

Local Feminist Perspectives as Transformation Levers for Sustainable Development in Ukraine in the Context of Ongoing Defence

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Abbreviations

CRSV	conflict-related sexual violence
CSO	civil society organisation
EU	European Union
FGD	focus group discussion
GBV	gender-based violence
GD	Gender in Detail
IDP	internally displaced person
NGO	non-governmental organisation
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

War is obviously a tragedy, but somehow we manage to use it as an opportunity as well. An opportunity to build new rules we hadn't thought of before, to adapt, and to see completely different perspectives (a leader of Ukrainian feminist organisation).

Executive summary

This study follows a structure that moves from the general to the specific. It begins with an explanation of the research context and conceptual dilemmas, followed by key findings. At the end of each section, a detailed summary of the data and expert insights is provided. The research timeline spans 2014-2024, corresponding to the duration of Russia's war against Ukraine, with a particular emphasis on the period of the full-scale invasion from 2022 to 2024.

Context. In 2024, feminism in Ukraine celebrated its 140th anniversary, highlighting a long history of women advocating for rights, despite societal and political challenges. The Revolution of Dignity (2013-2014), the start of Russia's war against Ukraine (since 2014), and the active participation of women in volunteering and military efforts during these events sparked significant gender debates and reforms. Unlike Russia's use of conservatism in state ideology, Ukraine embraced gender equality and LGBT+ rights as part of its European integration.

Although the full-scale invasion in 2022 exacerbated typical gender issues and created new ones, the mere existence and number of these issues do not indicate a "backlash". Ukrainian society and the state responded to war-related problems in an emancipatory manner, and progress in gender equality at the level of state policies, public attitudes towards gender roles and public discourse were still perceptible as of December 2024. Ukrainian feminists are trying to lead the public debate towards gender equality and social inclusion and embed them into state policies during the ongoing defence and recovery. **The main research puzzle of this paper is the persistence of gender-transformative (feminist) policies during the war.** We focus on examining the impact that feminist perspectives and actions have on gender-transformative changes in Ukraine, and on how the achievements of the Ukrainian feminist movement can serve as a foundation for developing sustainable gender-transformative (feminist) policies in the future.

The **research methodology** is based on a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative (survey of 720 participants) and qualitative (20 expert interviews and 5 focus group discussions) methods, which were used partly in parallel. The toolkit of the three methods was coordinated in such a way that the data related to the same thematic blocks were comparable. As an additional method, analysis of data from open sources was used: state statistics, data from representative surveys, advocacy initiatives of the feminist movement (e.g. petition texts) and legislation on gender equality.

Background of gender equality in Ukraine – desk study

The **results of the desk research** show that Ukraine has entered a full-scale war in 2022 with progress in reducing gender gaps and stable state policies for gender equality. For example, the gap in the average monthly salaries of women and men was reduced from 25.4% in 2016 to 18.6% in 2021, and important policies, for example gender quotas on lists of political parties (2019), were introduced. In 2022-2024 Ukrainian society and the state responded to gender issues, exacerbated by the full-scale invasion, in an emancipatory manner. Five new state policies on gender equality were adopted.

Although war-related challenges weigh heavily on both Ukrainian women and feminist organisations, this burden has not created a trend of strengthening conservative ideas in public

opinion, as reflected in surveys as of December 2024. On the contrary, sociological polls indicate slow but steady progress towards an egalitarian distribution of gender roles and increased support for equal rights for LGBT+ people. This progress should be cautiously evaluated, as it shows that perceptions about women's public roles are evolving faster than those about their private roles. For example, a representative survey conducted in March 2023 showed that, compared to 2021, the share of Ukrainians who believed that "men are better leaders than women" decreased (from 43% to 24%), as well as those who believed that "the main purpose of a woman is to give birth to children" (from 64% to 59%) (Ukrainian Veteran's Fund, 2023). This gap creates conditions for contradictory perceptions about women, and stereotypes and biases will continue to be fundamental barriers to gender-transformative changes across various sectors.

Feminism in Ukraine remains active and visible, organising movement-building events and advocacy initiatives (including three successful petitions to state authorities, participation in the development of the above-mentioned state policies and the creation of an Alliance to Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women in Ukraine's Recovery Process) as well as providing support for vulnerable groups.

The impact of feminism on gender-transformative changes – limitations and opportunities

Empirical analysis of data obtained by quantitative survey and the qualitative methods of our research showed that the majority of quantitative survey participants (67%) believed that feminist perspectives have a moderate impact on Ukrainian society. The spheres where these perspectives are hindered the most are politics (82% hinder, 18% impact) and the military (75% hinder, 11% impact). They are followed by the spheres of economics (43% hinder, 9% impact), security (41% hinder, 7% impact) and family (45% hinder, 22% impact). The greatest impact is believed to be in the spheres of media (17% hinder, 66% impact), culture (16% hinder, 61% impact), civil society (24% hinder, 51% impact) and education (28% hinder, 41% impact). These results align with perceptions about who supports, ignores or opposes feminism in Ukraine. Women's rights activists emerge as the strongest group of supporters, whereas sexists, conservatives and religious organisations form a distinct group of opponents. Donors and civil society are closer to the supporters, but the picture is less definitive. Key societal actors such as the state, education institutions, the general public, employers and political parties are noted as largely ignoring feminist perspectives.

The quantitative survey results for some issues contrast with expert interviews, which assess feminism's impact as significant, particularly in politics and the military. This discrepancy arises because experts evaluated both current influence and progress over the past 10-20 years, drawing on their knowledge of legislative changes, state policies and advocacy initiatives (detailed in Section 3). In contrast, survey participants reflect broader public opinion, focusing on the present and not perceiving the daily impact of these changes. Possible explanations for the low level of influence of state gender policies on daily life include: 1) the negative connotation of feminism in society, which affects public figures' willingness to raise feminist topics; 2) the gap between national policies and local-level implementation practices; 3) a formal approach to implementation due to a lack of awareness, knowledge and skills among local implementers; 4) insufficient resources at the local level and the overburdening of local government employees (mostly women) without proper resources or formal instructions.

Stereotypes and biases were identified as fundamental barriers to gender-transformative changes across various sectors.

Russia's full-scale invasion has had a contradictory impact on the opportunities for feminism to influence gender-transformative changes. It reinforced gender stereotypes about "traditionally male" spheres, with experts noting a decreased influence of women in decision-making due to the perception of war as a "male domain". Women's organisations had to shift their focus to

emergency issues, prioritising survival over strategic development and relegating some topics. On the other hand, the crisis has necessitated the optimal use of human resources in the military and economic sectors, creating a “window of opportunity” that promotes the inclusion of more women in “traditionally male” professions. Additional “windows of opportunity” for feminist impact are Ukraine’s aspiration for European integration and the demands of donors and international partners. The relocation of millions of Ukrainian women abroad and their exposure to more egalitarian values may lead to the popularisation of feminist ideas in the long term. These opposing tendencies coexist, overlap and conflict with each other, likely contributing to the situation reflected in sociological polls (detailed in Section 3), which show slow but steady progress towards an egalitarian distribution of gender roles since 2014 – a trend that has continued even after 2022.

Feminist perspectives

The analysis of research data highlights how participants perceived the Ukrainian feminist agenda and identified the feminist perspectives (topics, ideas, approaches, proposals and demands) they considered most prevalent, taking into account temporal dynamics (before, during and after the full-scale invasion).

Consistent perspectives: prevention of and combating violence against women, women’s economic rights, prevention of discrimination against women.

Perspectives receiving less attention: social inclusion and empathy towards women, combating sexual and reproductive exploitation (e.g. surrogacy), women’s labour rights (including unpaid caregiving labour, status of women in feminised and caregiving professions), social protection issues (including in the context of factors affecting the return of refugees), intersectionality, particularly regarding the rights of LGBT+ people.

War-related perspectives: women’s rights in the army, status of women in the security and defence sector, sexual violence related to the conflict.

Perspectives on recovery and post-war reconstruction: the issue of reproductive (caregiving) work and the supporting infrastructure, demographic challenges and the expected reproductive pressure on women, challenges of veterans’ reintegration (including possible rise of gender-based violence), women’s entry into “traditionally male” professions, women’s political participation, including challenges of prioritising the political representation of former military personnel (the majority of whom are men) and the risk of obstacles to the exercise of political rights by those who left the country during the war (the majority of whom are women). Experts warned against viewing post-war reconstruction as mere restoration, emphasising the need for inclusive restructuring and systematic integration of feminist approaches.

The precise role of feminist perspectives in driving gender-transformative changes is difficult to measure with scientific accuracy. However, an indirect confirmation of the influence of these perspectives can be seen in the positive dynamics of gender equality in Ukraine since 2014, because changes do not occur overnight. Their slow, yet gradual growth is a testament to the realised impact, and to the fact that the full-scale invasion, as of December 2024, has not stopped the progress of gender-transformative changes (as detailed in Section 3). State gender policies implemented in 2022-2024 align thematically with perspectives that are constant and dominant in the Ukrainian feminist agenda (combating violence against women, women’s economic rights, the prevention of discrimination against women). At the same time, structural barriers described in Section 4 highlight the limitations of feminist perspectives, particularly as quantitative research participants emphasised that key societal actors largely ignore (but do not oppose) feminist perspectives.

Feminist actions

The empirical analysis demonstrates how participants perceived the translation of feminist perspectives into feminist actions (organisations, projects, initiatives, programmes, campaigns led by feminists and (pro)feminist initiatives by other actors).

The forms of feminist actions most frequently mentioned by participants primarily belong to **advocacy**, namely informational campaigns, educational projects, supporting women's groups and initiatives, and engaging in activism and protests. Participants also noted the significant engagement of women's organisations in **humanitarian work**, the volume of which, due to the challenges of the war, hindered their focus on strategic development for gender-transformative changes.

Feminist actions mentioned by interviewed experts and focus group participants align with the consistent and war-related feminist perspectives detailed in Section 5. The quantitative research data show a low level of involvement among participants in feminist organisations (16%). Participants of the quantitative survey most frequently mentioned informational campaigns and educational projects (82%), supporting women's groups and initiatives (79%) and engaging in activism and protests (56%). Such actions can be related to any thematic area within the feminist perspectives described in Section 5. Therefore, the level of implementation of certain feminist perspectives into specific feminist actions requires further research.

Recommendations from participants regarding ways and tools to enhance the influence of feminism on gender-transformative changes can also be considered a description of the most potentially effective feminist actions. Their recommendations can be grouped into three blocks: 1) raising awareness and promoting feminism, 2) integrating feminist perspectives into decision-making and 3) ensuring accountability and adherence to gender commitments. A comparison with the results of the empirical analysis in Section 6.1 shows that block 1 is quite fully implemented in feminist actions, whereas blocks 2 and 3 require more effort.

Conclusions

Russia's war against Ukraine since 2014 has created a favourable geopolitical context for feminist perspectives. However, the full-scale invasion in 2022 has had a contradictory impact on the opportunities for feminism to influence gender-transformative changes. Opposing tendencies coexist and conflict with each other, potentially leading to uncertain outcomes that heavily depend on the war's duration and eventual resolution.

The ongoing war presents a rapidly changing social landscape that poses challenges for feminist advocacy. **Topics requiring further research** include: women's political participation, particularly the challenges that displaced women may face in voting abroad; changes in the labour market, including the sustainability of women's entry into "traditionally male" professions and the potential deepening of the gender pay gap; the impact of neoliberal reforms on highly feminised sectors such as health care and education; the crisis of masculinity for men not fighting, including those avoiding mobilisation; concerns about potential conservative backlash and restrictions on women's reproductive rights; the exacerbation of feminised poverty, especially among vulnerable groups of women; and the diverse experiences of new societal groups such as refugees, internally displaced persons and residents on the frontlines or in occupied areas, all of which require further gender-responsive analysis.

The **key takeaways** of the research are as follows.

Windows of opportunity. European integration, international commitments and gender equality legislation create opportunities for progress in gender equality across various sectors. The war and ongoing crisis present new opportunities for women to enter traditionally male-

dominated fields, encouraging flexibility in gender role distribution and driving the search for more adaptable solutions in response to changing circumstances.

Hindrances. Although attitudes towards feminism are more favourable among urban educated women, conservative views persist. Stereotypes and biases remain as fundamental barriers, with many perceiving gender inequality to be a non-urgent issue. Women are facing a double burden in “public” and “private” roles, and widespread prejudices against feminism, including associations with radical movements.

Levers and strategies. Humanitarian work with women can raise awareness of feminist issues. Emphasising European integration, international obligations and gender equality as European values – along with the role of anti-gender rhetoric in the ideology of the “Russian world” in communications with authorities and society – can serve as levers for gender-transformative change. Messages that resonate with the interests of a significant number of Ukrainian women, such as those related to unpaid care work, low pay in care sectors and direct discrimination in the labour market, should be prioritised. Feminism should evolve into a broader social justice movement.

Limitation of transformation and sensitive topics. The ongoing war, with its destruction and widespread power outages across Ukraine, severely hinders sustainable development and exhausts both the material and psychological resources of the population. The differences in experiences among various social groups create divisions, hindering mutual understanding and reform efforts. Even with a ceasefire, Ukraine remains under the threat of renewed aggression, requiring gender-responsive defence and reconstruction to avoid patriarchal militarisation. Sensitive topics such as domestic violence in military families and sexism within the armed forces need careful articulation.

Recommendations: main policy areas for feminist influence on gender-transformative changes:

1. Enhancing the role of women in decision-making and public policy.
2. Combating gender-based stereotypes and expanding educational efforts.
3. Supporting women’s economic empowerment.
4. Addressing care work and infrastructure as a necessary component of economic empowerment and women’s rights.
5. Ensuring gender-responsive recovery, post-war reconstruction and defence policies.
6. Addressing gender-based violence and legal protections.
7. Leveraging international partnerships for feminist policies.
8. Intersectionality and inclusivity: feminism as a comprehensive policy for change.
9. Providing necessary support for feminist organisations.

1 Introduction

This study is structured according to a logic that moves from the general to the specific. The Introduction explains the context of the research and the conceptual dilemmas characteristic of it, followed by the research objectives and methodology. The main body of the research follows the same principle – first, through desk research, Section 3 presents the state of gender equality in Ukraine as of now, and the main achievements of the feminist movement from 2022 to 2024. Section 4, based on empirical data, examines the obstacles and opportunities for the influence of feminism on gender-transformative changes. Section 5 focuses on feminist perspectives, and Section 6 analyses feminist actions, based on empirical data about the thematic directions of Ukrainian feminism and the types of practical actions. Each section includes a brief summary that highlights the main findings and provides additional expert explanations. The Conclusion summarises the research results and presents recommendations.

The research timeline spans 2014-2024, corresponding to the duration of Russia's war against Ukraine, with a particular emphasis on the period of the full-scale invasion from 2022 to 2024.

1.1 Context of the study

In 2024, feminism in Ukraine celebrated its 140th anniversary. The starting point is considered to be 1884, when Nataliya Kobrynska founded the “Society of Ukrainian Women”. At that time, Ukrainian ethnic territories were divided between the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires. Despite this division, Ukrainian women collaborated to advocate for their national and women's rights.

The Soviet period in Ukraine's history was ambivalent regarding women's rights. On the one hand, Soviet legislation guaranteed equal rights, and official ideology proclaimed gender equality as an accomplished fact. Women were widely integrated into the workforce, and the state offered a so-called contract between the state and working mothers, providing childcare, social and educational services. On the other hand, discrimination based on sex, gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, race and other factors persisted. However, it was impossible to conceptualise or resist these injustices due to the repressive and deceitful political system of the totalitarian state.

The post-Soviet legacy complicated the development of gender equality in independent Ukraine. For decades, society had been convinced that gender inequality did not exist in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and feminism was portrayed as a hallmark of “decadent capitalism”. This created a highly negative image of feminism during the 1990s. It took over 20 years to establish gender equality discourses and build a network of activism.

In 2013-2014, during the Revolution of Dignity (Euromaidan) and the onset of Russia's war against Ukraine (since 2014), women actively participated in crucial events as volunteers, activists and leaders. This sparked vigorous gender debates and led to gender-transformative changes (e.g. law on gender quotas in political party lists, gender-responsive policies in the security and defence sector, criminalisation of domestic violence, etc.), shaping a unique gender context for the ongoing war.

All wars are gendered, that is, they affect existing gender ideologies and relations in society, the distribution of gender roles, the social positions of women, men and other genders, as well as ideas about masculinity and femininity. This influence has been the focus of many (mainly Anglo-Saxon and Northern European) gender and feminist studies of war and security since the 1980s, the conventional conclusions of which are that wars usually exacerbate gender inequality and dramatically disadvantage women. They found, in particular, that wars, militarisation and patriarchy are closely interconnected; gender ideologies built during war are based on essentialist ideas that men are the “defenders” and women are the “defended”; gender roles

become highly polarised as a result of wars, and gender inequality deepens. It is also argued that wars, especially national liberation wars, fuel not only military, but also nationalist sentiments and discourses in which women are presented as biological, cultural and social reproducers of nations, and men as defenders and national heroes (Cockburn, 2012; Elveren & Moghadam, 2022; Enloe, 1983; Sjoberg, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 1997).

Meanwhile, these conclusions require revision due to the unique nature of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, which Kratochvíl and O'Sullivan (2023) call a war "like no other" because it is not a purely military conflict. They argue that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is not only gendered in the way other conflicts are, but the war's essential novelty lies in the fact that it is explicitly fought for the so-called traditional values and against gender and sexual equality. Similarly, Graff and Korolczuk (2022) note that gender and sexuality occupy a central place in the Russian campaign against the European Union (EU) and "the West", and this cultural war has played a major part in legitimising the actual war against Ukraine.

The uniqueness of this war is due to at least several factors. First, despite some predictions (Kennedy-Pipe, 2000) of future wars as mostly hybrid and "virtual" rather than being fought by national armies, Ukraine faced the challenge of a full-scale war that required a significant mobilisation of human resources for resistance. Second, Ukraine has entered a full-scale war with permanent state gender equality policies, progress in closing the gender gap and a developed women's/feminist movement. Third, the unique (geo)political and cultural context of the war (as mentioned above) as related to European integration processes and Ukrainian society's aspirations to distance itself from the culture and ideology of the so-called Russian world is an important factor in the stability of the policy of gender equality and gender-transformative changes.

The possibilities of a comparative analysis of the situation with gender issues during Russia's war against Ukraine and other wars are also limited because the vast majority of works on other wars were written after they had ended, while we are studying society in a state of ongoing war. These and other factors make it impossible to directly extrapolate conclusions about the impact of wars that took place in other times and in other contexts on the situation of modern Russia's war against Ukraine.

The second important caveat is the use of an analytical framework for the analysis of modern Ukrainian society as a country of the former USSR. Although it is true that the current gender regime is partly a consequence of the one formed in Soviet times (e.g. the "gender contract of the working mother"), the conventional idea among intellectuals is that the construct "post-Soviet society" is no longer relevant for the analysis of Ukrainian society, which, in fact, has already completed the transition. One of the markers of the completion of such a transition are the events of the Revolution of Dignity (Euromaidan, 2013-2014), which started the process of distancing from Russia, which was perceived as the embodiment of the Soviet repressive system, and the official memory policy after these events was defined as decommunisation.

1.2 Research puzzle

Contrary to stereotypical feminist statements that wars lead to a conservative shift and increased patriarchal tendencies in society, this did not happen in Ukraine after the onset of Russia's war against Ukraine in 2014.

Even though conservative traditions and sexist stereotypes were quite strong in Ukraine before and after the Revolution of Dignity (Euromaidan) protests of 2013-2014, active public feminist debate and popular women leaders formed a new social tendency towards emancipation. Women's active participation in volunteering, including military volunteering, led to significant gender changes in the social, military and political spheres, giving rise to influential public feminist debate. Until 2022, feminist marches and LGBT+ Pride events were regularly held in

various cities. That tendency was embodied in changes of legislation (e.g. the introduction of electoral quotas) and the rising of mass awareness about sexism and discrimination. In contrast to Russia, where the dictatorial regime utilises machismo, homophobia and conservatism as part of the state ideology, in Ukraine gender equality and LGBT+ rights were seen as a part of European integration, which motivated the state to implement emancipatory policies.

The full-scale Russian invasion in 2022 slowed the successes of the feminist movement and burdened society to an extent that became threatening to the further development of gender equality and inclusivity. The full-scale invasion has destroyed a significant portion of the social infrastructure, caused an economic crisis and compelled tens of millions of people to relocate to other regions within Ukraine and abroad. It also created a range of gender-related problems: the growth of gender-based violence (GBV); conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV); the increased burden of reproductive work on women; a deepening feminisation of poverty; an increase in the share of vulnerable groups of women (e.g. widows and single mothers); a predominant share of women with children among war refugees; an increasing burden on feminised fields of employment (education, health care, social work); as well as a decrease in the political and expert visibility of women. Although the war exacerbated typical gender issues and created new ones, the mere existence and number of these issues do not indicate a conservative turn (so-called backlash). Ukrainian society and the state responded to war-related problems in an emancipatory manner, and progress in gender equality at the level of state policies, public attitudes towards gender roles and public discourse were still perceptible as of December 2024.

Ukrainian feminists are trying to lead the public debate towards gender equality and social inclusion and embed them into state policies during the ongoing defence and recovery. **The main research puzzle of this paper is the persistence of gender-transformative (feminist) policies during the war, which requires an analysis of their successes, challenges and limits of impact in Ukraine.**

1.3 Research questions

According to the objectives of the research project “Local feminist perspectives as transformation levers for greater gender equality”,¹ our research process was built on four initial research questions proposed by IDOS:

- 1) How do existing socio-cultural norms and practices and the prevailing systemic-structural framework conditions prevent sustainable, gender-transformative policies?
- 2) What are the (ignored) local/national feminist perspectives in the local/national context?
- 3) Which alternative approaches to development processes can local feminist perspectives offer in order to target prevailing norms and practices?
- 4) How can existing local and national feminist perspectives be used to increase women’s, girls’ and LGBT+ persons’ access to services, infrastructure and resources as well as informal and formal political processes in Ukraine?

1 The research project “Local feminist perspectives as transformation levers for greater gender equality” seeks to contribute towards filling existing knowledge gaps on local feminist perspectives in partner countries. IDOS works together with three partner organisations in Ghana, India and Ukraine. In cooperation with the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre, the Goa Institute of Management and Gender in Detail, the project explores the potential of local feminist perspectives to act as levers for transformative change for greater gender equality in Ghana, India and Ukraine. The outputs of this project are three studies on local feminist perspectives in Ghana, India and Ukraine as well as one study that synthesises the results and recommendations from the partner studies against the background of feminist development and foreign policies.

These initial research questions were localised according to the Ukrainian context. The conceptual framework proposed below accommodates the search for answers on **how feminist perspectives and actions in Ukraine affect gender-transformative changes in the context of the ongoing defensive war and lead towards sustainable gender-transformative (feminist) policies.**

1.4 Conceptual framework

We rely on the most common definition of sustainable development, as that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Since 2019, Ukraine has started implementing the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5 “Gender Equality”, and monitoring the achievement of the goals.

Meanwhile, this study was conducted under the extraordinary circumstances of Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine. Although we have shown in the overview of the context that the war did not stop the progress of Ukrainian society on its path towards gender equality at the political and socio-cultural levels,² in general, the use of the concept “sustainable development” in the context of war is problematic. It is primarily about the fact that, in the context of the challenges of the ongoing war, the politics of sustainable development loses its significance because the needs for protection against armed aggression and survival come to the forefront.

Within this study, we rely on the following definitions.

We define “sustainable gender-transformative changes” as those that mean the stable movement of Ukrainian society towards gender equality and social inclusion and the securing of women’s and LGBT+ rights, including in the context of war. In order to achieve this goal, “gender-transformative” or “feminist policies” scrutinise how institutions and actors constitute and reproduce gender power relations, and how these processes could be changed to contribute to a more equal, inclusive, safer and just society. Given that the Ukrainian government does not declare feminist policies in any sphere, and the influence of the feminist movement on politics and society remains limited, we cannot speak of feminist policies in the Ukrainian context. Instead, we focus on examining the impact that feminist perspectives and actions have on gender-transformative changes in Ukraine, and on how the achievements of the Ukrainian feminist movement can serve as a foundation for developing sustainable gender-transformative (feminist) policies in the future.

“Feminist perspectives” mean the topics, ideas, approaches, proposals and demands of feminists.

“Feminist actions” mean the projects, initiatives, programmes and campaigns of feminists, and the (pro)feminist initiatives of other actors (e.g. employers).

We take into account the diversity of the feminist movement in Ukraine. Although the regions of Ukraine have certain differences in some characteristics (e.g. in the level of religiosity), within the scope of the study, we consider the feminist movement of Ukraine and its demands as relatively consolidated at the country level. We consider the settlement features (urban-rural) and centre/periphery as more significant in the work of feminist organisations. Given the massive wave of displacement caused by the war, we also include in our study feminists who are abroad, as well as those in temporarily occupied territories. We are also aware that the feminist movement in Ukraine is diverse in terms of its activities and ideological directions, which is reflected in the research methodology.

2 More evidence of this statement is provided in Section 3.

2 Methodology

2.1 Methods of data collection

The research design is based on a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative (survey) and qualitative (expert interview and focus group discussions, FGDs) methods, which were used partly in parallel. The toolkit of the three methods was coordinated in such a way that the data related to the same thematic blocks were comparable. As an additional method, analysis of data from open sources was used: state statistics, representative surveys, advocacy initiatives of the feminist movement (e.g. petition texts) and legislation on gender equality.

The survey was conducted in May-June 2024 using the KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices) model³ with Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI). The survey questionnaire is presented in Annex A. It covers **720 participants** from all regions of Ukraine, including the temporarily occupied territories and those displaced abroad (a detailed description of participants by socio-demographic parameters is provided in Annex B). The sample was formed through an open invitation to participate and the principle of self-selection of participants. Information about the survey was distributed on the Facebook and Instagram pages of the civil society organisation (CSO) “Expert resource Gender in Detail” (hereinafter GD), which has 52,000 and 24,000 subscribers, respectively. Women and men, as well as non-binary individuals who identify as feminists, were invited. All participants underwent two-level verification to be included in the study sample. At the first level, they answered questions about their self-identification as feminists, and at the second level, they gave their (dis)agreement with basic feminist statements. Taking into account the focus of the study and the risk of its inclusion of insufficient numbers of men for statistical comparison, it was decided that participants who identified themselves as men could leave their contact information in the questionnaire to participate in the focus group; however, they were not included in the survey.

Twenty in-depth interviews with feminist researchers and activists were conducted in June-July 2024. The interview guide is accessible in Annex C. The sample was formed in such a way as to include feminists of various ideological positions, spheres and areas of activity. To implement this approach, a list of potential participants representing six clusters was mapped: academic and research, professional (in various fields), activist (including a separate cluster of activists who cooperate with the authorities), donor and ideological. Clusters are contingent and may overlap: For example, a feminist researcher may simultaneously represent a particular ideological or activist cluster. Detailed information on the distribution of informants by these clusters is provided in Annex D. Interviews were conducted remotely using the Zoom platform. The average duration of the interview was 50 minutes. All interview recordings were fully transcribed and analysed by software inductively using an open coding technique.

Five FGDs were conducted in June-July 2024 with 25 persons (21 women, 4 men) taking into account the principle of gender sensitivity: the groups were segregated by gender (4 groups with women and 1 with men). The FGD guide is provided in Annex E. Groups were held with feminist women, women who supported emancipated ideas and pro-feminist men who supported emancipated ideas. Focus groups were conducted online using the Zoom platform, and the average duration was 75 minutes (min. 80, max. 103). All focus group recordings were fully transcribed and analysed inductively.

3 The KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices) model is a methodological approach used to study the knowledge, attitudes and practices of a specific social group regarding a particular topic or issue. This approach helps gather information on how the target audience is informed and how it responds to a specific issue, as well as the behavioural changes needed to achieve desired outcomes, particularly in relation to social changes.

Limitations of the study. The questionnaire for the quantitative study and the guides for the qualitative study (both focus groups and interviews) were structured according to the research questions in a harmonised way, but not completely identical. This incomplete identity of data collection tools – combined with the inductive approach to data analysis and different groups of interviewees – is the reason why some thematic blocks of the research report do not rely on the results of all three data collection methods at the same time.

The unfinished nature of the war and the dynamic social processes impose limitations on the ability to define tendencies, in addition to the situation rapidly changing. Feminist perspectives on post-war reconstruction may also change depending on how the war ends.

2.2 Research principles

The study was conducted according to the principles of the Sociologist's Code of Ethics and the Ethical Guidelines of the European Society of Marketing Research Professionals, for example informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with the right of interview participants to determine the anonymisation themselves), and other ethical principles. Every stage of the research was designed to take into account potential gender-related and other barriers that may hinder various groups of women and other marginalised genders from participating in the study and expressing their perspectives in order to obtain insights from the most diverse range of women.

The research design is also based on principles of feminist epistemology, namely: reflexivity to researchers' own experience and positionality in research, participatory approach, attention to intersectional inequalities, as well as positioning research as a political action capable of empowering women and vulnerable groups and leading to social transformations. As a research team, we are committed to practicing reflexivity to be aware of potential biases and assumptions that may cloud our perspectives as researchers. We consider our positionality as Ukrainian feminist researchers and activists as beneficial for the project due to our deep knowledge of the context, as well as feminist networks, organisations and leaders.

We consider our participants and feminist community as co-producers of knowledge: A participatory approach was thoroughly used at all stages of the research. *At the stage of operationalisation of research questions, and developing the toolkit and its testing:* The research questions were operationalised after consultations with the GD team (who are feminists not engaged in this project), and the questionnaire draft was also validated with the team. *At the stage of data collection:* Interviews were conducted using the so-called soft technique to avoid imposing our hypotheses on the participants and to allow them to express themselves freely with clarifying follow-up questions. *At the data analysis stage:* The obtained and visualised and brief notes on the progress and insights of the study were posted on the social media channels of the GD (total audience reach is 50,000 to 100,000 weekly). The target audience of the project reads this platform, including feminist volunteers, activists and agents of change. Finally, the results of the research will be widely communicated to the feminist communities of Ukraine through analytical materials or published interviews.

2.3 Data analysis

Quantitative data are presented in the SPSS array, in which analytical operations such as tables and crosstabs were performed. Qualitative data obtained in the FGD were analysed using primary coding and the Voyant tool to analyse textual data (Voyant, s.a.). Qualitative data obtained in interviews were analysed inductively by using coding. In the second stage, triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data was carried out, as well as a comparison with other available data.

3 Background of gender equality in Ukraine – desk study

Russia's war against Ukraine began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and support for separatist forces in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In our chronological review, we focus primarily on the period of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022. However, in reviewing the most visible feminist initiatives, we also touch on the broader period of the war since 2014, because the outcomes of some feminist advocacy initiatives in 2022-2024 were the result of their activities in previous years.

Based on data from open sources and secondary analysis of conducted studies in this section, we answer two questions:

- 1) whether Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine affects the sustainable gender-transformative changes at the political and sociocultural levels;
- 2) what challenges and opportunities does the full-scale war create for the influence of the feminist movement of Ukraine on sustainable gender-transformative changes?

Resistance to social change, including in matters of gender equality, is an international and – although undesirable – inevitable phenomenon (Flood, Dragiewicz, & Pease, 2021), including in developed democratic countries. The challenges of war can intensify this resistance, particularly in the context of the need to “mobilise” the traditional gender roles of men as “defenders” and women as “reproducers of the nation”, but as of the end of 2024, we did not find confirmation of this tendency in the context of war-torn Ukrainian society.

We base our argument on the understanding that war can exacerbate typical gender issues (such as gender stereotypes or GBV) and create new ones (such as CRSV). However, the mere existence and number of such issues do not necessarily indicate a conservative backlash. It is crucial to analyse how society and the state respond to these problems and which strategies (emancipatory or conservative) they employ to address them.

We focus on three dimensions to determine which approach (emancipatory or conservative) dominates:

- 1) on the political level and legislative changes;
- 2) on the socio-cultural expectations and practices regarding gender roles as an important factor influencing gender-transformative changes;
- 3) on the influence of the war on the activities of feminist organisations, and the impact of feminist perspectives (ideas, topics, visions, etc.) and feminist actions (projects, initiatives, campaigns, etc.) on state policies and public discourses.

Given that the audience of this report is mainly international, we supplement the desk study with a brief overview of data on the most indicative gender inequalities in Ukraine for a better understanding of the context in which feminist organisations operate.

3.1 A brief overview of the context: the state of gender (in)equality and women's rights in Ukraine

According to The Global Gender Gap Index 2023 rankings, Ukraine ranks 66th out of 146 countries, including 56th in education attainment, 45th in health and survival, 55th in economic participation and opportunities, and 87th in political empowerment (World Economic Forum, 2023), compared to 81st place in 2022. Other candidates for accession include the Republic of Moldova (19th) and Georgia (76th).

Within the framework of the harmonisation of national and international indicators of achieving gender equality, including the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, a national list of gender equality indicators containing 226 indicators grouped into 12 thematic sections was developed in Ukraine. Below is a selected list of key data for monitoring these indicators based on the results of 2020 (Derzhavna sluzhba statystyky, 2021).⁴ These data show that Ukraine belongs to the countries with the completed second demographic transition (which is characterised by a low birth rate, an increase in the age of marriage and childbirth, and a low level of maternal and child mortality). Women in Ukraine are highly educated and economically active. Against the background of the persistence of the main gender gaps, particularly in wages and the political representation of women, it is worth noting the tendency of these gaps to decrease over time.

Table 1: Population and birth rate

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Birth rate under the age of 20, per 1,000 women aged 15-19				
25.3	22.4	19.7	16.9	15.8
Total fertility rate, number of live births per woman				
1.47	1.37	1.3	1.23	1.22
The average age of the mother at the birth of the first child (years)				
25.1	25.3	25.6	25.9	26.2

Table 2: Employment and the economy

The level of participation of the population in the labour force by gender (persons aged 15-70) (%)					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Women	55.9	55.7	56.8	57.5	56.3
Men	69.1	69.0	69.0	69.9	68.5
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Employment rate of women aged 25-44 who have children aged 3-5 (%)					
	53.7	53.7	53.4	57.3	58.3
The gap in the average monthly salaries of women and men (%)					
	25.4	21.2	22.3	22.8	20.4

4 During a full-scale war, the collection of a considerable amount of statistical data and, accordingly, the subsequent monitoring of this data is not carried out. Assessment of the long-term impact of the war on gender inequality and the structural position of women requires further research.

Table 3: Education

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Index of gender parity among students of universities and academies and institutes⁵				
1,041	1,041	1,049	1,058	1,135
The share of men among teaching staff in institutions of general secondary education (%)				
14.4	14.3	13.4	13.1	12.9

Table 4: Public life and decision-making

The share of women among the members of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament), according to convocations (%)⁶								
I (1991- 1994)	II (1994- 1998)	III (1998- 2002)	IV (2002- 2006)	V (2006- 2007)	VI (2007- 2012)	VII (2012- 2014)	VIII (2014- 2019)	XIX (2019- ⁷
3	4	8	6	8	8	10	12	21
2016		2017		2018		2019		2020
Share of women in the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (%)								
11.5		11.5		20.8		27.8		13.0
Share of women among the ambassadors of Ukraine in the countries of the world (%)								
5.8		7.3		6.5		7.9		13.9
Share of women among the military personnel of the Ministry of Defence (%)								
12.2		13.5		13.5		14.1		19.6
Share of women among the employees of the National Police (%)								
22.3		23.0		24.3		25.4		26.6
2020				2021				
The share of NGOs headed by women								
27.8				28.1				
The share of political parties headed by women in the total number political parties (%)								
22.7				23.2				

*Health***Table 5: Average life expectancy at birth by sex (years)**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Women	76.4	76.8	76.7	77	76.2
Men	66.7	67.0	66.7	66.9	66.4

5 The ratio of the number of women to the number of men among students. The index equal to one means equality between men and women; less than one indicates that gender parity favours men; greater than one indicates gender parity that favours women.

6 The data are provided by Zakharova, Oktysyuk and Radchenko (2017) and Upravlinnia kadriv (s.a.).

7 The significant increase in the share of women is due to the fact that in 2019 the law on gender quotas in the lists of political parties was adopted (at the level of 40% of representatives of the same sex).

Table 6: Number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
12.6	9.1	12.5	14.9	18.7

*Work–life balance***Table 7: Enrolment of children under the age of three in preschool education institutions (%)**

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
15.3	16.0	16.9	17.9	15.2

Table 8: Duration of unpaid care work, minutes per day

	2020
Women	274
Men	129

Source: Authors

3.2 Gender-transformative changes at the political level

The Ukrainian state has made several international commitments to human rights and gender equality. The signing of the Association Agreement with the EU in 2014 became an important catalyst for such changes. Many regulatory and legal acts on gender equality were adopted, for example the criminalisation of domestic violence (2018), gender quotas on lists of political parties (2019), prohibiting discrimination based on sex in advertising and job postings (2022), and the list of professions prohibited for women was abolished (2017). In June 2022, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (“Istanbul Convention”), which Ukraine signed in 2011, was ratified. Since 2014, Ukraine has also made significant progress in gender equality in education, the military, the media and women’s political participation (Hrytsenko, 2022a; Strelnyk, 2023). These processes were the result not only of political will and Ukraine’s international commitments, but also of the influence of developed women’s and feminist movements (Kis, 2021a, 2021b).

Although full-scale war and martial law legislated patriarchal roles – where men are assigned the function of protecting the state – that also affect women, the full-scale war did not stop the political movement from moving in the direction of gender equality and securing women’s rights. From 2022 to 2024, several documents of strategic importance were adopted.

We assume that the political context of the war, which is connected with the massive consolidation of Ukrainian society on European integration and obtaining the status of a candidate for EU accession, creates an additional window of opportunity for promoting the agenda of gender equality and feminism. This can be demonstrated with the ratification of the **Istanbul Convention**, which Ukraine signed in 2011. Despite the long-term efforts of the women’s movement in Ukraine with demands for the ratification of the Convention, it did not happen due to the opposition of conservative groups or so-called anti-gender movements, that is, movements against gender equality and the rights of LGBT+ people (Elsner, 2022; Gender chy antygender, 2020). **On 20 June 2022**, when the issue of Ukraine’s EU candidate status was being discussed and negotiated, the Ukrainian Parliament finally ratified the Convention.

12 August 2022: Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men for the period up to 2030. Considering the challenges created by the full-scale war, the Strategy envisages integrating a gender approach into the processes of providing humanitarian aid and post-war reconstruction; establishing meaningful participation of women in recovery processes, particularly in decision-making, at all levels (from the national level to the community level); and building the capacity of civil servants to integrate a gender approach into recovery processes. One of the principles of the Strategy is intersectionality and taking into account the needs of different groups of women and men, depending on potential discrimination based on age, gender, place of residence, marital status, disability, ethnicity and other characteristics.

16 December 2022: Amendments to the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security for the period until 2025 were developed with the active participation of feminist organisations. The National Plan aims to ensure: women's participation in decision-making; resilience to security challenges; post-conflict recovery and transitional justice; counteraction to GBV and CRSV; and strengthening of the institutional capacity of the executors of the National Plan. Compared to the 2020 Plan, the target groups of the 2022 Plan have been significantly expanded and include vulnerable groups: internally displaced persons (IDPs); survivors of conflict-related violence, including sexual violence; persons vulnerable to trafficking, sexual violence, rape and torture; persons living in the military (combat) action areas; veterans and others. The Action Plan contains many directions related to vulnerable groups, such as women with disabilities, Roma women and IDP women.

20 December 2022: the Strategy for Gender Equality in Education, the development and adoption of which activists have been advocating since at least 2017 – this document was not adopted also due to opposition from conservative groups (Strelnyk, 2023). After the start of the full-scale war, the Ministry of Education launched the continuation of work on this strategy, and the document was approved in December 2022. This happened, we assume, also in the context of Ukraine's international commitments in matters of human rights and gender equality (e.g. the Biarritz Partnership with a focus on gender equality in education). The Strategy was developed with the active participation of feminist organisations, gender experts and activists.

15 September 2023: the National Strategy for Bridging the Gender Pay Gap until 2030 and the operational Action Plan for its implementation for 2023-2025. The government plans to reduce the gender pay gap from 18.6% in 2021 to 13.6% by 2030. The implementation plan for the Strategy provides steps for overcoming stereotypes and discrimination based on gender, improving legislation on equal pay, and creating conditions for a convenient combination of family and professional responsibilities.

During the full-scale war from 2022 to 2024, no conservative policies were adopted (although some of them were proposed by some deputies, for example regarding the introduction of a "childlessness tax"). The state of martial law, the ban on men leaving the country and the obligation for men to defend the nation can be considered gender-restrictive. The ban on civil servants and deputies (The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine's resolution No. 69, 27 January 2023) travelling abroad without special permission has also had a certain negative impact on women's participation in politics, as some female officials and deputies have stepped down from their positions due to this restriction. However, these measures are a response to the extraordinary challenges of the war and cannot be classified as conservative policies specifically aimed at restricting the rights of women or other vulnerable groups.

3.3 Socio-cultural expectations regarding gender roles as a factor influencing gender-transformative changes

The attitudes and practices of the distribution of gender roles are the least dynamic and most persistent component of the gender order. The perceptions about Ukrainian women and men regarding the distribution of roles in the family are mainly rather traditionalist. According to a survey of Ukrainian men conducted by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 2018, 69% agreed with the statement that “women’s most important role is to take care of her family and cook for her family”, 63% agreed that “changing diapers, giving a bath and feeding kids is the mother’s responsibility”. At the same time, 52% agreed that “men have to share the work around a house with women equally” (UNFPA, 2018). In 2016, 81% of women and 84% of men believed that “a man should completely provide for his family” (Sotsiolohichna hrupa, 2016).

From a comparative perspective, we observe a gradual movement towards an egalitarian distribution of gender roles in families: In 2021, 52% of those surveyed said that a woman mainly provided childcare in the family (59% in 2016); 64% said that in their family it is mostly a woman who cooks food (79% in 2016) (Sotsiolohichna hrupa, 2016, 2021). Surveyed in 2021, 54% pointed to the equal involvement of both partners in raising children, 50% said the contribution of partners in managing the family budget was about equal and 63% said leadership of the family was about equal. The distribution of roles in rural families and in older age groups is somewhat more traditional, especially when it comes to unpaid care work (Sotsiolohichna hrupa, 2021). Other data indicate that, against the background of a rather high level of economic activity of women,⁸ the practices of a division of gender roles remain unequal, especially with relation to women’s responsibility for care work (as indicated in Section 3.1.).

It is worth noting the positive dynamics of changing attitudes towards gender equality. Changes in the attitudes of young people are especially noticeable: Young people aged 15-25 are less inclined to support the traditional distribution of gender roles and gender stereotypes (Volosevych, Prochukhanova, & Strelnyk, 2023).

The full-scale war did not stop the dynamics of changing attitudes towards gender equality. A representative survey conducted in March 2023 showed that, compared to 2021, the share of Ukrainians who believed that “men are better leaders than women” decreased (from 43% to 24%) as well as those who believed that “the main purpose of a woman is to give birth to children” (from 64% to 59%) (Ukrainian Veteran’s Fund, 2023). Such progress in public opinion should be cautiously evaluated, as it shows that perceptions about women’s public roles are evolving faster than those about their private roles. This gap creates conditions for contradictory perceptions about women, and stereotypes and biases will continue to be fundamental barriers to gender-transformative changes across various sectors.

Before the beginning of the full-scale war, the practices of the distribution of gender roles, in particular, in care work, were mainly patriarchal, although with positive dynamics over time and among younger generations. There is a lack of data to assess the impact of how the full-scale war has changed these practices. In particular, there is reason to believe that the ongoing war has created a burden for women in reproductive work due to changes in the composition and structure of families as a result of the warfare, an increase in the proportion of those requiring care (e.g. wounded soldiers and people with disabilities), as well as a reduction in childcare resources (in particular, kindergartens and online education of younger schoolchildren). At the same time, a significant share of men reported in 2023 that the time they spent with their children had increased significantly (in comparison with 2020), and the proportion of fathers who would

8 In 2021, employment rate of women aged 15-64 years in Ukraine was 55.5% (in comparison with 63.4% in the EU).

like to take parental leave more than doubled: from 20% in 2020 to 50% in 2023 (Info Sapiens & UNFPA, 2023).

The growing visibility of women in the military is an important challenge to the patriarchal gender order. The events of the Revolution of Dignity (2013-2014) and Russia's war against Ukraine (starting in 2014) influenced the expansion of the spectrum of women's roles and their public normalisation, primarily in the sphere of military service (Hrytsenko, 2022b). At the level of ideas and expectations in the pre-war period, the armed forces were strongly associated with masculinity. Data from representative surveys indicate positive changes regarding opportunities for women in the military. In 2018, 53% agreed that women in Ukraine should be granted equal opportunities with men to work in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations. In 2022 the share of these supporters increased to 80% (Martsenyuk, 2022). The increasing visibility of women in the military affects gender perceptions and attitudes: 80% surveyed in September 2023 answered that they associated the image of a veteran equally with men and women, while only 20% associated it with a man (Sotsiolohichna hrupa, 2023).

Although a minority in Ukrainian society supports the idea of equal rights for LGBT+ people to marry, positive dynamics were also recorded during the war. During the 2022-2024 period, the majority of society treated LGBT+ people indifferently (45%-47%) or negatively (38%-32%). At the same time, the share of people who believed that LGBT+ people should have the same rights as the rest of the citizens of Ukraine grew: In 2024, 70.4% of surveyed shared this idea, which is 3.1% more than in 2023, and 6.7% more than in 2022 (KMIS [Kyivskiy mizhnarodnyi instytut sotsiologii], 2024). There were far fewer supporters of giving LGBT+ people equal rights to marry or enter into a civil partnership, although their share had gradually increased as well. In 2024, 28.7% gave a positive answer to the question "Do you support the introduction of a registered partnership for same-sex couples, similar to ordinary marriage, but without the right to the adoption of children" (KMIS, 2024), in comparison with 23.6% in April 2022 and 4.8% in 2018 (Martsenyuk, 2022). Young people and women usually are more open to the idea of equal rights for LGBT+ people than representatives of older age groups and men. It is interesting that the attitude towards LGBT+ military personnel was more positive: Even among those who had a negative attitude towards LGBT+ people in general, 54% gave a positive assessment of their participation in the defence of Ukraine, while only 21% had a negative attitude (17% were indifferent) (KMIS, 2024).

We assume that changes in attitudes regarding equal rights for LGBT+ people are driven by several factors. One is the (geo)political context of the war, as well as Ukraine's movement towards European integration. Another factor is the desire to create distance from the ideology of "Russkiy mir" ("Russian world"), which uses "traditional values" and conservatism as an ideological weapon. Additionally, the growing public visibility of LGBT+ soldiers has contributed to these changes (Ukrainian LGBT+ Military and Veterans for Equal Rights, s.a.).

3.4 Feminist perspectives, actions and the most visible achievements of Ukrainian feminism in 2022-2024

Women's and feminist organisations are important agents of change in Ukraine. The first such organisations – the goals, directions and forms of activity of which can be defined as feminist – began their work in the second half of the 1990s. Currently, the range of women's feminist organisations and initiatives in Ukraine is diverse in terms of both work and ideological direction. They play a significant role in women's rights advocacy (Kis, 2021a, 2021b).

Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine created a dramatic impact on the situation of women and the realisation of their rights and opportunities. Among these challenges are: the growth of GBV; CRSV; the increased burden of reproductive work on women; a deepening feminisation of poverty; an increase in the share of vulnerable groups of women (e.g. widows and single

mothers); a predominant share of women with children among war refugees; an increasing burden on feminised fields of employment (education, health care, social work); as well as a decrease in the political and expert visibility of women.

The war has created numerous challenges for Ukrainian feminism and feminist activists. They face the task of solving humanitarian issues and supporting vulnerable groups of women. There are also risks of the reduced influence of women on political decisions and the neglect of gender-responsive approaches in recovery and post-war reconstruction projects. Additionally, they must engage in international advocacy to promote the interests of the Ukrainian feminist movement and the right to protection against armed aggression, particularly in the context of the dominance of “abstract pacifism” (Manifest – Pravo na sprotyv, 2022) and in local advocacy emphasising that women’s issues are urgent during the war and cannot be postponed until after victory. In addition, most women’s and feminist organisations are forced to survive in rather difficult conditions of limited funding, bureaucratic policies of donors and their imposed policies, which are irrelevant to the Ukrainian context (Shevchenko, 2024).

In a situation of ongoing war, feminism in Ukraine remains active and visible. In 2022, the leaders and activists of women’s organisations – with the support of the Ukrainian Women’s Foundation – created a Roadmap for the development of the women’s/feminist movement, outlining challenges, opportunities and recommendations addressed to various stakeholders (state and local authorities, donors, businesses, CSOs) (Ukrainian Women’s Fund, 2023). In 2024, the Ukrainian women’s movement celebrates its 140th anniversary. For the fourth time, the Feminist Forum of Ukraine was held, dedicated to the opportunities and challenges of strengthening the influence of feminism during the war. The Forum was organised in cooperation with women’s organisations, the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy and donors.

According to the results of the self-assessment of the women’s movement conducted by the Ukrainian Women’s Foundation, in 2017 49% of participants from among representatives of women’s organisations and individual activists believed that the feminist movement in Ukraine was in the stage of formation, and only 7% believed that it was at a stage of maturity. The results of the 2024 survey indicate that only 19% believed that the movement was still in the formative stage, whereas 40% believed that the movement was already at a stage of maturity. Participants considered the greatest advantage of the movement to be the level of cooperation and coordination within the movement, and at the same time, 67% believed that this was a priority direction that the movement should strengthen in the future. In second place was the development of the movement at the national and local levels, and in third place was safety, which is both the biggest challenge for the participants of the movement and an important priority (Ukrainian Women’s Fund, 2024).

The most visible achievements/initiatives of the feminist movement in Ukraine on the national level since the beginning of the full-scale war have been the following.

The ratification of the Istanbul Convention in June 2022 was the result of 10 years of efforts by Ukrainian feminist advocates. Petitions for the ratification of the Convention to the President initiated by feminist activists gained the required 25,000 signatures two years in a row; however, it was not ratified for a long time due to the opposition of the Council of Churches and grassroots anti-gender-equality and anti-LGBT-rights (mostly pro-religious) initiatives. A change in the political climate on the eve of the expectation that Ukraine would receive the status of a candidate for EU accession helped feminist activists and allies to overcome conservative resistance before the Istanbul Convention was finally ratified.

A petition on the legalisation of same-sex marriages and a bill on civil partnerships. In July 2022, a petition for the granting of same-sex marriages received 28,000 signatures in one month, which was enough for the President’s consideration. In response, the President referred to the Constitution of Ukraine, in which marriage is defined as the union of a woman and a man, and to the fact that, during a war, changing the Constitution is prohibited. In 2023, Parliament

deputy Inna Sovsun initiated a bill on civil partnerships that could be used by opposite-sex and same-sex couples. In support of this bill, a petition was also initiated, which in April-May 2023 gained the necessary 25,000 signatures. Some of the specialised committees supported the bill, whereas the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine also opposed it. Although the bill had not been adopted as of December 2024, this initiative became visible and politically articulated the demands of the LGBT+ movement.⁹

The petition to the President of Ukraine on the introduction of sex education was initiated by the Public Alliance “Political Action of Women” and the CSO “Expert resource Gender in Detail” in February 2023 and received 25,827 signatures. In response to the petition, by the order of the President, the Ministry of Education and Science gave two contradictory answers: One was that sex education had already been implemented as a component of the Basics of Health and Biology courses, and the other was that the Ministry was developing draft standards that provide for the introduction of a separate sex education course in the school curriculum (Povaha, 2023).

A petition to the President demanding the implementation of the already developed mechanism for combating sexual harassment and violence in the Armed Forces was initiated in March 2024 by several women’s CSOs, including those representing the interests of women veterans, and received the necessary 25,000 signatures. As of December 2024, the Ministry of Defence is working on the implementation of the mechanism in coordination with CSOs. This petition is a continuation of the systematic work of women’s organisations to protect the rights of women in the military that began in 2015. With the beginning of the war in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, many women who went to serve faced a considerable number of restrictions and challenges, in particular due to the fact that many positions in the army were prohibited to them. The situation changed under the “Invisible Battalion” advocacy project in 2015, when the first research on the problems of women in the army was conducted (Grytsenko, Kvit, & Martsenyuk, 2016). After the research and advocacy campaign, the list of military professions that women were allowed to apply for was significantly expanded, and the need for full gender equality in the security sector and the destruction of the “glass ceiling” became the subject of public debate. Further phases of the project were devoted to the situation of women veterans and the issue of sexual harassment in the military. A gender-responsive approach is gradually being introduced in the security sector, and it is worth noting that servicewomen and women activists fought for these changes, which were not granted to them by the authorities from the top down (Hrytsenko, 2022b).

One of the important directions of the work of feminist organisations in the context of ongoing war is **the formation of discourses and policies on the issues of gender-responsive recovery and post-war reconstruction**, in particular the aspect of a comprehensive approach to reconstruction that takes into account the gender perspective in all spheres (Fedorova, Khurtsydze, & Verbytskyi, 2024) and reservations about building based on economic liberalisation (Lomonosova & Provan, 2024). In 2024, these initiatives became part of state policies. On 12 June, during the International Recovery Conference (URC-2024), Ukraine – together with the governments of partner countries, international and civil society organisations, and representatives of the business community – agreed to create an Alliance to Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women in Ukraine’s Recovery Process. The goal of the Alliance is to join efforts in implementing existing and launching new initiatives aimed at introducing gender-responsive approaches to the recovery process, as well as promoting gender equality and empowering women in Ukraine.

Feminist organisations and activists are engaged in numerous projects and initiatives aimed at advancing various aspects of women’s rights and the rights of other vulnerable groups. A comprehensive mapping of all the feminist projects in Ukraine falls beyond the scope of this study.

9 Although these initiatives were not explicitly initiated by feminist organisations or leaders as such, we define these initiatives as feminist in content.

3.5 Summary of Section 3: background of gender equality in Ukraine – desk study

Sociological data show that Ukraine belongs to the group of countries with the completed second demographic transition (which is characterised by a low birth rate, an increase in the age of marriage and childbirth, and a low level of maternal and child mortality). Women in Ukraine are highly educated and economically active. The perceptions about Ukrainian women and men regarding the distribution of roles in the family are mainly rather traditionalist and combined with the dominant gender contract of the “working mother”. Against the background of the persistence of the main gender gaps, particularly in wages and the political representation of women, it is worth noting the tendency of these gaps to decrease over time. For example, the gap in the average monthly salaries of women and men were as follows: 2016 (25.4%), 2020 (20.4%) and 2021 (18.6%). The government plans to reduce the gender pay gap to 13.6% by 2030.

Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine created a range of gender-related problems: the growth of GBV; CRSV; the increased burden of reproductive work on some groups of women (e.g. mothers of preschool and primary school children, wives and mothers of wounded soldiers, etc.); a deepening feminisation of poverty; an increase in the share of vulnerable groups of women (e.g. widows and single mothers); a predominant share of women with children among war refugees; an increasing burden on feminised fields of employment (education, health care, social work); as well as a decrease in the political and expert visibility of women.

The war has created numerous challenges for Ukrainian feminism and feminist activists: solving humanitarian issues and supporting vulnerable groups of women; counteracting the risks due to the reduced influence of women on political decisions and neglect of gender-responsive approaches in recovery and post-war reconstruction; engaging in international advocacy to promote the interests of the Ukrainian feminist movement and the right to protection against armed aggression; emphasising in local advocacy that women’s issues are urgent during the war and cannot be postponed until after victory; the challenges of limited funding; and bureaucratic policies of donors that are irrelevant to the Ukrainian context.

Although the war has exacerbated typical gender issues and created new ones, the mere existence and number of such issues do not indicate a conservative backlash. Ukrainian society and the state have responded to war-related problems in an emancipatory manner.

Political level

Since the beginning of Russia’s war against Ukraine in 2014, many regulatory and legal acts on gender equality have been adopted, for example the criminalisation of domestic violence (2018), gender quotas on lists of political parties (2019), the prohibition of discrimination based on sex in advertising and job postings (2022), and the abolition of the list of professions prohibited for women (2017). Since the full-scale invasion in 2022, as of December 2024, at least five emancipatory policies had been adopted, namely: ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), the Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men for the period up to 2030, the Amendments to the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security for the period until 2025, the Strategy for Gender Equality in Education for the period until 2030 and the National Strategy for Bridging the Gender Pay Gap until 2030.

During the full-scale war from 2022 to 2024, no conservative policies were adopted. The state of martial law, the ban on men leaving the country and the obligation for men to defend the nation can be considered gender-restrictive. The ban on government officials travelling abroad without special permission has also had a certain negative impact on women’s participation in

politics, as some female officials and deputies have stepped down from their positions due to this restriction. However, these measures are a response to the extraordinary challenges of the war and cannot be classified as conservative policies specifically aimed at restricting the rights of women or other vulnerable groups.

Socio-cultural expectations and practices

The attitudes and practices of the distribution of gender roles are the least dynamic and most persistent component of the gender order. Ukrainian men and women largely hold traditional views on the distribution of roles in the family, however sociological polls show slow but steady progress towards an egalitarian distribution of gender roles since 2014, and that this progress did not stop after 2022. Although a minority in Ukrainian society supports the idea of full equal rights for LGBT+ people (including marriage), positive dynamics were also recorded during the war.

This progress should be cautiously evaluated, as it shows that perceptions about women's public roles are evolving faster than those about their private roles. For example, a representative survey conducted in March 2023 showed that, compared to 2021, the share of Ukrainians who believed that "men are better leaders than women" decreased (from 43% to 24%), as well as those who believed that "the main purpose of a woman is to give birth to children" (from 64% to 59%) (Ukrainian Veteran's Fund, 2023). This gap creates conditions for contradictory perceptions about women, and stereotypes and biases will continue to be fundamental barriers to gender-transformative changes across various sectors.

There is reason to believe that the ongoing war has created a burden on many groups of women in reproductive work due to changes in the composition and structure of families as a result of the warfare, an increase in the proportion of those requiring care (e.g. wounded soldiers and people with disabilities) as well as a reduction in childcare resources (in particular, kindergartens and online education of younger schoolchildren). This burden, as well as other war-related challenges, did not result in a strengthening of conservative ideas in public opinion, according to surveys as of December 2024.

Feminist activity

Feminism in Ukraine remains active and visible, organising movement-building events and advocacy initiatives as well as providing support for vulnerable groups. Key achievements of the feminist movement in 2022-2024 include the adoption of five abovementioned emancipatory policies, with feminist activists actively participating in their development and lobbying efforts. Other notable initiatives include a petition for the legalisation of same-sex marriage, a draft bill on civil partnerships, a petition for the introduction of sex education, and a petition demanding the implementation of a developed mechanism to combat sexual harassment and violence in the Armed Forces – all of which received the required 25,000 signatures and responses from government officials. Additionally, there has been progress in shaping discourses and policies on gender-responsive recovery and post-war reconstruction, including the creation of an Alliance to Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women in Ukraine's Recovery Process. A comprehensive mapping of all the feminist projects in Ukraine falls beyond the scope of this study.

As shown by the information presented above, Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine has created burdens regarding gender issues, but as of December 2024, it has not stopped the progress of gender-transformative changes. These changes are evident in the implementation of emancipatory policies at the political level and in the positive shifts in public opinion at the sociocultural level.

We assume that the (geo)political context of the war, which is connected with the massive consolidation of Ukrainian society on European integration and obtaining the status of a candidate for EU accession, along with the desire to distance oneself from the ideology of

“Russkiy mir” (“Russian world”), which uses “traditional values” and conservatism as an ideological weapon, created an additional window of opportunity for promoting the agenda of gender equality and feminism.

4 The impact of feminism on gender-transformative changes: limitations and opportunities

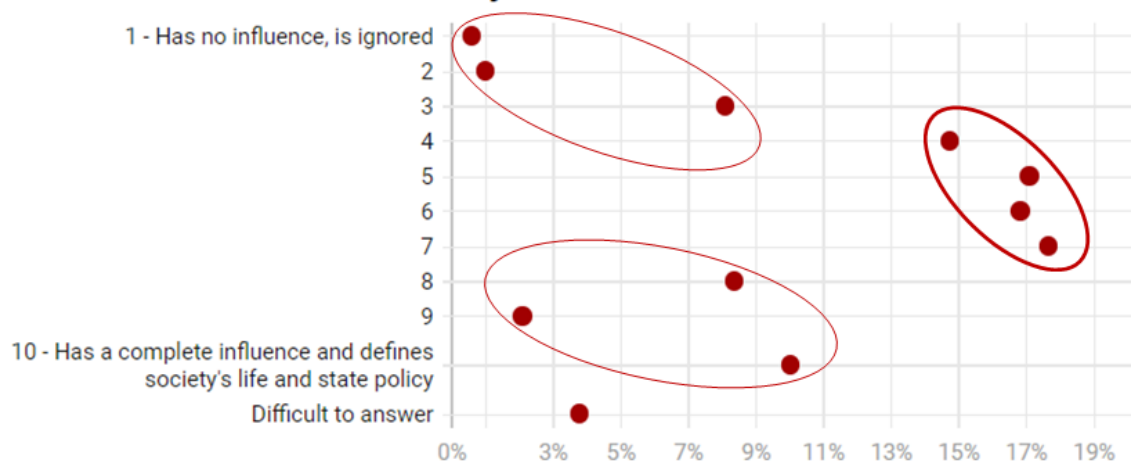
This section presents an empirical analysis of data obtained by quantitative survey and qualitative methods (expert interviews and FGDs). The analysis examines how research participants evaluated the overall impact of feminist perspectives and actions on Ukrainian society and its various sectors. It also explores the obstacles and barriers they identified in strengthening feminism’s influence on gender-transformative changes, including those caused by the full-scale invasion.

4.1 General characteristics of the impact of feminist perspectives and actions on Ukrainian society and its various sectors

The majority of participants, who are feminists, surveyed through quantitative methods (67%) believed that feminist ideas and perspectives have a moderate impact on Ukrainian society (see Figure 1). A small proportion of participants (approximately 10%) thought that feminism is either ignored or has very weak influence.

Figure 1: The influence of feminist perspectives

How much do feminist PERSPECTIVES and ACTIONS influence Ukrainian society and the state?



N = 720

Source: Authors, created with Datawrapper

The materials from interviews conducted with active representatives of the feminist movement present a somewhat more optimistic picture of this influence. This is justified considering that the participants represent the most active segment of Ukrainian feminism, possessing expert-level knowledge. At the same time, one cannot exclude distortions related to the overestimation

of feminism's impact by this group of participants. The vast majority of informants assessed the overall impact of feminism on the development of Ukrainian society as quite significant and strong, especially in the context of a temporal perspective by evaluating this impact now and 10-20 years ago. Justifying their opinions, the overwhelming majority mentioned three successful areas of such influence. Firstly, it concerns the political dimension, specifically legislative changes towards gender equality and increasing the political representation of women. The participants recalled numerous legislative changes, namely: the Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men (2005), the law on gender quotas in political party lists (2019-2020), the ratification of the Istanbul Convention (2022) and the Strategy for Gender Equality in Education (2022), all of which, in their opinion, are results of the activities of Ukrainian feminism and pressure on the authorities. Secondly, many noted changes in gender equality issues in the security and defence sector, stimulated by feminist research, advocacy campaigns and petitions. Thirdly, the participants spoke about the significant successes of Ukrainian feminism in preventing and combating GBV and issues related to CRSV, which are linked to both legislative changes and practices of working with survivors. A few informants evaluated the impact of feminism on Ukrainian society more cautiously, viewing it as contradictory or relatively weak, and mentioned that many of the aforementioned changes, especially legislative ones, are indeed advocated by feminists, but politicians do not recognise their contribution to these changes. They also noted that the impact of feminism is more localised, partly due to the negative connotation of feminism in society, which in turn affects women's willingness (especially public figures) to articulate their position as feminist.

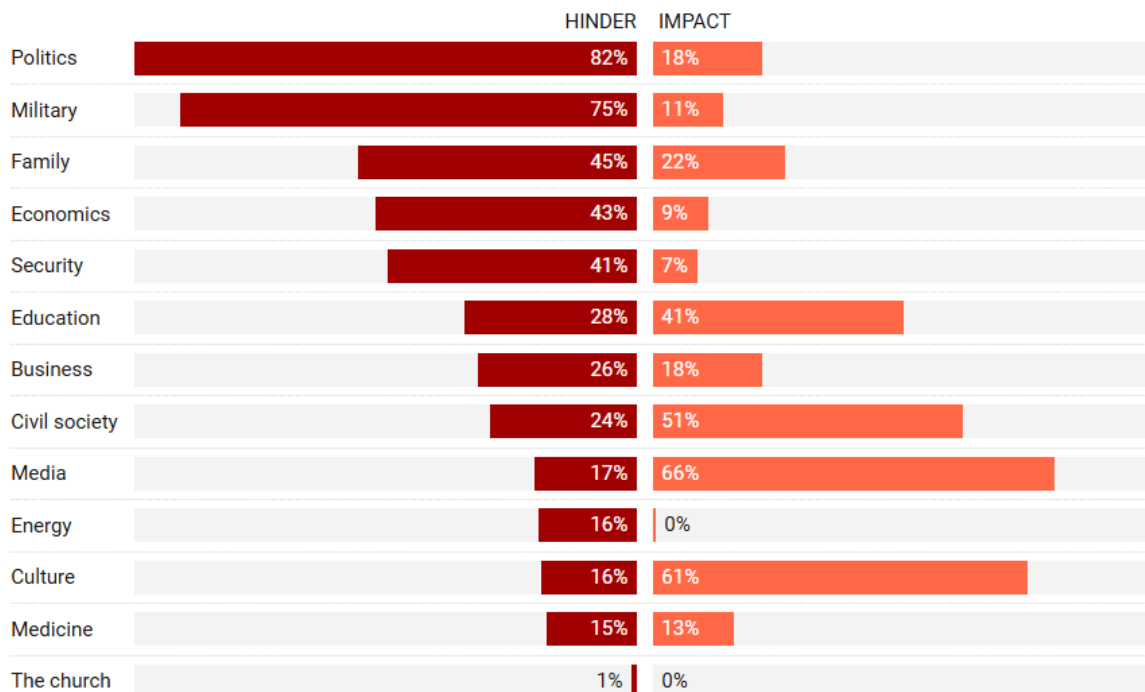
It's more comfortable to be a feminist public activist than a feminist politician. (Cluster "Authority", INT 19)

According to quantitative research data, feminist perspectives and actions encounter the greatest obstacles in areas such as **politics** (82%) and the **military** (75%) (see Figure 2). This indicates the presence of deeply rooted socio-cultural norms and stereotypes that limit women's participation in these fields, as well as systemic barriers that hinder the implementation of gender-transformative policies.

As we can see, these assessments contrast with the data from in-depth interviews with the most active representatives of the feminist movement in the country, who noted that changes in the political sphere and the security and defence sector are among the most tangible examples of feminist influence. It is likely that for the "wider circle" of women who identify as feminists, these changes are not as visible. Instead, the quantitative data shows that the greatest impact of feminist perspectives and actions is noticeable in the spheres of **media** (66%), **culture** (61%), **civil society** (51%) and **education** (41%).

Figure 2: Areas of influence and barriers of feminism

In which social spheres are feminist PERSPECTIVES and ACTIONS most hindered? | In which social spheres do feminist PERSPECTIVES and ACTIONS have the greatest impact?



N = 705 | N = 657

Source: Authors, created with Datawrapper

4.2 Structural barriers to the influence of feminism on Ukrainian society

The qualitative part of the research provided more focused data on the deep-seated factors and structural barriers affecting feminism’s influence on gender-transformative changes, the main ones of which are outlined below.

Iron walls of power institutions. In addition to data from the quantitative study, which indicate politics and the military as the most problematic areas, during FGDs, feminists emphasised the discrimination against women in professions considered “traditionally male”. According to the FGD participants, the army and political sphere remain closed to most women due to persistent traditional roles. Moreover, unequal starting conditions and structural limitations negatively impact women’s involvement. It is worth noting that, according to in-depth interviews with the most active representatives of the feminist movement in the country, they pointed out that changes in the political sphere and the security and defence sector are the most tangible examples of feminist influence, emphasising primarily legislative changes (at the political level) and the increasing public visibility of women in the military, thanks to feminist initiatives. At the same time, FGD participants noted that these changes have a limited impact on practices that reproduce gender inequality and lead to the persistence of gender stereotypes.

The interviewed experts also discussed the gap between national gender equality programmes/strategies and local-level documents as a factor hindering sustainable gender-transformative changes.

Very often, the programmes developed at the regional level do not meet the needs of local areas. Because the national plan is very large-scale and general. But we need to rely on some assessments of the needs of people living in local areas... And the problems vary from region to region, so it is very important to have an influence on the ground, to monitor, and to be included in the planning process at both local and regional levels. (Cluster “NGO”, INT 18)

The “Women, Peace, Security” plan is very good. It’s a framework. What happens next with this document? It goes down to a lower level of localisation, meaning that communities at the local level must make decisions. It doesn’t work like that here. If we look at these “Women, Peace, Security” plans at the regional level... it’s just terrible. There’s nothing about gender, gender equality at all. So it really doesn’t work. (Cluster “NGO”, INT 13)

Although the details of the implementation of gender equality policies were not the subject of our research, we can assume that there are several factors that contribute to the weakness of such policies. Among them is a formal approach to its implementation due to a lack of awareness, knowledge and skills among local implementers, as well as a lack of resources to carry out this policy, especially in small local communities. Financing for gender equality policies is usually absent and relies on local government employees (mostly women), who are overloaded with addressing the entire spectrum of social and humanitarian issues, especially in the context of war. This contributes to a situation where the measurable successes in introducing new gender-transformative policies from 2014 to 2024 (detailed in Section 3) have resulted in contradictory or relatively weak practical implementation.

Patriarchal fortresses: economics, security, family. Economics (43%), security (41%) and family (45%) are highlighted in the quantitative research as areas with significant barriers to feminist perspectives and actions. FGD participants noted that traditional family roles and stereotypes limit women’s participation in public life, particularly in economic and security-related matters. FGD participants also pointed out that the pressure of stereotypes is stronger in small communities and/or among older age groups, where there are fewer economic opportunities for women and their vulnerability is greater.

Glass ceiling in education and business. Despite the fact that education (28%) and business (26%) face fewer obstacles according to quantitative research data, these sectors still encounter certain barriers related to structural problems and the insufficient recognition of women in key roles. However, compared to other areas, feminist perspectives and actions in these fields are more influential. This situation can partly be explained by the fact that the education sector in Ukraine is feminised. Women make up 98% of preschool educators, 85% of general school teachers and 52% of vocational education workers. Conversely, in higher education, men dominate, accounting for 53% of teaching staff, which can be attributed to the higher prestige of the profession and higher salaries (Kyseliova, 2018, pp. 12-13).

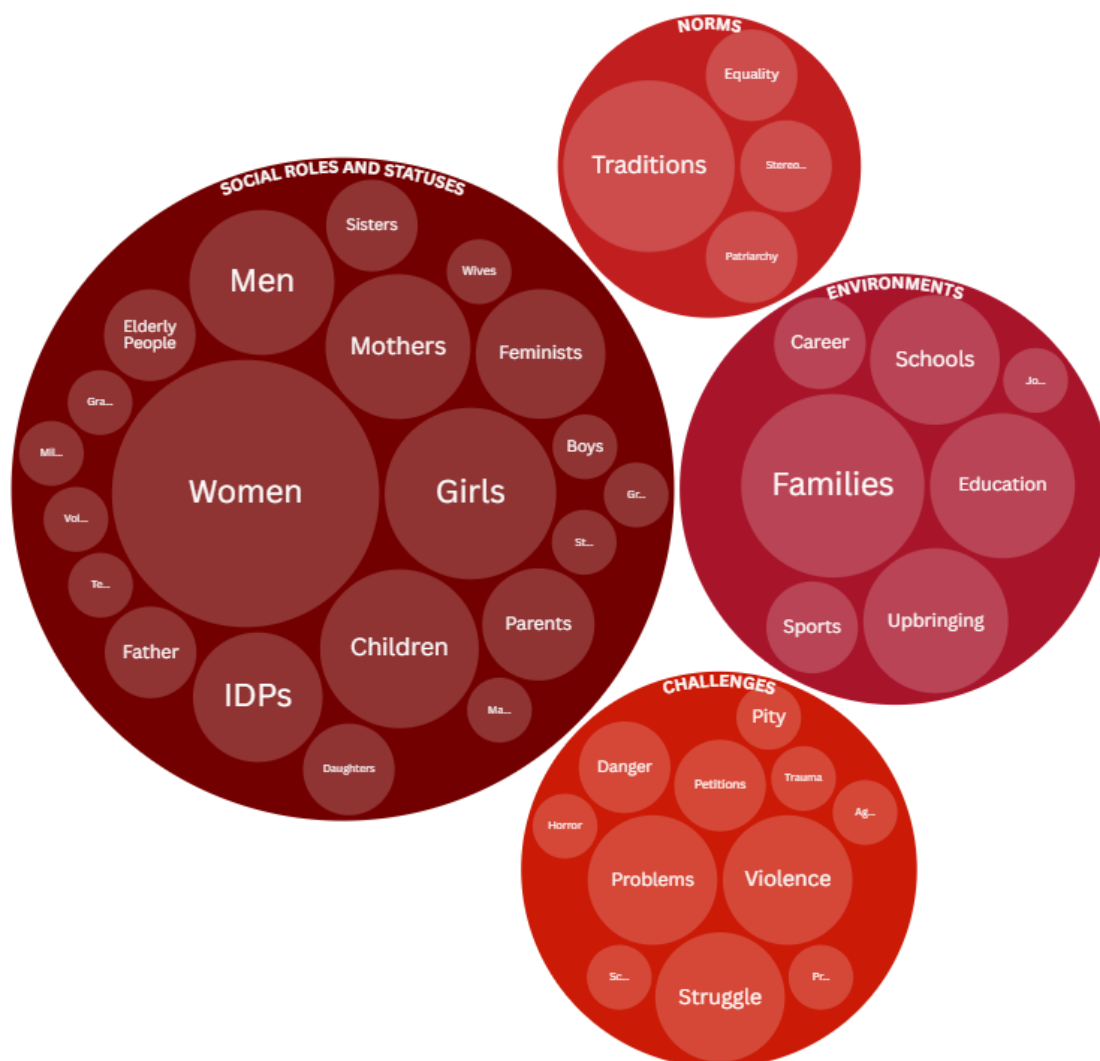
According to FGD participants, the lack of equal opportunities for women in business and education is explained by structural problems such as vertical gender segregation, gender discrimination in career advancement (glass ceiling) and systemic gender barriers to accessing professional opportunities. Although these sectors are gradually changing, traditional gender stereotypes remain strong.

Stereotypes as invisible barriers. Although the overview of sociological surveys presented in Section 3 indicate that Ukrainian society is making slow but steady progress in rejecting gender stereotypes, including during the war, participants in the qualitative component of the study identified stereotypes and biases as the foundation of barriers to gender-transformative changes across various sectors. This suggests that they should be considered a separate category of barriers. Specifically, all FGD participants clearly pointed to the existence and impact of stereotypes in society, particularly regarding “traditionally male” professions and women’s roles

in both the public and private spheres. These stereotypes act as a cultural mechanism that sustains structural inequality and discrimination, influencing institutional behaviour, especially in the military and workplaces, and they are reflected in the content of education. During the FGDs, feminists and pro-feminists highlighted discriminatory practices that were reinforced by stereotypes. Male pro-feminists emphasised that stereotypes about feminism being a radical or anti-male movement can provoke an anti-feminist reaction from conservative circles.

The views of FGD participants reflect that the most visible social roles and statuses are held by those who produce stereotypes and those who are subject to them (see Figure 3). In this context, girls, children, men and mothers were most frequently mentioned. The environments in which stereotypes circulate were also frequently mentioned, including families, education, schools and upbringing. Traditions were most commonly named among the norms, and challenges included issues, struggles and violence. These results suggest that gender stereotypes and social expectations are shaped and reinforced through intergenerational relationships and within key social institutions. They also confirm the idea that stereotypes are not isolated phenomena but are embedded in social structures and transmitted through family and educational practices. Stereotypes have not only a cultural but also a structural nature, and overcoming them requires active efforts both at the level of personal relationships and within societal institutions.

Figure 3: A map of environments where gender stereotypes operate



Source: Authors, created with Flourish

Media, culture and civil society as platforms of change. Feminist perspectives and actions encounter fewer obstacles in the fields of culture (16%), media (17%) and civil society (24%), while having the potential to achieve the greatest impact in these areas (61%, 66% and 51%, respectively). This suggests that these sectors could serve as platforms for more effective implementation of feminist perspectives in society. FGD participants also highlighted the significant potential of these fields in promoting gender equality, particularly through the popularisation of cultural and media initiatives. These results can be explained by the fact that the media, culture and civil society sectors are more open to activist initiatives and visibility campaigns, and the implementation of feminist projects in these fields does not require resource-intensive structural changes, as is the case in labour markets and childcare infrastructure, or the qualitative implementation of state policies by numerous local implementers at the day-to-day level, as in politics or the military. It is important to note that the named sectors, together with education, have great potential to shape cultural stereotypes and expectations and can be used as an effective tool for changing public opinion and gradually pushing changes in other spheres.

4.3 Opponents and supporters of feminism

According to the surveyed participants, the strongest **support** for feminist ideas comes from activists working on women's rights – 98% of them supported these perspectives (see Figure 4). Data also shows that donors partially supported feminism (50%), but a significant portion of participants (41%) remained neutral or undecided regarding them. This may indicate a lack of awareness, a certain distance or caution in expressing their positions. Civil society presents a mixed impression: 42% of participants indicated support for feminism in this sphere, while 27% believed that feminist issues are ignored and another 27% found it difficult to provide an answer.

The situation with state institutions, political parties, education institutions, employers and the general public was predominantly characterised by the participants as ignoring feminist ideas. Only 14% of participants believed that state representatives support feminism and 7% believed that education institutions support feminism, whereas the majority thought they **ignore** it (56% and 67%, respectively). This highlights the weak integration of gender issues into state policy, education and workplaces, which could slow progress towards achieving gender equality.

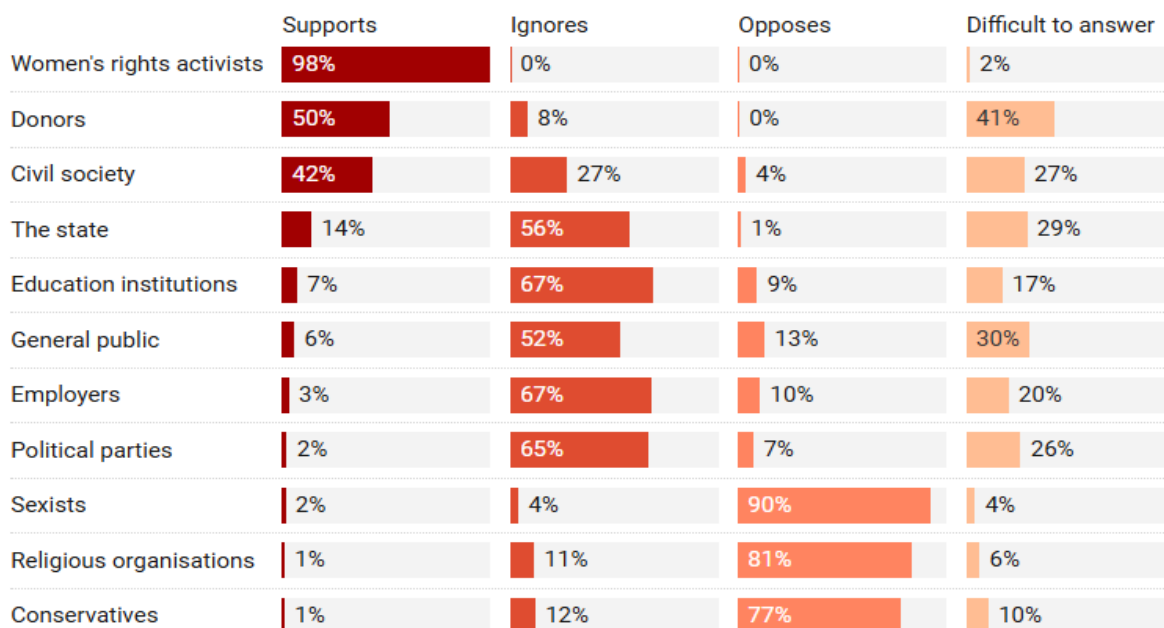
Some experts interviewed pointed out that the majority of society is indifferent to issues of feminism and gender equality.

And this is often the biggest challenge – not direct opponents, but rather those people who seem to have nothing against it, but, in essence, don't care, and they are not willing to learn to see the things that feminism offers, because this, I presume, doesn't align with their values. So, it's just a formal adherence to the law, but it's not something that corresponds to their values, and therefore it could not be something they genuinely care about. (Cluster "Professionals", INT 4)

On the other hand, the absence of clearly expressed opposition to feminist ideas can be interpreted as a precondition for the low level of resistance in the case of implementing feminist policies in these areas. According to participants, the most active **opponents** of feminist perspectives are religious organisations, sexists and conservatives. Eighty-one per cent of participants believed that religious groups reject feminist ideas, reflecting a conflict between traditional religious views and contemporary gender issues. Sexists are expectedly the most active group of opponents – 90% of participants believed they oppose feminism. Conservatives also predominantly oppose feminist perspectives, according to 77% of participants, which is typical for this group that tends to uphold traditional values.

Figure 4: Attitudes of different actors towards feminist perspectives

In your opinion, who overall supports, ignores or opposes feminist PERSPECTIVES?



N = 720

Source: Authors, created with Datawrapper

Overall, quantitative data indicate that feminism receives support in certain activist circles, but it lacks broad backing among key social institutions such as the state, education and business. At the same time, there are significant ideological barriers that complicate the implementation of feminist ideas, especially from religious and conservative groups.

According to the views expressed by focus group participants, feminist initiatives and actions are **supported** by the following groups. Firstly, these are **non-governmental organisations and activists**. They actively promote women's rights and engage in educational activities, including providing legal and psychological assistance to women, especially those affected by war and violence. These organisations also support women's economic empowerment and gender equality in the military and political spheres. Secondly, there are **international donors**. They fund initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality, but it is noted that their funding is often insufficient for bringing about sustainable change.

International projects are not obligated to do this for us; it is an act of goodwill that they invest the funds of their taxpayers to help us, as the people of Ukraine, grow in our understanding of the importance of women's rights. Meanwhile, the state is significantly underperforming, as it should not merely declare this process, as is currently the case, but also implement it in practice. (Female pro-feminist, project evaluator)

On the other hand, according to focus group participants, there are social groups that ignore feminism. Among them, firstly, is **the state**, which often overlooks important issues of equality: Although gender topics are on the agenda, the state frequently supports these initiatives formally, as there is a lack of resources and professional implementers to carry out state policies at the local, day-to-day level.

Secondly, this includes **employers and political parties**. It was mentioned that employers rarely actively promote gender equality, particularly in male-dominated professions where women could hold significant roles, and political parties avoid associations with feminism due to the widespread negative stereotypes surrounding this term.

In our country, people are afraid not only of the word “gender” but also of “feminism”, As a result, political parties, if they address these issues at all, do so in a very subtle way. They deliberately remove these words from their agendas, and we may not actually notice it, as these efforts are incorporated in a somewhat different form. (Female pro-feminist, project evaluator)

Ultimately, the groups that **oppose** feminism, according to the participants in FGDs and interviews, are the following. Firstly, **conservative and religious groups**. They actively oppose feminist initiatives. Participants noted their influence on the political and social agendas, particularly through lobbying for “traditional values”. These groups criticise feminism and block efforts to promote gender equality. Although their position in the new political context seems to have weakened, there is still a threat that they will resist.

The way the ratification of the Istanbul Convention was quickly concluded when it became politically beneficial for the state to gain support from the West shows that no one paid attention to what the Council of Churches was saying. However, they do have a certain potential, in my opinion, and we should not underestimate that, when they need to manipulate the electorate, they can do so. (Cluster “Researchers”, INT 3)

Secondly, there are **right-wing youth organisations**. They are characterised by aggression towards women and LGBT+ communities and often overlap with nationalist or religious movements.

The quantitative survey data and FGDs align in showing that feminist ideas are most strongly supported by CSOs, activists and international donors. In both components of the study, it is noted that the public sector and activists actively promote women’s rights, provide humanitarian aid and protect victims of violence. Additionally, the role of international donors is recognised in both, although in the quantitative survey, they are indicated as only partially supporting feminism.

However, there are some discrepancies. In the quantitative survey, state and education institutions are mainly indicated as those that ignore feminist ideas, while in the focus groups, participants specified that the state often symbolically (formally) supports gender initiatives but makes no real efforts for changes. In both cases, state structures were not viewed as active supporters of feminist perspectives; however, focus groups paid more attention to what the state could do to promote gender equality.

Similar findings emerged during the interviews: Although legislative changes were named as the most visible successes of Ukrainian feminism by the most active representatives of feminism, they also spoke about a formal approach to implementing gender equality policies and about the pressure from international organisations, women’s organisations and European integration processes as factors contributing to such success.

Furthermore, in the focus groups and interviews, specific groups that oppose feminism were clarified, notably conservative and religious organisations. They were identified as the main opponents of feminism who can hinder the implementation of gender reforms. The quantitative study also recognised religious groups and conservatives as primary opponents, but the focus groups emphasised their influence more strongly through specific examples of their lobbying for traditional values and blocking gender initiatives.

Thus, it can be argued that the results of the quantitative and qualitative components of the research are consistent, as they demonstrate a general picture: Feminist ideas are supported by activists and some international donors but face opposition from conservative and religious groups, while other societal actors, including the state, generally ignore, remain indifferent or have a formal approach, with possible variations in the depth and forms of these processes. These results resonate, as expected, with several previously conducted studies (Ukrainian Women's Fund, 2020). On the other hand, the absence of clearly expressed opposition to feminist ideas among major societal actors can be interpreted as a precondition for the low level of resistance in the case of implementing feminist policies in these areas.

To engage effectively with opponents, feminist activists should focus on awareness-raising campaigns to address indifference and misinformation, especially among neutral or undecided groups, and build coalitions with progressive elements within civil society, academia and international organisations. Gender disinformation should be exposed as a weapon of Russia's hybrid war. Efforts should also prioritise advocating for accountability in state institutions and policy implementation, emphasising the broader social and economic benefits of gender equality to counter traditionalist narratives. Targeted dialogue with moderate opponents and leveraging international pressure can further support feminist initiatives.

4.4 The influence of feminism on gender-transformative changes in the context of war: opportunities and limitations

The overwhelming majority of interviewed participants among the most active representatives of the feminist movement noted the agency of Ukrainian women and their adoption of new roles as a positive factor in feminism's influence on society in the context of war. Specifically, this includes the contribution of women to military resistance, women taking on "traditionally male" professions (*"I see opportunities for women who are developing, for example, becoming truck drivers. Previously, they didn't have the chance, but now businesses specifically conduct courses for women to learn how to drive trucks. This provides access to financial independence for women"*, Cluster "NGO", INT 16) and greater openness in the labour market to hiring women (*"These absolutely inflated expectations of employers towards employees have been somewhat hit by reality. They were forced to reconsider their attitudes and raise salaries. There is hope that now, due to the reshuffling of the entire labour sphere and labour market, women will have more employment opportunities; they are already starting to appear, and employers [...] are already happy that they have managed to find someone for the position"*, Cluster "Ideology", INT 10), the experience of relocation abroad, and exposure to new, more egalitarian values and practices of gender role distribution (*"Women who are currently working abroad see the difference in how society in Ukraine is organised around childbirth, upbringing, and childcare, compared to how it is organised in other countries. They see what is better and what is worse and they share with their friends in Ukraine, meaning we are experiencing a mass exchange of ideas and experiences"*, Cluster "Ideology", INT 10). At the same time, some participants pointed out the risks of losing progress in gender equality after the war ends.

About one-third of the experts interviewed noted that the war and its political and cultural context have created an additional window of political opportunities for promoting gender equality ideas. Primarily, this pertains to the processes of European integration and the demands of donors and international partners. At the same time, there is a risk of a temporary and instrumentalised "window of opportunity", including in the context of an intersectional agenda:

If you compare how much is said about LGBT+ rights compared to the rights of Roma or other ethnic minorities, it's just exponentially less. But why? This is just as big a European problem [...] I understand why, because LGBT+ organisations are better

organised, more professional, they are more visible, they are more active. But this, to me, is also an illustration of how all of this is instrumentalised. So right now, the hot topic is “Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity”. We are waving it around, and currently, this is a political opportunity that has opened up for LGBT+ organisations in Ukraine to advocate for their rights, and they are taking advantage of this opportunity. But it seems to me that it is very temporary. That is, it hasn’t opened up because it is there; we need to seize the opportunity. I don’t think it will ever open up for Roma, unfortunately, I don’t see the potential. Although this is a problem that has been ongoing for centuries, and all these horrific rights violations [...] And all of this, well, it’s not that interesting, it doesn’t mobilise society to talk about it. It’s not that interesting to use in their election speeches. (Cluster “Researchers”, INT 3)

At the same time, a portion (though a minority) noted **obstacles characteristic of the full-scale war period**. Regarding the challenges posed by the war, the most frequently mentioned was the **decreasing influence of women on decision-making, particularly political, due to the strengthening of gender stereotypes**:

This is the exclusion of women from levels of power, because war is a male thing; heroes are men. The longer the war lasts and the more changes occur, the more profound the shifts in social stereotypes will be. For now, both men and women still believe that decision-making is a man’s responsibility. Despite the ongoing mobilisation, men continue to hold power. In addition, it is believed that men are much more knowledgeable about war and everything related to it. (Cluster “Donors”, INT 9)

They also mentioned restrictions on the political participation of women who have moved abroad – both real and discursive:

After the Cabinet of Ministers’ resolution [The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine’s resolution No. 69, dated 27 January 2023, prohibited civil servants and deputies from crossing the border without special permission] was adopted, many women local deputies resigned because they were prohibited from leaving the country, and they needed to volunteer and visit their children and grandchildren abroad, so many women gave up their mandates. Now the topic of the rights of those who left is constantly being discussed, including how to participate in the upcoming elections. That is, active participation, certainly for, let’s say, the Verkhovna Rada and the presidential post, those who moved abroad cannot claim. But passive rights are also being discussed, meaning whether they will be able to participate in the elections at all. (Cluster “Authority”, INT 14)

Some experts talked about **the negative impact of the war on women’s organisations**, particularly regarding the reorientation of feminist and LGBT+ organisations to address emergency issues at the expense of strategic development, the outflow of some feminists abroad, asymmetry in collaboration with donors, and the limited opportunities for stakeholders to receive training and education on non-priority topics in the context of wartime challenges, such as LGBT+ rights:

The organisation where I previously worked, where I am still a member, I used to conduct training for teachers about LGBT+ students. And now we are not doing this because, firstly, we cannot create safe conditions, secondly, there are problems with funding, and thirdly, it’s very difficult to demand that teachers find two days in these conditions for a training on the rights of LGBT+ students. Even if they are interested. There is a certain understanding that this is not exactly untimely, but it’s not a priority; the priority is survival [...] But overall, it seems to me that people are sitting more often now scrolling through the news rather than attending an online course on gender equality. (Cluster “Researchers”, INT 3)

Summing up, we can conclude that Russia's war against Ukraine has had a contradictory impact on the opportunities for feminism to influence gender-transformative changes. On the one hand, gender stereotypes regarding "traditionally male" spheres, including the perception of war as a "male domain", were reinforced. On the other hand, the crisis has necessitated the optimal use of human resources in the military and economic sectors, creating a "window of opportunity" that promotes the inclusion of more women in "traditionally male" professions (the trend is also reinforced by Ukraine's aspiration for European integration, as well as the demands of international partners and donors). These opposing tendencies coexist, overlap and conflict with each other, likely contributing to the situation reflected in sociological polls (detailed in Section 3), which show slow but steady progress towards an egalitarian distribution of gender roles since 2014 – a trend that has continued even after 2022.

4.5 Summary of Section 4: the impact of feminism on gender-transformative changes – limitations and opportunities

This section provides an empirical analysis of data obtained by quantitative survey and qualitative methods (expert interviews and FGDs) in order to evaluate participants' views on the overall impact of feminism on various sectors of Ukrainian society and define the main obstacles and barriers for feminism's influence on gender-transformative changes, including those caused by the full-scale invasion.

Participants of the quantitative survey, all of whom self-identify as feminists, were asked a set of questions about the impact of feminism on gender-transformative changes: "How much do feminist perspectives and actions influence Ukrainian society and the state?", "In which social spheres are feminist perspectives and actions most hindered?", "In which social spheres do feminist perspectives and actions have the greatest impact?", "In your opinion, who overall supports, ignores or opposes feminist perspectives?".

Answers to these questions provide a logically coherent snapshot of opinions. The majority of participants (67%) believed that feminist perspectives have a moderate impact on Ukrainian society. The spheres where these perspectives are hindered the most are politics (82% hinder, 18% impact) and the military (75% hinder, 11% impact). They are followed by the spheres of economics (43% hinder, 9% impact), security (41% hinder, 7% impact) and family (45% hinder, 22% impact). The greatest impact is believed to be in the spheres of media (17% hinder, 66% impact), culture (16% hinder, 61% impact), civil society (24% hinder, 51% impact), and education (28% hinder, 41% impact). The business sphere is low, both in obstacles and impact (26% hinder, 18% impact). These results align with perceptions about who supports, ignores or opposes feminism in Ukraine. As expected, women's rights activists emerge as the strongest group of supporters, whereas sexists, conservatives and religious organisations form a distinct group of opponents. Donors and civil society are closer to the supporters, but the picture is less definitive (donors: 50% support, 8% ignore, 41% difficult to answer; civil society: 42% support, 27% ignore, 27% difficult to answer). Key societal actors such as the state, education institutions, the general public, employers and political parties are noted as largely ignoring feminist perspectives (more than 50% of responses indicating "ignore"), with a small percentage opposing and a significant portion (20-30%) answering "difficult to answer". Such uncertainty regarding key societal actors can be interpreted both negatively (as a lack of understanding of the usefulness of gender-transformative changes and motivation to implement them) and positively (the absence of clearly expressed opposition to feminist ideas can be seen as a precondition for the low level of resistance when implementing feminist policies in these areas).

The results of the quantitative survey partially contrast with the responses from expert interviews, which involved the most active representatives of the feminist movement with expert-level knowledge. The vast majority of experts assessed the overall impact of feminism as

significant and strong, highlighting the political and military spheres as the areas of greatest success (participants in the quantitative survey identified these same spheres as areas where efforts were hindered the most). This difference can be explained by the fact that experts, with their extensive experience, assessed the impact of feminism within a broader temporal perspective, considering its influence both now and 10-20 years ago. They also possess expert knowledge of numerous legislative changes, state policies and activists advocacy initiatives (detailed in Section 3). In contrast, participants in the quantitative survey represent a broader public opinion, focusing on the current state of affairs and, as a result, did not perceive a significant effect from legislative changes or policies on a day-to-day level.

Participants of expert interviews highlighted how the negative connotation of feminism in society affects public figures' willingness to openly identify as feminists. They noted that many of the aforementioned changes, particularly legislative ones, are driven by feminist advocacy; however, politicians and public opinion often fail to acknowledge or attribute these achievements to feminist efforts. They also highlighted the gap between national policies and local-level implementation practices as a crucial factor hindering sustainable gender-transformative changes. Although the details of the implementation of gender equality policies were not the subject of our research, we can assume that a formal approach to implementation – caused by a lack of awareness, knowledge and skills among local implementers; insufficient resources at the local level; and the overburdening of local government employees (mostly women) who do not have the allocation of proper resources and lack formal instructions and procedures – contributes to a situation in which the measurable successes in introducing new gender-transformative policies from 2014 to 2024 have resulted in contradictory or relatively weak practical implementation. This is evident in the results of the quantitative survey, which reveal that participants perceived key societal actors as largely ignoring feminist perspectives.

Both interviewed experts and focus group participants identified stereotypes and biases as fundamental barriers to gender-transformative changes across various sectors. Their views align with the sociological surveys presented in Section 3, which show that Ukrainian society perceives the distribution of gender roles in a rather traditionalist way, yet is making slow but steady progress in rejecting gender stereotypes, including during the war. Persistent stereotypes about “traditionally male” professions and women’s roles being confined to the private sphere make the military and political spheres hostile to women and significantly hinder sectors such as the economy, business and education, according to FGD participants. These stereotypes function as a cultural mechanism that sustains structural inequality and discrimination, influencing institutional behaviour. Unequal starting conditions and structural limitations negatively impact women’s involvement.

It is important to note that sectors shaping cultural stereotypes and expectations, such as media (66% impact), culture (61% impact) and civil society (51% impact), have the greatest potential to achieve significant gender-transformative change, according to the quantitative survey. FGD participants also highlighted the significant potential of these fields in promoting gender equality, particularly through the popularisation of cultural and media initiatives. However, they emphasised that the education sector, which is also a powerful transmitter of societal stereotypes, despite some successes (41% impact according to the quantitative survey), still retains structural barriers and stereotypical content. Participants also noted that increasing the public visibility of women in the military and other “traditionally male” professions contributes to the decline of gender stereotypes. These results can be explained by the fact that the media, culture and civil society sectors are more open to activist initiatives and visibility campaigns, and the implementation of feminist projects in these fields does not require resource-intensive structural changes – as is the case in labour markets and childcare infrastructure – or the qualitative implementation of state policies by numerous local implementers at the day-to-day level, as in politics or the military.

To engage effectively with opponents, feminist activists should focus on awareness-raising campaigns to address indifference, especially among neutral or undecided groups, and build coalitions with progressive elements within civil society, academia and international organisations. Gender disinformation should be exposed as a weapon of Russia's hybrid war. Efforts should also prioritise advocating for accountability in state institutions and policy implementation, emphasising the broader social and economic benefits of gender equality to counter traditionalist narratives. Targeted dialogue with moderate opponents and leveraging international pressure can further support feminist initiatives.

Russia's war against Ukraine has had a contradictory impact on the opportunities for feminism to influence gender-transformative changes. On the one hand, the war, especially its full-scale invasion phase since 2022, has reinforced persistent gender stereotypes regarding "traditionally male" spheres, with some interviewed experts noting a decreased influence of women in decision-making due to the perception of war as a "male domain". On the other hand, the crisis has necessitated the optimal use of human resources in the military and economic sectors, creating a "window of opportunity" that promotes the inclusion of more women in "traditionally male" professions. These opposing tendencies coexist, overlap and conflict with each other, likely contributing to the situation reflected in sociological polls (detailed in Section 3), which show slow but steady progress towards an egalitarian distribution of gender roles since 2014 – a trend that has continued even after 2022. Additional "windows of opportunity" for feminist impact are Ukraine's aspiration for European integration, the demands of donors and international partners, as well as the relocation of a few million Ukrainian women abroad and their exposure to new, more egalitarian values and practices of gender role distribution, which could contribute to the wider popularisation of feminist ideas in the long term.

The negative impact of the war on the work of women's organisations should be considered. This includes their reorientation towards addressing emergency issues at the expense of strategic development, the outflow of some feminists abroad, asymmetry in collaboration with donors, and the relegation of certain topics as being non-priorities in the context of war and survival.

5 Feminist perspectives

This section provides an empirical analysis of data obtained through quantitative surveys and qualitative methods (expert interviews and FGDs) showing how participants evaluated the Ukrainian feminist agenda and which feminist perspectives (topics, ideas, approaches, proposals and demands of feminists) they considered the most prevalent, taking into account the temporal dynamics (before, during and after the full-scale invasion). It also examines which perspectives are underrepresented, which are more characteristic of the full-scale invasion period and what is anticipated in order to gain primary relevance during the post-war reconstruction phase.

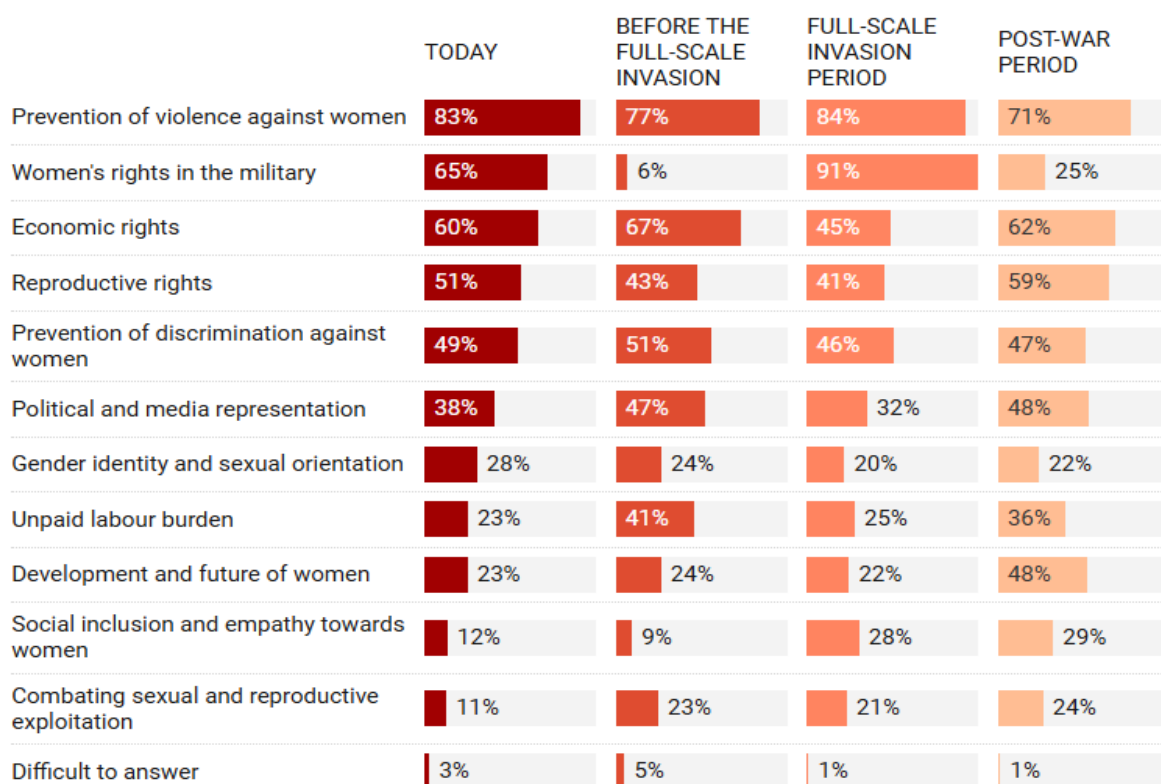
5.1 Feminist perspectives: an overview

The research results obtained from both quantitative and qualitative data demonstrate that participants considered the most pressing feminist issues to be **the prevention of violence against women and economic rights**. At the same time, during the full-scale invasion, particular attention is being paid to **women's rights in the military**, reflecting a shift in focus due to the wartime context. In the post-war period, an emphasis is predicted to be placed on **reproductive rights, social inclusion and unpaid labour**, indicating a need for the further development of social initiatives and inclusive policies (see Figure 5).

Focus group participants expressed more forward-looking views in this context, confirming the survey data regarding the post-war period. Prominent topics discussed during the focus groups included **LGBT+ rights, gender mainstreaming and unpaid labour**, with an emphasis on the necessity for further attention, especially concerning recovery and post-war reconstruction.

Figure 5: Feminist perspectives on the agenda across different periods

In your opinion, what PERSPECTIVES are included in the feminist agenda in Ukraine?



N = 720

Source: Authors, created with Datawrapper

Main priorities in feminist agenda: consistent topics. According to quantitative data, the prevention and combating of violence against women remains a constant and dominant theme in the feminist agenda across different time periods (83% today, 77% before the full-scale invasion, 84% during the full-scale invasion and 71% in the post-war period). The importance of economic rights also remains stable across various periods (60% today, 67% before the full-scale invasion, 45% during the full-scale invasion and 62% in the post-war period). Reproductive rights¹⁰ and the prevention of discrimination against women are frequently mentioned, though with less attention, ranging from 41% to 59% across different time periods.

Feminist women during FGDs and interviews emphasised the significance of fighting GBV as a key issue that remains relevant throughout all periods and is actively articulated by the feminist movement. They often mentioned economic inequality and the importance of women's economic independence as crucial factors in combating violence.

¹⁰ It should be noted that the issue of reproductive rights is primarily discussed in the context of possible reproductive pressure, as there are currently no restrictions on women's reproductive rights in Ukraine.

It is essential to strengthen women's economic capacity because, firstly, women are generally poorer than the overall population. Secondly, this depends on the place of residence: In small towns and rural communities, women have lower income levels. Additionally, the issue of forced displacement to other communities, where social capital and connections are lost, and everything must start from scratch, is crucial. Therefore, enhancing economic capacity should remain a constant priority on the agenda. (Female feminist, student)

Shifting priorities depending on the context of the war: dynamic topics. Quantitative data show that the issue of women's rights in the army has gained significant relevance during the full-scale invasion (91%), whereas it was relatively unknown prior to this event (6%). It is expected that its importance will decrease in the post-war period, yet it will remain at a considerable level (25%). The relevance of reproductive rights is projected to rise in the post-war period (59%), although this aspect was considered less important before and during the full-scale war (43% and 41%, respectively). During FGDs, participants noted the increasing number of women in military sectors but emphasised the structural barriers women face, such as discrimination in the army and a lack of recognition for their contributions.

The interviewed representatives of the feminist movement identified the following perspectives as being included in the current feminist agenda: the situation of women in the defence sector, GBV and CRSV. Among the perspectives cited in the current feminist agenda were the inclusion of women in decision-making processes, the involvement of women in "male professions", and the engagement of women in recovery and post-war reconstruction processes were also mentioned.

Secondary agenda: topics receiving less attention. Based on the quantitative data obtained, it can be stated that the relevance of the issue concerning the **political and media representation of women** has decreased during the full-scale invasion (32%), even though it was significant prior to this event (47%). Its recovery is anticipated in the post-war period (48%). The topic of **gender identity and sexual orientation** still has not gained significant traction in the feminist agenda (28% today, 20% during the full-scale invasion). Issues of political representation, LGBT+ rights and unpaid labour were deemed insufficiently prioritised during FGDs, although their impact on gender equality was recognised as significant. Male pro-feminists pointed out that LGBT+ community rights and same-sex partnerships are often overlooked in the state (national) agenda. They believed it is important to expand the discussion around minority rights in the gender context.

According to the interview materials, the perspectives that have been ignored or only partially articulated by Ukrainian feminism include economic issues (e.g. women's labour rights), social protection issues, the situation of women in feminised and caregiving professions, as well as the issues of sexual and reproductive exploitation of women (such as surrogacy). Additionally, the lack of intersectionality was noted, particularly regarding the rights of LGBT+ individuals:

I get the impression that most organisations that focus on women's rights do not include LGBT+ rights in their agenda. I understand that it may not be their priority to create programmes on this, but even when it comes to public statements, posts or what they talk about, I have the impression that they somehow exclude this group. (Cluster "Researchers", INT 3)

5.2 Feminist perspectives on recovery and post-war reconstruction

As we can see from the quantitative research data, the aspect of **social inclusion and empathy towards women is expected to gain importance** in the post-war period (29%), indicating the need for a deeper intersectional social dialogue and support for women, especially those affected by the war. The significance of the issue of **the burden on women due to unpaid labour** also rises in the post-war period (36%), according to the quantitative study data.

Focus group participants emphasised that the needs of women in small communities and rural areas often remain overlooked by the state, particularly during wartime. They highlighted the necessity of supporting local initiatives for women in the post-war period.

General reflections from the interviewed experts regarding gender-responsive reconstruction of the country concerned the misconception, in their opinion, of reconstruction as merely restoring what has been destroyed, whereas it should involve restructuring, including social infrastructure and its inclusivity in a broad sense, especially in light of the expected increase in the number of people with disabilities. The interviewed activists also expressed concerns about the declarative and unsystematic nature of implementing a feminist approach to reconstruction.

Among the feminist perspectives that will be relevant in the post-war development and reconstruction process, the interviewed feminists first highlighted **the issues of reproductive (care) work and the supporting infrastructure**. They emphasised that women's assumption of new roles in the public sphere would require the creation/improvement of conditions for caregiving labour, and that advocacy for improving care infrastructure could serve as a tool to encourage the return of women refugees. In discussions about improving care infrastructure, some informants noted the weak articulation of issues related to the care of the elderly, which is predominantly provided by women. Secondly, a range of problems associated with **demographic challenges and the anticipated reproductive pressure on women was highlighted**. This aligns with quantitative research data indicating that 59% noted the growing relevance of reproductive rights issues in the post-war period. Some informants expressed concerns about a conservative backlash and direct restrictions on women's reproductive rights; however, they viewed the women's movement in Ukraine as sufficiently powerful to counter these challenges and spoke of the European integration processes as a safeguard against possible rollbacks: *"I think we shouldn't expect [abortion bans] because Ukraine is trying to emphasise its pro-European stance, and that contradicts human rights, and so on"* (Cluster "Professionals", INT 5). Some regarded demographic challenges as threatening to Ukrainian society and believed they should be part of feminist policy aimed at supporting families with children and reproductive work. Thirdly, the challenges associated with **the return of veterans were discussed**: the complex issues of their rehabilitation and adaptation, the tension in relations between civilians and military personnel, the non-inclusiveness of infrastructure, as well as the rising levels of GBV and the (self)censorship of its discussion in the context of the heroisation of military personnel. Fourthly, the interviewees spoke about the relevance of **women's employment, particularly in the context of women taking on "traditionally male" professions**. This includes the creation of safe and gender-responsive workplaces, as well as the risks that women's pay in these professions may be lower. Fifthly, informants identified the problems of **women's political participation** as a relevant feminist perspective in post-war development. This includes challenges prioritising the voices of military personnel and the restrictions on the political participation of women who have gone abroad.

5.3 Summary of Section 5: feminist perspectives

This section provides an empirical analysis of data obtained through quantitative surveys and qualitative methods (expert interviews and FGDs) regarding how participants evaluated the Ukrainian feminist agenda and which feminist perspectives (topics, ideas, approaches, proposals and demands of feminists) they considered the most prevalent, taking into account the temporal dynamics (before, during and after the full-scale invasion). It also examines which perspectives are underrepresented, which are more characteristic of the full-scale invasion period and what is anticipated to gain primary relevance during the post-war reconstruction phase.

Consistent perspectives

Preventing and combating violence against women and the issue of women's economic rights remain constant and dominant in the feminist agenda, regardless of the time period and the situation of war/peace. Reproductive rights (discussing possible reproductive pressure) and the prevention of discrimination against women were also frequently mentioned.

Perspectives receiving less attention

Less prioritised according to the quantitative survey data were the topics of social inclusion and empathy towards women, as well as combating sexual and reproductive exploitation. According to qualitative data, among the perspectives that are insufficiently articulated by Ukrainian feminism are economic issues (such as women's labour rights or unpaid caregiving labour), social protection issues (including in the context of factors affecting the return of refugees), the status of women in feminised and caregiving professions, issues concerning the sexual and reproductive exploitation of women (e.g. surrogacy) and a lack of intersectionality, particularly regarding the rights of LGBT+ people.

War-related perspectives

Contextual perspectives, meaning those dependent on the context of war, include women's rights in the army and the status of women in the security and defence sector as well as CRSV.

Perspectives on recovery and post-war reconstruction

In the context of recovery and post-war reconstruction, the interviewed experts highlighted the risks of a flawed understanding of post-war reconstruction as merely restoring what has been destroyed, whereas it should entail restructuring, including social infrastructure and its inclusivity in a broad sense, especially in light of the expected increase in the number of people with disabilities. They also expressed concerns about the declarative and unsystematic nature of implementing a feminist approach to recovery.

Among the feminist perspectives that will be relevant in the process of recovery and post-war reconstruction, first and foremost is the issue of reproductive (caregiving) work and the supporting infrastructure. Secondly, a set of problems related to demographic challenges and the expected reproductive pressure on women was highlighted. This coincides with quantitative research data, which indicated that 59% noted an increase in the relevance of reproductive rights in the post-war period. Some experts feared a conservative backlash and direct restrictions on women's reproductive rights; at the same time, they considered the women's movement in Ukraine to be powerful enough to counter these challenges and cited European integration processes as a safeguard against possible rollbacks. Thirdly, there were discussions about the challenges of veterans' reintegration: the complex issues of their rehabilitation and adaptation, tensions between civilians and military personnel, the lack of inclusive infrastructure

as well as problems related to the rise of GBV and the (self)censorship of its discussion in the context of the heroisation of military personnel. Fourthly, the relevance of women's employment, especially regarding women's entry into "traditionally male" professions, was emphasised. In particular, this involves creating safe and gender-responsive workplaces, as well as acknowledging the risks that women's pay in these professions will be lower. Fifthly, the informants highlighted issues concerning women's political participation, emphasising the challenges of prioritising the political representation of former military personnel (the majority of whom are men) and the risk of obstacles to the exercise of political rights by those who left the country during the war (the majority of whom are women).

Ukrainian feminist perspectives are diverse, highly responsive to the changing wartime context and influential in shaping Ukraine's public discourse. Their precise impact and role in driving gender-transformative changes in the context of the ongoing defensive war are difficult to measure with scientific accuracy. However, an indirect confirmation of their influence can be seen in the fact that Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine has created burdens regarding gender issues; yet, as of December 2024, it has not stopped the progress of gender-transformative changes. These changes are evident in the implementation of emancipatory policies at the political level and positive shifts in public opinion at the sociocultural level during 2022-2024 (as detailed in Section 3). The implemented policies align thematically with perspectives that are constant and dominant in the Ukrainian feminist agenda, namely combating violence against women and ensuring women's economic rights. Additionally, progress has been made in shaping discourses and policies on gender-responsive recovery and post-war reconstruction, including the establishment of an Alliance to Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women in Ukraine's Recovery Process.

At the same time, structural barriers described in Section 4 highlight the limitations of feminist perspectives, particularly as quantitative research participants emphasised that key societal actors – such as education institutions, the general public, employers and political parties – largely ignore (but do not oppose) feminist perspectives. The state authorities, although demonstrating steady progress in implementing gender-transformative policies, have a formal approach to their implementation, caused by a lack of awareness, knowledge, skills and resources among local implementers.

The interviewed experts who assessed the impact of feminism as significant and strong generally pointed out that 10-20 years ago, the spread and influence of feminist perspectives were considerably less. This temporal dimension is important for understanding the potential of feminist perspectives to influence gender-transformative changes, because changes do not occur overnight – their slow, yet gradual growth is a testament of realised impact.

It is important to note that sectors shaping cultural stereotypes and expectations – such as the media, culture, civil society and partly education – were identified by participants as having a great potential for the influence of feminism and promoting gender equality. The fact that participants viewed these sectors as areas where feminism already has a significant impact is a step towards the possibility that feminist perspectives, broadcast through these spheres, will help eliminate structural barriers in other areas.

6 Feminist actions

In this section, we analyse the responses of study participants on how, in their view, feminist perspectives in Ukraine are translated into feminist actions (organisations, projects, initiatives, programmes, campaigns of feminists, and (pro)feminist initiatives of other actors), as well as the views of experts on what can be done to enhance the impact of feminist perspectives and actions on gender-transformative changes in Ukraine.

6.1 Feminist actions and activism in the context of war

The ideas of the interviewed experts and activists about the actions embodying feminist perspectives crystallise around the interaction of feminist organisations with authorities; activism related to the status of women in the armed forces; work and services for survivors of GBV and CRSV, as well as the creation of women’s support networks and coalitions (e.g. 1325 “Women, Peace, Security”). In addition to these action areas, which are consistently mentioned across different thematic blocks of the interviews (particularly regarding the issue of GBV and CRSV), the informants noted actions aimed at addressing the challenges of war for women, specifically humanitarian and psychological work that many women’s organisations have focused on since the onset of the full-scale war (e.g. organising shelters, providing humanitarian aid and assistance with evacuation). This focus on emergency issues creates obstacles for strategic development and change.

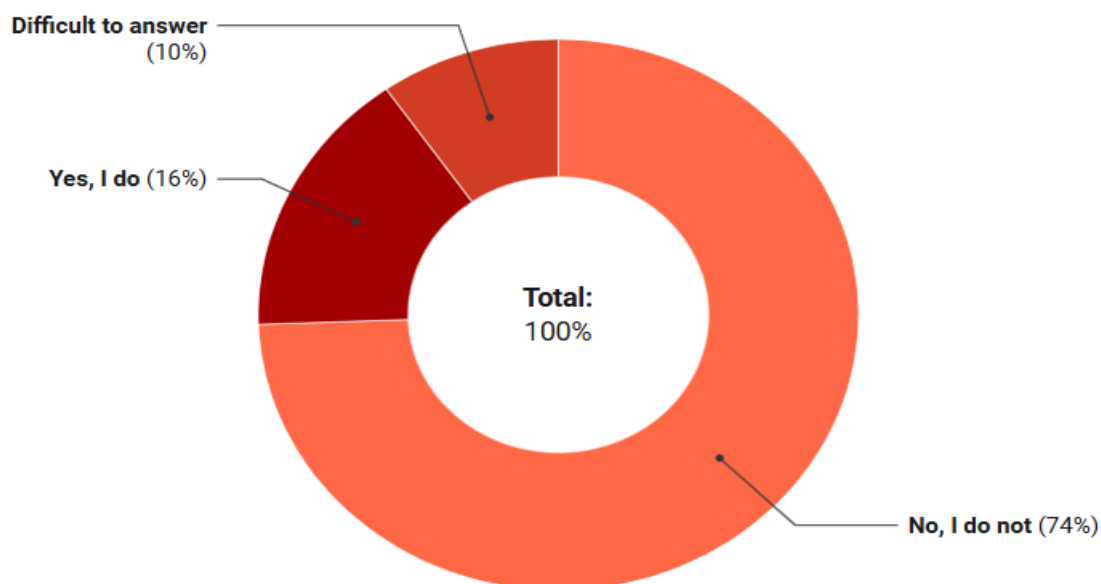
Based on the discussions in the focus groups, it can be asserted that feminists are actively engaged in various forms of public activity, including humanitarian initiatives, informational campaigns, protests and educational projects. They work on dismantling gender stereotypes, supporting women’s professional development, and disseminating information about sexual violence and mental health. Special attention is given to supporting vulnerable groups of women and expanding their opportunities in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Feminist actions mentioned by interviewed experts and focus group participants align with the consistent and war-related feminist perspectives detailed in Section 5.

The quantitative research data show a low level of involvement among participants in feminist organisations. Only 16% of participants in the quantitative study indicated that they belong to feminist organisations or initiatives (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Engagement in feminist organisations

Do you belong to a feminist organisation or initiative?



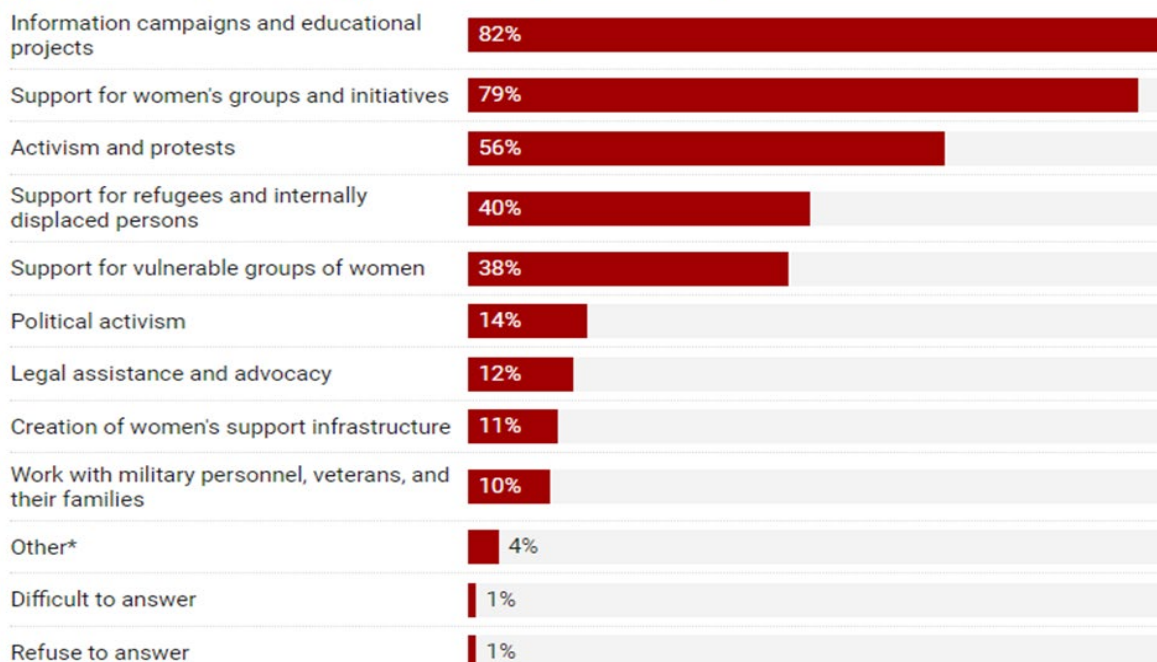
N = 720

Source: Authors, created with Datawrapper

Participants who belong to such organisations or initiatives most frequently mentioned participating in **advocacy work**, such as informational campaigns and educational projects (meaning awareness campaigns on gender issues; lectures, trainings and workshops on gender equality and women’s rights – 82%); supporting women’s groups and initiatives (meaning support and collaboration with women’s organisations and groups advocating for women’s rights – 79%); and engaging in activism and protests (meaning participating in public protests, marches, demonstrations and actions; initiating and supporting petitions to raise awareness of gender inequality issues; and demanding changes in legislation and society – 56% over the past two years). They also noted engagement in **humanitarian work** (support for refugees and IDPs through political activity, volunteering in organisations, social support, women’s rights advocacy and educational initiatives – 40%; support for vulnerable groups of women, such as victims of domestic and GBV, women in commercial sex, women with HIV/AIDS, etc. – 38%).

Figure 7: Activities of feminists involved in feminist organisations

Which of the listed feminist ACTIONS have you undertaken (or participated in) over the past two years?



N = 114

Source: Authors, created with Datawrapper

A comparison of Figure 7 about feminist actions and Figure 5 about feminist perspectives (today) shows that, despite some alignment between current feminist perspectives and the actions of feminist organisations, significant discrepancies exist. Supporting vulnerable groups of women (38% of actions) correlates with the perspective of prevention of violence against women (83%). Only 10% of participants stated that they engaged in work with military personnel, veterans and their families (such as psychological and other work with veterans, their integration into society, support for widows and families of fallen soldiers), while the feminist perspective regarding women’s rights in the military was among the most frequently mentioned (65%). The feminist perspective on political and media representation (38%) is poorly reflected in actions, with only 14% dedicated to political activism (political activity at various levels: activists of political parties, candidates for elected positions as well as lobbying for the adoption of legislative initiatives in favour of women). It is worth noting that both the political and military spheres were identified by

participants of the quantitative survey as having the most obstacles to feminist perspectives and actions.

Such discrepancies can be explained by the fact that the forms of feminist actions most frequently mentioned by survey participants are informational campaigns and educational projects, supporting women's groups and initiatives, and engaging in activism and protests. The quantitative data align with the results of focus groups, which identified informational campaigns, protests and educational projects as the prevalent forms of activity, and interviewed experts' emphasis on the interaction of feminist organisations with authorities. Such actions can be related to any thematic area within the feminist perspectives described in Section 5. Therefore, the level of implementation of certain feminist perspectives into specific feminist actions requires further research.

6.2 What can be done to strengthen the impact of feminism on societal development and gender-transformative changes?

Below are the recommendations given by participants in interviews and focus groups regarding ways and tools to enhance the influence of feminism on gender-transformative changes. The opportunity to give a voice to the participants of the research before we draw final conclusions and recommendations is an important part of our participatory feminist methodology. The suggestions expressed in the form of recommendations can also be considered a description of the most potentially effective feminist actions, according to the participants.

- 1) **Foster understanding of the importance of implementing gender equality policies:** Participants believed that more stability can be achieved through the enactment of legislation that supports gender equality. However, it is not enough to have laws; there also needs to be an understanding of the importance of their enforcement by government officials.
- 2) **Utilise real-life examples of women's agency:** According to the interviewees, visible actions by women, such as serving in the military, starting businesses and taking on "traditionally male" positions, have a significant impact on changing societal attitudes towards gender issues. They noted that real-life examples in local communities can have a greater effect than information campaigns or documents, as people see these changes directly in their surroundings. This contributes to sustainable development, as real stories change approaches and motivations for action.

Women in the military, as well as those who start businesses or take on roles in traditionally male-dominated fields, have the greatest impact as real-life examples. They are more effective catalysts for change than any documents or awareness campaigns, as their examples directly influence and shift people's mindsets and approaches.
(Female feminist, head of NGO)

- 3) **Combat corruption:** Some participants expressed the view that sustainable societal development requires achieving justice and reducing the level of corruption. They believed that feminist actions aimed at promoting justice and transparency in the government and society can facilitate stable changes. However, they also emphasised the risk of regression, especially when the situation changes after the war, and men return to their usual professions.
- 4) **Communicate with society and promote feminism:** Engage in outreach to meet the needs of broad groups of women and use accessible communication messages,

educational tools and awareness-raising: “A significant part of the resistance to changes and feminist perspectives is related to the fact that people demonise what they do not know” (Cluster “Professionals”, INT 4). “Gender equality issues, it seems to me, are still not adequately clarified for broad segments of the population, for society as a whole [...] But there is an opportunity to speak to people in their language, through the sources of information available to them; it seems to me that this is lacking” (Cluster “Authority”, UNT 19). One avenue for such work may be education and awareness-raising. Meanwhile, some informants interpreted feminist perspectives as extending far beyond the agenda of gender equality and women’s rights, relating to a just and inclusive society in a broad sense: “I like the definition that feminism is not only about fighting for women’s rights [...] We must be attentive to the needs of others. For me, this is feminism” (Cluster “NGO”, INT 12). One area for such communication may be the theme of feminised professions and, in particular, caregiving jobs, which is not always explicitly articulated as feminist but is essentially so.

- 5) **Appeal to Ukraine’s international commitments on gender equality:** Apply pressure on government officials from international bodies.
- 6) **Involve men:** “I miss public military men who would support the idea of gender equality” (Cluster “Researchers”, INT 2) and **engage youth** in supporting feminist ideas.
- 7) **Integrate feminist perspectives in all areas of decision-making.**
- 8) **Implement public oversight of authorities,** including issues related to post-war reconstruction: “You know, democracy is like riding a bicycle. You have to keep pedaling to stay in the saddle. So is civil engagement. As soon as civil society eases its pressure, we see regressions or simply are ignored. So there are opportunities, but these are opportunities that we have to secure for ourselves every time” (Cluster “Authority”, INT 14).
- 9) **Localise national programmes and reconstruction plans:** Many interviewees noted that national-level framework documents (e.g. the Action Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace, Security”, the Strategy for Promoting the Rights and Opportunities of Persons Belonging to the Roma National Minority in Ukrainian Society until 2030, national recovery plans, etc.) lose gender sensitivity at the local level, are not properly implemented, and do not meet the needs and contexts of regions and communities.
- 10) **Consolidate the demands of the feminist movement,** especially regarding recovery and post-war reconstruction: “We need to act unitedly because it is very important for us to carry one common message, especially to all streams of feminism, and advocate for the rights of women with different vulnerabilities from various vulnerable groups...” (Cluster “NGO”, INT 18).

These recommendations can be grouped into three blocks: 1) raising awareness and promoting feminism, 2) integrating feminist perspectives into decision-making and 3) ensuring accountability and adherence to gender commitments. A comparison with the results of the empirical analysis in Section 6.1 shows that block 1 is quite fully implemented in feminist actions, whereas blocks 2 and 3 require more effort.

6.3 Summary of Section 6: feminist actions

This section provides an empirical analysis of responses of study participants on how, in their view, feminist perspectives in Ukraine are translated into feminist actions (organisations, projects, initiatives, programmes, campaigns of feminists and (pro)feminist initiatives of other actors), as well as the views of experts on what can be done to enhance the impact of feminist perspectives and actions on gender-transformative changes in Ukraine.

Interviewed experts highlighted the interaction of feminist organisations with authorities; activism related to the status of women in the armed forces; work and services for survivors of GBV and CRSV; as well as the creation of women's support networks and coalitions (e.g. 1325 "Women, Peace, Security"). They also noted that the full-scale invasion compelled women's organisations to shift their efforts towards immediate humanitarian aid, hindering their focus on strategic development for gender-transformative changes. Focus group participants highlighted humanitarian initiatives and support for vulnerable groups of women, as well as various forms of public activity, including informational campaigns, protests and educational projects aimed at dismantling gender stereotypes, promoting women's professional development (particularly in traditionally male-dominated fields) and raising awareness about sexual violence and mental health. Feminist actions mentioned by interviewed experts and focus group participants align with the consistent and war-related feminist perspectives detailed in Section 5.

The quantitative research data show a low level of involvement among participants in feminist organisations (16%). Participants who belong to such organisations or initiatives most frequently mentioned participating in advocacy work, such as informational campaigns and educational projects (82%), supporting women's groups and initiatives (79%) and engaging in activism and protests (56%) over the past two years, and noted engagement in humanitarian work (support for refugees and IDPs – 40%; support for vulnerable groups of women – 38%). Only 10% of participants of the quantitative survey stated that they engaged in work with military personnel, veterans and their families, while the feminist perspective regarding women's rights in the military was among the most frequently mentioned (65%). The feminist perspective on political and media representation (38%) is poorly reflected in actions, with only 14% dedicated to political activism. It is worth noting that both the political and military spheres were identified by participants of the quantitative survey as having the most obstacles to feminist perspectives and actions.

The forms of feminist actions most frequently mentioned by participants were informational campaigns, educational projects, supporting women's groups and initiatives, and engaging in activism and protests. Such actions can be related to any thematic area within the feminist perspectives described in Section 5. Therefore, the level of implementation of certain feminist perspectives into specific feminist actions requires further research.

Recommendations given by participants in interviews and focus groups regarding ways and tools to enhance the influence of feminism on gender-transformative changes can also be considered a description of the most potentially effective feminist actions. Among them, the following were mentioned, which can be grouped into three blocks: 1) raising awareness and promoting feminism: fostering understanding of the importance of implementing gender equality policies by local implementers; communicating with society and promoting feminism in accessible language; popularising and utilising practical real-life examples of women's agency; involving men and engaging youth; 2) integrating feminist perspectives into decision-making: consolidating the demands of the feminist movement; integrating feminist perspectives in all areas of decision-making; and localising national programmes and reconstruction plans; 3) ensuring accountability and adherence to gender commitments: combating corruption; implementing public oversight of authorities and appealing to Ukraine's international commitments on gender equality. A comparison with the results of the empirical analysis in Section 6.1 shows that block 1 is quite fully implemented in feminist actions, whereas blocks 2 and 3 require more effort.

7 Conclusions

Russia's war against Ukraine since 2014 has created a favourable geopolitical context for feminist perspectives. Russia utilises machismo, sexism and homophobia in state politics, creating a narrative about the "decadent West" that the "Russian world" opposes. It positions itself as the last defender of "traditional values" and uses gender misinformation as a tool of hybrid war. The Revolution of Dignity (Euromaidan) protests of 2013-2014 began due to the suspension of the Association Agreement with the EU and the signing of the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership with Russia, reflecting society's decision to continue European integration despite the decision of the highest level of political leadership. This geopolitical opposition was utilised by Ukrainian feminists to influence gender-transformative changes, presenting gender equality and LGBT+ rights as elements of European values. In parallel, women's active participation in volunteering, including military volunteering, led to significant gender changes in the social, military and political spheres, giving rise to an influential public feminist debate. Until 2022, feminist marches and LGBT+ Pride events were regularly held in various cities. Efforts by feminists and women's organisations, the visibility of new women leaders and the pro-European geopolitical direction alongside commitments to international partners motivated the state to implement emancipatory policies (e.g. the introduction of electoral gender quotas) and fostered slow but steady progress towards gender equality in public opinion.

The full-scale invasion in 2022 marked a new stage of Russia's war against Ukraine, characterised by massive destruction, the occupation of significant territories, the conscription of large numbers of civilian men into the army, the forced displacement of people to other regions of Ukraine and abroad, constant terror in Ukrainian cities through missile strikes and the destruction of energy infrastructure, leading to power outages. By the degree of its impact, Russia's full-scale war from 2022 to 2024 exacerbated typical gender issues and created new ones: the growth of GBV; CRSV; the increased burden of reproductive work on women; a deepening feminisation of poverty; an increase in the share of vulnerable groups of women (e.g. widows and single mothers); a predominant share of women with children among war refugees; an increasing burden on feminised fields of employment (education, health care, social work); as well as a decrease in the political and expert visibility of women. However, the mere existence and number of these issues do not indicate a "backlash". As of December 2024, Ukrainian society and the state responded to war-related problems in an emancipatory manner, as detailed in Section 3. A possible explanation for the absence of gender backlash may be that the invasion has had a contradictory impact on the opportunities for feminism to influence gender-transformative changes. It reinforced gender stereotypes about "traditionally male" spheres, with experts noting a decreased influence of women in decision-making due to the perception of war as a "male domain". Women's organisations had to shift their focus to emergency issues, prioritising survival over strategic development and relegating some topics. On the other hand, the crisis has necessitated the optimal use of human resources in the military and economic sectors, creating a "window of opportunity" that promotes the inclusion of more women in "traditionally male" professions. The relocation of millions of Ukrainian women abroad and their exposure to more egalitarian values may lead to the popularisation of feminist ideas in the long term. The other influencing factors utilised by feminists since 2014 remain the same but have grown even stronger: Ukraine's aspiration for European integration, the desire to distance itself from Russia's "traditional values", and the demands of donors and international partners. These opposing tendencies coexist, overlap and conflict with each other, potentially leading to uncertain outcomes that heavily depend on the duration of the war and its eventual outcome.

7.1 Topics that require additional research

One of the limitations of the study is that it concerns a society in an ongoing war with a high dynamic of unpredictable social changes. The full-scale invasion has created a vast array of gendered experiences for large groups of the population, such as the conscription of predominantly male civilians into the army and the emigration abroad of predominantly women. However, a closer look at these trends challenges the simplified gender division of men as “defenders” and women as “those being defended”. Not all men serve in the army, and those who do not often face a crisis of patriarchal masculinity. The number of disabled veterans is increasing, while the infrastructure in Ukraine remains inadequate for people with disabilities, turning their partners into care providers and, in cases of severe disability, breadwinners. Meanwhile, the proportion of women serving in the professional military is increasing, and a significant number of women are actively engaged in volunteer efforts to provide for military needs. The lack of data on emerging trends and problems poses a certain challenge for the feminist movement, which is aimed at advocating for women’s rights not only reactively, but also proactively. The feminists interviewed articulated a number of topics that they considered to be relevant in the context of war. They **require additional research** on the dynamics of their changes need to be tracked. Among them are the following:

- 1) The topic of **women’s political participation and women’s influence on political decisions** was articulated by many interviewees. Meanwhile, it requires tracking, because it is unknown when and under what circumstances elections of what level will be held. In particular, a large number of forcibly displaced people abroad – the vast majority of whom are women – may jeopardise their ability to vote in the absence of technical conditions for holding elections in foreign polling stations designed for a large number of voters. The issue of the residency requirement, which in national electoral legislation is expressed in the requirement for a candidate for people’s deputies to have lived in the territory of Ukraine for the past five years, is also debatable. This may become a challenge for women who were forcibly displaced abroad due to a full-scale war.
- 2) **Changes in the labour market**, the scale of which is still difficult to assess due to the limited data, including state statistics on the state of economic activity of the population and its gender dimensions, the gender pay gap. The topic of attracting women to “male professions” was articulated by many interviewed feminists. It is difficult to assess the scale and sustainability of these changes: Will these positions of women in the labour market be preserved after the end of the war and the demobilisation of men? Will this lead to a transformation of working conditions and gender-responsive policies in the workplace? How will this affect the gender pay gap? We can also expect a deterioration in the situation of women employed in highly feminised sectors of the economy (health care, education, social protection, etc.) due to cuts in state and local budget spending on these areas and the expected neoliberal reforms of post-war reconstruction. In addition, together with the increase in the burden of many women with care work during this period, as well as their significantly lower representation in high-wage sectors (e.g. in the security and defence sector), the war may lead to a deepening of the gender pay gap, which in 2021 was 18.6%.
- 3) From time to time, opinion leaders express views on the possible **mobilisation of women**. This topic is not articulated by Ukrainian feminism as relevant or threatening, and as of now there are no signs of implementing such a policy; at the same time, changes may depend on further developments on the front.
- 4) The war emphasises the role of men as defenders, yet not all men – and not even the majority – are fighting. The **masculinity** of those who are not at the frontlines – whether they have legally or illegally left the country or are avoiding military mobilisation – **experiences a crisis**.

- 5) Some of the feminists interviewed expressed concern about a **possible conservative backlash** and, in particular, **restrictions on women's reproductive rights** in order to demographically restore the country. As of now, there is no reason to consider these threats real but the feminist movement has a **proactive position** on this issue.
- 6) The war and the humanitarian and socio-economic crisis it has caused, the shortage of state resources for social protection and the possible consequences of the expected neoliberal reforms of post-war development may negatively affect women (elderly single women, single mothers and mothers of children with disabilities), as well as deepen the **feminisation of poverty**, since women more often than men belong to socially vulnerable groups and their well-being depends more on social security.
- 7) The war has created **new groups in society, each with different experiences**. Refugees abroad, IDPs, residents of frontline areas and residents of occupied territories have unique experiences, and the gender dynamics of these groups require further research.

7.2 The key takeaways

The impact that feminist perspectives and actions have on gender-transformative changes in Ukraine can be summarised in the key takeaways.

Windows of opportunity

- European integration processes and international commitments made by Ukraine on gender equality are key factors in shaping the country's approach.
- Opposition to the ideology of the "Russian world", with its emphasis on "traditional values", can be leveraged to further popularise gender equality and LGBT+ rights as European values.
- Developed legislation on gender equality; state policy and strategies on gender equality in various areas ensures that gender equality is addressed in multiple sectors, providing a framework for progress.
- The war and ongoing crisis present new opportunities for women to enter traditionally male-dominated fields, encouraging flexibility in gender role distribution and driving the search for more adaptable solutions in response to changing circumstances.

Hindrances

Attitudes towards feminism in Ukraine have become more favourable among highly educated urban women, though conservative views remain prevalent, particularly in rural areas. Stereotypes and biases remain as fundamental barriers to gender-transformative changes across various sectors.

We believe that:

- Many women and men perceive gender inequality as a non-urgent issue in modern society.
- For many women, engaging in politics, civic activism or business activities presents a double burden, as the normalisation of women's public roles is not matched by simultaneous changes in the division of care work and societal expectations regarding women's roles as mothers.

- Widespread public prejudices against feminism persist, often associating it with movements such as Femen or with radical feminism.
- Women's organisations engaged in feminist activities do not always explicitly identify as feminist organisations, and political leaders and public figures often avoid associations with feminism.

Levers and strategies

Feminist organisations and activists could strengthen the influence of feminism on state policies and social change by using the following levers:

- Humanitarian work with women, such as IDPs, can serve as an entry point to raise their awareness of feminist issues.
- It is important to appeal to the requirements of European integration and the state policy on gender equality when communicating with authorities.
- The European integration choice of Ukrainians should also be connected to the fact that anti-gender rhetoric is part of the "Russian world" in discussions with both authorities and society.
- Messages that resonate with the interests of a significant number of Ukrainian women – such as those related to unpaid care work, the low pay in care sectors and direct discrimination against women in the labour market – should be identified and prioritised.
- Feminism should take the next step from a movement that is focused on women's rights to a movement that views feminism as a worldview foundation for shaping broader social policies, guided by the principles of intersectionality and social justice for all, aiming to build a society based on human rights rather than the self-serving interests of privileged groups.
- Using public petitions and communication campaigns as tools in advocating for change.

Limitation of transformation and sensitive topics

The ongoing war, which includes terror against the civilian population, shelling, infrastructure destruction and widespread power outages across Ukraine, poses a serious obstacle to sustainable development. Continuous tension and heavy losses lead to significant exhaustion of both material and psychological resources among the population. Society, including feminists as part of it, is overwhelmed by challenges and has critically limited resources for political transformational activity. Irreversible losses among the population and the differences in experiences of various social groups – refugees abroad, IDPs, residents of frontline areas, residents of occupied territories, those who have fought and those who have not, and those with military family members versus those without – create a significant divide, hindering mutual understanding and consolidation for reform.

Even in the case of a ceasefire, Ukraine will remain under constant threat of renewed Russian aggression, which requires the integration of defence into all levels of life in the long term. This creates the need to focus not only on gender-responsive recovery and post-war reconstruction but also on gender-responsive defence in order to prevent the militarisation of society on patriarchal terms.

Domestic violence in military and veterans' families, sexual harassment in the army in the context of the heroisation of the military, criticism of sexism within the armed forces, gendered mobilisation and the new dynamics of gender privileges are sensitive topics that require great caution in their articulation.

7.3 Recommendations: main policy areas for feminist influence on gender-transformative changes

1. Enhancing the role of women in decision-making and public policy

- **Recommendation.** Promote the integration of women into decision-making processes at all levels (local, regional and national) during and after the war. Allocate the necessary resources, including human and financial, as well as instructions and education for local implementers to ensure the proper realisation of state gender equality programmes at the local level across different spheres.
- **Rationale.** The research shows that while legislative measures such as gender quotas are in place, implementation at the local level remains weak. There is an urgent need to strengthen women's presence in political and military decision-making to ensure that gender-transformative policies are realised beyond declarations.

Who:

- Governmental authorities: ministries, local and regional councils, and parliamentary committees responsible for gender equality.
- CSOs: women's rights groups and advocacy organisations that monitor and promote gender representation.
- Political parties: particularly those with mandates for social equality and democratic development.
- International organisations: UN Women, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and other institutions providing technical and financial support for gender equality.

2. Combating gender-based stereotypes and expanding educational efforts

- **Recommendation.** Implement public campaigns and educational programmes aimed at reducing deeply rooted gender stereotypes, especially in rural and conservative communities.
- **Rationale.** The findings highlight persistent traditional gender roles and stereotypes as key barriers to feminist progress. Educational interventions and media campaigns should focus on challenging these norms, promoting equality in the home, the workforce and public life.

Who:

- Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine: to integrate gender-responsive curricula into schools and universities.
- Ministry of Culture, mass media outlets and cultural institutions: to run public awareness campaigns and showcase narratives promoting gender equality.
- CSOs: to organise workshops, public discussions and grassroots campaigns, especially in rural and conservative communities.
- International donors: to fund and support educational and cultural projects on gender equality.

3. Supporting women's economic empowerment

- **Recommendation.** Develop targeted economic programmes to support women, especially those displaced or serving non-traditional roles during the war (e.g. in military or leadership

positions), by providing them with access to employment opportunities and financial independence.

- **Rationale.** The war has opened new opportunities for women to participate in traditionally male-dominated fields such as the military and other stereotypically “male” professions, yet structural barriers remain. Offering financial and professional support can further gender equity in these areas.

Who:

- Ministry of Social Policy: to design and implement targeted economic programmes.
- Private-sector employers: to expand opportunities and leadership roles for women, especially in “male” fields.
- CSOs and trade unions: to advocate for workplace equality and support women’s participation in the labour force.
- International financial institutions (e.g. World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development): to fund initiatives aimed at empowering women economically.

4. Addressing care work and infrastructure as a necessary component of economic empowerment and women’s rights

- **Recommendation.** Develop and invest in care work infrastructure that recognises and supports the value of caregiving roles, ensuring access to affordable and quality childcare, eldercare, and health care services.
- **Rationale.** The care economy plays a critical role in women’s economic empowerment, yet it remains undervalued and underfunded. The impact of war lies in the destruction of infrastructure, underfunding and the simultaneous increase in the number of people requiring care. By investing in care infrastructure, not only can women gain greater economic opportunities, but their rights and overall well-being can also be enhanced. Plus, reflecting on the relevance of both unpaid and paid care work highlights its essential role for society at large as crucial for the upbringing of new generations, as well as fostering social stability and resilience.

Who:

- Local and regional governments: to allocate budgets for care-related infrastructure and services.
- State institutions: to develop policies recognising care work as integral to economic development.
- CSOs: to advocate for care infrastructure investments and support caregivers.
- International development organisations: to provide funding and best practices for the reform of the care economy.

5. Ensuring gender-responsive recovery, post-war reconstruction and defence policies

- **Recommendation.** Incorporate a gender-responsive approach into all recovery and post-war reconstruction plans, ensuring that the needs of women and marginalised groups are prioritised in the rebuilding of infrastructure, social services and economic systems. Additionally, integrate gender-responsive defence strategies at all levels of society.

- **Rationale.** The research identifies recovery and post-war reconstruction as a critical opportunity for feminist and gender-transformative policies. Ensuring that women have meaningful participation in these processes is key to preventing a conservative rollback of gender equality. Even in the case of a ceasefire, Ukraine will remain under constant threat of renewed Russian aggression, which necessitates the integration of defence into all aspects of life in the long term. This underscores the importance of not only focusing on gender-responsive reconstruction but also on gender-responsive defence in order to prevent the militarisation of society along patriarchal lines.

Who:

- Government reconstruction agencies: to ensure gender considerations are included in rebuilding plans.
- Ministry of Defence and armed forces: to implement gender-responsive defence strategies and policies.
- International partners (e.g. NATO, EU): to provide guidance and ensure alignment with international gender norms in reconstruction and defence.
- CSOs: to monitor and advocate for gender-responsive approaches.

6. Addressing gender-based violence and legal protections

- **Recommendation.** Strengthen and expand legal frameworks to combat GBV, especially CRSV, and provide more resources for survivors, including legal, psychological and social support services.
- **Rationale.** The war has exacerbated issues of sexual violence and GBV, with insufficient state capacity to address these crises. Legislative and policy measures need to be enforced, with additional resources allocated to protect vulnerable populations.

Who:

- Ministry of Justice and law enforcement agencies: to enforce and strengthen legal frameworks for combating GBV.
- Health care and social services: to provide psychological and social support for survivors.
- CSOs and crisis centres: to assist survivors with immediate and long-term needs.
- International organisations (e.g. UNFPA, World Health Organization): to provide expertise, funding and resources for addressing GBV and CRSV.

7. Leveraging international partnerships for feminist policies

- **Recommendation.** Engage more actively with international donors and organisations to sustain funding and support for feminist initiatives, focusing on long-term partnerships that align with Ukraine's specific gender-equity challenges.
- **Rationale.** International support has been vital for feminist initiatives in Ukraine, especially in areas such as the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Sustained engagement will help Ukrainian feminist movements maintain momentum in advancing gender equality, even under war conditions.

Who:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs: to build and maintain international partnerships focused on gender equality.
- Donor organisations (e.g. USAID, EU programmes): to provide financial and strategic support for feminist initiatives.
- International CSOs: to collaborate on projects and share best practices for feminist advocacy.
- Ukrainian feminist organisations: to engage with donors and coordinate international projects.

8. Intersectionality and inclusivity: feminism as a comprehensive policy for change

- **Recommendation.** Promote intersectional and inclusive feminist policies that address the diverse needs and rights of various groups, including LGBT+ individuals and marginalised communities, ensuring that all voices are represented in feminist discourse and activism.
- **Rationale.** Intersectionality is essential for understanding the complexities of gender inequality and the varied experiences of women and marginalised groups. By adopting inclusive practices and policies, feminist movements can address the unique challenges faced by different identities, creating innovative policy approaches aimed at ensuring the rights and opportunities of individuals.

Who:

- Ministry of Social Policy: to ensure inclusivity in national gender equality policies.
- LGBT+ and minority rights organisations: to advocate for intersectional approaches.
- Feminist organisations: to include diverse voices in their advocacy and policymaking efforts.
- Education, cultural institutions and media: to promote intersectional narratives and inclusive practices.
- Donors and international human rights organisations: to support local efforts and ensure alignment with global standards.

9. Provide necessary support for feminist organisations

- **Recommendation.** Secure contextually relevant funding for feminist organisations and reduce bureaucratic barriers. Create opportunities to continue strategic work on influencing gender-transformative changes while providing emergency humanitarian aid and addressing gender issues caused by the full-scale invasion (including burnout prevention, networking and advocacy events). Advocate for the urgency of women's issues during the war.
- **Rationale.** The war has intensified challenges for feminist organisations, including addressing humanitarian issues, supporting vulnerable women and countering reduced female influence in political decisions. It also involves advocating for gender-responsive approaches in recovery, promoting Ukraine's feminist interests internationally and emphasising that women's issues cannot be postponed. Additionally, limited funding and donor bureaucracy pose significant barriers.

Who:

- Feminist organisations: to continue strategic work and provide humanitarian aid while addressing gender issues.
- Government bodies (e.g. Ministry of Social Policy): to allocate funding and remove bureaucratic barriers.
- International donors: to provide contextually relevant financial support and ease bureaucratic processes.
- Local advocacy groups: to emphasise the urgency of women's issues during the war and ensure these are prioritised in recovery and post-war reconstruction.
- International human rights organisations: to support Ukraine's feminist movement in promoting gender-responsive policies and global advocacy.

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Annexes

Annex A: The survey questionnaire

Hello! We are reaching out to you on behalf of Gender in Detail. We are conducting a research project titled “Local Feminist Perspectives as Levers for Transformation for Sustainable Development in Ukraine in the Context of Comprehensive Defense”, aimed at understanding how war impacts feminist ideas and movements in Ukraine. There are no right or wrong answers to the survey questions. We simply want to know your personal opinion. We guarantee confidentiality – all your responses, along with those of other participants, will be used only after statistical processing and only in a generalized form.

S1. Do you consider yourself a feminist?

1. Definitely yes
2. Rather yes
3. Rather no
4. Not at all
5. Difficult to answer

S2. Please indicate the size of your settlement:

1. Village
2. Town
3. City
4. Difficult to answer

1. S3. In which settlement do you reside? (WRITE DOWN) _____

S4. Please tell me, how old are you?

1. 18-24 years
2. 25-39 years
3. 40-49 years
4. 50-59 years
5. 60+
6. Refuse to answer

S5. What is your level of education? (ONE ANSWER)

2. Secondary (secondary school)
3. Secondary technical / vocational (vocational school, technical school)
4. Higher (university, bachelor's, specialist's or master's degree)
5. Academic degree (candidate / doctor of sciences)

6. Other (WRITE DOWN)
7. Refuse to answer (DO NOT INCLUDE)

S6. Please indicate your gender:

1. Male TO S6a
2. Female
3. Other (WRITE DOWN) _____
4. Refuse to answer

S6a. It is extremely important for us to know men’s opinions on feminist positions and ideas of emancipation. Therefore, if you personally support the ideas of equal rights for people of different genders, we invite you to participate in a focus group discussion. If you are interested in such an opportunity, please leave your email or phone number, and we will contact you.

WRITE DOWN _____

S7. How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Full agreement	Rather agree	Rather disagree	Strongly disagree	Difficult to answer
Abortion is a basic right of women	TO S8	TO S8	TO S8	TO S8	TO S8
Household chores and childcare should be evenly distributed between both partners	TO S8	TO S8	TO S8	TO S8	TO S8
Women find it harder to build a career than men	TO S8	TO S8	END	END	END
A survivor is never to blame for being raped	TO S8	TO S8	END	END	END
Currently, men and women in Ukraine do not have equal opportunities to exercise their rights	TO S8	TO S8	END	END	END

S8. Which feminist stream do you consider yourself a part of (provided that within this survey, intersectionality and postcolonial approach are seen as tools that feminists of different streams can utilize)?

1. Liberal
2. Left (socialist)
3. Radical
4. Queer
5. Other (WRITE DOWN) _____
6. I do not affiliate with any specific stream on principle
7. I do not affiliate with any specific stream because I do not know the differences between them
8. Refuse to answer

THE RESEARCH UTILIZES THE CONCEPT OF FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES. UNDER SUCH PERSPECTIVES, THEMES, IDEAS, APPROACHES, PROPOSALS, AND DEMANDS OF FEMINISTS ARE CONSIDERED.

Q1. In your opinion, what PERSPECTIVES are included in the feminist agenda in Ukraine today? Choose the main ones. READ CAREFULLY WHAT WE INCLUDE IN THE CONTENT OF THE PERSPECTIVES IN BRACKETS, AS ONLY THE NAMES OF PERSPECTIVES WILL BE USED IN THE SURVEY LATER ON. CHOOSE UP TO FIVE OPTIONS THAT YOU CONSIDER MAIN.

1. **Economic rights of women** (equal pay for work, reducing horizontal and vertical segregation in the labor market, eliminating barriers to professional self-realization)
2. **Reproductive rights** (women's right to access abortion and reproductive and sexual health services; right to respect for one's own body and reproductive decision-making)
3. **Prevention and combating violence against women** (preventing violence against women in all its forms, including domestic violence, sexual violence, human trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence)
4. **Political and media representation, influencing decision-making** (greater representation of women in politics and government, as well as in leadership positions, in the media, etc.)
5. **Gender identity and sexual orientation** (ending discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation)
6. **Prevention and combating discrimination against women** (preventing discrimination against women; including sexism and harassment)
7. **Women's rights in the military** (various forms of violence and discrimination against women in the military, conditions of service in the military)
8. **Unpaid labor burden** (insufficient social infrastructure and services; reproductive and caregiving burdens; "second shift" as a life necessity, not a choice; women's volunteering as the "third shift")
9. **Social inclusion and empathy for women** (adaptation of displaced women; reintegration of refugee women currently abroad; return of refugees to Ukraine)
10. **Development and future of women** (comprehensive sexual education; gender-sensitive reconstruction; changing the culture of violence to a culture of consent)
11. **Combating sexual and reproductive exploitation of women** (prostitution, pornography, stripping, paid egg donation, surrogate motherhood)

12. NONE OF THE ABOVE OPTIONS

13. OTHER (WRITE DOWN) _____

14. Difficult to answer

Q2. Please consider the period BEFORE the full-scale invasion. What were the main feminist perspectives RELEVANT in Ukraine at that time? CHOOSE UP TO FIVE OPTIONS THAT YOU CONSIDER MAIN

1. Economic rights
2. Reproductive rights

3. Prevention of violence against women
4. Political and media representation
5. Gender identity and sexual orientation
6. Prevention of discrimination against women
7. Women's rights in the military
8. Unpaid labor burden
9. Social inclusion and empathy towards women
10. Development and future of women
11. Combating sexual and reproductive exploitation
12. NONE OF THE ABOVE
13. OTHER (WRITE DOWN) _____
14. Hard to answer

Q3. Please consider the MILITARY period (from 24.02.2022 until now). What are the main feminist PERSPECTIVES relevant in THIS PERIOD in Ukraine? CHOOSE UP TO FIVE OPTIONS THAT YOU CONSIDER MAIN

1. Economic rights
2. Reproductive rights
3. Prevention of violence against women
4. Political and media representation
5. Gender identity and sexual orientation
6. Prevention of discrimination against women
7. Women's rights in the military
8. Unpaid labor burden
9. Social inclusion and empathy towards women
10. Development and future of women
11. Combating sexual and reproductive exploitation
12. NONE OF THE ABOVE
13. OTHER (WRITE DOWN) _____
14. Hard to answer

Q4. Please consider the POST-WAR period (AFTER the end of the war). What are the main feminist perspectives that WILL BE relevant in Ukraine? CHOOSE UP TO FIVE OPTIONS THAT YOU CONSIDER MAIN

1. Economic rights
2. Reproductive rights
3. Prevention of violence against women
4. Political and media representation

5. Gender identity and sexual orientation
6. Prevention of discrimination against women
7. Women's rights in the military
8. Unpaid labor burden
9. Social inclusion and empathy towards women
10. Development and future of women
11. Combating sexual and reproductive exploitation
12. NONE OF THE ABOVE
13. OTHER (WRITE DOWN) _____
14. Hard to answer

Q5. How effective are the following channels and methods of influencing feminist PERSPECTIVES on society in the broad sense? (ONE CHOICE IN ORDER)

	Effective	Not effective	Hard to say
Media			
Social media			
Mass culture (music, cinema, advertising)			
School programs			
Legislation			
Statements and discourse of opinion leaders			
Educational events (trainings, lectures)			
Petitions			
Activism			

Q6. In your opinion, who overall supports, ignores, or opposes feminist PERSPECTIVES? (ONE CHOICE IN ORDER)

	Supports	Ignores	Opposes	Difficult to answer
The state				
Civil society				
Donors				
Employers				
Average people				
Women's rights activists				
Educational institutions				
Religious organizations				
Political parties				
Sexists				
Conservatives				

THE RESEARCH UTILIZES THE CONCEPT OF FEMINIST ACTIONS. UNDER SUCH ACTIONS, PROJECTS, INITIATIVES, PROGRAMS, AND CAMPAIGNS BY FEMINISTS, GOVERNMENTS, DONORS, AND EMPLOYERS ARE CONSIDERED.

Q7. In your opinion, which feminist ACTIONS are being implemented today? READ CAREFULLY WHAT WE INCLUDE IN THE CONTENT OF THE ACTIONS IN BRACKETS, AS ONLY THE NAMES OF ACTIONS WILL BE USED IN THE SURVEY LATER ON. CHOOSE UP TO FIVE OPTIONS THAT YOU CONSIDER MAIN.

1. **Activism and protests** (participation in public protests, marches, demonstrations, and actions, initiation and support of petitions to draw attention to gender inequality issues and demand changes in legislation and society)
2. **Information campaigns and educational projects** (awareness-raising campaigns on gender issues; lectures, trainings, and workshops on gender equality and women's rights)
3. **Political activism** (political activity at various levels: party activists, candidates for elective office, as well as lobbying for legislative initiatives in favor of women)
4. **Support for women's groups and initiatives** (support and cooperation with women's organizations and groups advocating for women's rights)
5. **Creation of women's support infrastructure** (daycares, shelters for victims of GBV, social services such as elderly care)
6. **Legal assistance and advocacy** (providing legal support to women facing gender discrimination, violence, war crimes, or other issues)
7. **Work with military personnel, veterans, and their families** (psychological and other work with veterans, their integration into society, support for widows and families of deceased military personnel)
8. **Support for vulnerable groups of women** (victims of domestic and gender-based violence, women in commercial sex work, women with HIV/AIDS)
9. **Support for refugees and internally displaced persons** (through political activism, volunteering in organizations, social support, protection of women's rights, and educational initiatives)
10. **OTHER (WRITE DOWN)** _____
11. **DON'T KNOW**
12. **DIFFICULT TO ANSWER**
13. **REFUSE TO ANSWER**

Q8. Which organizations, in your opinion, implement visible feminist ACTIONS?

1. **(WRITE DOWN)** _____
2. **DON'T KNOW**
3. **DIFFICULT TO ANSWER**
4. **REFUSE TO ANSWER**

Q9. In your opinion, for which period are the listed feminist ACTIONS more relevant?
(ONE CHOICE IN ORDER)

	Are relevant for each of the periods	Predominantly for the pre-war period	Predominantly for the wartime period	Predominantly for the post-war period	Are not relevant for any of the periods	Difficult to answer
Activism and protests						
Information campaigns and educational projects						
Political activism						
Support for women's groups and initiatives						
Establishment of support infrastructure for women						
Legal aid and legal protection						
Work with military personnel, veterans, and their families						
Support for vulnerable groups of women						
Support for refugees and displaced persons						

Q10. How much do feminist PERSPECTIVES and ACTIONS influence Ukrainian society and the state?

RANGE FROM 1 TO 10, WHERE 1 - HAS NO INFLUENCE, IS IGNORED AND 10 - HAS A COMPLETE INFLUENCE AND DEFINES SOCIETY'S LIFE AND STATE POLICY

1.....10

Q11. Will feminist PERSPECTIVES and ACTIONS lead to increased access for women to various services?

- 1. Definitely yes [TO Q11a](#)
- 2. Rather yes [TO Q11a](#)
- 3. Rather no
- 4. Definitely no
- 5. Difficult to answer

Q11a. ONLY Q11=1, 2 To what specific services can feminist PERSPECTIVES and ACTIONS lead to increased access for women? CHOOSE UP TO THREE OPTIONS YOU CONSIDER MAIN

1. **Social services** (information, counseling, support during difficult life periods)
2. **Psychological assistance** (help with stress management, relationship counseling, mediation)
3. **Legal assistance** (representation of interests, mediation, document preparation, legal cases)
4. **Material assistance** (access to necessary items, products, etc.)
5. **Educational services** (acquiring a new profession, enhancing knowledge and skills, adult education)
6. **Social (re)integration services** (social adaptation, supported living, shelter provision)
7. **Rehabilitation services for people with disabilities** (rehabilitation measures, physical support for people with disabilities, sign language translation)
8. **NONE OF THE ABOVE**
9. **OTHER (WRITE DOWN)** _____
10. **DON'T KNOW**
11. **DIFFICULT TO ANSWER**
12. **I DECLINE TO ANSWER**

Q12. To what infrastructure can feminist PERSPECTIVES and ACTIONS lead to increase women's access? CHOOSE UP TO THREE OPTIONS THAT YOU CONSIDER MAIN

1. Psychological offices
2. Legal offices
3. Kindergartens
4. Full-day/week schools
5. Spaces for adult education
6. Sports and healthy lifestyle facilities
7. Elderly care facilities
8. Shelters and support spaces
9. Cultural and creative spaces
10. **NONE OF THE ABOVE**
11. **OTHER (WRITE DOWN)** _____
12. **I DON'T KNOW**
13. **HARD TO ANSWER**
14. **I REFUSE TO ANSWER**

Q13. Think, please, exclusively about the LGBT+ community. Are contemporary Ukrainian feminist PERSPECTIVES and ACTIONS directed towards the listed areas? CHOOSE UP TO TWO OPTIONS YOU CONSIDER MAIN

1. **Fight for rights** (advocating for equal rights in marriage, partnership, adoption, and protection against workplace discrimination and discrimination in other areas of life)
2. **Solidarity and support** (supporting and participating in protests, marches, and campaigns for equality and justice)
3. **Changing cultural norms** (promoting changes in cultural norms and practices that may be harmful to the LGBT+ community and promoting the creation of a more open, accepting, and inclusive society)
4. **Intersectionality** (considering intersectionality in their work, meaning the interconnectedness of gender issues with other aspects of identity, including race, class, ethnicity, and other factors that may influence discrimination and oppression)
5. **NONE OF THE ABOVE**
6. **OTHER (WRITE DOWN)** _____
7. **DON'T KNOW**
8. **HARD TO ANSWER**
9. **REFUSE TO ANSWER**

Q14. In which social spheres are feminist PERSPECTIVES and ACTIONS most hindered? CHOOSE UP TO FIVE OPTIONS THAT YOU CONSIDER MAIN

1. Politics
2. Economics
3. Media
4. Family
5. Culture
6. Education
7. Medicine
8. Military
9. Security
10. Energy
11. Business
12. Civil society
13. NONE OF THE ABOVE
14. **OTHER (WRITE DOWN)** _____
15. **DON'T KNOW**
16. **HARD TO ANSWER**
17. **REFUSE TO ANSWER**

Q15. In which social spheres do feminist PERSPECTIVES and ACTIONS have the greatest impact? CHOOSE UP TO FIVE OPTIONS THAT YOU CONSIDER MAIN

1. Politics
2. Economics
3. Media
4. Family
5. Culture
6. Education
7. Medicine
8. Military
9. Security
10. Energy
11. Business
12. Civil society
13. NONE OF THE ABOVE
14. OTHER (WRITE DOWN) _____
15. DON'T KNOW
16. HARD TO ANSWER
17. REFUSE TO ANSWER

Q16. Do you belong to a feminist organization or initiative? (ONE ANSWER)

1. Yes, I belong [TO Q16a-Q16b](#)
2. No, I do not belong
3. Hard to answer

Q16a. Which of the listed feminist ACTIONS have you undertaken (or participated in) over the past two years? CHOOSE UP TO FIVE OPTIONS

1. **Activism and protests** (participation in public protests, marches, demonstrations, and actions, initiation and support of petitions to draw attention to gender inequality issues and demand changes in legislation and society)
2. **Information campaigns and educational projects** (awareness-raising campaigns on gender issues; lectures, trainings, and workshops on gender equality and women's rights)
3. **Political activism** (political activity at various levels: party activists, candidates for elective office, as well as lobbying for legislative initiatives in favor of women)
4. **Support for women's groups and initiatives** (support and cooperation with women's organizations and groups advocating for women's rights)
5. **Creation of women's support infrastructure** (daycares, shelters for victims of GBV, social services such as elderly care)
6. **Legal assistance and advocacy** (providing legal support to women facing gender discrimination, violence, war crimes, or other issues)

7. **Work with military personnel, veterans, and their families** (psychological and other work with veterans, their integration into society, support for widows and families of deceased military personnel)
8. **Support for vulnerable groups of women** (victims of domestic and gender-based violence, women in commercial sex work, women with HIV/AIDS)
9. **Support for refugees and internally displaced persons** (through political activism, volunteering in organizations, social support, protection of women's rights, and educational initiatives)
10. **OTHER** (WRITE DOWN) _____
11. **DON'T KNOW**
12. **DIFFICULT TO ANSWER**
13. **REFUSE TO ANSWER**

Q16b. Did your organization receive support from international funds or donors during the time of full-scale invasion? (ONE ANSWER)

1. Yes, received financial support TO Q17
2. Yes, received support in the form of training/consulting
3. No, did not receive
4. Other (WRITE DOWN) _____
5. Hard to answer

Q17. From which specific organizations or funds did you receive support?

1. WRITE _____
2. DON'T KNOW
3. HARD TO ANSWER
4. REFUSE TO ANSWER

Q18. Which organizations or funds hindered your activities?

1. WRITE _____
2. DON'T KNOW
3. HARD TO ANSWER
4. REFUSE TO ANSWER

The next stage of the research involves focus group discussions. If you're willing to participate and would like to share your thoughts more extensively, please leave your contact information:

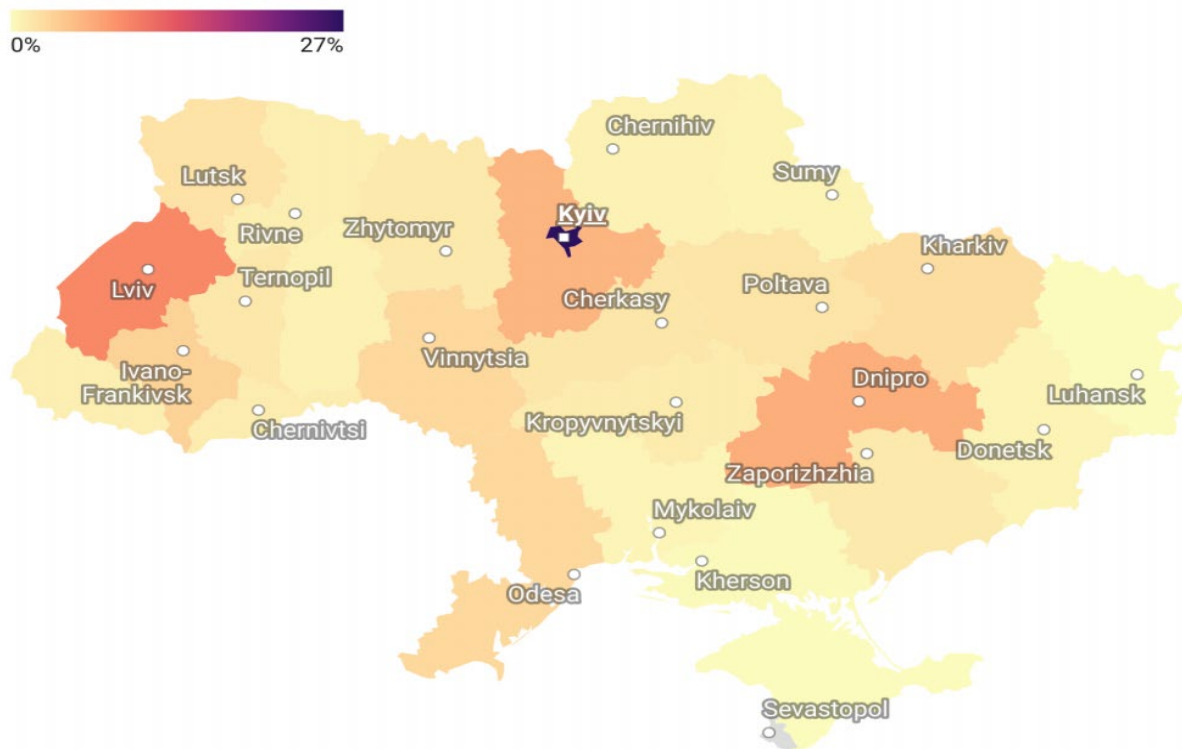
e-mail: _____

phone: _____

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us! They are extremely valuable to us!

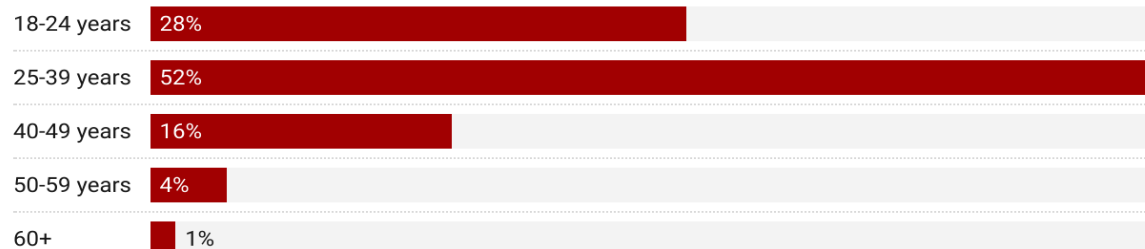
Annex B: Respondents' socio-demographic parameters

What region do you currently reside in?



N = 720 | n (Ukraine) = 599 (83% of sample) | n (abroad) = 121 (17% of sample)

How old are you?



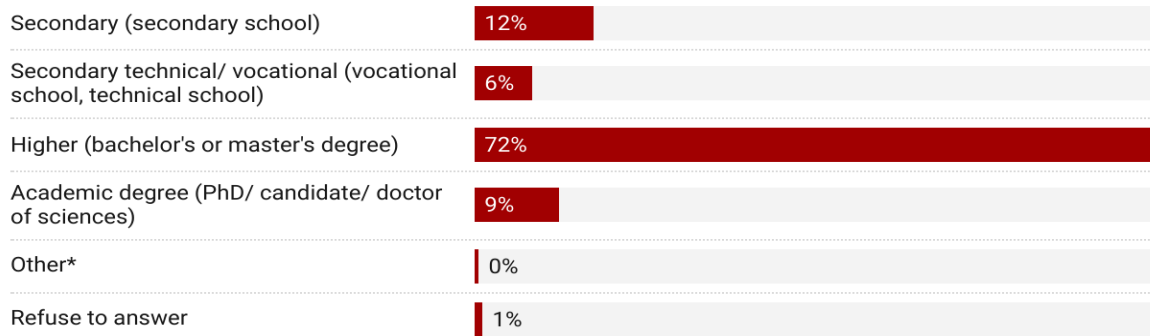
N = 720

Gender



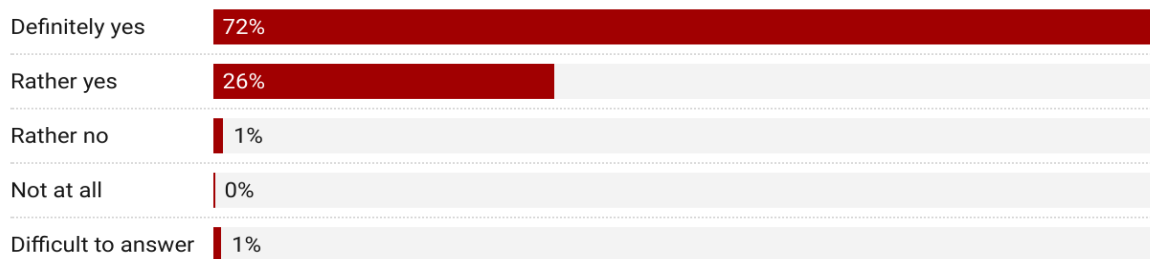
N = 720

What is your level of education?



N = 720

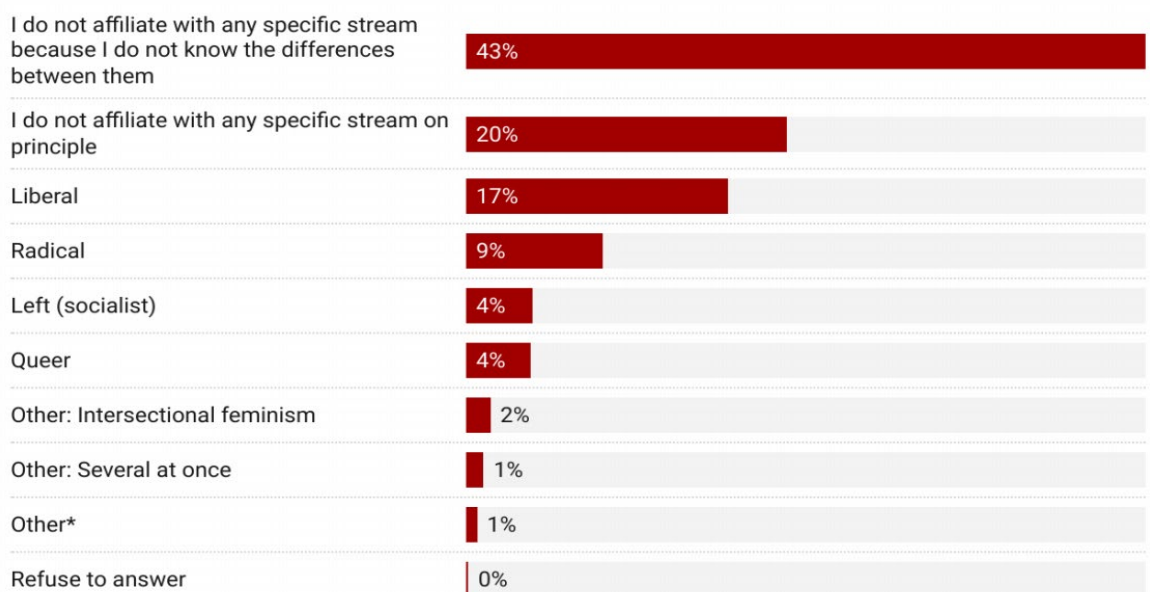
Do you consider yourself a feminist?



N = 720

Which feminist stream do you consider yourself a part of?

(provided that within this survey, intersectionality and postcolonial approach are seen as tools that feminists of different streams can utilize)



N = 720

Source: Authors, created with Datawrapper

Annex C: The interview guide

BLOCK 1. General Questions (for all interviewees)

1.1. Do you consider yourself part of a specific feminist movement?

(Comment: List feminist movements only if the interviewee asks: liberal, left (socialist), radical, queer, etc. Intersectional and postcolonial are considered approaches and methodologies rather than specific movements within this project.)

1.2. How would you generally assess the impact of feminism and feminist perspectives (ideas, approaches, proposals, demands from feminists) on the sustainable development of Ukrainian society?

(Comment: If the interviewee asks “By sustainable development, we mean meeting the current needs of society in a way that ensures its long-term stability and prosperity.”) If the interviewee expresses doubts, the question can be reformulated: What impact does feminism have on the development of Ukrainian society?

Follow-up questions:

1. In which areas is this impact most pronounced and visible?
2. In which areas is this impact the least noticeable?
3. Who supports feminist perspectives the most?
4. Who ignores or rejects feminist perspectives the most?

1.3. In your opinion, what issues are currently on the feminist agenda in Ukraine? (What are the problems, demands that Ukrainian feminism is articulating today?)

1.4. What actions are currently being taken to implement these feminist perspectives?

Follow-up questions:

1. Who is taking these actions?
2. What are the results of these actions?
3. Who or what hinders feminist actions?
4. What is the potential of these actions, given proper support? Who and how should provide this support?
5. Are there any examples of successful feminist actions that could be useful or scalable?

1.5. What perspectives are not included in this agenda or actions, but you think are important?

1.6. Has the war affected the ability of feminism and feminist perspectives to influence sustainable development in Ukrainian society? How?

Follow-up questions:

1. What are the main obstacles to this influence right now?
2. What opportunities for this influence exist now?

3. Does martial law and the general mobilization of men affect the status of women and the feminist movement?

1.7. If we think about post-war development and recovery, which feminist perspectives will remain relevant?

1.8. What can be done to strengthen the impact of feminist perspectives on the sustainable development of Ukrainian society? How can international organizations, donors, and governments be useful in supporting the influence of feminist perspectives on Ukraine's sustainable development and recovery?

BLOCK 2. Special Questions (depending on the interviewee's area of expertise or activity, clarified for individual interviews)

FINAL QUESTION: What would you like to add or say in the context of this conversation regarding our research topic, which focuses on the impact of feminism and feminist perspectives on the sustainable development of Ukrainian society?

Annex D: Detailed information on the distribution of informants by clusters

Clusters	Subclusters	n
Cluster 1. Feminist scholars	complex issues	2
Cluster 2. Specialized feminists	2.1. media	1
	2.2. lawyers	1
	2.3. historians	1
	2.4. military	1
	2.5. educators	1
Cluster 3. Feminists who work in national authorities or cooperate with authorities at different levels	2.1. national level authorities	0
	2.1. cooperate with national and international authorities	2
	2.2. cooperate with authorities at the national and local levels	1
Cluster 4. Leaders of NGOs	4.1. feminist	2
	4.2. LGBT+	2
	4.3. Roma	1
Cluster 5. Donors		1
Cluster 6. By ideological positions	4.1. the leftist	2
	4.2. radical	1
	4.3. queer	1
Total		20

Annex E: Guide for conducting focus group discussions

INTRODUCTION

To be sent with the invitation to participate.

Hello, my name is _____, and I represent the organization Gender in Detail.

First of all, I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in our project.

Today, we will be discussing questions about feminism in Ukraine.

A few important points before we begin:

We are interested in hearing your personal opinions; there are no right or wrong answers.

We will be recording our discussion to capture the essence of what is said accurately. However, your responses will remain strictly confidential.

In the study results, your information will be presented according to ethical standards and confidentiality principles. For instance, your name will not be mentioned in any citations; only generalized details, such as “female”, “region” or “age group”, will be used to ensure your response remains unidentifiable.

The discussion is expected to last about one hour.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.

FOR GROUPS WITH WOMEN AND MEN WITH EMANCIPATORY IDEAS: In addition to “feminism”, the phrase “or emancipatory ideas” will be added. If there is resistance to the term “feminism” at the start, we will use only “emancipatory ideas”.

Throughout this discussion, we use two key concepts:

FEMINISM – a movement aimed at achieving equality between men and women in all aspects of life, including rights, opportunities, access to resources, and power.

EMANCIPATORY IDEAS – concepts or views supporting equality and freedom for all people, regardless of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, etc.

I. INTRODUCTION & WARM-UP

Please share your name and a bit about yourself (profession, favorite book).

How long have you been interested in feminism (or emancipatory ideas)?

What does feminism (or emancipatory ideas) mean to you personally?

ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Thank you for sharing your experiences. Now, let's dive deeper into the topic of our study.

What perspectives (TOPICS, IDEAS, DEMANDS) are being promoted by feminists in Ukraine today?

Probe: Did these TOPICS, IDEAS, DEMANDS differ before the full-scale invasion?

What actions (PROJECTS, INITIATIVES, CAMPAIGNS) are feminists in Ukraine currently undertaking?

Probe: Did these PROJECTS, INITIATIVES, CAMPAIGNS differ before the full-scale invasion?

Moderator: After the responses, read the definition of "sustainable development".

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – meeting current societal needs in a way that ensures long-term stability and prosperity.

II. ATTITUDES TOWARD FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES AND ACTIONS

In your opinion, how relevant are feminist perspectives and actions for Ukraine?

Probe: What about for your region? Why?

Probe: How has the full-scale invasion by Russia affected this relevance? Provide examples.

What stereotypes exist about feminist perspectives and actions? What does your circle say about feminism?

What obstacles do you see for translating feminist PERSPECTIVES into successful ACTIONS?

Probe: What about in your region? Why?

How do feminist perspectives and actions impact your life and Ukrainian society during the war?

Probe: In which areas is this impact most noticeable? Why?

How much attention do you believe feminist perspectives and actions need from your community and society?

Probe: Is it enough for feminist organizations to address them alone? If not, who else should be involved?

Do you observe any changes or initiatives pushing feminist perspectives or actions forward? Provide examples.

Probe: How do you think the full-scale invasion by Russia has influenced this?

III. BEHAVIORS, ACTIONS, PRACTICES IN THE CONTEXT OF FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES AND ACTIONS

I would like to ask a few questions about your experience with feminism. Remember, you can share only the information you feel comfortable with or skip questions.

In your opinion, how important is it to take steps to implement feminist perspectives in post-war Ukraine?

Probe: What about in your region? Why is this important?

If you have any experience with feminist actions, please share it. What steps did you take and why?

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DISCUSSED THEIR EXPERIENCES:

Probe: Did anyone assist or support you? Did you share these actions on social media or elsewhere?

Probe: Did you interact with stakeholders (organizations, foundations, local authorities)?

What obstacles did you encounter in implementing feminist perspectives and actions? Describe these obstacles.

Probe: Do you think these obstacles will differ in post-war Ukraine?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Do you think feminist perspectives and women's rights will eventually be implemented in Ukraine? How about globally?

Thank you for this insightful discussion and for sharing so openly. I hope this conversation was comfortable for you. Thank you again for your time!