# ANALYTICAL REPORT ON THE FINDINGS OF A STUDY ON THE INTEGRATION OF STUDENTS FROM THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF UKRAINE

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| **IDP** | internally displaced person |
| **2024 study** | analytical report based on a comprehensive survey of students from the TOT of Ukraine on their educational needs and challenges in obtaining education, prepared by the Centre of civil education "Almenda" and the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights with the support of the USAID project "Ukraine Confidence Building Initiative (UCBI)". |
| **EIT** | External Independent Testing |
| **HEI** | higher education institution |
| **IVET institution** | refers to an Initial Vocational Education and Training institution (EU/UNESCO standard term), used in this report to denote Ukrainian institutions of vocational pre-higher education (ЗФПО) within the national education system. |
| **NGO** | non-governmental organisation |
| **CSO** | civil society organisation |
| **TOT** | temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine by the Russian Federation |
| **Student/students** | a person/persons studying in higher, IVET or vocational education institutions |
| **CCE "Almenda"** | a non-governmental organization "The Centre of civil education "Almenda"" |
| **N** | sample size |
| **AR of Crimea** | Autonomous Republic of Crimea |

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# INTRODUCTION

Access to Ukrainian education for applicants from the temporarily occupied territories has remained one of the key mechanisms for maintaining their connection with Ukraine throughout the entire period that followed the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Despite restrictions on freedom of movement, information isolation and systemic pressure from the occupation administrations, applicants from the TOT continue to seek opportunities to enter Ukrainian educational institutions — either in person or remotely — overcoming significant safety, informational and psychological challenges. These challenges and their impact on access to Ukrainian education are examined in detail in the Special Report of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights on access to education for children and young people from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

According to official data from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the number of graduates from the TOT of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions, the AR of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson and Sumy Regions who entered Ukrainian educational institutions in 2016–2025 was as follows: in 2016 – 1,008 persons, in 2017 – 1,550, in 2018 – 1,776, in 2019 – 1,865, in 2020 – 2,026, in 2021 – 2,083, in 2022 – 7,018, in 2023 – 6,516, in 2024 – 11,325, and in 2025 – 9,418 persons. The statistics also include individuals from settlements along the contact line and territories where hostilities were taking place. The growth in certain years is explained by the expansion of the list of temporarily occupied and frontline territories after the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022. As a result, the number of graduates whose place of residence qualifies them for special admission conditions increased significantly, which directly contributed to the rise in the total number of admitted applicants in 2022–2025.

The admission figures show that the decisions of applicants from the TOT to enter Ukrainian educational institutions largely depend on the level of safety, the availability of routes for leaving the TOT, access to reliable information and individual circumstances. At the same time, they demonstrate the strong determination of young people to remain within the Ukrainian educational environment and to maintain their connection with Ukraine.

In these conditions, the state must not only guarantee the right to education but also create conditions that allow every applicant from the TOT to leave safely, obtain the necessary information and support and begin their studies without unnecessary barriers. Supporting young people from the TOT is about people whose futures depend on state decisions, and about our shared responsibility to preserve their connection with Ukraine.

After all, these young men and women will play a key role in the future recovery and development of the de-occupied regions – they will return with education, a profession and experience, and will become the foundation for rebuilding their communities.

That is why this analytical report focuses on the real experiences of young people who enter educational institutions or study in Ukraine after living in the TOT. It examines the difficulties they face at different stages – from searching for information and being able to leave the TOT to adapting to a new environment and requiring institutional support.

The findings provide a basis for further improving state policy and strengthening systematic support for students from the TOT, so that each of them has a real chance for education, development and a future in Ukraine.

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# METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to identify the factors that positively influence the decision to enter

The aim of this study was to identify the factors that support or hinder the decision to enter Ukrainian HEIs and IVET institutions and the integration of students from the TOT. It also sought to determine the overall level of their integration into a new community and the challenges that require solutions from the authorities, HEIs, IVET institutions and NGOs/CSOs. Based on the data obtained, the study also aimed to develop relevant recommendations. The study was prepared by Info Sapiens for the CCE "Almenda".

Research tasks:

1. Identify the dynamics and evolution of integration challenges (in comparison with the previous study) and analyse the problems faced by young people from the TOT before and after entering Ukrainian HEIs and IVET institutions.

2. Identify the main sources of information and channels of communication with the TOT (websites, social media, etc.).

3. Identify the factors influencing the integration of students who are IDPs, namely: to identify and analyse the problems arising during their integration into the educational process and into the host communities (including the level of bias, social support, financial support, etc.) or their level of comfort during the educational process.

4. Determine the level of satisfaction with the educational services that HEIs and IVET institutions provide remotely to students residing in the TOT, namely: whether remote education ensures the acquisition of qualifications and maintains a connection with Ukraine; whether the educational process is satisfactory (practical tasks, seminars, assessment); the material and technical support for remote education; the organisation of remote learning; communication with teachers, and other aspects.

5. Develop a socio-demographic profile of students and identify their motivation for entering Ukrainian HEIs and IVET institutions.

To achieve the aim of the study and carry out its tasks, an analysis of secondary information was conducted, as well as a quantitative survey among students who had lived in the temporarily occupied territories.

The survey was designed to allow comparison with the findings of last year's study "Analytical Report on the Findings of a Comprehensive Survey of Students from the TOT of Ukraine on Educational Needs and Challenges in Obtaining Education". Such comparison is necessary to identify the dynamics of motivational factors and barriers to the integration of students from the TOT, as well as to determine which difficulties remain unchanged and which are becoming more pronounced or emerging as new.

The survey was conducted in September 2025. A total of 2,265 completed questionnaires were received. According to the data collection methodology, universities were required to distribute the link exclusively to the target audience — students from the TOT who were studying in the 1st or 2nd year. However, in practice, some universities also shared the link with other students, which resulted in a significant number of questionnaires being submitted by students who did not belong to the target audience.

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The link to the programmed questionnaire was provided to the Centre of civil education "Almenda" and then, with the assistance of the Ombudsman's Office, distributed through HEIs and IVET institutions among students.

During data cleaning, the following questionnaires were removed:

● respondents who had no experience of living in the TOT

● respondents in the 3rd year and above

● duplicate questionnaires

● questionnaires completed in too little time (less than five minutes), indicating low-quality or superficial responses

After data cleaning procedures were applied, the final dataset comprised 1,294 valid questionnaires, which were used for the analysis in this report, namely:

● students studying in person (861 respondents)

● students studying remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory (334 respondents)

● students studying remotely while residing in the TOT (99 respondents)

A notable characteristic of this year's survey is the rather high proportion of "hard to answer" responses across a number of questions (often around 20–25%, and in some cases even higher). In the process of analysing the data, we reached the following conclusions:

● The "hard to answer" option is more likely to be chosen by: (1) students studying in person; and (2) second-year students. A possible explanation is the objectively higher academic workload of second-year students compared with first-year students, as well as the higher level of time commitment required from students studying in person compared with those studying remotely.

● At the same time, the hypothesis that there is a significant segment of respondents who select "hard to answer" across many questions simply to complete the survey more quickly was not confirmed during the analysis.

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# CONCISE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The main findings of the study on the integration of students from the TOT into HEIs and IVET institutions of Ukraine are based on the analysis of 1,254 valid questionnaires and fully correspond to the research tasks. The sample includes three groups of students:

- students studying in person (861 respondents)

- students studying remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory (334 respondents)

- students studying remotely while residing in the TOT (99 respondents).

The data obtained made it possible to comprehensively describe the experiences, needs and challenges of students from the TOT across six key areas.

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND MOTIVATION FOR ADMISSION

By place of residence prior to entering Ukrainian educational institutions, respondents represented nine TOT regions. The largest groups were students from the temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia Region, Kherson Region and the temporarily occupied areas of Donetsk Region that were occupied after 24 February 2022 (16%). Compared with the previous year, the geography of applicants changed slightly: there was an increase in the number of students from the TOT of Kharkiv Region and the AR of Crimea, while the presence of applicants from some other regions decreased.

Most students from the TOT who entered Ukrainian HEIs and IVET institutions moved to the government-controlled territory of Ukraine, and only 8% of respondents study remotely while remaining in the TOT.

Among the surveyed students, the proportion of men and women is roughly equal (45% and 55% respectively), and the share of men has increased compared with the 2024 study, which may indicate that the decision to enter Ukrainian HEIs and IVET institutions does not depend on "fear of future mobilisation" or the difficulties of leaving the TOT.

Most students are young people aged 17–18, but there is a noticeable increase in the share of 16-year-olds who seek to obtain Ukrainian documents and access to education as early as possible. This may indicate stronger motivation among younger applicants to avoid Russian educational and ideological influence.

A primary motivating factor for entering Ukrainian HEIs and IVEt institutions is the student's own informed and conscious choice. The vast majority enter by personal decision, while the influence of parents or friends is considerably smaller. The main motive is patriotic conviction and the desire to link one's future with Ukraine. This motive is even stronger among students who study remotely while residing in the TOT. Educational and professional motives (interest in a specific field, the pursuit of knowledge and career aspirations) also remain important.

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## DYNAMICS AND EVOLUTION OF INTEGRATION CHALLENGES (COMPARED WITH THE 2024 STUDY)

Compared with the previous wave of the survey, several significant shifts occurred:

There was a noticeable decline in the use of the websites of educational institutions as the main source of information, while the importance of personal contacts and social media increased.

Language adaptation improved. More students are receiving language support from HEIs and IVET institutions, which contributes to greater confidence in using the Ukrainian language and has a positive effect on both psychological well-being and academic performance.

The difficulty of leaving the TOT remains or increases. Young people continue to face checkpoints, inspections and the risk of repression. The financial burden on families has not decreased.

Information isolation in the TOT is intensifying. Blocked resources, limited internet access and fear of searching for Ukrainian information complicate preparation for admission.

Social integration is improving slowly. While most do not encounter discrimination, around one-fifth still experience biased attitudes, including distrust of their background or knowledge.

## PROBLEMS FACED BY YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE TOT BEFORE ENTERING UKRAINIAN HEIS AND IVET INSTITUTIONS

The problems are complex and include safety-related, practical, informational and psychological aspects.

Safety risks. Leaving the TOT is often accompanied by inspections, psychological pressure and the risk of detention. Many students describe this process as traumatic.

Financial burden. The high cost of travel, the need to plan the route independently and the lack of funds for housing after arrival are the main restraining factors. For many young people, finances are the key obstacle.

Information vacuum. The lack of reliable information in the TOT, the blocking of Ukrainian resources and the fear of viewing them mean that students often make decisions "in the dark". Many do not know either the route for leaving the TOT or the rules of admission.

Bureaucratic difficulties. The lack of Ukrainian documents, the complexity of obtaining proof of education and the ambiguity of procedures make the admission process dependent on individual effort and outside assistance.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The Internet remains the key source of information, with websites of the educational institutions and official government resources being the most in demand. However, the role of personal contacts (family, friends) has become more significant.

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Although it was relatively easy for students to find general information about the educational institutions and the admission campaign, the greatest difficulties involved obtaining detailed information about the admission conditions through the Educational Centres.

## INTEGRATION CHALLENGES WITHIN THE ACADEMIC PROCESS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

After relocating to the government-controlled territory, more than half of the students experienced significant stress and confusion. The most immediate practical challenges were financial difficulties and the need to find housing. The greatest demand for information concerns the arrangement of social payments/benefits and housing-related issues.

Overall, students cope well with their studies. The language barrier is gradually diminishing, and the most significant factors contributing to academic difficulties are not subject-related but psychological and everyday ones — stress, adaptation, and financial constraints.

Social integration is generally successful, although some students experience biased attitudes because of their origin. Approximately one fifth of students have encountered prejudiced or intolerant behaviour due to coming from the TOT, which, among other things, manifested in stereotypes about their level of knowledge. This proportion remains unchanged compared with the 2024 study.

A positive factor is the support from those around them and the opportunity to study in a Ukrainian HEIs and IVET institutions.

Support from the educational institutions plays an important role: a welcoming atmosphere, academic advisers and adaptation activities help reduce the psychological pressure after relocation.

## SATISFACTION WITH REMOTE EDUCATION AMONG STUDENTS STUDYING IN THE TOT

The vast majority of students who study remotely while residing in the TOT are highly satisfied with the quality of the educational process. Both the methodological and technical support for remote learning are evaluated positively. The main reason for dissatisfaction among a small share of students is subjective difficulty in processing information in a remote format.

Among the key challenges faced by students in the TOT are: unstable or slow internet, which affects academic performance; control by the occupying authorities, which creates risks for students (device checks, restricted access to platforms, threats); isolation from the student community, which limits integration and social experience.

Overall, remote education serves as an "educational bridge" for those who cannot leave, but it requires additional institutional support and protection.

# GENERAL SURVEY RESULTS OF STUDENTS

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# 1. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENT

A total of 1,294 students were surveyed, and their place of residence prior to applying to Ukrainian educational institutions covered nine TOT regions. The largest groups of respondents came from the temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia Region (20%), the temporarily occupied areas of Kherson Region (18%), and the temporarily occupied areas of Donetsk Region that were occupied after 24 February 2022 (16%). Compared with the 2024 study, the share of students who had lived in the temporarily occupied areas of Kharkiv Region increased (from 9% to 15%), as did the share of those who had lived in the temporarily occupied AR of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, while the proportion of residents of the temporarily occupied areas of Luhansk Region that were occupied after 24 February 2022 decreased.

**Table 1.** Distribution of respondents by place of residence before entering an educational institution in Ukraine, N = 1294

**Where did you live before entering an educational institution in Ukraine?**

| Place of residence | Number of persons |
|---|---|
| Temporarily occupied AR of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol | 73 |
| Temporarily occupied areas of Donetsk Region that were occupied before 24.02.2022 | 91 |
| Temporarily occupied areas of Donetsk Region that were occupied after 24.02.2022 | 209 |
| Temporarily occupied areas of Luhansk Region that were occupied before 24.02.2022 | 54 |
| Temporarily occupied areas of Luhansk Region that were occupied after 24.02.2022 | 83 |
| Temporarily occupied areas of Zaporizhzhia Region | 254 |
| Temporarily occupied areas of Kherson Region | 232 |
| Temporarily occupied areas of Kharkiv Region | 197 |
| Temporarily occupied areas of Mykolaiv Region | 101 |
| **In total** | **1294** |

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**Figure 1** Distribution of respondents by place of residence before entering an educational institution in Ukraine, % of respondents, N = 1294 (2025) and N = 1909 (2024)

Where did you live before entering an educational institution in Ukraine?

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|
| TOT of the AR of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol | 6% | 3% |
| Temporarily occupied parts of Donetsk Region that were occupied before 24 February 2022 | 7% | 9% |
| Temporarily occupied parts of Donetsk Region that were occupied after 24 February 2022: | 16% | 20% |
| Temporarily occupied parts of Luhansk Region that were occupied before 24 February 2022 | 4% | 4% |
| Temporarily occupied parts of Luhansk Region that were occupied after 24 February 2022 | 6% | 14% |
| Temporarily occupied parts of Zaporizhzhia Region | 20% | 23% |
| Temporarily occupied parts of Kherson Region | 18% | 15% |
| Temporarily occupied parts of Kharkiv Region | 15% | 9% |
| Temporarily occupied parts of Mykolaiv Region | 8% | 3% |

Among the surveyed students, 45% are male and 55% are female, with the share of male students increasing compared with the 2024 study (from 40% to 45%).

Most respondents are aged 16–21 (89%), with the largest group (63%) aged 17–18. At the same time, the 2025 study shows an increase in the share of 16-year-old students — from 2% to 10%. Among those studying in person, the proportion of respondents aged 16–18 is higher than among those studying remotely. This may indicate that younger students more often try to leave the TOT to study in Ukrainian HEIs and IVET institutions.

**Figure 2** Respondent's gender, % of respondents, N = 1294

Please indicate your gender

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 45% | 40% |
| Female | 55% | 60% |

**Figure 3** Respondent's age, % of respondents, N = 1294

How old were you at the time of the survey?

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|
| 16 | 10% | 2% |
| 17 | 30% | 33% |
| 18 | 33% | 39% |
| 19 | 9% | 10% |
| 20 | 4% | 5% |
| 21 | 2% | 3% |
| 22+ | 11% | 8% |

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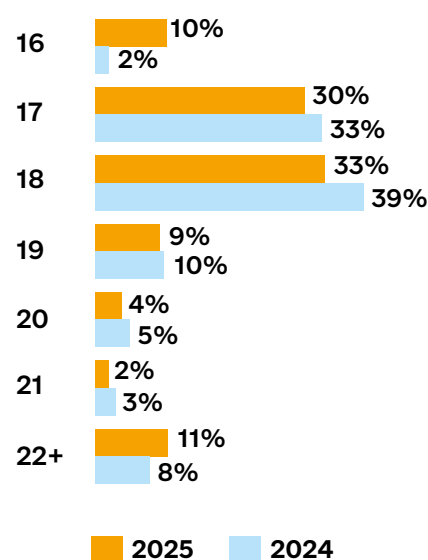
79% of respondents graduated from school in 2022–2025, that is, after the start of the full-scale invasion. Another 7% finished school before Russian aggression began (in 2013), while 14% graduated between 2014 and 2021.

**Figure 4** Year of school graduation, % of respondents, N = 1294
**Please indicate the year when you graduated from school**



- Before the start of Russian aggression (2013)
- Between 2014 and 2021
- After the start of the full-scale invasion
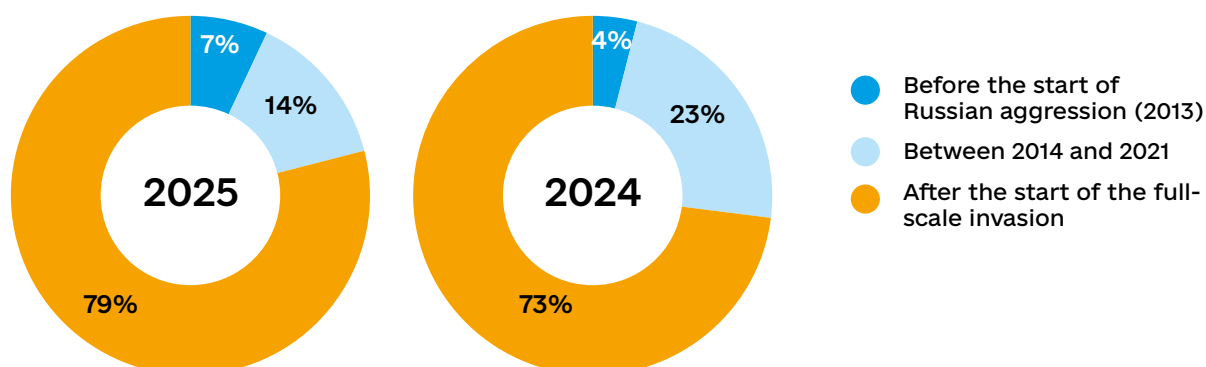
60% of the students who took part in the survey are in their second year of study, and 40% are in their first year.

**Figure 5.** Year of study completed by the respondent, % of respondents, N=1294
**Please indicate which year of study you had completed at the time of the survey.**



| | |
|---|---|
| Second-year students | 60% |
| First-year students | 40% |

80% of the respondents are learners at HEIs, and 20% are enrolled in IVET institutions. The latter figure is largely explained by the share of respondents aged 16, who account for 42% of those studying in IVET institutions.

As for the choice of study mode, 93% of respondents opted for full-time study, while 7% chose part-time study.

**Figure 6.** Level of education, % of respondents, N=1294
**Please select the level of education at which you are studying:**



IVET institution programme (Professional Junior Bachelor qualification) 20% / 9%

HEI programme (Junior Bachelor, Bachelor or Master qualification) 80% / 91%
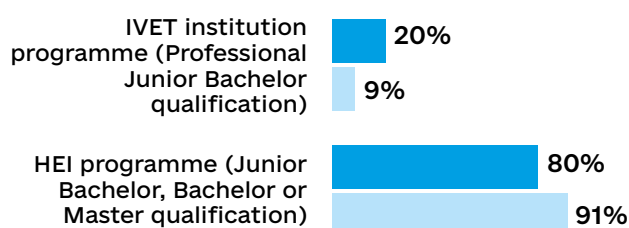
**Figure 7.** Mode of study, % of respondents, N=1294
**Please select your mode of study**



Full-time study 93% / 95%

Part-time study 7% / 5%
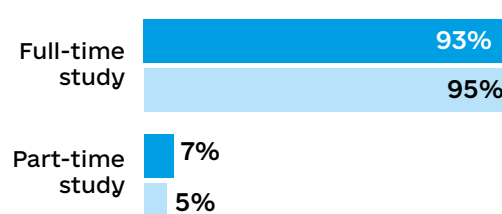
Two thirds (66%) of the surveyed students study in person, 26% study remotely while staying in government-controlled territory, and 8% study remotely while staying in the temporarily occupied territories.

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**Figure 8.** Learning format, 2025 study, % of respondents, N=1294

**Please select your learning format**

| Learning format | % |
|---|---|
| In-person | 66% |
| Remotely while staying in government-controlled territory | 26% |
| Remotely while staying in the temporarily occupied territories | 8% |
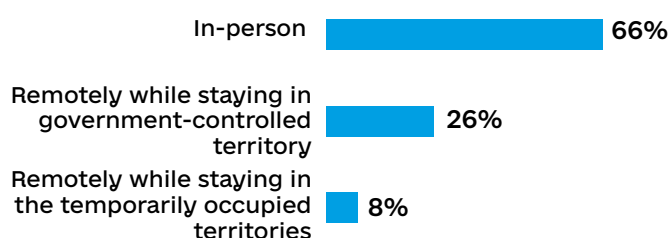
**Figure 9.** Learning format, 2024 study, % of respondents, N=1909

| Learning format | % |
|---|---|
| In-person | 43% |
| Remotely | 39% |
| Mixed | 18% |
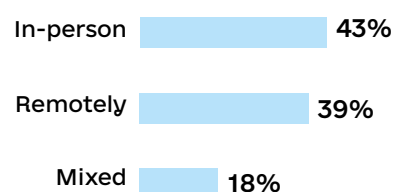
## 2. MOTIVATION FOR ENTERING UKRAINIAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Three quarters (76%) of the students surveyed entered a Ukrainian educational institution of their own choice, 15% were influenced by their parents, and a further 5% were influenced by online information resources. The decisions of friends who had enrolled in a Ukrainian educational institution mattered only for 3% of respondents, while 1% cited other reasons for applying.

**Figure 10** Motivation for entering a Ukrainian educational institution, % of respondents, N = 1294

**How did you make the decision to apply to a Ukrainian educational institution?**

### 2025

| | % |
|---|---|
| This was my personal decision | 76% |
| The decisions of my friends who enrolled in a Ukrainian educational institution influenced me | 3% |
| I received information about the admission campaign on the official websites of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and higher education institutions, and decided to apply | 4% |
| I received information about admission on non-governmental websites (civil society organisations, activists, volunteers, etc.) and decided to apply | 1% |
| My parents (family) advised me to do so, I had no objections and agreed | 14% |
| My parents (family) advised me to do so, I disagreed but eventually complied | 1% |
| Other | 1% |

(4% + 1% → 5%; 14% + 1% → 15%)

### 2024

| | % |
|---|---|
| Personal decision | 80% |
| Influence of friends | 2% |
| Influence of online information resources | 5% |
| Influence of parents (family) | 13% |

To understand the reasons for applying to Ukrainian educational institutions, respondents were asked an open-ended question: "Please describe in your own words why you decided to apply to an educational institution in Ukraine". In this question, students did

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not select from predefined answer options but were able to describe their own considerations regarding the reasons for choosing a Ukrainian educational institution.

The main factor for entering a Ukrainian HEIs and IVET institutions is patriotic motivation: 35% of respondents associate their future with Ukraine and want to study exclusively in Ukrainian. 16% of the students surveyed were guided by a specific profession or field of study; a further 15% simply wanted to learn something new and obtain an education, and 12% enrolled in a Ukrainian educational institution for career-building purposes. Patriotic and career-oriented motives are more prevalent among students who study remotely while residing in the TOT (52% and 21% of respondents from the TOT cited these reasons).

**Figure 11** **Reasons for entering a Ukrainian educational institution, % of respondents, N = 1294**

**Please describe in your own words why you decided to apply to an educational institution in Ukraine (multiple-response question).**

| Reason | % |
|---|---|
| Patriotic motive: I associate my future with Ukraine and want to study only in Ukrainian | 35% |
| Interest in a specific profession / field of study / qualification enhancement | 16% |
| Cognitive motive: I want to learn something new, gain knowledge, obtain an education | 15% |
| Career motive: education provides opportunities for employment and career development | 12% |
| Attracted by a specific institution | 8% |
| Personal desire/dream/decision (no further details) | 8% |
| Belief in the high quality of education in Ukraine / in the city | 7% |
| Convenience motive: for various reasons, applying here was advantageous (language, cost, location) | 6% |
| Altruistic motive: desire to help people / the country | 6% |
| For no particular reason | 4% |
| Based on recommendations/encouragement from others | 3% |
| Social motive: proximity to family / friends | 1% |
| Other | 5% |
| Hard to say / No response | 7% |

Below are several quotations – students' answers to this open-ended question:

> I decided to apply specifically to a Ukrainian university because this is my firm stance. I did not want to stay in a place where freedom and human rights are not respected. For me, it was unacceptable to study at institutions where Russian teachers work, because it was the Russians who destroyed my life. They killed many of my friends and repeatedly destroyed my home. This happened twice: first in 2014, when they came to my native Donetsk, and then again when the war once more deprived me of my normal life. Therefore, studying at a Ukrainian university for me is not only about obtaining an education but also a conscious choice in favour of an independent Ukraine.

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" I decided to apply specifically to an educational institution in Ukraine because I consider Ukrainian education to be high-quality and full of opportunities. In Ukraine, modern academic programmes are combined with rich cultural traditions, which makes it possible not only to gain professional knowledge but also to grow as an individual. It is also important for me that education is accessible, that I can study in my native language, and that I can develop myself within a student community. Ukrainian educational institutions offer the chance to acquire the practical skills needed for a future profession and also open the door to international opportunities. That is why I see my future in Ukraine and want to study here.

" I express my sincere desire to join the ranks of the National Police of Ukraine. Entering the police for me is not only an opportunity for professional self-realisation but also a calling of the heart, driven by a deep sense of responsibility to society and a desire to serve my country.

" The Ukrainian education system has strong traditions and a high level of professional training.

" Because I want to continue my life's path as a citizen of Ukraine and receive an education from my own country. Living in the TOT now, studying in Ukraine allows me to feel connected to my state despite the separation. It helps me hold on to who I am and gives me the strength to keep moving forward without losing hope.

" Because I see my future in this country, and I am not going to spend my whole life like a worm, hiding abroad without rights.

" Being a teacher is my calling. Living in Ukraine is my destiny!

Among the additional factors that prompted students to leave the temporarily occupied territories, 69% of respondents who now reside in the government-controlled territory cited security-related reasons. Of these students, 53% were seeking safety for themselves or their families, 12% wanted to avoid persecution or mobilisation by the occupation authorities, and 4% referred to actions or mistreatment by the occupiers.

The patriotic factor is a driving force for half (51%) of the students who left for the government-controlled territory – they intend to live in Ukraine, including within Ukraine's legal framework. Other factors include the desire to reunite with relatives and friends who live in the government-controlled territory (15% of respondents residing there) and medical needs (8% of respondents residing there).

The main reason for studying remotely, both for students residing in the government-controlled territory and for those living in the temporarily occupied territories, is the convenience of the remote-learning format. This was reported by 56% and 46% of respondents respectively. The second most common reason relates to safety concerns (43% of students studying remotely in both groups). For students living in the TOT, this specifically refers to the risks to life or health associated with travelling from the TOT to Ukraine.

Other important reasons for studying remotely among respondents residing in the government-controlled territory include the need to combine studies with work (34% of respondents). In addition, 16% of respondents cited financial difficulties related to renting accommodation or other expenses in the city where the educational institution is located as a reason for choosing remote learning.

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**Figure 12** **Additional factors that encouraged respondents to move from the TOT to the territory controlled by Ukraine, % of respondents residing in the government-controlled territory, N = 1195**

Apart from reasons related to obtaining education, were there any additional factors that encouraged you to leave the TOT and move to the territory controlled by Ukraine? (multiple-response question)

| Factor | % |
|---|---|
| Aspiration for safety for oneself or one's family | 53% |
| Intention to live in Ukraine, including within Ukraine's legal framework | 51% |
| Reunification with relatives/friends residing in the government-controlled territory | 15% |
| Avoiding persecution or mobilisation by the occupation authorities | 12% |
| Medical needs, access to the Ukrainian healthcare system | 8% |
| Actions or mistreatment by the occupiers | 4% |
| Fear, anxiety (for example, due to danger) | 3% |
| Constant shelling/military action | 2% |
| Other psychological discomfort | 2% |
| Propagation of Russian culture | 1% |
| Discomfort caused by living under occupation | 1% |
| Other | 1% |
| Hard to say | 23% |

For those who remain in the TOT, the financial factor is more significant: 34% of students mentioned it, specifically the lack of funds for travelling from the TOT to Ukraine (24%) and the lack of funds for renting accommodation or covering other expenses in the city where the educational institution is located (10%). One fifth (20%) need to combine their studies with work or other obligations, and 19% of respondents cannot leave their relatives.

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**Figure 13** Reasons for studying remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory, % of respondents studying remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory, N = 334

What influenced your decision to study remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory? (multiple-response question)

| Reason | % |
|---|---|
| Convenience of studying remotely (saving time, flexible schedule, etc.) | 56% |
| Aspiration for safety for oneself or one's family | 43% |
| Need to combine studying with work or other obligations | 34% |
| Financial difficulties related to the cost of living or other expenses in the city where the educational institution is located | 16% |
| Reunification with relatives/friends residing in the government-controlled territory | 9% |
| Need to care for family members or fulfil other family obligations | 9% |
| Medical needs, access to the Ukrainian healthcare system | 4% |
| Avoiding persecution or mobilisation by the occupation authorities | 4% |
| Other | 3% |
| Hard to say | 1% |

**Figure 14** Reasons for studying remotely while residing in the TOT, % of respondents studying remotely while residing in the TOT, N = 99

What influenced your decision to study remotely while residing in the TOT? (multiple-response question)

| Reason | % |
|---|---|
| Convenience of studying remotely (saving time, flexible schedule, etc.) | 46% |
| Safety considerations (risks to life/health when travelling from the TOT to Ukraine) | 43% |
| Lack of funds for travelling from the TOT to Ukraine | 24% |
| Need to combine studying with work or other obligations | 20% |
| Need to care for family members or fulfil other family obligations | 19% |
| Lack of funds for renting accommodation and/or other expenses in the city where the educational institution is located | 10% |
| Psychological discomfort | 1% |
| Other | 1% |

Admission seemed fairly easy for 59% of the students surveyed. Meanwhile, 17% — mainly first-year students – described the admission process as difficult. Another 21%

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were unsure whether entering a Ukrainian educational institution had been difficult for them or not. 2% considered the process to be of medium difficulty, and 1% gave another response.

**Figure 15** **Complexity of the admission process, % of respondents, N = 1294**
**How difficult was the admission process?**



● Admission was easy
● Of medium difficulty
● Admission was difficult
● Other
● Hard to say
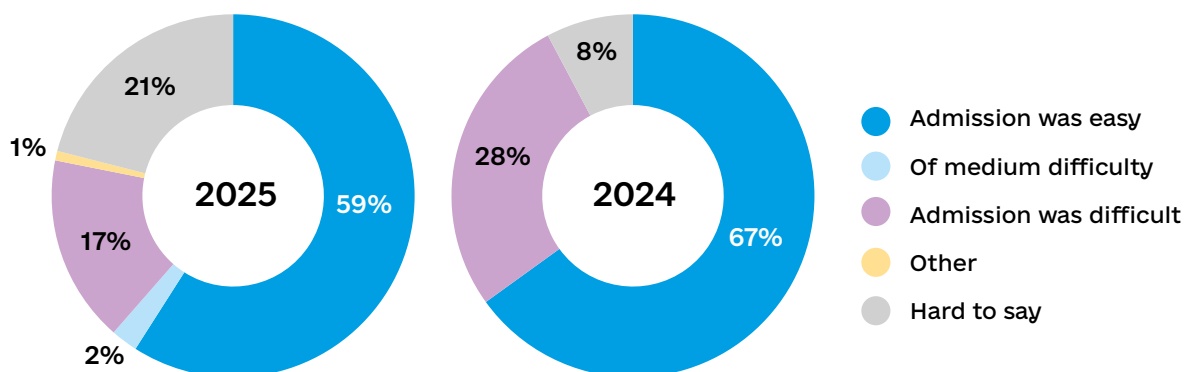
*В опитуванні 2024 року аналогічне питання було сформульовано як:
«Б20. Оцініть загальну складність вступної процедури».

Sources of information on possible routes for leaving the occupied territory are diverse, and students who leave most often obtain this information through social and family networks. One fifth (21%) of students received this information from acquaintances and friends, and a further 8% from parents and relatives. Internet resources were used by 15% of respondents: 10% relied on online resources in general, and 5% relied specifically on social media.

It should be noted that 23% of respondents were unable to identify the source of information about possible routes for leaving the TOT. These were primarily students studying in person as well as second-year students, which may be due to the fact that they do not remember the details of their departure from the TOT.

A little more than half (55%) of respondents could not say how much it had cost them to leave the TOT. This may be due to the difficulty of calculating such expenses (what should be included and what should not). The large variation in the amounts mentioned, as well as the almost identical proportions of students naming different cost ranges, may also point to this. Students from the temporarily occupied areas of Kherson Region were more likely than students from other TOTs to indicate the ranges of 10,000–20,000 UAH and more than 20,000 UAH.

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**Figure 16** Sources of information about possible routes for leaving the TOT for the territory controlled by Ukraine, % of respondents studying while residing in the government-controlled territory, N = 1195

Where did you obtain information about possible routes for leaving the TOT for the territory controlled by Ukraine? (multiple-response question)

| Source | % |
|---|---|
| From acquaintances, friends, neighbours | 21% |
| Through online resources | 10% |
| Parents dealt with this issue | 9% |
| From close relatives/family | 8% |
| Through the media, television (news, etc.) | 5% |
| Through social media (local chats, Telegram channels, etc.) | 5% |
| Left before the occupation | 5% |
| Found out independently and left | 4% |
| Through official sources (local authorities' websites, coordination centres, etc.) | 4% |
| From volunteers | 3% |
| Left via a green corridor | 2% |
| From the military | 1% |
| Other | 6% |
| Did not seek out information | 2% |
| Hard to say | 23% |

**Figure 17** Cost of leaving the TOT, % of respondents studying while residing in the government-controlled territory, N = 1195

What was the approximate cost of leaving the TOT (travel, services, document processing, etc.)?

| Cost | % |
|---|---|
| Up to 5,000 UAH | 12% |
| 5,000–10,000 UAH | 11% |
| 10,000–20,000 UAH | 10% |
| 20,000–30,000 UAH | 5% |
| More than 30,000 UAH | 8% |
| Hard to say | 55% |
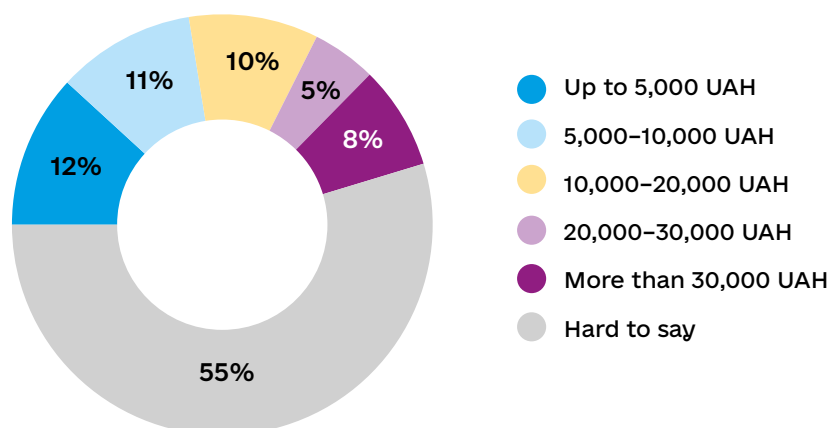
Leaving the temporarily occupied territories is associated with difficulties across multiple dimensions, primarily in:

● Safety: 36% of respondents mentioned checkpoints or inspections carried out by the occupation authorities, and 26% referred to the risk of detention or repression.

● Practical difficulties: 31% of respondents identified difficulties finding housing in the government-controlled territory, and 26% cited the high cost of travel.

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● Psychological factors: 52% of students experienced stress and fear when leaving the TOT.

● Access to information: a lack of reliable information about travel routes (20%); a lack of information about the admission procedure (6% of respondents); the absence of a single consultative centre (6% of students); and a lack of information about study programmes (5% of respondents).

Respondents also mentioned bureaucratic obstacles: 12% of those surveyed referred to difficulties with processing documents, and 9% considered it difficult to obtain a document confirming basic or complete secondary education.

**Figure 18** **Key difficulties or barriers encountered when leaving the TOT and entering a Ukrainian education institution, % of respondents, N = 1294**

**What key difficulties or barriers, in your view, arise when leaving the TOT and entering a Ukrainian education institution? (multiple-response question)**

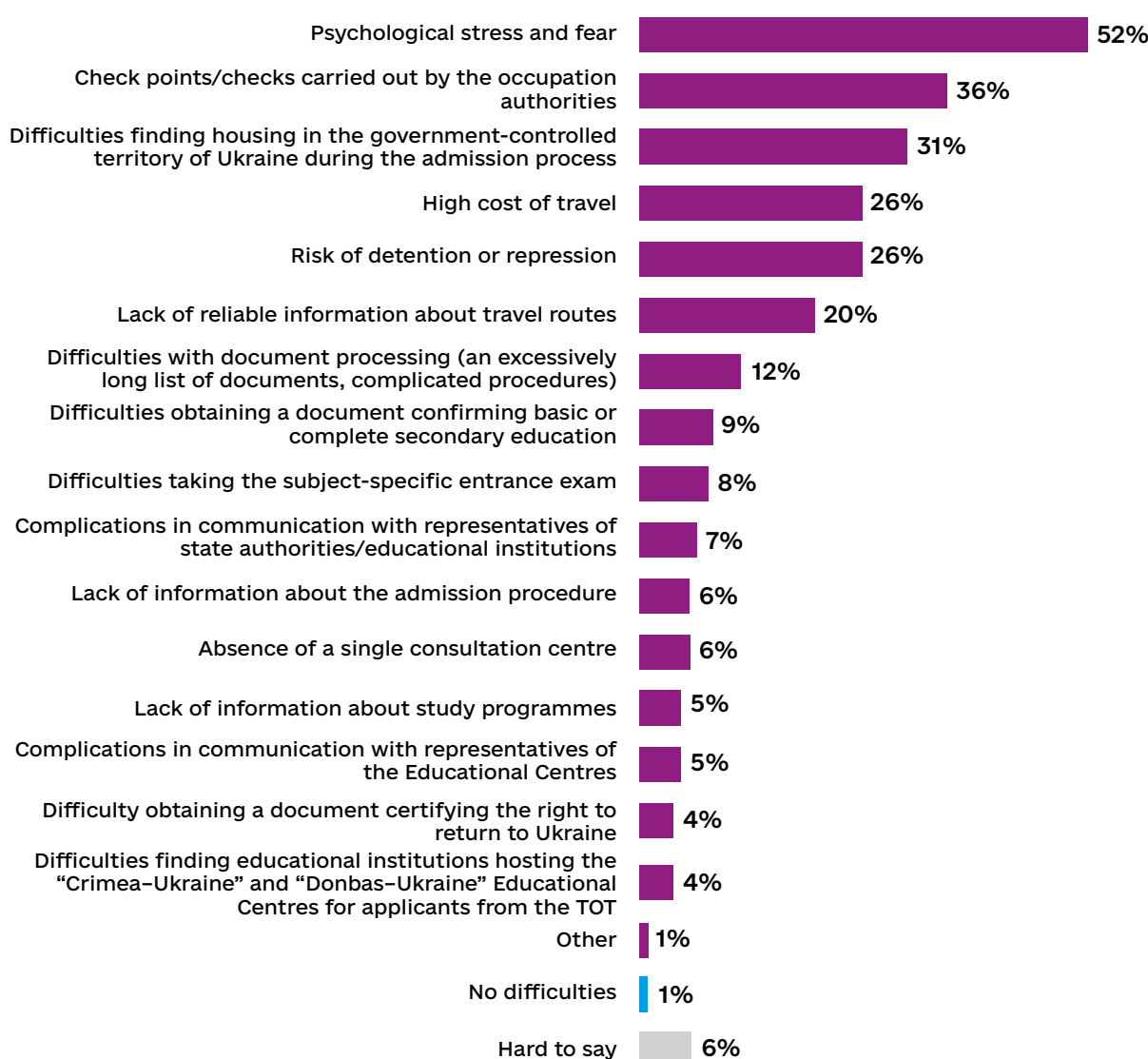| Difficulty | % |
|---|---|
| Psychological stress and fear | 52% |
| Check points/checks carried out by the occupation authorities | 36% |
| Difficulties finding housing in the government-controlled territory of Ukraine during the admission process | 31% |
| High cost of travel | 26% |
| Risk of detention or repression | 26% |
| Lack of reliable information about travel routes | 20% |
| Difficulties with document processing (an excessively long list of documents, complicated procedures) | 12% |
| Difficulties obtaining a document confirming basic or complete secondary education | 9% |
| Difficulties taking the subject-specific entrance exam | 8% |
| Complications in communication with representatives of state authorities/educational institutions | 7% |
| Lack of information about the admission procedure | 6% |
| Absence of a single consultation centre | 6% |
| Lack of information about study programmes | 5% |
| Complications in communication with representatives of the Educational Centres | 5% |
| Difficulty obtaining a document certifying the right to return to Ukraine | 4% |
| Difficulties finding educational institutions hosting the "Crimea–Ukraine" and "Donbas–Ukraine" Educational Centres for applicants from the TOT | 4% |
| Other | 1% |
| No difficulties | 1% |
| Hard to say | 6% |

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## 3. CHANNELS OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION WITH THE TOT
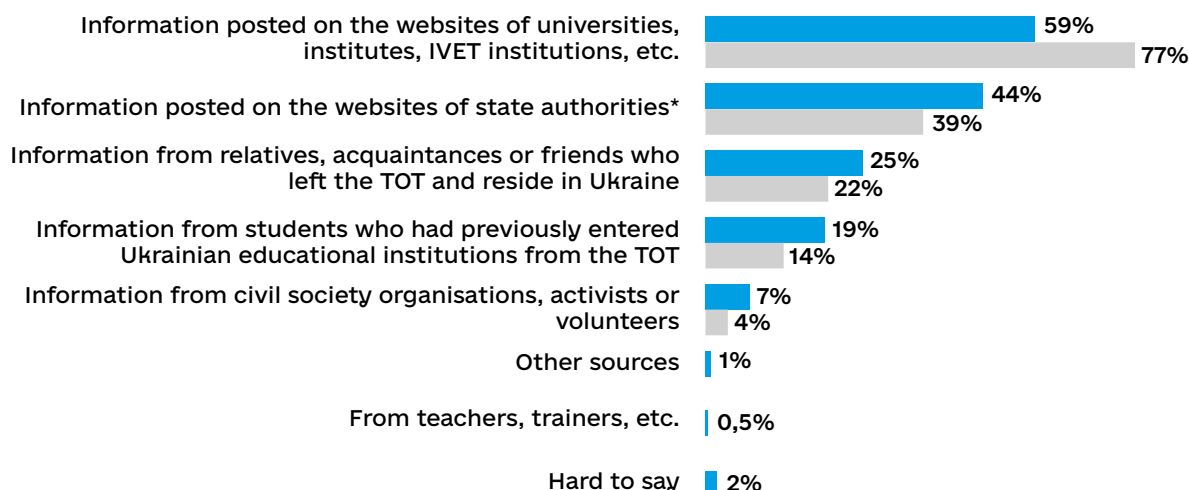
The primary source of information for prospective applicants is websites. In particular, the most frequently used sources are the websites of HEIs and IVET institutions, with 59% of respondents obtaining information from this source. The second most significant source is the websites of state authorities (44% of respondents).

Among respondents who had completed their first year at the time of the survey, as well as among students studying remotely while residing in the TOT, the use of HEI and IVET websites is more common compared with other groups of students (62% and 67%, respectively). However, even these groups show a considerable decrease in the use of such resources compared with the findings of the 2024 study, when three quarters of respondents (77%) indicated that they actively used information posted on HEI and IVET websites when making decisions about admission.

The role of personal contacts in accessing information is increasing: 25% of the students surveyed received information from relatives, acquaintances or friends who had left the TOT (which is 3 percentage points higher than in 2024), and 19% received information from students from the TOT who had already entered educational institutions (5 percentage points higher than in 2024).

**Figure 19** Sources of information, % of respondents, N = 1294

**What sources of information did you use when making your decision to enter a Ukrainian educational institution? (multiple-response question)**



| | |
|---|---|
| Information posted on the websites of universities, institutes, IVET institutions, etc. | 59% / 77% |
| Information posted on the websites of state authorities* | 44% / 39% |
| Information from relatives, acquaintances or friends who left the TOT and reside in Ukraine | 25% / 22% |
| Information from students who had previously entered Ukrainian educational institutions from the TOT | 19% / 14% |
| Information from civil society organisations, activists or volunteers | 7% / 4% |
| Other sources | 1% |
| From teachers, trainers, etc. | 0,5% |
| Hard to say | 2% |

\* In the previous survey, this response option was phrased as: "Information on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry for Reintegration, etc."

Only 7% of respondents indicated that they lacked information. At the same time, 5% of them noted that despite this shortage, they were still able to obtain the minimum amount of information they needed. A quarter of respondents (23%) reported that they learned important details only during the admission campaign itself. First-year students were more likely than students from other years to report a lack of information on key aspects of admission, 27% of first-year respondents mentioned this.

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**Figure 20** **Sufficiency of information, % of respondents, N = 1294**

Did you receive sufficient information from the sources listed earlier?



2025: 69%, 23%, 5%, 2%, 1%
2024: 64%, 29%, 7%

- ● Information was sufficient
- ● Information was sufficient, but I learned important admission details only during the admission process itself
- ● Information was insufficient, but I managed to obtain the minimum needed
- ● Information was insufficient
- ● Hard to say
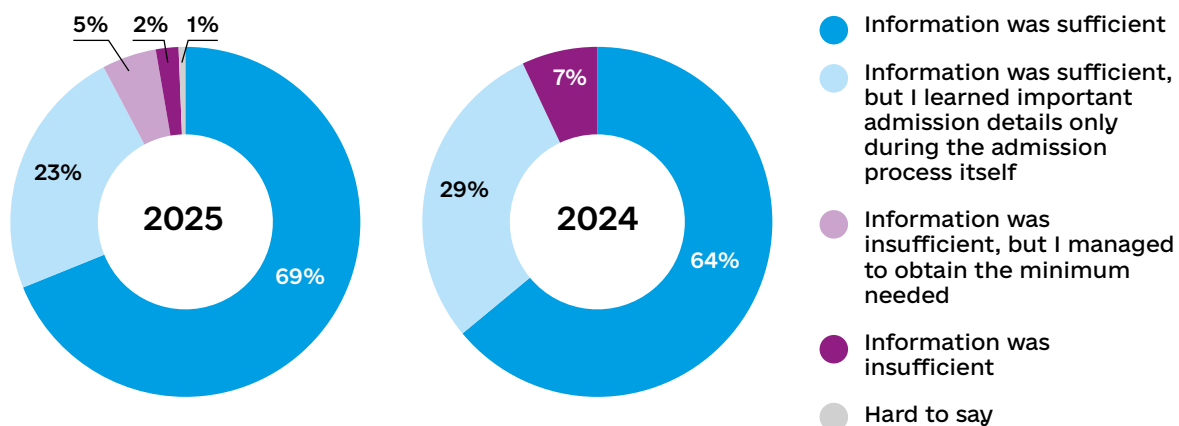
It was easiest for students who searched for information while still residing in the TOT (and who now study in the government-controlled territory) to find information about the list of universities accepting applicants from the TOT (28% of respondents were able to find this information while still in the TOT). Information about the conditions of the admission campaign was also relatively accessible; in particular, information about timelines (27%), the main stages of the admission procedure and the relevant dates (21%), as well as the full list of required documents (21%). At the same time, the most difficult information to find concerned the conditions of admission through the "Crimea–Ukraine" and "Donbas–Ukraine" Education Centres. In addition, a large proportion of students (from 35% to 60%) who are now studying in the government-controlled territory but searched for admission information while still in the TOT stated that it was difficult for them to recall exactly where they had found the necessary information — while still in the TOT or already after reaching the government-controlled territory.

**Figure 21** **Availability of information, % of respondents studying in person or remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory, N = 1195**

Which admission-related information were you able to find while you were in the TOT, and which information did you find only after reaching the government-controlled territory?



| | Found it while residing in the TOT | Found it after reaching the government-controlled territory | Could be found in both places | Hard to say |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| List of universities that accept applicants from the TOT | 8% | 37% | 20% | 35% |
| General timelines of the admission campaign | 7% | 34% | 13% | 46% |
| Specific stages of the admission procedure and the corresponding dates | 7% | 41% | 16% | 36% |
| Full list of required documents | 7% | 35% | 13% | 46% |
| Possibility of admission without the EIT or through alternative examinations | 6% | 42% | 15% | 36% |
| Where exactly the Educational Centres operate and how they function | 6% | 44% | 15% | 35% |
| What support is provided by educational institutions to internally displaced persons | 6% | 37% | 12% | 45% |
| Conditions of admission through the "Crimea–Ukraine" / "Donbas–Ukraine" Educational Centres | 6% | 23% | 11% | 60% |

- ● Found it while residing in the TOT
- ● Found it after reaching the government-controlled territory
- ● Could be found in both places
- ● Hard to say

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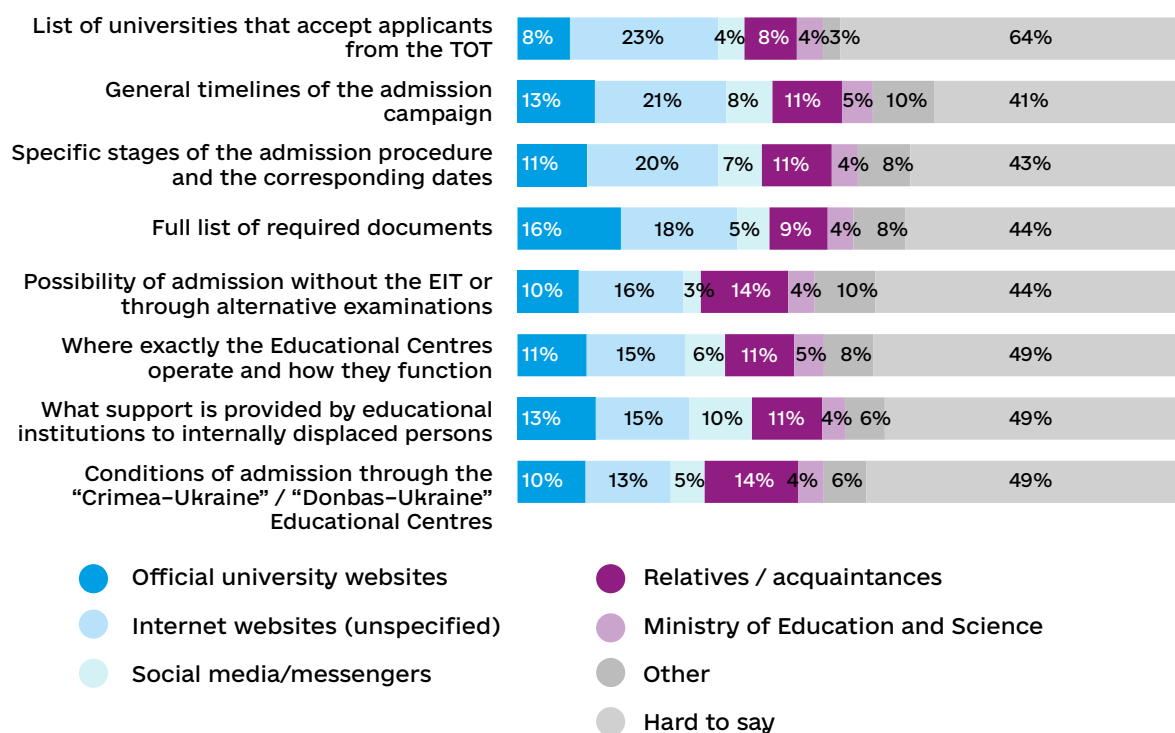from the Temporarily Occupied Territories into Higher Education Institutions of Ukraine

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The main sources of information about various aspects of the admission campaign and available support for IDPs, among students who searched for this information while still residing in the temporarily occupied territories, are online resources — the websites of educational institutions, other websites and social media. Social media are used just as actively as websites to obtain information about available support and Educational Centres. About half of the students who are now studying in the government-controlled territory but searched for admission-related information while living in the TOT stated that they find it difficult to recall the specific sources they used.

**Figure 22** **Availability of information in the TOT, % of respondents studying in person or remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory who selected the option "I found it while living in the TOT" in the question on information availability.**

You indicated that you found this information while living in the TOT: Please recall where exactly you found this information. If possible, specify the details: a particular social network, web page, blogger's name, etc.

| | Official university websites | Internet websites (unspecified) | Social media/messengers | Relatives / acquaintances | Ministry of Education and Science | Other | Hard to say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| List of universities that accept applicants from the TOT | 8% | 23% | 4% | 8% | 4% | 3% | 64% |
| General timelines of the admission campaign | 13% | 21% | 8% | 11% | 5% | 10% | 41% |
| Specific stages of the admission procedure and the corresponding dates | 11% | 20% | 7% | 11% | 4% | 8% | 43% |
| Full list of required documents | 16% | 18% | 5% | 9% | 4% | 8% | 44% |
| Possibility of admission without the EIT or through alternative examinations | 10% | 16% | 3% | 14% | 4% | 10% | 44% |
| Where exactly the Educational Centres operate and how they function | 11% | 15% | 6% | 11% | 5% | 8% | 49% |
| What support is provided by educational institutions to internally displaced persons | 13% | 15% | 10% | 11% | 4% | 6% | 49% |
| Conditions of admission through the "Crimea–Ukraine" / "Donbas–Ukraine" Educational Centres | 10% | 13% | 5% | 14% | 4% | 6% | 49% |

Legend:
- Official university websites
- Internet websites (unspecified)
- Social media/messengers
- Relatives / acquaintances
- Ministry of Education and Science
- Other
- Hard to say

One third (31%) of the students surveyed reported that they did not encounter any difficulties while searching for information. Another 36% found it difficult to specify what exactly had been unclear, which rather indicates that they did not face any significant obstacles. Among the aspects that were harder to find, students mentioned the list and procedure for preparing admission documents (4%), information about admission rules (exams, deadlines) (3%), as well as technical barriers such as lack of connection or internet access (3%) and the blocking of Ukrainian websites (2%).

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**Figure 23** Difficulties in finding information, % of respondents, N = 1294

What exactly was unclear or difficult to find while preparing for admission when you were living in the TOT? (multiple-response question)

| Category | % |
|---|---|
| Everything was clear | 31% |
| Other | 5% |
| I did not search / was not interested in admission at that time | 4% |
| List/preparation of admission documents | 4% |
| Lack of connection/Internet prevented searching | 3% |
| Everything/many things (unspecified) | 3% |
| Information about admission rules (quotas, deadlines) | 3% |
| Blocking of Ukrainian websites prevented searching (or using a VPN) | 2% |
| I was not in the TOT at the time of preparing for admission | 10% |
| Hard to say | 36% |

One fifth (22%) of respondents fully or partly agreed with the statement that graduates from the TOT often encounter unreliable information about admission to Ukrainian HEIs and IVET institutions. Among students studying in the government-controlled territory (both in person and remotely), this share is twice as high as among those who remain in the TOT and study remotely (22% compared with 11%). The main examples of unreliable information include incomplete or inaccurate data, disinformation, fake news and direct propaganda from the occupation authorities.
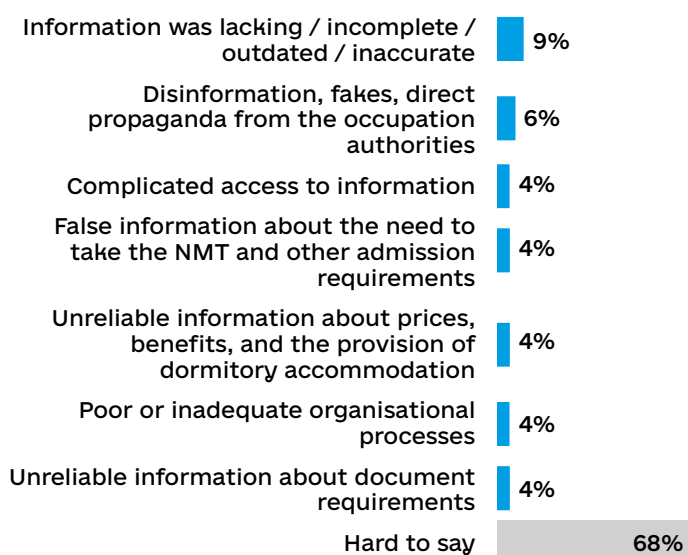
**Figure 24** exposure to unreliable admission-related information, % of respondents, N = 1294

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: graduates from the TOT often encounter unreliable information about admission to HEIs and IVET institutions in Ukraine?

- 7% Strongly agree
- 15% Rather agree
- 24% Rather disagree
- 11% Strongly disagree
- 44% Hard to say
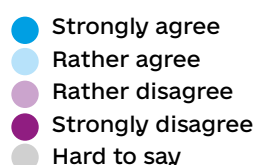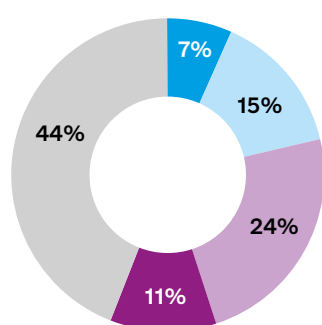
**Figure 25** Examples of unreliable information, % of respondents who answered "fully agree" or "rather agree" to the question on encountering unreliable information, N = 277

Please provide examples of such unreliable information

| Category | % |
|---|---|
| Information was lacking / incomplete / outdated / inaccurate | 9% |
| Disinformation, fakes, direct propaganda from the occupation authorities | 6% |
| Complicated access to information | 4% |
| False information about the need to take the NMT and other admission requirements | 4% |
| Unreliable information about prices, benefits, and the provision of dormitory accommodation | 4% |
| Poor or inadequate organisational processes | 4% |
| Unreliable information about document requirements | 4% |
| Hard to say | 68% |

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Below are some quotations – students' responses to this open-ended question about examples of unreliable information:

> Most websites did not include particularly important elements of the admission process.

> The Russian information space dominates in the TOT; since 2022 it has become harder to access Ukrainian websites. It is difficult to obtain reliable information when you are not in the Ukrainian information environment, where people have first-hand experience of the same process.

> The occupation authorities are actively promoting the idea that Ukrainians and the education system are hostile towards internally displaced persons.

> For example, false claims are spread that it is impossible to enrol without educational documents, although simplified procedures exist for those leaving the TOT; incorrect information is circulated about deadlines for submitting documents, which may differ for such applicants; rumours spread about the need to take difficult additional exams or tests, whereas for certain categories these may be simplified or not required at all; and myths appear claiming that most universities do not accept students from the TOT, although many institutions have special support programmes. Such misinformation creates unnecessary stress and can delay the decision to apply, which is why it is crucial to verify information through official sources.

> They promised I would be transferred to a state-funded place, but I am still paying for my studies under a contract. They said that IDPs are not entitled to any benefits.

> There are no clear lists of documents required for admission or for registering benefits. If you call the department, they say: 'the standard documents…'. Then you come to register the benefits, and it turns out you need more than the standard set.

> I was unable to enrol in a state-funded place. There are no alternative ways to receive reimbursement for tuition fees. There isn't even a discount for dormitory accommodation.

44% of the students surveyed said they had not encountered any Russian narratives about persecution. 21% reported hearing narratives about alleged persecution for using the Russian language, 12% heard narratives about possible mobilisation after crossing the border, and 4% heard narratives about persecution on religious grounds.

**Figure 26** Narratives about persecution, % of respondents, N = 1294

**Have you encountered narratives in the temporarily occupied territory about alleged persecution by Ukraine for any of the following? (multiple-response question)**
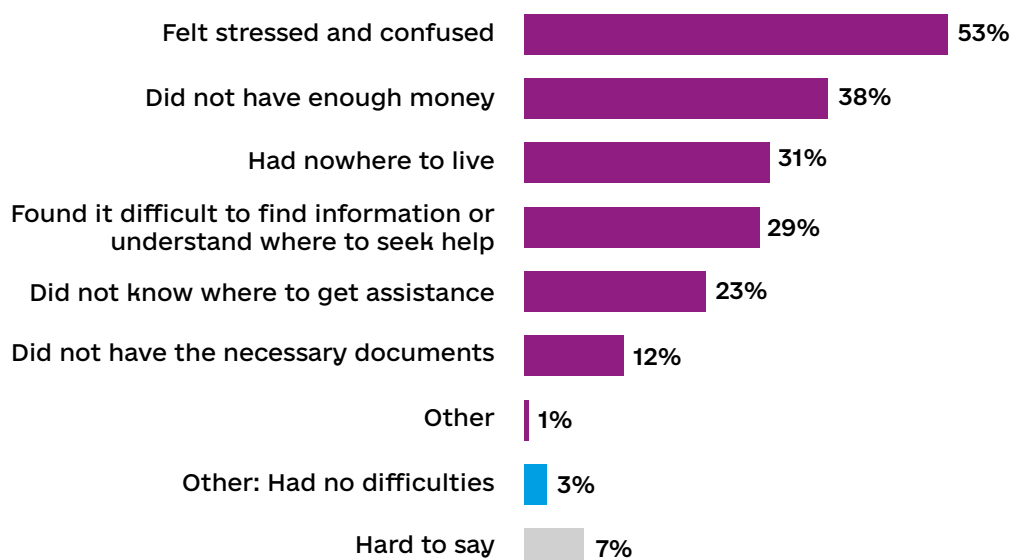
| Category | % |
|---|---|
| Use of the Russian language | 21% |
| Possible mobilisation after crossing the border into Ukraine | 12% |
| Religious beliefs | 4% |
| Other | 1% |
| Did not encounter such narratives | 44% |
| Hard to say | 31% |

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# 4. INTEGRATION OF STUDENTS IN UKRAINE, NEEDS AND CHALLENGES THAT ARISE DURING THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

After moving to the government-controlled territory, half (53%) of the students experienced stress and confusion, 38% said they lacked money, and 31% reported having nowhere to live. A significant share also lacked information – 29% found it difficult to locate information on where to turn for help, and 23% of students who arrived in the government-controlled territory did not know where to seek assistance.

Female students were more likely than male students to feel stress and confusion (63% of female respondents compared with 41% of male respondents). They also found it more difficult to obtain information (32% of female students compared with 26% of male students) and were more often concerned about the lack of housing (34% compared with 26%).

**Figure 27** Difficulties encountered immediately after arriving in the government-controlled territory of Ukraine, % of respondents studying in person or remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory, N=1195
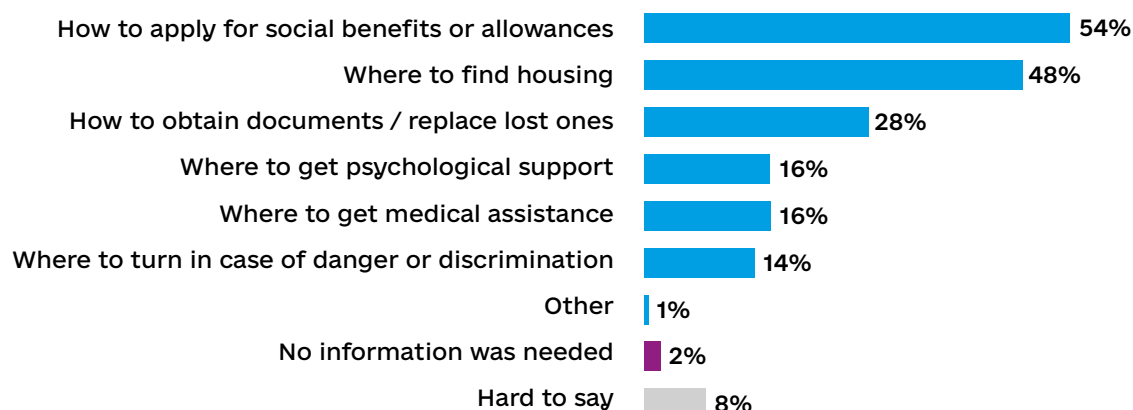
What difficulties did you face immediately after arriving in the government-controlled territory of Ukraine? (multiple-response question)

| Difficulty | % |
|---|---|
| Felt stressed and confused | 53% |
| Did not have enough money | 38% |
| Had nowhere to live | 31% |
| Found it difficult to find information or understand where to seek help | 29% |
| Did not know where to get assistance | 23% |
| Did not have the necessary documents | 12% |
| Other | 1% |
| Other: Had no difficulties | 3% |
| Hard to say | 7% |

The main information students need after arriving in the government-controlled territory concerns how to apply for social benefits or allowances (54%) and where to find housing (48%). Women tend to be more interested in all types of information—except information on accessing medical care and reporting in cases of danger or discrimination—compared with men.

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**Figure 28** Information needed after arriving in the government-controlled territory, % of respondents studying in person or remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory, N = 1195

What information did you need after arriving in the government-controlled territory? (multiple-response question)

| | |
|---|---|
| How to apply for social benefits or allowances | 54% |
| Where to find housing | 48% |
| How to obtain documents / replace lost ones | 28% |
| Where to get psychological support | 16% |
| Where to get medical assistance | 16% |
| Where to turn in case of danger or discrimination | 14% |
| Other | 1% |
| No information was needed | 2% |
| Hard to say | 8% |

The most common way of resolving the housing issue was living with relatives or acquaintances (43% of respondents). Thirty-nine per cent of surveyed students from the TOT rented accommodation at their own expense.

Only 18% of respondents were provided with a place in a dormitory, 7% received assistance with finding or paying for housing, and 11% did not have stable housing at all — this percentage is the same both for those studying remotely and for those studying in person.

**Figure 29** Resolving the housing issue after arriving in the government-controlled territory, % of respondents studying in person or remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory, N=1195
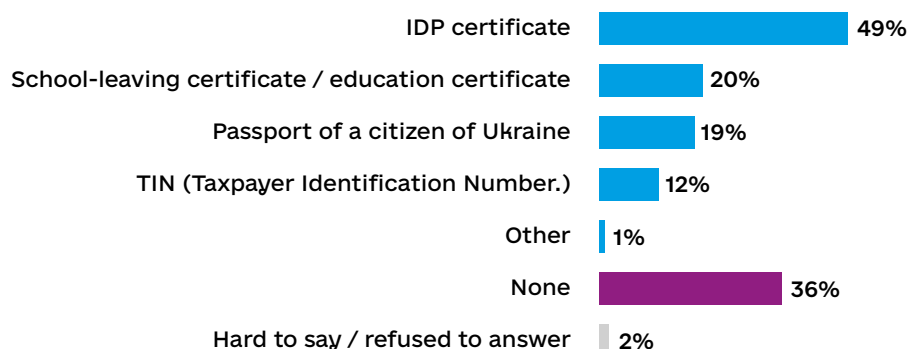
Overall, how did you resolve the housing issue after arriving in the government-controlled territory? (multiple-response question)

| | |
|---|---|
| Lived with relatives or acquaintances | 43% |
| Rented housing at my own expense | 39% |
| Received a place in a dormitory | 18% |
| Received assistance with finding/paying for housing | 7% |
| Other | 1% |
| Did not have stable housing | 11% |
| Hard to say | 7% |
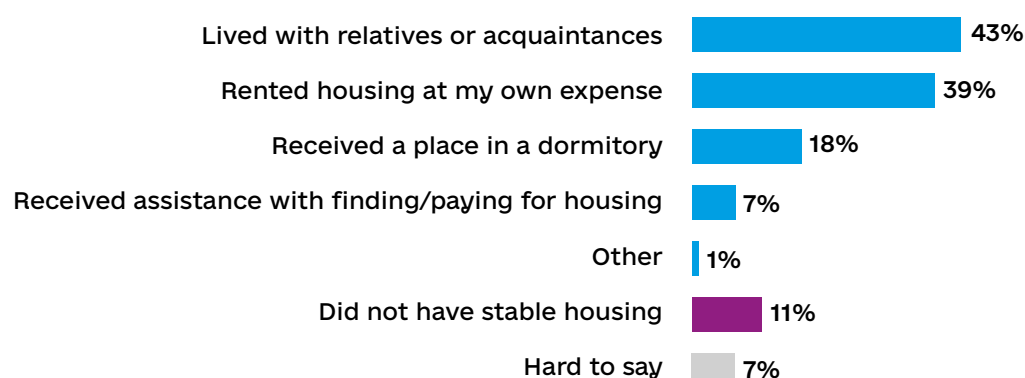
Only 36% of students did not need to obtain or renew any documents after arriving in the government-controlled territory of Ukraine. Almost half (49%) of respondents needed to obtain or renew a IDP certificate, 20% needed a school-leaving certificate, and another 19% did not have a valid Ukrainian passport.

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**Figure 30 Documents that needed to be obtained or renewed after arriving in the government-controlled territory of Ukraine, % of respondents studying in person or remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory, N=1195**

Which documents did you need to obtain or renew after arriving in the government-controlled territory of Ukraine? (multiple-response question)

| | |
|---|---|
| IDP certificate | 49% |
| School-leaving certificate / education certificate | 20% |
| Passport of a citizen of Ukraine | 19% |
| TIN (Taxpayer Identification Number.) | 12% |
| Other | 1% |
| None | 36% |
| Hard to say / refused to answer | 2% |

Half of the surveyed students either did not receive any support (24% of those studying while residing in the government-controlled territory) or do not remember whether they received it (26%).

36% of students residing in the government-controlled territory received material support: a quarter (26%) received benefits or a scholarship as entrants from the TOT, 15% received material or humanitarian assistance, and 9% received help with housing or accommodation. 17% of respondents received support in the form of admission-related consultations, and 7% received psychological support or mentoring.

**Figure 31 Support received during admission to a Ukrainian educational institution and/or during the first year of study, respondents studying in person or remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory, N=1195**

Did you receive any support during admission to a Ukrainian educational institution and/or during your first year of study? (multiple-response question)

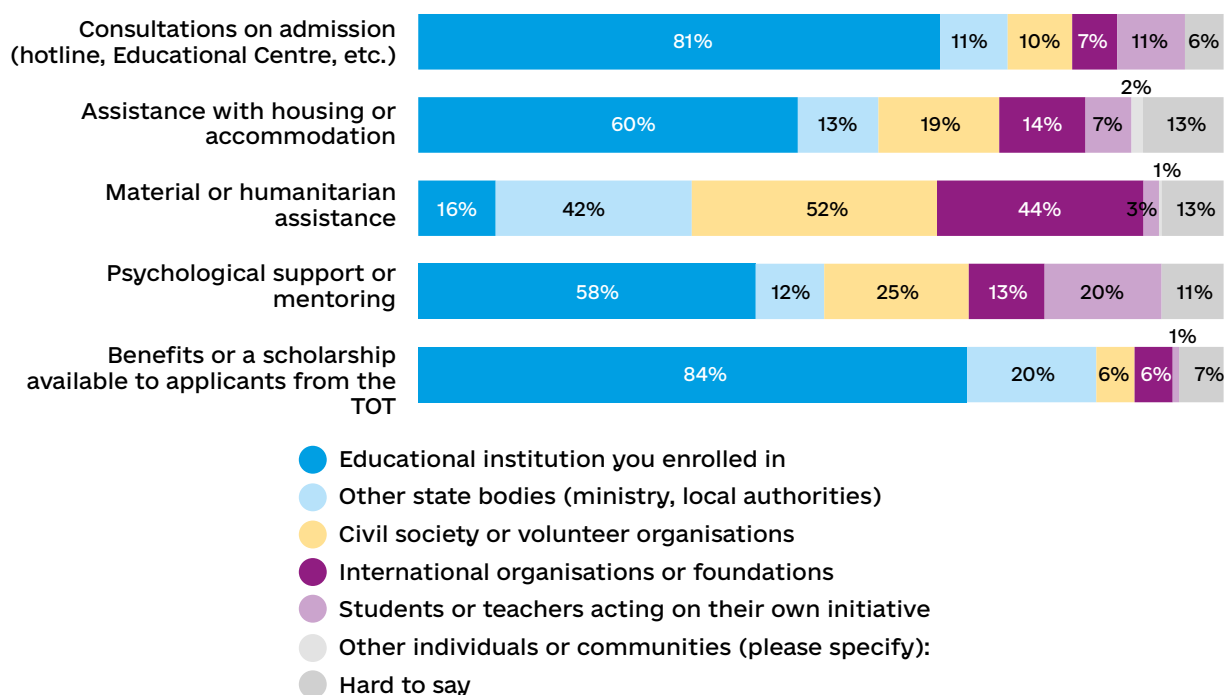| | |
|---|---|
| Yes, I received benefits or scholarship as an applicant from the TOT | 26% |
| Yes, I received admission-related consultations (hotline, Educational Centre, etc.) | 17% |
| Yes, I received material or humanitarian assistance | 15% |
| Yes, I received help with housing or accommodation | 9% |
| Yes, I received psychological support or mentoring | 7% |
| No, I did not receive any assistance | 24% |
| Hard to say / I do not remember | 26% |
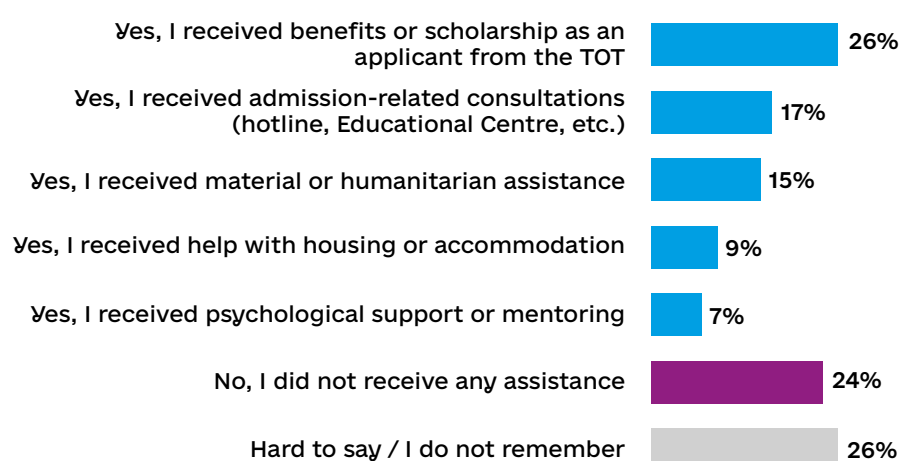
Sources of assistance vary significantly depending on its type, but in almost all cases the main provider (with the exception of material or humanitarian aid) is the educational institution where the student is enrolled. Thus, 84% of respondents who received assistance stated that benefits or scholarships for applicants from the TOT were provided by their educational institution; 81% received admission-related consultations from their educational institution; the institution was also primarily responsible for helping with housing

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or accommodation — 60% of students noted this; and 58% received psychological support or mentoring from their alma mater. It is worth noting that one in five students said that psychological support or mentoring was provided to them by initiative groups of students or teachers.

Among providers of material or humanitarian assistance, students most frequently mentioned civil society or volunteer organisations (52%), international organisations or foundations (44%), and state bodies (ministries, local authorities) (42%).

**Figure 32** **Sources of assistance received, % of respondents who indicated in the previous question that they had received assistance, N1=200, N2=110, N3=182, N4=84, N5=310**

You indicated that you had received _____. This assistance was provided by...



- Educational institution you enrolled in
- Other state bodies (ministry, local authorities)
- Civil society or volunteer organisations
- International organisations or foundations
- Students or teachers acting on their own initiative
- Other individuals or communities (please specify):
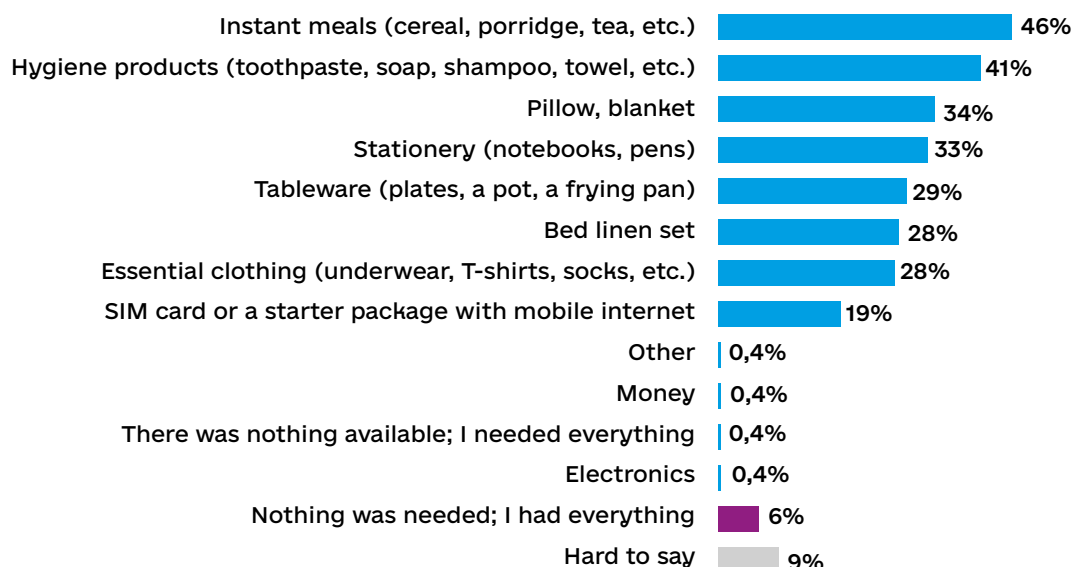- Hard to say

If students were offered a free humanitarian kit upon arrival at their educational institution, the items that would be most in demand include:

- essential items – ready-to-use food products (46% of students would want these in the kit), hygiene products (41%), basic clothing (28%)

- bulky everyday items that are difficult to bring with you – a pillow or blanket (34%), dishes (a plate, pot, frying pan) (29%), a set of bed linen (28%)

- stationery (33%)

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**Figure 33** Composition of a free humanitarian kit that would have been appropriate at the moment the respondent arrived at their educational institution for admission and/or study, % of respondents studying in person or remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory, N=1195
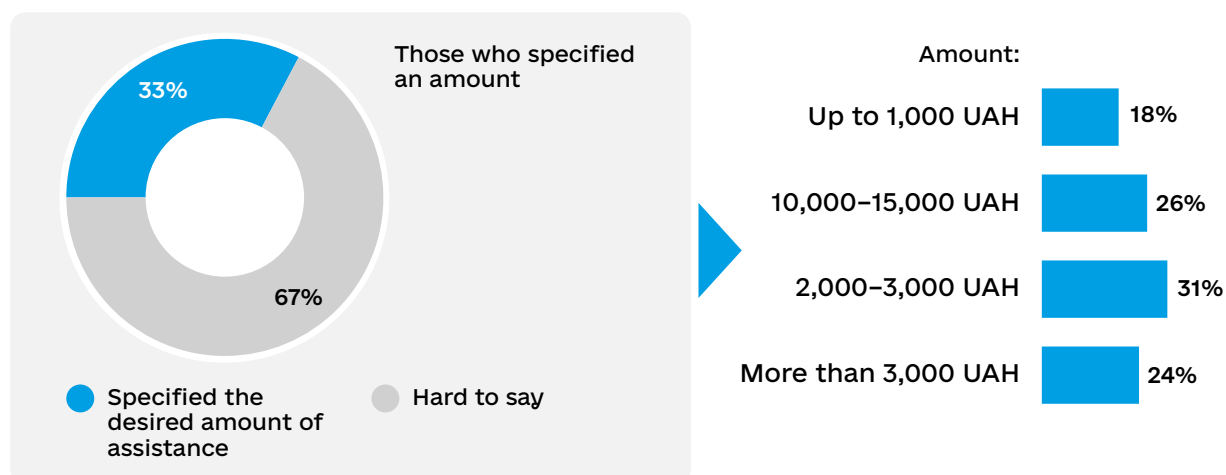
What composition of a free humanitarian kit would have been appropriate for you at the moment when you arrived at your educational institution for admission and/or study? (multiple-response question)

| | |
|---|---|
| Instant meals (cereal, porridge, tea, etc.) | 46% |
| Hygiene products (toothpaste, soap, shampoo, towel, etc.) | 41% |
| Pillow, blanket | 34% |
| Stationery (notebooks, pens) | 33% |
| Tableware (plates, a pot, a frying pan) | 29% |
| Bed linen set | 28% |
| Essential clothing (underwear, T-shirts, socks, etc.) | 28% |
| SIM card or a starter package with mobile internet | 19% |
| Other | 0,4% |
| Money | 0,4% |
| There was nothing available; I needed everything | 0,4% |
| Electronics | 0,4% |
| Nothing was needed; I had everything | 6% |
| Hard to say | 9% |

As in the previous question regarding the cost of leaving the temporarily occupied territories, we see a large share of respondents who cannot name a specific amount (67 %). This may indicate that first- and second-year students are not yet ready to assess the level of funding required to meet their own needs or that they rely on additional financial support from relatives. It may also be suggested by the wide variation in the amounts mentioned and the relatively even distribution among those who named different sums.

**Figure 34** Amount of one-off state financial assistance during the first months of the respondent's stay in the government-controlled territory, % of respondents studying on campus or remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory, N=1195

If the state were to offer you a one-off payment during the first months of your stay in the government-controlled territory, what amount would be sufficient for you? Please specify an approximate amount in hryvnias.

Those who specified an amount

33%

67%

● Specified the desired amount of assistance   ● Hard to say

Amount:

| | |
|---|---|
| Up to 1,000 UAH | 18% |
| 10,000–15,000 UAH | 26% |
| 2,000–3,000 UAH | 31% |
| More than 3,000 UAH | 24% |

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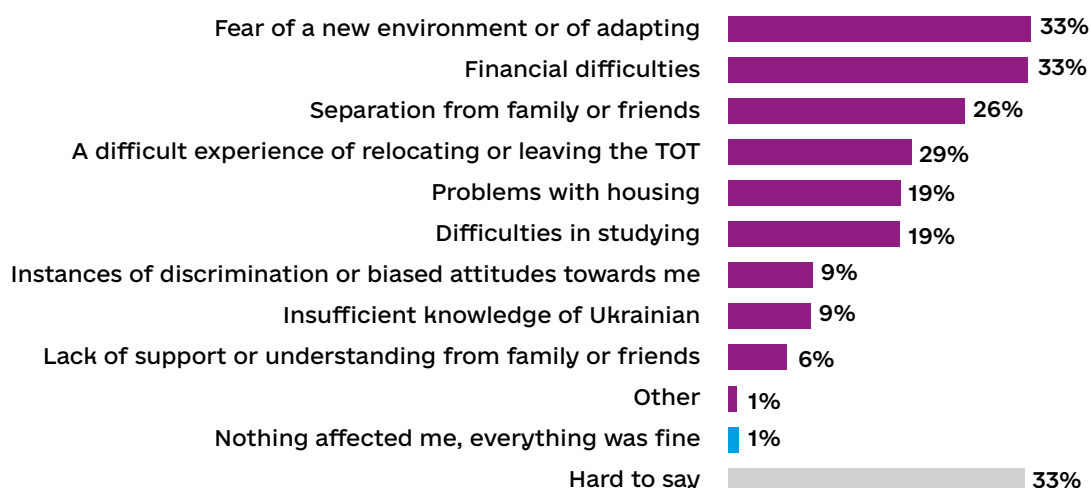
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The main concerns affecting students during their first year of study were fear of a new environment and financial difficulties (reported by 33% of second-year students). Among psychological challenges, students most frequently mentioned separation from family and friends (26%), the difficult experience of relocating or leaving the TOT (20%), and difficulties in studying (19%). Housing problems were another significant material challenge, mentioned by 19% of respondents.

9% of students reported experiencing discrimination or biased attitudes that negatively affected them, and another 9% said they felt uncomfortable due to insufficient knowledge of Ukrainian.

Students from the temporarily occupied districts of Kherson Region and the temporarily occupied districts of Donetsk Region that were occupied after 24 February 2022 show the highest levels of anxiety.

**Figure 35** **Events or circumstances that negatively affected the respondent's psychological state during the first year of study, % of students studying full-time or remotely while residing in government-controlled territory, N=710**
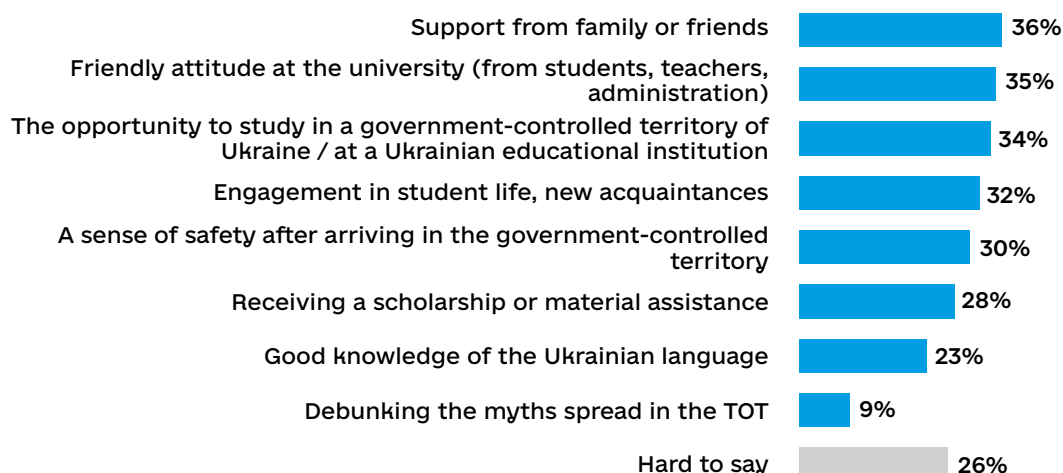
**Which events or circumstances negatively affected your psychological state during your first year of study? (multiple-response question)**
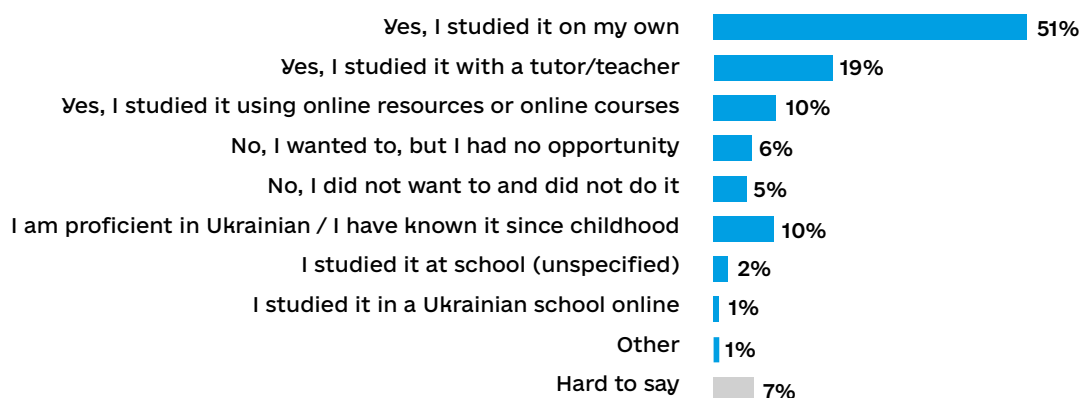
| | |
|---|---|
| Fear of a new environment or of adapting | 33% |
| Financial difficulties | 33% |
| Separation from family or friends | 26% |
| A difficult experience of relocating or leaving the TOT | 29% |
| Problems with housing | 19% |
| Difficulties in studying | 19% |
| Instances of discrimination or biased attitudes towards me | 9% |
| Insufficient knowledge of Ukrainian | 9% |
| Lack of support or understanding from family or friends | 6% |
| Other | 1% |
| Nothing affected me, everything was fine | 1% |
| Hard to say | 33% |

Support from others is the main factor that positively influenced students' psychological well-being during their first year of study: 36% of respondents said they were positively affected by support from family or friends, 35% mentioned a friendly atmosphere at the university, and 32% noted that getting involved in student life and forming new connections had a positive impact. For one third of respondents (34%), the very opportunity to study at a Ukrainian educational institution was already a positive factor. Almost one quarter (23%) of students reported that having a good command of the Ukrainian language brought them positive emotions.

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**Figure 36** **Events or circumstances that positively affected the respondent's psychological state during the first year of study, % of students studying full-time or remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory, N=710**

Which events or circumstances positively affected your psychological state during your first year of study? (multiple-response question)

| Category | % |
|---|---|
| Support from family or friends | 36% |
| Friendly attitude at the university (from students, teachers, administration) | 35% |
| The opportunity to study in a government-controlled territory of Ukraine / at a Ukrainian educational institution | 34% |
| Engagement in student life, new acquaintances | 32% |
| A sense of safety after arriving in the government-controlled territory | 30% |
| Receiving a scholarship or material assistance | 28% |
| Good knowledge of the Ukrainian language | 23% |
| Debunking the myths spread in the TOT | 9% |
| Hard to say | 26% |

## 4. CHALLENGES IN THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF STUDENTS FROM THE TOT

As the survey data show, good knowledge of the Ukrainian language has a noticeable impact on students' psychological well-being, at least during their first year of study. It is evident that students from the temporarily occupied territories make significant efforts to achieve fluency. Half (51%) of these students study Ukrainian independently, 19% have managed to find a tutor or teacher, and 10% use online resources.

Students who study remotely while remaining in the TOT devote more attention to learning Ukrainian via online resources (20%, compared with 10% on average).

**Figure 37.** **Methods used by respondents to learn Ukrainian while residing in the temporarily occupied territory, % of respondents, N=1294**

Did you study the Ukrainian language while residing in the temporarily occupied territory? (multiple-response question)

| Category | % |
|---|---|
| Yes, I studied it on my own | 51% |
| Yes, I studied it with a tutor/teacher | 19% |
| Yes, I studied it using online resources or online courses | 10% |
| No, I wanted to, but I had no opportunity | 6% |
| No, I did not want to and did not do it | 5% |
| I am proficient in Ukrainian / I have known it since childhood | 10% |
| I studied it at school (unspecified) | 2% |
| I studied it in a Ukrainian school online | 1% |
| Other | 1% |
| Hard to say | 7% |

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70% of students are confident that they have a high level of proficiency in Ukrainian, with 52% stating that they speak it fluently. One fifth (21%) report an intermediate level, 3% say their level is low and 6% are unsure.

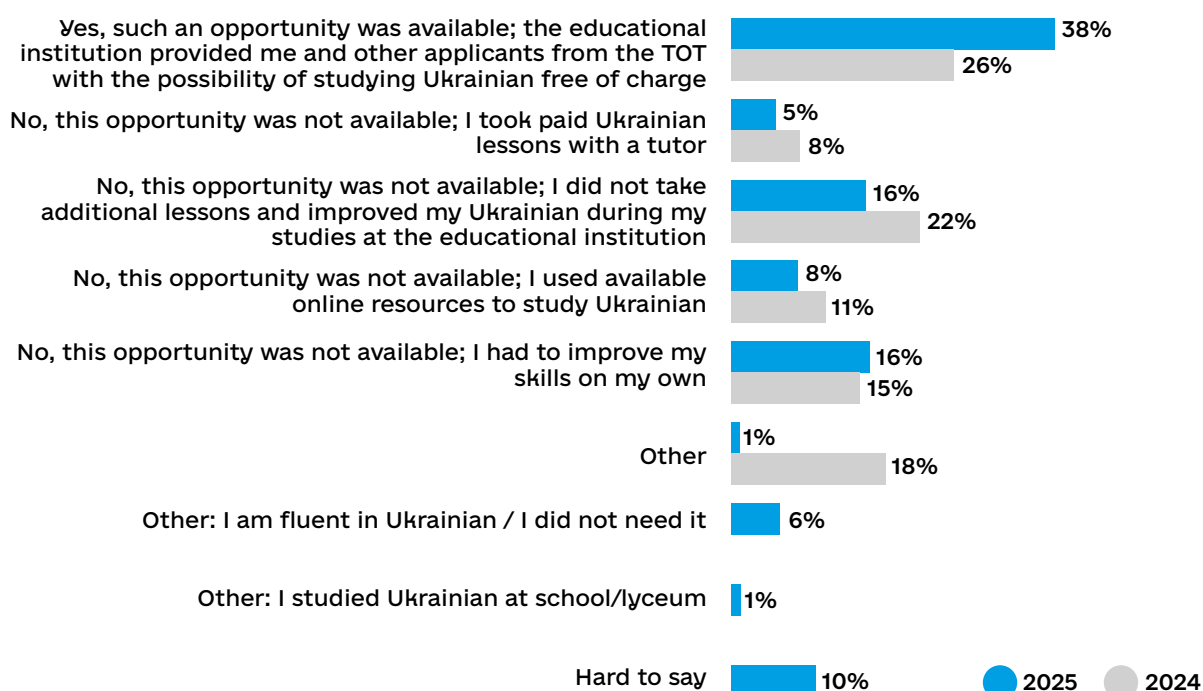**Figure 38** Respondents' level of Ukrainian language proficiency, % of respondents, N=1294

How would you assess your own level of proficiency in the Ukrainian language?



- Fluent proficiency
- High level of proficiency
- Medium level of proficiency
- Low level of proficiency
- Hard to say
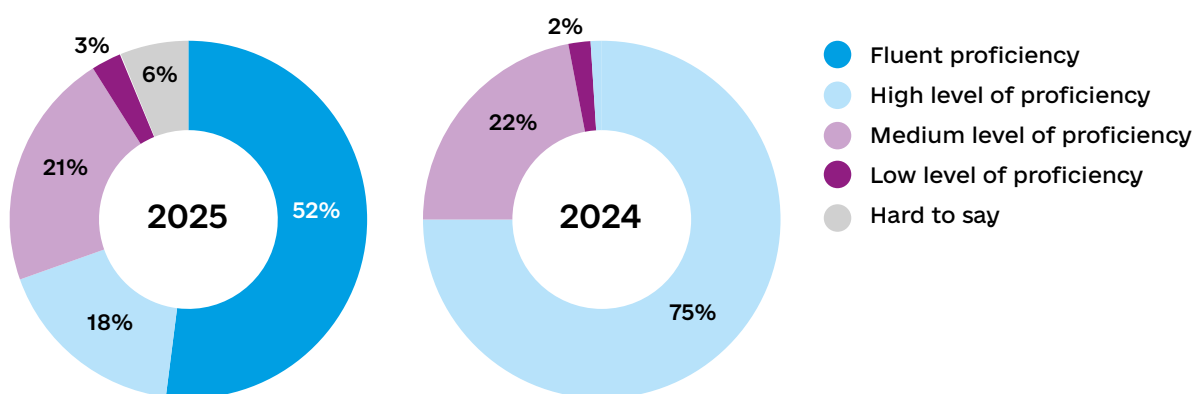
38% of students said they had the opportunity to improve their Ukrainian language skills before admission or during their studies with the support of the educational institution. Compared with the 2024 study, this figure increased by 12 percentage points, which may indicate that educational institutions are becoming more aware of the role of the Ukrainian language in both formal and informal student communication.

**Figure 39** Opportunities for respondents to improve their Ukrainian language skills before admission or during studies with the support of the educational institution, % of respondents, N=1294

Did you have the opportunity to improve your Ukrainian language skills before admission or during your studies with the support of the educational institution?



| | 2025 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|
| Yes, such an opportunity was available; the educational institution provided me and other applicants from the TOT with the possibility of studying Ukrainian free of charge | 38% | 26% |
| No, this opportunity was not available; I took paid Ukrainian lessons with a tutor | 5% | 8% |
| No, this opportunity was not available; I did not take additional lessons and improved my Ukrainian during my studies at the educational institution | 16% | 22% |
| No, this opportunity was not available; I used available online resources to study Ukrainian | 8% | 11% |
| No, this opportunity was not available; I had to improve my skills on my own | 16% | 15% |
| Other | 1% | 18% |
| Other: I am fluent in Ukrainian / I did not need it | 6% | |
| Other: I studied Ukrainian at school/lyceum | 1% | |
| Hard to say | 10% | |

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Only 4% of second-year students experience significant difficulties in mastering core subjects taught in Ukrainian, and a further 13% have some difficulties, though these do not affect their performance in core subjects. 60% of respondents said that they do not experience difficulties in mastering core subjects due to their level of Ukrainian, and among those second-year students who study remotely while residing in the temporarily occupied territories, this share reaches 84%. We can assume that a considerable proportion of those who hesitated to answer (and among them the share of full-time students is higher) did not respond to this question because they do not perceive their level of Ukrainian as influencing their ability to master core subjects.

**Figure 40** Difficulties in mastering core subjects taught in Ukrainian at the educational institution, % of second-year students, N=773

Do you experience difficulties in mastering core subjects taught in Ukrainian at your educational institution?
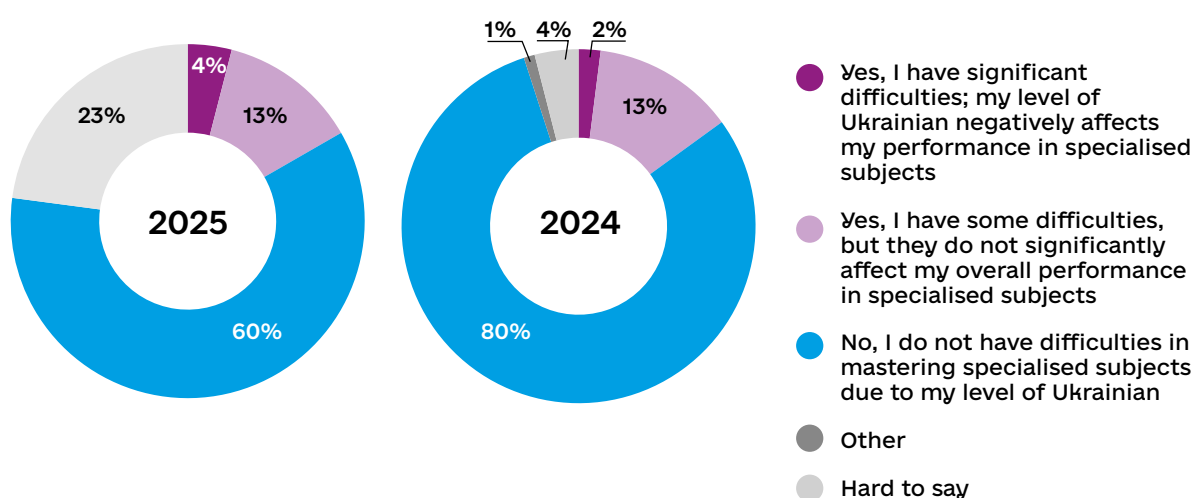


One fifth (21%) of students from the temporarily occupied territories reported experiencing biased or intolerant attitudes towards them because they come from an occupied territory. Specifically, 13% heard stereotypical or offensive remarks about "those from the TOT", 6% experienced public humiliation or jokes about their origin, and 7% felt distrust or doubt regarding their level of knowledge or education. Offensive remarks about "those from the TOT" were more often reported by female students (16% compared to 10% of male students) and by those studying in person (14%). Female students also more frequently experienced distrust or doubt regarding their knowledge or education (10% among women compared with 5% among men).

Slightly more than half (55%) did not experience biased attitudes. Among those studying remotely while residing in the TOT, this share is 78%, and among those studying remotely while residing in government-controlled territory – 60%.

A quarter (24%) said they found it hard to say whether they had experienced biased or intolerant treatment. This group is larger among men (27% compared with 21% among women) and among those studying in person (26%).

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**Figure 41** Experiencing biased or intolerant attitudes due to being from the temporarily occupied territory, % of respondents, N=1294
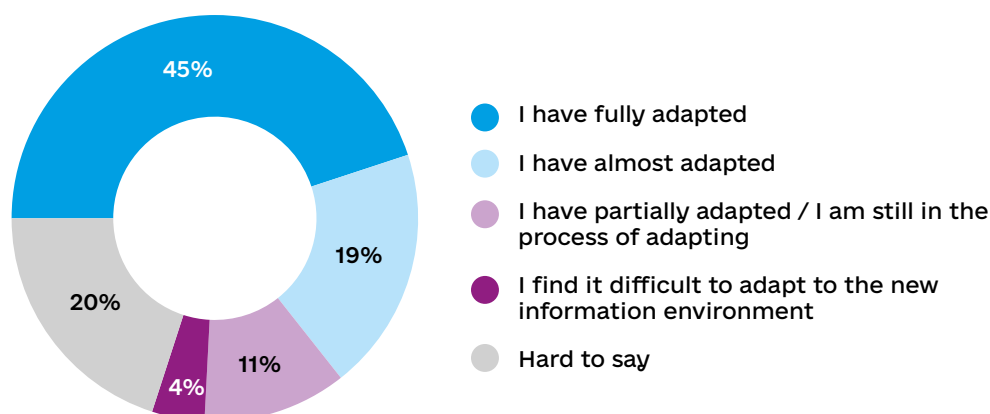
Have you ever experienced biased or intolerant treatment towards yourself because you are from the temporarily occupied territory? (multiple-response question)

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes, stereotypical or offensive remarks about "those from the TOT" | 13% |
| Yes, distrust or doubts about my level of knowledge / education | 7% |
| Yes, public humiliation or jokes about my origin | 6% |
| Yes, being ignored or avoided by classmates | 5% |
| Yes, being refused help or support | 4% |
| Yes, unjustified complications created by the administration or teachers | 3% |
| No, I did not experience biased treatment | 55% |
| Other | 1% |
| Hard to say | 24% |
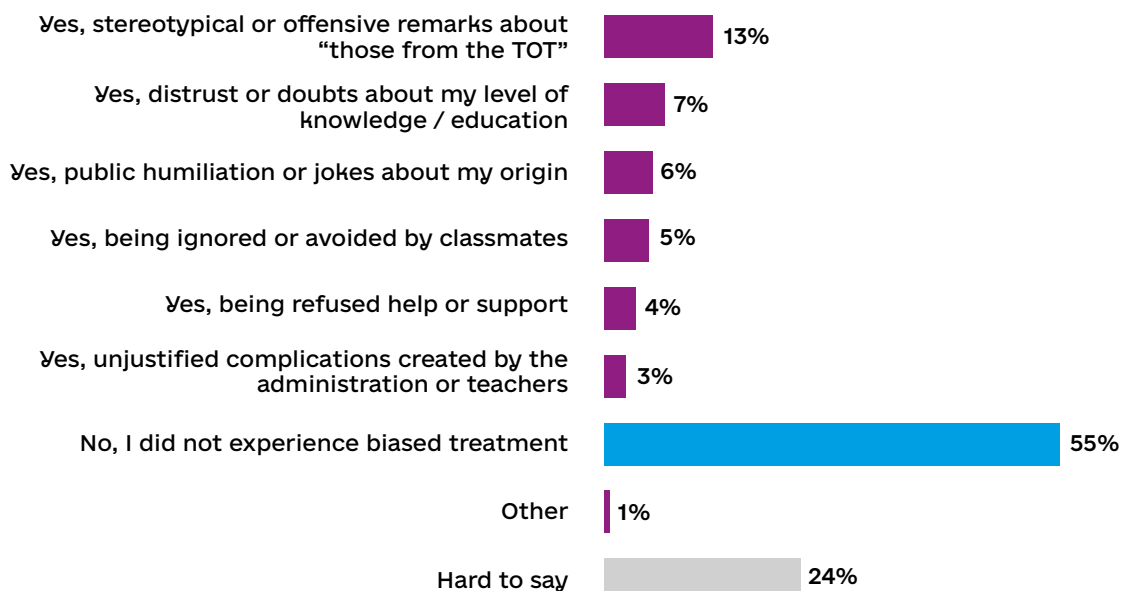
Two-thirds (64%) of students studying in person or remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory have fully or almost fully adapted to the new information environment. One in five respondents (20%) found it hard to answer this question, 11% had adapted only partially or were still in the process of adapting, and 4% reported finding adaptation to the new information environment difficult. Among those who fully adapted, as well as those who hesitated to answer, second-year students make up a larger share. First-year students and those studying remotely were more likely than other groups to say that they had only partially adapted or were still in the process of adapting.

**Figure 42** Adaptation to the new information environment, % of respondents studying in person or remotely while residing in the government-controlled territory, N=1195

How would you assess your adaptation to the new information environment (educational institution, news, digital services, etc.)?



- 45% I have fully adapted
- 19% I have almost adapted
- 11% I have partially adapted / I am still in the process of adapting
- 4% I find it difficult to adapt to the new information environment
- 20% Hard to say

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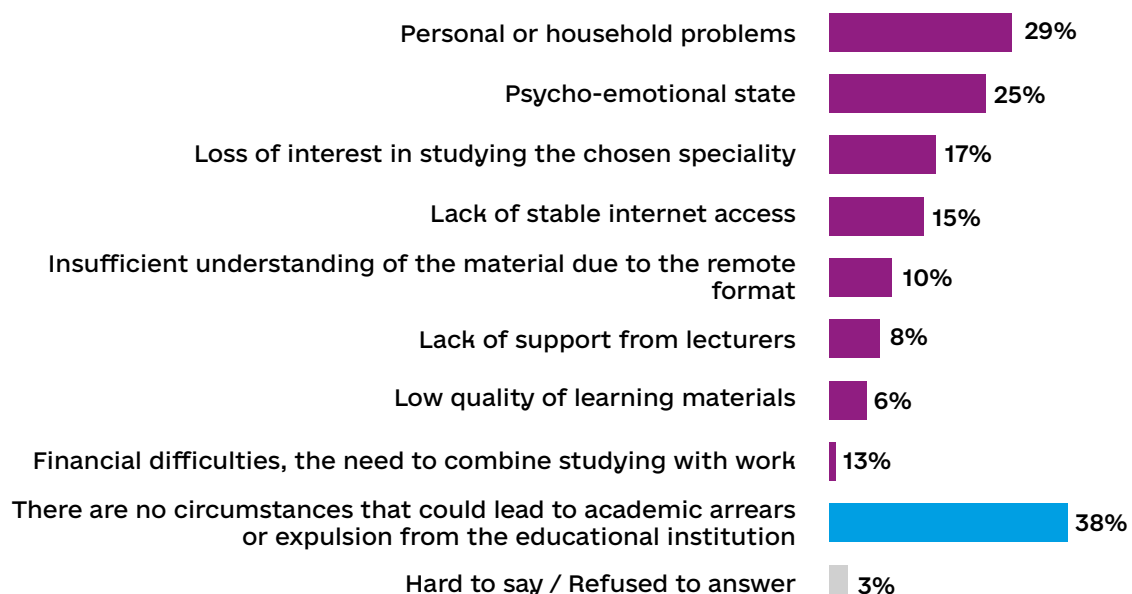
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Almost 40% of surveyed students believe that there are no circumstances that could lead to academic arrears or expulsion from their educational institution. Personal or household difficulties would significantly affect 29% of students, and a quarter believe that their psycho-emotional state could cause academic arrears. First-year students are more likely to think that their psycho-emotional state might hinder their ability to continue their studies (28% compared with 23% among second-year students). They are also more concerned about insufficient understanding of the material due to the remote format (13% compared with 8% of second-year students).

For students who are studying while residing in the temporarily occupied territories, having a stable internet connection is critically important. 48% of such respondents said that the lack of internet could lead to arrears or expulsion. Among those living in government-controlled territory, this risk is lower — 20% reported this concern.

**Figure 43** **Circumstances in the respondent's life that may currently lead to academic arrears or expulsion from an educational institution, % of respondents, N=1294**

**What circumstances in your life could currently lead to academic arrears or expulsion from your educational institution? (multiple-response question)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Personal or household problems | 29% |
| Psycho-emotional state | 25% |
| Loss of interest in studying the chosen speciality | 17% |
| Lack of stable internet access | 15% |
| Insufficient understanding of the material due to the remote format | 10% |
| Lack of support from lecturers | 8% |
| Low quality of learning materials | 6% |
| Financial difficulties, the need to combine studying with work | 13% |
| There are no circumstances that could lead to academic arrears or expulsion from the educational institution | 38% |
| Hard to say / Refused to answer | 3% |

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## 5. CHALLENGES AND ADVANTAGES OF STUDYING REMOTELY FOR STUDENTS RESIDING IN THE TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

This section presents data on the challenges and advantages of studying remotely for students residing in the occupied territories. It includes the results of the survey specifically for this group of students.
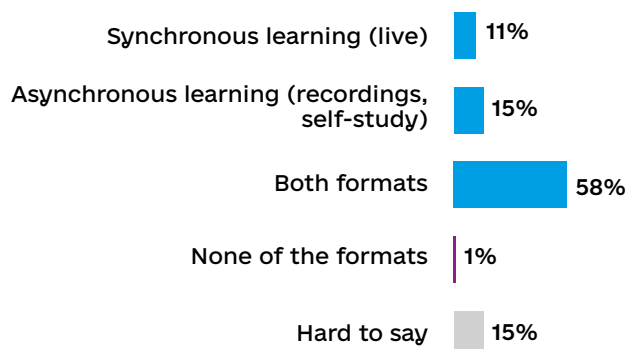
The majority (58%) of students who study remotely while residing in the occupied territories can study both synchronously and asynchronously; for 15%, only asynchronous learning is available, and 11% study exclusively synchronously.

A stable and fast internet connection in the temporarily occupied territories is available to only 35% of students; 41% reported having an unstable or slow connection, and for 13% it is frequently unavailable.

Among students who only have access to synchronous learning, only 55% have a stable internet connection, 27% have an unstable or slow connection, and for 9% it is frequently unavailable.

**Figure 44** Learning formats available to the respondent, % of respondents studying remotely and residing in the TOT, N=99

Which learning formats are available to you?

| | |
|---|---|
| Synchronous learning (live) | 11% |
| Asynchronous learning (recordings, self-study) | 15% |
| Both formats | 58% |
| None of the formats | 1% |
| Hard to say | 15% |

**Figure 45** Respondent's access to the internet, % of respondents studying remotely and residing in the TOT, N=99

How would you assess your internet access during remote learning?

| | |
|---|---|
| Stable and fast internet | 35% |
| Unstable or slow internet | 41% |
| Internet is often unavailable | 13% |
| Hard to say | 10% |
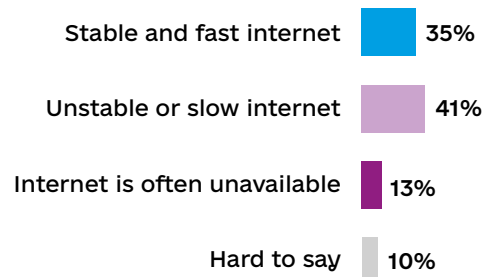
One in five (19%) students residing in the TOT stated that the occupation authorities obstructed their access to Ukrainian education, while 39% said they found it hard to answer this question. The high share of respondents who could not provide a clear answer may be explained by the fact that living in the temporarily occupied territories already complicates access to Ukrainian education. Those respondents whose access to education was obstructed by the occupation authorities reported threats of persecution and repression, barriers to accessing Ukrainian resources, as well as checks of their phones and laptops.

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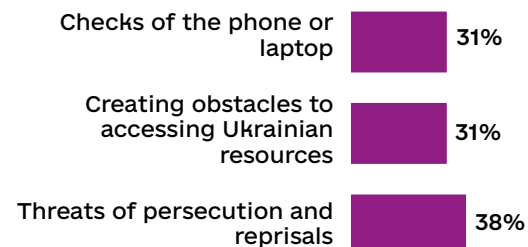
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**Figure 46** Obstruction by the occupation authorities of the respondent's access to Ukrainian education, % of respondents studying remotely while residing in the TOT, N=99

**Did the occupation authorities obstruct your access to Ukrainian education?**

- 19% Yes
- 41% No
- 39% Hard to say
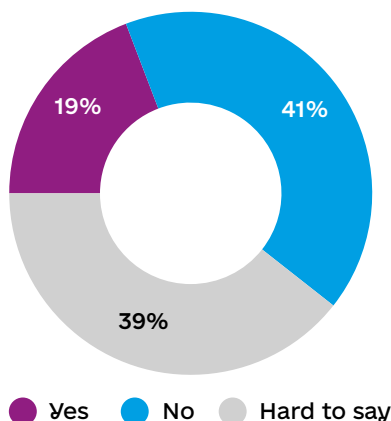
**Figure 47** Forms of obstruction by the occupation authorities, % of respondents who reported such obstruction, N=16*

**If yes, in what ways? (multiple-response question)**

| Form | % |
|---|---|
| Checks of the phone or laptop | 31% |
| Creating obstacles to accessing Ukrainian resources | 31% |
| Threats of persecution and reprisals | 38% |

*The sample size is too small to produce a reliable distribution.

The vast majority of students residing in the temporarily occupied territories rate the methodological support for remote learning as very good or good, and 76% give the same assessment to the technical support for remote learning.

**Figure 48** Assessment of methodological support for remote learning, % of respondents studying remotely while residing in the TOT, N=99

**How would you assess the methodological support (materials, access to lectures, instructions) for remote learning?**

- Very good 49%
- Good 30%
- Satisfactory 7%
- Insufficient 2%
- Poor
- Hard to say 11%
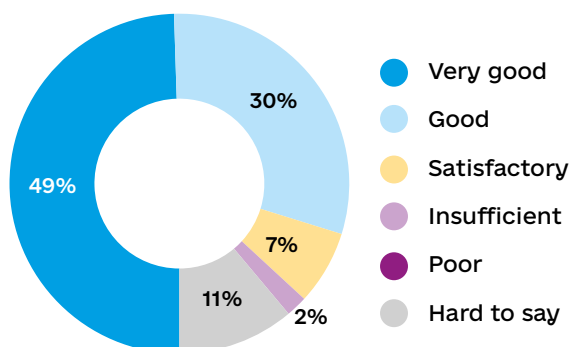
**Figure 49** Assessment of technical support for remote learning, % of respondents studying remotely while residing in the TOT, N=99

**How would you assess the technical support (platforms, connectivity, assistance) for remote learning?**

- Very good 44%
- Good 32%
- Satisfactory 17%
- Insufficient 1%
- Poor 2%
- Hard to say 3%

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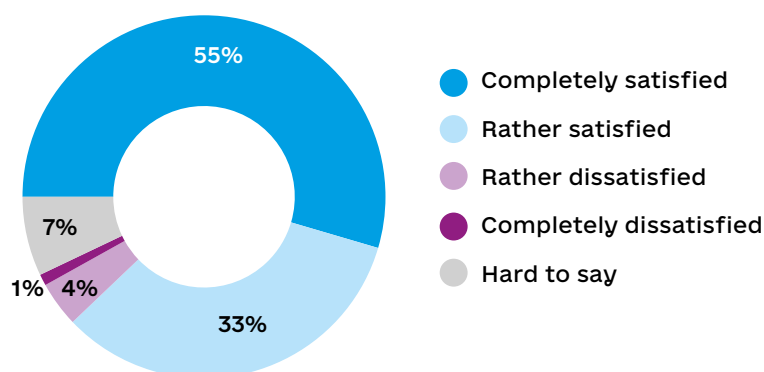from the Temporarily Occupied Territories into Higher Education Institutions of Ukraine

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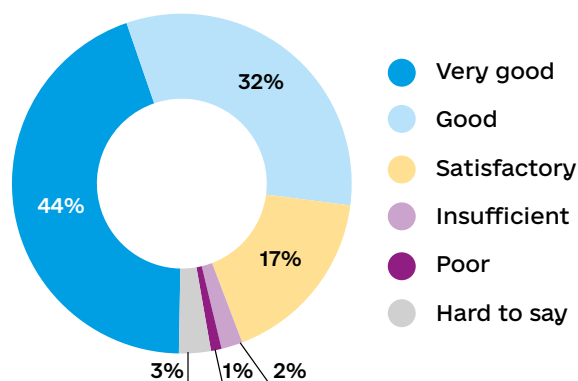
The overwhelming majority (88%) of students studying remotely while residing in the temporarily occupied territories are fully or rather satisfied with the quality of remote education. Only 5% reported being dissatisfied (rather or completely). Students who expressed dissatisfaction most often mentioned the following factors: difficulty processing information, poor quality of education and poor organisation of the educational process.

**Figure 50.** Assessment of the quality of remote education, % of respondents studying remotely while residing in the TOT, N=99

**How would you assess the overall quality of remote education?**



55%
33%
7%
1% 4%

- Completely satisfied
- Rather satisfied
- Rather dissatisfied
- Completely dissatisfied
- Hard to say

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study on the integration of students from the temporarily occupied territories into Ukrainian HEIs and IVET institutions, as well as an analysis of current regulatory procedures and practices, a set of recommendations is proposed for state authorities, relevant agencies, educational institutions and Educational Centres.

## CENTRAL EXECUTIVE AUTHORITIES

**Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine**

**1.** Develop a state-recommended action plan for individuals planning to leave the temporarily occupied territories, including instructions on risk assessment, safety rules and information about available channels of assistance.

**Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine, Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine, and the State Migration Service of Ukraine:**

**1.** Introduce the provision of administrative services at the level of territorial communities based on a "one-stop shop" approach for young people leaving the TOT, enabling them to obtain essential documents (passport services, IDP registration, TIN assignment, etc.) in one place.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the State Migration Service of Ukraine:**

**1.** Develop and approve procedures for establishing the identity of citizens leaving the temporarily occupied territories who do not have Ukrainian documents, including cases where their data is absent from state registers, with the subsequent possibility of issuing a Certificate of Return to Ukraine.

**2.** Ensure coordination among Ukraine's foreign diplomatic missions regarding the dissemination of information and the organisation of access for applicants from the temporarily occupied territories to the procedures for issuing a Certificate of Return to Ukraine, including in cases where their data is absent from state registers.

**Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine**

**1.** Ensure the implementation of state financial support to cover priority expenses for vulnerable categories of students during the first months after arriving in the government-controlled territory, in particular by developing a mechanism for enforcing the provisions of Resolution No. 551 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On the approval of the Procedure for identifying, returning, providing support and reintegrating children who were deported or forcibly transferred, or were at risk of deportation and/or forced transfer as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, or persons from among children".

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2. Ensure consistent information and communication efforts to inform students and their families about the mechanisms and conditions for receiving the relevant state support, including through the regular dissemination of up-to-date information via the official channels of central executive authorities, educational institutions and partner organisations.

## Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine

1. Integrate into the Diia application a dedicated information module on admission pathways to education institutions for young people from the TOT, including explanations of how Educational Centres operate and step-by-step guidance on submitting documents.

## Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

1. Ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Admission Procedure for obtaining higher, IVET and vocational (vocational-technical) education for individuals residing in territories where it is impossible to ensure compliance with Ukrainian education standards and/or a stable educational process (Order of the Ministry No. 271) as a special regulatory act governing the specific admission conditions for individuals from the temporarily occupied territories. This should be done, in particular, by fully aligning its provisions with the annual Admission Procedure for obtaining higher education and reflecting the relevant special rules in the annual document.

2. Strengthen the institutional readiness of educational institutions to admit students from the TOT by developing, implementing and integrating Methodological Guidelines, and by ensuring regular monitoring and student surveys to assess the effectiveness of the support environment.

3. Establish and ensure the continuous operation of a single hotline or advisory centre for applicants from the TOT.

4. Amend Ministry of Education and Science Order No. 271 and the annual Admission Procedure to ensure the year-round operation of the "Crimea–Ukraine" and "Donbas–Ukraine" Educational Centres, ensuring that advisory and information support for applicants from the TOT is available year-round, beyond the admission campaign.

## Ministry of Health of Ukraine and Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine:

1. Develop and ensure the implementation of psychological support and adaptation programmes using trauma-informed approaches for students from the TOT.

2. Establish and ensure the sustainable operation of anonymous psychological online consultations, including for those who remain in the TOT.

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**Educational institutions of higher, IVET and vocational education**

1. Standardise the operating procedures of the "Crimea–Ukraine" and "Donbas–Ukraine" Educational Centres.

2. Introduce dedicated models of mentoring programmes, including formats such as "senior student — student from the TOT" or "teacher–mentor", with a focus on individual support and integration.

3. Expand information outreach about the availability of free language courses for students from the TOT, including through remote platforms (formats suitable for weak or unstable internet connections, offline materials).

4. Organise safe formats of remote interaction with applicants and students from the TOT, including the use of channels that do not require disclosure of personal data, ensuring the possibility of anonymous contact, and developing digital safety guidance for students when communicating with educational institutions.

5. Develop tailored integration interaction scenarios for students arriving from the TOT for the first time (for example, micro-support groups, small-team meetings, safe spaces for socialisation).

6. Develop policies and mechanisms for responding to cases in which signs of discriminatory behaviour are identified among participants in the educational process, including those related to a person's origin, place of registration or place of residence.

7. Introduce and ensure the availability of individual learning pathways for students from the TOT, including allowing flexible class attendance schedules, extensions for completing assignments and postponed assessments in cases where their residence in the temporarily occupied territories creates risks or limits their access to learning.

since 2011 from Ukrainian Crimea

### Mission of the NGO "Centre of civil education 'Almenda'"

We are approaching the reintegration of the population of the (de)occupied territories and laying the foundations for guarantees of non-repetition.

**info@almenda.org**



### Mission of the Ombudsman of Ukraine

The Ombudsman of Ukraine effectively prevents violations, protects, and restores the rights of every individual

**hotline@ombudsman.gov.ua**