

WOMEN IN CIVIL DEFENCE



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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the role and readiness of women within Ukraine's civil defence system and explores opportunities for institutionally strengthening their contribution by adapting international best practices, specifically the Swedish Total defence model. The methodology combines quantitative data from a nationally representative survey with qualitative interviews, supplemented by an analysis of regulatory documents and open-source data. The work focuses on the interaction between government bodies and civil society, the development of volunteer initiatives and training programs, and gender-sensitive aspects of crisis preparedness. The study offers recommendations for integrating the practical experience of volunteer initiatives and training programs into systemic mechanisms for citizen preparedness. Furthermore, the expected impact of these recommendations is analyzed across four levels: individual, local, institutional, and national. The practical implications involve developing a systemic approach to citizen preparedness and building resource mobilization mechanisms. The results highlight the importance of integrating women into civil defence as a component of a resilient and flexible security and defence system for Ukraine.

Keywords: women and security, civil defence, total defence, national resistance, Ukrainian-Swedish cooperation.

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The project draws on gender mainstreaming practices within Sweden’s comprehensive defence system and represents the first attempt in the Ukrainian context to explore the possibilities of implementing a Swedish-style comprehensive defence strategy in Ukraine while simultaneously integrating a gender perspective across key sectors, including the economy, care work, the armed forces, civil defence, governance, information policy, and the volunteer movement.

Analytical reports on these sectors are available on the website of the CSO “Expert Resource Gender in Detail”.

<https://genderindetail.org.ua/>

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BRIEF SUMMARY

This report examines the readiness of Ukrainian society to participate in civil defence and provides recommendations for the institutional and civic development of the system, particularly focusing on the gender dimension and the role of women in strengthening community resilience.

In the Ukrainian context, civil defence is still undergoing transformation: from a centralized model of state paternalism to a partnership-based total defence model, where all citizens actively contribute to the security and resilience of their communities. The high potential of Ukrainian civil society has already been demonstrated during the war through numerous volunteer and educational initiatives, which effectively implement total defence principles from the bottom up, mirroring the Swedish total defence model.

The study examines the current state of Ukrainian civil society's preparedness for civil defence during the full-scale war. The results of a representative survey show that only 14.7% of citizens have undergone civil defence training since the outbreak of the war. At the same time, 43% of respondents believe that civilians should actively participate in emergency response, while 48% are ready to join after receiving appropriate training. These data demonstrate a high level of civic motivation, which, as the study shows, requires formalization and systematization through structured training and support programs.

Based on these results, the study proposes concrete steps to improve Ukraine's civil defence system. Firstly, it is recommended to integrate civil security courses into existing programs of Centers for National Resistance Training, non-governmental organizations, and the State Emergency Service (SES). Special emphasis is placed on crisis response, evacuation, debris clearance, and other practical skills that enhance community readiness.

Secondly, the study highlights the need to establish a certification system and regular retraining for male and female volunteers. This will not only ensure that knowledge remains up-to-date but also strengthen the trust of communities and state authorities in the individuals involved.

The importance of institutionalizing women's initiatives and civil society organizations was further emphasized. Supporting networks of women trainers and leaders in civil preparedness will facilitate gender mainstreaming in security policy, address women's needs, strengthen social resilience, and foster the development of horizontal networks of trust.

The study also proposes a decentralized governance structure capable of responding swiftly to regional needs and integrating state programs, local communities, and civil society organizations. A study of the Swedish experience suggests that adapting the 'Lottakåren' model to Ukrainian realities will transform 'enthusiastic chaos' into an institutional pillar of total defence. The Ukrainian model, as emphasized in the study,

should be built on the principles of equality, civic engagement, local resilience, and trust between the state and the community.

Overall, such an approach not only ensures security but also fosters a new culture of civic responsibility, where every citizen — regardless of gender — becomes an active participant in national defence.

INTRODUCTION

Following Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukrainian society underwent profound upheavals in daily life, the functioning of public services, and the national security system. In this crisis context, Ukrainian women played a pivotal role in the first wave of response, both within official structures, such as the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, and through grassroots initiatives, including debris clearance and community support.

This **study provides a rationale for institutionalizing women's participation in the civil defence system**, drawing upon the inherent strength of Ukrainian civil society. Recognizing the invaluable contribution of women at all levels of response, the document proposes integrating these efforts into a more structured and sustainable national civil defence system.

Sweden's total defence serves as an example for adaptation, as it is based on two interdependent pillars: military defence and civil defence. Particular attention is drawn to the close cooperation between emergency authorities and civil society organizations, such as the Swedish Women's Voluntary Defence Organization (Svenska Lottakåren), which operates at the intersection of institutional structures and civic initiative. Such synergy between formal systems and public mobilization is viewed as a prime example of best practices for enhancing societal resilience and crisis preparedness.

The relevance of this research is driven by a series of security challenges facing the Ukrainian state amidst the ongoing war and persistent threats to national security. Clearly, civil defence is becoming increasingly vital both for ensuring public safety and for adapting the country to the new realities of wartime. It should be noted that in recent years there has been a growing understanding of the importance of involving the population in defence processes, including women, whose capabilities and readiness to participate in civil defence remain insufficiently researched. The ongoing war in Ukraine has significantly altered the role of women in social life and the security sector. The increased involvement of women in defence initiatives, volunteer organizations, and civil defence measures demonstrates the importance and necessity of studying their experience.

The gender dimension is both timely and relevant, as women's participation in civil defence systems entails specific characteristics that require further study. Despite the overall progress of Ukrainian society toward gender equality, certain barriers — both social and organizational — persist, potentially limiting women's access to professional roles and social functions within civil protection. This pertains to both physical and psychological aspects of readiness for participating in crisis and emergency situations. Assessing these factors will help reveal the actual level of women's readiness and identify pathways for strengthening their role within the civil defence system and national security as a whole.

The aim of this study is to analyze women's readiness to participate in civil defence, examine the factors influencing their involvement, and identify the barriers and

opportunities for strengthening their contribution to the security of the community, the state, and society at large.

The research methodology includes in-depth interviews with women — training program participants, representatives of local government bodies, non-governmental organizations, charitable foundations, Centers for Civil Resistance Training, and Centers for Civilian Preparedness. It further involves a regional coverage analysis to assess the specifics of women's readiness across various regions of Ukraine, as well as a synthesis of international and national legal norms to identify gaps and opportunities for improving the legal framework governing women's involvement in the civil defence system.

Conceptually, this policy brief draws on the theoretical distinction between voluntarism and structuralism. The Swedish model can be regarded as an example of a structuralist approach, where clearly defined institutions and responsibilities bolster national preparedness. In contrast, Ukraine's initial response to the invasion was predominantly based on a voluntarist model, characterized by the spontaneous mobilization of citizens and a reliance on individuals and non-governmental organizations rather than established systems. However, Ukraine is currently in a transition phase — moving from a purely voluntarist to a more structured approach in the field of civil defence. This document explores opportunities to shape and support this transition, drawing on international experience while preserving the momentum of civic initiatives.

The ultimate goal of the recommendations proposed in this policy brief is to strengthen the resilience and effectiveness of Ukraine's civil defence system across four levels: national, institutional, community, and individual. At the core of this approach is the idea that increasing individual readiness, particularly among women, is directly linked to the effectiveness of Ukraine's overall national defence strategy.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods approach was employed for this study, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques with an analysis of open-source information.

This approach allowed for a comprehensive assessment of women's roles in civil defence, the structures and practices of total defence in Sweden and Ukraine, and a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of these systems.

Quantitative data were obtained through a nationally representative survey, which allowed for an assessment of general trends and the population's level of awareness regarding civil defence measures. It also helped identify gender, regional, and other socio-demographic differences in the perception of and participation in crisis preparedness activities. Data collection was conducted by the research agency Info Sapiens in July 2025. The survey was conducted using the CATI method (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing) based on a random sample of mobile phone numbers¹.

The qualitative component of the study included 37 interviews, covering respondents from the Khmelnytskyi, Kyiv, Lviv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Odesa, and Zakarpattia regions of Ukraine, as well as one interview conducted in Sweden.

The selection of participants was carried out in stages: first, a mapping of key stakeholders was conducted to identify experts and professionals with experience in civil defence and volunteer initiatives. In the next stage, a snowball sampling method was applied, which made it possible to engage additional respondents through recommendations from previously interviewed participants. Specifically, this approach facilitated the involvement of civil defence training participants, which is crucial for assessing the role of women and integrating a gender perspective into the system.

Additionally, a desk research study was conducted, involving an analysis of current Ukrainian and Swedish legislation in the field of security and defence, official reports from civil protection agencies and government structures, materials from non-governmental organizations, and media publications. This facilitated the outlining of the regulatory framework, the identification of key stakeholders, and the understanding of the organizational structure and functions of actors within the civil defence systems of both countries.

During the qualitative data collection and fieldwork, particular attention was paid to the adherence to ethical standards and data protection. All respondents were informed about the study's purpose and the format of their participation. When using direct quotes, generalized labeling was applied (e.g., 'leader of an NGO providing civil defence training based on Swedish methodologies') to preserve the context without revealing the respondent's identity.

Thanks to this comprehensive methodology, the study succeeded in combining quantitative assessments with deep qualitative interpretations. This enabled the

¹ The survey was not conducted in the temporarily occupied territories or areas lacking Ukrainian mobile network coverage (at least 96% of the adult population is estimated to have mobile numbers). The sample is representative of the Ukrainian population aged 16 and older by gender, age, region, and settlement size.

creation of an objective and holistic picture of civil defence operations in Sweden and Ukraine, while identifying how the Swedish experience can be adapted to Ukrainian realities.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF TOTAL defence

Total defence is a system in which a key role in the state's defence capability is played not only by the military as the central element but also by an equally involved civilian

population. In the event of war, crisis, or an attack on the country, society commits at national, institutional, community, and individual levels to supporting defence across various sectors — from civil defence to the economy and information security.

The concept of total defence dates back to the Cold War era, when Sweden and Finland concurrently began developing their own self-reliant defence models, which relied exclusively on national resources capable of operating autonomously. Finland was the first to formally implement a full-scale total defence model, while Sweden simultaneously developed its own version, integrated with the country's national characteristics and unique specificities. However, it is the Swedish model — noted for its high level of integration between military and civilian components — that is most frequently cited as a benchmark for total defence systems in Europe.

Following the end of the Cold War, Finland maintained its active strategy due to its proximity to Russia. Sweden, perceiving no direct threat, temporarily suspended the implementation of its total defence concept in the early 1990s; however, it reactivated the strategy in 2015 following the deterioration of the security situation in Europe caused by Russia's annexation of Crimea and the onset of the Russo-Ukrainian War.

Current debates in Sweden center on the advisability of having temporarily dismantled the total defence program at the end of the last century; in retrospect, there is a growing consensus that this decision may not have been the most prudent. At the same time, its restoration today enjoys overwhelming public support.

Thus, the total defence concept currently operates successfully in Scandinavia — primarily in Sweden and Finland — as well as in the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), which adapted the Scandinavian experience to their security needs after the restoration of their independence in the 1990s. A number of countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Poland, and others, are seeking to adopt the total defence experience in 2025. For these countries, the total defence model represents a new trend that will require long-term, phased implementation. For the Ukrainian population, however, the concept of total defence is already a familiar one. On an intuitive level, many components proposed by the doctrine have already been implemented in practice, yet they require institutional engagement to achieve greater effectiveness.

1.1 Why Does Ukraine Need Total defence?

For Ukraine, total defence is not merely an abstract concept but a tangible opportunity to transform public support for defence into systemic and continuous action.

The Armed Forces of Ukraine carry the primary mission of national defence; however, society cannot remain merely in the role of an occasional assistant. As the full-scale invasion approaches its fourth year, there is an evident need for citizens to assume institutional responsibility, ensuring that their participation in collective defence efforts is not situational, but constant and organized. This issue concerns not only the effectiveness of national defence capabilities but also the principle of social justice.

The Swedish experience demonstrates that an effective total defence system can function even outside the framework of NATO. Established during the Cold War era, it was conceived as a self-defence model that allows the state and society to rely primarily on their own resources. This approach is particularly valuable for Ukraine because, despite large-scale international support, the prospect of Alliance membership remains distant. Therefore, the Swedish model can serve as a practical roadmap for overcoming the fragmented nature of societal readiness and transforming public support for defence into a cohesive system.

The recommendations proposed in this study will focus exclusively on the Swedish total defence model — *totalförsvaret* — its core concepts, best practices, and organizational approaches. Adapting these in Ukraine will help strengthen the country's defence capabilities across various levels.

To better understand the total defence concept and its relevance to the Ukrainian context, we propose examining its key aspects.

According to the Swedish model, total defence consists of two equal components: **military defence and civil defence.**

Military defence in Sweden consists of the Armed Forces, which include the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. In the context of total defence, their primary mission is to organize and develop the nation's military defence. The Home Guard is also engaged in military defence, serving as the closest equivalent to the Territorial defence Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Other government agencies, such as the Swedish Defence Materiel Administration and the National Defence Radio Establishment, serve as supporting structures for the Swedish Armed Forces in implementing tasks within the total defence framework. Since 2024, Sweden has been a member of the NATO military alliance, which bolsters the country's defence capabilities but does not affect its commitment to the total defence concept rooted in self-sufficiency.

Civil defence in Sweden is responsible for organizing and implementing measures to prepare the population for war. Under the total defence concept, all citizens aged 16 to 70 have a duty to participate in relevant activities, specifically through involvement in civil defence. Responsibility for preparing the population is shared among various

structures and institutions: government agencies, municipalities, regional authorities, private sector enterprises, non-profit organizations, religious communities, associations, cultural institutions, and individual citizens.

SWEDISH CIVILIAN TRAINING AND COMPREHENSIVE DEFENCE

As interconnected components of comprehensive defence.

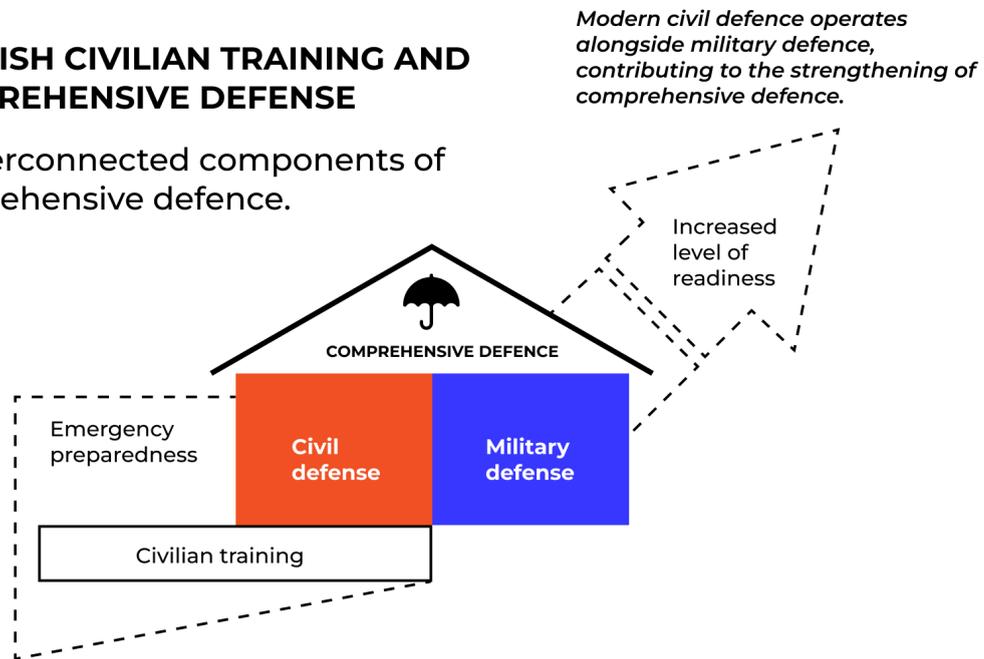


Figure 1.1. The Swedish Total Defence System: Interconnection of Elements

In this context, it is appropriate to focus specifically on Sweden's civil defence organizational system, namely the general total defence duty for the civilian population. As previously mentioned, all citizens aged 16 to 70 are required to participate in relevant activities; this obligation also extends to foreign nationals who are permanent residents of the country. This means that every individual whose contribution is deemed critical to national security may receive an individual notice regarding their wartime posting.

A wartime posting is an individual assignment that specifies a particular service location and the scope of duties in the event of war or the threat of war. Notifications regarding wartime postings are sent either by mail or through the employer. Individuals who have received a wartime posting are required to report immediately to their designated location and carry out their assigned tasks upon the declaration of a state of heightened alert.

Those who do not have an individual assignment fall under the general national obligation: they must remain at their workplaces and continue performing the professional functions necessary to maintain the functioning of the state.

The national defence duty in Sweden is legally binding. In the event of a refusal to perform designated tasks, citizens may be subject to fines or imprisonment. During a

state of heightened alert, refusal to serve is punishable by up to four years of imprisonment (Krisinformation, 2024).

At the same time, it is worth noting that the state guarantees the necessary conditions for the fulfillment of these duties. Municipalities are obligated to organize childcare even during a state of heightened alert; specifically, the municipality provides childcare for individuals who are called up for service.

Individuals with health issues or those on sick leave perform their duties only within the limits of their physical capabilities (Krisinformation, 2024).

1.2 Summary of Chapter 1

The concept of total defence entails the integration of military and civil components to ensure national security. Its essence lies in the fact that the responsibility for national defence is shared between the military, state institutions, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and every individual citizen. The Swedish model aims to create a resilient society capable of responding effectively to threats. For Ukraine, adapting this model would mean the possibility of institutionally formalizing the existing activities of volunteer and civic initiatives, making them an integral part of the national security architecture.

CHAPTER 2. THE CIVIL DEFENCE SYSTEM IN SWEDEN

According to Sweden's total defence system, civil defence is based on the principle that everyone must be involved in preparing society for crises, war, or the threat of war. It is not limited solely to military structures but encompasses the preparedness of individual citizens, government agencies, municipalities, regions, private companies, and non-governmental organizations (Government Offices of Sweden, 2024a). Such a broad approach has enabled Sweden to build collective resilience, which guarantees the functioning of society even in the face of serious threats.

Civil defence has three key objectives:

1. Protection of the civilian population;
2. Maintenance of essential societal functions;
3. Support for military defence as needed (Government Offices of Sweden, 2024b).

In practice, this means ensuring access to water, electricity, healthcare, food supplies, transport, and communications, while also strengthening the population's readiness to defend the country as a whole.

Individual preparedness is a vital element of this system. The Swedish authorities actively encourage households to prepare for living without electricity, water, or access to shops for a period ranging from a few days to one week. Practical instructions for this purpose are provided through the brochure 'If Crisis or War Comes,' prepared by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). This publication has also been issued in Ukrainian, among other languages. The more people are able to manage on their own, the more resources the state can direct toward helping those in the most difficult circumstances. This approach resonates with Ukraine: since 2022, millions of families have already been forced to adapt to life under wartime conditions, relying on their own initiative and mutual aid. Sweden, in turn, offers a systematized model for transforming these practices into a long-term civil defence policy.

Another cornerstone of this system is the **integration of state institutions**. In addition to the all-of-society approach, a 'whole-of-government' method is also applied (Ålander & Adamson, 2025). Sweden has identified 61 government agencies as authorities responsible for emergency preparedness, including 21 County Administrative Boards, which have been grouped into six civil regions (Government Offices of Sweden, 2024c). They coordinate activities across key preparedness sectors, including healthcare, logistics, cyber defence, and psychological resilience. For instance, the Psychological Defence Agency counters foreign information influence, while the National Cybersecurity Centre addresses digital threats (Swedish Psychological Defence Agency, 2023; National Cyber Security Centre, 2023). Such a multi-layered system meets the challenges of modern warfare, where information campaigns and cyberattacks are no less dangerous than armed strikes.

However, the heart of the Swedish system remains the voluntary defence organizations, one of which will be examined in greater detail in the next section. Voluntary defence organizations have existed for over a century and currently unite approximately 350,000 members of all ages across 18 organizations nationwide. Their areas of activity are exceptionally diverse, ranging from radio communications, logistics, and staff work to specialized skills such as canine search and rescue, parachute training, and motorcycle transport (MSB, 2025). Male and female volunteers undergo regular training, which guarantees their readiness in the event of a crisis.

Their activities are governed by the Ordinance on Voluntary Defence Activities (Ordinance 1994:524 on voluntary defence activities), which defines the legal framework for the functioning of such organizations, their structure, and their cooperation with state authorities. According to the law, voluntary defence organizations are non-political associations that operate on the basis of public participation and perform tasks related to the preparation and support of national defence. The law also mandates that these organizations maintain a nationwide presence and cooperate with both civilian authorities and the Swedish Armed Forces. To sustain their operations, they receive annual state support, which is directed toward training and administrative needs.

Significantly, the Swedish government emphasizes that membership in voluntary organizations is far more effective than spontaneous volunteering, as it ensures both proper training and integration into the system (Government Offices of Sweden, 2024d). At the same time, to mobilize additional resources, municipalities have established Voluntary Resource Groups (VRG). Their members assist with evacuations, information dissemination, water distribution, and providing first aid. They also coordinate the efforts of spontaneous volunteers to ensure their contributions are as effective as possible. In addition, religious communities and other civic associations play a significant role in Sweden. They provide psychological support, assist with housing, care for vulnerable groups, and help organize daily life during crises (Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities, 2024). This collaboration between the state and various societal institutions creates a truly comprehensive system of civil defence.

For Ukraine, where volunteering has become one of the primary factors of resilience during the war, the Swedish example is particularly valuable. Ukrainian society has already demonstrated extraordinary mobilization to support the front lines, ranging from self-organized defence groups to massive humanitarian initiatives. The task of the next stage is to institutionalize these practices, allowing volunteer energy to be transformed into a systemic foundation for civil defence.

Summary of Chapter 2

Thus, the Swedish experience demonstrates how to transition from fragmented mobilization to structured readiness, where civil resilience not only supports military defence but also protects civilians and ensures the continuity of government. Voluntary organizations are not merely an auxiliary mechanism but the cultural foundation of resilience in Sweden, and this approach directly resonates with Ukrainian realities.

However, Sweden has not yet had the opportunity to test the effectiveness of its entire Total defence system in the context of a large-scale war. At the same time, specific elements of the system — particularly the interaction between civil authorities, volunteers, and emergency services — have already been tested during crises, such as the massive wildfires of 2018 or major floods. Therefore, it is currently difficult to definitively assess how effectively this system would perform in a real-world crisis; however, its development demonstrates a proactive approach to enhancing national readiness.

The next section will examine one of Sweden's most prominent voluntary organizations — 'Svenska Lottakåren' — which demonstrates both the historical role of women in civil defence and the modern significance of gender inclusion in the security sector. This will allow for drawing parallels with the participation of Ukrainian women in civil and military defence and discussing how their role can be institutionalized within Ukraine's new system of Total defence. We will return to this topic in subsequent sections, which will analyze the architecture of civil defence in Ukraine.

CHAPTER 3. SVENSKA LOTTAKÅREN: SWEDEN'S AUXILIARY WOMEN'S DEFENCE CORPS

3.1 Case Study Analysis: Legal Framework, Functions, Responsibilities, and Organizational Programs

Svenska Lottakåren (The Swedish Women's Voluntary Defence Organization) is one of the oldest and most influential voluntary organizations in Sweden, uniting women to support national defence and civil security. The organization was founded in 1924, amidst a growing need for the organized participation of women in national security systems. From its very beginning, the organization combined a volunteer spirit with clear integration into state structures, while simultaneously maintaining its autonomy.

The legal basis for its activities is the possibility of formally involving women in defence and crisis response tasks through special agreements with state institutions. Today, Lottakåren collaborates with a range of key partners: the Swedish Armed Forces, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), and various municipalities. This cooperation spans a wide spectrum — from logistics and administrative support for military operations to civilian training, evacuation planning, and the delivery of information campaigns. It is institutionalized through memoranda, framework agreements, and state funding, ensuring transparency, accountability, and the high quality of its programs. The organization maintains financial and managerial autonomy while remaining accountable to relevant state agencies within the scope of programmatic cooperation; thus, it combines the flexibility of a volunteer movement with state standards for security and defence capability.

The primary mission of Svenska Lottakåren is to engage women in the national security system. The organization is open to all women aged 17 and older, regardless of their profession or place of residence, making it truly inclusive. This approach allows for the integration of women from various social groups, fostering a more balanced and resilient national security model.

A decentralized structure plays a vital role in this. Local branches (kårer) operate autonomously according to the needs of their communities: they organize education, training sessions, and events, and interact with regional authorities. At the same time, they coordinate with the national headquarters through a system of regional representatives, which allows for the consolidation of efforts at the national level. Governance is exercised by the National Board, which is elected by representatives from across the country. The Board defines strategic priorities, allocates the budget, approves operational plans, and coordinates cooperation with both national and international partners.

Membership in the organization can take various formats. Women can serve as active participants, involved in training and crisis response, or support the organization financially and participate in events as ambassadors. Additionally, there is honorary

membership for those who have made a significant contribution to the development of the civil security system.

The experience of Svenska Lottakåren is of particular value to Ukraine, as it demonstrates how a voluntary women's organization can be seamlessly integrated into the national security and civil protection system at an institutional level. This model combines several key elements that are highly relevant to the Ukrainian context.

Institutionalization of the volunteer movement

Ukraine has numerous volunteer initiatives, including women-led ones, that operate within the security sphere. The experience of Svenska Lottakåren shows that through the formalization of activities, the conclusion of agreements with state authorities, and stable funding, it is possible to ensure the sustainability and predictability of such structures.

Decentralized structure and regional coverage

For Ukraine, with its diverse regional security and crisis response needs, it is essential for organizations to be able to operate autonomously on the ground while remaining in coordination with the national center. This ensures a rapid response to local challenges.

Developing a personnel reserve

Through educational programs and the recruitment of new members, Svenska Lottakåren builds a trained reserve of specialists for crisis situations. For Ukraine, this could be beneficial in establishing a civil defence system that relies not only on professional personnel but also on trained civilians, significantly increasing crisis response capabilities.

Increasing trust between the state and the community

Formalized cooperation mechanisms, transparent funding, and accountability — inherent to Svenska Lottakåren — serve as effective tools for building trust in state institutions, a factor that is particularly relevant for Ukraine amidst the war and during post-war recovery.

3.2 An overview of the organization's training courses and identification of those adaptable to the Ukrainian context

The most critical element of the Lottakåren course system is the state commissioning mechanism, as all training programs serve as a model of effective partnership between state institutions and a non-governmental organization.

The course content, the list of required programs, and the training of instructors are determined jointly (Svenska Lottakåren, 2025). Crucially, the state maintains a needs monitoring system that allows for an assessment of how many civilians in various regions require training in specific skills.

Based on this data, the state issues a formal order to Lottakåren, after which the parties sign an agreement and approve budgetary funding, which is transferred to the organization to cover the costs of training activities.

As an organization, Lottakåren offers a wide range of educational opportunities that foster personal development, enabling members to contribute in various ways to strengthening both societal readiness and total defence.

The courses can be fundamentally divided into several categories:

Crisis response support: preparation for participation in civil defence staff operations and technical roles in crisis support.

Leadership and instructor programs: include instructor training for both civilian and military duties.

Civic education courses: covering democracy, human rights, the laws of war, and media literacy — essential for developing the cultural foundation of civil defence.

Courses adaptable to the Ukrainian context:

Staff training: a course aimed at developing participants' skills in staff operations, planning, and coordination during crisis situations. Participants master the fundamentals of resource management, decision documentation, and inter-agency cooperation. In the Ukrainian context, this could facilitate the creation of effective civilian reserves capable of bolstering state structures during military or humanitarian challenges.

Intelligence: focused on training in information security, the fundamentals of tactical intelligence, surveillance, and information gathering in conditions arising during conflicts, emergencies, or humanitarian crises. In Ukraine, such training could contribute to strengthening information security at the local level.

Logistics: the program focuses on organizing the supply, storage, and distribution of material resources under crisis conditions. It teaches how to plan logistics chains while considering the needs of various population groups, including vulnerable

categories. For Ukraine, this experience can enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian aid and ensure equitable and transparent distribution.

Field Kitchen: the course teaches participants to organize food provision for large numbers of people in field conditions, such as during training exercises, evacuations, or emergencies. In addition to technical skills, participants gain knowledge of safe food storage and hygiene. In the Ukrainian context, this may be useful for meeting the needs of internally displaced persons or during emergency evacuations from populated areas.

Youth Motivation: the programme includes methods of motivating young people, the organization of youth events, and the development of leadership skills. In Ukraine, such training may serve as a tool for fostering a socially conscious generation ready to contribute to building a secure state.

Girls' Camp: a specialized programme that creates a safe space for girls to develop leadership skills and gain knowledge about safety, cooperation, and self-defence. The course contributes to breaking down stereotypes about "male" and "female" roles in the security sector. For Ukraine, this could serve as an example of a gender-sensitive approach that encourages young girls to actively engage in social processes.

Civic Education: the course develops an understanding of democratic values, citizens' rights and responsibilities, as well as the role of society in supporting state resilience. Participants learn to think critically, identify disinformation, and engage in civic life. In Ukraine, this area can strengthen a culture of civic responsibility and trust in institutions.

3.3 Summary of Chapter 3

Svenska Lottakåren is not merely a historical example but an existing model for integrating women into the national security system.

With a resilient system grounded in legislative frameworks and formalized cooperation with state institutions, a decentralized model of governance and operations, and a reliable system for attracting funding and new members, the organization demonstrates a rapid response to local challenges and ensures the sustainability and effectiveness of its work.

For Ukraine, this experience is particularly valuable, as it demonstrates how a women's volunteer organization can operate effectively within the security system while both cooperating with the state and remaining independent, flexible, inclusive, and resilient to challenges.

The Lottakåren training system is a time-tested model of state-civil society partnership that combines the state's strategic needs in the field of civil defence with the expertise of a civil society organization. A key feature is the public commissioning mechanism, based on systematic monitoring of regional needs for specific civilian skills. This ensures the targeted focus and effectiveness of state-funded programmes.

The organization offers a comprehensive approach to training that covers both practical aspects of crisis response (logistics, intelligence, staff work) and the development of leadership skills, instructional competencies, and civic education.

In the Ukrainian context, the greatest potential lies in adapted programmes on staff training, tactical intelligence, logistics, and civic education, as well as in the systematic training of trainers to ensure the sustainability and development of educational programmes. This model demonstrates how effective partnerships between the state and civil society can be organized to strengthen societal resilience and resistance.

CHAPTER 4. UKRAINE: FROM CIVIL PROTECTION TO TOTAL defence

4.1 Legislative Foundations and the Transformation of Civil Protection into Total defence

The civil protection system in Ukraine is regulated by a number of legislative acts. These include the provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine, which enshrine citizens' right to life, the protection of life, health, property, and personal rights, as well as the responsibility of public officials to ensure the conditions for the realization of these rights (Constitution of Ukraine, 2006); and the Civil Protection Code of Ukraine, which defines civil protection as a function of the state and outlines the powers of state authorities and local self-government bodies, as well as the rights and obligations of citizens, enterprises, institutions, and organizations in this field (Civil Protection Code, 2012).

Chapter 10 of this legislative act contains a number of provisions regarding the organization of public action in emergencies. Article 39 defines the powers of the entities responsible for public awareness activities. In particular, Part 2 of this article states that "the organization of training for both able-bodied and non-able-bodied populations is entrusted to central executive authorities, local state administrations, and local self-government bodies, which develop and approve the relevant organizational and methodological guidelines and programmes for preparing the population for such actions" (Civil Protection Code, 2012: 56).

The entities responsible for providing civil protection education to preschool- and school-age children, as well as higher education students, are the institutions and organizations under the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Part 5 of this article specifies that civil society organizations may also organize training in accordance with their statutes.

The legislation (Part 1 of Article 40) establishes mandatory training only for the employed population. Such training must be conducted during working hours and at the employer's expense, under programmes for preparing the population to act in emergencies, as well as during special facility-based civil protection exercises and drills (Civil Protection Code, 2012: 59).

Part 1 of Article 42 states that the non-employed population is expected to acquire civil protection knowledge independently. The source of such self-education is to be "information and reference materials on civil protection, fire safety rules in everyday life and public places" (Civil Protection Code, 2012: 60). The non-employed population has the right to receive, through the media and from state authorities and local self-government bodies, visual materials and information about emergencies in whose zones, or in zones of potential impact, they may find themselves, as well as

information on methods of protection from hazardous factors caused by such emergencies (Civil Protection Code, 2012: 60).

Despite the fact that Part 2 of Article 42 mandates the establishment of advisory points and the designation of persons responsible for organizing their work (Civil Protection Code, 2012: 60), this approach remains largely formal. As a result, a portion of the adult population is not covered by civil protection awareness activities at the legislative level. The methods and formats of training are defined as conditional and formal, and are predominantly oriented toward the acquisition of a certain body of theoretical knowledge.

In particular, the legislation identifies the following training methods as priorities: the development of organizational and methodological guidelines (Part 2 of Article 39); the establishment of information and reference corners on civil protection (Part 3 of Article 40); mandatory briefings for persons performing work associated with increased civil risk (Part 4 of Article 40); mandatory briefings for persons performing work associated with increased civil risk (Part 4 of Article 40); and the organization of competitions among children and youth to promote a culture of safety (Part 2 of Article 41) (Civil Protection Code, 2012: 59–61).

The established civil protection system proved insufficiently adapted to wartime conditions. This model was developed in peacetime and accordingly reflected its security risks and needs. The focus was placed on natural and technological disasters rather than on large-scale missile strikes, hostilities, or the evacuation of civilians from combat zones.

The shift in the security model was partially reflected in the Law of Ukraine “On National Security of Ukraine,” adopted in 2018. This law became the foundation for the development of territorial defence and voluntary community formations, with an emphasis on civilian resilience (maintaining the viability of society during wartime, including evacuation, cyber protection, food security, etc.). According to its provisions (Article 12(1)), the security and defence sector of Ukraine, in addition to the defence forces, security forces, and defence-industrial complex facilities, also includes citizens and civil society associations that voluntarily participate in ensuring national security (Law of Ukraine “On National Security,” 2018: 4).

The issue of actively engaging local authorities and citizens in civil protection is reflected in the Law of Ukraine “On the Foundations of National Resistance,” adopted in 2021. The legal provisions of this Law, in particular Article 1(10) and Article 3(2), define the purpose and objectives of preparing citizens for national resistance (of which civilian preparedness is a component)². In particular, this concerns the role of

² The term “civilian preparedness” does not have a clear definition in Ukrainian legislation. However, there are semantically related concepts that interpret civilian preparedness as the capacity to respond quickly and appropriately to threats, emergencies, and crises, to eliminate (or minimize) their consequences, and to implement a комплекс of preventive measures (planning, education, training) (Terminological Dictionary-Reference Book in the Field of National Resilience [comp. O. Reznikova, K. Voitovskyi]. Kyiv: NISS, 202: 15). In the Swedish concept of total defence, the term “civilian preparedness” is one of the core notions and refers to a component of civil defence whereby society as a whole (state

state authorities and local self-government in fostering a civic stance and sustained motivation among the population, as well as in enabling the acquisition of the knowledge and practical skills necessary for the defence of the country. Article 23(1) states that the financing and logistical support of national resistance are to be provided from and within the limits of the State Budget of Ukraine, local budgets, and other sources not prohibited by Ukrainian legislation (Law of Ukraine “On National Resistance,” 2022).

Both systems — the national resistance framework and the civil protection system — are aimed at preserving human life and ensuring the functioning of communities in responding to threats (military, technological, and humanitarian). Thus, Article 1(8) of the Law defines national resistance as “a set of measures organized and implemented with the aim of supporting the defence of Ukraine through the broadest possible involvement of citizens of Ukraine in actions aimed at ensuring military security, state sovereignty and territorial integrity, deterring and repelling aggression, and inflicting irreparable losses on the adversary” (Law of Ukraine “On National Resistance,” 2022: 3).

An example of the practical implementation of the above-mentioned legislative acts is Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 478 of 18 April 2025, “On the Functioning of Citizen Training Centres for National Resistance.” In particular, using the Kyiv City Centre for Training Citizens for National Resistance as a case, the Resolution establishes the procedures and the model statute for this municipal organization (Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 478 of 18 April 2025).

Within the national security domain, civil protection constitutes one of the key components. Researchers argue that the categories of “national security” and “defence” are closely related and interconnected, particularly in defining the institutional tasks of state authorities. At the same time, important distinctions exist between them: in performing its defence function, the state only partially ensures national security, thereby covering its basic and core aspects and “creating for it the minimally necessary level of resilience. Indeed, without addressing defence issues and without guaranteeing the state’s legal subjectivity, it will be impossible to ensure the other components of national security” (Bohutskyi, Hryhorenko, Zhuravel, 2021: 38).

Overall, the Ukrainian system distinguishes between “military defence” and “civil protection” without integrating them into a unified mechanism, which reduces the effectiveness of response and increases the vulnerability of the population under conditions of total threat.

Understanding the relationship between national security, defence, and civil protection makes it possible to see that approaches to organizing the population protection system have not only a practical but also an ideological dimension. The

authorities, municipalities, private companies, civil society organizations, and citizens) prepares for war (New total defence resolution Sweden. <https://www.government.se/press-releases/2024/10/new-total-defence-resolution-for-a-stronger-sweden/>)

principles of civil protection currently in place were largely shaped within the framework of Soviet ideological doctrine.

Ukraine's civil protection model evolved from the Soviet civil defence system, whose purpose was to protect the population from the consequences of armed actions and disasters. It was based on total state monopoly: the state as the sole governing subject, and the citizen as the object of protection. Its key flaw is its reactive nature — it is designed not to prevent but to eliminate consequences. This principle is embedded in the terminology of the Code — “elimination of the consequences of emergencies,” “evacuation,” “rescue” — while the concept of “preparedness” is largely absent (Civil Protection Code, 2012: 60).

The system operates only after a crisis situation has occurred.

Another problem in the functioning of the civil protection system is the monopolization of competencies: the State Emergency Service (SES) is concentrated on executive functions, while local communities lack autonomy to develop their own resilience mechanisms. As a result, institutional helplessness emerges — each level awaits orders “from above,” whereas contemporary crises require rapid response and independent decision-making.

“The SES motto is ‘prevent, rescue, assist.’ Even here, you can read this underlying strategy—that there is an institution that assumes responsibility. In other words, you are not responsible for what happens to you... And it is very difficult to bring any Ukrainian SES leader back to the idea that there is a society and that society must be a partner in this... What shocked me was that I did not encounter the word ‘society’ even once in the Ukrainian Civil Protection Code. There is ‘population,’ there is ‘property,’ there is ‘territory,’ but there is no word ‘society.’ And this already illustrates the Ukrainian and Swedish paradigms in the development of civil protection.” (Leader of a civil society organization providing civilian preparedness training based on Swedish methodologies, Interview 18).

Overall, this also points to the absence of the concept of “civilian preparedness” as part of the civil protection system. In Ukraine, civil protection remains a response service rather than an institution of resilience. The legislation does not provide for broad mechanisms of public participation, population preparedness, or local autonomy that are central to contemporary concepts of total defence.

Despite outward modernization, Ukrainian legislation has only administratively streamlined the old system without changing its paradigm.

The practical incapacity of this model became evident during the large-scale invasion by the Russian aggressor. The illusion of formal preparedness, the lack of systemic decentralization, and the absence of partnership with the population all point to its ineffectiveness. At the same time, in wartime conditions citizens are in practice

demonstrating the principles of total defence by creating local alert systems, humanitarian aid networks, and volunteer groups, as well as initiating training in civilian preparedness. Current wartime experiences are pushing state institutions and society toward a shift from the civil protection concept to the concept of total defence.

The conceptual foundations of this transition are reflected in the Military Security Strategy of Ukraine, approved by Presidential Decree No. 121/2021 in 2021. The document defines “total defence” as “the use of all available resources of the state and society in defence — not only the armed forces but also the economy, infrastructure, population, and governance systems” (Military Security Strategy of Ukraine, 2021). This approach entails establishing effective interaction among different components: defence, information security, the economy, and society. Accordingly, the state mobilizes all resources — human, institutional, and material — not only in wartime but also in peacetime for deterrence, prevention, and resilience-building, with a focus on developing the population’s civilian preparedness to respond effectively to threats and crises and to recover from them.

The shift from civil protection (response) to total defence (prevention + resilience) represents a transformation of the social contract: the state ceases to function as a monopolistic guardian and instead becomes a coordinator of a partnership-based, decentralized defence system that includes both military and non-military components (Military Security Strategy of Ukraine, 2021).

Building an effective total defence system requires not only institutional reform but also a transformation of societal approaches to security. In this context, it is important to take into account the gender dimension of security, as an effective civilian preparedness system must ensure equal opportunities for the participation of women and men and respond to the specific needs of different social groups in crisis situations. The gender dimension of security thus becomes a key indicator of the maturity of contemporary defence policy, as it reveals the extent to which the system is capable of integrating the full human potential — not only formally but also in practice.

Despite the fact that Ukrainian legislation proclaims equal rights of women and men to security and protection of life, the legislation governing civil protection lacks a gender perspective. Although UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” obliges states to ensure women’s participation in security and protection decision-making and to take their needs into account in civil protection planning, Ukrainian legislation has not yet implemented these principles.

Formally, women and men have equal rights and obligations regarding participation in civilian preparedness measures; however, in practice, women’s specific needs in crisis and wartime conditions remain overlooked — particularly the right to protection and access to training. The law provides for mandatory training for the employed and the right to self-education for the non-employed; consequently, women, who more often perform caregiving roles, are less covered by systematic training. The provisions

also fail to account for needs during evacuation (pregnant women, mothers with young children, older women), which creates risks in the planning of shelters, routes, and humanitarian support.

During the war, women have been actively joining volunteer formations, territorial defence bodies, and volunteer initiatives; however, their role is not articulated in the regulatory framework. There are no dedicated support or professional training programmes for women in the fields of crisis management and civil protection.

Therefore, legislative updates are needed to take into account contemporary wartime threats, to shift from formal to practical training, and to integrate women into the civilian preparedness system (as a component of total defence). This also involves defining mechanisms for organizing flexible training formats (online courses, evening trainings, distance programmes) for women with caregiving responsibilities.

At the legislative level, it is advisable to establish requirements for evacuation plans that take into account the needs of women with children, pregnant women, and persons with disabilities, and to introduce standards for shelter arrangements (sanitary conditions, accessibility, child-friendly spaces) reflecting the needs of women and their families. It is also necessary to expand the mandates of civil society organizations in the fields of training and public awareness, while ensuring state funding for the relevant programmes.

The adoption of new legislative acts in itself does not guarantee a real shift in approaches. What matters is how these initiatives function in practice and whether they ensure the strengthening of total defence, the engagement of citizens in civilian preparedness, the development of local resilience mechanisms, and the integration of gender aspects of security. These issues are examined in the following subsection.

4.2 Implementing Total defence Principles in Practice

The study examined the experience of engaging citizens in civilian preparedness and incorporating gender aspects of security across communities in different regions of Ukraine. The selection of communities was based on differentiated characteristics—demographic parameters (population size)³, geographic factors (distance from the combat zone), and infrastructural considerations (presence of strategic facilities). The qualitative component of the study included 37 in-depth interviews. Geographically, the interviews covered respondents from different regions of Ukraine, including Khmelnytskyi, Kyiv, Lviv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Rivne, Odesa, and Zakarpattia oblasts. The survey included residents of territorial communities in the capital, regional centres (Lviv, Odesa, Khmelnytskyi, Sumy), as well as the cities of Romny, Kamianets-Podilskyi, Novodnistrovsk, Shepetivka, Starokostiantyniv, Netishyn, Tiachiv, Pereiaslav-Khmelnytskyi, and the villages of Kipti and Vovchok (Chernihiv oblast), Pishcha (Volyn oblast), Antonivtsi and Stara Ushytsia (Khmelnytskyi oblast), and Mylivtsi (Rivne oblast). Based on the criterion of the presence of strategic facilities, the sample included communities hosting the following: a nuclear power plant (Netishyn), a hydroelectric power plant (Novodnistrovsk), military infrastructure facilities (Shepetivka, Starokostiantyniv), and the border zone with the Republic of Belarus (Mylivtsi, Pishcha). The interview findings indicate that residents of most communities perceive the organisation of total defence narrowly, primarily as an administrative response to a range of threats and as the implementation of a set of measures to ensure the safety of life and health. These include the organisation of bomb shelters, population evacuation, provision of humanitarian assistance, and maintenance of essential services. Only some communities have organised civilian preparedness training. These are primarily trainings in tactical medicine, mine safety, psychological resilience, resilience more broadly, and weapons handling. The organisation of survival courses, chemical safety training, and tactical training in certain communities remains rather the exception.

Most educational initiatives in civilian preparedness are fragmented in nature and focused on short-term training. While these formats undoubtedly enhance the individual capacity of citizens to act in extreme conditions, they do not build a comprehensive system of societal resilience, which is one of the key features of the total defence concept.

The level of civilian preparedness varies significantly across communities. Urban communities tend to have better-developed training infrastructure, including Centres for Citizen Training in National Resistance, Civilian Preparedness Centres, and training programmes run by charitable foundations, civil society organisations, and the Red Cross. In contrast, small rural communities remain outside systematic training programmes, indicating inequality in access to security-related knowledge and practices.

³ Ukrainian legislation does not establish officially codified criteria for classifying communities by population size. According to the government portal DECENTRALIZATION (accessed 09.09.2025), communities are categorized as small (up to 5,000 residents), medium (5,000 to 15,000 residents), large (15,000 to 25,000 residents), and very large (over 25,000 residents).

In the development of the total defence model, the active engagement of citizens plays a key role. Interview participants note that their proactive stance often compensates for the lack of state initiatives and resources.

“If we have a neighbour like this, we must be prepared in every respect—not only in medicine, but also in terms of coordination, security, and absolutely everything.”

(Head of a settlement community who organised civilian preparedness training for women, Interview 12).

“In the organisation of civil protection, due credit should be given to civil society... the key is not to be lazy and to stay proactive. Remember how society came together in the first months of the full-scale war. By contrast, there is now a serious risk that people have grown accustomed and no longer respond adequately to danger.”

(Community leader, Interview 11).

Local resilience mechanisms are being formed through civic engagement, partnerships with authorities, and volunteer involvement, indicating a transition toward a comprehensive defence model. However, this transition remains largely bottom-up in nature and therefore requires strategic state support and institutional alignment.

Overall, Ukrainian society is at an early stage of transitioning to a comprehensive defence model: communities are gradually assuming the role of training organizers, partnerships between authorities and civil society are taking shape, and the role of volunteer initiatives is growing.

Institutional providers of training include Centers for Preparing Citizens for National Resistance, Civil Protection Centers, military units, civil society organizations, and donor structures. They develop emergency response plans — from wartime contingencies to natural disasters — while also providing methodological frameworks and material support for trainings. These organizations contribute to raising citizens' awareness and advancing women's leadership in the security sector.

“If we compare war to COVID, back then one could fight it individually by following hygiene measures and so on, but during wartime mass vaccination is required. I would say that national resistance is a kind of vaccination against war, against disaster, against death. During the war, we give a person strength; we help them believe that in our country any girl can pick up a pistol, load it, and fire a shot” (Head of the Regional Center for Preparing Citizens for National Resistance, Interview 23).

Institutions organizing civil preparedness training not only disseminate knowledge but also shape a new culture of security within society. The results of interviews with representatives of these organizations indicate that including women as full-fledged security actors is a prerequisite for building a resilient society and an effective

comprehensive defence system. Without women's participation in civil preparedness programmes, it is impossible to build a resilient society. Organizers link future development prospects to the training of women instructors, the establishment of permanent training centers, and the development of unified training standards and digital educational resources.

4.3 Summary of Chapter 4

Ukraine's civil protection system remains largely centralized. Its conceptual framework still relies on the Soviet paradigm of state paternalism, in which citizens are viewed not as active security actors but as objects of protection. The transition to a comprehensive defence model initiated after 2021 entails not only updating the regulatory framework but also a profound transformation of the social contract — from state monopolism to partnership between the state and society.

The transition from the civil protection model to comprehensive defence is currently at a formative stage. Its success depends on the state's ability to combine reforms in this area with genuine support for civic initiatives, to integrate a gender perspective into security policy, and to develop a culture of civil preparedness as a shared responsibility of the state and society.

The study findings indicate that communities are the key drivers of this transformation, effectively implementing the principles of comprehensive defence from the bottom up. Their local initiatives are what ensure real resilience and the practical preparedness of the population. At the same time, the state has not yet created systemic conditions for scaling up these practices — sustainable mechanisms for coordination, financing, and educational integration remain absent.

The gender dimension of security requires particular attention. Women are active participants in volunteer and educational initiatives; however, the current legislation does not take into account their specific needs and development potential. The absence of gender-sensitive approaches in the planning of evacuation measures, training programmes, and awareness-raising policies reduces the overall effectiveness of the comprehensive defence system.

CHAPTER 5. WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN CIVIL READINESS AS A COMPONENT OF TOTAL defence

5.1 Social Motivations and Challenges to Women's Participation in the Civil Readiness System

The transition from a centralized civil protection concept to a comprehensive defence model opens a new dimension for Ukrainian society — the dimension of civic participation. Whereas security was previously understood as the exclusive function of the state, it is now increasingly perceived as a shared responsibility of the state, communities, and citizens.

The inclusion of women in the civil preparedness system is not only a matter of gender equality but also a condition for societal effectiveness and resilience. Women are not only a driving force behind numerous local initiatives but also organizers of various mutual aid communities and leadership efforts. In crisis situations, women often perform care functions, support vulnerable groups, and coordinate everyday processes. Their participation expands the boundaries of the traditional understanding of security — from purely military and technical actions to social cohesion, trust, and community recovery. This directly corresponds to paragraph 17 of the Military Security Strategy of Ukraine, which states that “comprehensive defence предусматривает participation of citizens in defence preparedness and the strengthening of societal resilience” (Military Security Strategy of Ukraine, 2021). The inclusion of women in civil preparedness training, crisis response, and volunteer networks transforms the traditional model of “state security” into one of “civic security,” grounded in mutual responsibility, trust, and local initiative.

Women's experience makes it possible not only to broaden the scope of security but also to imbue it with a human, value-based dimension.

Women's motivations for participating in civil preparedness activities often combine personal responsibility with social solidarity. For many women, this is a way to realize their civic position, acquire practical self-defence and family protection skills, and contribute to a common cause. Interview participants' responses revealed a wide range of motivations, from simple interest in educational content to a conscious need to acquire essential knowledge, enhance personal safety, and fulfill professional needs. Some respondents indicated their intention to gain new knowledge and practical skills in order to use them for participation in combat.

Women highlighted the usefulness of the knowledge they had acquired and provided examples of its application in everyday practices, emphasizing the importance of developing practical skills.

“Because, you see, there is the golden hour and the ten platinum minutes, as we say — this is the most critical time for providing pre-medical care. In other words, bleeding must be stopped very

***quickly; time is literally measured in seconds, half a minute, and it can be a critical hemorrhage, and the person may no longer be saved”
(participant in civil preparedness training, Interview 7).***

Interview participants noted that they give preference to the professional experience of those who delivered the training. They reported gaining knowledge, experience, and valuable impressions from interacting and communicating with highly qualified specialists and practitioners.

***“I gained more than I expected. The guys there are truly very smart, very responsible, and experienced. It was very interesting to communicate and even to learn that kind of behavior, that strength of spirit — not only from people with combat experience, but simply from people of great inner strength... So there was both moral admiration, positive emotions, and valuable experience”
(participant in civil preparedness training, Interview 1).***

Most women believe that civil preparedness training should be regarded as their right rather than an obligation. They argued that individuals should be free to choose what they are most interested in, what aligns with their aptitudes, and the areas in which they already possess professional and life experience. Anything that becomes an obligation runs counter to a person’s will and is therefore perceived negatively. Not every individual is required to be capable of confronting all societal challenges and risks. However, if a woman seeks to be an active participant in public life and is capable of influencing what happens around her, she should be encouraged to move in the direction that interests her and in which she already has knowledge and experience. Therefore, the case for civil preparedness training and women’s participation in it should be built on interest and awareness of its necessity. Respondents emphasize that coercion is unlikely to work: if a person is simply not interested, she will not invest her time.

Interview participants identified the need for the systematic completion of civil preparedness courses, as knowledge quickly loses its practical value if not applied (and skills therefore need to be practiced periodically). Systematic training is also advisable given the rapid development of new technologies, which requires continuous updating of knowledge in line with emerging innovations.

During training, women encounter a range of barriers: gender stereotypes that undermine their perceived capacity to serve as leaders or instructors in the security sector; care responsibilities (children, elderly relatives) that limit their ability to participate in standard training formats; the formalism of institutional approaches, where women are viewed more as a “risk group” than as equal participants in the security process; and the limited availability of civil preparedness programmes in communities, including the lack of flexible schedules and adapted training materials.

“We always tend to think that I cannot do something on the same level as men, that I am weaker, or that I have less

experience. But in reality, once you start working during the training, it often turns out that this is not the case at all” (participant in civil preparedness training, Interview 6).

Despite the presence of positive experiences, some respondents drew attention to difficulties in meeting the required standards, particularly where physical fitness and endurance had to be demonstrated.

Overcoming the identified barriers is possible only through a comprehensive approach that combines state policy, local governance, and civic initiatives. This entails the need to institutionalize gender-oriented approaches in the security sector — from the development of training programmes and courses to the creation of flexible participation conditions for women with care responsibilities. It is also important to revise training formats by introducing short modules, online courses, and mobile training teams, which would enable the engagement of a broader group of participants.

The creation of a support and knowledge-sharing network among communities, training centers, volunteer groups, and civil society organizations is highly relevant. It is through horizontal linkages that a new culture of security is formed — from mutual assistance to partnership. Overcoming barriers to women’s participation in the civil preparedness system is not only a matter of equal opportunities but also a prerequisite for building social resilience and democratic security governance.

Women’s civil society organizations and initiatives play a significant role in this process, as they are already developing practical models for training, coordination, and support. They are becoming key intermediaries between the state and society, shaping a new architecture of comprehensive defence — human-centered, inclusive, and grounded in trust and mutual support.

5.2 Women's Grassroots Initiatives in Civil Readiness: From Ad Hoc Practices to Systemic Models

Women's civil society organizations in Ukraine play an important role in shaping civil preparedness practices at the local level. They fill institutional gaps in the state civil protection system by combining training, awareness-raising, psychological support, and leadership development among women.

In recent years, Ukraine has seen the emergence of a unique experience among women's civil society organizations implementing educational projects on women's civil preparedness. Among the most notable initiatives are:

The **NGO Ukrainian Women's Guard (Kyiv)** has been implementing the programme "On Guard of Yourself, Your Family, and Your Country" for over 10 years, through which women acquire skills in tactical medicine, mine risk awareness, psychological support, tactical training, survival in extreme conditions, as well as economic resilience and financial stability. The organization maintains its own information resources and communication channels.

The **NGO League of Modern Women (Sumy)** has in recent years implemented the projects "Informed and Protected" and "Safe Space for Women and Girls," through which women acquire knowledge and skills in preventing gender-based violence, strengthening psychological resilience, and learning the basics of financial stability and first aid.

The **NGO Studio of Women's Civic Initiatives (Myrhorod)** focuses its educational activities on women from remote rural communities and implements the project "Rural Women: United for Security," through which participants acquire knowledge and skills in tactical medicine, psychological support, and economic security.

The **NGO Right of Communities (Romny, Sumy region)** implements local educational projects that combine practical training in tactical medicine, psychological resilience, leadership, self-defence, inclusive security, and crisis response.

The **NGO Kipti Women's Union (Kipti village, Chernihiv region)** implements within its community the project "Safe Community — Happy Woman," through which women are introduced to the basics of first aid, mine risk awareness, psychological resilience, and financial stability.

In most cases, their activities unfold not because of state policy but despite it, driven by the energy of local women leaders and horizontal ties between communities. Training projects are usually conducted on a volunteer basis or operate with limited funding, often relying on grant resources. Financing projects through contributions from individual participants is also not a sustainable solution. The lack of funding periodically forces a number of projects to pause and, in some cases, leads to their discontinuation.

Despite limited funding and the absence of coordination, these civil society organizations are developing practical models of local security that fill institutional gaps in the state civil protection system. In practice, they implement the principle of “citizen participation in comprehensive defence” set out in Section IV of the Military Security Strategy, which states that state resilience is ensured through the interaction of public authorities, communities, and civil society (Military Security Strategy).

In their work, these organizations rely on the principle that **training is not coercion but interaction**. Interactive and training-based learning methodologies are widely used in their activities. Women’s mutual aid clubs are being established to build circles of trust among women and girls.

Methods and formats of adult education based on the Swedish model (drawing on the experience of Scandinavian folk high schools) are gaining wider use, alongside original methods and approaches (the interactive game “Mission Accomplished” by the NGO *League of Modern Women*; the meeting format “Coffee with a Police Officer” by the NGO *Kipti Women’s Union*), among others.

Self-directed learning methodologies and the personal experience of participants are actively used in the training process. The involvement of women veterans as trainers plays an important role, providing participants with real-life behavioral models in crisis situations, challenging stereotypes, and producing a therapeutic effect. Their experience can help dismantle stereotypes by demonstrating that women are capable of performing the same tasks as men. Women veterans acquire a new social role as mentors, rather than being seen solely as those who have “been through the war.” Working with civilian women enables the formation of horizontal communities that help address crises in peacetime.

This experience is more tangible than theoretical instruction. The transfer of experience can become a therapeutic practice that supports the rethinking of one’s personal trajectory and facilitates reintegration into civilian life. Such initiatives create communities of trust that strengthen psychological resilience and prepare communities to act in times of crisis.

Equal access for women to the knowledge, skills, and resources required for effective participation in civil protection, emergency response, and recovery is grounded in avoiding the stereotypical portrayal of women as an exclusively vulnerable group.

At the same time, there are few training programmes specifically tailored to vulnerable groups of women. As a rule, they are implemented in cooperation with civil society organizations working in the field of inclusive support, with charitable foundations, and in response to requests from state institutions, in particular the State Emergency Service of Ukraine and the National Police of Ukraine.

Among the challenges in organizing civil preparedness training for women in communities is the influence of stereotypical perceptions that limit women’s opportunities and reinforce biased attitudes. These entrenched views may stem from cultural traditions, historical narratives, media representations, and socialization

processes. Women are expected, first and foremost, to be homemakers, mothers, and wives. Their perceived role is to give birth to and raise children. Because domestic labour is often regarded in societal beliefs as secondary, women may develop a sense of guilt for not meeting others' expectations — for example, when they struggle to balance professional work and household responsibilities.

***“From what I see, it is still inequality within families. Women carry a great many obligations — slavery may have been abolished, but not in people’s minds”
(leader of a women’s organization implementing civil preparedness training projects for women, Interview 20).***

It is important to note that a significant share of the population during wartime — especially in rural communities — exists on the brink of survival, which is a major factor behind low motivation to participate in training. Respondents report that when their thoughts are focused on where to find money, they simply lack the energy for other activities.

Another problem is the shortage of qualified specialists, which ultimately results in limited population coverage by training and deteriorates its quality, making it partly formal due to trainers' overload.

Institutional support for civil preparedness projects remains insufficient due to the lack of systemic coordination, funding, and human resources. Civil preparedness issues are often fragmented across different agencies. As a result, the absence of unified coordination leads either to duplication or, conversely, to gaps in implementation. It is precisely through partnerships between state institutions (the State Emergency Service, the National Police, local self-government bodies) and women's CSOs that a new security architecture is taking shape — one grounded in trust, horizontal linkages, and readiness to act in crisis situations.

Thus, women's CSO initiatives on civil preparedness remain largely local, driven by women leaders' enthusiasm and grant funding. State support is absent, cooperation with authorities is ad hoc, and coordination among CSOs is limited. Training modules are fragmented and non-standardized, with no certification mechanisms.

Women's civil society organizations are increasingly seeking partnerships with public authorities, the State Emergency Service, the National Police, international donors, and local communities. These partnerships demonstrate that, with systematic support, women's initiatives can become an institutional pillar of comprehensive defence and civilian preparedness.

The transition from fragmented practices to systemic models requires: the establishment of a state programme to support women's initiatives in the field of comprehensive defence; the formation of a national network of women trainers and volunteers; the provision of sustainable funding and the integration of such projects into comprehensive defence policy; and the recognition of women's civil society organizations as state partners in the fields of security and recovery.

5.3 Summary of Chapter 5

Engaging women in the civil preparedness system is a strategic necessity for a state at war. Their crisis readiness reduces family vulnerability, strengthens psychological preparedness, and integrates a gender perspective into comprehensive defence policy and practice. Women's community leadership reinforces horizontal trust networks — essential for wartime resilience.

Based on the analysis of women's initiatives, the following key directions of state policy should be integrated into the implementation of the Military Security Strategy of Ukraine:

Institutionalization of women's initiatives — to provide within state programmes on national resilience a dedicated support stream for civil society organizations engaged in civil preparedness.

Establishment of a national network of women civil preparedness trainers. Such a structure could be incorporated into the implementation of territorial defence plans as a voluntary component.

Gender integration into military policy.

Taking into account the National Action Plan on “Women, Peace and Security” (2022–2025), the role of women as trainers, leaders, and analysts in the field of civil security should be strengthened.

Systematization and standardization of training programmes.

It is important to introduce a unified state standard for preparing the population to act in emergencies, with dedicated modules for women and families.

The Military Security Strategy of Ukraine (2021) establishes a regulatory framework within which the women's civil society sector can obtain institutional recognition and state support. The further development of this area should rely on state–civil society partnership integrated into the comprehensive defence system, as well as on the recognition of women as active security actors rather than merely a vulnerable group.

Ukraine does not yet have its own analogue of *Svenska Lottakåren*; however, there is already a critical mass of women's initiatives that collectively perform similar functions — training, supporting, coordinating, and inspiring. Their work demonstrates that women are not merely a “vulnerable group” but a key resource for national security.

Systemic support for these organizations can transform the “chaos of enthusiasm” into an institutional pillar of comprehensive defence, creating a Ukrainian model of *Lottakåren of the 21st century* built on the principles of equality, civic engagement, local resilience, and trust between the state and communities.

Thus, women's civil society organizations are becoming not only agents of support in crisis situations but also a foundation of Ukraine's new security culture — one that combines professionalism, solidarity, and humanity.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the Swedish experience shows that an effective national security system relies not only on military capability but also on the active participation of civil society. In Sweden, comprehensive defence is based on the principle of shared responsibility, whereby the state, communities, and citizens jointly ensure resilience and crisis response.

For Ukraine, this approach is not only relevant but also realistic, given the strong volunteer movement and active communities that are already effectively implementing its elements. The next step is to institutionalize this participation and create legal and financial mechanisms for cooperation between the state, communities, and civil society organizations.

The experience of *Svenska Lottakåren* confirms that the gender component enhances the effectiveness of civil defence. Formalized state partnerships with women's volunteer communities strengthen both the security system and social cohesion. Their decentralized governance model, state-commissioned training, and promotion of women's leadership constitute important reference points for Ukraine in reforming its security system.

At the same time, Ukraine's civil protection system requires further decentralization, openness to civic initiatives, and the integration of a gender perspective into civil protection policy. Today, real resilience is being built "from below," at the community level, where communities assume functions of self-organization, crisis response, and support for the Armed Forces. The state's task is not to replace these initiatives but to support, scale up, and embed them within the overall architecture of comprehensive defence.

Thus, Ukraine's transition to a comprehensive defence model should rest on three interrelated pillars:

1. **Institutionalization of civic participation** — through formal mechanisms of cooperation, financing, and training.
2. **A decentralized governance structure** — capable of responding оперативно to regional needs.
3. **Integration of the gender dimension** — as a means of enhancing the effectiveness, fairness, and inclusiveness of the security system.

The development of comprehensive defence is not only a matter of legislation or institutions but, above all, a new social contract between the state and its citizens, based on partnership, trust, and shared responsibility for security.

6.1. PROPOSAL FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SWEDISH SYSTEM IN UKRAINE

In the Ukrainian context, the inertia of the post-Soviet approach to civil protection of the population still persists — a centralized, hierarchical system in which the state acts as the primary actor while citizens remain largely passive recipients of protection. This approach is enshrined in the 2012 Civil Protection Code of Ukraine, which reflects a logic of emergency management rather than comprehensive societal defence.

In contrast, the participatory model of civil defence, characteristic of Sweden and other Nordic countries, is based on the active involvement of citizens in ensuring the resilience of both the state and local communities.

Given this fundamental difference, the following recommendations should be considered through the lens of Ukraine's transition from the model of "civil protection of the population" to "civil defence" — that is, from centralized response to shared, society-oriented responsibility for security.

Based on the results of the desk research, the representative survey (omnibus), and a series of interviews, we have developed practical recommendations aimed at strengthening Ukraine's defence capability.

A concise characterization of Sweden's comprehensive defence system (*Totalförsvaret*) can be captured in one key word — readiness. The essence of this system lies in the fact that every actor — from an individual citizen to a ministry or an entire sector — clearly understands their responsibilities in the event of a threat. A key feature of the system is its universality: it is designed to respond to any type of crisis, including military aggression, cyberattacks, pandemics, terrorist acts, or natural disasters. The greatest advantage of the Swedish model is its continuous real-world testing and ongoing improvement.

However, despite the clear advantages of Sweden's holistic approach, the full-scale implementation of a similar system in Ukraine is challenging due to economic instability and limited financial resources amid the ongoing war.

Thus, the optimal path for Ukraine is to adapt selected elements of the Swedish model, particularly those that can be implemented under martial law and are grounded in existing frameworks and practices. For example, this may include integrating civil-military cooperation mechanisms, strengthening volunteer networks, and improving the public alert system.

The results of the representative survey conducted within this study indicate that the potential for civic engagement in Ukraine is high; however, the level of preparedness remains insufficient. Only 14.7% of respondents have undergone any civil defence training since the start of the full-scale war, while 85% have had no such experience.

AFTER THE START OF THE FULL-SCALE WAR, DID YOU TAKE PART IN CIVIL DEFENSE TRAINING AND COURSES?

90% - No, I didn't pass.

10% - Yes, passed

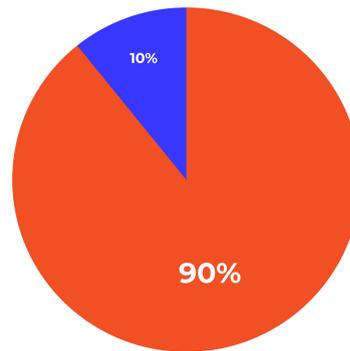


Figure 6.1. Women's experience in civil defence training since the start of the full-scale war

AFTER THE START OF THE FULL-SCALE WAR, DID YOU TAKE PART IN CIVIL DEFENSE TRAINING AND COURSES?

20% - No, I didn't pass.

80% - Yes, passed

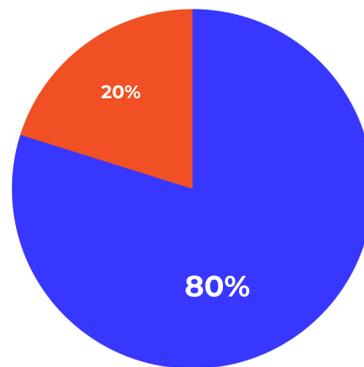


Figure 6.2. Men's experience in civil defence training since the start of the full-scale war

The 30–39 age group demonstrated the highest participation in training sessions, with an attendance rate of 24%.

AGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO RECEIVED CIVIL DEFENSE TRAINING DURING A FULL-SCALE INVASION

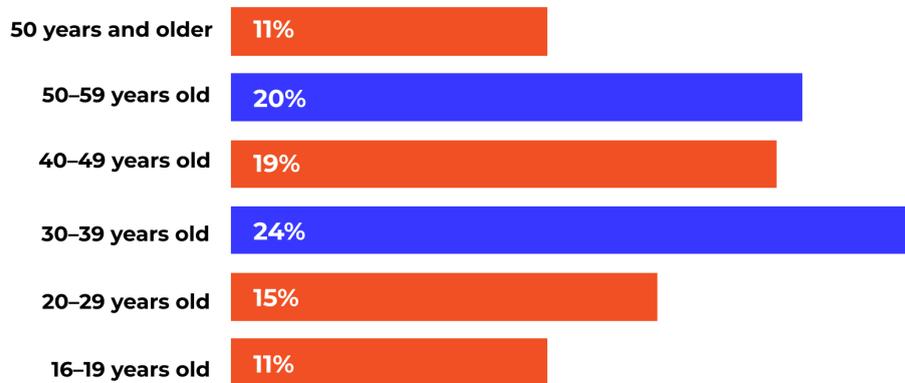


Figure 6.3. Age of respondents who participated in the training

The most popular training areas among those who participated were basic or advanced first aid courses (76%), evacuation and shelling response training (42%), and training on explosive ordnance risk reduction (39%).

TYPES OF TRAINING COMPLETED AMONG MALE AND FEMALE RESPONDENTS

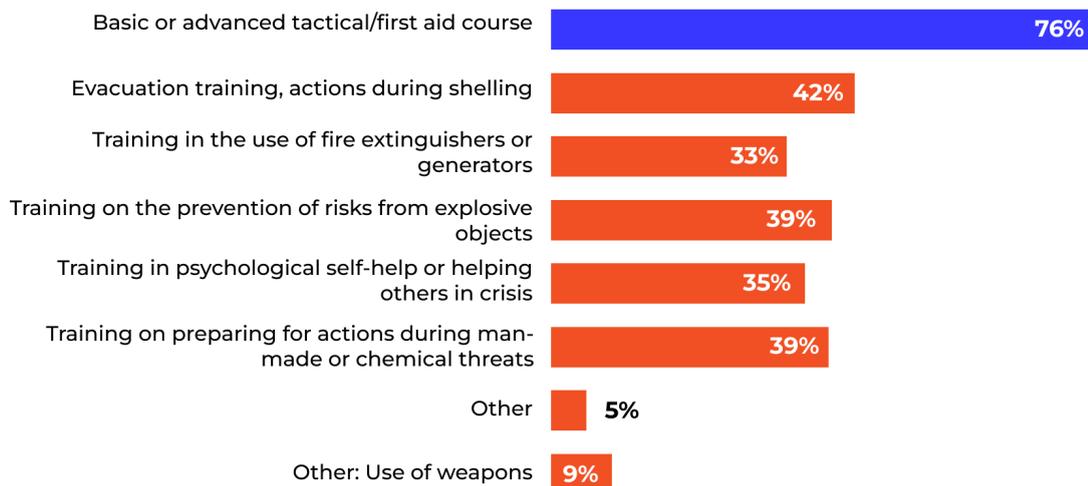


Figure 6.4. Types of training completed by respondents

It should be noted that Ukraine currently lacks an institutional system that formalizes civic duty in the field of national security. However, citizens' experience of participating in the defence of the country at various levels demonstrates their

confidence in their own ability to make a meaningful contribution. According to the survey, 43% of respondents believe that civilians should actively engage in emergency response within their communities, a further 48% are willing to participate after appropriate training, and only about 8% consider this exclusively the responsibility of professional services. Among surveyed women, 41.38% believe that civilians should actively engage in emergency response, while 48.46% believe that civilians should participate only after appropriate training. Among surveyed men, 44.97% believe that civilians should engage in response activities, and 47.76% of male respondents believe that civilians should participate only after completing appropriate training. In addition, 61% of respondents reported being willing to regularly attend civil preparedness training courses (once every 1–2 years).

After completing such courses, 74% of respondents are ready to personally participate in emergency response within their communities (81% among men and 68% among women).

HOW DO YOU THINK CIVILIANS SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN THEIR COMMUNITY (FOR EXAMPLE, ASSIST THE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE IN BASIC ACTIONS — INFORMATION, EVACUATION, SUPPORT OF VULNERABLE GROUPS, ETC.)?

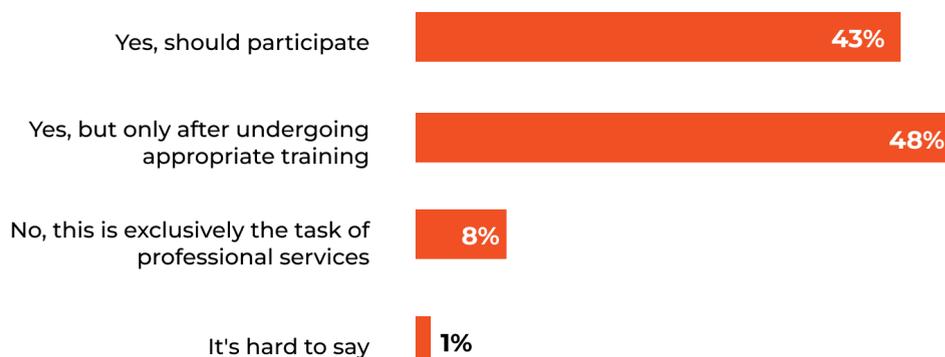


Figure 6.5. Respondents' attitudes toward civilian participation in emergency response

ARE YOU READY TO PERSONALLY TAKE ON THE COMMITMENT TO RESPOND TO AN EMERGENCY IN YOUR COMMUNITY AFTER COMPLETING THE APPROPRIATE TRAINING COURSE?

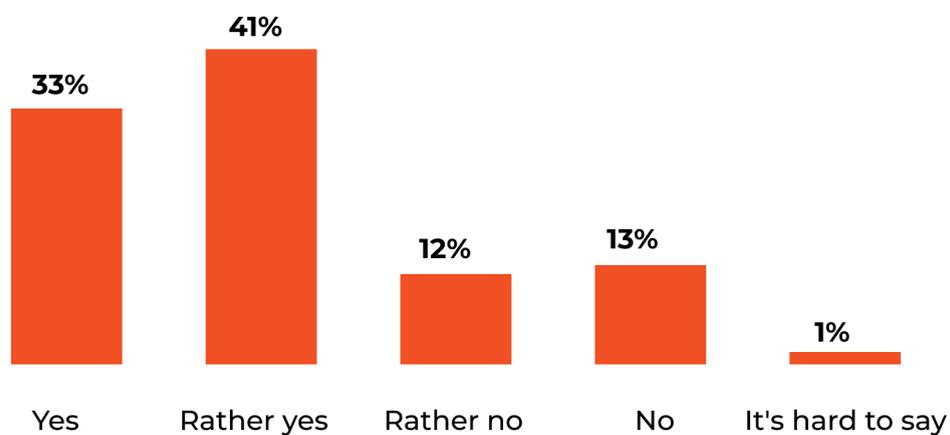


Figure 6.6. Level of respondents' readiness to assume emergency response responsibilities

These results indicate that formalizing civic duty could not only gain public support but also become a powerful instrument for strengthening national defence, highlighting the role of every individual in protecting the country.

These data confirm that Ukraine possesses not only potential but also a high level of civic motivation to participate in comprehensive defence; however, this potential requires systematization, a structured training base, and formal recognition.

6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING THE CIVIL defence SYSTEM IN UKRAINE

In circumstances where the full-scale implementation of the Swedish comprehensive defence model is unattainable due to limited resources and the ongoing state of martial law, Ukraine can focus on adapting its most effective components. The most promising and realistic for implementation is Sweden's experience in integrating volunteer organizations into the national security system.

The purpose of such adaptation is to systematize and enhance the effectiveness of the existing potential of Ukrainian civil society through:

Legalization and formalization of the status of volunteer organizations operating in the defence sector.

Standardization of their training and procedures for interaction with state bodies (Ministry of defence, State Emergency Service, Armed Forces of Ukraine, National Police).

Optimization of the use of resources (human, material, and financial) and coordination of their activities.

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the volunteer movement through mechanisms of state and international funding.

Ukraine already has a strong foundation for this—an active and highly mobilized civil society and an extensive network of volunteer organizations that, since the start of the full-scale war, have demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in providing multifaceted support to the military and civilian population. Adopting the Swedish model of Voluntary Defence Organizations would not only formally recognize the status of these initiatives but also integrate them into a unified and coherent national security system based on the following principles:

Coordination: establishment of a coordination center modeled on Sweden's MSB (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency) to facilitate interaction between the government and volunteers.

Standardization: development and approval of unified training programs, skills certification, and operational protocols.

Specialization: formal allocation of responsibilities among organizations by specific areas (medical assistance, logistics, cybersecurity, demining, psychological support, intelligence).

Resource provision: granting organizations access to funding, equipment, and expert support.

The proposed system differs from the existing reactive model primarily in that it introduces a proactive, standardized approach. It includes the following key elements:

Implementation of standardized courses on survival in wartime conditions, population evacuation, and work with explosive hazards, ensuring a uniformly high level of preparedness among all participants. It is important to ensure that the quality of such courses remains at the highest level and that professional rescuers and other specialists are involved in their development.

Creation of a unified registry of state-funded training programs (modeled on the Swedish approach), ensuring transparency and targeted use of funds.

The signing of agreements between the Ministry of defence/SESU and civil society organizations for the execution of specific tasks (e.g., training 500 medical volunteers per year), which formalizes relationships and ensures predictability.

Introduction of an official certificate recognized by state authorities that confirms volunteer qualifications and acknowledges their contribution.

Introduction of a unified state standard for volunteer training that will allow the harmonization of training programs and requirements across Ukraine.

Insurance coverage for volunteers during their participation in civil defence operations, which is critical for social protection and citizen motivation.

This approach will make it possible to transform the current situation, in which volunteers partially compensate for state capacity gaps, into a strategic model where they function as an official, predictable, and well-resourced component of the system. This represents the fastest and most effective way to strengthen Ukraine's capabilities with minimal costs, as it builds on already existing and field-tested potential.

Given the readiness of Ukrainian men and women to support emergency services and drawing on the Swedish experience with voluntary defence organizations, we propose a model to enhance the civil defence training system in Ukraine. It entails:

- The integration of civil security courses into the existing programmes of citizen training centres for national resistance, which will ensure systematic training and the standardisation of skills.
- Regular refresher training for previously trained citizens to maintain the relevance of their knowledge and their readiness to act in emergency situations.
- The establishment of a network of course graduates that will enable the rapid mobilisation of trained citizens within communities, supporting the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) at the local level and ensuring a swift response to emergencies.

The introduction of such a model will not only strengthen national security but also underscore the active role of citizens in defending their country, thereby reinforcing a culture of civic responsibility.

1. The integration of civil security courses into existing programmes

Recommendation. By pooling the efforts and capacities of the Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance, civil society organisations already engaged in citizen training, and the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES), develop civil crisis response courses tailored to community needs, including evacuation, debris removal, and other relevant skills.

Rationale. Integrating civil security courses into existing programmes is a winning strategy, as combining the human and administrative resources of the Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance and civil society organisations with the expertise of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) will make it possible to achieve significantly better results.

The Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance already possess a solid institutional foundation, an organised structure, a system of instructors, and a stable participant base, primarily composed of public sector employees. Civil society organisations have extensive networks, experience in working with the public, and flexibility in delivering training. The expertise of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) covers crisis response, evacuation planning, logistics, communication, and public preparedness for emergencies, enabling the effective integration of civil defence components into existing training programmes.

Recipients of the recommendations:

- The State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) and other operators, including emergency and rescue services that serve as first responders in the event of a crisis or disaster.
- At present, the Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance serve as the primary state actors in the field of civilian preparedness. However, the centres' current programmes are predominantly military-oriented, making it advisable to complement these courses with a civil defence component focused on crisis response skills. Such an expansion does not require the establishment of new institutions, as the Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance already possess an adequate institutional base. Incorporating civil defence elements into their programmes will ensure a more balanced and resilient approach to population preparedness.
- Civil society organisations: CSOs that already have experience in delivering courses and training trainers; local CSOs capable of operating in areas where large organisations are not present; and CSOs working to advance gender equality, to support the development and integration of gender-sensitive components across all of the above-mentioned courses.

2. The establishment of a certification system and regular refresher training for volunteers

Recommendation. Introduce a certification system for volunteers engaged in civil defence, accompanied by a requirement for regular refresher training.

Rationale. The availability of an official certificate entered into a unified register of issued certificates, containing information on completed refresher training and its validity, will increase the level of trust in volunteers among response authorities (the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, SES) and communities. It will also ensure recognition of their qualifications and their capacity to respond professionally in emergency situations. Regular refresher training will help maintain up-to-date knowledge and skills, particularly in rapidly evolving fields.

Recipients of the recommendations:

- The State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) and other operators, including emergency and rescue services that serve as first responders in the event of a crisis or disaster.
- Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance. Currently, the Centres already issue certificates to participants who have completed the training. However, we propose expanding the classification of these certificates to include, in particular, the category “ready to act as a certified SES assistant at the site of a crisis situation.”

It is also advisable, in consultation with the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES), to determine the validity period of such certificates, after which participants should return to the Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance to update their skills and knowledge. This approach will ensure the regular updating of volunteers’ competencies, maintaining the high effectiveness and readiness of the civil defence system in real crisis situations.

- Civil society organisations: CSOs with experience in delivering courses and training trainers; local CSOs capable of operating in areas where large organisations are not present; and CSOs working to advance gender equality, to support the development and integration of gender-sensitive components across all the above-mentioned courses.
- Local self-government bodies: provide premises for training sessions and educational activities; ensure administrative support and coordination of the process at the local level; facilitate public outreach and the recruitment of participants through local communication channels; integrate programme results into local civil protection and crisis response strategies; and act as partners in ensuring the sustainability of initiatives, including through co-financing or incorporation into community development programmes.

3. The establishment of a network of course graduates (certified volunteers) for rapid mobilisation within communities.

Recommendation. Establish a network of graduates of certified volunteer training programmes operating at the community level. This network should bring together individuals who have completed standardised training and obtained certification, ensuring their readiness for rapid deployment in crisis situations. It should include regional rosters and an electronic database of certified volunteers with contact information and areas of specialisation (e.g., medical support, demining, logistics, psychological support), a rapid alert and mobilisation system (via applications, SMS notifications, or local coordination centres), and a community support programme enabling network members to interact regularly, exchange experience, and remain motivated.

Rationale. A network of certified volunteers will enhance community preparedness for emergency response. Through a clear structure and rapid mobilisation mechanisms, the state will gain an additional reserve of trained individuals capable of acting in a coordinated and professional manner. This will help reduce response times, ease the burden on emergency and rescue services, and at the same time increase public trust in the comprehensive defence system. Moreover, the development of such networks will strengthen social cohesion, as communities will have their own human resource capacity to respond to crises.

Recipients of the recommendations:

- The State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) and other operators, including emergency and rescue services that serve as first responders in the event of a crisis or disaster.
- Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance. After completing the specialised module within the programme, participants who wish to obtain the certificate “certified SES assistant at the site of a crisis situation” should provide consent for the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) to contact them in the event of an emergency in their community. In this process, the Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance act as a bridge between certified volunteers and state authorities by transmitting information to the SES about available certified assistants and ensuring effective coordination of their rapid deployment in crisis situations.
- Civil society organisations: CSOs with experience in delivering courses and training trainers; local CSOs capable of operating in areas where large organisations are not present; and CSOs working to advance gender equality, to support the development and integration of gender-sensitive components across all the above-mentioned courses.
- Local self-government bodies: provide premises for training sessions and educational activities; ensure administrative support and coordination of the process at the local level; facilitate public outreach and the recruitment of participants through local communication channels; integrate programme results into local civil protection and crisis response strategies; and act as partners

in ensuring the sustainability of initiatives, including through co-financing or incorporation into community development programmes.

Within the framework of analysing the proposed recommendations on civilian preparedness, three possible implementation scenarios can be identified. Each of these scenarios envisages a different level of engagement by state institutions, civil society, and international partners. A detailed description of each scenario is provided below, outlining the extent to which the proposed measures are implemented in full, in part, or through contingency mechanisms.

4. Strengthening the role of women in the civil defence system through the consolidation of existing women's civil society organisations

Recommendation. Establish a national women's volunteer network in the field of civil defence in Ukraine, building on existing civil society organisations such as the Ukrainian Women's Guard and the League of Modern Women.

Rationale. Ukraine already has numerous active women's organisations with proven expertise in civil security that can serve as a foundation for the formalised participation of women in the comprehensive defence system. Leveraging their networks will create space for strengthening women's leadership, professional competencies, and strategic engagement in security provision at both community and national levels. This approach will not only enhance the operational readiness and resilience of communities but will also serve as a tool for advancing gender equality within the national security architecture, laying the groundwork for further scaling and the systematic integration of women into Ukraine's defence system.

Recipients of the recommendations:

- The State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) and other operators: act as experts in civil security; provide trainers for specialised training modules for women; support the integration of training programmes into the existing courses of the Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance; and ensure certification.
- Local self-government bodies: provide administrative support; facilitate the dissemination of information about courses and programmes among communities; assist in coordinating participants at the local community level; and support resource mobilisation for training activities.
- International partners — Svenska Lottakåren: may act as consultants and mentors in adapting Swedish experience in integrating women into the civil defence system. The cooperation would involve joint exchange of expertise, delivery of training, sharing of methodologies and best practices, and support for developing a Ukrainian model of gender-sensitive participation of women in civil defence based on existing women's civil society organisations.

6.3. POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION SCENARIOS: From Pilot Projects to Institutionalization

In developing these recommendations, we maintained a realistic approach, taking into account the war, uncertainty, and limited resources. We propose practical steps that can be implemented immediately. The possible implementation scenarios below reflect legislative, civil society, and pilot mechanisms.

Best-case scenario — Full institutionalisation

A successful advocacy campaign leading to amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On the Foundations of National Resistance.” Under these amendments, four components are formally added to the functions of the Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance:

1. Civilian preparedness to respond to emergencies in their communities.
2. Incorporation into SES action programmes of mechanisms for engaging civilians in emergency response.
3. Systematic updating of knowledge.
4. Establishment of volunteer networks, bringing together course graduates into sustainable communities.

Most realistic scenario — Piloting and gradual scaling

If legislative changes are not feasible in the near term, the option of launching pilot programmes in several regions should be pursued.

1. Local volunteer groups are established under the Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance as partnership initiatives (without formal institutionalisation).
2. The State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) conducts joint trainings and tests protocols with communities.
3. Course graduates are brought together into informal groups to practise coordination.

The pilot results will serve as a foundation for scaling and as an additional argument for legislators.

Contingency scenario — Civil society initiative

If the state does not adopt the proposed changes, the recommendations are shifted to the civil society sector, specifically to CSOs that already deliver training courses.

1. Formation of local volunteer groups based on existing initiatives (e.g., the Civilian Preparedness Centre of the Serhii Prytula Charitable Foundation).
2. Potential cooperation with international partners through small-scale pilot projects.

The risks of this scenario include fragmentation, lack of unified coordination, and limited coverage; however, even in this case, a pool of trained citizens would be formed, strengthening communities' response capacity.

6.4. EXPECTED IMPACT of Recommendations Across Four Levels

The implementation of the proposed recommendations will make it possible to combine the capacities of state institutions and civil society, creating a unified crisis preparedness system and thereby strengthening the comprehensive defence system in the Ukrainian context. The impact of these changes will be felt across four levels — **individual, local, institutional, and national.**

Expected impact

At the individual level:

Enhanced personal safety and preparedness — participation in standardised civil preparedness courses provides the knowledge and skills required for appropriate action in emergencies, ensuring greater control and risk reduction for individuals and their families.

Confidence and capacity to contribute to community protection — regular refresher training and practice build competence and confidence in one's actions, enabling individuals to effectively assist others in crisis situations.

A sense of agency and inclusion — participation in a network of course graduates fosters the perception that each individual is part of a community of trained people ready to support one another and the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) in critical situations.

At the local level:

Strengthened community resilience — standardised courses will equip citizens with practical knowledge for effective crisis response, reducing the risk of uncoordinated actions in real emergency situations.

Strengthened volunteer capacity — certification and access to state resources and funding will enhance the professionalism and motivation of local volunteer groups.

Strengthened response capacity of local SES teams — by introducing a system of professional training and a registry of certified volunteers (with planned training quotas for each region, city, and district), SES specialists will be able to rely on qualified support from trained volunteers, thereby increasing the speed and scale of assistance.

At the institutional level:

Enhanced operational capacity of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) — the availability of a network of trained and certified volunteers enables the rapid mobilisation of additional resources during emergencies, increasing the speed and effectiveness of response.

Standardisation of engagement with the public — integrating civil security courses into the programmes of the Centres for Training Citizens for National Resistance, together with the certification of volunteers, ensures unified procedures for working with the population, reducing uncoordinated actions and improving the quality of coordination during crises.

Improved resource planning and utilisation — regular refresher training and the maintenance of a registry of course graduates enable the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) to allocate human and material resources more efficiently, particularly during large-scale crises or wartime events.

Strengthened resilience and crisis preparedness — a trained community of certified volunteers enables the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) to maintain a sustained presence and rapid mobilisation capacity in peacetime, preparing the system for unforeseen challenges and increasing its ability to withstand pressure during wartime or emergency situations.

At the national level:

Integration of civil society into the national security system — a fundamental and key element for establishing an effective comprehensive defence system.

Transition from a reactive to a proactive model — Ukraine will be able to move from ad hoc volunteer response to a sustainable, coordinated, and predictable preparedness system.

Increased trust and legitimacy — formal recognition of the contribution of volunteers will strengthen public trust in both the state and civil society initiatives, thereby contributing to national unity.

CONCLUSIONS

Ukraine is currently operating in a critical security environment in which traditional military defence mechanisms require systematic reinforcement through the broad engagement of citizens at multiple levels. Existing practices — from large-scale volunteerism to local initiatives — have demonstrated their effectiveness; however, they remain fragmented and insufficiently integrated into state policy. In this context, the comprehensive defence concept, successfully implemented in Sweden and a number of other European countries, may serve as a well-grounded direction for the development of Ukraine's security system.

The inclusion of women in civil defence is of particular importance, as their active participation not only expands crisis response resources but also builds a gender-sensitive and socially resilient foundation for a comprehensive system of public preparedness.

The introduction of comprehensive defence elements will ensure greater coherence and consistency in approaches to citizen preparedness, transforming currently fragmented initiatives into a structured network with clearly defined functions and division of responsibilities. Standardised civil preparedness courses and regular refresher training create a sustainable mechanism for maintaining population readiness, enhance the professionalism of volunteers, and strengthen their role in crisis situations. Particular attention to gender sensitivity will facilitate broader participation of women, thereby reinforcing local resilience and social cohesion of communities.

At the institutional level, a system of certified volunteers enables the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) and other services to rapidly mobilise additional resources, efficiently allocate human and material capacities, and improve the quality of coordination during crisis events. This combination of state and civic initiatives creates the preconditions for proactive emergency management, reduces the risk of fragmented responses, and lays the groundwork for the long-term resilience of the civil defence system. The implementation of these recommendations will not only enhance population preparedness and safety but also contribute to the development of a more integrated and robust national security system.

We hope that this report will not only consolidate existing knowledge and practices but also initiate a broader discussion on the formalisation and mobilisation of civic participation in national defence, thereby laying the groundwork for an integrated, gender-sensitive, and resilient security system in Ukraine.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. National Survey Structure

1. Since the start of the full-scale invasion, have you participated in any civil defence training or courses?

Civil defence training refers to courses that help individuals prepare for emergencies and reduce risks to life and health. Examples include: basic or advanced tactical/first aid training; evacuation training and actions during shelling; training on the use of fire extinguishers or generators; explosive ordnance risk education (EORE); psychological self-help or support to others in crisis; and preparedness for technological accidents or chemical threats.

- No, I have not participated
- Yes, I have completed a basic or advanced tactical/first aid course
- Yes, I have completed evacuation and shelling response training
- Yes, I have completed training on the use of fire extinguishers or generators
- Yes, I have completed explosive ordnance risk education (EORE)
- Yes, I have completed psychological self-help or crisis support training
- Yes, I have completed training on preparedness for technological or chemical threats

2. In your opinion, should civilian citizens participate in emergency response in their communities (for example, by supporting the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) in basic tasks such as information sharing, evacuation, and assistance to vulnerable groups)?

- Yes, they should participate
- Yes, but only after receiving appropriate training
- No, this should remain the responsibility of professional services only
- Difficult to say (DO NOT READ OUT)

3. Would you be willing to regularly attend civil emergency response training?

For example, to complete or refresh such training once every 1–2 years, allocating 2–3 days for this purpose?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No
- Difficult to say (DO NOT READ OUT)

4. Would you be willing to commit to responding in the event of an emergency in your community after completing the relevant training?

For example, by providing basic support to the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SES) or assisting with evacuation, public information, shelter organisation, etc.

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No
- Not sure (DO NOT READ OUT)