

# Queering Displacement: The State of the Ukrainian LGBTQ+ Community During the Russian Full-Scale Invasion

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# Introduction

Before February 24, 2022, LGBTQ+ people were among the most marginalized and vulnerable groups in Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> Existing reports have highlighted the discrimination they faced in access to education, healthcare, employment, and other fundamental rights.<sup>2</sup> The full-scale invasion that unfolded thereafter only intensified these preexisting inequalities and created new ones. This policy brief focuses on a group of people particularly impacted

**While many international organizations have channeled their humanitarian assistance to alleviate the struggles of Ukrainian IDPs, they have paid much less attention to addressing the specific needs of displaced LGBTQ+ people.**

by the war: internally displaced people (IDPs) with queer identities. I chose this focus because, while quite a few international organizations have channeled their humanitarian assistance to alleviate the struggles of IDPs in the country, much less attention has been paid so far to addressing the specific needs of displaced LGBTQ+ people who found themselves in even more precarious positions of intersecting vulnerability.

In 2023, thanks to the efforts of activists, sociological reports demonstrated a significant improvement in Ukrainian attitudes toward LGBTQ+ rights. Studies by the Kyiv International Sociology Institute indicate a rise in support for equal rights, with 67.3 percent in favor in 2023 compared to 33.4 percent in 2016. Support for civil unions also increased, with 28 percent backing it in 2023, up from 4.8 percent in 2016.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the persistent work of LGBTQ+ rights organizations and human rights activists, together with the country's growing pro-EU sentiment and desire to differentiate itself from Russia's anti-queer rhetoric, have created the political momentum for an LGBTQ+-friendlier society in Ukraine.

Nevertheless, as this report demonstrates, ongoing humanitarian and advocacy efforts by Ukrainian LGBTQ+ organizations – who are backed mainly by international organizations – are far from enough, and more targeted efforts are needed. This includes enhancing support for shelters, community centers, and legal, social and psychological assistance services for queer IDPs. Core funding with flexible reporting mechanisms can ensure sustained support for LGBTQ+ organizations operating under the conditions of a full-scale invasion. Furthermore, this report recommends supporting initiatives to facilitate dialogue with local authorities and raise awareness among businesses, education institutions and healthcare professionals to foster understanding and cooperation. Finally, this report stresses the need to conduct more research to increase the understanding of specific challenges LGBTQ+ individuals face in displacement settings and to prepare informed responses.

This document builds on my research from 2022 to 2023 with Ukrainian LGBTQ+ rights NGOs and international organizations. It includes data from 18 interviews with LGBTQ+ rights activists, 44 interviews with affected LGBTQ+ individuals who left Ukraine, 56

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<sup>1</sup> Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, “Otsinka sytuatsiyi z dotrymannyam prav lyudyny (Human rights compliance assessment),” 2020, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://dif.org.ua/uploads/pdf/1061539148645d1696f0a255.53661934.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> LGBT Human Rights Nash Svit Center, “United against violence. LGBT+ situation in Ukraine in 2021,” February 10, 2021, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://gay.org.ua/en/blog/2022/02/10/united-against-violence-lgbt-situation-in-ukraine-in-2021/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., “Za rik ukrayinci pokraschyly svoye stavlennya do LGBT. (In a year, Ukrainians' attitudes toward LGBT people improved.),” June 15, 2023, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://gay.org.ua/blog/2023/06/15/za-rik-ukrainsi-pokrashchyly-svoie-stavlennia-do-lhbt/>.

interviews with queer IDPs still in Ukraine, and the results of the National Ukrainian LGBTQ school survey conducted in 2023.<sup>4</sup> My report also reflects my experience as a socially engaged Ukrainian scholar living abroad but closely connected to Ukraine.

This policy brief is structured as follows. It starts with a brief overview of the situation of LGBTQ+ Ukrainians before the full-scale invasion. It then proceeds with an analysis of the challenges LGBTQ+ people faced in Ukraine in 2022–2023, covering such areas as forced migration and displacement, access to housing and healthcare, economic inequalities, access to education, political participation, and civil society activism. I conclude with several recommendations for international actors.

## LGBTQ+ Rights Before the Full-Scale Invasion

Before the invasion, Ukraine was deemed relatively “safe” for LGBTQ+ people,<sup>5</sup> although legal protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) were limited. Despite a 2015 anti-discrimination law, there had been no cases of SOGI-based workplace discrimination brought to court by December 2023, highlighting distrust in the justice system more than tolerance in the job market.

Same-sex couples lack legal recognition and adoption rights in Ukraine. While transgender individuals saw some improvement in legal gender change protocols in 2016, implementation remains patchy, occurring mainly in urban areas and with inconsistent adherence by medical professionals.<sup>6</sup>

As of early 2022, there were over 40 civil society organizations (CSOs) focused on LGBTQ+ issues operating in Ukraine, mainly in Kyiv and other major cities like Kharkiv, Odesa, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson. These CSOs, characterized by a high degree of professionalization, rely heavily on foreign funding from governments (such as the US, the UK, Sweden, Canada, and the Netherlands) and international organizations like ILGA Europe, VOICE, RFSL, Freedom House, and the Open Society Foundations. Despite a favorable environment for civil society, public funding for LGBTQ+ causes in Ukraine is nonexistent, with limited support from the population.

There is no comprehensive sex education in schools that would include mention of non-heterosexual sexual orientation or transgender identity, and the attempts to introduce it

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<sup>4</sup> I would like to extend gratitude to Ukraine-based LGBTQ+ rights NGOs Gender Stream, Fulcrum, Insha, Cohort, Insight, Nash Svit, and others who shared the information with me and allowed me to be a part of their research projects.

<sup>5</sup> For a comprehensive overview, see, for example: LGBT Human Rights Nash Svit Center, “Situation of LGBT in Ukraine Jan–July 2021,” August 25, 2021, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://gay.org.ua/en/blog/2021/08/25/situation-of-lgbt-in-ukraine-jan-july-2021/>; Maryna Shevtsova, *LGBTI Politics and Value Change in Ukraine and Turkey: Exporting Europe?* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2021), <https://www.routledge.com/LGBTI-Politics-and-Value-Change-in-Ukraine-and-Turkey-Exporting-Europe/Shevtsova/p/book/9780367676421#>.

<sup>6</sup> Insight. “Trans-perekhid v Ukrain: (ne) vidpovidnist standartam prav liudyny (Trans transition in Ukraine: (non)compliance with human rights standards),” March 31, 2019, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://www.insight-ukraine.org/uk/blog/trans-perekhid-v-ukraini-ne-vidpovidnist-standartam-prav-liudyny/>.

meet fierce resistance from conservative and religious groups.<sup>7</sup> Secondary school teachers are rarely informed about creating inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ students and working with their families. As a result, the national surveys from 2017 and 2020 showed that LGBTQ+ teenagers in schools often face bullying, including homo- and transphobic insults and physical violence; more than 60 percent of Ukrainian LGBTQ+ school students reported lacking a responsible adult they could ask for help.<sup>8</sup>

In the last decade (2015–2024), LGBTQ+ people began enjoying some visibility in larger cities.<sup>9</sup> Peaceful marches in support of LGBTQ+ rights, called Marches of Equality, took place in such cities as Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, and Zaporizhzhia. At the same time, all public LGBTQ+ rights-related events needed police protection due to threats from and sometimes violent protests by conservative, religious, and radical right-wing groups. The Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations has been the primary and strongest opponent of LGBTQ+ rights promotion in the country, blocking most LGBTQ+ friendly legislation.

## Changes and Challenges After February 24, 2022

Two years into the full-scale invasion, LGBTQ+ individuals in Ukraine continue facing heightened vulnerabilities that are exacerbated even more for those who are internally displaced. As this section shows, the combination of discrimination, safety concerns,

**The combination of discrimination, safety concerns, limited support services, stigmatization, and legal barriers makes queer IDPs particularly vulnerable within internally displaced populations.**

limited support services, stigmatization, and legal barriers makes queer IDPs particularly vulnerable within internally displaced populations. Despite a decrease in organized homophobia and associated crimes reported by NGOs like Nash Svit and Insight in 2022 and 2023,<sup>10</sup> instances of homo- and transphobic violence persist, with LGBTQ+ individuals experiencing various forms of abuse such as hate speech and both physical and sexual violence. Queer IDPs in Ukraine are likely to face increased vulnerability to such violence, as well as greater stigmatization and discrimination, due to the heightened visibility of their identities in unfamiliar environments and the disruption of their social support networks.

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<sup>7</sup>Maryna Shevtsova, “School as a Battlefield: The Debate on Sexuality Education in Ukraine,” Heinrich Boell Stiftung Blog, December 1, 2021, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://www.boell.de/en/2021/12/01/school-battlefield-debate-sexuality-education-ukraine>.

<sup>8</sup> TERGO, “Natsionalne doslidzhennia shkilnogo seredovyscha u 2021 roci (National school environment survey in 2020),” 2021, accessed March 13, 2024, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pCcH4AFaKsfLcOBIEwtj\\_jpvbXO-XApV/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pCcH4AFaKsfLcOBIEwtj_jpvbXO-XApV/view).

<sup>9</sup> DW, “Ukraine’s LGBTQ march draws thousands,” September 19, 2021, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-thousands-march-for-lgbtq-rights/a-59232409>.

<sup>10</sup> For more details, see: LGBT Human Rights Nash Svit Center, “Situation of LGBTQ in Ukraine January–August 2022,” August 30, 2022, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://gay.org.ua/en/blog/2022/08/30/situation-of-lgbtq-in-ukraine-january-august-2022/>; Inna Iriskina, “Analitichna zapyska. Stanovysche LGBT luidey v Ukrayini pid chas viyny. (Analytical note. The position of LGBT+ people in Ukraine during the war),” October 10, 2022, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://www.insight-ukraine.org/uk/library/analytics-lgbt-war-ukraine/>.

Addressing these vulnerabilities requires targeted efforts to ensure their safety, inclusion, and access to support services within displacement settings – a fruitful avenue for international intervention since foreign donors and humanitarian organizations have already developed strong ties to Ukrainian LGBTQ+ rights NGOs.

## Displacement

LGBTQ+ people across Ukraine and especially in its eastern part felt particularly threatened by the Russian invasion due to the latter country’s state-sponsored homophobia and transphobia; information circulated widely about the torture of queer activists in the Donbas and later in occupied Kherson. This pushed many LGBTQ+ people to leave their homes.

There is no research available on how many LGBTQ+ people have been displaced due to the full-scale invasion. As of November 2023, the number of internally displaced persons was reported to be 4.9 million, 3.6 million of whom were displaced after February 24.<sup>11</sup> Assuming that up to 9 percent of this group are LGBTQ+ people,<sup>12</sup> the number of queer IDPs would exceed 300,000 persons. The top five IDP-hosting oblasts, where roughly 52 percent of IDPs are living, are Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Odesa Oblasts and Kyiv City.<sup>13</sup> Although there is no data available on the geographic distribution of queer IDPs, LGBTQ+ rights NGOs report that many IDPs chose larger cities where they can access humanitarian assistance, attract less attention, and have more chances to find jobs.

Under martial law regulations, men aged 18 to 60 were prohibited from leaving Ukraine, except for specific circumstances such as disability, single parenthood, fatherhood of three or more children, or being the sole caregiver for a disabled person. Consequently, queer individuals fleeing Ukraine due to the war were predominantly women or those with female gender markers. While a diagnosis of gender dysphoria could exempt individuals from military service, not all transgender individuals had their medical records in order, causing difficulties at border crossings. Ukrainian NGOs began offering legal aid to obtain necessary medical documents and facilitate border crossings, as even individuals with proper documentation faced barriers such as discrimination and threats of arrest or conscription.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ukrinform, “V Ukraini nalichuyetsia 4.9 milyona vnutrishnih pereselenciv (There are 4.9 mln internally displaced persons in Ukraine),” November 12, 2023, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3785762-v-ukraini-nalichuetsa-49-miljona-vnutrishnih-pereselenciv-veresuk.html>.

<sup>12</sup> As there has been no data collection to identify the number of LGBTQ+ people in Ukraine, this assumption is based on a 30-country survey conducted by Ipsos in 2023, according to which the LGBTQ+ share of the average population is 9 percent. Chris Jackson, “LGBT+ Pride Study 2023 Global Survey,” Ipsos, June 1, 2023, <https://www.ipsos.com/en/pride-month-2023-9-of-adults-identify-as-lgbt>.

<sup>13</sup> IOM, “Ukraine — Internal Displacement Report — General Population Survey Round 14 (September–October 2023),” 2023, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/ukraine-internal-displacement-report-general-population-survey-round-14-september-october>.

<sup>14</sup> Gender In Detail, “Transhenderni lyudy pid chas povnomasshtabnoyi viyny v Ukraini. (Transgender people during the full-scale invasion in Ukraine),” October 21, 2023, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://genderindetail.org.ua/season-topic/dosvidy-viyny/transgenderni-lyudi-v-ukraini-pid-chas-povnomasshtabnoi-viyny.html>.

## Access to Food and Housing

The status of housing access largely depends on the region of Ukraine. In the western, safer parts of Ukraine, the price of housing has increased disproportionately; in eastern and central Ukraine, there remain many more apartments available at more affordable prices. IDPs have been among those most affected by the limited access to housing because even in eastern Ukraine, landlords tend to discriminate against IDPs and be reluctant to rent them their apartments.<sup>15</sup> LGBTQ+ people whose documents match their gender expression have reported that they were more likely to face discrimination due to the fact that they were IDPs coming from Donetsk, Luhansk or Kherson regions rather than assumptions regarding their sexual orientation. However, there were several cases of reported discrimination, including evictions, against lesbian women and gay men in western Ukraine, both in rural and urban areas. Trans and non-binary people whose documents do not match their gender expression also face queer- and transphobia from landowners.

At the same time, for those LGBTQ+ people who lost all or a significant part of their income, whether internally displaced or not, renting accommodations has not been an option. Several major LGBTQ+ rights NGOs opened shelters for LGBTQ+ people and their families in cities like Chernivtsi, Kyiv, Lviv, and Uzhhorod, where people can stay for several weeks to several months and get support with basic food and hygienic products. However, the number of places in such shelters is far from sufficient, and these NGOs are constantly searching for additional funding to cover shelter residents' basic needs and to expand. Moreover, not all these shelters are accommodating enough for trans people, who are among the most affected.

While some people could move in with their parents or relatives, in cases where the family does not accept their sexual orientation or gender identity, LGBTQ+ Ukrainians have to deal with the risk of various kinds of domestic violence. It is particularly difficult for LGBTQ+ teenagers who fully depend on their parents and cannot choose to live in a shelter, as these NGOs cannot host minors without their parents' permission.

It is noteworthy that following the onset of the full-scale invasion, numerous Ukrainian LGBTQ+ rights NGOs turned their focus to humanitarian efforts, tailoring both existing and new projects to support queer IDPs and those residing in de-occupied or severely affected areas. These initiatives encompassed procuring and distributing food packages; provisioning food coupons; dispensing medicines; assisting with payments for utilities, mobile phones and internet access; as well as facilitating evacuations from occupied or heavily targeted regions. Notably, while none of the organizations exclusively catered to IDPs, certain services – like shelters for queer individuals – saw increased demand from displaced populations. However, as these NGOs gradually initiated program activities, many encountered staff fatigue and overload challenges, exacerbated by the absence of additional hiring provisions within humanitarian assistance budgets. Moreover, the escalating demands for reporting placed further strain on LGBTQ+ activists involved in this work.

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<sup>15</sup> Parliament.ua, “Chy isnuye v Ukrayini dyskryminaciya: dosvid VPO (Is there discrimination in Ukraine? IDPs' experience),” July 11, 2023, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://parlament.ua/news/chi-isnuye-v-ukraini-diskriminacziya-za-miszem-prozhivannya-dosvid-vpo/>.

## Healthcare

Access to healthcare, and especially to gynecologists or urologists, was a common problem for LGBTQ+ people even before the full-scale invasion. Lesbian and bisexual women were already more likely to go to a private clinic, knowing that they would receive more respect if they paid for services. For some, this meant they would postpone their visits until they had saved enough money or skip regular check-ups. The situation has been even more challenging for trans people, some of whom need regular consultations with endocrinologists and psychiatrists (only psychiatrists can prescribe antidepressants in Ukraine, and trans people are more likely to experience depression due to the challenging life conditions they face). Since trans-friendly and competent doctors are only available in large cities and there are often long waiting lists, many trans people have instead self-prescribed hormonal treatments using the internet or following the advice of a friend.

Displaced LGBTQ+ people often rely on local NGOs and networks that keep databases of LGBTQ-friendly healthcare specialists, yet the full-scale invasion notably worsened the situation: many doctors left the country and those who stayed are overloaded with work. Though IDPs are not formally discriminated against in their right to medical treatment, the fact is that faster healthcare service access is often related to personal connections or the ability to pay for private services.

In the past, many trans people were reluctant to go through the legal transition process, given the transphobia in the healthcare system and the requirement to obtain a psychiatric diagnosis, which is often only possible after a two-week stay in a psychiatric ward. However, due to the possibility of conscription and the restrictions on leaving the country, the number of those who decided to initiate the formal procedure increased significantly. NGOs working with trans people report a growing number of people requesting legal and social support while transitioning and stress the need to improve the transition protocol.<sup>16</sup> Interviewees also reported that since October 2023, doctors have refused to initiate the transition procedure, making it de facto impossible to do so. This is explained by the fact that the F64 diagnosis (gender identity disorders) grants one an exemption from being conscripted.

Supply shortages and inflation have made hormonal treatment for trans people less accessible both logistically and economically. The accessibility of hormonal drugs is also influenced by another requirement: a prescription is formally needed to buy them. In reality, numerous trans individuals initiate hormone replacement therapy without medical consultation, opting instead to seek guidance from fellow trans people.

Over time, LGBTQ+ rights organizations such as Insight, Cohorta, and Trans Generation assumed responsibility for providing hormones to trans individuals. Specifically, a network was established wherein foreign organizations and volunteers procure medications from other European countries and ship them to Ukraine.<sup>17</sup> In 2023, activists reported that they had enough hormones to meet most of their target groups' requests, yet as this scheme heavily relied on voluntary donations, they saw it as only a temporary solution and believed a more sustainable arrangement needed to be found. NGOs also reported lacking the resources needed to increase awareness about the availability of free hormones in smaller towns and rural areas, as well as to improve distribution channels,

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<sup>16</sup> Inna Iryskina, "LGBT+ liudy v Ukraini pid chas povnomasshtabnoyi viyny (LGBT+ people of Ukraine during a full-scale war. 2023 year)," Insight, 2023, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://insight-ukraine.org/special/2023-lgbt-war-ukraine/>.

<sup>17</sup> Iryskina, "LGBT+ liudy v Ukraini," 2023.



which could be accomplished through more volunteer work or grassroots initiatives.

## Economic Opportunities

There is a lack of data on occupational segregation and employment trends among LGBTQ+ individuals in Ukraine, but LGBTQ+ rights NGOs confirm that the economic conditions of queer Ukrainians suffered greatly first during COVID-19 and then during the full-scale invasion. IDPs were also disproportionately affected in this dimension, as most lost their jobs and many have yet been able to find new ones. As shown by a 2024 study by Fulcrum,<sup>18</sup> queer IDPs who are looking for a job face a similar landscape as other Ukrainian IDPs who do not identify as LGBTQ+: the ones with higher employability (IT professionals, people well-connected in the field, or people with specific in-demand skills) were quick to find new jobs, while others faced such challenges as lower salaries in their fields, discrimination against IDPs as compared to the local population, and worse work conditions including being paid in cash and delays in payment.

**Trans and intersex individuals face the most significant challenges in employment, especially if they have not undergone a legal transition or if their gender expression differs from their official documents.**

Interviews with LGBTQ+ activists reveal that trans and intersex individuals face the most significant challenges in employment, especially if they have not undergone a legal transition or if their gender expression differs from their official documents. Many resort to sporadic part-time work, and some engage in sex work due to financial necessity. Although international companies have begun implementing diversity, equity and inclusion training and becoming more LGBTQ-inclusive, the Ukrainian job market remains largely homo- and transphobic, prompting community members to remain closeted if possible. In response, LGBTQ+ rights NGOs, in collaboration with foreign partners and Ukrainian businesses, have launched programs to provide professional retraining opportunities. These programs aim to equip participants with skills to enter the IT sector or other specialized careers such as hairdressing or copywriting. However, these programs are limited in both number and capacity.

## LGBTQ+ Rights NGOs

During the initial months of the full-scale invasion, LGBTQ+ rights organizations in Ukraine shifted their focus to providing humanitarian aid, organizing evacuations, and offering shelter to displaced LGBTQ+ individuals and their families. Many activists, themselves displaced, experienced burnout and health issues due to stress and workload, highlighting the necessity for ongoing psychological support for both beneficiaries and staff. Despite there being ample donors, organizations face challenges with short project durations, complex monitoring, and limited administrative funding, leading to uncertainties about future financial sustainability. Elaborate reporting requirements, such as photographing aid recipients and sharing personal details, also pose the risk of outing LGBTQ+ individuals. Grassroots initiatives, which often rely on volunteers and receive minimal funding, struggle to meet needs that have been exacerbated by the conflict. LGBTQ+ rights NGOs also highlight a lack of social spaces for displaced

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<sup>18</sup> Fulcrum, “(Non)discrimination of LGBTQI+ people in the workplace and inclusive labor market results of a national survey of the LGBTQI+ community,” 2024, accessed March 14, 2024, [https://www.t-o.org.ua/files/ugd/ae7e39\\_4d03f472b93641878f4ec85ce5bb859d.pdf](https://www.t-o.org.ua/files/ugd/ae7e39_4d03f472b93641878f4ec85ce5bb859d.pdf).

individuals, emphasizing the need for community centers to foster support networks and safe environments for socializing and activities. There is also a growing concern regarding shrinking humanitarian assistance, on which many organizations still largely rely.

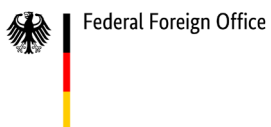
## Recommendations

1. **When designing funding programs to support IDPs in the oblasts with the highest concentration of IDPs (Dnipro, Kharkiv, Lviv, and Kyiv Oblasts and Kyiv City), international donors need to provide targeted support for LGBTQ+ shelters, community centers, and legal, social and psychological resource providers that particularly serve IDPs.** Separate shelters for LGBTQ+ individuals, and especially transgender people, are essential to provide safety, understanding and affirmation. Mainstream shelters often pose risks of discrimination and revictimization, making LGBTQ-specific shelters crucial environments where residents can access resources without fear of mistreatment, receive gender-affirming care, and connect with a supportive community.
  - 1.1. **Investment in shelter capacity.** As mentioned above, LGBTQ+ shelters exist in cities such as Chernivtsi, Kyiv, Lviv, and Uzhhorod. However, they can only provide shelter to less than 1 percent of the estimated displaced LGBTQ+ population. International donors should therefore commit funding to build more shelter capacity. This will also increase preparedness in case future Russian offensives lead to renewed waves of displacement.
  - 1.2. **Investment in LGBTQ+ community centers.** This could include funding for facility maintenance and expansion; staffing to provide services such as counseling, education and outreach programs; resources for organizing social events and support groups; and technology and infrastructure improvements to enhance accessibility. Maintaining an LGBTQ+ community center during wartime offers a vital lifeline for LGBTQ+ individuals, and especially for IDPs who lost their social network and feel less safe in new cities. Community centers provide a wide range of assistance: from mental health services, which are in highest demand, to support for re-integration, education, and community building.
  - 1.3. **Legal, social and psychological help for LGBTQ+ IDPs.** Psychological support is constantly in demand from LGBTQ+ people, and particularly queer IDPs; most NGOs have a network of friendly psychologists and psychiatrists but lack funding to cover their services. There is also a resource shortfall for medication prescribed by psychiatrists, which has become very costly due to inflation and thus unaffordable for most queer IDPs. Legal assistance is required by IDPs facing discrimination and homo- or transphobic violence; trans people also need legal and social accompaniment at different points of the transition process. NGOs have a network of social workers and lawyers ready to assist in such moments but need funding to cover the cost of

their services; at present, this work is very limited and is mostly conducted pro bono.

2. **Creating more opportunities for short-term professional education and supporting with job searches.** As with other IDPs, LGBTQ+ people in displacement are highly likely to have lost their source of income but they face more challenges in finding new jobs as they are discriminated against both as IDPs and as queer persons. Ukrainian NGOs and their international donors must address the intersection of these two dimensions of vulnerability, for instance by offering exclusive professional development opportunities for LGBTQ+ IDPs. There is a demand for short professional courses that would allow queer IDPs to acquire skills to quickly find employment in host cities or remotely. As best practice examples, there are already courses training manicure and massage specialists, social media managers, and copywriters. Existing programs need to receive more funding to be able to reach a broader audience.
3. **Education and course-maintaining support for businesses, educational institutions and healthcare professionals.** Though humanitarian assistance has become a priority in wartime, to avoid possible regress as the war continues and to address specific challenges faced by queer IDPs, LGBTQ+ rights NGOs stressed the importance of being able to continue activities such as educational programs/workshops and campaigns aimed at raising awareness and sensitivity among businesses, educational institutions and healthcare professionals. International donors need to include these in the list of funded activities.
  - 3.3. **Funding and designing more programs to train LGBTQ+-friendly healthcare practitioners.** As many LGBTQ+-friendly doctors leave the country, there is a need to educate and train a new cohort. The NGO Cohorta, for example, reported making preliminary agreements with medical universities and academies in Ukraine to develop a module for students to gain experience working with trans individuals. But more training and awareness-raising programs are needed for already practicing healthcare professionals.
  - 3.4. **Funding activities to train and educate law enforcement personnel.** As the tension in Ukraine's militarized society will continue to grow, it is imperative to invest in increasing police sensitivity and understanding of homo- and transphobic violence, discrimination, and the specific vulnerabilities of queer populations and IDPs who are particularly unsafe. This will help to reduce instances of discrimination and bias-based policing, and foster trust and cooperation between law enforcement and the LGBTQ+ community.
  - 3.5. **Distributing information on hormonal treatment.** Access to hormonal treatment remains a problem, especially for trans IDPs who lost access to their trusted medical network due to displacement. NGOs such as Insight, Cohorta and Trans Generation provide information and drugs for hormonal treatment but are limited in their capacity and reach. International actors should provide such NGOs with resources to design programs for trans IDPs.

4. **Reorienting toward core funding and flexible reporting.** In planning and designing funding programs for 2024–2026, it is recommended that international donors consider long-term, core funding (rather than project funding) for LGBTQ+ organizations working with displaced populations, allowing flexibility in allocating resources to address evolving needs and ensuring decent working conditions for activists. Flexible reporting requirements can ensure that organizations focus on providing effective assistance rather than meeting rigid reporting criteria.
5. **Baseline research.** While continuing their humanitarian efforts in Ukraine, international humanitarian organizations need to allocate more time and resources to commission research on experiences and challenges faced by LGBTQ+ displaced individuals. Foreign donors should also reserve funding for baseline research as part of their support for LGBTQ+ rights NGOs' activities. This includes funding for surveys, studies and data collection to better understand this population's specific needs. Additionally, support for organizations focused on documenting hate crimes against LGBTQ+ individuals can help to raise awareness and advocate for stronger protections.



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