2018 UN Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index for Eastern Ukraine

Key changes from 2017 to 2018

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.

Photo: Darina Solodova

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Introduction

This brief summarizes the most significant changes from the first (2017) to the second (2018) USE waves. The indicators presented in this brief have been chosen and ranked according to the magnitude of statistically significant change, and not by the overall value of the indicator. In other words, those indicators for which no significant change occurred are not presented in this brief, although they might have a particularly significant impact on social cohesion.

The 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 that the indicator is observed strongly and prevalently. The first part of the brief highlights the most prominent changes that have taken place at the aggregate level of all five oblasts. Recognizing that there are significant differences among the five oblasts that are generally referred to as eastern Ukraine, the second part of the brief provides a brief overview of the major changes for each oblast.

Summary of key trends

The three major trends across all five oblasts are:

■ Improvement in intergroup relations, particularly in terms of readiness for dialogue with different groups in society, coupled with a significant decrease in negative stereotypes and perceived social threats;

■ Increased support for a peaceful solution to the conflict, coupled with increased levels of conflict fatigue; and

■ Increased trust in central institutions, although the overall level of trust remains much lower than for local institutions.

In summary, the most noteworthy trends in each of the five oblasts are as follows:

■ **Dnipropetrovsk oblast** demonstrates the largest improvement in trust toward central institutions, but at the same time also demonstrates the largest deterioration in personal security;

■ In **Donetsk oblast**, perceived levels of social threats from various groups in society have decreased, but migration tendency has grown and economic security has noticeably declined;

■ In **Kharkiv oblast**, the majority of indicators remained constant, with improved perceptions toward people living in non-government-controlled areas (NGCA) of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and a particularly high level of trust in local institutions;

■ **Luhansk oblast** improved significantly with regards to inter-group relations, including decreased levels of stereotypes and increased readiness to engage in dialogue; and

■ **Zaporizhzhia oblast** shows improvements across a range of governance indicators, including a notable decrease in perceived levels of corruption and improved political security.

Most significant changes from 2017 to 2018: Regional perspective

The most significant changes across all five oblasts in eastern Ukraine are illustrated in Table 1 below. A change of 0.5 is considered to be a significant change.
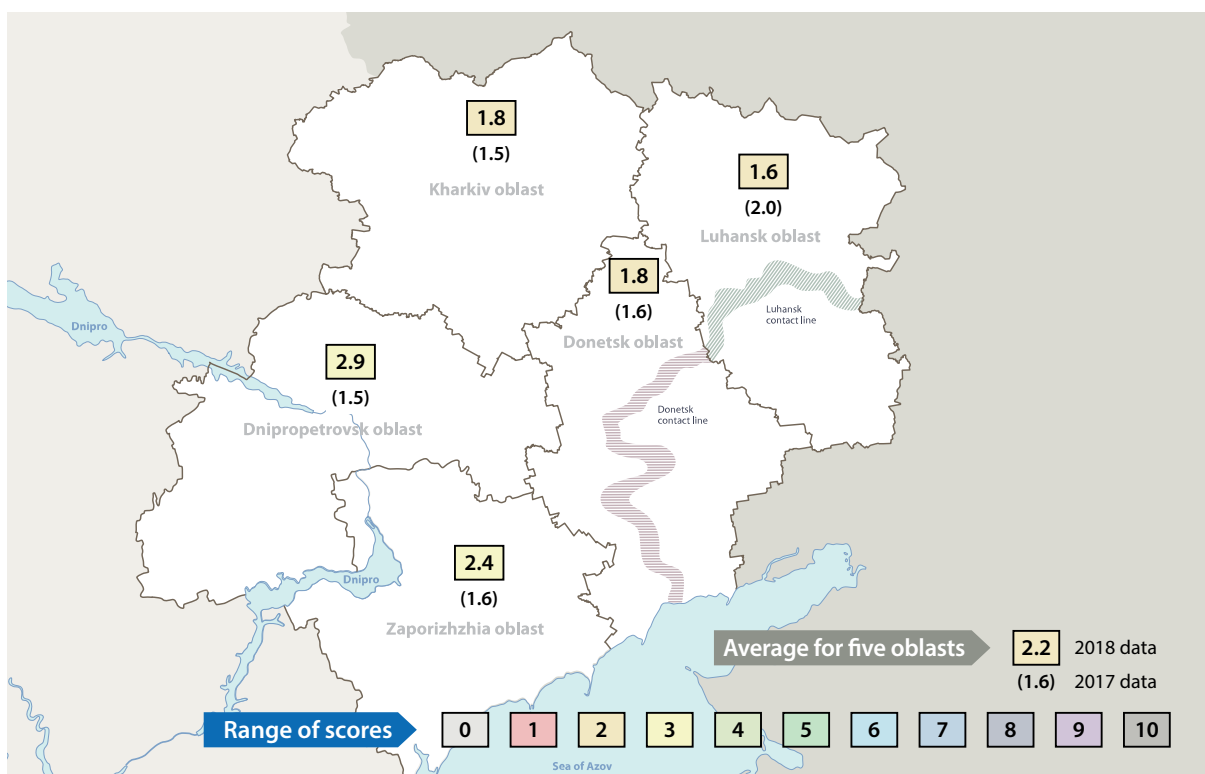
■ **Table 1.** **USE indicators with the most significant changes from 2017 to 2018 in five oblasts***

Indicator	2017	2018	Change
Trust in central institutions	1.6	2.2	▲
Traditional media exposure	6.0	5.4	▼
Personal security	4.8	4.2	▼
Readiness for dialogue: People living in NGCAs	5.8	6.4	▲
Social threat: People living in NGCA	4.2	3.6	▼
Endorsement of military operations	1.7	1.3	▼

*Indicators are presented in descending order by the difference in scores.

The most significant change at the level of all five oblasts is the improved trust in central institutions,[1] although the overall level of trust remains very low (see Figure 1). Dnipropetrovsk oblast stands out as the oblast with both the highest level of trust and the largest improvement (see further below). While the score for trust in local institutions[2] is much higher than for trust in central institutions (see Figure 2), trust in the former did not significantly change between 2017 and 2018.

■ **Figure 1.** **Trust in central institutions***
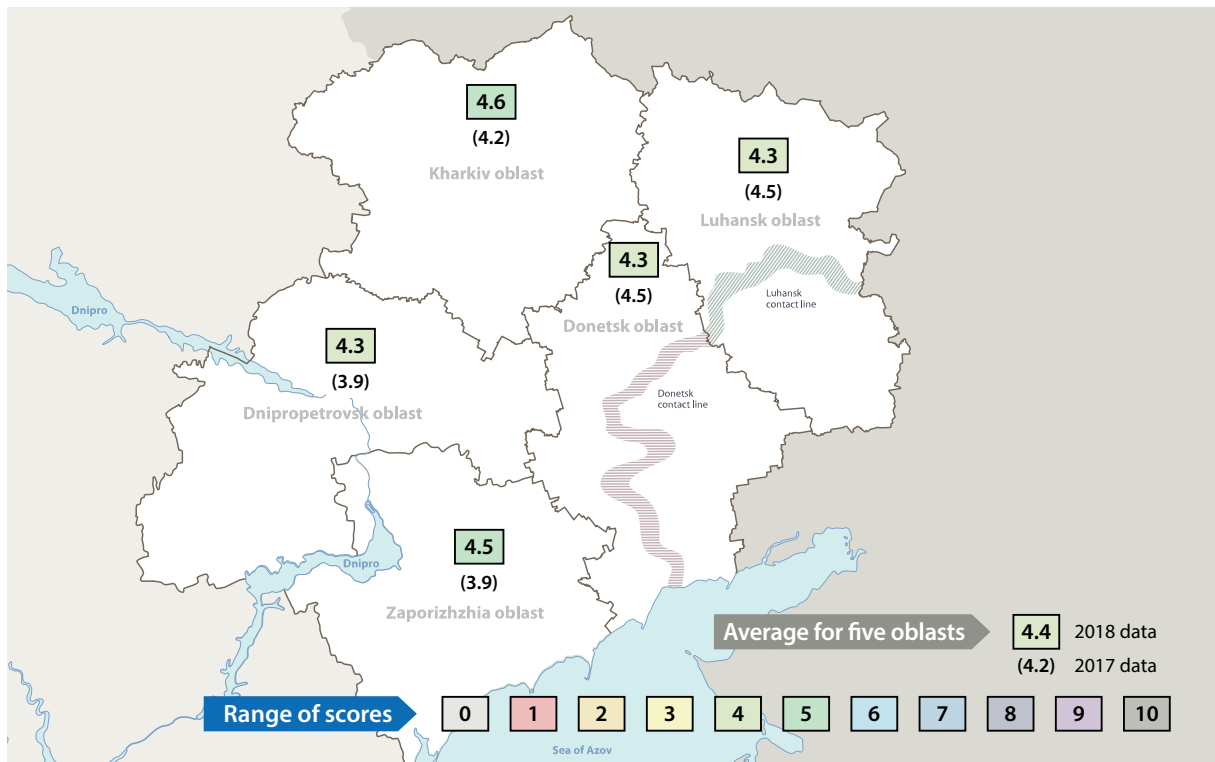

* The boundaries, names and the designations used on the maps in this brief do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

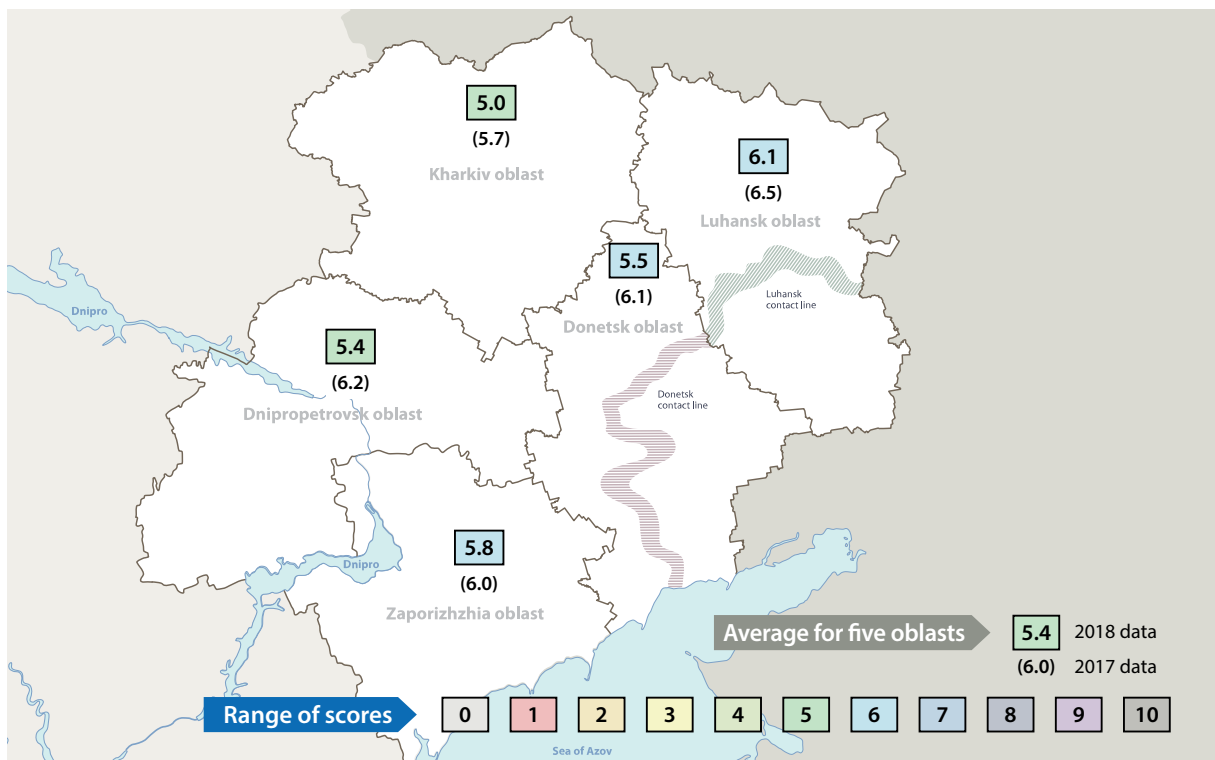[1] Central institutions include the Cabinet of Ministers, courts, the Parliament, and the President.
[2] Local institutions include police, schools, State Oblast Administration, and village/town administration.

■ **Figure 2. Trust in local institutions**

The second most significant change is the decrease in consumption of traditional media[3] (see Figure 3). The move away from traditional media reflects a global trend where in online media is becoming increasingly the main source of information on current events and developments. However, the scores for online media consumption in eastern Ukraine did not increase significantly from 2017 to 2018, suggesting that the overall use of media as a source of information is decreasing. There is also a significant difference between men and women, with traditional media consumption being higher among women, and online media consumption higher among men. This is supported by other research, showing that Internet access and overall usage is higher among men than women.[4]
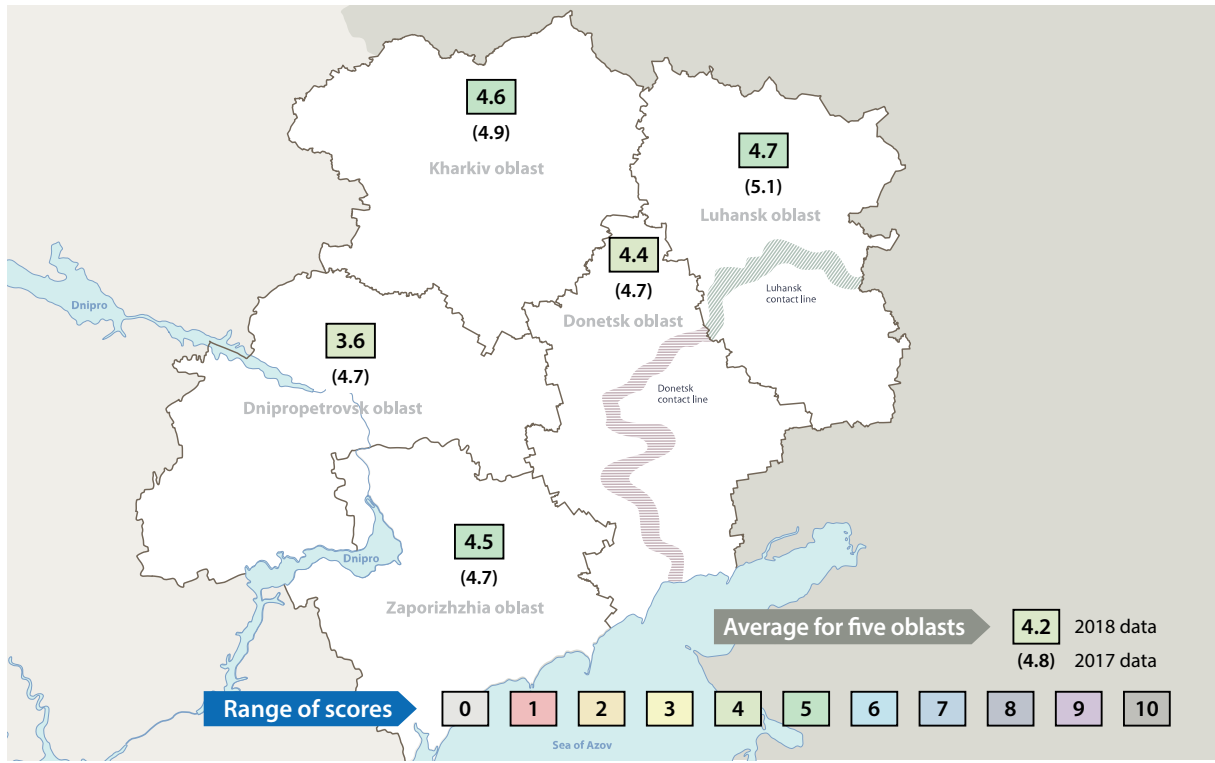
■ **Figure 3. Traditional media exposure**

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3   Traditional media refers to TV and newspapers.

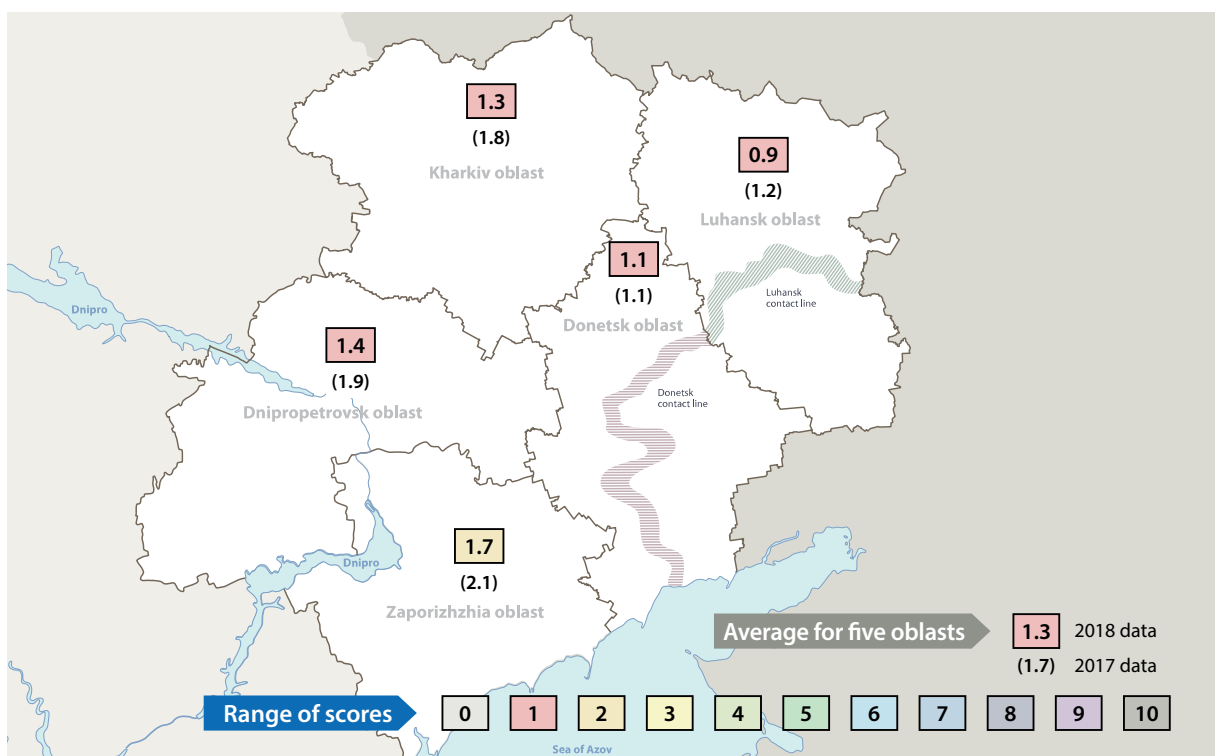4   https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=rus&cat=reports&id=705&page=1&t=5

The third most significant change is the decrease in the score for personal security[5] (see Figure 4). Noteworthy, there was no significant change in levels of personal security in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, but the overall regional score was affected by a significant deterioration recorded in Dnipropetrovsk oblast. A demographic breakdown indicates that women, and in particular women aged 60 and older, feel significantly more insecure than men. The lowest levels of personal security, however, remain along the contact line (see USE brief on *Frontier communities in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts: A neglected resource*).

■ **Figure 4. Personal security**

The remaining three significant changes between 2017 and 2018 all indicate a move toward increased support for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, combined with an increased readiness to engage with people living in the NGCAs of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Support for a military solution to the conflict is consistently low (see Figure 5), although a demographic breakdown indicates that men are much more prone to supporting a military solution to the conflict, especially men aged 18–35.
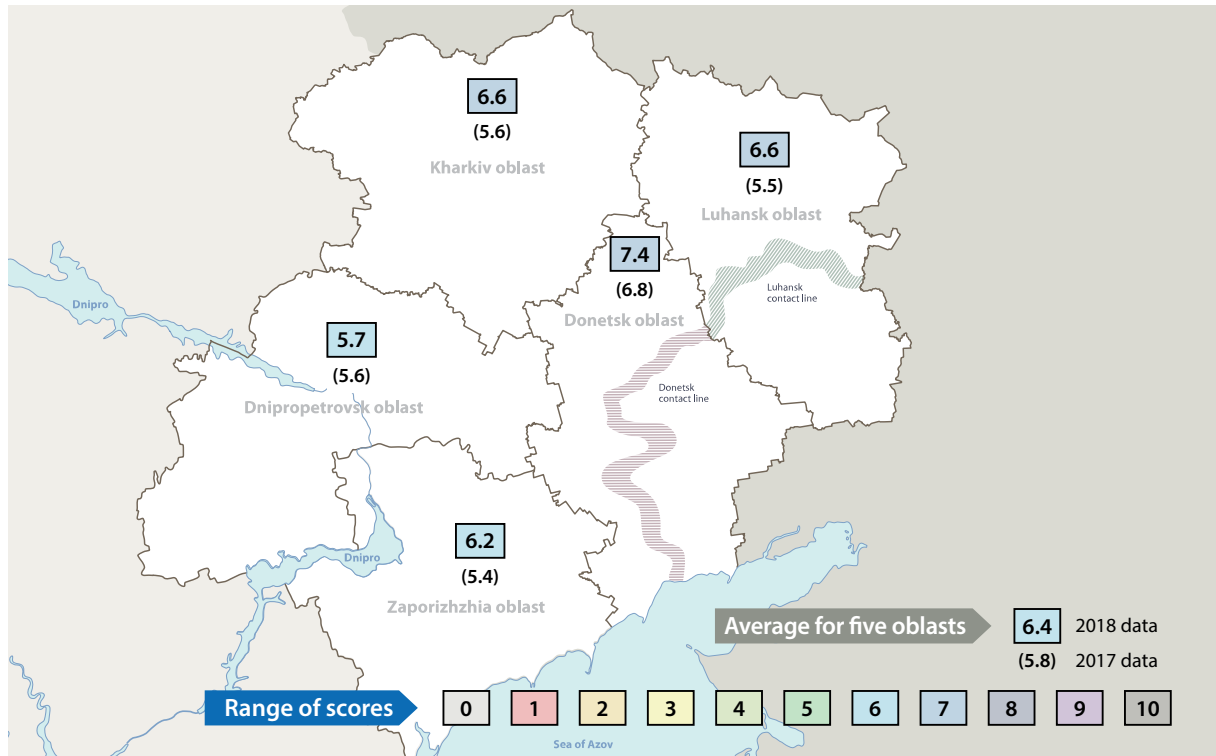
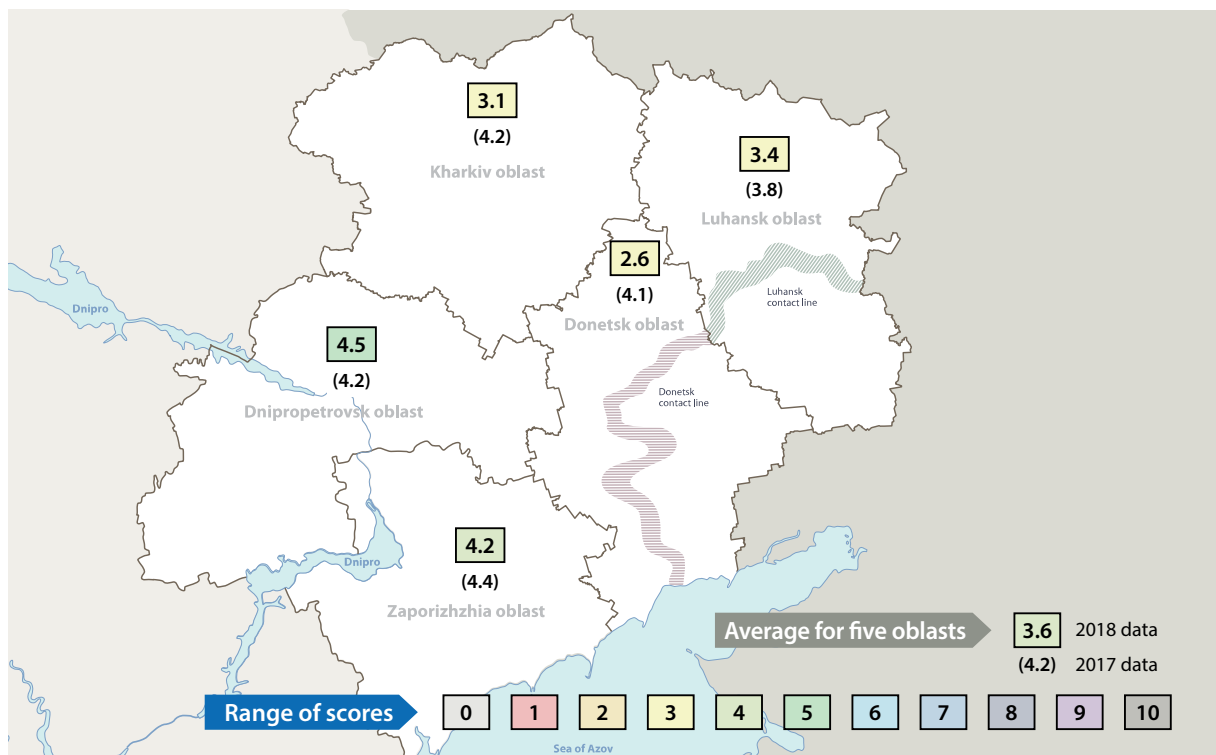■ **Figure 5. Support for a military operation to end the conflict in eastern Ukraine**

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5   Personal security measures the degree to which one feels safe from violence in daily life.

As another indication of growing support for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, people in eastern Ukraine are increasingly more open to dialogue[6] with people living in the NGCAs, and consider residents of the NGCAs to be less of a social threat[7] than they did in 2017. Readiness for dialogue with residents of the NGCAs is particularly high in Donetsk oblast (see Figure 6), and notably lower in Dnipropetrovsk oblast. A similar pattern is evident when looking at the perceived level of social threat from people living in the NGCAs (see Figure 7). Again, Donetsk oblast recorded the lowest levels of social threat perception, while residents of Dnipropetrovsk oblast report the highest sense of social threat. As in 2017, there is a significant difference between Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, with a lower readiness for dialogue in Luhansk oblast and a higher perception of social threat.

■ **Figure 6. Readiness for dialogue with people living in the NGCAs**

■ **Figure 7. Perceived level of social threat from people living in the NGCAs**

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[6]   Readiness for dialogue refers to the perception that the members of a group will hear one's arguments and be ready to discuss, and that the dialogue will offer mutual benefit.

[7]   Social threat refers to the perception that, in this case, an increase in the number of NGCA residents would be followed by fewer job opportunities, overall destabilization, higher crime rates, and undermined unity.

Most significant changes from 2017 to 2018: Oblast perspective

Below are the most significant changes from 2017 to 2018 recorded in each of the five oblasts.

Dnipropetrovsk oblast

While trust in central institutions nearly doubled in Dnipropetrovsk oblast, it still remains low (see Table 2). By contrast, there was a significant decrease in personal security, and people reported feeling particularly less safe when walking alone in the streets at night. At the same time, however, Dnipropetrovsk oblast residents also reported increased trust in the police, from 3.0 in 2017 to 3.7 in 2018. Satisfaction with the public transportation network and the provision of drinking water also grew in 2018. Other significant changes relate to political vision, with a steady trajectory of increased positive feelings toward supporters of EU integration and a decrease in support for membership in the Eurasian Customs Union. Increased support for the unconditional reintegration of the NGCAs was also recorded, alongside decreased support for any solution that would leave the NGCAs outside of Ukraine.

■ **Table 2. Significant changes in Dnipropetrovsk oblast**

Indicator	2017	2018	Change
Trust in central institutions	1.5	2.9	▲
Personal security	4.7	3.6	▼
Support for the Customs Union[8]	5.2	4.2	▼
Shortage of drinking water	2.0	2.9	▲
Positive feelings: People who support close ties with EU	6.2	7.0	▲
Traditional media exposure	6.2	5.4	▼
Ensuring efficient public transport	6.5	5.7	▼
Political vision for NGCAs: Separate countries	2.2	1.5	▼
Political vision for NGCAs: Part of the Russian Federation	2.0	1.3	▼

Donetsk oblast

The most significant changes in Donetsk oblast concern inter-group relations, with residents of Donetsk oblast showing significantly decreased perceptions of social threat from various groups,[9] including those with different political views and those from different parts of the country. Although positive feelings toward internally displaced persons (IDPs) have decreased, it remains one of the most positively assessed groups. Readiness for dialogue with people living in the NGCAs also increased, with Donetsk showing the highest score of all five oblasts. In terms of service delivery, while there is a sense that the quality of roads has improved, the overall efficiency of public transportation services has deteriorated. In terms of political vision, support for joining the Customs Union has decreased – although to a lesser extent than in Dnipropetrovsk oblast, while support for NATO membership has increased. However, it is concerning that economic security has decreased[10] in parallel with an increase in migration tendency.[11]

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[8] Customs Union refers to the economic union between Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

[9] Perceptions of social threat decreased especially towards IDPs and people living in the NGCA.

[10] Economic security refers to the availability of financial means to buy food, clothes and/or more expensive items, as well as social welfare systems and access to and affordability of food.

[11] Migration tendency measures the extent to which one is inclined to leave one's region in search for more or better opportunities.

Indicator	2017	2018	Change
Social threat: All groups	4.1	3.0	▼
Ensuring quality of roads	3.2	3.9	▲
Support for the Customs Union	5.3	4.7	▼
Readiness for dialogue: People living in NGCAs	6.8	7.4	▲
Support for NATO membership	2.4	2.9	▲
Traditional media exposure	6.1	5.5	▼
Economic security	4.8	4.3	▼
Positive feelings: IDPs	7.9	7.5	▼
Ensuring functional public transport	6.4	5.9	▼
Migration tendency	4.2	4.7	▲

Luhansk oblast

As in Donetsk oblast, there was a significant improvement in intergroup relations in Luhansk oblast, including a significant increase in readiness for dialogue with different groups in society, as well as a decrease in negative stereotypes. Luhansk oblast residents reported having less contact with IDPs in 2018, which may reflect local integration, rather than distancing on the part of host communities. While people assessed that corruption had decreased, there was no improvement recorded of trust in central or local institutions. As in Donetsk oblast, migration tendency increased; Luhansk oblast recorded the highest migration tendency among all five oblasts. In stark contrast to Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk oblasts, support for the Customs Union increased in Luhansk oblast, which may be linked to a greater negative impact from disrupted trade relations with the Russian Federation. In line with the other oblasts, there was a decrease in support for a political solution that results in any type of independence for the NGCAs.

■ **Table 4.** Significant changes in Luhansk oblast

Indicator	2017	2018	Change
Readiness for dialogue: All groups	5.1	6.1	▲
Negative stereotypes: All groups	2.6	2.0	▼
Trust in Ukrainian Armed Forces	4.6	3.7	▼
Migration tendency	4.4	5.2	▲
Contact with IDPs	4.6	3.9	▼
Support for the Customs Union	5.1	5.7	▲
Assessment of corruption level	6.4	5.8	▼
Political vision of NGCAs: Separate countries	2.5	2.0	▼

Kharkiv oblast

Only three significant changes were recorded in Kharkiv oblast, all of which reflect positive trends (see Table 5). First, the residents of Kharkiv oblast consider people living in the NGCAs to be less of a social threat than they did in 2017. Second, the residents of Kharkiv oblast have become more open to engaging in dialogue with NGCA residents. Third, trust in village/town administrations has increased significantly, while at the same time, the level of trust in central authorities has not shown a significant change.

■ **Table 5:** Significant changes in Kharkiv oblast

Indicator	2017	2018	Change
Social threat: People living in NGCAs	4.2	3.1	▼
Readiness for dialogue: People living in NGCAs	5.6	6.6	▲
Trust in village/town administration	4.7	5.6	▲

Zaporizhzhia oblast

Zaporizhzhia oblast recorded several improvements, predominantly in the area of governance (see Table 6). The perceived level of corruption has decreased significantly, while sizable increases were recorded in levels of political security, trust in both central and local institutions, and also in levels of satisfaction with the quality of roads. In contrast with all other oblasts, no significant changes were recorded in inter-group relations in Zaporizhzhia oblast.

■ **Table 6:** **Significant changes in Zaporizhzhia oblast**

Indicator	2017	2018	Change
Assessment of corruption level	7.4	6.4	▼
Political security	4.5	5.4	▲
Trust in central institutions	1.6	2.4	▲
Trust in local institutions	3.9	4.5	▲
Ensuring quality of roads	2.9	3.4	▲