

POWER

4 Girls

Girls and Young Women not in Education, Employment or Training in Ukraine

Barriers, Needs and Pathways
to Labour Market Integration

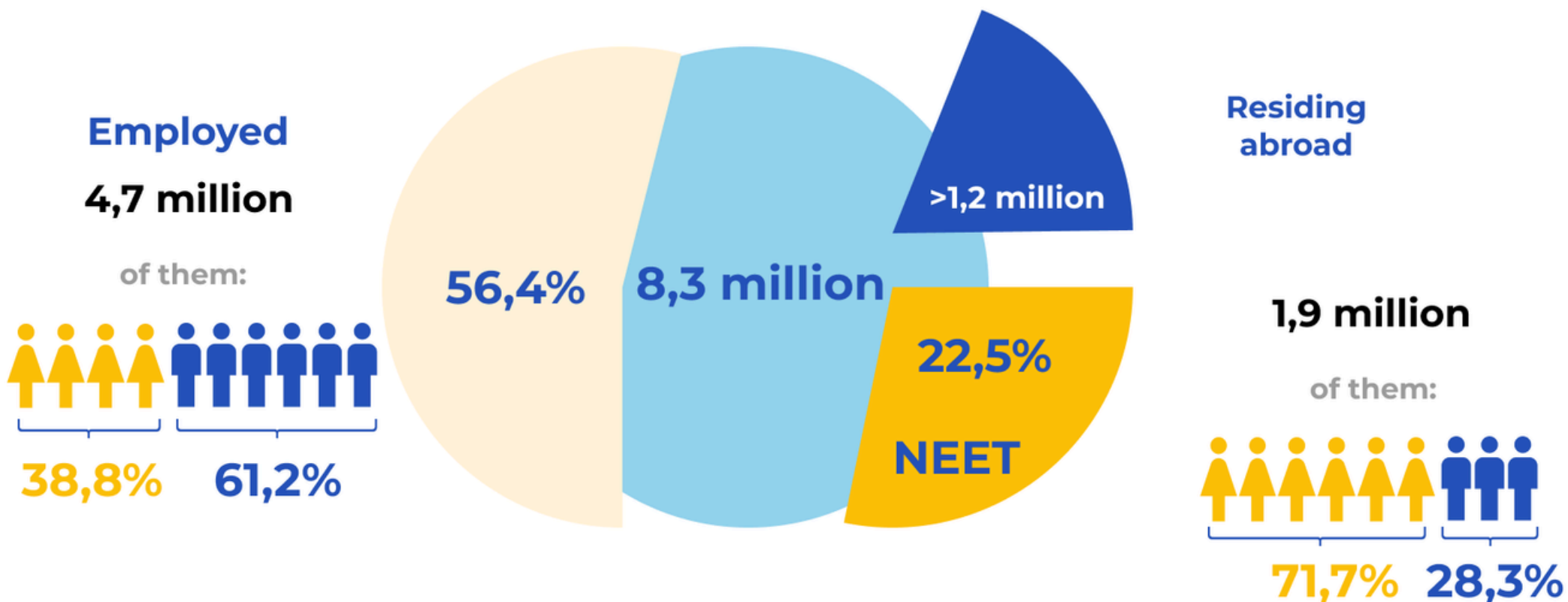


**Results of
the Sociological Study**



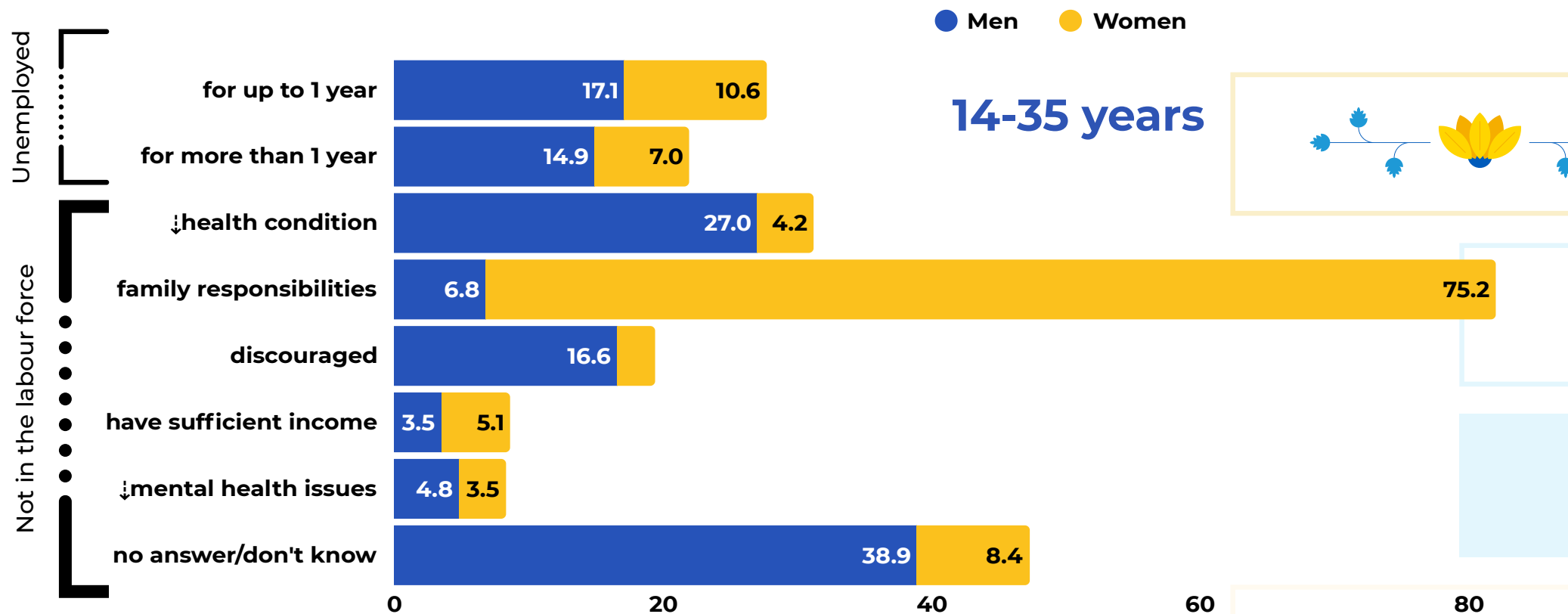
Statistical Assessment of the Youth Profile in Ukraine (2023)

Young people aged 15-34 years

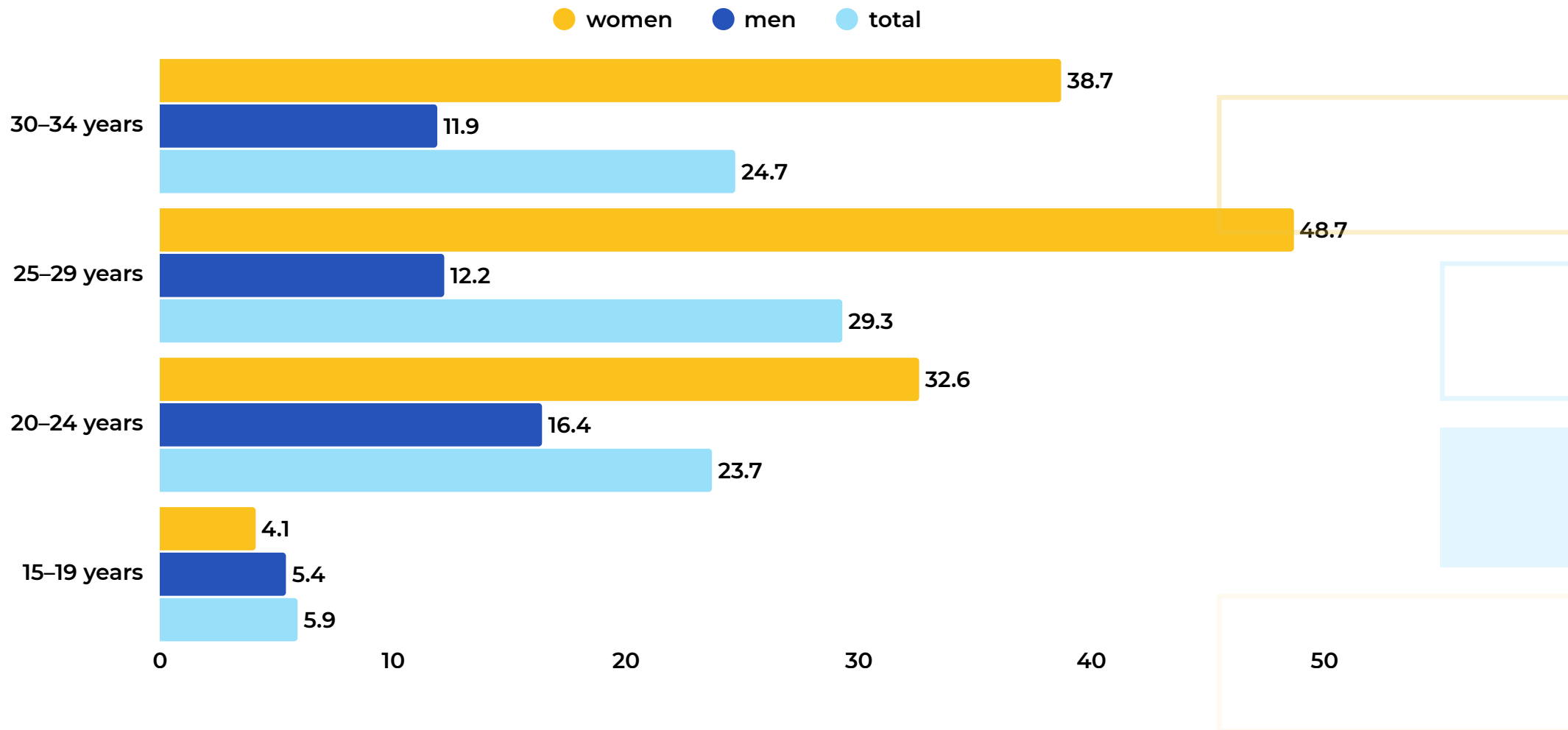


* NEET - Not in Education, Employment, or Training

Disaggregation of NEET Youth by Category and Gender, % (2023)



NEET Youth by Age, % (2023)



Goal, Objectives and Target Group



Goal:

- to identify the barriers, needs and employment potential of girls and young women (aged 15–34) who are NEET, in the context of their vulnerability, socio-economic conditions and the current situation in the Ukrainian labour market.

Target Group:

- girls and young women aged 15 to 35 who are not employed, not in education and not acquiring professional skills.

Study Period:

- October–November 2025

Objectives:

- Measure the scale and structure of NEET among young girls and women.
- Analyze vulnerability factors (war, displacement, gender stereotypes, barriers to education and employment).
- Identify key barriers to re-engagement in active life.
- Assess NEET women's awareness of available support services.
- Identify barriers to accessing the labour market and education.
- Examine the economic capacity and self-perception of young women.
- Evaluate institutional capacity.

Study Sample



Target Groups		Actual
I. In-Depth Interviews (IDI)		
1	Gender and employment experts	10
2	Service providers	20
3	NEET girls and young women (aged 15–34) (hard-to-reach groups)	23
		TOTAL
		53
III. Focus Groups (FG)		
3	NEET girls and young women (aged 15–34)	8
Number of participants		61
		TOTAL (groups)
		8
III. Structured Interviews		
4	NEET girls and young women (aged 15–34)	512
		TOTAL
		512

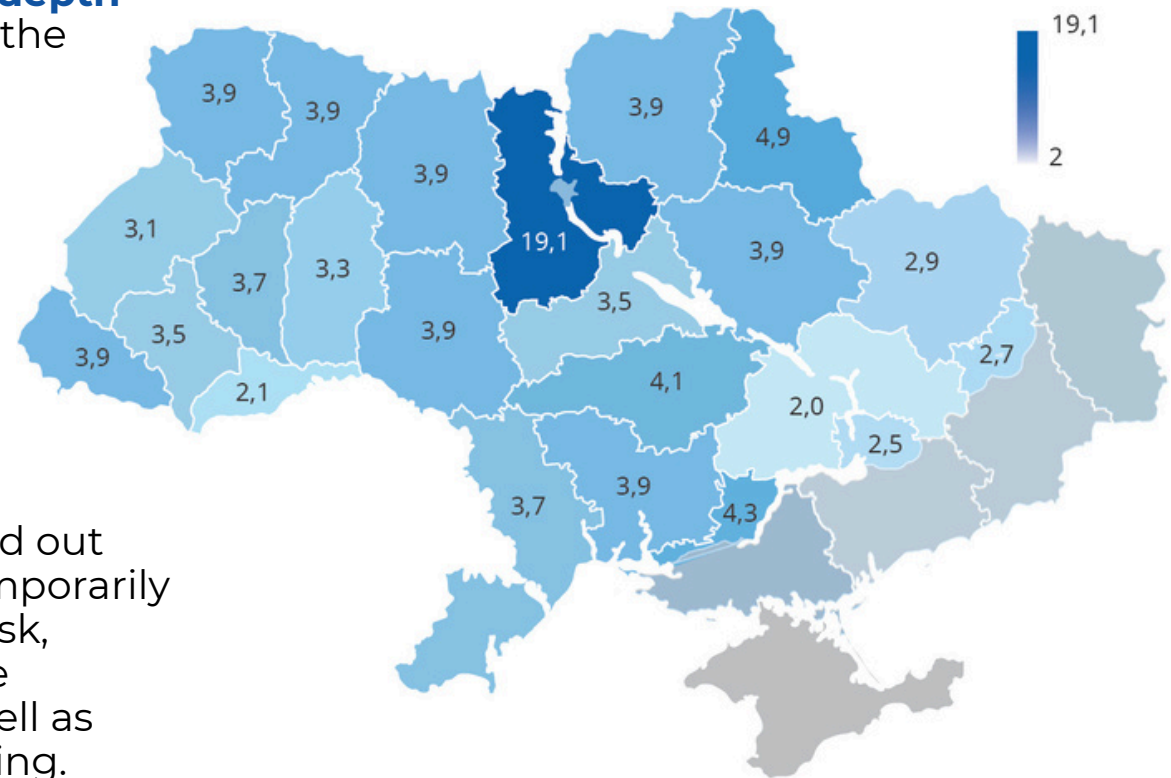
Research Geography



Focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted across the following macro-regions of Ukraine:

- Western;
- Central;
- Kyiv City;
- Northern;
- Eastern;
- Southern.

The survey of respondents was carried out throughout Ukraine, excluding the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia regions, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, as well as areas where active hostilities are ongoing.



Girls and Young Women NEET in Ukraine: Who Are They?

Ages 20–24 represent a critical period for entering NEET status, while **ages 25–29** –reinforce associated risks. Predominantly living in **small towns and rural areas**, with some residing in cities.

- 62%** have children
- 67%** live in financial vulnerability
- ≈ 9%** have a disability status

26,6% are IDPs



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High-Risk NEET Groups: Facing Double Isolation

- Women with caregiving responsibilities (single mothers, caregivers, guardians, etc.)
- Internally displaced persons (IDPs)
- Women with disabilities
- Residents of rural areas and frontline communities
- 15–19-year-old girls from socially vulnerable backgrounds (low-income, large families, difficult life circumstances, etc.)
- Representatives of Roma communities



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Reasons for NEET Status

- Caregiving responsibilities
- Economic disincentives to employment
- Limited opportunities in local labour markets
- Health-related challenges (depression, trauma, disability)
- Lack of professional experience
- Low self-esteem and/or unrealistic expectations of the labour market
- Gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles

"I stopped [working] because working conditions got much worse... and the pay dropped..."

(an 18-year-old woman, NEET, Poltava region)

Causes of NEET Status by Age Group

15-17 years



Family stereotypes.
Early motherhood.
Career guidance crisis

18-19 years



Failed admission.
Forced gap period.
Insufficient independent living skills

20-24 years



Education-labour market mismatch.
Informal employment

25-29 years



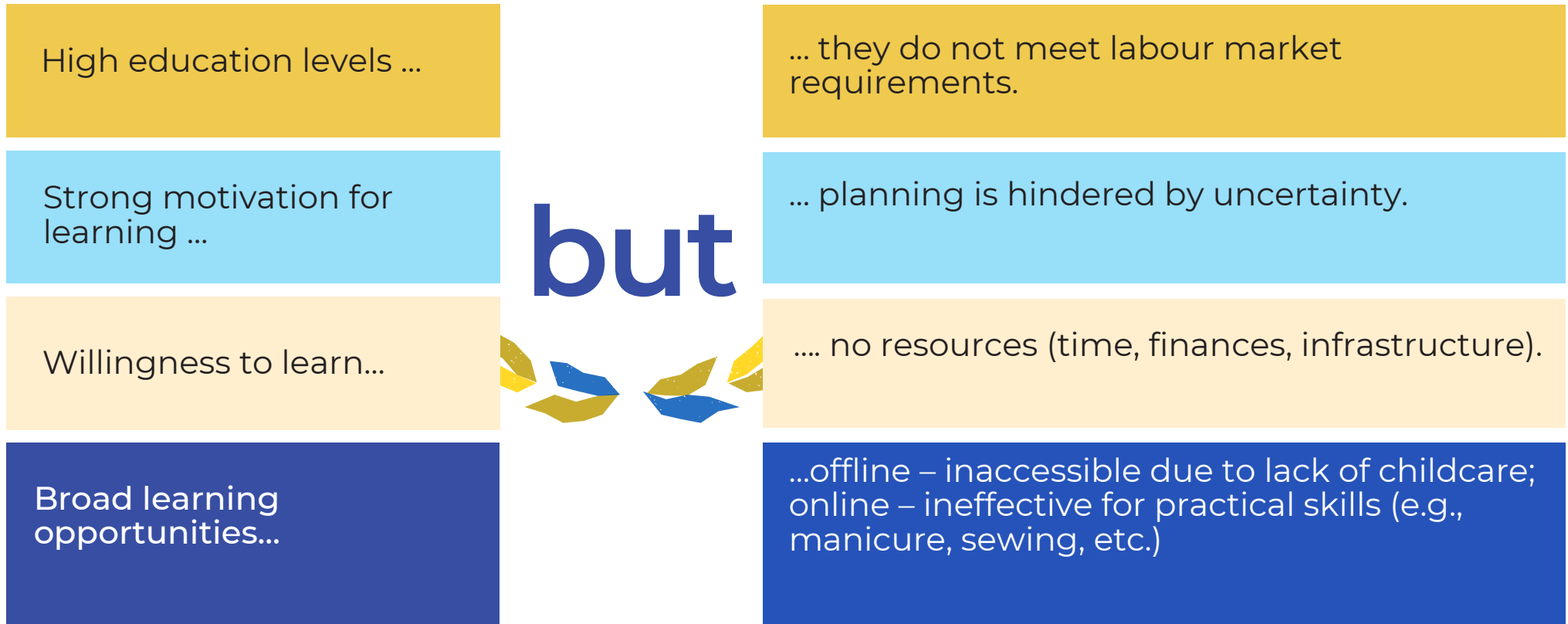
Care work (childcare, care for elderly parents or other family members)

30-34 years



Career gap.
Skills depreciation

Education Level, Plans and Barriers to Learning



Employment Experience and Challenges

How Women Perceive the Labour Market:

- The labour market is perceived as hostile to mothers.
- Women feel like “undesirable candidates” because they have children.
- A vicious cycle: to work, childcare is needed; to pay for childcare, work is needed.
- In small towns and rural areas, there is a lack of vacancies or very low wages.

Employer-Side Challenges:

- Discrimination against mothers due to concerns about sick leave and evacuations.
- Offers of informal employment or schedules incompatible with childcare.

"Our young women are not very eager to learn something new, be able to do it and start doing it. They all wait for someone to hand-feed them the tools and guide them through the procedures... "

(a social service provider)

Gender Stereotypes and Their Impact on the Prevalence of NEET

- **Shifting the responsibility for childcare solely onto mothers** by society and employers.
- **Discriminatory practices in the labour market:** mothers are perceived as “unreliable” employees.
- Occupational segregation and **bias against “non-traditional” professions** for women.
- **Social lack of alternatives to the role of homemaker** due to the absence of accessible childcare infrastructure.
- **Self-limitation among women:** lowering professional ambitions and salary expectations

“This only seems to apply to women, because if a man comes to work, they don't ask him: ‘How many children do you have? Are you going to pull your weight?’ But with women they do. Why is that?”

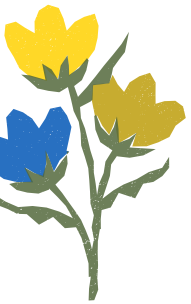
(a 27-year-old woman, unemployed, Sumy region)

Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment as a Career Alternative

Self-employment is the most desirable path, as it offers flexibility and the ability to work from home.

Main Challenges:

- Fear of bureaucracy and taxes
- Lack of equipment
- Lack of start-up capital
- Lack of knowledge and business skills



"I could teach children how to bake pizza... We could do such youth gatherings. I dream of opening my own cooking school."

(a 26-year-old woman from a vulnerable population group, Lviv region)

Barriers to Exiting NEET Status for Girls and Young Women

STRUCTURAL:

- Lack of care infrastructure
- Poverty and financial dependence
- Economic unfeasibility of employment
- Geographic, transport, and digital isolation
- Weak local labour markets, especially in rural areas

INSTITUTIONAL:

- Inflexible labour market
- Bureaucratic procedures
- Low awareness of available opportunities
- Discrimination and gender stereotypes

INDIVIDUAL:

- Apathy, fear of change, low self-esteem
- War-related effects: trauma, loss of purpose
- Health problems and disability
- Lack of self-presentation skills (CV preparation and job interviews)

Barriers to exiting NEET status for girls and young women by age

15-17 years



Lack of experience.
Legislative constraints.
Low self-esteem

18-19 years



Inexperience.
Salary–expectation gap.
Soft skills deficit.
Information gap

20-24 years



Hidden discrimination.
Low pay in entry-level positions

25-29 years



Employers' unwillingness to offer flexible employment.
Shortage of care infrastructure.
De-professionalization

30-34 years



Ageism.
Psychological burnout

Awareness and Communication Effectiveness

39% know nothing about support programmes.

51% have only superficial information.

Effectiveness of Communication Channels

- High level of “information noise”
- Main sources: Work.ua, Robota.ua, Telegram, TikTok, Instagram
- Low effectiveness of official government websites
- High trust in “word-of-mouth”
- Digital divide in rural and frontline communities
- Offline channels and local intermediaries are critically important for vulnerable groups



“I didn’t contact anyone, I wasn’t interested in anything particular. The only places where I could look for some kind of work, whatever it might be, were OLX and Robota.ua.”

(a 29-year-old, IDP, widow of a serviceman, caring for a child with a disability, Khmelnytskyi region)

Potential Demand for Support

66%

interested in courses, consultations, grants

Development of soft skills (communication, self-presentation)

64%

are willing to participate in free programmes

Professional training, retraining courses

43%

Psychological support

26%

Career counseling

25%

Childcare / care for sick family members

21%

Legal assistance

20%

I do not need any support

23%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50%

Employment centres: From Successful Programmes to Systemic Distrust

High awareness



- Training vouchers (primarily for IDPs and individuals aged 45+)
- Free access to diverse learning opportunities
- Business start-up grants (including consultations, training, etc.)
- A “female face” of the service



Low level of trust



- The “insurance record trap”
- Job segmentation (“second-tier” vacancies)
- Focus on formal deregistration rather than sustainable employment outcomes
- Economic unviability of job offers
- Unattractive formats and ineffective communication channels

Conclusions

- **The NEET profile:** these are mostly educated women aged 25–35 with children.
- **Motherhood** and the lack or underdevelopment of care institutions form a NEET trap.
- Education exists, but it doesn't work, since there is **a gap between diplomas and labour market** needs.
- **The labour market penalizes motherhood:** discrimination, inflexible conditions, low pay.
- **Psychological exhaustion:** anxiety, apathy, learned helplessness.
- **Self-employment is attractive but intimidating:** fear of risk, responsibility and bureaucracy.
- **Low trust in employment centres:** weak communication, information vacuum.
- **War is a key catalyst,** exacerbating all barriers and territorial inequalities.

Practical recommendations



1. People-centred approach

- Individual case management + psychological support
- “One-stop-shop” model and coordination between government, community, and business

2. Accessibility and Care

- Mobile teams, digital hubs for villages
- Child-friendly spaces + “Municipal Nanny” + inclusiveness

3. Education and Skills

- Short, practical, free courses with no age barriers
- Soft skills, self-presentation
- Overcoming gender stereotypes

4. Economic Activation

- Entrepreneurship: “grant + mentorship”
- Internships, mentoring
- Business tax incentives, flexible employment
- Financial support during transitional phases

5. New-Type Communication

- Checklists, roadmaps, and AI consultants
- Social media, micro-communities, chatbots
- Real success stories based on a “peer-to-peer” approach



Logic of Formation and Overcoming NEET Status among Girls and Young Women

Reasons for Entering NEET Status	Barriers to Exiting NEET Status	Proposals / Interventions
Caregiving responsibilities (children, persons with disabilities, elderly relatives in the absence of services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underdeveloped care infrastructure Inability to balance work and family life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the network of preschools and daycare groups Scaling the "Municipal Nanny" programme Childcare spaces at employment centres, universities and youth centres
Economic disincentives (low wages, poor working conditions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poverty and financial dependency Lack of incentives to enter the workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer incentives First-job placement support Flexible and remote employment formats
Labour market inflexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrimination against mothers Lack of flexible schedules and remote work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy for family-friendly practices Institutionalization of remote work
Consequences of war (IDPs, loss of jobs, housing and social ties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geographic and transport isolation Digital divide Psychological trauma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile multidisciplinary teams Local digital hubs Psychological support as a primary stage
Limited local labour markets (rural areas, frontline communities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of vacancies Transport isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remote employment opportunities Training for remote-friendly professions Development of local entrepreneurship
Health issues and psycho-emotional state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apathy, burnout, fear of responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of psychological assistance into all support programmes Peer-to-peer support groups
Lack of relevant skills and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor self-presentation skills Skill loss or obsolescence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vouchers for short-term skill acquisition Practice-oriented training Internships and mentorship programmes
Socio-cultural and gender norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hidden discrimination Self-stigmatization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender-sensitive career orientation Awareness work with communities and employers
Low awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information vacuum caused by information noise Mistrust of public institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Checklists and roadmaps AI-powered consultants Communication through micro-communities
"Invisible" NEET (subsistence farming, Roma communities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-identification as unemployed Lack of help-seeking behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive identification (outreach) "Going to the people": mobile services, community mediators
Cumulative effect of war	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simultaneous intensification of all barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive case management Social investment model

The full report in Ukrainian

can be downloaded

from the Analytical Library
of ISAR Ednannia



as well as short versions in
Ukrainian and English

The study was conducted by the NGO "Institute for Youth" within the framework of the global UNICEF initiative POWER4Girls and the project "Unlocking Youth Potential: Systemic Strengthening of Youth Services", implemented by ISAR Ednannia in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine and the All-Ukrainian Youth Centre, with the support of UNICEF Ukraine and financial backing from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

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