



*Final analytical report*

# Public sentiment in the Kherson city community in 2023–2024

Based on sociological research conducted using the Kherson community online research panel

This research was conducted by the Charitable organization “Community Foundation of Kherson “Zakhyst” as a part of it's project implemented under the USAID/ENGAGE activity, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Pact. The contents of this research are the sole responsibility of Pact and it's implementing partners and do not necessary reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government

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December

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# Research overview and description of methodology

Cumulatively **from July 2023 to September 2024**, a group of researchers from among the experts of the NGO "Kherson Regional Branch of the Sociological Association of Ukraine" and the New Image Marketing Group, commissioned by the Kherson City Community Foundation "Zakhyst," conducted **32 sociological public opinion surveys**. These were quantitative surveys based on an online research panel of residents of the Kherson urban community - internet users over 18 years old - both those who have remained in Kherson and those who left the city after February 24, 2022.

The sample size, formed based on demographic indicators as of January 1, 2022, ranged **from 400 to 1,200 respondents**. The error margin with a probability of 0.95 did not exceed 5% for studies with a sample size of 400 respondents; 4.5% for a sample of 500 respondents; 3.5% for a sample of 800 respondents; 3% for a sample of 1,200 respondents. The field stage of the research was carried out by the individual entrepreneur Oleh Sinayuk (New Image Marketing Group) using the [Lemur](#) service.

The most important results and conclusions of all project surveys were structured into five analytical blocks. **In particular, they considered issues such as:**

- Community unity
- Resilience
- War fatigue
- Transformation in response to armed aggression
- The cultural code of Kherson residents
- The image of Kherson of the future

**You can find more detailed information about the research via the following links:**

- [01.08.2023 - Rating of problems and level of trust in the Kherson community](#)
- [13.08.2023 - The Kakhovka tragedy and its consequences for the Kherson city community](#)
- [13.09.2023 - Freed area map: what do Kherson residents think about renaming streets in the city](#)
- [26.09.2023 - Safety, shelter, and the consequences of shelling: how Kherson residents assess the situation in the city](#)
- [10.10.2023 - Kherson in the future: what do Kherson residents think about renewal of the city.](#)
- [31.10.2023 - Kherson in the future: what do Kherson residents think about renewal of the city. Part 2](#)
- [07.11.2023 - Kherson, culture, the future: what do Kherson residents think about renewal of the city](#)
- [24.11.2023 - Emotional-psychological condition of Kherson residents: results of the sociological research](#)
- [11.12.2023 - Memorial space of Kherson: report on the results of the survey](#)
- [05.01.2024 - Assessment of the public utilities in Kherson: survey report results](#)

- **16.01.2024** - Monitoring situation in Kherson
- **16.01.2024** - Before and after: how has life changed for Kherson residents after the full-scale invasion
- **06.02.2024** - Educational services in Kherson: survey report results
- **16.02.2024** - Business, trade, and services in Kherson: survey report results
- **06.03.2024** - Kherson residents as donors: report on the results of the study
- **19.03.2024** - Kherson: direct democracy
- **23.04.2024** - War realities in the eyes of Kherson residents: report on the results of study
- **30.04.2024** - The state and prospects of higher education in Kherson
- **15.05.2024** - Kherson: direct speech
- **30.05.2024** - Kherson dachas
- **14.06.2024** - Kherson: urbanism and real estate
- **02.07.2024** - Assessment of the renaming of streets in Kherson
- **30.07.2024** - Establishing the Museum of Resistance and Occupation in Kherson
- **07.08.2024** - Monitoring the social-economic situation of the Kherson community
- **23.08.2024** - Assessment of the draft order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine "On the conditions for obtaining secondary education under martial law in Ukraine"
- **29.08.2024** - History changes, should symbolism also change?
- **01.10.2024** - Informed behavior of Kherson residents
- **04.10.2024** - Values, informed level, Identity
- **25.10.2024** - What has changed in 2023-2024
- **31.10.2024** - Prospects and obstacles for Kherson residents to return to the community
- **11.11.2024** - Community cohesion
- **14.11.2024** - Migration and demographics

The analytical report and tools for all research were prepared by the NGO "Kherson Regional Branch of the Sociological Association of Ukraine" under the leadership of the head of the Kherson Regional Branch of the Sociological Association of Ukraine, Mykola Homanyuk.

# General conclusions and results

**One of the first findings of the research project was the phenomenon of unity of the Kherson urban community.** It turned out that despite the departure of more than two-thirds of the city's population, Kherson residents continue to live in the same information field, browse the same social networks and websites of their hometown every day, and adhere to a fairly similar position on most various issues. Noticeable discrepancies in the responses between those remaining in Kherson and those who have left for another country or another region of Ukraine were rather an exception to this rule and were recorded only for some items in our surveys. To this should also be added the fact that the vast majority of internally displaced persons declared a willingness to return to Kherson as soon as it becomes safe.

But at the same time, we have observed the emergence of centrifugal tendencies. Some of the displaced people have already managed to adapt quite successfully in their new places of residence, increase their income, and improve their social status. Their motivation to return is decreasing. Moreover, the more time passes, the more irreversible migration processes become. The experience of other military conflicts and large-scale displacements of people have shown that a significant number of migrants will no longer be able or willing to return, even if they now sincerely desire to do so.

**The risk of the non-return of the pre-war population is a serious challenge for Kherson, since people are the main resource for the city's future revival.**

Therefore, restoring the migrants' emotional connection to Kherson and supporting community unity is an important social task. This can be achieved through methods of remote involvement in the city's public life in such a way, that even from other regions or countries, Kherson residents can influence social processes in the community and express their opinions. It is significant that the people of Kherson themselves support such initiatives as much as possible.

**An important characteristic of the Kherson community is also a strong urban identity.** At the same time, local patriotism and national patriotism are not mutually exclusive, on the contrary, being intrinsically interwoven. Actually, pride in the city and in one's Kherson identity is primarily connected with the "Ukrainian invincible Kherson." The residents of the community are equally proud of being Kherson residents and of being Ukrainians. Other local identities (related mainly to the sense of belonging to a region – the South, the Kherson region, or the Tavria region) are not priorities. The city of Kherson is much more significant for its community. If respondents did lean toward a regional or oblast (non-urban) identity, it was almost always the second or third choice.

Urban identity to a great degree influences perceptions of desired memory politics. Kherson residents tend to organically combine the symbolism of different eras of the city's history. For example, most Kherson residents support the idea of a joint memorial in the Park of Glory, dedicated to the memory of the fighters for Ukraine in the Liberation Struggles of 1917-1922, World War II, and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. While generally approving of initiatives to decolonize toponymy and rename streets, city residents are more inclined to local and neutral names, or returning to older pre-Soviet names, provided they do not hold any imperial meaning.

**The war and its associated challenges have also significantly enhanced the role of volunteerism in the community.** Currently, civil society organizations are among the most authoritative institutions in Kherson. Kherson residents not only highly appreciate the work of volunteers, but also actively participate in charitable activities, help others, or donate.

**Despite high resilience and belief in victory, war fatigue is gradually accumulating in the community.** Residents of Kherson are directly suffering from bombing, and the number of those who have experienced the death of relatives and loss of property has increased significantly over the year. There have been more difficulties with employment. Many people have been forced to change jobs to less well-paid and prestigious ones. Those who left Kherson have also faced problems. Although, on average, they are in a better financial and psychological situation than those who remained.

**Overall, most Kherson residents now feel unhappy.** Most alarming is that the respondents' condition has tended to worsen over the past year. Ultimately, psychological depression is reflected in one's health. Very few Kherson residents can consider themselves completely healthy.

Psychological exhaustion is also manifesting itself in the fact that people have started unsubscribing from Telegram channels (in addition to the fact that the dangers of Telegram are currently being discussed). One can assume that in this case a kind of "safeguard" is set off to protect the psyche from burnout. Many respondents watch the news from the front not even daily, but hourly - taking everything that happens to heart. Despite everything, Kherson residents are not losing optimism and believe in positive changes: they associate the future with the words "hope" and "expectation of improvement."

One of the visible results of Russia's invasion and 8-month occupation of the city was that the predominantly Russian-speaking (before the war) Kherson community switched to Ukrainian in everyday communication, or at least has declared doing so. **The linguistic behavior of Kherson residents became a form of resistance to the invaders and a defense of their own identity.**

**Kherson residents would like to dedicate a special museum to the events of 2022,** and a fairly significant proportion of residents are ready to share their own stories, exhibits, or photographs for this purpose. They see the core themes of such a museum as the public resistance of 2022 and the overall resilience of Kherson.

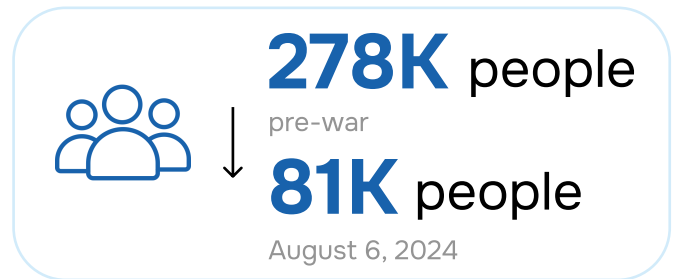
**The thought is quite widespread that the Kherson of the future will be a different city – not the one it is right now or was before the war.** Clearly, the respondents imagine the renewal of Kherson differently. Everyone fills the idea of a "new city" with their own meaning, but in general, it can be stated that the demand for creating a new one is much stronger than restoring the old one.



# 1. The Kherson community: divided or united?

Each sociological study based on the Kherson community online research panel is conducted taking into account the fact that **the war actually divided the community into two parts**: those who were forced to leave the city and those who remained.

[According to the Kherson Regional Administration](#), as of August 6, 2024, 81 thousand people lived in the regional center (out of a pre-war population of 278 thousand, [according to the Main Department of Statistics of the Kherson region](#)).

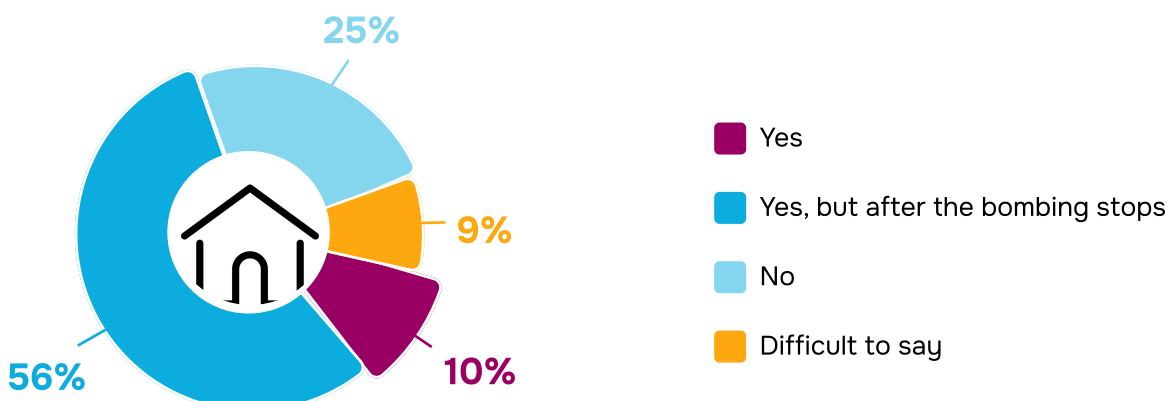


Moreover, in the summer season of 2024, there was a tendency for Kherson residents to return home. In three months, the population of the city **increased by 12 thousand**. This behavior generally reflects the feelings of internally displaced persons and migrants. 10% of them declared their intention to return to Kherson this year, and another 56% are ready to do so provided that the bombing stops.

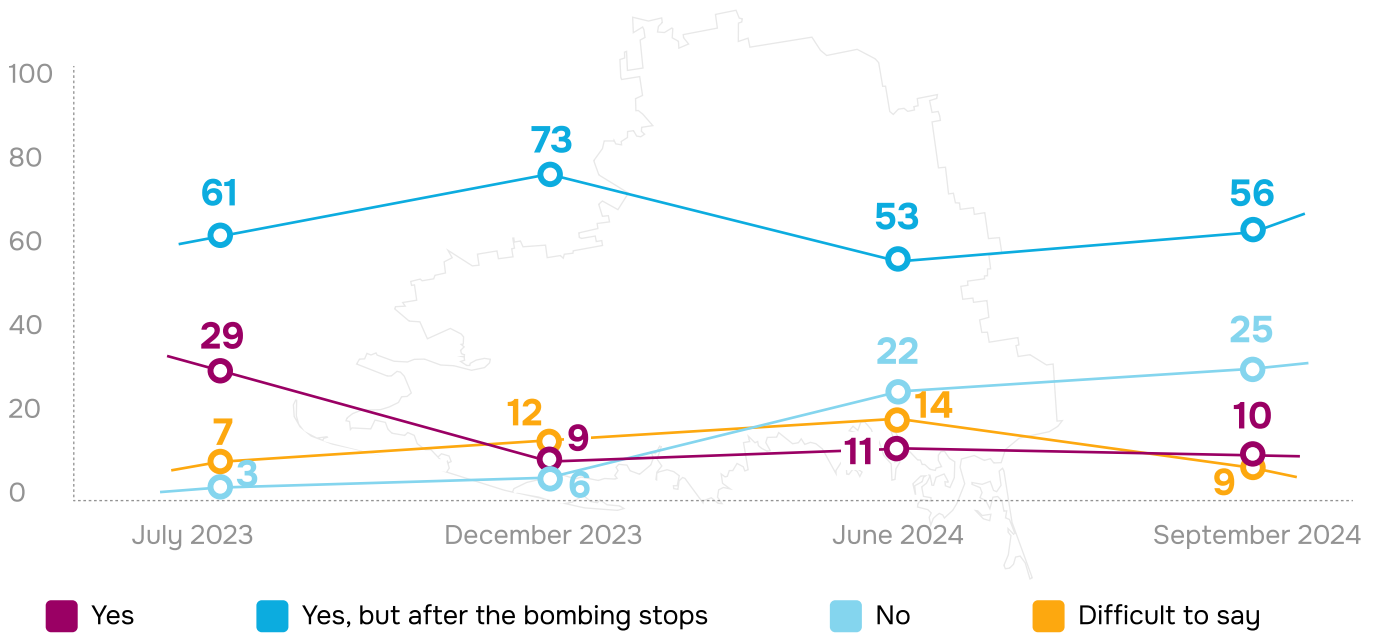
At the same time, the dynamics of intentions to return home have undergone significant changes over the past year. If in July 2023, only 3% of displaced people definitely did not intend to return to the city this year, in December 2023 there were already 6% of them, 22% in June 2024, and 25% in September 2024. Although this category of respondents is still in the minority, the rapid growth of its share in the overall distribution may indicate the emergence of certain changes in consciousness.

## Are you going to return to Kherson this year? N = 155 (those, not residing in Kherson)

 Research: September 2024



## 1. The Kherson community: divided or united?



### It's still premature to talk about the irreversibility of migration processes.

But, clearly, the continuation of the current state of affairs, when living in Kherson is associated with daily physical danger, reduces the chances of the pre-war population returning home. Characteristically, a still small but already noticeable share of migrants was able to improve their social status and financial situation in their new locations. According to a study conducted in December 2023, 7% of them significantly increased their wealth, and 16% increased it somewhat. Among those who remained, the corresponding figures are 1% and 11%. One can assume that the more successful the migrants are in their new locations, the less likely they will have a desire to return home.

### Kherson community incomes during the war, %

Q.: How has your income changed since the 2022 invasion (accounting for inflation) ?

📅 Research: December 2023

#### All respondents



#### Currently in Kherson



#### Not currently in Kherson



■ Significantly increased      ■ No change      ■ Significantly decreased  
■ Somewhat increased      ■ Somewhat decreased

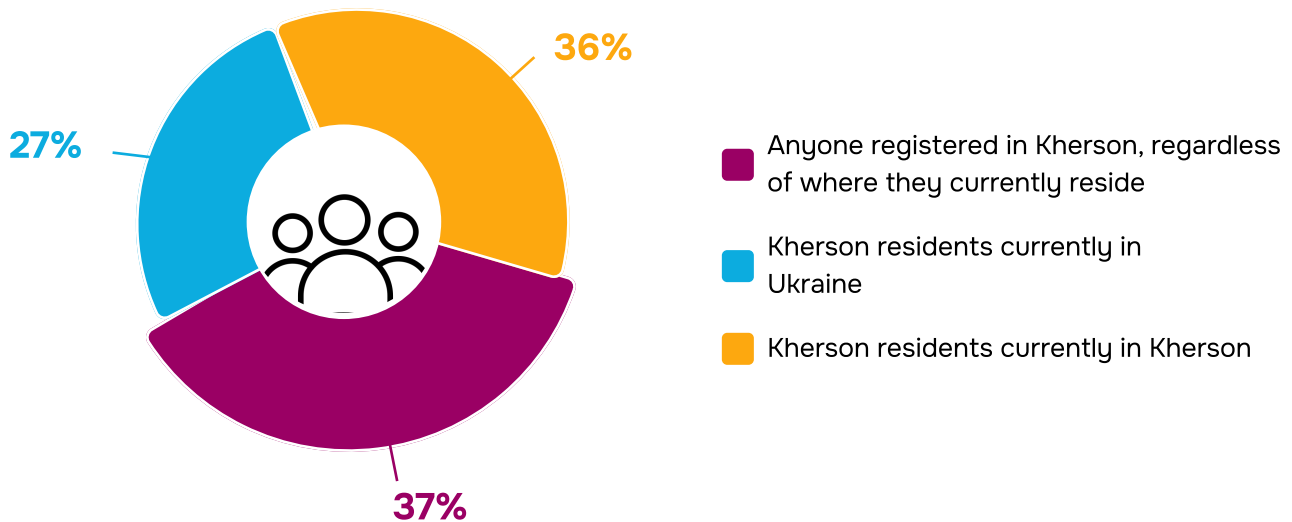


On the other hand, there is a certain alienation on the part of Kherson residents toward those people who left the community. Thus, in a survey on direct democracy tools in February 2024, more than a third of respondents were in favor of involving only those people who remained in the city in decision-making in the Kherson community.

### Participants in decision making in Kherson (N=404), %

Q.: Who do you think should be involved in making decisions in Kherson society?

📅 Research: February 2024



Nonetheless, the unifying factors have a great inertial power. An extremely important component that ensures the unity of the Kherson community is **a common information field**. IDPs continue to use the same sources of information about Kherson as do the residents directly on location. The popularity rating of Telegram channels is approximately the same for both categories. The picture is similar for the media.

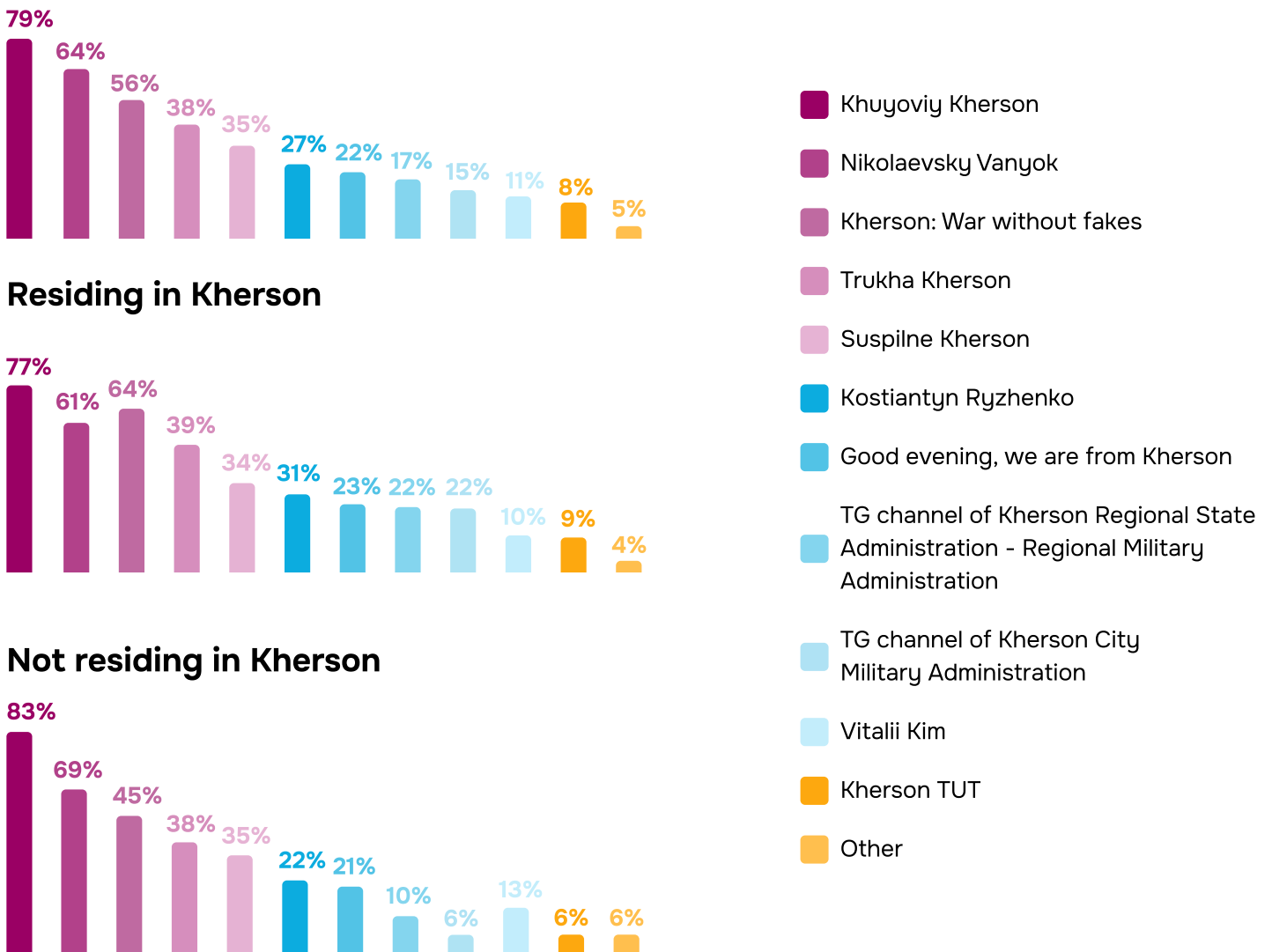


## Rating of Telegram channels in Kherson (N=349 (Kherson residents who receive information about life in Kherson from Telegram channels)), %

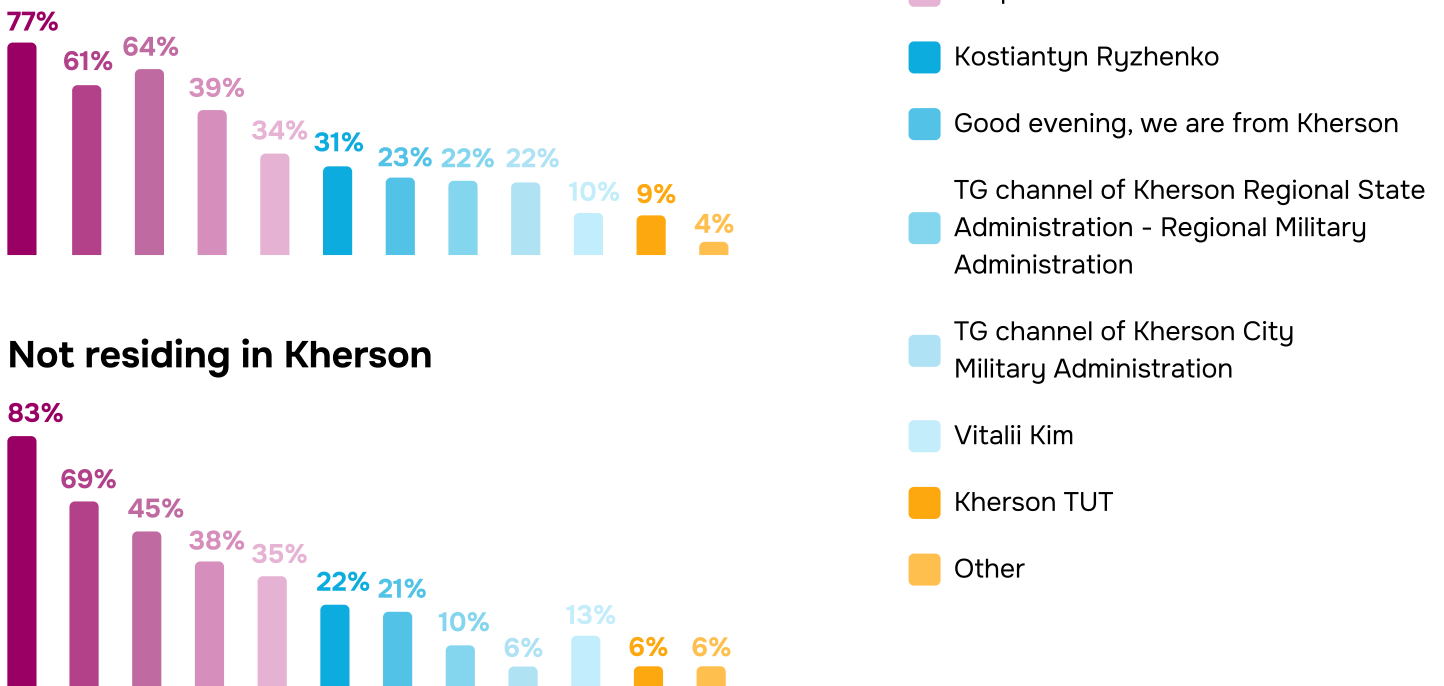
Q.: Which Telegram channels are you subscribed to?

📅 Research: June 2024

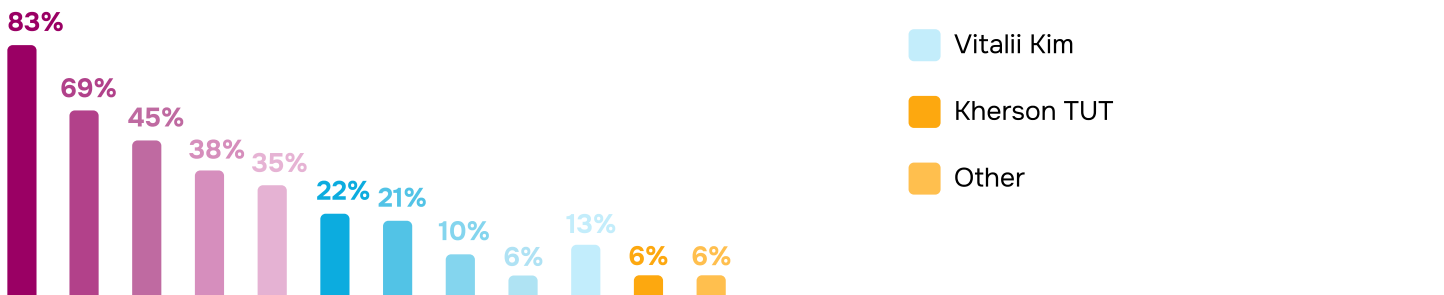
### All respondents



### Residing in Kherson



### Not residing in Kherson



#### Other:

- MOST;
- Up;
- Kavun;
- My Kherson;
- Kherson Day and Night;
- Nadzor Kherson;
- Roman Mrochko;
- Kherson Sanyok;
- Shalena Bdzhilka Pogomiy, etc.

### **A common information field forms a common opinion on a wide range of issues.**

Therefore, the distribution of responses in more than 20 sociological surveys from July 2023 to August 2024 did not reveal significant differences between those who left and those who stayed. The differences, which also sometimes occur, can be explained primarily by the age and social differences between the groups of respondents. Most of the current Kherson residents are retirees. For objective reasons, elderly people have turned out to be less mobile. On the flip side, those who left were mostly active working age people.

The thesis about the unified information field of the Kherson community is also confirmed by focus group research conducted in the spring of 2023 by the sociologist Mykola Homanyuk at the request of the Kherson City Community Foundation "Zakhyst" ([Kherson: a torn community in a common space](#)). The level of awareness regarding urban events at that time was the same for both of those who left and those who remained. Common topics in the discussion were typical even for such visual topics that require a personal presence on location, such as open or closed pharmacies and stores, the work of humanitarian aid distribution points, not to mention city-wide news. All IDPs from Kherson noted that they are in daily contact with their friends and relatives in Kherson.

Therefore, quite complex processes are taking place within the Kherson community. On the one hand, the community continues to live in a single information field, and the migrants retain strong emotional ties to their home and loved ones who have remained in Kherson. **Doubtless, a significant number of the internally displaced people would return to the city if it were safe to do so.** But on the other hand, time centrifugal factors are gradually starting to act. Some migrants have been able to settle down in their new locations, increasing their income, raising their social status, and creating new families. The experience of other wars and forced migrations have shown that over time, population displacement processes become irreversible, even if people continue to declare their desire to return home. It is very characteristic that the share of Kherson residents who do not plan to return in the near future has increased several times over the past year.

### **Over time, the gap can also deepen between those who stayed and those who left.**

A significant number (although still a minority) of the city's residents are already denying the right of those who left to participate in decision-making regarding the community. Therefore, preserving the unity of the Kherson community is becoming a serious challenge. A community can become more resilient to the effects of negative factors if it turns to special strategies for remotely involving those who have left the community in the city's public life.

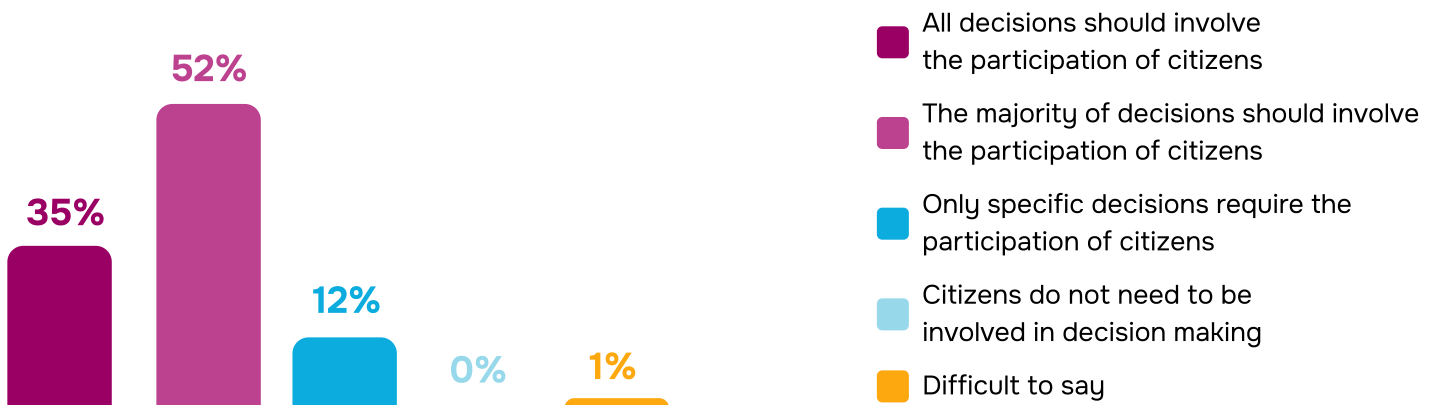
After all, this is in the interests of the community itself, since, in fact, its people are the main resource and hope for the revival of Kherson after the war's end.

The willingness of residents to participate in direct democracy events, which are one of the most obvious ways of engaging in public life and uniting the community, was also confirmed during sociological research. **In fact, 99% of residents believe that citizens should be included in community decision-making, and less than one percent deny their right to such actions in peacetime.** In the conditions of war, the tools of direct democracy are approved by 95% and rejected by 1% of respondents.

### Attitude toward citizens involved in making decisions in society (N=404), %

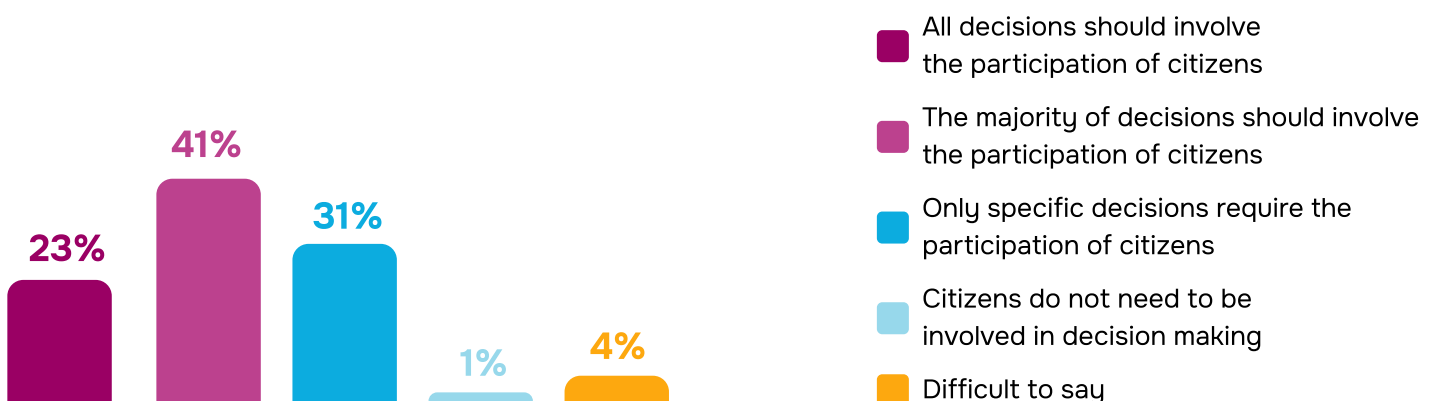
Q.: To what extent should Kherson residents influence decision making in society ?

📅 Research: February 2024



### Attitude toward citizens making decisions in society during war (N=404), %

Q.: To what extent should citizens be involved in decision making in society in wartime conditions?



# 2. The cultural code of Kherson residents

**An important characteristic of the Kherson community is its pronounced urban identity.** For approximately half (46%) of Kherson residents, local (Kherson) identity turned out to be the fundamental one from the proposed set of regional/political/ethnic identities. For the other half (45%), the fundamental one was Ukrainian national identity as a combination of ethnic (30%) and political/civic (15%). Local and national identities are not opposed to each other, but complement each other, as Kherson residents are equally proud of being Kherson residents (89%) and citizens of Ukraine (87%). The key words they characterize modern Kherson are organically connected with Ukraine and its struggle for independence in the current war. These include, in particular, such images as “indomitability,” “indomitability,” “Kherson is Ukraine,” “Hero city of Ukraine.”

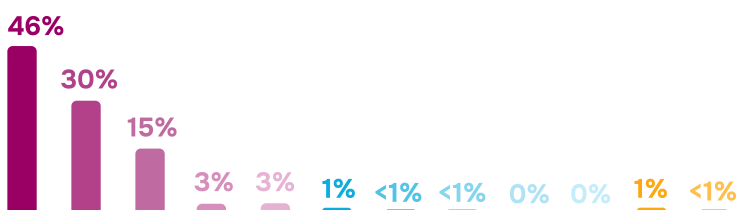
Other types of regional (non-urban) identity do not have such a strong foundation. A certain number of Kherson residents may identify themselves as residents of the region, South Dnieper, or even Tavria, but in almost all such cases these were a second or third choice, and not first.

## Self-identification (N=400), %

Q.: Who from the above list do you feel like first, second, and third?

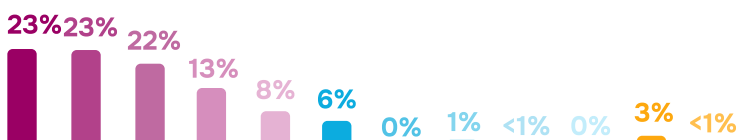
📅 Research: September 2024

### Primary

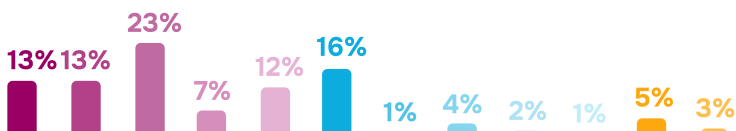


- Khersonite
- Ukrainian
- Citizen of Ukraine
- Resident of Kherson Oblast
- Southern Ukrainian
- European
- Citizen of the USSR, Soviet person
- Child of the world
- Tavrian
- Representative of one's own nationality (ethnic group)
- Difficult to say
- None of the above

### Secondary



### Tertiary



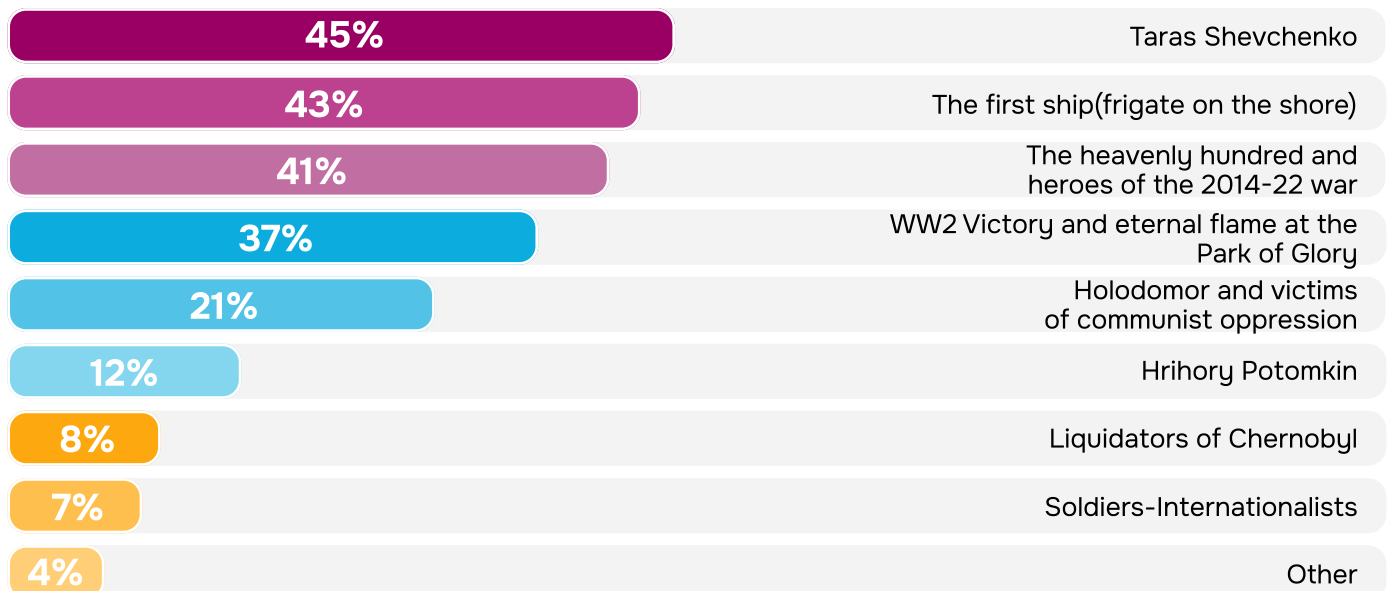
Priorities in self-identification indicate that for its residents, Kherson is not just a place where they live now or lived before the war. **Kherson is a city with its own cultural code, which has certain descriptive characteristics.** These can in turn be isolated and deciphered from a number of public opinion polls.

A kind of mirror of Kherson residents' perceptions of their own city is public opinion regarding the memorial space and toponymy of the settlement. It is worth noting that during the war, the community's attitude towards various memorials was essentially reconsidered. Thus, the importance of the monument (monuments) to the participants of the 2014-22 hybrid war and the Heavenly Hundred has increased, which is now perceived as the most important memorial in the city - 58% of respondents considered it so (study: November 2023). The rating of monuments related to the imperial period has decreased: monuments to Potemkin and the First Shipbuilders (Frigate). The significance of the monuments to Taras Shevchenko, the victims of the Holodomor, the workers at the Chernobyl accident, and the participants in the Soviet-Afghan war has not significantly changed.

## Rating statues and memorials in Kherson

### Prewar rating of memorials (N = 486), % (multiple choice)

Q.: Which memorial in Kherson was most important to you up until the 2022 invasion?



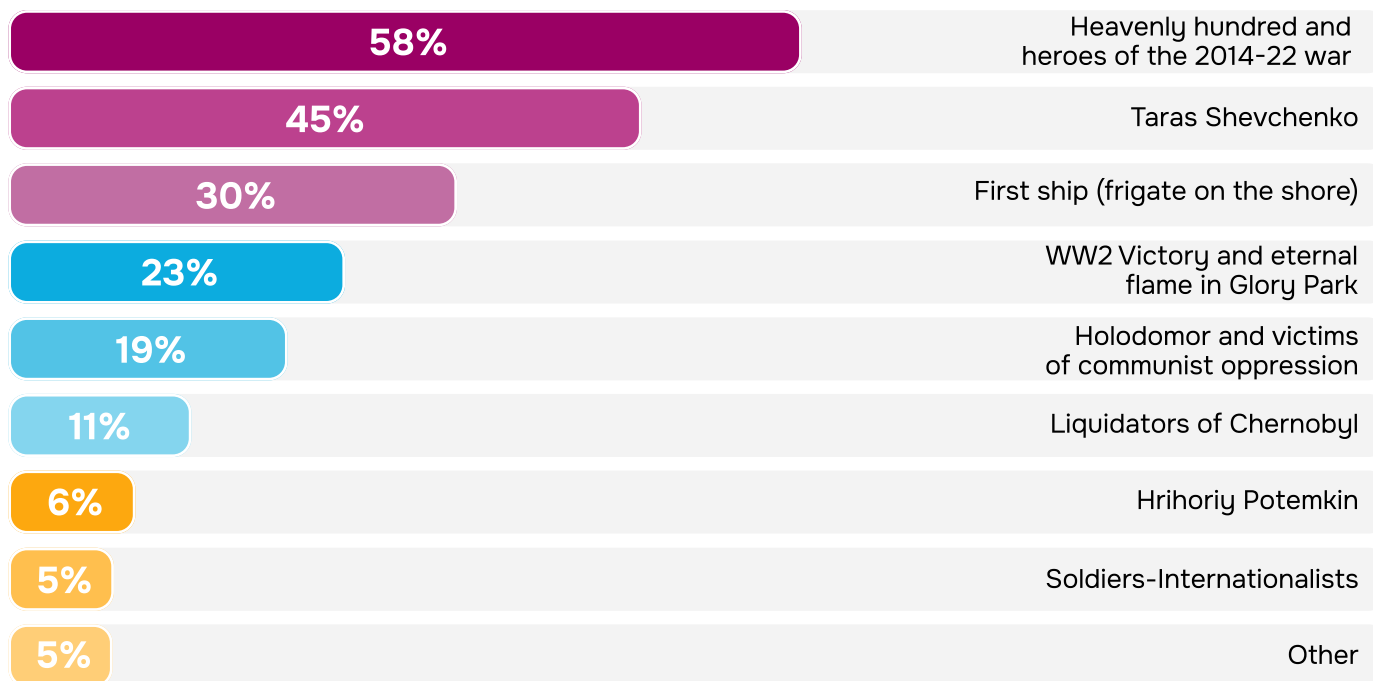
#### Other answers:

- John Howard / John Howard's sundial;
- Scythian Pectoral (sculpture near central market);
- Suvorov;
- Ushakov;
- Tank in Glory Park;
- Storming the Dnieper (Antonivka).

## Current rating of memorials (N = 486), % (multiple choice)

Q.: What memorial in Kherson is currently most important to you?

Research: November 2023



### Other answers:

- Buzkovyy park;
- John Howard.

**A significant part of the community advances a compromise, a coexistence of various memorials and symbols in the territory of Kherson.** In particular, the majority of respondents (as of November 2023) have not yet decided whether any monuments should be removed from the city's public space. 55% could not answer, and the opinions of the rest were divided in half. 24% believe that monuments, plaques, and symbols associated with the Russian Empire and Soviet past have no place on the streets of Kherson. At the same time, the vast majority of all respondents believe that the Eternal Flame in the Park of Glory in Kherson should burn, at least on the appropriate days.

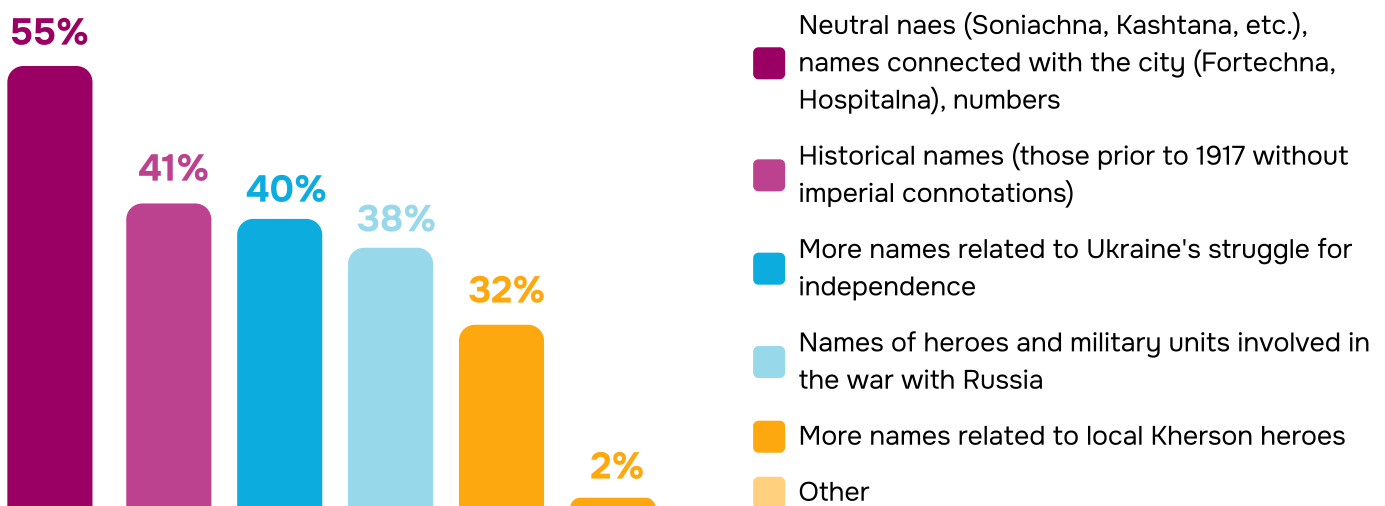
The readiness for an organic combination of different symbols is also emphasised by the idea of creating a single memorial in the Park of Glory, which would combine the memory of the fighters for Ukraine in the Liberation Wars of 1917-1922, the Second World War, and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. Such an idea was supported by 57% of the respondents.

The community also holds a similar position regarding decolonizing toponymy. The most desirable model of renaming is the appearance of neutral names on the city map – figurative and poetic or those associated with a landmark in the location (Soniachna, Kashtanova, Fortechna, Hospitalna, etc.). The second most popular model is the return of old (Soviet) names that do not hold any imperial meanings.

### How, in your opinion, is best to rename streets in Kherson?

Question with multiple alternatives, therefore total sum may be greater than 100%

Research: September 2023

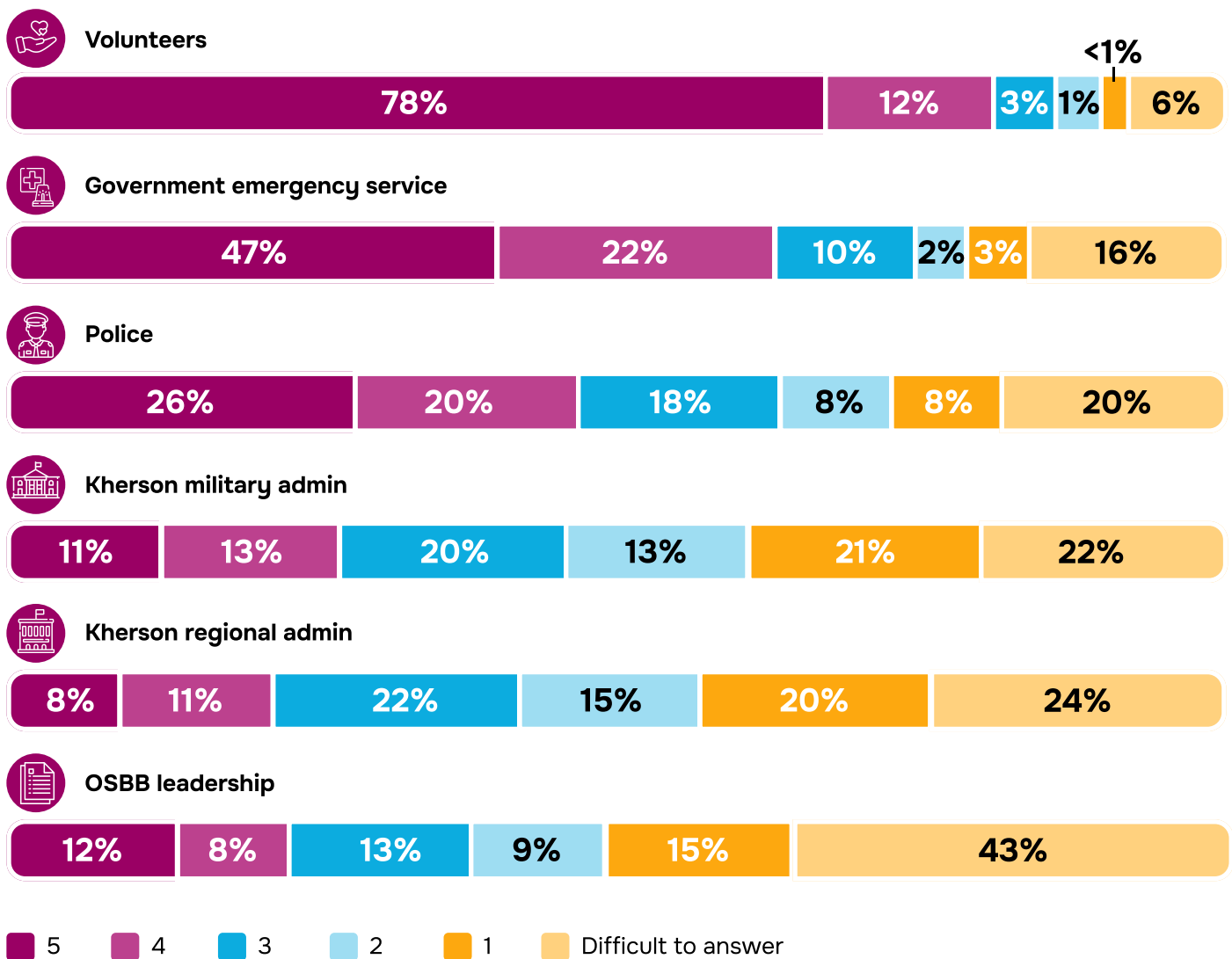


**The war and the trials associated with it have given rise to a powerful public institution in volunteerism.** The role of the public sector is now extremely important throughout all Ukraine, but in Kherson it has become a factor in the physical survival of the entire city. Evacuation from occupied zones, delivery of food and medicine, rescuing people from flooded areas, repairing destroyed housing - in each of these areas, the contribution of volunteers and public organizations has been significant. In evaluating the actions of various institutions to mitigate the consequences of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station explosion, the residents of Kherson ranked volunteers first.

## Ratings of actions of various institutions following the Kakhovka HPP disaster

Evaluate, using a system with 5 as highest and 1 as lowest, the actions of the following institutions in the aftermath of the Kakhovka HPP explosion. (0 = cannot evaluate):

Research: July 2023

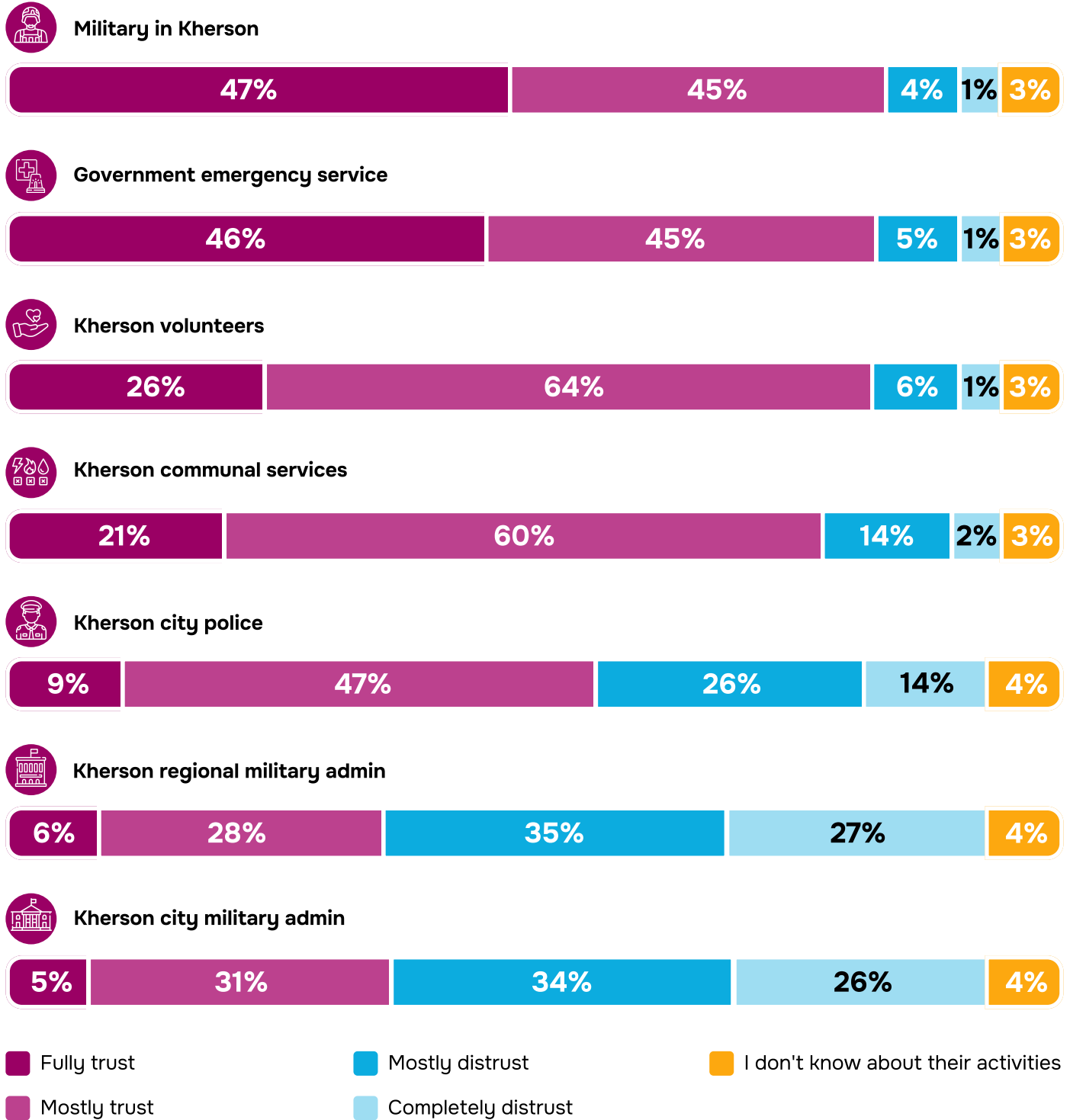


At the same time, the extremely high assessment of the volunteer contribution cannot be called a temporary surge associated with their outstanding activity during dealing with the consequences of the explosion at the Kakhovka HPP. Several consecutive sociological surveys from July 2023 to September 2024 show that trust in volunteers is not falling, but even increasing slightly. According to the last two studies, it reached 90–91% (“Completely trust” + “Rather trust”), and ignorance about their activities decreased to within statistical error.



## What is your degree of trust in the following institutions?

📅 Research: September 2024



✓ Trust
✗ Distrust
? Know nothing about

	July 2023			December 2023			June 2024			September 2024		
Institutions	✓	✗	?	✓	✗	?	✓	✗	?	✓	✗	?
Military in Kherson	90	3	7	90	5	5	85	10	5	92	5	3
State Emergency Service in Kherson	87	4	9	92	4	4	91	6	3	91	6	3
Kherson volunteers	85	6	9	87	6	7	91	7	2	90	7	3
Kherson municipal enterprises	61	28	11	81	14	5	78	18	4	81	16	3
Police in Kherson	56	28	16	54	35	11	53	42	5	56	40	4
Kherson Regional Military Administration	32	46	22	31	53	16	32	59	9	34	62	4
Kherson City Military Administration	28	51	21	28	57	15	30	61	9	36	60	4

**In fact, the public sector claims the role of one of the most authoritative and important institutions of the Kherson community.** It should be added that a significant part of the city's residents in this process act not as passive evaluators of the work of volunteers, but as people participating themselves, be it through help, support, or donations. In particular, during the disaster at the Kakhovka HPP, the majority of Kherson residents did not stay away. **69% of those surveyed joined volunteer work on site or helped remotely.** In general, 80% of Kherson residents declared that since the 2022 invasion, they have been involved in activities that can be regarded as charitable. The most common types are monetary assistance (donations) and free transfer of clothing, food, medicine, or other property.

At the same time, both Kherson residents who left the city and those who remained have contributed to charity to the same extent. The difference lies only in the structure of such assistance. Those located outside of Kherson donated more. However, people on location were more involved in free distribution of food and clothing, unloading or delivering humanitarian aid, etc.

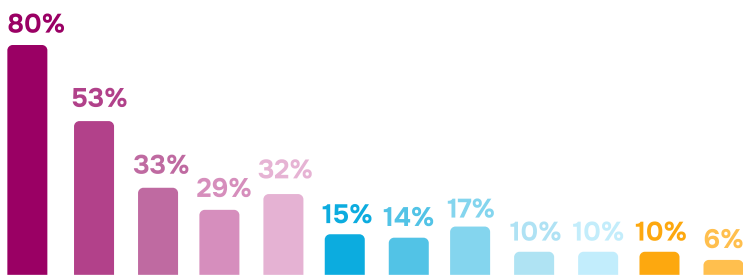
### Types of charitable activities (N=366, of those involved in charity), %

Q.: In what way?

Multiple choice

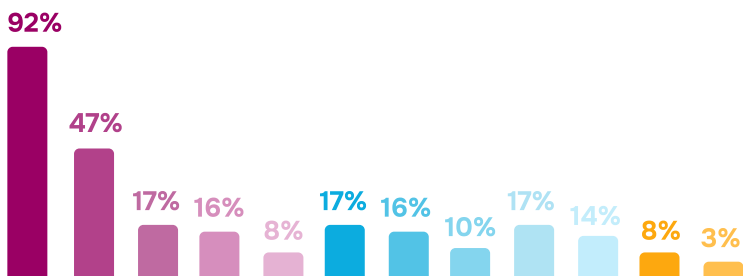
📅 Research: February 2024

#### Now in Kherson

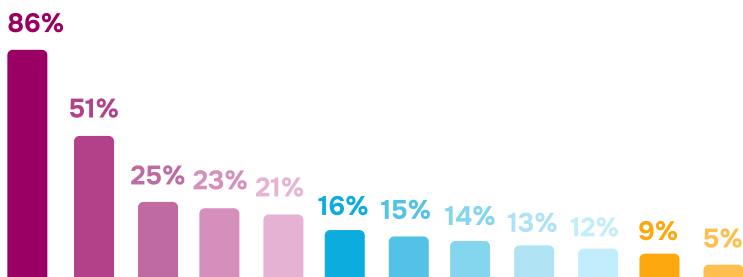


- Money/financial (donations)
- Free exchange of food, clothes, medicine
- Unloading aid supplies
- Free provision of services
- Caring for others' pets
- Paying for others' services (education, social, utilities)
- Allowing others to stay on property
- Delivering aid supplies
- Leading/participating in humanitarian events
- Organizing collections for victims
- Help with evacuations
- Other

#### Not in Kherson now



#### Various



**An important characteristic of a community is also the degree of its openness to others.** Soberly assessing the demographic prospects of Kherson, respondents are generally prepared for the fact that the city's population will recover after the war not only due to the return home of internally displaced persons, but also thanks to the migration of newcomers. New residents are expected mainly from other settlements in the Kherson region or from other regions of Ukraine.

**The attitude toward foreign migrants is more wary.** Judging by the fact that respondents are not inclined to grant Ukrainian citizenship to migrants from other countries (only 6% of respondents), rather a policy of short-term employment contracts (51%) or residence permits (31%); the hypothetical scenario of Kherson being populated by foreigners will not be supported by the community.

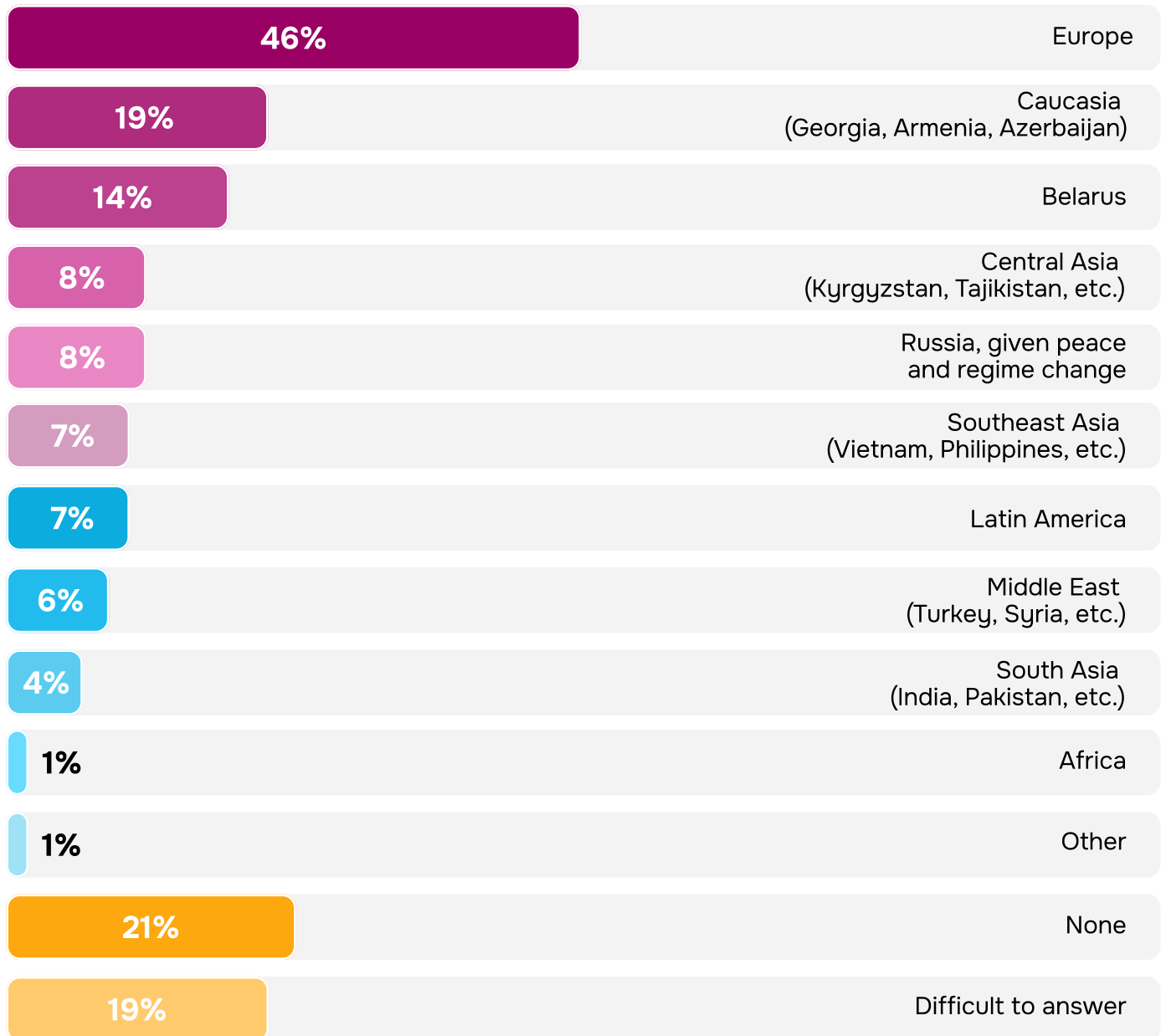
To some extent, Kherson residents demonstrate openness only to Europe and Europeans (who, in turn, adhere to a friendly policy towards Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees in their countries). 27% of respondents are currently learning a foreign language (almost exclusively European languages - English, German, Polish, French, Italian). The real interest in foreign languages is probably higher than the data provided, since the sample of respondents for the sociological study (57% live in Kherson, 32% in other regions of Ukraine, 11% abroad; the study was conducted in December 2023) is biased toward current residents of the community and does not take into account the larger share of those who have gone abroad.

**The distribution of responses regarding the preferred region of origin of labor migrants for the future reconstruction of Kherson is also very indicative.** 46% see immigrants from Europe in this role, 19% from Transcaucasia (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), and 14% from Belarus. Of course, this rating of "migrant workers" has nothing to do with the real readiness of residents of these countries or regions to come to rebuild post-war Kherson. But it eloquently attests whom the Kherson residents consider close to their cultural code: Firstly, residents of Europe; secondly, citizens of the former Soviet republics, excluding Russians; lastly, residents of South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

## Origin of labor migrants (N=402), %

Q.: Citizens of which countries (regions) do you see as labor migrants in Kherson?

📅 Research: September 2024



**Therefore, an important feature of the Kherson community is a strong urban identity, which is organically linked to Ukrainian patriotism.** Kherson residents share common cultural values and maintain an emotional connection with the city, even if they were forced to leave it due to the war.

The following characteristic of the Kherson community seems to be a logical continuation of the previous one. **Since the beginning of the war, the volunteer movement has begun playing a major role in Kherson, and is now one of the most authoritative institutions in the community.** The contribution of volunteers in dealing with the consequences of the explosion of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station was especially highly appreciated. Kherson residents placed their actions much higher than those of the steps taken by the State Emergency Service, the police, or local authorities. The strength and trust in the volunteer movement and civil society is fueled by the fact that it is an organic component of the community. Many Kherson residents themselves participate in charitable practices and help others.

Urban identity also greatly influences the community's perception of memorial and toponymic space. Kherson residents tend to organically combine the symbolism of different eras of the city's history. While supporting all ideas of decolonization and renaming streets, they are more inclined toward neutral names or the return of older pre-Soviet names, provided they do not hold any imperial connotations, which once again emphasizes the importance of local identity - Kherson residents want to preserve the uniqueness of the city.

**The war forced the resettlement of at least 2/3 of the population of the Kherson community.** Considering that at least some of these migrants are currently abroad, it is not surprising that a fairly high proportion of respondents are studying a foreign language. It can be assumed that close acquaintance with other countries will make Kherson residents more open to other cultures. But at least now a high level of tolerance can be observed, mainly toward European peoples. Considering the hypothetical question of populating Kherson with new residents after the war, the community would prefer to live next to immigrants from Europe. Conventionally, the “second circle” includes residents of Transcaucasia, and the “third” includes Belarusians. The resettlement of migrants from South Asia, the Middle East, or Africa to Kherson is viewed by the community as unacceptable - apparently due to the too great distance between cultures.

# 3. Endurance, fatigue, and defensive reactions

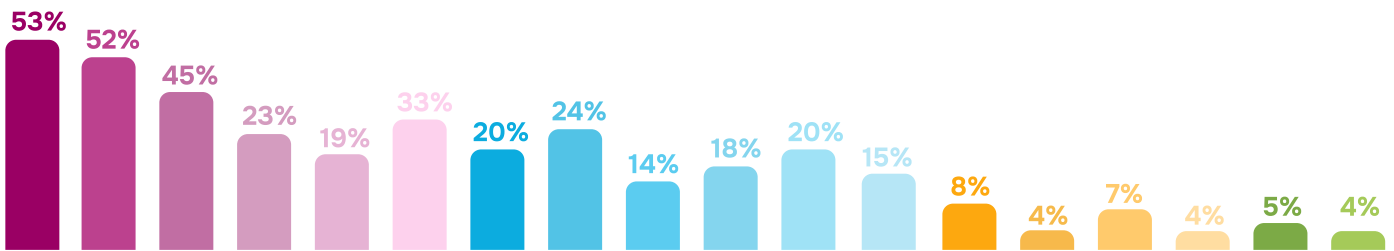
Sociological surveys of public opinion in Kherson record the gradual accumulation of fatigue and the deterioration of the psycho-emotional and physical state of respondents. **The community's residents demonstrate extremely high levels of endurance and adaptability, but are finding it increasingly difficult to bear the hardships of war.**

Three surveys over the past year (October 2023, December 2023, June 2024) show that feelings of anxiety, disappointment, despair, and fear are gradually increasing. Moreover, positive emotions (hope, expectation of improvements, happiness) are losing their positions.

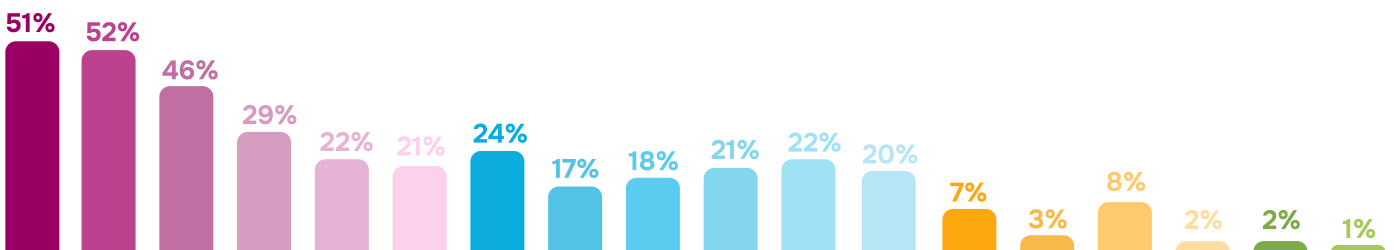
## Socio-psychological dynamics (current)

📅 Research: October 2023, December 2023, June 2024

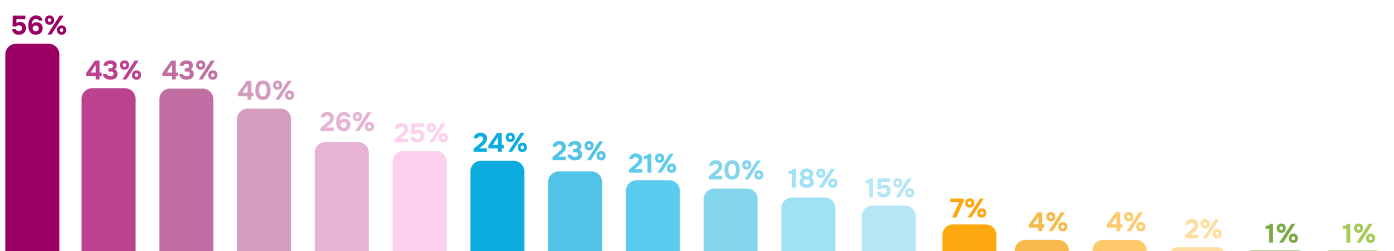
### October 2023



### December 2023



### June 2024



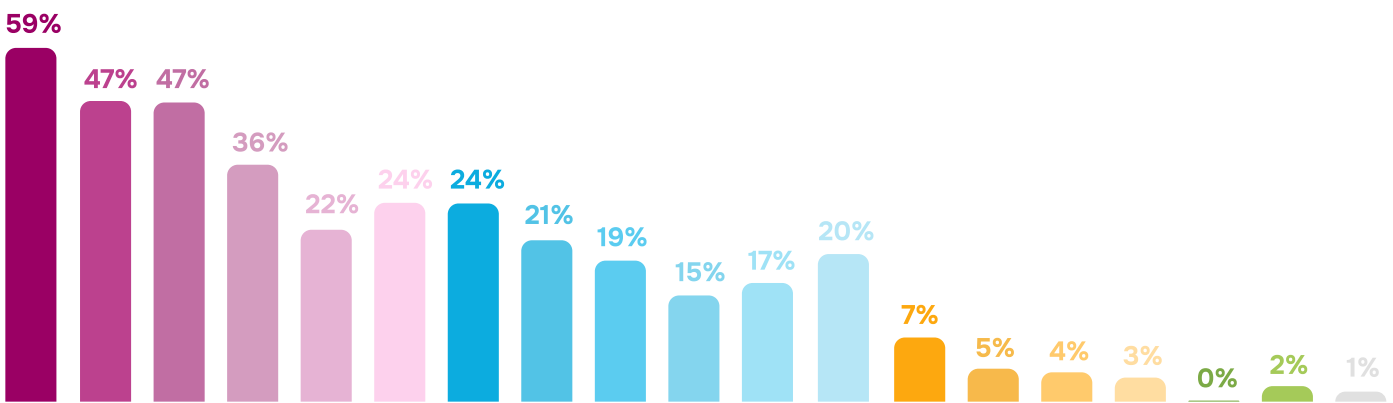
- Anxiety
- Optimism
- Hope
- Disappointment
- Despair
- Irritation
- Fear
- Apathy
- Pessimism
- Hopelessness
- Anger
- Rage
- Love
- Inspiration
- Aggression
- Joy
- Happiness
- Satisfaction

**If we compare the psycho-emotional state of those who left and those who stayed, migrants are in a better position, but not by much.** Kherson migrant residents maintain an emotional connection with home, read the same Telegram channels, and continue to live in the same information field. They also accumulate fatigue and frustration, though to a slightly lesser extent than the city's residents.

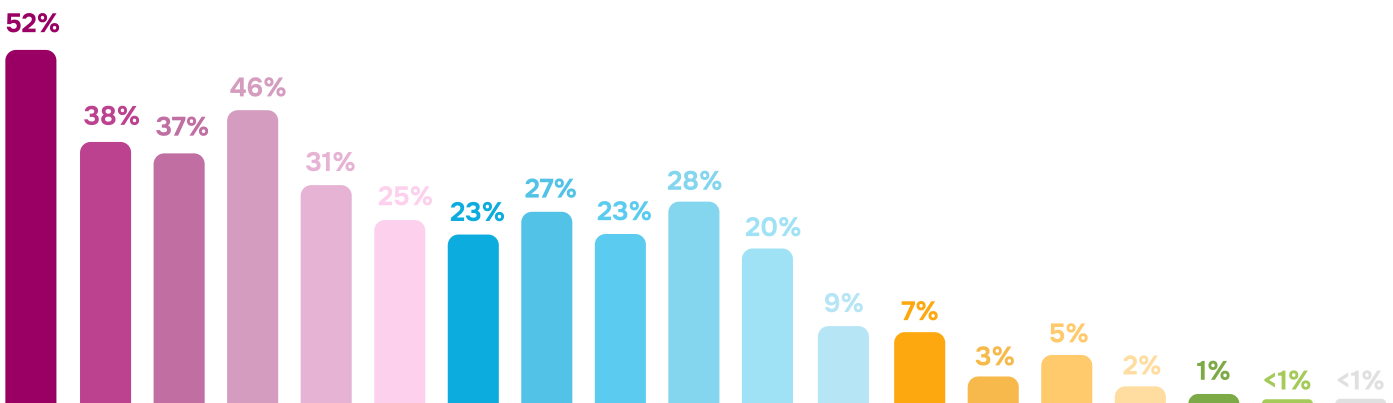
### Socio-psychological state based on location

📅 Research: June 2024

#### Currently in Kherson



#### Not currently in Kherson



- Anxiety
- Optimism
- Hope
- Disappointment
- Despair
- Irritation
- Fear
- Apathy
- Pessimism
- Hopelessness
- Anger
- Rage
- Love
- Inspiration
- Aggression
- Joy
- Happiness
- Satisfaction



There are many objective reasons for the deterioration of the well-being of Kherson residents. City residents are suffering from bombing. If a year ago every third respondent spoke about damage to their home, then in June 2024 their number was already more than half. **Over the year, the number of those who have experienced the death of relatives has increased significantly - from 2% to 9% of the total population of the community.** For those living directly in Kherson, there have been more difficulties with employment (56% in the rating of urban problems according to a survey in September 2024, an increase of +9% compared to December 2023). The percent of unemployed, according to a survey in December 2023, reached 28%. Almost a third of respondents faced a decline in social status, changing to lower paid and less prestigious ones. The number of people who have developed psychological disorders due to constant bombing has increased. In July 2023, 35% of respondents talked about this problem with themselves or their family members, and in September 2024, 47% did so.

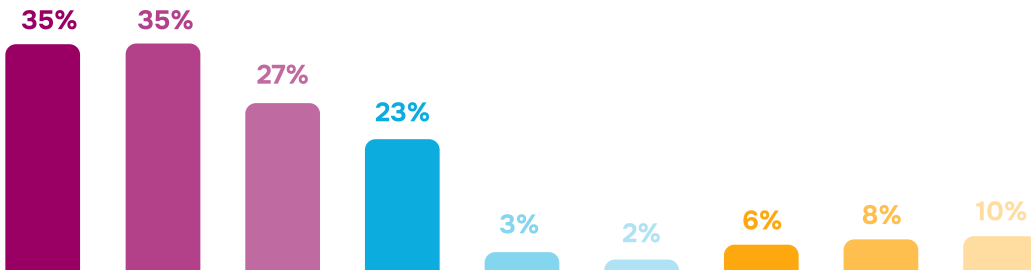
**Those who left Kherson are in a better position, but almost all of them live in rented housing (before the war, 88% of them lived in their own homes, and now only 4% do so).** This causes powerful material and psychological pressure on families and obviously does not boost confidence in the future. A New Year's Eve survey last year showed that about half of those who usually put up a Christmas tree at home for the holidays now do not intend to do so. People are denying themselves things that used to bring them happiness, or they simply cannot afford them.

**As a result, the vast majority of Kherson residents, according to a survey in August 2024, are unhappy (59% of respondents) or could not answer this question (19%).** Only 20% said they were rather happy, and only 2% said they were very happy. Health is also not at a high level. Only 14% feel that they are in very good (1%) or good (13%) health. 56% indicated their health as average. 24% of respondents have poor health, and 5% have very poor health.

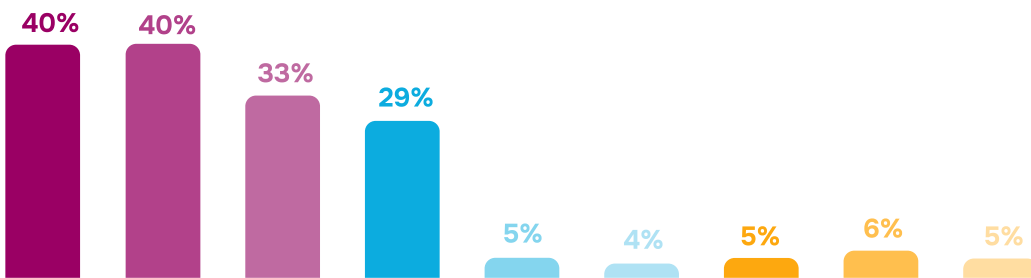
## Dynamics of damage assessment

📅 Research: September 2023, December 2023, June 2024

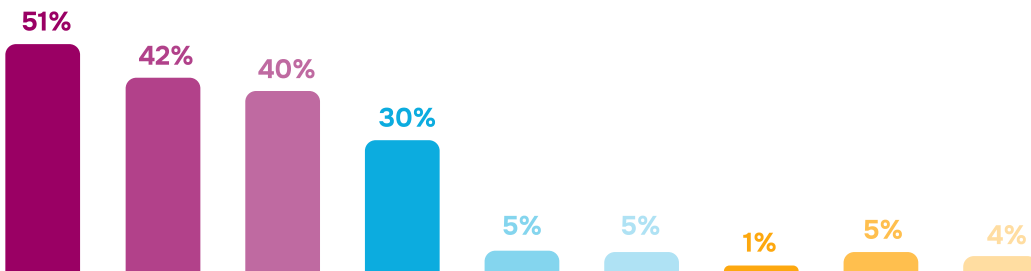
### September 2023



### December 2023



### June 2024



- Damaged housing (apartment, house)
- After bombings I/family member have developed psychological trauma
- The building where my apartment is located has been damaged
- Destroyed property (car, garage, cottage, communications)
- I /family member have been injured
- A family member has been killed
- Other
- None
- Difficult to answer

**A characteristic symptom is also increased information fatigue.** Kherson residents gradually began **unsubscribing from Telegram channels**, the main source of information in the community. This trend has not yet emerged very clearly and requires further research. In fact, it may turn out that the main motivation of

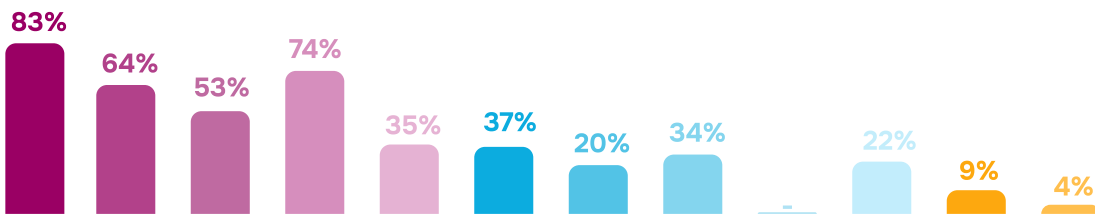
Kherson residents in such actions is not so much the desire to fence themselves off from community news, but rather to preserve their own psyche from burnout. It's no secret that the media primarily focuses on the audience's emotional reaction in their messages, as such news stimulates more clicks. Given the predominantly negative character of the news during the war and the constant bombing of Kherson, the reduction in information consumption may be a kind of defensive reaction of respondents.

Moreover, the actual volume of news consumption significantly exceeds the need for information. Thus, according to a survey in August 2024, exactly half of those surveyed watch news from the front several times a day, and 26% watch it every hour. In contrast, the percentage of those who watch the news less than daily is only 9%.

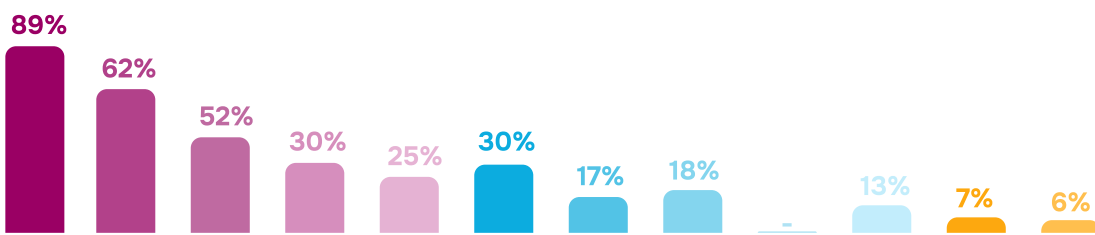
### Dynamics of Telegram channel ratings

📅 Research: September 2023, December 2023, June 2024

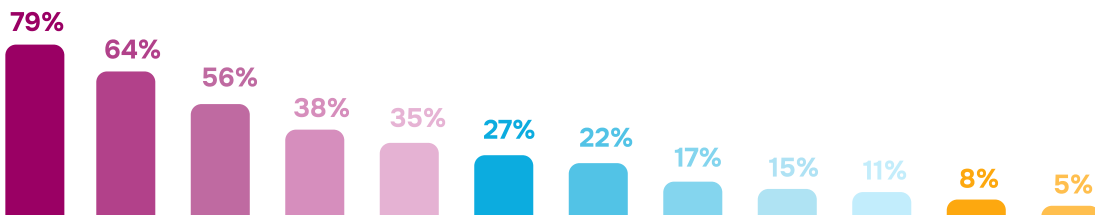
#### July 2023



#### December 2023



#### June 2024



- Khuyevyy Kherson
- Nikolayevskyy Vanyok
- Kherson: War without fakes
- Trukha Kherson
- Suspilne Kherson
- Konsiantin Ryzhenko
- Good evening, we are from Kherson
- Kherson regional state channel
- Kherson city council channel
- Vitalyi Kim
- Kherson TUT
- Other

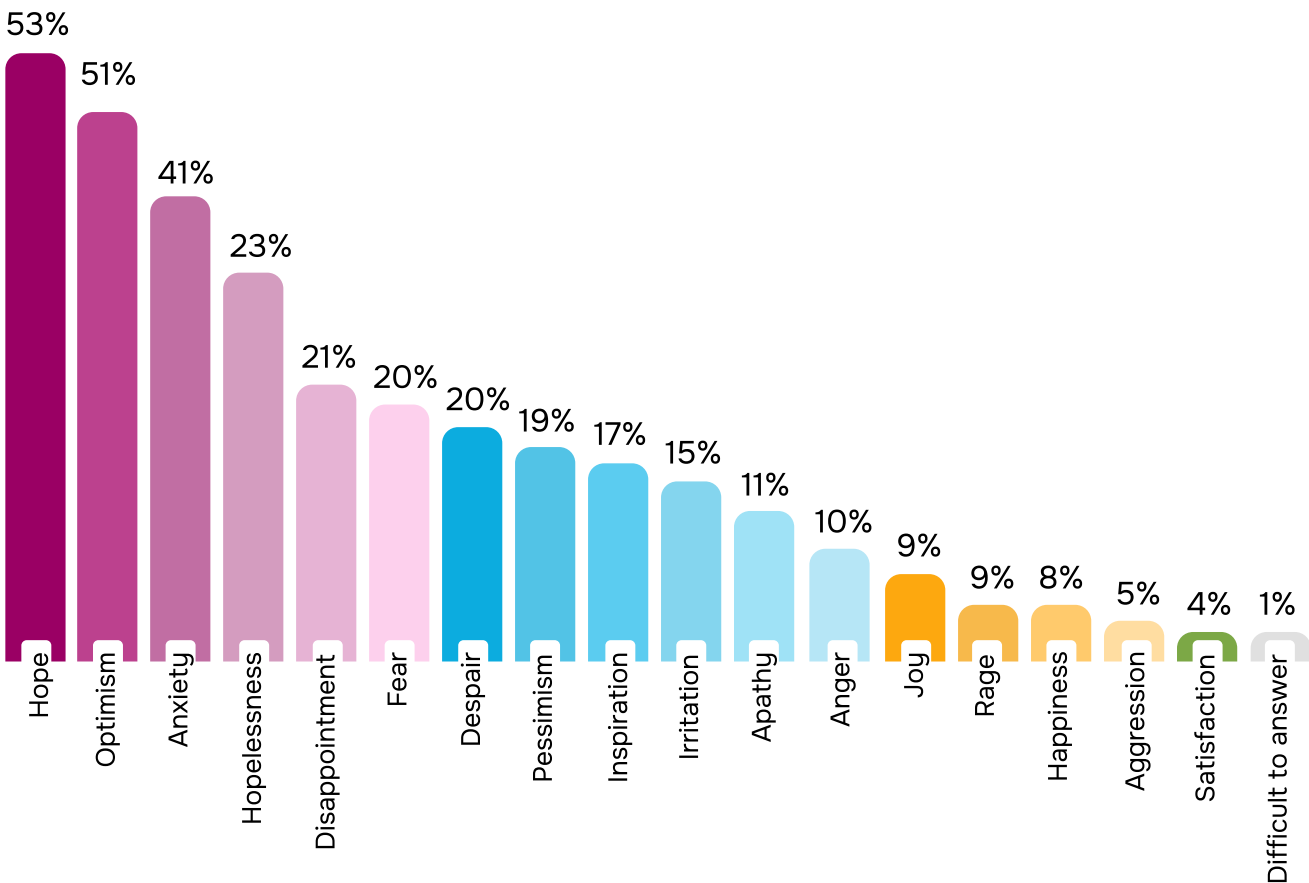
It is also encouraging that Kherson residents are not losing hope and believe in positive changes. "Hope" and "expectation of improvement" significantly outperform "anxiety" and "hopelessness" in the rating of the assessment of the future. In this regard, the city's residents are even more optimistic than those who left. Most likely, this is also a kind of defensive reaction of the psyche. Facing threats and challenges every day, they nonetheless hope for change for the better.

### Socio-psychological state (future) (N=400), %

Q.: When you think about the future, what emotions do you feel?

Multiple choice, choose up to 5 answers

📅 Research: June 2024



## 4. "Reactive Transformation": Community Changes in Response to Armed Aggression

**The 2022 invasion and the following 8-month occupation significantly affected almost all spheres of life of the Kherson community.** An important component of this process was the conscious changes initiated by the Kherson residents as an original form of resistance, protest, and the desire to preserve their own identity.

**Thus, Kherson has significantly become Ukrainianized, not only declaratively, but also at the level of real behavior.** The number of residents of the Kherson urban community who speak only Ukrainian has approximately doubled since the 2022 invasion. This is especially true for using Ukrainian for communication with friends (4.1 times increase). More than half (54%) began to prefer using Ukrainian in public places. For 72% of respondents, Ukrainian is the language used on the phone.

At the same time, a significant number of Kherson residents are bilingual. 45% now communicate in both their native languages, both Ukrainian and Russian, and 43% with friends, though at work and in public, bilinguals prefer Ukrainian. Kherson residents turned out to be quite demanding regarding the linguistic behavior of officials and service providers. They require officials and service providers to communicate exclusively in Ukrainian at work, but in informal communication with Kherson residents, switching to the language of the interlocutor is acceptable for half of the respondents.

**It is worth noting that, regarding language issues, there is a noticeable difference between those Kherson residents who remained in the city and those who left.** Thus, Kherson residents who left have a more negative attitude towards the Russian language, and they are less inclined to switch to another language (Russian) in a conversation than those who remained in the city.

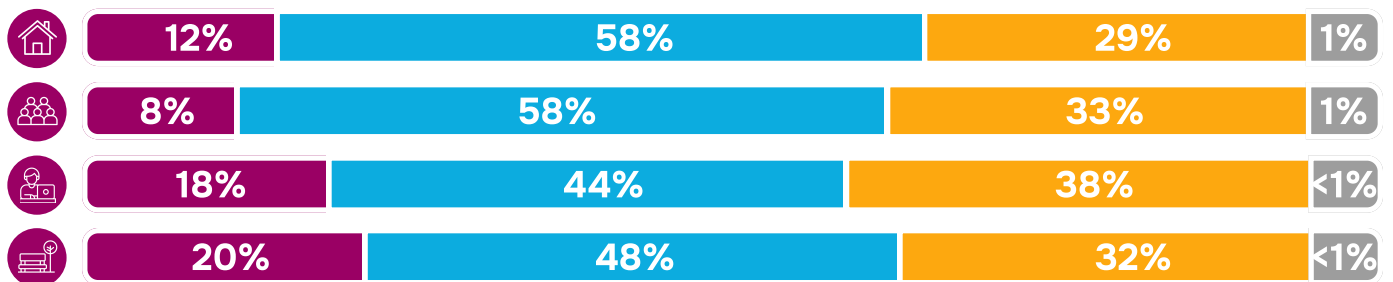
There may be several explanations here. At least in part, this difference can be explained by the linguistic environment. Having moved to predominantly Ukrainian-speaking regions of Ukraine, Kherson migrants have begun using the language of their surroundings more.

## Language of communication prior to the 2022 invasion (N=403), %

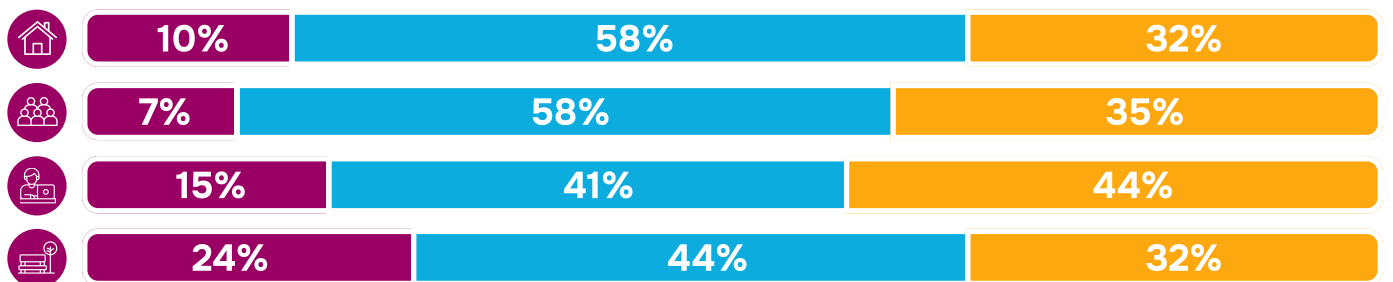
Q.: What language did you most often speak before the 2022 invasion?



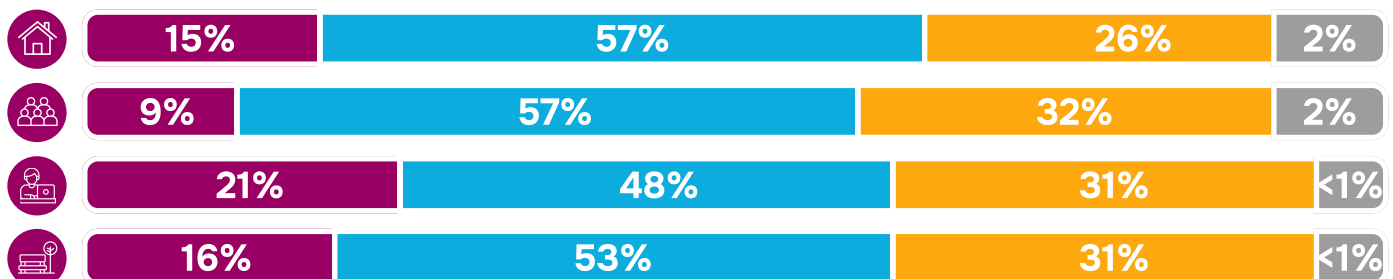
### All respondents



### Currently in Kherson



### Not currently in Kherson



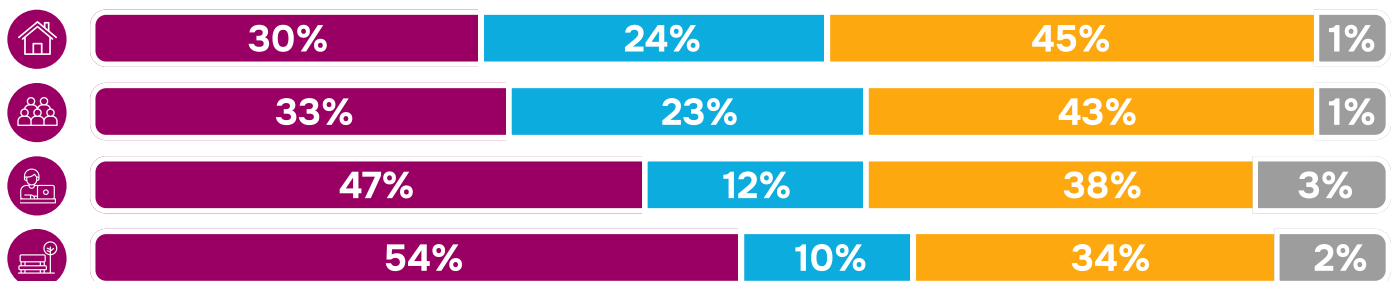
## Language of communication after the 2022 invasion (N=403), %

Q.: What language do you usually use now?

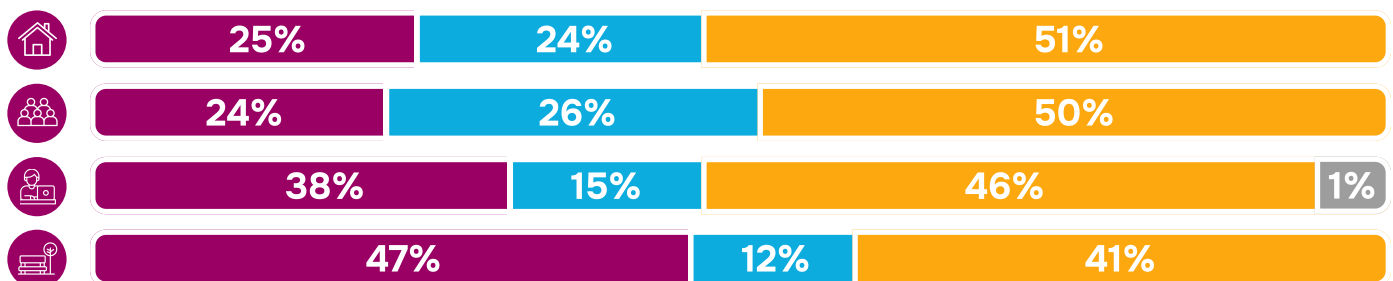
Research: May 2024



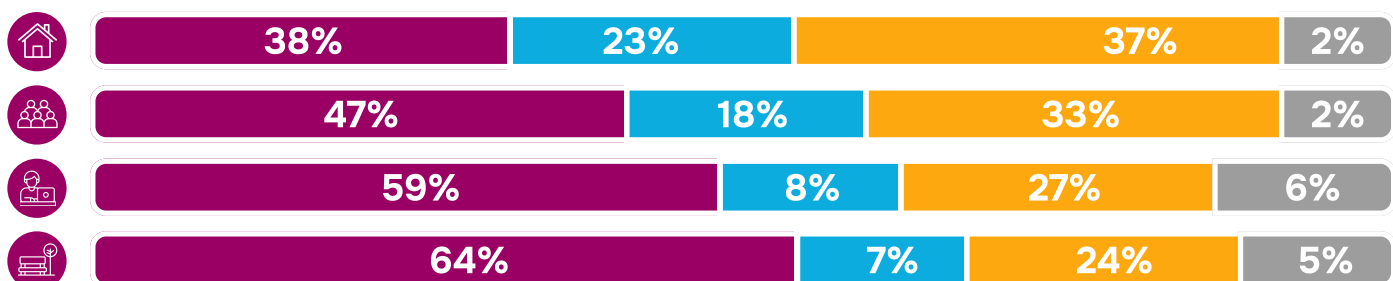
### All respondents



### Currently in Kherson



### Not currently in Kherson



A characteristic marker that should also obviously be added to the reactions to the armed invasion is **the spelling of "Russia" with a lowercase letter ("russia")**. The predominant majority (65%) believes that "Russia" should be written with a lowercase letter in all cases, while for another 22% the choice of uppercase or lowercase letter depends on the situation.

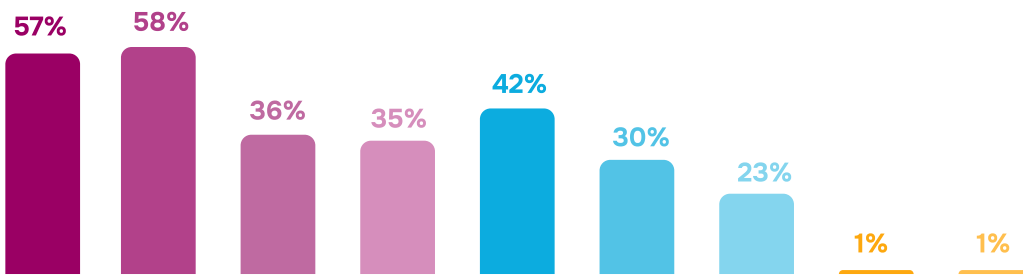
**The community treats the Kherson residents who cooperated with the occupiers no worse than they treat the invaders.** Several surveys in a row have recorded an extremely strong demand for punishment of collaborators. In the priorities for the restoration of Kherson, this point consistently ranks second, right after the reconstruction of what has been destroyed. And in the latest study (in September 2024), it even came in first place, reaching 58% in the priority rating.

**A lot of people are talking about Kherson's renewal. Choose from the list what, in your opinion, what should we start with? (choose the three most important things)**

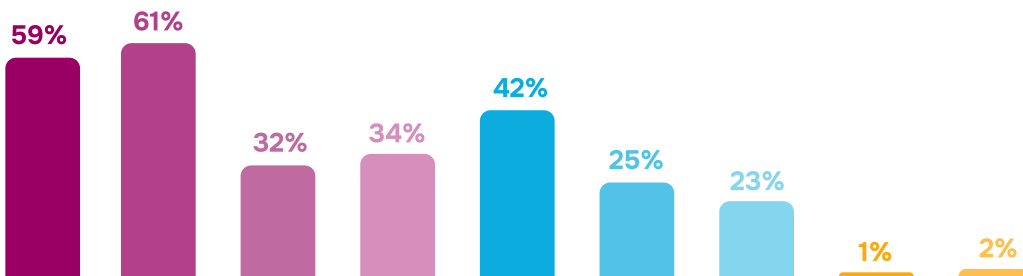
Multiple choice

📅 Research: September 2024

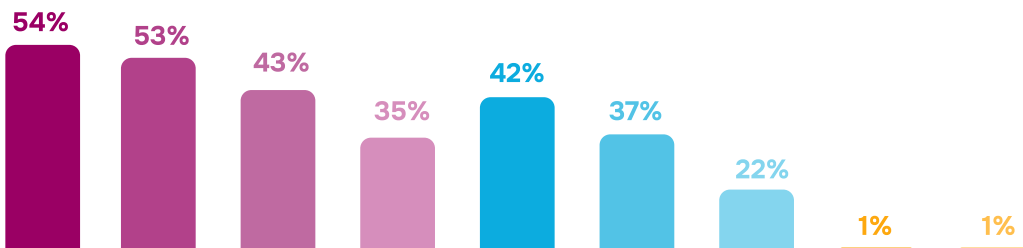
**All respondents**



**Currently in Kherson**



**Not currently in Kherson**



- Rebuilding destroyed buildings
- Punishing traitors and collaborators
- Developing a concept (plan, strategy) of renewal
- Finding investors
- Returning people to society
- Working on the city's public institutions (schools, hospitals, cultural establishments)
- Implementing connections and communication between people in various structures
- Other
- Difficult to answer



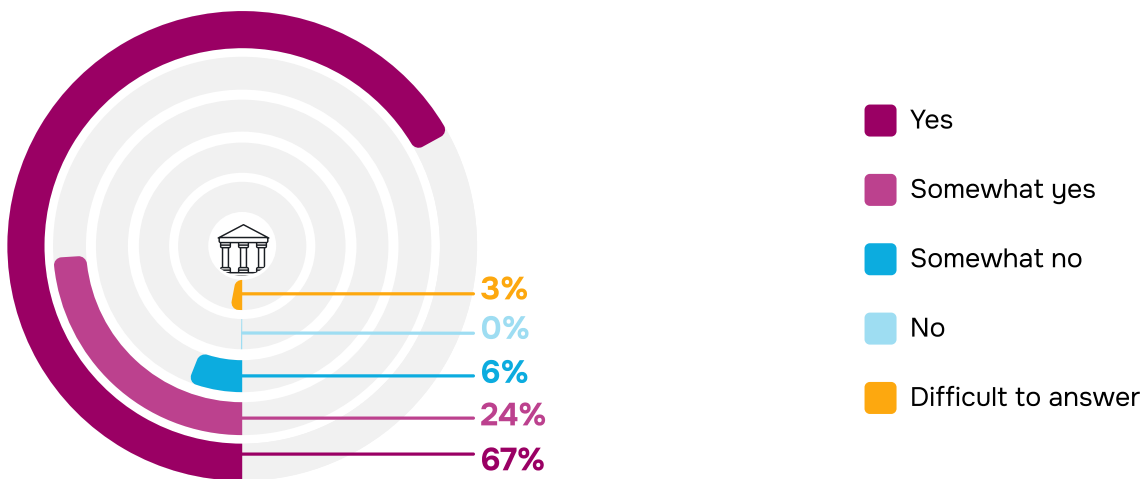
**The 8-month occupation of the city left a significant mark on the minds of Kherson residents.** A survey on the possible creation of a museum dedicated to the events of 2022 showed that Kherson residents not only support the idea of establishing such an institution (91% of respondents), but are also ready to take an active part in shaping its exhibits. 41% of respondents have memories that they are ready to share with the new museum, and 24% have objects, photographs, or video files that could become exhibits.

The community ranked public resistance of Kherson residents in first place among the main themes of such a museum (76%). Among the proposed names, the option "Museum of Indestructibility" received the greatest support (65%). Such emphases indicate the desire of Kherson residents to stress the strength of the community, its resilience, and its readiness to defend its freedom and identity.

### Building a new museum (N=400), %

**Q.:** Do you think that a museum is needed in Kherson dedicated to the events of 2022?

 Research: June 2024



The nature of the Kherson community can also be illustrated by differences from the all-Ukrainian data of sociological surveys. Thus, according to a [sociological survey by KIIS](#) conducted in May 2024, 34% of Ukrainians agreed (or probably completely) with the statement: "I support the new law on mobilization." At the same time, 20% probably disagreed, and 32% completely disagreed. 14% did not respond to the question.

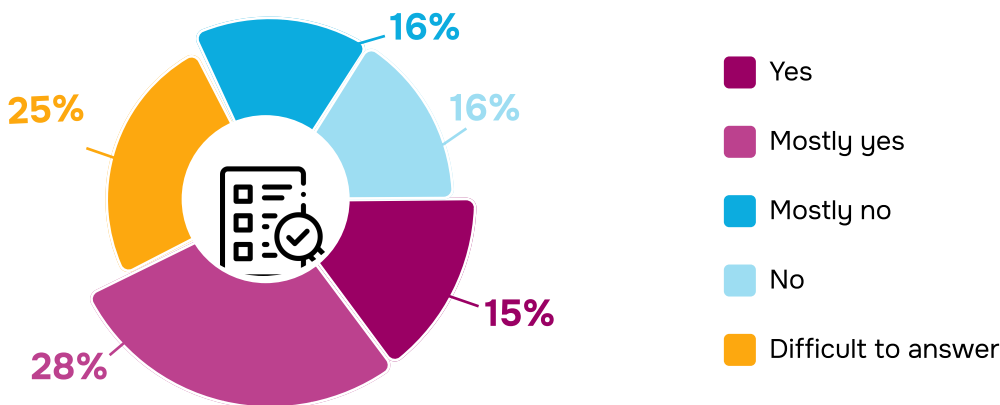
However, our research in March 2024 showed significantly higher support among Kherson residents for the (then) draft law on mobilization. Certainly, a direct comparison of these studies is not entirely correct. In particular, the interval

between surveys is two months. At the time of the KIIS study, the draft law on mobilization had already become law, and at the time of the March survey it was only at the discussion stage. The surveys were conducted using different methodologies (KIIS - a telephone survey, we have an online panel). But nonetheless, it is impossible to dismiss the fact that, according to a survey conducted in March 2024, Kherson residents expressed a high level of support for the idea of increasing mobilization. 43% of respondents answered "Yes" and "Probably yes" and 32% answered "No" and "Probably no".

### On the amendments to the law on the military draft (N = 337 - those who have heard of the amendments to the law on the military draft), %

Q.: Do you support the amendments to the law on the military draft?

📅 Research: March 2024

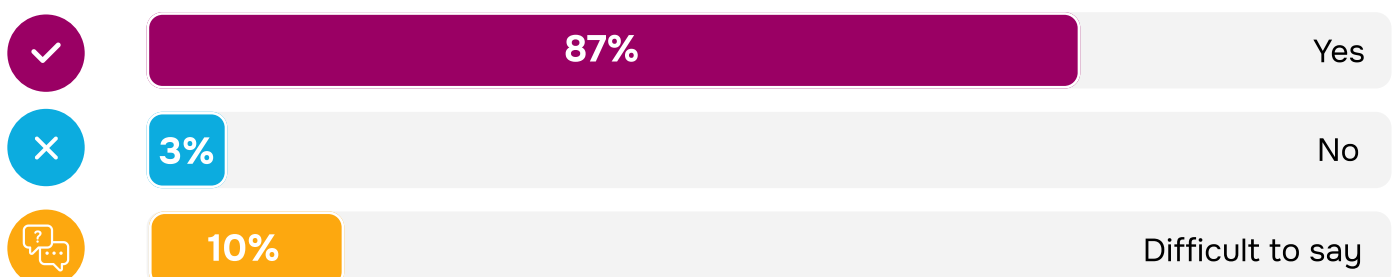


**Kherson residents are characterized by their firm belief in the victory of Ukraine.** In particular, in March 2024, 87% answered “Yes” to the question: “Do you believe in Ukraine’s victory?” Only 3% of respondents answered "No." It is interesting to compare this data with a [survey conducted at the same time by the Razumkov Center](#), according to which, on average across Ukraine, 83% of respondents believe in victory (among residents of the East and South – 78%), while 11% do not believe in it (15% in the East).

### Faith in victory (N=402), %

Q.: Do you believe in Ukraine's victory?

📅 Research: March 2024



Another aspect of the "reactive transformation" of Kherson residents was a deeply personalized perception of the war. They see it not just as hostilities on the territory of Kherson, but as a war that the enemy is waging against them personally. **90% of those surveyed believe that the bombing of Kherson by the Russian military is not aimed at destroying military facilities, but is aimed at terrorizing the civilian population (March 2024 poll).**

Thus, the strongest reactions of the people of Kherson to the Russian armed aggression and the 8-month occupation of the city have been resilience and resistance. A significant part of the city's residents abandoned, at least declaratively, the Russian language in everyday communication, switching to Ukrainian. Kherson residents have shown a high level of support for mobilization measures and demonstrated strong faith in Ukraine's victory. Remembering the occupation period, their focus is primarily on public resistance and their struggle for their own freedom and identity.

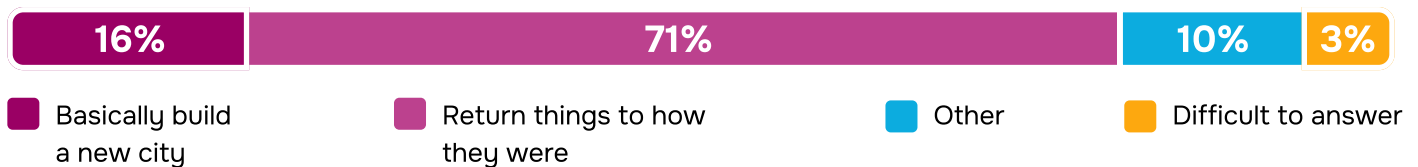
# 5. Kherson of the future: the image of a "new city"

Many sociological studies of the project directly or indirectly record the fairly widespread public opinion that the Kherson of the future will be a different city - not the one it is now or was before the war. Clearly, the respondents imagine the renewal of Kherson differently. Everyone fills the idea of a "new city" with their own meaning (new architecture, new economy, new infrastructure, new social relations, etc.). But in general, it can be stated that the demand for creating something new is much stronger than for restoring what's old. Only 16% of respondents want to return everything to the way it was before the war, while 71% are in favor of creating a "fundamentally new city."

It is characteristic that the ratio of "conservatives" and "progressives" leans more toward the latter for the part of the sample that left Kherson because of the war. Among them, there are 10% more supporters of the "new city" than among current residents (75% versus 65%). On the contrary, there are 4% fewer "conservatives" among those who left (15% versus 19%). Considering that the majority of the community leaving Kherson was younger and more socially active, their request for the "re-establishment" of the city should be given even greater weight.

## Do you think that the main idea of Kherson's renewal is returning everything to how it was before the war, or building a new city?

📅 Research: October 2023



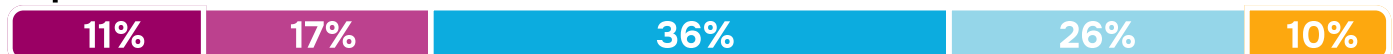
In addition, the current trend shows that over time, the number of supporters of the "new city" is gradually increasing. In particular, when answering the question about the future of Kherson, Kherson residents are now less inclined to answer that the city will not change as compared to a year ago.

## A lot of people are talking about Kherson's renewal. Do you agree that the post-war renewed Kherson will look the same as it did before the war?

October 2023



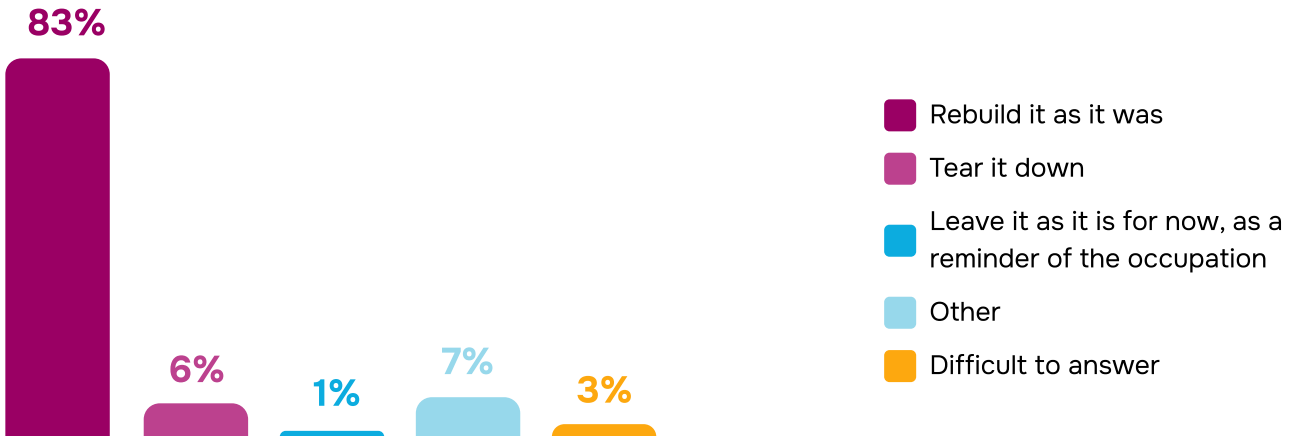
September 2024



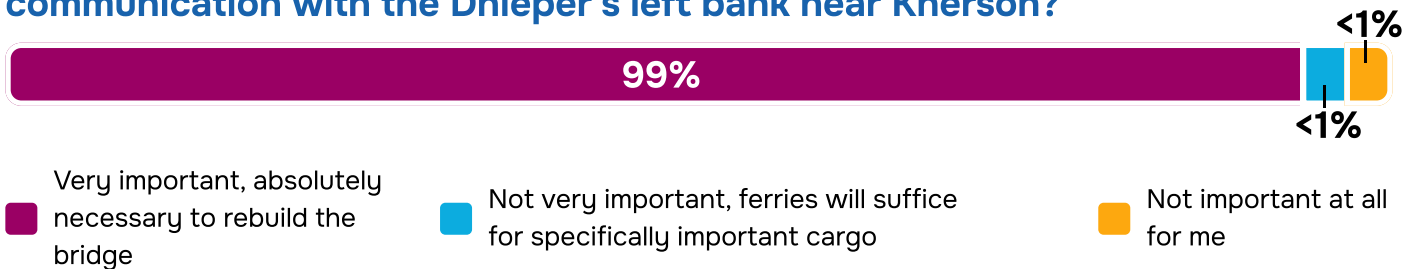
The tendency toward "renewal" does not negate the desire to fully and without changes rebuild some of Kherson's facilities, which are both strategic and symbolic for the city. Thus, 83% of the community spoke out in favor of rebuilding the Fabryka shopping center and 99% in favor of restoring the Antonivskyi Bridge.

### What do you think should be done with the Fabrika mall??

📅 Research: October 2023



### How important is it for you to rebuild the Antonivskyi bridge or other communication with the Dnieper's left bank near Kherson?



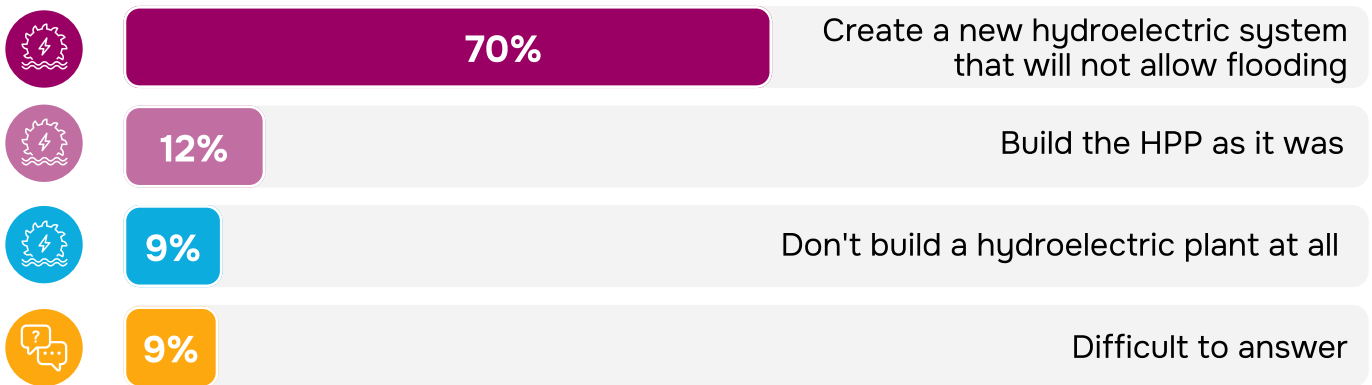
**The dynamics of the attitudes toward the restoration of the Kakhovka HPP are interesting.** A significant number of Kherson residents suffered from the flood after the explosion (43%) or took an active part in overcoming its negative consequences (69%) - they rescued people and property, cleared houses and territories, helped the victims with donations, their own belongings, and housing. Therefore, the natural reaction to this shock was the desire to fully restore both the power plant itself and the reservoir. However, ideas regarding smaller-scale hydraulic structures (a smaller dam and, accordingly, a smaller reservoir area) were not very popular. But in just six months from October 2023 to April 2024, the number of supporters of the full restoration of the Kakhovka HPP decreased more than fourfold, and the share of supporters of its reconstruction on a smaller scale increased almost threefold.

The reasons for such a radical change in position regarding hydroelectric power plants require a more in-depth and qualitative (and not just quantitative) study. It is only possible to roughly reconstruct the development of the respondents' beliefs.

The state of shock after the disaster passed; people saw that the apocalyptic scenarios (the transformation of the reservoir into a desert, the cessation of the city's water supply) did not come true. The rational arguments of scientists and eco-activists played a certain role. But we will also allow ourselves to make the assumption that a clearly expressed public demand for the creation of something new, rather than the restoration of something old, plays a major role in the turn of public opinion.

### Attitude toward various options for a future Kakhovka HPP (N=402), %

Q.: Which variant of a future Kakhovka HPP do you consider best?

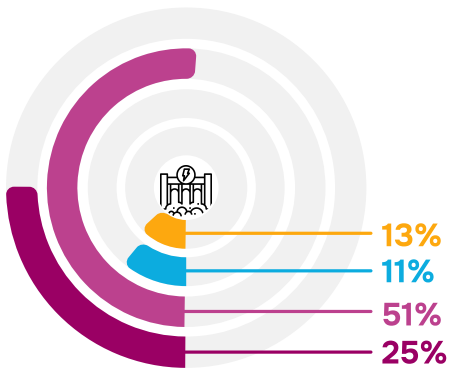


### Attitude toward restoring the Kakhovka HPP

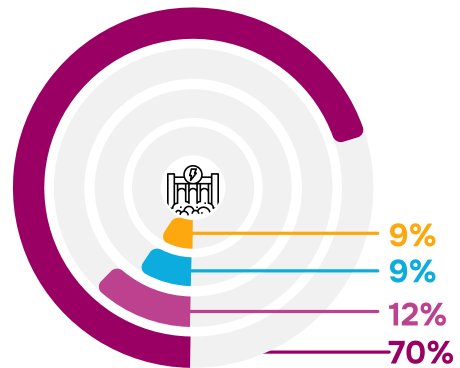
Research: October 2023, April 2024

■ Build new a HPP system    
 ■ Rebuild the HPP as it was    
 ■ Don't build any HPP    
 ■ Difficult to answer

#### October 2023



#### April 2024



**New hydroelectric structures** with a shorter dam and smaller reservoir with less volume; dam and reservoir without HPP rebuilding

**New hydroelectric structures** new hydroelectric structures that will not allow flooding over such a great territory