



**INVICTUS
GAMES**
FOUNDATION



INVICTUS GAMES TEAM UKRAINE



The impact of the Invictus Games on the system of recovery for veterans and active-duty service members through sport in Ukraine



10 THE JOURNEY MUST GO ON



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INVICTUS GAMES **TEAM UKRAINE**

This study was prepared within the partnership of StratcomUA (Invictus Games: Team Ukraine) and the Invictus Games Foundation in cooperation with Vox Ukraine. Responsibility for the content of the study lies solely with StratcomUA and Vox Ukraine; it does not necessarily reflect the position of the Invictus Games Foundation.

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Invictus Games Foundation — for the decisive role in making this story possible. From the first invitation to the Invictus Games in 2016 to confident joint steps into a new decade.

The Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine — for a reliable strategic partnership.

We also thank the partners of the Invictus Games movement in Ukraine — your support has become an integral part of this journey.

This study is a joint result of trust, cooperation, and accumulated experience. Before you is the story of the first decade of the Invictus Games in Ukraine.

The journey must go on!

INTRODUCTION



The **Invictus Games** are an international sport event for veterans and active-duty service members who have sustained injuries, wounds, or illnesses during or as a result of performing their official duties. The name derives from the Latin word for “unconquered,” and this spirit lies at the core of the movement’s philosophy: sport is not merely entertainment, but a tool for recovery, for rediscovering oneself, and for returning to society.

The idea for the event emerged in 2013, when Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, visited the U.S. Warrior Games — competitions for wounded veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces — and witnessed the transformative role that sport can play in recovery after severe injuries. Having served for ten years in the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom and completed two combat deployments to Afghanistan, he personally understood what a veteran loses when taking off the uniform—and what it takes to find a new sense of purpose. In 2014, he held the first Invictus Games in London with the participation of:

409
competitors

13
countries

and established

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The Invictus Games Foundation is the world’s leading organisation supporting wounded, injured and sick service personnel and veterans through the power of sport. It has grown from being the governing body of the Invictus Games into a community of 25 participating nations and a global movement that recognises the role of service, inspires positive change, improves lives, and drives progress towards a more inclusive future for those who have served.

Since its founding, the Invictus Games Foundation has presided over seven editions of the Invictus Games — from London in 2014 to Orlando, Toronto, Sydney, The Hague, Düsseldorf, and Vancouver and Whistler — with Birmingham, UK set to host in 2027, marking the first time the Invictus Games will return to the United Kingdom.

Beyond the Games, the Invictus Games Foundation delivers year-round sport recovery and rehabilitation programmes, support and impact. The Foundation’s mission is to catalyse systemic change across a growing international movement, focusing where the need is great while maintaining support for the community it has built, so that every wounded, injured or sick service member or veteran can have the opportunity to recover, rebuild and thrive beyond injury through the power of sport.

Ukraine has been participating in the Invictus Games since 2017. Over ten years, thanks to the efforts of the StratcomUA charitable organisation, what began as the participation of fifteen individuals in the competition in Toronto has evolved into a systemic movement that spans the entire country.



**Closing Ceremony
Invictus Games 2023**
Düsseldorf
16 Sept 2023

This report is the first comprehensive assessment of the impact of the Invictus Games initiative on the system for the recovery of veterans and active-duty service members through sport in Ukraine. It covers the institutional, social, diplomatic, and cultural dimensions of this impact and is based on three independent research components:

44 873

publications

1 025

respondents

**Media content analysis
2015–2025**

**Nationwide
survey**

108 Invictus Games participants and 27 in-depth interviews with national team members, their family members, officials, organizers, and international partners, as well as an institutional analysis of the veteran sports system.

The scale of what has taken place over these years is best illustrated by several key indicators.

Individuals took part in
the first national selection



114

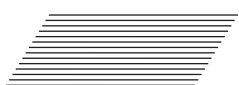
in 2017



329

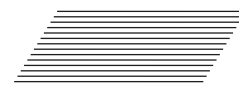
in 2024

According to a 2025 UNICEF study presented at the National Barrier-Free Council, 44% of Ukrainians are aware of the Invictus Games



50 000
people

Size
of the followers



In 2025 and in the first quarter of 2026, regional Invictus Games: Team Ukraine initiatives engaged more than 1,000 veterans and active-duty service members, including through formats such as “Invictus Days in Your City,” sports camps, and partner events. This nearly threefold growth occurred despite the full-scale war, evacuation, destruction of infrastructure, and disruptions in funding. The Ukrainian national team at the international level grew from 15 participants in Toronto to 35 — the largest delegation in its history — in Vancouver. Members of national teams from all cohorts reside in almost all regions of the country. This geography is a clear reflection of how deeply the movement has taken root in Ukrainian communities.

However, participation figures are only an entry point for understanding what is actually taking place. The Invictus Games have influenced Ukraine on several levels simultaneously: they have become a trigger for the formation of a legislative framework for veteran sport, which did not exist prior to 2017; they have transformed the identities of hundreds of participants — from “patients” to “active members of the community”; they have launched a network of civil society organizations in the regions founded by veterans themselves; and they have shaped the international image of Ukraine as a country that is recovering not after the war, but during it.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to determine the social, institutional, and interpersonal impact on the formation of a system for the recovery of veterans and active-duty service members through sport in Ukraine, as well as on the development of the veteran movement and changes in public attitudes toward veterans and active-duty service members with injuries, wounds, or illnesses sustained in the line of duty during the Russia–Ukraine war — using the Invictus Games as a case study.

To achieve this objective, the study set out to answer the following questions:

- 01** How have the Invictus Games influenced the formation and development of the state system of sports-based rehabilitation for veterans?
- 02** Does participation in the Invictus Games change the identity of a veteran and contribute to their reintegration into society?
- 03** What secondary impact is generated by the Invictus Games in Ukraine: how do the initiatives of participants influence other veterans?
- 04** Has Ukraine strengthened its international image through participation in the Games — as a state that supports its defenders?
- 05** Have the Invictus Games in Ukraine changed public attitudes toward veterans and active-duty service members with injuries, wounds, or illnesses sustained in the defense of the country, as well as toward rehabilitation and accessibility?
- 06** Do veterans who have participated in the Invictus Games demonstrate higher levels of social engagement after participation than before?
- 07** Are regions where members of the Invictus Games community are active more open to the implementation of inclusive solutions?

METHODOLOGY

The study is structured around three components, each of which captures a distinct dimension of the phenomenon — institutional, sociological, and media-related. Their findings are interpreted within a unified analytical framework, in which each research objective is validated through evidence from all three sources.

Component 1. Media Content Analysis (2015–2025)

Research method: quantitative and qualitative content analysis of media mentions of the Invictus Games in Ukraine. The quantitative component includes all counts and statistical measurements. The qualitative component involves the interpretation of these results, that is, the analysis of meaning and the formulation of conclusions based on the data.

The dataset of mentions over the **10-year** period was compiled using the Semantrum media monitoring system, which performs automated collection of publications from media and social media based on predefined keywords. The dataset includes publications from media and social media across the defined categories and comprises a total of **44,873 mentions**.

Component 2. Sociological Research

The sociological component consists of three independent data collection instruments.

Nationwide online survey. Sample: 1,025 respondents across all regions of Ukraine, except temporarily occupied territories, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The sample parameters correspond to those of the urban population of Ukraine by age and region of residence as of 24 February 2022. Method: online interviews (CAWI). Target audience: residents of Ukraine aged 18–55. Implementing organization: Research.ua. Fieldwork period: 1–16 Dec 2025.

Online survey of Invictus Games Team Ukraine community. Sample: **108 individuals** (participants in national selections and/or members of national teams). Among them, **105 men and 3 women**; 61% are demobilized, and 39% remain in active service. Fieldwork period: Dec 2025 – Mar 2026.

In-depth interviews. Conducted between Dec 2025 and Mar 2026 with the following groups:

- members of national teams from 2017–2025 (10 individuals);
- family and friends members of participants (6 individuals);
- the initiative's organizational team — coordinators, managers, a psychotherapist, and a coach (5 individuals);
- Ukrainian officials involved in shaping veteran policy (3 individuals);
- international partners involved in organizing the Invictus Games (3 individuals).

A total of **27 in-depth interviews** were conducted.

Limitations of the Sociological Component. The nationwide online survey reflects only the urban population based on pre-war parameters and may not capture the perspectives of rural populations or residents of occupied and frontline territories. The sample of Invictus Games Team Ukraine participants is not statistically representative and includes only those who could be reached; it also has a significant gender imbalance (97% men). In-depth interviews are qualitative and are not intended to be statistically generalizable. Responses related to personal attitudes and achievements may be subject to social desirability bias.

Component 3. Institutional Analysis

The institutional analysis is based on a systematic review of open sources, including legislative acts, official documents, public reports of government authorities, and materials from veteran organizations and business partners. The findings are verified and supplemented with data from in-depth interviews (conducted as part of the sociological component).

The component covers:

- the chronology of regulatory and legal acts in the field of veteran and adaptive sport (2014–2025);
- analysis of institutional architecture (distribution of responsibilities among government bodies, civil society organizations, and businesses);
- cataloging of partnerships and fundraising projects by year (2017–2025);
- analysis of secondary impact, including veteran initiatives established by participants of the Games.

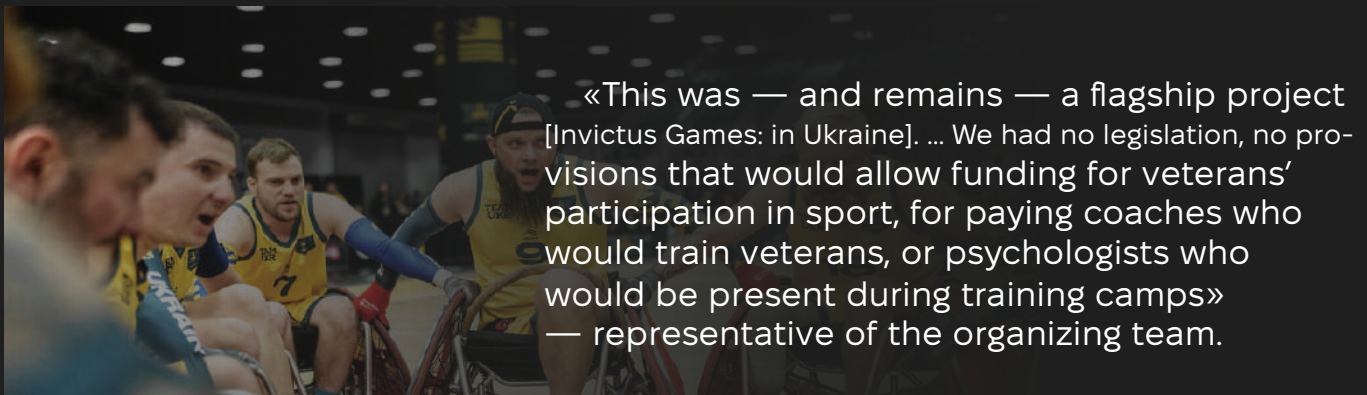
Limitations of the Institutional Analysis. The analysis relies primarily on publicly available information and may not reflect informal arrangements or internal decision-making processes. Verification of certain data, particularly related to funding volumes, is limited due to the absence of consolidated public reporting. The catalog of NGOs and veteran initiatives is illustrative and does not claim to be exhaustive.

CHAPTER 1. THE HISTORY OF THE INVICTUS GAMES IN UKRAINE

The Invictus Games in Ukraine have evolved from a civil society initiative into a systemic element of veteran policy. This chapter traces how a project launched without state support was gradually institutionalized and transformed into a large-scale movement with broad geographic reach and increasing participation.

1.1 The History of the Invictus Games in Ukraine

Ukraine's participation in the Invictus Games was, from the outset, an initiative of the civil society sector. In 2015, the Center for Strategic Communications StratCom Ukraine, together with the agency Pepelatz Production, initiated Ukraine's involvement in the international Invictus Games movement and held negotiations with the Invictus Games Foundation. StratCom Ukraine developed a model for Ukraine's participation in the Invictus Games — including selection, training, communication, and engagement with partners. This model later became the basis for the involvement of state institutions and was subsequently institutionalized. At the early stages, there was no legislative framework, no state budget support, and no methodological guidelines for working with wounded veterans through sport.

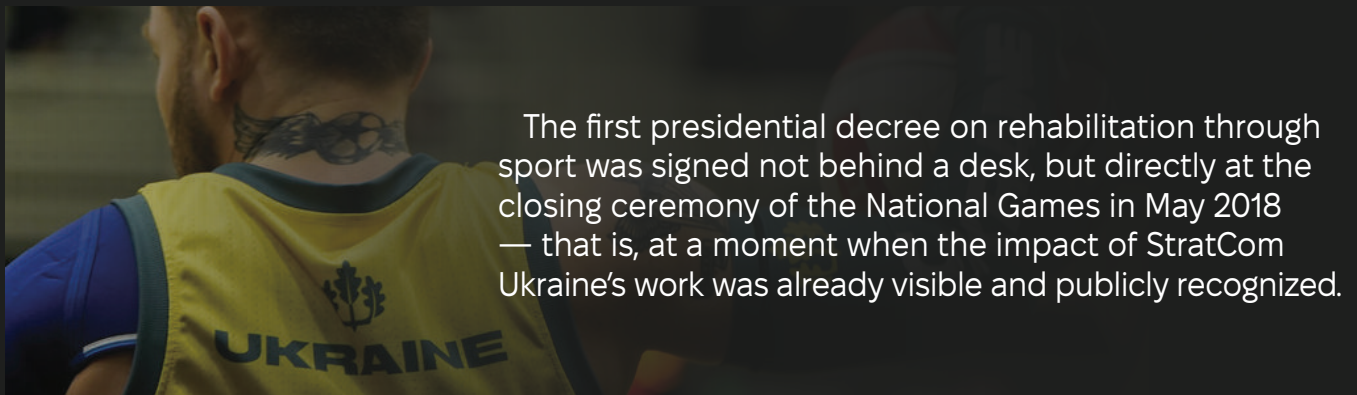


«This was — and remains — a flagship project [Invictus Games: in Ukraine]. ... We had no legislation, no provisions that would allow funding for veterans' participation in sport, for paying coaches who would train veterans, or psychologists who would be present during training camps» — representative of the organizing team.

In this context, the role of StratCom Ukraine is particularly illustrative — they not only launched the Games in Ukraine as a project, but also demonstrated an approach in which a non-governmental initiative can strengthen state policy through the creation of effective and scalable practices. This experience can be considered a model for other areas of veteran policy, where the state does not act as the sole actor but operates in partnership with other stakeholders.

In 2016, Ukraine received an official invitation to participate in the Invictus Games Toronto 2017. At the same time, the organizing team established the NGO “Invictus Games Ukraine,” which strengthened the team’s operational capacity — taking on part of the selection, preparation, and organization of the national selection process. On the government side, the Ministry of Defense was responsible for the preparation and participation of the national team in the first international event.

In September 2017, the Ukrainian national team — consisting of 15 participants — made its first appearance at the international event in Toronto.



1.2. Scaling of Participation in the Invictus Games

The number of participants in the Invictus Games in Ukraine, as well as the size of the national team at the international level, is one of the most indicative measures of the development of veteran sport in Ukraine. Over eight years, this number has increased nearly threefold. The movement has gradually developed its infrastructure and has become more visible within communities. At the same time, Ukraine remains in a state of full-scale war, as a result of which the number of people in need of rehabilitation and recovery — including through sport — continues to grow each year.

Figure 1.1 Number of participants from the initial stages to the present day

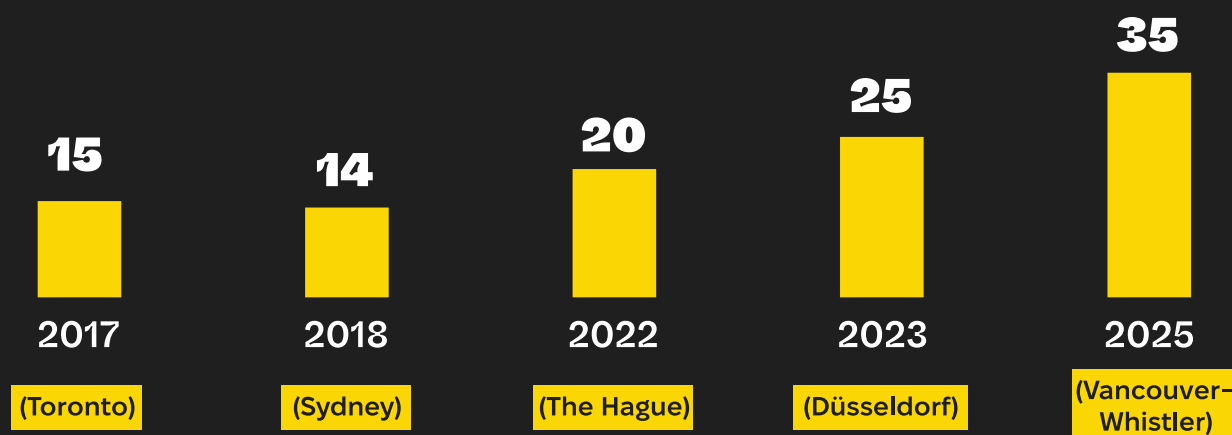


The target for the IG27 selection cycle is to exceed 1,000 competitors in the nationwide competitions, as well as to engage 1,500 new members of the movement through other Invictus Games Team Ukraine initiatives — including regional and partner formats such as Invictus Days, sports camps, and regional competitions

The national team at the international level has grown at a similar pace — from 15 participants in Toronto in 2017 to 35 in Vancouver in 2025. This was not just a quota increase — the Invictus Games Foundation expanded it deliberately, in response to the quality of Ukraine’s national selection process and to demand from veterans themselves.

Dynamics of the Number of National Team Members

Figure 1.2



The geography of participation covers nearly the entire territory under Ukraine’s control. The leading regions by number of national team members are:

- > Kyiv — 32
- > Lviv — 14
- > Dnipropetrovsk — 8
- > Kharkiv, Cherkasy, and Khmelnytskyi, etc. — between 1 and 5.
- > Odesa — 7
- > Rivne — 7
- > Volyn — 6

This distribution, on the one hand, reflects the expected concentration around major rehabilitation centers — and, on the other, highlights that demand for participation exists across all regions, while the available infrastructure remains insufficient to ensure full coverage.

Summary



A defining feature of the development of the Invictus Games in Ukraine has been the leading role of the civil society sector, which created a model later supported and further developed by the state. At the same time, participation dynamics demonstrate a steady increase in interest in veteran sport, particularly under conditions of full-scale war. This indicates a transition of the Invictus Games Team Ukraine from a standalone initiative into an important institutionalized instrument for the rehabilitation and social reintegration of veterans.

CHAPTER 2.

THE IMPACT OF THE INVICTUS GAMES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE SYSTEM OF VETERAN SPORTS

In Ukraine, the Invictus Games have become one of the key factors in transforming approaches to the recovery of veterans through sport — in particular through the integration of sport into state policy.

Nataliia KALMYKOVA

Minister of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine

«Sport is a key component of the health of veterans. It is through our partnership with the Invictus Games Foundation that we have embedded — and continue to develop — the role of sport in the recovery of veterans and have incorporated it into the Veteran Policy Strategy».

At the same time, the findings of in-depth interviews with public officials and members of the organizing team confirm that prior to 2017, veteran sport in Ukraine did not exist as a distinct concept — neither as an element of state policy nor as a standalone rehabilitation practice.

Quote from an interview with public officials:

«Before 2017, the concept of ‘veteran sport’ did not exist in Ukraine. Before 2014, it did not exist at all. [...] There was sport, there was sport for persons with disabilities — and that was it».

Quote from an interview with a veteran:

«Before the Invictus Games, we had no veteran sport at all — neither as a concept nor as a practice of rehabilitation through sport. In fact, the Invictus Games became the driver of changes in state policy. It was from us that the development of all legislative acts began — and from us that the formalization of everything that happens during preparation for the Games started».

Quote from an interview with a veteran:

«The Invictus Games became evidence-based — they became an example that veteran sport works. That it helps veterans. And for the state, this was a real example that it works. From that moment on, the state began to champion this as a priority».

Thus, the Invictus Games have played a role not merely as a sport initiative, but as one of the mechanisms for the institutionalization of veteran sport. In effect, the Games preceded the formation of state policy in this area. First, practice emerged — national selections, training, participation in the international event — and only later did the state begin to formalize these processes through regulatory acts, strategies, and the creation of dedicated institutions. It is precisely this shift from practice to policy that defines the distinctive trajectory of the development of veteran sport in Ukraine.

Importantly, this process from the outset was supported not only by domestic efforts but also by international partners — most notably NATO, which since 2017 has acted as a systemic institutional donor supporting Ukraine's participation in the Invictus Games. The chronology of legislative changes clearly reflects and confirms this logic.

2.1. Legislative Framework for Veteran Sport in Ukraine

Most key decisions and regulatory acts were adopted after Ukraine first participated in the Invictus Games in 2017.

One of the first steps was the adoption of a presidential decree that introduced the concept of «rehabilitation through sport».

Quote from an interview with a representative of the organizing team (2017–2022):

«The first presidential decree on sports-based rehabilitation of ATO veterans was signed at the Ukrainian Games — at the closing ceremony of the Ukrainian Invictus Games in May 2018».

Subsequently, the legislative framework developed systematically — through secondary legislation and interagency decisions — which provided the foundation for the functioning of veteran sport.

A key milestone was the adoption in 2020 of the National Strategy for Physical and Sports Rehabilitation of Veterans and Their Families, which established the legal basis for state support in this area and explicitly defined participation in the Invictus Games as part of the rehabilitation process. To implement the Strategy, the Cabinet of Ministers approved an action plan for 2021–2025, which became the basis for launching the main projects of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs.

In 2024, the Veteran Policy Strategy until 2030 was adopted, which formalized the development of adaptive sport as a tool for restoring the physical and mental health of veterans through physical culture and sports rehabilitation programs, as well as through the development of adaptive sport and veteran sport.

Further institutionalization occurred through amendments to framework legislation. In 2022, a provision on “sport for war veterans” was introduced into the Law of Ukraine “On Physical Culture and Sport” as a separate category. This made it possible to move beyond the category of sport for persons with disabilities — since previously veterans with disabilities were legally classified only within that category, creating bureaucratic challenges, as some veterans did not have official disability status but still required rehabilitation.

In 2025, a Law on Adaptive Sport was adopted, which established this area as a distinct field of physical culture with clearly defined state guarantees and designated the Ministry of Veterans Affairs as the lead authority responsible for the development of veteran sport.



National competitions

Kyiv
31 May 2024

Thus, the regulatory framework was formed gradually, consistently reflecting the demand shaped by the practice of the Invictus Games.

Respondents unanimously recognize the role of the Invictus Games as a “conceptual trigger.” At the same time, despite the significant strengthening of the role of the state, representatives of the veteran community and civil society continue to play an active role in shaping and implementing policy in this area.

Quote from a public official:

«I would say that the Invictus Games made a contribution to embedding the concept of veteran sport. Now <...> this state policy is continuing to develop».

2.2. Who is Responsible for Veteran Sport in Ukraine

Prior to 2018, the involvement of veterans in sport as a form of rehabilitation was largely ad hoc — driven primarily by civil society initiatives. Funding was mostly donor-based or dispersed across different government bodies.

At the same time, international support programs played an important role in shaping this infrastructure — in particular the NATO Trust Fund for Medical Rehabilitation, established in 2014.



**Wheelchair race
Invictus Games 2018**

Sydney
26 Oct 2018

At the initial stage, the institutional capacity of the state in this area was limited. Before the establishment of a dedicated ministry, issues of adaptation and rehabilitation were addressed by the State Service of Ukraine for War Veterans and ATO Participants (now dissolved), but no systemic approach to the development of adaptive sport existed. As respondents note, the relevant infrastructure was effectively available only to professional Paralympic athletes — while veterans remained outside this system.

Quote from an interview with a representative of an international organization in Ukraine involved in veteran support projects:

«Infrastructure for adaptive sports in Ukraine previously existed only for Paralympians — professional athletes. In practice, for veterans who simply engage in adaptive sport, there was no infrastructure. And this is a major problem at the national, regional, and local levels».

The foundation of the Ukrainian Invictus Games movement was laid by the Center for Strategic Communications StratCom Ukraine. Since 2017, it has coordinated the core processes of the Games — selection of candidates, organization of events and training, work with participants, and logistics.

Other civil society initiatives have also been involved. Between 2019 and 2025, the Come Back Alive Foundation acted as a co-organizer of the national team selection process. Specialists from the foundation's veteran department participated in selection and training and supported the team throughout all stages of preparation and during the Games themselves.

At the early stage, the state's involvement in organizing the Games was primarily channeled through individual institutions. In particular, through public representation and coordination by Deputy Prime Minister Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze, support for the initiative was secured at the government level, and the Ministry of Defense ensured the preparation and participation of the national team in the first Invictus Games international event in 2017.

Following the establishment of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs at the end of 2018, responsibility for developing veteran sport policy was gradually transferred to the relevant ministry.

The Ministry assumed the role of the primary coordinator of state policy in the field of veteran sport, particularly in terms of regulatory oversight, development of the annual calendar of events, and organization of selections for national teams, as well as the preparation and participation of Ukraine's national teams in the Invictus Games. It also co-implemented other Invictus Games initiatives — sports camps, Invictus Days in Your City, and regional competitions — which contributed to the development of the Invictus movement at both national and regional levels and to the engagement of new veterans in the Invictus community. At the same time, the operational implementation of programs largely remained with the civil society sector, resulting in a hybrid governance model.

The institutional system of veteran sport in Ukraine is characterized by an interagency structure, with responsibilities distributed among key state institutions.

«It can be stated that this support exists at the state level and continues to grow, as the state increasingly recognizes its value».

«At the regional level, more opportunities are emerging, supported by both local authorities and administrations».

Growing state funding is one of the most telling indicators of the systemic recognition of veteran sport. In 2024, total expenditures on veteran policy reached UAH 14.3 billion — twice as much as the previous year — while in 2026, the Verkhovna Rada approved UAH 18.9 billion, exceeding the 2025 figure by UAH 6.3 billion. A separate UAH 1.4 billion was allocated to programs such as "eSupport for Sport," educational certificates, and initiatives of the Ukrainian Veteran Fund.

Thus, the institutional model of veteran sport in Ukraine has developed as a result of the interaction between civil society, the state, and international partners. In this process, the Invictus Games in Ukraine have served not only as a sporting initiative but also as a coordination mechanism that enabled the transition from fragmented practices to a systemic state policy.

2.3. Ecosystem Supporting State Initiatives

As a result, a multi-level ecosystem has formed around the Invictus Games, bringing together:

Government institutions

Local authorities

Civil society

International partners

Private sector



Farewell to Team Ukraine going to Canada

Kyiv

31 Jan 2025

Its key feature is the distribution of roles among actors:

- **Government institutions** formulate policy, ensure sustainable funding, and create conditions for scaling.
- **Civil society** organizations implement practical programs, including selections, training, and team preparation, mobilize donor support to scale initiatives, and develop new areas.
- **Local authorities** ensure infrastructure development and policy implementation at the community level.

It is precisely this model that has enabled the scaling of Invictus Games practices beyond the national team — to the community level. Through local initiatives, adaptive sport is gradually becoming accessible not only in large cities but also at the regional level, integrating into a broader system of support for veterans.

- **International partners** play an important role in the development of this ecosystem. Support from NATO is systemic in nature. In 2021, it was integrated into the Comprehensive Assistance Package, where Ukraine's participation in the Invictus Games is defined as a separate programmatic activity within a human-centered rehabilitation policy. This means that the Invictus Games are not only a national project but also part of a broader international architecture of support for Ukraine. In particular, this support includes funding for logistics, rehabilitation programs, equipment procurement, and infrastructure development, as well as the establishment of new rehabilitation centers and the reconstruction of those damaged during Russian aggression, within initiatives such as Operation RENOVATOR.

In addition, the Invictus Games have become a platform for the development of new areas within veteran sport. Based on this initiative, training programs for coaches in adaptive sport are being launched in cooperation with international partners, such as IREX with support from the U.S. Department of State. This contributes to building the professional capacity of a system that was previously significantly limited.

The Invictus Games in Ukraine are also integrated into broader state policies aimed at creating a barrier-free environment and supporting the return of veterans to civilian life — an initiative led by Olena Zelenska. The National Strategy for a Barrier-Free Environment until 2030, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2021, focuses on accessibility of public and private spaces, transport, services, and information. Within this framework, the Invictus Games in Ukraine act as one of the contributors to the development of veteran support — particularly through sport as a tool for physical recovery, psychological support, and social reintegration.

In particular, the Invictus Games are part of the Barrier-Free Council — a temporary advisory body under Cabinet of Ministers that coordinates efforts to remove barriers in physical, social, economic, educational, digital, and informational domains. The Ukrainian Invictus Games team participates in Council meetings bringing practical experience and providing feedback from participants on the real state of accessibility in communities. This allows individual experiences of veterans to be translated into concrete policy recommendations.

The Invictus Games in Ukraine are one of the state instruments for physical and mental recovery and the return of veterans to civilian life. The founder of StratCom Ukraine, Alina Frolova, has described the project as a “flagship” that has driven the broader development of adaptive veteran sport.

The practical outcomes of this role are reflected in the expansion of formats for working with veterans. In 2024, for example, a sports training camp was organized for the first time within the Invictus Games 2025 National Trials framework, where newcomers could try ten different sports and assess their impact on recovery and quality of life.

Taras Kovalyk

Ex-head of the Veteran Department at the Come Back Alive Foundation (co-organizers in 2019–2025)

«Such initiatives not only shape individual recovery experiences but also generate demand for the development of barrier-free infrastructure — adaptive sports facilities and centers accessible to veterans on a continuous basis».

In addition to directly organizing the Invictus Games: Team Ukraine, the StratCom Ukraine team, together with partners from the civil society sector and government institutions:

- > the Ministry of Veterans Affairs
- > the Ukrainian Veterans Fund
- > NGO Come Back Alive
- > NGO Invictus Games Ukraine

organizes Ukraine's participation in other veteran sport events, including the Warrior Games and the Air Force Trials. These opportunities are a direct result of participation in the Invictus Games, through which Ukraine has integrated into the international community of veteran sport and established lasting partnerships with counterparts from other countries.

2022

After first joining the Warrior Games in Orlando, the Ukrainian team won over **90 medals**.

2024

Ukraine for the first time sent **30 Ukrainian veterans and active-duty service members** to the United States Air Force Trials in Las Vegas at the invitation of the U.S. Air Force.

In this way, the Invictus Games for Ukraine have become not merely a standalone project, but an organizational core and a point of entry for Ukraine into the broader international ecosystem of veteran sport.

Summary



The institutional system of veteran sport in Ukraine has developed according to a distinctive trajectory, in which the Invictus Games acted as the primary driver of change and preceded the emergence of corresponding state policy.

The experience of the Games demonstrated the effectiveness of recovery through sport — which in turn stimulated the gradual formalization of adaptive sport, the establishment of dedicated institutions, and the integration of sport into state veteran policy strategies.

Today, Ukraine has a multi-level ecosystem supporting the Invictus Games. The state is responsible for regulatory frameworks and funding.

- > The Ministry of Veterans Affairs acting as the central coordinator of policy;
- > The Ministry of Youth and Sports is responsible for the sports component;
- > The Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the involvement of service members;
- > The Ministry of Health for the medical and rehabilitation dimension.

CHAPTER 3.

PRIMARY IMPACT OF THE INVICTUS GAMES ON PARTICIPANTS

3.1. Self-assessment of Return to Social Life by Invictus Games Participants

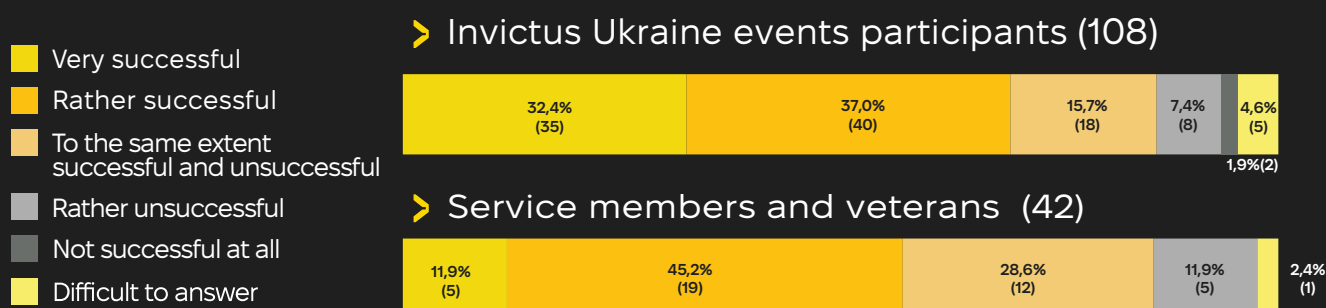
The survey of Invictus community members in Ukraine shows positive trends in their ability to return to social life. 69% of surveyed participants assessed their return as successful or rather successful. At the same time, only 9% of participants reported that their return was unsuccessful or rather unsuccessful.

These results differ from the assessment of their own integration by defenders who took part in the nationwide survey. There, 57% of respondents reported a successful return to social life, while 14% reported an unsuccessful one.

The more optimistic perception of the success of their return to active social life among Invictus community members in Ukraine (69% compared to 57% of defenders surveyed in the nationwide survey) is not unfounded, given their active life position, civic engagement, and involvement in various types of development activities, which is evident from their answers to other survey questions.

Figure 3.1

To what extent did veterans manage to return to social life and activity (self-assessment)?



At the same time, assessments of the success of the experiences of other service members and veterans — rather than their own — are somewhat more

pessimistic, both among the defenders themselves and among other respondents in the nationwide survey.

To what extent did veterans who were injured while defending the Motherland manage to return to social life and activity

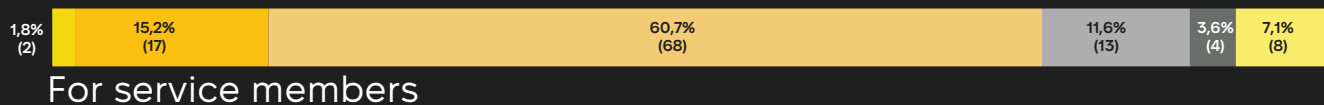
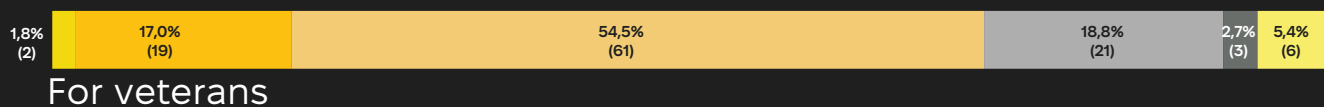
Figure 3.2

■ Not successful at all
 ■ To the same extent successful and unsuccessful
 ■ Very successful
■ Rather unsuccessful
 ■ Rather successful
 ■ Difficult to answer

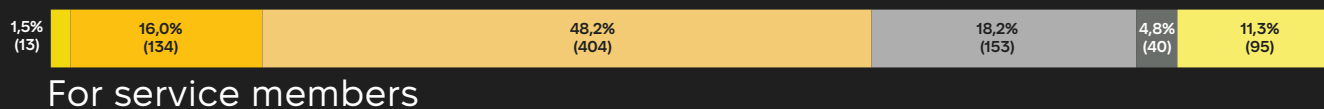
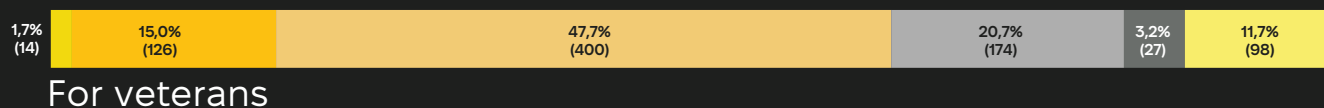
> Service members and veterans (74)



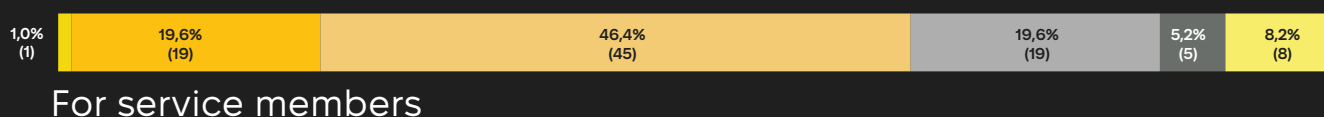
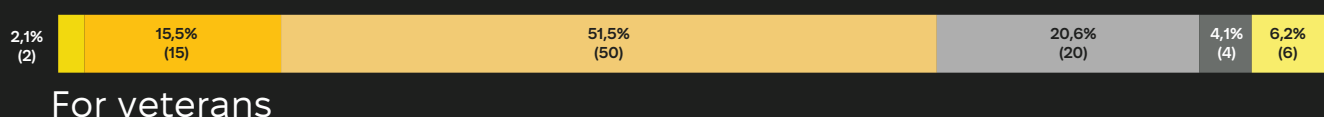
> Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members (112)



> Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members (839)



> People with disabilities (97)



The gap between the assessment by defenders who participated in the nationwide survey of their own achievements (57% reported a successful return to social life) and the achievements of other service members (15% of surveyed defenders assessed their return as successful) and veterans (22% of surveyed defenders assessed their return as successful) can be explained by several factors.

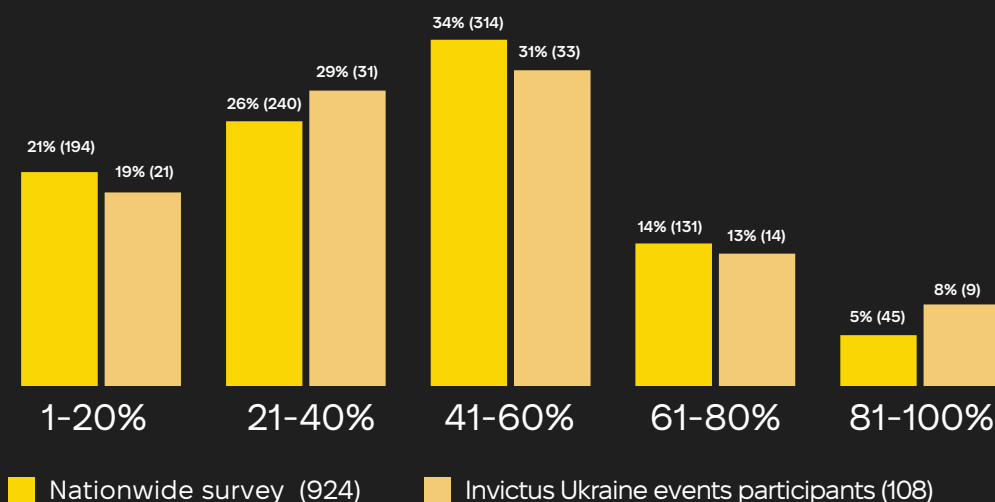
- First, psychological defense mechanisms lead people to evaluate their own achievements more highly.
- Second, the criteria of success may differ: veterans may consider it a success that they have returned to a certain level of functioning. At the same time, external observers compare it to the pre-war condition. This issue requires separate research.

Indicative within the nationwide survey is the difference in assessments of the success of returning to social life between the defenders themselves and their families. Families are the most skeptical group of respondents on this issue. On the one hand, this may indicate that close relatives better see the daily difficulties of adaptation. On the other hand, this skepticism may also have a downside: excessive care within the family environment can sometimes foster a sense of helplessness in veterans.

According to respondents — both participants in the nationwide study and Invictus Ukraine community members — approximately half of veterans with injuries returned to a full social life. It is noteworthy that only a small share of respondents believe that such people constitute the majority, indicating awareness of the scale of the reintegration problem in society.

Figure 3.3

The percentage of service members and veterans with injuries managed to return to social life



3.2. Drivers of Return to Active Life

The key factors of successful return to social life are support from loved ones, psychological rehabilitation, support from society, and personal determination. However, the assessment of the priority of these factors differs across respondent groups.

Thus, according to surveyed service members and veterans, “support from loved ones” is the main factor (81% selected it as the most helpful), as well as among civilians who do not have/have not had service members or veterans among their family members (79%). At the same time, families of defenders rank this factor second (84%), giving psychological rehabilitation first place (85%). For Invictus Ukraine participants, support from loved ones ranks third (69%), behind “personal will, perseverance, determination” (81%) and “recovery through sport” (79%). This may indicate a positive impact of involvement in the Invictus Ukraine community on defenders' independence and self-reliance.

During interviews, it was noted that participation in the Invictus Games can become a tool for improving family relationships. Thus, international partners note that injury often creates a “wall” between a veteran and their loved ones due to the inability to talk through the traumatic experience. The Games make this topic open. Respondents emphasize that participation in the project brings families closer together, allowing relatives to see the veteran not as a helpless victim but as a strong role model.

Quote from an interview with a representative of the organizing team:

«Involving friends and family members directly in the Games and in close communication helped families, and continues to help, understand what exactly their husband or wife went through. [...] very often this [...] was a closed topic for the family. They did not share it with the family. [...] participation in Invictus actually made this topic open for the family. And it [...] brought them closer [...] and it changed relationships».

An Invictus Games participant emphasizes the change in status in the eyes of children:

«Now the child is recognized: hey, this is the daughter of our defender».

This empowers children to overcome the stigma that “mom or dad is no longer the same as before” and feel pride in their parent. Respondents agree that for most families involved in the Invictus Games, relationships within the family are significantly strengthened. Many people create families or decide to have children precisely after the Games.

Quote from an interview with a representative of the organizing team:

«Those families that were involved in the process, in the vast majority, became stronger, and this brought them much closer. [...] Many went to therapy, many people began to learn to communicate in a new way».

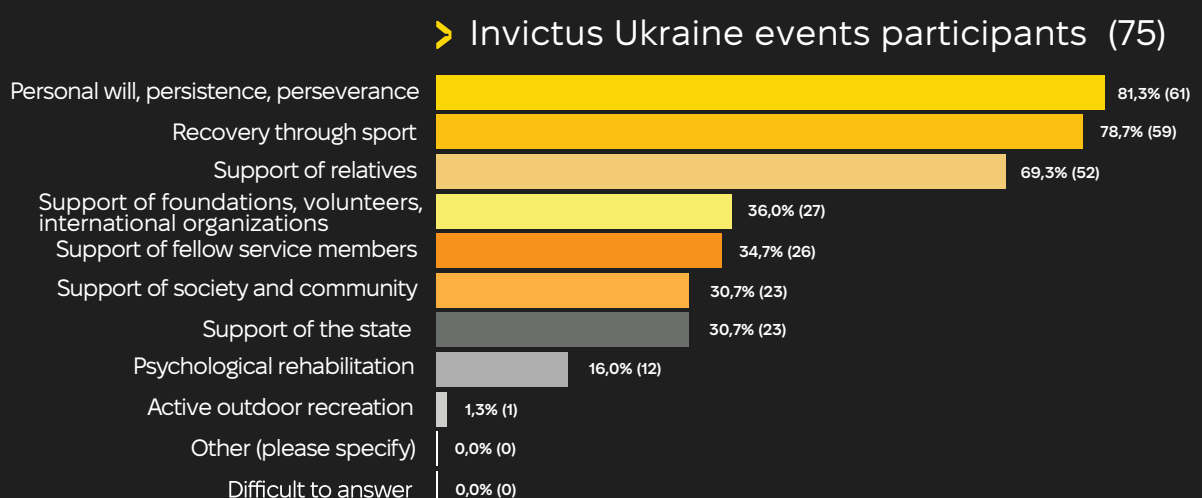
The factor «**psychological rehabilitation**» ranked as follows among the groups:

- 1 place** Group of families of defenders (85%)
- 2 place** Group of civilians without service members in their families (76%)
- 4 place** Group of defenders (66%)
- 8 place** Group of Invictus Ukraine events participants (16%)

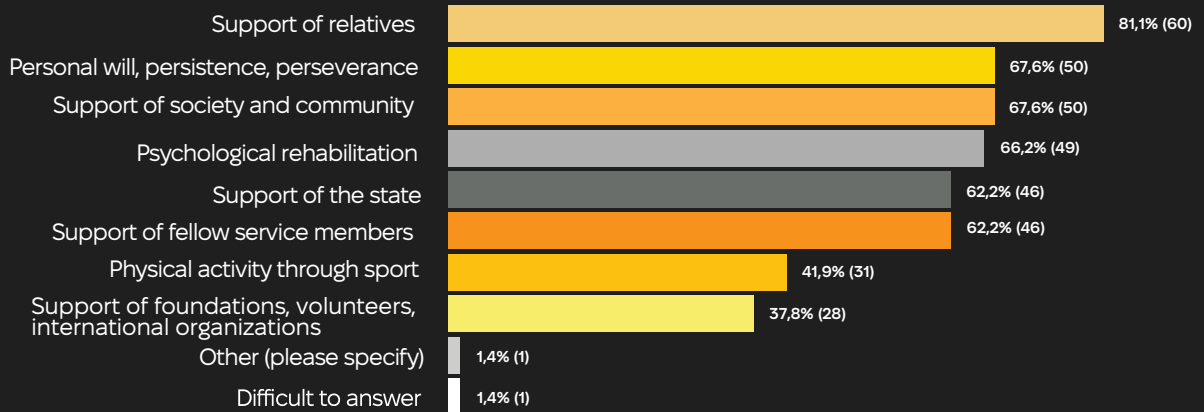
The gap in the perception of the importance of psychological rehabilitation between defenders and their families may indicate that close relatives feel the scale of psychological problems much more acutely, while defenders themselves may downplay or not recognize the need for psychological assistance. This issue requires further research; however, based on the available results, it may be advisable to unobtrusively and consistently integrate psychological support services into state / local / private support programs and activities for veterans, even without their clearly articulated request to work with a psychologist.

Figure 3.4

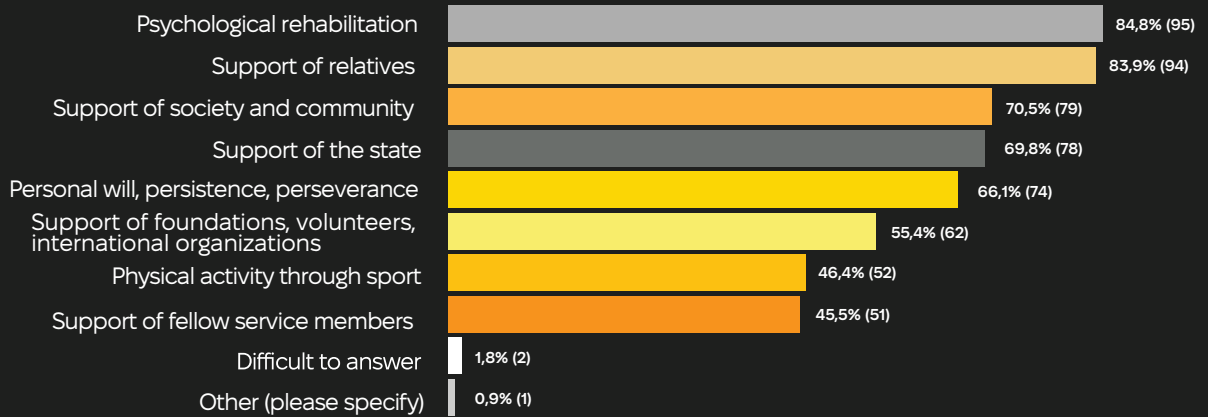
Factors of return to active social life (different wording for Invictus Ukraine events participants and other respondent groups)



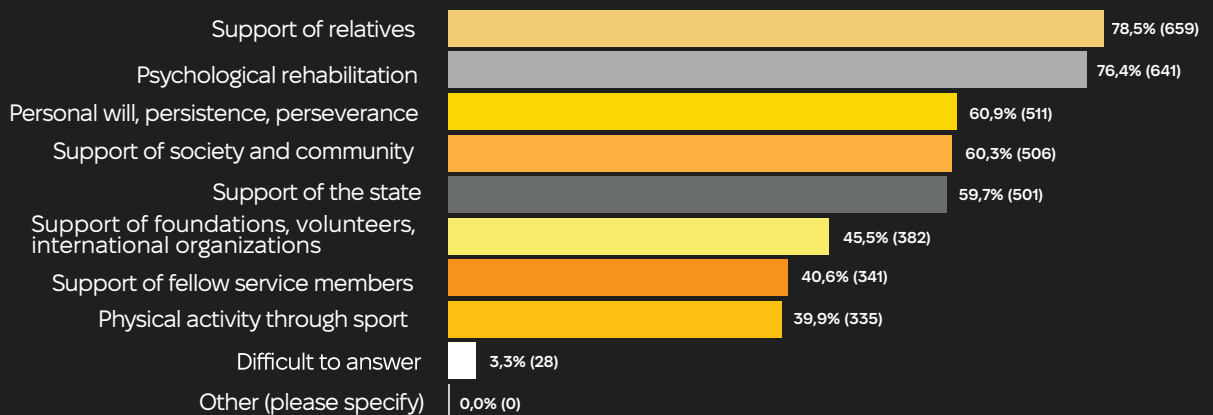
> Service members and veterans (74)



> Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members (112)



> Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members (112)



Another factor that is assessed differently across groups is «**personal will and perseverance**».

- 1 place** Group of Invictus Ukraine events participants (**81%**)
- 2 place** Group of Service members and veterans (**68%**)
- 3 place** Group of Civilians without service members in their families (**61%**)
- 5 place** Group of families of service members and veterans (**66%**)

At the same time, the families of defenders ranked support from society, the community, and the state higher than their personal will and perseverance.

This may indicate that relatives see the bureaucratic obstacles service members face and how these slow down their return to active social life.

The factor «**support from comrades-in-arms**» is significantly more important to defenders (62%) than to their families (46%) and to civilians without service members in their families (41%), underscoring the importance of horizontal ties within the veteran community that are difficult to assess from the outside.

At the same time, only 35% of Invictus Ukraine events participants highlighted this factor among those that helped them return to an active social life. On the one hand, this again emphasizes the agency and acquired habit of relying on themselves among members of the Invictus community. On the other hand, in the nationwide survey, the question aimed to elicit a theoretical understanding of key factors in returning to an active social life, whereas for Invictus Ukraine events participants, the question focused on their personal experience. Therefore, the answers should be compared with this limitation in mind.

«**Recovery through sport**» became a factor in social integration for 79% of the surveyed Invictus Ukraine events participants. In the nationwide survey, the factor “physical activity and sport” was selected among the key ones by 40–46% of respondents across groups. This shows a potential underestimation of the ability of sports activities to facilitate veterans’ return to active social life, helps understand which measures should be included in support programs for defenders, and provides a basis for assessing the role of the Invictus Games.

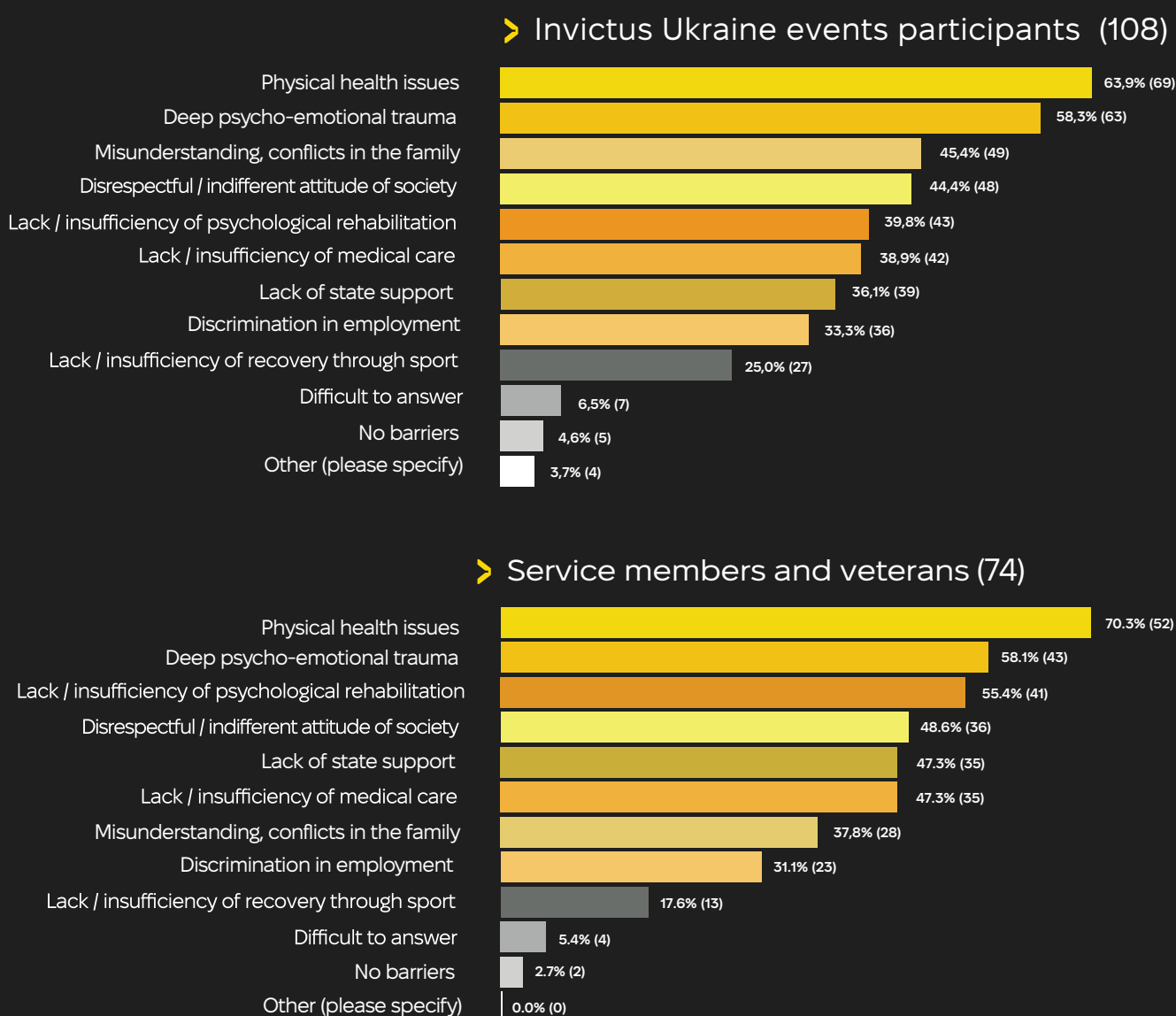
3.3. Barriers to Successful Returning to Social Life

Three main barriers to returning to social life are consistently identified by all groups, although with varying intensity. These are problems with physical health (56–70% of respondents from different groups), psycho-emotional trauma (58–71%),

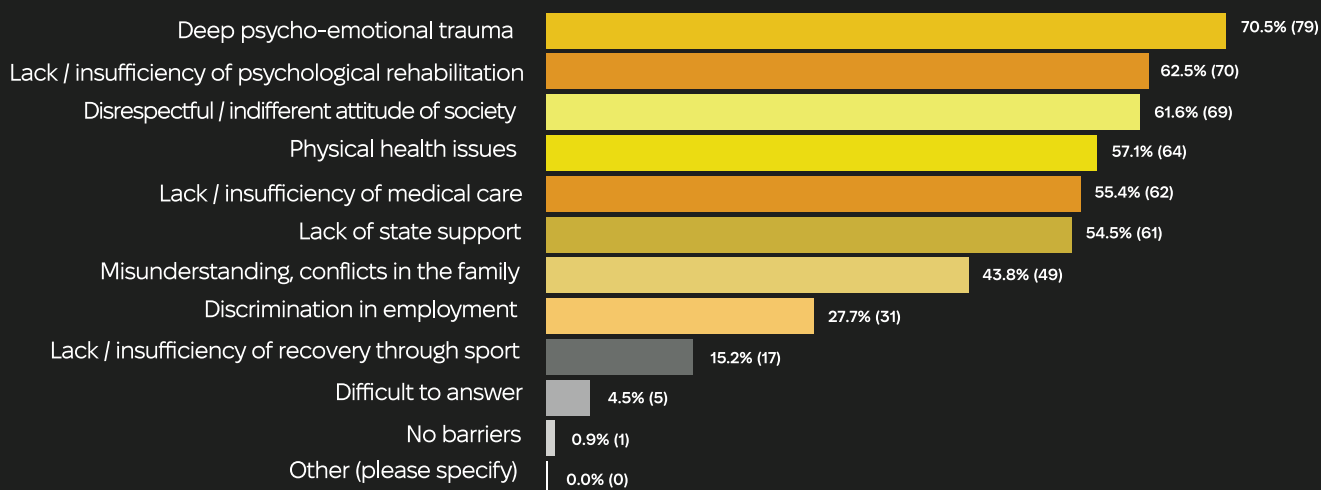
and lack / insufficiency of psychological rehabilitation (40–63%). Families of service members and veterans (62%) also assign significant negative importance to disrespectful or indifferent attitudes from society. At the same time, only 1–3% of representatives from different groups believe there are no barriers to returning. This means that all groups of respondents recognize the need to make efforts for a successful return to social life.

Barriers that exist in the return of service members and veterans who were injured, wounded, or became ill while defending the Motherland to active social life

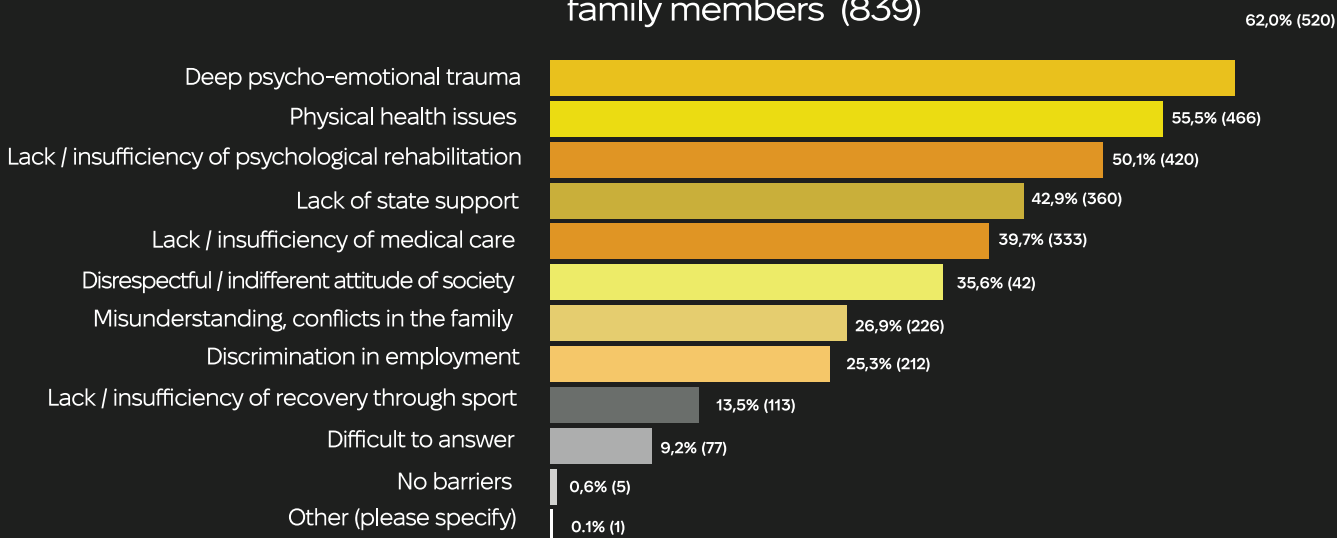
Figure 3.5



> Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members (112)



> Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members (839)



> **Deep psycho-emotional trauma** tops the list of barriers in the responses of civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members (62%) and families of defenders (71%); among Invictus Ukraine events participants and service members who took part in the nationwide survey, this factor ranks second, selected by 58% of respondents.

> **Physical health issues** show the opposite trend: 70% of defenders who took part in the nationwide survey and 64% of Invictus Ukraine events participants point to this barrier, while among other groups, 56–57% of respondents selected this answer. This inversion shows that veterans themselves focus more on visible, physical impairments, while their relatives pay more attention to psychological challenges.

➤ **The lack of psychological rehabilitation** is identified as a barrier by 63% of representatives of families of defenders, 55% of service members and veterans, 50% of civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members, and 40% of surveyed Invictus Ukraine events participants. This shows a strong gap in the perception of the need for psychological rehabilitation between family members of service members and veterans and the veterans themselves.

➤ **The lack of state support** is noted by 55% of family representatives of service members, 47% of defenders, 43% of civilians who do not have defenders among their family members, and 36% of Invictus Ukraine events participants, despite its existence. Therefore, there is a risk that respondents either do not know about the mechanisms for receiving state support or find them too complex.

➤ **Disrespectful and indifferent attitudes from society** were named as a barrier to returning to social life by 62% of families of defenders, 49% of defenders themselves, 44% of Invictus Ukraine events participants, but only 36% of civilians who do not have defenders among their family members. This gap indicates radically different perceptions of the social atmosphere and may point to a “shadow experience” — everyday discrimination and indifference that are invisible to most of society but are painfully felt by those who directly encounter them.

➤ **Misunderstanding and conflicts within the family** are recognized as barriers by 45% of Invictus Ukraine events participants, 44% of families of service members and veterans, 38% of defenders, and 27% of civilians who do not have defenders in their family. This shows that not all difficulties are visible to outsiders and once again highlights the importance of support from loved ones, which is one of the key emphases of the Invictus Ukraine.

➤ **Discrimination in employment** concerns 33% of Invictus Ukraine events participants, 31% of defenders, 28% of their family members, and 25% of civilians who do not have defenders among their family members, indicating a noticeable, though not dominant, problem.

3.4. Physical and Psychological Impact

The Games change not only the general attitude toward veterans but also the societal assessment of their capabilities in various areas. In particular, all categories of respondents within the nationwide survey indicated that the Invictus Games positively influence the assessment of the psycho-emotional state, physical condition, communication skills, and civic activity of veterans with injuries.

Figure 3.6 How did your assessment of the condition of service members and veterans who were injured while defending the Motherland change after you began observing the Invictus Games



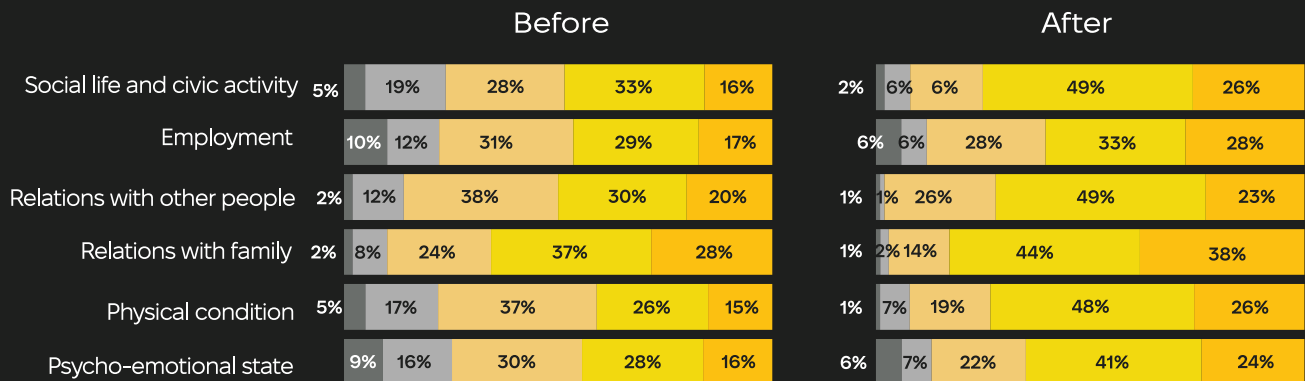
Positive changes were also recorded by Invictus Ukraine events participants who took part in the survey.

Assessment of one's own condition before and after participation in sports activities

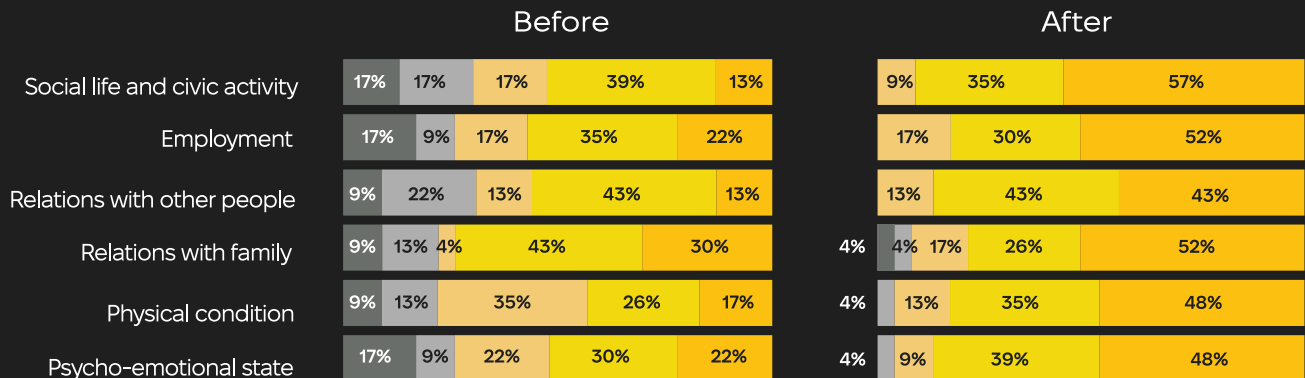
Figure 3.7

1 - Very bad 2 3 4 5 - Very good

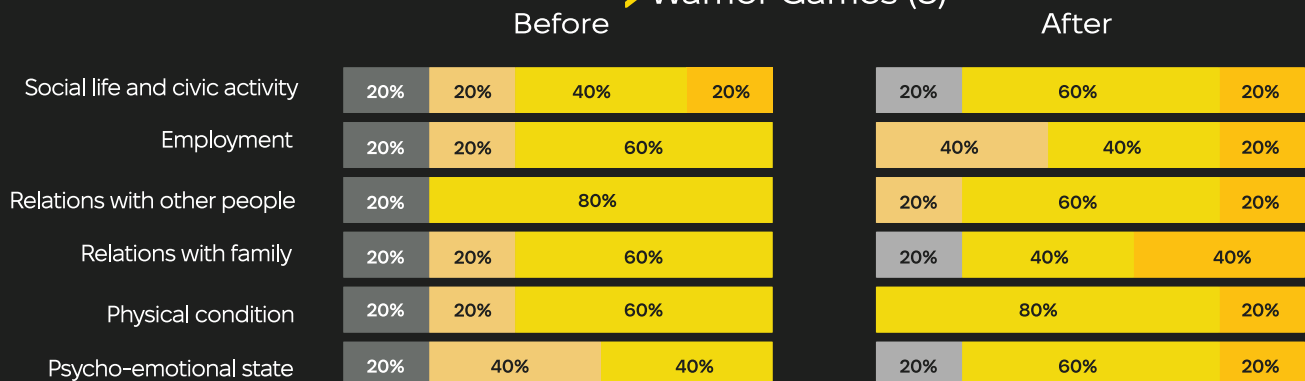
> National Trials (86)



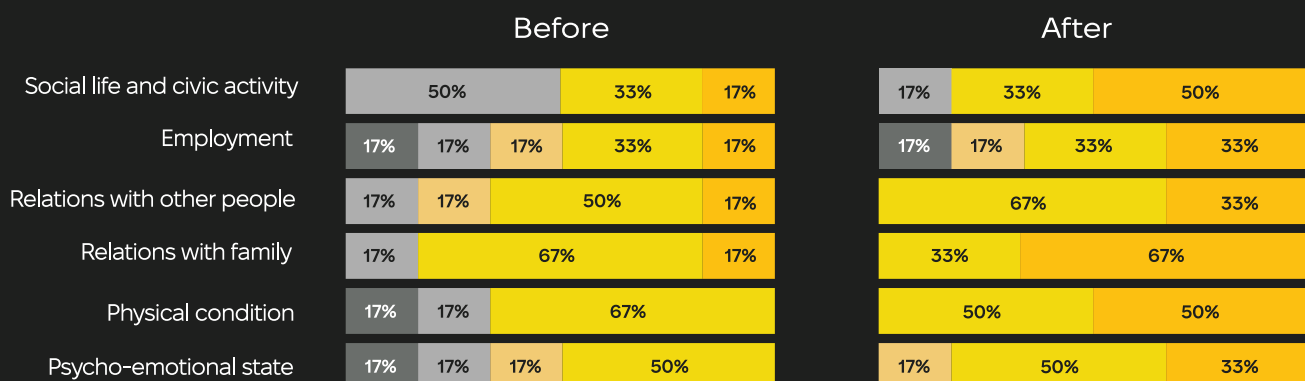
> Invictus Games (23)



> Warrior Games (5)



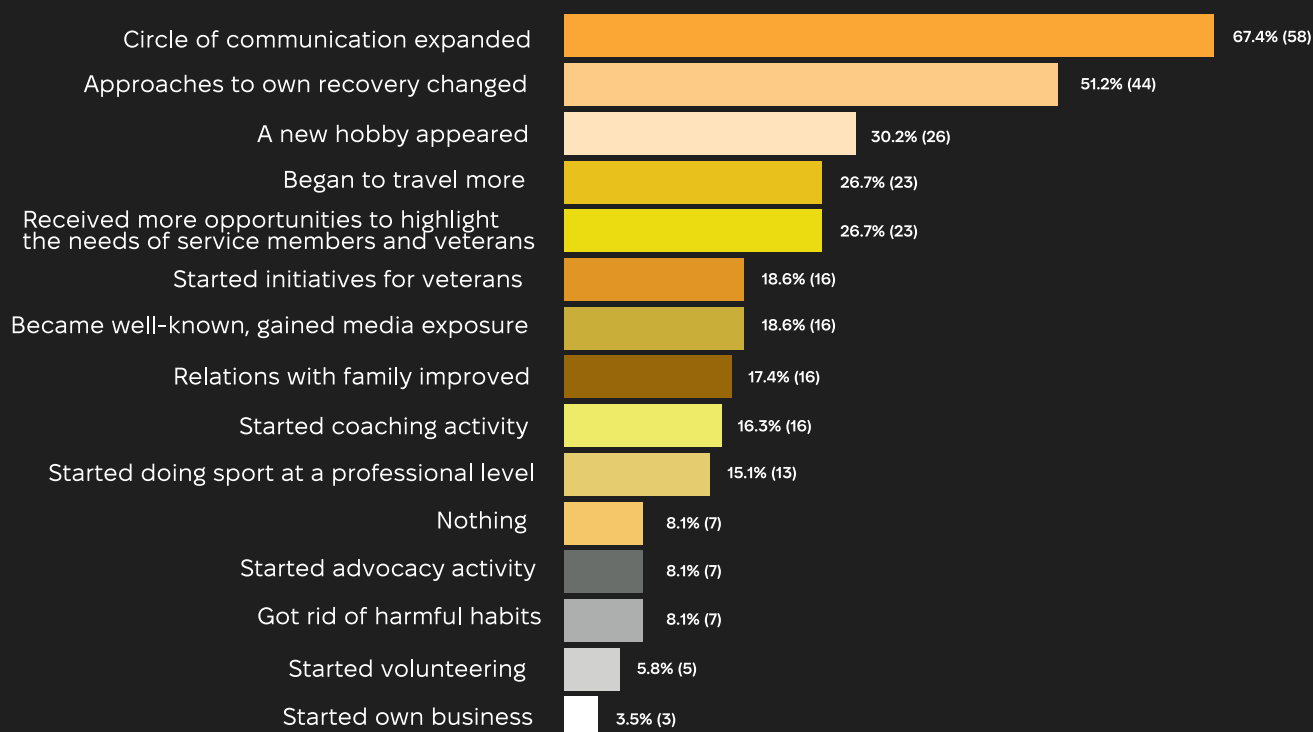
> Air Force & Marine Corps Trials (6)



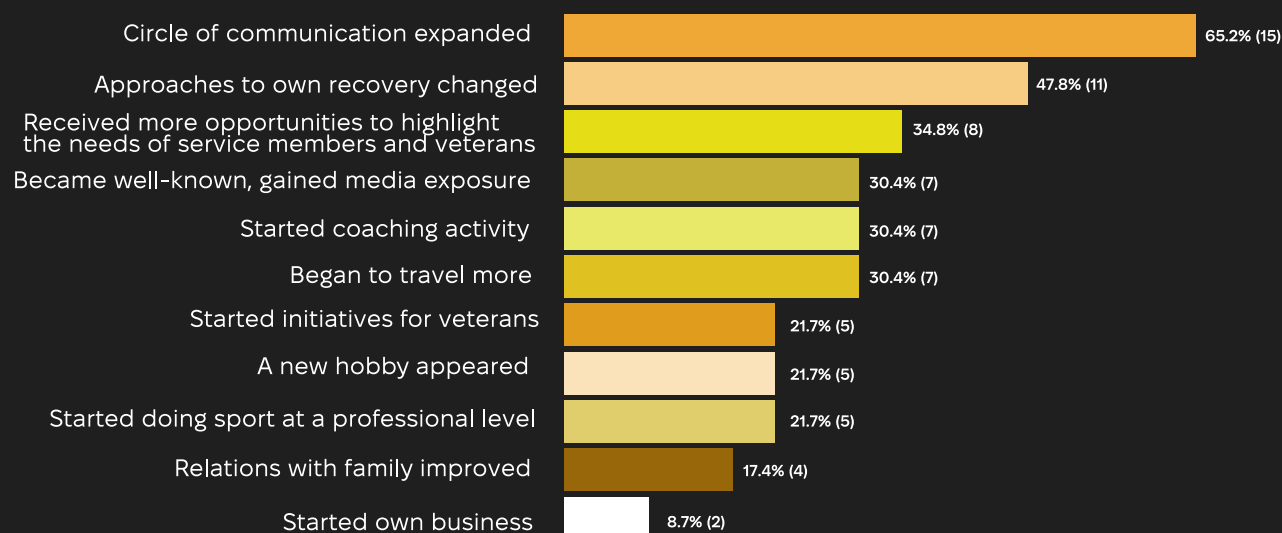
Surveyed Invictus Ukraine events participants also indicated specific changes / achievements after participating in sports activities.

Figure 3.8 **Changes resulting from participation in sports activities**

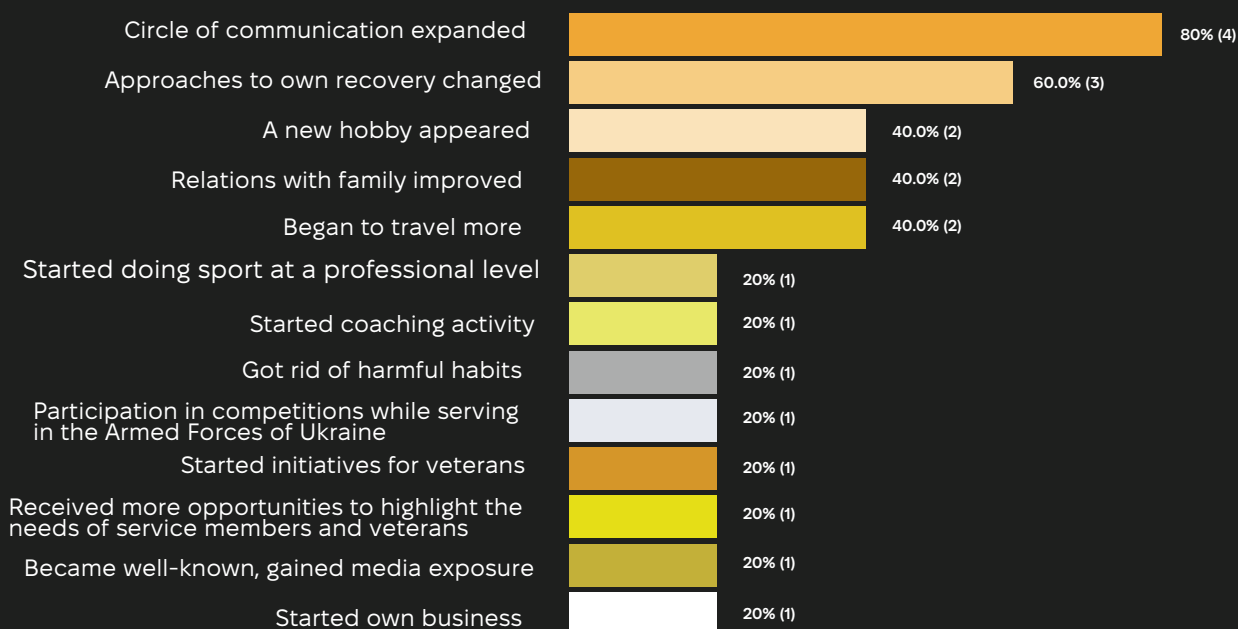
> **National Trials for Invictus Games /
Warrior Games / Air Force & Marine Corps Trials (86)**



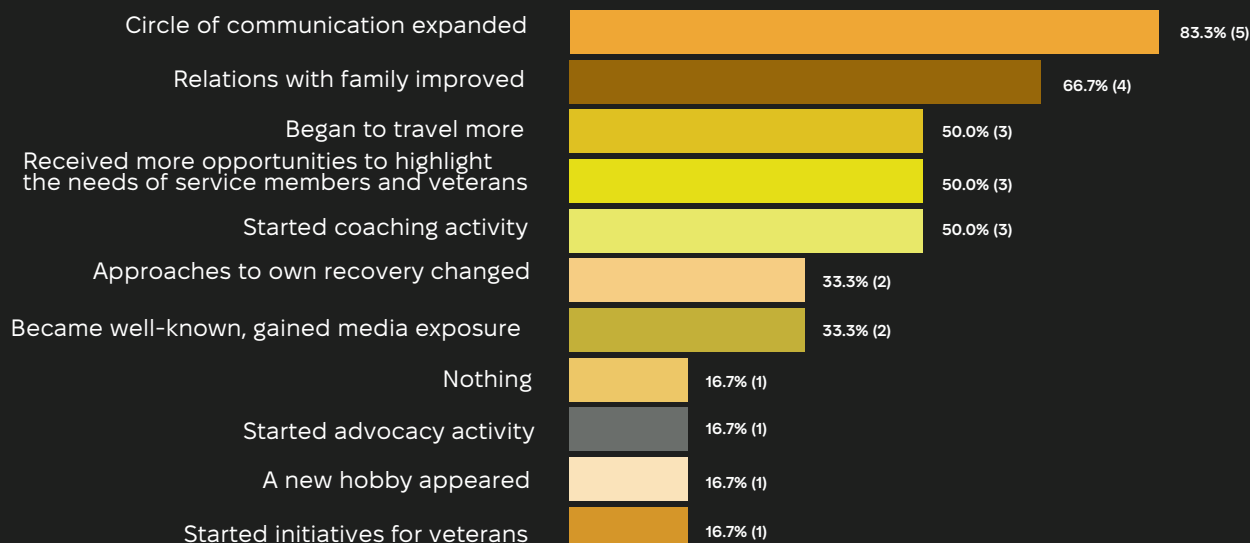
> **International sport event Invictus Games (23)**



> International sport event Warrior Games (5)



> International sport event Air Force & Marine Corps Trials (6)



Interview participants confirmed and detailed the pathways through which the Invictus Games impact the transformation of a veteran's identity, which, after a severe injury, is often in crisis. Analysis of respondents' answers allows us to state that the project launches a process of "returning to yourself", where physical recovery becomes only the foundation for much deeper psychological shifts.

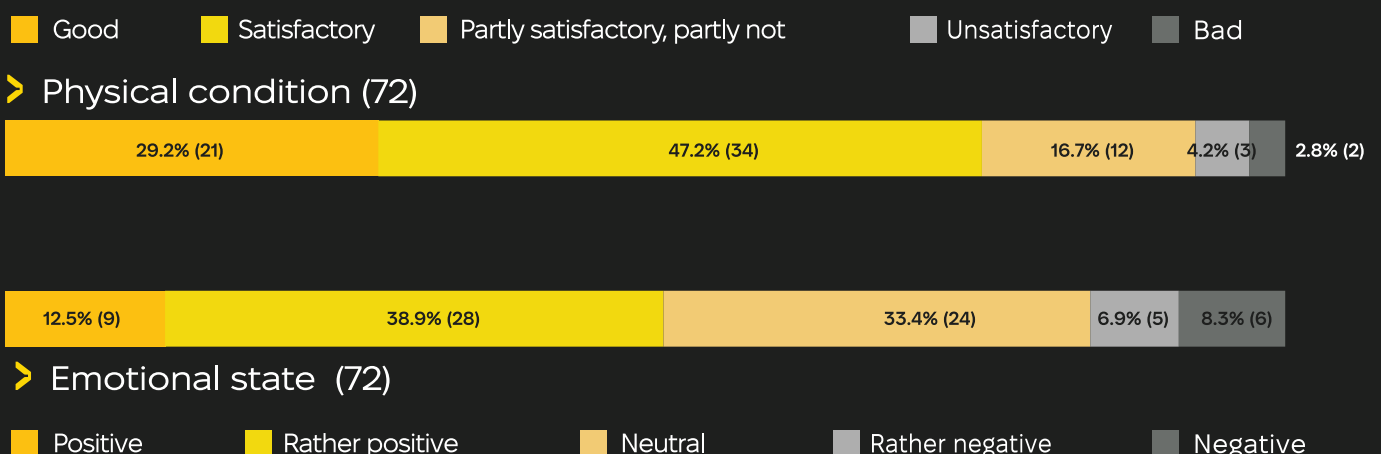
For a serviceman or servicewoman, physical capability is not just health, but a “defining personal characteristic.” The loss of a limb or functionality may destroy the image of the defender, with a possibility of turning them in their own eyes into a “patient” or an “object of care.” Adaptive sport, in this context, becomes the first bridge to recovery, as through exertion it returns the veteran a sense of control over their own body and life. As one respondent notes, sport helps practice skills necessary in everyday life, from the ability to transfer independently from a wheelchair to the ability to lift a child in her arms. Family members of Invictus Games participants note the special role of sport in overcoming “intra-family disability,” as the family often tends to overprotect a loved one with an injury, which unconsciously slows down their recovery. The Invictus Games, by contrast, teach families to treat veterans as full-fledged partners. This is confirmed by the participants themselves, who emphasize that thanks to the training, they have become independent in their daily lives and have been able to stop relying on painkillers.

Quote from an interview with an Invictus Games participant:

«...after the injury, I had severe health complications. I had severe phantom pains [...] I was constantly dependent on painkillers to somehow reduce these pains. [...] And only physical activity, certain types of sport helped me break away from painkillers [...] and, in addition, helped me restore and improve my physical condition after the injury, since the injuries were very severe. Doctors predicted that I would be bedridden all the time and would always depend on someone. But I became independent and was able to cope with it».

The long-term impact of the Invictus Games on Ukrainian community members’ well-being is also supported by responses to an online survey question, in which participants assessed their physical and emotional condition.

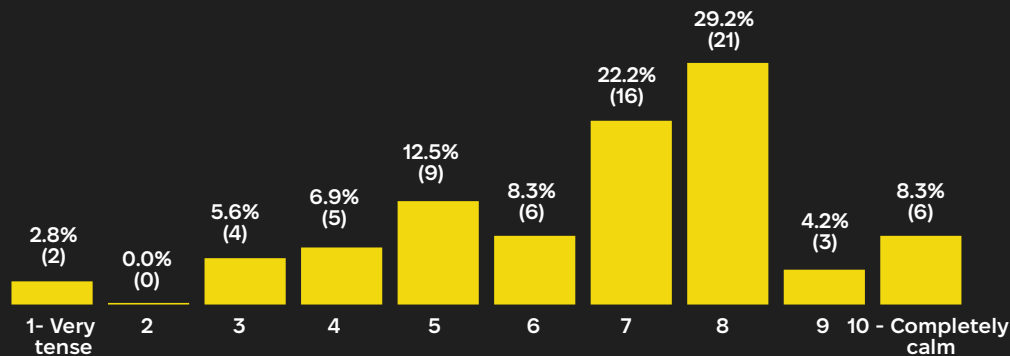
Figure 3.9 Assessment of current physical and emotional condition



Another confirmation of the positive emotional state of Invictus Games community members is the answer to the question about how their relationships with others are developing.

Assessment of one's own relationships with other people

Figure 3.10



Interviewed Ukrainian officials involved in shaping veteran policy emphasize that the main goal of the Games is to pull veterans out of their “bubble,” where apathy prevails, and to show them the larger world, where they are not indifferent to society.

Quote from an interview with an official:

«The Invictus Games are about recovery, rehabilitation, and readaptation. Not about sport itself. In fact, sport is only 5%. The main goal of the Games is to remove the veteran from their ‘bubble’, where everything is bad, and show them that there is actually a big world, where there are many people like them, where they are not indifferent to this society, and where they have opportunities to do what they want to do».

The psychological impact of the Games stems from the transition from a “victim narrative” to a “fighter narrative.” Veterans note that the project helps overcome social isolation and the fear of judgmental looks from society.

Quote from an interview with a representative of the organizing team:

«Within a period from a month to a year, participants gained confidence in themselves... stopped hiding their amputation... they developed acceptance of their injury».

Importantly, the identity of a “fighter” does not disappear but transforms into the identity of an “active member of a sports community.” This allows the veteran to stop hiding their injuries. Members of the organizing team observe a change in self-presentation: veterans stop hiding their amputations, feel more open in society, and identify themselves on social media as “a member of the national team,” which becomes a new source of pride. For the female participants in the Invictus Games, it is important to project the image of a “Ukrainian veteran” and a “Ukrainian woman” finding her place in the world of sports.

Participants themselves describe participation in the Invictus Games as a “confidence pill”.

An important psychological aspect is self-competition. Participation in the Invictus Games allows veterans to once again feel like fighters who can overcome not only their own limitations but also their opponents on the international stage. For many veterans, injury becomes a point of “post-traumatic growth”, where real life and self-awareness begin precisely after the trauma. One respondent shares that after leaving the service, she found herself in a void, with no friends and no activities, and that only sports became the “anchor” that kept her grounded in civilian life.

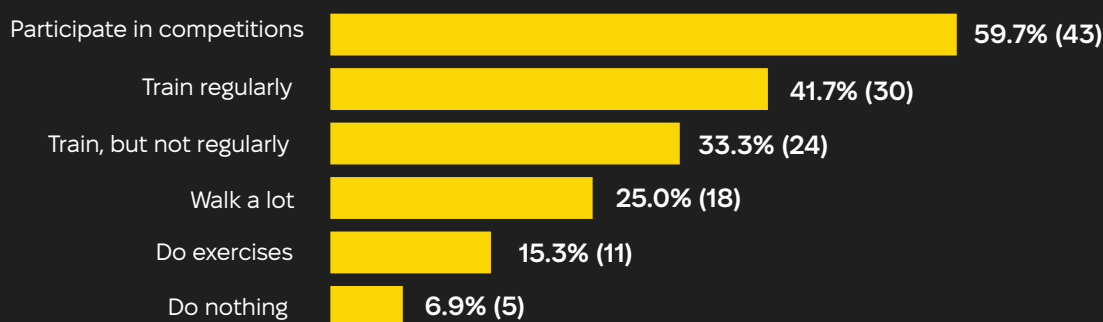
Quote from an interview with a female Invictus Games participant:

«...At that moment, I had nothing in my life at all. I came, left the service, and who was I, what was I? [...] Through sport [...] friends appeared, [...] media visibility returned, health, some motivation, and even activity».

It is important that competition preparation becomes a routine that is maintained in the future.

Figure 3.11

Current involvement in physical activity



International partners also emphasize the positive impact of the Games on life strategies.

Quote from an interview with an international partner:

«According to our surveys ... 76% of participants [Invictus Games - ed.] feel that either thanks to the Games or thanks to our other activities, they have become more capable of contributing to society or giving something back to society. ... We try to disseminate best practices. For example, many of our alumni become coaches. There are many examples where participants later become mentors and coaches, continue to give back, and at the same time acquire new skills to pass on to others».

After participating in the Games, veterans demonstrate higher social activity: they publicly advocate for inclusion, enter public service, or start businesses. An important result is the ability to see an “image of the future”, which is what rehabilitation means in the modern sense.

Quote from an interview with an Invictus Games participant:

«... after the Invictus Games, I got a job at the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. To help veterans like me».

Summary



The primary impact of the Invictus Games is complex and manifests itself through a combination of physical rehabilitation, psychological transformation, and reintegration into social life. Society, families, and the veterans themselves acknowledge that the return to active social life is only partial. Moderately cautious assessments prevail across all groups: people are more likely to say it was “partially successful” than “very successful,” and almost no one believes there are no barriers.

A notable gap: veterans themselves rate their own return success significantly higher (57%) than other veterans (15–26%). At the same time, the most optimistic about their own return to active social life (and this is not unfounded, given their active life position) are Invictus Games participants — 69% of them answered that it “succeeded well” or “rather succeeded”.

Almost all groups cite support from loved ones as the most important factor in successful reintegration. This is followed by psychological rehabilitation, personal willpower, support from fellow veterans, and sports as a means of recovery.

Although all groups of respondents reached a relative consensus in identifying the main barriers to adaptation, the emphases differ fundamentally. The main barriers are identified as psycho-emotional trauma, physical health problems, and lack of psychological rehabilitation. At the same time, veterans themselves focus on physical problems, while their families focus on psychological ones. A similar trend can be observed in other questions. In general, sport is significantly underestimated by society as a reintegration tool, even though it ranks second among Invictus Ukraine community members.

Surveys show that society generally identifies the Invictus Games not only as a sports project but also as a tool for readaptation. They help veterans overcome social isolation, see themselves not as “patients” but as strong and capable individuals, and restore connections with family and community. For many participants, sport becomes the starting point for new social roles: civic engagement, mentoring, public service, the creation of organizations, and veteran initiatives.

CHAPTER 4.

ANALYSIS OF THE SECONDARY IMPACT OF THE INVICTUS UKRAINE

4.1. Strategic Nature of Business Engagement

Business engagement with Invictus Ukraine from the very beginning was not limited to finding donors. StratCom Ukraine conducts ongoing fundraising work, however the strategic goal is broader: to draw business attention to the need to support veterans and to stimulate the development of corporate initiatives and policies aimed at their reintegration.

In practice, this means that each wave of business engagement — from the first event in 2017 to Vancouver in 2025 — formed not only a resource base for the national selection and the team, but also a broader market reflex. Companies that started with situational support gradually became partners in systemic veteran projects.

At the initial stages of the Invictus Games, businesses joined as donors and suppliers of specific resources — locations, equipment, logistics, transport, food, inventory, and media. Such cooperation is often situational and depends on the needs of a specific nationwide selection, team preparation, and the organizing team.



National competitions

Lviv
29 Apr 2023

In essence, each partner covered a separate link in the system. Among the main ones (for the full list of partners, see Appendix 1):

- > logistics partners — transport and fuel;
- > food and beverage brands — event support;
- > fitness clubs and equipment manufacturers — sports infrastructure for training;
- > creative agencies and uniform manufacturers — team identity;
- > media partners — coverage of the Invictus Games in the media.

International actors are mainly involved in two areas:

- > provision of training processes and equipment. For example, NATO or Crown Agents provide gear, sports equipment, and organize training camps;
- > coverage of large financial needs. This primarily concerns the team's international travel, treatment, prosthetics, and team preparation.

Fundraising projects and corporate donors that provide financial support and cover a significant part of the team's participation budget play a separate role.

Many examples of cooperation within the Invictus Games concern not only the national team but also the broader areas of recovery and reintegration for veterans — and, in general, for everyone who needs inclusivity and accessibility. Some partnerships went beyond specific events and became investments in the national infrastructure of adaptive sports — a foundation that will serve thousands of veterans in the future.

Some partner companies of the Team Ukraine went further than one-time support: they adapted their own infrastructure to the needs of people with disabilities. For some, this became a direct result of partnership with the Games — cooperation opened up an understanding of the real needs and provided concrete impetus for change. For others, the Team Ukraine strengthened already existing corporate accessibility initiatives, serving as an additional platform for their implementation and public positioning. In both cases, the results go beyond specific Games: adapted gyms, barrier-free pools, and discount programs for veterans — this is infrastructure that remains and serves a wider audience after the Games end (Table 4.1)

Table 4.1

Examples of joint projects between businesses and the Invictus Ukraine

Organization	Example
SportLife	The gym network committed to adapting facilities to the needs of people using wheelchairs. This is a good example of how business makes the environment accessible — both for veterans and for all citizens
Apollo Next	By offering discounted memberships for veterans, they helped create an affordable environment for veterans.
PUMB (FUIB)	Development of the “Live towards” platform — a space for integrating veterans into employment, entrepreneurship, financial, and social life. Within the initiative, an educational grant program for veterans to start their own business was implemented, a program to develop accessibility in small businesses, and support for adaptive sports development. The platform and the Team Ukraine are implementing a joint project, “[extra]ordinary” — free introductory adaptive training sessions for veterans. Merchandise for the project included T-shirts and sweatshirts with illustrations and embroidery.
MadMuscles	In partnership with the Invictus Games, the Ukrainian fitness app developed an adaptive training program for veterans who sustained injuries or were wounded
MHP	The MHP Standing Together program supports the development of veteran sports in communities together with the Team Ukraine. In particular, with the company’s support, sports events for veterans are periodically held.
Intellias	The company allocated 1 million UAH for adaptive bicycles for the Team Ukraine (which were handed over during the Invictus Day in Ternopil).

Note: a more detailed list of cooperation examples is in Appendix 1.

Such cooperation between business and veteran initiatives is not one-sided charity, but a mutually beneficial partnership. Companies gain strategic advantages: a stronger reputation, an innovative image, better HR policies, and stronger market positioning.

4.2. Development of Other Related Sports Projects

Over nine years — from the first testing of candidates in three cities in 2017 to a branched system of training coaches, regional festivals, and diplomatic events in 2025 — the Invictus Games have transformed from a sports project for selecting a national team into a system for developing the veteran community, within which new projects and initiatives have been created.

Quote from one of the Invictus Games participants:

«Civil society organizations, veterans saw that there are the Invictus Games, and began to introduce new competitions».

The evolution of this transformation can be presented as several stages.

Phase 1. Building the basic model (2017–2019)

In the first three years, the structure of events was similar: first, three regional testing/selection events were held (Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa), followed by the National Trials and sending the national team to the international Invictus Games. In 2017, more than 200 candidates applied for selection; 126 passed testing in three cities, and the result was 15 Ukrainian participants in Toronto. This **three-stage architecture — testing, National Trials, international Games — remains the backbone of the system**.

An important exception already in 2017 was the initiative “Invictus: Restart” — the first event beyond sports selection — which indicated an awareness of the broader rehabilitation and communication potential of the initiative in its debut year.

Phase 2. Adaptation and expansion (2020–2021)

2020 became a turning point. The COVID-19 pandemic made physical Invictus Games in The Hague impossible, but instead of a pause, three new formats emerged, each of which remained part of the initiative’s legacy.

“National Invictus Games 2.0 ONLINE” (October–November 2020) — for the first time in Ukraine, the event was held online. Six sports, more than 60 participants from 15 regions of the country. Ukraine became the second Invictus country to hold an event in an online format during the pandemic. This was not only a forced substitute but also a technological innovation: it demonstrated that adaptive sport can be conducted remotely and reach veterans anywhere in the country. The project was implemented with the support of the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine.

“Sports Ambassadors” (first iteration, 2020–2021) — a project aimed not at preparing the national team, but at developing veteran sports in communities through the participants of the Games themselves. The idea emerged in 2019 within StratCom Ukraine and Come Back Alive as a response to the question: “What happens after the Invictus Games? The team members will depart — and then what?” The project was implemented in partnership with IREX with support from the U.S. State Department. The project received a second iteration in 2023 and a third in 2026, with the latter already providing grants of up to \$15,000 for the best participant projects.

In 2021, regional games were held in Cherkasy and Kryvyi Rih — the first expansion beyond the three traditional cities and the first precedent of decentralization. Both cities later became local hubs for veteran initiatives.

Phase 3. Beyond Invictus (2022–2023)

2022 brought a fundamentally new position — Ukraine's first participation in international competitions organized not by the Invictus Games Foundation but by the U.S. Department of Defense, the Warrior Games. As part of the organizing team, the Invictus Games became an “entry point” into a broader international ecosystem of veteran sports, enabling Ukraine’s participation through successful negotiations.

In 2023, four new formats were added to the standard cycle. The screening of the film “Heart of Invictus” (Netflix, September 2023) is the first cultural event on the list and a powerful media trigger in its own right.

An illustrative example of how the Invictus Games influenced regional policy was the “League of the Unconquered” — a regional project of the Lviv Regional State Administration launched in 2023: inspired by the values and approaches of the Invictus Games, the Department of Sports, Youth and Tourism of the Lviv RSA developed its own systemic program of physical and mental rehabilitation of veterans, covering training in hospitals and rehabilitation centers, competitions, camps, and outreach activities. One of its direct results was the preparation of veterans for selection to the Invictus Games themselves. In 2024, the Lviv region ranked among the top three regions by the number of participants in the national selection.

Phase 4. Systemic institutionalization (2024–2025)

The years 2024–2025 mark a qualitative leap — from preparing a team to building a comprehensive system. Ukraine sent a team to the Air Force Trials 2024 — for the first time, 30 Ukrainian veterans competed in the U.S. Air Force competitions in Las Vegas.

A logical continuation of the evolution from the idea “we prepare a team” to “we prepare those who will prepare veterans” was the “Project for training coaches to work with veterans.”

Invictus Day in Vinnytsia and Ternopil became a format for regional festivals not tied to selection: a way to maintain the initiative’s presence in regions between the Games and a mechanism for engaging new audiences.



**Team Ukraine at the
Invictus Games 2025**

Vancouver

A sports camp for veterans and service members (November 2025, Carpathians) — the broadest in scope: unlike previous ones, it is aimed not only at candidates for the national team but at a wider audience of veterans who want to “take the first or a new step toward recovery through sport.”

Two personal visits by the Duke of Sussex, Prince Harry, and the Invictus Games Foundation to Ukraine in 2025 — in April to Lviv and in September to Kyiv — emphasized that the Invictus Games have become part of a broader diplomatic and humanitarian dialogue.



**Veterans meeting
with Prince Harry,
Duke of Sussex**

Kyiv
2025

The model developed by the Invictus Games has also become a reference point for new state initiatives. In 2024, the Ministry of Veterans Affairs established and held the “Veterans Games” — nationwide competitions in CrossFit and esports. The first season covered four regional stages — in Kryvyi Rih, Odesa, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Zhytomyr — and concluded with a final in Kyiv, where more than 100 participants competed. In 2025, the format expanded: regional stages covered 11 regions, and the national final competitions were scheduled for November in Kyiv.

At the end of 2025, at the initiative of the Come Back Alive charitable foundation, the GART competitions were held in Kyiv — a large-scale multi-sport project for veterans. The program includes 9 adaptive sports (wheelchair basketball, sitting volleyball, laser run, etc.) and is aimed at engaging veterans with visible and invisible injuries in active social life.

4.3. “Ripple Effect”: Veterans as Agents of Change



Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex
Founder of the Invictus Games

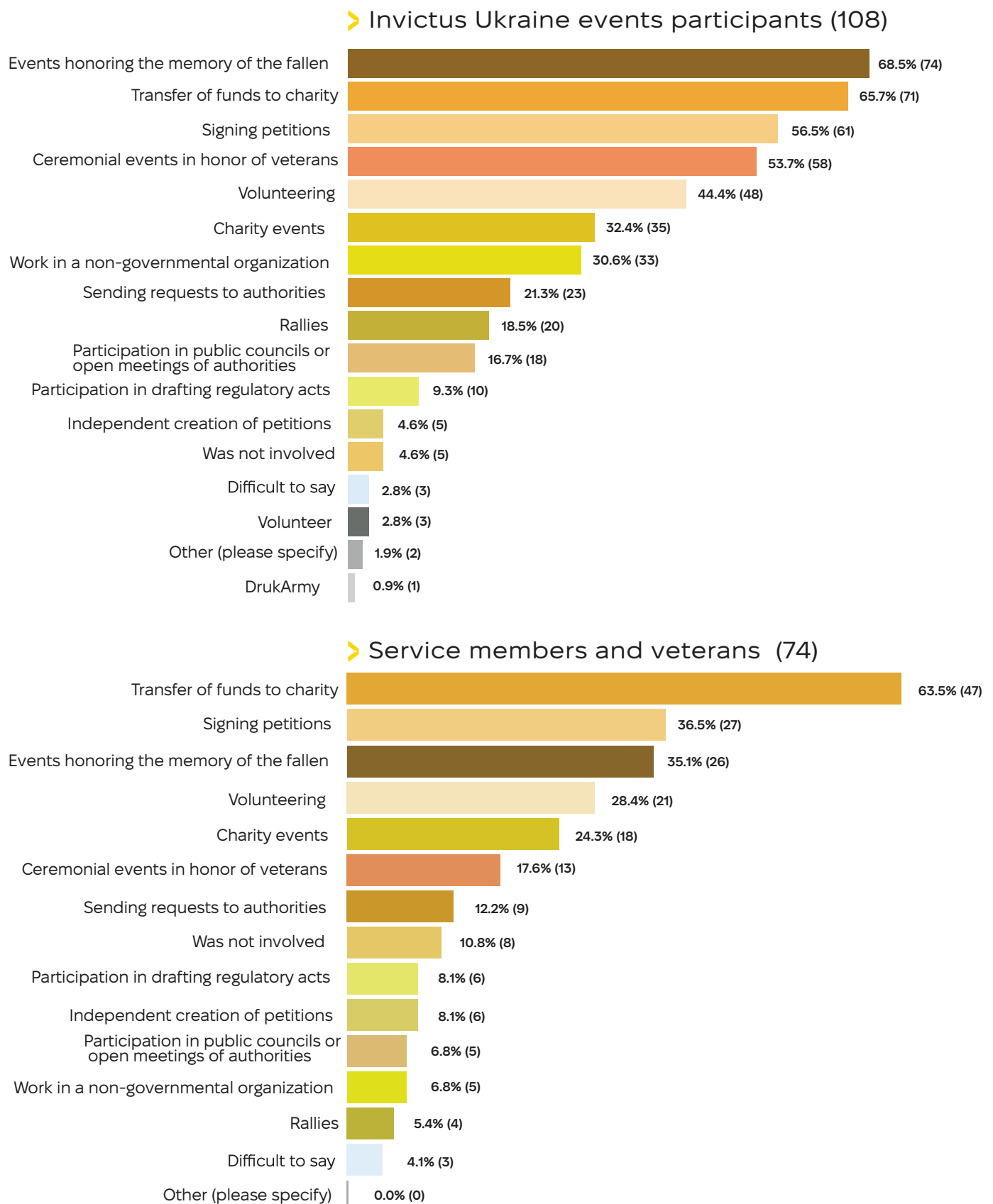
Participants in Team Ukraine activities (in particular, national selections and national teams at the international Invictus Games event) and other sports events such as the Warrior Games and Air Force Trials 2024 remain active after the competitions end. On the one hand, they demonstrate a generally higher level of civic engagement. On the other hand, they implement their own projects and work in various fields — from military service to the institutionalization of veteran policy and rehabilitation.

Survey results show that Invictus Ukraine community members participants and families of service members and veterans demonstrate the highest civic engagement across almost all categories, which may be explained by both personal motivation and the wider social contacts fostered by military service.

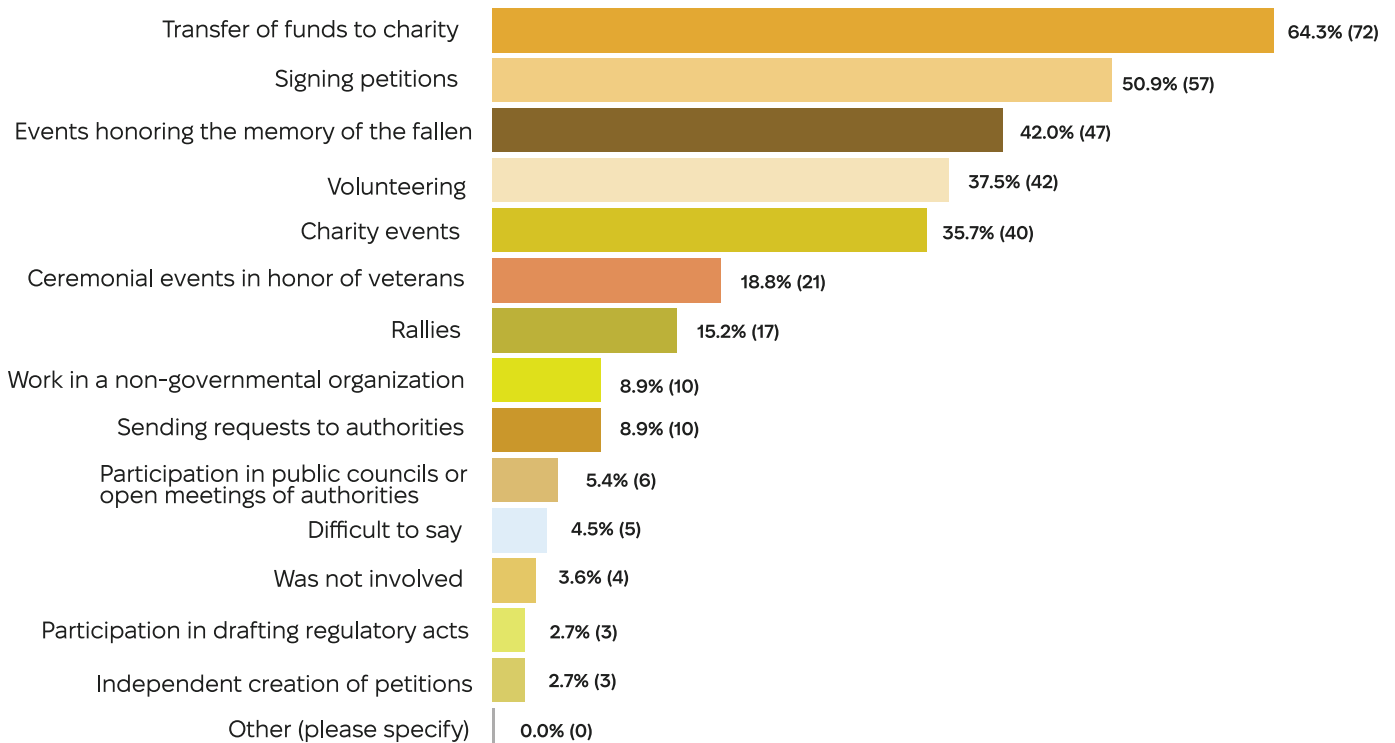
Only 5% of Invictus Ukraine community members reported not being involved in any of the activities listed in the questionnaire, compared to 14% of civilians who do not have service members or veterans among their family members. This confirms the thesis that Invictus Ukraine community members and families of defenders in this study are currently the most active segment of civil society.

Were you involved in the following activities during the full-scale war

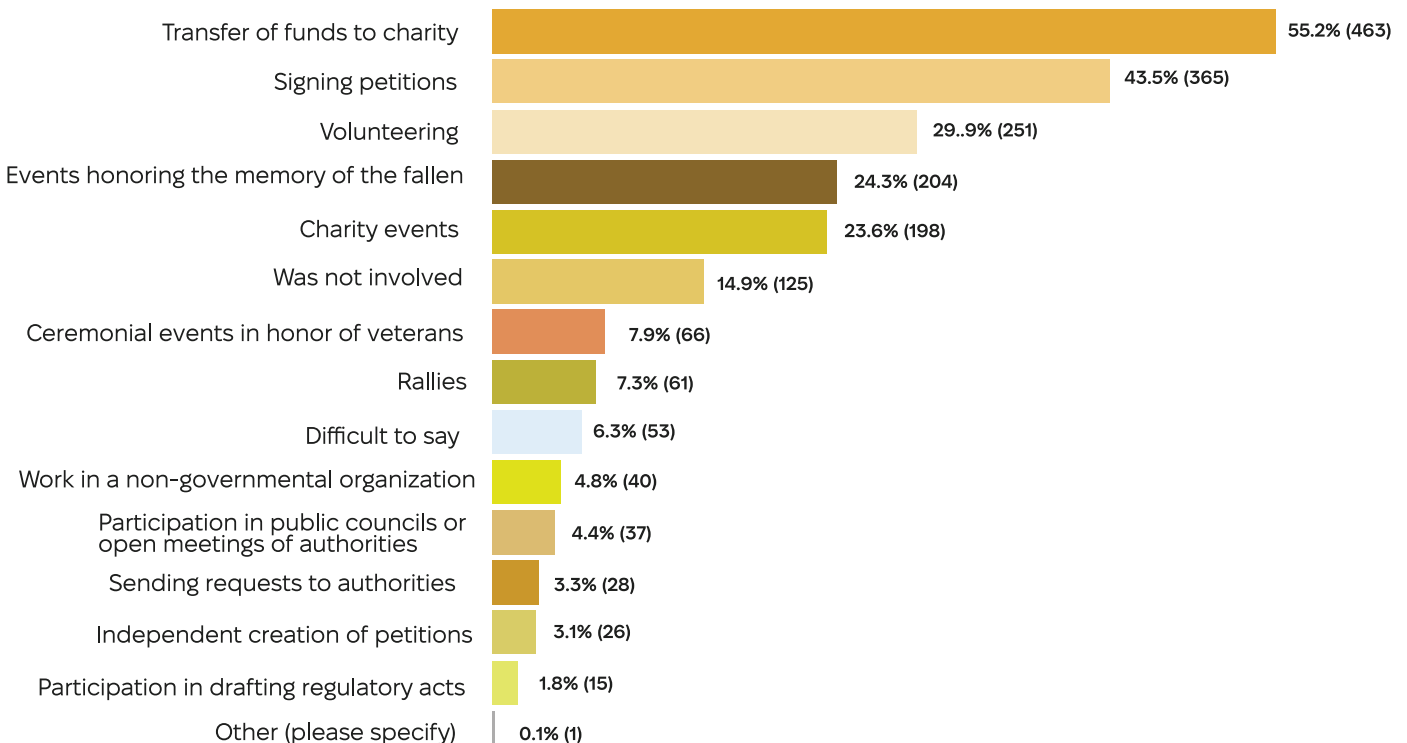
Figure 4.1



> Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members (112)



> Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members (112)



For example, 69% of surveyed Invictus Ukraine events participants take part in events commemorating the fallen, while in other groups this ranges from 24% (civilians who do not have service members or veterans among their family members)

to 42% (civilians who have service members or veterans among their family members).

Charitable monetary donations are made by 66% of Invictus Ukraine events participants, 64% of respondents among defenders and their family members, and 55% of civilians who do not have service members or veterans among their family members.

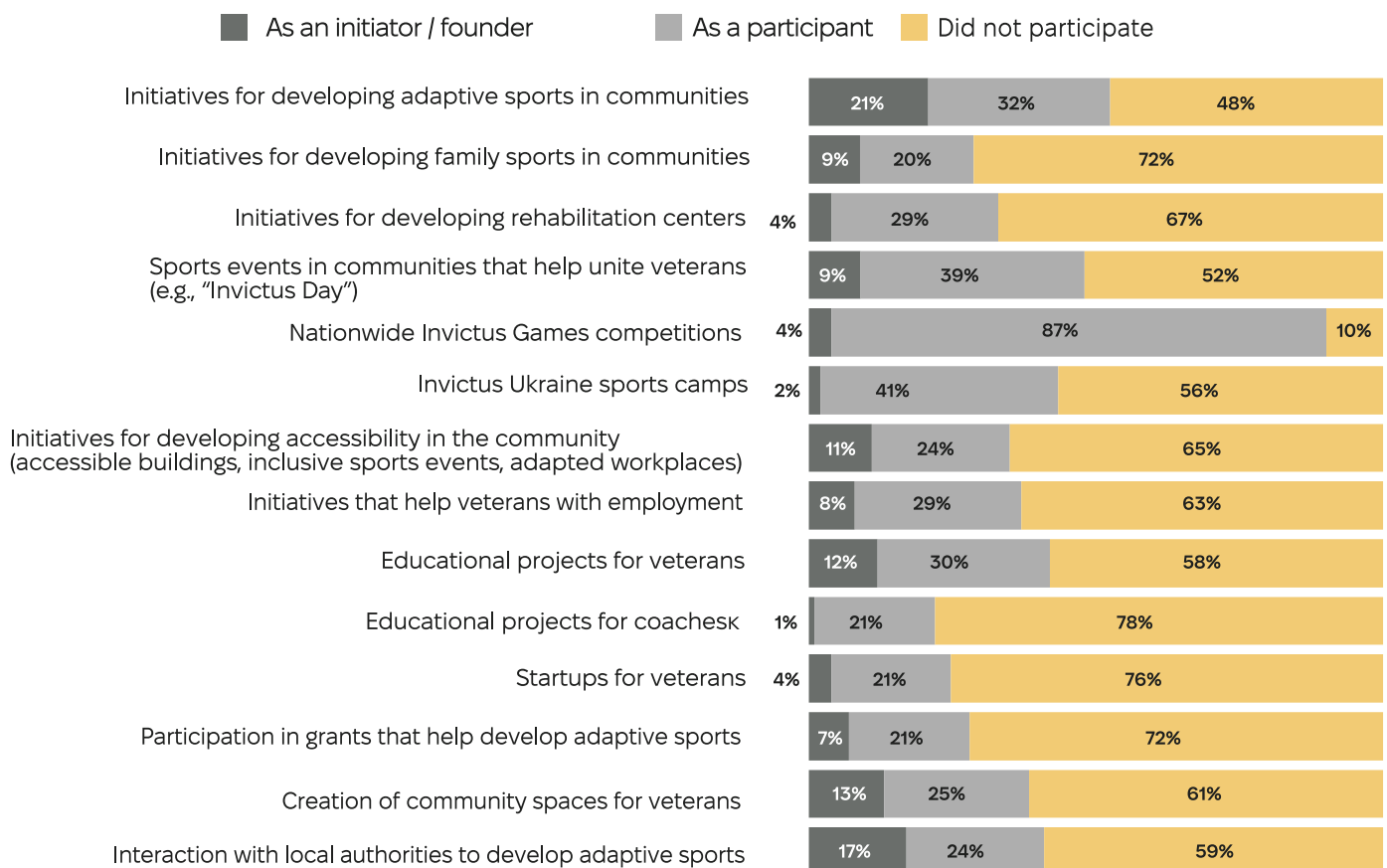
44% of surveyed Invictus Ukraine events participants engage in volunteering, 38% of representatives of families of service members and veterans, 30% of civilians who do not have service members or veterans among their family members, and 28% of surveyed defenders.

57% of Invictus Ukraine events participants sign petitions, 52% of civilians who have service members or veterans among their family members, 44% of civilians who do not have service members or veterans among their family members, and 37% of defenders.

Moreover, Invictus Ukraine events participants regularly engage in various activities within the Invictus Ukraine community. In addition to participating in competitions, they often initiate or take part in activities aimed at developing adaptive sports at the local level, organizing sports events to unite the veteran community, and supporting educational projects for veterans.

In which projects of the organizers and participants of the Invictus Ukraine have you participated

Figure 4.2



The results of in-depth interviews also confirm diverse mechanisms of the Invictus Games' impact, in particular as a powerful catalyst for grassroots initiatives. Veterans return to their communities not as recipients of assistance, but as leaders and “agents of change”

Quote from an interview with a representative of the organizing team:

«The Invictus Games have a ripple effect [...] after you have participated there, you are left with this energy, and you strive to pass it on, to bring your comrades-in-arms along. Therefore, it is a natural phenomenon that they return and create opportunities for others».

This decentralization trend enables scaling the Invictus Games experience to thousands of other veterans who did not make it to the national team. Moreover, it fills regions with qualified mentors who understand the specifics of injuries and the psychological condition of their comrades-in-arms.

Invictus Games participants serve as a “connecting link” between the state and veterans and their families, using their experience to shape policy and create legal structures. According to in-depth interviews and available data on initiatives by Invictus Games participants (Appendices 2 and 3), at least 50 unique projects and organizations across at least 20 regions of Ukraine have been recorded, ranging from NGOs and sports clubs to educational programs, competitions, and media initiatives. The documented direct outreach of participants in these initiatives exceeds 8,000 people¹. Among the main forms of participation, the following can be highlighted:

- direct work within the Ministry of Veterans Affairs;
- work in local government bodies;
- creation of municipal veteran spaces;
- establishment of NGOs and/or volunteering;
- creation of sports initiatives, training, and competitions.

The most common type of activity is the creation and management of NGOs focused on adaptive sports, rehabilitation, and socialization of veterans. The study provides dozens of examples:

- creation of archery clubs and events (Lutsk);
- development of wheelchair rugby in Kyiv;
- establishment of the NGO “Vilni Voyny” in Odesa, which implements adaptive sports in hospitals;
- veteran business and children’s camps.

¹Both estimates represent a lower bound: the actual scale is larger, as they do not account for the secondary audience of the events, spectators at the competitions, and those who have joined the community indirectly.

Within this activity, participants move from purely sports competitions to comprehensive rehabilitation. Such NGOs combine sports training with services from rehabilitation specialists, psychologists, and veteran support professionals, and provide legal consultations on social protection issues.

In-depth interviews with the organizing team confirm the scale and geography of this phenomenon. According to one expert, almost every region of Ukraine has at least one member of the Invictus Ukraine community who initiates local activities — from training sessions and competitions to the creation of NGOs

Quote from one of the Invictus Games participants:

«The Invictus Games became the impetus to realize that in our city, where I live, there was no veteran sport at all. And if you wanted just to train and come somewhere to communicate and have a good time, it simply didn't exist. And what existed was not in the format we wanted or with those values. [...] it became the impetus to start creating new opportunities for ourselves. And we started all this with two sports: volleyball and tennis. And now we already have six sports. We established a nonprofit organization dedicated to rehabilitation through sports».

«Many of our team members continue to develop adaptive sports in other cities. Everyone has different sports, but many continue such mentorship in this direction».

In Odesa, veteran athletes, in particular members of the Invictus Games team, Illia Pylypenko and Arsen Riaboshapko, founded the NGO "Vilni Voyny." This NGO conducts weekly wheelchair basketball training and other adaptive sports.

Wheelchair basketball, Illia and Arsen in the photo

Vancouver
9 Feb 2025



Thus, an barrier-free sports space has been created, with the competition conditions and rules taking into account the needs of people with disabilities. This solution is barrier-free in that it provides veterans with equal access to sports (adapts equipment and environment for participants using wheelchairs).



Andrii Kucher

Founder of the NGO «Union of Wounded service members of Ukraine 'Mitsni 300'»

The NGO "Union of Wounded service members of Ukraine 'Mitsni 300'" is one of the most illustrative examples of the "ripple effect" of the Invictus Ukraine. The founder of the organization, Andrii Kucher, is a airborne soldier of the 79th brigade who was injured in 2022 in the Donetsk region. Finding himself in a hospital without systemic support, he decided to create a community where veterans would share experiences and help each other navigate life after injury. Andrii joined the Invictus Ukraine on his path to recovery: after participating in the selection in Lviv, he was, in his own words, "shocked by the family-like atmosphere." He did not make it to the national team, but the experience of the Games directly influenced the development of the organization. "Mitsni 300" operates in three areas: legal consultations for the wounded, assistance with rehabilitation, and involvement in adaptive sports through outreach, workshops held directly in hospitals, and running clubs for veterans.

According to one respondent's estimate, about 80% of Invictus Ukraine participants are involved either in their own projects or in cooperation with StratCom Ukraine, Come Back Alive, or the Ministry of Veterans Affairs.

It is important that the transformation also extends to those who have had only limited contact with the community.

Quote from a representative of the Team Ukraine organizing team:

«In many regions, the development of veteran sports was actually initiated and is maintained exclusively by Invictus Games participants».

At the same time, starting from 2022, the balance of responsibility is gradually shifting:

Quote from a representative of the Team Ukraine organizing team:

«If before 2022, 95% of the credit for the development of adaptive sports actually belonged to the organizing team, then from 2022 until now, it is 50/50. The organizing team continues to do something, but the participants themselves have taken on a lot».

Officials acknowledge that it is the Invictus Games participants who “push” local authorities to create conditions for sports, because they “do not agree to less.”

Quote from an interview with a representative of the organizing team:

«...the state began to be pushed by the veterans themselves and the veteran environment, and the organizations that took up Invictus [...] we must also give credit to the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, which is actively involved. [...] Definitely, this involvement exists, and it becomes better and better every year».

Some organizations founded by Invictus Games participants consciously move toward decentralization — going beyond regional centers and bringing veteran sports to small communities.

The project “VetSport — to communities!” implemented by the NGO “Union of Wounded service members of Ukraine ‘Mitsni 300’” with the support of the “MHP-Gromadi” foundation. Within the initiative, organizers travel to small communities with inclusive equipment to engage veterans in sport as a tool for physical and mental rehabilitation.

In addition, the project forced the state system to reconsider standards of infrastructure inclusivity. One respondent cited the example of a base in Koncha-Zaspa, where, under pressure from the Team Ukraine, rooms for wheelchair users were finally adapted, as the previous Paralympic system did not pay sufficient attention to these basic needs. Such a “forceful” approach by the organizing team and the veterans themselves pushed state institutions and businesses (for example, the hotel sector) to change spaces not for formality, but for real use. The principle of veteran policy, “nothing for veterans without veterans,” became a standard precisely because Invictus Games participants were involved in decision-making.



Team Ukraine training camp ahead of the Invictus Games

2020

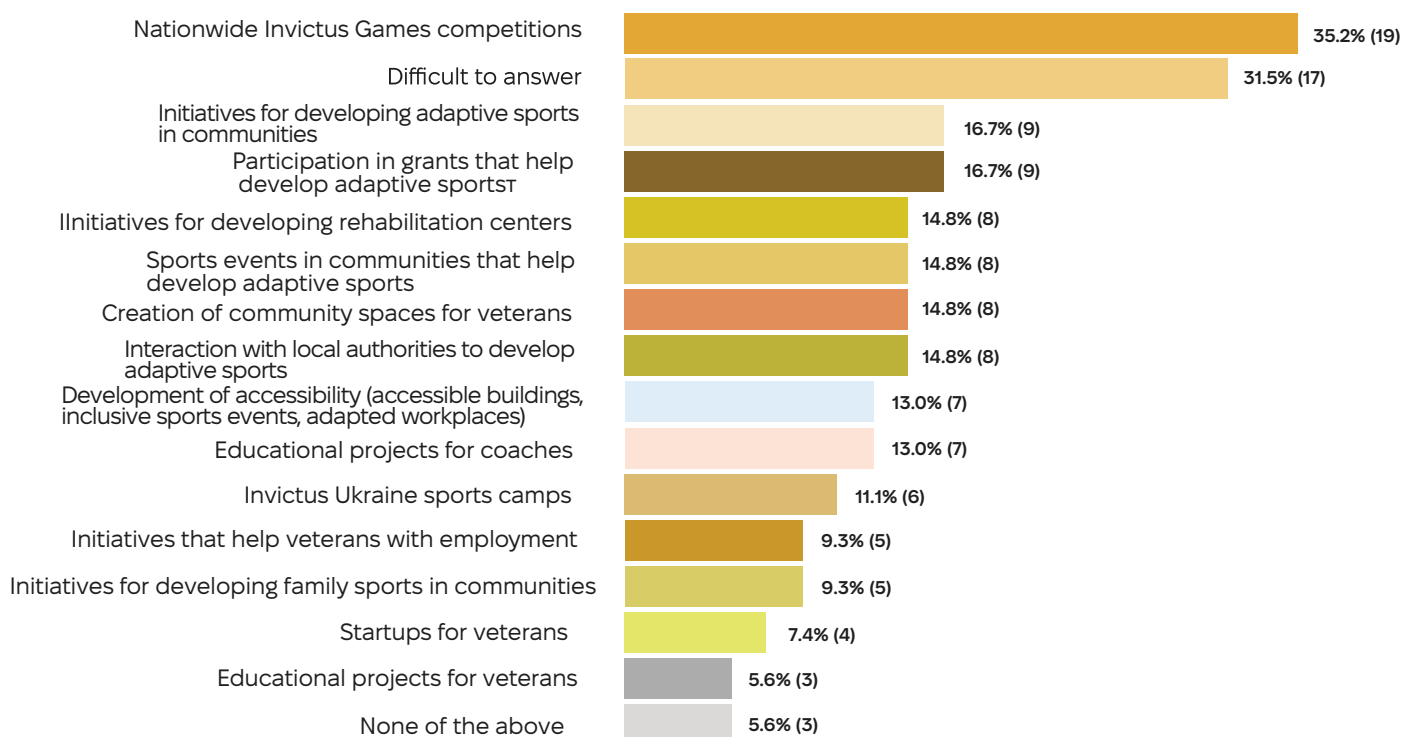
However, participants in the in-depth interviews point to serious systemic gaps. Officials note that despite the success of the Games, this project alone cannot meet the needs of 1.5 million veterans through sports. The main obstacle is a critical shortage of infrastructure and qualified adaptive sports coaches at the community level.

Overall, the nationwide survey results show that among those who know about the Invictus Games, the most well-known initiative is the Invictus Games' nationwide events. They are known to 31–36% of respondents across different groups in the nationwide survey. Activities aimed at improving accessibility are known to 19% of families of service members and veterans, 17% of civilians who do not have service members or veterans in their families, but only 13% of defenders. Initiatives for the development of rehabilitation centers are known to 26% of families of defenders, which is almost twice as much as the defenders themselves (15%) — perhaps this information is less relevant for those currently serving — and civilians who do not have service members or veterans among family members (16%). It is likely that the families of defenders are more involved in organizing medical care and rehabilitation for their relatives and, therefore, are more interested in available opportunities.

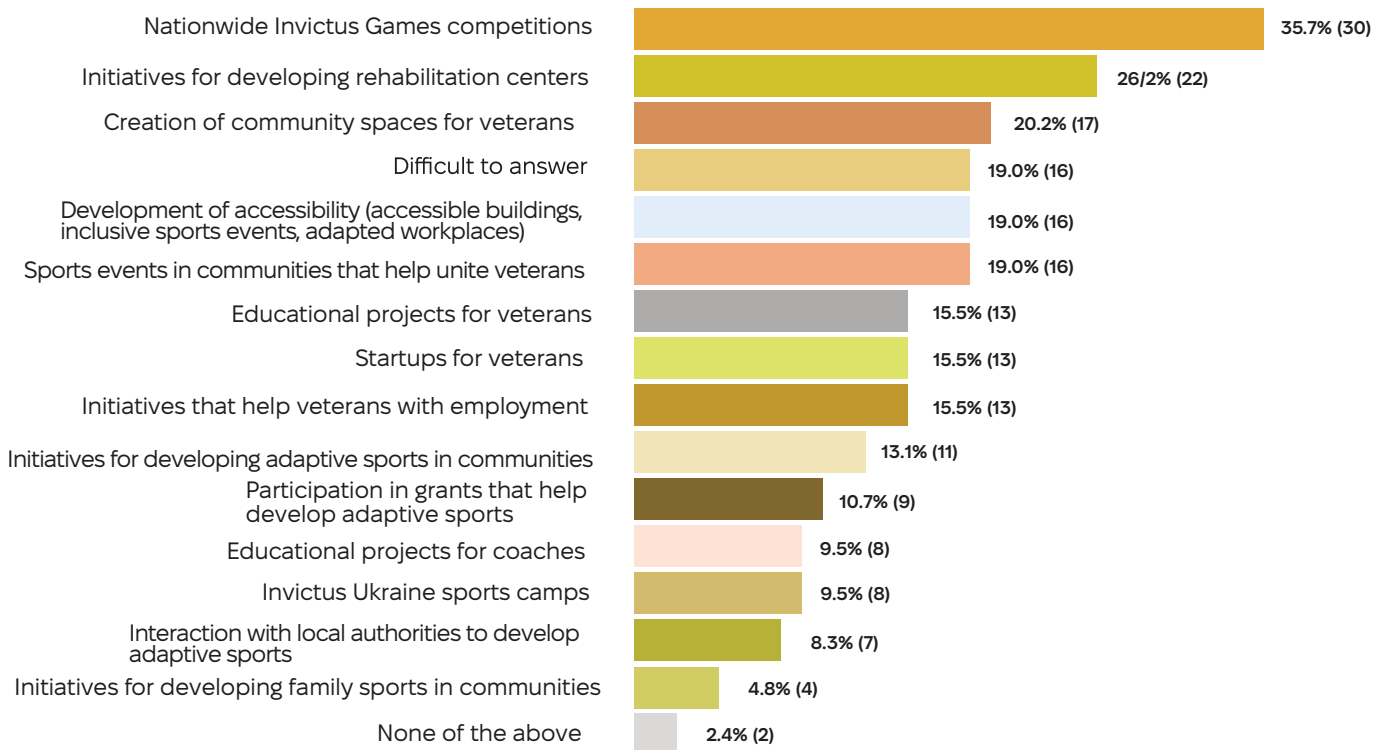
Figure 4.3

Which initiatives of the organizers and participants of the Invictus Games in Ukraine do you know?

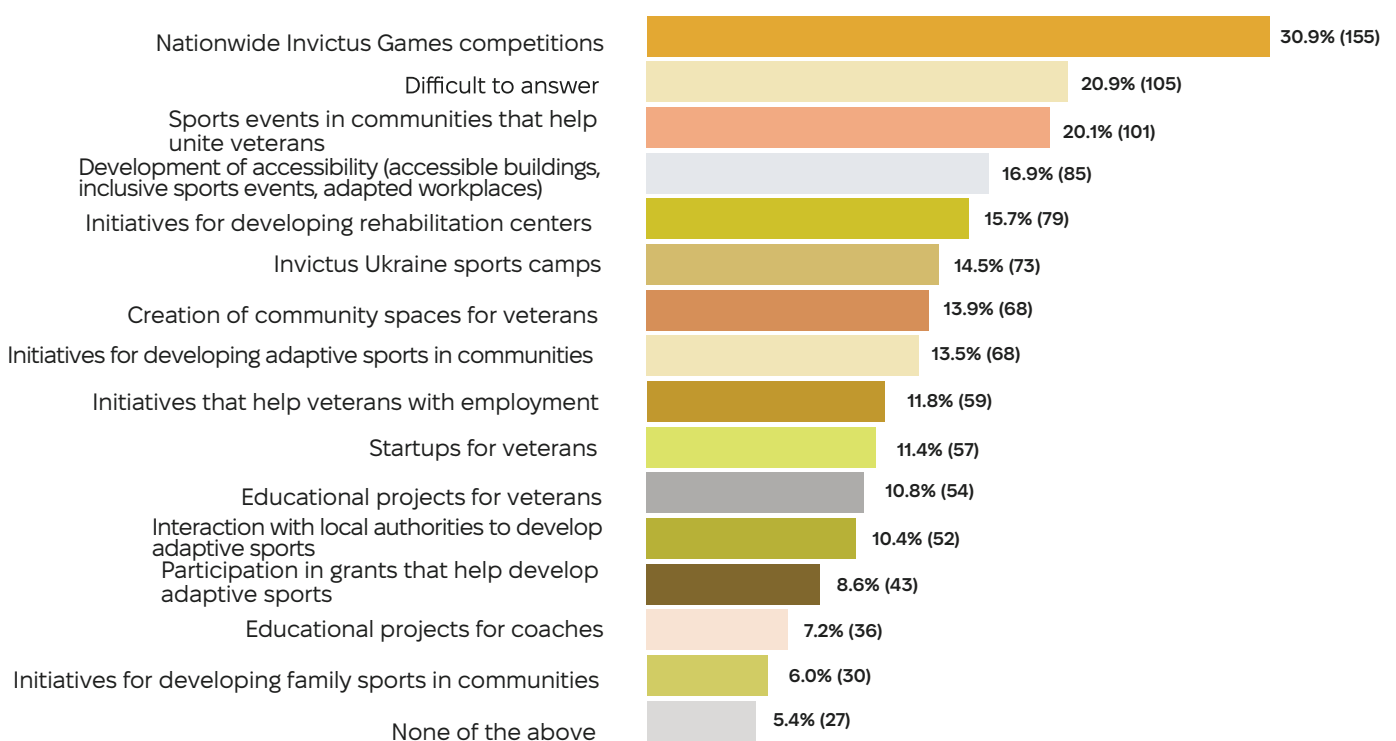
➤ Service members and veterans (54)



> Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members (112)



> Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members (502)



Summary



The secondary impact of the Team Ukraine extends beyond a sports project in two interrelated dimensions.

In the sphere of public-private partnerships, the Team Ukraine have set a precedent for systemic collaboration between business and the veteran community. Partner companies have evolved from situational sponsors to initiators of their own corporate reintegration and accessibility programs. This is one of the key achievements of the project and requires further scaling through engaging new market players and stimulating the development of industry standards for veteran support.

In terms of civic engagement, the Games participants have formed an organic, decentralized network of veteran initiatives that covers most regions of Ukraine. This network is an independent reintegration mechanism — parallel to state programs and often more effective at the local level due to trust and participants' personal experience

Both processes reinforce each other: corporate partners finance and legitimize veteran initiatives in communities, while veterans themselves, through their visibility and activity, make the veteran issue an integral part of the public and corporate agenda.

At the same time, the network of projects created by participants remains vulnerable. Without a transition from “personal” incentives for individual veterans to systemic municipal support, most of these initiatives risk disappearing as their founders exhaust their personal resources.

CHAPTER 5. VETERANS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

The Invictus Games in Ukraine influence not only their direct participants but also the broader social context — reshaping attitudes toward veterans, redefining perceptions of disability, and strengthening the role of sport as a tool for recovery and inclusion.

This impact operates through several key mechanisms:

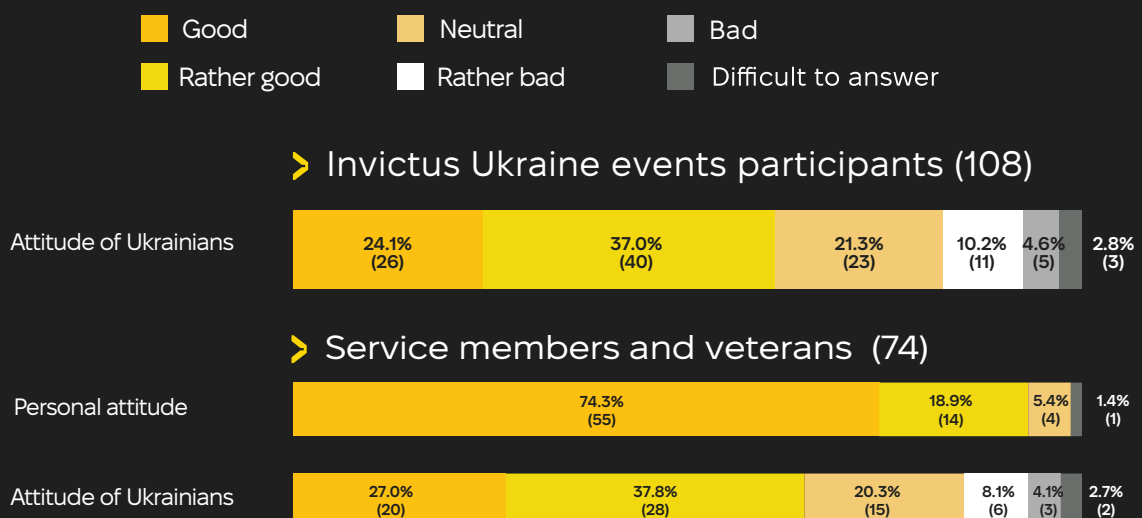
- > the formation of new social norms and representations of veterans;
- > increased visibility of trauma, including “invisible” injuries;
- > the development of a barrier-free environment;
- > the normalization of recovery through sport.

5.1. Public Attitudes Toward Veterans

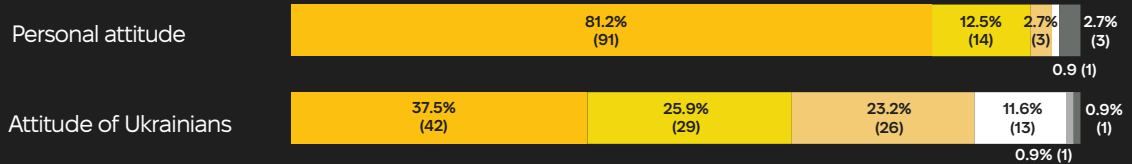
The study identifies a significant gap between perceptions of societal attitudes and respondents’ own positions.

Assessment of Ukrainians’ attitudes toward service members and veterans who sustained injuries, wounds, or illnesses while defending the Motherland

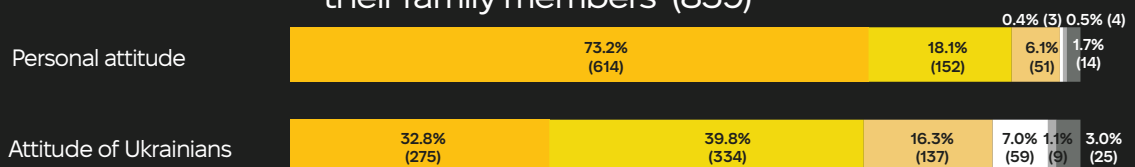
Figure 5.1



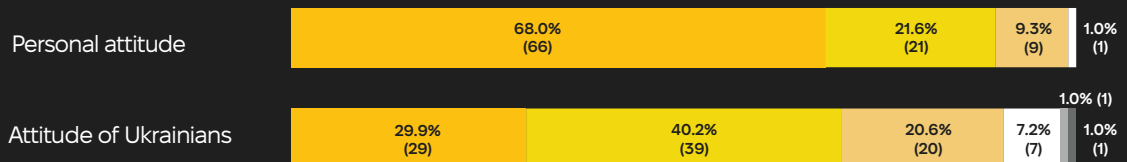
> Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members (112)



> Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members (839)



> People with disabilities (97)



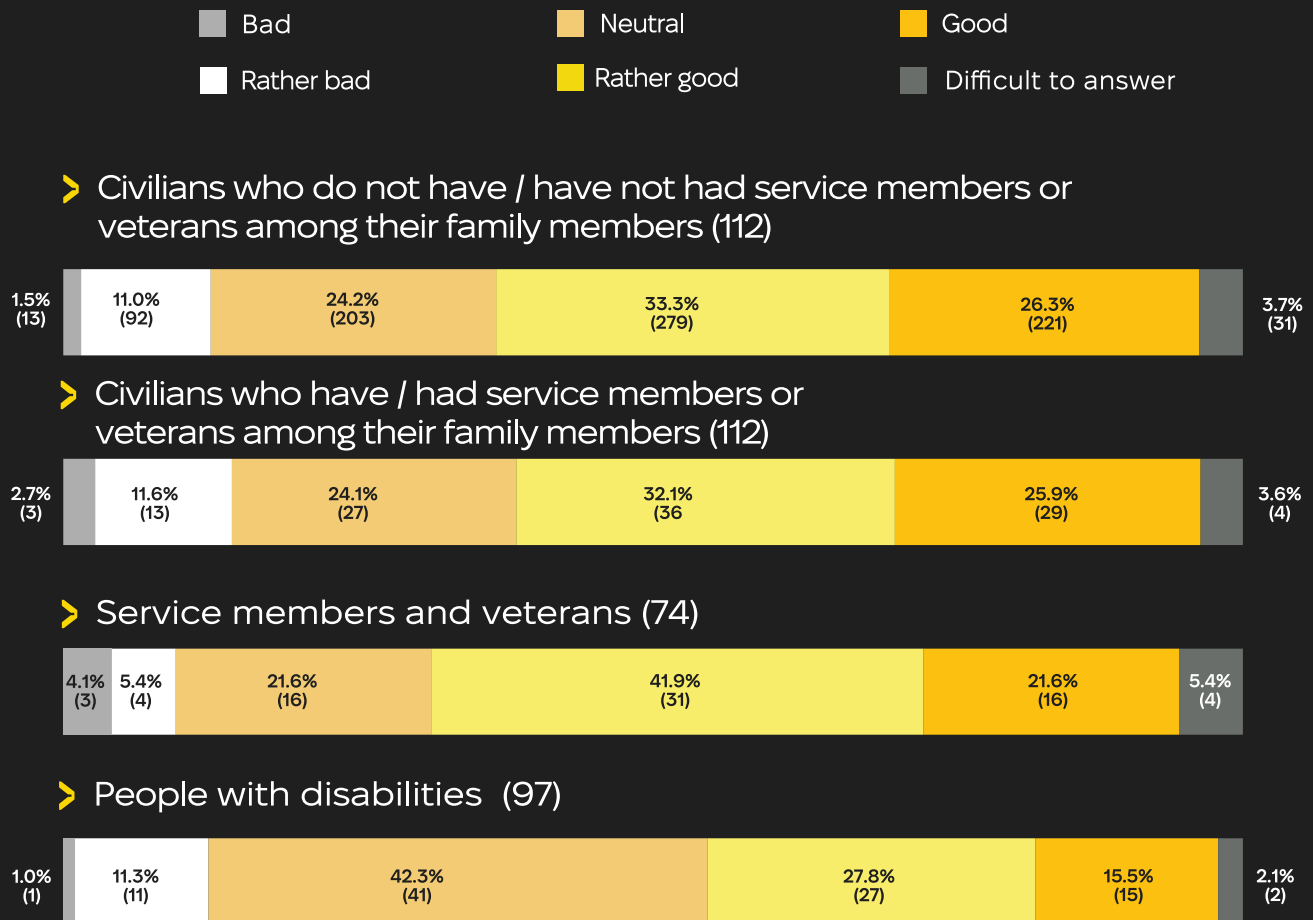
Across different groups, 61–73% of respondents assess Ukrainians' attitudes toward veterans who sustained injuries while defending the Motherland as positive ("good" or "rather good"). Notably, Invictus Ukraine events participants are the most skeptical in their assessment of Ukrainians' attitudes: only 61% consider it "good" or "rather good," while 15% (the highest share among all groups) consider it "bad" or "rather bad." The reasons for this assessment require further research.

At the same time, 90–94% of respondents across different groups in the nationwide sociological survey report a positive personal attitude. This gap of approximately 30 percentage points between the assessment of societal attitudes and one's own attitude indicates an effect whereby respondents tend to attribute less tolerant views to others than they themselves hold. This is the so-called "false consensus effect" — the tendency to believe that others think and act differently, in this case more negatively, than they themselves do.

Particularly notable is the near absence of explicitly negative personal attitudes: not a single respondent among service members, veterans, and their family members indicated a "bad" attitude, while among civilians who do not have and have not had service members or veterans among their family members, this share is only 1%. This contrasts with how Ukrainians' attitudes toward service members and veterans who sustained injuries are assessed at the societal level, where negative evaluations ("bad" and "rather bad") are higher: 8–13% of respondents indicated that Ukrainians treat them poorly.

Assessment of Ukrainians' attitudes toward people with disabilities

Figure 5.2



However, the majority of respondents in the nationwide survey believe that Ukrainians treat people with disabilities well — 58–64% of respondents across different groups hold this view. The most skeptical on this issue are people with disabilities themselves: only 43% of them stated that Ukrainians treat such people well (the maximum gap compared to other groups is 21 percentage points), while another 42% indicated a neutral attitude — compared to 22–24% in other groups. This may indicate a difference between declared attitudes and everyday experience, which tends to be more critical among members of this group.

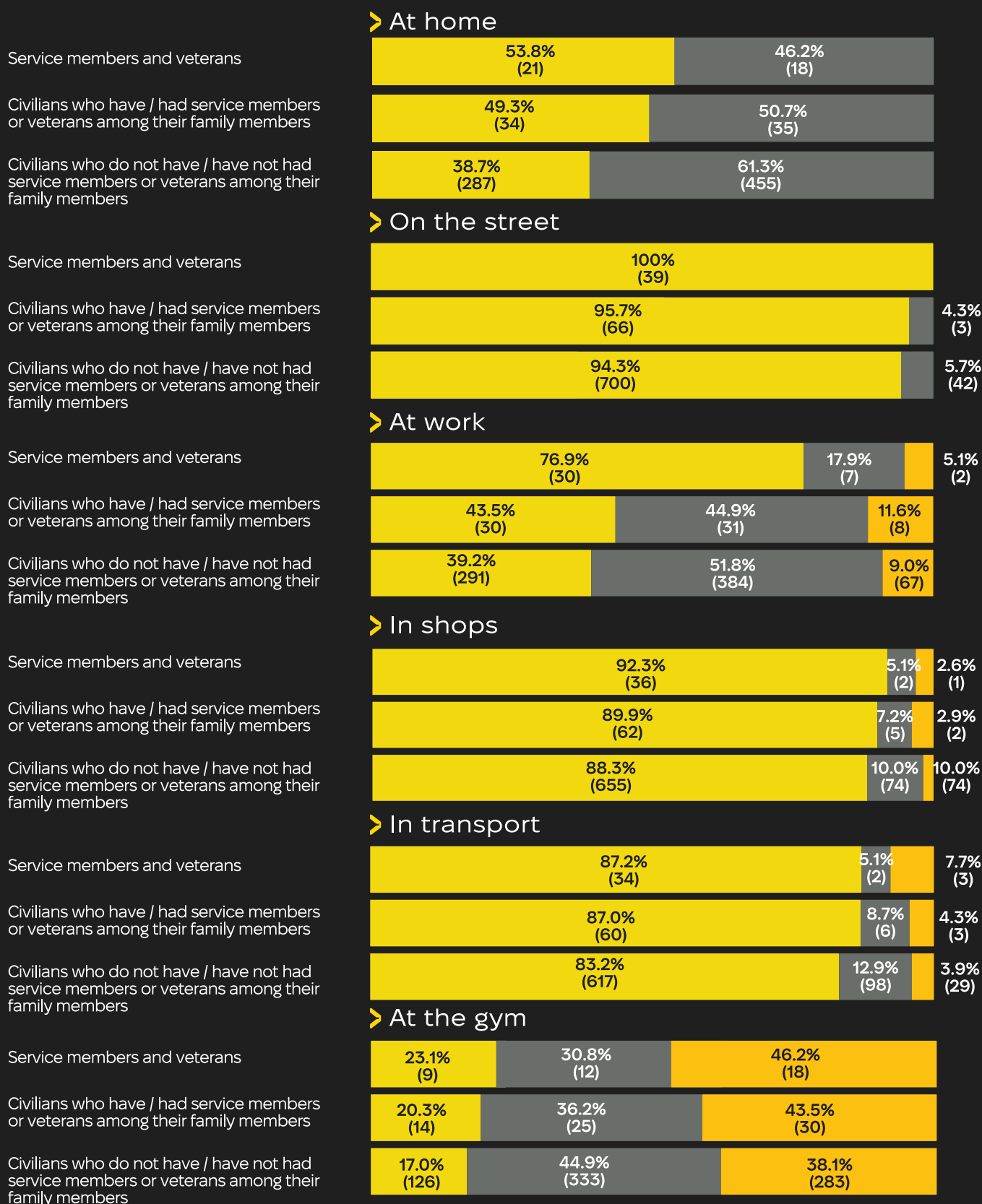
5.2. Frequency of Interaction with Veterans Who Received Injuries Defending the Motherland

The intensity of contact with veterans who sustained injuries, wounds, or illnesses while defending the Motherland differs, as expected, across respondent groups in the nationwide survey.

Figure 5.3

Frequency of encounters over the past year in everyday life with service members and veterans who sustained injuries, wounds, or illnesses while defending the Motherland

■ Yes ■ Not ■ Do not visit / do not use services



■ Yes ■ No ■ Do not visit / do not use services

> In clinics / hospitals

Service members and veterans	97.4% (38)		2.6% (1)
Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members	89.8% (62)	5.8% (4)	4.3% (3)
Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members	85.8% (637)	8.5% (63)	5.7% (42)

> At administrative service centers

Service members and veterans	66.7% (26)	7.7% (3)	25.6% (10)
Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members	72.5% (50)	5.8% (4)	21.7% (15)
Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members	59.7% (443)	18.5% (137)	21.8% (162)

> At cultural and entertainment events

Service members and veterans	38.5% (15)	20.5% (8)	41.0% (16)
Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members	52.2% (36)	17.4% (12)	30.04% (21)
Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members	42.0% (312)	26.8% (199)	31.1% (231)

> At sports events

Service members and veterans	33.3% (13)	12.8% (5)	53.8% (21)
Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members	24.6% (17)	20.3% (14)	55.1% (38)
Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members	27.4% (203)	28.8% (214)	43.8% (325)

Within the home environment, 54% of respondents from the group of service members themselves, 49% of civilians who have service members among their family members, and 39% of those whose families do not have direct experience of military service report interaction with service members and veterans who have sustained injuries.

The majority of contacts are concentrated in high-traffic public spaces with limited interpersonal interaction. The highest shares are recorded on the street (94.3–100%), in shops (88.3–92.3%), and in pharmacies or hospitals (85.8–97.4%). These results are expected, as these locations are essential for everyday life.

Significantly lower levels of interaction are observed in settings that involve sustained contact or shared activities. In the workplace, veterans with injuries are encountered by 39.2% of civilians without family members in military service.

The most problematic area is sports infrastructure.

Only 17% of civilians without family members in military service reported encountering veterans with injuries in gyms. At the same time, between 38% and 46% of respondents across different groups do not attend sports facilities at all. The low visibility of veterans in this segment may indicate that sports-based rehabilitation is currently concentrated in narrowly specialized veteran or medical centers.

This suggests insufficient adaptation of general-use sports facilities to the needs of people with injuries.

A similar trend is observed in the sphere of leisure and culture. Around 41% of veterans themselves reported that they do not attend cultural and entertainment events, which may be a result of limited accessibility of such facilities. At sports events, veterans are encountered by only 24–33% of respondents, which also correlates with a high share of respondents who do not attend such events at all (43–55%). This may be due to a combination of psychological factors and the specifics of adaptation to civilian life under conditions of martial law, which limits demand for participation in entertainment activities.

5.3. Emotional Profile of Perception Toward Veterans with Injuries

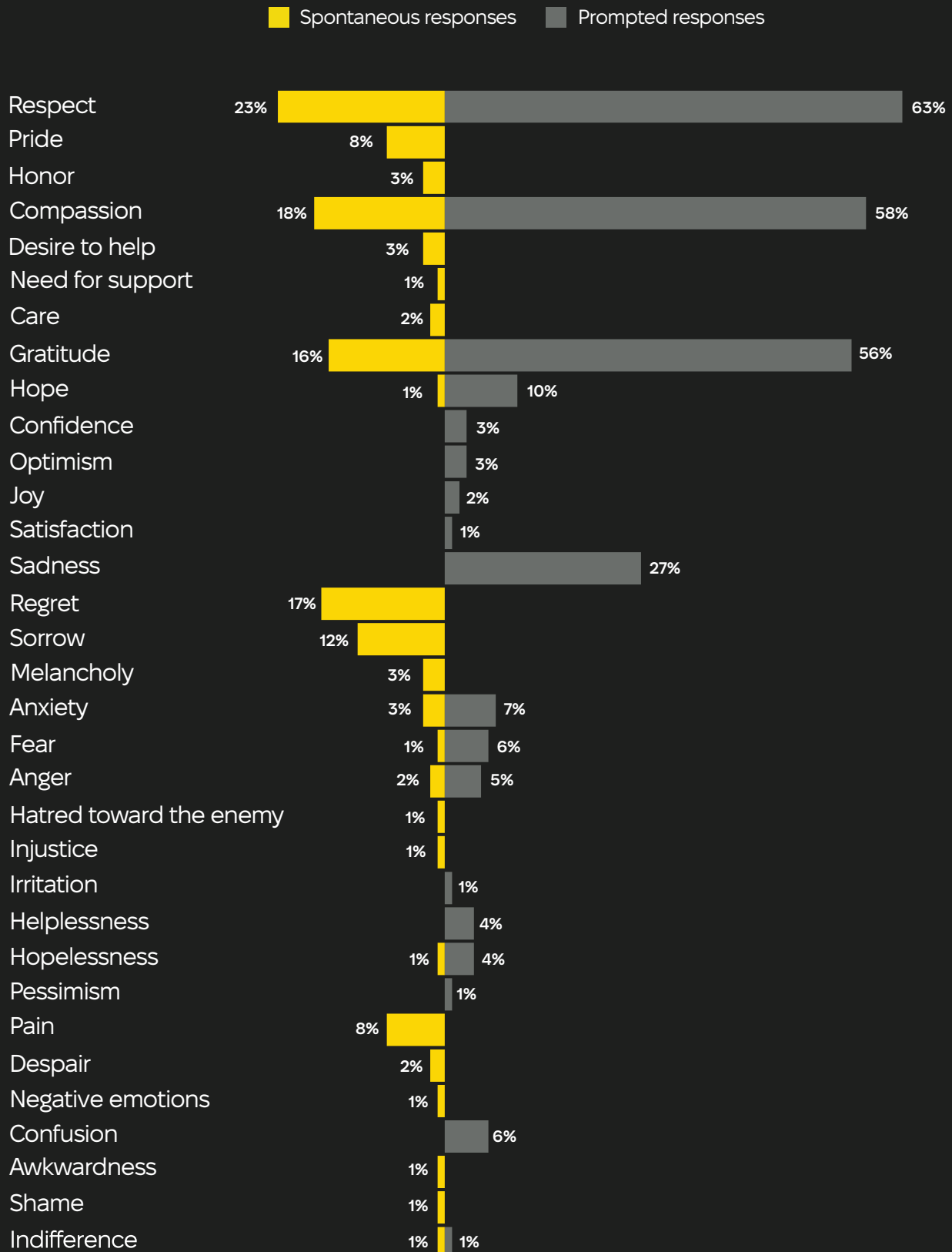
Among the emotions that respondents in the nationwide survey feel toward veterans with injuries, the most frequently reported are respect, compassion, gratitude, and sadness. The highest intensity of these feelings is observed among civilians who have family members among service members, although the difference compared to civilians without such experience is minimal.

Negative emotions are expressed at low levels across all groups — only 2% of respondents associate anger with the phrase “service member or veteran who sustained injuries, wounds, or illnesses while defending the Motherland” in the unprompted question and 5% in the prompted question; fear — 1% and 6%, respectively.

The low level of indifference among all respondents confirms that the issue of veteran rehabilitation is emotionally significant for Ukrainians.

Emotions associated with "service member who sustained injuries while defending the Motherland": spontaneous responses / prompted responses

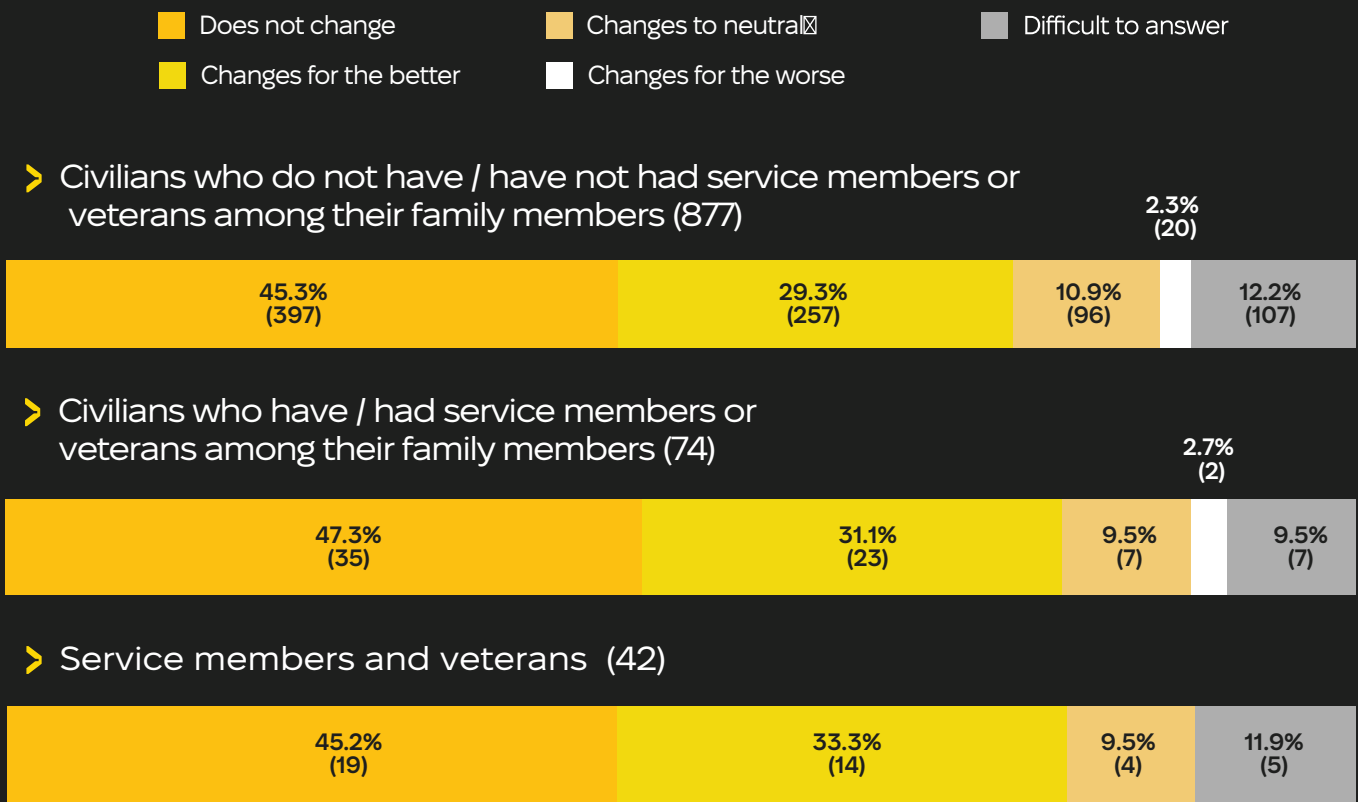
Figure 5.4



5.4 Attitudes Toward “Invisible” Injuries

The issue of “invisible” injuries (PTSD, mild traumatic brain injury, and other non-visible consequences of combat) is widely understood in society.

Figure 5.5 Change in Ukrainians’ attitudes toward service members and veterans with “invisible” injuries compared to those with visible injuries



The most common pattern is that attitudes remain unchanged upon learning about their “invisible” injuries: 47% of families of service members and 45% of respondents in other groups indicate that their attitude does not change.

At the same time, 33% of service members and veterans, 31% of civilians who have or have had service members among their family members, and 29% of civilians who do not have and have not had such family members report a more positive change in attitude, recognizing the challenges of living with non-visible injuries that nevertheless affect everyday life and the capabilities of veterans. Notably, 11–13% of respondents across different groups find it difficult to answer. This may indicate insufficient understanding of the nature of PTSD, mTBI, and other “invisible” consequences of combat. Only 2% of respondents report a more negative change in attitude, which indicates a low level of stigmatization of this group of veterans.

Regarding personal experience, in response to the question, “Have you ever encountered a situation in your life where you communicated or interacted with a person and later learned that they had an blast injury, a prosthesis, or a serious illness? If yes, how did your attitude toward this person change afterward?”, 32% of respondents answered that they had not encountered such situations. At the same time, 30% of respondents reported that they felt compassion, 26% — a sense of respect, and 12% — that they developed a desire to interact with this person more (2% — a desire to interact less).

5.5. Impact on Public Perception

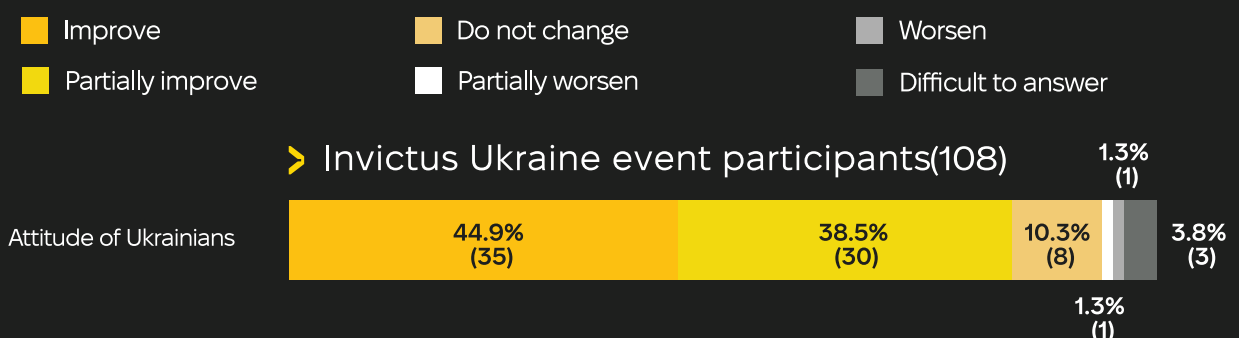
Respondents positively assess the impact of the Invictus Games on Ukrainians’ attitudes toward service members and veterans.

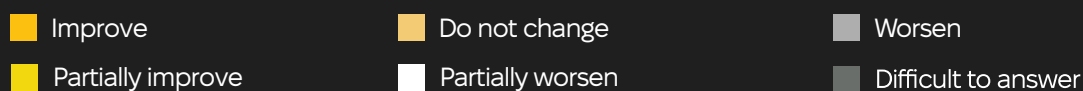
All surveyed groups — 83% of Invictus Ukraine participants, 82% of civilians who have service members or veterans among their family members, 79% of people with disabilities, 78% of civilians without such family connections, and 65% of service members — believe that, due to the Games, Ukrainians’ attitudes toward veterans who sustained injuries while defending the Motherland improve or somewhat improve.

It is important to note two points. First, the positive assessment of the impact by Invictus Games participants, as they are the primary focus of changes in Ukrainians’ attitudes. Second, a noteworthy observation is the relatively high level of skepticism among service members and veterans who participated in the nationwide survey. In addition to having the lowest share of respondents who consider the Games to have a positive impact, they are also the group most likely to state that the Games do not have a significant impact on changes in Ukrainians’ attitudes (17% compared to 11% in other groups) or to indicate that it is difficult to assess the impact (17% compared to 4–9%). This question warrants further research.

Assessment of the impact of the Invictus Games on Ukrainians’ attitudes toward service members and veterans who sustained injuries while defending the Motherland

Figure 5.6





> Service members and veterans (54)



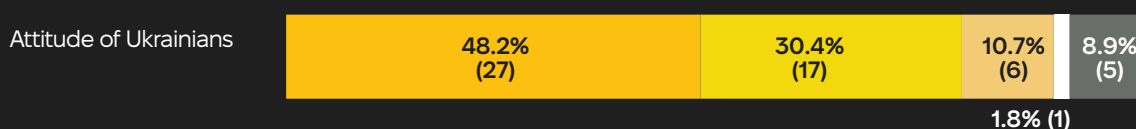
> Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members (84)



> Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members (502)



> People with disabilities (56)

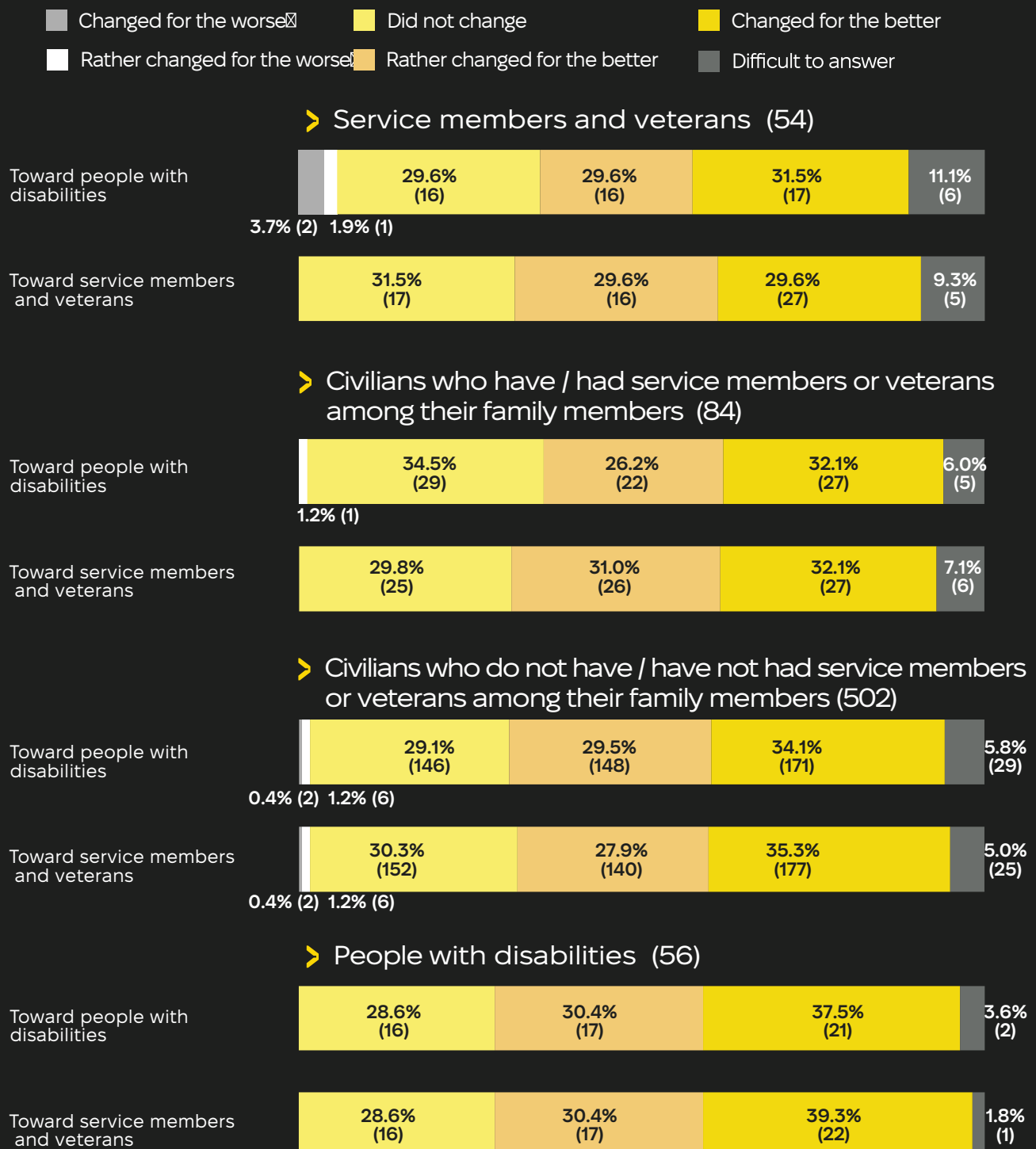


In the question on changes in personal attitudes toward service members, veterans, and persons with disabilities, the survey also recorded a positive trend. Attitudes toward veterans improved or rather improved among 59% of service members, 63% of civilians in both groups, and 70% of persons with disabilities.

Attitudes toward persons with disabilities improved or rather improved among 54–68% of respondents in the nationwide survey. The lowest share is observed among service members and veterans, and the highest among persons with disabilities.

Change in personal attitudes toward veterans who sustained injuries while defending the Motherland / people with disabilities following observation of the Invictus Games

Figure 5.7



Quote from an interview with an international partner:

“They [Invictus Games participants — ed.] have become an inspiration, they have become role models — not only for the military, but also for other parts of society who may have never served. People look at them and see the Invictus spirit — resilience, the ability to unite, and a sense of community”.

5.6. Development of a Veteran-Friendly Environment in Ukraine

In addition to changing attitudes toward specific groups of people, the Invictus Games and other similar sport events also contribute to changes in the social landscape in Ukraine.

It is noteworthy that Invictus Ukraine participants primarily point to direct impacts related to the nature of the activities within the Games. The most common response regarding areas of impact is “developing adaptive sport,” cited by 83% of respondents; in second place are “supporting the international image” and “facilitating better integration of veterans into civilian life” (both at 71%); and in third place is “promoting sport” (69%)



Invictus Games 2017

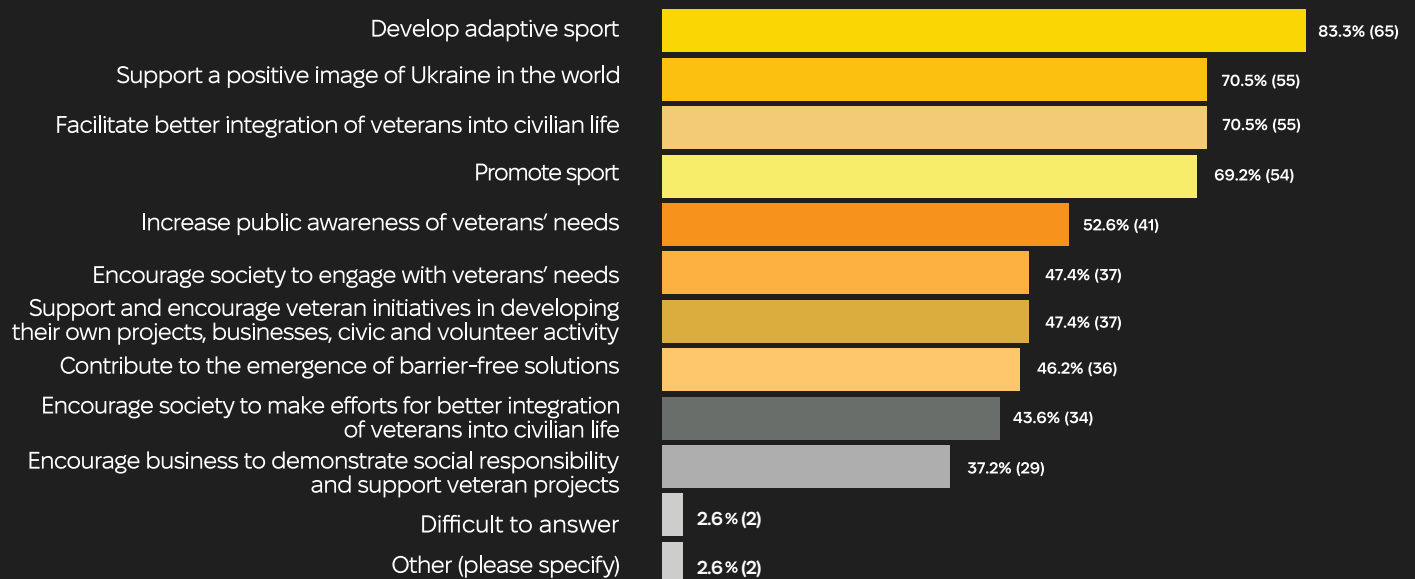
Toronto

Respondents who participated in the nationwide survey describe the impact on society in a broader sense. In particular, among the most common responses are that the Games increase Ukrainians’ awareness of veterans’ needs (50–63% across different groups), encourage veterans to implement their own initiatives (43–55%), and encourage businesses to demonstrate social responsibility (24–32%), contribute to the emergence of barrier-free solutions (32–56%), promote sport in general (39–41%), and support the development of adaptive sport in particular (26–32%).

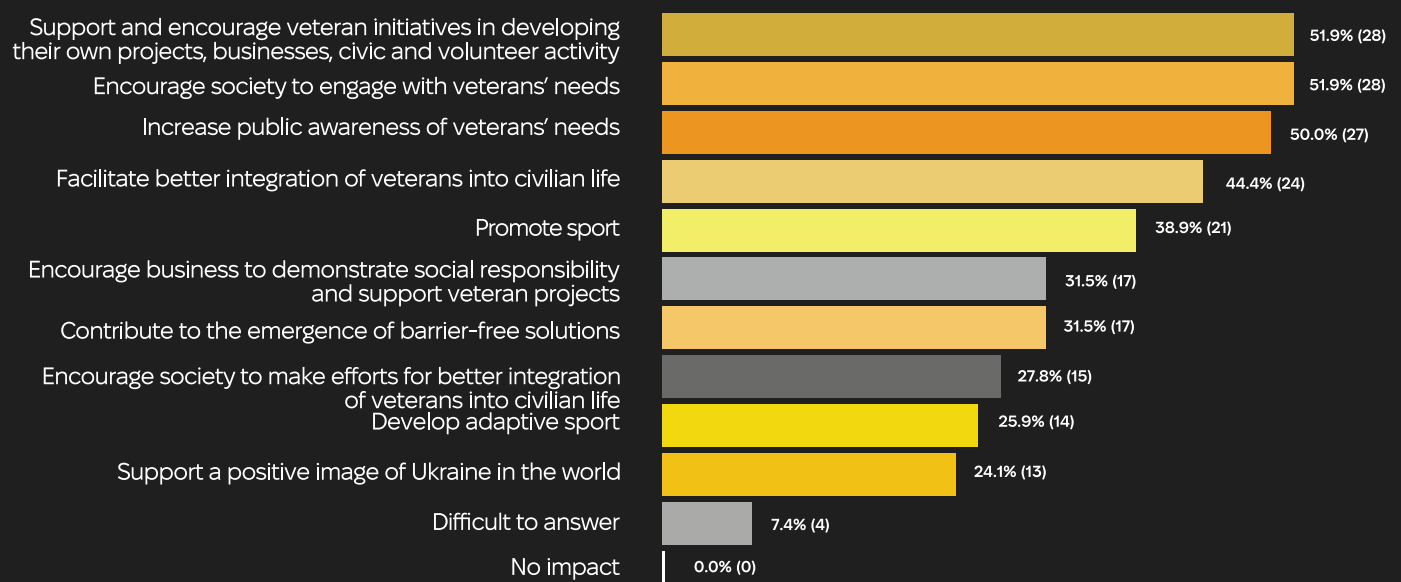
Assessment of the impact of projects such as the Invictus Games on Ukraine

Figure 5.8

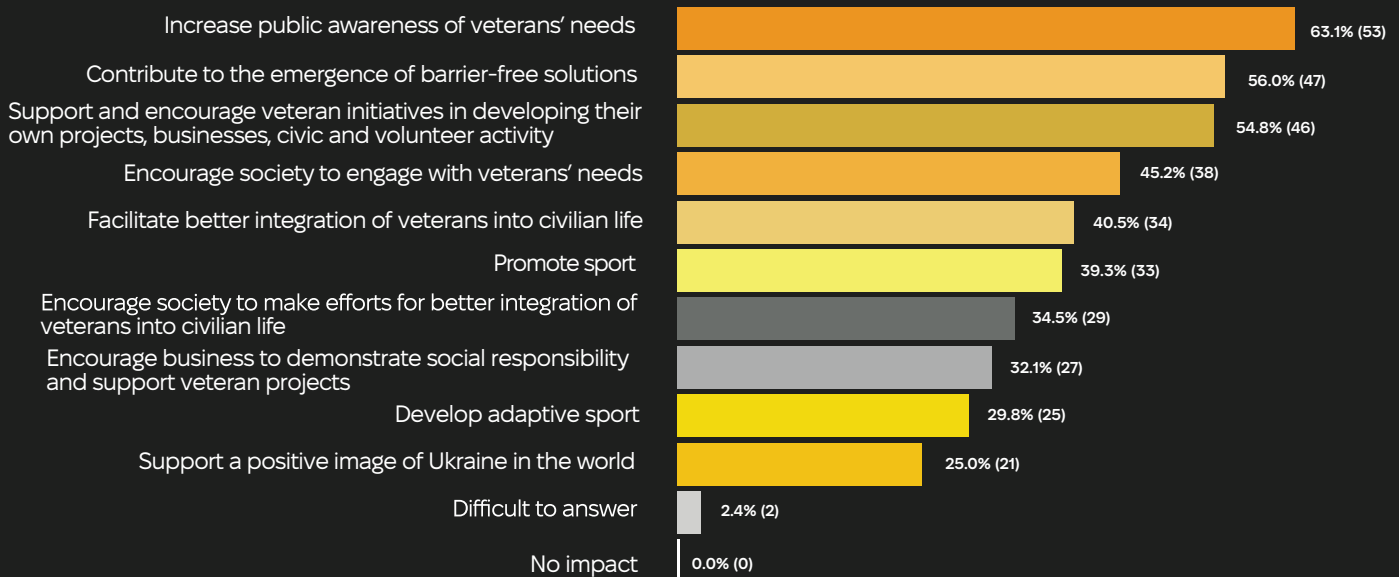
> Invictus Ukraine events participants (78)



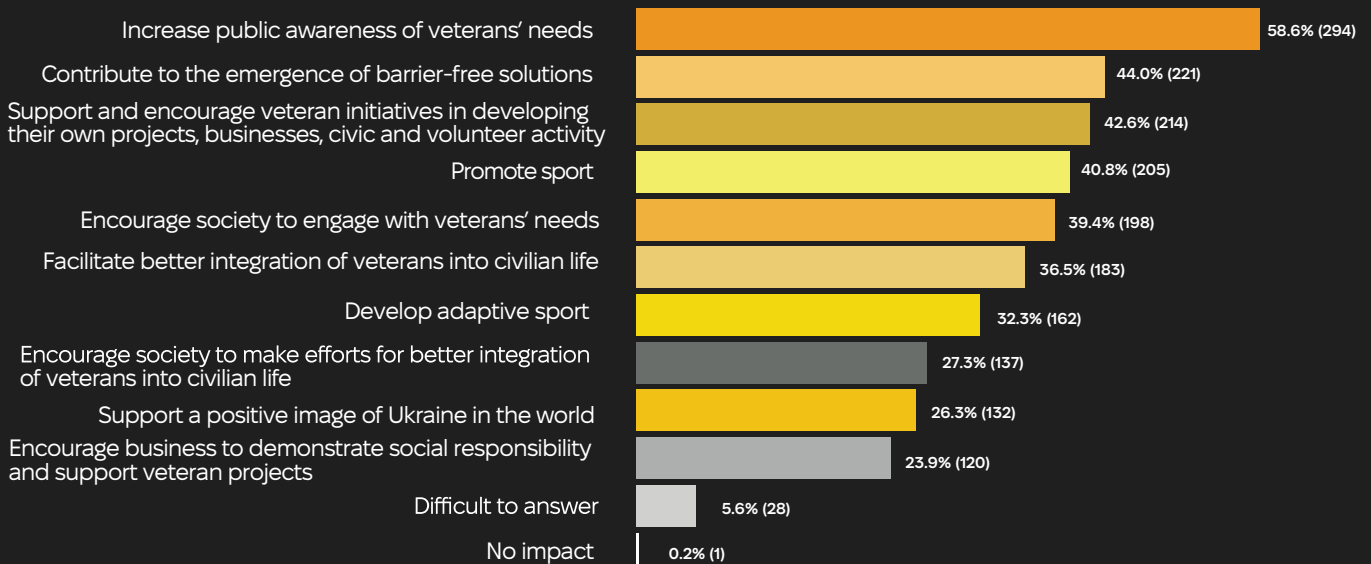
> Service members and veterans (54)



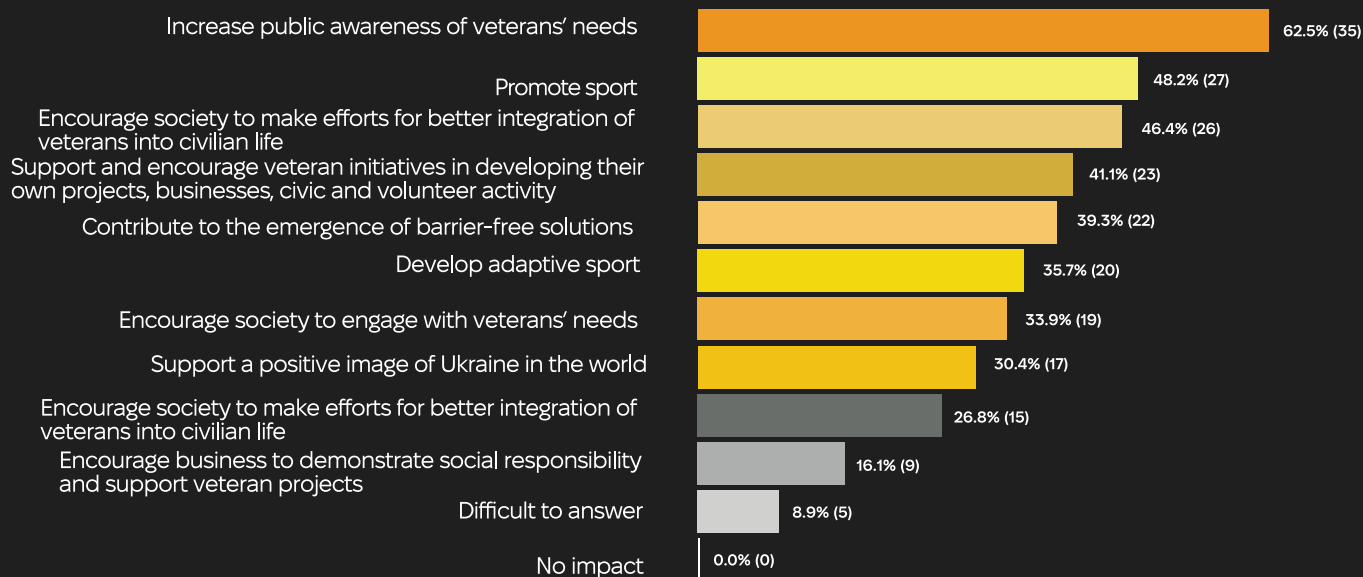
> Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members (84)



> Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members (502)



> People with disabilities (56)



In interviews, respondents noted that one of the key factors behind the success of the initiative is that, at the level of the veteran community, the Invictus Ukraine has created a unique support ecosystem based on the principle of "peer-to-peer."

Respondents note that sport accounts for only 5% of the project's success, while the remaining 95% is overcoming social isolation. Veterans find an environment that facilitates their exit from isolation, providing them with a sense of belonging and shared experience. Such social support is critically important for overcoming depressive states and for psychological recovery.

Quote from an interview with an Invictus Games participant:

«I now see competitions as more of a place to come together socially, and sport is just a reason to get together. A good reason».

Veteran-to-veteran relationships within the project take the form of a new social network that replaces the lost unit. Since being in general-use gyms may be associated for veterans with a sense of excessive attention — as reflected in the data on frequency of attendance — the Games create a "trusted community" where veterans feel secure, which significantly reduces stress during socialization.

The Invictus Games have significantly changed perceptions of veterans with disabilities, increased the visibility of veterans in media and public space, and contributed to the normalization of inclusion among civilians. International partners note that Ukrainian veterans project a positive outlook by embracing their new reality (for example, by attaching toys to prostheses).

The Invictus Games have brought accessibility to the forefront not only as a benefit for service members and veterans, but as a necessary standard for all groups with limited mobility.

Quote from an interview with an international partner:

«I attend a large number of different events where veterans take part, including those with amputations or using wheelchairs. And I see this change [...] it is also a change in how veterans themselves relate to this [...] not to hide it, not to conceal it, not to avoid drawing attention to it [...] but, on the contrary, to draw attention — and to do so in a positive way».

At the same time, interview participants note pragmatically that the level of stereotyping remains high and that changes often occur more quickly through high-profile scandals than through positive representations, which underscores the need for sustained work in the media space.



**National
competitions**

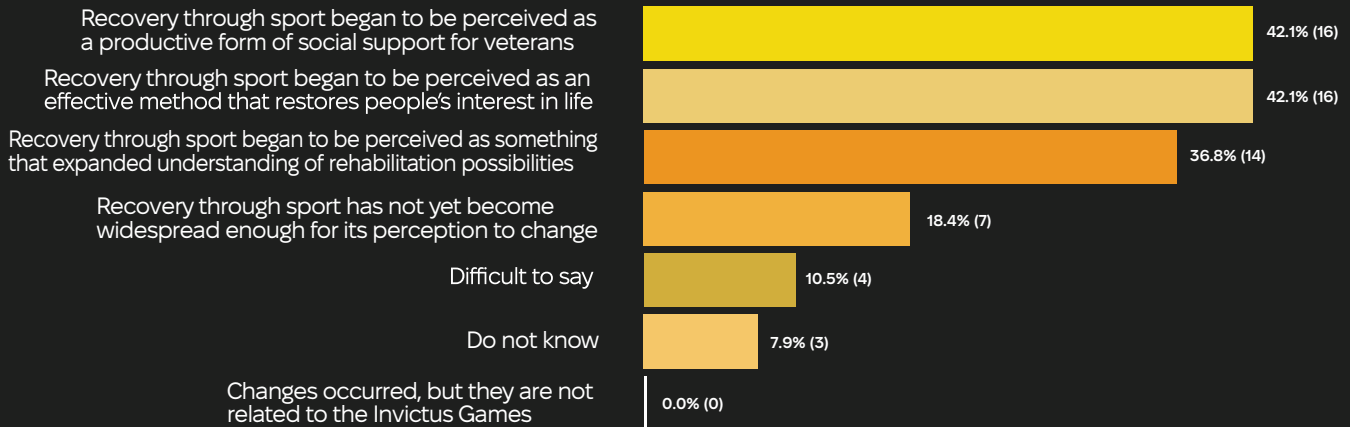
Kyiv
2024

Respondents in the nationwide survey note that, due to the Games, sport is no longer perceived merely as leisure, but is also seen as an effective tool for recovery and return to active life.

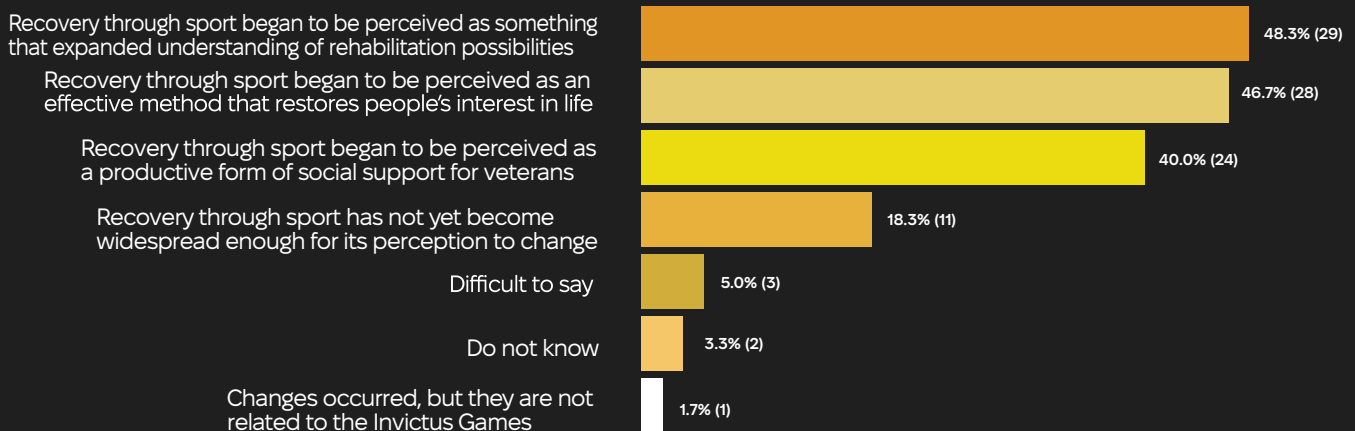
Figure 5.9

Change in public opinion on the recovery of veterans through sport as a result of Ukraine's participation in the Invictus Games

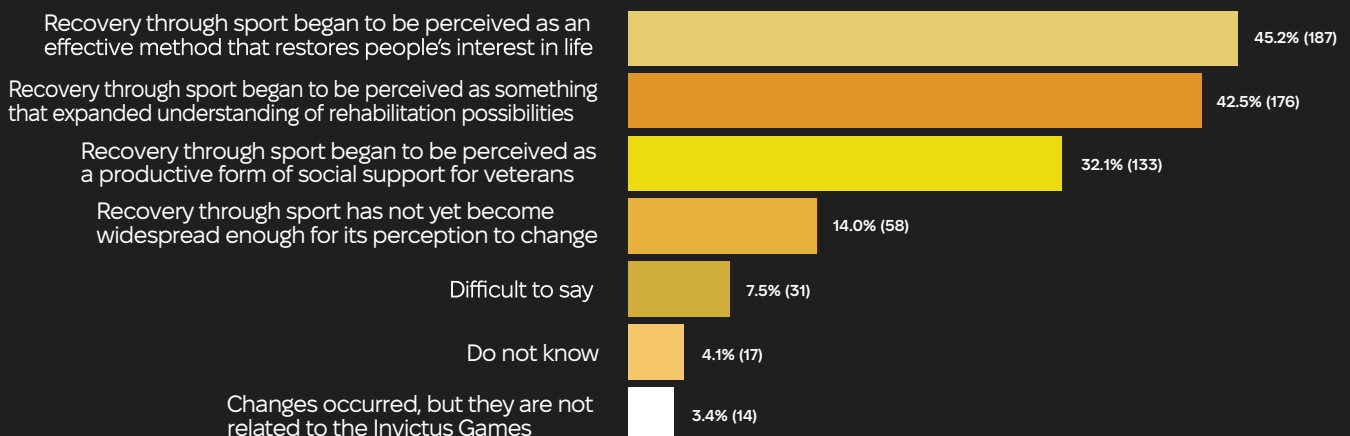
> Service members and veterans (38)



> Civilians who have / had service members or veterans among their family members (60)



> Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members (414)



Summary



The societal impact of the Invictus Games is reflected in changes in both attitudes and social practices.

A new image of the veteran is emerging — as active, capable, and socially integrated.

Attitudes toward veterans are generally positive. However, there is a gap between personal attitudes and perceptions of Ukrainians' attitudes, which respondents assess significantly more critically than their own.

The issue of "invisible" injuries is partially understood but requires further communication.

The Invictus Ukraine act as a driver of accessibility and influence infrastructure, public policy, and business. Recovery through sport is emerging as a new social norm, although its potential beyond the circle of the Games' participants remains underestimated.

At the same time, the impact of the Invictus Ukraine is limited by the current scale of the project and requires strengthening through systemic solutions: the development of adaptive infrastructure in communities and expanded access to rehabilitation programs



CHAPTER 6.

MEDIA DIMENSION

After the establishment of the Invictus Games in 2014, the topic of the Games was practically absent from the Ukrainian information space for some time. Ukraine did not participate in the first Games, so media coverage was limited to isolated mentions of an international nature, with no connection to the domestic context.

Over the past 10 years, the topic of the Invictus Games in Ukraine has grown from almost zero presence to a stable part of the information space.

The turning point was the announcement of Ukraine's invitation to participate in the next Games. It was then that the topic first gained significant presence in the Ukrainian media space: the first publications appeared, and attention from the veteran community and civil society organizations increased. Information interest was formed around the very fact of participation and preparation for the event. At the same time, this interest did not arise on its own — it was the result of the StratCom Ukraine team's systematic work with journalists, which helped shape a clear understanding of the veteran environment. At that time, media attention to the topic of veterans, especially wounded veterans, remained low: journalists often were not familiar with the terminology and frequently avoided the topic or covered it in a simplified and inaccurate way.

The Ukrainian team's debut at the Invictus Games in Toronto in 2017 was a key event in the final consolidation of the Invictus Games as a recognizable media brand.

The information field significantly expanded due to new narratives, including reports on participant selection, the training process, medals won, and veterans' personal stories. From concentration in Kyiv and nationwide media in 2016, the topic of the Invictus Games spread to all regions of Ukraine.

The second important thing is that media presence is built around people. The greatest attention is paid to specific individuals (media-visible veterans and officials) and to organizations that finance or coordinate participation. A special role is played by Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex — his presence automatically strengthens interest in the Games and adds international weight to the topic.

A significant share of attention is concentrated on a small group of the most media-visible veterans. As a result, the veteran community in the media appears narrower than it actually is.



**Opening Ceremony
Invictus Games 2020**

The Hague, Netherlands
2022

After 2022, the brand of the “Invictus” became simultaneously athletic, diplomatic, memorial, and information security-related.

The agenda is shaped online. Online media (30.9%) and Facebook (30%) account for more than half of the entire body of mentions. Social media lead in influence due to rapid dissemination and reposting (Facebook, Telegram, YouTube, X, TikTok). Telegram has demonstrated the greatest growth since 2022 and is now the third-largest source by volume (13.1%). Traditional media and official sources maintain a stable presence of the topic, but do not determine the overall dynamics.

Cooperation with business has changed noticeably. While earlier businesses engaged episodically, after 2022, this interaction became more systemic and public.

The overall media tone is consistently positive or neutral. Negative coverage occurs rarely and does not form a separate narrative. The project has a high level of reputational resilience: criticism does not discredit the initiative itself. Not a single incident in 10 years has escalated into a systemic brand crisis.

Another important change is the expansion of geography. While earlier the topic mainly lived in national media, it is now actively picked up by the regions. Local stories about participants from their own communities have become one of the key formats.

The Invictus Games are perceived as an important event for every community that has its own participants. The most stable mechanism of regionalization is the personalization of a nationwide news story through a local participant. Each time the team roster was announced, or medal results were announced, regional media created massive amounts of their own content following the pattern: “our fellow resident joined the team or won a medal at the Invictus Games”.

CHAPTER 7.

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

This chapter examines the international dimension of the Invictus Games across two planes. The first is a comparative analysis of state approaches to sports-based rehabilitation for veterans in Invictus Games participating countries: the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Israel, France, Germany, and Poland. The second is the role of Ukraine's participation in the Invictus Games in shaping its international image and public diplomacy, supported by data from the sociological study and qualitative interviews. The chapter demonstrates where Ukraine already aligns with best practices in partner countries — and where there is room for further development.

The conceptual foundation for the use of sport as a tool for rehabilitation was laid by Dr. Ludwig Guttmann at Stoke Mandeville Hospital after the Second World War. Guttmann recognized that physical activity for soldiers with spinal cord injuries has not only physiological significance: it restores their sense of dignity and belonging to society. This approach became the basis of the Paralympic movement and was later adapted for veterans of contemporary armed conflicts — in particular through the Invictus Games and the Warrior Games (United States).

An analysis of the experience of 25 Invictus Games participating countries (including Ukraine) shows that state decisions integrating sport into veteran strategies are aimed at transforming the image of veterans — from “patients” to “active members of the sports community.” This helps combat social isolation, depression, and PTSD.

Among the common features characteristic of most participating countries:

- in most countries, participation in international events falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence or military medical services;
- in some countries (for example, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia), the Invictus Games have a more official status and are associated with large-scale state funding, in contrast to countries such as Jordan, Iraq, and Nigeria, where infrastructure is developed by the community itself;
- the Invictus Games are most often viewed as a tool for the recovery of veterans and for public recognition;
- most countries are characterized by the lack of stable public funding and uneven state support — with the initiative largely dependent on civil society organizations and philanthropic support.

This comparative overview highlights where Ukraine already aligns with best practices among its partners and where there is still room for development. In most of the countries analyzed, sports-based rehabilitation for veterans has evolved from a purely civil society initiative into a comprehensive state system. Ukraine is currently at precisely this turning point.

7.1. International Experience in Veterans Recovery through Sports

United Kingdom

The Invictus Games Foundation is a leading global organisation that has evolved from the governing body of the Invictus Games into a community of 25 participating nations and a global movement. Through its engagement with the Foundation, Ukraine and other participating nations receive methodological and organisational support for developing sport-based recovery for service members and veterans, as well as funding under specific programs.

The United Kingdom is the country that founded the Games and participates in every edition through Team UK. Its participation is coordinated by the Royal British Legion in partnership with the Ministry of Defence.



Sitting volleyball

Vancouver
15 Feb 2025

There is no separate government strategy for veteran sport in the United Kingdom — it is part of the broader veteran strategy. At the same time, the Covenant Duty (Armed Forces Act 2021) is legally established, requiring certain public bodies to comply with the Armed Forces Covenant in the provision of services in healthcare, education, and housing.

Responsibility for sports-based rehabilitation programs for veterans lies with the Ministry of Defence (MOD). It coordinates the Battle Back program — an adaptive sport program for wounded, injured, and sick (WIS) veterans — implemented in partnership with charitable organizations (including Help for Heroes, the Royal British Legion, and others).

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Within the structure of the Ministry of Defence of the United Kingdom, the Office for Veterans' Affairs operates, which includes Defence Transition Services — a service that helps veterans receive support on issues related to physical and mental health.

An important role is played by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust — a government non-departmental body that funds and supports social and rehabilitation initiatives for veterans through partnerships with charitable and non-governmental organizations.

It is also worth mentioning Help for Heroes — a major UK veteran charity that for a long time prepared veterans for the Invictus Games and provided rehabilitation, physical, and psychological support. Another initiative is Bravo Victor — a charitable organization created as an independent part of Blind Veterans UK, aimed at improving the lives of visually impaired veterans and their families through research, innovation, support, employment development, and practical services.

In November 2025, the United Kingdom adopted a new veteran strategy to replace the previous one (2022–2024). The document provides for support of Invictus Games Birmingham 2027: the UK government takes on the financing of the Games, providing underwriting of up to £26 million. The Invictus Games are presented not simply as sport competitions, but as a tool for rehabilitation, recovery, public recognition, and honoring veterans and active-duty service members. The emphasis is on physical recovery, psychological stabilization, and social integration through sport.

In the Contribute section, sport is mentioned as a form of civic participation of veterans. The document explicitly states that veterans often participate in community life as coaches, mentors, and organizers of local initiatives. In this context, sport serves as a way to transmit discipline, teamwork skills, and leadership.

The Support section also addresses the physical recovery of veterans. The Op RESTORE program covers treatment and rehabilitation for physical injuries, including therapeutic physical activity, adaptive practices, and sports-based rehabilitation approaches.



United States

The United States has the most extensive and best-funded system of sports-based rehabilitation for veterans in the world, with a clear legislative foundation. Congress has established the adaptive sports program in 38 U.S.C. § 521A and, through 38 U.S.C. § 322, established the Office of National Veterans Sports Programs within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). These provisions grant the VA the authority to issue grants and coordinate sports programs for veterans who have sustained injuries, wounds, or illnesses in the line of duty.

U.S. policy emphasizes that rehabilitation should be accessible at the place of residence of the veteran. The VA implements this through regulation 38 C.F.R. Part 77 and official grant programs for adaptive sports. This makes it possible to fund local organizations, camps, and national events (such as the Warrior Games).



Wheelchair rugby

Vancouver
 13 Feb 2025



Initiatives are also financed through membership contributions and donor support. For example, the Soldier Ride program by the Wounded Warrior Project uses cycling to restore confidence and physical strength.

For the United States, the Invictus Games are important, but they are first and foremost a civil society initiative that is supported by the government indirectly. Selection for the Invictus Games in the United States takes place through a national selection process: candidates are WIS veterans (wounded, injured, or sick — those who have been wounded, injured, or got ill). The selection takes place through training camps that cooperate with the Department of Defense ("Department of War") and the Department of Veterans Affairs. This combines medical support with sports training.

Canada

In Canada, the main state body is the Department of National Defence (DND) and its division Morale and Welfare Services, which implements the Soldier On program — adaptive sport and rehabilitation for veterans and active-duty service members. There is no separate state strategy for veteran sport — unlike the United Kingdom or the United States. Instead, the regulatory framework is distributed across institutions: Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) has its own system of policies covering rehabilitation, compensation, and the well-being of veterans, and sport is integrated into the broader framework of veteran well-being as a tool for physical recovery and social integration.

Soldier On operates in partnership with civil society foundations, in particular the True Patriot Love Foundation (TPL), which finances Team Canada's participation in the Invictus Games and the Warrior Games. Support is also provided by the Government of Canada through Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), which jointly with DND develops support programs. In particular, in 2022–2025, VAC allocated \$1 million to Soldier On.



Opening ceremony

Vancouver

8 Feb 2025

Soldier On organizes sports rehabilitation camps and finances the participation of veterans in competitions, including the Invictus Games. Canada is an active participant in the Invictus Games: it hosted IG-2017 in Toronto and IG-2025 in Vancouver, while maintaining a high level of state support.

A distinctive feature of Canadian policy is its focus on “legacy” after the Games. The hosting of Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025 led to the creation of a \$5.5 million legacy fund for long-term rehabilitation programs for veterans in British Columbia and across the country.

Israel

Israel's model of sports-based rehabilitation for veterans is considered one of the most effective in the world due to the deep integration of sport into the general healthcare system and close partnership between the state and veteran organizations.

There is no separate "veteran sport policy" in Israel, but veterans with injuries have access to medical and sports services.

The main government body responsible for the treatment and reintegration of veterans with injuries, wounds, or illnesses of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is the Rehabilitation Department of the Ministry of Defense (Agaf HaShikum). On the side of veterans, the officially recognized organization is the Zahal Disabled Veterans Organization (ZDVO), which operates a network of Beit Halochem rehabilitation centers.

The 2011 Service Convention of the Rehabilitation Department between the Ministry of Defense and ZDVO defines the legal framework for cooperation. In 2025, the Knesset adopted a law that doubles state funding for veteran organizations in the fields of sport and cultural rehabilitation.



Doubles table tennis tournament

Düsseldorf
13 Sep 2023



Israel's state policy is based on the principle of "rehabilitation before bureaucracy." This means that medical and psychological support, including sports activities, is provided before lengthy bureaucratic procedures for disability recognition are completed. For Ukraine, where veterans often wait months for official confirmation of disability status, the Israeli model represents a concrete benchmark: sports and psychological rehabilitation should begin immediately after injury — regardless of whether administrative procedures have been completed.

The TIKVOT organization, operating with the support of the state and private partners, begins working with injured service members directly in hospitals, offering “hope” through sport (skiing, surfing, triathlon). For Israel, sport is a way to overcome the “shock of injury” and restore confidence in one’s own abilities in a society where military service is a central part of identity.

Israel joined the Invictus Community of Nations in 2022. The state, through the Ministry of Defense and ZDVO, fully coordinates and finances team preparation. Israel’s participation is used for the exchange of experience in the field of mental health and physical therapy with other NATO countries.

France

In France, the state policy of “reconstruction through sport” (reconstruction par le sport) is part of the general plan for supporting the wounded, implemented by the Ministry of Armed Forces and the Ministry for Veterans. The main institution is the National Defense Sports Center (CNSD), which provides a three-stage recovery model.



The state strategy for veteran sport in France is embedded in the general rehabilitation programs of the armed forces. For example, in the French army, sports medicine and adaptive sport units operate within military hospitals. Funding is provided through the Ministry of Defence budget and state rehabilitation programs.

Sitting volleyball

Vancouver
15 Feb 2025

France has participated in the Invictus Games since 2016. Unlike the United Kingdom or Canada, where the Games are a distinct priority project, in France they are considered primarily as an international component of a broader parasport program.

Germany

Germany’s state policy views sport as a tool to combat the stigmatization of mental trauma. Rehabilitation and compensation for veterans are provided through a number of social and compensation laws, in particular the Bundesversorgungsgesetz (BVG) and provisions on veterans’ social security

(Soldatenversorgungsgesetz). These acts cover medical rehabilitation, pensions, and social measures. Sports therapy is integrated into medical rehabilitation programs.

The country uses sports-based rehabilitation to strengthen the link between the armed forces and society. The hosting of the Games in Düsseldorf in 2023 under the slogan “A Home for Respect” was one of the factors in the introduction of a national Veterans Day in 2024 and the establishment of a permanent Invictus Germany structure.



**Opening Ceremony
Invictus Games 2023**

Düsseldorf
9 Sep 2023

Preparation of the German team for the Invictus Games is coordinated by the Bundeswehr and specialized rehabilitation centers. The system is strong in the medical domain, although at times complicated by bureaucratic procedures.

Poland

In Poland, support for contemporary veterans — participants in overseas missions — is the responsibility of the Centrum Weterana Działań poza Granicami Państwa (Veterans Centre for Overseas Operations) in Warsaw. This is a unit directly subordinate to the Minister of National Defence, and it is precisely this body that serves as the official coordinator of Poland’s national team for the Invictus Games. The Centrum takes care of veterans of the post-communist period — participants in missions after 1953, including in Afghanistan and Iraq — and provides them with legal, psychological, and medical support.

The legislative foundation is laid by the Act of 19 August 2011 on Veterans of Activities Outside the State (Ustawa o weteranach działań poza granicami państwa). It defines veteran status, rights to rehabilitation, social support, and related benefits.



Archery

Düsseldorf
 16 Sep 2023



Amendments adopted in 2019 further established the right of injured veterans (with a loss of health of no less than 30%) to annual free 14-day rehabilitation and recovery camps, including sports and recreational activities, psychological workshops, and physiotherapy.

Sports-based rehabilitation is implemented first and foremost through the Centrum Weterana: in addition to preparing the national team for the Invictus Games, the Centre annually organizes the national competition “Wyzwanie Weterana” — an internal analogue of the Invictus Games, which promotes physical activity and community among veterans across the country. Poland has participated in the Invictus Games since 2018; the team is formed in coordination with the Ministry of Defence and relevant units, with priority given to veterans with injuries or illnesses for whom participation has rehabilitation value.

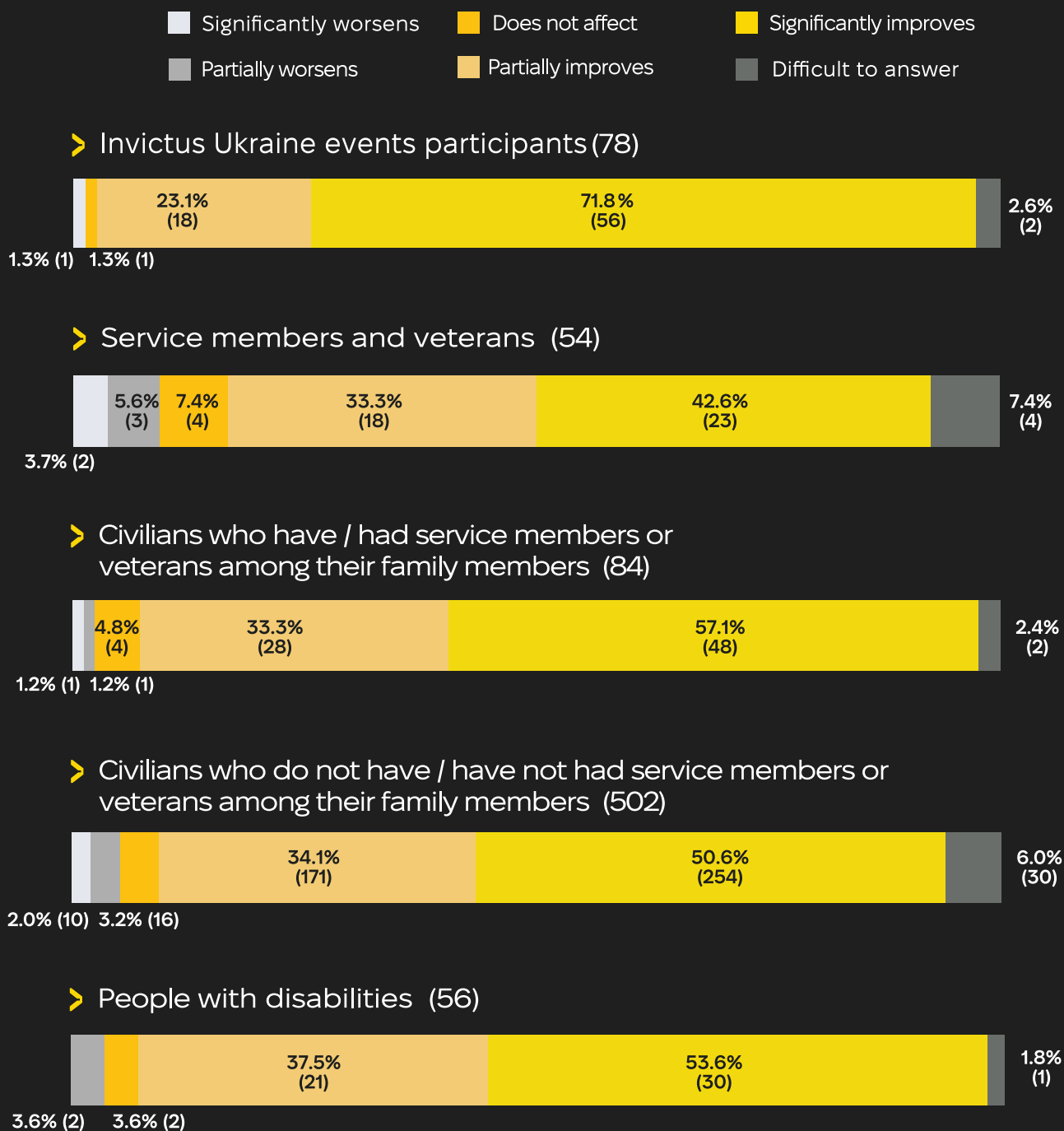
7.2. The Impact of the Invictus Games on Ukraine’s International Image

Within the sociological survey, it was found that among those aware of the Games, the predominant majority believe that they significantly or partially improve the state’s international image. This is the view of 95% of Invictus Ukraine events participants, 91% of people with disabilities, 89% of families of service members, 85% of civilians who do not have and have not had service members in their families, and 76% of service members. The latter are generally the most skeptical regarding the impact: 7% believe that the Games do not affect the state’s image, and another 7% selected the option “difficult to answer.” The participants themselves assess this impact from within: nearly 72% of them note that the Games support the state’s international image, which in turn contributes to better integration of veterans into civilian life.

Thus, a positive assessment of the international dimension is consistent across all audiences — from civilians to direct participants.

Figure 7.1

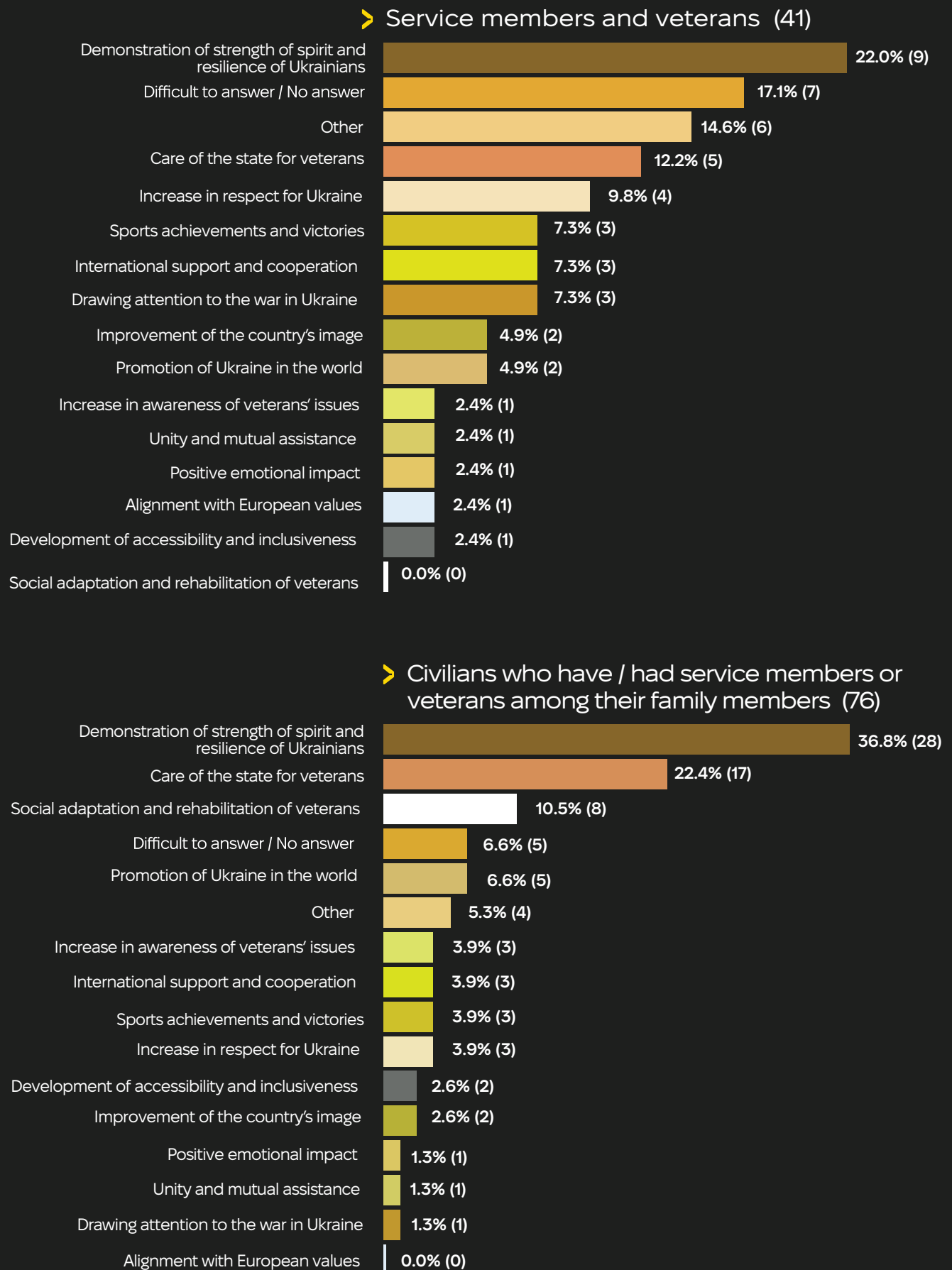
How Ukraine's participation in the Invictus Games affects its international image



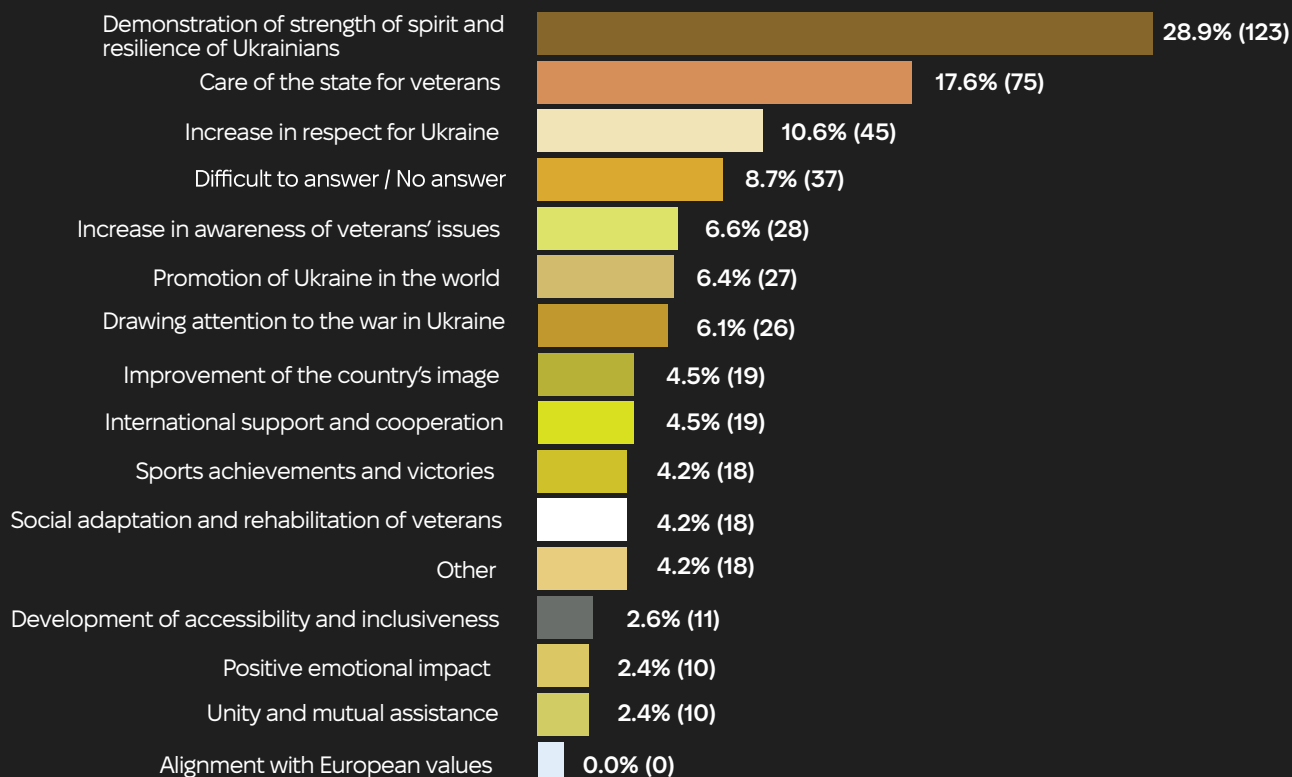
The main mechanism for improving the image is considered the demonstration of the strength of spirit and resilience of Ukrainians: this is noted by 37% of families of service members, 29% of civilians, and 22% of service members and people with disabilities.

How do you see the country's international image improving

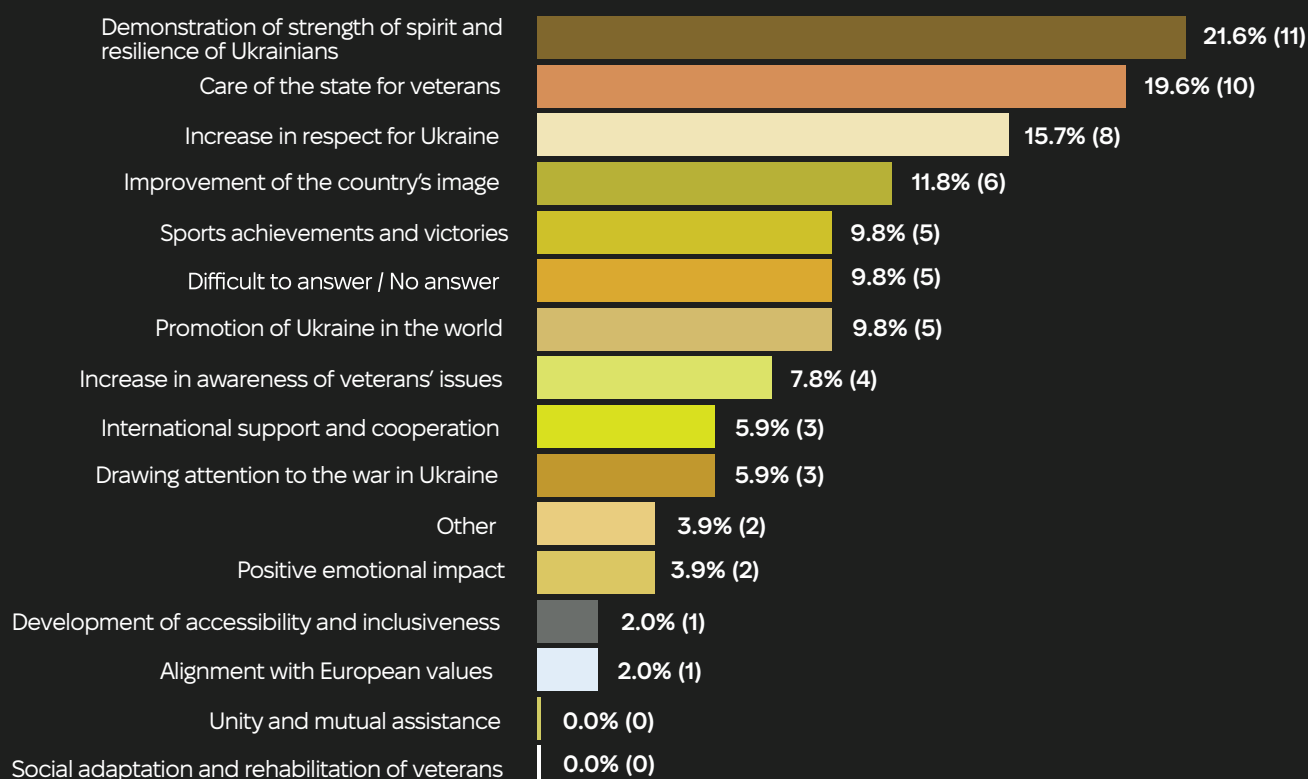
Figure 7.2



> Civilians who do not have / have not had service members or veterans among their family members (425)



> People with disabilities (51)

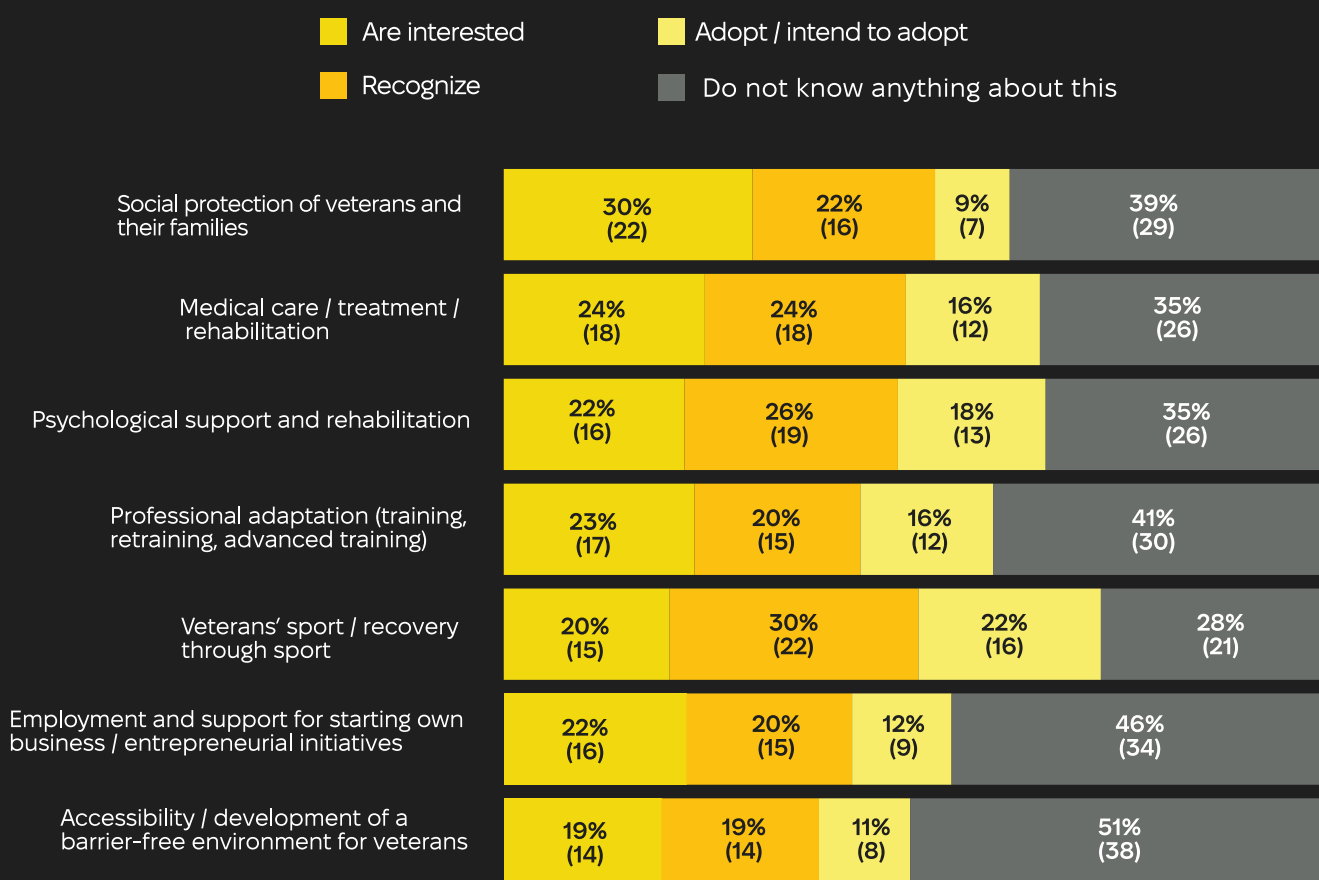


Participants of the Invictus Games noted that, in their experience, representatives of other countries are most interested in Ukraine's practices in the social protection of veterans and their family members, as well as in medical support and professional reintegration.

At the same time, according to this audience, other countries most often adopt Ukraine's experience in the organization of recovery of veterans through sport and in the psychological rehabilitation of service members.

Which areas of Ukraine's state policy on veterans are adopted / recognized by other countries

Figure 7.3



Officials interviewed emphasize that the authenticity of the experience of veterans, who often arrive at the Games directly from the frontline, creates an unprecedented emotional impact on international audiences. Family members of participants who accompanied the team describe the international perception of Ukraine as a state of deep admiration and solidarity.

In 2023, Invictus Games: Team Ukraine received the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Award for its contribution to public diplomacy, while Team Ukraine's media reach exceeded 500 million views during the 2024–25 Invictus Games cycle. Ukraine's presence at the Games reminds the world of the reality of war, while the personal stories have a much greater impact on international audiences than political statements.

Quote from an interview with a member of the organizing team:

«The first thing the Invictus Games bring to the world is that Ukrainians are very adaptive and very resilient as a nation. And the second is that Ukrainians are grateful and know how to be grateful. [...] The second is also the story of the professionalism of the Ukrainian military and the story that Ukrainians will defend what is theirs to the very end».

Key areas of international impact include: advocacy of national interests — in 2022, the team lobbied for the provision of weapons to Ukraine (including F-16 aircraft); support for other service members — efforts to secure the release of the defenders of Mariupol, and the “Free Tayra” campaign. The case of Yuliia Paievska (“Taira”) deserves particular attention. Her participation in the Games together with her daughter, as well as a Netflix documentary, created international resonance that contributed to pressure for her release from Russian captivity. This is perhaps the most illustrative example of how the Invictus Games platform is transformed into an instrument of real diplomacy and the protection of specific individuals. No participating country has a comparable case.



Yuliia "Taira" Paievska,
Defender of Ukraine,
member of Team Ukraine
at the Invictus Games

Through personal contact, it becomes possible to change perceptions of Ukraine. Ukraine is no longer perceived as a “third-world country” or an “object of aid.” Thanks to veterans who demonstrate professional expertise and exceptional resilience, Ukraine has emerged as a capable and reliable partner country.

Summary



The analysis of the experience of partner countries demonstrates that the common denominator of successful models is not the scale of funding, but the systemic nature of the approach — when sport is embedded in the rehabilitation process rather than existing alongside it. It is through this prism that Ukraine’s role in the international Invictus Games movement should be assessed — and how this participation changes the perception of the state in the world.

The uniqueness of Ukraine’s experience lies in “recovery during war, not after it.” While previously Ukraine only borrowed methodologies from the United States and the United Kingdom, international partners now declare their readiness to learn from Ukrainians in the medical and psychological aspects of working with complex trauma in real time. Respondents recognize that Ukraine’s experience of rehabilitation directly during an ongoing war is unique and subject to further study.

It is precisely this uniqueness — rehabilitation during active war, not after it — that is the experience Ukraine can and should systematically document and share with partners. Whereas previously Ukraine acted as a recipient of methodologies from the United States, the United Kingdom, and other countries, it now has grounds to position itself as a source of knowledge on working with complex trauma in the context of an ongoing conflict.

At the same time, Ukraine’s participation in the Invictus Games has gone far beyond sports-based rehabilitation: it has become an instrument of public diplomacy, advocacy of national interests, and transformation of the international perception of the state. While in 2017 Ukraine entered the movement as a recipient of experience, by 2025 it had formed its own model — rehabilitation during active war, not after it — which has no analogue among the 25 participating countries and warrants systematization and transfer to partners.

CONCLUSIONS

01 The Invictus Games have acted as a catalyst for the development of a state system of sports-based rehabilitation for veterans

The findings provide systematic evidence that the Invictus Games directly catalyzed the development of sports for veterans. Prior to 2017, the concept of “sports for veterans” did not exist as a distinct policy area. Veterans with injuries were treated exclusively as part of disability sport, which created bureaucratic barriers for those without formal disability status.

The chronology of legislative change confirms a clear causal relationship:

- 2018** The first presidential decree on sports-based rehabilitation for ATO veterans was signed directly at the closing ceremony of the National Games in May 2018, rather than through standard administrative procedures.
- 2020** The National Strategy for Physical and Sports Rehabilitation of Veterans explicitly justified state engagement in the Invictus Games as a component of rehabilitation.
- 2022** Amended Law “On Physical Culture and Sport” to include “sport for war veterans” as a distinct category.
- 2025** The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, at its plenary session on June 4, 2025, adopted the Law on Amendments to the Law of Ukraine “On Physical Culture and Sports” regarding veterans’ sport and its development.

The analysis shows that the state increased funding for veteran policy from UAH 7 billion in 2023 to UAH 18.9 billion in 2026. A separate allocation of UAH 1.4 billion was designated for the “eSupport for Sport” program, educational certificates, and programs of the Ukrainian Veterans Fund.

In-depth interviews with public officials and veterans confirm the logic of “from practice to policy” — the development of sports for veterans was initially driven by civil society, in particular by the StratCom Ukraine team, which demonstrated the effectiveness of this form of rehabilitation, and only subsequently institutionalized by the state.

At the same time, the study identifies systemic challenges — including limited infrastructure, a shortage of qualified coaches, and a lack of coordination at the community level. The Games acted as a catalyst — but did not resolve all systemic constraints.

02 Participation in the Invictus Games transforms veteran identity and contributes to reintegration into society

During in-depth interviews and surveys, a clear transformation mechanism is observed: following a severe injury, a veteran often experiences an identity crisis — a transition from “defender” to “patient.” Participation in the Invictus Games triggers a reverse process through the restoration of a sense of control, personal development, and social visibility.

Quantitative data from the survey of Invictus Ukraine participants show that 69% of participants assessed their return to social life as successful or rather successful — compared to 26% among all veterans in the nationwide survey. This gap of over 40 percentage points is statistically significant and indicates a substantial difference between those who participated in the Games and the overall veteran population.

79% of Invictus Ukraine participants identified “recovery through sport” as a key factor in their return to active social life — this indicator is higher than “support from loved ones” (69%) and significantly higher than “psychological rehabilitation” (16%). This differs fundamentally from the nationwide sample, where sport is selected by only 40–46% of respondents.

The organizing team identifies specific markers of identity change: participants stop concealing their amputations, appear on social media as “members of the national team of Ukraine,” and stop taking painkillers regularly.

The psychological transformation is described as a transition from a “victim narrative” to a “fighter narrative,” in which the new identity does not replace the previous one, but transforms it into that of an “active participant in the sports community.”

Invictus Ukraine community constitute a selected group with higher levels of motivation and activity. At the same time, their results cannot be directly extrapolated to the entire veteran community due to the risk of social desirability bias.

03 The activities of the Invictus Games in Ukraine have a secondary impact — participants create initiatives that reach hundreds of other veterans

The study shows how the “domino effect” — a phenomenon in which veterans, having gained their own experience of transformation through the Games, return to their communities and begin to create opportunities for others — is observed in practice in Ukraine.

In every government-controlled region of Ukraine, there is at least one member of the Invictus Games community who runs local initiatives — from training sessions to the establishment of NGOs. The activities of individual organizations reach hundreds of people. According to respondents of sociological surveys, around 80% of Invictus Ukraine community are involved either in their own projects or in co-operation with StratCom Ukraine, Come Back Alive, or the Ministry of Veterans Affairs.

Only 5% of surveyed Invictus Ukraine community reported not taking part in any of the listed activities (e.g., volunteering, rallies, charitable events, financial donations, work in NGOs, etc.), compared to 14% among civilians who do not have service members or veterans among their family members.

A particularly illustrative quote from an interview with the organizing team: Before 2022, 95% of the contribution to the development of adaptive sport was borne by the organizing team. Since 2022, it has been 50/50. Participants themselves have taken on a significant share.”

At the same time, there is a risk that most initiatives rely on the personal capacity of their founders and may disappear as a result of burnout if they do not transition to municipal support.

04 Ukraine has strengthened its international image through participation in the Invictus Games — as a state that supports its defenders

Across all groups of respondents who are aware of the Invictus Games, the predominant majority believe that Ukraine’s participation significantly or partially improves the country’s international image: 95% of Invictus Ukraine community, 91% of persons with disabilities, 89% of service members’ families, 85% of civilians without veterans in their families, and 76% of service members themselves.

At the same time, service members themselves are the most skeptical regarding this impact. 7% believe that the Invictus Games do not affect the country’s image, and another 7% selected “difficult to answer.” The reasons for this skepticism remain a subject for further research.

In 2023, The Invictus Games: Team Ukraine received an award from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for public diplomacy. Team Ukraine’s media reach exceeded 500 million views during the 2024–25 Invictus Games cycle. Ukraine’s participation in the Games in The Hague in April 2022 — during the first months of the full-scale invasion — became a symbolic signal of resilience at a time when international attention to Ukraine was at its peak.

The case of Yuliia Paievska (“Taira”) is documented as the most illustrative: her participation together with her daughter in the Invictus Games, as well as a Netflix documentary, generated international resonance that contributed to pressure for her release from Russian captivity. None of the 25 participating countries has a comparable case of transforming a sports platform into an instrument of real diplomacy.

A particularly significant finding is the recorded shift: while in 2017 Ukraine entered the movement as a recipient of methodologies from the United States and the United Kingdom, by 2025 international partners express their readiness to learn from Ukraine. Rehabilitation conducted in parallel with active hostilities is a unique experience that no other participating country possesses.

05 The Games have changed public opinion regarding service members and veterans who have sustained injuries, wounds, or illnesses in the course of defending the Motherland, as well as regarding rehabilitation and accessibility

54–68% of respondents in the nationwide survey reported that their personal attitudes toward people with disabilities improved or rather improved after they began following the Invictus Games. An interview with an international partner confirms: “They have become an inspiration, they have become role models — not only for the military, but also for other parts of society”.

78–83% of all respondent groups believe that attitudes toward veterans with injuries improve or partially improve as a result of the Invictus Games. Personal attitudes improved among 59–70% of respondents, depending on the group.

Participants in the nationwide survey note that, due to the Invictus Games, sport is no longer perceived exclusively as leisure, but is now seen as an effective tool for recovery. However, the potential of this perception remains underestimated: in the nationwide survey, sport as a factor of reintegration is selected by only 40–46% of respondents, compared to 79% among Invictus Ukraine community.

The study also identifies concrete infrastructure changes: SportLife committed to adapting its facilities for wheelchair users; the base in Koncha-Zaspa was adapted under pressure from the Invictus Games, as “the previous Paralympic system did not pay attention to this.” Stratcom UA (Invictus Games: Team Ukraine) is a co-founder of a public platform supporting a barrier-free society.

At the same time, media analysis shows that the themes of accessibility and rehabilitation remain on the periphery of the media narrative — appearing in less than 1% of positive mentions (10 out of 5,856). The issue of “invisible” injuries (PTSD) is recognized, but 11–13% of respondents still hesitate to provide an answer. Interviews note, in a measured way, that the level of stereotyping remains high, and that changes often occur more quickly as a result of high-profile scandals than through positive representations.

06 After participation in the Invictus Games, veterans demonstrate higher levels of activity in public life than before participation

Among members of the Invictus Ukraine community:

- **69%** take part in commemorative events honoring the fallen (compared to 24–42% in other groups);
- **66%** make charitable donations (55–64% in other groups);
- **57%** sign petitions (37–52% in other groups);
- **44%** engage in volunteering (28–38% in other groups);
- **Only 5%** did not participate in any of the listed activities (compared to 14% among civilians without veterans in their families).

Many participants subsequently become coaches and mentors. A concrete example from an interview: “After the Invictus Games, I got a job at the Ministry of Veterans Affairs — to help veterans like me.”

At the same time, the survey of Invictus Ukraine community is not statistically representative, as the sample includes only those with whom contact could be established.

07 Regions where members of the Invictus Games community are active are more open to the implementation of inclusive solutions

The study identifies a bottom-up pressure mechanism at the regional level. Officials acknowledge that Invictus Games participants actively pressure local authorities to create conditions for sport, as they are not willing to accept less. Examples show that in Kryvyi Rih, following the emergence of an active Invictus Ukraine participant, local self-government provided full conditions for sport — including facilities, coaches, and rehabilitation specialists. In Volyn, open archery training sessions attract around 50 people per month. In Chernihiv, a veteran space has been established within the city council. In Rivne, a veteran participant is organizing an inclusive sports festival.

The regional spread of the topic in the media is confirmed by analysis: from concentration in Kyiv in 2016 to organic dissemination across the country by 2025 — Invictus Ukraine has become one of the most geographically widespread veteran-related narratives.

At the same time, although participants exert pressure on local authorities, this pressure is insufficient to drive systemic change. Initiatives remain vulnerable without a transition from individual-level drivers to municipal support. The shortage of infrastructure and qualified adaptive sport coaches at the community level likely remains the main barrier.

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1. List of Partnerships

> Invictus Games National Selection, 2017

The mineral water brand **Morshynska** provided water for the National Selection in Kyiv.

Participation of the Ukrainian National Team in the Invictus Games in Toronto (Canada), 2017.

- 01** **NATO** — provided support for the training process and sports uniforms for National Team participants. The NATO Representation in Ukraine assisted with training camps, sports equipment, and ticket arrangements for the team's travel to Toronto.
- 02** **Crown Agents (Ukraine)**: provided sports equipment for team training. In 2017, they supplied 10 professional Olympic bows for training the Ukrainian team.
- 03** **Ukrainian Canadian Congress** — UCC National — organised a reception in honour of the national team and raised funds for veterans' projects.
- 04** **STB TV Channel**: media partner and sponsor.
- 05** **KLO** fuel station network: supplied fuel and lubricants for the team's logistical needs. KLO also joined the #MillionVoices information campaign in support of the Ukrainian team at the Toronto Games.
- 06** **CUIA Fund**, Ukraine Prosthetic Assistance Project, Prosthetika: provided prosthetics for candidates and members of the National Team.

> Invictus Games National Selection, 2018

Shebel (Shebelynka Oil Refinery): main sponsor of the 2018 National Games.

"Pioner" Stadium (Kyiv): venue for most National Selection events.

Pizza Veterano: provided pizza for the National Games closing party.

Uklon: organized transportation of necessary equipment and provided promo codes for participants.

Participation of the Ukrainian National Team in the Invictus Games in Sydney (Australia), 2018

- 01** **NATO** — provided support for the training process and sports uniforms for National Team participants.
- 02** **Crown Agents (Ukraine)**: provided sports equipment for training. For preparation for the Sydney Games, they supplied equipment for archery, powerlifting, and cycling.
- 03** **STB TV Channel**: media partner and sponsor; produced event coverage.
- 04** **KLO** fuel station network: supplied fuel and lubricants
- 05** **Inter Atletika**: provided professional training equipment for the National Team

> Invictus Games National Selection, 2019

CrossFit Banda sports club: provided rowing machine concepts..

Obolon company: distributed 600 bottles of water to participants of the National Selection in Kyiv on 14 September 2019.

Veteran Hub provided space for the credentials commission, registration, and weigh-in procedures.

Power PRO sports nutrition manufacturer: provided 500 energy bars to participants in sports testing events in Lviv, Odesa, and Kyiv.

Pizza Veterano: provided 80 pizzas for the closing party

> «National Invictus Games 2.0 Online»

The online format was implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related quarantine restrictions

Target Archery School of Dmitriy Lvovskiy provided premises for filming archery instruction, and Sport Life provided access to its sports facilities for filming.

The startup Changeable — provided the winners with branded gifts.

> Invictus Games, 2022

Participation of the Ukrainian National Team in the Invictus Games in The Hague (Netherlands), 2022*

*Originally scheduled for 2020, postponed to 2022 due to the pandemic.

- 01 Come Back Alive** Charitable Foundation, with support from the Petro Poroshenko Foundation: provided UAH 875,000 for team preparation (according to financial reports). In 2020, the foundation held two general assemblies and two training camps for 20 basketball participants (10 players participated), and organized 8 online sessions with American Invictus Games players.
- 02** In 2020, the Ukrainian Invictus Games Organizing Committee and Sport Life signed a Memorandum of Cooperation. Under its terms, National Team members for The Hague Games and subsequent teams received free access to Sport Life gyms. Members of the 2017 and 2018 teams also trained there.
- 03 Embassy of the Netherlands:** provided logistical support and assistance with public events.
- 04 The charitable organisation 'FAVBET FOUNDATION'** donated 600,000 hryvnias to the 'Come Back Alive' Charitable Foundation in support of the Invictus Games.

> Invictus Games National Selection, 2023

Emily Resort: hosted the National Games.

Institute of Public Initiatives: implemented projects focused on veteran adaptation and reintegration.

Friends of Ukraine Foundation: purchased table tennis equipment and "created favorable conditions for training, psychological support, and ensured all necessary resources for high-quality preparation and participation."

Toyota Center Lviv "Diamant": transport partner..

Xsport TV Channel: official broadcaster.

Tribuna.com: media partner.

"Three Elements" wellness complex: provided a swimming pool for events in Lviv.

Diia: application used for submitting participation applications

Razom for Ukraine Foundation: supported National Team preparation.

Eskulab Medical Laboratory, Black Honey coffee chain, UNBROKEN Ukraine prosthetics center, Krayna mineral water brand, BRONX FitnessHub, LIMO company: mentioned as partners, though cooperation details were not specified publicly.

Participation of the Ukrainian National Team in the Invictus Games in Düsseldorf (Germany), 2023

The Ukrainian Invictus Games team publicly communicated its partnerships via social media.

- 01 STB TV Channel:** key media partner.
- 02 Embassy of Germany:** organized reception and supported the Ukrainian team.
- 03 INTERTOP:** main partner of the Support the Unconquered project, implemented jointly with the Come Back Alive Foundation (a project supporting the National Team's participation in the Düsseldorf Games). More than UAH 12 million was raised to support team needs and veteran rehabilitation through sport.
- 04 Dragon Capital:** partner of the "Support the Unconquered" project. Contributed UAH 5 million, including for the needs of the National Team.
- 05 Ciklum:** partner of the "Support the Unconquered" project.
- 06 Razom for Ukraine Charitable Foundation:** supported the work of National Team coaches in 2023.
- 07 Scitec Nutrition Ukraine, Workshop fitness club:** provided the team with sports nutrition.
- 08 Poparada:** provided beanbags.
- 09 BLACKROLL UKRAINE:** conducted training sessions for the team and provided equipment for subsequent training camps; supplied equipment for recovery sessions.
- 10 Rivnovaha.Knyhy:** book sponsor of the team. Compiled a list of books for the National Team library.
- 11 NATO Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) Trust Fund:** provided support for transportation of the team and their participation in the international event in Düsseldorf.
- 12 Uklon:** transport partner.

- 13** **Apollo Next:** partner network of sports clubs.
- 14** **Friends of Ukraine Foundation:** purchased table tennis equipment.
- 15** **Brendari:** brand manager of the National Team uniform. The agency developed the Ukrainian team uniform for the 2023 Games.
- 16** **TYR Sport Ukraine:** provided necessary swimming equipment.
- 17** **Onride Team:** supplied cycling equipment for the team, including cycling apparel for the 2023 Games.
- 18** **Blau-Gelbes Kreuz e.V. and the Ukrainian Culture Network** — provided informational support; organised two events in Germany involving the national team, ensured a presence at Invictus Village (tent), and hosted a reception in honour of the national team with the Ukrainian community.
- 19** **German Armed Forces Sports School** — facilitated a training camp in Warendorf ahead of the Invictus Games.
- 20** **Croatian Ministry of Veterans' Affairs and the Veterans' Centre in Sinj** — facilitated a training camp in Croatia

> **Invictus Games National Selection, 2024**

PUMB Bank: financial partner of the Ukrainian team.

Parkovyi Convention and Exhibition Center (Kyiv): provided the venue for the opening ceremony and supported on-site organization.

Morshynska: supplied water.

Therabody UA: provided massage equipment for the recovery zone.

Poparada: provided beanbags at the venue.

Aspichi: provided VR technologies for psychological support and recreation of participants.

Midgard Education private school: provided a barrier-free swimming pool.

> Invictus Games, 2025

Participation of the Ukrainian National Team in the Invictus Games in Vancouver and Whistler (Canada), 2025

- 01 **PUMB Bank:** financial partner of the Ukrainian National Team for the 2025 Invictus Games.
- 02 **MHP agro-technological company:** became a sponsor of the National Team through the #MHP_Poruch program
- 03 **Intellias:** provided adaptive bicycles for members of the Invictus Games community in Ukraine.
- 04 **Ciklum,** together with the Come Back Alive Foundation: raised UAH 10,200,800 to support the participation of the Ukrainian National Team in the Vancouver Games.
- 05 **NATO** Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP): supported preparation of the Ukrainian team for Invictus Games 2025 in Canada.
- 06 **Suspilne:** broadcast of the Games and media coverage.
- 07 **Army FM:** implemented the information project "Invictus Games. From the Inside," covering team members, coaches, and organizing team as a whole.
- 08 **Green Forest English language school:** provided English training to participants prior to travel to Canada.
- 09 **Ukrzaliznytsia:** provided the Kyiv Central Railway Station building for the official departure event of the National Team for the Games in Canada in 2025.
- 10 **Brendari creative agency:** developed the Ukrainian National Team uniform.
- 11 **True Color Sport:** a Kharkiv-based company producing sports and corporate apparel: manufactured the team uniform.
- 12 **Bukovel resort:** provided infrastructure for training and preparation for the first hybrid Invictus Games of the Ukrainian team in 2025.
- 13 **Canada-Ukraine Foundation, Temerty Foundation, Ukrainian Canadian Congress:** supported the participation of the Ukrainian team in the 2025 Games through covering training camp in Whistler prior to Games.

- 14** **Royal Canadian Air Force:** provided a military aircraft that transported the National Team and accompanying persons (family members and team staff) to Canada.
- 15** **Embassy of Canada in Ukraine:** organizational support and coordination with the Air Force that provided the aircraft.
- 16** **The Ukrainian Spirit Foundation,** founded by Yaryna Levytska, has purchased 10 wheelchairs for wheelchair rugby and donated them to the national team.
- 17** **Ukrainian Canadian Advocacy Group** — organised the 'Gala Night and Opening Reception': it contributed its own resources and the funds raised at the event, which were donated to veterans' projects in Ukraine in the form of microgrants for the national team members; it also provided gifts for the team and a warm welcome.
- 18** **TYR** — provided swimming equipment.
- 19** **Bandit Socks** — supplied the team with socks for training.
- 20** **Nash Format** — provided books to team members.
- 21** **Bake House and Bakerstreet**— provided cakes for Birthday celebrations of participants and team staff.

Appendix 2.

Examples of Secondary Impact of Invictus Games Participants in Ukraine

 Participants	 Civic Activities
Vinnytsia Region	
> Dmytro Chorny participant in national selections	Sitting volleyball training Active in the veteran sector since 2021. Since 2023: Veteran Support Specialist at the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. A sitting volleyball team was established in Vinnytsia. Training takes place three times a week at the Invahsport facility, which provided all necessary equipment. The team participates both in veteran competitions and in competitions for persons with disabilities (Rivne, Kamianets-Podilskyi, Chernihiv, etc.). The goal was to become national champions as a team. Currently, the team has up to 10 members.
Volyn Region	
> Maia Moskvych member of the IG18 and WG22 teams	NGO Lutsk Falcons — archery training. In 2019, she founded the archery club “Lutsk Falcons” after participating in the Invictus Games 2018 international event. The club is visited by approximately 50 veterans per month.
> Kostiantyn Kopeliuk member of the IG25 team	Kostiantyn Kopeliuk: On 27 March 2025, sitting volleyball training sessions were launched. During meetings with city council representatives, their support was secured: the Department of Youth and Sports provided material assistance in the form of balls and a net. The goal is to enable veterans to engage in sport and to arrive at the next Invictus selection with a fully formed team. He also develops pétanque.

	On 30 March 2025, a tournament was held with participation from Invictus Games 2025 participants, including Denys Smolnikov, Yaroslav Sharkyi, and Serhii Khrapko.
Dnipropetrovsk Region	
> Ruslan Serhiichuk member of the IG25 team	NGO Prometey works with veterans and their families, focusing on adaptive sport. A UN grant was secured to build a shooting range for archery and air rifle disciplines. A community space Plus Plus has been created, reaching approximately 2,000 veterans annually (Serhiichuk).
> Valerii Katkin participant in national selections	Organization of competitions and training for veterans and service members; NGO Invincibles; Veterans Family Games; regional Invictus-style competitions in Kryvyi Rih (2021). Valerii Katkin: Captain of the Unconquered team in Kryvyi Rih for three years. Strong cooperation with local authorities enabled full support for veterans and service members to engage in sport. The team currently includes 70 participants across all Invictus sports. Training takes place daily. The team has access to facilities, coaches, rehabilitation specialists, and psychologists. Competitions were held in multiple cities (Lviv, Odesa, Ivano-Frankivsk, Cherkasy, etc.). Local Family Games are held every two weeks for participants and their families. Recently, the team won 14 medals in sitting volleyball. Upcoming participation includes the Dnipro Cup (Dnipro) and Strong Ukraine (Kyiv).
> Serhii Hordieiev member of the WG22 team	Serhii Hordieiev: Currently not engaged in veteran activities; considering returning to military service. Previously worked as Chief Specialist for Veterans Affairs at the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, supporting up to 8,000 veterans.

Zhytomyr Region

- > **Yaroslava Mazur**
member of the
WG22 team

Yaroslava applied as a representative of the NGO “War Veterans’ Sport” (Zhytomyr region) for the procurement of equipment for a gym for veterans, under a grant from the IOM. With the grant funds, a strength training station adapted for adaptive sports was purchased (February 23, 2022). The gym is free of charge and is owned by the municipality of Berdychiv.

Zakarpattia Region

- > **Oksana Reminets**
caregiver for
IG20 and WG22
participant
Rustam Rosul

Creation of opportunities for adaptive sport in the region; organization of events and coordination of veterans.

Veterans are consistently engaged in competitions. For example, following competitions in Lviv, 10 participants from Zakarpattia joined, began training actively, and became more engaged in sport.

Ivano-Frankivsk Region

- > **Yurii Haponchuk**
member of the
AFT24 team

The NGO “Poliuby doliu” organizes training sessions for veterans with the involvement of professional coaches. The organization currently engages more than 50 veterans, who regularly participate in competitions in Ukraine and abroad. Thanks to the organization’s work, Andrii Boychuk was prepared for IG25.

Kyiv Region

- > **Yurii Zekun**
member of the
WG22 team

Training sessions are held in Kyiv, the Kyiv region, and across Ukraine. Veterans are engaged in competitions, and participated in the preparation of the Ukraine sitting volleyball team for international competitions AFT24. Around 16 participants attend regularly.

Kyiv (city)

- > **Oleksandr Androshchuk**
member of the IG25
- > **Oleksii Tiunin**
member of the IG25 team, team captain
- > **Andrii Kucher**
participant in national selections
- > **Yevhenii Omelchuk**
member of the AFT24 team
- > **Serhii Mytsyk**
participant in national selections
- > **Dmytro Kozak**
member of the IG23 team
- > **Yaroslav Sharkyi**
member of the IG25 team
- > **Ihor Salii**
member of the AFT24 team

The NGO "Gentlemen" organizes training sessions for a wheelchair rugby team of veterans and promotes this sport in Ukraine.

NGO Mitsni 300: organization of training sessions and events for veterans and service members; provision of consultations. The NGO Union of Wounded Service Members of Ukraine "Mitsni 300" was established in May 2023 by two airborne soldiers wounded in combat while defending Ukraine.

Over this period, the organization has conducted more than 300 phone and online consultations for active-duty service members, veterans, wounded individuals, and their families, including on issues related to military medical commissions, veteran status, disability status determination, payments, etc. It has also organized trips for more than 100 wounded men and women from hospitals and rehabilitation centers to exhibitions, museums, open training sessions, and similar activities. These processes are ongoing.

As of now:

1) A veteran running club, Mitsni 300, is active. Four participants have taken part in international races in Rome, Brighton, and London.

2) A veteran bowling team Mitsni Shary has been launched.

3) A run was organized on 4 May 2025 in Kyiv (Trukhaniv Island), with 300 participants.

Distances included 1 km, 3 km, and 5 km obstacle runs.

A key feature was paired runs of veterans with children, completing obstacle courses together.

The event also included an expo zones for veteran organizations, partner activations, performances by dance groups, a free food court, and children's entertainment. Mitsni 300 is a charitable family sports event that motivates veterans, promotes patriotic education among youth, and demonstrates to civilians the importance of supporting the military.

4) VetSport to Communities!: an ongoing project implemented six times, involving visits to smaller communities, engagement of local authorities and businesses. Veteran coaches bring adaptive sports equipment and conduct open training sessions where veterans can try adaptive sports and discuss current issues. The primary goal is to engage veterans and wounded service members in sport as a key tool of physical and mental rehabilitation. Operates subject to sponsor support.

5) A group psychological therapy program for former prisoners of war was planned, subject to funding.

6) Plans to establish a local branch, potentially in Svitlovodsk (Kirovohrad region), serving a population of approximately 50,000, including around 350 veterans. Funding remains a key issue. There are also plans to introduce a "veteran assistant" position.

7) Future plans include organizing an archery camp to train veterans, followed by procurement and distribution of equipment for use in local communities.

NGO Power of Defenders (Yevhenii Omelchuk): organization of training in paintball, bowling, climbing, adaptive skiing, and sitting volleyball for veterans and their families. According to Yevhenii, approximately 800 veterans have been reached.

Creation of the "Invincibles" table tennis team (Dmytro Kozak).

NGO Iron Eggs: organization of training and competitions for veterans and service members; regular training in pétanque, boccia, pickleball, and wheelchair basketball.

Organization of a sports event marking the anniversary of a military unit (11 sports disciplines): more than 600 veterans and service members engaged; creation of a sports team within the 112th Territorial Defense Brigade; organization of chess and billiards competitions within the structure of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (Ihor Salii).

Total reach of initiatives: more than 1,800 individuals.

Lviv Region

- > **Pavlo Luchkiv**
member of the IG23 team
- > **Serhii Shymchak**
member of the IG18 team
- > **Dmytro Sydoruk**
member of the IG17 team
- > **Herman Zolotariov**
member of the AFT24 team
- > **Vasyl Zdyrko**
participant in national selections

Invincibles League: organization of veteran competitions (Warriors Cup) and training sessions for veterans and service members.

Pavlo Luchkiv is involved in the regional Department of Sport and Tourism, including adaptive sport, working as a specialist responsible for developing adaptive sports, communicating with veterans and authorities, and supporting implementation of initiatives. His primary sport is archery.

The Warriors Cup in archery engaged approximately 200 veterans, while across other sports (para-sambo, tennis, swimming, wheelchair basketball, athletics, shooting, kayaking, billiards, esports) total engagement reached around 300 participants.

Herman Zolotariov: organization of training for veterans and service members from the Superhumans prosthetics center. In February 2025: 124 veterans; January: approximately 150; March 2025: approximately 120 (month ongoing). Sports include archery, table tennis, inclusive sambo, kickboxing, alpine skiing (including Boichuk), as well as shooting, sitting volleyball, and squash.

Stryi — Vasyl Zdyrko: co-founder of the Stryi House of Warriors with Nazar Fomin. Provides services to veterans, service members, and their families.

Total reach of initiatives: approximately 900 individuals

Mykolaiv Region

- > **Dmytro Oliinyk**
member of the WG22 team
- > **Volodymyr Motelchuk**
participant in national selections
- > **Oleh Kravets**
participant in national selections

Participants established the NGO Gard, reaching approximately 20 individuals. The organization is currently inactive due to Dmytro Oliinyk, Volodymyr Motelchuk, and Oleh Kravets being killed in action

> Oleksandr Ponomariov member of the IG23 team	
Odesa Region	
> Arsen Riaboshapko member of the IG25 team > Illia Pylypenko member of the IG25 team	The NGO "Vilni Voiny" is an organization created by veterans for veterans. It organizes training sessions in wheelchair basketball, sitting volleyball, pickleball, archery, golf, and swimming. It also initiated the organization of two nationwide competitions "On the Wave".
Poltava Region	
> Volodymyr Musiak member of the IG20 team > Artem Pohorilyi member of the AFT24 team	A gym was established with purchased adaptive sports equipment. Artem Pohorilyi organizes sitting volleyball training and visits hospitals to promote adaptive sport.
Rivne Region	
> Dmytro Polovyan member of the IG23 team	As for 2025, Dmytro Polovyan worked at City Hospital No. 2 in Rivne as a physical training instructor and is studying to become a physical therapist. Introduces veterans and service members undergoing treatment to adaptive sports (60–100 individuals reached). Organizes festivals demonstrating adaptive sports and providing information on participation opportunities. The latest festival included archery, rowing, and table tennis. Also involved in procuring wheelchairs for wheelchair basketball, with plans to form a team.

> Andrii Badarak member of the IG20 team	Andrii Badarak organizes veterans in the Rivne region and works as a social worker in a rehabilitation center in Klevan, motivating and preparing veterans for the Invictus Games. Also conducts swimming training sessions for children, including children of defenders..
Sumy Region	
> Mykola Zarytskyi member of the IG23 team	Organization of training sessions for veterans. The NGO includes approximately 15 participants. An agreement was reached with a private gym to allow free use for training sessions. A municipal institution, the veteran space Veteran PRO Sumy Region, has been registered. Currently in the development phase: premises have been identified, the structure and staffing (35 positions) have been approved, and there are significant challenges related to securing funding. Around 10–15 veterans have been engaged in other competitions.
Ternopil Region	
> Oleksii Horb member of the IG25 team	Organization of the first sitting volleyball training sessions in the region and development of adaptive sports for veterans in Ternopil.
Kharkiv Region	
> Serhii Kiyashko member of the AFT24 team	NGO Unbreakable Kharkiv: organization of competitions for National Guard service members and veterans; coordination of veterans after injury; regular participation of National Guard personnel in national-level competitions. Cultural and patriotic events are also organized.

Khmelnyskyi Region

- > **Tetiana Huranska**
sitting volleyball
coach, IG25

Organization of a sitting volleyball tournament in co-operation with the Invictus Games.
Reach: approximately 70 veterans.

Chernivtsi Region

- > **Mykola Hutskal**
participant in
national selections

An NGO has been established as a platform for organizing training sessions for veterans. Currently serves as Director of the Municipal Sports and Recreation Enterprise Bukovyna.

Chernihiv Region

- > **Serhii Dovbysh**
participant in
national selections
for the Invictus
Games

NGO Sertsevir (veteran community in Chernihiv; organization of veteran events).

Began working in the veteran sector four years ago. Nationwide competitions are organized three times a year. In April 2025, the "Sertsevir" Cup was organized in Chernihiv, featuring 8 sports disciplines and registering over 150 veterans.

As for 2025, weekly performances by the "Veterans Theatre" are held in different cities (around 100 people involved in each performance).

Also serves as Director of the municipal non-commercial enterprise "Veteran Space of the Chernihiv City Council," opened in early November 2024. Services include psycho-social adaptation, hippotherapy, veteran support, and recovery through sport. Adaptive sports equipment is planned to be procured within four months, along with the development of an economic hub.

Family retreats are organized once or twice a year, reaching around 2,000 people.

Training programs for adaptive sport coaches among veterans are also conducted. Following the opening of a properly equipped gym, these trained specialists are expected to work there.

Appendix 3. Examples of Veteran Initiatives: Quotes from In-Depth Interviews

Respondent		Quote (verbatim)	Initiative name / identifiers
Type	Nº		
International partner	1	After participating in the Invictus Games, two participants founded a civil society organization in Odesa called "Free Warriors." They started with wheelchair basketball and archery training, and are now expanding the range of adaptive sports they offer to veterans in Odesa and the region.	Free Warriors NGO, Odesa. Wheelchair basketball, archery, and other adaptive sports for veterans. Cooperation with hospitals.
International partner	1	There are cases where people who learned about adaptive sport through visits to hospitals later became ambassadors themselves. For example, I know a story about archery. A person was in hospital, in quite a difficult emotional state. They were introduced to archery. Now he leads the adaptive archery movement in Ukraine and serves as an inspiring example.	Adaptive archery movement in Ukraine (no specific name provided). Leader: veteran and former hospital patient.
International partner	1	There are veterans who participated in the Invictus Games and later joined the organizing team, providing organizational support for the participation of subsequent national teams.	Former participants joining the organizing team of the Ukrainian Invictus Games delegation (no specific name provided).
International partner	1	I know that in Kyiv there is a wheelchair rugby club founded by a captain and member of the Invictus Games team who participated in the Games in Vancouver. There is a similar initiative in Volyn as well.	Wheelchair rugby club, Kyiv — founder: captain / member of the IG team (Vancouver), Oleksii Tiunin. Similar initiative in Volyn (no specific name provided).

International partner	2	In Germany, in addition to Veterans Day, an Invictus sports festival is held every two years. The most recent one brought together around 200 athletes and their families from six countries. This year it will take place again, and I think it will be even larger. / In June 2024, Germany held its first National Veterans Day. It was a very strong event. It continues to develop and expand.	1) First National Veterans Day in Germany — June 2024. 2) Invictus Germany sports festival — every two years (200+ participants from 6 countries). Both initiatives were inspired by the Düsseldorf 2023 Games.
International partner	2	Nigeria joined us in Düsseldorf in 2023. After that, they started building a large Invictus center for the armed forces in Abuja, because previously they did not even have a full understanding of the number of veterans and wounded personnel. This center will not only be medical, but will also include developed sports and rehabilitation infrastructure for service members and their families. I believe it will become a model not only for Nigeria, but for other African countries.	Armed Forces Invictus Centre, Abuja, Nigeria — hospital and rehabilitation-sport infrastructure; planned as a model for African countries. Initiated after participation in IG Düsseldorf 2023.
International partner	2	In Australia there is Invictus Australia — essentially a national hub. In Germany, Invictus Germany has also been created. In Australia, they are considering holding regional Games to maintain the momentum of the Invictus movement.	Invictus Australia — national hub; potential regional Games. Invictus Germany — national hub. Both represent long-term legacy structures following participation/ hosting of the Games.
International partner	2	Ukraine has submitted a bid to host the Invictus Games in the future, and we fully support this ambition and are ready to assist when circumstances allow. We have an active research program, conduct training in the Carpathians, provide equipment, and support local initiatives.	Ukraine's bid to host the Invictus Games (2029 — resilience and recovery; 2031 — independence). Training in the Carpathians; equipment provision (IGF program for Ukraine).
International partner	3	Many of the athletes I started the program with have continued as coaches, mentors, or moved into administrative roles within the team.	Former participants in wheelchair basketball programs transitioning into

		They want this process to continue and these opportunities to remain available to others.	coaching, mentoring, or team staff roles (specific names not indicated; it concerns the wheelchair basketball program and preparation for the Invictus Games The Hague.)
International partner	3	Ukraine definitely needs a mentorship program. When an athlete who has already gone through the process becomes a mentor and guides another person — it is incredibly powerful. The U.S. Air Force has done an excellent job in this area. They have a fully developed mentorship system. After being an athlete, you can complete training in their AFW2 program, become a mentor, and later speak publicly — representing the program and sharing your experience.	AFW2 mentorship program (U.S. Air Force) as a model for Ukraine (specific names not indicated; it concerns a mentorship system in which participants transition into mentors and public representatives of the program).
Invictus Games participant	1	At the level of Lviv region, where I am an ambassador of the project — it is called the Invincibles League, a project of the Lviv Regional Military Administration. The Invincibles League is specifically designed for the physical and psychological recovery of veterans. It includes various adaptive sports, mountain climbing, rafting, swimming — well, perhaps not the exact terms — kayaking, paddleboarding, a wide range of activities that service members with different types of injuries can participate in.	Invincibles League, Lviv region (project of the Lviv Regional Military Administration; focused on physical and psychological recovery of veterans through adaptive sports).
Invictus Games participant	2	I am the founder of the project Spotted Raccoons. It is a children's camp project for ages 8 to 18. I first tried to run a camp after returning from the U.S. trip... The idea itself is not directly connected to the Invictus Games. But during the Games I made new connections, including with the	Spotted Raccoons children's camp project .

		Canadian community. That helped me later find like-minded people for the camp project. Some level of public visibility also helped people understand who they were going to — they could read about me and what I do.	
Invictus Games participant	2	I know that some of the guys at the local level organize sports activities — in Ternopil, Sumy, Kyiv, even in Odesa. I don't know how active they were in sport before, but after the Games they started organizing activities not only for themselves but also for local communities.	Local-level sports initiatives.
Invictus Games participant	3	Dmytro Sydoruk, who was killed, was actually engaged in the development of veteran sport in Lviv. Yes, after Invictus. Well, although I don't know, maybe it just happened that way, I'm now going to say that it was after Invictus, maybe it's not so, but he won't say anymore. But the fact is that after 2017, well, he was engaged specifically in veteran sport in Lviv. Well, maybe before that he simply did not have time, since he was preparing for those competitions themselves. Or maybe just, yes, that this needed to be promoted, and he did it at home, that is, on his own shoulders there in Lviv.	Development of adaptive sport in Lviv.
Invictus Games participant	3	Maia Moskvych, you know her, right? Well, she also after Invictus, by the way, opened an archery section and developed it there.	Archery section.
Invictus Games participant	3	In Chernihiv I know the guys are engaged, also developing it. Serhii in Kyiv, basically, also. In Cherkasy. Well, many, actually, many.	Local initiatives in Kyiv, Cherkasy, Chernihiv (no specific names).

Invictus Games participant	4	And we started all this with two sports : volleyball and tennis. Uh-huh. And now we already have six sports. That is, we created a public organization that is engaged in rehabilitation through sport. And we conduct wheelchair basketball, sitting volleyball, pickleball, swimming, archery and golf. And we form a community, a veteran community, introduce new sports, and everything, according to those values that we adopted in Invictus.	Public organization engaged in rehabilitation through sport (no name and no city indicated).
Invictus Games participant	4	In Ternopil there is — Oleksii Horb created, also created a public organization that engages in sitting volleyball and archery.	NGO in Ternopil engaged in sitting volleyball and archery.
Invictus Games participant	4	Then in Khmelnytskyi sitting volleyball is practiced by Valerii Odainyk.	Sitting volleyball in Khmelnytskyi.
Invictus Games participant	4	In Kyiv, in Kyiv they practice wheelchair rugby. Sania Andrushchuk and Oleksii Tiunin.	Wheelchair rugby in Kyiv.
Invictus Games participant	4	In Kharkiv, Misha Tarasenko develops CrossFit.	CrossFit in Kharkiv.
Invictus Games participant	4	And in Dnipro, Rusik develops archery and sitting volleyball.	Sitting volleyball and archery in Dnipro.
Invictus Games participant	4	And In Rivne, the guys are engaged, like, in powerlifting.	Powerlifting section for veterans in Rivne.
Invictus Games participant	4	Well, football is now actively developing. That is, there is. Even in Odesa we already have quite a lot of people who say that they are doing it. Well, and how they are doing it, well, that is a separate topic.	Sitting football in Odesa.
Invictus Games participant	5	I mean, before 2021 there was the public organization Invincibles Kryvbas. We conducted, together with the Invictus Games, with StratCom, we conducted competitions in Kryvyi Rih.	Invincibles Kryvbas, sports competitions in Kryvyi Rih.

		We had, we had national competitions — Invincibles Kryvyi Rih. We were the first who introduced prize money for prize places. Our guys received 10,000 for gold and so on. There were cases when swimmers, wheelchair users — swimmers — he swam in five, in five categories, 50 m backstroke, you know, 50 butterfly and so on. Well, he took 50,000 home.	
Invictus Games participant	5	Well, there were held, Hart was held. Seems in Kyiv, "Hart" — competitions.	Sports competitions "Hart" in Kyiv.
Invictus Games participant	5	And then, I know, after that it spread, Chernihiv held, Dnipro held, the guys saw that in Kryvyi Rih, that it is possible to hold these Games locally and it started across all of Ukraine.	Sports competitions in cities of Ukraine.
Invictus Games participant	6	And there, for example, Hart, or Chernihiv competitions. What are they called? Northern Outpost. In Lviv there are many different veteran competitions now. If we take them as a whole, this is very good and positive development for veterans who, well, are left alone with themselves. They do not know what to do with themselves, and then they see that veterans somewhere are engaged in something. They themselves start to join, and it positively affects them. They stop, I don't know, abusing alcohol, thinking some nonsense, closing themselves off, and they begin to change something in their lives.	Sports competitions: "Hart", "Northern Outpost".
Invictus Games participant	6	My colleague on the team, an archer, at a certain point in her life, after the Invictus Games, created such a, mm, an archery school. And for a long time she both held competitions and trained her veterans, did this quite enthusiastically, but then the full-scale war began and she returned to combat duty. The club exists, but not with her participation. There are already other coaches there, but yes, it continues to exist, this club.	Archery club.

Invictus Games participant	6	I heard that there were, for example, such activities, or they organized sports ambassadors. They trained certain veterans so that they would continue this work, so that they would direct veterans to recover through sport. But how effective this project became, it is difficult for me to say, because I do not see its continuation. I heard that such a program existed, they trained these veterans.	Sports ambassadors program.
Invictus Games participant	7	The Games themselves can make you want to do your own work. I know guys from the team, well, last year's team already, who were in Vancouver and in Canada, they, for example, founded their own public organizations that are engaged in the development of adaptive sports in their region. Or specific sports, such as wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby competitions.	NGOs for development of adaptive sports in cities of Ukraine.
Invictus Games participant	8	The Falcons were shooting, there was archery. And Oleh Dochymynskyi sent us a link — register, because this is our *** "Falcon" founded by Maia, who won the Invictus Games and after returning she founded this archery club.	Archery club.
Invictus Games participant	8	In Odesa, our team participants Illia. Oh God, help me remember. Illia and Riaboshapko. The two of them and also created an NGO there, engaging in rehabilitation... there the guys train, take part in various competitions, they do wheelchair basketball.	Wheelchair basketball in Odesa.
Invictus Games participant	8	In my city as well, our participant also created training both in sitting volleyball.	Sitting volleyball (city not specified).
Invictus Games participant	9	Through sport there appeared, I don't know, both friends and some kind of, I don't know, also there was restored both media presence and health and some kind of motivation, and even activity. Then I opened this archery club, it brought me money, it was already my work.	Archery club.

Invictus Games participant	9	For example, Zozuliak, he is very good. He became, well, he went into the Paralympic team. And now, as far as I know, he is an ambassador, basically, he engages in prosthetics, and is an ambassador of upper-limb prosthetics.	A veteran joined the Paralympic team and is an ambassador of prosthetics.
Invictus Games participant	9	Serhii Shevchuk, also from my team, he in Lviv region is engaged in sport and organizes a veterans' cup, as far as I know, also actively supports.	Veterans' Cup in Lviv region.
Invictus Games participant	9	Now there are a lot of different competitions. And Zvytiaha, and Hart, and Games and the Invincibles League. That is, in my opinion, now sport has developed very much in the media.	Adaptive sports competitions.
Invictus Games participant	10	In Vinnytsia, it seems, the guys opened, in Kyiv they opened. Where else are the guys now? In Ternopil Oleksa. Well, that is, I will tell you, quite a lot of guys became interested and many guys went to play, I know two or three in arm football play in teams there, Bartka, Khrestonostsi.	Local initiatives for development of adaptive sport.
Invictus Games participant	10	Here even in my region a guy opened I don't know whether a club or an NGO for playing pétanque. That is, he received a grant to purchase equipment, build a terrain and now plays.	NGO for pétanque.
Officials (Expert)	1	We entered this process and began to develop... a training program. It is clear that this was fully supported by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs. And today we are talking about the fact that such a program already exists.	Training program for coaches (IREX together with the Ministry of Veterans Affairs) on working with veterans.
Officials (Expert)	1	Maia Moskvych... participated in archery, then founded the archery club Lutsk Falcons.	Archery club "Lutsk Falcons" (Lutsk).
Officials (Expert)	1	Today we simply have an incredible number of such things. This is Come Back Alive, Gard.	The Gard project (Come Back Alive).

Officials (Expert)	1	What Serhii Koniushok and Yurii Stepaniuk did about strongmen.	Strongman competitions for veterans (Strongman Federation of Ukraine).
Officials (Expert)	1	Strongman competitions for veterans (Strongman Federation of Ukraine).	Polissia Cup (regional competitions in the Chernihiv region).
Officials (Expert)	1	Sasha Teren... launched his show, Vidval Nih. Well, not only him. In fact, as a member of the national team, he highlighted communicatively the issue that, for example, in our cities there is no inclusivity.	YouTube show, Vidval Nih or All inclusive (educational media project).
Officials (Expert)	1	Sasha... founded the NGO Gentlemen and they are engaged in wheelchair rugby. Yes, that is his initiative together with brothers-in-arms.	NGO Gentlemen (wheelchair rugby team).
Officials (Expert)	1	In Cherkasy sailing sport was opened for veterans... there was a sailing school.	Sailing school for veterans (Cherkasy).
Officials (Expert)	1	In Zaporizhzhia there's a great powerlifting team... Zhenia Oleksiienko.	Regional powerlifting team (Zaporizhzhia).
Officials (Expert)	1	The Ministry of Internal Affairs is quite actively engaged now, and they have border guards, police, and the National Guard. And they have, well, they direct certain initiatives within the structure so that such sport develops, they even have representatives in different regions.	Internal initiatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Police, State Border Guard Service, National Guard): creation of a regional network of representatives and competitions.
Officials (Expert)	2	They are doing a lot of adaptive premises, already understanding the requirements. Someone is redoing descents into the pool. That is, such a movement is a bit there.	Program for adaptation of MIA infrastructure (pools, sports halls).
Officials (Expert)	2	We, for example, with the owner of Toronto, there in Toronto the center was Ibis... they said yes, we will restore already remembering your requirements.	Adaptation of hotel business (Hotel Ibis / Toronto Center) to the needs of wheelchair users.

Officials (Expert)	2	We pushed them to refurbish Koncha-Zaspa, Olympic, a location that did not have normal adaptive conditions, for example, for accommodation... now there both Paralympians and everyone else have some [conditions].	Modernization of NSC Koncha-Zaspa (adaptation of rooms and sports base).
Officials (Expert)	2	the story with Taira... we then arrived with a poster, we Free Taira... This campaign worked. She was released only because of public pressure... she and others now... are constant speakers... advocate already within their program.	International advocacy campaign "Free Taira" (use of Games visibility for release of prisoners).
Officials (Expert)	3	Now we have those projects that grew out of the Games, this is training of adaptive sports coaches.	Training program for adaptive sports coaches (systemic state project).
Officials (Expert)	3	Teams that are already organized by the participants of the Invictus teams themselves, which then go further, around themselves create their small communities.	Local veteran sports communities created by participants in their communities.
Organizing team (Expert)	1	Maia Moskvych. She founded her archery club in Lutsk.	Archery club Lutsk Falcons (Lutsk).
Organizing team (Expert)	1	Illia Pylypenko and Arsen... they created their NGO Free Warriors... have already held the first such All-Ukrainian competitions in Odesa.	NGO Free Warriors (Odesa): training in 5–6 sports, all-Ukrainian competitions.
Organizing team (Expert)	1	He created his NGO Northern Outpost. They also organize both training and competitions in Chernihiv.	NGO Northern Outpost (Chernihiv).
Organizing team (Expert)	1	Oleksandr Andrushchuk and Oleksii Tiunin, they created the NGO Gentlemen. And they conduct training in wheelchair rugby.	NGO Gentlemen (Kyiv): regular wheelchair rugby training.
Organizing team (Expert)	1	Andrii Kucher... also created his organization Mitsni 300... they organize runs there, play bowling.	NGO Mitsni 300: running community, runs.
Organizing team (Expert)	1	In the Ivano-Frankivsk region... Yura Haponchuk. He also created his NGO Poliuby doliu... they train together with veterans.	NGO Poliuby doliu (Ivano-Frankivsk region).

Organizing team (Expert)	1	Volodia Mosiak, he created his sports club. This is a gym... purchased equipment... veterans, children train.	Sports gym/club of Volodymyr Mosiak (Karlivka, Poltava region).
Organizing team (Expert)	1	Sashko Kutoratskyi. He created his NGO Dnipro Honor... engaged in sports rehabilitation.	NGO Dnipro Honor (Dnipro).
Organizing team (Expert)	1	In Kryvyi Rih... after participation in Invictus Games they created their own competitions for veterans and their families.	Veterans and family competitions in Kryvyi Rih (initiator — Valerii Katkin)
Organizing team (Expert)	2	Andrii [Badarak]... he lives in Klevan... he started training children in swimming. He has a group... about 50 children now.	Children's swimming section of Andrii Badarak (Klevan, Rivne region).
Organizing team (Expert)	2	They have now founded a charitable foundation... aimed at supporting service members in their region, locally.	Charitable foundation of Veniamin Bondarchuk (Vinnytsia region).
Organizing team (Expert)	2	Oleksandr Chub... opened a children's camp, Spotted Raccoons, which today is really great... separate programs for families of the fallen, prisoners.	Children's camp Spotted Raccoons
Organizing team (Expert)	2	Mykola Zarytskyi... won a grant... opened a kindergarten in Kyiv, and in Sumy he also does activity specifically in veteran sports.	Kindergarten (Kyiv) and veteran sports in Sumy.
Organizing team (Expert)	2	In Mykolaiv... the guys created a veteran sports club Hart and literally brought their comrades by the hand to the gym.	Veteran sports club "Hart" (Mykolaiv).
Organizing team (Expert)	3	Andrii Badarak... won the Ukrainian championship in swimming among Paralympians... studied to become a rehabilitation specialist... now he is a coach in a children's sports school... he has about 50 children working every day.	Children's swimming and rehabilitation (Zoria/Klevan, Rivne region).

Organizing team (Expert)	3	Yana [Maia] Moskvych... now studies to become a psychotherapist at the Ukrainian Catholic University... will continue working in this field.	Professional psychotherapeutic activity (new initiative).
Organizing team (Expert)	3	Yana [Maia] Moskvych participated in archery competitions, and she also had an archery sports club opened in Lutsk.	Archery club (Lutsk).
Organizing team (Expert)	3	Ihor Halushka also became a coach-teacher and rehabilitation specialist... he is simply a very good role model.	Rehabilitation and teaching activity of Ihor Halushka.
Organizing team (Expert)	3	Artem... from the city of Cherkasy... he led and created a veteran football sports club.	Veteran football club (Cherkasy).
Organizing team (Expert)	4	Maia Moskvych... founded the first archery school 'Archers'... became a center of archery in Lutsk and later in Volyn region.	Archery school "Archers" (Lutsk, Volyn region).
Organizing team (Expert)	4	Volodia Moshak, he created his gym in Karlivka... for veterans, for their families, for service members.	Veteran sports gym (Karlivka, Poltava region).
Organizing team (Expert)	4	They create a center engaged in sports adaptation... in Odesa. The same group exists in Lviv, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, in Ternopil.	Regional network of adaptive sports centers (Odesa, Lviv, Khmelnytskyi, etc.).
Organizing team (Expert)	4	The first presidential decree on sports rehabilitation of ATO veterans was signed exactly at the Invictus Games... in May 2018.	Presidential decree on sports rehabilitation (institutional impact).
Organizing team (Expert)	4	This year a resolution on adaptive sport was adopted... on the development of adaptive sport in communities. And it all started from the Invictus Games.	State Resolution on adaptive sport (2024).
Organizing team (Expert)	4	His work still lives in Lviv. His advertising partners continue... his comrades continue this work [production of special mouthpieces for shooting with the mouth].	Production of adaptive equipment (legacy of Dmytro Afanasiev, Lviv).

Organizing team (Expert)	4	We pushed them to refurbish Koncha-Zaspa... widened doors, completely renovated, removed all barriers in bathrooms.	Modernization of NSC Koncha-Zaspa (inclusive infrastructure).
Organizing team (Expert)	4	In Bukovel... slopes are being formed, and also... storage of equipment for mono-ski... so that persons with amputations can ski.	Adaptation of ski infrastructure (Bukovel resort).
Organizing team (Expert)	5	Serhii... now an instructor in shooting. In Lviv we opened a shooting range, and Serhii went to work there.	Shooting range in Lviv (employment of veterans).
Organizing team (Expert)	5	A veteran in Varash... he is the driver there. Says: 'I will move, I will change all this... integrate this [at the nuclear power plant]'.	Sports initiative at Rivne Nuclear Power Plant (Varash).
Organizing team (Expert)	5	Ivan wants to open a school for the blind. They received a grant... will develop shooting for such as themselves.	Archery school for the blind (grant project).
Organizing team (Expert)	5	They massively open cafés, sports clubs... give jobs to entrepreneurs.	Network of veteran businesses (cafés, private sports clubs).
Family member	1	We founded in 2022 a charitable foundation to support veterans and their families. And the direction of adaptive sport we selecting as one of the main and fundamental ones. We believe in it very much as a format of recovery.	Charitable foundation to support veterans and their families (founded 2022; no specific name). Directions: adaptive sport, reskilling (training sappers for humanitarian demining), psychological support. Trips to Adaptive Sports Center (Colorado, USA, 2023 and 2024/2025).
Family member	1	I know that Illia, he was in the Invictus Games, and he created an organization as well, for supporting veterans. This is all very illustrative. Ihor Halushka, he	1) Organization for support of veterans (founded by Illia; no name).

		traveled with us then, and he also actively supports veterans in Lviv, in Lviv region.	2) Initiatives of Ihor Halushka in Lviv/Lviv region (grant for equipment).
Family member	2	We had, this was before the full-scale invasion, the NGO Invincibles Kryvyi Rih, where we engaged and trained the guys as much as possible.	NGO Invincibles Kryvyi Rih (before full-scale invasion). Engaging and training veterans.
Family member	2	He entered a higher education institution. And he wants to become a coach. He will train those like him, veterans who have been injured, I think.	Training of IG participant in higher education institution to become a coach.
Family member	2	I know examples that veterans went into professional sport after Invictus. Vitya Lehkodukh. He is a member, if I'm not mistaken, of the Paralympic team in discus throw. Viktor Lehkodukh from Lviv.	Transition to Paralympic sport: Viktor Lehkodukh (Lviv) — member of the national Paralympic team in discus throw following participation in the Invictus Games.
Family member	3	He met his friend at the Invictus Games, now colleague, with whom they now co-operate, create their NGO, spread all this further. Well, and they succeeded, that is, I believe that they now have a very successful organization, Free Warriors. This autumn they already held their first competitions in Odesa on the wave.	NGO Free Warriors (Odesa) — adaptive sport for veterans. Co-founders: two IG participants who met at the Games. First competitions in autumn (adaptive rowing "on the wave," ~100 participants). Support from the IGF team (wheelchairs, informational and media support).
Family member	4	He was a deputy of the Kyiv City Council of the ninth convocation. He was a deputy for a very short time and, unfortunately, died. But he constantly had public activity and was also involved in such a public association Diia — the state initiative	Public association Diia (State initiative of Yarosh, Dmytro Yarosh) — a patriotic civic movement (all regions of Ukraine).

		of Dmytro Yarosh. Because he served, was the first deputy commander of the Ukrainian Volunteer Army of Dmytro Yarosh.	IG participant — an active participant of the movement, a deputy of the Kyiv City Council (healthcare committee, rehabilitation of veterans). Killed; rehabilitation projects remained unfinished.
Family member	5	After the Invictus Games he also started playing golf professionally. And he wanted to develop golf as a rehabilitation sport for Ukrainian veterans. Plus he became a city council deputy, and, being a deputy, wanted to develop veteran sport as well.	Promotion of golf as a rehabilitation sport for veterans — an initiative of an IG participant (team captain). Organization of free morning sessions in golf clubs. Opening of facilities for veterans. Deputy activity in the city council aimed at developing veteran sport (city name not specified).
Family member	5	He told his acquaintances from the military about the Invictus Games. That is, he spread information and thus encouraged them to participate in future Games.	Informal ambassador activity of an IG participant — dissemination of information among military personnel, engagement of new participants in the Games (no formal name of the organization).





INVICTUS GAMES: TEAM UKRAINE



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THE JOURNEY MUST GO ON

Kyiv 2026