



2018

UN Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index for Eastern Ukraine

Frontier communities of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts: a neglected resource

About USE

The UN Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index for Eastern Ukraine (USE) is an analytical tool designed to improve the understanding of societal dynamics in government-controlled areas (GCA) of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, and neighboring Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. This helps to identify strategic entry points for policies and programs that contribute to strengthening social cohesion.

USE is based on the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index methodology, which was originally developed in Cyprus by the Center for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development and UNDP. The initiative in Ukraine is jointly implemented by three UN entities, UNDP, UNICEF and IOM, under the overall direction of the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, and is one of the UN's evidence-based knowledge products for joint analysis and programming in Ukraine.

USE is implemented on an annual basis and consists of two components: one component captures the views of 6,000 adults residing in the five oblasts in eastern Ukraine, including along the GCA side of the contact line; the other component captures the views of adolescents in Donetsk and Luhansk GCAs. The USE conceptual model comprises more than 70 indicators, each measured through multiple questionnaire items.

Conceptualization and analysis of the data has been done in consultations with government and civil society representatives in Kyiv and in each of the five oblasts. For more information on USE and to see the results of the first (2017) and second (2018) waves please visit use.scoreforpeace.org.

Introduction

The contact line (CL) stretches for 487 kilometers between the GCAs and non-government controlled areas (NGCAs) of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. In addition to being exposed to the life-threatening dangers associated with armed conflict, the population living along the CL also faces lack of access to basic services, scarcity of economic opportunities, and broken family ties and friendships due to the division between the GCAs and NGCAs.

Building on numerous regular assessments covering the humanitarian situation, economic conditions and need for protection of people and communities living along or in close proximity to the CL,¹ this brief identifies entry points for recovery initiatives that also help to strengthen the social fabric of conflict-affected communities. It highlights the main differences between the population living close to the CL and that living in other GCAs of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, as well as the differences between the Donetsk oblast CL and Luhansk oblast CL. This brief seeks to highlight that, while the two oblasts and the two segments of the CL share some characteristics, they also demonstrate significant differences. Understanding these differences is essential to designing more responsive, tailored community-based recovery interventions that will have greater potential for impact.

The findings summarized in this report are based on the results of 700 face-to-face interviews with people residing within 15 kilometers of the CL on the GCA side. The indicators presented in this brief were selected according to their statistically significant difference, not by the overall value of each indicator.² In other words, indicators that did not show significant differences between areas close to the CL and other parts of the oblast are not addressed in this brief. For a more comprehensive understanding of which indicators may have particular importance for social cohesion in eastern Ukraine, this brief should be read in conjunction with the USE 2018 thematic briefs.

Summary of key findings

Compared to areas further away from the CL in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, people living at the CL experience distinct vulnerabilities and strengths, including:

- **A sense of isolation and insecurity.** People residing along the CL report lower levels of connectivity, less access to a number of public services, and lower levels of personal security. This creates a sense of isolation, and even abandonment and neglect.
- **A bleak view of economic opportunities and low locality satisfaction.** People living along the CL have a more pessimistic outlook regarding job opportunities. This is related to poor transportation networks, which reduce the prospects for finding work and/or for commuting. Low locality satisfaction also comes as no surprise, and residents along the CL, especially young people, remain the least satisfied with the availability of leisure activities, as well as prospects for raising a family and children.
- **A high desire for civic engagement, but limited opportunities.** People living along the CL demonstrate higher readiness to take part in community activities, but they also report fewer opportunities for civic engagement.

There are, however, also **distinct differences between the Luhansk and Donetsk CL areas:**

- **Higher intergroup animosity at Luhansk CL.** People living at the Luhansk CL have less favorable attitudes toward people from different social groups as well as people holding particular political views, such as those who support closer ties with the EU as well as those who support closer ties with Russia. The Luhansk CL population also reports a higher sense of social threat being posed to them by different groups (e.g., a fear of declining job opportunities or rising crime rates).
- **Higher support for autonomy for NGCAs at Donetsk CL.** The share of those who support a political settlement of the conflict where the NGCAs are granted autonomy within Ukraine is significantly higher in the Donetsk CL areas than in the Luhansk CL.

¹ See e.g., <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/ukraine/document/ukraine-2018-humanitarian-needs-overview-hno>, http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_ukr_report_humanitarian_trend_analysis_september_2017_0.pdf and <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/ENACARRegion/Pages/UAReports.aspx>

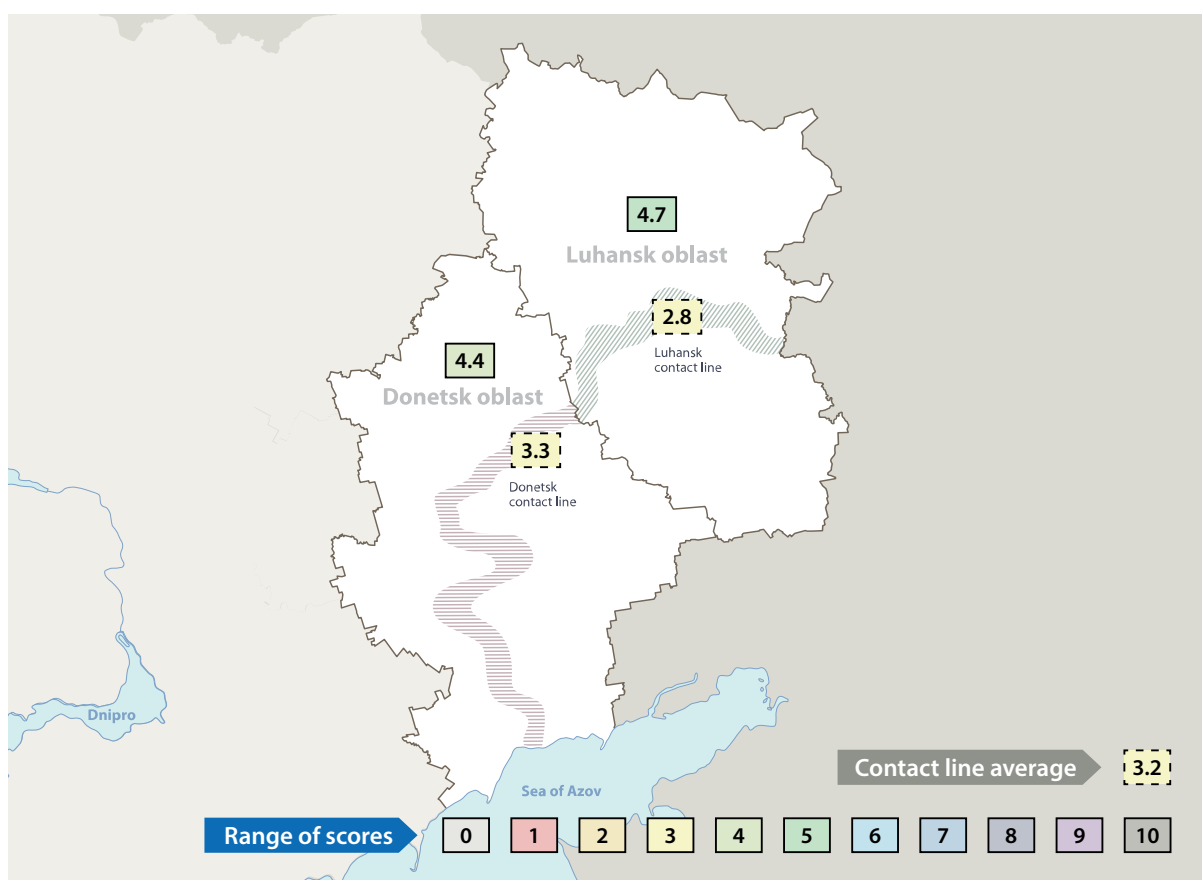
² Scores for indicators are measured on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates that an indicator is not observed at all while 10 indicates the indicator is observed strongly and prevalently. A list of indicators with significantly different scores between CLs and the rest of the oblast can be found in Annex A.

Key vulnerabilities and strengths in CL areas compared to the rest of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts

Security and provision of services

The level of personal security is lower for residents near the CL than for residents in other parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (see Figure 1).³ Specifically, most residents think that law-enforcement agencies cannot sufficiently protect them from violence, and they fear walking alone at night. Overall, the lowest sense of personal security is along the CL in Luhansk oblast, which may be due to its rural make-up and poorer connectivity, with the associated sense of isolation and remoteness. A demographic breakdown shows that women above the age of 60 feel a particularly low level of personal security, which is also the case for the rest of eastern Ukraine (see the USE brief *Key changes from 2017 to 2018*).

■ **Figure 1. Personal security***



*The boundaries, names and the designations used on the maps in this brief do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

The quality and access to public services are generally rated lower along the CL than in other parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. In particular, road quality, public transportation and the availability of drinking water are rated significantly lower among residents along the CL than in other parts of the two oblasts (see Table 1). Noteworthy, the difference in scores for service satisfaction between the Luhansk CL and the rest of Luhansk oblast is much higher than for the Donetsk CL and Donetsk oblast. This can, in part, be attributed to the greater remoteness or isolation of the Luhansk CL, not at least given the fact that there is only one pedestrian crossing-point connecting the GCA and NGCAs in Luhansk oblast.

³ Personal security refers to the degree to which people feel safe from violence in daily life.

■ **Table 1. Service provision assessment in Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts in 2018**

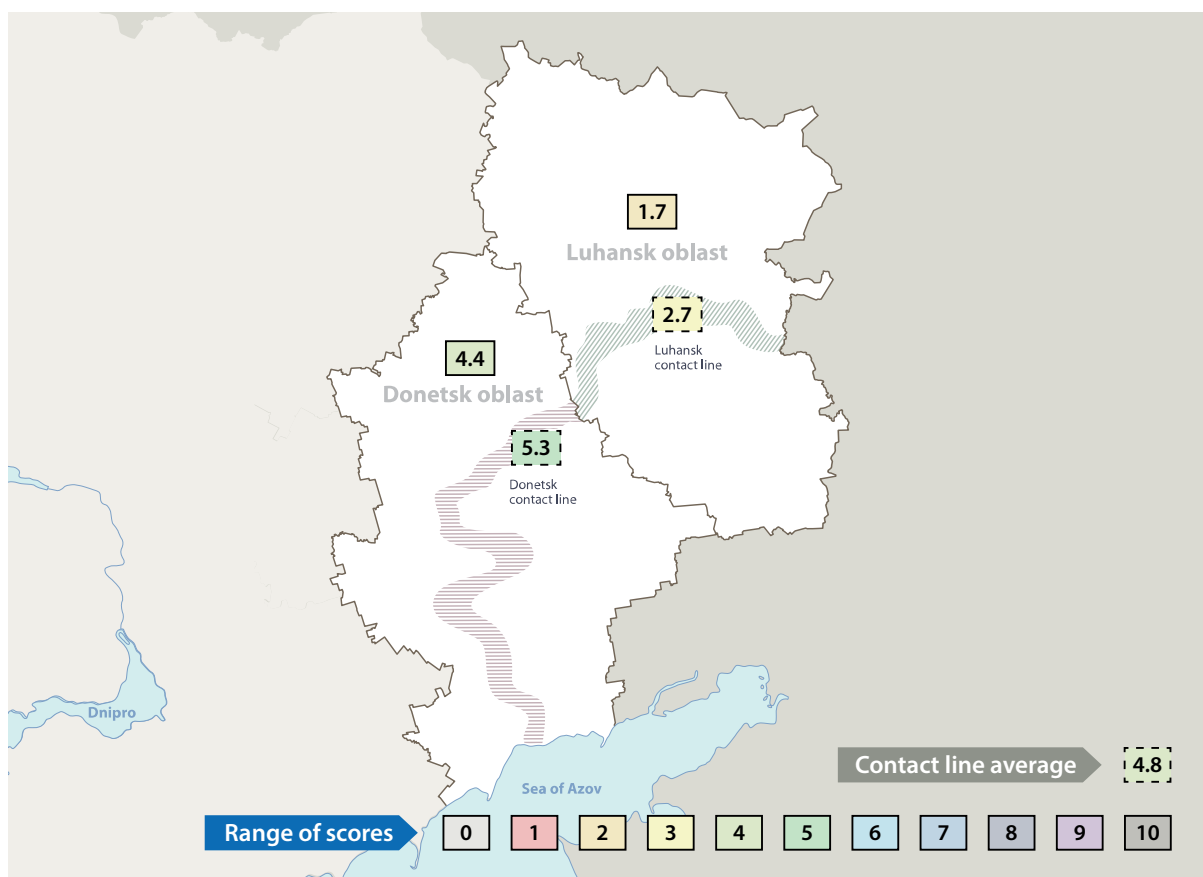
Services*	Donetsk oblast	Donetsk oblast CL	Luhansk oblast CL	Luhansk oblast
Administrative services	6.0	6.1	5.2	6.4
Public transportation	5.9	5.3	4.0	4.7
Communal services	5.8	5.3	4.9	5.6
Secondary education	5.7	5.8	6.0	5.6
Higher education	5.6	5.7	5.7	5.3
Social services	5.2	5.3	4.9	5.1
Healthcare services	4.4	4.7	3.9	4.0
Justice services	4.5	4.2	3.8	4.3
Road quality	3.9	3.1	1.5	2.3
Shortage of drinking water**	4.4	5.3	2.7	1.7

* A 0.5 difference in scores indicates a notable difference. Significant differences between scores in the CL compared to the respective oblast are marked in bold.

** This indicator was measured as the absence of the service and should be interpreted differently from scores for other indicators in this table (i.e., as a score of dissatisfaction).

The difference in scores for drinking water shortages and road quality between the CL and the rest of the oblasts is particularly significant. Shortages of drinking water are more severe along the CL than in other parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (see Figure 2). In addition to insufficient water supplies, there are also issues with the poor quality of groundwater, and lack of maintenance of water infrastructure in the area.⁴ Shelling of water infrastructure facilities further exacerbates what is an already difficult situation.

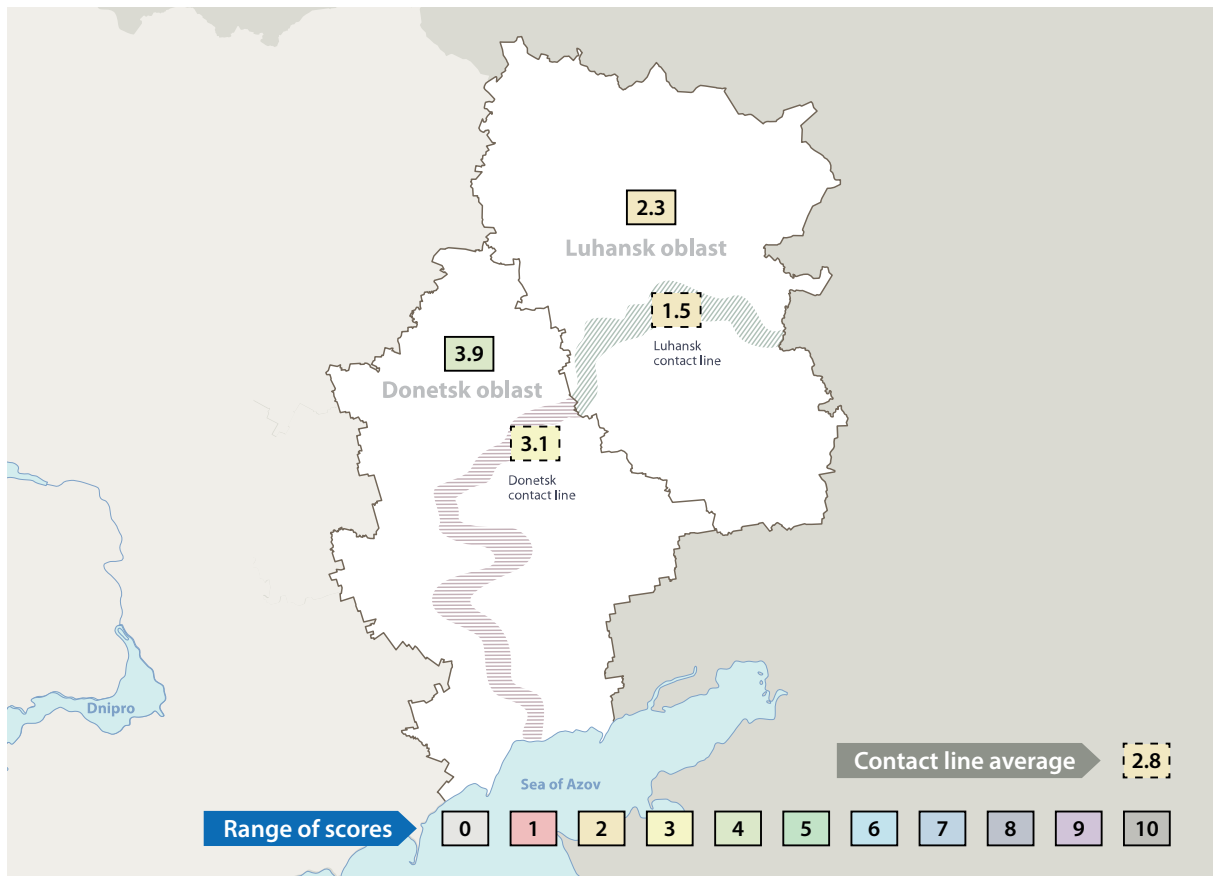
■ **Figure 2. Shortage of drinking water**



Road quality is also worse in areas along the CL, although there are also regional differences (see Figure 3). Many of the roads along the CL have been destroyed by shelling or have become inaccessible due to the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance. In addition, most settlements along the CL are located in rural areas, which typically lack regular maintenance throughout the country.

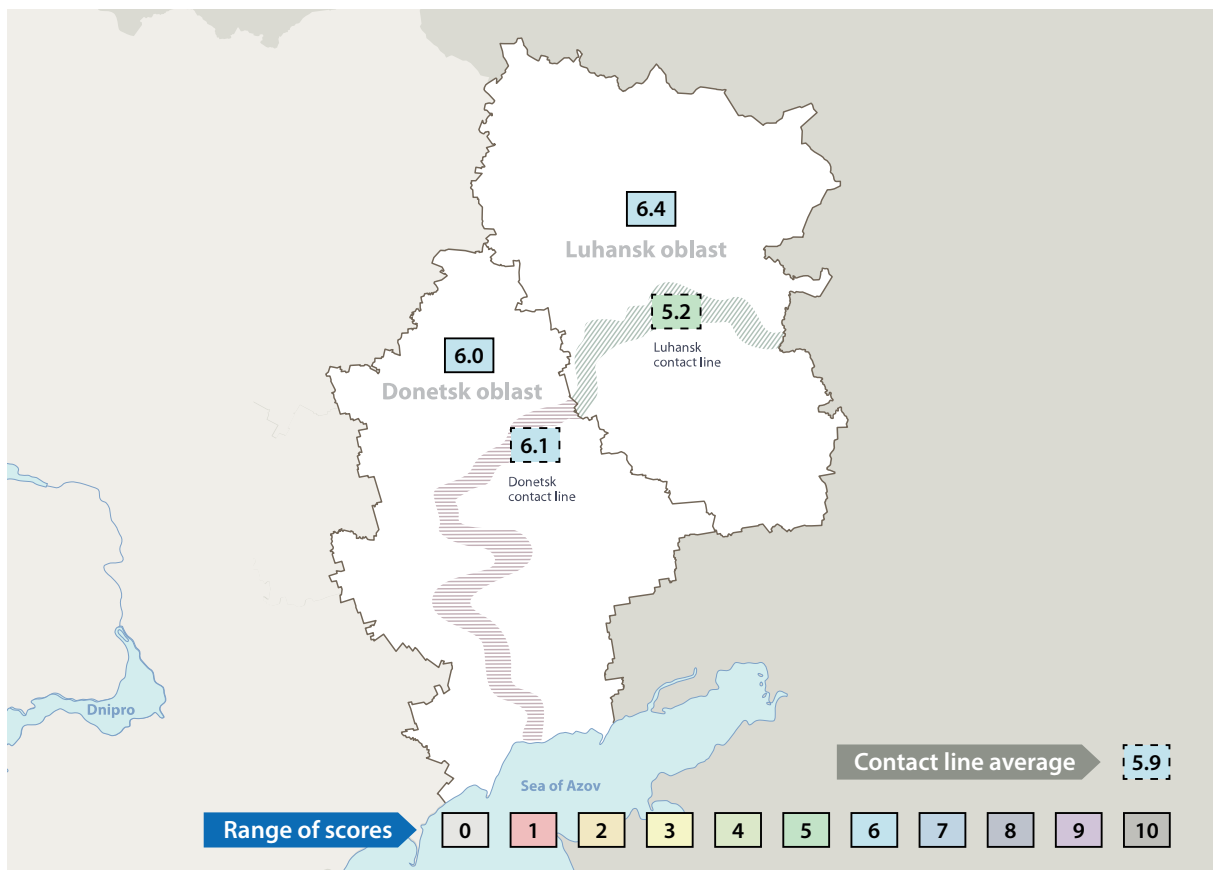
⁴ See e.g., https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/13_wash_cluster_alert_bulletin_issue_13.pdf

■ Figure 3. Road quality



Satisfaction with administrative services, such as obtaining official documents, is much lower along the CL in Luhansk oblast than in the rest of Luhansk oblast (see Figure 4). In Donetsk oblast, however, no such difference was noted, meaning that administrative services are provided equally at the CL and in other parts of Donetsk oblast.

■ Figure 4. Satisfaction with administrative services



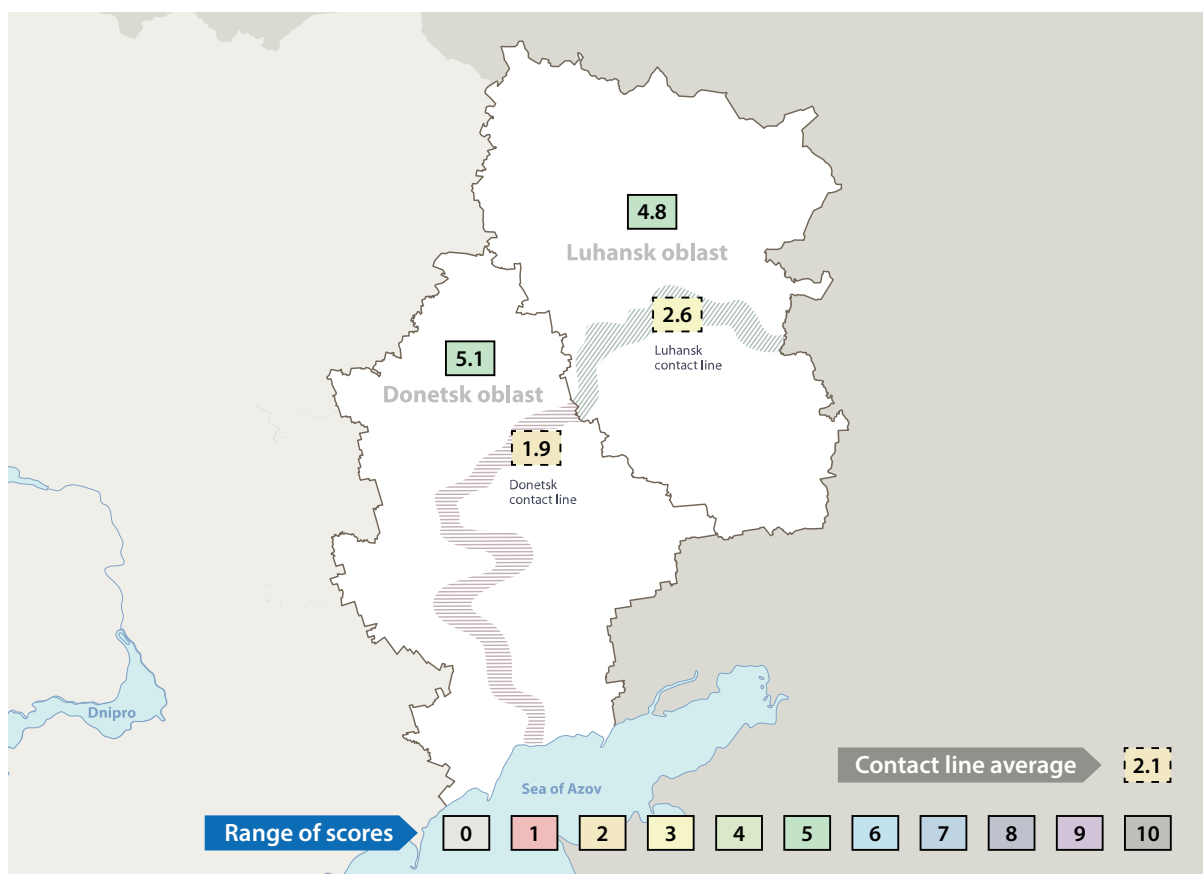
There are also a number of services where scores are the same or even higher along the CL than in other parts of the two oblasts, such as education, social services, healthcare and justice. There are a number of possible explanations, including that services are provided equally well or equally poorly in all localities, or that some of these services, such as higher education and certain healthcare services, have never been easily available.

Economic opportunities

While economic opportunities are limited throughout Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the situation is particularly severe near the CL (see Figure 5). The younger population, aged 18 to 35, assesses the availability of jobs somewhat better than the older population, with men aged 60 and older seeing the fewest opportunities. The depressed view of the economic situation along the CL is in large part explained by the disruption of market linkages between the GCA and NGCA,⁵ as well as conflict-related security issues. With the older population, a particularly negative view of economic opportunities may also stem from a gap in skills and training, and the demands of the labor market, not least through the disruption and decline of traditional industries.

Donetsk CL residents are far less optimistic about employment opportunities than the rest of Donetsk oblast and the Luhansk CL. This may be due to the more industrial area around the Donetsk CL compared to the more agricultural area around the Luhansk CL. In the latter, people can continue small scale farming, while industrial enterprises may be closed or hard to reach given the insecure connections between the CL area and the rest of Donetsk GCAs.⁶

■ **Figure 5. Economic opportunities**

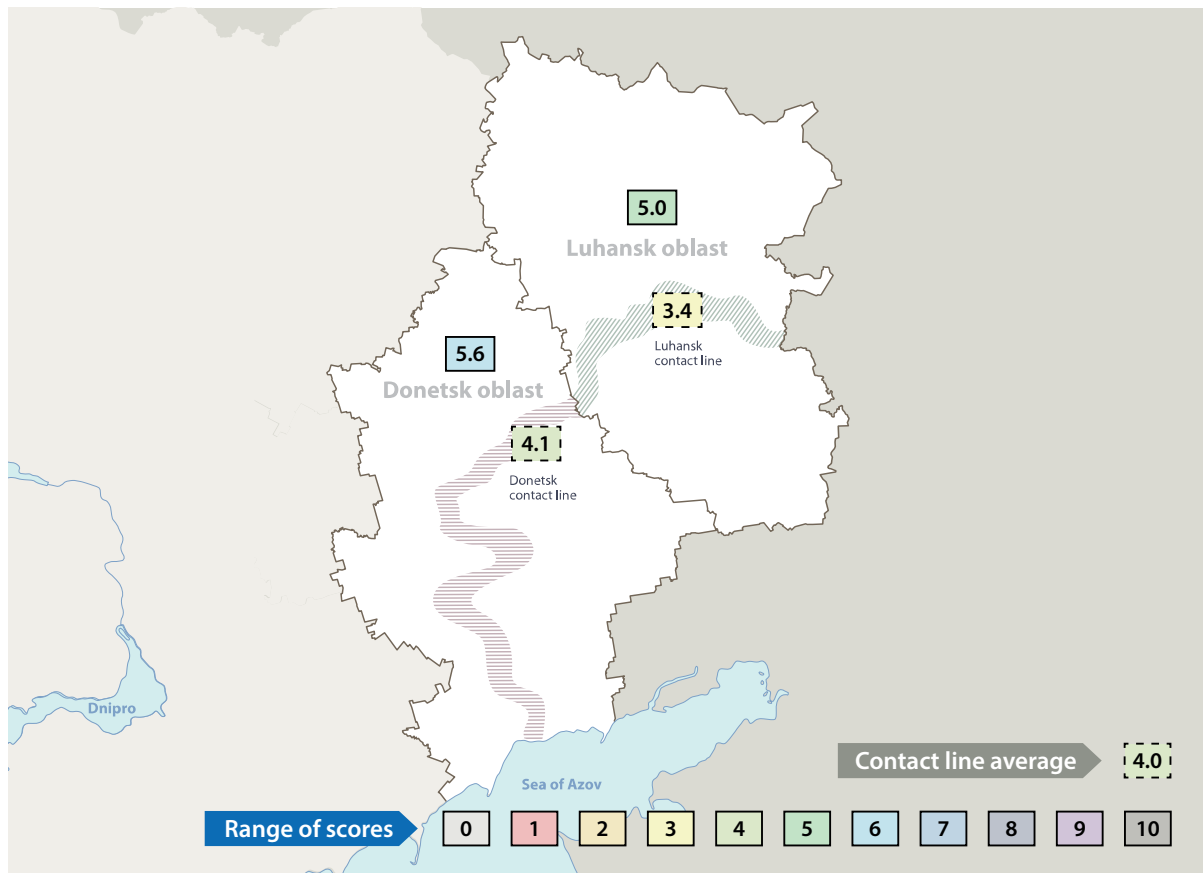


⁵ See REACH findings on the needs along the contact line in Ukraine at <http://www.reach-initiative.org/where-we-work/ongoing-field-presence/ukraine>

⁶ Specifically, in Luhansk oblast about 53 percent of respondents reported available job opportunities in agriculture as opposed to 39 percent in Donetsk oblast. There is a major difference in terms of skill distribution between oblasts as well: the largest share of people in Donetsk oblast report having skills in manufacturing, while in Luhansk oblast the most common skills are those related to farming.

Unsurprisingly, residents of the CL area are much less satisfied with their place of residence⁷ than people in other parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (see Figure 6). Many people do not view their towns and villages as suitable for work and life, with an especially poor assessment of the availability of leisure activities.

■ **Figure 6. Locality satisfaction**



Community and intergroup relations

Compared with the rest of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, people living along the CL demonstrate stronger community resilience and a higher sense of both self-reliance and reliance on people around them. In light of the shortage of key socio-economic support mechanisms (see above), people seemingly have a much stronger reliance on, and sense of support from, their neighbors (see Figure 7).⁸ In turn, this stronger community bonding appears to have generated a higher willingness to take part in civic and community activities. However, people along the CL report much fewer opportunities to meaningfully engage in public and political activities,⁹ which has led to lower levels of actual civic engagement¹⁰ along the CL (for further details see USE brief *Active and tolerant citizenship: revealing drivers and barriers of participation*).

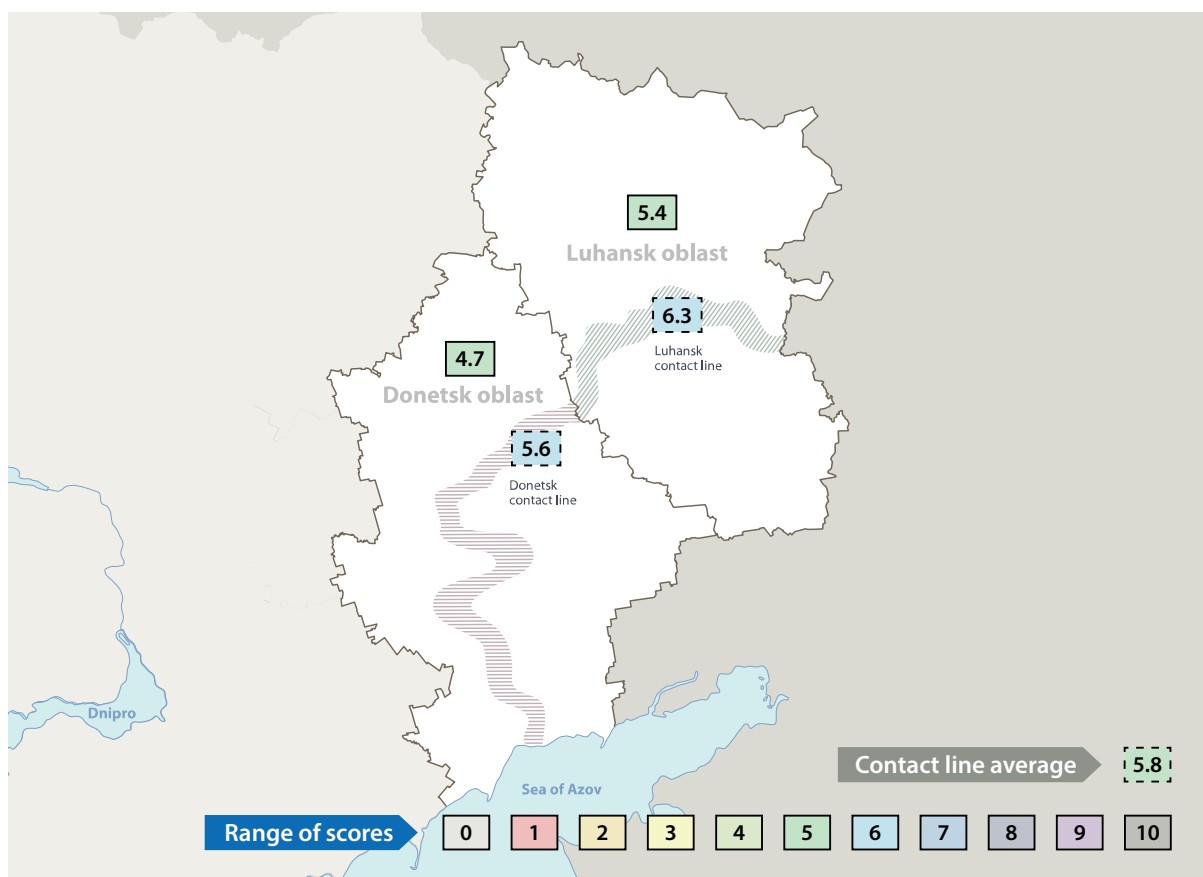
⁷ Locality satisfaction refers to the extent to which the person is satisfied with their place of residence in terms of work, leisure and family life.

⁸ Neighborhood support refers to the extent to which people feel supported by and can rely on neighbors for support.

⁹ Civic engagement opportunities refer to the perceived availability of information about and actual opportunities for participating in civic life.

¹⁰ Civic engagement refers to active participation in civic and political matters, such as participation in public hearings, petitions and demonstrations.

■ Figure 7. Neighborhood support



There are a number of notable differences between residents of Donetsk CL and residents of Luhansk CL when it comes to intergroup relations (see Table 3). Levels of tolerance¹¹ toward marginalized and minority groups are higher along the Donetsk CL. This may be linked to higher levels of human security being reported in Donetsk CL areas, which is likely to reduce levels of animosity towards social groups seen as different (see the USE 2017 brief *Social connectedness and belonging*).

Residents along the Luhansk CL also report much higher levels of perceived social threats from different political and social groups than at the Donetsk CL¹², which also could be linked to lower levels of human security and poorer psychosocial functioning.¹³

At the same time, residents of the Luhansk CL area have significantly less positive feelings towards two distinct groups of people: those who support closer ties with Russia and those who support closer ties with the EU (see Table 3). This could reflect distinct internal geopolitical preferences at the Luhansk CL area,¹⁴ or it may indicate a prevailing perception of the negative implications of social polarization, that is, a desire to remain equidistant from opposing political narratives. It is not surprising that residents of Luhansk CL may express stronger levels of antipathy or even hostility towards both pro-Russia and pro-EU supporters, as they may perceive the conflict between them as the source of their current predicament. Such antipathy is likely to be exacerbated given that people at the Luhansk CL experience a stronger sense of victimization—measured by indicators for the provision of services, psychosocial well-being and perceived threats from other groups.

¹¹ Social tolerance refers to the degree to which people are tolerant towards minority or marginalized groups, such as Muslims, Jews, Roma, drug users, and so on, in terms of personal interaction and acceptance within the community.

¹² Social threat refers to the perception that an increase in the numbers of a certain group would be followed by fewer job opportunities, overall destabilized communities, rising crime rates, and undermined unity. Such groups include internally displaced persons (IDPs), military personnel, people who support the separation of NGCAs from Ukraine, and so on.

¹³ Residents along the Luhansk CL reported higher levels of anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

¹⁴ Luhansk CL residents are somewhat less supportive of EU membership, at 3.2 compared to 4.0 at the Donetsk CL, while CL residents in both oblasts share the same levels of support for the Customs Union and non-aligned status for Ukraine—5.1 and 6.3.

■ **Table 3. Social threats and positive feelings toward selected groups**

	Donetsk oblast	Donetsk oblast CL	Luhansk oblast CL	Luhansk oblast
Social threat	3.0	1.7	3.4	3.8
Positive feelings towards people who support closer ties with the EU	5.9	6.0	4.8	6.0
Positive feelings towards people who support closer ties with Russia	5.7	6.0	4.9	6.4

Vision of the NGCAs' political future

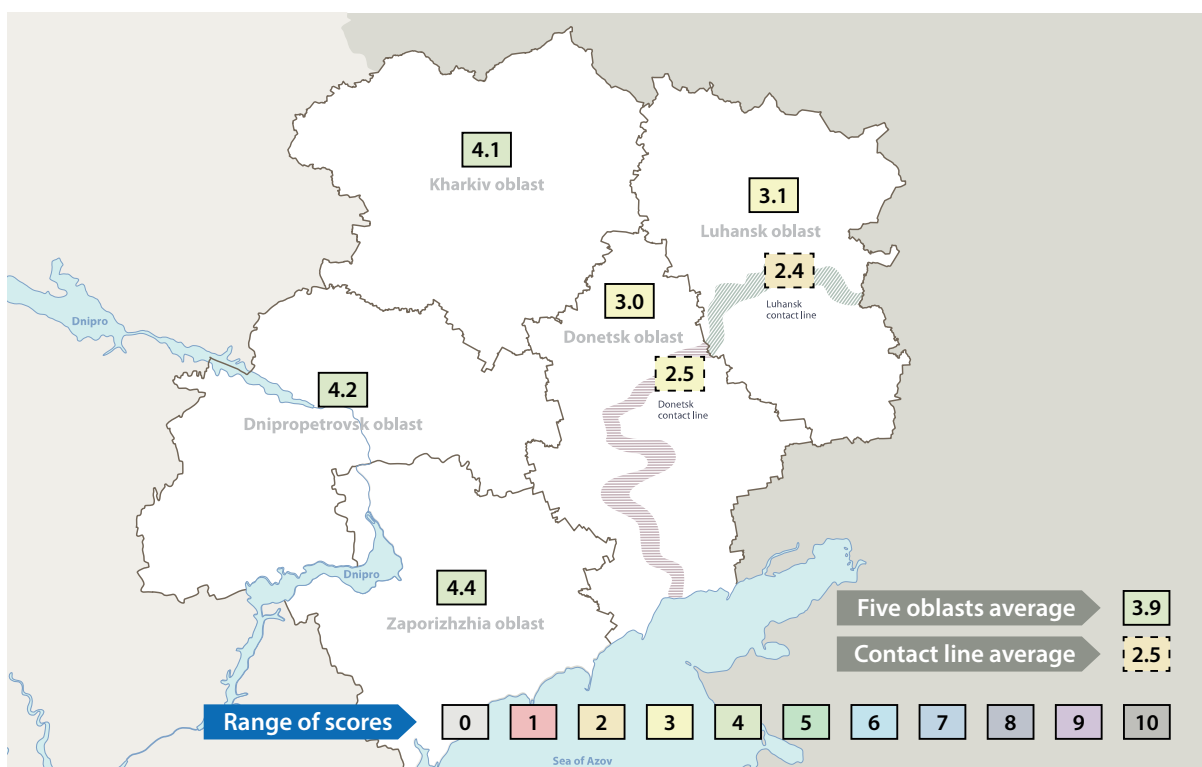
Although residents along the CL demonstrate similarly high levels of support for returning the NGCAs to their previous status, that is, as part of Ukraine with the same status as all other oblasts, there are some notable differences in levels of support for other options (see Table 4). In particular, support in the Donetsk CL area, and in Donetsk oblast in general, for granting the NGCAs special autonomy is significantly higher than in Luhansk oblast. It is, however, worth noting that the non-response rate for questions about a vision of the NGCAs political future was much higher in Donetsk CL, compared to Luhansk CL, which could indicate that respondents were not fully comfortable answering such questions.

■ **Table 4. Options for the political future of NGCAs**

	Donetsk oblast	Donetsk oblast CL	Luhansk oblast CL	Luhansk oblast
Part of Ukraine (as it was before)	7.5	7.7	8.0	8.2
Part of Ukraine, with special autonomy	4.9	6.3	3.6	4.3
Part of Russian Federation	2.2	2.9	2.4	2.2
Internationally recognized independent countries	2.4	2.7	1.5	2.0

Residents of both Donetsk CL and Luhansk CL areas report notably lower levels of political security compared to the rest of their respective oblasts (see Figure 8).¹⁵ The level of political security in both Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts is also much lower than in the three neighboring oblasts.

■ **Figure 8. Political security**



¹⁵ Political security refers to the extent that people feel confident expressing their views without fear of negative consequences.

Conclusions

Proximity to the conflict and poor connectivity with other parts of the oblasts have aggravated pre-existing livelihood and governance issues for people living along or in close proximity to the CL. This has been further compounded by the sense of isolation and even abandonment that has emerged over the last few years. The longer such problems remain unaddressed, the more difficult it will be to restore both the vertical and horizontal components of social cohesion in areas that will be crucial for the peaceful reintegration of the NGCAs.

Somewhat unexpectedly, the quality of some services is assessed at the CL at the same level as for the rest of the oblasts. One possible explanation is that people living along the CL may have a less critical assessment of service provision against the backdrop of more important aspects, such as personal security, livelihoods and connectivity. Another possible explanation is that local authorities, active citizens and other stakeholders have restored or replaced certain services, maintaining a degree of continuity.

Men and women along the CL have become more self-reliant, and also more reliant on their immediate neighbors in the absence of other and structural support mechanisms. Such coping mechanisms are admirable but are also in need of reinforcement to counter fatigue and the sense of anxiety on the part of many local communities, and to reestablish connectivity.

To ensure a sustainable restoration of the social fabric in the CL areas, priority should be given to strengthening intergroup relations, in particular along the Luhansk CL, in parallel with stronger cooperation between local residents and authorities in planning and implementing activities. Overall, to better respond to local needs, interventions have to respond to the specific needs along and between the Donetsk CL and Luhansk CL areas.



Annex A: Differences between CL areas and rest of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts

	Luhansk oblast	Luhansk oblast CL	Difference
Much lower at Luhansk contact line			
Perceived economic opportunities	4.8	2.6	2.2
Personal security	4.7	2.8	1.9
Locality satisfaction	5.0	3.4	1.6
Provision of administrative services	6.4	5.2	1.2
Health security	3.9	2.8	1.1
Positive feelings (average for all groups)	6.4	5.5	0.9
Environmental security	5.9	5.1	0.8
Availability of civic engagement opportunities	5.3	4.5	0.8
Road quality	2.3	1.5	0.8
Economic security	4.4	3.6	0.8
Political security	3.1	2.4	0.7
Much higher at Luhansk contact line			
Contact with military personnel	2.6	3.7	-1.1
Drinking water shortage	1.7	2.7	-1.0
Neighborhood support	5.4	6.3	-0.9
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	0.9	1.5	-0.6

	Donetsk oblast	Donetsk oblast CL	Difference
Much lower at Donetsk contact line			
Perceived economic opportunities	5.1	1.9	3.2
Locality satisfaction	5.6	4.1	1.5
Social threat (average for all groups)	3.0	1.7	1.3
Availability of civic engagement opportunities	5.6	4.4	1.2
Personal security	4.4	3.3	1.1
Civic engagement	2.2	1.3	0.9
Ensuring quality of roads	3.9	3.1	0.8
Trust in local authorities	4.3	3.5	0.8
Much higher at Donetsk contact line			
Active citizenship	3.5	5.4	-1.9
Political vision for NGCAs: Part of Ukraine, with special autonomy status	4.9	6.3	-1.4
Neighborhood support	4.7	5.6	-0.9
Social tolerance	5.7	6.4	-0.7