

WARTIME CRISIS MODE

THE IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S AGGRESSION ON THE SYSTEM OF SOCIAL CONTROL IN UKRAINE

Edited by Dr. Dmytro Yagunov
and Dr. Tetiana Melnychuk



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**Crime, Institutes, and Trust
in Criminal Justice**

Monograph

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and Dr. Tetiana Melnychuk

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FOREWORD

The 21st century is the time of polycrisis, characterised by its temporal and spatial boundaries and cascading effects (Covid-19 pandemics, climate change, the war in Ukraine, mass migration caused by the war in Ukraine and other armed conflicts).

Moreover, European societies are almost universally in *crisis mode*, which is linked to an accelerating process of transformation and further threats from the Russian Federation which changes the priorities of the police forces and limits them in resources.

It is no secret that European states, accustomed to stable, peaceful coexistence within the framework of beneficial economic cooperation and the free movement of goods and people within the European Union, were unprepared for many of the challenges associated with the war in Ukraine.

Having adapted to the large number of refugees from Ukraine, European states have nevertheless been unable to adapt to the changing nature and rates of crime caused by global and regional crises.

More importantly, however, most European states are unprepared to combat crime in the context of a possible state of war.

Therefore, it can be said that Ukraine's experience is invaluable not only in countering Russia's imperial ambitions on the diplomatic and military fronts, but also in ensuring the sustainable and uninterrupted development of the justice system, including the police, criminal courts and prisons.

Therefore, I am pleased to present this monograph to the scientific and expert community, prepared at the Endowed Professorship for Crime Prevention and Risk Management at the Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, focused on the problems of the evolution of crime during full-scale war in modern Europe, which focuses both on crime indicators and on the impact of war on elements of the criminal justice system.

Despite the variety of scientific works devoted to the impact of war on crime both in Ukraine and in the countries of the European Union,

there has been a lack of a *comprehensive approach* to the analysis of these issues until now.

In fact, such a comprehensive approach was implemented by the team of experts, who formed a systematic critical view of how *modern war* affects a *modern European country*.

I am convinced that this monograph will be of interest and use to European politicians, senior police officers and academics for a forward-looking analysis of the threats that can be expected as a result of the further escalation of Russian imperialist ambitions.

September 2025

Prof. Dr. Rita Haverkamp
Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

INTRODUCTION¹

Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine has a unique context. It is *the first full-scale war* in the geographical centre of Europe since the Second World War finished.

Although the formal countdown to the War started in 2022, in reality it has been ongoing since 2014, when two pseudo-people's pseudo-republics (*so-called 'LNR' and 'DNR'*) were self-proclaimed in eastern Ukraine, with Russia's armed and ideological support, and the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea was illegally annexed.

It is an open, albeit undeclared, interstate *war*, which is hopefully extremely rare in the XXI century, which has been marked mostly by regional or intrastate conflicts. This War is *hybrid* by nature. In addition to classical military tactics, the Russian aggressor employs broadly and systematically cyberattacks, systematic torture and other forms of ill-treatment, propaganda, disinformation, and economic and political pressure. Its ongoing protraction has shaken global geopolitics and exposed the fragility of the international legal order.

It is the first war in European history when military actions of Russian military units were amalgamated with the *public policy of torture*, recognised as a *policy* both by the United Nations and the Council of Europe's bodies. It is the first war in Europe when the already former member state of the Council of Europe broadly adopted *torture* as one of the main tools of military actions on occupied Ukrainian territories. The judgment in the case of *Ukraine and the Netherlands against the Russian Federation* provides a clear understanding that this War has brought many new challenges that demonstrate the weakness of many international organisations. It also highlights a vulnerability of the world's order based on the UN treaties.

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The consequences of the War are extremely destructive, and future restoration may take many generations. Hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths, hundreds of military casualties, destroyed infrastructure, forced migration of millions of Ukrainians, forced deportation of Ukrainian children from the occupied Ukrainian territories to Russia, Belarus, and two pseudo-republics (*so-called 'LNR' and 'DNR'*), thousands of hectares of land mined or rendered unusable for cultivation as a result of hostilities, and countless ruined human lives.

Despite the profoundly destabilising effects of the War, there is an obvious *paradox*: it has *not* eliminated criminal practices from the daily life. Having recovered from the initial shock, criminality adapted effectively to the wartime conditions. Criminal thinking remains intact even amid extreme social crises, and part of the population continues to '*solve problems*' through criminal means, driven by situational opportunity, habits or personal inclination.

Even in a peace time society, crime is determined by many factors and takes various forms, which are difficult to be analysed. Moreover, while it is difficult to draw a direct causal link between war and crime, the impact of this War is *axiomatic*. The War has fundamentally altered Ukrainian society, and with it, the nature and volume of criminal activities, reflected in both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Changes in the criminal landscape are manifested in the adaptation of traditional criminal activities to wartime conditions, the intensification of military and war crimes, and the emergence of new crimes 'born' by the War. These trends have become especially noticeable since the onset of the full-scale invasion. The dynamic transition of crime rates during the War is facilitated by the change in the actors involved, in particular, the Russian military committing numerous regular and war crimes on the territory of Ukraine. The Russian state itself acts as a *collective perpetrator*, as crimes of aggression and crimes of looting prohibited by international standards are committed on its behalf.

This monograph is a pioneer in *complex* researching the crime trends in Ukraine in the period of 2013-2025 where the main focus is made on the *impact* of the 2022 Russia's armed aggression on criminal justice system, human rights, criminality in Ukraine and the national crime prevention policy.

This study also has the potential to explore the impact of the War on regional crime and the European community as a whole, given that crime in the modern world is internationalized and capable of migrating. There is a possibility that Ukrainian criminal practices may be transferred to other countries as a result of, among other factors, the relocation of criminal business.

Perhaps most importantly, despite the uniqueness of the context, the study can serve as a theoretical model and methodological framework for examining the *crime-conflict nexus* in various national jurisdictions.

In addition, the study provides an overview not only of crime trends but also forms a foundation for assessing the rule of law and human rights situation during war.

From a practical point of view, it offers valuable benchmarks for crime forecasting in the post-War period, which will be crucial for developing a strategy for post-War reconstruction and ensuring the criminological security of the region.

The monograph contributes to the development of war criminology as a distinct scientific field and fosters the growth of interdisciplinary studies of war at the intersection of law, international relations, political science, social sciences and security studies.

In other words, this monograph is about *how the contemporary war in Europe impacts contemporary European states and societies and challenges national criminal justice systems*.

The monograph is not only about challenges that human rights in Ukraine met during the War. The monograph is not even about challenges that human rights in other European states met during the War. The monograph is about the real and potential threats to the security and safety of stable European societies in the case of any war in Europe, for which national governments are not ready.

While the book was being preparing for publishing, the BBC announced that three men have been found guilty of an arson attack on a London warehouse linked to Ukraine on behalf of Russian mercenary group Wagner. Around £1m-worth of damage was caused in the attack on the warehouse in east London in 2024. The warehouse was targeted because it shipped humanitarian aid and goods to Ukraine, including Starlink satellite equipment – crucial for Ukrainian military troops. From

the official point of view of the Crown Prosecution Service's counter-terrorism division, it was a targeted attack, given the connection to the warehouse which had to ship aid and other goods to Ukraine². This and other examples are useful to demonstrate that localisation of the Russian-Ukrainian War is a *fiction*, as well as localisation of other potential war that can flare up in Europe.

Therefore, the authors hope that this book will be useful for academics, political leaders, criminal justice managers, human rights activist and legal practitioners in many European countries to avoid mistakes that Ukraine made after the February 2022. However, considering the global trends, this book will be useful not only for the European readers.

² Campbell, A., Armstrong, K. (2025). Three men found guilty of Wagner-linked arson attack in London. *BBC*. June 8, 2025. Source: www.bbc.com/news

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS³

The monograph consists of two main blocks.

The first block is focused on challenges that Ukrainian criminal justice met during the War. This block covers problems and challenges faced by different structural parts of the criminal justice system including judiciary, police, prosecution, and the bar.

The second block is of a purely criminological nature. It reflects the crime situation in Ukraine in pre-War and War periods and focuses on the criminological indicators of Ukrainian criminality during the War. The authors conducted a quantitative analysis of key crime indicators in their dynamics by the types of *corpus delicti* recognised as crimes under the corresponding sections of the Criminal Code of Ukraine in force at the time of each statistical report.

The statistical part of the monograph is mostly based on police statistics from the Office of General Prosecutor, the authorised state body responsible for collecting and disseminating crime statistics on the crime situation in the country⁴. Annual reports were used for the calculations, including the first six months of 2025, which were the most recent available at the time of publication. The monograph is also based on the previous authors' papers focused on crime trends in Ukraine in different periods⁵.

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⁴ The definition of 'police statistics' includes crime statistics provided by the National Police of Ukraine, the State Investigation Bureau, the Security Service of Ukraine, Tax Police, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and the Office of General Prosecutor.

⁵ Yagunov, D. (2022). Crime prevention policy in Ukraine in the light of crime statistics for the period of eight months of 2022. *Bulletin of the Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University. Series Political sciences*. 4. P.28-45; Yagunov, D. (2022). Criminal justice system of Ukraine in the wartime: impacts and challenges. *European Political and Law Discourse*. 9. 4. P.33-51; Yagunov, D. (2022). Impact of the 2022 Russian military aggression on crime trends in Ukraine (analysis of crime prevention policy in the light of crime statistics for ten months of 2022). *European Political and Law Discourse*. 9. 6. P.35-80.

The authors acknowledge the limitations of the study, as it relies heavily on quantitative analysis and official government sources. Not all crimes are captured in official statistics due to crime latency, difficulties (and sporadically the physical impossibility) of documenting and investigating crimes during hostilities, and the limited comparability of data from territories currently or previously occupied by the aggressor's forces, etc.

However, quantitative research methods are well-recognised and validated in the social sciences. The data used, being the only official source of information on crime, reflects the official position of the state on the dynamics, structure and geographical distribution of crime; it is also widely used in comparative studies and international surveys. Most decision-makers in criminal justice policy rely on official statistics on the overall crime rate.

In order to ensure comprehensive conclusions, the authors also applied a case study method, selectively analysing typical criminal practices through content analysis of official reports from authorised law enforcement agencies and texts of court decisions from the Unified Register of Court Decisions of Ukraine for the period 2022–2025⁶.

The data collected was carefully evaluated and interpreted through critical analysis. The value of the findings is enhanced by highlighting the social, legal and political context of the nexus between war and crime.

The authors stress on the importance of the latest judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Ukraine and Netherlands against the Russian Federation* which can serve by itself as a separate brilliant sourcebook on crimes committed by Russian occupiers on Ukrainian territories. Therefore, some provisions of the mentioned above judgment were incorporated into this monograph.

Nevertheless, one of the most important methodological comments on this monograph, which should be considered both when analysing crime indicators and when analysing the impact of the War on the state and society, is the *size of Ukraine's population*.

After the occupation of Crimea and parts of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions by Russia, the population in the territory controlled by

⁶ The Unified State Register of Court Decisions is an automated system for collecting, storing, protecting, recording, searching and providing electronic copies of court decisions. The register contains all decisions of Ukrainian courts in civil, administrative, commercial, administrative offence and criminal proceedings without personal data.

the Ukrainian government has significantly decreased. However, the full-scale invasion of the Russian army into Ukraine in February 2022 led to forced migration by millions of Ukrainians. For example, on 31 May 2025, 4,28 million non-EU citizens, who fled Ukraine as a consequence of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, were under temporary protection in the EU⁷.

Therefore, each section of this monograph should be analysed together with this methodological note on the population of Ukraine. Accordingly, even when discussing a certain decrease in crime rates in a particular segment, it is necessary to consider not only absolute but also relative crime rates per 100000 population (*Figure 1*).

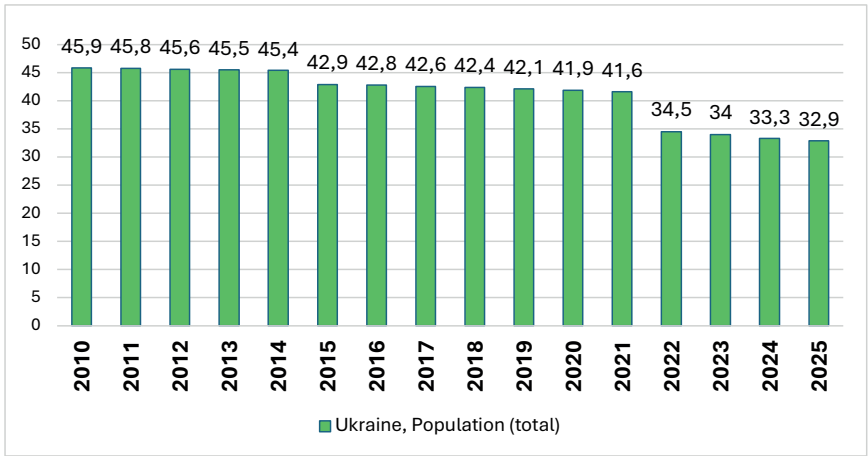


Figure 1. Population of Ukraine (million)

⁷ Eurostat (2025). Temporary protection for persons fleeing Ukraine – monthly statistics. *Eurostat*. July 4, 2025. Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics>

TERMINOLOGY⁸

According to Article 276 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of Ukraine, notification of suspicion shall be necessarily issued in the following cases: 1) apprehension of an individual at the scene of a criminal offence or immediately after the commission of a criminal offence; 2) enforcement of a measure of restraint against an individual as prescribed by this Code; 3) availability of sufficient evidence to suspect a person of having committed a criminal offence.

Therefore, in this paper, we describe 2013-2025 crime trends in Ukraine based on two main indicators of the Ukrainian criminal justice system: 1) the general number of criminal proceedings opened and registered by the Ukrainian law enforcement agencies (the number of crimes); 2) the number of criminal proceedings where suspects were given the notifications (notes) of suspicion.

In corresponding tables and diagrams, we use the term ‘*notifications*’, which reflects the number of criminal proceedings with concrete suspects (the number of notifications of suspicion).

In corresponding tables and diagrams, we use the term ‘*police statistics*’, which relates to all crime statistics in Ukraine accumulated by all law-enforcement agencies and bodies in Ukraine and presented on the official website of the Office of General Prosecutor.

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NEW WAR – NEW HORIZONS FOR CRIMES⁹

In this monograph, we aim to analyse the impact of war on both state institutions and specific segments of crime.

The impact of war on organised crime and corruption is analysed separately. We believe that these trends deserve special attention and should be discussed in a separate section of the monograph and illustrated with the most striking cases that have resonated not only in Ukraine but also beyond its borders.

Ukrainian legal and law-enforcement practices demonstrate how unprepared Ukraine's criminal justice system was for the challenges of the War. To avoid Ukraine's mistakes, the EU states need to consider this experience.

Given that war is a total mobilisation and military service with a constant threat to life, it is natural that a large number of men resorted to committing crimes in order to avoid military service, using both tools to avoid conscription in the country and to leave Ukraine illegally on the basis of forged documents. Consequently, corruption at the border has become a major source of illicit enrichment. Most cases of illicit enrichment are linked to abuses at the border¹⁰.

As the State Border Service of Ukraine announced in May 2025, since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the imposition of martial law, attempts by around 49 thousand men liable for military service to leave Ukraine illegally have been stopped. Almost 45 thousand people have been detained attempting to illegally cross the border and were stopped in the 'green zone' of the border or at checkpoints or

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¹⁰ Ukrinform (2023). Corruption at the border has become the main source of illegal enrichment – the Head of Ukraine's National Agency for Corruption Prevention. *Ukrinform*. July 19, 2023. Source: www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-economy/3737888-korupcia-na-kordoni-stala-osnovnim-dzerelom-nezakonnogo-zbagacenna-golova-nazk.html

roadblocks in the border area. To this number can be added the detention of violators at checkpoints, which is about 4000 people¹¹.

Case 1. Medical and Social Expert Commissions (MSEC)

Firstly, it is necessary to mention the widespread tendency towards corruption in specialised medical institutions responsible for determining the fitness or unfitness of individuals to serve in the Armed Forces or other paramilitary formations.

In early October 2024, law enforcement officers arrested Tetyana Krupa, the Head of the Khmelnytskyi Regional MSEC, on suspicion of illegal enrichment. During searches, almost 6 million USD was seized from the woman. On the same day, the Head of one of the MSECs in Kharkiv was also detained. According to the Security Service of Ukraine, he and his accomplices organised a scheme to evade mobilisation.

Many Ukrainians were shocked by images of millions of dollars in cash found in the office of the Head of an agency that determines people's disability status. These cases have once again drawn attention to the activities of the entire MSEC system in Ukraine, which has long been the subject of numerous complaints and calls for reform, especially during martial law.

Last spring, the Ministry of Health announced plans to reform the MSEC, and the Minister even stated that these commissions would cease to exist from 2025.

A medical and social expert commission (MSEC) is essentially a large group of narrowly specialised medical professionals. They meet to decide whether a person is entitled to disability benefits.

MSECs have existed in Ukraine since 1992, when they replaced the *medical and labour expert commissions* of the Soviet era. These commissions are subordinate to the Ministry of Health. They are divided into regional, city, inter-district and district commissions, as well as a central commission in Kyiv.

In order to obtain a disability group, a patient must undergo an MSEC examination, for which a referral is required. An MSEC certificate is the basis for calculating cash benefits and other social benefits.

¹¹ Smyshyaev, S. (2025). State Border Service of Ukraine: 49000 men were unable to leave the country illegally. *Deutsche Welle*. May 21, 2025. Source: www.dw.com/uk/dpsu-49-tisacam-colovikiv-zavadili-nezakonno-zalisiti-ukrainu/a-72627412

In 2023, law enforcement agencies investigated about 100 cases of corruption in the MSEC bodies. However, allegations of bribery against the MSEC were made long before the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

In particular, the case of Ukrainian soldier *Petro Oleksyuk* gained widespread attention when he was asked for a bribe to establish his disability status during an MSEC examination after being wounded in 2018. After the man appealed to law enforcement agencies, the doctors who demanded the bribe and the MSEC premises were searched and about 130000 USD was seized.

Only in 2024, based on materials from the SBU, 64 MSEC officials were suspected of committing crimes, and another nine people have already been convicted. In addition, on the initiative of the Ukrainian special services, 4106 disability certificates issued on the basis of fictitious documents have been revoked¹².

However, after the start of the full-scale war, the number of injuries among both military personnel and civilians increased significantly, and as a result, MSEC services became even more in demand.

For example, on 19 August 2025, law enforcement officers exposed the former Head of the Central MSEC and his accomplices in a fictitious disability scheme. The former Head of the Central MSEC and seven members of an organised group have been charged with abuse of office and forgery of official documents. They are suspected of systematically issuing medical examination reports and disability certificates to citizens who did not actually have legal grounds for them¹³.

Case 2. Corruption in Military Recruitment Centres

Secondly, there is an explosion of corruption in *military recruitment centres*.

In early June 2025, the former Commander of the Odessa Regional Territorial Centre for Recruitment and Social Support, Yevhen Borysov, was once again remanded in custody. An alternative preventive measure was set at a bail of 20 million UAH.

¹² Saakov, V. (2024). Corruption in the MSEC: 4000 disability certificates revoked. *Deutsche Welle*. October 22, 2024. Source: www.dw.com/uk/korupcia-u-msek-skasovano-ponad-4-tisaci-visnovkiv-pro-invalidnist/a-70570578

¹³ Romanenko, V. (2025). Former head of the Central Medical and Social Examination Commission and his subordinates exposed in a fictitious disability scheme. *Ukrainska Pravda*. August 19, 2025. Source: www.pravda.com.ua/news/2025/08/19/7526921

As of today, the Main Investigation Department of the State Bureau of Investigations is conducting a pre-trial investigation against Yevhen Borysov under the following articles of the Criminal Code: Article 114-1 – organisation of obstruction of the lawful activities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine during a special period; Article 366 – organisation of the compilation and issuance by an official of a knowingly false official document.

The case concerns the fact that Yevhen Borysov's family purchased real estate and cars worth millions of dollars on the Spanish coast during the War.

In May 2025, the State Bureau of Investigation opened criminal proceedings under Part 5 of Article 426-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine and suspended the military commissar from his post.

After the scandal with the property in Spain, President Zelenskyy gave an urgent order to the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to immediately dismiss Yevhen Borisov from his post as Odessa military commissar.

On July 19, 2023, the Head of the National Agency of Ukraine on Prevention of Corruption announced that Yevhen Borysov had embezzled 188 million UAH, a record amount of illicit enrichment. On July 22, 2023, Yevhen Borysov was charged with illegal enrichment of hundreds of millions of hryvnias and deliberate evasion of military service.

The former official attempted to flee from the investigation, using various means of concealment, such as changing his phone numbers, cars, and location.

Previously, in 2024, two cases against Yevhen Borysov were referred to court. In particular, they concerned illegal enrichment, trips to Spain and the Seychelles instead of serving in the military, and document forgery.

However, illegal enrichment through bribes from conscripts is far from the only example of criminal activity caused by the War.

Several corruption schemes have been uncovered in the military recruitment centre system, ranging from the sale of fake draft notices to abuse of authority.

Since the beginning of 2025, law enforcement agencies have uncovered several corruption schemes in the military recruitment centres system.

In the Odesa region, a 24-year-old soldier from a local military recruitment centre sold fake draft notices to men of conscription age. He promised one of the conscripts a document that would allow him to move freely throughout Ukraine for six days. For this, the military '*businessman*' demanded a 1000 USDs and later increased the amount by another 2000 UAH.

In addition, the State Bureau of Investigations reported corruption schemes in which officers offered to '*resolve issues*' with updating military registration data in exchange for money.

In January 2025, a lieutenant colonel offered a conscript to update his data through '*his people*' at the Kyiv military recruitment centre for 4000 USD. After paying, the conscript went through the procedure, but it was illegal.

For other '*clients*', he offered an alternative option through the military recruitment centre in Volyn. For 9000 USD, he promised to prepare the necessary documents and said that he would fill out the required applications himself, draw up a fictitious lease agreement for the '*clients*' to live in Volyn, and pass the military medical examination on their behalf.

In April 2025, the LEA detained the Commander of the Military Recruitment Centre in Chernivtsi region and his subordinate for a bribe of 6000 USD. The officers promised a resident '*rear*' military service through forged documents. According to the prosecutor's office, the suspects changed the man's fitness category so that he would not be called up to the front.

Case 3. Corruption in the courts

Thirdly, there is an explosion of corruption among *judges*, some of whom regularly issued court decisions on the adoption of children by men or established other false facts that allowed men to leave Ukraine unhindered with a seemingly legitimate court decision in their hands.

The most telling case in Ukraine is the criminal case against several judges of the Bilhorod-Dnistrovsky City District Court of Odesa Region and several local barristers who organised a conveyor belt for producing court decisions allowing men to leave Ukraine.

According to the investigation, the aforementioned individuals committed crimes, including obstructing the lawful activities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as well as illegally transporting individuals

across the state border of Ukraine by ensuring the adoption of court decisions.

During 2022-2023, the suspects issued *over a thousand* illegal court decisions in *the* Bilhorod-Dnistrovsky City District Court of Odesa Region, which provided grounds for men of conscription age to cross the border. In order for conscripts to avoid mobilisation and subsequently leave the country, the court issued decisions establishing the place of residence of the child with the father. Information about the provision of such services was published in relevant social media groups.

The cost of one decision was between 1500 and 3000 USD.

At the end of August 2025, the High Anti-Corruption Court approved an agreement with the judge of the Bilhorod-Dnistrovsky City District Court of Odesa Region. The judge was sentenced to six years in prison with a three-year ban on holding certain positions and confiscation of 20 thousand USD and 200 thousand UAH. At the same time, he was released from punishment for a three-year probationary period. The former judge also undertook to transfer 1,06 million UAH of bail to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Thanks to the judge, two other figures in the case were exposed – the Head of the same court and another judge of the same court, as well as other participants, in particular, an advocate (according to the investigation, he was the one who sought clients)¹⁴.

Case 4. Corruption concerned with remuneration for participation in combat operations

Another example of criminal activity caused exclusively by the War is the payment of sums of money for direct participation in combat operations.

On the one hand, a huge number of Ukrainian men and women are on the front line.

By law, each day spent directly on the front line must be paid for additionally.

On the other hand, some military commanders abuse their authority in this regard, recording '*combat days*' for individual soldiers and officers

¹⁴ South Today (2025). The judge of the Bilhorod-Dnistrovsky court, who deprived more than 350 women of their parental rights, agreed to a settlement: what sentence was imposed. *South Today*. August 26, 2025. Source: <https://yug.today/suddia-bilhorod-dnistrovskoho-sudu-iakyy-pozbavyv-materynskykh-prav-bilshe-350-zhinok-pishov-na-uhodu-iakyy-vyrok-pryznachyly/>

while they were in the rear in exchange for a portion of these ‘*combat payments*’.

Accordingly, law enforcement agencies respond to such crimes from time to time.

Thus, in early August 2025, the Prosecutor General announced the exposure of a scheme to pay ‘*combat*’ allowances to those who were not actually at the front. It was found that over 34 million UAH in additional remuneration were unjustifiably paid for participation in combat operations, even though they were not at the front line.

The Prosecutor General gave the following examples:

– *The Bila Tserkva Specialised Prosecutor’s Office for Military Defence*: a former commander of a military unit failed to ensure control over the legality of payments. Subordinates were unjustifiably charged well over 15 million UAH in additional remuneration for participation in combat operations, although they were not on the front line.

– *The Lviv Specialised Prosecutor’s Office for Military Defence*: an organised group consisting of an official from the financial and economic department of a military unit, officers, and sergeants was exposed. They unjustifiably charged themselves payments of over 5 million UAH¹⁵.

On August 12, 2025, officers of the State Bureau of Investigations gave the notes of suspicion to the commander of one of the military units in the Chernihiv region and three of his subordinate officers. According to the investigation, they earned money from illegally registering payments to soldiers who allegedly worked in a fictitious headquarters. According to the investigation, in 2024, the commander created a separate command post ‘*on paper*’, where 14 military personnel were allegedly on duty. In reality, they did not perform any duties – they spent almost a year at their own discretion but received additional monetary compensation in the amount of 2000 UAH for each ‘*shift*’. After receiving the funds, the soldiers transferred part of the money to the commander and his accomplices. Five of these soldiers performed *personal work* for the unit commander: they repaired his private estate, built a guest house on the same plot of land, and furnished an apartment belonging to his son. In

¹⁵ Mamchenko, M. (2025). Prosecutor General Ruslan Kravchenko announced the exposure of 25 million hryvnia in illegal payments to ‘combatants’ who were not at the front. *Judicial and Legal Newspaper*. August 8, 2025. Source: <https://sud.ua/uk/news/publication/338007-genprokuror-ruslan-kravchenko-zayavil-o-razoblachenii-25-mln-grn-nezakonnykh-vyplat-boevykh-tem-kto-ne-byl-na-fronte>

addition, the commander helped another soldier evade military service, who earned money repairing cars near the unit during working hours. The rest of the soldiers simply spent their time in the army as they saw fit. According to the State Bureau of Investigation, the state suffered losses of over 2 million UAH as a result of this illegal scheme¹⁶.

Case 5. The phenomenon of ‘busification’ as a threat to human rights in Ukraine

Busification is an informal but extremely common term that emerged in Ukrainian society during the general mobilisation in connection with martial law.

It is widely used as a synonym for ‘*illegal mobilisation*’, namely situations where military personnel from territorial recruitment and social support centres (*hereafter – recruitment centres*) ‘catch’ and forcibly load men of conscription age onto small minibuses on the streets and deliver them to recruitment centres to register them for further military service.

Currently, in Ukraine, over the last three months, there has been an increase in busification, with or without the use of force.

Busification takes *two forms*.

Either by deception, for example, a person is offered to undergo a medical examination voluntarily and be sent home, or they are asked to voluntarily go to the recruitment centre to be removed from the so-called *wanted list* and sent home.

Many men get into the minibus ‘*voluntarily*’, hoping that the recruitment centres will actually remove them from the wanted list, help them pass the medical examination, and let them go home. However, in most cases, men who are more or less aware of their rights and refuse to get into the minibus and go to the recruitment centres are beaten, have their arms and legs physically broken, have their ribs broken, are beaten and forcibly dragged into the minibus.

After the minibus has taken the men to the recruitment centre, their *mobile phones* are taken away, citing the *special security regime* of the recruitment centre building. In reality, they are deprived of contact with their families and any communication with the ‘*outside world*’ is

¹⁶ Romanenko, V. (2025). State Bureau of Investigations: Military unit commander created a ‘command post on paper’ to earn money from payments. *Ukrainska Pravda*. August 14, 2025. Source: www.pravda.com.ua/news/2025/08/14/7526096

restricted. In other words, psychological pressure is exerted on conscripts to force them to decide to undergo military service and to ensure that none of their relatives or lawyers can interfere with their illegal conscription.

Whereas previously the *principle of territoriality* applied, now, as a rule, conscripts are taken away from their place of residence or stay, but within the same region. This is also done so that neither relatives nor lawyers can find the person's whereabouts, and so that no relatives can prevent the illegal mobilisation. By the time relatives and lawyers begin searching for the conscript, the illegal mobilisation process will already have taken place, and the conscript will have already left for the military unit's training centre.

In the past two months of 2025, the mobilisation process takes 3–5 hours, i.e. from the moment of *busification* and to the delivery of the conscript to the recruitment centre to dispatch to the military unit's training centre.

At this time, the *military medical commission procedure*, which is a decisive factor in determining fitness for military service, sometimes takes *several minutes*. Of the entire military medical commission procedure, only the blood test is actually performed.

Even if the conscript has medical documents certifying illnesses or diagnoses with him, the documents are *not* considered in the best-case scenario. In the worst case, the medical documents are *taken away* illegally from the conscript by the staff of the recruitment centres and may even be *thrown away* and not returned. So, while relatives are getting duplicates of medical documents, the conscript will already be in the military and serving.

To protect a client from illegal mobilisation, it is not enough for a lawyer to know all the intricacies of military or mobilisation legislation, which is changing rapidly for the worse and restricting human rights.

Lawyers must know all the nuances of the work of each recruitment centre in which they defend their clients. A lawyer must not be afraid to go against the '*system*' of recruitment centres and, as part of defending their client, must open at least several criminal cases against the head of the recruitment centre for: 1) for the illegal deprivation of the client's liberty; 2) forging the client's military medical commission document; 3) torturing the client; 4) illegally taking blood from the client; 5) obstructing the provision of medical assistance by military personnel; 6) obstructing the lawyer's activities by military personnel; 7) threats, or

violence against the lawyer; 8) beating the lawyer while defending the client.

The lawyer must publicise the case in defence of the client and highlight the illegal actions on *social media*. Recruitment centres are not so much afraid of breaking the law as they are afraid that their illegal actions will be exposed on social media. Each recruitment centre is a '*separate state*' within the Ukrainian state, with its own unwritten rules and laws. The only effective means of defending a client that remains for a lawyer is to publicise the violation of the law on social media and raise awareness of each specific case, as well as to file complaints with all possible law enforcement agencies.

When appealing the illegal mobilisation procedure in *court*, Ukrainian courts also quietly side with the recruitment centres, citing in their decisions the inevitability of military service and the fact that they are delaying the consideration of the case beyond the two months provided for by law, dragging out court proceedings for up to six months or even a year, citing the courts' heavy workload. And while the court proceedings challenging the illegal mobilisation are being appealed, the person still has to perform military service.

It is no secret that during martial law, in the process of mobilisation, conscripts pay large sums of money to avoid military service.

Moreover, the rates vary greatly.

The scale of corruption has increased.

To avoid serving, conscripts pay large sums of money. There are certain individuals who offer intermediary services between conscripts and recruitment centres or military units and offer various types of '*services*', from leaving recruitment centres to crossing the border. The rates for so-called '*exemption from mobilisation*' range from 7 to 20 thousand dollars.

No one can interfere with the armed forces of Ukraine or mobilisation

However, mobilisation must be carried out in accordance with the law; even under martial law, no one is entitled to violate the law.

IMPACT OF THE WAR ON SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTES¹⁷

Just as the *armed forces* are considered a mirror of society, conflict is a manifestation of relationships within a collective, and *war* is an effective manifestation of all social processes and relationships.

Everything, both positive and negative, in social relations and political processes that was not noticeable in peacetime, which people tried not to notice during Russia's covert war against Ukraine since 2014, became apparent and almost impossible to ignore after the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

Various problems inherent in any society, which are entirely solvable and not critical in peacetime, have intensified after the invasion and are increasingly affecting social life and the state.

These issues have been compounded by the turmoil caused directly by military action. In fact, they should be mentioned first as the most significant factors of social change.

The *mass displacement* of millions of people caused by the War is one of the most decisive factors. More than a third of Ukraine's population was forced to leave their homes, searching for safety in the central and western regions and abroad.

Although this displacement took place in several waves – the early episodes began as early as 2014 were followed by a mass exodus after the full-scale invasion in 2022 – the bulk of internally displaced persons and those who left the country took place in 2022 and continues to grow slowly with the gradual advance of Russian troops.

Internally displaced persons in Ukraine often face significant bureaucratic obstacles and limited access to social services, while refugees who have crossed international borders face problems with integration, language barriers and uncertainty about long-term residence.

¹⁷ **Mykola Polovyi**, Ph.D in History, D.Sc. in Political Science, Professor (Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University Bratislava); **Olena Chaltseva**, Ph.D in History, D.Sc. in Political Science, Professor, Head of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration (Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

Host countries, including Poland, Germany, and the United Kingdom, have responded with various measures to accommodate Ukrainian refugees, including visa programmes and temporary protection directives that provide housing and social support. However, despite these initiatives, many refugees still face difficulties entering the labour market and overcoming the *psychological trauma* of forced displacement. Conditions for refugees are also complicated by the risks of *exploitation*, including *human trafficking*.

The relationship between the intention to return home and permanent integration in countries of asylum remains complex: although many refugees express a desire to eventually return, the ongoing danger and economic instability in Ukraine suggest that a significant proportion may remain abroad permanently, thereby changing the country's demographic landscape for the long term.

One of the most enduring consequences of the War is its profound impact on Ukraine's *demographic trajectory*.

Before the invasion, Ukraine was already experiencing a prolonged population decline, exacerbated by low birth rates and significant emigration; the War has dramatically accelerated these trends. Mass population displacement – both internal and international – has led to an ageing demographic profile and a shrinking labour force, creating significant challenges for both current production and post-war reconstruction when it begins.

This will have a particular impact on the *social security system*. In addition, the uneven distribution of refugees by gender – the vast majority of whom are women and children due to restrictions on conscription for men – has changed family structures and labour market dynamics.

This demographic imbalance puts additional pressure on social services and creates long-term challenges in the areas of *healthcare* and the *pension system*.

The *education sector* in Ukraine has been severely and profoundly destabilised by the War. Schools in combat zones have been damaged or used for military and humanitarian purposes, while mass displacement has forced children and adolescents to leave their familiar learning environments and move to makeshift educational settings or educational institutions in host countries.

The *secondary and higher education system* in Ukraine-controlled territory is also feeling the impact of the War in the form of disruption to

the usual face-to-face learning regime, a reduction and/or change in the staffing of secondary and higher education institutions, aberrations in the goals of students due to shifts in social norms and the uncertainty of the socio-political situation caused by the war.

The main problem is the drastic reduction in the *planning horizon* for all participants in the educational process as a result of a similar process in the social life of the entire country. Uncertainty about tomorrow and the perception of a year's perspective as a decade of peacetime breed apathy and a lack of planning for one's own future, which is reflected in a decline in motivation to learn among students and to teach among teachers.

In the long term, this will have significant negative consequences for the *development of human capital* and the future *competitiveness of graduates* in the labour market, further exacerbating demographic concerns and economic uncertainty in the country. It should be noted that, despite the absence of a threat to the lives of Ukrainians who have left the country, the factor of reduced planning horizons also has a negative impact on their *educational motivation* and is reflected in the corresponding results.

The *forced migration* of millions of highly skilled workers, combined with the destruction of industrial enterprises and ongoing security issues, has led to a significant reduction in the available labour force and a drastic decline in Ukraine's *labour market*.

In addition, the displacement of working-age citizens contributes to a '*brain drain*' that undermines the prospects for future economic recovery and further exacerbates long-term demographic problems. The mobilisation of men of prime working age is already having an additional impact on the country's economic development and will continue to do so for a long time to come.

Obviously, the War has led to a large-scale *psychological crisis*. More than half of displaced individuals and refugees have symptoms of PTSD, with women with children and those who have lost loved ones being particularly vulnerable. Chronic stress, uncertainty and the constant risk of violence are destroying adaptation mechanisms.

Against the backdrop of the above-mentioned processes, there is a *paradoxical increase in social cohesion*, manifested, for example, in the volunteer movement and mass donations to the army, and *social atomisation*, which causes, among other things, the phenomenon of

'*draft dodging*' and sometimes blatant manifestations of corruption and embezzlement.

As a result of the military actions, Ukraine's *economic system* has become extremely vulnerable and dependent on external support, and this state of affairs is compounded by greater uncertainty in people's lives as a result of the military actions.

This leads to a gradual *accumulation of pessimism* and a *syndrome of helplessness* at the general social level, which will take a long time to overcome after the war ends.

Thus, in contemporary Ukrainian society, it is easy to see all the possible negative features of social life, as well as to identify many seeds of a strong, self-sufficient society.

The main problem, not only scientific but also practical, remains which set of social traits – flaws or advantages – will prevail in Ukraine under the influence of the changing processes of wartime.

IMPACT OF THE WAR ON HUMAN RIGHTS: RESTRICTIONS AND DEROGATIONS¹⁸

Ukrainian statehood has existed and transformed for more than ten years in conditions of Russian armed aggression. Although Ukraine's institutional system has been constantly tested by political crises and corruption, and traditions of constitutionalism were not well established before the War, the State is a developing constitutional democracy. The political and legal reality that has developed over more than ten years of War has demonstrated the ability of Ukrainian constitutional institutions to function in unprecedented security and humanitarian conditions. Even during a full-scale invasion, which included missiles and bomb strikes across the country and the advance of enemy infantry along a 1200 km front line, public authorities and civil society institutions continued to function. The judicial system, which had undergone significant reforms during the War in 2016-2017, proved to be fully prepared for such challenges and, after the full-scale invasion, coped with all the challenges of wartime without undergoing any organisational changes. Of course, Ukraine's constitutional design has undergone significant changes aimed at adapting the constitutional system to wartime conditions.

Among these changes, the following are key.

1. Introduction of martial law and general mobilisation

This involves restricting certain rights and freedoms of citizens, such as freedom of movement, assembly and demonstration, in order to ensure the security and defence capability of the state. As a first and necessary condition, Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 64/2022 of 24 February 2022 stipulates that, in connection with the introduction of martial law in Ukraine, the constitutional rights and freedoms of individuals and citizens provided for in Articles 30-34, 38, 39, 41-44, and 53 of the Constitution of Ukraine may be restricted, and temporary restrictions on the rights

¹⁸ *Albert Yezerov*, Judge of Supreme Court (Ukraine), Ph.D in Law, Associate Professor

and legitimate interests of legal entities may be introduced to the extent necessary to ensure the possibility of introducing and implementing the measures of the legal regime of martial law provided for in part one of Article 8 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On the Legal Regime of Martial Law’. At the same time, the Decree obliges the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to ensure that the UN Secretary-General and officials of foreign states are informed in the established manner about the introduction of martial law in Ukraine, about restrictions on human and civil rights and freedoms, which constitute a derogation from the obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and about the limits of these derogations and the reasons for adopting such a decision. The implementation of general mobilisation required legislative changes and the establishment of a system of relevant public bodies.

2. Changes in public administration

During wartime, there is an objective centralisation of power and an increase in the powers of public authorities, which allows for faster decision-making in critical situations. Thus, the President of Ukraine acts as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (he has this status permanently, but during wartime it becomes titular). The functions of day-to-day governance are taken over by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and the National Security and Defence Council. The government continues to function but the role of the Ministry of Defence is strengthened. The Armed Forces and other military formations are given expanded powers to protect national security. Local authorities form defence councils and assist the military command in introducing and implementing measures under the legal regime of martial law.

3. Financial and economic changes

Certain economic activities are being frozen, and budget expenditures are being revised in favour of defence and recovery. At the level of constitutional doctrine, enhanced social protection for military personnel has been introduced. All these and other factors have a significant impact on the legal status of individuals and, consequently, on the future functioning of Ukraine as a constitutional state, where the activities of the state are limited by human rights.

An important guarantee for the realisation of constitutional rights and freedoms of individuals and citizens is Article 64 of the Constitution of Ukraine, which stipulates that such rights and freedoms cannot be restricted, except in cases provided for by the Constitution of Ukraine. This provision allows for the establishment of certain restrictions on rights and freedoms in times of war or emergency, specifying the duration of such restrictions.

At the same time, in accordance with Article 15 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, a High Contracting Party may, in time of war, take measures derogating from its obligations under this Convention, and in the event of exercising this right, it must inform the Secretary General of the Council of Europe of the measures taken. Such notification shall be made by letter, accompanied by copies of the legal documents under which the emergency measures will be implemented.

Therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine periodically and regularly sends to international organisations information prepared by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine on derogations from its obligations under the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Covenant, including on the extension of martial law. In accordance with the provisions of the Convention and the Covenant, Ukraine has been providing such information since 2015 in connection with the Russian Federation's armed aggression against Ukraine. This regular practice has continued since February 2022 in connection with the start of a full-scale invasion and the introduction of martial law in Ukraine. In April 2024, Ukraine once again clarified the list of existing restrictions and reduced it. This notification was the twentieth since 2015. All notifications made by Ukraine regarding the derogation from its obligations are publicly available.

The notification itself does not introduce emergency measures but is only a means of informing the Council of Europe of the possibility of their introduction in accordance with the national legislation of the High Contracting Party.

In accordance with Article 3 of the Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 64/2022 of 24 February 2022 'On the introduction of martial law in Ukraine' in connection with the introduction of martial law in Ukraine, the constitutional rights and freedoms of individuals and citizens, provided for in Articles 30–34, 38, 39, 41–44, and 53 of the

Constitution of Ukraine may be restricted, and temporary restrictions on the rights and legitimate interests of persons provided for in Article 8 of the Law of Ukraine No. 389 of 12 May 2015 ‘On the Legal Regime of Martial Law’ may be introduced.

Considering the above and in accordance with Article 15 of the Convention, the Council of Europe was informed about the introduction of martial law in Ukraine, the provisions of legislation that apply during this regime, the measures that may be applied by the authorised bodies during martial law, and a list of articles of the Convention and its Appendices was provided, from which, in connection with the possible application of the above measures, a corresponding derogation is permitted, namely: Articles 3, 8(3), 9, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27 of the Covenant, as well as Articles 4 (3), 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16 of the Convention, Articles 1, 2, 3 of the Additional Protocol to the Convention, Article 2 of Protocol No. 4 to the Convention.

Considering the requirement to notify such measures without delay, the above information on the introduction of martial law and the corresponding derogation was prepared and sent to the Council of Europe as soon as possible after the introduction of martial law. It was posted on the Council of Europe website on 1 March 2022.

According to the explanation to Article 15 of the Convention, derogation from obligations does not necessarily mean that the State will be unable to guarantee the rights enshrined in the Convention. In practice, when declaring a derogation from its obligations, the Contracting State usually stated that the measures it was taking ‘may’ entail a derogation from its obligations under the Convention.

Possible derogation is also provided for in Article 4 of the Covenant, which states that in times of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation and the existence of which is officially proclaimed, the States Parties to the Covenant may take measures derogating from their obligations under the Covenant only to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with their other obligations under international law and do not entail discrimination solely on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin.

This provision shall not constitute grounds for any derogation from articles 6, 7, 8 (paragraphs 1 and 2), 11, 15, 16 and 18. Any State Party to the Covenant which avails itself of the right of derogation shall

immediately inform the other States Parties to the Covenant, through the Secretary-General of the United Nations, of the provisions from which it has derogated and the reasons for its decision. It shall also notify, through the same intermediary, the date on which it ceases such derogation.

Thus, key human rights instruments allow for temporary derogations by states from their obligations to ensure certain human rights, subject to certain criteria.

On 21 May 2015, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Resolution 'On Approval of the Statement of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine 'On Ukraine's Derogation from Certain Obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms'.

In this resolution, the Ukrainian parliament approved the Statement on the withdrawal from certain obligations specified in paragraph 3 of Article 2, Articles 9, 12, 14 and 17 of the Covenant and Articles 5, 6, 8 and 13 of the Convention for the period until the complete cessation of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation, namely until the withdrawal of all illegal armed formations controlled, managed and financed by the Russian Federation, Russian occupation troops and their military equipment from the territory of Ukraine, the restoration of Ukraine's full control over its state border, and the restoration of constitutional order in the occupied territory of Ukraine.

In this Statement, among other things, Ukraine noted that the Russian Federation, as a state that has effectively occupied and controls part of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, is responsible for respecting and protecting human rights in these territories under both international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The Statement also emphasises that the ongoing armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, accompanied by the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity by both the regular Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and illegal armed formations controlled and financed by the Russian Federation, constitutes a public danger that threatens the life of the nation within the meaning of Article 4(1) of the Covenant and Article 15(1) of the Convention. To ensure the vital interests of society and the State in the context of armed aggression, public authorities are forced to take decisions that constitute a derogation from Ukraine's obligations under the Covenant and the Convention.

In addition to such declarations, the Statement sets out obvious measures that formally constitute a derogation from international human rights standards but appear to be objective and necessary in the circumstances. For example, it states that on 12 August 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law ‘On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine ‘On Combating Terrorism‘ regarding the preventive detention of individuals involved in terrorist activities in the area of the anti-terrorist operation for a period exceeding 72 hours’.

In accordance with this Law, in the area of a long-term anti-terrorist operation, as an exception, individuals involved in terrorist activities may be preventively detained for a period exceeding 72 hours but not more than 30 days, with the consent of the prosecutor and without a court order. The application of the provisions of this Law necessitates a certain departure by Ukraine from its obligations under Article 2(3), Articles 9 and 14 of the Covenant and Articles 5, 6 and 13 of the Convention.

At the same time, the application of such provisions exclusively during anti-terrorist operations in exceptional cases with the aim of preventing serious crimes is justified by the acute danger caused by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and the actions of terrorist groups supported by the Russian Federation.

In addition, it is noted that on 12 August 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law ‘On Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine Regarding the Special Regime of Pre-trial Investigation in Conditions of Martial Law, State of Emergency or in the Area of Anti-Terrorist Operations’.

In accordance with this Law, a special regime of pre-trial investigation is introduced for the duration of the anti-terrorist operation, according to which the powers of investigating judges, as defined by the current Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine, are temporarily transferred to the relevant prosecutors, who acquire additional procedural rights. The special regime for pre-trial investigation applies exclusively in the area of anti-terrorist operations and provided that the investigating judge is unable to exercise the powers defined by the current Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine.

The application of the provisions of this Law necessitates a derogation from Ukraine’s obligations under Article 2(3), Articles 9, 14 and 17 of the Covenant and Articles 5, 6, 8 and 13 of the Convention.

At the same time, the absence of functioning courts in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, caused by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and the actions of terrorist groups supported by the Russian Federation, is the limit that allows the powers of investigating judges to be transferred to prosecutors in conditions that threaten the existence of the nation.

Through this Statement, Ukraine also informed the international community that on 12 August 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law ‘On the Administration of Justice and Criminal Proceedings in Connection with the Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations’.

In accordance with this Law, for the duration of the anti-terrorist operation, the territorial jurisdiction of court cases subject to the jurisdiction of courts located in the area of the anti-terrorist operation and the jurisdiction of criminal offences committed in the area of the anti-terrorist operation were changed in cases where it was impossible to conduct a pre-trial investigation. The application of the provisions of this Law necessitates a certain departure from Ukraine’s obligations under Article 14 of the Covenant and Article 6 of the Convention. At the same time, the actual absence of functioning courts and pre-trial investigation bodies in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, caused by the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and the actions of terrorist groups supported by the Russian Federation, is the limit that allows for a change in the territorial jurisdiction of court cases and the jurisdiction of criminal offences in conditions that threaten the existence of the nation.

Ukraine also reported that on 3 February 2015, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law ‘*On Military-Civilian Administrations*’.

In accordance with this Law, military-civilian administrations were established as temporary state bodies operating in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as part of the Anti-Terrorist Centre under the Security Service of Ukraine and designed to ensure the implementation of the Constitution and laws of Ukraine, ensure the security and normalisation of the population’s life, law and order, participating in countering sabotage and terrorist acts, and preventing a humanitarian catastrophe in the area of the anti-terrorist operation.

This Law grants military-civilian administrations the authority, in particular, to establish restrictions on staying on the streets and in other public places at certain times of the day without specific documents;

temporarily restrict or prohibit the movement of vehicles and pedestrians on streets, roads, and areas; organise the verification of identity documents of individuals and, if necessary, the inspection of belongings, vehicles, luggage and cargo, office premises and citizens' homes, except for the restrictions established by the Constitution of Ukraine.

The application of the provisions of this Law necessitates a derogation from Ukraine's obligations under Articles 9, 12 and 17 of the International Covenant, Articles 5 and 8 of the Convention and Article 2 of Protocol No. 4 to the Convention.

At the same time, the conduct of an anti-terrorist operation with the aim of averting the threat of destruction of the nation by armed aggression by the Russian Federation is the limit that allows for the temporary restriction of freedom of movement and the right to respect for private life.

Over the following periods, Ukraine repeatedly informed the Council of Europe and other international institutions about the state of affairs regarding human rights compliance during the armed aggression. For example, the Note of the Permanent Mission of Ukraine dated 29 November 2019, registered by the General Secretariat on 3 December 2019, contained a notification and partial withdrawal of the derogation.

With this Note, Ukraine informed the international community that, given that the Russian Federation is committing a crime of aggression against Ukraine and temporarily occupying part of its territory with armed formations of the Russian Federation, on 18 January 2018, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law 'On the Specifics of State Policy to Ensure Ukraine's State Sovereignty over the Temporarily Occupied Territories in Donetsk and Luhansk Regions' (hereinafter referred to as Law No. 2268), which aims to define the specifics of state policy to ensure Ukraine's state sovereignty in the temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. To ensure Ukraine's state sovereignty over the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, state bodies and their officials, acting on the grounds, within the powers and in the manner provided for by the Constitution and laws of Ukraine, shall take measures to ensure national security and defence, repel and deter armed aggression by the Russian Federation (Article 5.3 of Law No. 2268). Measures to ensure national security and defence, repel and deter armed aggression by the Russian Federation in the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions include measures

to restore the territorial integrity of Ukraine, which are carried out by security and defence bodies, other public bodies of Ukraine, and their officials (Article 7.1 of Law No. 2268).

The initiation and refinement of measures to ensure national security and defence, repel and deter armed aggression by the Russian Federation in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions are determined by separate decisions of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (Article 8.3 of Law No. 2268). The President of Ukraine, as Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, by his Decree No. 116 of 30 April 2018, in accordance with Article 8. 3 of Law No. 2268, enacted the Decision of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine (hereinafter referred to as the NSDC) on the commencement of national security and defence measures to repel and deter the armed aggression of the Russian Federation in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (hereinafter referred to as the Joint Forces Operation (JFO)).

In accordance with Article 18 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On Combating Terrorism’ and Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 166 of 30 April 2018, a decision was made to terminate the anti-terrorist operation in connection with the launch of the JFO.

Thus, on 30 April 2018, the anti-terrorist operation was terminated and measures were initiated to ensure national security and defence, repel and deter armed aggression by the Russian Federation in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (JFO).

The Note also states that, in accordance with Article 5 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On Military-Civilian Administrations’ (as amended by Law No. 2268), military-civilian administrations in the area of the Joint Forces Operation, with the consent of the Commander of the Joint Forces, have the right to:

- 1) impose restrictions on staying on the streets and other public places without documents;
- 2) temporarily restrict or prohibit the movement of vehicles and pedestrians on streets, roads and areas of territory;
- 3) organise the verification of documents certifying the identity of individuals and, if necessary, the inspection of belongings, vehicles, luggage and cargo, office premises and citizens’ homes, except for the restrictions established by the Constitution of Ukraine.

In security zones adjacent to combat zones, a special procedure is in place that grants security and defence agencies and other public bodies

of Ukraine the special powers necessary to carry out this operation (Article 8.2 of Law No. 2268). To ensure the vital interests of society and the state during the period of repelling armed aggression in security zones adjacent to combat zones, military personnel, law enforcement officers and persons specified in Article 8 of Law No. 2268 who are involved in the implementation of the JFO measures in accordance with the Constitution and legislation of Ukraine, have the right to:

1) use weapons and special means in cases of extreme necessity against persons who have committed or are committing offences or other actions that impede the fulfilment of the lawful requirements of persons involved in the implementation of the JFO measures, or actions related to unauthorised attempts to enter the zone where these measures are being implemented;

2) detain and deliver to the National Police of Ukraine the persons referred to in paragraph 1 of this part;

3) check documents certifying the identity of citizens and officials, and in the absence of documents, detain them to establish their identity;

4) conduct personal searches of citizens, searches of items in their possession, vehicles, and items they are transporting;

5) temporarily restrict or prohibit the movement of vehicles and pedestrians on streets and roads, prevent vehicles and citizens from entering certain areas and facilities, evict citizens from certain areas and facilities, and the vehicles;

6) enter residential and other premises, land plots belonging to citizens, areas, and premises of enterprises, institutions and organisations to inspect vehicles for the purposes of conducting environmental protection;

7) use for official purposes means of communication and vehicles, including special ones, belonging to citizens (with their consent), enterprises, institutions and organisations, except for vehicles of diplomatic, consular and other missions of foreign states and international organisations.

The presence of individuals not involved in such activities in the area of the Joint Forces Operation may be temporarily restricted by the commander of the Joint Forces for the duration of such activities (Article 12.4 of Law No. 2268). The implementation of these measures may entail a derogation from Ukraine's obligations under Articles 9, 12, and 17 of the Covenant, Articles 5 and 8 of the Convention, and Article

2 of Protocol No. 4 thereto, and necessitates the continuation of such derogation.

In the context of war and in order to ensure human rights, it was necessary to implement certain organisational measures in the field of justice. Thus, in accordance with Article 2.8 of Law No. 2268, the procedure for territorial jurisdiction of cases falling within the jurisdiction of courts located in the temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Luhansk regions for the duration of the Joint Forces Operation is established in accordance with Law of Ukraine No. 1632-VII of 12 August 2014 ‘On the Administration of Justice and Criminal Proceedings in Connection with the Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations’ (hereinafter referred to as Law No. 1632).

As stated in the aforementioned Article 2.8 of Law No. 2268, Law No. 1632 defines measures for legal regulation and aims to ensure access to justice for citizens and legal entities.

In accordance with Article 1 of Law No. 1632, due to the inability of certain courts to administer justice, the territorial jurisdiction of court cases is changed, and civil cases, administrative offences, administrative cases, commercial and criminal proceedings are considered by local and appellate courts as determined by the President of the Supreme Court. Issues relating to the competence of the investigating judge in criminal proceedings at the pre-trial investigation stage and carried out in the area of the Joint Forces Operation, in the event of the impossibility of administering justice, shall be considered by investigating judges of local courts of general jurisdiction as determined by the President of the Supreme Court (Article 1.2 of Law No. 1632).

The issue of access to justice in territories not controlled by Ukraine was considered by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the cases of *Khlebiuk v. Ukraine* and *Tsezar and Others v. Ukraine*, in which the ECtHR found that the applicants’ inability to come to court at their place of residence did not violate the essence of the right of access to court and ruled that there had been no violation of Article 6 of the Convention.

In paragraph 52 of the judgment in the case of *Tsezar and Others v. Ukraine* (applications nos. 73590/14, 73593/14, 73820/14, 4635/15, 5200/15, 5206/15 and 7289/15 of 13 February 2018), the ECtHR recognised that state authorities may sometimes face certain difficulties in ensuring the proper functioning of the courts in certain regions due

to ongoing hostilities in those regions. Nevertheless, the Court noted that state authorities must take certain measures to resolve the problem, for example, by granting special permission to file lawsuits in courts in another region of the state. Thus, the ECtHR does not consider the above measures to be a violation by Ukraine of its obligations under Article 6 of the Convention.

In a communication contained in verbal note No. 31011/32-119-42777 from the Permanent Representation of Ukraine to the Council of Europe, dated 17 June 2022, Ukraine transmitted to the Secretary General, on behalf of the Government of Ukraine, further information on measures derogating from its obligations under the Convention in accordance with Law of Ukraine No. 2201 of 14 April 2022 ‘On Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine on improving the procedure for conducting criminal proceedings under martial law’, which sets out a new version of Article 615 ‘Special regime for criminal proceedings under martial law’ of the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine.

In accordance with this law, during martial law:

– if there is no objective possibility of continuing or completing a pre-trial investigation and referring the case to court with an indictment, a motion for the application of coercive measures of a medical or educational nature, a motion for exemption from criminal liability – the term of the pre-trial investigation in criminal proceedings shall be suspended on the basis of a reasoned decision of the prosecutor, setting out the relevant circumstances, and shall be resumed if the grounds for suspension cease to exist. Prior to the suspension of the pre-trial investigation, the prosecutor is obliged to decide on the extension of the period of detention (subparagraph 3 of part 1 of Article 615);

– if there is no objective possibility of performing procedural actions within the time limits specified in Article 220 ‘Consideration of motions during pre-trial investigation’, Article 221 ‘Familiarisation with the materials of the pre-trial investigation before its completion’, Article 304 ‘Time limit for filing a complaint against a decision, action or inaction of an investigator or prosecutor, his return or refusal to open proceedings in a case’, Article 306 ‘Procedure for considering complaints against decisions, actions or inaction of an investigator or prosecutor during a pre-trial investigation’, Article 308 ‘Appeals regarding failure to comply with reasonable time limits’, Article 376 ‘Announcement of a court decision’, Article 395 ‘Procedure and time limits for appeals’,

Article 426 ‘Procedure and time limits for cassation appeals’ of the Criminal Procedure Code, – such procedural actions shall be carried out immediately, if possible, but no later than 15 days after the termination or cancellation of martial law (subparagraph 5 of part 1 of Article 615);

– if there are cases of detention of a person without a ruling by an investigating judge or court, as specified in Article 208 ‘*Detention by an authorised official*’ of the Criminal Procedure Code, or there are reasonable circumstances indicating that evasion is possible in order to avoid criminal liability of a person suspected of committing a crime – an authorised official has the right to detain such a person without a decision of an investigating judge, court or resolution of the head of the prosecution authorities. The period of detention without a decision of an investigating judge, court or resolution of the head of the prosecution authorities during martial law may not exceed 216 hours from the moment of detention, as determined in accordance with Article 209 of the Criminal Procedure Code (subparagraph 6 of part 1 of Article 615);

– testimony obtained during the interrogation of a witness or victim, including the simultaneous interrogation of two or more persons, in criminal proceedings conducted under martial law may be used as evidence in court only if the course and results of such interrogations were recorded using available technical means of video recording. Testimony obtained during the interrogation of a suspect, including the simultaneous interrogation of two or more persons who have already been interrogated, in criminal proceedings conducted under martial law, may be used as evidence in court only if the defence counsel participated in such interrogation and the course and results of the interrogation were recorded using available technical means of video recording (subparagraph 11 of paragraph 1 of Article 615);

– the investigator or prosecutor shall ensure the participation of the defence counsel in a specific procedural action, including, if the defence counsel is unable to appear, through the use of technical means (video, audio) to ensure the remote participation of the defence counsel. The investigator or prosecutor shall ensure the participation of an interpreter to translate the explanations, testimony or documents of the suspect or victim at the earliest opportunity. If circumstances prevent the participation of an interpreter in criminal proceedings, the investigator or prosecutor shall have the right to personally translate explanations,

testimony or documents if he or she speaks one of the languages of the suspect or victim (subparagraph 12 of part 1 of Article 615).

The provisions of Article 87 ‘Inadmissibility of evidence obtained as a result of a substantial violation of human rights and freedoms’ and Article 95 ‘Testimony’ of the Criminal Procedure Code shall apply considering the specific features set out in Article 615 of the Criminal Procedure Code (as amended by Law No. 2201).

The provisions of Article 87, ‘Inadmissibility of evidence obtained as a result of a substantial violation of human rights and freedoms’, and Article 95, ‘Testimony’, of the Criminal Procedure Code shall apply, considering the specific features set forth in Article 615 of the Criminal Procedure Code (as amended by Law No. 2201). The application of Law No. 2201 necessitates a departure from Articles 2 (paragraph 3), 9, 14 and 17 of the Covenant and Articles 5, 6, 8 and 13 of the Convention.

On 5 April 2024, the derogation contained in Note No. 31011/32-119-46585 from the Permanent Mission of Ukraine was partially withdrawn regarding Articles 4.3, 9, 13, 14 and 16 of the Convention.

In particular, it states that in connection with the introduction of martial law in Ukraine, the constitutional rights and freedoms of individuals and citizens provided for in Articles 30-34, 38, 39, 41, 44 and 53 of the Constitution of Ukraine may be temporarily restricted for the duration of martial law; temporary restrictions on the rights of individuals may also be introduced to the extent necessary to ensure the implementation of the measures of the legal regime of martial law provided for in part one of Article 8 of the Law of Ukraine ‘On the Legal Regime of Martial Law’.

The above-mentioned articles of the Constitution, which may be subject to restrictions, guarantee the inviolability of the home (Article 30); the secrecy of correspondence, telephone conversations and other communications (Article 31); non-interference in personal and family life (Article 32); freedom of movement, free choice of place of residence, the right to freely leave and return to the territory of Ukraine (Article 33); the right to freedom of thought and speech, free expression of views and beliefs, and the right to freely collect, store, use and disseminate information (Article 34); the right to participate in the management of public affairs and referendums, to freely elect and be elected to state and local authorities, and equal access to public service (Article 38); the right to hold assemblies, meetings, marches and demonstrations, as well as the

right to strike (Articles 39, 44); the right to own, use and dispose of one's property (Article 41); the right to entrepreneurship and work (Articles 42, 43); the right to education (Article 53).

In areas where martial law has been imposed, the military command may implement measures of the legal regime of martial law, in particular: compulsorily expropriate property that is privately or communally owned for the needs of the state under martial law, in accordance with the procedure established by law and issue relevant documents in this regard; introduce a curfew (a ban on being on the streets and in other public places during certain periods of time without specially issued passes and certificates) in accordance with the established procedure; establish a special regime for entry and exit in accordance with the established procedure, restrict the freedom of movement of citizens, foreigners and stateless persons, as well as the movement of vehicles; inspect belongings, vehicles, luggage and cargo, office premises and citizens' homes in accordance with the established procedure, except restrictions established by the Constitution of Ukraine; prohibit peaceful assemblies, rallies, marches, demonstrations, and other mass events; establish, in accordance with the established procedure, a ban, or restriction on the choice of place of stay or residence of persons in the territory where martial law is in force; prohibit citizens who are on military or special registration from changing their place of residence without proper permission; establish a military housing tax for individuals and legal entities.

The possibility of applying the above measures entails a departure from the obligations provided for in Articles 12, 17, 19, 21, 25 of the Covenant and Articles 8, 10, 11 of the Convention, Articles 1, 2, 3 of the Additional Protocol to the Convention, Article 2 of Protocol No. 4 to the Convention.

Derogation from the requirements under the previously specified Articles 3, 8(3), 9, 13, 20, 22, 24, 26, 27 of the Covenant and Articles 4(3), 9, 13, 14, 16 of the Convention is repealed.

Thus, in Ukraine's declaration of derogation from certain obligations under the Convention, submitted on 4 April 2024, the scope of the derogation was revised and reduced. This is important because, in the context of ongoing armed aggression, Ukraine is consciously renewing its obligations and increasing the scope of the rights and freedoms it can guarantee.

In Verbal Note No. 31011/32-119-9327 of the Permanent Representation of Ukraine to the Council of Europe dated 27 January 2025, updated information was provided on measures to derogate from its obligations under Article 2, paragraph 3, Articles 9, 14 and 17 of the Covenant and Articles 5, 6, 8 and 13 of the Convention. It is reported that, in accordance with Decision No. 8-r(II)/2024 of the Constitutional Court of 18 July 2024, part six of Article 615 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine ceased to have effect three months after the date of adoption of this Decision.

This part provided that in the event of martial law, if the term of a court decision on detention expired, and it was impossible for the court to consider the extension of the term of detention in accordance with the procedure established by the CPC, the preventive measure in the form of detention would be considered extended until the relevant issue was resolved by the court, but for no longer than two months.

At the same time, other provisions of this article, the possibility of applying which became the basis for the derogation, remain in force.

Thus, Article 615 of the CPC, considering the above changes, provides that in the event of the introduction of martial law:

- if it is not possible to draw up procedural documents on the conduct of investigative (search) or other procedural actions, the recording shall be carried out by technical means, with the subsequent drawing up of a protocol no later than 72 hours after the completion of these actions;

- if it is not possible to continue the proceedings, complete the pre-trial investigation and submit an indictment, a motion for the application of coercive measures of a medical or educational nature, a motion for the release of a person from criminal liability to the court, the term of the pre-trial investigation in criminal proceedings shall be suspended because of a reasoned decision of the prosecutor stating the relevant circumstances and shall be subject to continuation if the grounds for suspension no longer exist. Prior to the suspension of the pre-trial investigation, the prosecutor is obliged to decide on the extension of the period of detention;

- if it is not possible to perform procedural actions within the time limits specified in the CPC, such actions shall be performed immediately, where possible, but no later than 15 days after the termination or cancellation of martial law;

- if it is impossible to hold a preliminary court hearing, the preventive measure in the form of detention chosen by the investigating

judge or the head of the prosecution authorities during the pre-trial investigation shall be considered extended until it takes effect. The issue shall be resolved at a preliminary court hearing, but for no longer than two months;

- testimony obtained during the interrogation of a suspect in criminal proceedings may be used as evidence in court if the defence lawyer participated in the interrogation and its course and results were recorded by technical means of video recording. Video recording of the testimony of witnesses and victims obtained during the interrogation is also permitted;

- the investigator, prosecutor, and investigator are obliged to ensure: (i) the remote participation of the defence lawyer in a specific procedural action using technical means of video and audio communication if it is impossible for him to appear in person; (ii) the participation of an interpreter at the earliest opportunity in the translation of explanations, statements, or documents of the suspect or victim. If circumstances prevent the interpreter from participating, the investigator, inquiry officer or prosecutor is entitled to perform the relevant translation personally if they know one of the languages spoken by the suspect or victim.

The possibility of applying the above-mentioned provisions of Article 615 of the Code of Criminal Procedure necessitates a continued derogation from Ukraine's obligations under Article 2(3), Articles 9, 14 and 17 of the Covenant and Articles 5, 6, 8 and 13 of the Convention, without prejudice to the fundamental principles of fair trial and legal protection, including the principle of *ne bis in idem*.

Returning to the characterisation of Ukrainian constitutionalism during the war, we note that its very essence as a system of rights that limits the arbitrariness of the state is being seriously tested.

On the one hand, the state of political relations has an objective tendency towards the establishment of autocracy (at least during the war), while on the other hand, the mechanisms of the state and civil society institutions continue to perform their roles (albeit with varying degrees of effectiveness). Terms such as '*military constitutionalism*' or '*war constitutionalism*' are being introduced into scientific discourse as a special mechanism for the exercise of state power during wartime, which allows for derogations from the constitutional principles of the functioning of power provided for by the Constitution in peacetime.

In other words, war becomes a basis for rethinking those values whose inviolability in peacetime is obvious and beyond doubt, values that are a qualitative feature of the liberal human-centred approach to the exercise of public power.

To a certain extent, these concepts echo the doctrine of '*militant democracy*', which was first proposed by the renowned German constitutionalist K. Löwenstein in his 1937 article '*Militant Democracy and Fundamental Rights*'. Describing the catastrophic situation with the dominance of totalitarian extremist regimes on the European continent, he called on democratic countries to defend themselves, which he briefly characterised with the words 'fire must be fought with fire'. Its essence lies in banning political forces and movements of a fascist, communist or extremist nature (whose activities are aimed at supporting or promoting the suppression of citizens' rights and freedoms, contributing to national, racial, class or religious hatred, etc.) and developing other instruments for the self-defence of democracy.

The War has threatened not only Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also the very foundations of constitutionalism. Therefore, the mechanisms of modern constitutionalism must be flexible. Derogations from commitments to ensure human rights is one way to ensure such flexibility.

However, derogation from obligations does not necessarily mean that the State is unable to guarantee the rights enshrined in the Convention. In fact, in practice, when declaring a derogation from its obligations, the State usually states that the measures it is taking 'may' involve a derogation from its obligations under the Convention.

For this reason, whenever an applicant complains that his or her Convention rights have been violated during a period of derogation, the Court first examines whether the measures taken can be justified under the fundamental provisions of the Convention; and only if they cannot be justified in this way does the Court proceed to determine whether the derogation was lawful (*A. and Others v. the United Kingdom [GC]*, § 161; *Lawless v. Ireland (No. 3)*, § 15).

Ukraine's experience with derogation is unique in its scope and duration, as is the war in Ukraine for the European continent. The practice of the ECtHR, which will inevitably arise in the future in connection with the derogations from the obligations under the Convention made during the war, will give impetus to the development of European constitutionalism in extraordinary circumstances.

	Articles			Derogation			
	Constitution	Convention	Covenant	28.02.22	23.03.22	04.04.24	27.01.25
The right to life	27	2	6	Derogation is not possible in accordance with Article 15 of the Convention, except in cases of death as a result of lawful hostilities			
Prohibition of torture	28	3	7	Derogation is not possible under Article 15 of the Convention			
Prohibition of slavery and forced labour	43	4	8	Derogation from the prohibition of slavery is not possible under Article 15 of the Convention			
					The possibility of derogation is declared, for example, in the case of labour service	The derogation is cancelled and the article is restored in full	No changes
Right to liberty and security of person	29	5	9		The possibility of derogation is declared	No changes	Extended
Right to a fair trial	55	6	14		The possibility of derogation is declared	No changes	Extended
No punishment without law	29, 62	7	14, 15	Derogation is not possible under Article 15 of the Convention			

	Articles			Derogation			
	Constitution	Convention	Covenant	28.02.22	23.03.22	04.04.24	27.01.25
Right to respect for private and family life	31, 32	8	17	The possibility of derogation is declared	No changes	Derogation confirmed	Extended
Freedom of thought, conscience and religion	35	9	18	The possibility of derogation is declared	No changes	Derogation is cancelled; article restored to full force and effect	No changes
Freedom of expression	34	10	19	The possibility of derogation is stated	No changes	Derogation confirmed	No changes
Freedom of assembly and association	36, 39	11	21, 22	Declared on possibility of derogation	No changes	Derogation confirmed	No changes
Right to marriage	51	12	23	Without derogation	Without derogation	No indentation	No changes
The right to an effective remedy	55	13	14	The possibility of derogation is declared	The possibility of derogation is declared	The derogation is cancelled; the article is restored in full	The possibility of derogation is declared
Prohibition of discrimination	24	14	24, 26	The possibility of derogation is declared	No changes	Derogation is cancelled; the article restored in full	No changes

	Articles			Derogation			
	Constitution	Convention	Covenant	28.02.22	23.03.22	04.04.24	27.01.25
Restrictions on political activity of foreigners		16		The possibility of derogation is stated	No changes	Derogation is cancelled, the article restored in full	No changes
Prohibition of abuse of rights		17	5	No derogation	Without derogation	No derogation	No changes
Protection of property rights	41	1 of Protocol No. 1		The possibility of derogation is declared	No changes	No changes	No changes
Right to education	53	2 of Protocol No. 1		The possibility of derogation is declared	No changes	No changes	No changes
Right to free elections	71	3 of Protocol No. 1	25	The possibility of derogation is declared	No changes	No changes	No changes
Freedom of movement	33	2 of Protocol No. 4	12	Declared on possibility of derogation	No changes	No changes	No changes

FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION¹⁹

For our research, we use an important instrument – *the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)*, which is an index that scores and ranks countries by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, as assessed by experts and business executives.

The CPI generally defines corruption as an *‘abuse of entrusted power for private gain’*.

The index has been published annually by the Transparency International since 1995.

Since 2012, the Corruption Perceptions Index has been ranked on a scale from 100 (*very clean*) to 0 (*highly corrupt*).

As far as 2024 is concerned, Ukraine received 35 points out of a possible 100 in the Corruption Perceptions Index. In a new study by Transparency International, our country ranks 105th among 180 countries.

Serbia also scored 35 points in this year’s study.

The Dominican Republic is one point ahead of Ukraine, while Algeria, Brazil, Malawi, Nepal, Niger, Thailand, and Turkey scored one point less (*Figure 2*).

Thus, after a significant increase in three points in 2023, Ukraine has already lost some ground in the fight against corruption in 2024. The main drivers of change remain reforms aimed at European integration and the fulfilment of international commitments.

However, this year’s results signal a formal approach to the implementation of many reforms or a deliberate delay in their implementation. Therefore, the loss of points in 2024 indicates that a focus solely on the programmatic implementation of Ukraine’s commitments is not enough, and that the reforms that have been launched are not being implemented as well as planned.

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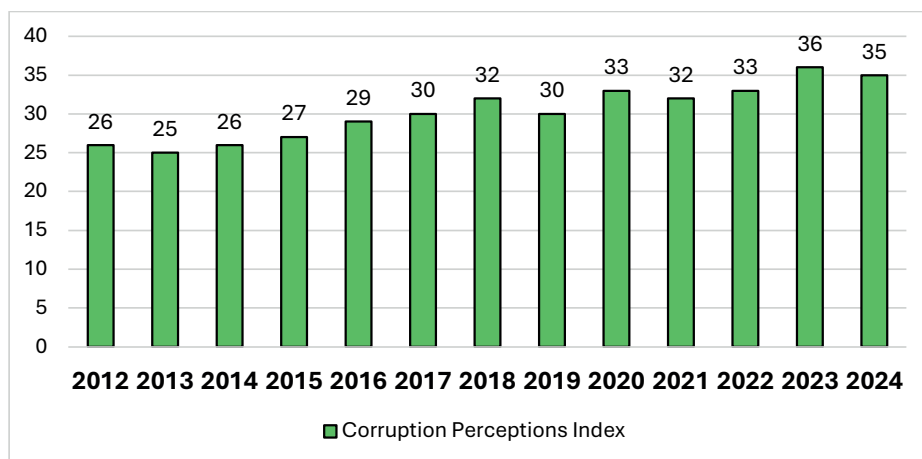


Figure 2. Corruption Perceptions Index - Ukraine

Given methodological limitations, many events in autumn 2024 and early 2025 did not affect this year's Index results. However, many of these events continue and reinforce Ukraine's negative trend in the fight against corruption and may lead to a further deterioration of our CPI score.

A distinctive feature of the Corruption Perceptions Index is that most of its studies consider events in dynamics, focusing on data from the last two years. That is why Ukraine's results should be projected not only for 2024, but also for 2023.

Over the past two years, despite the full-scale war, Ukraine has been able to take systematic steps to effectively fight corruption, which is reflected in the CPI results. The vast majority of these steps were driven by commitments made by Ukraine as part of its European integration. On the other hand, however, we have witnessed a number of negative events and decisions that have, to some extent, offset the effect of the anti-corruption measures taken by the authorities.

The creation of the Anti-Corruption Bureau and the establishment of truly independent anti-corruption institutions was a core requirement by the European Union for Ukraine to advance in its EU integration. The specialised prosecutorial unit is tasked with overseeing the National Anti-Corruption Bureau's adherence to legislation during investigations, and its prosecutors represent cases investigated by the NABU in court.

The heads of both bodies are selected independently through open competition²⁰.

On July 22, 2025, Law No. 4555 '*On Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine Regarding the Specifics of Pre-trial Investigation of Criminal Offences Related to the Disappearance of Persons Without a Trace Under Special Circumstances During Martial Law*' was adopted²¹.

As stated in the title of the law, it introduces certain amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) and the Law '*On the Prosecutor's Office*'.

First, it should be emphasised that the law was intended to weaken the role of the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office.

The Head of the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office has become a purely decorative figure in terms of his powers and now differs little from other deputies of the Prosecutor General.

He lost his status as Head of the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office and ceased to exercise the powers of the Head of the Prosecutor's Office provided for in the CPC in criminal proceedings falling within the jurisdiction of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine.

The Head of the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office has lost the power to appoint a prosecutor as a procedural supervisor in a specific criminal proceeding, to create a group of prosecutors and to appoint a senior prosecutor for such a group.

The Head of the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, as well as his first deputy and deputies, are now prohibited from supplementing, amending or withdrawing appeals or cassation complaints, motions for review of court decisions on the basis of newly discovered or exceptional circumstances submitted by them, heads, deputy heads of bodies or prosecutors. The Head of the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office also does not have the power to extend the term of a pre-trial investigation after a person has been notified of suspicion of committing a corruption offence.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch (2025). Ukraine: New Law Undercuts Independence of Anti-Corruption Bodies. *Human Rights Watch*. July 24, 2025. Source: www.hrw.org/news/2025/07/24/ukraine-new-law-undercuts-independence-of-anti-corruption-bodies

²¹ The bill was registered on January 16, 2025, under No. 12414 and voted on by the Verkhovna Rada on July 22, 2025, hereinafter referred to as Law No. 4555

The law also restricts the ability of prosecutors of the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office to enter into plea agreements with suspects or defendants in criminal proceedings under the jurisdiction of the NABU. Such agreements will become virtually impossible without the consent of the Prosecutor General, if he so requires.

At the same time, the powers of the Prosecutor General have been expanded.

According to the amendments introduced by Law No. 4555, the Prosecutor General:

- has a new exclusive power to notify the Head of the Presidential Administration of Ukraine and his deputies, as well as the Prime Minister of Ukraine, members of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, first deputies and deputy ministers, the Director of the State Bureau of Investigations, his first deputy and deputy, the Director of the Economic Security Bureau of Ukraine, his first deputy and deputy, as well as civil servants whose positions are classified as category 'A';

- may issue binding written instructions to the Head of NABU to provide him with materials of the pre-trial investigation, and after gaining access to these materials, authorise another prosecutor to verify compliance with the law during the pre-trial investigation. This creates a risk of violating the secrecy of the pre-trial investigation;

- instructs another pre-trial investigation body to conduct a pre-trial investigation of criminal offences falling within the competence of the NABU, *'in the event of an ineffective pre-trial investigation or if there are objective circumstances that make it impossible for the relevant pre-trial investigation body to function or conduct a pre-trial investigation under martial law'*;

- transfers proceedings in criminal offences under Articles 369 and 369-2 of the Criminal Code (giving illegal benefits to an official and abuse of influence) committed by top officials to the jurisdiction of the NABU investigators if the criminal offence caused or could have caused serious consequences for the freedoms and interests of a natural or legal person protected by law, as well as for state or public interests (in particular, for the realisation of constitutional rights, freedoms and obligations of three or more persons);

- resolves disputes over jurisdiction in criminal proceedings that may fall within the jurisdiction of the NABU.

In addition, Law No. 4555 changed the procedure for selecting prosecutors at all levels during martial law. Now, virtually any local prosecutor or person who has never worked in the prosecutor's office can be appointed to the General Prosecutor's Office without any competitive procedures. To do so, the prosecutor must simply apply, and a person who has not previously been a prosecutor must submit the documents required for a candidate for the position of prosecutor, such as an application, a health certificate, a certificate of knowledge of the state language, a copy of a higher education diploma in law, etc.

On July 22-23, 2005, thousands of people across Ukraine, many of them teenagers and young adults, protested against what they view as an attack on anti-corruption efforts and what they perceive as backsliding of Ukraine's democratic process. These were the first widespread anti-government protests in Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion began, with people taking to the streets in Kyiv, Odesa, Lviv, and several other cities.

On July 31, 2025, the Verkhovna Rada adopted in its entirety President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's draft law *'On strengthening the powers of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office'*.

POLICE REFORM IN UKRAINE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND FAILURES²²

The Soviet Union established a deeply corrupt and flawed criminal justice system designed to protect itself. Infiltrated by organised crime, it essentially functioned as a criminal body. Following the Soviet collapse, except for the Baltic States, corruption, clan-based structures, nepotism, and human rights violations persisted in the newly independent republics, mirroring the Soviet framework. It was a heritage in Ukraine too.

Ukraine's law enforcement system, particularly before the Revolution of Dignity and during the early post-Soviet period, was deeply corrupt, inheriting many flaws from the Soviet system. The following characteristics and factors contributed to its systemic corruption:

Elite and Petty Corruption: Corruption permeated all levels of law enforcement. High-ranking officials engaged in elite corruption, such as embezzlement of state resources or protecting powerful criminal networks for personal gain. Meanwhile, petty corruption was rampant among lower-level officers, who frequently demanded bribes from citizens for routine services like traffic stops, permits, or avoiding minor penalties.

Infiltration by Organised Crime: The system was heavily infiltrated by organised crime, facilitated by corruption. Criminal groups often bribed or collaborated with police, prosecutors, and judges, creating networks that protected illegal activities like drug trafficking, extortion, and smuggling. This blurred the line between law enforcement and criminal enterprises.

Clan-Based Networks and Cronyism: Law enforcement operated through clan-like structures, where loyalty to personal networks trumped professional duty. Police chiefs, prosecutors, and judges often shared economic interests, forming tight-knit groups that prioritized mutual benefit over justice. Nepotism ensured that positions were filled based on connections rather than merit.

²² *Khatia Dekanoidze*, Member of Parliament of Georgia, Minister of Education and Science of Georgia (2012), Head of the National Police of Ukraine (2015–2016)

Soviet-Style Bureaucracy and Centralisation: The system inherited a rigid, centralized structure from the Soviet era, with the Ministry of Internal Affairs holding near-absolute control. This monopolized power, concentrated in the hands of politically appointed figures, made the system prone to abuse and reduced accountability. Decentralization or independent oversight was virtually non-existent.

Low Salaries and Poor Infrastructure: Officers were underpaid. It made them susceptible to bribery as a means of supplementing income. Inadequate funding also led to outdated equipment, poor training facilities, and dilapidated infrastructure, further demoralizing the force and fostering a culture of corruption to compensate for resource shortages.

Soviet Rudimentary Education and Training: Training for law enforcement was outdated, rooted in Soviet-era practices that emphasized control over service. Officers were often ill-equipped to handle modern policing challenges, relying on intimidation or corrupt practices rather than professional skills.

Lack of Public Trust: Systemic corruption eroded public confidence, as citizens viewed police as predatory rather than protective. This lack of trust discouraged cooperation with law enforcement, perpetuating a cycle where police relied on coercion or bribes to maintain authority.

For years, Ukrainian society had been demanding fair, human-centred, and transparent law enforcement institutions, but these requests went largely unfulfilled, leaving anachronism, cronyism, and systemic corruption entrenched. Ukrainians saw the police forces as their primary function – to serve as the state’s primary security guardians, tasked with protecting people and property through public assistance, law enforcement, crime identification, investigation, prevention, and maintaining peaceful public order. As the front line of state security, they are the most visible institution that citizens encounter daily.

The 2005-2012 Georgia’s police reforms set a tone for some other neighbouring countries. It was remarkably successful and widely recognized. By eradicating corruption, organised crime (largely known as ‘thieves-in-Law’ mafia style soviet tradition), nepotism, and clan-based structures, Georgia laid a foundation for progress and the rule of law. In fact, many post-Soviet republics sought to emulate this model,

but the absence of political will often hindered their efforts, diluting the commitment and spirit needed for meaningful reform.

Following Ukraine's Dignity Revolution, reforming law enforcement became essential not only for societal trust but also for the country's development. It was vital to fill the abyss with the Ukrainian public's lack of confidence in the state Institutions, undermining feelings of safety, protection of businesses and private property, child safety, and adherence to human rights standards. Without the rule of law, a democratic society cannot exist, nor can it thrive without safeguarding human and property rights – core responsibilities of state institutions, particularly the police. Inspired by Georgia's success, President Poroshenko's government sought to replicate these reforms post-revolution. Police reform became a pathway to establishing the rule of law, gaining Euro-Atlantic support, and securing political backing. The Government understood that without law enforcement and anti-corruption reforms, it would be difficult to acquire Western support and technical assistance.

The task required a near-complete overhaul of the law enforcement system, focusing on eliminating corruption, reducing crime, combating organised crime, earning public trust, protecting human and property rights, and maintaining public order. Achieving these goals was possible but depended heavily on the state and political leaders' commitment, expressed through political will? It is not a specific law or individual but a unified government approach ensuring impartial law enforcement and punishment, simplified regulations, reduced bureaucracy, and efficient service delivery to citizens. Political will is essential to declare corruption as a common enemy and prioritize transparent institutions to expose hidden financial flows. It was important for Ukraine's law enforcement, which was plagued by elite and petty corruption, infiltration by organised crime, bureaucratic inefficiencies, Soviet-style rudimentary education, clan-based networks linking prosecutors, judges, and police chiefs through shared economic interests, low salaries, and poor infrastructure.

In 2012, Georgia's elections saw pro-Russian oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili defeat reformist, pro-Western Mikheil Saakashvili. Legal cases were launched against Saakashvili and his allies. As a reform expert, Saakashvili was invited to Ukraine, catalysing the import of Georgia's police reform model. The Soviet-inherited, highly centralized, and monopolized police system, controlled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, lacked decentralization or checks and balances. In Ukraine, this was exemplified

by the powerful Interior Minister Arsen Avakov, whose political influence overshadowed institutional autonomy. President Poroshenko and Minister Avakov were ‘kind’ enemies. Nowadays, I can admit that the Minister of Internal Affairs, with its enormous forces, was more influential than the President of Ukraine. At least, he used his power effectively. Police forces typically included traffic police, the first responders to crime, criminal police for investigation and operations, special forces, and crowd control units. But the Minister was more powerful than a police chief; he obtained institutional control over the National Guard. The new National Guard absorbed the Interior Ministry’s ‘Internal Troops’ and volunteer battalions. The National Guard functioned as a territorial defence and support to the Armed Forces during wartime, civilian law enforcement: guarding government buildings, managing protests, and protecting critical infrastructure and forces during civilian unrest. Possessing control over the National Guard was one of the issues of controversy between the President and the Minister from different political groups.

The first wave of reform targeted the patrol police, abolishing the corrupt Soviet-era traffic police and establishing a modern, prevention-focused patrol police department.

Key factors included:

- a transparent recruitment system with rigorous vetting;
- modern tactical and intellectual training;
- geographic redistribution for patrolling;
- new uniforms and equipment;
- decent salaries and social benefits.

The appointment of Eka Zguladze as Avakov’s deputy kickstarted the patrol police reform, supported significantly by the U.S. ICITAP (International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, a specialized initiative of the U.S. Department of Justice. Since its founding in 1986, ICITAP has played a pivotal role in helping foreign governments build professional, transparent, and rights-respecting law enforcement institutions.) program, which focused on recruitment.

The process involved vacancy announcements, strict criteria, general and psychological testing, physical assessments, and competitive salaries with social benefits. During the recruitment of patrol officers, candidates underwent specialized psychological testing, which constituted a critical element of the selection process. These assessments were designed to evaluate emotional resilience, ethical judgment, and

the capacity to perform under pressure – qualities essential for building public trust and ensuring professional conduct in law enforcement. The integration of psychological screening marked a departure from previous practices and reflected a broader commitment to institutional reform and modernization.

Ultimately, the patrol police reform succeeded, mobilising nearly 15,000 new recruits. Training occurred at the Interior Ministry's academy, not as higher education but as intensive, U.S.-style courses lasting a few months, with tactics developed by American police experts. Within six months, Kyiv's patrol police department was operational. The emphasis on young, patriotic officers was key, as reforming the old, corrupt system was deemed impossible.

In December 2015, Ukraine's National Police was established—a legislative step forward, though insufficient. The law didn't grant the National Police chief enough independence from the politically appointed Interior Minister. Despite debates in the Verkhovna Rada, the law was a compromise, leaving the Interior Ministry dominant and the police with limited autonomy. After the patrol police's success, the focus shifted to the criminal police, a more resistant and sensitive area due to its entrenched clan-based structures and cronyism.

The public trust in the Patrol Police increased to 60%, but the main challenge remained the vetting (attestation) process of former militia officers. My idea was that without passing attestation, former militia officers should not be allowed to be appointed to the Police staff. The main challenge was a political one. Heads of departments and regional districts had been too influential and tied to the different political figures to be vetted properly. The commissions reviewed approximately seventy thousand former Militia and fired over five thousand, or nine percent of police in 2016.

The Central Commission consists of five members:

1. Two representatives appointed by the Minister of Internal Affairs.
2. One – nominated by the Chief of Police.
3. Two public representatives recommended by the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights – chosen from persons with impeccable reputation, strong professional standards.

As you have seen, the balance in the commissions was in favour of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The same principle was at the different cities where all regional Militia had been vetted. The vetting process was accompanied by a huge

scandal. One of the scandals was the firing of a Head Anti-Drug Unit – Iliia Kyva, who later betrayed Ukraine and escaped to Russia. It was a symbol of the broader struggle between reform and entrenched figures from the political clans covered by the Influential Minister. Vetting faced lots of criticism.

The vetting process was met with profound systemic resistance. Former members of the militia organised demonstrations, issued personal insults, and made threats. The persistence of double standards and impunity within the police force could not be overcome without a high degree of independence in the judiciary and the prosecutor's office. One of the most detrimental outcomes of the vetting process was the legal reinstatement of dismissed officials, which ultimately undermined and halted the reform of the criminal police.

Regional police chiefs could neither be dismissed nor appointed without the direct involvement of the Minister, reflecting the centralised nature of decision-making. Legislative progress was severely hindered due to the absence of political support in the Verkhovna Rada, where reform initiatives lacked both allies and a dedicated parliamentary faction. The reform agenda was overshadowed by significant political interests at play.

A functional internal audit service was never established. The prosecutor's office operated primarily in pursuit of its own institutional interests. Given that both the Prosecutor General and the Minister of Internal Affairs were political appointees, the police frequently served as a tool of political influence rather than as an impartial law enforcement body.

Ultimately, Ukrainian society expected more than I was able to deliver, as the reform did not reach its full potential. Nevertheless, I believe that the most significant component of the police reform – the patrol police – was genuinely felt by the public.

The level of engagement from international donors and civil society was unprecedented. This collaborative effort laid the foundation for a new model of public service, one that prioritized transparency, accountability, and citizen trust.

During Russia's full-scale invasion, both the patrol police and the reformed criminal police demonstrated that the protection of citizens and patriotic commitment were paramount. Their response under crisis conditions reaffirmed the core values of the reform and highlighted the resilience and dedication of Ukraine's law enforcement institutions.

THE IMPACT OF WAR ON THE LEGAL PROFESSION: USURPATION OF POWER AND THE PROBLEM OF HOLDING ELECTIONS²³

The most difficult challenge faced by the Ukrainian legal profession during the war is the problem of ending the *usurpation of power, renewing the leadership* of the Ukrainian National Bar Association (UNBA) and *holding elections* for self-governing bodies of the legal profession, such as regional bar councils and qualification and disciplinary bodies.

In Ukraine, Regional Bar Councils perform organisational functions to improve the qualifications of lawyers, resolve disputes between them and protect their rights and guarantees of professional activity.

Regional Qualification and Disciplinary Commissions of the Bar certify candidates for the right to practise as lawyers and bring lawyers to disciplinary responsibility. When considering complaints against lawyers, they are authorised to either exonerate them or hold them accountable, with penalties ranging from a warning or temporary suspension from the practice of law to complete deprivation of the right to practise law.

In addition, the UNBA has established a *General Council of Advocates of Ukraine* and a *Higher Qualification and Disciplinary Commission of the Bar*, which are authorised to review decisions made at the regional level and adopt them at the national level.

It should be emphasised that in Ukraine, as in other countries, the Bar has a self-governing status. This means that the Bar is a legal institution directly provided for by the Constitution of Ukraine as *part of the justice system*, and lawyers are traditionally regarded as '*officers of justice*'.

The Ukrainian bar is administered and governed not by the state, but by bodies of self-government elected by the lawyers themselves.

²³ **Yurii Kanikaiev**, Attorney at Law: **Dmytro Yagunov**, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

These are *the Bar Council of Ukraine* and *the High Qualification and Disciplinary Commission of the Bar*, as well as regional bar councils and qualification and disciplinary commissions of the bar.

The Bar is headed by an elected person – the Chair of the Bar Council of Ukraine, who is also the Chair of the National Association of Advocates of Ukraine. All lawyers, without exception, become members of this Association upon acquiring professional status. In Ukraine, it is impossible to be a lawyer without membership in the National Bar Association of Ukraine. Membership is mandatory for all advocates in Ukraine.

Elections of bar self-government bodies must be held regularly at intervals specified by law.

On 18 November 2022, the term of office of the Chair of the UNBA, Lidia Izovitova, came to an end. At the same time, according to the Law of Ukraine ‘*On the Bar and the Practice of Law*’, the term of office of the Chair of the Bar Council of Ukraine cannot exceed two consecutive five-year terms. As a result, critical but well-founded questions are regularly raised in the media and academic publications that the Chair of the UNBA and other members of the bar self-government bodies hold their positions illegally, i.e. *beyond the terms established by law*.

As a result, there is discussion of the *usurpation of power* by the top echelons of the bar self-government bodies, which have blocked the renewal of power.

Accordingly, the issue of holding elections for the heads and members of the bar self-government bodies has become topical.

Nevertheless, the Chair of the UNBA, Lidia Izovitova, continues to perform the duties of the Chair of the UNBA after the expiry of her legal powers. This has been made possible by decisions of the UNBA that are contrary to the current Ukrainian legislation.

In particular, the decisions of the Bar Council of Ukraine No. 69 of 21 September 2020 and No. 108 of 5-6 September 2022 allowed her to continue her powers, which is a violation of the law.

Back in September 2020, the Bar Council of Ukraine announced that ‘in order to prevent institutional discontinuity in the legal profession, it is appropriate and reasonable to apply the principle of *institutional continuity* of the organisational forms of self-government of the National Bar Association of Ukraine’.

However, this was before the start of full-scale Russian aggression, and the situation was caused by *the coronavirus pandemic*.

Therefore, the Bar Council of Ukraine stated that ‘the extension of the terms of office of bar self-government bodies should be an exception and is permitted only if there are objective grounds that preclude the possibility of holding elections that are unimpeded and safe for the life and health of individuals, such as the impossibility of holding such elections in a timely manner under pandemic conditions’.

As a result, the Ukrainian Bar Association believes that ‘the legislative requirement for continuity and uninterrupted powers of bar self-government bodies means that bar self-government bodies and their members keep doing their jobs until the newly formed bar self-government bodies start working, and their new members are elected’²⁴.

However, *the pandemic has passed*, but the elections of the bodies of bar self-government have *not* been held.

Therefore, as of today, in order to elect the composition of the Bar Council of Ukraine, the High Qualification and Disciplinary Commission of the Bar, and the Chair of the Council of the Bar Association/UNBA, it is necessary to convene and hold a *Congress of Lawyers of Ukraine*, whose delegates are elected on a quota basis from each region.

In accordance with current Ukrainian legislation, the term of office of members of the bar self-government bodies, as well as the Chair of the Bar Council/UNBA, is five years. The same person cannot hold a certain position for more than two consecutive terms.

The term of office of the current Chair of the Bar Council of Ukraine and the National Association of Advocates of Ukraine expired in November 2022, but a new Congress of Advocates of Ukraine to elect new leadership of the bar has not yet been held.

The explanation offered to lawyers and the public by the National Association of Advocates of Ukraine is the so-called ‘*security risks caused by the war*’ and ‘*the complete or partial occupation of several regions of Ukraine, which, in the opinion of the leadership of the National Association of Advocates of Ukraine, makes it impossible to ensure the proper representation of all bar councils of all Ukrainian regions*’.

²⁴ Decision of the Ukrainian Bar Association № 69 ‘On Approval of Clarifications Regarding the Institutional Continuity of the Ukrainian Bar Association and Organisational Forms of Bar Self-Governance’ dated September 21, 2020.

As a rule, on the issue of extending the indefinite powers of the bodies of the bar self-government after the expiry of their terms, the leadership of the UNBA emphasises the analogy with the legal status of the President of Ukraine in wartime. As a rule, on the issue of extending the indefinite powers of the bodies of the bar self-government after the expiry of their terms, the leadership of the UNBA emphasises the analogy with the legal status of the President of Ukraine in wartime (the so-called principle of '*continuity*', i.e. the continuity of power).

Thus, in accordance with Part 1 of Article 108 of the Constitution of Ukraine, the President of Ukraine shall exercise his powers until the newly elected President of Ukraine takes office.

However, during the period of martial law, democratic presidential elections cannot be held in accordance with the constitutionally defined principles of electoral law. In addition, the Law of Ukraine '*On the Legal Regime of Martial Law*' expressly prohibits the holding of presidential elections during martial law.

Thus, the Constitution of Ukraine significantly limits the powers of the President of Ukraine. It is obvious that in the current circumstances of prolonged full-scale Russian armed aggression, Ukraine will face problems of state governance in the absence of the President of Ukraine.

Accordingly, the current President, in accordance with Article 108 of the Constitution of Ukraine, not only is entitled to continue his powers until the newly elected President takes office in the first post-war elections but is also politically obliged to the Ukrainian people to exercise his powers²⁵.

Accordingly, the leadership of the bar self-government bodies raises the question: if the President of Ukraine can continue to exercise his powers after the expiry of his official term, why is the Head of the National Bar Association of Ukraine deprived of this right?

At first glance, the question deserves to be formulated with precision and logic.

However, if we analyse the issue more deeply, we can conclude that this position is *manipulative* and has only one goal to prevent Ukrainian lawyers from obtaining a new legitimate composition of self-

²⁵ Chirkin A., Mahera, A., Kirichenko, Y. (2024). Conclusion of experts from the Centre for Political and Legal Reforms on the powers of the President of Ukraine. *Centre for Political and Legal Reforms*. 20 May 2024. Source: <https://pravo.org.ua/vysnovok-ekspertiv-tsentru-polityko-pravovyh-reform-shhodo-povnovazhen-prezydenta-ukrayiny>

governing bodies of the legal profession, including a new composition of disciplinary courts for lawyers, which decide on many issues that are crucial for lawyers and take decisions that constitute interference in the private and professional lives of lawyers.

The powers of the President of Ukraine as the Head of State directly depend on the possibility of holding *nationwide elections*, which, as is well known, are strictly prohibited during wartime. Moreover, the President is elected not by representatives according to quotas, but by *all citizens of Ukraine* who have the right to vote.

However, the Chair of the Bar Council of Ukraine and the Chair of the National Bar Association of Ukraine are not subject to such legislative restrictions *in principle*. Moreover, there is no law in Ukraine that would prohibit the holding of congresses of representatives of self-governing professional organisations during martial law, including congresses of lawyers.

This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that, after the start of full-scale Russian aggression, congresses were organised and held by judicial and prosecutorial self-government bodies, as well as by self-government bodies of private enforcement officers.

On August 30, 2024, a Congress of Private Enforcement Officers of the Executive District of the City of Kyiv was held with the help of technical means.

On September 18, 2024, the 20th Regular Congress of Judges of Ukraine was held. At the congress, a judge was elected to the Constitutional Court of Ukraine and a new version of the Code of Judicial Ethics was approved.

On September 10 and September 24, 2024, a Congress of Representatives of Higher Legal Education Institutions and Scientific Institutions was held.

On 12 December 2024, a regular Congress of Private Enforcement Officers of Ukraine was held.

Therefore, the position of the UNBA regarding the so-called ‘*security risks*’ of holding a advocates’ congress is based on the argument that a large gathering of delegates in one place could become an attractive target for Russian occupiers.

However, there are many opinions that such a position of the UNBA and the UBA is nothing more than a justification for the banal *usurpation of power*.

Firstly, because in the fourth year of the war, Ukraine has more than enough successful events held by various bodies or organisations in regions far from the front line using underground shelters.

Secondly, because the Law '*On the Bar and the Practice of Law*' does not in any way prohibit the holding of an advocates' congress online.

Thirdly, online voting by lawyers can be easily ensured with the help of electronic digital signatures and appropriate modern information technologies that allow online events such as voting or testing to be held. For example, long before the war, many universities began to hold thesis defences online. Today, there are already many electronic programmes that allow *video conferences* with numerous participants to be held and their identities to be reliably verified, which, in fact, nullifies any so-called '*security arguments*' of the UNBA at the present stage.

Moreover, the current Law of Ukraine '*On the Bar and the Practice of Law*' does not specify any mandatory forms for holding this event, delegating the resolution of all organisational issues to the lawyers themselves through a decision of the Bar Council of Ukraine.

Accordingly, this means that, if they so desire, the members of the Bar Council of Ukraine are fully capable of adopting decisions that will allow any reporting and election events of the bar self-government bodies to be held remotely. By law, every advocate in Ukraine must register in the '*Electronic Court*' system, which includes a video conferencing subsystem that not only provides online communication but also allows for the exchange of documents and recording of the conference process, as well as authorisation with the signing of documents in digital format using electronic digital signature keys or a special application called '*Diya*' (which is officially recognised in Ukraine as an electronic document that certifies identity and allows authorisation in all state online services and banking institutions).

Therefore, if the UNBA had asked the court administration to allow it to organise and hold the congress, the court administration would not have raised any objections. Not to mention the commercial offers available on the online communications market, which are also plentiful.

Thus, Ukrainian advocates have found themselves hostage to their own elected representatives, who are deliberately failing to comply with the law, justifying their inaction by the war and continuing to usurp power.

Continuing to highlight this issue, it is necessary to note one more aspect of this problem. As mentioned above, according to Article 131-2 of the Constitution of Ukraine, the legal profession is a *part of the judiciary*.

The application of this direct provision of the Constitution of Ukraine, together with the numerous conclusions of the Supreme Court, indicates the status of regional qualification and disciplinary commissions as a ‘court’ within the meaning of Article 6 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights. Numerous decisions of the Supreme Court have established a consistent practice that each Regional Qualification and Disciplinary Commission of the Bar is a *holder of public authority*²⁶.

This points to a fundamental issue in the Ukrainian legal profession, as disciplinary courts for lawyers, which require reform and whose members need to be re-elected, continue to issue disciplinary ‘sentences’ in disciplinary cases based on complaints against lawyers, imposing severe restrictions on lawyers that may amount to ‘*punishment*’ within the meaning of Article 6 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights.

Given that Regional Bar Qualification and Disciplinary Commissions are ‘*courts*’ within the meaning of Article 6 of the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights, this creates an acute issue of the establishment of ‘*courts not in accordance with the law*’.

As a result, there is a real threat of numerous lawsuits by Ukrainian lawyers to the European Court of Human Rights due to disciplinary sanctions imposed on them by disciplinary courts of the Bar, which have no authority but have usurped the ‘*power to punish*’.

²⁶ Decision of the Civil Court of Cassation in case No. 607/678/20 of 03.02.2022, Decision of the Grand Chamber of the Supreme Court in case No. 817/66/16 of 06.11.2019, Decision of the Grand Chamber of the Supreme Court in case No. 817/66/16 of 06.11.2019, Decision of the Grand Chamber of the Supreme Court in case No. 640/12325/15-tc dated 29.03.2018, Decision of the Administrative Court of Cassation in case No. 380/9317/21 dated 15.03.2023

THE STATE OF COMPLIANCE WITH FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS GUARANTEES IN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS UNDER MARTIAL LAW²⁷

The state of ensuring the human right to access an independent lawyer

Access to a lawyer is an important guarantee of the right to a fair trial, the right to defence, the presumption of innocence and other fundamental rights. In Ukraine, representation in courts and public authorities is carried out exclusively by lawyers (advocates)²⁸.

Article 213 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine (CPC) obliges the official who carried out the detention to immediately notify the body authorised by law to provide free legal aid.

Pursuant to Article 52 of the CPC, the participation of a defence counsel is mandatory in cases of serious crimes – from the moment a person acquires the status of a suspect.

In other cases, the mandatory participation of a defence counsel is ensured in criminal proceedings:

- regarding individuals suspected or accused of committing a crime under the age of 18;
- regarding individuals subject to *‘compulsory educational measures’*;
- regarding persons who, as a result of mental or physical disabilities are unable to fully exercise their rights;
- regarding individuals who do not speak the language of criminal proceedings;

²⁷ **Maryna Demura**, Attorney at Law, Ph.D in Law, Associate Professor of the Department of Criminal Procedure of the Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University

²⁸ Subsection 11 of Section 16-1 of Chapter XV ‘Transitional Provisions’ of the Constitution of Ukraine (as amended by Law of Ukraine No. 1401-VIII of 02.06.2016 ‘On Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine (regarding Justice)’).

- regarding individuals respecting whom ‘compulsory medical measures’ are envisaged;
- regarding the rehabilitation of a deceased person;
- regarding individuals subject to a special investigation or special court proceedings;
- in case of a plea agreement between the prosecutor and the suspect or accused.

In such situations, the investigator or prosecutor makes a request (decision), and the investigating judge or court passes a ruling. The decision or ruling is immediately sent to the relevant regional centre for free legal aid (*FLA*), which appoints a defence counsel to provide legal aid.

A defence counsel appointed by the legal aid centre shall arrive at the specified address for a confidential meeting with the detainee within 1 hour, and in exceptional cases, except for the issuance of the order for the provision of legal aid to a person subject to administrative detention, within 6 hours from the moment of issuing the order. If the appointed defence counsel is unable to provide legal aid, he/she shall immediately notify the centre, which shall appoint another defence counsel²⁹.

However, failure to comply with, improper or untimely execution of a decision or ruling on the appointment of a defence counsel entails liability established by law. This may include disciplinary liability for those responsible, or it may lead to the recognition of an investigative action conducted in the absence of a defence counsel as violating the rights of the suspect or accused, and, as a result, the inadmissibility of the evidence obtained.

With the introduction of martial law, the law ensured access of a lawyer to a client at any time of the day, including during curfew. Lawyers involved in the FLA system can move freely during curfew if they have the relevant documents³⁰.

In the majority of these cases, legal aid is provided to the suspect/accused at the expense of the state. Generally, the CPC

²⁹ On approval of the Procedure for informing free legal aid centres about cases of detention, administrative arrest or application of a preventive measure in the form of detention: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 28.12.2011 No. 1363.

³⁰ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (2023). On Amendments to Certain Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on the Functioning of the Free Legal Aid System: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 24.06.2023 No. 630.

does not provide such support for *victims*. A victim may be represented by a *representative* – a person who is entitled to be a defence counsel. In other words, the law requires mandatory representation of the victim's interests by a professional lawyer in cases where the victim wishes to engage them. The payment for its services is entirely borne by the victim, which negatively affects the protection of victims.

In addition to sectoral legislation, the right to legal aid is also enshrined in the Law '*On Free Legal Aid*', which defines the basic concepts, legal service providers and persons entitled to free legal aid³¹.

Categories of persons entitled to free legal aid:

- 1) individuals whose average monthly total income does not exceed twice the subsistence minimum for able-bodied persons;
- 2) persons under administrative detention or arrest, regardless of their economic situation;
- 3) persons in respect of whom a preventive measure in the form of detention has been imposed;
- 4) persons subjected to violence, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment during detention;
- 5) individuals who have refugee status or have applied for it;
- 6) internally displaced persons, etc.;
- 7) other individuals specified by law.

There have also been developments in expanding the list of subjects entitled to free legal aid recently. Thus, in May 2022, two new categories of subjects entitled to free legal aid were added: 1) persons who do not have identity documents confirming their citizenship of Ukraine; 2) victims of sex crimes, torture, or ill-treatment during hostilities or armed conflict³².

Another Law in February 2023 added such subjects as citizens of Ukraine – in cases of loss (destruction) of documents, receipt (issuance) of documents, establishment of facts of legal significance in court if such a need arose as a result of hostilities, terrorist acts, sabotage caused by

³¹ Article 14 of the Law of Ukraine '*On Free Legal Aid*' of 02.06.2011 No. 3460-VI.

³² The Law of Ukraine '*On Amendments to Part 1 of Article 14 of the Law of Ukraine '*On Free Legal Aid*' to Expand the List of Persons entitled to Free Secondary Legal Aid*' No. 2238-IX of 03.05.2022.

the armed aggression of the Russia against Ukraine (including to obtain compensation for damaged and destroyed real estate as a result)³³.

Another law passed in 2025 granted *convicted prisoners* subject to disciplinary sanctions the right to free legal aid. When imposing a disciplinary penalty on a convict, the prison administration is obliged to immediately provide them with the opportunity to notify their close relatives, lawyer, or other legal professionals who are legally entitled to provide legal assistance in person or on behalf of a legal entity. A prisoner is entitled to use the services of a lawyer of their choice in preparation for a disciplinary commission hearing. If a prisoner does not have access to a lawyer, the prison administration must provide them with the opportunity to seek legal assistance from entities providing such assistance. In such a case, the disciplinary commission is obliged to suspend the disciplinary proceedings until a copy of the decision to provide free legal aid is received. The suspension of disciplinary proceedings suspends the period for imposing disciplinary penalties³⁴.

Regarding the practical aspect of ensuring access to a lawyer, numerous violations of the right to defence were recorded during the National Preventive Mechanism visits in 2022, namely:

1) officials who carry out detention do not notify at all or notify after a long time the free legal aid providers;

2) the right of suspects to a confidential meeting with a lawyer is not ensured;

3) there is no proper record of the facts of informing, in particular, the logs of informing the centres for providing free legal aid to detainees, which should be kept in each police station, etc.

In addition, in a significant number of the visited territorial police units, there are no conditions to ensure the right to a confidential meeting between a detainee and a lawyer. In most of the visited police stations, there are no such rooms or they are not properly equipped. Most often, police officers inform that meetings between detainees and lawyers are

³³ Law of Ukraine 'On Compensation for Damage and Destruction of Certain Categories of Real Estate as a Result of Hostilities, Terrorist Acts, Sabotage Caused by the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the State Register of Property Damaged and Destroyed as a Result of Hostilities, Terrorist Acts, Sabotage Caused by the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine' of 23.02.2023 No. 2923-IX.

³⁴ Law of Ukraine 'On amendments to certain legislative acts of Ukraine regarding the right to free legal aid'.

held in the offices of investigators or other premises without ensuring confidentiality³⁵.

In 2023, a visit by the Ombudsman to the Khmelnytskyi Pre-Trial Prison revealed that some prisoners did not receive legal aid from the Regional Centre for Free Legal Aid. In particular, the prisoners reported that the free aid lawyer assigned to them did not participate in court hearings, even despite the capability and availability of participating via video conference in a specially equipped room, and so, did not coordinate the legal position of the defence in the cases³⁶.

At the same time, according to the CPT's report on the 2023 visit, it was noted that, as a rule, the police are to promptly inform the relevant free legal aid centre. The majority of detainees confirmed that they were allowed to speak to their lawyer in private before the interview. In a few cases, detainees claimed that interrogation had begun before the lawyer arrived; however, none of them reported being forced to sign a confession or any other official statement without the presence of a lawyer and without prior opportunity to speak to a lawyer. In this regard, the CPT noted in the report that persons in police custody should, in general, never be interrogated without the presence of a lawyer. The CPT noted positive developments compared to the situation observed during the 2017 periodic visit³⁷.

The state of ensuring the human right to access an independent doctor

One of the main issues in ensuring human rights compliance in the prison system remains inadequate medical care and insufficient staffing and equipment of medical units.

³⁵ The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights (2023). Special report of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights on the state of implementation of the national preventive mechanism in Ukraine in 2022. *The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights*. Source: <https://ombudsman.gov.ua/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/spetsdopovid-npm-2022-na-druk-1compressed-1.pdf>

³⁶ The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights (2023). Special report of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights on the state of implementation of the national preventive mechanism in Ukraine in 2022. *The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights*. Source: <https://ombudsman.gov.ua/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/spetsdopovid-npm-2022-na-druk-1compressed-1.pdf>

³⁷ The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (2023). Report to the Ukrainian Government on the visit to Ukraine carried out by the CPT from 16 to 27 October 2023. *The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture*. Para 22.

In 2017, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine created a new public body independent of the prison system – the State Institution ‘*Health Care Centre of the State Criminal Executive Service of Ukraine*’ but this did not improve the situation with the provision of medical care to persons serving sentences in prisons³⁸. After the separation of the prison medical service into an independent body, the directors of prisons unreasonably abdicated their responsibility for the lives and health of prisoners. In practice, this attitude led to a situation where the prison does not accept applications, complaints, or requests from convicts, their relatives and lawyers regarding medical care.

In 2019, the Human Rights Centre ZMINA and the Expert Centre for Human Rights conducted a study of the practice of documenting torture, in particular in prisons, which included focus groups with medical staff³⁹. The results of the study indicated that medical staff in the prison system, although formally independent of the prison administration, cannot work if they have negative relations with their superiors.

Prisons do not pay sufficient attention to improving the diagnosis and treatment of generalised somatic and socially dangerous diseases (HIV, tuberculosis and viral hepatitis). There are violations of sanitary regulations, inadequate medical nutrition for people with chronic diseases, and virtually no walks or access to fresh air, especially for people who are unable to move independently. The quality and timeliness of medical care is affected by the availability of qualified medical staff in medical institutions. In most medical units at the institutions, as well as in the multidisciplinary and specialised hospitals of the Health Care Centre of the Prison Service, there is a lack of doctors of various specialisations. The understaffing of medical staff in penitentiary institutions and facilities is a long-term problem that remains acute from year to year. After Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the situation worsened as some paramedics and doctors were mobilised.

According to the Special Report of the Ombudsman on the state of implementation of the national preventive mechanism in Ukraine for 2022, the majority of Health Care Centres do not provide substitution

³⁸ Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine ‘On the Establishment of the State Institution ‘Health Care Centre of the State Criminal Executive Service of Ukraine’ of 13.09.2017 No. 684-p.

³⁹ Zmina NGO *et al* (2020). The practice of recording torture in places of detention: Report on the results of the research. Source: <https://zmina.ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/02/fixingtorture-web.pdf>

maintenance therapy for people with mental and behavioural disorders due to opioid use under *the Procedure for Substitution Maintenance Therapy for People with Mental and Behavioural Disorders Due to Opioid Use*. During 2022, most of these prisoners were not referred to healthcare facilities where substitution maintenance therapy was implemented for registration. However, they were referred to healthcare facilities for detoxification, which violates their right to choose treatment methods under Article 38 of the Law of Ukraine ‘*Fundamentals of the Legislation of Ukraine on Healthcare*’ (Kropyvnytskyi City Medical Unit No. 14 of the Branch of the Health Care Centre of the Prison Service in the Cherkasy and Kirovohrad regions).

During the visits, it was found that most of the institutions and facilities of the Health Care Centre of the Prison Service do not have proper infection control and epidemiological surveillance of tuberculosis.

In particular:

- no partitions with doors or airlocks are installed at the boundaries of clean areas and high-risk areas;
- isolation wards are used for more than one or two people;
- doors to the wards are not equipped with a sealed threshold, or seals around the edges; the wards are not equipped with a separate sanitary unit; there is no separate room in front of the entrance (gateway);
- there is no air circulation through mechanical ventilation. In some medical units, there are no separate isolation rooms for infectious patients, which makes it impossible to place tuberculosis patients and patients with other dangerous infectious diseases separately from each other and other convicts (Kropyvnytskyi City Medical Unit No. 14 of the Branch of the Health Care Centre of the Prison Service in the Cherkasy and Kirovohrad regions)⁴⁰.

At the same time, according to the CPT’s report on the 2023 visit, the situation with such a legal guarantee as access to a doctor has generally improved since the 2017 visit⁴¹.

⁴⁰ The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights (2023). Special report of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights on the state of implementation of the national preventive mechanism in Ukraine in 2022. *The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights*. Source: <https://ombudsman.gov.ua/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/spetsdopovid-npm-2022-na-druk-1compressed-1.pdf>

⁴¹ The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (2023). Report to the Ukrainian Government on the visit to Ukraine carried out by the CPT from 16 to 27 October 2023. *The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture*. Source: <https://rm.coe.int/1680af632a>

The problem with the provision of medical care in prisons, which is coordinated and funded by the Ministry of Health. Over the years, the CPT has repeatedly recommended that medical care in prisons be transferred to the responsibility of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine. This recommendation remains unfulfilled. After analysing possible models for such a transformation and assessing the advantages and risks of each option, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, together with the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, decided to launch a pilot project in one prison aimed at integrating prison medicine into the general health care system, which is scheduled for implementation in 2025. In addition, it should be noted that the trend in European countries is for prison health services to be transferred, largely or completely, to the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. In this context, the CPT in the report on its visit to Ukraine in 2023, as well as in its recommendations to other countries, emphasizes that the active participation of the Ministry of Health in this area (in particular in matters of recruitment of medical personnel, their training, evaluation of clinical practice, certification and inspection) will help to ensure optimal medical care for prisoners and convicted persons, as well as the implementation of the general principle of equivalence of medical care in penitentiary institutions with medical care in society as a whole⁴².

One of the main problems with the accountability of the medical system to officials in places of detention is the formal approach to documenting physical injuries. In 2024, the Ombudsman found that instead of careful documentation as required by current legislation, medical workers often limit themselves to formal records. There have been cases where law enforcement agencies have reported such incidents in violation of the established requirements of the law. In addition, physical injuries are still not properly photographed, and the documented information is not given to the victim.

Thus, during a visit to Kropyvnytskyi City Medical Unit No. 14, a branch of the Health Care Centre of the Prison Service in Cherkasy and Kirovohrad regions, the NPM group established that prisoner D. suffered bodily injury while in his cell, namely, 'haemorrhage in the left eye, haematoma, soft tissue contusion, contusion of the left temple, haematoma of the scalp on the left side'. At the same time, medical workers did

⁴² Zmina NGO *et al* (2025). Alternative report to the UN Committee against Torture on the fulfilment by Ukraine of its international obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Kyiv, 2025. P. 80.

not take photos of the bodily injuries and, in violation of established requirements, only notified the prosecutor by telephone. In addition, the outpatient's medical record does not contain any information about the medical care provided to the prisoner. In another case, it was found that medical workers only photograph minor bodily injuries in prisoners, while other injuries are not given proper attention. The photographs themselves are stored on the personal computers of medical staff and are not added to the patient's medical records, as required by the current procedure. Despite the recommendations of the CPT, when documenting the presence of bodily injuries in convicted and imprisoned individuals, even when there is suspicion of ill-treatment, medical staff do not record their observations regarding the correspondence between any statements made by the victim and objective medical conclusions.

At the same time, the majority of people who have been subjected to ill-treatment report that they sustained bodily injuries through their negligence or refuse to name the cause of their injuries altogether, fearing negative consequences.

A review of medical records at one of the medical units revealed that in 2024, medical staff recorded 190 cases of bodily injury among convicts and detainees. According to the records in the logbook of bodily injuries found in individuals held in the institution, almost all prisoners reported that they had suffered bodily injuries due to their negligence or refused to explain the circumstances of the injury. In turn, medical staff often describe only the injury and whether medical assistance was provided, apart from the victim's words. The lack of independent and objective documentation of injuries significantly complicates both the prevention of violence and the conduct of effective investigations. It also undermines trust in the prison system and creates an atmosphere of impunity for those who commit violence against individuals in prison.

Difficult access to doctors in pre-trial prisons remains a serious problem for prisoners. Those in need of medical care are forced to wait a long time before receiving a doctor's consultation and necessary treatment. This significantly worsens their condition and can lead to complications, especially in cases where delays in providing medical care can have critical consequences.

For example, during a visit to the Zaporizhzhia City Medical Unit of the Health Care Centre of the Prison Service in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, the NPM group received numerous complaints from prisoners

regarding obstruction of access to a doctor. In particular, prisoners held in cells are required to first obtain permission from the paramedic to visit the medical unit, explaining the reason for the appointment to other prisoners. In addition, in order to see a doctor, prisoners are required to submit a written request, which medical staff keep for about a day and then destroy. Some prisoners have to wait more than a week before receiving medical consultation.

Convicts who are being transferred to or returning from a prison hospital require special attention. Due to the significant distance between such facilities and the difficulties in organizing the escort of these patients, the process can take about a month. Given this factor, such individuals require careful medical observation and prompt response to possible changes in their health. At the same time, NPM teams received reports that while in transit facilities, convicts were not provided the opportunity to see a doctor from the medical unit, and visits by other medical personnel (paramedics) took place no more than once a week.

The right to providing information to relatives and family members

According to Article 213 of the CPC, the authorised official who carried out the detention is obliged to provide the detainee with the opportunity to immediately inform close relatives, family members or other persons of their choice about their detention and the location of their whereabouts. Despite the existence of the legal provision, there are currently isolated cases of its violation. In particular, in April 2024, during a visit by the National Preventive Mechanism to the temporary detention centre of the 31st Border Guard Detachment (Chernivtsi), among other violations, the failure to notify close relatives of a person's detention was recorded, which is a violation of the right to respect for private and family life⁴³.

At the same time, according to the CPT's report on its visit in 2023, it was noted that the notification of detainees' relatives or other third parties of their choice of detention was carried out properly and

⁴³ The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights (2024). A visit to the temporary detention centre of the 31st Border Guard Detachment (Chernivtsi). *The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights*. April 1, 2024. Source: www.ombudsman.gov.ua/news_details/vidviduvannya-punktu-timchasovogo-trimannya-31-go-prikordonnogo-zagonu-im-general-horunzhogo-oleksandra-pilkevicha-m-chernivci

promptly in the vast majority of cases. Welcoming this, the Committee recommended that the Ukrainian authorities continue their efforts to ensure that all detainees can effectively exercise the right to be informed of their detention from the very beginning of their detention. Furthermore, measures should be taken to ensure that detainees receive systematic feedback on whether it has been possible to notify a close relative or other third party of their detention; this still does not appear to be the case in practice (Para 21 of the Report)⁴⁴.

The inadmissibility of ill-treatment during interrogations

Torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in criminal proceedings has almost always been used to obtain incriminating testimony from a person. The rule on the inadmissibility as evidence in criminal proceedings of testimony obtained as a result of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or threats of such treatment is set out in CPC⁴⁵, which came into force in 2012. In this legal act, the Ukrainian law established a mandatory prohibition on the use of such testimony and also removed from the list of sources of evidence such a source as a suspect's or accused's confession of guilt.

In addition to the exclusion of confessions from the list of sources of evidence, the CPC enshrines the principle of '*direct examination of testimony, items and documents*', according to which:

- the court examines the evidence directly;
- the court receives the testimony of participants in criminal proceedings orally;
- information contained in testimony, items and documents that were not directly examined by the court cannot be recognised as evidence, except in cases provided for by the CPC. The court may admit as evidence the testimony of persons who do not give it directly in court only in cases provided for by the CPC of Ukraine⁴⁶.

The implementation of this principle in criminal proceedings means the impossibility of using the testimony of a suspect or accused

⁴⁴ The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (2023). Report to the Ukrainian Government on the visit to Ukraine carried out by the CPT from 16 to 27 October 2023. *The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture*. Source: <https://rm.coe.int/1680af632a>

⁴⁵ Paragraph 2 of Part 2 of Article 87 CPC

⁴⁶ Parts 1, 2 of Article 23 of the CPC

(including those to which they plead guilty) and other participants without their direct examination by the court during the court hearing.

The quoted provisions of Parts 1 and 2 of Article 23 of the CPC contain rules on exceptions to the rule of direct examination of testimony.

These exceptions are:

1) The possibility of obtaining testimony from a person at the stage of pre-trial investigation and their further use in court as evidence. This exception is related to the need to obtain testimony during the pre-trial investigation if there is a danger to the life and health of the person, their serious illness, or other circumstances that may make it impossible to interrogate them in court or affect the completeness or reliability of their testimony. To obtain testimony, the investigating judge at the pre-trial investigation stage may interrogate a person in court, including simultaneous interrogation of two or more persons already interrogated. In this case, the interrogation is carried out in court at the location of the court or the stay of the sick person in the presence of the parties to the criminal proceedings in compliance with the rules of interrogation during the trial (Article 225 of the CPC). Although this case is an exception to the principle of direct examination of testimony, it does not pose a risk of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, as the investigating judge conducts the interrogation in compliance with all the rules of the court session.

2) The possibility of using as evidence in criminal proceedings the testimony obtained at the stage of pre-trial investigation under martial law and recorded by video recording equipment. Law dated 14.04.2022 amended the CPC in connection with the introduction of martial law and established the following:

- Testimony obtained during the interrogation of a witness or a victim, including simultaneous interrogation of two or more persons already interrogated, in criminal proceedings conducted under martial law may be used as evidence in court only if the progress and results of such interrogation were recorded using available technical means of video recording;

- Testimony obtained during the interrogation of a suspect, including the simultaneous interrogation of two or more already interrogated persons, in criminal proceedings conducted under martial law may be used as evidence in court only if a defence counsel participated in

such interrogation and the course and results of the interrogation were recorded using available technical means of video recording (art 11 of Article 615 of the CPC)⁴⁷.

The aforementioned provisions indicate that martial law established a new exception to the principle of direct examination of testimony. Starting on 24 February 2022, martial law was introduced throughout Ukraine, which is extended by the relevant laws every 90 days, and at the time of preparation of this report, it was extended until 9 May 2025 and may be extended further⁴⁸.

The Law establishes safeguards in the procedure of such interrogation: video recording and the participation of a defence lawyer, which should be positively noted as an attempt to prevent the use of testimony obtained as a result of torture. At the same time, video recording of the interrogation process alone does not guarantee that inadmissible types of treatment will not be applied to the interrogation. As for the defence counsel, during martial law, a provision was introduced to allow for remote participation of the defence counsel. Thus, Part 12 of Article 615 of the CPC stipulates that the inquirer, investigator, and prosecutor shall ensure the participation of the defence counsel in a separate procedural action, including in case of impossibility of the defence counsel's appearance with the use of technical means (video, audio communication) to ensure the defence counsel's remote participation. The possibility of remote participation of the defence counsel jeopardises the observance of human rights and the effectiveness of the defence. At the same time, the CPC does not contain a requirement to consider the opinions of the defence counsel and their client regarding the possibility of 'remote defence'. These norms are of concern given such conventional requirements as practicality and efficiency (effectiveness) of professional legal aid, in particular in terms of confidentiality of communication with a lawyer. Moreover, human rights defenders have expressed concerns about the possibility of using audio communication as a form of involvement of a lawyer in criminal proceedings, since audio communication is not

⁴⁷ The Law of Ukraine 'On Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine on Improving the Procedure for Conducting Criminal Proceedings under Martial Law' of 14.04.2022 No. 2201-IX.

⁴⁸ Law of Ukraine 'On Approval of the Decree of the President of Ukraine 'On Extension of the Martial Law in Ukraine' No. 12404 of 14.01.2025.

able to fully meet the requirements of Article 6 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms⁴⁹.

Another risk factor for the remote participation of a defence counsel is the lack of regulation of the method of ensuring the confidentiality of communication between the defence counsel and the client. Communication before a procedural action is aimed at forming a line of defence, choosing a common position, providing defence counsel with advice on how to behave during further procedural action, allowing the suspect to report violations of their rights, etc. Therefore, the incorporation of the above safeguards into the procedure for obtaining testimony at the stage of pre-trial investigation under martial law is not an effective counteraction to potential instances of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment⁵⁰.

Thus, the introduction of martial law has added new risks of violations of fundamental human rights and created a danger to Ukraine's implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

3) Possibility not to hear the testimony of a suspect or accused in court if an agreement is concluded between the parties (on reconciliation – between the victim and the suspect or accused; on plea bargaining – between the prosecutor and the suspect or accused). If the parties reach an agreement, the court does not conduct a full trial, but only examines the content of the agreement and during the trial ascertains from the accused whether they fully understand that they have the right to a trial during which the prosecutor is obliged to prove each circumstance of the criminal offence of which they are accused, and they have the following rights to remain silent, and the fact of silence will not have any evidentiary value for the court; to have a defence counsel, including the right to receive legal aid free of charge in the manner and cases provided for by law, or to defend themselves;

⁴⁹ Hloviuk I., Drozdov O., Teteriatnyk H., Fomina T., Rohalska V., Zavtur V. (2022). Special regime of pre-trial investigation and court proceedings under martial law. Scientific and practical commentary on Section IX-1 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine. Edition 3. Electronic edition. Source: www.researchgate.net/publication/366684199_Glovuk_I_Drozdov_O_Teteratnik_G_Fomina_T_Rogalska_V_Zavtur_V_Osoblivij_rezim_dosudovogo_rozsliduvanna_sudovogo_rozgladu_v_umovah_voennogo_stanu_naukovo-prakticnij_komentar_Rozdilu_IX-1_Kriminalnogo_pr

⁵⁰ Zmina NGO *et al* (2025). Alternative report to the UN Committee against Torture on the fulfilment by Ukraine of its international obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Kyiv, 2025. P.80.

to question prosecution witnesses during the trial, to file a motion to summon witnesses and to present evidence in their favour, etc. (Part 4 of Article 474 of the CPC). The court is also obliged to make sure in court that the parties' agreement is voluntary, i.e. not the result of violence, coercion, threats or the result of promises or any other circumstances other than those provided for in the agreement (Part 6 of Article 474 of the CPC). It is worth noting that in case of initiating a plea bargain between the prosecutor and the suspect or accused, the participation of a lawyer is mandatory (Paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Article 52 of the CPC). The suspect or accused may engage a lawyer independently or the state will provide one as part of free legal aid. The CPC was supplemented with this provision in 2015 by Law No. 198-VIII⁵¹. That is, for almost three years since the CPC of Ukraine came into force in 2012, a suspect or accused person participated in such proceedings without a defence counsel, but now this rule is mandatory.

Thus, the CPC of 2012 enshrined a clear rule on the inadmissibility of evidence obtained as a result of torture and the possibility of using in court only those testimonies that were heard orally by the court. At the same time, the above provisions indicate the existence of three exceptions to the principle of direct examination of the testimony, which may potentially become a precondition for violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the right to human dignity. The most complicated and the one that poses a real threat to the rule of law and human rights under martial law is the exception to the possibility of using a suspect's testimony as evidence in criminal proceedings if it was recorded on video and a lawyer was involved to take such testimony (in person or remotely). This provision, enshrined in Part 12 of Article 615 of the CPC, has a negative impact on the observance of human rights and may lead to the use of inadmissible methods of obtaining testimony from a person under martial law. Additionally, the safeguards enshrined in the CPC against the use of torture during the investigation are insufficient to overcome this phenomenon.

⁵¹ The Law of Ukraine 'On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Ensuring the Activities of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption' of 12.02.2015 No. 198-VIII.

The right to obtain compensation for damage caused by the state agents

According to Article 14 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, each State Party shall ensure in its legal system a redress for victims of torture and an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including measures for the fullest possible rehabilitation. In the event of the death of a victim as a result of torture, the right to compensation shall be granted to the victim's dependants.

Article 27 of the Constitution of Ukraine enshrines the inalienable right of everyone to life. Article 28 defines the right of everyone to respect their dignity.

In its decision on the petition of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, the Constitutional Court of Ukraine determined⁵², that the analysis of Articles 27 and 28 of the Basic Law of Ukraine in systemic connection with its Article 3, as well as the legal positions of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, gives grounds to assert that Articles 27 and 28 of the Constitution of Ukraine institutionalise not only the negative obligation of the state to refrain from acts that would violate human rights to life and respect for human dignity but also the positive obligation of the state, which consists, in particular, in ensuring an adequate system of national protection of constitutional human rights by developing appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks; implementing an effective system of protection of human life, health and dignity; creating conditions for the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms by a person; guaranteeing the procedure for compensation for damage caused as a result of violations of constitutional human rights; ensuring the inevitability of liability for violations of constitutional human rights.

The Constitutional Court of Ukraine considers that the positive obligation of the state to implement an appropriate system of protection of human life, health and dignity involves ensuring effective investigation of deprivation of life and ill-treatment, including concerning persons in places of detention under full state control.

⁵² Decision of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine in the case based on the constitutional submission of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights on the compliance of Part 6 of Article 216 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine with the Constitution of Ukraine (constitutionality) of 24 April 2018; case No. 1-22/2018 (762/17).

The effectiveness of such an investigation is measured by its completeness, comprehensiveness, efficiency, independence, etc. The independence of the investigation of violations of the human rights to life and respect for human dignity in places of detention means, in particular, that from the perspective of an impartial observer, there should be no doubt about the institutional (hierarchical) independence of the state body (its officials) authorised to conduct an official investigation of such violations. In this respect, the independence of the investigation cannot be achieved if the competent state body (its officials) is institutionally dependent on the body (its officials) to which the system of places of deprivation of liberty is subordinated and which is responsible for its functioning.

Thus, based on Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 27, Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 28 of the Constitution of Ukraine in systemic connection with its Article 3, the state should implement legislation that would ensure effective investigation of applications, reports of violations of the constitutional rights to life and respect for human dignity in places of deprivation of liberty by the competent state body (its officials), which is not institutionally or hierarchically dependent on the state body (its officials) to which the system of places of deprivation of liberty is subordinated.

The issue of the effectiveness of investigations into human rights violations by state agents is discussed in a separate section of this report. National legislation should be considered concerning compensation for damage caused by violations of constitutional human rights.

In the Ukrainian law, the state's obligation to compensate for damage caused by representatives of its bodies as a result of torture and other ill-treatment is enshrined in the Law of Ukraine '*On the Procedure for Compensation for Damage Caused to a Citizen by Unlawful Actions of Bodies Conducting Operational and Investigative Activities, Pre-trial Investigation Bodies, Prosecutor's Office and Court*'⁵³. This law dates back to 1994 and has more than 15 amendments to the supplementary text. This law does not specify the amount of compensation. However, it stipulates that the amount of compensation, depending on which body conducted the investigative (detective) actions or considered the case, is

⁵³ The Law of Ukraine 'On the Procedure for Compensation for Damage Caused to a Citizen by Unlawful Actions of Bodies Conducting Operational Investigation Activities, Pre-trial Investigation Bodies, Prosecutor's Office and Court' of 01.12.1994 No. 266/94-VR.

determined within one month from the date of the citizen's application by the relevant bodies conducting operational and detective activities, pre-trial investigation, prosecutor's office and court, and a ruling (decision) is issued. If the criminal proceedings are closed by a court when the criminal case is considered on appeal or cassation, these actions are carried out by the court that considered the case in the first instance. At the same time, in case of disagreement with the ruling (decision) on compensation for damage, a citizen may appeal the ruling to a court according to the provisions of civil procedure law, and the court's decision to a higher court on appeal (Article 12).

The quoted provisions indicate that the bodies that determine the amount of compensation are the very bodies that caused the damage to the citizen, which creates a situation of absolute legal insecurity. Enshrining the possibility of appealing a decision or ruling on determining the amount of damage to a court is a positive norm, but it is significant to involve a lawyer or attorney to file such a complaint, which is not always possible for such a person.

In 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine submitted to the legislature a draft law on amendments to certain legislative acts on measures aimed at restoring the rights of convicted persons and persons in custody due to inadequate conditions of detention (No. 4093-IX of 21.11.2024)⁵⁴. The purpose of this act is to ensure that Ukrainian legislation complies with the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, to create appropriate material and living conditions for detainees, and to introduce effective preventive and compensatory remedies in the national legislation in case of inadequate conditions of detention.

It was only at the end of 2024 that this draft law was adopted as a law (and came into force on January 1, 2025), which, among other things, stipulates that proper conditions of detention are those that meet the requirements of the Constitution of Ukraine, international treaties ratified by the Parliament, and other legislative acts, namely: 1) prevention of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; 2) providing proper medical care; 3) providing adequate nutrition; 4) providing adequate living conditions (living space, free access to toilets,

⁵⁴ Draft Law on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts on Measures Aimed at Restoring the Rights of Convicted Persons and Persons in Custody Due to Improper Conditions of Detention No. 4093-IX of 21.11.2024.

sufficient natural light, standard temperature conditions, ventilation of premises); 5) adherence to state medical and sanitary regulations⁵⁵.

To implement the provisions of this law, commissions for reviewing complaints about inadequate conditions of detention in prisons are established. The Commission shall establish the fact and/or duration of detention in inadequate conditions in a prison. At the same time, the law stipulates that the measures of compensation for improper conditions of detention include: 1) reduction of the period from which parole may be applied, commutation of a court-ordered sentence to a lighter one, or removal of a criminal record according to the procedure provided for in the Criminal Code; 2) exemption from reimbursement of the cost of detention for the entire period of the established fact of detention in improper.

However, the text of the legislative acts regulating the activities of the Commissions is unclear, in particular, the question remains open as to what is the mechanism and algorithm for reducing the term from which conditional early release or the process of replacing the sentence imposed by the court with a more lenient one, or the removal of a criminal record, can be applied. At the same time, the mechanism for reducing the term for which conditional early release may be applied, replacing the sentence imposed by the court with a more lenient one, or expunging a criminal record, should come into effect after amendments are made to the Criminal Code, which has not been done. Therefore, in essence, the commissions have significantly limited opportunities to respond to cases of inappropriate conditions, and their activities remain more of a formality than a real mechanism for responding to cases of inappropriate detention.

These means of redress are not sufficient and appropriate given the content of Article 14 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. After all, the damage caused by torture can hardly be compensated for through conditional release or the expungement of a criminal record, etc. This issue, unfortunately, remains unanswered and requires legislative resolution. The urgency of its resolution is also supported by the recommendations of the CPT and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

⁵⁵ The Law of Ukraine 'On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Measures Aimed at Restoring the Rights of Convicted Persons and Persons in Custody Due to Improper Conditions of Detention' of 21.11.2024 No. 4093-IX.

on the need to take comprehensive measures to address the problem of conditions of detention and the absence of an effective remedy in national legislation. After all, the total number of ECtHR judgments relating to the problems of inadequate conditions of detention is about 1/7 of the total number of all cases under the control of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe regarding Ukraine.

A special mention should be made of the right of victims of torture to *compensation for moral damages*.

As mentioned earlier, the Law of Ukraine '*On the Procedure for Compensation for Damage Caused to a Citizen by Unlawful Actions of Bodies Conducting Operational Investigation Activities, Pre-trial Investigation Bodies, the Prosecutor's Office and the Court*' contains provisions on compensation for moral damages to a person who suffered it as a result of unlawful actions of pre-trial investigation bodies. This Law defines moral damages as the suffering caused to a citizen as a result of physical or mental impact, which led to deterioration or deprivation of opportunities to exercise their habits and desires, deterioration of relations with other people, and other negative moral consequences (Part 6 of Article 4). The sum of moral damages is determined considering the circumstances of the case within the limits established by civil law (Part 2 of Article 13)⁵⁶.

A look at civil legislation (Chapter 82 'Compensation for Damage') reveals a complex system for assessing the severity of moral suffering and a complicated procedure for victims of torture to apply to the relevant authorities for compensation for moral damages, which has not changed over the years and has been further complicated by the adoption of law enforcement acts, such as the resolution of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of Ukraine (e.g. '*On Court Practice in Cases of Compensation for Moral (Non-Pecuniary) Damage*', 1995)⁵⁷.

In Ukrainian law enforcement practice, there is a rule according to which a preliminary court decision recognizing such actions as unlawful is not required to compensate for moral damages for unlawful actions,

⁵⁶ The Law of Ukraine '*On the Procedure for Compensation for Damage Caused to a Citizen by Unlawful Actions of Bodies Conducting Operational Investigation Activities, Pre-trial Investigation Bodies, Prosecutor's Office and Court*' of 01.12.1994 No. 266/94-VR.

⁵⁷ On court practice in cases of compensation for moral (non-pecuniary) damage: Resolution of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of Ukraine No. 4 of 31.03.1995.

as this legal fact is inherently part of the subject matter to be proven in a claim for damage compensation⁵⁸.

In another decision, the Supreme Court established that the obligation to compensate for moral damages arises under the following conditions:

- the existence of moral damages;
- the unlawfulness of the behaviour of the person who caused the moral damages;
- the existence of a causal link between the unlawful behaviour of the person who caused moral damages and its result – moral damages;
- the fault of the person who caused moral damages.

If a specific person who caused moral damages is identified, the burden of proof is shared: a) The plaintiff must prove the existence of moral damages and causation; b) The defendant proves the absence of unlawfulness and guilt⁵⁹.

In practice, courts determine the amount of compensation for moral damages in different ways, and there are no clear criteria for determining it.

For example, the Supreme Court, in its ruling of 10.06.2024 in case No. 642/4335/21, resolved the issue of the amount of compensation for moral damages for such actions as unlawful prosecution, unlawful detention and detention for nine months, torture and other unlawful actions. In this case, the court of first instance (Leninskyi District Court of Kharkiv) determined the compensation for moral damages in the amount of 2,4 million UAH. After review by the Kharkiv Court of Appeal, the amount of compensation for moral damages was set at 0,66 million UAH. The review of the case by the Supreme Court resulted in the cancellation of the decision of the Court of Appeal and upholding the decision of the court of first instance, which set the amount of compensation for moral damages at UAH 2,4 million UAH⁶⁰.

In another case *inter alia* the plaintiff determined the amount of compensation for moral damages for torture, namely: being placed in so-called ‘pressure cells’, ‘black cells with general criminals’, cells

⁵⁸ Resolution of the Supreme Court of 19.06.2024 in case No. 369/14404/17. Source: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/120006233>

⁵⁹ Resolution of the Supreme Court of 25.05.2022 in case No. 487/6970/20. Source: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/104539336>

⁶⁰ Resolution of the Supreme Court of 10.06.2024 in case No. 642/4335/21. Source: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/120370612>

with individuals in proceedings over which he had supervised the investigation, and cells where persons with active tuberculosis were serving their sentences, amounting to 0,5 million UAH. The total amount of moral damages claimed by the plaintiff was 10 million UAH. The Zhytomyr District Court of the Zhytomyr Region partially satisfied the claim and determined the amount of moral damages in the amount of 1,45 million UAH. The Zhytomyr Court of Appeal increased the amount of non-pecuniary damage from UAH 1,45 million UAH to 4 million UAH. The Supreme Court upheld the position of the court of appeal in determining the amount of compensation for moral damages in the amount of UAH 4 million UAH⁶¹.

The examples given above demonstrate a subjective approach to determining the sum of moral damages, and unpredictability of the actual amount of compensation received by the person filing the relevant complaints, which negatively affects the observance of human rights and Ukraine's implementation of international legal acts.

In conclusion, the provisions of the Law of Ukraine '*On the Procedure for Compensation for Damage Caused to a Citizen by Unlawful Actions of Bodies Conducting Operational Investigation Activities, Pre-trial Investigation Bodies, Prosecutor's Office and Court*' and the Regulation on the Application of the mention above Law are outdated and require fundamental changes in the area of compensation for moral damages to citizens who have been victims of torture. The law enforcement practice of higher courts indicates the absence of a single mechanism for determining the sum of moral damages; different approaches to determining the sum of moral damages by courts of different instances, which together question the implementation of the principles of the rule of law, legality, legal certainty and others⁶².

A special mention should be made of the right of victims of torture to *compensation in the healthcare sector*. According to Article 3 of the Law of Ukraine '*Fundamentals of the Legislation of Ukraine on Health Care*', a rehabilitation service is a service provided to a patient by a rehabilitation facility, rehabilitation institution, healthcare, social protection or other legal entity that is entitled to provide rehabilitation

⁶¹ Resolution of the Supreme Court of 07.02.2024 in case No. 278/2621/21.

⁶² Zmina NGO *et al* (2025). Alternative report to the UN Committee against Torture on the fulfilment by Ukraine of its international obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Kyiv, 2025. P.80.

care under the law and is paid for by its customer. The customer of the rehabilitation service may be the state, local government, legal entity or natural person, including the patient⁶³.

According to Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine '*On Rehabilitation in Healthcare*', rehabilitation care in healthcare is the activity of healthcare rehabilitation specialists, which involves the implementation of a set of measures aimed at optimising the functioning of persons who are or may be subject to limitations in their daily functioning in their environment. The same article defines psychological assistance in rehabilitation as an activity aimed at restoring and maintaining the functioning of a person in the physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual spheres using methods of psychological and psychotherapeutic assistance in the forms of psychotherapy, psychological counselling or first aid. Psychological assistance in rehabilitation is provided by psychologists and/or psychotherapists as part of a multidisciplinary rehabilitation team⁶⁴.

Despite the existing legal framework for psychological rehabilitation of victims of torture, there are no state rehabilitation programmes for victims of torture in Ukraine. There is currently no state-targeted rehabilitation programme for victims of torture, and such assistance is provided only by civil society organisations and volunteers. Non-governmental organisations took on the task of improving the condition of torture victims, reducing the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and working with the victims' families, but their efforts, expertise, and resources are sorely lacking. This means that they can only support a very limited number of the total number of the torture victims that need assistance. As a result, most victims are denied their right to rehabilitation and with that essential support in rebuilding their lives and becoming active members of their community⁶⁵.

⁶³ The Law of Ukraine 'Fundamentals of the Legislation of Ukraine on Healthcare' of 19.11.1992 No. 2801-XII.

⁶⁴ The Law of Ukraine 'On Rehabilitation in the Field of Healthcare' of 03.12.2020 No. 1053-IX.

⁶⁵ Zmina NGO *et al* (2025). Alternative report to the UN Committee against Torture on the fulfilment by Ukraine of its international obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Kyiv, 2025. P. 80.

PRISONS IN WARTIME⁶⁶

With the start of Russia's full-scaled aggression against Ukraine, prisons, prisoners, and prison staff found themselves in an extremely dangerous situation.

Back in 2014, when Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine began, numerous prisons found themselves in extremely difficult conditions. Some of them were occupied, while others were located in the combat zone. Almost all institutions located in the relevant territories (occupied or annexed) remained there, were not evacuated and found themselves in a situation of legal uncertainty.

Despite the experience of 2014, in 2022 the prison service still found itself in a situation where some prisons were under occupation. The War has posed a major complex challenge for the prison system, as prisons are secure facilities and prison staff are therefore unable to quickly resolve issues relating to the evacuation of prisoners and the transfer of property and documents, including classified documents.

Efforts to return prisoners have had some success but given the number of individuals who have been returned, it can be said that this success was more a matter of chance than a systematic practice of the Ukrainian authorities.

Furthermore, the fact that prisons are effectively outside the control of the Ukrainian authorities puts staff at risk of potential collaboration with the enemy, as provided for in Article 111-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

For example, the acting head of Correctional Colony № 5 of the Federal Criminal-Executive Service of Russian Federation in the so-called 'Luhansk People's Republic' (formerly Sverdlovsk Correctional Colony № 38 of Ukraine) in the city of Dovzhansk in the temporarily occupied Luhansk region, where Ukrainian prisoners are being held, is a former Ukrainian colonel of the prison service. In March 2024, the Office of the Prosecutor General announced that he was suspected of

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collaboration under Part 7 of Article 111-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (voluntary occupation by a citizen of Ukraine of a position in illegal law enforcement agencies created in the temporarily occupied territory)⁶⁷.

At the end of August 2025, the Kherson City Court found the former inspector of Darivska Correctional Colony №10 guilty of collaboration. During the temporary occupation of the Kherson region, she voluntarily joined the Russian prison administration. In May 2022, when Russian troops seized part of the Kherson region, the inspector voluntarily joined the ‘service’ of the Darivska Correctional Colony № 10, which had been captured by the occupiers. She was given the position of ‘junior inspector of the security department’ by the occupiers and began to carry out the instructions and orders of the leaders of the Russian Federation’s occupation authorities, for which she received a salary in rubles. After the de-occupation of the Kherson region, the woman hid from Ukrainian law enforcement agencies for a long time. In early March 2025, she was exposed and detained. The court sentenced her to 8 years’ imprisonment with deprivation of the right to hold positions in law enforcement agencies for 10 years (Part 7 of Article 111-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine)⁶⁸.

The war affects not only Ukrainian collaborators. It also affects Russian occupiers who hold positions in occupied Ukrainian penitentiary institutions. On December 9, 2024, a car exploded in the temporarily occupied city of Donetsk. The former head of the Olenivka colony was likely killed in the explosion. At least two people were seriously injured⁶⁹.

In addition, one of the main challenges was the danger of prisons coming under rocket and drone fire.

One of the most tragic examples of such situations was the bombing of the Bilenkivska Correctional Colony located in the Zaporizhzhia oblast,

⁶⁷ Shaposhnikov, D. (2025). The colony where Ukrainian prisoners are held is run by Vitaliy Sterzhanov, who studied and met his wife in Chernihiv. *Suspilne*. August 14, 2025. Source: <https://suspilne.media/chernihiv>

⁶⁸ Armiya Inform (2025). A traitor who served the occupiers in a penal colony in the Kherson region received her deserved punishment. *Armiya Inform*. August 19, 2025. Source: <https://armyinform.com.ua/2025/08/19>

⁶⁹ Kovalevich, A. (2024). Former head of Olenivka colony blown up in occupied Donetsk, according to Russian media. *Hromadske Radio*. December 14, 2024. Source: <https://hromadske.radio/news/2024/12/09/v-okupovanomu-donetsku-pidirvaly-eksnachalnyka-olenivskoi-kolonii-rozsmi>

In general, on 27 July 2025, at night, Russian armed forces fired eight times on the Zaporizhzhia oblast, with FAB bombs⁷⁰. One of the targets was the Bilenkivska Correctional Colony.

At approximately 23:28, Russian armed forces launched an airstrike on the territory of the Bilenkivska correctional colony using four guided aerial bombs.

The prison's dining hall was destroyed as a result of the shelling, and the administrative headquarters and quarantine section suffered significant damage. As a result of the strike, 17 prisoners were killed and 42 were wounded. The seriously wounded were hospitalised in hospitals of the Ministry of Health. About 40 more people suffered injuries of varying severity, and one employee of the facility suffered minor injuries (shrapnel wounds to the face)⁷¹.

The Ministry of Justice of Ukraine noted that this attack once again demonstrates a gross violation of international humanitarian law by the Russian armed forces. The shelling of civilian infrastructure, in particular penitentiary institutions, is considered a war crime⁷².

As of August 7, 2025, the leadership of the Zaporizhzhia Regional State Administration and the 17th Army Corps of the Ground Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine decided to carry out the mandatory evacuation of convicts and detainees held in state institutions:

- Zaporizhzhia Pre-Trial Detention Centre;
- Vilnianska Penitentiary Institution (No. 11);
- Kam'yanska Penal Colony (No. 101).

In the context of the involvement of the prison system into the war, it should be noted that in 2024, Ukraine introduced a mechanism for the voluntary mobilisation of convicts into the Armed Forces in exchange for the possibility of conditional early release after completion of service. Mobilisation is entirely voluntary and involves several stages of

⁷⁰ The FAB-500 is a Soviet-designed 500-kilogram (1,100 lb) general purpose air-dropped bomb with a high-explosive warhead, primarily used by the Russian Aerospace Forces, former Soviet republics and customer countries. The original M-54 model was rolled out in 1954, shaped for internal carriage by heavy bombers, a low-drag M-62 version in 1962 was intended for fighter bomber external hardpoint carriage.

⁷¹ Ministry of Justice of Ukraine (2025). Russian troops launched an air strike on the Bilenkivska correctional colony. *Ministry of Justice of Ukraine*. July 28, 2025. Source: www.minjust.gov.ua/news/ministry/rosiyski-viyska-zavdali-aviatsiynogo-udaru-po-bilenkivskiy-vipravniy-kolonii

⁷² Ministry of Justice of Ukraine (2025). Russian troops launched an air strike on the Bilenkivska correctional colony. *Ministry of Justice of Ukraine*. July 28, 2025. Source: www.minjust.gov.ua/news/ministry/rosiyski-viyska-zavdali-aviatsiynogo-udaru-po-bilenkivskiy-vipravniy-kolonii

screening, including medical and psychological examinations. Convicts can only be mobilised with the consent of the prisoner himself and the commander of the military unit. Mobilised convicts serve in special units formed exclusively from former prisoners.

Mobilisation is entirely voluntary and involves many stages of screening, including medical and psychological examinations. Convicts can only be mobilised with the consent of the prisoner himself and the commander of the military unit. Mobilised convicts serve in special units formed exclusively from former prisoners.

As of May 2025, more than 8300 convicts had joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine. According to the prison system's leadership, if we discuss the potential of this initiative, we estimate that about 20-30% of all convicts in Ukraine could take advantage of this opportunity and defend the state.

This could become an important reserve of personnel for the armed forces in the context of ongoing Russian aggression.

However, not all prisoners are eligible for mobilisation according to the criteria established. For example, individuals convicted of terrorism, corruption and sexual offences, as well as crimes against state security, are not eligible for mobilisation.

It should be added that Russian aggression against Ukraine has not stopped the spread of organised crime in prisons, in accordance with the traditional Soviet model of informal prison hierarchy. It was during the war that the fight against informal hierarchies among prisoners became one of the priorities of the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice and the prison service. Sporadically, the Ukrainian media report on the announcement of suspicion against one or another criminal boss held in places of detention.

For example, on August 15, 2025, in the Chernihiv region, a prison boss in the Novgorod-Siversk Penal Colony was charged with organising extortion of money from convicts and their relatives. His accomplices, both free and behind bars, were also charged. According to the case file, law enforcement officers documented several instances of receiving money from the relatives of convicts totalling almost 100 000 UAH. The money was paid so that the prisoners could serve their sentences in peace.

According to the Strategic Investigations Department of the National Police of Ukraine in the Chernihiv region, all those involved

in the criminal proceedings met while serving their sentences in a correctional facility. Having authority among the prisoners, the so-called ‘*watcher*’ in the prison organised a group. On his instructions, the participants engaged in extortion. Those who refused to pay were subjected to unbearable conditions within the prison walls. Even after their release, the two defendants continued to exert psychological pressure on the victims’ relatives, who were now free, in order to force them to pay money. Part of the money received was transferred to the so-called ‘*common fund*’ held by the ‘*watcher*’⁷³.

Unfortunately, the war has not freed Ukrainian prisons from practices of torture and other forms of ill-treatment by prison staff. Moreover, the mass transfer of prisoners, the uncertainty faced by staff, and the lack of proper oversight by human rights organisations, which are typical in peacetime, have led to an increase in torture and other forms of ill-treatment. In fact, this negative aspect cannot be ignored in the context of studying Ukrainian wartime penalty.

Thus, at the end of August 2025, officers the State Bureau of Investigations detected and arrested the head and four employees of Oleksiyivska Correctional Colony №25, who forced prisoners to perform unpaid and overtime work using psychological pressure, intimidation and humiliation. The investigation established that the management of this prison, with the help of the operational department, systematically exerted illegal influence on convicts. People were forced to work for free, including overtime, through blackmail, threats, insults and other forms of humiliation. In addition, disciplinary measures were used without justification – prisoners were placed in disciplinary isolation or cell-type cells⁷⁴.

⁷³ Varkhol, V. (2025). Demanded money from convicts: suspicions announced against the ‘overseer’ of the penal institution and his accomplices. *Suspilne Media*. August 15, 2025. Source: <https://suspilne.media/chernihiv/1091486-vimagali-grosi-u-zasudzenih-ogolosilipidozru-smotrasomu-v-novgorod-siverskij-ustanovi-vikonanna-pokaran>

⁷⁴ Pogorilov, S. (2025). Abuse and coercion to work overtime: DBR detained five officials of the colony in Kharkiv. *Ukrainska Pravda*. August 26, 2025. Source: www.pravda.com.ua/news/2025/08/26/7527852

ORGANISED CRIME⁷⁵

Organised crime always favours stable jurisdictions with weak institutions and corrupt environments that provide relatively safe opportunities to base and conduct criminal activity, increasingly penetrating and influencing politics, economies and social life, expanding criminal markets and introducing new criminal technologies. However, due to its high adaptive capacity, organised crime effectively leverages chaos and social upheaval to generate profits and benefits.

The large-scale invasion has ‘*shuffled the deck*’ for many criminal groups in Ukraine and related transnational organisations, disrupting established criminal economy schemes and networks, including their logistics routes and distribution channels. At the same time, as will be shown below, the War and martial law imposed in Ukraine have created the potential for organised crime to develop new illicit activities and diversify and expand existing ones⁷⁶.

In this section, we rely on the legalistic definition of organised crime to analyse its key indicators in the pre-war and wartime periods.

In Ukraine, the normative definition of organised crime refers to the special law of Ukraine, ‘*On the Organisational and Legal Fundamentals of Combating Organised Crime*’, adopted in 1993.

The term ‘*organised crime*’ in the special Act means a series of criminal offences committed due to the *creation* and *activity* of organised criminal groups. The features of organised criminal groups refer to the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

The legal definition of organised crime is highly criticized due to the poor explanation and incomplete coverage of organised crime varieties. The definition is rather imperfect and descriptive – and does not provide clear criteria for distinguishing organised criminal activity from the activities of situational groups.

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⁷⁶ Melnychuk, T. (2023). *Organized Crime as Institutional Cluster: Transition from Traditional to Informational Model in Ukraine*. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. Source: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-39532-1>

However, the law was adopted in the early 1990s – in harsh conditions at the beginning of Independence, with a significant spread in organised crime – in order to create specialized bodies for combatting organised crime, with a legal framework and legal instruments for active countermeasures. Indeed, these are still valid today.

In 2001, the Criminal Code of Ukraine enabled punishment for the criminal activity of *organised criminal groups* and *criminal organisations*.

A criminal offence shall be held to have been committed by an *organised group* where several persons (three or more) participated in its preparation or commission, who have previously established a *stable association* for the purpose of committing of this and other offence (or offences) and have been consolidated by a common plan with assigned roles designed to achieve this plan known to all members of the group (Part 3, Article 28).

A criminal offence shall be held to have been committed by a *criminal organization* where it was committed by a *stable hierarchical association* of several persons (five and more), members or structural units, which have organised themselves, upon a prior conspiracy, to jointly act for the purpose of directly committing of grave or special grave criminal offences by the members of this organisation, or supervising or coordinating criminal activity of other persons, or supporting the activity of this criminal organisation and other criminal groups (Part 4, Article 28).

This legalistic approach, despite its imperfections, serves as the basis for the current accounting of both quantitative and qualitative indicators of organised crime in Ukraine.

In police statistics, organised groups and criminal organisations are recorded in aggregate, with criminal organisations listed separately in a distinct column. In this subsection, the term ‘*organised criminal groups*’ (hereinafter – *OCGs*) is used to refer to both organised groups (hereinafter – *Org.Gr.*) and criminal organisations (hereinafter – *Crim. Org.*), unless otherwise specified.

The rate of organised crime and its dynamic manifestations are determined by three main indicators: the number of OCGs under investigation; the number of persons who committed crimes as part of OCGs, for which investigation was completed; and the number of crimes, for which investigation was completed (*Table 1*). They cover all types of criminal activity and provide an integrative ‘picture’ of organised crime in Ukraine.

Tab. 1**Dynamics of organised crime in Ukraine (police statistics of 2013 – 6 m 2025)**

Year	Number of OCGs under investigation	Including Crim.Org.	Number of persons who committed crimes as a part of OCGs, for which investigation was completed	Including Cr.im.Org	Number of crimes, for which investigation was completed	Including committed by Crim.Org.
2013	185	7	662		1396	
2014	166	1	676		1337	
2015	135	4	570		1197	
2016	136	3	598	27	1043	3
2017	210	5	949	68	1728	5
2018	288	12	1429	168	2513	12
2019	293	16	1428	235	2344	16
2020	377	21	1609	190	3595	241
2021	499	45	2248	360	4318	662
2022	395	40	1637	276	3142	409
2023	494	51	2103	368	5197	788
2024	663	72	3035	714	7881	1262
6 m 2025	509	57	2283	465	5339	1474

After the decreasing dynamics for 2013–2015, the pre-War period from 2016–2021 was marked by a gradual increase in the overall rate of organised crime in Ukraine. The number of identified OCGs grew from 136 groups committing 1043 crimes in 2016 to 499 groups committing 4318 crimes in 2021. The annual increase averaged 5,5%.

In the meantime, it should be noted that the overall crime rate in Ukraine experienced a declining trend over the same period, with an annual average fall of 9%. The share of criminal organisations among all identified OCGs also increased – from just 2% in 2016 to 9% in 2021.

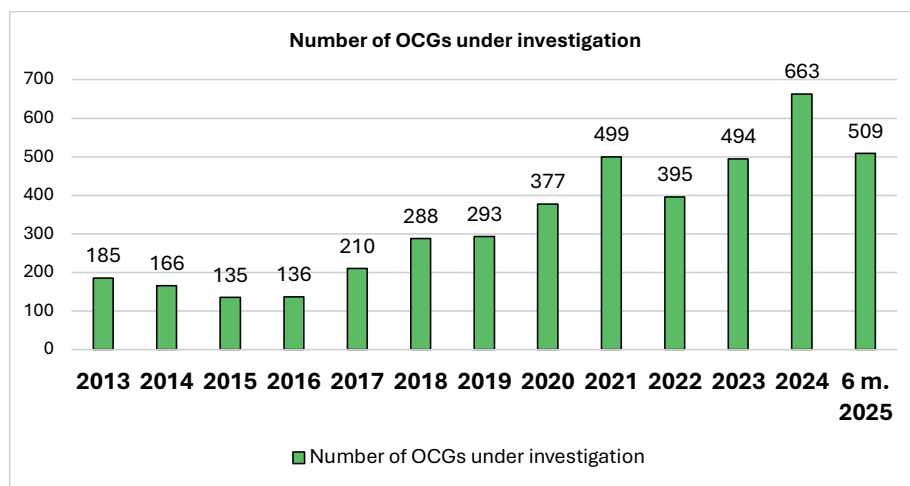


Figure 3. Number of OCGs under investigation

The number of OCGs detected in Ukraine in 2022 amounted to 395, which represents a 21% decrease compared to the previous year, 2021. Given the negative dynamics, some unstable groups likely ceased to exist in 2022, having been forced to dismantle their networks or at least temporarily suspend their criminal activities.

At the same time, there is evidence that the top tiers of traditional criminal hierarchies continued their operations in Ukraine despite the War. In December 2022, the leaders of the so-called ‘top’ of the criminal world were allegedly detained in Ukraine: criminal bosses nicknamed ‘*Umka*’, ‘crowned’ in 2014, and ‘*Lasha Svan*’, a ‘*thief in law*’ since 1995, who received their ‘titles’ from senior figures of the Russian criminal world⁷⁷.

The monthly trend lines of organised crime in war-torn Ukraine during 2022 generally do not diverge significantly from those observed in pre-war 2021, with the exception of an atypical decline in the number of detected OCGs in March 2022. This decline can reasonably be attributed to general disorganisation at the onset of the War, both within criminal networks and law enforcement investigations, which were primarily focused on the country’s defence and combating sabotage groups.

⁷⁷ National Police of Ukraine (2022). Organization and participation in the so-called ‘criminal assemblies’: ‘thieves in law’ Umka and Lasha Svan detained. *National Police of Ukraine*. December 27, 2022. Source: www.npu.gov.ua/news/orhanizatsiia-ta-uchast-u-tak-zvanykh-skhodkakh-zatrymano-voriv-u-zakoni-umku-ta-lashu-svana

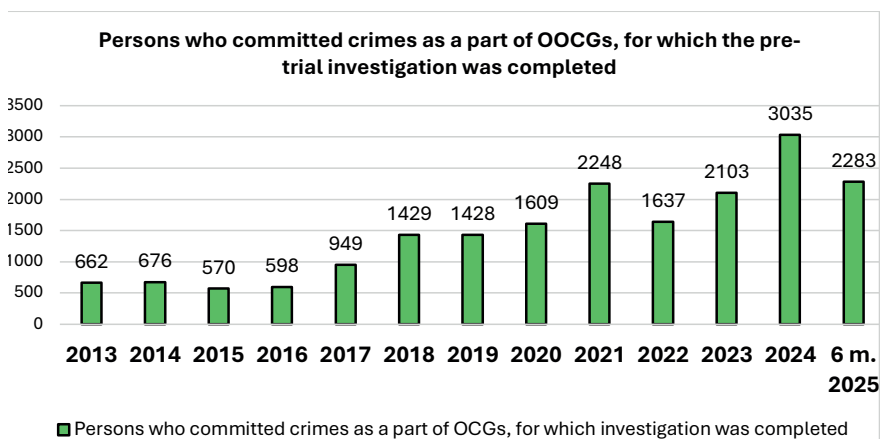


Figure 4. Persons who committed crimes as a part of OCGs, for which the pre-trial investigation was completed

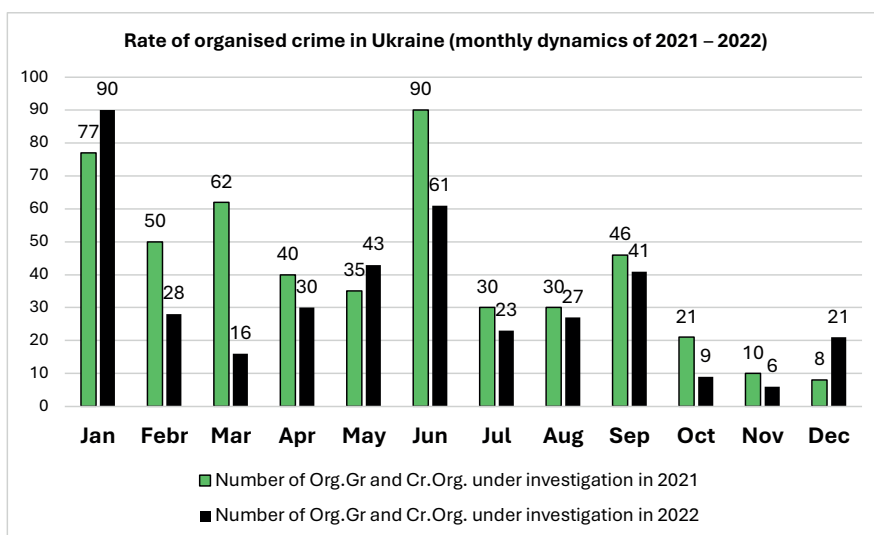


Figure 5. Rate of organised crime in Ukraine (monthly dynamics of 2021 – 2022)

The prolonged War has been marked by a rapid increase in organised crime. In 2023, 494 OCGs were identified (+25% compared to 2022), which committed 5197 crimes, and in 2024 – 663 OCGs (+13.4% compared to 2023) and 7881 crimes. This trend clearly reflects criminal

adaptation to wartime conditions and the emergence of new criminal opportunities.

Given that the share of criminal organisations among all organised crime actors increased to 11% in 2024, we can trace the continuation of the pre-War trend toward more complex forms of organisation and more serious crimes.

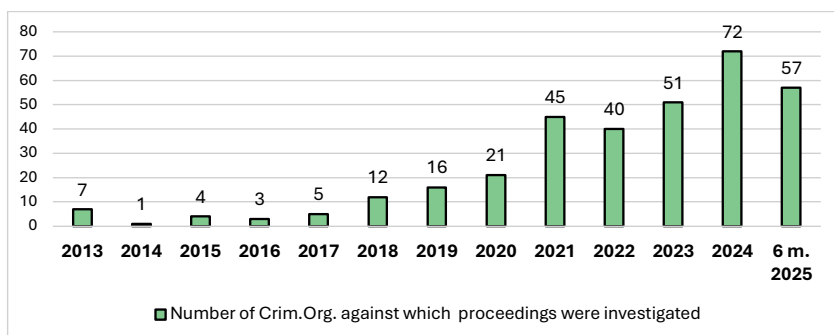


Figure 6. Number of Crim.Org. under investigation

The trend towards an increase in the share of criminal organisations in the overall structure of OCGs is also confirmed by the growing number of offenses related to the creation of a criminal organisation, which constitutes a substantial crime. Thus, in 2016, only four such cases were detected, in 2021 their number rose to 66, and in 2024 – to 116. The indicator for the first six months of 2025 has already reached 80 cases of the creation of criminal organisation, which, based on the forecast for the next six months, suggests that the total for 2025 may surpass that of 2024 (*Table 2*).

Retracing our steps to the analysis of the overall level of organised crime in the dynamics, it should be stressed that the trend lines and indicators for the first six months of 2025 confirm the forecasts of a continued escalation of organised crime during the War. Thus, in six months of 2025, 509 OCGs and 5339 crimes committed by them were identified. This amount already exceeds the totals recorded for the entire year of 2023.

It is important to consider that during the War, the total population residing in the government-controlled territory of Ukraine has significantly decreased. While the exact population figure remains unknown, there is clear evidence that millions of Ukrainians have fled the country as

forcibly displaced persons (including, likely, some involved in criminal activity), and that tens of thousands of civilians have died as a result of hostilities. In addition, a part of the population, particularly men, has been mobilized into the army, with many killed in action or held in captivity. Certain Ukrainian territories remain temporarily occupied, and therefore, crimes committed in those areas are either not officially recorded by Ukrainian authorities or are only partially accounted for after liberation. This significant population decline would be expected, under normal circumstances, to lead to a reduction in potential criminal activity. Moreover, the absence of statistical coverage for occupied territories should, purely mathematically, result in an artificially lowered level of recorded organised crime and overall crime in the country. Nevertheless, even under such conditions, the crime situation in terms of organised crime is steadily and significantly deteriorating.

The essential characteristics of OCGs are determined by their internal and external stability. Internal stability is indicated by the stability of the composition of members and the existence of the group for a certain period of time to commit a number of crimes (or one crime that required long and thorough preparation). External stability implies the ability to resist detection by law enforcement agencies, including through corrupt connections, and the ability to cooperate/compete with other groups at the local or transnational level.

The structural characteristics of OCGs analysed for the pre-war period 2013–2021 provide an informative picture of the nature of organised crime. Thus, in 2021, 14% of the identified OCGs had inter-regional ties, 11,4% used corrupt ties, 7,6% were formed on an ethnic basis and 2,2% established transnational ties. Poly-criminal activities were carried out by 45% of the identified groups, confirming the propensity of organised crime to diversify.

2021 became the peak year for the entire research period in terms of the number of OCGs with corrupt connections. In Ukraine, corruption permeates all spheres of social life - from the household level to the highest government positions. Balancing between violence and corruption as a means to achieve criminal goals, Ukrainian organised crime is more likely to use corruption, which, unlike violence, adds concealment to criminal activity and provides a long-term perspective. It is believed that during the War, some well-established corruption ties were lost, however, the general corruption in society and the corrupt nature of officials allowed for their quick restoration or the establishment of new ones.

Table 2

OCGs' characteristics

Number of OCGs under investigation		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 m. 2025
		185	166	135	136	210	288	293	377	499	395	494	663	509
<i>Among them</i>	with corrupt connect.	33	32	11	16	25	21	29	33	57	36	35	46	34
	with inter-regional connect.	-	-	-	21	27	41	23	51	70	40	48	62	59
	with intern. / trans. connect.	38	38	28	4	11	7	6	11	11	11	13	12	5
	formed on ethnic grounds	21	19	8	6	9	17	11	36	38	27	14	20	17
<i>Among them</i>	poly-criminal activity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	139	225	161	223	291	214
Duration of activity of Org. Gr. and/or Crim.Org	up to 1 year	140	120	97	108	166	202	218	278	368	281	363	472	345
	up to 2 years	14	25	22	16	28	51	46	72	91	75	90	133	126
	3-6 years	4	2	4	4	4	9	5	9	9	8	17	23	11
	more than 6 years	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	3	4	1	4	4
Number of persons who committed crimes as a part of Org. Gr. and/or Crim.Org	3 persons	-	-	-	77	122	160	170	215	247	0	264	341	265
	4-10 persons	-	-	-	59	85	120	118	153	242	213	220	304	232
	11-20 persons	-	-	-	0	2	7	5	8	9	177	9	14	12
	more than 20 persons	-	-	-	0	1	1	0	0	1	5	0	3	0

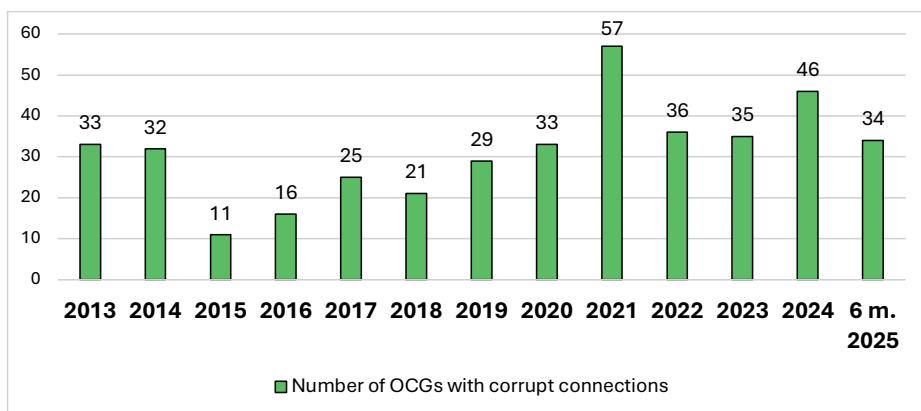


Figure 7. Number of OCGs with corrupt connections

OCGs with transnational connections dominated in 2013-14, when 38 such groups were identified annually. A further 28 OCGs with transnational ties were identified in 2015. Since 2016, both in the pre-war and war periods, the statistical indicators do not show a pronounced trend in the establishment of transnational ties by groups - the total number of such groups has decreased and averages 10 groups annually.

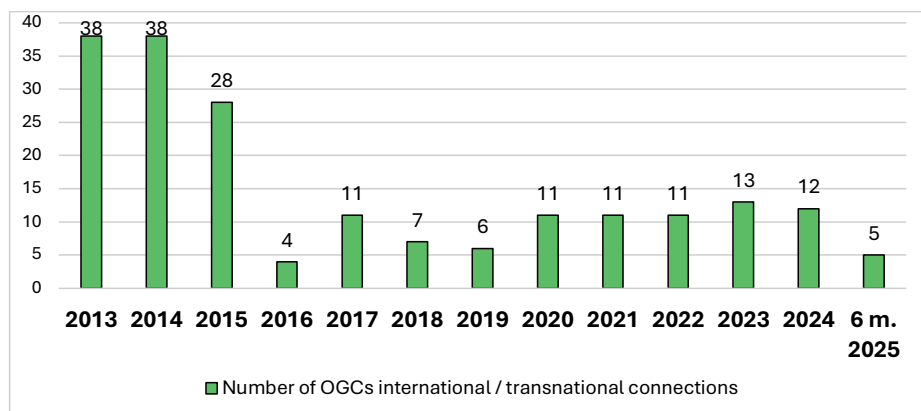


Figure 8. Number of OCGs with international / transnational connections

Although Ukraine traditionally belongs to mono-national countries with more than 70% of the population being Ukrainian, ethnic-based groups are quite active in the structure of organised crime, which serves as an additional factor of their unity and at the same time a factor of

complexity in counteraction. The largest number of ethnically-based groups was identified in the pre-war years – 36 in 2020 and 38 in 2021. Such active documentation is likely due to the changes to criminal law introduced in 2020, which, despite fair criticism, allowed the prosecution of so-called ‘*thieves in law*’, a significant proportion of whom are believed to be members of ethnic minorities.

Since the outbreak of the war, the number of ethnic groups has decreased to 27. In addition, in 2023, the Strategic Investigations Department of the National Police, which is authorised to investigate organised crime in Ukraine, was granted the ability to ban ‘*thieves in law*’ and ‘*criminal authorities*’ as well as their subordinates and associates from entering Ukraine. Thus, ‘*thieves in law*’ who are representatives or supporters of Russia could not enter Ukraine. Accordingly, the share of ethnic groups decreased. However, the first six months of 2024 and the first six months of 2025 show an increasing trend.

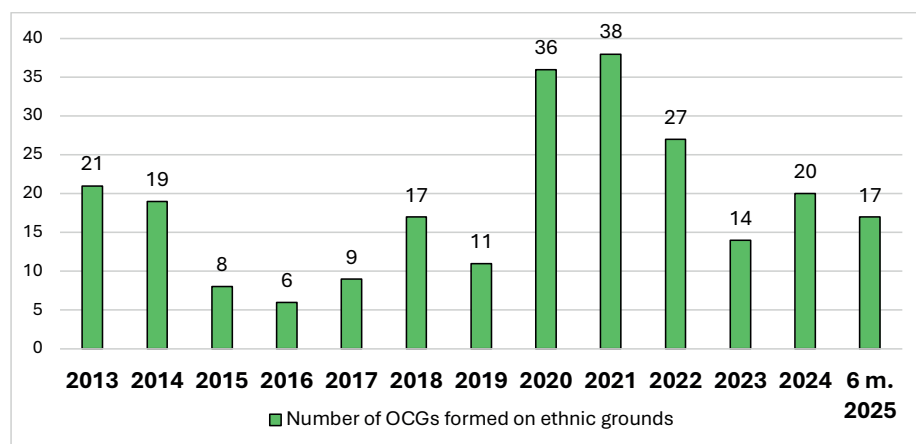


Figure 9. Number of OCGs formed on ethnic grounds

The ranking of the duration of existence shows that the largest share of identified OCG is made up of those that have been functioning for up to one year, i.e. a relatively short period of time – 73,7% in 2021. Another 18% belong to OCGs that existed for up to two years (*Table 2*). The trend of about 90% of registered OCGs operating for short periods is typical for statistical observation.

In terms of the group size, OCGs are usually small in number, mostly having three persons in their composition. So, in 2021, 49,5% of

detected OCGs had three members, 48,5% had from four to 10 members, 1,8% had from 11-20 members and only one group united more than 20 persons.

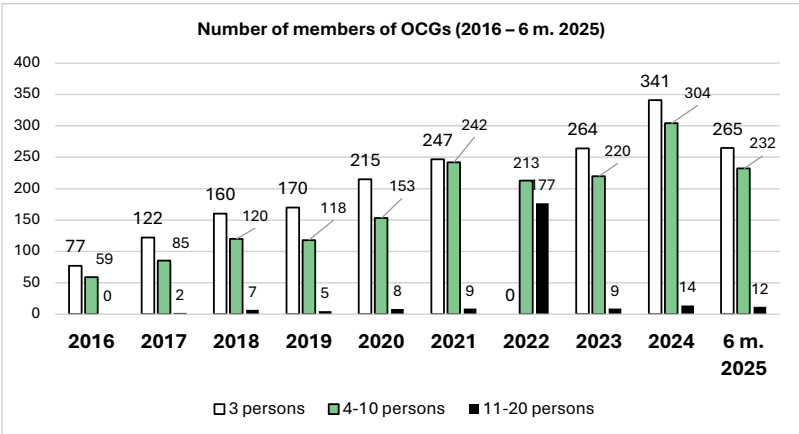


Figure 10. Number of members of OCGs (2016 – 6 m. 2025)

Similar patterns were observed during the wartime period from 2022 through the first half of 2025. Despite the presence of OCGs with transnational connections (2,8% in 2022, 2,6% in 2023, 1,8% in 2024), organised crime in Ukraine remains a regional phenomenon without a single hierarchical subordination within the country. Interregional links were observed in 10,1% of OCGs in 2022, 9,7% in 2023, and 9,4% in 2024. Corrupt ties were present in 9,1% of OCGs in 2022, 7,1% in 2023, and 6,9% in 2024. Poly-criminal activities were established in 40,8% in 2022, 45,1% in 2023 and 43,9% in 2024 of all identified OCGs.

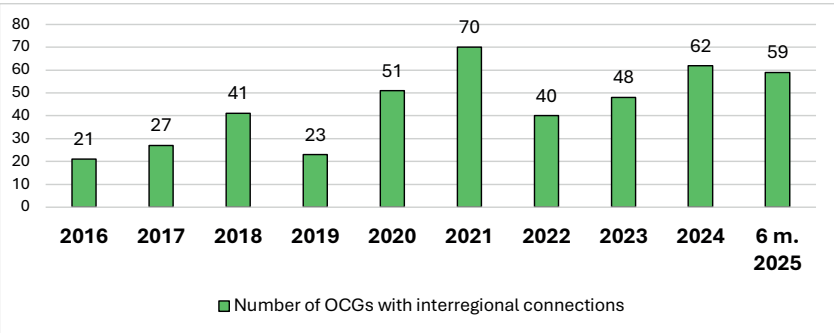


Figure 11. Number of OCGs. with interregional connections

Preliminary data from the first half of 2025 indicate that interregional ties continue to expand, reaching 11,6% of all identified OCGs – an absolute increase compared to the total number recorded in 2023 or 2022.

As in the pre-war period, so during the War, the least stable OCGs – those that existed for less than 1 year – came to the attention of the criminal justice system (71,1% in 2022, 73,5%, 71,2% in 2024).

The year 2022 was atypical with regard to the size of identified OCGs. Not a single group composed of up to 3 members was detected, while five groups (the largest number for the entire analysed period) consisted of more than 20 members. In 2023-2024, however, the group size distribution largely returned to patterns of the pre-War period.

Table 3

Organised crime’s features											
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	6 m. 2025
Completed criminal proceedings on crimes committed by OCGs		1043	1728	2513	2344	3595	4318	3142	5197	7881	5339
including	Creation, management of a criminal community or Crim.Org, and participation therein	4	11	11	14	20	66	65	78	116	80
	Illegal movement of persons across the state border	5	6	15	24	28	20	54	299	403	152
	Illegal arms trafficking	18	12	26	9	77	57	8	40	44	59
	Drug-related crimes	118	312	706	801	1178	1276	1291	1047	2204	2566
	Theft	193	202	139	179	144	180	96	142	127	90
	Appropriation or embezzlement of property through abuse	14	34	221	85	160	180	210	399	295	328
	Bribery-related crimes	18	7	6	71	32	33	43	63	63	100
	Smuggling	1	0	2	0	1	4	0	6	3	6
	Illegal actions with excisable goods	14	48	44	47	66	97	67	96	209	83

Among the various types of organised criminal activity during the period 2013–2021, drug trafficking related crimes occupied the largest share of all identified organised crimes (29.5% in 2021). This was followed by common (regular) criminal offences of a mercenary (theft) and mercenary-violent nature (robbery, assault, extortion – a total of 8% in 2021). All other crimes represented less than 5% of the proportion of crime committed. In 2021, mercenary crimes that fall into the category of white-collar crime, such as misappropriation, embezzlement or seizure of property by malversation (4%) have become more pronounced.

At the onset of the War, logistics-dependent forms of crime experienced the greatest turbulence. Infrastructure facilities of airspace, railway, ports, highways and roads became the key areas that suffered the heaviest attacks, severely affecting these crime types. However, as the War progressed, criminal groups involved in criminal markets and the trafficking of illegal goods and services have found themselves in a comparatively advantageous position. The demand for certain categories of illicit goods was (is) still as relevant as ever, and in some cases has even increased during wartime. This trend is most clearly illustrated by drug trafficking, which has maintained a dominant position among organised criminal activities by a considerable margin.

Of the 3142 crimes committed by OCGs in 2022, drug trafficking comprised the largest share – 1291, or 41% (or +10% to the same share in 2021). Although there was a slight decrease in this figure to 1047 crimes in 2023, the number of detected cases of drug trafficking doubled in the following year, 2024 (2204 crimes). In the first six months of 2025, 2566 organised drug-related crimes were detected (or an unprecedented 48% of the total number of organised crimes). This figure not only surpasses the total for all of 2024 but is also more than double that of 2023.

With the outbreak of the War, the blockade of air and sea space, and the suspension of commercial activity in port regions, the production of synthetic drugs, typically concentrated in laboratories, was temporarily suspended due to a shortage of chemical precursors previously smuggled into Ukraine. However, by the end of 2022, the production and distribution of synthetic drugs had returned to their usual state, using online platforms and the postal system.

The analysis of typical cases reveals a growing concentration of drug laboratories in frontline areas (*Case A*).

Case A. In 2023, 37 members of the «Dvadtsiativski» criminal group, including ten leaders, were detained. To ensure uninterrupted production of methamphetamine, the offenders organised a network of drug laboratories in rented garage space and a residential apartment in Kryvyi Rih, a city located near the frontline. The drug market covered almost all regions of Ukraine. The capacities of the laboratories allowed for the industrial production of up to 40 kg of drugs per month.

The drug cartel network consisted of three criminal organizations and six organised groups. The organizers carefully selected the “staff” and gave preference to individuals who had good physical characteristics and connections among people involved in drug trafficking. At the same time, to preserve autonomy and complicate the process of documenting criminal activity, representatives of the separate links had almost no contact with each other. To ensure proper control, operation and security of the criminal community, there was a clear hierarchy and distribution of roles: control over the work of laboratories, their security, “chemists”, “financiers”, etc.

To ensure uninterrupted trade, the offenders thought over the logistics and arrangement of storage points: they sold products in large and retail batches through an extensive “courier” network by means of ‘hidden caches’ and the “hand-to-hand” method. The group leaders transferred the proceeds from drug sales, which amounted to more than a million US dollars of “profit” per month, to the leaders of the criminal community, who distributed them among all those involved in the drug business⁷⁸.

During the years of the full-scale invasion, misappropriation, embezzlement or seizure of property by malversation, ranked second in the structure of organised crime after drug trafficking. In 2022, 210 or 7% such crimes were detected, while in the first six months of 2025, 328 or 6% crimes were detected.

⁷⁸ National Police of Ukraine (2023). Large-scale special operation of the National Police: activities of Kryvyi Rih drug cartel, whose members ‘supplied’ almost all regions of Ukraine with drugs, are neutralized. *National Police of Ukraine*. February 27, 2023. Source: www.npu.gov.ua/news/masshtabna-spetsoperatsiia-natspolitsii-zneshkodzheno-diialnist-kryvorizkoho-narkokarteliu-uchasnyky-iakoho-zabezpechuvaly-narkotykamy-maizhe-vsi-rehiony-ukrainy

The respective OCGs included officials not only from private business entities, but also from state and local authorities at various levels. These officials engaged their subordinates and affiliated business entities in criminal schemes, creating favourable conditions for holding tenders.

A particularly notable trend that emerged in 2022, directly linked to the full-scale armed invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, was the misappropriation or embezzlement of funds intended for charitable purposes and humanitarian aid.

This trend reflects not only the profit-driven nature of organised crime but also the broader tendency to use non-violent means of obtaining profits.

This shift is further evidenced by changes in organised criminal activity related to more primitive forms of property acquisition.

During the first year of the War, a record low number of thefts committed by OCGs was recorded – only 96, which is almost half the number of thefts compared to 2021, when 180 such thefts were detected. In subsequent years, the dynamics were not stable (142 crimes in 2023, 127 crimes in 2024), however, remaining consistently below pre-war levels.

The number of robberies, extortions and assaults, has shown a steady downward trend since the onset of the War.

The factors that contributed to a decrease in the number of primitive mercenary and mercenary-violent crimes were: the enhanced public safety measures imposed under martial law, including curfews, increased patrol activity, and the establishment of checkpoints; the emigration of a significant number of persons previously involved in the relevant illegal activities.

In addition, the War has brought its own specifics to the patterns of victimization. Many potential victims were forcibly displaced abroad and may not have been aware of crimes committed against their property, such as theft, thus leaving such incidents unreported.

The beginning of the active phase of Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine necessitated the formation of local self-defence initiatives, which resulted in the distribution of unknown but large numbers of small arms to the civilian population for the needs of territorial defence with their temporary legalization for the period of martial law in accordance with the Law. Broadly, the conduct of hostilities to repel

Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine has created the preconditions for an increase in the number of firearms, ammunition and explosives in illicit circulation and has led to the emergence of new channels for the distribution of weapons, explosives and ammunition. The armed conflict in the east of the country and the occupation of part of Ukraine's territory also contributed to the diversion of illegal flows of traumatic, air, small arms, firearms, ammunition and explosives to the rest of the country⁷⁹.

Nevertheless, earlier forecasts predicting a massive increase organised arms trafficking during the War have not been statistically confirmed so far. Available data on this category of organised criminal activity remains unstable; it is difficult to trace clear long-term trends. In 2022, only eight such cases were recorded, which is significantly lower than in any pre-war year. In 2023-2024, there was an increase to 44 detected cases, but this figure did not exceed the pre-war peak (77 cases in 2020). The first six months of 2025 show a significant increase with 59 cases of organised arms trafficking detected.

During the War, the illicit market for excisable goods intensified, reaching the scale of a threat to the Ukraine's economic security. In 2024, there was a significant surge in the in offenses related to illegal manufacturing, storage, sale or transportation for the purpose of sale of excisable goods committed by OCGs – 209 such cases were recorded, which is twice increase compared to 2023 (96 cases). The trend has persisted into 2025, with 83 cases in just six months.

In addition to transformations within relatively traditional markets (drugs, human beings, excisable goods, etc.), the War has facilitated the emergence of new markets, such as black grain, smuggling by men who are liable for military service and are trying to avoid conscription, and trade in humanitarian aid, including military supplies and ammunition⁸⁰.

Notably, the statistical observations of organised crime in 2022-2025 fixed a considerable increase in the illegal movement of persons across the state border of Ukraine, which is typical for the conditions of

⁷⁹ Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (2024). Serious and/or Organised Crime Threat Assessment – SOCTA Ukraine. Source: www.mvs.gov.ua/upload/1/8/5/3/8/2/socta.pdf.

⁸⁰ Melnychuk, T. (2023). *Organized Crime as Institutional Cluster: Transition from Traditional to Informational Model in Ukraine*. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. Source: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-39532-1>; Melnychuk, T. (2025). Illegal Grain Market in Ukraine: Harvesting War Opportunities. *Journal of Economic Criminology*. 100160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconc.2025.100160>; Shostko, O., Dryomin, V., Melnychuk, T., Dunaieva, T. (2025). Illicit Trade in Wartime: Ukraine's Trends and Challenges for Counteraction. *International Annals of Criminology*. 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cri.2025.7>.

the war and martial law. The number of such cases rose sharply from 54 in 2022 to 403 in 2024.

On the first day of the War, martial law in Ukraine was imposed; men of military age between 18 and 60 were banned from leaving the country. This legal restriction triggered the demand for the services of illegal movement of persons across the state border. Conscripts have been smuggled across the border both outside and through official checkpoints; in the last case with fake or fictitious documents granting the right to leave - under the guise of volunteers, drivers of transportation companies, disabled people or their accompanying persons. A common scheme involves the production of a fictitious package of documents on inability to serve in military service in peacetime and wartime, allowing persons to be removed from the military registry. In this case, the OCGs often engage doctors from the military medical commission who allegedly conduct medical examinations and employees of military commissariats to facilitate the process⁸¹.

Criminal markets in the contemporary global landscape are inherently transnational, necessitating the smuggling of goods into and out of countries for such markets. It is believed that during the War, due to the closed airspace and seaports, the main smuggling routes were relocated and shifted to the western and southwestern borders of Ukraine. However, the indicators of organised smuggling both before and during the war period are very low (4 cases were detected in 2021, 0 in 2022, 6 in 2023 and 3 in 2024). It can be assumed that the main reason for this is the failure to prove the organised nature of the crimes. Many cases are prosecuted as offenses committed by individual couriers or informal groups lacking the legal indicators of organised criminality.

One of the most recent and concerning trends of smuggling is using Ukrainian citizens having temporary residence in one of EU countries as mules for transporting illicit goods, such as money or drugs, across the borders. As the War entered a protracted phase, a certain social cluster of individuals has emerged, who periodically or regularly migrate along the route between the European countries and Ukraine and back for

⁸¹ Security Service of Ukraine (2023). Kyiv region: SBU exposes head of military medical commission who 'wrote off' fifty evaders. *Security Service of Ukraine*. August 29, 2023. Source: www.ssu.gov.ua/novyny/sbu-vykryla-na-kyivshchyni-ochilnytsiu-viiskovoi-medkomisii-yaka-spysala-pivsozni-ukhyliantiv-za-ponad-10-mln-hrn-khabariv

personal, social or humanitarian reasons and provide smuggling services for OCGs⁸².

The success of criminal markets is inevitably linked to the existence of corrupt connections and the possibility of bribing regulatory or supervisory officials. Since the beginning of 2022, the trend of corruption associated with organised crime has increased. In 2022, 43 cases of bribery and accepting an offer, promise or obtaining an improper advantage were detected in the structure of organised crime, 63 in 2023-24, and 100 cases of corruption crimes committed by OCG in 6 months of 2025.

This situation reveals the problem of systemic corruption deeply embedded in Ukraine's institutional structures. The War has further exposed it (Case B).

***Case B.** In 2022, a corrupt scheme to embezzle funds from the export of Ukrainian grain was uncovered, involving more than 10 high-ranking officials of the State Customs Service and the management of the Odesa Customs.*

They set up a large-scale mechanism for tax evasion for the export of Ukrainian grain. As a result, the state lost hundreds of millions of hryvnias. To implement the scheme, the participants involved more than 370 commercial entities with signs of fictitiousness. Through them, dealers bought wheat from private farmers, agricultural enterprises and large agricultural holdings. To “confuse” the trade chains and avoid paying mandatory payments to the budget, the offenders transferred products from one “shell company” to another. In particular, in August-September 2022, entrepreneurs exported more than one million tons of grain of dubious origin through the grain terminals in the Black Sea, Pivdennyi and Odesa ports⁸³.

⁸² State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (2023). Law Enforcement Officers Block Smuggling Channel for Wholesale Cocaine in Lviv Region. *State Border Guard Service of Ukraine*. March 29, 2023. Source: www.dpsu.gov.ua/ua/news/Nalvivshchini-pravoohoronci-perekryli-kanal-kontrabandi-gurtovih-partiy-kokainu

⁸³ Security Service of Ukraine (2023). SBU dismantles corruption scheme at customs: millions of hryvnias stolen from Ukrainian grain exports. *Security Service of Ukraine*. January 3, 2023. Source: www.ssu.gov.ua/novyny/sbu-likvidovala-koruptsiinu-skhemu-na-mytnytsi-rozkradaly-miliony-hryven-na-eksporti-ukrainskoho-zerna

The outbreak of War has significantly reshaped not only Ukraine's legal economy but also the dynamics of organised criminal activity in the economic sphere beyond criminal markets.

With the beginning of the war economy in Ukraine has come to a standstill, shifting towards cash circulation due to significant restrictions on cashless currency transactions imposed by the banking system. This is indirectly evidenced by a 26% decrease in the total number of registered economic crimes in Ukraine in 2022 compared to 2021.

At the same time, the budgetary sphere and public procurement under martial law became areas of increased criminal risk.

In Ukraine, along with traditional OCG, there are criminal groups close to the state and local authorities. They do not associate themselves with the criminal world, but they have organised modus operandi and operate mainly as white-collar groups in economic sphere.

In 2022, the largest number of all identified in economic sphere OCGs – 32 groups – committed crimes in the budgetary sphere, including misappropriation of budget funds intended for various types of state social benefits, among others. This number rose to 37 OCGs in 2023, 58 in 2024, and 50 in just the first six months of 2025, reflecting a growing trend of organised criminal infiltration into public sector finances.

The risks of criminalization for budgetary sphere, first of all, are caused by the possibility to purchase goods/services beyond open auctions. The fact is, the state orders for the defence sector contain sensitive state or military information, and due to the obvious reasons, should be removed from public access. Auctions in the electronic procurement system cannot properly function due to constant shelling of energy infrastructure. This resulted in headline-making criminal schemes involving high-level authorities.

Crimes in the budgetary sphere during the War represent more than misappropriation of public funds; they constitute an assault on national defence sector by undermining the procurement of weapons, ammunition, and frontline logistics (*Case C*). They also compromise efforts to restore critical civilian infrastructure destroyed by ballistic and drone strikes.

Case C. In 2023, a large-scale embezzlement scheme involving the procurement of food for the Armed Forces of

Ukraine by the Ministry of Defense during Russia's full-scale invasion was exposed.

The former head of a department within the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, the owner of affiliated supplier companies, two executives of supplier companies and an individual were served with a notice of suspicion.

According to the investigation, in 2022-2023, the army food supply involved the procurement of the so-called food kits. This allowed for the ordering from an approved catalogue of 409 products. However, essential items such as vegetables, cereals, meat, and water made up only 10% of the list. The rest, including spices, gelatin, and berries, were rarely or never ordered.

The price of the food kits was calculated based on the average cost of all items in the catalogue. This system allowed suppliers to manipulate prices—artificially inflating the cost of high-demand products while lowering prices for unpopular or seasonal products (such as cherries or apricots in winter). At first glance, there were no violations, as the total price of the kit remained unchanged. However, potatoes, supplied in thousands of tons, cost a fortune, while seasonal berries and fruits, which were rarely ordered, were priced at mere pennies.

As a result of these fraudulent schemes, between August and December 2022, two supply companies, both controlled by the same owner, illegally generated over UAH 733 million in excess profits, as confirmed by a comprehensive forensic merchandising and economic examination.

A part of these funds was later siphoned off under the guise of dividend payments and financial assistance to affiliated companies. This money, in particular, was allegedly used by the company owner to purchase hotels in Croatia and other real estate properties⁸⁴.

⁸⁴ National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (2025). 'Golden eggs' of the Ministry of Defense: embezzlement of over UAH 733 million and attempted embezzlement of UAH 788 million exposed. *National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine*. April 2, 2025. Source: www.nabu.gov.ua/news/iayitcia-po-17-grn-dlia-zsu-vykryto-rozkradannia-ponad-733-mln-grn-ta-zamakh-na-zavolodinnia-788-mln-grn

Organised crime is not limited to the types of crimes analysed in this section. Other crimes committed by OCGs are assessed as no less serious, especially in times of war, such as crimes against the foundations of national or state security, related to espionage and sabotage facilitated by foreign intelligence services through the use of OCGs, cybercrime, including cyberattacks targeting critical infrastructure, environmental crimes with long-term societal and ecological consequences, etc. However, these organised crimes are not specifically reflected in statistical reports and therefore, were excluded from the scope of this analysis.

Summarily, the available data and the trends in organised crime during the war constitute a clear indication of a significant deterioration in the crime situation and an increase in the threat of organised crime. Organised crime in Ukraine has long ceased to be a problem of criminal justice alone, it has become a national security issue. Given the current trajectory and available projections, it is highly likely that organised crime will emerge from the War more resilient and more deeply embedded in both the shadow economy and elements of formal governance⁸⁵. There is also a significant risk that wartime criminal practices will be transferred to the post-war reconstruction period, when the state is in an institutional vacuum and is most vulnerable in terms of the rule of law.

⁸⁵ Melnychuk, T. (2024). Organised Crime in Post-war Reconstruction of Ukraine: Mapping the Risks. In *European Guidelines for Ukraine's Development: Scientific and Practical Dimension in the Context of Wartime Challenges*. 473–475. Odesa: Feniks.

CHILDREN IN WAR⁸⁶

The Russian Federation continues to involve Ukrainian children in the War violating numerous international standards and treaties.

Forced displacement of Ukrainian children remains widespread in territories that are temporarily occupied or under constant shelling. At the same time, there is still no single transparent algorithm or mechanism that allows Ukrainian children deported to Russia to be returned. Another pressing issue is the lack of a systematic state reintegration programme for returned children, which should provide long-term support and assistance to the child and their family.

Unfortunately, no significant changes have taken place in the context of deinstitutionalisation. The newly adopted strategy to ensure every child in Ukraine has the right to grow up in a family environment carries a significant risk of non-implementation due to a lack of state funding and often declaratory nature of the commitments made. The development of social protection in local communities also remains very slow. Some communities, especially those with small budgets, cannot afford to hire even one social worker or specialist for the children's needs. At the same time, those communities that do have such specialists or even social service centres and child welfare services are also unable to fully perform their functions due to inadequate staffing levels and an increase in socially vulnerable groups.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines six grave crimes against children: murder or mutilation, recruitment or enlistment in the military, attacks on schools and hospitals, rape, abduction/transfer and denial of access to humanitarian assistance. Due to Russia's massive shelling of Ukrainian civilians and infrastructure, children are being killed and maimed. There is evidence of a physical and sexual violence against children in the temporarily

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occupied territories. Children are being militarised and recruited into the war, and Ukrainians are being deported to Russia.

As of December 2024, approximately, 737000 Ukrainian children are internally displaced persons as a result of the hostilities. Another 1,7 million are refugees, many of whom have been separated from their parents. As of 31 March 2025, 606 children have been killed, 1846 have been injured to varying degrees, and 19 cases of sexual violence against children have been confirmed.

As a result of targeted attacks, as well as indiscriminate attacks, Russian military troops are intentionally destroying residential buildings, schools, hospitals, sport courts, historical and cultural sites. Even after the War ends, it will be impossible to return to a significant number of cities, towns and villages, as the infrastructure there has been virtually destroyed.

In three years of full-scale War, 236000 residential buildings have been damaged or destroyed, including 209000 private homes, 27000 apartment buildings and 600 dormitories. More than 4000 educational institutions have also been destroyed or damaged, including 229 schools, 110 kindergartens and 97 universities. Hospitals, clinics and other medical facilities are regularly targeted. In total, 1554 medical facilities have been damaged, including 515 hospitals, and 465 outpatient clinics. 3921 cultural facilities, 399 religious buildings and 343 sports complexes have also been damaged. There have been attacks on energy infrastructure and water supply facilities, causing Ukrainians to experience problems with electricity, water and heat supply, as well as communications, which worsens the conditions for the care and upbringing of children.

Russia is actively using prohibited weapons on the territory of Ukraine against the civilian population. Such weapons cause more serious injuries and damage than other types of ammunition. Cluster munitions, phosphorus and thermobaric weapons, butterfly mines, etc. are particularly dangerous. Over the three years of the War, more than 6900 cases of Russian occupiers using ammunition containing dangerous chemicals have also been confirmed. According to the Mine Action Centre, about 30% of Ukraine's territory is contaminated with mines and unexploded ordnance, and more than 139000 km² of land and 14000 km² of water bodies need to be surveyed by demining units.

In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, there is extensive evidence of the occupiers using civilian facilities as military headquarters

and/or warehouses for military equipment and ammunition. In conditions where children are forced to attend schools and kindergartens in the temporarily occupied territories and, when necessary, visit medical facilities, this means that the civilian population is being used as human shields during military operations. It also means that the population has no proper access to medical, social and educational services, which only exacerbates the humanitarian crisis in these territories.

The Russian Federation continues to involve Ukrainian children in the War. In particular, Russian special services use mobile gaming applications and establish contact through social networks and messengers to recruit minors. Children are usually offered monetary rewards for performing various tasks, such as photographing the area, monitoring certain objects, posting advertisements, etc. For more serious tasks (delivering bags with explosives, setting cars on fire, etc.), psychological pressure and manipulation are also used. As of the end of March 2025, the prosecutor's office had opened 173 criminal cases on the recruitment of Ukrainian children for subversive activities.

For example, in August 2025, the Security Service of Ukraine and the National Police detained two underage Russian agents who, on orders from the Russian Federation, carried out a terrorist attack in Zhytomyr on 5 August. The attack involved the detonation of a homemade explosive device in one of the neighbourhoods of the capital of the region. One man was killed and another was hospitalised in serious condition. The investigation established that the attack was planned by a 17-year-old student at a local vocational school and her peer, who had been recruited by the enemy. Both came to the attention of the aggressor while seeking for money on Telegram channels^{87/}

In addition, Russia continues to expand its network of so called '*military-patriotic education*' programmes for young people in the Russian Federation and in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine with the aim of waging a long-term war against Ukraine and possible future armed conflicts with Western countries.

As of early 2025, Russian invaders had forced nearly 60,000 children from temporarily occupied settlements in the Luhansk region, about 1,800 children from the Zaporizhzhia region, and 45,000 children

⁸⁷ Oliinyk, T. (2025). Teenagers detained in Zhytomyr for blowing up two men on orders from Russia. *Ukrainska Pravda*. August 7, 2025. Source: www.pravda.com.ua/news/2025/08/7/7525174

from Crimea to join propaganda military-patriotic movements. In just eight months of 2025, Russia took almost 11000 Ukrainian children to 164 institutions. Moreover, the programme in such camps is becoming increasingly militarised⁸⁸.

The militarisation of children is actively taking place from school age onwards. One example is last year's publication of the first textbook for teaching drone operation in school labour classes for pupils in grades 8-9. Another example is the active manufacture of weapon parts for specific military units by pupils in schools in the Crimea.

Forced displacement remains widespread in territories that are temporarily occupied or under constant shelling. Children are often forcibly sent to '*re-education camps*' in Russian-controlled territories, where propaganda and indoctrination are used to try to change their perceptions of their identity, Ukraine, and the course of the war. Children in such camps are forced to listen to the anthem and express support for Russia. Teenagers are often issued Russian passports, which makes it much more difficult for them to return home. The militarisation of boys and attempts to recruit them into the Russian army are also widespread. In addition, the conditions in which children are kept in such camps are unfit for human habitation. The Russians ignore the basic needs of children in terms of hygiene, medical care, adequate nutrition, etc.

According to statements by representatives of the occupation administrations, during the summer of 2024, 40,000 Ukrainian children were taken to '*re-education camps*' as part of so called '*Useful Holidays*' project. This is almost twice as many as last year. Children from the occupied territories went on propaganda trips to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Rostov-on-Don and Tula as part of the '*Cultural Map 4+85*' and '*Route for Youth*' programmes, '*Route for Youth*' and '*University Changes*'⁶ and also took part in a series of 'patriotic' events, sometimes more than 8,000 kilometres from home.

As of March 31, 2025, Ukraine has confirmation of 19,546 deported Ukrainian children who were illegally taken to Russia, Belarus, and the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. The number of displaced children is likely to be significantly higher, but it is currently impossible

⁸⁸ Shurmakevich V. (2025) Only in 2025, the Russian Federation sent almost 11,000 Ukrainian children to re-education camps. *Ukrainska Pravda*. September 12, 2025. Source: <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/u-2025-roci-rosiyani-vivezli-do-taboriv-mayzhe-11-tisyach-ukrajinskih-ditey-310271>

to estimate the scale due to the lack of access to the temporarily occupied territories and the ongoing full-scale war. According to open sources cited by Russia, 744,000 children have been taken away. So far, joint efforts by civil society organizations and the government have managed to return 1,256 children.

A positive step towards preventing and returning deported Ukrainian children was the development of the White Paper '*Protecting Children from Forced Displacement and Deportation*' by the *International Expert Group Bring Kids Back UA*. The book consistently debunks the Kremlin's myths about so-called 'evacuation' and, through international law, describes how the Russian Federation is systematically committing the crime of *deportation and forced displacement of Ukrainian children*. It strengthens Ukraine's ability to develop effective international legal mechanisms for the return of abducted children and to ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration.

The regulatory framework for registering deported and forcibly displaced children in Ukraine has also been improved. In particular, in the fall of 2024, the Law of Ukraine 'On the Registration of Information on Damage Caused to the Personal Non-Property Rights of Individuals as a Result of the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine' was adopted, which provides for the creation and functioning of a register of information on deported children.

The Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1240 of October 29, 2024, which defines the mechanism for the creation, maintenance, and access to the Register of Information on Children Deported or Forcibly Displaced in Connection with the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and its use, came into force. An Interagency Commission on the Verification of Information on Children Deported or Forcibly Displaced in Connection with the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine was established.

Furthermore, in October 2024, the Verkhovna Rada adopted Implementation Law No. 4012-IX in connection with the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and amendments thereto, according to which the deportation of children is now considered as *genocide*.

At the same time, there is still no single effective mechanism that allows Ukrainian children deported to Russia to be returned. The practice of returning children varies greatly – with the help of other countries,

international organizations, through the offices of Ombudsmen, and often privately, when the parents or guardians themselves travel to the Russian Federation to pick up their children.

Another pressing issue is the lack of a state-run system for reintegrating kids who come back from the temporarily occupied territories, Russia, and Belarus, which should include long-term support and assistance for the kids and their families. Currently, there are only initiatives from the civil society sector to develop specific concepts for such reintegration in Ukraine, which include the involvement of social services, educational institutions, and the community as a whole in working with returned children. In fact, such children are currently cared for by the Center for the Protection of Children's Rights and involved civil society organizations, which, where possible, meet the children's needs for humanitarian, psychological, social, legal, educational, and other types of assistance. At the same time, with a significant return of deported children, the existing practice of assistance will not be able to cope with the load. The state has to some extent become involved in addressing this problem with the adoption of the Procedure for the identification, return, support, and reintegration of children deported or forcibly displaced as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which requires that all returned children be placed exclusively in family-based care.

As of March 31, 2025, according to the Office of General Prosecutor, a total of 161,900 crimes of aggression and war crimes committed by the Russian Federation are under investigation in Ukraine. As of September 2024, about 4,000 criminal proceedings are related to crimes against children. The largest number of proceedings are in the Luhansk, Donetsk, and Kherson regions. They concern cases of abduction and deprivation of liberty, forced deportation, and sexual violence. Fifty-four people have been notified of suspicion of war crimes against children. Investigations have been completed in 44 cases and the cases have been referred to court. Thirty-one war criminals have been convicted.

Among the positive steps taken, it is worth noting the pilot projects in the field of juvenile justice. In November 2024, a pilot project was launched in Ukraine to specialize judges in family and children's cases. Its goal is to introduce child-friendly justice. Nearly 60 judges will undergo training. The pilot project is being implemented by the All-Ukrainian Public Center 'Volunteer' in cooperation with the Civil Cassation Court

within the Supreme Court and the Interagency Coordination Council on Juvenile Justice, with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Ukraine. It is expected that the consideration of cases by specialized judges with in-depth knowledge of children's rights and the age and psychological characteristics of children's development will ensure the proper protection of the rights and well-being of every child who comes into contact with the justice system, considering their needs and life situation. It may also significantly speed up the consideration of the cases related to ensuring the right of the child to a family.

In addition, another pilot project initiated by the Interagency Coordination Council on Juvenile Justice, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, and the All-Ukrainian Public Center 'Volunteer' with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Ukraine has proven effective. Since autumn 2024, the project has been operating throughout Ukraine. It provides for the establishment of a register of psychologists who are involved in criminal proceedings involving children. The database greatly facilitates the search for the necessary specialists in the regions and ensures that the best interests of the child are respected during proceedings involving children.

Training for juvenile investigators remains essential, especially in relation to war crimes. Currently, there are almost no such investigators, and all law enforcement agencies are generally overburdened, with hundreds or even thousands of cases to handle at the same time.

It should also be noted that in early 2025, an important and positive decision for Ukraine was the appointment by the Council of Europe of a Special Representative on Ukrainian Children to draw attention to the problems they face, as well as to standards and initiatives aimed at supporting them. Her powers also include coordinating international cooperation and interaction with structures such as the Register of Damages and the Advisory Group on Children in Ukraine.

A detailed picture of administrative practice of abduction and transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia and Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia is presented in the judgement in the case of *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*⁸⁹. What is important that the ECtHR considered the period starting from 2014 for the needs of a broader

⁸⁹ *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* [GC], applications № 43800/14, 8019/16, 28525/20 *et al.*, judgment 09.07.2025.

picture of crimes committed by Russian agents or other persons under the control of Russian agents.

The Court found undisputed that in the summer of 2014, three groups of a total of 85 residents of children's homes in eastern Ukraine were escorted by armed 'DPR' and 'LPR' representatives across the Ukrainian-Russian border, on three separate dates and from different parts of the 'DPR' and 'LPR'⁹⁰.

The Court found undisputed that children from the 'DPR', the 'LPR' and subsequently from other occupied territory were removed to the Russian Federation or to other occupied areas in Ukraine, separated from their legal caregivers and prevented from reuniting with them. Indeed, the evidence establishes clearly that there were such transfers in the 'DPR' and the 'LPR' shortly before the invasion, as purported 'evacuation' measures.

In the following months, countless children from institutions and children attending holiday camps were transferred to Russia from occupied territory and were subsequently unable to return to their homes in Ukraine. Some were retained in holiday camps, while others were placed in foster care with Russian families across various regions in Russia and adopted once they acquired Russian nationality.

Numerous public statements by Russian officials do not dispute the mass removal of children from Ukraine and the ongoing presence of such children in Russia. The Commission of Inquiry was able to review the transfers of 195 such children. The 'DPR authorities' themselves said that 'all children previously in 'DPR' institutions' had been removed to Russia by July 2022. The Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights has claimed that 2,000 children arrived in Russia in February 2022 alone. The portal operated by the Ukrainian Government recorded that, by 30 September 2022 a total of 7890 children had been removed from⁹¹.

The Commission of Inquiry and the OSCE Moscow Mechanism mission experts concluded that in the Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Mykolaiv regions, the displacement of children was an organised process. Their reports concluded that the transfers were not justified by safety or medical reasons and lacked proper

⁹⁰ Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia [GC], applications № 43800/14, 8019/16, 28525/20 *et al.*, judgment 09.07.2025. Para 1569.

⁹¹ Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia [GC], applications № 43800/14, 8019/16, 28525/20 *et al.*, judgment 09.07.2025. Para 1573.

consent from the children's legal caregivers. They further found that subsequent actions and omissions by the Russian authorities prevented the children's reunification with their legal caregivers. The evidence shows that parents in Ukraine were not provided with information concerning their children's location in Russia and that where contact was re-established it was often through coincidence or luck⁹².

At the same time, Russian officials put in place dedicated legislative and policy measures for the removal and placement of Ukrainian children in Russia. Removal of allegedly orphaned Ukrainian children from Ukraine was carried out by the Russian armed forces and authorities, including by the Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights in person as well as by 'DPR' and 'LPR' armed groups, in coordination with the 'DPR' and 'LPR' *'child protection authorities'*. Once across the border, Russian authorities at federal and regional level accommodated the children in hospitals, social institutions or 'camps' throughout. The trips were typically funded by Russia's regional and republican governments, under the so-called *'patronage'* system. Official statements referred to the support of President Putin himself to the placement of Ukrainian children in Russian families⁹³.

The Russian Federation made it easier for Ukrainian children to acquire Russian citizenship and be adopted by Russian families. After 24 February 2022 children born in occupied territory were issued Russian birth certificates and Russian nationality. This practice was subsequently formalised with the annexation of the four Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in October 2022. Perceived to be Russian citizens, children from occupied territory in Ukraine could be adopted by Russian families from anywhere in Russia. The evidence indicates that they were listed for adoption or foster care in Russia⁹⁴.

It has been widely reported, and confirmed in the activity reports of her mandate, that the Russian Federation's Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights, spearheaded a wide range of initiatives aimed at transferring and accommodating Ukrainian children in the Russian Federation. She herself travelled to the Russian-controlled territories

⁹² Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia [GC], applications № 43800/14, 8019/16, 28525/20 *et al.*, judgment 09.07.2025. Para 1574.

⁹³ Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia [GC], applications № 43800/14, 8019/16, 28525/20 *et al.*, judgment 09.07.2025. Para 1575.

⁹⁴ Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia [GC], applications № 43800/14, 8019/16, 28525/20 *et al.*, judgment 09.07.2025. Para 1577.

of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions to coordinate the transfers and placements of children in Russian families. She also accompanied a group of children to Russia and reported on more groups of children being ready to travel to Russia for placement in Russian families. She further adopted a child from Mariupol herself. On 17 March 2023 a pre-trial chamber of the ICC issued arrest warrants for her and for President Putin, charging them with the war crime of unlawful deportation of children and that of unlawful transfer of children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation⁹⁵.

Finally, the Court concluded that there was the movement of numerous children across the border between Ukraine and the Russian Federation between 2014 and 2018. It can be inferred from the regular presence of vehicles and personnel of the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations and the preparations for, and carrying out of, medical checks that the transfers were organised by the Russian Federation and involved significant logistical arrangements⁹⁶.

Evacuations may be carried out only in case of ‘*imperative military reasons*’ or for the ‘*safety of the population*’; within the bounds of occupied territory unless impossible; and only temporarily. There are extensive procedural rules concerning the need for written consent from parents or legal guardians and the obligation to make arrangements to facilitate the return and reunification with their families of evacuated children. Changes in their personal status are prohibited.

However, the Russian Government has not provided evidence that the children’s removal from Ukraine in the circumstances complied with any of these provisions. There was nothing to show that any of the purported evacuations of children were carried out for the reasons provided for by international humanitarian law. It is also significant that the essence of the present complaint is that the children were transferred from occupied territory to the Russian Federation, which is in clear breach of international humanitarian law in the absence of evidence showing that transfer within occupied territory would have been impossible.

The Russian Government did not implement any measures to secure the return to Ukraine and the family reunification of children purportedly

⁹⁵ Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia [GC], applications № 43800/14, 8019/16, 28525/20 *et al.*, judgment 09.07.2025. Para 1578.

⁹⁶ Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia [GC], applications № 43800/14, 8019/16, 28525/20 *et al.*, judgment 09.07.2025. Para 1582.

evacuated, and no such measures are described in the various reports before it.

On the contrary, numerous credible reports identify cases where Ukrainian children were themselves left to try to contact their parents, often with the manifest non-cooperation of the persons in whose custody they were. The policy put in place for the mass acquisition of Russian nationality by children in occupied areas after the 2022 invasion, in breach of international humanitarian law, was nothing less than the automatic imposition of Russian.

As a result, the Court concluded that, given the evidence of changes to nationality and adoption in the Russian Federation, the children's transfer to Russia cannot be seen as a temporary measure. Considering these considerations, the children's transfer from Ukraine to the Russian Federation would not appear to qualify as lawful 'evacuation' under international humanitarian law.

Making conclusions to the analysed problems of the impact of the War on children, it is reasonable to draw the following recommendations:

1. To ensure that all crimes committed by Russian military personnel against Ukrainian children are recorded: murders, mutilations, cruel treatment of children, and others.

2. To engage international partners to monitor the situation of children who have been deported to Russia and their return to Ukraine or departure to third safe countries.

3. To apply child-friendly justice approaches, including training the necessary number of relevant specialists.

4. To standardise at the legislative level the juvenile specialisation of the police, prosecutors, judges, and probation services.

5. To develop a clear algorithm for the reintegration of children affected by the War, in particular those returned from deportation and the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

6. To disseminate recommendations for parents and educators on identifying potential risks of child recruitment and protecting children from negative influences.

CRIME RATES⁹⁷

When assessing crime rates in Ukraine during the war, senior officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and the National Police of Ukraine usually deny that there has been an increase in the number of crimes committed in Ukraine.

For example, in June 2022, the Cyber Police of the National Police of Ukraine stated officially that *‘since the start of hostilities, crime rates have fallen by 30-40%, and in some areas by as much as 50%’*⁹⁸. As far as the beginning of the War is concerned, such a statement is correct because the War made all actors (the State, the society, crime, perpetrators) to stop and adapt to the wartime conditions and restrictions.

However, the crime and perpetrators have adapted more than quickly, and crime indicators jumped up in the most of segments of criminality. Unfortunately, such a state of things was *not* reflected properly in corresponding public statements of the top managers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and the National Police of Ukraine.

In April 2023, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine said that since the beginning of the War, the crime rate in Ukraine had decreased. According to the Minister, during the 13 months following Russia’s full-scale invasion, the number of certain types of crimes decreased by 50%⁹⁹.

In October 2023, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine said that *‘the law enforcement agencies have kept the crime situation under*

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⁹⁸ Cyber Police of the National Police of Ukraine (2022). Head of Ukrainian Police: ‘Crime rates are falling; robbers are collaborating with the enemy for a few rubles’. *Cyber Police of the National Police of Ukraine*. June 17, 2022. Source: <https://cyberpolice.gov.ua/news/zmi-pro-nas-golova-ukrayinskoyi-policziyi-riven-zlochynnosti-znyzhuyetsya-grabizhnyky-vzayemodiyut-z-vorogom-za-paru-rubliv-4696>

⁹⁹ Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (2023). ‘Since the start of the war, crime rates in Ukraine have fallen’, says Ihor Klymenko in an interview with Reuters. *Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine*. April 1, 2023. Source: www.mvs.gov.ua/news/vid-pocatku-viini-riven-zlocinnosti-v-ukrayini-znizivsia-igor-klimenko-v-interviu-reuters

*control, and the crime rate is now significantly lower than it was before 24 February 2022*¹⁰⁰.

In January 2024, the Head of the National Police of Ukraine stated that *‘despite the fact that the crime rate has not increased during two years of full-scale war in Ukraine, it has taken on a ‘character’ of its own’*¹⁰¹.

In February 2025, in an interview, the Head of the Main Investigation Department of the National Police of Ukraine stated that crime in Ukraine was at pre-War level. In particular, the curfew is having an impact on the situation. He noted that in the first six months after the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, *‘there was no one to commit crimes’*¹⁰². *‘Almost all men left to defend the country from the occupiers. During that period, crime fell significantly. The situation was also influenced by restrictions on alcohol sales, increased police patrols, and checkpoints’*¹⁰³.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Heads of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and the National Police of Ukraine are *not* providing the public with a complete picture of crime during the war. Individual official statements contradict official statistics. Instead, there is a consistent policy of providing incomplete information.

However, such declarations are refuted with official police statistics.

In 2022, the Ukrainian law enforcement agencies (*hereafter – LEA*) registered 362636 crimes with corresponding criminal proceedings where the above-mentioned numbers reflect both criminal proceedings with concrete suspects and so-called *‘factual’* criminal proceedings (*with no concrete suspects*).

¹⁰⁰ Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (2023). Ihor Klymenko: Law enforcement agencies have kept the crime situation under control, and the crime rate is now significantly lower than it was before 24 February 2022. *Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine*. Source: www.mvs.gov.ua/news/pravooxoronnii-organi-vtrimali-kriminogennu-situaciiu-i-riven-zlochinnosti-zaraz-znacno-nizce-niz-buv-do-24-liutogo-2022-roku-igor-klimenko

¹⁰¹ RBK-Ukraine (2024). The crime rate in Ukraine has not risen, but some interesting nuances have emerged. *RBK-Ukraine*, January 22, 2025. Source: www.rbc.ua/rus/news/ukrayini-riven-zlochinnosti-viris-ale-z-yavilisya-1705908276.html

¹⁰² RBK-Ukraine (2025). Has crime increased in Ukraine since the start of the full-scale war: the National Police’s response. *RBK-Ukraine*, February 25, 2025. Source: www.rbc.ua/rus/news/chi-zroslo-zlochinnist-ukrayini-pochatku-1740491203.html

¹⁰³ RBK-Ukraine (2025). Has crime increased in Ukraine since the start of the full-scale war: the National Police’s response. *RBK-Ukraine*, February 25, 2025. Source: www.rbc.ua/rus/news/chi-zroslo-zlochinnist-ukrayini-pochatku-1740491203.html

It should be noted that the number of registered crimes even for the period of ten months of 2022 almost reached the level of 2021 (a whole year). Consequently, the number of crimes committed in Ukraine in 2022 exceeded the number of crimes committed in 2021 (321443 crimes) and the number of crimes committed in 2020 (360662 crimes) (Figure 12). The above-mentioned facts seem to be of a great importance due to the general presumption that negative social and economic consequences of the War would lead to increasing crime trends in Ukraine.

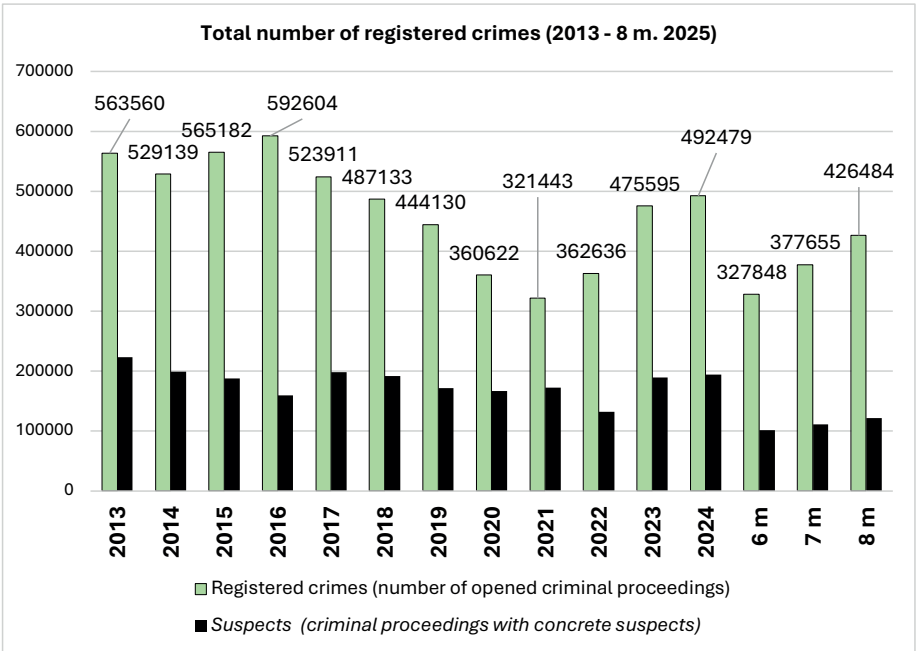


Figure 12. Total number of registered crimes (2013 – 8 m. 2025)

At the same time, in 2023, the LEA registered 475595 crimes with corresponding criminal proceedings where notes of suspicion were given in 189292 proceedings

Correspondingly, in 2024, the LEA registered 492479 crimes with corresponding criminal proceedings where notes of suspicion were given in 194688 proceedings.

In the period of 6 months of 2025, the LEA registered 327847 crimes with corresponding criminal proceedings where notes of suspicion were given in 101399 proceedings. It means that in the period

of 6 months of 2025, the LEA registered 67% of the total number of criminal proceedings registered in 2024.

In the period of 7 months of 2025, the LEA registered 377655 crimes with corresponding criminal proceedings where notes of suspicion were given in 111112 proceedings. It means that in the period of 7 months of 2025, the LEA registered 77% of the total number of criminal proceedings registered in 2024.

In the period of 8 months of 2025, the LEA registered 426484 crimes with corresponding criminal proceedings where notes of suspicion were given in 121962 proceedings. It means that in the period of 8 months of 2025, the LEA registered 87% of the total number of criminal proceedings registered in 2024.

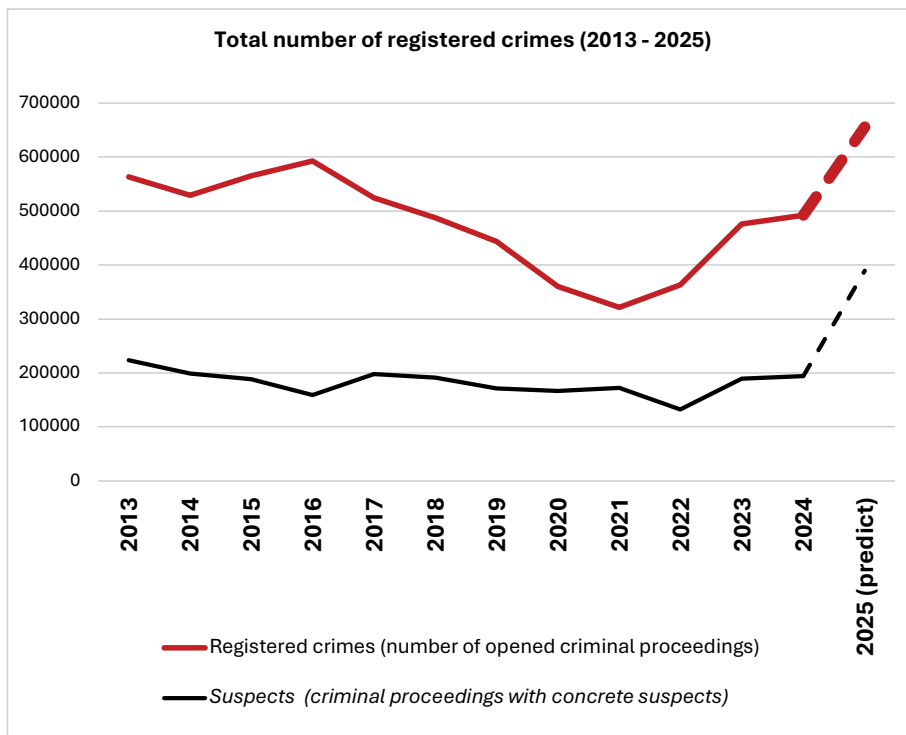
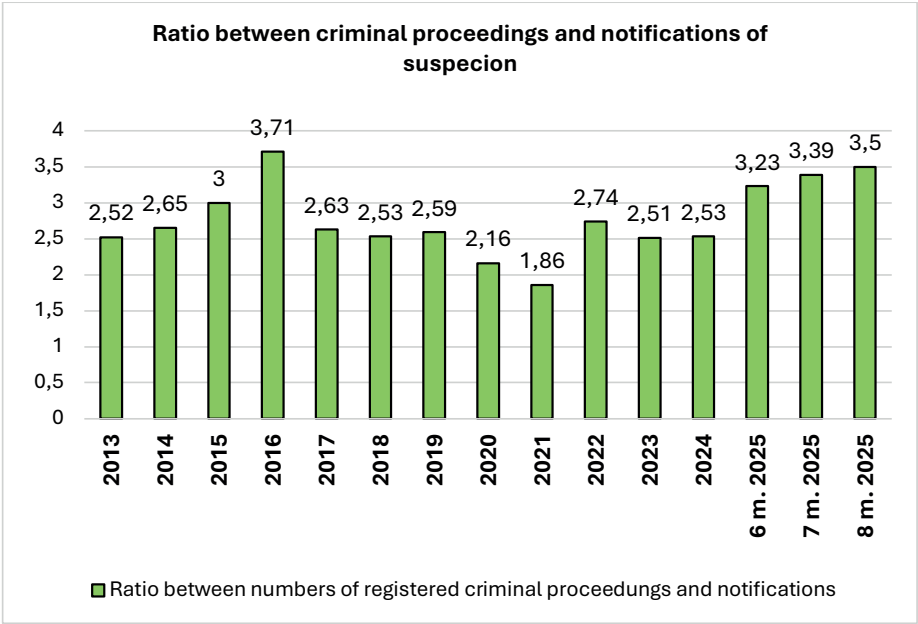


Figure 13. Total number of registered crimes (2013 – 2025, prediction)

At the same time, as police statistics demonstrate, the number of criminal proceedings *with suspects* in 2022-2024 dropped significantly as compared with the pre-War period, which serves as an indicator of the

decreasing effectiveness of the national criminal justice system. It could also be noted that the *ratio* between the number of criminal proceedings and the number of criminal proceedings with concrete suspects has had a stable trend towards decreasing until the 2022 Russian military invasion. As a result, the criminal justice system of Ukraine has demonstrated one of the highest ratios in the last ten years (*Figure 14*).



**Figure 14. Ratio between crimes and notifications
(2013 – 8 m. 2025)**

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF CRIME¹⁰⁴

One of the main conclusions from research into crime trends in 2022 is that the War made criminality in Ukraine *more rural*.

In 2013, the ratio between crimes committed in urban and rural areas was 4,04.

However, in 2022, the same ratio decreased to the point of 3,45

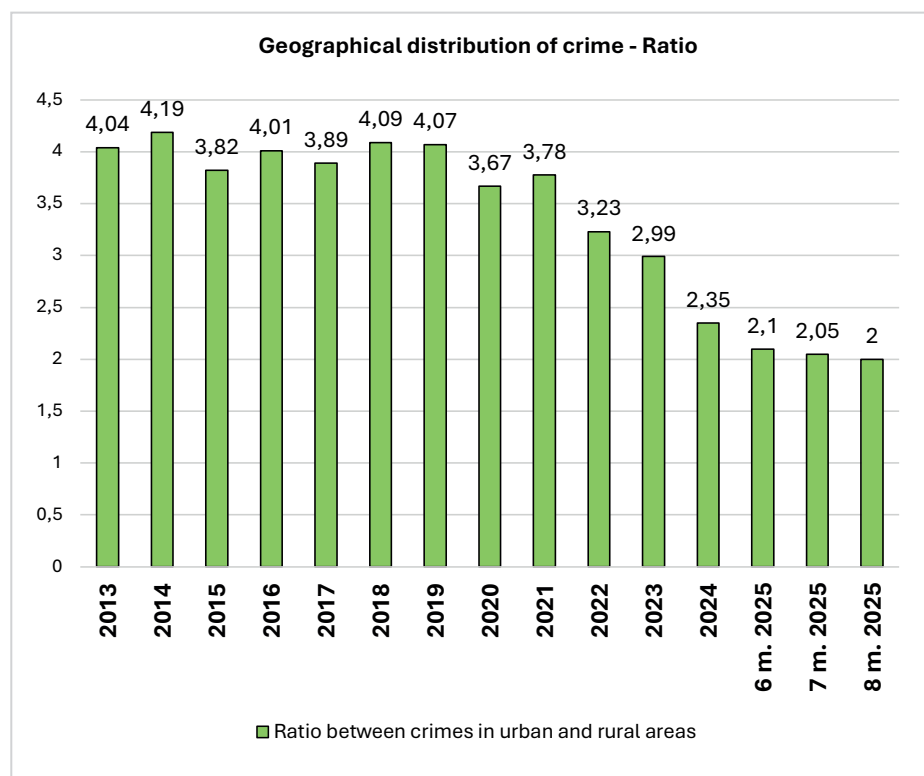


Figure 15. Geographical distribution of crime (1)

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The same indicator for six months of 2025 was 2,1.

The same indicator for seven months of 2025 was 2,05.

In the period of 2013-2021, urban crimes occupied 77 – 78% in the general structure of criminality in Ukraine.

The beginning of the War has brought the minimum level of urban crime (74,14 %) and maximum level of rural crime (22,97 %) for the last ten years of national history of crime prevention.

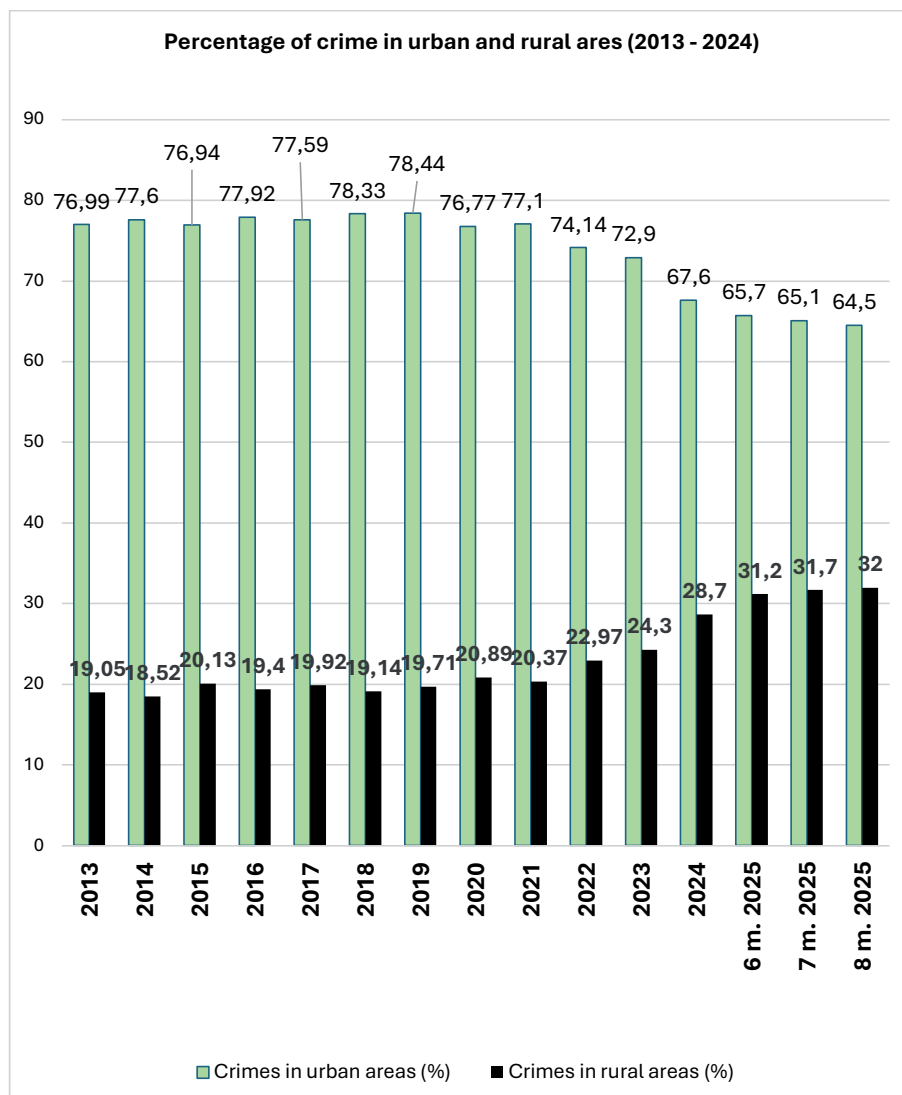


Figure 16. Geographical distribution of crime (2)

Moreover, in 2024, police statistics demonstrate the lowest level of crimes in urban areas (67.6%) and the highest level of crimes in rural areas (28,7%). It appears that such changes have resulted from the 2022 Russian armed aggression, where many crimes were committed by Russian soldiers and officers in *rural* areas (Figure 16, Figure 17).

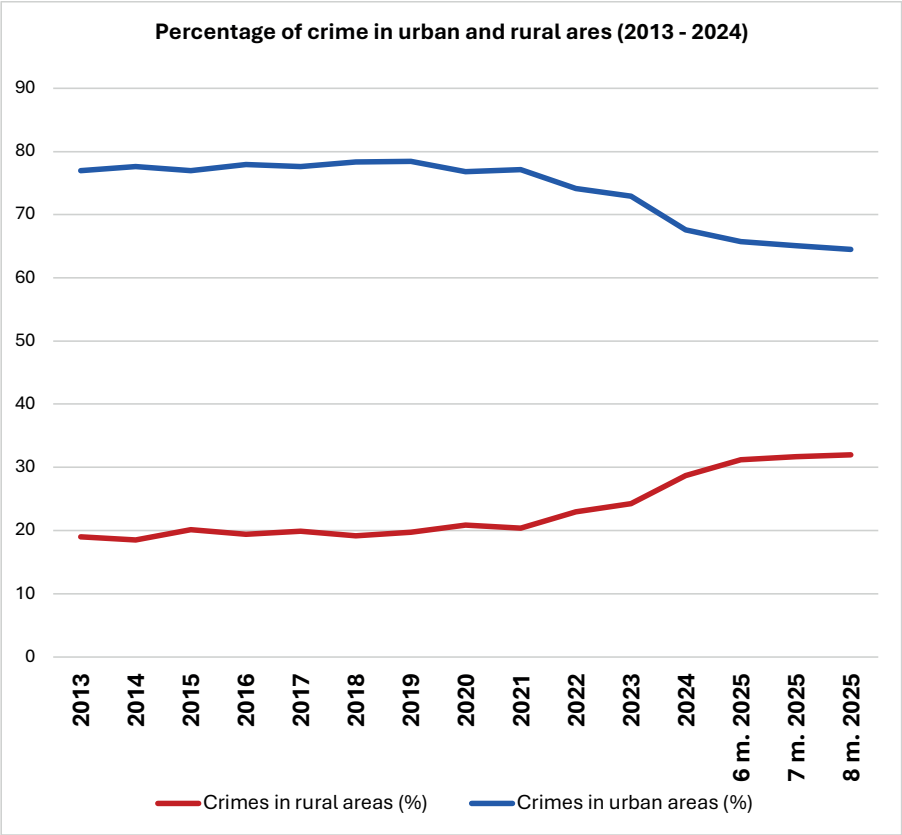


Figure 17. Geographical distribution of crime (3)

NATIONALITY PERPETRATORS OF CRIMES¹⁰⁵

As previously, crimes committed by foreign nationals in Ukraine occupy an *insignificant* segment in the general structure of criminality (*Figure 18*).

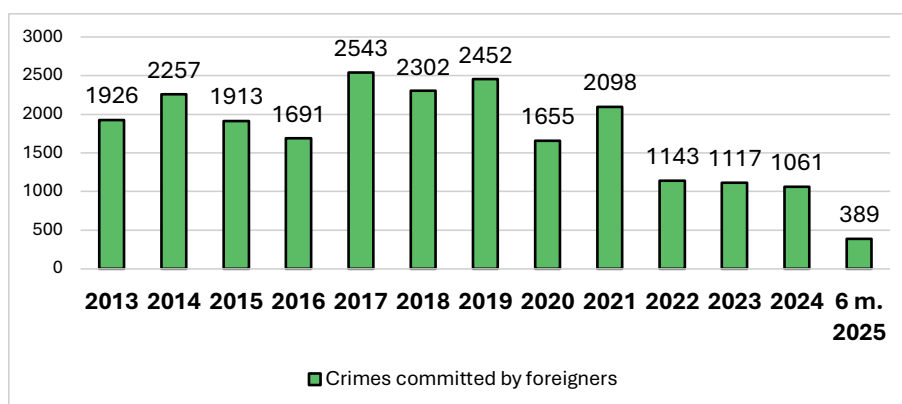


Figure 18. Crimes committed by foreigners

At the same time, the War has led to a reduction in crimes committed by foreign nationals (*Figure 19*). Probably, police statistics do *not* cover crimes committed by Russian military agents during the 2022 War. Nevertheless, there is *no* reference in the police statistics that the mentioned indicator does *not* cover crimes committed by Russian occupiers.

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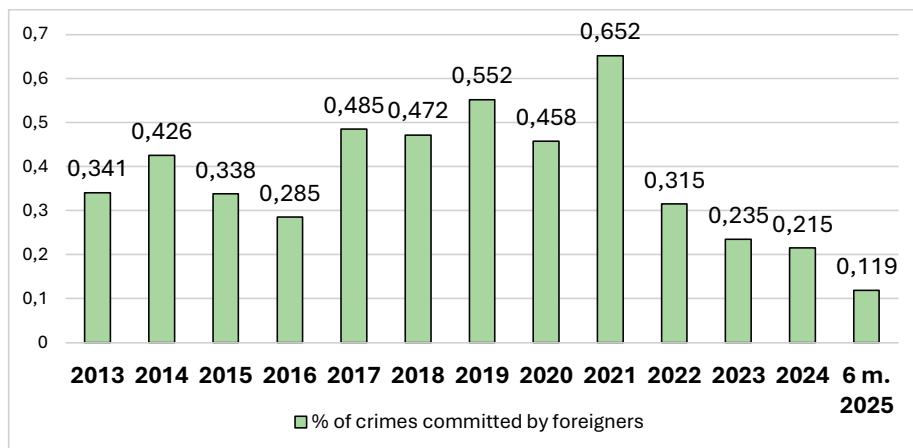


Figure 19. Percentage of crimes committed by foreigners

AGE OF OFFENDERS¹⁰⁶

One of the surprising conclusions drawn from police statistics is that the percentage of crimes committed by persons at the age of 18 – 59 years has changed since 2021.

In other words, the War has led to changes in the percentage of crimes committed by adults *under* 60 years (*Figure 20*).

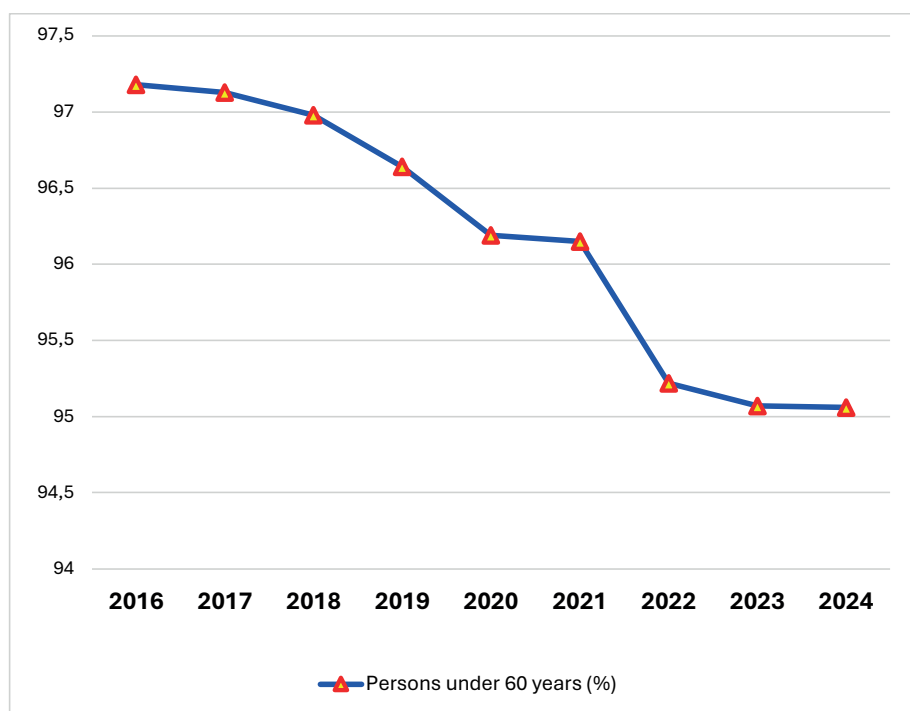


Figure 20. Percentage of crimes committed by persons under 60

During the War, crime has become ‘*older*’ in Ukraine.

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The percentage of crimes committed by offenders over 60 has *increased*, which can be partly explained by involvement of such persons in collaboration with Russian occupiers before and during the War.

However, the main number of *passionaries* who could commit crimes were recruited into the Army or join the Army voluntary (Figure 21).

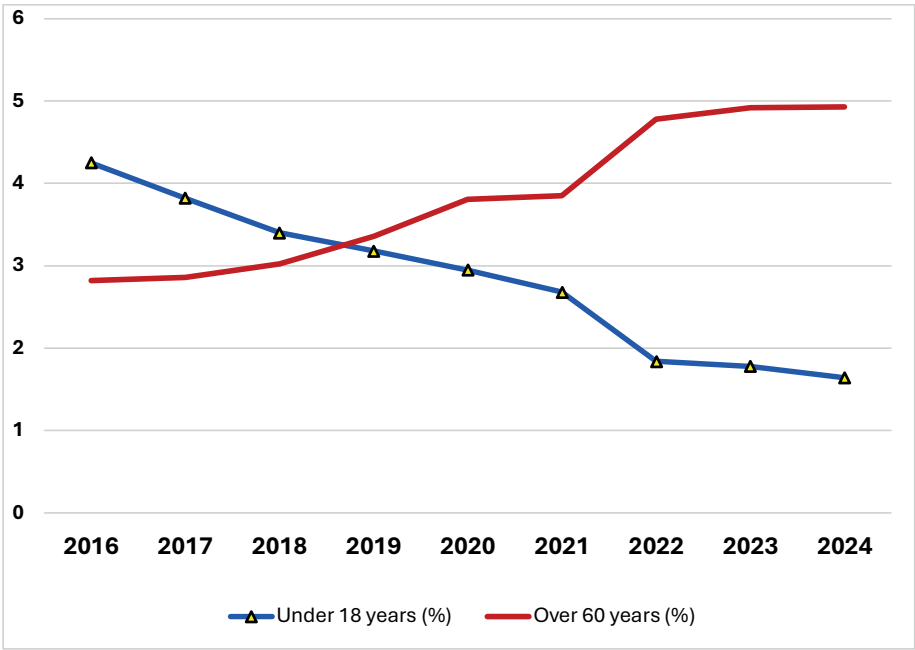


Figure 21. Percentage of crimes committed by persons under 18 and over 60

Police statistics demonstrate a *decrease* in involvement of persons over 60 in crimes against property, against public order (*including illegal keeping of firearms*) or drug-related crimes.

In contrast, police statistics demonstrate an *increase* in involvement of persons over 60 in crimes against human life and health (1083 crimes in 2022, 145 crimes in 2023, and 1590 crimes in 2024) (Table 4).

Tab. 4

Offenders at the age over 60 (2016 – 2024)

Persons over 60 committed crimes	Against national security	Against life and health	Property crimes	Against public order	Drug-related crimes	Against justice	War crimes
2016	8	846	723	173	535	22	0
2017	13	858	924	338	610	17	1
2018	7	935	1120	313	380	14	0
2019	16	997	1129	295	409	25	0
2020	8	1098	1124	271	487	32	5
2021	13	1125	1160	239	388	33	3
2022	188	1083	753	197	353	24	201
2023	214	1453	1170	219	308	52	220
2024	130	1590	974	214	259	103	91

At the same time, in 2022, offenders over 60 committed many more *crimes against national security* as compared with the whole period of 2016-2021 (the ratio is 2,89) (Table 5, Figure 22).

Tab. 5

Offenders over 60: general numbers

	Against national security (all offenders)	Against national security (over 60)	%	War crimes (all offenders)	War crimes (over 60)	%
2016	95	8	8,4%	2	0	0%
2017	107	13	12,1%	20	1	5%
2018	113	7	6,2%	4	0	0%
2019	117	16	13,7%	6	0	0%
2020	101	8	7,9%	21	5	24%
2021	111	13	11,7%	35	3	8,6%
2022	1455	188	12,9%	679	201	30%
2023	2373	214	9%	626	220	35,1%
2024	2303	130	5,6%	430	91	21,2%

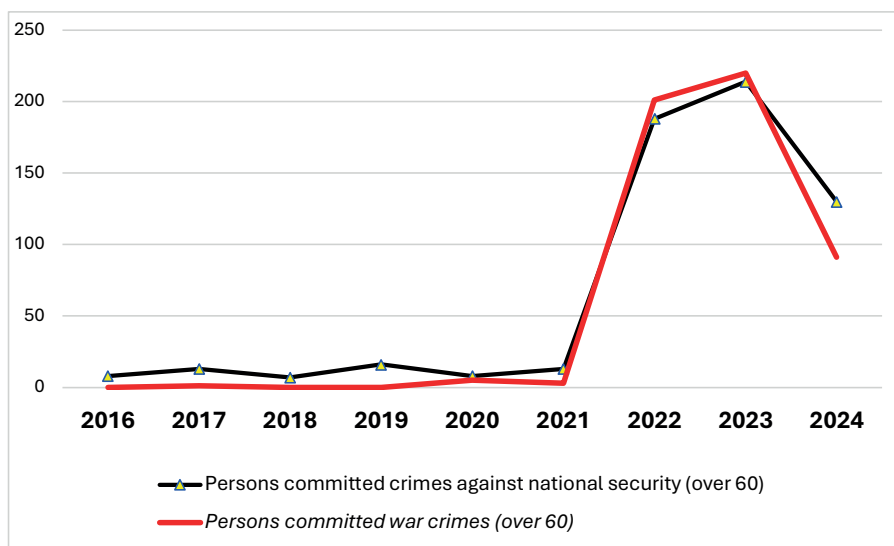


Figure 22. Offenders over 60 committed war crimes and crimes against national security

Figure 23 demonstrates statistical data concerning the percentage of persons over 60 who committed *crimes against national security* and *war crimes*.

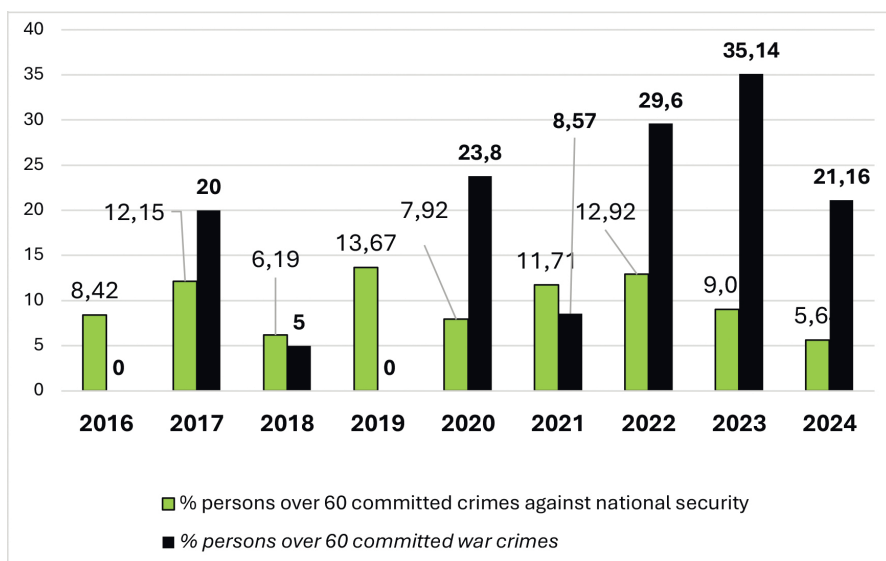


Figure 23. Percentage of offenders over 60 committed war crimes and crimes against national security

Police statistics demonstrate that in relative numbers, persons under 60 committed many more *crimes against national security* and *war crimes* as compared with other types of crimes (Table 6, Figure 24).

Tab. 6

Percentage of offenders over 60				
	2021	2022	2023	2024
<i>Crimes against human life and health</i>	5,39	7,13	6,59	7,17
<i>Crimes against property</i>	2,38	3,01	3,46	3,81
<i>Crimes against public order</i>	2,44	6,17	4,97	4,76
<i>Drug-related crimes</i>	3,35	2,79	1,65	1,34
<i>Crimes against public services</i>	8,40	8,96	7,33	6,68
<i>Crimes against justice</i>	1,59	2,16	2,91	3,48
Crimes against national security	11,71	12,92	9,01	5,64
War crimes	8,57	29,60	35,14	21,16

Offenders under 18

Police statistics show that the number of offenders under 18 having committed property crimes had reduced until 2022. Moreover, the number of such crimes dropped *significantly* in 2022-2024 as compared to 2021.

In contrast, the number of offenders under 18 who committed crimes against human life and human health has reduced *insignificantly* (Figure 25).

In contrast, the number of offenders having committed drug-related crimes does not show such rapid trends to the decrease, which can prove a hypothesis that *the War had no influence on the illegal drug market*, which is informally controlled by the police (Figure 25).

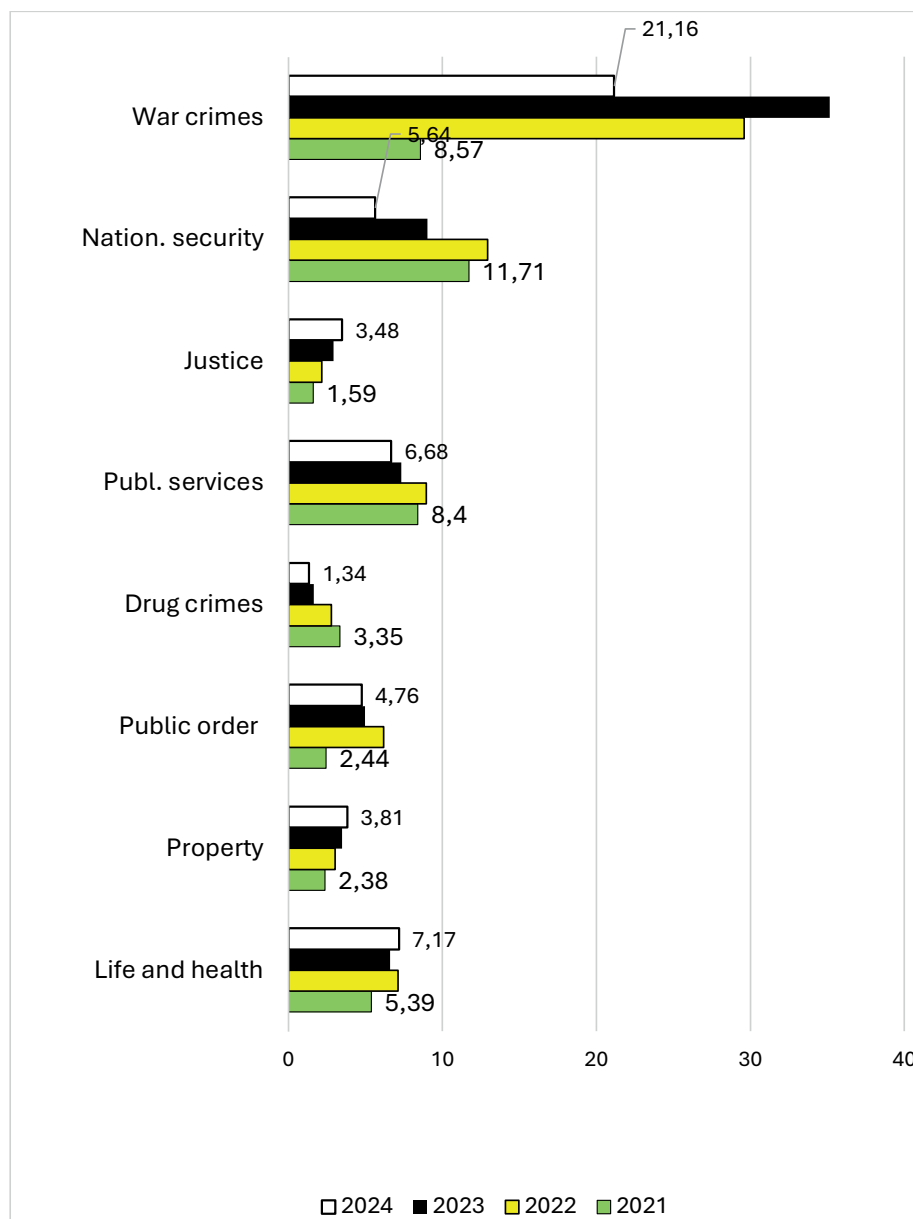


Figure 24. Percentage of offenders over 60

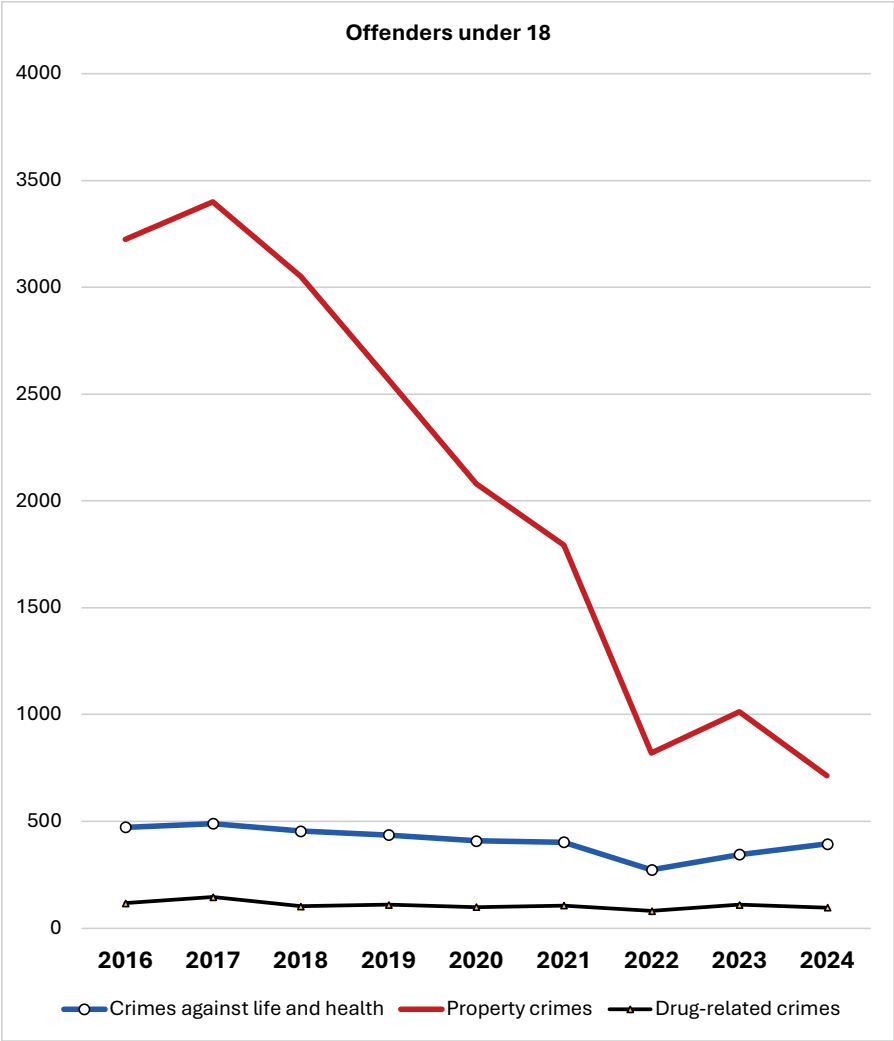


Figure 25. Number of offenders under 18 committed crimes against life and health, drug-related crimes and property crimes

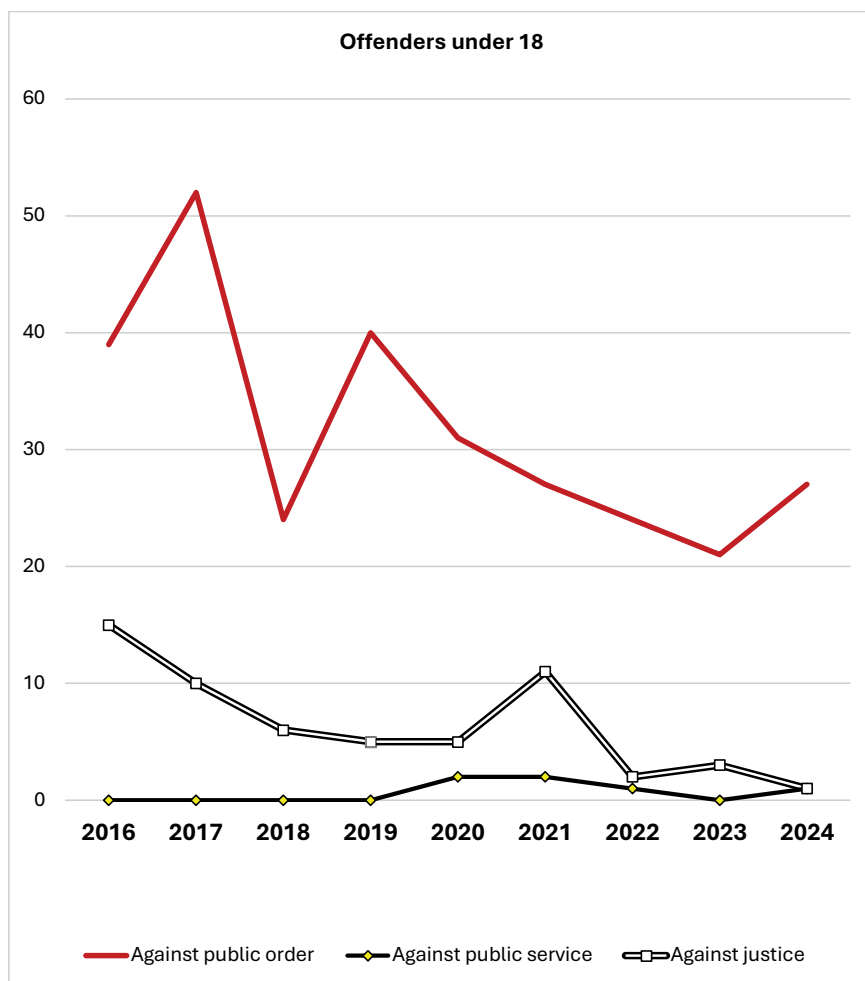


Figure 26. Number of offenders under 18 committed crimes against public order, public service and justice

Offenders at the age 18 – 28

Police statistics show that the number of offenders at the age of 18 – 28 years having committed property crimes has also had a trend to reduce until 2022.

The number of offenders having committed crimes against human life and human health has increased (*Figure 27*).

As in previous example with drug-related crimes committed by persons under 18, the number of offenders at the age of 18-28 who

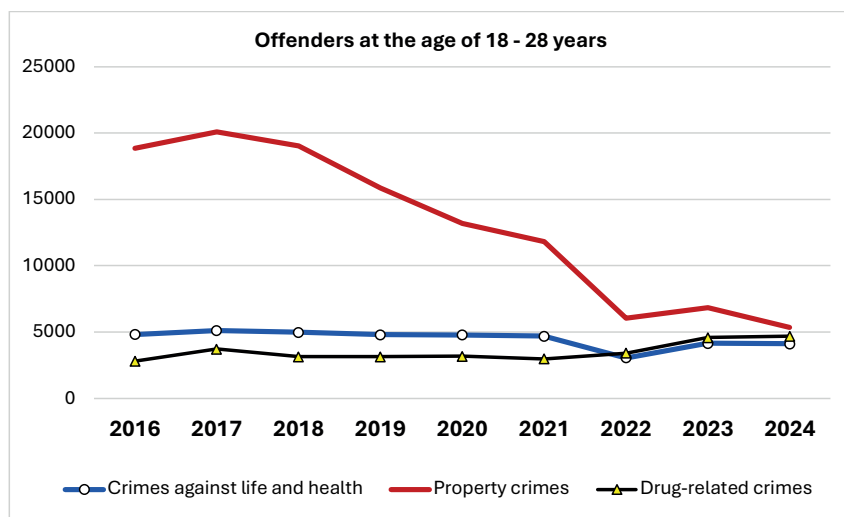


Figure 27. Number of offenders at the age 18 – 28 committed crimes against life and health, drug-related crimes and property crimes

committed drug-related crimes does *not* demonstrate such rapid trends towards the decrease, which can also prove the hypothesis that *the War had no influence on the illegal drug market*, which is informally controlled by the police.

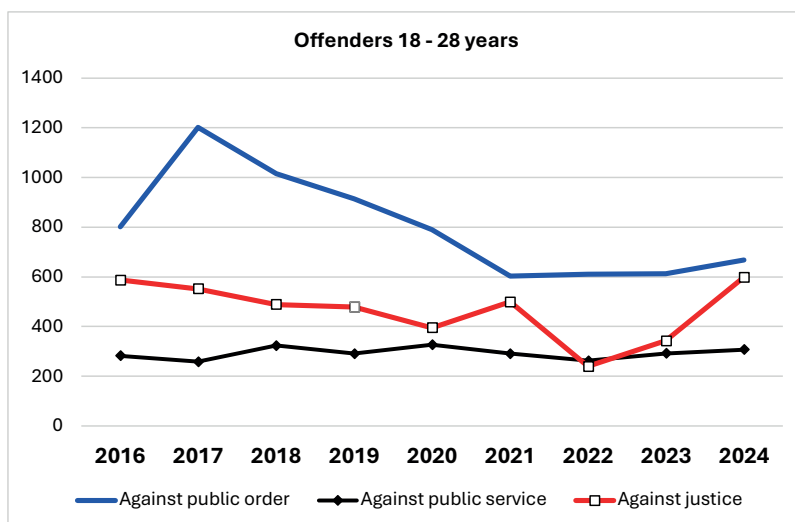


Figure 28. Number of offenders at the age 18 – 28 committed crimes against public order, public service and justice

Offenders at the age 29 – 39

As far as offenders at the age of 29 – 39 are concerned, the corresponding crime rates reflect the general crime trends typical for Ukraine.

We can also point to reduction in persons at the age of 29 – 39 who committed crimes against human life and human health in 2022 with further increase.

At the same time, numbers of drug offenders seem to be *not* influenced by the War, which gives us additional grounds to argue about the illegal control of the police over the illegal drug market and its ‘customers’ (Figure 29).

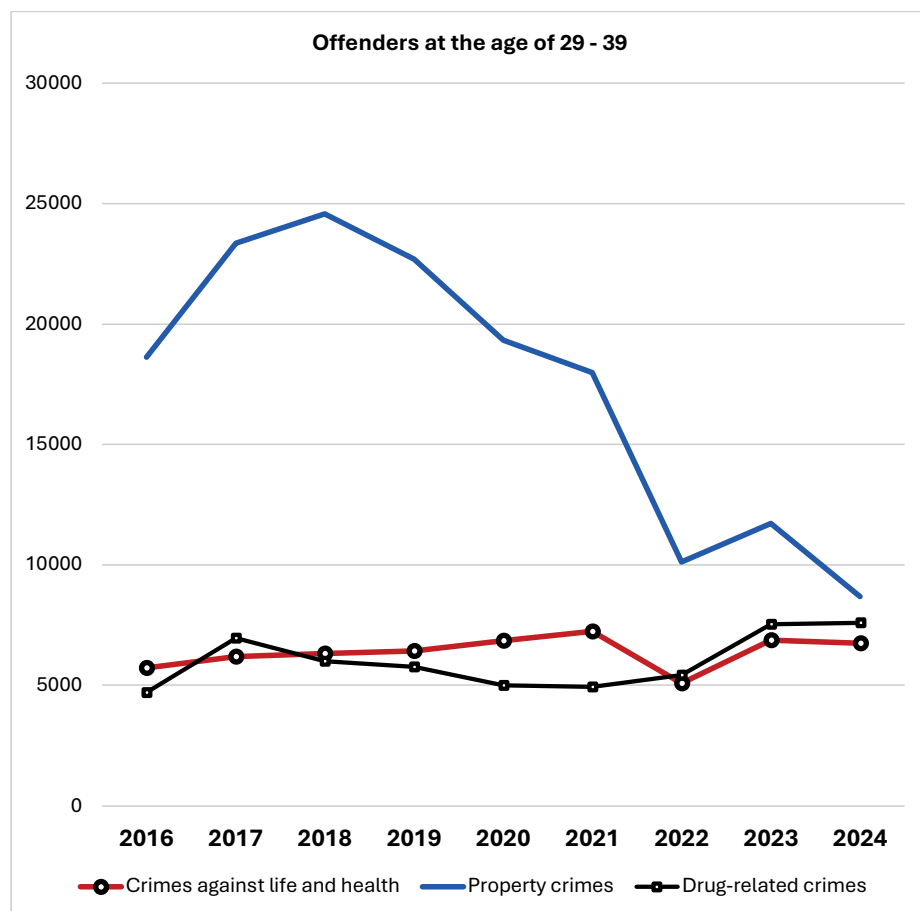


Figure 29. Number of offenders at the age 29 – 39 committed crimes against life and health, drug-related crimes and property crimes

As far as *crimes against public service* and *crimes against justice* are concerned, the number of offenders at the age of 29 – 39 having committed the above-mentioned crimes dropped significantly in 2022, which can also be explained with the impact of the War on normal life of Ukrainian society (Figure 30).

However, in 2023 and 2024, the number of crimes against public service and against justice increased, mainly due to crimes of not-execution of judicial decisions.

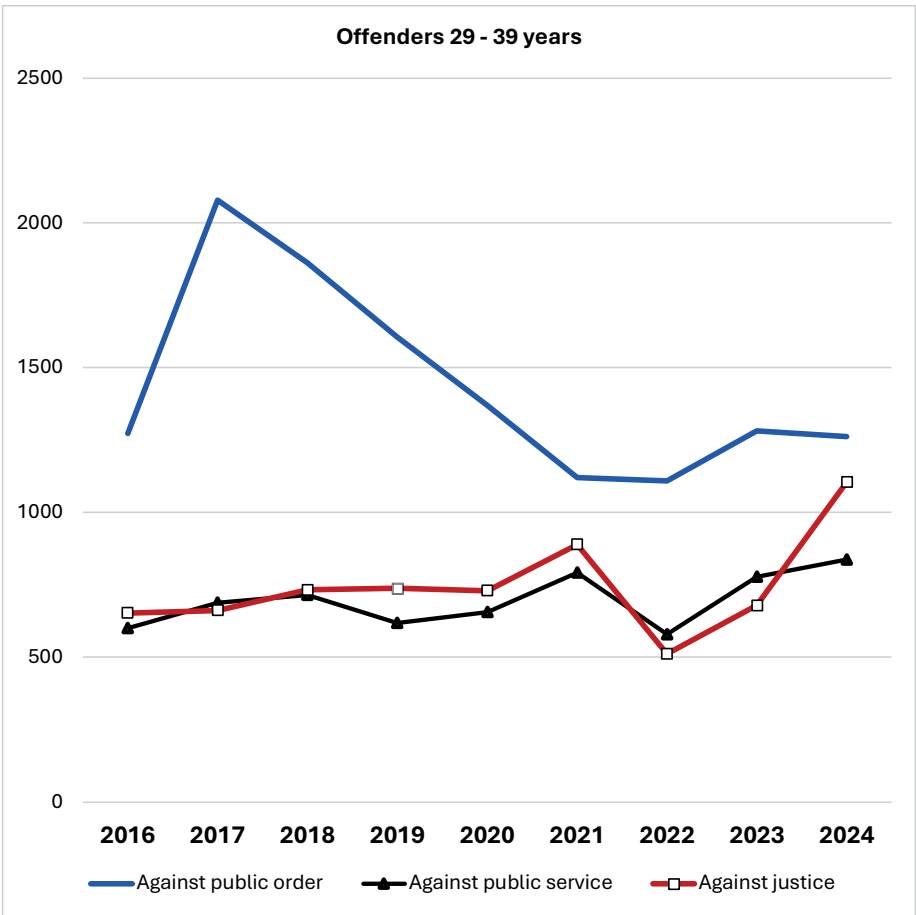


Figure 30. Number of offenders at the age 29 – 39 committed crimes against public order, public service and justice

Offenders at the age 40 – 54

The conclusions presented above could also be used relating to offenders at the age of 40 – 54 years – reduction in *crimes against human life and human health*, as well as serious reduction in *property crimes* in 2022 (Figure 31).

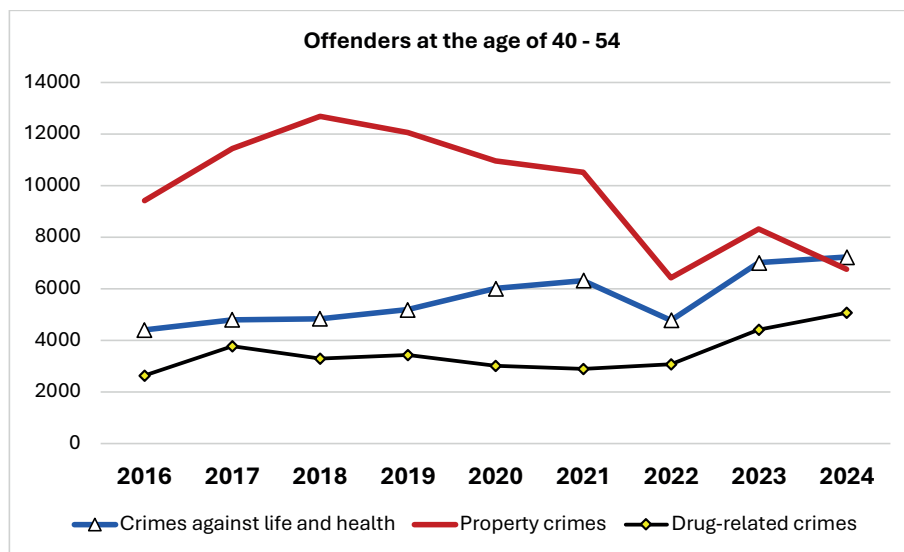


Figure 31. Number of offenders at the age 40 – 54 committed crimes against life and health, drug-related crimes and property crimes

In line with previous conclusions, it is not surprising that the number of persons at the age of 40 – 54 committed drug-related crimes had *increased*.

The number of persons committed crimes against public security, public service and justice had decreased in 2022 with further increase in 2023-2024 (Figure 32).

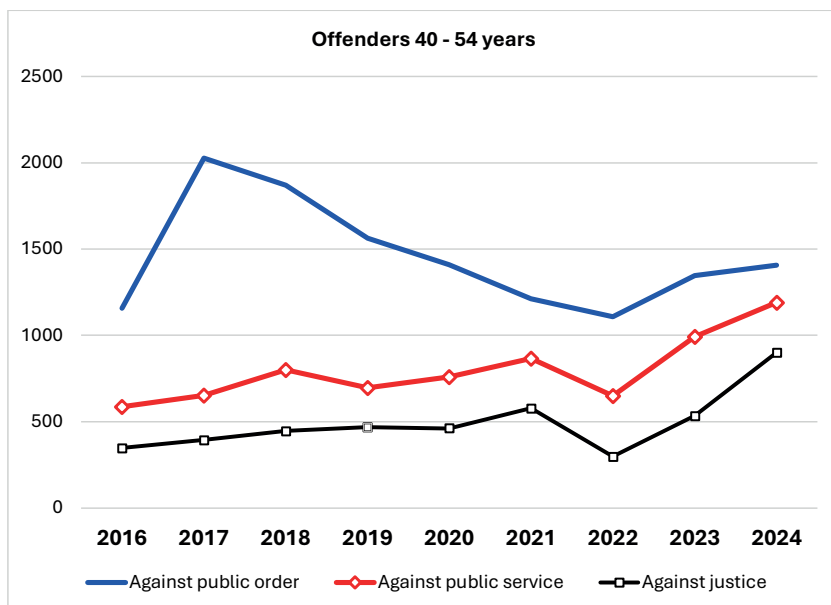


Figure 32. Number of offenders at the age 40 – 54 committed crimes against public order, public service and justice

Offenders at the age 55 – 59

The same conclusions could be drawn from the police statistics in relation to offenders at the age of 55 – 59 (*Figure 33*).

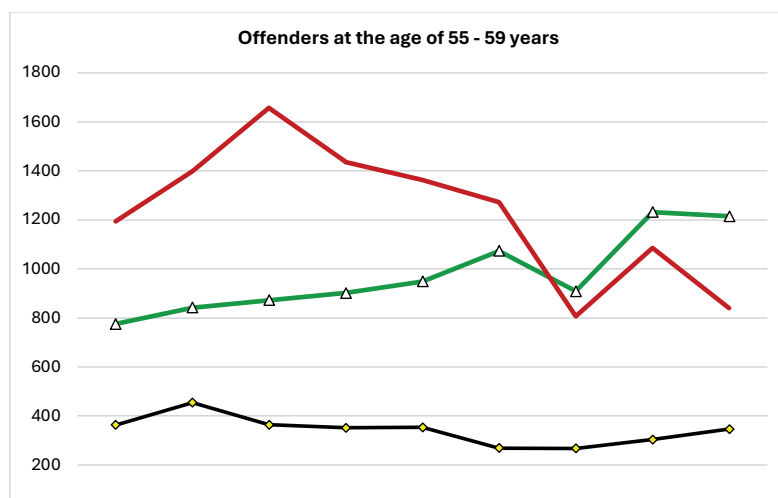


Figure 33. Number of persons at the age 55 – 59 committed crimes against life and health, property crimes and drug-related crimes

As it was argued before, the crime trends of drug offences seem to be *not* influenced by the War, which gives us additional grounds to argue about the control of the police over the illegal drug market (*Figure 33*).

In contrast, the number of persons having committed crimes against public order, public service and justice has decreased in 2022 with further increase in 2023 and 2024 (*Figure 34*).

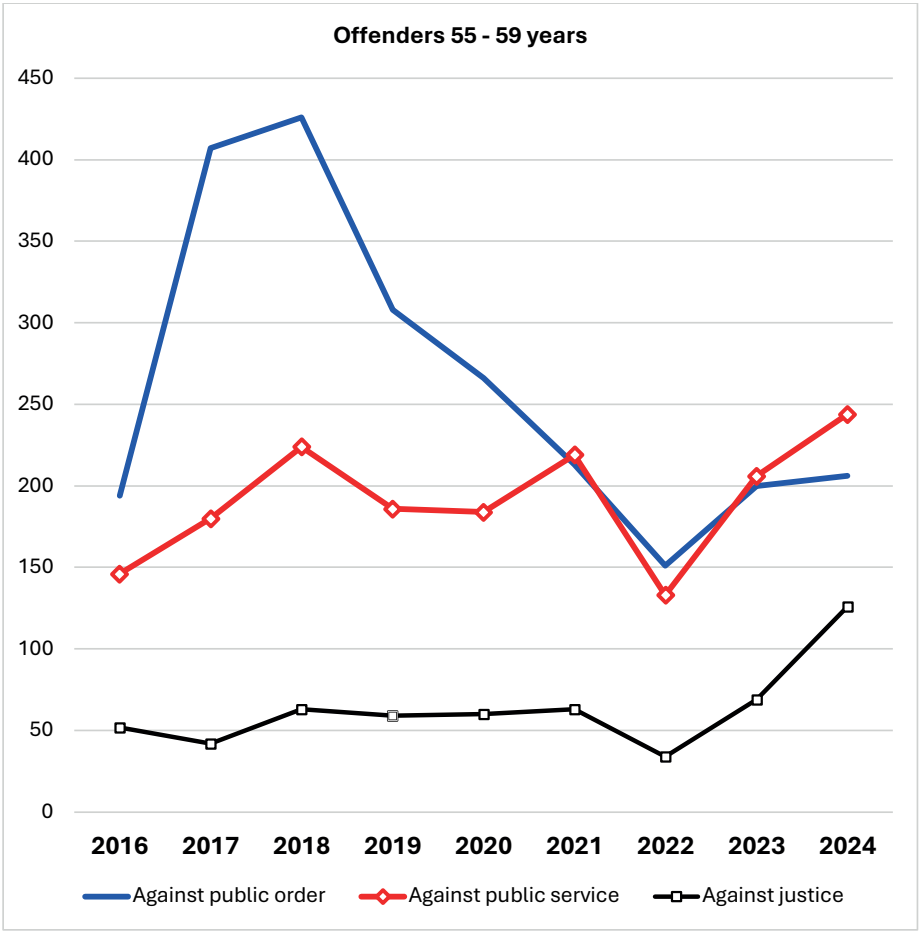


Figure 34. Number of offenders at the age 55 – 59 committed crimes against public order, public service and justice

Offenders over 60

Finally, the number of offenders over 60 years who committed crimes against property decreased significantly after the War started, with further increase in 2023.

At the same time, the number of offenders over 60 years who committed crimes against human life and human health increased *significantly* in 2023 and 2024.

The number of persons who committed drug-related crimes, as could be predicted in the light of previously drawn conclusions, has decreased *insignificantly* (Figure 35).

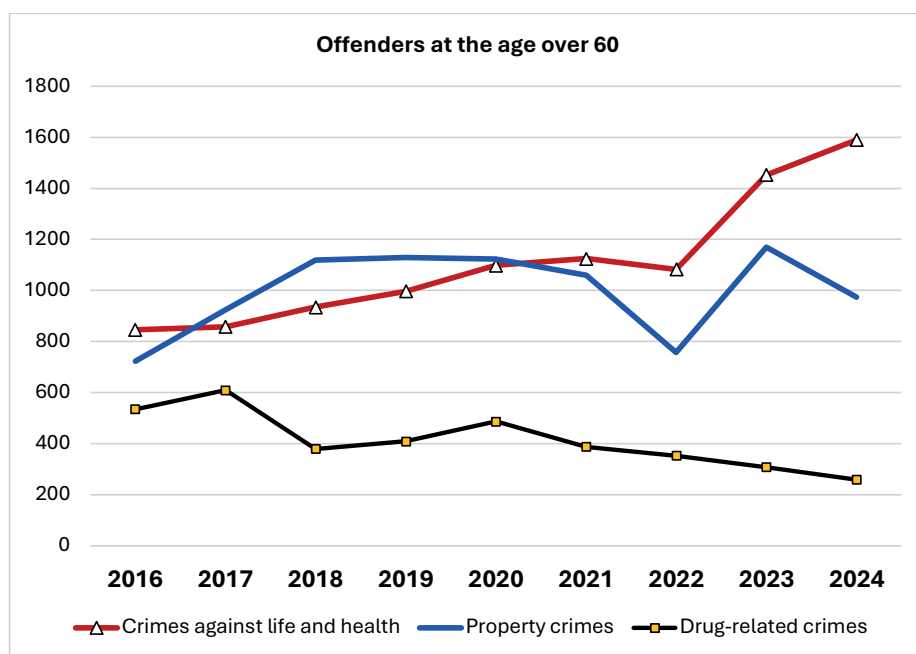


Figure 35. Number of offenders over 60 committed crimes against life and health, drug-related crimes and property crimes

As far as we have paid special attention to offenders having committed drug-related crimes, we have decided to present the numbers of the above-mentioned offenders graphically in a separate Figure 37 (Figure 37).

Here, we can observe the numbers of offenders of the mentioned category for the period of 2016 – 2024.

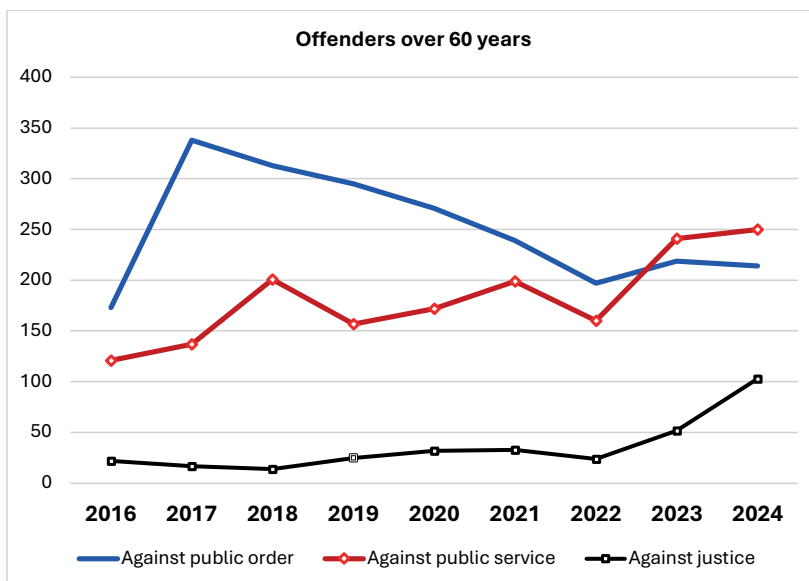


Figure 36. Number of offenders over 60 committed crimes against public order, public service and justice

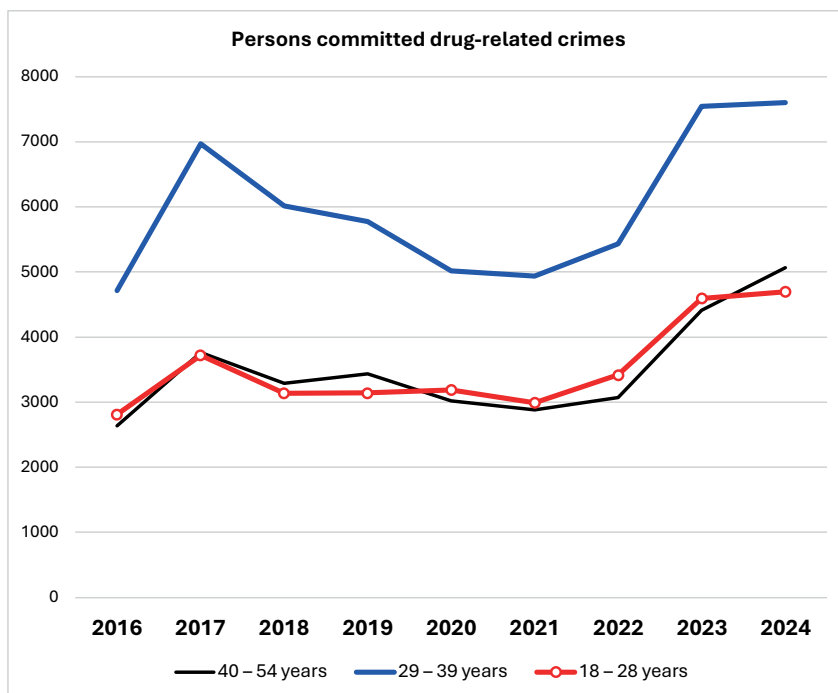


Figure 37. Persons committed drug-related crimes (1)

If we exclude the pick of such persons at the age of 29 – 39 registered in 2017, we can conclude that there had been no rapid changes in this number until the War started.

In other words, the War has *significantly* impacted the number of such persons after the War started.

The same generally could be said in relation to drug offenders under 18 years and drug offenders over 55 years.

It is obvious that the War has impacted the numbers of such drug offenders: people in the age of 55 – 59 became involved more in drug crimes, people over 60 became involved less in drug crimes (*Figure 38, Table 7*).

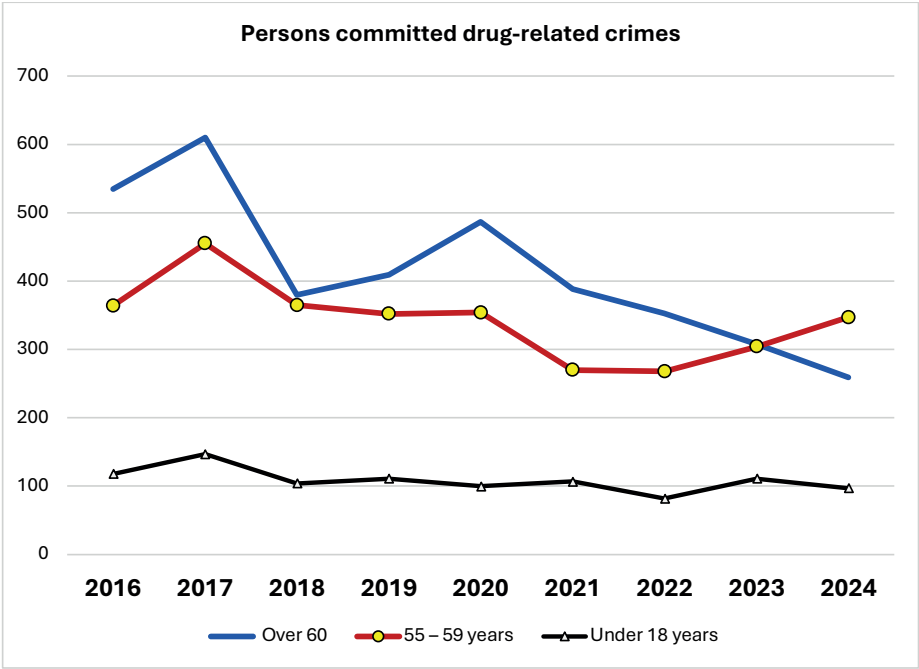


Figure 38. Persons committed drug-related crimes (2)

Tab. 7.

Age of persons committed drug crimes						
Age of persons committed drug crimes	Over 60	55 – 59	40 – 54	29 – 39	18 – 28	Under 18
2016	535	364	2638	4715	2814	118
2017	610	455	3767	6970	3722	147
2018	380	365	3290	6016	3140	104
2019	409	352	3437	5777	3145	111
2020	487	354	3019	5018	3193	100
2021	388	270	2886	4935	2993	107
2022	353	268	3074	5434	3422	82
2023	308	304	4414	7547	4598	111
2024	259	347	5068	7604	4698	97

With an aim to compare trends in numbers of offenders having committed *drug-related crimes* (Figure 38, Figure 7), we can demonstrate the same Figure but with offenders having committed *property crimes* (Figure 39, Figure 8).

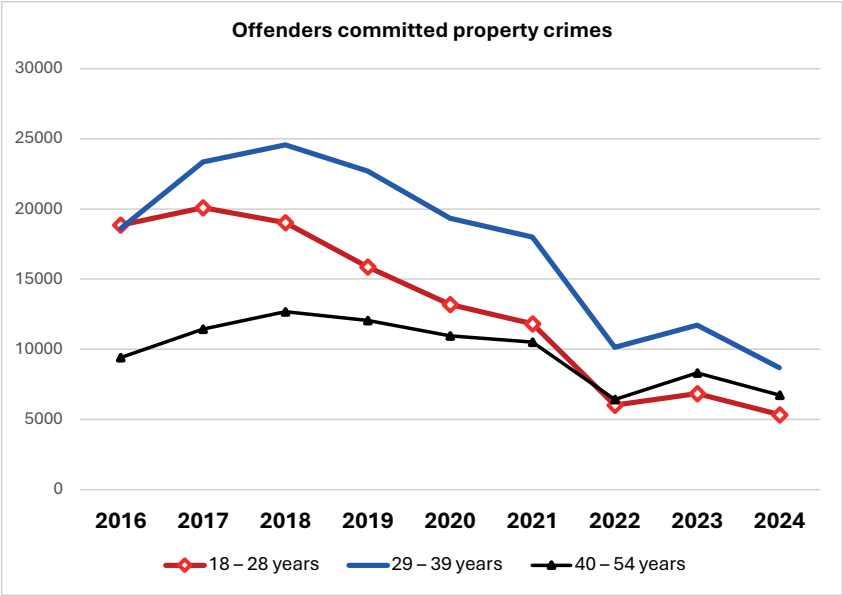


Figure 39. Number of offenders committed property crimes (1)

Here, we can note how the War significantly impacted the numbers of *property offenders* where the average numbers of such persons remain unchanged in 2024 as compared with 2022 (*Figure 39, Figure 40, Table 8*).

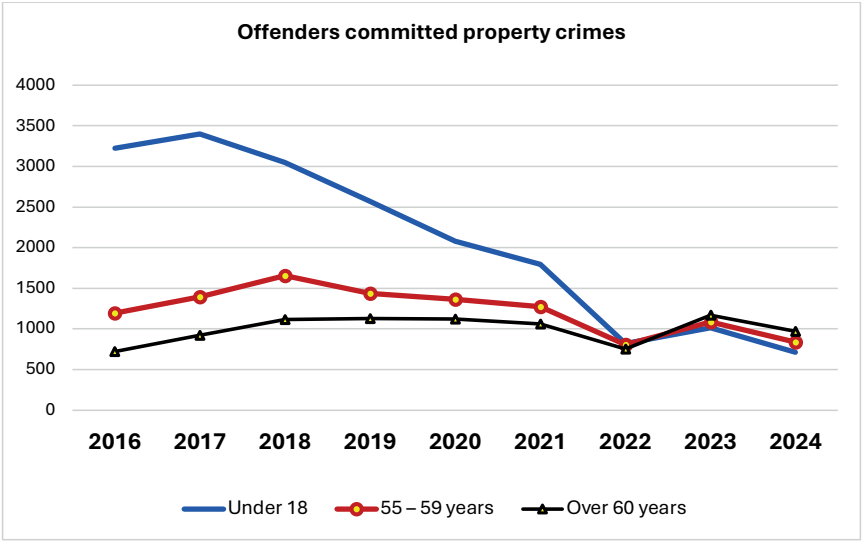


Figure 40. Number of offenders committed property crimes (2)

Tab. 8.

<i>Offenders in different age groups</i>						
<i>Offenders committed property crimes</i>	Under 18	18 – 28	29 – 39	40 – 54	55 – 59	Over 60
2016	3224	18858	18623	9409	1194	723
2017	3400	20098	23358	11447	1398	924
2018	3050	19035	24576	12687	1657	1120
2019	2570	15861	22703	12063	1437	1129
2020	2080	13209	19329	10963	1363	1124
2021	1793	11808	17994	10524	1273	1060
2022	820	6037	10130	6424	807	753
2023	1013	6856	11726	8314	1086	1170
2024	713	5350	8687	6752	841	974

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF OFFENDERS

The wartime period has put on the agenda an interesting aspect concerned with *educational background* of offenders (Table 9).

Tab. 9

Educational level of offenders

	University degree	Technical education	Secondary school	No education
2016	9,21	24,39	63,33	3,06
2017	9,74	24,09	63,18	2,98
2018	9,33	24,32	63,72	2,63
2019	9,71	24,45	63,39	2,45
2020	9,99	22,45	65,24	2,32
2021	10,67	18,71	68,63	1,98
2022	13,78	18,05	66,69	1,48
2023	13,34	17,86	67,47	1,33
2024	13,39	17,92	67,57	1,19

The percentage of offenders with *professional (technical) education* for the period of twelve months of 2022 was the same as compared with 2021, while the percentage of offenders with a *university degree* increased to the level of 13,78% in 2022.

Moreover, for the period of 2016-2022 there was a trend of increase in the proportion of offenders with a *university degree*. After the 2022 invasion, the number of offenders with a *university degree* remains mostly unchanged.

In contrast, for the period of 2016-2024 there was a trend of decrease in the proportion of offenders with *no education* (Table 9).

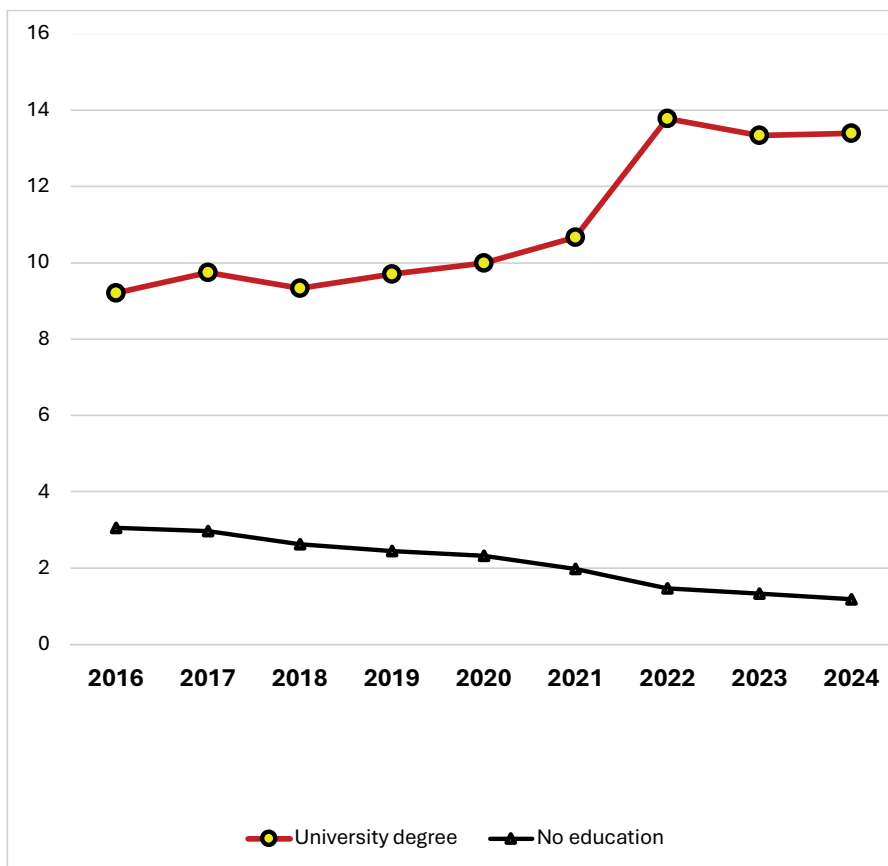


Figure 40. Percentage of offenders with university degrees and with no education

As far as offenders with technical education are concerned, the War has not impacted significantly on their percentage in the general number of offenders (18,71 % in 2021, 18,05 % in 2022, 17,86 % in 2023, 17,92% in 2024) (*Figure 41, Table 9*).

As far as offenders with secondary school education are concerned, the War has decreased their percentage in the general number of offenders (68,63 % in 2021, 66,69 % in 2022, 67,47 % in 2023, 67,57 % in 2024) (*Figure 42, Table 9*).

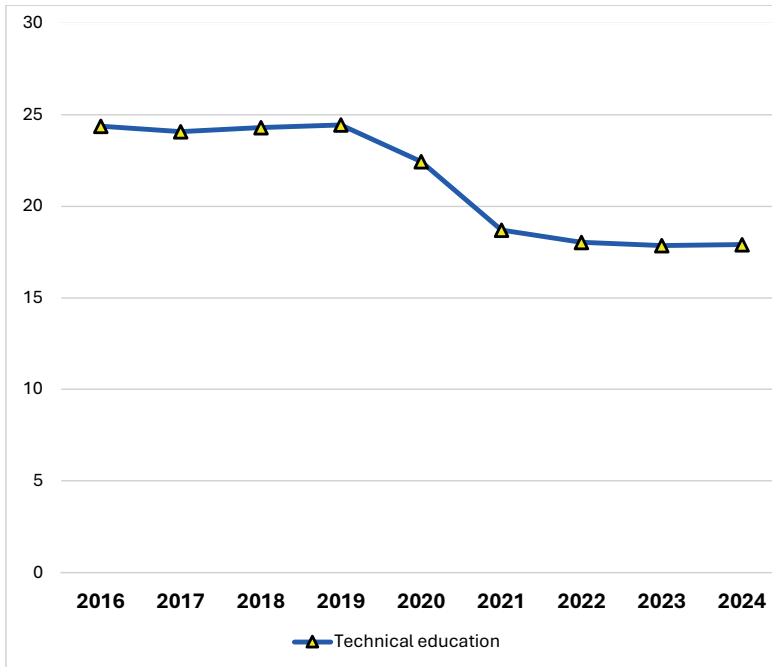


Figure 41. Percentage of offenders with technical education

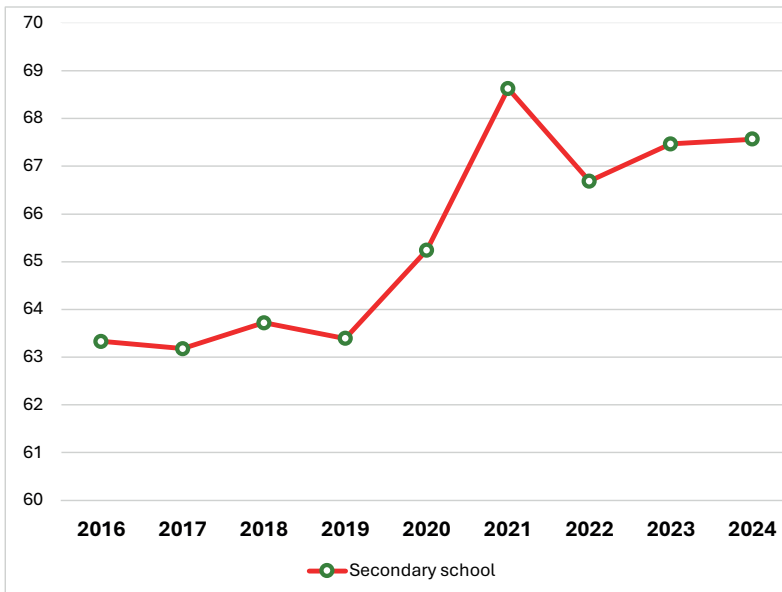


Figure 42. Percentage of offenders with secondary school education

CRIMES AGAINST HUMAN LIFE AND HEALTH¹⁰⁷

We can observe how the War ‘*cut*’ the number of *detected* crimes against human life and health in March 2022 because of the reasons mentioned above. As a result, in July 2022, the number of crimes against human life and health, previously dropped seriously in March 2022, has reached the level of January 2022 in July 2022.

In 2021, 33657 crimes against human life and public health were committed. At the same time, notes of suspicion were given only in 22524 criminal proceedings.

In 2022, 43199 against human life and public health were committed. At the same time, notes of suspicion were given only in 16559 criminal proceedings.

In 2023, 63766 crimes against human life and public health were committed. At the same time, notes of suspicion were given only in 22920 criminal proceedings.

In 2024, 80054 crimes against human life and public health were committed. At the same time, notes of suspicion were given only in 23365 criminal proceedings (*Table 10, Figure 44*).

Tab. 10

Crimes against human life and health (2013 – 2024)

	Crimes against human life and health (criminal proceedings)	Crimes against human life and health (proceedings with suspects)
2013	71749	33411
2014	61760	25873
2015	53794	21073
2016	45979	19066
2017	38274	20223
2018	39164	20058

¹⁰⁷ **Dmytro Yagunov**, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

2019	41101	20587
2020	37328	21980
2021	33657	22524
2022	43199	16559
2023	63766	22920
2024	80054	23365

In six months of 2025, 42426 crimes against human life and public health were committed. At the same time, notes of suspicion were given in only 10395 criminal proceedings (*Figure 44*).

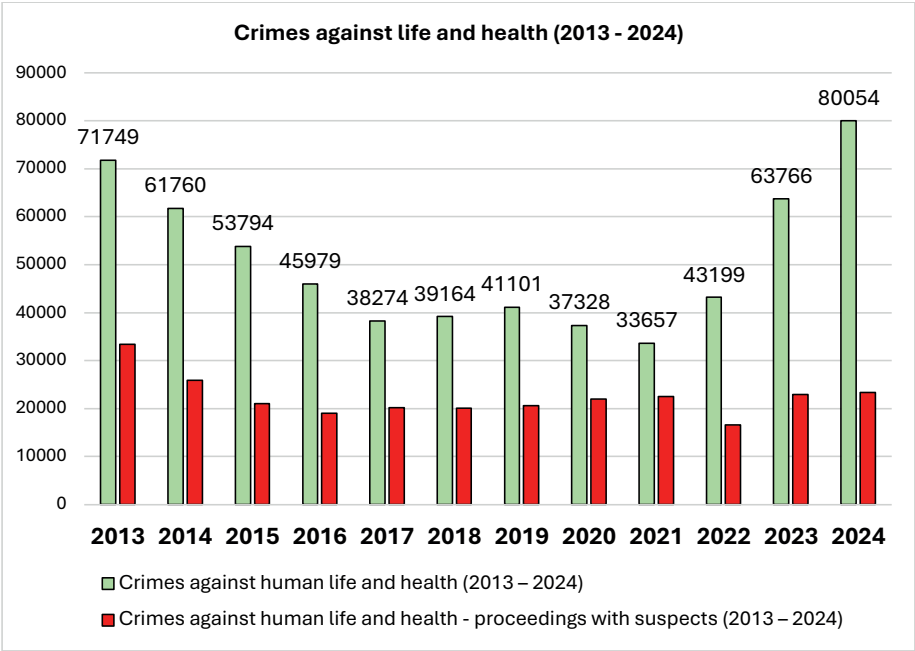


Figure 44. Crimes against life and health (1)

That means that in the first six months of 2025, 53% of criminal proceedings were registered as compared with 2024. At the same time, in the first six months of 2025, 45% of criminal proceedings with concrete suspects were registered as compared with 2024.

Police statistics demonstrate how Ukrainian society became more violent after the War started.

Here, we should consider the factor of the War.

On one hand, violations of the laws and customs of war are classified only under Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine and do not require additional classification under articles on intentional murder, rape, human trafficking, enforced disappearance, torture, bodily harm, destruction of property, etc.

However, there is an approach that ‘any ‘general criminal’ violations of the laws and customs of war shall be classified in conjunction with Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine if these violations are equally or more socially dangerous than violations of the laws and customs of war’¹⁰⁸.

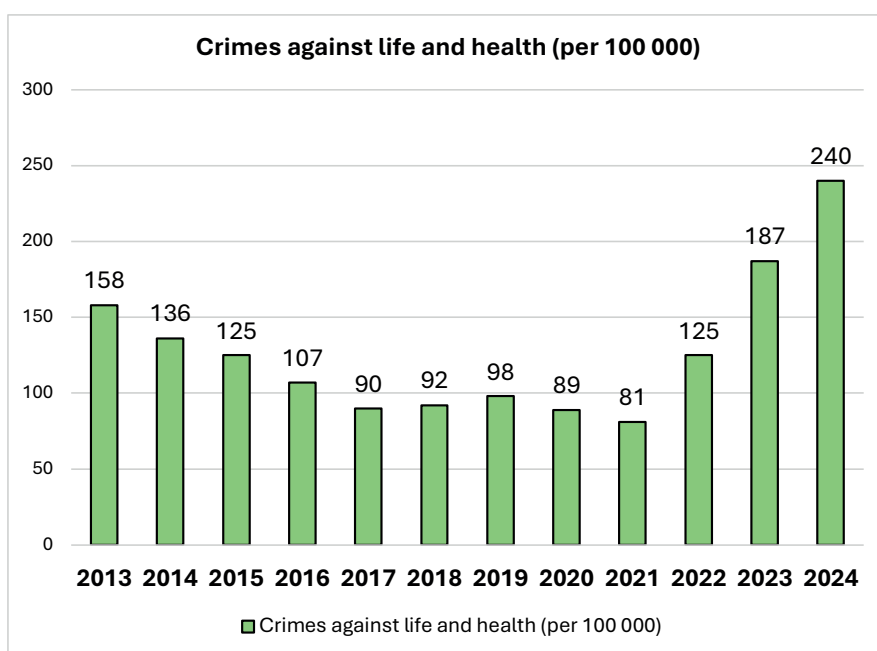


Figure 45. Crimes against life and health (per 100 000)

It can be predicted that the end of 2025 would hardly surprise us with rapid changes in the police statistics on crimes against human life and health, which are not concerned with the War and the military actions by Russian occupiers.

¹⁰⁸ Hloviuk, I. (2024). War crimes: classification of crimes and the role of the defence lawyer. *Higher School of Advocacy*. December 6, 2024. Source: www.hsa.org.ua/blog/vojenni-zlocini-kvalifikaciia-zlocinu-ta-rol-zaxisnika-irina-gloviuk

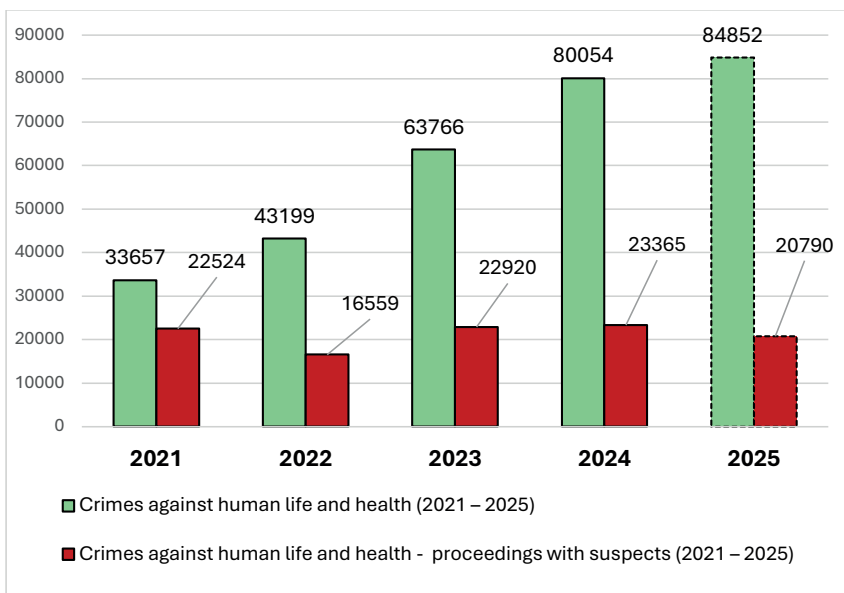


Figure 46. Crimes against life and health (2)

Intentional Homicide

A special attention should be paid to the statistics on *intentional homicides*.

Having approximately the same number of suspects each year, we can point to the fact that 38,3% of perpetrators were detected having committed these grave crimes in 2021 (*Figure 47*).

In contrast, only 5% of perpetrators were identified in 2022, only 2,8 % of perpetrators in 2023, and only 1,9 % of perpetrators in 2024 that indicates an obvious operational weakness of the national criminal justice system in the wartime (*Figure 47*).

One most important conclusion from the above-mentioned comparative analysis is a big difference in numbers of intentional homicides, which is obviously concerned with the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, it is difficult to separate the number of murders committed by Russian *military* agents from those which were committed by Ukrainian '*civilian*' criminals.

In June 2022, Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova sent a circular dated 28 June 2022 to the heads of regional prosecutor's offices regarding the classification of criminal acts in the context of armed conflict. The

circular, among other things, indicates the need to classify actions when circumstances of the disappearance of a civilian or military personnel in combat zones and temporarily occupied territories are identified, in the absence of information about death, capture, illegal detention, deprivation of liberty, enforced disappearance, hostage-taking, forcible transfer and deportation, under Article 115 (intentional homicide) of the Criminal Code of Ukraine¹⁰⁹.

Tab. 11

Intentional homicide: crimes and notifications (2021 – 6 m. 2025)

	Intentional homicide – Criminal proceedings (total)	Intentional homicide – Criminal proceedings with suspects
2013	5861	1779
2014	11466	1760
2015	8224	1507
2016	5992	1403
2017	5145	1381
2018	5557	1363
2019	5465	1304
2020	3809	1242
2021	3230	1238
2022	22083	1115
2023	36667	1044
2024	52197	1019
6 m. 2025	27938	435

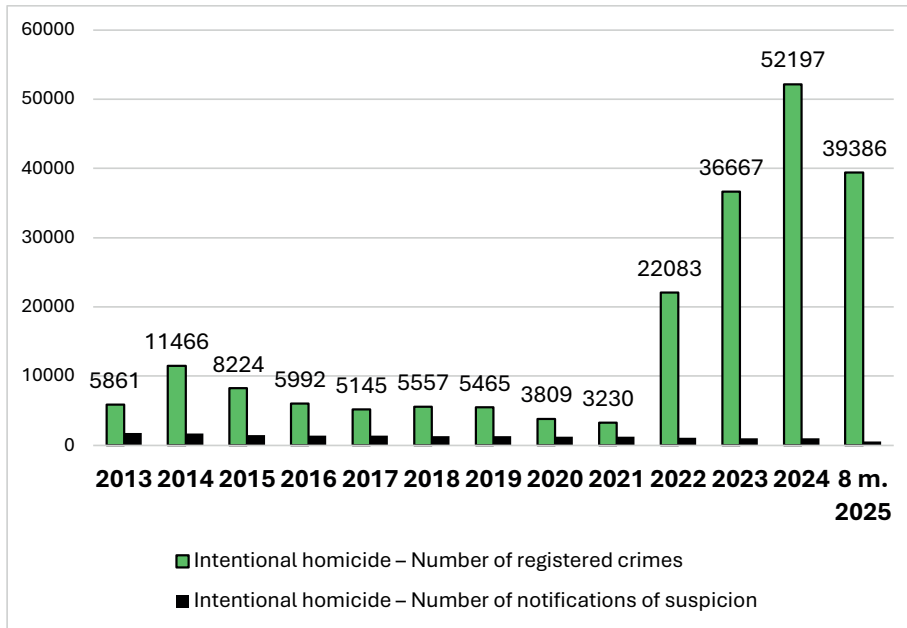
Only such an approach can partly explain a ‘*statistical explosion*’ of intentional homicides after February 2022, when many millions of Ukrainians fled the country.

However, as of May 2025, there were over 70 thousand people listed as missing in the Register of Missing Persons¹¹⁰. That means that

¹⁰⁹ Khrypun, V. (2022). War crimes committed by the Russian Federation against Ukraine: what is wrong with the established practice of their classification. *Judicial and Legal Gazette*. November 20, 2022. Source: www.sud.ua/uk/news

¹¹⁰ Ukrinform (2025). Artur Dobroserdov, Commissioner for Persons Missing Under Special Circumstances: A single centre for identifying bodies may begin operating in Ukraine this year. Ukrinform. May 1, 2025. Source: www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3987798-artur-dobroserdov-upovnovazeniij-z-pitan-osib-zniklih-bezvisti-za-osoblivih-obstavin.html

even mentioned before 70 thousand missing persons are not ‘covered’ with statistics of intentional homicides (more than 130 thousand victims of intentional homicide for the period of 2022 – May 2025).



**Figure 47. Intentional homicide: crimes and notifications
(2021 – 6 m. 2025)**

It should also be noted that during the eight months of 2025, there were 39386 intentional homicides, which is 75,5% of the total number of intentional homicides committed in 2024.

At the same time, it is necessary to point out the growing gap between the total number of criminal proceedings for intentional homicides and the number of criminal proceedings for intentional homicides in which individuals have been notified of suspicion.

This increase can be explained by the fact that the total number of intentional homicides partly includes homicides committed by Russian occupiers, which makes it impossible to study the dynamics of homicides in Ukraine committed *outside the scope of Russian aggression*.

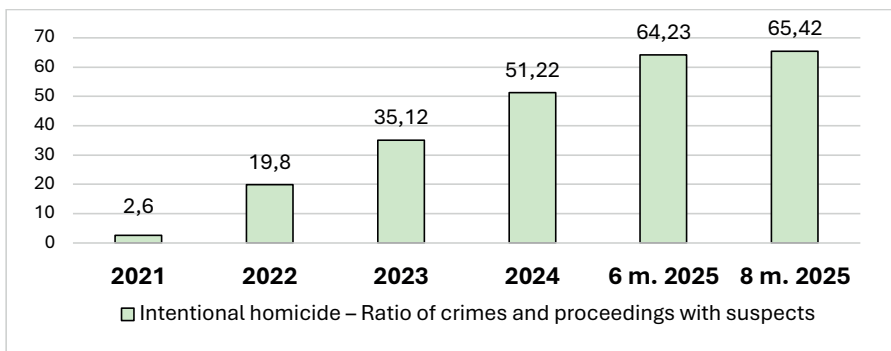


Figure 48. Intentional homicide: ratio of crimes and notifications (2021 – 6 m. 2025)

As it was mentioned earlier, this chapter should be analysed together with this methodological note on the population of Ukraine. Accordingly, even when discussing a certain decrease in crime rates in a particular segment, it is necessary to consider not only absolute but also relative crime rates per 100,000 population.

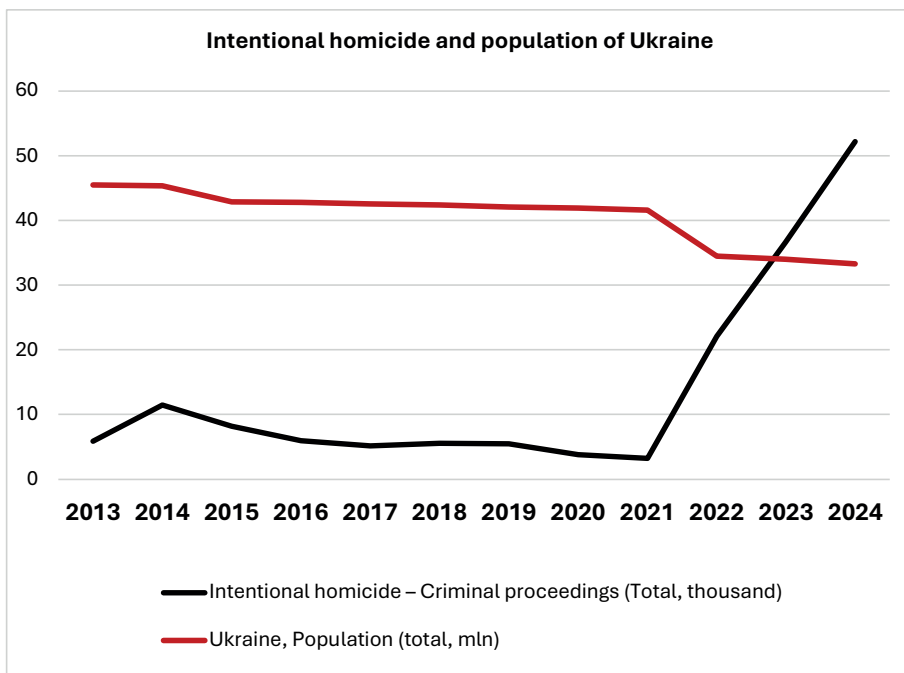


Figure 49. Population of Ukraine and intentional homicide

Here we can clearly see the value of analysing relative indicators of murder trends, considering the significant decrease in Ukraine’s total population under the influence of Russian aggression.

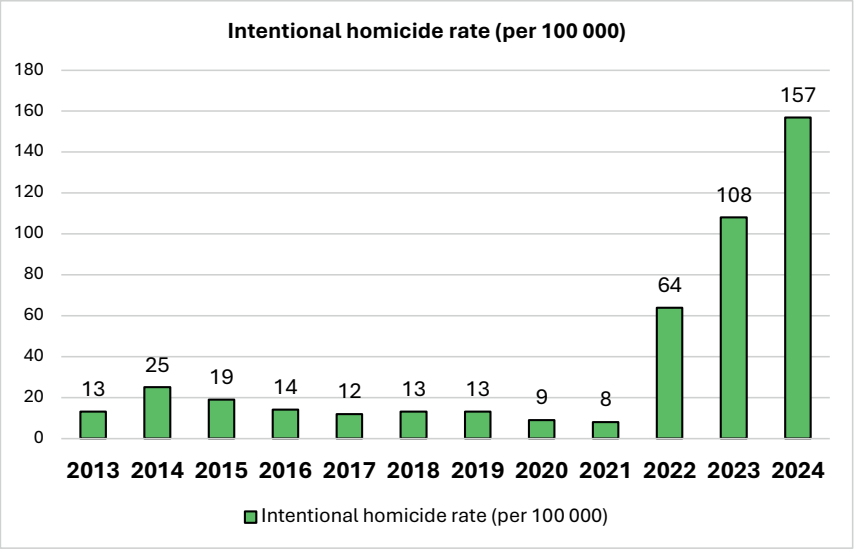


Figure 50-A. Intentional homicide rate (per 100 000)

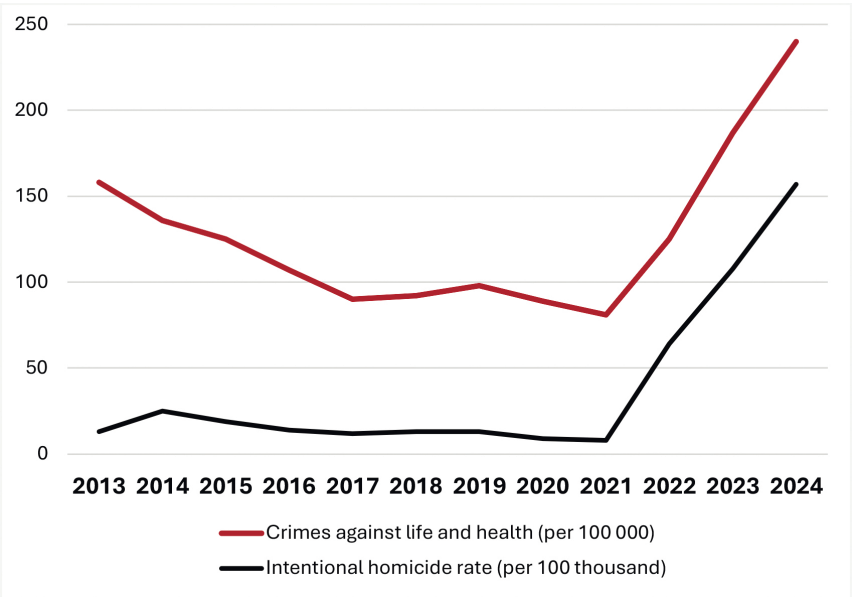


Figure 51-B. Intentional homicide rate (per 100 000)

Minor Crimes against Human Health

As far as interaction between victims and the LEA is concerned, after the 2022 Russian military invasion, Ukrainians applied much less to the LEA with claims of minor injuries (*Figure 51*).

These trends can also be explained by that people generally understood the priorities of the law-enforcement system in the wartime period, where the police officers would probably be expected to *sabotage* registering minor crimes and minor offences.

Here, we present police statistics of all minor crimes against human health committed in 2013-2024 (statistics of 2020 – 2022 include data on minor crimes and minor offences against health, according to Article 12 of the Criminal Code (*‘Classification of criminal offences’*)).

Another important conclusion from the above police statistics is that the Ukrainian criminal justice system has adapted to the wartime conditions and challenges and *‘swum out’* from the deep crisis. At least, the fact that the police have turned back again to registering minor crimes and minor offences against human health can be considered as a normalization of the police routine (*Figure 51*).

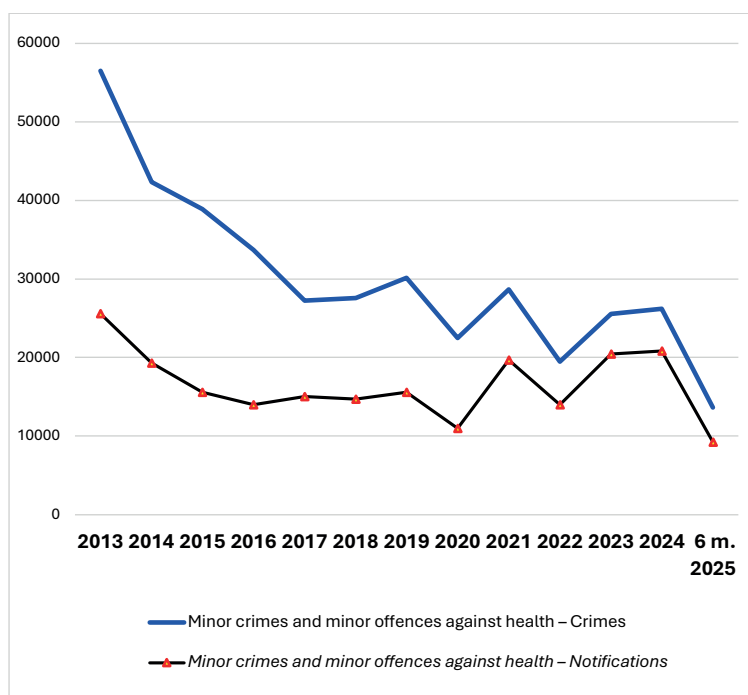


Figure 51. Minor crimes and minor offences against health

TORTURE¹¹¹

When describing the statistics under Article 127 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, it should be noted that the definition of torture in Ukrainian criminal law is only partially in line with international standards, in particular the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984) and the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987). The Criminal Code of Ukraine; in its Article 127 defines torture as the intentional infliction of severe physical pain or mental suffering by violent means with the aim of forcing a person to perform any act against their will, punishment, intimidation, or discrimination.

At the same time, according to Article 127 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, any person (*general subject*) who has reached the age of criminal responsibility can be a subject of torture, regardless of whether they are a representative of the state authorities.

This is in direct contradiction to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified by Ukraine. According to Article 1 of the Convention, the perpetrator of torture is recognised as a representative of state authorities or another person acting in an official capacity, on the orders of, or with the tacit consent of, a state official. If such actions are carried out by a private person without the involvement of state authorities, this is not considered torture within the meaning of the Convention, although it may be qualified under other articles providing for liability for violence. That is, the subject of torture can only be a state functionary – a ‘*special subject*’.

According to Ukrainian law and law enforcement practice, law enforcement authorities can open criminal proceedings and subsequently

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prosecute any person for torture, regardless of their connection to state authorities. For example, in the context of domestic violence, criminal confrontations or hate crimes. This approach not only blurs the statistics; it also negatively affects the protection of victims. After all, torture requires a special approach to investigation, examination and qualification, and the absence of such an emphasis may lead to a failure to comply with the state's international obligations in the field of prevention and investigation of this type of crime.

In December 2022, Ukrainian Parliament adopted the Law 'On Amendments to the Criminal Code of Ukraine on Improving Liability for Torture' No. 2812-IX, which amended Article 127 of the CC to introduce a special subject of the crime provided for in the added Part 3 under the same article: «3. Acts stipulated by Parts 1 or 2 of this Article, committed by a representative of a state, including a foreign one, are punishable by imprisonment for a term of seven to twelve years with deprivation of the right to occupy certain positions or engage in certain activities for a term of up to three years»¹¹².

Police statistics on torture (Article 127 of the Criminal Code) occupy a controversial place in the analysis of the general structure of crime in Ukraine.

Tab. 11

Torture: general numbers of criminal proceedings

Torture	Crimes	Proceedings with suspects	Indictments sent to courts	Dropped proceedings
2016	62	20	13	26
2017	82	37	26	26
2018	163	59	51	43
2019	140	34	22	25
2020	129	59	32	52
2021	79	33	25	33
2022	68	20	16	21
2023	94	53	37	24
2024	124	78	58	24
6 m. 2025	68	36	17	7

¹¹² By 'representatives of the state' in this article and Article 146-1 of the Criminal Code, it should be understood as officials, as well as individuals who act as officials, or who act at their instigation, with their knowledge, or with their tacit consent.

On one hand, systematic torture by the police and prison officers has shaped corresponding views on torture practices in Ukrainian society and media. Ukrainian society has a strong view that ill-treatment by the police and prison officers is a *wide-spread phenomenon*.

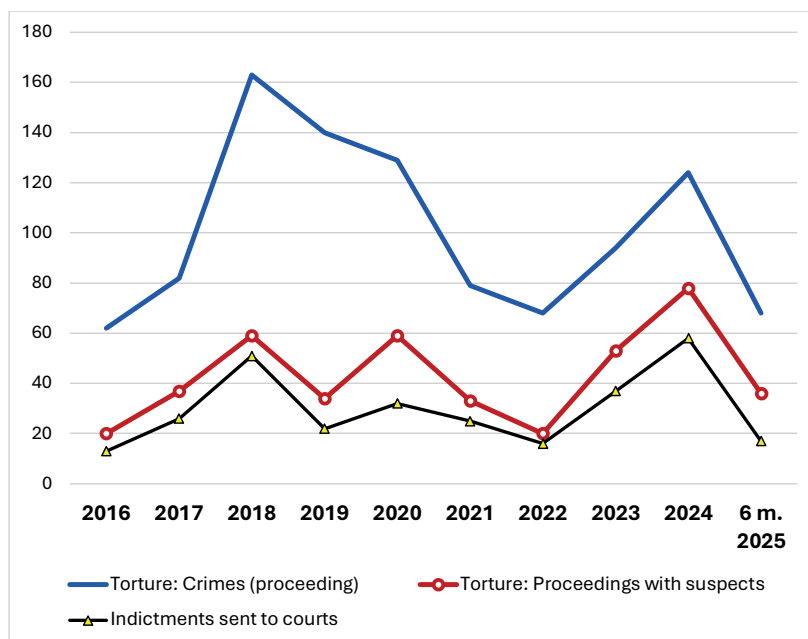


Figure 52. Torture

On the other one, the number of officially registered crimes of torture determines many questions concerning the *latent nature* of this type of crime as well as the *effectiveness of investigation* of torture by state agents in Ukraine which become known to the society (*Table 11*).

The police statistics indicate the next trends of crime of torture in Ukraine:

- 1) before the 2022 War, there was a decline in number of crimes of torture registered by the LEA;
- 2) after the War started, the number of crimes of torture increased rapidly and reached the level of the 2020 indicators.

At the same time, both the pre-War and the War periods demonstrate a strong trend that only 40% of criminal proceedings had a clear judicial perspective (28 % before the War (2016–2021) and 50% in the period of 2022–2024).

Additionally, the percentage of *dropped* criminal proceedings stimulates additional questions about *the effectiveness* of pre-trial investigation of tortures. The specific feature of crimes of torture is that the victim can identify a perpetrator or at least to provide the information that he or she was subjected to torture in a concrete police department or in a concrete prison (*Table 12*).

Tab. 12

Torture: indictments sent to courts and dropped criminal proceedings

Torture	Torture: Percentage of criminal proceedings with suspects	Torture: Indictments sent to courts	Torture: Percentage of dropped criminal proceedings
2016	32,3	20,9	41,9
2017	45,1	31,7	31,7
2018	36,2	31,3	26,4
2019	24,3	15,7	17,8
2020	45,7	24,8	40,3
2021	41,8	31,6	41,8
2022	29,4	23,5	30,9
2023	56,4	39,4	25,5
2024	62,9	46,8	19,3
6 m. 2025	53	25	10,3

In general, after 2022, a positive trend can be detected when notes of suspicion were given in more criminal proceedings and less criminal proceedings were dropped. However, such even positive trends are far from the appropriate state of things: too many criminal proceedings are ‘*factual*’ (without suspects), too many criminal proceedings in torture cases are dropped (*Figure 53*).

In addition to general statistical data on torture, it should be emphasised that the War has unfortunately contributed to an increase in the use of torture in places of detention. On the one hand, the state, despite the imperative that torture is prohibited even if circumstances threaten the life of the nation, did not place it as a priority.

Indeed, in the first months of the War, when it was unclear whether the Ukrainian state would exist tomorrow, against the backdrop of mass migration and the evacuation of prisoners and property from prisons, the

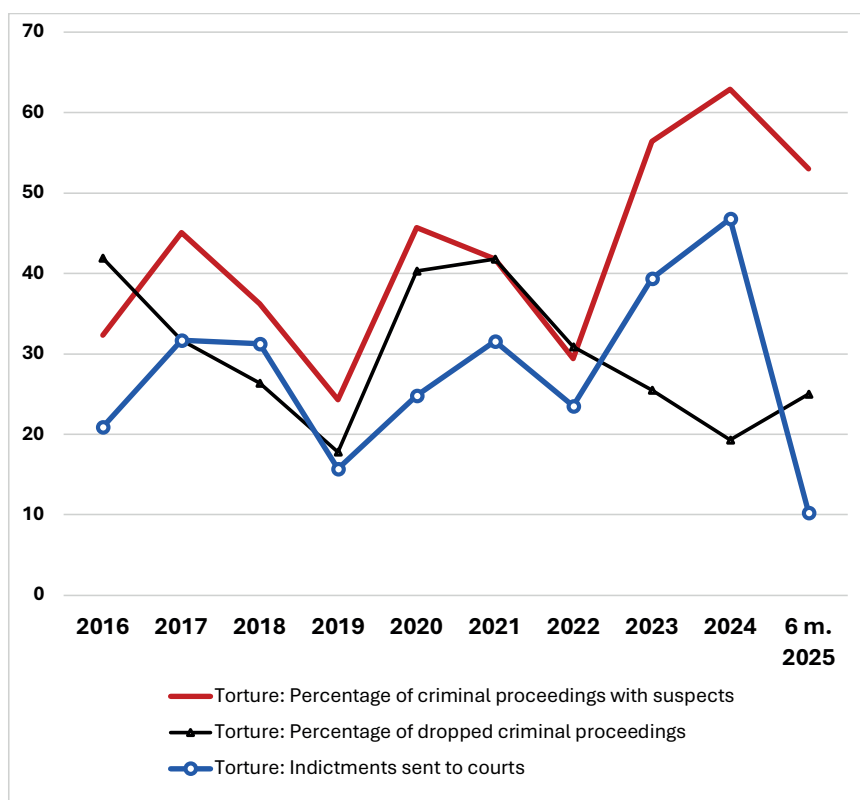


Figure 53. Torture

state had neither the resources nor any particular interest in combating torture in places of detention in the territory controlled by the Ukrainian government to the same extent as before the Russian invasion.

The hasty evacuation of prisoners to new locations inevitably led to conflicts between prisoners and both staff and other prisoners, which contributed to the spread of prison subculture and, consequently, violence.

It should be added here that society itself is creating a false imperative that if law-abiding citizens are suffering from Russian missiles and drones, then why should those who have gone against society be given priority.

Unfortunately, even in the fourth year of the war, when both the state and society have partially adapted to the war, there are examples that indicate the spread of torture practices in places of detention.

In August 2025, investigators from the State Bureau of Investigations completed a pre-trial investigation and sent an indictment to court against five prisoners, including the so-called ‘*watcher*’ over the Kyiv Pre-Trial Prison. According to the pre-trial investigation, in December 2024, the ‘*watcher*’ and other defendants inflicted numerous bodily injuries on the imprisoned victim during the conflict, leading to his death. They will be tried for causing grievous bodily harm resulting in the death of the victim (Part 2 of Article 121 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine). It has been established that the employees of the Kyiv Pre-Trial Prison attempted to conceal the crime by falsifying documents about the victim’s state of health and placing him in solitary confinement for alleged violations of the regime. Due to the failure to provide adequate medical care, the victim’s condition deteriorated rapidly, and he was only taken to hospital the following day, where he died¹¹³.

¹¹³ Office of the Prosecutor General (2025). Death of a detainee in Kyiv SIZO. Prosecutors have sent indictments to court against five prisoners and four prison staff. *Office of the Prosecutor General*. 11 August 2025. Source: <https://gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/smert-arestanta-u-kiyivskomusizo-shhodo-5-uvyaznenix-ta-4-sluzbovciv-ustanovi-prokurori-skeruvali-obvinuvalni-aktido-sudu>

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE¹¹⁴

Recently, *domestic violence* has become an object of special attention by the Parliament, the Government, and the society in general. Therefore, domestic violence could be an attractive object for criminological research in the context of the impact of the War on the society.

In 2017, the Criminal Code was supplemented by Article 126-1 according to the Law № 2227-VIII of 06.12.2017 and amended by the Law № 3342-IX of 23.08.2023, where the domestic violence was defined as a crime.

In June 2022, the Law of Ukraine ‘On Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence’ No. 2319-IX was adopted. It entered into force on July 2, 2022, and the Istanbul Convention entered into force for Ukraine on November 1, 2022¹¹⁵.

However, not all the provisions of the Istanbul Convention have been implemented so far. Article 55 ‘*Ex parte and ex officio proceedings*’ obliges the parties to the Convention to ensure that the investigation or prosecution of offences such as physical violence (Article 35), sexual violence, including rape (Article 36) forced marriage (Article 37), female genital mutilation (Article 38), forced abortion and forced sterilisation (Article 39), are not wholly dependent on a report or complaint made by the victim and that proceedings may continue even if the victim withdraws their report or complaint.

The first part of the quoted provision of the Istanbul Convention – ‘*that the investigation or prosecution... should not depend entirely on a report or complaint made by the victim*’ – is not currently reflected

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¹¹⁵ The Law of Ukraine ‘On Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence’ of 20.06.2022 No. 2319-IX. *Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine*. Source: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2319-20#Text>

in national legislation and needs to be implemented. This indicates the need to change the approach to such categories of criminal offences as physical violence, sexual violence and others, in particular, to conduct proceedings against them even in the absence of complaints or statements from victims, i.e. in the form of public prosecution. In other words, they should be excluded from the list of offences specified in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Article 477 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of Ukraine (the concept of criminal proceedings in the form of private prosecution), which has not yet been implemented in Ukraine¹¹⁶.

At the end of 2024, a draft Law of Ukraine ‘On Amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure of Ukraine to Ensure Full Implementation of the Provisions of International Law on Combating Domestic and Other Forms of Violence, including Against Children’ was submitted to the VRU (Reg. No. 12297 of December 9, 2024)¹¹⁷. It contains provisions on the exclusion of several criminal offences from those that can be initiated only based on a victim’s application (i.e. from the list set out in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Article 477 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of Ukraine). Specifically, domestic violence, rape, sexual violence, and coercion into sexual intercourse are planned to be removed from the list of private prosecution cases¹¹⁸.

The Parliamentary Committee on European Integration supported Draft Law No. 12297 on ensuring the full implementation of the provisions of international law on combating domestic and other forms of violence, in particular against children. This document was reviewed at a meeting of the Committee in early February 2025¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁶ Zmina (2025). Alternative report to the UN Committee against Torture on the fulfilment by Ukraine of its international obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Kyiv, 2025. P. 80.

¹¹⁷ Draft law on amendments to the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine to ensure full implementation of the provisions of international law on combating domestic and other forms of violence, including against children No. 12297 of 09.12.2024. Source: <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/BILLINFO/Bills/Card/45377>

¹¹⁸ At the same time, this draft law contains certain inaccuracies that may negatively affect the rights of victims of domestic violence. For more details, see: Demura, M. (2025). Improving the legislation on investigating domestic violence: arguments for and against. *Just Talk*. February 18, 2025. Source: <https://justtalk.com.ua/post/udoskonalennya-zakonodavstva-schodo-rozsliduvannya-faktiv-domashnogo-nasilstva-argumenti-za-ta-proti>

¹¹⁹ Zmina (2025). The Parliamentary Committee on European Integration supported draft law No. 12297 on ensuring the full implementation of international law on combating domestic and other forms of violence, including against children. *Zmina*. February 4, 2025. Source: <https://zmina.info/news/komitet-vr-z-yevrointegracziyi-pidtrymav-zakonoprojekt-pro-vnesennya-zmin-do-kryminalnogo-kodeksu-shhodo-pokarannya-za-nasylstvo/>

We look forward to the further approval of this draft law and its acquisition of the status of the law. After all, the proposed provisions are an implementation of the obligations arising from Article 55 of the Istanbul Convention and will ensure the protection of victims of domestic and other types of violence.

The second part of the quoted provision of the Istanbul Convention – ‘*that the proceedings may continue even if the victim withdraws their statement or complaint*’ – has now been implemented by Ukraine in its national legislation, in particular, the victim’s withdrawal of the prosecution is not a ground for closing the proceedings (Paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Article 284 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of Ukraine). Thus, this regulation stipulates that criminal proceedings are closed if the victim, or in cases provided for by the CPC of Ukraine, their representative, has waived the prosecution in criminal proceedings in the form of private prosecution, except for criminal proceedings concerning a criminal offence related to domestic violence. Thus, the Ukrainian criminal procedure legislation currently provides for a kind of ‘*safeguard*’ against the closure of proceedings in cases of domestic violence.

According to the Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code, domestic violence is defined as intentional systematic commission of physical, psychological or economic violence against a spouse or former spouse or another person with whom the perpetrator is (was) in a family or close relationship, which results in physical or psychological suffering, health disorders, disability, emotional dependence or deterioration of the quality of life of the victim.

As the police statistics show, 4800 crimes resulted from domestic violence were registered in Ukraine in 2021.

The next year, after the War started, 3360 crimes resulted from domestic violence were registered. Such a reduction could be explained by different factors like the mass migration of *potential* victims to other European countries and the participation of many *potential* perpetrators in military actions. In any case, a *traditional social basis* for domestic violence was minimised largely with the War (*Figure 54*).

However, in 2023, 6805 crimes resulted from domestic violence were registered in Ukraine. Moreover, in 2024, 8900 crimes resulted from domestic violence were registered in Ukraine.

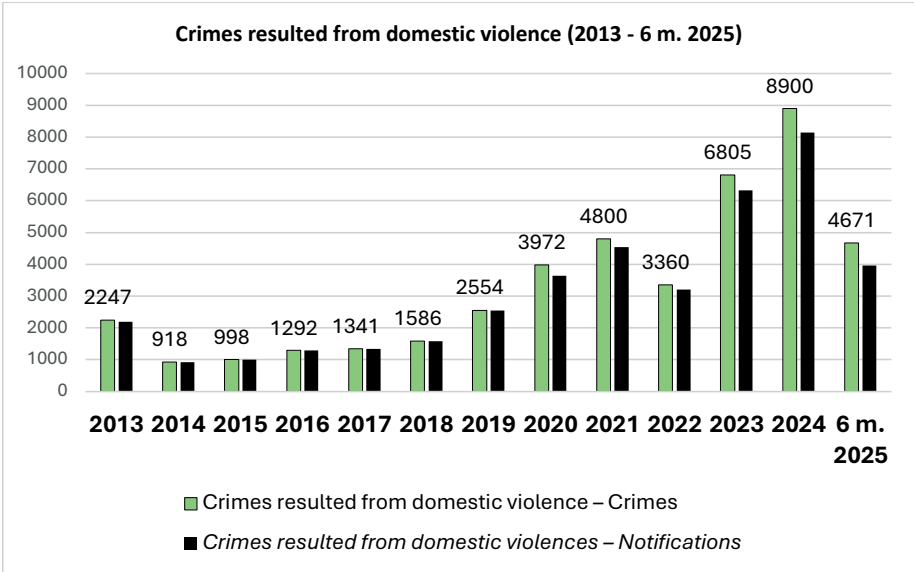


Figure 54. Crimes resulted from domestic violence (2013 – 6 m. 2025)

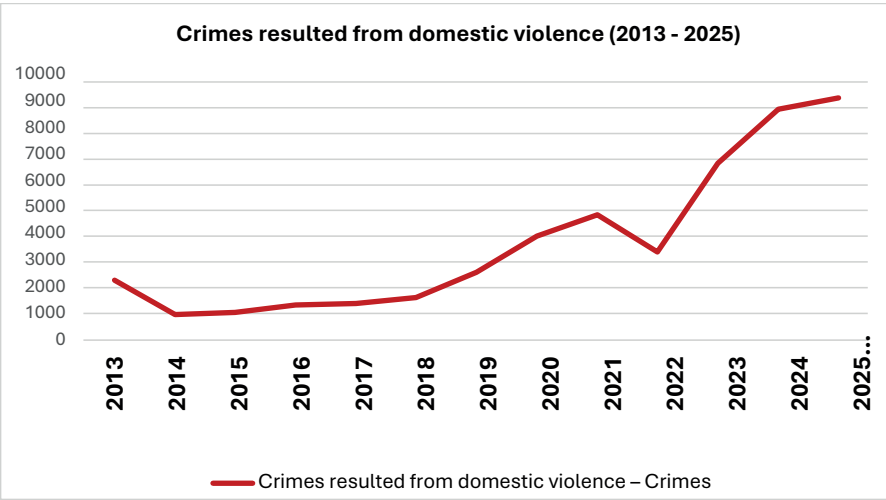


Figure 55. Crimes resulted from domestic violence (2013 – 6 m. 2025)

Two interesting facts are drawn from the analysis of official police statistics:

1) an *average* number of crimes resulted from domestic violence in 2022 decreased 1,42 times as compared with 2021;

2) an *average* number of crimes resulted from domestic violence in 2022-2024 is 2,9 times higher as compared with an *average* number of the same crimes in the period of 2012-2021 (2189 and 6355 correspondingly) (*Figure 56*).

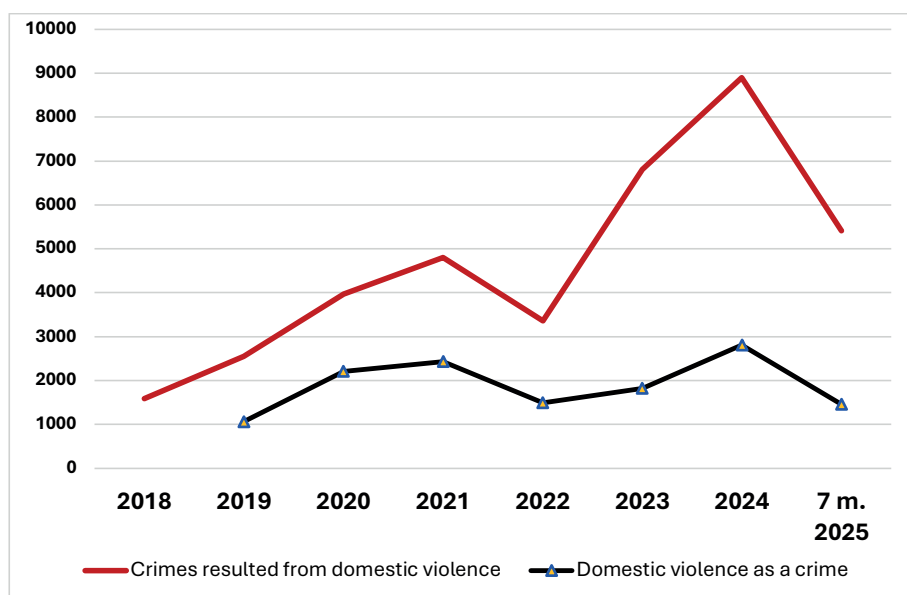


Figure 56. Domestic violence (2018 – 2024)

It should be noted that police statistics distinguishes two indicators: 1) crimes *resulted* from domestic violence; 2) domestic violence as a *separate crime*.

Here, we can see the statistical data for both indicators:

- 2019: 2554 crimes resulted from domestic violence (total), 1068 crimes of domestic violence (Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code);
- 2020: 3972 crimes resulted from domestic violence (total), 2213 crimes of domestic violence (Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code);
- 2021: 4800 crimes resulted from domestic violence (total), 2432 crimes of domestic violence (Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code);

- 2022: 3360 crimes resulted from domestic violence (total), 1498 crimes of domestic violence (Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code);
- 2023: 6805 crimes resulted from domestic violence (total), 1824 crimes of domestic violence (Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code);
- 2024: 8900 crimes resulted from domestic violence (total), 2810 crimes of domestic violence (Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code);
- six months of 2025: 4671 crimes resulted from domestic violence (total), 1254 crimes of domestic violence (Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code);
- seven months of 2025: 5406 crimes resulted from domestic violence (total), 1459 crimes of domestic violence (Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code);

Several conclusions could be drawn from police statistics

Before the War started, there was a permanent trend that crimes of domestic violence constituted a half of all crimes resulted from domestic violence (42% in 2019, 55% in 2020, 51% in 2021).

However, after the War started, the percentage of crime of domestic violence (Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code) reduced to the level of 35% (45% in 2022, 27% in 2023, 32% in 2024) in favour of *other crimes* resulted from domestic violence.

We can presume that *other crimes* resulted from domestic violence could hide different forms of ill-treatment by private individuals, which is hidden from real statistical representation. At the same time, it is obviously problematic to separate domestic violence from other crimes resulted from domestic violence.

CRIMES AGAINST THE WILL, HONOUR AND DIGNITY OF A PERSON¹²⁰

Crimes in this category include such crimes as unlawful deprivation of liberty or abduction of a person (Article 146), enforced disappearance (Article 146-1), hostage-taking (Article 147), child substitution (Article 148), trafficking in human beings (Article 149), exploitation of children (Article 150), using a minor for begging (Article 150-1), illegal placement in a psychiatric facility (Article 151), and forced marriage (Article 151-2).

The number of *crimes against will, honour and dignity of a person* has increased significantly – from 782 crimes in 2021 to 1534 crimes in 2022.

At the same time, the number of criminal proceedings where offenders were informed on suspicion dropped significantly – from 412 criminal proceedings (2021) to 207 criminal proceedings (2022) (*Figure 57*).

As far as the first six months of 2025 are concerned, the LEA opened 381 criminal proceedings on crimes of such category, in which in 150 criminal proceedings perpetrators were given the notes of suspicion.

Accordingly, in the period of the first six months of 2025, the LEA opened 71% criminal proceedings on the crimes against the will, honour and dignity of a person as compared with the whole year of 2024.

The highest indicator of crimes against will, honour and dignity of a person was registered in 2014 which could be explained with the political and social consequences of the 2014 Revolution of Dignity when people were regularly arbitrary deprived of their freedom (*Figure 58*).

What is more important is the fact that after the 2022 Russian military invasion, the average level of such crimes has doubled as compared with any year for the period of 2016-2021 (1535 crimes in 2022, 782 crimes in 2021, 712 crimes in 2020, 981 crimes in 2019, 939 crimes in 2018, 918 crimes in 2017, 734 crimes in 2016) (*Figure 58*).

¹²⁰ **Dmytro Yagunov**, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

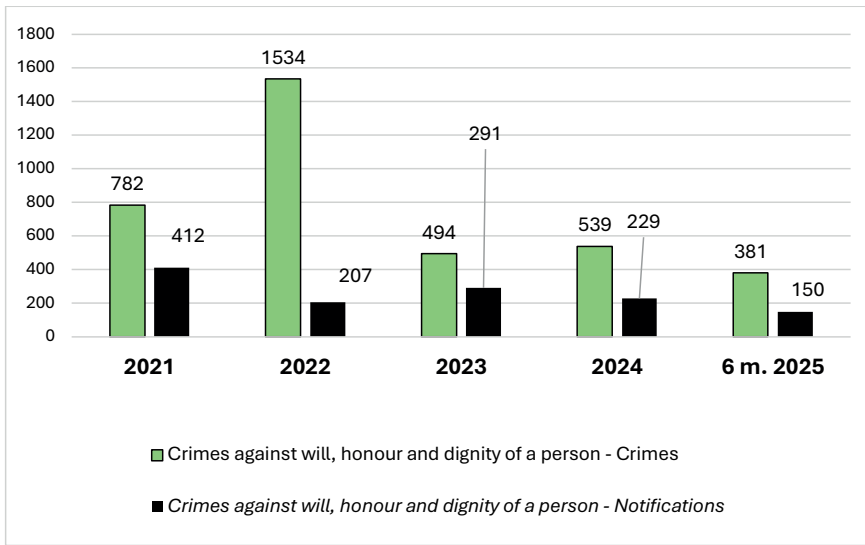


Figure 57. Crimes against the will, honour and dignity of a person (2021 – 6 m. 2025)

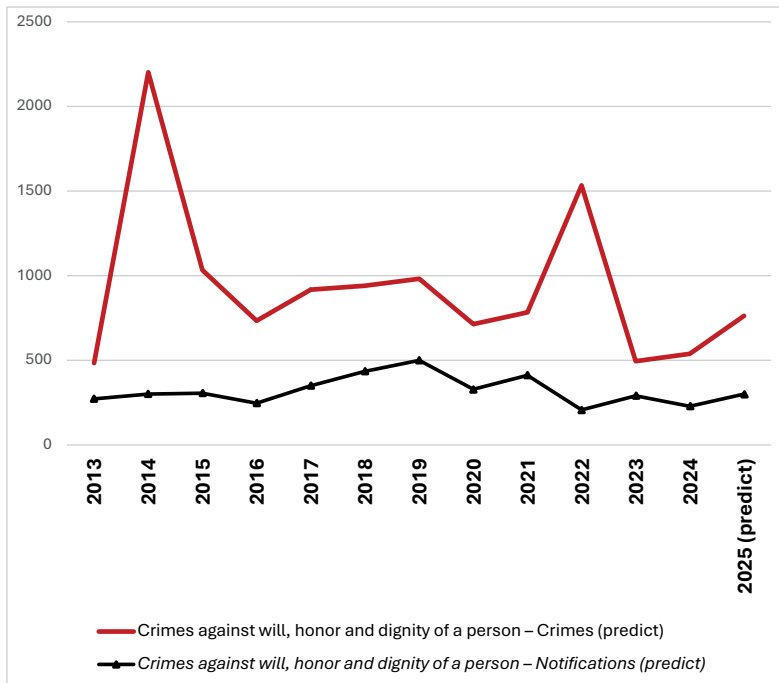


Figure 58. Crimes against the will, honour and dignity of a person (2013 – 2025)

DRUG-RELATED CRIMES¹²¹

From the point of view of international organisations, since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the trafficking of cocaine and heroin through Ukraine decreased drastically, in part due to the closure of all airports and seaports and the quadrupling of heroin prices in 2022. As in other parts of Eastern Europe, however, the production and trafficking of synthetic drugs, notably cathinones and methadone, increased. Most of the methadone produced in Ukraine is not trafficked out of the country, the report notes, as a result of the rising domestic demand for the drug and the closure of borders¹²².

Large, structured organised criminal groups dominate the synthetic drugs market. Cases of scams and online fraud more than tripled in 2023 compared to 2022 and are carried out via an estimated 1500 call centres located throughout the country. Most of the victims are Ukrainians, including those who have been forcibly displaced, although people in other parts of Europe are also occasionally targeted¹²³.

The situation with *drug-related crimes* partly refutes the thesis that the War ‘*cut*’ all indicators of the police statistics. The number of many crimes stated in numerous Chapters of the Criminal Code, which was registered in March 2022, decreased sharply for completely understandable reasons. Many types of crimes that *might have been* expected to increase after the start of the 2022 Russian armed invasion saw a sharp drop.

¹²¹ **Dmytro Yagunov**, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

¹²² UNODC (2025). War transforming Ukraine’s criminal landscape, causing economic and social damage. *UNODC*. 18 July 2025. Source: www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2025/July/unodc_-war-transforming-ukraines-criminal-landscape--causing-economic-and-social-damage.htm

¹²³ UNODC (2025). War transforming Ukraine’s criminal landscape, causing economic and social damage. *UNODC*. 18 July 2025. Source: www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2025/July/unodc_-war-transforming-ukraines-criminal-landscape--causing-economic-and-social-damage.htm

Nevertheless, it appeared that drugs, drug offenders (especially petty offenders) and drug-related crimes (especially minor crimes) were *absolutely another matter*.

In 2022, more than 34 thousand drug-related crimes were registered in wartime Ukraine (34398 criminal proceedings in general, 22678 criminal proceedings with given notifications of suspicion) (Figure 59).

As far as the first six months of 2025 are concerned, the LEA opened 33789 criminal proceedings on crimes of such category, in which in 27089 criminal proceedings perpetrators were given the notes of suspicion. Accordingly, in the period of the first six months of 2025, the LEA opened 70% criminal proceedings on the drug-related crimes as compared with the whole year of 2024.

As far as the first seven months of 2025 are concerned, the LEA opened 33968 criminal proceedings on crimes of such category, in which in 28431 criminal proceedings perpetrators were given the notes of suspicion. Accordingly, in the period of the first six months of 2025, the LEA opened 70,5% criminal proceedings on the drug-related crimes as compared with the whole year of 2024.

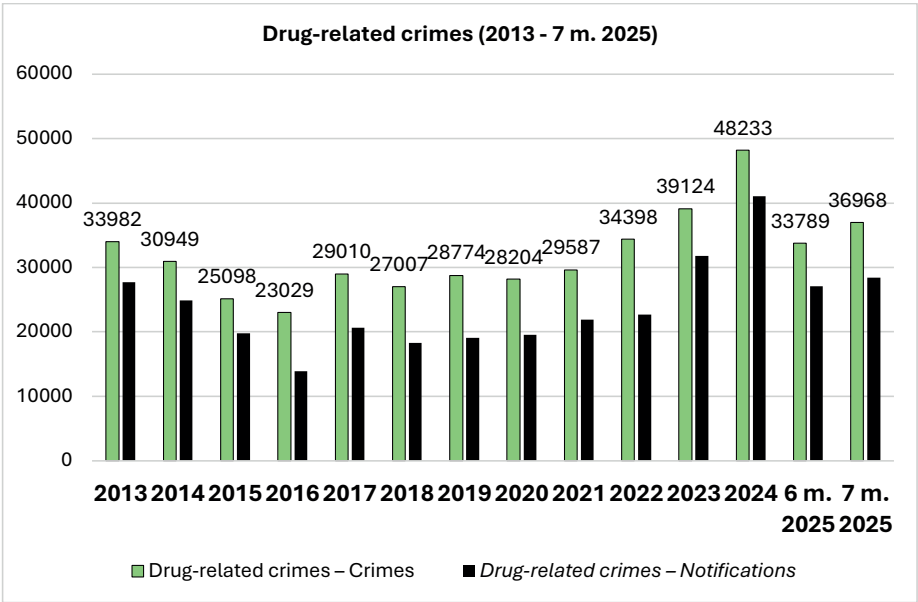


Figure 59. Drug-related crimes

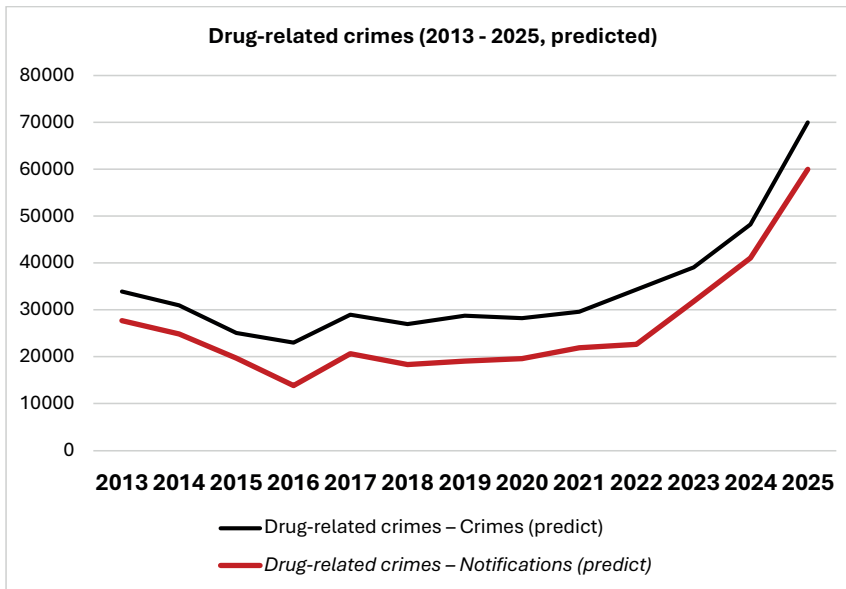


Figure 60. Drug-related crimes (2103 – 2025, predicted)

No less interesting is the fact that the ratio between the general number of registered criminal proceedings and criminal proceedings with given notifications of suspicion in 2022 appeared one of the highest for the last ten years (the exclusion is 2016 with the ratio of 1,66) (*Figure 61*).

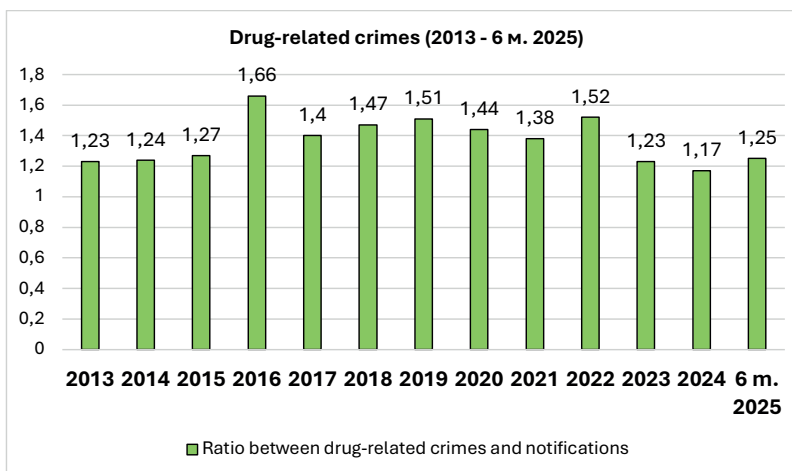


Figure 61. Ratio between drug-related crimes and notifications

It could also be noted that in 2022, the general number of criminal proceedings in minor drug-related offences and minor drug-related crimes increased. At the same time, the general number of criminal proceedings in grave and special grave drug-related offences decreased, but not significantly.

In contrast, in 2024, the number of criminal proceedings in minor drug-related offences, minor drug-related crimes and special grave drug-related offences increased insignificantly. At the same time, the general number of criminal proceedings in grave drug-related offences increased drastically (14806 crimes in 2023, 21713 in 2024) (*Figure 62*).

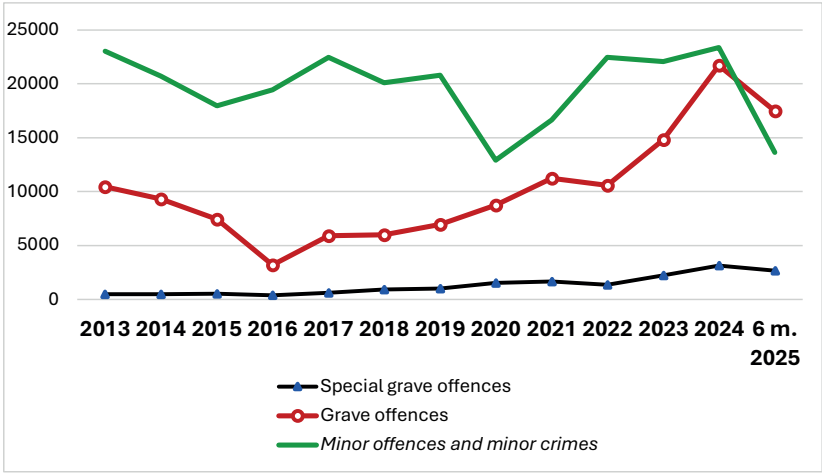


Figure 62. Drug-related crimes: distribution (2013 – 6 m. 2025)

Accordingly, *the general number* of criminal proceedings *with suspects* in drug-related offences and minor drug-related crimes increased (*Figure 63*).

It can be concluded from observing *Table 47* that the biggest number of minor drug-related offences and drug-related crimes was registered in 2024 (for the period of 2014 – 2024).

Here, we would like to draw some conclusions.

The 2022 police statistics demonstrate that 34,398 drug-related crimes have already been committed in 2022. In 2023, the police registered 39124 drug-related crimes. In 2024, the police registered 48233 drug-related crimes.

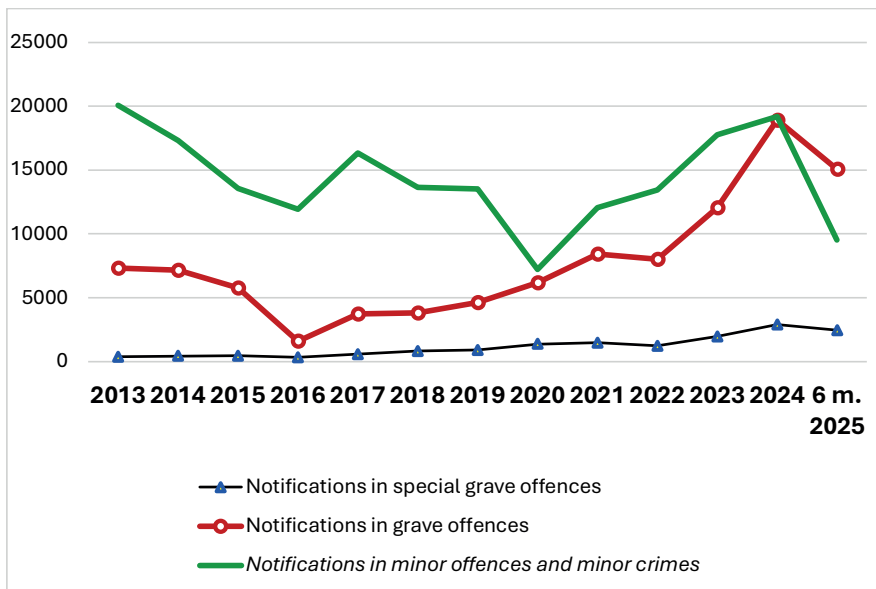


Figure 63. Notifications in drug-related crimes: distribution

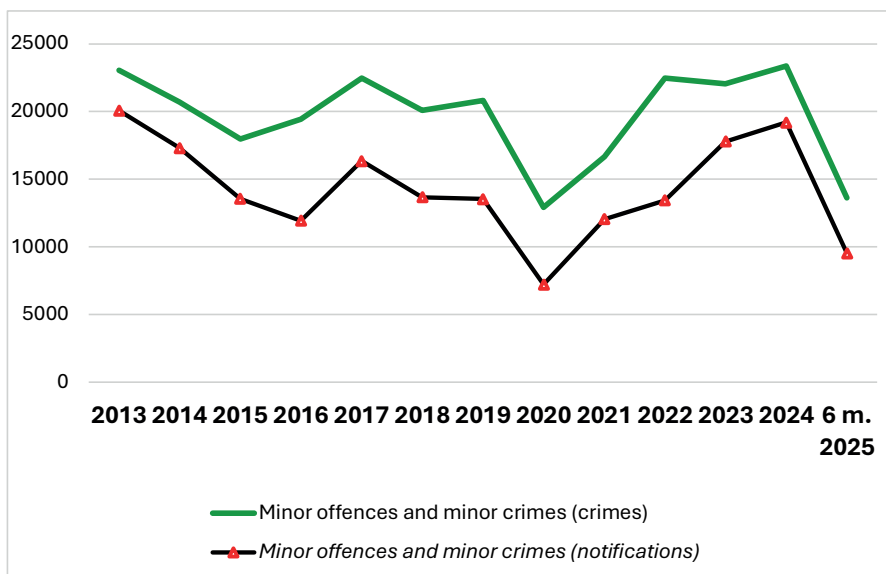


Figure 64. Minor drug-related crimes and offences and notifications

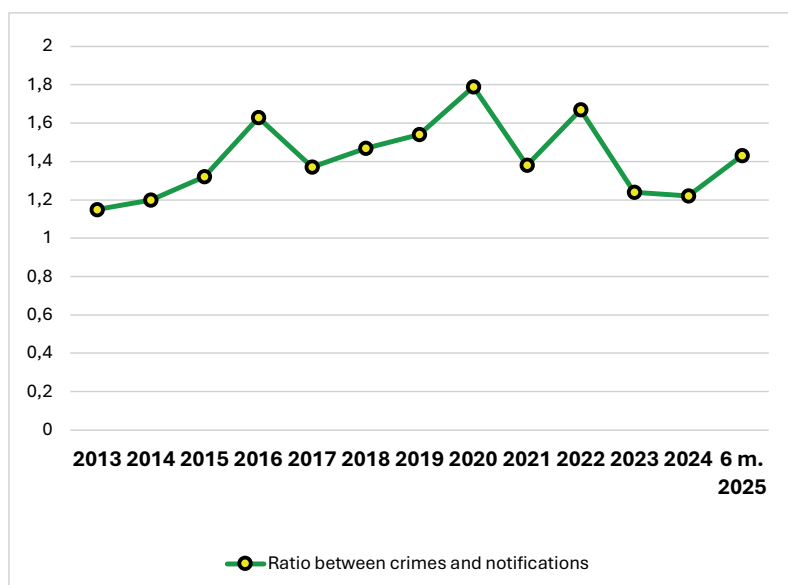


Figure 65. Ratio between the number of criminal proceedings in minor drug-related crimes and offences and notifications

However, even for 6 months of 2025, 33789 drug-related crimes were registered by the Ukrainian police. We can presume that more than 67 thousand drug-related crimes can be registered in 2025 if the same trend continues. At least, it means that even for six months of 2025, more than 70% of drug-related crimes have already been registered as compared with the number of drug-related crimes registered in 2024.

The importance of the fight against drug crime *cannot* be underestimated. However, the main question here is: *Does the National Police of Ukraine effectively manage its personnel's potential under wartime conditions?*

The question is on the surface: drug-related crimes are mostly the crimes of *peacetime*. Considering closed borders, border checks, curfews, and roadblocks, the number of *registered* drug-related crimes should theoretically have decreased, not the other way around.

It seems that the mechanism of an artificial '*market*' for drug-related crimes, where criminals are very often victims at the same time, and where police officers know *who*, *where*, and *under what conditions* will commit the next 'crime', '*should not stand idle*' even during the War.

OFFENSES AGAINST OF MILITARY SERVICE¹²⁴

Crimes of such category include:

- disobedience (Article 402);
- failure to comply with an order (Article 403);
- resisting a superior or coercing him to violate his official duties (Article 404);
- threat or violence against a superior (Article 405);
- violation of statutory rules governing relations between military personnel in the absence of a subordinate relationship (Article 406);
- unauthorised absence from a military unit or place of service (Article 407);
- desertion (Article 408);
- evasion of military service by self-mutilation or other means (Article 409);
- theft, appropriation, extortion by a military serviceman of weapons, ammunition, explosives or other combat substances, means of transport, military and special equipment or other military property, as well as acquisition thereof by fraud or abuse of official position (Article 410);
- intentional destruction or damage to military property (Article 411);
- negligent destruction or damage to military property (Article 412);
- loss of military property (Article 413);
- violation of rules for handling weapons, as well as substances and objects that pose an increased danger to the environment (Article 414);
- violation of rules for driving or operating vehicles (Article 415);
- violation of flight rules or rules for preparing for flights (Article 416);
- violation of the rules of navigation (Article 417);

¹²⁴ *Dmytro Yagunov*, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

- violation of the statutory rules of guard duty or patrolling (Article 418);
- violation of the rules of border service (Article 419);
- violation of the rules of combat duty (Article 420);
- violation of the statutory rules of internal service (Article 421);
- disclosure of military information constituting a state secret, or loss of documents or materials containing such information (Article 422);
- negligent attitude to military service (Article 425);
- inaction by military authorities (Article 426);
- excessive use of authority or official powers by a military official (Article 426-1);
- surrendering or abandoning means of warfare to the enemy (Article 427);
- abandoning a sinking military vessel (Article 428);
- unauthorised abandonment of the battlefield or refusal to use weapons (Article 429);
- voluntary surrender (Article 430);
- criminal acts committed by a military serviceman in captivity (Article 431);
- looting (Article 432), violence against the population in the area of military operations (Article 433);
- ill-treatment of prisoners of war (Article 434);
- illegal use and abuse of the symbols of the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Crystal (Article 435);
- insulting the honour and dignity of a military serviceman, threatening a military serviceman (Article 435-1).

Expectedly, the number of offenses against military service (*military crimes*) has also increased significantly in 2022-2024.

An increase in such crimes also continues in 2025.

The increase took place due to purely ‘wartime’ Articles of the Criminal Code such as Article 407 (*Abandoning a military unit or place of service*), Article 408 (*Desertion*) and Article 402 (*Disobedience*).

Figure 66 demonstrates that increasing the personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine expectedly led to an increase in crimes committed by Ukrainian military officials. In 2023, military staff committed 28666 military crimes. The next year, they committed 93900 military crimes what is 3,3 times bigger as compared to 2023 (*Figure 66*).

However, the impact of the War on such type of crime is more than evident.

In the first six months of 2025, the LEA registered 110319 criminal proceedings on crimes of such category. That means that only the first six months of 2025 demonstrated the number of such crimes in the amount of 117% as compared with the while year of 2024.

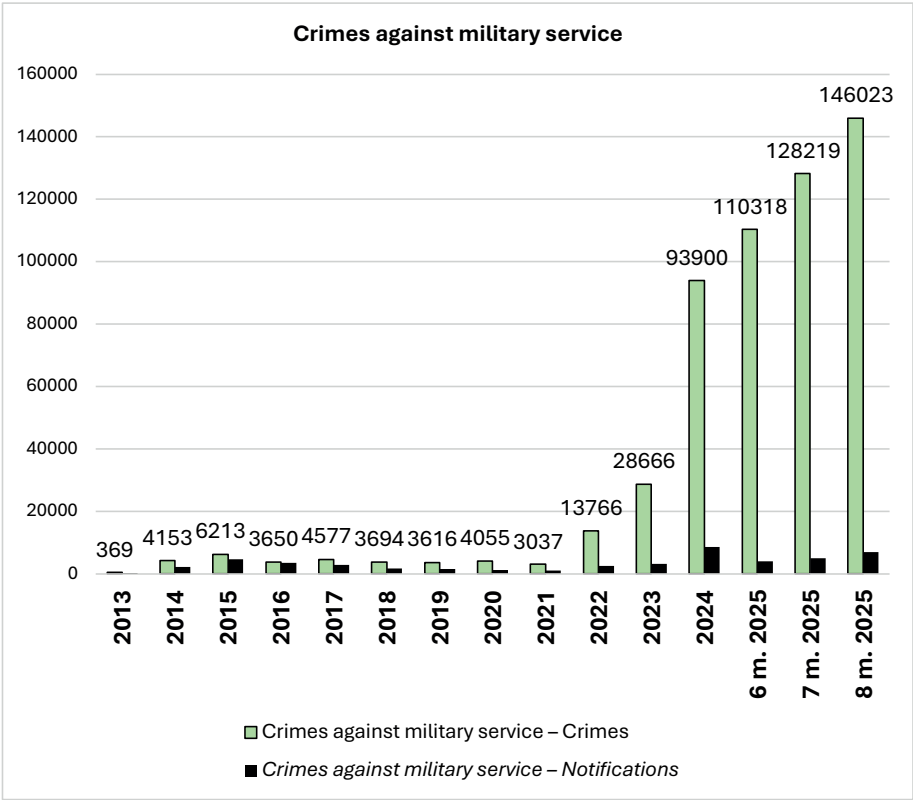


Figure 66. Crimes against military service

In the first seven months of 2025, the LEA registered 128219 criminal proceedings on crimes of such category. That means that only the first seven months of 2025 demonstrated the number of such crimes in the amount of 137% as compared with the while year of 2024.

In the first eight months of 2025, the LEA registered 146023 criminal proceedings on crimes of such category. That means that only the first eight months of 2025 demonstrated the number of such crimes in the amount of 155% as compared with the while year of 2024.

A special attention is paid here to the number of crimes of *absence without leave from a military unit or place of service* (Article 407 of the Criminal Code).

The LEA registered 16515 crimes in 2023 and 66240 crimes in 2024.

At the same time the number of criminal proceedings with suspects were very low (2239 and 7398 correspondingly).

The main conclusion here is that the number of registered crimes has in parallel to the decrease of identified suspects in corresponding criminal proceedings (Figure 67).

Here, the impact of the War on such type of crime is also more than evident.

In the first six months of 2025, the LEA registered 94317 criminal proceedings on crimes of such category. That means that only the first six months of 2025 demonstrated the number of such crimes in the amount of 143% as compared with the whole year of 2024.

Partly the same could be said about a more serious crime – *desertion* (Article 408 of the Criminal Code).

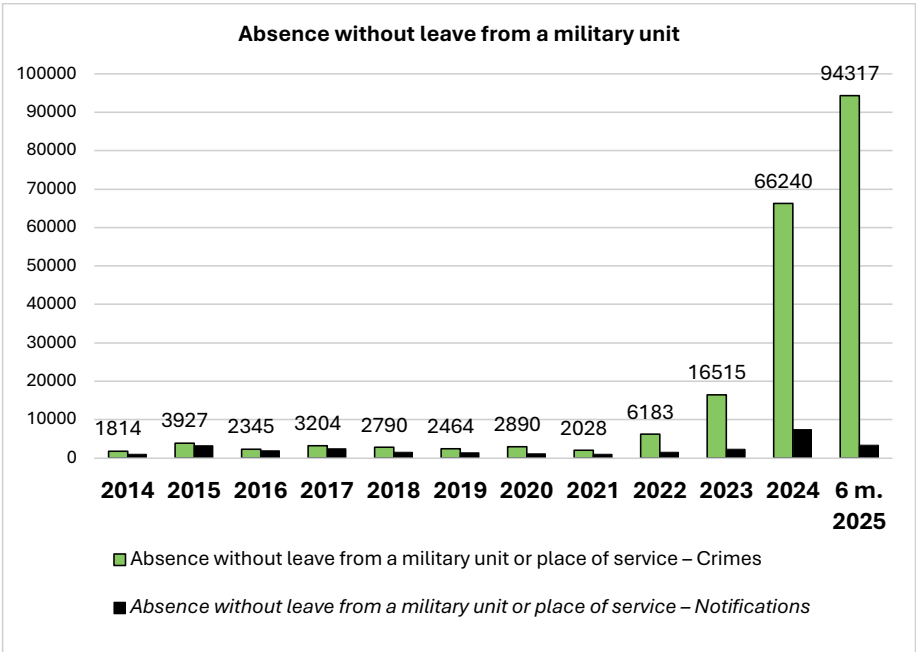


Figure 67. Absence without leave from a military unit

Desertion is starving the Ukrainian army of desperately needed manpower and crippling its battle plans at a crucial time in its war with Russia. Facing every imaginable shortage, tens of thousands of Ukrainian troops, tired and bereft, have walked away from combat and front-line positions to slide into anonymity, according to soldiers, lawyers and Ukrainian officials. Entire units have abandoned their posts, leaving defensive lines vulnerable and accelerating territorial losses, according to military commanders and soldiers¹²⁵.

If, in 2021, 117 crimes of desertion were registered, the number of crimes in 2022 increased up to the level of 3214. Moreover, 7771 crimes were registered in 2023 and 23209 crimes in 2024 (*Table 68*).

Here, the impact of the War on such type of crime is also more than evident.

In the first six months of 2025, the LEA registered 13355 criminal proceedings on crimes of such category. That means that only the first six months of 2025 demonstrated the number of such crimes in the amount of 58% as compared with the while year of 2024.

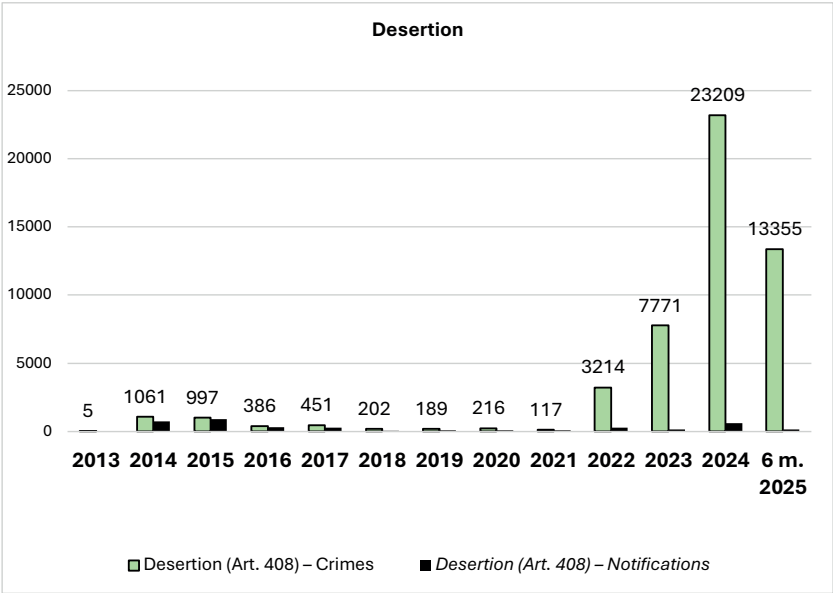


Figure 68. Desertion: registered crimes and suspicions

¹²⁵ Bellamy, D. (2024). Tens of thousands of soldiers have deserted from Ukraine’s army. *Euronews*. November 30, 2024. Source: www.euronews.com/2024/11/30/tens-of-thousands-of-soldiers-have-deserted-from-ukraines-army

Here, we should mention that in 2014, the ratio between the number of registered crimes of desertion (*total number of criminal proceedings*) and the number of suspects (*criminal proceedings with notifications of suspicion*) was 1,4.

The same ratio was 1,1 in 2015, 11,4 in 2022, 45 in 2023, and 38 in 2024.

However, in the first six months of 2025, the same ratio was 90,3.

So, the main conclusion here is that the criminal justice system of Ukraine is mostly oriented now on the *quantitative* indicators rather than on the qualitative ones.

Police statistics on crimes against military service indicate deep-rooted problems in the application of the relevant articles of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

The main problem is that the total number of crimes against military service in the first six months of 2025 significantly exceeded the same indicator for 2024 as a whole.

This is particularly true for crimes such as *unauthorised absence from a military unit or place of service* (Article 407 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine), where the number of crimes in the first six months of this year exceeded the annual figure for 2024 by almost 1.2 times.

The number of *desertion offences* in the first six months of 2025 already accounts for almost 58% of the number of similar offences registered in 2024.

However, there is another side to this problem, and it seems that the more criminal proceedings are opened under the relevant articles on crimes against military service, the fewer ‘*real*’ criminal proceedings there are against suspects. In other words, the relevant criminal proceedings have no prospect of reaching court. These problems are extremely painful, but we must talk about them in order to improve the situation in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and their defence capabilities.

It also should be noted that since November 2024, Ukraine has been offering amnesty to deserters who return to their units. Nearly 30 thousand people have taken advantage of this offer.

The mechanism, introduced by a separate law at the end of November 2024, allowed deserters from the army to return to service, receiving amnesty and without waiting for the formal closure of criminal investigations against them. After that, the Parliament extended the

simplified regime. In May 2025, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy extended it until 31 August¹²⁶.

It was decided to revise the law due to the sharp increase in the number of criminal cases for desertion during the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine, which the relevant authorities were unable to cope with. In 2024, before this amnesty, Ukrainian law enforcement agencies opened almost 89,500 new cases of desertion and unauthorised absence from military units. This made desertion from the army the most widespread crime in Ukraine¹²⁷.

No fewer interesting criminological conclusions could be drawn from the analysis of crime foreseen by Article 426-1 of the Criminal Code (*Excess of power or official authority by a military official*). While in 2016, 65 crimes were registered with 17 suspects, in 2022, we can observe the increase in the distance between the number of crimes and number of suspects (*Figure 69*).

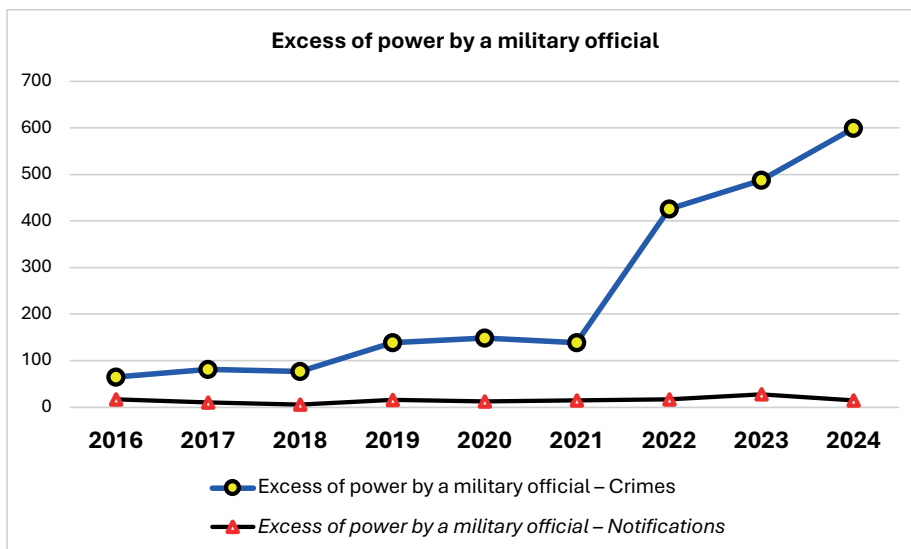


Figure 69. Excess of power by a military official

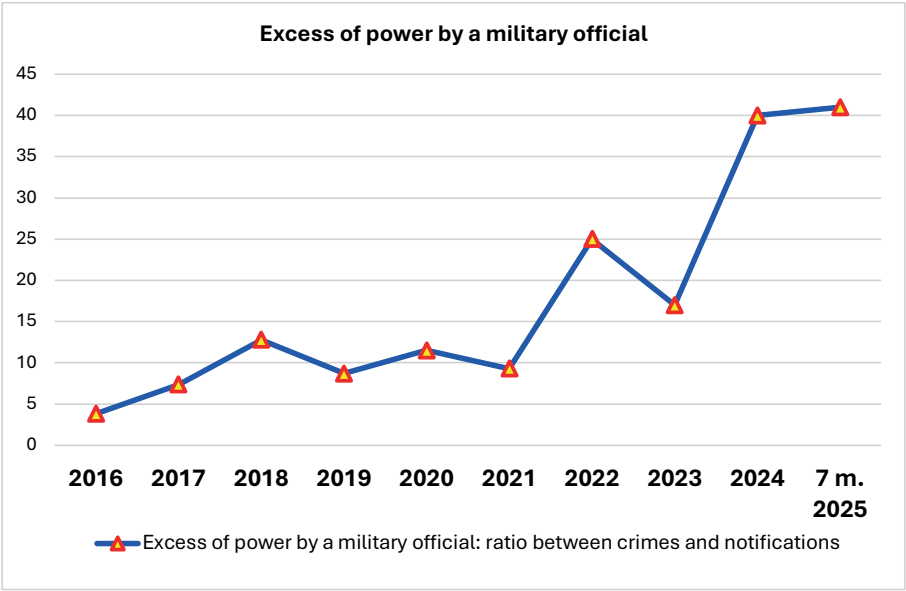
¹²⁶ Sotnikov, D. (2025). State Border Service of Ukraine: 49000 men were unable to leave the country illegally. *Deutsche Welle*. August 5, 2025. Source: www.dw.com/ru/v-vsu-po-uprosennoj-sheme-vernulos-29-tys-dezertirov/a-73538916

¹²⁷ Sotnikov, D. (2025). State Border Service of Ukraine: 49000 men were unable to leave the country illegally. *Deutsche Welle*. August 5, 2025. Source: www.dw.com/ru/v-vsu-po-uprosennoj-sheme-vernulos-29-tys-dezertirov/a-73538916

Police statistics indicate the following numbers: 426 crimes in 2022, 487 crimes in 2023, and 599 crimes in 2024. In the first six months of 2025, the LEA registered 303 criminal proceedings, in which perpetrators were informed of suspicion only in 10 criminal proceedings.

As in the previous example with a crime of desertion, the ratio between the number of registered crimes (*total number of criminal proceedings*) and the number of suspects (*criminal proceedings with notifications of suspicion*) was 9,3 in 2021.

In 2022, the same indicator increased to the level of 21, which also raises an issue of effectiveness of the military justice system (*Table 70*).



**Figure 70. Excess of power by a military official:
ratio between crimes and notifications**

The 2022 Russian armed invasion brought serious changes to practices of bringing military men to criminal liability for the offence of *unauthorised leaving of a battlefield or refusal to use weapons*.

For the whole period of 2013-2024, only 2 criminal proceedings were registered (including 1 criminal proceeding with a given notification of suspicion).

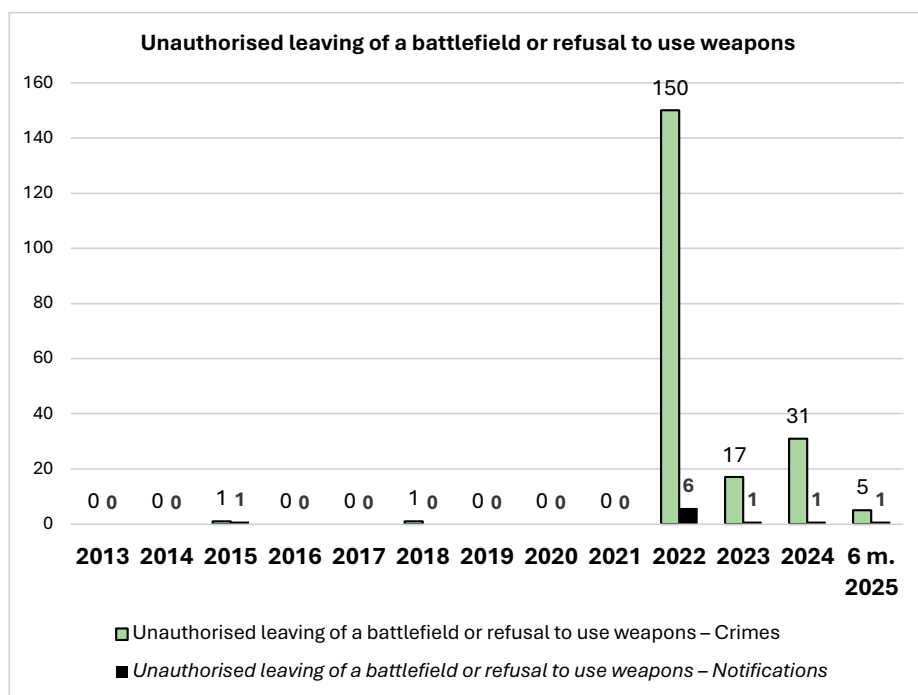


Figure 71. Unauthorised leaving of a battlefield or refusal to use weapons (Art. 429)

In 2022, the LEA registered 150 criminal proceedings (6 criminal proceedings with given notifications of suspicion) (*Table 71*).

The 2022 Russian armed invasion brought serious changes to practices of bringing military men to criminal liability for the offence of *voluntary rendering oneself prisoner of war*.

For the whole period of 2013 – 2024, zero criminal proceedings were registered. In other words, this Article of the Criminal Code was ‘dead’ from the practical point of view. In 2022, the LEA registered 16 criminal proceedings (with no concrete suspects). In 2023-2024, there were only 18 criminal proceeding registered (*Table 72*).

No less ‘dead’ was Article 432 of the Criminal Code (*Marauding*). For the whole period of 2013-2025, only 2 criminal proceedings were registered with zero suspects (one criminal proceeding in 2014 and one criminal proceeding in 2022).

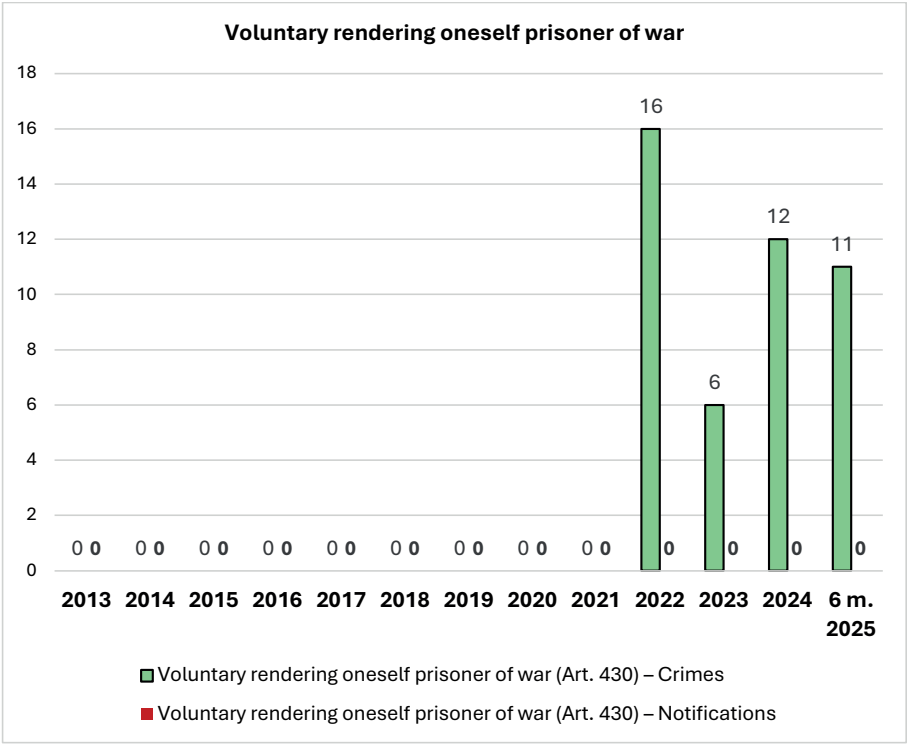


Figure 72. Voluntary rendering oneself prisoner of war

PROPERTY CRIMES¹²⁸

While considering *property crimes* in wartime Ukraine, the first hypothesis appears that the absence of well and properly organized policing *would* lead to a serious increase in number of property crimes.

Nevertheless, the number of recorded property crimes has in fact significantly *decreased* (Figure 73, Figure 74). The impact of the War on property crimes is more than obvious: 158729 property crimes in 2021, 113137 property crimes in 2022, 178902 property crimes sin 2023, and 132910 property crimes in 2024.

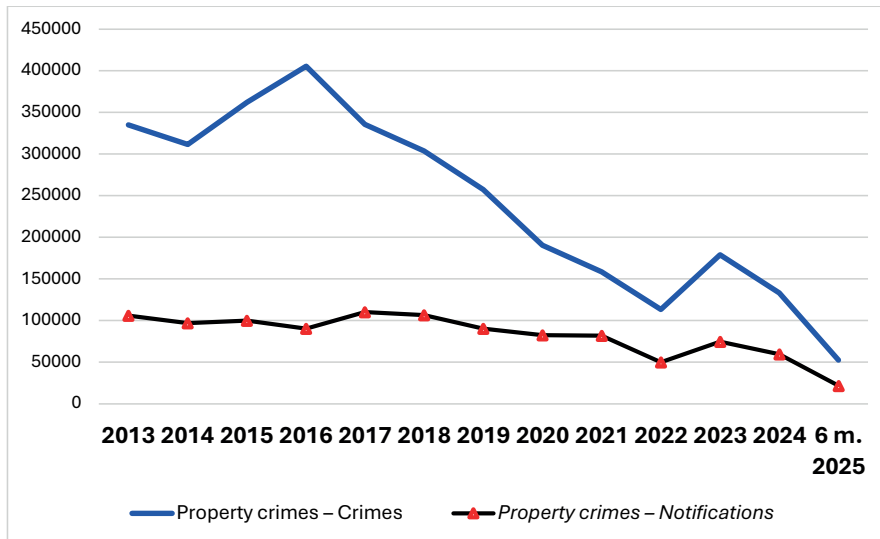


Figure 73. Property crimes

The mentioned above trend was officially recognised by the top managers of the National Police of Ukraine, who confirmed that the level of *street crime* in Ukraine has decreased compared to the pre-war period.

¹²⁸ **Dmytro Yagunov**, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

In particular, there are fewer reports of robberies, muggings, serious and particularly serious crimes. The police announced that ‘we can talk about a controlled crime situation in the country. Thanks to the comprehensive work of all law enforcement agencies, legislative changes, in particular the increase in responsibility for certain types of crimes, we have reduced the [*street*] crime rate, which is now lower than before the war’¹²⁹.

In the first half of 2025, there was a slight decrease in the number of reported crimes against property.

Thus, in 2024, 132910 criminal proceedings were initiated, with 59768 individuals notified of suspicion. However, in the first six months of 2025, 52460 criminal proceedings were registered for crimes against property, with 21845 criminal proceedings in which individuals were notified of suspicion. This means that in the first six months of 2025, the number of crimes against property registered amounted to 39% of the total number of similar crimes in 2024.

The same way the War impacted the practices of crimes of *theft*: 113517 thefts in 2021, 69496 thefts in 2022, 82123 thefts in 2023, and 55576 thefts in 2024 (*Figure 74*).

In the first half of 2025, there also was a decrease in the number of reported crimes of theft.

Thus, in 2024, 55576 criminal proceedings were initiated, with 35578 criminal proceedings where individuals were notified of suspicion.

However, in the first six months of 2025, 15157 criminal proceedings were registered for thefts, with 9961 criminal proceedings in which individuals were notified of suspicion.

This means that in the first six months of 2025, the number of crimes of theft registered amounted to 31% of the total number of similar crimes in 2024.

The same way the War impacted the practices of *car thefts*: 5571 car thefts in 2021, 2001 car thefts in 2022, 2266 car thefts in 2023, 1138 car thefts in 2024.

The same way the War impacted the practices of *robberies*: 4846 robberies in 2021, 2205 robberies in 2022, 1732 robberies in 2023, 1453 robberies in 2024 (*Figure 75*).

¹²⁹ Tsurkan, R. (2025). Crime rate now lower than before the war: National Police provide explanation. *Podrobnosti*. April 15, 2025. Source: www.podrobnosti.ua/2499162-rven-zlochinnost-zaraz-nizhchij-nzh-dovonnij-u-natpolts-dali-pojasnennja.html

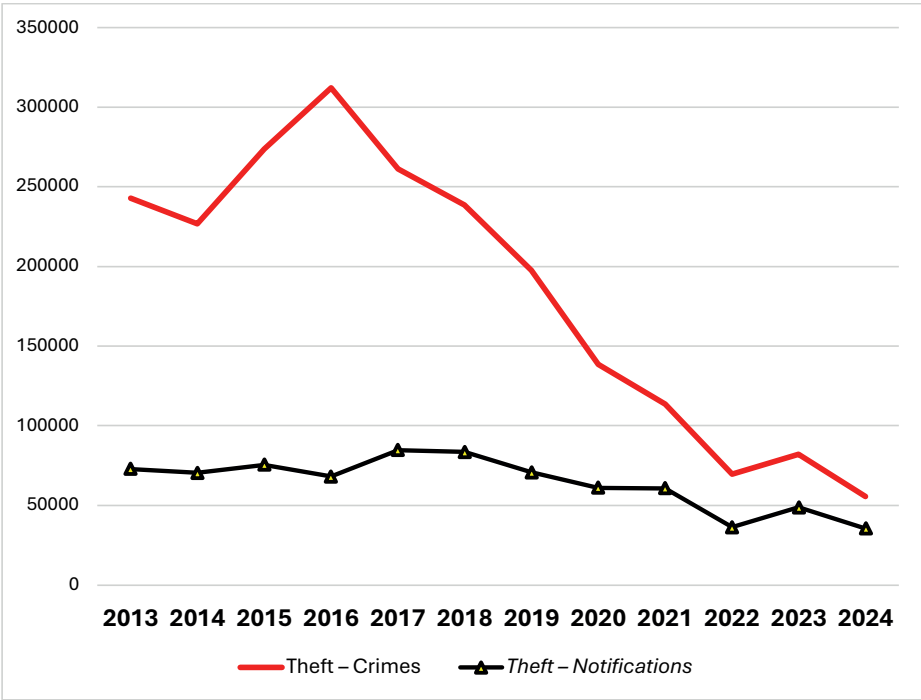


Figure 74. Theft

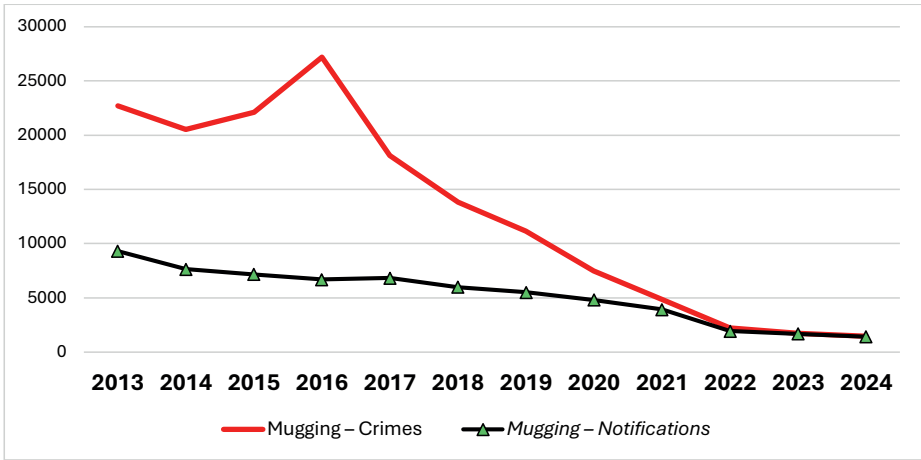


Figure 75. Mugging

In the first half of 2025, there also was a decrease in the number of reported crimes of mugging.

Thus, in 2024, 1453 criminal proceedings were initiated, with 1420 criminal proceedings in which individuals were notified of suspicion.

However, in the first six months of 2025, 674 criminal proceedings were registered for mugging, with 661 criminal proceedings in which individuals were notified of suspicion.

This means that in the first six months of 2025, the number of crimes of mugging registered amounted to 44% of the total number of similar crimes in 2024.

The same way the War impacted the practices of *aggravated robberies*: 952 aggravated robberies in 2021, 492 aggravated robberies in 2022, 386 aggravated robberies in 2023 and 313 aggravated robberies in 2024 (*Figure 76*).

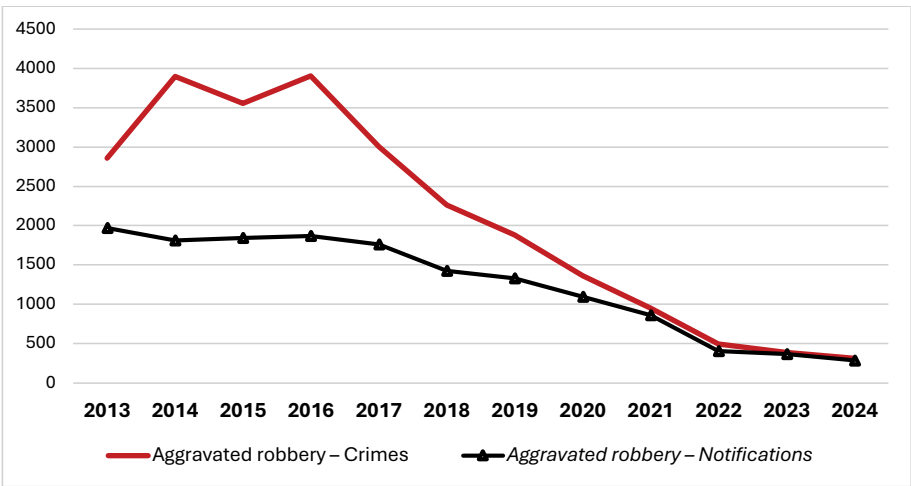


Figure 76. Aggravated robbery

However, in the first six months of 2025, 150 criminal proceedings were registered for aggravated robbery, with 140 criminal proceedings in which individuals were notified of suspicion.

This means that in the first six months of 2025, the number of crimes of aggravated robbery registered amounted to 48% of the total number of similar crimes in 2024.

The same way the War impacted the criminal practices of *racketeering*: 606 crimes of racketeering in 2021, 366 crimes of

rackeering in 2022, 499 crimes of rackeering in 2023, and 279 crimes of rackeering in 2024 (*Figure 77*).

Nevertheless, there are no grounds for optimism regarding a decrease in the number of crimes of this type in 2025, as in just six months of 2025, 209 criminal proceedings were registered for extortion, with suspects named in 76 of these cases.

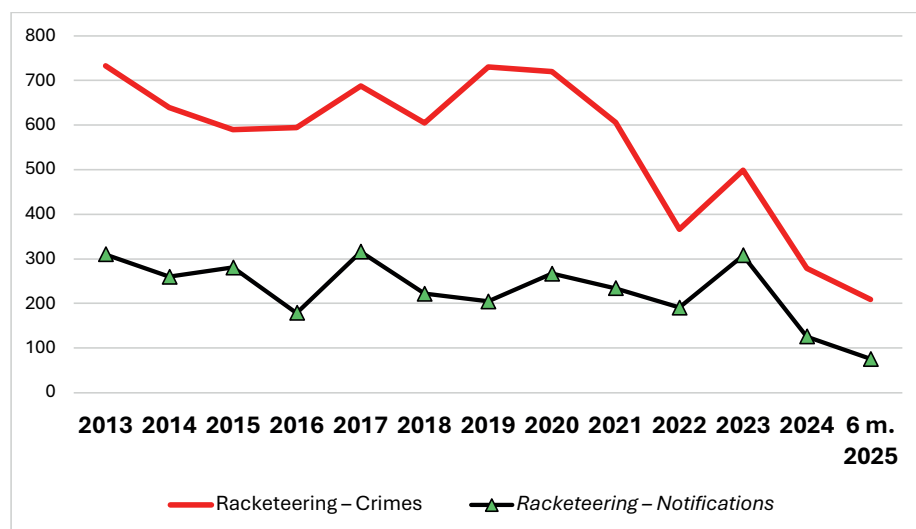


Figure 77. Rackeering

Fraud in Ukraine has come a long way. Previously, criminals used to rely mainly on classic schemes, such as street scams, fraud in sales, or phone calls asking for help for a relative. Nowadays, their methods have become much more sophisticated with the development of technology.

Simple scams have been replaced with cyber threats that exploit the capabilities of the internet and mobile communications. Phishing, vishing, smishing, fraudulent online advertisements, online investment pyramids, hacking of social media accounts and banking apps are just some tools used by modern fraudsters. They skilfully use social engineering, psychological techniques and vulnerabilities in the digital space to steal other people's money and personal data¹³⁰.

¹³⁰ Tanchenko, S. (2025). New types of fraud in Ukraine: how not to fall into a trap in 2025. *Dnipro Express*. 20 April 2025. Source: www.dnepr.express.ua/post/novi-vidi-shahrajstva-v-ukrayini-yak-ne-potrapiti-v-pastku-u-2025-roci

In 2025, this trend will only intensify. Malicious actors are adapting to new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, to create more convincing fake messages and websites. They are becoming more aggressive and inventive in their attempts to deceive citizens.

Based on recent trends and reports from the Ukrainian LEA, the following are the most common new methods of fraud in Ukraine: 1) fake payments from state and international organisations; 2) hacking social media and messenger accounts with requests for help; 3) investment ‘projects’ promising super profits; 4) fake advertisements for the sale of goods and services with prepayment; 5) manipulation of bank cards and payment details¹³¹.

The War in Ukraine has also become a breeding ground for fraudulent schemes based on the vulnerable emotional state and abuse of citizens’ trust. Criminals can deceive children and pensioners and attempt to disappear into the vastness of the internet without leaving any traces of their crimes. Over 60% of Ukrainians cannot use the internet safely, often falling prey to scammers and voluntarily handing over their money. The elderly and children are at particular risk. However, fraudsters manage to deceive even experienced internet users. At the same time, the ingenuity of fraudsters goes beyond the scams that Ukrainians are already familiar with, so new ways of deceiving people are emerging.

Moreover, the War has given rise to new crimes of fraud specifically related to the War. Sporadically, the wives and other relatives of deceased Ukrainian military personnel, who received significant sums of compensation from the state, immediately became attractive targets for criminals.

A new trend in crime has emerged involving fraudulent offers to return the bodies of deceased Ukrainian soldiers or to return Ukrainian soldiers themselves from Russian captivity. Accordingly, such fraudulent ‘services’ are offered by individuals who have no influence over the return of prisoners or their bodies.

For example, in 2025, a resident of the Ternopil region extorted 3000 USD from the relatives of a deceased soldier for allegedly influencing the decision to return his body from the occupied territory. However, in reality, the woman had no connection to this process.

¹³¹ Tanchenko, S. (2025). New types of fraud in Ukraine: how not to fall into a trap in 2025. *Dnipro Express*. 20 April 2025. Source: www.dnepr.express.ua/post/novi-vidi-shahrajstva-v-ukrayini-yak-ne-potrapiti-v-pastku-u-2025-roci

According to the pre-trial investigation, in October 2024, a resident of one of the villages in the Ternopil district contacted the family of a deceased soldier whose body was in the temporarily occupied territory of Donetsk region.

She convinced the relatives that she was on good terms with servicemen from one of the units who could help return the body of the deceased. The woman wanted to receive 5000 USD for her ‘services’.

The suspect demanded that 3000 USD be transferred to her immediately, with the rest to be paid after the body was returned to the relatives. The wife of the deceased soldier agreed to the woman’s terms and contacted law enforcement.

The body of the deceased was returned to the family in early June 2025, after an additional forensic examination. The woman was not involved in this¹³².

It should also be noted that the War has opened the season of the fraud with *humanitarian aid*. An analysis of currently available official data reveals numerous cases of embezzlement and fraud involving humanitarian aid during the period of martial law. In most cases, the aid is intended for specific recipients who are in dire need of it, but it never reaches them. It should be noted that those involved in fraud involving humanitarian aid include not only officials representing state authorities and local self-government bodies, but also people who present themselves as volunteers or military personnel, although in reality they have no connection with either.

The most common type of fraud is fake fundraising for the Armed Forces of Ukraine, such as collecting money for cars, drones, thermal imagers, etc., or for the treatment of wounded soldiers and civilians affected by the war. Such announcements quickly gain publicity on social media. As a rule, fraudsters publish the bank card number of an individual to collect funds¹³³.

The second type of fraud in the field of humanitarian aid involves targeted appeals from various organisations that claim to be providing

¹³² Shvets, V. (2025). In the Ternopil region, a woman was detained who promised the relatives of a deceased soldier to return his body for money. *Ukrainska Pravda*. August 7, 2025. Source: www.life.pravda.com.ua/society/otrimala-3-tisyachi-dolariv-za-vpliv-na-povernennya-tila-z-okupaciji-309633

¹³³ Kasatkin, S. (2023). Humanitarian aid and fraud. What businesses need to know. *KPMG Review Magazine*. January 1, 2023. Source: <https://kpmg.com/ua/uk/blogs/home/posts/2023/01/humanitarna-dopomoha-ta-shakhraystvo-shcho-potribno-znaty-biznesu.html>

humanitarian aid. The funds collected are then transferred to affiliated companies under the guise of payment for humanitarian goods at significantly inflated prices or without any delivery at all¹³⁴.

The third type of fraud in the field of humanitarian aid is when fraudsters use phishing tools to gain access to the bank details of war victims. Under the guise of well-known international organisations that collect and provide humanitarian aid, news about fictitious financial assistance provided to all (or certain groups) of Ukrainians by international organisations is spread on social media or through targeted mailings to gain people's trust. To attract aid, fraudsters ask for the personal bank details of those who need help¹³⁵.

The fourth type of fraud in the field of humanitarian aid is the purchase of equipment and material assets, in particular through certain 'grey' schemes, with foreign fraudsters becoming more active abroad. There have already been cases where, after receiving an advance payment, a foreign contractor ceases to communicate, and the address of the supplier's 'respectable' office turns out to be a long-abandoned building¹³⁶.

In addition, there has been an increase in fraud in the housing rental market and in the organisation of transport from temporarily occupied or frontline areas, given the large number of displaced people and refugees and the corresponding increase in demand. Fraudsters ask for advance payment for transport or housing and then disappear.

Fraud has even become the subject of public appeals by the Ukrainian Ombudsman. In a post on Facebook, the Ombudsman publicly announced the position of his Office that there has been an increase in fraud on social media recently, ranging from account theft to extortion of money under the guise of 'assistance'. This year alone, the Ombudsman's Office has received 1134 complaints about violations of the right to personal data protection.

¹³⁴ Kasatkin, S. (2023). Humanitarian aid and fraud. What businesses need to know. *KPMG Review Magazine*. January 1, 2023. Source: <https://kpmg.com/ua/uk/blogs/home/posts/2023/01/humanitarna-dopomoha-ta-shakhraystvo-shcho-potribno-znaty-biznesu.html>

¹³⁵ Kasatkin, S. (2023). Humanitarian aid and fraud. What businesses need to know. *KPMG Review Magazine*. January 1, 2023. Source: <https://kpmg.com/ua/uk/blogs/home/posts/2023/01/humanitarna-dopomoha-ta-shakhraystvo-shcho-potribno-znaty-biznesu.html>

¹³⁶ Kasatkin, S. (2023). Humanitarian aid and fraud. What businesses need to know. *KPMG Review Magazine*. January 1, 2023. Source: <https://kpmg.com/ua/uk/blogs/home/posts/2023/01/humanitarna-dopomoha-ta-shakhraystvo-shcho-potribno-znaty-biznesu.html>

Correspondingly, crimes of *fraud* in 2022 demonstrated absolutely another trend as compared to other property crimes: the number of crimes of fraud in 2022 (32086) appeared much bigger than in 2021 (23847). The police registered 82609 crimes of fraud in 2023 and 64978 crimes of fraud in 2024 (*Figure 78*).

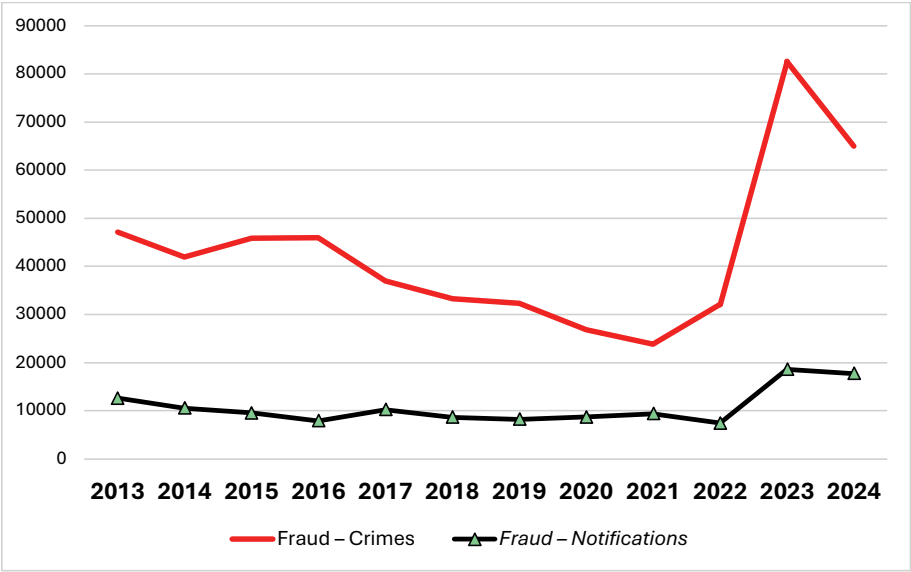


Figure 78. Fraud

So, after a sharp jump in fraud cases in 2023, the number of reported crimes in this category declined in 2024.

Moreover, during the first six months of 2025, law enforcement agencies registered 28488 cases of fraud, with 8576 criminal proceedings initiated and suspects notified of their status.

During the first seven months of 2025, law enforcement agencies registered 32233 cases of fraud, with 8787 criminal proceedings initiated and suspects notified of their status.

In relative terms, this means that during the first six months of 2025, law enforcement agencies registered only 44% of the total number of fraud cases for the whole of 2025. However, final conclusions can only be drawn based on the results of the assessment of statistics for 2025.

Here we can mention that in February 2022, many Ukrainians tried to restore order by themselves in conditions of the War chaos through demonstrative corporal punishment of marauders. Namely, *‘there is a War here, and they are making money here’*. Many Ukrainians supported such inhumane methods, and what is important, among these *‘many’* there were lawyers.

Almost one year has passed, and the police statistics have proven that, it turns out, the problem of Ukrainian society during the War was completely *different*, and official statistics convincingly proved the existence of the problem of *moral and ethical foundations of Ukrainian society* during the War: 1) during the 2022 War, criminal behaviour was considered as *less permissible* by individuals who belonged to the *‘criminally addicted’* strata of the society; 2) criminal behaviour was considered as *more permissible* by individuals who were considered less inclined to commit crimes due to the presence of higher education, higher *‘social status’* and greater social adaptability (Figure 79).

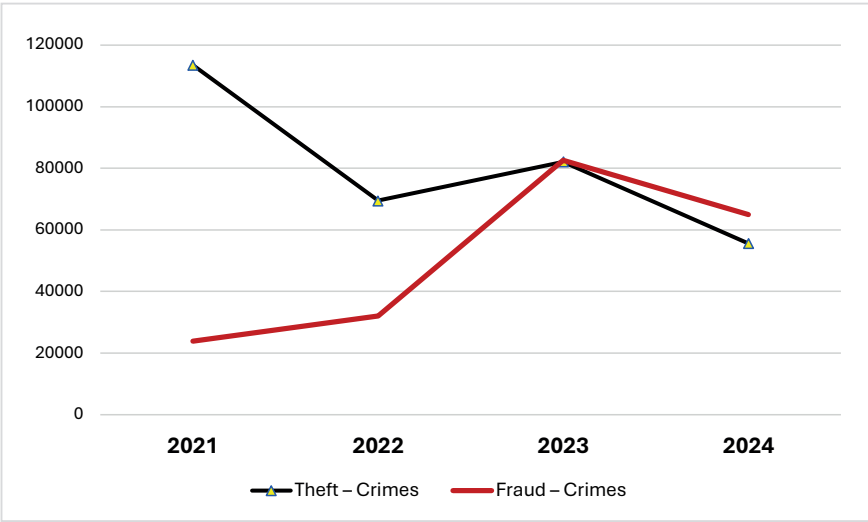


Figure 79. Theft and fraud: criminal proceedings

Moreover, this trend is partially confirmed by the latest corruption scandals at the highest levels of government, which proves that the War is by *no* means a guarantee of the quasi-elites’ understanding of the society’s problems, where the *moral demand* of *‘the water law of the jungle during a drought’* comes first (Figure 80).

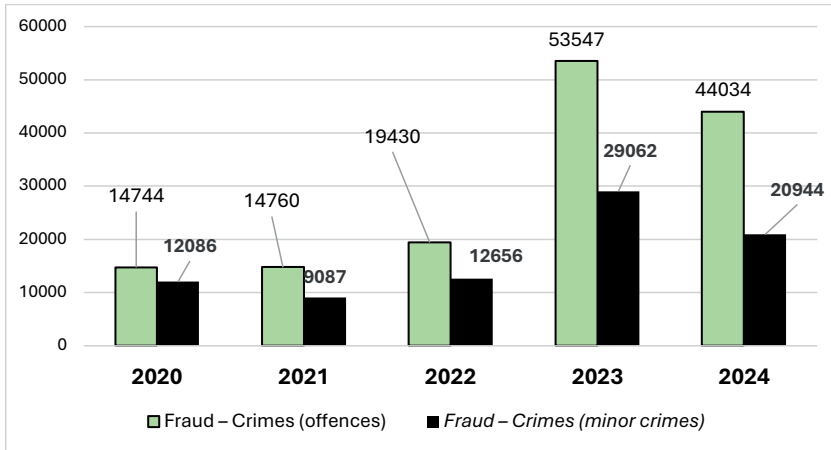


Figure 80. Fraud: offences and minor crimes

Yes, be that as it may, the statistics of 2022 demonstrate the violation of, using Rudyard Kipling’s expression, the ‘*water truce in our jungle*’, namely: 1) a significant decrease in thefts (although, on the other hand, the tendency to decrease thefts existed even before the beginning

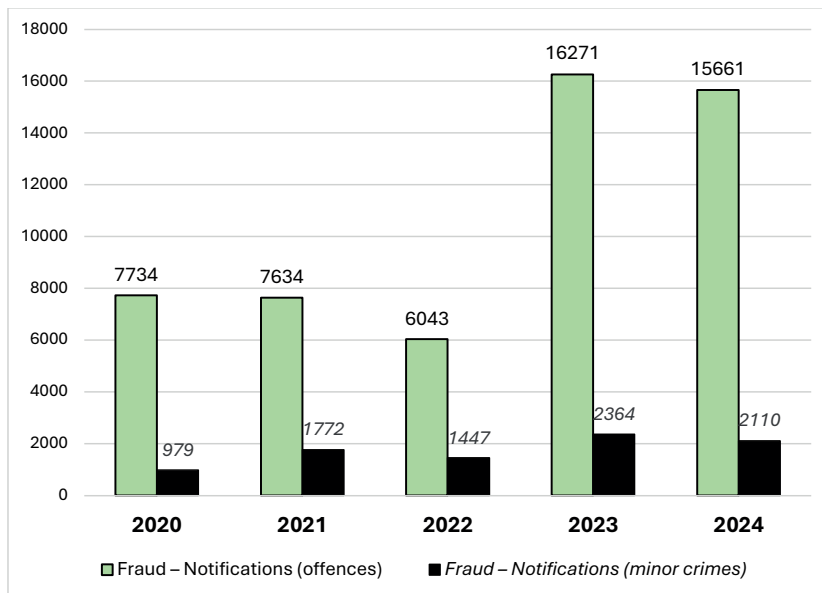


Figure 81. Notifications in fraud: offences and minor crimes

of the war); 2) an explosive increase in cases of frauds; 3) a sharp decline in real estate fraud, which can be attributed to the war's impact on the real estate market.

After 24 February 2022, most construction sites not located in the western regions of Ukraine faced a complete lack of new sales, a significant slowdown in payments under existing contracts, and in some cases, a complete cessation of payments. Investors waited for a year and a half, but in the second year of the war, those investors who had paid the full cost of the property began to initiate legal proceedings to protect their rights.

Accordingly, in numerous instances, a criminal component also emerged.

The crisis in public administration caused by the start of the Russian invasion has further exacerbated traditional schemes of corruption in the real estate sector:

- *Document forgery*: Criminals use fake documents to sell real estate that does not belong to them or to register ownership of someone else's property. This often involves forging sales contracts, powers of attorney, and other legal documents;

- *Double selling*: The same property is sold to several buyers. The fraudsters receive money from numerous people and then disappear. As a result, the buyers are left without money and without property;

- *Rental fraud*: Landlords may deceive tenants by providing false information about the condition of the property, its legal status, or the terms of the contract. This frequently involves renting out property that is already rented to someone else;

- *Fraudulent agencies*: Fake real estate agencies promise to help with the sale or rental of property, take advance payments, but do not provide any services. After receiving the payment, such agencies disappear.

Since the real estate market during the War stopped in fact, it is not surprising that the number of crimes of *real estate fraud* decreased rapidly (1312 crimes in 2020, 1356 crimes in 2021, 798 crimes in 2022, 1176 crimes in 2023, 1091 crimes in 2024) (*Figure 82*).

In the first six months of 2025, the LEA registered 533 criminal proceedings on the crime of real estate fraud, where in 115 criminal proceedings individuals were notified of suspicion.

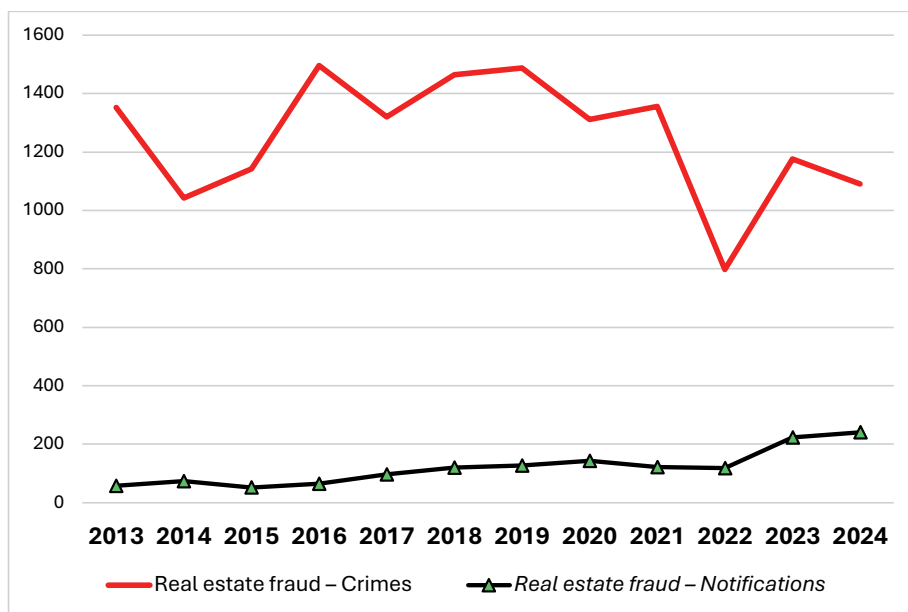


Figure 82. Real estate fraud

ECONOMIC CRIMINAL OFFENCES¹³⁷

It was predictable that the number of economic criminal offences would increase: 5469 crimes in 2021, 3414 crimes in 2022, 4840 crimes in 2023, and 5139 crimes in 2024 (*Figure 83*).

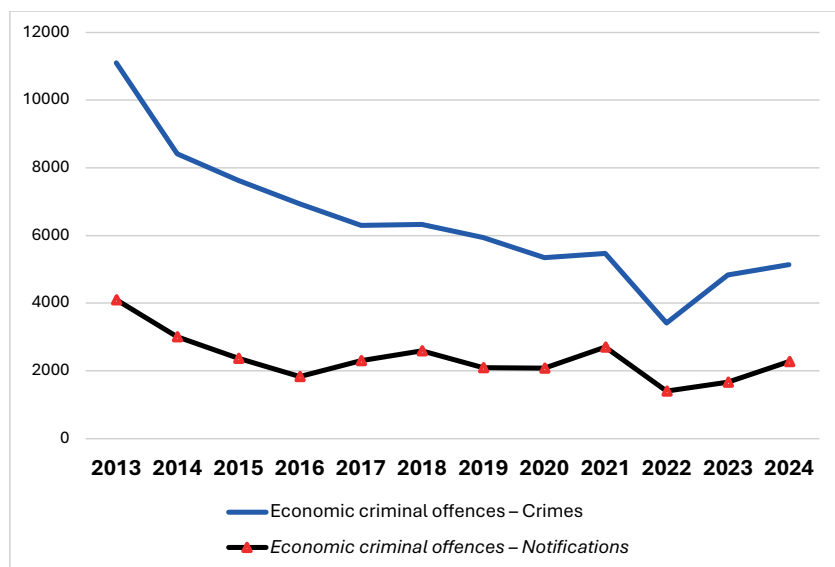


Figure 83. Economic criminal offences

In the period of 6 months of 2025, the LEA registered 3181 crimes and opened corresponding criminal proceedings. Among others, the LEA identified concrete suspects in 1435 criminal proceedings (45% of all criminal proceedings).

At the same time, it means that in the period of 6 months of 2025, the LEA opened 62% criminal proceedings of the total number of criminal proceedings in 2024.

¹³⁷ **Dmytro Yagunov**, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

A much more interesting conclusion concerning economic criminal offenses is that the ratio between the general number of criminal proceedings in economic crimes and criminal proceedings in economic crimes with notifications of suspicion remained mostly the same as in previous years. In 2022, this ratio increased insignificantly to the point of 2,4 from the level of 2 in 2021 (the same ratio of 2,4 can be found in 2018) (Figure 84).

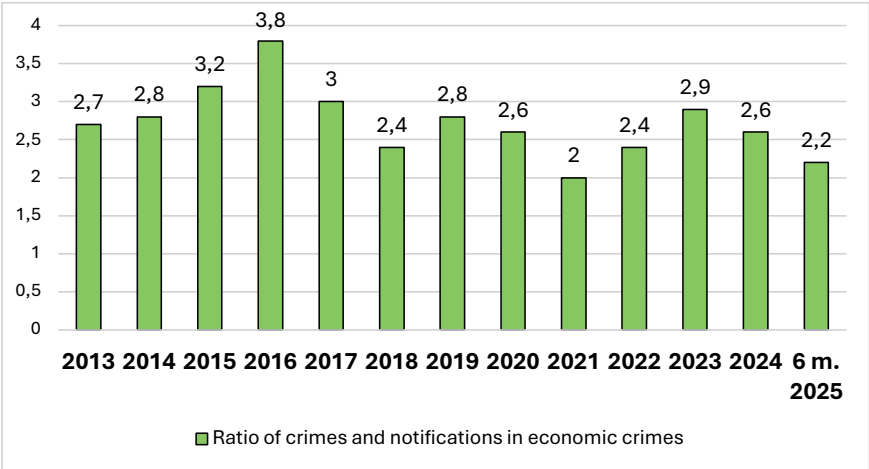


Figure 84. Economic criminal offences: ratio between crimes and notifications

Criminal activities concerned with *the use of counterfeit money, government securities, state lottery tickets, excise tax stamps or holographic security features* (Article 199 of the Criminal Code) were also impacted with the War and reduced (859 crimes in 2019, 686 crimes in 2020, 494 crimes in 2021, 215 crimes in 2022, 328 crimes in 2023, and 288 crimes in 2024) (Figure 85).

In 6 months of 2025, 206 criminal proceedings were registered what is 72% of criminal proceedings registered in 2024.

The same could be said about *illegal actions in respect of remittance documents, payment cards, and other means providing access to bank accounts, electronic money, and equipment for their production* (Article 200 of the Criminal Code): 1577 crimes in 2021, 933 crimes in 2022, 468 crimes in 2023, and 745 crimes in 2024.

On the other hand, it is surprising that the number of registered crimes of such a category did not decrease more, as could be expected.

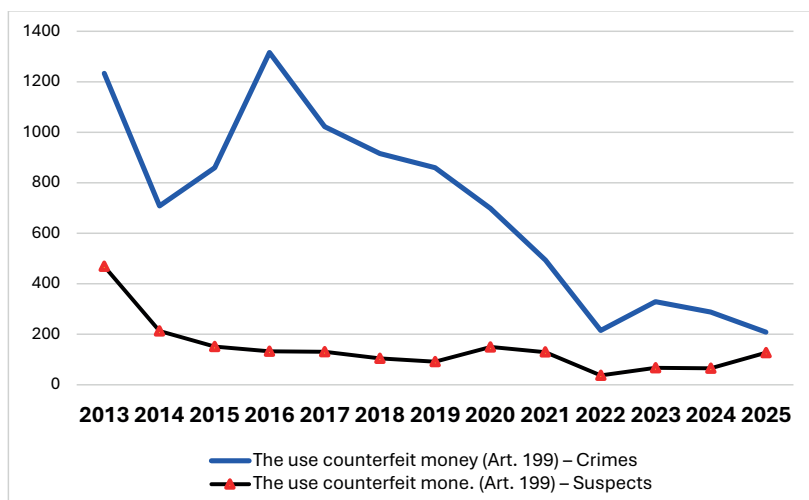


Figure 85. Manufacture, storage, purchase, transportation, shipment, import to Ukraine for use in the sale of goods, sale of counterfeit money, government securities, state lottery tickets, excise tax stamps or holographic security features

There were 724 crimes in 2022, 711 crimes in 2019, and 609 crimes in 2018.

If we exclude the 2021 indicator, the number of crimes committed in 2022 was the biggest one for the period of 2013-2024 (*Figure 86*).

Moreover, in six months of 2025, 409 criminal proceedings were registered (409 criminal proceedings with suspects) what is 55% of the number of the same crimes registered in 2024.

In 2022, in contrast, the number of crimes of *legalisation (laundering) of property proceeding from crime* (Article 209 of the Criminal Code) increased: 348 crimes in 2020, 395 crimes in 2021, 437 crimes in 2022, 969 crimes in 2023, and 1132 crimes in 2024 (*Figure 87*).

It could also be said that the number of these crimes has been stable in its increase since 2018 (*Figure 87*).

However, the War stimulated to committing more crimes of such a category.

Moreover, in 6 months of 2025, the LEA registered 828 criminal proceedings on the crime of legalisation (laundering) of property proceeding from crime (496 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects). It means that in 6 months of 2025, the LEA opened 73% of the number of the same crimes registered in 2024.

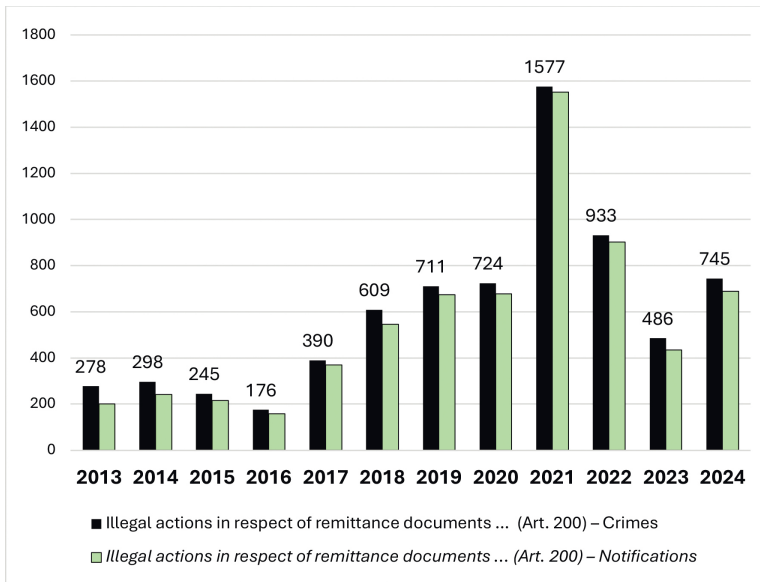


Figure 86. Illegal actions in respect of remittance documents, payment cards and other means providing access to bank accounts, electronic money and equipment for their production

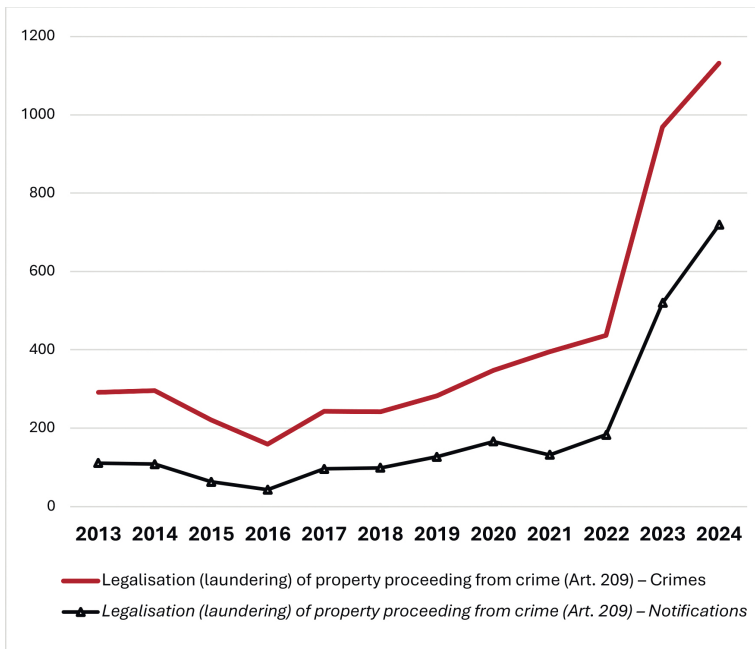


Figure 87. Legalisation of property proceeding from crime

In 2022, crime of *financial fraud* (Article 222 of the Criminal Code) demonstrated a rapid reduction. In fact, the War led to zero indicators of such crimes in Ukraine. However, in 2023-2024, the police registered 107 such crimes (*Figure 88*).

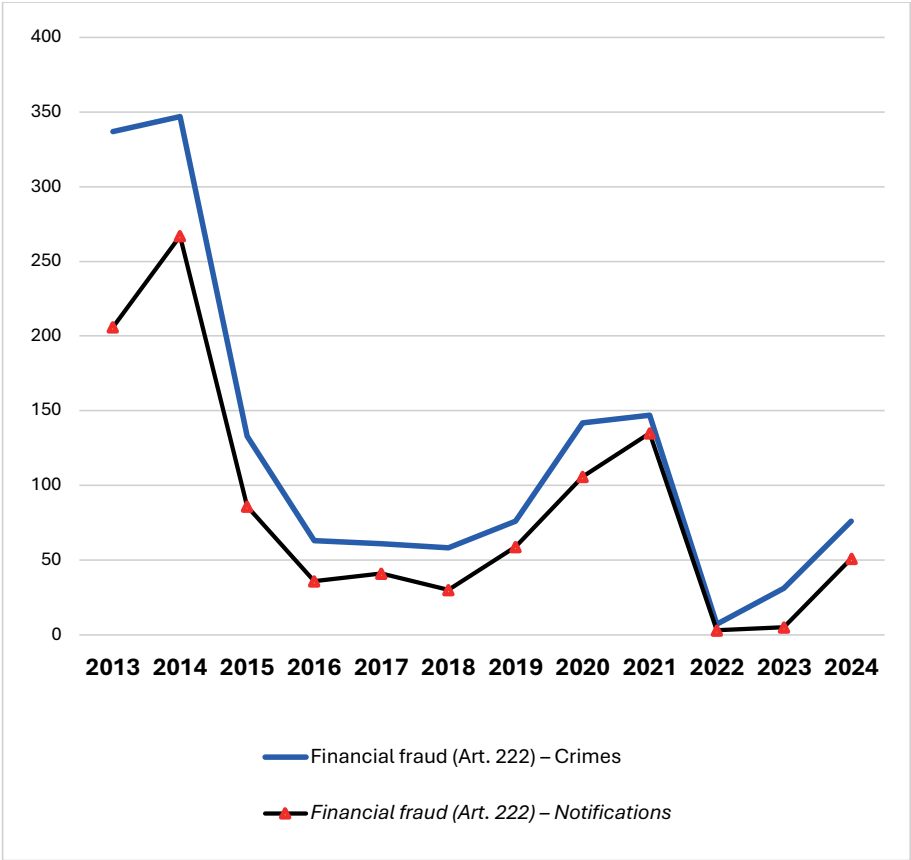


Figure 88. Financial fraud (Art. 222)

CRIMES COMMITTED WITH FIREARMS¹³⁸

The war has increased the availability of weapons since February 2022, resulting in a rise in arms seizures and violence among civilians. While there is no evidence to suggest large-scale trafficking of arms outside of Ukraine, the report highlights the importance of monitoring given the sheer number of arms available, as well as the historic presence of criminal actors specialized in arms trafficking¹³⁹.

According to separate independent estimates, Ukrainian citizens may have between 1 and 5 million firearms and grenades in their possession, posing a serious threat to security both during and after the War¹⁴⁰. The most common types of offences related to illegal weapons remain storage, use and sale. Some cases involve careless handling of explosive devices or their discovery in public places. The most frequently used items are grenades, ammunition, and pistols. In some cases, entire arsenals were seized from private garages, residential buildings or even public places¹⁴¹.

Sporadically, the National Police of Ukraine conduct special operations aimed at confiscating weapons from civilians. For example, on June 13, 2025, the National Police of Ukraine launched a large-scale nationwide special operation to combat the illegal circulation of weapons and ammunition. As stated on the website of the National Police of

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¹³⁹ UNODC (2025). War transforming Ukraine's criminal landscape, causing economic and social damage. *UNODC*. 18 July 2025. Source: www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2025/July/unodc_war-transforming-ukraines-criminal-landscape--causing-economic-and-social-damage.htm

¹⁴⁰ The Times (2025). Brimming with weapons, Ukraine is a gunrunner's paradise in waiting. *The Times*. March 23, 2025. Source: www.thetimes.com/world/russia-ukraine-war/article/ukraine-europe-weapons-ceasefire-rhxxqdlf8

¹⁴¹ Centre for Security Studies (2025). Illegal circulation of weapons in Ukraine: monitoring results for 2024. *Centre for Security Studies*. 24 July 2025. Source: <https://censs.org/illegal-circulation-of-weapons-in-ukraine-monitoring-results-for-2024>

Ukraine, law enforcement officers conducted more than 500 searches in various regions of Ukraine¹⁴².

It is not surprising that experts from the EU States urge that Ukraine, overflowing with weapons, is supposedly a ‘*paradise for arms dealers*’ or a place where ‘*uncontrolled weapons*’ are used to resolve disputes. Post-war Ukraine (if this is possible in the near future) could become a ‘*Kalashnikov society*’ in which disputes that were once settled with fists will be settled with weapons. Experts fear that this is a real possibility if there are delays in state regulation, such as the state buyback of unregistered weapons¹⁴³.

Indeed, from time to time, Ukrainian media report on truly high-profile cases that testify to the increasing saturation of Ukrainian society with weapons.

For example, at the end of July 2025, law enforcement officers in Ivano-Frankivsk region have detained three men suspected of illegal trade in weapons and ammunition. The operation was carried out by the National Police in cooperation with the Security Service of Ukraine. According to preliminary data, the suspects organised a distribution channel for combat weapons, which were probably illegally taken from the combat zone. Law enforcement officers found more than 70 combat grenades, 14 small arms, including automatic rifles and pistols, as well as a significant amount of ammunition. The estimated value of the seized arsenal is about 700000 UAH¹⁴⁴.

On July 27, 2025, in Kryvyi Rih, a man tried to blow up his wife with a grenade during an argument. However, he died himself¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴² Shepeleva, A. (2025). Illegal circulation of weapons: over 500 searches conducted in Ukraine. *Deutsche Welle*. June 13, 2025. Source: www.dw.com/uk/nezakonnij-obig-zbroi-v-ukraini-provodat-ponad-500-obsukiv/a-72895070

¹⁴³ The Times (2025). Brimming with weapons, Ukraine is a gunrunner’s paradise in waiting. *The Times*. March 23, 2025. Source: www.thetimes.com/world/russia-ukraine-war/article/ukraine-europe-weapons-ceasefire-rhxxqdlf8

¹⁴⁴ West News Info (2025). Illegal arms dealers exposed in Ivano-Frankivsk region: arsenal worth 700,000 hryvnias seized. *West News Info*. July 28, 2025. Source: www.westnews.info/news/Na-Ivano-Frankivshhini-vikrili-torgovciv-nelegalnoyu-zbroyeyu-vilucheno-arsenal-na-700-tisyach-griven.html

¹⁴⁵ Bozenko, A. (2025). Tragedy in Kryvyi Rih: man blows himself and his wife up with a grenade. *True UA Info*. July 27, 2025. Source: <https://trueua.info/news/trahediya-u-kryvomu-rozi-cholovik-pidirvav-sebe-i-druzhynu-hranatoyu>

On August 5, 2025, in Cherkasy, a man threatened to detonate several grenades. The conflict arose because representatives of the district military recruitment centre attempted to check his documents¹⁴⁶.

On August 5, 2025, near Izmail, Odessa region, a moped driver shot to death a police officer during a document check. According to reports, patrol police officers stopped a 45-year-old moped driver to check his documents. The man behaved aggressively, pulled out a weapon, and started shooting at the police officers. As a result, one of the law enforcement officers was wounded. In response, the police officer used his service weapon and wounded the attacker. Both were hospitalised. The senior police lieutenant later died in hospital.

On August 5, 2025, a young man was arrested in the Kyiv region for throwing a grenade into his rival's yard out of jealousy, damaging his property¹⁴⁷.

On August 7, 2025, in Cherkasy, the man entered the premises of the McDonald's restaurant, fired several shots from a weapon, injuring himself, and then locked himself in a toilet. Later, he was detained by the police special unit¹⁴⁸.

On 22 August 2025, in Kyiv, a 45-year-old man threw a training grenade near residential buildings. The suspect was unable to explain his actions, as he was intoxicated¹⁴⁹.

On 12 September, a shooting occurred at a car service office in the village of Pidryasne, Lviv District, Lviv Region, resulting in the death of two men. Two employees of the car service were found dead with gunshot wounds in the office¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁶ Kostyuk, K., Gavriyan, M. (2025). In Cherkasy, a man threatened to detonate grenades: details of the incident. *Suspilne*. August 5, 2025. Source: www.suspilne.media/cherkasy/1083177-u-cerkasah-colovik-pogrozue-pidirvati-granati-podrobici-incidentu

¹⁴⁷ Bozenko, A. (2025). In the Kyiv region, a young man threw a grenade into his rival's yard out of jealousy. *True UA Info*. August 5, 2025. Source: <https://trueua.info/news/na-kyivshchyni-molodyk-cherez-revnoshchi-kynuv-hranatu-u-dvir-supernyka>

¹⁴⁸ Mirror of the Week (2025). There was a shooting near McDonald's in Cherkasy, and now an armed man is inside the restaurant. *Mirror of the Week*. August 7, 2025. Source: www.zn.ua/ukr/ukraine/bilja-makdonaldsa-v-cherkasakh-vidbulasja-striljanina-a-zaraz-ozbrojenij-cholovik-znakhoditsja-vseredini-zakladu-politsija.html

¹⁴⁹ Gera, L. (2025). Drunk man throws grenade near residential buildings in Kyiv (photo). *True UA Info*. August 22, 2025. Source: <https://trueua.info/news/u-kyievi-pyanyj-cholovik-kynuv-hranatu-bilya-zhytlovykh-budynkiv-foto>

¹⁵⁰ Petrenko, R. (2025). Two car service employees found shot dead in Lviv region. *Ukrainska Pravda*. September 12, 2025. Source: www.pravda.com.ua/news/2025/09/12/7530585

Illegal arms trafficking has proven to be such a lucrative business that even prisoners have started engaging in it. For example, in July 2025, a criminal scheme involving the illegal sale of firearms, explosives, and ammunition was uncovered in prisons in the Chernihiv region. It was established that the prisoners, acting in collusion with a person outside the prison, had organised a channel for the sale of illegally supplied weapons.

Therefore, while analysing *crimes committed with firearms* and corresponding crime statistics, it could be expected that crime rates resulting from *illegal use of firearms* would extremely rise after February 2022.

Nevertheless, police statistics *partly* refute such a presumption. Yes, it is obvious that the number of crimes with weapons has seriously risen for the twelve months of 2022 compared with 2021 or 2020. On the other hand, Ukrainian history knows examples when the number of crimes with weapons was *higher* (for example, in 2014).

At the same time, it should also be noted that the number of crimes committed with the use of firearms in 2015 (in the period of the continuing Russian invasion to Eastern Ukraine) was less than even for twelve months of 2022 (*Figure 89*).

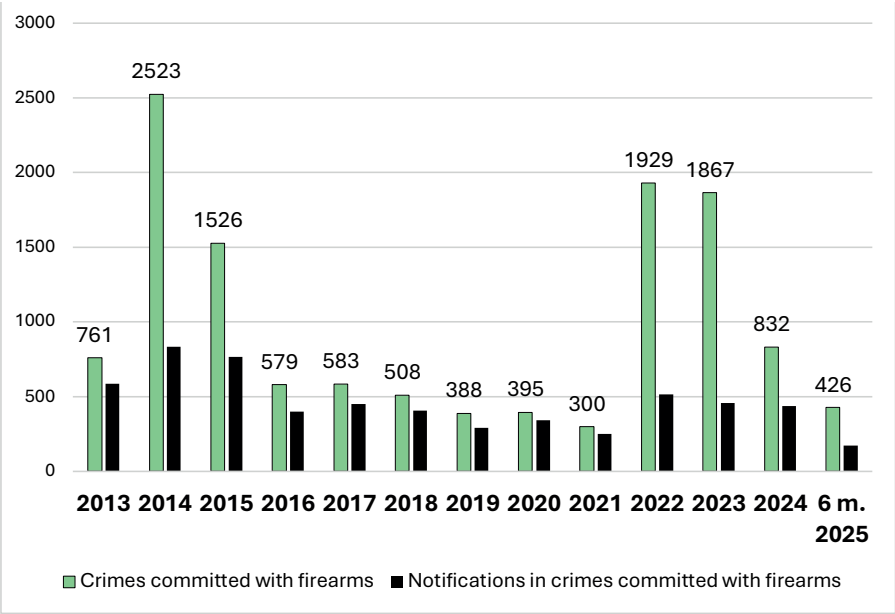


Figure 89. Crimes committed with the use of firearms

In 6 months of 2025, the LEA opened 426 criminal proceedings on crimes of illegal use of firearms (173 criminal proceedings with suspects). It means that in the first 6 months of 2025 the LEA registered 52% of the total number of the crimes of such category registered in 2024.

In 7 months of 2025, the LEA opened 491 criminal proceedings on crimes of illegal use of firearms (204 criminal proceedings with suspects). It means that in the first 6 months of 2025 the LEA registered 59% of the total number of the crimes of such category registered in 2024.

Additionally, it should be noted that in 2022, alongside an increase in the number of crimes committed using firearms, the number of suspects in the same criminal proceedings decreased, which could also raise an issue concerning the effectiveness of LEA activities.

Police statistics of 2022 demonstrate to which extent the number of registered *intentional homicides committed with the use of firearms* has risen:

- in 2021, there were 36 intentional homicides committed using firearms;
- in 2022, the same indicator increased to the level of 247 crimes;
- in 2023, the same indicator increased to the level of 909 crimes;
- in 2024, the same indicator decreased to the level of 295 crimes;
- in 6 months of 2025, the same indicator reached to the level of 102 crimes;
- in 7 months of 2025, the same indicator reached to the level of 113 crimes (*Figure 90*).

The same could be said about *intentional serious bodily harm committed with firearms*.

Here, it should be noted that, on one hand, 2022 has brought a bigger number of such crimes.

On the other hand, the 2014 data show the same numbers of crimes even in the absence of full-scaled Russian armed aggression (*Figure 91*).

Figure 92 demonstrates the number of *robberies* committed with the use of firearms and numbers of suspects in corresponding criminal proceedings.

On one hand, we can observe a significant increase in *robberies* committed with the use of firearms as compared with 2021.

On the other one, police statistics for 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 demonstrate much bigger numbers of *robberies* even when

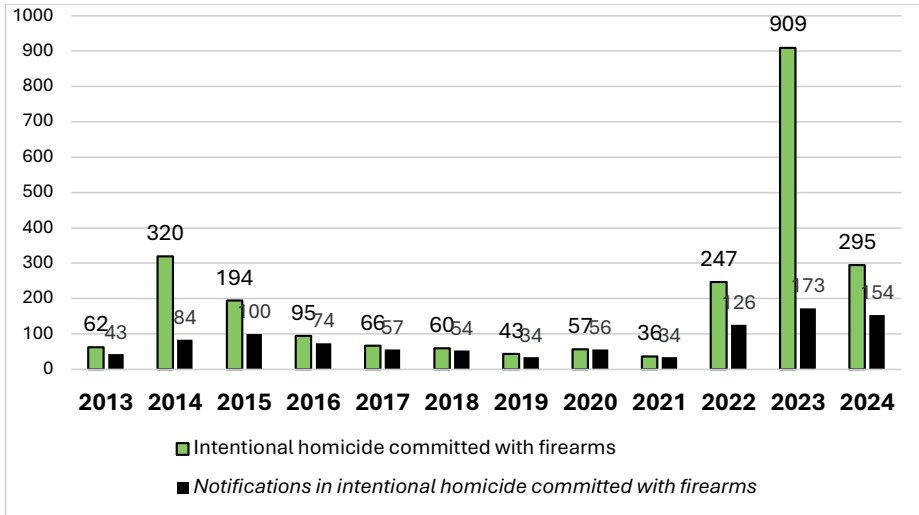


Figure 90. Intentional homicide with the use of firearms

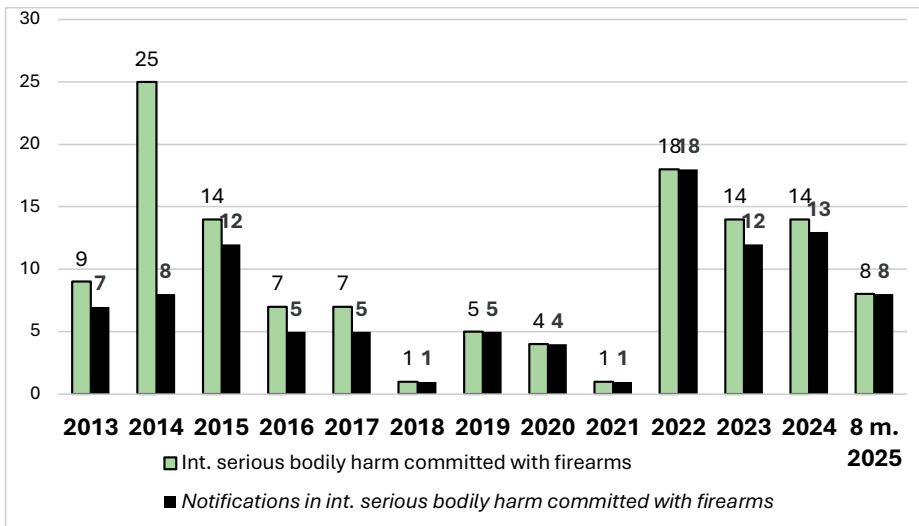


Figure 91. Intentional grievous bodily harm committed with the use of firearms

Ukrainian society was not so deeply saturated with firearms as in 2022 (Figure 92).

Figure 93 demonstrates data on the number of *crimes committed with the use of explosives* and the numbers of suspects in corresponding criminal proceedings (Figure 93).

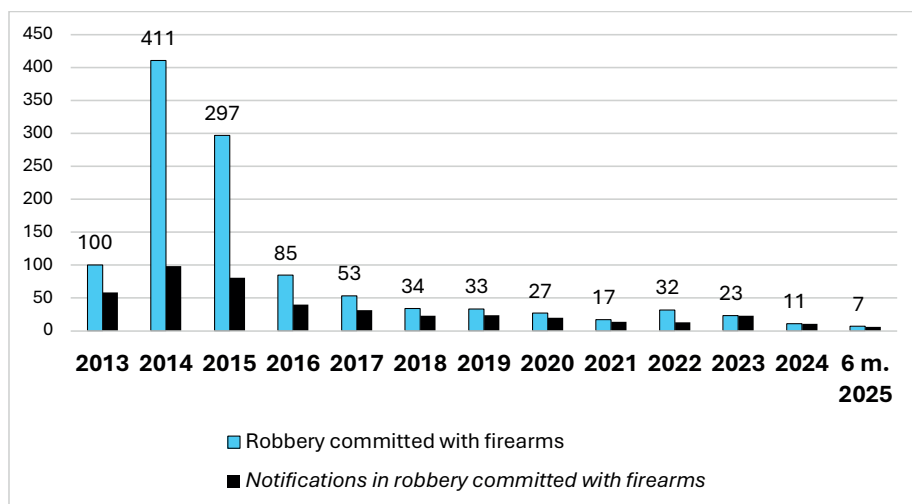


Figure 92. Robbery with the use of firearms

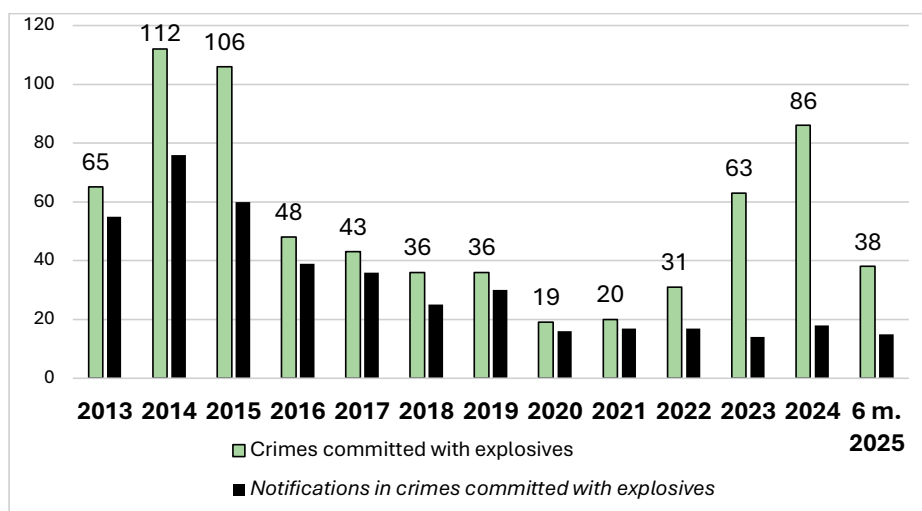


Figure 93. Crimes with the use of explosives

Here, it can be concluded that crimes committed with the use of explosives have indicate a dualistic trend: 1) the number or crimes increased (63 crimes in 2023, 86 crimes in 2024); 2) the number of criminal proceedings with suspects decreased (14 proceedings in 2023, 18 proceedings in 2024).

The saturation of Ukrainian society with firearms and an increase in numbers of military men in the country is used by organized crime

groups which commit crimes not only with the use of firearms but also with the use of military or police uniform.

Here, it should also be stressed on one aspect of post-war life of any state. It is not only about social rehabilitation of former soldiers who directly participated in military actions but also potentially possible criminal activity of persons with post-war traumatic disorders where some of them will not find themselves in post-war society.

Figure 94 demonstrates trends in different crimes committed with firearms and explosives *in comparison*.

Here, we can conclude that if crimes with the use of explosives and aggravated robberies with the use of firearms largely increased (in absolute numbers), nevertheless, most crimes committed with firearms are *intentional homicides* (Figure 94).

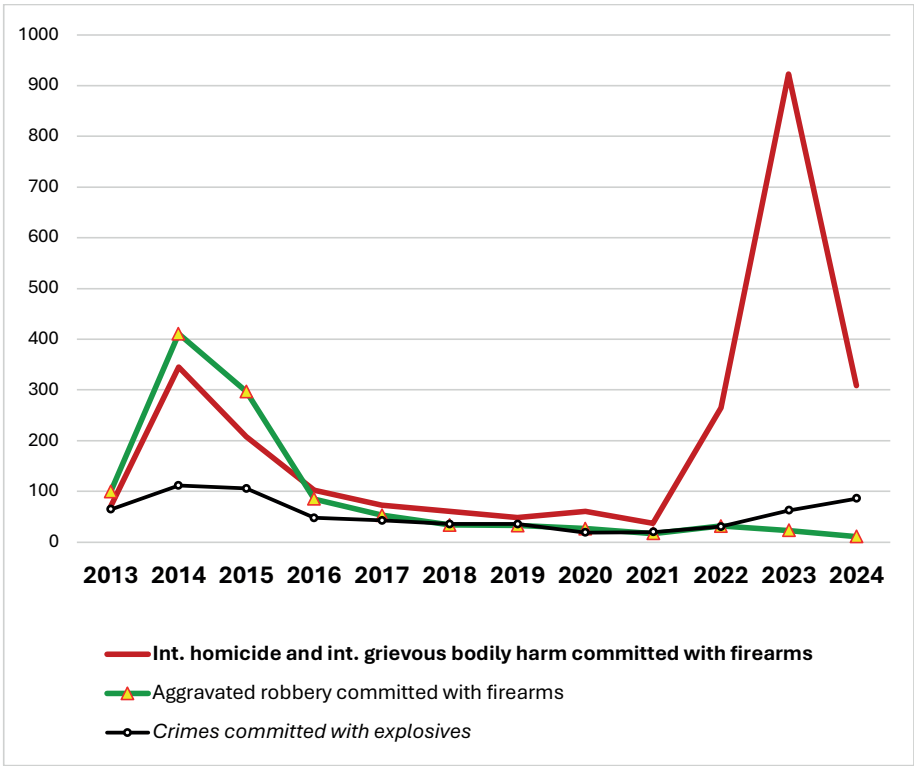


Figure 94. Crimes committed with the use of firearms

CRIMES AGAINST PEACE, SECURITY OF MANKIND AND INTERNATIONAL LEGAL ORDER¹⁵¹

According to official data of the Office of General Prosecutor, as of 7 August 2022, the Ukrainian authorities were investigating almost 26 thousand criminal cases of suspected war crimes committed after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

In 2023, the number of war crimes increased 246 times as compared to 2021 (62128 crimes). In 2023, the number of crimes was mostly the same (62667 crimes). However, in 2024, the number of war crimes decreased two times as compared to the previous year (*Figure 95*).

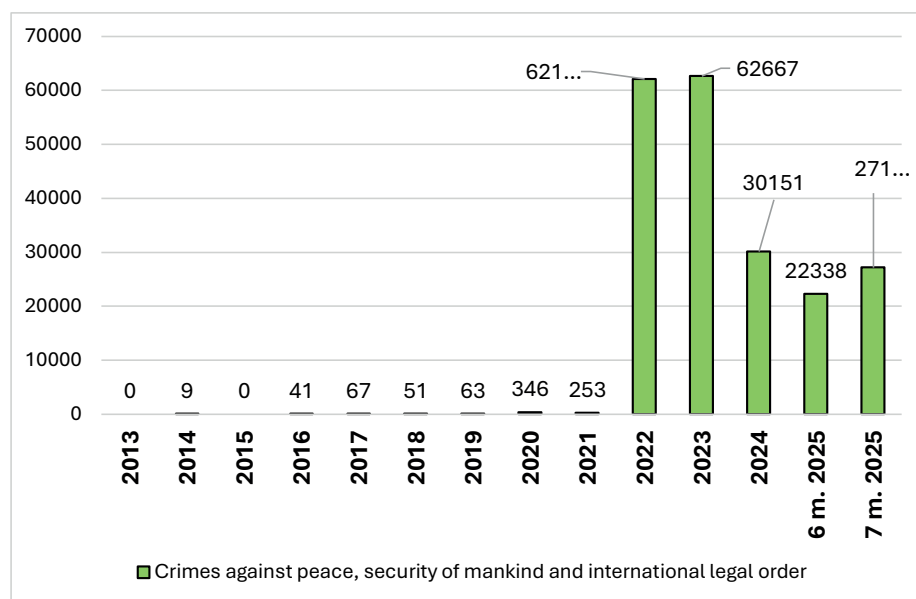


Figure 95. Crimes against peace, security of mankind and international legal order

¹⁵¹ **Dmytro Yagunov**, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

After 2024, considering the intensification of hostilities between the Armed Forces of Ukraine and Russian aggressors, as well as the use of tactics of mass destruction of civilian infrastructure by Russians, the number of crimes against peace, security of mankind, and international legal order increased again.

Thus, in 2024, a total of 30151 crimes against peace, security of mankind, and international legal order were registered, with 872 criminal proceedings in which concrete individuals were notified of suspicion.

However, in 6 months of 2025, 22338 criminal proceedings were opened in which concrete individuals were notified of suspicion. In 453 criminal proceedings, individuals were notified of suspicion. Accordingly, this means that in the first half of 2025, 74% of the total number of criminal proceedings opened in 2024 were registered.

In 7 months of 2025, 27174 criminal proceedings were opened in which concrete individuals were notified of suspicion. In 494 criminal proceedings, individuals were notified of suspicion. Accordingly, this means that in seven months of 2025, 90% of the total number of criminal proceedings opened in 2024 were registered.

During the period of Russia's war against Ukraine from 24 February 2022 to 6 August 2025, Ukrainian law enforcement agencies registered 202918 criminal offences related to the Russian aggression, including:

- 180222 crimes against peace, human security and international law and order (of which 174961 are war crimes);
- 22696 crimes against the foundations of Ukraine's national security.

As a result of war crimes committed by the Russian occupiers, 15318 civilians died (including 646 children) and 34324 civilians (including 2104 children) were injured.

The Russian occupiers destroyed and damaged 236631 civilian infrastructure objects, including 191375 residential buildings, 4379 educational and training institutions; 1085 medical institutions, 793 cultural buildings, 257 religious buildings, 9551 networks that ensure the vital activity of the population (gas pipelines, water pipelines, electricity networks), as well as 29191 other objects.

Contrary to the requirements of international instruments, Russian aggressors are actively using prohibited means of warfare. Thus, during the period of Russia's war against Ukraine from 24 February 2022 to 6

August 2025, numerous facts of the use of prohibited means of warfare by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation were established.

Pre-trial investigations are currently underway into 4,895 such facts, including 116 cases of the use of chemical weapons, as well as asphyxiating, poisonous or other similar gases; 4767 cases of the use of mines (anti-personnel, booby traps, remotely-launched mines); 5 cases of the use of phosphorus and thermobaric ('*vacuum*') bombs and shells; 7 cases of the use of incendiary weapons or weapons primarily intended to set fire to objects or to burn people by flame or heat.

During the period of Russia's war against Ukraine from 24 February 2022 to 6 August 2025, law enforcement agencies brought 736 people to criminal responsibility in the '*Mainline Case*', including

- 49 representatives of the highest military command of the Russian Armed Forces and the '*Rosgvardia*' (including the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the General Staff, Commander of the '*Rosgvardia*');
 - 4 heads of law enforcement and intelligence agencies;
 - 2 heads of both chambers of the Federal Assembly;
 - 8 heads of executive bodies;
 - 178 senators of the Federation Council;
 - 419 deputies of the State Duma;
 - 10 cultural figures and propagandists;
 - 52 other public figures;
 - 1 head of a private military company;
 - 12 academics and university rectors;
 - 1 representative of other countries (other than the Russian Federation).

During the period of Russia's war against Ukraine from 24 February 2022 to 6 August 2025, law enforcement agencies submitted indictments (*in absentia*) against 484 people, including: 421 people under Article 110 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine; 18 people under Article 437 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine; and 45 people under Articles 110 and 437 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

The court proceedings resulted in guilty verdicts against 245 people (members of the State Duma).

In August 2025, according to the materials of the Security Service of Ukraine, two Russian governors were sentenced in absentia for financing the occupation war in Ukraine. Thus, the Korolyovsky District Court of Zhytomyr found two Russian officials guilty of financing

the occupation units of the Russian army. Both were sentenced to 8 years in prison in absentia with confiscation of property. They are Igor Kobzev and Alexander Osipov, governors of the Irkutsk region and the Zabaikalsky Krai of the Russian Federation. Both officials organize regular deliveries of military aid worth tens of millions of rubles. Among the items transferred to the front are drones, satellite communication systems, weapons with optical and thermal imaging sights, ammunition and uniforms, generators, provisions, cars, motorcycles with equipment for conducting combat operations, etc. The court found both defendants guilty in absentia of financing actions committed with the aim of changing the boundaries of the territory and state border of Ukraine in violation of the order established by the Constitution of Ukraine and violent overthrow of the constitutional order, committed repeatedly (Article 110-2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine)

Propaganda of war (Article 436 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine)

During the period of Russia's war against Ukraine from 24 February 2022 to 6 August 2025, law enforcement agencies conducted pre-trial investigations in 89 criminal proceedings.

In the respective criminal proceedings, the law enforcement agencies of Ukraine served notices of suspicion to 89 persons; proceedings against 1 person were closed on the basis of Article 284(1)(5) of the CPC of Ukraine (deceased).

Indictments against 80 people were submitted to the court, and a request for the application of medical coercive measures was submitted against 1 person.

As a result of the trial, 43 people were convicted; 1 person was acquitted under Article 436 of the Criminal Code; and 1 person was subjected to medical compulsory measures.

Investigation of war crimes (Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine)

During the period of Russia's war against Ukraine from 24 February 2022 to 6 August 2025, 967 people were served with a notice of suspicion by the law enforcement agencies of Ukraine (28 of them were prisoners of war, 8 were civilians in custody, and the rest were served in absentia):

475 people	Cruel treatment of the civilian population;
135 people	Looting;
153 persons	Intentional killings;
78 people	Sexual violence (five of them were additionally prosecuted for ill-treatment);
75 people	indiscriminate shelling, attacks and bombardment of populated areas and civilian objects ;
19 persons	Organisation of forced mobilisation;
16 people	Causing damage to the natural environment, attacks on facilities containing dangerous forces;
16 people	violation of the right to a fair trial.

During the period of Russia's war against Ukraine from 24 February 2022 to 6 August 2025, Ukrainian law enforcement agencies submitted indictments against 698 people (24 of them were prisoners of war, 5 were civilians, and the rest were tried in absentia):

355 people	Cruel treatment of civilians;
103 people	Looting;
126 people	Intentional killings;
31 people	Indiscriminate shelling, attacks and bombardment of populated areas and civilian objects;
56 people	Sexual violence (five of whom were additionally prosecuted for ill-treatment);
11 people	Organisation of forced mobilisation;
6 people	Causing damage to the natural environment, attacks on facilities containing dangerous forces;
10 people	Violation of the right to a fair trial.

During the period of Russia's war against Ukraine from 24 February 2022 to 6 August 2025, 195 people were convicted in court (18 of them were prisoners of war, 1 was a civilian, and the rest were convicted in absentia):

117 people	Cruel treatment of civilians;
11 people	Indiscriminate shelling, attacks and bombardment of settlements and civilian objects;
28 people	Looting;
21 people	Intentional killings;
17 people	Sexual violence (one of them was additionally prosecuted for ill-treatment);
1 person	Organisation of forced mobilisation.

War crimes against children

According to the Unified Register of Pre-trial Investigations, pre-trial investigations are being conducted in criminal proceedings on the facts of 4,862 criminal offences related to the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine committed against children and in the field of child protection, including

- war crimes against children - 1612;
- armed attacks on institutions and facilities for children - 2979;
- cases of sexual violence against children - 19;
- deportation and forced displacement - 186;
- 66 cases of illegal deprivation of liberty.

According to the regional prosecutor's offices, pre-trial investigations are currently underway in 462 criminal proceedings into the disappearance of 2,178 children in the context of hostilities (Donetsk - 597, Kyiv - 3, Kirovohrad - 4, Luhansk - 758, Mykolaiv - 1, Kharkiv - 81, Kherson - 734).

According to the National Police of Ukraine, 2,216 children have not yet been found.

In 30 criminal proceedings, 74 members of the Russian Federation Armed Forces and other individuals have been notified of suspicion of committing war crimes against children.

In 21 criminal proceedings, indictments were submitted to court against 51 members of the Russian Federation Armed Forces and others for war crimes against children.

In 14 criminal proceedings, verdicts were delivered convicting 34 servicemen of the Russian Federation Armed Forces under Article 438(1) and (2) of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

Executions of Ukrainian defenders

The law enforcement agencies of Ukraine are conducting pre-trial investigations in 78 criminal proceedings on the execution of Ukrainian defenders by the Russian occupiers.

As a result of the investigation, 7 persons were served with a notice of suspicion, indictments were filed against 3 persons, and 2 persons were convicted by the courts.

Strikes on Ukrainian power facilities

3 24.02.2022	938 strikes on 348 facilities
October 2022 - March 2023	220 strikes (23.45%) on 93 objects
April 2023 - to date	660 strikes (70.36%) on 299 objects

The highest number of strikes for the entire period:

Dnipropetrovska	209 strikes	Ivano-Frankivsk	19 hits
Sumy	108 strikes	Poltava	15 strokes
Donetsk	107 hits	м. Kyiv	14 hits
Zaporizhzhia	77 strikes	Rivne	12 strokes
Kharkiv	63 strikes	Khmelnysky	11 strokes
Kherson	61 strikes	Zhytomyrska	11 hits
Odesa	44 strikes	Volynska	7 strikes
Mykolaivska	36 strikes	Cherkasy	5 strikes
Kyivska	34 strokes	Luhansk	2 strikes
Vinnyska	29 hits	Chernivtsi	2 strikes
Lviv	28 hits	Ternopilska	2 strokes
Chernihiv	21 strikes	Transcarpathian	1 strike
Kirovogradskaya	20 strikes	Autonomous Republic of Crimea	

The following objects were hit most often:

Region	Name of the objects	Number of objects
Vinnytska	750 kV Vinnytska power substation	14
	Ladyzhynska heat and power plant	10
Dnipropetrovska	Kryvyi Rih heat and power plant	14
	Grushivska PS 154/35/10 power station	9
	Pokrovska solar power plant	8
	Pavlohradska 330 kV power substation	8
	Dniprovsk-750 power substation	6
	Prydniprovsk heat and power plant	10
	330 kV Pershotravneva substation	6
	SS 330 kV Ferrosplavna	6
Donetsk	Kurakhovskaya heat and power plant	39
	Slavyanskaya heat and power plant	19
	Konstantinovka-110/35/6 power substation	6
	SS 330 kV Bilytska	7
Zhytomyrska	SS 330 kV Zhytomyrska	5
	SS 330 kV Lisova	6
Zaporizka	Zaporizka 750 kV power substation	13
	Dniprovsk hydroelectric power station	10
Ivano-Frankivsk	Burshtyn heat and power plant	15
Kyivska	Kyivska SS 750 kV power substation	15
	Trypilska heat and power plant	5
Kyiv City	Heat and Power Plant № 5	6
	Heat and Power Plant № 6	3
Kirovohradska	330 kV Ukrainka power substation	8
	Kremenchuk hydroelectric power station	7
Lviv	750 kV Zakhidnoukrainska substation	12
	Dobrotvirska heat and power plant	5

Mykolaivska	330 kV SS Trykhaty power substation	8
	SS 330 kV Pobuzka	4
Odesa	SS 330 kV Usatove	11
	SS 330 kV Novoodeska power substation	9
	SS 330 kV Adzhalyk power substation	5
Poltavska	SS 330 kV Kremenchuk power substation	4
Rivne	330 kV Rivne power substation	6
Sumy	Sumy thermal power plant	12
	Okhtyrka power station	6
	Konotop 330 kV power substation	5
	SS 330 kV Sumy power substation	14
	SS 330 kV Sumy-Pivnichna	8
	SS 330 kV Shostka	4
Kharkivska	Zmiivska heat and power plant	14
	Zalyutyno 330 kV substation	9
	Loseve power substation	7
Kherson	Kherson power station	27
	Khersonska SS 330 kV power substation	3
Khmelnyska	Khmelnyska SS 330 kV power substation	5
	SS 330 kV Shepetivka power substation	4
Chernihivska	SS 330 kV Chernihivska	4

Sexual violence in times of war

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, prosecutors have recorded 373 cases of conflict-related sexual violence.

In particular, 137 cases were recorded against men and 236 against women, including 19 underage girls and 1 underage boy (other types of sexual violence not related to rape), including rape, mutilation or violence to genitals, forced nudity, threats and attempts to rape, forcing to watch sexual abuse of loved ones, etc.

Currently, the highest number of cases of sexual violence has been recorded in Kherson region (116), Donetsk region (86), Kyiv region (60), Kharkiv region (47), Zaporizhzhia region (26), Mykolaiv region (11), Luhansk region (9), Chernihiv region (8), Odesa region (6), Sumy region (3) and in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (1).

All of the above statistics relate exclusively to crimes committed against civilians. Data on military personnel are not included in these statistics and are not subject to public disclosure until martial law is lifted.

In connection with sexual violence in the occupied territories of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kherson, Kharkiv and Mykolaiv regions, as well as in the territory of the Russian Federation, 87 members of the Russian Armed Forces were served with a notice of suspicion. Forty-six indictments against 60 people were sent to court. 122 cases of conflict-related sexual violence have been uncovered.

So far, courts have passed 13 verdicts against 20 people, 19 of whom have been sentenced to imprisonment. 13 individuals were sentenced to 12 years, two to 10 years and 11 years respectively, and five to 15 years. 5 verdicts against 10 people have not entered into force. All verdicts were delivered following a special trial (*in the absence* of the accused) *in absentia*.

CRIMINAL OFFENSES RELATED TO THE MISUSE OF HUMANITARIAN AID¹⁵²

Any crisis, particularly armed conflict, is inevitably accompanied by rising levels of poverty and increased societal demand for both material and financial humanitarian assistance. Following the full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukraine became a hub for the operational activity of various humanitarian organizations—both international and domestic. The unprecedented volume of aid flowing into the country, coupled with insufficient coordination mechanisms for its distribution, created a criminogenic environment conducive to abuses related to the handling and distribution of humanitarian resources.

In response to these emerging threats, the Criminal Code of Ukraine was amended to include a specific provision addressing such misconduct. Article 201-2, titled *‘Illegal use for profit of humanitarian aid, charitable donations, or gratuitous assistance’*, was introduced to criminalize such acts.

According to Article 201-2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, the illegal use of humanitarian aid, charitable donations, or gratuitous assistance for profit is defined as the sale of humanitarian goods (items), the use of charitable or gratuitous assistance, or entering into transactions concerning such property with the intention of obtaining profit, committed in significant amounts¹⁵³.

Data provided by the Office of the Prosecutor General show the number of registered criminal offenses (proceedings) under Article 201-2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine over time:

Analysis of this data reveals a correlation: as the volume of humanitarian aid decreased, so too did the number of associated criminal offenses. This trend can be attributed not only to the reduction in aid but also to the implementation of coordination systems for aid distribution and the introduction of a unified humanitarian response plan.

¹⁵² **Yanina Hrabova**, Attorney at Law, Ph.D at Law, Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance Program Coordinator, Norwegian Refugee Council, South Area Office (Ukraine)

¹⁵³ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. (2001, April 5). *Criminal Code of Ukraine No. 2341-III (updated 30.06.2022)*. Source: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text>

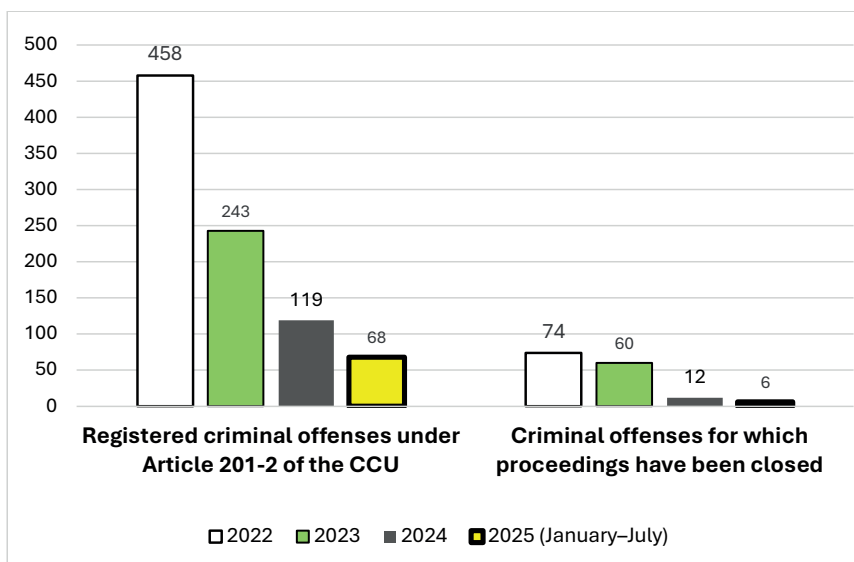


Figure 96. Criminal offenses related to the misuse of humanitarian aid (1)

Additional data for 2023 was obtained from open sources.

According to information published by the media outlet *Zaborona*, which cited a response from the National Police of Ukraine:

- pre-trial investigations were initiated in 861 criminal proceedings related to unlawful actions involving humanitarian aid, charitable donations, or gratuitous assistance;
- 165 individuals were formally charged in 175 criminal offenses of this category;
- indictments were submitted to court in 78 cases;
- the total amount of identified material losses amounted to approximately 40 million UAH.¹⁵⁴

Moreover, over 200 other offenses were investigated under alternative legal classifications such as fraud, embezzlement, theft, and bribery – although they also involved the misappropriation of humanitarian cargo.

It is worth noting that offenses involving humanitarian aid predated the introduction of Article 201-2 of the CCU but were previously

¹⁵⁴ Zaborona (2024). A noble but over-bureaucratized cause: How and why humanitarian aid in Ukraine ended up in a gray zone [Investigative article]. Source: <https://zaborona.com/blagorodna-ale-zabyurokratyzovana-sprava-yak-i-chomu-gumanitarna-dopomoga-v-ukrayini-opynylasya-v-sirij-zoni-rozsliduvannya-zaborony/>

prosecuted under other legal provisions. A discrepancy in reported figures is evident.

Notably, in response to a request submitted by the author, the National Police of Ukraine stated it does not possess or manage the requested data, raising concerns about the transparency and consistency of statistical reporting:

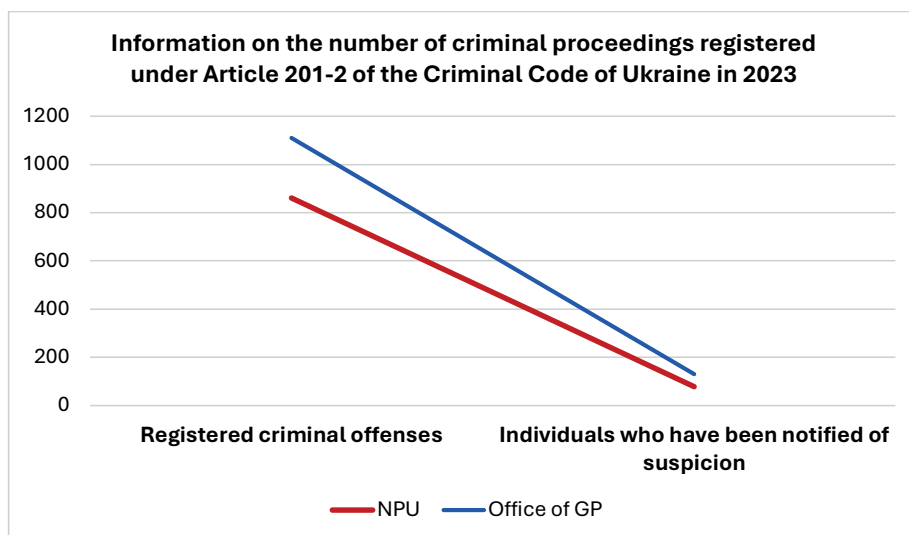


Figure 97. Criminal offenses related to the misuse of humanitarian aid (2)

A review of specific case studies reveals that criminal acts were committed both by individuals affiliated with well-known humanitarian organizations and by actors operating through fictitious charitable foundations. For instance, employees of the charitable foundation *‘Right to Protection’* became subjects of criminal proceedings. Investigators found that a group of individuals, acting in collusion during martial law in 2022, exploited their official positions to profit by processing financial aid from the United Nations on behalf of individuals who were not legally recognized as internally displaced persons¹⁵⁵. In return for their services, the perpetrators retained a portion of the allocated funds. These acts were classified under Part 3 of Article 201-2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

¹⁵⁵ Unified State Register of Court Decisions. *Court decision №757/36978/23-к*. <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/113267071>

Another illustrative case is described in the report of the Temporary Investigative Commission of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, which examined potential legal violations in the receipt, distribution, transportation, storage, and use of humanitarian aid and public property intended for the temporary accommodation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other state needs. According to the report, during a Commission meeting on May 29, 2023, the Main Investigative Department of the National Police of Ukraine reported incidents of humanitarian aid being sold – specifically, ballistic plates for bulletproof vests valued at approximately 1,27 million UAH. Part of this aid, including steel plates worth 450 thousand UAH, had been imported under a guarantee letter from a military unit. Criminal charges were brought under Article 201-2, and similar reports of violations involving humanitarian aid imported under such guarantees were submitted by other governmental agencies¹⁵⁶.

According to the State Customs Service, as of June 20, 2023, a joint audit conducted by the Department for Combating Smuggling and Customs Violations and the Ministry of Defence's Internal Audit Department revealed 743 cases where military units and territorial recruitment and social support centres failed to confirm receipt of humanitarian aid. The unaccounted-for goods included 963 distinct items with a total weight of 1282.9 tons¹⁵⁷.

The available data suggest a clear correlation between the number of criminal offenses related to humanitarian aid and the volume of aid being delivered, as well as the level of coordination between state institutions and humanitarian organizations. These offenses may occur at various levels – among recipients of aid, within humanitarian organizations themselves, and among representatives of public authorities.

As the global volume of humanitarian aid delivered to Ukraine declines, there is a concurrent reduction in the number of criminal proceedings, as evidenced by official data. However, these crimes continue to highlight significant challenges in governance, accountability, and transparency in humanitarian operations during wartime.

¹⁵⁶ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. (2023). On the report of the Temporary Investigative Commission of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine regarding possible violations of Ukrainian legislation in the field of receipt, distribution, transportation, storage, and targeted use of humanitarian and other aid... (Resolution No. 132, Article 714). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3395-20#Text>

¹⁵⁷ State Customs Service of Ukraine. (2023). Since the beginning of 2023, the State Customs Service, together with the Ministry of Defense, has detected 653 cases of humanitarian aid not being received by the military. <https://customs.gov.ua/news/zagalne-20/post/z-pochatku-2023-roku-derzhmitsluzhba-spilno-z-minoboroni-viiavili-653-vipadki-neotrimannia-gumanitarnoyi-dopomogi-viiskovimi-1179>

SEX CRIMES¹⁵⁸

As far as *sex crimes* are concerned, the number of mentioned crimes decreased significantly, as could be expected from wartime society. At the same time, we have the lowest level of sex crimes in the ten-year history of crime prevention in Ukraine (*Figure 98*).

Moreover, in December 2022, there were only 2 sex crimes registered in Ukraine: 621 sex crimes for the period of eleven months of 2022, and 623 sex crimes for the period of twelve months of 2022.

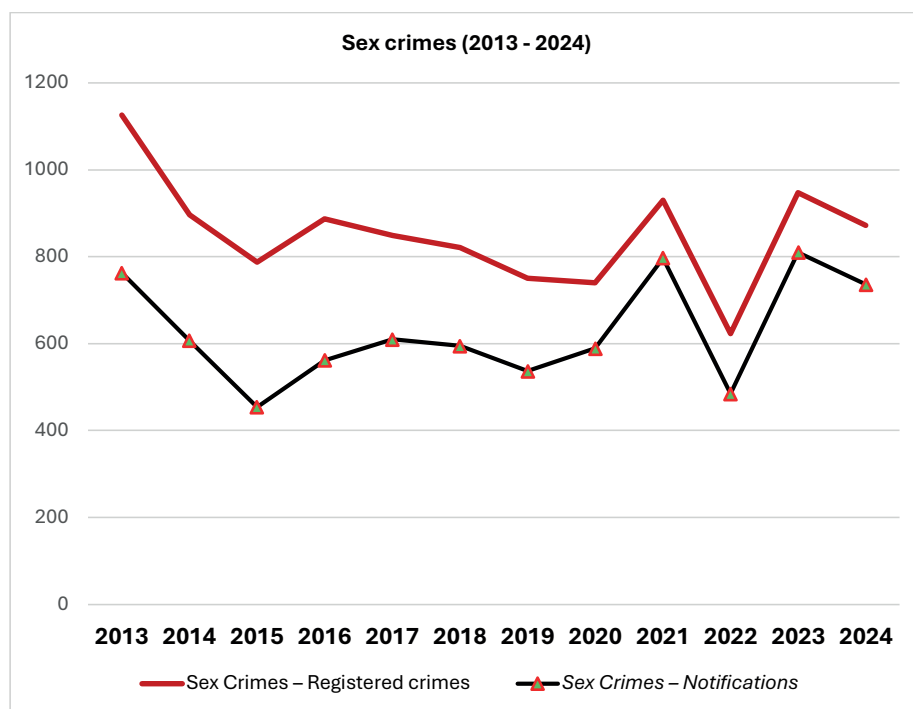


Figure 98. Sex crimes

¹⁵⁸ *Dmytro Yagunov*, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

Statistics indicate that in 2023, a total of 947 sex crimes were registered, with concrete individuals being notified of suspicion in 810 criminal proceedings.

In 2024, a total of 872 sex crimes were registered, with 736 criminal proceedings involving concrete individuals being notified of suspicion.

Finally, in the first six months of 2025, 587 sex crimes were registered, with 461 criminal proceedings in which concrete individuals were notified of suspicion.

It is obvious that 2021 brought many restrictions concerned with the COVID pandemics which led to the closing of all nightclubs, discos and restaurants where sex offences were often committed. Nevertheless, the number of sex crimes registered in 2021 was one of the highest in the previous ten years of crime prevention. However, the number of sex crimes increased to 947 in 2023 with further decrease in 2024 (872 crimes).

At the same time, restrictions imposed due to the wartime period led to a rapid decrease in the crimes of rape in Ukrainian society. The beginning of the War led to a rapid decrease in rapes (406 rapes in 2021, 250 rapes in 2022). However, 450 rapes were registered in 2023, and 410 rapes were registered in 2024 (*Figure 99*).

In the first six months of 2025, 245 criminal proceedings were registered in Ukraine on the facts of rape, with 222 individuals notified of suspicion. This means that in the first half of 2025, criminal proceedings for rape were registered in 60% of all similar crimes registered in 2024.

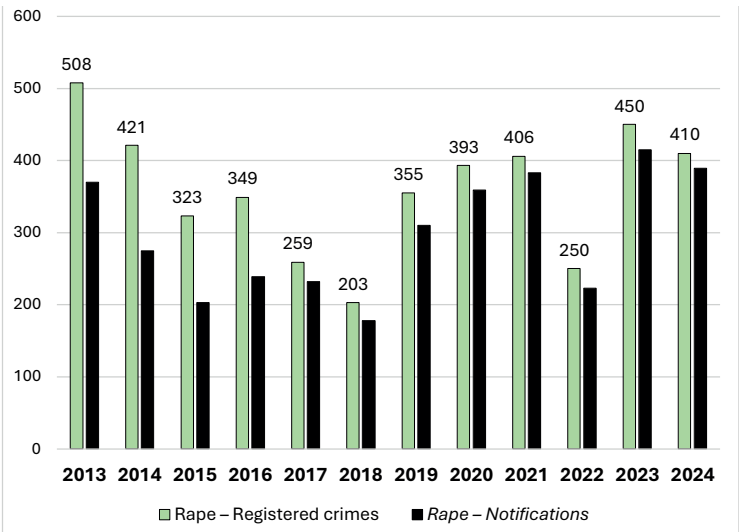


Figure 99. Rape

CRIMES AGAINST NATIONAL SECURITY¹⁵⁹

No less interesting is official statistics of *crimes against national security* for 2013-2024

In 2013, as many as 8 crimes against national security were registered, in which only *one* criminal proceeding had a *concrete suspect*. The rest were so-called '*factual*' criminal proceedings. That is, the ratio between all cases and cases with concrete suspects was 8.

Here, we have visual additional – current *criminological* – evidence of the *anti-state orientation* of the political regime in Ukraine that was overthrown in 2014. A big country in the centre of Europe with great potential, having a dangerous neighbour to the East, could not have such performance indicators of the Security Service of Ukraine and other LEA.

Immediately after the 2014 Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of Crimea, the occupation of Eastern Ukraine by Russia and before the start of a full-scale armed invasion of Russia in 2022 – and regardless of which President was in power – both the number of registered crimes and the number of criminal proceedings with suspicion had the same ratio (*Figure 100*).

5998 crimes against national security were registered in 2024 (2477 criminal proceedings with suspects).

At the same time, 3375 crimes against national security were registered in six months of 2025 (1229 criminal proceedings with suspects).

3816 crimes against national security were registered in seven months of 2025 (1447 criminal proceedings with suspects).

Moreover, 4227 crimes against national security were registered in eight months of 2025 (1645 criminal proceedings with suspects). (*Figure 101*).

¹⁵⁹ **Dmytro Yagunov**, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

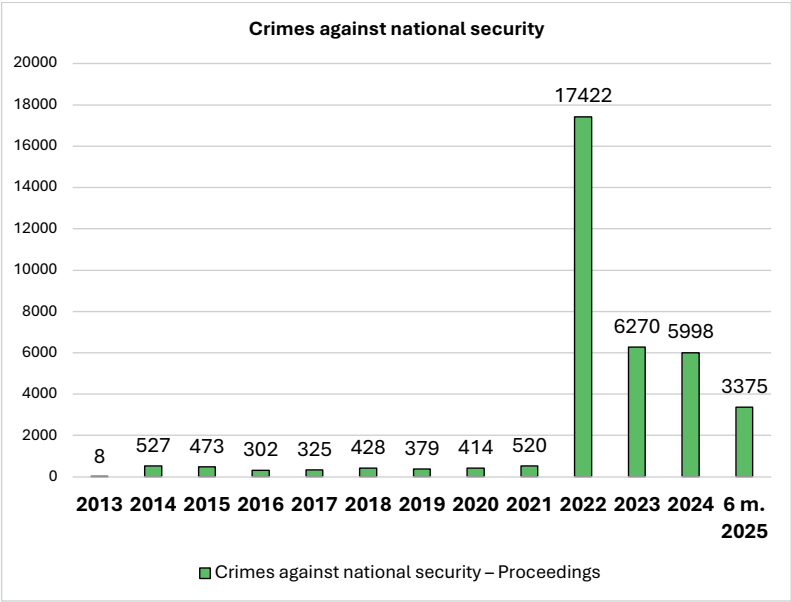


Figure 100. Crimes against national security

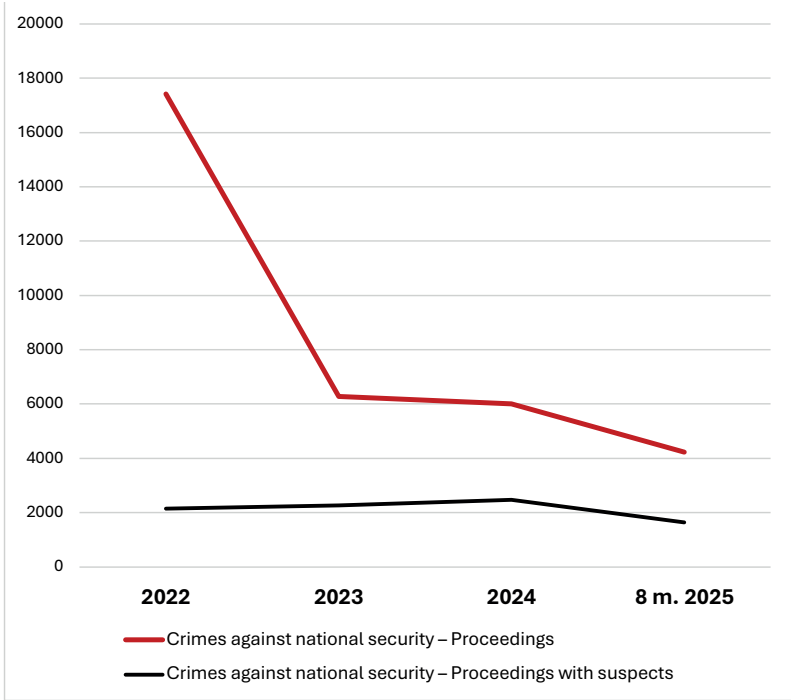


Figure 101. Crimes against national security

CRIMES IN THE SPHERE OF PROTECTION OF STATE SECRETS, INVIOABILITY OF STATE BORDERS, PROVISION OF CONSCRIPTION AND MOBILIZATION¹⁶⁰

It was clearly expected that the 2022 Russian armed invasion would bring a serious increase in the numbers of military forces of Ukraine and transportation of military units within Ukrainian territory.

Consequently, it was clearly expected that the 2022 Russian armed invasion would bring an increase in the numbers of *crimes in the sphere of protection of state secrets, inviolability of state borders, provision of conscription and mobilization*.

As a result, as we can observe, the number of the above crimes in 2022 is 2,6 times bigger as compared with 2021. However, the number of the above crimes in 2023 is 2,3 times bigger as compared with 2022 (1000, 2624 and 6279 crimes correspondingly) (*Figure 102*).

In 2024, the number of crimes in this category increased even more.

In 2024, 7865 criminal proceedings were registered, of which 4413 resulted in charges being brought against concrete perpetrators.

In six months of 2025, 4008 criminal proceedings were registered, with charges being brought against concrete perpetrators in 2040 cases.

However, in seven months of 2025, 4454 criminal proceedings were registered, with charges being brought against concrete perpetrators in 2264 cases.

A special look should be paid to the crime of *illegal trafficking of persons across the state border of Ukraine* (Article 332 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine).

¹⁶⁰ **Dmytro Yagunov**, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University); **Oleksandr Leshchenko**, Associate Professor of the Department of Constitutional, International Law and Public Law Disciplines (Kyiv University of Intellectual Property and Law), Managing Partner of Leshchenko & Partners Law Firm, Associate Professor, Attorney at Law, Ph.D in Law; **Valentyna Yurchenko**, Attorney at Law

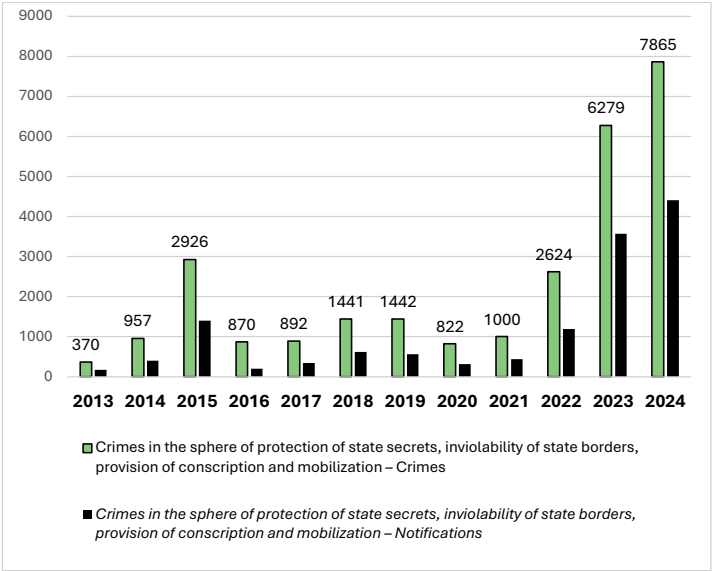


Figure 102. Crimes in the sphere of protection of state secrets, inviolability of state borders, provision of conscription and mobilization

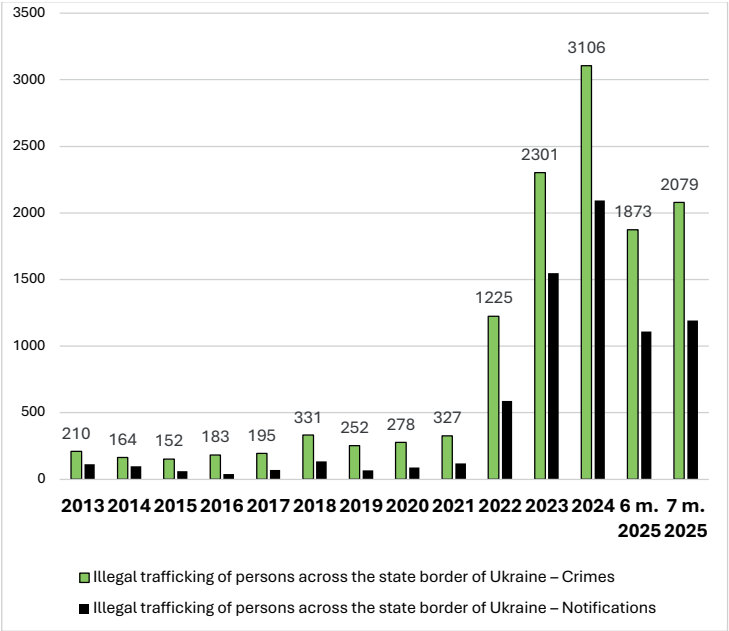


Figure 103. Illegal trafficking of persons across the state border

The police registered only 327 such crimes in 2021. However, the War stimulated a rapid increase in such crimes when 1225 crimes were registered in 2022. Moreover, 2301 crimes were registered in 2023, and 3106 crimes were registered in 2024.

Even in the period of 6 months of 2025, 1873 criminal proceedings were registered, where suspects were found in 1111 criminal proceedings.

However, even in the period of 7 months of 2025, 2079 criminal proceedings were registered, where suspects were found in 1193 criminal proceedings. That means that in the period of 7 months of 2025, 67% of crimes of illegal trafficking of individuals across the state border were committed, as compared with the whole year of 2024.

In order to provide answers that reflect the real situation in the field of protection of the state border of Ukraine – both before the full-scale war and during the War – it is necessary to consider the crime statistics under Article 419 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (*Violation of the rules of border service*).

Between January 1, 2013, and June 30, 2025, 169 criminal proceedings were initiated under Article 419 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. However, only 11 criminal proceedings resulted in charges being brought. In other words, only 6.5% of criminal proceedings under this article had any prospect of reaching court.

At the same time, it is necessary to analyse another indicator of the structure of crime, which also concerns the state border of Ukraine, namely *the illegal transportation of persons across the state border of Ukraine* (Article 332 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine).

Between January 1, 2013, and June 30, 2025, 10597 criminal proceedings were initiated under this article. In 6140 criminal proceedings, individuals were notified of suspicion, which is 58%.

It is worth comparing these two indicators.

It is obvious that 169 criminal proceedings under Article 419 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine and 10595 criminal proceedings under Article 332 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine constitute a more than significant difference, indicating a clear disproportion in the punitive approach to border guards and ordinary citizens, who are the main targets of criminal repression in terms of violations of the rules for crossing the state border of Ukraine.

Furthermore, it can be presumed that over the past ten years, the state has created an informal system of indulgences for its agents for violations of the rules by these agents.

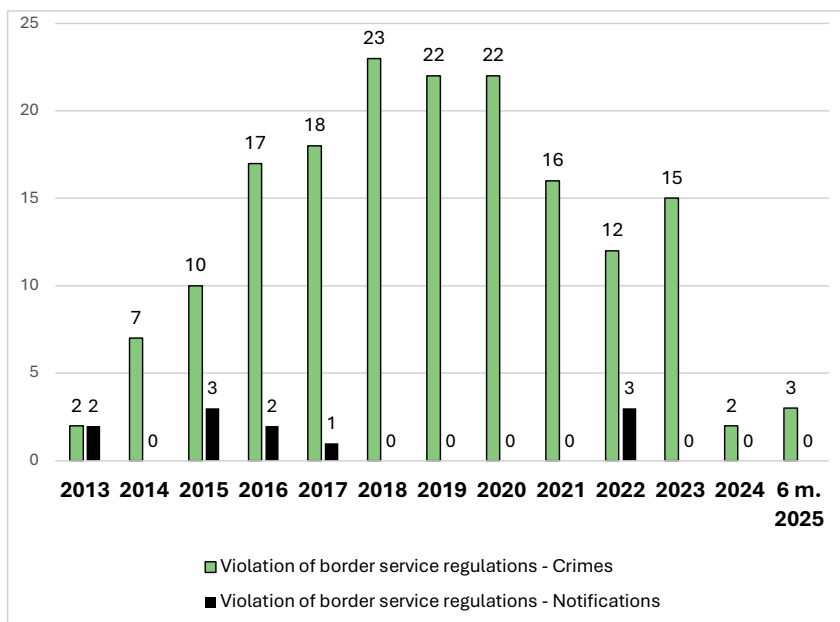


Figure 104. Violation of border service regulations

At the same time, this cannot be said about ordinary citizens. Moreover, it should be emphasised that Article 332 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (*Illegal transportation of persons across the state border of Ukraine*) has a relatively low level of latency. Usually, persons are brought to justice based on the detected fact of illegal border crossing. Therefore, the fact that only 58% of criminal proceedings under Article 332 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine result in a notification of suspicion indicates the presence of a significant corruption component in the activities of border guards, who are *the main providers of evidence* for the police investigators in corresponding criminal proceedings.

It should be added that, according to statistics from the Supreme Court, in 2023, only 191 persons were convicted under Article 332 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, although 2301 criminal proceedings were opened in 2023. In 2024, 247 persons were convicted, although 3106 criminal proceedings were initiated in 2023.

At the same time, in 2023, Ukrainian courts applied special confiscation in only 10 criminal cases, and in 2024, in only 9 criminal cases, which also adds to the overall picture of a systemic crisis in the protection of Ukraine's state border.

CRIMES AGAINST JUSTICE¹⁶¹

During the War, *crimes against justice* have mostly gone into the shadows in Ukraine.

Police statistics demonstrate a rapid decrease in crimes against justice (more than two times as compared with 2021) although we tend to analyse such a decrease in the light of factual sabotage of the LEA in registering such crimes: 7198 crimes in 2021, 3663 crimes in 2022, 5308 crimes in 2023, and 7369 crimes in 2024 (*Figure 105*).

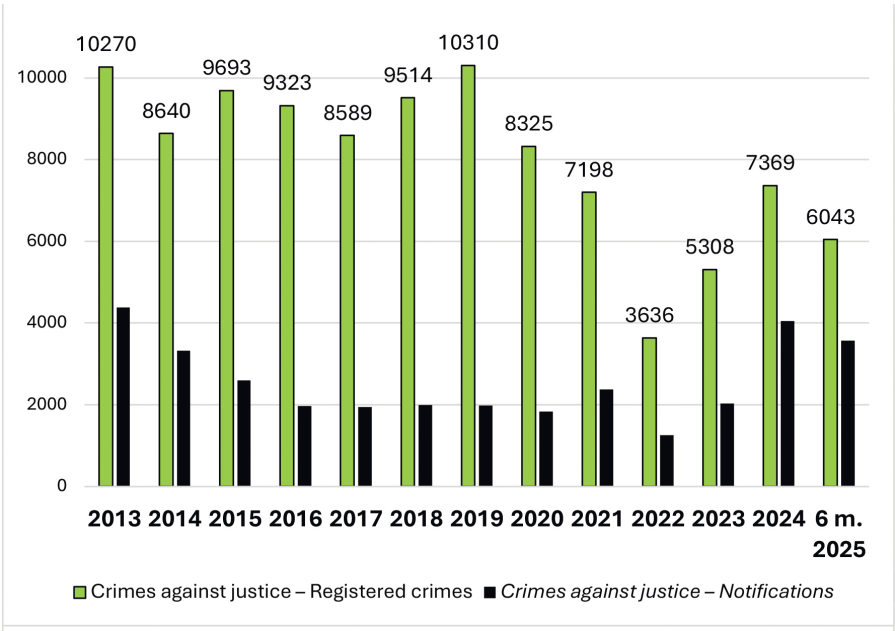
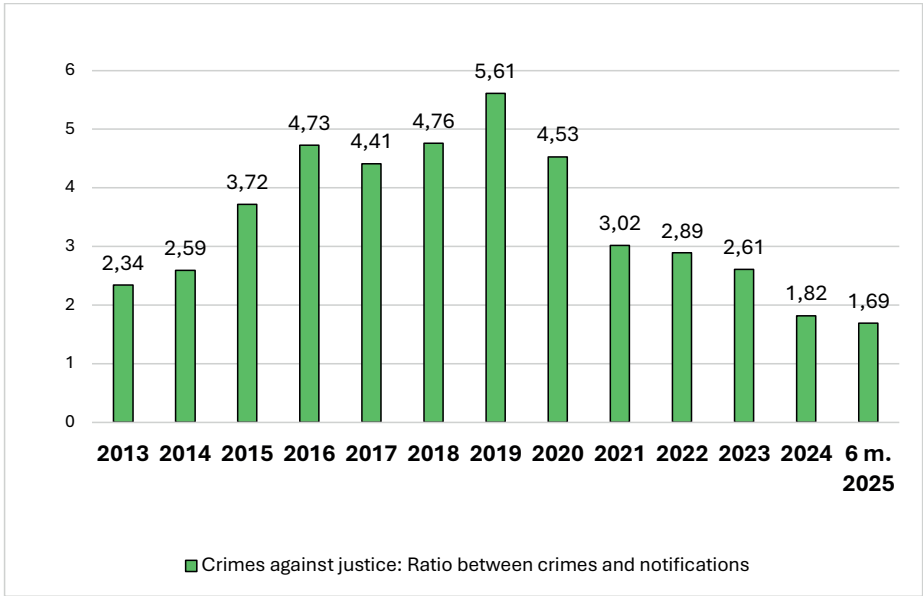


Figure 105. Crimes against justice

This means that in the first six months of 2025 alone, crimes against justice were committed in Ukraine in a number representing 82% of the total number of similar crimes committed in the whole of 2024.

¹⁶¹ **Dmytro Yagunov**, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

At the same time, the ratio between the number of crimes against justice and the number of suspects in related criminal proceedings decreased (*Figure 106*).



**Figure 106. Crimes against justice:
ratio between crimes and notifications**

Intentional Non-Execution of the Court Decisions

Non-execution of court decisions remains a chronic problem of the Ukrainian justice system, which was repeatedly noted by the Council of Europe and the ECtHR.

If 2021 was an exception, then during the entire period of 2013-2024, the number of criminal proceedings opened under Article 382 of the Criminal Code, fluctuated at approximately the same level, heaving reached the highest position in 2019 (4212 registered crimes against justice), after which the number of registered crimes against justice of the mentioned type started to consistently decrease.

In 2023, the police registered 2065 crimes.

In 2024, the police registered even more crimes (3537 criminal proceedings).

However, even the first 6 months of 2025 demonstrated even more crimes of intentional non-execution of the court decisions (3703 criminal proceedings, where notes of suspecting were given in 2302 criminal proceedings).

Moreover, the first 7 months of 2025 demonstrated even more crimes of intentional non-execution of the court decisions (4221 criminal proceedings, where notes of suspecting were given in 2610 criminal proceedings).

Such trends, which are not immediately apparent in the overall picture of crime in Ukraine, nevertheless indicate dangerous crisis phenomena in the country, where war, in addition to its direct impact on people, property, and infrastructure, also has an additional profound erosive effect on the justice system, which, again, significantly undermines statehood.

On the other hand, applying the classic approach that crime within certain limits (both upper and lower) is a *normal* social phenomenon, one can conclude about the extent to which the 2022 Russian aggression has *hit* the justice system in Ukraine, significantly destroying what had been worked on for years both Presidents of Ukraine, legislators, executive power, international and national experts, international and national NGOs (*Figure 107*).

However, the number of crimes registered in 2022 indicates the objective and obvious priorities of wartime society, and here we have a *dualistic trend*.

On the one hand, we have a record low number of registered crimes under Article 382 of the Criminal Code, where such a few registered crimes do *not* at all indicate an improvement in the situation in the field of execution of court decisions.

On the other hand, we have an interesting situation.

Thus, since 2017, there has been a consistent trend of decreasing the ratio between the number of registered crimes and the number of criminal proceedings with concrete suspects. That is, there were reasonable suspicions, and we assume that there were grounds for them. That is, the criminal justice system began functioning better.

Since 2022, there has been a sharp upward jump in this indicator, which reflects how deeply destabilized the Ukrainian justice system has

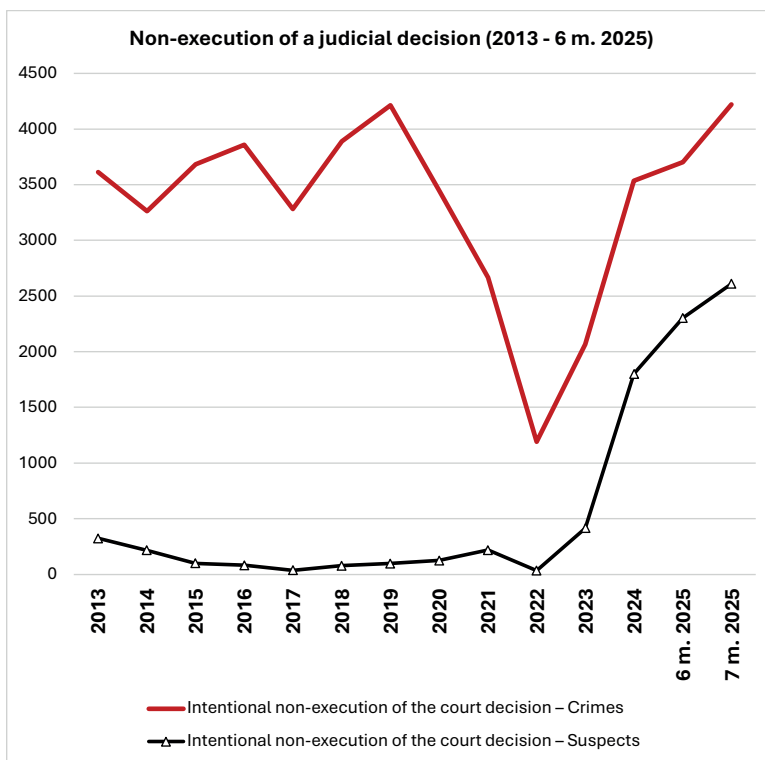


Figure 107. Intentional non-execution of a judicial decision

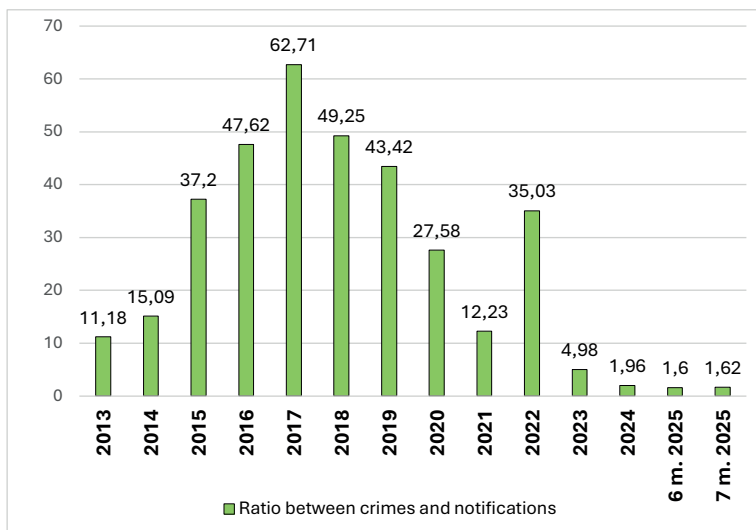


Figure 108. Non-execution of a judicial decision: ratio between crimes and notifications

become due to the escalation of the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine (*Figure 108*).

Registering crimes under Article 382 of the Criminal Code has become *much easier*, and even in already registered criminal proceedings, as police statistics prove, there are *no* prospects. Crimes under Article 382 of the Criminal Code have become much *more latent*.

Independence of judges of any democratic state is one of the pillars of the sustainable development and protection of human rights. Interference in the work of the judiciary is defined as a crime in the Article 376 of the Criminal Code.

Pursuant to the first paragraph of the Article 376, interference in any form with the activities of a judge with the aim of obstructing the performance of his/her official duties or obtaining an unjust decision shall be punishable by a fine of one thousand to four thousand tax-free minimum incomes, or correctional labour for up to two years, or probationary supervision for up to three years.

Pursuant to the second paragraph of the Article 376, the same actions, if they prevented the prevention of a criminal offence or detention of the person who committed it, or were committed by a person using his/her official position shall be punishable by deprivation of the right to occupy certain positions or engage in certain activities for a term of up to five years, or probationary supervision for a term of up to five years, or imprisonment for a term of up to three years.

In the light of the numerous complaints of Ukrainian judges on interference in their independence, it is very surprising that in 2019 there were 168 crimes registered with zero criminal proceedings with the concrete suspects.

In 2020, there were only 143 crimes with 2 suspects.

In 2021, there were only 122 crimes with no suspects.

In 2022, there were only 64 crimes with 2 suspects.

In 2023, there were only 102 crimes with no suspects.

In 2024, there were only 98 crimes with 0 suspects.

In the period of 6 months of 2026, there were only 66 crimes with 0 suspects.

Finally, in the period of 7 months of 2026, there were only 81 crimes with 0 suspects.

To sum up, for the last six years, 697 actions were declared as crimes of interference in the work of the judiciary. However, only 6 criminal proceedings of the last four years had concrete suspects.

The answer could lie in two areas. First, it can be concerned with the absence of the proper investigations by the corresponding LEAs. Second, it could be concerned with the false evaluation of the conflict situations by the judges who, as usual, initiate such criminal proceedings.

These crimes are not latent as compared to other crimes. Therefore, the key may lie in proper evaluation of situations by judges to avoid stigmatising with the label of ‘crime’ the actions which could be of a conflict nature during the court proceeding or concerned with sometimes emotional expression of thoughts by parties during the trial.

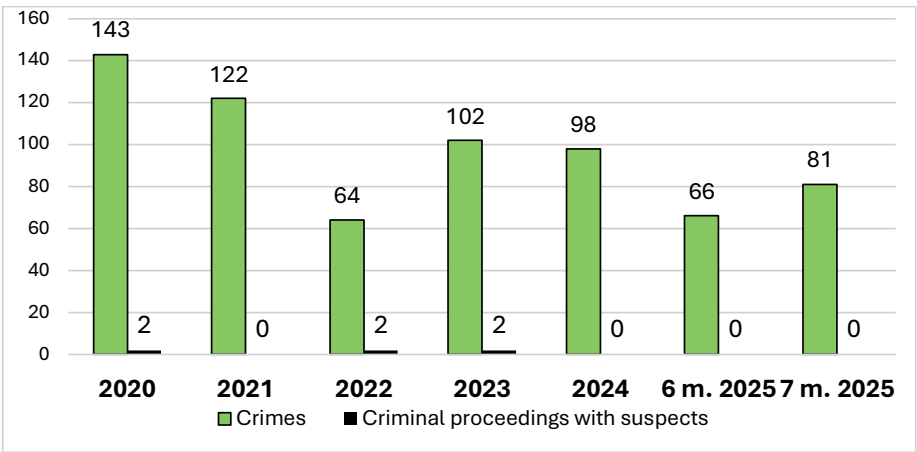


Figure 109. Interference in the work of the judiciary

This means that in the first six months of 2025 alone, crimes of interference in the work of the judiciary were committed in Ukraine in a number representing 67% of the total number of similar crimes committed in 2024.

This also means that in the first seven months of 2025 alone, crimes of interference in the work of the judiciary were committed in Ukraine in a number representing 83% of the total number of similar crimes committed in 2024.

CRIMES AGAINST PUBLIC SERVICES¹⁶²

Here, we provide an analysis of the police statistics related to Section XVII of the Criminal Code (*'Criminal offences in the area of official and professional activity related to the provision of public services'*), which are following:

- abuse of authority or office (Article 364);
- abuse of power by an official of a legal entity of private law, regardless of the organizational and legal form (Article 364-1);
- excess of authority or official powers by a law enforcement officer (Article 365);
- abuse of power by persons providing public services (Article 365-2);
- forgery in office (Article 366), neglect of official duty (Article 367);
- accepting an offer, promise or receiving an improper advantage by an official (Article 368);
- unlawful enrichment (Article 368-2);
- bribery of an official of a legal entity of private law, regardless of the organizational and legal form (Article 368-3);
- abuse of influence (Article 369-2);
- provocation of bribery (Article 370);
- others.

A significant decrease in *crimes against public services* points to the fact that most of such crimes have gone into the shadows (*Figure 110*).

The police statistics is the following:

- 18330 crimes were registered in 2021 (5874 criminal proceedings with suspects);

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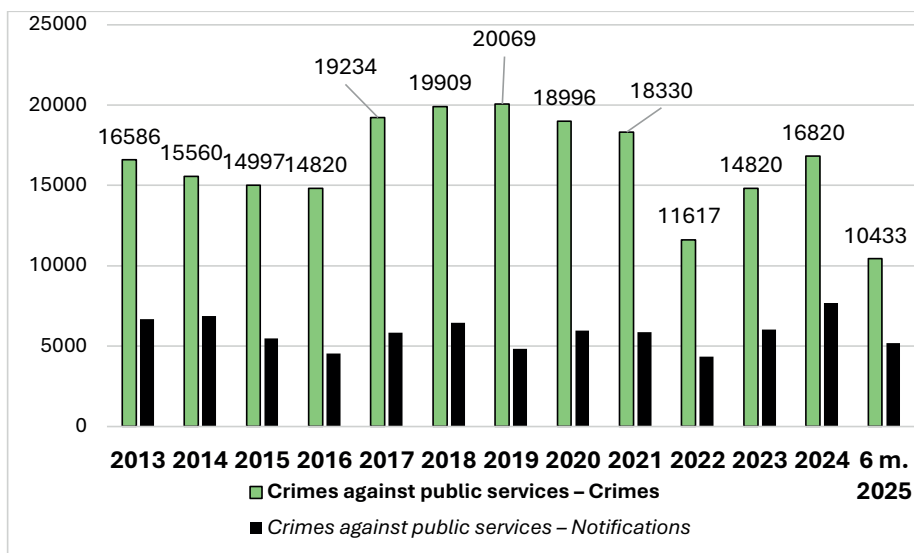


Figure 110. Crimes against public services

– 11617 crimes were registered in 2022 (4355 criminal proceedings with suspects);

– 14820 crimes were registered in 2023 (6048 criminal proceedings with suspects);

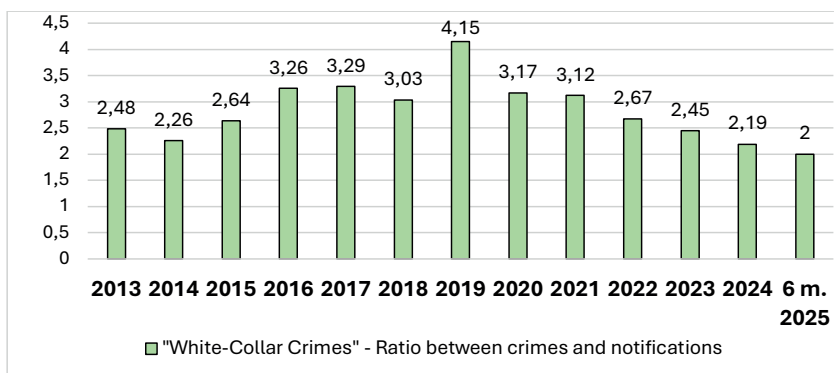
– 16820 crimes were registered in 2024 (7682 criminal proceedings with suspects);

– 10433 crimes were registered in first six months of 2024 (5205 criminal proceedings with suspects);

Crimes against public services are very latent ones by nature but the 2022 Russian armed invasion made them *less* latent, which is surprising (*Figure 111*).

In 2022, crimes of receiving a bribe have also gone into the shadows: 1566 registered crimes in 2021, and 988 registered crimes (*Figure 112*).

A crime of *bribery* reflects a *dualistic trend* – a decrease in registered ‘white-collar’ crimes and an increase in the ratio between registered crimes and the suspects in related criminal proceedings (*Figure 113*).



**Figure 111. Crimes against public services:
ratio between crimes and notifications**

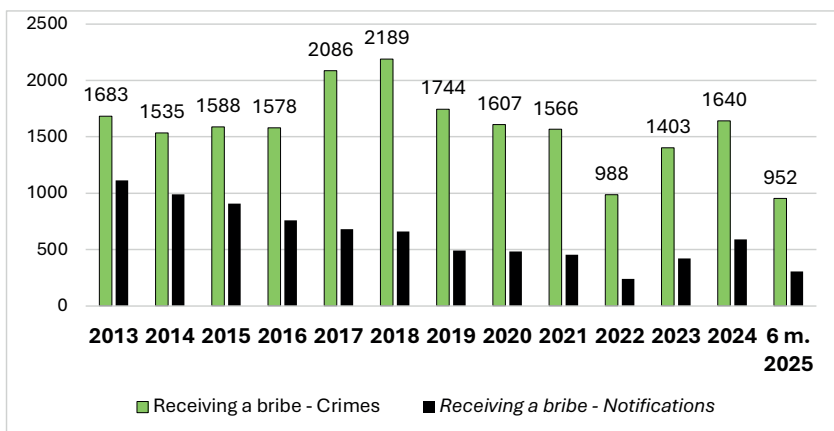


Figure 112. Receiving a bribe

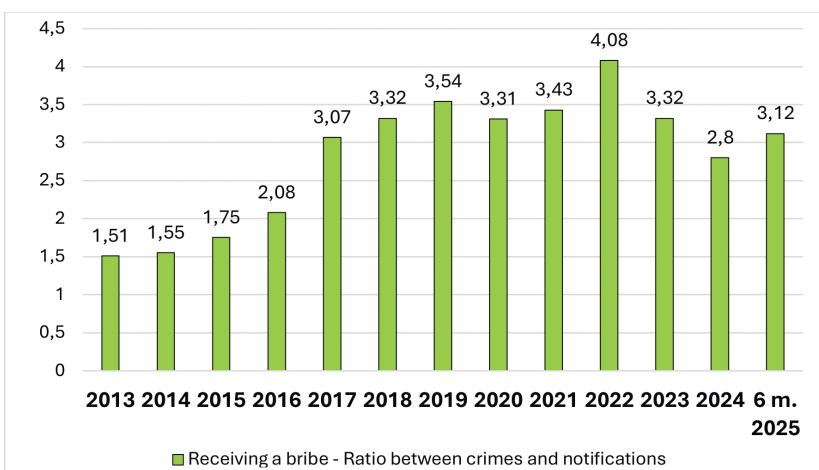


Figure 113. Receiving a bribe: ratio between registered crimes and notifications

CORPORATE RAIDING¹⁶³

In the general structure of criminality in Ukraine, a special place is occupied with crimes concerned with *corporate raiding*.

Here, we focus attention on two articles of the Criminal Code: *obstruction of legitimate economic activity* (Article 206) and *illegal seizure of property of an enterprise, institution, or organisation* (Article 206-2).

Firstly, it should be stressed that the mentioned articles are *not* concerned only with activities of big corporations. Moreover, as practice shows, they are used for the aims of prevention of illegal ‘conquests’ of *small legal entities*.

Secondly, it should be stressed that Ukraine is a big agricultural country, which supplies food to many states of the European Union. Ukraine is one of the three largest exporters of agricultural products to the EU (the USA and Brazil occupy the first places). According to the European Commission’s statistics, Ukraine has supplied production to the EU by 7 billion euros.

Therefore, the EU is interested in a *transparent and stable agricultural market* in Ukraine, which is important from the point of view of safety of products and minimizing money-laundering in the agricultural sector. At the same time, one of the most dangerous problems both for Ukrainian justice and the agricultural market is the problem of *corporate raiding*.

Of course, this is an issue *mostly of peacetime*, but at the same time, the War also exacerbates this issue as much as possible. If, in peacetime, national and local *quasi-elites* were highly interested in the existence of the *permanent* phenomenon of corporate raiding in Ukraine, then during the 2022 Russian armed aggression this phenomenon hid even more in the twilight.

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Every year the spring-summer-autumn news from Ukraine demonstrated numerous examples of corporate raiding of lands, fields, enterprises, utility premises, agricultural machinery, plants, factories etc., which is often ‘supported’ by violent actions and the use of firearms.

But what about police statistics?

Unfortunately, police statistics say *nothing* about corporate raiding in Ukraine. As a result, it *seems* that there is *no* corporate raiding in Ukraine.

Instead of corporate raiding, there is only a Soviet-style shaped ‘*unauthorised action*’ (Article 356 of the Criminal Code) which provides punishment for ‘*unauthorised action, that is doing anything contrary to the rules established by law, where the lawfulness of such acts is challenged by an individual citizen, an enterprise, institution or organisation, and where such acts caused any substantial damage to the interests of a citizen, state and public interests, or interests of the owner*’.

Let us analyse an issue of the corporate raiding in Ukraine in the light of the police statistics.

Police statistics for the last 10 years indicate that, on average, for the period 2013-2021, notes of suspicion were handed in almost 40% of *all* criminal proceedings open in Ukraine.

The same indicator for 2022 is 36,5%.

At the same time, the same indicator under Article 206 of the Criminal Code for the period of 2013-2021 is 3,64%. The same indicator for 2022 is 3,57%.

A similar indicator under Article 206-2 of the Criminal Code for the period 2014 – 2021 is 10,04% and 6,66% for the period of twelve months of 2022.

Having analysed the percentage of criminal proceedings under Articles 206 and 206-2 of the Criminal Code (in light of the total number of criminal proceedings), we receive *disappointing* conclusions, especially considering that, firstly, these crimes are *not* latent (because of the activities of the victims), and, secondly, the police investigators and prosecutors ‘*drive*’ the most crimes of corporate raiding under simple ‘*unauthorised action*’.

Here, we have another clear example that the presence in the Criminal Code related prohibitions does *not* guarantee that *quasi*-elites

will be interested in restricting themselves in the use of such an illegal source of income.

As a conclusion to this part of our criminological analysis, we should point out that the problem of corporate raiding is a ‘face’ of a broader problem of *corruption* in the field of justice and the LEA activities (Figure 114, Figure 115).

Here, we would like to take a look at the percentage of criminal proceedings with suspects.

Corporate raiding is a crime where a victim clearly defines a perpetrator. Therefore, such crimes cannot be defined as latent ones.

Criminal proceedings with suspects occupied 39,8% in 2023 and 39,5% in 2024 in general number of all criminal proceedings registered. However, criminal proceedings with suspects in crimes of obstruction

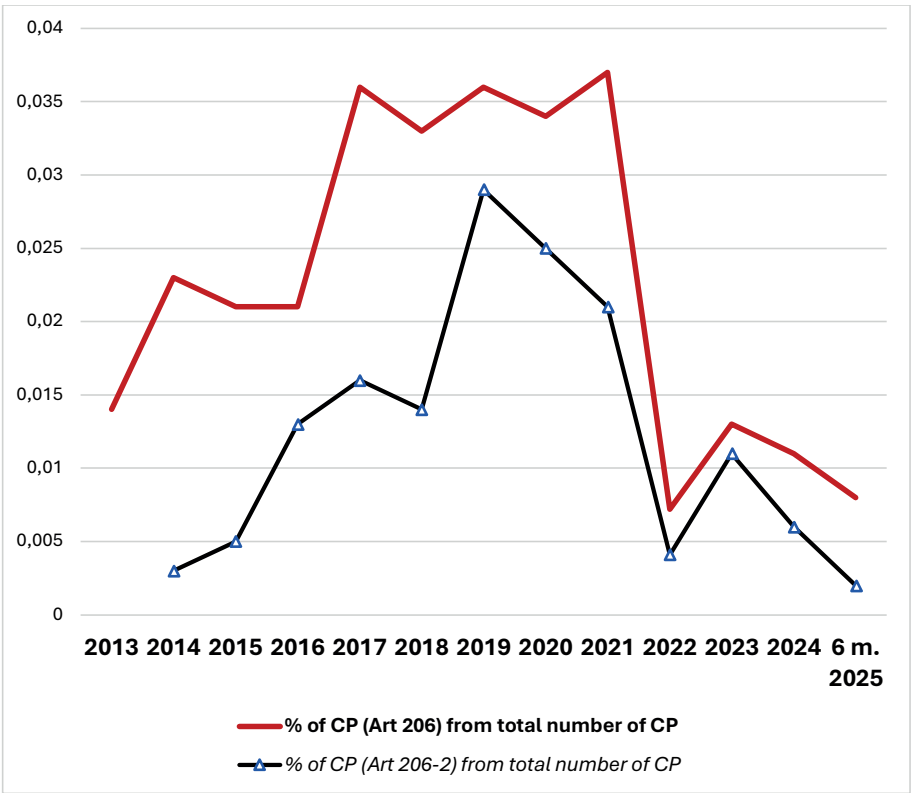


Figure 114. Corporate raiding: percentage of criminal proceedings from total number of related criminal proceedings

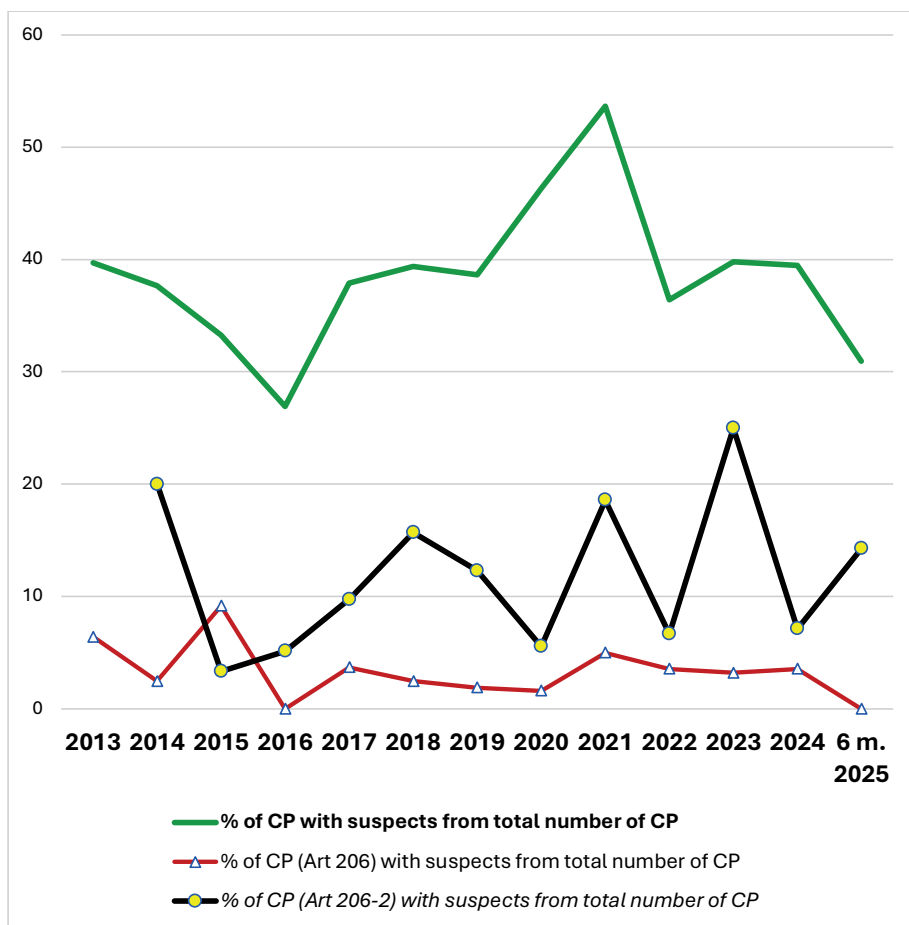


Figure 115. Corporate raiding: percentage of criminal proceedings with suspects from total number of criminal proceedings with suspects

of legitimate economic activity occupied only 3,2% and 3,5% in general number of all criminal proceedings registered pursuant to Article 206 of the Criminal Code. Accordingly, criminal proceedings with suspects in crimes of illegal seizure of property of an enterprise, institution, or organisation occupied only 25% and 7,1% in general number of all criminal proceedings registered pursuant to Article 206 of the Criminal Code. The answer lies in systematic failures in investigation of such crimes because of the corruption in the LEA.

HOOLIGANISM¹⁶⁴

No less interesting for the aims of the analysis of the criminological situation in Ukraine is the crime of *hooliganism* (according to Article 296 of the Criminal Code – ‘*a serious disturbance of public order based on motives of explicit disrespect to community in a most outrageous or exceptionally cynical manner*’) which can be used as an example of impacts of harsh wartime restrictions with curfews, military and the police patrols as well as roadblocks on *normal* social life.

Generally concluding, criminal acts of hooliganism have had a permanent trend to decrease for the last ten years when the 2021 restrictions resulting from the COVID pandemic should also be noted.

In 2022, a particular decrease of acts of hooliganism should be considered because of the next Russian military invasion. If, in 2021, acts of hooliganism were widely prevented by closing public spaces (shopping centres, cinemas, public transport etc.), the COVID pandemic was almost ‘*forgotten*’ by the general population at the end of February 2022. Accordingly, the end of February 2022 has led to harsher physical restrictions on *possible* actions aimed at violation of public order (*Figure 116*).

In general, 1939 crimes of hooliganism were registered in 2021, 1133 crimes in 2022, 1322 in 2023, and 1434 crimes in 2024.

On the other hand, the number of acts of hooliganism almost disappeared from social life in February-March 2022, has appeared again in April 2022 with a trend to further increase.

Correspondingly, such a trend should be considered an indicator of a partial *stabilization* of social life in Ukraine, mostly in areas far from the front line.

Certainly, the last two months of 2022 will prove (or not) such a hypothesis. At least data for 2022 has given reasonable grounds to shape it in the above form.

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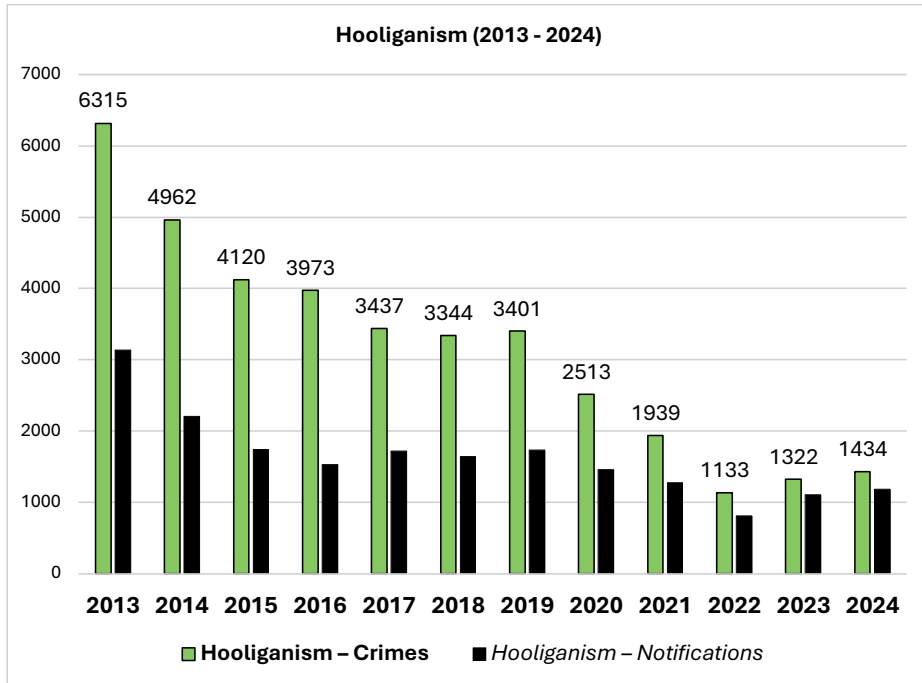


Figure 116. Hooliganism: registered crimes and notifications

On the other hand, one more conclusion could be drawn from the above situation described. Yes, the number of acts of hooliganism dropped to a particular extent due to the harshest social control measures in Ukrainian history. For example, comparative analysis of crimes of hooliganism for ten months of 2021 and 2022 shows that the number of detected acts of hooliganism decreased.

Nevertheless, the drop was not too insignificant to make a statement that the harshest police restrictions have resulted in decreasing such acts to a minimum level that could be expected from a point of view of proponents of harsher police control over society.

Smuggling from Ukraine to the rest of Europe has been an obvious problem for the stability of public order in the EU for a long time. Therefore, *crimes of smuggling* are no fewer interesting cases for researching the impact of the War because they reflect the state of *protection of the borders* of Ukraine, which, in its turn, reflects the general potential of the *State* to keep its territory safe.

The Ukrainian police statistics show that the crime of smuggling had occupied a permanent segment in the general structure of the Ukrainian police until 2022.

In the period of 2016-2021, there has been an increase in detected crimes of smuggling with its highest point of 135 crimes in 2021 (*Figure 117*).

In 2021, 151 criminal proceedings were registered. However, 71 criminal proceedings were registered in 2023, 125 proceedings were registered in 2023, and 151 proceedings registered in 2024.

Here, it should be noted that in 2018, the Criminal Code was supplemented with Article 201-1 according to the Law '*On the introduction of amendments to some legislative acts of Ukraine regarding the preservation of Ukrainian forests and the prevention of the illegal export of unprocessed timber*' which has stated a criminal liability for *smuggling of timber*. Therefore, in this paper, data for 2020-2024 also reflect the numbers of both crimes of smuggling – the '*classical*' one and the *smuggling of timber*.

Additionally, we would like to make a conclusion that seems to be of great importance in the context of analysis of smuggling in a broader context of Ukrainian criminality.

For the period of 2013-2021, the average ratio between all detected crimes of smuggling (including so-called '*factual cases*') and criminal proceedings with concrete suspects was 2,25.

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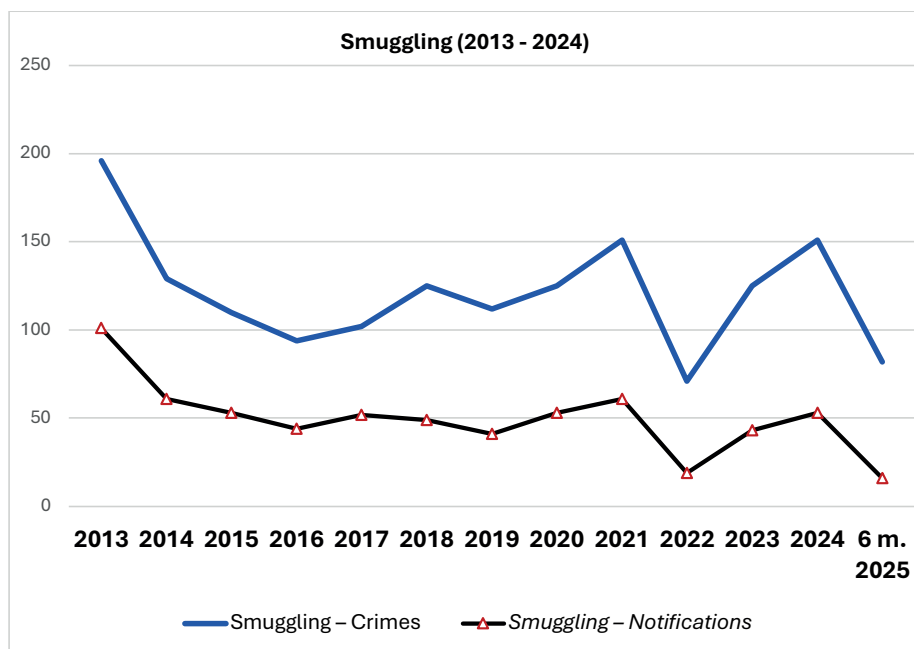


Figure 117. Smuggling: registered crimes and notifications

In 2022, the same indicator increased to 3,74 (that is 1,7 times higher).

Considering the fact that crimes of smuggling are often concerned with concrete persons who are crossing the border with smuggled goods, such a state of things poses reasonable questions concerning the effectiveness of the LEA.

Moreover, in the wartime period when all law-enforcement bodies operate in a state of a heightened alertness, such a gap between the mentioned indicators seems to be of an *artificial nature* (Figure 118).

Here, we would also like to analyse crimes of *smuggling of drugs*.

Drug-related offences have already been analysed in a separate chapter of this paper. Nevertheless, here, a focus is made not on drugs but mostly on *smuggling*. Therefore, both crimes – smuggling and smuggling of drugs – are discussed together in a broader context of *immovability of the state borders of Ukraine* in the wartime period.

The first conclusion that could be drawn from statistics is that the number of detected crimes of smuggling of drugs decreased (183 criminal proceedings in 2021, 115 proceedings in 2022, 145 proceedings in 2023, 201 proceedings in 2024) (Figure 119 , Figure 120).

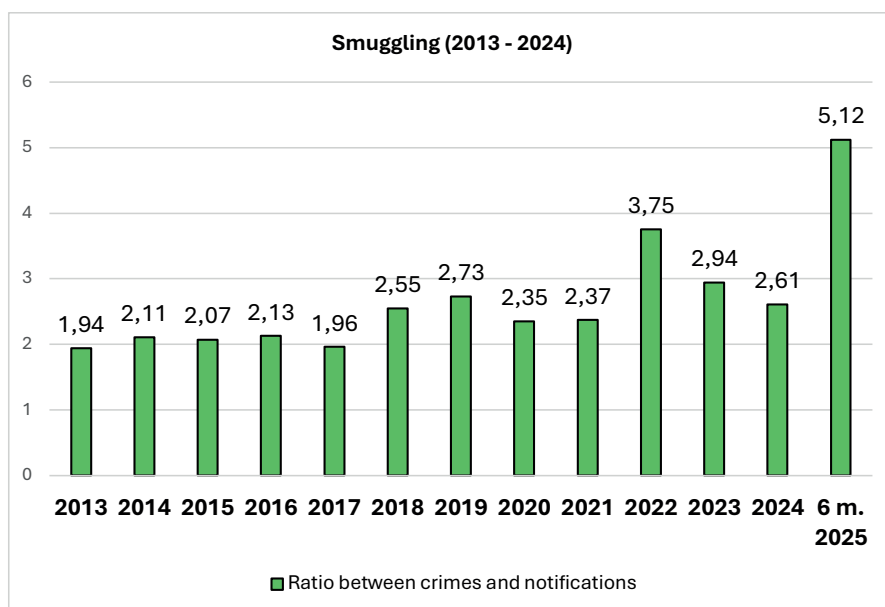


Figure 118. Smuggling: ratio between crimes and notifications

In the first 6 months of the 2025, 112 crimes of a such type were registered (62 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects) what is 56% from the total number of crimes registered in 2024.

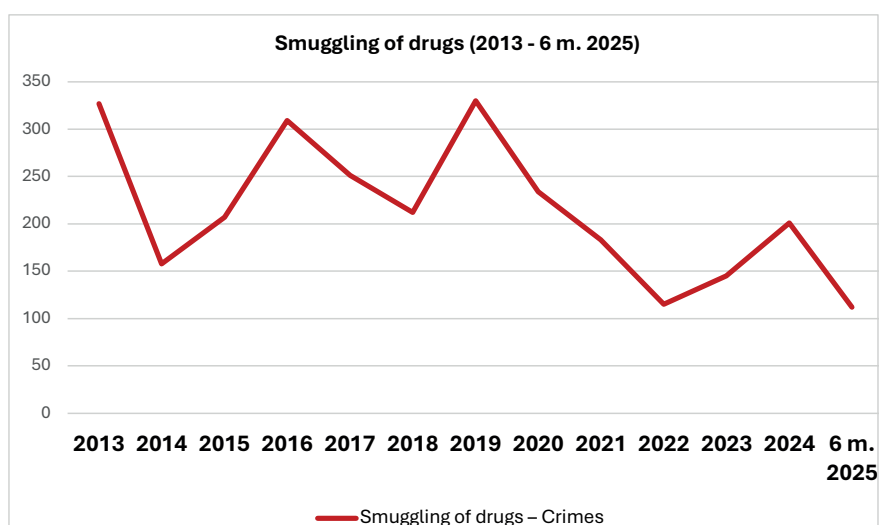


Figure 119. Smuggling of drugs: criminal proceedings

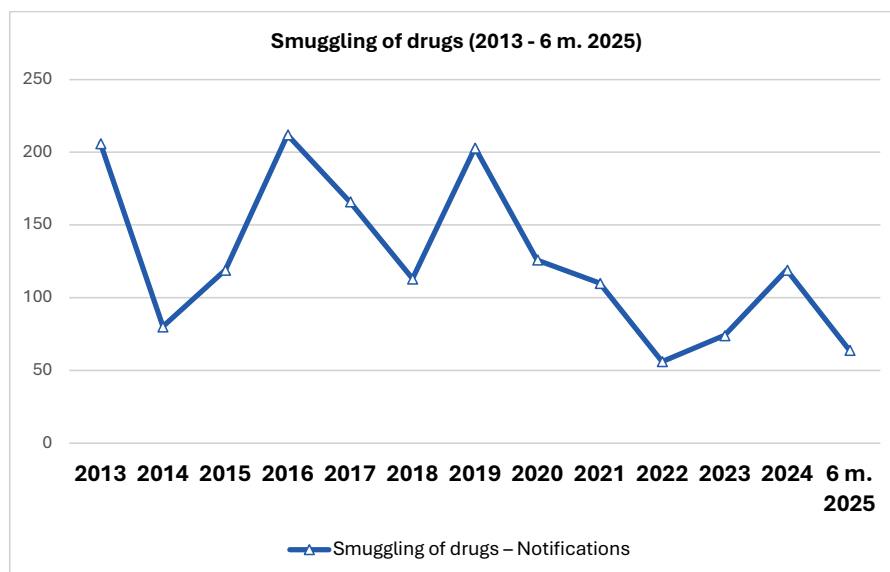


Figure 120. Smuggling of drugs: criminal proceedings with suspects

As in the previous example with smuggling, in the *period of 2013-2021*, the average ratio between detected crimes (so called ‘*factual*’) and criminal proceedings with concrete suspects was 1,55. In 2022-2024, the same indicator increased to 1,9 (*Figure 121*).

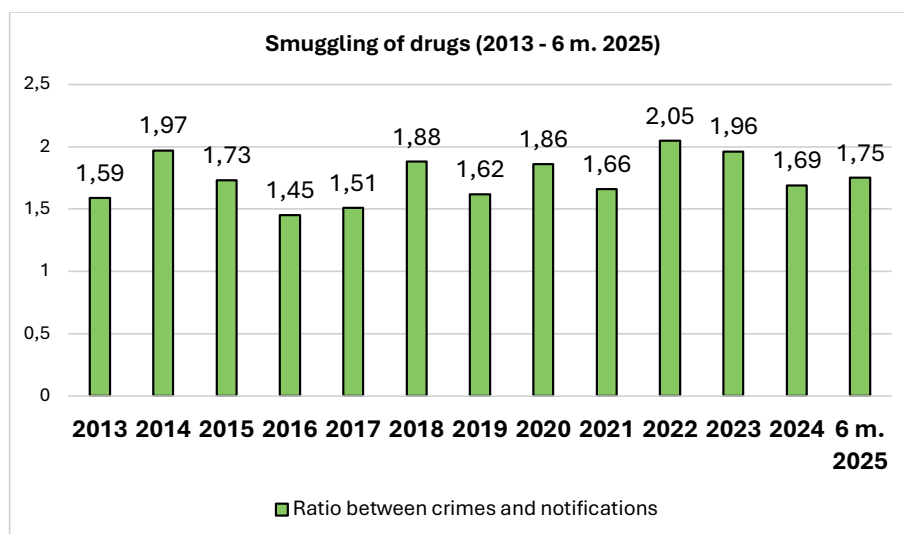


Figure 121. Smuggling of drugs: ratio between crimes and notifications

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SATELLITE CRIMES¹⁶⁶

About 14 million people, or 35% of the population, have been forced to flee their homes in Ukraine. Displacement can increase the vulnerability of people to trafficking in persons. In Ukraine, some criminal groups have exploited these populations to take advantage of welfare subsidies intended for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. Some other displaced populations in Ukraine are lured into shelters or accommodations disguised as humanitarian assistance providers, where they are then subjected to forced labour¹⁶⁷.

According to general stereotypes, which are *not* far from reality, Ukraine has traditionally been used as a *transit country* for the aims of human trafficking. In its recent judgment of 16 February 2021 in *V.C.L. and A.N. v. the United Kingdom* (applications nos. 77587/12 and 74603/12), the European Court of Human Rights pointed at the similarities in the route to the United Kingdom taken by the victims of human trafficking where *Ukraine* was defined as a *transit country* to Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany and France.

What is stressed in declarations of many political leaders from the EU, Ukraine and other Europeans states that the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has handed the future of many Ukrainian women and children over to criminal elements because of the chaos in Ukraine that took place in the first period of the 2022 War.

The author's personal sources prove that some humanistic initiatives of several NGOs and individuals on bringing Ukrainian refugees to new homes or at least safe places in the states of the EU were halted because

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¹⁶⁷ UNODC (2025). War transforming Ukraine's criminal landscape, causing economic and social damage. *UNODC*. 18 July 2025. Source: www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2025/July/unodc_war_transforming_ukraines_criminal_landscape_creating_economic_and_social_damage.htm

new ‘opportunities’ of sheltering were proposed by persons who can be arguably suspected in human trafficking and forced labour.

On the other hand, in academic sources, the authors rightly assert that shaped in mass-media imagination about ‘*an innocent victim*’ of human trafficking, in fact, does not meet the reality¹⁶⁸.

Accordingly, the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has moved the concept of ‘*innocent victim*’ of human trafficking more far from the reality.

It is generally accepted that human trafficking is mostly a *well-organized criminal activity* which demands different forms of criminal ‘*cooperation*’ among perpetrators *in different border states*. At the same time, with the beginning of the 2022 War, trying to control the wave of refugees, the Ukrainian Government severely restricted border crossing for *males* while *males* were mostly involved in this criminal activity.

On the other hand, a new slave market was opened in the occupied Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine, obviously under informal authorization and control of the Russian regime. There is mass evidence of arbitrary arrests of not only military men but also civilians, with further putting them into a state of forced military service. Moreover, there were further informal demands of a large sum of money for each person (up to 30 thousand USD) with corresponding formal letters from Russian officials that ‘*N. resisted the Special Military Operation conducted by the Military Forces of the Russian Federation in Ukraine. Therefore, N. will be deprived of freedom for an unpredictable period until the Special Military Operation ends*’.

As far as Ukraine is concerned, police statistics show that a period of 2013 – 2016 was stable in the aspect of numbers of registered crimes of human trafficking as well as of numbers of suspects in related criminal proceedings.

In 2017, there was a rapid increase in human trafficking crimes, which slowly ended in 2021. The Ukrainian police statistics say, even in 2022, 2023 and 2024, the average number of crimes was almost the same as it was in 2013 – 2016.

However, one can conclude that the War impacted the crime rates significantly (232 crimes in 2021, 133 crimes in 2022, 147 crimes in

¹⁶⁸ Haverkamp, R. (2019). Victims of Human Trafficking: Consideration from a Crime Prevention Perspective, in ‘What is Wrong with Human Trafficking? Critical Perspectives on the Law’, R. Haverkamp, E. Herlin-Karnell and C. Lernestedt (Eds.). London: Hart, 280 p.

2023, 105 crimes in 2024) (Figure 122). At the same time, we can argue concerning a factual *increase* in THB cases considering the fact that 6,5 million Ukrainians left the country and ‘created’ new ‘opportunities’ for human traffickers.

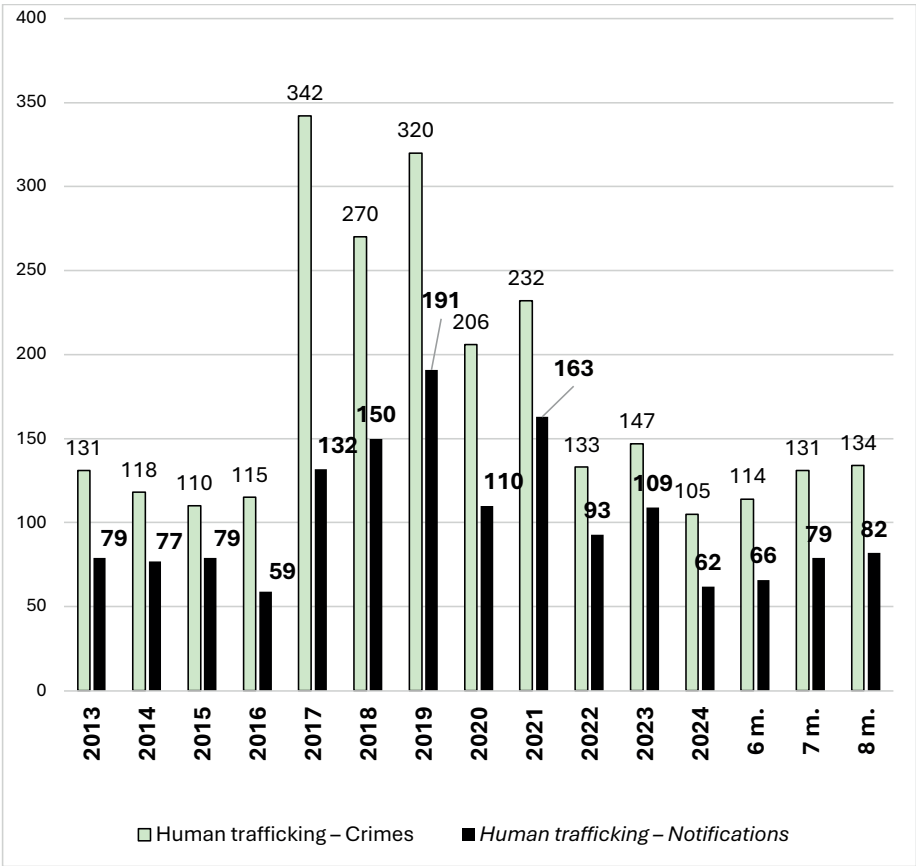


Figure 122. Human trafficking: crimes and notifications

The wartime period has given evidence that the War in Ukraine is a key driver of human trafficking. While the real number of human trafficking cases is often not known for a long time after the conflict, as victims may not recognize they are being exploited and take time to come forward – it is clear that the conflict in Ukraine has increased trafficking in the region¹⁶⁹.

¹⁶⁹ UNICRI (2022). The Conflict in Ukraine and its Impact on Organized Crime and Security. A Snapshot of Key Trends. *UNICRI*. November 2022. 50 p. P. 21.

The conflict has generated opportunities for traffickers and human smugglers (especially for undocumented migrants, given that Ukrainians can benefit from a visa-free regime for entering the EU), ranging from providing illicit services to forging documents and smuggling men of military age across the Ukrainian border (these men are banned from leaving Ukraine by the law) to abusing the vulnerable status of refugees in host countries. Of the millions who fled Ukraine, 90% are women or children – the primary and most vulnerable targets for trafficking¹⁷⁰.

What is really remarkable is the number of THB crimes registered in 6 months of 2025, which appeared much bigger than for the whole period of 2024. In 2024, 105 criminal proceedings in human trafficking were registered in Ukraine, with 62 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects.

However, in the first six months of 2025, 114 criminal proceedings in human trafficking were registered in Ukraine, with 66 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects.

It means that the number of THB crimes registered in six months of 2025 constitutes 109% as compared with the same number for 2024.

In the first seven months of 2025, 131 criminal proceedings in human trafficking were registered in Ukraine, with 79 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects. It means that the number of THB crimes registered in seven months of 2025 constitutes 125% as compared with the same number for 2024.

In the first eight months of 2025, 134 criminal proceedings in human trafficking were registered in Ukraine, with 82 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects. It means that the number of THB crimes registered in eight months of 2025 constitutes 128% as compared with the same number for 2024.

However, it is difficult to say how human trafficking was affected by the 2022 Russian invasion. On one hand, the number of registered THB crimes decreased to *zero* immediately after the Russian military forces crossed the Ukrainian border. On the other hand, serious concerns arise around the fact that THB cases continue to be registered in the light of closed borders, police checks, curfews and hundreds of military and police roadblocks.

¹⁷⁰ UNICRI (2022). The Conflict in Ukraine and its Impact on Organized Crime and Security. A Snapshot of Key Trends. *UNICRI*. November 2022. 50 p. P. 21.

At the same time, it should be pointed that 133 THB crimes in 2022, 147 THB crimes in 2023, 105 THB crimes in 2024 and even 114 crimes in 6 months of 2025 are more than *insufficient* considering 6,5 million Ukrainian refugees, which could lead to the conclusion that something is obviously *wrong* with the police intelligence in the sphere of THB prevention as well as with intelligence of the Ukrainian border service. It could be said that THB crimes are *more latent* ones than the LEA officials declare.

The factor of *corruption* should also be considered – both in the police and border service. There were many reports in numerous mass media that a '*price*' for illegally crossing the Ukrainian border varies from 2000 to 5000 USD.

The situation with '*satellite crimes*' is different.

Firstly, let us demonstrate the official statistics of a crime of *creating or running brothels and procuring*.

The period of 2013-2021 could be described as a permanent decrease in the mentioned crimes where the War '*cut*' corresponding crime trends. Even considering an increase in this type of crime in 2023 (129 registered crimes), the next year has indicated a decrease (79 crimes) (*Figure 123*).

Comparative analysis of the police statistics proves the trend of decreasing numbers of crimes of running brothels, which are traditionally considered as '*shadow crimes*' or '*satellite crimes*' in relation to THB crimes.

The same could also be said about a crime of *pimping or engaging the person in prostitution*. Even considering an increase in this type of crime in 2023 (348 registered crimes), the next year has indicated a decrease (244 crimes) (*Figure 124*).

However, in the first 6 months of 2025, 125 criminal proceeding on crimes of pimping or engaging person in prostitution were opened, with 77 criminal proceedings with suspects. This means that in the first 6 months of 2025, criminal proceedings were opened for these crimes, which is 52% of the total number of criminal proceedings opened in 2024

Moreover, in the first 7 months of 2025, 141 criminal proceeding on crimes of *pimping or engaging person in prostitution* were opened, with 83 criminal proceedings with suspects. This means that in the first 6 months of 2025, criminal proceedings were opened for these crimes, which is 58% of the total number of criminal proceedings opened in 2024.

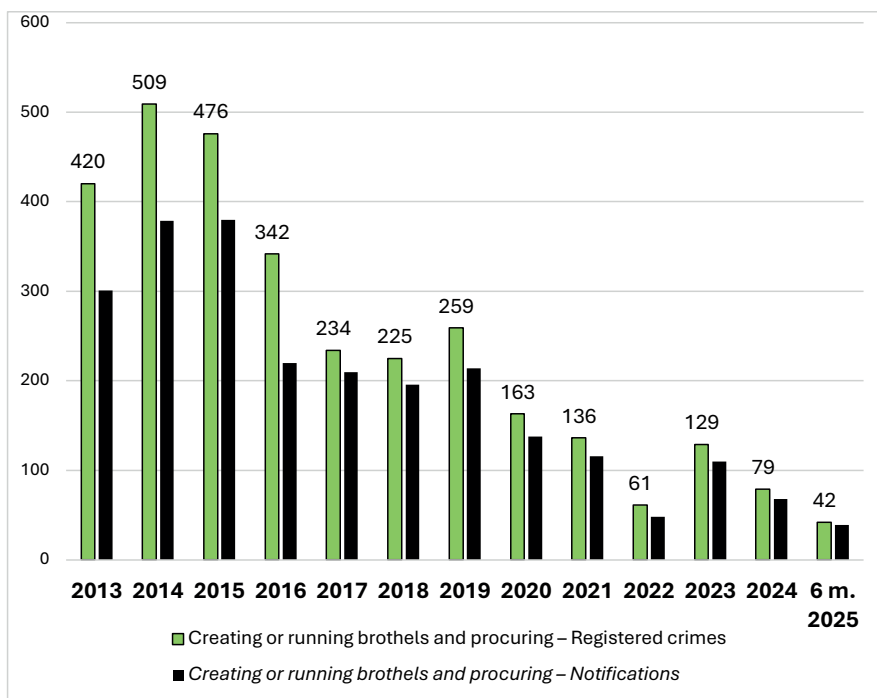


Figure 123. Creating or running brothels and procuring

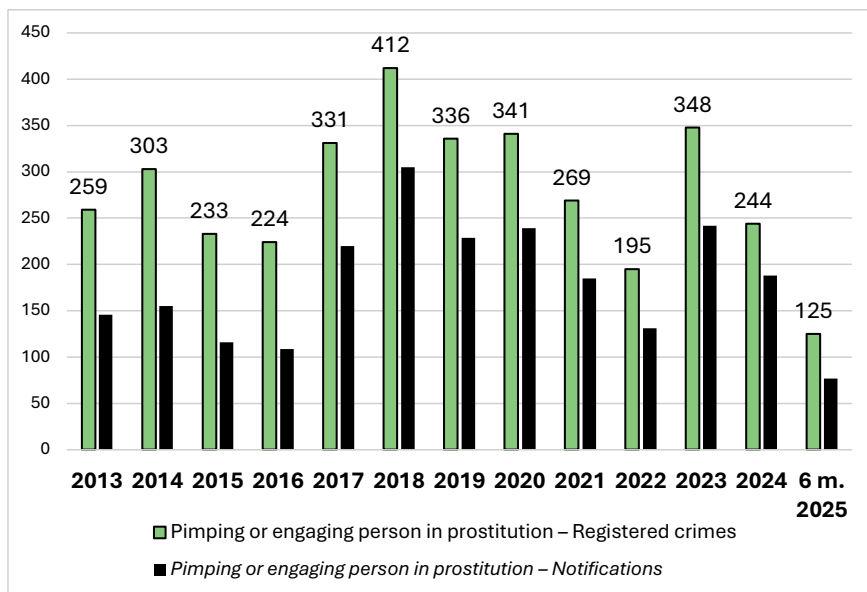


Figure 124. Pimping or engaging person in prostitution

The War cut the official rates of crime of *engaging minors in criminal activity* (Article 304 of the Criminal Code) (122 crimes in 2021, 79 crimes in 2022, 73 crimes in 2023, 91 crimes in 2024) (*Figure 125*).

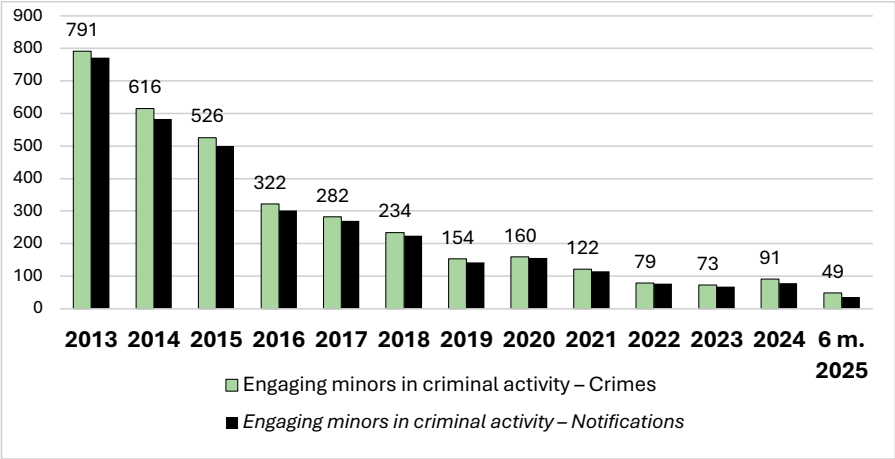


Figure 125. Engaging minors in criminal activity (Art. 304)

At the same time, it is hard to say that the War cut the official rates of crime of *use of a minor for begging* (Article 150-1 of the Criminal Code) (4 crimes in 2021, 3 crimes in 2022, 3 crimes in 2023, 1 crime in 2024) (*Figure 126*).

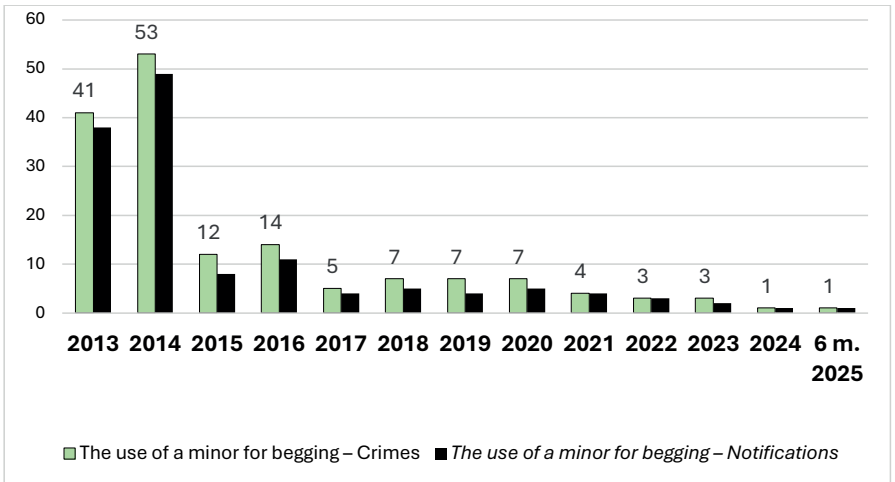


Figure 126. The use of a minor for begging (Art. 150-1)

The same could be conceded in respect of the official rates of crime of *use exploitation of children* (Article 150 of the Criminal Code) (4 crimes in 2021, 3 crimes in 2022, 3 crimes in 2023, 1 crime in 2024) (Figure 127).

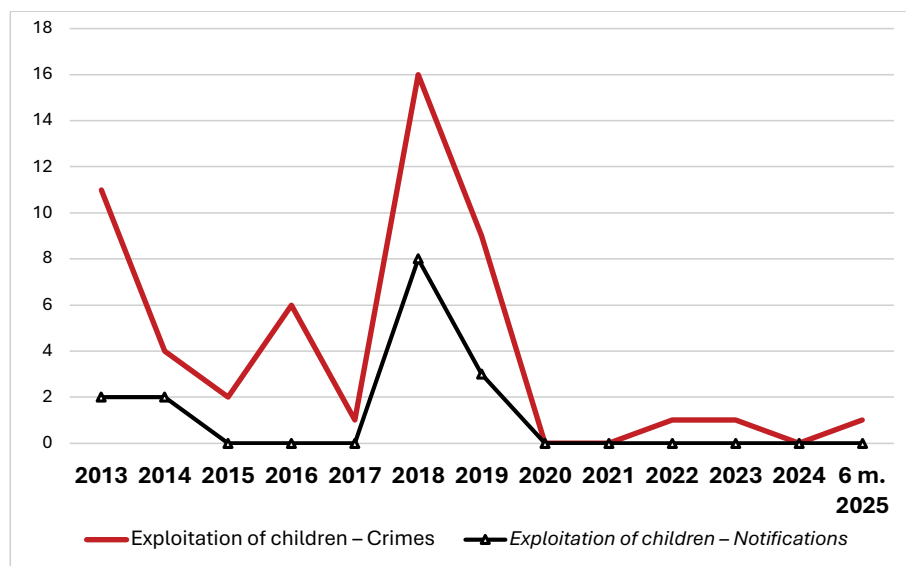


Figure 127. Exploitation of children (Art. 150)

At the same time, it is hard to say that the War cut the official rates of crime of use of a minor for begging (Article 150-1 of the Criminal Code) (zero crimes in 2021, 1 crime in 2022, 1 crime in 2023, zero crimes in 2024).

Crime trends in Ukraine for the last ten years are a good example to prove the common social nature of THB crimes and ‘*satellite*’ (‘*shadow*’) crimes’ discussed above. The common feature of all the mentioned crime trends is the fact that they are changing almost the same way (Figure 128, Figure 129).

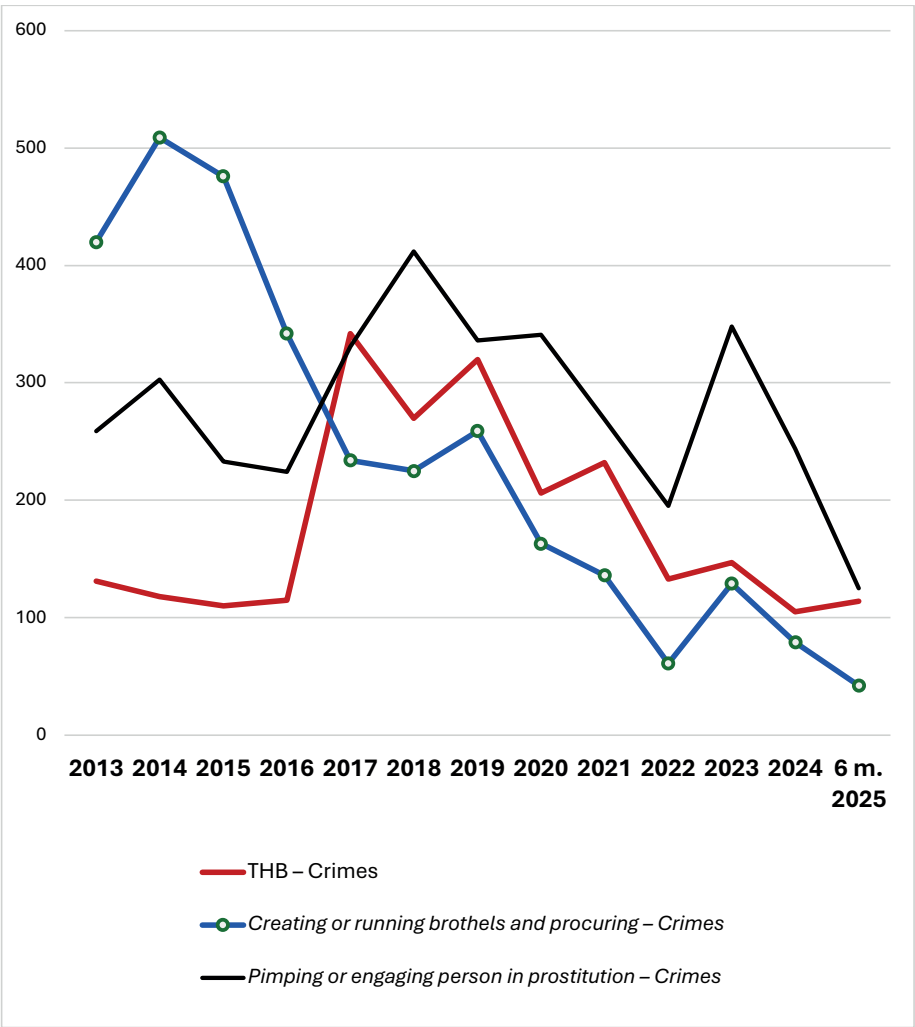


Figure 128. THB crimes and satellite crimes

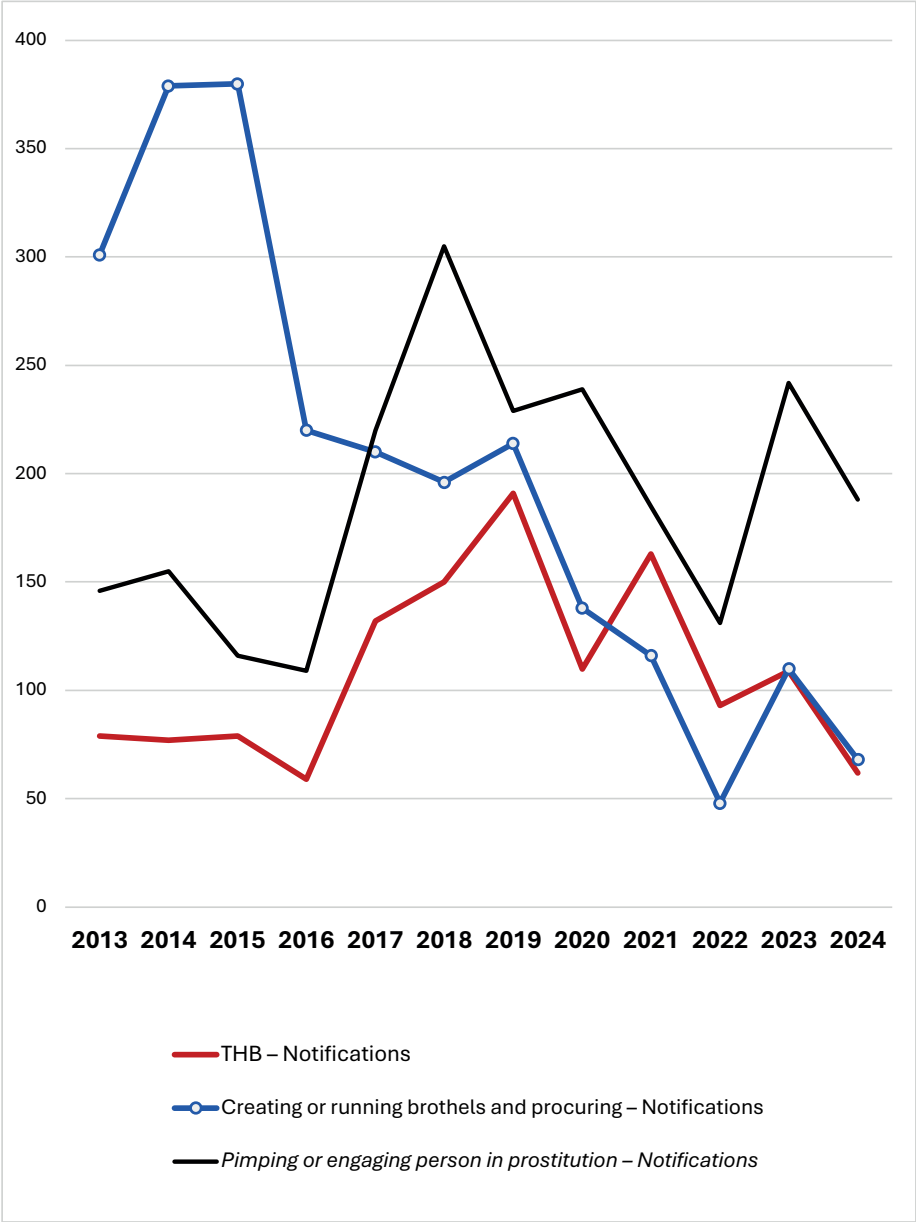


Figure 129. Suspects in THB crimes and satellite crimes (proceedings with suspects)

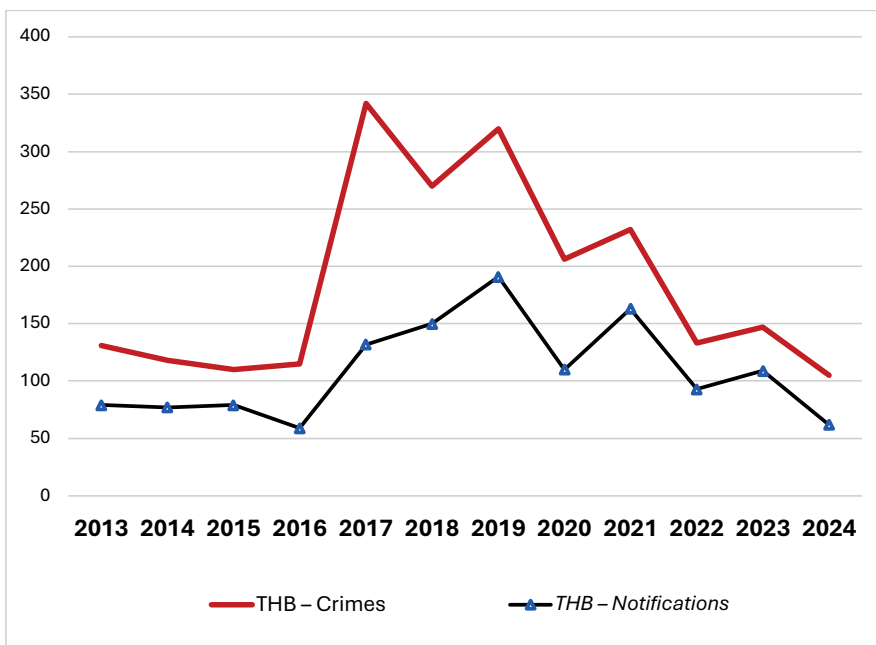


Figure 130. THB crimes and notifications in THB crimes

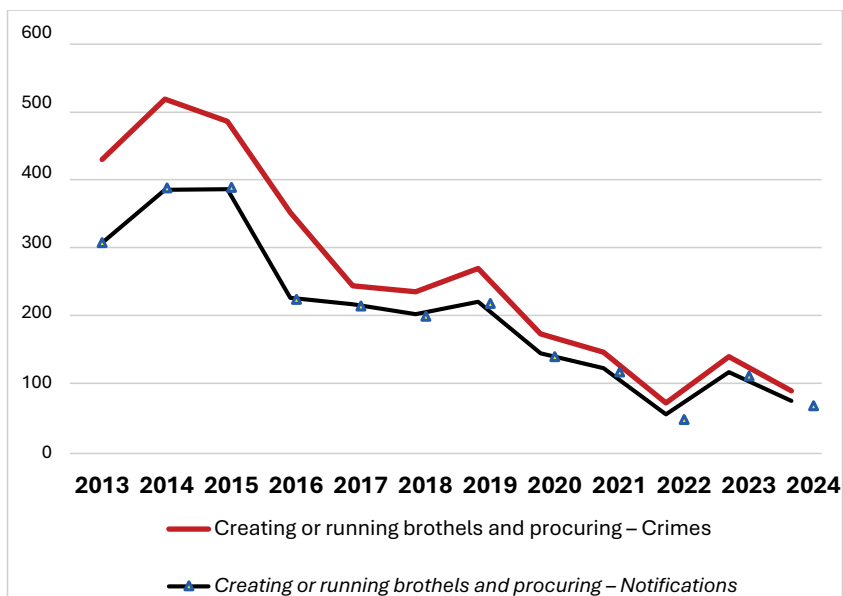


Figure 131. Creating or running brothels and procuring: crimes and notifications

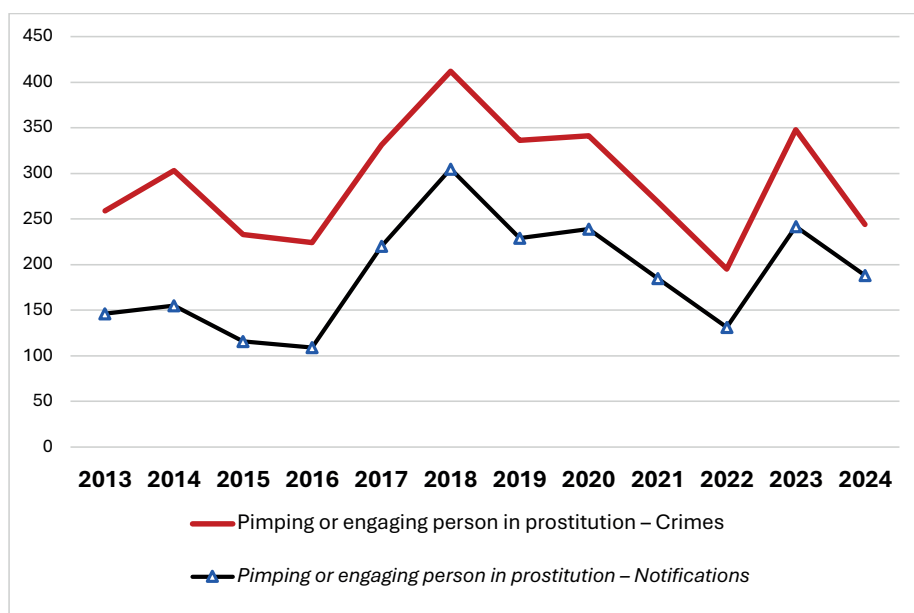


Figure 132. Pimping or engaging person in prostitution: crimes and notifications

Analysing the problem of human trafficking, we guess it is necessary to have one more look at the problem but from another perspective. As we mentioned earlier, during the War, the number of crimes of illegal trafficking of persons across the state border of Ukraine increased drastically.

At the same time, the number of THB crimes decreased. Moreover, the number of such crimes was not very impressive in the light of the official police statistics.

However, both mentioned types of crimes are strictly concerned with the state border. In the first case, trafficking of persons across the state border is a compulsory element of crime. In the second case, most persons in Ukraine are trafficked through the state border.

So, all perpetrators aim at the easiest points on the border to cross. They are looking for the most appropriate ‘assistants’ for their criminal activity, including corrupted officers from the Army and the State Border Guards Service. Demand generates supply: they do find such corrupted officers.

Therefore, the question arises: why are the numbers of illegal trafficking of persons across the state border so large as compared with the THB crimes?

Tab. 13

Crimes concerned with illegal crossing the state border of Ukraine

	Illegal trafficking of persons across the state border of Ukraine – Crimes	Illegal trafficking of persons across the state border of Ukraine – Notifications	Human trafficking – Crimes
2021	327	119	232
2022	1225	590	133
2023	2301	1547	147
2024	3106	2093	105
6 m. 2025	1873	1111	114

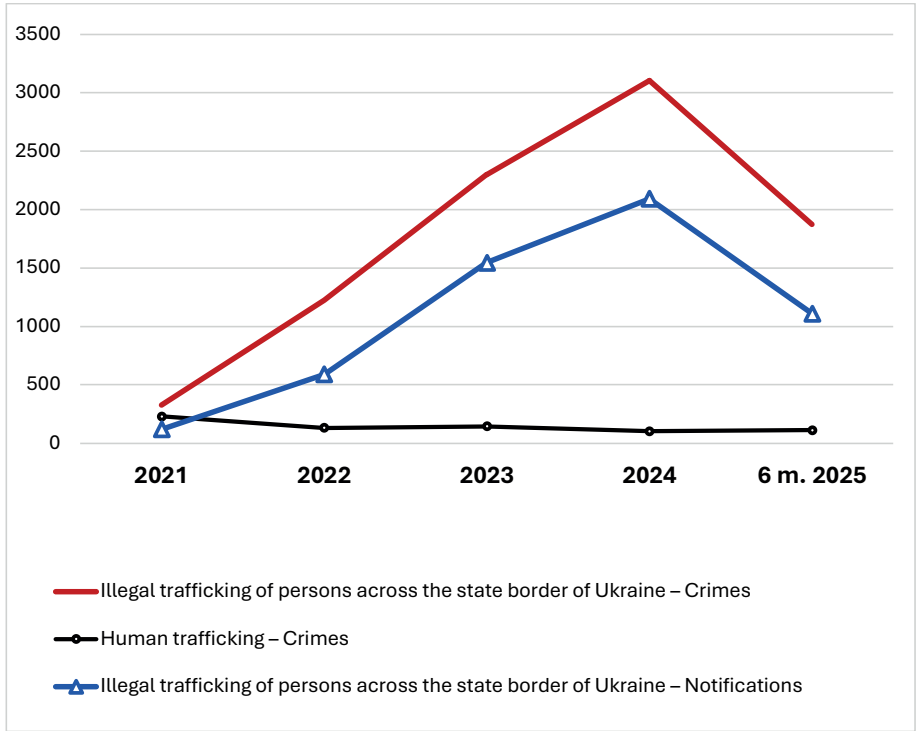


Figure 133. THB and the State border

One can argue that it is much easier to transport the unpretentious males who wish to be trafficked and who are not victims, as compared with mostly female victims of human trafficking. Such an argument should be considered with no doubt. However, it does not explain the difference in numbers in the mentioned above two types of crimes. Probably, the answer lies around corruption on the border and minimisation of the risks of perpetrators being arrested. The answer could also be concerned with the more latent nature of THB crimes during the War. In any case, if you can create a channel for transportation of males-perpetrators, you can use the same channel for trafficking of female victims of human trafficking. Moreover, the police statistics indicate that last year, more perpetrators avoided charges for illegal trafficking of males across the border.

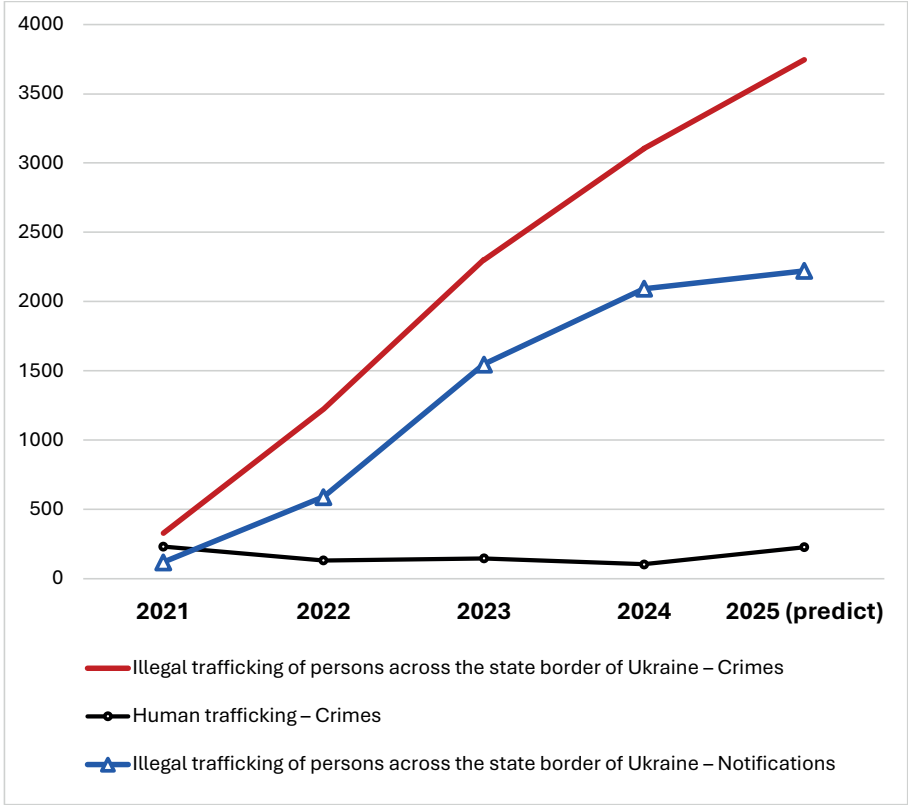


Figure 134. THB and the State border

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE WAR¹⁷¹

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused prolonged, potentially serious and long-term environmental damage that can reasonably be classified as ecocide.

Hundreds of thousands of explosions have caused and continue to cause toxic damage and physical destruction. Each explosion releases particles of toxic substances such as lead, mercury and depleted uranium into the environment. When ingested, explosive substances cause numerous chronic diseases.

Combat operations in industrialised areas can lead to technological disasters, such as waste and fuel spills, which poison large areas not only in Ukraine but also in other European countries and Russia.

Destroyed buildings can release carcinogenic dust that remains dangerous for decades. Heavy metals and chemicals can seep into groundwater and poison water sources, killing life in rivers and reservoirs. The destruction of civilian infrastructure has already left more than four million people without access to clean drinking water. Soil in some areas of military conflict is no longer suitable for agriculture, as plants absorb and accumulate pollutants.

War also increases the risk of nuclear accidents. Power shortages at nuclear power plants and fighting near stations could lead to disasters similar to Chernobyl and Fukushima. Military CO₂ emissions reach hundreds of millions of tonnes and undermine the Paris Agreement.

More than 12000 square kilometres (4600 square miles) of Ukraine's nature reserves have been turned into a war zone. Populations of rare endemic and migratory species have already suffered heavy losses, and birds have been forced to abandon their nests and change their usual migration routes. The results of many years of nature conservation projects have been destroyed.

¹⁷¹ *Dmytro Yagunov*, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

It is impossible to assess the total environmental damage caused by the war until it ends. According to preliminary data, it will take at least 15 years for Ukraine's nature to recover.

Destroyed cities pose a huge environmental threat, as unexploded bombs are buried under the rubble, destroyed buildings emit carcinogenic dust (sometimes for decades), and millions of tonnes of debris are almost impossible to recycle. Asbestos can be released into the air from under the rubble. Forced mass displacement of people overloads the infrastructure of host regions. Waste accumulates in refugee camps, and there are almost no recycling facilities.

In 2014, it cost approximately 2,5 Euro to lay a mine in Ukraine and over 900 Euro to clear it. Numerous studies are needed to fully assess the environmental damage caused by the Russian invasion, although this is impossible until the hostilities cease. As of June 2022, the Ukrainian Ministry of Environmental Protection estimates the damage at 6.6 billion Euro.

After the first two weeks of fighting, air monitoring in Kyiv showed pollutant concentrations 27 times higher than normal. Explosions, destroyed armoured vehicles and transport, burning and spilled fuel pollute the air, water and soil. Each bomb explosion releases particles of heavy metals, formaldehyde, nitrogen oxide, hydrogen cyanide and toxic organic compounds. These pollutants are spread by wind and groundwater, so the dangerous environmental impact of the war will directly affect Russia and Europe. Explosive substances release chemical compounds that oxidise in the air and can cause acid rain. They can 'burn' vegetation and the respiratory organs of mammals (including humans).

About 95–97% of ammunition consists of lead components. The rest is made of materials such as zinc, nickel, barium, manganese, copper and antimony, and sometimes depleted uranium. Lead is highly toxic and easily absorbed; it enters the human body not only through breathing, eating and drinking, but also through the skin and hair. Prolonged exposure to lead leads to kidney failure, and even short-term contact affects the nervous system and causes encephalopathy, as well as anaemia, loss of coordination and memory. Similar neurotoxic effects are observed in animals.

Depleted uranium particles are 100 times smaller than white blood cells and easily penetrate the blood-brain barrier, so they can reach

the olfactory nerves and directly disrupt cognitive processes. Arsenic causes inflammation of the cardiovascular, respiratory and digestive systems. Nickel also damages the immune system. Exposure to high concentrations of copper, manganese and zinc can have a toxic effect and cause pneumonia, pulmonary fibrosis and lethargy. Microparticles from destroyed munitions can enter the water and penetrate the human and animal body through the food chain.

According to the Pentagon, at least 1200 missiles and bombs had exploded in Ukraine by July 2022¹⁷².

Eastern Ukraine was a highly industrialised region, home to over 900 facilities and production centres, including coal mines, oil refineries, chemical laboratories and metallurgical plants. According to estimates by the Conflict and Environmental Observatory (CEOBS), more than 10 million tonnes (22 billion pounds) of toxic waste and industrial waste remain in the region. Direct hits and explosions lead to the leakage of hazardous substances that poison the air, water and soil. Accidents at high-risk industrial sites can escalate with a domino effect and cause catastrophic thermal, hydro and chemical releases.

The carbon footprint of this war undermines efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions. The first two years of the war have resulted in significant greenhouse gas emissions and even more may be emitted due to the need to rebuild destroyed infrastructure. In total, this is estimated to be 175 million tonnes (390 billion pounds) of carbon dioxide equivalent.

Environmental crimes committed by Russian occupiers are extremely dangerous not only because of the fact that they were committed or because of the consequences that followed. Such crimes create grounds for repeat offences, which systematically exacerbate the damage already caused.

For example, fires regularly break out at the bottom of the Kakhovka Reservoir, which dried up after the Russians blew up the hydroelectric power plant in 2023. The fires destroy the potential basis for the restoration of the local ecosystem. Experts say that the terrorist attack on the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant led to the loss of

¹⁷² Konya, R. (2022). Ukraine Crisis: Unprecedented environmental impacts of war. *Budapest Business Journal*. June 20, 2022. Source: www.bbj.hu/politics/foreign-affairs/ukraine-crisis/ukraine-crisis-unprecedented-environmental-impacts-of-war-wwf-warns

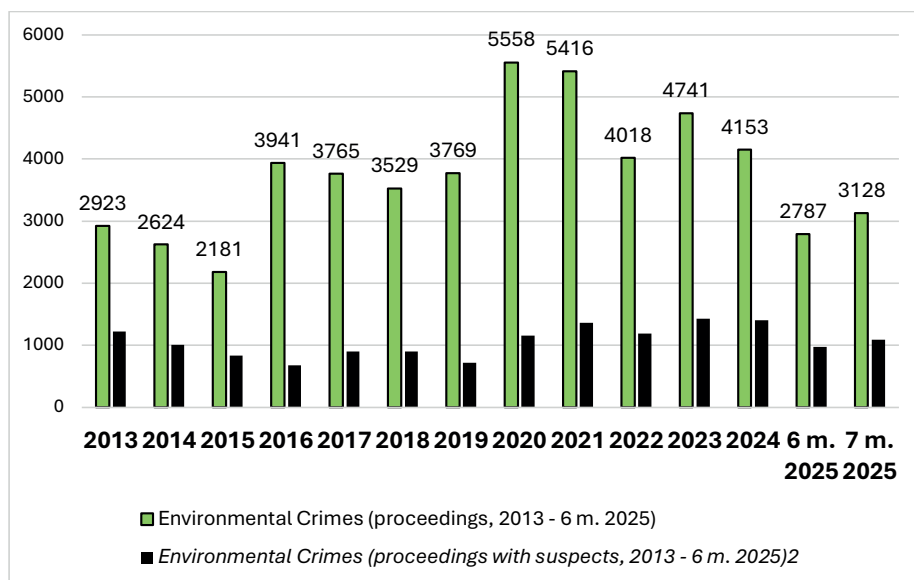


Figure 135. Environmental crimes

water in the reservoir and disrupted the natural balance. As a result, fires regularly occur in the dried-up areas¹⁷³.

The graph below, based on police statistics, shows a gradual increase in environmental crimes in Ukraine since 2015. Environmental crime peaked in 2020, with a very slight decrease in 2021.

The start of the war slightly reduced the number of environmental crimes (54 environmental crimes in 2021, 4018 environmental crimes in 2022), but not as significantly as might have been expected after the start of the Russian invasion.

Moreover, in 2023, 4741 environmental crimes were recorded, and in 2024, 4153 environmental crimes were recorded.

However, in just six months of 2025, 2787 environmental crimes were recorded, which is 67% of the number of similar crimes recorded in the whole of 2024.

On the other hand, the wartime showed a small but steady drop in the ratio between the total number of criminal cases for environmental

¹⁷³ Kovalenko, A. (2025). Fires regularly break out at the bottom of the Kakhovka Reservoir: what is the cause? *Ukrainska Pravda*. August 9, 2025. Source: <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/u-kahovskomu-vodoshovishchi-regulyarno-zaymayutsya-pozhezhi-309682>

crimes and the number of criminal cases where suspects were notified on suspicion. The worst indicators for these parameters were observed in 2016 and 2019, so the war itself probably did not particularly affect the quality of investigations into these crimes (5,25 in 2019; 4,8 in 2020; 3,97 in 2021; 3,38 in 2022; 3,24 in 2023; 2,96 in 2024; 2,86 – for 6 months of 2025).

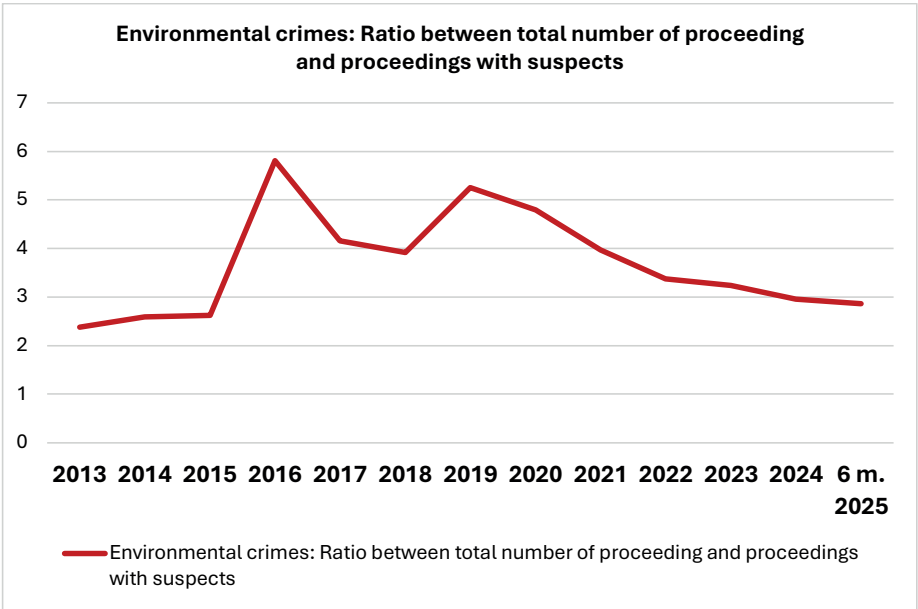


Figure 136. Environmental crimes: ratio between total number of criminal proceedings and criminal proceedings with suspects

Moreover, if we take such crimes as illegal logging or illegal transportation, storage, and sale of timber for analysis, the picture becomes even more acute and relevant.

In 2021, the largest number of crimes under this article was registered (2862 crimes).

After a slight decrease in the number of crimes registered in this category in 2022 (2454 crimes), the number of crimes registered jumped again the following year, reaching 2687 crimes.

However, in just six months of 2025, 1517 crimes in this category were registered, which also accounts for 66% of the total for the whole of 2024.

In addition to environmental crimes committed by Ukrainian citizens, attention should be paid to the crime of ecocide (Article 441 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine), for which liability is provided for in the relevant section (Criminal offences against peace, security of humanity, and international legal order).

The crime of ecocide itself appeared in Ukrainian criminal statistics in 2016, when Russia occupied the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

In 2013, 2014, and 2015, no crimes of ecocide were recorded at all, at least according to the statistics provided by the Office of the Prosecutor General.

In 2016, one crime of ecocide was recorded for the first time.

Subsequently, the following number of ecocide crimes were registered: 3 crimes in 2017, 2 crimes in 2018, 8 crimes in 2019, 6 crimes in 2020, 2 crimes in 2021, 15 crimes in 2022, 7 crimes in 2023, and 1 crime in 2024.

No crimes of ecocide were registered in the first six months of 2025.

Thus, between 1 January 2013 and 30 June 2025, 45 crimes of ecocide were registered in Ukraine, 51% of which were registered during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Unfortunately, however, no one has been charged, and therefore no Ukrainian court has handed down a verdict under this article.

Tab. 14

Land pollution or degradation		
	Land pollution or degradation (proceedings, total)	Land pollution or degradation (proceedings with suspects)
2013	164	16
2014	75	4
2015	102	3
2016	109	3
2017	167	5
2018	141	3
2019	162	5
2020	194	5
2021	373	15

2022	149	8
2023	288	23
2024	285	43
6 m. 2025	200	36
7 m. 2025	233	44

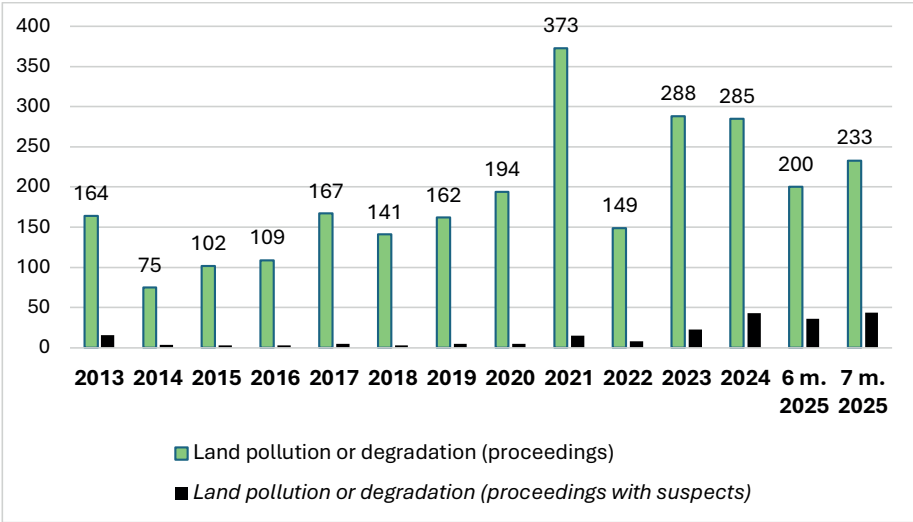


Figure 137. Land pollution or degradation

The crime of polluting or damaging land (Article 239 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine) is also an interesting example for studying the impact of war on the structure of crime in Ukraine.

During the period 2013–2022, the number of registered crimes in this category ranged from 75 to 194 each year (an average of 106 crimes per year). However, in 2021, there was a sharp increase in crimes in this category, reaching 373 crimes.

The start of the war made a large number of crimes in this category latent, with only 149 crimes registered in 2022.

The following years again showed a significant increase in cases of land pollution or damage (288 crimes in 2022, 285 crimes in 2024).

Moreover, in just six months of 2025, 200 crimes of this category were registered, accounting for 70% of the total number of crimes of this category registered in 2024.

Moreover, in just seven months of 2025, 233 crimes of this category were registered, accounting for 82% of the total number of crimes of this category registered in 2024.

It is presumed that all of these crimes were committed by individuals in the territory controlled by the Government and, more importantly, relatively far from the front line. Otherwise, the Ukrainian authorities would have classified such cases as ‘ecocide’ (Article 441 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine). This, in turn, indicates that from the very beginning, the war stopped the wave of crimes in this category and forced the perpetrators to hide in the shadows. However, this segment of crime quickly adapted to the conditions of war, taking advantage of the weakness of the state apparatus at the local level and other priorities of the state related to direct threats from Russia.

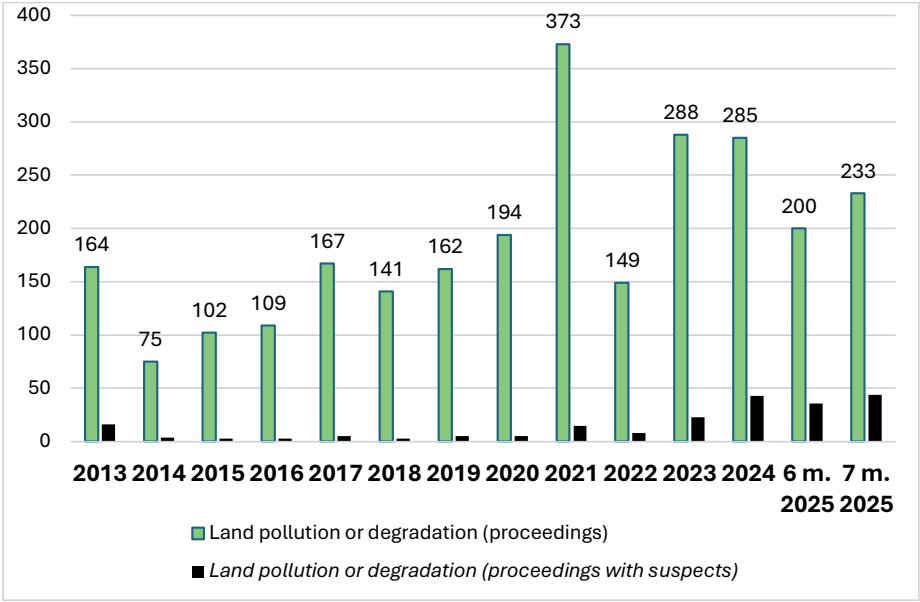


Figure 138. Land pollution or degradation

However, given that the crime of ecocide has extremely serious consequences, it cannot be ruled out that some of the crimes provided for in Article 239 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine were the result of actions by Russian aggressors in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

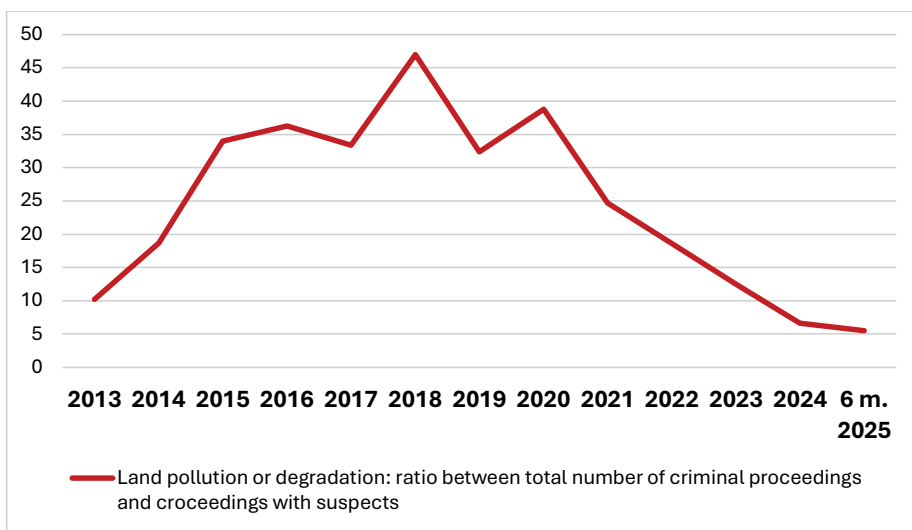


Figure 139. Land pollution or degradation: ratio between total number of criminal proceedings and criminal proceedings with suspects

Tab. 15

Land pollution or degradation	
	Land pollution or degradation: ratio between total number of criminal proceedings and proceedings with suspects
2013	10,2
2014	18,7
2015	34,0
2016	36,3
2017	33,4
2018	47,0
2019	32,4
2020	38,8
2021	24,7
2022	18,6
2023	12,5
2024	6,6
6 m. 2025	5,5

CRIMINAL OFFENCES AGAINST PUBLIC SAFETY¹⁷⁴

Pursuant to the Criminal Code of Ukraine, criminal offences against public safety include:

- creation, leadership of a criminal community or criminal organisation, as well as participation therein (Article 255);
- establishment or dissemination of criminal influence (Article 255-1);
- organisation, facilitation or participation in a criminal gathering (Article 255-2);
- appeal for the use of criminal influence (Article 255-3);
- assistance to members of criminal organisations and concealment of their criminal activities (Article 256);
- banditry (Article 257);
- terrorist act (Article 258);
- involvement in the commission of a terrorist act (Article 258-1);
- public calls to commit a terrorist act (Article 258-2);
- creation of a terrorist group or terrorist organisation (Article 258-3);
- assistance in committing a terrorist act, undergoing training in terrorism (Article 258-4);
- financing terrorism (Article 258-5);
- crossing the state border of Ukraine for terrorist purposes (Article 258-6);
- knowingly false reporting of a threat to the safety of citizens, destruction or damage to property (Article 259);
- creation of illegal paramilitary or armed formations (Article 260);
- attack on objects containing items that pose an increased danger to the surrounding area (Article 261);
- theft, appropriation, extortion of firearms, ammunition, explosives or radioactive materials, or acquisition thereof through fraud or abuse of official position (Article 262);

¹⁷⁴ *Dmytro Yagunov*, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

- illegal handling of weapons, ammunition or explosives (Article 263);
- illegal manufacture, alteration or repair of firearms or falsification, illegal removal or alteration of their markings, or illegal manufacture of ammunition, explosives or explosive devices (Article 263-1);
- negligent storage of firearms or ammunition (Article 264);
- illegal handling of radioactive materials (Article 265);
- illegal manufacture of a nuclear explosive device or a device that disperses radioactive material or emits radiation (Article 265-1);
- threat to steal or use radioactive materials (Article 266);
- violation of the rules for handling explosive, flammable and corrosive substances or radioactive materials (Article 267);
- violation of radiation safety requirements (Article 267-1);
- illegal importation of waste and secondary raw materials into the territory of Ukraine (Article 268);
- illegal transportation of explosive or flammable substances by air (Article 269);
- violation of fire or industrial safety requirements established by law (Article 270);
- intentional destruction or damage to residential and communal facilities (Article 270-1).

Before the full-scale war began, approximately eighty crimes of creating, leading, or participating in a criminal community or criminal organisation were registered each year (Article 255 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine).

Thus, in 2017, 88 such crimes were registered, in 2018 – 84 crimes, in 2019 – 68 crimes, and in 2019 – 92 crimes.

However, in 2021, the number of crimes of this type jumped to 173, which was a record high for Ukraine at that time.

The start of the war reduced the number of crimes of this type to 137 in 2022.

However, in 2023, a new record was set, which still stands today, with 206 crimes of creating, leading, or participating in a criminal community or criminal organisation being registered.

The statistics for 2024 remained almost unchanged, with 198 crimes of this type registered during the year.

However, in just six months of 2025, 116 crimes of this type were registered, accounting for 59% of the total number of similar crimes for the whole of 2024.

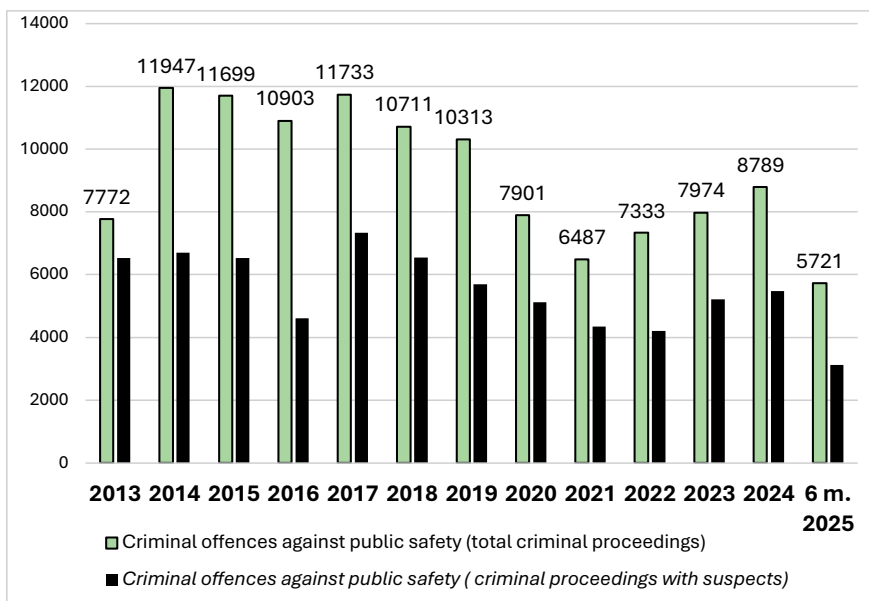


Figure 140. Criminal offences against public safety

Tab. 16

Criminal offences against public safety (criminal proceedings and criminal proceedings with suspects)

	Criminal offences against public safety (total criminal proceedings)	Criminal offences against public safety (criminal proceedings with suspects)
2013	7772	6531
2014	11947	6701
2015	11699	6531
2016	10903	4619
2017	11733	7342
2018	10711	6549
2019	10313	5690
2020	7901	5129
2021	6487	4353
2022	7333	4204
2023	7974	5217
2024	8789	5479
6 m. 2025	5721	3124

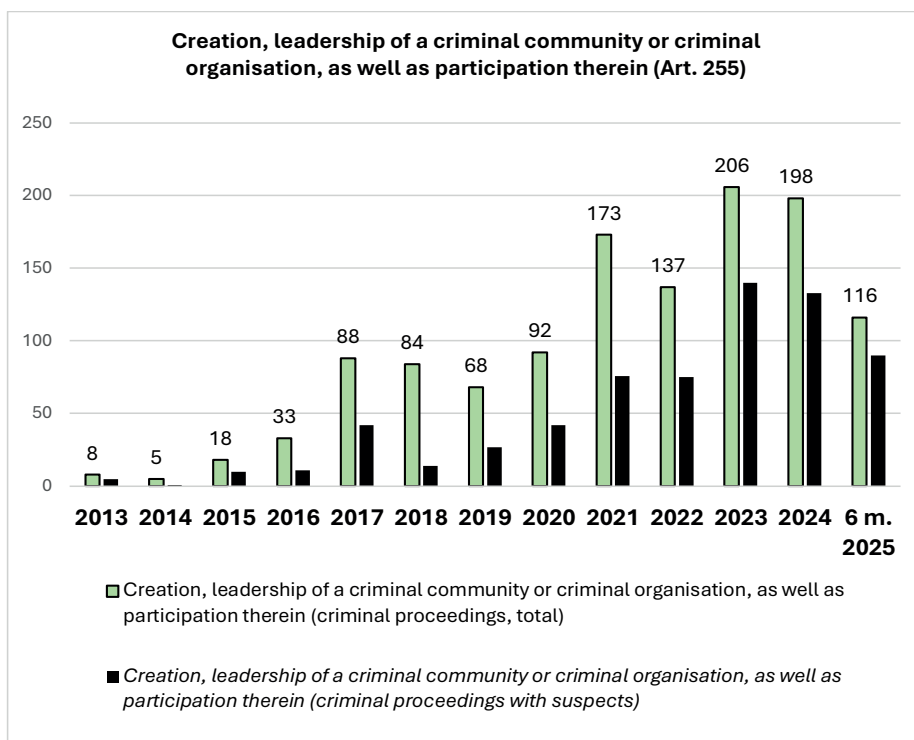


Figure 141. Creation, leadership of a criminal community or criminal organisation, as well as participation therein (Art. 255)

After the War started, terrorism received its ‘second life’ in Ukraine, mostly due to the activities of the Russian special services aimed against Ukrainian civilians and the agents of the police and the military.

Since the beginning of 2025, law enforcement agencies have recorded 128 arson attacks on cars belonging to military personnel in Ukraine. In addition, 44 terrorist attacks were carried out on behalf of Russian special services during this period. As a rule, the bombers used homemade explosive devices made from improvised materials according to instructions from their handlers in the Russian Federation. The Russians recruit perpetrators through *Telegram* channels and other platforms for job searches, selling used items, dating sites, and social networks. They even send parcels with explosives disguised as packages from relatives¹⁷⁵.

¹⁷⁵ Makarova, S. (2025). Police report on Russian special services’ activities in Ukraine in the first half of 2025. *Donpatriot*. Source: www.donpatriot.news/komanduvach-uda-dmytro-yarosh-prokomentuvav-protesty-cherez-novyj-zakon-shhodo-nabu-i-sap

Tab. 17

**Creation, leadership of a criminal community
or criminal organisation, as well as participation therein
(criminal proceedings and criminal proceedings with suspects)**

	Creation, leadership of a criminal community or criminal organisation, as well as participation therein (criminal proceedings, total)	Creation, leadership of a criminal community or criminal organisation, as well as participation therein (criminal proceedings with suspects)
2013	8	5
2014	5	1
2015	18	10
2016	33	11
2017	88	42
2018	84	14
2019	68	27
2020	92	42
2021	173	76
2022	137	75
2023	206	140
2024	198	133
6 m. 2025	116	90

In this context, the War in Ukraine detected a new trend in the sphere of terrorist activities, namely participation of children and young people in terrorist activities.

In Ukraine, law enforcement agencies are recording an increasing number of cases where, according to the Security Service of Ukraine, Russian special services are involving minors in terrorist acts, using them as *'couriers'* to deliver explosive devices. Moreover, the perpetrators deliberately blow-up children while they are carrying out their tasks¹⁷⁶.

As part of an increasingly dangerous campaign within Ukraine, Russian intelligence services are using channels on the social network *Telegram* to recruit young Ukrainians – often unemployed teenagers –

¹⁷⁶ BBC (2025). 'Suicide bombers by necessity'. How Russia could use children in terrorist attacks in Ukraine. *BBC*. March 14, 2025. Source: <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/cqid9l4xyx5o>

paying them to carry out small tasks that then escalate into acts of sabotage and even terrorism.

Often, these recruits are unaware that they are carrying explosive devices connected to mobile phones that can be activated remotely, turning them into unwitting suicide bombers.

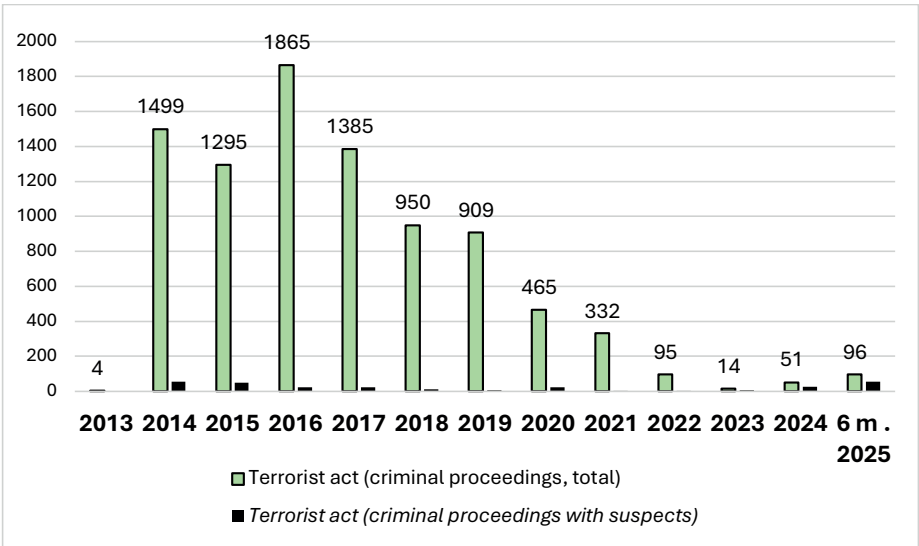


Figure 142. Terrorist act

One of the most high-profile cases occurred on 11 March 2025, when explosions rocked the railway station in Ivano-Frankivsk. According to the Security Service of Ukraine, a 17-year-old boy who had been recruited to carry out a terrorist attack in the city was killed.

According to the SBU, the Russian special services blew up two of their agents who were carrying a homemade explosive device. The investigation established that the Russian agents were two local minors, aged 15 and 17, who were recruited by the Russian Federation through Telegram channels offering 'easy money' and involved in criminal activities. As a result of the incident, the 17-year-old boy died at the scene, and his 15-year-old friend was hospitalised with serious injuries.

On September 4, 2025, law enforcement officers detained a young man and woman from the Cherkasy region in Lviv who, on the instructions of their unknown 'employer', planted explosives under

a car of a Ukrainian military man in a public place. According to the investigation, the 17-year-old and 16-year-old residents of the Cherkasy region, looking for ‘easy money’ on Telegram messenger, agreed to an anonymous offer. On the instructions of the anonymous person, the boy was to plant a homemade explosive device under a car in a public place, and the girl was to set up video surveillance. To carry out the plan, the minors arrived in Lviv, where they settled in a hotel. At the specified coordinates, the boy found a backpack with explosives and special equipment in the park. They then went to a parking lot near a building, where they planted explosives under a car, after which they were detained by the police¹⁷⁷.

Tab. 18

Terrorist act (criminal proceedings and criminal proceedings with suspects)

	Terrorist act (criminal proceedings, total)	Terrorist act (criminal proceedings with suspects)
2013	4	0
2014	1499	55
2015	1295	50
2016	1865	25
2017	1385	23
2018	950	13
2019	909	6
2020	465	24
2021	332	1
2022	95	1
2023	14	6
2024	51	27
6 m . 2025	96	56

¹⁷⁷ Pogorilov, C. (2025). In Lviv, two teenagers planted explosives under a military vehicle: they were detained. *Ukrainska Pravda*. September 4, 2025. Source: www.pravda.com.ua/news/2025/09/4/7529327

However, it should be emphasised that it is not only children and young people who are targeted by the Russian Federation's special services. Russian special services are no longer recruiting only young people. Their new target is the elderly. When communicating with their victims, supposedly on behalf of the Security Service of Ukraine, Russian agents send them fake summonses, intimidate them with prison, and blackmail them. They then force pensioners to transport explosives, spy on the military, and carry out acts of sabotage. They also convince them that this is 'in the interests of Ukraine'.

One example is the case of an elderly woman in Kyiv who brought 1,5 kg of explosives, equivalent to TNT, to a café in the city centre. Thanks to the professional work of the Security Service of Ukraine, the terrorist attack did not happen and dozens of people were saved.

There is also the story of an elderly man who became a spotter for the Russians. One of the targets was only 50 metres from his mother's house.

The recruitment of Ukrainian citizens into terrorist activities by Russian special services is not limited to children, young people, and the elderly. Very often, drug-addicted Ukrainians who are seeking an opportunity to earn money become accomplices of Russian intelligence.

For example, in early August 2025, the counterintelligence service of the Security Service of Ukraine detained a Russian agent who was preparing an explosion near one of the law enforcement agencies in the centre of Dnipro.

The suspect was a 29-year-old resident of Vinnytsia with a drug addiction. She came to the attention of Russian special services when she was looking for 'easy money' on *Telegram*. After being recruited, she was sent to Pavlohrad, where she received a homemade explosive device. Following instructions from her handlers in Russia, the woman moved to Dnipro, settled in a pre-rented flat, and conducted reconnaissance of the selected target. She also hid the explosives near the planned site of the attack and passed the coordinates to her Russian handlers. Security Service of Ukraine officers arrested the agent as she attempted to flee to Odesa on a shuttle bus¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷⁸ Nizhyn News (2025). Wanted to blow up law enforcement officers in the centre of Dnipro: another Russian agent detained. *Nizhyn News*. 1 August 2025. Source: <https://nizhyn.in.ua/xotila-pidirvati-pravooxoronciv-u-centri-dnipro-zatrimali-chergovu-agentku-rf.html>

Tab. 19

**Illegal handling of weapons
(criminal proceedings and criminal proceedings with suspects)**

	Illegal handling of weapons (criminal proceedings, total)	Illegal handling of weapons (criminal proceedings with suspects)
2013	6929	6174
2014	7228	5632
2015	7409	5247
2016	6307	3841
2017	8002	6425
2018	7466	5719
2019	6204	4875
2020	5116	4252
2021	4067	3619
2022	4735	3560
2023	5582	4556
2024	5898	4844
6 m. 2025	3848	2709
7 m. 2025	4374	3043

In 2014, Russia started a new war against Ukraine, which turned into a full-scale invasion in 2024. This obviously led to the militarisation of Ukrainian society because of all the weapons from the front lines. It is reasonable to assume that many veterans kept weapons captured or found on the battlefield during the period 2013-2022, and that this trend has likely continued and grown in scale.

Therefore, the decrease in the number of crimes involving illegal handling of weapons, ammunition or explosives in 2019-2021 may not reflect the real situation in Ukrainian society regarding the number of people who have stored and continue to store firearms and explosives.

Even an increase in the number of registered crimes in 2022 may not reflect the real situation, especially considering that large areas of Ukraine were under occupation and, once liberated, allowed local residents to find and store Russian weapons.

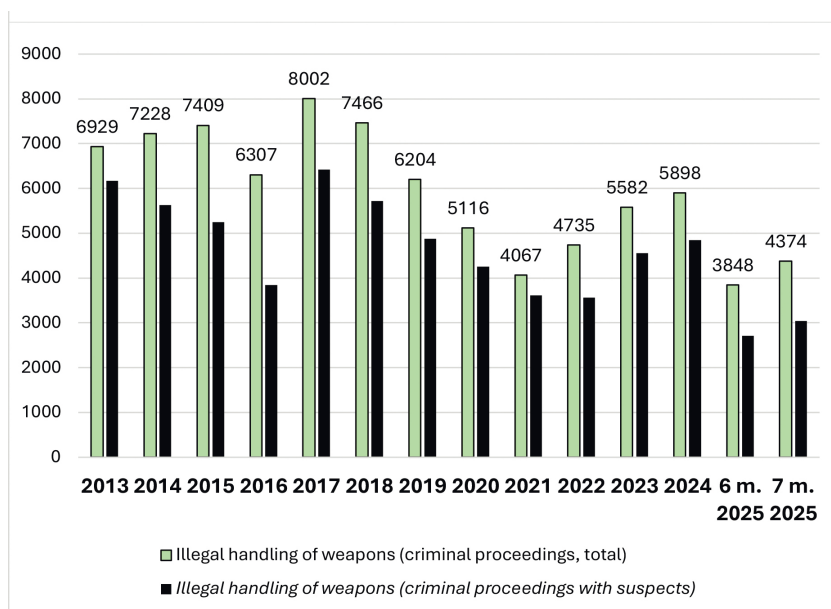


Figure 143. Illegal handling of weapons, ammunition or explosive substance

Again, the greater mobilisation of Ukrainians creates a reasonable presumption of even greater saturation of society with weapons, as indicated by the fact that, even according to official statistics, in the first six months of 2025, 65% of crimes involving illegal handling of weapons, combat supplies or explosives out of the total number of crimes registered in 2024.

Moreover, in the first seven months of 2025, 74% of crimes involving illegal handling of weapons, combat supplies or explosives out of the total number of crimes registered in 2024.

Statistical indicators of crimes involving the illegal manufacture, alteration or repair of firearms or the falsification, illegal removal or alteration of their markings, or the illegal manufacture of ammunition, explosive substances or explosive devices (Article 263-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine) fully correspond to the statistics on crimes related to illegal possession of weapons (Article 263 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine). It can only be added that in the first six months of 2025, 76% of crimes related to the illegal manufacture of weapons were registered, compared to the same indicator for the whole of 2024.

Tab. 20

**Illegal manufacture of firearms, explosive substances or devices
(criminal proceedings and criminal proceedings with suspects)**

	Illegal manufacture of firearms, explosive substances or devices (criminal proceedings, total)	Illegal manufacture of firearms, explosive substances or devices (criminal proceedings with suspects)
2013	170	145
2014	196	182
2015	150	139
2016	119	92
2017	198	178
2018	194	177
2019	185	157
2020	168	152
2021	132	123
2022	113	106
2023	163	155
2024	165	158
6 m. 2025	125	106
7 m. 2025	138	116

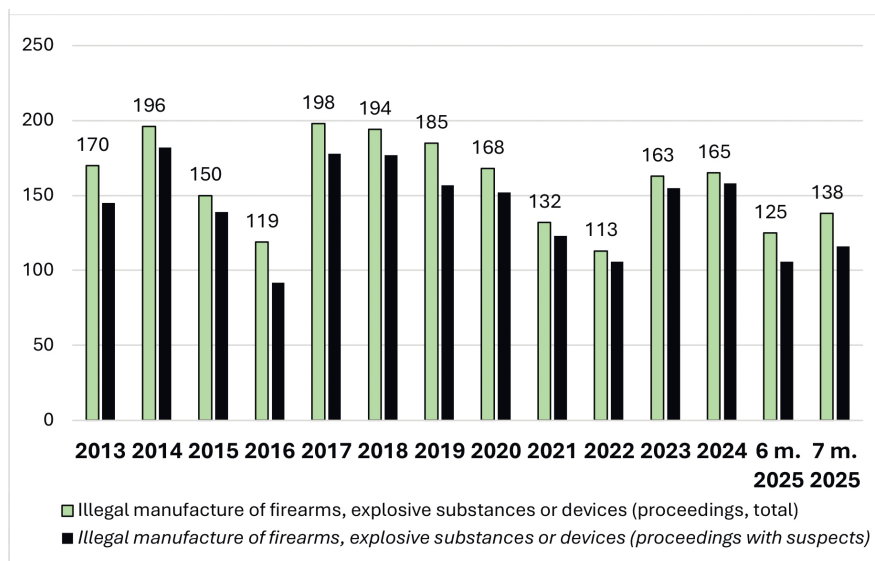


Figure 144. Illegal manufacture of firearms, explosive substances or devices

After February 2022, ensuring cybersecurity in Ukraine has become an even greater priority in Ukraine's overall national security system. This priority will be implemented by strengthening the capabilities of the national cybersecurity system to counter cyber threats in the current security environment.

Cybercrimes in Ukraine's current situation is a complex social phenomenon characterised by a combination of *general criminal offences* and *politically motivated crimes* committed by Russian special services with the aim of weakening Ukraine's defence capabilities¹⁸⁰.

Of particular concern in this context are the activities of so-called '*bot farms*' or anonymous *channels* in numerous messengers, whose creation and operation are controlled and financed by Russian special services. They are used to spreading disinformation among the population, undermine trust in public authorities, escalate political tensions, and complicate the mobilisation and staffing of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. It is also necessary to point out the systematic cyber sabotage against critical infrastructure, which is also used by Russia to weaken Ukraine's defence capabilities¹⁸¹.

It is important to note that the issue of cyberterrorism was put on the primary agenda of the European Union in direct connection with the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

In its press release of May 19, 2022, the Council of the European Union stressed that the cyberattack had taken place one hour before Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 thus facilitating the armed aggression. This cyberattack had a

¹⁷⁹ **Dmytro Yagunov**, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

¹⁸⁰ Galushko, P. (2023). Cybercrime in Ukraine in the context of war as a subject of criminological analysis. *Theoretical issues of jurisprudence and problems of law enforcement: challenges of the 21st century*. Kharkiv, 2023. P.127.

¹⁸¹ Galushko, P. (2023). Cybercrime in Ukraine in the context of war as a subject of criminological analysis. *Theoretical issues of jurisprudence and problems of law enforcement: challenges of the 21st century*. Kharkiv, 2023. P.128.

significant impact, causing indiscriminate communication outages and disruptions across several public authorities, businesses and users in Ukraine, as well as affecting several EU Member States.

The Council of the European Union underlined that ‘this unacceptable cyberattack is yet another example of Russia’s continued pattern of irresponsible behaviour in cyberspace, which also formed an integral part of its illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. Such behaviour is contrary to the expectations set by all UN Member States, including the Russian Federation, of responsible State behaviour and the intentions of States in cyberspace’¹⁸².

The Council of the European Union stressed that ‘cyberattacks targeting Ukraine, including against critical infrastructure, could spill over into other countries and cause systemic effects putting the security of Europe’s citizens at risk’¹⁸³.

Focusing on cybercrimes in Ukraine, we should note that we use the term ‘*cybercrime*’, although the full title of the relevant Section of the Criminal Code of Ukraine is ‘*criminal offences in the field of the use of electronic computers, systems and networks, computer networks and electronic communication networks*’.

Tab. 21

Criminal offences in the field of the use of electronic computers, systems and networks, computer networks and electronic communication networks’

	Cybercrimes (criminal proceedings, total)	Cybercrimes (proceedings with suspects)
2013	595	256
2014	443	207
2015	598	263
2016	865	472
2017	2573	1272

¹⁸² Council of the European Union (2022). Russian cyber operations against Ukraine: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union. *Council of the European Union*. May 10, 2022. Source: www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/05/10/russian-cyber-operations-against-ukraine-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union

¹⁸³ Council of the European Union (2022). Russian cyber operations against Ukraine: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union. *Council of the European Union*. May 10, 2022. Source: www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/05/10/russian-cyber-operations-against-ukraine-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union

2018	2301	1608
2019	2204	1481
2020	2498	1675
2021	3310	2435
2022	3415	2643
2023	3841	2879
2024	4055	3180
6 m. 2025	2008	1477
7 m. 2025	2115	1521

The first thing to note in this section of the monograph is that, unfortunately, the analysis of police statistics does *not* allow us to distinguish between cybercrimes committed by Ukrainian citizens or other individuals in the course of *traditional criminal activity* (mainly for gain) and *politically motivated crimes* committed by Russian special services or their agents.

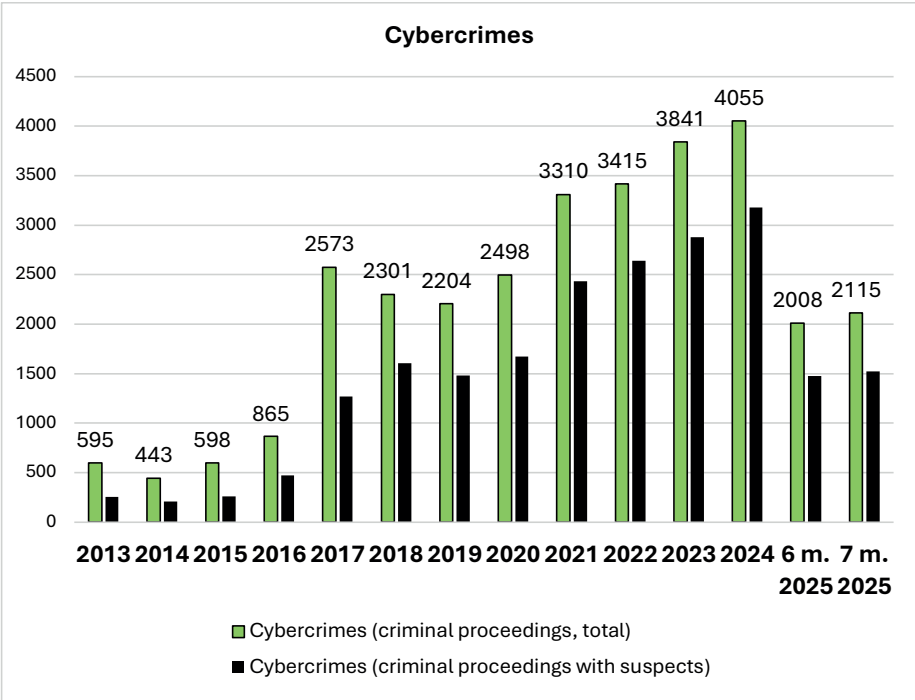


Figure 145. Cybercrimes

Yes, 2022 certainly saw an explosive growth in cybercrime, although, on the other hand, an even greater ‘explosion’ of cybercrimes took place in 2017.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the War has demonstrated a more than significant increase in the number of cybercrimes, with the number of such crimes growing significantly each year. Even the first half of 2025 was no exception.

Thus, in the first six months of 2025, the Ukrainian law enforcement agencies registered 2008 criminal proceedings for cybercrimes (1477 criminal proceedings with identified suspects), which is 49,5% of the total number of similar crimes registered in 2024 (4055 criminal proceedings).

Further, in the seven six months of 2025, the Ukrainian law enforcement agencies registered 2115 criminal proceedings for cybercrimes (1521 criminal proceedings with identified suspects), which is 52,2% of the total number of similar crimes registered in 2024.

Here, we have a look at police statistics of crime of *unauthorised interference with the operation of electronic computers, automated systems, computer networks or telecommunications networks* (Article 361 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine).

Tab. 22

**Unauthorised interference with electronic networks
(Article 361 of CCU)**

	Unauthorised interference with electronic networks, Art. 361 (criminal proceedings, total)	Unauthorised interference with electronic networks, Art. 361 (proceedings with suspects)
2013	408	120
2014	344	139
2015	432	170
2016	494	191
2017	1795	610
2018	1023	533
2019	1183	706
2020	1187	682
2021	1679	1201
2022	1403	986

2023	2273	1710
2024	1953	1466
6 m. 2025	1029	779
7 m. 2025	1091	787

Overall, police statistics on this crime reflect the general statistics on cybercrimes in Ukraine, but there is one exception.

It is interesting to note that, unlike the total number of crimes of unauthorised interference with electronic networks, the number of crimes of this type decreased significantly in 2024.

Similarly, the number of crimes of this type registered in the first half of 2025 also did not show a significant increase compared to 2024.

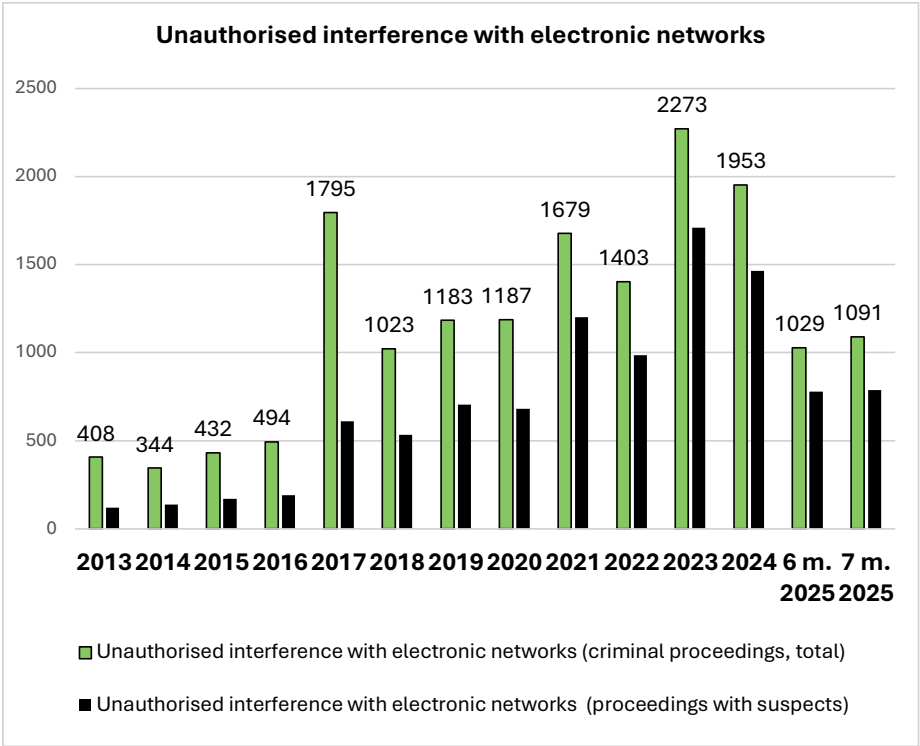


Figure 146. Unauthorised interference with electronic networks

Thus, in the first six months of 2025, the Ukrainian law enforcement agencies registered 1029 criminal proceedings for unauthorised interference with electronic networks (779 criminal proceedings with identified suspects), which is 53% of the total number of similar crimes registered in 2024 (1953 criminal proceedings).

Further, in the seven six months of 2025, the Ukrainian law enforcement agencies registered 1091 criminal proceedings for unauthorised interference with electronic networks (787 criminal proceedings with identified suspects), which is 56% of the total number of similar crimes registered in 2024.

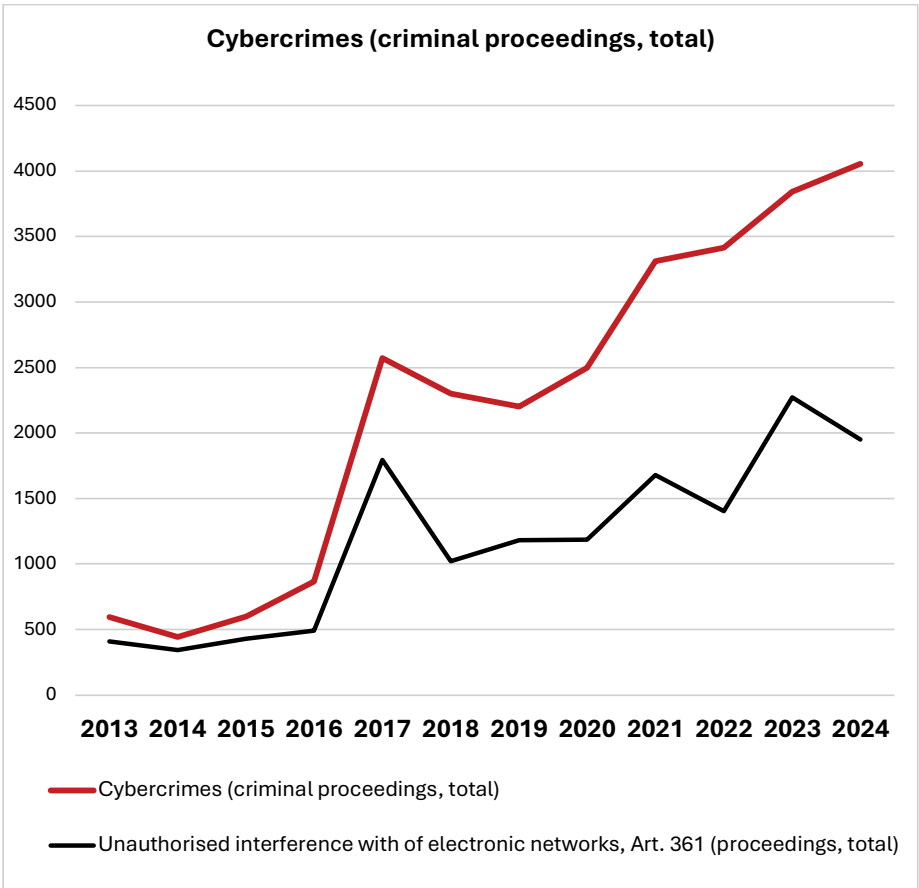


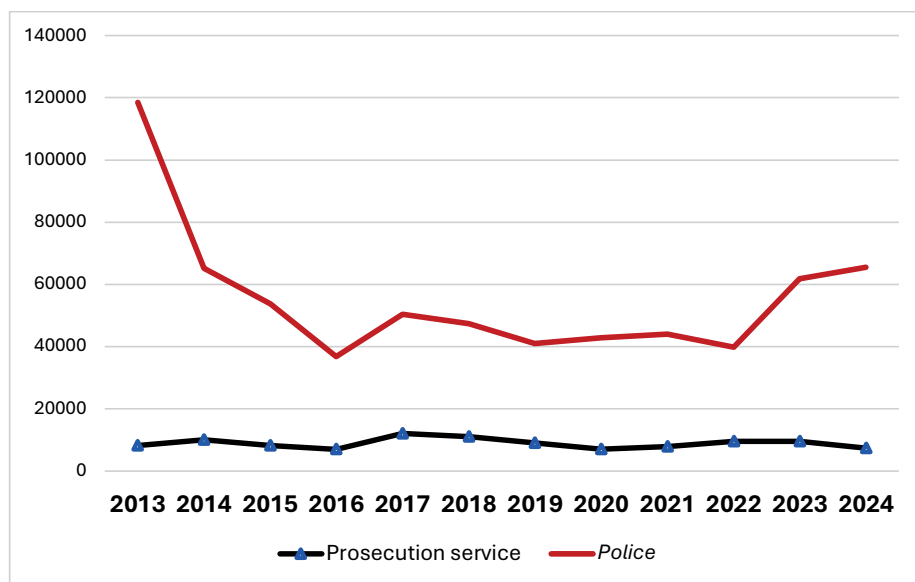
Figure 147. Cybercrimes and unauthorised interference with electronic networks

LAW-ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN THE LIGHT OF THE POLICE STATISTICS¹⁸⁴

Here are presented the numbers of criminal proceedings opened by different law-enforcement agencies, with corresponding analysis.

In 2022, prosecution offices registered 9586 criminal proceedings (7870 criminal proceedings in 2021).

At the same time, the police registered much more criminal proceedings (2022 criminal proceedings in 2022, 44027 criminal proceedings in 2021) (*Figure 148*).



**Figure 148. Criminal proceedings opened
by Prosecution Service and the Police**

¹⁸⁴ **Dmytro Yagunov**, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

The wartime period indicates a clear trend where the Prosecution Office registered fewer criminal proceedings in 2023 (9584 criminal proceedings), and especially in 2024 (7399 criminal proceedings). However, in the first six months of 2025, the Office of General Prosecutor opened 3329 criminal proceedings (638 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects). This means that in the first six months of 2025, the Office of General Prosecutor opened 45% of criminal proceedings out of the total number for 2024 as a whole.

At the same time the police registered much more criminal proceedings in 2023 (61847 criminal proceedings) and 2024 (65478 criminal proceedings). However, in the first six months of 2025, the National Police of Ukraine opened 34694 criminal proceedings (29129 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects). This means that in the first six months of 2025, the National Police of Ukraine 53% of criminal proceedings out of the total number for 2024 as a whole.

Investigators of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) registered many more criminal proceedings in 2022 (11841 criminal proceedings) as compared with 2021 (5035 criminal proceedings) (*Figure 149*).

In contrast, investigators of the tax police registered much fewer criminal proceedings in 2022 (218 criminal proceedings) as compared with 2021 (1324 criminal proceedings) (*Figure 149*).

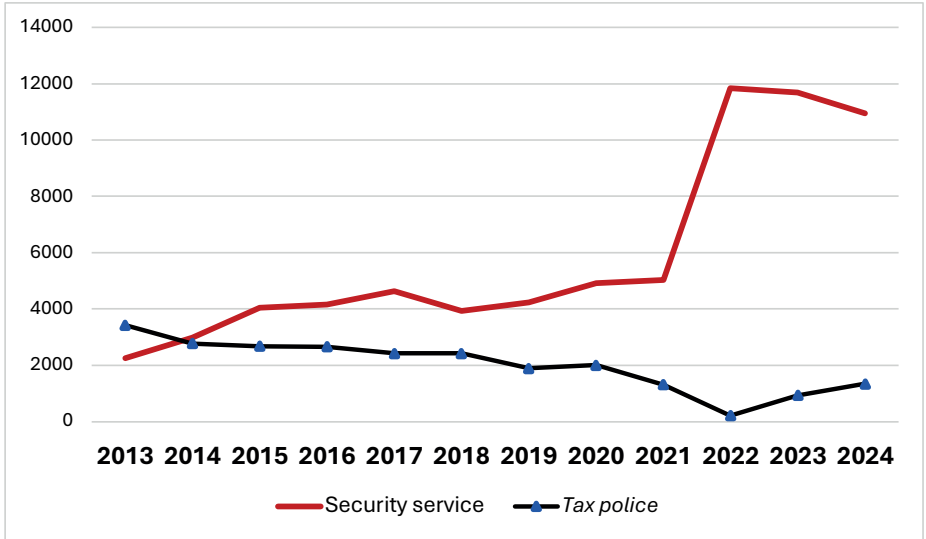


Figure 149. Criminal proceedings opened by the SBU and the Tax Police

In 2024, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) opened 10956 criminal proceedings (4258 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects). However, in the first six months of 2025, the Security Service of Ukraine opened 6442 criminal proceedings (2561 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects). This means that in the first six months of 2025, the Security Service of Ukraine opened 59% of criminal proceedings out of the total number for 2024 as a whole.

In 2024, the Tax Police opened 1347 criminal proceedings (371 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects). However, in the first six months of 2025, the Tax Police opened 780 criminal proceedings (218 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects). This means that in the first six months of 2025, the Tax Police opened 78% of criminal proceedings out of the total number for 2024 as a whole.

From the 2023-2024 statistics, it is surprising that the number of criminal proceedings registered by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) decreased after 2022, especially considering the continuous threats from Russia (11841 criminal proceedings in 2022, 11679 criminal proceedings in 2023, and 10956 criminal proceedings in 2024).

At the same time, an increase in criminal proceedings by the tax police demonstrates that the economics has adapted to the wartime conditions with corresponding adaptation of white-collar crime to challenges of the War.

In 2022, investigators of the State Investigation Bureau (DBR) and detectives of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) registered approximately the same number of criminal proceedings as in 2021. However, investigators of the State Investigation Bureau (DBR) demonstrated more activities in 2023-2024. They registered 2906 criminal proceedings in 2023 and 4971 criminal proceedings in 2024 (*Figure 150*).

However, in the first six months of 2025, the State Bureau of Investigations opened 4251 criminal proceedings (945 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects). This means that in the first six months of 2025, the State Bureau of Investigations opened almost 86% of criminal proceedings out of the total number for 2024 as a whole.

However, in the first six months of 2025, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau opened 167 criminal proceedings (31 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects). This means that in the first six

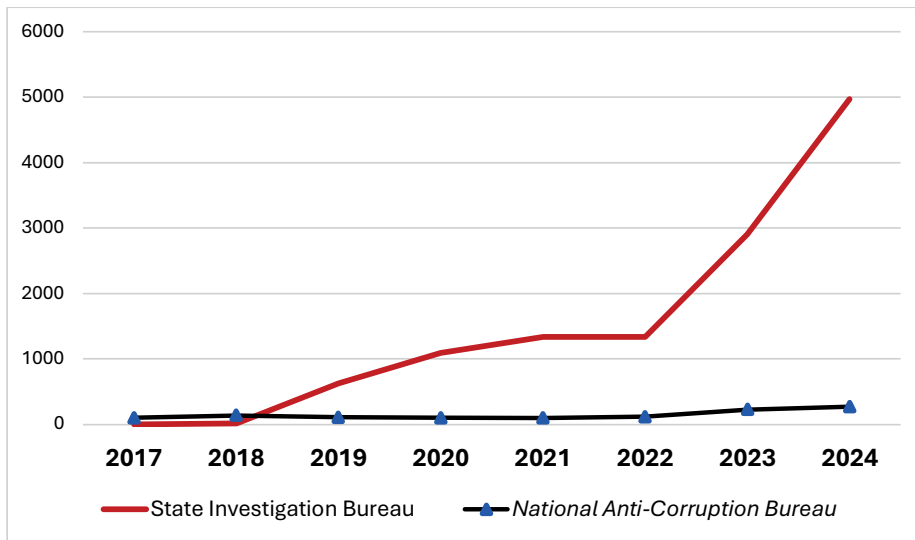


Figure 150. Criminal proceedings opened by the DBR and the NABU

months of 2025, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau opened 61% of criminal proceedings out of the total number for 2024 as a whole.

As far as the situation with notifications of suspicions given to suspects in criminal proceedings, police statistics provide us with the following results.

The police investigators decreased the number of notes of suspicion in 2022 (28633 notifications in 2022, 36562 notifications in 2021).

The number of notifications of suspicion given in criminal proceedings opened by prosecutors in 2022 was mostly the same as in 2021 (*Figure 152*).

The number of notifications of suspicion given in criminal proceedings opened by investigators by the tax police and the Security Service of Ukraine is very controversial in the context of its transformation.

In 2013, both LEAs started with the same numbers of criminal proceedings with given notifications of suspicions (*Figure 152*).

In 2023, the differences between them have reached a historical point.

The indicators of the tax police almost reached zero level. At the same time, the indicators of the Security Service of Ukraine reached its historical maximum (*Figure 152*).

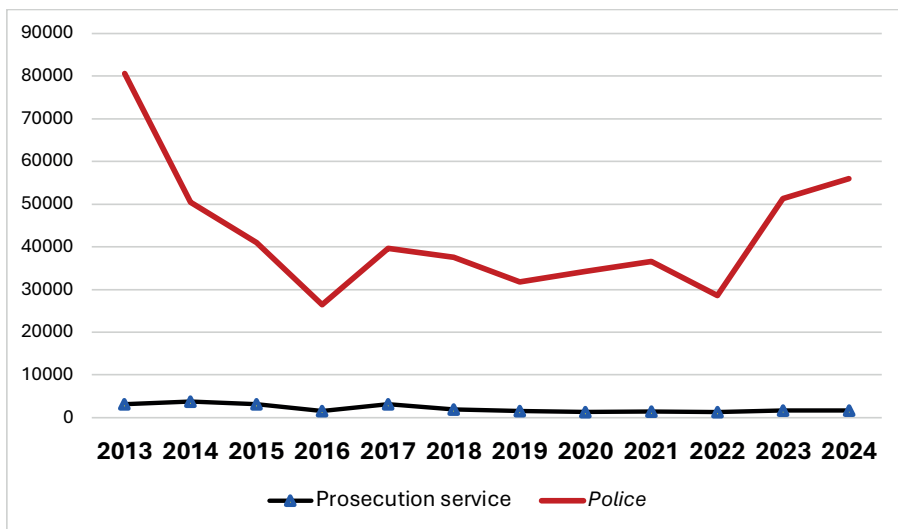


Figure 151. Criminal proceedings with suspects opened by the Prosecution Service and the Police

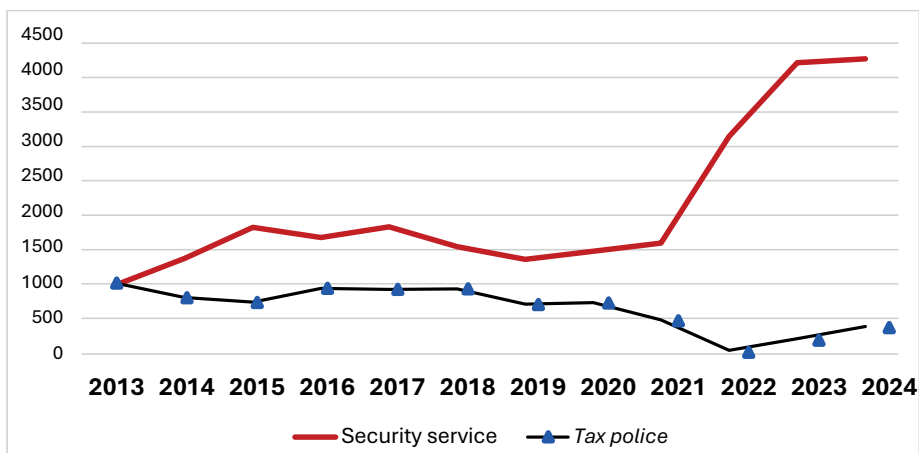


Figure 152. Criminal proceedings with suspects opened by the SBU and the Tax Police

Indicators of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU), as statistics demonstrate, were not significantly impacted by the War. In contrast, indicators of the State Bureau of Investigation (DBR) increased more than significantly (*Figure 153*).

Overall, as previously noted, the activities of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine are perceived by the Ukrainian population as virtually the last bastion of defence against high-level corruption, and this makes sense. Thus, between 2016 (i.e. when the NABU was established) and 2025, 71 members of the Ukrainian parliament were brought to criminal responsibility with the corresponding notification of suspicion.

In general, for the period 2019-2025, based on the results of the review of indictments in the NABU cases, the High Anti-Corruption Court passed 289 verdicts against corrupt top officials, members of parliaments and judges, of which 263 were convictions and 26 were acquittals.

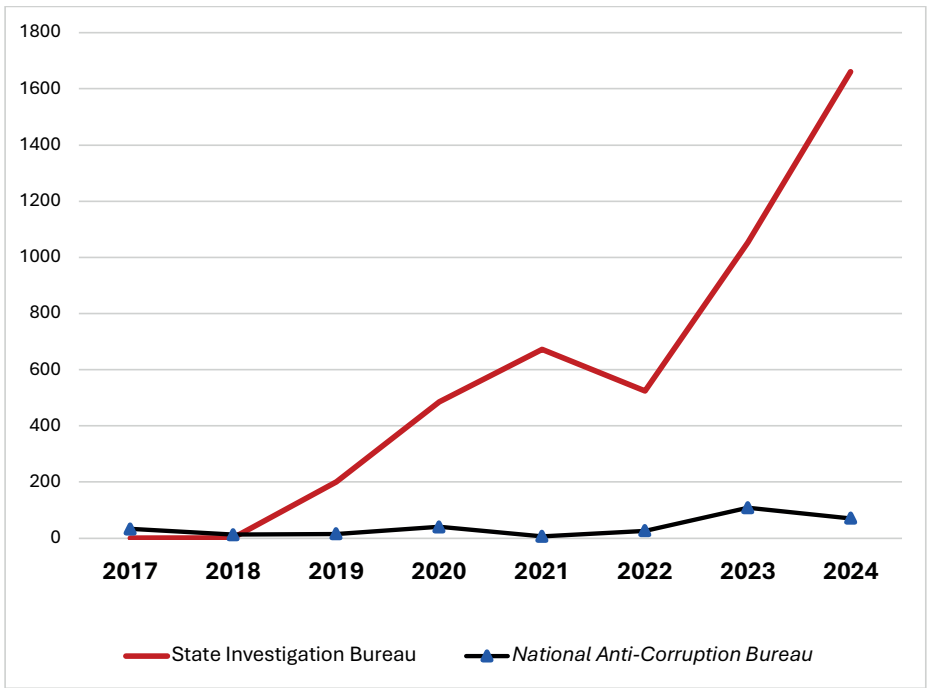


Figure 153. Criminal proceedings with suspects opened by the DBR and the NABU

Quality and Quantity of Criminal Investigations during the War

No less interesting is the issue of researching the impact of the War on the indicators of the work of Ukrainian law enforcement agencies, where, according to statistical forms, we take as a basis two indicators – the total number of criminal proceedings opened by one or another law enforcement agency (prosecutor's office, the police, security service, tax police, the State Bureau of Investigation, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine), and the number of criminal proceedings with concrete suspects opened by the relevant law enforcement agency.

It can be concluded that during the year of the Russian military invasion, the prosecutor's office opened significantly more criminal proceedings (9586 criminal proceedings in 2022, as compared to 7870 criminal proceedings in 2021).

However, the number of criminal proceedings in which suspicion was reported decreased (1420 criminal proceedings in 2021, 1354 criminal proceedings in 2022). However, prosecutors registered 1678 criminal proceedings in 2023 and 1693 criminal proceedings in 2024 (*Figure 154*).

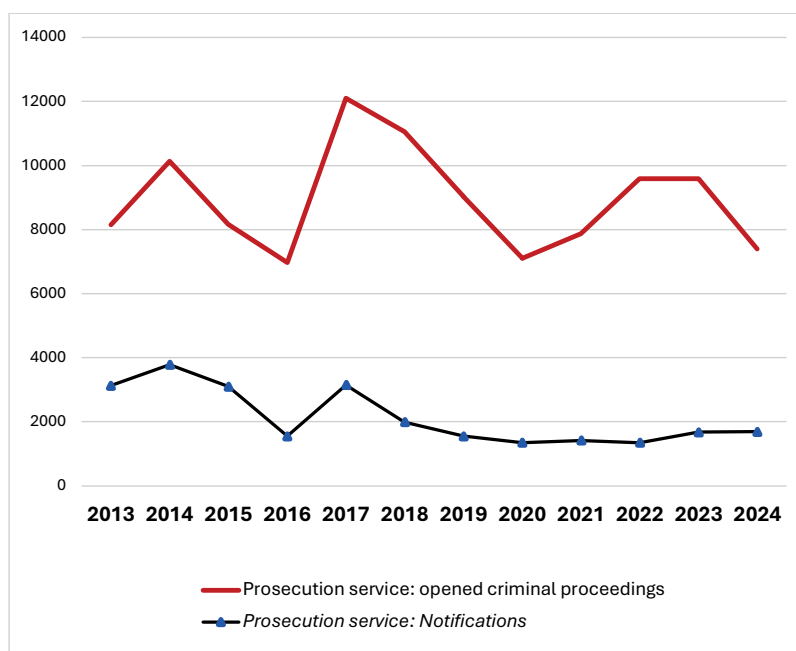


Figure 154. Criminal proceedings opened by Prosecution Service

In 2022, the police registered 39800 criminal proceedings (28633 criminal proceedings with concrete suspects), which is less than in 2021 (44027 criminal proceedings, of which there were 36562 criminal proceedings with suspects). However, the next year the police registered 61847 criminal proceedings, of which there were 51373 criminal proceedings with suspects. In 2024, year the police registered 65478 criminal proceedings, of which there were 56014 criminal proceedings with suspects (*Figure 155*).

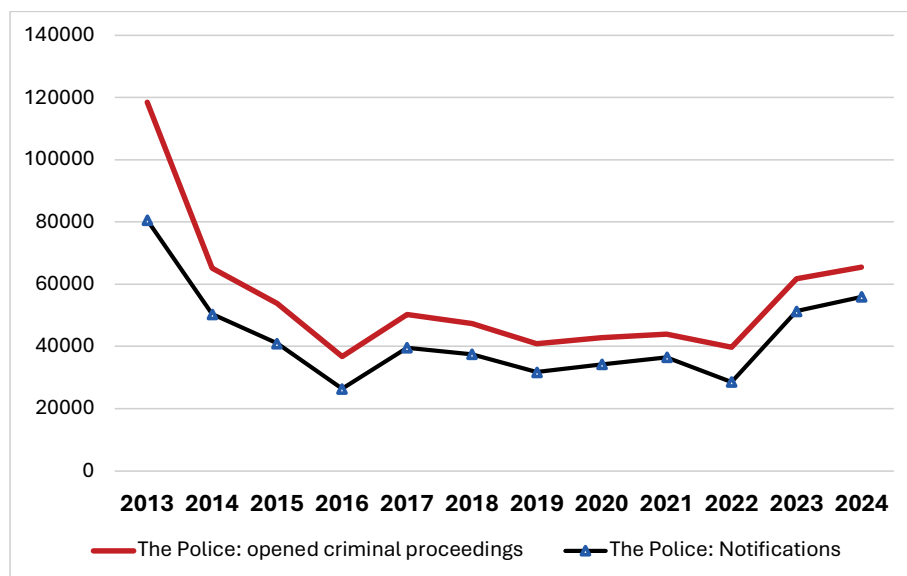


Figure 155. Criminal proceedings opened by the Police

At the same time, for obvious reasons, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) registered 11841 criminal proceedings in 2022, while only 5035 criminal proceedings were registered in 2021. The further wartime period demonstrated further slight decrease in a general number of criminal proceedings registered by the Security Service of Ukraine (11679 criminal proceedings in 2023 and 10959 criminal proceedings in 2024). However, there was an increase in criminal proceedings with suspects (4198 criminal proceedings in 2023 and 4258 criminal proceedings in 2024) (*Figure 156*).

If we discuss the indicators of the tax police, then, for objective reasons, the indicators have reached almost zero level in 2022

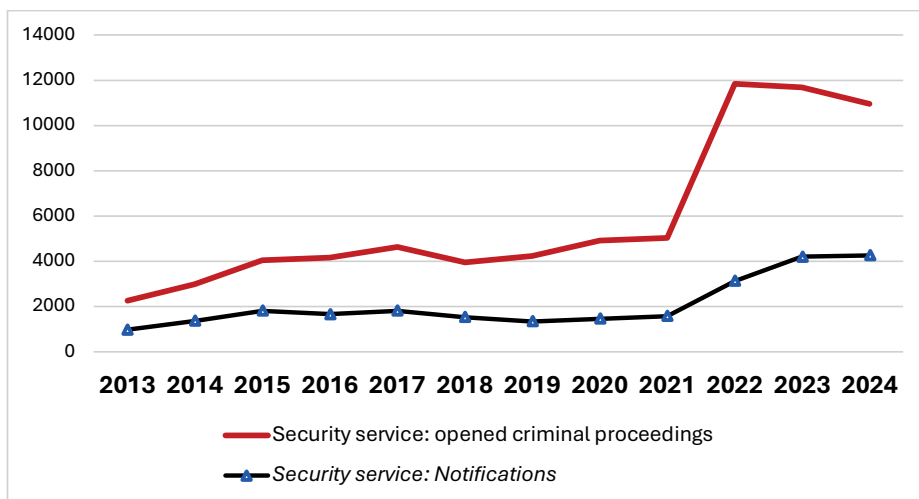


Figure 156. Criminal proceedings opened by Security Service

(especially criminal proceedings with suspects). However, the next years demonstrated an increase in the number of criminal proceedings registered (945 criminal proceedings in 2023, 1347 criminal proceedings in 2024). However, it appears that the quantity was not supported with the quality: only 192 criminal proceedings in 2023 and 371 criminal proceedings in 2024 had suspects (*Figure 157*).

Since 2017, statistics on the results of crime investigations by investigators of the State Bureau of Investigation (DBR) started to be published, which show quite indicative results. Thus, despite the annual increase in the number of registered criminal proceedings, the ratio between the total number of cases and cases with suspects increased every year, which proves the thesis of the transformation of the State Bureau of Investigation into a body investigating mainly *'factual'* cases. At the same time, the War left the indicators at the same level as last year (1341 criminal proceedings in 2021, 1130 criminal proceedings in 2022). At the same time, the beginning of the War further increased the distance between actual criminal proceedings and criminal proceedings with suspects (672 criminal proceedings with suspects in 2021, 525 criminal proceedings with suspects in 2022, 1053 criminal proceedings with suspects in 2023, and 1661 criminal proceedings with suspects in 2024) (*Figure 158*).

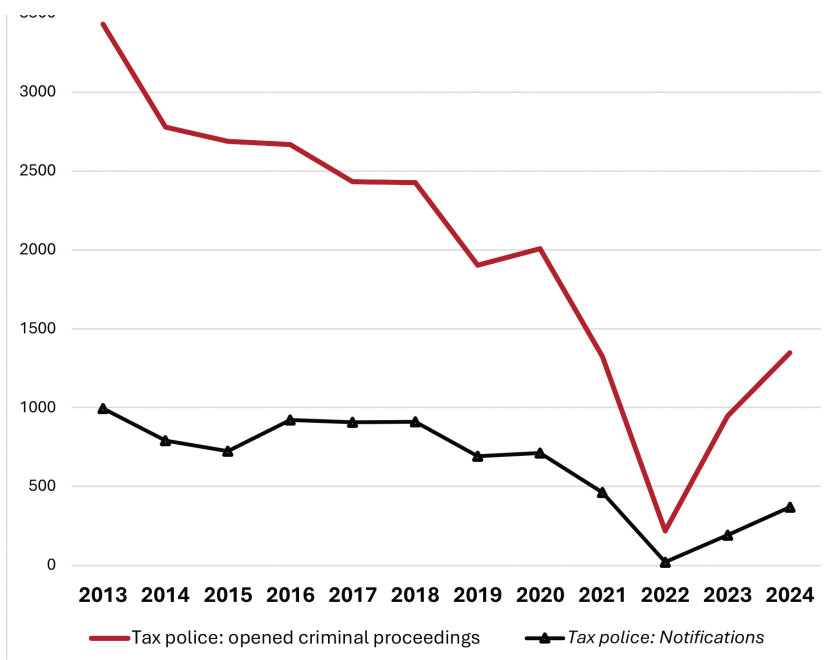


Figure 157. Criminal proceedings opened by the Tax Police

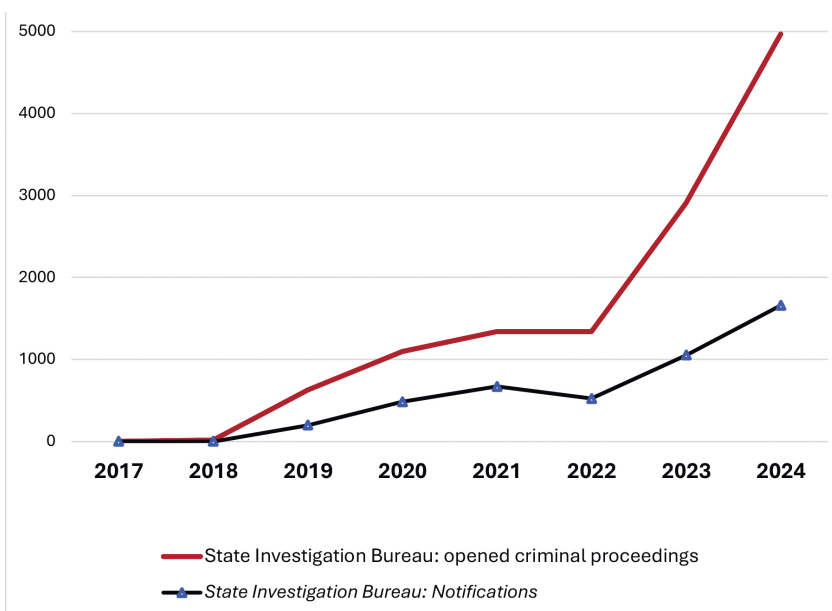


Figure 158. Criminal proceedings opened by the DBR

In 2022, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine, on the contrary, demonstrated an increase in both the total number of criminal proceedings and the number of criminal proceedings involving suspects. In general, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine has demonstrated stability in both indicators since its establishment, which the war does not seem to have affected. However, the statistics demonstrate a deeper gap between the general number of criminal proceedings and the number of criminal proceedings with suspects (*Figure 159*).

At the same time, it should be noted that the first half of 2025 was marked by a number of high-profile criminal cases for the NABU and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, particularly in the defence, land and medical sectors. As in previous periods, the focus was on uncovering high-level corruption taking place in the context of full-scale Russian aggression.

For the first time in history, the current Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine has been exposed for corruption. He is suspected of receiving undue benefits in the form of a discount on real estate.

Anti-corruption bodies have reported suspicions of bribery and legalisation of illegally acquired funds against the former deputy head of the President's Office. He had previously been charged with illegal enrichment.

In addition, anti-corruption authorities conducted a unique operation called 'Clean City' to neutralise a criminal organisation that controlled the process of granting land ownership rights in Kyiv.

Furthermore, anti-corruption bodies exposed two large-scale schemes in the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine. The first criminal scheme was concerned with the inflation prices for military supplies, which caused the state losses of 733 million UAH. The second criminal scheme was concerned with embezzlement of 246 million UAH for the development of an automated system for the Operational Command Centre of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were uncovered.

Anti-corruption authorities also shut down a criminal group of judges and lawyers who, for a fee, helped conscripts illegally leave the country and obtain deferrals from mobilisation. Anti-corruption authorities also stopped the criminal activities of a group of individuals who, through illegal access to the closed part of the register of court decisions, leaked information about the NABU's investigative actions to criminal organisations.

In total, in the first half of 2025, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine opened 370 new investigations, notified 115 persons of suspicion, and sent 69 indictments to court. As a result of the consideration of indictments filed with the court by the NABU detectives, 54 top corrupt officials were convicted.

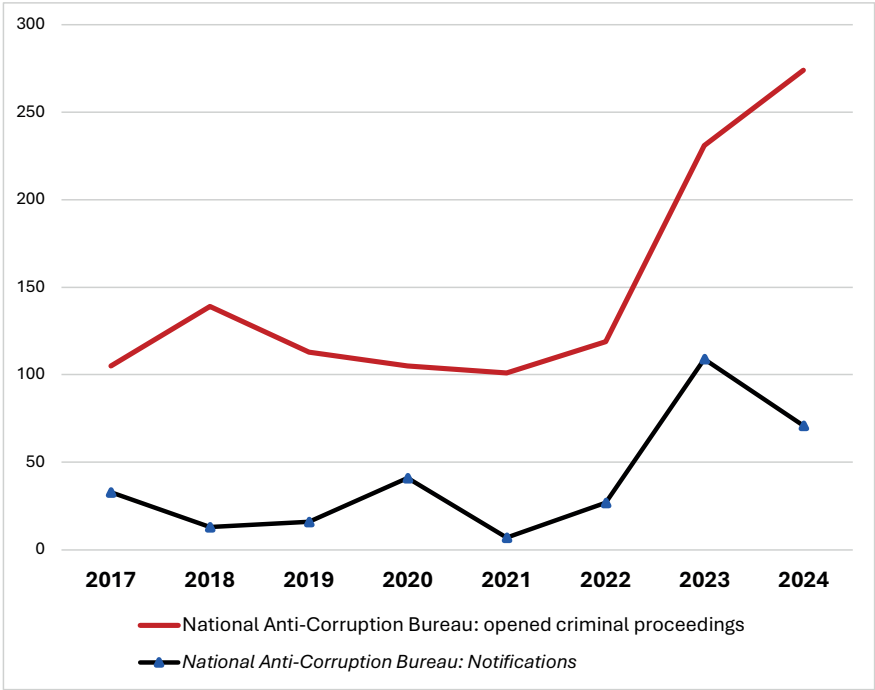


Figure 159. Criminal proceedings opened by the NABU

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT AND LAW: CHALLENGES DURING WARTIME¹⁸⁵

One of the most important consequences of the War's impact on crime is the change in citizens' attitudes towards law enforcement agencies in Ukraine as a result of or under the influence of the Russian invasion.

Research into this issue is an integral part of the overall picture of the impact of the War on the State as a whole, as well as on crime within the State's borders. We believe that research into the dynamics of institutions and crime indicators, as well as the study of expert opinion, requires additional coverage of broad public opinion at the national and regional levels.

Therefore, at the end of this monograph, we aim to analyse the results of individual sociological studies in Ukraine that indicate a change in Ukrainians' attitudes towards law enforcement and justice.

First, we have to present the situation with the trust in law-enforcement and judiciary before the War started.

From 3 to 9 July 2020, the Razumkov Centre's conducted the survey in cooperation with the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, using face-to-face interviews at the respondents' place of residence¹⁸⁶.

In 2020, most often, Ukrainian citizens expressed trust in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (65% of respondents trust them), the Church (63%), volunteer organisations (63%), the State Emergency Service (53%), volunteer battalions (53%), the State Border Service (52%),

¹⁸⁵ *Dmytro Yagunov*, Attorney at Law, D.Sc. in Political Science, Ph.D in Public Administration, MSSc in Criminal Justice, Associate Professor (Eberhard Karls University, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University)

¹⁸⁶ Razumkov Centre (2020). The beginning of a new political year: trust in social institutions (July 2020). *Razumkov Centre*. Source: www.razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/pochatok-novogo-politychnogo-roku-dovira-do-sotsialnykh-institutiv-lypen-2020r

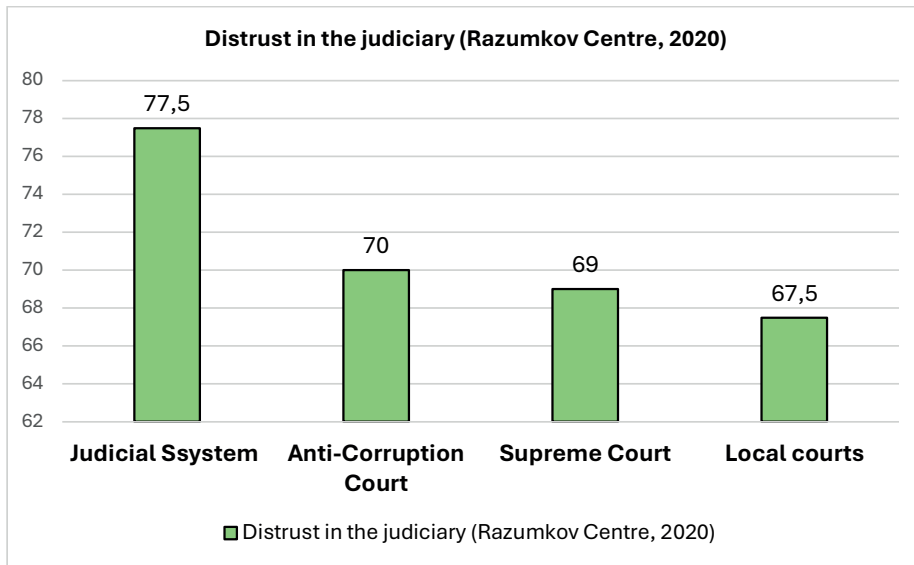


Figure 160. Distrust in the judiciary (Razumkov Centre, 2020)

the Ukrainian media (50%), the National Guard of Ukraine (49%), and public organisations (47%)¹⁸⁷.

Unfortunately, all other institutions were viewed with more distrust than trust.

The President of Ukraine was distrusted by 49% of citizens, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine by 75%, the Government of Ukraine by 72%, and the state apparatus (officials) by 78%.

There was a high level of distrust in the judicial system as a whole (77,5%), the Anti-Corruption Court – 70%, the Supreme Court (69%), and local courts (67,5%).

The prosecutor's office was distrusted by 73% of respondents, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) by 71%, the

¹⁸⁷ A total of 2,022 respondents aged 18 and older were interviewed in all regions of Ukraine, except for Crimea and the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, using a sample representative of the adult population according to key socio-demographic indicators. The theoretical sampling error (without considering the design effect) does not exceed 2.3% with a probability of 0.95.

Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SAP) – 70,5%, and the National Agency for Corruption Prevention (NAZK) – 70%¹⁸⁸.

Among law enforcement agencies, distrust of the police and the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) is slightly less common (although distrust still prevails over trust). Thus, 58% of respondents did not trust the National Police of Ukraine (NPU) (33% trusted them), the patrol police (54% and 35%, respectively), and the Security Service of Ukraine (56% and 31%, respectively)¹⁸⁹.

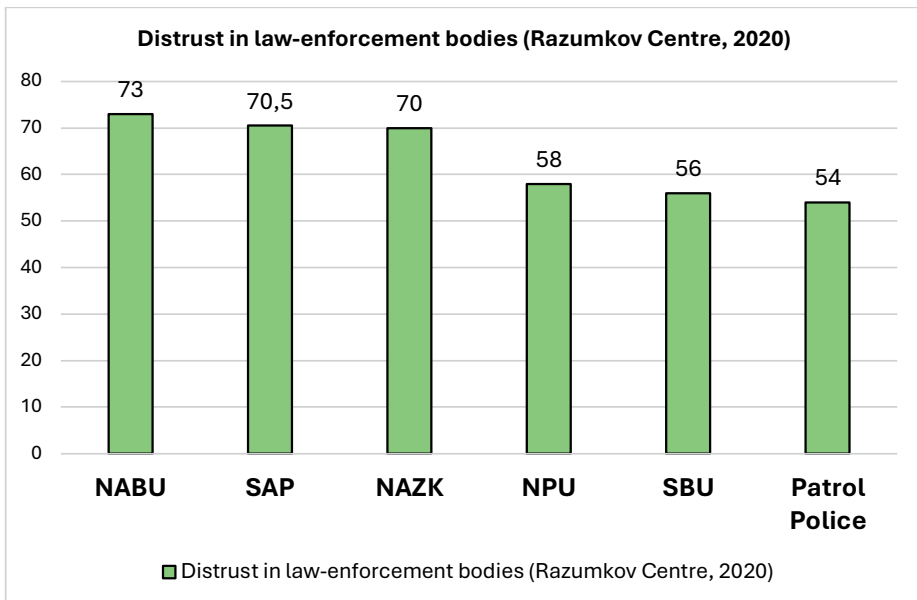


Figure 161. Distrust in law-enforcement bodies (Razumkov Centre, 2020)

Later, from 3 to 11 December 2021, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) conducted its own nationwide public opinion

¹⁸⁸ Razumkov Centre (2020). The beginning of a new political year: trust in social institutions (July 2020). *Razumkov Centre*. Source: www.razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/pochatok-novogo-politychnogo-roku-dovira-do-sotsialnykh-institutiv-lypen-2020r

¹⁸⁹ Razumkov Centre (2020). The beginning of a new political year: trust in social institutions (July 2020). *Razumkov Centre*. Source: www.razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/pochatok-novogo-politychnogo-roku-dovira-do-sotsialnykh-institutiv-lypen-2020r

poll¹⁹⁰. Using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) based on a random sample of mobile phone numbers (with random generation of phone numbers and subsequent statistical weighting), 2,000 respondents living in all regions of Ukraine (except for the Autonomous Republic of Crimea) were interviewed¹⁹¹.

The army, volunteers, ordinary people in their local communities, and the Church continue to enjoy the highest level of trust in Ukrainian society.

At the same time, compared to December 2020, there has been an increase in trust in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. A total of 72% of Ukrainians trust the army, with a trust-distrust balance of +60%.

Compared to December 2020, the share of those who trust the army increased by 6 percentage points, and the trust-distrust balance increased by 8 percentage points¹⁹².

Compared to December 2020, there is also a trend towards increased trust in the army in all regions.

Compared to December 2020, the situation remained virtually unchanged. The situation was slightly better in the case of law enforcement agencies: 30-35% trusted the Patrol Police, the Security Service of Ukraine, and the National Police.

The balance of trust ranged from -2% for the Patrol Police to -14% for the National Police.

Although the share of those who trusted these institutions did not change compared to December 2020, the balance in all three cases improved slightly. No significant regional differences in trust in law enforcement agencies were found¹⁹³.

¹⁹⁰ Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2021). Dynamics of trust in social institutions during 2020-2021: results of a telephone survey. *Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*. Source: www.kiis.com.ua

¹⁹¹ The sample was representative of the adult population (aged 18 and older) of Ukraine. The sample did not include territories temporarily not controlled by the Ukrainian government – the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, the survey was conducted only in areas controlled by the Ukrainian government. The statistical margin of error (with a probability of 0.95 and considering the design effect of 1.1) did not exceed: 2.4% for indicators close to 50%, 2.1% for indicators close to 25%, 1.5% for indicators close to 10%, 1.1% for indicators close to 5%.

¹⁹² Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2021). Dynamics of trust in social institutions during 2020-2021: results of a telephone survey. *Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*. Source: www.kiis.com.ua

¹⁹³ Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2021). Dynamics of trust in social institutions during 2020-2021: results of a telephone survey. *Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*. Source: www.kiis.com.ua

In December 2024, the Ministry of Internal Affairs presented the results of their survey¹⁹⁴. As in previous examples, the survey aimed at trust in different law enforcement agencies¹⁹⁵.

According to the survey, the National Guard of Ukraine has the highest level of trust among law enforcement agencies: 86% of respondents expressed trust, compared to 72% of those surveyed in 2023. The State Border Service is trusted by 54%, while 42% of respondents do not trust it to one degree or another.

The National Police have a 48% trust rating, while 51% do not trust it. The level of trust in the National Police has declined slightly: in 2023, the share of those who trusted the National Police was 56%.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs believes that the identical levels of trust in the National Police of Ukraine and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine are, in particular, a sign that citizens still do not clearly distinguish between these bodies¹⁹⁶.

In January 2025, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) presented very significant and impressive results of a new survey focused on the issues of dynamics of trust in social institutions in 2021-2024¹⁹⁷.

The survey was conducted among adult (aged 18 and older) citizens of Ukraine who, at the time of the survey, were residing in the territory of Ukraine controlled by the Government of Ukraine. The sample did not include residents of territories temporarily not controlled by the Ukrainian authorities (at the same time, some of the respondents were

¹⁹⁴ Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (2024). Among law enforcement agencies, the National Guard is the most trusted, with 86% approval rating, according to a poll. *Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine*. Source: <https://mvs.gov.ua/news/sered-pravooxoronnix-organiv-naibilse-doviraiut-nacionalnii-gvardiyi-86-socopituvannia>

¹⁹⁵ The survey was conducted from 24 to 29 September 2024 using the CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) method, with a sample of 2,000 respondents representing the adult population of Ukraine (excluding temporarily occupied territories and territories where Ukrainian mobile communications are unavailable). The margin of error is 2.2% with a confidence level of 0.95.

¹⁹⁶ Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (2024). Among law enforcement agencies, the National Guard is the most trusted, with 86% approval rating, according to a poll. *Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine*. Source: <https://mvs.gov.ua/news/sered-pravooxoronnix-organiv-naibilse-doviraiut-nacionalnii-gvardiyi-86-socopituvannia>

¹⁹⁷ Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2024). Dynamics of trust in social institutions in 2021-2024. *Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*. Source: www.kiis.com.ua

IDPs who had moved from the occupied territories), and the survey did not cover citizens who had left the country after 24 February 2022¹⁹⁸.

In the case of the Armed Forces, support remains consistently very high – 92% trust them and only 2% do not (a year ago, the figures were 96% and 1%, respectively). The balance of trust and distrust is +90%.



Figure 162. Distrust in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (KIIS, 2025)

The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) also maintains a fairly high level of trust (despite a slight decline compared to last year). Thus, 54% of Ukrainians trust the SBU, while 21% do not (in December 2023, the figures were 58% to 16%). The balance of trust and distrust is +33% (last year it was +42%).

Trust in the police has declined slightly, with those who trust the police falling from 41% to 37%, while those who do not trust the police rose from 29% to 38%.

¹⁹⁸ Using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) based on a random sample of mobile phone numbers (with random generation of phone numbers and subsequent statistical weighting), 985 respondents were interviewed in all regions of Ukraine (territory controlled by the Government of Ukraine).

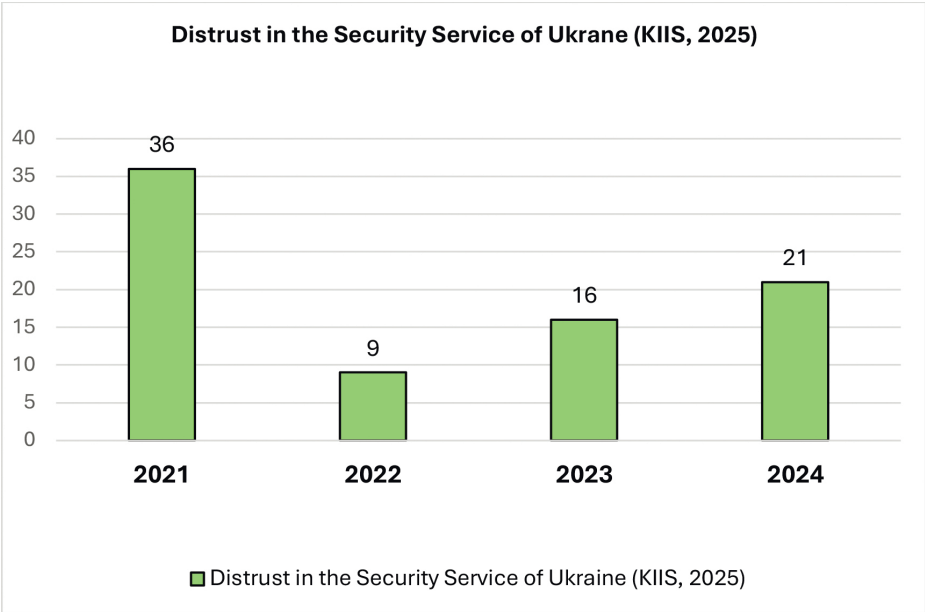


Figure 163. Distrust in the Security Service of Ukraine (KIIS, 2025)

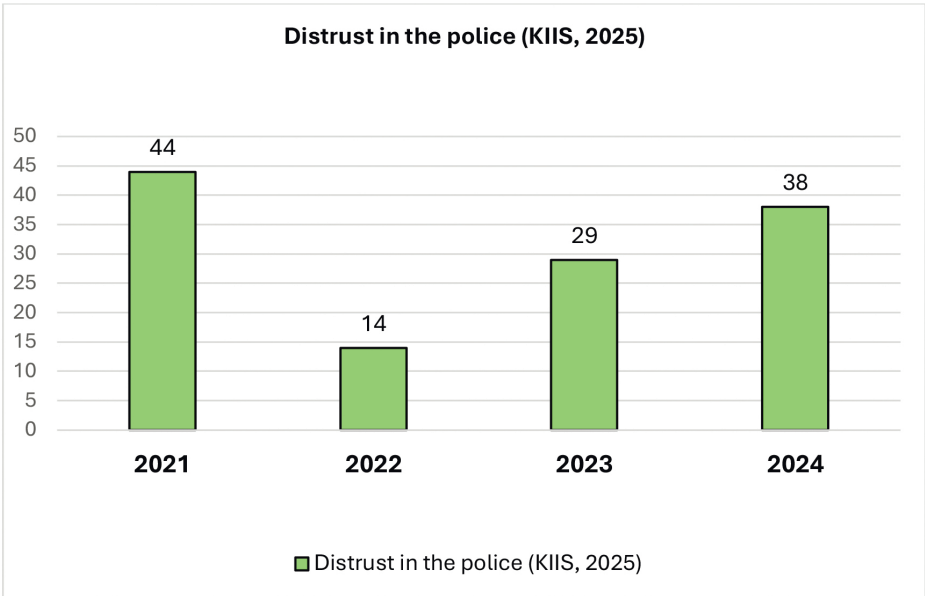


Figure 164. Distrust in the police (KIIS, 2025)

Trust in the courts and prosecutors remains critically low. Only 12% of Ukrainians trust the courts and only 9% trust prosecutors.

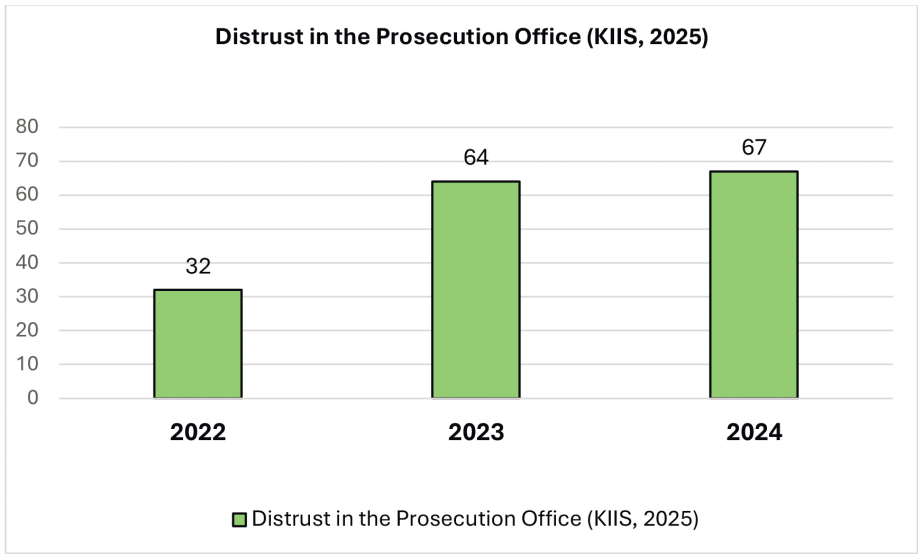


Figure 165. Distrust in the Prosecution Office (KIIS, 2025)

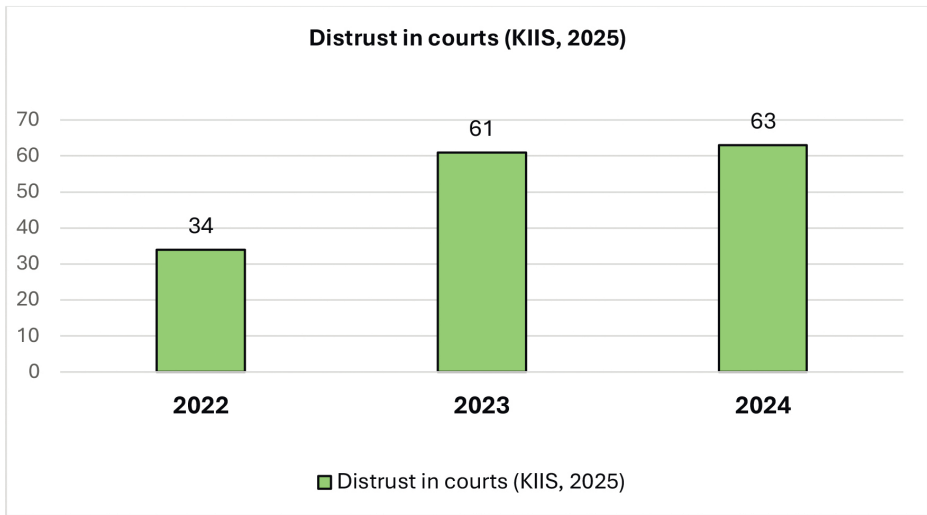


Figure 166. Distrust in courts (KIIS, 2025)

The percentage of those who do not trust the courts and prosecutors is 63% and 67%, respectively. Compared to last year, the situation has not changed.

Overall, in the current socio-political circumstances, Ukrainians trust only the Armed Forces of Ukraine and, to a much lesser extent, the Security Service of Ukraine. Ukrainians trust the police even less. However, prosecutors and courts demonstrate the greatest and most critical dysfunctionality today, with critically low levels of trust among the Ukrainian population.

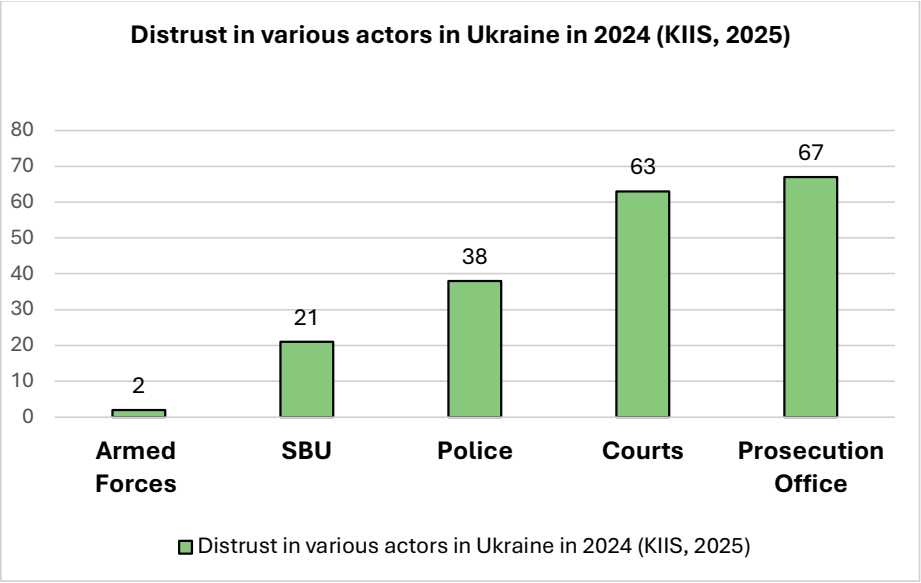


Figure 167. Distrust in various actors in Ukraine in 2024 (KIIS, 2025)

As far as *corruption* is concerned, in September 2023, the KIIS asked about perceptions of corruption, and 59% responded that ‘there are real attempts to fight corruption in Ukraine, and there are positive developments’, while 36% responded that ‘Ukraine is hopelessly corrupt, and there are no positive changes’.

In September 2024, according to new data, 48% believed that there were attempts to fight corruption in Ukraine, while the share of those who agreed with the view that corruption was hopelessly entrenched rose to 47%. By December 2023, 55% of Ukrainians believed that corrupt

officials should be punished as quickly as possible, even if this meant breaking the law¹⁹⁹.

According to the Transparency International Ukraine, *corruption in economic and political reconstruction processes in Ukraine* is considered to be very or rather widespread by 65% of Ukrainians surveyed. Two-thirds of respondents consider the distribution of international and budget funds (65%), control and reporting on the use of resources (63%) and tenders (61%) to be the most vulnerable stages to corruption. The most common fears of Ukrainians regarding reconstruction are the lack of proper control (62%), the possible return of corruption schemes (61%) and the lack of security guarantees and the resumption of hostilities (56%)²⁰⁰.

¹⁹⁹ Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2024). Dynamics of trust in social institutions in 2021-2024. *Kyiv International Institute of Sociology*. Source: www.kiis.com.ua

²⁰⁰ Muravsky, A. (2025). Ukrainians see corruption in reconstruction processes – study. *Ekonomichna Pravda*. August 25, 2025. Source: <https://epravda.com.ua/biznes/ukrajinci-bachat-korupciyu-v-procesah-vidbudovi-doslidzhennya-810787>

CONCLUSIONS²⁰¹

Having summarised the above developments presented, we have come to the following conclusions that reflect the 2013-2024 crime trends in Ukraine, heavily impacted with the wartime challenges.

Following up on our conclusions shaped in previously published papers, we have to stress again that the 2022 Russian armed invasion of Ukraine became *the first full-scale war* in the centre of the European continent after World War II with direct and open participation of the biggest European states which has become an absolutely new broad field for criminological research *on the impacts of a contemporary war on contemporary digital and technological societies*.

The crime trends in wartime Ukraine have become a much more interesting *criminological phenomenon* for researchers due to the *dualistic nature* of such trends.

The number of crimes committed in Ukraine in 2022 (362636 crimes) exceeded the number of crimes committed in 2021 (321443 crimes). Mass attacks on Ukrainian cities by drones and missiles and destruction of the infrastructure left many people without their homes, incomes, hopes, and perspectives. Therefore, it is not surprising that the number of crimes increased significantly in 2023-2024 considering the ruination of all aspects of economic and social life in Ukraine (475595 crimes in 2023, 492479 crimes in 2024).

All these factors, including further mass migration of people from frontline areas, increased the crime rates significantly. In addition, the crime landscape took new forms and characteristics having received the 'injection' of purely wartime crimes (crimes against military service, war crimes and crimes against national security).

It is obvious that all resources of Ukraine have been directed to the needs of the defence of the state from the Russian armed aggression, including the police. Therefore, it is not surprising that the quality of investigation of crimes and the preventive effect of criminal punishment

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decreased proportionally. In 2023, there were only 189292 criminal proceedings with suspects (40% from the total number). In 2024, there were only 194688 of criminal proceedings with suspects (39% from the total number). In contrast, the same indicator for 2021 was 53%. The latter can serve as an indicator of the decreasing effectiveness of the national criminal justice system in the conditions of the wartime challenges and sometimes even chaos.

The War made criminality *more rural* in Ukraine. In 2024, police statistics demonstrated the lowest level of crimes in urban areas (67.6%) and the highest level of crimes in rural areas (28,7%).

The War ‘*cut*’ the number of detected *crimes against human life and health*. In 2023, suspects were found only in 36% of criminal proceedings. In 2024, the same indicators dropped to the point of 29%. Only 5% of perpetrators of *intentional homicides* were identified in 2022, 2,8% of perpetrators were identified in 2023, and 1,9% of perpetrators were identified in 2024 that indicates an obvious operational weakness of the national criminal justice system in wartime.

Police statistics on *torture* occupy a very controversial place in the analysis of the general structure of crime in Ukraine. On one hand, systematic torture by the police and prison officers has shaped corresponding views on torture as *practices* in Ukrainian society and media. Ukrainian society has a strong view that ill-treatment by the police and prison officers is a *wide-spread phenomenon*. On the other one, the number of officially registered crimes of torture determines many questions concerning the latent nature of this type of crime as well as the effectiveness of investigation of torture by state agents in Ukraine which become known to the society. Additionally, the percentage of *dropped* criminal proceedings in torture cases stimulates additional questions about the effectiveness of pre-trial investigation of tortures.

Domestic violence also deserves to become an interesting phenomenon of the crime landscape in wartime Ukraine. In the light of the absence of both victims and perpetrators due to mass migration of *potential* victims and participation of many *potential* perpetrators in military actions, crime rates go up.

No less interesting picture one can find in the case of *drug-related crimes*. Even in the light of further escalation of military actions, the state continues focusing even on minor drug crimes. It seems that the mechanism of an artificial ‘*market*’ for drug-related crimes, where criminals are

often victims at the same time, and where police officers know *who*, *where* and *under what conditions* will commit the next ‘crime’, ‘*should not stand idle*’ even during the War.

Expectedly, the number of offences against military service (*military crimes*) has also increased significantly in 2022-2024. The police registered 16515 such crimes in 2023 and 66240 in 2024. At the same time the number of criminal proceedings with suspects were very low (2239 and 7398 correspondingly). The main conclusion here is that the number of registered crimes has increased in parallel to the decrease of identified suspects in corresponding criminal proceedings.

While considering *property crimes* in wartime Ukraine, the first hypothesis appears that the absence of properly organised policing *would* lead to a serious increase in the number of property crimes. Nevertheless, the number of recorded property crimes has, in fact, significantly *decreased* in 2022. The impact of the War on property crimes is more than obvious: 158729 property crimes in 2021, 113137 property crimes in 2022, 178902 property crimes in 2023, and 132910 property crimes in 2024. The same way the War impacted the practices of crimes of *thefts, car thefts, muggings, aggravated robberies* and *racketeering*.

In contrast, crimes of *fraud* in 2022 demonstrated absolutely another trend: the number of crimes of fraud in 2022 (32086) appeared much bigger than in 2021 (23847). Moreover, the police registered 82609 crimes of fraud in 2022 and 64978 crimes of fraud in 2024.

It was predicted that the number of *economic offences* would decrease (5469 crimes in 2022). However, perpetrators have *adapted* to wartime conditions, and crime rates almost reached the level of 2021. Moreover, the ‘adaptation process’ was more than effective. As an example, we can consider the crime of *legalisation (laundering) of property proceeding from crime*: 348 crimes in 2020, 395 crimes in 2021, 437 crimes in 2022, 969 crimes in 2023, and 1132 crimes in 2024.

While analysing *crimes committed with firearms*, it could be expected that crime rates resulting from *illegal use of firearms* would extremely rise after February 2022. Nevertheless, police statistics *partly* refute such a presumption. For example, in 2021, there were 36 intentional homicides committed using firearms. In 2022, the same indicator increased to the level of 247 crimes. In 2023, the same indicator increased to the level of 909 crimes. However, in 2024, the same indicator decreased to the level of 295 crimes.

In contrast, the War increased the number of *crimes committed with the use of explosives*. These crimes have indicated a dualistic trend: 1) the number of crimes increased; 2) the number of criminal proceedings with suspects decreased.

As far as *sex crimes* are concerned, the number of mentioned crimes decreased significantly in 2022, as could be expected from the wartime society. However, the number of rapes reached the pre-War indicators in 2023. At the same time, we had the lowest level of sex crimes in the ten-year history of crime prevention in Ukraine. Moreover, in December 2022, there were only 2 sex crimes registered in Ukraine: 621 sex crimes for the period of eleven months of 2022, and 623 sex crimes for the period of twelve months of 2022. The same can be said about the crimes of *rape*: the beginning of the War led to a rapid decrease in rapes (406 rapes in 2021, 250 rapes in 2022). However, 450 rapes were registered in 2023, and 410 rapes were registered in 2024.

No less interesting is official statistics of *crimes against national security*. In 2022, the LEA registered five times more crimes against national security as compared to the whole period of 2013-2021. However, the number of such crimes dropped almost three times in 2023.

It was clearly expected that the 2022 Russian armed invasion would bring an increase in the numbers of *crimes in the sphere of protection of state secrets, inviolability of state borders, provision of conscription and mobilization*. As a result, the number of the above crimes in 2022 is 2,6 times bigger as compared with 2021. The number of the above crimes in 2023 is 2,3 times bigger as compared with 2022 (1000, 2624 and 6279 crimes correspondingly).

Economic offences also demonstrate how crime has adapted to wartime conditions. In 2022, the number of crimes against public services decreased 1,6 times. However, the number of these crimes increased 1,3 times in 2023. Moreover, the number of these crimes increased 1,1 times in 2024 as compared to 2023. In general, the number of these crimes increased 1,1 times in 2024 as compared to 2022.

As far as *human trafficking* is concerned, 133 crimes in 2022, 147 crimes in 2023, and 105 crimes were registered in 2024. These numbers are more than *insufficient* considering 6,5 million Ukrainian refugees, which could lead to the conclusion that something is obviously *wrong* with the police intelligence in the sphere of THB prevention as well as with

intelligence of the Ukrainian border service. It could be said that THB crimes are *more latent* ones than the LEA officials declare.

As far as *the effectiveness of the law enforcement agencies* is concerned, they provided different indicators depending on the types of crimes they registered and investigated.

The importance of *policing* increased in wartime society. The wartime period indicates a clear trend where the Prosecution Office registered fewer criminal proceedings in 2023, and especially in 2024. At the same time, the police registered much more criminal proceedings in 2023 and 2024.

It is surprising that the number of criminal proceedings registered by *the Security Service of Ukraine* decreased after 2022, especially considering the increasing threats from Russia. At the same time, an increase in criminal proceedings by *the tax police* demonstrates that the economics has adapted to the wartime conditions, with a corresponding adaptation of white-collar crime to the challenges of the War. For obvious reasons, *the Security Service of Ukraine* registered 2,4 times more criminal proceedings in 2022 as compared to 2021. The further wartime period demonstrated a further slight decrease in a general number of criminal proceedings registered by *the Security Service of Ukraine*. However, there was an increase in criminal proceedings with suspects.

The tax police registered 4,3 times more criminal proceedings in 2023 as compared to 2022. In 2024, the tax police registered 1,3 times more criminal proceedings as compared to 2023. However, it appears that the quantity was not supported with the quality: only 10% of criminal proceedings registered by the tax police in 2022 had suspects (20% and 27% correspondingly for 2023 and 2024).

Finalising this book, we would also like to draw some attention to the problems which are considered too serious and significant to avoid.

During the war, the Government had the priority to combat against Russian occupiers, where a traditional peace-time human rights approach has been replaced with *humanitarian law*.

There are grounds to believe that Ukraine will have a generation of police officers grown up on the long distance from *procedural justice* and *human rights*. We can also presume that even after the War the Ukrainian police will face a *post-war echo* and focus on *harsh crime prevention policies* aimed at organised crime and gang activities.

Therefore, it can be presumed that even the second generation of police officers will have a *punitive style of thinking*. It is clear that these generations of police officers will need more time to adapt themselves to *peacetime policing* based on human rights standards of the Council of Europe and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture. Considering the time limits and a lack of material resources on the police, the issue of the training of police officers can be very problematic.

Moreover, we have all grounds to presume that not only time and financial resources should be considered. One of the sharpest aspects of postwar Ukrainian policing has a purely *psychological* nature.

It is obvious the police force of Ukraine will be recruited mostly from the former military officers and soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In addition to the absence of proper knowledge and skills on how to communicate with people in the post-War society, they are expected to rely on the *autocratic and harsh style of policing* rather on the dialogue with citizens.

Consequently, such a situation will lead to a bigger *gap* between the police and the society.

Moreover, one more aspect must be considered here.

The majority of police officers – regardless of their age – will be former military officers or police officers directly involved in the military actions. Even now, many police officers participate in military actions on the basis of regular rotation.

Even those who are not involved in military actions participate in joint actions with military staff of the military recruiting centres, performing purely punitive actions with a zero level of trust by the population.

In the case of former military officers and police officers involved in direct armed hostilities, it is obvious that they will be reluctant to follow traditional methods of police training. Moreover, there is a real danger that such police officers can even *sabotage* human-rights oriented police strategies in the postwar Ukrainian society.

Consequently, such a situation shapes a problem which has to be solved with *new innovative methods* of training of police officers adapted to the needs of the last two generations of police officers.

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Наукове видання

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В УМОВАХ ВОЄННОГО ЧАСУ
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СОЦІАЛЬНОГО КОНТРОЛЮ В УКРАЇНІ**

**злочинність, інститути
та довіра до кримінального правосуддя**

Monograph

Під редакцією
політичних наук Дмитра Ягунова
і кандидата юридичних наук Тетяни Мельничук

