

Ukraine: protection of civilians in armed conflict

March 2024 update



HRMMU visits an apartment building in Myrnohrad (Donetsk region) destroyed in an overnight attack that killed and injured civilians in March.

Date: 9 April 2024

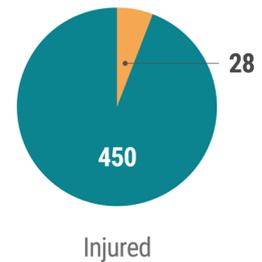
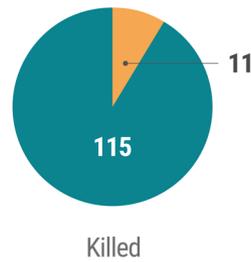
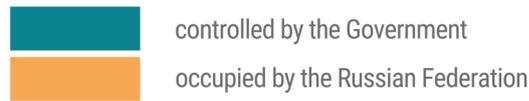
Summary

- The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) verified that at least **604 civilians were killed or injured** in Ukraine in March 2024, a **20 per cent increase compared with February 2024**.
- The **March increase** in civilian casualties was mainly due to attacks by the Russian armed forces using **missiles and loitering munitions** across Ukraine and **increased aerial bombardments** near the frontline.
- At least **57 children were killed or injured in March, doubling the number from February**. These casualties resulted particularly from the increased use of guided and unguided aerial bombs.
- Mines and explosive remnants of war killed and injured at least 28 civilians, including **7 agricultural workers**. The onset of the spring agricultural season increased the risk for farmers as they began working the land.
- In March 2024, large-scale coordinated attacks on **critical infrastructure** destroyed or damaged at least **20 energy facilities throughout the country**, temporarily disrupting access to electricity for millions of people in large cities and rural areas. Water supply was also disrupted in some areas.
- Most civilian casualties (**93.5 per cent**), damage to educational and health facilities (**98 per cent**) and to critical infrastructure (**95 per cent**) continued to occur in Government-controlled territory.

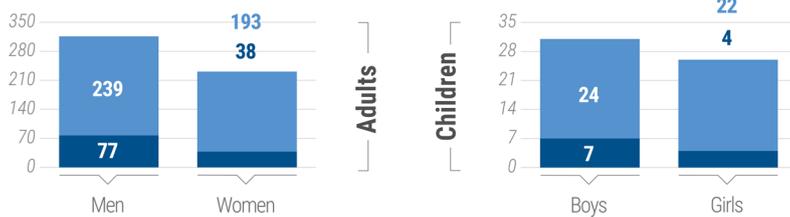
Civilian casualties March 2024¹

Total civilian casualties **604** { **126** Killed **478** Injured

1. By territory where casualties occurred



2. By age and sex



3. By type of weapon/incident



Damage to educational and medical facilities March 2024



HRMMU visits a damaged office building in an industrial area in Kharkiv City where a missile strike killed and injured civilians in March.

Representative incidents

- On 2 March, 11 civilians (4 women, 3 boys, 2 girls and 2 men) were killed and 8 civilians (4 women, 3 men and 1 girl) injured in Odesa from a loitering munitions attack. Three families lost at least two family members in this attack. This incident was the deadliest for children in more than nine months.
- On 12 March, 6 civilians were killed (3 men and 3 women) and at least 25 injured (12 women, 6 boys, 4 girls and 3 men) when missiles struck Kryvyi Rih, Dnipropetrovsk region.
- On 15 March, two consecutive missile strikes within 15 minutes reportedly killed 21 and injured 66 individuals in Odesa. HRMMU has verified that at least 20 among those killed and injured were civilians (13 men and 7 women), some of whom were emergency and medical workers who came to help the injured after the first attack.
- On 22 March, missile and loitering munitions attacks throughout the country damaged and destroyed critical infrastructure in the largest coordinated attack on energy infrastructure since the winter of 2022.

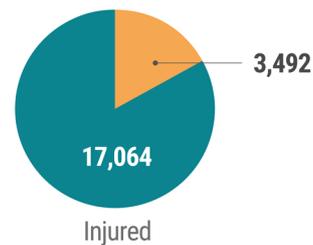
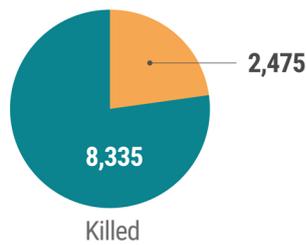
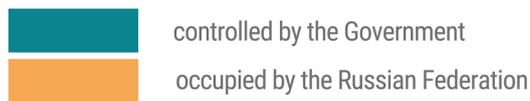
"We are shocked, we don't know what to say, I am holding on only thanks to my pills. It is also snowing today, so it is very cold in the apartment without the windows. Pieces of broken glass are everywhere."

- 73 year-old woman waiting for the emergency services to finish clearing debris after the 12 March 2024 attack in Kryvyi Rih.

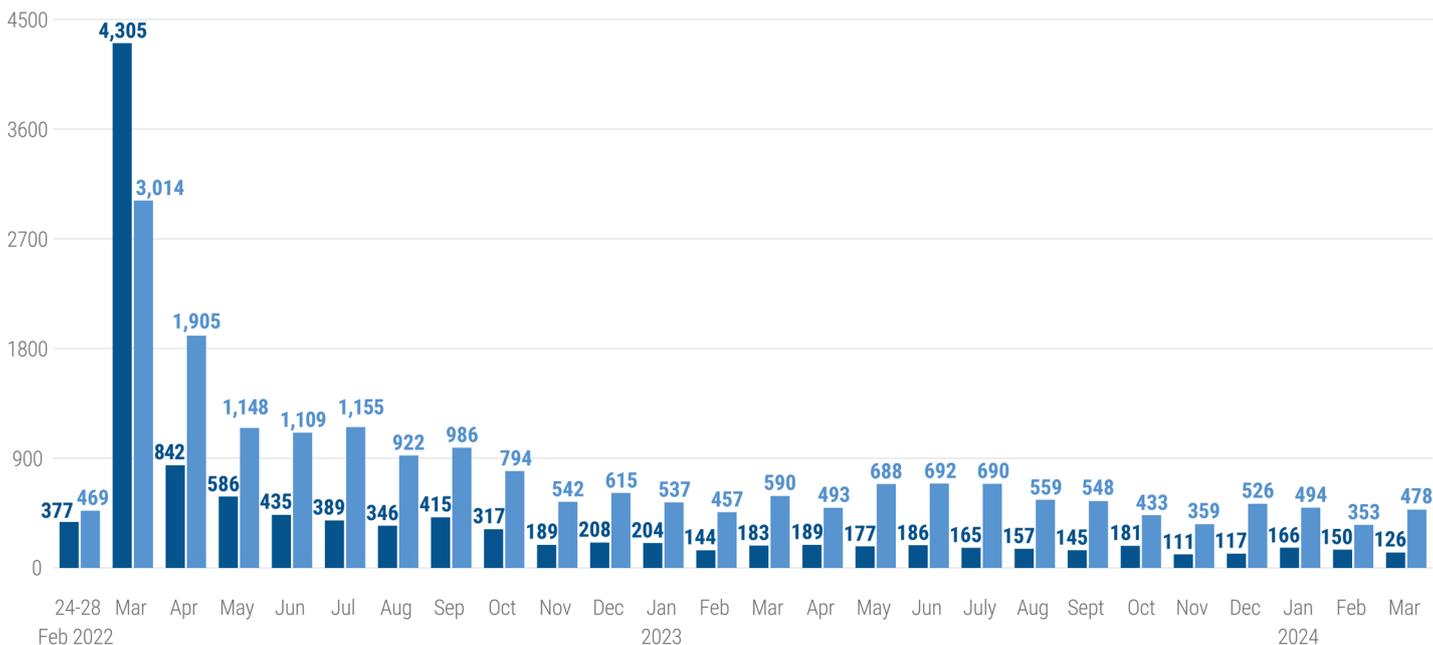
Civilian casualties since 24 February 2022³

Total civilian casualties **31,366** [**10,810** Killed **20,556** Injured]

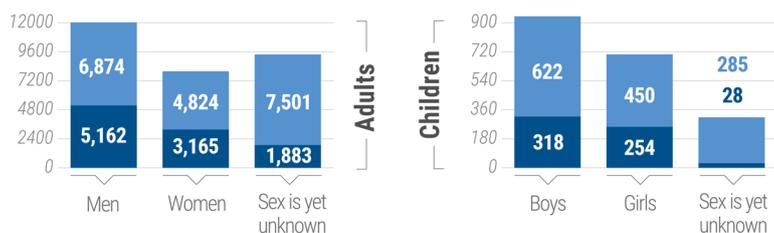
1. By territory where casualties occurred



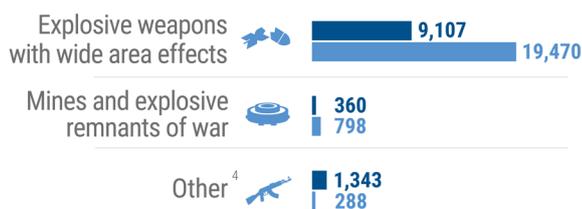
2. By month



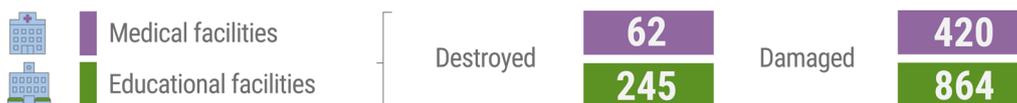
3. By age and sex



4. By type of weapon/incident



Damage to educational and medical facilities since 24 February 2022



Civilians killed since 2014





The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine

HRMMU collects information about civilian harm from conflict-related violence from a wide range of sources, including through interviews with victims, their relatives, and witnesses; open-source information, including photo and video material; 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 takes time. This means that conclusions on civilian casualties may be revised as more information becomes available and numbers may change as new information emerges over time.

Statistics presented in the current update are based on individual records of civilian harm 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 harm took place as described. HRMMU refers to information that meets this criteria as “verified.” When HRMMU has not yet verified a casualty or reported an individual case of death or injury, it does not necessarily mean that HRMMU has established the individual as an active member of an armed group or as someone who directly participated in hostilities. In many cases, the non-designation of an individual as a civilian reflects a lack of information, rather than confirming the individual’s status as a combatant.

The actual extent of civilian harm – both casualties and infrastructure damage – is likely considerably higher as many reports of civilian harm, particularly from the period immediately after the full-scale armed attack, have not been possible to verify due to the large number of reports and the lack of access to relevant areas. The number of civilian casualties is likely particularly undercounted in cities such as Mariupol (Donetsk region), Lysychansk, Popasna, and Sievierodonetsk (Luhansk region), where there was protracted intensive fighting at the start of the armed attack in 2022.

¹ The actual number might be higher as some reports are still pending confirmation.

² 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).

³ HRMMU 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 HRMMU also continues to corroborate cases that occurred before the reporting period.

⁴ 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.