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Impact of the War on Different Categories of Ukrainian Scholars

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Authors:

Olena Kozak <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0399-0631>

Lidia Kuzemska <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4829-4362>

Yevheniia Polishchuk <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6133-910X>

Kateryna Chuyeva <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kateryna-chuyeva-79a39a8/>

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Executive Summary

This white paper presents a comprehensive, evidence-based analysis of the ways in which the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has reshaped the living conditions, professional trajectories, and institutional affiliations of Ukrainian scholars since 2022. Drawing on desk research, online surveys, focus groups, and additional qualitative sources, the study develops a structured typology of scholars at risk and identifies the specific challenges and needs emerging across scientific fields, career stages, displacement statuses, veteran status, and affiliation patterns.

Context and problem

The war has severely disrupted Ukraine's research ecosystem. Scholars face overlapping pressures, including insecurity, displacement, loss of income, destruction of laboratories, limited access to equipment, and psychological strain. Ukrainian researchers are under extreme pressure, with basic survival needs overshadowing academic priorities. The fragmentation of researcher profiles (by field, career stage, displacement status, and affiliation), however, requires differentiated, evidence-based support mechanisms. Without intervention, Ukraine risks the long-term erosion of its research capacity.

Key findings and recommendations

Finding 1: Basic needs overshadow academic needs.

Financial stability, safety, housing, and mental health have become more urgent concerns than access to laboratories, academic mobility, or professional development. War-related stress and displacement significantly reduce researchers' ability to focus on academic work.

Recommendation 1: Address basic needs and reduce stressors.

Scholars need improved mental health support programs, specially-designed housing programs, particularly for displaced researchers, early- and mid-career researchers, and veterans, and regular communication and information support to reduce uncertainty and stress during wartime.

Finding 2: Financial instability is the core systemic risk.

The vast majority of scholars (90%) need increased salaries and research funding.

Currently, 64% of scholars surveyed are seeking additional income and 34% are receiving reduced research funding. Rigid salary structures linked to low-baseline salary rates are making academic careers increasingly unattractive. Many early-career researchers are not continuing to seek employment in the sector, some established scholars have left academia entirely, and others have greatly reduced their research activities.

Recommendation 2: Stabilize the financial foundations of Ukrainian science.

Ensuring fair and sustainable financial support for scholars is essential to prevent the collapse of Ukraine's research workforce. Support for scholars during wartime should be treated as a strategic state investment in national resilience and post-war recovery. The current uneven and inadequate system must be replaced with competitive salaries, transparent funding mechanisms, and the prioritization of research areas. The tax system for international

research grants should be updated to allow scholars to join global research projects more easily without the burden of heavy bureaucratic structures.

Finding 3: War has disrupted Ukrainian research infrastructure and caused mobility challenges.

Access to laboratories and facilities has become restricted, limiting access to research materials. The restricted mobility is reducing domestic and international collaboration. The issue is gendered, impacting men and women differently, in that martial law prevents men from leaving Ukraine, but many women have little choice but to leave.

Infrastructure challenges also vary by field. Natural, medical, and agricultural sciences are highly dependent on physical infrastructure and energy supply; engineering requires stable technical facilities; humanities require safe and stable access to libraries, archives, and museums; the social sciences require regular human interaction.

Recommendation 3: Restore and modernize research infrastructure and mobility.

Ukraine needs flexible mobility mechanisms that allow scholars to maintain institutional affiliations while working abroad, simplified equipment procurement procedures, and reformed taxation rules for international grants. Shared multidisciplinary hubs, dedicated funding for research centers, and rebuilding of destroyed infrastructure will strengthen continuity and resilience.

Finding 4: The academic workforce is imbalanced and unequal.

The war has reshaped workforce dynamics by increasing workloads for scholars who remain in Ukraine. Responsibilities have been redistributed without adequate compensation or institutional support. Displaced researchers, especially women, face significant job insecurity in Ukraine and are at greater risk of leaving academia. Mid-career researchers are the most affected

group, experiencing increased workloads, reduced access to research infrastructure, and general burnout. Early-career researchers face low salaries, insecure employment, and limited opportunities. Senior researchers are more likely to retain their status, but risk losing institutional affiliation.

Recommendation 4: Reduce inequalities and strengthen the academic workforce.

Creating ethical, transparent, and attractive working conditions is essential for the retention of talent. Bureaucratic burdens, certification barriers, and minimum publication requirements from Ukrainian regulatory bodies must be reduced during wartime. Research teams should be supported with fair workload distribution and career development opportunities, especially for early-career scholars.

Finding 5: The displacement of so many scholars has the potential to cause significant damage to the future of Ukrainian academia.

Since 2022, many internally displaced scholars and universities have been forced to relocate within Ukraine. There has been very limited support from the state for these moves, which is impacting the survival of research projects. External displacement has also been destabilizing. Scholars who currently live abroad face unstable employment, and/or partial integration into the academic systems of their host countries. We must ensure that these scholars maintain their Ukrainian affiliations and return once it is possible to do so, as their international experiences will be vital to the recovery of Ukraine's research capacity and economic renewal.

Recommendation 5: Support displaced researchers and enable reintegration.

State-level mechanisms should be developed to stop the 'brain drain,' so that scholars working and/or living abroad are able to maintain strong ties with Ukrainian institutions. Team-based reintegration pathways for returnees, paired with a database for individual cases, would enable more successful returns

and reintegration. Displaced researchers need institutional support to remain connected with Ukrainian academia.

Finding 6: Ukrainian scholar-veterans face unique reintegration challenges.

Over 1,500 scholars have been serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine since 2022. Many are facing—or will face—challenges when trying to return to academic careers, due to their requirements for physical and psychological recovery, and financial instability due to a range of barriers to employment. Targeted

reintegration support, including financial compensation, is essential to prevent the exclusion of demobilized scholars from academia.

Recommendation 6: Ensure targeted reintegration pathways for scholars who served in the Armed Forces.

Veterans require flexible and compassionate routes for reintegration, reduced formal requirements for their positions, time for recovery and skill renewal, and long-term access to mental health services.

Expected impact

Implementing these measures will help preserve Ukraine's scientific potential, reduce the loss of human capital, and ensure that Ukrainian researchers, regardless of location or affiliation, can contribute to national resilience, post-war recovery, and the EU-integration process. Strengthening shared

research infrastructures, improving access to equipment, and establishing transparent systems for monitoring damage and resource availability will enhance the continuity, efficiency, and long-term sustainability of Ukraine's research ecosystem.

Stakeholders and corresponding recommendations

The implementation of the proposed measures requires coordinated action across multiple levels of governance and institutional responsibility. The following stakeholder groups are directly linked to specific recommendations:

- Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine—Recommendations 1, 2, 3.
- Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MESU)—Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
- Ministry of Health—Recommendations 1, 6.
- Ministry of Social Policy—Recommendations 1, 5.
- Ministry for Veterans Affairs—Recommendations 1, 6.
- Ministry for Development of Communities and Territories—Recommendation 5.
- Ministry of Finance—Recommendations 2, 3.
- Ministry of Economy—Recommendation 3.
- State Customs Service—Recommendation 3.
- Ministry of Digital Transformation—Recommendation 3.
- Parliament of Ukraine (relevant committees)—Recommendations 2, 4.
- National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU)—Recommendations 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
- National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQA)—Recommendation 4.

- Universities and research institutions—Recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, 6.
- Local governments—Recommendations 1, 3, 5, 6.
- International donors and development agencies—Recommendations 2, 3, 5.
- Professional associations and academic societies—Recommendation 4.
- NGOs (e.g., Kunsht)—Recommendations 1, 5.
- Veteran NGOs and rehabilitation centers—Recommendations 1, 6.

Introduction

Ukrainian scholars and the country's scientific infrastructure are in constant danger due to the full-scale Russian invasion. The situation of Ukrainian scholars differs from scholars in other situations of risk, however, for several reasons ([SAR, 2025](#)). Unlike researchers forced to flee their homelands due to limited academic freedoms, political repression, or civil wars, Ukrainian scholars have not experienced internal repression, except for those who have remained in the territories occupied by Russia where such risks are high. Rather, Ukraine's research community is experiencing the destruction of its infrastructure. This includes physical damage to its universities and research facilities, the occupation of Ukrainian territory—including the spaces where research is undertaken and where information is stored (archives)—and exhaustion of the country's resources to the point where scientific development is not possible. These circumstances mean that international support for the preservation of Ukrainian science is essential and urgently needed.

Most studies about challenges faced by scholars at risk focus on researchers forced to leave their home countries and the challenges they face abroad in finding stable employment that matches their qualifications ([EUA et al., 2025](#)), as well as in adapting to a new academic environment ([Parkinson et al., 2020](#), [Özgür, 2022](#)) with few to no pathways to permanent academic employment ([Axyonova et al., 2022](#)). Legal, administrative, linguistic, and cultural barriers undermine scholars' integration into the academic spheres of their host countries, which often leads to problems with mental

health ([Omer et al., 2024](#), [Kushnir and Richards, 2025](#), [Kiselyova and Ivashchenko, 2025](#)).

The vast majority of Ukrainian scholars, however, remain in the country under the difficult conditions of war, economic, and infrastructural hardships. Some are displaced and others remain under Russian occupation. Many Ukrainian scholars, predominantly women, left Ukraine after 2022. Unlike scholars at risk from other countries, however, there are no political reasons preventing them from returning to their homeland, if and when they wish to do so. The Ukrainian case also allows us to understand the needs and challenges of unique groups of scholars that have emerged due to the war: veterans and scholars who joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine—1,518 scholars as of early 2024 ([UNESCO, 2024](#)); scholars who experienced displacement within Ukraine; scholars who were displaced abroad and subsequently returned to Ukraine; as well as scholars who had to leave academia due to the impact of war on their lives and their research.

All Ukrainian scholars face some common challenges during wartime, but they also have specific needs depending on career level, current location, and research area. The lack of in-depth data about the war's effects on these different groups makes it difficult to develop tailored supports. This white paper provides granular detail on the impact of the war on different groups of Ukrainian scholars, highlights those in the most vulnerable situations, and offers recommendations on how to support both science and scholars in Ukraine.

Aims

The main goal of the white paper is to assess how the war is affecting the identified groups of Ukrainian scholars. It provides detailed mapping and analysis of the groups to reveal their differing needs and elaborates on how Ukrainian scholars themselves see the impact of the war on their academic careers, daily lives, and professional futures.

The findings are based on desk research of existing studies about Ukrainian scholars

conducted since 2022 (academic publications, surveys, reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations), regulatory documents and other open sources, on the results of the online survey (N=293), and three focus group discussions with pre-selected groups of Ukrainian scholars. These discussions were conducted on topics which had been identified during the desk research phase as needing more research.

Research questions

What are the main categories into which Ukrainian scholars can be placed, and what are the key characteristics of their professional profiles?

1. How is the war affecting each category of scholars?
2. What are the shared challenges between groups and what challenges are unique to a particular group?

3. How do the various groups view the impact of war on their academic careers?

This white paper was commissioned by the NGO Kunsht, with the support of the Alfred Sloan Foundation. This report continues a [series of white papers](#) commissioned by Kunsht under the “Science At Risk” initiative. The authors of this paper represent various academic fields (ecology, sociology, economics, and museum studies). Two are currently living abroad due to safety risks, and two are in Ukraine.

Expected impact

The white paper provides data, findings, and recommendations that:

- Show how the needs and problems of Ukrainian scholars in different categories vary, and identifies the most vulnerable categories;
- Show what kind of targeted support is needed, from the perspective of Ukrainian scholars;
- Can help design effective advocacy

campaigns at national and international levels;

- Can help the Ukrainian government develop and implement legislative changes and policies to ensure more sustainable working conditions for Ukrainian scholars, to mitigate brain drain and talent loss;
- Can help Ukrainian organizations and international partners develop relevant programs of support for Ukrainian scholars.

Key findings

1. Basic needs dominate over academic needs.

The most pressing needs of Ukrainian scholars are no longer primarily academic. Instead, they reflect broader wartime conditions: financial insecurity, safety and security, housing, and daily living conditions. While access to research infrastructure, mobility, and professional development remain important, the primary concern of most is survival. Many researchers report that war and displacement are taking a serious toll on their psychological and emotional wellbeing and are inhibiting their ability to concentrate on academic work.

2. The core systemic risk is the financial instability of Ukrainian scholars and academic institutions.

According to our online survey, 90% of responding scholars report the need for increased salaries and research funding; 64% are seeking additional income; and 34% report reduced research funding. Rigid state salary structures, which are linked to low baseline rates, make academic careers increasingly unattractive, especially for early-career researchers. Some scholars have left academia entirely as a result, while others have reduced research activity. As a result, workforce retention is becoming increasingly difficult.

3. War has led to the disruption of research infrastructure and forced academic (im)mobility.

46% of online survey respondents report restricted access to laboratories and facilities, while 27% report limited access to research materials. Mobility restrictions affect both domestic and international collaborations. Male scholars are further limited in their internal and external academic mobility because of the martial law which has been in place since February 2022, while many female scholars have been forced to emigrate due to war. Infrastructure challenges also vary by field. Natural, medical, and agricultural

sciences are highly dependent on physical infrastructure and energy supply. Engineering requires stable technical facilities. Humanities and social sciences are less infrastructure-dependent but are still constrained by funding and access to resources.

4. The academic workforce faces imbalances and inequalities.

The war has reshaped workforce dynamics by redistributing responsibilities of displaced academics which increases workloads for those remaining in Ukraine, often without adequate compensation. Displaced researchers, particularly women, face higher risk of job loss in Ukraine, and are at greater risk of leaving academia entirely. Career-stage disparities are also evident, since primarily early-career researchers face low salaries, insecure employment, and limited opportunities. Mid-career researchers are the most affected group overall, with increased workloads and reduced access to infrastructure. Senior researchers are more likely to retain their status but remain at risk of losing institutional affiliation.

5. War has led to a significant forced displacement of Ukrainian scholars, whose support and reintegration are vital for Ukrainian academia in the long run.

37% of survey respondents have reported experiencing internal displacement. Internally displaced scholars, universities and institutes forced to move within Ukraine have received very limited support from the state. They must adapt their research projects to available resources and facilities depending on their new locations. Many scholars who were forced to leave Ukraine and now live abroad face unstable employment or partial integration. At the same time, these scholars also represent an opportunity for future renewal. Over 70% of surveyed scholars abroad are willing to return under improved conditions. International experience strengthens research capacity and networks, but without structured reintegration

policies, Ukraine risks losing the potential benefits of the Ukrainian science diaspora. Such policies, however, should be sensitive to potential conflicts which may arise between those who stayed in Ukraine and those who were forced to move abroad.

6. Ukrainian scholars who joined the Armed Forces encounter unique challenges when considering reintegration into academia.

Over 1,500 scholars have been serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine since 2022, and many face challenges when trying to return

to academic careers. Reported challenges include interrupted research trajectories, skill gaps and outdated knowledge, the need for physical and psychological recovery, and financial and bureaucratic barriers to employment. Those currently serving report that they will consider returning to academia if they are able to contribute meaningfully to the development of science and academia, and receive decent financial compensation. Targeted reintegration support is essential to prevent the long-term exclusion of demobilized scholars from academia.

Structure of the report

The white paper consists of an introduction, four substantive chapters, and a list of recommendations. Chapter one provides a short overview of existing research about the impact of war on Ukrainian science and scholars. Chapter two describes various existing approaches to categorizing scholars at risk and explains our methodological choices. It also details the data collection and analysis, including limitations and ethical considerations. Chapter three focuses on the

challenges faced by all Ukrainian scholars due both to previous structural issues in Ukrainian academia and the Russian invasion. Chapter four analyzes specific needs and challenges of Ukrainian scholars depending on their field of study, career stage, displacement status (internal, external, returnees, non-displaced), proximity to the frontline, and affiliation changes (including military service or leaving academia).

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Chapter 1: Background and context

The body of literature reviewed, compared, and contrasted with the aforementioned empirical sources for this study confirms that Ukrainian scholars face unprecedented challenges caused by the war. In addition to the threat to life, the loss of loved ones and other personal challenges, the conflict has also introduced a range of professional problems that have complicated or impeded research activity. According to [Lutsenko et al., \(2023\)](#) and [Suchikova et al., \(2023\)](#), about 70% of the scholars surveyed reported challenges with research activities due to war. The main issues raised were:

- Situations of being in constant danger;
- Inability to be present at the workplace;
- Unreliable phone, internet, and power connections;
- Lack of access to laboratories and scientific equipment;
- Challenge of undertaking research because of the difficulties—or impossibility—of keeping up with relevant and new research happening around the world;
- Inability to concentrate on research;
- Loss of connection and the physical impossibility of cooperation with project teams and consortia;
- Lack of interest, apathy, PTSD and trauma responses such as physical and mental freeze, critical isolation, and disassociation from reality.

There is very little specific and empirical data available on how the war has affected scholars across different research concentrations (e.g., social and natural sciences, health and biosciences, engineering and technology, etc.) As of yet, no studies have been done on aspects

of work or working conditions of scholars who have returned from abroad, nor have there been any investigations of the reasons researchers have left academia. Studying these would help us better understand the challenges and difficulties researchers face in the context of war. Additionally, very little information has been collected on scholars who have decided to remain in the occupied territories, or on those who have served or are currently serving in the military.

Numerous studies have provided insights on the impact of war on Ukrainian researchers since February 2022 ([de Rassenfosse et al., 2023](#); [Ganguli and Waldinger, 2023](#); [Guariglia et al., 2025](#); [Halahan et al., 2023](#); [Hladchenko, 2025](#); [Hladchenko and Costas, 2025](#); [Jaroszewicz et al., 2025](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2023](#); [Lutsenko et al., \(2025\)](#); [Oleksiienko et al., 2023](#); [Tsybuliak et al., 2024](#); [Tsybuliak et al., 2025](#); [Suchikova et al., 2023](#) [Ivanenko et al., 2024](#); [Rabinovych et al., 2024](#), [Rabinovych et al., 2025](#)). The main issues covered by these publications include safety considerations linked to the frequency of air attacks ([Lutsenko et al., 2023](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2025](#), [Rabinovych et al., 2024](#), [Rabinovych et al., 2025](#)); destruction of infrastructure and limited access to resources ([de Rassenfosse et al., 2023](#); [Ganguli and Waldinger, 2023](#); [Furiv et al., 2023](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2023](#); [Nature, 2023](#); [UNESCO, 2024](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2025](#)); financial issues, the loss of human capital (“brain drain”), relocation and migration ([de Rassenfosse et al., 2023](#); [Ganguli and Waldinger, 2023](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2023](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2025](#)); impact on mental health and decreasing productivity ([de Rassenfosse et al., 2023](#); [Tsybuliak et al., 2025](#)); publication

activity, funding and cooperation ([Ganguli and Waldinger, 2023](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2023](#)), and obstacles to internationalization for universities and scholars ([Oleksiyenko et al., 2023](#)). Notwithstanding this work, gaps remain in terms of how the war is affecting particular categories of researchers.

In particular, several studies (e.g., [Ganguli and Waldinger, 2023](#); [Maryl et al., 2022](#); [Osypchuk et al., 2022](#)) were prepared during the first or second year of the full-scale invasion, so they do not reflect the dynamics and longer-term impacts of the ongoing war.

Another limitation is that, most often, previous studies addressed general problems faced by governmental agencies, institutional authorities, or individual scholars ([Guariglia et al., 2025](#); [Hladchenko, 2025](#); [Halahan et al., 2023](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2023](#); [Tsybuliak et al., 2025](#)) and did not consider how the war affects different categories of scholars. For example, in the UNESCO research conducted by [Lutsenko et al. \(2025\)](#), Ukrainian researchers were categorized by residential status rather than by career stage or discipline:

1. Residing abroad;
2. Residing in temporarily occupied territories;
3. Residing in Ukrainian-controlled territories near front lines;
4. Residing in Ukrainian-controlled territories away from front lines;
5. Internally displaced persons (IDPs);
6. Those who have changed residence but are without IDP status ([Gusejnova et al., 2024](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2025](#)).

The results of the UNESCO survey, however, did not include details on the demographics of the scholars in each category, making it impossible to break down statistics by other characteristics, such as professional or institutional status.

Other studies have described the war-generated needs felt by individual categories of scholars, but these studies have organized their subjects by location and distance from the

front line ([de Rassenfosse et al., 2023](#); [Halahan et al., 2023](#); [Suchikova et al., 2023](#); [Tsybuliak et al., 2024](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2025](#)). The work of [Tsybuliak et al. \(2024\)](#) investigated the impact of the safety situation on the research activity of Ukrainian academic staff whose universities were temporarily relocated during wartime. This is one of the few studies that divided the subject groups by location:

1. Researchers who stayed in their permanent places of residence (in territory temporarily occupied by Russian troops);
2. Researchers who were forced to temporarily move to Ukrainian-controlled territories;
3. Researchers who were forced to temporarily move abroad.

Studies about the effect of internal displacement ([Furiv, 2018](#), [Osypchuk et al., 2022](#), [Finikov et al., 2025](#), [Zaporozhets et al., 2025](#)) and external displacement ([34 Snapshots, 2025](#), [Ivanenko, 2026](#), [Kiselyova and Ivashchenko, 2025](#), [Kiselyova and Ivashchenko, 2024a](#), [Kiselyova and Ivashchenko, 2024b](#), [Kiselyova and Ivashchenko, 2024](#)) on Ukrainian scholars and science indicate numerous challenges as a result. Specifically, they note that displacement often leads to the weakening of academic institutions due to the loss of research infrastructure and teaching buildings, the forced migration of staff and students, and the instability and unreliability of state funding and premises when the time comes to restart teaching and research programs.

Ukrainian scholars abroad often face employment precarity, funding shortages, pressures to return to Ukraine, and psychological problems due to displacement. These studies do not explore in any detail the different ways displacement affects scholars at various career stages and in different disciplines. None consider how displacement might influence someone's decision to leave academia altogether.

This report reveals how the risks facing Ukrainian researchers are intensifying and

evolving as the war continues. By disaggregating Ukrainian scholars into distinct categories, it provides detail on their divergent needs.

The specifics of Ukraine's national legislation and the measures taken by the Ukrainian government during the war are also important for understanding the bounding conditions for the work of Ukrainian scholars. A concise but informative description of the legal situation prior to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and during its first year can be found in the white paper "[Preserving Science during Wartime](#)" (Biletskyi et al., 2022, p. 12–14).

Numerous regulatory acts in the fields of science and education were approved between 2022–2025. They were focused particularly on research infrastructure, implementing open science approaches, support of young researchers, support of research in institutions of higher education, (e.g. Parliament of Ukraine, [2025](#), [2026](#)), define priority research areas for the post-war period ([Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2024a](#)), regulate different procedures, or were intended to fulfil Ukraine's European integration commitments (For example, a number of steps in 2022 ([Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023a](#)) or the Roadmap on European integration until 2027, approved in 2023 ([Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023b](#)). As of 2026, Ukrainian legislative regulation for science and higher education has not changed radically.

A number of amendments have been made to the current legislation and regulatory documents. For example, between September 2022 and February 2026, thirteen amendments were made to the key Law of Ukraine "[On Scientific and Scientific Technical Activities](#)." Some of the amendments concerned issues relating to the war, while others were budget amendments, or focused on institutional routine, partly aimed at supporting scientific research and scholars during wartime and beyond.

Among the notable changes to the law was a new methodology for the state attestation (evaluation) of research institutions, approved in 2024 ([Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine № 1485](#), 21 Oct 2024) and officially launched in 2025. Adoption of the methodology is expected to lead to more efficient use of governmental funds, benefiting research organizations. As of November 2025, the fully digital procedure was in use for [more than 500](#) scientific organizations, institutes, and universities. As of March 2026, 216 institutions were successfully [registered](#) as research institutions and receiving basic state financial support. Three billion Ukrainian hryvnia (UAH) were [allocated](#) from the state budget to fund them. The extraordinary state attestation process created an additional administrative workload for institutions, however, and the efficiency of the procedure has to be analyzed now that the first rounds of applications seem to be [finished](#), as of May 2026. There are also still no special regulatory acts focused exclusively on complex support of research institutions and researchers during wartime.

In particular, the problem of inconsistency of legislation in the fields of science and culture remains unresolved. Although a significant number of cultural institutions (primarily museums, reserves, and scientific libraries) conduct scientific research, management bodies at the ministerial, municipal, or regional levels, as well as financial control authorities, impose requirements on these institutions around research topics or job positions at their own discretion. These imposed requirements are generally guided by the management bodies' own notions about the scientific process.

Despite the fact that some cultural institutions, such as Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra National Reserve, which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, register their research topics according to the current "[Procedure for state registration and accounting of scientific research, research-construction works and](#)

[dissertations](#),” only two institutions—[Lviv National Academy of Arts](#) and the [National Museum of History of Ukraine](#), both under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine—completed the application procedure and were listed as research institutions within the meaning of the law. It seems, however, that the attestation approach is largely irrelevant to the majority of cultural institutions, and cannot be directly applied to most of them. A number of other regulations aimed at culture and science should be further analyzed and coordinated with each other to avoid any

ambiguity, allocate funds more efficiently, and ensure they are aligned with each other.

As a result of all the above factors, some researchers, such as independent scholars and those affiliated with institutions outside academia, can be caught in a blind spot as none of the current policies take their needs sufficiently into account. It remains to be seen whether the [National System of Researchers](#), recently initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, will succeed in filling this gap.

Chapter 2: Methodology for categorizing scholars at risk

At-risk scholars are identified in this report through several overlapping criteria that distinguish them from other categories of displaced people. For the purposes of this report, “scholars at risk” are defined as scholars at all stages of their research careers who experience threats to their lives, freedom, or academic work, and are displaced due to these threats.

The following criteria have been used by Scholars At Risk (SAR) to assess risk levels:

1. Threats to life, liberty, or research career due to the content of their work, research, or teaching being perceived as threatening by authorities or other groups;
2. Aspects of an individual’s status making them a prominent target, especially if they belong to political, ethnic, or religious minorities, are female, or identify as LGBTQ+;
3. Risk as a result of a scholar’s peaceful exercise of basic human rights, particularly

freedom of expression or association;

4. Risk from conflict, situational violence, and natural disasters ([Inspireurope+, 2025](#)).

Through the Academic Freedom Monitoring Project (AFMP), SAR tracks six categories of risk:

1. Killings/violence/disappearances: violent physical assaults causing serious harm, including beatings, shootings, torture;
2. Wrongful imprisonment: arrest and detention on false grounds relating to academic opinions or human rights activities;
3. Wrongful prosecution: legal action in retaliation for academic activities;
4. Loss of position: discharge, demotion, or professional penalties for academic work;
5. Travel restrictions: legal, administrative, or physical restrictions on movement;
6. Other incidents: campus closures, destruction of facilities, systematic harassment, discrimination ([SAR, 2026](#)).

2.1 Assessment frameworks and typologies

Classification by organizational criteria.

Different organizations apply varying assessment methods to identify scholars at risk. Some may require asylum status as proof of risk. Others emphasize risk to both individuals and to disciplines under attack (e.g., peace studies or gender studies). Others rely on risk assessments from established

organizations, such as SAR, IIE Scholar Rescue Fund, or CARA ([Yarar and Karakaşoğlu, 2023](#)). These organizations give preference to those with PhDs (or equivalent terminal degrees for their fields) and scholars with proven risk factors, thereby categorizing primarily by career stage and academic position ([Parkinson et al., 2020](#)). SAR and IIE-SRF prioritize those with

significant teaching or research experience, recent publications, and appropriate language skills ([IIE-SRF, 2026](#); [SAR, 2026](#)). Some selection committees evaluate combinations of factors including academic qualifications, host institution commitment, and post-funding perspectives ([Inspireurope+, 2024](#)).

Classification by support status. Scholars can be categorized by their migration circumstances:

1. Sponsored scholars who left with support from sponsor organizations related to their academic profiles and who had support to integrate into new research systems;
2. Non-sponsored scholars who fled independently without external agency support.

Classification by self-identification. Scholars at risk from Ukraine self-identify into three dynamic types, based on how they construct their autobiographical narratives:

1. Mobile academics who are able to construct a more consistent academic identity and frame their experiences through continuity with pre-migration international mobility, emphasizing professional networks and planned departures;
2. Refugee academics who see their migration experiences as traumatic, often lacking opportunities in host countries, who view their future as uncertain and feel guilt for fleeing Ukraine;
3. Displaced academics who transition from a refugee identity, through professional mobilization and reframing of work as a social mission, to a professional identity ([Kiselyova and Ivashchenko, 2025](#)).

Classification by legal status and geography.

Ukrainian researchers could be categorized into six groups based on location and displacement status:

1. Residing abroad;
2. Residing in temporarily occupied territories;
3. Residing in Ukrainian-controlled territories near front lines;
4. Residing in Ukrainian-controlled territories away from front lines;
5. Internally displaced persons (IDPs);
6. Those who have changed residence but are without IDP status ([Gusejnova et al., 2024](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2025](#)).

All of the above classifications focus on various aspects of displacement as the main lens through which to analyze scholars at risk. In the Ukrainian context, however, displacement is only one criterion among many which are equally important, such as field of study, career stage, affiliation, and career change. Together, these criteria define specific needs and challenges faced by different groups of scholars.

Typical support programs for scholars at risk who are abroad focus on temporary relocation and initial integration into a new academic system. Ukrainian scholars, however, need a wider variety of support trajectories, because the majority of them are still in Ukraine, and their circumstances may vary widely depending on the specific configuration of their personal and institutional situations. That is why we argue that categorization of Ukrainian scholars based on multiple criteria allows us to better identify the intersections of specific needs and challenges.

2.2 Research design, data collection, and analysis methods

Desk research

During the first stage of the research, we analyzed recent (2022–2026) academic publications, gray literature, academic journalism, and other open sources focused on the impact of war on Ukrainian scholars and scientific research. Based on our findings, we identified a number of characteristics by which we can categorize Ukrainian scholars during wartime:

1. Field of study;
2. Career stage;
3. Displacement status;
4. Proximate location to the front line, and
5. Changes in their institutional affiliations related to war.

Online survey

The online survey was conducted between 20 January 2026 and 4 March 2026, with Ukrainian scholars using Google Forms to answer 25 questions. Overall, 293 responses were collected. The survey was advertised and circulated throughout the Science At Risk database contact lists of the Kunsht, the [website](#) of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, as well as through online Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp groups for/of Ukrainian scholars—for example, [Ukrainian Scientists Worldwide](#), Ukrainian Science Diaspora, Young Scholars' Council of the Ministry of Education—and personal contacts of the researchers.

The survey was conducted in Ukrainian and consisted of three sections. The first section asked about the immediate impact of war on the academic career of the respondent and the possibility of continuing their research, their immediate needs, and what their post-war needs are likely to be. The second section was dedicated to collecting data on participation in

and views on the effectiveness of national and international support programs for scholars at risk, as well as gathering respondents' recommendations to national policymakers and international donors about the best ways to support Ukrainian scholars. The results of this section of the survey are analyzed in another white paper of the Science At Risk white paper series ("[Support Mechanisms for Researchers at Risk: Historical Development, Survey Evidence, and Policy Lessons from Wartime Ukraine](#)" by I. Sviezhentseva, A. Lutsenko, I. Lyman). The third section gathered information about the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, including their experiences of internal and/or external displacement.

The online survey was analyzed using both statistical and manual thematic analyses, for open-ended questions. The analysis and visualization were conducted in Excel and a free version of Flourish.

Anonymized summaries of the participants' personal information are presented below:

Gender: 62.5% of our respondents were women, 34.7% were men, and 2.7% did not want to indicate their gender.

Age: 12% of respondents were aged 24-35, 56% aged 35-49, 28.5% aged 50-64, and 3% aged 65+, with one respondent aged 18-24.

Academic degree: 4.8% of respondents were PhD students (aspirantura), 63.9% held a PhD degree (Candidate of Sciences), 26.8% had a post-doctoral habilitation degree (Doctor of Sciences, Doktor Nauk), and 4.5% of respondents did not hold an academic degree (Fig. 2.1).

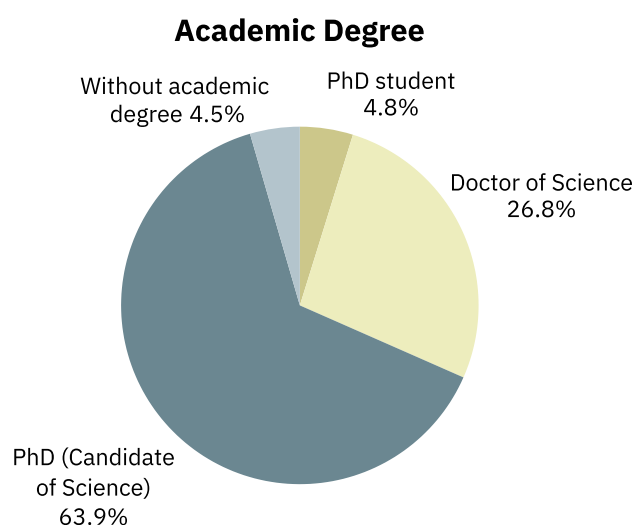


Figure 2.1 The academic degree of respondents (%). Source: SAR survey, 2026 (N = 293).

Career level: 21% of respondents indicated they were early-career researchers (up to ten years after the PhD defense), 40% were mid-career level scholars (10–20 years after the PhD defense), and 35% were senior level academics (20+ years after the PhD defense).

Affiliation: 39% of our respondents were work in a university in Ukraine, 21% in institutions of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, 4% had two or more affiliations in Ukraine, 12% had both an affiliation in Ukraine and with a research institution abroad, 7% had only a longer-term affiliation (not a scholarship or an internship) with a research institution abroad, and 6% had temporary affiliation (scholarship, internship) with a research institution abroad.

Field of science: 28.9% of respondents were from the humanities and arts, 30.6% from the natural sciences, 14.1% from engineering and technology studies, 3.1% from medical sciences, 4.5% from agricultural and veterinary sciences, and 18.9% from the social sciences (Fig. 2.2).

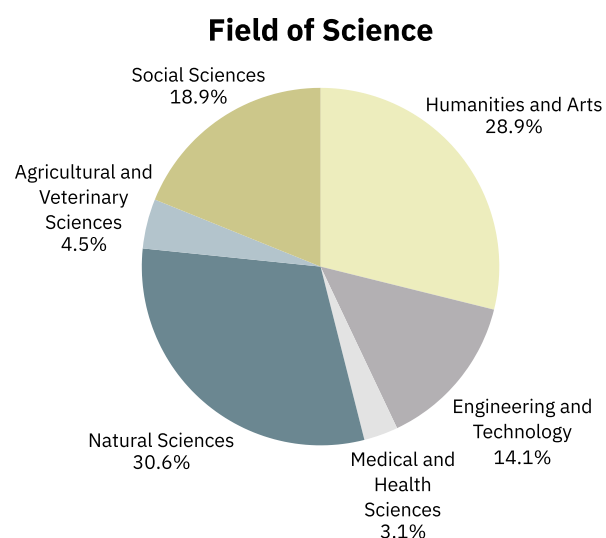


Figure 2.2 The field of science of respondents (%). Source: SAR survey, 2026 (N = 293).

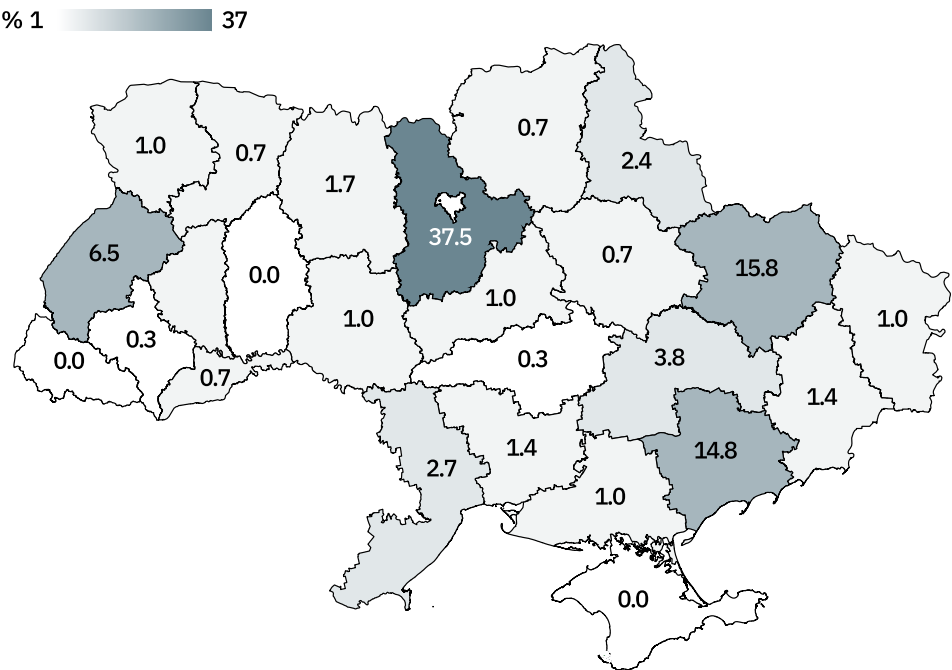
Change of professional status: Almost 50% of respondents indicated that their professional status in Ukrainian academic institutions had not changed since the start of the full-scale invasion. 24.1% reported that they had received a promotion, 6.2% noted that they now hold a lower position than prior to the invasion, 11.3% of respondents lost their affiliation with a Ukrainian academic institution due to displacement within Ukraine or abroad, and 2.1% changed their profession. Other respondents reported a mix of scenarios, with different combinations of losses and gains in professional statuses in Ukraine and/or abroad.

Current place of residence: Before the full-scale invasion, the majority of respondents lived in the Kyiv (37.5%), Kharkiv (15.8%), and Zaporizhzhia (14.8%) regions, while a much smaller share lived in the remaining regions, and only 3.1% of respondents lived abroad (Fig. 2.3A). In order to evaluate the impact of the war and exposure to its effects, we asked the respondents to indicate their current place of residence based on pre-defined macroregions (Fig. 2.3B). 16.8% of respondents replied that they lived in areas near the front line (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv,

and Dnipropetrovsk regions) and 39.2% of respondents live in Northern and Central Ukrainian regions (including Kyiv) often targeted by Russian missiles and drones, but are further from the front line. 13.4% of our respondents resided in Western Ukrainian regions—the furthest from the front line, yet

also a target, though to a lesser extent, of the Russian attacks on military and civilian infrastructure—and 30.6% of respondents resided abroad. None of our respondents currently reside in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

Regions where respondents lived as of February 24, 2022



Regions where respondents lived as of the beginning of 2026

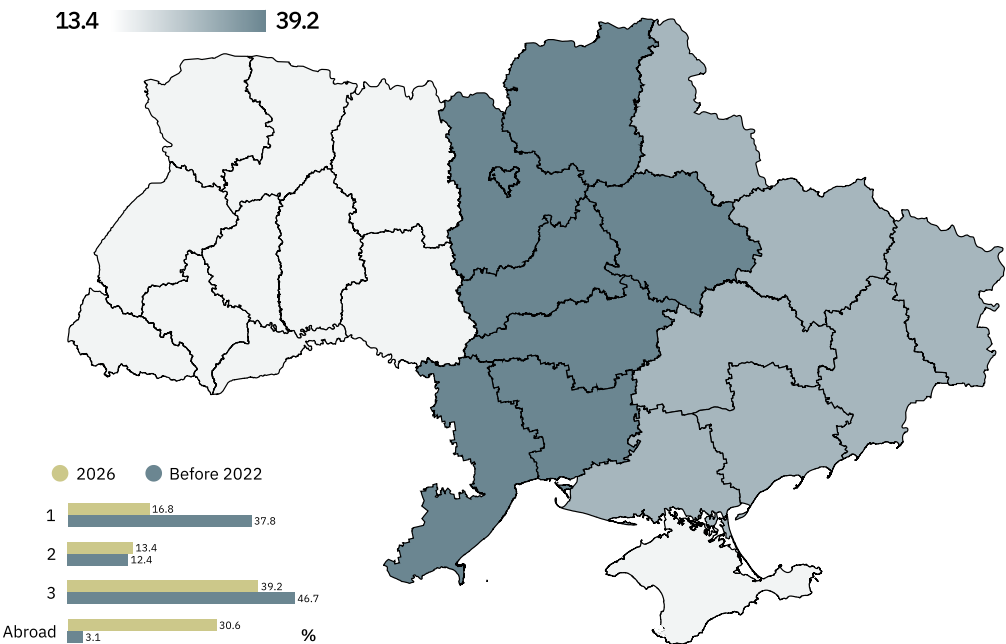


Figure 2.3 The regions of residence of respondents until February 22, 2024 (A) and as of the beginning of 2026 (B). Source: SAR survey, 2026 (N = 293).

Personal experience of displacement: 34.7% of our respondents did not have any experience of internal or external displacement between 2014 and the time of interview. Almost 10% of respondents had experienced displacement in some form between 2014 and 2021.

Institutional displacement: 80.4% of respondents indicated that their academic institution in Ukraine was not displaced due to war. 1.7% indicated their institution had been displaced once since 2014, 17.2% indicated their institution had been displaced once since 2022, and two (< 1%) respondents indicated their institutions had been displaced at least twice.

Focus groups

Three structured online focus group discussions were conducted in February 2026 with a total of 16 participants, each discussion lasting about 1.5–2 hours. Each focus group was aimed at one of the pre-selected target groups of scholars whose needs were pre-identified as under-researched.

- Focus Group 1: Scholars who joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine (five participants);
- Focus Group 2: Scholars who were displaced abroad but have since returned to Ukraine (eight participants);
- Focus Group 3: Scholars with experience of internal displacement since 2014 and/or 2022 (three participants).

Supplementary individual interviews were conducted online with two scholars who left academia due to the impact of war on their research work. It proved impossible to organize a focus group discussion with these respondents due to electricity shortages and scheduling conflicts.

The questionnaire for the focus group discussions and interviews contained questions about the impact of war on academic work and on scholars' personal lives, about the short and long-term challenges for Ukrainian academia due to war, and about participants' opinions on the most urgent support measures

for Ukrainian scholars. Participants for the focus groups were recruited either through contact information included in the main online survey, or through personal contacts and snowball sampling. For the focus group discussions and interviews, we used manual thematic analysis based on the predefined set of research questions.

Additional sources

To complement our study about Ukrainian scholars abroad and scholar-returnees to Ukraine, and to inform the recommendations of this white paper, we also used data from a recently conducted survey of 300 scholars abroad. The study, "Impact Assessment of the Ukrainian Science Diaspora on the Rebuilding of the Research and Higher Education System in Ukraine," was co-led by one of the co-authors of this white paper in November–December 2025 ([Ukrainian Science Diaspora, 2025a](#)). The survey asked about scholars' intentions, motivations, and barriers to returning to Ukraine.

Limitations of the study

Due to the project's limited budget and timeframe, an online survey was chosen as the most appropriate tool for gathering information from as many researchers as possible. The quantitative and qualitative data collected are not representative of the general population of Ukrainian scholars. The data does, however, show some trends about the effects of the war on Ukrainian scholars in general, and aims to shed light on specific groups of war-affected Ukrainian scholars whose needs and challenges have been under-researched to date.

The fieldwork for this research coincided with the unanticipated period of massive electricity shortages, power, and heat outages across Ukraine due to the Russian attacks on the critical infrastructure of Ukraine in January–February 2026. Due to the fixed project plan, the timeframe of fieldwork could not be extended. Many respondents invited to participate in focus group discussions and/or interviews declined the invitations or could not join due

to electricity cuts. All the data collection was virtual. The level of engagement and rapport with and between the study participants might not have been the same as during in-person meetings as a result. Given the circumstances, however, for the aims and target groups of this study, online data collection was the safest and most manageable option.

One focus for our research was a comprehensive analysis of the current Ukrainian science policy framework. As a result, the recommendations in this report are mostly based on responses and suggestions of our respondents, as well as blind gaps in the official statistics, and other data identified by the team during the desk research phase.

Ethical considerations

Prior to the focus-group discussions and interviews, all the participants received an

information sheet outlining the aims of the research, their right to withdraw from the research at any point, details about how the data would be gathered, anonymized, processed, and stored in secure locations, as well as instructions about how to withdraw consent for participation in the study, if necessary. All participants e-signed the informed consent forms.

Due to the sensitivity of the data, and in order to protect the research participants, all the data collected was used only in a generalized form and without any identifiable details of individual respondents. The researchers also tried to minimize the risk of creating or heightening trauma or emotional distress during the focus-group discussions and interviews by highlighting participants' right not to answer any question(s), take breaks, and leave the online meeting space, if necessary.

Chapter 3: Daily living challenges, humanitarian issues, and safety concerns of Ukrainian scholars

As the majority of Ukrainian scholars remain in the country, they face the same wartime challenges as the Ukrainian population in general. People live under constant threat from regular life-threatening events such as missile strikes, shellings—including aerial guided bombs—Shahed drone (loitering munition) attacks, and more. The infrastructure for protecting the civilian population is still not sufficient for such a large-scale and prolonged military threat. Front-line areas are especially dangerous, due to so-called “human safari” tactics that the Russian army uses to target civilians in Kherson and other cities, when “hunting” with FPV-weaponized drones makes any movement through the streets of cities or villages, or the roads between them, extremely dangerous ([Tokariuk, 2025](#)).

One of the key issues is the deterioration of infrastructure and disruptions in electricity, water, and heating. The winter of 2025–2026 proved to be particularly difficult, thanks to Russian attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure. Ukrainians also experience increasing costs of living, including the cost of medicine, and the deterioration of basic medical services. This particularly impacts households with persons who suffer from

chronic disease or illness ([IOM, 2025](#)). There are also problems with access to social services, especially for women who are heads of households. These include “lack of kindergartens, difficulty in registering, long queues” ([People in Need, 2026](#)). For those living in rural areas, transportation barriers and road damage impede access to work sites ([IOM, 2025](#)). Increased attacks on rail infrastructure and rising fuel prices in the spring of 2026 are also likely to have some impact on citizens’ mobility ([Pradid, 2026](#); [Stasiuk, 2026](#)). The risk of landmines has increased and is now critical in many areas ([IOM, 2026](#)). The psychological impact of living under the constant threat of harm or injury reduces productivity and the ability to plan for the long term ([WHO, 2026](#)). Mental health issues are a significant concern.

According to our online survey, financial difficulties, security issues, and household infrastructure problems are the most pressing concerns of Ukrainian scholars (Fig 3.1). Strictly academic issues, such as the need for professional development, access to research equipment, labs or libraries, academic mobility or psychological support, are also important, but less so when compared to the urgent challenges of daily life during wartime.

What are the most pressing needs for you, as a scientist?

(Respondents could choose up to 5 options; 291 respondents)

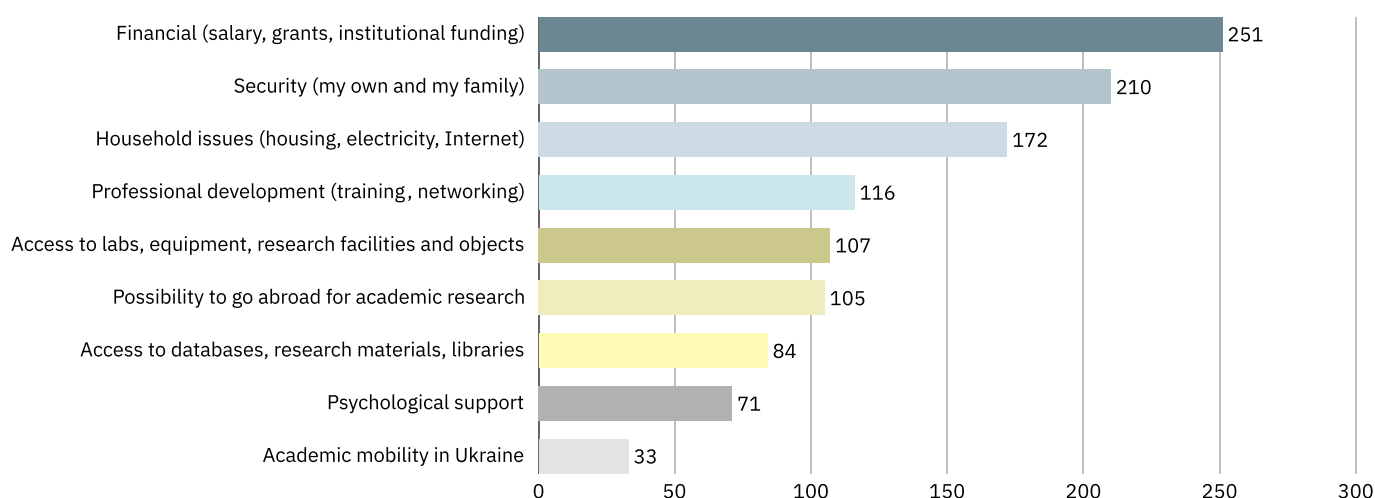


Figure 3.1 The most pressing needs of Ukrainian scholars. Source: SAR survey, 2026.

In response to the full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukraine introduced martial law, which put many restrictions on the mobility of Ukrainian men. For male scholars, this has meant that their mobility abroad was limited and some had to restrict their mobility within the country as well.

As funding was redirected to military purposes, 64% (186 persons) of scholars

in our survey reported they had to look for additional sources of income, which was often the case prior to the full-scale invasion as well. 34% reported decreased funding for research, 27% mentioned limited access to sources, research materials, areas of research or topics, and 25% experienced limitations to their academic mobility (Fig. 3.2).

Did you encounter any of the following challenges in your professional activity due to martial law? Choose no more than three options (N=291)

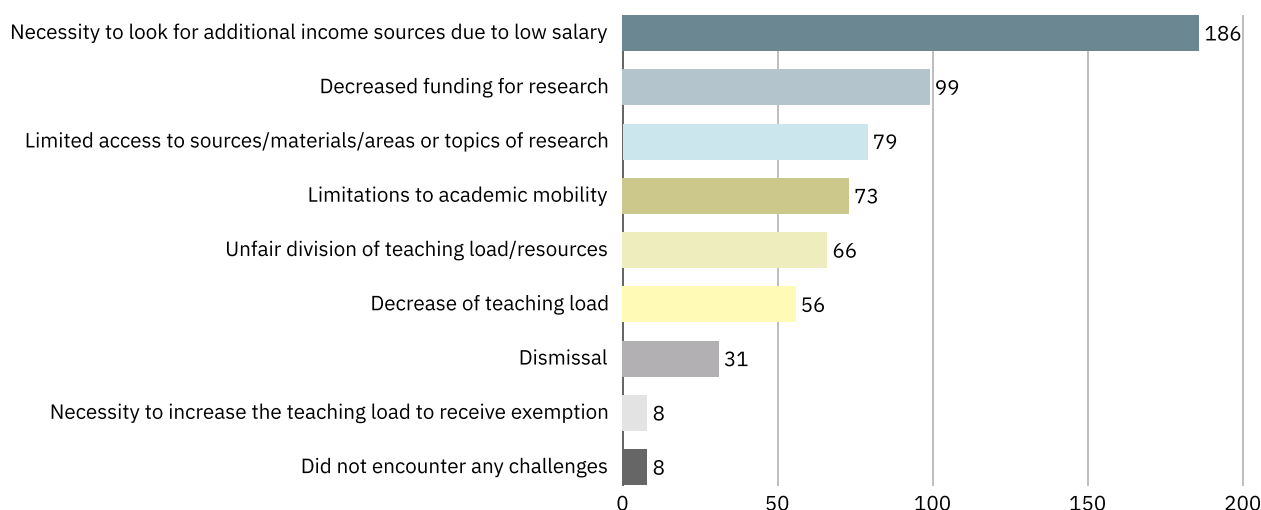


Figure 3.2 Challenges experienced by Ukrainian scholars due to martial law. Source: SAR survey, 2026.

With a significant number of Ukrainian scholars, mostly women, escaping the war by going abroad, the teaching/research loads in their Ukrainian academic institutions were often decreased or redistributed among those who remained. This sometimes led to scholars abroad being dismissed from their original positions or put on indefinite unpaid leaves of absence. At the same time, those who received increased workloads were not always reimbursed for this additional work. Some respondents noted that their workloads were redistributed to male scholars in order

to make them eligible for temporary exemption from military service (broniuвання), as per the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine Order № 560 ([Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2024b](#)).

Almost half of survey respondents (46%) indicated that war had a significant impact on their access to the research infrastructure of their institution in Ukraine, leading either to the slowing down of their research or to its temporary or complete stop (Fig 3.3).

How did military action impact your access to the research infrastructure of your university/research institution in Ukraine? Choose one option: (% of the total 291 responses)

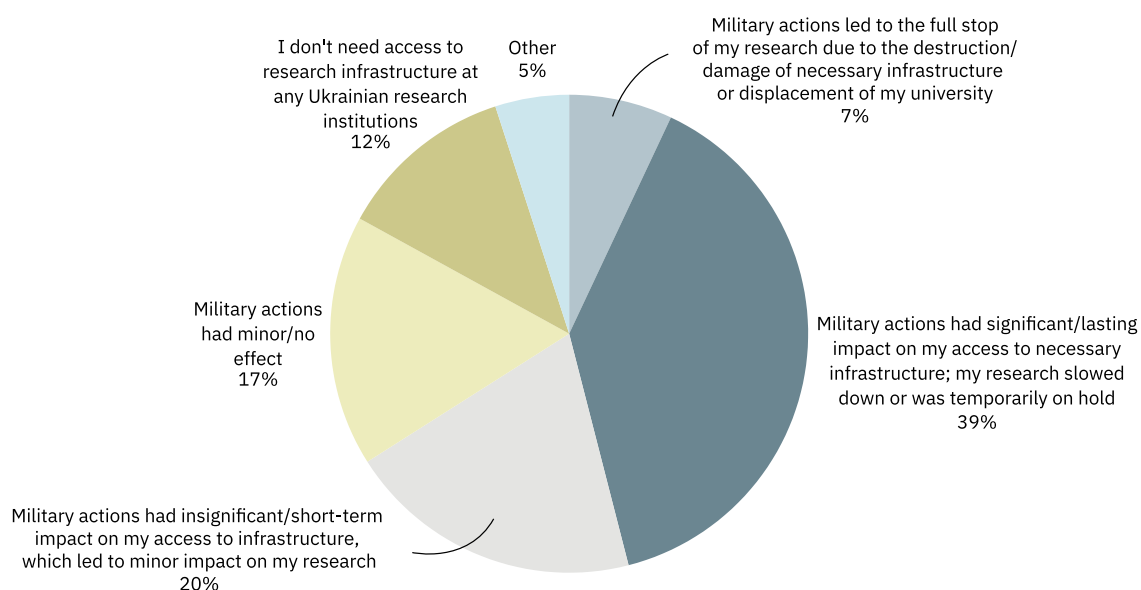


Figure 3.3 Impact of military actions on access to the research infrastructures of universities/research institutions in Ukraine. Source: SAR survey, 2026.

Answering an open question about what kind of infrastructure within their institution should be renewed to enable them to continue their research, respondents mentioned three practical needs: 1) electricity; 2) heating and water; 3) backups to ensure consistent access to electricity, heating, and water. As one of the respondents noted: “There are practically no institutes; even in an empty office in Ukraine, the temperature was -5 degrees Celsius. Under such conditions, it’s difficult to even talk about research infrastructure.”

They also identified broader needs around rebuilding of damaged or destroyed buildings, or the renovation of old buildings for teaching and research, as well as the renewal of hardware and software infrastructure necessary for research (labs, equipment, databases and digitization, libraries, research materials, purchase of licenses to use particular software packages, etc.). Finally, many respondents noted that better management of already available infrastructure and co-use opportunities would also be helpful for scholars who otherwise might not have access to such facilities.

Asked about the most critical needs of scholars once the war is over, 90% of respondents highlighted the need for increased salaries and funding for research (Fig. 3.4). Financial needs were ranked more important than all others listed, including personal safety (55%). At the moment, the average monthly salary of Ukrainian scholars is [UAH 12000-15000](#) (USD \$275–\$340) and the average monthly PhD scholarship stipend is [UAH 8000](#) (USD \$185), whereas the average salary in Ukraine is around [UAH 30356](#) (USD \$690). In the capital, Kyiv, the discrepancy is even larger, with an average non-academic salary reaching UAH [49 381](#) (USD \$1000). Considering the cost of living and inflation, it is often impossible for Ukrainian scholars to survive and sustain their families relying only on their salaries, let alone being able to also conduct high-quality research. That is why 64% of our respondents told us that they have been looking for additional sources of income. A second important need that was highlighted in the results was safety and security (55%). A third need highlighted by respondents of the survey (54%), and echoed in the focus group discussions and interviews, is the urgent need to create possibilities and incentives for young people to become engaged in research, and motivated to have a research career in Ukraine.

What kind of needs of scientists in Ukraine, in your view, will be the most critical for the renewal and development of science after the end of war? Choose up to 5 options (N=291):

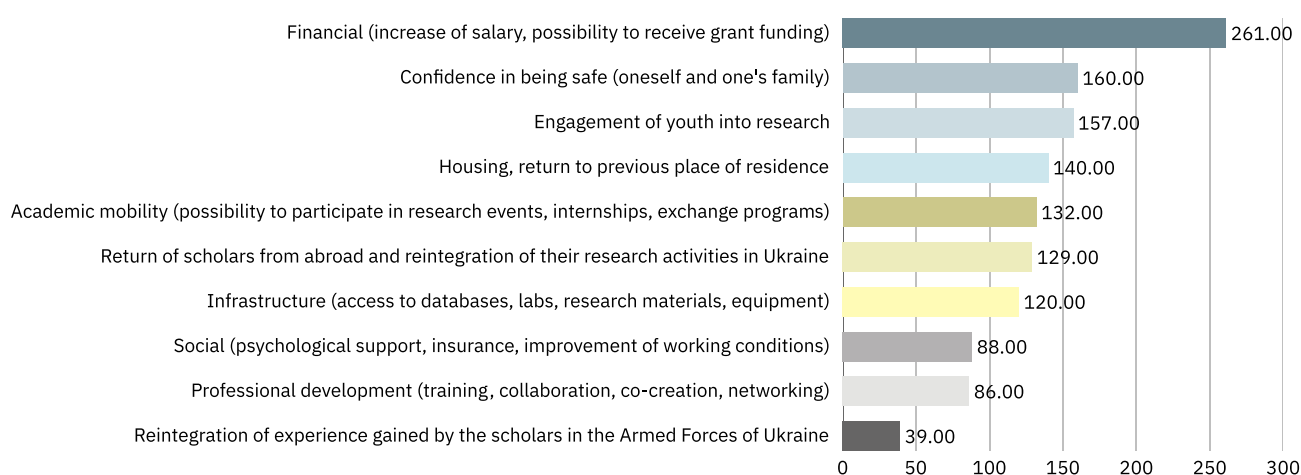


Figure 3.4 Needs that will be most critical for the renewal and development of science after the end of the war. Source: SAR survey, 2026.

Support for both internally and externally displaced scholars was also brought forward as important for the post-war science renewal, as well as the removal of restrictions on academic mobility. Purely academic needs, such as access to research infrastructure or professional development, ranked significantly lower than basic everyday needs. Finally, 13.4% of our respondents acknowledged that the experience gained by scholars who

joined the Armed Forces during the conflict should also be incorporated into the process of renewal and development of Ukrainian science after the war.

In short, **money and people**. These two elements were repeated constantly in the results as the most important factors required for science in Ukraine to survive.

Chapter 4: Specific needs, problems, and possibilities for Ukrainian scholars

4.1 Ukrainian scholars by field of science

Common challenges for Ukrainian researchers tend to vary depending on their specific fields, but lists commonly include security issues, access to everyday necessities, frequent alarms, missile and drone attacks, power outages, heating problems, Internet and communication outages, etc. All these problems are typical for all fields but the specific levels of impact may be different for each. For example, power outages can be of different durations and have different effects on research depending on the specific scientific field.

Inconsistent power has affected STEM scholars the most because of their need to maintain collections and samples, or conduct experiments within a controlled laboratory environment ([de Rassenfosse et al., 2023](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2025](#); SAR survey, 2026). Prolonged power outages and heating problems may even cause the complete loss of samples and collections, a critical problem for biological sciences. One survey respondent noted that biosamples had been lost due to prolonged power outages, and several others noted that uninterrupted power supply was a priority because of the need to maintain research samples. In the winter of 2026, the situation with heating and electricity was precarious, and natural history collections, greenhouses in botanical gardens, and exotic animals in zoos suffered

([Mediabrama, 2026](#); [Vivcharyk, 2026](#); [Boiko, 2022](#); [Kobzar, 2026](#); [Rybalska, 2026](#)). This is one of the long-lasting consequences of massive air strikes, because even the structures which survived destruction by missiles and drones are now either freezing or flooding due to breaks in their heating systems.

Survey data as well as results from Focus Group 3 show that military actions have had a significant and long-term impact on the ability of scholars to use research infrastructure, and in some cases have led to a complete cessation of scientific research. This effect is particularly pronounced within the natural sciences, as much of the work in that field is connected to specific territories or species requiring systematic monitoring.

The impact of the war on humanities and arts research and researchers warrants a separate study. As of 2026, scholarly access to museum collections is often still limited, due to evacuations and other security measures. The data on the loss and theft of items from museum collections and archives—including materials illegally removed by the Russian occupation administration, as well as those destroyed due to air strikes—is still being compiled. There are no official statistics reporting the number of researchers who have been forced to change their research focus due to the lack of access to the museum collections or their digital copies.

Nearly half of all scholars working in natural science, humanities, and the arts reported significant challenges in their ability to conduct research. The proportion of researchers

unable to continue their work in other fields is considerably lower by comparison, amounting to roughly one-third to one-quarter (Fig. 4.1).

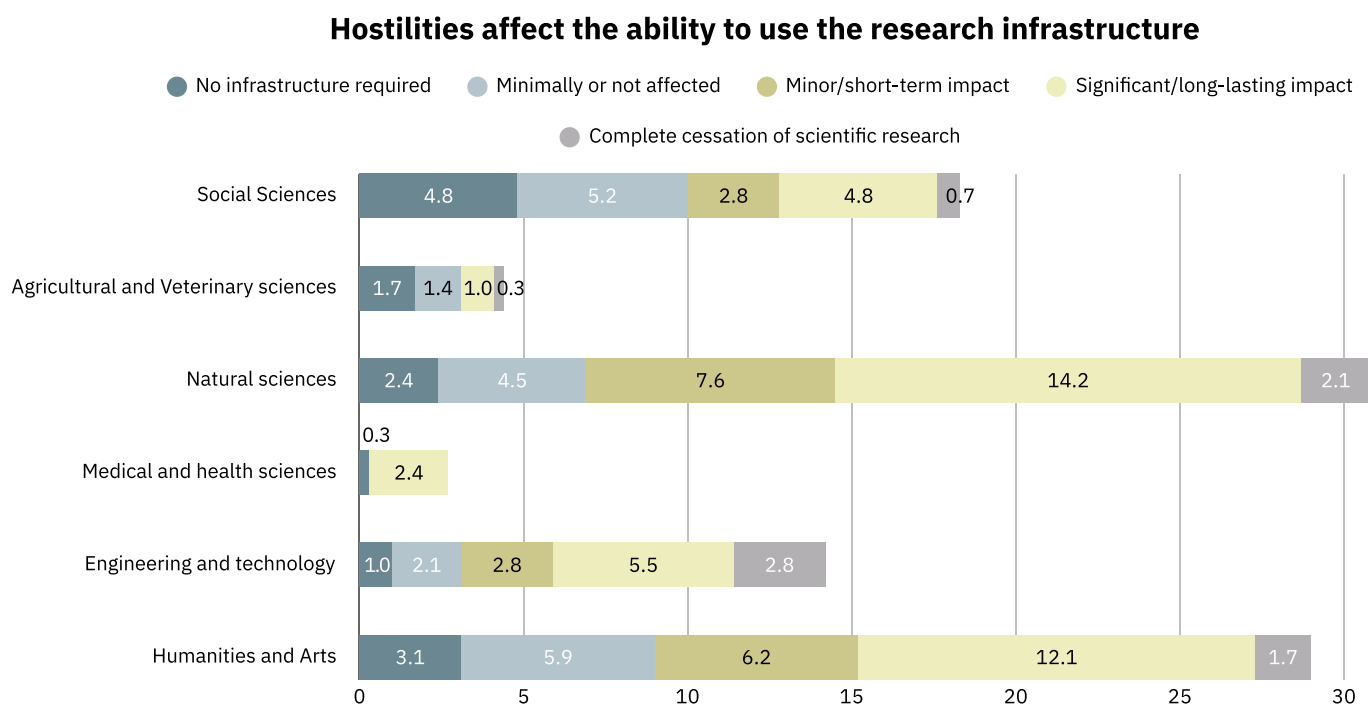


Figure 4.1 Impact of hostilities on the ability of Ukrainian researchers to use research infrastructure. Source: SAR survey, 2026 (N = 293).

The results of our survey (Fig. 4.2) show that almost half of Ukrainian researchers saw no change in their professional status after 2022. Of the rest, 24% received a promotion, 12% lost their affiliation, and 6.5% were moved to lower-ranking positions. The largest

proportion of scholars who lost affiliations and/or transitioned to a lower-ranking position were social scientists (about 30%), while the smallest change was for scholars working in natural science, humanities, and the arts (about 15%).

Status changes among Ukrainian researchers across different fields of sciences after 24 February 2022

Numbers in %

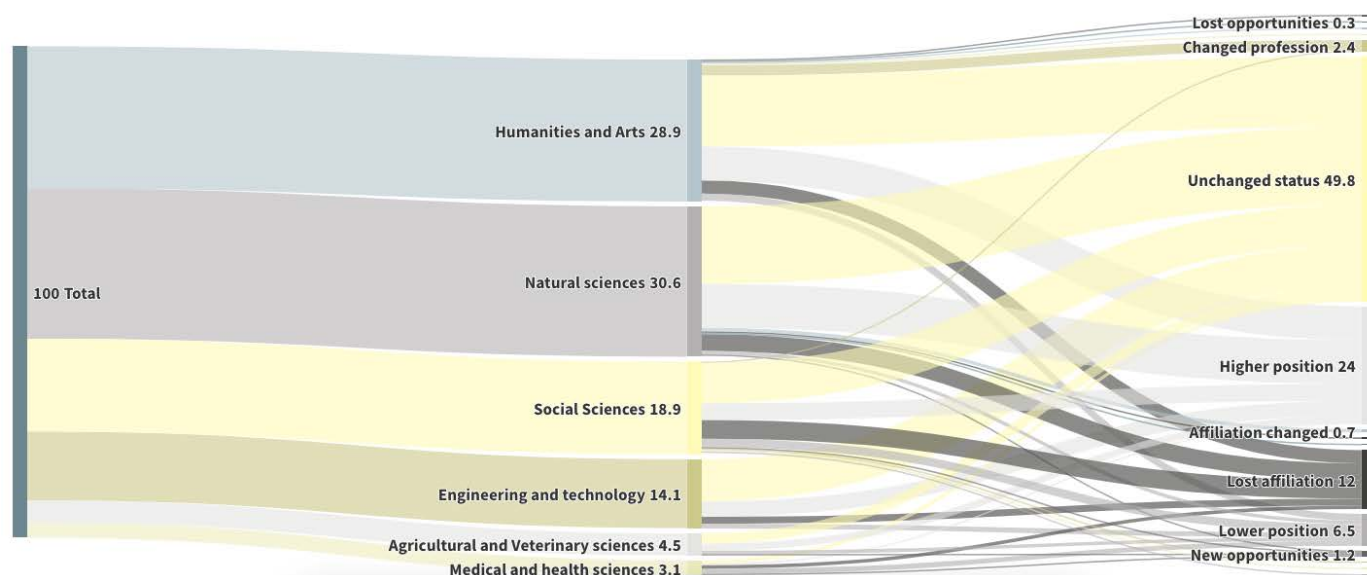


Figure 4.2 Changes in the professional status of Ukrainian researchers across various research fields after 24 February 2022 (values indicate % of total responses). Source: SAR survey, 2026 (N = 293).

Research in all disciplines needs funding. Taking into account limited national resources, a logical strategy for scholars seeking funding would be to apply to international options. A study conducted in 2022 ([Maryl et al., 2022](#)) revealed that the three main obstacles to funding applications in all disciplines are 1. a lack of experience in applying for external funding, 2. the language barrier, and 3. the lack of funding opportunities for some specific disciplines.

Funding opportunities, level of competition, and the cost of research can vary depending on the field ([Tian et al., 2024](#); [Rathenau Instituut, 2024](#)). Research in the natural, engineering, technical, medical, and agricultural sciences often requires laboratories, equipment and tools, samples and collections, and access to specific geographic areas, which can be difficult in wartime.

In addition to the destruction of research infrastructure and problems with access

to territories, prolonged power outages make it very difficult or even impossible to conduct laboratory research and maintain the integrity of samples. Scholars in the natural, engineering, technical, medical, and agricultural sciences also require more financial and technical support than researchers in other fields overall. As a result, it may be easier and cheaper to relocate and support scholars in the social and computer sciences than those who rely more heavily on infrastructure. Therefore, the most vulnerable researchers in wartime will be those working in fields that require scientific laboratories, support for collections, specimens, and samples, and access to specific locations.

It should still be acknowledged that in almost all fields of science, including the humanities and social sciences, laboratories, scientific collections, and research samples may be necessary. Additionally, the presence of a laboratory may not be mandatory for all projects in the natural, medical, and

agricultural sciences, as well as engineering, since all fields are currently actively developing modelling, computational, and remote research methods. The institutions of the National Academy of Sciences in these fields have sustained the greatest reported damage to research infrastructure ([Furiv et al., 2023](#); [UNESCO, 2024](#); [Science At Risk, 2026](#)). Alongside damage to research facilities, even obtaining basic consumables is difficult due to the war, which further slows progress across projects and institutions. Disturbances to industry and economic instability, as well as complications in cross-border transportation and the total interruption of civil aviation, have made it difficult for researchers to buy essential laboratory equipment and supplies ([Hondermarck et al., 2024](#)).

Another general problem is the level and duration of stress being experienced by scholars. One study on the mental health of Ukrainian researchers during wartime reveals that everyone surveyed experienced equal levels of stress, not dependent upon discipline or field. ([Tsybuliak et al., 2025](#)).

War and limited resources forced scholars to change their research focus, a situation seen across fields. In particular, Ukrainian research efforts have shifted toward priorities more relevant to the war and its consequences, including humanitarian aid, public health and stress levels, environmental monitoring and ecosystem damage, defense technologies, etc. ([Hondermarck et al., 2024](#)). While all these issues are very important for the country during a long-term war, there is the risk that fundamental research across disciplines may become deprioritized or even neglected altogether in favor of other subjects.

The study ([Hladchenko, 2025](#)) showed no significant differences in publishing activities across all fields of science in 2022–2023 when compared with output in 2020–2021. Articles published in engineering and the physical sciences represented the largest share of the

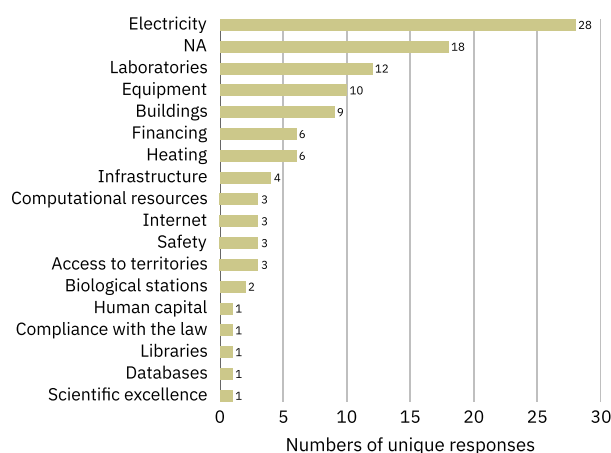
NASU's research output (about 55.0%), while the social sciences and humanities accounted for the smallest share of the articles (about 9%). Articles in the NASU in biomedical and health sciences, life and earth sciences, mathematics, and computer science each make up an average share (about 10-15% for each field listed above). The research output published by universities is relatively balanced across disciplines. This study represents only the first year after the full-scale invasion, however, so publications could have been prepared earlier and only recently completed the publication process. Later research ([Bezvershenko et al., 2025](#)) shows that while the number of publications in 2022 showed no significant decrease compared to the previous year, starting in 2023, the number of publications began to drop sharply in all fields by approximately 2–7 times.

Natural Sciences

Research in the natural sciences requires access to territories and laboratories, which can be limited in wartime. As of the beginning of 2024, a total of 18 research institutes from the regions of Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Luhansk, Donetsk, and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea have had to be relocated. Many of the studies at these institutions were looking at regional biodiversity and as a result of the relocations, no longer have access to their territories of interest ([UNESCO, 2024](#)).

The survey results indicated that the most important elements of research infrastructure are the electrical supply, laboratories, equipment, and buildings (Fig. 4.3A). At the same time, several respondents reported that they did not currently have a critical need for any specific research infrastructure (included as NA on the figure below). Among the most urgent needs identified by respondents were financial support, engagement of young researchers, opportunities for academic mobility and international cooperation, safety, and research infrastructure (Fig. 4.3B).

A. The most important infrastructure for continuing scientific work / Natural Sciences



B. The most urgent needs of Ukrainian researchers / Natural Sciences

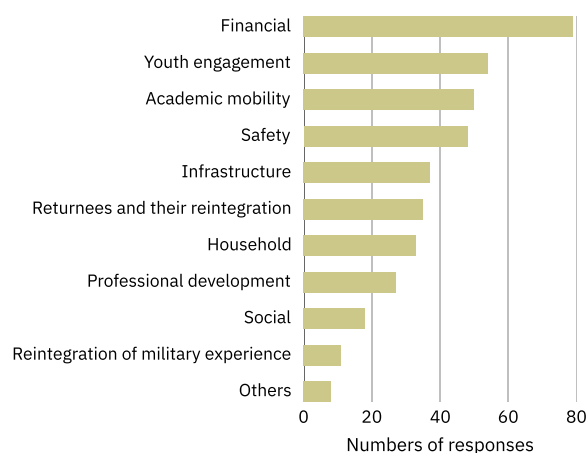


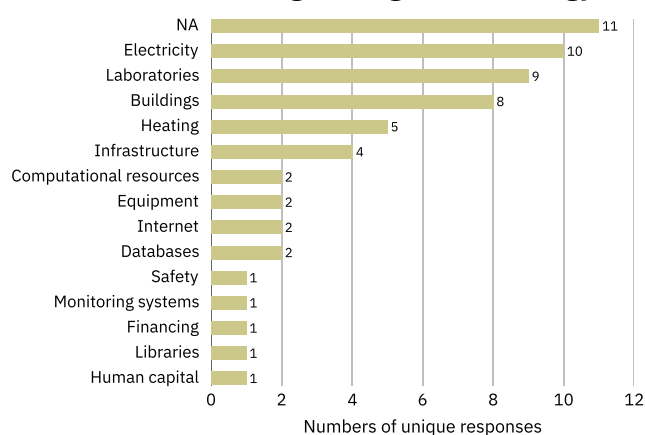
Figure 4.3 The most important infrastructure for continuing scientific work (A) and the most urgent needs reported by Ukrainian researchers (B) in natural science.
Source: SAR survey, 2026.

Engineering and Technology

The main challenge within the fields of engineering and technology is consistent access to laboratories and equipment, although there is potential for scholars in these fields to shift to computational research. The field of physics has seen the highest impact from researchers emigrating—about 706 physicists, or 5% of the researchers employed by the NAS ([UNESCO, 2024](#)).

Survey results showed that many respondents in this category do not have a critical need for specific research infrastructure (shown as NA on Figure 4.4A, below). At the same time, the most important elements of their research infrastructure were described as electricity, laboratories, buildings, and heating. The most urgent needs expressed by researchers in this group were financial support, safety, youth engagement, household issues, and academic mobility (Fig. 4.4B).

A. The most important infrastructure for continuing scientific work / Engineering and technology



B. The most urgent needs of Ukrainian researchers / Engineering and technology

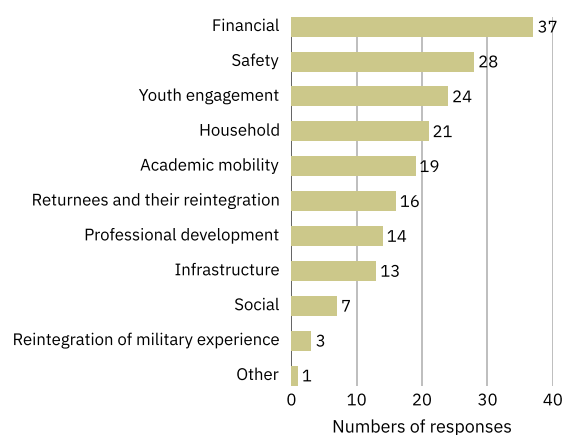


Figure 4.4 The most important infrastructure for continuing scientific work (A) and the most urgent needs of Ukrainian researchers (B) in engineering and technology.
Source: SAR survey, 2026.

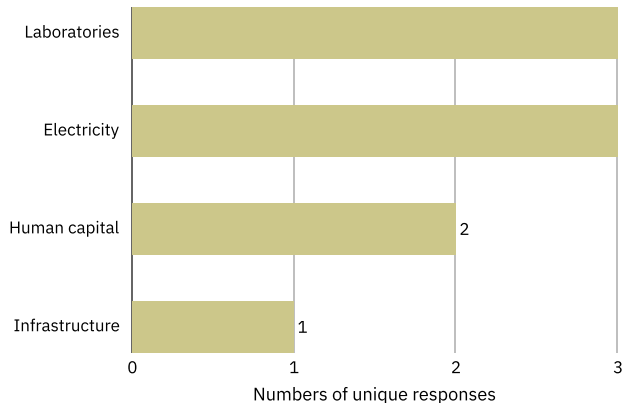
Medical and Health Sciences

Biomedical research has a high national priority even in peacetime, and in wartime, this research field can be a matter of survival for both military and civilian personnel. At the same time, it is one of the most vulnerable industries, as the research requires laboratories, equipment, support for biological samples and biobanks, clinical trials, etc. In this field, however, there has also been a shift to prioritize tactical medicine, prosthetics, rehabilitation, mental health, etc., while lower-priority research can be suspended. Before the war, ClinicalTrials.gov listed about 400 ongoing clinical trials in Ukraine, but most ongoing clinical trials in the country have been negatively affected by

the war or have been interrupted, and there are essentially zero new clinical trials being initiated now ([Hondermarck et al., 2024](#)).

Representatives of the medical sciences were the least numerous respondents to our survey (about 3%) but may be under the most strain. The respondents we did have noted the following important elements of research infrastructure for their continuing work: laboratories, electricity, human capital, and appropriate research infrastructure (Fig. 4.5). The most urgent needs reported were for financial support, professional development, returnees and their experience, research infrastructure, and safety.

A. The most important infrastructure for continuing scientific work / Medical and health sciences



B. The most urgent needs of Ukrainian researchers / Medical and health sciences

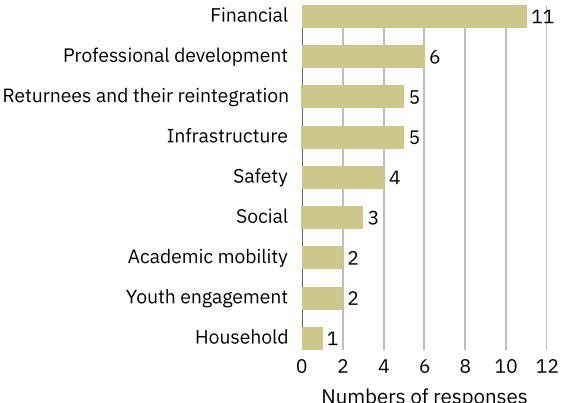


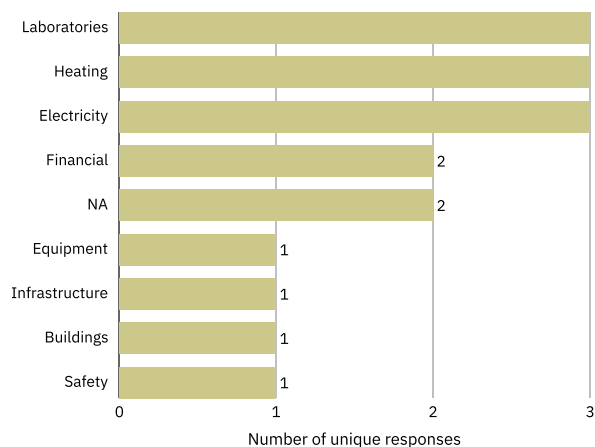
Figure 4.5 The most important infrastructure for continuing scientific work (A) and the most urgent needs of Ukrainian researchers (B) in medical and health sciences.
Source: SAR survey, 2026.

Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences

Agriculture and veterinary science are two of the most vulnerable fields, as research in these areas requires the availability of research fields, collections, laboratories, experimental nurseries, etc. Without these resources, research is almost impossible. At the same time, agriculture is closely linked to food security and is therefore given high priority in any country.

Despite the low number of participants in our survey among representatives of agricultural sciences, those who did participate reported the following important elements of research infrastructure: laboratories, heating, electricity, and financing. The most urgent needs were financial support, youth engagement, research infrastructure, household issues, and safety.

A. The most important infrastructure for continuing scientific work / Agricultural and Veterinary sciences



B. The most urgent needs of Ukrainian researchers / Agricultural and Veterinary sciences

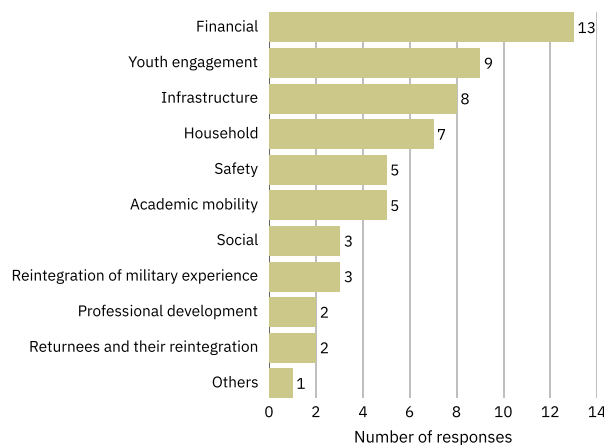


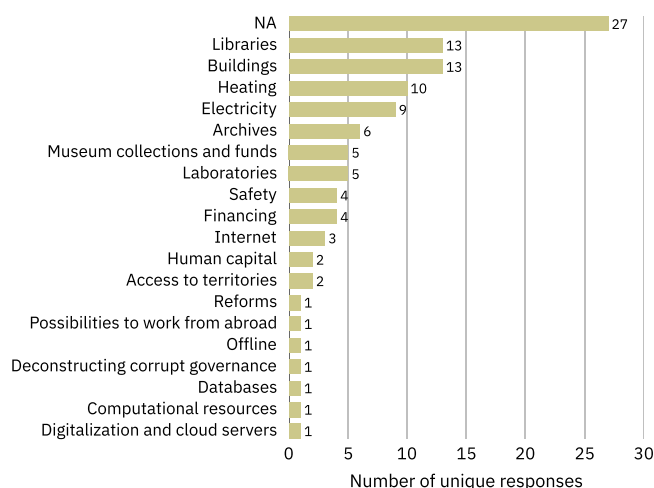
Figure 4.6 The most important infrastructure for continuing scientific work (A) and the most urgent needs of Ukrainian researchers (B) in agricultural sciences. Source: SAR survey, 2026.

Humanities and Arts

A wide circle of research areas in the humanities and arts may require access to museum collections, archives, and other research collections, which, while easier to maintain and evacuate when needed than living biological collections, can still be permanently lost. The history of a country is threatened and can even be destroyed when its archives are stolen, relocated, closed, or deliberately bombed. The humanities have been the disciplines least affected by trends of scholarly migration ([UNESCO, 2024](#)).

Our survey results show that a significant proportion of humanities scholars do not depend on research infrastructure (shown as NA on Figure 4.7A). However, libraries, buildings, electricity, heating, archives, and collections were identified as important infrastructure resources. The most urgent needs reported were financial support, professional development, academic mobility, household issues, and safety.

A. The most important infrastructure for continuing scientific work / Humanities and Arts



B. The most urgent needs of Ukrainian researchers / Humanities and Arts

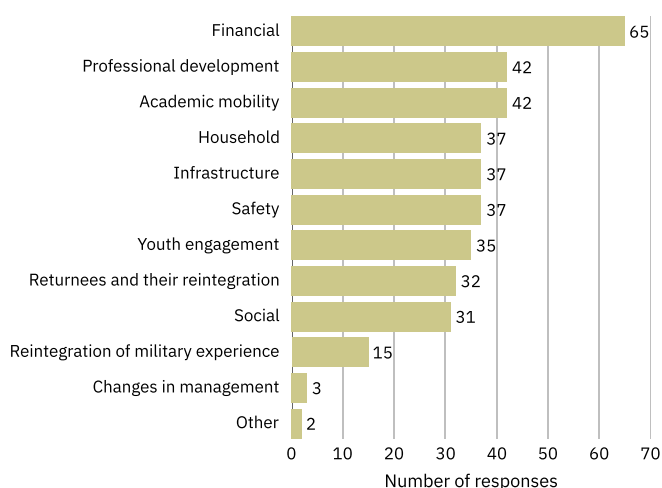


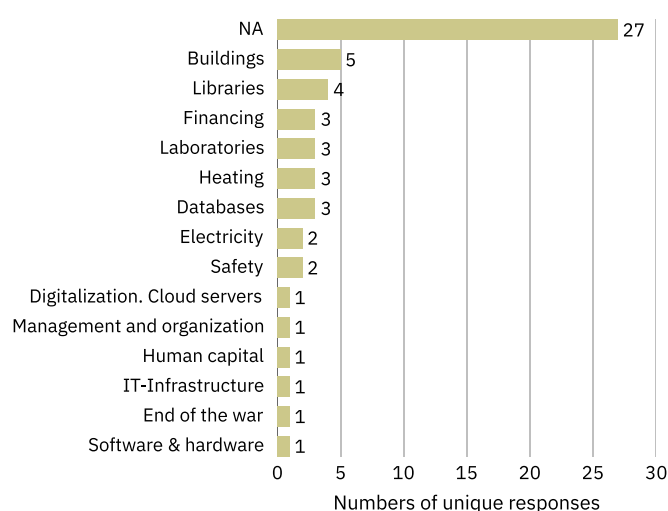
Figure 4.7 The most important infrastructure for continuing scientific work (A) and the most urgent needs of Ukrainian researchers (B) in the humanities and arts. Source: SAR survey, 2026.

Social Sciences

In general, social sciences often do not require expensive equipment and laboratories and are therefore less vulnerable to wartime conditions. But in this field, problems such as limited time and fewer research resources, insufficient levels of English, and other unfavorable conditions including chronic underinvestment and lack of access to the knowledge frontier, have historically been exacerbated by a “publish or perish” culture, which resulted in the proliferation of paper-mill-produced, low-quality publications in predatory journals ([Lutsenko et al., 2025](#)).

Our survey shows that almost half of the respondents in the social sciences do not need research infrastructure (shown as *NA* on Figure 4.8A), making it the most commonly selected answer across all categories. Among the important elements of research infrastructure to this group were buildings, libraries, funding, laboratories, and heating. Among the most urgent needs identified by respondents were financial support, returnees and their experience, household issues, opportunities for academic mobility, and safety.

A The most important infrastructure for continuing scientific work / Social Sciences



B The most urgent needs of Ukrainian researchers / Social Sciences

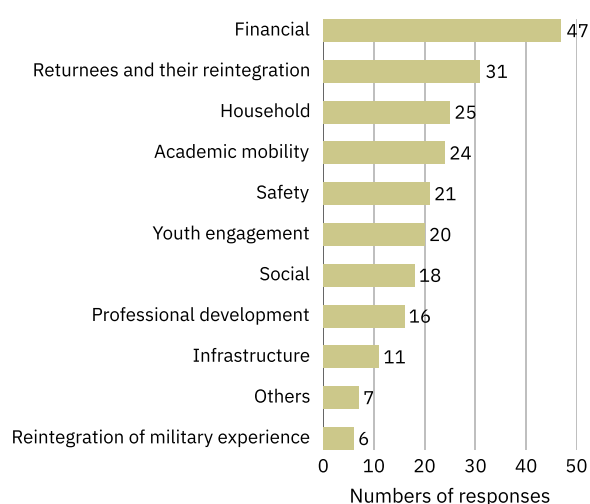


Figure 4.8 The most important infrastructure for continuing scientific work (A) and the most urgent needs of Ukrainian researchers (B) in the social sciences. Source: SAR survey, 2026.

4.2 Ukrainian scholars depending on career stage

Previous research with disaggregated age cohorts has shown that young scholars in Ukraine face numerous challenges, including a lack of funding, low salaries, short-term and precarious employment, and unpredictable changes in legal requirements for scholarly work ([Lutsenko et al., 2025](#)). These factors contribute to a decline in the number of young scholars and a “brain drain” as they seek better opportunities elsewhere. Additionally, there is a need for improved research mentoring, supervision, and access to smaller grants for young researchers ([Lutsenko et al., 2025](#)).

Due to martial law, all male and some female scholars cannot freely travel abroad for academic events, even if they have received a deferral from mobilization. These restrictions significantly hinder international academic exchange ([Ivanenko, 2026](#)). A separate study of female Ukrainian scholars in STEM disciplines found that female scholars, especially those with small children, have experienced difficulty combining an academic career and expectations of academic mobility with family, especially in situations when a partner had joined the Armed Forces ([Zheriobkina et al., 2025](#)). Female scholars also noted gender segregation in science, as female scholars are less present in top managerial positions, as well as problems of gender discrimination and sexism in their workplaces.

According to the 2025 Science At Risk monitoring report ([Rabinovych et al. 2025](#)), younger scholars (under 35 years) generally reported better emotional well-being than their older peers. Scholars in the middle-aged group (35–60) reported the highest proportion of low motivation. This is likely because younger scholars are more flexible and adaptable to change, while the middle-aged group faces the greatest professional and family pressures, which reduces professional motivation. Respondents over 60 were least likely to report the need for professional psychological support compared to other age groups, and were the least likely to report low motivation or low productivity.

In our survey, we focused on the impact of war in relation to the career stages of our respondents. The figure below (Figure 4.9) illustrates our findings that senior researchers were more likely to lose their affiliation in Ukraine due to displacement, either in Ukraine or abroad, compared to their younger colleagues. However, they were also the most likely to maintain their professional status compared to early- and mid-career researchers. Early-career and mid-career researchers surveyed were more likely to obtain higher positions compared to their senior colleagues. In comparison to other groups, mid-career researchers also were more likely to have been demoted to a lower position after the start of the full-scale invasion.

How did your professional status in Ukraine change after February 24, 2024? (in your main research affiliation institution)

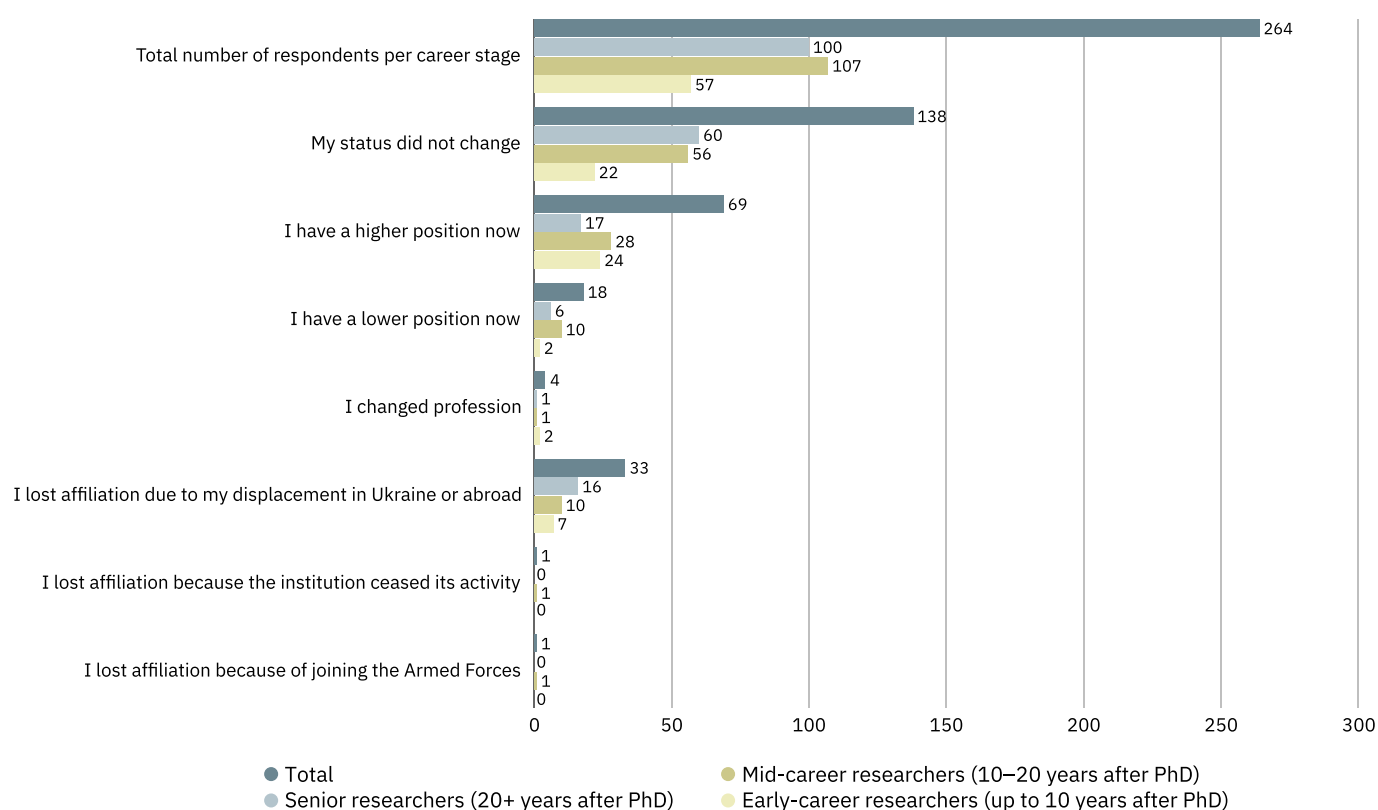


Figure 4.9 Impact of war on professional status in Ukraine, depending on the respondent's career stage. Source: SAR survey, 2026.

Looking at the impact of war on scholars' access to research infrastructure (Fig. 4.10), mid-career researchers seem to be the most affected by the changes. This is because mid-career researchers are the most dependent on institutional infrastructure, stability of their positions, and funding (which have been disrupted by the war), while also facing the highest professional and family responsibilities, which allows them less flexibility than their younger colleagues.

For 9% of mid-career researchers the war led to the full stop of their research compared to 7% among the early-career respondents, or to 4% among the senior researchers. 21% of early-career researchers reported that war had no/minor impact on their access to infrastructure, compared to 17% among both mid- and senior-level researchers.

How did the military actions impact your possibility to access the research infrastructure of your university/research institution in Ukraine? Choose one option:

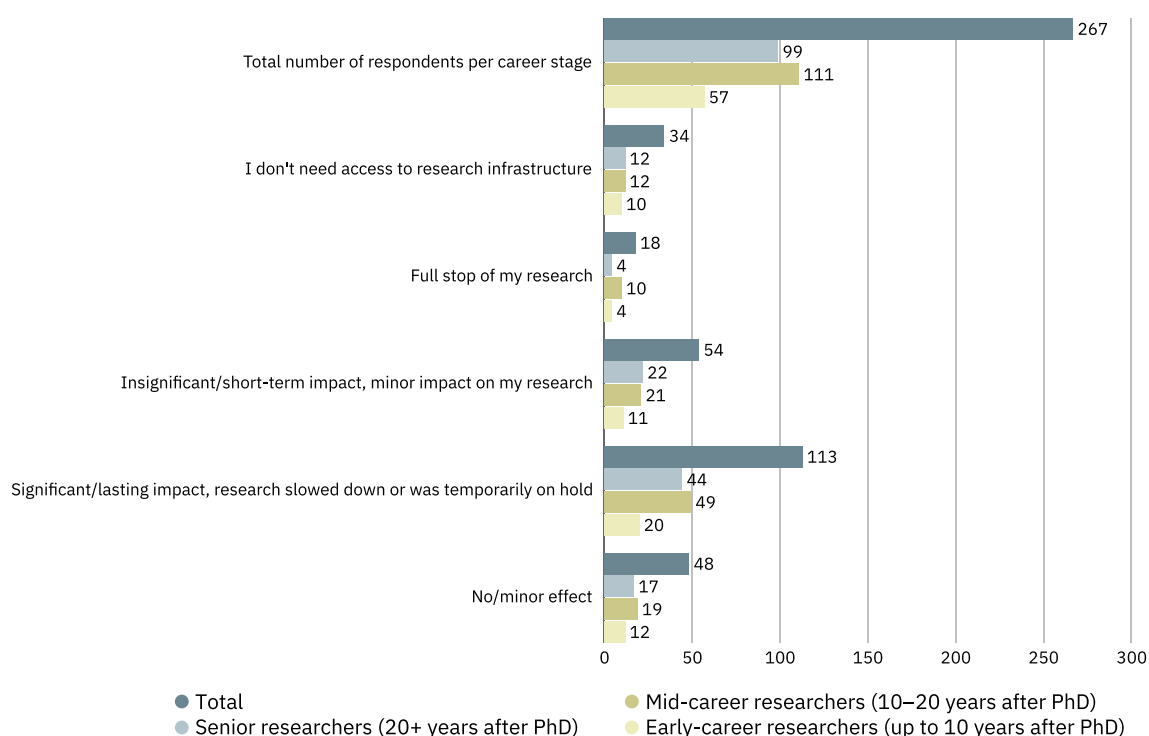


Figure 4.10 Impact of military actions on respondents' access to research infrastructure at university/research institutions in Ukraine, depending on the career stage.
Source: SAR survey, 2026.

There were no major career-level differences in the reported needs of scholars. However, early-career researchers more often mentioned missing out on opportunities for academic mobility and professional training, whereas mid- and senior-level researchers emphasized their need for access to equipment, labs, locations, and databases. They also highlighted the importance of keeping ties with researchers displaced abroad, to maintain cohesive research teams.

Mid-career level scholars, especially women, often reported emotional exhaustion due to the need to navigate multiple competing responsibilities, combined with wartime challenges. As one respondent in the survey noted: "This 'invisible burden'—constant disruption, need to simultaneously think about

safety, electricity, Internet, and academic work—cannot be reflected in any productivity matrix. However, it has an enormous impact on cognitive load, health, and the long-term ability to work." Academic women with children who have been displaced abroad reported that they have little support to continue their academic work.

Another major issue is the long-term impact of war stress on cognitive abilities of researchers. As one respondent emphasized: "Even though the war impacts scholars in the same way as those from other professions, chronic instability, psychological burnout, and almost complete absence of administrative support critically stab the main instrument of a scientist—his brain." "Massive emotional burnout," summarized another of our participants.

4.3 Ukrainian scholars depending on displacement status abroad

Displaced scholars constitute a heterogeneous group, differing in their levels of professional integration, employment stability, and career prospects. The degree of integration experienced into the host country's academic system directly correlates with the level of socio-economic and professional security of forcibly displaced scholars, while employment instability or withdrawal from academia significantly increases the risks of long-term marginalization and loss of research potential. Based on the Ukrainian Science Diaspora's survey ([Ukrainian Science Diaspora, 2025a](#))

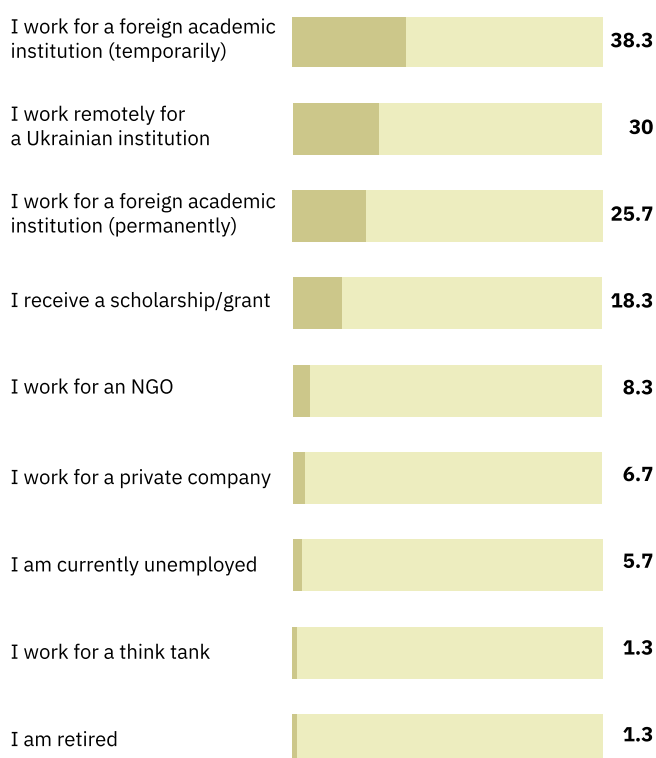


Figure 4.11 The employment status of displaced Ukrainian scholars abroad. Source: Ukrainian Science Diaspora's survey.

Scholars displaced abroad can be categorized in the following ways:

1. The least vulnerable group are **integrated scholars** (25.7%), that is, researchers

who have obtained permanent positions in universities or research institutions in host countries. They have long-term contracts, access to institutional resources, opportunities to participate in funded research, and social guarantees. This status provides a high level of professional and social stability and also allows for long-term planning of research activities.

2. A separate group is **semi-integrated scholars** who work in temporary or visiting positions, including postdoctoral contracts and fellowships, often but not always arranged with or through an NGO such as Scholars At Risk (18.3%). They are not employed in Ukraine. Although they are involved in the academic environment of their host countries, their situation is characterized by uncertainty regarding further employment, extension of stay permits, and career opportunities. The limited duration of their contracts often prevents full integration into research teams and participation in long-term research programs.

3. A significant number of displaced researchers fall into the category of those **employed in Ukrainian institutions of higher education but not working in their host countries** (30%). Such scholars have retained formal employment in Ukrainian universities, often in a remote format, but are not integrated into the local academic system. This allows them to maintain institutional ties with Ukraine, but limits their access to the research infrastructure, funding, and academic networks of the host country.

4. Another category is **researchers employed in Ukrainian universities and in foreign universities in temporary positions,**

combining work in Ukraine with short-term contracts abroad. Such dual employment supports scholarly activity and international contacts, but is accompanied by a significant workload, instability of funding, and dependence on support programs with a limited duration.

5. The most vulnerable is the situation of **unemployed scholars** (5.7%) who do not have a job in the academic sphere of their host countries. Unemployment among researchers is often associated with difficulties in recognition of credentials, language barriers, lack of suitable vacancies, or the need to quickly secure a livelihood. A long break in research activity increases the risk of losing qualifications and complicates the return to an academic career.
6. A separate category should be included for **scholars who have left the academic**

sector and moved to other areas of employment (6.7%). Such a transition is usually due to economic necessity or the lack of stable academic positions. Although these specialists can successfully integrate into other fields, their exit from academia means a loss of human capital for the academic system and a reduction in the potential for future recovery of Ukraine's research capacity.

In terms of vulnerability, the most protected are integrated scholars and researchers with permanent positions abroad. The most vulnerable are unemployed scholars, researchers employed exclusively in Ukrainian institutions without integration into local academic structures, and those who were forced to leave academia entirely. An intermediate space is occupied by semi-integrated researchers and those working in temporary positions abroad, since their professional stability depends on time-limited programs and contracts.

4.4 Ukrainian scholars remaining in Ukraine

Returnees

A survey of 300 Ukrainian scholars currently residing abroad indicates a substantial but conditional potential for return to Ukrainian universities and research institutions ([Ukrainian Science Diaspora, 2025a](#)). Answers to 192 open-ended questions have been received and analyzed. More than 70% of respondents considered some form of return possible, but only 22.7% viewed it as a fully realistic scenario. The most common responses reflected delayed or partial return: 26.7% were willing to return "but not now," 15.7% considered return only in the form of a temporary visit, and 7.0% would return only if moving to a different professional position. These findings suggest the predominance of

circulation and flexible engagement models, rather than full institutional reintegration.

Gender-based analysis reveals moderate differences. Women more often reported intentions of delayed return, while men more frequently considered scenarios of temporary academic mobility. At the same time, willingness to return to a different position was observed exclusively among women, which may indicate greater openness to professional re-adaptation upon return.

The timing of respondents' departure from Ukraine emerges as the most significant factor with regards to willingness to return. Scholars

who left after February 2022 demonstrated markedly higher readiness to return: 27.8% fully envisaged returning, while an additional 30.3% considered it a longer-term possibility. In contrast, those who left before the full-scale invasion were more likely to prefer long-term careers abroad, with their intentions to return largely limited to temporary visits, if present at all.

Financial constraints, primarily low and non-competitive salaries, were cited by more than two-fifths of respondents (44.3%), making them the most dominant obstacle to return

by a wide margin. Security concerns related to the ongoing war follow (18.2%), while the lack of available academic positions (16.1%), and inadequate research infrastructure (12.0%) formed the next tier of constraints. Institutional barriers, including bureaucracy (10.9%) and corruption or nepotism (7.8%), remained significant, whereas housing conditions (7.8%), social recognition and status of scholars (7.3%), and uncertainty around state science policy (7.3%) were mentioned less frequently. Family-related factors (4.7%) and issues of academic culture (2.1%) appeared as secondary but non-negligible considerations.

Most frequently mentioned barriers to the return of ukrainian scholars

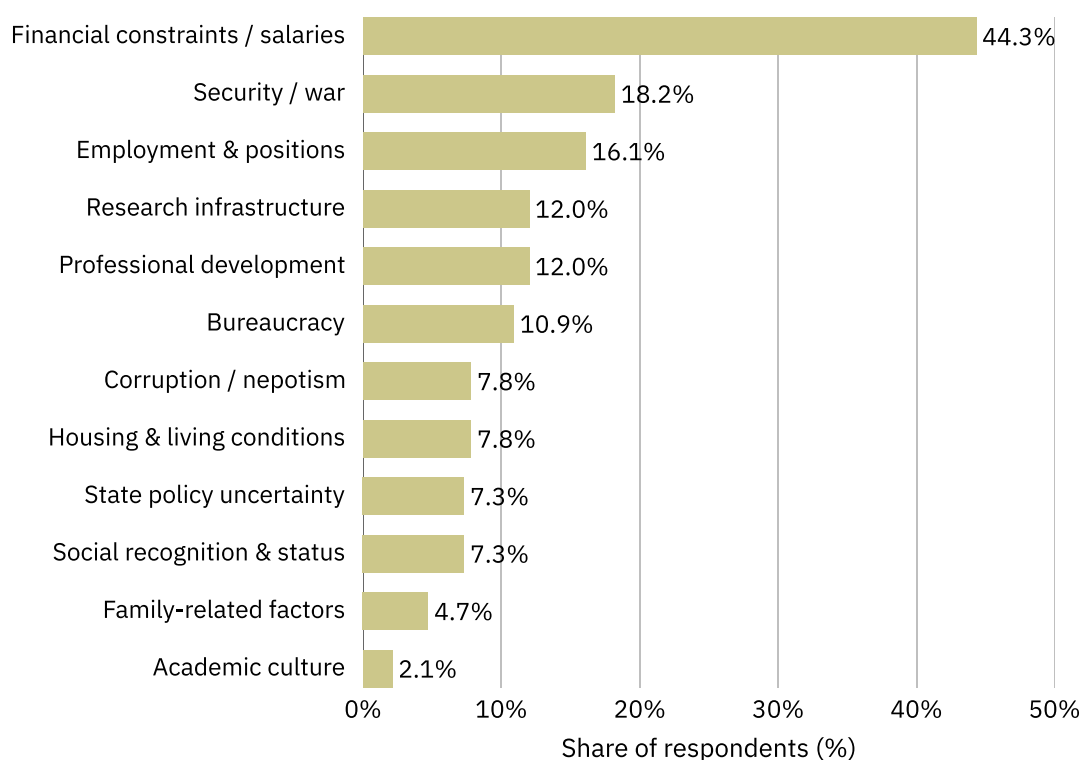


Figure 4.12 Most Frequently Mentioned Barriers to the Return of Ukrainian Scholars (based on results of the survey (Ukrainian Science Diaspora, 2025b))

In their answers to open-ended questions from the survey ([Ukrainian Science Diaspora, 2025a](#), [Ukrainian Science Diaspora, 2025b](#)), Ukrainian scholars working abroad consistently highlighted a set of structural factors that limit the attractiveness of Ukrainian universities as places of academic employment.

One of the most frequently mentioned barriers was excessive bureaucracy and formalism, which significantly reduces efficiency and flexibility in academic work. Respondents noted that “abroad there is less bureaucracy and, most importantly, significantly more research resources,” while in Ukraine, “bureaucratism and excessive formality are still strongly felt,” and academic processes may involve “100-page teaching programs.”

Low salaries further undermine the attractiveness of academic careers. In contrast to systems where “the work of a scientist is a paid and respected profession,” respondents described the Ukrainian context as one where “everything had to be purchased at one’s own expense,” and academic work was often carried out “for the sake of the idea.” For early-career researchers, this translated into severe constraints, with one respondent noting that being a PhD student in Ukraine meant “condemning oneself to poverty.”

Another key issue was the lack of time for research due to excessive teaching and administrative workloads. Respondents emphasized that “abroad, scholars do research, whereas in Ukraine scholars do ‘everything,’” and that academic staff are “overloaded with many tasks, often formal,” and noted that “research work in Ukraine was largely combined with teaching and administrative duties.”

Limited research infrastructure also constrains the quality and scope of academic output. Scholars pointed to the lack of funding, equipment, and institutional support, noting that “Ukraine often lacks the infrastructure for large-scale projects,” that “institutional support is often missing,” and that in many

cases “everything had to be purchased personally.”

Ukrainian universities often lack institutional support mechanisms for grants, publications, and international mobility. While foreign institutions provide “a whole network of grant offices and project managers,” in Ukraine researchers reported that “we fight bureaucracy ourselves, whereas abroad there are dedicated staff for this,” and that “no research project in Ukraine allows allocating funding for publications.”

The academic environment is also shaped by issues of organizational culture, including insufficient respect, hierarchical rigidity, and, in some cases, toxic practices. In contrast to environments where “there is respect and humanity regardless of rank—you are simply a person,” respondents stressed that foreign institutions were characterized by “the absence of mobbing and inappropriate behavior,” often perceived as “the complete opposite of working conditions in Ukraine.”

Weaknesses in transparency and fair competition further affected the system. Respondents highlighted the importance of “the absence of corruption and nepotism and the presence of healthy competition,” as well as “transparent procedures—from grants to the evaluation of teaching,” which are not consistently ensured in the Ukrainian context. Despite these challenges, however, respondents emphasized that Ukrainian academia retains important strengths. These include a tradition of fundamental research, intellectual flexibility, and strong interpersonal relations. As respondents noted, “science in Ukraine is more fundamental,” many value “the warmth of interpersonal relations and the flexibility of Ukrainian scholars,” as well as the “sense of contributing to a national cause,” which remains a distinctive feature of academic work in Ukraine.

On the question of what motivates the desire to return, and the barriers that exist for returnees,

Focus Group 2, which included in the eight participants women at different stages of their careers, and representing different fields of science, offers some information.

The return of Ukrainian scholars from abroad is determined by a complex web of interrelated family, emotional, and professional factors. First of all, family and everyday circumstances play a decisive role, primarily the desire to reunite with family, children's needs, and housing issues. For many respondents, closeness to a partner, parents, or the desire for their children to study in a Ukrainian environment became the key motives for return. As one of the study participants noted: "The only reason for my return was to reunite with my husband." Others emphasized the importance of family ties for children who "missed their father, grandfathers, grandmothers."

Emotional factors were also significant, particularly the need to be among "their own," a sense of belonging to the community, and a desire to support the country in a difficult period. The returnees described returning as an experience of restoring identity and inner comfort: being in a Ukrainian-speaking environment, in a familiar culture, and receiving social support have a strong psychological impact. For some scholars, the motivation to be useful at home, and to contribute to the rebuilding of the country's research and educational potential, was also important.

Professional incentives also played a significant role. Among them were offers of positions at home universities, the opportunity to complete postgraduate studies, or to implement research plans in Ukraine. In many cases, return was the result of a combination of personal and professional motives, rather than due to a single determining factor.

In most cases, staying abroad significantly increases the professional potential of Ukrainian scholars. Returnees reported obtaining new positions in international projects, access to global research networks,

and expanding professional competencies. Another important result was improved foreign language skills and intercultural skills, which strengthens scholars' ability to compete professionally. International experience contributes to increased professional confidence, awareness of one's own capabilities, and transformation of academic identity. The study participants noted that working abroad "tempers" and broadened their worldview, and it helped them understand the strengths of their own scientific school. Many acquired new practical skills, ranging from digital marketing to modern pedagogical methods.

International professional contacts acquired while abroad are of significant value if maintained after a scholar's return, and have the potential to become a foundation for joint research and grant applications. Returnees are uniquely positioned to act as a channel for the transfer of knowledge and practices between Ukrainian and global science.

Despite the significant potential, reintegration into the Ukrainian research system has been accompanied by numerous difficulties. The most frequently mentioned issues are security issues, low salaries, and unsatisfactory working conditions. For scholars who worked under European grants or contracts, Ukrainian salaries seem demotivating, and the low pay forces them to combine several jobs to ensure a basic standard of living.

Additional challenges include the deterioration of the quality of student training due to youth migration, destroyed infrastructure, excessive bureaucratic burden, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life in the remote work mode. Some returnees also face misunderstandings with colleagues who did not leave the country during the war, which creates tensions within academic teams. As a result of these difficulties, some scholars partially or completely leave the academic sector, moving into entrepreneurship, consulting, or work in non-governmental institutions.

Overall, Ukrainian returnee scholars are a strategic resource for the post-war rebuilding of science and education. Combining international experience with a deep understanding of the national context has the potential to accelerate Ukraine's reintegration into the global research space, improve the quality of academic standards, and promote institutional reforms. At the same time, realizing this potential requires targeted state policies aimed at improving working conditions, funding science, and supporting the reintegration of returned specialists.

The full-scale invasion has also provoked the emergence of a specific group of Ukrainian scholars: those who work in a state of "dual affiliation," or live "on a tightrope." According to the survey results, one in four respondents (25.9%) was trying to balance between several career tracks rather than rely on a single position. That number can be broken down further:

- **International hybridity** (18.4%): Combining a position at a Ukrainian institution with one or more at a foreign university (contract or scholarship).
- **Internal multitasking** (7.7%): Working in two or more institutions in Ukraine or combining a position in academia with one in an NGO or the business sector.

Although the "on a tightrope" group makes up only a quarter of total respondents, it represents the most active and integrated part of the Ukrainian research community in the international context.

Three critical areas of tension have been identified based on the qualitative responses from the survey respondents. Despite digitalization, the Ukrainian academic system remains in a state of inertia. Scholars working remotely from abroad, for example, point out the absurdity of requirements for physical signatures and outdated reporting forms. As one respondent said, "I have access to the best laboratories in the world, but I have to spend hours filling out paper attendance logs

for a department in Ukraine, where there is not even electricity."

As the survey answers show, combining affiliations is often not a sign of career success, but a consequence of financial desperation. The average salary at NASU (often reduced to 0.5 or even 0.25 of the salary due to budget deficits) forces scholars to go into administration or business consulting. Thus, more than 60% of part-time workers indicated the financial insolvency of their main institution as the main motivator for finding a second job. "We do not do science part-time—we survive there. This leads to the fact that we are only nominally present at our main place of work," noted one of the respondents.

Scholars who return often face stigmatization and misunderstanding from colleagues who did not leave Ukraine. Scholars who are on the "international tightrope" feel pressure from both sides. In Ukraine, they are often perceived as "those who have already left," and abroad, they are viewed as temporary staff without the right to be included in long-term planning. As one respondent noted, "Constant fear: if I stay in Ukraine, I will degrade professionally; if I leave completely, I will betray my school. I live in anticipation of dismissal from both sides."

In order to ensure that the "tightrope" does not lead to researchers abroad breaking ties with Ukraine, we suggest reviewing the approach to human resources management, keeping the following in mind:

1. Legalization of "digital nomadism": Enshrining at the legislative level the possibility of full-fledged remote work for scholars without mandatory presence at the workplace, as long as the specifics of the research allow it;
2. Recognition of cross-affiliation: Simplification of procedures for enrolling research results (articles, grants) obtained abroad in an individual plan at a Ukrainian institution;

3. Transition to the “Scientific Hub” model: Rather than a place for “serving hours,” universities should become a gathering point for talent, where a researcher can be employed at 0.1 FTE, but bring international connections and publications.

Scholars “on the tightrope” are not “fugitives,” but the most valuable resource available for future reconstruction. They are carriers of Western standards of management and technology. The task of the state is not to force them to choose one side over the other, but to create conditions under which the “tightrope” will turn into a “bridge” to help Ukraine integrate into the global research space.

Here, we include two more important comments from Focus Group 2 participants: *“The war made visible new roles of science. In particular, Ukrainian scholars increasingly act not only as researchers, but also as translators of knowledge, advisors, and facilitators of change. Recognition and support of these roles are critically important for science in Ukraine not only to survive, but also to become the basis of post-war development.”*

“I gained experience working in scientific laboratories of universities in Spain and Italy: I worked with high-tech equipment more than in Ukraine; I learned to process the data of my research results in a more modern and professional way; I acquired communication skills in English; I improved the level of writing scientific publications. But morally it is very difficult to live away from home. The impact of the war on Ukrainian scholars—as on all other people—is terrible. Peace is the most important thing that the state can give to its citizens.”

The returnees played an active role as informal ambassadors of Ukraine to the world. They disseminated information about the war, organized charitable initiatives, spoke at international forums, and gave others a positive image of Ukrainian science. For many foreign colleagues, these scholars were

the first representatives of Ukraine with whom they interacted.

Returned scholars may have the potential to act as agents of modernization for the research system. Among the answers to the question “what would you take with you to Ukrainian University?” respondents gave answers about new academic standards, a culture of integrity, less hierarchical models of interaction, and practices of horizontal cooperation.

Residing in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine

It is very difficult to estimate the number of scholars remaining in the occupied territories. According to the 2024 UNESCO report ([UNESCO, 2024](#)), which only offers limited information, 85 employees of the Priazovsky State Technical University, 58 from the Berdiansk State Pedagogical University, 22 from Taras Shevchenko Luhansk National University, 16 from Luhansk State Medical University, and ten from the Institute of Horticulture remained in the temporarily occupied territories.

Repression, illegal searches, and imprisonment are among the most acute dangers for all Ukrainians who remain under occupation. As of the beginning of 2026, there are 509 political prisoners in Russian custody. Many of them have been prosecuted for criminal “cases” during the period of the occupation of Crimea ([CTRC, 2026](#)). Scholars are among them. The most high-profile cases include the 2025 arrest for treason of Leonid Pshenichnov, a Ukrainian biologist and expert on Antarctica ([Krym.Realii, 2025](#)), and Lenora Dulber, a political scientist, sociologist, journalist and Crimean Tatar activist, who was arrested for “extremism” ([Krym.Realii, 2026](#)). Although the Academic Freedom Index in 2024 was the lowest in Ukraine’s history, academic freedom and institutional autonomy have declined even further in the occupied territories ([Rabinovych et al., 2025](#)).

There are very few studies which have been done on scholars remaining in temporarily occupied territories. Recent sociological surveys ([Tsybuliak et al., 2024](#)) of scholars—where the proportion of scholars staying in temporarily occupied territories was 48.3%—discuss very general needs of researchers such as Internet access, possibility of conducting further research, research relevance, access to up-to-date information, publishing activity, and grant activity. In particular, researchers in occupied territories have the lowest rate of grant activity, but higher publication rates.

Studies ([Guariglia et al., 2025](#)), which investigated the effect of the Russia–Ukraine war on research productivity showed a significant decline in quantity and quality of research, measured by the average number of papers and citations produced by authors based in the Donetsk/Luhansk occupied regions with active hostilities. In contrast, the quantity of papers published by authors based in annexed Crimea has increased, a difference which can be attributed to increased funding from Russian authorities towards institutions located in Crimea, as well as the publication of articles in Russian journals by scholars with relatively low productivity.

Therefore, for scholars under occupation, there are only two main options for continuing their professional activities: to look for ways to leave, either abroad or to the territories under the control of Ukraine; or to collaborate with the occupation authorities. But this is a very risky and “slippery” path. Cooperation with the aggressor can lead to continued

ability to engage in research, but as soon as one begins to contradict the authorities, one risks being subjected to repression.

It should be noted that no one from the occupied territories participated in our survey. We were also unable to organize a focus group with scholars in the occupied territories for several reasons, mainly safety-related.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Ukraine

As of March 2026, there are no official figures on the number of researchers who have official status as internally displaced persons, but some institutional data are available. As a result of Russia’s full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, approximately 34 higher education institutions have been forced to relocate to other regions of the country, some of them for the second time. This primarily involved institutions in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and later in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions ([Osypchuk et al., 2022](#)).

Among our survey participants, 37.2% had experience of displacement. Although this group was expected to be the most vulnerable to the consequences of war, our results show that about half of the respondents did not experience a change in their career status, while another 25% received a promotion to a higher position. About 20% experienced negative trends in their career status, such as demotion to lower positions, loss of affiliation, or change of profession. The most important needs in this group are financial, safety, and household issues (Fig. 4.13B).

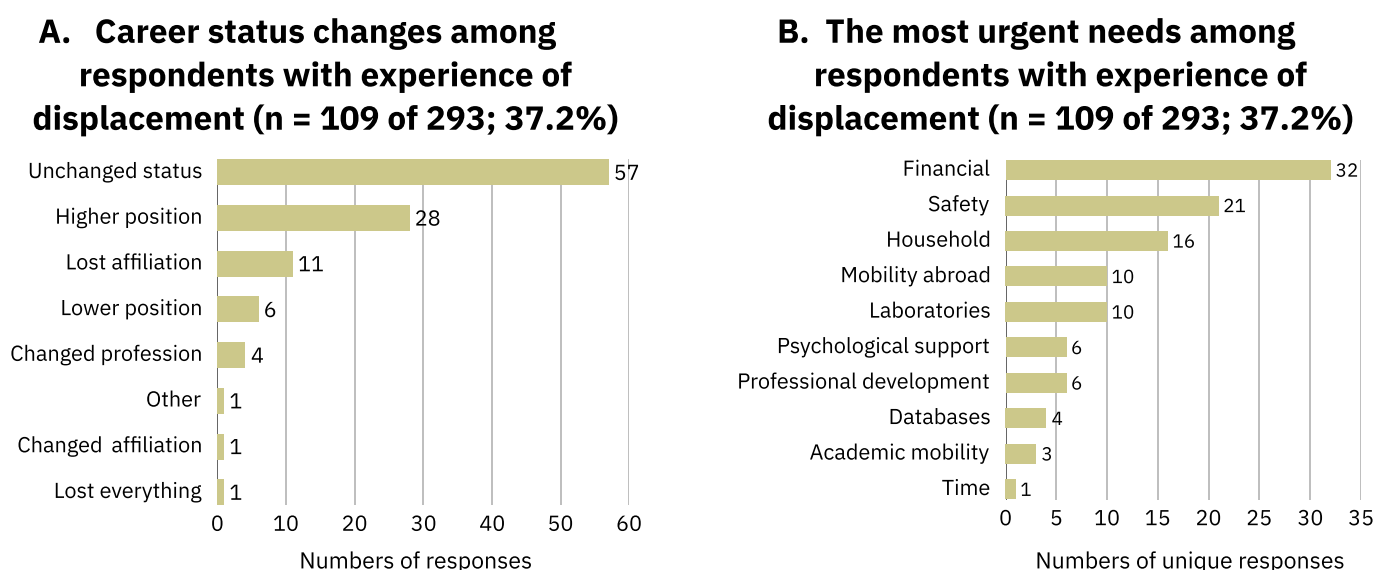


Figure 4.13 Career status change among respondents experiencing internal displacement (A) and their most urgent needs (B). Source: SAR survey, 2026.

Participants in Focus Group 3, with their experience of displacement, noted that one of the main professional issues they faced was the forced change in research focus away from the work being performed before the forced displacement / relocation, and losing access to appropriate research infrastructure. Relocation can remove the opportunity to continue the work already started, and scholars may not have access to the necessary equipment in a new place. Accordingly, previous research can be interrupted and may never be resumed.

Another problem is the loss of access to geographical locations, including those where long-term research or monitoring was conducted, which are currently occupied, mined, or have undergone intense fighting. It is unlikely that research will be resumed in these spaces, even in the long term. There is also a problem of access to collections, including natural history and archaeological collections, many of which have not only been lost, damaged, or stolen by the occupiers, but have also been preserved / evacuated and to which access has been limited for security concerns. One of the vulnerable groups includes those scholars who have moved to safer areas, but whose institutions have not been relocated.

Such scholars not only lack minimal standards of living, but also working conditions, and have to work in spaces that may not be designed for research at all. For example, due to financial limitations and the lack of access to appropriate infrastructure, they may be forced to live in a single rented room with other family members, working in the shared space as well as storing specimens collected during fieldwork, a situation which is extremely difficult for the family. On the other hand, among the respondents were also scholars who found better professional options after the forced relocation. Focus Group 3 respondents noted that in wartime, such skills as adaptability, willingness to experiment, and to change research methods—taking into account the lack of laboratories and other limitations—proved to be important.

Focus Group 3 respondents noted that there has been no special support from the state for displaced scholars. Moreover, they are often faced with bureaucratic obstacles, stereotypes, and discrimination both from representatives of governmental structures and among ordinary people in their new communities. Some of the difficulties encountered in establishing new lives in new

places could only be solved individually, or by relying on personal contacts. State support cannot discriminate between categories of displaced persons, but it is very unsystematic and insufficient. Some support can be obtained from international organizations, which also applies to all displaced persons, not solely displaced scholars.

Respondents explain that relocation is very difficult when you lose everything and have to pack your life into several travel bags. Relocation of institutions is even more problematic. There is no support from the state for the process, and moreover, bureaucracy makes it difficult to establish educational and research structures and processes in a new place. In particular, relocated institutions do not have their own buildings, relying on rental properties, and therefore cannot make capital purchases or renovations even when money for the equipment or research infrastructure is available.

This is especially difficult for relocated universities that need to be attractive to new applicants. A shortage of students leads to budget cuts, reductions in full-time faculty positions, mergers with other universities, or could even lead to a risk of liquidation of the institution. These institutions often play a symbolic role in terms of local identity, and a last connection with the lost home city or region for the institution's teams and students. All the respondents in Focus Group 3 flagged the importance of understanding the state's strategy and intentions regarding displaced scholars and institutions, but these have not been made clear. Increasing funding is also vital. Salaries need to be raised to a level that can cover basic, everyday needs. Housing assistance is also needed, especially taking into account the increase in housing rental prices in all rear regions. Respondents also noted that they are ready to return home once the occupation has ended, as long as their safety can be assured.

Some number of scholars have relocated to other regions of Ukraine without applying

for official IDP status. The exact number of scholars in this category is unknown.

Remaining in their original places of residence in territories under Ukrainian control, but in proximity to the front line

Our survey results show that the percentage of respondents in regions close to the front line has more than halved, from 37.8% at the beginning of 2022 to 16.8% in 2026 (Fig. 2.3). Although we did not conduct targeted focus groups based on distance from the front line, other focus groups included participants from different parts of Ukraine, and a pattern can be observed. Participants living close to the front line indicated a number of similar problems: difficulties with online learning in conditions of power outages, problems with internet access, difficulty in communication, destruction of infrastructure on a fairly large scale, difficulties with recruiting students and young professionals, security and constantly stressful conditions, and lack of prospects or vision for the future. The further from the front line the respondents lived, the smaller the impact and/or duration of these problems. While many of the general problems are common to all scholars remaining in Ukraine, most escalated with closer proximity to the front line. Scholars who remain close to the front lines will be the most vulnerable in all aspects.

Remaining in their existing places of residence, in territories under Ukrainian control, which are not in proximity to the front line

According to different assessments, about 40% to 50% of scholars have stayed in Ukraine and have not changed their location due to war ([de Rassenfosse et al., 2023](#); [Lutsenko et al., 2023](#)). Among those scholars who remain in Ukraine, the loss of access to research infrastructure varies between 20–24%, but this index cannot be equally distributed across the country ([de Rassenfosse et al., 2023](#)).

Among our survey participants, 32% had no experience of relocation, which is lower than in previous studies. Overall, this is the group

of researchers who have been least affected by the war. About half of the respondents had not experienced a change in their career status, while another 25% received a higher position. Only about 10% experienced negative impacts to their careers, such as

lower positions, loss of affiliation, or change of profession. The most important needs expressed by this group are financial and safety issues, as well as the limitations placed on their ability to travel abroad for research (Fig. 4.14).

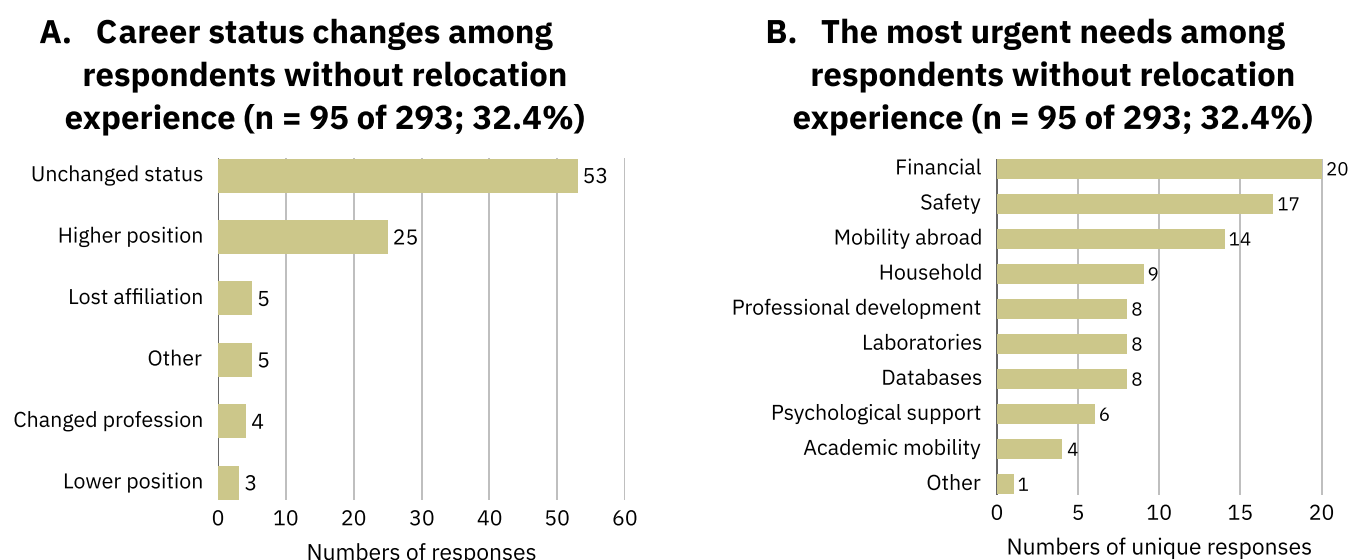


Figure 4.14 Career status changes among respondents without relocation experience (A) and their most urgent needs (B). Source: SaR survey, 2026.

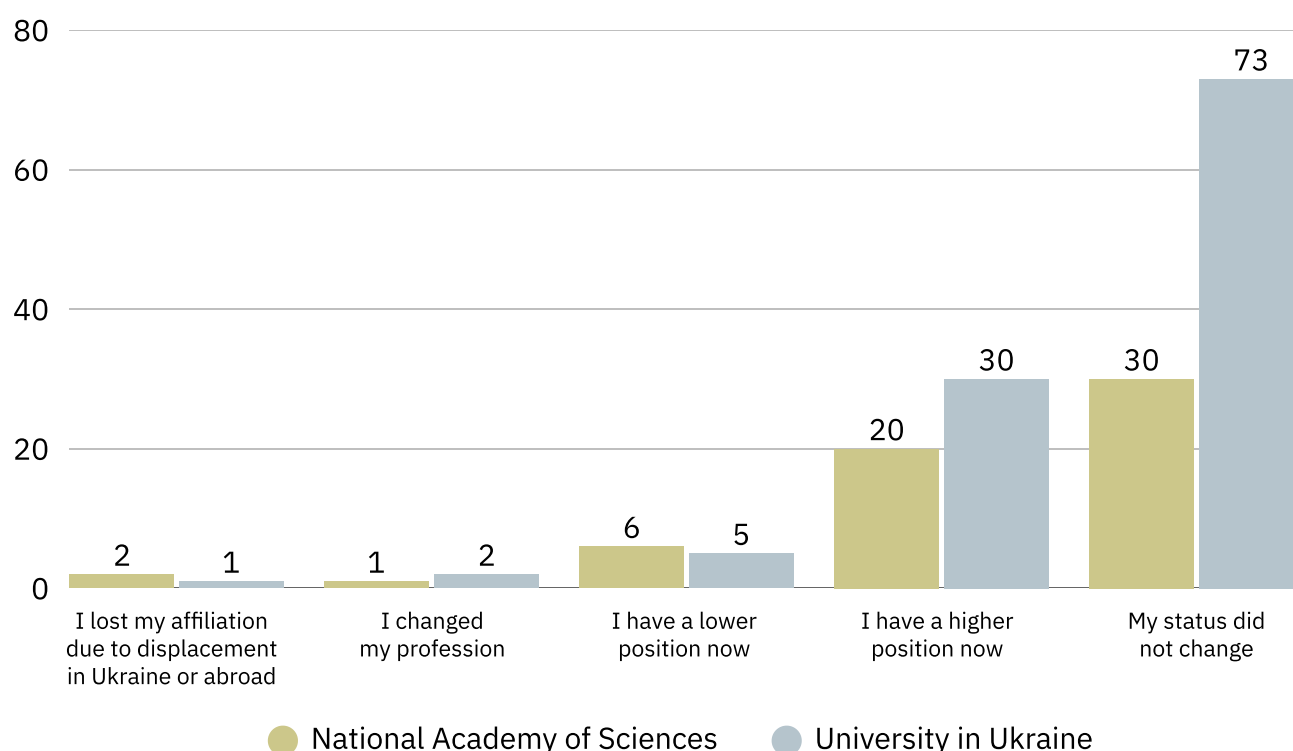
4.5. Ukrainian scholars depending on affiliation changes

Almost 50% of our online survey respondents indicated that their professional status in Ukrainian academic institutions had not changed since the start of the full-scale invasion. 24.1% reported that they had received a promotion, 6.2% noted that they now hold a lower position than prior to the war, 11.3% of respondents lost their affiliation with a Ukrainian academic institution due to displacement within Ukraine or abroad, and 2.1% changed their profession to leave academia. Other respondents reported a mix of individual scenarios, with different combinations of losses and gains in professional status in Ukraine and/or abroad.

Ukrainian scholars affiliated with Ukrainian universities or the National Academy of Sciences

Based on our survey data (see Fig. 4.15 A and B, below), it appears that war and military actions had similar impact on Ukrainian scholars affiliated with universities in Ukraine or with research institutes of the National Academy of Sciences. The latter, however, were more likely to experience a career status change compared to the former.

How did your professional status in Ukraine change after February 24, 2024? (with your primary research institution, N=170)



Impact of military actions on access to research infrastructure per main affiliation in Ukraine (N=168)

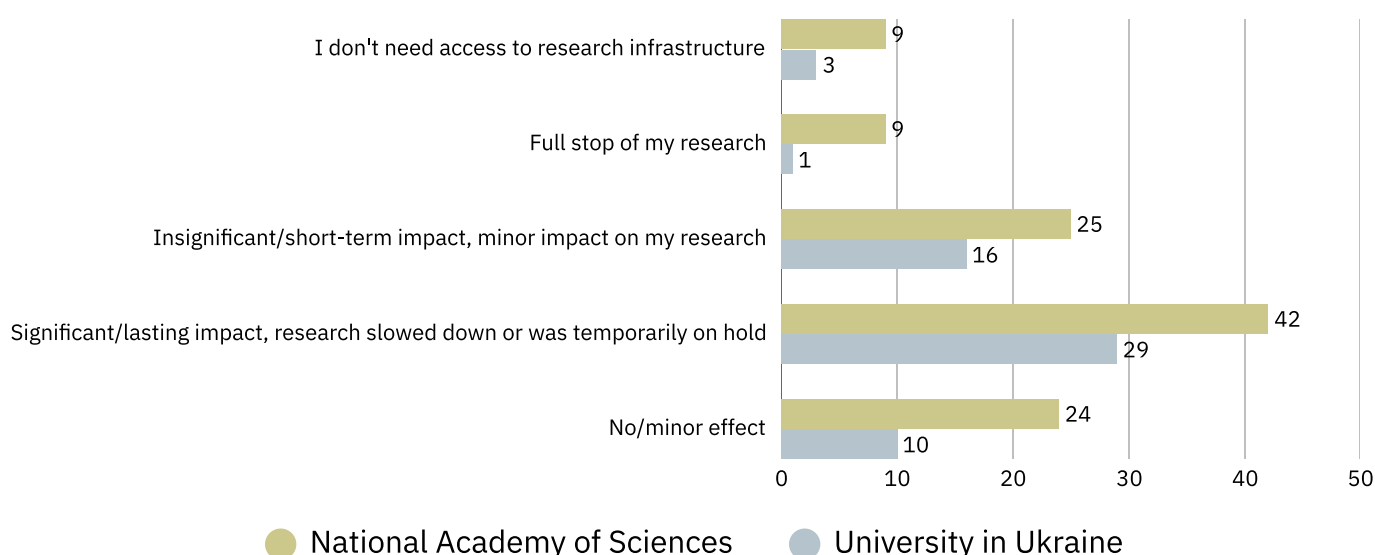


Figure 4.15 A and B The impact of war on professional status of Ukrainian scholars and their access to research infrastructure depending on affiliation. Source: SAR survey, 2026.

A small number of people surveyed (12 respondents) had affiliations with two Ukrainian institutions. Eight in the group were men and four were women. Nine were in the age group of 35–49, one respondent was between 25–34 years old, and two were between 50–64 years old. All but three worked in the natural sciences or engineering. None had experienced a complete stop to their research activity due to war. Dual-affiliation seems to work as a buffer for a selected group—that is, male, mid-career, STEM researchers.

Ukrainian scholars affiliated with foreign universities

Among the 22 respondents with a non-temporary foreign university affiliation (not a scholarship or an internship), 15 were women and seven were men. Six people were aged 24–35, 12 aged 35–49, and four aged 50–64. Three were from the humanities and arts, three from engineering, three from the medical sciences, six from the natural sciences, and seven from the social sciences. 20 currently reside abroad. 16 respondents lost their affiliations with Ukrainian institutions, but only one voluntarily resigned due to a low salary. The other 15 reported experiencing shrinking workloads and ultimately layoffs from their Ukrainian institutions due to their displacement abroad. Only one of those institutions which laid off scholars was displaced due to war, which suggests that the reductions in employment were not related to the immediate impact of war. Our survey found that mid-career women from various academic fields were the demographic most likely to be laid off from Ukrainian institutions.

Ukrainian scholars with dual affiliation in Ukraine and abroad

Out of 37 respondents who had affiliations with both a Ukrainian institution and a foreign institution, 28 were women and nine were men. Four people were aged 25–34, 21 aged 35–49, and ten were aged 50–64. Half of the group was mid-career (17 persons), seven were early-career researchers, and 12 were

senior level researchers. 30 out of 37 resided abroad. 13 were from the natural sciences, nine from social sciences, seven from the humanities and arts, seven from engineering, and one from the medical sciences.

From these respondents, we can see the general demographic category of those who managed to keep their Ukrainian affiliation as well as gain a foreign one, even if temporarily: predominantly mid-career women, residing abroad, from various research disciplines. It is not yet clear whether these scholars will be able to keep their dual affiliations in the long term or be forced to choose one.

Ukrainian scholars without affiliation

This group of scholars encompasses people without a current affiliation with a Ukrainian research institution or university, but who continue to do research. Among the six respondents in our survey who indicated they currently have no institutional affiliation, neither in Ukraine, nor abroad, were five women and one man. One person is aged 25–34, three aged 35–49, and two aged 50–64. Four are from the humanities and arts, one from the social sciences, and one from the natural sciences. Five have experience with internal or external displacement, and three currently reside abroad. Four indicated that they lost affiliation with their Ukrainian institutions due to their displacement, but none of the institutions were themselves displaced.

Based on this survey, displaced female scholars from the humanities are most at risk of losing their affiliations with Ukrainian institutions and are at risk of leaving academia altogether if they cannot find employment in research-related fields.

Ukrainian scholars who left the academy

According to a late 2022 survey of scholars in Ukraine, about 15% have left research, and the others experienced a marked reduction in research time. A large number of those who stayed in Ukraine have lost access to critical input for their research (23.5%) or cannot

physically access their institution (20.8%) ([de Rassenfosse et al., 2023](#)).

According to a 2024 UNESCO report ([UNESCO, 2024](#)), during the first two years of the full-scale invasion, 439 researchers resigned from the National Academy of Sciences or were killed. Eleven of the 208 researchers who joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine have been killed. Another five scholars have died in bombardments of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, and Dnipro. 715 researchers (5.3% of the total number of employees) are on unpaid leave, and another 4% are working remotely. A further 514 (3.8%) have been internally displaced, 1.9% have accepted internships, and 1.7% have taken a leave of absence to launch their own business project. A small number of employees (141) have been forced to accept part-time work and a drop in pay to 67% of a full working wage. The fields of physics and technology within NASU were most affected by the outflow of researchers due to outmigration, whereas the humanities and mechanics were the least affected.

According to the data collected by N. Ivanenko ([Ivanenko, 2026](#)), 665,000 higher education and school students (16% of the total number) and 25,000 educators (6% of the total number) have left Ukraine since 2022. Due to funding shortages and the decreasing number of students enrolled, Ukrainian universities had to optimize their costs by reducing the number of staff. This led to many academics leaving the profession altogether, moving to more secure fields, or seeking employment in foreign institutions of higher education. According to the 2024 UNESCO report ([UNESCO, 2024](#)), universities in Kharkiv, Kryvyi Rih, Dnipro, Mariupol, and Odesa lost the highest numbers of employees, with V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University counting over 350 fewer scholars in 2024, compared to before the war. Low salary, overwork, insufficient level of equipment necessary for research, and issues in professional relationships significantly impacted the motivation of scholars and often drove them to consider quitting academia,

or switching affiliation to a private research institution with better equipment and higher wages ([Zheriobkina et al., 2025](#)). Damage or destruction of scientific and educational buildings, complex security situations, electricity shortages, time and space restrictions on mobility, and changes in the funding landscape were mentioned as factors impacting research during wartime. The outmigration of researchers and enlistment in the Armed Forces impacted those colleagues who remained in Ukraine, by increasing their workload. This impact was especially significant if the colleagues who left had specific or unique expertise.

53% of respondents thought about terminating their research career; however, only 6% had a plan on how to proceed ([Zheriobkina et al., 2025](#)).

The authors of the report conclude that many female scholars in Ukraine feel exhausted, disappointed, and doubtful about continuing their research careers. Much of that sentiment is derived from personal reasons, but also from the complications which have arisen around doing research in Ukraine. For instance, 76% mentioned that a higher salary was their top reason for considering a research career change, followed by unsatisfactory workspace conditions in state research institutions, the need to constantly prove the value of academic work, the focus on formal requirements of work instead of its substance, and violations of academic integrity ([Zheriobkina et al., 2025](#)).

The motivation and morale of female scholars seem to be more affected by wartime conditions than those of their male colleagues. According to the 2025 survey conducted by the Science At Risk Emergency Office, 48% of male scholars described themselves as “motivated” or “very motivated” compared to only 36% of female scholars, while 31% of women and just 18% of men identified themselves as “not motivated” or “not motivated at all.” ([Rabinovych et al., 2025](#)). The authors suggest that these differences may stem from a combination of

factors, such as men possibly overstating their morale on surveys, while women face greater emotional strain as primary caregivers in households where male relatives are serving in the armed forces ([Rabinovych et al., 2025](#)).

32 respondents to our survey can be considered to have left Ukrainian academia. This can be broken down further: 11 respondents indicated that they have no current affiliation with a research institution in Ukraine or abroad but continue their research, 18 persons have only temporary affiliations with research institutions abroad, one person retired, one changed profession, and one joined the Armed Forces. From this group of 32 persons, 21 were female, ten were men, and one person did not want to indicate their gender. Three people were aged 25–34 years, 21 aged 35–49 years, seven aged 50–64 years, and one person was over 65 years old. Five do not have a PhD degree, 22 do have a PhD degree (kandydatka nauk) and five have habilitation (doktor nauk). 14 respondents represented humanities and arts, three were from the engineering field, one from medical science, seven from the natural sciences, and seven from the social sciences. Only six persons did not have any internal and/or external displacement experience, whereas 24 currently reside abroad. Looking at the characteristics of this group, we see that middle-aged women, predominantly from the humanities and social sciences, who had to leave Ukraine, are more likely to leave or be forced to leave Ukrainian academia. Many reported they experienced being laid off from their institutions.

Even those who did keep their affiliation and continued working, reported thinking about leaving academia. As one respondent said, “The war negatively impacted me and my colleagues. In my research institution, the funding shrank, salaries are low compared to prices and dollar/euro exchange rate in Ukraine. My colleagues, very talented people who dedicated a significant part of their life to science, are looking for alternative sources of income and in non-single cases leave their

job at the institute because they don’t see the prospects and possibilities to feed themselves, especially those with families. The youth is reluctant to enter PhD or habilitation programs, whereas those who do are studying without enthusiasm write their theses and postpone their theses defenses indefinitely due to war.” Another female scholar respondent who lost her position at her research institution noted: “People of my age, 40+, are left to survive on their own because the European community is funding people under 40, the youth. And all those people who are already established, they either fund themselves or leave research because they have to survive with their families.”

Ukrainian scholars who joined the Armed Forces

According to the available data, as of early 2024, 1,518 scholars were serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine ([UNESCO, 2024](#)). By November 2025, at least 167 Ukrainian scholars had fallen during the Russia-Ukraine war, according to the “Ukrainian scholars at War” project ([My Science, 2026](#)). Not only employees of Ukrainian military profile universities, such as the National Academy of the National Guard of Ukraine (287 people), or the Ivan Kozhedub Kharkiv National Air Force University (167 people), joined the Armed Forces. Other major universities also counted dozens of employees mobilized and volunteering ([UNESCO, 2024, p. 13](#)). Ukrainian scholars and university professors who work at least 75% of FTE or are going through their PhD training are exempt from mobilization. Therefore, the majority of those who are serving have volunteered to join the army.

The results of our interview with scholars in Focus Group 1, who have served, or are serving, in the Ukrainian Defense Forces/ Armed Forces of Ukraine indicate the complex nature of the challenges associated both with combining research activity with military service and returning to academic activity after participating in military operations. The participants emphasize that these challenges

have professional, psychological, social, and institutional dimensions.

The “In the Thunderstorm of War” project collects interviews with scholars who served in the Armed Forces ([In the Thunderstorm of War, 2026](#)). Most of the participants are representatives of the humanities and social sciences. The scholar-soldiers and veterans describe the front line as a place of extreme psychological and temporal compression. Their academic backgrounds often informed their coping mechanisms and their roles in the military. For example, they may draw historical parallels to current events or use literary metaphors to describe front-line realities, using an ethnographic lens to analyze everyday life at the front. Academic training helped scholars survive combat conditions by providing them with a psychological framework to process the horrors of war, offering a “research distance” that acted as a form of therapy, and equipping them with analytical skills that were valuable in military leadership and training, or provided a framework for understanding how people react to occupation, blockade, and extreme stress ([In the Thunderstorm of War, 2026](#)).

While the scholars interviewed for the project viewed their current military service as a primary duty, most described it as a temporary pause in their professional careers, with several of the scholars expressing a strong desire or concrete plans to return to academia and research. For most project participants, their academic institutions kept their positions intact until their return. Others, however, tried to balance service with active scholarly participation (part-time lecturing), or envisioned ways to integrate their experience from military service to advance the development of new disciplines upon their return to academia.

To be able to return effectively to research and academic life, the participating scholars emphasized the need for a combination of financial stability, availability of ongoing medical treatment, rehabilitation and support for veterans, state-level strategic planning for

sustainable development of Ukrainian science, and a fundamental shift in how academic institutions prioritize and frame Ukrainian studies ([In the Thunderstorm of War, 2026](#)).

Ukrainian scholars in the rear are also involved in the defense industry of the country. The Ukrainian government co-opted civilian science infrastructure into service for military research. “We had to change our priorities to defense and security. Many institutes are rather deeply involved now,” said Anatoly Zagorodny, president of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine ([Stone, 2025](#)). Ukraine has the unfortunate but unique opportunity to test new technologies in real combat conditions ([Harmatiy, 2022](#)). Drone innovations, multispectral mobile camouflage, directed-energy weapons, glass ceramics for rockets, military medicine, and technologies for safeguarding both critical infrastructure and historic monuments are among the new technologies. However, the concentration on military research and development has left other areas of science—those without immediate defense applications, such as astronomy, botany, and the humanities—significantly underfunded ([Stone, 2025](#)).

Participants in Focus Group 1 drew attention to the insufficient level of integration of science with the defense sector. In their opinion, the country’s scientific potential has not been fully used during the war. Some scholars perform tasks during their service that are not related to their professional specialization, although their knowledge could be more effectively used in technological or analytical support for defense. Closer integration of science and the defense sector could not only strengthen defense capabilities but also create opportunities for maintaining the professional competencies of scholars during military service.

Demobilized Ukrainian scholars

The participants of Focus Group 1 emphasized that in a broader context, the reintegration of veteran scholars is not fundamentally different from the return of veterans to other professional

fields, although academic activity has certain specific requirements. The participants also emphasized that the reintegration of veterans should be considered to be a process of human development across several dimensions—physical, social, and professional. At the same time, the emotional and psychological states of veterans can differ significantly, so there are no universal models for returning to professional activity. For some people, this process may be relatively easy, while for others it may require a long period of adaptation. Additionally, the time spent during the war cannot be fully compensated. Interrupted careers, research projects, and lost academic time are realities that both veterans and the institutions that will host them after their service have to reckon with.

There are no statistics about the number of demobilized scholars who returned to the academy or decided not to return, but universities acknowledge their role in the reintegration of veterans—and not only their employees. The Alliance of Ukrainian Universities emphasized the leading role of universities in the reintegration of veterans. They asked member institutions to focus on the development of a comprehensive policy for veterans, and to create an inter-university program of support for veterans which would provide psychological help, educational opportunities, legal support, entrepreneurship development, and international cooperation ([Chernivtsi National University, 2025](#); [NaUKMA, 2026](#)). So far, only every tenth veteran is using the educational programs and benefits to which they are entitled ([Veteran Fund, 2025](#)). A survey conducted in 2025 by the Ukrainian Veteran Fund indicated that veterans report gaining practical “soft skills” during their military service, namely rapid adaptability to new environments (73%), teamwork (66.5%), managing people (64.5%), critical thinking (61.2%), and communication skills (51.9%) ([Veteran Fund, 2025](#)). More than half of surveyed veterans (57%), however, faced significant challenges in finding employment after demobilization, regardless of their

educational level or disability status. Such challenges negatively impacted their financial independence and the possibility of returning to civilian life. Two-thirds of veterans did not return to their previous workplace after demobilization. The main problems they reported were insufficient salary (37.3%), issues with physical health (36.3%), psychoemotional state (25.5%), discrimination (23.3%), the loss of professional skills during military service (14%), and the lack of an adaptation period between demobilization and the start of work.

Veterans indicated they needed a reintegration period of at least 3–6 months, and a third of those surveyed indicated they need at least one year or more. In addition, the lack of acknowledgement of military experience as relevant for civilian professions, a low level of employers’ readiness to integrate veterans into work teams, and a limited number of reskilling programs negatively impacted reintegration into the workforce. A third of demobilized veterans cannot find work, despite labor shortages in most areas of the Ukrainian economy ([Veteran Fund, 2025](#)).

The main obstacles to employment were described as: the need to compensate for educational gaps in knowledge and skills due to time in the military, differences in values between veterans and civilians, civilians’ lack of understanding of veterans’ experiences, and the feeling that one’s civilian work was unvalued and seen as unimportant ([Veteran Fund, 2025](#)). The main reasons veterans gave for quitting their first civilian job after demobilization mirrored the most important challenges of finding employment: low salary, issues with physical health and psychoemotional state, a feeling that they did not belong to the work team, and the low perceived importance of their work ([Veteran Fund, 2025](#)).

A survey conducted in 2025 ([Resource Center “Lisova Poliana”, 2025](#)), indicated that problems with physical health (69.9% of respondents) and mental health issues (49%)

were key challenges to the reintegration of veterans, along with lack of housing (33%), issues in personal relationships (31.7%), unemployment (29.1%), stigmatization, and social isolation (27.8%). 46% of veterans surveyed said that educational programs and training were among the top three most desirable forms of support for reintegration after military service. Almost 39% of surveyed veterans reported the need for reskilling. Half of the surveyed veterans indicated civilians' lack of understanding of their experiences as the third major factor hindering reintegration.

The respondents of Focus Group 1 noted that one of their main challenges was the psychological transformation caused by the experience of war. Participants also explained that the moral, psychological, and physical states of veterans after service can differ significantly. For some, returning to professional activity is relatively painless, while for others, this process can be difficult and long.

The experience of combat changes veterans' perceptions of many things and also causes them to form new psychological defense mechanisms. In some cases, these changes can affect a veteran's ability to focus on academic work, or alter their professional priorities and attitude toward the work. Another important aspect is how difficult it can be to return to the academic mode of working and thinking. Participants noted that military service gave them a different type of response to highly stressful situations: constant mobilization, quick decision-making, and readiness to act. In contrast, research activity requires prolonged concentration, deep analysis, and the ability to work consistently through long intellectual processes. Moving between these different modes of thinking can require significant time and effort.

For those who have had combat experience, returning to universities or research institutions is sometimes accompanied by a feeling of not being understood by colleagues who continue to work in their usual professional mode. The

differences in experience and priorities can create psychological distance between these groups—and in some cases, an abyss.

Another key challenge noted by participants of Focus Group 1 was the loss of professional context. The lack of presence leads to a lag in knowledge about developments in their field. Several years of participation in combat operations means a de facto withdrawal from the academic process, as during service, one is fully involved in combat tasks and does not have the opportunity to engage in other activities. In such conditions, it is almost impossible to maintain research activity or compliance with qualification requirements—particularly developing publications, participation in research projects, or professional discussions. After the return to academia, significant time and effort is required to rebuild knowledge of the discipline, how the discipline has changed, and what new approaches and research have appeared.

Connected to that point is another important barrier created by formal and bureaucratic requirements for research positions. Due to the long-term break in publication activity caused by active service, veteran scholars may no longer meet the formal criteria necessary to be competitive for positions in state research institutions or universities. The strict regulation of the academic system, which requires a certain number of recent publications or other indicators of research activity, can create additional difficulties for veterans returning to the academic world. This also applies to the global academic community. In particular, the lack of publications or participation in international projects for periods of several years can lead to the loss of academic visibility and professional contacts. After returning to scholarly work, veteran scholars are required to catch up with all the changes, while former colleagues may already occupy leading positions in their fields.

Participants in Focus Group 1 particularly emphasized institutional uncertainty and

transformation of the academic environment as issues. Wartime causes changes in the institutional structures of universities and research institutions. Faculties are reduced, and research projects are transformed or terminated. As a result, some scholars are uncertain about which institutions they will be able to return to after the war. For many, this means the requirement to start their professional activities anew. Another point of concern is the age of the scholars, and their career stage. The most vulnerable may be scholars at the early or middle stages of their careers, who have not yet had the time to form significant academic achievements. On the other hand, early-stage researchers may have a greater ability to adapt and resume professional activities more quickly.

The participants in Focus Group 1 also emphasized the importance of social support and opportunities for personal recovery. In addition to professional reintegration, educational, cultural, or creative initiatives can play an important role in allowing veterans to reflect on their experiences and gradually

return to active social and professional lives. In a broader context, participants noted that the challenges faced by veteran scholars reflect the general state of Ukrainian state institutions, which operate in difficult conditions of war, lack of resources, and staff shortages. Addressing these problems is not only about supporting veterans, but would contribute to broader processes of recovery and modernization of the research, educational, and state systems as a whole.

At the same time, participants emphasized that success in returning to academia largely depends on the professional environment. The presence of research teams to which one can return can significantly facilitate the reintegration process. The opportunity to gradually resume work with a familiar team can be an important stabilizing factor. One of the most effective strategies for veteran recovery and rehabilitation can be provided through engagement in citizen science in various fields ([Kozak et al., 2024](#)).

Chapter 5: Recommendations

5.1 General Recommendations

Excessive bureaucracy and requirements kill the science

Participants in both our focus groups and the broader survey noted that excessive bureaucracy in science demotivates people, creates many professional obstacles, and undermines science in Ukraine. This bureaucracy includes burdensome governmental requirements for various positions, excessive paperwork, the need for multiple reports, the requirement for multiple signatures on grant applications or to participate in international internships, unreasonable requirements for publication activity, and the complexity of certification and accreditation. Some respondents noted that it is easier to get a foreign grant than to compete for a local position or receive a grant from national funds: "...they want to produce more and more results without money, without light and heating, without reagents and without equipment."

Our research suggests that it would be worth reducing productivity requirements for veterans and other groups of scholars who were forced to take a break in their research careers (maternity leave, forced evacuation, illness, etc.). In addition, veterans may need extra time to recover from combat stress, and further allowance to make up for lost time. Veterans would also benefit from specialized mental health support, given what many have witnessed and experienced at the front.

The system of taxation of international and foreign grants in Ukraine, including individual

grants, should be changed. In many countries, there is no tax on research grants, or the rate of taxation is significantly lower than the general tax rate.

The management and administration of research activities should be simple, understandable, transparent, and motivational. The procurement process for and customs clearance of foreign scientific equipment should also be simplified.

Sustainable financial support, transparent governance, and fairness

Funding, including salaries, is currently very unevenly and unfairly distributed among Ukrainian scholars. In particular, the salaries of a significant number of scholars are below the cost of living, which does not allow them to meet even basic needs. If a researcher in Ukraine wants to survive, they are required to look for additional work. As a result, research activity is unattractive in the labour market, uncompetitive and becomes more of a hobby than a main activity. Many scholars, especially young ones, do not own housing, and rent is very expensive. Providing housing could be an additional incentive for attracting young people to science.

Transparent and fair funding from national funds deserves separate attention. Despite all efforts, this process still has significant problems. On the one hand, during wartime, it is important to preserve and continue fundamental research. On the other hand, it is also important to develop new applied

research that would help solve many societal challenges. It is important, therefore, for the state to be realistic in which research areas it prioritizes, and to ensure that the funding is adequate. We recommend the following:

1. Financial reporting should be as simple and transparent as possible, for example, following EU regulations.
2. Develop targeted programs for financing applied and interdisciplinary research aimed at the defense and restoration of the country;
3. Consider support for scholars during the war to be a strategic investment in the future of the country, rather than a temporary social measure. Ukrainian scholars should not lose their professional subjectivity, their trust in the state, or motivation to work for the restoration and development of the country after the end of the war.

Human capital in focus

The main long-term risk for Ukrainian science is not only physical destruction of resources, but also the loss of human capital due to the disintegration of research groups, relocation of Ukrainian scholars abroad, and other factors. In wartime conditions, flexible mechanisms are necessary to combine international mobility with maintaining affiliation ties in Ukraine. Support should be aimed at ensuring the continuity of scientific trajectories and the future restoration of the country's research system.

Unfortunately, working conditions and remuneration of scholars differ significantly between Ukraine and other countries, so international projects and foreign institutions are often more attractive for Ukrainian professionals. It is necessary to create interesting and promising working conditions in an environment where scholars will feel comfortable and safe. It is also important to adhere to the principles of integrity, ethics, dignity, transparency, and equality.

Involving young people in science is both a priority and a necessary condition for preserving research capacity. Both survey

respondents and focus group participants emphasized that all professional spheres in Ukraine, not just science, will need even more young specialists in the future.

It is important to create mechanisms at the state level to encourage “circulation” rather than “brain drain,” to prevent losing scholars who are integrated into foreign institutions. It is also necessary to develop a regulatory framework that would allow Ukrainian scholars to officially combine work abroad with involvement in Ukrainian universities—through joint courses, for example, or shared supervision of graduate students—while maintaining their seniority and status.

An effective policy should be based on the understanding that a researcher is mobile capital. If the state government creates conditions under which a period of working abroad will not be considered an “escape,” but rather an “expedition for knowledge and resources,” we will be able to radically update Ukrainian science now, without waiting for the end of the war.

Teams are the key to resilience

The formation and development of effective research communities of all sizes can ensure resilience and sustainability in any field, not only in science.

Participants in our focus groups, including scholars who served in the Armed Forces, noted that only those who maintained contact with their team continued research activities. The results of our focus group with returnees also showed that it was easier for those scholars who maintained contact with their teams in Ukraine to return to research later.

Strong and harmonious teams can themselves be a reason to stay in science or stay/return to Ukraine and encourage the reintegration of veterans and returnees. At the same time, teams provide redundancy. If a team member leaves for any reason, the research work will continue.

In today's world, where scholars must meet many expectations and perform multiple roles—not only performing research, but also writing grant applications, reports, publications, participation in conferences, etc.—only strong research teams can be effective, grow, develop, and be resilient in times of crisis. That being said, it is also important to maintain a friendly, fair, honest, and non-toxic environment within the team, to preserve working relationships and prevent burnout.

Decision-makers at all levels should promote and support the development of research communities and teams.

Sharing research infrastructure

The creation of modern scientific multidisciplinary hubs at universities, which could be used easily and openly by scholars from all over the country, could be a very effective and rational strategy in conditions of limited resources and constant uncertainty. Even greater sustainability could be achieved if centers which provided equipment for shared use were made available throughout the country. However, the operators of such centers should have separate funding and separate positions.

Monitoring the impact of war on research infrastructure and researchers

Although there is currently a considerable amount of research available on the impact of war on science and scholars, the data has not been collected in a single coordinate system. As a result, it is not possible to compare statistics, identify trends and changes, or make appropriate decisions.

One of our focus group participants said that it is very important to conduct such research on an ongoing basis, because the situation is very dynamic. The needs and challenges of scholars change, not only depending on the intensity of military engagements, but also on the state's legislative initiatives.

Given this, we see a need to establish an effective monitoring system. This monitoring system could include the following:

- A continuously open questionnaire on the impact of war on scholars, their needs, and challenges. This will allow us to assess changes as they happen, the consequences of policies and legislative changes, and promptly take the necessary actions to improve the situation.
- A database of destroyed research infrastructure. This is important to assess the damage, assist in the restoration of destroyed facilities, coordinate the sharing of available equipment, identify opportunities to quickly assist and/or relocate research objects, etc.

In Ukraine, the national database of destroyed and damaged objects ([Karta vidnovlennia ta rujnuvan, 2026](#)) was developed with a function allowing new objects to be added to the database. The objects can be added to many categories during input, however: "Agricultural Sector," "Administrative Buildings," "Cultural Objects," "Educational Institutions," and so on, which creates certain difficulties when searching. A separate category, "Research and science objects," should be added to this platform, as well as making this platform more open, transparent, and user-friendly.

There have also been attempts to create a database of destroyed research infrastructure ([Scientific infrastructure damaged during the war, 2026](#)), but this database is not being updated and does not have the functionality for users to add information. Therefore, this issue is currently not sufficiently regulated and should be improved.

- A database of case studies from scholars. Collecting real stories from real scholars will allow for a deeper assessment of the consequences of war, more effective

advocacy for the needs of science, building strategies to ensure sustainability, and so on.

Ideally, a system like this for monitoring the impact of war on science would be created and supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. But this may require the allocation of limited resources and efforts. The initiative could also be created by non-governmental organizations (NGO Kunsht, for example, based on the Science At Risk platform).

Effective communication and dissemination of opportunities

Communication and information support are vital for scholars in wartime. Information about grant opportunities, job vacancies, and any other possible support should be disseminated effectively, transparently, and regularly. Respect, concern for the research community, and assistance in solving difficulties should be the basis of all communication. Being a scholar should be perceived as something prestigious, deserving of respect, not the other way around. No pseudoscience should be tolerated, and reputation should be one of the main priorities for all. Leaders of universities and institutes should have unblemished reputations and be examples of worthy, authoritative, honest, and successful scholars.

5.2 Additional recommendations for selected groups of stakeholders

It is important to flag that a number of recommendations prepared by our colleagues within the framework of [other white papers](#) of the Science At Risk Project from previous years are still waiting for implementation. The recommendations from the white paper “Preserving Scientists During Wars and Emergencies” ([Halahan et al., 2024](#)) are consistent with our observations and conclusions in this study, so avoiding duplication is not a simple task.

Based on the results of our study, and in addition to the recommendations presented in the Executive Summary, we would also like to make some targeted recommendations.

For the Government of Ukraine

1. Develop a comprehensive, evidence-based, interministerial program of support for Ukrainian scholars during wartime regardless of affiliation. This program may include: in-depth sociological research and up-to-date verified statistical data sets; a clear vision and strategy of support for Ukrainian scholars; a list of measures aimed at providing appropriate social and financial support to Ukrainian scholars, including support for veterans and their families, internally displaced scholars, independent scholars, and scholars from small local institutions with limited capacity for the reintegration of returnees; and a plan to raise funds and allocate resources for program implementation;
2. Develop a road map of relocations and support for relocated scientific institutions, their teams, collections, libraries, and archives, taking into account their strengths and symbolic representation of regions to which access has been lost due to temporary occupation;
3. Implement measures aimed at deregulating and maximizing transparency

of the financial and economic activities of scientific institutions, as well as scientific and financial reporting, particularly around the management of grant funds within the framework of budget legislation;

4. Simplify conditions for obtaining individual academic scholarships and grants for Ukrainian scholars; particularly, to abolish taxation of individual academic scholarships and grants, regardless of their source, registration of programs in Ukraine, and to raise additional funds to establish a wide range of state scholarship programs.

For local authorities

1. Develop local support/assistance programs for relocated scholars and teams of relocated institutions, to help their integration into local communities, particularly housing assistance, and assistance with finding employment in local research institutions if necessary;
2. Using the capabilities of local institutions, create conditions to support academic mobility;
3. Build support for relocated scientific institutions and their integration into the economic development of the region.

For international partners and donors

1. Encourage the dissemination of the experiences of Ukrainian scholars, promote Ukrainian studies, and knowledge about Ukraine;
2. Expand and diversify the range of institutional and individual support programs for Ukrainian scholars, in particular, individual support programs for scholars who remain in Ukraine, taking into account the specifics of working conditions in Ukraine during the war;
3. Diversify the range of research topics eligible for support, to make the programs and requirements more flexible and accessible

for a wider range of Ukrainian scholars, regardless of age or affiliation, including independent scholars, scholars from small institutions with limited capacities, those with language barriers, etc.;

4. When developing support programs or scholarships for Ukrainian scholars that provide academic mobility abroad, take into account the income disparity between Ukrainian scholars and scholars in the EU, USA, and other developed countries. Take into account as well that international scholarship may be the only source of income for Ukrainian scholars, and consider possible delays in processing visas and other documents in the country of residence due to the workload of migration offices, etc.

For civil society organizations

1. Conduct in-depth research and regular monitoring of conditions, problems, and needs of Ukrainian scholars and scientific institutions in wider context;
2. Advocate for the needs of Ukrainian scholars at national and international level;
3. Develop active horizontal academic networks to strengthen the capacity of Ukrainian scholars and scientific institutions;

4. Promote science and scientific knowledge, support research projects and initiatives focused on local topics and needs, and involve different stakeholders in the support of science, scholars, and scientific institutions.

For administrators of scientific and cultural institutions

1. Provide flexible and supportive conditions for teams, to mitigate the negative impacts of war and burnout;
2. Provide/share access to your collections and scientific infrastructure with external researchers, to enable vulnerable groups of scholars to continue their work in Ukraine;
3. Develop programs and events that will engage children and youth in scientific knowledge.

Implementation of these proposed measures requires coordinated action across multiple levels of governance and institutional responsibility, as well as effort in raising additional funds. But if successful, they will allow us to preserve and develop Ukraine's scientific capacity as much as possible in wartime.

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