



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Ukraine: Military Service

Version 9.0

September 2025

Executive summary

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. On the same day, martial law was declared by President Zelensky, initially for 30 days. It has since been extended several times, most recently for 90 days from 7 August to 5 November 2025.

In general, people who evade or desert from military service do not fall within one of the 5 Refugee Convention grounds. A person could establish a convention reason on one of the following grounds: (a) political opinion or (b) religion if they are a conscientious objector.

Men aged 25 to 60 who are fit for military service are generally subject to mobilisation. Certain circumstances may allow men to defer or be exempted from military service.

Compulsory national service is a prerogative of sovereign states. A requirement to do compulsory military service – or punishment for failing to complete this duty – does not, in itself, give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution.

In general, military service in Ukraine during martial law does not involve acts which are contrary to the basic rules of human conduct. Conditions of military service are not so harsh as to amount to persecution and the punishment for draft evasion or desertion are not disproportionately harsh or severe.

The Country Guidance cases of [VB & Another \(draft evaders and prison conditions: Ukraine\) \(CG\) \[2017\] UKUT 79 \(IAC\) \(6 March 2017\)](#) and [PK and OS \(basic rules of human conduct\) Ukraine CG \[2020\] UKUT 314 \(IAC\)](#) continue to apply and, in general, punishments for draft evasion or desertion, as well as imprisonment for either crime, remain unlikely.

Alternative service for conscientious objectors is not recognised during martial law and mobilisation.

Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection from the state, and they are unlikely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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Assessment

Section updated: 11 September 2025

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of **whether, in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state of Ukraine:
 - (a) because of the general treatment and/or conditions likely to be faced by the person during compulsory military service duties; and/or
 - (b) because they are required to perform military service during emergency mobilisation, despite their stance as a conscientious objector; and/or
 - (c) because of the penalties likely to be faced by the person's refusal to undertake, or their desertion from, military service duties; and/or
 - (d) on account of the prison conditions if a draft evader convicted in absentia is held in detention on return to Ukraine
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- a claim, if refused, is likely or not to be certified as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when one has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 In general, people who evade or desert from military service do not fall within one of the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, including particular social group (PSG). This is because they:
 - do not share an innate characteristic, or a common background that cannot be changed, or share a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it – and
 - do not have a distinct identity which is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.
- 2.1.2 A person could establish a convention reason based on their: (a) political opinion or (b) religion if they are a conscientious objector.
- 2.1.3 Some people may claim that refusing to do military service, including as a conscientious objector, will be perceived by the state as an act of political opposition. The [Asylum Instruction on Military Service and Conscientious Objection](#) and paragraph 22 of the House of Lords judgement in the case of [Sepet & Another v. SSHD \[2003\] UKHL 15](#) explain that it is necessary to

carefully examine the reason for the persecution in the mind of the persecutor rather than the reason which the victim believes.

- 2.1.4 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.1.5 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3. Risk

3.1 Mobilisation and martial law eligibility

- 3.1.1 On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. On the same day, martial law was declared by President Zelensky, initially for 30 days. It has since been extended several times, most recently for 90 days from 7 August to 5 November 2025. Males aged 23 to 60 are prohibited from leaving Ukraine as long as martial law is in place. In general, women and children are legally allowed to leave Ukraine (see [Martial law](#)).
- 3.1.2 On 24 February 2022, President Zelensky also signed a decree on mobilisation in all regions of Ukraine. Men aged 25 to 60 who are fit for military service, have not deferred and are not exempt are generally subject to compulsory mobilisation. Men aged 18 to 25, unless they are reserve officers or have completed conscript service, are not automatically mobilised but may volunteer by signing a contract for military service (see [Martial law](#) and Military service and mobilisation during martial law – [Age](#)).
- 3.1.3 The laws on mobilisation set out categories of citizens who are exempt from military mobilisation or who can defer military service. These include some prisoners, people with certain medical conditions, occupations and particular family circumstances (see [Exemptions](#)). Men may defer service for up to 90 days (renewable within martial law) if officially exempted due to critical work, disabilities, caregiving duties, security roles, are MPs, or released prisoners of war (POWs). Students under 25 on a first full-time degree and some educators also qualify for deferral but vocational trainees, men aged over 25 on a second degree, or those who began studies abroad after February 2022 do not (see [Deferment](#)).

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3.2 General approach to claims based on military service

- 3.2.1 Compulsory national service is a prerogative of sovereign states. A requirement to do compulsory military service – or punishment for failing to complete this duty – does not, in itself, give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution. It will only do so where, on account of a Convention reason:
 - (a) military service would involve acts, with which the person may be associated, which are contrary to the basic rules of human conduct, or
 - (b) the conditions of military service would be so harsh as to amount to persecution, or
 - (c) the punishment for draft evasion or desertion is disproportionately harsh or severe.

3.3 Risk based on conditions of military service during martial law

- 3.3.1 In general, (a) (outlined at [3.2.1](#)) does not apply in respect of Ukrainian nationals because available country information does not support that mobilised military recruits are forced to commit acts which are contrary to the basic rules of human conduct.
- 3.3.1 Allegations of mistreatment by Ukrainian forces focus primarily on Russian POWs, particularly during capture and transfer before arrival at official detention facilities. Reports include torture, sexual violence, beatings, and harsh ‘admission procedures’ in some transit sites, with a small number of deaths documented. Investigations have been launched, and authorities, including POW camp staff and the Ministry of Justice, have sought to improve treatment. At official camps like Zakhid-1, POWs generally reported being treated respectfully. In June 2025, it was reported that the first Russian soldier was on trial in Ukraine for the execution of a POW. Throughout the proceedings, the defendants’ rights were reportedly upheld, demonstrating the Ukrainian armed forces’ commitment to lawful and accountable conduct (see [Conduct of Ukrainian military](#)).
- 3.3.2 Human Rights Watch also noted isolated incidents of likely indiscriminate attacks or war crimes committed by members of the Ukrainian army. However, evidence of misconduct or acts which are contrary to the basic rules of human conduct committed by Ukrainian forces is scarce and does not support that this behaviour is sanctioned, systemic or widespread (see [Conduct of Ukrainian military](#)).
- 3.3.3 In general, (b) (outlined at [3.2.1](#)) does not apply in respect of Ukrainian nationals because, whilst conditions are challenging, available country information does not support that they are so harsh as to amount to serious harm or persecution.
- 3.3.4 Training in the Ukrainian armed forces is mandatory, lasts around 45–60 days and includes weapons handling, field exercises, patrol tactics, first aid, education on the Law of Armed Conflict and discipline routines. Training is structured and has both national and international involvement and support (see [Training](#)). Life for mobilised Ukrainian soldiers during martial law is reportedly physically demanding and often prolonged, with limited demobilisation or rotation leading to extended deployments and mental strain (see [Treatment, conditions and avenues of redress](#)).
- 3.3.5 Pay and benefits are structured, with standard salaries, bonuses, housing, travel, medical care, and, for volunteers between the ages of 18 and 24, contracts worth around the equivalent of £17,700 and additional leave entitlements. Annual leave totals up to 30 days with at least 15 guaranteed, plus 14 days for combatants and educational leave for students, though leave is reportedly often limited in practice. Soldiers face stricter discipline than in peacetime, with harsher punishments for disobedience. A military ombudsman has been put in place to handle complaints confidentially, including issues with transfers, medical treatment, or abuses by commanders, providing formal avenues of redress. This mechanism is proving effective in practice, offering soldiers a trusted channel for concerns and demonstrating a clear commitment to improving conditions (see [Treatment, conditions and avenues of redress](#) and [Conditions of military](#)).

[service](#)).

- 3.3.6 Therefore, a person is unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.3.7 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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3.4 Risk based on desertion or evasion during martial law

- 3.4.1 In general, (c) (outlined at [3.2.1](#)) does not apply in respect of Ukrainian nationals who have or may evade or desert military service during martial law. Available country information does not support that punishments or penalties for draft evasion or desertion are disproportionately harsh or severe.
- 3.4.2 Since 2022, roughly 20,000 men successfully fled Ukraine to avoid conscription and over 21,000 were caught. Hundreds of criminal networks assisted evasion, and in 2023 over 1,200 people were convicted, with around 700 cases still ongoing (see Evasion: [Statistics](#)). Punishments for evading military service in Ukraine range from fines and corrective labour to imprisonment of up to 10 years, depending on the offence and circumstances. Additional measures can include loss of driving licences, frozen bank accounts and property seizure (see Evasion: [Punishment](#)). In practice, enforcement is inconsistent, with some who flee abroad often facing no consequences on return but others receiving criminal charges. Capacity constraints and prioritisation of other cases mean many alleged evasion cases are not actively pursued (see Evasion: [Punishment in practice](#)).
- 3.4.3 Ukraine has recorded over 250,000 cases of soldiers going absent without leave (AWOL) or deserting, including both short-term AWOL and longer-term desertions. Figures suggest around 50,000 cases were formally recorded or investigated between 2022 and 2024, though many soldiers voluntarily returned. Although Ukrainian law allows for fines and imprisonment of up to 12 years for desertion, in practice, authorities have issued fines, suspended sentences or allowed deserters to return without penalty, primarily to maintain troop numbers. By early 2025, around 21,000 deserters had returned without penalty. Between 2022 and mid-2025, over 250,000 criminal cases were opened for AWOL or desertion, but only about 15,500 – around 6% - resulted in formal charges, indicating that enforcement of the law is limited (see Desertion: [Statistics](#)).
- 3.4.4 The Country Guidance case of [VB & Another \(draft evaders and prison conditions: Ukraine\) \(CG\) \[2017\] UKUT 79 \(IAC\) \(6 March 2017\)](#), heard on 31 October and 1 November 2016 and promulgated on 6 March 2017, held that very few draft evaders had been subject to any criminal proceedings, let alone convicted of any criminal offence or sent to prison. It further noted the presumption in favour of bail for those awaiting trial and the removal of criminal penalties for minor matters. It held that draft evaders convicted in absentia would probably be entitled to a retrial and that there was no evidence that a retrial would result in a prison sentence.
- 3.4.5 [VB & Another](#) also noted that a draft evader convicted in absentia and sentenced to a term of imprisonment was at risk of being held in detention

on arrival, pending a decision on any retrial. It further noted, 'There is a real risk that the conditions of detention and imprisonment in Ukraine would subject a person returned to be detained or imprisoned to a breach of Article 3 ECHR' (paragraph 90).

- 3.4.6 The more recent Country Guidance case of [PK and OS \(basic rules of human conduct\) Ukraine CG \[2020\] UKUT 314 \(IAC\)](#), heard on 3 and 4 June 2020 and promulgated on 19 November 2020, held that it was not reasonably likely that a draft evader avoiding conscription or mobilisation in Ukraine would face criminal or administrative proceedings for that act, even though prison sentences were provided for in law, and that it was 'highly unlikely' that a draft evader would be detained at the border pending trial.
- 3.4.7 Whilst the situation in Ukraine has progressed from when [VB & Another](#) and [PK and OS](#) were promulgated; the country information published since supports that disproportionate punishments for draft evasion or desertion, as well as any term of imprisonment for either crime remain unlikely. Each case must be determined on the individual facts.

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3.5 Conscientious objection (CO)

- 3.5.1 The law provides for alternative service for those persons for whom military duty contradicts their religious convictions during peacetime. However, alternative service for conscientious objectors is not recognised at times of emergency mobilisation (see [Conscientious objection](#)).
- 3.5.2 Refusal to undertake military service on the grounds of conscience is prosecuted in the same way as 'regular' draft evasion. There are no official statistics on the number of conscientious objectors in Ukraine, but available information indicates that they are primarily from minority Christian denominations with pacifist beliefs, particularly Jehovah's Witnesses (JW), of whom there are approximately 100,000 in the country. While Jehovah's Witnesses are the most affected group, only a small minority have faced criminal penalties. By mid-2025, over 80 CO cases had reportedly reached trial, and around 300 new cases had been opened since the middle of the year, including 171 involving members of the JW denomination. As of August 2025, 5 Jehovah's Witnesses were serving prison sentences and one was under house arrest pending appeal (see [Law and numbers](#) and [Punishments](#)).
- 3.5.3 In May 2025, the Supreme Court upheld previous draft evasion convictions of conscientious objectors and ruled that citizens cannot refuse military service on religious grounds during wartime, emphasising that the duty to defend Ukraine applies to all citizens (see [Punishments](#)).
- 3.5.4 Whilst not authoritative country guidance, the House of Lords judgement in the reported case of [Sepet & Another](#) noted that punishment for refusing to perform military service because of a conscientious objection will not in itself give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution. The Court held that there is no provision in international law which requires States to recognise the right to conscientious objection or to provide some form of alternative service. Therefore, it is legitimate for States to treat conscientious objectors in the same way as any other draft evader. As a result, punishment for refusing to perform military service due to genuine reasons of conscience does not

amount to persecution.

- 3.5.5 The Asylum Policy Instruction on [Military Service and Conscientious Objection](#) noted that punishment for draft evasion and desertion can, in particular circumstances, amount to persecution on political or religious grounds. However, if the state was simply punishing a conscientious objector for their failure to comply with its laws rather than being motivated by a Convention reason, it would not amount to persecution.
- 3.5.6 There is no available information to suggest that the Ukrainian government views a refusal to undertake military service as an act of political disobedience or that, in general they are treated differently to draft evaders or deserters who do not hold deeply held convictions preventing them from participating.
- 3.5.7 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instructions on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#), the [Military Service and Conscientious Objection](#), and [Humanitarian Protection](#).

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4. Protection

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection from the state.
- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 For further guidance on internal relocation and factors to consider, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment which, as stated in the [About the assessment](#), is the guide to the current objective conditions.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included in this note relates to the situation in Ukraine following Russia's invasion in 2022. For information on military service prior to the war in Ukraine, see previous iteration [Country Policy and Information Note Ukraine: Military Service \(Version 9.0\)](#) published June 2022.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **1 September 2025**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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7. Legal context

7.1 Law on conscription and military service

- 7.1.1 For information on the laws regarding conscription and military service **before** the war in Ukraine, see previous iteration [Country Policy and Information Note Ukraine: Military Service \(Version 9.0\)](#) published June 2022.

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7.2 Martial law

- 7.2.1 The [Law on the legal regime of martial law](#)¹, dated 2015 and subsequently amended defined martial law in Article 1 as,
- ‘...a special legal regime introduced in Ukraine or in certain areas of Ukraine in the event of armed aggression or threat of attack, danger to the state independence of Ukraine, its territorial integrity and provides for the granting of the relevant state authorities, military command, military administrations and local self-government bodies the powers necessary to avert the threat, repel armed aggression and ensure national security, elimination of the threat to the state independence of Ukraine, its territorial integrity, as well as temporary, due to the threat, restriction of constitutional rights and freedoms of man and citizen and the rights and legitimate interests of legal entities, indicating the duration of these restrictions’².
- 7.2.2 On 24 February 2022, at the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine,

¹ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, [Law on the legal regime of martial law](#), 12 May 2015

² Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, [Constitution of Ukraine](#), 28 May 1996

martial law was declared by President Zelensky, restricting some constitutional rights and freedoms, in particular Articles 30 to 34, 38, 39, 41 to 44 and 53³ of the [Constitution of Ukraine](#)⁴. This was initially for 30 days⁵, but has since been extended several times, along with the extension of general mobilisation^{6 7 8 9 10}.

- 7.2.3 In July 2025, [RBC-Ukraine](#) reported that the Ukrainian parliament voted for the 16th time to extend martial law, from 7 August to 5 November 2025¹¹.
- 7.2.4 On 8 September 2023, the Kyiv Post, an English-language newspaper in Ukraine¹² reported: 'Starting Oct. 1, women with a medical or pharmaceutical background will have to register for military service, however – unlike men between the ages of 18 and 60 – they won't be restricted from leaving Ukraine unless they're mobilized.'¹³
- 7.2.5 In June 2023, the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) published a comprehensive report on exit rules during martial law (DIS report 2023). It noted:
- 'The procedure for crossing the state border by citizens of Ukraine is regulated by Resolution 57, "On the Approval of the Rules for Crossing the State Border by Citizens of Ukraine." The resolution dates from 1994 and since 24 February 2022, it has been amended more than 15 times.
- '... Resolution no. 57, Article 2, subparagraphs 1 – 13 specify the rules regarding border crossing and leaving the country for a Ukrainian citizen during martial law. ...'¹⁴
- 7.2.6 The DIS report 2023 outlined categories of citizens permitted to cross the border, which included:
- Persons with disabilities and their caregivers
 - Parents and guardians of children with disabilities
 - People accompanying children with serious medical conditions
 - People accompanying orphans or children deprived of parental care
 - Family members or staff accompanying persons in need of constant care
 - Persons not subject to mobilisation under the law
 - Wounded members of the Defence and Security Forces and one accompanying family member
 - Designated drivers of humanitarian/medical/military cargo

³ President of Ukraine, [President signed a decree on the imposition of martial...](#), 24 February 2022

⁴ Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, [The Constitution of Ukraine](#), 28 June 1996, amended 1 January 2020.

⁵ President of Ukraine, [President signed a decree on the imposition of martial...](#), 24 February 2022

⁶ Ukrinform, [Ukraine's parliament extends martial law, general mobilization...](#), 16 November 2022

⁷ Deutsche Welle, [Ukraine updates: Germany approves over 100 tanks to Kyiv](#), 7 February 2023

⁸ Pravda, [Zelenskyy signs law extending martial law and mobilisation](#), 9 May 2024

⁹ Pravda, [Zelenskyy once again extends martial law and mobilisation](#), 7 August 2024

¹⁰ NSDC, [Ukraine extends martial law and mobilisation](#), 29 October 2024

¹¹ RBC-Ukraine, [Ukraine prolongs martial law, mobilization amid ongoing war](#), 15 July 2025

¹² Kyiv Post, [About Us](#), 2025.

¹³ Kyiv Post, [Some Women in Ukraine Must Register...Could Still Go Abroad](#), 8 September 2023

¹⁴ DIS, [Ukraine: Exit rules, exemptions from military service ...](#), (section 1), June 2023

- Licensed international transport drivers (cargo/passenger)
- Railway workers
- Athletes, coaches, referees, and sports support staff
- Maritime crew and trainees
- Aviation personnel and aviation inspectors¹⁵.

See section 1.2.1 of the [DIS report 2023](#) for the details and conditions attached to the above categories of citizens permitted to cross the border.

7.2.7 The below table compiled by CPIT using information from the DIS 2023 report lists the punishments for illegal border crossings during martial law and related offences¹⁶:

Offence	Law	Penalty
Crossing the border if it endangers state interests, without proper documents, or using false documents	Criminal Code Article 332.2	Up to 3 years' imprisonment if committed by an individual; if committed by an organised group, fine (2,000 UAH tax-free minimum incomes), restriction of liberty or imprisonment up to 3 years.
Illegal border crossing (anywhere, including border checkpoints)	Admin. Code Article 202-1	Fine, up to 1 month correctional labour, or up to 15 days' arrest
Using forged or invalid documents to cross the border	Criminal Code Article 358.4	Fine, up to 6 months' arrest, or up to 2 years' imprisonment if knowingly forged
Crossing the border without proper documents or with false information	Admin. Code Article 204-1	Fine, up to 1 month correctional labour, or up to 15 days' arrest
Attempting to bribe a border official	Criminal Code Article 369.2	Fine or 2–4 years' restriction of liberty, or 4–8 years' imprisonment, with or without confiscation of property if committed by an organised group
Repeated bribery of an official	Criminal Code Article 369.2	3–6 years' imprisonment, fine, and possible confiscation of property
Organising illegal movement of people (human smuggling – organisers only)	Criminal Code Article 332.1	3–5 years' imprisonment or 7-9 years' imprisonment if done by an organised group

¹⁵ DIS, [Ukraine: Exit rules, exemptions from military service ...](#), (section 1), June 2023

¹⁶ DIS, [Ukraine: Exit rules, exemptions from military service ...](#), (section 4), June 2023

7.2.8 On 26 August 2025, the Kyiv Independent, a Ukrainian independent English-language media organisation¹⁷ reported:

‘Ukraine’s Cabinet of Ministers has revised travel rules and allowed men aged 18 to 22 to cross the border, Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said on Telegram on Aug. 26.

‘Ukrainian men aged 18 to 60 have been prohibited from leaving the country since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022, with some exceptions. Men aged 25 to 60 can be conscripted into the armed forces.

‘On Aug. 12, Zelensky asked the Cabinet to relax border crossing rules for Ukrainian men aged 18 to 22.

‘... On Aug. 22, a bill allowing them to cross the border was submitted to the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine’s parliament.’¹⁸

7.2.9 See also [Evasion: Punishment](#) and [Desertion: Punishment](#).

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8. Armed forces

8.1 Branches

8.1.1 Last updated on 26 August 2025, the CIA World Factbook described Ukraine’s military forces:

‘Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU; Zbroyni Syly Ukrayiny or ZSU): Ground Forces, Naval Forces, Air Forces, Air Assault Forces, Marine Corps, Special Operations Forces, Unmanned Systems Forces, Territorial Defense Forces (Reserves)

‘Ministry of Internal Affairs: National Guard of Ukraine, State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (includes Maritime Border Guard or Sea Guard), National Police of Ukraine (2025)

‘note 1: combat units of the National Guard, National Police, and Border Guards come under the control of the Armed Forces in wartime.

‘note 2: the Territorial Defense Forces (TDF) were formally established in July 2021; the TDF evolved from former Territorial Defense Battalions and other volunteer militia and paramilitary units that were organized in 2014-2015 to fight Russian-backed separatists in the Donbas; in January 2022, the TDF was activated as a separate military branch

‘note 3: collectively, the AFU and the forces under the Ministry of Interior are known as the Defense Forces of Ukraine (DFU)’¹⁹

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8.2 Size

8.2.1 In May 2024, the Atlantic Council, an American think tank on international affairs²⁰, noted:

‘Ukrainian military officials initially stated that the goal of the new law [on mobilisation] was to mobilize an additional 500,000 people. This figure has

¹⁷ Kyiv Independent, [About](#), 2025

¹⁸ The Kyiv Independent, [... government allows men aged 18-22 to go abroad](#), 26 August 2025

¹⁹ CIA, [Ukraine - The World Factbook](#) (Military and Security), updated 26 August 2025

²⁰ Atlantic Council, [About the Atlantic Council](#), 2025

since been reduced to an unspecified but significantly lower number. Prior to the full-scale invasion, around 250,000 people served in the Ukrainian military, but thanks in large part to a massive surge in volunteers following Russia's invasion, this force swelled to around 880,000 troops. Together with the National Guard and other formations, there are now believed to be approximately one million Ukrainians in uniform.'²¹

- 8.2.2 In March 2025 the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), a Polish, publicly funded, independent research organisation²², published commentary on the size and organisation of Ukrainian armed forces. It stated:

'By the summer of 2022, the armed forces had reached a strength of one million soldiers. By the end of that year, 47 brigades had been either created or expanded from cadre status, including 30 Territorial Defence brigades – 25 expanded and five newly established. This almost doubled the number of brigades compared with the period before Russia's full-scale invasion. A similar pace was maintained in 2023, when a further 26 brigades were formed. However, the DFU's [Defence Forces of Ukraine] total strength increased by only 50,000 soldiers, suggesting that new tactical formations were created by drawing on manpower reserves left unused the previous year, or that many units were not fully staffed.

'... [D]espite continued expansion, the DFU's troop strength has not exceeded 1,050,000 – a level reached in 2023 and still officially maintained. However, the number of troops directly engaged on the battlefield is significantly lower: according to Ukrainian estimates, it does not exceed 300,000.'²³

- 8.2.3 Last updated on 26 August 2025, the CIA World Factbook noted that military and security service personnel strengths were 'estimated 850,000-1 million active Defense Forces (2025)'²⁴

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9. Military service and mobilisation during martial law

- 9.1.1 The [Law on mobilisation training and mobilisation](#)²⁵, dated 21 October 1993 and subsequently amended regulates the scope and conditions of mobilisation.

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9.2 Conscripts register

- 9.2.1 The 2017 law, revised on 9 July 2025, [On the Unified State Register of Conscripts, Persons Liable for Military Service and Reservists No. 1951-VIII](#) specified the information to be kept by the state in an electronic database of Ukrainian citizens liable for mobilisation²⁶.

- 9.2.2 The law states, 'The Unified State Register of Conscripts, Persons Liable for Military Service and Reservists ... is an information and communication system designed to collect, store, process and use data on conscripts,

²¹ Atlantic Council, [Ukraine's new mobilization law leaves demobilization issue ...](#), 2 May 2024

²² OSW, [About us -OSW Centre for Eastern Studies](#), no date

²³ OSW, [Army at a crossroads: the mobilisation and organisational...](#), 14 March 2025

²⁴ CIA, [Ukraine - The World Factbook](#) (Military and Security), updated 26 August 2025

²⁵ Verkhovna Rada, [No. 3543-XII, "On Mobilization Preparation and Mobilization."](#) 21 October 1993

²⁶ Verkhovna Rada, [On the Unified State Register of Conscripts ...](#), 2017, amended 28 June 2024.

persons liable for military service and reservists, created to ensure military registration of citizens of Ukraine.²⁷

- 9.2.3 See [Article 7 of the law](#) for a list of the personal information and service information stored in the register database²⁸.

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9.3 Age

- 9.3.1 Article 22, Chapter IV [Law of Ukraine On Military Duty and Military Service](#), set out the maximum age of military service in peacetime and wartime, noting:

‘... for military personnel serving during a special period, from among the following persons: privates, sergeants and petty officers, junior and senior officers - up to 60 years old;

‘senior officers - up to 65 years old.’²⁹

- 9.3.2 In March 2025, Ukraine’s Ministry of Defence explained who was eligible for mobilisation. It stated:

‘... As a general rule, mobilization applies to men liable for military service, aged 25 to 60, who are deemed fit for military service, do not qualify for a deferment, and are not exempt through reservation.

‘Citizens aged 18 to 25 may be subject to mobilization in specific cases, including:

- Reserve officers;
- Individuals who have completed conscript military service.

‘In other cases, individuals aged 18 to 25 may voluntarily join the military by signing a contract for military service.

‘Women who are listed in the call-up registry may be called up for military duty or engaged in defense-related work during wartime on a voluntary basis.’³⁰

- 9.3.3 In May 2025, the Norwegian Immigration Administration’s Country Information Unit, Landinfo, published a report titled ‘Ukraine: Mobilisation’ (Landinfo report 2025). Originally written in Norwegian and translated using free online tools, the report noted:

‘The rules also apply to Ukrainian men of military age (18–60) who are abroad. Male citizens abroad without grounds for exemption or deferment have the same obligation to serve during mobilization as those who are in Ukraine. Updated military registration is required to receive consular services, including passport issuance, and can be done at Ukrainian foreign missions/consulates or digitally in Rezerv+ [[mobile application for military registration system](#)]³¹. Consular services for Ukrainian men of military age without military registration are available only to them [sic] who applies for a temporary travel document for return to Ukraine (laissez-passer), for

²⁷ Verkhovna Rada, [On the Unified State Register...](#), 2017 (Art. 1), amended 28 June 2024

²⁸ Verkhovna Rada, [On the Unified State Register ...](#), 2017, amended 28 June 2024

²⁹ Verkhovna Rada, [No. 2232-XII “On Military Duty and Military Service.”](#) 25 March 1992

³⁰ MoD Ukraine, [Mobilization in Ukraine: who is subject to it and citizens' obligations](#), 22 March 2025

³¹ Promotion, [TRSCC Explains Military Registration Statuses in Ukraine’s “Reserv+”...](#) undated

consular services for children of a Ukrainian citizen if the other parent is not a Ukrainian citizen, or if the applicant is arrested or imprisoned ...

'In response to questions about the concrete consequences of the requirement to register personal data at foreign stations or in Rezerv+ for conscripted men abroad, and whether Ukrainian authorities are actually able to mobilize any of these individuals, an NGO in Kyiv (September 2024) stated that this is one of the major challenges for Ukrainian authorities. According to the source, the authorities have no way to reach them, even with the introduction of an electronic summons register in the future. Therefore, the rule was established not to provide consular services to them. However, the source pointed out that so far, restricting consular services to this group has had no effect on mobilization.'³²

- 9.3.4 [Law No. 4539-IX](#), an act introduced on 16 July 2025, amended the Law of Ukraine on Military Duty and Military Service meaning that age limits do not apply to 'voluntary contract service' during martial law, and individuals aged 60 and above may serve if medically fit and approved. Once martial law ends, the standard age limits resume³³.

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9.4 Call up procedures

- 9.4.1 Article 1, Chapter 1 of the [Law of Ukraine On Military Duty and Military Service](#) sets out the call up process. It states:

'Conscripts, persons liable for military service, reservists and military personnel are drawn up and issued a military registration document, which is a document that determines the belonging of its holder to the performance of military duty.

'... Citizens of Ukraine who are subject to military registration, are on the military register of conscripts or in the reserve of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, in the reserve of the Security Service of Ukraine, intelligence agencies of Ukraine or serve in the military reserve, are obliged to:

- clarify within 60 days from the date of entry into force of the decree of the President of Ukraine on the announcement of mobilization, ... their personal data through the center for the provision of administrative services or through the electronic cabinet of a conscript, conscript, reservist, or in the territorial center for recruitment and social support;
- to arrive at the call of the district (united district), city (district in the city, united city) territorial center for recruitment and social support ..., the Central Directorate or regional body of the Security Service of Ukraine, ... for registration ... ;
- undergo a medical examination ...;
- undergo training for military service, military service and perform military duty in the reserve;
- comply with the rules of military registration established by law.

'Reservists are obliged to arrive at the military unit in which they serve in the

³² Landinfo, [Theme note Ukraine Mobilisation](#), (page 11), 2 May 2025

³³ Verkhovna Rada, [No. 4539-IX, "On Amendments ... Maximum Age."](#) 16 July 2025

military reserve, at the call of the commander of this military unit.’³⁴

9.4.2 In March 2025 the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine also published [Mobilization in Ukraine: who is subject to it and citizens' obligations](#) in which it stated the legal requirements citizens must abide by:

- ...‘Report to Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Centers (TRSSCs) at the date, time, and location specified in the call-up notice for military registration, determination of their assignment during a special period, or referral for a medical examination;
- ‘Provide, in accordance with established procedures during mobilization, buildings, structures, vehicles, and other property in their ownership to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, with subsequent compensation by the state for their value;
- ‘Undergo an annual medical examination to determine fitness for military service;
- ‘Carry a military registration document in either paper or electronic form and present it upon request to an authorized representative of the TRSSCs, a police officer, or a representative of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine operating in the frontier zone, within the supervised border area, and at the state border checkpoints in Ukraine;
- ‘Notify the TRSSCs (or other bodies where they are listed in the call-up registry) or through the Reserve+ electronic account of a conscript of any changes to personal information within seven days;
- ‘Comply with other requirements of current legislation, such as adhering to the Rules of Military Registration for Conscripts, Reservists, and Persons Liable for Military Service ...’³⁵

9.4.3 In January 2025, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine stated:

‘From now on, 17-year-old male citizens will have the option to register in the military register of conscripts using one of two available methods: through the ‘Electronic Cabinet of a Conscript,’ using electronic identification, or by personally visiting the Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Center (enlistment office).

‘An important change is the elimination of the Commission responsible for the military registration of conscripts and the initial medical examination. Instead, medical examinations will be mandatory immediately before conscripts begin basic military service and before practical exercises in basic general military training (BGMT), which is scheduled to be introduced in higher education institutions in 2025.

‘The draft law also outlines valid reasons for the inability to register, including:

- illness of the conscript;
- natural calamity;
- residing in temporarily occupied territory or a combat zone;

³⁴ Verkhovna Rada, [Law of Ukraine. On military duty and military service](#), amended 10 May 2025

³⁵ MoD Ukraine, [Mobilization in Ukraine: who is subject to it and citizens' obligations](#), 22 March 2025

- other circumstances that prevent electronic identification or personal attendance at enlistment office ...

‘Other key changes include:

- The military rank of recruit will be assigned to enlisted personnel from the start of basic military service until the completion of their basic general military training (BGMT). After completing BGMG [sic], they will be assigned the military rank of soldier/sailor;
- Enlistment for military service under contract is open to enlisted personnel who are Ukrainian citizens, including those currently serving in basic military service, as well as individuals aged 18 and older who have not previously served in the military, but only if they have completed basic general military training;
- Providing military unit commanders with the additional authority to call up reservists and individuals liable for military service on the day of their voluntary arrival at the military units.’³⁶

9.4.4 Article 22 of the ‘Law of Ukraine on mobilization training and mobilization’ states:

‘1. Citizens are obliged ...:

‘to appear on call to the territorial center for recruitment and social support at the time and place specified in the summons ... for military registration of conscripts or reservists, determination of them [sic] appointment for a special period, referral for a medical examination;

‘provide buildings, structures, vehicles and other property owned by them to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, other military formations, civil defense forces in accordance with the established procedure during mobilization, with subsequent reimbursement by the state of their cost in the manner established by law;

‘undergo a medical examination to determine fitness for military service ...

‘Citizens who are registered with the military voluntarily register their electronic account as a conscript, conscript or reservist.

‘2. Citizens who are in the reserve and are not called up for military service or are not involved in the performance of mobilization duties in positions provided for by wartime states, during mobilization, may be involved in the performance of work of a defensive nature in accordance with the law.’³⁷

9.4.5 In May 2024, the Atlantic Council stated, ‘In line with the new regulations, men of military age will now be obliged to update their registration details within 60 days of the [mobilisation] law entering into force, either at regional offices or via an online portal. They will be required to carry their military registration documents and present them upon request or when applying for a passport.’³⁸

9.4.6 In May 2025, the Norwegian COI service, Landinfo 2025, translated using free online translation tools, reported:

³⁶ MoD Ukraine, [At the initiative of the Ministry of Defence](#), 9 January 2025

³⁷ Verkhovna Rada, [On mobilization training and mobilisation](#), 1993, amended 1 January 2025

³⁸ Atlantic Council, [Ukraine's new mobilization law leaves demobilization issue ...](#) 2 May 2024

‘Men who are drafted receive their summons by personal delivery. If the summons is sent by post, it is sent as a registered letter, which means that it is not placed in the mailbox, but is delivered in person ... In addition to home addresses, summons can also be delivered at the workplace or on the street...

‘The new mobilisation legislation from 2024 allows for summonses to be sent electronically via the conscript’s electronic portal. Once a summons has been sent through this system, it is considered delivered – even if the recipient has not seen it in the portal ... Despite the fact that the legal framework allows for electronic delivery, the technical and organisational details are still being developed and clarified. As of today, summonses are not sent electronically ...

‘After receiving a summons, one is required to appear at the TRC at the time specified in the summons.’³⁹

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9.5 Length of service

9.5.1 In May 2024, the Atlantic Council stated:

‘Ukraine’s new mobilization law ... fails to address the topic of demobilization for the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians who have been serving since the onset of the full-scale Russian invasion more than two years ago...

‘... Initial drafts envisaged the demobilization of military personnel after 36 months of service, and the rotation of those serving on the front lines for over six months. However, these clauses were taken out of the legislation at the last minute following appeals from Ukraine’s military leadership, who argued that they would weaken Ukraine by facilitating the withdrawal of the country’s most experienced military personnel without providing sufficient trained replacements. The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense is now working on a separate law to handle the demobilization issue.’⁴⁰

9.5.2 In August 2024, the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), an independent, UK-based defence and security research organisation⁴¹, stated, ‘The new Law ‘On Mobilisation Training and Mobilisation’ did not provide an answer to the question of when demobilisation should take place and how many years a mobilised person should serve ...’⁴²

9.5.3 In November 2024, the Kyiv Independent reported, ‘The parliament voted to remove provisions on demobilization, which previously foresaw soldiers having the right to leave the military after 36 months of service, from the bill so that they could be considered separately. The parliament obliged the Defense Ministry to develop a relevant draft law within eight months.’⁴³

9.5.4 In January 2025, Ukrainian News, a Kyiv-based news agency,⁴⁴ reported: ‘Oleksii Honcharenko, MP ... on his Youtube channel ... [stated that] “The

³⁹ Landinfo, [Theme note Ukraine Mobilisation](#), (page 12), 2 May 2025

⁴⁰ Atlantic Council, [Ukraine's new mobilization law leaves demobilization issue ...](#), 2 May 2024

⁴¹ RUSI, [Our Purpose](#), 2025

⁴² RUSI, [The Current State of Ukrainian Mobilisation and Ways to Boost Recruitment](#), 8 August 2024

⁴³ Kyiv Independent, [Parliament passes bills on military service, including draft ...](#), 20 November 2024

⁴⁴ Ukrainian News, [Agency services](#), no date

law (on demobilization) has been worked out, it is practically ready for its submission to the Verkhovna Rada [Parliament of Ukraine] through the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine,” he said.

‘According to Havryliuk, in order to submit the law to the Verkhovna Rada, the Ministry of Defense is working out a number of mechanisms in order to understand how to replace a large number of demobilized military personnel.’⁴⁵

9.5.5 In April 2025, Meduza, an independent news outlet based in Latvia⁴⁶, stated:

‘Ukraine’s Defense Ministry drafted legislation that would have introduced rules for discharging and rotating troops during martial law but reportedly withdrew the bill from parliament amid objections from the military’s General Staff. The legislation reportedly proposed allowing a soldier’s demobilization after three years of service — but only if the soldier had participated in combat for a total of 18 months.

‘According to journalists at Ukrainska Pravda, Ukraine’s military leadership worries that the policy would cause a “substantial reduction in the staffing of combat units.” The outlet’s sources in parliament said the proposed demobilization and rotation measures would affect 108,000 service members, including 14,000 officers.

‘On April 1, a member of the Ukrainian parliament’s defense committee said the military was developing a rotation mechanism under which, after 90 days of direct participation in combat, a soldier “would have the right to rest for a few months.”’⁴⁷

9.5.6 As of September 2025, Ukraine has not yet enacted legislation to regulate the demobilization of military personnel during martial law (see [Bibliography](#)).

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9.6 Reservists

9.6.1 The [Law of Ukraine. On Military Duty and Military Service](#) (Article 1, Chapter 1) refers to reservists as, ‘persons serving in the military reserve of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, other military formations and intended for their recruitment in peacetime and in a special period.’⁴⁸

9.6.2 Article 2 of the same source states:

‘8. Fulfillment of military duty in the reserve consists in compliance by persons liable for military service with the order and rules of military registration, passing training camps to preserve and improve knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for the performance of military service duties in a special period.

‘Citizens of Ukraine may serve in the military reserve of the Armed Forces of Ukraine or other military formations. The procedure for selection and admission to service in the military reserve, the terms, conditions and procedure for its passage, as well as the grounds and procedure for dismissal from service are determined by this Law, the relevant provisions

⁴⁵ Ukrainian News, [Demobilization law may be submitted in 3 months](#), 10 January 2025

⁴⁶ Meduza, [About Meduza](#), 2025

⁴⁷ Meduza, [Ukraine quashes legislation to limit draftees’ service terms, fearing mass ...](#), 7 April 2025

⁴⁸ Verkhovna Rada, [Law of Ukraine. On military duty and military service](#), amended 10 May 2025

on service by citizens of Ukraine in the military reserve, approved by the President of Ukraine, and other regulatory legal acts ...

‘10. Citizens of Ukraine who have concluded contracts for service in the military reserve and/or enrolled in the military operational reserve shall be called up for military service in the military reserve and/or enrolled in the military operational reserve in a special period in accordance with the procedure established by this Law for operational replenishment of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations ...’⁴⁹

9.6.3 On 23 February 2022, Interfax-Ukraine, ‘an independent Ukrainian news agency’⁵⁰, reported:

‘The conscription of reservists into the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine begins on Wednesday, February 23, 2022, the command of the Ground Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine reports.

“Reservists from 18 to 60 years old will be subject to the call. These will be both officers and private, sergeant officers. The call will begin from today. The maximum service life is one year,” the Facebook message says.

‘The command said that the reservists of the operational reserve of the first stage will serve in those military units and in the specialty in which they served before and signed a contract to serve in the operational reserve.

“According to the law of Ukraine, the drafted reservists will retain their jobs and average monthly wages,” the message says.

‘According to the order of the President of Ukraine, the reservists of the operational reserve of the first stage must independently report to their military units or territorial centers of recruitment and social support, by phone call or by receiving a summons.

‘If a reservist, for one reason or another, provided by law, cannot be called up, he must personally provide supporting documents...

‘The reservists of the first stage of the operational reserve are servicemen who are dismissed from fixed-term military service, military service by conscription during mobilization, for a special period, who, according to their professional and psychological characteristics and health status, are suitable for service in the military reserve and meet the established requirements for service in the military reserve, and received a certain military registration specialty ...’⁵¹

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9.7 Women

9.7.1 In May 2024, the Atlantic Council stated, ‘The new mobilization law does not extend to military-age females. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had earlier stated his opposition to obligatory military service for women. While they are not subject to conscription, many Ukrainian women do choose to enlist in the armed forces voluntarily, with approximately 60,000 currently serving in a variety of positions including front line roles.’⁵²

⁴⁹ Verkhovna Rada, [Law of Ukraine. On military duty and military service](#), amended 10 May 2025

⁵⁰ Interfax-Ukraine, [About the Agency – Interfax-Ukraine - news from Ukraine and the world](#), 2025

⁵¹ Interfax-Ukraine, [Conscription of reservists starts on Feb 23](#), 23 February 2022

⁵² Atlantic Council, [Ukraine's new mobilization law leaves demobilization issue ...](#) 2 May 2024

9.7.2 In January 2025, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, referring to Draft Law No. 12076 amending the Law of Ukraine 'On Military Duty and Military Service', stated, 'Considerable emphasis is placed on the matter of military registration of women. Those wishing to undertake basic military service will be registered as conscripts upon their request. Upon completing their service, they will be registered in the military register of individuals liable for military service.'⁵³

9.7.3 The [Law of Ukraine. On Military Duty and Military Service](#) (Article 1, Chapter 1) states:

'11. Women who are fit for military service for health reasons and age and have expressed a desire to perform basic military service, immediately before being sent for basic military service, at their request (appeal), are taken to the military registration of conscripts. After completing basic military service, women discharged from military service shall, at their request, be taken to the military registration of persons liable for military service in the manner and period determined by [part eleven](#) of Article 26 of this Law.

'Women who are fit for military service for health reasons and age and have graduated from institutions of vocational (vocational-technical), professional pre-higher or higher education and have received a medical or pharmaceutical specialty, are subject to military registration of persons liable for military service.

'Women who have a specialty and/or profession related to the relevant military accounting specialty specified in the list approved by the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine and are fit for military service for health reasons and age, except for those specified in paragraph two of this part, are taken on military registration of persons liable for military service at their request.

'12. Women who are registered with the military may be called up for military service or involved in the performance of work to ensure the defense of the state in wartime on a voluntary basis. In peacetime, women can be accepted for military service and service in the military reserve only voluntarily (under a contract).

'Women perform military duty on an equal basis with men (except for cases provided for by the legislation on the protection of motherhood and childhood, as well as the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex), which includes voluntary acceptance (under a contract) and conscription for military service, military service, service in the military reserve, performance of military duty in the reserve and compliance with the rules of military registration.'⁵⁴

9.7.4 In May 2025, the Norwegian COI service Landinfo 2025, (translated using free online tools) reported:

'There are currently no plans to mobilize women. The legislation on mobilization does not contain provisions on compulsory service for women, and all service is voluntary. However, women with certain medical or pharmaceutical qualifications must register for military service, but they can only be called up on a voluntary basis. Women who are registered for military service have no restrictions on leaving Ukraine (Visit Ukraine 2025b).

⁵³ MoD Ukraine, [At the initiative of the Ministry of Defence](#), 9 January 2025

⁵⁴ Verkhovna Rada, [Law of Ukraine. On military duty and military service](#), amended 10 May 2025

An NGO with expertise in mobilization is not aware of any cases of women being mobilized against their will (email, April 2025).⁵⁵

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9.8 Alternative forms of service

- 9.8.1 In April 2025, Forum 18, a Scandinavian human rights charity⁵⁶, explained the removal of the right for Ukrainian citizens to opt for alternatives to military service. It noted:

‘Ukraine’s Constitution limits alternative service to those with religious conscientious objections to serving in the military. Article 35, Part 4 stipulates: “If the performance of military duty contradicts the religious beliefs of a citizen, the performance of this duty shall be replaced by alternative (non-military) service.” The Constitution allows for the limitation of the rights under Article 35, including the right to alternative civilian service, during martial law, but the government has never decided to implement this limitation.

‘The legislative framework is more restrictive. It guarantees the right to alternative service only in peacetime and only for those who not only hold pacifist beliefs but also belong to religious organisations whose teachings prohibit the bearing of arms (Article 2 of the [Alternative Service Law](#)) and are recognised as such by the government ...

‘More importantly, alternative civilian service is not available for those mobilised under martial law. Ukraine’s [Mobilisation Law](#) does not provide for those mobilised to opt for alternative service. This has completely prohibited the right to alternative service (whether inside or outside the military) since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.’⁵⁷

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10. Exemptions

10.1 Prisoners

- 10.1.1 Article 4 of the [Law of Ukraine On Military Duty and Military Service](#) states:

‘The Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations may not be staffed by persons who have a criminal record for committing crimes against the foundations of national security of Ukraine, committing the premeditated murder of two or more persons, or committed with particular cruelty, or combined with rape or sexual violence, or especially serious corruption criminal offenses, or have a criminal record for committing criminal offenses provided for by Articles 152-156-1, 258-258-6, part four of Article 286-1, Article 348 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, as well as convicted officials who, according to subparagraph 1 of paragraph 3 of the note to Article 368 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, held a particularly responsible position, if such a conviction was not canceled or expunged in accordance with the procedure established by law.’⁵⁸

- 10.1.2 On 18 May 2024, in order to increase troop numbers, legislation came into

⁵⁵ Landinfo, [Theme note Ukraine Mobilisation](#), (page 14). 2 May 2025

⁵⁶ Forum 18 [About Forum 18](#), 2025

⁵⁷ Forum 18, [How should government deal with conscientious objectors in wartime?](#), 24 April 2025

⁵⁸ Verkhovna Rada, [Law of Ukraine. On military duty and military service](#), amended 10 May 2025

force allowing early release of certain Ukrainian prisoners if they voluntarily signed up to serve in the military^{59 60 61 62 63}.

- 10.1.3 On 17 May 2024, Politico, 'a global nonpartisan politics and policy news organization'⁶⁴, reported:

'The bill, which was passed earlier in May by the Ukrainian parliament, allows the voluntary mobilization of convicts for the country's war with Russia with the exception of those who committed serious crimes including murder, rape, terrorism, drugs offenses and treason.

'MPs and top government officials convicted of crimes will also be mostly ineligible to have their sentences commuted to serve in the military.

'Ukrainian Minister of Justice Denys Maliuska predicted the new law will enable the recruitment of between 10,000 to 20,000 convicts into army, both aiding the war effort and easing overcrowding in Ukrainian jails.'⁶⁵

- 10.1.4 In December 2024 the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) stated in their 'Ukraine- Prison Conditions, 2024 update':

'Prisoners ineligible to serve include individuals convicted of sexual violence, multiple homicides, serious corruption offenses and former high-ranking officials. Only prisoners with less than three years remaining on their sentence would be eligible to apply. Individuals who are mobilised will receive parole, and not a pardon. Remand prisoners are not included in the bill.

'As of July 2024, more than 3,000 prisoners have reportedly been enlisted and sent to military units. According to the MoJ, approximately 27,000 prisoners could be qualified for enlistment, while the aim of the government is to enlist approximately 10,000 prisoners.'⁶⁶

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10.2 Medical conditions

- 10.2.1 PravoVsim, a digital platform offering free legal aid primarily to Ukrainian citizens⁶⁷ outlined the main list of illnesses, diseases and conditions as of 27 April 2024 which exempt individuals from military service and is regulated by the Order of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine:

- Infectious and parasitic diseases
 - Active tuberculosis, severe forms of viral hepatitis, HIV in the AIDS stage, and other hard-to-treat infections.
- Neoplasms (tumors)
 - Malignant tumors with metastases, leukemias, lymphomas, and benign neoplasms that cause significant dysfunction.

⁵⁹ AP News, [Ukraine is releasing thousands of prisoners so they can join the fight ...](#), 1 July 2024

⁶⁰ CBC News, [Ukraine to allow some prisoners to enter army, as Kyiv focuses on...](#), 25 May 2024

⁶¹ Newsweek, [Ukraine Follows Russia's Playbook in Mobilizing Convicts](#), 19 May 2024

⁶² Al Jazeera, [Ukraine parliament passes bill for prisoners to join army...](#), 8 May 2024

⁶³ CNN, [From prison to the trenches: Inside Ukraine's attempt to turn inmates into...](#), 13 June 2024

⁶⁴ Politico, [About Us](#), no date

⁶⁵ Politico, [Ukraine's Zelenskyy signs law allowing some convicts to serve...](#), 17 May 2024

⁶⁶ DIS, [Ukraine: Prison conditions](#), December 2024

⁶⁷ PravoVsim, [About PravoVsim](#), undated

- Blood and hematopoietic disorders
 - Severe anemia, blood clotting disorders, hemorrhagic conditions, and other diseases significantly affecting blood composition.
- Endocrine and metabolic disorders
 - Diabetes mellitus, severe thyroid diseases, obesity with significant dysfunction.
- Mental and behavioral disorders
 - Schizophrenia, severe depressive disorders, alcohol or drug addiction, and severe intellectual disability.
- Neurological conditions
 - Epilepsy with frequent seizures, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, and the aftermath of strokes with major functional impairment.
- Vision and eye issues
 - High myopia or hyperopia, glaucoma, retinal detachment, blindness in one eye combined with poor vision in the other.
- Hearing and ear vestibular disorders
- Bilateral deafness, severe balance disorders (vestibular dysfunction), and chronic otitis media with complications.
- Cardiovascular diseases
 - Hypertension stage III, coronary heart disease, heart failure stages IIB–III, and arrhythmias causing hemodynamic disruption.
- Respiratory diseases
 - Severe asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and bronchiectasis with significant respiratory impairment.
- Digestive system illnesses
 - Liver cirrhosis, complicated peptic ulcer disease, Crohn's disease, severe ulcerative colitis.
- Dermatological conditions
 - Widespread psoriasis, papular pustules, and atopic dermatitis with severe skin thickening (lichenification).
- Musculoskeletal/connective tissue diseases
 - Rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, and connective tissue disorders causing significant dysfunction.
- Genitourinary disorders
 - Chronic renal failure, polycystic kidney disease, hydronephrosis, and severe inflammatory diseases of genital organs.
- Congenital or chromosomal anomalies
 - Major malformations of the heart, nervous system, or musculoskeletal system, resulting in significant impairment.

- Injuries and poisoning consequences
- Severe sequelae of head, spine, or limb injuries (e.g., amputations) leading to considerable functional limitations⁶⁸.

10.2.2 The DIS report 2023 noted that: ‘The Military-Medical Commission is the entity that undertakes the medical examination and decides whether someone is fit for military service or not.’⁶⁹

10.2.3 On 12 May 2025, The New Voice of Ukraine, a Ukrainian news source noted:

‘To be exempted from mobilization for health reasons, an illness must be accompanied by a significant impairment of functions that significantly reduces the quality of life, partially or completely deprives the person of legal capacity, and requires lifelong medication. However, each body and system has its own list of criteria: only after an examination does the commission assess the medical indications for exemption from mobilization and make a final decision.

‘... The list of diseases for exemption from mobilization has now been confirmed, which is relevant for the third group. Husbands are not subject to conscription if their wives have the same disease:

- ‘missing one of the paired organs or a limb, including arms and legs;
- ‘oncology;
- ‘mental disorder;
- ‘Cerebral palsy.

‘Previously, any group was eligible for mobilization, but now full exemption is granted to the first and second groups, and the list for the third group is strictly detailed: only certain diseases are allowed to exempt from mobilization.’⁷⁰

10.2.4 On 16 June 2025, News Ukraine, an online news aggregator⁷¹ noted:

‘According to the provisions of the Law of Ukraine “On Mobilization Training and Mobilization”, citizens with established disabilities are not subject to conscription for military service. This applies to persons with all three disability groups — the first, second, and third. In particular, the presence of a disability of the third group is a basis for granting a deferral from mobilization measures.

Disability in Ukraine is classified into three groups, which are determined by the degree of health impairment: the first is the most severe, the third is milder. A deferral in the event of confirmation of disability is granted for a period of six months to one year.

‘The third group of disability is usually established in cases where a person has chronic or persistent health disorders that partially limit their ability to work and perform daily activities. Such cases include, in particular: loss of one eye, removal of three fingers on one limb, severe scoliosis (grade 3),

⁶⁸ PravoVsim, [What is the list of diseases unfit for military service?](#), undated

⁶⁹ DIS, [Ukraine: Exit rules, exemptions from military service ...](#), (Annex 1, page 72), June 2023

⁷⁰ The New Voice of Ukraine, [Ukraine allows service with managed HIV, hepatitis ...](#), 12 May 2025

⁷¹ News Ukraine, [About](#), undated

adrenal insufficiency, absence of one lung or kidney, cancer and other serious diagnoses.

‘The full list of diseases and conditions for which the third group of disability may be established is approved in the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1338 of November 15, 2024. The main criterion for assigning this group is the presence of moderate limitation of the body's functional capabilities, which complicates full-fledged work activity.

The same source noted:

‘If the disability is granted for an indefinite period, a repeat medical examination is not required. If the disability is granted for a specific period, then it is necessary to undergo a medical examination after 6 or 12 months – this is noted during the initial examination.

‘The procedure for repeated examinations is regulated by the updated document of the Cabinet of Ministers – “Procedure for Conducting Assessment of Daily Functioning of a Person”, adopted on November 15, 2024.

‘If disabled persons aged 25 to 60 did not undergo a repeat medical examination in 2022–2024, they must do so by November 1, 2025.

‘Other categories of citizens must undergo such an examination by April 1, 2026. If the examination was scheduled for the period from January 1, 2025, the deadline has been extended for another six months – that is, you must pass the commission no later than July 1, 2025.

‘If a person ignores a medical examination, they risk losing both social benefits related to disability and the right to deferment from mobilization.’⁷²

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10.3 Workers in defence jobs abroad

10.3.1 In January 2025, the Kyiv Independent, reported exemptions related to defence jobs for Ukrainians living abroad. It noted:

‘Ukraine is prepared to provide jobs at defense enterprises for citizens abroad and exempt them from the mobilization of conscripts, National Unity Minister Oleksii Chernyshov said on Jan. 8, as reported by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. These centers aim to guide individuals toward career paths that can benefit Ukraine’s defense industry. Chernyshov expressed confidence that many Ukrainians would take advantage of these opportunities.

“We have a shortage of professionals, and Ukraine is ready to exempt most of them from military service,” Chernyshov said.

‘To address this need, the Ukrainian government plans to establish centers to assist citizens abroad in finding jobs in both Ukraine and their current countries of residence, he added.’⁷³

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⁷² News Ukraine, [Mobilization in 2025: will people with disability group 3 be mobilized?](#) 16 June 2025

⁷³ Kyiv Independent, [Ukraine offers defense industry jobs, draft exemptions ...](#), 9 January 2025

10.4 Medical workers

10.4.1 In February 2025, Ukrinform, self-described as ‘the national news agency of Ukraine’⁷⁴, reported exemption of medical workers from military service. It noted:

‘Ukraine’s government has allowed 100% of medical workers in state and communal medical institutions to be exempt from military service.

‘A corresponding resolution by the Cabinet of Ministers, issued on January 14 and amending the procedure for the conscription of reservists during mobilization and wartime, was published on the [Government Portal](#), as reported by Ukrinform.

‘In particular, Section 5 of the procedure now allows exemption from military service for "medical workers at healthcare facilities of state and communal ownership, public health institutions, establishments involved in forensic and psychiatric expertise, blood centers, for whom working in these institutions is the primary job."

‘The Ministry of Health notes that these changes only apply to medical workers. Restrictions on the exemption for other specialists working in medical institutions remain in place.

‘The Ministry added that the review of the procedure was prompted by a decree by the President of Ukraine, following the National Security and Defense Council's decision on December 5, 2024, concerning "counteracting national security threats in the healthcare sector during exceptional periods." The main goal of these measures is to ensure quality and timely medical and rehabilitation assistance to both military personnel and civilians. The decision also mentions the necessity of reviewing the conditions for exempting medical workers, as well as a ban on assigning people with medical education to non-medical military service positions, unless they voluntarily choose such roles.’⁷⁵

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11. Deferment

11.1.1 Article 23 of the [Law of Ukraine on mobilization training and mobilization](#) outlines deferral conditions.

11.1.2 In January 2025, Interfax Ukraine, reported the Ukrainian Prime Minister’s statement to parliament on deferments from mobilisation. It stated, ‘As of today, less than a million are booked [deferred], in the region between 900 and 950 thousand people," Shmyhal [Ukraine’s Prime Minister] said during an hour of questions to the government in the Verkhovna Rada ... According to the Prime Minister, this number is acceptable, it has been fixed for a long time and does not affect the mobilization processes that the General Staff and the Ministry of Defense need.’⁷⁶

11.1.3 On 26 June 2025, [Breaking News](#), an English language Ukrainian news source listed the categories of people able to temporarily defer military service:

⁷⁴ Ukrinform, [Information on Agency](#), 1 July 2025

⁷⁵ Ukrinform, [Government allows exemption for 100% of medical workers ...](#), 2 February 2025

⁷⁶ Interfax-Ukraine, [To date, 900-950 thousand ... have been booked ...](#), 10 January 2025

‘Main categories of men liable for military service who may receive a deferral:

‘– individuals reserved by state bodies and institutions, local self-government bodies, as well as enterprises, institutions, and organizations;

‘– persons with disabilities of groups I, II, or III;

‘– fathers of large families (with three or more children under the age of 18 in their care);

‘– women and men who are single parents of a child (children) under the age of 18 or of an adult child with a group I or II disability;

‘– women and men (including guardians) who care for orphans or children under 18 deprived of parental care;

‘– individuals whose spouse or one of the parents has a group I or II disability;

‘– women and men with minor children whose spouse is serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

‘– full-time or dual education students, as well as postgraduate students;

‘– individuals convicted of serious crimes (intentional murder, sexual assault, etc.);

‘– persons whose close relatives died or went missing during the war;

‘– family members of individuals posthumously awarded the title Hero of Ukraine;

‘– military servicemen who were released from captivity (they may only be called up with their consent);

‘– members of the Verkhovna Rada or the Autonomous Republic of Crimea;

‘– employees of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, including enterprises, institutions, and organizations of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine and other bodies and organizations in the field of state security (Security Service, National Guard, police, anti-corruption bodies, etc.).

‘How to obtain a deferral:

‘You must contact the Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Center with the relevant documents and submit an application addressed to the head of the TRC. These documents may include certificates, official statements, registry extracts, court decisions, or findings from medical commissions. Different types of deferrals require different supporting documents. For example, if applying on the basis of illness, one must provide hospital documentation and undergo a new medical examination.’⁷⁷

11.1.4 On 4 April 2025, the Kyiv Independent noted:

‘The Ukrainian government approved a draft law on April 4 that narrows eligibility for military service deferments for students and educators, according to Taras Melnychuk, the government's representative in parliament.

⁷⁷ Breaking News, [Who cannot be mobilized in July 2025: all categories named](#), 26 June 2025

‘Under the proposed changes, students under the age of 25 who are enrolled full-time or in dual education programs for their first degree will qualify for deferments.

‘The law also removes the right to a deferral for vocational school attendees who are only upgrading their professional qualifications without obtaining a formal education.

‘Additionally, the law establishes a specific sequence of education levels that grant the right to a mobilization deferral.

‘Men aged 25 and older who are pursuing a second degree at the same or lower educational level, or who began studies abroad after Feb. 24, 2022, will no longer be eligible for deferrals.’⁷⁸

An article published on 28 July 2025 by Information Agency 112.ua, a Ukrainian news website⁷⁹ noted:

- 11.1.5 An article published on 28 July 2025 by Information Agency 112.ua, a Ukrainian news website reported the lengths and expiries of deferments:

‘It should also be remembered that the deferment is not granted indefinitely. It has a certain duration that can be up to 90 days or until the end of martial law. Since martial law in Ukraine has been extended, the new term will begin on August 7. On this day, all previously granted deferments will actually be canceled, so it is important to check your status in the ‘Reservist+’ application.

‘The strengthening of martial law in Ukraine has led to changes in the deferment procedure from mobilization. Citizens who had grounds for deferment should check their status by August 7, as deferments will be canceled due to the extension of martial law.’⁸⁰

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12. Conditions of military service

12.1 Training

- 12.1.1 In September 2024 the UK Government stated:

‘The UK will train further cohorts of Ukrainian men and women to become soldiers on British soil, as part of this new government’s commitment to stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes.

‘The training operation, which continues to evolve to incorporate lessons identified from Ukraine’s frontline, was due to come to an end this year but the scheme will now continue until at least the end of 2025.

The trainees will join the more than 45,000 Ukrainian personnel who have been trained under Operation Interflex since Russia’s illegal invasion in 2022...

‘Delivered in locations throughout the UK, the programme takes volunteer recruits who have joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine with little to no previous military experience and teaches them the skills required for frontline combat. The training allows Ukraine’s forces to accelerate their

⁷⁸ The Kyiv Independent, [Ukraine moves to tighten military deferments for students...](#), 4 April 2025

⁷⁹ 112.ua, [About us](#), undated

⁸⁰ 112.ua, [Thousands of men may lose their deferment in August - what to do](#), 28 July 2025

deployments, rebuild their forces, and scale-up their resistance as they continue to defend their nation against Russian invaders.

‘Over a minimum of five weeks, recruits will learn weapons handling, battlefield first aid, Law of Armed Conflict training, patrol tactics and receive rural environment training. With support from experienced British instructors, the brave men and women of Ukraine are supported as they become combat-ready soldiers...

‘Alongside training for the Ukrainian Army, British Royal Air Force instructors have been training Ukrainian pilots on their journey to learning to fly F16 fighter jets. Pilots received basic flying training, including aircraft handling and navigation, alongside English language training to assist their further instruction on F16s with other NATO countries.’⁸¹

12.1.2 In December 2024, The Kyiv Post reported:

‘Recruits into the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) will receive two months of induction training instead of 45 days as in the past, Ukraine’s Commander-in-Chief Oleksandr Syrsky said ...

‘Basic training will be expanded to one and a half months from the 30 days at present, Syrsky said in an announcement following the AFU’s final 2024 meeting on training military personnel.

‘Both recruits and receiving units have complained that fresh troops are not given enough time to learn basic military skills or discipline, which leads to increased casualties and worsened morale once soldiers are committed to combat.

‘Recruits will soon receive a two-week training at their receiving unit before being assigned to a military job, giving them 45 days worth of training as a fresh inductee and 15 days within their receiving unit, Syrsky said.

‘The unit training, in particular, must adapt the soldier to “as much as possible for the challenges of modern warfare in order to keep him in combat,” Syrsky said ...

‘Unlike NATO armies, which often devote six to nine months to preparing a recruit in peacetime, the AFU rarely trains combat soldiers in advanced fighting skills like small unit tactics, coordination with other combat arms or battlefield leadership...’⁸²

12.1.3 In January 2025, the Kyiv Independent reported:

‘Basic general military training for students of Ukrainian higher education institutions will begin in September 2025, the Defense Ministry announced on Jan. 17.

‘President Volodymyr Zelensky earlier approved amendments to the law on military duty and military service in Ukraine. The updated law stipulates systematic basic military training for students.

‘The course will consist of 90 academic hours of theory study, and 210 academic hours of practical training.

‘The theory part is compulsory for both men and women, aged 18 to 25. The

⁸¹ UK Government, [UK to extend training programme for Ukrainian Armed ...](#), 6 September 2024

⁸² Kyiv Post, [Ukrainian Army to Boost New Recruit Training to 2 Months](#), 28 December 2024

practical course is mandatory only for men. Women can attend it at their own request, having previously passed a medical examination.

‘During the course, students will gain basic knowledge of tactical, intelligence, and psychological training, first aid, and the basics of military discipline. They will also master the skills of handling weapons, according to the ministry's statement.

‘Following the basic military training, students will take the military oath, receive a certificate, and obtain a military specialization.

‘Men who complete the course will become liable for military service, but according to the law on mobilization training and mobilization, they will not be drafted into the army until they are 25 years old. Up until that age, they can do so voluntarily.’⁸³

12.1.4 In March 2025, the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) reported:

‘Since the start of Russia’s invasion, Ukraine’s mobilisation effort has not been matched by the expansion of the country’s training infrastructure sufficient to prepare newly conscripted personnel for service. This stems from two objective constraints: a lack of resources, as these were allocated primarily to combat operations, and a shortage of instructors, as most, including the most experienced, have been deployed to the battlefield. As a result, the DFU have found themselves in a difficult position, needing to deploy reasonably well-trained recruits while maintaining the highest possible pace and scale of deployment.

‘Training provided to Ukrainian soldiers by partner states has not resolved the underlying challenges. Owing to their own limitations, particularly the lack of sufficiently developed infrastructure to accommodate more trainees, these countries have been unable to conduct training on a mass scale. By October 2024, when the General Staff last released relevant figures, just over 100,000 Ukrainian troops had been trained abroad. Basic and lower-level unit training has been provided by the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM), primarily in Poland and Germany, as well as through the UK-led Interflex programme. Specialist personnel are also being trained abroad to operate the weapons systems and military equipment supplied to Ukraine. The shortcomings of this training include inadequate coordination of larger units (or, more often, its absence) and, in the view of Ukrainian officials, the failure of these programmes to reflect the realities of the war.

‘Ukraine’s training system is built around several large centres. However, these facilities are unable to adequately train recruits, leading to a decline in the quality of military personnel. Despite lower intake numbers compared with 2022, these centres remain consistently overcrowded. As a result, they cannot ensure proper training or even basic living conditions, particularly for older recruits and those in poor physical condition. Another problem is the short duration of training courses. In 2024, basic training lasted only 30 days. This was extended to 45 days in December in an effort to allow as many conscripts as possible to complete it – at least formally. Training centres have also been repeatedly targeted by Russian missile and drone strikes.’⁸⁴

⁸³ Kyiv Independent, [Basic military training to start in Ukrainian higher education ...](#), 17 January 2025

⁸⁴ OSW, [Army at a crossroads: the mobilisation and organisational crisis...](#), 14 March 2025

12.2 Roles, responsibilities and areas of deployment

12.2.1 Article 6, Chapter 1 of the [Law of Ukraine On Military Duty and Military Service](#), states:

‘The procedure for appointment to military positions shall be established by the Constitution of Ukraine, laws of Ukraine, regulations on military service, and on military reserve service by citizens of Ukraine ...

‘Servicemen, in accordance with the procedure established by the regulations on military service, may be sent for further military service from one military formation to another with exclusion from the lists of personnel of the formation from which they left, and inclusion in the lists of personnel of the formation to which they arrived.’⁸⁵

12.2.2 In May 2024, the Atlantic Council stated:

‘To further boost the mobilization process, the Ukrainian army plans to open a network of 27 [new recruitment centers](#) in the coming months in major cities across the country. These centers will function as advisory and information hubs, providing guidance to those interested in joining the armed forces and allowing candidates to choose which unit they prefer to serve in. The first recruitment centers have already opened in Lviv and Zaporizhzhia. Initial reports are positive and indicate this modern approach to military service could help address some of the key concerns among potential recruits.’⁸⁶

12.2.3 In May 2025, the Norwegian COI service, Landinfo 2025, (translated using free online tools) reported, ‘After training, recruits are supposed to spend two weeks on the second line or in rear areas before their first deployment to the “zero-line” to acclimate to frontline conditions. However, due to heavy casualties, new soldiers are often sent straight to the zero-line to relieve soldiers who have been there for a long time.’⁸⁷

12.2.4 On 31 January 2025, The Guardian published an article primarily focused on desertion from the Ukrainian army, but also reported on life for soldiers and how new recruits are placed: ‘... Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, recently ordered a change in policy, with inexperienced recruits integrated into existing battalions.’⁸⁸

12.2.5 No other information was found to state where conscripts are deployed, in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

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12.3 Treatment, conditions and avenues of redress

12.3.1 In December 2024, the Ukraine Ministry of Defence provided details of pay for those in the military services. It explained the additional payments, bonuses and one-time payments for particular conditions. See [The Ministry of Defence explains: What service remuneration do military personnel in the Armed Forces of Ukraine receive](#).

12.3.2 Further considering pay and benefits, in February 2025, The Defense Post,

⁸⁵ Verkhovna Rada, [Law of Ukraine. On military duty and military service](#), amended 10 May 2025

⁸⁶ Atlantic Council, [Ukraine's new mobilization law leaves demobilization issue ...](#) 2 May 2024

⁸⁷ Landinfo, [Theme note Ukraine Mobilisation](#), (page 25). 2 May 2025

⁸⁸ The Guardian, [‘Everybody is tired. The mood has changed’: the Ukrainian...](#) 31 January 2025

an 'independent security and defense news publication' based in Washington D.C.⁸⁹, reported:

'Ukraine's Ministry of Defense has launched a new military recruitment scheme for civilians aged 18 to 24 ... offered to prospects willing to serve for one year in a "voluntary" manner, particularly to people who "seek to contribute to the country's defense and gain meaningful opportunities for personal growth.

'The effort incorporates training according to NATO standards, a competitive salary package, and other "social guarantees" that are inaccessible to other opportunities outside the armed forces...

'In its announcement, Kyiv further specified that the volunteers would receive a contract worth 1 million Ukrainian hryvnias (\$23,963) [£17,746⁹⁰] for a year's service.

'About 200,000 hryvnias (\$4,793) [£3,549⁹¹] will be paid to the recruits upon enlistment, while the rest of the amount will be distributed throughout their time in the military.

'Each soldier will also receive up to 120,000 hryvnias (\$2,876) [£2,131⁹²] of supplemental pay, zero-interest mortgage benefits, free medical care such as dental prosthetics, and the right to travel abroad.

'Moreover, the initiative guarantees a 12-month exemption from mobilization after the recruits complete their respective contracts.

"We are establishing conditions that elevate the prestige and competitiveness of military service. Ukrainians joining the Defence Forces will have access to everything necessary: the best training, high pay, social guarantees, and opportunities for career growth," Umerov said.⁹³

12.3.3 In May 2025, the Kyiv Independent noted:

'On Feb. 11, the government introduced a one-year voluntary service contract for citizens aged 18–24, offering Hr 1 million (\$24,000) [£17,749⁹⁴] in one-time aid and monthly payments of up to Hr 120,000 (\$3,000) [£2,129⁹⁵]. Volunteers also receive housing and travel benefits upon completion of service.

'The initiative aims to attract younger recruits without lowering the draft age from 25 to 18, a move urged by the U.S. but resisted by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who argued it could harm Ukraine's long-term future.⁹⁶

12.3.4 Considering annual leave, 22 August 2025, Ukrainian National News (UNN), 'an independent Ukrainian information agency'⁹⁷ reported:

'On July 31, the Verkhovna Rada adopted a bill that guarantees military

⁸⁹ The Defense Post, [About The Defense Post](#), No date.

⁹⁰ Xe Currency Converter, [1,000,000 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British ...](#), 4 June 2025

⁹¹ Xe Currency Converter, [200,000 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British ...](#), 4 June 2025

⁹² Xe Currency Converter, [120,000 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British ...](#), 4 June 2025

⁹³ The Defense Post, [Ukrainian Military Opens Lower Draft Age Program](#), 13 February 2025

⁹⁴ Xe Currency Converter, [1,000,000 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British ...](#), 4 June 2025

⁹⁵ Xe Currency Converter, [120,000 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British ...](#), 4 June 2025

⁹⁶ Kyiv Independent, [Ukraine's Supreme Court rules religious belief does not exempt ...](#), 1 May 2025

⁹⁷ UNN, [About agency](#), undated

personnel a minimum of 15 out of 30 days of annual basic leave, reinstates 14 days of additional leave for combatants, and introduces educational leave for contract soldiers under the "18-24" program. The President has already signed the [law](#).

‘An important nuance – the changes will come into force one month after official publication. ...

‘The changes are as follows:

- guaranteed 15 days. A serviceman must use at least 15 days out of 30 days of basic annual leave (they can only refuse at their own request). The remaining up to 30 days – depending on the unit's capabilities;
- additional 14 days for combatants reinstated. Combatants can again receive additional leave lasting 14 calendar days with the commander's permission. During martial law, this norm was effectively not in effect;
- educational leave. Contract soldiers under the “18-24” program who are pursuing higher education without interruption from service have the right to leave for taking exams.

‘... The following is envisioned:

- the commander forms a schedule so that no more than 30% of the personnel of a certain category are on leave at the same time, meaning at least 70% of people must remain in the unit;
- basic leave can be granted in parts, but the minimum continuous part is 15 days (now guaranteed);
- every war veteran (and combatants are currently equated in rights to war veterans) has the right to receive additional leave with salary preservation for a period of 14 calendar days per year;...
- a separate type of leave – up to 10 days for family circumstances⁹⁸

12.3.5 Considering punishment for malpractice, in February 2023, Politico reported on tougher punishments for military personnel who disobey orders. It stated:

‘Seeking to bring his forces into line, Zelenskyy in January signed into force a punitive law that introduces harsher punishment ... and strips them of their right to appeal.

‘The law aims to standardize and toughen the repercussions for rule-breaking, improving discipline and the combat readiness of military units. Disobedience will be punishable by five to eight years in prison, rather than the previous two to seven; desertion or failure to appear for duty without a valid reason by up to 10 years. Threatening commanders, consuming alcohol, questioning orders and many other violations will also be dealt with more harshly, potentially with prison time; those who broke these rules in the past may have gotten away with a probation period or the docking of their combat pay.’⁹⁹

12.3.6 In April 2024, The US Department of State (USSD) published their 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Ukraine, in which it stated: ‘On July 28, a city court arrested Serhiy Lutsyuk, the chief military commissar of

⁹⁸ UNN, [Military leave: what changes in the law signed by the President ...](#), 22 August 2025

⁹⁹ Politico, [Ukraine army discipline crackdown sparks fear and fury on the front](#), 5 February 2023.

Rivne Oblast. Together with the head of the district military enlistment office, he allegedly beat another military officer with a bat and forced him to “beg for forgiveness” on his knees. The official was charged with exceeding authority under martial law.’¹⁰⁰

- 12.3.7 Considering the conditions of military life generally, on 16 January 2025, Euromaidan Press (EP) an English-language Ukrainian newspaper¹⁰¹ noted:

‘A military of a million people is not just an army – it’s a city on the move. Ukraine’s armed forces have grown to this scale through necessity, but managing such a vast organization has created extraordinary challenges.

‘The problems include unstructured mobilization, a lack of demobilization policies, the absence of mechanisms to replace incompetent or abusive commanders, insufficient troop rotation, etc. As a result, the same soldiers bear the burden of combat indefinitely, often without any rest or break, leading to increased feelings of unfairness and growing desertion.

‘Things started to change after President Zelenskyy met with civil society representatives in October 2024. Following discussions with military volunteers Maria Berlinska, Lyuba Shipovich, and others, the military started slowly introducing reforms.

‘So far, the team of Deputy Defense Minister for Digital Transformations Kateryna Chernohorenko has implemented most of the changes. One significant change allows soldiers to request reassignment to different units within the military—a process that was previously bureaucratically complex and often impossible. Another key reform opened new career paths by allowing combat-experienced civilians to pursue military leadership roles without requiring traditional military academy education.

‘Yet, more should be done, including establishing fixed terms of service, improving training programs for new recruits, and making it easier to demote and dismiss ineffective commanders.’¹⁰²

- 12.3.8 On 29 July 2025, The Kyiv Independent published an article on demobilisation which looked at the lives of Ukrainian soldiers. It noted:

‘Since Russia launched its [full-scale invasion](#), the Ukrainian government has not established a system for rotating troops out of long-term service or discharging them after extended deployments. Under the current legislation, demobilization is only permitted once martial law is lifted.

‘The challenge is less a question of legislation and more one of [recruiting](#) enough new soldiers to relieve those who have been on continuous duty since 2022. In short, Ukraine is not mobilizing enough troops each month to let soldiers demobilize, leaving families wondering when they will be reunited.

‘Under martial law, Ukrainian soldiers can be discharged only under a narrow set of conditions, such as serious health issues, the need to raise a child, or caring for close relatives with severe illness or disability.

‘... In most other cases, service members are required to remain on duty. They are entitled to 30 days of basic annual leave. Additional leave may be

¹⁰⁰ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ukraine](#), 22 April 2024

¹⁰¹ Euromaidan Press, [About](#), undated

¹⁰² Euromaidan Press, [Ukraine faces critical military reform challenge as ...](#), 16 January 2025

granted for family emergencies, medical treatment, recovery after captivity, or pregnancy.

‘However, even authorized leave can be denied if there are no available replacements, the unit's combat readiness would be compromised, or for other operational or organizational reasons.’¹⁰³

12.3.9 The same source noted:

‘Service member Dmytro, a soldier in the 63rd Separate Mechanized Brigade, enlisted at the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. He has been on duty for over three years, with no path — barring desertion — to leave the army.

“The lack of clear terms of service is a serious problem, as it is taking a toll on soldiers' mental health,” Dmytro told the Kyiv Independent.

‘... Attempts to roll out changes to the regulations have been made before, although none have been successful.

‘A clause allowing soldiers to be discharged after three years of service was initially included in the 2024 [mobilization bill](#). However, it was removed ahead of the second reading in parliament at the request of Commander-in-Chief Oleksandr Syrskyi, according to [Ukrainska Pravda](#) (UP).

‘In late January, the Defense Ministry also prepared a draft law regulating the dismissal and rotation of soldiers during martial law. But without backing from the General Staff, the proposal was not registered in parliament...

‘And in April, the Armed Forces Communications Directorate told [UP](#) that the draft law on clear terms of service would go to parliament only if troop levels were sufficient to sustain the fight against [Russia](#).

“There is a sense of being a hostage, trapped by circumstances,” Oleksii Nazarenko, a soldier currently serving in a unit specializing in unmanned systems, told the Kyiv Independent. “And we are all in the same boat with other soldiers, working together to shovel out the problems before they sink us.”

‘Nazarenko has served in the army since the very beginning of the [full-scale invasion](#). He moved between units seeking the greatest impact and, despite a shrapnel wound, returned, determined to keep serving.

‘But after over three years of continuous service, Nazarenko admitted to feeling worn down and said that another year would feel unbearable.’¹⁰⁴

12.3.10 Considering abuses and avenues of redress, in May 2025, the Norwegian COI service, Landinfo 2025, (translated using Google translate), reported:

‘Men who receive a call-up for service must report to the TRC [Territorial Recruitment Centre]. The Ukrainian Ombudsman for Human Rights, Dmytro Lubinets, stated in September 2024 that they had received more than 1,600 complaints of rights violations committed by TRC employees since January 2024. In Ternopil and Zhytomyr regions, there have been demonstrations following the deaths of conscripts arrested by military officers (War Resisters' International 2024; d'Istria 2024).

¹⁰³ The Kyiv Independent, [Why Ukraine can't afford to demobilize its soldiers](#), 29 July 2025

¹⁰⁴ The Kyiv Independent, [Why Ukraine can't afford to demobilize its soldiers](#), 29 July 2025

'In response to reports of abuses in the military, the Ministry of Defense decided in April 2024 to establish a military ombudsman, who will handle complaints from military personnel, provide legal assistance, conduct inspections, and investigate violations of the rights of military personnel and their family members.'¹⁰⁵

12.3.11 On 15 May 2025, The New Voice of Ukraine published an article focused on the appointment of the military ombudsman and complaints she had received:

'["I've heard a lot—and frankly, I was already familiar with many of these issues before the appointment, having worked in service member rights advocacy for years. But the volume of complaints I now deal with daily allows me to systematize and analyze these problems more comprehensively.

'["Some issues are solvable quickly, while others require systemic reforms—sometimes not even legal changes but shifts in mindset.

'["If we were to rank complaints, the most common early on were about transfers—the lack of enforcement of the right to be transferred between units. There were also complaints about being denied medical treatment or referral to military medical commissions. Many came from families of the fallen, missing, or POWs.

'["Within the first few months, we were able to alleviate the most urgent issues related to transfers. With help from the Ministry of Defense's Central Office for the Protection of Servicemen's Rights, we identified and addressed the worst-offending units, explained to commanders the need to follow General Staff orders, and in some cases, higher-level commanders stepped in directly. The issue hasn't disappeared, but it's no longer critical. The Army+ digital platform has also made inter-unit transfers easier.'¹⁰⁶

12.3.12 The same source noted:

'Ukraine has been at war with Russia for over a decade, but this institution didn't exist until now. There was only a hotline number on the Defense Ministry's website. I spoke with soldiers who said their commanders demanded 20% of their pay. But they didn't trust the hotline. "We can't name ourselves," they said. "We might give our commander's name, but nothing will happen to him—and we'll be punished." Have you heard things like this?

'["Absolutely. These cases happen. And maybe in some instances, the hotline did work as it should. But there's already a general distrust among service members toward military institutions.

'["This is exactly why we need a military ombudsman. Other structures won't work because you have to understand the psychology of those in uniform—they operate within strict hierarchies. They know that if their commander finds out they filed a complaint, there could be consequences.

'["That's why my office allows for confidential complaints. I always ask service members to explicitly request confidentiality if they're worried about retaliation. We don't contact commanders directly or disclose identities

¹⁰⁵ Landinfo, [Theme note Ukraine Mobilisation](#), (page 19). 2 May 2025

¹⁰⁶ The New Voice of Ukraine, [Reshetylova: Ukraine's army needs cultural shift to...](#) 15 May 2025

without consent. Our goal is to protect those who report abuses.

Considering the process for receiving complaints, the same source noted:

‘[“]In most cases, we don’t simply forward complaints. We often follow up with the service member, verify the facts. One example: a soldier filed a complaint saying he was under pressure. A day later, he wrote back saying he wanted to withdraw it because the issue was "resolved." We didn’t buy it. We called him. "Are you sure? Or did someone find out you reported it?" He insisted all was fine. But we double-check because we know how things work.

‘[“]Once, we sent a complaint to the Ground Forces Command, and they forwarded it—as usual—to the very commander accused of violating rights. The soldier came back to us and said, "What are you doing?" We had to remind Ground Forces Command that under Ukrainian law, complaints must never be referred to the subject of the complaint.

‘[“]We’re working to instill [sic] a culture of accountability in the defense and security sector. It can’t be just a box-checking exercise.’¹⁰⁷

12.3.1 The same source continued:

‘... “The Ukrainian military *is* humane. But the war is brutal, and the enemy is ruthless. Sometimes we forget our central narrative: that people are our highest value.

‘Another example: uncertainty. Even senior leadership—from the top down—often doesn’t know what tomorrow holds. That affects morale. If a soldier is in training, they should know ahead of time which unit they’ll join. If it’s about leave, then it must be planned, however hard that may be. Families need to know when they’ll see their loved ones. This kind of predictability sustains a soldier’s inner resilience.

‘... [“]Right now, probably because I represent the Commander-in-Chief, they can’t ignore me. Whether they want to or not, they have to engage.

‘[“]I don’t approach them with ready-made answers. I consult with them, we discuss issues at briefings, I ask for calls. I respect their workload, so I try to be efficient. Usually, we’re aligned. They understand the problems too. But with everything they’re tasked with, systemic reform just isn’t a priority.

The military won’t change itself—not because it doesn’t want to, but because it physically can’t while fighting a war. So no, I haven’t faced real resistance. We’re working together. I get support from commanders at all levels. Of course, there are difficult cases, and we look for workarounds.

‘... In terms of authority, I can interact with the military. But I need clear procedures—and that’s what the bill [on appointing a military ombudsman in law] establishes: rules for inspections, conclusions, recommendations, and how military units should respond. Right now, I send official letters. They respond, of course, but there’s no standardized process. That’s what we’ve put into the law. We need a legal foundation to say: this is how the military ombudsman works, and here is the mandate.’¹⁰⁸

No other recent information was found on the treatment of servicemen

¹⁰⁷ The New Voice of Ukraine, [Reshetylova: Ukraine’s army needs cultural shift to...](#) 15 May 2025

¹⁰⁸ The New Voice of Ukraine, [Reshetylova: Ukraine’s army needs cultural shift to...](#) 15 May 2025

during mobilised military service in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

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12.4 Casualty statistics

- 12.4.1 Exact numbers of Ukrainian troops killed and injured in the war are not known but in February 2025, Radio France Internationale (RFI), 'a French news and current affairs public radio station'¹⁰⁹ reported:

'... the true death toll of the three-year conflict remains unknown ...

'In a rare public estimate, President Volodymyr Zelensky told US news outlet NBC over the weekend that more than 46,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed and some 380,000 wounded.

But independent Ukrainian war correspondent Yuri Butusov said in December 2024 that his army sources estimated some 70,000 dead and 35,000 missing.

Several Western media, citing European and US sources, have reported numbers that hugely vary -- with estimates ranging from 50,000 to 100,000 Ukrainians killed in combat.'¹¹⁰

- 12.4.2 On 21 February 2025, the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) noted:

'Zelensky stated on February 16, 2025, that Russia has killed 46,000 Ukrainian soldiers since the start of the full-scale invasion, and that Ukraine has suffered over 390,000 soldiers wounded in action.'^[8]

'US officials have placed the number of Ukrainian military losses between 60,000 and 70,000, but no reputable source places casualty estimates near or in the millions.'¹¹¹

- 12.4.3 On 19 August 2025, Britannica noted:

'In June 2025, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, based in Washington, D.C., released an analysis that estimated ... Ukrainian military casualties since 2022 to be 400,000, including an estimated 60,000–100,000 soldiers killed.'¹¹²

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13. Evasion

13.1 Statistics

- 13.1.1 In November 2023, BBC News reported:

'Nearly 20,000 men have fled Ukraine since the beginning of the war to avoid being drafted, the BBC has discovered.

'Some have swum dangerous rivers to leave the country. Others have simply walked out under cover of darkness.

'Another 21,113 men attempted to flee but were caught by the Ukrainian authorities, Kyiv confirmed.

¹⁰⁹ RFI, [Who are we? - RFI](#), 2025

¹¹⁰ RFI, [Ukraine war death toll: huge but not fully known](#), 17 February 2025

¹¹¹ ISW, [Ukraine Fact Sheet, February 21, 2025](#), 21 February 2025

¹¹² Britannica, [...military casualty estimates for the Russia-Ukraine War?](#), updated 19 August 2025

'After Russia's invasion, most men aged 18-60 were banned from leaving. But data obtained by the BBC reveals dozens have made it out daily...

'The BBC has established - by requesting data of illegal border crossings from neighbouring Romania, Moldova, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia - that 19,740 men illegally crossed into these countries between February 2022 and 31 August 2023.

'While we do not know how those men escaped, we do know what methods were used by the other 21,113 who were caught trying. The majority - 14,313 - were attempting to walk or swim across the border, and the remaining 6,800 relied on fraudulently obtained official paperwork stating fake exemptions such as fabricated illnesses, the Ukrainian authorities said.'¹¹³

13.1.2 In April 2024 BFBS Forces News, the British broadcasting charity for the armed forces¹¹⁴, reported, 'As the full-scale invasion entered its third year, Ukraine has experienced a marked decline in volunteer fighters, alongside numerous reports of mobilisation evasion.'¹¹⁵

13.1.3 In September 2024, The Kyiv Independent stated:

'Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, law enforcement agencies have uncovered over 570 criminal networks that help individuals evade military service by aiding them in fleeing abroad, State Border Guard spokesperson Andrii Demchenko said during a telecast on Sept. 2.

'Under martial law, Ukrainian men between the ages of 18–60, with some exceptions, are not allowed to leave the country as they could be called up for military service.

'Criminal entities who assist those escaping military service reportedly charge between \$7,000 to \$10,000 [£5162¹¹⁶ to £7,373¹¹⁷] to provide fake certificates declaring individuals unfit for military service due to fabricated health conditions.

'Law enforcement officials have begun to crackdown on the criminal networks helping individuals evade military service. In total, Demchenko said that over 200 criminal networks have been uncovered thus far in 2024.'¹¹⁸

13.1.4 In January 2025, Le Monde, a French newspaper¹¹⁹, reported:

'Ukrainian police said on Friday, January 10, they were conducting hundreds of raids nationwide to shut down routes used by military-aged men to flee the country to avoid military service.

'Kyiv has been driving a large-scale mobilization campaign for months to boost its military, which is struggling to hold back Russia's significantly larger army that is advancing in the east of the country, nearly three years after Moscow invaded.

¹¹³ BBC News, [Swimming rivers and faking illness to escape Ukraine's draft](#), 17 November 2023

¹¹⁴ BFBS, [About us](#), 2025

¹¹⁵ BFBS Forces News, [Ukraine lowers military draft age from 27 to 25 to streamline ...](#), 3 April 2024

¹¹⁶ Xe Currency Converter, [7,000 USD to GBP - US Dollars to British Pounds ...](#), 4 June 2025

¹¹⁷ Xe Currency Converter, [10,000 USD to GBP - US Dollars to British Pounds ...](#), 4 June 2025

¹¹⁸ Kyiv Independent, [Authorities have uncovered nearly 600 criminal networks ...](#), 3 September 2024

¹¹⁹ Le Monde, [About us - World news, culture and opinion](#),

'The divisive campaign has spurred panic among Ukrainian fighting-aged men and has seen thousands flee the country illegally toward Europe, sometimes utilizing dangerous smuggling routes over mountains or rivers.

"More than 600 simultaneous searches are being conducted by the SBU [Security Services of Ukraine] operatives and National Police investigators," police said in a statement. "This is only the first stage of a special operation to block the channels of trafficking of men of military age abroad," it added ...

'Police said "criminals" had helped hundreds of people cross the border via illegal routes and that the operation was being conducted across the country.

'... Kyiv has been battling problems with systemic corruption within its military mobilization infrastructure since the beginning of Russia's invasion in February 2022. Late last year, Ukrainian former prosecutor general Andriy Kostin resigned after a probe uncovered a large-scale corruption scheme that apparently provided military draft exemptions for government officials. That followed a decision by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to fire the heads of regional draft offices.'¹²⁰

- 13.1.5 In May 2025, the Norwegian COI service, Landinfo 2025, (translated using Google translate), reported, 'In total in 2023, 1242 people were convicted of evasion of service during mobilization and six were acquitted. At the end of 2023, there were 700 ongoing criminal cases against 704 people in the courts (Likatsjov 2024).'¹²¹

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13.2 Punishment

- 13.2.1 The following table of punishments for evasion of military service was compiled by CPIT using information drawn from the Criminal Code of Ukraine¹²².

Type of evasion	Criminal Code Article	Punishment
Evasion of military service (by self-mutilation, malingering, forgery or deceit)	Article 409, Paragraph 1	Detention in a penal battalion or imprisonment for up to 2 years
Refusal to comply with military duties	Article 409, Paragraph 2	Imprisonment for 2 to 5 years
Evasion during martial law or in a combat situation	Article 409, Paragraph 3	Imprisonment of 5 to 10 years
Evasion of officers from conscription for military service	Article 335	Restriction of liberty for up to 3 years
Evasion of reservists from conscription during	Article 336	Imprisonment for 3 to 5 years

¹²⁰ Le Monde, [Kyiv begins mass operation to seal borders for draft evaders](#), 10 January 2025

¹²¹ Landinfo, [Theme note Ukraine Mobilisation](#), (page 24), 2 May 2025

¹²² Verkhovna Rada, [The Criminal Code of Ukraine...](#), 2001, amended 7 June 2025

mobilisation, for a special period		
Evasion from civil defence service during mobilisation	Article 336-1	Imprisonment for 2 to 5 years
Evasion of a conscript reservist from military registration	Article 337, Paragraph 1	Fine of 300 to 500 tax-free minimum incomes or correctional labour for up to 1 year
Evasion of a conscript reservist from training	Article 337, Paragraph 2	Fine of 500 to 700 tax-free minimum incomes or correctional labour for up to 2 years

13.2.1 In May 2024, the Kyiv Independent reported:

‘Ukraine’s parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, voted in favor on May 9 of a draft law that increases the fines given to those who evade mobilization...

‘The fine for not registering or updating information at their local conscription office has increased from Hr 3,400 (\$86) [£60¹²³] to Hr 5,100 (\$130) [£90¹²⁴], while repeat violations will result in a fine of 25,500 (\$647) [£452¹²⁵], up from 17,000 (\$431) [£301¹²⁶].

‘Men who refuse draft summons will face a fine of Hr 25,000 (\$634) [£443¹²⁷], up from Hr 17,000 (\$431) [£301¹²⁸] with the fine rising to Hr 59,000 (\$1,500) [£1,046¹²⁹] for officials.

‘The average monthly salary in Ukraine is estimated to be around Hr 19,500 (\$495) [£346¹³⁰].’¹³¹

13.2.2 In June 2024, The Guardian reported, ‘Under the new guidelines, draft evaders can lose their driving licence, have their bank accounts frozen and property seized.’¹³²

13.3 Punishment in practice

13.3.1 In March 2024, the ‘Ukraine Mobilisation’ COI report from the Danish Immigration Service stated:

‘A humanitarian NGO had not heard of draft evaders returning from abroad being met with consequences upon return, as they have not been properly summoned for mobilisation by signing a notice e.g. through an embassy, however, there could be risks when they return to Ukraine, either during or after martial law ...

¹²³ Xe currency Converter, [3,400 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British Pounds ...](#), 4 June 2025

¹²⁴ Xe Currency Converter, [5,100 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British Pounds ...](#), 4 June 2025

¹²⁵ Xe Currency Converter, [25,500 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British Pounds ...](#), 4 June 2025

¹²⁶ Xe Currency Converter, [17,000 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British Pounds ...](#), 4 June 2025

¹²⁷ Xe Currency Converter, [25,000 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British Pounds ...](#), 4 June 2025

¹²⁸ Xe Currency Converter, [17,000 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British Pounds ...](#), 4 June 2025

¹²⁹ Xe Currency Converter, [59,000 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British Pounds ...](#), 4 June 2025

¹³⁰ Xe Currency Converter, [19,500 UAH to GBP - Ukrainian Hryvni to British Pounds ...](#), 4 June 2025

¹³¹ Kyiv Independent, [Parliament votes to increase fines for draft evasion](#), 9 May 2024

¹³² The Guardian, [‘I am not made for war’: the men fleeing Ukraine to evade ...](#), 29 June 2024

‘According to UHHRU, [Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union] draft evaders will not be punished upon return at a later stage despite having received the summons letter.

‘Media reports noted that it is not clear whether those who escaped mobilisation and choose to return to Ukraine in the future face retrospective punishment, although a parliamentary representative voiced that it would not be in the national interest. If the prosecutor can prove in court that a person illegally crossed the international border with the purpose of evading mobilisation, the perpetrator can be punished with imprisonment for a term of three to five years.

‘Pryncyp [a Ukrainian human rights organisation supporting military personnel and veterans¹³³] stated that there had been cases of people, who had been apprehended, trying to evade mobilisation and move abroad, and who, subsequently, faced criminal charges ...

‘The National Agency for the Corruption Prevention (NACP) opined that although law enforcement bodies ought to investigate cases regarding persons who have falsified a document to travel abroad, there would not be sufficient capacity to investigate such cases due to a backlog of thousands of cases. Moreover, the cases pertaining to crossing the border illegally would not be prioritised given the high number of criminal cases related to war crimes.’¹³⁴

- 13.3.2 In September 2024, The Kyiv Independent stated: ‘Earlier this year, Ukraine’s parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, voted in favor of a draft law that increases the fines given to those who evade mobilization, although the country does not have plans to forcibly bring back military-aged men who are in the EU.’¹³⁵

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14. Desertion

14.1 Statistics

- 14.1.1 In December 2024, France 24, the French international news channel¹³⁶, reported:

‘Figures published by the Ukrainian general prosecutor’s office show that more than 90,000 cases have been opened into instances of soldiers going absent without leave or deserting since Russia invaded in 2022, with a sharp increase over the past year ...

‘Prosecutors said in early December that 8,000 servicemen that went absent without leave or deserted had returned in November alone.’¹³⁷

- 14.1.2 In March 2025, OSW reported that ‘Problems within units and battlefield setbacks – attributed by many to poor decisions by Ukraine’s military leadership – have contributed to a growing number of desertions.’¹³⁸

¹³³ Pryncyp, [About us](#), 2023

¹³⁴ Danish Immigration Service, [Ukraine - Mobilisation](#), March 2024

¹³⁵ Kyiv Independent, [Authorities have uncovered nearly 600 criminal networks ...](#), 3 September 2024

¹³⁶ France 24, [Who are we? - France 24](#),

¹³⁷ France 24, [Desertions spark panic, and pardons, in Ukraine's army](#), 27 December 2024

¹³⁸ OSW, [Army at a crossroads: the mobilisation and organisational crisis...](#), 14 March 2025

- 14.1.3 On 28 August 2025, The Eurasian Times, a global news platform¹³⁹ noted: 'According to Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office, since the war began in 2022, the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) have witnessed more than 250,000 desertions. These numbers include both AWOLs (absences without official leave) and desertions from the front line.'¹⁴⁰

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14.2 Punishment

- 14.2.1 The following table of punishments for desertion of military service was compiled by CPIT using information drawn from the Criminal Code of Ukraine¹⁴¹.

Type of desertion	Criminal Code	Punishment
1.Absence of active military serviceman without leave or failure to return from leave for more than 3 days, up to a month.	Article 407, Paragraph 1	Detention in a penal battalion for up to 2 years or imprisonment for up to 3 years
2.Absence without leave or failure to return of military serviceman not in active service, for more than 10 days, up to a month. Or if repeated during one year for more than 3 days up to 10 days	Article 407, Paragraph 2	Fine of 1,000 to 4,000 tax-free minimum incomes. Or service restriction for up to 2 years. Or imprisonment for up to 3 years.
3. Absence as in 1 or 2 above for more than a month	Article 407, Paragraph 3	Imprisonment for 2 to 5 years.
4. Absence of military serviceman as in 1 or 2 (above), or late arrival for service, during a special period or under martial law	Article 407, Paragraph 4	Imprisonment for 5 to 10 years
Absence without leave or failure to return, with purpose of avoiding military service	Article 408, Paragraph 1	Imprisonment for 2 to 5 years.
Absence without leave or failure to return, with purpose of avoiding military service, if under martial law or in combat situation	Article 408, Paragraph 3	Imprisonment for 5 to 12 years
Desertion with weapons or desertion of a group following conspiracy	Article 408, Paragraph 2	Imprisonment for 5 to 10 years

¹³⁹ The Eurasian Times, [Know Eurasian Times](#), undated

¹⁴⁰ The Eurasian Times, [Ukraine's Military In Turmoil: 576 Soldiers Desert Daily...](#), 28 August 2025

¹⁴¹ Verkhovna Rada, [The Criminal Code of Ukraine...](#), 2001, amended 7 June 2025

Desertion with weapons or desertion of a group following conspiracy, if under martial law or in combat situation	Article 408, Paragraph 3	Imprisonment for 5 to 12 years
Unauthorised leaving of battlefield during a battle or refusal to use weapons	Article 429	Imprisonment for 5 to 10 years

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14.3 Punishment in practice

14.3.1 In March 2024, the 'Ukraine Mobilisation' COI report from the Danish Immigration Service stated, 'Regarding punishment of deserters returning from abroad, the source assessed that they will be presented with criminal liability upon their return.'¹⁴²

14.3.2 In December 2024, France 24, the French international news channel¹⁴³, reported, 'In an effort to address manpower shortages, Ukrainian lawmakers in August approved an amnesty for first-time offenders who voluntarily returned to their units.

'Both the 47th and 53rd brigades in December announced they would welcome back servicemen who had left the front without permission, saying: "We all make mistakes."¹⁴⁴

14.3.3 In March 2025, OSW reported that 'In 2024, prosecutors initiated approximately 89,500 proceedings related to desertion and unauthorised abandonment of units – two distinct offences under Ukrainian military law, despite being indistinguishable in practice. This figure was three and a half times higher than in 2023.'¹⁴⁵

14.3.4 The same source noted:

'The scandal surrounding mass desertions from the 155th Mechanised Brigade revealed that soldiers were abandoning their units even during training, including abroad; with confirmed cases in France and Poland. The scale of this phenomenon – and the scant prospects for curbing it – were underscored by the decision to waive punishment if a deserter voluntarily returned to service...

'Facing difficulties in meeting mobilisation targets, the government is now refraining from prosecuting those who have left their units without permission for the first time. In October 2024 alone, courts in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Volyn, Zakarpattia, and Ternopil oblasts issued around 100 such rulings, contingent on soldiers returning to their original units.'¹⁴⁶

14.3.5 In April 2025, Deutsche Welle (DW), the German international media organisation¹⁴⁷, reported:

'Ukrainian deserters were given until early March to rejoin their units without

¹⁴² Danish Immigration Service, [Ukraine - Mobilisation](#), March 2024

¹⁴³ France 24, [Who are we? - France 24](#),

¹⁴⁴ France 24, [Desertions spark panic, and pardons, in Ukraine's army](#), 27 December 2024

¹⁴⁵ OSW, [Army at a crossroads: the mobilisation and organisational crisis...](#), 14 March 2025

¹⁴⁶ OSW, [Army at a crossroads: the mobilisation and organisational crisis...](#), 14 March 2025

¹⁴⁷ DW, [About DW's history and mission.](#), 2025

penalty. DW spoke with several about why they left, and why they're now returned.

"What crime did I commit? I had family problems!" exclaimed Kosjantyn, who deserted his post in the Ukrainian army...

'Kosjantyn is just one of the roughly 21,000 Ukrainian soldiers classified as deserters who voluntarily returned to military service in March to avoid legal punishment.

'The deadline for returning was set for early March. At the start of the year, Ukraine had registered about 123,000 investigations into soldiers going absent without leave (AWOL) or deserting their units.

'The number of soldiers leaving their posts grew so high in 2023 and 2024 that investigators couldn't keep up, completing inquiries into only about 7% of cases.

'That led to the tacit acceptance of a deal in which authorities promised not to prosecute deserters as long as commanders could convince them to return to duty.

'The deal was enacted into law in the fall of 2024, when parliament made it possible for draft dodgers and deserters to report back to the army for duty as a way of avoiding prosecution.

'Ukraine's laws were changed in December, giving soldiers until January 1, 2025, to comply. The deadline was then extended until March ...

'Their [the returned deserters'] commander ... said deserters who return are serious about fulfilling their duties if they are treated like any other soldier. "Most have already served and seen combat. They are better trained than new recruits. They're also more motivated. It's easier to work with them," he said...

"The acts they have committed fall under the criminal code, but that does not mean they are bad soldiers," said Roman Horodezkyi, an officer responsible for psychological support in the 68th Jaeger Brigade, which is also stationed on the Pokrovsk front. Horodezkyi said about 30% of soldiers return to duty after deserting, and half of those return to their original unit.'¹⁴⁸

14.3.6 In May 2025, the Norwegian COI service, Landinfo 2025, (translated using free online tools), reported, 'The number of registered criminal cases for absence without leave (AWOL) and desertion increased significantly in 2024. From January to September, around 35,300 AWOL cases were registered (compared to around 11,600 in the same period in 2023) and around 18,200 cases for desertion (compared to around 4,700 in the same period in 2023).'149

14.3.7 On 28 August 2025, The Eurasian Times noted:

"More than 250,000 criminal cases have been opened into soldiers' absence without leave (AWOL) and desertion since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukrainska [Pravda](#) reported, citing the Prosecutor General's Office.

'The official data was provided under the "Unified Report on Criminal

¹⁴⁸ DW, [Ukraine's deserters returning to the front](#), 18 April 2025

¹⁴⁹ Landinfo, [Theme note Ukraine Mobilisation](#), (page 24), 2 May 2025

Offenses” under Article 407 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (Unauthorized abandonment of a military unit or place of service).

‘As many as 202,997 criminal cases were opened into unauthorized abandonment of military units, also known as absence without leave, from 2022 to July 2025. A total of 15,564 people were officially charged with the crime.’¹⁵⁰

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15. Conscientious objection

15.1 Religion

15.1.1 The 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ukraine (2023 IRF report) published by the USSD noted:

‘According to a November [2023] national survey conducted by the Razumkov Center, 60.8 percent of respondents identify as Christian Orthodox ... 11 percent Greek Catholic ... 1.4 percent Protestant ... 1.2 percent Roman Catholic ... 11.3 percent of respondents identify as Christian unaffiliated with any church, and 13.4 percent say they do not belong to any religious group. Pagans (following traditional pre-Christian polytheistic beliefs, including animism), Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, followers of other religions, and individuals choosing not to disclose their beliefs constitute the remainder of the respondents.’¹⁵¹

15.1.2 In an undated article, the ‘official website for Jehovah’s Witnesses’ JW.org noted there were approximately 100,424 Jehovah’s Witnesses in Ukraine:

‘Fast Facts—Ukraine

‘37,860,000—Population

‘102,972—Ministers who teach the Bible

‘1,164—Congregations

‘1 to 377—Ratio of Jehovah’s Witnesses to population

15.1.3 World Population Review estimated a population of 39 million people in 2025¹⁵².

15.1.4 In May 2025, Providence, an online webpage which ‘examines global statecraft with Christian Realism’¹⁵³ noted:

‘In a predominantly Eastern Orthodox country, conscientious objection remains a minority position. Following the invasion, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has made it explicit that fighting for Ukraine should be seen as an act of self-defense. Orthodox Metropolitan Epiphanius I of Ukraine emphasized this point by [stating](#): “Protecting, killing the enemy is not a sin... And the one who came to us with a sword will perish by that sword.” In contrast, pacifism prevails in minority, mostly protestant religious communities.

‘Among them, Ukrainian evangelicals haven’t fully abandoned their historical commitment to radical pacifism. According to theologian Roman Soloviy, during the Soviet era, evangelicals [believed](#) violence was never acceptable –

¹⁵⁰ The Eurasian Times, [Ukraine’s Military In Turmoil: 576 Soldiers Desert Daily...](#), 28 August 2025

¹⁵¹ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ukraine](#), 26 June 2024

¹⁵² World Population Review, [Ukraine population 2025](#), 2025

¹⁵³ Providence, [About](#), undated

even in war. Since independence, pacifism has come to be seen as a [pragmatic](#) response to oppression. Yet despite these reassessments, most evangelicals have upheld their nonviolent convictions.

‘Among pacifists, Jehovah’s Witnesses stand out as particularly committed. Emphasizing the [centrality](#) of nonviolence in the teaching of Jesus, they have refused to serve on either side of the war ...’¹⁵⁴

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15.2 Law and numbers

15.2.1 In December 2024, OHCHR’s ‘Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine’, stated:

‘Under the ICCPR, [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights] the right of conscientious objection to military service allows no restrictions or derogation. The right to conscientious objection to military service is also enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine. However, domestic law in Ukraine unduly restricts this Constitutional right only to some forms of religion or belief, excluding others, contrary to applicable obligations of equality before the law and non-discrimination under the ICCPR.

‘Furthermore, military service mandated under the legislative framework in relation to conscription during mobilization, while granting exemptions on other bases, does not appear to allow for any exemptions to military service for reasons of conscientious objection, even for those religions or beliefs that otherwise would qualify for exemptions under domestic law in Ukraine.’¹⁵⁵

15.2.2 In their ‘The State of the World’s Human Rights: April 2025’ Ukraine report, Amnesty International stated, ‘The Constitutional Court was still deliberating in December [2024] whether denying the constitutional right to conscientious objection was permitted under martial law. No grants of alternative civilian service had been made since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022.’¹⁵⁶

15.2.3 In an undated online article, The European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO), an umbrella organisation for national associations of conscientious objectors which lobbies for the right to conscientious objection to military service in Europe¹⁵⁷, described the situation in Ukraine. It stated:

‘Conscientious objection to military service has ceased to be recognised in Ukraine since the full-scale Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, and discharge from the army for reasons of conscience was never allowed. Under the current mobilisation, no applications for alternative service have been granted, intensifying policies of total compulsory military registration and further conscription are ruling out conscientious objection ...

‘The domestic Law of Ukraine "On Alternative (Non-Military) Service" is currently applied not for protection of conscientious objectors but for denial in access to alternative service. Conscientious objectors have to rely on appeals, rarely successful, to constitutional principles and Ukraine’s international human rights obligations, but courts and officials, with rare

¹⁵⁴ Providence, ‘[The Limits of Conscientious Objection in Wartime Ukraine](#)’, 30 May 2025

¹⁵⁵ OHCHR, [Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine](#), page 21. 31 December 2024

¹⁵⁶ Amnesty International, [Human rights in Ukraine](#), (Conscientious objectors’ rights), 28 April 2025

¹⁵⁷ EBCO, [About EBCO](#) 2019

exceptions, are mostly accommodating to army's denial of conscientious objection...

'The Law on Alternative (Non-Military) Service of 1991, later linked with Article 35 of the 1996 Constitution of Ukraine, which prescribes "replacement of military duty with alternative non-military service when compliance with such contradicts religious beliefs of a citizen", introduced a civilian alternative service for conscientious objectors, but the detailed regulations limited access to members of ten specified religious denominations which were recognised as forbidding their adherents to bear arms.

'Immediately following the Russian invasion, two Presidential decrees were issued. Decree 64/2022 declared martial law from 5.30am on 24th February 2022 and limited certain specified constitutional rights (not including those under Article 35). Decree 69/22 started a general mobilisation, under which every person registered for military service and passed as fit by a military medical commission could be called-up for indefinite service until reaching the age of 60 (or 65 for commissioned officers), subject to exemptions and deferrals for family, education or occupational reasons, including employment considered vital for the functioning of the government and economy. No mention was made of exemption for conscientious objectors.'¹⁵⁸

15.2.4 In May 2025 the Norwegian COI service Landinfo (translated using free online tools), reported:

'The only exception, recently introduced, concerns clergy, who may be exempted (up to half of clergy from each religious organization).

'In 2024, the Supreme Court ruled that refusal to mobilise constitutes evasion of military service, even when it concerns members of religious organisations whose teachings prohibit the use of weapons. The court stressed that the constitutional duty to defend the fatherland does not necessarily require the mobilised person to bear arms. Such service can also be carried out in other ways, such as maintaining military equipment, building fortifications, evacuating the wounded or other tasks that do not involve the use of weapons.'¹⁵⁹

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15.3 Punishments

15.3.1 The 2023 IRF report noted:

'According to Jehovah's Witnesses, since June, military enlistment officials transported 60 Jehovah's Witnesses to enlistment centers against their will. Of these, officials detained more than 30 for more than one night. In a small number of cases, Jehovah's Witnesses reported individuals were forcibly enlisted despite expressing their conscientious objection to military service.

'On June 12, enlistment officials reportedly detained Natan K. in Vyzhnytsia, Chernivtsi Oblast. They took him to a local enlistment office and conscripted him into a military unit on June 15, even though he had identified himself as

¹⁵⁸ EBCO, [Ukraine. European Bureau for Conscientious Objection](#), no date

¹⁵⁹ Landinfo 2025, [Theme note Ukraine Mobilisation](#), (page 17), 2 May 2025

¹⁶⁰ Landinfo, [Theme note Ukraine Mobilisation](#), (page 17), 2 May 2025

a conscientious objector.

‘On July 11, enlistment officials reportedly detained Petro D. in Ternopil and took him to enlistment office and conscripted him even though he had identified himself as a conscientious objector. After a July 19 court hearing, he did not return to the enlistment center, which resulted in his being absent without leave, an offense incurring a sentence of up to 10 years’ imprisonment.

‘At year’s end [2023], there were five conscientious objector cases pending before trial courts and two cases before appellate courts. One case was dismissed because of the prosecutor’s refusal to proceed. Jehovah’s Witnesses said that despite the war, no member of their congregation asserting conscientious objection status had been sentenced following conviction.’¹⁶¹

15.3.2 In December 2024, OHCHR’s ‘Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine’, stated:

‘Thus, during the reporting period [1 September to 30 November 2024], courts handed down five decisions convicting conscientious objectors belonging to religious communities which would otherwise be eligible for alternative non-military service under domestic law, for evading military service. The individuals were sentenced to one and three years of imprisonment ... In one case, the court considered conscientious objection as itself evidence of the individual’s intent to evade military service, while it did not address the defendant’s arguments regarding conscientious objection at all in another.

‘During the reporting period, OHCHR documented the cases of five men who were assigned to military duty and transferred to a military training facility after attempting to exercise their right of conscientious objection to military service. In all cases, the men were arbitrarily detained between two to four days by military personnel responsible for conscription and subjected to ill-treatment or torture. They faced threats of violence and ‘being sent to the frontline’, and four of them were subjected to beatings and suffocation and being dragged across the floor.’¹⁶²

15.3.3 In an undated online article, The European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO), stated:

‘Those who have persisted in declaring themselves conscientious objectors have been prosecuted as draft evaders ...

‘At least 24 conscientious objectors have faced criminal cases that have reached court since February 2022, others are under investigation under Article 336 ("Refusing call-up for military service during mobilisation or in a special period, and for military service during call-up of reservists in a special period") of the Criminal Code, which carries a penalty of three to five years imprisonment.

‘Christian conscientious objectors Vitaliy Alexeienko and Dmytro Zelinsky became prisoners of conscience after their religiously-motivated refusal to serve in the army. Zelinsky was initially acquitted, but then sentenced to

¹⁶¹ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ukraine](#), 26 June 2024

¹⁶² OHCHR, [Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine](#), page 21. 31 December 2024

three years' imprisonment after a prosecution appeal. Alexeienko...initial conviction was overturned by the Supreme Court in May 2023 on the grounds that the first instance court had refused to consider arguments of conscience, but on retrial he received a suspended sentence for draft evasion, upheld in March 2024 against his appeal asking for acquittal and a prosecution appeal to replace the suspended sentence with actual incarceration...

'three other conscientious objectors, a Jehovah's Witness, an Evangelical Christian, and Protestant conscientious objector Serhy Stadnitsky had been sentenced to three year terms of actual imprisonment.

'Several other conscientious objectors were sentenced to suspended prison terms. Mykhailo Yavorsky was initially sentenced for actual prison term despite that the court considered his conscientious objection a mitigating factor, the court of appeal in Ivano-Frankivsk changed the verdict to suspended prison term, and Yavorsky has lodged a cassation complaint against his conviction which the Supreme Court rejected on 2 May 2024.

'Andrii Vyshnevetsky, a religious objector and member of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement, was denied discharge from military service, and the Supreme Court refused to grant his lawsuit to President Zelensky; after cassation the Grand Chamber of the Supreme Court quashed on procedural grounds the inaccurate judgement of first instance and wrote that the judiciary have no powers to compel President Zelensky to act for protection of human right to conscientious objection, to remedy relevant gaps in legislation. The Ukrainian Pacifist Movement complained to the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, which refused to open proceedings.'¹⁶³

15.3.4 In March 2025, Forum 18 stated:

'Officials took Baptist Serhy Semchuk to prison in Lviv in January for his 5-year jail sentence. The Recruitment Office had told him he could serve in the military without weapons. However, later a criminal case was launched when he refused to take up weapons ...

'Conscientious objectors to mobilisation who were not in the military also increasingly face prosecution on "disobedience" charges, including 6 Jehovah's Witnesses on trial. Many Protestant and Jehovah's Witness conscientious objectors are on trial for refusing mobilisation ...

'In February and March, officials took four convicted Jehovah's Witness conscientious objectors - including Vitaly Kriushenko - to prison to begin serving their 3-year jail sentences. At least four other conscientious objectors – two Jehovah's Witnesses, a Pentecostal and a Baptist - will be taken to prison to begin serving their 3-year jail sentences if they lose their appeals.

'...Perhaps 200 cases against conscientious objectors under Criminal Code Article 336 are already in court. Of these, 171 are against Jehovah's Witness, Jehovah's Witnesses told Forum 18. Others facing such prosecutions include Baptists (including Council of Churches Baptists), Pentecostals and Seventh-day Adventists ... Investigators have opened perhaps 600 criminal cases against conscientious objectors who have requested alternative civilian service under Criminal Code Article 336 which

¹⁶³ EBCO, [Ukraine. European Bureau for Conscientious Objection](#), no date

have not yet reached court.’¹⁶⁴

15.3.5 In their ‘The State of the World’s Human Rights: April 2025’ Ukraine report, Amnesty International stated: ‘Religious freedom watchdog Forum18 reported a surge of new criminal cases opened against conscientious objectors since the middle of the year, bringing the total number to around 300, in addition to over 80 cases that had already reached trial.’¹⁶⁵

15.3.6 In May 2025, the Kyiv Independent reported on a court ruling disallowing religious belief as grounds for exemption from military service. It noted:

‘Ukraine’s Supreme Court ruled that citizens cannot refuse military service during wartime based on religious beliefs, emphasizing that the obligation to defend the nation applies to all Ukrainians during Russia’s full-scale invasion, the court’s press office said on May 1.

‘The ruling comes from a case involving a member of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, a religious group whose doctrine forbids any form of military service. Lower courts had convicted a man for failing to report to a military recruitment office after receiving a summons. He was sentenced to three years in prison under Article 336 of Ukraine’s Criminal Code for evading conscription during mobilization.

‘The man’s defense argued that his refusal was grounded in deeply held religious convictions and that criminal prosecution should not apply in such a case. However, the Supreme Court upheld the conviction, citing the state of martial law and the urgent need for national defense.

“Ukraine has introduced alternatives to (mandatory) military service in peacetime, and Ukrainian citizens can freely use them,” the court said in a statement. “However, in wartime, during mobilization and defensive war, the duty to defend Ukraine, which has been aggressively attacked by the Russian Federation, is imposed on all citizens of Ukraine, regardless of their religion.”

‘The court added that Ukraine’s current state of defensive war against a far larger and more heavily resourced Russia constitutes an “exceptional public need,” which justifies limitations on certain freedoms, including religious exemptions from military service.

‘Citing previous European Court of Human Rights rulings, the Supreme Court acknowledged the importance of balancing freedom of religion with state obligations. It noted that no ECHR decision has addressed a comparable case involving such a large-scale war and national threat.’¹⁶⁶

15.3.7 In May 2025 the Norwegian COI service Landinfo (translated using free online tools), reported:

‘Those who refuse service for reasons of conscience may be punished under Article 336 of the Criminal Code (“Refusing to be called up for military service during mobilization or for a special period, and for military service during the call-up of reservists for a special period”) with imprisonment for three to five years (Corley 2024a). In the fall of 2024, a small but growing group of conscientious objectors who are not serving were prosecuted under

¹⁶⁴ Forum 18, [Conscientious objectors prosecuted, jailed as "disobedient" soldiers](#), 10 March 2025

¹⁶⁵ Amnesty International, [Human rights in Ukraine](#), (Conscientious objectors’ rights), 28 April 2025

¹⁶⁶ Kyiv Independent, [Ukraine's Supreme Court rules religious belief does not exempt ...](#), 1 May 2025

Article 402, Part Four of the Criminal Code (“Disobedience Committed under Martial Law or in a Combat Situation”). This provision is usually used against those already serving. The penalty is imprisonment for five to ten years (Corley 2025).’

‘Since February 2022, over 500 criminal cases have reportedly been opened against conscientious objectors. By the end of 2024, around 300 were under investigation for conscientious objection (Corley 2024a). According to Forum 18, the number of criminal prosecutions has increased since the summer of 2024, when the Attorney General instructed local prosecutors to take legal action against conscientious objectors (Corley 2024a). Several individuals have appealed to the Supreme Court, but their appeals were unsuccessful.’¹⁶⁷

15.3.8 On 8 July 2025, JW.org noted:

‘On May 28, 2025, the Starokostiantyniv District Court of the Khmelnytskyi Region sentenced 33-year-old Brother Oleksandr Shnyra to a three-year prison term for refusing to serve in the military. Notably, the court placed Oleksandr under house arrest while he appeals the decision.

‘... Brother Hennadii Barabash, a 48-year-old father of two young children, was forcibly transported to a military compound and enlisted into military service against his will. When he refused to carry out military orders, the authorities charged him with insubordination. On June 10, 2025, the Lychakivskyi District Court in the city of Lviv placed Hennadii in pretrial detention.’¹⁶⁸

15.3.9 An undated article by the same source noted: ‘As of August 18, 2025, a total of five Witness men are in prison for conscientious objection and are serving sentences of up to 60 months. An additional two Witness men are currently in pretrial detention, awaiting sentencing.’¹⁶⁹

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16. Prison

16.1.1 Sources consulted for the DIS ‘Ukraine- Prison Conditions, 2024 update’ report disagreed about where those punished for evading military service would be held. The report stated:

‘According to the KhPG [Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group¹⁷⁰], the question concerning where draft evaders and conscientious objectors are held is difficult to answer in definite terms ... individuals cannot be imprisoned immediately. There must first be a trial. If convicted, a person who refused to mobilise, and hence did not become a military serviceman, will not be sent to a [disciplinary battalion] disbat, but to a regular prison institution.

‘Asked if a person would be considered a civilian or a military person after not showing up for the military when receiving a call-up letter, the Commissioner for Human Rights in places of detention noted that up to the point where a person has received a conscription letter, they are considered

¹⁶⁷ Landinfo 2025, [Theme note Ukraine Mobilisation](#), (page 17), 2 May 2025

¹⁶⁸ JW.org, [Ukraine Sentences Two More Brothers for Conscientious Objection](#), 8 July 2025

¹⁶⁹ JW.org, [Imprisoned for their faith – Ukraine](#), undated

¹⁷⁰ Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (KHPG), [About the KHPG](#), 26 February 2023

civilian.¹⁷¹

- 16.1.2 Sources consulted for the DIS ‘Ukraine- Prison Conditions, 2024 update’ report similarly disagreed about where those punished for deserting from military service would be held. The report stated:

‘The KhPG stated that if a person ... is sentenced to prison for desertion, then the person in question was already considered serving in the army and hence a military serviceman. If convicted, such a person would serve time in a disbat, according to UwT [Ukraine without Torture¹⁷²]. The source noted that this is not their field of expertise. The KhPG said that all servicemen serve their sentences in disbats.

‘PPU [Protection for Prisoners of Ukraine¹⁷³], however, stated that military personnel who have violated Article 407 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, by unlawfully leaving their military units, according to Ukrainian criminal law can be placed in a disbat or assigned a prison sentence, in which case the individual would serve their sentence in a general correctional colony. Pursuant to Article 407 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, the place where the individual would serve their sentence depends on the length of the period in which the person was absent without leave from a military unit or place of service.’¹⁷⁴

- 16.1.3 The DIS ‘Ukraine- Prison Conditions, 2024 update’ reported on detention of convicted military personnel. It stated:

‘According to Article 17 of the Criminal Executive Code of Ukraine, a disciplinary battalion serves as the means for carrying out punishments involving the detention of convicted military personnel in a disciplinary battalion. This applies to conscripted servicemen, contracted servicemen, officers on professional military service, officers on conscription service, military personnel mobilised for service during special periods and reserve personnel called up for special duty (excluding female military personnel) ...

‘The 307th Disciplinary Battalion is a specialised institution housing a specific group of individuals who have not committed serious criminal offences... The vast majority of detainees are military personnel who have violated Article 407 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, meaning that they have unlawfully left their military units.

‘The court, considering the circumstances and the individual profile, can deem it possible to replace imprisonment of up to two years with detention in a disciplinary battalion for the same term. However, detention in a disciplinary battalion instead of imprisonment cannot be applied to individuals who have previously served imprisonment sentences...

‘The detention of a military member in a disciplinary battalion applies exclusively to convicted military personnel.’¹⁷⁵

- 16.1.4 The same source described living conditions in disbats:

‘According to KhPG, the conditions in the disbats are not bad. Before the

¹⁷¹ DIS, [“Ukraine: Prison conditions, 2024 update”](#), Executive summary, December 2024

¹⁷² Ukraine without Torture (UwT), [About Us -Ukraine without torture](#) , no date

¹⁷³ Protection for Prisoners of Ukraine (PPU), [PROTECTION OF PRISONERS OF UKRAINE](#), no date

¹⁷⁴ DIS, [“Ukraine: Prison conditions, 2024 update”](#), Executive summary, December 2024

¹⁷⁵ DIS, [“Ukraine: Prison conditions, 2024 update”](#), pages 29-30, December 2024

war, there were very few convicts there, and the authorities managed to renovate the facilities. The disbats have allegedly not changed for the worse. As the number of prisoners has increased, however, the facilities are gradually wearing down. In terms of access to healthcare in disbats, the same issues as in regular colonies prevail, including a lack of personnel and medical supplies. There can be no more than 500 convicts in a single disbat. The KhPG did not have precise information on the total number of prisoners serving their sentences in disbats. As of October 2024, KhPG has not documented cases of harsh treatment or torture in these facilities. KhPG informed DIS about a trend that has emerged where soldiers desert their posts, preferring to be sent to a colony rather than stay at the front. The source added that in a paradoxical way, prisoners have more rights, such as a set sentence and the possibility of early release, which soldiers do not have....

‘CPT [European Committee for the prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment¹⁷⁶] visited military detention facilities (so called *hauptvakhtas*) in Kyiv, Odesa and Zhytomyr. These facilities house five types of servicemen detainees: persons who need to sober up or who are placed in preliminary custody; those in remand custody by a court order; persons sentenced by a court; persons sentenced to administrative arrest for a maximum of 15 days; and POWs before they are transported to other facilities. CPT found no cases of ill-treatment or inter-detainee violence. The overall material conditions were reportedly acceptable with equipment such as beds, lockers, tables, radio and often TVs, etc. The cells did not lack artificial lighting, heating nor ventilation. The detainees were supplied with items for personal hygiene and clothing. Nevertheless, there were some problems with access to natural lights in some cells because of the observance of the blackout in connection with the war, as well as the fact that only one shower was granted per week, while the CPT standard is at least twice each week. All detainees could participate in outdoor exercise on a daily basis for one hour, in addition to voluntary unpaid labour and attend military drills. However, servicemen remand detainees could not participate in organised activities or make telephone calls. Administrative detainees are not permitted to have visits. According to CPT, the detainees were provided with satisfactory healthcare assistance.’¹⁷⁷

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17. Conduct of Ukrainian military

17.1.1 In April 2025, the 82nd session of the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel Inhuman or degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) considered reports on the situation in several countries, including Ukraine. In the Committee’s ‘Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Ukraine’ it stated:

‘Violations of the Convention by the State party in the context of the armed conflict and occupation

‘The Committee notes the State party’s commitment and measures taken to abide by international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the context of the ongoing armed conflict and occupation... However, it is

¹⁷⁶ CPT, [European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman ...](#), updated 14 April 2025

¹⁷⁷ DIS, [“Ukraine: Prison conditions, 2024 update”](#), page 31-32, December 2024

concerned by reports indicating:

‘(a) Allegations of torture, including sexual violence, ill-treatment, threats, humiliation, ... and deaths in custody of Russian prisoners of war, allegedly committed by the Ukrainian armed forces and military police ... although it notes the State party’s denial of the existence of such unofficial places; the lack of information on the procedural safeguards provided to the captured prisoners of war; and the inadequate recording and reporting of visible injuries of Russian soldiers sustained by torture or ill-treatment. In this regard, the Committee takes into account 20 investigations launched by the general prosecutor’s office into war crimes committed by the members of Ukrainian armed forces and expects further information on their outcome;

‘(b) Acts of torture and ill-treatment and arbitrary detentions allegedly inflicted on ... “conflict-related detainees” ... including to extract confessions or information ... although it also notes the State party’s negation of the existence of such unofficial places ... The Committee notes the existing draft law to amend this article, as informed by the delegation;

‘(c) The alleged lack of adequate and prompt investigations into allegations of torture, ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, arbitrary and incommunicado detention allegedly committed by members of the Ukrainian army and other forces in the conflict zones in the east since 2014 ...

‘(d) Alleged abuses committed by enlistment officers towards civilians and conscripts, including towards conscientious ...’¹⁷⁸

- 17.1.2 In March 2024, the UN OHCHR, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment’, stated: ‘The Special Rapporteur received several allegations of mistreatment of Russian prisoners of war by Ukrainian authorities over the course of her visit. They included the use of intimidatory tactics and of physical violence during the transfer from the front line or after being brought in for questioning, including in non-official places of detention.’¹⁷⁹

- 17.1.3 The same source reported:

‘The Special Rapporteur visited camp Zakhid-1, the largest camp for prisoners of war in Ukraine, located in the village of Zaklad, on the outskirts of Lviv. At the time of the visit, the number of persons held in the facility did not exceed the number of places for which the facility was designed.

‘The Special Rapporteur found that sincere efforts were being made by the Ukrainian authorities to treat Russian prisoners of war held there with respect...

‘Prisoners expressed being generally satisfied with the overall conditions and treatment in the prison ... A number said they had not been expecting this level of treatment.

‘The Special Rapporteur asked the prisoners she interviewed whether they had been tortured or ill-treated while at the camp. None of them said that they had been. A few of them, however, reported instances of abusive treatment, including verbal abuse and having been beaten following their capture in combat, during their transfer to various detention facilities or while

¹⁷⁸ UN CAT, [82 Session. Ukraine. Concluding observations](#), 1 May 2025

¹⁷⁹ UN OHCHR, [Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and ...](#) (Para 51, 52), 15 February 2024

in custody in such places, before their arrival at Zakhid-1.

‘The Special Rapporteur notes that responsibility for the overall treatment of prisoners of war has been assumed by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, although the camp was managed day-to-day by staff and officers of the Ukrainian armed forces. Those responsible for the management of the camp expressed the view that the handling of prisoners of war had significantly and continuously improved since the beginning of the conflict, something acknowledged also by international actors. ... The Government ... was determined to ensure that no prisoner of war would be tortured or ill-treated.

‘With regard to camp Zakhid-1 in particular, the understanding of the authorities was that ill-treatment only happened occasionally. They were aware that the risk of torture for prisoners was higher during the first hours after their capture and during transfer to various places of detention. Those two distinct phases, however, involved different institutional responsibilities.’¹⁸⁰

17.1.4 In December 2024, UN OHCHR’s ‘Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine’, stated:

‘... OHCHR interviewed 25 Russian POWs in Ukrainian internment facilities, including in the newly opened camp “Zakhid-4” in Lviv city. All but one reported experiencing torture or ill-treatment in 2024 at one or several stages of captivity. Fourteen POWs were subjected to sexual violence.

‘Consistent with OHCHR’s previous findings, torture and ill-treatment predominantly occurred in transit places before POWs were transferred to official places of detention. In addition, seven POWs were beaten during “admission procedures” or while escorted out of cells in official places of detention.

‘Torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, appeared to be particularly prevalent in one transit facility controlled by Ukrainian forces and located close to the frontline in an eastern region. Twelve of the 25 Russian POWs interviewed in this reporting period were held in this facility, providing detailed and consistent information on their treatment and conditions of detention. They consistently told OHCHR that POWs who were brought to this location underwent torture commonly described as the “admission procedure” that consisted of severe beatings with plastic tubes, batons, and a whip, dousing with cold water, and dog attacks. The POWs interviewed had also been strapped to a chair and received electric shocks, including – in 11 cases – with clamps attached to genitalia. In this same transit facility, OHCHR documented the death of one Russian POW and continues to follow-up on credible allegations of the deaths of two others (all men) resulting from torture in May and June 2024. In addition, POWs held at this location were forced to work for nine hours daily digging pits and tending a vegetable garden. Only POWs who worked received food, once per day in the evening. The Office of the Prosecutor General launched a criminal investigation into the allegations of torture at this facility. The Coordination Headquarters on Treatment of POWs, the General Staff of Ukrainian Armed Forces, and the Ministry of Defence also confirmed investigations are

¹⁸⁰ UN OHCHR, [Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and ...](#) (Para 53 to 70). 20 March 2024

ongoing.’¹⁸¹

17.1.5 Human Rights Watch (HRW) published their 2024 World Report on Ukraine, based on events in the country during 2023. It noted: ‘Throughout the year, Ukrainian forces also carried out some “likely indiscriminate attacks and two incidents that qualify as war crimes,” the UN Commission of Inquiry (UN Col) stated in its March report.’¹⁸² The HRW 2025 World Report did not report any war crimes committed by Ukraine during the year 2024¹⁸³.

17.1.6 In June 2025, the BBC published a report on the trial of a Russian soldier for execution for the first time. The report stated:

‘...A Russian soldier...Dmitriy Kurashov, callsign 'Stalker', was about to go on trial for the alleged battlefield execution of Vitalii Hodniuk, a veteran 41-year-old Ukrainian soldier known by the callsign 'Penguin'.

The trial was to be the first of its kind. According to Ukrainian authorities, Russian troops have executed at least 124 prisoners of war on the battlefield since the full-scale invasion began, but Kurashov is the first person to be brought to trial in Ukraine for the crime. His case is one of a tiny number among the tens of thousands of open war crimes cases where a suspect has been captured and can be made to stand in the dock. Adding to the unprecedented nature of the event, three members of Kurashov's own unit had agreed to testify against him.

The seriousness with which Ukraine is treating this criminal prosecution is apparent. The SBU investigation produced more than 2,000 pages of evidence. Each of the witnesses was put through filmed reconstructions of the event on a Ukrainian army shooting range. In court, all efforts have been made by the prosecutor and the judges to ensure that Kurashov understands his rights, that he can understand his interpreter, and is given the opportunity to cross examine witnesses against him – an opportunity he has so far declined. (Kurashov's state-appointed lawyer declined to speak to the BBC. She has spoken only briefly in court, on administrative matters and to clarify some descriptions of the event by witnesses.). Kurashov's trial continues.’¹⁸⁴

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¹⁸¹ UN OHCHR, [Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine](#), page 21. 31 December 2024

¹⁸² HRW, [World Report 2024](#), 11 January 2024

¹⁸³ HRW, [World Report 2025](#), 16 January 2025

¹⁸⁴ BBC, [The first trial of its kind: A Russian soldier takes the stand for an execution](#), 15 June 2025

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Military service
 - Ukrainian Forces
 - Relevant law
 - Changes to law since Russian invasion
- Conscription
 - Procedures of call-up and registration
 - Eligibility, age, health, gender
 - Reservists
 - Contractors
 - Length of service
- Exemptions
 - Grounds for exemption
 - Conscientious objection
 - Alternative forms of service
 - Action taken by the state
- Conditions of service
 - Requirements of conscripts
 - Training, pay
 - Areas of posting
 - War crimes
 - Mistreatment during military service
- Draft evaders, and deserters
 - Records of conscripts kept by the state and used to detect evaders/deserters
 - Legislation- penalties and convictions
 - Actions taken by the state
 - Prison

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **9.0**
- valid from **30 September 2025**

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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Changes from last version of this note

Updated COI including new laws changing eligibility for mobilisation and increased penalties for evasion and desertion from military service during mobilisation.

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Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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