



ASSESSMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE CAPACITY

IN LOCAL RECOVERY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Analytical Research-Based Report

«ASSESSMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE CAPACITY IN LOCAL RECOVERY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT»

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The ERP aims to support internally displaced persons and other war-affected populations to maintain stable livelihoods with reduced reliance on cash and in-kind support. The programme supports small and medium-sized enterprises, subsistence farmers, small and medium farming enterprises, and vocational education training institutions, as well as Diia.Business

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASC — Administrative service center

CBOs — Community-based organizations

CMU — Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine

CRP — Comprehensive recovery program

CSIs — Civil society institutions

CSS — Center for social services

CV — Combat veteran

FG — Focus group interview

IE — Individual entrepreneur

LGO — Local government official

LSGA — Local self-government authorities

MA — Military administration

NACS — National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service

R&DP — Recovery and development plan

RLA — Regulatory legal acts

SME — Small and medium-sized enterprises

TC — Territorial community

VET — Vocational education and training

VRU — Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

RATIONALE

The greatest asset of any town is its residents—their knowledge and skills, level of education, sense of belonging, and willingness to engage in local policymaking while also acting as a form of oversight for local authorities. Together, these elements shape the crucial concepts of human capital and social capital, without which the sustainable development of our country is impossible.

The issue of human capital shortages is particularly acute in regions or specific areas that have been affected by hostilities since February 2022, have suffered large-scale destruction, and where residents have experienced the trauma of temporary occupation. This is especially relevant for the Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson, and Chernihiv oblasts. Many areas within these regions remain under temporary occupation by enemy forces, while numerous communities continue to endure the devastating consequences of active hostilities.



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According to the Kyiv School of Economics (https://kse.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/01.01.24_Damages_Report.pdf), as of early 2024, the direct losses from the Russian-Ukrainian war in the regions we studied were as follows: Dnipropetrovsk — USD 3,369 million, Zaporizhzhia — USD 14,773 million, Mykolaiv — USD 7,853 million, Sumy — USD 3,398 million, Kharkiv — USD 30,224 million. These figures have undoubtedly continued to rise throughout the year, as military operations of varying intensity persist across all of these regions.

However, despite the enormous challenges, communities in frontline regions continue to strive to meet the basic socio-economic needs of their populations, even as they face a shortage of qualified management personnel. In particular, participants in focus group discussions and surveys conducted during this study in frontline communities highlighted that key positions —

such as lawyers, project management specialists, state registrars, and economic development specialists—have remained vacant for an extended period, including: lawyers, project management specialists, state registrars, and economic development specialists. This shortage is further exacerbated in the context of community recovery. According to Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1159 of 14/10/2022 and No. 731 of 18/07/2023, Ukraine continues to develop Comprehensive Recovery Programs (CRPs) and Recovery and Development Plans (R&DPlans) for territorial communities. Ongoing field research indicates a lack of personnel to implement these government directives at the community level, and those who are available often require additional training to develop the skills necessary to operate effectively in crisis conditions under martial law.

So it is now the right time to implement educational projects that include the development of training programs, as well as the training and retraining of not only local government officials but also teachers/trainers/mentors who will support both current and newly appointed officials. As part of this study, the project team identified the essential knowledge and skills required by local government employees, as well as the key actors involved in the process, and the findings of this study are presented in the proposed report.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The data was collected through questionnaires, focus group interviews, and a telephone survey. During the desk research stage, statistical data and reporting and analytical materials from the National Agency on Civil Service (NACS) were analyzed.

The survey was conducted using Google tools and carried out in three waves. The questionnaire used in the first wave comprised 12 questions in the main section and 3 demographic questions, and it was designed for local self-government officials in senior and middle management positions (community heads and their deputies, heads of departments and divisions within executive committees of city and village councils, as well as heads and deputy heads of administrative service centers, territorial centers for social services, and educational institutions, etc.). The first wave of the survey took place in July–August 2024, yielding 202 completed questionnaires from respondents evenly representing the project's target regions: Dnipropetrovsk Oblast — 59, Zaporizhzhia Oblast — 34, Mykolaiv Oblast — 44, Sumy Oblast — 34, Kharkiv Oblast — 31. The average age of respondents was 46.8 years.

The second wave of the survey took place in August–September 2024 and targeted lower-level officials (chief specialists and specialists within territorial community governments, as well as employees of ASCs, CSSs, and other municipal institutions). The questionnaire for this wave contained 10 main questions, which largely mirrored those from the first wave but were more specific, and required respondents to express their opinions on well-known issues rather than provide generalizations or analyses. A total of 259 questionnaires were received during the second wave, with responses distributed as follows: Dnipropetrovsk Oblast — 54, Zaporizhzhia Oblast — 45, Mykolaiv Oblast — 45, Sumy Oblast — 71, Kharkiv Oblast — 44. The average age of respondents in the second wave was 43.9 years.

The respondents of the third wave, conducted in September 2024, were employees of educational institutions that train students in Public Management and Administration (specialty 281) in the Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Sumy, and Kharkiv oblasts, as well as employees of the Regional Centers for Professional Development. More than 20 senior representatives from these institutions were interviewed by telephone.

An important stage of the study involved 25 focus group interviews, conducted across each of the target communities between July and September 2024. In most cases, the focus groups were held after the first wave of the survey and were designed to provide qualitative insights into the processes and phenomena identified during the questionnaire phase. Furthermore, many focus group participants in the communities had also taken part in the survey the day before. When combined with the results of the second wave, this enabled the application of the triangulation method—examining the issue from three different perspectives—which significantly enhanced the reliability of the data obtained.

So throughout the study process, a substantial body of empirical data—both quantitative and qualitative—was collected and systematized. Taken as a whole, this data makes it possible to analyze communities' needs for qualified management personnel while also serving as a basis for market research on educational services relevant to the leaders and employees of public authorities in territorial communities. Additionally, the findings can be used to forecast the development prospects of the training and retraining system for local government officials.

The target communities of the project represented five regions of Ukraine:

- Dnipropetrovsk Oblast — Apostolove, Zhovti Vody, Zelenodolsk, Kryvyi Rih, and Sofiyivka communities.
- Zaporizhzhia Oblast — Novomykolayivka, Mykhailo-Lukasheve, Novooleksandrivka, Ternuvate, and Komyshevukha communities.
- Mykolaiv Oblast — Bashtanka, Berezanka, Yelanets, Nova Odesa, and Snihurivka communities.
- Sumy Oblast — Okhtyrka, Konotop, Krolevets, Lebedyn, and Nedryhayliv communities.
- Kharkiv Oblast — Balakliya, Rohan, Savyntsi, Krasnokutsk, and Krasnohrad communities.



When selecting communities for the study, the following factors were considered: the availability of professional higher and/or vocational education institutions; the presence of industrial enterprises of various industries; territorial representation within the region. Given that the challenges of preserving, restoring, and strengthening human capital are particularly pressing for frontline and de-occupied communities, this factor was also taken into account when identifying the target communities.

SECTION 1

STAFFING OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT BODIES

The onset of full-scale war and the declaration of martial law in February 2022 have profoundly impacted all aspects of life in Ukraine, affecting both the state and society. Significant changes have also occurred within the system of public authorities, particularly in the functioning of local self-government bodies. One of the most pressing challenges faced by local self-government bodies has been staffing. The temporary occupation of sovereign Ukrainian territory, the departure of government officials and municipal institution employees beyond their respective TCs and/or even abroad, and the mobilization of some LGOs into the Ukrainian Defense Forces have all contributed to shifts in the personnel structure of local self-government bodies.

The importance of staffing issues is also growing in the process of restoring and rebuilding TCs, when public authority employees are now required not only to be prepared to work under the extreme conditions of martial law but also to acquire new, relevant knowledge and skills essential for both making effective management decisions and successfully implementing them.

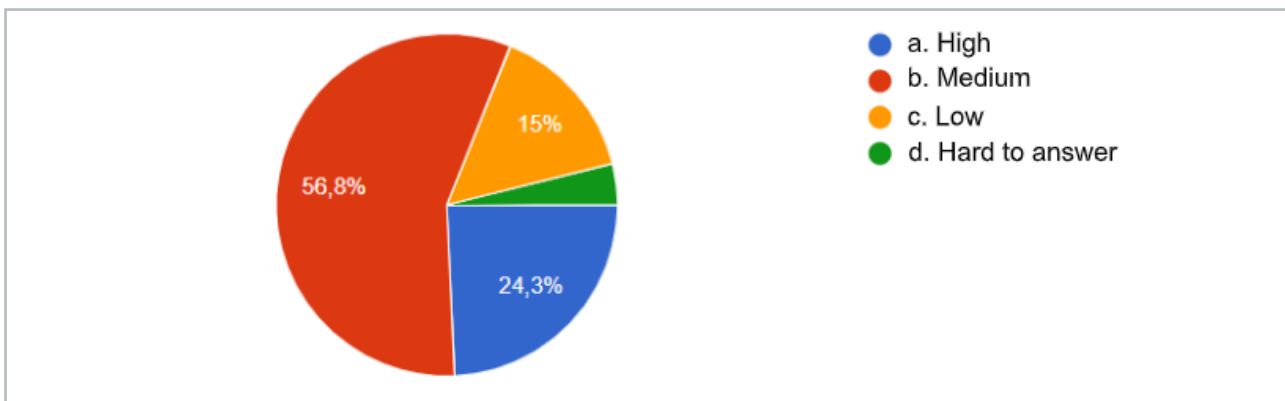


Fig. 1.1. Distribution of responses to the question: “How would you assess the staffing level of your unit (department, division, sector) in 2023–2024?” (“managers”, n=206)

As shown in Fig. 1.1., almost one in four respondents (managers) assessed the staffing level of their unit as “high,” indicating full staffing and no significant staffing issues. This category includes the communities of Apostolove, Zhovti Vody, Krasnokutsk, Lebedyn, and Okhtyrka. According to 56.8% of respondents, the staffing level is “average,” meaning there are occasional vacancies, but overall, there are sufficient specialists. Meanwhile, 15% of respondents reported a “low” staffing level, where staff shortages are frequent and vacancies remain consistently unfilled, in particular in the communities of Bashtanka, Komyshevukha, Krolevets, and Savyntsi. Finally, more than 3% of respondents were unable to provide a clear answer to the question.

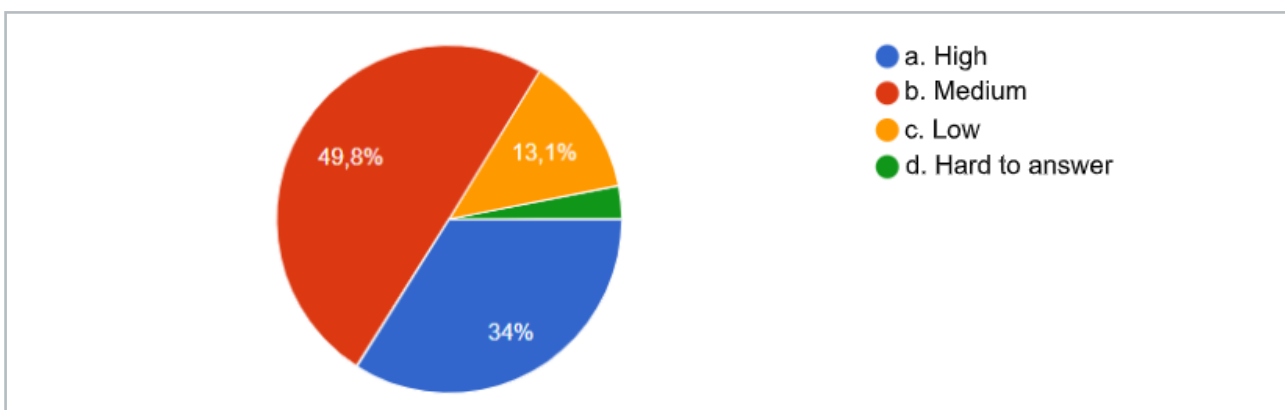


Fig. 1.2. Distribution of responses to the question: “Assess the staffing level of your unit (department, division) in 2023–2024” (“officers”, n-259).

Middle- and lower-level officers assess the staffing levels of their institutions slightly more positively than managers, as illustrated in Fig. 1.2. According to 34% of respondents, staffing is at a high level, particularly in the communities of Apostolove, Balakliya, Yelanets, Krasnokutsk, Lebedyn, Nedryhayliv, and Okhtyrka. Nearly half of respondents (49.8%) consider staffing to be average. Meanwhile, 13.1% describe it as low, with shortages most commonly reported in the Komyshuvakha, Krolevets, and Mykhailo-Lukasheve communities, and 3.1% of respondents found it difficult to answer this question.

So there is no significant difference in the assessment of this indicator between managers and officers, as the proportion of positive responses (high + average) remains similar—exceeding 81% and almost 84% respectively. Additionally, both managers and officers identify the same 3 to 5 communities as relative leaders and laggards in terms of staffing levels.

A key requirement in the current environment is the increasing inclusivity of professional teams, ensuring openness to employing individuals of diverse social and family backgrounds, ages, and health conditions.

Category	Yes, it does	No, it does not	Hard to answer
Internally displaced person	66/71	137/172	4/17
Parents with many children	63/56	142/180	4/23
Persons with disabilities	112/123	87/113	10/24
Combatants, veterans	54/53	142/185	11/22
Persons aged 60+	138/156	64/90	6/15
Family members of fallen soldiers	55/74	140/156	14/30

Table 1.1. Distribution of responses to the question: “Does your unit employ representatives from the following categories?” (“managers” (n-206) / “officers” (n-259), number of persons)

As shown in Table 1.1, a large number of individuals aged 60+ are employed in LSGAs and municipal institutions within TCs, and a significant percentage of respondents reported having colleagues with disabilities. We believe that the relatively small number of employees currently holding CV status will gradually increase, and after the full-scale war ends, this number may rise rapidly over a relatively short period. This growth is likely to be observed in both elected positions and roles within the executive bodies of local councils. One of the key indicators supporting this assumption is the significant number of active servicemen from the Defense Forces of Ukraine currently enrolled in the Master’s program in Public Management and Administration (specialty 281).

It is also likely that the number of LGOs with disabilities will increase, as large-scale wars inevitably lead to a rise in disability rates—and Ukraine is no exception. According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, as of 13/07/2024, the number of people with disabilities had increased

by 300,000 over the two years of war. In total, approximately 3 million people in Ukraine held this status by mid-2024 (<https://www.msp.gov.ua/news/23795.html>)

A key staffing challenge for local self-government bodies is the shortage of young employees. Only 23.6% of officer-level respondents confidently stated that there were sufficient young professionals working in their institutions. These respondents were primarily from the Balakliya, Zhovti Vody, Zelenodolsk, Kryvyi Rih, Lebedyn, Okhtyrka, and Sofiyivka communities. More than 42% of respondents highlighted the need for young staff, while 14.3% reported a severe shortage. Among the latter group, the highest number of responses came from the Balakliya, Yelanets, and Komyshevakh communities.

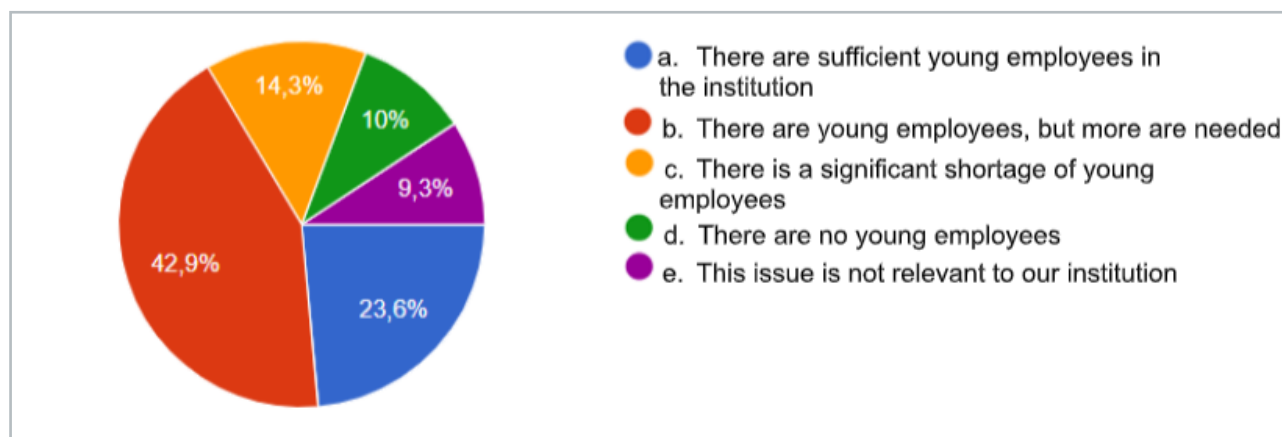


Fig. 1.3. Distribution of responses to the question: “Which of the following statements best describes the situation regarding young staff (under 35) in your institution?” (“officers”, n=259)

With the onset of the full-scale invasion, the introduction of martial law, and the announcement of mobilization, a significant number of men joined the Ukrainian Defense Forces. However, we cannot definitively state that this has radically altered gender proportions in LSGAs.

Firstly, even before the war, the proportion of men increased with seniority, while the number of men holding lower-level positions was significantly lower. For example, in Kharkiv Oblast, four out of the five target communities (Krasnokutsk, Krasnohrad, Rohan, and Savyntsi) are currently headed by women.

Secondly, under Article 23 of the Law of Ukraine “On Mobilization Training and Mobilization”, individuals enlisted under LSGAs are granted a deferral from mobilization, allowing men to continue holding their positions.

Thirdly, a man’s resignation from local government service may not necessarily be due to mobilization into the Armed Forces, but rather a result of changing employment, relocating, or emigrating abroad.

As illustrated in Fig. 1.4, 46.3% of officer-level respondents reported that the gender balance in their team had not changed. In contrast, more than 17% of respondents noted a significant decrease in the number of male employees in their institutions. This trend was particularly evident in the Yelanets, Nedryhayliv, Novooleksandrivka, and Okhtyrka communities.

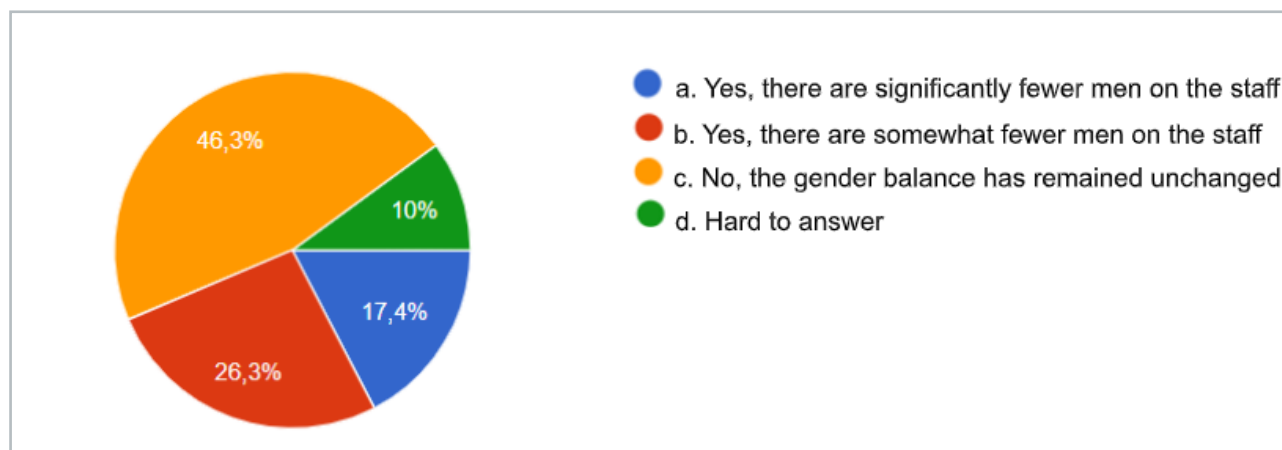


Fig. 1.4. Distribution of responses to the question: “Has the gender composition of your LSGA, institution, or organization changed between 2022 and 2024?” (“officers”, n=259).

A notable feature of the socio-demographic profile of LSGAs is the high proportion of elderly employees. During the focus groups, respondents generally expressed a positive attitude towards this category of staff, which can be attributed to several factors:

1. Many elderly employees are considered “carriers of institutional memory”, possessing a deep understanding of the public administration system and its local specifics.
2. Some experienced employees have mentored current middle managers, including participants in the survey and interviews.
3. The level of social protection and financial security for retirees in Ukraine is relatively low, often failing to ensure an adequate quality of life. As a result, younger and middle-aged employees tend to show tolerance and support for their older colleagues’ desire to continue working.
4. Due in part to martial law, personnel shortages make it difficult to replace older employees with younger professionals of equivalent expertise.
5. In the case of elected officials, it is virtually impossible to replace the incumbent through legal or legitimate means, as no elections can be held at any level during martial law.

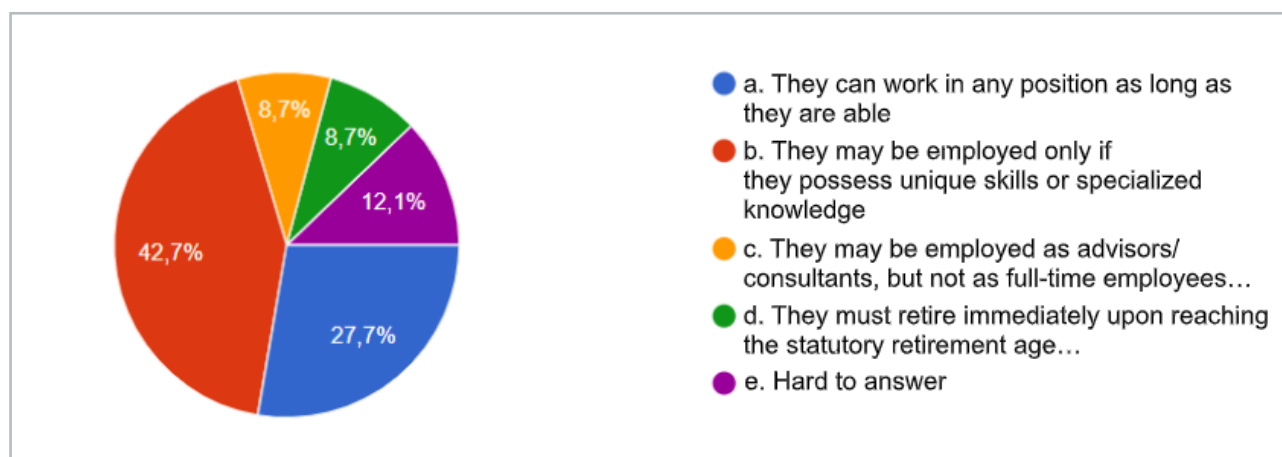


Fig. 1.5. Distribution of responses to the question: “Which of the following statements best reflects your attitude towards the employment of retirement-age individuals in LSGAs?” (“Managers”, n=206).

As shown in Fig. 1.5., more than one in four manager-level respondents expressed a positive attitude towards professionals of retirement age. Among the 206 survey respondents, 19 individuals aged 60+ were employed, 18 of whom selected the response “They can work in any position as long as they are able”. Additionally, 42% of respondents believe that unique professional skills should be a prerequisite for employment. More than 8% stated that retirees can be useful as advisors. An equal proportion believe that individuals should retire immediately upon reaching the statutory retirement age.



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The negative impact of the ongoing full-scale war on staffing in communities is clearly illustrated in Table 1.2. According to manager-level respondents, the most pressing challenges affecting staffing include: mobilization of residents into the Armed Forces of Ukraine; young people leaving the community to pursue education; the acute security situation and onset of hostilities; residents relocating to other regions. All of these factors are interrelated and collectively contribute to the decline in human capital within the study’s target communities.

Response option	“0”	“1”	“2”	“3”	“4”	“5”
Lack of residents with the necessary qualifications	-	7	14	67	60	64
Young people leaving the community to study elsewhere	-	3	11	42	51	105
Residents relocating to other regions	-	3	20	49	54	83
Mobilization of residents into the Armed Forces	-	4	11	25	50	117
Lack of educational institutions in relevant fields	-	31	32	57	50	37
High labor market competition and shortage of vacancies	-	25	42	65	32	43
Acute security situation and impact of military operations	-	6	15	51	46	89
Low, uncompetitive wages	-	6	12	51	66	72

Table 1.2. Distribution of responses to the question: To what extent are the following factors relevant to staffing in institutions and organizations of all forms of ownership in your community? (Where “0” = Not relevant at all and “5” = Very relevant) (“managers”, number of persons):

The officer-level respondents identified a similar set of key threats to staffing: mobilization; youth migration; the acute security situation. However, compared to managers, officers placed greater emphasis on low, uncompetitive wages as a significant factor (Table 1.3.).

Response option	"0"	"1"	"2"	"3"	"4"
Lack of residents with the necessary qualifications	17	33	73	78	62
Young people leaving the community to study elsewhere	11	27	40	53	131
Residents relocating to other regions	21	34	51	65	92
Mobilization of residents into the Armed Forces	15	21	46	62	117
Lack of educational institutions in relevant fields	38	46	58	74	47
High labor market competition and shortage of vacancies	42	61	59	47	54
Acute security situation and impact of military operations	13	26	47	54	123
Low, uncompetitive wages	10	26	51	65	110

Table 1.3. Distribution of responses to the question: To what extent are the following factors relevant to staffing in institutions and organizations of all forms of ownership in your community? (Where "0" = Not relevant at all and "4" = Very relevant) ("officers", number of persons):

The study also identified the key factors that attract citizens to and deter them from working in LSGAs.

During both the survey and FGs, respondents highlighted several positive aspects of the job: a structured working day; career stability; regulated work processes; a guaranteed social benefits package. As shown in Table 1.4., manager-level respondents also identified salary and financial incentives as important motivating factors.

	Very influential	Somewhat influential	Not influential	Hard to answer
<i>Stability and career predictability, with no personal risks</i>	78	100	14	15
<i>Structured working hours, guaranteed holidays, and social benefits</i>	104	89	11	2
<i>Clearly regulated work processes and a defined hierarchy</i>	89	93	18	6
<i>Prestige and the ability to influence community processes</i>	73	90	35	9
<i>Remuneration, financial incentives, and bonuses</i>	101	85	14	9
<i>Relative ease of employment and low competition</i>	24	96	55	31
<i>Career prospects and the ability to apply acquired skills for future growth</i>	80	99	19	9

Table 1.4. Distribution of responses to the question: "Based on your own experience, how would you assess the influence of the following factors on a person's decision to work in local self-government authorities?" ("managers", number of persons).

Despite the above challenges faced by the public administration system, a significant number of participants and survey respondents provided a positive assessment of the staffing levels in their departments and institutions, as illustrated in Fig. 1.6.

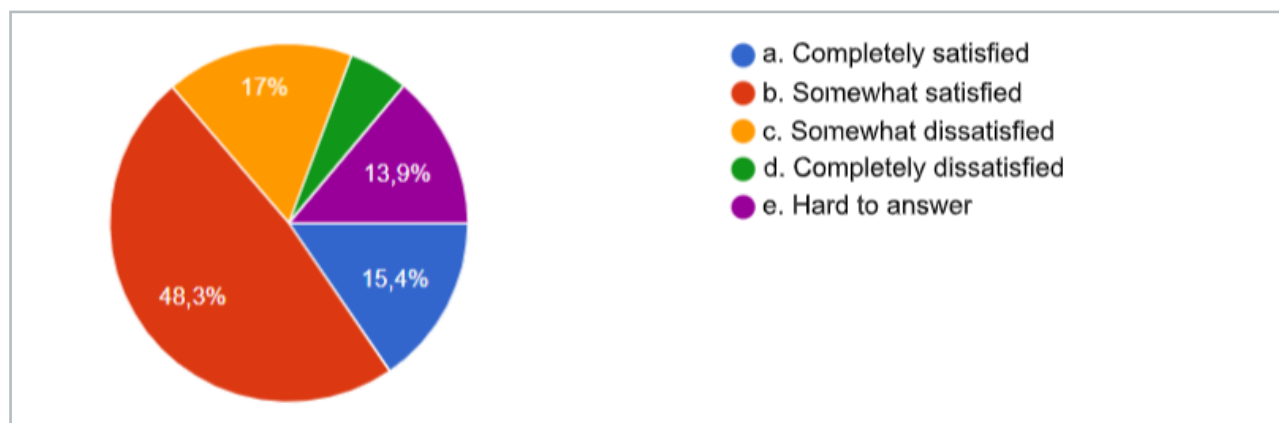


Fig. 1.6. Distribution of responses to the question: “To what extent are you personally satisfied, as an official, with the staffing levels of your local self-government authority or institution during the period 2022–2024?” (“officers”, n=259).

At the same time, the highest percentage of “completely satisfied” respondents was recorded in the Zelenodolsk, Nedryhayliv, and Okhtyrka communities, as well as in the Kryvyi Rih city community. Conversely, among those who selected “completely dissatisfied”, the highest number of respondents came from the Komyshevakha, Krolevets, and Mykhailo-Lukasheve communities.

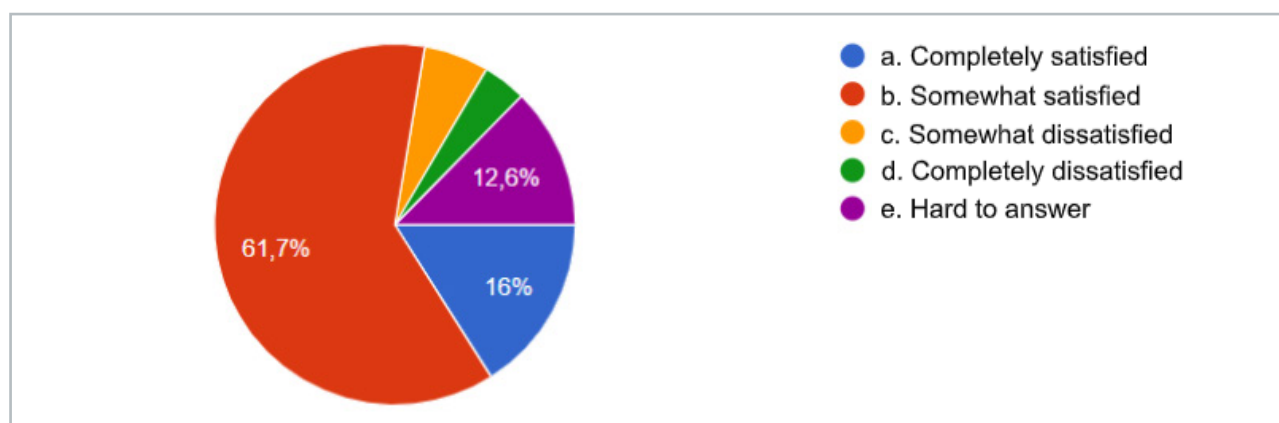


Fig. 1.7. Distribution of responses to the question: “As the manager of a structural unit, how satisfied are you personally with the staffing levels of your LSGA during the period 2022–2024?” (“managers”, n=206).

Manager-level respondents are even more optimistic than officers about the current staffing situation (Fig. 1.7). Among the 16% who are “completely satisfied”, the proportion of respondents from the Balakliya and Nedryhayliv communities is relatively higher. 61.7% of “somewhat satisfied” managers are evenly distributed across most of the study’s target communities. The highest percentage of “somewhat dissatisfied” and “completely dissatisfied” respondents was recorded in the Bashtanka and Savyntsi communities.

Overall, the participants in our study are generally satisfied with the current staffing situation, but this satisfaction appears to be localized within their respective units (institutions, establishments). The relative stability and predictability of professional activities, along with the

availability of modest but relatively secure financial and social benefits, are key factors that attract citizens to work in LSGAs. At the same time, respondents identified several major challenges currently affecting LGOs: low remuneration compared to the private sector; martial law, which has introduced additional difficulties, including: a sharp increase in functional responsibilities, restrictions on international travel, limited career progression opportunities, and appointments to positions without competitive selection.

SECTION 2

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT STAFF

The results of the surveys and FGs indicate that community leadership recognizes the importance of employees acquiring relevant knowledge and skills to effectively implement key socio-economic development tasks in communities at a high level. As shown in Table 2.1., the most in-demand areas for professional development, as identified by managers, include: project activity and grant participation, legislative support, computer literacy and cybersecurity, and foreign language proficiency, which ranked second among the “very relevant” skills.

	Very relevant	Somewhat relevant	Not relevant	Hard to answer
<i>Digital skills, computer literacy, and cybersecurity</i>	90	107	9	2
<i>Working with datasets, data analysis, and visualization</i>	65	119	17	6
<i>Sector-specific legislative support</i>	83	103	16	6
<i>Legislative framework for LSGAs</i>	73	108	18	7
<i>Foreign language proficiency</i>	93	75	21	18
<i>Financial principles of public administration, budgeting, and tax policy</i>	45	119	25	19
<i>Project management, grant applications, and working with donors</i>	109	76	12	9
<i>Procurement procedures and online tenders</i>	62	84	48	13
<i>Engagement with private entrepreneurs and socially responsible businesses</i>	53	102	33	20
<i>Collaboration with vocational education and training institutions</i>	42	103	41	22

Table 2.1. Distribution of responses to the question: “As the manager of a structural unit, how would you assess the importance of enhancing your employees’ knowledge and skills in the following areas?” (“managers”, number of persons).

The officer-level respondents identified a similar set of strongly in-demand knowledge and skills (Table 2.2.). When considering the combined responses for “very relevant” and “somewhat relevant”, the top 3 areas are as follows: 1. Legislative support for activities. 2. Foreign language proficiency. 3. Computer literacy and cybersecurity. However, when looking specifically at responses for “very relevant”, foreign language proficiency stands out as the most highly prioritized skill, significantly ahead of all other options.

Table 2.2. Distribution of responses to the question: “How would you assess the importance of enhancing your knowledge and skills in the following areas.” (“officers”, number of persons).

	Very relevant	Somewhat relevant	Not relevant	Hard to answer
<i>Computer literacy, cybersecurity</i>	73	152	34	4
<i>Data analysis and visualization</i>	47	154	39	22
<i>Legislative framework</i>	93	134	23	12
<i>Foreign language proficiency</i>	107	102	33	19
<i>Budget and tax policy</i>	49	133	49	29
<i>Project activities, participation in grants</i>	90	100	48	22
<i>Procurement procedures and online tenders</i>	52	98	78	32
<i>Cooperation with private business</i>	48	116	57	38

The development of vocational education is a key driver of Ukraine’s economic recovery. As the reconstruction of territorial communities accelerates, the demand for skilled workers—already in short supply—will continue to grow, as illustrated in Fig. 2.1.

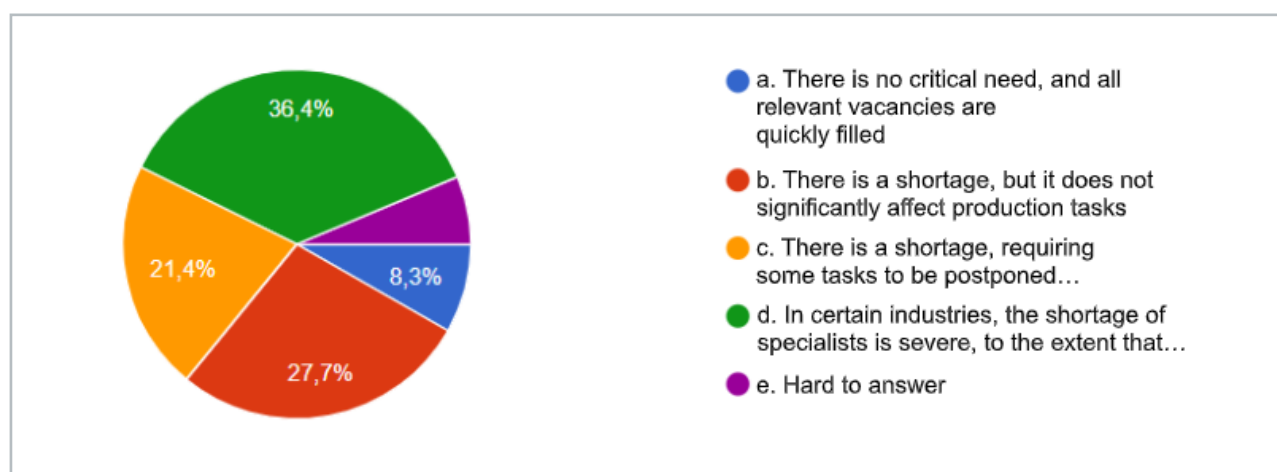


Fig. 2.1. Distribution of responses to the question: “Which of the following statements best reflects the need for specialists with vocational education for the socio-economic development of your community?” (“managers”, n=206).

Only 8.3% of the surveyed managers believe there is no critical need for VET specialists in their communities. Meanwhile, 27.7% acknowledge a moderate shortage, though they note that it does not significantly impact production tasks. However, 21.4% of respondents consider the shortage to be so severe that certain production tasks must be postponed. At the same time, 36.4% of respondents reported a significant shortage of VET specialists, indicating a staffing crisis in this sector. Notably, this view is shared not only by representatives from smaller communities (Bashtanka, Yelanets, Zelenodolsk, Savyntsi, and Sofiyivka) but also by respondents from larger urban communities, including Zhovti Vody and Kryvyi Rih.

Officers assess the severity of this issue to be slightly lower (Fig. 2.2.). For example, 32% of respondents reported a moderate shortage of VET specialists, and 24.7% believe the staff shortage is already noticeable, leading to delays in problem-solving. 21.2% of officer-level respondents, mostly from Mykhailo-Lukasheve TC, believe that the staff shortage is very significant. A notable share of respondents (over 12%) found it difficult to answer this question. Among the 9.7% of respondents who do not believe that there is a critical need for VET specialists,

the largest share comes from the Nedryhayliv community, along with respondents from the Balakliya and Krasnokutsk TCs.

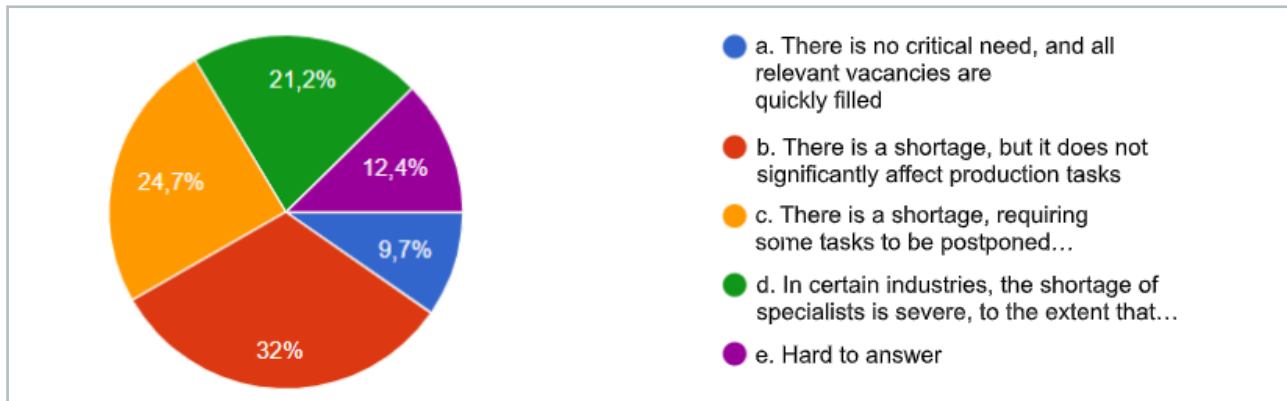


Fig. 2.2. Distribution of responses to the question: “Which of the following statements best reflects the need for specialists with vocational education for the socio-economic development of your community?” (“officers”, n=259).

It is important to mention that during the focus groups, participants pointed out several key factors influencing employment. One of the major concerns is the widespread presence of shadow employment, reflected in individuals’ unwillingness to be officially employed by institutions or enterprises, regardless of their ownership type. This also includes reluctance to register as an individual entrepreneur, as it would require individuals to declare income, pay taxes, and comply with other legal obligations. Additionally, mobilization processes during Ukraine’s period of martial law have had a significant impact. Many men are currently serving in the Ukrainian Defense Forces, temporarily excluding them from the labor market. As focus group participants noted, some individuals deliberately avoid official employment to prevent their employer from being required to submit their details to the Territorial Centers for Recruitment and Social Support.



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Importantly, the shortage of specialists affects not only production processes but also the ability of local authorities to fulfill their social obligations to the population of TCs. For example, in one community in Kharkiv Oblast, the LSGAs are unable to arrange transportation of children to educational institutions due to a lack of qualified drivers with the required license category and health clearance.

SECTION 3

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

The data collected in this study reflect an ambiguous attitude toward the managerial training system. FG participants, particularly experienced local-level managers, repeatedly stressed the importance of practical experience for young professionals in managerial roles. While they did not dismiss the need for a theoretical foundation provided by educational institutions, most participants emphasized that practical skills and relevant knowledge—which they believe are best acquired through hands-on experience—are far more critical.

As illustrated in Fig. 3.1., fewer than one-third of respondents are fully convinced of the need for formal education in public administration, while 51.5% consider it “somewhat needed”.

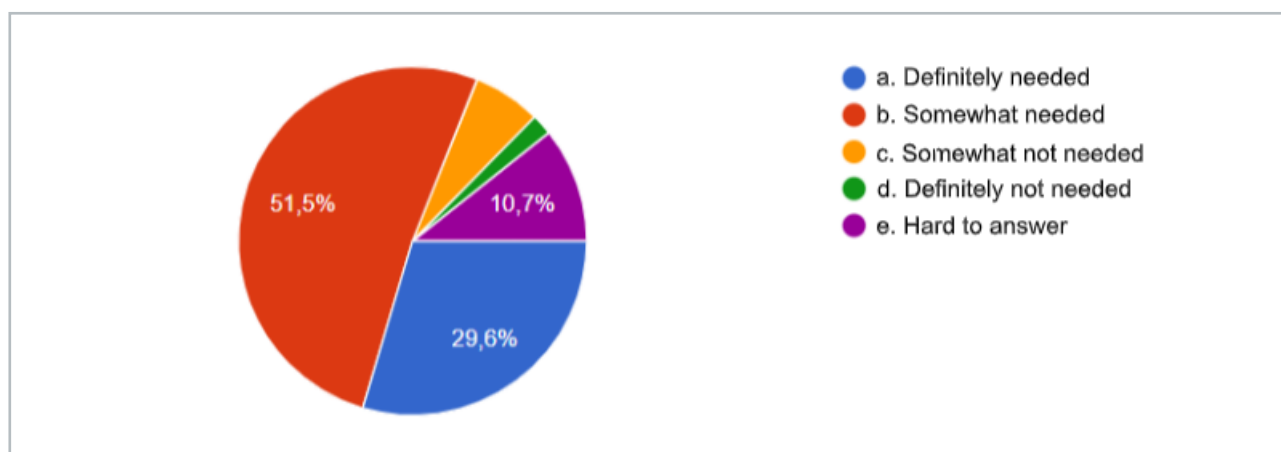


Fig. 3.1. Distribution of responses to the question: “In your opinion, how necessary is a master’s degree in Public Management and Administration (specialty 281) for a successful career in public authorities in Ukraine?” (“managers”, n=206).

Overall, the attitude of community leaders toward the frequency of professional development for LSGA employees is illustrated in Fig. 3.2.

As shown in the data, one in four managers (25.2%) considers a two-year interval to be the optimal frequency for professional development. This view is supported by FG data, where participants consistently emphasized the importance of timely and continuous updates to professional knowledge to address current challenges. 18.4% of respondents believe that training once every three years is sufficient. However, the majority of managers (35.9%) prefer to determine the frequency of training for their subordinates based on specific needs.

During the FGs, manager-level participants demonstrated a strong understanding of the importance of professional development and continuous learning, and provided examples of practical support for employees eager to acquire new knowledge and skills. At the same time,

some managers expressed willingness to financially incentivize subordinates who actively pursue professional growth, including covering subscription costs for essential digital learning platforms, particularly those related to accounting, information security, and data analysis.

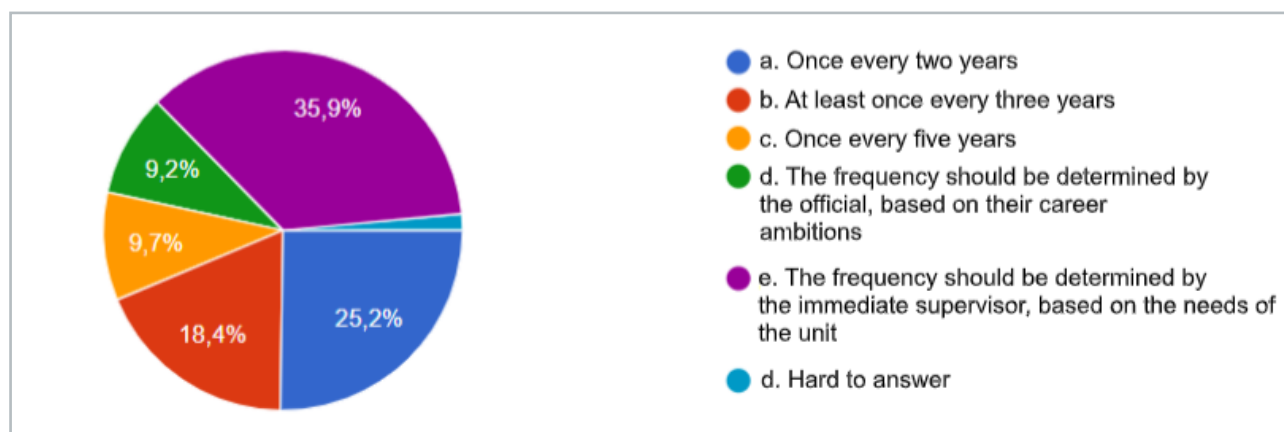


Fig. 3.2. Distribution of responses to the question: “In your opinion, as an experienced manager, how often should public authority employees (excluding newly appointed ones) undergo professional development?” (“managers”, n-206).

At the same time, as shown in Fig. 3.3., private educational platforms remain outside the professional focus of many managers. 34% of respondents are not ready to assess their quality, as they are unfamiliar with the content of these educational initiatives. 35.4% rated the quality of educational programs on private platforms as “satisfactory”, and only 5.8% rated them as “high”. A notably large percentage of managers refrained from making a definitive assessment, selecting the “hard to say” option. It is reasonable to assume that, had this option not been available, a significant portion of respondents would have chosen “not ready to assess”.

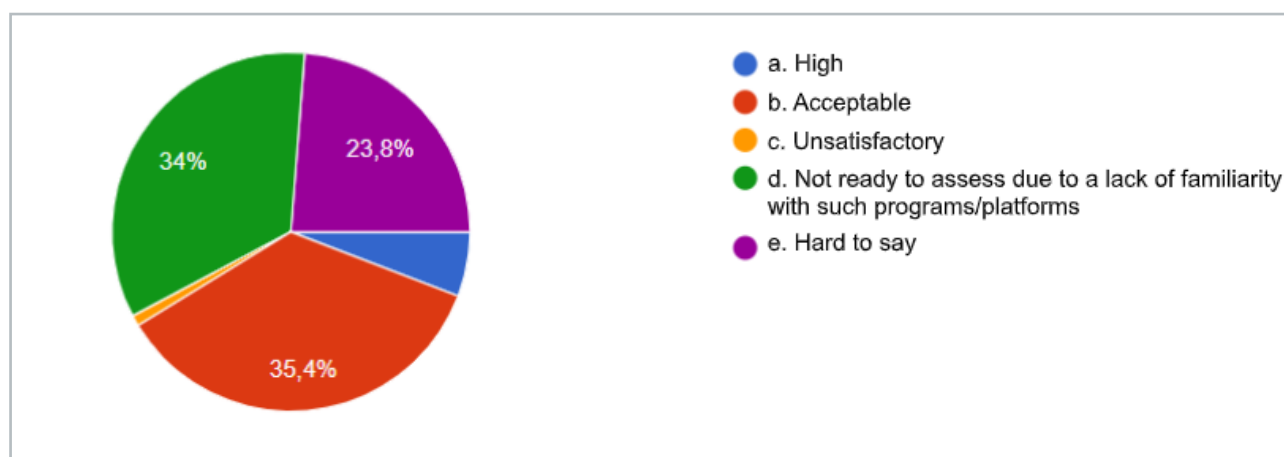


Fig. 3.3. Distribution of responses to the question: “How would you assess the quality of educational programs for local self-government officials offered by private higher education institutions and/or private educational platforms?” (“managers”, n-206).

59.1% of officer-level respondents consider themselves to be sufficiently aware of the activities of private educational platforms, while only 11.6% are dissatisfied with their level of awareness. As with managers, a notable proportion of respondents did not express a clear position on this issue. It can be assumed that many of these respondents are not familiar with the work of private educational platforms.

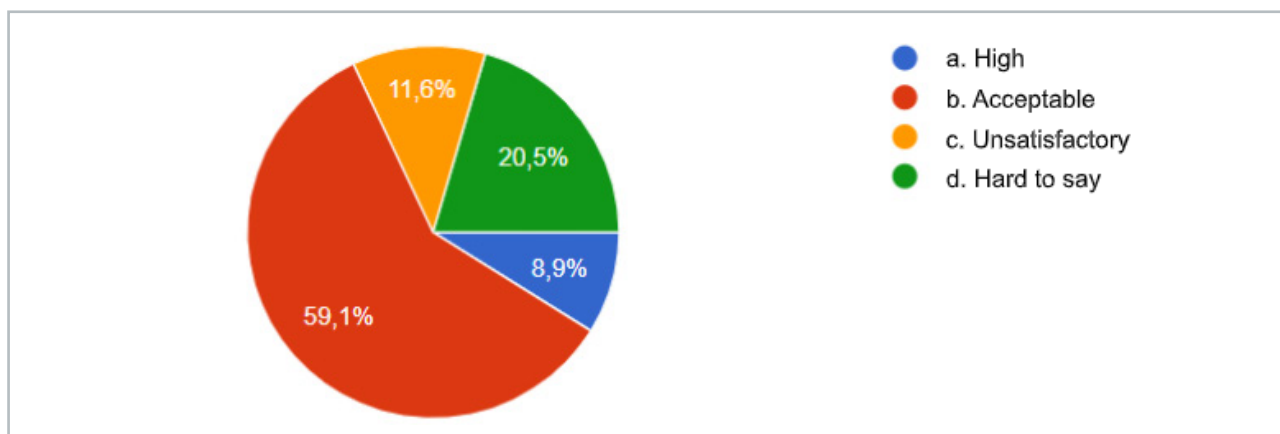


Fig. 3.4. Distribution of responses to the question: “How would you assess your level of awareness regarding educational programs for local self-government officials and municipal institution employees offered by private higher education institutions and/or private educational platforms?” (“officers”, n-259)

Overall, the majority of survey respondents expressed a neutral or cautiously positive attitude toward both public educational institutions and private educational initiatives. During the FGs, participants did not strongly reject management education but consistently emphasized the importance of combining in-depth theoretical knowledge with extensive practical training and the need for continuous professional development. For most participants, management education is seen as a valuable addition rather than a primary foundation for professional growth, which should be based on high-quality sectoral education (technical, economic, legal, medical, etc.) combined with mandatory practical experience..



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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study—derived from questionnaires and focus group interviews with representatives of public authorities and employees of educational institutions that train specialists in Public Management and Administration (specialty 281)—the following conclusions can be drawn.

Between 2022 and 2024, the staffing system of local self-government authorities experienced the negative impact of the full-scale war, however, it has generally continued to fulfill its functions. The majority of managers and officers describe the staffing situation in their communities as satisfactory, having adapted to the conditions of martial law.

The key motivating factors that attract individuals to work in LSGAs include: a sense of involvement in community life and the ability to take certain actions to enhance community cohesion, well-being, and security, job stability and continuity in professional activities, a reliable social benefits package, and a small but steady increase in remuneration. The main deterrents that discourage individuals from choosing a career in LSGAs include: non-competitive salaries compared to the private sector, significant psycho-emotional stress on LGOs and especially employees of municipal institutions who interact directly with the public in ASCs and CSSs, etc.

Local self-government officials express critical views on the state's role in its interaction with LSGAs. While they recognize and support the philosophy of decentralization, viewing it as a promising area for Ukraine's development, FG participants—particularly community leaders—perceive the state primarily as a controller or inspector rather than a full partner. This perception stems from the state's attempts to shift responsibilities onto LGOs—tasks that, in their view, should instead be carried out by executive authorities.

There is a significant shortage of skilled laborers in many communities: electricians, painters, turners, fitters and others. The shortage of such workers hinders the timely completion of essential production tasks, reduces the investment attractiveness of TCs, negatively impacts the quality of life for residents, and makes it difficult to carry out repair, installation, construction, transport, and other necessary work on time.

Importantly, this refers specifically to the provision of legal services by licensed and officially employed specialists, as FG participants emphasized, “gray” markets for these services exist and can often meet the urgent needs of citizens. So there is an urgent need for logistical, financial, and human resource support for VET institutions. Additionally, educational institutions that have been relocated from temporarily occupied or frontline areas may require increased attention.

Education in Public Management and Administration (specialty 281) is generally viewed as a beneficial but not essential component of professional development for local public authority employees. During the FGs, participants emphasized that master's programs in this field are essential for high-ranking managers, but for middle- and lower-level officers to effectively perform their functional duties, they require high-quality sector-specific education, continuous practical experience, and regular (once every 2–3 years) professional development, which may take the following forms: internships in successful communities, short-term foreign business trips with a practical sector-specific focus, and sector-specific internships in higher-level government bodies.

The study participants point to a significant need to enhance their knowledge and skills in the following areas: project management, cybersecurity and information technology, data analysis and information management, and foreign languages. Notably, an increasing number of

respondents no longer consider foreign language proficiency merely desirable but rather essential for the full and high-quality execution of their job responsibilities.

To enhance the legal, human resources, and institutional capacity of LSGAs, reduce dependence on external assistance, and improve coordination with central authorities in the context of local recovery and economic development in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, a systematic approach is required to ensure that LSGAs are staffed with qualified personnel in accordance with their specific needs.

A thorough analysis of the study findings enables the formulation of several key recommendations, the practical implementation of which will not only enhance community staffing but also address the fundamental socio-economic needs of the population.

One of the key areas for improvement is the development of the legal capacity of LSGAs, which may include:

1. Establishing legal advisory centers to support LSGAs would significantly enhance various aspects of communication between central and local authorities in the context of decentralization, particularly by providing advisory services to clearly define the responsibilities of each of the parties, consultations on decentralization legislation, prompt resolution of legal conflicts through both face-to-face meetings and online advisory platforms, expanded access for hard-to-reach areas to seek assistance remotely, and improved communication.
2. Supporting local advocacy groups to represent community interests before central government authorities (CGAs), including the creation of joint working groups to improve communication.
3. Encouraging the integration of local communities into strategic regional development planning, ensuring their participation in the formulation of state programs..
4. Conducting regular research to identify problem areas that require attention in the relations between local authorities and CGAs.

The development of the institutional capacity of LSGAs can be achieved through the following measures:

1. Organizing specialized courses for LSGA officials to enhance their knowledge in key areas, including: management in conditions of legal uncertainty, protection of community rights in conflict, conflict management between local and central authorities, updates on decentralization, and local self-government legislation.
2. Implementing educational training programs on project management, equipping specialists with high-quality knowledge on grant application preparation, donor identification and engagement, and cooperation with foreign donors.
3. Introducing in-depth professional development courses on cybersecurity, information hygiene, digital skills improvement, and English language training for employees involved in grant management and international cooperation..
4. Conducting training programs on modern recruitment strategies, providing up-to-date tools for staff search and selection..

5. Organizing internships for specialists in communities that have successfully adapted to the current challenges, establishing experience exchange programs between communities, and facilitating participation in international events and foreign business trips with a practical sector-specific focus to study best practices.

Strengthening human resource capacity can be achieved through the following measures:

1. Establishing partnerships with universities and vocational education and training (VET) institutions to train young and qualified professionals essential for community recovery, including: lawyers, project management specialists, state registrars, and economic development specialists.



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2. Collaborating with VET institutions to train skilled specialists in construction, logistics, and infrastructure maintenance, ensuring the timely achievement of production targets and enhancing the investment attractiveness of communities.
3. Partnering with public and private training centers to facilitate the regular updating of professional knowledge for LSGA employees.

On this basis, it is advisable to emphasize the need for comprehensive support to educational institutions to ensure their capacity to provide staffing services aligned with regional needs, including:

1. Allocating financial resources for the development of vocational training programs and the creation of new programs tailored to the specific needs of each region..

2. Providing material and technical support to educational institutions to enhance their training capacity.
3. Facilitating the development of training and retraining programs for LSGA officials from de-occupied territories, ensuring their successful reintegration into communities..
4. Enabling the participation of educational institution representatives in international events, conferences, and short-term internships to adopt best practices and improve educational processes at the local level.
5. Conducting regular monitoring of the effectiveness of the training system in educational institutions, including quality assessments of educational services.



Image by Freepik

The implementation of these recommendations will establish an effective staffing system for LSGAs, support the recovery of affected communities, enhance their investment attractiveness, and ultimately increase overall satisfaction with community services while improving the quality of life for residents.

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APPENDIX A

DEAR PARTNERS,

The Government of Ukraine and international organizations are investing significant resources in the ongoing recovery efforts across many communities in Ukraine. It is essential to ensure the involvement of experienced and competent personnel in the implementation of community recovery and development projects at the local level.

To better understand the key challenges and opportunities in respect of local government staffing in Ukraine, we invite you to participate in this survey.

All personal data collected during the survey will be used exclusively in a generalized form.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Do you consent to the processing of your personal data?

- a) Yes
- b) No (If “No”, the respondent exits the survey)

MAIN PART:

2. How would you assess the staffing level of your unit (department, division, sector) in 2023–2024?

Where “Low” — constant staff shortages, frequent vacancies; “Medium” — occasional vacancies but generally sufficient specialists; “High” — fully staffed, no staffing issues.

- a) High
- b) Medium
- c) Low
- d) Hard to answer

3. As the manager of a structural unit, how would you assess the importance of enhancing your employees’ knowledge and skills in the following areas?

	Very relevant	Somewhat relevant	Not relevant	Hard to answer
Digital skills, computer literacy, and cybersecurity				
Working with datasets, data analysis, and visualization				
Sector-specific legislative support				
Legislative framework for LSGAs				
Foreign language proficiency				
Financial principles of public administration, budgeting, and tax policy				
Project management, grant applications, and working with donors				
Procurement procedures and online tenders				
Engagement with private entrepreneurs and socially responsible businesses				
Collaboration with vocational education and training institutions				

4. Based on your own experience, how would you assess the influence of the following factors on a person's decision to work in local self-government authorities?

	Very influential	Somewhat influential	Not influential	Hard to answer
Stability and career predictability, with no personal risks				
Structured working hours, guaranteed holidays, and social benefits				
Clearly regulated work processes and a defined hierarchy				
Prestige and the ability to influence community processes				
Remuneration, financial incentives, and bonuses				
Relative ease of employment and low competition				
Career prospects and the ability to apply acquired skills for future growth				

5. To what extent are the following factors relevant to staffing in institutions and organizations of all forms of ownership in your community? (Where "0" = Not relevant at all and "5" = Very relevant)

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of residents with the necessary qualifications						
Young people leaving the community to study elsewhere						
Residents relocating to other regions						
Mobilization of residents into the Armed Forces						
Lack of educational institutions in relevant fields						
High labor market competition and shortage of vacancies						
Acute security situation and impact of military operations						
Low, uncompetitive wages						

6. In your opinion, how necessary is a master's degree in Public Management and Administration (specialty 281) for a successful career in public authorities in Ukraine?

- a) Definitely needed
- b) Somewhat needed
- c) Somewhat not needed
- d) Definitely not needed
- e) Hard to answer

7. Which of the following statements best reflects the need for specialists with vocational education for the socio-economic development of your community?

- a) There is no critical need, and all relevant vacancies are quickly filled
- b) There is a shortage, but it does not significantly affect production tasks
- c) There is a shortage, requiring some tasks to be postponed
- d) In certain industries, the shortage of specialists is severe, indicating a personnel crisis
- e) Hard to answer

8. To what extent is each of the following life experiences important for a representative of local community leadership?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Hard to answer
Work experience in executive authorities				
Experience in business, running a private enterprise				
Work experience in an enterprise, knowledge of production processes				
Work experience in non-governmental organizations				
Work experience in self-organizing bodies of the population				
Experience of foreign internships in public authorities				

9. Does your unit employ representatives from the following categories?

Category	Yes, it does	No, it does not	Hard to answer
Internally displaced person			
Parents with many children			
Persons with disabilities			
Combatants, veterans			
Persons aged 60+			
Family members of fallen soldiers			

10. Which of the following statements best reflects your attitude towards the employment of retirement-age individuals in LSGAs?

- a) They can work in any position as long as they are able
- b) They may be employed only if they possess unique skills or specialized knowledge
- c) They may be employed as advisors/consultants, but not as full-time workers
- d) They must retire immediately upon reaching the statutory retirement age
- e) Hard to answer

11. In your opinion, as an experienced manager, how often should public authority employees (excluding newly appointed ones) undergo professional development?

- a) Once every two years
- b) At least once every three years
- c) Once every five years
- d) The frequency should be determined by the official, based on their career ambitions
- e) The frequency should be determined by the immediate supervisor, based on the needs of the unit
- f) Hard to answer

12. How would you assess the quality of educational programs for local self-government officials offered by private higher education institutions and/or private educational platforms?

- a) High
- b) Acceptable
- c) Unsatisfactory
- d) Not ready to assess due to a lack of familiarity with such programs/platforms
- e) Hard to say

13. As the manager of a structural unit, how satisfied are you personally with the staffing levels of your LSGA during the period 2022–2024?

- a) Completely satisfied
- b) Somewhat satisfied
- c) Somewhat dissatisfied
- d) Completely dissatisfied
- e) Hard to answer

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:

Your current position and place of work: _____

Your age: _____

Which community do you represent? _____

Thank you for your time!



APPENDIX B

DEAR PARTNERS,

The Government of Ukraine and international organizations are investing significant resources in the ongoing recovery efforts across many communities in Ukraine. It is essential to ensure the involvement of experienced and competent personnel in the implementation of community recovery and development projects at the local level.

To better understand the key challenges and opportunities in respect of local government staffing in Ukraine, we invite you to participate in this survey.

All personal data collected during the survey will be used exclusively in a generalized form.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Do you consent to the processing of your personal data?

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MAIN PART:

2. How would you assess the staffing level of your unit (department, division) in 2023–2024?

Where “Low” — constant staff shortages, frequent vacancies; “Medium” — occasional vacancies but generally sufficient specialists; “High” — fully staffed, no staffing issues.

- a) High
- b) Medium
- c) Low
- d) Hard to answer

3. How would you assess the importance of enhancing your knowledge and skills in the following areas?

	Very relevant	Somewhat relevant	Not relevant	Hard to answer
Computer literacy, cybersecurity				
Data analysis and visualization				
Legislative framework				
Foreign language proficiency				
Budget and tax policy				
Project activities, participation in grants				
Procurement procedures and online tenders				
Cooperation with private business				

4. To what extent are the following factors relevant to staffing in institutions and organizations of all forms of ownership in your community? (Where “0” = Not relevant at all and “4” = Very relevant)

	0	1	2	3	4
Lack of residents with the necessary qualifications					
Young people leaving the community to study elsewhere					
Residents relocating to other regions					
Mobilization of residents into the Armed Forces					
Lack of educational institutions in relevant fields					
High labor market competition and shortage of vacancies					
Acute security situation and impact of military operations					
Low, uncompetitive wages					

5. Has the gender composition of your LSGA, institution, or organization changed between 2022 and 2024?

- a) Yes, there are significantly fewer men on the staff
- b) Yes, there are somewhat fewer men on the staff
- c) No, the gender balance has remained unchanged
- d) Hard to answer

6. Which of the following statements best reflects the need for specialists with vocational education for the socio-economic development of your community?

- a) There is no critical need, and all relevant vacancies are quickly filled
- b) There is a shortage, but it does not significantly affect production tasks
- c) There is a shortage, requiring some tasks to be postponed
- d) In certain industries, the shortage of specialists is severe, indicating a personnel crisis
- e) Hard to answer

7. Does your unit employ representatives from the following categories?

No.	Category	Yes, it does	No, it does not	Hard to answer
1	Internally displaced person			
2	Parents with many children			
3	Persons with disabilities			
4	Combatants, veterans			
5	Persons aged 60+			
6	Family members of fallen soldiers			

8. Which of the following statements best describes the situation regarding young staff (under 35) in your institution?

- a) There are sufficient young employees
- b) There are young employees, but more are needed
- c) There is a critical shortage of young employees
- d) There are no young employees
- e) This issue is not relevant to our institution

9. Does your professional development, retraining, or further education impact your immediate career growth?

- a) Yes, definitely
- b) Yes, but not as noticeably as I would like
- c) No, but it will likely benefit me in the future
- d) No, and it is unlikely to

- e) I have never participated in professional development training
- f) Hard to answer

10. How would you assess your level of awareness regarding educational programs for local self-government officials and municipal institution employees offered by private higher education institutions and/or private educational platforms?

- a) High
- b) Acceptable
- c) Unsatisfactory
- d) Hard to say

11. To what extent are you personally satisfied, as an official, with the staffing levels of your local self-government authority or institution during the period 2022–2024?

- a) Completely satisfied
- b) Somewhat satisfied
- c) Somewhat dissatisfied
- d) Completely dissatisfied
- e) Hard to answer

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:

Your current position and place of work: _____

Your age: _____

Which community do you represent? _____

Thank you for your time!

For notes

For notes



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