

Ukraine: protection of civilians in armed conflict

May 2024 update



Residential houses in Kharkiv destroyed in an overnight attack at the end of May.

Date: 7 June 2024

Summary

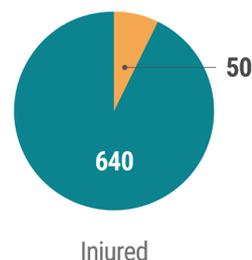
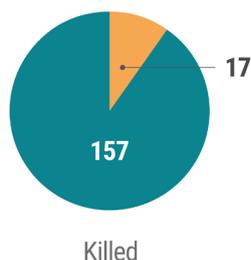
- At least **174 civilians were killed and 690 injured in Ukraine in May**, the highest monthly number of civilian casualties the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) has documented since June 2023. The number of killed civilians represents a **31 per cent increase** compared to April 2024.
- The increase in civilian casualties was **mainly due to attacks in Kharkiv region since 10 May** related to a ground offensive launched by Russian armed forces from the Russian Federation into the Kharkiv region. Attacks in Kharkiv region caused **53 per cent** of overall civilian casualties in May.
- Sixty-five per cent of overall **damage to educational and health facilities** also took place in Kharkiv region, with particularly widespread destruction taking place in **Vovchansk**, a city in Kharkiv region close to the border between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.
- The vast majority of civilian casualties (**92 per cent**), and damage to educational and health facilities (**96 per cent**) continued to occur in Government-controlled territory.
- HRMMU documented **24 attacks on energy infrastructure** (19 attacks in Government-controlled territory and 5 in territory occupied by the Russian Federation), destroying or damaging power generation plants and electricity substations and temporarily disrupting access to electricity and water supply. HRMMU also documented **six attacks on railway infrastructure** in Government-controlled territory in May.

Civilian casualties May 2024¹

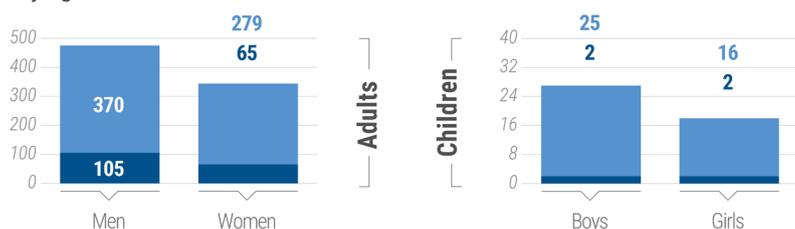
Total civilian casualties **864** { **174** Killed **690** Injured

1. By territory where casualties occurred

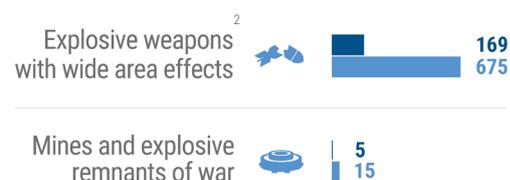

 controlled by the Government
 occupied by the Russian Federation



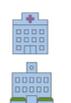
2. By age and sex



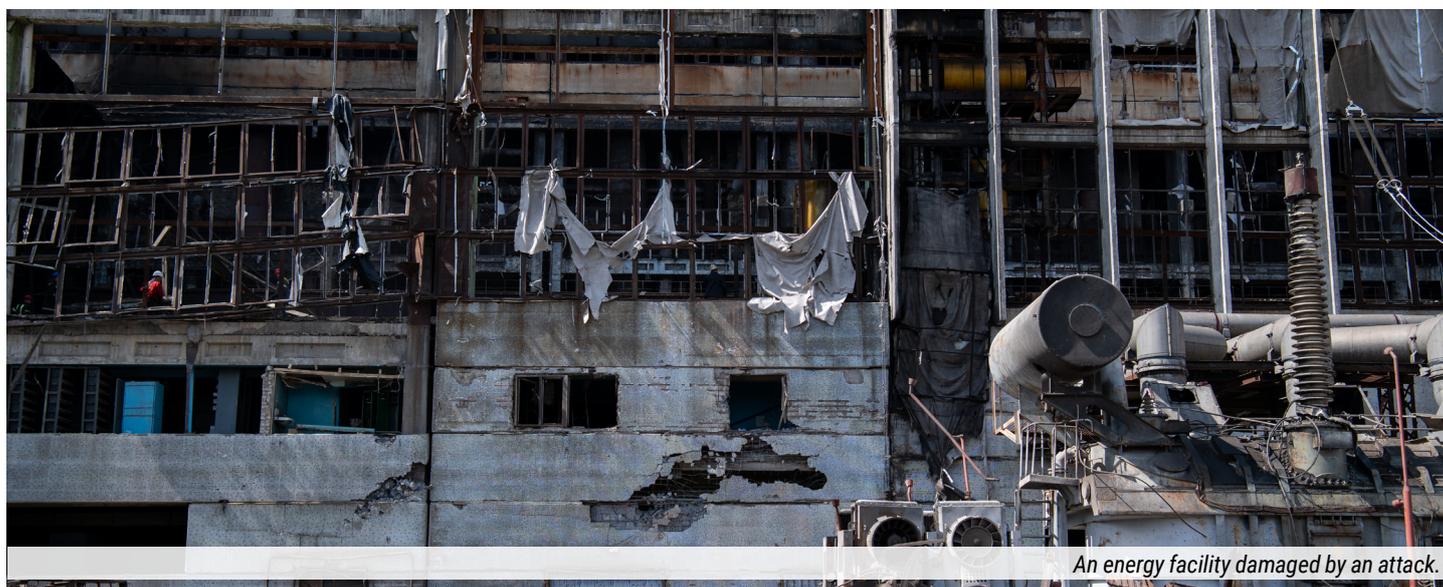
3. By type of weapon/incident



Attacks damaging educational and health facilities May 2024


 Medical facilities
 Educational facilities

Destruction: **2** Medical, **16** Educational
 Damage: **9** Medical, **22** Educational



An energy facility damaged by an attack.

Representative incidents

- On 8 May, a large-scale missile and loitering munition attack throughout the country damaged or destroyed at least 8 energy infrastructure facilities in 6 regions across Ukraine.
- On 19 May, two consecutive strikes on a lakeside recreation center in Cherkaska Lozova (Kharkiv region) killed 6 civilians (5 men and 1 woman) and injured at least 13 (6 men, 6 women and 1 girl).
- On 23 May, missiles struck a printing house in Kharkiv city, killing 7 employees (5 women and 2 men) and injuring at least 21 civilians (19 women and 2 men).
- On 25 May, an attack struck a large construction hypermarket in Kharkiv city, killing 19 civilians (11 men, 6 women, 1 boy and 1 girl), and injuring 54 (37 men and 17 women), including many employees. Later that day, a missile struck Kharkiv city center, injuring 25 civilians (15 men, 9 women and 1 boy).
- Around midnight on 30-31 May, multiple missiles hit a residential area in Kharkiv city, including a multi-story building, killing 9 civilians (5 women and 4 men), and injuring at least 15 (7 men, 6 women, 1 boy and 1 girl).

“Streets are on fire. Street by street is being erased from the face of the earth. Everything is in ruins around you.”

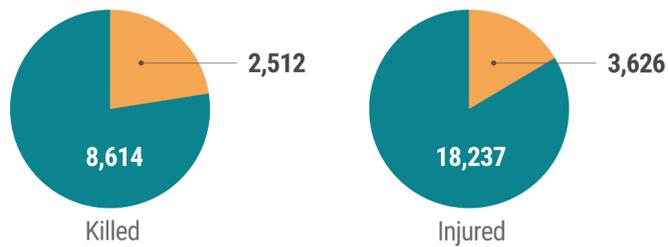
- A female evacuee from Vovchansk interviewed by HRMMU in the collective IDP center in Kharkiv.

Civilian casualties since 24 February 2022³

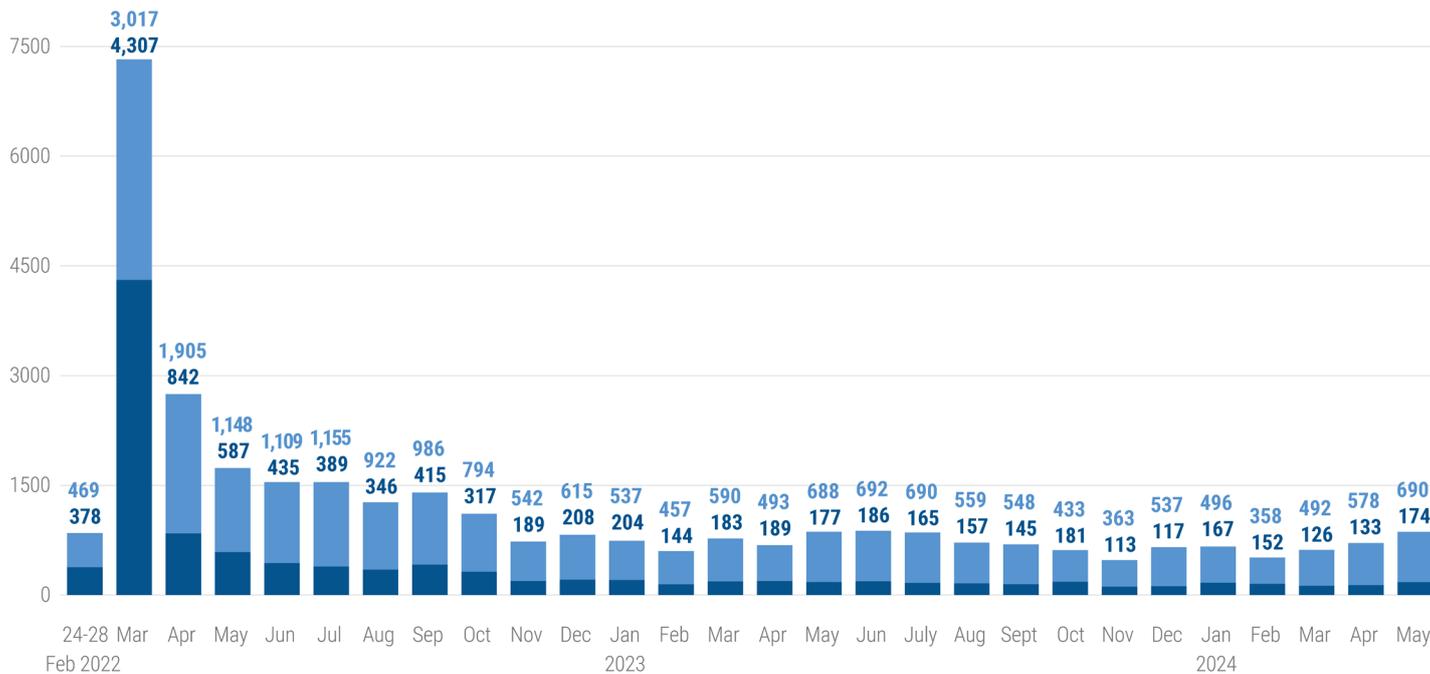
Total civilian casualties **32,989** [**11,126** Killed **21,863** Injured]

1. By territory where casualties occurred

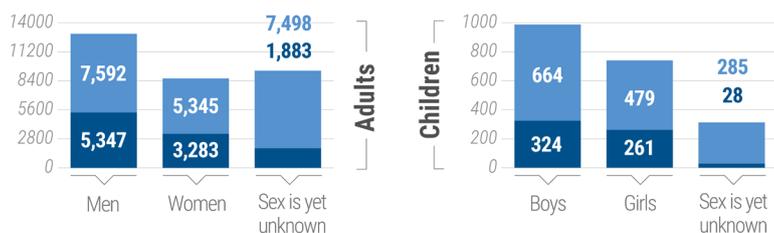
■ controlled by the Government
■ occupied by the Russian Federation



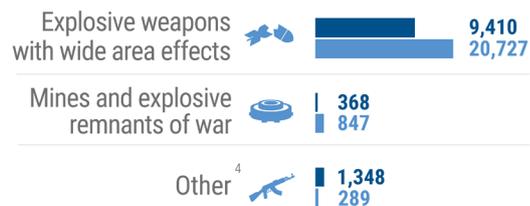
2. By month



3. By age and sex



4. By type of weapon/incident



Attacks damaging educational and health 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.