounds, injuries, illnesses, and other health consequences of military service and combat operations. However, Ukraine's current rehabilitation system remains fragmented, creating significant barriers for veterans seeking high-quality services.

It is essential to continue developing a comprehensive physical and psychological rehabilitation system for Ukrainian citizens, implement unified service standards, train specialists, and establish effective monitoring mechanisms.

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### **4 Long-term care and support for people with a loss of functionality**

Veterans with severe injuries, disabilities, or the experience of captivity require not only medical but also ongoing social support. It is essential to develop a comprehensive long-term care system that includes lifelong nursing assistance and adaptation programmes.

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### **5 A systemic approach to mental health**

Mental health reform is a crucial step, but current resources do not yet meet the high demand. Veterans require services at various levels, starting from basic psychological support to multidisciplinary rehabilitation.

It is necessary to expand training in providing psychological first aid for all state healthcare providers, ensure quality control of psychological services by regulating market access for specialists, and develop mechanisms to make psychological care, including psychotherapy.

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## **6 Continuing to adapt the Programme of Medical Guarantees to current challenges**

Currently, the Programme of Medical Guarantees does not always account for the specific needs of combat injuries, the requirement for long-term rehabilitation, prosthetics, reproductive health support, or the treatment of complex cases. It is therefore critical to continue the audit of the PMG, expand reimbursement, and introduce regular medical check-ups after discharge or demobilisation.

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## **7 Service accessibility through information support**

Veterans may be unaware of the services available to them. Systematic outreach work and accessible information at the community level can significantly increase awareness, trust in the system, and the effectiveness of assistance.



**Component 2**

# **Housing and Physical Environment**

# Abstract

This section of the Concept outlines how housing conditions and the physical environment affect the well-being of veterans, as well as their needs for accessible housing, transportation, and public spaces. The focus is on creating environments that provide basic stability, support the return to civilian life, restore autonomy, and ensure safety and well-being after service.

## **This section examines:**

- housing needs of veterans after service, including issues arising from loss or lack of housing, internal displacement, and financial instability;
- existing mechanisms of state housing policy and support programmes (compensation, preferential loans, rental options);
- the need to adapt housing for veterans with disabilities;
- the role of utilities in the financial stability and comfort of veterans;
- the importance of mobility and accessibility in maintaining veterans' activity levels, social connections, and access to services;
- challenges and support tools in the areas of public transport, personal mobility, and state transportation policy.

# Introduction

Regardless of why they end their service, what they experienced, or what their immediate post-service needs are, veterans require a stable, safe, and affordable space that supports recovery, well-being, and personal growth<sup>134</sup>. This need is not related to combat experience only. It mirrors challenges faced by many Ukrainians – internal displacement, the loss or destruction of homes in Russian attacks, living with disabilities and the need for a barrier-free environment, or the struggle to buy or rent housing at a price proportionate to their income. Combat experience, however, can present additional challenges in meeting these needs.

During military service, veterans are unable to take care of their homes, whether through maintenance or improvements. This is especially true for those without a spouse or partner who can handle these matters in their absence, as well as for those without the necessary financial, time, or other resources to do so.

For veterans whose homes remain in temporarily occupied territories, the challenges multiply. While in service, they cannot experience internal displacement, such as moving to a new community, renting or buying new housing, or adapting to unfamiliar surroundings. Even if their families have already gone through this process, veterans will return to an unfamiliar community and housing that does not feel like home. If their property has been damaged or destroyed, repairs, reconstruction, claims for compensation, or the search for a new home should all be put on hold until their service ends.

Disability and the need for an accessible environment are common among civilians, but combat injuries bring specific demands. For instance, some veterans may be highly sensitive to noise or light, or require private and safe accommodations, which place additional requirements on the quality and functionality of their housing. If their homes are not adapted to these new needs, veterans may no longer be able to use them and may have to undergo lengthy renovations

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<sup>134</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). Well-being of veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/dobrobut\\_-opys-skorocheno.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/dobrobut_-opys-skorocheno.pdf)

or find a new place to live. For them, the living space must provide a sense of safety, comfort in daily life, and the possibility of independent living – from moving around the home to cooking, showering, or simply opening doors.

Combat experience can also indirectly affect veterans' ability to buy or rent housing. Long periods of service can result in losing a stable income in the civilian job market, leaving veterans to rebuild their well-being from scratch upon their return. Even with state support programmes in place, many struggle to save for a down payment, compete for market-rate housing, or secure an affordable rental for a reasonable period. Thus, combat experience affects not only the physical and emotional capacity to find, furnish, or maintain housing but also limits access to the basic resources that should be available to all citizens.

For veterans, as for many others, housing security is a cornerstone of their well-being, enabling them to rebuild their lives with security and dignity. That is why housing support in the post-service period, when rest and recovery are most needed, is also an acknowledgement of their contribution, experience, and the challenges they have faced.

A safe and comfortable living space also encompasses the broader system of mobility and accessibility – from urban planning to social infrastructure and public transportation. Veterans should be equal and welcome participants in and users of all public spaces in their communities, not confined to specialised “veteran” facilities or services. This approach supports not only their adaptation, but also the creation of a society that values their experiences and integrates them into daily and civic life without stigma or marginalisation.

Research in urban studies, sociology, social psychology<sup>135</sup>, and medicine<sup>136</sup> shows that mobility expands a person's safe and comfortable space. The broader this space is, the more essential

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<sup>135</sup> Angell, L. C., & Klassen, R. D. (2014). Integrating environmental issues into the mainstream: An agenda for research in operations management. *Journal of Operations Management*. [doi.org/10.1016/j.jom.2014.01.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jom.2014.01.010)

<sup>136</sup> Health and well-being care: How mobility impacts quality of life. (2024, 13 March). LOH Medical. [lohmedical.com/en/blog/health-and-wellbeing-care-how-mobility-impacts-quality-life](https://lohmedical.com/en/blog/health-and-wellbeing-care-how-mobility-impacts-quality-life)

infrastructure and social activities it encompasses, which directly influence well-being in other areas. For veterans, this can be a crucial part of a smooth return and adaptation to civilian life.

Mobility also means the ability to move independently. The accessibility of public transport, well-planned routes, and the ability to own and use a personal vehicle without physical or financial barriers directly affect veterans' capacity to remain active, access services, maintain social connections, and preserve their independence.

Housing and the physical environment form an interconnected system that underpins daily life. This component of public policy should ensure decent living conditions, reduce the risk of isolation, and lay the foundation for the recovery of veterans' well-being.

# Housing Needs of Veterans

Housing is a fundamental human need, and its availability depends on broader socioeconomic conditions and national housing policy.

For veterans, a comfortable home is one of the key elements of their well-being at every stage of returning to civilian life. It is within their own homes that they can feel physically and emotionally safe.

According to The Journeys of Veterans study<sup>137</sup>, **returning service members have the following housing needs:**

- 1) a personal space and a place to live;
- 2) homeownership – the ability to buy property, particularly through affordable housing programmes, own and modify a living space;
- 3) comfortable conditions – living arrangements that match their idea of comfort;
- 4) private space for recovery – the ability to be alone when needed;
- 5) inclusive housing – adapting living space for those with injuries.

During wartime service, warriors generally live away from home, unable to maintain or improve their property. Upon discharge or a significant change in service status, veterans may need a home to return to or a place to rebuild their well-being.

Russia's full-scale invasion has also had a negative impact on housing availability. The Kyiv School of Economics estimates<sup>138</sup> that more than 170,000 residential buildings, with a total area of 88.9 million square metres (8.6% of the entire national housing stock), have been destroyed

<sup>137</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans.

[veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

<sup>138</sup> Direct damages to Ukraine's infrastructure have risen to \$170 billion, according to the KSE Institute's estimate as of November 2024. Kyiv School of Economics.

[kse.ua/ua/about-the-school/news/pryami-zbitki-infrastrukturi-ukrayini-cherез-viynu-zrosli-do-170-mlrd-otsinka-kse-institute-stanom-na-listopad-2024-roku](https://kse.ua/ua/about-the-school/news/pryami-zbitki-infrastrukturi-ukrayini-cherез-viynu-zrosli-do-170-mlrd-otsinka-kse-institute-stanom-na-listopad-2024-roku)

or damaged by hostilities since 2022. This has significantly impacted the housing conditions of approximately 1.4 million households, affecting around 3.4 million people.

Because veterans come from different regions, age groups, and income levels (and because Russia's invasion has negatively impacted housing across the country since 2014), their experiences vary widely: some have no home of their own, some have lost access to it due to occupation, and others have had their homes destroyed or damaged.

For veterans from temporarily occupied or frontline areas, the transition to civilian life often begins not with returning home, but with searching for a new one for themselves and their loved ones. This need may be temporary (if they plan to go back after liberation or reconstruction) or permanent (if their homes have been completely destroyed or remain under temporary occupation). Not all veterans choose to purchase new housing, whether due to a lack of funds or a lack of desire, and opt to rent instead. This can weaken financial stability and make it more difficult to develop long-term housing plans.

Returning from service combined with the experience of internal displacement can create a double challenge for veterans: the process of recovery and adaptation to civilian life is layered over the need to find housing because of losing it or being unable to return to their home.

# State Housing Policy

The right to housing for all citizens of Ukraine is enshrined in Article 47 of the Constitution: “Everyone has the right to housing. The State creates conditions that enable every citizen to build, purchase property, or rent housing.”<sup>139</sup> These conditions are implemented through housing programmes designed for all residents of the country, including veterans.

**Currently, veterans have access to the following general housing support measures<sup>140</sup>:**

- registration for housing in the absence of a home – receiving accommodation under the standard procedure;
- registration for housing to improve living conditions;
- the preferential mortgage programme eOselia (eHousing);
- the state programme for affordable housing;
- the Personal Home programme, which offers long-term loans for individual housing construction in rural areas;
- compensation for destroyed housing.

**In addition to these general programmes, current legislation provides veterans with targeted housing support:**

- people with combat experience have the right to priority housing allocation within the standard procedure, and persons with disabilities resulting from war are entitled to housing allocation ahead of all other categories;
- monetary compensation for entitled housing – for veterans with Group I and II disabilities resulting from war;

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<sup>139</sup> Constitution of Ukraine. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254k/96-bp#Text](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254k/96-bp#Text)

<sup>140</sup> Pryncyp. Housing Programmes for Veterans. [navigator.pryncyp.org/veterans/housing-programs](http://navigator.pryncyp.org/veterans/housing-programs)

- monetary compensation for entitled housing – for people with combat experience with IDP status or veterans with Group III disabilities resulting from war;
- free major repairs of their houses or flats;
- one-time monetary compensation for rental housing (for a period of up to six months)<sup>141</sup>.

Despite the legislative guarantees, state housing policy for veterans is somewhat fragmented and poorly coordinated, while national programmes are not always implemented effectively due to procedural hurdles and insufficient funding.

The current **Housing Code of Ukraine**<sup>142</sup>, adopted in 1983, does not account for decades of changes in housing stock and societal needs. As a result, state housing policy requires a review and modernisation.

Some important steps are already underway. In January 2025, the government registered **Draft Law No. 12377, “On the Foundations of Housing Policy,”**<sup>143</sup> intended to shape Ukraine’s housing policy in line with European Union standards and norms, including principles of accessibility and barrier-free environments, fair and equal access to housing, strategic planning, and social integration. The Draft Law also envisages the creation of a Unified Information and Analytical Housing System to serve as a public registry containing data on Ukraine’s housing stock and eligibility for state housing support.

Such housing reform is a necessary step toward a unified housing policy strategy. A well-developed national housing strategy would enable more efficient resource allocation and ensure housing not only for veterans but also for other social groups in need of support. Its foundation already includes an important approach recognising that people’s needs and ability to exercise their housing rights depend on their financial

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<sup>141</sup> Pryncyp. Housing Programmes for Veterans. [navigator.pryncyp.org/veterans/housing-programs](http://navigator.pryncyp.org/veterans/housing-programs)

<sup>142</sup> Housing code of Ukraine (30 June 1983). No. 5464-X. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5464-10#Text](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5464-10#Text)

<sup>143</sup> Draft Law of Ukraine No. 12377, “On the Foundations of Housing Policy” (6 January 2025). [itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/55543](http://itd.rada.gov.ua/billinfo/Bills/Card/55543)

capabilities and physical health. The strategy also acknowledges that private activity in the housing sector has changed since the Housing Code was adopted and now requires regulation.

Beyond this systemic challenge – the absence of an updated national housing strategy – we have also identified a set of pressing issues that directly affect the housing well-being of veterans, which we examine in detail below.

**Important:** This work does not provide a general overview of Ukraine’s housing sector and its current challenges. The focus is on potential solutions the state can implement to meet the needs of veterans, identified through analysis of available data and information.

These recommendations were developed through discussions within a Coalition of organisations with expertise in veterans’ affairs and consultations with sector-specific experts. We acknowledge, however, that it was not possible to cover every potential challenge and solution and emphasise that further research is essential to design effective housing support for veterans.

# Personal Housing

According to the Veteran Reintegration<sup>144</sup> study, in 2019, the share of veterans who owned housing was nearly 20% lower compared to the civilian population. The full-scale war may have altered the situation, but no updated data is yet available.

Owning a home can be a crucial aspect of veterans' well-being. eOselia is one of the affordable housing programmes in Ukraine, which began operating in October 2022. It enables all citizens aged 18 to 70 to secure a housing loan at 7% for the first 10 years, followed by a 10% rate thereafter. These terms are considerably more favourable than market alternatives such as mortgage annual rates of 15–25% offered by banks.

Certain groups – contract service members, healthcare workers, teachers, and scientists – have access to preferential terms: a 3% interest rate for the first 10 years, rising to 6% thereafter.

## eOselia Affordable Mortgage Programme

Borrower group	Annual interest rates	
	First 10 years	Thereafter
Overall	7 %	10 %
Preferential (including contract service members)	3 %	6 %

Veterans are not included in the list of preferential categories and therefore cannot access the most favourable programme terms. After returning to civilian life, many often lack the financial resources

<sup>144</sup> IREX, Veteran Hub. (2021). Programme for Reintegration of Veterans. Analytical Report of 14 July 2021. P.3. [irex.org/sites/default/files/Veterans-Current-Employment-Conditions-Ukrainian.pdf](https://irex.org/sites/default/files/Veterans-Current-Employment-Conditions-Ukrainian.pdf)

to purchase housing under the eOselia standard terms, as their service frequently prevents them from building capital or saving for a down payment.

Conditions	Barriers
<b>Down payment</b>	
<p>Up to 20–30% of the housing value<sup>145</sup>.</p> <p>For people under 25, it is reduced to 10% of the housing value<sup>146</sup></p>	<p>Even with the reduced rate for citizens under 25, the sum may still be prohibitively high for many veterans just starting to rebuild their civilian well-being</p>
<b>Age of housing</b>	
<p>Flat or house must be no more than three years old</p>	<p>This condition creates major difficulties for those living in regions with low construction rates or where costly new builds are in high demand.</p> <p>Veterans in small towns and villages often cannot use the programme at all due to a lack of qualifying housing.</p> <p>In large cities, high prices for new builds make purchase challenging, even with concessional loans.</p>

<sup>145</sup> eOselia. Affordable Mortgage Programme. eOselia. Diia. [eoselia.diia.gov.ua](https://eoselia.diia.gov.ua)

<sup>146</sup> How to Get a Loan for Housing: A Detailed Review of the Updated eOselia Programme (2024). Svii Dim. [sviidim.media/articles/help/yak-otrymaty-zhytlo-v-kredyt-detalnyj-oglyad-onovlenoyi-programy-yeoselya](https://sviidim.media/articles/help/yak-otrymaty-zhytlo-v-kredyt-detalnyj-oglyad-onovlenoyi-programy-yeoselya)

Conditions	Barriers
Interest rate	
Depends on borrower category	<p>Veterans, IDPs, and other citizens outside the preferential categories can obtain a 7% mortgage, provided they do not own housing or its size is below the set norms.</p> <p>After 10 years, the rate rises to 10% or 6% respectively, which affects long-term programme accessibility.</p> <p>Given rising housing prices, even 7% rate can be too high for veterans seeking to buy housing.</p>

## Expert Recommendations

- **Grant veterans a one-time preferential mortgage under the eOselia programme**

Since eOselia already provides targeted support to specific population groups, we propose extending it to veterans. Such a step would not only provide practical assistance but also serve as a form of state recognition of their contribution to defending the country.

Upon returning, veterans often need time to recover and adapt – a period during which they may undergo medical treatment, reassess their values, retrain for new professions, change jobs, and rebuild their civilian lives and financial stability. At the same time, they may need affordable and comfortable housing, yet lack the means to purchase it. Granting veterans a preferential mortgage under the eOselia programme would make it easier for them to start a new life after service, with a home of their own and state support during the recovery phase.

## Housing for Veterans With Experience of Internal Displacement

Before the full-scale war, veterans could be on waiting lists for housing in settlements that later fell under temporary occupation. In 2018, Ukraine introduced a mechanism that allows such veterans to receive monetary compensation to purchase new housing. This mechanism was regulated by Resolution No. 280 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine<sup>147</sup>, but in 2023, it was discontinued, and no effective replacement has been introduced yet.

The lack of stable funding and the uncertainty over the programme resumption have left veterans with IDP status without an effective system for receiving housing support.

Veterans whose homes were damaged or destroyed as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation now have priority access to monetary compensation. In contrast, internally displaced veterans who never received housing have lost that opportunity.

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<sup>147</sup> Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 280 of 18 April 2018, "On the Provision of Housing to Internally Displaced Persons Who Defended the Independence, Sovereignty, and Territorial Integrity of Ukraine," was effective till 24 March 2023. The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine then approved Resolution No. 263, "Certain Issues of the Provision of Housing to Internally Displaced Persons Who Defended the Independence, Sovereignty, and Territorial Integrity of Ukraine," that amended Resolution No. 280.

## Expert Recommendations

- **Provide partial compensation for unreceived or destroyed housing for veterans with internal displacement experience**

We propose reinstating the mechanism outlined in Resolution No. 280 and adapting it **for veterans with internal displacement experience who:**

- were on the waiting list for housing in occupied communities before the full-scale invasion and have no means of obtaining the promised property;
- have had their homes destroyed due to Russia's armed aggression

Financial compensation for unreceived housing restores justice for veterans who formally had the right to housing but, in fact, lost it. This measure would allow them to purchase or rent new accommodations suited to their needs, accounting for the new realities of war – mass displacement, housing destruction, and lack of access to homes in occupied territories.

# Rental Housing

An important direction for housing policy development is alternative housing solutions, such as rentals or sublets<sup>148</sup>.

Beyond the lack of financial resources to buy a flat or house, some veterans may prefer renting for other reasons. Purchasing property requires a certain level of stability in employment, a choice of location, and understanding one's needs. According to The Journeys of Veterans study, it may take approximately a year and a half or longer for veterans to reach the stage of focusing on self-care and well-being after returning from service<sup>149</sup>.

At the same time, comfortable housing is an immediate need after returning from military service, especially for veterans from temporarily occupied territories or combat zones whose homes are no longer accessible. Developing alternative housing programmes could therefore be an effective way to expand housing support.

In March 2025, prompted by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine, the government passed a resolution that **governs monetary compensation for housing rental exclusively for veterans who**<sup>150</sup>

- own housing that has been damaged or destroyed due to hostilities;
- own housing in areas of active hostilities or in territories temporarily occupied by Russia;
- are undergoing rehabilitation outside their place of residence or registration.

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<sup>148</sup> Subletting refers to renting housing by a service member at their place of deployment if they do not own a home in that location. The state provides financial compensation for such subletting (renting) to service members who do not have access to military-provided housing.

<sup>149</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

<sup>150</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (7 March 2025). Resolution No. 252 "On Certain Issues of Monetary Compensation for the Rental of Housing to Persons Who Defended the Independence, Sovereignty, and Territorial Integrity of Ukraine." [kmu.gov.ua/npas/deiaki-pytannia-vyplaty-hroshovoi-kompensatsii-osobam-iaki-zakhyshchaly-nezal-ezhnist-suverenitet-ta-terytorialnu-tsilisnist-ukrainy-za-naim-orendu-nymy-zhytlovykh-prymishchen-252-070325](https://kmu.gov.ua/npas/deiaki-pytannia-vyplaty-hroshovoi-kompensatsii-osobam-iaki-zakhyshchaly-nezal-ezhnist-suverenitet-ta-terytorialnu-tsilisnist-ukrainy-za-naim-orendu-nymy-zhytlovykh-prymishchen-252-070325)

They can receive the compensation only once and only for a period of six months. **The amount of compensation also varies by territory and cannot exceed the following number of subsistence minimums<sup>151</sup> for able-bodied people:**



If the rental price exceeds the compensation limits set by the state, veterans are responsible for covering the difference themselves.

While this programme is an important step toward supporting alternative mechanisms for exercising the right to housing, the list of eligible veterans is limited.

### Expert Recommendations

- **Implement state compensation for a portion of rental expenses for all veterans without housing**

We believe that partial rental compensation should be available to all veterans and their families who do not own a home. After returning from service, veterans may need to rent housing while simultaneously handling paperwork, searching for new civilian employment or returning to a previous job, adjusting to civilian life, and (when necessary) undergoing treatment, rehabilitation, or recovery.

Partial rental compensation would provide crucial support for veterans in the first months after their return from service, helping restore financial stability and a sense of security. We recommend offering it **to all veterans for the first six months after completing service** to support them during the adaptation period.

<sup>151</sup> As of January 1, 2025, the subsistence minimum for able-bodied people in Ukraine is UAH 3,028.

It is also worth **revising the current caps on rental compensation**. At present, the maximum payout for rentals is offered in Dnipro, Kyiv, Lviv, and Odesa, amounting to twice the 2025 subsistence minimum for able-bodied persons, which is UAH 6,056 per month. Although designed only as partial support, this amount often falls short of actual rental market prices in the cities. For instance, the average rent for a one-bedroom flat in Kyiv in 2025 ranges from UAH 9,000 to 37,000, depending on the neighbourhood<sup>152</sup>.

**Additionally,** as it intersects multiple policy areas, partial rental compensation for veterans should be implemented as a joint programme of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, the Ministry for Communities and Territories Development, and the Ministry of Social Policy. Such interagency coordination is essential to ensure comprehensive data collection, account for regional differences, and avoid duplication of support.

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<sup>152</sup> Rental Market Statistics. LUN. [lun.ua/misto/stat/rent/kyiv](https://lun.ua/misto/stat/rent/kyiv)

# Adapting Housing for Veterans with Disabilities

According to the Unified State Register of War Veterans, as of 2025, Ukraine has 120,974 veterans with disabilities resulting from war<sup>153</sup>. Depending on the nature of their injuries, they may lose the ability to use their homes comfortably. **Common barriers include:**

- doorways too narrow for convenient wheelchair access;
- kitchen work surfaces at unsuitable heights;
- the absence of assistive fixtures in bathrooms for independent use.

Addressing these challenges requires a systemic approach, including a review of the state building codes (DBNs), which form the basis for ensuring barrier-free housing environments.

**DBNs** are mandatory regulatory acts that set requirements for the design, construction, reconstruction, operation, and maintenance of buildings and facilities, including public spaces, rehabilitation facilities, and housing. They are intended to guarantee barrier-free access for all population groups.

The Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine regularly amends DBNs, including those applicable to multifamily buildings. For example, DBN “Accessibility of Buildings and Structures”<sup>154</sup> (B.2.2-40:2018) requires the installation of barrier-free entrances, lifts, ramps, mechanisms, and portable loading platforms. Under these codes, failure to meet accessibility requirements can be grounds for denying a building’s commissioning.

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<sup>153</sup> Number of people with combat experience 01.04.2025.xlsx. Diia. [data.gov.ua/en/dataset/034f43a4-133a-498f-8478-6076ed1013e4/resource/0ed358d8-2ad1-4b31-9850-42ca27c83a24](https://data.gov.ua/en/dataset/034f43a4-133a-498f-8478-6076ed1013e4/resource/0ed358d8-2ad1-4b31-9850-42ca27c83a24)

<sup>154</sup> BN01:2101-4608-3065-1581. Portal of the Unified State Electronic System in the Construction Sector. [e-construction.gov.ua/laws\\_detail/3192362160978134152?doc\\_type=2](https://e-construction.gov.ua/laws_detail/3192362160978134152?doc_type=2)

However, control over DBN compliance is not always effective. Due to insufficient transparency in monitoring and inspections, even new buildings may fail to meet accessibility, energy efficiency, and safety standards. It is crucial that inspection bodies possess both a supervisory and advisory role, particularly during the design phase, to reduce the risk of DBN noncompliance and prevent construction delays. Additionally, DBNs should be aligned with ISO international standards and reflect the real needs of users, with updates carried out systematically and at set intervals.

In 2021, the government approved the **National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine until 2030**<sup>155</sup>, and in March 2025, it adopted an **action plan for 2025–2026 to implement it**<sup>156</sup>. This plan involves reviewing DBNs, amending building standards to meet accessibility requirements, and introducing an effective housing exchange mechanism for people with disabilities, particularly those who are unable to adapt their current homes due to cost or other factors.

2025 is set as the launch year for these measures, with the Ministries for Communities and Territories Development, Social Policy, and Veterans Affairs responsible for introducing a housing exchange mechanism for people with disabilities.

However, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine has yet to approve a procedure for housing adaptation. Current legislation also has no defined programmes or designated bodies responsible for adapting housing to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

In August 2024, the Ministry of Social Policy began drafting a standardised service for adapting homes for people with disabilities<sup>157</sup>,

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<sup>155</sup> Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine “On Approving the National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine until 2030,” No. 366-r (14 April 2021). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/366-2021-p#n10](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/366-2021-p#n10)

<sup>156</sup> Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine “On Approving the 2025–2026 Action Plan for Implementing the National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine until 2030” No. 374-r (25 March 2025). [kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-zatverdzhennia-bezbarierno-ho-prostoru-v-ukraini-na-period-do-2030-roku-i-374](https://kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-zatverdzhennia-bezbarierno-ho-prostoru-v-ukraini-na-period-do-2030-roku-i-374)

<sup>157</sup> Ministry of Social Policy Drafts a Standard for Adapting Housing for People with Disabilities and a New Social Care Model – Zholnovych (22 August 2024). Interfax. Ukraine. [interfax.com.ua/news/general/1008835.html](https://interfax.com.ua/news/general/1008835.html)

intended to outline a process for making housing suitable for comfortable living. However, as of the time of writing this concept, the service has not been approved.

At present, veterans can apply for compensation to adapt their homes. If they require modifications of their housing, such as ramps, specialised bathrooms, or lifts, they can submit a request to their local self-government body. A commission then inspects their home and issues recommendations for the necessary changes. Based on this, the local authorities decide on the adaptation, approve a cost estimate, and select a contractor.

Although the law provides for compensation of adaptation costs for veterans, the process is not standardised nationwide and depends on the policies of individual communities.

As a result, some veterans find it simpler to carry out adaptations at their own expense. However, this can be a significant financial burden, as costs are often high and compensation is not guaranteed.

If housing cannot be adapted to the needs of a person with disabilities, the law allows for its replacement.

**The Housing Code of Ukraine outlines two options<sup>158</sup>:**

### **1. Exchange of state or municipal rental housing**

Suppose a person lives in rental housing owned by the state or a municipality (e.g., a flat belonging to a government or community). In that case, they may exchange it for another, more accessible home. However, this option is not available if such housing is privately owned by the person or another individual.

Another obstacle is the underdeveloped social rental housing sector in Ukraine. In Western Europe, social housing owned by local communities and rented to vulnerable groups is relatively widespread.

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<sup>158</sup> Housing Code of Ukraine. Article 42-1. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5464-10#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5464-10#Text)

In Ukraine, however, it accounts for just 1.5% of the rental housing market<sup>159</sup>.

## 2. Exchange of private housing with transfer to community ownership

Under this mechanism, veterans with disabilities may transfer their privately owned flat or house to the local territorial community. In return, the community must provide another housing that is more suitable and adapted to the person's needs.

To implement these mechanisms, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine should approve a special procedure. However, no such decision has been adopted, making the provision unenforceable in practice.

In addition, under Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 719<sup>160</sup>, veterans with Group I or II disabilities who are on the housing waiting list are eligible for monetary compensation for unprovided housing. This payment serves as an essential form of support, enabling veterans to independently purchase or co-finance housing that is better suited to their individual needs, including in terms of accessibility, location, and condition. However, veterans with Group III disabilities are excluded from this compensation, even if their housing situation is critical.



<sup>159</sup> Social Housing in Ukraine to Become Paid – Expert (20 January 2025). Ukrinform. [ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3950638-socialne-zitlo-v-ukraini-stane-platnim-ekspert.html](https://ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3950638-socialne-zitlo-v-ukraini-stane-platnim-ekspert.html)

<sup>160</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (19 October 2016). Resolution No. 719 “On the Provision of Housing to Certain Categories of People Who Defended the Independence, Sovereignty, and Territorial Integrity of Ukraine, and to Their Family Members.” [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/719-2016-p#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/719-2016-p#Text)

## Expert Recommendations

- **Provide monetary compensation instead of non-adapted housing exchanges**

Since current legal mechanisms for replacing non-adapted housing for veterans with disabilities are largely ineffective, an alternative solution is needed. We recommend offering monetary compensation in place of exchanges, allowing veterans to resolve their housing needs independently. This would enable them to purchase housing that meets their physical needs or carry out adaptations of their choice, such as installing ramps, widening doorways, or modifying bathrooms.

This option is more flexible, faster, and more realistic than arranging exchanges through local communities, especially amid wartime and housing destruction.

- **Provide compensation for housing adaptation**

Veterans with disabilities returning from war may face significant expenses for medical treatment and rehabilitation, which, coupled with the loss of income and financial well-being, can make even basic home modifications a financial burden.

Although the state guarantees accessible housing for people with disabilities, all adaptation expenses are borne entirely by the individual. A mechanism for direct state funding of housing adaptations should therefore be introduced to cover the cost of renovations, ramps, and adapted bathrooms. This would prevent veterans from having to bear the initial expenses themselves. Implementing such a compensation mechanism could be paired with the defining national standards for adaptive housing.

**Additionally,** if a veteran does not own housing, a **partial rental compensation** would be a reasonable solution, as flats equipped adequately for the needs of veterans with disabilities tend to be more expensive on the rental market.

# Housing and Utility Services

Upon returning from service, veterans begin rebuilding their civilian well-being and assets. Many require time for adaptation, recovery, medical treatment, and rehabilitation and cannot immediately return to employment or entrepreneurship.

Some need time for education, retraining, self-discovery, or adjusting their new skills into the civilian labour market. This often affects their income and financial well-being for months or even years after discharge, as some veterans may remain without a stable source of earnings. According to The Journeys of Veterans study, the recovery period until re-rooting into civilian life can take around three years after leaving service<sup>161</sup>. Support during this time is critical to building long-term well-being.

One of the most significant and recurring costs necessary for comfortable living is the payment of housing and utility services. Currently, the state provides utility benefits to multiple categories, including veterans. Such benefits offer a lifelong discount on utility payments within the limits of the standard housing area and consumption. All veterans are entitled to a discount of up to 75% on utility bills, while veterans with disabilities receive a full 100% discount. This is one of the most accessible benefits for veterans: according to a survey by the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation survey<sup>162</sup>, 69.2% of respondents reported using it.

Despite being widely accessible, the utility benefit does not fully account for the actual financial status and needs of veterans. It is available to all, regardless of income level, other resources, or time since discharge from service. It can lead to budgetary strain and a sense of inequality among veterans with varying financial situations, as their need for utility benefits depends on their income and stage of rebuilding their civilian well-being.

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<sup>161</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. [drive.google.com/file/d/1gSlkhpMoJHDFNgO6FV0o-y6oA99ieq6a/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gSlkhpMoJHDFNgO6FV0o-y6oA99ieq6a/view)

<sup>162</sup> Ukrainian Veterans Foundation (2024). Needs of Veterans. P. 5. [veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Opytuvannia-veteraniv-zhovten-2024.pdf](https://veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Opytuvannia-veteraniv-zhovten-2024.pdf)

## Expert Recommendations

- **Implement financial aid to cover housing and utility expenses during the recovery phase**

We propose reimbursing veterans for the cost of housing and utilities (including liquefied gas and solid/liquid heating fuels) during their first three years of transition. This financial assistance would alleviate financial pressure and enable them to focus on adapting and rebuilding their civilian well-being.

Assistance should be provided regardless of homeownership status, in the manner and amounts specified by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. It would make it possible to account for individual conditions such as the housing size, location (urban or rural), and preferred fuel type, ensuring the reimbursement mechanism is flexible and responsive to the actual needs of veterans.

- **Offer subsidies to cover housing and utility expenses, considering needs and financial and property status, following the recovery period**

After the initial recovery period, veterans may achieve greater financial stability. At this stage, we recommend offering subsidies for housing and utility services, liquefied gas, and solid/liquid heating fuel.

Veterans would be eligible for subsidies on the same terms as the general population, in line with Resolution No. 389 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine<sup>163</sup>, and subject to income assessment.

This approach would create a more targeted support system, taking into account veterans' actual paying capacity and needs, and ensuring that state resources reach those who genuinely need them.

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<sup>163</sup> Benefits for housing and utility services based on the income of citizens (22 February 2024). Pension Fund of Ukraine. [pfu.gov.ua/2163497-pilgy-na-oplatu-zhytlovo-komunalnyh-poslug-yaki-nadayutsya-z-urahuvannyam-dohodiv-gromadyan](https://pfu.gov.ua/2163497-pilgy-na-oplatu-zhytlovo-komunalnyh-poslug-yaki-nadayutsya-z-urahuvannyam-dohodiv-gromadyan)

Forms of such support may include subsidies for housing and utility services, as well as liquefied gas and solid/liquid heating fuel purchases, in the manner and amounts set by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

It would ensure that veterans receive partial reimbursement of utility expenses for the first three years after discharge, when they are most likely to need financial support. After that recovery period, assistance would continue based on their needs.

# Mobility

The ability to move freely is one of the most fundamental human needs and rights. Independent movement matters not only for getting from one place to another, but also for maintaining control over one's life, accessing essential services, engaging in social interactions, working, resting, receiving medical care, pursuing education, and handling administrative matters. Mobility enables people to stay active, maintain independence, and engage in social life.

After completing their service, veterans return to civilian life, where the ability to move without barriers and access essential infrastructure becomes a crucial part of their adaptation. For some, mobility is impaired, especially in cases of disability resulting from injuries or illnesses related to service. The lack of accessible infrastructure and transport, coupled with an unadapted environment, can create not only physical barriers but also social isolation, loss of independence, and emotional exhaustion.

Today, mobility is part of the broader concept of a barrier-free environment<sup>164</sup>. In Ukraine, creating a barrier-free environment for people with disabilities remains largely limited to individual cities or initiatives. However, current legislation<sup>165</sup> compels state and local authorities, together with civil society organisations, to ensure the accessibility of social infrastructure, meaning that people with disabilities should be able to use public buildings, transport, and services without obstruction.

Accessibility of public spaces and transport infrastructure is also regulated by the State Building Codes (DBN), but they do not always address the requirements for an adaptive urban environment. The lack of consistency between the standards for buildings and those for streets often creates physical barriers for different groups of the population.

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<sup>164</sup> Barrier-Free Handbook. [bf.in.ua](http://bf.in.ua)

<sup>165</sup> Law of Ukraine "On Fundamentals of Social Security for Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine," No. 875-XII (21 March 1991). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/875-12#Text](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/875-12#Text)

Another critical aspect is infrastructure accessibility – the convenience and safety of the physical environment, including transport, stops, and pavements. In some communities, public transport may be absent or operate irregularly, with routes failing to cover certain social or administrative infrastructure. In such cases, personal transport becomes essential for mobility, and a lack of access to it further increases vulnerability.

This Concept examines mobility through two lenses: 1) **public mobility** (barrier-free public transport and access for people with mobility, vision, or hearing impairments; adequate information about transport operations; the issue of affordability); and 2) **personal mobility** (benefits for purchasing personal vehicles and attending driving schools; support for adapting vehicles to individual needs). Both aspects are equally important to ensuring that veterans can participate in public life, regardless of their place of residence or health status.

Mobility of veterans	
Public (public transport)	Personal (private vehicle)
Barrier-free public transport and access to it	Benefits for purchasing a private vehicle
Information on transport operations	Benefits for driving school tuition
Affordability	Adaptation to individual needs

## Public Transport

The issue of public transport within veteran policy is multifaceted and encompasses both infrastructural and socioeconomic challenges. In Ukraine, transport accessibility is a systemic problem, extending beyond individual technical or infrastructural barriers to the lack of a comprehensive and effective policy that addresses all aspects of public transport access across regions and communities. It is a complex problem that demands long-term, coordinated solutions at both national and local levels.

This section examines public transport accessibility from two key perspectives: 1) physical accessibility (barrier-free, inclusive infrastructure and technical adaptation of vehicles for people with various disabilities) and 2) affordability (the ability to use transport regardless of income level).

### Barrier-Free Transport

Public transportation is vital for daily mobility within or between settlements, especially for veterans who do not have personal vehicles. For veterans with disabilities, accessible transport is crucial for independence and well-being.

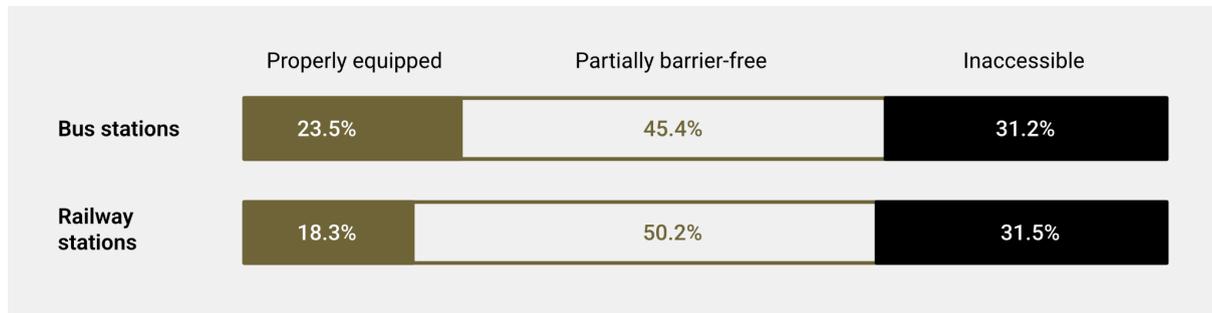
Despite legal guarantees of free travel for veterans on urban and intercity transport, a combination of infrastructural, organisational, informational, and financial barriers often makes it difficult to use it. Vehicles are frequently not adapted to the needs of people with reduced mobility, including wheelchair users and those with vision or hearing impairments.

The situation is equally challenging at major transport hubs. Only 18.3% of railway stations and 23.5% of bus terminals meet barrier-free standards<sup>166</sup>. Other facilities are either partially modified or entirely

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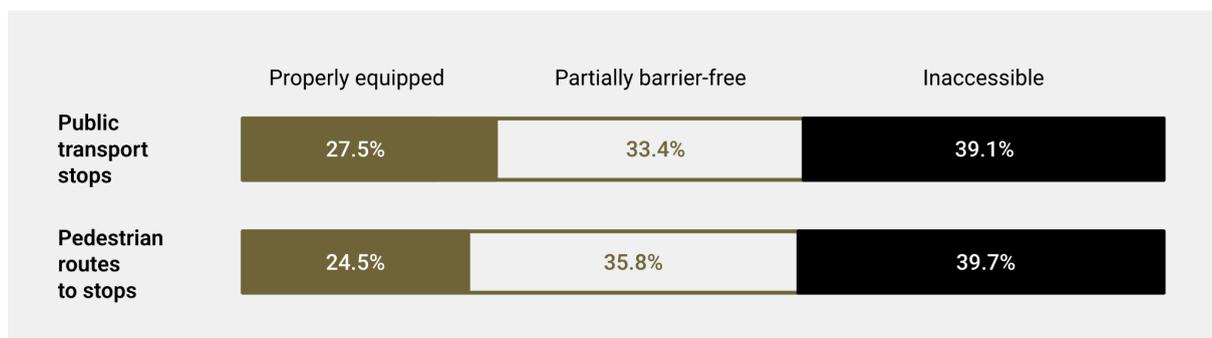
<sup>166</sup> Results of the 2024 monitoring on the level of barrier-free access to physical infrastructure and services for persons with disabilities, conducted in accordance with the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 537 of 26 May 2021. [mtu.gov.ua/files/Monitoring\\_barrier\\_free\\_2024.pdf](https://mtu.gov.ua/files/Monitoring_barrier_free_2024.pdf)

inaccessible for individuals with disabilities. They often have to rely on strangers' help or avoid public transport altogether.



These barriers can be even more pronounced in rural communities, where public transport may operate irregularly (if at all), whereas social and medical services remain concentrated in distant administrative centres.

Problems extend to public transport stops as well: only 27.5% are properly equipped, while 39.1% remain inaccessible. Pedestrian routes to stops, particularly near healthcare facilities, show similar patterns: only a quarter (24.5%) are fully barrier-free, while the majority are rated as inaccessible (39.7%)<sup>167</sup>.



The inaccessibility of the mentioned infrastructure may indicate a lack of necessary adaptations, such as lowered curbs or ramps. Without these, wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments are physically unable to access public transport.

Another important prerequisite for accessibility is communication. Even where accessible transport exists, a lack of information about

<sup>167</sup> Results of the 2024 monitoring on the level of barrier-free access to physical infrastructure and services for persons with disabilities, conducted in accordance with the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 537 of 26 May 2021. [mtu.gov.ua/files/Monitoring\\_barrier\\_free\\_2024.pdf](https://mtu.gov.ua/files/Monitoring_barrier_free_2024.pdf)

schedules, routes, or usage conditions can pose significant problems. Information should be available not only through digital channels, but also in offline formats, which is critical for older people, who are less likely to use electronic devices, and for residents of rural areas, where internet access may be limited.

A particular challenge lies in informing people with vision or hearing impairments. Public spaces currently severely lack adapted announcement formats. For instance, although Vinnytsia placed public transport timetables at 90% of stops in 2022, the information was inaccessible to people with vision or hearing impairments<sup>168</sup>. Ensuring inclusive communication is therefore a vital element of accessibility.

## **Affordability**

The economic affordability of transportation is a crucial factor in the overall mobility of veterans. Preferential conditions for using public transport can help reduce the financial burden on veterans during the recovery period following discharge or demobilisation and afterwards.

Such benefits not only cover part of daily expenses but also serve as a form of support and recognition. They can ease access to essential services (medical, administrative, educational) and encourage more diverse leisure activities and travel, as moving within and between settlements becomes more affordable.

The right to free travel is one of the most relevant benefits for veterans. According to a survey by the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation<sup>169</sup>, 48.9% of respondents consider them significant.

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<sup>168</sup> Information on accessibility of public transport and transport infrastructure for persons with disabilities and other groups with reduced mobility (13 December 2022). Vinnytsia Regional Military Administration.

[vin.gov.ua/upravlinnia-dorozhnoho-hospodarstva-oblderzhadministratsii/korysna-informatsiia/51528-informatsiia-pro-dostupnist-transportu-ta-objektiv-transportnoi-infrastruktury-dlia-osib-z-invalidnistiu-ta-inshykh-malomobilnykh-hrup-naselennia](http://vin.gov.ua/upravlinnia-dorozhnoho-hospodarstva-oblderzhadministratsii/korysna-informatsiia/51528-informatsiia-pro-dostupnist-transportu-ta-objektiv-transportnoi-infrastruktury-dlia-osib-z-invalidnistiu-ta-inshykh-malomobilnykh-hrup-naselennia)

<sup>169</sup> Ukrainian Veterans Foundation (2024). Needs of Veterans.

[veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Opytuvannia-veteraniv-zhovten-2024.pdf](http://veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Opytuvannia-veteraniv-zhovten-2024.pdf)

**Currently, this benefit is implemented through two main mechanisms:**

### **1. Free travel on intercity routes (rail, air, and bus transport)**

Veterans are entitled to one free round-trip every two years, or one trip per year, with a 50% discount on intercity routes.

This benefit is universal across all communities and regions, state-guaranteed, implemented through centralised ticket booking and purchase systems, and governed by clear rules. This makes it understandable, predictable, and equal for all, regardless of where a veteran lives.

### **2. Discounts on local travel (urban, suburban, and intercity within the region)**

This benefit is not equally available across all communities. Its implementation and funding depend on local budgets and decisions made by local government authorities. These authorities often lack accurate data on the number of veterans living in their communities who require such benefits, which means they cannot allocate sufficient funds in their budgets to meet their needs<sup>170</sup>. This may result in underestimated service orders for transport operators and complex or unimplemented compensation mechanisms.

Due to insufficient compensation, transport operators often work without subsidies and set their own limits for discounted passenger categories<sup>171</sup> that include not only veterans, but also all people with disabilities, pensioners, and children from large families. Suppose a private transport operator has only a few seats for free travel, and they have already been taken at previous stops. In that case, veterans may be refused boarding, which undermines the very concept of the benefit. It can also lead to uncomfortable social situations, prompting veterans to abandon this benefit entirely.

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<sup>170</sup> Cedos, Pryncyp. (2024). Social Services for Veterans in Communities: Challenges and Needs. P. 76. [cedos.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/soczposlugy\\_digital.pdf](https://cedos.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/soczposlugy_digital.pdf)

<sup>171</sup> Right to Public Transport Benefits. Free Legal Aid. [legaid.gov.ua/publikatsiyi/pravo-na-pilgovyj-provizd-u-gromadskomu-transporti/](https://legaid.gov.ua/publikatsiyi/pravo-na-pilgovyj-provizd-u-gromadskomu-transporti/)

## Expert Recommendations

- **Continued the exercise of the right to free travel once every two years, or at a 50% discount once a year, by all types of intercity transport**

We propose retaining veterans' right to free intercity travel but extending it to all types of transport (rail, water, air, and road), regardless of whether rail connections are available.

This centralised benefit for intercity travel is both effective and fair, as it guarantees equal access to the service irrespective of place of residence. At the same time, local communities could develop alternative mechanisms to support mobility of veterans, such as personal vehicle adaptation programmes, which could have a greater impact with less strain on local budgets.

## Personal Mobility

Establishing conditions for barrier-free travel via public transport requires long-term, coordinated planning to deliver effective, efficient benefits and to develop accessible infrastructure. In the short term, some challenges can be addressed through targeted measures, such as improving conditions for veterans to acquire and adapt personal vehicles.

### Car Purchase

Providing support for personal mobility is especially important for veterans with disabilities, as the transport infrastructure may be physically inaccessible or lack the necessary conditions for safe use. In these situations, owning a car enables veterans to tailor routes to

personal needs and bypass infrastructure obstacles, while also allowing them to travel, work, engage in community activities, and access services.

An economical choice for personal mobility in Ukraine is purchasing a second-hand car from overseas. This allows for buying a vehicle at a reduced price and selecting its features and configuration independently. However, the cost of national-level customs clearance can be a major additional financial obstacle.

### Expert Recommendations

- **Provide veterans with disabilities with compensation for customs clearance – one vehicle at any time**

We suggest offering veterans with disabilities the opportunity to clear their vehicles at a reduced rate at any time after their service ends, regardless of discharge date. This type of support can alleviate financial pressures and provide individuals with personal transportation when mobility and independence are crucial – during treatment and rehabilitation. This is particularly important for those whose health deteriorates some time after leaving the service or who need to replace a vehicle due to worsening physical condition.

**Furthermore**, it is crucial to continue examining and reaching a consensus on the practicality of expanding this type of support to all veterans.

In 2020, a draft law<sup>172</sup> was proposed, and a working group was established to implement preferential customs clearance for veterans' cars, but the preferential mechanisms were never approved. In 2024, the issue resurfaced as the Ministry of Veterans Affairs announced

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<sup>172</sup> Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Veterans should receive customs clearance benefits for vehicle imports. [mva.gov.ua/prescenter/category/86-novini/veterani-mayut-otrimati-pilgi-na-rozmitnennya-avtotransportnih-zasobiv](https://mva.gov.ua/prescenter/category/86-novini/veterani-mayut-otrimati-pilgi-na-rozmitnennya-avtotransportnih-zasobiv)

a new draft law proposing preferential customs clearance for all veterans' cars<sup>173</sup>.

However, it is essential to identify the kind of support veterans may need in this area. When considering mobility support, it is sensible to prioritise veterans with disabilities, as their independence relies heavily on mobility. If the aim is financial assistance, then offering preferential customs clearance for cars to all veterans might not be the most efficient method. This matter requires additional study and substantiation.

It is also worth considering not only preferential import but also purchasing cars within Ukraine, as this could be a more suitable solution that both stimulates the domestic market and makes it easier for veterans to obtain transportation.

## Vehicle Adaptation

At present, Ukraine lacks a unified, approved mechanism for adapting personal vehicles to the needs of people with disabilities. There are no standardised technical or functional requirements to ensure that vehicles can be safely and effectively modified for different physical needs. As a result, adaptations are uncontrolled, sometimes carried out in private workshops without proper certification or standardisation. This creates risks for both the veterans themselves and other road users.

Even when local authorities introduce pilot support programmes, such as the 2025 decision of the Kyiv City Council to provide up to UAH 100,000 in compensation for adapting vehicles for people with Group I

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<sup>173</sup> Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Oleksandr Porhun: "The adoption of the draft law on preferential taxation during customs clearance of vehicles will contribute to resolving the issue of employment of ATO/JFO veterans."

[mva.gov.ua/mediagalereya/oleksandr-porhun-prijnyattya-zakonoproektu-pro-pilgove-opodatkovannya-pri-rozmitnenni-transportnih-zasobiv-spriyatime-virishennyu-pitannya-pracevlashtuvannya-veteraniv-ato](https://mva.gov.ua/mediagalereya/oleksandr-porhun-prijnyattya-zakonoproektu-pro-pilgove-opodatkovannya-pri-rozmitnenni-transportnih-zasobiv-spriyatime-virishennyu-pitannya-pracevlashtuvannya-veteraniv-ato)

or II disabilities<sup>174</sup>, these remain geographically limited and have yet to be scaled nationally.

## Expert Recommendations

### ■ **Introduce a mechanism for adapting personal vehicles or financial compensation for vehicle adaptation**

Implementing a mechanism to reimburse the costs of adapting a personal vehicle, or offering such adaptation as a service, is a crucial step toward ensuring equal access to transportation infrastructure for veterans with disabilities. It is also important for such a mechanism to specify how many times a person can use the benefit, for example, when replacing a vehicle.

Meanwhile, it is advisable to consider receiving financial compensation that veterans can use to modify their vehicles. Obtaining a car adaptation service can indeed take considerable time.

### **Additionally:**

### ■ **Introduce discounts for veterans with disabilities to attend driving schools**

Another key prerequisite for mobility is the opportunity to obtain or renew a driving licence. For veterans with disabilities, especially those who have never had a licence, this can be a critical step in returning to civilian life, enabling them to drive independently, work, and avoid relying on outside assistance or services. It also allows them to actively participate in social life outside large cities with developed transport networks.

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<sup>174</sup> The Kyiv City Council approved the procedure for providing compensation for vehicle adaptations to the Defenders of Ukraine who have obtained disabilities due to the war (20 February 2025). Official Kyiv Portal.

[kyivcity.gov.ua/news/kivrada\\_zatverdila\\_poryadok\\_kompensatsi\\_na\\_pereoblashtuvannya\\_avto\\_dlya\\_zak\\_hisnikiv\\_i\\_zakhisnits\\_ukrani\\_yaki\\_nabuli\\_invalidnist\\_vnaslidok\\_viyni](https://kyivcity.gov.ua/news/kivrada_zatverdila_poryadok_kompensatsi_na_pereoblashtuvannya_avto_dlya_zak_hisnikiv_i_zakhisnits_ukrani_yaki_nabuli_invalidnist_vnaslidok_viyni)

However, attending driving school and passing licensing exams can pose both financial and logistical challenges, particularly for people with disabilities who require specially adapted vehicles or additional time for training. The cost of courses, transport to training centres, and difficulties in booking exam slots create extra barriers.

In spring 2024, the Barrier-Free initiative of the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska, launched the Driving Schools for Persons with Disabilities project, under which veterans with musculoskeletal disorders can learn to drive free of charge. Currently, the project is funded by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs and operates in six regions of Ukraine<sup>175</sup>.

Expanding the geographic reach of this project or introducing driving school discounts would serve not only as financial support but also as an important tool for enhancing personal mobility. Such measures can ease the economic burden and make the return to civilian life more comfortable by encouraging veterans to obtain a driver's license as a step toward improved personal mobility.

#### ■ **Grant priority in driving licence exam queues and waiving exam fees for veterans with disabilities**

In many regions, particularly rural areas, the number of service centres of the Ministry of Internal Affairs or accredited driving schools is limited, resulting in months-long waiting lists for exams. For veterans with disabilities, who may have additional medical constraints or demanding rehabilitation schedules, such delays are a significant barrier.

We propose granting veterans with disabilities priority access to driving exam slots and waiving the exam fee, which could substantially reduce the time needed to obtain a licence.

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<sup>175</sup> Free driving school training for veterans and their family members. Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine.

[mva.gov.ua/ua/news/bezkoshtovne-navchannya-v-avtoshkolah-dlya-veteraniv-ta-chleniv-yihnih-simej-yaki-mayut-invalidnist-iz-porushennyam-oporno-ruhovogo-aparatu-za-finansuvannya-minveteraniv](https://mva.gov.ua/ua/news/bezkoshtovne-navchannya-v-avtoshkolah-dlya-veteraniv-ta-chleniv-yihnih-simej-yaki-mayut-invalidnist-iz-porushennyam-oporno-ruhovogo-aparatu-za-finansuvannya-minveteraniv)

# Conclusions

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## **1 Housing as a Space for Privacy and Recovery for Veterans**

Housing and the physical environment are key components in the return and adaptation of veterans to civilian life.

A personal or accessible home, comfortable living conditions, housing adaptation to individual needs, and the presence of social infrastructure and barrier-free transport directly influence their well-being after service.

Veterans return to civilian life with diverse experiences, health conditions, financial capacities, and personal conditions.

The war further shapes their needs, as their homes may be damaged or left in occupied territories. Public policy must account for these realities and provide targeted support to restore housing well-being.

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## **2 Current Housing Programmes Are Not Always Accessible for Veterans**

Existing housing policy already offers important tools, such as monetary compensation and the eOselia mortgage programme. Veterans, however, are not always able to use them, often because they are not included in the priority categories. It is crucial to expand eligibility for housing programmes and reinstate compensation for veterans with IDP status, enabling them to purchase or rent housing that meets their needs and the realities of war.

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### **3 Housing Policy Must Guarantee Not Only the Right to Housing, but Its Accessibility**

Veterans with disabilities may require adaptations of the environment. For many, returning to active life may be impossible without a physically accessible home with functional entrances, bathrooms, kitchens, ramps, lifts, and access to public infrastructure, transport, and streets. This calls for compensation programmes for housing adaptation, the development of accessible housing standards, and a review of State Building Codes in line with international best practices.

Housing well-being is not just about having a place to live, but also about the barrier-free nature of the living space, the accessibility of the surrounding infrastructure, and the ease of mobility within the community.

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### **4 Accessible Rent as a Flexible Response to Housing Needs of Veterans**

Not all veterans need or can afford to buy housing. It is therefore essential to develop alternative support measures, such as partial rental compensation during the post-service recovery period.

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## **5 Mobility and Barrier-Free Space for Veterans as Part of Policy on Improving Physical Environment**

A veteran's well-being after returning home depends not only on having a roof over their heads but also on the ability to pay utilities, access transport, move freely, work, and maintain social connections. Access to housing and utility services through subsidies and benefits should be fair, income-based, and adjusted for the length of the transition period.

Mobility, both physical (public transport, adapted vehicles) and spatial (accessible public spaces), is equally essential. It is not just about movement, but about autonomy, dignity, and participation in community life after service. It ensures that veterans can access services, education, and work and maintain social connections. Policy in this area should provide support for purchasing and adapting personal vehicles for veterans with disabilities and ensure simplified access to driving schools and driving exams.



**Component 3**  
**Material**  
**needs**

# Abstract

This section outlines the material needs of veterans as an essential component of their well-being after returning to civilian life, as well as key policy areas in this field to ensure quality living standards after service, compensate for civilian capital losses, and guarantee financial stability during the adaptation period.

## **This section:**

- describes how military service and combat participation affect the ability of veterans to accumulate resources and maintain economic capacity;
- analyses current national mechanisms of financial support, including lump-sum and regular payments, benefits, and compensations;
- examines the payments that veterans receive after completing their service and their accessibility;
- analyses the issue of access to the statutory right to land plots for various purposes as a tool of support after returning to civilian life;
- considers the importance of legal security in exercising the material rights of veterans and receiving assistance and benefits.

# Introduction

During military service, the military has limited access to and ability to manage their civilian capital – assets, property, and income they received in civilian life before enlistment. Their attention is often focused on military and combat missions, while civilian assets may either be preserved under favourable circumstances or lost.

Veterans who owned a business before their service often lack the time and resources to maintain their operations. The business can only be sustained if a close relative takes management duties. Those who worked in the civilian sector before their service often struggle to maintain their professional skills while in the military and are at a disadvantage after discharge compared to their colleagues who continued their civilian career development.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the level of material support for service members and the rewards for combat missions have significantly increased. However, they have limited opportunities to save money during their service. Service members often spend their own money on unit supplies, new accoutrements, vehicle repairs, and other property lost during hostilities. In addition, they can provide financial support to their families, particularly if they kept children, parents, or relatives with disabilities before their service. The possibility of saving is further hindered by the stressful conditions of war and hostilities, which make it difficult to develop saving mechanisms and control expenses.

Upon return, veterans need time to restore their financial and material status. Meeting material needs may become a priority and is critical in adaptation to civilian life. A post-service lack of funds can make it difficult for veterans to meet their basic needs, such as medical care, rest, and recovery. At the beginning of civilian life, veterans may prioritise earnings over other needs, which can affect overall adaptation and well-being<sup>176</sup>. For example, if a veteran wishes to change their activity

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<sup>176</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. Pp. 150–152.  
[veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

after service, a lack of funds can hinder these plans, as additional education, such as short-term or advanced training, is typically paid for.

**The current state support for the civilian capital of veterans upon their return to civilian life is designed for two periods:**

Short-term support	Long-term support
Post-service payments	Benefits and pension provision

However, these mechanisms do not always operate effectively, particularly because they fail to account for the diverse statuses and experiences of veterans and do not meet their actual needs. In addition, it is important that veterans are able to meet their material needs while still in service, for example, through consumer loans. Although there are no legal restrictions on granting loans to service members, in practice, banks often deny credit limits or instalment options if they know the applicant is currently serving<sup>177</sup>. If service members already had a loan before enlisting or got one during service, they may benefit from preferential terms allowing them to avoid paying loan interest<sup>178</sup>. However, the grace period usually ends immediately after discharge, leaving the veteran with potentially large repayments even though they need time to restore their financial well-being.

Considering the needs and experiences of veterans is crucial in identifying relevant material needs. Depending on their additional statuses, they may also require support in other areas of well-being, such as benefits, payments, and social guarantees. For example, travel privileges contribute to mobility, while reimbursement for utility payments improves living conditions.

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<sup>177</sup> Ishchenko A. (25 November 2024). The Security Blocked the Service: Why Banks Refuse Consumer Loans to Service Members? LIGA.net. [finance.liga.net/ua/bank/article/zakhyst-zablokuvay-posluhu-chomu-banky-vidmovliaiut-viiskovym-u-spozhyvchykh-kredytakh](https://finance.liga.net/ua/bank/article/zakhyst-zablokuvay-posluhu-chomu-banky-vidmovliaiut-viiskovym-u-spozhyvchykh-kredytakh)

<sup>178</sup> Law of Ukraine "On Social and Legal Protection of Servicepersons and Members of Their Families," No. 2011-XII (20 December 1991). Article 20. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2011-12#n245](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2011-12#n245)

This section outlines problems and provides recommendations that concern material needs specifically, including payments and pension provision, free land allocation for various purposes, and access to legal aid. Issues that lie at the intersection of this and other components are considered in other sections of the Concept.

**Important:** This section does not provide a general overview of the entire sector, its current situation and related challenges. It focuses on potential solutions that the state can implement to meet the needs of veterans.

These needs were identified through an analysis of available data and information. The recommendations presented are the result of collaborative efforts by a coalition of organisations with expertise in veterans' affairs, informed by insights from professionals in relevant fields. We acknowledge that this work does not cover the full spectrum of challenges and solutions and emphasise the need for further research to develop effective support for veterans in the field of material needs.

# Payments

Discharge from service can occur in a short time, but returning to civilian life requires financial resources that veterans have not always had the opportunity to accumulate or retain. Due to insufficient personal savings, some veterans are forced to return to work immediately to provide a basic income for their families. According to a study by the Veteran Hub and the Human Rights Centre Pryncyp, having time to rest, recover, and find oneself is often one of the primary post-service needs.

According to the labour law<sup>179</sup>, veterans who retain their civilian jobs shall return to work the very next day after discharge and registration with the Territorial Centre for Recruitment and Social Support (TCRSS). **If they require more time before returning to work, they are entitled to one of the following types of leave:**

Basic annual leave	Additional leave for people with combat experience	Additional unpaid leave
24 paid calendar days	14 paid calendar days	14 calendar days, up to 21 days for persons with outstanding service to the Homeland

**The following payments are provided to veterans during their return to civilian life<sup>180</sup>:**

## 1. Lump-Sum Allowance Upon Confirmation of Disability

According to the law, this type of allowance is designated for veterans with **“disabilities caused by wounds, concussions, injuries, or illnesses.”** The amount depends on the subsistence minimum and the established causal link between the wound or illness and the service.

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<sup>179</sup> Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on the Regulation of Granting and Using Leave, as well as Other Issues,” No. 3494 (22 November 2023). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3494-IX#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3494-IX#Text)

<sup>180</sup> As of October 2025.

If the disability results **from defending the Homeland**, the amounts in 2025 are as follows:

- **first group** – 400x subsistence minimum (UAH 1,211,200);
- **second group** – 300x subsistence minimum (UAH 908,400);
- **third group** – 250x subsistence minimum (UAH 757,000).

If the disability was acquired **while in service or performing duties in the reserve**, the amounts in 2025 are as follows:

- **first group** – 120x subsistence minimum (UAH 363,360);
- **second group** – 90x subsistence minimum (UAH 272,520);
- **third group** – 70x subsistence minimum (UAH 211,960)<sup>181</sup>.

## 2. Lump-Sum Allowance after Discharge from Service

The amount depends on **the grounds for discharge and length of service**:

- **50% of the monthly salary for every full calendar year of service** – in case of discharge for health reasons, or voluntary discharge after 18 or 24 months of service during a special period under a contract extended until the end of that period;
- **50% of the monthly salary for every full calendar year of service after ten or more calendar years of service** – in case of discharge due to contract expiration, age limit, or for family reasons;
- **25% of the monthly salary for every full calendar year of service after ten or more calendar years of service**, in case of voluntary discharge or discharge for family reasons<sup>182</sup>.

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<sup>181</sup> The Amount of Lump-Sum Allowance. Taking Care of a Service Member. Your Military Assistant. [turbota.mil.gov.ua/vyplaty/na-yakyj-rozmir-odnorazovoyi-vyplaty-mozhna-rozrahovuvaty](http://turbota.mil.gov.ua/vyplaty/na-yakyj-rozmir-odnorazovoyi-vyplaty-mozhna-rozrahovuvaty)

<sup>182</sup> Lump-Sum Allowance upon Discharge from Service: Who Will Receive 50% or 25%? (26 October 2023). Army Inform. [armyinform.com.ua/2023/10/26/odnorazova-groshova-dopomoga-pry-zvilnenni-z-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-komu-vyplatvat-50-abo-25/](http://armyinform.com.ua/2023/10/26/odnorazova-groshova-dopomoga-pry-zvilnenni-z-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-komu-vyplatvat-50-abo-25/)

### 3. Annual Independence Day Payment

The government establishes the amount of this payment each year.

In 2025, it amounted to:

- UAH 3,100 for persons with group I disability resulting from the war;
- UAH 2,900 for persons with group II disability resulting from the war;
- UAH 2,700 for persons with group III disability resulting from the war;
- UAH 1,000 for people with combat experiences;
- UAH 3,100 for persons with outstanding service to the Homeland<sup>183</sup>.

The issue of payments and financial stability is crucial for the recovery and sense of security of veterans, particularly during their return to civilian life. Financial stability offers predictability of the future and enables them to plan their next steps.

At the same time, these payments also have symbolic value, reflecting the state and society's attitude toward veterans. This is not only material support, but also a tool for conveying a sense of justice and dignity. Significant delays or other payment issues can negatively impact the overall well-being of veterans. Moreover, they may interpret this as a failure to recognise their combat experience and contribution.

#### Expert Recommendations

- **Provide a lump-sum unconditional allowance to all veterans upon discharge**

Such allowance should be available to all veterans regardless of any injuries, traumas, or related service experiences. The allowance should serve as temporary support for individuals with combat experiences who may require time to recover after discharge. According to the "Journeys

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<sup>183</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (2 April 2024). Resolution No. 369 "On Establishing the Amount of Lump-Sum Allowance for Independence Day of Ukraine, as Provided by the Laws of Ukraine 'On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection' and 'On Victims of Nazi Persecution,' in 2024." [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/369-2024-n#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/369-2024-n#Text)

of Veterans” study<sup>184</sup>, the recovery period after service usually lasts about three months.

This allows veterans to rest after their service and ensures a stable reserve for the initial period of adaptation. The allowance also supports those seeking new employment, providing them with the time and space to find a job that aligns with their interests and values.

The amount of this lump-sum allowance needs to be further calculated and treated fairly. The current formula used for calculating lump-sum allowances for those discharged from service for various reasons takes into account the number of calendar years of service. This is logical and appropriate for those who have chosen service as a profession and are retiring from service or completing their contract. However, it does not consider the experience of veterans who were mobilised, served for shorter periods, and have combat experience.

Therefore, the formula for calculating the lump-sum allowance upon discharge should be adjusted for veterans who were not career service members. Such an amount should enable them to sustain themselves during the three-month recovery period after service without the financial pressure to go to work or seek new employment immediately. This sum could be calculated based on the national subsistence minimum or the average salary, or it could be a fixed amount granted to all veterans upon discharge. The current principle of calculating a lump-sum allowance is an appropriate support option for career service members.

**Furthermore, veterans with disabilities should continue to receive a one-time disability payment, alongside the lump-sum payment given upon discharge.** They may require additional support during their transition back to civilian life to undergo necessary rehabilitation, adapt their housing to their needs, find employment, and recover.

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<sup>184</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

■ **Develop mechanisms to compensate for the impact and the service of veterans in the reserve**

Veterans who continue their service in the reserves lack guarantees that their efforts to rebuild their civilian lives and well-being will remain stable. In the case of re-mobilisation, their civilian capital may be negatively affected again. As a result, their planning horizon is limited, hindering full adaptation to civilian life and long-term planning in various areas of civilian well-being.

They may invest significant effort and resources into maintaining combat readiness, including participation in periodic exercises. Although reservists receive daily allowances for each day of combat training and payments for the duration of their service under current legislation, being in the military reserve can affect their ability to generate a stable income and save in civilian life.

**So, when developing policy for veterans serving in the reserve and amending the regulatory framework for reserve management, it is necessary to:**

- 1) take into account the specific experiences of veterans serving in the reserve;
- 2) assess the real impact of continuing service in the reserve;
- 3) develop mechanisms to compensate for the impact and the service of veterans in the reserve.

# Pension Provision

State support for veterans should be lifelong and cover their needs throughout their ageing years. For veterans, this stage may arrive earlier than for civilians due to the consequences of combat experience. Such experiences also affect health and often lead to early performance impairment, which negatively impacts their ability to save for retirement, continue working, and maintain quality living standards in old age.

At this stage, the veterans' needs include securing income despite performance impairment. Therefore, it is the state's task to ensure decent pension provision that allows veterans not to worry about their material needs after retirement.

The public pension system of Ukraine is based on the principle of solidarity and is designed to provide financial support to those who have spent most of their lives working, generating income, and contributing to the state budget through taxes. **As of 2025, veterans may be eligible for the following types of pensions:**

1. Length-of-service pension	2. Civil pension	3. Disability pension
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## 1. Length-of-Service Pension

Pension provision for service members – persons who have chosen a profession with increased risks and limitations – is higher than the general one. This principle is embedded in the current **Law of Ukraine “On Pension Provision for Persons Discharged from Military Service and Some Other Persons,”**<sup>185</sup> adopted in 1992.

Increased pensions are provided to both career service members and those serving in law enforcement agencies, the National Police, the State Bureau of Investigation, and the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine. Service members of the Security and Defence

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<sup>185</sup> Law of Ukraine “On Pension Provision for Persons Discharged from Military Service and Some Other Persons,” No. 2262-XII (9 April 1992). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2262-12#Text](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2262-12#Text)

Forces, law enforcement and the National Police officers receive significantly higher pensions due to additional length-of-service payments, as well as regular pension recalculations to align with current salaries for relevant positions.

Veterans may receive a length-of-service pension, regardless of age, if they have 25 years of military service. The amount depends on the reason for discharge – 50% (or 55% in case of discharge due to age or health reasons) of salary for 20 years of service. The pension increases by 3% for every following year beyond the first 20. If a service member has fewer years of service, they may be eligible to apply for a combined pension, which considers both the length of service and the insurance record. This type of pension is available to individuals aged 45 and above who have at least 25 years of insurance record, including 12.5 years of military service.

Length-of-service pension	Combined pension
Not dependent on age	45+ years
25+ years of military service	25+ years of insurance record, including 12.5 years of military service
The amount of pension depends on the reason for discharge	The amount of pension does not depend on the reason for discharge

## 2. Civil old-age pension

Pensions for every Ukrainian civilian are governed by the Law of Ukraine “On Mandatory State Pension Insurance.”<sup>186</sup> Veterans are entitled to early old-age retirement: men, from the age of 55 with at least 25 years of service, and women, from the age of 50 with at least 20 years of service. As of October 2025, the minimum fixed pension for veterans is UAH 5,528.

<sup>186</sup> Law of Ukraine “On Mandatory State Pension Insurance,” No. 1058-IV (9 July 2003). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1058-15#Text](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1058-15#Text)

Unlike length-of-service pensions, Ukrainian civilian pensions are adjusted only through an indexation mechanism to account for inflation. This approach is based on 50% of the inflation index and 50% of average wage growth. That is, civilian pensions, unlike those of military personnel, law enforcement officers, and National Police officers, are not linked to salary increases for the positions held during recipients' employment.

According to the Pension Fund, the average pension in Ukraine was UAH 4,623 as of 1 January 2023, while the average pension for military and law enforcement officers was UAH 9,463. According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, recipients of special pensions are prosecutors and judges, whose average pensions ranged from UAH 21,572 to UAH 96,196 in 2023<sup>187</sup>.

**In addition to their common pension, veterans also receive additional allowances for their combat experience as follows:**

- 25% of the subsistence minimum established for disabled persons in the amount of UAH 2,361, and a pension supplement for combat experience of UAH 590 as of 2025;
- a monthly targeted subsistence allowance of UAH 40<sup>188</sup>;
- a monthly state-targeted pension allowance if the total monthly pension benefits do not reach the minimum pension level<sup>189</sup>.

This approach needs to be revised, as the current amount of additional pension allowances does not adequately reflect the true value of the contribution made by veterans who risked their health and lives defending the country. Pension provision should not only serve

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<sup>187</sup> Vinokurov, Y. (8 June 2023). It is Difficult for the State to Support Vulnerable Pensioners, but Easy to Pay UAH 100,000 to Judges. What is Wrong with the Pension System? *Ekonomichna Pravda*. [pravda.com.ua/publications/2023/06/8/700937/](https://pravda.com.ua/publications/2023/06/8/700937/)

<sup>188</sup> Law of Ukraine "On Improving the Financial Status of Persons with Combat Experience and Persons with Disabilities Resulting from the War," No. 1603-IV (16 March 2004). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1603-15#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1603-15#Text)

<sup>189</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (28 July 2010). Resolution No. 656 "On Establishing a Monthly State-Targeted Pension Allowance for Persons with Disabilities Resulting from the War and Persons with Combat Experience." [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/656-2010-n#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/656-2010-n#Text)

as material support, but also as a form of recognition of veterans' combat experience and contribution.

### **3. Disability pension**

**This pension is granted to veterans of any age after discharge from service if the disability occurred:**

- during military service;
- within three months after discharge;
- three or more months after discharge, but as a result of illness, injury, wound, concussion, or trauma sustained during service or captivity.

Pension amount depends on the cause of disability and the evaluated disability group. The state guarantees higher pensions for veterans whose disability is a result of war, defending the Homeland or performing military duties. If the disability has other causes, the pension is smaller. The amount is also calculated based on the salary during the service.

**Disability resulting from the war:**

- **Group I** – 100% of salary;
- **Group II** – 80% of salary;
- **Group III** – 60% of salary.

**Other persons with disabilities:**

- **Group I** – 70% of salary;
- **Group II** – 60% of salary;
- **Group III** – 40% of salary.

Another important aspect of pension provision in Ukraine, besides its amount, is the retirement age. Veterans currently have the right to early retirement, but under specific conditions. Veterans who were career

service members must have 25 years of service, while others must have a relevant insurance record, which determines their pension amount. For example, if a veteran had 15 years of civilian insurance experience and served in the military for three years, their total record would be 18 years. As of 2025, 32 years of insurance record are required to retire at the age of 60. However, certain types of veterans' service are counted in length of service on a preferential basis<sup>190</sup>.

Treating insurance records for combat experience in the same way as civilian employment does not reflect the real needs of veterans. This can hinder early retirement due to an insufficient insurance record. Combat experience often has a negative impact on health and working capacity, limiting opportunities for further employment. Treating combat experience as another form of employment with greater risks and burdens than civilian jobs can also constitute recognition of veterans' contributions.

The problems of pension provision for veterans in Ukraine may change following the implementation of the pension reform in 2025. At the end of December 2024, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine published a draft law to amend the Law of Ukraine "On Mandatory State Pension Insurance," which outlines a significant transformation of the current pay-as-you-go pension system in Ukraine and provides a new formula for calculating pension benefits<sup>191</sup>. **The reform proposed by the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine will have the following benefits:**

Basic pension	Insurance pension	Funded contributions
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<sup>190</sup> Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine No. 530 (14 August 2014), "On Approving the Regulation on the Organisation of Work within the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine on Calculating Length of Service to Assign Pensions to Service Members and Social Benefits to Persons Discharged from Military Service and Their Family Members." Clause 2.3. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z1294-14#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z1294-14#Text)

<sup>191</sup> Letter from the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine on Approving Draft Laws of Ukraine. [spo.fpsu.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/ukaz-proyekt-proyekt-E28496-106520-14-24-markuvannya-1.pdf](https://spo.fpsu.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/ukaz-proyekt-proyekt-E28496-106520-14-24-markuvannya-1.pdf)

**The basic pension** will be the guaranteed portion of the pension payable to everyone. **The insurance pension** will depend on the employment record and the amount of salary. It will be calculated based on points earned monthly during official employment.

**Funded contributions** will be a mandatory part of the pension system – individual persons’ contributions to a separate account, accessible upon reaching retirement age, at the age of 60 with 35 years of work experience<sup>192</sup>.

All special pensions and allowances, including those for service members, officers of law enforcement agencies, the National Police, and the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, will be calculated in accordance with a separate updated **Law of Ukraine “On Pensions for Special Merits to Ukraine.”**<sup>193</sup> This will require the establishment of professional pension funds and the attraction of additional insurance payments from employers<sup>194</sup>.

Despite the proposed reform, the final version of the updated pension system and payment amounts may differ. However, the system must fairly recognise the experience and contributions of veterans who have combat experience and defended the state.

## Expert Recommendations

- **Enable veterans to retire at the age of 55 regardless of their insurance record**

The state must recognise and respect the contribution and experience of veterans who defended Ukraine, risking their health and lives.

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<sup>192</sup> Vinokurov, Y. (9 December 2024). Another Pension Reform: How Will the Calculation of Payments Change, and How Much Will Need to Be Saved for Old Age? *Ekonomichna Pravda*. [epravda.com.ua/finances/pensiya-v-ukrajini-yaku-reformu-gotuye-uryad-800613/](http://epravda.com.ua/finances/pensiya-v-ukrajini-yaku-reformu-gotuye-uryad-800613/)

<sup>193</sup> Law of Ukraine “On Pensions for Special Merits to Ukraine,” No. 1767-III (1 June 2000). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1767-14](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1767-14)

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

Such a decision and service may have had a negative impact on their health, work capacity, and ability to recover their well-being. Regardless of employment or insurance record, and the current pension system, veterans should have the opportunity to retire earlier than other Ukrainian citizens. Their service is a form of experience distinct from any other employment, for which retirement currently occurs at 60.

In addition, veterans should have the right to age with dignity regardless of the pension system. The state can guarantee this by implementing mechanisms that take combat experience into account when calculating pension benefits.

# Land

The Land Code of Ukraine allows every citizen to receive a land plot free of charge for various purposes: gardening, construction of a residential house, individual farming, or forestry<sup>195</sup>.

According to the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection,”<sup>196</sup> veterans have the right to priority access to land. However, under martial law, a moratorium on free land allocation has been in effect since 2022. **Even if the moratorium is lifted, the issue of access to land, in particular for veterans, has some objective limitations:**

1. Lack of land resources in Ukraine	2. High corruption risks in the free land privatisation mechanism
3. Lack of fairness and equality principles	4. No queue for free land privatisation

## 1. Lack of Land Resources in Ukraine

Since all citizens of Ukraine are entitled to receive land free of charge, 690,000 hectares of state land were privatised between 2012 and 2020<sup>197</sup>. Only 32.9% or 262,000 hectares of them were privatised by veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian war after 2014<sup>198</sup>.

To ensure land rights of all Ukrainian citizens who have not yet exercised them, about 160 million hectares are needed, which is four times

<sup>195</sup> The Land Code of Ukraine. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2768-14#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2768-14#Text)

<sup>196</sup> Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection,” No. 3551-XII (22 October 2003). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3551-12#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3551-12#Text)

<sup>197</sup> The Centre for Food and Land Use Research at the Kyiv School of Economics (2023). On the Inexpediency of Resuming the Free Transfer of Agricultural Lands to Private Ownership. P. 4. [kse.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Analitichna-zpiska.-Traven-2023.pdf](https://kse.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Analitichna-zpiska.-Traven-2023.pdf)

<sup>198</sup> Ibid. P. 5.

the total area of agricultural land in Ukraine<sup>199</sup>. The state lacks the necessary resources to guarantee the exercise of this right for all citizens.

## **2. High Corruption Risks in the Free Land Privatisation Mechanism**

According to the National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NACP)<sup>200</sup>, this process is one of the corruption tools. The priority entitlement for veterans to receive land plots may be exploited for shadow land acquisition schemes<sup>201</sup>.

## **3. Lack of Fairness and Equality Principles**

Land may be allocated anywhere in Ukraine where plots are available. However, its cost varies significantly depending on the region. This provides unequal opportunities for citizens.

For example, land plots in Kyiv, Zakarpattia, or Sumy Oblasts have different market prices. Moreover, regions differ in terms of security risks and the suitability of land for specific needs.

## **4. No Queue for Free Land Privatisation**

The priority right to such privatisation is formal and declarative, being applied only in specific cases, when several persons simultaneously submit documents for land plots. There is no general national waiting list for free land allocation, with veterans having priority.

These restrictions significantly undermine both the possibility of extending the period of free land allocation, particularly for veterans, and the relevance of such a mechanism in the future.

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<sup>199</sup> The Centre for Food and Land Use Research at the Kyiv School of Economics (2023). On the Inexpediency of Resuming the Free Transfer of Agricultural Lands to Private Ownership. P. 7. [kse.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Analitichna-zpiska.-Traven-2023.pdf](https://kse.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Analitichna-zpiska.-Traven-2023.pdf)

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. P. 7.

<sup>201</sup> Use of land privileges granted to veterans in corruption schemes. Integrity Portal. The National Agency on Corruption Prevention. [antycorportal.nazk.gov.ua/risks/16/](https://antycorportal.nazk.gov.ua/risks/16/)

# Legal Protection

Access to legal aid is a crucial component of veterans' well-being. The transition from military to civilian life involves a change in legal status – from service member to veteran – which legally entails new rights, obligations, and access to support and benefits. For many veterans, the beginning of civilian life is the starting point for processing important legal documents<sup>202</sup>. However, this process can be significantly complicated, in particular due to bureaucracy in acquiring statuses and public services, lack of information, misunderstanding of legal procedures, and biased attitudes of some civil service providers<sup>203</sup>. For these reasons, veterans may require additional support in this process.

**Currently, the state offers veterans some legal guarantees:**

1. Exemption from court fees

2. Right to free legal aid

## 1. Exemption from Court Fees

According to the Law of Ukraine “On Court Fee,”<sup>204</sup> persons with combat experiences are exempt from paying court fees in cases concerning the violation of their rights. On 25 January 2025, the Supreme Court of Ukraine confirmed<sup>205</sup> that this exemption also refers to cases involving veterans' social protection, such as pension-related issues.

## 2. Right to Free Legal Aid

This system is currently the only extensive network with representatives in rural and remote areas. Veterans can access this service within

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<sup>202</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. P. 153.  
[veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. P. 155.

<sup>204</sup> Law of Ukraine “On Court Fee,” No. 3674-VI (8 July 2011). Article 5, clause 13.  
[zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3674-17#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3674-17#Text)

<sup>205</sup> The Supreme Court of Ukraine. (29 January 2025). Decision in Case No. 600/3723/24-a (Administrative Proceedings No. K/990/36520/24). Unified State Register of Court Decisions.  
[reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/124782408](https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/124782408)

the free legal aid system of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine – either online or at the nearest legal aid centre. **The service includes:**

- legal consultations;
- assistance with drafting applications, complaints, and other legal documents;
- defence and representation of interests in courts, state bodies, local governments, and before third parties<sup>206</sup>.

Despite the importance of this right, its exercise is often limited by insufficient funding and overburdened legal aid centres<sup>207</sup>. So, veterans primarily turn to private lawyers or civil society organisations rather than government agencies. According to the “Journey of the Wounded: Needs, Challenges, and a Vision for the Future” study, service members consider private lawyers and CSOs to be the most effective mechanisms for protecting their rights<sup>208</sup>.

Another challenge in the field of legal security is veterans’ lack of awareness about the rights, benefits, and services guaranteed by the state. According to the SREO study, together with the United Nations Development Programme, 85% of surveyed veterans need information about their rights, benefits, and guarantees after returning from service<sup>209</sup>. Problems occur because of vague lists of necessary documents, ambiguity regarding the responsible authority to contact, and the complexity of overall procedures.

Proper awareness-raising should be a fundamental part of ensuring access to rights, benefits, and services for veterans. Accordingly, the state should give due attention to the communication aspect

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<sup>206</sup> About the Free Legal Aid System. Free Legal Aid. [legalaid.gov.ua/pro-systemu-bpd/](http://legalaid.gov.ua/pro-systemu-bpd/)

<sup>207</sup> Legal Hundred (2022). Analysis of the Social Protection System for Veterans and Service Members. P. 111. [legal100.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-Bila-kniga.pdf](http://legal100.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-Bila-kniga.pdf)

<sup>208</sup> Pryncyp, Gradus Research, & Terra Ukraine (2023). The Journey of the Wounded: Needs, Challenges, and a Vision for the Future. P. 32. [drive.google.com/file/d/1Dtt-5nn2bLZK2M1HnkOSCFhjRo9478kE/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Dtt-5nn2bLZK2M1HnkOSCFhjRo9478kE/view)

<sup>209</sup> Survey on the Legal Needs of Veterans and Their Family Members. UNDP. [undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-12/veteransreport-2.pdf](http://undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-12/veteransreport-2.pdf)

of service delivery for veterans and coordinate the efforts of responsible agencies to ensure effective dissemination of such information at all levels.

The training of system employees in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine and civil society organisations could be an appropriate step to strengthen the capacity of the free legal aid system in providing primary and secondary assistance to veterans.

# Conclusions

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## **1 The provision of a lump-sum unconditional allowance after discharge is a key element of financial well-being for all veterans**

Veterans need support to allow time and space for rest and recovery after returning to civilian life. A lump-sum allowance, regardless of the reason for discharge or other factors, would help veterans recover, plan their future, and start rebuilding their civilian well-being. In addition, veterans with disabilities shall continue to receive a lump-sum disability allowance, in addition to the lump-sum allowance granted upon discharge. They may need additional support during their return to civilian life to undergo necessary rehabilitation, adapt their housing to their needs, find a job, and recover.

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## **2 It is important to develop mechanisms to compensate for the impact and the service of veterans in the reserve**

Veterans who continue their service in the reserve lack guarantees that their efforts to rebuild civilian life and well-being will remain stable. Since everyone who completes their service during martial law or a special period is subject to mandatory enrolment in the military reserve, most veterans may face the uncertainty of re-mobilisation and planning horizon. This limits their ability to fully rebuild well-being in civilian life and may impact the trajectory of veterans' journeys. Recognising veterans' experience involves acknowledging that reserve service has a significant impact on their civilian well-being and should be compensated.

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### **3 Pension provision and retirement age for veterans must fairly recognise and reflect their contribution to the defence of Ukraine**

As of mid-2025, pension provision for veterans does not adequately reflect their experience in defending the state. Veterans must receive a decent pension to make a living. The decision to mobilise may have negatively affected their health and work capacity, as well as reduced opportunities to rebuild their well-being in civilian life. Therefore, veterans, regardless of employment or insurance record, should have the right to retire earlier than other citizens.

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### **4 Many restrictions undermine the possibility of extending the period of free land allocation, in particular for veterans**

Although several laws provide that veterans have priority rights to receive land plots free of charge for various purposes, their exercise is now severely limited. First, Ukraine lacks land resources to exercise this right for all citizens, including veterans. Second, the mechanism of free land privatisation, including the priority entitlement for veterans to receive land plots, carries significant corruption risks. Third, the process lacks fairness and equality principles, as land plots have different material value depending on location. Finally, the priority entitlement for veterans to receive land plots is formal, as there is no waiting list for free land allocation in Ukraine. All of the above restrictions significantly undermine the feasibility of the free land allocation mechanism in general and for veterans in particular.



Component 4

# Vocation

# Abstract

In this section, we explore how veterans can find and fulfil their vocation after completing their service, as well as possible areas of public policy on veteran self-fulfilment, taking into account their needs, experiences, and potential challenges.

## **This section:**

- outlines the specifics of transitioning from the military to the civilian labour market, including challenges related to career, education, or business disruption during service, re-mobilisation, reserve service, and uncertainty about the future;
- considers the experiences and needs of veterans who wish to change professions, resume their education, or start their own business;
- describes current employment guarantees for veterans and proposes flexible employment options after discharge, including the right to additional leave, gradual return to work, and protection against dismissal during long-term treatment;
- outlines the importance of access to education, advanced training, and retraining, including short-term programmes and individual learning tracks;
- considers support for veteran entrepreneurship as an additional tool for self-employment and economic recovery.

# Introduction

The common composition of the Ukrainian army changed significantly after the start of the Russian invasion in 2014. The army moved from career service members who had spent most of their adult lives in service to recruiting many conscripted civilians with no prior service experience or only short-term one.

Military service is a civic duty for all Ukrainian citizens. Article 65 of the Constitution of Ukraine states: “Defence of the Homeland, independence, and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and respect for its State symbols, shall be the duty of the citizens of Ukraine.”<sup>210</sup> So, citizens subject to military service may be conscripted.

During martial law or a special period, those completing military service are automatically enrolled in the reserve<sup>211</sup>. This means they are among the first to be called up again if needed. This was the journey followed in 2022 by the ATO/JFO veterans, who immediately returned to the army after the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion.

Since 2014, military service has become part of the professional journey for over 1.5 million Ukrainian citizens, most of whom had civilian careers and want to continue them after discharge. The number of service members may increase significantly in the future with the ongoing Russian aggression and the development of Ukraine’s national defence strategy.

Active and reserve services have become a new (and in some cases already routine) reality on the labour market for a significant portion of Ukrainian working-age men and many women. At the same time, neither the military personnel system nor the civilian labour market in Ukraine accounts for a significant number of reservists or provides equal access to career opportunities for veterans. Until recently,

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<sup>210</sup> Constitution of Ukraine. Article 65.

[president.gov.ua/ua/documents/constitution/konstituciya-ukrayini-rozdil-ii](https://president.gov.ua/ua/documents/constitution/konstituciya-ukrayini-rozdil-ii)

<sup>211</sup> On the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Clause 12. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#n15](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/618/2012#n15)

the military and civilian labour markets have hardly overlapped, both in terms of staff exchange and the structure of systems and processes. While civilian specialists are strengthening the Security and Defence Forces, and veterans are rebuilding their permanent or temporary civilian careers, there are still no proper links and mechanisms for transforming experience between the two systems. So, prior civilian skills rarely influence a service member's career development in the army. Conversely, military experience is often invisible to civilian employers after discharge.

Only some veterans with combat experience who are unfit for military service are guaranteed a return to civilian life without the risk of further conscription – those discharged and removed from military registration for health reasons or upon reaching the age limit. Other veterans either have temporary rights on deferred service during martial law, in particular for some family reasons, or may be re-mobilised until they reach the age limit under current legislation.

When considering a person's journey within the state, we must pay attention to the inequality that will inevitably arise from the current situation if urgent changes are not made. Imagine two employees with similar competencies and talents holding similar positions at the same company. One of them was mobilised, while the other was not for various reasons. Initially, their careers develop in parallel. After the first mobilisation and military service, a veteran is guaranteed job retention and average earnings<sup>212</sup>. Upon return, they resume work at the same stage they were before their service.

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<sup>212</sup> The Labour Code of Ukraine. Article 119. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/322-08#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/322-08#Text)

# CAREER SERVICE MEMBER

## Career Path



# CONSCRIPTED SERVICE MEMBER

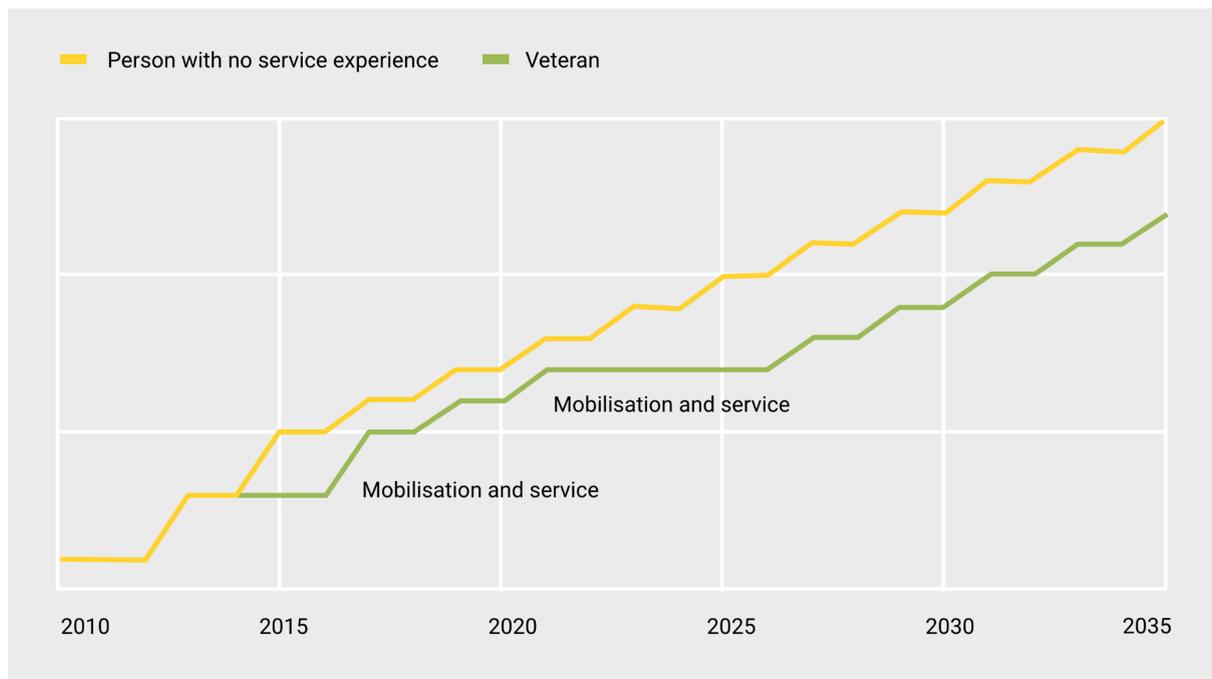
## Career Path



For those transferred to the reserve (all veterans fit for service), the number of re-mobilisations until reaching the age limit of 60 is currently unlimited.

Comparison of Career Paths for Career and Conscripted Service Members

Meanwhile, the civilian colleague continues their career path with gradual progress. After returning to work, the veteran also begins to advance, but reaches the same level of achievement as their civilian colleagues several years later. If the next mobilisation occurs, the situation repeats: the veteran's position and salary are retained until the end of service. The more often this happens, the more noticeable the gap becomes – in income, prospects, and professional recognition.



Of course, this chart does not account for many important factors: individuals' traits, their ambitions, company and military policies (including higher pay for service members during martial law), career growth rates, length of service, new skills acquired in combat, and the time required to rebuild and re-establish daily life or health after service. It also does not consider the specifics of certain industries where professional recognition, market presence, awareness of changes and innovations, and formal professional development play a key role in a career.

We assume that in the current conditions, the earlier a veteran is discharged and removed from military registration, the higher their chances of building a successful civilian career. However, this situation is unfair and does not provide an adequate response to the security

threats posed by Russia. Ukraine must be constantly ready for prolonged and exhausting defence now.

According to the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine, the country needs about 4.5 million employees to support economic growth<sup>213</sup>. This figure indicates a serious labour shortage. According to the latest data from the Ministry of Veterans Affairs<sup>214</sup>, up to 1.5 million of these employees may be veterans who left their civilian jobs to join the army.

Although military service is an employment, veterans currently have limited opportunities for career development within the Security and Defence Forces. Their experience, including combat one, is often not properly taken into account and does not serve as a basis for significant promotion.

As early as 2020, the NGO “Come Back Alive” conducted a study on the reasons for the discharge of service members from the army. At the time, 65% of respondents chose to return to the civilian labour market after completing their first contract. Their decision was influenced by factors such as the quality of management and leadership, attitude from the military system, work-life balance, job content, and salary amount<sup>215</sup>. According to the 2021 Veteran Reintegration Study by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), only 23% of veterans returned to their previous civilian positions<sup>216</sup>.

Currently, while no demobilisation has been announced since the start of the full-scale invasion, only a relatively small number of veterans are beginning civilian careers: those discharged for health reasons, upon

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<sup>213</sup> Kryzhnyi, A. (22 July 2024). Ukraine Lacks Personnel to Achieve Its Annual Economic Growth Targets. *Ekonomichna Pravda*. [epravda.com.ua/news/2024/07/22/716967/](https://epravda.com.ua/news/2024/07/22/716967/)

<sup>214</sup> Administrative Data within the Meaning of the Law of Ukraine “On State Statistics” Collected by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. Number of Veterans (1 April 2025). Ukraine Crisis Media Centre. [data.gov.ua/dataset/034f43a4-133a-498f-8478-6076ed1013e4](https://data.gov.ua/dataset/034f43a4-133a-498f-8478-6076ed1013e4)

<sup>215</sup> Muraveinyk, A. (1 March 2020). Why are Servicemen Leaving the Armed Forces? CBA Initiatives Centre. [cbacenter.ngo/page/comu-viiskovosluzbovci-zvilniaiutsia-z-armiyi](https://cbacenter.ngo/page/comu-viiskovosluzbovci-zvilniaiutsia-z-armiyi)

<sup>216</sup> IREX, Veteran Hub (14 July 2021). Results of the Veteran Reintegration Study on Current Employment Conditions. [irex.org/sites/default/files/Veterans-Current-Employment-Conditions-Ukrainian.pdf](https://irex.org/sites/default/files/Veterans-Current-Employment-Conditions-Ukrainian.pdf)

reaching the age limit, following captivity, or for family reasons (without being removed from military registration). Some of them require adapted workplaces due to the consequences of trauma or injuries, and may require intermittent additional treatment or rehabilitation.

Most veterans will return to civilian jobs only after demobilisation is officially announced, while remaining fit for further service. According to previous surveys, including the 2021 Veteran Reintegration Study, only 31% of veterans continued military service after discharge<sup>217</sup>.

In addition to wage labour, veterans may choose entrepreneurship and build their own businesses. Even before the full-scale invasion, many veterans started their businesses after returning from service. However, since the start of a new phase of the war in 2022, some veteran entrepreneurs have found themselves back in the army. Veteran-owned businesses become particularly vulnerable under such conditions.

We do not have research-based data, but we assume that during their service, veterans lack the time and capacity to continue entrepreneurial activities. They are often forced to either delegate leadership to someone else, for example, a spouse, partner, or close relative, or to close the business down. This happened in 2022 and may happen again. Even reserve service affects the ability to fully develop their own businesses, as it involves participation in training sessions and carries the risks of immediate re-mobilisation.

In such circumstances, we believe that a guaranteed planning horizon in civilian life becomes the key factor for most veterans transferred to the general conscription pool in finding and fulfilling their vocation after service. Veterans will be able to plan their future in an informed and cautious manner, depending on whether this period is defined and how long it lasts.

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<sup>217</sup> IREX, Veteran Hub (14 July 2021). Results of the Veteran Reintegration Study on Current Employment Conditions.  
[irex.org/sites/default/files/Veterans-Current-Employment-Conditions-Ukrainian.pdf](https://irex.org/sites/default/files/Veterans-Current-Employment-Conditions-Ukrainian.pdf)

This challenge affects all veterans and their families, regardless of the career path they intend to pursue after discharge – whether retraining, additional training, employment, or starting a business. There is clear evidence from ATO/JFO<sup>218</sup> veterans who, after completing their service, were rebuilding their civilian well-being – working, building their careers, or starting their own businesses – but enlisted in the army to defend the country at the beginning of the full-scale invasion. Because they are still in the reserve or general conscription pool, they cannot plan their future long-term, which poses a serious challenge to their adaptation and integration into the country’s economic life.

Since the new legislation on military reserve was only adopted in 2024<sup>219</sup>, the mechanisms for involving veterans in such service remain unclear. It is difficult to predict what additional employment-related challenges they may face. However, it is important to develop policies that protect veterans in the reserve or general conscription pool, enabling them to combine employment with the service, secure additional guarantees and job retention support, and access opportunities for education and entrepreneurship.

It is crucial to create a support system that takes into account different career paths: returning to a previous job, retraining, obtaining new qualifications, or starting a business. This system should integrate labour guarantees, accessible formal and informal education, retraining programmes, and tools for supporting entrepreneurship.

In addition, enabling self-fulfilment is a tool for restoring justice – a way to compensate for lost time in the labour market or education system while a person was defending the country. Therefore, vocation policy should be veteran-centred, aimed at creating conditions that enable veterans to fully reintegrate into civilian economic and social life.

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<sup>218</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/analytics/doslidzhenya-shlyahu-veteraniv-i-veteranok](https://veteranhub.com.ua/analytics/doslidzhenya-shlyahu-veteraniv-i-veteranok)

<sup>219</sup> Decree of the President of Ukraine (31 December 2024). “On Amending the Regulation on the Military Reserve Service of Ukrainian Citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.” [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/895/2024#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/895/2024#Text)

In this section, we analyse the current support available to veterans in employment, education, and entrepreneurship, and propose solutions that the state can implement immediately to create prerequisites for a meaningful, dignified, and sustainable return of veterans to civilian life.

**Important:** This section does not provide a general overview of the entire employment, education, and entrepreneurship sectors and related challenges. It focuses on potential solutions that the state can implement to meet the needs of veterans. These needs were identified through an analysis of available data and information.

The recommendations presented are the result of collaborative efforts by a coalition of organisations with expertise in veterans' affairs, informed by insights from professionals in relevant fields. We acknowledge that this work does not cover the full spectrum of challenges and solutions and emphasise the need for further research.

# Work and Employment

Veterans represent a significant share of Ukraine's working and solvent population. As of May 2024, there are about 1.3 million veterans in the country, with about 80% of them mobilised<sup>220</sup>. Most veterans are aged between 19 and 45, indicating their potential to participate actively in the labour market and the relevance of long-term employment solutions<sup>221</sup>.

In 2020, there were about 194,000 service members<sup>222</sup>. However, after the start of the full-scale invasion, that number had grown to about 700,000 by January 2025<sup>223</sup>. The number of veterans is expected to continue growing: the number could reach **1.7 million persons** after the war ends, which is about 10% of Ukraine's total working-age population<sup>224</sup>.

The end of service often becomes a point for reflection on a career path for veterans. Service experience often greatly affects a person's identity, values, and self-perception in society. So, career choices may be preceded by a re-evaluation of life priorities.

Upon returning to civilian life, veterans may seek new employment opportunities to establish a stable source of income, integrate into society, find a community, reconsider their vocation, and restore daily routine and a sense of inner security. Someone seeks to explore a new industry, others return to their previous jobs or take a break to recover, while others decide to start their own business.

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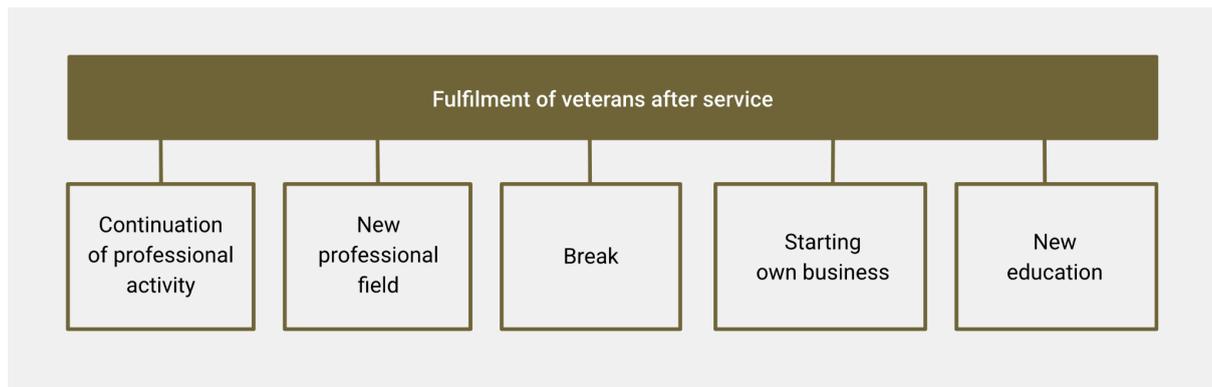
<sup>220</sup> Chernovol, K. (26 July 2024). There are Currently 1.3 Million Veterans in Ukraine: How Does the State Support Them? UNIAN. [unian.ua/society/v-ukrajini-zaraz-1-milyon-300-tisyach-veteraniv-yak-jih-pidtrimuye-derzhava-12708381.html](https://unian.ua/society/v-ukrajini-zaraz-1-milyon-300-tisyach-veteraniv-yak-jih-pidtrimuye-derzhava-12708381.html)

<sup>221</sup> Sadomska, B. (15 February 2024). The Needs of Veterans upon Their Return: Surveys and Personal Experience. Kunsht. [kunsht.com.ua/articles/potreby-veteraniv-pislia-povernennia-dodomu](https://kunsht.com.ua/articles/potreby-veteraniv-pislia-povernennia-dodomu)

<sup>222</sup> Semenova, I. (13 April 2021). Seven Years Since the Start of the ATO/JFO. Ten Key Facts and Figures about the War That Russia Is Still Waging against Ukraine. Radio NV. [nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/ato-sim-rokiv-z-pochatku-viyni-10-vazhlyvih-faktiv-i-cifr-pro-oos-novini-ukrajini-50153614.html](https://nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/ato-sim-rokiv-z-pochatku-viyni-10-vazhlyvih-faktiv-i-cifr-pro-oos-novini-ukrajini-50153614.html)

<sup>223</sup> Zelenskyi Announced the Current Strength of the Ukrainian Army (15 January 2025). Radio Svoboda. [radiosvoboda.org/a/news-zelenskyi-chyselCAB9nist-armiya/33276800.html](https://radiosvoboda.org/a/news-zelenskyi-chyselCAB9nist-armiya/33276800.html)

<sup>224</sup> Every Tenth Employee Will Be a Veteran — What Measures Are Already Being Taken Today to Provide Ukrainian Defenders with Jobs (1 August 2023). Ukraine. Ukraine. [mediacenter.org.ua/uk/kozhen-10-j-pratsivnik-bude-veteranom-yaki-zahodi-vzhivayutsya-vzhe-sogodni-dlya-zabezpechennya-ukrayinskih-zahisnikiv-robotoyu](https://mediacenter.org.ua/uk/kozhen-10-j-pratsivnik-bude-veteranom-yaki-zahodi-vzhivayutsya-vzhe-sogodni-dlya-zabezpechennya-ukrayinskih-zahisnikiv-robotoyu)



The search for professional fulfilment after service may be accompanied by challenges – practical, social, financial, and psychological. **According to the “Journeys of Veterans” study, respondents reported the following barriers when entering a new field:**

- deterioration of physical or psychological condition after service;
- fear of losing or decreasing professional skills due to prolonged absence from the civilian environment;
- lack of civilian work experience before service<sup>225</sup>.

Inaccessibility of the working environment may be another barrier. According to the 2024 survey conducted by the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation<sup>226</sup>, the unemployment rate among Ukrainian veterans has risen to 30.95%, which is almost 3% higher than in 2023, when 28% of respondents said they were unemployed. Respondents with disabilities named the following main barriers: architectural inaccessibility of offices, lack of adapted workplaces, options for flexible schedules or adjusting leave, and psychological support at work.

Despite current legal provisions, particularly **Article 18 of the Law of Ukraine “On Fundamentals of Social Security for Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine,”<sup>227</sup>** which guarantees an accessible workplace,

<sup>225</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. P. 197. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

<sup>226</sup> Ukrainian Veterans Foundation (13 February 2024). Unemployment Rate among Veterans is Growing: Research Shows. [veteranfund.com.ua/2024/02/13/sered-veteraniv-zrostaie-riven-bezrobitiia-doslidzhennia](https://veteranfund.com.ua/2024/02/13/sered-veteraniv-zrostaie-riven-bezrobitiia-doslidzhennia)

<sup>227</sup> Law of Ukraine “On Fundamentals of Social Security for Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine,” No. 875-XII (21 March 1991). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/875-12#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/875-12#Text)

this right is often not exercised in practice. The lack of effective mechanisms for controlling, monitoring and supporting employers in adapting workplaces and environments results in employment conditions that fail to consider veterans' needs.

As a result, they may take longer to find a job, agree to lower-paid positions, or stay outside the labour market. This intensifies economic instability, complicates adaptation, and may have long-term consequences for a person's mental and emotional state.

The need for recovery and treatment can also affect the ability to resume a career. After completing service, veterans often require time to adapt to a new lifestyle and routine, re-establish daily life, and make career decisions. The opportunity to take a break may be relevant for many veterans: to rest, spend time with family, or undergo rehabilitation. Such a break is not a privilege but a necessary element of a dignified return from service, which should be ensured at the governmental level.

Following discharge from military service, veterans face the requirement to return to employment almost immediately. According to the law, employers are obliged to retain veterans' job positions during their service<sup>228</sup>. After being discharged and registered with the TCRSS, veterans shall return to work the very next day<sup>229</sup>. This creates a situation where the transition to civilian life may occur without a comfortable period for adaptation, reflection, or recovery.

After returning to civilian life, veterans have the right to take their annual leave at any time, as well as an additional 14-day leave<sup>230</sup>. However, given the potential physical and mental exhaustion after service, the impact of chronic stress, and the need for rehabilitation or a return to family life, flexibility in using these leaves becomes especially important.

The circumstances of discharge from service may vary – planned or sudden, related to health, age, contract completion or personal

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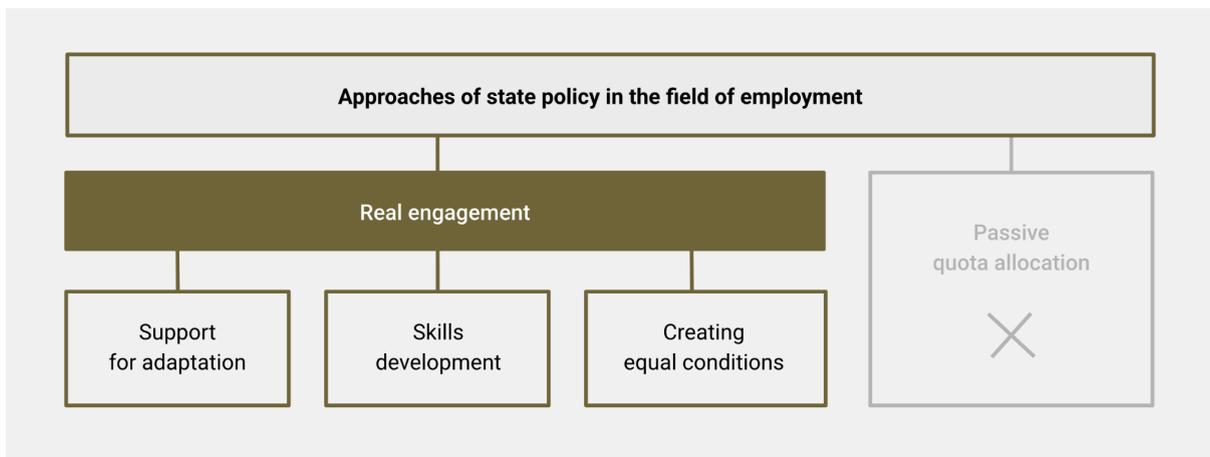
<sup>228</sup> The Labour Code of Ukraine. Article 119. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/322-08#n709](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/322-08#n709)

<sup>229</sup> Law of Ukraine "On Military Duty and Military Service" No. 2232-XII (2025). Article 26, part 11. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text)

<sup>230</sup> The Labour Code of Ukraine. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/322-08#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/322-08#Text)

reasons. In any of these cases, returning to a civilian job requires not only organisational but also emotional readiness.

Veterans with disabilities may need particular attention in this context: their comfortable return to work is possible only after completing treatment or rehabilitation, which may take several months or even years. In such cases, the requirement for immediate reinstatement at work does not align with medical indications or the principle of dignified treatment of a person.



## Expert Recommendations

- **Introduce a deferral period of up to three months before resuming work after discharge from service upon the veteran’s request**

We propose granting a deferral period for recovery, i.e., the first three months after discharge from service, to allow veterans a more comfortable transition to civilian life without losing their jobs.

Many NATO countries provide for a transitional period – Permissive Temporary Duty (PTDY)<sup>231</sup>, which may last 60–90 days. Ukraine could adopt a similar practice, adapted to its context.

We propose making it optional, as not everyone requires extended adaptation, and someone may wish to return to work immediately –

<sup>231</sup> U.S. Department of Défense. Leave Benefits during Transition. Military Compensation. [militarypay.defense.gov/Benefits/Leave-Benefits-During-Transition/](https://militarypay.defense.gov/Benefits/Leave-Benefits-During-Transition/)

that is their important right. So, the deferral should be optional and initiated by the veteran, depending on their readiness to resume professional activity.

The ability to take a break after service is a sign of care and recognition from the state. It also helps prevent overload, burnout, health deterioration, and the risk of losing work capacity. A break in work allows one to make conscious decisions about their future career or life journey.

- **Grant a temporary extension of three months before returning to work after rehabilitation for veterans with disabilities**

Veterans may require rehabilitation after returning from service, the duration of which depends on individual conditions and the person's condition. A medical or rehabilitation facility may complete a course of treatment, but that does not mean the person is already physically or mentally ready to return to work. They may still need time to return home, re-establish daily life, adapt to civilian life, and stabilise their well-being.

So, we propose introducing a temporary deferral of three months after the completion of rehabilitation for veterans with disabilities. Returning to work should take place only after completing all rehabilitation procedures, taking into account medical indications and the person's wishes.

- **Extend the sick leave with a guarantee of job retention even after four months of treatment.**

Veterans may return to work after completing their service, but later require long-term treatment due to injuries or chronic illnesses sustained during service.

According to Article 40 of the Labour Code of Ukraine<sup>232</sup>, an employer has the right to terminate the employment contract if an employee is absent from work for more than four months due to temporary disability. Exceptions are pregnancy and childbirth, as well as work injuries, for example, as a result of a workplace accident or while

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<sup>232</sup> The Labour Code of Ukraine. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/322-08#n275](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/322-08#n275)

performing official duties in the police force. However, veterans are not covered by these exceptions and remain unprotected from job loss during their recovery.

We propose extending the period of temporary disability with a guarantee of job retention even after four months of treatment. This could be introduced as an amendment to the Labour Code of Ukraine. The optimal duration of sick leave should be determined on a case-by-case basis, with a mutual agreement between the employee and employer as one fair approach.

■ **Enshrine guarantees for the treatment period as per draft law No. 12209 for veterans with disabilities.**

Draft Law No. 12209, adopted in the first reading by the Verkhovna Rada on 21 November 2024<sup>233</sup>, aims to reform the social insurance system for people with limited work capacity, including veterans with disabilities.

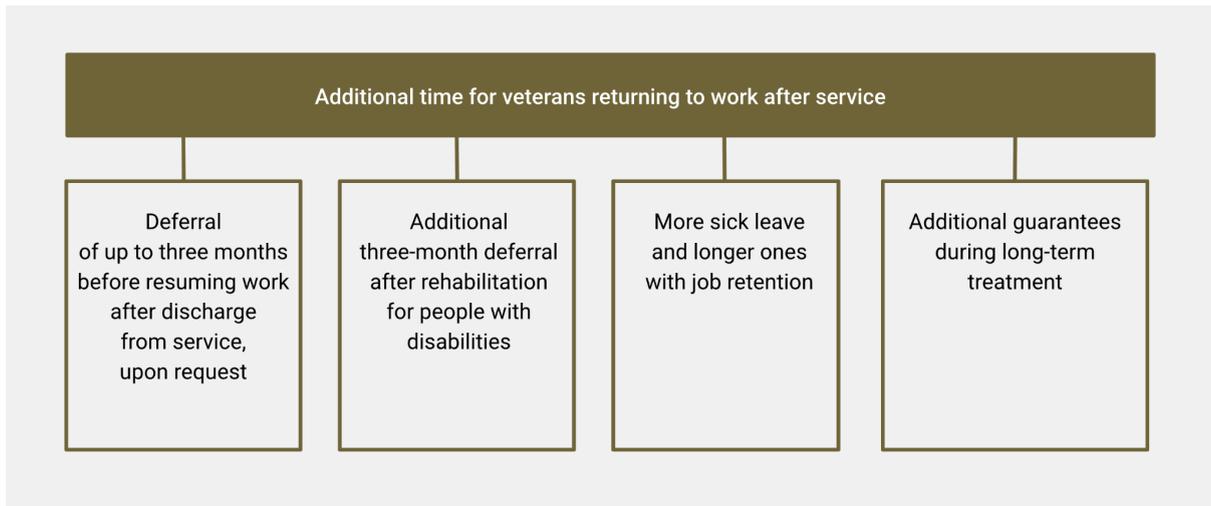
The draft law introduces a new insurance benefit related to rehabilitation based on medical indications. This benefit will be provided from the first day of rehabilitation until work capacity is restored, or a permanent disability is established, but not longer than one year. Its amount will constitute 70% to 100% of the salary, depending on their insurance record. In addition, it provides compensation for additional costs, including medicines and medical devices, transportation, care, and other related services<sup>234</sup>.

Such guarantees are especially important for veterans undergoing long-term recovery or requiring multi-stage medical support. They help reduce the risk of job loss due to circumstances directly related to service experience.

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<sup>233</sup> Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (2024). Draft Law Card No. 12209. [itd.rada.gov.ua/BILLINFO/Bills/Card/45246](https://itd.rada.gov.ua/BILLINFO/Bills/Card/45246)

<sup>234</sup> New rules for supporting persons with disabilities: Comment from trade unions (24 January 2025). Debit-Credit. [news.dtki.ua/labor/social-protection/95575-novi-pravila-pidtrimki-osib-z-obmezenoiu-pracezdatnistiu-komentar-vid-profspilok](https://news.dtki.ua/labor/social-protection/95575-novi-pravila-pidtrimki-osib-z-obmezenoiu-pracezdatnistiu-komentar-vid-profspilok)



**Additionally,** when making state employment policy, we are convinced that the integration of veterans into the labour market should be based on real engagement: through support during adaptation, skills development, and the creation of equal conditions, rather than solely on passive engagement tools such as quota allocation<sup>235</sup>. We do not support or promote quota-based hiring, as it often leads to formality rather than meaningful engagement of veterans in the work process. The state should encourage both employers and veterans to make informed choices, providing resources for retraining rather than simply assigning roles through obligations.

<sup>235</sup> In this context, quota allocation is the targeted allocation of a portion of job vacancies to be filled by members of population groups vulnerable in the labour market.

# Education and Retraining

Due to a lack of data, it is impossible to determine how many veterans will become employees, remain temporarily unemployed, or start their own businesses after demobilisation or discharge from service, and in what fields. So, we assume that the current composition of the army reflects Ukrainian society in terms of social status and employment. Many service members may want to change their fields of activity after discharge, as their priorities, values, and interests may have changed during their service.

According to the 2021 Veteran Reintegration Study by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), about 70% of ATO/JFO veterans changed their employment sector after discharge from service<sup>236</sup>. It is expected that within the first decade after demobilisation, demand for retraining and changing career or fields of activity will significantly increase.

After completing their service, veterans often seek to acquire new knowledge or enhance existing skills to find or change jobs. In this context, education and retraining opportunities play a key role: they open the door to career development, foster social integration, create a sense of stability, and provide the conditions for self-fulfilment.

The current system of educational and retraining support for veterans is mainly focused on higher education or vocational training. Veterans have the right to undergo training, retraining, and advanced training for working professions, including through vocational and educational programmes<sup>237</sup>.

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<sup>236</sup> IREX (2021). Results of the Veteran Reintegration Study on Current Employment Conditions. P. 3. [irex.org/sites/default/files/Veterans-Current-Employment-Conditions-Ukrainian.pdf](https://irex.org/sites/default/files/Veterans-Current-Employment-Conditions-Ukrainian.pdf)

<sup>237</sup> Benefits for Education. The Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. [mva.gov.ua/veteranam/pilgi-na-navchannya](https://mva.gov.ua/veteranam/pilgi-na-navchannya)

Retraining can be performed through various programmes and formats, including higher and non-formal education. **For veterans who wish to obtain a bachelor's or master's degree, there are four ways to fund their education:**

- 1) **free education on general terms** – an opportunity to enrol in any speciality subject to obtaining high rating points on the National Multisubject Test (NMT) or the External Independent Evaluation (EIE);
- 2) **free enrolment in state-prioritised specialities**, even with lower NMT or EIE scores, if the chosen speciality is on the list supported by the state;
- 3) **state co-financed educational grants** – part of the tuition fees is covered by the state, the rest by the student;
- 4) **social educational grants for privileged groups** – 100% of tuition fees are covered. Veterans belong to such groups. To enrol through this mechanism, veterans do not have to take NMT or EIE, as admission to higher education institutions is non-competitive.

In addition to funding mechanisms, according to the **Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection,”**<sup>238</sup> all veterans shall be entitled to support during their studies – a social scholarship, free textbooks and access to educational databases, and free or subsidised accommodation in residence halls.

Despite guaranteed opportunities, the retraining process may be accompanied by many challenges for veterans. These include difficulties in regaining knowledge and skills after a long break, physical or mental barriers, and uncertainty about the future. Many veterans are not ready for long-term plans and commitments after returning to civilian life, such as two- or four-year educational programmes.

According to representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, during expert interviews conducted within this concept, only some veterans choose post-service higher education. This situation may

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<sup>238</sup> Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans and Guarantees of Their Social Protection,” No. 3551-XII (22 October 1993). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3551-12#Text](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3551-12#Text)

change in the future, in particular with the introduction of voluntary contract service for young people aged 18–24. The current lack of data on the social and demographic profile and educational needs of veterans complicates the development of a flexible education policy.

It is also important to consider that veterans will enter higher education institutions after a break, sometimes a long one, due to military service and combat participation. Their knowledge and experiences may differ significantly from those of recent school graduates. This does not call into question veterans' ability to obtain quality higher education but may indicate a need for additional support, such as assistance in refreshing certain knowledge, especially if they are enrolling on general terms based on NMT scores.

In addition, the state's focus on supporting veterans in obtaining higher education often does not meet their real needs. Some veterans entering universities may indicate not a lack of motivation for acquiring new knowledge and skills, but rather a preference for more practical or short-term educational formats. For example, according to the "Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life: Contexts, Experiences, Solutions" study conducted by the Human Rights Centre Pryncyp, about 40% of surveyed veterans were interested in online courses and another 40% in offline ones to restore professional skills or master a new profession<sup>239</sup>.

Another significant challenge is the lack of awareness among veterans about state-provided educational and retraining programmes. According to a survey conducted by the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation in January 2024, about 67% of veterans were not aware of such opportunities at all<sup>240</sup>. This issue is especially acute in small settlements, where access to information from local authorities responsible for veterans' affairs may be limited.

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<sup>239</sup> Pryncyp (20 March 2025). Transition from Military Service to Civilian Life: Contexts, Experiences, Solutions. [pryncyp.org/analytics/perehid-vid-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-do-czyvilnogo-zhyttya-konteksty-dosvidy-rishennya/p.183](https://pryncyp.org/analytics/perehid-vid-vijskovoyi-sluzhby-do-czyvilnogo-zhyttya-konteksty-dosvidy-rishennya/p.183)

<sup>240</sup> Ukrainian Veterans Foundation (2024). Current Needs and Vision of Opportunities for Career and Professional Growth of Veterans. Pp. 16–17. [veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/pracevlashtuvanna.pdf](https://veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/pracevlashtuvanna.pdf)

Even those veterans interested in training or retraining may simply not know about such programmes. At the same time, available opportunities do not cover all forms of education, making them inaccessible or inconvenient for many veterans.

Some active service members are also students who took an academic leave due to service and wish to resume their studies after returning. According to an explanation letter from the Ministry of Education and Science of 11 October 2023 addressed to heads of higher education institutions, veterans have a guaranteed right to be reinstated to state-ordered places<sup>241</sup>.

However, Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of 7 February 2024<sup>242</sup> stipulates that veterans and persons with disabilities resulting from the war may resume their studies after completing academic leave only if there are available state-funded places in the relevant speciality at the educational institutions. This means that institutions are not obliged to reserve state-funded places for students who took academic leave due to service and may reassign them to others, for example, based on academic performance.

As a result, veterans risk losing their state-funded places during their service. In such cases, they are forced either to transfer to a study on a contractual basis or drop it due to a lack of funds.

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<sup>241</sup> Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 1/15735-23 (11 October 2023). On Academic Leave. [document.vobu.ua/doc/23785](https://document.vobu.ua/doc/23785)

<sup>242</sup> Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine “Regulation on the Procedure for Expulsion, Interruption of Studies, Reinstatement, and Transfer of Students of Higher Education Institutions, and Granting Them Academic Leave” No. 134 (7 February 2024). Section III, clause 5. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0509-24#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0509-24#Text)

## Current Support for Veterans in Education and Retraining

Vocational training	Higher education	Support during studies
The right to training, retraining, and skill enhancement in vocational professions, including advanced training within work and educational programmes	Free education on general terms, provided high rating points	Social scholarship
	Enrolment in state-prioritised specialities	Free textbooks
	Co-financed educational grants	Access to educational databases
	Social grants	Free or subsidised accommodation in residence halls

### Expert Recommendations

- **Grant the right to free training for entering higher education institutions**

In addition to existing support mechanisms, including grants for studying at higher education institutions of any form of ownership within the maximum cost, veterans should also be granted the right to free training for entering such institutions. This would help them refresh their knowledge, for example, in English or mathematics, and facilitate a more comfortable learning process in the future.

Specific state-established admission requirements may apply for certain specialities. For example, there is a requirement that the competitive NMT/EIE score cannot be lower than 150 for enrolment in medical specialities on general terms. Such requirements have an objective basis – to ensure a basic level of knowledge required for mastering

a complex profession. However, the state can support veterans by guaranteeing them access to free pre-entry training, helping ensure equal conditions with other applicants.

**Additionally,** along with expanding access to higher education, it is **important to preserve the opportunity for veterans to receive vouchers for vocational education in accordance with the List of Professions and Specialities approved by the state**<sup>243</sup>. This format allows veterans to master or enhance practical skills and knowledge gained during service and apply them in civilian employment. In addition, such training is usually shorter than full higher education and can be a suitable option for veterans who cannot or do not wish to study for a long time.

#### ■ **Introduce vouchers for informal educational courses**

Currently, veterans are eligible for a one-time education voucher under the State Employment Service programme. General requirements include having professional, vocational, special pre-higher, or higher education. A person may only receive them if they have not previously undergone retraining funded by the State Social Unemployment Insurance Fund within the last three years. The voucher cost cannot exceed ten times the subsistence minimum. As of 2025, this amounts to UAH 30,280. If the cost of training exceeds the maximum amount of the voucher, the veteran or employer must cover the difference.

To meet the needs of veterans for short-term study, we propose introducing vouchers for non-formal education – short-term courses, certificate programmes, and online courses. This would enable veterans to quickly master practical skills for further civilian employment, and give them time and opportunity to understand their priorities and consciously choose a profession and format of training or retraining.

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<sup>243</sup> Order of the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine “On Approval of the List of Professions and Specialities Eligible for Training Vouchers” No. 2040 (11 April 2023). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0793-23#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0793-23#Text)

- **Grant the right to resume their free study at the university after discharge from service**

It is important to preserve veterans' right to be reinstated at the very educational institutions they left due to their service. This right should apply to all forms of free education, regardless of the mechanism through which the place was provided. Such a guaranteed opportunity would serve as recognition of the contribution made by veterans who paused their civilian lives, well-being, and education to defend Ukraine. It would contribute to further rebuilding civil well-being by gaining knowledge and skills that they can apply in the future, finding meaningful activities for them and returning to their social circle.

# Entrepreneurship

After completing their service, many veterans do not return to wage labour, but instead seek more flexible and autonomous forms of employment. The reasons may vary: the need for retraining, a desire to implement their ideas, or to adapt their activities to a changed physical or mental state. For many, starting their own business becomes not only a source of income but also a means of self-fulfilment and adaptation to civilian life.

According to a survey by the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation, about 70% of veterans are interested in starting their own business<sup>244</sup>. According to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs<sup>245</sup>, as of 1 January 2022, almost 13,000 (12,789) individual entrepreneurs and self-employed persons were registered among veterans and their family members.

There is no clear legal definition of “veteran business,” which can create barriers to systematic support and the development of a separate public policy on veteran entrepreneurship. It is important to establish a precise definition in the future to ensure priority and transparency of conditions for granting access to preferential programmes for businesses started by veterans in public procurement, grant programmes or tax initiatives.

The conditions of reserve service are another important factor influencing the future development of entrepreneurship among veterans. The majority of veterans, especially those discharged during martial law, will be enrolled in the reserve forces. In practice, this could mean up to three months of exercises and training during peacetime, as well as priority return to the army in the event of mobilisation. So, reserve service introduces additional uncertainty, which may affect both the decision to start one's own business and the ability to develop one. It is essential that the state provides guarantees

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<sup>244</sup> Ukrainian Veterans Foundation (2024). Needs of Veterans. P. 5.  
[veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Opytuvannia-veteraniv-zhovten-2024.pdf](https://veteranfund.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Opytuvannia-veteraniv-zhovten-2024.pdf)

<sup>245</sup> Ukrainian Veterans Foundation (2022). Portrait of a Veteran in Russian-Ukrainian War 2014–2022.  
[veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/portret\\_veterana/](https://veteranfund.com.ua/analytics/portret_veterana/)

regarding prospects and offers support to veterans running a business during service.

Currently, the state supports veteran entrepreneurship through a number of programmes. In particular, the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine launched a grant programme for veterans and their family members<sup>246</sup>, covering a wide range of business development areas. The grant amount depends on the number of jobs created, with a maximum amount of up to UAH 1 million.

Grant Programme for Veterans Creating New Jobs  
from the Ministry of Veterans Affairs

Up to UAH 250,000	Up to UAH 500,000	Up to UAH 1 million (70% of project value)
1 job	2 jobs	4 jobs
		Registered as an individual entrepreneur for over a year

In addition to this programme, there are other national and international grants for veterans, including those for starting their own business<sup>247</sup>, gardening<sup>248</sup>, and processing enterprises<sup>249</sup>.

It will be important to preserve and scale current grant programmes and to adapt them to the needs of different groups of veterans, based on clearly defined criteria. This will support long-term well-being by enabling veterans to express themselves through their own businesses, fostering economic activity, and creating new jobs not only for veterans but also for communities.

<sup>246</sup> Grant for Veterans and Their Families. Diia. [diia.gov.ua/services/grant-dlya-veteraniv-ta-chleniv-yihnih-simej](https://diia.gov.ua/services/grant-dlya-veteraniv-ta-chleniv-yihnih-simej)

<sup>247</sup> Grant for Starting a Business. Diia. [diia.gov.ua/services/grant-na-vlasnu-spravu](https://diia.gov.ua/services/grant-na-vlasnu-spravu)

<sup>248</sup> Grant for Gardening. Diia. [diia.gov.ua/services/grant-na-sad](https://diia.gov.ua/services/grant-na-sad)

<sup>249</sup> Grant for Manufacturing Industry. Diia. [diia.gov.ua/services/grant-na-pererobne-pidpriyemstvo](https://diia.gov.ua/services/grant-na-pererobne-pidpriyemstvo)

It is also important to retain simplified procedures for terminating employment contracts, self-employment, and specific procedures for suspending/resuming business for veterans with experience of internal displacement. Veterans with IDP status face not only the consequences of combat experience but also additional social and economic challenges related to the loss of housing, documents, employment, or business in regions where hostilities have taken place or are ongoing. It is crucial to ensure flexibility for veterans who are forced to adapt to new conditions in a new region, have lost their income or business, or require simplified legal and administrative procedures when changing their employment.

# Conclusions

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## **1 Returning to civilian life requires predictability**

A guaranteed planning horizon is a key factor in a veteran's career. Without clear rules for reserve service or re-mobilisation, opportunities for stable employment, retraining, or entrepreneurship remain limited.

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## **2 Public policy must include flexible adaptation tools**

After completing military service, veterans may require time to recover, re-evaluate their life priorities, adapt to civilian life, or make decisions about a career change. Legislation should provide the option for voluntary deferral of reinstatement at work without the risk of job loss.

It is also important to establish a system of flexible employment guarantees for veterans undergoing treatment or rehabilitation, those with injuries, trauma and disabilities, or those requiring long-term medical recovery. The right to extended sick leave, flexible leave, and job retention should be statutory. This is especially important for maintaining income and professional trajectory during the recovery period.

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## **3 Education and retraining must be accessible, practical, and adaptable**

Despite formal opportunities, many veterans may not choose long-term educational programmes due to personal reasons – age, lack of funds, or the need to quickly return to work after discharge from service. The state could focus on short-term and non-formal training programmes and ensure not only the right to free education, but also support in preparing for it. It is also important to guarantee the right to resume a state-funded place after an academic leave.

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## **4 Entrepreneurship should become a full-fledged tool for supporting veteran self-fulfilment**

Running a business is not only a source of income but also a means to achieve independence, regain control over one's life, and foster self-confidence. To support this trajectory of veterans returning to the labour market, it is necessary to scale up grant programmes and business training, and to legally define the term “veteran business” as a separate category. This should include the possibility of obtaining benefits, access to public procurement, and special financial tools.



**Component 5**

# **Relationships and Recognition**

# Abstract

This section outlines the key policy areas concerning veterans' relationships with their close circles, as well as recognition, commemoration, and memorialisation systems, which form the basis of public gratitude and support.

## **This section examines:**

- types of personal relationships that impact veterans' well-being, particularly with family, brothers-in-arms, and the civilian environment;
- recognition as a key principle of veteran policy, and examples of its integration into public practices and services;
- approaches to commemoration, farewells, memorialisation, burial arrangements, and the state's role in preserving memory;
- memorialisation mechanisms as part of memory culture — from individual to collective;
- the importance of veterans' expression of will, in particular regarding inheritance, burial, and remembrance, taking into account their right to choice and dignity.



**Part 1**

# **Relationships**

# Introduction

Relationships with others – whether friendly, romantic, or family – are an integral part of any person’s life. They can offer support during difficult times or become a source of additional stress, depending on life conditions, the person’s state, and the level of trust between partners. As with anyone, relationships and social interaction are an important component of veterans’ well-being.

After returning to civilian life, veterans’ relationships with family, fellow veterans, and the civilian environment may undergo changes. For some, this means re-evaluating close relationships, while for others, it means renewing or establishing new ones and changing their social circle.

We identify three key groups of people whose relationships are crucial for veterans’ well-being<sup>250</sup>: family and close circle, brothers- and sisters-in-arms, and the civilian environment. This section concentrates on areas of public policy concerning the first two groups, as family and comrades are usually the closest people to veterans. At the same time, engagement with the civilian environment is also important and complex.

It is worth noting that the state should not and cannot interfere in a person’s private life. Therefore, we consider these relationships mainly in terms of support policies, without delving into the complex and multidimensional nature of human relationships.

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<sup>250</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans.  
[veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

# Family and Close Circle

An extended separation, different experiences of family members, and the need to rebuild common life after returning to civilian life may be challenging for veterans and their families. There may be a process of “reacquainting” with one another and revisiting relationships even within the closest circles – family, friends, or a partner.

Returning to civilian life demands that families not only re-establish their roles but also reallocate responsibilities and adjust to altered needs and habits. Veterans may have limited capacity to establish or resume relationships if they are primarily focused on personal recovery and adaptation. Someone may also experience communication difficulties about their service-related experiences, which can lead to detachment in relationships<sup>251</sup>.

Military service and combat experience can affect not only the veterans’ mental well-being but also their self-perception, especially in the context of body image and sexual health. Injuries or physical changes resulting from combat may pose significant challenges. Some veterans feel shame or fear of being a burden to their partner, which may lead to avoidance of intimacy or emotional detachment<sup>252</sup>, impacting trust in relationships and overall well-being.

It is important to discuss and explore the topics of body image and sexual health at an institutional level. Veterans with amputations, spinal cord injuries, or traumatic brain injuries often lack specific advice and practical guidance for recovery. The healthcare system must provide access to information and expert advice on resuming a sexual life following injury or trauma.

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<sup>251</sup> McFee, E., Röders, J., Agrawal, R., van den Aakster, E. Sudachek, D. (2024). Between Frontline and Home Front. Reintegration, Resilience, and Participation Strategies for Ukraine’s Veterans. Corioli Institute. [reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/between-frontline-and-home-front-reintegration-resilience-and-participation-strategies-ukraines-veterans](https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/between-frontline-and-home-front-reintegration-resilience-and-participation-strategies-ukraines-veterans)

<sup>252</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). RESEX. About Sexual Life for Service Members Who Have Been Injured. [resex.veteranhub.com.ua/](https://resex.veteranhub.com.ua/)

This issue is relevant not only to veterans but also to civilians, and thus requires a systemic approach. It is necessary to develop inclusive programmes and train healthcare specialists in the area of sexual health, including sexologists and therapists.

Parenthood can also be affected by service-related and post-service changes. In particular, returning to parental duties may be difficult for veterans due to extended separation and shifts in family dynamics. Parenthood requires involvement and sensitivity to a child's needs. However, veterans may experience many post-service personal and emotional changes<sup>253</sup>, which can influence the quality of their relationships with their children and their ability to dedicate time and attention to them and their leisure activities.

Male service members are not always able to be present at the birth of their children, as there is currently no clearly defined mechanism for granting leave during this period. For many families, a father's presence at birth holds significant emotional value, and an enforced absence can also impact the father's sense of involvement in family life.

Female veterans may have specific needs in terms of reproductive health maintenance, particularly due to the impact of combat conditions, stress, and traumas/injuries on hormonal balance, menstrual period, and fertility. Some female veterans may struggle to access specialised medical services, in particular due to a lack of specialists who take into account the specifics of female physiology during post-service adaptation and recovery.

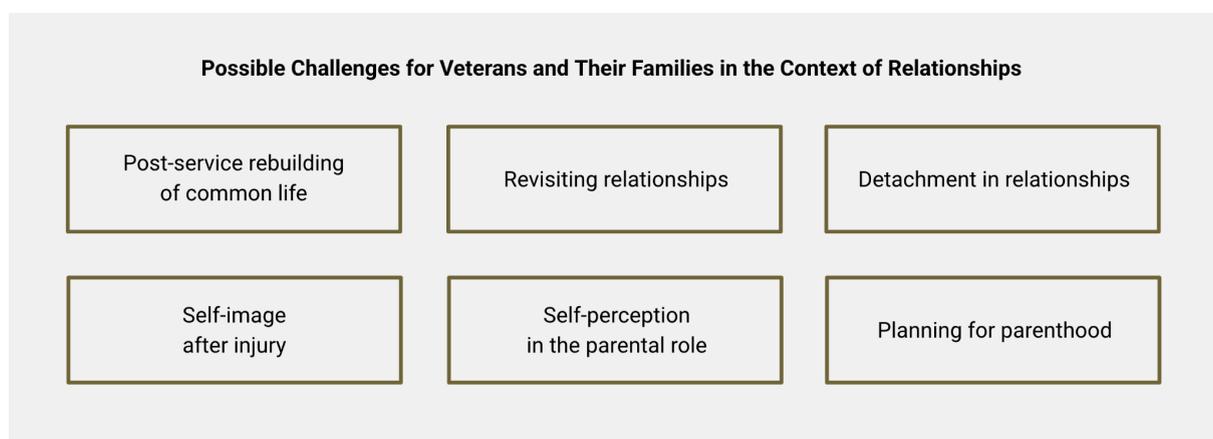
Challenges may also arise for couples who are planning parenthood either during service or after the veteran's return. Extended service and forced separation can significantly impact a couple's ability to make this wish a reality. While serving, partners might not have the chance

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<sup>253</sup> McFee, E., Röders, J., Agrawal, R., van den Aakster, E. Sudachek, D. (2024). Between Frontline and Home Front. Reintegration, Resilience, and Participation Strategies for Ukraine's Veterans. Corioli Institute. [reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/between-frontline-and-home-front-reintegration-resilience-and-participation-strategies-ukraines-veteransf](https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/between-frontline-and-home-front-reintegration-resilience-and-participation-strategies-ukraines-veteransf)

to conceive a child, and upon returning, aspects like mental and physical health or combat experience could affect the process. This is particularly relevant for those who lose their reproductive function due to age.

Given the risks associated with combat participation, it is essential to guarantee the right to parenthood even in the case of a warrior's death. This requires not only medical solutions, but also ethical and legal regulations regarding the preservation and use of reproductive material. It is important to develop programmes aimed at supporting the reproductive health of service members and to guarantee them the possibility to preserve reproductive material.



**Psychological support of veterans' families** is an essential component of recovery and adaptation. Returning to living together after an extended separation can affect all family members and sometimes lead to communication difficulties, tension, or a sense of detachment<sup>254</sup>. It is essential to provide veterans and their families with access to family counselling programmes that can help them adapt to changes and rebuild relationships when needed.

Challenges concerning the veterans' families and close relationships are often ignored by public policy, as personal life is not subject to state

<sup>254</sup> McFee, E., Röders, J., Agrawal, R., van den Aakster, E. Sudachek, D. (2024). Between Frontline and Home Front. Reintegration, Resilience, and Participation Strategies for Ukraine's Veterans. Corioli Institute. [pislyasluzhby.org.ua/uploads/admin/Project20Report20-20Between20Frontline20and20Home20Front.pdf](https://pislyasluzhby.org.ua/uploads/admin/Project20Report20-20Between20Frontline20and20Home20Front.pdf)

regulation. However, researching relationship-related issues among veterans and the challenges their families face during and after service is crucial for designing policies and support mechanisms that effectively address their needs. Caring for veterans' families should be a separate area of public policy, and families should be its full beneficiaries. For more details on the issues addressed in this support, the determination of the status of veterans' families, and their needs, refer to a separate concept of public policy<sup>255</sup>.

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<sup>255</sup> Concept of the public policy on Veterans Families. [veteranspolicy.org.ua/family](http://veteranspolicy.org.ua/family)

# Brothers- and Sisters-in-Arms

During their service, brothers- and sisters-in-arms become the closest people for warriors, forming a bond based on shared experience and mutual support. Veterans often note that these relationships are special and irreplaceable, as only those who have gone through war and combat together can really understand that experience<sup>256</sup>.

However, after discharge from service, this bond undergoes changes. Veterans may be far away from their brothers- and sisters-in-arms who continue serving or live in other regions. Isolation can be worsened if a person has ended the service involuntarily, for example, due to a serious injury. In such cases, a crisis of identity as a warrior and guilt can become particularly acute. This difficult period can also be worsened by the loss of brothers- and sisters-in-arms – both during combat missions and after completing their service.

While adapting to civilian life, veterans may seek new forms of communication with other veterans through veteran organisations, spaces, communities, and civic initiatives. For some, such associations become critical, as they help maintain contact, provide emotional support, and foster a sense of belonging to a community.

In other countries, such as the United Kingdom, the state actively cooperates with the public sector, combining governmental and non-governmental tools to provide comprehensive support to veterans and their families<sup>257</sup>. A network of institutions providing services to veterans cooperates with the Ministry of Defence, which coordinates

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<sup>256</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

<sup>257</sup> Brus, S., Bukhta, Y., Shmatko, I. (2024). Systems of Social Support for Veterans: Croatia, Israel, United Kingdom, Serbia, and Denmark. Pryncyp. [pryncyp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/soczpidtrymka-1.pdf](https://pryncyp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/soczpidtrymka-1.pdf).

the support system for service members and veterans<sup>258</sup>. One of the key areas of this cooperation is the development of veterans' social relationships after returning to civilian life, helping to prevent social isolation and ease their adaptation. Improved access for veterans to the necessary advice, support, and information about them is an important aspect of this cooperation.

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<sup>258</sup> State Support Policy for Veterans: Experience of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Department of Educational and Analytical Work of the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. Ukrainian Veterans Foundation.  
[veteranfund.com.ua/support-for-veterans-of-the-united-kingdom-of-great-britain-and-northern-ireland](http://veteranfund.com.ua/support-for-veterans-of-the-united-kingdom-of-great-britain-and-northern-ireland).



**Part 2**

# **Recognition and Commemoration**

# Introduction

Since the start of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2014, Ukraine has begun to cultivate a modern culture of gratitude, remembrance, and respect for its defenders. The need for this has become even more evident since the full-scale invasion.

Ukrainian service members devote their time, resources, and health to the defence of the country. They are influenced by combat experience from the moment they decide to join the service and throughout their lives. They have unique experiences, journeys, and needs. So, recognition and commemoration policies are a moral duty of society, and dignified treatment of them and their families must become a consistent institutional standard.

Currently, the recognition and commemoration of warriors in Ukraine are gradually emerging as a distinct and integral part of public policy. These are not only ethical categories but also the basis for a sustainable veteran policy in the context of prolonged war, as well as the fundamental basis for the country's existential survival. Recognition is a vital tool for fostering social cohesion, bolstering support for the veteran community, and elevating the prestige of military service.

We are now on the way towards realising the importance of these practices and creating the necessary mechanisms. This section examines how recognition and commemoration can be effectively integrated into national policy as tools to foster support, trust, gratitude, and social cohesion. By analysing current practices, legislative gaps, and international experience, we outline proposals for building a sustainable, sensitive, and human-centred model.

# Recognition

The systematic recognition of veterans' contributions to the country's security, resilience, and future is one of the key areas of public policy regarding veterans. Recognition is not only a moral concept or a symbolic gesture of gratitude, but also an institutionally significant tool that has a direct impact on veterans' return to civilian life, the level of public trust in the state, and its ability to maintain and strengthen resilience during a prolonged war.

It is an important element of veterans' well-being, as it provides a sense that their contribution, experience, risks, and losses have not gone unnoticed. This meets a fundamental emotional need: to be seen, heard, and appreciated by the society they have served. According to the Journeys of Veterans study, respondents emphasised the significance of recognition from the civilian environment<sup>259</sup>.

For society, recognition is an element of trust and cohesion, shared reflection, the formation of historical memory, and gratitude to service members who have given their time, resources, health, and, in some cases, their lives to defend the country. For the state, recognition is a response to public demand and a mechanism for building institutional trust, enhancing the prestige of military service, and influencing citizens' willingness to join the country's defence in the future.

We believe that decent recognition of the journey of Ukrainian service members and their families, as well as care for them, should be a basic principle in the development and implementation of public policy.

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<sup>259</sup> Veteran Hub (2023). The Journeys of Veterans. [veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/doslidzhennia-shliakh-veteraniv-ta-veteranok.pdf)

In 2023, we introduced the first Concept of Public Policy on Veterans and Their Families<sup>260</sup>, the main goal of which is recognition. In 2024, we started cooperation with the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, and the first outcome of this joint work was the development of the Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030<sup>261</sup>, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. It incorporated our vision of recognition as the main goal of policy, outlined important principles of respect and human-centrism into public veteran policy, and provided a clear definition of the status of veterans as persons with combat experience.

However, the strategy also emphasises that “There is no unified approach in Ukrainian society to demonstrating respect and gratitude to veterans and commemorating the fallen. This leads to the emergence of different and uncoordinated practices for demonstrating respect and gratitude, both at the state and local levels.”

As public policy, there is indeed a lack of a comprehensive approach to recognising veterans, particularly in terms of integration into everyday life – from communication and culture to education, benefits, and services. The existing state initiatives in this area are mostly fragmentary, focusing on social security or symbolic events that do not create a sustainable system of everyday honouring. Such an approach does not meet the society’s expectations that increasingly require deeper, regular, and accessible practices of recognition.

The National Thanks to You Campaign<sup>262</sup>, initiated by the public sector in 2018, is an example of public recognition. A simple gesture – a hand over the heart – became popular as it represents a clear and informal language of gratitude.

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<sup>260</sup> Veteran Hub, Pryncyp, Space of Opportunities, Legal Hundred, Veteranka. (2023). Concept of the Policy on Veterans and Their Families.

[veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/polityka-shchodo-veteraniv-ta-ikh-simey.pdf](https://veteranhub.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/polityka-shchodo-veteraniv-ta-ikh-simey.pdf)

<sup>261</sup> Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, “On Approving the Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030 and the Operational Action Plan for Its Implementation in 2024–2027,” No. 1209-r (29 November 2024). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-p#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1209-2024-p#Text)

<sup>262</sup> Thanks to You. National Campaign to Thank Ukrainian service members and veterans. #thanks to you. [zt.org.ua/](https://zt.org.ua/)

This indicates a demand for institutional consolidation of such practices, as well as a lack of clear and everyday mechanisms of recognition from the state. **In addition to symbolic gestures, recognition can also take the form of practical measures and support, becoming a systematic policy integrated into daily institutional and social practices, including:**

- taking into account the needs for services at the state and local government levels;
- actively involving veterans in public, cultural, and educational life;
- supporting veteran enterprises and veteran-friendly businesses;
- representing veterans' experiences in educational programmes, cultural projects, and public spaces;
- communication campaigns and digital initiatives that promote recognition of veterans and disseminate information about their contributions and needs.

Special attention in recognition policy should be given to prisoners of war, missing in action, and their families, as the absence of public recognition can lead to a sense of social isolation and non-disclosure. In this case, recognition is not only moral support, but also a symbolic confirmation that the state acknowledges its responsibility and does not forget its service members.

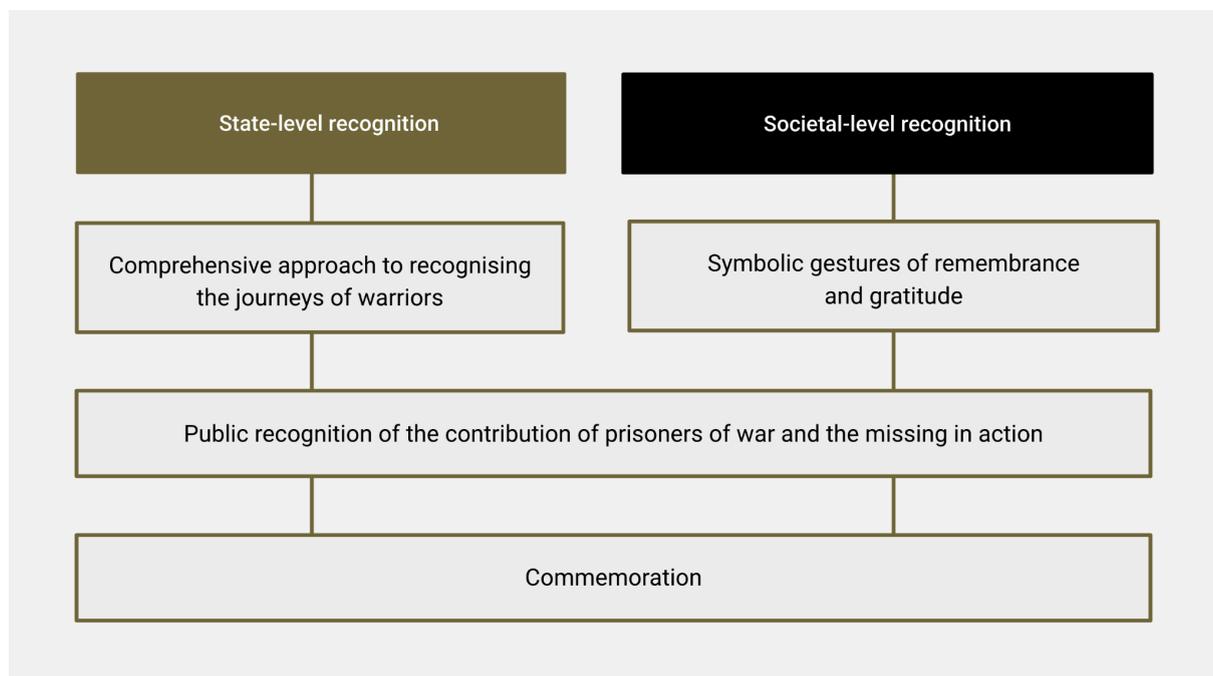
The introduction of official remembrance symbols, such as the POW/MIA flag<sup>263</sup> in the United States, which has been a tool of shaping national identity and collective memory for more than half a century, demonstrates the effectiveness of such an approach. In Ukraine, similar initiatives, such as the creation of the Flag of Hope<sup>264</sup>, have the potential to become an important step in expanding state recognition policy for prisoners of war and the missing in action.

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<sup>263</sup> Prisoners of War/Missing in Action.

<sup>264</sup> Electronic Petition "Creation of a State Symbol – the Flag of Hope to Remind the World and Every Ukrainian of Prisoners of War and Missing in Action," No. 22/232764-ep (2024).  
[petition.president.gov.ua/petition/232764](https://petition.president.gov.ua/petition/232764)

Recognition of the warriors' contribution is also connected with commemoration. An effective public policy should ensure consistency in its approaches: if a person's merits are recognised during their lives, then dignified commemoration after their death should logically follow. Conversely, focusing only on the memory of the fallen, without supporting living veterans, creates a systemic imbalance that can lead to social tension and devaluation of experiences of those who continue their service or adapt to civilian life. So, both areas must be integral parts of a coherent policy.



# Commemoration

Ukraine has a long but fragmented history of commemorating its defenders. In Soviet times, such practices were formalised and ideologically driven, so Ukraine had to rethink and develop a new commemoration approach after gaining independence. Over the next decades, initiatives were mostly local, and a stable system was not established.

The onset of the Russo-Ukrainian War in 2014 was a pivotal moment, characterised by the emergence of the first memorials, the Alleys of Heroes, the revival of Ukrainian military burial traditions, and the re-emergence of national symbols. These practices were fragmented without a unified strategy or standards, and were based on the initiatives of the brothers- and sisters-in-arms, families of the fallen, and NGOs.

Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 increased the scale of hostilities and losses, intensifying the need to develop a comprehensive policy for commemorating fallen warriors. Such a public demand is confirmed by research. According to the 2025 Justice and Memory of the War survey<sup>265</sup>, 66% of Ukrainians name the programmes supporting the families of the fallen, creating films, museums, memorial parks, and monuments, as well as giving lessons of memory, establishing scholarships in the names of the fallen, and forming digital archives as priority forms of commemoration.

The Action Plan for Commemorating the Defenders of Ukraine until 2025<sup>266</sup>, approved in 2021, was a step towards systematising and making commemoration policy. This strategic document serves as a key reference point for long-term memory policy, outlining a comprehensive approach to implementing memorial projects, developing the museum sector, supporting search initiatives, and creating thematic information resources.

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<sup>265</sup> Justice and the Memory of War: Opinions of Ukrainians (4 March 2025). Rating Sociological Group. [ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/justice\\_jan2025.html](https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/justice_jan2025.html)

<sup>266</sup> Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On Measures to Commemorate the Defenders of Ukraine until 2025," No. 37-2021-r (2023). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/37-2021-p#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/37-2021-p#Text)

In 2024, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine approved the Concept for Commemorating the Fallen Warriors of Ukraine<sup>267</sup>, which describes approaches to organising rituals, creating memorial sites, and maintaining relevant registers. Since 2022, Ukraine has also been actively working on the establishment of the National Military Memorial Cemetery – a landmark facility that will have both symbolic and practical significance, and will contribute to the development and unification of policies for commemorating service members and veterans.

Honouring the memory of Ukraine’s defenders requires a systematic approach and long-term planning at both national and regional levels. In this context, organising burials, creating memorial spaces, and ensuring transparency and respect for the deceased’s wishes regarding the location and format of their burial are particularly important. We will discuss current approaches and provide recommendations for supporting veterans in these areas.

**Important:** This section does not provide a general overview of the entire recognition and commemoration sectors and related challenges. It focuses on potential solutions that the state can implement to meet the needs of veterans. These needs were identified through an analysis of available data and information.

Recommendations presented are the result of collaborative efforts by a Coalition of organisations with expertise in veterans’ affairs, informed by insights from professionals in relevant fields. We acknowledge that this work does not cover the full spectrum of challenges and solutions and emphasise the need for further research.

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<sup>267</sup> Order of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine “On Approving the Concept for Commemorating the Fallen Warriors of Ukraine within the System of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine,” No. 544 (2024). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/rada/show/v0544322-24#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/rada/show/v0544322-24#Text)

## Farewell and Burial

In Ukraine, the burial of warriors holds not only ceremonial importance but also significant institutional value, serving as a concrete expression of state memory policy and a means of acknowledging the contributions of defenders and supporting the families of those who have died. The burials are not only personal or local rituals but also part of the public space and the social and political process.

Today, a unified state approach to the arrangement, format, and procedure of warriors' burials, as well as the responsible entities and standardised guidelines that would ensure a basic level of respect, dignity, and awareness of burial sites in any region of the country, is not sufficiently widespread in Ukraine. Ceremonies in different communities vary greatly, depending on the decisions of the family of the fallen, the community's initiative, or the burial procedures carried out by the TCRSSs.

During expert discussions held as part of the development of this concept, we recorded testimonies from representatives of the families of the fallen about the significant impact of the human factor on the quality of the burial process. When families, communities, brothers-in-arms, and friends of the fallen are involved, farewells take place with dignity. They may become formal and fail to reflect the depth of gratitude and respect that such involvement would convey.

Families also noted during the discussions that there was a lack of information support and communication from the state regarding the specifics of the military burial ritual. For example, the unexpected appearance of an honour guard or gunshots during the ceremony could be emotionally distressing and even traumatic, highlighting the need for a transparent and sensitive information policy in commemoration.

A separate, but closely related aspect of commemoration is the approach to the spatial organisation of military burial sites. In most Ukrainian communities, warriors' graves appear spontaneously within existing cemeteries, without standardised design requirements or spatial

logic. The graves of the fallen may be located in remote sectors, without proper signage or memorial elements, making it harder to perceive them as memory spaces. The absence of a unified approach also creates inequality in dignified commemoration, with commemoration varying by region, level of community initiative, or family's financial resources.

In response to these challenges, in 2022, Ukraine initiated the establishment of the National Military Memorial Cemetery (NMMC) – a symbolic place intended to become a nationwide memorial space. The establishment of the NMMC was expected to ensure standardisation, increase the visibility of the contribution of the fallen, and guarantee state presence in burial practices. However, the implementation of this project dragged on: the original site for the cemetery's construction was changed, and there has been no regular reporting on its progress. As of October 2025, the site is not operational.

There is also no established mechanism specifying who is entitled to burial at the NMMC, whether such burial is free by default, and how the application and decision-making process for burial there will be carried out.

Meanwhile, in some Ukrainian cities, including Lviv, Dnipro, Kharkiv, and Odesa, separate sectors for military burials are already in operation. However, due to the absence of a unified national strategy and standards, they develop in isolation, following the logic of local decisions and available resources. As a result, even the existence of such sectors does not create in society a holistic perception of military burial as part of a nationwide memory policy.

## Expert Recommendations

### ■ **Guarantee free burial at the NMMC for all fallen veterans**

In the Ukrainian context, the launch and full operation of the NMMC have the potential not only to create a unified symbolic memory space but also to introduce clear mechanisms for supporting the families

of the fallen. One such step could be the guarantee of free burial at the NMMC, which would ensure equal access to dignified commemoration – regardless of the family’s financial status, place of residence, or the capacity of the local community.

**Secure the guarantee of free burial at the NMMC to:**

- reduce the financial and administrative burden on families at the time of loss, when burial can become a serious economic challenge, and administrative procedures add further stress;
- establish a unified standard of commemoration, harmonising burial practices and strengthening trust in the state’s memory policy;
- consolidate the state’s responsibility for commemorating the fallen with dignity, making the NMMC a permanent, recognisable, and nationwide symbol.

To ensure that burials at the NMMC remain free of charge, it is essential to amend CMU Resolution No. 1466<sup>268</sup>, specifically Article 10, Part 2. This would provide legal certainty for local authorities and responsible institutions.

**Additionally:**

- **Guarantee free burial for veterans after their discharge from service**

As of 2025, Ukrainian legislation provides for free burial only for active service members who died defending the Homeland or in the line of duty. This approach is logically linked to the service status at the time of death and excludes from state support veterans who were discharged from service but may have died from its long-term consequences – physical injuries, wounds, chronic illnesses, or mental health.

This disparity in access to dignified burial guarantees contradicts the principles of a consistent policy that recognises the contributions

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<sup>268</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (2024). Resolution No. 1466, “Certain Issues of Arranging Burials (Reburials in Cases of Identification) at the National Military Memorial Cemetery of Unidentified Bodies (Remains) of Service Members and Police Officers Who Fell as a Result of Armed Aggression against Ukraine.” [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1466-2024-п#n103](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1466-2024-п#n103)

of defenders. Respect for a veteran should not be limited by the length of service or the fact of being in active service at the time of death. The care and support provided by the state should be continuous for any person who defends its independence.

We propose granting the right to free burial to all veterans as a logical continuation of the policy of recognising their contribution and ensuring the possibility of a dignified end to their journey. The prospect of counting on guaranteed state support in advance, regardless of the date of discharge, is a manifestation of institutionalised care that should be lifelong for every veteran. Such a decision should strengthen legal guarantees, contribute to a predictable, equal, and fair policymaking process for all service members, and increase trust in the state.

Providing state guarantees for free burial is also an important element of supporting the families of veterans. When they lose a loved one, they face not only profound emotional shock but also significant financial and organisational difficulties. The lack of a clearly defined mechanism for state assistance in such situations can intensify feelings of abandonment and devalue the fallen's contributions, thereby undermining trust in the declared policy of respect and gratitude to defenders.

■ **To guarantee free cremation for veterans after their discharge from service**

There are people with different views, beliefs, faiths, and traditions in the army. They are united by a common purpose – to defend the country. However, everyone is first and foremost a human being entitled to dignity, free choice, and respect for personal decisions, even after death. The form of burial is one such decision. For many, it is a conscious choice – one that is driven by religious, ethical, environmental, or practical considerations. Therefore, ensuring that such a choice is available is a crucial part of the state's veteran policy.

Cremation is one of the alternative burial forms in Ukraine. According to Article 84 of the Law of Ukraine “On Regulations for Garrison and Guard Duty of the Armed Forces of Ukraine,”<sup>269</sup> it is free for active service members. However, as with traditional burials, we believe this option should be available upon completion of service.

We propose guaranteeing free cremation for veterans as an alternative that ensures equal access to different forms of farewell, in accordance with the wishes of the person or their family.

Although this form of burial can be cheaper than a traditional one, the full cost of cremation in Ukraine may range from UAH 8,000 to 15,000, depending on the region<sup>270</sup>. This price does not include related costs, such as transportation of the body, a farewell ceremony, funerary urns, or mortuary storage. Such costs can be substantial for veterans themselves and their bereaved families. So, this form of support is not merely a ritual, but also an expression of state respect for service members, a dignified recognition of their service not only during their lives but also after death, and care for them and their loved ones.

## Memorialisation

There is no separate public policy in Ukraine that outlines unified principles, standards, procedures, and approaches to the commemoration of service members as part of the national memory. As a result, memorial work remains fragmented, inconsistent, and dependent on ad hoc initiatives.

International practice demonstrates the effectiveness of a centralised approach to the warriors’ memorialisation. For example, in the United

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<sup>269</sup> Law of Ukraine “On Regulations for Garrison and Guard Duty of the Armed Forces of Ukraine” No. 550-XIV (2024). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/550-14#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/550-14#Text)

<sup>270</sup> Haiduk, Y. (8 August 2024). What Is the Cost of Cremation in Ukraine in 2024, and Where Is It Carried Out? Fakty ICTV. [fakty.com.ua/ua/ukraine/suspilstvo/20240808-yaka-vartist-kremacziyi-v-ukrayini-u-2024-roczi-ta-de-provodytsya](https://fakty.com.ua/ua/ukraine/suspilstvo/20240808-yaka-vartist-kremacziyi-v-ukrayini-u-2024-roczi-ta-de-provodytsya)

States, the National Cemetery Administration<sup>271</sup> coordinates more than 150 national military cemeteries and ensures standardised procedures for ceremonies, headstones, inscriptions, and ground maintenance. This model guarantees dignity, recognition, and equality of commemoration regardless of social status or burial location, reduces administrative and emotional burdens on families, and demonstrates the state's responsibility for remembering the fallen.

In Ukraine, there is no central body responsible for memorial policy, and memorial projects are mainly implemented with grant funds or residual funds from local budgets. Between 2016 and 2023, more than 2,000 contracts were concluded via Prozorro for the installation of monuments and the arrangement of memorial garden squares dedicated to honouring warriors, with a total value of approximately UAH 1 billion. Another UAH 500 million was allocated to parks, avenues, and memorials<sup>272</sup>. This emphasises the need for sustainable state funding for such work, enabling communities to plan the relevant activities on a systematic rather than episodic basis.

Currently, commemoration is practised locally and not unsystematically – at the initiative of families, communities, or local authorities. As a result, some regions have numerous monuments, while others have only a few memorial sites. There is also no unified approach to the design of sites and headstones, their form, symbolism, message, or any guidelines and advice on the appearance of sites that could enhance memory practices. For this reason, it is important to include memorialisation in the budget planning system – both at the national and regional levels – to address inequalities arising from local differences in commemoration approaches, and to create guidelines on modern forms of commemoration that combine personalisation and cultural sensitivity with a relevant level of quality and ritual ethics.

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<sup>271</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. National Cemetery Administration. [cem.va.gov](https://cem.va.gov)

<sup>272</sup> Synytska, D. (22 March 2023). Money for Memory: How Much Has Been Spent on Monuments Over the Last Six Years? DOZORRO. [dozorro.org/blog/groshi-na-pamyat-skilki-vitratili-na-pamyatniki-za-ostanni-shist-rokiv](https://dozorro.org/blog/groshi-na-pamyat-skilki-vitratili-na-pamyatniki-za-ostanni-shist-rokiv)

Due to the lack of state support and coordination, memorialisation processes often fall on families, who must independently choose the design of the headstone, order it, and seek funding. This can lead to significant inequality and dependence on a family's budget, which contradicts the principle of equality: all those who defend the state should be honoured with dignity.

Around the world, there are examples of effective solutions to this issue through the introduction of unified approaches to memorialisation. Arlington National Cemetery in the United States is one of the most well-known examples that serves as a symbol of respect for service members, regardless of their rank, race, religion, or social status. This cemetery has a standardised approach to memorialisation – an identical headstone in shape and material, manufactured under state standards, with a defined font, inscription structure, and state symbols.

This ensures dignity, recognition, and equality for all who served the state, regardless of the conditions of their life or death, and enables honourable commemoration regardless of the financial status of service members and their families.

### Expert Recommendations

- **Guarantee a free state-designed monument or reimbursement for its cost to all veterans**

Introducing a state guarantee for installing a headstone is a significant step toward recognising the personal contributions of veterans. Such an initiative will not only ensure a dignified commemoration in the event of death but will also allow this practice to be adapted to individual wishes.

The state should guarantee the free installation of a standardised headstone, as well as provide compensation for its cost to families who wish to create an individual memorial. This will make it possible to honour not only the status of the defenders but also their personalities.

Compensation should be provided directly to families or those responsible for arranging the burial so that they can choose the form of remembrance based on the wishes of the fallen or their own vision of a dignified commemoration, especially when no wishes were expressed during the person's lifetime.

## Expression of Will

Recording of their wishes regarding their own burial, commemoration method, or ceremonial preferences is one of the profound respects for a person and their dignity, even after their death. There are people of different worldviews, cultures, denominations, and faiths among service members and veterans. Respect for beliefs should be no less important than formalities, and the form of commemoration symbolises the end of a person's journey, so the person should make a choice. As of 2025, Ukrainian legislation does not provide a clearly defined procedure for a service member to officially record their wishes regarding the form of commemoration ritual after their death.

A military burial ritual is arranged in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations for Garrison and Guard Duty of the Armed Forces of Ukraine<sup>273</sup>. According to these regulations, the military unit that coordinates the process with the family of the fallen is responsible for arranging the burial. In particular, the official responsible for arranging the burial shall obtain consent from relatives or close ones to hold the military burial ritual.

While the law allows for family participation in determining the form of burial, it does not provide service members with the opportunity to record their wishes in advance regarding the commemoration ritual. Therefore, such decisions are most often made by the family, military structures, or local governments, not based on the person's reliably recorded will, but rather on oral agreements, prior conversations,

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<sup>273</sup> Law of Ukraine "On the Statute of Garrison and Guard Services of the Armed Forces of Ukraine" No. 550-XIV (24 March 1999). [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/550-14#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/550-14#Text)

or assumptions about their values and beliefs. If a person is unable to convey their wishes, their will may be completely disregarded due to the unawareness of their relatives or the absence of any valid document. This reduces the person's agency and can sometimes lead to unethical or distressing decisions for the family, such as a ceremony that contradicts the religious beliefs of the fallen.

In some countries, there are specialised mechanisms for recording a person's will. For example, Danish service members can complete a special form, "My Last Will. If I fall in the service of the Defence Forces"<sup>274, 275</sup>, where they indicate not only the technical aspects of their burial but also spiritual, cultural, or symbolic details: the place, music, decoration, and form of the ritual. In the Ukrainian context, such a mechanism could also be a sign of care: allowing a person to decide on their own commemoration is just as important as ensuring a burial at the state's expense. This would also reduce the burden on families at the time of loss, when they are unable to resolve complex administrative or moral issues about the appropriateness of a ritual.

**In Ukraine, service members can use three main tools to record their will, including property and financial wishes, as follows:**

1. Personal instruction

2. Power of attorney

3. Will

## 1. Personal Instruction

This regulates the receipt of certain types of payments to a service member: a lump-sum allowance in the event of death<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> My Last Will. If I fall in the service of the Defence Forces.

<sup>275</sup> Sorensen, B. Public Commemorations of Danish Soldiers: Monuments, Memorials, and Tombstones. (2016). [academia.edu/26284936/Public\\_commemorations\\_of\\_Danish\\_soldiers\\_monuments\\_memorials\\_and\\_tombstones](https://academia.edu/26284936/Public_commemorations_of_Danish_soldiers_monuments_memorials_and_tombstones)

<sup>276</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (28 February 2022). Resolution No. 168 "Issues of Certain Allowances to Service Members, Rank-and-File Personnel and Senior Officers, Police Officers and Their Families during Martial Law." [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/168-2022-п#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/168-2022-п#Text)

and an allowance in the event of captivity or missing in action<sup>277</sup>. A personal instruction can be issued in any form, indicating the recipients and their shares. The document shall be signed by the service member and certified by a notary or the commanding officer of the military unit.

## 2. Power of Attorney

This allows a person to transfer authority to another person during their lifetime, but it automatically expires upon death. The power of attorney is prepared in writing and includes the details of the service member and their representative, a list of permitted actions, and its validity period. If no term is specified, the document remains valid until revoked, including in cases such as the veteran's return from service, being declared missing, or death.

## 3. Will

The main legal instrument by which a person disposes of their property after death. The estate includes all property that belonged to the person at the time of their death, including housing, vehicles, bank accounts, and business shares. A will is drawn up in writing and certified by a notary or the commanding officer of the military unit<sup>278</sup>. This document allows property to be transferred not only to relatives but also to other close ones.

The legislation allows the testator to include instructions relating to the burial and commemoration procedures. **According to Article 6 of the Law of Ukraine "On Burial and Burial Affairs,"** the expression of will may include:

- consent or disagreement with a post-mortem examination;
- consent or disagreement with the harvesting of organs and/or body tissues;

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<sup>277</sup> Law of Ukraine "On Social and Legal Protection of Servicepersons and Members of Their Families." Article 9, part 4. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2011-12#Text](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2011-12#Text)

<sup>278</sup> Civil Code of Ukraine Articles 1248, 1252, clause 4. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/435-15#Text>

- a wish to be buried in a certain place in accordance with certain customs, or next to certain people;
- a wish to be cremated;
- an instruction to entrust the fulfilment of these wishes to a specific person;
- other provisions that do not contradict the law.

Such an expression of will must be clearly recorded during the person's lifetime. However, in practice, wills rarely contain such provisions, since, according to widespread social perceptions, attention is mainly focused on property matters rather than spiritual or symbolic ones. As a result, even if a will exists, a person may be left without proper commemoration in accordance with their beliefs if these instructions are not included in the document or if the family is unaware of them.

It is essential to inform citizens about the option of including burial and commemoration provisions in a will and the practice of drafting such instructions during their lifetime to ensure the complete implementation of a person's wishes. In addition, it is worth raising awareness among relatives about the existence of such provisions in a will to avoid situations where spiritual and symbolic wishes are disregarded due to ignorance or underestimation of their importance.

# Conclusions

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## **1 Recognition as a basis of the veteran policy**

Recognising the warriors' contribution to the defence of the country is not only a symbolic act of gratitude but the foundation of the social contract between them and the state and civil society. It should manifest both in public through rituals, symbols, and communications, and in everyday policies and services that take into account the needs of persons with combat experience. The modern veteran strategy provides this approach, but the further recognition of the contribution of service members needs to be strengthened across all areas of public life.

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## **2 Commemorating the fallen as a continuation of recognition**

Dignified commemoration is the logical continuation of recognition. It requires a coherent public policy that encompasses not only commemorative dates and monuments, but also practices of supporting families, educational and cultural initiatives, and the development of memorial spaces. The public demand for such approaches has already been established, but it is crucial that their implementation does not remain limited and dependent on local efforts and initiatives.

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## **3 Farewell and burial: the need for standardisation**

The absence of a unified approach to the burial of service members creates inequality, fragmentation, and the risk of losing dignity during farewells. The introduction of common standards, effective communication, and community and family involvement is critical.

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## **4 Memorialisation as a policy of equal commemoration**

The memorialisation of the war experience in Ukraine remains unsystematic, irregular, and dependent on the resources of families or communities. The state should introduce a unified policy that will ensure dignified headstones, accessible compensation mechanisms, and standardised ethical approaches to their appearance and symbolism. Memorials should not only memorialise, but also contribute to shaping national identity and collective memory.

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## **5 Expression of will as a respect for human dignity**

The veteran policy should focus on the individual and their right to vote and choose, even after death. The absence of mechanisms for officially recording wishes regarding burial, farewell, and commemoration forms diminishes the agency of service members. It is necessary to create simple, accessible, and state-recognised tools for expressing their will, as well as to ensure preferential access to legal procedures, including the drafting of a will.

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## **6 A systemic memory policy as the basis of justice**

Ukraine requires a comprehensive policy, not isolated measures, that integrates recognition, commemoration, memorialisation, and respect for the wishes of military personnel. Only by integrating these elements into legislation, administrative practice, communication campaigns, and budget planning can justice be achieved for those who have defended and continue to defend Ukraine.

# SECTION 5

## **Stakeholder Map**

# Introduction

Despite the profound impact of combat experience and military service on the identity and needs of veterans, many aspects of their lives remain shared with the civilian population. Their new status may give rise to specific needs, yet they continue to be citizens of the state.

After completing their service, they return to their families and loved ones, once again becoming part of the community: they engage with others in public spaces, at work, in educational and healthcare institutions, and in government and private-sector settings. Veterans also represent diverse social groups and use the same services as other members of society.

Similarly, the families of veterans – partners, parents, children, siblings – maintain ongoing interactions with the state and the broader community. They continue to live in their communities, work, study, seek medical care, and access public and private services. At the same time, their unique experiences – coping with the realities of war, separation, managing household responsibilities alone, sustaining emotional stability, and, in some cases, facing loss, captivity, or the disappearance of a loved one – shape their needs, well-being, and way of life.

All of this requires a comprehensive, multisectoral response from the state, local communities, and society as a whole. Public policy on veterans and their families must follow an open-system approach, identifying all those who seek to support veterans and their families and who naturally interact with them along their journey. Such a policy must also be cross-cutting – integrated into the broader policy framework.

Implementing an effective and holistic veteran policy requires the participation of a wide range of actors, both governmental and non-governmental. Each plays a unique role in providing support to veterans and their families at different stages and under varying circumstances: from the end of military service and adaptation to civilian life to situations where a person remains in captivity, is missing in action, or has been killed.

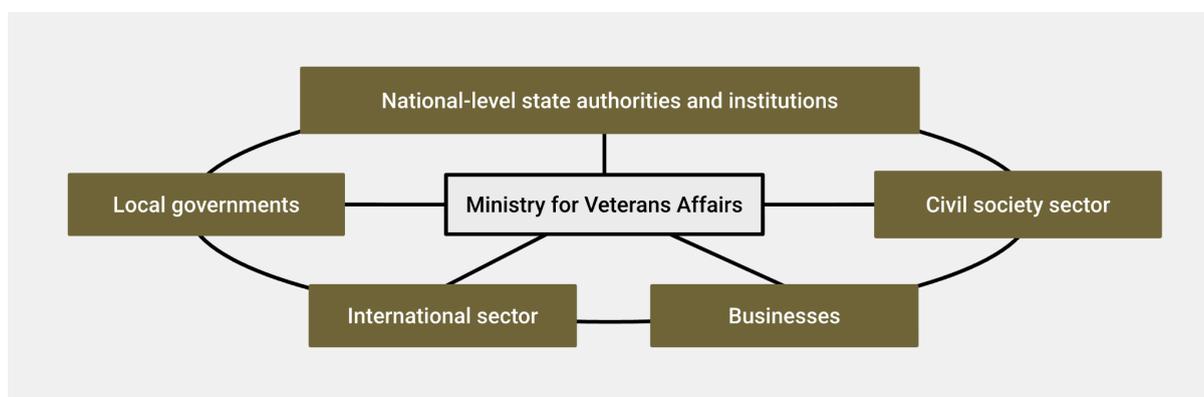
In Ukraine, a unified strategic vision and a coordinated system of support for veterans and their families by various stakeholders are still underway. The efforts of state authorities, local governments, civil society organisations (CSOs), businesses, and international partners are not always aligned – at times they overlap or diverge in their approaches. This can lead to inefficient use of resources, complicate access to services, and affect the level of public trust in institutions.

When designing and implementing public veteran policy, it is crucial not only to identify its stakeholders but also to clearly understand the functional role of each actor, from policy formation to its practical implementation and strengthening. Such differentiation helps delineate the areas of responsibility for each stakeholder, ensures alignment of actions, systematises the existing support infrastructure, and identifies potential points for collaboration and interaction, as well as gaps within this infrastructure.

Within this Concept, we have developed a **stakeholder map** that organises and identifies the key “players” in veteran policy (state authorities, local governments, businesses, CSOs, and international partners) and defines their functions, areas of responsibility, and potential influence. This map visualises stakeholders and also enables all participants in veteran policy – from state officials to businesses and donor organisations – to better understand how they are interconnected, how they can complement one another, and where their actions could be more coordinated, effective, and sustainable.

# How to Use the Map

The stakeholder map is presented in the form of a table that outlines the areas of responsibility and potential influence of each stakeholder. **It identifies five main stakeholder groups:** national-level state authorities and institutions, local governments, businesses, the civil sector and international sectors. The table provides a description of each stakeholder, their primary function, and their specific role in implementing veteran policy.



**We also categorise stakeholders into three types based on their functions** in building an effective support system for veterans and their families. None of these groups is given priority or deemed more important than the others, as only collective and well-coordinated efforts from all participants can ensure the successful implementation of veteran policy.

## Stakeholders by Role

Shape and implement the policy	Implement policy at the national and local levels	Complement policy, provide services, resources, or expertise, and strengthen state efforts
Legislative and executive authorities, President of Ukraine	Central executive authorities and local self-governments	Non-state actors: CSOs, businesses, international partners

## The table enables sorting by multiple criteria:

### 1. By components of well-being

The well-being model is a framework for categorising human needs. When these needs are met, the level of well-being is considered high; when they are unmet, the level is low. The model consists of 6 components:

- **Health** (physical and mental);
- **Material needs** (income, housing, legal security);
- **Relationships and recognition** (close social connections, sense of belonging to a community);
- **Vocation** (work, hobbies, education, personal growth);
- **Life skills and spirituality** (resilience, faith, values);
- **Physical environment** (living conditions, home, spaces for interaction).

It is crucial that support for veterans and their families is comprehensive and covers all well-being components. This is why we have categorised each stakeholder according to the component they support.

This makes it easy to quickly identify which stakeholders provide assistance in specific areas. For instance, if you are searching for a local authority that offers support in the area of material needs, select the sorting option, search among local governments, and choose the “Material Needs” option. This method helps quickly identify relevant stakeholders and clearly indicates where support is provided.

### 2. By the target audience (veterans, family members)

Although the needs of veterans and their families sometimes overlap, not all stakeholders work with both groups. Some are focused solely on supporting veterans, while others are only concerned with working with their families. At the same time, there are those who engage with both groups.

To ensure a clear understanding of which group each stakeholder targets, we classified them on the map by target audience type.

### 3. By type of activity

To better understand the specific role each stakeholder plays in the field of veteran policy, we also categorised them based on their type of activity. This helps reveal how the support system is structured, including who sets the strategic framework, who coordinates efforts, who works directly with individuals, and who evaluates the quality.

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The tool can be used to navigate the realm of veteran policy: the map helps swiftly identify those who offer support to veterans and their families and at which level, pinpointing key roles by activity type, well-being component, and target audience, spotting system gaps, forming cross-sector partnerships, or devising advocacy campaigns.



This map is not final or static. Over time, the context in which veteran policy is implemented may change, influencing its structure. Below is a condensed list of stakeholder types and roles. The full table is available [via the link](#) or QR code.

## Stakeholders by Type of Activity

Stakeholders	Area of responsibility	Examples of institutions
<b>Political/Strategic</b>	Define the overall framework of veteran policy: goals, values, directions, and rules of engagement. They determine priorities, create legislative and financial foundations, approve programmes, and influence other sectors and the overall effectiveness of support	Ministry of Veterans Affairs, intergovernmental organisations, Parliament, oblast military administrations, and others
<b>Coordination/ Administrative</b>	Responsible for policy and programme implementation. Align actions across levels of government and manage resources	Pension Fund, departments of social protection, local health administration offices, and others
<b>Service delivery/ Work with people</b>	Institutions that directly interact with veterans and their families. They provide support, help, advice, and accompany	National Police, Social Service Centres (SSC), Administrative Service Centres (ASC), and others
<b>Analytics/ Monitoring/ Oversight</b>	Conduct independent evaluations, collect data, analyse policies, and monitor respect for rights. Their work helps improve public policies and local support programmes.	Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, analytical centres, media outlets, etc.

## **Stakeholder 1 National-Level State Authorities and Institutions**

State authorities and institutions bear a special responsibility for ensuring a systematic and high-quality policy that meets the needs of veterans and their families. These bodies define the overall framework and strategic direction of veteran policy, ensure the integrity of policies designed to support beneficiaries, and coordinate cross-sectoral initiatives and interagency collaboration. We divide them into two categories:

### **1. Legislative, executive, and judicial bodies**

- Legislative bodies establish the legal foundation of veteran policy.
- Executive bodies develop and implement policies.
- Judicial bodies ensure every person's right to a fair trial and the protection of rights and freedoms as guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of Ukraine.

### **2. Institutions representing state structures responsible for the functioning of the state and the protection of human rights and freedoms as guaranteed by the Constitution of Ukraine**

- Develop the strategy for veteran policy, including regulatory frameworks and financial mechanisms for its implementation at the national and local levels.
- Integrate veteran policy into all areas of public administration, create and modernise service delivery standards to address the needs of veterans and their families, and monitor compliance with these standards within their area of competence.

## **Stakeholder 2 Local Governments**

Local authorities consist of local governments at oblast, raion, and local levels, along with local executive bodies and territorial branches of central executive authorities.

They play a vital role in supporting veterans after their discharge from service, serving as spaces for recovery and support during their return to civilian life. They also serve as a source of support and stability for veterans' loved ones while the veterans are still serving and defending the country.

Local governments have the capacity to adapt the national strategy to their local context, taking into account the specific needs of veterans and their families. They can develop additional support programmes at the local level and respond promptly to individual requests. This enables them to implement targeted solutions that the state may be unable to cover at the national level due to limited resources, particularly financial ones. Such targeted solutions can also account for local specificities and the needs of veterans and their families residing in these territorial communities or regions.

**Local authorities also must:**

- ensure access for veterans and their families to social, healthcare, educational, administrative, and rehabilitation services guaranteed by the state;
- provide consultations on available programmes and opportunities;
- create or restore public spaces that are accessible to all veterans;
- arrange training programmes for professionals who work directly with veterans and their families;
- facilitate initiatives aimed at preserving the memory of warriors, foster a culture of gratitude, and strengthen social cohesion within the community;
- provide feedback to central authorities responsible for designing policies and service standards to improve support mechanisms and increase the overall effectiveness of veteran policy implementation.

### Stakeholder 3 Businesses

Upon discharging from military service, veterans often seek new employment opportunities, financial stability, and access to support and services. In these areas, businesses can become an essential partner to the state and communities by providing practical solutions both in the sphere of employment and through the provision of goods and services tailored to the needs of veterans.

It also plays a crucial role in supporting their families, particularly in its capacity as an employer, both during military service and after the return to civilian life. While a warrior is on service, their loved ones often face increased emotional, household, and financial burdens. Thus, businesses can offer support and consider the needs of family members, such as leave to care for an injured veteran or to investigate the circumstances in cases of a missing person, captivity, or the loss of a loved one. Such consideration from an employer helps families feel supported and secure even during the most difficult times.

**The map highlights two main roles of the business sector: an employer and a supplier of goods and services.**

Role	Action
Employer	Creates barrier-free conditions for employing veterans
	Fosters a friendly work environment and supports veterans throughout all stages – from mobilisation to return and adaptation to civilian life, as well as supports their families during the service member’s active duty
	Adapts workplaces to meet the needs of employees with disabilities, including by procuring necessary equipment funded by local budgets or the Fund for Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities

Role	Action
<b>Provider of goods and services</b>	Adapts products and services to meet the needs of veterans, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity
	Implements support programmes for veterans and their families
	Provides specialised services for veterans and their families, including healthcare, psychological, legal, financial, social, educational, transportation, and recreational services

#### **Stakeholder 4 Civil Society Sector**

Civil society organisations are also participants in veteran policy. Here, we primarily refer to organisations that directly engage with veterans and their families by providing services, offering support, studying their needs, and interacting with them in various formats. Thanks to their flexibility and close connection to communities, they can respond quickly to challenges that may fall outside the scope of state programmes.

Direct contact with the target audience enables CSOs to deeply understand the needs, challenges, and experiences of veterans and their families. This understanding allows them to respond promptly to individual requests and strengthen the state’s efforts in shaping the strategic vision for veteran policy.

The civil society sector can prepare analytics and conduct research on the needs, adaptation processes, and well-being of veterans and their families, providing a strong empirical foundation for developing effective state programmes and solutions.

Such organisations can also introduce practices of recognition and commemoration at the local level, lobby for changes at the national level, advocate for the interests of their target audience, and actively

participate in implementing veteran policy, including as service providers.

## **Stakeholder 5 International Sector**

The international sector plays a significant role in providing material and technical support for the field of veterans affairs, directing resources to priority areas of veteran policy and expanding opportunities for creating programmes and providing high-quality services to veterans and their families.

**The role of the international sector is realised in several key areas:**

- **financial support** – both direct contributions to the state budget and funding for programmes that support the civil society and private sectors;
- **expert support** – sharing experiences, providing recommendations for policy development, and devising standards and procedures based on international best practices;
- **analytics and research** – supporting local research and analytical centres or organisations, as well as conducting independent studies and analytical work;
- **partnerships with non-governmental organisations** that implement projects directly within communities;
- **international business investments** – implementing projects that directly or indirectly support veterans and their families at the national and local levels;
- **engagement of diplomatic institutions** – embassies, foreign governments, and international agencies support targeted programmes, cultural initiatives, exchanges, and advocacy efforts.

# Role of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine

**The Ministry of Veterans Affairs** is the central executive authority responsible for developing and implementing veteran policy. It coordinates the operation of all state institutions and stakeholders in this field.

While veteran policy is implemented through the collective efforts of many stakeholders, the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine serves as the key coordinator of this process. It is responsible not only for shaping policy at the national level but also for ensuring its coherence across all state authorities, communities, and the civil society and international sectors.

For this reason, the Ministry's role is highlighted separately on the stakeholder map as a central actor responsible for the coherence, coordination, and sustainability of veteran policy.

This role aims to ensure a comprehensive public veteran policy by effectively coordinating the efforts of all involved parties and mobilising available resources toward its priority areas. This entails creating conditions for the successful return of veterans to civilian life, protecting their rights and dignity within their communities and the state as a whole, and providing meaningful support to their families.

The Ministry must maintain a leadership role in developing and implementing policies that support veterans and their families at the national and international levels. **We outline the primary functions and responsibilities of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine as follows:**

- **Developing the architecture, philosophy, and framework of public policy on veterans and their families**

The Ministry serves as the primary developer and coordinator of policy across all implementation levels. It ensures the cross-cutting nature

of veteran policy and advocates for its prioritisation across all state authorities. The Ministry defines the core principles that underpin support for veterans and their families, including the development of an overall support strategy at both national and local levels.

#### ■ **Stakeholder coordination**

The Ministry is authorised to engage with other state authorities, the civil society sector, local communities, international donors and organisations, and businesses. Its goal is to coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders involved in implementing policy on veterans and their families.

#### ■ **Monitoring, verification, and control of compliance of policies with the principles of public veteran policy**

The Ministry is responsible for reviewing and verifying whether policies developed by all executive authorities and local governments adhere to the core principles of public veteran policy. It also tracks and oversees the integration of policy principles into regulatory legal acts of other state authorities, ensuring alignment with the overarching objectives.

#### ■ **Consulting and coordinating with state authorities during the decision-making process**

With access to analytics, data, and experiences of veterans and their families, the Ministry acts as a source of expertise, supporting the development of related policies across various sectors.

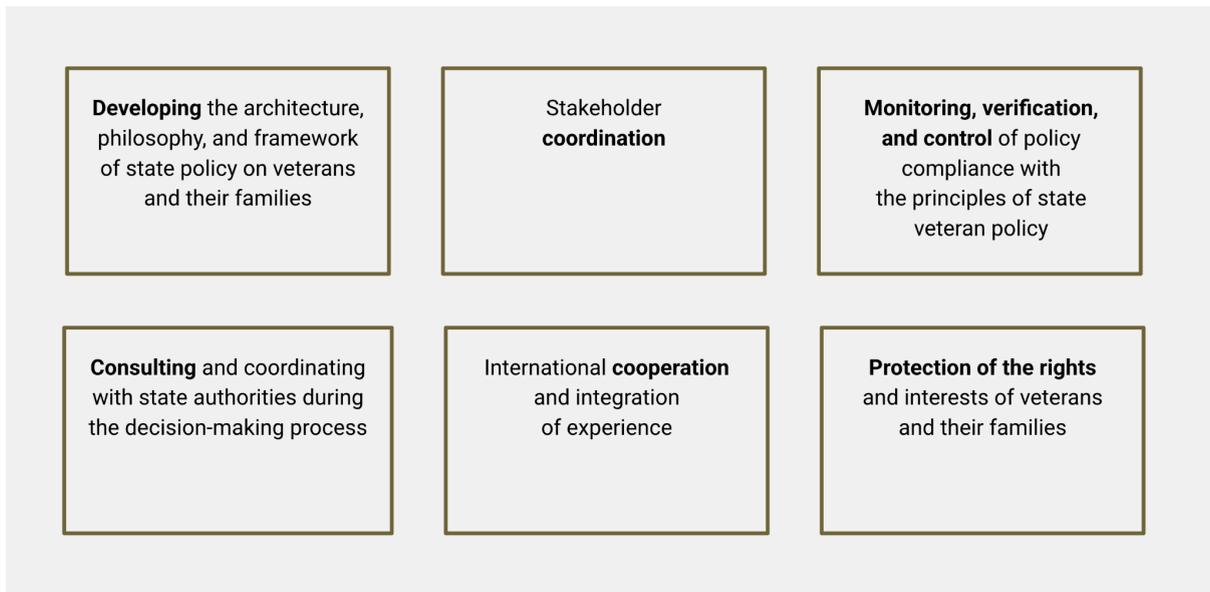
#### ■ **International cooperation and integration of experience**

The Ministry represents the interests of veterans and their families at the international level and incorporates the experience of international partners into policy development.

#### ■ **Protection of the rights and interests of veterans and their families**

The Ministry ensures the safety and support of veterans and their families, particularly during crisis situations. It also emphasises the importance of recognising the contribution of veterans to national history.

## Functions and Tasks of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine



**Given the growing number of veterans and the interagency nature of veteran policy,** it is advisable to consider the introduction of the position of a Deputy Prime Minister – Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Establishing this position would significantly enhance interagency cooperation. Unlike a regular minister who oversees only their own ministry, a Deputy Prime Minister would have broader authority to coordinate actions across multiple ministries, launch comprehensive programmes, and ensure the coherence of policy on veterans and their families across the entire government. This step is crucial to make veteran policy truly cross-cutting and systemic.

# Budgeting

Veteran policy in Ukraine is funded by state and local budgets and may be supplemented with resources from the private sector and international partners. Expenditures are allocated across different ministries and government bodies, providing opportunities for targeted assistance to veterans and their family members, but this may also lead to risks of uneven funding and insufficient coordination.

## State budget

According to **Article 87 of the Budget Code**<sup>279</sup>, the state budget provides annual one-off cash assistance to war veterans, state support for public associations to implement nationwide programmes, housing subsidies, and benefits for paying housing and utility services. Moreover, distinct programmes funded by state and local budgets provide scholarships, compensation, and services for veterans and their families.

**Veteran policy is cross-departmental and funded through different ministries within their respective budget programmes. For example:**

- rehabilitation and healthcare services are funded from the Ministry of Health's budget;
- the Ministry of Economy offers grant schemes for businesses and reskilling.

Consequently, the majority of funding for veteran policy is secured not through the dedicated Ministry of Veterans Affairs but through other central executive authorities responsible for specific services. Meanwhile, its implementation is hindered by the lack of an adequate mechanism to monitor and assess spending on veteran support across departments, as these costs are often not accounted for.

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<sup>279</sup> Budget Code of Ukraine (8 July 2010, No. 2456-VI) (2025). Legislation of Ukraine. [zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2456-17](https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2456-17)

## Local budgets

Local budgets differ from state budgets, as they reflect the degree of autonomy and decentralisation in Ukraine. The benefit is that community representatives decide on priority spending in a particular area. This enables veterans' associations to exert greater influence over the local budget than over the state budget, as they can participate in its planning.

Simultaneously, budget decentralisation poses the risk of unequal funding for veteran initiatives. The level of support for veterans can vary greatly across communities: some offer travel reimbursements, additional benefits, and family support programmes, while others may lack such initiatives or be underfunded. The amount of funding is also heavily influenced by the community's economic capacity and management priorities, as well as the initiative of local authorities.

**Local budgets are also supported by the state budget through targeted subventions. They are allocated for:**

- the work of professionals in assisting war veterans and demobilised individuals;
- financial compensation for acquiring housing for individuals with groups I-II war-related disabilities;
- development of veteran spaces.

## Other potential funding sources

Veteran policy extends beyond funding from state and local budgets.

Eligible participants for the support programmes include:

- **private sector** – can offer retraining programmes for veterans, assist them in adapting to a new workplace, and partially lower the cost of services for veterans from private providers;
- **international programmes** – can fund infrastructure or social services – either through specific projects or via the state budget;
- **public associations and charitable foundations** – implement support programmes, arrange training, consultations, and social initiatives/events funded by international aid, the state budget, or the private sector.

# Conclusions

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**1** Policy regarding veterans and their families is a crucial element of national security, resilience, and recovery. The stakeholder map demonstrates that supporting veterans and their families is not the responsibility of a single ministry, but the result of collective efforts – from those who design the policy framework to those who work directly with people. The effectiveness of veteran policy depends on the ability of the state to ensure its comprehensiveness, consistency, and sustainability.

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**2** Given the number of parties involved, coordination among all stakeholders – state authorities, local governments, the civil society sector, businesses, and international partners – is essential. Resources can only be effectively utilised, duplication avoided, and support provided to meet real challenges through collaborative work and clear role allocation.

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**3** **State authorities** set the strategic direction, develop policies, laws, and standards, and ensure their implementation and oversight. They play a crucial role in establishing a comprehensive framework of veteran policy and benefits for beneficiaries.

**Local governments** are the first to welcome veterans after service, provide access to services, and create a safe environment for their return to civilian life.

**The business sector** provides barrier-free employment, supports families of service members, and offers services adapted to the needs of veterans. Its participation is essential for economic stability and well-being.

**The civil society sector** responds rapidly to emerging needs, fills gaps not covered by the state, and generates knowledge that can underpin effective policymaking.

**International partners** provide resources and expertise and strengthen the capacity of national institutions through training, joint programmes, and knowledge exchange.

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- 4** The Ministry of Veterans Affairs plays a central role as the body responsible for policy development, its integration into nationwide strategies, the coordination of efforts of all stakeholders, and oversight of compliance with defined principles and standards. This leadership ensures that the combined efforts of all stakeholders result in a unified, effective, and dignified policy for those who have defended and continue to defend Ukraine.

# Afterword

This concept is the outcome of years of collaborative efforts by public organisations and experts who engage daily with veterans and their families. It was born from experience, dialogue, and the need to create a public policy for veterans, acknowledging their contribution to the country's defence.

This document is not a completed narrative, but rather a dynamic basis for future changes. It establishes guidelines for government institutions, local authorities, businesses, international partners, and civil society, collectively creating a support system for veterans. Its practical application will necessitate ongoing collaboration, review, and enhancement to ensure that everyone involved in the country's defence can live there with dignity.

We are also certain that shaping veteran policy is not just about implementing guarantees and social support, but also about making a significant contribution to the national memory, security, and the country's future.

This document is an appeal for action and evidence of our development as a society: we are prepared to acknowledge the contributions of veterans not just symbolically, but also through institutional and systemic support at all levels and across all areas. Government policy toward veterans should serve as a model of how Ukraine cares for its citizens.