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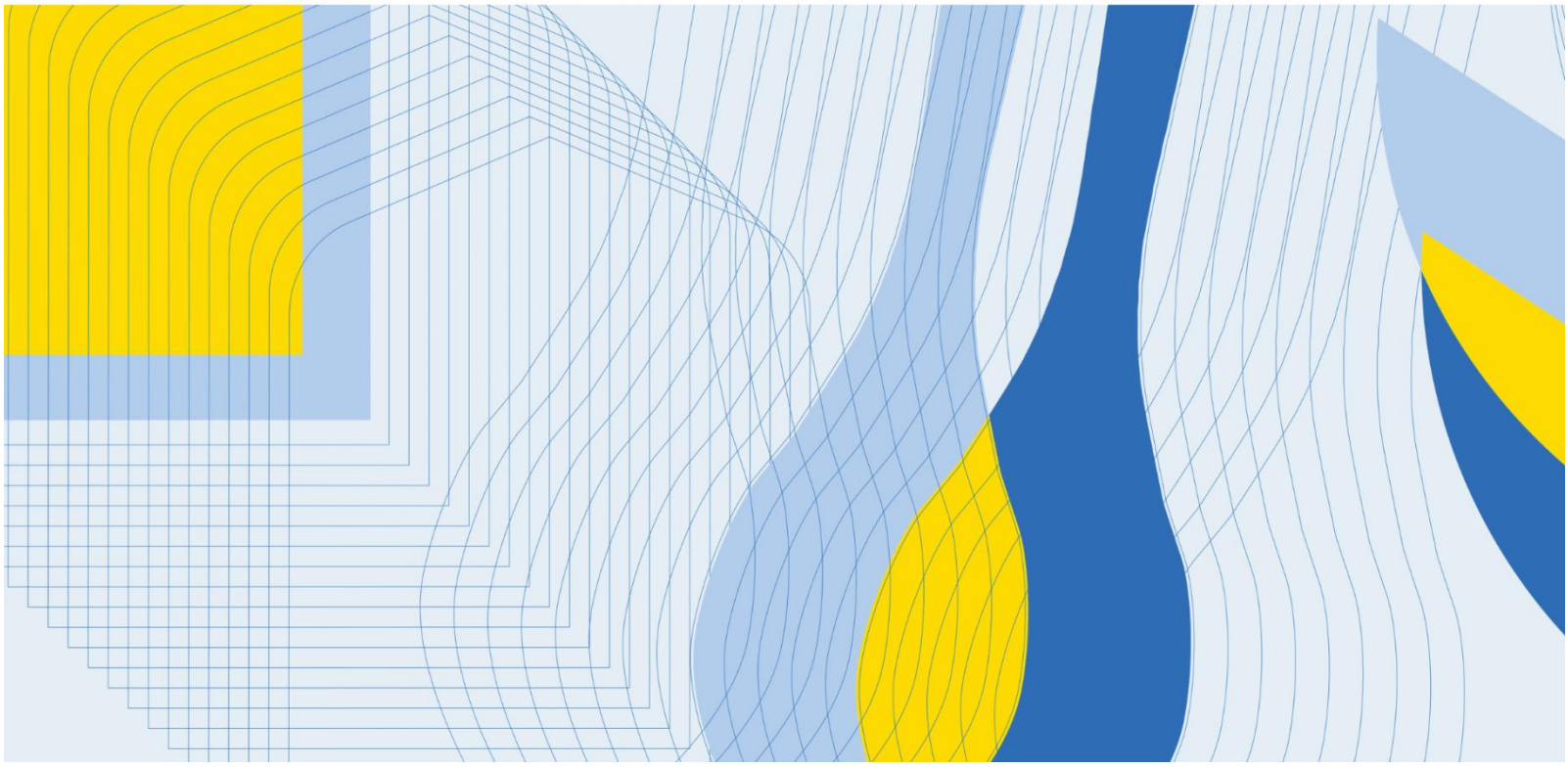

The Multi Donor Initiative Skills4Recovery

Solidarity Fund PL in Ukraine

Solidarity Fund PL

Skills4Recovery: Graduate Career Trajectories. Issue 2.

Report on the Results of the Survey of Graduates of Vocational Education and Training (VET) Institutions, Graduates of 2024

Kyiv 2026

Skills4Recovery: Graduate Career Trajectories. Issue 2. Report on the Results of the Survey of Graduates of Vocational Education and Training (VET) Institutions, Graduates of 2024. Kyiv, 2026. 135 p.

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This report was prepared within the framework of the Multi Donor Initiative Skills4Recovery, aimed at supporting the recovery and sustainable development of Ukraine through modernisation of education system, strengthening institutional capacity, and developing human capital. The study was conducted in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and is intended to provide an evidence base for improving vocational education and youth employment policies in the context of wartime and post-war transformations. The Solidarity Fund PL served as the main implementing organisation of this research.

The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the results of the national survey of graduates of vocational education and training institutions (VET) of 2024 and evaluates the effectiveness of the transition from education to the first job. The study combines descriptive data with aggregated analytical indicators measuring the alignment between vocational training and labour market conditions, making it possible to assess both the scale of employment outcomes and the quality of initial career opportunities.

Special attention is given to groups in situations of increased vulnerability, young people not in education, employment, or training (NEETs), and regional disparities. The report forms an analytical foundation for updating policies in the fields of vocational education and youth employment, outlining the key challenges and potential directions for improving the effectiveness of the VET system in the context of war and post-war recovery.

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List of Abbreviations

VET institution(s) – Vocational Education and Training institutions

VET – Vocational Education and Training

MESU – Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

USEDE – Unified State Electronic Database on Education

Content

List of Abbreviations 3
Foreword *5*
Acknowledgements *6*
Executive Summary *7*
General Conclusions *9*
I. Research Methodology *10*
1.1. General Characteristics of the Survey 10
1.2. Survey Sample 11
1.3. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents 12
1.4. Grouping of Graduate Occupations and Specialties by Occupational Field of Training 13
1.5. Interactive Dashboard 14
1.6. Indicators for Assessing the Effectiveness of Graduates' Transition to Employment 15
1.7. Specific Features of Time-Series Indicators in the VET Graduate Survey 15
II. Employment and Career Trajectories after Graduation *17*
2.1. Structure of Employment 17
2.2. Territorial Employment Trajectories 26
2.3. Duration and Methods of Job Search 34
2.4. Employment in the Acquired Profession and Stability of Employment 43
2.5. Wages 51
2.6. Employment and Needs of Vulnerable Groups 56
2.7. Graduates Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET Group) 62
2.8. Impact of the War on Employment 70
Conclusions to the Section *76*
III. Quality of Training and Labour Market Relevance *79*
3.1. Stability of Educational and Professional Choices among Graduates 79
3.2. Assessment of Learning Conditions 86
3.3. Use of Acquired Knowledge and Skills 91
3.4. Knowledge and Skills Lacking Among Graduates 95
Conclusions to the Section *99*
IV. Career Guidance Conclusions for Career Counselling *101*
4.1. Typical Employment Profiles of Graduates 101
4.2. Skills for Career Development 104
4.3. Typical Barriers in the Transition from Education to Employment 107
4.4. Recommendations for Career Counsellors 111
V. Aggregated Indicators and Dynamics of VET Effectiveness *115*
5.1. Indicators of Alignment Between Vocational Education and Labour Market Conditions 115
5.2. Key Trends in 2020–2025 121
5.3. Policy Implications for Education and Employment 125
References *127*
Annexes *128*
Annex 1. Questionnaire 128
Annex 2. Assessment of repeated choice of educational institution by region,% 134
Annex 3. Assessment of repeated choice of occupation by region, % 135

Foreword

This report has been prepared within the framework of the Multi Donor Initiative *Skills4Recovery – Strengthening Skills for Ukraine's Recovery*, implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and national partners. The initiative aims to strengthen human capital and enhance the resilience of the education system and labour market in the context of the ongoing war and post-war recovery. The report is based on the results of the second nationwide survey of VET graduates and is intended to support the development of policies aimed at modernising vocational education and training (VET) and promoting youth employment in Ukraine.

In the context of a full-scale war, structural changes in the labour market and unprecedented migration processes, the VET system remains one of the key institutions ensuring economic resilience and the reproduction of a skilled workforce. It is building the workforce that will drive the country's recovery – from critical infrastructure to the sectors that will determine Ukraine's competitiveness in the coming decades. At the same time, the VET system in Ukraine is undergoing a period of profound transformation.

In such a context, reliable information on how young people enter working life, how well vocational training corresponds to the needs of the economy, and what barriers arise on the path to the first job becomes particularly important. The 2024 nationwide survey of VET graduates makes it possible not only to record the results of individual institutions or regions, but also to identify systemic patterns that shape the early career trajectories of young people.

This report provides an analytical overview of the employment outcomes of VET graduates in 2024, combining statistical indicators, measures of the alignment between training and labour market demand, and integral assessments of effectiveness. The findings have practical implications for updating public policy in the fields of education and employment, developing regional programmes to support young people, and strengthening cooperation between policymakers, VET institutions and employers.

At a time when the country is mobilising all resources for victory and recovery, high-quality vocational education becomes a strategic investment in the future. This report aims to support decision-making that will ensure real opportunities for young people's development and provide Ukraine's economy with the skilled workforce necessary for modernisation and growth.

All survey results, including the full set of indicators as well as regional and occupational breakdowns, are available in an interactive analytical dashboard developed in Power BI, which allows filtering of data by region, occupation and other parameters: https://lnk.ua/wVljqv34P

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We express our sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the organisation and implementation of this study, and in particular:

To all 2024 graduates who agreed to participate in the survey and provided an unbiased assessment of various aspects of employment and education.

We would also like to thank to:

Iryna Shumik, Director General of the Directorate for Vocational Education of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine;

The heads and specialists of the Educational and Methodological Centres for Vocational Education and Training in the regions and Kyiv City;

The heads of educational institutions and group coordinators who ensured the participation of graduates in the survey;

All experts and programme managers of the Multi Donor Initiative Skills4Recovery.

Executive Summary

The survey of graduates of vocational (vocational and technical) education institutions was conducted on 27–31 October 2025. It was the fourth annual survey conducted with the support of SF PL in Ukraine (previous surveys included graduates of 2019, 2020 and 2022). The sample covered 24,910 graduates of 2024 from all regions of Ukraine. The margin of error at the national level is 0.68% (P = 99%), while regional margins range from 1% to 7%. The gender structure of the sample is balanced (52.2% men and 47.8% women). The majority of respondents are young people aged 18–20 (over 65%). Overall, 40.4% of graduates belong to socially vulnerable groups, including internally displaced persons, young people with disabilities, orphans, and graduates from low-income and large families.

At the time of the survey, 66.2% of graduates were employed. Among those employed, 62.7% had permanent formal employment, while approximately one third were engaged in informal, temporary, or otherwise unstable forms of work. The vast majority of employed graduates work in Ukraine (87%), while 13% are employed abroad, primarily in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Germany. Internal mobility remains moderate: more than three quarters of those employed in Ukraine work in the same region where they completed their studies.

The level of job–qualification match is relatively high: 43% of all graduates (65% among the employed) work in the occupation they acquired through vocational education. The main reasons for working outside the obtained profession include more attractive job offers, low wages in the trained occupation, and a limited number of vacancies. Entry into the labour market is generally rapid: more than 75% of employed graduates found their first job within three months after completing their studies. The most effective job-search channels are personal contacts, work-based learning and internships, and direct applications to employers, while the role of the public employment service and private agencies remains limited.

The share of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET) amounts to 14% of graduates. Approximately half of them belong to socially vulnerable groups, indicating the presence of structural barriers to labour market entry. At the same time, around 6% of all graduates form a NEET group without vulnerability markers, pointing to issues of occupational uncertainty and local labour market imbalances.

Despite the conditions of martial law, satisfaction with the choice of institution and occupation remains high: 85.8% of graduates would choose the same vocational education institution again, and 79.3% would choose the same profession. More than 60% of employed graduates report that they regularly or predominantly use the

competencies acquired in vocational education, while shortages of soft skills and digital skills are increasingly evident.

To assess the alignment of vocational education with labour market conditions, five integrated KPI indicators were applied in line with the CEDEFOP and ETF tracer studies methodology. In 2025, the basic indicator of local employment in the trained occupation (KPI-Standard) amounted to 33.7%, functional occupational match (KPI-Functional) to 36.7%, and the strictest indicator of full formal employment (KPI-Strict) to 22.4%. When interregional and international mobility is taken into account, the overall share of effective employment reaches 55.6%, indicating a generally high level of utilisation of graduates' professional competencies.

Trends observed over 2020–2025 demonstrate the structural resilience of the transition from vocational education to employment, a growing role of work-based learning as a key entry channel into the labour market, and a gradual increase in external labour mobility, which simultaneously poses risks for Ukraine's economic recovery.

All survey results, including the full set of indicators as well as regional and occupational breakdowns, are available through an interactive Power BI analytical dashboard with filtering options by region, occupation, and other parameters:

https://lnk.ua/wVljqv34P

General Conclusions

The survey results indicate that Ukraine's vocational education system demonstrates a significant degree of resilience. More than two thirds of graduates find employment within the first months after completing their studies, while around three quarters obtain jobs in their trained occupation or in related fields. This points to stable underlying demand for skilled workers and to the continued functioning of the labour market despite the security, economic and logistical constraints caused by the war. At the same time, employment trajectories largely depend on regional opportunities, the mobility of graduates and the specific characteristics of the occupational field.

Technical and engineering occupations provide the highest levels of formal employment and earnings, whereas occupations in trade, services and the beauty sector more often lead to short-term or lower-paid forms of work. Territorial mobility remains one of the key mechanisms of adaptation: some young people find employment in other regions or abroad, where nearly half of those employed receive wages significantly higher than the average levels in Ukraine.

Despite the overall inclusiveness of the VET system, graduates belonging to vulnerable groups more often face barriers when entering the labour market, are less likely to work in their trained occupation and face a higher risk of economic inactivity. A separate analysis of the NEET group shows that approximately 14% of graduates are temporarily outside both employment and education, and that this group includes not only vulnerable categories but also young people without clear indicators of vulnerability. This highlights the need to strengthen institutional support for young people in general during the transition from education to employment.

The applied composite indicators measuring the alignment of training with labour market conditions (KPI-Standard, KPI-Functional, KPI-Strict and migration-related KPIs) made it possible to quantitatively assess the effectiveness of VET institutions across regions and occupational fields, while also providing an analytical basis for comparisons and monitoring. The KPI analysis confirms the overall conclusion: the system demonstrates a certain level of adaptability, but persistent challenges – including regional disparities in opportunities, limited access to formal employment and unequal starting conditions – require strategic responses in public policy.

Overall, the data indicate that vocational education plays a key role in supporting Ukraine's recovery and economic resilience. The main challenge for the system is not merely ensuring employment as such, but creating conditions for stable, formal and occupation-relevant jobs, particularly for young people from vulnerable groups and in regions where labour market opportunities remain limited. The findings can serve as a basis for the development of targeted policies supporting youth employment, strengthening regional labour markets and further modernising vocational education in Ukraine.

I. Research Methodology

1.1. General Characteristics of the Survey

The survey of graduates of Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions was conducted from 27 to 31 October 2025. The survey was administered using a self-completed electronic questionnaire distributed by staff of the regional Educational and Methodological (Scientific and Methodological) Centres for Vocational Education and Training of Ukraine through group chats of the respective graduate groups. This approach made it possible to quickly reach graduates across all regions and occupational fields.

The electronic questionnaire included built-in mechanisms for logical control, including validation of response consistency, verification of the uniqueness of IP addresses, and monitoring of the time spent completing the questionnaire. The resulting dataset underwent an additional comprehensive verification and data-cleaning procedure, including the filtering of duplicate entries and checks for internal consistency of responses.

The final dataset includes only valid and unique questionnaires that meet all established data quality criteria.

The survey questionnaire included the following groups of indicators:

- socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, region, categories of vulnerability);
- educational trajectory (field of training, occupational profile);
- employment and working conditions (employment status and forms of employment, duration of job search, job search methods);
- alignment of occupation with training and employment stability;
- level and structure of earnings;
- assessment of acquired skills;
- assessment of the main components of training quality;
- the impact of the full-scale war on employment.

This set of indicators made it possible to comprehensively assess the labour market situation of graduates, the characteristics of their transition from education to employment, and the key barriers they encounter. The full text version of the survey questionnaire is provided in Annex 1.

1.2. Survey Sample

A total of 24,910 graduates participated in the survey, representing 31.26% of the total population of 2024 graduates (79,665 individuals). This number of responses ensures a high level of representativeness of the results at both the national and regional levels.

Tab. 1. Regional structure of the sample and representativeness parameters

Region	Number of respondents	Total number of graduates	Share of respondents (%)	Margin of sampling error (P=0.99%)	Margin of sampling error (P=0,95%)
Ukraine	**24910**	**79665**	**31,3**	**0,68**	**0,51**
Vinnytsia	2771	4200	66.0	1,43	1,09
Volyn	325	2311	14.1	6,63	5,04
Dnipropetrovsk	2467	6413	38.5	2,04	1,55
Donetsk	473	2177	21.7	5,25	3,99
Zhytomyr	856	2860	29.9	3,69	2,80
Transcarpathia	421	1765	23.9	5,49	4,17
Zaporizhzhia	880	3662	24.0	3,79	2,88
Ivano-Frankivsk	1881	3390	55.5	1,98	1,51
Kyiv	895	2572	34.8	3,48	2,65
Kirovohrad	1064	2121	50.2	2,79	2,12
Luhansk	221	769	28.7	7,33	5,56
Lviv	1305	6159	21.2	3,17	2,41
Kyiv city	72	5368	1.3	15,10	11,47
Mykolaiv	636	3154	20.2	4,57	3,47
Odesa	628	3153	19.9	4,66	3,54
Poltava	1004	3080	32.6	3,34	2,54
Rivne	1302	4140	31.4	2,96	2,25
Sumy	1237	2817	43.9	2,75	2,09
Ternopil	462	2263	20.4	5,35	4,07
Kharkiv	2753	5555	49.6	1,75	1,33
Kherson	744	1378	54.0	3,21	2,44
Khmelnytskyi	884	2692	32.8	3,56	2,70
Cherkasy	433	2868	15.1	5,71	4,34
Chernivtsi	505	1820	27.7	4,88	3,71
Chernihiv	691	2678	25.8	3,23	3,21

Overall, the regional samples of the survey are sufficient for analysis: in most oblasts the number of responses exceeds 600 questionnaires, while in larger regions it exceeds 2,000. Even in regions with the lowest coverage (Kyiv City, Volyn Oblast, and Luhansk Oblast), the sample size allows the identification of general trends.

In general, the survey sample is representative and methodologically reliable. Its size and structure allow for analysis at the national level, comparisons between regions,

occupational fields and forms of employment, among others. Potential limitations are related to varying levels of engagement among educational institutions, which do not significantly affect the validity of the overall conclusions. The collected data therefore provide a solid empirical basis for analysing employment outcomes, the quality of training and the alignment of graduates' skills with labour market needs.

1.3. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The gender and age structure of respondents is balanced and representative of VET graduates, with 52.2% men and 47.8% women, which corresponds to the traditional gender structure of the VET system.

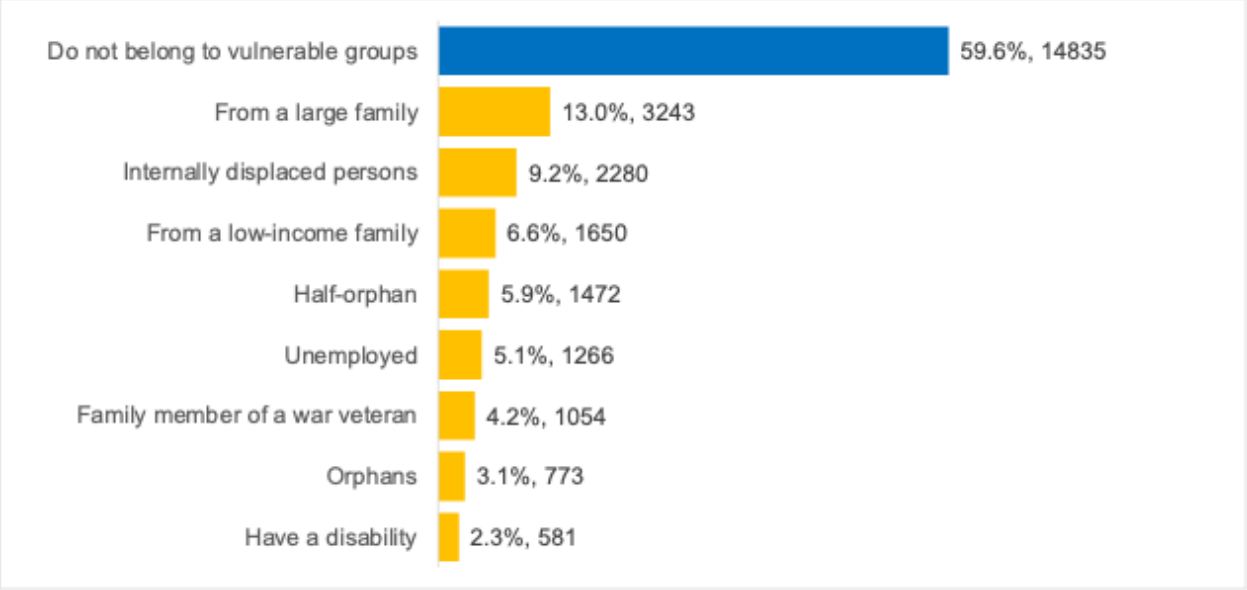
Tab. 2. Gender and age distribution of respondents

Gender/ Age of respondents	Number of respondents	Share in sample (%)
Total respondents	24910	100
Males	13015	52.2
Females	11895	47.8
Under 18 years old	1450	5.8
18 years old	2085	8.4
19 years old	8014	32.2
20 years old	6086	24.4
21 years old	2245	9.0
22 years old	987	4.0
23 years old and older	4043	16.2

The age composition of respondents shows the expected concentration within the typical age range for completing VET. The largest group consists of 19-year-old respondents (32.2%), followed by 20-year-olds (24.4%). The share of respondents younger than 18 is 5.8%, while graduates aged 23 and older account for 16.2% of the sample. This distribution allows for reliable comparisons across different age groups.

The distribution of respondents by indicators of social vulnerability shows that nearly 40% of graduates belong to one or more vulnerable groups, highlighting the importance of considering social barriers in the further analysis of employment trajectories. The largest categories include graduates from large families (13%) and internally displaced persons (9.2%).

Fig. 1. Respondents belonging to vulnerable groups



A notable share of respondents also comes from low-income families (6.6%) and includes half-orphans (5.9%). Particular attention should be given to groups facing significant barriers to employment, including young people with disabilities (2.3%) and orphans (3.1%). The observed structure of belonging to vulnerable groups has led to a separate analysis of their employment conditions in the relevant section of the report.

1.4. Grouping of Graduate Occupations and Specialties by Occupational Field of Training

The survey included graduates representing 730 unique occupations and specialties (in most cases combined qualifications). For analytical processing of the data, these occupations were aggregated into 12 occupational fields of training:

1. **Construction, Materials & Repair** (131 occupations, 2,480 graduates);
2. **Energy & Electrical Engineering** (74 occupations, 1,385 graduates);
3. **Beauty & Personal Care** (25 occupations, 2,074 graduates);
4. **IT & Office Support** (66 occupations, 2,021 graduates);
5. **Light Industry & Fashion** (20 occupations, 1,218 graduates);
6. **Metalworking & Machinery** (148 occupations, 4,668 graduates);
7. **Security & Safety** (18 occupations, 256 graduates);
8. **Agriculture & Green Economy** (64 occupations, 2,470 graduates);
9. **Trade & Customer Services** (22 occupations, 554 graduates);
10. **Transport & Logistics** (50 occupations, 807 graduates);
11. **Food Service & Hospitality** (73 occupations, 6,467 graduates);

12. **Creative, Arts & Media Occupations** (39 occupations, 510 graduates).

Assignment to a specific field was based on the principle of prioritising the first occupation in the combination of professions. This grouping makes it possible to logically structure the wide range of VET occupations and specialties, ensure comparability of data across regions, and simplify the interpretation of results. The classification is constructed taking into account the relatedness of occupations in terms of type of activity, skill requirements and labour market characteristics.

1.5. Interactive Dashboard

To enable deeper and more flexible analysis of the survey results, an interactive online dashboard has been developed. It allows users to explore employment distributions across different dimensions, including years, regions, place of employment, gender, occupation and belonging to vulnerable groups.

The interactive dashboard of the VET graduate survey results is an integral part of this report and serves as a supplementary tool for all stakeholders interested in more detailed analysis of the survey indicators.

Fig. 2. Screenshot of the main page of the interactive survey results dashboard

The dashboard is available at:https://lnk.ua/wVljqv34P

1.6. Indicators for Assessing the Effectiveness of Graduates' Transition to Employment

Within the framework of this study, a system of analytical indicators was applied to enable a comprehensive assessment of the transition trajectories of VET graduates into the labour market. In particular, a set of alignment-related KPIs was used to reflect the relationship between the occupation obtained during training and actual employment outcomes, including local, interregional and international employment. These KPI indicators are structured according to increasing levels of strictness, ranging from full alignment between occupation and formal employment to broader functional employment trajectories.

These analytical tools ensure comparability of data across regions and occupational fields. A detailed methodological description of the alignment KPIs and the logic of their construction is presented in Section V.

1.7. Specific Features of Time-Series Indicators in the VET Graduate Survey

The survey of vocational education and training graduates has been conducted annually by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in cooperation with partners since 2020. The aim of the study is to collect data on employment outcomes, labour market trajectories, the perceived quality of training, and the demand for specific occupations. The survey is carried out through an online questionnaire targeting graduates of the previous academic year (6–12 months after graduation), with participation on a voluntary basis. Respondents are typically recruited through group chats of the respective graduate cohorts.

The basic methodology for conducting the VET graduate survey was developed within the EU4Skills programme component implemented by the Solidarity Fund PL, with the participation of international and national experts and taking into account both best European practices and the national context of Ukraine.

Tab. 3. Methodological features and changes across the VET graduate surveys, 2020–2025

Year	Regional coverage	Sample size	Key features	Role in time comparisox
2020	7 oblasts (pilot)	8755	First pilot wave; testing of the questionnaire and data collection procedures	Used in the "pilot trend" (together with 2021)
2021	10 oblasts (pilot)	11787	Expanded geographic coverage; refined questionnaire; improved sample control	Used in the "pilot trend"
2022	Survey not conducted due to the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine			

2023	All oblasts	1851	Interruption due to wartime circumstances; small sample; uneven representation	Not used in the main comparisons
2024	All oblasts	18798	Full national coverage; updated questionnaire; standardised weightingя	Main wave for constructing the national trend
2025	All oblasts	24910	Full coverage; expanded set of questions (career guidance, skills)	Used together with 2024

Despite differences in the sample and methodology across individual waves, the accumulated dataset makes it possible to identify general patterns regarding the employment situation of graduates and the structural characteristics of their transition to the labour market. However, methodological and sampling differences between years do not allow for the construction of fully comparable annual trends. For this reason, the analysis of data from previous survey waves in this report is used primarily to describe the broader context, while the main body of results is based on the most comprehensive and methodologically consistent surveys conducted in 2024 and 2025.

In view of these limitations, the dynamic series should be interpreted as an indicative medium-term reference rather than as a statistically comparable time series. Further accumulation of data will make it possible to establish a comprehensive national monitoring system and enable more in-depth analysis.

Extended options for viewing comparative indicators for 2024–2025 are available in the interactive survey results dashboard at:https://lnk.ua/wVljqv34P

II. Employment and Career Trajectories after Graduation

The transition of VET graduates from education to their first job is one of the key indicators of the effectiveness of the VET system and its alignment with labour market needs. The structure of this section consistently explores different aspects of this transition – from basic employment indicators to the analysis of employment stability, distribution across occupations, geographic mobility, and the impact of the war on youth employment patterns.

The section presents a multidimensional analysis of the labour market integration of graduates, highlighting its structural characteristics and providing a comprehensive picture of the conditions and challenges young people face when entering the labour market in 2024–2025.

2.1. Structure of Employment

The labour market situation of graduates one year after completing their studies shows that the transition from education to work occurs unevenly and follows several typical entry patterns. A substantial share of young people enter the labour market immediately, others combine employment with further education, while some groups face difficulties in finding work.

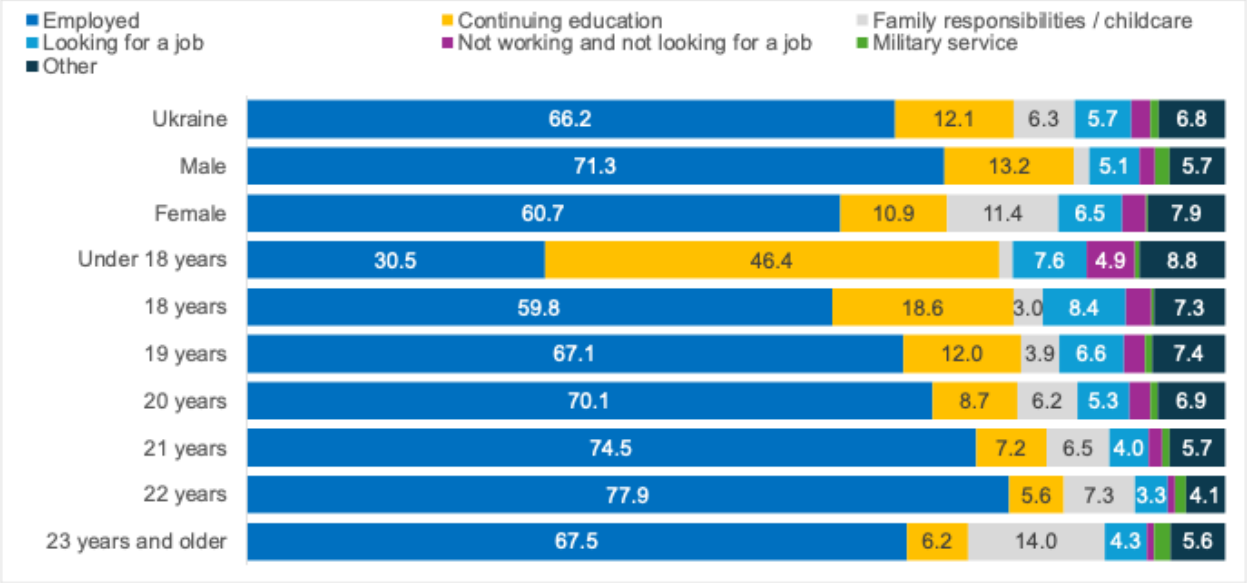
Overall, the labour market integration of young people after VET is relatively successful, although it demonstrates clear gender, age and regional differences.

In general, the data indicate a relatively high level of integration of young people into the labour market. The overall employment rate at the national level stands at 66.2%. However, this aggregate indicator conceals significant differences that become visible when analysed across socio-demographic, regional and occupational characteristics of graduates.

Clear differences are observed in the comparison of employment rates between men and women. Among men, the employment rate reaches 71.3%, which exceeds the corresponding figure among women (60.7%). Women are significantly more likely to be engaged in household responsibilities (11.4% compared with 1.6% among men), which affects their actual participation in the labour market. The age structure shows a gradual transition from education to employment. While fewer than one third of graduates younger than 18 report having a job (30.5%), this figure increases to 74–78% among

those aged 21–22. At the same time, among older age groups the share of individuals engaged in household responsibilities also increases, reflecting changes in family circumstances and a temporary choice of economic inactivity.

Fig. 3. Employment status by gender and age, %

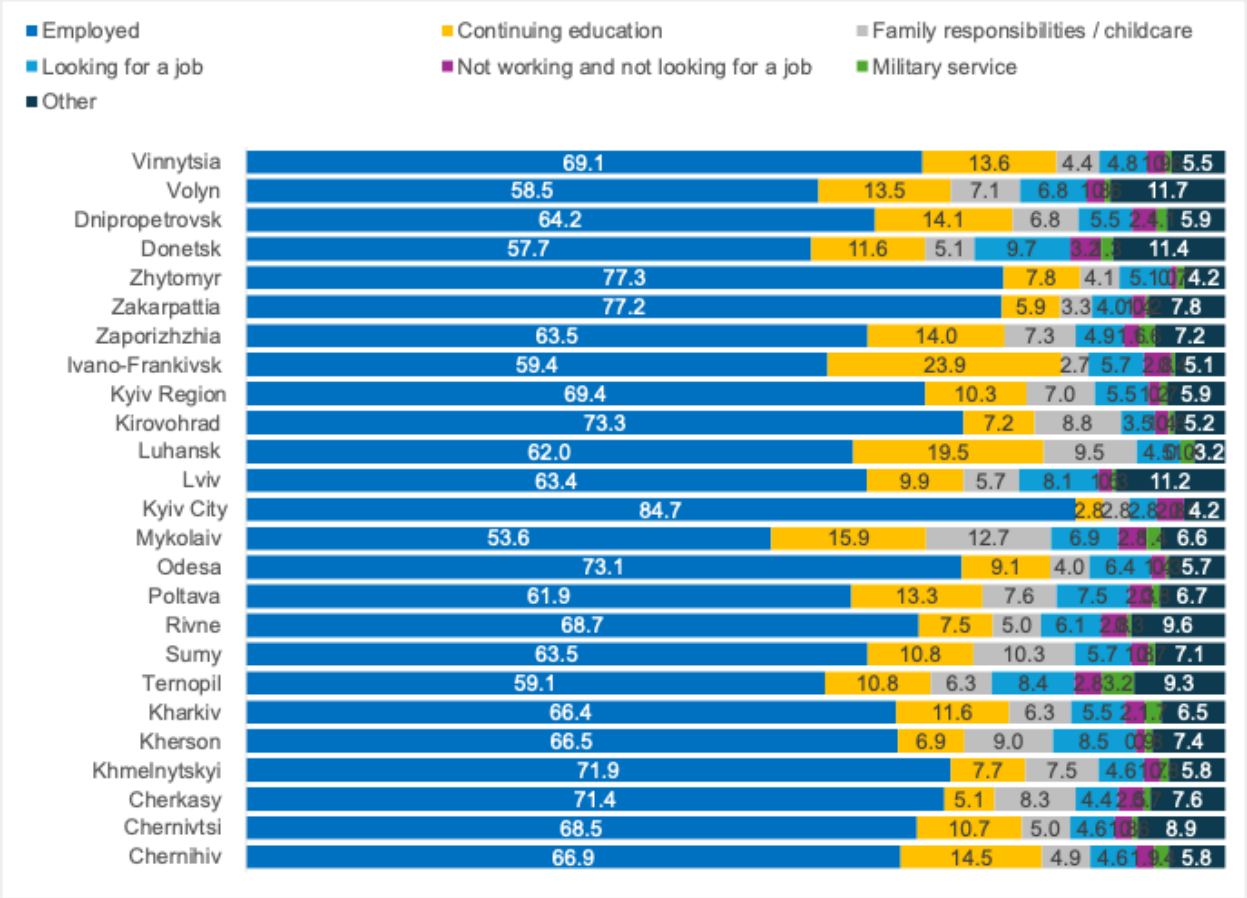


Overall, more than 12% of graduates in Ukraine continue their education, forming a distinct educational trajectory. The highest share of graduates continuing their studies is observed among those younger than 18 years (46.4%). A noticeable share of graduates (5.7%) are actively seeking employment. The proportion of young people who are neither working nor looking for work is relatively small (2%), but it is concentrated mainly among the youngest respondents.

Regions affected by the war demonstrate higher shares of unemployment, continued education and family-related inactivity, indicating disruption of local labour markets.

The regional distribution also reveals significant contrasts. The highest employment levels are observed in Kyiv city (84.7%) and in several oblasts of central and western Ukraine – Zhytomyr, Zakarpattia and Kirovohrad (over 72%). By contrast, in Mykolaiv, Donetsk and Volyn oblasts, this indicator does not exceed 58–60%. In regions that have experienced the most severe destruction or are located close to the frontline, the share of those seeking employment or experiencing temporary inactivity increases, as does the share of those engaged in household activities. This indicates the direct impact of wartime conditions on youth employment opportunities.

Fig. 4. Employment status by region, %



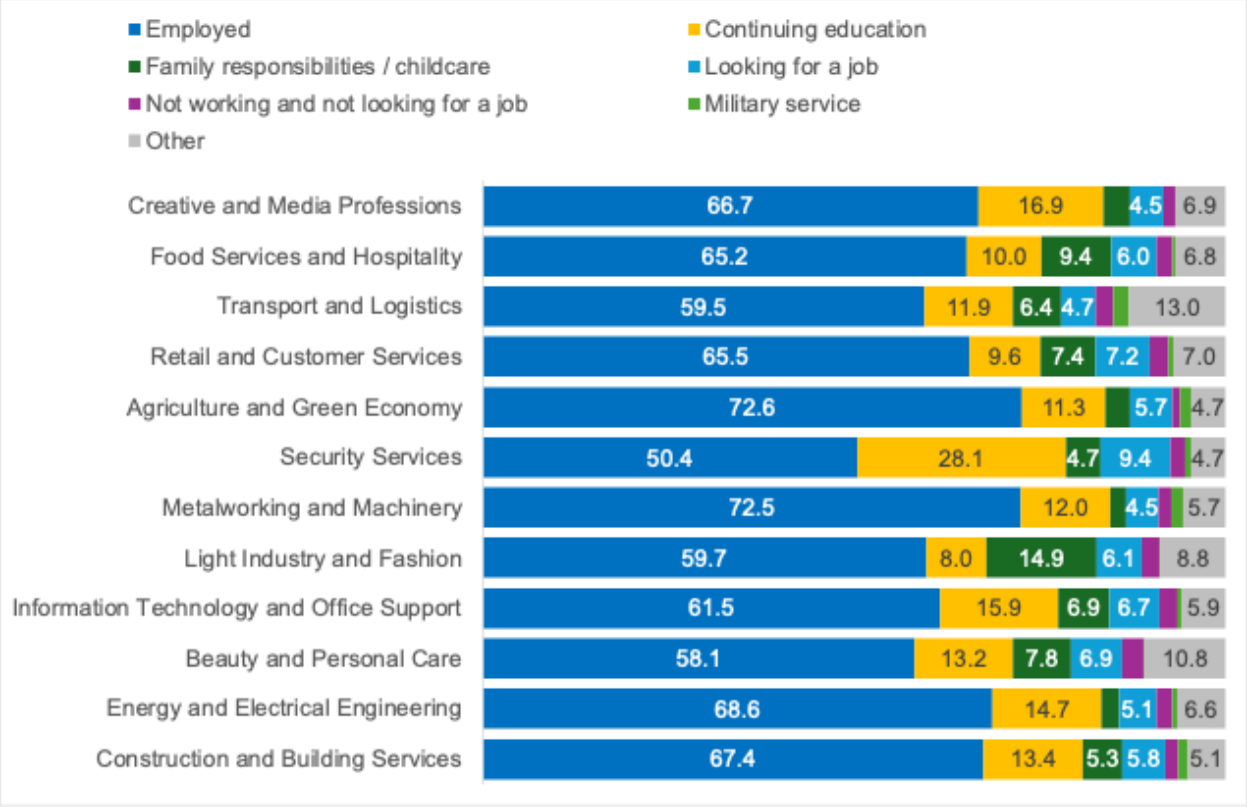
Other employment statuses in the regional dimension demonstrate even greater differentiation. The share of young people who continue their education ranges from 2–6% in Kyiv and Zakarpattia to almost 24% in Ivano-Frankivsk oblast. In several southern and eastern regions (Kherson, Mykolaiv and Donetsk oblasts), noticeably higher shares of graduates report being engaged in household responsibilities (9–13%), which may be related to forced changes in households, loss of place of residence or the temporary departure of family members.

The share of graduates who are seeking employment is most common in the western regions – Volyn, Ternopil, Lviv, as well as Donetsk oblast (8–10%), indicating a local shortage of job opportunities or a high level of competition. At the same time, the indicator “not working and not seeking employment” remains low in most regions. However, its increase in Khmelnytskyi, Poltava and Chernihiv oblasts reflects different patterns of adaptive behaviour among young people. The category “other” in several regions (Lviv, Volyn and Donetsk oblasts) approaches 10–11%, capturing temporary migration, seasonal employment or non-standard labour trajectories.

From a professional perspective, the strongest labour market entry is demonstrated by graduates of technical and engineering fields: agriculture and green economy (72.6%), metalworking and machinery (72.5%), energy and electrical engineering (68.6%), and construction (67.4%). These are fields characterised by stable demand, opportunities for rapid employment and lower competition. Less favourable results are observed among service-sector occupations: beauty industry (58.1%), light industry (59.7%), and security and safety (50.4%). Graduates from these fields more often experience delayed employment or transition to other types of activity.

The distribution of other statuses also varies significantly depending on the professional field. The share of those continuing education is highest in areas with stronger educational pathways or a creative component – IT and office support (15.9%), creative and media professions (16.9%), and security and safety (28.1%). In light industry and beauty-related professions, a larger share of respondents report engagement in household responsibilities (7–15%), which likely reflects gender-specific employment patterns and an earlier transition to family roles.

Fig. 5. Employment status by occupational field of training, %



The category of respondents actively seeking employment is also most frequently observed among graduates of the beauty industry, light industry, and trade, which may

indicate both instability in job availability and a high level of competition when starting a career.

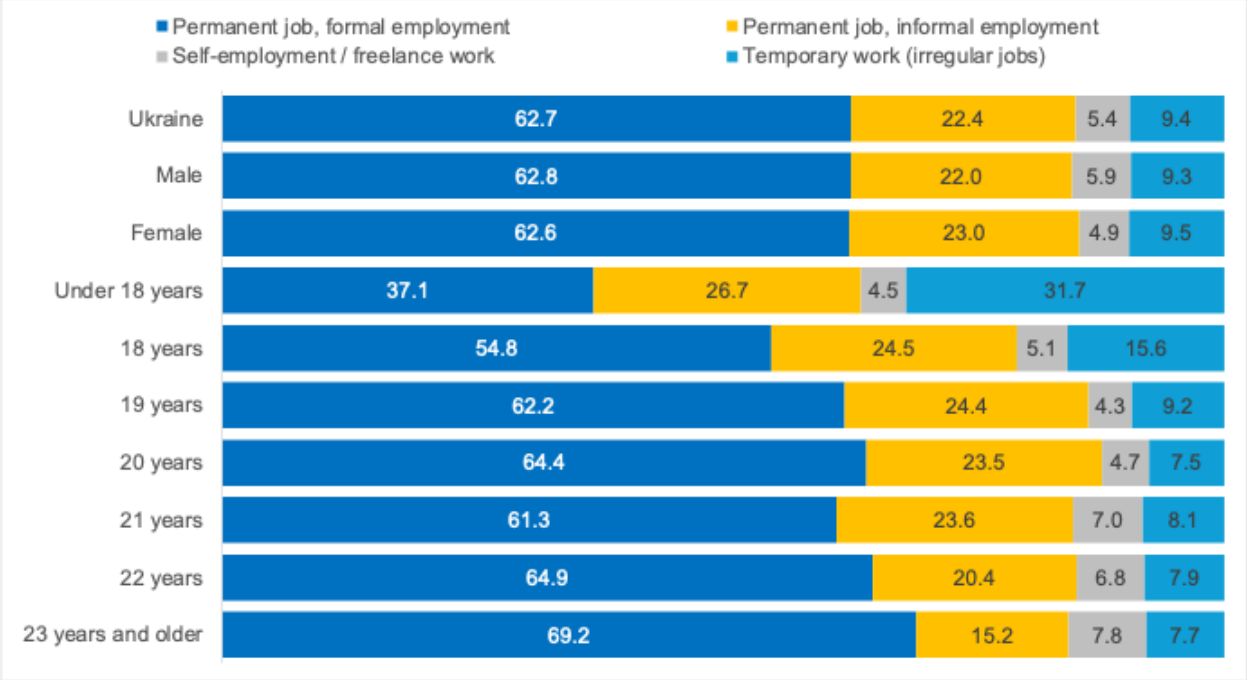
At the same time, in professions related to transport, construction and energy, the share of graduates currently seeking employment is noticeably lower, confirming the stability of demand for VET graduates in these professional fields.

The analysis of the survey data shows that the majority of employed graduates (62.7%) have a permanent formal job. At the same time, 22.4% report working on a permanent basis but informally, while 9.4% have temporary work or occasional jobs. Thus, nearly one third of employed graduates are engaged in unstable forms of employment. Self-employment was reported by 5.4% of respondents.

In practice, there are almost no differences in the structure of employment forms by gender. Only minor differences can be observed in the share of the self-employed, where the proportion of men slightly exceeds that of women (5.9% compared with 4.9%). Overall, the minimal gender differences in employment forms indicate similar conditions of access to the labour market for employed graduates.

At the same time, age dynamics are clearly visible. The youngest graduates (under 18 years old) demonstrate the lowest level of formal employment – only 37.1%, while simultaneously having the highest share of temporary jobs or occasional work – 31.7%. This appears to be a typical transitional stage, when young people have not yet secured stable employment or cannot be formally employed due to age restrictions.

Fig. 6. Main forms of employment of graduates by gender and age, %



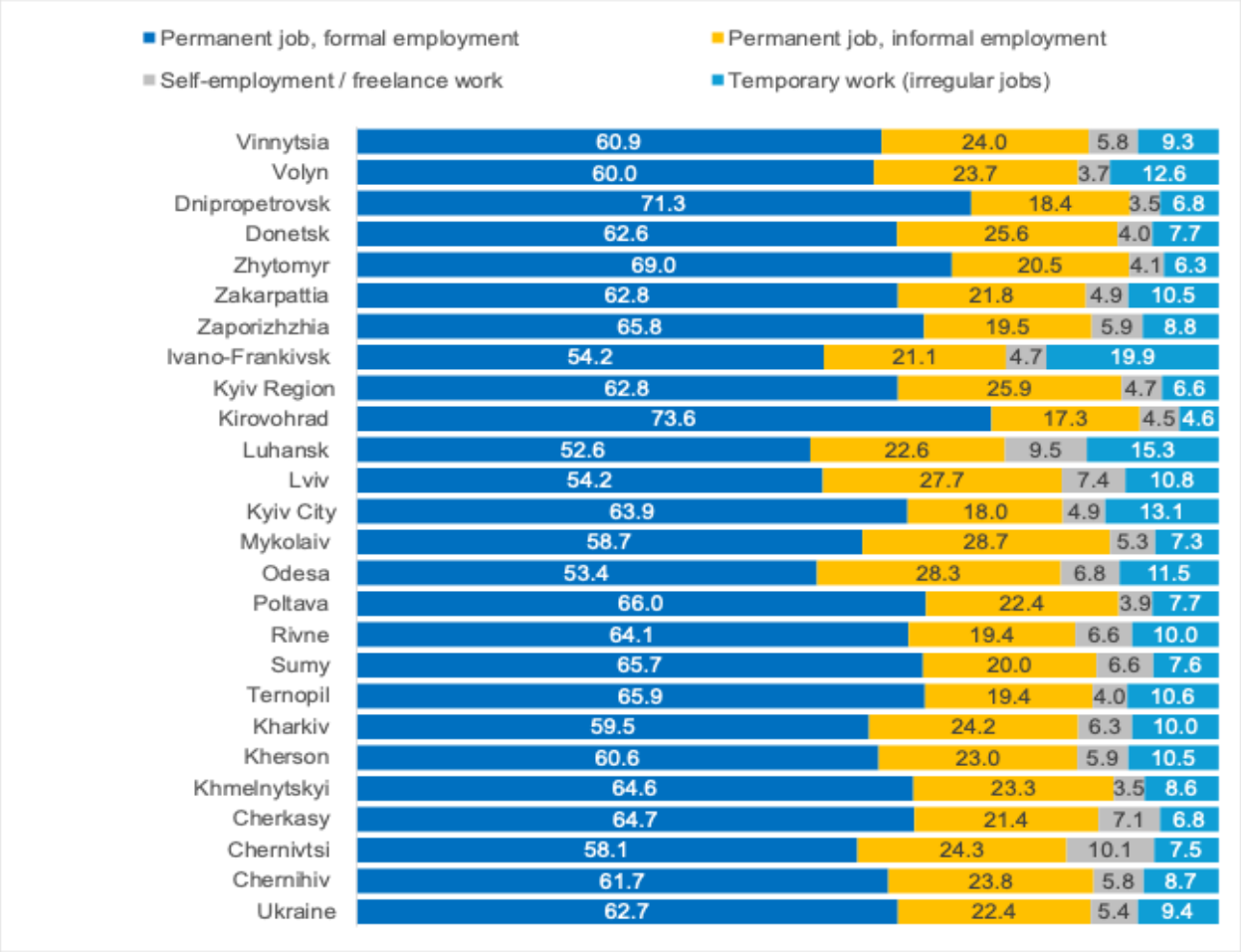
From the age of 18, the format of employment becomes more stable: formal employment increases to 54.8%, while temporary jobs decrease to 15.6%. Thereafter, the indicators gradually approach average levels: in the 19–22 age groups, the share of formal employment reaches 62–65%, while the share of temporary jobs declines to 7–9%.

The highest level of formal employment is observed in the 23+ age group – 69.2%, indicating the completion of the transition stage and consolidation within the stable formal segments of the labour market. At the same time, the share of informal employment decreases to 15.2%, which is the lowest indicator among all age groups.

Overall, the age profile of the main forms of employment demonstrates a gradual stabilisation of labour trajectories, a decline in temporary jobs and a consistent transition towards formal employment among older age groups.

The regional distribution of the main forms of employment among employed graduates reveals significant and systematic differences, reflecting local labour market conditions, the varying economic structures of regions and the impact of the war.

Fig. 7. Main forms of employment of graduates by region, %



The highest levels of permanent formal employment among VET graduates are observed in Kirovohrad (73.6%), Dnipropetrovsk (71.3%) and Zhytomyr (69.0%) oblasts. Conversely, particularly low levels of formal employment are recorded in Ivano-Frankivsk (54.2%), Lviv (54.2%) and Odesa (53.4%) oblasts, which may reflect high youth mobility, seasonal employment and a shift toward short-term forms of work.

The share of permanent informal employment also varies significantly across regions. In most oblasts, this indicator ranges between 17–20%, but in Mykolaiv, Lviv and Odesa oblasts it is substantially higher, reaching 27–29%. This likely indicates the persistent spread of informal employment practices, particularly in large and dynamic regions where competition for jobs and the prevalence of small businesses contribute to informal labour arrangements.

Self-employment overall remains noticeable but relatively limited (3–6% in most regions), although it reaches 10.1% in Chernivtsi oblast, which may reflect the influence of cross-border mobility.

Overall, the regional perspective shows that formal employment remains the dominant model in most regions, although the scale of informal and temporary work varies considerably depending on the economic profile of the region, the degree of wartime impact and local opportunities for young people. This confirms that the labour market integration of VET graduates has a distinct territorial dimension and requires regionally differentiated policy responses.

The professional field of graduates also significantly influences the form of employment. The data demonstrate clear differences between technical, service and creative fields, as well as between sectors with strong regulatory requirements for formal employment and those where informal work is a common practice.

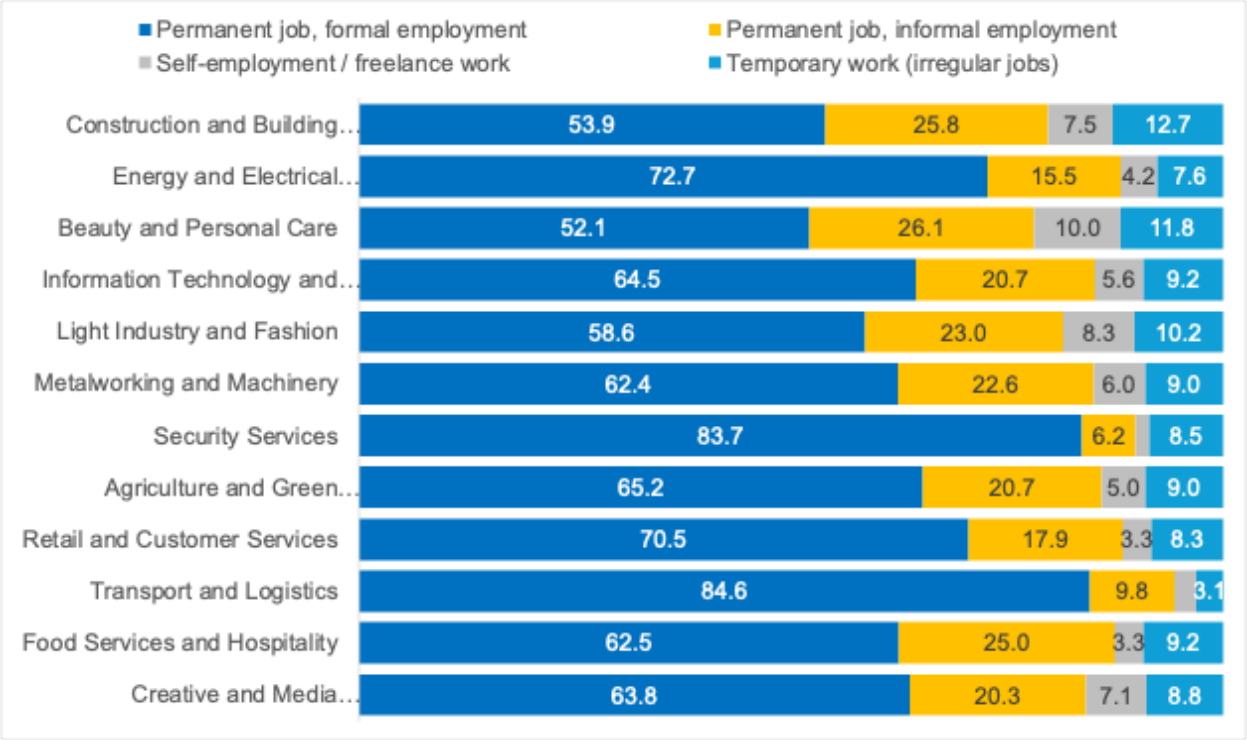
The highest levels of permanent formal employment are observed among graduates in transport and logistics (84.6%)and security and safety (83.7%). Both sectors traditionally have stricter requirements for formal employment due to responsibility, access to material assets, work-related risks or the need to comply with safety protocols. High values are also observed among graduates in energy and electrical engineering (72.7%) and trade and customer services (70.5%), confirming stable demand and the availability of formal job opportunities.

In contrast, in professional fields with less formalised employment conditions, the share of formally employed workers is significantly lower. In particular, in the beauty industry (52.1%) and construction (53.9%), formal employment covers only about half of employed young specialists, which likely reflects the prevalence of short-term contracts, informal employment or self-employment in these sectors.

Accordingly, informal employment is most widespread among graduates in food and service occupations (25.0%), construction (25.8%) and the beauty industry (26.1%). These sectors are largely composed of small and micro-enterprises that are less likely to formalise employment relationships, and it is also common practice to hire young workers on a “trial period” without formal contracts.

Self-employment (including freelancing and contract-based services) is most common in fields associated with creative activities or individual service provision, such as the beauty industry (10.0%), light industry and fashion (8.3%), and creative and media professions (7.1%). This pattern appears entirely logical, as these sectors are characterised by individual practice, micro-businesses and project-based work arrangements.

Fig. 8. Main forms of employment of graduates by occupational field of training, %



Overall, the survey data demonstrate clear professional patterns of labour market integration:

- Technical and engineering fields provide higher levels of formal employment and more stable working conditions.
- Service sectors are characterised by a higher share of informal employment and temporary jobs.
- Creative and individualised professions show the highest share of self-employed workers, which corresponds to the market nature of these activities.

These differences are crucial for shaping policies supporting the transition to the first job and for designing measures that encourage formal employment among young labour market participants.

As a general conclusion, it should be emphasised that the employment structure of VET graduates one year after graduation demonstrates overall positive integration of young people into the labour market, though with significant internal differences. Approximately two thirds of graduates already have a job, while the rest remain in transitional or temporarily inactive states – continuing their education, searching for employment or engaged in family care responsibilities. Employment among graduates takes different forms. Although most have a permanent formal job, nearly one third are engaged in

informal or irregular work, indicating risks of unstable income and limited opportunities for professional development.

Importantly, these structural differences are not random. Different patterns of labour market entry emerge according to gender, age, region and professional field. Women are more likely to withdraw from the labour market due to family circumstances; younger age groups remain longer in education or temporary employment; and regions that have suffered destruction or demonstrate lower economic activity show weaker employment outcomes.

The professional perspective confirms structural features of the labour market: technical and engineering specialisations provide better opportunities for formal employment, while service sectors and creative professions more often generate informal or unstable work. This reflects sustained demand for technical occupations and the structural vulnerability of sectors dominated by small businesses.

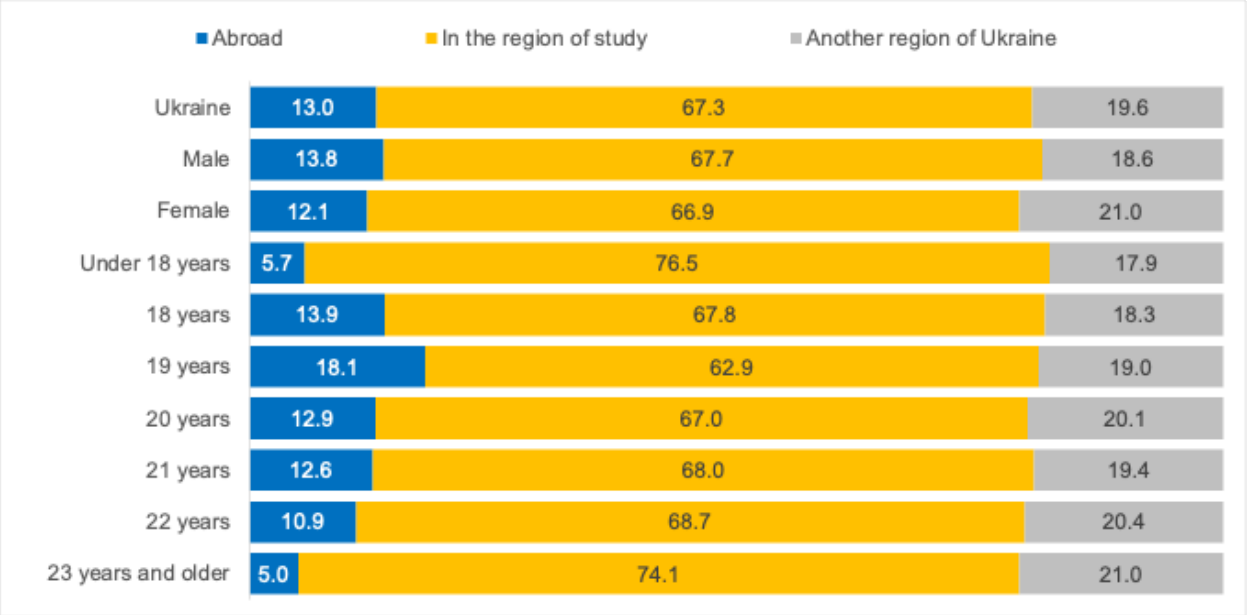
Thus, the first year after completing VET is characterised by moderate stability but a highly segmented labour market, which creates unequal opportunities for different groups of graduates. The results highlight the need for policies supporting the transition to formal employment, strengthening regional opportunities and implementing targeted measures for groups facing higher risks of unemployment or unstable work.

2.2. Territorial Employment Trajectories

The territorial dynamics of employment constitute one of the key dimensions of the career trajectories of VET graduates, as they largely determine access to jobs, the level of competition, wages and the stability of employment. Analysing the regional patterns of employment makes it possible to assess how evenly employment opportunities are distributed, which countries and regions act as “donors” and “recipients” of labour, and where young people face the greatest barriers when entering employment. In wartime conditions, this dimension becomes particularly important, as the security situation, the scale of destruction and internal migration significantly affect regional labour markets.

The survey results on the place of employment show that the majority of graduates (67.3%) work in the same region where they studied, indicating that they primarily choose the local labour market. This suggests that the training system remains closely linked to local labour market needs. At the same time, 19.6% find employment in other regions of Ukraine. Given the importance of security factors in many regions, such a level of internal (both voluntary and forced) labour migration appears quite natural. A smaller but still significant share of graduates (13%) have moved abroad and are working outside the country.

Fig. 9. Structure of employment by place of employment, gender and age, %

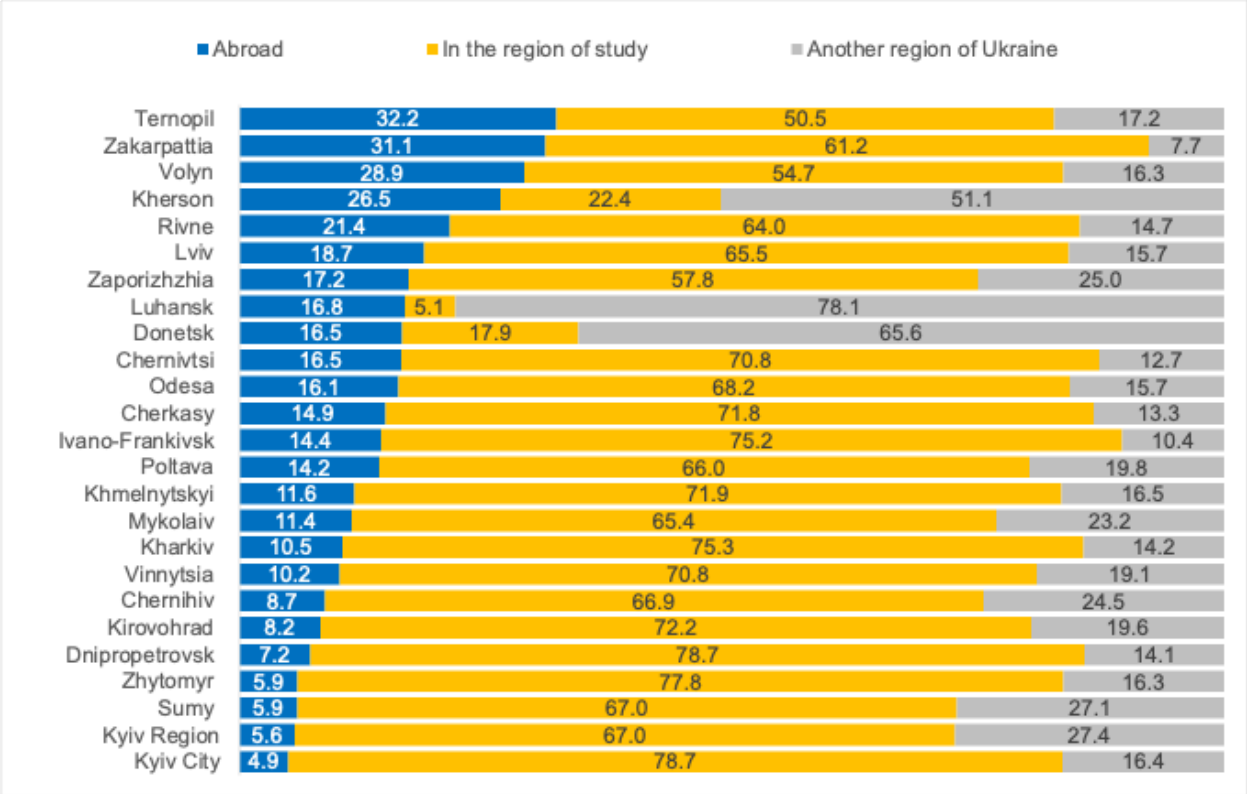


Gender differences in the geographic structure of employment are generally minor, although in some cases they require attention. First, it is worth noting the higher share of men working abroad (13.8% compared with 12.1% among women). This trend is expected given the circumstances of the war and the risks associated with mobilisation, as well as the higher demand for labour in sectors involving physical work and increased risks, which are traditionally more oriented toward male workers. Second, women more often find employment in other regions of Ukraine (21.0% compared with 18.6% among men), which may reflect both higher internal mobility and more limited opportunities to find suitable employment within their home region. Overall, these differences are not substantial, but they reflect different patterns of territorial mobility among graduates.

Regional data demonstrate significant differentiation in the employment locations of VET graduates. The regional differences in employment geography are considerable and structured. Broadly, three key trajectories can be identified:

1. International mobility as a traditional trajectory (external migration model) – predominantly observed in Western Ukraine.
2. Local employment as the main trajectory (local model) – typical of major economic centres and rear regions.
3. Forced internal migration trajectory (forced migration model) – characteristic of regions affected by the war.

Fig. 10. Structure of employment by place of employment and region, %



The first trajectory (external mobility model) includes the western regions of Ukraine, where the share of graduates working abroad significantly exceeds the national average (13%). The highest values are recorded in Ternopil (32.2%), Zakarpattia (31.1%), Volyn (28.9%), Rivne (21.4%) and Lviv (18.7%) oblasts. Kherson oblast (26.5%) can also be included in this group. In these regions, external migration is a traditional strategy shaped by proximity to the EU, active migration networks and the structure of demand for low- and medium-skilled labour. Kherson oblast may be classified within this group due to its long-standing traditions of maritime education and training for the fleet, which for decades oriented graduates toward international labour markets and facilitated employment abroad.

A characteristic feature of this model is that even with high levels of migration abroad, the majority of graduates still find employment within their home regions (50–75%). Thus, international mobility acts as an additional rather than dominant employment pathway.

The second trajectory (local employment model) includes oblasts where the majority of graduates find employment within the region where they studied. In these regions, the share of local employment ranges from 70% to almost 80%, significantly exceeding the national average (67.3%) and indicating relatively stable local labour markets. The

highest values are recorded in Ivano-Frankivsk (75.2%), Kharkiv (75.3%), Dnipropetrovsk (78.7%) and Zhytomyr (77.8%) oblasts, as well as in Kyiv city (78.7%). This group also includes Khmelnytskyi, Vinnytsia, Chernivtsi and Cherkasy oblasts, where local employment ranges between 70–72%.

Regions within this model are characterised by developed local labour markets with a diverse structure of vacancies, including manual and technical occupations corresponding to the training profiles of VET graduates. Large urban agglomerations and industrial centres play an important role by providing stable labour demand and reducing the need to search for employment outside the region. The share of employment abroad in these oblasts is traditionally low, generally not exceeding 6–12%, while mobility to other regions of Ukraine remains moderate.

The local model therefore reflects the structural resilience of regional economies, indicating that opportunities for young people's first employment are largely available within their region of residence and education.

The third trajectory (forced migration model) includes regions where the majority of graduates find employment outside the region where they studied, and sometimes even beyond neighbouring territories. In these regions, internal migration becomes the dominant strategy, as local labour markets provide very limited employment opportunities for young people. The highest levels of employment in other regions of Ukraine are recorded in Donetsk (65.6%) and Kherson (51.1%) oblasts. High levels of internal mobility are also observed in Kyiv (27.4%), Sumy (27.1%) and Zaporizhzhia (25.0%) oblasts, figures that significantly exceed the national average (19.6%).

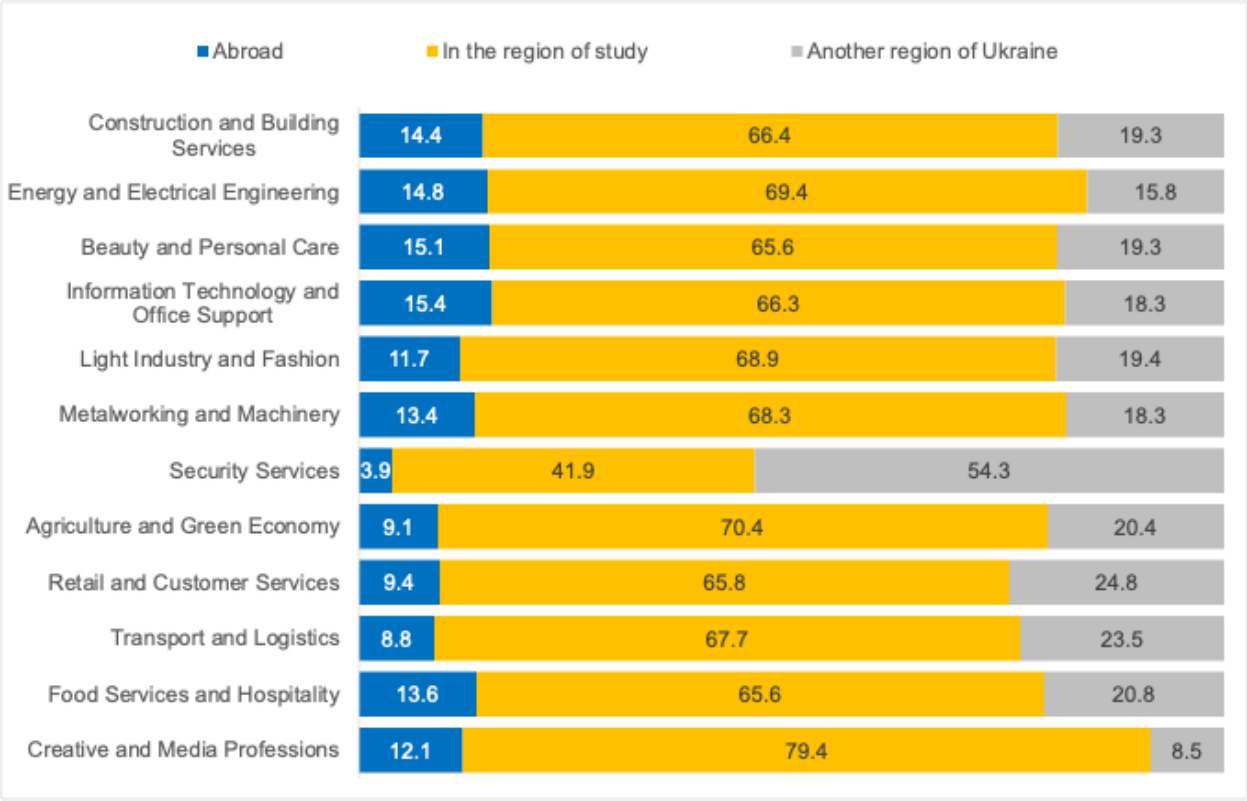
For this group of regions, the decisive factor is the impact of the war. Occupation, active hostilities, destruction of infrastructure and the contraction of local enterprises have sharply reduced the number of jobs available in the region of education. As a result, graduates are forced to seek employment in other oblasts, creating a specific "migration-based" employment model. The share of local employment in these regions is minimal (from 5% to 22%), while employment abroad plays a secondary role, although in some cases it remains noticeable.

This trajectory reflects high levels of forced mobility, driven not by personal choice but by circumstances that limit the possibility of finding work in the place of residence. In these regions, employment outcomes depend primarily on national rather than local economic opportunities.

Overall, the diversity of these models highlights the uneven distribution of economic opportunities across regions and the different mechanisms through which young professionals integrate into the labour market. This conclusion is broadly confirmed by the analysis of employment structures by place of work and professional field.

Although certain differences exist between professional groups — in particular, slightly higher shares of employment abroad among occupations with transferable or export-oriented skills — the overall differences between fields remain relatively small. In most professions, the share of employment abroad ranges within a fairly narrow interval (9–15%), while local employment accounts for 65–75%.

Fig. 11. Structure of employment by place of employment and occupational field of training, %



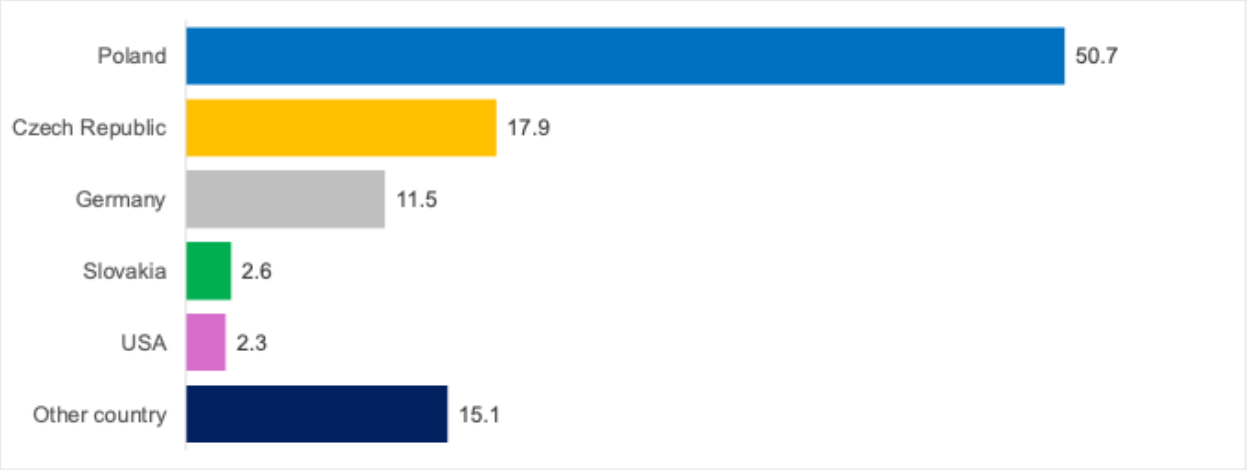
This suggests that the professional field itself is not a key determinant of the territorial mobility of graduates. Instead, regional factors play a more significant role, particularly the security situation, the opportunities available in the local labour market and the overall availability of jobs.

Thus, the overall pattern of labour mobility among graduates is influenced far more by the regional context of residence and education than by the specific profession obtained. This is especially evident in regions that have experienced occupation or active hostilities, where even in professions typically oriented toward local employment the share of forced internal migration is significantly higher than average.

The structure of destination countries for employment also indicates that during periods of forced mobility young people primarily choose the closest, most familiar and least

risky destinations, and the geography of migration is largely determined by accessibility rather than professional specialisation.

Fig. 12. Countries of employment of graduates abroad, %



According to the survey data, the vast majority of those working abroad choose Poland (50.7%), the closest country both geographically and culturally. Poland represents the simplest and least risky destination: short distance, accessible transport, large Ukrainian communities, a familiar linguistic environment and relatively favourable employment conditions. In situations of uncertainty and forced decision-making, these factors play a decisive role.

The Czech Republic (17.9%) is the second most important destination, also combining geographic proximity, established employment channels and extensive migration networks. Germany (11.5%) ranks as the third major destination, primarily attracting those with higher qualifications or those planning longer-term employment abroad. Smaller shares for Slovakia (2.6%) and the United States (2.3%) reflect more individual but stable migration routes that are not associated with large-scale flows.

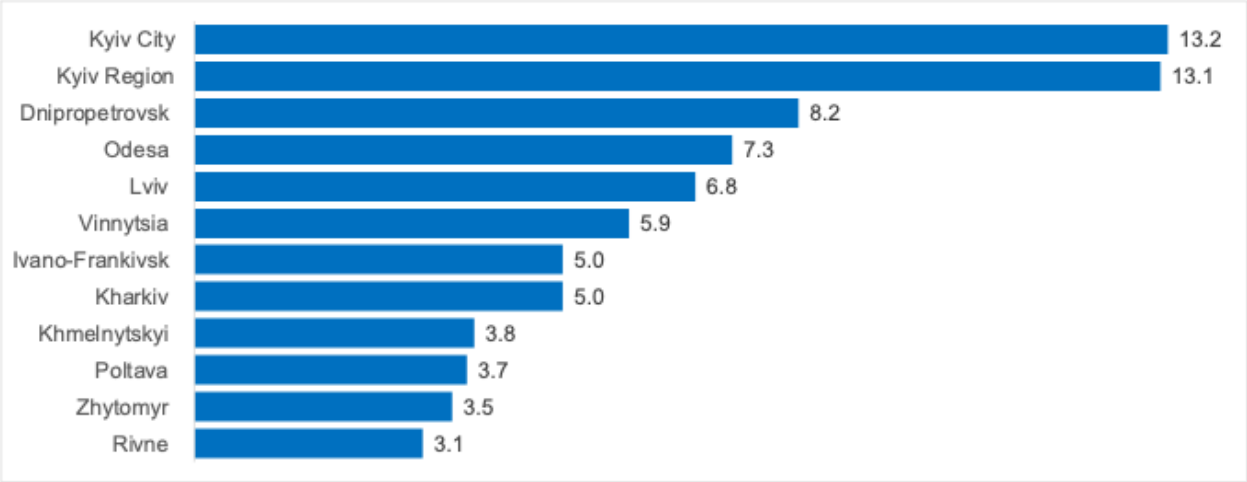
The category “Other country” (15.1%) actually covers a very broad and geographically diverse range of destinations. The data show that VET graduates are working in more than 40 countries worldwide, covering almost all European countries. In addition to the traditional destinations, some graduates find employment in more distant locations, including Australia, South Africa, the Gulf countries and North America. This likely reflects individual labour trajectories, the role of personal and family networks, and the ability of graduates to integrate into very different labour markets.

The geography of internal labour migration clearly demonstrates the attraction of graduates to the largest and safest economic centres of the country. Kyiv city (13.2%) is the leading destination for internal mobility, combining a high concentration of vacancies, higher wages and relative security. Similar figures are observed in Kyiv

oblast (13.1%), which forms part of the same metropolitan area and actively absorbs labour flows.

The second group of destinations consists of large and relatively safe industrial regions, primarily Dnipropetrovsk (8.2%), Odesa (7.3%), Lviv (6.8%) and Vinnytsia (5.9%) oblasts, which offer a wide range of vacancies in trade, logistics, technical and service occupations. Their attractiveness is reinforced by their location outside the immediate zone of hostilities and by the relative stability they provide for first employment.

Fig. 13. Main recipient regions of internal labour mobility, %



The structure of labour flows also demonstrates a regional “east → west” axis, which has persisted since 2022. Graduates from eastern and southern oblasts more often move to western and central regions, where higher levels of security coincide with sufficient job opportunities. Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts (5.0%) serve as the main “western hubs” of internal migration.

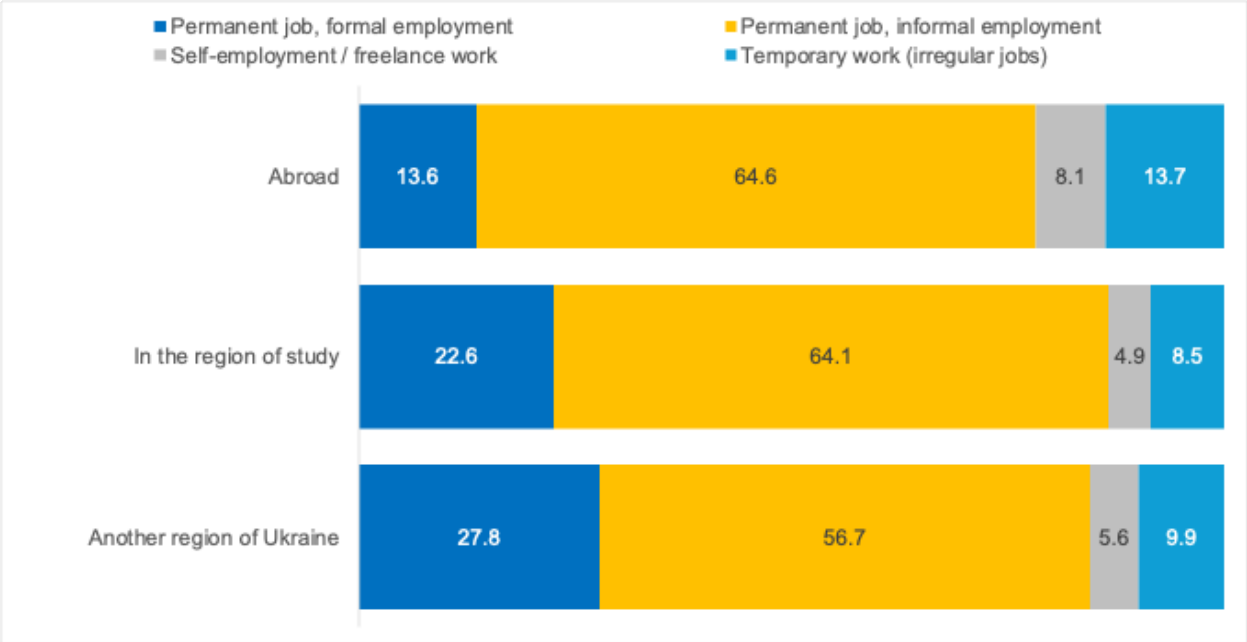
Kharkiv oblast (5.0%) represents a certain exception to this pattern. Despite its proximity to the frontline and regular shelling, Kharkiv remains an important employment magnet due to its large economic base, strong educational infrastructure and industrial agglomeration. At the same time, labour flows to Kharkiv are largely formed by graduates from neighbouring and more severely affected regions — Donetsk, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts — which historically oriented themselves toward Kharkiv as the largest regional centre.

A smaller but stable level of attractiveness is observed in Khmelnytskyi (3.8%), Poltava (3.7%), Zhytomyr (3.5%) and Rivne (3.1%) oblasts, which serve as secondary but noticeable destinations of internal labour mobility.

Overall, internal labour migration among graduates is determined not only by economic attractiveness, but also by the level of safety and stability of regions, which significantly strengthens labour flows toward central and western oblasts.

Differences in the forms of employment across the main territorial employment models also appear quite illustrative. Although permanent formal employment remains the dominant form in all models, the share of informal employment varies noticeably between them.

Fig. 14. Structure of employment by place of employment and form of employment, %



The share of informal employment ranges between 13–28% and is highest among those working in other regions of Ukraine. This situation likely reflects factors related to adaptation, the characteristics of certain sectors (such as construction and services), and the prevalence of short-term arrangements during relocation. Among those working in their region of education, the level of informality is lower, which may be associated with stronger social networks and better knowledge of the local labour market.

Among graduates working abroad, the share of formal employment is the highest, which can be explained by stricter requirements for legal employment and the wider availability of formal contracts in receiving countries. At the same time, the share of temporary jobs is slightly higher than in Ukraine, reflecting the nature of short-term seasonal work abroad.

Self-employment remains relatively low in all three groups (5–8%), which is typical for first employment after graduating from VET institutions.

Overall, the structure of employment forms among graduates remains broadly similar across the territorial employment models, although the combination of formal, informal and temporary employment varies significantly. Employment abroad appears to be the most formalised, with legal labour contracts prevailing. In the region of education, formal employment dominates, although a notable share of informal work is still present. Among those working in other regions of Ukraine, the share of informal and temporary employment increases noticeably, which may reflect the specifics of professional entry and adaptation after relocation. Despite these differences, the overall pattern of first employment remains relatively well formalised.

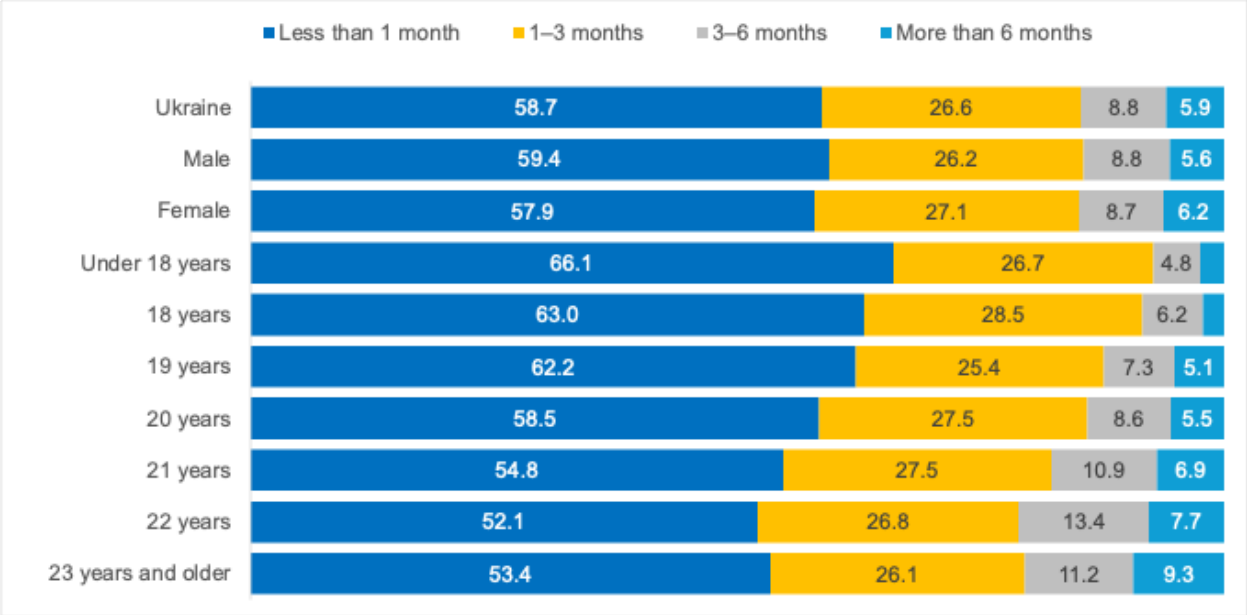
In general, the territorial distribution of graduate employment reflects the interaction of three key factors: the availability of local labour markets, the security situation and opportunities for labour migration. Regions can be broadly grouped into several mobility models — external migration, local employment and forced internal migration — which are shaped by differing economic opportunities and the scale of wartime impact. Graduates from western regions more often choose employment abroad; in central and economically resilient regions, local employment dominates; while residents of the eastern and southern regions are more frequently forced to seek employment in other oblasts of Ukraine. At the same time, the countries and regions where graduates move for work reflect a logic of risk minimisation, favouring the safest and most stable locations. Overall, the data indicate that the geographical trajectories of graduates are determined less by professional differences and more by the spatial opportunities and conditions under which they enter the labour market.

2.3. Duration and Methods of Job Search

The duration and characteristics of the search for a first job are key indicators of how successfully graduates integrate into the labour market after completing their studies. These indicators reflect not only the individual activity and readiness of young people to enter employment, but also the actual opportunities provided by labour markets in different regions and professional fields. The analysis makes it possible to assess how quickly graduates find employment, which channels they use most frequently and which factors influence the effectiveness of their job search. This helps to determine whether the transition into working life occurs smoothly or whether barriers exist that slow down or complicate employment.

According to the survey data, most VET graduates find their first job relatively quickly. More than half (58.7%) become employed in less than one month, while another 26.6% find work within 1–3 months. Thus, more than 85% of young specialists integrate into the labour market within the first three months after completing their studies. The shares of graduates experiencing longer job search periods are significantly smaller: 8.8% search for a job for 3–6 months, and only 5.9% require more than six months.

Fig. 15. Duration of job search by gender and age, %



The distribution of responses by gender for this indicator is almost identical to the national average. Men and women demonstrate nearly the same speed of employment, indicating the absence of significant gender barriers at the stage of entering the labour market.

A comparison of job search duration and employment forms reveals a clear age-related pattern. The younger the graduates, the faster they tend to find work, and the higher the likelihood that this employment will be temporary or informal. The youngest respondents (under 18 years old) more often find employment within less than a month, but at the same time they largely integrate into labour market segments with less formalised conditions — seasonal work, short-term contracts or informal permanent employment. This situation is typical for the first work experience, when young people are generally less selective and less demanding regarding working conditions.

In older age groups, the trend changes: the duration of job search increases, but the share of those who seek and eventually obtain formal and permanent employment also rises. Respondents aged 22–23 and older more often spend 3–6 months or longer searching for employment. However, this is frequently explained not by labour market barriers but by changes in life priorities. At this age, factors influencing job choice become more significant, including family responsibilities, the birth of children, the need for a more stable work schedule and social protection, as well as higher expectations regarding working conditions.

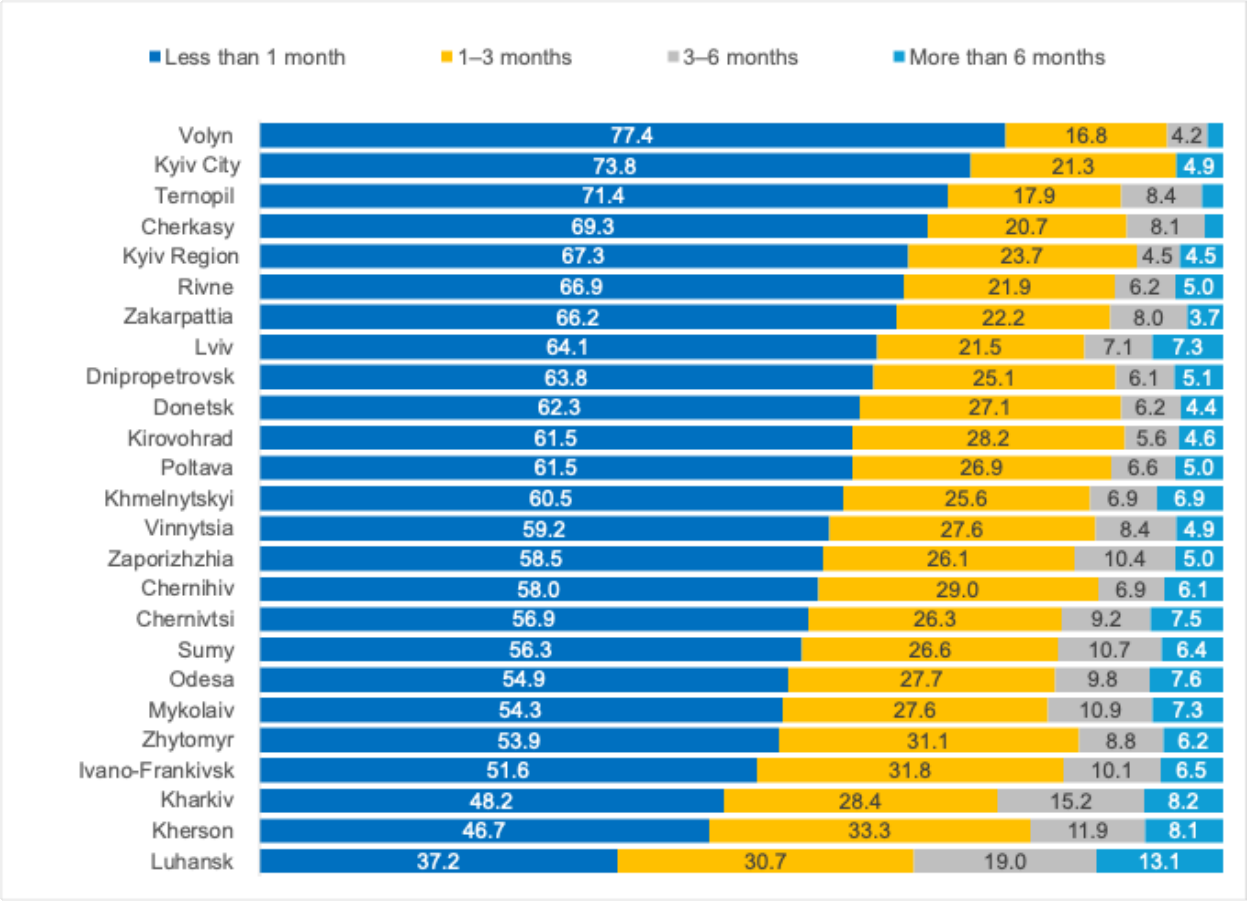
Thus, age differences in employment speed and employment forms do not contradict each other: younger respondents enter the labour market more quickly due to greater

flexibility and lower expectations, whereas older respondents do so more slowly but with a stronger orientation toward formal and stable employment.

The regional analysis demonstrates that the speed of graduate employment strongly depends on local labour market conditions, the security situation and the overall economic activity of the region.

The highest levels of rapid employment are observed in western and central regions, where relative security coincides with stable labour demand. In particular, Volyn (77.4%), Ternopil (71.4%), Cherkasy (69.3%), Rivne (66.9%), Lviv (64.1%) oblasts, as well as Kyiv city (73.8%), demonstrate significantly higher-than-average shares of graduates who find employment within the first month. These are regions with active local economies, where young people integrate quickly into the labour market due to a sufficient number of vacancies and the absence of major security risks.

Fig. 16. Duration of job search by region, %



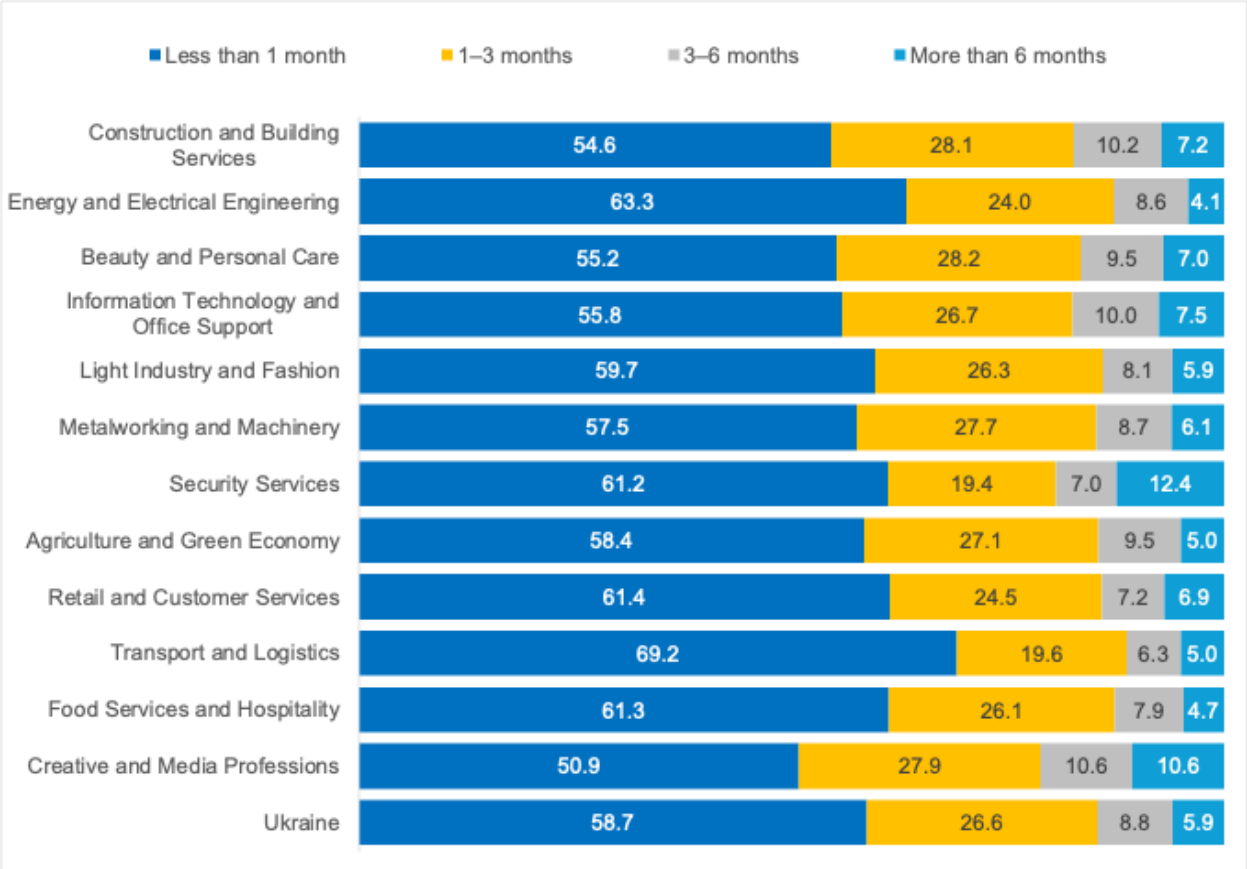
An intermediate group consists of regions with moderate indicators of rapid entry into the labour market — Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, Zhytomyr, Poltava and

Zaporizhzhia oblasts — which maintain relatively stable labour demand but still experience the effects of economic fluctuations and proximity to areas of hostilities.

Overall, the data indicate that the speed of job search has a clear territorial dimension: in safer and economically stronger regions, graduates find employment much faster, whereas in frontline and heavily affected regions the search process becomes significantly longer.

The duration of the search for a first job shows relatively stable patterns across all professional fields, although some differences related to labour market characteristics can be observed. In general, the structure remains similar to the national average: most graduates find employment within the first month, while the share of longer job searches remains moderate.

Fig. 17. Duration of job search by occupational field of training, %



The highest levels of rapid employment are observed among graduates in the following professional fields: transport and logistics (69.2%), energy and electrical engineering (63.3%), food and service occupations (61.3%), trade and customer services (61.4%), and security and safety (61.2%). These are sectors where demand for young workers is

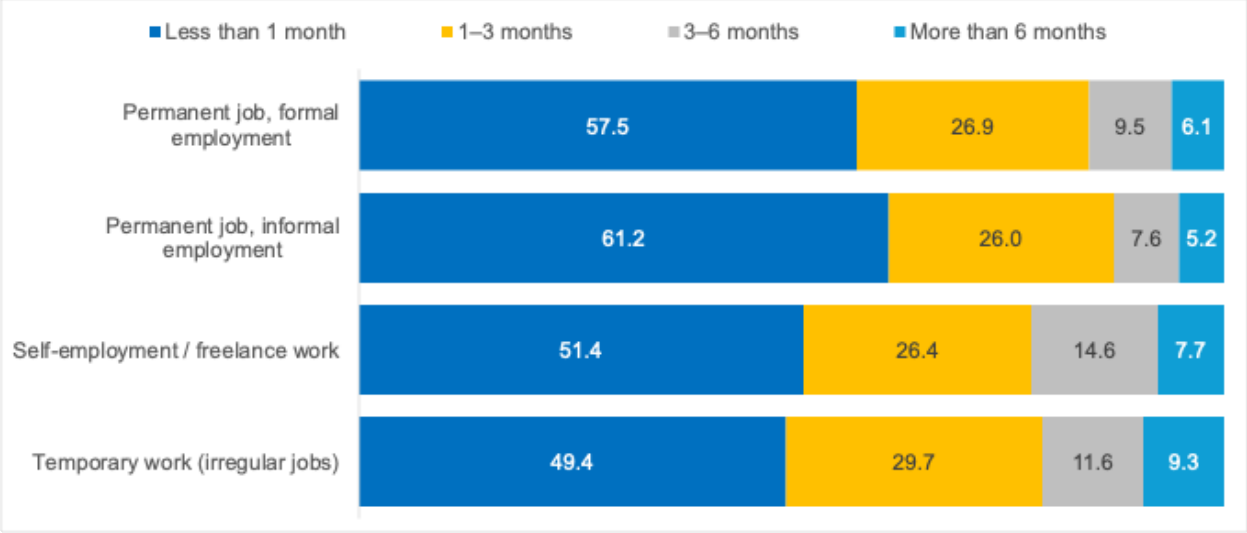
relatively stable and entry into the labour market occurs quickly due to a large number of vacancies and relatively low barriers to entry.

In occupations related to creative industries – creative and media professions (50.9%) – the job search tends to be relatively longer. This reflects the fragmented nature of the market, competition for a limited number of vacancies and a stronger dependence on portfolios, recommendations and project-based employment. Similar tendencies are also observed in construction, IT and office support, and the beauty industry, where the share of those searching for work for 1–3 months exceeds the national average.

A longer job search (more than six months) is characteristic of only a small share of graduates across all fields of study — ranging from 4.1% to 12.4%. The highest figure is observed in security and safety (12.4%), which may be related to specific requirements for formal employment, employer expectations and the characteristics of enterprises that employ workers in this occupational group.

Overall, the differences between professional fields remain moderate: all groups demonstrate relatively rapid entry into the labour market, and extended job searches remain the exception rather than the norm. At the same time, certain sectors — particularly those dependent on project-based work or a narrow segment of employers — show greater variation in employment timelines.

Fig. 18. Duration of job search by form of employment, %

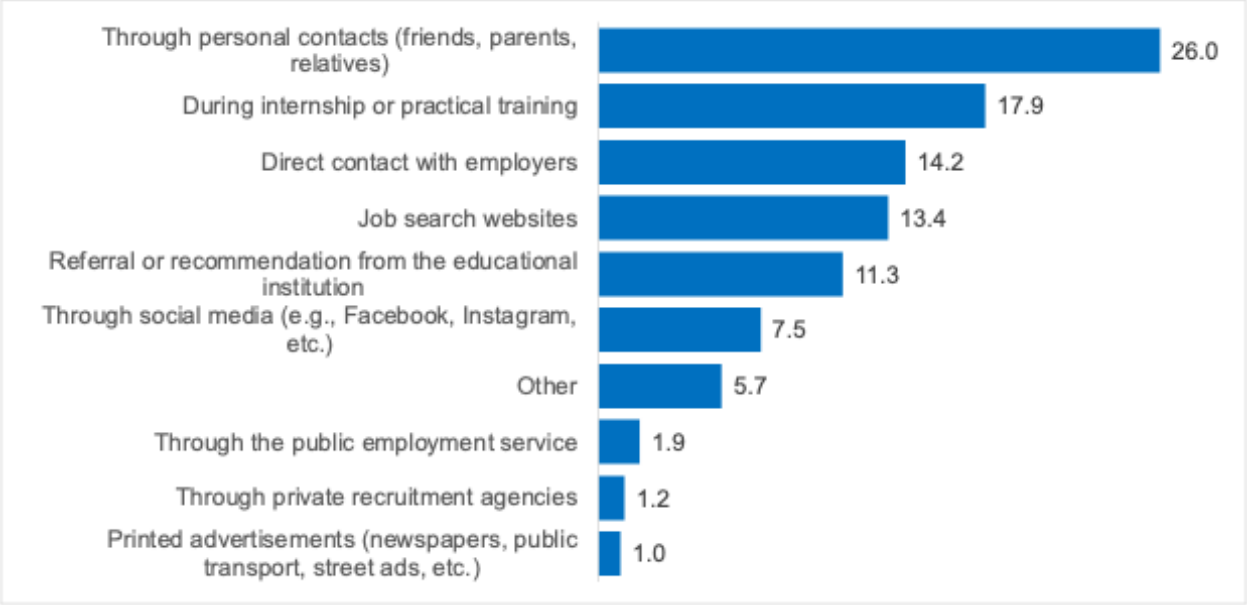


The speed of job search depends both on the age of graduates and on the form of their current employment, although these factors operate in different ways. Younger respondents generally find employment faster due to their flexibility and willingness to accept temporary or informal job offers. Older graduates, by contrast, tend to search longer but aim for more stable and formal employment arrangements.

At the same time, the analysis of job search duration by type of employment reveals a different pattern: those who currently have permanent formal jobs most often found them quickly. By contrast, unstable forms of employment — temporary work or self-employment — more often result from longer or less successful job searches. This suggests that some graduates who fail to find acceptable conditions for formal employment move into alternative, less formalised forms of work. Thus, age-related differences and differences between employment forms are consistent with one another: younger respondents tend to find flexible forms of work more quickly, while formal positions are more often obtained by those who deliberately seek formal employment.

The analysis of job search methods used by graduates shows a clear predominance of informal and direct channels. The most common method remains personal contacts (26%), highlighting the important role of family and friendship networks in youth employment. A significant share is also accounted for by internships and practical training (17.9%), which often facilitate a smooth transition from education to employment. Other important channels include direct contact with employers (14.2%) and online job search websites (13.4%).

Fig. 19. Main job search methods, %



Formal institutional channels are used less frequently: educational institutions assist 11.3% of graduates in finding employment, while public employment services help only 1.9%. Social media (7.5%) plays a noticeable but secondary role. The least common methods are printed advertisements (1.0%) and private recruitment agencies (1.2%). However, it should be noted that for certain groups of graduates in specific professional

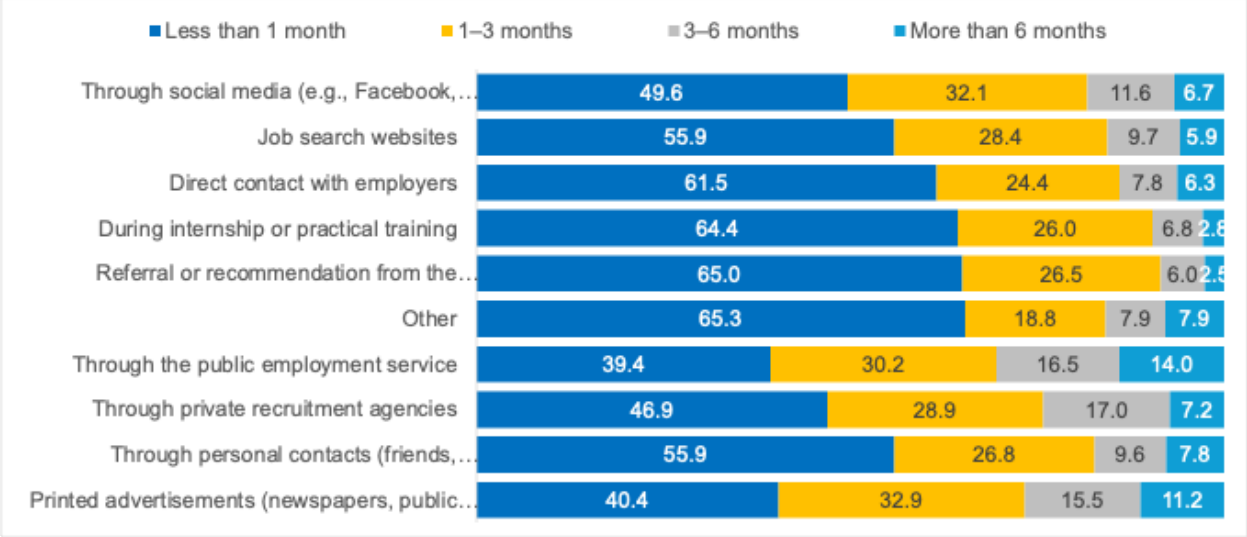
fields, recruitment agencies play a particularly important role, which will be discussed further below.

Overall, the structure of job search methods indicates that most graduates rely on personal contacts, internships and direct communication with employers, while public and commercial institutional channels play only a minor role in the employment process.

Job search methods also significantly influence the speed of employment. The fastest entry into the labour market is observed through channels that involve direct interaction with employers or educational institutions. Recommendations from colleges, internships or traineeships, and direct contact with employers lead to more than 60% of graduates finding employment within one month.

In contrast, more indirect methods — such as printed advertisements, applying to public employment services, or some online resources — are more often associated with longer job searches, sometimes lasting six months or more. This suggests that the effectiveness of employment largely depends on the activity of the graduate, their integration into professional or educational networks, and their willingness to use more direct and proactive job search channels.

Fig. 20. Duration of job search by job search method, %



According to the data obtained, the job search method significantly influences the type of employment graduates ultimately obtain. Formal channels (through educational institutions, public employment services or internships) more often lead to formal employment, whereas informal channels (personal contacts, social media, printed advertisements) increase the likelihood of informal or temporary work.

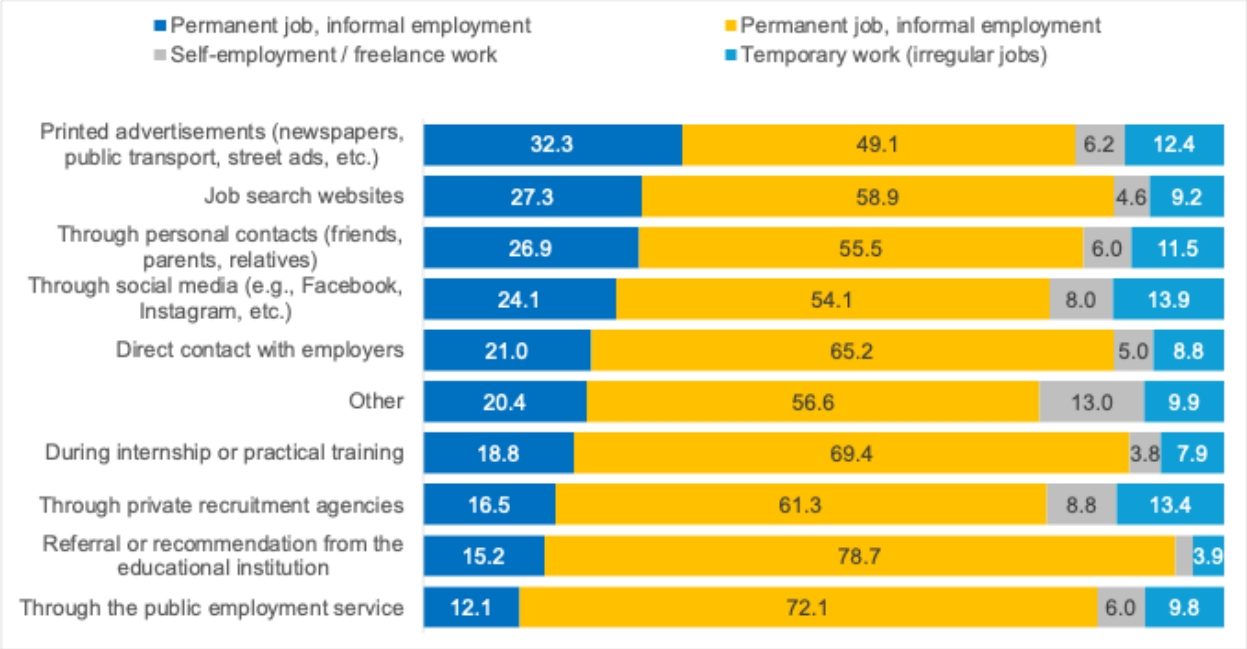
Formal channels demonstrate the highest concentration of permanent formal employment: recommendations from educational institutions (78.7%) and public

employment services (72.1%) are highly likely to result in legal employment contracts. These channels provide a structured recruitment process, clear requirements and a lower share of temporary jobs.

In contrast, informal and indirect methods — personal contacts, social networks, job search websites and printed advertisements — are more often associated with informal or temporary employment, as they tend to rely on quick and flexible arrangements rather than formal recruitment procedures.

This indicates that the choice of job search channel significantly shapes the labour market segment into which a graduate enters, as well as the stability of their first employment experience.

Fig. 21. Forms of employment by job search method, %



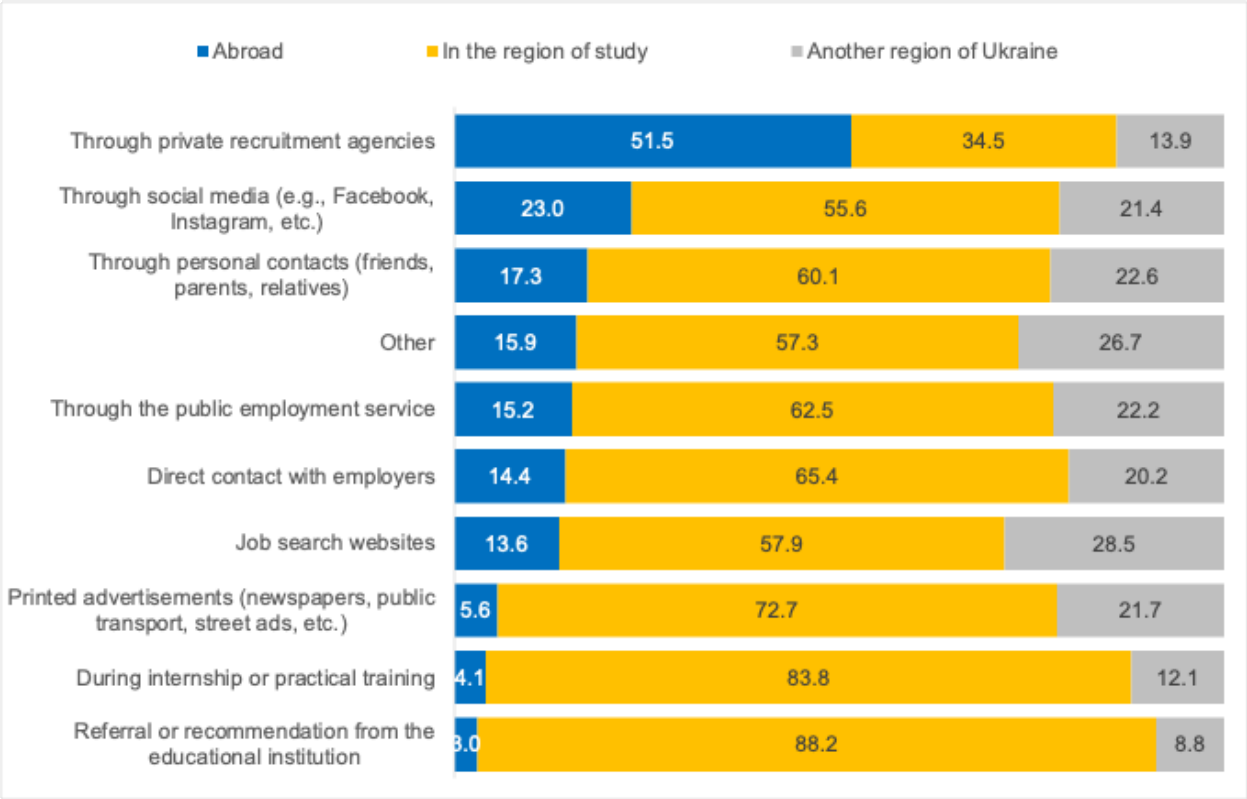
Territorial employment trajectories appear to be shaped primarily by the initial motivation of graduates — whether they are oriented toward local employment or work abroad. The choice of a job search channel largely reflects this motivation and serves as a mechanism for implementing the chosen direction.

At the same time, the analysis shows that certain job search methods are clearly associated with specific employment outcomes. Private recruitment agencies are the main instrument for young people entering the international labour market. More than every second graduate working abroad (51.5%) reported using this channel to secure employment outside the country.

In contrast, internships, practical training and recommendations from educational institutions predominantly lead to local employment — 83–88% of such graduates remain working in the region where they studied. This suggests that formal education-based channels effectively meet the needs of local labour markets.

Other methods — social networks, job search websites and personal contacts — have a mixed effect. They provide employment abroad for 13–23% of users, but at the same time remain the main channel for finding work within the country. These channels are used both by graduates who plan to migrate and by those seeking employment in Ukraine, which explains their more variable employment outcomes.

Fig. 22. Territorial employment trajectories by job search method, %



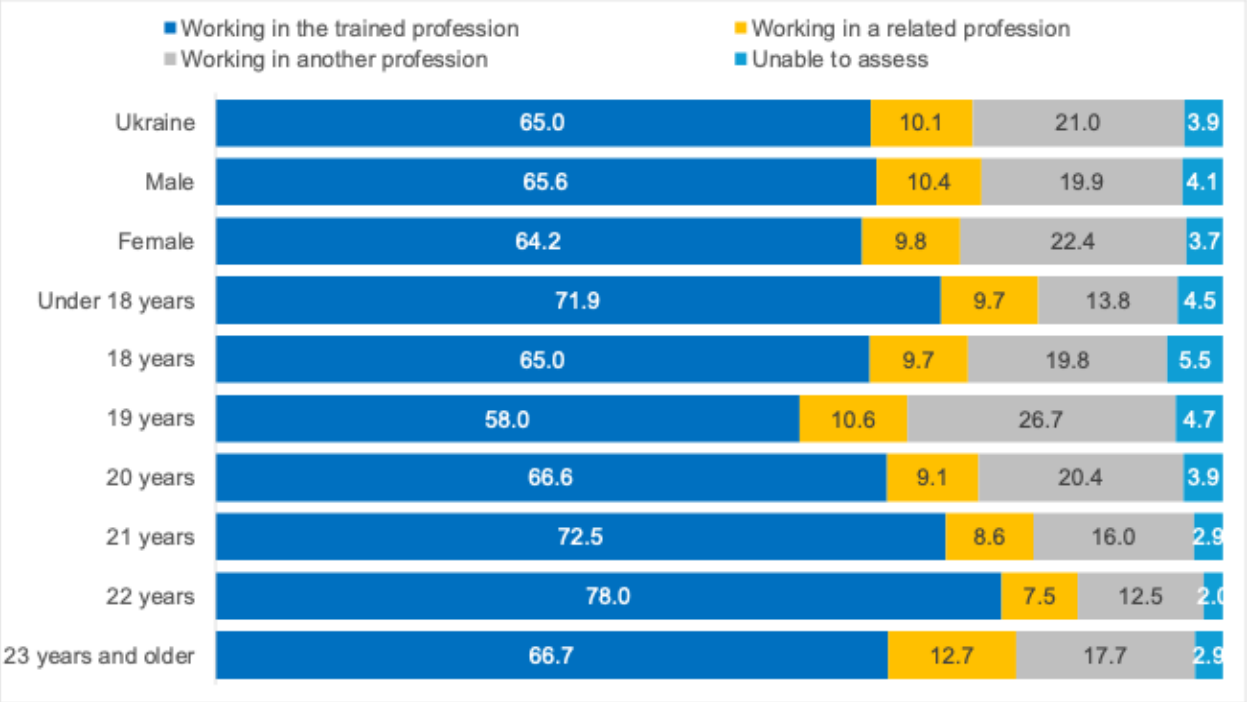
Overall, the data demonstrate that the process of young people entering the labour market is relatively dynamic, but strongly influenced by the combination of individual strategies and the available job search channels. The activity of the graduate, the quality of professional contacts and their integration into the networks of the educational institution significantly increase the chances of rapid and stable employment.

2.4. Employment in the Acquired Profession and Stability of Employment

Employment in the acquired profession is one of the key indicators of how well the vocational education system corresponds to labour market needs and of the effectiveness of specialist training. According to the data obtained, 65% of graduates in Ukraine work in the profession they studied, while another 10.1% are employed in a related occupation. In total, this means that three out of four graduates find employment within their field of qualification or in a closely related area.

At the same time, 21% are employed in occupations outside their trained profession. A small share of graduates (3.9%) were unable to assess whether their job corresponds to their qualification. This may be related both to the instability of the first job and to an unclear understanding of the content and scope of their professional training.

Fig. 23. Working in the trained occupation by gender and age, %



Men only slightly more often work in their field of qualification (65.6% compared to 64.2% among women), while women are somewhat more likely to be employed in completely different occupations (22.4% compared to 19.9%). This may reflect structural differences between traditionally “male” and “female” sectors of the economy.

Age-related differences in working in the acquired profession are more noticeable, although they are uneven and do not follow a linear pattern. The highest level of occupational match is observed among the youngest graduates (71.9%). This is partly

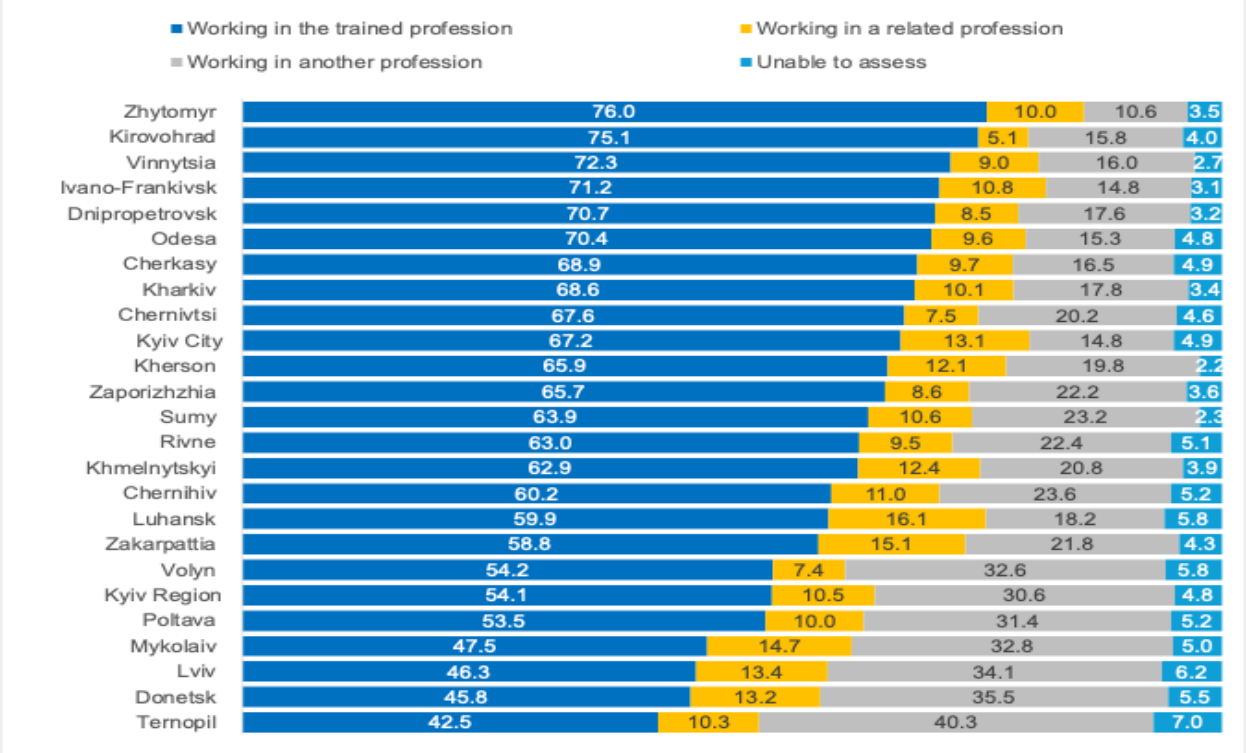
because those who complete VET at 18 years of age often graduate from shorter and less complex programmes that begin at an early age (14–15) — such as sales assistants, cashiers, waiters and service workers. These occupations are typically characterised by flexible and rapid entry into employment, and the first job often has a direct connection with practical training.

Among 19-year-old graduates, the share working in their profession is the lowest (58.0%), which is related not to continuing education but rather to the characteristics of early employment. At this age, young people are more likely to take temporary or non-specialised jobs, experiment with different types of activities, or face limited access to professional vacancies due to lack of work experience.

In the 20–22 age groups, the match between qualification and employment is considerably higher (66.6–78.0%), which is typical for those who have already determined their professional direction and secured employment in their field. Among those aged 23 and older, the share working in their profession is slightly lower, which may be explained by the fact that some adult graduates underwent retraining or studied through public employment services and do not always work in their newly acquired qualification.

Regional differences in working in the acquired profession are significant, indicating uneven demand structures and varying opportunities across local labour markets.

Fig. 24. Working in the trained occupation by region, %

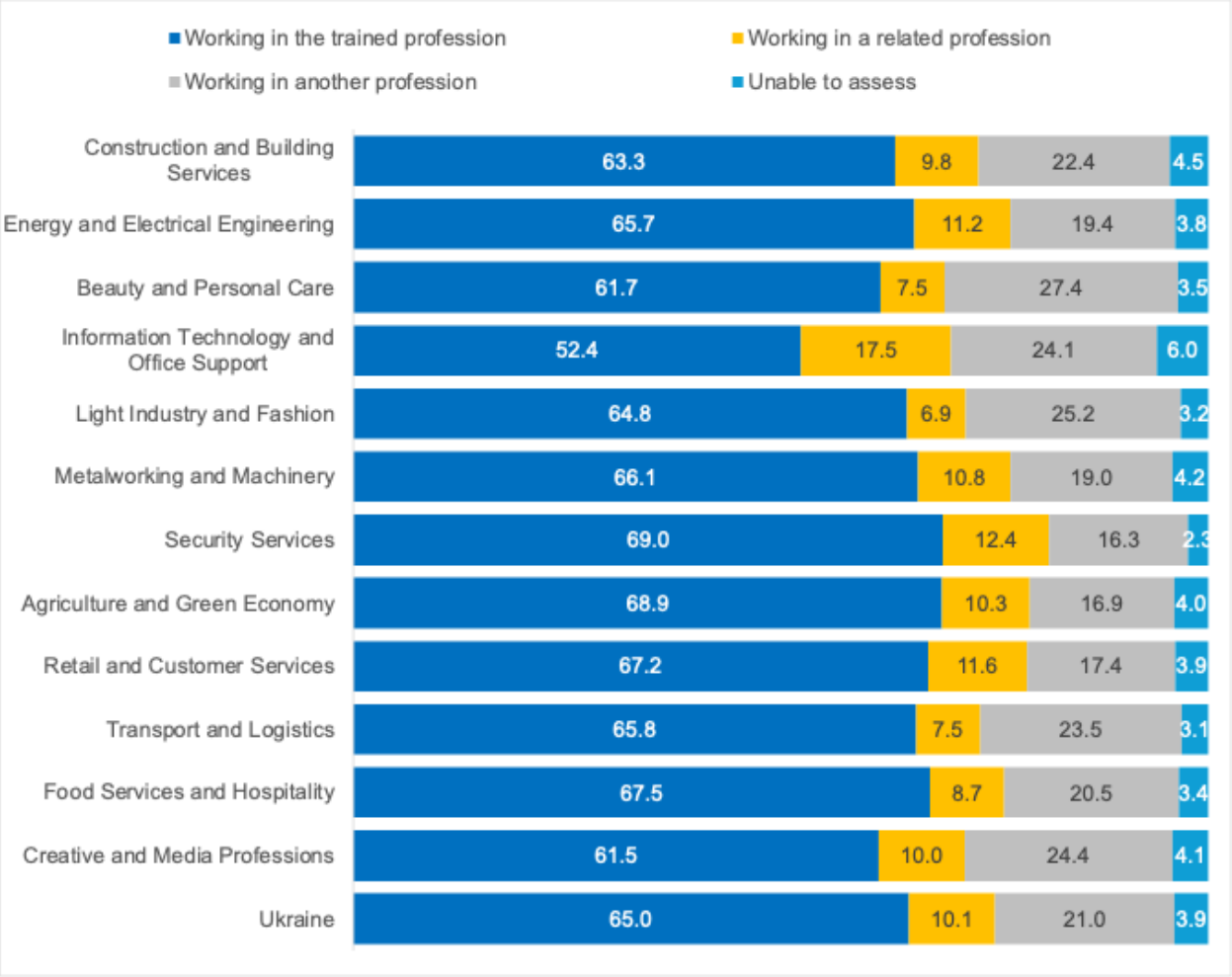


The highest levels of employment in the acquired profession (above 70%) are recorded in Zhytomyr (76.0%), Kirovohrad (75.1%), Vinnytsia (72.3%), Ivano-Frankivsk (71.2%) and Dnipropetrovsk (70.7%) regions.

The lowest levels (below 50%) are observed in Lviv (46.3%), Mykolaiv (47.5%), Ternopil (42.5%), Donetsk (45.8%) and Volyn (54.2%) regions. In these regions, a significant share of graduates (30–40%) are employed in occupations outside their field of training. Notably, regions with high levels of migration or strong service sectors (such as Lviv, Volyn and Mykolaiv) demonstrate more frequent changes of occupational field. This situation may be explained by a combination of factors that require deeper analysis.

The analysis of employment in the acquired profession across professional fields also reveals noticeable differences. The highest levels of occupational match (above 68%) are observed in professions related to security, agriculture, transport, trade, food services and machinery. Lower levels (below 60%) are recorded in IT (52.4%), creative professions (61.5%), the beauty industry (61.7%), and light industry and fashion (64.8%).

Fig. 25. Working in the trained occupation by occupational field of training, %



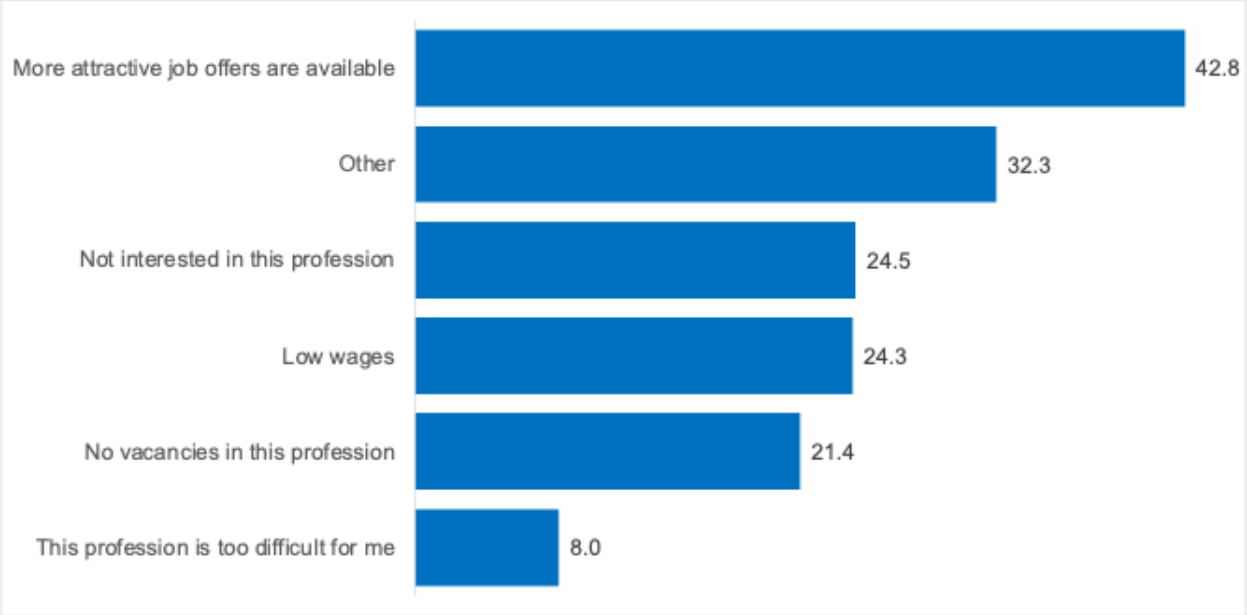
The IT sector stands out in particular: although it is a popular field of study, only about half of graduates work in their profession, while 24.1% are employed in completely different fields, reflecting a mismatch between training programmes and employer requirements.

The analysis of responses from graduates who work outside their acquired profession shows that the most common motives are market-related and value-based factors. The main reason is the availability of more attractive job offers (42.8%). The second most frequently mentioned category is “Other” (32.3%), which includes a wide range of individual situations such as seasonal work, migration plans, specific features of local labour markets and training systems, or transitions to family businesses. At the same time, the relatively high share of this category also indicates a limitation of the survey instrument, which should be addressed in future survey waves.

Other important reasons for working outside the trained profession include a mismatch between the job and the graduate’s interests or expectations (24.5%), as well as low

wages in the field of initial training (24.3%). Lack of vacancies in the profession was mentioned by 21.4% of graduates. The least common reason is the perceived excessive difficulty of working in the trained profession (8%).

Fig. 26. Reasons for working outside the trained occupation, %



Taken together, these results suggest that most transitions into other fields are driven primarily by the search for better working conditions or by changing professional preferences, rather than by a shortage of jobs in the trained profession.

An analysis of the reasons for working outside one's profession across professional fields helps to identify the largest gaps between training and actual employment outcomes.

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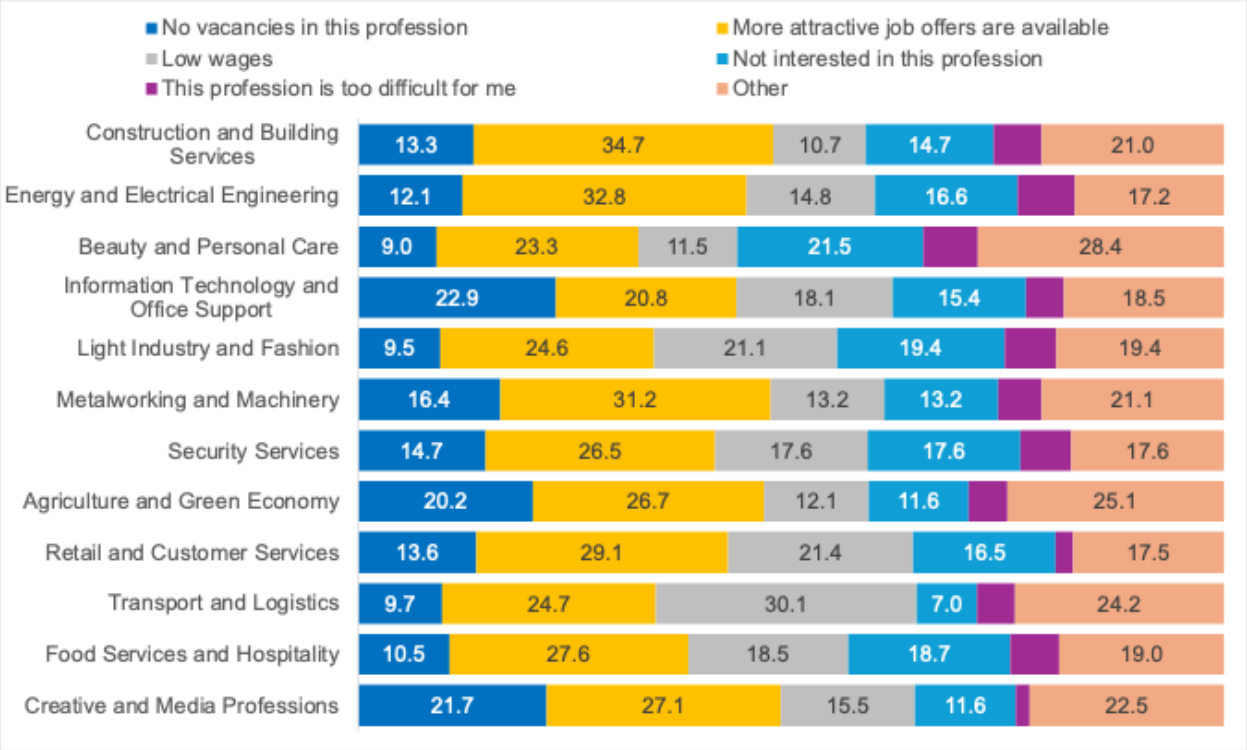
*In **technical and industrial occupations**, the main factor leading graduates to move into other sectors is the availability of **more attractive market opportunities**, rather than a lack of vacancies in their field of qualification.*

The results reveal significant differences between fields. The highest shares of the response "more attractive job offers are available" are observed among graduates in construction, machinery, food services, transport and trade — sectors where the labour market offers a wide range of alternative positions for workers with basic or transferable skills. In these fields, market incentives and the pursuit of higher wages or better working conditions play the dominant role in shaping employment choices.

Fig. 27. Reasons for working outside the trained occupation by occupational field of training, %



In fields related to light industry, trade and food services, the factor of low wages plays a significant role. In these sectors, the share of responses indicating “low salary” reaches 18–21%, reflecting the generally low wage levels in these industries and strong competition from other sectors offering higher earnings.

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*In **service sectors and light industry**, financial and value mismatches dominate: low pay or a lack of interest in the profession.*

A considerable share of responses stating that “the profession is not interesting” is recorded among graduates in the beauty industry (21.5%), light industry (19.4%) and food services (18.7%). These results point to a certain value mismatch, meaning that young people realise that the profession they initially chose does not correspond to their expectations, interests or perceived career prospects.

In IT and creative professions, a higher share of respondents report the absence of suitable vacancies (22.9% and 21.7% respectively), indicating a structural mismatch between the acquired qualifications and the level of practical experience required by employers.

Overall, the mismatch between employment and field of training has different underlying causes depending on the sector. In technical professions, it is mainly associated with the search for better employment conditions; in service occupations, with low wages and declining interest in working in the profession; and in creative and IT fields, with a limited number of relevant vacancies.

A territorial analysis of employment also makes it possible to assess how the reasons for working outside the trained profession differ depending on where graduates are employed: abroad, in their home region, or in another region of Ukraine.

Working outside one's profession abroad is more often forced, primarily due to the lack of accessible vacancies in the relevant field.

The results show that the largest structural barriers arise among those working abroad. The share of respondents indicating the absence of vacancies in their profession reaches 17.9%, the highest among all groups. This likely reflects situations in which Ukrainian qualifications cannot be easily applied in foreign labour markets or are not formally recognised.

In addition, this group shows a higher share of the response "other" (22.7%), which may reflect adaptation difficulties, language barriers, reorientation to another sector or the temporary nature of employment abroad.

Fig. 28. Reasons for working outside the occupation by place of employment, %

Among graduates working in their home region, the most common response is “more attractive job offers are available” (28.7%). This suggests that choosing a job outside one’s trained profession in the local region is mostly voluntary and related to the search for better working conditions, rather than a lack of employment opportunities in the field of qualification. A relatively high share of responses also indicates that “the profession is not interesting” (15.7%), highlighting the importance of value-based career choices and the need for career guidance to support informed professional trajectories.

Within Ukraine, voluntary motives for changing professional trajectories prevail, primarily the search for better working conditions or the mismatch between the profession and the graduate’s interests.

The structure of reasons among those employed in another region of Ukraine is somewhat intermediate. This group shows a slightly higher share of responses stating that the profession is not interesting (18.1%), which may reflect greater mobility and a higher willingness to change occupational fields when relocating. The share of responses indicating low wages (16.0%) is almost the same as among those who remained in their region of study, suggesting similar economic incentives.

Overall, the geography of employment significantly influences both the likelihood of working outside one's profession and the motivations behind this choice. For those working abroad, structural constraints play the dominant role, whereas within Ukraine, decisions are driven mainly by market incentives and value-based considerations.

2.5. Wages

Wages are one of the key indicators of the effectiveness of graduates' transition into the labour market. Information on earnings makes it possible to assess both the economic return of vocational education and the differences between groups by gender, age, region and type of employment. It should be noted that 18.6% of respondents declined to provide information on their income, which limits the level of detail in some cross-analyses. The following analysis therefore includes only those respondents who reported their income level.

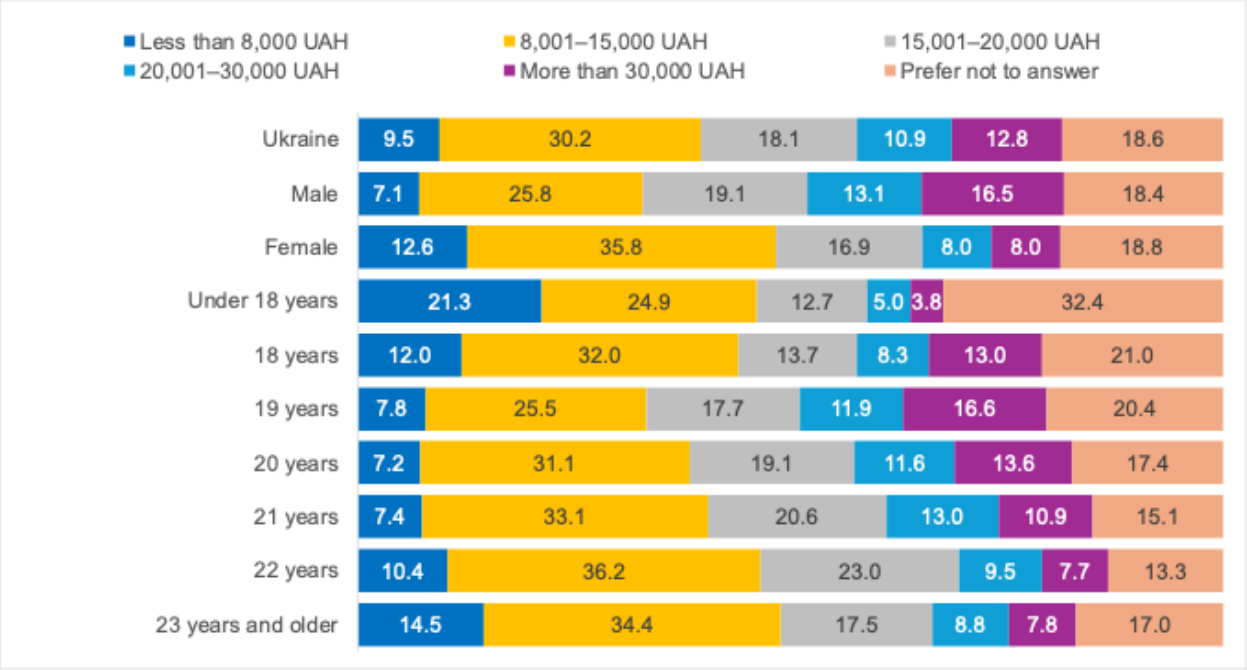
The median income of VET graduates in 2025 falls within the range of 12,000–15,000 UAH.

The most common income level among graduates is the 8,001–15,000 UAH range, which includes about one third of respondents. This corresponds to the typical level of entry-level wages for young workers in most sectors. Another 18.1% earn between 15,001 and 20,000 UAH, reflecting a transition into a more stable segment of employment. The share of higher incomes — above 30,000 UAH — accounts for 12.8%, and this share increases in segments related to technical professions or employment abroad.

A gender wage gap is already visible in the first year after graduation.

The distribution of incomes between men and women demonstrates clear inequality. Men are significantly more likely to earn over 20,000 UAH, while women are concentrated in lower income ranges — up to 15,000 UAH. The share of men earning more than 30,000 UAH is approximately twice as high as among women. This difference is largely explained by the sectoral structure of employment, where occupations traditionally dominated by women tend to be associated with lower levels of pay.

Fig. 29. Earnings by gender and age, %



Income levels increase with age in a fairly predictable manner. Younger respondents (under 18) mostly have lower earnings, which is associated with part-time employment or work without prior experience. The highest average incomes are observed among 22-year-old graduates. In this group, the share of those earning 15–20 thousand UAH is the largest, and the proportion of incomes above 30 thousand UAH also increases noticeably.

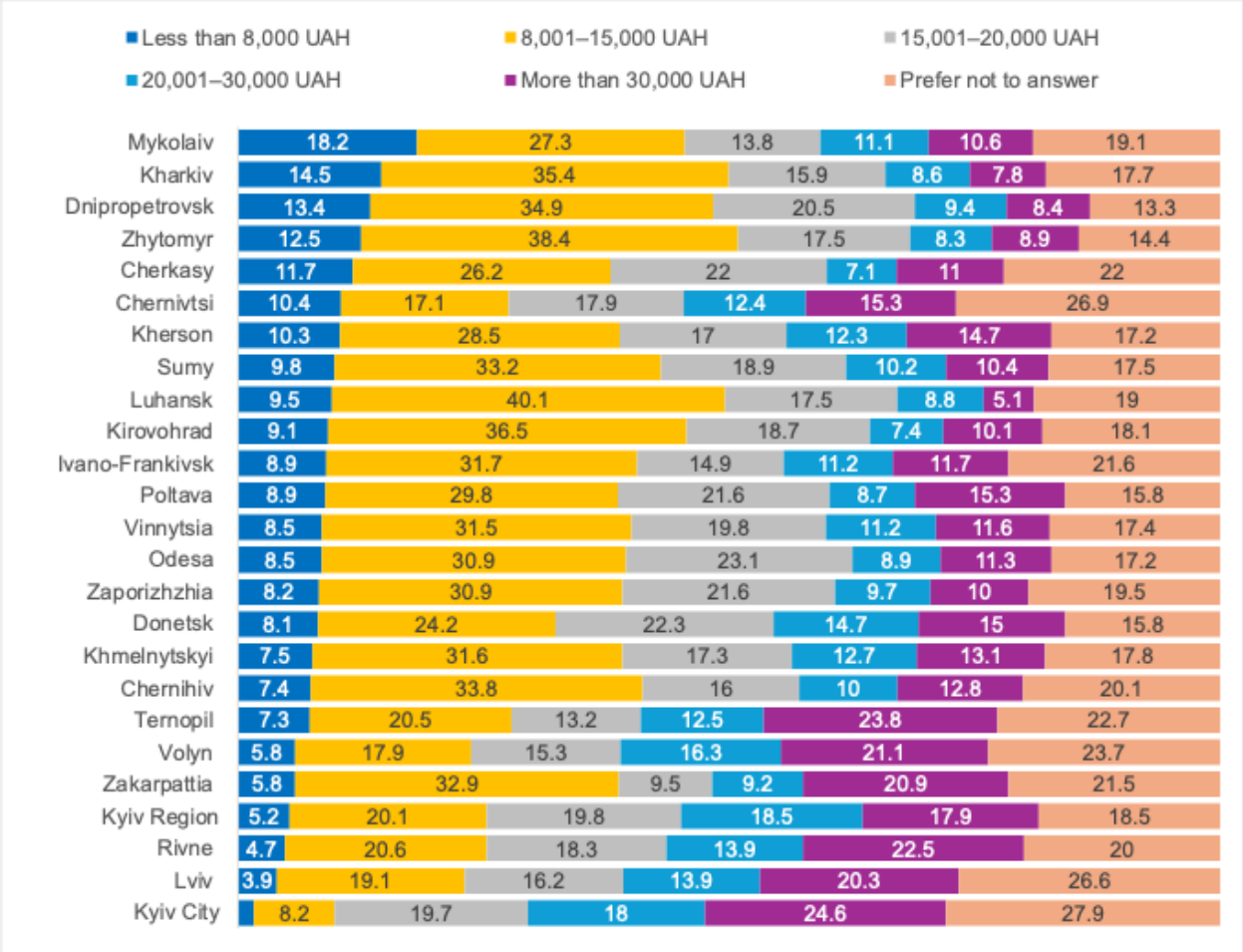
The “23 years and older” group has a different profile. A significant share of these graduates enters VET through retraining programmes, training referrals from public employment services, or after periods of unemployment. As a result, this group includes both experienced workers and individuals re-entering the labour market, which makes income levels more heterogeneous and prevents them from being interpreted as a direct effect of age alone.

Urban agglomerations and industrial regions provide the highest income levels, while smaller regions show greater informality and a wider dispersion of earnings.

The regional distribution of income is highly uneven. The highest wage levels are recorded in Kyiv and Kyiv region, where the share of incomes above 30 thousand UAH is the highest in the country, and low incomes are relatively rare. In industrial regions —

Dnipropetrovsk, Poltava and Zaporizhzhia — the 15–30 thousand UAH salary segment dominates, reflecting the structure of their labour markets. Western regions show a relatively higher share of incomes above 20 thousand UAH, but also a higher rate of non-response, which may partly be associated with informal employment or earnings received abroad.

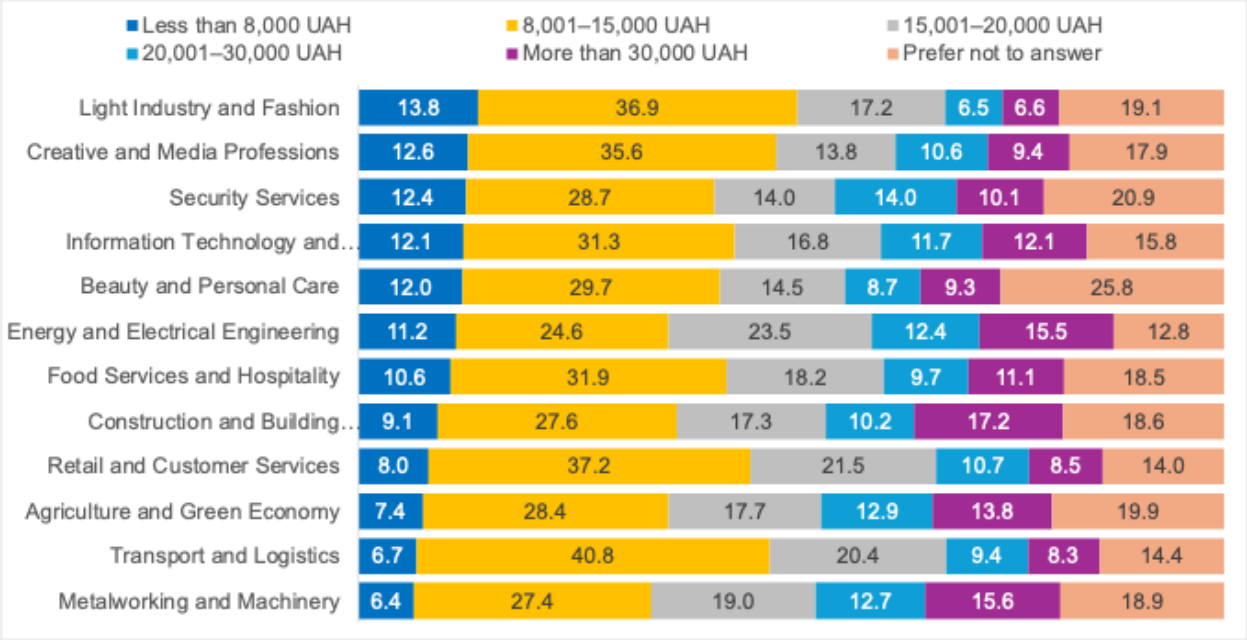
Fig. 30. Earnings by region, %



A comparison across fields of education shows that the highest wages are associated with technical and engineering specialisations. Graduates in energy, electrical engineering, machinery and construction are significantly more likely to fall into the income category above 20,000 UAH.

By contrast, in professions related to trade, the beauty industry and creative fields, lower income levels prevail. This corresponds to their general position in the Ukrainian labour market, where these fields are traditionally among the lower-paid sectors.

Fig. 31. Earnings by occupational field of training, %



The form of employment significantly influences the income levels of graduates. The highest earnings are observed among those with permanent formal employment: the share of incomes above 20,000 UAH in this group reaches around 24% (10.7% earn between 20–30 thousand UAH and 13.5% earn more than 30 thousand UAH).

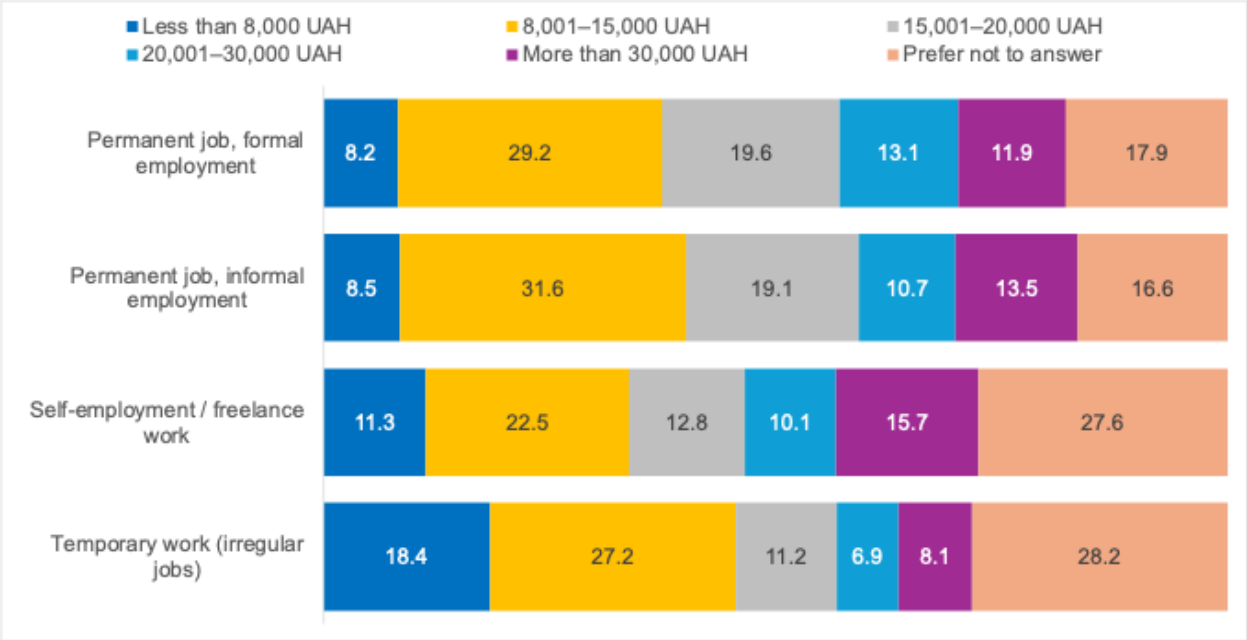
In contrast, among temporarily employed graduates, low incomes dominate: 18.4% earn less than 8,000 UAH, while the share of higher incomes (above 20,000 UAH) is the lowest — only 14.9%. Permanent informal employment occupies an intermediate position in terms of income distribution, but overall, it remains below formal employment in the higher wage segments.

Self-employed and freelance workers demonstrate a wide variation in income levels. This group combines both relatively low earnings (11.3% earn less than 8,000 UAH) and relatively high incomes (15.7% earn more than 30,000 UAH). Such a distribution reflects the heterogeneity of self-employment: some individuals operate in low-paid segments, while others have access to higher and more flexible sources of income. However, the stability of such earnings is considerably lower compared with permanent formal employment.

Across all forms of employment, there is a noticeable share of respondents who prefer not to disclose their income. The highest proportions are observed among temporarily employed workers (28.2%) and the self-employed (27.6%), which may be related to income instability, irregular payments, or partial informality of earnings. Among those in permanent formal employment, the share of non-responses is lower (16.6%), which

indirectly confirms the greater predictability and transparency of incomes in the formal sector. Overall, the pattern of non-responses highlights different levels of income stability and formalisation across employment types.

Fig. 32. Earnings by form of employment, %



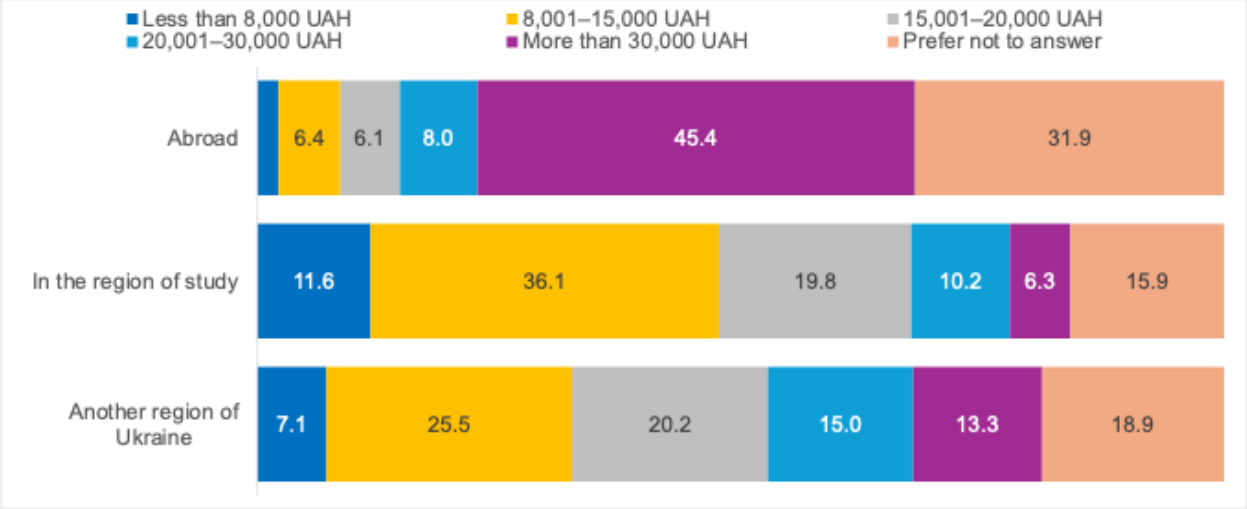
Employment abroad provides the highest incomes among all groups — approximately three to four times higher than the average earnings of young workers in Ukraine.

Graduates working abroad report substantially higher income levels: almost half earn more than 30,000 UAH, which significantly exceeds the national average. Low incomes occur almost exclusively among those engaged in part-time or temporary work. Among those working within Ukraine, the 8,000–15,000 UAH range dominates, while higher incomes remain much less common.

Within Ukraine, income levels vary considerably depending on where graduates are employed. Those who remain in their region of study most frequently earn 8,000–15,000 UAH (36.1%), while the share of high incomes (above 30,000 UAH) is minimal — only 6.3%. Among those working in other regions of Ukraine, the income distribution is more mixed: the share of higher earnings (13.3%) is somewhat higher, but the share of low incomes is also noticeable. This indicates that relocating to another region opens access to a wider range of opportunities but does not guarantee higher earnings.

In contrast, working abroad fundamentally changes the income structure: high incomes become the norm, while medium and low incomes are observed mainly among those with temporary or partial employment.

Fig. 33. Earnings by place of employment, %



Overall, the income levels of VET graduates are determined by a combination of three key factors: the form of employment, the professional field, and the location of employment. The highest incomes are associated with permanent formal employment, technical fields of training, and work abroad.

In contrast, unstable forms of employment, service and humanities-related professions, and employment within local labour markets tend to be associated with lower levels of pay.

In general, the income structure of graduates reflects the broader situation in the Ukrainian labour market: technical occupations remain the most highly paid, while service sectors and creative professions are typically less stable and lower paid.

2.6. Employment and Needs of Vulnerable Groups

Graduates of VET institutions from vulnerable groups face specific barriers when entering the labour market, which significantly affects both their employment rates and the nature of their professional trajectories. Although the share of each individual vulnerability category within the overall sample is relatively small, their combined representation among respondents is substantial (40.4%). This makes it possible to identify broader systemic problems related to the integration of vulnerable youth into the labour market — ranging from limited access to vacancies and potential professional discrimination to the need for additional support instruments, counselling and guidance.

The largest groups among these categories are graduates from large families (13.0%), internally displaced persons (9.2%), and young people from low-income households (6.6%). Other groups at increased risk include semi-orphans (5.9%), unemployed respondents at the time of the survey (5.1%), members of veterans' families (4.2%), orphans (3.1%), and young people with disabilities (2.3%). The presence of these groups in the sample makes it possible to assess how their transition into the labour market differs, what barriers they encounter and which support mechanisms may be particularly important for them.

Although the survey covers a wide range of vulnerable categories, the number of respondents in most of these groups remains relatively small, which limits the possibility of conducting reliable statistical analysis without a risk of significant sampling error. Therefore, the further analysis is conducted for the combined group of graduates belonging to vulnerable categories. This approach allows for more stable and generalised conclusions regarding their employment chances, barriers and support needs.

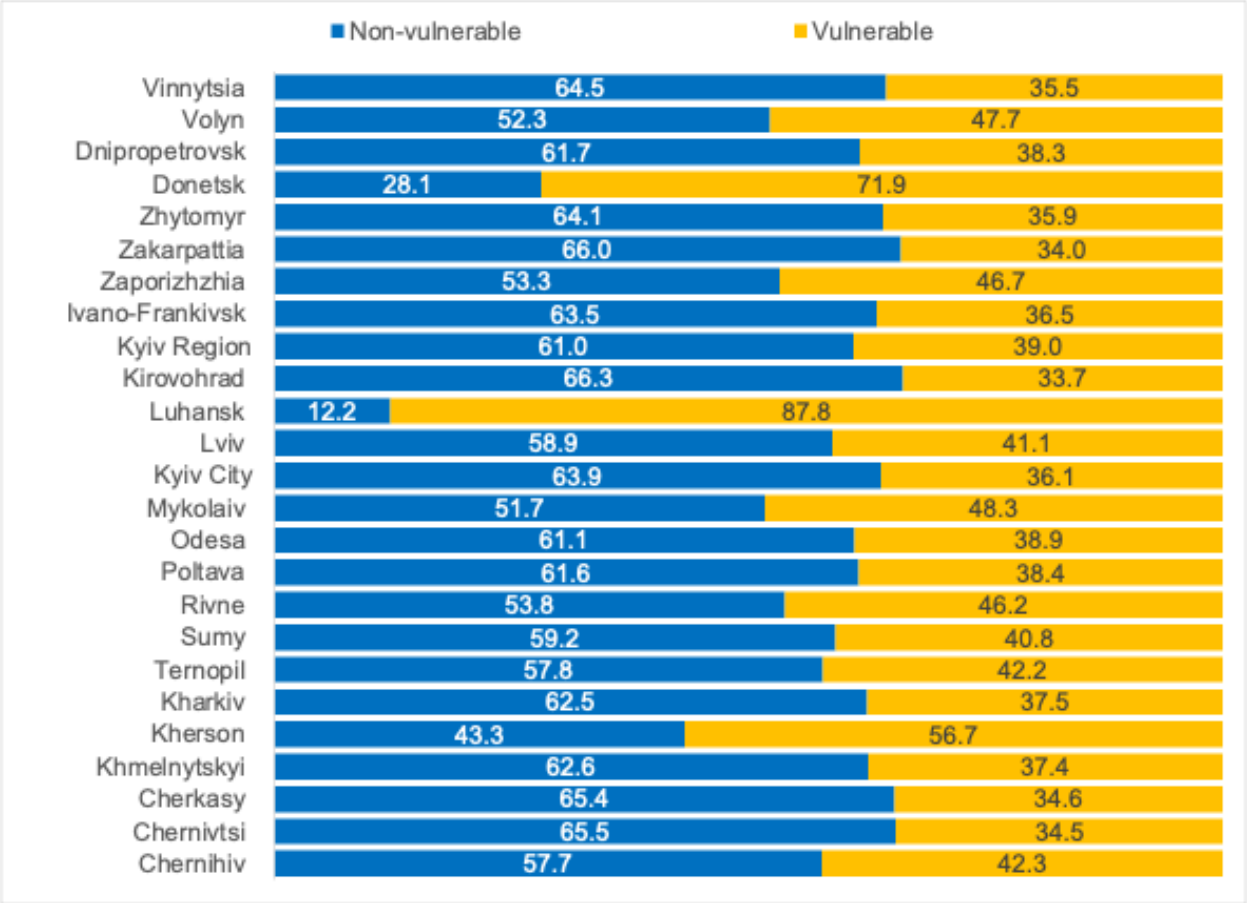
A comparison of distributions for vulnerable groups by gender and age does not reveal significant or systematic deviations from the overall national pattern. The differences between groups are relatively small and do not form clear trends. A slightly higher share of vulnerable respondents is observed among women (44.8%) and among the youngest graduates (under 18 — 48.6%), which may reflect both family circumstances and differences in household-level social support. In older age groups, the share of vulnerable respondents gradually decreases, although this appears to be more a structural feature of the sample rather than a consistent pattern. Overall, the data suggest that vulnerable groups are relatively evenly represented in the sample and their share does not depend strongly on gender or age.

By gender, this group is moderately feminised. Among graduates belonging to vulnerable groups, women account for 52.9% and men for 47.1%. The age profile of graduates classified as vulnerable largely corresponds to the typical structure of VET graduates, although with several specific features. More than half of this group consists of young people aged 19–20 (57% in total) — the core cohorts who enter the labour market immediately after completing education. Younger graduates (under 18) account for 7%, while older graduates (23 and above) represent 13.9%, which mainly reflects the presence of adult students enrolled through retraining programmes or referrals from public employment services.

Overall, graduates belonging to vulnerable groups represent a large and heterogeneous population, combining both young people following typical vocational education pathways and older graduates with more complex educational and life trajectories.

The regional distribution of vulnerable graduates shows noticeable differences, although most of them are explained not by regional socio-economic conditions themselves but by the structure of the sample and migration processes related to the war. The highest shares of vulnerable respondents are recorded in Kherson (56.7%), Donetsk (71.9%) and nominally in Luhansk regions. In these regions, a significant proportion of respondents classified as vulnerable are internally displaced persons who completed their studies in regions where educational institutions were relocated. Therefore, the high level of vulnerability in these regions reflects mass displacement and changes in places of study after 2022, rather than the characteristics of the local labour market.

Fig. 34. Share of vulnerable groups among graduates by region, %



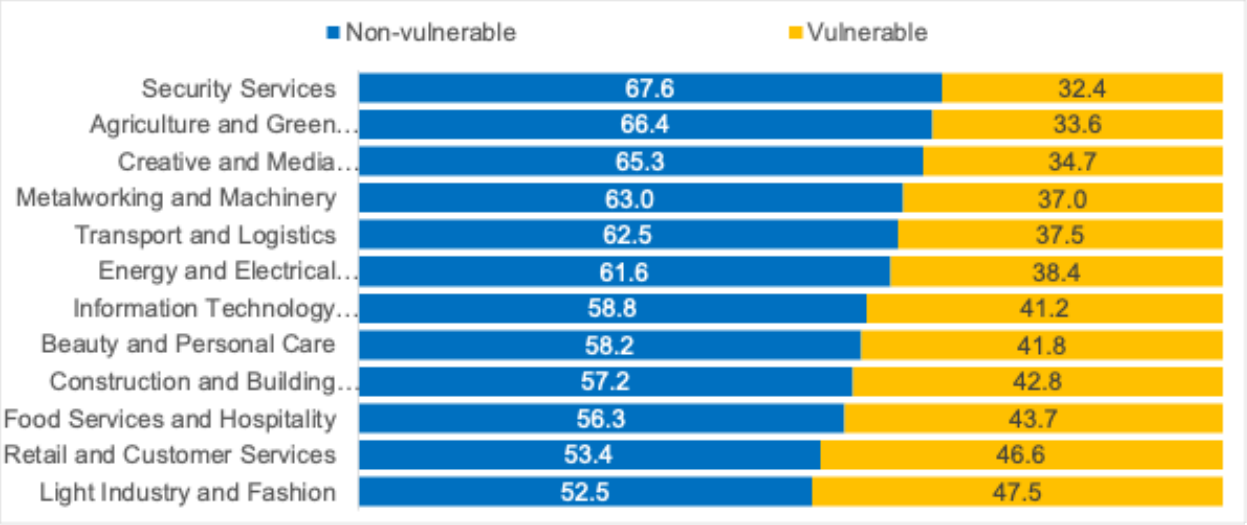
In the remaining regions, the share of vulnerable graduates generally ranges between 33% and 48%, which is close to the national average (40.4%). Only a few regions show noticeably lower values — for example, Vinnytsia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Zhytomyr, Cherkasy and Chernivtsi regions, where the share of vulnerable graduates is approximately 34–37%. This may be explained by a more stable social environment, a smaller number of internally displaced persons and relatively better socio-economic conditions of households.

At the same time, higher shares of vulnerable respondents (40–48%) in Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Rivne and Sumy regions reflect a mixed effect: the combination of local socio-economic challenges and the significant presence of families affected by the war, job losses or difficult life circumstances.

Overall, the regional profile of vulnerable respondents indicates that the key determinant is migration and the impact of the war, rather than the “strength” or “weakness” of individual labour markets. For this reason, the high vulnerability rates recorded in Kherson, Donetsk and nominally Luhansk regions should be interpreted primarily through the lens of displacement and the relocation of VET institutions, rather than as a reflection of local economic conditions.

The distribution of graduates from vulnerable groups across professional fields shows moderate differences but does not indicate systemic inequality in access to education. In most fields, the share of vulnerable respondents remains within 33–43%, which is close to the national average (40.4%). This suggests that VET education remains accessible to young people from vulnerable backgrounds, and that their professional choices are not strongly constrained by their socio-economic status.

Fig. 35. Share of vulnerable groups among graduates by occupational field of training, %



The highest shares of graduates from vulnerable groups are observed in the following professional fields: light industry (47.5%), trade and customer services (46.6%), food services and hospitality (43.7%), and the beauty industry (41.8%). These fields traditionally have lower entry barriers and shorter training programmes, which makes them more accessible to young people facing more complex life circumstances.

In technical and engineering professions, the share of graduates from vulnerable groups is somewhat lower (32–38%). This is partly related to the strong male orientation of these fields, while the overall level of social vulnerability among male respondents in the

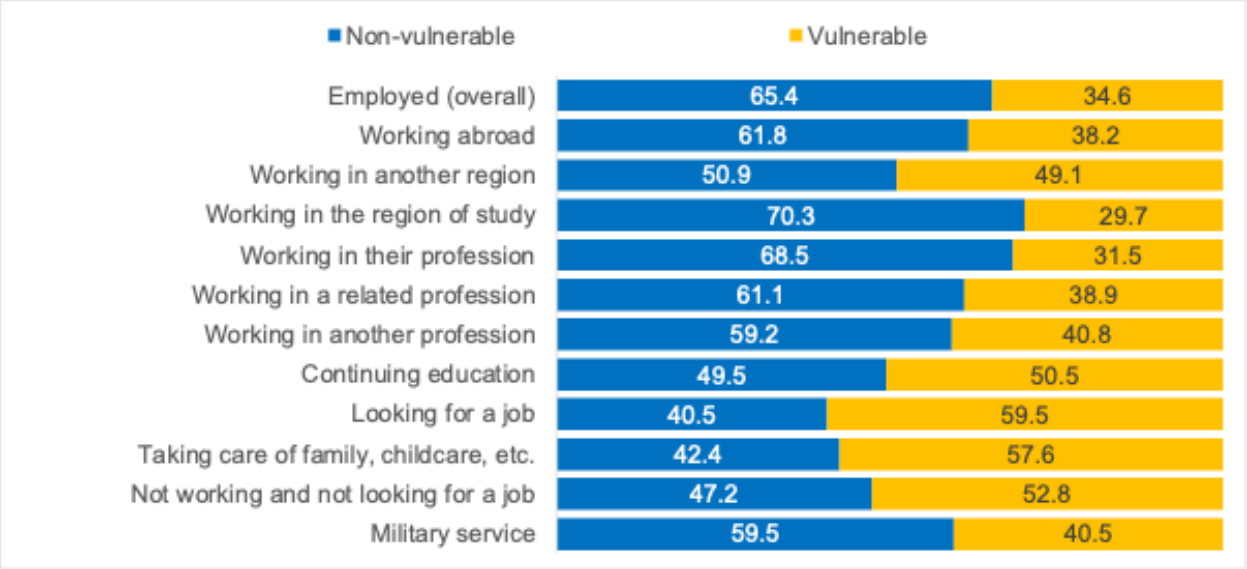
survey is slightly lower. However, even in these areas the share of vulnerable groups remains substantial, confirming that there are no major barriers preventing them from entering professions with higher earning potential.

Overall, the data indicate that young people from vulnerable groups are represented across nearly all professional fields, and that the VET system provides relatively equal access to different educational trajectories.

The employment rate among graduates who do not belong to vulnerable groups is noticeably higher. 65.4% of these respondents are employed, whereas among graduates belonging to vulnerable groups only 34.6% are working. This reflects differences in starting opportunities and available resources. At the same time, more than one third of graduates from vulnerable groups successfully enter the labour market immediately after completing their education.

A particularly high share of graduates from vulnerable groups is observed among those actively seeking employment (59.5%), which indicates the presence of additional barriers during the job search process.

Fig. 36. Employment status of graduates by belonging to vulnerable groups, %



Graduates belonging to vulnerable groups tend to demonstrate higher territorial mobility, which is often forced rather than voluntary. Among those working in another region of Ukraine, the share of graduates from vulnerable groups reaches 49.1%, accounting for nearly half of all mobile workers. In contrast, among those who remain employed in the region where they studied, their share is significantly lower (29.7%). This confirms that young people from vulnerable backgrounds are more likely to seek opportunities outside their local labour markets.

In the segment of employment abroad, the share of graduates from vulnerable groups is also relatively high (38.2%), which may reflect both economic motivations and the limited availability of quality job opportunities in their regions of residence.

Graduates who do not belong to vulnerable groups are considerably more likely to work in their trained profession(68.5%), whereas among graduates from vulnerable categories this share is 31.5%. The proportion of those employed in another profession is significantly higher among vulnerable graduates (40.8%), indicating difficulties in accessing relevant vacancies or the need to accept less favourable employment conditions.

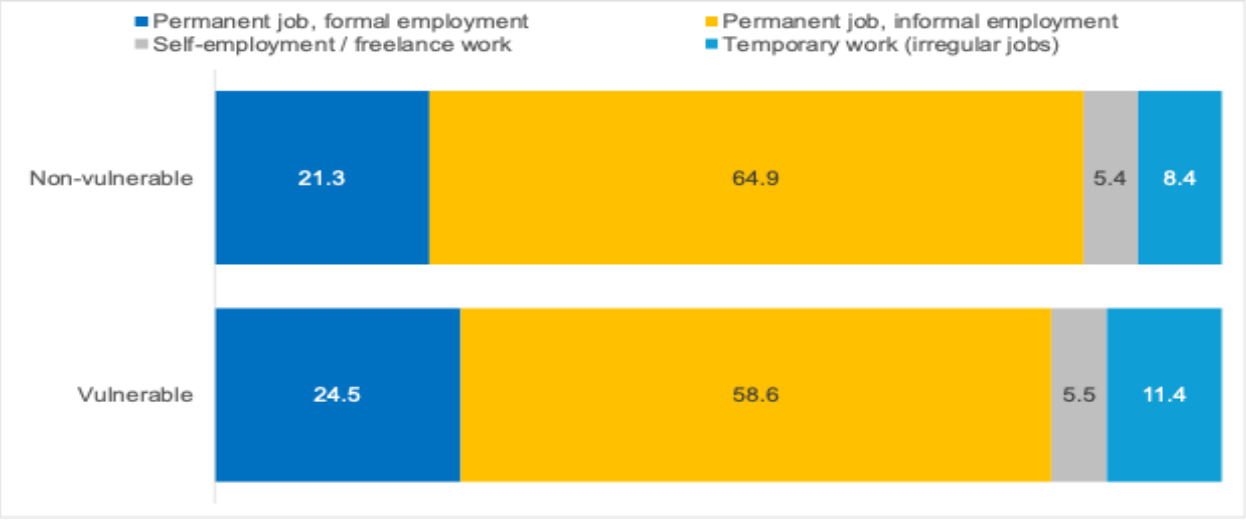
Among those who continue their education, graduates from vulnerable groups account for 50.5%, suggesting that further education is often used as an alternative strategy, including as a way to compensate for weaker starting positions in the labour market.

Overrepresentation of graduates from vulnerable groups is also observed among economically inactive categories:

- among those engaged in household activities — 57.6%,
- among those not working and not seeking employment — 52.8%.

The employment structure among working graduates belonging to vulnerable groups is generally similar to that of other graduates, but several important differences remain. In both groups, permanent formal employment dominates, but its share is lower among vulnerable graduates — 58.6% compared to 64.9% among those not belonging to vulnerable groups. This indicates that even after successfully entering the labour market, young people from vulnerable categories less frequently obtain formal employment contracts.

Fig. 37. Forms of employment by belonging to vulnerable groups, %



At the same time, the share of permanent informal employment is noticeably higher among graduates from vulnerable groups (24.5% compared to 21.3%). In other words, they are more likely to be employed in stable but informal jobs. The levels of self-employment are almost identical (5.4–5.5%), suggesting similar opportunities and interest in this form of employment among both groups.

The largest difference is observed in the segment of temporary employment: among graduates from vulnerable groups, 11.4% are engaged in temporary work, compared to only 8.4% among other graduates. This confirms that social vulnerability slightly increases the risk of being employed in unstable, irregular or seasonal jobs.

The main inequality between the groups does not lie in a sharp shift toward unstable forms of employment, but rather in the reduced accessibility of formal jobs and the increased share of temporary and informal employment formats among graduates from vulnerable groups. This indicates the need for additional support specifically at the stage of searching for the first stable job, including assistance in connecting with formal employers and reducing the risk of becoming trapped in temporary or informal employment arrangements.

In summary, graduates belonging to vulnerable groups face noticeable barriers in the transition to their first job: they are less likely to be employed, more likely to change regions, less likely to work in their trained profession, and more likely to remain economically inactive. Even among those who are employed, the share of formal employment is lower, while the proportion of temporary and informal employment formats is higher.

At the same time, a significant share of young people from vulnerable categories successfully adapt to the labour market, which highlights the importance of strengthening career support mechanisms and guidance tools at the beginning of their professional trajectories.

2.7. Graduates Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET Group)

The analysis of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is an important element in assessing the transition of VET graduates to the labour market. Unlike the general employment indicator, the NEET indicator makes it possible to assess not only the fact of employment, but also the scale of young people's socio-economic vulnerability.

In international approaches (ILO, Eurostat, OECD), the NEET group is used as a key indicator of the effectiveness of youth policy, the state of the labour market, and the capacity of the education system to ensure a successful start to a career. For the VET

system, this indicator is particularly important, since graduates who move neither into further education nor into employment face a high risk of prolonged exclusion from the labour market, an accumulation of poverty risks and a loss of professional skills.

The identification of NEETs in this study is based on respondents' answers to the question "Are you currently working?" and, in the case of a negative response, on a follow-up question clarifying the reasons for non-employment.

The classification applies the international definition of NEET (ILO / Eurostat): a young person is considered NEET if they are simultaneously not working, not studying, and not seeking work (or seeking work, in the case of NEET-Unemployed).

Based on the available response categories in this survey, three clearly defined groups were included in the NEET category:

- "Looking for work" – corresponds to the category of unemployed NEETs (NEET-Unemployed);
- "Not working and not looking for work" – corresponds to the group of economically inactive NEETs;
- "Taking care of family, household, childcare, etc." – is also conventionally included in NEET as part of economically inactive youth.

The category "Other" remains outside the NEET category, as its content is heterogeneous and does not allow for a reliable determination of respondents' status. The methodological rationale for this is based on the high probability of erroneous or situational responses. In the context of youth surveys, particularly among VET graduates, the response "Other" often reflects not so much actual labour market status as difficulties in interpreting the question, which may lead to incorrect self-identification as inactive, especially in cases of flexible, seasonal or informal forms of employment.

Thus, the calculated NEET indicator includes only those young people who: (1) are not working, (2) are not studying, and (3) are not looking for work according to international standards. This makes it possible to obtain a correct and comparable indicator, whereas the category "Other" cannot be accurately classified within the NEET approach.

The first important aspect of analysing the NEET category is assessing its overall share among all graduates, as well as the structure and significance of vulnerability characteristics within this group.

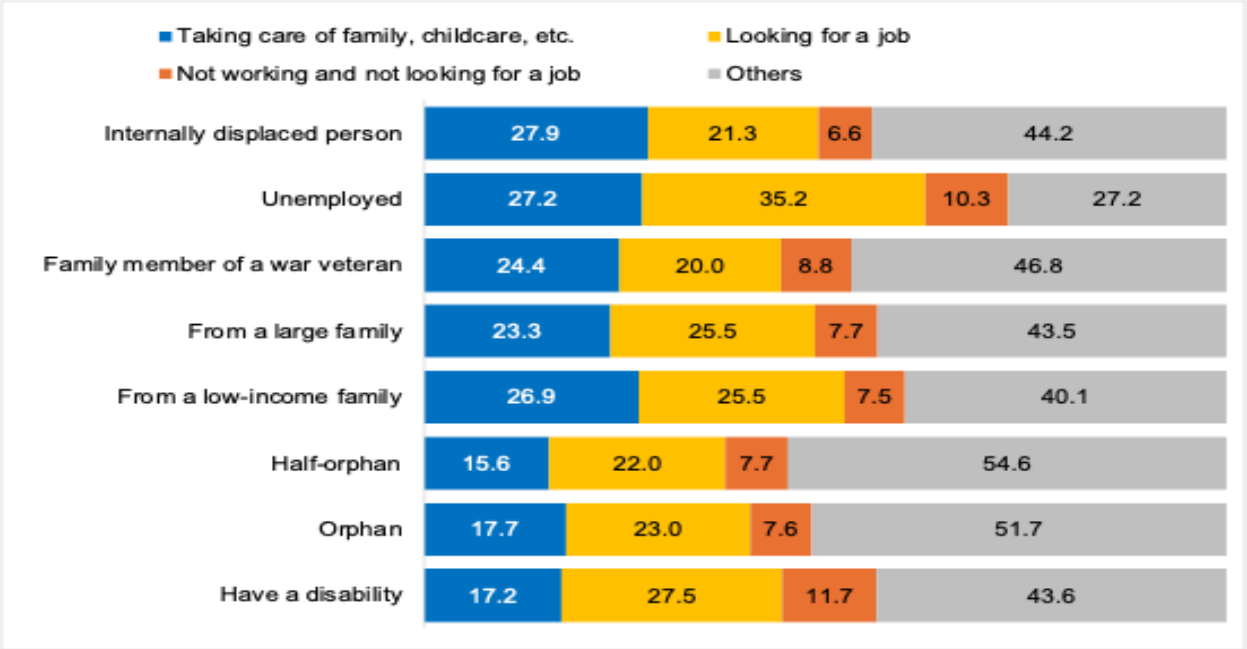
The overall share of NEETs among VET graduates is 14.0%. Within this group, the largest category consists of those engaged in family responsibilities, childcare, etc. (6.3% of all graduates or 44.7% of all NEETs), followed by those looking for work (5.7% and 42.4%, respectively). The share of those who reported that they are not working

and not looking for work is significantly smaller, amounting to 2.0% of graduates or 13.0% of all NEETs.

As shown in the previous section, the share of persons belonging to vulnerable groups in the overall sample is substantial and amounts to 40.4%. The largest such categories are graduates from large families (13.0%), internally displaced persons (9.2%), and young people from low-income families (6.6%). Other higher-risk groups include half-orphans (5.9%), unemployed persons at the time of the survey (5.1%), members of war veterans' families (4.2%), orphans (3.1%), and young people with disabilities (2.3%). At the same time, it is important to emphasise that the quantitative representation of different vulnerable groups in the sample is uneven. Some categories (in particular young people with disabilities, orphans, half-orphans, and members of veterans' families) are relatively small, which requires caution in interpreting their percentage indicators. Therefore, the analysis below does not equate the share of NEETs with the scale of the problem in absolute numbers, but instead considers the risk profile, that is, the probability of transition into NEET status among representatives of each group.

The analysis of the distribution of NEETs by vulnerability characteristics shows that the risk of dropping out of education and employment varies significantly across social categories. The highest NEET values are observed among internally displaced persons, of whom 27.9% are engaged in family care, while another 21.3% are actively looking for work. Overall, more than half of IDPs are in a status that limits their economic activity. This reflects the consequences of losing housing, social networks, access to childcare infrastructure, and the general destabilisation following forced migration.

Fig. 38. NEET statuses within the structure of vulnerable groups, %



Similarly high risks are recorded among those unemployed at the time of the survey: 35.2% of them are looking for work, while 10.3% are not looking, indicating significant barriers to entering the labour market. Members of veterans' families demonstrate a combined risk profile: 24.4% are engaged in care-related responsibilities, 20.0% are looking for work, and 8.8% are not seeking work, which may indicate psychological and social burdens within households affected by the experience of war.

Among young people from large and low-income families, elevated NEET risks are also observed: approximately one quarter of them are engaged in care responsibilities or are actively looking for work. This points to the role of material constraints, lack of resources for continuing education, and limited opportunities for mobility.

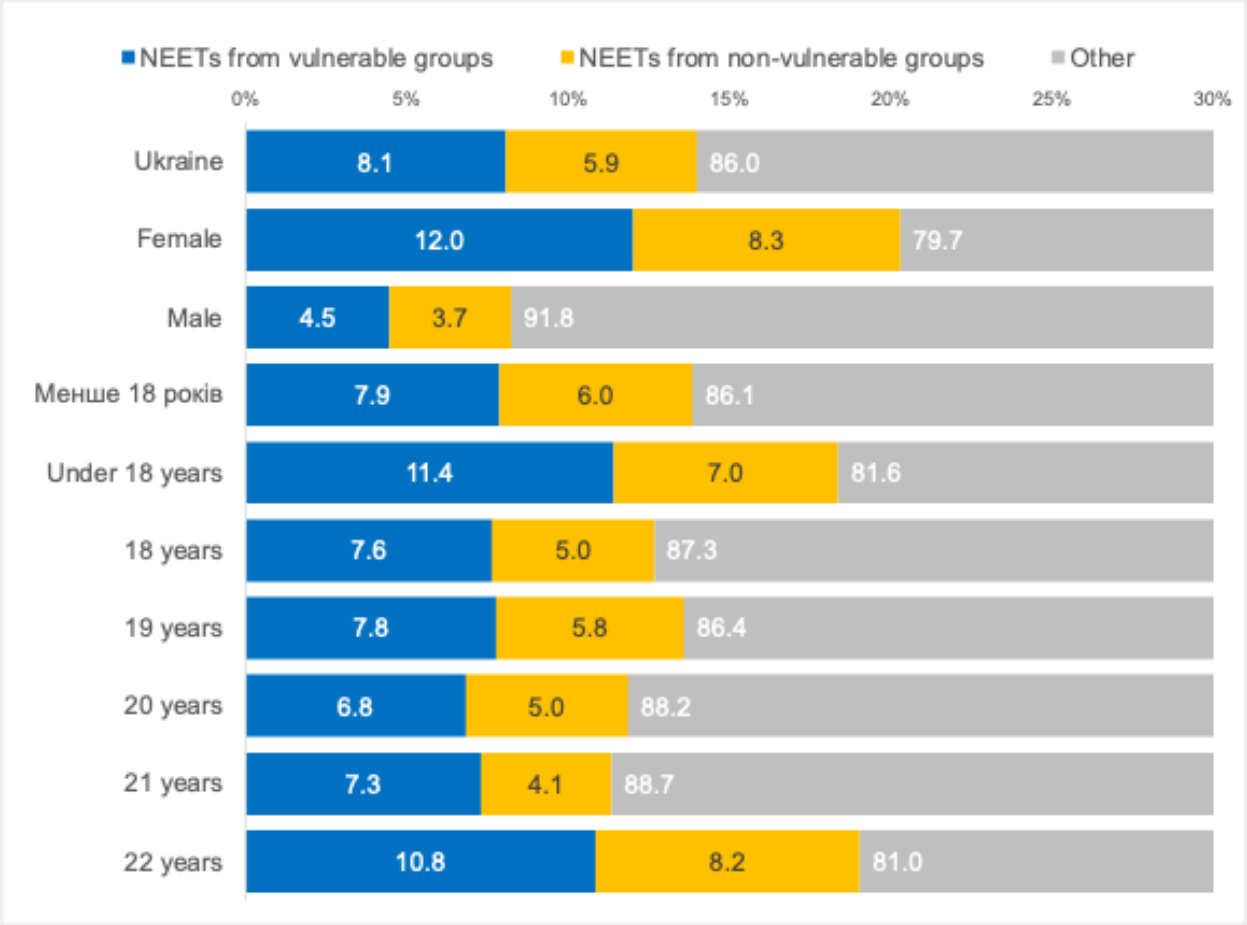
The highest level of vulnerability is observed among orphans and half-orphans: although these groups are relatively small, more than 20% of them are looking for work, while a significant share are engaged in caregiving responsibilities or fall into the category of "not working and not looking for work." This confirms international evidence showing that the absence of family support is one of the key factors associated with long-term NEET status.

Young people with disabilities demonstrate the most complex risk profile: 27.5% are looking for work, 17.2% are engaged in family responsibilities, and 11.7% report no activity in the labour market at all. Taken together, this makes them one of the groups with the highest probability of developing persistent NEET status.

In general, vulnerability cannot be considered homogeneous: different groups of young people have different motivations, face different barriers to labour market entry, and operate within different social contexts that shape their transition into NEET status. For this reason, effective policies aimed at supporting VET graduates should be segmented: universal measures facilitating the transition to employment should be complemented by targeted support programmes for specific categories of young people who face elevated risks of economic inactivity.

Unlike vulnerability characteristics, which reflect structural or social barriers, demographic indicators make it possible to assess broader patterns in the formation of NEET status among VET graduates and to identify groups with a higher or lower probability of dropping out of both education and employment. The diagram presented below shows the share of NEETs (among vulnerable and non-vulnerable categories) by gender and age groups, making it possible to assess not only the scale of the issue but also the potential mechanisms behind its formation across different groups of young people.

Fig. 39. Shares of NEETs among vulnerable and non-vulnerable groups by gender and age, %



Among women, the NEET rate is noticeably higher than among men, and the majority of this group consists of socially vulnerable categories. This is consistent with the fact that women more often face additional barriers, including family responsibilities, caregiving roles, and more limited opportunities for mobility.

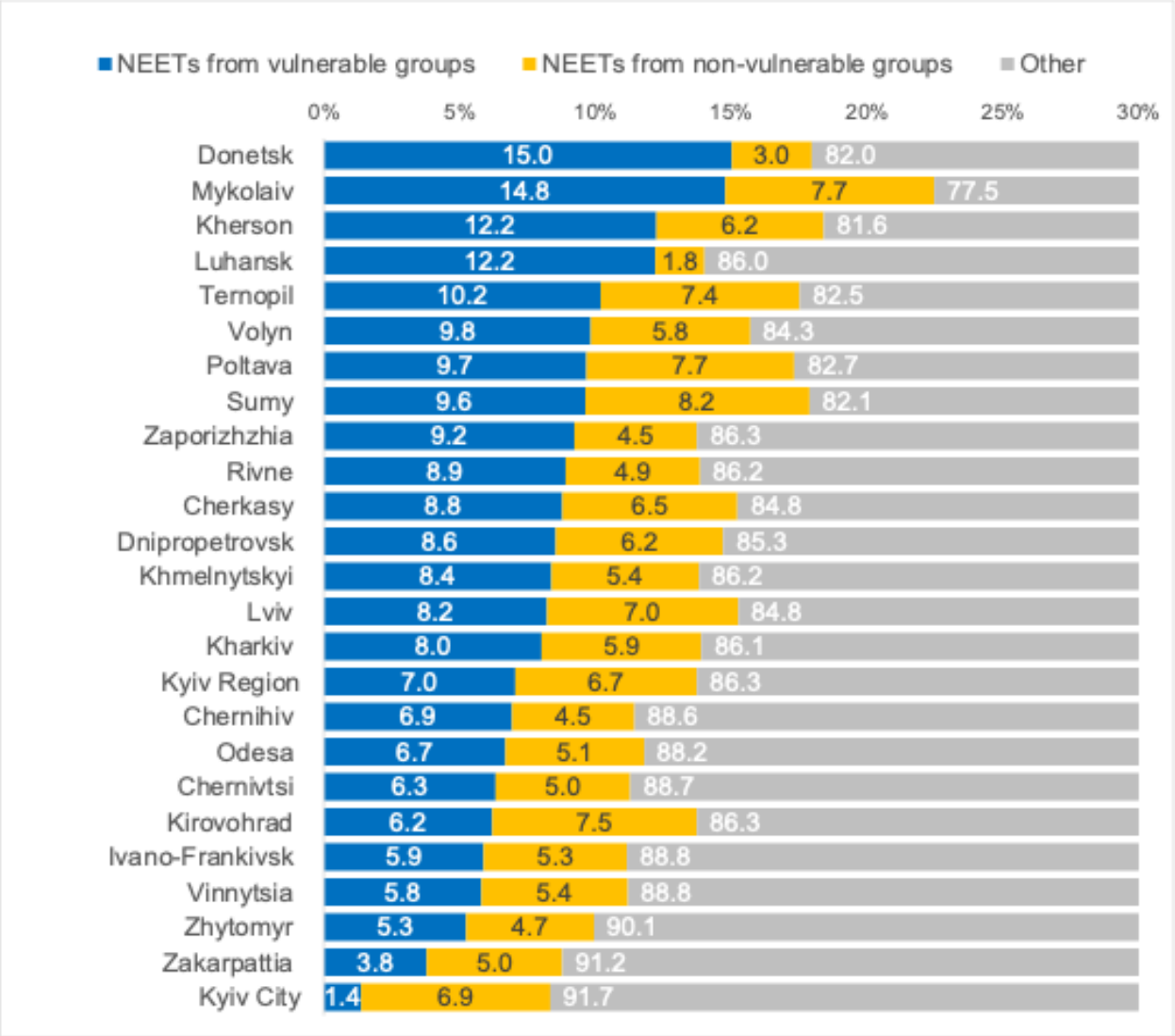
The 18-year-old age group shows the highest share of NEETs among all respondents, and a significant part of this figure is formed by young people with indicators of social vulnerability. In the 19–22 age group, the overall share of NEETs decreases, and the contribution of vulnerable and non-vulnerable groups becomes more balanced. This suggests that for most young people during this period, the first successful transition into employment or further education takes place, regardless of social status.

However, among respondents aged 23 and older, a noticeable presence of NEETs emerges again, with socially vulnerable young people constituting a larger share of this group. This may indicate that for some young people, barriers related to social circumstances remain significant even several years after completing education.

Overall, the analysis shows that social vulnerability is a significant factor associated with NEET status across all age groups, but its influence is particularly visible at early stages (age 18) and later stages (23+), when the need for support becomes most pronounced.

The regional distribution of NEETs also demonstrates substantial differences across Ukrainian regions, reflecting the specific characteristics of local labour markets, the scale of destruction and displacement, and the social structure of youth in different territories. In most regions, the share of NEETs is around 10–15%, but the balance between socially vulnerable youth and those without such characteristics varies considerably.

Fig. 40. Shares of NEETs among vulnerable and non-vulnerable groups by region, %



The highest shares of NEETs among graduates are recorded in Mykolaiv, Donetsk, and Kherson regions. A large proportion of NEETs in these regions consists of young people

belonging to socially vulnerable categories. This is consistent with the conditions these regions experienced during the war: destruction of infrastructure, contraction of local labour markets, limited mobility opportunities, and high levels of forced displacement. Under such circumstances, the risk of being outside employment or education is particularly high for young people who already face additional social or economic constraints.

Moderate shares of NEETs are observed in Sumy, Ternopil, Poltava, Volyn, Lviv, Cherkasy, and Dnipropetrovsk regions. In these regions, there is a more balanced proportion between vulnerable and non-vulnerable NEETs, suggesting a less concentrated vulnerability profile and a greater role of diverse individual factors explaining non-participation in employment or education.

The lowest shares of NEETs are observed in Zakarpattia region and the city of Kyiv. These territories are characterised by the largest proportion of young people who display neither NEET status nor social vulnerability. In the capital region, this may be linked to the high concentration of jobs and educational opportunities, while in Zakarpattia it may be associated with a relatively stable local economy and lower intensity of hostilities, creating more favourable conditions for young people's transition into employment.

In most regions, young people with indicators of social vulnerability constitute a significant share of NEETs, which points to the systemic impact of economic and social barriers on the ability of young people to integrate into the labour market. This suggests that regional support strategies should focus not only on job creation but also on reducing the social barriers that hinder young people during the transition period.

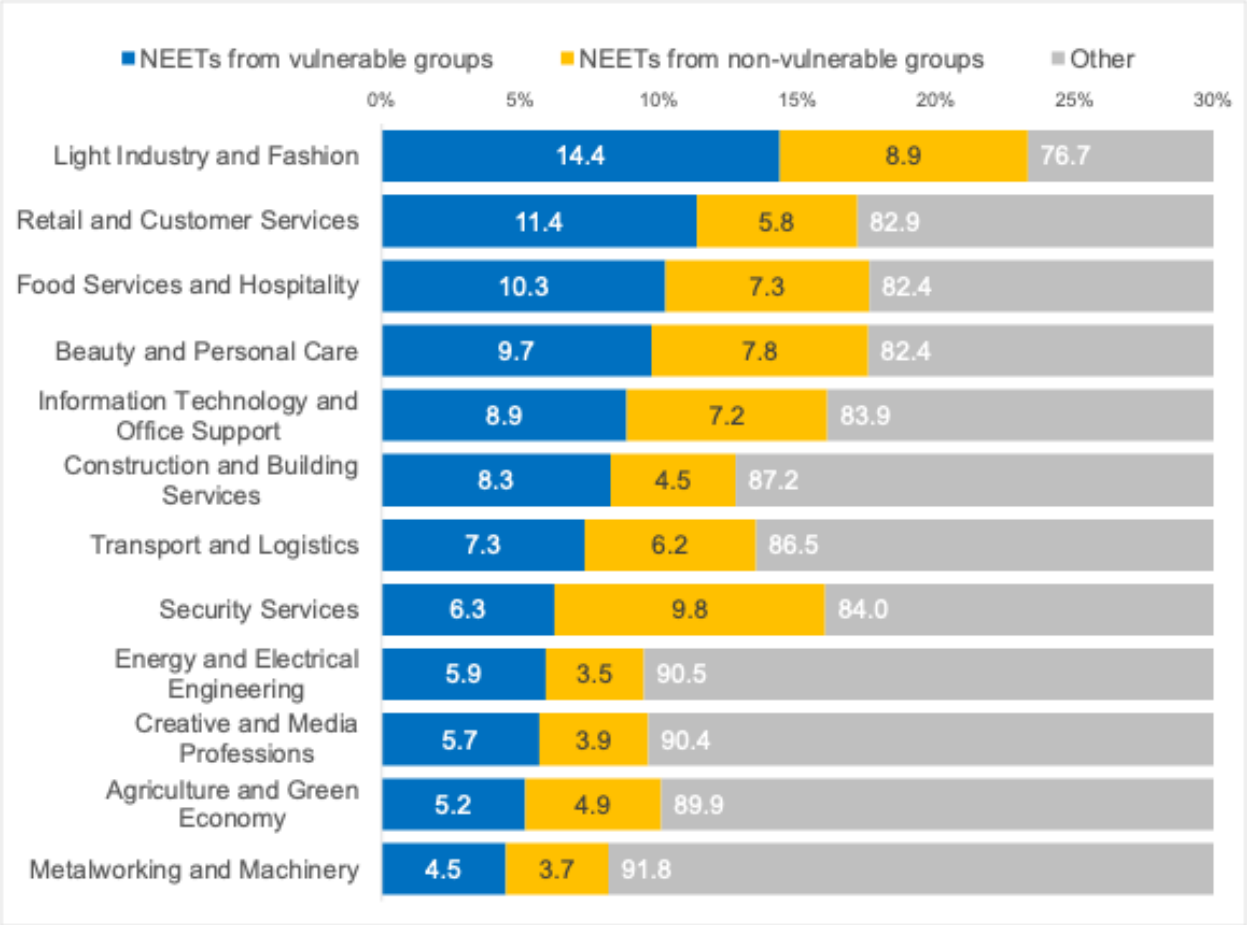
The structure of NEETs differs noticeably across professional fields, reflecting differences in access to a first job, employment conditions, and the broader socio-economic context of various sectors. However, additional gender-based analysis shows that gender is one of the key factors shaping the risk of falling into the NEET category across different professional groups.

The highest shares of NEETs are observed among graduates of light industry and fashion, trade and customer services, food and hospitality services, and the beauty and care industry. Women predominate in these groups, and it is among them that the share of NEETs—particularly among socially vulnerable categories—is the highest.

Professional groups with a technical profile—including information technologies and office support, construction and repair, transport and logistics, and security and safety—demonstrate moderate levels of NEETs, while the balance between vulnerable and non-vulnerable NEETs is considerably more even. These fields are characterised by a predominance of male graduates, although the share of women is also noticeable.

The lowest shares of NEETs are recorded in fields related to metalworking and machinery, energy and electrical engineering, agriculture and the green economy, as well as artistic and creative specialisations. These fields either have a clearly male-dominated profile (industrial and technical professions) or a more mixed composition. In technical sectors, the low share of NEETs can be explained by stable demand for specialists and rapid entry into the labour market. In artistic and creative professions, non-participation more often has an individual character, associated with the search for creative opportunities or with non-standard forms of employment.

Fig. 41. Shares of NEETs among vulnerable and non-vulnerable groups by occupational field of training, %



Thus, within the professional structure of NEETs, two key factors intersect: the characteristics of labour demand in specific fields and the gender profile of graduates. The most vulnerable fields are those where a high share of women coincides with unstable employment formats. In contrast, technical specialisations demonstrate a lower risk of NEET status, which corresponds to broader employment opportunities and sustained demand for skilled workers.

The results of the analysis show that the NEET category within the structure of VET graduates is heterogeneous, including both young people facing clear social risks and those who do not belong to any vulnerable group. This requires different policy approaches and different instruments for addressing barriers to labour market transition.

As noted in the previous section, individuals belonging to vulnerable groups generally face more numerous barriers: they are less likely to be employed, less likely to work in their trained profession, and more likely to remain economically inactive. These groups are characterised by limited social resources and more complex life circumstances, meaning that NEET status for them is primarily the result of systemic barriers—including forced displacement, economic instability within the family, caregiving responsibilities, limited mobility, or health conditions. In such cases, young people are less making an active “choice” not to participate and more facing an accumulation of external circumstances that complicate or prevent their transition into employment. This group requires priority and targeted support.

At the same time, a noticeable share of NEETs who do not belong to any vulnerable category (approximately 6% of graduates) deserves separate attention. For this group, the reasons for temporary non-participation in education or employment are less obvious and cannot be explained solely by social or economic vulnerability. The range of possible explanations becomes considerably broader and may involve other types of barriers. These may include local mismatches between labour demand and supply, uncertainty regarding career choices, psycho-emotional difficulties, low motivation to search for work, or weak channels of interaction between VET institutions and employers. In some professional fields (especially those with predominantly female structures), the causes may also be linked to instability of first jobs or a high prevalence of informal employment.

Thus, the NEET category consists of two fundamentally different structural groups: those who face objectively elevated risks, and those who require targeted support to enter a professional trajectory even without significant social constraints. Accordingly, effective public policy should differentiate between these groups, as their needs, the causes of non-participation, and the appropriate support mechanisms differ substantially.

2.8. Impact of the War on Employment

Assessing the impact of the war on employment is one of the central aspects of analysing the transition of graduates to the labour market in 2024–2025. Despite the prolonged duration of the full-scale war, its effects on employment remain uneven: they vary significantly depending on the region, gender, age, professional field, and the current labour market status of young people.

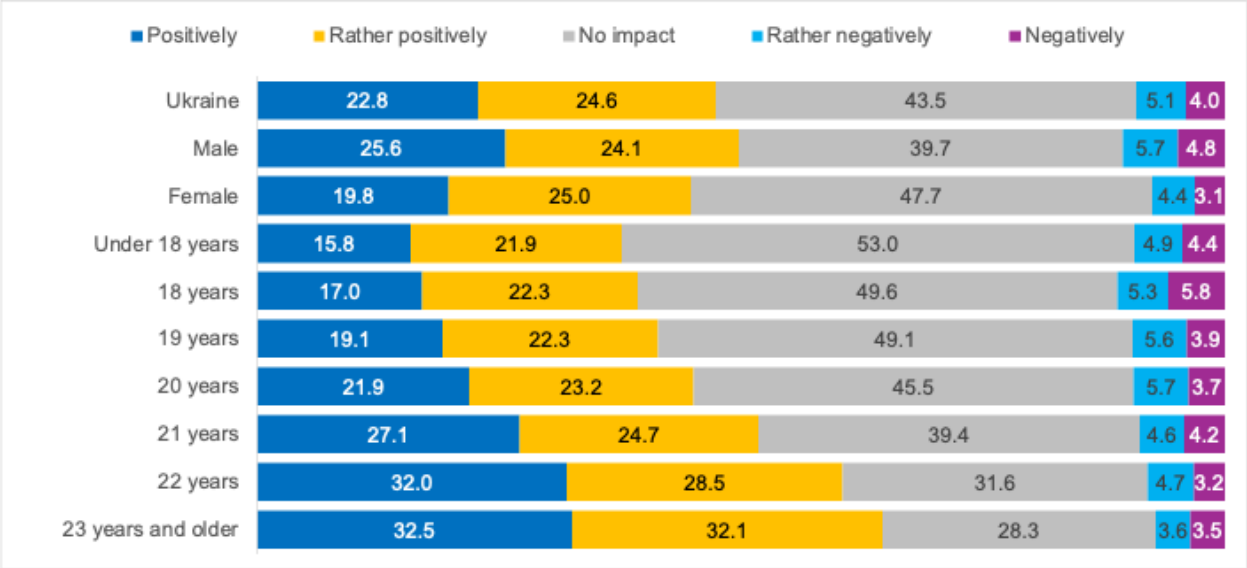
This subsection examines in detail how the war has influenced young people's employment opportunities, which groups experienced the most significant negative effects, where adaptation effects can be observed, and which factors—both negative and positive—respondents identify as key influences on their labour market decisions.

Most graduates describe the impact of the war on their employment opportunities as moderate or partial. The most common response is that the war did not affect their employment situation, reported by 43.5% of respondents. At the same time, almost half reported experiencing a negative or rather negative impact (22.8% and 24.6%, respectively), indicating a significant deterioration in labour market entry conditions for a considerable share of young people. Only about 9% reported a positive impact, which likely reflects specific groups who were able to find new opportunities or shift their professional trajectory.

Gender differences are relatively small but still indicative. Men more often report a negative impact of the war on job search (49.7% in total), which may be related to conscription age, employer requirements, or a reduction in vacancies in traditionally male-dominated occupations. Women somewhat more frequently state that the situation has not changed (47.7%) and less often report direct negative consequences.

Age differences are considerably more pronounced. The youngest respondents (under 18) more often report that the war did not affect their employment opportunities (53%), which may be explained by the higher prevalence of temporary, short-term, or informal employment among this group. In contrast, among older graduates (22–23 years and above), the share of those reporting a negative impact is significantly higher—up to 60% or more. This may be linked to increasing responsibilities, expectations of stable employment in their profession, and the fact that these age groups are most actively entering the full labour market, where competition and the limited number of vacancies have intensified due to the war.

Fig. 42. Assessment of the impact of the war on employment by gender and age, %



Assessments of the war's impact on employment opportunities reveal a clear regional divide. The highest levels of negative responses are recorded in frontline and near-frontline regions—Kherson (66.7% combined negative responses), Kharkiv (60.2%), as well as Donetsk, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions, where the negative impact also exceeds 60%. This situation appears entirely logical, as these regions have experienced the greatest destruction, loss of enterprises, unstable security conditions, and the highest levels of forced migration.

In the central regions, the overall assessment is less critical: Cherkasy, Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, and Odesa regions show approximately 45–55% combined negative responses, indicating a noticeable negative impact of the war, though less severe than in frontline territories.

The lowest levels of negative impact are observed in western regions and in Kyiv. Kyiv region, Volyn, Khmelnytskyi, Chernivtsi, Zhytomyr, Lviv, and the city of Kyiv demonstrate the highest shares of neutral responses (45–55%) and significantly lower shares of negative assessments (mostly 30–40%). This can be explained by the fact that these regions became the main centres of business relocation, where demand for labour increased, new enterprises emerged, and the service sector expanded.

Positive assessments of the war's impact on employment are limited across all regions, but occur somewhat more frequently in Kyiv and western regions, where the labour market is generally more dynamic.

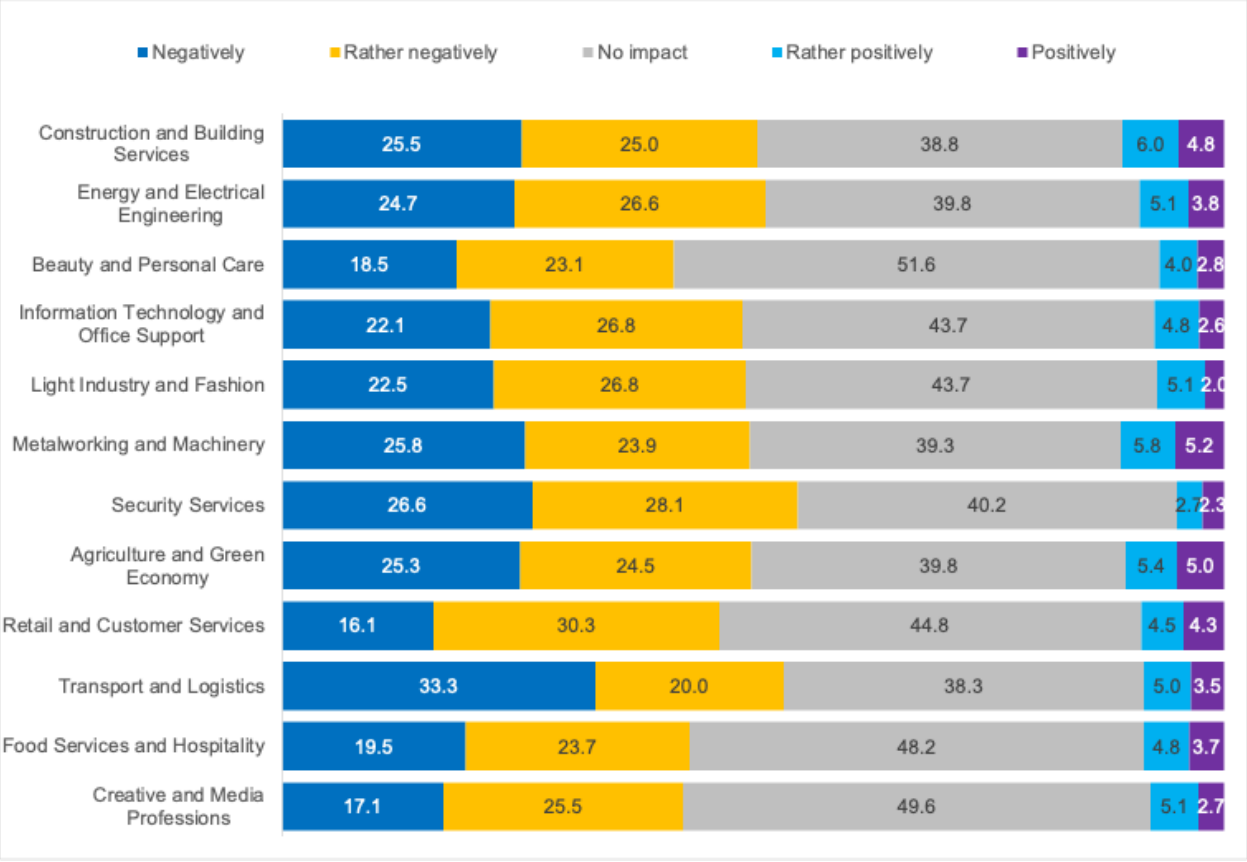
Across professional fields, the overall pattern appears relatively balanced: for graduates of most fields of study, the response "no impact" predominates (around 40–52%), suggesting a relative resilience of the labour market for young people, particularly in

mass and broadly applicable occupations. At the same time, there are certain fields where the impact of the war is perceived as more strongly negative.

The highest levels of negative impact are observed among graduates in transport and logistics professions, with a combined 53.3% reporting negative assessments. This is understandable given the closure of airspace, disruption of maritime and river transport, and interruptions to logistics chains. Elevated levels of negative assessments are also recorded for professions in metalworking and machinery, construction, and security and safety, where the combined share of negative responses reaches approximately 48–51%. These professional fields are closely linked to infrastructure, industry, and the physical accessibility of workplaces, making them more sensitive to war-related risks.

In contrast, in professions related to the beauty industry, creative and media fields, trade, food and hospitality services, and information technology, the share of negative responses is lower (generally 35–45%). Evidently, graduates in these fields were able to adapt more quickly to changing conditions, while demand for these professions has been partially maintained even during the war.

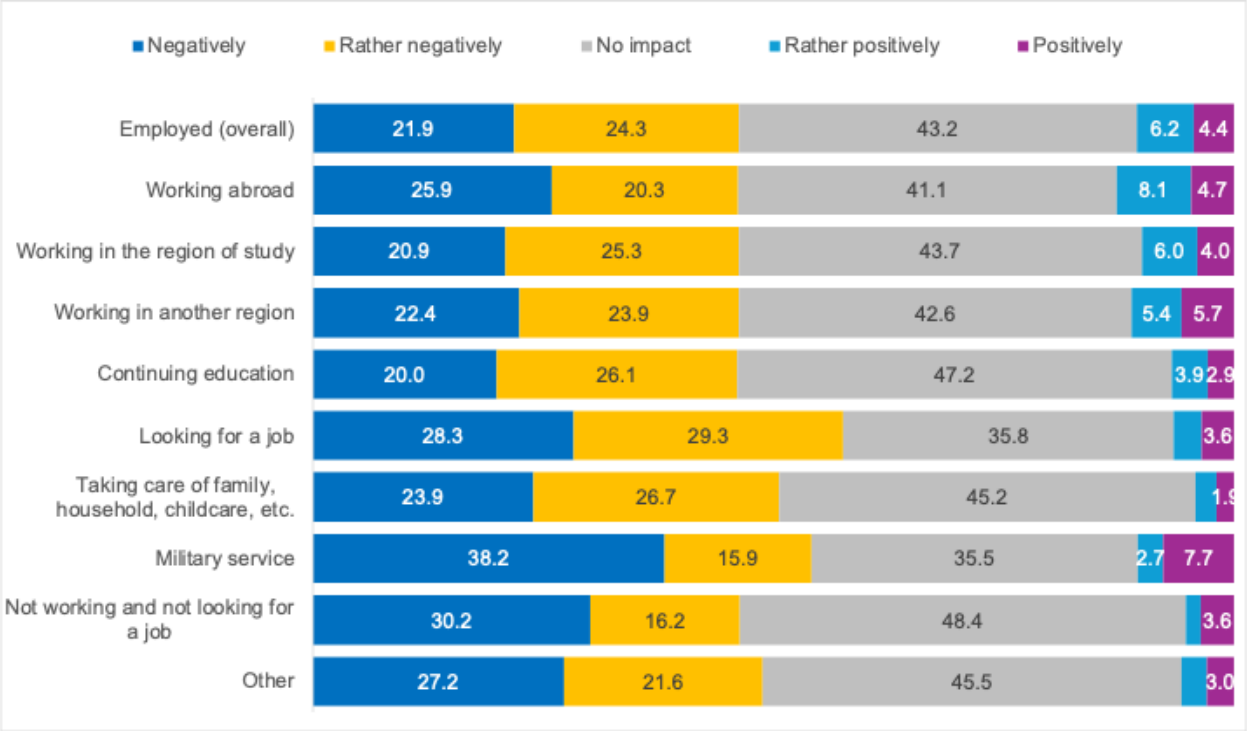
Fig. 43. Assessment of the impact of the war on employment by occupational field of training, %



Positive assessments of the war's impact are reported by only a small share of graduates across all fields (from 2% to 6%), though they appear somewhat more frequently in sectors related to humanitarian, service, and locally oriented services.

Assessments of the war's impact also vary significantly depending on the current status of the graduate. Among those who are already employed (either in Ukraine or abroad), neutral assessments dominate—more than 40% state that the war has not changed their employment situation. At the same time, the share of negative assessments remains substantial among both those working abroad and those employed in the region where they studied. This indicates that even among employed graduates, the effects of wartime conditions remain noticeable, through risks, mobility restrictions, reduced job vacancies, or changes in working conditions.

Fig. 44. Assessment of the impact of the war by employment status, %



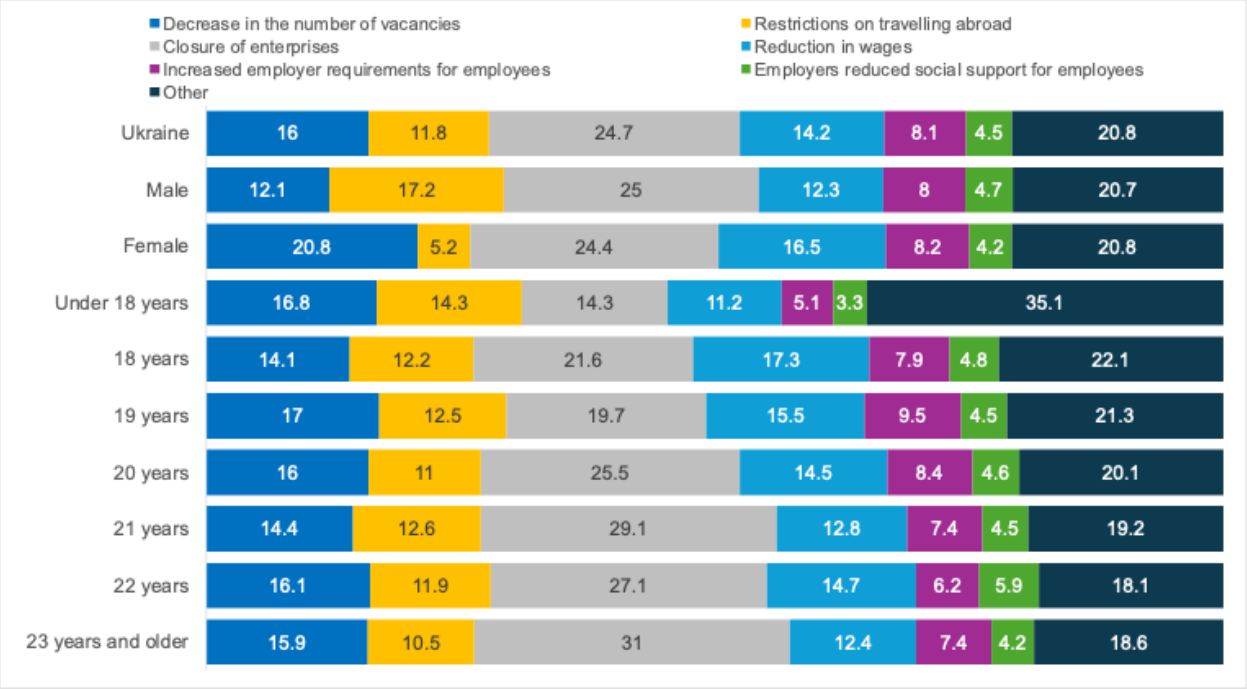
The most negative assessments of the war's impact are reported by those actively looking for work, with more than 57% giving negative evaluations overall. A similar pattern is observed among those who do not work and are not looking for work, where 46% report a negative impact, indicating that the war reduces the chances of entering the labour market even among economically inactive groups. At the same time, the share of positive assessments in these categories is minimal (2–4%).

The group of military personnel stands out distinctly: the level of negative responses here is the highest—over 54%, which is entirely expected, as military service directly

limits access to the civilian labour market. At the same time, this group also records the highest share of positive assessments (7.7%), which may be associated with stable employment and certain social guarantees.

Among the reasons for the negative impact of the war, respondents most frequently pointed to business closures (24.7%) and a reduction in the number of vacancies (16%), both of which directly affect opportunities for entering the labour market. A noticeable share of respondents also reported declining wages (14.2%) or restrictions on travelling abroad (11.8%), which for some young people had previously been a key strategy for labour mobility. Some respondents also mentioned increased employer requirements (8.1%) and reduced social support (4.5%). One in five respondents selected the option “other”, indicating a wide range of situational difficulties—from the loss of relatives, housing, or documents to various psychological factors.

Fig. 45. Reasons for the negative impact of the war on graduate employment by gender and age, %



The reasons for the positive impact of the war (reported by 9.1% of all respondents) are mainly associated with expanded employment opportunities. Among graduates who reported positive effects, the most frequently mentioned factors were an increase in the number of vacancies (25.1%) and greater employer interest in hiring workers (24.2%), which is generally characteristic of the Ukrainian labour market under current conditions. Some graduates also pointed to wage increases (17.6%), lower hiring requirements (8%), and stronger employer-provided social support (9.6%).

A neutral perception of the war (nearly 47%) is most common among those continuing their education, which is quite logical: students are less integrated into the labour market and therefore less dependent on its fluctuations.

An analysis of the distribution of reasons for the positive and negative impacts of the war by gender, age, region, and employment status does not reveal significant differences. Across different groups, the same types of responses dominate: positive effects are most often associated with increased vacancies and greater employer interest, while negative effects are linked to business closures, declining vacancies, and reduced incomes. Observed variations across groups are minimal, suggesting that the nature of the experienced changes is determined primarily by the general conditions of the wartime labour market rather than by individual demographic or professional characteristics of respondents.

Overall, the impact of the war on graduates' employment situations is multidimensional, but the general picture remains relatively uniform: for most respondents, neutral or mixed assessments dominate. This indicates that young people's transition to the labour market is determined primarily by structural characteristics of local labour markets and professional fields rather than by individual differences between groups. The war has created additional challenges, but these appear to be distributed relatively evenly regardless of gender, age, or region of residence.

At the same time, negative effects are considerably more pronounced, manifesting in fewer job vacancies, business closures, and declining incomes. Positive effects—such as increased demand for certain professions, greater employer interest in hiring young workers, and partial easing of hiring requirements—remain localised and limited to specific segments of the labour market. Overall, the findings indicate a limited adaptive capacity of the labour market under wartime conditions and highlight the need for targeted support measures to facilitate young people's entry into economic activity.

Conclusions to the Section

The analysis shows that the transition of graduates into the labour market is shaped by a combination of three factors: the structure of local opportunities, the type of professional training received, and the individual resources of young people. Despite the difficult wartime conditions, most graduates find employment within the first months after completing their studies, indicating a relatively high level of youth adaptability and a basic resilience of the labour market in the segment of entry-level positions. At the same time, a significant share of respondents experience more complex transition trajectories, highlighting the importance of institutional support for the "transition from education to employment".

The alignment between employment and the obtained profession varies significantly: approximately two-thirds of graduates work in their trained profession or in related occupations, while a substantial share is forced to change their field of activity immediately after completing their studies. This most often occurs in sectors with a limited number of vacancies or unstable demand. Age differences are also noticeable: younger graduates more often work in flexible formats and not strictly within their field of training, while older age groups more frequently find professionally relevant positions.

Wages are largely determined by the professional field and the territorial model of employment. The highest incomes are earned by graduates of technical and engineering specialisations, as well as those working abroad: nearly half of those employed abroad earn more than 30 thousand UAH, significantly exceeding national averages. The lowest incomes are recorded in trade, service, and beauty industry occupations, which corresponds to the structure of labour demand and the nature of entry-level vacancies in these sectors. Overall, the labour market demonstrates the expected stratification: employment in one's profession and technical training correlate with higher incomes, while lower-tier service occupations remain the lowest paid.

The territorial trajectories of graduates are strongly influenced by regional disparities. Where labour markets are more diversified, young people are more likely to remain and work in their region of study; in regions with limited demand or higher security risks, they are more likely to change regions or seek employment abroad. Job search methods largely reflect the initial motivation of graduates: those oriented toward local employment more often rely on internships, recommendations, and direct contact with employers, while those oriented toward external mobility more frequently use online job platforms, personal networks, or recruitment agencies.

Vulnerability factors influence employment trajectories but do not create critical structural gaps, which indicates the overall inclusiveness of the VET system. Vulnerable graduates are less likely to be employed, more often work outside their trained profession, and are more likely to remain economically inactive. Among those who are employed, they are less likely to receive formal employment contracts and more often engage in temporary or informal forms of employment. At the same time, the overall structure of employment (formal, informal, temporary) is broadly similar across groups; the main barriers arise primarily at the point of entry into the labour market rather than in the structure of employment after a job has been secured.

At the same time, an important component of the overall picture is the group of graduates who are outside both education and employment (NEETs). As the analysis shows, almost 14% of young people are temporarily not engaged in either work or study, and approximately half of them belong to socially vulnerable categories. For this group, barriers to transition are primarily structural in nature—forced displacement,

caregiving responsibilities, economic instability, or other circumstances beyond individual control. At the same time, there is also a noticeable share of NEETs without signs of social vulnerability: in their case, non-participation in the labour market is more often related to local mismatches between labour demand and supply, limited availability of first jobs, or uncertainty regarding professional trajectories. Thus, the NEET phenomenon reflects both the depth of social barriers faced by some young people and the insufficient availability of effective mechanisms supporting labour market transition for others.

For most young people, the impact of the war on employment opportunities appears moderate, although it varies significantly across regions and, to a lesser extent, across professional fields. The highest negative assessments are reported in frontline regions. Positive effects—such as increased demand for certain professions, growth in vacancies, and greater employer interest in hiring—are generally localised and do not form a widespread trend. Overall, for graduates the war acts more as a factor that amplifies existing structural disparities rather than one that independently determines career trajectories.

In summary, the labour market for graduates of vocational education remains functional and relatively adaptive even under wartime conditions. The main challenge lies not so much in securing employment itself, but in gaining access to stable, formal, and professionally relevant jobs, as well as in addressing inequalities in starting opportunities between different groups of young people. These aspects require priority attention in policies aimed at supporting youth employment.

III. Quality of Training and Labour Market Relevance

3.1. Stability of Educational and Professional Choices among Graduates

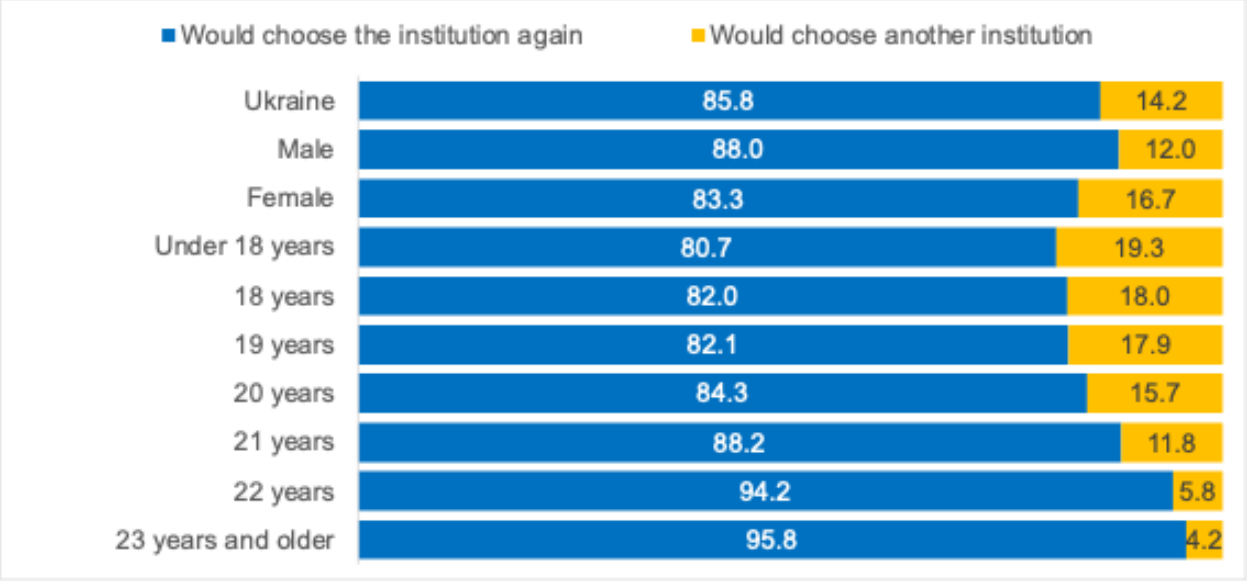
Choosing a profession and a vocational education institution is one of the key decisions at the beginning of a young person's career trajectory. One year after completing their studies, this choice may either be confirmed by personal experience or reconsidered under the influence of labour market conditions, the quality of training, or individual expectations. Indicators such as the willingness to choose the same institution and the same professional field again make it possible to assess the level of satisfaction with education and its alignment with expectations and actual employment conditions. These indicators are among the most sensitive measures of the effectiveness of VET, as they reflect graduates' real willingness to once again invest their time and resources in the same institution and chosen profession.

The survey results show that the vast majority of graduates (85.8%) would choose the same institution again if they had the opportunity to make the decision once more. The share of those who would choose a different institution is relatively small—14.2%, indicating an overall high level of satisfaction with the educational experience.

The gender dimension shows relatively similar but still slightly different results. Men more often confirm their choice, with 88% stating that they would study at the same institution again. Among women, the level of satisfaction is slightly lower—83.3%, which may be related to the specific characteristics of professional fields, differences in labour market conditions, or variations in professional expectations.

The age distribution illustrates a fairly logical pattern. The youngest graduates, who completed their studies before the age of 18, demonstrate the lowest share of repeated choice (80.7%), which may be related to a less conscious initial choice of profession. In contrast, among the 18–21 age groups, the share of those satisfied with their choice remains relatively stable at around 82–88%. The highest levels are observed among graduates aged 22 (94.2%) and those aged 23 and older (95.8%), that is, among those who likely entered education with greater awareness, prior experience, or more concrete expectations regarding their profession. This indicates that with age, the level of awareness and the alignment of educational choices with career plans increases significantly.

Fig. 46. Assessment of repeated choice of the educational institution by gender and age, %



The regional distribution of satisfaction with the choice of institution demonstrates an extremely high level of uniformity across the country: in most regions, the share of graduates who would choose the same institution again consistently ranges between 80–90%. This suggests that regional differences have only a limited impact on perceptions of educational quality. The highest level is recorded in Luhansk region—95.9%, which can partly be explained by the context of institutional relocation and the heightened level of support provided to students in such institutions. Similarly high levels of repeated choice are observed in Kharkiv (91.4%) and Kherson (90.2%) regions, where graduates, despite the difficult wartime conditions, demonstrate strong loyalty to their educational institutions.

In most central and eastern regions—including Zhytomyr, Kirovohrad, Dnipropetrovsk, Sumy, Zaporizhzhia, and Vinnytsia regions—the share of those who would repeat their institutional choice ranges around 86–89%. This indicates a consistently positive assessment of training quality and the alignment of educational programmes with graduates' expectations.

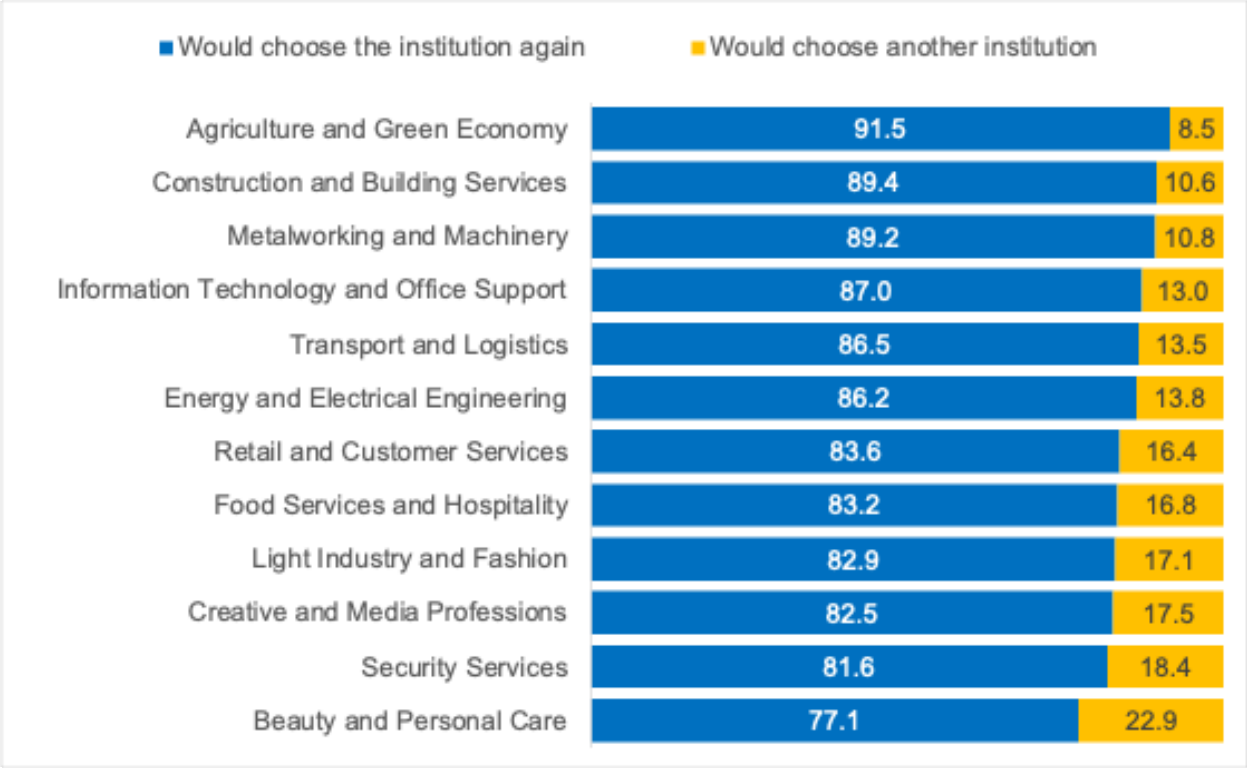
Lower, though still high, levels of repeated choice are observed in western regions. In Ternopil, Kyiv, Chernivtsi, and Volyn regions, the share of satisfied graduates ranges between 78–80%, while Lviv region shows the lowest value—75.4%. Nevertheless, even here the level of loyalty remains relatively high, which does not indicate a crisis of trust but rather reflects higher expectations among graduates in larger labour markets, where competition among educational institutions is traditionally stronger.

Overall, the regional analysis confirms that the choice of institution is successful in most cases regardless of territorial differences, and that differences between regions represent nuances rather than systemic disparities. A detailed breakdown of repeated institutional choice by region is provided in Appendix 2.

The distribution of satisfaction with the choice of institution by professional field demonstrates the same overall stability observed in the regional analysis. Across all fields, the vast majority of graduates would repeat their choice. At the same time, certain nuances in the data reflect differences in expectations and the specific characteristics of educational programmes across sectors.

The highest level of satisfaction is observed among graduates of agricultural specialisations, where 91.5% would choose the same institution again. Fields with similarly high levels include construction (89.4%), metalworking and machinery (89.2%), and information technology (87.0%).

Fig. 47. Assessment of repeated choice of the educational institution by occupational field of training, %



Slightly lower, though still high, levels are observed in transport and logistics and energy fields (86–87%), as well as trade and customer services and food and hospitality services (83–84%). In these fields, the decision to repeat the choice is likely linked to the fact that these programmes facilitate relatively rapid entry into the labour market and

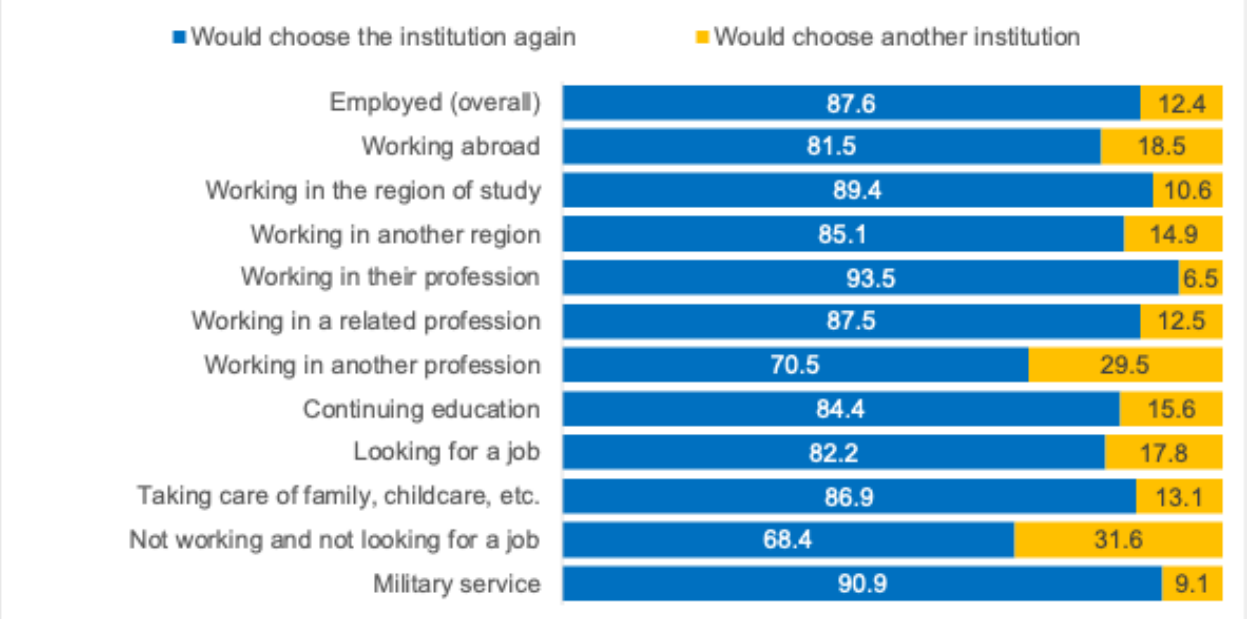
offer a wide range of vacancies, although the more variable working conditions in these sectors may influence overall satisfaction levels.

The lowest levels of satisfaction are recorded in the fields of beauty and personal care services (77.1%) and security and safety (81.6%). These fields also show the highest shares of graduates who would choose a different institution—almost 23% in the first case and about 18% in the second. This may reflect a more fragmented education market, strong competition between private courses and colleges, as well as varying levels of training quality within these sectors.

Overall, professional fields demonstrate moderate variation, but a common pattern is evident: in most fields graduates assess the quality of their education positively and would confirm their choice again, which represents an important indicator of trust in the vocational education and training (VET) system.

The analysis of satisfaction with the choice of institution depending on the current status of graduates also demonstrates a generally high level of confidence in the education received, while revealing several notable differences between groups. Among those who are employed, the share of repeated institutional choice ranges between 87–89%, and this applies both to graduates working in their home region and to those employed in another region or abroad.

Fig. 48. Assessment of repeated choice of the educational institution by employment status, %



Particularly high levels are observed among graduates working in their profession: 93.5% of them would repeat their choice of institution. This is logical, as the alignment

between education and actual employment reinforces confidence in the correctness of one's educational trajectory.

In contrast, among graduates working in a different profession, the level of loyalty is significantly lower—70.5% would choose the same institution again, while almost 30% would prefer an alternative. This may reflect disappointment caused by a mismatch between the competencies acquired and labour market conditions, or a reconsideration of career interests, which retrospectively changes the assessment of the educational experience.

A distinct group consists of graduates who are neither working nor studying: among them, only 68.4% would repeat their choice, while 31.6% would choose another institution. The highest level of satisfaction is observed among military personnel (90.9%).

Overall, the data structure reveals a clear pattern: the more successful the post-graduation trajectory—employment, work in the profession, and career stability—the higher the likelihood that graduates consider their educational choice successful. Conversely, uncertainty, unemployment, or a forced transition to another profession weaken the perception that the educational institution was the right choice.

The regional distribution of repeated professional choice largely replicates the same pattern observed for the repeated choice of institution: in most regions the level of satisfaction remains consistently high—generally 80% or higher. The highest levels are recorded in Luhansk, Kherson, and Kharkiv regions, while the lowest are observed in Lviv and Kyiv regions, where nevertheless more than two thirds of graduates would repeat their professional choice. As in the case of institutional choice, differences between regions appear situational rather than systemic, confirming the overall stability of graduates' professional orientation.

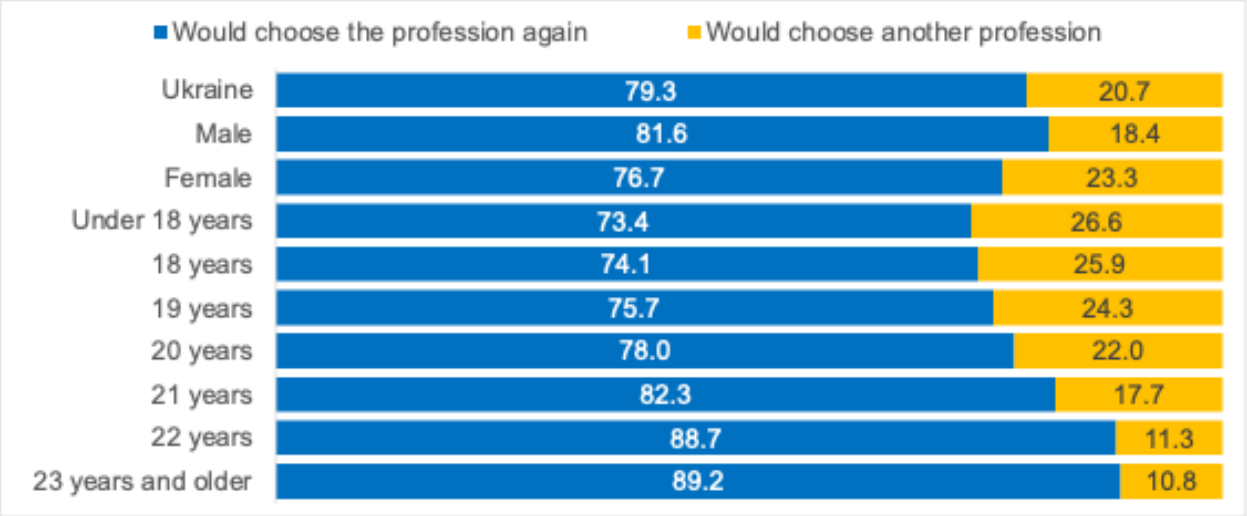
A detailed breakdown of the repeated choice of profession by region is provided in Appendix 3.

The distribution of responses regarding repeated professional choice, similarly to the choice of institution, reflects a generally high level of satisfaction: almost 80% of graduates would choose their profession again. Men demonstrate higher confidence in the correctness of their professional choice (81.6%), while among women the share is slightly lower but still consistently high (76.7%).

Age groups differ only slightly; however, a clear trend can be observed: the level of satisfaction with the chosen profession increases with age. The lowest level is recorded among those under 18 years old (73.4%), while the highest is observed among graduates aged 22 and older (88–89%), which may indicate a more conscious and deliberate professional choice among older students. Overall, the distribution

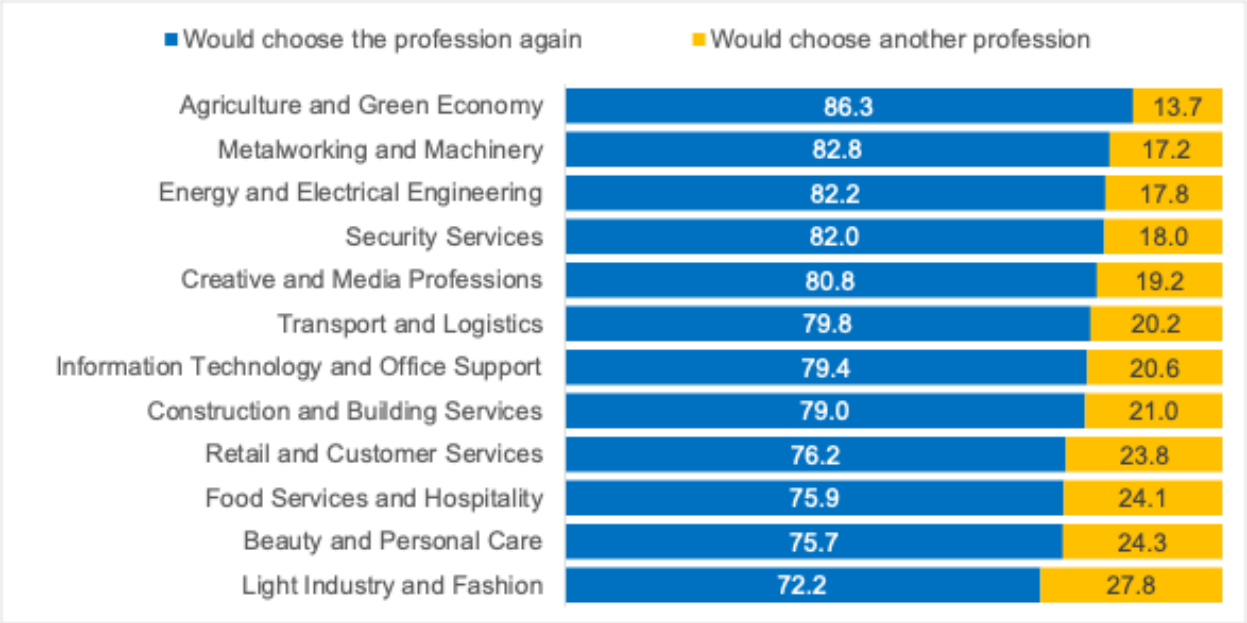
demonstrates consistency and the absence of sharp differences between groups, which corresponds with the stability observed in the choice of institution.

Fig. 49. Assessment of repeated choice of occupation by gender and age, %



The distribution of repeated professional choice by professional fields also reflects the general pattern of high satisfaction: in all fields, the majority of graduates would choose their profession again.

Fig. 50. Assessment of repeated choice of occupation by occupational field of training, %

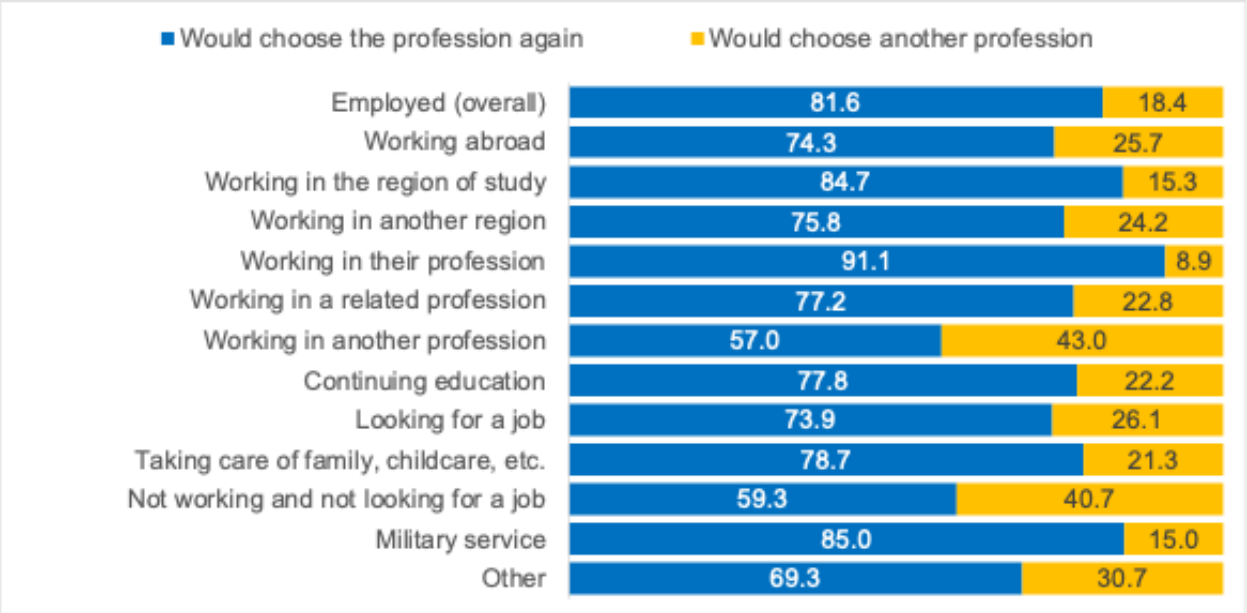


The highest levels are observed in agriculture and the green economy, metalworking and machinery, and energy—exceeding 82–86%. In fields with a greater share of customer interaction or creative components, the proportion of those who would change

their profession is slightly higher; however, even in these areas the repeated choice still predominates. Overall, the structure of responses is almost identical to the distribution observed for institutional choice, highlighting the stability of educational and professional decisions regardless of the field of training.

Overall, the distribution of responses by employment status demonstrates patterns similar to those observed in the case of institutional choice, indicating that satisfaction with the chosen profession largely depends on how successfully graduates have managed to realize themselves within the respective field.

Fig. 51. Assessment of repeated choice of occupation by employment status, %



The largest share of those who would repeat their professional choice is observed among graduates working in their field (91%), while the most critical assessments are expressed by those working in another profession, where the share of those who would repeat their choice falls to 57%. Similarly high levels of satisfaction are demonstrated by those working in the region where they studied or continuing their education, while the lowest levels are typical for young people who are unemployed or otherwise not engaged in the labour market.

Overall, the data confirm an intuitive pattern: the closer a graduate's actual work is to the profession they studied for, the higher the likelihood that they would repeat both their choice of institution and profession. Conversely, professional mismatch and instability in the labour market significantly reduce confidence in both the choice of institution and profession.

The analysis therefore suggests a high level of stability in educational and professional decisions: the vast majority of graduates are satisfied with both their chosen institution

and profession and would repeat their choice if given the opportunity to start again. At the same time, the share of those who would change their profession or institution (approximately 15–25% depending on the group) is quite natural for any system of vocational education. It reflects normal processes of maturation, the clarification of career expectations, the accumulation of real work experience, and the growing awareness of one's own strengths and limitations.

At the same time, it is important to consider that negative reassessment of one's choice may be driven not only by the profession itself or the quality of training, but also by external circumstances: difficult conditions in local labour markets, wartime risks, forced mobility, the inability to work in one's field, or a prolonged search for a first job. In such contexts, some young people may be inclined to consider changing their profession because of contextual constraints rather than genuine dissatisfaction with the education received or the nature of the work itself.

Thus, the presence of a certain share of "incorrect choices" should not be interpreted as a sign of systemic failure, but rather as an indication of the need for further development of career guidance, stronger support for the transition from education to employment, and better awareness among young people about the real conditions of the labour market.

3.2. Assessment of Learning Conditions

The assessment of learning conditions makes it possible to understand to what extent the educational experience meets graduates' expectations and how effectively the knowledge and skills acquired support the start of their professional careers. Graduates evaluated their learning experience across the key components of the educational process—from material and technical facilities and the quality of teaching to workplace training and support in job search.

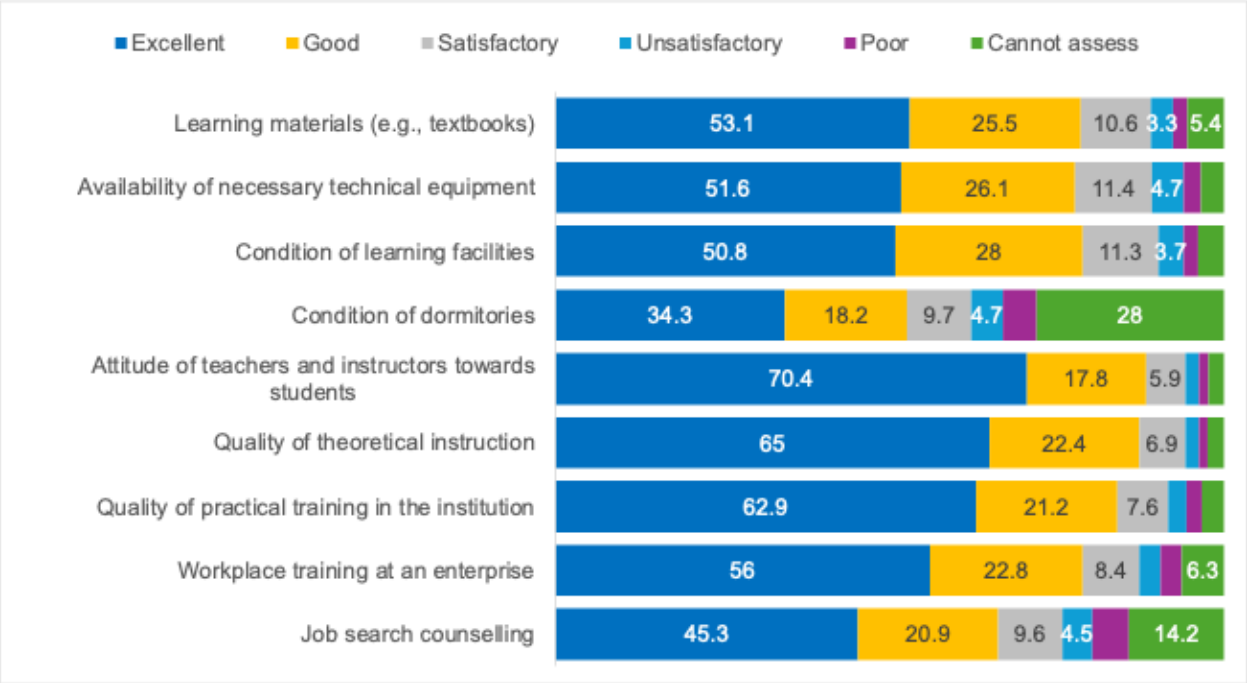
Overall, the results indicate a high level of satisfaction, although certain aspects reveal noticeable problem areas and variability in evaluations.

Most learning parameters receive high or good evaluations. Graduates give the highest ratings to the attitude of teachers and instructors: almost 70% describe it as "excellent", and another 17.8% as "good." Theoretical training is also highly rated—more than 87% of respondents evaluate it positively overall. Similarly positive perceptions are observed for the quality of practical training within the institution (almost 84% combined "excellent" and "good"), which indicates the effectiveness of the core educational function of vocational education and training (VET) institutions.

Material and technical resources are also assessed largely positively: half of the graduates consider textbooks and learning materials "excellent," and another quarter rate them as "good." A similar pattern is observed regarding the availability of technical

equipment and the condition of learning facilities, where positive evaluations consistently range between 75–78%.

Fig. 52. Assessment of training quality indicators, %



The lowest evaluations concern the condition of dormitories: only about one third of respondents rate them as “excellent,” while almost every fifth respondent evaluates them as “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory,” and 28% cannot assess this aspect (likely because they did not live in dormitories). Another challenge relates to the job placement support component: consultations on job search receive positive ratings much less frequently (around 66% combined “excellent” and “good”) and have the largest share of respondents unable to evaluate this component—14%.

The analysis of average evaluations of learning quality by gender and age shows only very minor differences between groups. For most parameters, the average scores range between 3.8 and 4.8 points, indicating a consistently high level of satisfaction and demonstrating the overall uniformity in perceptions of the educational experience. To present these average values, a gradient scale corresponding to a 1–5 rating range was applied:

- Dark red / red – lower average scores (≈ 3.8–4.1)
- Orange – moderately low values (≈ 4.1–4.25)
- Yellow – medium level of satisfaction (≈ 4.25–4.40)
- Light green – above average (≈ 4.40–4.55)
- Dark green – highest scores (≈ 4.55–4.80)

This approach makes the map sensitive to relative differences that may not always be visible in a numerical table but are important for interpreting the quality of the educational process.

The heat map demonstrates consistently high evaluations across almost all learning components, without significant differences between age or gender groups. The highest average scores across all groups relate to the attitude of teachers and the quality of theoretical training, confirming the high quality of pedagogical work in VET institutions. Slightly lower, though still positive, evaluations relate to practical training and workplace placements, indicating the adequacy of the training infrastructure.

Tab. 4. Heatmap of average scores of training quality indicators by gender and age

Indicator	Ukraine	Female	Male	Under 18 years	18 years	19 years	20 years	21 years	22 years	23 years and older
Learning materials (e.g., textbooks)	4.310	4.314	4.306	4.263	4.198	4.239	4.265	4.355	4.367	4.546
Availability of necessary technical equ	4.238	4.239	4.237	4.232	4.177	4.148	4.193	4.310	4.319	4.461
Condition of learning facilities	4.265	4.241	4.287	4.306	4.239	4.179	4.237	4.306	4.337	4.442
Condition of dormitories	4.004	3.946	4.055	3.998	3.926	3.873	3.970	4.046	4.114	4.326
Attitude of teachers and instructors to	4.573	4.538	4.605	4.418	4.459	4.503	4.557	4.623	4.674	4.793
Quality of theoretical instruction	4.515	4.514	4.516	4.403	4.433	4.448	4.490	4.544	4.563	4.739
Quality of practical training in the insti	4.445	4.451	4.440	4.353	4.363	4.359	4.411	4.476	4.548	4.700
Workplace training at an enterprise	4.335	4.336	4.335	4.348	4.287	4.239	4.285	4.352	4.446	4.582
Job search counselling	4.119	4.077	4.157	4.037	4.023	3.972	4.060	4.176	4.329	4.467

The lowest values are consistently recorded in areas related to the condition of dormitories and job placement counselling, which clearly identifies potential areas for improvement. At the same time, age dynamics show slightly higher evaluations among older groups, which may reflect both greater maturity and the ability to assess the educational experience retrospectively, as well as the possibility that younger students tend to be more critical due to their more limited experience.

Regional indicators of learning quality demonstrate an overall high and relatively uniform level of satisfaction, although the differences between regions are more noticeable than in the age or gender distribution. The vast majority of regions receive average scores within the range of 4.1–4.6 points, which indicates a stable quality of the educational process in the VET system across the country. At the same time, the lowest values are recorded in Volyn, Lviv, Chernivtsi, and Kyiv regions, mainly due to lower evaluations of dormitory conditions, equipment provision, and career counselling. However, even in these regions the overall indicators remain within the “satisfactory” to “good” range, indicating the absence of critical shortcomings.

The distribution of average scores by professional fields also demonstrates a generally high and relatively uniform level of satisfaction with the quality of education. Despite the different specific characteristics of the fields, most average values range between 4.1 and 4.6 points, indicating the consistency of educational standards across different training areas.

Tab. 5. Heatmap of average scores of training quality indicators by region

Region	Learning materials (e.g., textbooks)	Availability of necessary technical equipment	Condition of learning facilities	Condition of dormitories	Attitude of teachers and instructors towards students	Quality of theoretical instruction	Quality of practical training in the institution	Workplace training at an enterprise	Job search counselling
Vinnytsia	4.348	4.289	4.340	4.115	4.546	4.529	4.492	4.379	4.120
Volyn	3.987	3.896	3.959	3.579	4.414	4.389	4.248	4.199	3.685
Dnipropetrovsk	4.381	4.281	4.282	4.109	4.646	4.563	4.473	4.410	4.312
Donetsk	4.387	4.229	4.252	4.098	4.647	4.572	4.459	4.419	4.200
Zhytomyr	4.311	4.215	4.312	4.105	4.590	4.490	4.466	4.331	4.177
Zakarpattia	4.248	4.235	4.005	3.833	4.636	4.531	4.460	4.337	4.114
Zaporizhzhia	4.342	4.215	4.302	4.019	4.614	4.467	4.390	4.308	4.197
Ivano-Frankivsk	4.322	4.316	4.377	4.018	4.499	4.452	4.419	4.374	4.122
Kyiv Region	4.111	4.014	4.171	3.526	4.372	4.341	4.259	4.076	3.738
Kirovohrad	4.380	4.324	4.315	4.132	4.611	4.567	4.515	4.423	4.253
Luhansk	4.559	4.343	4.277	4.026	4.836	4.761	4.656	4.555	4.473
Lviv	4.029	3.997	4.023	3.782	4.281	4.242	4.075	3.952	3.569
Kyiv City	4.265	4.282	4.239	3.677	4.592	4.577	4.478	4.284	4.215
Mykolaiv	4.337	4.257	4.212	3.984	4.687	4.605	4.557	4.361	4.147
Odesa	4.303	4.263	4.247	4.139	4.588	4.510	4.473	4.340	4.108
Poltava	4.255	4.214	4.179	3.884	4.538	4.517	4.446	4.297	4.077
Rivne	4.211	4.232	4.297	3.840	4.513	4.484	4.408	4.304	3.972
Sumy	4.435	4.391	4.412	4.187	4.681	4.590	4.562	4.477	4.217
Ternopil	4.223	4.071	4.284	3.771	4.468	4.487	4.327	4.185	3.806
Kharkiv	4.421	4.351	4.324	4.199	4.687	4.638	4.600	4.449	4.356
Kherson	4.450	4.395	4.272	4.051	4.764	4.683	4.594	4.440	4.265
Khmelnytskyi	4.278	4.105	4.199	3.913	4.566	4.529	4.431	4.305	4.106
Cherkasy	4.356	4.149	4.279	4.006	4.619	4.559	4.396	4.304	4.055
Chernivtsi	4.111	3.947	3.966	3.740	4.484	4.294	4.251	4.163	3.879
Chernihiv	4.192	4.162	4.226	3.924	4.501	4.454	4.353	4.254	4.032
Ukraine	4.310	4.238	4.265	4.004	4.573	4.515	4.445	4.335	4.119

The highest scores are consistently recorded in fields where training traditionally has a strong practical and technical component—namely metalworking and machinery, transport and logistics, agriculture and the green economy, energy and electrical engineering, and construction and repair. These fields demonstrate the best average evaluations both in terms of teachers' attitudes and the quality of theoretical and practical training. Their strong positions are largely explained by a traditionally stronger production base, established links with employers, and a greater emphasis on practical skills.

Lower values are observed mainly in areas related to the beauty industry, food and service sectors, as well as creative and media professions. The differences are not critical—generally within 0.2–0.3 points—but they consistently appear across several parameters, including the condition of facilities, availability of equipment and dormitories, and job placement counselling. This may reflect both objective limitations in the material and technical infrastructure in certain sectors and the specific organization of the educational process in fields oriented toward flexible career paths and rapid entry into the service sector.

Despite this, the quality of interaction between teachers and students—particularly teachers' attitudes and the quality of theoretical instruction—remains consistently high across all fields, indicating the overall strength of the pedagogical component of vocational education.

Tab. 6. Heatmap of average scores of training quality indicators by occupational field of training

Occupational field of training	Learning materials (e.g., textbooks)	Availability of necessary technical equipment	Condition of learning facilities	Condition of dormitories	Attitude of teachers and instructors towards students	Quality of theoretical instruction	Quality of practical training in the institution	Workplace training at an enterprise	Job search counselling
Agriculture and Green Economy	4.366	4.285	4.363	4.059	4.643	4.560	4.506	4.344	4.172
Beauty and Personal Care	4.238	4.211	4.217	4.040	4.553	4.473	4.373	4.309	4.159
Construction and Building Services	4.241	4.065	4.188	3.736	4.403	4.387	4.259	4.152	3.797
Creative and Media Professions	4.266	4.271	4.227	3.905	4.585	4.487	4.447	4.280	4.110
Energy and Electrical Engineering	4.273	4.295	4.143	3.778	4.559	4.517	4.536	4.322	4.124
Food Services and Hospitality	4.332	4.236	4.272	4.104	4.605	4.513	4.433	4.355	4.187
Information Technology and Office Sup	4.185	4.125	4.120	3.870	4.478	4.526	4.532	4.383	3.941
Light Industry and Fashion	4.422	4.308	4.423	4.245	4.686	4.613	4.511	4.455	4.238
Metalworking and Machinery	4.346	4.277	4.354	4.096	4.620	4.597	4.479	4.397	4.175
Retail and Customer Services	4.387	4.251	4.276	3.973	4.636	4.558	4.462	4.448	4.417
Security Services	4.290	4.245	4.241	3.962	4.531	4.511	4.450	4.335	4.075
Transport and Logistics	4.154	4.112	4.108	3.810	4.552	4.495	4.514	4.322	3.925

The analysis of average evaluations of learning quality by employment status shows that differences in this dimension also remain relatively small, and the structure of evaluations largely reproduces the patterns already observed across age groups, regions, and professional fields. All groups generally assess the quality of learning within the range of 4.0–4.6 points, which corresponds to an overall high level of satisfaction.

Tab. 7. Heatmap of average scores of training quality indicators by employment status

Employment status	Learning materials (e.g., textbooks)	Availability of necessary technical equipment	Condition of learning facilities	Condition of dormitories	Attitude of teachers and instructors towards students	Quality of theoretical instruction	Quality of practical training in the institution	Workplace training at an enterprise	Job search counselling
Employed (overall)	4.305	4.227	4.258	4.020	4.584	4.523	4.458	4.338	4.146
Abroad	4.168	4.084	4.091	3.757	4.480	4.438	4.351	4.195	3.865
Working in another region	4.285	4.196	4.207	3.963	4.569	4.518	4.429	4.317	4.065
Working in the region of study	4.337	4.263	4.305	4.088	4.609	4.540	4.487	4.371	4.217
Working in their profession	4.395	4.323	4.372	4.173	4.670	4.601	4.571	4.465	4.332
Working in a related profession	4.284	4.214	4.212	4.004	4.576	4.502	4.332	4.253	4.047
Working in another profession	4.043	3.950	3.947	3.536	4.344	4.306	4.148	3.979	3.579
Continuing education	4.319	4.295	4.321	4.030	4.591	4.519	4.455	4.343	4.129
Looking for a job	4.284	4.214	4.287	3.977	4.536	4.496	4.361	4.307	3.912
Taking care of family, childcare, etc.	4.422	4.358	4.333	4.055	4.644	4.624	4.582	4.499	4.277
Not working and not looking for a job	4.070	3.987	4.017	3.638	4.259	4.187	4.120	4.054	3.627
Military service	4.398	4.307	4.335	4.023	4.608	4.544	4.470	4.344	4.187

The highest evaluations traditionally relate to the attitude of teachers and instructors (4.5–4.6) and the quality of theoretical teaching (4.5 and higher), regardless of employment status. Indicators with lower values also remain consistently low across all groups: these include the condition of dormitories and, to some extent, the condition of facilities, which confirms that these issues represent system-wide challenges within institutions rather than characteristics of particular groups of graduates.

Interestingly, graduates employed in their profession or in a related field show only slightly higher evaluations for certain parameters, but these differences remain within statistically insignificant fluctuations. Meanwhile, groups who are unemployed or actively

seeking work do not demonstrate lower evaluations—their level of satisfaction is practically identical to that of other categories.

Overall, the assessment of learning conditions reveals a high degree of uniformity in graduates' perceptions, regardless of region, age, professional field, or employment status. The highest evaluations consistently relate to teachers' attitudes, the quality of theoretical instruction, and practical training, while the lowest concern the condition of dormitories and the material infrastructure. A distinct element is job search counselling: despite generally positive assessments, this component receives noticeably lower scores compared with other aspects of the educational process. In general, the limited variation in average values suggests that satisfaction is primarily determined by the overall quality of the educational process rather than by individual characteristics or subsequent career trajectories.

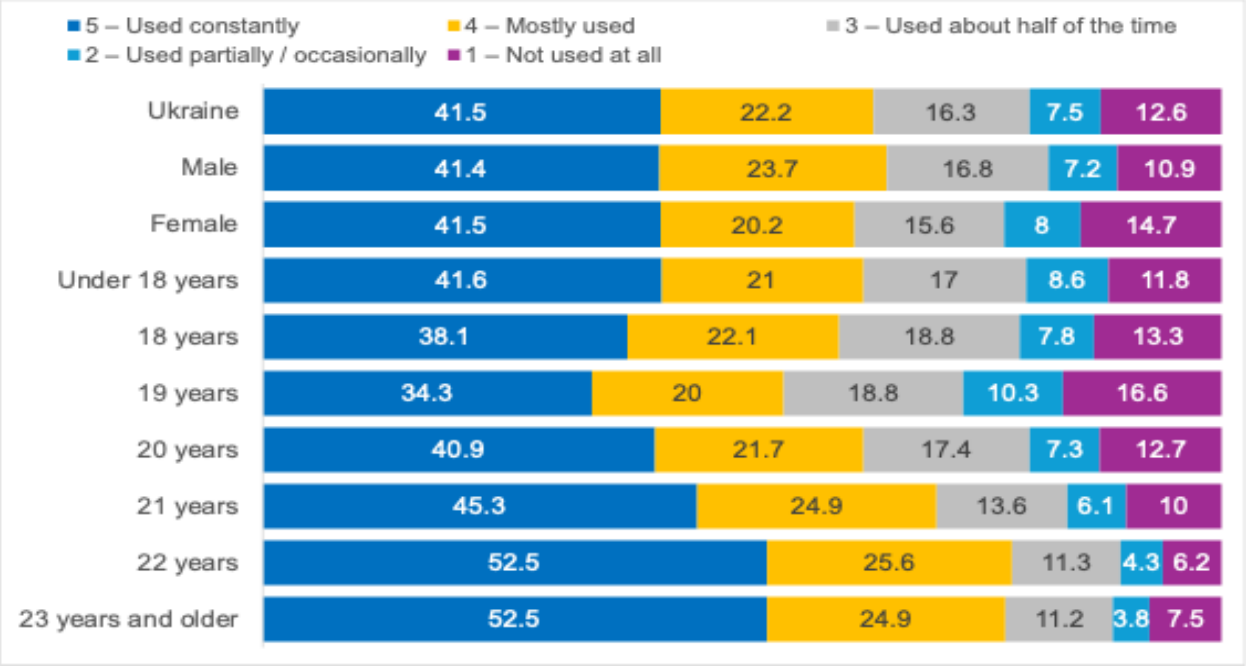
3.3. Use of Acquired Knowledge and Skills

The level of use of knowledge, skills, and competencies obtained in vocational education institutions is one of the key indicators of the effectiveness of training and the alignment of educational programmes with labour market needs. The analysis of graduates' responses makes it possible to assess how the acquired qualifications are integrated into actual work activities, whether educational outcomes correspond to contemporary professional requirements, and which factors may limit the application of skills in the workplace. This section summarises graduates' subjective evaluations regarding how frequently and to what extent they use the competencies acquired during their studies when performing their professional duties.

The distribution of responses demonstrates an overall high level of skill utilisation among graduates who are currently employed. At the national level, 41.5% of employed graduates report that they constantly use the knowledge obtained during vocational education, while another 22.2% state that they use it to a large extent. Gender differences are almost non-existent: men and women apply their skills in the workplace with similar intensity.

The observed age differences should be interpreted as a consequence of variations in the employment structure across age cohorts. Younger respondents are more often engaged in temporary or part-time forms of employment and are less likely to work in their field of specialization, which results in a lower share of "constant use" of skills among 18–19-year-olds. In contrast, older graduates are more frequently employed in fields more closely related to their acquired profession, which explains the increase in the share of constant use of knowledge to over 52% among the 22–23+ age groups.

Fig. 53. Use of acquired knowledge and skills by gender and age, %



This pattern indicates that the application of professional knowledge and skills increases with age and accumulated experience, while younger graduates are more often in a phase of professional exploration or temporary mismatch between their job and the qualification they obtained.

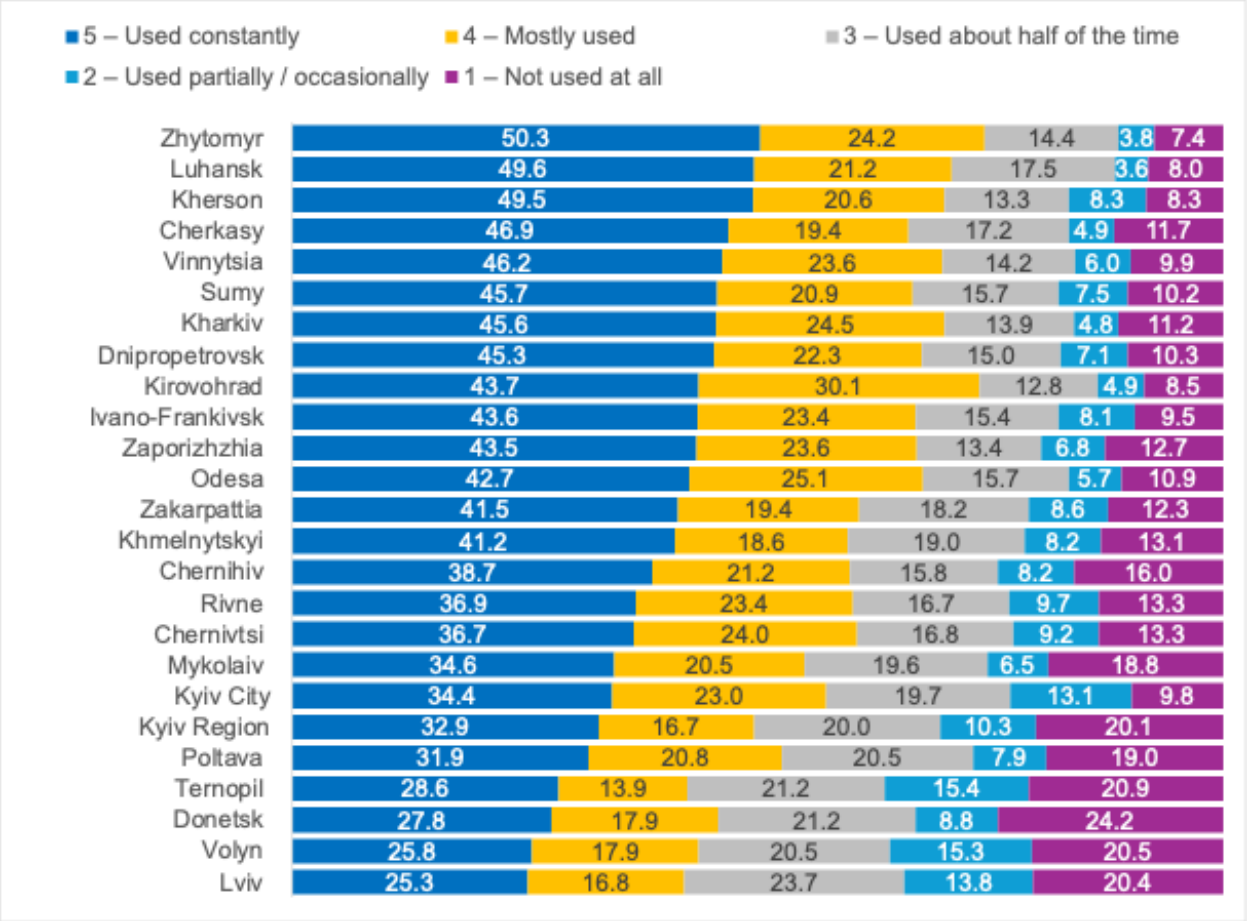
The regional distribution of skill utilisation shows significant differences between regions, which largely have a structural labour-market origin rather than an educational one. Regions with a higher share of employment in the trained profession understandably demonstrate higher levels of constant use of skills. This is clearly visible among the leading regions—Zhytomyr, Luhansk (institutions relocated to government-controlled territory), Kherson, Cherkasy, and Vinnytsia regions—where 46–50% of graduates report constantly using the knowledge they acquired, and another 20–25% use it to a large extent. These figures indicate that local labour markets actively absorb specialists in the professions provided by local VET institutions.

The national average level (41.5% reporting constant use of skills) is reproduced in most regions of central and eastern Ukraine—Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Kirovohrad, Sumy, and Zaporizhzhia regions. These are regions with a large industrial base and developed service sectors, where young specialists generally find employment in their field, although they change professional direction or workplace more often than in the leading regions.

Lower levels are characteristic of regions with a higher share of migration, occupational change, or a dominance of low-skilled vacancies in youth employment segments—Kyiv

region, Poltava, Chernivtsi, Volyn, Lviv, and partly Ternopil regions, as well as the city of Kyiv. In these areas, only 25–35% of graduates constantly use the skills they acquired, and the share of those who do not use them at all is among the highest in the country.

Fig. 54. Use of acquired knowledge and skills by region, %

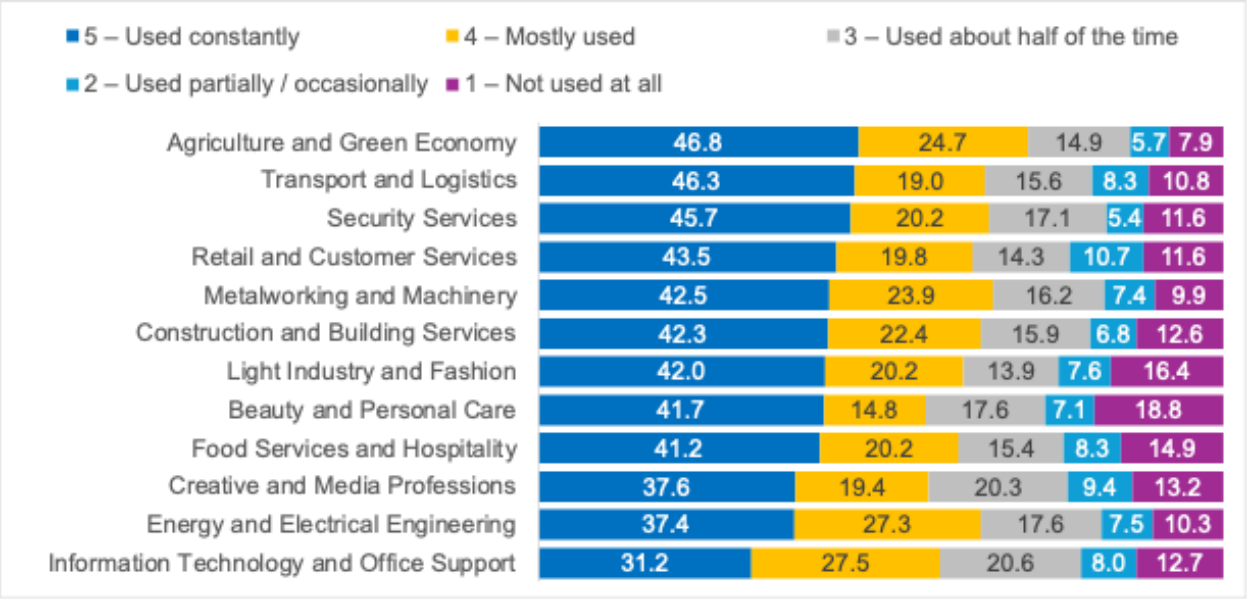


Overall, the data reflect not so much educational disparities as different trajectories of labour market entry characteristic of particular regions. Where graduates more often find employment in their profession, the level of skill utilisation is systematically higher. Where alternative forms of employment dominate, the skills acquired in VET institutions are used much less frequently.

The distribution of skill utilisation by professional fields demonstrates significant but logical differences, which are directly related to the degree to which professions are practice-oriented and how effectively the labour market absorbs specialists in the respective fields. The highest level of constant use of acquired knowledge and skills is observed in the fields of agriculture and the green economy (46.8%), transport and logistics (46.3%), and security and safety (45.7%). In these areas, young people

predominantly work in their trained profession, and the nature of the work clearly requires the skills obtained during training.

Fig. 55. Use of acquired knowledge and skills by occupational field of training, %



Slightly lower, though still relatively high levels are characteristic of professions in trade and customer services, metalworking and machinery, construction, and light industry, where around 41–44% report constant use of their skills. In these sectors, VET-acquired competencies remain in demand, but more variable employment formats (temporary, part-time, or related work) reduce the frequency of their full application.

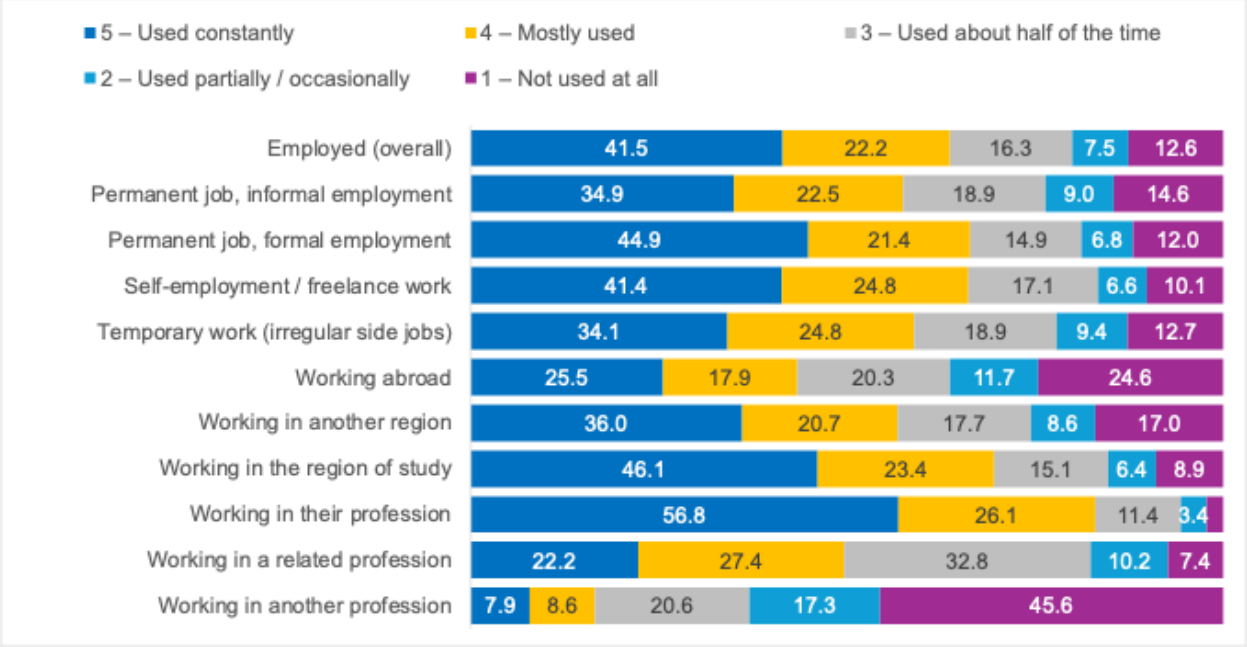
The lowest levels are observed in the fields of creative and media professions (37.6%) and energy and electrical engineering (37.4%). In the first case, this can be explained by the fragmented nature of the labour market and the high share of part-time or project-based employment, which does not always require the full range of acquired competencies. In the second case, the explanation lies in the fact that a considerable share of young people begin working in related or low-skilled positions, where specialised knowledge is applied only occasionally.

Overall, the data demonstrate a clear relationship between the nature of employment and the extent to which graduates use the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired in VET institutions.

The use of knowledge and skills acquired during VET training is most intensive among those working in the profession they studied for: more than 80% report using them constantly or to a large extent. High levels are also characteristic of graduates who remain employed in the region where they studied, which indicates a close alignment between local labour markets and the structure of vocational training.

In contrast, employment abroad or in another region of Ukraine noticeably reduces the frequency of skill utilisation: the share of those who use their skills constantly falls to 25–36%, while the share of those who do not use them at all increases. This is largely associated with employment in low-skilled or general jobs that are not directly related to the trained profession.

Fig. 56. Use of acquired knowledge and skills by forms of employment



Temporary, informal, or occasional employment is also characterised by lower use of acquired skills, as such types of work rarely require specialised training. The lowest levels are observed among graduates who changed their professional field: when working in related professions, skills are more often used only partially, whereas when working in unrelated occupations, they are rarely applied at all.

In summary, the results indicate a clear relationship between the match between job and specialization and the intensity of using knowledge and skills acquired in VET. It is therefore the structure of employment, rather than differences in training, that primarily explains the age and regional variations observed in the evaluations.

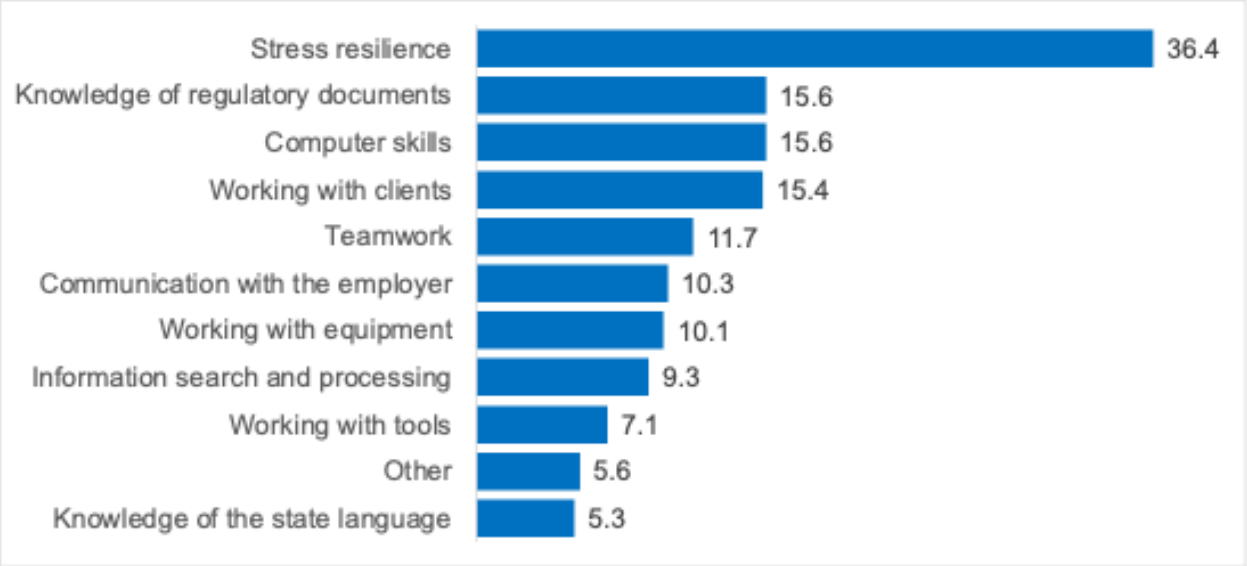
3.4. Knowledge and Skills Lacking Among Graduates

Despite the generally high evaluation of training quality and the significant share of graduates who successfully apply the competencies acquired during their studies in the workplace, both employers and graduates themselves continue to identify a number of knowledge areas, abilities, and skills that are lacking for a confident start to a career.

An analysis of graduates' responses shows that the most noticeable deficit during the first months of employment relates not so much to professional technical competencies as to skills associated with adapting to the real working environment. The most frequently mentioned deficit is stress resilience (36.4%), which indicates difficulties in adjusting to the work pace, interacting with clients, and performing tasks under conditions of pressure or high expectations. A separate issue concerns proficiency in the state language (5.3%), which in some cases also creates challenges in professional communication.

The second most significant group of gaps relates to regulatory and information-related skills, including knowledge of regulatory documents (15.6%), computer skills (15.6%), and the ability to process information (9.3%). This suggests a gap between the educational process and the requirements of the contemporary labour market, where an increasing share of tasks requires digital literacy and an understanding of formal procedures.

Fig. 57. Skills lacking among graduates, %



Key "social" skills—such as working with clients (15.4%), teamwork (11.7%), and communication with employers (10.3%)—also occupy a noticeable place among the reported gaps. This highlights the lack of training practices that simulate real workplace situations, including communication, conflict scenarios, customer service, and teamwork in a production environment.

Technical skills—such as working with equipment (10.1%) and using tools (7.1%)—are mentioned less frequently. This suggests that most graduates are generally prepared for professional activity, but still require adaptation to specific equipment used at particular enterprises.

The development of the key competence of proficiency in the state language remains relevant for a certain share of respondents (5.3%), which is particularly important in the context of working with clients and handling documentation.

The “Other” category includes a range of smaller but still significant skills that were not included among the main response options. These most often include foreign language proficiency, better organization, punctuality, self-management, time planning, and critical thinking, as well as responses indicating that “no additional skills are lacking.” It is important to note that the list of skills in the questionnaire was developed based on the results of previous survey waves, and therefore some skills that are relevant today may not have been included in the structured list. This indicates the need to improve the survey instrument in future waves, particularly by expanding or refining the list of skills, which would allow a more accurate identification of the evolving needs of young specialists in the labour market.

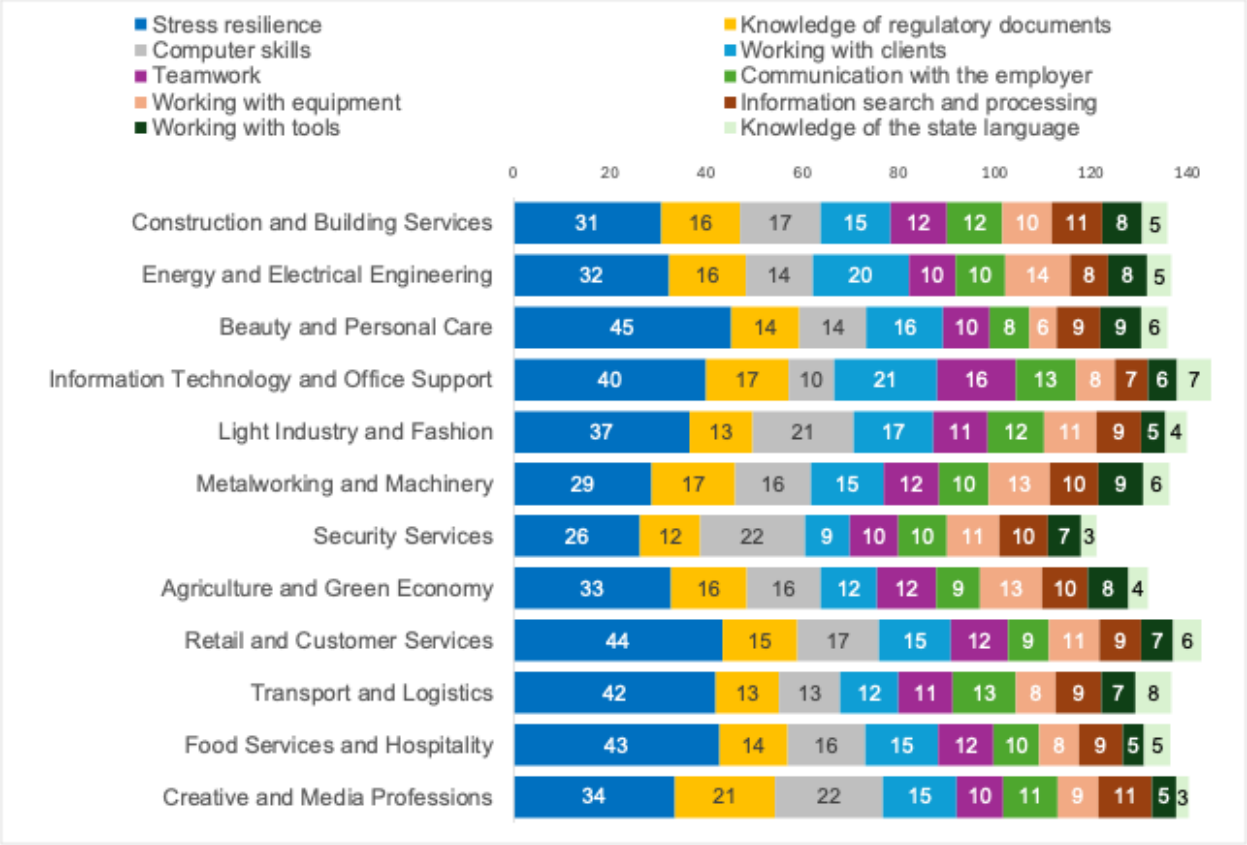
The data demonstrate a clear differentiation in the shortage of knowledge, abilities, and skills depending on the professional field, and this structure correlates well with labour market demands and the specific nature of workplaces. Although stress resilience remains the dominant need in almost all fields, its importance varies depending on the nature of professional workload: the highest levels are observed in sectors that involve client interaction, high work pace, or unpredictable conditions (such as beauty services, trade, hospitality, and transport). In contrast, in more technically oriented and relatively stable sectors, its importance is somewhat lower, although it still remains a key competency.

1) Professions with a significant deficit of “soft skills”—such as customer interaction, communication, and teamwork. These primarily include professions in the beauty and personal care industry, trade, food and service sectors, as well as creative professions.

Professions in these fields involve the highest levels of client interaction, which makes strong demands for communication skills, emotional resilience, and service-oriented behaviour both logical and expected. At the same time, VET educational programmes have traditionally included insufficient modules dedicated to the development of soft skills, particularly those related to customer communication. It should also be noted that part of this demand arises from the actual conditions of the labour market, where young workers encounter emotionally demanding tasks, conflicts, and unpredictable situations.

All of this clearly indicates the need to integrate modules on etiquette, complaint management, stress management, and complex communication scenarios into training programmes.

Fig. 58. Knowledge and skills lacking among graduates by occupational field of training, %



2) Technical and industrial professions: shortage of practical technical skills. This deficit is most evident in professions related to machinery, construction, transport, and energy.

High levels of reported shortages in equipment and tool operation skills point to insufficient or outdated practical training. Enterprises often operate with different equipment than that available in VET institutions, which leads to a “technological gap” even after practical training. Graduates in machinery and energy-related professions also report a strong demand not only for practical skills but also for knowledge of regulatory documents, which is closely linked to safety and compliance requirements.

This confirms the need to modernise training and practical facilities, ensure access to real industrial equipment through dual education models, and expand curricula with modules on regulatory requirements and compliance procedures.

3) IT and office support professions – a paradox: lack of computer-related skills. At first glance this may appear surprising, but the situation has a logical explanation. Young people generally possess basic computer literacy, yet often lack specialised professional software skills, algorithmic thinking, and structured data management

abilities. Employers increasingly expect competencies that VET institutions rarely provide, such as working with CRM systems, databases, online communication platforms, digital document management, and advanced Excel skills. The notable deficit in information search and processing skills also indicates a lack of research abilities, analytical reading, and the capacity to work with large volumes of data.

For VET institutions, this means the need to update digital literacy modules to modern standards (including office systems, digital services, cybersecurity, and CRM tools), as well as to introduce project-based tasks that simulate real workplace situations.

4) Security and safety professions: emphasis on regulatory knowledge and interaction with employers. Graduates in these professions demonstrate one of the highest demands for knowledge of regulatory documents, as well as for communication skills when interacting with employers and clients. The security sector operates within a complex regulatory framework, and training programmes often do not provide sufficient practical experience in applying these regulations. In real working environments, everyday tasks involving shift rotations, hierarchical structures, and compliance with service instructions require both communication and organisational skills.

5) Agricultural professions – the most balanced training field.
In this area, there are no pronounced peaks in skill shortages; graduates report moderate deficits across different types of skills. This pattern is likely explained by the diversity of professions within the agricultural sector, which creates a broad set of competency requirements.

Overall, the findings show that skill shortages across different professional fields are not random—they closely reflect the real logic of labour market demands. The lack of certain skills does not arise solely from the quality of training, but rather from different production contexts, the specific nature of job tasks, the technological equipment of enterprises, the level of client interaction, and the regulatory burden associated with particular occupations.

This implies that VET development policies should move from a “universal” training model toward sector-specific competency frameworks, and that recommendations should be formulated separately for each professional field.

Conclusions to the Section

Overall, the analysis of skill utilisation in employment shows that educational competencies are applied most fully when young people work in the profession for which they were trained. In all other situations—mobility between regions, employment in a different profession, or temporary and informal work — the intensity of skill use decreases significantly. This indicates that the quality of the transition to the labour

market, the alignment between occupation and qualification, and the stability of employment are key determinants of the realisation of the educational potential of VET.

The results also demonstrate a consistently high level of satisfaction with learning conditions among graduates of VET institutions. The average scores for most parameters fall within the range of 4.2–4.7 points, and differences by gender, age, or professional field are minimal, indicating an overall uniformity and consistency of the educational process at the national level. The highest scores relate to interaction with teachers, the quality of theoretical training, and practical learning within institutions, confirming the strength of the pedagogical component of vocational education.

At the same time, the heat maps reveal regional and field-specific differences that are primarily structural in nature: the strongest results are observed in regions and professional fields with better material infrastructure and more developed labour markets. Lower evaluations are recorded for indicators that depend on external conditions, particularly the condition of dormitories and the availability of equipment.

The most problematic component is job search counselling, which received the lowest average scores among all evaluated parameters. This points to a lack of systematic career support, which directly affects the duration and quality of employment after graduation.

Thus, although the overall quality of training remains high, the development and strengthening of career counselling within VET institutions represents a significant reserve for improving the effectiveness of the VET system as a whole, as well as enhancing young people's initial opportunities in the labour market. This conclusion forms the conceptual basis for the recommendations presented in the next section.

IV. Career Guidance Conclusions for Career Counselling

The transition of VET graduates to their first job is a complex and multidimensional process shaped by a combination of individual characteristics, structural labour market conditions, professional field, and external factors, including the impact of the war. The analysis presented in the previous sections has shown that the success of career entry is most strongly influenced by the alignment between the acquired profession and the job obtained, the type and stability of employment, the duration of job search, the level of utilisation of professional competencies, and specific risks faced by vulnerable groups. At the same time, the analysis demonstrates that job search counselling performs noticeably weaker compared with other parameters of learning conditions and training quality. This indicates that career support is one of the weakest elements of the VET system, and it is precisely in this area that students and graduates experience the greatest lack of support.

Taking this into account, the present section summarises the results of the analysis and translates them into practical conclusions and recommendations for specialists in career guidance and counselling within VET institutions. Its purpose is to outline typical employment trajectories, identify competencies that support professional development, and highlight the most common barriers faced by young specialists. In this way, the section links analytical findings with practical tools, enabling counsellors to provide more effective support to young people in building their careers.

4.1. Typical Employment Profiles of Graduates

The analysis of survey data makes it possible to identify several typical models of transition from vocational education to the labour market. Although individual trajectories largely depend on the region of residence, professional field, and external conditions, the overall structure of employment indicators allows the identification of characteristic profiles of early career entry. These profiles are important for understanding which factors increase the likelihood of stable employment and which, conversely, create risks of unstable entry into professional life.

Employment profiles are not random; they are formed through the interaction of three key factors:

- the structure of local and regional labour markets,
- the alignment between the trained profession and the job obtained,
- the quality of support during the transition period (especially career counselling).

These three elements largely determine whether young people enter stable professional trajectories or are instead forced to adapt through temporary, informal, or low-skilled

employment. For career counsellors, it is important to be able to recognise the profile of each graduate, in order to adapt recommendations, career pathways, and support mechanisms accordingly.

It should be emphasised that the identified profiles are analytical types, constructed on the basis of recurring combinations of indicators observed across different groups. They are not statistical clusters and do not imply precise quantitative measurement. The profiles presented here should not be interpreted as evaluations of “better” or “worse” employment paths. Rather, they represent typical models of graduates’ integration into the labour market, reflecting the different contexts, opportunities, and constraints faced by young specialists after completing their education.

Each profile follows its own logic of formation and is influenced by a distinct set of factors—ranging from the structure of local labour markets and mobility opportunities to the availability of support, external conditions, and the degree of alignment between training and employment. Therefore, these profiles should be understood as an analytical typology rather than a system for evaluating the success of particular groups of graduates.

1. “Stable Local Start” – the most typical and most successful profile

This is the most common model of successful employment among graduates of vocational education and training (VET). It is characterised by a combination of several interconnected features:

- employment in the same region where the education was completed;
- a short job search period – most graduates find employment in less than one month;
- a high degree of alignment between the obtained profession and the job;
- full use of the knowledge and skills acquired during training.

This profile demonstrates the best outcomes in terms of employment stability and income levels. It is most typical for regions with developed local labour markets, strong partnerships between VET institutions and employers, and well-established traditions of practical training.

In career counselling, this profile can be considered a benchmark example of an optimal transition trajectory, which counsellors can use as a reference when guiding students and graduates.

2. “Mobile Profile” – generally effective but more risky pathway

This type includes young people who find employment in another region of Ukraine or move abroad for work, but not in the segment of low-skilled jobs.

This group is characterised by the following features:

- a moderate alignment between profession and job;
- a medium level of utilisation of skills acquired in VET;
- more frequent job changes during the first year;
- strong regional contrasts in employment opportunities.

The success of this mobile profile largely depends on whether the graduate manages to obtain formal employment and whether the professional field is in demand in the destination region (for example: construction, transport, IT).

For counsellors, it is important to emphasise that mobility itself does not guarantee better outcomes, but it can become an effective strategy when supported by strong professional competencies and a realistic assessment of labour market demand in the destination region.

3. "Forced Mobility Profile" – typical for some vulnerable groups

This profile represents a mixed trajectory and includes young people who work in another region due to family relocation or personal displacement, have limited choice of profession, or experience interruptions in their professional trajectory. They are also more likely to work in jobs unrelated to their training.

Key characteristics include:

- a high share of unstable and temporary employment;
- a low level of utilisation of acquired competencies;
- a longer job search period;
- higher barriers due to competition and a shortage of vacancies.

According to the survey results, vulnerable groups are most likely to fall into this trajectory. This profile requires targeted career support, additional training opportunities, and integration measures.

4. "Low-Skilled Start" – employment abroad without using professional training

This is the most risky entry model, typical for some graduates who move abroad in search of quick income and work in sectors that do not require specialised training (services, warehouse operations, basic manufacturing).

Typical characteristics include:

- a very low level of use of acquired knowledge and skills (up to one quarter do not use them at all);
- a high share of temporary or seasonal employment;
- strong competition and limited opportunities for professional growth;

- lack of professional development even when income levels are higher.

This profile is most common among young people aged 18–20. For career counsellors, it is important to explain the limited long-term prospects of such a pathway and offer alternatives, such as reskilling, integration courses, or job search strategies aimed at finding employment related to the obtained profession in Ukraine.

5. "High Potential, Delayed Start" – graduates who continue education or are temporarily not employed

This profile includes graduates who continue their education, those who experience short-term interruptions in employment, and those who have not yet entered the labour market due to family circumstances or insufficient job-search skills.

This group is typically characterised by high motivation for professional development, a need for structured career guidance, and a high share of individuals who plan to return to work in their profession in the future.

This profile should not be interpreted as unsuccessful. A delayed start often leads to successful long-term outcomes, particularly when the continuation of education is linked to further development within the chosen professional field, deeper specialisation, and receives appropriate support (such as mentoring, career planning, internships, etc.).

4.2. Skills for Career Development

Survey data indicate that the success of graduates' transition to the labour market is determined not so much by the overall level of skills development as by the absence of critical skill deficits that complicate the transition from education to employment. A comparison of responses across different groups of graduates shows that the lack of certain competencies distinguishes those who work in their trained profession, find employment quickly, or achieve stable employment, from those whose transition to the labour market is less successful.

Based on the analysis, four groups of skills have been identified whose deficits have the greatest influence on the trajectory of entry into employment.

1) Skills and knowledge essential for finding a job in the trained profession

A comparison across professional fields shows that groups with a lower share of employment in their trained occupation more frequently report shortages of the following skills and knowledge.

Working with equipment and tools

This deficit is most clearly observed in technical occupations, where the match between training and workplace requirements depends heavily on practical skills.

The problem is most pronounced in the following fields:

- Metalworking and mechanical engineering: 10% reported insufficient skills in working with equipment and 6% with tools.
- Energy and electrical engineering: 8% and 5% respectively.
- Construction: 11% and 5%.

Knowledge of regulations and safety standards

Insufficient regulatory knowledge particularly affects occupations where compliance with procedures and safety regulations is a critical component of work.

The deficit is most visible in the following fields:

- Energy: 14%
- Light industry: 13%
- Metalworking: 17%
- IT/office support: 17%

In these professional fields, graduates reporting such deficits are more likely to move into adjacent or unrelated jobs.

Computer skills

A lack of digital skills is one of the key factors leading graduates to move into simpler or less qualified roles.

The deficit is most pronounced in the following fields:

- Security and safety: 22%
- Light industry: 21%
- Beauty industry: 14%

Graduates who report these deficiencies are more likely to work outside their trained profession, confirming the role of digital skills as a minimum entry threshold for many modern jobs.

Communication with clients and interaction with employers

A lack of communication skills has the greatest impact in occupations where customer interaction is a central part of the job.

The deficit is most pronounced in the following fields:

- Trade and services: 12% report insufficient client interaction skills and 11% difficulties in communication with employers.
- Beauty industry: 16% and 8% respectively.

- IT/office support: 10% and 7%.

Overall, employment in the trained profession is closely linked to the absence of deficits in practical, digital, and communication skills, as well as regulatory knowledge. The lack of these competencies most often pushes young people into employment outside their field of training.

2) Skills whose deficit reduces employment stability

Employment stability is determined not primarily by technical competencies but by socio-emotional skills, particularly stress resilience and the ability to work in a team. Among graduates with unstable employment trajectories, two types of deficits are most prominent.

Stress resilience

This is the most widespread deficit across all professional fields without exception.

- In trade and services, 44% reported a lack of stress resilience.
- In transport, 42%.
- In food and service occupations, 43%.
- Even in IT, 40%.

The high prevalence of this deficit is reflected in the fact that these sectors also show a higher share of graduates who change jobs during the first months of employment.

Teamwork

A deficit in teamwork skills is typical for professions with collective production processes or strong interdependence between workers.

- Energy sector: 10%
- Metalworking: 12%
- Light industry: 11%
- Trade and services: 12%

In these fields, young workers more often report difficulties in workplace adaptation and conflicts with colleagues, which are among the main factors contributing to unstable employment.

3) Skills whose deficit slows down job search

Survey data show that a longer job search period is primarily associated with a lack of digital skills and difficulties in communication with employers. These deficits slow the transition from education to the first job because they make it harder for graduates to navigate modern job search channels.

Digital skills

In professional fields with higher deficits (such as security, light industry, and manufacturing), young people more often report longer job search periods.

Communication with employers

This deficit limits the ability to successfully participate in recruitment processes, including responding to vacancies, participating in interviews, and maintaining communication during the hiring process. The highest levels of this deficit are observed in professions within the fields of trade and services (11%), IT (13%), and food and service occupations (12%).

These findings make it possible to better orient VET programmes not only toward general skill development but specifically toward reducing the deficits that most strongly affect the start of a career.

4.3. Typical Barriers in the Transition from Education to Employment

Despite the generally high rate of transition of VET graduates into employment, the survey data indicate a number of barriers that complicate entry into the first job, delay professional start, or reduce employment stability. These barriers are rarely expressed by young people as direct statements about difficulties. Instead, they appear through a combination of indicators such as the duration of job search, alignment between employment and field of training, the nature of employment (formal, informal, temporary), skill deficits, job search channels, and the specific situations of vulnerable groups.

Typical barriers in the transition from education to the labour market largely shape the initial career trajectories of young specialists. Each barrier has its own nature, but together they form a complex set of obstacles affecting the speed, quality, and stability of early work experience.

1) Structural labour market barriers

Structural barriers are related not to the individual characteristics of graduates but to the conditions of the labour market they enter. Under wartime conditions, these barriers are particularly visible because they combine the effects of economic instability, relocation of enterprises, uneven recovery of economic activity, and large-scale population displacement.

Barrier to access stable formal employment

In a number of professional fields — especially service, humanitarian, and creative occupations — the share of formal and permanent jobs is noticeably lower than in technical or industrial sectors. This pattern is reflected in employment outcomes: some graduates work temporarily, in the informal sector, or under unstable employment arrangements such as contracting, short-term jobs, or seasonal work.

A higher share of such employment formats does not necessarily indicate a lack of opportunities, but rather reflects structural difficulties at the entry point to the labour market: newcomers more easily access short-term jobs that require fewer formal qualifications and allow rapid staff turnover.

Barrier of mismatch between professional training and the structure of available vacancies

For some graduates — especially in social, humanitarian, and certain service professions — the structure of local labour demand may not match their training. This often pushes them into employment outside their professional field. In such cases, working outside the trained profession becomes an indicator of a structural barrier: the qualification exists, but opportunities to apply it locally are limited.

Specific structural barriers affecting vulnerable groups

Graduates from priority and vulnerable social groups (such as persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, orphans, etc.) more often face a combination of structural barriers: a limited number of potential employers, persistent stereotypes, lack of supportive infrastructure, and limited access to transport.

As a result, these groups tend to have a lower share of formal employment and a higher share of temporary work arrangements, even when they possess the necessary competencies.

2) Professional and competency-related barriers

A specific feature of this survey (due to the methodology used) is that the data on skills reflect not only the level of proficiency but also the deficits that graduates have already encountered after entering employment. Therefore, professional barriers are manifested through which skills are most often absent or insufficient for a successful start in the labour market.

Barrier of adaptation to the work environment

Stress resilience is the most widespread deficit across the entire sample, regardless of profession. Young workers often face difficulties adapting to a fast-paced work environment, multitasking, emotionally demanding situations, conflicts within teams, or

pressure from clients. This barrier frequently underlies early job turnover, difficulties in retaining the first job, and repeated transitions between workplaces.

Barrier of practical alignment with professional requirements

A lack of skills related to working with equipment, tools, and regulatory documentation in technical and industrial fields creates an entry barrier to profession-specific vacancies. Young people who have not sufficiently mastered production processes are more likely to move into non-core roles or start from lower positions within the occupational hierarchy.

Barrier of client interaction and service

In occupations oriented towards working with people, barriers arise from insufficient client communication skills, including interaction, emotional regulation, persuasion, and conflict management. This deficit often pushes graduates toward simpler, lower-paid, or seasonal jobs.

Barrier of digital literacy

In several professional fields (such as security, lower-skilled production occupations, and certain service sectors), digital skills function as a “ticket of entry” to modern workplaces. Their absence limits access to vacancies and complicates job search, documentation procedures, and the use of basic workplace systems.

Thus, competency-related barriers create a blind spot at the point of entry into employment: formally, the qualification exists, but the practical or behavioural readiness of graduates remains below the level expected by employers.

3) Informational and behavioural barriers to job search

This type of barrier is reflected in how graduates search for jobs, which channels they use, what strategies they choose, and how actively they engage with employers.

Barrier of limited access to information about vacancies

Some young people rely primarily on informal contacts, relatives, acquaintances, or passive expectations of job offers. This reduces the range of available vacancies, limits access to higher-quality job opportunities, and often prolongs the job search period.

Barrier of ineffective job search strategies

Graduates who do not use modern digital platforms, are unable to properly prepare a CV, or have difficulties communicating with employers tend to search for jobs longer. They are also more likely to accept less favourable conditions or employment outside their professional field.

Barrier of lack of confidence in communication with employers

Fear of calling employers, responding to vacancies, participating in interviews, or presenting one's skills becomes one of the key hidden obstacles. This is particularly visible in professional fields where a significant share of young people report deficits in communication skills.

Behavioural barriers are not related to the absence of opportunities; rather, they stem from insufficient readiness to take an active role in the job search process.

4) Territorial and mobility barriers

Under wartime conditions, the territorial dimension of the labour market becomes particularly important. These barriers are not always related to the region as such; more often they concern specific territories, communities, or districts.

Barrier of local limitation

In some communities, employment opportunities are limited due to security conditions, enterprise relocations, or reduced economic activity. Graduates who are not ready or able to leave their community face a much narrower range of available vacancies.

Barrier of forced mobility

For some young people (especially internally displaced persons), mobility is not a strategy but a necessity. This creates additional challenges: disrupted social networks, lack of local work experience, and difficulties related to housing and transport. Such graduates more often begin with non-professional jobs or short-term employment.

Barrier of spatial mismatch between training and the local labour market

Even when overall demand in a region is balanced, within particular territories there may be a mismatch between the graduate's field of training and locally available vacancies. This forces young people either to seek employment in related professions or postpone employment until relocation becomes possible.

Territorial barriers often combine with behavioural ones: low mobility together with passive job search strategies significantly narrows opportunities for entering the labour market.

5) Institutional barriers in career support

One of the most consistent conclusions of the report is that the career support system within VET institutions has not yet become a fully developed tool for supporting young people. Career counselling receives lower evaluations than other aspects of educational conditions and quality, while the experience of interaction with employers during training often remains fragmentary.

Barrier of weak integration of career support into the learning process

Many graduates do not receive systematic information about employment opportunities, job search strategies, formats of interaction with employers, or prospects for professional development.

Barrier of weak partnerships between VET institutions and employers

Practical training, internships, and dual education elements do not always function as effective channels for entering employment. When partnerships are weak, young people do not gain direct access to employers and must enter the labour market independently.

Barrier of unequal access to support

Graduates from vulnerable groups are less likely to receive high-quality career guidance, which further reinforces existing structural and behavioural barriers.

Barriers to labour market entry therefore have a complex and multi-level character, emerging at different levels:

- structural (labour market conditions, unstable employment);
- professional (skill deficits);
- behavioural and informational (job search strategies);
- territorial (local conditions, mobility);
- institutional (quality of career support).

Importantly, these barriers rarely exist in isolation; most often young people face combinations of several barriers simultaneously. For this reason, the work of career counsellors should focus not on overcoming a single factor but on addressing the entire set of obstacles that shape the transition from education to employment.

4.4. Recommendations for Career Counsellors

The transition from education to work is always associated with uncertainty, lack of information, internal doubts, and difficulties in understanding one's own opportunities. In this context, the career counsellor primarily plays the role of a guide, helping young people navigate available options, recognise their strengths and risks, and identify realistic steps toward their first job.

Given the barriers identified in the analysis, career counselling support can be particularly effective when it focuses on several key areas.

1) Supporting orientation toward the real labour market

Career counsellors can help young people develop a realistic understanding of labour market demand in their professional field by:

- explaining which types of vacancies are most common at entry-level positions;
- drawing attention to the fact that stable formal employment may not always be available immediately, and that starting from temporary or related roles is a common practice;
- helping graduates assess when mobility can expand opportunities and when it may create additional difficulties.

The role of the counsellor in this context is not to change the structure of the labour market, but to help young people understand it and identify their place within it.

2) Supporting the overcoming of competency barriers

In many cases, graduates' difficulties are related not to the absence of qualifications but to deficits in stress resilience, digital literacy, teamwork skills, or the ability to interact with clients. A career counsellor can:

- discuss with young people the typical challenges of the first workplace;
- help identify competencies that may require attention in the near future;
- recommend accessible short learning formats, online resources, or opportunities available within the institution;
- where appropriate, encourage participation in practical training or internships as a safe environment for developing such competencies.

This is not direct "skill formation," but support in recognising and gradually developing the competencies needed for professional growth.

3) Supporting effective job search strategies

Since many barriers are related to how young people search for jobs, counselling can focus on:

- explaining which job search channels tend to produce the best results;
- gently adjusting ineffective strategies (for example, relying only on personal contacts);
- assisting in preparing a CV or a short message to a potential employer;
- discussing common communication mistakes during the recruitment process;
- modelling simple scenarios of a "first phone call" or "first conversation" with an employer.

In this format, the counsellor does not primarily "teach", but rather accompanies, facilitates, and supports the first practical steps in the job search process.

4) Orientation in territorial and mobility opportunities

In situations where labour market conditions depend on a specific community or even a particular part of a city, career counsellors can:

- help young people assess what employment opportunities are available locally;
- support them in choosing between local employment and mobility options;
- jointly evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of relocation;
- discuss possibilities of remote or hybrid employment, where such formats are relevant for the profession.

The counsellor's role in this context is to help navigate available options rather than offer universal solutions.

5) Support for vulnerable groups

For graduates belonging to vulnerable groups (such as internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, orphans, etc.), the following forms of support may be particularly helpful:

- more frequent short consultations;
- assistance in rebuilding social connections and identifying support points in a new environment;
- discussions not only about available vacancies but also about realistic pathways of adaptation;
- referrals to support programmes, scholarships, or additional services available within the community.

The primary goal in this case is to reduce the risk of social isolation and exclusion from the labour market.

6) Facilitating bridges between education and work

Career counsellors can help young people see practical training, internships, or seasonal employment not as a formal requirement but as an opportunity for a safe transition into professional life. They can:

- gently highlight the benefits of practical training;
- encourage viewing practice as a way to become familiar with a real work environment;
- if the student wishes, help them prepare questions for employers or clarify expectations from the internship.

Even such small informational interventions can significantly strengthen the impact of practical learning.

As a conclusion, it should be noted that career counselling within VET institutions can play a significant role in overcoming barriers to employment transition, even when resources are limited. Its strength lies in soft guidance, orientation, attention focusing, support in self-reflection, and an individual approach.

A counsellor does not eliminate structural labour market problems and does not replace the employer. However, they can become the specialist who:

- makes the pathway more understandable;
- reduces the level of uncertainty;
- supports confidence in one's own abilities;
- helps identify realistic opportunities.

This is precisely the essence of effective career guidance and support.

V. Aggregated Indicators and Dynamics of VET Effectiveness

5.1. Indicators of Alignment Between Vocational Education and Labour Market Conditions

The effectiveness of VET institutions in supporting graduate employment is assessed using three indicators of alignment, each reflecting a different level of correspondence between the profession obtained and labour market conditions. This approach allows for a comprehensive assessment of how training provided by VET institutions contributes to graduates' successful transition into employment, and is consistent with the Tracer Studies methodology developed by CEDEFOP and ETF.

To assess the transition to the labour market, **five integrated indicators** are applied:

1. **KPI-Standard. Employment in the trained profession in the region of education.** This is the main indicator of alignment between training and the local labour market. It includes all graduates who are employed **in the region where they studied and in the trained profession or a clearly related occupation**, regardless of the form of employment.
2. **KPI-Functional. Employment within the professional field in the region of education.** This indicator includes not only those working in the exact profession but also graduates employed in **related or functionally similar occupations**. It reflects a **broader spectrum of professional alignment** in graduates' career trajectories.
3. **KPI-Strict. Full-time formal employment in the trained profession in the region of education.** This is the **most stringent indicator**, including only graduates who are **formally employed full-time in the same profession (or a clearly related one) and in the same region where they studied**.
4. **KPI-MigF-Standard. Employment in related professions abroad.** This indicator captures graduates who **found employment abroad while maintaining professional alignment**, working in occupations that are **similar or closely related to their field of training**. It reflects the ability of vocational training to support **flexible transitions into broader segments of the international labour market**.
5. **KPI-MigL-Standard. Employment in the trained profession in another region of the country.** This indicator measures how well the obtained profession is **demanded on the national labour market regardless of territorial boundaries**. It includes graduates working in **their trained or a closely related**

profession in another region of Ukraine, thus reflecting **labour mobility and the geographical spread of demand for skills**.

The aggregate indicator of effective employment (Standard) represents an integrated measure combining all forms of professional alignment captured by KPI-Standard, KPI-MigL-Standard, and KPI-MigF-Standard. It accounts for both local employment in the trained profession and interregional or international career trajectories, allowing for an assessment of the full extent to which graduates' professional competencies are utilised, regardless of the geography of employment.

Tab. 8. Values of education-to-labour market matching models by region, %

Region	Employment in the profession / clearly related profession in the region of study (KPI-L-Standard)	Employment in the field of training in the region of study (KPI-L-Functional)	Full formal employment in the profession / clearly related profession in the region of study (KPI-L-Strict)	Employment in the profession / clearly related profession in another country (KPI-MigF-Standard)	Employment in the profession / clearly related profession in another region (KPI-MigL-Standard)	Total share of effective employment (Standard)
Ukraine	**33.7**	**36.7**	**22.4**	**3.5**	**7.3**	**44.5**
Zhytomyr	50.8	55.1	36.9	2.3	6.8	59.9
Kyiv City	50.0	55.6	33.3	4.2	5.6	59.7
Kirovohrad	43.8	45.4	33.5	3.3	8.6	55.6
Dnipropetrovsk	40.0	43.0	30.6	1.7	4.8	46.5
Cherkasy	40.0	43.4	28.9	5.8	4.8	50.6
Vinnytsia	39.6	42.5	25.4	2.9	8.8	51.4
Kharkiv	39.2	42.4	24.8	2.8	5.2	47.2
Odesa	38.9	42.5	22.0	5.4	8.4	52.7
Khmelnytskyi	37.2	42.0	23.1	3.5	6.1	46.8
Chernivtsi	36.8	40.0	21.2	4.8	5.9	47.5
Ivano-Frankivsk	36.8	39.9	20.5	3.3	3.7	43.8
Zakarpattia	34.9	39.2	24.7	10.5	3.1	48.5
Rivne	34.1	36.3	22.9	5.0	5.8	45.0
Sumy	32.6	35.1	21.7	0.9	8.8	42.3
Chernihiv	30.5	34.4	20.8	2.0	8.8	41.4
Kyiv Region	29.7	33.3	20.3	1.2	8.2	39.1
Zaporizhzhia	28.4	30.5	20.3	4.3	9.8	42.5
Poltava	26.5	29.3	19.2	2.4	5.2	34.1
Lviv	23.0	27.0	12.4	4.1	4.1	31.2
Volyn	21.2	21.8	13.5	8.0	3.7	32.9
Mykolaiv	19.8	24.4	12.4	2.0	5.3	27.2
Ternopil	15.2	17.1	10.2	6.5	4.3	26.0
Kherson	12.1	12.8	7.4	9.7	23.8	45.6
Donetsk	6.1	7.2	3.0	2.7	18.6	27.5
Luhansk	Not calculated					

At the national level, the main alignment indicator KPI-L-Standard (graduates working in their trained profession or a clearly related occupation in the region where they studied) amounts to 33.7%, which corresponds to the average range observed in EU countries.

The indicator KPI-L-Functional (graduates working within their professional field in the region of education) reaches 36.7%. In EU countries, this type of "functional alignment" usually covers 40–55% of graduates.

The indicator KPI-L-Strict (full-time formal employment in the trained profession in the region of education) stands at 22.4%. This is the most stringent indicator, capturing only those who are formally employed, working full time, in their profession and in their region of education. In EU tracer study practice, strict alignment indicators rarely exceed 20–30%, which makes the Ukrainian results comparable even under wartime conditions.

The indicator KPI-MigF-Standard (graduates working in their profession or a clearly related occupation in another country) amounts to 9.5%. Similar values are typical for countries with high levels of labour mobility, where the international labour market partly compensates for structural imbalances at the national level.

The indicator KPI-MigL-Standard (graduates working in their profession or a clearly related occupation in another region of Ukraine) reaches 12.3%. This value indicates a moderate level of internal labour mobility among graduates, which, given wartime restrictions, appears somewhat lower than might otherwise be expected. In European studies, such mobility usually ranges between 10–20%, confirming that the Ukrainian transition model remains broadly comparable with European labour market patterns, even under the challenging conditions of war.

The aggregate share of effective employment (Standard)—which combines local, interregional, and international employment in the trained profession or a clearly related occupation—amounts to 55.6%. This integrated indicator reflects the overall level of utilisation of graduates' professional competencies regardless of the geography of employment. The result can be considered relatively high, particularly given wartime constraints, uneven labour market recovery, and regional disparities. It reflects both the continued demand for vocational qualifications and the capacity of the VET system to support successful labour market transitions even under conditions of war.

Overall, the relationship between the three local KPI models corresponds to the typical European structure: Strict < Standard < Functional, confirming the validity of the chosen methodological approach and reflecting the real mechanisms through which young people enter the labour market.

The migration-based KPI models (interregional and international employment) complement this picture by demonstrating that alignment between training and employment is maintained even under conditions of territorial mobility. They capture additional transition trajectories not covered by local indicators and reflect a broader space of demand for professional competencies—both within the country and abroad.

All five KPI models demonstrate pronounced regional differentiation, which closely corresponds to the structure of regional economies, the security situation, and the level of development of economic sectors in each oblast.

The highest values of employment in the trained profession within the region of education (KPI-L-Standard) are observed in Zhytomyr oblast, the city of Kyiv, Kirovohrad oblast, Dnipropetrovsk oblast, and Cherkasy oblast. These regions maintain a relatively developed industrial, construction, and agricultural base, which ensures stable demand for graduates of technical and service professions. Medium values of this indicator are typical for most central and western regions, including Vinnytsia,

Rivne, Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, Sumy, Chernihiv, and Odesa oblasts, where labour markets are diversified but more competitive.

The lowest values are recorded in Kherson and Donetsk oblasts, where employment opportunities are objectively limited due to active hostilities, partial occupation of territories, disrupted logistics, and relocation of educational institutions. In these cases, the low values of KPI-Standard, KPI-Functional, and KPI-Strict do not reflect the performance of VET institutions, but rather the broader economic and security conditions affecting these regions.

Indicators of migration-based employment also show significant regional variation. The highest values of KPI-MigL-Standard (internal labour mobility) are observed in border and western regions, particularly Lviv, Zakarpattia, Ternopil, and Volyn oblasts, where a substantial share of graduates finds employment outside their home region due to limited local demand. Conversely, the lowest levels of internal mobility are observed in Dnipropetrovsk, Zhytomyr, and Kirovohrad oblasts, where developed industrial and agricultural sectors provide sufficient employment opportunities within the region.

The indicator KPI-MigF-Standard (international employment) is predictably higher in western regions, including Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Ternopil, and Zakarpattia oblasts, where migration networks and cross-border mobility are well established. In central and eastern regions, the share of international employment is lower, reflecting both greater geographical distance from EU borders and lower intensity of migration flows.

The aggregate indicator of effective employment (Standard) largely preserves the overall regional structure of the local KPIs but is significantly strengthened in regions with high mobility. The highest values of the integrated indicator are observed in Lviv, Kyiv, Zhytomyr, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts. Lower values in Kherson and Donetsk oblasts are primarily explained by security risks and limited access to both local and mobile employment opportunities.

Overall, the regional model of alignment between vocational education and labour market demand demonstrates the resilience of training systems in regions where economic activity remains relatively stable, while also reflecting the expected impact of war in regions with severely limited employment opportunities.

Indicators of alignment between vocational training and labour market conditions across professional fields reveal structural differences between groups of related professions. These differences are shaped by the nature of work tasks, qualification requirements, and employment structures for young specialists. As observed in European tracer studies—where professional fields differ significantly in the characteristics of first employment—Ukrainian results demonstrate a similar pattern: technical fields show

higher alignment, service fields display moderate alignment, while creative and flexible professions exhibit more diverse and mobile career trajectories.

The highest levels of employment in the trained profession within the region of education (KPI-L-Standard) are observed in professional fields that include technical and engineering occupations, such as energy-related professions, metalworking and mechanical engineering, construction occupations, and vehicle maintenance professions. These professional groups are characterised by clearly defined qualification requirements, structured workplaces, and stable demand for young specialists. They also tend to demonstrate higher levels of formal employment, which is reflected in a smaller gap between KPI-L-Standard and KPI-L-Strict.

Tab. 9. Values of education-to-labour market matching models by occupational field of training, %

Occupational field of training	Employment in the profession / clearly related profession in the region of study (KPI-L-Standard)	Employment in the field of training in the region of study (KPI-L-Functional)	Full formal employment in the profession / clearly related profession in the region of study (KPI-L-Strict)	Employment in the profession / clearly related profession in another country (KPI-MigF-Standard)	Employment in the profession / clearly related profession in another region (KPI-MigL-Standard)	Total share of effective employment (Standard)
Ukraine	**33.7**	**36.7**	**22.4**	**3.5**	**7.3**	**44.5**
Construction and Building Services	40.5	43.7	28.5	2.8	8.3	51.6
Energy and Electrical Engineering	38.0	41.2	25.5	4.2	7.6	49.9
Beauty and Personal Care	37.9	41.0	30.8	3.8	4.6	46.4
Information Technology and Office Support	36.9	40.4	24.9	2.2	3.1	42.2
Light Industry and Fashion	33.2	35.7	21.2	3.9	8.1	45.2
Metalworking and Machinery	32.7	35.6	17.3	4.0	7.3	44.0
Security Services	32.3	36.1	24.4	2.3	11.2	45.8
Agriculture and Green Economy	31.4	33.3	29.6	0.6	8.2	40.1
Retail and Customer Services	31.3	32.7	18.0	2.3	6.2	39.8
Transport and Logistics	27.9	29.9	14.2	3.6	5.4	36.9
Food Services and Hospitality	26.7	32.1	20.3	2.7	4.3	33.6
Creative and Media Professions	11.3	16.0	9.4	0.4	23.8	35.5

Medium levels of alignment are characteristic of professional groups in trade, customer service, hospitality, food services, and agricultural work. These fields typically involve greater variability in entry-level jobs, more frequent transitions between related occupations, and mixed forms of employment. For this reason, a noticeable increase in KPI-Functional is observed in these sectors: many graduates begin working not in the exact occupation they studied, but within the broader professional field. This pattern is also typical for EU countries, where functional alignment often exceeds strict occupational alignment.

The lowest values of KPI-Standard and the largest differences between KPI models are observed in professional fields that include beauty industry occupations, light industry, design, media, and other creative professions. These groups are characterised by higher mobility, short-term employment formats, frequent self-employment, and a tendency to seek opportunities outside the region of education. Accordingly, a low KPI-Strict in these fields does not indicate weaker institutional performance, but rather reflects a different pattern of career entry, where full-time formal employment is less common.

Migration-related indicators also reveal significant differences across professional fields. The highest values of KPI-MigF-Standard (international employment) are recorded in IT, creative industries, and service sectors, where the share of international employment ranges between 12–18%. These sectors are characterised by flexible employment arrangements and cross-border mobility. In contrast, industrial, construction, and agricultural professions show significantly lower levels of international employment — usually 3–6% — reflecting their stronger dependence on local production infrastructure.

The indicator KPI-MigL-Standard (internal mobility) is highest in trade, logistics, hospitality, and food service professions, where employment outside the region of education reaches 15–22%. These sectors are characterised by high geographical accessibility of jobs and typical migration patterns toward large urban agglomerations. Technical and industrial professions show lower levels of internal mobility — generally 8–12%, reflecting stronger ties to local employers and a more limited number of alternative production sites.

The aggregate share of effective employment (Standard) increases most strongly in trade, services, transport, and IT, where the integrated indicator reaches 58–65%, reflecting the combination of local employment opportunities and relatively high mobility. At the same time, the lowest values are observed in creative and design professions—typically 38–45%, which is associated with irregular employment formats, widespread self-employment, and a higher dependence on external markets.

Overall, the structure of indicators across professional fields demonstrates high internal consistency: technical professions consistently show the highest alignment with vocational training, service-oriented fields provide broad functional alignment, and creative professions are characterised by greater mobility and flexible career trajectories.

Thus, the proposed alignment models provide a balanced understanding of the overall effectiveness of vocational education and training across different regions and professional fields. At the same time, each model reflects only one aspect of the transition process—such as the level of formal employment, the precision of occupational alignment, or the breadth of professional orientation. A more comprehensive and informative approach requires a model that covers a broader range of meaningful parameters and integrates different components of successful labour market transition, including qualitative characteristics of employment such as income levels, the use of acquired skills, and other indicators of first-job quality.

Such a comprehensive approach is presented in the next subsection, where an integrated indicator of alignment between vocational education and labour market conditions is introduced.

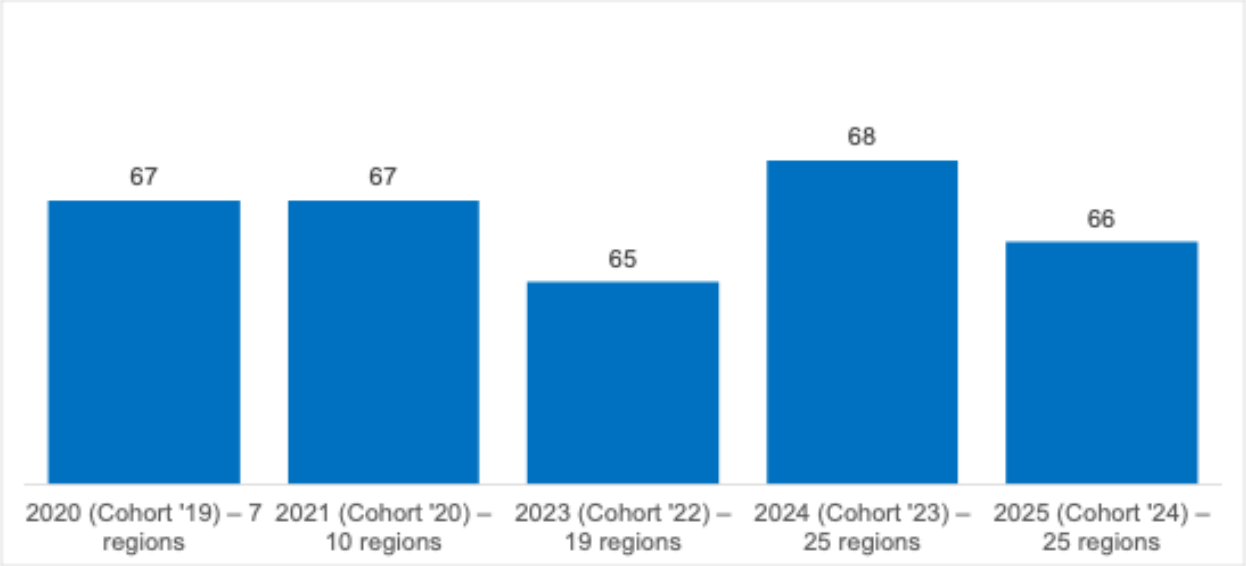
5.2. Key Trends in 2020–2025

The analysis of five waves of surveys on the career trajectories of VET graduates conducted between 2020 and 2025makes it possible not only to trace the methodological evolution of monitoring in Ukraine (from pilot initiatives to large-scale national projects), but also to identify the key trends shaping the labour market position of young specialists under conditions of full-scale war. At the same time, the survey waves should not be interpreted as precise annual measurements. It is more appropriate to view them as a medium-term indicator of stable trends, which also allows for the validation of aggregated models of effectiveness.

The results of the two most recent waves (2024 and 2025) are particularly important for identifying nationwide trends, as they provide the highest level of representativeness and cover all regions of the country. The data from 2023 serve as an important—though methodologically limited—reference point corresponding to the most acute period of military hostilities.

Despite global shocks such as COVID-19 and the full-scale war, as well as broader economic challenges, the VET system demonstrates a high level of structural resilience in employment outcomes. Throughout the entire observation period, the share of employed graduates remains practically unchanged, fluctuating between 65% and 68%. The decrease in 2023 to 65% can be associated with the large-scale disruption of the economy following the first year of the full-scale war, but by 2024 the indicator returned to 68%, reflecting business adaptation and sustained baseline demand for VET graduates. The result for 2025 (66%) confirms that employment outcomes remain structurally stable and show no signs of long-term deterioration.

Fig. 59. Employment rate of graduates, 2020–2025, %



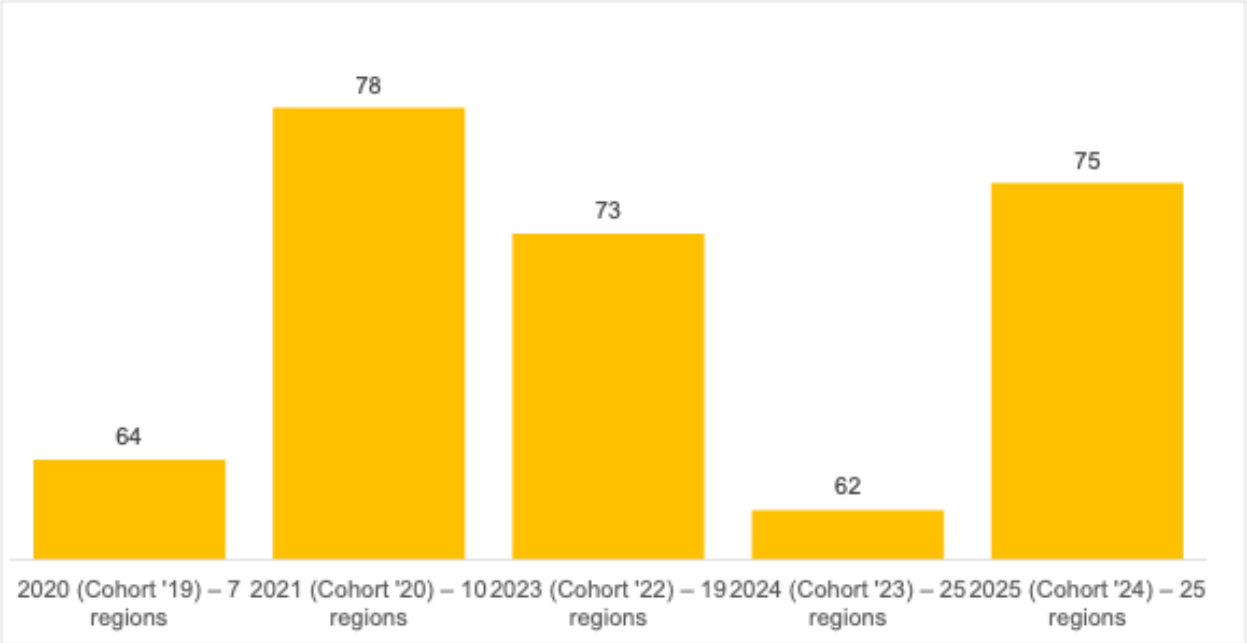
This dynamic is consistent with the previously presented KPI alignment models, which demonstrate a moderate but consistently reproduced level of transition into employment across regions.

It is evident that the system's ability to maintain the employment rate above two thirds indicates a fundamental demand for skilled workers, supported by the needs of the economy, including critical sectors.

In contrast, the indicator of employment alignment with the field of study shows more noticeable fluctuations. In 2020, it stood at 64%, rising to 78% in 2021. This increase may be explained both by methodological changes in the interpretation of "similar occupation" and by the expansion of the labour market following the easing of pandemic restrictions. In 2023, the level of employment alignment remained relatively high (73%), indicating a persistent shortage of skilled workers even during wartime.

The lowest value was recorded in 2024—only 62%. This decline is likely associated with changes in the structure of available vacancies, the growing share of temporary and low-skilled jobs, and mobility constraints, which significantly affected the transition of young people into stable professional employment.

Fig. 60. Employment in the trained or a related occupation, 2020–2025, %



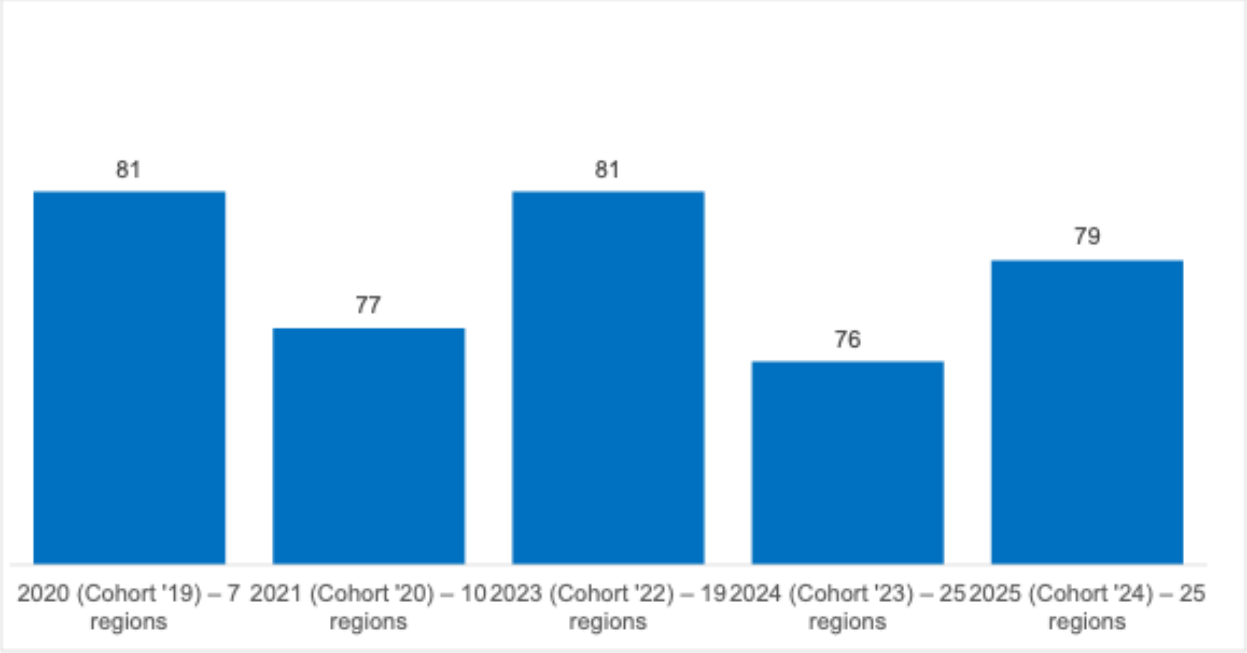
In 2025, the indicator increased again to 75%, signalling labour market recovery and confirming the conclusions drawn from the model analysis: approximately three quarters of graduates typically find jobs that fully or partially correspond to their field of training. This finding is consistent with the relationship between KPI-Standard, KPI-Functional, and migration-related KPIs, which show that the overall share of relevant employment

consistently exceeds 50%. Overall, this confirms that vocational education and training provides relevant professional skills that are directly applicable in the labour market.

Assessments of subjective satisfaction with education remain consistently high: the share of graduates who would choose the same profession again ranges between 76% and 81%, without a clear upward or downward trend. This indicates that the educational process within VET institutions continues to receive positive evaluations from learners, while the main challenges for young people arise not during training, but at the stage of transition to the first job. These challenges relate primarily to the availability of vacancies, wage levels, the formalisation of employment, and competition in local labour markets.

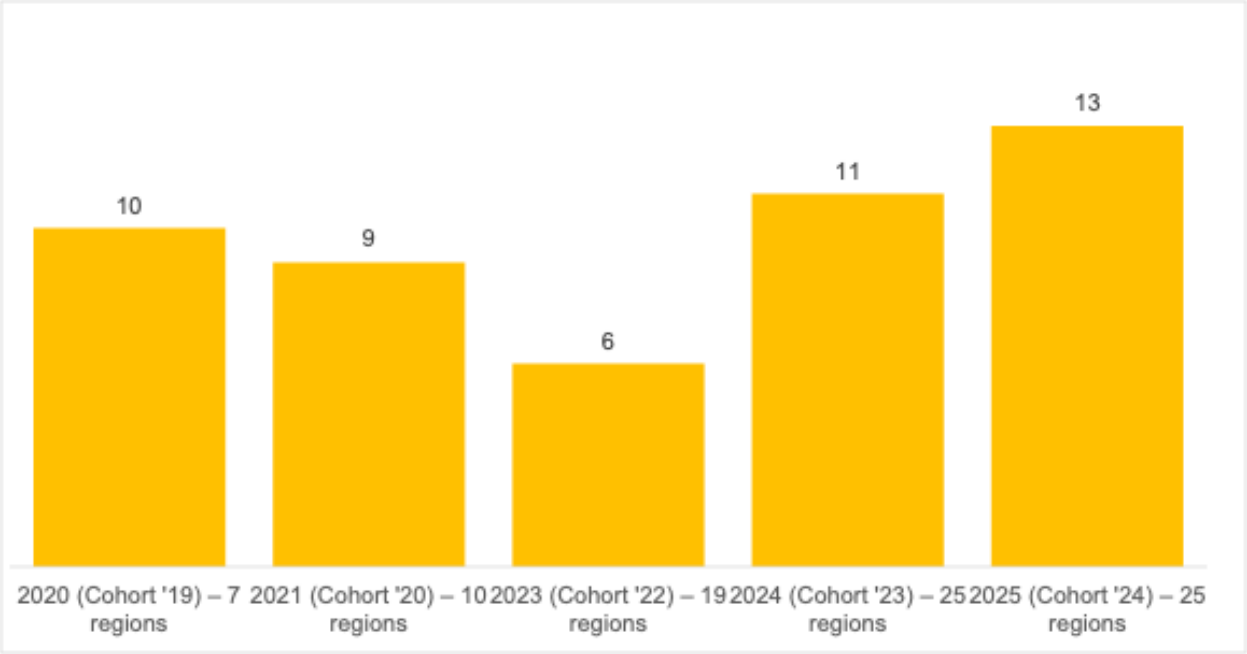
This interpretation is fully consistent with the KPI-Strict indicator, which take into account formal employment and the extent to which acquired skills are utilised in the workplace.

Fig. 61. Share of graduates who would choose the same occupation again, 2020–2025, %



The most dynamic and concerning trend, accelerated by military actions and economic constraints, is the growing share of graduates choosing employment abroad. International migration is the only available indicator that demonstrates a clear and consistent upward trend.

Fig. 62. Share of graduates working abroad, 2020–2025, %



This trend reflects both security risks and structural distortions in the Ukrainian labour market. One possible factor is the growing demand for skilled workers in EU countries. The dynamics fully confirm the migration-related KPIs, which record a significant share of relevant professional employment taking place abroad.

It is evident that the growing external mobility of VET graduates creates a risk of a long-term shortage of skilled labour for Ukraine's future recovery, which calls for immediate retention and repatriation policies.

Particular attention should also be paid to the dynamics of stress-resilience deficits, which were measured only in 2024–2025. The share of graduates who report lacking this competency decreased from 42% to 36%, yet remains remarkably high. This reflects both the psychological consequences of war and the growing importance employers place on behavioural competencies.

- Overall, the dynamics of survey results from 2020–2025 represent not only a temporal measurement but also an important tool for validating broader analytical conclusions:
- Stability of employment outcomes corresponds to KPI-L-Standard (local alignment), confirming the baseline demand for skilled workers.
- Growth in international mobility fully correlates with KPI-Migration (external alignment), demonstrating that the value of vocational training is realised beyond national borders.

In summary, the dynamics of 2023–2025 indicate that the Ukrainian VET system has successfully adapted to the shocks of war while continuing to provide training for skilled workers. However, structural imbalances in the labour market, intensified by external mobility, create new challenges, requiring comprehensive policies aimed at retaining young professionals and improving the quality of transition to the first job.

5.3. Policy Implications for Education and Employment

The conclusions and policy recommendations arising from the results of the 2025 survey and the analysis of 2020–2025 trends should focus on three key areas: preventing migration, strengthening the mechanisms of transition to employment, and adapting educational programmes to current labour market requirements.

1. Highest policy priority: retaining skilled workers

The growth of external labour mobility (up to 13% among employed graduates in 2025) is the most significant strategic threat to Ukraine's economic recovery. The VET system is producing qualified specialists, and the KPI-MigF model confirms that a substantial share of this mobility is aligned with graduates' acquired professions, indicating the high international competitiveness of Ukrainian graduates. However, for the country this creates a risk of long-term depletion of human capital, especially in critical sectors such as construction, transport, machinery, and energy. This requires the development of retention policies for young people, repatriation programmes for the recovery period, and the integration of VET institutions into international qualification frameworks to enable legal temporary employment abroad. In other words, the system prepares competitive specialists well (high KPI-Migration), but the domestic labour market is not able to retain them.

2. Improving transition-to-employment mechanisms

A key trend is the stability of the basic transition to employment, which has remained at 65–68% over five years. This confirms that vocational education continues to be a powerful instrument for integrating young people into the economy, and that demand for skilled workers remains high even under wartime conditions. At the same time, KPI-Strict and the survey wave data indicate substantial difficulties related to the formalisation of employment, job instability, and access to full-time formal jobs. This creates the need for systemic support frameworks for the first job, including subsidised employment schemes, mentoring mechanisms, and stronger institutional cooperation between education providers and employers.

3. The critical role of regional disparities

The analysis reveals significant differences between regions, which closely correlate with the security situation, sectoral structure of regional economies, and patterns of

labour mobility. These disparities indicate that the opportunities for graduates to enter employment vary substantially across oblasts. Consequently, VET and employment policies should rely not only on national-level measures but also on regionally differentiated approaches, including the development of specialised training centres, stronger local cooperation with employers, and the integration of VET institutions into regional economic recovery strategies.

4. Adapting educational content to new challenges

The high and stable relevance of the first job to the profession of training is confirmed by KPI-Standard, KPI-Functional, and trend observations (approximately 70–75%), showing that the majority of graduates find employment related to their professional competencies. This means that, despite limited resources, the Ukrainian VET system ensures a sufficient alignment between educational content and labour market demand. At the same time, the sharp fluctuations observed in 2024 show how vulnerable this alignment is to external shocks and changes in the sectoral structure of the economy. This increases the relevance of policies aimed at flexible updating of educational programmes, short-cycle reskilling, and the development of broader professional competencies. The growing deficit of soft skills (behavioural competencies) and digital literacy requires a structural adjustment of curricula.

5. Strengthening partnerships (dual education)

High levels of occupational alignment in leading sectors such as metalworking and construction highlight the effectiveness of close cooperation with business.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the VET system in Ukraine has demonstrated the capacity to maintain functional resilience even under the unprecedented conditions of war, as confirmed both by the survey waves and by the index-based models. However, structural challenges — growing external migration, instability of formal employment, unequal regional opportunities, and the need for behavioural competencies — require an active modernisation of policy in the fields of education and employment. A focus on strengthening the “education-to-work” transition, developing career support, adapting training content to the needs of the wartime and post-war economy, and creating mechanisms for retaining young professionals are the key preconditions for the country’s recovery and development over the coming decade.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Questionnaire

Dear Respondents,

About a year has passed since you completed your training and obtained your profession. At the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Solidarity Fund PL invites you to participate in a short survey of graduates of 2023. The results obtained will be used to improve practical training.

Completing the questionnaire will take up to 10 minutes.

1. In which region did you study?

2. At which educational institution did you study?

3. Which profession did you study in the vocational education institution?

4. Are you currently employed?

1. Yes → Go to Q5
2. No → Go to Q11

5. What is the nature of your work?

1. Permanent job, formal employment
2. Permanent job, informal employment
3. Self-employment / freelance work
4. Temporary work (irregular jobs)

6. Are you working in Ukraine?

1. Yes → Go to Q7
2. No → Go to Q6a

6a. Which country are you working in? → Go to Q7a

1. Poland
2. Czech Republic
3. Germany
4. Slovakia
5. USA
6. Other country (please specify)

7. Are you working in the region where you studied?

1. Yes
2. No

8. Are you working in the profession you obtained in the vocational education institution?

1. Yes → Go to Q9
2. No → Go to Q8a

8a. Is the profession you currently work in similar to the profession you studied in the vocational education institution?

1. Definitely not → Go to Q8a1
2. Probably not → Go to Q8a1
3. Probably yes → Go to Q9
4. Definitely yes → Go to Q9
5. Don't know / difficult to say → Go to Q9

8a1. Please indicate the profession you are currently working in:

8b. Why are you not working in the profession you obtained in the vocational education institution?

(Select up to three most important options)

1. No vacancies in this profession
2. More attractive job offers available
3. Low wages
4. I am not interested in working in this profession
5. The job in this profession is too difficult for me
6. Unsatisfactory working conditions
7. Lack of housing
8. No job with formal employment available yet
9. Other (please specify)

9. How long did you search for your first job?

1. Less than 1 month
2. 1–3 months
3. 3–6 months
4. More than 6 months

9a. Which job search method was the most successful?

1. Referral or recommendation from the educational institution

2. Printed advertisements (newspapers, public transport, street ads, etc.)
3. Job search websites
4. Personal contacts (friends, parents, relatives)
5. Direct contact with employers
6. During internship or practical training
7. Through the public employment service
8. Through private recruitment agencies
9. Through social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
10. Other (please specify)

10. What is your monthly income?

1. Less than 8,000 UAH
2. 8,001–15,000 UAH
3. 15,001–20,000 UAH
4. 20,001–30,000 UAH
5. More than 30,000 UAH
6. Prefer not to answer

10a. To what extent are the knowledge and skills acquired at the vocational education institution used in your work?

(5-point scale, where 1 = not used at all and 5 = used constantly)

1. 1 – Not used at all
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5 – Used constantly

10b. Which skills do you lack most for your work?

(Select the 3 most important options) → Go to Q13

1. Working with clients
2. Communication with employers
3. Working with equipment
4. Working with tools
5. Teamwork
6. Stress resilience
7. Knowledge of the state language
8. Knowledge of regulatory documents
9. Computer skills
10. Information search and processing
11. Other (please specify)

11. Why are you currently not working?

1. Continuing education
2. Family responsibilities / household / childcare
3. Looking for a job
4. Not working and not looking for a job
5. Military service
6. Other (please specify)

12. Where are you studying?

1. Higher education institution
2. Vocational course organised by the employment service
3. Private vocational courses
4. Other (please specify)

13. How would you assess the learning conditions at the vocational education institution?

(5-point scale, where 1 = very poor and 5 = excellent)

1. Learning materials (e.g., textbooks)
2. Availability of necessary technical equipment
3. Condition of training facilities
4. Condition of the dormitory
5. Attitude of teachers and instructors towards students
6. Quality of theoretical teaching
7. Quality of practical training at the institution
8. Workplace training / internship at an enterprise
9. Job search counselling

14. How has martial law in Ukraine affected your employment situation?

1. Positively → Go to Q14a
2. Rather positively → Go to Q14a
3. No impact → Go to Q15
4. Rather negatively → Go to Q14b
5. Negatively → Go to Q14b

14a. In your opinion, what is the main positive impact?

(Select the most significant option)

1. Increase in wages
2. Increase in the number of vacancies

3. Greater interest from employers in hiring workers
4. Reduced requirements for employees
5. Increased social support from employers
6. Other (please specify)

14b. In your opinion, what is the main negative impact?

(Select the most significant option)

1. Decrease in the number of vacancies
2. Restrictions on travelling abroad
3. Closure of enterprises
4. Decrease in wages
5. Increased requirements from employers
6. Employers reduced social support for workers
7. Other

15. Would you choose the same vocational education institution again?

1. Yes
2. No

16. Would you choose the same profession again?

1. Yes
2. No

17. Please indicate your gender

1. Male
2. Female

18. Please indicate your age

1. Under 18
2. 18
3. 19
4. 20
5. 21
6. 22
7. 23 or older

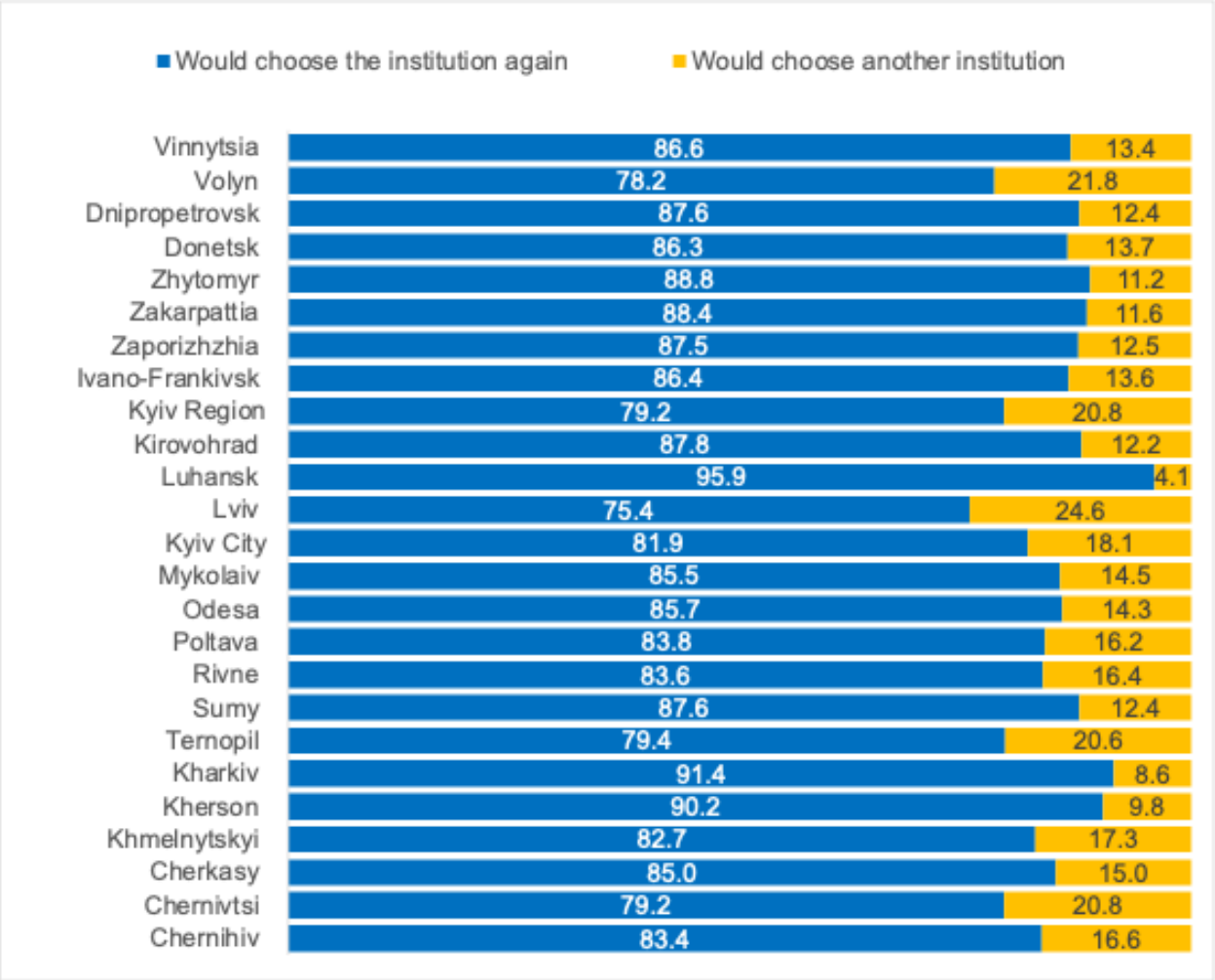
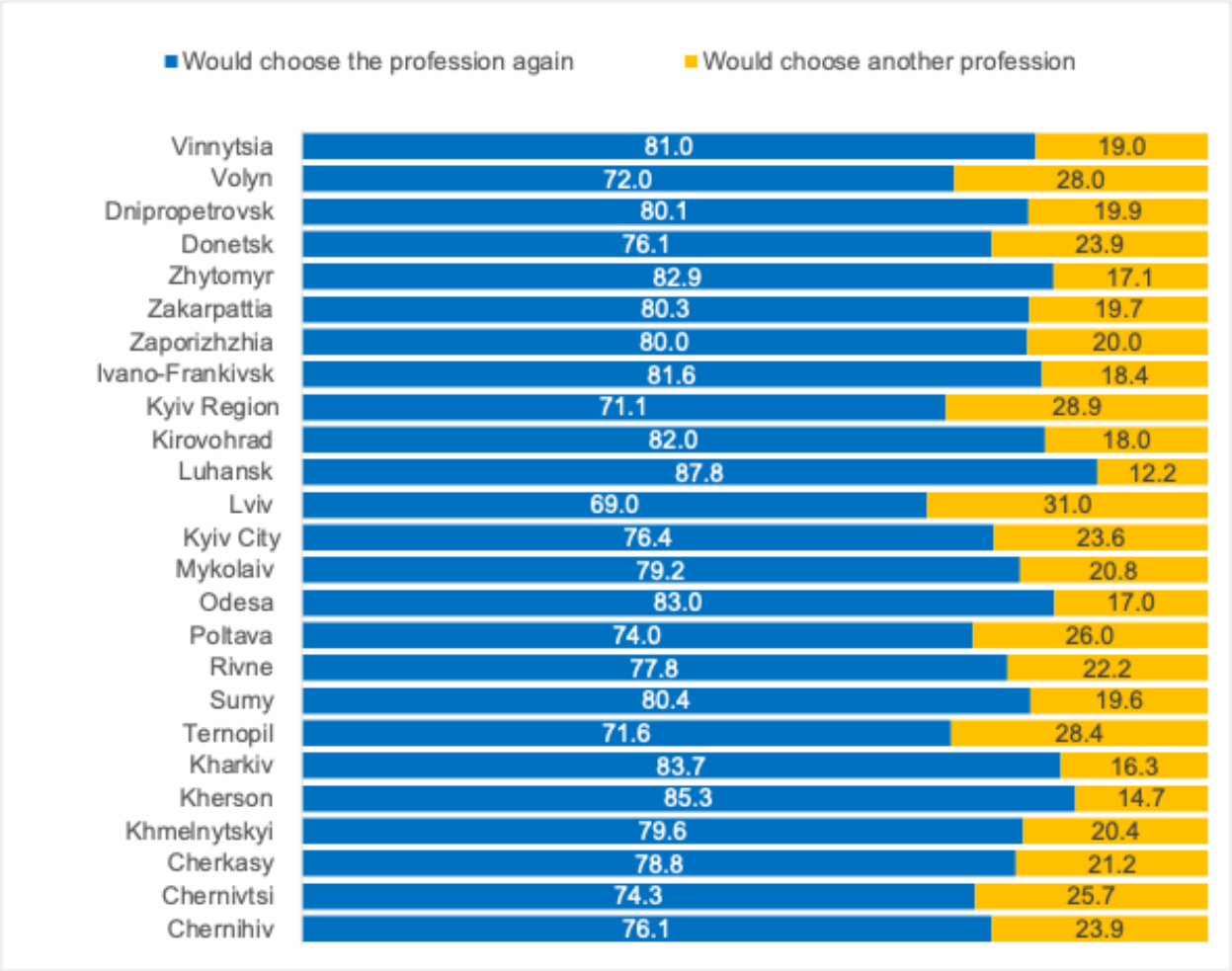
19. Please indicate if you have any of the following statuses

1. Person with disability

2. Orphan
3. Half-orphan
4. From a low-income family
5. From a large family
6. Family member of a war veteran
7. Unemployed
8. Internally displaced person
9. None of the above

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

Annex 2. Assessment of repeated choice of educational institution by region, %



Annex 3. Assessment of repeated choice of occupation by region, %