

The effectiveness of government employment and reskilling programmes

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Conclusions and recommendations

Salary remains the key criterion when choosing a job for the majority of the population — this is confirmed by both the focus groups and the mass survey, where salary ranks first across all age and gender groups (69% among young people, and even higher in other groups). At the same time, there are significant differences between groups: for younger women and those of retirement age, the opportunity for self-fulfilment is important — interesting work, personal development and a sense of self-worth; for women aged 30–50, a flexible timetable that allows them to balance work with childcare is the top priority; for men aged 25–60, mobilization deferment is the key factor, for which they are prepared to compromise on their salary expectations.

The second most important criterion for a ‘good job’ across all groups is a convenient working schedule and proximity to home — people are not prepared to move house or endure a long commute, even for the sake of higher earnings. It is telling that working in one’s chosen field (10–16%) and the prestige of the position (4–9 %) rank lowest among the selection criteria — this indicates a general devaluation in the importance of ‘specialisation’ when making employment decisions and, at the same time, creates fertile ground for reskilling as such.

The main barrier to a transition into blue-collar professions is not the actual working conditions, but **the established perception of these roles**. Respondents declare a neutral attitude but do not consider blue-collar roles for themselves personally, associating them with hard physical labour, irregular working hours, low pay and low social prestige. A large-scale survey confirms this quantitatively: only 8–13% of respondents believe that blue-collar professions fully match their idea of a good job, whilst 35–50% believe that they do not match it at all.

Blue-collar professions are perceived **not as an opportunity, but as a forced choice** brought about by difficult life circumstances — and this general perception is in itself a barrier, regardless of the actual conditions of specific job vacancies. It is telling that young people have the least clear understanding of these professions: almost 70% of respondents under the age of 30 were unable to name a single blue-collar trade in an open-ended question — this is not a negative perception, but a ‘blank’ one, which, unlike the entrenched negative stereotype among older age groups, opens up scope for shaping the image practically from scratch. It is noteworthy that during focus group discussions of specific vacancies

offering competitive pay, some respondents noticeably change their attitude and begin to view blue-collar professions as an attractive option (presenting real vacancies with real salaries in focus groups elicits a reaction of surprise: ‘*Wow, I didn’t know that*’). This is consistent with the observations of representatives from job search websites: a significant proportion of people who say they are ‘looking for work’ have never seen relevant vacancies and do not even take the first active step — in other words, the barrier lies in jobseekers’ lack of contact with what the market actually has to offer, which stems not from a lack of information as such, but **from the passive stance of jobseekers**. Based on the results of a survey of various stakeholders, it can be argued that **there is a certain gap** between the established image of blue-collar occupations and the actual conditions and requirements of such vacancies. Bridging this gap could form one of the foundations for the implementation of retraining programmes for blue-collar occupations.

The population’s stated willingness to change profession in adulthood is high — between 64% (the 50+ age group) and 87% (young people) view the idea of retraining positively, and if it leads to a ‘good job’, the level of willingness rises to over 80% across all groups. This suggests that the limiting factor is not motivation itself, but uncertainty about the outcome: respondents are willing to study only if there is a real guarantee of subsequent employment; they are not prepared to spend time and money for the sake of merely a potential job. It is precisely guaranteed employment that is the main motivation for retraining — this is confirmed both by the comments of focus group respondents (“if you’ve found a job, your employer should send you on a training course and guarantee that you’ll be hired”) and by the survey, where a guarantee of employment (54–65% in favour) and free training (49–55%) are the main drivers, whilst motives such as prestige or alignment with previous education play a minimal role.

Barriers to changing one’s specialism vary by group: for people aged 50 and over, the biggest barrier is precisely the lack of a job guarantee; for the other groups, it is the need for physical stamina and fears of injury, especially as modern equipment and automation are associated with complex digital technologies, which some potential candidates doubt they will be able to master.

Most respondents have experience of adult learning (60–70%), but only 8–13% of them have studied specifically at employment centres or through state-programmes — the bulk of the learning takes place through private courses, particularly those ‘for self-improvement’.

As for state retraining programmes, awareness of them is high (74–87% of respondents have heard of the State Employment Service's programmes), and the level of declared trust is also high (68–80%), but actual experience of using them is low: only 18% of respondents overall have used at least one programme, and only 14–23% 'fully trust' such programmes. This means that the state and training providers enjoy a kind of '**credit of trust**', which is not yet underpinned by widespread positive experience and could easily turn into a crisis of confidence if the actual programmes fail to live up to expectations.

Representatives of job search websites and civil society organisations that directly support people in finding employment confirm this picture from the inside: the State Employment Service is currently not ready to provide comprehensive career support due to being overburdened and its historical focus on statistical and payment-related functions rather than service provision, so the barrier lies not in a lack of awareness of the programmes' existence, but in the absence of support. For certain groups, active outreach and case management models work well, where specialists reach out to people themselves — through mobile teams, evacuation centres or benefit registration points, — and, as a result, reach passive and less capable individuals who are overlooked by both traditional job sites and employment service offices; however, this approach is difficult to organise for mass audiences.

It is also worth noting factors relating to the labour market itself and employers. Employers generally have a much better understanding of the labour market situation than the average jobseeker, who, at best, looks for work only once every few years and does not have time to keep up with trends. However, **employers themselves do a poor job of communicating their value proposition**: very few jobseekers are even aware of the opportunities available for free retraining in specific trade-based specialisms. Businesses' readiness to adopt inclusive practices depends not so much on bias as on their resource capacity: large businesses are easier to persuade with economic arguments (the cost of a vacant post, recruitment time), whereas small business owners are often 'one-man bands' without a dedicated HR department and need simple, ready-to-use tools rather than awareness campaigns.

Testing research hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. 'Willingness to reskill is limited by low motivation and high uncertainty regarding outcomes' — partially confirmed. Quantitative data refute the claim of low motivation: 64–87% of respondents report a positive attitude

towards learning a new specialism. However, the second part of the hypothesis is fully confirmed — it is precisely the high uncertainty of the outcome (the lack of a guarantee of employment) that is the main deterrent, particularly for the 50+ age group.

Hypothesis 2. ‘There are significant information barriers regarding learning opportunities in vocational education and training (VET)’ — confirmed. Qualitative data reveal persistent stigmatisation of VET (‘this is not for me, but for outsiders’) and a lack of detailed information about specific programmes; quantitative data show that only a small proportion of adults have ever undertaken training specifically at VET or employment centres (8–13%), whilst in-depth interviews with representatives of job search websites independently confirm that even active jobseekers are largely unaware of the available courses in blue-collar trades.

Hypothesis 3. ‘Blue-collar professions have a diminished public image among the working-age population’ — confirmed. Qualitatively, this manifests itself in persistent associations with hard physical labour, low prestige and a ‘forced’ rather than a desired choice; quantitatively, only 8–13% of respondents consider blue-collar trades to fully meet the criteria of a ‘good job’, whilst 35–50% believe they do not meet them at all.

Hypothesis 4. ‘Perceptions of vocational education institutions and employers influence decisions regarding participation in training’ — confirmed. Mistrust of job descriptions (fears that actual working conditions will not match those stated), the reputation of VET institutions as places ‘for others’, and the lack of guarantees from employers proved to be key deterrents in both the focus groups and the in-depth interviews with stakeholders.

Recommendations

For the government and the State Employment Service

- Design reskilling programmes based on the ‘training + guaranteed employment’ principle (a prior agreement with a specific employer before training begins), rather than as standalone educational programmes — this is the main driver of willingness to reskill, according to data from both stages of the research.
- Move away from general information campaigns (posters, offline centres) towards targeted communication via channels actually used by the target audiences — job search websites, social media, messaging apps — featuring specific examples of vacancies and actual earnings, rather than general statements about the programmes.
- Accelerate the transformation of employment centres from a statistical and benefit-payment model to a service-oriented (career counselling) model, drawing on established case management practices from civil society organisations and initiatives such as the ‘Obrii’ digital platform.
- Introduce systematic monitoring not only of the completion of training, but also of employment and job retention after 3, 6 and 12 months — this will enable the timely identification of programme weaknesses and protect the accumulated ‘credit of trust’ from a sharp decline.
- Develop active outreach (mobile teams, evacuation centres and payment registration points) to reach passive and less capable members of vulnerable groups who do not come to the attention of traditional job sites.

For VET institutions

- Carry out a targeted rebranding campaign and communicate real success stories of graduates in order to overcome the entrenched perception that ‘VET is not for me, but for outsiders’, which persists even in the absence of any overt negative experiences.
- Develop short-term modular programmes modelled on private courses (either as an alternative to or in addition to 2–3-year programmes), as the duration of study is one of the main reasons why adults choose courses rather than VET.

- Establish separate groups or distance learning formats for adult learners to alleviate the psychological discomfort of studying alongside young people, which is regularly mentioned by respondents in the older age group.
- Expand partnerships with specific employers to guarantee employment for graduates — following the example of programmes that combine training with a pre-arranged job offer.

For employers

- Introduce transparent communication of actual working conditions right from the job advertisement stage to bridge the gap between promises made during interviews and actual duties/workload — respondents explicitly cite this gap as one of the reasons for mistrust of vacancies in blue-collar professions.
- Develop inclusive recruitment practices. Provide training for recruiters and managers on communicating with vulnerable groups (veterans, people with disabilities, older adults).

For a communication and branding strategy regarding blue-collar professions

- Prioritise working with young people: nearly 70% of young respondents were unable to name a single blue-collar profession in an open-ended question — this is not a negative perception, but a ‘blank’ one, which can be purposefully filled with positive content through career guidance in schools and colleges.
- Rely on groups with lower levels of gender stereotypes (young people, women aged 30–50) as ‘agents of change’ in promoting ‘male-dominated’ blue-collar occupations among women.
- Use the presentation of specific job vacancies with real salaries as a tool for changing attitudes — in focus groups, it was precisely this approach that elicited a sense of surprise and increased interest.
- Scale up and support existing media initiatives to promote blue-collar professions, involving businesses, job search platforms and government bodies.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

IDPs	internally displaced persons
SES	State Employment Service of Ukraine
IT	Information Technology
MVA	Ministry of Veterans' Affairs of Ukraine
PwD	people with disabilities
VET	vocational education and training
TOT	temporarily occupied territories
FGD	focus group discussion
VET centre	vocational education and training centre
CAWI	<i>(Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing)</i> — an online survey conducted via a web interface
NEET	<i>(Not in Employment, Education or Training)</i> — young people who are not in employment, education or training

Chapter 1. The population's readiness for reskilling: motivation and barriers

Motivational factors for transitioning to blue-collar occupations: a qualitative study

Most respondents are seeking stability, including through successful employment. Generally, in the respondents' view, job stability is more closely associated with:

- a) a timetable that can be adapted to their own needs.
- b) the possibility of mobilization deferment for men (and women also mentioned this as a must for friends and family) and the ability for women to balance work and childcare.

Being able to get to work without difficulty, having a stable, guaranteed salary thanks to formal employment, (for men) having mobilization deferment, and being able to combine work with childcare (for women) – these criteria determine the stability and attractiveness of a job. And if switching to a blue-collar profession offers these opportunities, respondents are keen to consider the idea of reskilling.

Another significant factor encouraging reskilling is the perception of the prospects for blue-collar professions in the current climate – the availability of permanent employment. Men tend to base their conclusions about prospects more often on opportunities for wage growth and additional benefits (mobilization deferment).

'As I said at the start, a decent wage with good conditions – I'm willing to retrain. And to work. I'm not against it. But I have obligations to my family. And various other needs, too. And I'm willing to retrain whilst working. In other words, I'm working in a new role, in a new specialism. I'm retraining, and at the same time I'm studying and working, yes. You could put it that way.' (Man, aged 43, member of a vulnerable group)

Respondents are prepared to change their specialism if they have a realistic prospect (guaranteed by the employer) of long-term employment with a much higher wage compared to their current one (the average wage on which the unemployed base their estimates) or, for men aged between 25 and 60, for the opportunity of mobilization deferment.

'For me, a good job would be if I were taken on, say, in the defence sector. I'd work there. Yes, the pay's decent there, if you meet your targets. Assembling those same drones, for example. That sort of thing.' (NEET man, aged 25–29)

‘I’ve been looking, but I’d like a better salary. No, I’ve had some offers, but I’d like a slightly better salary.’
(NEET man, aged 25–29)

Women also agree on the importance of higher earnings and are considering reskilling specifically for this reason:

“A good salary is probably the top priority.”
(NEET woman, aged 30–34)

Women are more likely than men to consider a career change based on the social utility of a profession. Professions that are socially significant (agriculture, construction, and those related to safety) are seen as having good prospects, as such work is expected to provide stability and benefit society. However, female respondents cite physical limitations as a barrier to taking up such jobs.

‘These are very important jobs – driver, porter and so on. But not for pensioners, because as a driver, you have to pass the driving test very strictly. Although as for tram drivers, I know that tram drivers are in great demand right now, and there’s a shortage in Kyiv, Odesa and Lviv. I’d be happy to – well, I could go for it – but would I even pass the driving test with my health issues?’ (Unemployed woman, aged 65+)

Some respondents view learning a trade as an additional safety net. They noted the possibility of working under any conditions, using their craft skills either as a paid job or as a side job from home. This provides an additional source of income in the event of a crisis or failure in their main line of work:

“Most people just see it as a sort of extra income.” (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

Manual trades are appealing, but the requirement for physical strength acts as a barrier for women. The greatest appeal of switching to a manual trade lies in the perception of stability within the sector. Respondents noted that manual trades are a ‘lifelong craft’, and that with the right skills, a person can work anytime and anywhere:

‘Well, I did say that you can be self-employed, just like a seamstress, for example. If I... well, I can make nice suits, do alterations. I could open my own little workshop, and people would come to me. I could work for myself like that,

earn a living. Why not? If it's my own thing. Well, if it's not my own thing, and I'm just giving it a go, then, of course, it won't work out quite the same way..."
(Woman, aged 34, member of a vulnerable group)

Thus, the biggest driver for changing profession and undertaking training is the potential for a pay rise and receiving additional bonuses (mobilization deferment for men). Many respondents express a personal interest in learning blue-collar skills (for example, in repairs or sewing). For some, this is a way of trying to start their own business.

Main barriers to transitioning into blue-collar trades: a qualitative study

There are significant barriers to transitioning into blue-collar trades. Among these, the key one is the physical strain which, according to respondents, blue-collar trades entail. For most respondents, blue-collar trades are associated with physically demanding work. Respondents doubt their own ability to perform heavy physical labour:

'As for my own profession, my health no longer allows me to work in that field.'
(Man, aged 36, member of a vulnerable group)

The widespread image of manual workers also detracts from the appeal of these sectors. At the level of initial associations, the perception is extremely negative:

"It seems to me that they're people who are worn out by life. That's the image I have." (Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

"Exhausted and on edge. Because when people work hard, they walk around looking sad." (Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

'Alcohol use.' (Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

"A worn-out drunk." (Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

Manual labour is also associated with a high risk of injury, occupational diseases and a rapid decline in health.

For men, the health risks associated with long-term work in manual trades requiring physical exertion are of greater concern; they also fear injuries. For them, physical exertion is associated with carrying out work that requires the use of considerable physical strength (lifting, carrying or transporting objects under their own steam) and with the potential for injury whilst performing such work. This is particularly important for those who already have health issues: a degree of disability, age-related difficulties, or incurable injuries resulting from previous work

– conditions which do not qualify for a degree of disability but significantly complicate their lives.

‘I’m looking, for example, more towards a security guard job. Because my health’s already letting me down – my blood pressure, and my head, the pressure. You know what I mean. Somewhere as a security guard, so that I don’t have to do night shifts either – just day shifts. It’s hard to find; there are day-rate jobs, but full-time ones are a bit of a struggle.’ (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)
“At 60, your health isn’t what it used to be.” (Unemployed woman, aged 65+)

Women also cited examples of male acquaintances and relatives who are unable to work in manual trades due to injuries sustained during military service, or due to a decline in their health that has occurred as they’ve moved into a different age group.

Women are more likely to consider such occupations unsuitable for themselves due to gender stereotypes. The difficulty of performing the tasks involved in manual labour due to physical limitations – a lack of physical strength and stamina – also plays an important role for them. They consider the physical strain and potential deterioration in health resulting from prolonged work in awkward positions or uncomfortable conditions (poor lighting, awkward postures, intense though not necessarily heavy workloads, long working days):

“I can’t imagine an elderly woman working on a crane anywhere. And a bricklayer – that’s the same; it’s hard physical labour that requires, well, good health and stamina. A pensioner simply can’t manage it, let’s put it that way.” (Unemployed woman, aged 65+)

“The second option didn’t appeal to me at all, because it involves physical labour; physically, I’m not ready to work like that, to deplete my health somehow.”
 (Woman, aged 35, member of a vulnerable group)

“There are downsides, I’d say. It’s sedentary work – that’s the first downside. It’s sedentary work, so your back will often ache. The second downside is that if you’re sewing in poor lighting, your eyesight will deteriorate.” (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

Some respondents calmly accept physical exertion at work as a basic necessity inherent in any job. They are more open to change.

'Well, these professions are in high demand. Drivers in particular right now. Both in civilian life and on the front line, especially. Because, well, after all, someone has to transport people, goods, weapons and everything else.' (Unemployed woman, aged 33)

"It's true, there are women who drive too, but they're young; they drive lorries when they need to, because there are no other ways to earn a living."
(Unemployed woman, aged 65+)

Another limiting factor is that, in the respondents' view, manual labour is more suited to men:

'Girls won't get behind the wheel of a tractor or a combine harvester (laughs).'
(NEET woman, aged 30–34)

"Those jobs are good; they're very well-paid. But, well, they're not really suitable for women – they're more for men." (Unemployed woman, aged 65+)

However, when it comes to their beliefs, many of them are open to discussing the kinds of work they are physically capable of doing.

"I'd go and work for Nova Poshta." (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

Apart from the physical demands, another barrier is the traditional perception of low wages in manufacturing, construction or agriculture, which do not match the level of workload:

"The pay is low. My uncle runs a car repair workshop. But there are loads of them all over the city. It's not profitable." (NEET man, aged 16–19)

"But they still pay you the same as a labourer or building site staff, and you're just slaving away for everyone." (NEET man, aged 16–19)

There is some ambiguity in the assessment of wages for blue-collar professions. High wages are possible, but only for high-level professionals with a large number of regular clients. The respondents do not see themselves in this light, however, as newcomers to the profession do not earn high wages.

One barrier is the fear of unregulated working hours and pressure from management:

'Because, again, the workload of two or three people is placed on one person. Yet you're only paid for one set of duties, even though you're doing the work of

three. So, naturally, people don't want to put their health and energy on the line for a pittance, if you'll pardon the expression.' (NEET man, aged 25–29)

'There's this trend in Ukrainian companies – to pile a huge number of responsibilities onto someone that they simply can't physically cope with, so that they feel overwhelmed by it and start thinking, "I'm really not up to it, I'm not doing a good job." And you have to work harder to sort it all out somehow. It's as if, once they've come up with this, it's just the norm. That's a trend you see a lot in our companies.' (NEET man, aged 25–29)

The low prestige of blue-collar professions is also a barrier. Attitudes aren't openly stated, but they're evident in the responses, particularly among men:

'[On working in construction] I wouldn't go. Just on principle. I wouldn't go. Especially given the current situation in the country, where a lot of people have lost their minds... You could say that. There's no respect for it at all.' (NEET man, aged 25–29)

Prospects for learning and transition to employment: barriers and motivational grounds for adult learning: a qualitative study

There is a list of barriers to learning that are common to most respondents:

Economic (significant costs / loss of income)

First and foremost, respondents consider the risk of spending money on education itself without subsequent employment. The idea of studying at the employer's expense seems attractive, as it reduces risks and costs:

'A job guarantee – that you're studying and you're guaranteed to be hired'
(Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

'I think employers should send you on training. If you've found a job, your employer should send you on training. And they should guarantee that you'll be hired.' (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

'If you're just going to go along for the sake of it, it's only for the grant, really. You've come to the workplace to get a job; they offer you that job and training. You've learnt the skills, and then you go off and work. But without that job guarantee, I don't know what the point of the training is. You'll finish your training, and then you'll just have to go out and look for a job.' (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

Some respondents see a risk of being held to excessively high standards at work:

'It's a bit of a mixed bag. On the one hand, it's sort of good. On the other hand, there'll be more demands on you now. You've sort of already learnt the trade. So, naturally, you're expected to do more now. I don't think the pay will be any higher.' (NEET man, aged 16–19)

But most agree that training funded by employers is a guarantee of their interest in their staff:

"I think that if the training is paid for out of your salary, it's a good option." (NEET man, aged 16–19)

"I think so too – it's generally a good thing that the employer is keen for you to train for this profession. But I'm not sure how this will affect my pay." (NEET man, aged 16–19)

Most respondents are concerned about wasting working hours:

“Well, I agree with the financial aspect, because you’re not working, you don’t have a job, and here you’d have to change your role, change your field of work, right? You’d have to learn something in order to get somewhere. Not every company offers this training opportunity. They either provide some two- or three-day courses – short ones, right? Then, at the end of these courses, they tell you: ‘You’re not right for us’ – without any explanation whatsoever. What sort of training are we talking about then? That’s when a person really suffers psychologically.” (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

Many respondents are also unsure about the quality of training when it comes to courses, as other sectors where skills can be learnt easily and quickly (the beauty industry, for example) have already created a negative impression of this type of training:

‘Well, for example, I attended a one-and-a-half-week course in manicure. Well, how should I put it? I think that’s not enough. For me, it wasn’t enough; I needed even more so that I could, as it were, really master this profession.’ (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

“I finished a hairdressing course, and for some reason I don’t feel like continuing. Especially as it’s a paid course, and quite expensive.” (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

Many respondents are only willing to try changing their line of work if they receive guarantees from an employer, or if the new job offers significantly higher pay:

“Because you’ll be working your way into it – that is, you’ll be learning the trade – so will they pay you more or not?” (NEET man, aged 16–19)

Psychological (fear / insecurity)

Respondents admitted that, generally speaking, change and learning something new frighten them, because at present most of them have a familiar profession, and some have a familiar job and work team; all of this forms a way of life that is very uncomfortable to change:

“Look, the comfort zone is, as always, where we’ve already been working for one, two, up to five years; those who’ve been working there even longer—10 years or more—don’t want to leave their comfort zone; they’ve got used to it. It’s the same team; they don’t want to change anything; they want to stay there and live that life.”
(NEET woman, aged 30–34)

However, some mentioned simply the desire to learn new things as an end in itself, which motivates them to retrain, amongst other things:

‘Yes, I’m ready to learn. That’s basically my life’s motto. There you go. I don’t see anything wrong with getting some sort of education. But I have a question: I need training that’s supported by some sort of grant; I need to earn a living at the same time, as I have a family.’

(Woman, aged 41, member of a vulnerable group)

Another factor is that respondents fear they won’t be able to cope with studying or working in a radically different field:

“You’ve got to know geometry, you’ve got to know maths. You’ve got to calculate everything – all the radii, all the diagonals. You’ve got to work it all out. You’ve got to work out the volume, the area, everything (laughs).” (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

This is particularly difficult for the older age group:

‘The thing is, we’re older people now; we can’t keep up with technology, I’m afraid. Modern technology. Because everything works differently now. Even in agriculture, take the tractor: you used to get in, pull the lever and off it went, but now you have to press a button – and you have to know which one, you see.’
(Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

People aged 55 and over, whilst willing to learn and work, fear they won’t be able to cope with the competition from younger professionals:

‘We’re ready to work. We’re ready to learn and work. But given our age, can our work really be as useful as that of young people? Because we might not be as quick to pick things up, or work in the same way as young people. Young people are young people.’ (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

‘And we might not be much use. So we can train and work. But the employer will say: “Listen, you’re not performing at 100%. Take Sasha, for example – he works 30–40% better. It’s easier for me to keep him on than you.” (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

Status (‘lack of prestige’ of blue-collar occupations)

For skilled workers, the transition to less prestigious professions is a vulnerable point. Some see this as a loss of their own potential and a waste of their previous years of study. Because of this, they are not keen on training either.

‘No, there’s no such situation. I’d much rather take any job, even as a porter, than go to a vocational college to study now.’ (Unemployed man, aged 35–44)
“Yes. I don’t know what life has in store for me. I’ve got both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree, and I’m planning to apply for a PhD. I don’t know.”
 (Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

For the respondents, short-term courses to upgrade or change their qualifications are the preferred option. They do not consider VET as an alternative because:

A) The length of study, which is significantly shorter on courses, and is therefore more convenient and cost-effective.

B) The reputation of VET institutions, about which people don’t openly say anything bad, but they aren’t prepared to imagine themselves as students there. In the respondents’ view, VET is only for outsiders:

‘I wouldn’t go to a vocational school. I’ve got no problem with them. I’ve got a friend who’s there, it turns out. I enrolled at a college, whilst my friend enrolled at a vocational school. In principle, I’ve got nothing against them. They do provide an education, in principle. It just depends on the individual there. Those who want to study do so, and then go on to work. At the moment, I don’t really see it as a viable career path. Why? I can explain. Because right now, in principle, I don’t need to. I’m just getting by, so to speak. But if things get really tight, to the point where there’s no way out, then, in principle, I could consider any kind of job. Even considering the Territorial Recruitment Centre, I might even take a risk. Basically, when there’s no choice, there’s no choice – when you’re backed into a corner.’ (Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

‘For me, I’d say a vocational college – I agree with my colleagues that it’s best for younger people. But courses – that’s interesting. I’ve just finished a massage course. I can work from home. If I invite a client round, that brings in a few pennies for the family. Right now, I’m thinking of perhaps doing a baker’s course.’ (Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

‘I think training for people like us should last no more than two weeks. If it’s just two weeks, then it’s still worth doing – you can learn a few new things.’
 (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

The VET deserves positive feedback only from respondents who have attended it themselves and had a positive experience:

“My experience of the training was quite positive. I’m very satisfied. They gave me knowledge. I learnt. So everything was great for me. I got an 11, passed my final exam. I qualified as an accountant. That was one of the qualifications on offer. You could qualify for two professions over three years: accountant and computer data entry operator. They gave me a good grounding in the subject. Considering that it was a state-funded programme and I didn’t pay anything, I’m very satisfied. I just happened to end up in that particular group with those particular teachers.” (NEET man, aged 25–29)

“Here’s my experience. I trained as a bricklayer-plasterer and a tiler. The vocational college was in my village. I didn’t live there; I just went to classes. That’s it. I learnt a lot and was taught a great deal.” (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

Institutional (lack of time / access / information)

For many women, family obligations and the responsibility of looking after children or sick relatives are a significant barrier to learning. Even when they are motivated and willing to learn, they often cannot leave their loved ones unattended, particularly given the limited availability of nurseries and other care services:

‘[Regarding the retraining courses offered by the State Employment Service that she’d found earlier] I asked if I could take my child with me. They told me no, absolutely not.’
(46-year-old woman, member of a vulnerable group)

Most respondents prioritise short-term distance learning (provided their field of study allows it, i.e. if their line of work does not require additional equipment that the respondent cannot afford to provide themselves)

“I’d rather do some sort of course, so to speak, one that’s shorter and more specific, so that it provides both information and practical experience. Rather than a vocational college. There’ll still be subjects there that aren’t just what I need. That’s it. I don’t want to take on unnecessary information. That’s it.” (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

There is a lack of information because, when it comes to further training courses or changing career paths, people usually mention professions in the beauty industry or design, as these are easier (physically), the training is short, and

respondents consider these fields to be very lucrative. For some, it's also an opportunity to do something they're personally interested in.

'I realise that training and courses are very expensive. Electrolysis. I'd love to do electrolysis, but I realise my eyesight has started to deteriorate rapidly. And then... I've also got back problems and other health issues, and I realise it puts a strain on my back and affects my eyesight, but I'd really love to!'

(46-year-old woman, member of a vulnerable group)

People aged 40 and over anticipate additional difficulties whilst studying. Older people often feel self-conscious when interacting with younger students, recalling their own reactions in the past, which complicates the learning process. This is particularly noticeable in full-time, face-to-face learning, where the age gap becomes more pronounced:

'I remember when I was still at university, it felt strange to see 50 of them turn up... That's how it seemed to me at the time. These part-time students. And they're studying. And we're young. It was a bit odd that they'd turn up here straight away. I don't know if it was just them, or if it wasn't the right time. But there were these middle-aged men and older gentlemen walking around these lecture theatres.' (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

Respondents who are keen to learn something new and personally interesting view the prospects of studying with optimism, especially provided that studying can be combined with work, or that employment is a guaranteed prospect:

'So, if an employer offered an opportunity like that—where you could work and study at the same time, so you could then move up the career ladder—that would be brilliant. Because nobody's saying anything like that at the moment, not even among my friends.' (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

"I believe that at any age you can change jobs, you can change your field of work, you can try something completely different – something you've never done before. And there aren't any age restrictions these days. You can go back to study even in your 40s, and that's absolutely fine. And perhaps a person will find themselves. If they didn't find themselves at 17, when they went off to learn how to work, they might find themselves at 45." (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

'In any case, self-development is a good thing. And if you need to learn something for work or whatever... Obviously, provided it's paid afterwards. I mean, not a two-week unpaid work placement, but if you're rewarded for it afterwards, so to speak, then of course.' (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

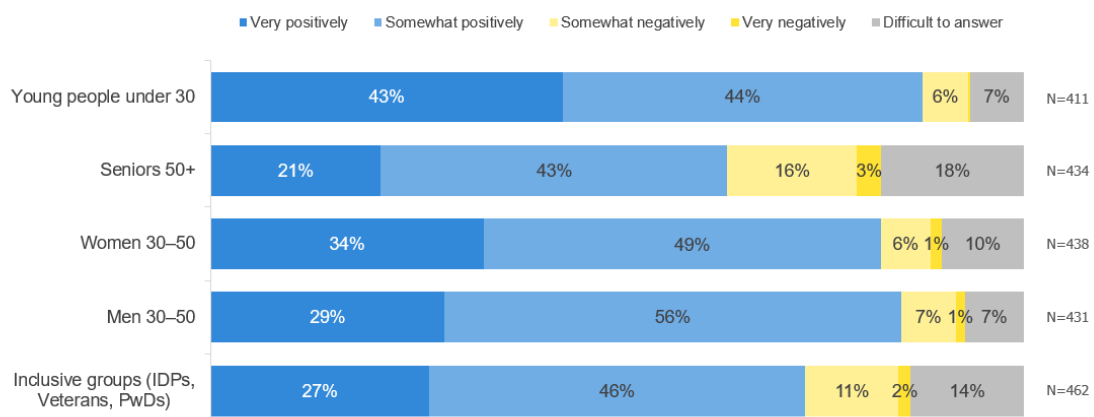
The same applies to people with special needs who are willing to train for new professions from among those they would be able to work in, taking into account their physical limitations:

‘Yes, illness, disability. The war has taken its toll on my health. So now I need to look at myself and at life a bit differently. I mean, you still need to learn. Because you need to learn everything. You need to learn how to live with a disability, and everything else. I don’t see anything wrong with that. That’s it.’ (36-year-old man, member of a vulnerable group)

Prospects for learning and transitioning to employment: a quantitative study

The majority of respondents to the quantitative survey answered positively to the question ‘How do you feel about the idea of learning a new profession at your age?’ (Fig.1). Among young people, the largest proportion view this idea very positively (43%). Among the older demographic, the proportion with a ‘very positive’ attitude is half as high (21%); however, across all age groups, the combined proportion of ‘very positive’ and ‘somewhat positive’ responses accounts for more than half of those surveyed (ranging from 87% among young people to 64% among respondents aged over 50). Of course, it cannot be ruled out that respondents are giving socially acceptable answers, but even this fact indicates a consensus in society regarding the possibility of learning and mastering a new profession at any age (lifelong learning).

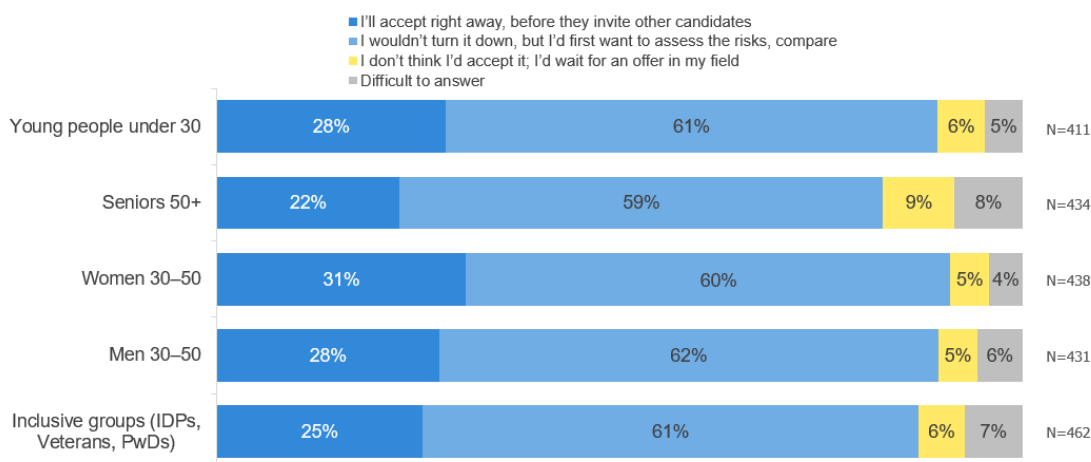
Fig.1 . How do you feel about the idea of learning a new profession at your age? (% of responses, public survey¹)



¹ Here and throughout, unless otherwise stated, the survey data are based on the total number of respondents

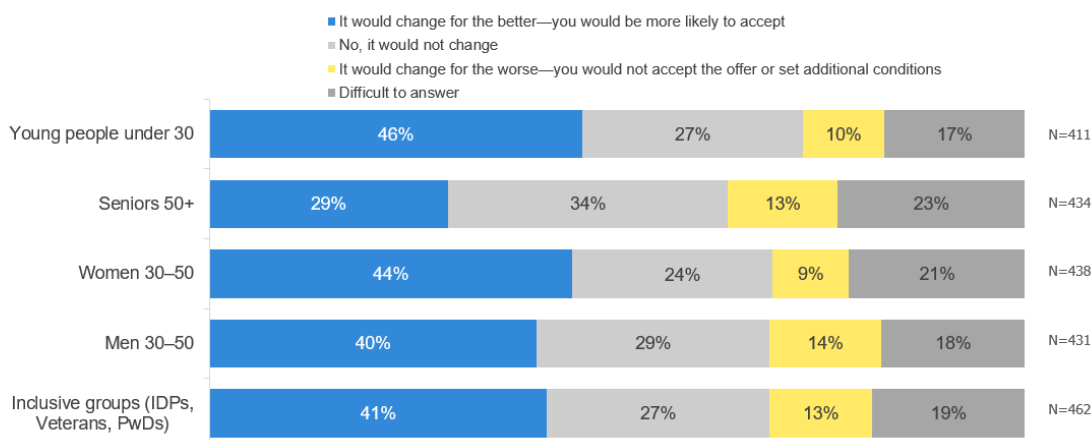
Moreover, if the training or retraining relates to a ‘good job’, as perceived by respondents, the level of tentative willingness rises even further, reaching over 80% across all target groups (Fig.2). Admittedly, the characteristics of a ‘good job’ – which we examine in Section 3 – play a significant role here.

Fig.2 . Imagine that you’ve been offered a good job that requires you to change your field of study—that is, to undergo training or retraining (the terms and duration of the training suit you, and your future employer will cover the costs). Select the statement that most accurately describes your attitude: (% of responses, mass survey)



It should be noted that if the ‘good job’ involves training and subsequent employment in a blue-collar role, respondents do not express any objections: their attitude would either improve or remain unchanged (Fig.3). Only 9–14% of respondents across different target audiences answered that their attitude ‘would change for the worse’.

Fig.3 . Would your opinion on retraining change if this good job involved training and subsequent employment in a skilled trade? (% of responses, mass survey)

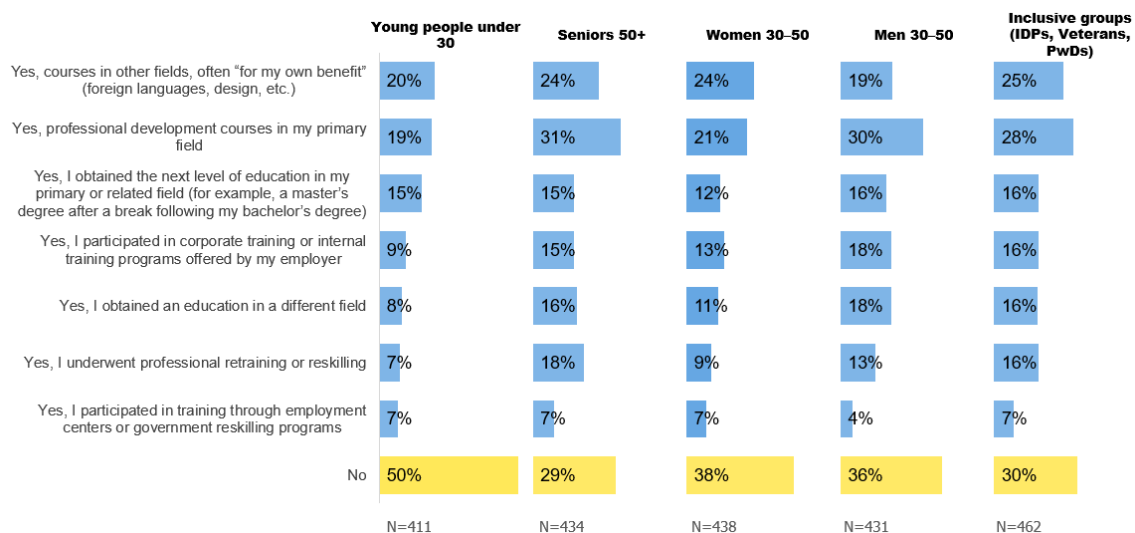


Most of the target groups surveyed already have experience of adult learning, with the exception of young people (half of this group have no such experience). For the other groups, the proportion of respondents with learning experience ranges from 60% to 70% (Fig.4). Most often, such experience is limited to self-development courses (foreign languages, design, etc.) and professional development courses in their main field of specialisation (particularly among the older group of respondents aged 50+) and men aged 30–50.

A significant proportion of respondents have experience of studying a different subject, as well as experience of retraining: 17% of young people, 35% of the older age group, 24% of women aged 30–50, 28% of men aged 30–50 and 32% of members of inclusive population groups. It should be noted that only a small proportion of respondents undertook training at employment centres or as part of state retraining programmes; approximately three-quarters of the training load was undertaken by other players in the adult education market.

Consequently, when planning retraining and training programmes, the experiences of two large groups (each accounting for around 25–40 per cent of the population) should be taken into account. The first group consists of people who have had no training experience whatsoever since leaving school, college or university (and, accordingly, their barriers are largely psychological in nature). The second group consists of people who have had experience of retraining specifically, and their barriers may lie in the context of their past experience. The lack of experience of learning specifically at employment centres can be viewed as a *carte blanche*.

Fig.4 . Do you have any experience studying as an adult (roughly after age 25 or after you had already started working)? (% of responses, mass survey)



As regards the drivers and barriers to reskilling, whilst the drivers are roughly equally strong for all target groups, the barriers vary for each audience (Fig.5).

Thus, the main drivers, which were formulated as *'It is always useful to learn something new'*, *'You can retrain at any age if you like the field and your health allows it'*, and *'It is important that a retraining certificate be recognized by the job market and employers'* are unquestionably supported by representatives of all target audiences. The response balance (i.e. the difference between the proportion of those who agree with the statement and those who disagree) ranges from 66% to 88%; in other words, the proportion of those who disagree with these statements does not exceed 13% among men aged 30–50, and does not exceed 10% in other groups. This level of agreement indicates, at the very least, an existing social consensus on lifelong learning (the opportunity to learn and master a new profession at any age).

As for the barriers to reskilling (highlighted in red in the figure) — all of them proved to be relevant to respondents, albeit to varying degrees. At the very least, there is not a single barrier for which the proportion of those disagreeing exceeds the proportion of those agreeing; for all barriers, the response balance is positive.

Among young people, the level of agreement with the barriers is the lowest and tends to relate not to themselves but to certain 'adults' who find it difficult to change their usual professional activity (response balance: 44%) and to work in roles that require physical endurance (response balance: 36%). For young people, training

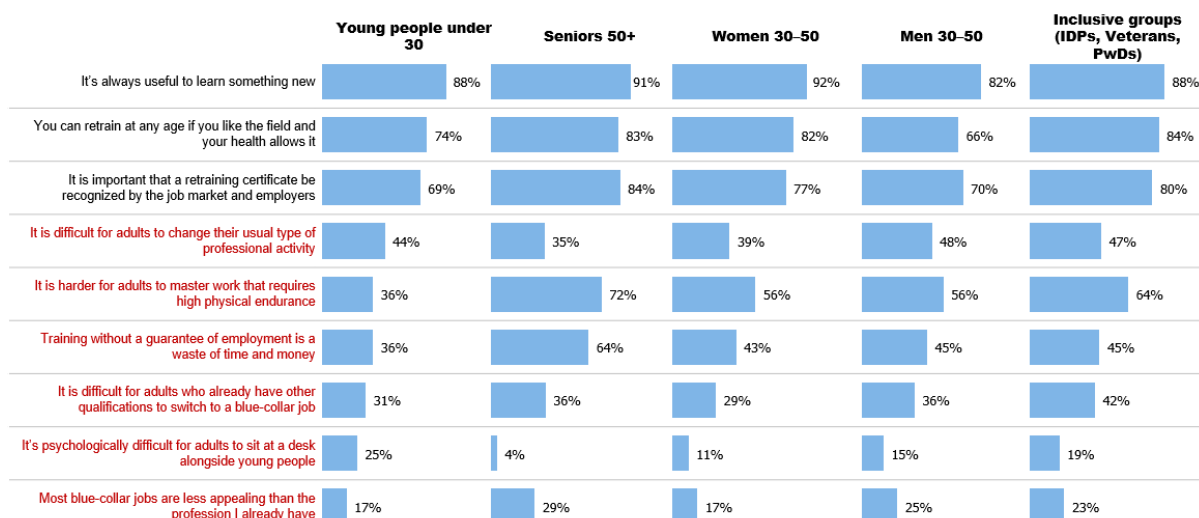
without a guarantee of employment is also a lesser barrier (response balance: 36%, the lowest level among all respondents).

For older people aged 50 and over, by contrast, the lack of a guarantee of employment is the greatest barrier among all groups (response balance 64%), and the second most significant among this group. The greatest barrier for them is a lack of physical stamina (response balance 72%). This barrier (the difficulty of mastering work that requires physical endurance) is also the greatest for the other groups: the response balance stands at 56% among women and men aged 30–50, and 64% among the inclusive population groups.

The barrier associated with transitioning to a blue-collar profession for people with different qualifications is relevant to all groups. The response balance here ranges from 29% among middle-aged women to 42% among the inclusive population. However, at the same time, a smaller proportion of respondents agree that *‘Most blue-collar jobs are less appealing than the profession I already have’*: the proportion of respondents holding this view stands at 17% among young people and middle-aged women, and 23–29% among other groups.

Interestingly, the psychological barrier regarding the idea that *‘It’s psychologically difficult for adults to sit at a desk alongside young people’* is least supported by the oldest demographic: the proportion of respondents aged over 50 who agree with this statement is just 4%.

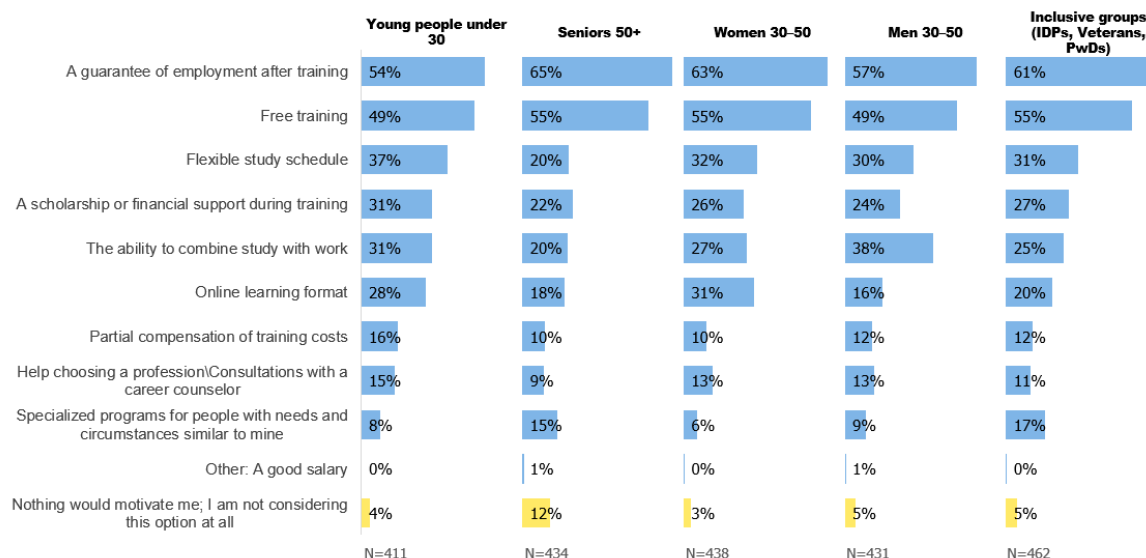
Fig.5 . Indicate how much you personally agree with each of the following statements?
(percentage of responses “strongly agree or somewhat agree” minus the percentage of responses “strongly disagree or somewhat disagree”)



Overall, to summarise, only a small proportion of respondents in each target group do not consider the option of learning a new profession or retraining at all. The highest proportion of such respondents is among people over 50 – 12%. In other groups, this proportion is several times lower, ranging from 3 to 5%.

The main drivers for retraining are purely rational in nature (Fig.6): a guarantee of employment (agreed by 54–65%) and free training (agreement levels across different groups range from 49 to 55%). Other drivers are more niche in nature: women and young people are more likely to choose online learning (31% and 28% respectively); for men aged 30–50, as the group with the highest employment rate, the ability to combine learning with work is important (38%); older people and marginalised groups are more likely to mention specific programmes for people with special needs or circumstances (15 and 17% respectively). However, it is noteworthy that the availability of such programmes ranks significantly lower in importance than the basic requirements.

Fig.6 . What might motivate you to consider learning a new profession or retraining? (% of responses, mass survey)



Experience of changing career paths in adulthood: qualitative research

Some respondents had already experienced a change of profession. In most cases, this was out of necessity due to an inability to continue working (injuries sustained or a lack of jobs on the labour market), or a change of residence, including as a result of the Russia-Ukraine war.

‘Yes. I’ve also had the experience of a complete, radical change. As I could no longer work due to my health, I changed careers. It was difficult at first, but you get used to it; still, the routine does take its toll a little.’
(Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

“I used to be a choreographer, but I switched careers and worked in the furniture industry, selling fittings and things like that.” (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

“I also consider my experience to have been positive. I worked as a programmer, which really strains your eyes. And then, after my time as a programmer, given my vocational education, I went on to work as a fitness trainer. So, basically, two completely different fields.” (Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

‘Yes, that’s happened to me many times. I mean, I got off to a flying start, graduated from university, held managerial positions. Then there was a sharp downturn. To put it figuratively, I’ve worked on Euro-fences, screeds – basically, building houses. Then I’d slowly start up a private business again. I’d work for a

while, everything was fine. Then another setback. I changed jobs; I've had loads of different ones. I've been a storekeeper and a driver.” (Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

“I've also had a great many different jobs; there's hardly a role I haven't done. I've been a director, a regional manager, run my own business, worked in construction and in security.” (Unemployed woman, aged 65+)

“Nothing really stood in my way. If the job was interesting, if the pay was decent, and if I could see that I could handle it – if I could learn a bit, read up on it, and see how it's done properly – then absolutely nothing stood in my way.” (Unemployed woman, aged 65+)

“I've changed jobs too. There's nothing difficult about it. I've worked at the zoo, as an administrator, in construction and in security. In lots of places. And in my actual profession – I used to bake bread rolls. There's nothing difficult about it. The main thing is to have the desire to learn. They always help you when you get a job. There's nothing like that here.” (Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

Another common reason is the search for a job with a higher salary:

‘I switched from construction to, say, working online. It's much the same, really. How can I put it? The salary was a huge motivator. Because there was a lot of money involved, believe me. I was working for an American company in Ukraine. I was earning money that I'd never have earned here in a million years. I learnt the job very quickly – literally within a month – and I was already doing the same work.’ (NEET man, aged 25–29)

Some had experience of upskilling to change their field of work:

‘I took various online courses to improve specific skills, but not for a specific qualification.’ (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

A less common reason: retraining driven by personal interest – switching to a job that is more appealing to them personally or attempting to start their own business:

‘I'd say that what would make me change careers is the desire to develop...’ (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

“I'd like to share my experience. As I've already mentioned, I used to work as an investigator with the tax police; in other words, it was a desk job, mostly involving a computer and paperwork. When my son was born, and then I found out I was

expecting a daughter, we sold our flats and moved into a detached house. And we took up farming. My husband carried on working, whilst I turned to the internet: how to plant, how to grow? We also got some livestock, just a small number: chickens, ducks, geese and rabbits. Basically, the things we still have today. The vegetable garden, pruning trees – I was absolutely hooked, and I still am. My neighbours are already asking me to show them how to prune. So I've really got into it. But what am I trying to say? Basically, if someone enjoys something and wants to do it, I'm all for retraining. But what am I trying to say? It's been 12–13 years now, and I've started to feel the urge to move on again; I've become interested in law once more, and in some kind of creative work. I mean, it seems to me that in the course of their life, a person can master many different professions if they wish.” (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

“Of course. Mostly it's pensioners who've worked in their jobs for a very long time, retired, and spent some time in retirement. And they've found themselves, I suppose, a bit of extra income, but no longer in their original field. But then they've retrained and are now engaged in a new activity, a new job.” (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

A forced change of profession is common due to personal circumstances or the general situation in the country. Respondents also shared the experiences of acquaintances and friends:

‘He used to be a teacher, then became a builder or something else. Or even took a job as a caretaker. These days, there are plenty of cases where an older person has retired but still takes on some extra work. These are all sorts of jobs. Take, for example, someone who became a caretaker and just went for it. He even became a caretaker at the very same school. He used to be a teacher, but became a school caretaker.’ (NEET man, aged 25–29)

*‘Most people are switching to military professions at the moment.’
(NEET man, aged 16–19)*

“I had a friend who used to be a senior foreman, but he's now a taxi driver. He's happy with it.” (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

*“I've got one too. I've got a friend who worked as a driver his whole life, but now he's abroad in Germany, where he's working as a tiler.”
(Unemployed man, aged 55–64)*

The beauty industry as an attractive alternative (for women)

The beauty industry is an attractive sector, particularly for women. Female respondents tend to view the beauty sector as a form of manual work, as such jobs primarily involve physical, though not heavy, labour. This is the main attraction, as the skills required for a manicurist, hairdresser, stylist, designer or related professions can be learnt fairly quickly, whilst avoiding heavy physical strain and serious injuries. However, these professions are not without health risks; for example, working as a manicurist involves spending long periods in an uncomfortable position and being exposed to harmful dust from nail varnish.

What motivates the respondents most to consider retraining in the beauty sector is the potential earnings and the autonomy of the work:

'I'd probably choose something in the beauty sector. I'm interested in permanent make-up, for example, so I'd probably go into that and retrain.'
(NEET woman, aged 30–34)

"I like it, and I think the beauty sector here pays well at the moment." (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

"They're highly valued. That's probably why." (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

Although they are aware of the risks, which lie primarily in the lack of sustained solvent demand:

"Yes, when I was still working in the beauty sector, things really slumped there – no bookings, nothing. It's the same in choreography: clients have all moved away, there's nothing. You just end up out of work, that's all."
(NEET woman, aged 30–34)

In their convictions, these women draw on the experiences of successful acquaintances who have already undergone retraining and are satisfied with the outcome:

"I have a friend who worked at a factory for a long time; she worked there for... I don't know, maybe 10–15 years, and then she moved into the nail industry, and she's really happy. She's opened her own salon and is working there. And there are other girls working alongside her." (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

"I have a friend who's a teacher, and she's gone on to do manicures as well. She does manicures. And she manages to be a teacher and do manicures by

appointment. And she really enjoys it. Well, she's already in her sixties now. So I look at her and think, maybe I should do something like that too, learn another trade. Because it's such an interesting line of work. It's worth thinking about."
(Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

"I've got a friend too—well, not me personally, but a friend of mine. She used to be a teacher as well. But she's learnt to make all sorts of jewellery. Well, jewellery and all sorts... handmade stuff. She does that, and she really enjoys it. It even lifts her spirits. She's really got the hang of it. She's found her calling in all sorts of artistic pursuits." (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

"I've got one too—well, not me personally, but I've got a friend. She used to be a teacher as well. But she's learnt how to make all sorts of jewellery. Well, jewellery and all sorts of things. You know, what they call a 'life hack' these days, or something like that?" (Unemployed woman, aged 65+)

Some of the respondents already have personal experience in the beauty sector:

"I also tried to change careers and become a personal stylist. I find that very appealing. I wanted to help women look their best. And I started doing it. I ran an Instagram page. Now I've stopped doing it all." (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

Apart from the financial rewards, what motivates women to move into blue-collar roles in the beauty industry is the opportunity to realise their own creative potential.

"[On the professions of painter and fitter] Well, I'm more of a creative type. I love doing things that involve making something beautiful. I don't know. I wouldn't go into a profession like that; I don't like it." (Unemployed woman, aged 65+)

Generally speaking, the respondents view the beauty sector as an accessible alternative that does not require serious physical training and offers more comfortable working conditions. Short-term training and the accessibility of these professions are particularly appealing, as they do not require bulky equipment or specialised facilities. Women of all ages see this as an opportunity to earn extra income or a side job, a complement to their main profession, and a safety net that allows them to work under any conditions whilst maintaining a stable client base. A pleasant bonus is the chance to realise their own creative potential and find fulfilment.

Self-employment and attitudes towards it

Some respondents in the qualitative study view the possibility of self-employment as a result of a transition to blue-collar professions. This idea is particularly popular among young people and women over 55. Working for oneself seems more advantageous: more money, the ability to set one's own schedule, working in a field one genuinely enjoys, and not being at the mercy of a boss's mood:

'I'd find it interesting to be self-employed, and there are certainly advantages to managing your own time. Well, maybe that's just how it seems to me? Of course, the tax increases are a bit daunting, and it's a bit of a worry that sole traders will... well, that entrepreneurs will have to pay... But I'd find it interesting; I realise that when you're self-employed, you have to find clients yourself. But I've actually had jobs where, as a manager, I sought out clients myself. And I was successful at it. I realise you have to put a lot of time into all of this. It's interesting; I'd find it interesting...' (47-year-old woman, member of a vulnerable group)

'You can organise things to suit yourself. Obviously, you can't just take the weekend off whenever you fancy, because that wouldn't really count as work, but even so, the main thing is that you're not dependent on anyone. And I'm also aiming to become a sole trader; right now I want to keep working, save up some money and open my own agency, rather than working for someone else.' (35-year-old woman, member of a vulnerable group)

'It's better to be self-employed, because you're working for yourself. If you had that option, you'd pay your own taxes as a self-employed person. As for an employer – well, it depends on the employer. If it's a good employer, they pay your taxes, you get a good salary, and the working relationship is good.' (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

“At the moment, I think I’d work as an employee, but in the future I’d like to be self-employed and open a beauty salon or a hotel. That’s right.”
(NEET woman, aged 20–24)

“For me, the best career is to have my own business and build something of my own. But if you work for someone else, you’ll always be in the red for the rest of your life.” (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

“I’m definitely in favour of being self-employed. Because I’ve also worked as an employee. I didn’t like it.” (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

Men in general and economically active women see more risks in starting their own business:

“I’d say that these days, of course, being your own boss is much more satisfying than working for someone else. But to do that today, you have to invest, you have to do all the work yourself, and you don’t know when you’ll see a profit. In other words, you have to invest now, and you’ll only see a profit, at best, in 3–5 years’ time. So, if you have the financial means and the physical ability to work for five years, and then you might or might not make a profit, then yes. But at our age today, without all these additional resources, it’s easier, of course, just to earn a living for yourself.”

These groups are more interested in guarantees and protection when it comes to employment:

“[On a good job] It’s formal employment; it’s a guaranteed benefits package, a healthcare package, and health insurance.” (NEET man, aged 25–29)

“Again, clear working conditions, a clear employment contract. Not through a sole trader and not through some sort of vague, incomprehensible arrangement. Clearly set out conditions, a clear salary that suits you, which you know will be paid on time, that you’ll actually receive. Again, everything as it should be, as it ought to be.” (NEET man, aged 25–29)

‘I’d say that, of course, it’s good to be formally employed when taxes are paid for you and you get some holiday leave. You get all that as part of the package. That’s very good. But, unfortunately, I’ve never worked like that in my life – I don’t even remember if I ever did. I mean, I was officially employed. I was on a fixed

minimum wage on which tax was paid, and the rest was paid under the table.”
(Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

‘Business is always a risk if it’s your own business. There are businesses that thrive, where people don’t count their money, and everything just runs smoothly. As for me, that’s not for me.’ (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

Generally speaking, the difficulties of running one’s own business are recognised by those who already have a clear example among their acquaintances, with all the challenges and difficulties that entails:

‘The topic of working as a home-based confectioner has come up twice here. I’d like to talk about the pros and cons, as my daughter does this. The pros are that you work from home and are self-employed. And what are the cons? The fact that you have to constantly look for a market. She has regular customers, but despite the war, people still order cakes for weddings and birthdays – though now everything has to be done online. You need to have a good website, you need good advertising, and you need to invest time in filming videos. People want to see attractive images; there needs to be good lighting, a nice kitchen, well...’ (47-year-old woman, member of a vulnerable group)

Changing career paths to one involving the transition to self-employment carries the risk of financial loss at the start of the business and significant taxation for entrepreneurs and small businesses. This is the main factor deterring people from working for themselves. Although this arrangement seems more appealing to many due to its flexible working hours, the opportunity to pursue their interests through their own business, and the potential for higher earnings, setting up a business requires paying high taxes – which, unlike earnings, are a fixed cost – as well as having start-up capital, which most people lack, particularly among young people:

‘Because tax legislation currently places such heavy demands on small and medium-sized businesses – which is why they end up closing down. The second point is the possibility of red tape and unfavourable conditions for business, for running a business in Ukraine. It’s going to get worse and worse every year.’
(NEET man, aged 25–29)

“Because you need funds to set up a sole trader business, to start your own venture. And you have to earn that money first. So, I’m currently in paid

employment, but in the future I'd like to be a sole trader.” (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

So, starting one's own business is an attractive prospect for those who already have experience in a sought-after profession, start-up capital and some financial cushion. Or for young people who are thinking more in the long term. For people whose focus is on providing for their family and/or child, starting their own business is perceived as too risky.

The results of the quantitative study show that self-employment is preferred over salaried employment across all target groups (Fig. 7). Young people are particularly interested in this form of employment: over 70% would like to be self-employed and only 17% would prefer salaried employment (the remaining 12% were undecided). Older people are twice as likely to prefer salaried employment (33%), but even in this group of respondents, the majority (52%) would prefer to be self-employed.

Respondents who tend to prefer working as employees are more likely to expect their salary to correspond to their workload (this is particularly pronounced among older people). They are also more likely to choose *formal employment and social security* and *stability and confidence in the future* as characteristics of a 'good job'.

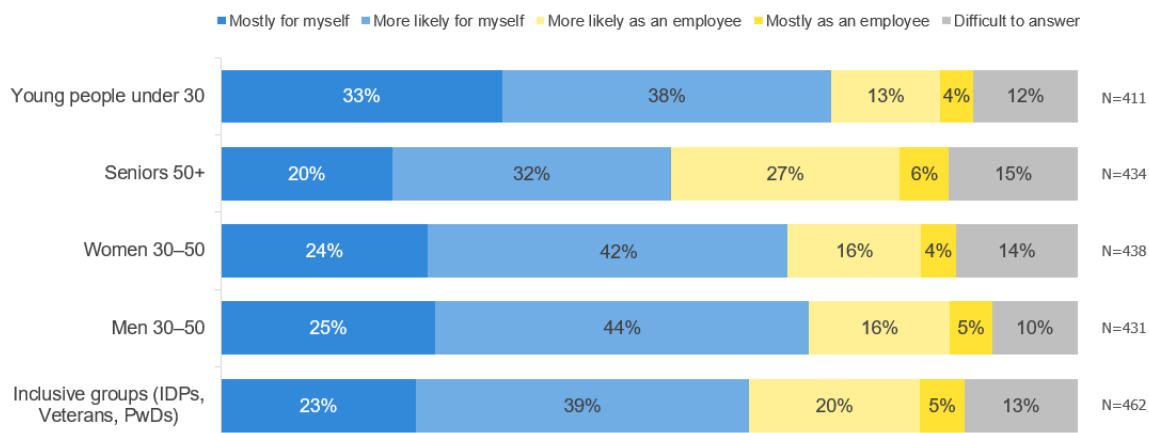
Respondents who tend to prefer self-employment are more likely to value *opportunities for professional development and training, as well as career progression* as characteristics of a 'good job', as well as the opportunity to *work remotely* (particularly among older people and among women and men aged 30–50). Thus, employers who are able to offer job seekers these conditions will have an advantage over potential self-employment.

Interestingly, people who tend to prefer self-employment have a more positive view of the idea of learning a new profession: they choose the 'very positive' response one and a half to two times more often than those who prefer employment. They are also more likely to agree to take a job that requires a change of profession. Thus, this group is more flexible and proactive, and employers should pay attention to such candidates.

There is no difference in the image of blue-collar professions between those who prefer self-employment and those who prefer employment. However, interestingly, people who tend to prefer self-employment are more likely to agree that blue-collar professions as such will become a thing of the past and that the future belongs to

the digital world. Thus, demonstrating the prospects of blue-collar professions is an important factor in attracting this group.

Fig.7 . Would you rather work for yourself (as a sole proprietor or running your own business) or be employed by a company? (% of responses, mass survey)



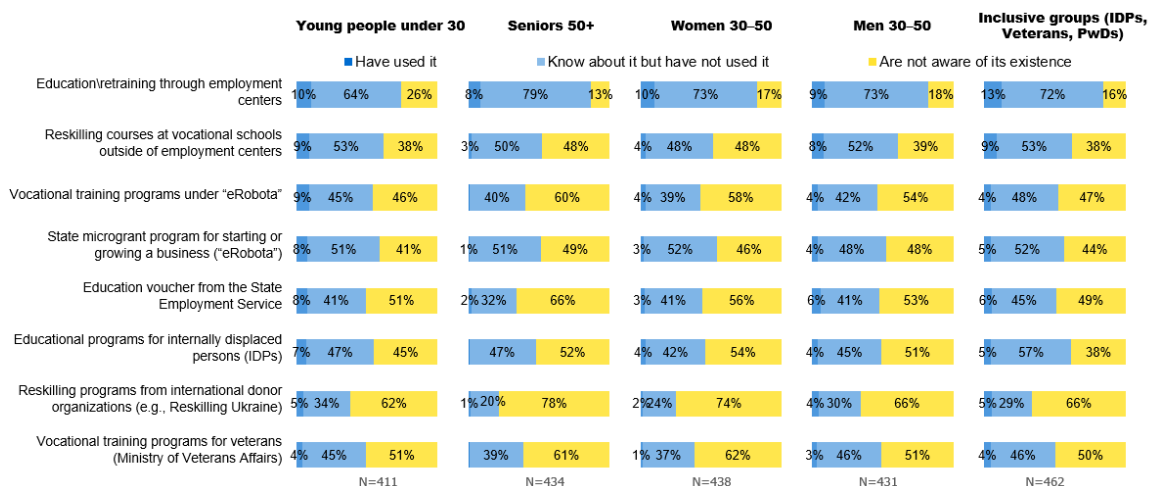
Chapter 2. Assessment of government reskilling programmes: trust, effectiveness and accessibility: a quantitative study

We asked respondents to the quantitative survey about their experience of participating in government reskilling programmes (Fig.8). Overall, only a very small proportion of respondents had participated in any of the programmes on the list. However, awareness of these programmes is quite high, with approximately half of the sample or more being aware of each one (with the exception of retraining programmes run by international donor organisations, which are known to between a quarter and a third of respondents, depending on the target groups).

The State Employment Centres lead the way in terms of both usage and awareness: 13% of members of inclusive groups and 8–10 % of members of other groups have experience of training or reskilling through them. The State Employment Service also leads in terms of awareness: the proportion of those who have at least heard of its training/reskilling programmes stands at 74% among young people and 82–87% in other groups. These are the highest figures for awareness and usage among all programmes.

Overall, analysing the cumulative data, 18% of respondents have used the services of at least one programme: this proportion is highest among young people and within inclusive population groups (22–23%) and lowest among older people (13%).

Fig.8 . There are several government retraining programs in Ukraine. Read their list and tell us how familiar you are with each one (% of responses, mass survey)



Despite the relatively low level of direct use of these programmes, the level of trust in them is quite high. For example, among young people, the highest levels of trust are in training vouchers from the State Employment Service and international programmes (such as Reskilling Ukraine), with a trust level of around 80%. Young people have the least trust in training programmes at employment centres and programmes for veterans run by the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, with a trust level of 72%. Among older people aged 50 and over, the highest level of trust is recorded for reskilling programmes from international donors (72%), whilst the lowest is for educational programmes for internally displaced persons (IDPs) (57%). Women aged 30–50 trust programmes run by employment centres and courses at vocational education institutions the most (76–77%), and programmes run by the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs the least (68%). Men aged 30–50 tend to trust international programmes and vocational education institutions the most (79–80%), and educational programmes for IDPs the least (70%). Members of inclusive population groups also tend to trust international programmes and vocational education institutions to a greater extent (78%), whilst the lowest level of trust is recorded for vocational training programmes under the 'eRobota' initiative (72%).

Thus, the level of trust in retraining programmes is quite high, which reflects positive expectations rather than actual experience of using them (which is negligible). On the one hand, this can be seen as a vote of confidence and a free hand – a good starting point for boosting such programmes. On the other hand, high expectations are risky in that, should the actual programmes fail to fully meet those expectations, users' ratings will plummet and a crisis of trust will ensue, which is then difficult to overcome.

It should also be noted that positive ratings of reskilling programmes are predominantly based on 'partially trust' ratings. The proportion of 'fully trust' ratings is low, averaging 14% for men aged 30–50, 23% for inclusive population groups and around 18% for other target audiences.

Only those respondents who had used the programmes assessed their effectiveness, and their numbers within each target audience are insufficient for a reliable analysis. Overall, the effectiveness ratings for all programmes across all audiences are quite high: the proportion of dissatisfied participants is only 6–13% across all audiences. It would be good practice to collect feedback from participants in retraining programmes both immediately after completion and some time later, in order to record the proportion of participants who were able not only to find employment but also to remain in their jobs. This would enable weak points to be identified quickly and the training programmes to be improved accordingly.

Chapter 3. Perceptions of blue-collar occupations and willingness to consider them as a career option

The 'ideal'/'good' job: qualitative research

Job selection criteria: what attracts and what puts respondents off when reviewing job vacancies

Income is generally one of the key criteria when choosing a career. Most people do not consider blue-collar jobs to be particularly lucrative, so they do not seek them out; however, when discussing attractive vacancies or mentioning higher-paying professions (such as those related to logistics or architecture), interest increases.

It is noteworthy that the minimum desired salary for men is higher (30–40,000 UAH) than for women (20–30,000 UAH). This is because providing for a family is considered a necessary expense for men:

'I don't know, it's somewhere in that range, at least. I think that here in Ukraine, given our prices, you need to earn at least 40,000 to make ends meet. If you've got a family, children, a wife. That's at least 40,000.' (NEET man, aged 25–29)

Young people, on the other hand, pay more attention to opportunities for career progression and future pay rises:

"30,000 plus, plus prospects for development"
(NEET man, aged 16–19)

Women are more sceptical about high-paying jobs:

"Everything else – like a cleaner – 30–40 thousand and so on"
(Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

"A caretaker – 45–50 thousand. For our town, that's an unrealistic amount of money. Sure, maybe some people do earn that sort of salary, but they're qualified specialists; ordinary workers don't get paid like that. It's just, you know, ridiculous." (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

"As for wages, depending on how many days you work a month, 25–27 thousand would be enough, in principle." (NEET man, aged 16–19)

"Well, for me, for example, 9,000 is a bit too little." (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

“For example, my threshold is already 26–30 thousand, because, to be honest, I don’t even consider anything below 26 thousand to be a proper wage.” (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

There is also a lack of trust in job vacancies. Respondents fear that their salary will be reduced due to additional benefits, or that they will be saddled with extra unpaid duties whilst working, which would devalue the ratio of pay to time spent on the job.

“I’m also put off by the workload, which nobody ever agrees on. I mean, they promise one thing at interviews – even during, say, a few days’ trial period, you see one thing. But once you’re actually employed, it’s a completely different story. And really... It feels as though you walked through one door, but on the fourth day, when you turned up officially, you found yourself through a completely different door and in a completely different team. Everything changes radically. Because it’s a bit of a bait-and-switch, you know. It’s as if everything’s fine with us, everything’s great in terms of duties, everything’s just as you need it to be, and the timetable too. But as soon as you become one of them, once you’re officially employed, that’s it. You sign the contract – and then they show you the real face of the job you’ve ended up in, the one you didn’t want to end up in. In other words, they promise one thing, but in reality it’s something completely different. That’s also why it puts our people off so much. It’s not just laziness. Of course, there are plenty of lazy people. But for many, this is a major factor” (NEET man, aged 25–29)

‘I have a relative who works at a factory. He’s not a manager; he’s an ordinary worker on the production line, doing his job. When he was first hired, it was one thing, as I’ve just mentioned. A year later, the production quota they had to meet changed. But the pay didn’t change. And now their working hours have changed. They used to work 7.5 hours a day, but now they’ll be working 8.5 hours. And the production quota will be increased as well. They’ve raised the wage – that works out at a difference of 1,000 hryvnias a month. What’s 1,000 hryvnias? But there’s the quota and the 8.5 hours.” (NEET man, aged 25–29)

Thus, a significant barrier to interest in blue-collar vacancies is a lack of trust in the job description itself, stemming from their own negative experiences or the stories of acquaintances, relatives and friends whose actual work had little in common with the initial description given at the time of recruitment.

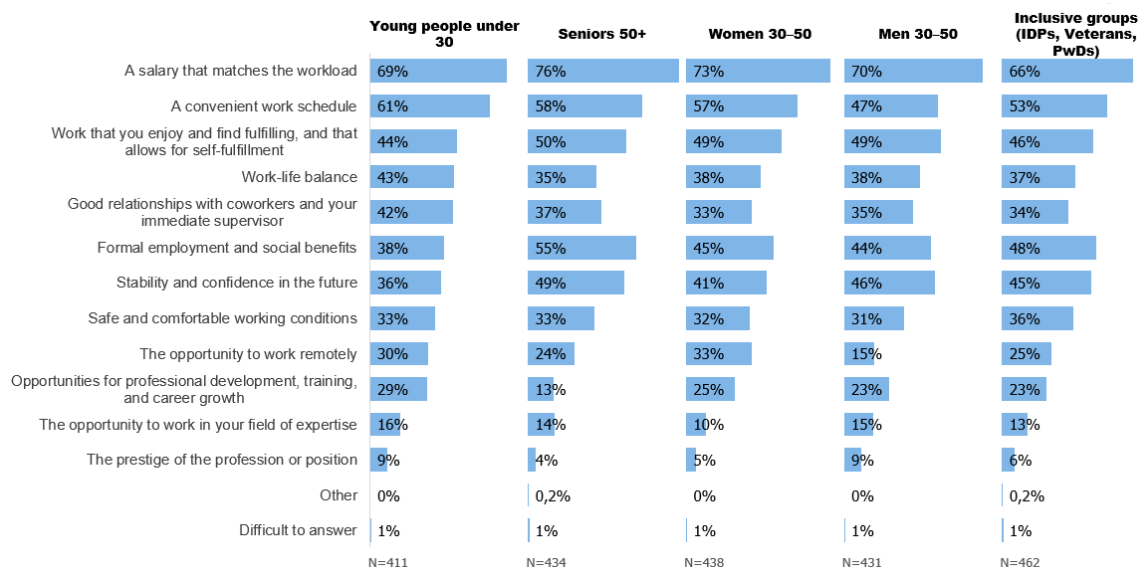
The 'ideal'/'good' job: a quantitative study

The results of the quantitative survey allow us to 'quantify' the criteria for a 'good' job (Fig.9). Salary takes the top spot across all demographics. In second place, also across all demographics, is a convenient working schedule. Interestingly, for young people, the gap between these categories is the smallest of all demographics, at just 8 percentage points (69% of young people chose salary, whilst 61% chose a flexible working schedule). In the other demographics, the difference between the first and second factors is more significant.

For older people, formal employment (55%) and the stability that comes with it (49%) are also important factors. It is also important to older people that their work brings satisfaction and fulfils their need for self-fulfilment (50%). Self-fulfilment, formal employment and stability are important factors for other groups as well, but it is among older people that these needs are most strongly expressed.

Interestingly, the opportunity to work in one's chosen field is of interest to only 10–16% of respondents, which suggests a certain devaluation of education, which is only weakly linked to employment and self-fulfilment. The prestige of a profession or position ranks last, with 4–9% of respondents selecting this factor.

Fig.9 . What makes a good job for you? (% of responses, mass survey)

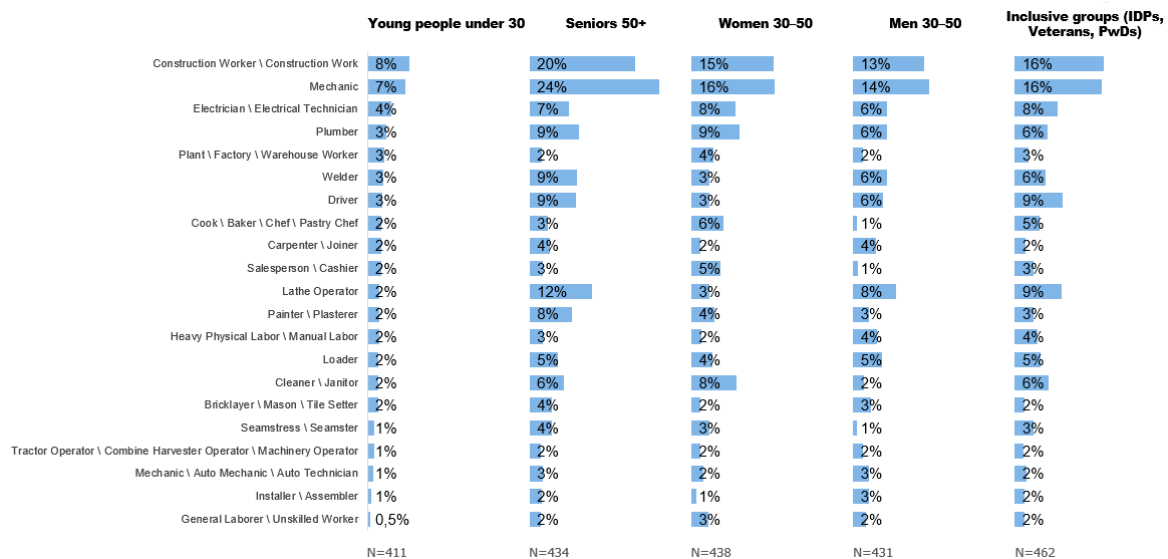


Respondents primarily associate blue-collar occupations with professions such as builder, fitter, electrician, plumber and lathe operator (Fig.10). Between 30 and 40% of respondents across all age groups, excluding young people, named these

specific professions in response to an open-ended question regarding their perception of blue-collar occupations. Young people have a very poor understanding of blue-collar professions in general; almost 70% of respondents aged under 30 were unable to answer this question.

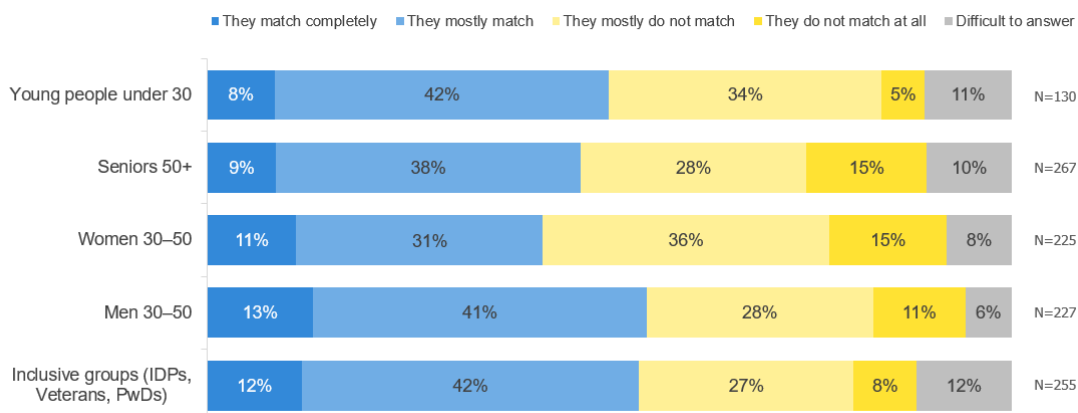
It is worth noting that the responses do not include occupations related to the operation of high-tech machinery. Instead, the responses include low-skilled labour (cleaner, unskilled labourer, porter and even simply 'manual labour').

Fig. 10 . When you hear the words 'blue-collar profession', which occupations come to mind first? (% of responses, public survey)



Accordingly, such occupations are not strongly associated with a 'good job', as perceived by respondents (Fig.11). Between 8% and 13% said that such occupations 'fully meet' the criteria for a good job, whilst 35–50% do not regard these occupations as a 'good job'. Women aged 30–50 were the most critical of the prospects for such employment, whilst the most positive attitudes were recorded among inclusive population groups.

Fig.11 . To what extent do the professions you just mentioned match the characteristics of a good job that you selected in the previous question? (% of responses, mass survey)



The image of blue-collar occupations: qualitative research

The overall impression of blue-collar occupations is neutral. The image of blue-collar occupations is linked to perceptions of their prestige.

Respondents categorise blue-collar occupations according to their level of prestige. Professions with high social significance and responsibility (for example, the agricultural sector, which provides food) are perceived as prestigious:

‘If, for example, I were told to retrain – well, I’d have to, I suppose – I can see a future in agriculture, for instance. It’s a blue-collar profession. And honestly, sometimes, with work experience under your belt, once you’ve been on the job for a while, you really do want to get on that tractor so that nobody bothers you, and you plough that field, and that’s it! [...] Then, they see the results of their work straight away – that is, if they’re producing something, right? [...] They can put their knowledge into practice – that’s another plus. Modern equipment; they can explore the latest methods of growing certain crops, if we’re talking about agriculture. And they have great prospects for further training. Another plus is that, right now, as you can see, there’s a war in the country, and blue-collar professions are more in demand; in other words, their relevance during such emergency situations in the country is, I believe, a definite plus for this profession.’

(Woman, aged 41, member of a vulnerable group)

Among young men aged 19 to 25, blue-collar trades are generally viewed most critically – they aspire to find work in their chosen field or in the creative industries.

Digital skills are becoming increasingly important to them – they are often seen as the key to a successful future. That is why many are keen to switch to an easier and more lucrative field, for example, in creative sectors (design, 3D visualisation). Men are interested in the IT sector and management.

‘I’m willing to learn. I’d be happy to switch to a tester role. From developer to tester. Actually, please, a database tester. A database tester. Because I’m really into databases... I’m up for it, please. Take me on, I’ll learn. I’ll study hard in my spare time, as you said, without affecting productivity. They don’t want that. They want a fully-trained specialist straight away.’ (NEET man, aged 16–19)

‘There’s probably greater demand for managers than for IT staff. Because right now, with artificial intelligence being used so extensively, they’re simply cutting IT staff very often.’ (NEET man, aged 16–19)

“I’m trying to learn all the IT professions: programming, video editing, sound engineering. Some things work out, some don’t.”
(Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

Women share similar criteria, particularly those over 50, who have presumably already met the main financial obligations towards their family and children and are now seeking personal fulfilment. They are drawn to creative fields because of a desire to realise their creative abilities. The beauty industry is particularly appealing because it allows them to fulfil their potential by mastering a new profession or to earn extra income:

‘Design-related jobs. Interior designer, landscape designer, something along those lines.’ (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

“And I agree with Ms [name of previous speaker]; that thought crossed my mind too.” (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

“Interior designer. Yes, I did study that (laughs).”
(NEET woman, aged 30–34)

These same professions are more relevant for respondents with special needs who believe they are physically unable to take up manual trades:

“So, I’m ready to study now, but not a manual trade – rather something, let’s say, on a computer, administrative work, something along those lines. That’s it. But not...” (59-year-old man, member of a vulnerable group)

Those respondents who have already had experience of working in the sector favoured by young people are more critical, as they have had negative experiences:

‘I, for example, worked – as I said – in 3D modelling. So, you’re on the minimum wage there. And to earn that minimum wage, you need to work fast. A specific speed. It’s not about the quality of the work, but the speed. And there, if, for example, you can’t learn to produce output faster, you can’t earn more than the minimum wage. That’s why I left, because I’d worked there for half a year. And my output figures just wouldn’t improve. I couldn’t figure out how to increase the output speed for these renders.’ (NEET man, aged 25–29)

‘Take 3D modelling, for example – I worked at a company. You have a two-week training course there, and then they train you on the job as well. There are also various other areas of work. You do all this in the office on a computer. There were periods when I earned money from these jobs. There were both positive and negative aspects, so to speak. I’ve changed my line of work many times, both as a freelancer and in manual labour, so to speak. For instance, I worked at a car wash.’ (NEET man, aged 25–29)

Opinions are less clear-cut when it comes to ‘low-status’ jobs in the service sector or cleaning. In the event of taking up a low-prestige job (for example, as a cleaner), some respondents openly stated that they had no intention of sharing this information with their acquaintances. Respondents who had held managerial positions, worked in business or finance, or were engaged in more creative pursuits were particularly reluctant to consider blue-collar professions:

‘[In response to the moderator’s question about whether it’s embarrassing] Well, of course! Of course, it’s a barrier if a person used to work... well, no... let’s not go there – an office worker, a manager, a florist. Let’s take a florist, shall we? A person worked as a florist in a shop for 20–30 years. And they leave their job, and they’re offered a job milking cows! Well, for a person, you know? Psychologically, it’s very hard to adjust.’ (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

These sectors are also the least appealing to men of all ages:

“[On a cleaner’s job] It’s just... I don’t know, I don’t like it.” (NEET man, aged 16–19)

“I wouldn’t want to be a cleaner at 27. It’s a bit early.”
(NEET man, aged 25–29)

“A cleaner – that’s not for me.” (NEET man, aged 25–29)

Some openly stated that a profession’s status influences their choice, and whilst attitudes towards blue-collar jobs are generally neutral, cleaning, in the men’s view, is a less prestigious field and is more suited to women:

‘As with everyone else, all the other five professions are more prestigious, apart from cleaning. The most prestigious, if you ask me, is an engineer, because a lot is expected of them... Just hearing the word, many people immediately imagine that there are quite high expectations.’ (Male NEET, aged 25–29)

Women expressed less aversion to working in the cleaning sector:

“Cleaner – that sounds really good. But, then again, the pay seems a bit dodgy. So, yeah.” (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

“Yes. Let’s say, a caretaker – that’s practically the same. And a cleaner – that’s also within the same ballpark, not far off. It’s very interesting.” (NEET woman, aged 20–24)

Some view a job such as a cleaner as an alternative in difficult circumstances and see certain advantages in this particular type of employment:

“I have a friend who used to work in the service sector with another friend. So they’re sales assistants. She works as a cleaner in people’s flats; she says: ‘I’d rather be cleaning than having to deal with people like that.’ She likes cleaning; she turned up, had a tidy-up, spent an hour or two in the flat, and then she left.”
(Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

‘And someone who doesn’t have much time—say, only twice a month—goes round cleaning the stairwells in the block. Well, we used to live in the city. So it comes down to circumstances: if you realise you only have that much time and

you need the money, you'll go and work.'
(Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

Blue-collar jobs are also viewed as less prestigious among those who have a higher education or have held a prestigious position (such as a manager) or worked in a very different kind of field. These groups do not consider switching to blue-collar professions at all, or would only entertain the idea as a last resort if a tragedy were to strike, and have no intention of admitting to friends that they have taken up a blue-collar job:

'[In response to the moderator's question about what might force someone to switch to a blue-collar profession] I don't know, my financial situation is very difficult. God forbid I should fall ill.' (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

'[On switching to blue-collar roles] A last resort.' (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

Some respondents see such a retraining as a betrayal of their own potential:

'The only thing that might encourage me to move into blue-collar jobs is a lack of bread. It's a simple reason. A lack of funding, a lack of basic funding and bread. That's the first thing. Secondly, I find it deeply upsetting that I really cannot put to use the skills I've acquired throughout my life. I cannot use them for a decent wage. I'll have to take whatever comes my way, because I'll have to survive. But I am, of course, more positive about my future prospects.' (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

'Here's my situation. I studied humanities, not a technical subject. If the need arises and life gets tough, then I might consider it. Not studying, specifically. What's the point of me studying at a vocational college, to put it bluntly, if I've got a master's degree in law enforcement?'
(Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

Despite a generally stated neutral attitude towards blue-collar professions, a hidden distancing from them is often evident. Only a handful of respondents are prepared to consider them as a possible employment option for themselves. People may recognise their importance, but not for themselves — rather for acquaintances, friends or relatives, rather than as a path for themselves.

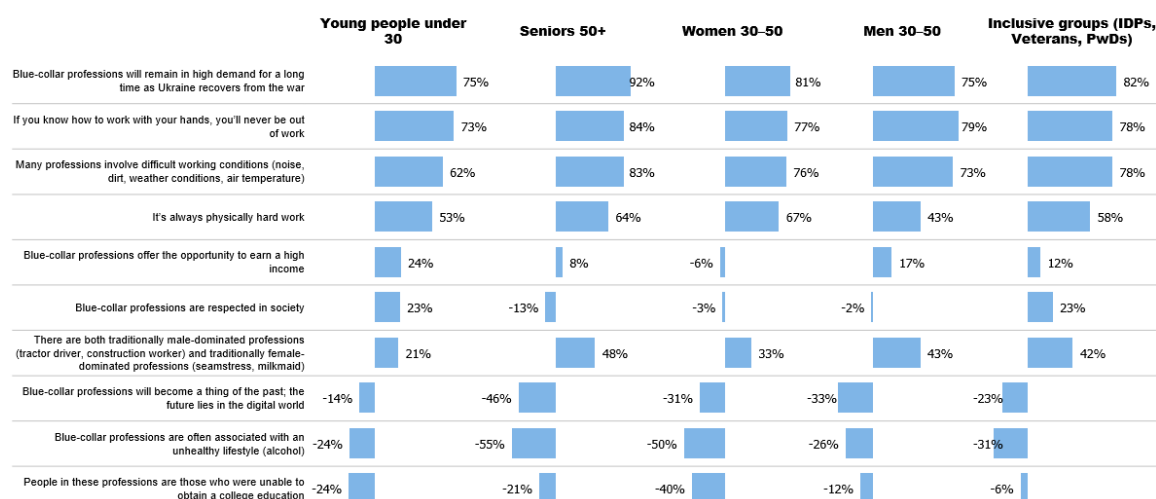
The image of blue-collar professions: a quantitative study

Respondents to the quantitative survey unanimously recognise the importance of blue-collar professions for post-war reconstruction, as well as the advantage of having a 'trade' under one's belt for finding employment in any circumstances (Fig.12). However, respondents are equally unanimous in agreeing that blue-collar professions often involve difficult working conditions. The perception that this is always physically demanding work is also prevalent in society.

Respondents rarely perceive blue-collar occupations as a source of high income, nor as being held in high regard by society. Interestingly, it is young people who most often agree with these statements, as young respondents have the least clear understanding of blue-collar professions (it is worth noting that almost 70% of this group of respondents were unable to answer the open-ended question about which professions they associate with blue-collar work).

Young people are also less likely than other groups to endorse gender stereotypes in occupations. It is noteworthy that women aged 30–50 are also less likely than other groups to endorse gender stereotypes: clearly, these female respondents are more willing to take up traditionally 'male' professions, which is a positive sign

Fig.12 . Perception of blue-collar occupations (net score: percentage of responses "strongly agree or somewhat agree" minus the percentage of responses "strongly disagree or somewhat disagree", mass survey, employers)

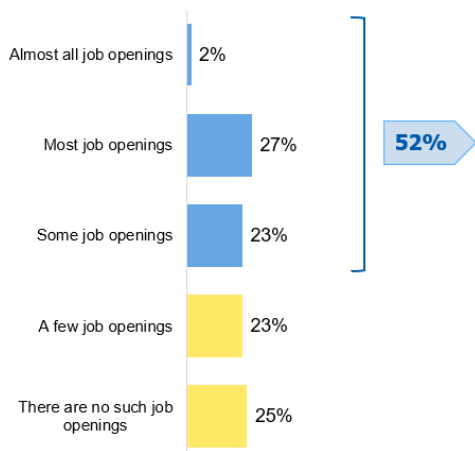


It should be noted that, from the employers' perspective, physical labour is not always a barrier to employment: firstly, only half of the surveyed companies noted that physical exertion is required for a significant proportion of vacancies (Fig.13).

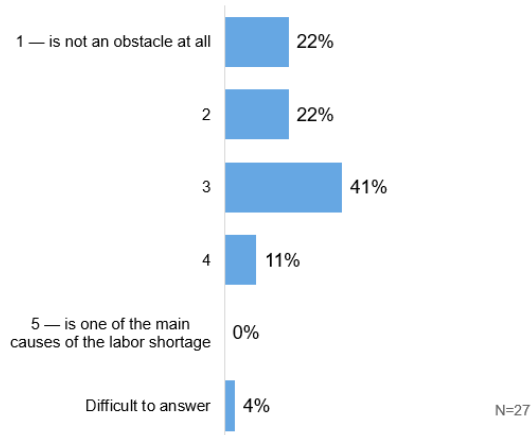
And amongst those where physical exertion is indeed required, none consider this factor to be a significant cause of staff shortages, and almost half (44 per cent) believe that it is either not an obstacle at all or is more likely not an obstacle.

Fig.13 . Employers' assessment of physical labour as a barrier (% of responses, employers)

How common are job openings that are physically demanding in your organization?



In your opinion, to what extent does physically demanding work at the workplace act as a barrier to attracting candidates for job openings at your company?



Appendix 1. Methodology

WP1. Focus group discussions

Method: Focus group discussions (FGDs)

Format: online

Sample: 10 FGDs

Target audiences:

- [1] NEET young people (not in employment, education or training), various age groups
- [2] Unemployed people who are ready to take up employment, various age groups
- [3] Vulnerable groups (people with disabilities, demobilised veterans, single parents)

All FGD participants are currently not in work but are considering the possibility of finding employment (levels of motivation and job-search activity vary: from actively seeking work to passively considering opportunities). Each group includes at least two respondents with IDP status.

Geography: They reside throughout Ukraine, except in the temporarily occupied territories (TOT) and areas of active hostilities, or in areas where the security situation does not allow for a safe place of residence for the entire duration of the FGD.

Fieldwork dates: 27 May 2026 – 3 June 2026

Details:

No.	Target group	Gender/age	Date
1	NEET young people	Males, aged 16–19	3 June 2026
2	NEET young people	Women, aged 20–24	3 June 2026
3	NEET young people	Men, aged 25–29	27 May 2026
4	NEET young people	Women, aged 30–34	27 May 2026
5	Unemployed	Men, aged 35–44	28 May 2026
6	Unemployed	Women, aged 45–54	28 May 2026
7	Unemployed	Men, aged 55–64	29 May 2026
8	Unemployed	Women, aged 65 and over	29 May 2026

9	Vulnerable groups	Women aged 18 and over	2 June 2026
10	Vulnerable groups	Men, aged 18 and over	2 June 2026

WP2. Stakeholder survey

Method: Interviews

Target audiences:

- [1] Experts: In-depth interviews via the ZOOM online platform
- [2] Employers: telephone interviews
- [3] Representatives of the State Employment Service and Employment Centres: the survey was conducted in two stages:
 - [I] – an email campaign sent to the State Employment Service and Employment Centres to gather quantitative data and contact details for follow-up
 - [II] – telephone interviews

Sample size: 100+ interviews

Fieldwork dates: June–July 2026

Geography: Interviews were not conducted in the temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol, the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and other areas under occupation, nor in territories where Ukrainian mobile network coverage is unavailable.

WP3. Mass survey of target audiences

Method: Online survey using the CAWI method

Samples: 5 surveys, each comprising 400 (or more) respondents.

Survey specifications:

Survey 1. Young people, men and women (aged up to 30), who meet the following criteria:

- are unemployed,
- or are in work but are dissatisfied with their current situation,
- do not rule out the idea of changing their profession.

Label on slides: *‘Young people under 30’*

Survey 2. Men and women aged over 50 who meet the following criteria:

- are unemployed,
- or are in work but are dissatisfied with their current situation,
- do not rule out the idea of changing their profession.

Labels on the slides: *‘Older people aged 50+’*

Survey 3. Women aged 30–50 who meet the following criteria:

- are unemployed,
- or are in work but are dissatisfied with their current situation,
- do not rule out the idea of changing their profession.

Label on slides: *'Women aged 30–50'*

Survey 4. Men aged 30–50 who meet the following criteria:

- are unemployed,
- or are in employment but are dissatisfied with their current situation,
- do not rule out the idea of changing their profession.

Label on slides: *'Men aged 30–50'*

Survey 5. Groups requiring additional inclusive support (internally displaced persons, veterans, people with disabilities)

Label on slides: *'Inclusive groups (IDPs, veterans, people with disabilities)'*

Fieldwork dates: June–July 2026

Geography: Residents throughout Ukraine, excluding the temporarily occupied territories and areas of active hostilities

Caveats: The specific nature of the online panel survey method should be taken into account. There may be a systematic bias in the sample towards people who are more digitally literate and more active. Consequently, the estimates obtained through the CAWI survey should be interpreted as the upper limit of the values for the indicators under study. Further research using other methods may be useful and could reach a wider audience.

WP4. Mystery shopping

Method: Mystery shopping – unannounced visits

Sample: 11 mystery shopping campaigns

Profile of 'mystery shoppers':

- [1] NEET young people (not in education, employment or training)
- [2] Unemployed people
- [3] Vulnerable groups of unemployed people

Fieldwork dates: 11 June 2026 – 27 July 2026

Geography: Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Kryvyi Rih, Lviv, Odesa

Details: The initial visit was made to an employment centre. Following this, the mystery shopper went through all the stages of interaction provided by the employment centre, with the aim of assessing how the employment system functions through this job-search channel (as well as retraining and upskilling mechanisms).