



# **CONSOLIDATED REPORT BASED ON THE RESULTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY COGNITIVE DEOCCUPATION OF CRIMEA**

The research was conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) at the request of the Partnership Fund for a Resilient Ukraine and the Mission of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, as part of the support for the work of the Council on Cognitive De-occupation of Crimea

September 2024

# Contents

<b>Glossary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Research Methodology</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>10</b>
Ethnic structure and ideological orientation of Crimean residents	10
The current situation in Crimea	11
Reintegration	12
Collaborationism	15
Memorialisation	16
Potential conflicts after de-occupation	16
<b>1. Self-identification and national-territorial identity. Associations with Crimea.</b>	<b>18</b>
1.1. Residents of the mainland part of Ukraine	18
1.2. Residents of Crimea	20
1.2.1. Crimean Tatars	24
1.2.2. Ukrainians	25
1.2.3. Russians	25
1.3. Crimean Tatars living outside Crimea	26
1.4. Associations with Crimea	28
1.4.1 Associations with Crimea: residents of the mainland part of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars	28
1.4.2 Associations with Crimea: Crimean Tatars in the mainland part of Ukraine	29
1.4.3 Associations with Crimea: residents of Crimea	30
<b>2. Current situation in Crimea</b>	<b>33</b>
2.1. Changes in Crimea over the past ten years	33
2.1.1. Migration	33
2.1.3. Welfare of the population	35
2.1.4. State of infrastructure and environment	36
2.1.5. Employment in Crimea	37
2.1.6. Ideological Influence of Russia	38
2.1.7. Repression of Dissidents	40
2.1.8. Values and Worldview changes amongst Crimean residents	41
2.1.9. Situation of Crimean Tatars in Crimea	42
2.1.10. Impact of the full-scale invasion	45
2.2. Awareness of the current situation in Crimea and the mainland part of Ukraine	46

2.2.1. Self-assessment of awareness amongst residents of the mainland part of Ukraine, sources of information and media coverage of the situation in Crimea	46
2.2.2. Awareness of Crimean residents about the situation in the mainland part of Ukraine	53
<b>3. Civic engagement and social cohesion</b>	<b>56</b>
3.1. Social cohesion of residents of the mainland part of Ukraine	56
3.2. Social cohesion and civic engagement of Crimean residents	57
3.3. Attitudes of residents of Crimea and the mainland part of Ukraine towards each other	61
3.3.1. Situation of Crimean Tatars in mainland Ukraine	61
3.3.2. Attitudes of the mainland part of Ukraine residents towards Crimean residents	62
3.3.2. Attitudes of Crimean residents towards the residents of the mainland part of Ukraine	65
3.4. Factors of unification between the mainland part of Ukraine and Crimea	67
<b>4. Reintegration of Crimea</b>	<b>71</b>
4.1 Current perception of the situation in Crimea by residents of the mainland part of Ukraine	71
4.2. Perceptions of the future of Crimea	71
4.2.1. Importance and possibility of de-occupation of Crimea	71
4.2.2. Political and administrative status of Crimea and Sevastopol after de-occupation	73
4.2.3. Economic and infrastructural future of Crimea	76
4.2.4. Demographic Future of Crimea	77
4.2.5. How the future of Crimea is covered in Telegram channels on the peninsula	77
4.3. Structure and organisation of power in a de-occupied Crimea	77
4.3.1 Organisation of Community Governance and Elections after De-occupation	79
4.3.2. Restrictions on the voting rights of citizens living in the occupied territories	80
4.3.3 Quotas in government for Crimean Tatars	80
4.4. Collaborationism	81
4.4.1 Lack of clear policy and communication on collaborationism	81
4.4.2 Is it collaboration if a Crimean resident receives a Russian passport?	86
4.4.3. Who should be punished for collaboration in Crimea	87
4.5. Educational Reintegration	91
4.5.1. Relevance of the education issue	91
4.5.2. Ideological influence of the educational process after the occupation	92
4.5.3. Cultural Diffusion and Blurring of Identity in Crimean Education	93
4.5.4. Language issue in education in Crimea	93

4.5.5. Personnel issues in education after de-occupation	95
4.6. Other components of reintegration	95
4.6.1. Demographic and statistical accounting of the existing population of Crimea after de-occupation	95
4.6.2. Keeping the Crimean issue in the mainland part of Ukraine current	95
4.6.3. Communication of the reintegration plan to the population of Crimea	97
4.7. Challenges that Ukrainian society may face after the de-occupation of Crimea	97
4.7.1. Possible conflict over the status of Crimea and the issue of national-territorial autonomy of Crimean Tatars	97
4.7.2. Possible social and political conflict between Ukrainian citizens inside Crimea	99
4.7.3. Possible conflict between citizens of the Russian Federation who illegally settled in Crimea after 2014 and Ukrainian society	100
4.7.4. Possible conflict between Crimean residents and government officials from other regions of Ukraine	101
4.7.5. Possible tension on the issue of confessions	101
4.7.6. Possible tension in the language issue	102
<b>5. Memory</b>	<b>106</b>
5.1. Attitudes towards monuments and memorials erected during the Russian occupation of Crimea	106
5.1.1. Division of monuments into groups: historically significant and propaganda	106
5.1.2. Museum of the Occupation	110
5.1.3. Local community decisions vs mandatory implementation of the current laws of Ukraine	110
5.2. Attitudes towards place names	112
5.3. Attitudes towards war graves	115

# Glossary

AFU	Armed Forces of Ukraine
ARC	Autonomous Republic of Crimea
CATI	Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews
FSB	Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IPSO	Information and Psychological Operations
IRI	International Republican Institute
KGB	Committee for State Security (Predecessor to the FSB)
KIIS	Kyiv International Institute of Sociology
NDI	National Democratic Institute
SMO	Special Military Operation (the Russian designation for Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine)
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VPN	Virtual Private Network (a virtual private network for anonymisation and bypassing blocked sites on the Internet)

# Research Methodology

The research methodology aimed at studying the issues of social cohesion and challenges related to the de-occupation of Crimea included different approaches, including qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, which allowed for the coverage of a wide range of topics and opinions.

**The qualitative research** was based on focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Two focus groups were organised with Crimean Tatars living in Ukraine, divided by age: young people (18-35) and older participants (50+ years old). This allowed us to study the differences in attitudes of different generations of Crimean Tatars towards identity and reintegration. In addition, nine focus groups were conducted with residents of various regions of Ukraine - Kyiv, the South, the West and the East - and different age groups (16-24, 25-45, 46+ years). This allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of Ukrainians' attitudes towards such essential issues as social cohesion, language policy, decommunisation, monuments, and the prospects for the reintegration of Crimea. All focus groups were conducted online using the Zoom platform, which allowed us to engage participants from different parts of the country. Discussions were recorded for further analysis.

**In-depth interviews** complemented the qualitative part of the study, providing an individualised view of the problems of occupation and de-occupation. Six in-depth interviews were conducted with Crimean residents, three men and three women of different ages. This gave us various personal stories and visions of the peninsula's future after de-occupation. An essential part of the study was nine interviews with experts. These interviews aimed to analyse specific reintegration aspects: legal issues, education, cultural policy, language issues, memorialisation, and social cohesion. Experts expressed their opinions on how the reintegration process should occur, what challenges may arise, and how best to address them. Key topics included discussions of the role of local communities in decision-making, particularly regarding monuments, as well as issues related to Crimean Tatar identity and language.

**The quantitative study** consisted of an all-Ukrainian survey, 'Cognitive De-occupation of Crimea', conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. The purpose of this survey was to study the opinions of the adult population of Ukraine on crucial issues related to the reintegration of Crimea and overcoming possible conflict situations after de-occupation. The survey was conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), using a specially designed questionnaire programme based on the SNA software. Mobile numbers for the survey were randomly generated to ensure a representative sample, and only respondents residing in the government-controlled area participated in the survey. This excluded respondents who moved abroad after the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022. The survey was conducted in Ukrainian or Russian, depending on the respondent's choice. A total of 2014 interviews were conducted as part of the study.

To ensure representativeness, the sample was weighted according to the gender and age structure of the Ukrainian population, level of education, and region of residence. The data were compared with official statistics and previous KIIS surveys. After conducting the planned number of effective (full) interviews, the distribution of respondents in the sample by macro-region of residence, type of settlement (urban or rural), gender, age, and education were compared with official statistics. During the interview, respondents reported their residence until 24 February 2022, and their current (at the time of interview) place of residence. For further procedures, we used the place of residence before 24 February 2022. The distribution of the total adult population by macro-region and settlement type was determined based on data from the Central Election Commission based on the results of the 2019 parliamentary elections (by the number of registered voters). The gender and age structure was determined according to the State Statistics Service as of 1 January 2021. Education was determined based on the results of KIIS surveys. To bring the sample structure in line with the structure of the population of Ukraine as a whole, special statistical weights were constructed. In addition, these weights take into account the different probabilities of different respondents being included in the sample (depending on the number of other mobile numbers that a particular respondent has).

The survey covered topics such as attitudes towards decommunisation, the future of monuments, language policy, social cohesion, and the role of local communities in reintegration.

**An analysis of the content of Telegram channels** was used to study the information space of Crimea and Ukraine regarding reintegration issues. For this purpose, we used the automated data collection system Semantrum, which allowed us to collect a large amount of textual data from publications, comments and reactions in Telegram channels related to Crimea (30,000 publications were analysed at the first stage). In the second stage, 500 of the most active Crimean channels were selected, where topics related to the peninsula's status, national issues, memorialisation, education, and militarisation were discussed. The content analysis of the data included identifying key issues and analysing specific keywords and phrases, which made it possible to trace the prevailing sentiments in these channels.

The content analysis was conducted in two stages. First, a textual analysis was performed to identify the main topics most frequently discussed in the Telegram channels of Crimea, which allowed us to create a general picture of information priorities in Crimea. In the second stage, a more detailed analysis was conducted based on key topics and words, which allowed us to understand how Crimeans discuss de-occupation, their sentiments towards Ukraine, and what issues are of the most significant concern to the peninsula's residents. This stage helped to study not only the official position but also the attitudes of ordinary citizens of Crimea and Ukraine.

The analysis of the content of Ukrainian Telegram channels aimed to study the information space, including publications, comments and reactions related to the topic

of Crimea. The data were collected automatically using the Semantrum system, which allowed us to track the activity of more than 1,000 Ukrainian channels between February 1 and July 31, 2024. The main topics were the status of Crimea, education, national issues, memorialisation, and militarisation. The content analysis allowed us to identify key trends in public discussions and prevailing sentiments regarding the de-occupation and reintegration of the peninsula.

Data collection for this study lasted from 31 July to 9 August 2024, for the qualitative stages, and the quantitative survey lasted from 26 July to 12 August 2024. The analysis of the content of Telegram channels covered the period from 1 February to 31 July 2024.

Thus, thanks to a comprehensive approach that included focus groups, in-depth interviews, a quantitative survey, and media monitoring, we acquired a detailed picture of Ukrainian society's attitude to the de-occupation of Crimea and identified the main challenges associated with the peninsula's reintegration.

# Summary

## Ethnic structure and ideological orientation of Crimean residents

Creating a realistic concept and plan for the de-occupation of Crimea requires an understanding of the current demographic structure of the peninsula, as well as the changes that have occurred since 2014. It is important to objectively analyse the ethnic and ideological structure of the population living there today and to predict the reactions of these segments to possible decisions that will be made after de-occupation. Belonging to ethnic and ideological groups on the peninsula determines attitudes towards vital political issues: the de-occupation process, the status of Crimea after de-occupation, as well as possible decisions on toponymy, memorialisation, etc.

Currently, there is no single ethnic and civic identity for Crimean residents: the peninsula is home to many ethnic groups, the most numerous of which are Russians, Ukrainians, and Crimean Tatars. Within each ethnic group, there are ideological and social differences due to political views (pro-Ukrainian, pro-Russian, indifferent), place of residence (South Coast, Sevastopol, steppe Crimea), length of residence on the peninsula, source of income, social status, lifestyle, experience of deportation, etc. Crimean Tatars (on mainland Ukraine and in Crimea) are characterised by a strong sense of belonging to their ethnic group and the peninsula and a widespread perception of themselves as part of the Ukrainian political nation. In contrast, Ukrainians in Crimea, according to experts, have had few opportunities to strengthen their Ukrainian identity, ethnic and civic. One peculiarity of Crimean residents is that many have a regional, 'island' identity, perceiving themselves as 'Crimeans' as opposed to self-determination by ethnicity or citizenship.

After the Russian temporary occupation of Crimea in 2014, the ethnic structure of the population underwent significant changes: some residents left the peninsula for various reasons, but at the same time, there was a large-scale resettlement from Russia's territory and, after 2022, from the temporarily occupied territories of south Ukraine. Different experts estimate the number of newcomers at an average of around 1 million people.

Changes in the demographic structure of the population, as well as the processes of ideological indoctrination and cultural diffusion taking place in Crimea, shape the identity, moods, expectations, fears, and inclinations of the peninsula's residents, directly affecting the reintegration process. Experts suggest that the de-occupation of Crimea itself will cause significant demographic changes. It is expected that some of the Russians who settled in Crimea after 2014 may leave the peninsula, and possible economic and infrastructure problems may force young people to emigrate, including outside of Ukraine. Another component of demographic changes will be the deployment of specialists from different regions of Ukraine to Crimea to work

on the reintegration of the peninsula. Possible scenarios of drastic demographic changes should be analysed in advance.

## The current situation in Crimea

Both Crimean residents and experts mentioned both positive and negative changes that have taken place on the peninsula during the ten years of Russian occupation. Both groups acknowledge that Russia has invested a lot of money to improve the welfare of the population on the peninsula, especially in the first years after the attempted annexation: in particular, it has increased wages and pensions, introduced certain social benefits, repaired and built new infrastructure, and introduced enhanced measures to ensure public safety. It was mentioned that the labour market in Crimea is full of vacancies, including high-paying ones.

On the other hand, the positive changes have a flip side: the improvement in the personal well-being of the population was more noticeable in the first years of the temporary occupation, after which it came to nought for many. Freedom of enterprise has deteriorated: small entrepreneurs are often forced to cooperate with large businesses associated with the state on unfavourable terms. The construction of new infrastructure sometimes harms the environment. Some residents feel unsafe because of the many newcomers and their antisocial behaviour.

The Russian occupation administration conducts intensive propaganda work on the peninsula, backing up ideological influence with repressive pressure on those who do not demonstrate loyalty. As a result, the population of Crimea is mostly focused on personal safety, and it is atomised and passive. After the full-scale invasion, the ideological and repressive pressure intensified further.

The situation of Crimean Tatars in Crimea has become more complicated since Russia occupied the peninsula. On the one hand, the Russian occupation administration declares peace and friendship between peoples and takes demonstrative steps to show their attention to the needs of Crimean Tatars. On the other hand, it is trying to blur their ethnic identity and increase their loyalty to Russia, including through interference in religious institutions. Those Crimean Tatars who demonstrate disloyalty are subject to repression.

All components of the study show a lack of information about Crimea in the Ukrainian information space, and the level of awareness of mainland Ukrainians (including Crimean Tatars) about the peninsula is low (according to their assessment). In addition to the explanations offered by ordinary respondents, which are likely to be true - independent media have limited access to the peninsula, and the local population is reluctant to share information for fear of reprisal - experts also offer another interpretation: there is no active policy on the de-occupation of Crimea, and therefore the number of newsworthy events remains very small. Representatives of the Crimean Tatars, who are better informed about the situation in Crimea, also pointed to the

sometimes unprofessional work of Ukrainian media in matters related to the peninsula and specifically the Crimean Tatars.

## Reintegration

The issue of Crimea's status after de-occupation – whether it will receive autonomy as before 2014, acquire Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomy, or become an ordinary region - has not yet been discussed at a high political level. At the same time, according to experts, this issue has significant conflict potential. Currently, Ukrainian society does not have a generally accepted vision of a solution regarding the future status of Crimea in Ukraine. Amongst citizens of mainland Ukraine, Crimean Tatar national autonomy is the least popular of the three options, and awareness of this option remains low. Although most citizens do not oppose this idea when asked directly, the validity of such answers needs to be analysed, as respondents indicate that they have little knowledge of the concept. At the same time, the Crimean Tatar community and the experts who represent it are almost wholly consolidated around national-territorial autonomy. Many other experts support this proposal, whilst others see risks in it.

Generally, most Ukrainians (77.5% – 96.0%) have a good or at least neutral attitude towards IDPs, refugees abroad, Ukrainians under occupation, and Russian-speaking citizens. However, there is still a differentiation in attitudes and somewhat better attitudes are observed in the cases of Crimean residents who moved to government-controlled territories after the full-scale invasion, IDPs, Crimean Tatars, and Ukrainians in the temporarily occupied territories of Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, and Kharkiv Oblasts: at least 63% have a favourable attitude towards them (and a significant number are neutral). At the same time, in the case of refugees abroad, Russian-speaking citizens, and Ukrainians under occupation in Crimea and Donbas neutral attitudes prevail: only about a third have a good attitude; while 43-47% have a neutral attitude. In addition to a direct question about attitudes towards specific categories, the survey also examined attitudes towards Ukrainians living under occupation using the Bogardus scale (adapted)<sup>1</sup>. Since 1994, KIIS has been researching the attitudes of the Ukrainian population towards certain ethnic groups. This research is based on the scale developed by the American sociologist Emory Bogardus (adapted by N. Panina). For each ethnic group (or group formed on other grounds) from the list, respondents have to answer how close they are willing to be with representatives of each group. This is called social distance. The minimum social distance is 1 (I agree to let them in as a family member), and the maximum is 7 (I would not let them into Ukraine). The level of social distance is often interpreted as prejudice

---

<sup>1</sup> More information about the Bogardus scale can be found in this publication. Gorbachyk, O. (2005). Testing the Validity of the Bogardus Scale for Measuring Interethnic Tolerance in Ukraine. Scientific notes of NaUKMA. Volume 46. Sociological sciences.  
<https://ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/server/api/core/bitstreams/2caf07c7-47fd-44dc-9436-17df422e4e19/content>

against a particular group. In the case of all three groups of the population - Ukrainians living under occupation in Crimea / in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts / in Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, and Kherson Oblasts - the average value ranges from 2.8 to 3.4 (where 1 is the most open/tolerant attitude, and 7 is the most hostile attitude). This indicates a relatively low distance to all groups. Respondents are 'closest' to residents of Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, and Kherson Oblasts (2.8). This is followed by the residents of Crimea (3.1), and the relatively lowest indicator is for the residents of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (3.4).

Regarding Crimea's resistance to the occupation over the past ten years, 43.2% of respondents agree that 'the population of Crimea has been resisting the Russian occupation for all ten years'; 48.7% disagree.

The overwhelming majority of Ukrainians reject the idea of the peninsula's Russian past. Most respondents believe that Crimea should return to Ukrainian control and recognise Crimea as the homeland of the Crimean Tatar people. At the same time, opinions on the role of the Crimean Khanate in Ukrainian statehood are divided: the majority (59%) of respondents agree that the Crimean Khanate is part of the history of the formation of Ukrainian statehood, although 28% disagree.

Although most Ukrainians support the return of Crimea to Ukrainian control, only a little more than half consider it very important to them personally. The majority agree that significant financial support and benefits for businesses will be necessary after the de-occupation of the peninsula. Less than half of the respondents believe in the de-occupation of Crimea within the next five years, with young people being less optimistic in the short term than older people and the de-occupation of the peninsula itself being less important to them.

Experts emphasise that the Ukrainian authorities should be organisationally, methodologically, and legally prepared to govern Crimea on the ground right now rather than addressing this issue after de-occupation. Most Ukrainians support the introduction of quotas for the Crimean Tatar people in the local governments of Crimea and the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. The respondents were almost equally divided on the issue of organising community governance in Crimea after de-occupation: 47% support the holding of elections, whilst the same number of respondents believe that community leaders should be appointed by the President, the Government or local military-civilian administrations.

Regarding the timing of the elections for the local authorities of Crimea, almost half of the respondents believe that the elections should take place after the complete restoration of the security situation in Crimea. At the same time, a significant number of respondents are ready for faster elections - immediately after the end of martial law (19%) or no later than a year after de-occupation (20%). It is essential to develop a safe format to ensure citizens will express themselves after the de-occupation of Crimea.

The issue of restricting the voting rights of citizens who lived in Crimea under occupation causes serious divisions in society. Almost half of the respondents support the five-year restriction on participation in the national elections, whilst the other half oppose it. Regarding the right to run for President and the Verkhovna Rada in Ukraine, the majority supports such restrictions, but many respondents oppose them.

Experts and ordinary citizens recognise that education is crucial in Crimea's reintegration. Most respondents support simplified admission to Ukrainian higher education institutions for Crimean youth. Education is also one of the central topics of the Crimean media, where, along with organisational issues, the ideologisation and militarisation of schooling by the occupation administration are actively discussed. Experts believe this poses severe challenges for reintegration, as it raises a generation of students with a negative attitude towards Ukraine.

Experts emphasise the importance of resolving the language issue through quotas for teaching in indigenous and minority languages but note that this does not solve the issue of the Russian language in the Crimean educational system, which requires other approaches.

54% of residents of the mainland part of Ukraine who participated in the quantitative survey said they did not support the temporary use of Russian for teaching in educational institutions. However, a reasonably significant number of respondents (45%) expressed support. Amongst Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians, opponents of the temporary permit significantly prevail (although there are also quite a few who agree). Amongst bilingual and Russian-speaking Ukrainians, the majority support the temporary permit.

Regarding the staffing of the educational process in Crimea after de-occupation, only 22% of respondents insist on the complete replacement of all teachers, heads of institutions, education officials, etc., who worked during the occupation. Instead, 34% propose to dismiss only heads of institutions and officials (if they have not committed crimes), and 40% consider it necessary only to limit the dismissal to officials in the field of education who have committed crimes.

One of the essential problems raised by respondents is not only the indoctrination of students in schools on temporarily occupied territories but also the gradual erosion of cultural identity, in particular amongst Crimean Tatar children studying in mixed schools. According to them, this leads to children adopting the majority culture and losing their cultural characteristics. In addition, experts raise the issue of the recognition of Russian educational documents, especially for those students who received their education after 2014. It remains unclear which subjects can be recognised by the Ukrainian state and which will require additional re-certification.

Experts emphasise the importance of establishing a system of registration and documentation of the Crimean population immediately after de-occupation. Ukraine will be responsible for these people under international humanitarian law.

Some experts believe that the issue of de-occupation is not sufficiently present on the agenda of Ukrainian society. In addition to developing strategies, there should be ongoing work to demonstrate cultural and political unity with Crimea. It is also important to update the topic of Crimea in Ukrainian school education, emphasising forming the proper ideological basis for de-occupation. In addition, the plan for Crimea's reintegration should be carefully developed and communicated to the peninsula's residents to avoid distrust and fear amongst Crimeans.

## Collaborationism

The issue of collaborationism in Crimea is one of the biggest challenges for the reintegration of the peninsula, as the lack of a clear approach to its definition and communication with residents of the temporarily occupied territory raises severe fears of persecution for themselves and their loved ones. Both experts and ordinary citizens note that the lack of an unambiguous policy on collaborationism makes the prospects of de-occupation threatening for many Crimeans, even those who support Ukraine. Experts recognise that communication efforts to explain this issue have not been adequately implemented, and the legal definition of collaborationism remains inconsistent and confusing. There are fears that mistakes in this regard could lead to new conflicts after de-occupation.

The survey respondents emphasise the importance of an individual approach to the issue of collaborationism, as rash actions can lay the foundation for new problems in Crimea. At the same time, it is essential to convey to the peninsula's residents that they are Ukrainians, not traitors, and to avoid creating the image of a 'punisher'. Experts warn that the authorities' ill-conceived communication not only causes anxiety amongst Crimeans but also negatively affects public opinion in Ukraine about the importance of de-occupying Crimea.

Most Ukrainians believe that Crimean residents who received Russian passports during the occupation did so by force, without a natural choice. At the same time, a significant share of people (29%) disagrees with this interpretation.

An essential aspect of the discussion is the distinction between voluntary and forced collaboration. Experts emphasise that the key is determining whether a person's activities were politically motivated or if they performed neutral functions, such as those of a maths teacher or a firefighter. Collaborationism in education is particularly complicated, where work has social and ideological components.

Regarding punishment for collaboration with the occupation administration, most Ukrainians support strict measures against officials, judges, security forces, and media workers. However, in the case of emergency services and public utilities, the majority opposes punishment. The sphere of education and culture evokes contradictory opinions: the majority supports punishment for managers and teachers of humanitarian disciplines, whilst ordinary educators are more lenient. As for

entrepreneurs and doctors, many respondents believe they should not be punished, especially if they are ordinary employees.

## Memorialisation

After the de-occupation of Crimea, Ukrainian society will face several challenges related to monuments, place names, and war graves, and these issues require not only careful consideration but also the search for compromises. Most respondents favoured that monuments erected during the occupation should be dismantled, especially those of a colonial or propagandistic nature. However, it is important to distinguish between such monuments and those with cultural or historical value, related to the development of Crimea or the Crimean Tatar people. In this context, society seeks to avoid radical solutions that could exacerbate conflicts and instead tends to favour a compromise approach that involves local communities in the decision-making process.

One of the key ideas supported by experts and focus group participants is the importance of dismantling monuments and creating conditions for these decisions to be perceived as a natural process. For example, through information campaigns explaining the historical context and reasons for such actions, initiatives from the bottom, from the Crimeans themselves, can be perceived much better than those imposed by the authorities. This will avoid conflicts and help to form a common position on the peninsula's future.

Society is also seeking a compromise on the issue of place names. Opinions on radical name changes are divided, with many believing that it is essential to consider the heritage of all ethnic groups inhabiting Crimea. The overwhelming majority of respondents favour a gradual transition and the preservation of meaningful names to local communities, which will avoid conflicts and facilitate the peaceful reintegration of the peninsula.

The same compromise position is evident in the issue of war graves. Most respondents and experts believe these places of remembrance should be left, but memorialisation should be avoided, as it could glorify the aggression. The reburial of Russian soldiers should only take place at the request of their relatives or the state, which will allow for compliance with international norms and respect for memory without risking conflict.

Ukrainian society generally seeks compromise solutions to memory, decommunisation, and historical heritage issues. It is ready to preserve the memory of the past but to do so in a way that avoids new conflicts in the future.

## Potential conflicts after de-occupation

After the de-occupation of Crimea, Ukrainian society may face many serious challenges. Experts predict that one of the critical issues will be a political conflict over

the model of governance of the peninsula. In particular, the idea of Crimean Tatar autonomy is not yet widely supported in Ukrainian society, which could lead to tensions between Crimean Tatars and the Ukrainian authorities after the de-occupation. Ukrainian society's level of knowledge about Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomy is still low.

Another threat is a possible conflict between those who remained loyal to Ukraine and those who supported the occupation. Such fears are expressed not only by experts but also by Crimean Tatars living in the mainland part of Ukraine. They also note that some Crimeans who support Russia may create obstacles to reintegration. The Crimean Tatar respondents fear both direct conflicts and that the pro-Russian community will try to make Crimea 'some kind of separate part of Ukraine'.

One of the most challenging issues will be the policy towards Russian citizens who settled in Crimea after 2014, not all of whom will want to leave voluntarily. Experts warn that deportation or other radical actions against these people could be considered a violation of international law. In addition, there will be a legal problem with the property built after the occupation, which Crimean residents are already using but which is illegal under Ukrainian law.

Another challenge may be Crimeans' perception of managers who will be sent from other regions of Ukraine to restore governance on the peninsula. This may cause a sense of 'quasi-colonisation' amongst the local population.

The church issue could also cause conflicts, as many Crimeans are members of the Russian Orthodox Church. The language issue is even more sensitive: rapid and comprehensive Ukrainisation could provoke tensions, whilst most experts and citizens support a gradual transition to the Ukrainian language in government, education, media and other areas. Most respondents of the quantitative survey (67% to 76%) believe that a transition period should be established in Crimea to introduce the Ukrainian language in certain institutions (government agencies, cultural institutions, etc.). Support for the Crimean Tatar language is also high amongst Ukrainians, although not everyone agrees.

Experts emphasise that Ukraine should already develop a strategy for communication with Crimeans. Without a clear concept and proper communication, these challenges could increase distrust and create additional difficulties in reintegrating the peninsula.

# 1. Self-identification and national-territorial identity. Associations with Crimea.

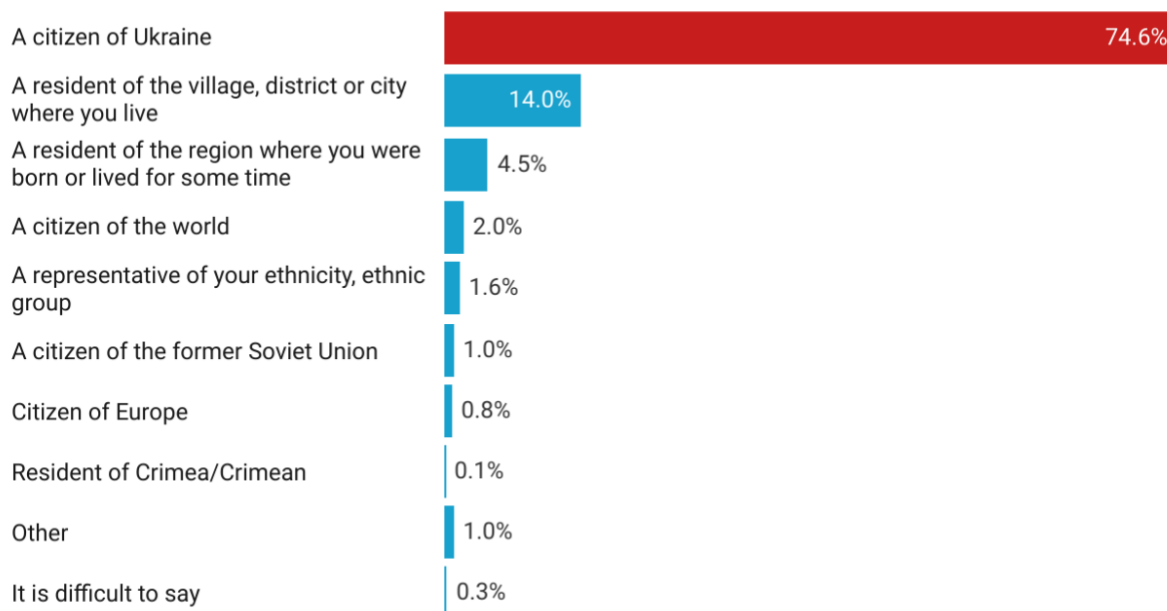
## 1.1. Residents of the mainland part of Ukraine

Data from a nationally representative survey show that Ukrainian ethnic self-identification dominates amongst Ukrainian residents: 92% consider themselves Ukrainian by ethnic origin. Another 2% simultaneously identify as Ukrainians and Russians; the same number say they are Russians. Other ethnic groups were represented by no more than 0.5% of respondents each.

Regarding territorial identity, 75% primarily consider themselves citizens of Ukraine, another 14% - residents of the settlement or district where they live, and 5% - residents of the settlement or district where they were born or lived for some time. Amongst other options: Crimean, a representative of their ethnicity, a citizen of the former Soviet Union, a citizen of Europe, a citizen of the world - none of them gained more than 2%. Ukrainian civic identity prevails in all socio-demographic and linguistic-ethnic groups studied.

### National and territorial identity

Results of the survey



Question: Who do you consider yourself to be first and foremost?

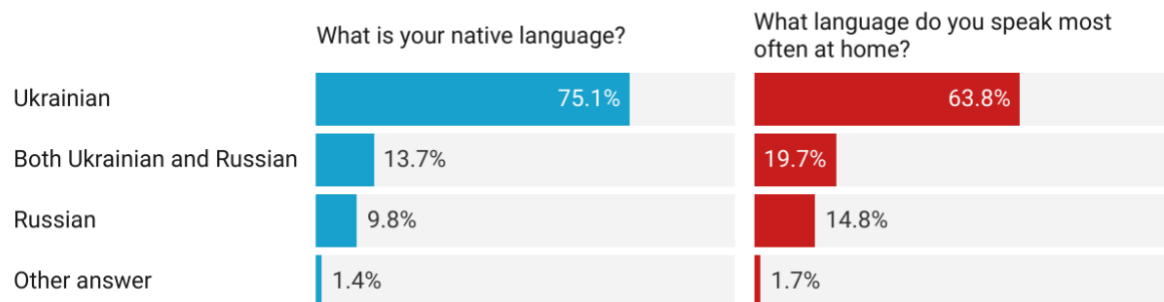
Created with Datawrapper

Three quarters of Ukrainians (75%) consider Ukrainian their native language. For a minority, both Ukrainian and Russian (14%) or only Russian (10%) are native languages. At home, 64% speak Ukrainian predominantly, another 20% speak

Ukrainian and Russian approximately equally, and 15% use Russian predominantly. Thus, Russian remains the language of choice for about a third of Ukrainians at home.

## Language practices

Results of the survey

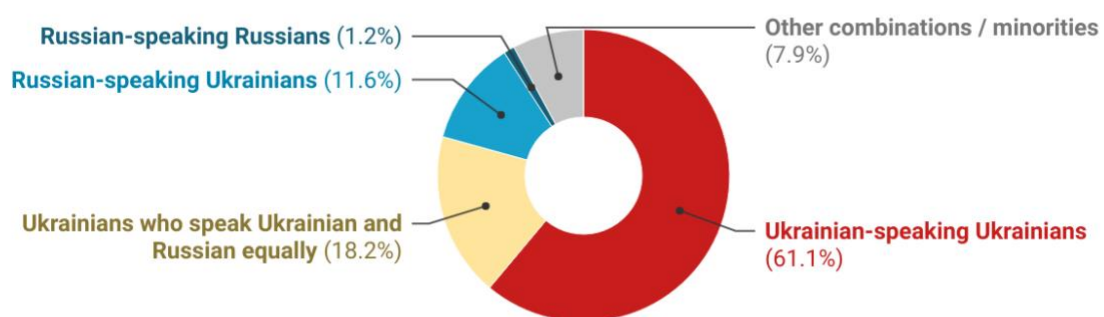


Created with Datawrapper

If we combine respondents' answers regarding ethnic self-identification and preferred language of communication, Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians are the most numerous amongst the linguistic and ethnic categories (61%). This is followed by Ukrainians who speak Ukrainian and Russian equally (18%) and Russian-speaking Ukrainians (12%). The share of Russian-speaking Russians is 1%. In the East, South, and Kyiv, Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians make up slightly less than half of the population, but together with bilingual Ukrainians, they constitute the majority.

## Linguistic and ethnic structure of the population of Ukraine

Results of the survey



Created with Datawrapper

The results of this and previous nationwide sociological surveys compare and indicate that the full-scale invasion has strengthened Ukrainian civic and ethnic identity and influenced the use of the Ukrainian language in communication.

Ethnic self-identification has undergone significant changes after 2014 and especially after 2022. This is partly due to the occupation of the territories where many

representatives of the Russian ethnic group lived, but changes have also occurred in the minds of citizens. Previous studies show that in the late 1990s and early 2000s, up to a quarter of Ukrainians considered themselves Ukrainians and Russians at the same time, and this phenomenon, although more common in the South and East, was significantly represented in all regions. In this survey, only 2% of respondents identified themselves as bi-ethnic.

According to monitoring data from the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, in the early 1990s, just under half of respondents considered themselves primarily Ukrainian citizens. Over the years, the figure grew, and on the eve of the invasion, it was over 60%. As noted above, it is now up to 75%.

Focus group participants from the mainland part of Ukraine agreed that Russian aggression has made them more aware of their ethnicity and nationality and feel proud of their country:

**‘Yes, until 2022, I identified more with Russians because I was only in their cultural space. But with the beginning of the full-scale invasion, I started studying history and better understood who I am. And so, I started to identify myself as Ukrainian.’ (focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine)**

## 1.2. Residents of Crimea

Crimea's residents are not homogeneous; several groups with different ethnicities, self-perceptions, and worldviews represent them.

Regarding ethnicity, there are three most prominent groups: Ukrainians, Russians, and representatives of indigenous peoples (Crimean Tatars, Karaites, and Krymchaks), amongst whom the Crimean Tatars dominate. According to a poll conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in May 2013<sup>2</sup>, 59% of respondents identified themselves by ethnicity as Russians, 20% as Ukrainians, 15% as Crimean Tatars, and 6% as representatives of other ethnic groups. Regarding self-perception (regardless of citizenship), 40% of Crimean residents considered themselves Russians, 15% - Ukrainians, 15% - Crimean Tatars, and 24% - Crimeans. Amongst the ethnic Crimean Tatars surveyed, 100% identified themselves accordingly. Amongst ethnic Ukrainians, 66% considered themselves Ukrainians, 19% - Crimeans, 10% - Russians, and 5% - someone else. Amongst ethnic Russians, 63% considered themselves Russians, 29% Crimeans, 3% Ukrainians, and 4% - someone else.

---

<sup>2</sup> Public Opinion Survey Residents of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. May 16 – 30, 2013. <https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/iri.org/2013%20October%207%20Survey%20of%20Crimean%20Public%20Opinion.%20May%2016-30,%202013.pdf>

After the Russian occupation, the ethnic structure of the population became even more heterogeneous. Some residents left the peninsula for various reasons, but at the same time, there was a large-scale resettlement from Russia and also from the occupied South of Ukraine after 2022. Different experts estimate the number of newcomers at an average of roughly 1 million people.

**'Russia has been pursuing its colonising policy with great power and financial support from the very first days, through resettlement, changing the structure of the population, the ethnic structure. According to various estimates, they achieved this with 750 thousand to 1.2 million people. This structure is now changing even more because IDPs from the South, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts are settling there and receiving housing certificates. There are family members of soldiers who were redeployed to Crimea, and Crimea is now a transit zone'. (expert interview)**

Experts confirm the absence of a single identity for Crimean residents:

**'We cannot talk about the identity of Crimean residents because there are several identities in Crimea. The identity of Crimean Tatars will be one identity, the identity of Russians in Crimea will be another identity, whilst Ukrainians are yet another identity. And here we can, if we generalise, talk about the inhabitants of Crimea today, about a social environment with a lot of mistrust and fear. This relates to the temporary occupation of Crimea. That is why today, this is one of the key questions regarding where Ukrainians and Crimean residents position themselves and how they feel. I would divide the residents of Crimea into pro-Ukrainian, pro-Russian, and those who are like weathervanes, ready to adjust to the order in either way.' (expert interview)**

Even within one ethnic group, there are differences. For example, Crimean Tatars were scattered in different countries before returning from deportation, which affected their experience in Crimea. There is also a difference in social status and lifestyle: for example, residents of the southern coast of Crimea, whose significant source of income is tourism and resort recreation, differ from residents of the steppe of the peninsula, whilst residents of Sevastopol feel separate from other Crimeans.

**'You know, Crimea is very diverse. It's not just Crimean residents; it's several ethnic and political groups whose social status matters. And you understand that the**

**mentality of the family members of a Russian retired officer from the Soviet Union period is very different. And he moved to Crimea to live, right? It's very different to a typical Crimean family. Ukrainians who were resettled from Western Ukraine, there are whole villages in embroidered towels, you know? And Ukrainian folklore ensembles. This is a very diverse Crimea. And the South Coast is one group of people. People who are used to earning money during the season and then spending it. These are very entrepreneurial people with completely different behaviours, and I would say, lifestyles and ways of life than people in the steppe of Crimea or in the foothills. [...] Another group are the Crimean Tatars. And here, in general, it is tough to speak briefly and unequivocally because of the process of return, that is, after living half a century in special settlements and places of deportation, living in different countries, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, North Asia, it is not the same, believe me, not at all.' (*expert interview*)**

As noted above, another approach categorises Crimean residents based on their political views: pro-Russian, pro-Ukrainian, or indifferent. Experts note that political orientation overlaps but does not entirely coincide with ethnicity. Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars dominate the pro-Ukrainian community of Crimeans. Russians dominate the pro-Russian community, but there are also representatives of other ethnic groups. One expert shared the observation that at the beginning of the occupation, young people in Crimea were more pro-Ukrainian than the older generation.

The interviewed experts stated that indifferentism is widespread amongst the peninsula's residents. One manifestation is an instrumental attitude to Ukrainian citizenship, which provides specific opportunities abroad.

**'...the majority - I call them a swamp. That is, those who don't care about the Russian flag or the Ukrainian flag, the Russian government or the Ukrainian government, who don't care. The main thing is that they have water, income, money, a pension, and so on.' (*expert interview*)**

**'I don't think they generally associate themselves with anyone regarding their country. If you ask them, probably many of them will say that they live in Russia because Crimea is Russian, conditionally, and they don't think about it. But when they go on holiday abroad, they will gladly take a Ukrainian passport just as they will use it to get some**

**benefits under Article 24 in Ireland or Germany. And there are probably a lot of them.’ (expert interview)**

Even before the occupation, many Crimean residents were characterised by a regional, ‘island’ identity: perceiving themselves as ‘Crimeans’ as opposed to self-determination by ethnicity or citizenship. Russia has further fuelled this identity, attempting to weaken the sense of belonging to Ukrainian society and state. After the peninsula’s occupation, Russia, on the contrary, made considerable efforts to replace the ‘island’ identity with the Russian one.

**‘Crimeans always think, and this is exactly what the propaganda campaign was built on, which started somewhere in 2010, In 2012, it was already very noticeable in terms of the ‘Russian world’, and in 2014, it was built on the fact that Crimeans are special. And almost all the politicians who came to Crimea with their speeches, Zhirinovskiy and others, if you look at them, their main theses were “You are special, we understand this, and you belong in the Russian Federation, which will consider your specialness. It will offer you much more than Ukraine offered you, which tried to make you the same as everyone else, like the rest of Ukrainians”. So, I think this should be considered in the future reintegration.’ (expert interview)**

**‘Today, the Russian Federation is trying to neutralise this Crimean identity; it is trying to create an all-Russian, all-swamp identity, that it is one swamp. This will be a difficult situation for Ukraine because it was much easier to work with a separate identity, let’s say, the Crimean identity, than to work with the Russian identity.’ (expert interview)**

Some Crimean participants in the in-depth interviews emphasised their regional identity and emphasised the differences between Crimeans and Russians:

**‘...it’s kind of a joke, but for probably ten years or so now, people have been saying, “Well, we have Crimean nationality, we are Crimean, so we are somehow...” We still have a different mentality; we are slightly different to mainland Russia.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

Like residents of the mainland part of Ukraine, the events of 2014-2022 prompted some Crimeans to rethink their national and ethnic self-identification.

**‘...2014 was a great kick in the pant for Crimeans because before, I lived with the understanding that I was Russian, Ukrainian, whatever. I mean, it’s clear that I’m Slavic, but until 2014, I was a citizen of Ukraine, so I knew I**

**was a citizen of Ukraine everywhere; I filled in the forms. But I never thought about my ethnicity until 2014.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

### 1.2.1. Crimean Tatars

According to experts and participants in focus groups and in-depth interviews, Crimean Tatars are characterised by a strong ethnic identity and a sense of belonging to the peninsula, which is their homeland. This group cherishes their identity and tries to preserve it in their children whenever possible, for example, by reviving the use of the Crimean Tatar language at home.

**‘I belong to the Nogai family, and our native lands are the Crimean steppes. My mother is a Kerch Nogai from the Kerch side, and my father is from the coast of the Black Sea. These are also steppes, roughly speaking, it’s just that the sea comes after the steppe. And naturally, in any case, it’s the region that defines me. Because even if I were to be in Armenia or Tajikistan, my home is still here.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents, Crimean Tatar)**

Experts have repeatedly emphasised that Crimean Tatars generally gravitate towards Ukraine rather than Russia. One of the reasons is that Russia is perceived as the successor to the USSR, a country that carried out the deportations and continues to repress the Crimean Tatar community. Another possible reason for this is the commitment of Crimean Tatars to the values of freedom and dignity, which they see as likely to be realised in Ukraine. However, over the past ten years, this community, especially the youth, has been exposed to Russian influence in one way or another, which could have affected their worldview.

**‘And I’m sure that if you talk to these children, i.e., the children of Crimean Tatars, they may not remember anything about Ukraine, but if you ask them, probably they will associate themselves with Ukraine politically. And if the security situation allowed, they would say, frankly, many of them would say that we are pro-Ukrainian, sticking to our state and our citizenship. But they, many of them, if you listen to the music that they add to their publications, posts and other things... Even, I think, in the government-controlled territory, many, many young people are still under the influence of all the Russian narratives and music.’ (expert interview)**

According to experts, some Crimean Tatars are orientated towards Europe. Some are drawn to countries that follow Islam (for example, Turkey).

### 1.2.2. Ukrainians

Despite their numbers, ethnic Ukrainians in Crimea had few opportunities to maintain and develop their ethnic identity. According to one expert, before the occupation, only a few of the more than 200 Crimean schools provided education in Ukrainian, and only a few cultural and sporting events out of the entire list approved by the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) Supreme Council were dedicated to Ukrainian historical events and cultural figures (whilst most were about Russian history and culture).

**‘So here are the Ukrainians, there are a lot of our people there, that’s understandable. But these people are very inclined to collaborate because they have always felt like second-class citizens, even during the years of Ukraine’s independence. Because even though it was Ukraine, the Ukrainian government flirted with the pro-Russian and Russian majority and abused Ukrainians. Well, suffice it to say, as my friend, the former head of education in Crimea and former actress, Alla Petrova, used to say, there are as many Ukrainians in Crimea as there are children in Ukrainian classes. And so, this is a problem.’ (expert interview)**

Experts believe that despite the large number of Ukrainians by origin, a strong ethnic identity was inherent in a relatively small portion of these people.

**‘Well, we should not forget about such a small group, a tiny, numerous small group - those who called themselves Ukrainians of Crimea or the ethnic Ukrainian community of Crimea. As you know, they had their media, including the Krymska Svitlytsia. And in the Krymska Svitlytsia, as I read, I recently reread the archives of the early 90s, they indicate that we are very numerous in Crimea. But to be honest, there were very few who clearly identified themselves and associated themselves ethnically with Ukrainians. This can be confirmed, I think, by the very circulation of the Krymska Svitlytsia, which seems to have been distributed very little by subscription and also not sold very widely.’ (expert interview)**

### 1.2.3. Russians

Experts distinguish several waves of migration of ethnic Russians/carriers of Russian identity and culture to the peninsula. The current ethnocultural portrait of Crimea was formed under the influence of, amongst others, ‘Soviet retirees’: Soviet army servicemen, representatives of state institutions, etc., who willingly settled in

Crimea. Even after Ukraine declared independence, the Russian military settled there permanently. After 2014 and 2022, a flow of people from Russia again came to Crimea to settle on the peninsula. Due to these processes, the share of Russian identity (ethnic and civic) in Crimea has increased significantly over the past ten years.

**‘Crimean identity, in general, is exceptional, even in peacetime, because historically, Crimea was inhabited mainly by Russian-speaking or culturally Russian people. This happened as a result, firstly, of the annexation of Crimea in 1783, and the second major factor was the deportation of Crimean Tatars and the representatives of other ethnic groups in 1941-1944 by the Stalinist regime. Representatives of Russian regions were transported to the vacated places. There are studies on this issue. That's why Crimea has always been a centre of Soviet things throughout the years of Ukraine's independence, and I used to call it a ‘Soviet reserve’. That is, this nostalgia for Soviet times was most prevalent there. In particular, because a lot of the immigrants were representatives of various state institutions of the Soviet government, the KGB, the military elite, and so on, that is, the Black Sea Fleet was based in Sevastopol and other regions.’ (expert interview)**

One expert said that Crimean residents distinguish between those who have lived on the peninsula for a long time and those who moved after the Russian occupation. Relations between locals and newcomers are strained.

**‘When such a mighty movement of people from the mainland Russian Federation to Crimea began, they were called “ponayekhy”. So, Crimeans did not accept all those who arrived in Crimea after Crimea's annexation. They were called “ponayekhy”, which caused certain conflicts between Crimeans and those who moved.’ (expert interview)**

### 1.3. Crimean Tatars living outside Crimea

Crimean Tatars who left for mainland Ukraine can be divided into three categories: political figures and civic activists who were under threat of repression by Russia because of their activities; representatives of religious groups who also sought safety from persecution; and ordinary civilians, including those who were interested in educating their children in Ukrainian universities or who did not want to be mobilised after 24 February 2022. Like the members of this ethnic group who remained in Crimea, Crimean Tatars in the government-controlled area also have a strong sense of their ethnicity but are more integrated into Ukrainian society and inclined to feel part of the Ukrainian political nation. Forced displacement prompted them to improve their

knowledge of the Ukrainian language (as life after deportation and living later in Russian-speaking Crimea did not help Crimean Tatars to learn Ukrainian).

**'But if we're talking about those who left Crimea after the occupation in 2014, around 70 to 100 thousand people according to various estimates, it's hard to say how many of them are Crimean Tatars, but Crimean Tatars indeed make up a significant part of these people. They went to predominantly Ukrainian-speaking regions because they first went to Kherson, to Kherson Oblast. Then a significant part of them went to, well, at least, I know, Lviv and Vinnytsia Oblasts. These are Ukrainian-speaking regions. Therefore, in a certain way, they have now, since that moment, begun to integrate into the all-Ukrainian context and learn the Ukrainian language. Many of them know Ukrainian quite well, which is normal. Therefore, this part of the mainland Crimean Tatars is much more integrated into Ukrainian society. I can say that there is already an understanding in my environment, amongst the Crimean Tatars in particular, that whilst the Crimean Tatars are a separate ethnic community, an indigenous people of Ukraine, formed on the territory of Crimea, they are also part of the all-Ukrainian nation. They are the Ukrainian people envisaged by the Constitution, who are the source of power and everything else.'** *(expert interview)*

Participants in focus groups with Crimean Tatars from mainland Ukraine confirmed that they value and are proud of their ethnic origin but see themselves as part of Ukrainian society. Younger respondents mentioned that 2014 had strengthened their ethnic identity.

**'...I am proud that I am a Crimean Tatar, that I have such a nation that has been fighting peacefully for so many years.'** *(focus group with Crimean Tatars)*

**'...it's a responsibility, a personal responsibility in representing yourself as part of your people, in representing your people as part of Ukrainian society and part of Ukraine.'** *(focus group with Crimean Tatars)*

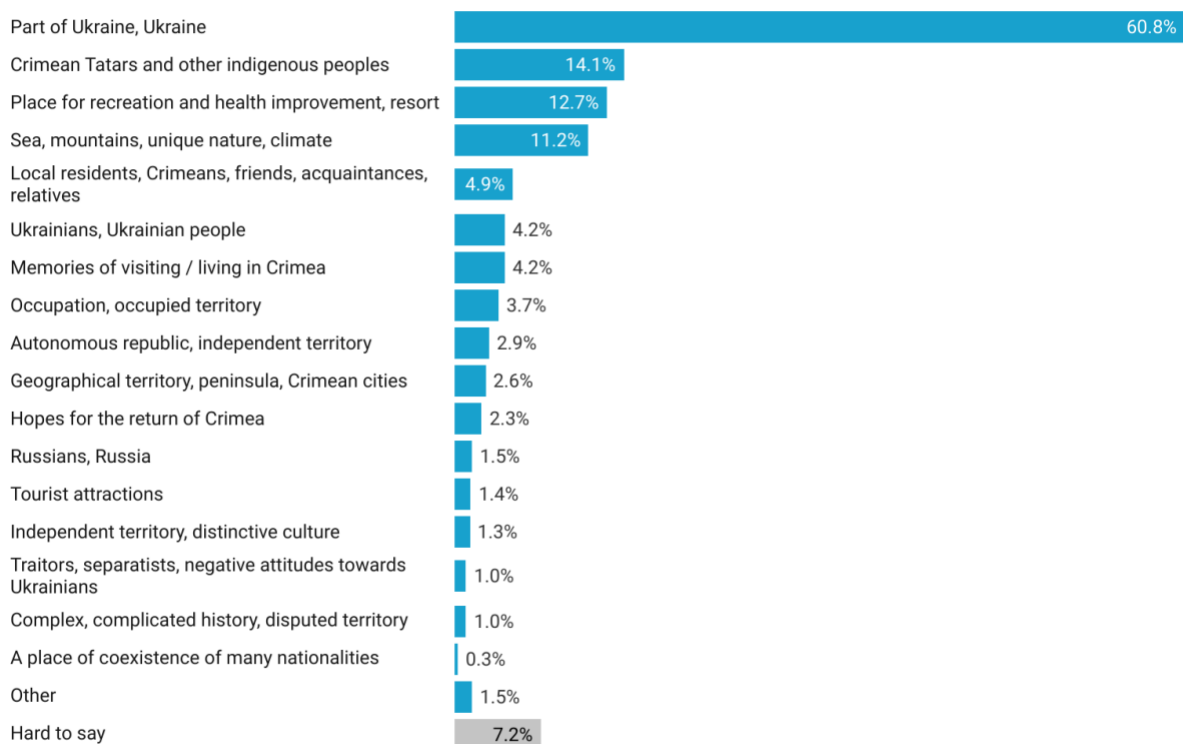
## 1.4. Associations with Crimea

### 1.4.1 Associations with Crimea: residents of the mainland part of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars

Answering an open-ended question about associations with the Crimean Peninsula in the quantitative survey, 61% of respondents said that for them, Crimea is Ukraine. A significant proportion of respondents (11% - 14%) associate Crimea with Crimean Tatars and other indigenous peoples, resorts and recreation, as well as nature, the sea and mountains. Other associations were mentioned much less frequently: only 1% of respondents primarily associate Crimea with traitors, separatists, or negative attitudes towards Ukrainians.

#### Associations with the Crimean peninsula

Results of the survey



Question: What and who do you associate the Crimean peninsula with in the first place? (open-ended question)

Created with Datawrapper

During the focus group discussions, participants expressed different associations with Crimea. The difference was quite noticeable between the Crimea of the past and the Crimea of the present. Respondents mostly defined the Crimea of the past as the Crimea before 2014 or the Crimea of the 20th century. Amongst the most common associations with the Crimea of the past are the following: beautiful nature, recreation, resort, children's camps, sea, grief, sense of freedom, Crimean Tatars, deportation of Crimean Tatars, rich history, multiculturalism, the Crimean War, a

historical part of Ukraine, the constant struggle of Crimean Tatars for independence, and development of industry.

**'...since I have not been to Crimea at all, Crimea is something so beautiful for me. You know, not from the point of view of politics, but from the point of view of the landscape, nature, and so on. For me, it's something like this... Comparison with the Carpathians, something so nice and cool, forests, air, sea. For me, it's something as simple as paradise, as they say. From the past point of view, yes, there were many wars, and I know for sure that in any case, no one managed to capture Crimea for a long time, and in any case, it will always be an island that no one has ever overcome.'** *(focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)*

Focus group respondents associate Crimea today with a military base, danger, attempted annexation, harassment of Ukrainians, and the launching of missiles into mainland Ukraine.

According to most focus group participants, Crimea should be part of Ukraine in the future. However, this process is seen as complicated and lengthy, and the de-occupation and de-Russification of Crimea will be painful and take 10 to 20 years. Despite the difficulties, respondents express positive expectations for Crimea's restoration as part of Ukraine after de-occupation.

#### 1.4.2 Associations with Crimea: Crimean Tatars in the mainland part of Ukraine

Young Crimean Tatar focus group participants noted that their first associations with Crimea were their parents' homes, families, and native land. One of the participants reported that when discussing associations with Crimea, somewhat idealised thoughts come to mind, i.e., the Crimea one wants to see, not the Crimea as it is. Also, during the focus group, it was suggested that Crimea is always associated with historical events that directly affect Crimean Tatars.

**'...right now, we said that Crimea is there, family, and that's all, there is such a feeling, but it refers to a kind of Crimea in a vacuum, that is, abstractly, the Crimea we would like to live in. We remember something from the period before 2014, but we also didn't like many things there, so when we think about Crimea, we idealise it slightly. We see it as we would like it to be.'** *(focus group with Crimean Tatars)*

Young respondents noted that after the occupation, Crimea began to feel alienated from them, as a sense of alienation emerged, the inner sense of home was lost.

**‘...when you go outside your neighbourhood, from your house to the city, you feel like a stranger and are in a parallel reality. I was switching realities; it seemed unreal to me. It was inconsistent with my idea of Crimea and what Crimea should be like, as I know it and remember it.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

**‘As for 2014, it is associated with such a routine life. Nothing so special. 2014 is associated with tension, uncertainty, and unfreedom. If we look to the future, it is probably associated with hope for positive changes.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

Older respondents noted that they associated Crimea before 2014 with freedom and after 2014 with uncertainty. Instead, one respondent indicated that 2022 gave hope for change and the return of Crimea to Ukraine. There was a rather interesting metaphor in which Crimea was called a house under construction before the occupation and a house with rats after it.

**‘Before 2014, let's say, we were still building our house, let's say. In 2014, rats moved into our house. And the next step, I believe, will be a complete cleanup and completion. The completion of our house, our home. And, let's say, after all the work is done, it will blossom and be filled with children's voices that will be happy and laughing.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

**‘...before 2014, there was a sense of freedom, it was free to breathe... After 2014, there was a move, relocation, and complete uncertainty. What, how and why... And after 2022, there was hope. There is hope that everything can still come back. I hope so.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

### 1.4.3 Associations with Crimea: residents of Crimea<sup>3</sup>

Most participants in the in-depth interviews associated Crimea with concepts such as home, homeland, steppes, fields, sea, and nature. All participants had positive

---

<sup>3</sup> Most of them were representatives of Slavic ethnic groups, with some Crimean Tatars also involved.

associations. The value of Crimea is formed by the presence of relatives and the feeling of Fatherland.

**‘This value is formed by Crimea being my native land. Crimean Tatar blood was formed here. This is a fusion of all the bloods that have ever lived on the territory of Crimea. Sarmatians, Chernihivites, Cumans, Scythians, Taurians, and you can list many more, although there aren’t any others that come to my mind so quickly. This is a fusion of all blood types - the nation of the Crimean Tatars was formed. For me, Crimea is an indigenous land.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**‘...I like the energy. I like the atmosphere here. Maybe it's because it's all familiar; it's all kind of my own—a lot of friends, it's all like, native for me. You go, like... Well, you feel good when you're at home, as it were.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**‘Crimea is my family... These are pleasant memories in connection with work and so on from the collective with which I worked. For example, I do not have any very unpleasant memories with Crimea. Well, everything is associated with it, everything. I'm not even talking about the nature of Crimea.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

One of the respondents noted that for her, living in Crimea had lost its value since the beginning of the occupation. The respondent tried not to use the word ‘Russia’ and replaced it with the words ‘society’ and ‘the state that now controls Crimea’.

**‘Society. Society has destroyed... this value. I would like very much for all these people not to be here, and then I would be happy... in fact, because Crimea is no longer my exact home. ...I mean, I live with some sweet memories. When I talk about warm things, it's all about memories. Bring me back to 2013, and I will be the happiest person in the world. Society, if you think further, is, in fact, the state that controls Crimea today. And it can be scary here, too. I never thought I would be paranoid at all. That is, for example, until 2022, I could still very openly enter a discussion with anyone here about our preferences. I could very openly express my opinions and statements. I had a Ukrainian flag hanging in my house, but I took it down when the full-scale war started**

**because my neighbours' could see my room from their windows. So, you sometimes think about what you say and where you say it. When I arrived home in Crimea, I was terrified. Even though I have a Russian passport. I was given it without asking much.'** (*in-depth interviews with Crimean residents*)

## 2. Current situation in Crimea

### 2.1. Changes in Crimea over the past ten years

The sources of information about changes in Crimea over the past ten years in this study are in-depth interviews with residents of the peninsula and experts, as well as focus groups with Crimean Tatars from the mainland part of Ukraine who are aware of the situation due to visits to Crimea and/or connections with those who remained there. These sources primarily reflect the opinions and views of the pro-Ukrainian community, which is more critical of the consequences of the Russian occupation. We assume that the pro-Russian part of the Crimean population does not attach much importance to some of the changes listed below. Instead, it has its own vision of the positive and negative aspects of life on the peninsula.

Also, the study of Crimean Telegram channels (resonant news, topics discussed) provides insight into the peninsula's information environment.

The most discussed topics in the Telegram channels of Crimea (from 1 February 2024 to 31 July 2024) are related to:

- War (air raids, military exercises, attacks by the AFU on facilities in Crimea and Russia, including the Crimean Bridge).
- Terrorist threats (in particular, the terrorist attack on Crocus City Hall in Moscow Oblast).
- Putin, the Russian government and the army in a positive light.
- Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian government and the Armed Forces in the most negative way possible, focussing on problems with mobilisation in Ukraine and the Armed Forces' failures at the frontline.
- Celebrating Victory Day, Russia Day and the reunification of Crimea with Russia.
- Socio-economic issues and problems: infrastructure repairs and construction, inflation. Unlike war and politics, these topics are a 'permitted' opportunity to express dissatisfaction with the situation in Crimea.

#### 2.1.1. Migration

As noted above, over the past ten years, Crimea has experienced large-scale migration from Russia and the occupied territories of Ukraine. Experts estimate that the peninsula's population has grown by more than 1 million people. On the other hand, a part of the pre-war population left for mainland Ukraine, post-Soviet countries, and others. After 2014, the departure was driven by repressions on the peninsula, unwillingness to live under Russian occupation, and the need to maintain ties with the Ukrainian state and its institutions. After 2022, the risk of illegal conscription into the

Russian army and military threats was added. As a result, the socio-demographic profile of the Crimean population has undergone significant changes because of the Russian occupation.

**‘And, naturally, the conflict drags on and here in Crimea, there was a very high probability of even being mobilised and going, so to speak, to fight against the country where you were born. Many people left for post-Soviet countries, such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Of those who had the opportunity to leave, many left. Brothers, friends, many left the territory of Crimea.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

### 2.1.2. Sense of safety

One of the consequences of large-scale migration to Crimea for its residents who lived on the peninsula before the occupation is a negative impact on their sense of security and trust in the people around them.

**‘...the last time I was there was in '21 and early '22, and even though we are all Russian speakers in Crimea, you walk around the city and realise that you're hearing a different Russian language. And you feel like a stranger in your home; Simferopol was exactly like that. And during these ten years, I think that, in principle, the general atmosphere has changed. It has developed into this feeling of, I don't know, such a vile fear and distrust; well, for me, it has some kind of association with 1937, when you don't know with whom you can talk about anything.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

Residents of Crimea note that the emergence of new ethnic groups and the specific behaviour of some representatives has disrupted the public security.

**‘I do not like the new ethnic composition of Crimea. It is frightening. For the first time, we have these Chechens, Dagestanis, Azerbaijanis visiting. That is, we had had Crimean Azerbaijanis, but new people have arrived, and it is complete lawlessness. That is, it's really scary to be in the centre of the city at 9 pm, the very centre of the city. You see a person walking around with a gun in a holster. And it was relatively few years ago, when was it, probably '21, '22, no, probably '21, '20, '21, when people were killed here in the centre of the city on the street. It's just these comrades right here... They show who they are. I was once dragged by my hand in the city centre... This powerful change has caused**

**people who have not been in Crimea long to ask what happened to the city centre. Under Ukraine, there was the Patrol Police and Checkpoint Service. But here, there are three boys from the Russian National Guard, who have a baton on them, in the best scenario. They walk around in groups of three and don't do anything. There is no such thing as security.' (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

The feeling of safety has not deteriorated for everyone — another Crimea resident, a man of retirement age, on the contrary, believes that patrols, street lighting, and document checks have reduced the level of street crime.

### 2.1.3. Welfare of the population

Residents of Crimea and experts recognise that Russia has taken specific measures to improve the well-being of the peninsula's population, especially in the first years after the attempted annexation. They have increased wages and pensions and introduced certain social benefits. However, respondents note that the effect of these measures has become less noticeable over the years.

**'...after all, ten years have passed, and there are people who ideologically, that is, consciously support the occupation, who say that no, everything is fine, they see something positive there, and so on. They have reason to think so because, believe it or not, Russia has been doing some positive things in occupied Crimea, but for what purpose is another question, but they are there. Infrastructure development, certain social benefits, wages, especially in the first years of occupation, and relatively high pensions. Later, it decreased, but some of this history remains.' (expert interview)**

Crimean residents say that those pensioners who were able to retire at the time of the occupation (and whose support Russia was trying to gain) benefited the most from the pension increase. Those who retired later received less, which negatively affected their satisfaction with their financial situation.

**'Everyone who was already a pensioner at the moment of the, well, accession to Russia were very lucky, their pensions were raised twice and determined by a favourable exchange rate. And they began to immediately receive something like, well, much more than what the average pensioners in Russia received. Well, in Russian money, it was ten years ago that our people started to receive somewhere between 16,000 and 25,000 Rubles. And**

**the new ones, who started to retire while under Russia, received 7-8 thousand. And this is the contrast of those who had to be, as it were, lured.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**‘I can say the standard of living is falling. Although they say, they’re raising it. No, I know when I used to work and still had some money to save. Now I, well, I don’t have enough. Utilities and groceries eat up everything.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

However, it is obvious that all the infrastructure improvements on the peninsula were actually made for the occupying army and military needs.

#### 2.1.4. State of infrastructure and environment

Residents of Crimea say that since 2014, the infrastructure on the peninsula has undergone significant changes: a lot of resources have been invested in repairs, renovation, construction, and agricultural development. This has positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, it improves the appearance of cities and the condition of roads and adjacent areas:

**‘Roads, yes, roads are constantly being built, streets, squares, parks are constantly being improved. These are the things I can notice when walking around the city... So yes, I see parks, yes, I see roads, yes, I see streets. For example, my street was repaired for the first time in '22 or '23, for the first time in my life, even though these are trendy neighbourhoods. But it was never repaired under Ukraine. Just never... Or the street lighting.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

On the other hand, the Crimean environment, including nature reserves, where construction and deforestation was prohibited under Ukrainian law, is suffering from intensive construction.

**‘And what’s happening now, everything is rolling in asphalt here. The territory is being seized, and construction is underway. We have a tiny town, and they’re building the Tavrida Highway next to it. And in all of this they’re building high-rise buildings. What was not allowed in Ukraine and was once a nature reserve, now no one looks at it, no one at all. They are building high-rise, 12-storey buildings and 9-storey buildings, but at the same time, we still have no sewage treatment plants... the money is going to the wrong place, let’s put it this way. It’s going to the entertainment**

**infrastructure to smudge the eyes... It's very pathetic to watch. When the road was being built, I just couldn't drive on that road. It is huge, it is a highway with so many forks, so many things there, this Tavrida. But simultaneously, all the plants and the forests close to this road were cut down.'** *(in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)*

#### 2.1.5. Employment in Crimea

Crimean residents note contradictory trends in employment opportunities in Crimea. On the one hand, infrastructure projects and businesses are creating new jobs, including high-paying ones. On the other hand, there have been observations that some companies have lost jobs and become more hierarchical and remote in their management, with the organisational centre moving to Russia.

**'The fact that they have this Tavrida, that they are building a Tavrida for themselves, for us it is... Yes, they have opened jobs, and almost the whole city has gone there because the salary is 45 thousand Rubles, starting at 45 thousand. We do not have such prices in the city, and no one pays such a salary. Almost everyone works there, well, whoever can.'** *(in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)*

**'It's such a power vertical... If we had a meeting with Ukrainian Railways here, the chief engineers and everyone would decide everything at the factory, they would sit at the same table and just communicate. It's just unrealistic to imagine in Russia, that someone of that level would come to us, again, to perform these or those tests... The factories have become worse... If there were, let's say, 700 people, 800 people working there, well, these are small enterprises for Crimea, some of which are decent, then now there would only be 200 people.'** *(in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)*

Small businesses in Crimea, particularly those related to tourism and recreation, were reported to be experiencing difficulties. One respondent said that supply chains from abroad were monopolised by large businesses affiliated with the state ('feudal lords'), and small businesses were forced to buy from them at inflated prices, negatively impacting their incomes. In addition, small businesses cannot compete with large ones because of the latter's scale and access to administrative leverage, so they are forced to cooperate on the terms of the 'feudal lord'.

**'But it has become much more difficult to work with business. After all, they are feudal lords; they crush everyone under their thumb. And, in general, it is tough for**

**small businesses. All of our businesses have somehow fallen under these feudal lords. It is difficult with the feudal lords. Well, where do we go?.' (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**'...in Koktebel, they closed it for three years. Can you imagine completely rebuilding the city's boardwalk and the seaside area there? They just demolished it. That charm and that Koktebel will never exist again. They are just making it to suit themselves. Some asphalt, some paths, some this and that. And now, can you imagine, for three years, these people who live off tourism and these visitors, even these Russians, will not have a living? They will have no income for three years. At all. I mean, at all. No one will compensate them.' (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

#### 2.1.6. Ideological Influence of Russia

All groups of respondents—experts, residents of Ukraine and Crimea, and Crimean Tatars—mentioned Russia's intensive propaganda work with the Crimean population at all levels. According to the study participants, this work is quite effective and affects everyone, including pro-Ukrainian people.

**'We must understand that propaganda has grown so much over the years that it has penetrated everywhere. Even those who are 100% pro-Ukrainian in their position and thinking are also influenced by it because it is everywhere.'**  
**(focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

One of the directions of propaganda is aimed at glorifying Russia and creating the worst possible image of Ukraine as a 'fascist state' that has left its citizens to fend for themselves and has done nothing good for them. Much attention is paid to creating a picture of positive changes after the occupation of the peninsula:

**'The narrative that everything has changed is being promoted very strongly. I follow many Russian-orientated public groups in Crimea itself, in Simferopol, the "Simferopol" groups, "Yevpatoriya", and others. And before, even a year ago, they were not so political, so openly political. For the last six months or so, they have been strongly promoting the image of change for the better. "This is how it was ten years ago: everything was bad, in decline, and dying. Now, look how we have repaired the waterside area or something". And all this, together with music, festivals, some cultural layers and influences, in the**

**absence of any powerful alternative, of course, like a magnet, I think, attracts people there.’ (expert interview)**

Another area is the justification of war and the general militarisation of the public consciousness, especially amongst minors.

**‘If you look through the textbooks that help children study at schools in the Russian Federation, including in Crimea, you will see that war is all over the place. And war, during any historical period, is not presented as evil. It is presented as a way to achieve a certain goal and always as a positive one. I reread 23 textbooks that were brought here from Kherson Oblast by the prosecutor's office. They made an expert analysis of these textbooks to determine the main narratives that are embedded in them. And I was stunned. I'm a history teacher, and I was astonished by how the content of the textbooks was transformed. Well, it is almost all based on war. The main mythologeme that promotes the theme of war as a value is the great “victory”, the Great Patriotic War. And this “victory” begins on 1 January and ends on 31 December.’ (expert interview)**

In general, the stories of the study participants suggest that Russia is relatively successful in broadcasting Russian narratives about Ukraine, the West, war, history, international relations, government, and other ideological and value messaging in Crimea, taking advantage of the fact that it essentially controls the information space on the peninsula. Crimean residents reported that they still find opportunities to receive information from Ukrainian sources, but their answers suggest that this is a consequence of their own desires and needs.

The results of the monitoring of Crimean Telegram channels confirm and supplement the above observations. The most discussed topics in the Crimean Telegram channels (from 1 February 2024 to 31 July 2024) are related to:

- War (air raids, military exercises, attacks by the AFU on facilities in Crimea and Russia, including the Crimean Bridge).
- Terrorist threats (in particular, the terrorist attack in Crocus City Hall).
- Putin, the Russian government and the army in a positive light.
- Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian government and the Armed Forces in the most negative way possible, focussing on problems with mobilisation in Ukraine and the Armed Forces' failures at the front.
- Celebrating Victory Day, Russia Day and the reunification of Crimea with Russia.

- Socio-economic issues and problems: infrastructure repairs and construction, inflation. Unlike war and politics, these topics are a 'permitted' opportunity to express dissatisfaction with the situation in Crimea.

An analysis of audience reactions to the messages shows that readers of pro-Russian Crimean Telegram channels generally perceive events through the same prism as the authors of the posts: they support the Russian authorities, have a strongly negative attitude towards the Ukrainian authorities and the Armed Forces, are concerned about military and terrorist threats, mostly approve of initiatives to commemorate memorable dates, and express dissatisfaction with social and economic problems that directly affect their comfort and well-being.

The monitoring of reports on education in Crimea has highlighted numerous examples of innovations proposed or implemented in educational institutions that foster a sense of patriotism towards Russia, respect for 'traditional values', and support for the so-called 'special military operation' amongst children and youth.

#### 2.1.7. Repression of Dissidents

All groups of respondents - experts, residents of Ukraine and Crimea, Crimean Tatars - mentioned repression faced by those whose activities or public position contradict the official line of the Russian authorities or whose loyalty is in doubt.

**'Only loyal things exist. What is not loyal is called extremist. The members of these groups are imprisoned, and, as we know, first, they are persecuted, interrogated, searched, raided, and then given huge Stalinist prison terms. Therefore, it is impossible to talk about any disloyal or neutral activism... Everything active and alive has left.'**  
*(expert interview)*

**'Now, in Crimea, there is a real medieval witch hunt. That is, some professional informers are looking for enemies in social networks and in neighbourhood conversations, reporting them to the special services, and these people work it all out, if not all of it, then they just put it in their work queue.'**  
*(expert interview)*

In particular, the Russian special services focus on ethnic organisations, whose activities are formally allowed, but only if the organisation declares the priority of Russian civic identity over ethnicity.

**'There is a Ukrainian community, a community of Bulgarians, Germans, etc. What was there for Ukraine, let's say, has been preserved. But now, they are under the tight cover of the special services and the government that**

finances all these national organisations. Therefore, they are allowed this small space of self-identification. Still, it's like a matryoshka doll; this self-identification of representatives of certain ethnic groups stands in a big matryoshka of the Russian Federation. "We, the citizens of the Russian Federation, are a little different, but we are all Russians". This is strictly controlled, and there are no deviations. And we see in Russia itself how representatives of organisations of ethnic, well, representatives of indigenous peoples are persecuted, how much influence the special services have there and how they persecute those who go beyond this matryoshka.' (*expert interview*)

'In Crimea, the occupation policy has been going on for a very long time, based on social and ideological engineering to displace all identities except the Russian identity. Even though Russia declares its attention to national minorities, the de facto policy is based on pushing out, emasculating, erasing, as the English word 'cancel' means, all identities of small groups, including the Ukrainian identity.' (*expert interview*)

#### 2.1.8. Values and Worldview changes amongst Crimean residents

Ideological influence and repression against dissidents naturally affected the values and worldview of Crimean residents, as discussed mostly by experts. First, the values of security, particularly security from persecution, have become much more relevant.

'Even up until 2022, it's hard for me now to imagine how this is happening now, but even by 2022, I was there last in 2021, some of my relatives were afraid of something even when they were in the kitchen, or if they were asked something, they would start whispering about something. Very quietly, quickly, in our native language, because there is less of a chance that they will be accurately translated or something else. This level of fear was strange to me. [...] In Crimea, in a neighbourhood where mostly Crimean Tatars live, parents with children, children with children, and grandparents with small children, they hardly speak their native language. And I am sure, from what I have researched, that they are first afraid of an allegedly unhealthy, inadequate reaction to the manifestation of their identity in the form of language. If they do speak, they always speak quietly. And it's not customary to speak in the

**native language, especially to speak loudly.’ (expert interview)**

Secondly, according to one expert, a passive attitude and learned helplessness are flourishing amongst Crimeans.

**‘I can see it in the people I talk to. And the main opinion of these people is that we do not influence anything. Some big leaders are somewhere, and we do not influence them. And this is formed quite systematically.’ (expert interview)**

Third, Crimean residents observe that Crimeans lack cohesion: in most situations, they are atomised and avoid interfering in the affairs of others.

**‘The only thing that unites Crimea is this whole ‘Z’-story. Here, the Crimeans are united by their political view. Well, the Crimeans were not very united at all. These are my problems, and these are your problems. I think we generally had that in common. I didn't see a lot of us being all together. We are all together when something threatens us... When I see help on the street, I see it as an exception to the rule.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

#### 2.1.9. Situation of Crimean Tatars in Crimea

The situation of Crimean Tatars in Crimea, according to participants in focus group discussions amongst representatives of the ethnic group and experts, has become more complicated since the Russian occupation of the peninsula. The participants of the study highlighted the following changes:

- Attempts by the Russian occupation administration to blur the ethnic identity of Crimean Tatars and increase their loyalty to Russia and the Russian occupation administration:

**‘Speaking of Crimean Tatars, we see an active blurring of the Crimean Tatar identity via other nationalities living in Russia, well, with the help of other nationalities. This is a cultural attempt to combine Tatars with people from the Caucasus or someone else somehow.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

**‘The Crimean Tatars are a people who... Although they do not say that they are an indigenous people, according to their, let's say, logic, according to their narratives, the Crimean Tatars are a foreign people who came from Asia and lived in Crimea only a little bit. Sorry, in Russian Crimea, as they see it, they lived for a little bit, and**

**that's it. But [those in power] are trying, on the one hand, to suppress them and, on the other hand, to help them to “develop”. For example, they created the Crimean Tatar channel “Millet” (“Nation”), which broadcasts in the Crimean Tatar language. This is a television channel. But if you look at the content of this Crimean Tatar channel, or rather this channel that broadcasts in the Crimean Tatar language, it is generally Russian content about how bad Ukraine is and how Crimean Tatars suffered in Ukraine. If Russia will be there, they will live there happily ever after, whilst Ukraine was destroying them.’ (expert interview)**

- Numerous cases of repressions against members of the Crimean Tatar community, whom the Russian occupation administration consider disloyal:

**‘If we look at the statistics conducted by our organisations and based on the results of the activities of this Russian occupation centre for countering extremism, we will see that amongst the detainees, the vast majority are Crimean Tatars. That is, what Russia calls extremism is simply a strong civic position of the Crimean Tatars.’ (expert interview)**

- Crimean Tatars face economic difficulties, avoiding cooperation with those they consider collaborators:

**‘The people are under occupation, the only people who earn money are those close to the collaborators, who are friends with them. They are the only ones who are given contracts and have the opportunity to earn money. The rest of us don't have such an opportunity and are scrambling to make money wherever we can.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

- Interference of the Russian occupation administration in the religious life of Crimean Tatars and politicisation of religion (attempts to promote narratives favourable to the Russian occupation administration through religious institutions, for example, regarding attitudes towards the war):

**‘The second situation is that they have taken over the Muslim administration, or rather the administration of the religious structure that manages religious feelings in Crimea. That is, it is now also working for the occupiers, and it is through this structure that they are trying to influence the Crimean Tatars so that their loyalty to the occupation authorities would increase. Anyone who disagrees with this, let's say, interpretation of the activities of this “spiritual**

**administration”, they call them radicals or something else. And, you know, in this situation, that person will at least end up under, let's say, supervision, and at most, they will end up in prison.’ (expert interview)**

- A ban on holding mass gatherings, including for traditional events or celebrations:

**‘It has become a little more difficult to carry out our traditions, indigenous to the Crimean Tatars. On May 18, the day of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, we always had a big rally in the centre of Simferopol when we were under Ukraine. 20-30 thousand people gathered, and all these people walked. Mostly, let's say, they prayed; that is, they recited words from prayers. Since 2014, unfortunately, such events have been forbidden. Large gatherings of people are also prohibited according to the rules, even at a wedding when a convoy of cars gather. Either you must coordinate it or pay a fine if someone punishes you for it.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

It was also mentioned that schools do not pay enough attention to teaching the Crimean Tatar language, so children do not know it well.

The results of the content analysis of Crimean Telegram channels show that pro-Russian writers cover ethnic relations through the prism of the successful integration of different peoples into the ‘big family’ of Crimea, emphasising the preservation of historical memory and the importance of commemorative dates for maintaining national identity and interethnic peace in Crimea. Cases of discrimination or harassment of ordinary Crimean Tatars are demonstrably condemned (this does not apply to situations where the Russian occupation administration accuse individual representatives of extremism, sabotage, etc.). At the same time, bloggers close to the occupation administration can severely criticise certain representatives of the Crimean Tatars. For example, blogger Talipov aggressively called for the renaming of a street in the village, which is named in honour of Mustafa Dzhemilev:

**‘In the village of Zolotoe Polye of Kirov district of the Republic of Crimea, the street of Mustafa Dzhemilev appeared. Mustafa Dzhemilev is a traitor to the Crimean Tatar people, a criminal on whom criminal cases have been opened; he is on the federal wanted list, the organiser of the energy and food blockade of Crimea, a market who claims that soon the AFU will enter Crimea.**

**Judging by the cadastral map, it is a new quarter that is free from development. The cadastral map plots appeared in December 2022.**

**I have a question for the village authorities: Are you doing well? What guided them when they accepted the street's name? Who is the initiator, and when was the initiative submitted? Didn't you notice the name when you consented to the execution of documents or when you issued permits?**

**Are you satisfied with everything, or is it necessary to eliminate this unfortunate misunderstanding?' (TalipoV Online Telegram Channel)**

#### 2.1.10. Impact of the full-scale invasion

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has affected the situation and well-being of Crimean residents. First, those liable for military service now face the risk of being mobilised into the Russian army, which is not popular even with the pro-Russian part of the population. As noted above, some men have left Crimea to avoid participating in hostilities.

**'Pro-Russian collaborators and most of the swamp I'm talking about, they support the so-called "special military operation". But when it started to affect their loved ones, they started to look at it differently.'** (*expert interview*)

Secondly, transportation links between Crimea and the mainland part of Ukraine have been cut off, deepening the separation of some families.

**'Because I had relatives living there, my brother. And since the beginning of the full-scale war, they have lost the opportunity to return to Crimea to come and see their parents. And this is one of the most important things. Although at one point, there were at least some ways to see your parents, friends, and so on, now it is impossible. And naturally, the conflict is dragging on, and here in Crimea, there was a very high probability of even being mobilised and going to fight against the country in which you were born.'** (*in-depth interviews with Crimean residents*)

Thirdly, after 24 February 2024, repression against dissidents intensified:

**'There is a noticeable tendency that people have begun to speak their thoughts out loud less often, because it had become quite dangerous. If before, it was more or less dangerous, you could somehow sweat it out, but now thinking out loud is a real opportunity to go to jail quickly and for a very long time.'** (*expert interview*)

Fourth, the outbreak of a major war affected the psychological well-being of Crimeans. Ukraine's struggle inspired some Crimeans, but others were frightened and depressed.

**'Here, when Ukraine fought back, for the first few months, it fought back. I'm sorry, but they kicked the so-called second army of the world in the teeth, and they saw that Ukraine can fight. This, in a way, raised morale.'** (*expert interview*)

**'...24 February came, and I realise I can't do anything else here. It's impossible to live here anymore... it's completely wrecking my nervous system. [...] I lost my sense of home. I always had this sense of home: Crimea, Ukraine, this is home... there is no stability because, in Crimea, I don't feel a sense of home in my own house.'** (*in-depth interviews with Crimean residents*)

Eventually, over time, Crimeans began to be directly affected by the hostilities, as Ukraine began to launch long-range strikes against targets in Crimea.

## 2.2. Awareness of the current situation in Crimea and the mainland part of Ukraine

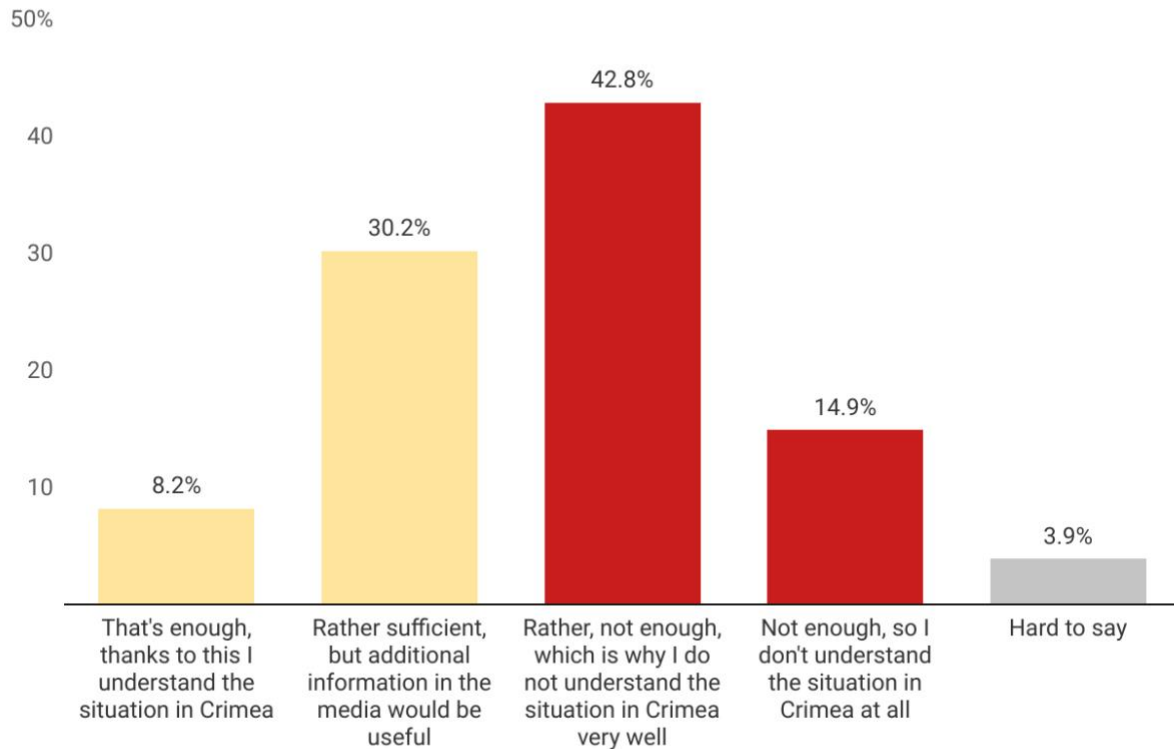
### 2.2.1. Self-assessment of awareness amongst residents of the mainland part of Ukraine, sources of information and media coverage of the situation in Crimea

#### 2.2.1.1. Citizens of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars

Both quantitative and qualitative studies show that there is not enough information about Crimea in the media of the mainland part of Ukraine. Only 8% of respondents to the quantitative study believe that Ukrainian media provide enough information about Crimea, and another 30% consider it rather sufficient. At the same time, the majority feels the need for more information.

# Sufficiency of Ukrainian media attention to the situation in Crimea

Results of the survey



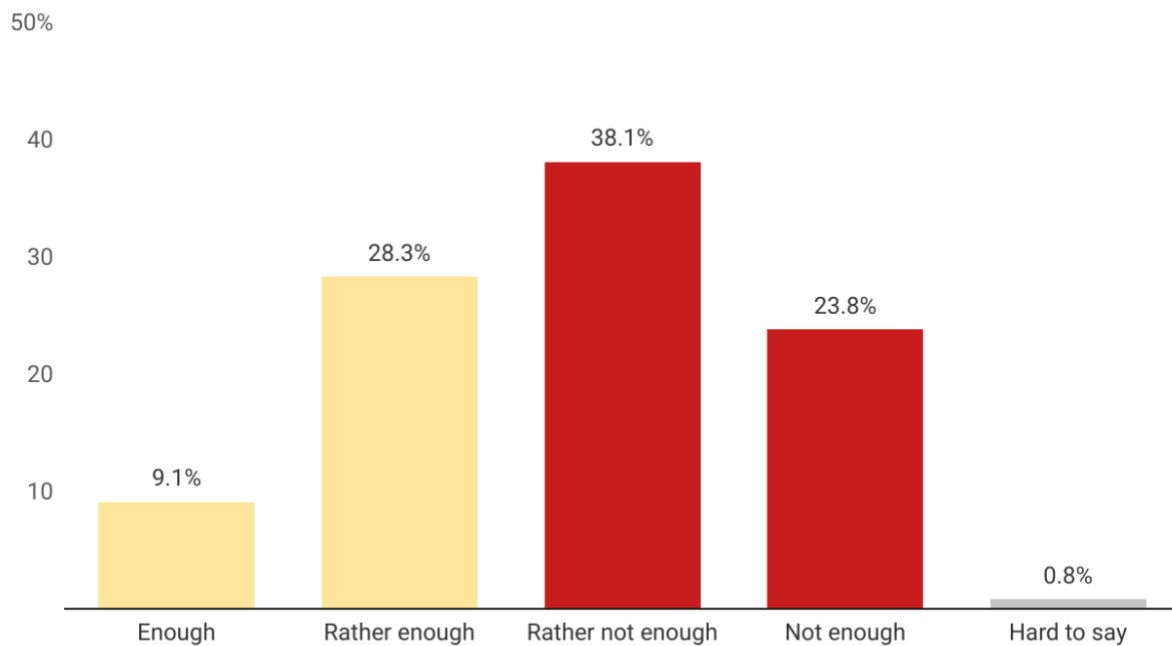
Question: In your opinion, do the Ukrainian media you use (these can be TV channels, radio stations, websites, Viber or Telegram channels) pay enough attention to the situation in Crimea?

Created with Datawrapper

Only 9% of respondents consider themselves sufficiently informed about the Crimean Peninsula, and another 28% say they are rather well informed. At the same time, the majority say they do not know enough.

## Self-assessment of knowledge about the Crimean peninsula

Results of the survey



Question: How would you rate your knowledge of the Crimean peninsula, its population, history and culture?

Created with Datawrapper

Focus group participants hardly ever mention the editorial policy of the Ukrainian media as a reason for the current situation, trying to explain that the lack of information is due to objective difficulties. Respondents attributed the lack of information about Crimea to the fact that independent media have limited access to the peninsula, and the local population is reluctant to share information for fear of reprisal. Some respondents would like to receive news about Crimea, not from Ukrainian or Russian media, but from media from countries not involved in the war.

**'Because a lot is happening there, and we don't understand it. For example, I don't know what is happening with the people who stayed there, with the military who switched from the Ukrainian Navy to the Russian Navy, so after 2022, as they say, this is a dark spot for me.**

**There are very few, let's say, sources, and you must look for them and be self-motivated. The local population is not eager to share their opinions because they can get scolded. And some independent sources of information do not get there either. For example, even foreign journalists simply do not have the goal to go there and cover the situation at the moment. Because of this, there is very little information, and because of this, most of the Ukrainian population has the opinion that the vast majority there**

**support Russia, and this is not entirely true in reality.’ (focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)**

Young Crimean Tatars also agree with the fact that between 2014 and 2022, Crimea occupied a disproportionately small share of Ukraine's information space:

**‘If we talk about the past, Crimea held 1.5% of Ukraine's information space. This is before the full-scale invasion. Well, 1.5% of the information was about the region, well, sorry, but there was more information about Odesa, Lviv, Volyn, and Zhytomyr Oblasts than about the occupied territory and everything happening there. That is, it was a problem. Now, whether there is such a problem, I cannot say for sure, but I cannot say that there is enough historical information.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

At the same time, some experts offer a more frank and controversial explanation for the lack of information about Crimea in the Ukrainian media: a passive policy on the de-occupation of the peninsula, which has resulted in a lack of significant media attention to this issue and a small number of news stories.

**‘So, we need more information and more real cases. Believe me, when we are told that “little is being written about Crimea”, I ask: “what should we write?”. For Crimea, and about Crimea. I'm showing you what they used to do before the invasion when some survey agencies conducted a survey to see how much content there was about Crimea, and they said, “Not enough, not enough”. What was there to tell? [The politician] Refat Chubarov once took great offence at me when I said, ‘So you do something. We will talk about it’. There is nothing to say. The policy on Crimea is not being implemented.’ (expert interview)**

Some young focus group participants say that they do not even understand basic things about the situation in Crimea now, such as whether there are any problems with water, food, etc.

**‘In general, there is very little information about how people live, how they are doing, whether they have enough water or food, maybe they have some problems there. We do not know what exactly is happening in the occupied territories, how the residents are treated there, whether they are in danger or not.’ (focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)**

According to respondents, the situation for Crimean Tatars is also tricky for the average news consumer to understand fully.

**'We very often talk about Crimea as the Crimean Tatars, but, as far as I know, not much can be said about the Crimean Tatars in Crimea. Even from the point of view of news. That is, just the absence of such events or any activities implies that we do not have a lot of news about Crimea and Crimean Tatars in general.'** (*focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars*)

Some respondents lack information about the motivation of pro-Russian Crimeans and their assessment of the current situation on the peninsula. Today, respondents most often see news about strikes on Russian military targets in Crimea, coverage of Russian crimes, and information about the actions of the Yellow Ribbon partisan resistance movement. Amongst the most recent stories, respondents recalled how the National Preserve of Tauric Chersonesos, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was destroyed by the Russians; news about the preparation of the Crimean bridge blowing up; the destruction of warehouses and military bases in Crimea, and a programme about the impact of the explosion of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power on the North Crimean Canal. Amongst the topics of most interest to respondents were war-related events, the situation of Crimean residents under occupation, including illegal abductions, the history of Crimea and Crimean Tatars, human rights protection, and information about fundamental changes in the life of Crimea after the temporary occupation.

Respondents from the mainland part of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars primarily hear about Crimea on social media (Telegram, YouTube, TikTok), television (1+1, STB, the telethon 'United News'), radio (Radio NV), and through personal communication with their friends. Telegram channels used by participants to follow information about Crimea included: 'Lachen writes', 'STERNENKO', 'Trukha Ukraina', 'Trukha Krym', 'Insider UA', 'Times of Ukraine', 'Mykolaivsky Vanyok', and 'Real Crimea', Amongst the YouTube channels mentioned were 'Real History' and 'Comedian Plus Historian', and respondents also follow Crimean bloggers who cover their lives in Crimea on YouTube. Also mentioned in the context of media covering news about Crimea were 'Ukrayinska Pravda', 'Suspilne', 'Babel', 'New Voice', and 'TSN'.

According to most respondents, ties between the mainland part of Ukraine and Crimea have remained only at the level of interpersonal relations. Many Ukrainians have friends and relatives who remained in the temporary occupied Crimea, and it has become quite challenging to keep in touch with them. It was noted that over time, communication with acquaintances from Crimea stops and ties are severed, mainly due to Russian propaganda that turns Crimean residents against Ukraine. Respondents reported that when communicating with their relatives in Crimea, they

avoid topics related to politics and war and discuss only family issues. Many note that interpersonal ties cannot withstand a full-scale invasion in 2022 and quickly fade away.

#### 2.2.1.2. Citizens of Ukraine who are Crimean Tatars

Senior representatives of Crimean Tatars say they follow all the information about Crimea available in the information space. Those who can do so also keep in touch with friends and relatives on the peninsula. Respondents named several resources from which they get information about the situation in Crimea, including TV channels, radio stations, and content from civil society organisations on social media.

- ATR - Crimean Tatar TV channel;
- MeydanFM - Crimean Tatar radio;
- Suspilne Krym, a TV channel of the Public Broadcasting Company;
- CANLI Radio;
- Crimea Realities;
- Crimean Tatar Sort and Cardinal News Production;
- content from 'Crimean Solidarity';
- Facebook page 'Crimean Tatar Resource Centre';
- The Mejlis, the representative body of Crimean Tatars and the equivalent of a parliament.

According to both older and younger Crimean Tatars, there is insufficient information about Crimea. Media resources covering Crimea's situation do not receive sufficient support and funding, leading to reduced or terminated activities. The emergence of the Crimean Platform and the adoption of the Law 'On Indigenous Peoples of Ukraine' significantly impacted the return of the Crimean issue to the agenda in the Ukrainian information environment. To establish the possibility of influencing the population of temporarily occupied Crimea, one of the respondents noted that it is necessary to restore the state television and radio company 'Crimea'. Respondents also pointed out that it is vital to return the ATR TV channel to the air:

**'When the return of the Crimean Tatars to their ancestral land began in 1990, the press did not write much about it; there was not much information. And when the ATR TV channel, the first and only Crimean Tatar TV channel, was created, everyone rejoiced. Why? First, these were the first programmes in the Crimean Tatar language. And secondly, the most truthful information came from this TV channel...**

**But recently, they stopped funding this channel. I don't know for what reasons, unfortunately...'** (*focus group with Crimean Tatars*)

Young representatives of the Crimean Tatars noted that they also learn information about Crimea from their friends and relatives, media that write about Crimea (ATR, Crimea Realities, MeydanFM) and civil society organisations (CrimeaSOS, ZMINA, Almenda, Crimean Solidarity). In addition, they noted that they get information from officials and bodies, including the Mejlis and Refat Chubarov and other civil society activists of Crimea, including political prisoners. They also use such sources as Crimean Tatar groups in social networks and Russian and Ukrainian news. The topics of most interest to all respondents are military operations on the territory of Crimea, the general situation on the peninsula, the issue of the mobilisation of Crimean residents, detentions, arrests, and repressions.

**'...I am interested in the issue of mobilisation, how it is carried out, how it is violated. Because this is an international crime, a violation of conventions, and a violation of international law. It is connected to detentions and arrests, we are interested in this and are constantly recording it, trying to document it. It is also connected to the closure of Crimean Tatar schools, classes, etc. That is, everything connected to the violation of collective and individual rights... As for the explosions related to the war in Crimea, of course, we are also concerned about this.'** (*focus group with Crimean Tatars*)

Both older and younger representatives of the Crimean Tatars noted that sometimes the media can be inaccurate in their coverage of the situation in Crimea. The reasons for this may be the work of the Russian PSYOPS or the incompetence of organisations that cover content about Crimea.

**'Very often, due to personal views on a particular situation, the media covers an event from one side. It's very often PSYOPS, even the Ukrayinska Pravda Telegram channels and media, even they fell for it and threw in some false information. You can trust someone, but this person or media outlet can take some information that is not true.'** (*focus group with Crimean Tatars*)

**'...there is also a factor that, in my opinion, does a disservice to the Crimean Tatar people, when some organisations, not being competent in these matters, take on the task of writing or simply copying or plagiarising**

**information, but then presenting it in a worse format.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

The trends in interpersonal communication between Crimean Tatars living in Ukraine and their relatives and friends who remained in temporarily occupied Crimea are like those reported by participants in focus groups with Ukrainians: political topics and war issues are not discussed, and information exchange is less intense.

**‘Of course, we are in touch. There are relatives, my relatives, my wife's relatives, and friends from my previous place of work. We keep in touch mainly by electronic means. At first, if there was a telephone connection, we could communicate that way. Now, we only use WhatsApp or Telegram. We text, talk, share things. But lately, I've noticed that there is less information. People are afraid, so we don't talk about general topics anymore. Not even about the social situation in Crimea. I'm not talking about politics or something else.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

**‘...I am in Kyiv; my family is in Crimea. And, naturally, when I talk to my family by phone or video, they are used to it; they have accepted the frightening situation around them. They never use the words ‘aggressor’, ‘invasion’, they never use the words ‘war’, ‘missile’, ‘planes’. That is, they avoid any phrases associated with the occupation of Crimea... I understand them. I even lived there under occupation for a year, almost a year... It felt like all the phone conversations were being tapped. I don't know to what extent that was actually the case, but it was always like that.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

### 2.2.2. Awareness of Crimean residents about the situation in the mainland part of Ukraine

All the respondents who live in Crimea regularly or occasionally follow the news about Ukraine. They receive information about events in Ukraine from social media, mainly Telegram, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Amongst the Telegram channels used by respondents to follow the news about Ukraine, NEXTA Live and Mykolaivsky Vanyok were mentioned. YouTube channels such as Politeka Online, Oleksandr Shelest, Mykhailo Chaplyha, and Ruslan Bortnyk were also mentioned. Internet resources and TV channels were also mentioned, including Radio Liberty, RIA Novosti, ICTV, and 1+1. In addition, participants noted that they follow well-known Ukrainian personalities and politicians on social media, such as Volodymyr Zelenskyy,

Petro Poroshenko, and Oleksiy Goncharenko. Russian bloggers, such as Michael Nacke, were also mentioned in the context of consuming news about Ukraine.

**'Ukraine, I love my people so much, and Ukraine in general, both territorially and in general. [I can't imagine collaborating], I have no such thoughts. Pride for my country. I watch, say, 1+1 every day to stay connected. You must be in touch daily to stay connected and communicate with your relatives and friends. That's one thing. And there must be some kind of information flow that we can maintain as much as possible. For me, in Ukraine, what people are doing and what is happening there now shows how strong the people are. It's horrible what is happening. This is a rebellious people. It is impossible to subdue them.'** (*in-depth interviews with Crimean residents*)

The respondents are most interested in Ukraine's context regarding warfare on Ukraine's territory and politics. It was noted that watching Ukrainian news is prohibited in Crimea, but those who want to watch it still find ways to do so, such as using VPN services.

**'I am interested. I mostly watch analysts on YouTube, which may be blocked soon by my internet provider. I will watch them through a VPN, like I do when I scroll on social media like Instagram, Facebook, etc. I watch bloggers. I'm interested in politics and in supporting the countries of the EU and the US. How they, so to speak, whether they help, whether they don't help and so on. In my family, my father loves politics very much. He watches a lot of Ukrainian political bloggers, and even if I miss something, I always hear from him. The latest news and so on. That is, as long as there is YouTube and the Internet, we still get some news.'** (*in-depth interviews with Crimean residents*)

**'...until 1 August, YouTube was helpful for us. News was drawn from there, from those sources, from Ukrainian sources, from live broadcasts, from the programmes of bloggers, and I had news channels and everything else, now we are deprived. Unfortunately, there is a huge shortage. I just don't know what sources to subscribe to, like Telegram or some news channels... I am naturally interested in military actions, and what is happening to cities, to people.'** (*in-depth interviews with Crimean residents*)

Some respondents indicated they continue to follow the Ukrainian political agenda and news as if 'by inertia', not so emotionally.

**'...some internal political issues. I think, well, Ukrainian correspondents are just somehow more lively, human, and interesting. I don't know; by inertia, you just kind of watch whatever is going on. You know, like, there's news, you just watch the news.... I can't explain it. Why do you need it? Like, I don't know... my old memory doesn't help me. I don't know, I can't explain.'** (*in-depth interviews with Crimean residents*)

### 3. Civic engagement and social cohesion

#### 3.1. Social cohesion of residents of the mainland part of Ukraine

Participants in the focus group discussions noted that since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the cohesion of the mainland part of Ukraine residents has increased significantly. However, over time, people are less willing to sacrifice their time and resources to help others, although the overall level of cohesion remains high.

In the focus group with the Crimean Tatars, it was noted that members of this ethnic group always come to each other's aid. The cohesion of the Crimean Tatars is also manifested in the desire to liberate their homeland and end the war. In this context, one of the respondents shared the story of how the Crimean Tatar people helped him with his medical treatment:

**'We cannot all think the same and act the same. There are some disagreements, and everyone has their interests, which is evident. But I believe we are mostly united in a single impulse and desire to end this war and liberate our land.'** *(focus group with Crimean Tatars)*

**'The Crimean Tatar people, in general, are such a specific people. They are not simple. But in a difficult moment, people pull together. They don't look at grievances; they don't look at anything. They just pull together. A disease knocked me down. And thanks to our leaders, thanks to the Mejlis, thanks to my people, I say this with pride, because it's thanks to them all. The doctors said I have no more than three months to live. I've been alive for over two and a half years now.'** *(focus group with the Crimean Tatars)*

Participants in the focus group discussions comparing the level of cohesion between residents of the mainland part of Ukraine and Crimea noted that it was lower in Crimea. Many participants lacked the knowledge of the situation in Crimea to understand the reasons for this. Still, they acknowledged that cohesion in Crimea is lower due to the absence of shelling and constant threats to life, as well as repression by the Russian occupation administration, which makes each person think about their own life first and foremost rather than helping other people. According to the participants, a small number of Crimean residents who belong to the Yellow Ribbon guerrilla movement are united.

In contrast, the level of cohesion amongst residents of the mainland part of Ukraine was highest at the beginning of the full-scale invasion. Still, it has weakened over time due to certain factors (political scandals, corruption, and people's fatigue from the protracted war). However, respondents characterised the cohesion of Ukrainians as high; as proactive communities continue to operate, fundraisers rapidly reach their goals for the needs of the army, and many people are involved in helping victims of shelling and in clearing rubble. In general, it was noted that Ukrainians tend to unite and support each other in difficult times.

**‘...the cohesion [of Ukrainians] has decreased a little bit compared to 2022, as it was in the first half of the year when everyone was volunteering and trying to help somehow; now I hear more disappointment and despair from people. There is cohesion, but it is not as great as it used to be. And I think the situation is the same in Crimea because this has been going on there for ten years, so they most likely tried to do something in 2014, 2015, 2016, maybe a little more. And then people broke down, somehow succumbed to this influence. One person may have succumbed for the sake of their lives, while another just changed their mind and pro-Russian thoughts appeared, so there is less cohesion there.’ (focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine)**

**‘...for Ukrainians, the highest level of cohesion is inherent when the situation becomes most critical. The level was extremely high in the first months at the beginning of the full-scale invasion. Accordingly, when the military operations entered a protracted phase, the level of cohesion slowly fell... As for the cohesion in the territory of Crimea, it seems to me that every year, it is becoming less and less because everyone understands that for such cohesion, they receive repressions. It is unclear how effective their cohesion will be, regarding their security and any social impact on the current situation in Crimea.’ (focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)**

### 3.2. Social cohesion and civic engagement of Crimean residents

Experts and Crimean residents agree that society in Crimea is primarily divided, atomised, and capable of uniting only in the event of a common problem. A significant contribution to this situation was made by the threat of repression by the Russian

occupation administration against dissidents and civic activists who do not demonstrate loyalty.

**‘...most likely, it's every man for himself. [...] And our people are, as you might say, every man for himself, his own business. Well, let's say, they're more like wary competitors than people who help each other.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**‘...the society, or it's hard to call it a society, the population in Crimea is incredibly atomised. And I think it is even more atomised now.’ (expert interview)**

The study participants note that Crimean Tatars, unlike other ethnic groups in Crimea, are very united and tend to help each other.

**‘...a Crimean, an indigenous Crimean Tatar, understands who a native Crimean Tatar is by looking at him. They are united. The Crimean Tatar people are united... I can't say if it's the same for Russians and Ukrainians living in Crimea. But the Crimean Tatars will never be left without food or housing. Never.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents, Crimean Tatar)**

The Russian occupation administration in Crimea prohibit civic activism, except for officially approved or completely apolitical issues. Residents of Crimea say that many cultural events are held there and that youth movements inspired by the Russian occupation administration are flourishing.

**‘Well, of course, there are some concerts and exhibitions, but they are, well, as far as I can see, not protesting, you know? Well, they are either neutral or, on the contrary, kind of glorifying it... the concerts are held to earn money... They earn their salary, they hold some thematic evenings there, but it is not political.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**‘We have a lot of youth movements now, but they are all, as they are called, the Young Guard, something like that, some student groups appear. But they all go in the same direction [...] I mean, there seem to be a lot of them, but I don't understand what they do except, again, propaganda.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**‘...ideologically, it is very, very dangerous to hold events publicly, It is now actually focused on, for example, environmental issues, animal rescue, fighting against landfills, things like that.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

Culture and, to a lesser extent, sport and charity (for example, fundraising for medical treatment, restoration of architectural monuments, and construction of a mosque) have become a safe space for self-organisation and public activity for the pro-Ukrainian community and Crimean Tatars. However, even cultural figures can become the focus of attention of Russian special services and are forced to conduct their activities very carefully.

**‘This is the unfortunately the case for those who are supporters of Ukraine, to a greater or even minimal extent. They have almost no opportunity, even if they organise certain activities, they are not allowed to demonstrate that this activity has any association with Ukraine. The maximum that it can be is just that, that we’re just, that it’s culture, we are just there, very carefully and on the edge, at the boundary. This is a result of the constant communication with some FSB officers or the Centre for Countering Extremism, they are all at their pencils, they are all working as if they are looking into microscopes, unfortunately. But I am one of those who, during all the years of occupation, now believe that the work [of those making events related to Ukraine] is invaluable, as it should be. Because I have been to such events, I know first-hand what a strong influence they have on preserving a normal set of values, on identification.’ (expert interview)**

**‘...the Crimean Tatars have completely dedicated themselves to the cultural aspect. This is the only place where they can express their identity, interests, pain, and expectations. That's why there are so many initiatives and organisations aimed at creating, I don't know, literary evenings. I'm not talking about festivals, but there are several events. We have a lot of poets and writers. This is the trend in the cultural sphere. There is almost nothing left, well, there are some charitable organisations, this kind of activism.’ (expert interview)**

Crimean Tatar experts and research participants also talked about various forms of public resistance to the Russian occupation:

- attempts to obtain information from Ukrainian sources;
- attempts to restore and preserve Ukrainian documents;
- the tradition of Crimean Tatars to celebrate successful strikes by the AFU on targets in Crimea together over evening coffee;
- publishing videos or stories about the negative aspects of life in Crimea;

- taking photos of Ukrainian symbols against the background of well-known Crimean objects and publishing these photos on social media;
- throwing leaflets and creating pro-Ukrainian graffiti, hanging Ukrainian flags;
- disseminating information amongst Crimean residents on the possibilities for realising the right to education in Ukraine;
- holding public events on the territory of the mainland part of Ukraine dedicated to the deportation of the Crimean Tatar people from Crimea;
- publishing information in the media that hinders the Russian occupation administration, such as UN reports on the violations of the rights of Ukrainian citizens in Crimea;
- collecting personal data of people who are actively engaging in repression and mobilisation activities in Crimea and are involved in collaboration activities;
- collecting and transferring donations to the territory of the mainland part of Ukraine to help the AFU;
- detecting Russian military facilities and passing information about them to special services in Ukraine.

The experts listed resistance movements such as Yellow Ribbon, Liberate Crimea, The Fighting Seagulls, and Atesh.

### 3.3. Attitudes of residents of Crimea and the mainland part of Ukraine towards each other

#### 3.3.1. Situation of Crimean Tatars in mainland Ukraine

According to one expert, the situation of Crimean Tatars living in mainland Ukraine is complicated by the problem of obtaining Ukrainian documents, especially for those who did not have them before the occupation of Crimea in 2014. The process of receiving or confirming citizenship rights is lengthy and complicated, which creates additional difficulties for this community.

**'I've already told you that it depends on whether they have Ukrainian documents. Because if they manage to get Ukrainian documents, they are in the same situation as other citizens of Ukraine, but with the only nuance that they have lost their historical homeland. [...] However, those who do not have documents are in a different situation. They are worse off, and we must do a lot of work here. Unfortunately, Ukraine has not yet developed an adequate algorithm to confirm Ukrainian citizenship or their right to obtain Ukrainian citizenship. In particular, by obtaining documents from the archives of the countries where they were deported. And there is still work to be done because today's mechanism is very time-consuming. This is especially true for those who, for example, were not yet 16 years old at the time of the occupation, I mean, as of February 2014, because they would receive their first passport at age 16. And they lived, for example, under occupation, and now they are trying to go to the controlled territory of Ukraine to get their first documents and then build their lives either in Ukraine or go abroad to study or live abroad or something else.'**  
*(expert interview)*

Experts also note the language barrier problem: many Crimean Tatars do not speak Ukrainian, as it was not widespread in their places of residence (including Crimea). This complicates their integration into Ukrainian society.

**'None of them knew Ukrainian. Because it was not used in the places where they were. When they returned to Crimea, they also did not hear this Ukrainian language very much, so they did not consider themselves to be part of the Ukrainian community. This is my impression. This does not mean that they did not learn it, they tried where there was**

**such an opportunity, but let's be honest, there was not much opportunity to learn Ukrainian in Crimea.' (expert interview)**

Crimean Tatars themselves are more optimistic about the attitude of mainland Ukrainians towards them.

**'People here [in Kyiv] expressed interest when I arrived. Even before, when people from other regions of Ukraine came to Crimea, children in summer camps there were interested... And I realised I wanted to tell them something, to familiarise them [with Crimea], and establish some connections. And that's how we live. In other words, in any new group of people, when you join, they immediately ask you questions, and you start telling them something. And here it is perceived very positively and with great interest.' (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

One of the experts also points out that despite all the difficulties that Crimean Tatars faced after forced moving to mainland Ukraine, they have the opportunity to present themselves and their culture to the entire Ukrainian society.

**'This is also an emotionally difficult period because of the separation of people, including families, friends, and the environment. This is a state of opportunity to demonstrate Crimean Tatar culture and Crimean Tatar identity here for Ukrainians who are discovering Crimean Tatars today, this is an important element.' (expert interview).**

### 3.3.2. Attitudes of the mainland part of Ukraine residents towards Crimean residents

Of all eight categories of Ukrainians (from the list offered to the respondents), no more than 19% said they have a negative attitude towards the other groups. This means that most Ukrainians have good or at least neutral attitudes towards IDPs, refugees abroad, Ukrainians under temporary occupation, and Russian-speaking citizens.

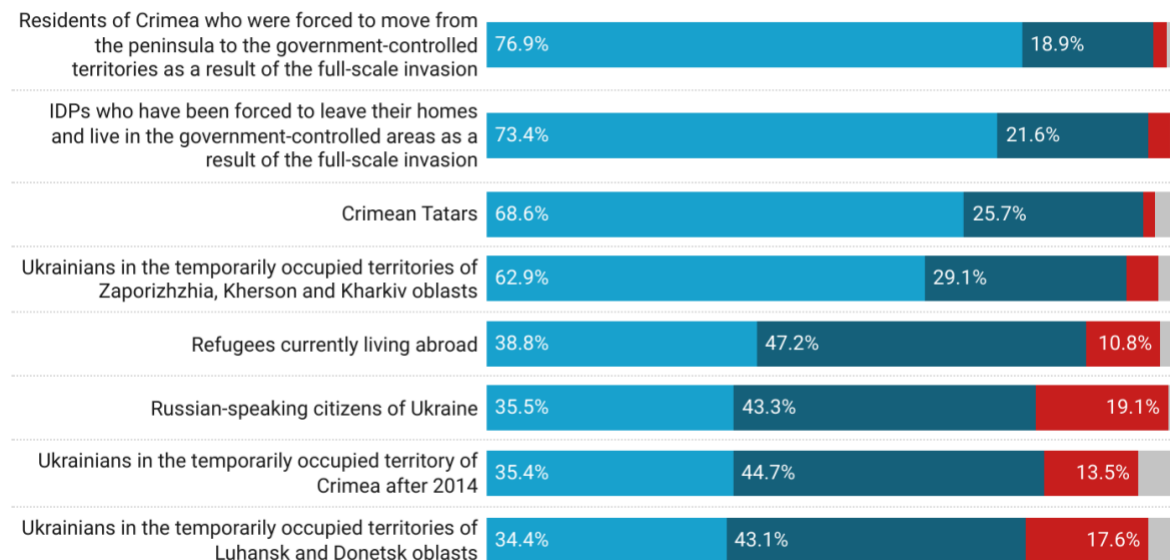
At the same time, attitudes towards different categories are unequal, and the attitudes still have a specific hierarchy. For example, Ukrainians have the best attitude towards Crimean residents who moved to government-controlled territories after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine (77% have a good attitude towards them). In addition, most Ukrainians have a good attitude towards IDPs (73%), Crimean Tatars (63%), and Ukrainians living under temporary occupation in Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, and

Kherson Oblasts (63%). At the same time, another 19-26% have a neutral attitude towards these categories, and only 1-3% have a bad attitude towards them.

## Attitudes towards different categories of the population

Results of the survey

Good Neutral Negative Hard to say



Question: How do you currently feel about the following categories of Ukrainians...

Created with Datawrapper

In addition to a direct question about attitudes towards specific categories, the survey examined attitudes towards Ukrainians living under occupation using the Bogardus scale (adapted)<sup>4</sup>. KIIS has considerable experience researching social distance (primarily in interethnic relations, but also about other groups of society) using the Bogardus scale<sup>5</sup>.

For each group on the list, respondents have to answer how close they are willing to be with representatives of each group. This is called social distance. The minimum social distance is 1 (I agree to let them in as a family member), and the maximum is 7 (I would not let them into Ukraine). The level of social distance is often interpreted as prejudice against a particular group. N. Panina and E. Golovakha

<sup>4</sup> More information about the Bogardus scale can be found in this publication. Gorbachyk, O. (2005). Testing the Validity of the Bogardus Scale for Measuring Interethnic Tolerance in Ukraine. Scientific notes of NaUKMA. Volume 46. Sociological sciences.

<https://ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/server/api/core/bitstreams/2caf07c7-47fd-44dc-9436-17df422e4e19/content>

<sup>5</sup> KIIS has considerable experience in researching social distance (primarily in the area of interethnic relations, but also in relation to other groups of society), for example, 'Interethnic Prejudice in Ukraine: October 2023' // <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1364&page=1> or 'Attitudes towards Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons, Russian-speaking Citizens and Some Other Categories of the Population of Ukraine' // <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=rus&cat=reports&id=1218&page=1>

believe that values less than 4.0 indicate openness (tolerance), and values from 4 to 5 indicate separation.

So, first, in the case of all three population groups - Ukrainians living under occupation in Crimea / in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts / Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, and Kherson Oblasts - the average value ranges from 2.8 to 3.4 (for comparison, openness to 'Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians' is 2). This indicates a relatively low distance to all groups, i.e. Ukrainians are mainly open to relatively close relations with Ukrainians who were forced to live under temporary occupation regardless of the specific territory.

Second, a particular hierarchy is again evident. Respondents are 'closest' to residents of Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, and Kherson Oblasts (2.8). This is followed by the residents of Crimea (3.1) and the relatively lowest indicator for residents of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (3.4). For context, similar indicators of social distance (2.9-3.4) in another KIIS survey were traced to Poles, Russian-speaking Ukrainians, Canadians, Americans, Germans, French, and Jews.

At the same time, there is some tension between Ukrainians living in the mainland part of Ukraine and Crimea. The focus group participants who are Ukrainian citizens and are not Crimean Tatars verbalise this in the form of insults and pretences towards the inhabitants of the peninsula.

**'In 2014, it was, probably, a symbol of betrayal for me that Crimea, during such a difficult time, left us. Many of my friends were living in Crimea in 2014, and I talked to them at that time, and I was shocked, to be honest: everyone there was waiting for Russia. Well, not all of them, but my friends from my institute who lived there were, and it was at the same time, a disappointment, and such a betrayal. Even the position of the Crimean Tatars inspired me more than the person with whom I lived in the dormitory, in the same room.'** *(focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine)*

During the focus group discussions, respondents expressed that most Crimean residents are forced to live under temporary occupation because they cannot leave their homes for various reasons. After 2022, some participants in the study became more interested in the history of Crimea and expressed sympathy for the residents who remain under occupation. However, two participants from the western region of Ukraine noted that the full-scale invasion had changed their attitude towards those who remained in Crimea to a more negative one. They explained this, saying that they did not understand how people could choose to stay under occupation and be exposed to Russian propaganda.

### 3.3.2. Attitudes of Crimean residents towards the residents of the mainland part of Ukraine

The in-depth interview respondents who live in Crimea have a positive association with Ukraine and characterise it as the country where they spent most of their childhood and youth. Some of them expressed regret over the events that Ukraine is going through. At the same time, two respondents hinted that Ukraine was to blame for the war with Russia, avoiding direct wording.

**‘[These associations,] it's naturally what I learned at school. We called it, at first, the Ukrainian language, then our native language, the Ukrainian literature that I studied. Poems come to mind. “I was 13 years old and herding lambs outside the village, either the sun was shining, or I was imagining it” ... I remember the poems, naturally, with warmth. After all, this is where I lived, the country where I lived for 18 years, and that's most of my life.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**‘This is a country where I lived for most of my life, and there was no doubt, censorship or whatever, well, at least in our family, or disagreement with the decision that Crimea was handed over to Ukraine. I don't know, it's in the order of things and the norm.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**‘I don't think anything bad about Ukraine at all. We lived there long enough, we worked there, and we have partners there in Kyiv. Well, if I were to say what my first association is, it's a pity that it all turned out like this—pity's kind of my first association. There is no hatred. Well, there is pity, but it seems to me that the Ukrainian side is more to blame for behaving this way. They should have somehow used the multi-vector approach that Leonid Kuchma talked about. That is, the first association is pity. Pity, regret that this happened.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**‘...when I think of Ukraine, I immediately have a yellow-blue colour in mind, Kyiv, the Dnipro, walks in April, with chestnuts in bloom. Delicious food... Ukraine, for me, has always been freedom. And this is not only my feeling, when we even travelled from Crimea to Ukraine, here in the north, from the north of Crimea to Kherson Oblast, and we passed these two borders, everyone always said that on the Russian side, you stand so nervously. And you pass the Kherson side, and when you see this cloud on the Kherson**

**side, you literally exhale.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

Respondents believe that residents of the mainland part of Ukraine have different attitudes towards Crimean residents. Some of them keep in touch with their friends in Ukraine. The full-scale war has significantly deteriorated interpersonal relations and negatively affected the attitudes of mainland Ukrainians towards Crimeans. Two participants expressed the opinion that Ukrainians have a negative attitude towards Crimean residents and consider Crimeans to be traitors.

**‘I have a lot of friends in Ukraine now, with whom I communicate daily. Their cities are often hit by rockets, and I am worried about them. I am interested in their well-being, health and so on. And from what I hear from my friends, they think very positively about me, my friends, and my surroundings... I would like, as you said, to tell the people of Ukraine that you are a very strong, courageous and resilient people. And sooner or later, I am sure you can come to the Black Sea coast, rest with your families, meet your relatives, and so on.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**‘In all different ways. I have friends; I had a friend when the war started, and she stopped communicating with me completely. ...Well, what do you think? Maybe I made this war happen, and I can stop it. Well, if I were to go to the city square [to protest], would my sacrifice help? If it would stop the war, I would go... not everything depends on us. If something depended on me...’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**‘...they believe that we betrayed them. That's why I once had, like I say now, I had partners before. Now we are not socialising with each other. Well, it doesn't work... we are considered traitors by the people of Ukraine. Well, at least, by those with whom I have communicated.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

**‘In different ways. I know different opinions. Some people are critical and say that everyone should have left. Some people believe that ‘this is home, they are waiting there, they will help us there.’ (in-depth interviews with Crimean residents)**

### 3.4. Factors of unification between the mainland part of Ukraine and Crimea

According to residents of the mainland part of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars, a level of understanding between the populations of Crimea and the mainland part of Ukraine is theoretically possible. Still, it will not be easy or quick. Finding things in common after de-occupation will take time, even years or decades, and it is unlikely that pro-Russian Crimeans will ever be able to find common ground with mainland Ukrainians.

**‘...reconciliation and understanding will come, but we should not expect it to come quickly. It will take at least one or even two generations, and only the next generations will find common ground when no such pronounced personal emotions and traumatic experiences exist. There will be just an intellectual understanding of why these people did this and why those people did that. I believe that this will happen over time.’ (focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine)**

Young residents in the South of Ukraine noted that the South and East of Ukraine, unlike the West, will understand Crimean residents better because of their shared historical experience with Russification. Some representatives of the Western region, on the other hand, believed that in the West of Ukraine, the local population finds it more difficult to accept people who have lived under Russian occupation for a long time.

**‘...I am in western Ukraine, and I believe that if the local population finds out that the Muscovites, as they say, who lived under the occupiers and bowed to the occupier, have come here, then they will not be accepted here. I am 100% sure that people here will say and think everything and anything bad about them. If they find out that those people sold their souls, as someone said here, and lived on those pensions or social benefits... I think that’s just how our region is. In eastern Ukraine, I think they would be accepted faster.’ (focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine)**

The factors that could unite Crimea and the rest of Ukraine, according to some respondents, could be:

- The perception of Russia as a common enemy (meaning for Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars):

**‘If we are talking about the current situation, then in this case, I see only unification in the fact that we have a common enemy with these Ukrainian Tatars, who suffered a lot from the Soviet Union, but we know who was in charge in the Soviet Union for the most part.’ (focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)**

- Crimea's need for water and electricity from the mainland part of Ukraine and for communication with the mainland through a land corridor:

**‘You know the story that Khrushchev gave Crimea to Ukraine not because Ukraine wanted it so badly, but because Crimea could not survive independently. Water from Ukraine will be vital, communication through the land corridor is critical, electricity is important, and so on.’ (focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)**

- A common vision of the future and a shared desire for the best:

**‘...what could unite us is some kind of vision of the common future. To be together with each other and see a common future. There must be a common understanding. Of course, I understand that people are all different, everyone has their own views and opinions, but most people need to perceive the right idea and go in one direction.’ (focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)**

- Desire for European integration to achieve a higher standard of living:

**‘...the idea of European integration, but it has to be real European integration. It should be a high level of socio-economic development and a high standard of living, and not what happened in our country when officials gave themselves 50-100 thousand Hryvnia salaries, that is, they made some kind of personal European integration within their circle. At the same time, the people’s standard of living remained the same or even decreased from what it was before 2014. There should be real development, not simply declared development.’ (focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)**

- Restoration of historical justice:

**‘I think that restoring, again, historical justice and further economic prosperity are the most compatible topics for Ukraine and the people of Crimea. Both for the future, as well as for the present.’ (focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine)**

To reduce the likelihood and intensity of conflicts, focus group participants suggested:

- To pursue a competent information policy:

**‘Whoever invests money, knowledge, and experience in information, wins. Therefore, there will be no understanding without competent propaganda, competent information, and some convincing arguments.’ (focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)**

- To strengthen the rights and opportunities of Crimean Tatars, up to the transfer of governance over the peninsula to them:

**‘If there is some kind of de-occupation in Crimea in the future, it's just hard to talk about it now in our current conditions. I think it would be right to make a moratorium on voting for those who were under occupation in Crimea for a certain period. Unlike in Latvia, when these people simply do not vote for ten years, for example. So, who will represent this autonomy? It would be right and fair for the Mejlis itself to represent it. Why the Mejlis? Because the Mejlis have not betrayed us, it is banned, and no matter how you say it, in principle, the Tatars are a separate people, but they know that we are their allies, and we support them. Therefore, let the Crimean parliament transfer power to the Mejlis. Let ten years pass. And then some general elections will be held there, and there will be, for example, two chambers in this parliament.’ (focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine)**

- Avoid sensitive issues such as national holidays and national heroes;
- Create a free economic zone in Crimea:

**‘It seems to me that Crimea should be a kind of free economic zone. Economic cooperation is somehow a peaceful platform for understanding and reconciliation. Crimea is a different region in terms of economy. When I worked in a bank, the Crimean branches worked completely differently. The economy there is completely different; the people are completely different. We need to make cooperation as profitable as possible, and people will cooperate there based on economic interaction. There will be some points of reconciliation. There will be some kind of cooperation with our southern regions. The vegetables [there] could be delivered to Crimea, where there is a real**

**problem with growing them.’ (focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine)**

- Cultivate respect for human rights, linguistic and religious identity:

**‘When I was studying, when I had many friends from Crimea and representatives of national minorities, we all found common ground during our long stay together, that we all have the same rights. We all have some kind of ethnicity, and we have every right to express it freely and to respect the rights of another person and not to offend them. These are the only common points we can have.’ (focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine)**

## 4. Reintegration of Crimea

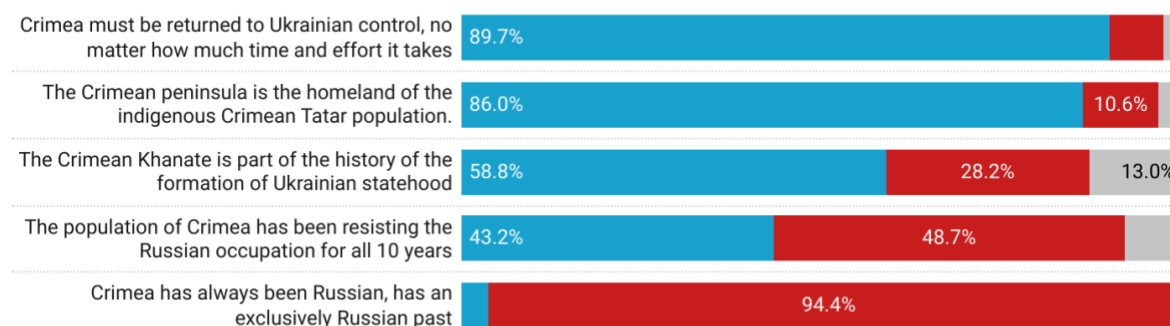
### 4.1 Current perception of the situation in Crimea by residents of the mainland part of Ukraine

Most respondents believe that Crimea should eventually return to Ukraine's control (90% vs. 7.5% disagree) and that the Crimean Peninsula is the homeland of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people (86% vs. 11% disagree). In addition, 94% reject the thesis that Crimea has always been Russian and has an exclusively Russian past. The other two statements demonstrate a more significant variation of opinions. Thus, 59% agree with the argument that the Crimean Khanate is part of the history of the formation of Ukrainian statehood, whilst 28% disagree. Regarding the statement that Crimea has resisted the occupation for all ten years, 43% agree, and 49% disagree.

#### The perception of Crimea

Results of the survey

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Hard to say



Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Created with Datawrapper

### 4.2. Perceptions of the future of Crimea

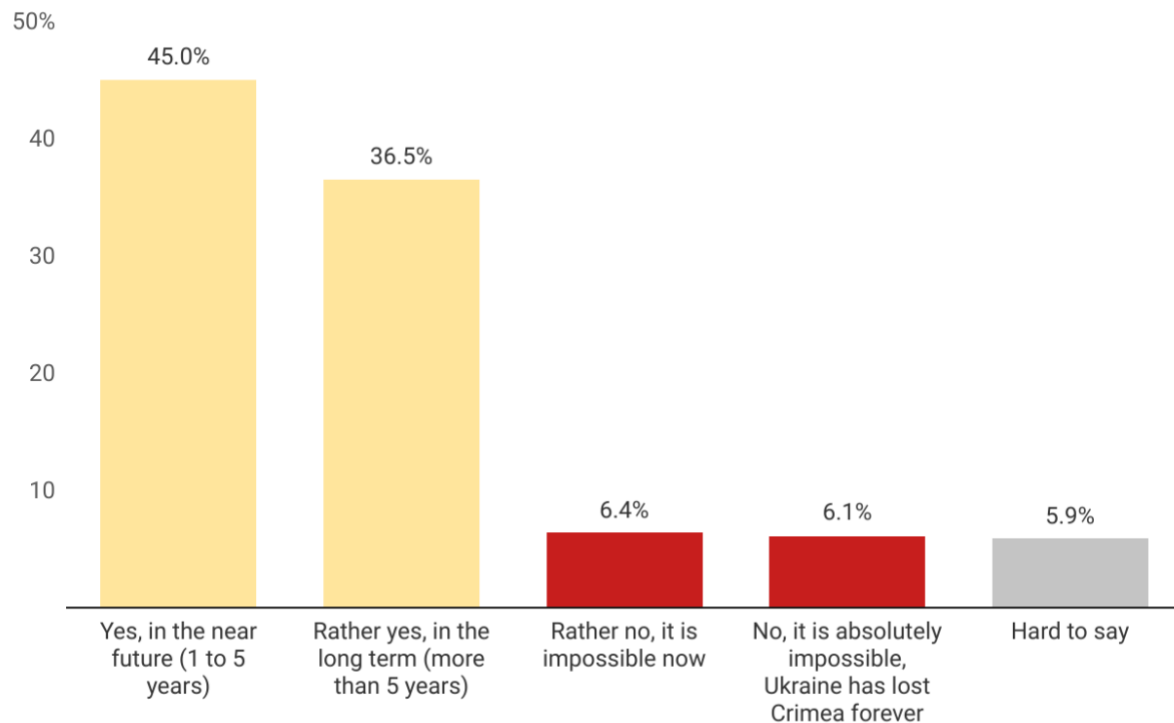
#### 4.2.1. Importance and possibility of de-occupation of Crimea

Although 9 out of 10 Ukrainians support the return of Crimea to Ukraine's control, when asked about the importance of de-occupying the peninsula, 55% said it was very important to them personally. For 19%, it is rather important, and for 24%, it is rather unimportant or not at all important. Indirect evidence of the importance of this issue and the willingness of Ukrainians to sacrifice certain benefits for the sake of Crimea is that the vast majority of respondents believe that after de-occupation, the peninsula should become an essential area of financial support from the state (83%) and that business benefits should be introduced (79%). Only 14% and 17% of respondents do not support these initiatives.

At the same time, 45% of respondents believe Crimea could be de-occupied in the next five years, and another 37% expect it in the distant future. On the other hand, 13% are sceptical about the possibility of returning the peninsula at all, and only 6% believe it is absolutely impossible.

## Is the De-occupation of the Crimean Peninsula Possible in the Future?

Results of the survey



Question: In your opinion, is the de-occupation of Crimea possible in the future?

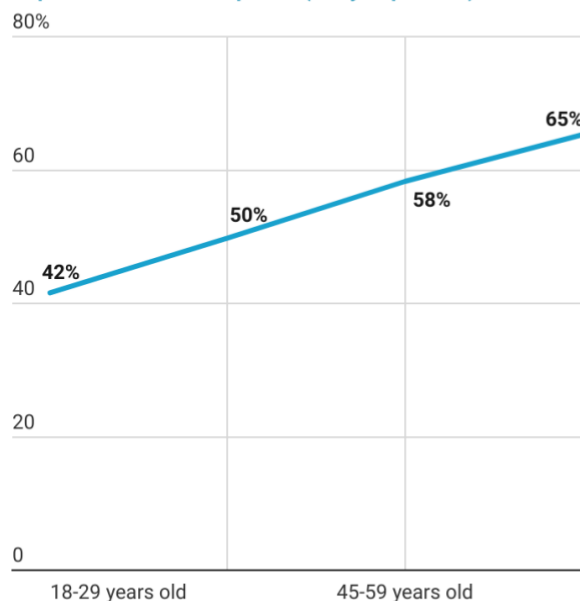
Created with Datawrapper

For younger respondents, the de-occupation of Crimea is less important, and they have less faith in achieving it in the short term. Whilst 65% of respondents aged 60+ consider the de-occupation of the peninsula to be very important for them, this figure drops to 42% amongst young people aged 18-29. Regarding the belief in the possibility of de-occupation in the next five years, amongst older respondents (60+), this figure is 53%, whilst amongst younger respondents (18-29 years old), it drops to 22%. At the same time, few young people do not believe in the possibility of de-occupation - they are likelier to talk about a distant future.

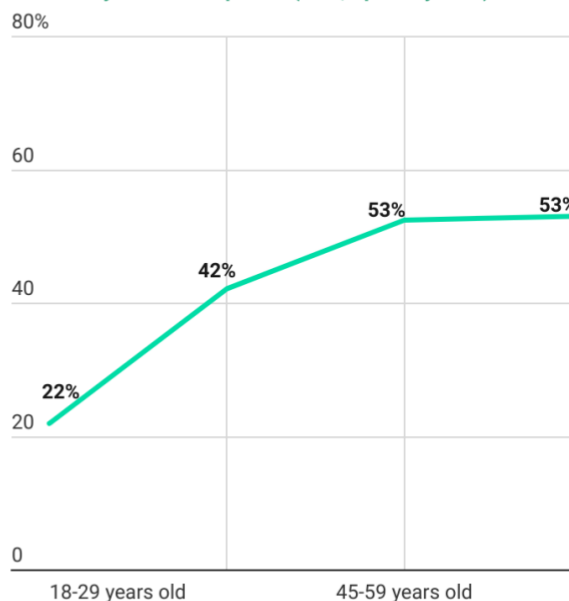
## The Importance and Possibility of the De-occupation of the Crimean Peninsula: Dependence on Respondents' Age

Results of the survey

Importance of de-occupation ('Very important')



Possibility of de-occupation ('Yes, up to 5 years')



Question: How important is the de-occupation of Crimea for you personally on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all important' and 10 is 'very important'?

Question: In your opinion, is the de-occupation of Crimea possible in the future?

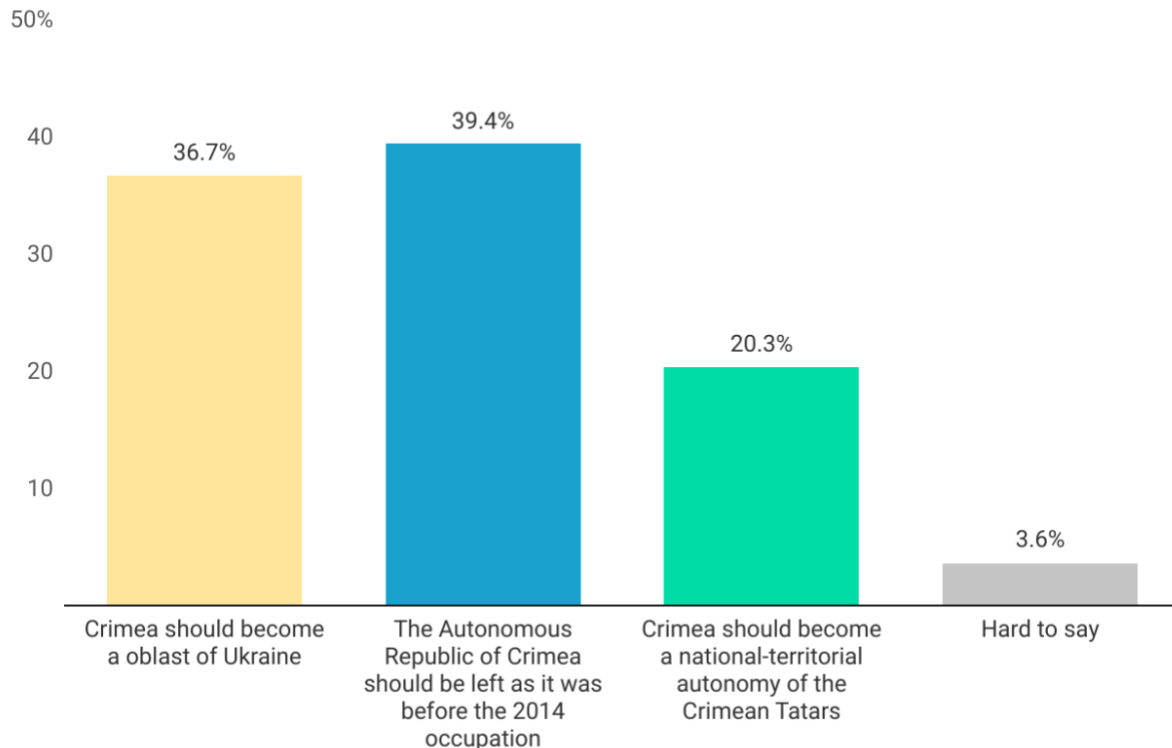
Created with Datawrapper

### 4.2.2. Political and administrative status of Crimea and Sevastopol after de-occupation

Crimea's political and administrative status after de-occupation is one of the most critical factors for its future. Still, neither Ukrainian society nor experts have a fully consolidated position. According to the quantitative survey, 39% of respondents support the return of Crimea to its pre-war status as an Autonomous Republic within Ukraine. However, almost the same number (37%) favour Crimea becoming an ordinary oblast of Ukraine. Another 20% of respondents believe that the peninsula should become a national-territorially autonomous, led by Crimean Tatars. These data emphasise society's significant polarisation regarding Crimea's future status, where opinions are divided between three main options. Opinions are similarly divided on the status of Sevastopol: 52% of respondents believe that the city's special status should be preserved, whilst 40% are against it.

## What should Crimea's status be after de-occupation?

Results of the survey



Created with Datawrapper

Ukrainians are generally not sufficiently informed about the Crimean Tatars' aspirations to establish national-territorial autonomy in Crimea. According to the polls, 23% of respondents have not heard anything about this initiative and do not understand its essence. Only 17% are well aware and fully understand the issue. Another 26% have heard something but cannot explain its essence, and 34% have not heard about it but have some idea what it might be about.

At the same time, most respondents to the quantitative survey (64%) support the creation of Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomy, whilst 29% oppose it and 7% have not decided on the issue. It should be noted that, considering the answers to the previous question about the level of awareness of the creation of Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomy, these data should be interpreted with caution. The results may change during a full-fledged socio-political discussion and an increase in public awareness of this issue.

One of the experts points out that this issue is not being addressed at the government level because it is a delicate topic.

**'I'm thinking about the law on the status of the Crimean Tatar people, I mean the preparation, resumption of**

**the work of the Constitutional Commission on the status of Crimea and the Crimean Tatar people, in general, they are very afraid of this topic, what will happen to Crimean autonomy, in what form it will be, and the status of Sevastopol.**

**This discussion does not exist today because it is very painful. Some people think, and they may be right, that it is not needed, that what is required now is cohesion, not discussions that will shake up society. I agree, but it doesn't mean the people who need to be engaged in this topic, shouldn't be. They should do their work quietly, without outbursts of emotion in the public space, but they need to prepare, study and think about how this can be done.'** *(expert interview)*

Amongst experts, as well as amongst ordinary respondents, views on the status of Crimea after de-occupation depend very much on their ethnicity: experts amongst the Crimean Tatars are more likely to support national-territorial Crimean Tatar autonomy or autonomy for all indigenous peoples of Ukraine, whilst other experts discuss a more comprehensive range of possibilities. The respondents - Crimean Tatars living in Crimea - consider the results of the creation of national-territorial autonomy to include the return of Crimean Tatar names for places, granting official status to Crimean Tatar holidays, the creation of Crimean Tatar schools, the construction of mosques, etc:

**'...I would like to see Crimea as a part of Ukraine so that my people would have more power. Perhaps even its own autonomy... I would like to see, I remember this word now, that our elders, let's say, Mustafa Dzhemilev, Refat Chubarov and so on, these are the main politicians of the Crimean Tatar people, that they were given more power to do what they think and want to do in Crimea. Naturally, I want to return the names of Crimean Tatar cities and the names of Crimean Tatar villages. I would like our holidays to be more official, so to speak, so that our holidays also have official days off and so on... To create Crimean Tatar schools or restore the ones there, naturally, to a greater extent. So, a mosque could be built in every village with 200-300 people or more.'** *(in-depth interviews with Crimean residents, Crimean Tatar)*

Participants in focus groups with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine are far from being unanimous on this issue. As in the quantitative study, opinions were voiced in support of all the options for the status of Crimea that circulate in the public

space. Crimea holding the status as an oblast of Ukraine was described by respondents in focus groups with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine as the safest option after de-occupation. As for the sentiments of Crimean residents, which we cannot assess with a quantitative survey, one expert believes that preferences for certain options on the peninsula depend very much on the ethnic and ideological group.

**‘Crimean Tatars see it as national-territorial autonomy. I think pro-Ukrainian residents partly do see it as just an oblast. Pro-Russian residents do not even consider this.’ (expert interview)**

One of the experts made the following argument against preserving Crimea's status after de-occupation as an autonomous republic or an ordinary oblast: since, in his opinion, the population of Crimea will be mostly pro-Russian, the elected local governments (regardless of the region's status) will pursue their own identity policy. He sees the creation of Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomy as a counterweight.

Some experts believe that the key factor in Crimea's future administrative-territorial structure, which will ease the potential conflict between supporters of the peninsula's autonomy (in its various forms) and those who oppose it, is the successful implementation of decentralisation.

**‘I see the future of Crimea very positively. We will be able to effectively implement the decentralisation reform there, which may or may not exacerbate the issue of autonomy because autonomy is not a panacea. Autonomy may even play a negative role for the Crimean Tatars. There are cases when the status of autonomy negatively affects the status of the indigenous people, de facto their socio-economic opportunities, their opportunities for inclusion.’ (expert interview)**

#### 4.2.3. Economic and infrastructural future of Crimea

This topic was most often mentioned by experts, some of whom believe that after the de-occupation of Crimea, the peninsula will face significant infrastructural and economic problems, especially if the liberation of Crimea is carried out through warfare. It was also pointed out that the actions of the occupation administration have already damaged the peninsula's infrastructure capabilities.

**‘Why? Because they destroyed the water supply in Crimea. The blowing up of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station and the destruction of the canal - well, I don't know how many years it will take to get it all up and running again. I don't know. And now, well, I don't know how much it**

**will take to restore the power supply and the fibre optics necessary for the Internet.’ (expert interview)**

#### 4.2.4. Demographic Future of Crimea

Experts suggest that the de-occupation of Crimea, no matter how it happens, will lead to dramatic demographic changes. One expert describes the mechanism of these changes as follows. First, Russians who settled in Crimea after 2014 will leave the peninsula. Secondly, possible infrastructural and economic problems may encourage young people to emigrate from Crimea (and even move outside Ukraine).

**‘That's why Crimea will go through a challenging economic period. And this will lead to the fact that some young people will leave Crimea. They will get Ukrainian passports with a visa-free regime and go somewhere else. The fact that there will be certain demographic shifts is certain. The fact that the “newcomers” will leave, they will leave for the most part. Well, you know, that's how we will deport them. I'm sure that they will leave for some reason. And Crimea will need to look for its new economic model in terms of the conditions in which it will be.’ (expert interview)**

#### 4.2.5. How the future of Crimea is covered in Telegram channels on the peninsula

According to the results of media monitoring, pro-Russian Telegram channels are actively covering events and issues related to Crimea's future, trying to consolidate a positive narrative in the information space about the peninsula's integration into the Russian Federation after the attempted annexation. Special attention is paid to infrastructure development, social programmes, and support from the occupying federal government. At the same time, pro-Russian Telegram channels emphasise threats from Ukraine and the West, presenting them as challenges to stability in the region.

A significant part of the information space is also occupied by pro-Ukrainian channels discussing the return of Crimea to Ukrainian control. They emphasise the illegality of the attempted annexation, human rights violations, and the negative consequences for the Crimean population due to the actions of the Russian occupation administration. These channels often highlight international support for Ukraine and consider possible scenarios for de-occupation.

### 4.3. Structure and organisation of power in a de-occupied Crimea

One of the foremost expert recommendations on the organisation of power in the de-occupied Crimea is that the Ukrainian authorities should be organisationally,

methodologically, and legally ready to govern Crimea on the ground right now, rather than addressing these issues in the future.

**‘And here, it is necessary for the Ukrainian legislation to be ready for certain actions. The first and most important stage is to develop Ukrainian legislation now so that it is ready, because we will demonstrate, we need to demonstrate, that Ukraine is a state governed by the rule of law, that it acts following the laws of Ukraine, the Constitution of Ukraine and international law. And here we need all these legislative acts to be adopted so everyone responsible for reintegrating Crimea has the tools to do so.’  
(expert interview)**

Experts believe that in the first year(s), the mechanism of local self-government in Crimea will not work through elections, and the military administration or similar temporary power structures will have all the power.

**‘We must be honest, there will be no elections in the first years. There won’t be any... In the first year, especially, it will be a military administration, a commandant's office, measures to cleanse the government, and it is also necessary to talk about it... There will be deportations of people who illegally entered the territory, in principle, the territory of Crimea. And over the years, we will talk about all this, and Ukrainian politicians, well, of Crimean origin, let's say, will be in the loop.’ (expert interview)**

Crimean Tatar experts believe that in the first stages after de-occupation, local national self-government bodies should be restored, and representatives of these bodies, as well as the Mejlis, should participate in the work of the interim military-civilian administration of Crimea.

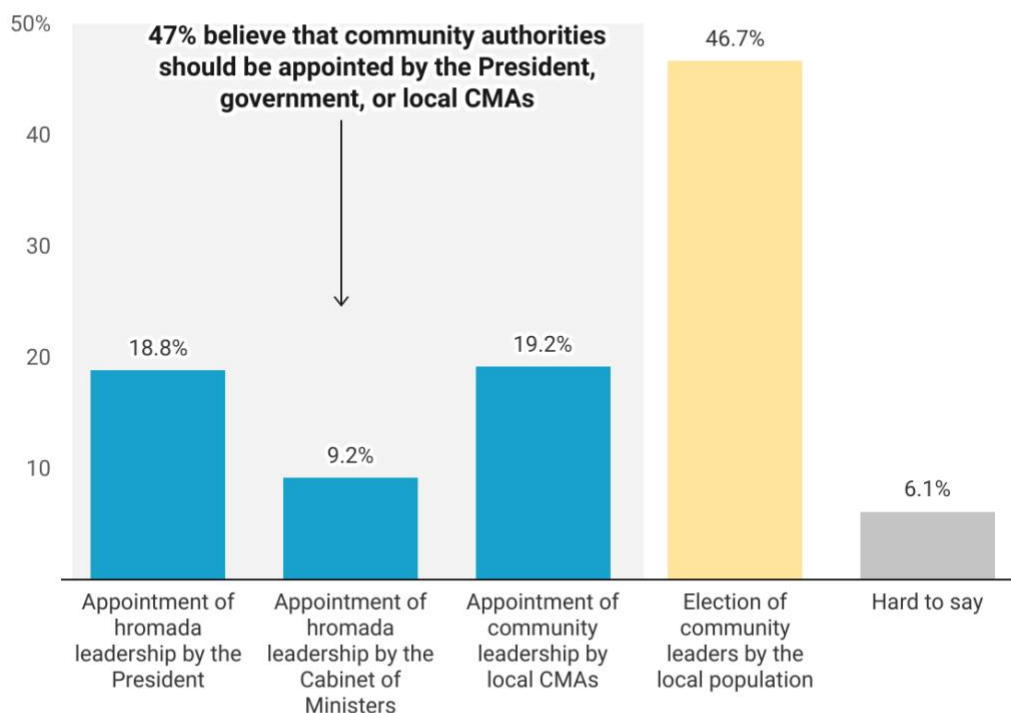
**‘We propose, for example, that if we cannot hold elections in the first years, we can hold elections to the [national congress,] the Qurultay. Because the Crimean Tatars are tiny nation, we all practically know each other. And here, when we will be in the first year [after de-occupation], we will need to restore all the local national self-government bodies, which will primarily assist the civil-military administration in reintegration issues. And during this period, whilst the military-civilian administration is working with the help of local national self-government bodies and the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, it will be possible to train local people who will continue to participate in all these political processes and build a pro-Ukrainian Crimea.’ (expert interview)**

### 4.3.1 Organisation of Community Governance and Elections after De-occupation

The respondents were almost equally divided on the issue of organising community management in Crimea after de-occupation: 47% believe that the leadership of communities should be appointed by the President, the Government or local military-civilian administrations, whilst the same number (47%) support holding elections.

#### Organization of Community Governance in Crimea After De-occupation

Results of the survey



Question: In your opinion, how should the process of community governance in Crimea after de-occupation be organised during the temporary transition period?

Created with Datawrapper

Regarding the timing of local elections, almost half of the respondents (44.5%) gave a 'diplomatic' answer that they should take place only after the security situation is fully restored. At the same time, 40% of respondents are already ready for conditionally 'quick' elections - either within a year or immediately after the end of martial law. Only 13% are inclined to mention a more distant date (in 2-4 years or more than five years). According to KIIS research for the NDI, for Ukrainians, 'free and fair elections' are one of the three critical aspects of a fully functioning democracy<sup>6</sup>. In

<sup>6</sup> Ukraine's support for NATO and demand for inclusive democracy reach record highs// <https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1255&page=1>

addition, over 90% constantly express their desire for Ukraine to remain a democratic state. Perhaps the data on the timing of the elections indicate that, despite the ongoing occupation, respondents believe that democratic procedures should be maintained. Therefore, it remains essential to develop a format in which the expression of the will of citizens will be preserved, but in a safe environment for the peninsula and the country as a whole.

#### 4.3.2. Restrictions on the voting rights of citizens living in the occupied territories

The issue of restricting the voting rights of citizens who lived under occupation is controversial without a clear consensus. Thus, 47% believe there should be five-year restrictions on the ability to elect the Verkhovna Rada and the President, although the same number (49%) oppose such restrictions. At the same time, in the case of the right to run for the presidency or the Verkhovna Rada, 59% support such restrictions, but a significant share (38%) opposes them. This indicates a severe division of society as to how the issue of voting rights of citizens under occupation should be addressed. On the one hand, restrictions can be seen as a means of security and stabilisation of the political situation. On the other hand, it can be criticised for violating fundamental democratic rights and potentially dividing people into 'us' and 'them'.

#### 4.3.3 Quotas in government for Crimean Tatars

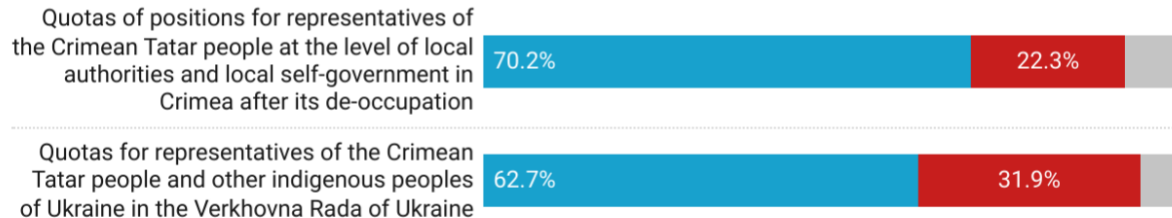
Although a significant number of Ukrainians have a critical view of these issues, in general, the majority supports both quotas for the Crimean Tatar people in local governments in Crimea (70% versus 22% who do not) and quotas for the Crimean Tatar and other indigenous peoples in the Verkhovna Rada (63% versus 32%).

It is worth noting that the wording of the quota in the Verkhovna Rada emphasised the Crimean Tatar people. The attitude towards other indigenous peoples will likely differ depending on the people in question.

# Introduction of Quotas for Representatives of the Crimean Tatar People in Local Authorities and the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

Results of the survey

■ Yes ■ No ■ Hard to say



*Question: In your opinion, should quotas for positions for representatives of the Crimean Tatar people at the level of local authorities and local self-government be introduced in Crimea after its de-occupation?*

*Question: Do we need quotas for representatives of the Crimean Tatar people and other indigenous peoples of Ukraine in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine?*

Created with Datawrapper

## 4.4. Collaborationism

### 4.4.1 Lack of clear policy and communication on collaborationism

The issue of collaborationism in Crimea, its legal definition, the lack of consistency in approaches to this problem, and communication on collaborationism with Crimean residents who now live in the occupied territory are amongst the most challenging issues related to the reintegration of the peninsula. The study participants, experts, and ordinary citizens believe that the approach to defining collaborationism is not discussed in the public space, which negatively affects the attitude of Crimeans towards de-occupation. For example, a respondent living in occupied Crimea points out that even pro-Ukrainian residents of the peninsula fear persecution after de-occupation:

**'I'm distraught that when Ukraine comes, my family .... And I won't be able to get them out of here, and I won't be able to whitewash them there or justify them there. There is no chance. And I am very worried that my mother will be punished, in my opinion, for nothing. She made some wrong decisions, but in my opinion, for example, when you go to the "Myrotvorets" website, then my mother is a saboteur who will be imprisoned for the rest of her life, and the people who were the faces of this so-called 'Crimean Spring' will just come to court and that's it. That is, Sergey Aksyonov, Vladimir Konstantinov, Natalia Poklonskaya - these people**

**were squeezing Crimea out with their hands... They are not saboteurs from Ukraine's point of view. I mean, this surprises me very much.'** (*in-depth interviews with Crimean residents*)

Both the experts who are Crimean Tatars and those who are not have highlighted the importance of the Ukrainian authorities' consistency, unambiguity of policy, and communication on the issue of collaborationism. Like ordinary Crimean residents in occupation, the experts emphasise that uncertainty about collaborationism makes the prospects for de-occupation very threatening for many segments of the Crimean population in occupation.

**'It is imperative to send clear, non-contradictory messages, at least in terms of principles. Because I have not seen this consistency until recently. I received this message from Crimea: 'Man, we're scared'. I'm pleased about the prospect of Ukraine's return, and all of this is terrible, but still, I'm even scared, conditionally, of businessmen and entrepreneurs who have registered a business and registered new property, which, you know, he received and for which he paid. This is also a difficult moment for many people because they pay taxes and they understand where, amongst other things, these taxes go. They are worried about all this and think: 'What will happen to us?.'** (*expert interview*)

**'Why am I talking right now about dispelling myths and fears? Because the main fear about the Ukrainian state is, what will happen to us? When reintegration takes place, what will happen to us? And we cannot start any cognitive reintegration unless we will be able to get rid of these fears. This is not the case today. Developing a very understandable state policy about people's fears will be necessary. Because for them, the Ukrainian state and the state institutions of Ukraine are now those that want to come and punish them. This is the myth. And there can be no cognitive de-occupation until we destroy these myths and these fears.'** (*expert interview*)

Experts believe that the communication work on explaining the issue of collaborationism to the Crimean population has not been sufficiently conducted to date:

**'First of all, we have to influence the general population so that they better understand what to be afraid of and what not to be afraid of. That is, via these legal**

**components of this legislation, and whether they will be primarily against crimes, against this. From the start, we need to work on a massive scale to influence a huge part of the population, and then, of course, we need to work on more local groups.’ (expert interview)**

Some experts think that such work has not been done at all.

**‘In ten years, we have not set a framework for answering who a collaborator is.’ (expert interview)**

However, a big problem is that even the experts do not have a clear understanding of the approaches to the issue of collaborationism. Some participants in the expert interviews admit that they do not currently understand what is legally considered collaboration in Crimea and what is not, and cannot advise Crimeans who remained on the peninsula.

**‘Next, we need to have the same transparent, clear state policy on collaboration. Because now I don’t know anything about it either. There is nothing. And when I talk to my girlfriend, who works in a clinic, she says that when Crimea is de-occupied, that she will be considered a collaborator. Well, she works in the HR department. She is a collaborator...I can’t really say. She works in an HR department at a state institution. She hires and fires people according to the Russian standard. So, is she a collaborator or not? She doesn’t know, and I don’t know. It is necessary to have a transparent and understandable transitional justice policy.’ (expert interview)**

The respondents to the expert study believe that mistakes have already been made in the legislative definition of collaborationism, and Ukraine's policy has not been consistent and clear. For example, certain economic activities in Crimea, which were not banned after 2014, have been interpreted by legislative acts as collaborationism since a certain moment in time.

**‘And here, too, we must work very hard to detail Article 111-3-1. What I mean are collaboration activities, because if you take Crimea, then you could put all of Crimea in jail. Because until 2022, all of this was allowed there. That, which has now been prohibited, at this moment in time. This is a big problem that is also caused by corruption.’ (expert interview)**

**‘Collaborationism in the situation with Crimea is a rather difficult issue. Why? For some time, the Ukrainian**

**legislation allowed certain actions, which today are forbidden by the very same legislation, or not the same, but Ukrainian legislation now recognises these actions as collaboration. That is, in my understanding, unfortunately, the Ukrainian government was inconsistent. First, let's talk about collaborationism as an economic activity. In other words, at first, they allowed it. And now, when I look at, let's say, the procedural documents that are presented to collaborators, there are references to the fact that a person committed certain actions, a certain period, which at that time were not recognised as, let's say, a violation of the law.'** *(expert interview)*

Crimean Tatar experts have their approach to the methodology for identifying collaborators.

**'We need to formulate a policy today, and we have actually developed something that, for example, the state does not do. Back in 2019, we developed a methodology, as we call it, to determine the degree of collaboration. That is, every person who lives in Crimea, even if they are pro-Ukrainian, can be considered a collaborator. But the degree of collaboration when we are talking about a person who, for example, ran around with a Russian flag, who went to the so-called SMO, who received awards from the Russian authorities [occupation administration – Ed.], who worked, for instance, at a school or university and taught the history of the Russian Federation and Crimea as part of the Russian Federation. This is one of the questions, and we have a 12-point system there.**

**On the other hand, when we talk about a person who lived in Crimea, it is vital for us that pro-Ukrainian citizens remain in Crimea. And it's very important that all these people were not socially active, in terms of pro-Russianism. The people who score higher than 50% in our test have to already be thinking that they may have problems with Ukrainian legislation for their actions in Crimea.'** *(expert interview)*

Both the participants of the focus group study (including both Crimean Tatars living in Ukraine and other residents of Ukraine), and experts emphasised the importance of the principle of an individual approach to the issue of collaborationism.

Such opinions are typical for representatives of all ethnicities, age groups, and regions of Ukraine who participated in the study. One of the experts said:

**'I, for one, have my doubts if it's the right thing to reject case management, to choose not to look at each case on an individual basis. One of the approaches to transitional justice is to put people into groups and apply transitional justice regarding collaborationism, group by group. For example, we can choose to exempt a group of primary school teachers from any responsibility and hold school principals responsible by default. I'm not sure if that's the right thing to do, but I think there should be some kind of individual approach. Because you won't find any universal criteria.'** (*expert interview*)

**'This is one of the biggest problems, but it has to be a case-by-case situation. That is, there can be no collective responsibility here. A university professor training children or students underground for ten years and developing critical thinking is our ally. But the same teacher can simply sow propaganda and hostility towards Ukraine. This is our enemy. Therefore, it should be case by case. We must move away from general international practices and group policies, to more individual consideration for each person.'** (*expert interview*)

Participants in the focus group discussions expressed fears that mistakes in decisions regarding collaboration would lay the foundation for a new conflict in Crimea that would develop after de-occupation.

**'Well, I wouldn't apply anything to these people because everyone has a different situation, you don't need to apply everything... I think all these de-occupation conditions are too strict. They could simply create some prerequisite for a new war. The people whom...even the same Crimeans, the Crimean Tatars...whom Stalin deported in three nights in 1945, returned 50-60 years later and claimed their rights. Well, with these harsh, too harsh methods, I think some prerequisites for a new conflict will be created. I mean, like in the First World War, Germany lost, and wild reparations besieged it. As a result, Hitler came along and said "we will restore Germany's power", and again, it all started again in a second round. This, I think, is the risk of being too tough. It can simply lead to laying the**

**groundwork for a future conflict.’ (focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine)**

Experts see significant risks in the process of identifying those involved in collaboration activities, as the testimonies of Crimeans that will be collected by Ukrainian law enforcement officers may be false and aimed at revenge for personal insults or conflicts.

**‘Again, when hearing testimonies, it must be understood that people are different. Therefore, after Ukraine de-occupies territory, there will be a lot of people who will just point fingers and say some absurd things. Therefore, there should be a well-thought-out strategy for conducting investigative actions, identifying these collaborators, collecting this relevant evidence, and documenting and evaluating it.’ (expert interview)**

The results of the study demonstrate that Ukraine should communicate that the residents of Crimea are Ukrainians, not traitors or collaborators. This will relieve the tension that Russia is fuelling by claiming that Ukraine considers all Crimeans to be enemies. It is essential to define who is a collaborator, on what grounds, and for what actions they are liable, in order to avoid the image of a ‘punisher’. The communication should show that the AFU is liberating Ukrainians, not punishing them. Some experts believe that the government’s ill-conceived communication about collaboration in occupied Crimea not only creates a sense of uncertainty, fear, and anxiety amongst the peninsula’s residents, but also negatively affects public opinion about how the de-occupation of Crimea in the mainland part of Ukraine is prioritised.

**‘Because what Russia is trying to promote and what, unfortunately, is perceived by a significant part of the Ukrainian population is that there are collaborators and traitors in Crimea. This is a multidimensional situation, where, for example, amongst the residents of Ukraine, it can be manifested in such a way that we do not need this Crimea, let’s not return it, there are only collaborators, only bad people there, we have lived without it and we will continue to somehow live without it.’ (expert interview)**

#### 4.4.2 Is it collaboration if a Crimean resident receives a Russian passport?

Most Ukrainians agree that Crimean residents who received Russian passports during the occupation had no choice and were forced to do so: 68% of respondents believe so, whilst a significant share (29%) disagrees with this interpretation.

#### 4.4.3. Who should be punished for collaboration in Crimea

Both experts and ordinary citizens in the qualitative research often emphasised the importance of determining whether collaboration was political and voluntary or, on the contrary, forced. That is, whether a person consciously participated in politics and the implementation of ideological projects, or only performed the functions of a firefighter, maths teacher, etc.

**‘The level of teachers, educators, or something else, is not even discussed; I did not notice any negative attitude.**

**But if, a teacher helps the occupation administration to promote narratives amongst children, they push for the Russian tricolour flag and everything else, without even trying to mitigate it, they will be perceived negatively, and their students’ parents will even discuss the teacher between themselves. I witnessed this even when I still had access to visit Crimea myself.’ (expert interview)**

**‘But again, I would prioritise what kind of collaboration it is. Is it collaboration related to maintaining the work of critical infrastructure facilities that help support this government? Or is it collaboration that relates to the fact that a person just goes to their job, one that is not related to supporting and strengthening the occupation authorities? Does this person work in law enforcement or military recruitment? Or do they work, for example, in the education system? Here, we must also distinguish between what they do in the education system and what they teach. If a person teaches Russian history and says that Ukraine is a colony, then questions arise. If she teaches maths or English and has no ideological influence on the child, I would also rank it and say that it will be perceived as just an element of survival in life today.’ (expert interview)**

It is worth noting that, according to experts, collaborationism in education is extremely complex and controversial. Educators’ work fulfils an important social function but has a significant ideological component.

**‘And a separate subgroup in this group of state employees is, of course, educators. People who work according to Russian standards. People who are involved in the militarisation of children. People who are engaged in propaganda activities, and, I’m sorry, but that is the only kind of education that exists in Russia. And this will be a big question. We don’t need think about what to do with their consciousness, but what to do about them at all. We need to**

**We need to cleanse these cadres, think about what this process should be like, how tough and “total” it should be, and so on. This is a separate topic altogether.’ (expert interview)**

In the focus group of Crimean Tatars, the following argument was made about teachers working in the educational system of Crimea after occupation: whether they received livelihoods from Ukrainian authorities that would allow them to obtain a certain income.

**‘There is a lot of serious work that needs to be done to identify this level of collaboration in Crimea, but also taking into consideration how the Ukrainian government left Crimea. For example, in Zaporizhzhia Oblast, teachers still receive some kind of salary so that they don't go, well, people have to live on something, so that teachers don't go to work in the occupied school of the occupying power. In Crimea, Ukraine immediately refused to provide any funding. All the people who worked in the state system and who worked in public utilities were left without means of subsistence. All these things should be considered, not only the fact that a person was working, but the question was what options he had in this situation if the state did not take any steps.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

Crimean Tatars also pointed out that the reckless and ill-considered communication of the Ukrainian authorities regarding the responsibility of people who work in education in Crimea is wrong and harmful.

**‘I don't remember exactly when, but it was probably last year when our minister for the occupied territories said that all teachers would be punished. And in Crimea, this caused a lot of fear because many people worked at schools, and they did not teach lessons on how to love Russia. This is incorrect communication.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

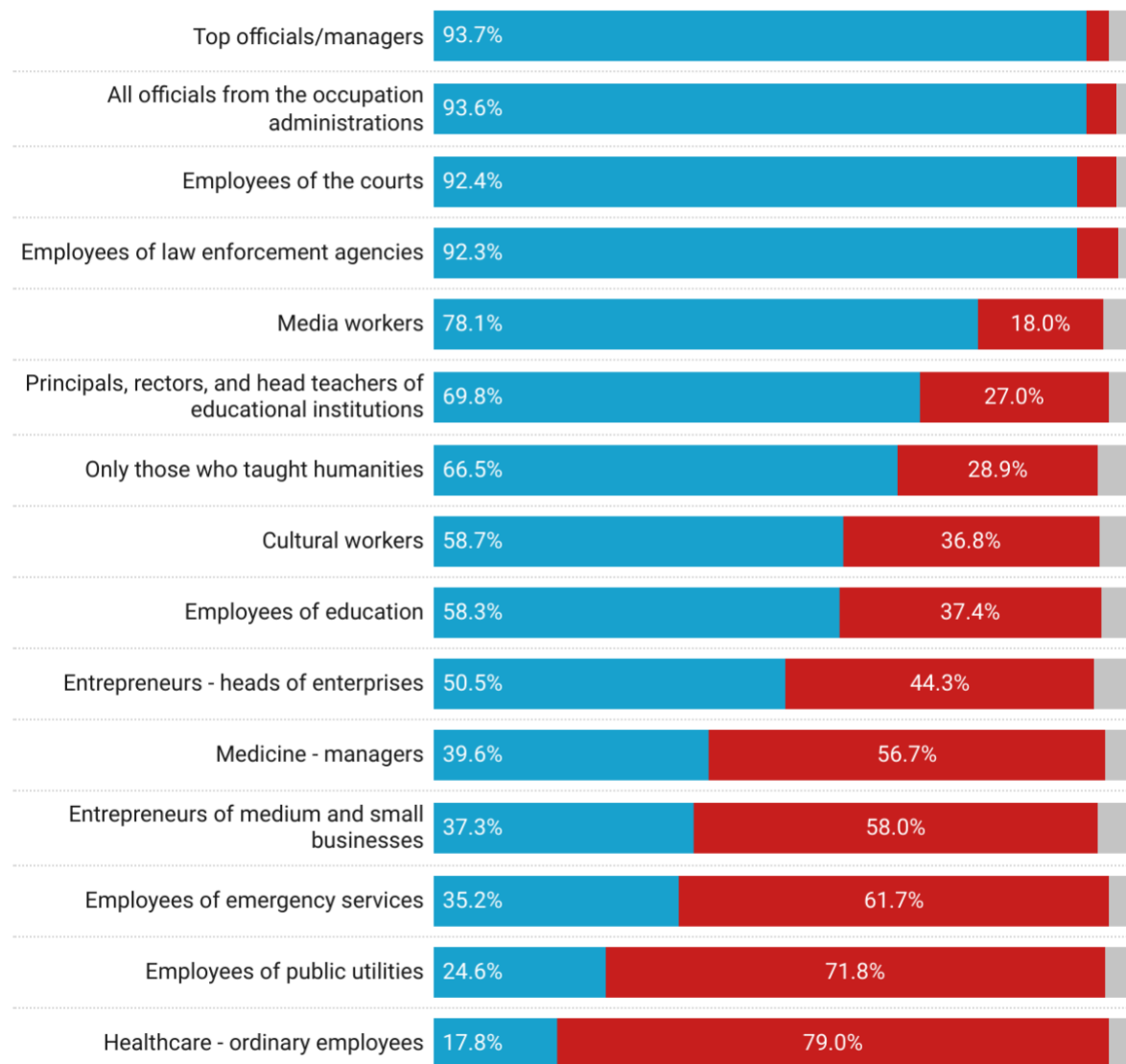
92-94% of respondents to the quantitative survey demanded punishment for top officials, ‘all the officials’ working in government bodies, and judicial and law enforcement officials, for cooperation with the occupier administrations in Crimea. Regarding people working in media, a majority (78%) also support punishment. At the same time, only 35% of respondents support punishment for emergency service workers (62% do not support punishment), and 25% support punishment for public utility workers (72% do not support punishment). In the field of education and culture, on the one hand, the majority of respondents support punishment for everyone, although at a lesser extent than in the case of government officials. On the other hand,

they particularly expect punishment for principals, rectors, etc. (70%) and those who taught humanities (66.5%). At the same time, 58-59% want to punish 'ordinary' education and culture workers (37% do not support punishment). As for entrepreneurs, the level of punishment depends on the size of the enterprise. In the case of business leaders, 50.5% support punishment, and 44% oppose it. As for small and medium-sized businesses, 58% believe they should not be punished, whilst 37% support punishment. Regarding the healthcare sector, even in the case of executives, 57% oppose punishment, whilst 18% support it. At the same time, in the case of ordinary healthcare workers, 79% do not support punishment, whilst only 18% believe they should be punished.

# Who should be punished for cooperation with the occupation administrations in Crimea?

Results of the survey

■ Yes 
 ■ No 
 ■ Hard to say



Question: Who should be held accountable for cooperation with the occupation administrations in Crimea?

Created with Datawrapper

## 4.5. Educational Reintegration

### 4.5.1. Relevance of the education issue

In both qualitative and quantitative research, different segments of respondents, experts, and ordinary citizens mentioned the importance of education for the successful de-occupation of the peninsula.

Furthermore, focus group participants emphasised the critical importance of education for the successful reintegration of Crimea.

**'...we need to set our hopes on education, right on education. Because as the experience of developed countries shows, education is a critical part of, as I said earlier, soft power, that will allow us to grow a loyal society for ourselves in the future.'** *(focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)*

**'...I sincerely believe that any changes in reintegration and reforms, if we are talking about people's consciousness, begin from a very young age. That is, by making changes, for example, in children's education in kindergartens, schools, and so on, you can start to educate the very generation that will see Crimea as a part of Ukraine and not otherwise... It is necessary to start changing the mentality while it is being formed.'** *(focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)*

Respondents to the quantitative survey also demonstrated the importance of education as a tool for reintegrating Crimea and their support for its usage. Most respondents (66%) agree that admission to higher education institutions in other regions of Ukraine should be simplified for young people from Crimea. At the same time, one-third of respondents (32%) oppose this idea.

Education news have a prominent place in Crimean Telegram channels. The analysis of these channels, conducted as part of the study, shows that more than a fifth of all messages in the second phase of the study (when specific topics identified by the researchers were monitored) were devoted to education - 22.2%. For comparison, the subject of memorialisation was mentioned in 8% of the messages, and the topic of the people of Crimea - about 3%. Along with organisational issues of education (a certification system, reduction of the number of tests and homework, etc.), these channels actively cover the ideological innovations that have been implemented by the occupation administration. These include meetings between schoolchildren with the military, teachers going to schools to teach 'the basics of security and defence of the Motherland', and the possible introduction of lessons on 'traditional values'.

#### 4.5.2. Ideological influence of the educational process after the occupation

Experts believe that the occupation administration's actions in the field of education in Crimea have created one of the most serious problems that will have to be solved in the process of de-occupation and the reintegration of Crimean residents into Ukrainian society. Experts point out that the ideologisation and militarisation of education in Crimea create entire age cohorts of students who may have a negative attitude towards Ukraine.

**‘Because, as far as I know, the Russians have already developed a new education strategy, which is being actively implemented in educational institutions for both youth and children. This is both pioneering 2.0, and “conversations about important things” when they say that Ukraine is a fascist state, that Ukraine has forgotten about them, that no one needs them, that Russia is here forever, and that Ukraine will not return. And when you repeat this from year to year, from lesson to lesson, you realise that it still affects the subconscious. Therefore, there is a distorted perception of the history of Ukraine, and, in my opinion, we will simply have to revise the historical studies that currently exist, create completely new material, for example, based on the research by Yaroslav Hrytsak or Serhii Plokyh, and make some kind of alternative history using the experience of the Russian-Ukrainian war. This is the second way that we can influence this. The third I have already mentioned, it is the militarisation of education when war is perceived as a normal part of life. Here, too, the Russians use their “Dostoyevskys”, particularly Dostoevsky himself, and his idea that war is a normal part of the struggle for the state's space. They are very loyal to this concept and beautifully write it into the education system. And we will also have to fight with this. The third story is that they distort the concept of patriotism. You understand that now we are talking about Russian patriotism.’ (expert interview)**

Related to the indoctrination of the educational process is the problem of acceptance and recognition of Russian educational documents, a topic which was raised by one of the participants in the expert study: what should be done with the certificate of a student who started their studies after 2014 and successfully graduated from school? What subjects can the Ukrainian state recognise, and what subjects can it not recognise?

**‘About the nostrification process, I'm talking about the legislative approval of Russian educational documents. Some subjects, for example, mathematics, may converge with the Ukrainian programme. But as for the history of Ukraine, there is also... Well, it's kind of there, but...’ (expert interview)**

#### 4.5.3. Cultural Diffusion and Blurring of Identity in Crimean Education

In addition to the state's deliberate and purposeful direct ideological influence on schoolchildren, respondents to the focus group with young Crimean Tatars also pointed to a less visible but significant mechanism of blurring identities other than the Russian one that operates in Crimean education. According to them, even Crimean Tatar students studying in mixed schools adopt the majority culture and lose their cultural characteristics.

**‘Well, negatively, of course, because it's also about the blurring of identity and the fact that there are people who are, unfortunately, from younger generations than I. I don't know. I don't know, when I see that even my cousins put music on their stories and videos, I don't know who they are. Who are they at all? I can't ask you that, purely for security reasons. But I understand that we have a different cultural field. And they put on music by Russian musicians because they listen to them, because in principle, they have no other, I don't know, alternatives. And forget about seeing anything Crimean Tatar there.’**

**If children study in some rural school in the Simferopol district and it is not a Crimean Tatar school, then they will grow up with the same children. Unfortunately, my teenagers are cousins; they don't know the Crimean Tatar [language] very well, and I don't think they associate themselves with it much, even though they still live in Crimea. However, as Respondent 4 said, their whole life was spent in a Crimean school. That is, they have never left and already managed to graduate last year.’ (focus groups with Crimean Tatars)**

#### 4.5.4. Language issue in education in Crimea

According to experts, the language issue in the educational process may become painful. Quotas for teaching certain subjects in indigenous and minority languages can resolve this. However, this does not apply to the issue of the Russian language in education in Crimea, which cannot be solved by such tools.

**'That is, we can talk about the introduction of appropriate quotas. Quotas for education in the appropriate language, for example. If you recall, Crimea had Jewish communities and Armenian communities, not just the Crimean Tatar community. We can talk about proportionality in the education system depending on the proportion of the population there.'** (*expert interview*)

**'Well, first of all, we have a very flexible and good system that was developed as part of the decentralisation reform, a system for the educational rights of minorities. Here, the question will be, what should we do with the Russian language, which is not covered by this? The fact that the Ukrainian education system should be returned is one thing. Still, we will need thoughtful policies, tactics and mechanisms to overcome the language segregation of these children. Perhaps, at certain stages, these will be bilingual teaching methods at schools. There should also be the return of education in the Crimean Tatar language, which is also very important. The issue of the Greek minority, I know, who also have a tiny population in Crimea now, we have to study possibilities and needs and restore these educational rights as well.'** (*expert interview*)

Some experts emphasise that, in their opinion, there should be no Russian-language schools in Crimea.

**'There should be two state languages in Crimea - Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar. There are languages of national communities and dependencies, and obviously, it should be possible for these languages to be taught in Crimea. But this does not mean that this is about Russian-language schools. This vicious practice obviously cannot be continued. If a person wants to learn something, they can learn their native language, Bulgarian, Greek, Polish. And the Ukrainian state should make such a decision on the language whilst taking into account ethnic perspectives.'** (*expert interview*)

At the same time, when asked about the temporary use of Russian for teaching in educational institutions, in 53.5% of cases, the residents of the mainland part of Ukraine in the quantitative survey did not support such an initiative. However, a fairly significant number of respondents (45%) expressed support. Amongst Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians, opponents of the temporary usage significantly prevail (although there are also quite a few who agree), and amongst bilingual and Russian-speaking Ukrainians, the majority support the temporary usage.

#### 4.5.5. Personnel issues in education after de-occupation

Regarding the staffing of the educational process in Crimea after the de-occupation, only 22% of respondents insist on the complete replacement of all teachers, heads of institutions, education officials, etc. 34% instead propose to dismiss only heads of institutions and officials (if they have not committed crimes), and 40% consider it necessary to limit the dismissal to education officials.

### 4.6. Other components of reintegration

#### 4.6.1. Demographic and statistical accounting of the existing population of Crimea after de-occupation

In an expert interview, the speaker expressed their opinion that immediately after de-occupation, Ukraine should create a system of accounting and documentation of the existing population of Crimea since, according to international humanitarian law, Ukraine will be responsible for these people.

**‘If we have built the infrastructure for interaction with the population - and the population is the main thing - then we need to first and foremost address the issue of documenting the population. This is important because I have already said that more than a million people, a third of the current population, were imported to Crimea from somewhere else. And we, as the state of Ukraine, as a state that adheres to international humanitarian law, we will have to take care of the entire population on the territory we receive.’ (expert interview)**

**‘I am sure that in the last 10 years, there were many Russians who came illegally and have already acquired or have their own property. Illegally acquired property. What do we do with them? But in a year, all of them, at once...they won't leave all at once, they won't just leave everything they have there. And this raises the question: what should we do? That is why we propose, first of all, to register everyone who is actually located on the territory of Crimea.’ (expert interview)**

#### 4.6.2. Keeping the Crimean issue in the mainland part of Ukraine current

Some experts believe that not enough efforts are being made to keep the issue of de-occupation of Crimea on the agenda of Ukrainian citizens. The expert's logic is that, in addition to developing strategies and preparatory work for the de-occupation of

Crimea, constant day-to-day work should demonstrate the cultural and political unity of the 'host country' and Crimea.

**'We need to work first with the host country, and, unfortunately, we are building some kind of castles for future return and reintegration. And at the same time, we are not working with the host country. We aren't working... How many exhibitions of Crimean artists have you seen? Doesn't the Ukrainian population have any paintings by Crimean artists? There are so many events that are happening here and now. To keep in the consciousness of Ukrainians that Crimea is Ukraine.'** (*expert interview*)

According to experts, the issue of Crimea must be made current in Ukrainian school education by increasing attention to it quantitatively and by making efforts to form the right ideological 'framework' for Ukrainian students regarding the de-occupation of the peninsula.

**'For example, we are now seeing that the Russians are preparing a new textbook for schools, in which they have Crimea is not a separate region, but part of the all-Russian narrative. We understand that a certain generation of children, people, and young adults will grow up with this textbook and have this outlook on the situation with Crimea. This is where Ukraine needs to look at and develop counter-narratives and put them not just in textbooks. We need to prepare these textbooks, these methodological materials and everything else, and this is what we need to offer in Ukraine now. Because if you look at a textbook, for example, on the history of Ukraine, there is very little about Crimea. There are two or three that are very general and in which, excuse me, the Cossacks fought with the Crimean Tatars there almost constantly. This wasn't actually the case, but we still don't have these materials. This is the so-called preparatory situation that exists today. That is, we need to prepare the population of the controlled part of Ukraine to understand that Crimea is the territory of Ukraine and that not only collaborators and traitors live there, which is what Russia is trying to put into the information space of Ukraine.'** (*expert interview*)

#### 4.6.3. Communication of the reintegration plan to the population of Crimea

One expert emphasised that the reintegration plan for Crimea should not only be elaborated in detail by the Ukrainian authorities, but also be communicated and explained to the Crimean residents. Otherwise, the absence of such information will generate distrust and fear amongst Crimeans.

**‘And the main thing is communicating now how it should happen. Because for the people who live in ignorance, their ignorance breeds distrust. This is an important aspect. If we don’t communicate this, it can be like a black box for people from which they can expect bad decisions for themselves. In general, if you look at post-Soviet societies, any changes are often perceived as something bad for post-Soviet societies.’ (expert interview)**

#### 4.7. Challenges that Ukrainian society may face after the de-occupation of Crimea

Here is a list of possible challenges that Ukrainian society may face after the de-occupation of Crimea.

##### 4.7.1. Possible conflict over the status of Crimea and the issue of national-territorial autonomy of Crimean Tatars

Some experts who participated in the study believe that a political conflict over the political life and governance model in Crimea could become a severe problem for Ukraine after de-occupation.

**‘In Ukraine, the main conflict that can and already does have some of these features is the conflict over what Crimea will be like. That is, what will it be? What status and organisational model will Crimea be, an oblast or national-territorial autonomy, or as it was before? There are at least three options whose supporters can communicate with each other in a very conflicting way. At the level of Ukraine, there is, if not one hundred per cent, then a very high probability of conflict, which will occur if we do not start working on this. Work is being done, I know, there are steps, but we need a clearer position and concrete decisions from those who make decisions today, i.e. from the leaders of state decisions and so on.’ (expert interview)**

**'Well, of course, the first thing that comes to my mind is the expectations and interests of indigenous peoples and the largest, most numerous indigenous people to find and restore their home in the form of autonomy, which is not perceived as a positive development by all groups in Ukraine, moreover, because of the full-scale invasion due to the war that has been going on there for ten years, there are many concerns about the form that the Crimeans have chosen for themselves about autonomy. And this is the first source of potential conflict.'** *(expert interview)*

**'The third small potential conflict I see is between representatives of the Ukrainian community in Crimea and Crimean Tatars. It is already somewhere in the atmosphere; it can sometimes be felt, to be honest. It can also happen because they have their ambitions and claims, and lack of attention to their expectations, wishes and interests, in their opinion.'** *(expert interview)*

This risk was also voiced in a focus group with young Crimean Tatars. According to one of the respondents, Crimean Tatar autonomy does not have much support in Ukrainian politics and society, which could lead to a conflict between its people and the Ukrainian authorities after de-occupation.

**'Firstly, we will need at least five years in Crimea if there is de-occupation, and that's only if we have a positive perspective. There will be a military administration in Crimea, where the issue of Crimean Tatar autonomy will not be considered at all.'**

**I hope we will win this war. Then, I believe, we will have to continue to fight with the Ukrainian authorities for Crimean Tatar national-territorial autonomy to realise our right as the Indigenous people of Crimea to self-determination. We are talking about national-territorial autonomy within Ukraine. Today, this issue does not receive support from Ukrainian politicians or many Ukrainian citizens.'**

**However, everyone seems to understand that we have the right to do so. Unfortunately, over 50% of the population of Ukraine is still waking up, or these thoughts are contagious. I don't know, there are some kinds of imperialistic sentiments towards the Crimean Tatars of Crimea. Therefore, we will still have to fight for Crimean Tatar autonomy and our right to self-determination and existence.'** *(focus groups with Crimean Tatars)*

#### 4.7.2. Possible social and political conflict between Ukrainian citizens inside Crimea

During the expert interviews, it was suggested that the long-standing contradictions between Crimean residents who remained loyal to Ukraine and those who supported the occupation could escalate into an open conflict after de-occupation.

**‘As for Crimea, first of all, this is a question of, you know, being ready for a certain revision. I don’t want to do it, but there may be revenge. The revenge of those who have remained committed to Ukraine all those years under oppression, and those who openly supported the occupation. This is the kind of almost physical conflict that can break out. I have talked to people who are ready on an individual psychological level to use even physical force to take revenge on those who personally did something bad to them, to others, perhaps their friends, or just to someone they consider to be a victim of the occupation. And at the level of Crimea, this can be a powerful and serious conflict.’**  
*(expert interview)*

Crimean Tatars who are now living in the mainland part of Ukraine are also concerned about this. When discussing the de-occupation and reintegration of Crimean residents into Ukrainian society, respondents noted a potential challenge related to the sentiments of the population that supports Russia.

**‘I see a complicated future. If there is de-occupation [when – Ed.], it will be joyful, but it will be challenging because most of the population there is Russia-orientated. For example, Russians who are already used to living in Russia will stay there. And somehow, you will have to live with them because you can’t sentence them all. They won’t all leave. And these conflicts will be constant, so we need to take a tough position there. And I’m just apprehensive about how there may be a lot of problems with these people later, that these same people will not allow us to live normally in Crimea. Because they will again somehow make Crimea a separate part of Ukraine.’** *(focus group with Crimean Tatars)*

Experts say that Ukraine should already develop a reconciliation policy that will be implemented after de-occupation.

**‘And so, the state must also have answers to such claims, and prevent conflicts from escalating from such individual clashes, which will 100% be a result of some kind of social tension. I’m saying it will happen individually, it will**

**happen for years, unfortunately, but the state must carefully think up a policy of reconciliation. We have already talked about this, and a lot needs to be done, many specific details need to be looked at carefully.’ (expert interview)**

#### 4.7.3. Possible conflict between citizens of the Russian Federation who illegally settled in Crimea after 2014 and Ukrainian society

Both participants in the focus group discussions and experts discuss the possibility of a conflict between Ukrainian society and Russian citizens who settled in Crimea. The focus group participants talk about difficult ‘forks in the road’ for the Ukrainian authorities: how should these people be deported from Crimea? What should be the policy regarding the property they acquired in Crimea after 2014? Experts say that this group of Russians may have material incentives to stay in Crimea, and there is a risk of creating a politically encapsulated community. In addition, any radical actions by the Ukrainian authorities against this group of Russian citizens could be interpreted as a violation of international law.

**‘Because for these ten years, for example, a large part of the population that came from Russia, what will happen to them? Do we have to deport them? For example, if there is a very positive outcome and Crimea is de-occupied, what should we do with the population that came from Russia? What if, for example, they were living in flats that belonged to Ukrainians who left Crimea? There are a lot of questions, both about language issues and, in general, what to do with the population there. I think we will have a lot of problems if we de-occupy Crimea, and, to be honest, I still don't know the official position of our government. I remember there were some news reports on how to solve some problems, but I don't see a clear position or a vision of this.’ (focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)**

**‘...if in Crimea, at the level of Crimea, if there are many people who came from the Russian Federation after 2014, and not all of them can leave or do not want to leave and will try their best, some of them, to gain a foothold, as it happened in Estonia, then of course, there is potential for conflict between these groups. They will want access to all the benefits that Ukraine will have as part of the European body and will not want to return. But at the same time, they will not want to become part of the nation-building processes and part of Ukraine in general. People are definitely aware about this.’ (expert interview)**

**'I have already said that some of the population that moved to Crimea will try to stay. Even though they are violators of Ukrainian law, Ukraine will have to build certain algorithms to comply with international humanitarian law. Yes, Ukraine can deviate from certain norms, but it cannot ignore international law in general, so there will be conflicts here. There are families there, families have even had children who were born and have grown up, and this will be a conflict zone, a vast conflict zone.'** (*expert interview*)

Another aspect of this problem is the legal resolution of the issue of property, primarily real estate, that appeared in Crimea after the occupation. Experts say that certain infrastructure facilities or residential real estate built after 2014 are illegal under Ukrainian law. At the same time, Crimean residents and businesses use these facilities, which may become another source of conflict.

#### 4.7.4. Possible conflict between Crimean residents and government officials from other regions of Ukraine

The expert study suggested that after de-occupation, Crimea will need many professional managers, civil servants, etc., who are likely to be deployed from other regions of Ukraine. Crimean residents may perceive this as 'quasi-colonisation.'

**'You know where I see inter-regional conflict at the level between regions? I see it in how there will be a lack of personnel to administer and manage the liberated territories, including Crimea. And of course, many people will want to go to the South, where there is a lot of sun. There may be a conflict there, a conflict between different regions because, as I said, many Crimeans will perceive this as quasi-colonisation. [...] Well, what I said before, between regions, is true. I also see that if, conditionally, the apparatus and representatives of the state leave en masse, this will also be the basis for potential conflicts or rejection of these people in Crimea.'** (*expert interview*)

#### 4.7.5. Possible tension on the issue of confessions

Experts discussed this danger in the interviews. According to one respondent, most Crimean residents who consider themselves Orthodox were parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, now the Russian Orthodox Church, and after de-occupation, this issue could become a conflict on the peninsula.

**'Well, the situation with the church is very important. I mean, here's the church, if it will be easier regarding Islam, in my opinion, and it will also be easier for other faiths, but as for Orthodox Christians, there will be a problem. 99% of them were parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate at that time, and now the Russian Orthodox Church. And it will be impossible to change this. We will have to think about all this.'** (*expert interview*)

#### 4.7.6. Possible tension in the language issue

Although experts mainly mention the potential conflict around the church issue, Ukrainian respondents and experts also point out the danger of a conflict related to regulating the language sphere after de-occupation. In their opinion, rapid and comprehensive Ukrainisation could provoke a confrontation after the de-occupation of Crimea.

**'I think the first thing will be the language. Well, I don't know, that's what I think for some reason. If they start very strongly, as we heard at the beginning of the 22nd, that you, you Muscovites, you are like this, you're all these types of things, you speak Russian there, you were waiting for them, you were asking them to come, up until now you haven't left Kharkiv while it's being bombed, you just sit there only because you're waiting for them. But it's not 100% like that, we aren't waiting for anyone, naturally. And if we bend the rules too far, they will start to cross the line and adopt very serious laws. I think it will be difficult. They will resist... We must get along somehow. Calmly, gently. No one is harassing anyone. It's up to you how you want to speak. There are official documents there; everything is in Ukrainian. It is part of Ukraine, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. I don't think ordinary people should be bent over backwards and reproached for this. It should be done calmly.'** (*group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars*)

**'...contradictions can arise. I can only think of the topic of language, that is, Ukrainian/Russian. We have been actively carrying out Ukrainisation for the last ten years. Crimea fell away at that time when it all started. That's it. Well, how do you solve it? Just teach it at schools and universities. Soft Ukrainisation.'** (*focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine*)

**‘We have a lot of such statements that we will only have things in Ukrainian, Crimean Tatar and other languages. There will be no Russian. In fact, in my heart, I think this is the wrong thing to do. It would be wrong. We will still need to keep the Russian language. Another question is what we will need to do...’ (expert interview)**

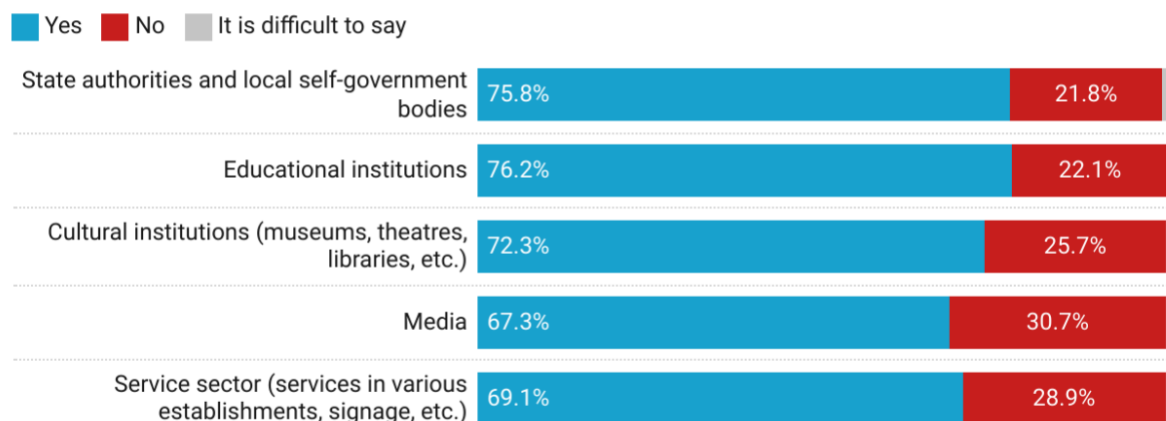
**‘In particular, a crucial, very sensitive issue is the use of the Ukrainian language in Crimea. Here, we need to understand the overall strategy and tactics. The general strategy is that Crimea is Ukraine, and the Ukrainian language should be used on Crimea's territory at all levels. However, tactically, we must understand that Ukrainian has not been spoken there for more than ten years. And there will be no immediate perception of information in Ukrainian. We will have to convey socially important and politically important information to the residents of Crimea, and we will have to convey it in the language they understand then. First, we need to use more of the language for such information, for general things, and to create more opportunities for learning the Ukrainian language. In this way. It should be the so-called “Soft Ukrainisation”, not as radical as, unfortunately, we sometimes have here, where we’re out there, hot under the collar, and let's translate everything into Ukrainian at once.’ (expert interview)**

The issue of language in Crimea after the de-occupation is a kind of litmus test that shows that different experts, territorial groups of the population, and ethnic groups have different ideas about how it will be organised. This indicates the lack of a developed conceptual framework for organising life after de-occupation and, secondly (and as a corollary to the first), the lack of communication of these concepts.

The quantitative survey results confirm that most residents of the mainland part of Ukraine understand the complexity and danger of the language issue in Crimea and mainly support the gradual Ukrainisation of life on the peninsula. Most respondents (67-76%) believe a transitional period should be established in Crimea to introduce the Ukrainian language in certain institutions, including government, educational and cultural institutions, media, and services. 22-31% of respondents do not support this opinion. The highest level of support recorded was for introducing a transitional period in government and education (76% supporting, and 22% not supporting), whilst the lowest was in the media (67% supporting and 31% not supporting). At the same time, respondents believe that the transition period should not be long. When asked how long the transition period should last for introducing the Ukrainian language in Crimea, only 20% of respondents said that it was not needed at all. The majority favours a short-term period: 35% believe it should last up to 1 year, and 24% - up to 3 years.

## Whether a transition period should be established in the relevant institutions for the introduction of the Ukrainian language

Results of the survey



Question: Do you think it is necessary to establish a transitional period in Crimea after its de-occupation for the introduction of the Ukrainian language in...

Created with Datawrapper

One of the experts offered his concept of the Ukrainisation of Crimea after de-occupation: the Ukrainian language should be associated with universal and acceptable values for most people.

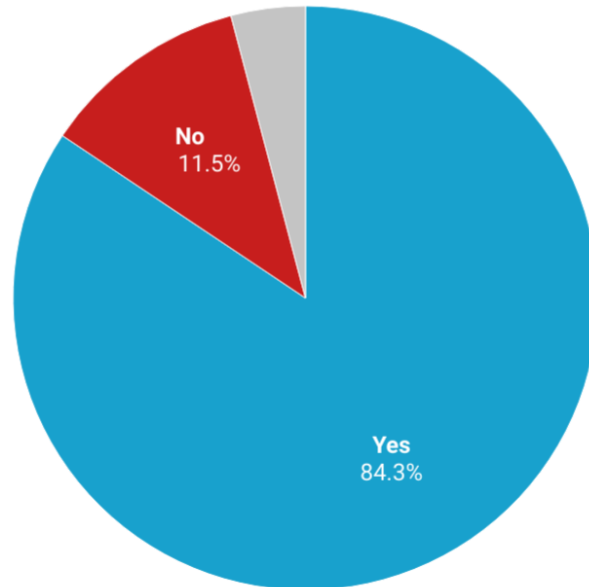
**‘And when we talk about Ukrainisation again, we need to demonstrate more Ukrainisation. This is not an imposition of the Ukrainian language, traditions, etc. This is a value-based approach. Values. Freedom, human rights, the right to protect Indigenous people, the right for them to develop, the right to choose, the right to freely travel to other countries, etc. And respect for the state, respect and responsibility to the state, and respect for the state language should be mandatory in Crimea.’ (expert interview)**

As for support for the Crimean Tatar language, 84% believe it needs the state's support. 12% do not think so (4% have no opinion).

## Does the Crimean Tatar language need support?

Results of the survey

■ Yes ■ No ■ It is difficult to say



Question: Does the Crimean Tatar language need support from the state?

Created with Datawrapper

## 5. Memory

### 5.1. Attitudes towards monuments and memorials erected during the Russian occupation of Crimea

Only 5% of respondents to the quantitative survey believe that monuments and sights in Crimea erected during the occupation should be left in place. Instead, 52% are in favour of simply demolishing them. One option that could be a compromise - creating a special commission - is supported by 36%.

The results of the qualitative research provide a more detailed picture of this problem and experts' ideas on the best way to solve it.

#### 5.1.1. Division of monuments into groups: historically significant and propaganda

The research participants believe it is essential to distinguish between monuments that have historical value for the region and those that are exclusively colonial and propagandistic. Monuments associated with historical figures who have positively contributed to the development of Crimea, such as the monument to architect Nikolai Krasnov in Yalta, can be preserved. Monuments of historical or cultural significance to the Crimean Tatar people, such as the memorial to the deportation of Crimean Tatars, may also be preserved. But other monuments associated with Russian colonisers, such as the monument to Catherine the Great or those glorifying the war against Ukraine, should be dismantled.

**'In this case, I would suggest that all the monuments that were erected during the occupation period and are related to the occupation, to its capture and so on, should be demolished on the first day and destroyed.'** (*focus group with Crimean Tatars*)

**'Oh, this is a difficult question. Why? Because you can't tar everyone with the same brush, as they say. Let's remember what monuments have been erected there. There is a monument, for example, for the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, which is in the Bakhchysarai district at the station of Syren. There is a monument, for example, to Amet-Khan Sultan, two-time Hero of the Soviet Union, who represents the Crimean Tatar people. But there is also a monument, for example, to Catherine the Great, who is the executioner of both the Ukrainian people and the Crimean Tatar people. Therefore, it is complicated to talk about every monument this way. There is also a separate and long**

**question involving nuances. I will say this: any monuments that are associated with the glorification of this so-called situation with the SMO, should be dismantled. They should disappear from the memorial space of Ukraine as such.'** *(expert interview)*

Other experts suggest using such monuments for historical education, adding the necessary context and explanations from experts.

**'Well, for example, look. During the years of occupation, a whole memorial complex for the victims of deportation and so on appeared near Bakhchysarai, in the village of Syren, a museum town. There is also a monument there with figures of people who were deported, of people with knots who are somehow going somewhere. But there is no depiction of the soldiers who deported them. The memorial does not show who did it. We should explain and show people that Russia tried to distort this history, particularly the deportations. We should explain why this monument should not be used, why tour guides should say, look, actually, things really happened a certain way, the reality of certain events, but Russia tried to show it differently. And to draw the attention of young people, or whoever will come there, old people, foreigners, to come and clearly show how the Russian Federation, and the Soviet Union before it, tried to do all this, to disguise history. And not by hand, but by these monuments. I think this can be used in a very cool way.'** *(expert interview)*

Some experts believe that the fate of monuments erected after 2014 which are not political should be decided by local Crimean communities; otherwise, this issue could become another point of conflict after the peninsula's de-occupation.

**'There are monument-markers of the Russian Federation erected after the annexation [occupation – Ed.]. For example, there is the monument to Alexander III near the Livadia Palace and other monuments. These are markers that need to be destroyed. Well, because these monuments are not very connected with the region, they will not directly cause such resistance from the local population. And there are monuments, for example, that you will need to consider. However, they are markers, too, marking the territory not related to political figures like Alexander III, whom I just mentioned. For example, for the city where I was born, for the city of Yalta, the architect Nikolay Krasnov, a Nobel Prize winner in architecture, was a significant figure for the locals.**

**And not during the Soviet Union, not during Ukraine, [before both of them]. He was the person who formed the modern register of Yalta [as its Chief Architect]. But Yalta, the way it was built, the way the pier was made, he was very much respected by the locals. The Russians came and erected a monument to Krasnov. For me, the question is, what we will do with the monument to Krasnov because, once again, none of the locals will cry about Alexander III. They will demolish it, demolish it. But there will be outrage over the monument to Krasnov, for example, the monument to Chekhov and the monument to Mikhail Pugovkin, which have appeared as part of the city's landscape. For example, there's the monument to Aleksandr Khanzhonkov, a Ukrainian filmmaker, the founder of Ukrainian cinema. But this monument was erected by Russians. How do we deal with these monuments? Again, we come back to the principles I mentioned. It requires participation. If it's a political figure, then we just demolish it. If it is not a political figure, then I think it is necessary to discuss these monuments and their future fate publicly.'** (*expert interview*)

An example of the great conflict potential of decisions, which involve demolishing monuments without consulting the community, can be seen in Crimean Telegram channels:

**'This post informs about the decision to dismantle the monument to Viktor Tsoi and the band "Kino" near Sudak, which caused a negative reaction amongst the audience. In the context of memorialisation, many people have expressed outrage over the destruction of an important cultural symbol, considering this a manifestation of disrespect for the legendary musician's legacy. The negative feedback underscores the importance of preserving historical and cultural sites, especially those important to the community.'**



Telegram channel 'Emergency Crimea'

Caption: Near Sudak, a monument to Tsoi and the group 'Kino' (at the place where everything began) will be removed to make way for a bypass road.

As far as we can tell, the community's occupier leadership has decided not to dismantle the monument.

The conclusions of the content analysis of Telegram channels emphasise the importance of monuments for Crimean residents.

**'It is important to emphasise that one of the critical topics that evokes a significant emotional response is the preservation of historical monuments on the peninsula. This topic is significant because of the rich cultural heritage of Crimea, which includes ancient ruins, medieval fortresses, and religious sites from different eras.**

Telegram channels are becoming essential platforms for popularising the idea of protecting these historical monuments. Active coverage of these topics by the channels indicates the local population's and community's deep interest in preserving the region's cultural identity. In addition, it also raises the question of the impact of current political and social changes on the state of these sites,

**causing an emotional resonance amongst readers.’ (*content analysis of Telegram channels*)**

### 5.1.2. Museum of the Occupation

Some focus group respondents and experts suggest not destroying all the monuments, but removing and placing them in an occupation museum, where they could serve as a reminder of Russia's aggression and have an educational function for future generations.

**‘...in the practice of some future, it may be necessary to dismantle the monument of Alexander Suvorov, but not to completely demolish it and destroy it, like the monuments of Lenin and Stalin, who are criminals, but to move them to some other place, which could be, for example, a park or a museum, an open park, in my opinion.’ (*focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine*)**

### 5.1.3. Local community decisions vs mandatory implementation of the current laws of Ukraine

Non-Crimean Tatar focus group participants believe that it is important to conduct an information campaign aimed at raising awareness amongst Crimean residents about Russia's negative role in the history of Crimea, the true history. According to some participants, such a campaign could catalyse the destruction of monuments erected by Russia on Crimean residents' initiative. This, in turn, would be better perceived by the Crimeans themselves, as a decision ‘from below’ rather than one imposed by the authorities.

**‘We must first show the actual history, teach people, show them its quite different side, the one that wasn't so great. And so, when people realise that this is not something to be proud of, they will destroy these sights and monuments just like it happened here. That is, people went out and destroyed monuments themselves, to Lenin, Stalin, and the like. That is, it was an expression of the people's will. So, we have to start with the people themselves. We need to show them a different story so that people just come to this themselves, and not that we arrived and we destroyed them because we must.’ (*focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars*)**

Some experts also talk about the chain of information campaigns leading to community decisions, pointing out that these should not be the decisions of the local government, but of the entire community:

**‘Well, of course, I would like to say that we need to destroy them, but I will say this: it should be decided by the local community. This should not be the decision of local governments, but rather be at the referendum level. If the residents believe it should be there, I would like to hear an argument about why it should be there. The local government should offer an alternative, including what should be there and why these monuments should not be in Crimea. Before this referendum, there should be a well-developed information campaign against the preservation of these monuments and their replacement with pro-Ukrainian or pro-Ukrainian-Tatar monuments. And this will be much more logical than preserving the relics of the Russian occupation.’ (expert interview)**

Other experts believe that all decisions regarding monuments should simply be made based on the current laws of Ukraine:

**‘I have said several times that Ukrainian law should work there. It's very simple. Does this monument comply with our legislation? No. So what do we have here? It was erected, I don't know, with the owner's consent, it was erected on the territory of, let's say, a boarding house, and a monument to Stalin, which was stolen in Ukraine, was erected. Well, why should it be there? Why is there a monument to Stalin near the Livadia Palace? Why should it be there? No, why? Because we have a law. Decommunisation, de-Stalinisation, or whatever else does not comply with the law. There isn't anything like this. It's simple. The law should be the same for everyone. Then people will perceive it normally. It will just be: we're doing this because of this law, and that's it.’ (expert interview)**

## 5.2. Attitudes towards place names

Russia has changed the name of Crimea several times throughout history. The first instance occurred during the reign of Catherine II when active Russification policies were enforced. The second time was under Stalin, when the names were ideologically altered. Now, for the third time, we are seeing it again in the present day. This illustrates the continuous layering of changes that Russia has imposed on Crimea under different political regimes.

Experts from the group of Crimean Tatars have the most defined and consolidated position regarding toponymic changes. They believe it is necessary to return historical place names in Crimea (most of which will be of Crimean Tatar origin), not limited to decommunisation. These experts point out that it would be unfair to replace Soviet and Russian place names with predominantly Ukrainian ones. Some other experts who are not Crimean Tatars agree with this proposal.

**‘...well, right now, we must demonstrate Ukraine as a fair state. So now we must return all the names of historical places in Crimea. This is the first thing. Unfortunately, we see different approaches and opinions amongst Ukrainians, including experts. I would say, when they say that we need to get rid of Russian narratives in toponymy, they mean that we need more Ukrainian ones. But if we rename settlements by something other than their historical names, it doesn't matter what their origin is, whether Tatar or Greek or something else. Artificially inventing Ukrainian names will be perceived as colonisation. If I propose something like this, we need to demonstrate that Ukraine is fair. That is, to return all historical names.’ (expert interview)**

**‘Regarding the issues related to memorialisation, you can say, perhaps, that this question involves decolonisation, in particular the decolonisation of geographical names, if we start talking about it. In my understanding, this has to take place, and this means that Ukrainian society will have to understand that these historical names were changed after the first annexation of Crimea by Catherine the Great during the Russian Empire and then changed after the deportation of the Crimean Tatars.**

**The return of historical names is precisely the return of Ukrainian memory. This is not only the Crimean Tatar memory or the memory of the Germans who lived in these territories. This is the return of Ukrainian memory because this is the history of Ukraine. This Ukrainian nation was**

**formed, I say, not only by ethnic Ukrainians, but also from the indigenous peoples of Ukraine, as well as other nations that participated in the formation of the Ukrainian nation.’**  
*(expert interview)*

Other experts point out that radical changes in place names could cause conflict amongst Crimean residents, some of whom may not accept the disappearance of essential names from the peninsula's map.

**‘Will this be a trigger for interethnic conflict amongst the rest of the non-Crimean Tatars? I don't know. It depends on the policy under which this reintegration will take place. It needs to be spelled out, you know, right down to the letter. Well, I can tell you about the place names. Well, even now, when Crimeans are considering these changes to Crimea's toponymy that Ukraine is proposing, they are outraged. I don't know what will happen there. When Sevastopol, as a name, will disappear. Or Simferopol as a name. I don't know how it will be. Won't it trigger the deterioration of people's attitude towards Crimean Tatars?’** *(expert interview)*

In the focus groups, Crimean Tatars themselves mention the risks of radical changes in the toponymic landscape, while noting that, in their view, this is a matter of restoring historical justice. At the same time, they note that even the idea of total completely renaming each city is already causing resistance amongst certain groups of Crimeans.

**‘I want to add. The question of decommunisation and de-Russification is important in our country because this process has hardly begun in Crimea, and there will be big questions about returning historical names to Crimean cities, primarily Sevastopol, Yevpatoriya, Simferopol, and everything else. There may be some problems with the acceptance of this because, for example, I have already seen some Crimean people who have left Crimea, who aren't Crimean Tatars, who are against renaming things, suggesting to let them stay as they are, to not rename them to anything Crimean Tatar, because they are used to it and everything else.**

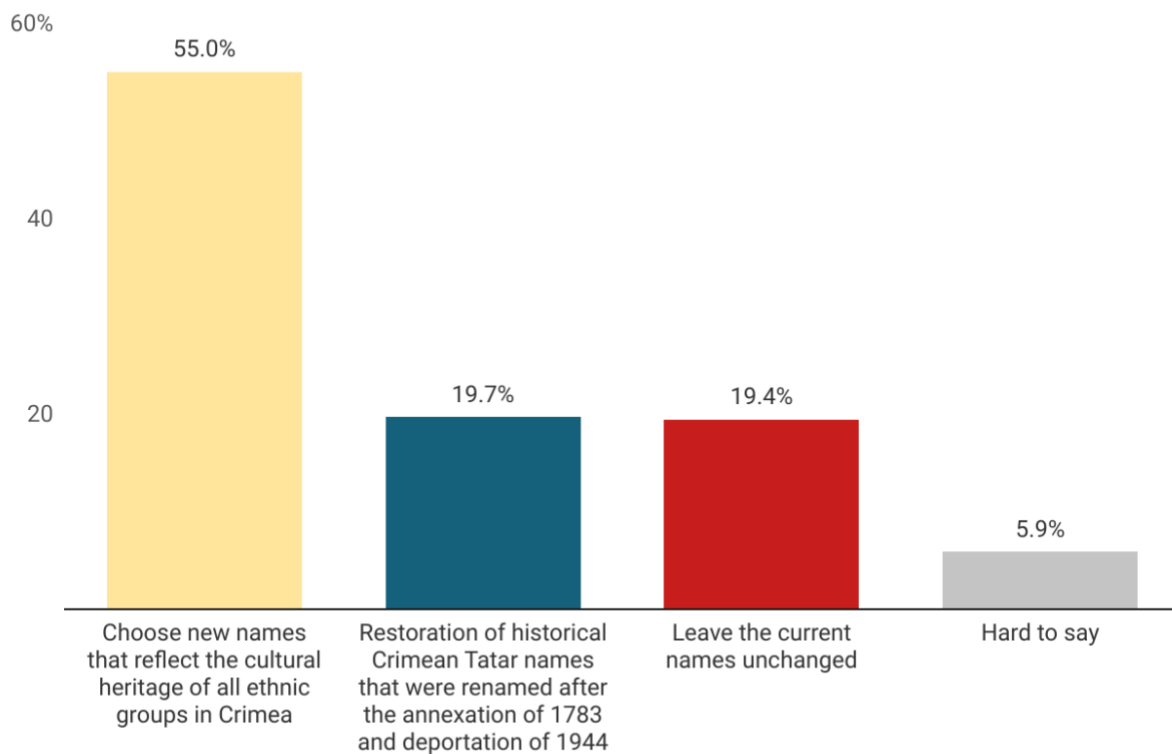
**That is, double standards are being applied to the implementation of this law. This may be a big problem because many Crimean Tatars hope that historical names will be returned. This is one of the cross-cutting themes in restoring the rights of the Crimean Tatar people. It was there**

**before 2014; this discourse is still there, and, well, in general, it will remain.’ (focus group with Crimean Tatars)**

The respondents to the quantitative survey seem more inclined towards compromise in this regard: more than half (55%) believe that after the de-occupation of Crimea, new names for place names should be chosen that reflect the heritage of all ethnic groups. At the same time, a minority supports the other two polarised approaches: 20% of respondents believe that the historical Crimean Tatar names should be restored, and only 19% favour leaving the names unchanged.

## How the renaming policy in Crimea should be implemented

Results of the survey



*Question: In your opinion, how should the policy of renaming place names (i.e. settlements and geographical names, etc.) be implemented in Crimea after its de-occupation?*

Created with Datawrapper

Participants in one of the focus groups with Ukrainian citizens also mentioned that changing place names could become a point of conflict. Still, they justified this not by ideological issues but by practical ones, such as the need to reissue documents and so on.

**‘After the de-occupation of Crimea, there may be disputes over changing the names of settlements and streets. Many people are already accustomed to the existing names, and if there is a need to revise all the documents for**

**new names, it may cause many questions and conflicts.’  
(focus group with non-Crimean Tatar residents of Ukraine)**

Although most respondents agree with the need for renaming places, opinions are divided on who should decide the new names in Crimea. Relatively most respondents (33%) believe that the residents themselves should decide this through a poll or public hearing. Another 20% agree that it should be through a poll or public hearing, but believe that it should be decided by the Indigenous people of Ukraine, not by the local residents. Fewer respondents chose the other options: 12% support decision-making by state authorities, and 11% - by the official representative bodies of Indigenous peoples of Ukraine. Interestingly, contrary to similar events in different regions of Ukraine, only 5% of respondents believe that the military administration should make the decision.

In the context of toponymy, respondents to the quantitative survey were also asked about the pace of decommunisation in Crimea after the de-occupation. They were asked whether there should be a transition period for replacing the names of administrative-territorial units, other geographical objects, and legal entities in the public sphere of the peninsula, if they contain symbols of the communist totalitarian regime. Most respondents (63%) support a transition period being introduced for decommunisation. At the same time, a significant part of the population (33%) opposes this.

### 5.3. Attitudes towards war graves

Most experts believe that Ukraine should not dismantle cemeteries, but should ensure that these sites remain places of remembrance for relatives without signs of memorialisation or glorification of the war. Ukraine should avoid the presence of military monuments and Russian symbols, particularly the letters Z and V. These should exclusively be places of remembrance, not memorial complexes. Ukraine should take international experience and standards into account. The deceased can be recognised as victims of Russian aggression, especially in Crimea. It is crucial to ensure that relatives have access to places of remembrance. Regarding the graves of Russian soldiers, Ukraine can offer exhumation and transfer of the bodies to relatives for reburial in Russia. Experts suggest this could be part of an agreement between Ukraine and Russia, including exchanging bodies from both sides.

**‘As for the burial of real people, this is a separate situation, and a certain procedure needs to be followed. In my opinion, what this procedure should include is that, for example, in commemorative displays, i.e., the monument on the grave of, for example, a Ukrainian citizen who died in the**

**SMO and fought on the side of Russia, cannot contain elements that Ukraine is against, like the letter Z or something else. So, these monuments will have to be remade. But the grave itself cannot be, for example, destroyed and everything else, because this is, I'm sorry, an indecent situation.'** (*expert interview*)

**'There is already international experience here too. Even the people who fought in the army are victims of Russian expansion in the unprovoked Russian war. Of course, these victims, especially the local populations which were far from voluntarily mobilised, were forced to mobilise. The memory of the victims of Russian aggression, of Russian...'** (*expert interview*)

Crimean Tatar focus group participants also believe that nothing should be done with the graves of Russian servicemen who died in battles with the AFU, as well as with the graves of the Ukrainian citizens and Crimean residents who were mobilised by the Russian occupation administration and died fighting the AFU, and who are buried in Crimea.

**'I believe that nothing should be done with graves if it is just a grave and there are no memorials on them that would contradict our history, justice, and so on. If it says that these people are the heroes of the SMO, then you can simply ask to remove this monument. You can remove this monument and leave the grave there. So that it will be just an ordinary grave, and no one knows who is lying there. Just someone's son, husband, sister, and so on. Getting rid of the graves, well, the whole world would perceive that badly.'** (*focus group with Crimean Tatars*)

The opinions of most non-Crimean Tatar respondents regarding war graves were also unequivocal, although the complexity of this issue was emphasised. Most of the respondents said that Ukraine should not initiate the reburial of Russian servicemen whose graves are in Crimea. However, our country should be allowed to rebury Russian servicemen if the relatives of the victims, or Russia in general, wish to exhume and transport the bodies to Russia. Some participants drew analogies to the burials of German soldiers on the territory of Ukraine, as well as to the burials from World War I and World War II in Europe. These examples were cited in the context of the soldiers' graves being left untouched and cared for by local authorities, emphasising the possibility of a similar approach to the graves of Russian servicemen.

Several participants noted that memorials should not be built for the fallen Russian soldiers, but rather, that these places should be left unadorned and not attract attention.

**‘By no means can you do anything with the graves. First, since we are moving towards Europe, we need to take an example from Europe. Many graves and burials from the First World War and the Second World War remain untouched, and even the locals take care of them. So, this is not even a debatable issue; it is a deeply ethical one... History will remain history, but we still need to preserve the rights of relatives, no matter whether it is those of the occupation forces or ours. We need to preserve the right of relatives to visit, first of all, the grave, and by no means disturb the grave, without the relatives’ permission and request.’ *(focus group with residents of Ukraine who are not Crimean Tatars)***

## OUR CONTACTS:



**ppu.gov.ua**



**ppu.gov.ua**



**ppu.gov.ua**



**ppu\_gov\_ua**



**ppuark**