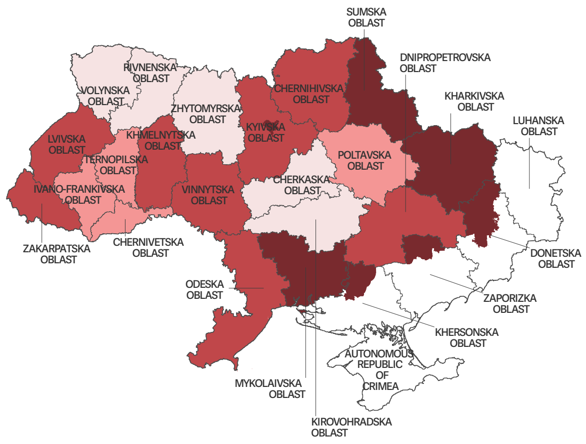
Ukraine

ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY | The impact of the war on food access and availability maintained high levels of acute food insecurity, particularly in frontline areas in the eastern and southern oblasts.

PEAK 2023 (SEPTEMBER)

7.3M or 20% of the population faced moderate or severe acute food insecurity in September 2023, which represents a decrease from the previous year when 8.9M or 25% of the population experienced these conditions. The areas directly affected by the war had the highest levels of acute food insecurity (HNRP, January 2024).



Source: REACH/WFP, October 2023.

Proportion of households facing moderate or severe acute food insecurity

3–11 percent | 12–16 percent | 17–26 percent | > 27 percent | Areas not covered with household interviews

History of the food crisis A lower-middle-income country, armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine started in 2014. The eastern Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts were selected for inclusion in the GRFC 2018–2022 due to localized conflict and high food prices that limited access to markets, basic services, and livelihood opportunities.

The country has been classified as a major food crisis four times – in 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023 with at least 1 million people facing high levels of acute food insecurity. The severity and magnitude of the food crisis escalated sharply after the conflict expanded into a full-scale war in February 2022. Ukraine's agrifood sector has suffered massive losses that have negatively impacted crop and livestock activities within the country, and resonated through global markets.

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS 2023–2024

Conflict/insecurity The war in Ukraine continued to disrupt the country's economy, including the agrifood sector throughout 2023, as air and ground attacks hindered agricultural activities. This constrained the availability of food in some markets and reduced livelihood opportunities. Issues of food access and availability were exacerbated by the physical damage to critical infrastructure, including homes, energy infrastructure, dams, ports, warehouses and hospitals (OCHA, October 2023).

The damage and losses suffered by Ukrainian agriculture are estimated to amount to USD 80.1 billion. Machinery and equipment damage account for the largest share of total damage (57 percent), followed by stolen inputs and outputs (18 percent) and damaged storage facilities (18 percent) (RDNA3, February 2024).

The impacts of the war also led to the abandonment of arable land – mostly in current and past conflict zones – due to contamination from large numbers of mines and unexploded ordinances as well as lack of irrigation water following the Kakhova dam collapse (JRC Bulletins, September and June 2023).

The hostilities have constrained humanitarian access in the eastern and southern oblasts as humanitarian facilities, delivery points and workers have been targeted. Humanitarian access is very restricted in the areas under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation (OCHA, October 2023).

Economic shocks Although the Ukrainian economy continued to face challenges related to the war, positive shifts in real GDP growth and inflation were observed. After contracting by nearly 30 percent in 2022, the Ukrainian economy grew by 4.8 percent in 2023. Headline inflation slowed, declining to 5.1 percent year-on-year by December 2023 (National Bank of Ukraine, January 2024). Favourable weather conditions and improved harvests in addition to lower global energy prices eased upward pressure on prices in the country.

However, the formal labour market has been severely constrained by displacement and military service, with Ukraine recording the highest unemployment levels in over a decade (HNRP, January 2024).

Households employed coping strategies with increased frequency, particularly in the eastern and southern oblasts, including spending savings, reducing medical costs, and buying cheaper foods (HNRP, January 2024).

Lack of livelihood opportunities hindered financial access to food. The economy was still facing a massive deficit going into 2024.

Europe's largest displacement crisis since World War II

3.7M forcibly displaced people by 2023

3.7M IDPs

Source: IOM, December 2023.

3 300 refugees and asylum-seekers

Source: UNHCR Nowcasted estimate December 2023.

Out of the 6 million Ukrainian refugees globally, 5.9 million live across Europe, with close to 2 million of them in neighbouring countries: Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.Most are women and children, with adult men making up only 19 percent (UNHCR, January 2024).

In recognition of refugees' protracted displacement, the EU extended the region's Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), facilitating Ukrainians' access to safety, legal status, rights and services in the EU through to March 2025. Country implementation of this directive varied, and many refugees still report that they had at least one basic need unmet, including food access, education, healthcare and housing.

There is still cause for concern for acute food insecurity among certain refugee population groups – including the unemployed and the elderly – as some are struggling to meet their minimum food needs given overall limited income and the pressures of inflation (FEWS NET, September 2023).

IOM estimates that 3.7 million IDPs and 4.6 million returnees reside in Ukraine. Some 80 percent of IDPs have been displaced for more than one year and around 39 percent more than once. Almost half of the total IDP population originated from just two oblasts: Donetska (24 percent) and Kharkivska (22 percent) (IOM, September 2023).

IDPs' most acute needs were for cash and financial support (56 percent). Their primary coping mechanisms to meet basic needs were switching to cheaper food and non-food items (69 percent), reducing the quantity of food consumed (63 percent), and spending savings (61 percent). As IDP households deplete their savings, they are likely to resort to more severe coping strategies (IOM, December 2023).

ACUTE MALNUTRITION

No 2023 nutrition data were available for Ukraine, but the nutritional status of children has likely deteriorated. Destruction of civilian infrastructure caused millions to struggle with inadequate access to water, food, health, housing, protection and other essential services and supplies, especially during the winter months. This damage, in addition to issues of affordability, limited healthcare, nutritional and WASH services, put many at risk of disease (HNRP, December 2023).