



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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Post-Distribution

Monitoring Report

Winter Cash Assistance

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Abbreviations	3
Executive Summary	4
Overview of UNHCR’s 2025/2026 winter cash programme	5
Methodology	6
Limitations	6
Household profiles and socio-economic conditions	7
Household composition and demographic profile	7
Self-reported specific needs on household level	8
Access to regular or war-related social benefits	8
Outcomes of UNHCR’s winter cash assistance	10
Positive impact on well-being and living conditions	10
High satisfaction levels with winter cash assistance	11
Ongoing needs	11
Availability of items and services and expenditure patterns	12
Expenditure patterns	12
Amount spent on solid fuel for households	13
Information sharing and perceptions around eligibility	14
Information sharing on cash assistance	14
Selection criteria and availability for cash assistance	15
Feedback and complaints management	15
Beneficiary selection and preferences about cash assistance	16
Respondent feedback and gratitude	16
Conclusions and Recommendations	17
Key findings	17

Cover Photo: Fedir, 68, lives alone in the town of Hlukhiv, Sumy region, after losing his wife to a terminal illness. From his home, it is only 10 kilometres to the Russian border. There is no active frontline here, but the proximity brings daily risks and regular shelling, prompting the authorities to introduce a mandatory evacuation order in 2024. Since then, about one-third of the town’s 30,000 pre-war residents have left. But many, especially older people like Fedir, remain – hoping that the war will spare their homes and the lives they have built here. Ahead of winter, Fedir received winter cash assistance from UNHCR and was able to buy firewood which he used to heat his house during cold months. © UNHCR/Iryna Tymchyshyn

Abbreviations

CBI	Cash-Based Intervention
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
HH	Household
KIIS	Kyiv International Institute of Sociology
MoSPFU	Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine
NFI	Non-Food Items
OTC	Over-the-counter (cash pick-up without bank account)
PDM	Post-Distribution Monitoring
PFU	Pension Fund of Ukraine
SMS	Short message service
UAH	Ukraine Hryvnia
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USD	United States Dollars

Executive Summary

This Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) report assesses the relevance, effectiveness and outcomes of UNHCR's 2025/2026 Winter Cash Assistance programme in Ukraine, which formed a significant component of the [UN inter-agency Winter Response Plan](#). The findings are based on **2,985** telephone interviews conducted in January 2026 with beneficiary households that received assistance primarily between October and December 2025.

UNHCR's winter response complemented a nationally-led effort to support conflict-affected populations during the cold season. Implemented under Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 985, the programme was delivered in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity, the Pension Fund of Ukraine and oblast authorities. A one-off transfer of **UAH 19,400 per household** was provided to approximately **122,200 households (193,300 individuals)** across frontline oblasts, prioritising households living within 0–10 km of the frontline and vulnerable households in surrounding areas. Local authorities led application intake and beneficiary identification, the Pension Fund supported eligibility confirmation, and UNHCR provided verification, de-duplication, payment delivery and monitoring.

The PDM results highlight the relevance, timeliness and impact of UNHCR's winter cash response. The findings confirm that the programme achieved its primary objective of helping vulnerable households meet winter heating needs through a flexible and dignified form of assistance. **91%** of beneficiaries used the transfer to purchase firewood or other heating fuel, while **88%** reported improved living conditions and **77%** reported reduced stress levels. As a result of the winter cash payment, many households were also able to use limited resources for other urgent needs such as utilities and healthcare.

The programme was strongly valued by beneficiaries. **90%** of respondents said they would prefer cash assistance in future responses. More than **95%** were satisfied with the process of receiving assistance, **99%** felt safe receiving and using the transfer, and **98%** reported no complaints or feedback regarding the support received.

Operationally, the response demonstrated that large-scale seasonal assistance can be delivered efficiently through partnership with national systems. Around **93%** of payments were transferred directly to bank accounts, while alternative over-the-counter modalities helped ensure access for households without banking services. Many households also reported receiving pensions, disability benefits or other public assistance, highlighting the importance of complementarity between humanitarian support and national social protection systems.

At the same time, significant needs remain. **54%** of respondents reported that the fuel purchased was not enough for the full winter season, underlining the continued economic pressure faced by many frontline households. This underscores the protective role of winter cash in sustaining families in close proximity to the frontline where they wish to stay, together with broader humanitarian support, social assistance and recovery efforts.

Overall, the 2025/2026 Winter Cash Assistance programme demonstrates the value of timely, targeted and partnership-based support for communities affected by war and seasonal hardship.

Overview of UNHCR’s 2025/2026 winter cash programme

Post-distribution monitoring is a core component of UNHCR’s ongoing effort to ensure accountability to those we serve, to understand the impact of interventions, and to inform future programmatic decisions. UNHCR’s methodology relies on random sampling of the beneficiary population, using standard, contextualized questionnaires, and preserves the anonymity of respondents.

UNHCR’s 2025–2026 winter response formed part of the inter-agency winter response plan and complemented the Government of Ukraine’s efforts to mitigate the possible effects of Ukraine’s harsh winter on displaced, war-affected, and other vulnerable populations in close proximity to the frontline. In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity, the Pension Fund of Ukraine and oblast authorities, UNHCR provided UAH 19,400 per household to approximately 122,200 households (193,300 individuals) in frontline oblasts to support winter-specific needs such as solid fuel and warm clothing.

The application and registration phase were fully government-led. The cooperation between the government, UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations was guided by the CMU Resolution No. 985 on provision of one-time financial assistance for the purchase of solid fuel, which defined eligibility criteria (use of solid fuel for heating), geographical prioritization (0–10 km and 10+ km zones from the frontline) and vulnerability categories. The primary focus of UNHCR support was on people residing in the 0-10 km zone, where the harsh winter season was compounded by war-damaged homes, disrupted power infrastructure, and limited access to critical services. In the 10+ zone UNHCR aimed to provide support to households with specific vulnerabilities, including older people, people with disabilities and IDPs.

Upon receipt of beneficiary lists from the government authorities, UNHCR initiated the data review process and deduplication of winter support with other humanitarian agencies, followed by preparation of final payment lists. The majority of payments were sent out by UNHCR in October-December 2025. Transfers were implemented through direct bank transfers to beneficiaries’ IBAN accounts complemented by over-the-counter (OTC) withdrawal options for households without access to banking services. During the period of October 2025 - March 2026, UNHCR disbursed more than 128,157 payments (including repeated attempts to reach households whose initial payments failed): 118,682 payments (93%) to IBANs and 9,475 payments (7%) through OTC.¹

Figure 1a | Winter cash recipients reached by raion inside the 10 km zone from the frontline or the border

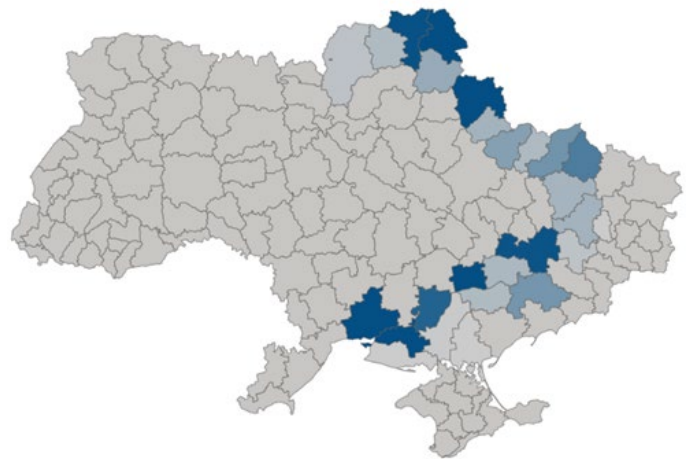
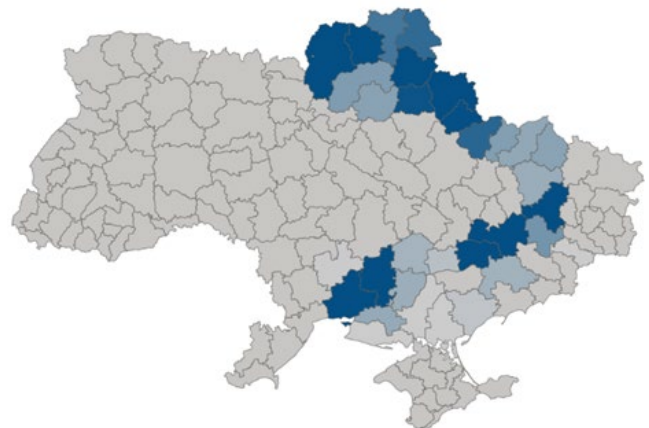


Figure 1b | Winter cash recipients reached by raion outside the 10km zone



¹ The total of 128,157 payments exceeds the number of enrolled households because it includes repeated payment attempts to reach beneficiaries whose initial transactions failed.

METHODOLOGY

This study was implemented by Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) as a quantitative Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) survey covering the Cash-Based Intervention (CBI) Winter Cash programme. The PDM aims to assess beneficiaries' experiences with the assistance received, identify operational strengths and gaps, and generate evidence-based recommendations to improve service delivery and effectiveness.

For each oblast, the required sample size was calculated to achieve a 95% confidence level and $\pm 5\%$ margin of error. In total, this resulted in **2,985 interviews across eight oblasts, conducted in January 2026**. KIIS used UNHCR's assistance enrolment lists as the sampling frame. Within each oblast, beneficiaries were randomly selected from the enrolment database to ensure equal probability of inclusion. In cases of non-response or ineligible contacts, replacements were drawn from the pre-selected reserve list within the same oblast. The required sample size per oblast was determined based on the total number of beneficiary households (HHs) in each location.

To account for anticipated non-response (e.g., unreachable phone numbers, refusals), a replacement was applied. Replacement contacts were randomly selected from the same beneficiary lists to maintain representativeness. Data was collected through Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) using a standardized questionnaire.

LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the data is based on self-reported information from respondents, which may be subject to recall bias or social desirability bias. Second, the study provides a snapshot of conditions at one point in time and cannot capture longer-term trends or impacts. Finally, the study's findings are specific to UNHCR winter cash assistance beneficiaries and may not be generalizable to other cash assistance programs or the broader population. These limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the findings or using them to inform policy decisions.

Household profiles and socio-economic conditions

This section outlines the geographical distribution of the surveyed respondents and provides key demographic characteristics. It includes a breakdown by gender, age groups, and household composition, offering insights into the socio-demographic structure of the beneficiary population reached with winter cash assistance.

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Among all respondents (2,985 cases), 68% (2,037 respondents) were women and 32% (948 respondents) were men. This gender distribution is due to the predominant share of women in Ukraine, who are more likely to be heads of households; it is also worth noting that this trend has significantly intensified during the war.

More than half of the survey respondents are 60 years or older, which indicates a significant share of people in this age category as heads of households. 37% of heads of households are middle-aged respondents (36-59 years), and the share of young people (18-35 years) is the smallest with 8%.

These figures reflect a general trend where older households are more likely to remain in frontline communities, especially outside urban centres, while younger people demonstrate mobility practices and move to safer areas.

The **average household across the entire sample has 2.2 members**. Significant differences in household size exist when considering age of the head of household. Older households tend to be smaller, with an average of 1.8 members, with nearly half of them living in single-person households.

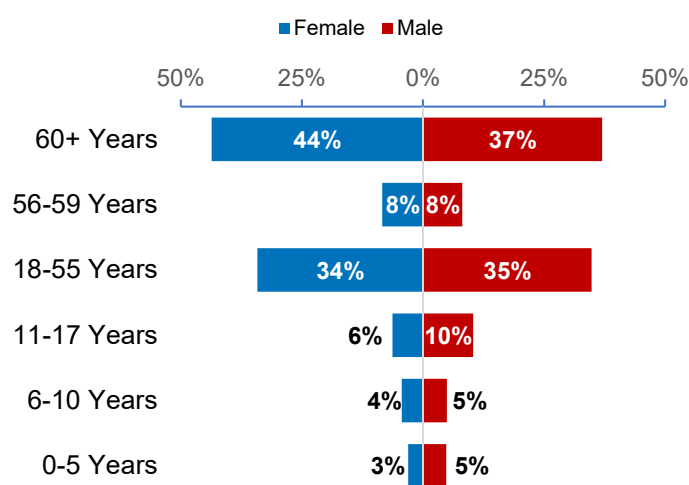
The distribution of gender and age among household members is relatively balanced. The only significant difference is observed in the category of people 60 years and older where the share of women is 7 percentage points higher than for men (44% vs. 37%).

Almost half (47%) of the households surveyed are non-displaced families, 40% are IDP families still in displacement and 13% are households who returned to their area of origin.

Table 1 | Demographic differences by zone

	0 - 10km	10+ zone
Gender of head of household		
Female	64.7%	69.2%
Male	35.3%	30.8%
Age of head of household		
18-35 years	5.6%	8.2%
36-59 years	42.8%	35.5%
60+ years	51.5%	56.2%
Households with children		
% of households with at least one child (0-17)	15.8%	22.2%
Average household size, by age of head of household		
18-35 years	2.8	3.4
36-59 years	2.3	2.6
60+ years	1.7	1.8
Displacement status		
War-affected non-displaced	53.8%	45.1%
IDP in displacement	36.6%	40.9%
Returnees (IDPs or Refugees)	9.7%	13.9%

Figure 2 | Household member distribution by gender and age



SELF-REPORTED SPECIFIC NEEDS ON HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

Participants were asked whether their households had any characteristics that might lead to greater socioeconomic needs.

Table 2 | Self-reported household vulnerabilities by geographic location

Category	Total	0-10 km zone	10+ km zone
Households with one or more people with specific needs	49%	40%	52%
Head of household is retired	44%	49%	43%
HH residing in areas of armed conflict and where conflict is ongoing	38%	61%	32%
Female headed household	29%	32%	28%
HH affected by sudden shelling	25%	42%	20%
Head of household is unemployed	13%	18%	12%
Older headed household	13%	15%	12%
Single headed households with at least 1 child under 18 years of age or older family members (over 55 years of age)	8%	10%	8%
Other	5%	3%	5%
None of the above	6%	2%	6%

Most households surveyed (94%) confirm that they fall under one or more vulnerability categories. Half of all households (49%) have one or more persons with specific needs (disability, chronic illness, etc.), 44% are headed by persons who are retired, and 38% say they reside in areas of armed conflict and where conflict is ongoing. 25% of respondents say their household was affected by sudden shelling. Naturally, these vulnerabilities are more prevalent in the areas closest to the frontline.

ACCESS TO REGULAR OR WAR-RELATED SOCIAL PROTECTION BENEFITS

Access to the social protection system remains a major concern for households in frontline oblasts. Overall, **40% of households report receiving regular state benefits**, such as pensions or disability or child-related payments. More than half said they do not receive any regular social benefits. **Some 35% of respondents state that they have received assistance as a conflict-affected person.** It is noteworthy that there is no significant difference for households within and outside the 10km zone, even though this information is self-reported, the overall low share of confirmed government support points to a high risk of exclusion if winter cash assistance was provided based on existing government lists without adequate verification.

Figure 3 | Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, did your household receive cash assistance from the government as a conflict-affected person?

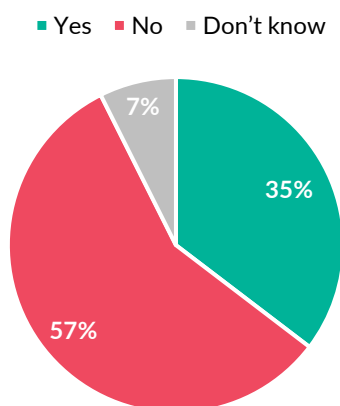
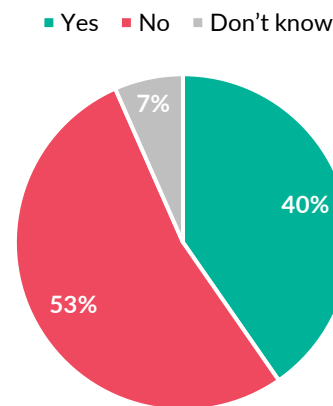
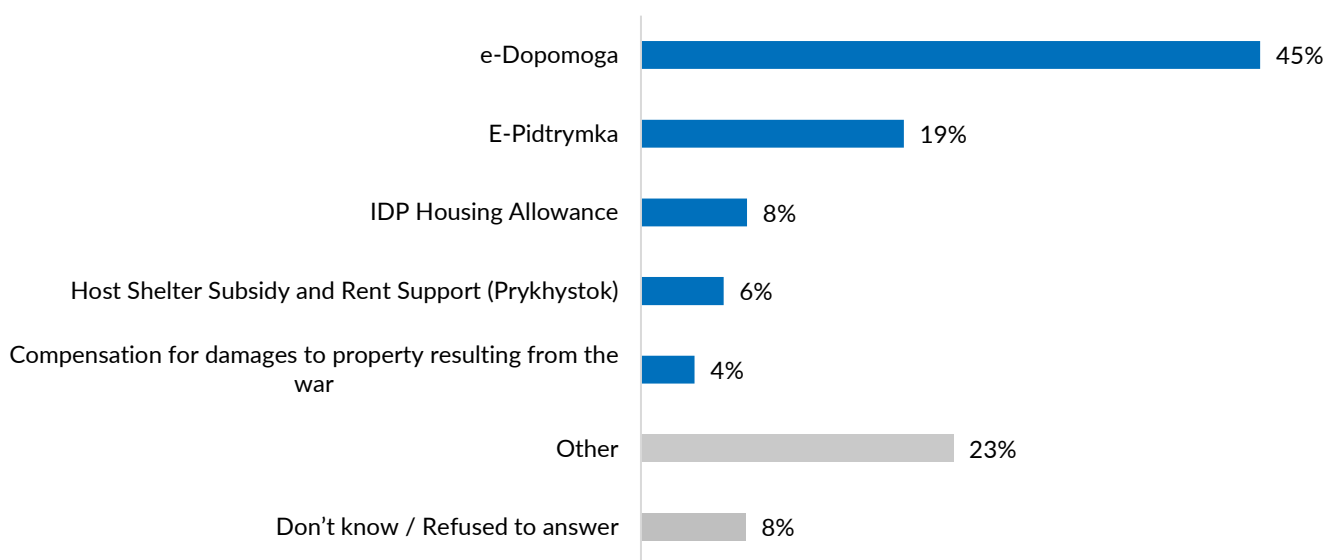


Figure 4 | Does your household receive regular social benefits?



Among the 40% who receive social benefits cash assistance, 71% received or started receiving this payment before they registered for winter cash assistance. Almost half received support through the IDP and Conflict-Affected People Emergency Support Programme (e-Dopomoga), and some 19% say they received e-Pidtrymka assistance.² Other types of financial assistance from the government were reported by 21% of respondents, such as the President’s winter assistance programme, shelter-related support including the e-Vidnovleniya programme, and state social benefits. The latter include pensions, support for people with disabilities, support for large families, support for caregivers, and subsidies for utility services. Some beneficiaries also indicated receipt of cash assistance of 10,800 UAH / person, i.e. cash transfers provided by humanitarian actors.

Figure 5 | Social support programmes after the begin of the full-scale invasion
multiple choice, 1,056 unique respondents



² e-Dopomoga is a comprehensive governmental aid programme designed to assist the conflict-affected population in Ukraine. It has three components (cash assistance from the government, cash assistance from international organizations, assistance from volunteers). Usually, the term 'e-Dopomoga' means cash assistance from the government for IDPs. This assistance provides 2000 UAH per adult and 3000 UAH per child or person with disability per month.

Both ePidtrymka and e-Dopomoga support from international organizations were suspended before the 2025/2026 winter season. This points to respondents reporting on government assistance received in previous seasons or at the beginning of the full-scale invasion. It does not indicate duplicative assistance with UNHCR's winter cash assistance.

Outcomes of UNHCR’s winter cash assistance

POSITIVE IMPACT ON WELL-BEING AND LIVING CONDITIONS

UNHCR’s winter cash assistance contributed to improved living conditions for most beneficiaries (88%) across all oblasts, with 47% noting a significant improvement. Lower stress levels were reported by 77% of all beneficiaries. Improvements are more often reported by younger heads of household, especially when compared with respondents 60 years or older, as shown in Table 3. Positive impacts on well-being are similarly felt by respondents both in immediate vicinity of the frontline as well as outside the 10 km zone.

Table 3 | Impact on well-being by age group

	Improved living conditions*				Reduced feelings of stress**				
	Total	18-35	36-59	60+	Total	18-35	36-59	60+	
Improved	88%	97%	90%	85%	Reduced stress	77%	90%	81%	73%
No improvement	12%	3%	10%	15%	No reduction in stress	23%	10%	19%	27%

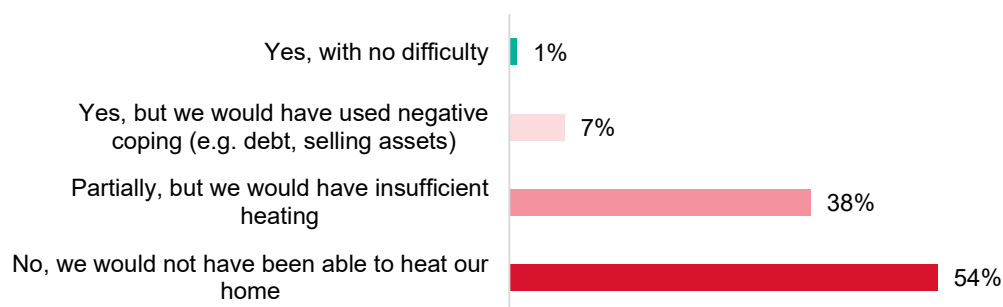
* NB: Improved/No improvement are NET results combining: improved (significantly, moderately), no improvement (slightly, not at all)

** NB: Reduced stress/No reduction in stress are NET results combining: reduced stress (significantly, moderately), no reduction in stress (slightly, not at all)

The overwhelming majority of households confirmed that winter cash assistance had a significant positive impact on thermal comfort, enabling them to stay warm during the winter season. 92% of households confirmed that winter cash assistance helped them to maintain adequate heating levels for all or part of the winter season (93%) and so enabled them to stay warm. More specifically, almost 40% said that cash assistance kept them warm all winter, 54% said they could stay warm during a part of the season.

Without UNHCR’s winter cash support, more than half of all households would not have been able to heat their house at all, and another 40% could have lived through the winter with heating turned on only at times. 7% of households could have managed without winter support by using negative coping strategies. Just 1% of households would have had sufficient heating without any difficulty.

Figure 6 | Household ability to heat home adequately without winter cash assistance



Cash assistance enabled households to acquire various necessities that would otherwise have been unattainable. As expected, the most common impact was enabling 77% of households stay warm during winter, consistent across all age groups and locations. 13% of households mentioned that cash assistance helped them meeting their healthcare needs. Covering additional health care needs was especially reported by respondents aged 60 or older. 11% of households reported being able to acquire more food. Only 5% of households reported that the assistance had no significant impact.

HIGH SATISFACTION LEVELS WITH WINTER CASH ASSISTANCE

UNHCR’s winter cash programme aimed to provide much needed relief in areas closest to the frontline, as part of UNHCR’s ongoing efforts to strengthen the government’s social protection system. Under Resolution 985, local authorities in frontline oblasts collected and consolidated applications before submitting them for vulnerability screening to the Pension Fund of Ukraine and subsequently to UNHCR and other humanitarian actors for payment. Most of UNHCR’s beneficiaries (97%) received financial assistance through bank transfers, while the remaining beneficiaries picked up physical cash at Western Union and PrivatBank branches. Virtually all confirmed that they received 19,400 UAH, the amount set out in Resolution 985.

Almost all beneficiaries (99%) felt safe receiving, keeping or spending cash assistance. Those feeling unsafe indicated threats of actual shelling or bombing as the principal concern. Virtually all respondents believe that financial assistance from UNHCR was delivered in a safe, accessible, accountable and participatory manner. **99% of beneficiaries are fully or mostly satisfied with the process of receiving cash assistance.** Only 1% of beneficiaries experienced technical issues, either because the person registered to pick up the money was not available, or because there was poor connectivity in frontline areas. **None of the households reported being coerced or asked to do anything unwanted to participate in the program.**

Collecting applications under frontline area conditions (low connectivity, power outages, stretched human resources) led to extended processing timelines for local authorities. Despite such adverse circumstances, **UNHCR had supported 178,315 individuals by 31 December 2025, meeting the expectations of 81% of respondents.** 13% said they did not receive funds within the expected timeframe. Half of the respondents received cash assistance within 1-2 months from the moment of application. 41% of respondents said they needed to wait for 3 months or longer.

ONGOING NEEDS

The survey also asked for beneficiaries’ perception of how well they can cover their basic needs. **More than half (68%) of households say they manage to cover at least half of their basic needs:** 42% say they can meet half of their basic needs, another 17% more than half, and 9% were able to meet their basic needs in full. However, 25% of all respondents struggle to cover even half of their basic needs. There is no significant difference between households living in the 0 – 10km are and those living in the rest of the oblasts.

Figure 8 | Household’s ability to meet basic needs

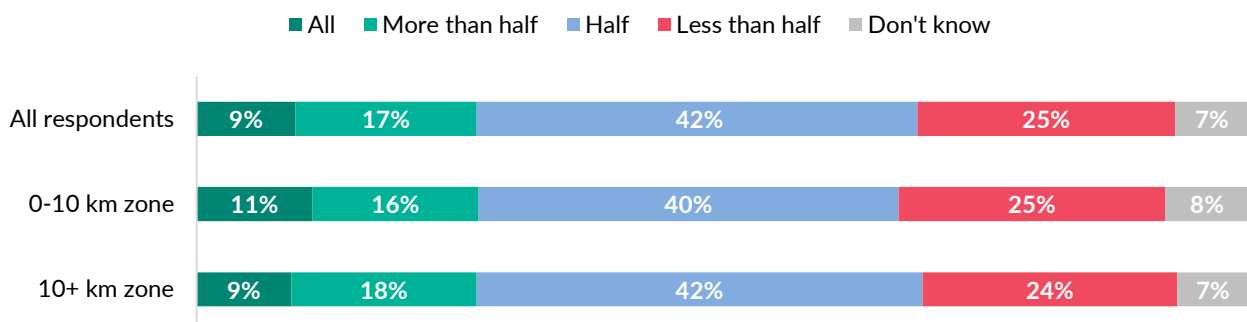
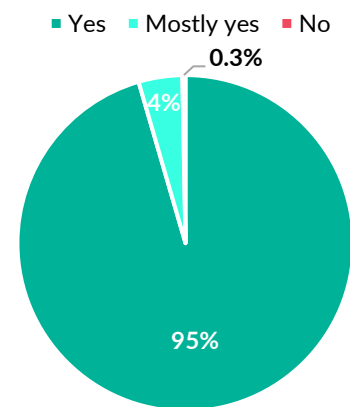


Figure 7 | Cash assistance delivered in a safe, accessible, accountable, and participatory manner



Ability to meet basic needs also varies by age, with older heads of households facing greater difficulties. 43% of respondents between 18 and 35 say they manage to cover more than half or all their basic needs. The same is true for only 27 of respondents 36 to 59 years old and for 24% of those 60 years and older. The same proportion of older respondents indicate that they can meet only less than half of their basic needs. This may be partially due to the higher expenses associated with healthcare that older households must cover, as well as with more limited access to income generating activities.

In order to meet their basic needs at an adequate level, 62% of households had to use at least one alternative coping strategy during the four weeks preceding the survey to meet basic needs. More than a third (37%) of households had to reduce spending on essential items. One third (33%) needed to tap into their savings, and some 14% needed to take out loans or borrow money. Most households (93%) say they had enough food in the past seven days, regardless of whether they lived within or outside the area 10 kilometres from the frontline.

Availability of items and services and expenditure patterns

In almost all cases (96%), the goods and services that beneficiaries needed to buy were available in local markets. Most beneficiaries surveyed (89%) also reported that they were able to find high-quality goods and services. Lack of access to fuel, medication, and building materials were the problems most frequently mentioned, mostly due to non-functional markets, unavailable services in the area, and high prices.

Table 4 | Availability of goods and services in local shops

Oblast	Yes	Mostly	No	N/A
All respondents	96%	2%	1%	1%
Donetsk	99%	1%	0.3%	0%
Kherson	87%	5%	4%	5%
Sumy	92%	2%	3%	3%
Zaporizhzhia	97%	1%	1%	1%
Kharkiv	96%	2%	1%	2%
Chernihiv	100%	0%	0%	0%
Mykolaiv	96%	2%	1%	1%
Dnipro	98%	1%	0%	1%

The situation differs slightly across regions of Ukraine. For example, in Kherson and Sumy oblasts, all sought-after items were available for 86% and 92% of respondents respectively. The highest and absolute share of accessibility of items and services is observed in Chernihiv oblast with 100%.

EXPENDITURE PATTERNS

91% of beneficiaries confirm that they spent financial assistance on firewood, cooking fuel, and/or heating. Firewood and other heating sources were top spending positions for 87% of all respondents, i.e. the position they spent most of their assistance on. In addition to firewood, 18% of households spent money on utilities and bills, for 6% this was the top spending priority. 13% of households report expenses for health, the top spending priority for 2% of all respondents.

There are no significant differences in spending patterns across the different age groups, except for health costs and clothing. Older respondents mentioned health-related expenses twice as often as young people (16% vs. 8%). Young people on the other hand mentioned spending on clothing more often, compared with middle-aged and older respondents (6% vs. 3% and 2% respectively).

The situation by region in general maintains this trend, but there are some minor exceptions. In Chernihiv (99%), Mykolaiv (96%) and Sumy (95%) regions, a comparatively significant larger part of beneficiaries spent assistance on firewood and fuel for cooking and heating. In Dnipro (30%) and Kherson (23%) regions, a slightly

higher share of beneficiaries spent cash assistance on utilities and bills, while in Mykolaiv (14%), Sumy (11%) and Chernihiv (10%) regions this share is slightly lower than for the total sample. Also, health costs in Chernihiv region account for the largest share among beneficiaries - 19%, and in Mykolaiv region the smallest - 9%, when compared to the overall indicators.

Table 5 | Winter cash spending on goods and services

Good/service	Total (n=2986)	Donetsk (n=213)	Kherson (n=343)	Sumy (n=879)	Zaporizhzhia (n=204)	Kharkiv (n=290)	Chernihiv (n=230)	Mykolaiv (n=405)	Dnipro (n=421)
Firewood / Fuel for Cooking / Heating	91%	89%	89%	95%	90%	90%	99%	96%	82%
Utilities and bills	18%	19%	23%	11%	20%	19%	10%	14%	30%
Health costs	13%	10%	14%	14%	13%	13%	19%	9%	13%
Food	9%	9%	10%	10%	8%	7%	11%	6%	10%
Rent	3%	7%	1%	2%	2%	3%	0%	0%	10%
Clothes / shoes	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%	1%	3%	2%	2%
Shelter repair	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Other	6%	6%	7%	7%	5%	3%	6%	6%	9%

9% of all respondents (258 households) indicated that they did not buy firewood or other solid fuel. Of those 258 households, a significant proportion reported that the funds were used for other (more urgent) household needs. 24% indicated that they did not need solid fuel, representing only 2% of all respondents (63 out of 2,985 respondents). The largest share of beneficiaries (45%) identifies other reasons that influenced their spending decisions, such as:

- The household had to move to a new place that does not use solid fuel, due to evacuation or destruction of the place of living.
- The house uses gas or centralized heating, so the households used assistance to pay gas bills.

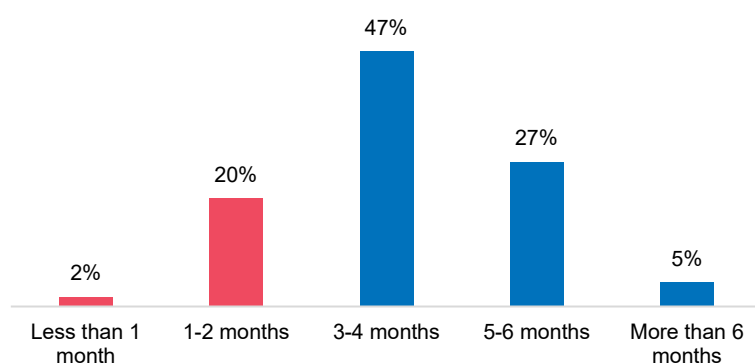
AMOUNT SPENT BY HOUSEHOLDS ON SOLID FUEL

Winter assistance is calculated based on the theoretical energy needs for 6 months. Almost half of the beneficiaries surveyed (49%) spent on solid fuel within the range of 15-20 thousand hryvnias. The average amount of expenses on solid fuel is UAH 16,156, the median is UAH 17,800.

Despite financial assistance from UNHCR and the efforts of the beneficiaries themselves to procure solid fuel, more than half, namely 54%, noted that the amount of solid fuel procured was not enough to cover the entire 2025/26 winter season. 32% of respondents said the assistance reached that objective fully. Another 47% of beneficiaries surveyed report that cash helped them cover solid fuel needs for 3-4 months. 22% of respondents could cover only two months or less with the cash they received.³

More than three-quarters of beneficiaries (79%) fully used the financial assistance provided for household needs, while less than a quarter (21%) indicated that they saved some of the funds provided.

Figure 9 | Period covered by winter cash assistance



³ Payments were released between October and December 2025, and PDM data collection started in January 2026, when winter was not over yet. Both factors might influence respondents' perception.

Information sharing and perceptions around eligibility

INFORMATION SHARING ON CASH ASSISTANCE

According to beneficiaries, virtually all received sufficient and useful information about financial assistance. In total, 85% of beneficiaries noted they received adequate information and another 14% indicated that the information provided was mostly adequate. No significant variations occur across the oblasts.

For the winter cash programme, the first line of information sharing was with local authorities and oblast administrations. In terms of information received, **half of all beneficiaries (50%) received information about financial assistance from local leaders and community representatives, regardless of age.**

Almost a third of beneficiaries (31%) received information from relatives, friends and neighbours (the principle of network information dissemination), and one in five beneficiaries (21%) received information through social media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp).

Communication modes and trends vary across different age groups and location. Older people are much less likely to receive information through social media compared to young people (18% vs. 28%). Residents within the 10-kilometre zone from the contact line were more likely to receive information from relatives, neighbours and friends - 39%, while people outside this area use this source of information somewhat less often - 29%.

Figure 10 | Received adequate information about winter cash assistance

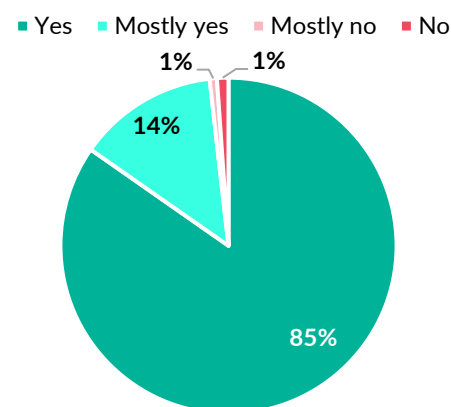


Table 6a | Actual sources of information on winter cash assistance

Information channel	Total	Age groups			Zone	
		18-35 years	36-59 years	60+ years	0-10 km	10+ km
Local leaders/ community representatives	50%	48%	50%	50%	43%	52%
Relatives, neighbours, friends	31%	29%	30%	32%	39%	29%
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp)	21%	28%	25%	18%	21%	21%
Text (SMS) message	4%	0%	2%	5%	2%	4%
NGOs staff or outreach volunteers	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%

Table 6b | Preferred sources of information

Information channel	Total	Age groups			Zone	
		18-35 years	36-59 years	60+ years	0-10 km	10+ km
Local leaders/ community representatives	46%	40%	44%	49%	42%	48%
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp)	32%	45%	40%	25%	32%	32%
Text (SMS) message	24%	25%	24%	24%	30%	22%
Relatives, neighbours, friends	16%	13%	14%	17%	20%	15%
UNHCR staff	9%	12%	12%	7%	11%	9%

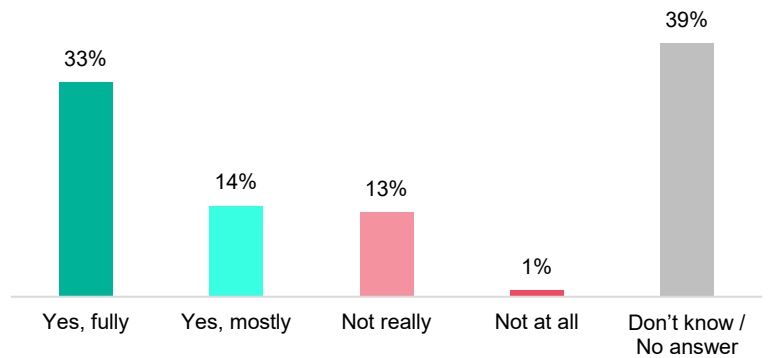
When asked about their preferred sources of information, 46% selected local leaders and community representatives also are the preferred sources of information, making this still the most informative and most desired information source.

For other information sources, communication preferences differ by age. Respondents aged 60 years and older want to receive information more often from local leaders and community representatives - 49%, whereas younger respondents prefer information sharing through social media - 45%. A significant proportion of respondents would like to receive information via SMS text messages (24%). Any information strategy should rely on a combination of these four channels to ensure adequate information dissemination.

SELECTION CRITERIA AND AVAILABILITY FOR CASH ASSISTANCE

Almost half (47% overall) of beneficiaries believe that all people who applied and needed financial assistance had access to it and the opportunity to receive it: 33% of beneficiaries are completely sure of this, and another 14% are somewhat sure. 14% overall hold the opposite opinion; of those, most believe that older persons and pensioners are the most excluded category, followed by persons with disabilities and chronic illnesses, unemployed persons, and families with low income. 39% of respondents did not know or did not answer this question.

Figure 11 | Perceived inclusiveness of assistance: All people deserving were eligible and had access, and no-one deserving was excluded



FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

Most beneficiaries (98%) indicated that they had no complaints or feedback regarding financial assistance from UNHCR. Among the remaining 2%, more than a third reported their feedback to UNHCR, while the rest did not. Of those who provided feedback, 91% of beneficiaries used a hotline (telephone, WhatsApp, call centres).

Figure 12 | Households who needed to contact UNHCR with inquiries

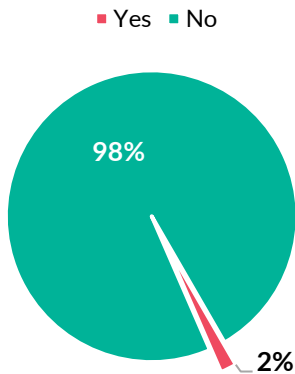
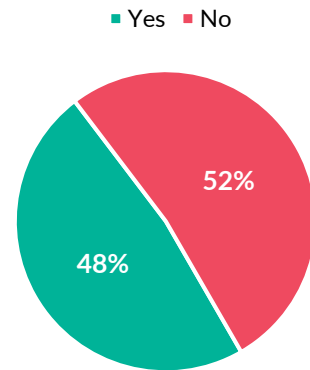


Figure 13 | Households having access to complaints mechanism



UNHCR provided winter assistance in close cooperation with oblast authorities and local authorities, who were the principal interlocutors for beneficiaries. It is therefore striking that **almost half of beneficiaries indicated that they do not have access to a complaints and feedback mechanism.** Also, only half of

beneficiaries (50%) say they received information on how to report complaints and feedback regarding winter cash assistance. There is also a significant age gap: some 60% of younger respondents affirm that they know how to provide feedback and complaints, compared to only 45% of those aged 60 years and older.

Among the small proportion of beneficiaries who reported complaints or feedback, 76% said they received a timely response, 10% were still waiting for a response at the time of the survey, and 14% reported that they had to wait a long time for a response.

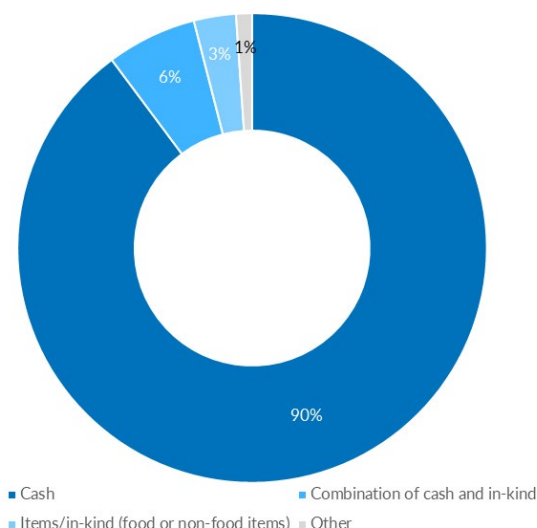
Among beneficiaries who did not report their complaints and feedback noted several reasons, including:

- Lack of access to the complaints and feedback mechanism - 15%
- Lack of awareness of the complaints and feedback mechanism - 13%
- Distrust of the system - 9%
- Other reasons - (38%) include mobile phone outages, lack of time, and unwillingness to complain.
- Another 25% do not know what to answer.

BENEFICIARY SELECTION AND PREFERENCES ABOUT CASH ASSISTANCE

A strong majority, 96%, of respondents indicated a preference for cash assistance either as only assistance modality or in combination with in-kind assistance. If given the choice between cash or in-kind assistance as humanitarian assistance in the future, the vast majority of beneficiaries, namely 90%, prefer cash assistance, and another 6% prefer a combination of cash and in-kind support. Only 3% indicated a preference for in-kind assistance. The preference for cash only is significantly higher for older respondents, 93% of whom prefer cash only. Younger respondents on the other hand prefer cash assistance in 75% of all cases, with another 17% expressing a preference for a combined cash/in-kind assistance.

Figure 13 | Preferred assistance modality



Among respondents who preferred hybrid or in-kind assistance, about a third (35%) indicated that the cash amount was not enough cash to buy all necessary items; 24% expressed a concern that shopkeepers would increase the prices of items; and another 20% of beneficiaries indicated that the items were not always available in the markets (which is not supported by responses on market functionality). Other reasons (21%) included convenience, lack of mobility (e.g. among older people), lack of or problems with transportation, and problems with cash withdrawals (ATMs not working, electricity problems).

RESPONDENT FEEDBACK AND GRATITUDE

At the end of the survey, beneficiaries could provide additional comments on any aspects of UNHCR's assistance. While 39% did not wish to leave a comment, **more than half (58%) of beneficiaries expressed their gratitude for the assistance provided.** The remaining beneficiaries indicated their own wishes for improving the process of providing financial assistance:

- 1% indicated that they want to receive more assistance, since it is not always enough for the entire season.

- 1% indicated that the categories of beneficiaries need to be expanded, since not everyone who needs and deserves assistance receives it.
- A few respondents indicated that the registration process needs to be improved, making it more accessible (especially for older people), as well as extending the deadlines for accepting applications.
- A few noted the need to improve the information campaign, in particular, both expanding the list of information sources and its content.
- Very few indicated the need to improve the mechanism for distributing aid, in particular, older people do not always have bank cards and are not always able to go to ATMs or distribution points.
- Very few indicated the need to provide financial assistance at the beginning of the winter season, this would make the assistance timely.

Conclusions and Recommendations

KEY FINDINGS

1. Strong cash preference

Cash is overwhelmingly perceived as the most appropriate and dignified modality for meeting winter needs. If given a choice between cash and in-kind assistance, **90% of beneficiaries would prefer cash, 6% prefer a combination of cash and in-kind support, and only 3% prefer in-kind assistance alone.**

95% of beneficiaries are satisfied with the process of receiving winter cash, and 99% feel safe receiving, keeping and spending the assistance, indicating very strong confidence in the delivery mechanisms.

98% report having no complaints or feedback about the financial assistance. Among the small group (2%) who did have feedback, **over one-third actually reported it to UNHCR, and 91% of those used hotlines** (telephone, WhatsApp, call centres).

Recommendation: Continue positioning cash assistance as a core modality for winter support where markets remain functional and access conditions allow.

2. Winter cash assistance produced the intended outcome

Qualitative responses highlight that the winter cash assistance **enabled households to keep their homes warm and to cover other essential expenditures (health, and utilities)** that would otherwise have been difficult or impossible to afford. The vast majority of respondents report clear positive effects on their well-being:

- **88% say winter cash assistance improved their living conditions** (with only 12% reporting slight or no improvement).
- **77% report a reduction in stress levels.**
- Improvements in living conditions and reduced stress are **most frequently reported by younger heads of household**, but remain high across all age groups.

Recommendation: Sustain targeted winter assistance for vulnerable households in frontline areas where seasonal needs and economic pressures remain acute.

3. Spending patterns confirm programme relevance

91% of households used the cash to purchase firewood or other fuel for cooking and heating, and for 87% of respondents, heating fuel was the single largest spending item, confirming strong alignment with the programme's winter-energy objective.

In addition to fuel, households also spent on:

- **Utilities and bills – 18%** (top spending priority for 6% of respondents).
- **Health costs – 13%** (top priority for 2%).

Beneficiaries spent on average UAH 16,156 on solid fuel, with a median of UAH 17,800. This indicates an adequate transfer value.

2% of all respondents stated they did not need solid fuel pointing to a very low inclusion error. In total, 9% of households did not buy solid fuel with the transfer. Most of them used the cash for other urgent needs, e.g. moving to a dwelling that does not use solid fuel following evacuation, or paying gas/central heating bills.

Recommendation: Continue using evidence on expenditure patterns to inform transfer values, targeting approaches, and future seasonal programme design.

4. Information channels

Virtually all beneficiaries feel adequately informed: 85% describe the information received on winter cash as adequate and another 14% as mostly adequate.

Local leaders and community representatives are both the main and preferred information channel:

- 50% of beneficiaries heard about the assistance from local leaders/community representatives.
- 46% name local leaders/community representatives as their preferred future source of information.

Information on feedback channels and complaints mechanisms could be improved. Almost half of all beneficiaries say they do not have access to a complaints and feedback mechanism, and only 50% recall receiving information on how to report complaints, highlighting an important accountability gap despite overall high satisfaction.

Among beneficiaries who reported complaints or feedback, 76% received a timely response, 10% were still waiting at the time of the survey, and 14% experienced long waiting times, indicating that where feedback is submitted, it is usually processed promptly.

Recommendation: Strengthen multi-channel communication; outreach efforts through local community representatives need to be accompanied by information sharing through social media and SMS text messages.

5. Ongoing needs

Despite the strong positive impact, the PDM shows that many households still face significant winter energy gaps:

- 54% say that the amount of solid fuel they were able to purchase was not enough for the entire 2025/26 winter season.
- Only 32% report that the assistance fully covered the theoretical six-month energy requirement, while 47% say it covered about three to four months of solid-fuel needs.

Recommendation: Continue prioritizing the most vulnerable households and, where feasible, link winter support with broader humanitarian and social assistance measures to address persistent needs.

DONORS

UNHCR is grateful for the essential support provided by our top government donors and for the generous contributions from individuals and the private sector, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with softly earmarked and unearmarked funds.



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- Visit Ukraine's Operational Data Portal for more information products [here](#).
- Visit UNHCR Ukraine's Website [here](#).

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