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RESEARCH OF PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF ECONOMIC ADAPTATION OF MILITARY SERVICEMEN: SOCIOLOGICAL AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The object of research is the system of economic adaptation of military personnel returning to civilian life after participating in hostilities during the full-scale war in Ukraine. As a result of the conducted analysis and sociological research, several key deficiencies in the functioning of this system were identified, including: insufficient level of state support during the transition to civilian employment, low level of informational assistance, difficulties with job placement, and limited access to retraining and entrepreneurial development.

To identify and address these shortcomings, a comprehensive approach was applied, including statistical analysis of the labor market, regional analysis of job vacancies, study of veteran support initiatives, and a sociological survey of servicemen using an online questionnaire. These methods made it possible not only to detect weaknesses in the adaptation system but also to develop proposals for its improvement.

The study found that 58 % of military personnel are only partially prepared for reintegration into civilian life. The main reserves for improving adaptation include expanding access to training programs (noted by 48 % of respondents), promoting entrepreneurship (important to 34 %), and developing digital and creative skills (needed by 22 % and 28 %, respectively). The results also revealed a high potential for self-employment among veterans, with 26 % intending to start their own business, which could become a growth driver for regional economic activity.

The authors interpret the results by asserting that effective economic adaptation is achievable through the creation of an integrated institutional support model. This model should combine state policy, digital labor market tools, human capital development, and the utilization of veterans' creative potential. The results of the sociological study of the needs of military personnel, presented in the article, give grounds to argue about the possibility of their involvement in entrepreneurial activity. Such an integrated system can ensure not only employment but also economic self-realization and sustainable reintegration of veterans into post-war society.

Keywords: adaptation, creative potential, military personnel, labor market, self-employment, entrepreneurial activities.

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1. Introduction

For 10 years now, Ukraine has been fighting for its independence in a war with the Russian federation. A large number of men and women have risen to defend our country, to the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), defending it from invaders. Studies [1] show that the overwhelming majority of the representatives of the AFU are citizens of Ukraine aged 30–45, that is, young people of working age. Not every one of them is able to independently cope with the process of transition from military to civilian life. In most cases, this process is accompanied by significant psychological shocks for both the person itself and its immediate environment. Among the main problems faced by Ukrainian veterans, different authors highlight medical and rehabilitation assistance, problems of social interaction with the family, uncertainty of future prospects, lack of proper support from the state.

The need for support and assistance to people who have returned from the combat zone is emphasized by a large number of scientists and psychologists. Certain aspects of the social adaptation of military personnel were analyzed in the work [2]. Authors have identified the following areas of work with soldiers: psychological rehabilitation, socio-economic support, public support, educational programs, legal support.

An interesting approach to the adaptation of seriously wounded combatants is proposed in the work [3] and which involves the allocation of the following stages of psychological rehabilitation: diagnostic, psychological, readaptation, support stage.

Most researchers pay attention exclusively to the psychological aspects of the adaptation of military personnel to civilian life [4–6].

A review of domestic and international literature shows a significant research gap. The key aspects of economic adaptation remain insufficiently explored. This is especially true considering the need to ensure a full return of military personnel to civilian life. Economic

reintegration is essential not only for psychological comfort but also for professional development and stability. In this context, an analysis of the best foreign experience of countries that have encountered similar problems is very important for Ukraine. Thus, the work of [7] highlights the career adaptation of war veterans in North Korea, as well as the motivational factors that guide former military personnel when making employment decisions. Authors [8] studied the features of integration of veterans in the workplace. Also interesting are the results of the study presented in the work of [9] on employment opportunities for war veterans in STEM fields of employment. Military veterans are a valuable part of the human capital resource pool. Nonetheless, veterans often struggle with their transition into civilian life and workplaces.

The aim of research is to analyze the modern labor market in the context of the problems of employment of former servicemen, as well as to study the basic needs of servicemen. This will ensure the economic adaptation of servicemen during their return to civilian life.

2. Materials and Methods

The object of research is the system of economic adaptation of military personnel returning to civilian life after participating in hostilities during the full-scale war in Ukraine.

The subject of research is economic, social and professional aspects of the adaptation of military personnel to peaceful life, in particular their integration into the labor market, employment problems, as well as factors affecting the success of this adaptation.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the work is a complex of general scientific and special methods of scientific knowledge, which ensure the systematicity, objectivity and comprehensiveness of the research. The theoretical basis of the work is the fundamental provisions of economics, psychology, sociology, as well as interdisciplinary research into the processes of socio-economic adaptation of military personnel to the conditions of civilian life.

The work used theoretical and practical research methods. The following theoretical methods were applied in the study. Generalization, comparison, analysis, and synthesis were used to identify the essence of key concepts and categories related to the socio-economic adaptation of military personnel. Additionally, comparison, induction, and deduction were applied to formulate conclusions and develop recommendations for improving the mechanisms of economic adaptation. Statistical data analysis was used to identify trends in employment, unemployment, and labor market demand for specific professions in the post-conflict context. Publicly available datasets from Ukrainian and international labor monitoring institutions served as the primary source of data. Descriptive statistics and comparative indicators were applied to assess changes before and after the onset of the full-scale war.

A structured sociological survey was conducted among 50 former or demobilizing military service members aged 25 to 55 from various regions of Ukraine. The survey was carried out online using Google Forms from September to December 2024. This method was selected for its ability to ensure anonymity, geographic reach, and cost-efficiency, while enabling collection of first-hand information regarding veterans' career aspirations, barriers to employment, and expectations for state or non-governmental support.

Comparative analysis was used to highlight regional disparities in labor market recovery and accessibility of reintegration programs for veterans. This method helped identify structural inequalities and the need for targeted policy interventions.

To carry out the study efficiently, both modern hardware and specialized software tools were utilized. Between the hardware tools, that were used in the article, it is possible

to distinguish Personal Computer, Internet access and cloud storage to ensure continuous backup and remote collaboration. Software includes Google Forms (for the creation and distribution of the survey questionnaire), Microsoft Excel (for primary data cleaning, tabulation, and generation of visualizations such as charts and graphs), Microsoft Word (for drafting and editing the research paper).

The complex of methods applied ensures the systematicity and validity of the research results, contributing to the formation of specific conclusions regarding ways to solve the problems of adapting military personnel to the conditions of civilian life.

3. Results and Discussion

The labor market is one of the first aspects of people's lives that is affected by all political, economic, and military events taking place in the state. Changes in the labor market in Ukraine have occurred throughout the years of independence, and they were especially noticeable during the COVID-19 pandemic and the first years of military aggression. Each new year of the war brings its own changes to the domestic labor market, which adapts to changing external conditions. Analysis of the modern labor market allows to understand its current trends, identify shortage specialties, and assess the readiness of enterprises to accept former military personnel. This makes it possible to predict the challenges associated with the adaptation of veterans and implement effective strategies to ensure their economic stability, professional fulfillment, and decent employment.

In general, 2025 will be marked by active growth in the labor market. These tendencies have been noted by Work.ua, the largest job search site in Ukraine, which provides access to over 94,000 current vacancies and resumes. In the first month of 2025, employers posted 94,985 vacancies on this site, and in February – 98,736 vacancies. That is, the number of jobs in January 2022, the last month before the full-scale invasion, was exceeded. At that time, there were 97,349 vacancies on the labor market [10] (Fig. 1).

However, it should be noted that the recovery of the labor market is uneven. In the western regions, the demand for labor significantly exceeds pre-war indicators, in particular in Zakarpattia (156 %), Ivano-Frankivsk (150 %), Volyn (124 %), Lviv (121 %) and Khmelnytskyi (119 %) regions. This is explained by internal migration and business relocation, which led to an increase in economic activity. The central regions demonstrate a stable recovery, in particular Vinnytsia (112 %), Cherkasy (105 %), Poltava (100 %), Zhytomyr (96 %) and Kirovohrad (95 %). Here, the economic situation is more balanced, as the regions have not suffered significant destruction.

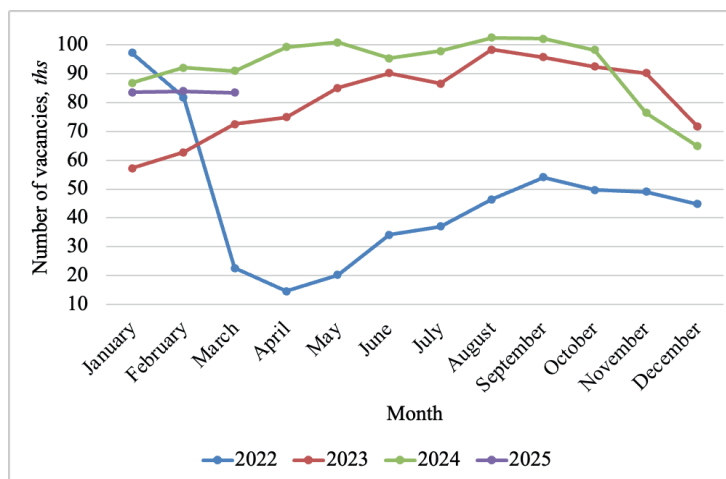


Fig. 1. Dynamics of vacancies on the Work.ua website 2022–2025 (compiled based on data from [11])

At the same time, the situation in the eastern and southern regions is much worse. For example, in Kharkiv region, the recovery rate is 35 %, in Donetsk – 12 %, and in Luhansk – 0 %, which is due to hostilities, occupation and destruction of infrastructure. Slower recovery is also observed in Zaporizhzhia (52 %), Dnipropetrovsk (78 %), Odesa (65 %), Mykolaiv (59 %) and Kherson (13 %) regions (Fig. 2). That is, now the western regions have become new economic centers, while the recovery of the east and south is currently limited due to hostilities and will depend on the security situation and opportunities for business to return in the long term [11]. At the same time, it should be noted that the increase in the number of vacancies does not mean a significant solution to the problem of providing job seekers with jobs and employers with qualified employees. As shown by statistical data provided by the State Employment Service, as of March 1, 2025, the number of job seekers significantly exceeded the number of vacancies (Fig. 3).

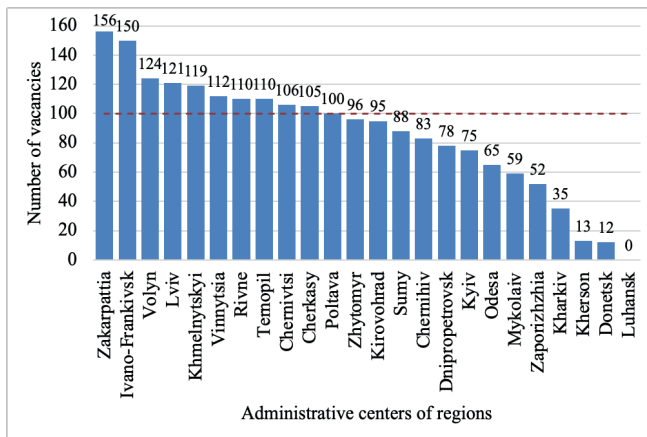


Fig. 2. Recovery of regional labor markets of Ukraine by number of vacancies (February 2025 to February 2022), % (compiled based on data from [11])

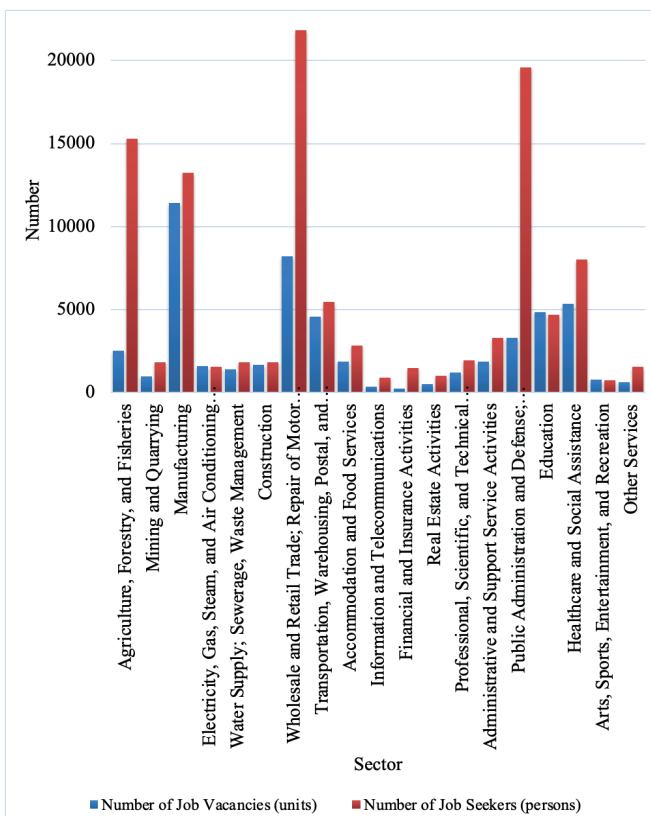


Fig. 3. Number of vacancies and number of job seekers registered with the State Employment Service as of March 1, 2025 (compiled based on data from [12])

An analysis of occupational statistics shows that skilled workers with tools are currently the most in demand. In particular, there is a significant shortage of electricians, especially those specializing in the repair and maintenance of electrical equipment. Other high-demand professions include turners, electric and gas welders, locksmiths, milling machine operators, and similar technical specialists. In addition, the demand for doctors has increased significantly, in particular anesthesiologists, surgeons, therapists, family doctors, psychiatrists. Due to military operations, the need for occupational therapists, emergency medicine doctors, physical therapists, physical and rehabilitation medicine doctors has increased. Vacancies have also appeared for new professions, such as a specialist in supporting war veterans and demobilized persons [12].

At the same time, it is necessary to understand that the analysis of current trends cannot fully reflect the problems that the Ukrainian economy and the labor market itself will face after the end of the war. The main challenges will be the reconstruction of the country, the shortage of personnel, the aging workforce, and the need to retrain a significant number of citizens, including war veterans.

The military, who return to civilian life, will be faced with a choice: return to their previous profession or acquire new skills. According to experts, about 60 % of them will change their professional activities. According to the President of the Confederation of Employers of Ukraine Oleksiy Miroshnychenko, the main areas where there will be a high demand for labor are:

- construction and restoration of infrastructure, where builders, electricians, glazing specialists, and concrete workers will be in demand;
- energy and communications, where the need to rebuild critical infrastructure will create a demand for power engineers, specialists in communications, automation, and energy-saving technologies;
- defense industry and high technologies, where professions related to robotics, maintenance of robotic systems, and operation of equipment with numerical program control will develop;
- digital technologies and artificial intelligence, where new professions will emerge that combine several disciplines (e. g., mechatronics) [13].

Modern society is already beginning to focus on the need for veteran employment. In particular, the platform “Nazustrich” was created at the initiative of Work.ua. It helps to combine military experience with the needs of the labor market, providing employers with tools to integrate veterans into the working environment. More than 2,304 companies already offer vacancies with an advantage for former military personnel, which contributes to their professional realization and strengthening the country's economic stability. In 2025, 4,626 vacancies were posted on the site, where military experience is an advantage (Fig. 4). The largest number of such offers is concentrated in the security, safety and defense sector, where they account for 9 % of all vacancies. A high level of interest in attracting veterans is also observed in mechanical engineering and the media industry – 8 % in each of these areas. A similar level of offers is also observed in the defense forces, energy, as well as construction, architecture and interior design, which account for 7 % of the relevant vacancies.

At the same time, a new option was offered to job seekers. By adding the status “I am a veteran of the Russian-Ukrainian war” to their resume, candidates can emphasize their unique skills and experience gained in the army. This increases their visibility to employers who value stress resistance, responsibility, and managerial and technical competencies. The initiative not only helps veterans realize the value of their military experience, but also popularizes it among employers, contributing to successful employment. This option has already been used by 6,180 veterans of the Russian-Ukrainian war who indicated their status in their resumes [14].

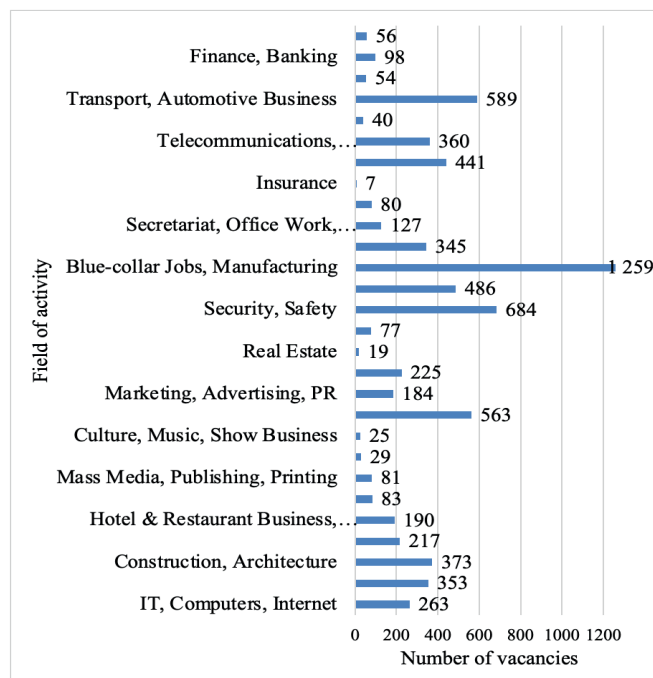


Fig. 4. Vacancies where veterans are preferred (compiled based on data from [14])

The State Employment Service is doing significant work to maintain the competitiveness of combatants and persons with disabilities as a result of the war. In particular, a pilot project was launched in 2023 by the State Employment Service in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy. As part of this initiative, combatants and persons with disabilities caused by the war are given the opportunity to acquire a new profession free of charge. They can also undergo advanced training to maintain or improve their competitiveness in the labor market.

Since the beginning of 2024, 1,910 training referrals have been issued for veterans and persons with disabilities, of whom 1,909 people have already started training. Among them, 1,800 are defenders and 109 are persons with disabilities as a result of the war. The largest number of training referrals was issued in Donetsk (305), Ivano-Frankivsk (223), Sumy (202), Vinnytsia (182) and Poltava (143) regions. The selected educational areas indicate the main requests of veterans for employment and self-realization. The leader is psychology (510 people), which indicates a high need for psychological support and rehabilitation. Entrepreneurship and business planning (388 people) are in second place, which demonstrates the interest of veterans in self-employment and opening their own business. Also popular are UAV control (337 people), driving specialties (132) and IT areas (115), which indicates the desire to master modern technologies and sought-after professions [12].

The training program for veterans and people with disabilities is an important stage of their economic adaptation. It not only contributes to the acquisition of new skills, but also opens up opportunities for stable employment, professional development and integration into civilian life. Focusing on areas that are in demand on the labor market helps ensure veterans' competitiveness and financial independence in the future.

Also, combatants and their family members have the opportunity to receive a grant to create or develop their own business. It is especially important that this assistance provides not only for the employment of the veteran itself, but also for the creation of additional jobs. The grant support program for veterans and their partners has shown significant results: as of February 11, 2025, 1,159 decisions on granting grants had been made, which contributed to the creation of 2,208 jobs. The most popular areas for starting a business were trade and repair (28 %), production (16 %), cafes and bakeries (15 %), and services (9 %).

Among the grant recipients, 55 % are defenders, 44 % are their spouses, and 1 % are people with disabilities as a result of the war [12]. This initiative contributes to the economic adaptation of veterans, providing them with the opportunity to start their own business, create jobs, and integrate into civilian life. The particular focus on entrepreneurship among veteran spouses demonstrates the families' desire for financial stability and the development of their own businesses. Overall, the program plays an important role in supporting veterans, contributing to their professional fulfillment and economic independence.

The analysis of the labor market emphasizes the feasibility and openness of the labor market to employment of those who returned from the combat zone. The main task on this path is the primary adaptation of demobilized people to civilian life. When a person is demobilized from the Armed Forces of Ukraine and returns to civilian life, its value system and behavior change, it often has different views compared to the people around it. Studies show that approximately 25–30 % of individuals demobilized from the Armed Forces of Ukraine experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to diagnostic research criteria, PTSD is defined as a delayed or prolonged reaction to a stressful event or situation. Such events are typically exceptionally threatening or catastrophic in nature and can lead to significant psychological distress [15]. All this highlights the need to pay close attention to the process of adaptation to civilian life of servicemen, which should be comprehensive and systemic. The concept of “adaptation” is broad and can be used in many contexts – psychological, regulatory, professional, social. Let's dwell in more detail on the essence of this definition.

Social adaptation is the formation of the most adequate stereotypes of behavior in the conditions of a changing microsocial environment [16].

Psychological adaptation is a constant process of active adaptation of an individual to the conditions of the social environment, the result of this process [17].

Normative and legal adaptation is an adaptation aimed at mastering the norms that regulate the socio-legal status of a person, its rights and obligations [18].

Economic adaptation is measures aimed at acquiring, restoring and improving professional knowledge, skills and abilities [19].

During military service, soldiers acquire a number of valuable skills and abilities, among which discipline, organization, stress resistance and leadership qualities can be distinguished, which can become a guarantee for successfully opening their own business, realizing their own entrepreneurial talent. The study [20] is aimed at supporting the adaptation of military personnel and promoting their broader involvement in economically active life. It emphasizes the importance of considering not only individual psychological characteristics but also the creative potential of veterans. In this context, creative potential is defined as the highest form of human activity, based on the ability to create something new and original. The use of the creative potential of servicemen in the process of adaptation to civilian life is of great importance for their successful reintegration into society. Creativity not only contributes to the development of new professional skills, but also helps in psychological rehabilitation and social adaptation. Programs that support this potential can significantly improve the quality of life of veterans, help them find new goals and opportunities in civilian life. This hypothesis is confirmed in the work of leading domestic scientists. Thus, authors in work [21] identify creativity as an important basis for the implementation of entrepreneurial activity.

In order to determine the priority areas and ways of economic adaptation of servicemen who left the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the authors conducted a sociological study using a questionnaire that has been created by using Google Forms [22]. In previous studies by the authors [23], this method of surveying has proven its effectiveness, in particular in ensuring a higher level of confidentiality, which allows for more honest answers from respondents.

The survey was conducted from September to December 2024. The study covered 50 servicemen from different regions of Ukraine, of different ages, including 41 men and 9 women. Among those surveyed, 80 % have higher education, 20 % have secondary specialized education. 78 % of those surveyed are people aged 25 to 55, that is, they are those who make up the basis of the country's labor resources.

Based on the survey, data was obtained on the plans, expectations, difficulties and needs of servicemen in the process of adaptation to civilian life. The generalized results allow to draw the following conclusions about the future plans of servicemen (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Answers to the question “What do you see as your future professional path after the end of the war?”

Most respondents (26 %) plan to engage in entrepreneurial activities after completing military service. At the same time, 2 % of respondents plan to first find an interesting field of activity and then start their own business. Such a high interest in self-employment indicates a motivation for independence and the implementation of their own initiatives. At the same time, 20 % of respondents are considering the possibility of finding a new job, which emphasizes the need for employment programs and the development of new skills. 14 % of respondents plan to return to their previous place of work. The same number of respondents plan to continue their military career. It is worrying that 14 % of servicemen do not have clear ideas about their future. This indicates the importance of information support and career guidance consultations as important means of economic adaptation.

In addition to plans, servicemen also have concerns about adapting to new living conditions (Fig. 6). The main problem that servicemen expect after discharge from service is the lack of state support (52 %). 44 % of respondents think about possible difficulties in finding a job, which is a serious obstacle to successful integration into social life.

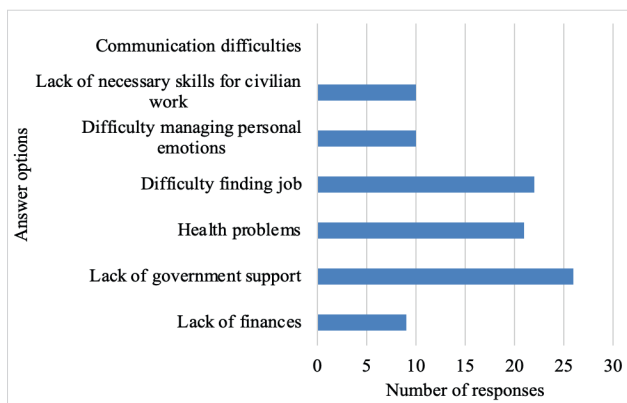


Fig. 6. Answers to the question “What difficulties do you foresee when returning to civilian life?”

Health problems (42 %) also remain a significant challenge for many military personnel. In addition, 20 % of respondents predict difficulties in managing their own emotions and lack of skills for civilian work. Lack of finances, noted by 18 % of respondents, highlights financial insecurity after completing military service. This indicates the need to ensure systematic state support through preferential employment and access to financial resources. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that military veterans are mainly people who have been in conditions of increased physical and psychological stress for a long time. Many of them have combat injuries, both physical and mental, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which affect their ability to adapt to civilian life. It is quite natural that only 36 % of servicemen feel fully prepared for adaptation, while the majority (58 %) indicate that they are only partially ready. This indicates the need for additional psychological and informational support. Another 6 % of respondents said that they were not ready for the difficulties and needed help. This group requires special attention from the state and public organizations.

Among the most important forms of assistance, respondents named employment (50 %). Financial assistance and information support are also in high demand (30 % each). More than a third of respondents (34 %) are interested in consulting on opening their own business, which correlates with their desire to engage in entrepreneurship. A significant part of the military (38 %) considers preferential support important, and 28 % – preferential opportunities for training.

Training is considered an important adaptation tool: 48 % of respondents believe that it can contribute to faster integration into civilian life, and 38 % have not yet thought about this possibility. The most demanded skills are (Fig. 7) entrepreneurial (40 %), job search skills (28 %), computer literacy (22 %) and creative thinking (28 %).

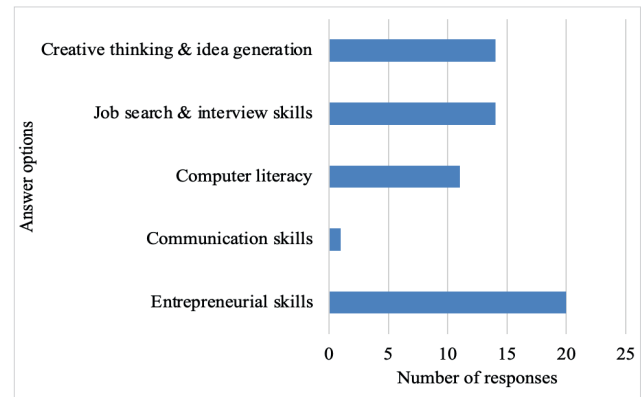


Fig. 7. Answers to the question “What skills would you like to master during your studies?”

According to respondents, support programs implemented by the state should play a significant role in economic adaptation (Fig. 8).

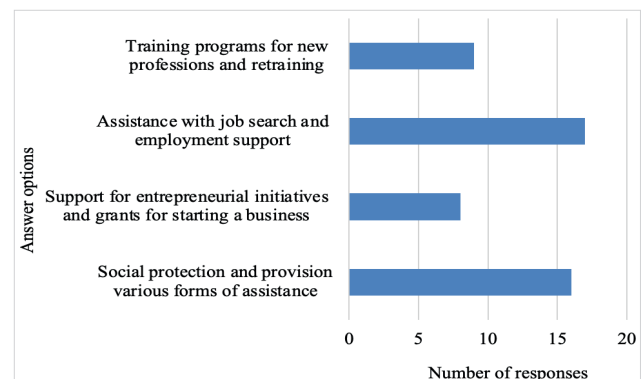


Fig. 8. Answers to the question “What support programs for servicemen should the state implement first?”

The greatest interest of the respondents was aroused by support programs in job search and employment (34 %), as well as social protection and assistance (32 %). A significant part of the respondents (18 %) considers retraining programs important. Another 16 % note the need to support entrepreneurial initiatives through grants.

The survey results demonstrate that the main challenges for servicemen in the adaptation process are job search, lack of state support, financial difficulties and health problems. At the same time, they have a high level of motivation for self-development, in particular in the field of entrepreneurship.

The practical significance of the work lies in the formulation of specific recommendations for improving institutional support for veterans. In particular, the creation of entrepreneurship support centers based on state employment centers, the development of creative thinking development programs, and the introduction of flexible retraining mechanisms are proposed. Thus, the results obtained can be directly used in state employment policy and veteran reintegration, which increases the applied value of the study.

The results are directly tied to the Ukrainian labor market and its transformation during and after the Russian-Ukrainian war. These insights may not be fully transferable to other countries or regions without similar economic, social, and military contexts. Applicability is limited in regions not affected by military conflict or large-scale economic disruption. The results are directly tied to the Ukrainian labor market and its transformation during and after the Russian-Ukrainian war. These insights may not be fully transferable to other countries or regions without similar economic, social, and military contexts. Applicability is limited in regions not affected by military conflict or large-scale economic disruption. Key considerations for practical application include special attention should be given to mental health support, as PTSD and emotional adaptation are critical barriers to reintegration. Also, data must be continuously refreshed to adapt to evolving circumstances and the shifting needs of both veterans and employers.

The prospect of further research in this area involves the development of institutional principles to support military personnel in realizing their creative potential and starting their own businesses. This includes providing regulatory and legal support, as well as establishing specialized centers to assist veterans in launching entrepreneurial initiatives. In the future, such centers could operate within the framework of state employment services. Additionally, further research may explore innovative approaches to the employment of former military personnel.

4. Conclusions

The conducted study is distinguished by the comprehensiveness of the approach to the problem of economic adaptation of military personnel returning to civilian life. Unlike most previous works focused mainly on the psychological or social aspects of adaptation, this article focuses on the economic component, which has a direct impact on the ability of veterans to realize themselves in the post-war society.

A specific feature of this research is the integration of theoretical labor market analysis with empirical data obtained through a sociological survey of 50 servicemen from various regions of Ukraine. The study revealed that 58 % of respondents feel only partially prepared for civilian reintegration, while only 36 % feel fully ready, and 6 % are not ready at all and require assistance. The data also show clear trends in the needs and intentions of veterans. Specifically: 52 % of respondents consider lack of state support to be the main obstacle after demobilization; 44 % anticipate difficulties with employment; 42 % expect health-related challenges; 50 % identified employment as the most important form of support; 26 % intend to start their own business; 34 % expressed interest in business consulting; 48 % recognize training as a vital tool for adaptation, with the most desirable skills being entrepreneurial (40 %), job search (28 %), creative thinking (28 %), and computer lit-

eracy (22 %). This allowed not only to collect objective information about modern challenges, but also to identify the internal resources of veterans – in particular, a high level of motivation for self-employment and entrepreneurship, which remained unnoticed in a significant part of previous studies.

Compared to other sources, where adaptation is considered as a unidirectional process from the state to the veteran, this work proposes a two-way interaction model in which the serviceman acts as an active subject of change, capable of using its own creative potential as a tool for economic self-realization.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest in relation to this study, including financial, personal, authorship or other, which could affect the study and its results presented in this article.

Financing

The study was conducted without financial support.

Data availability

Data will be provided upon request.

Use of artificial intelligence

The authors confirm that they did not use artificial intelligence technologies when creating the presented work.

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