

Ukraine: protection of civilians in armed conflict

December 2023 update



Date: 15 January 2024

Summary

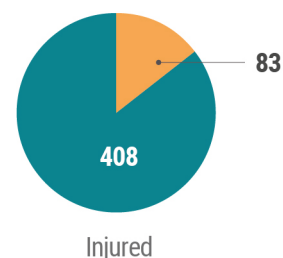
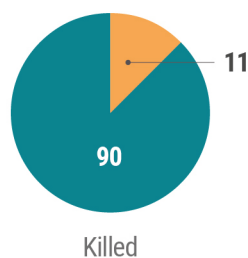
- HRMMU verified that at least **592 civilians were killed or injured** in Ukraine in December 2023. This constitutes a **26.5 per cent increase** in verified civilian casualties compared with the previous month. The number of reported civilian casualties, some of which are still pending verification, suggest that the increase was even higher. The increase in civilian casualties in December breaks a trend of decreasing numbers of civilian casualties in 2023.
- The December increase in civilian casualties was mainly due to intensified missile and loitering munitions attacks by Russian armed forces across Ukraine **on 29 and 30 December**. Attacks with these types of weapons accounted for **34 per cent** of civilian casualties in December compared **with 16 per cent** in November.
- Most civilian casualties (**84 per cent**) and damage to educational and health facilities (**92 per cent**) continued to occur in Government-controlled territory.

Civilian casualties December 2023²

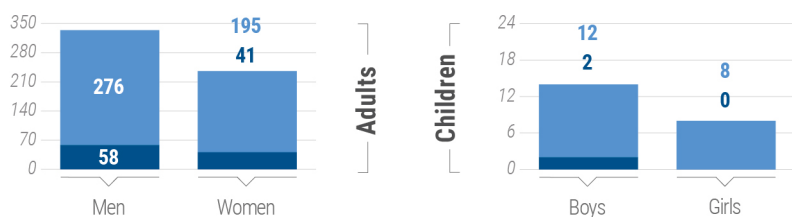
Total civilian casualties **592** [**101** Killed **491** Injured]

1. By territory where casualties occurred

controlled by the Government
 occupied by the Russian Federation



2. By age and sex



3. By type of weapon/incident



Damage to educational and medical facilities December 2023

Medical facilities
 Educational facilities

Destroyed: Medical facilities **0**, Educational facilities **4**
 Damaged: Medical facilities **5**, Educational facilities **16**



Significant incidents

- On 29 December, massive missile attacks targeted Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, Lviv, as well as other towns and villages in Dnipropetrovsk, Sumy, Cherkasy and Kyiv oblasts. At least 21 civilians were killed (11 men and 10 women) and 85 injured (51 men, 29 women, 3 boys and 2 girls) in the attacks.
- On 30 December, a missile strike in Kharkiv injured 26 civilians (13 women, 11 men and 2 boys). A supermarket, a small shopping center, a barber shop, several stores, a coffee place and at least five residential buildings were damaged.

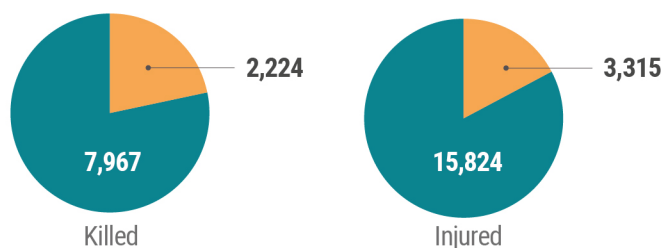
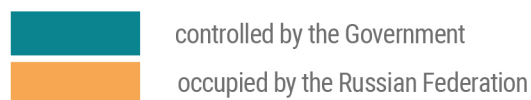
"I heard a loud, deafening blast. My hearing to the right ear normalized only half an hour later. I immediately saw several ambulance vehicles and fire brigade come to site and I felt how the smoke filled the apartment through the damaged window and balcony door frames."

A man in his late 30s describing an attack in Kharkiv on 30 December 2023

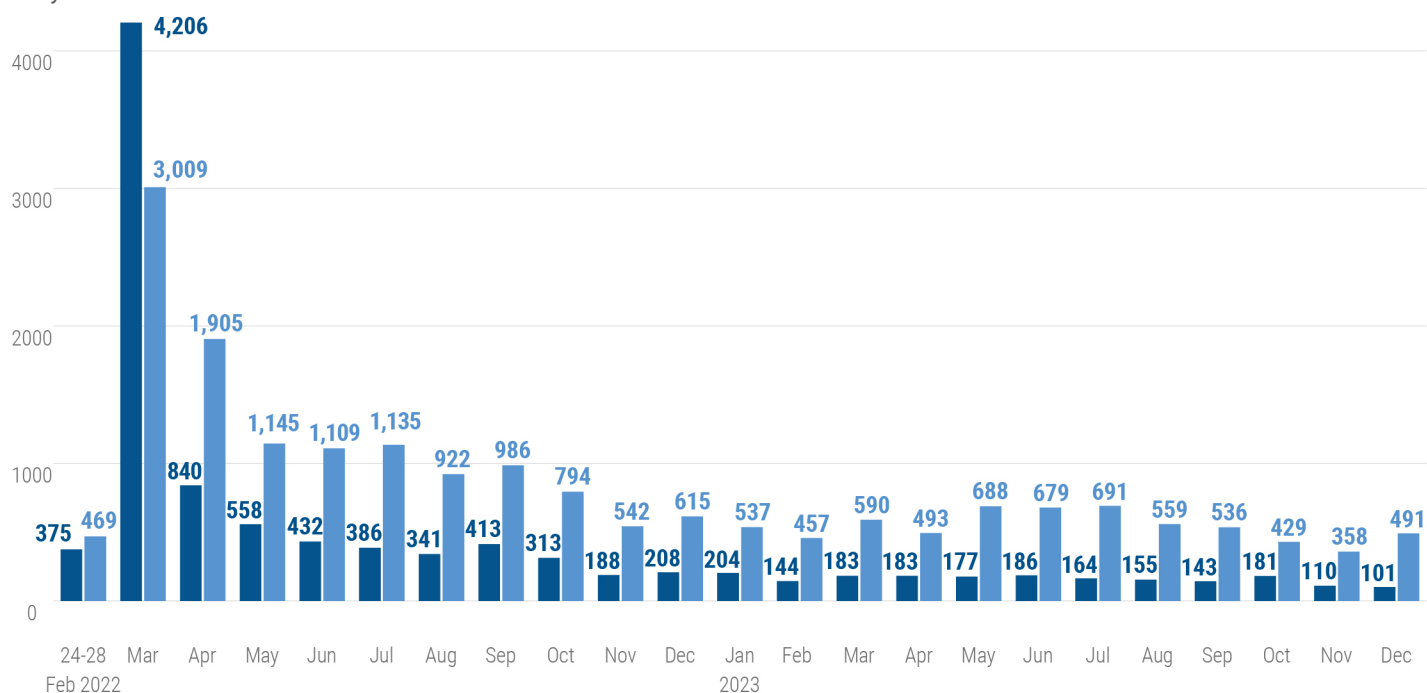
Civilian casualties since 24 February 2022⁴

Total civilian casualties **29,330** [**10,191** Killed **19,139** Injured]

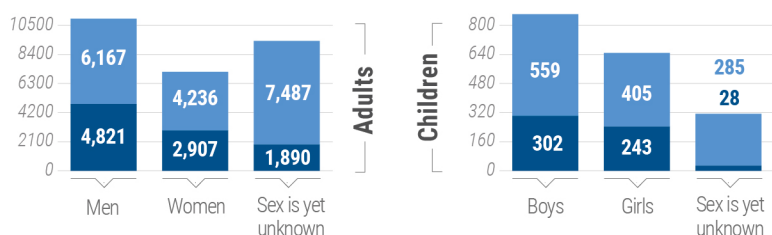
1. By territory where casualties occurred



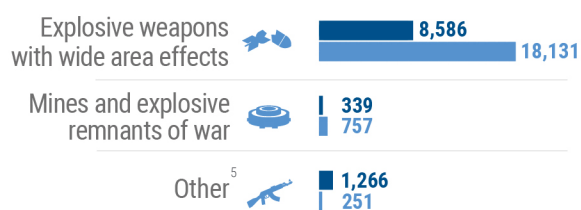
2. By month



3. By age and sex



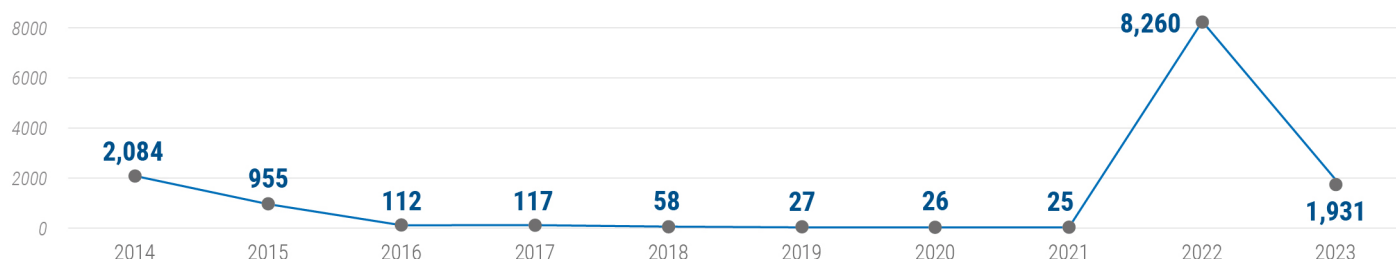
4. By type of weapon/incident



Damage to educational and medical facilities since 24 February 2022



Civilian casualties (killed) since 2014





The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine

OHCHR has documented civilian casualties in Ukraine since 2014. The numbers are based on information that the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) has collected through interviews with victims and their relatives; witnesses; analysis of corroborating material confidentially shared with HRMMU; official records; open-source documents, photo and video materials; forensic records and reports; criminal investigation materials; court documents; reports by international and national non-governmental organisations; public reports by law enforcement and military actors; data from medical facilities

and local authorities. All sources and information are assessed for their relevance and credibility and cross-checked against other information. In some instances, corroboration may take time. As a result, civilian casualty figures may be revised as more information becomes available. Statistics presented in the current update are based on individual civilian casualty records where the “reasonable grounds to believe” standard of proof was met, namely where, based on a body of verified information, an ordinarily prudent observer would have reasonable grounds to believe that the casualty took place as described.

¹ The ratio of reported incidents that are still being verified was higher in December than in previous months because of the high number of attacks towards the end of the month.

² The actual number might be higher as some reports are still pending confirmation.

³ Incidents in which civilians were killed or injured by shelling from artillery, tanks and multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS), by cruise and ballistic missiles (air, sea and land-based), and by air strikes, including loitering munitions and other unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

⁴ OHCHR believes that the actual figures are considerably higher, as many reports, particularly from certain locations and from the immediate period after 24 February 2022, are still pending corroboration. This concerns, for example, Mariupol (Donetsk region), Lysychansk, Popasna, and Sievierodonetsk (Luhansk region), where there were allegations of high civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure. An increase in total figures in this update compared with the previous update is not only due to casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure that occurred in the reporting period as OHCHR also continues to corroborate cases that occurred before the reporting period.

⁵ Incidents in which civilians were killed or injured by fire from small arms and light weapons, including as a result of crossfire, sniper fire, escalation of force incidents (cases in which military opened fire on civilians whom they perceived as a threat), and wilful killings, as well as road accidents involving either military vehicles or civilian vehicles driven by military in the area of hostilities.