

УДК 330.322.01

JEL Classification: C22, C62, D60, E20, E32

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COPING STRATEGIES IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32620/cher.2024.3.06>

Formulation of the problem. The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, intensified by the conflict that began in February 2022, has resulted in 14.7 million individuals requiring humanitarian aid by 2024. This crisis has led to significant socioeconomic challenges, with households adopting various coping strategies to manage economic stress. Understanding these strategies and their regional variations is crucial for effective crisis response and resource allocation. *The purpose of the article.* To analyze and present findings on the coping strategies adopted by Ukrainian households in response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis and conflict, with a particular focus on regional differences and the most severely affected areas. *The object of the research.* Household coping strategies across different regions of Ukraine, including selling assets, spending savings, purchasing food on credit, seeking additional employment, reducing health and education expenditures, and using degrading income sources. *The methods of the research.* The study employed a quantitative data collection methodology developed by REACH, utilizing both face-to-face household surveys and computer-assisted telephone interviews. The dataset encompassed 10,434 interviews conducted at the household level across 23 oblasts, targeting a 95% confidence level and an 8% margin of error. *The hypothesis of the research.* The research appears to hypothesize that there are significant regional variations in the adoption of coping strategies, with areas closer to the conflict zone experiencing more severe economic stress and resorting to more extreme coping measures. *The statement of basic materials.* The research identified ten distinct coping strategies and analyzed their adoption rates across different regions of Ukraine. Eastern and southern regions, particularly Donetska, Kharkivska, Zaporizka, Khersonska, and Sumska oblasts, consistently demonstrated higher adoption rates of various coping strategies. Donetska oblast emerged as the epicenter of economic stress, with 50% of households reporting the sale of assets or spending of savings. Zaporizka oblast led in purchasing food on credit (18.63%) and reducing health expenditures (55.28%). Significant regional disparities were observed, with some oblasts showing coping strategy adoption rates far exceeding national averages. *The originality and practical significance of the research.* This study provides a comprehensive, region-specific analysis of household coping strategies in Ukraine during an ongoing crisis, offering valuable insights for targeted interventions. The research's practical significance lies in its potential applications for socio-economic management, including informing the design of targeted social safety nets and economic support programs, guiding efficient resource allocation based on region-specific needs, and supporting the development of tailored healthcare and education policies. *Conclusions and prospects for further research.* It provides a baseline for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of future interventions and informs long-term regional development strategies and crisis response planning. By offering a nuanced understanding of how different regions are coping with the crisis, this research enables policymakers to develop more effective, localized approaches to addressing Ukraine's complex humanitarian challenges.

Keywords:

household coping strategies, regional analysis, Humanitarian crisis, Conflict impact, Economic stress, Socioeconomic management.

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КОПІНГ-СТРАТЕГІЇ В КОНТЕКСТІ КРИЗОВОГО УПРАВЛІННЯ

Постановка проблеми. Триваюча гуманітарна криза в Україні, посилена конфліктом, що почався в лютому 2022 року, призвела до того, що до 2024 року 14,7 мільйона людей потребуватимуть гуманітарної допомоги. Ця криза призвела до значних соціально-економічних проблем, коли домогосподарства приймають різні стратегії подолання, щоб подолати економічний стрес. Розуміння цих стратегій та їх регіональних варіацій має вирішальне значення для ефективного реагування на кризу та розподілу ресурсів. *Мета статті.* Проаналізувати та представити висновки щодо стратегій подолання, прийнятих українськими домогосподарствами у відповідь на триваючу гуманітарну кризу та конфлікт, з особливим акцентом на регіональні відмінності та найбільш постраждалі райони. *Об'єкт дослідження.* Стратегії подолання домогосподарств у різних регіонах України, включаючи продаж майна, витрачання заощаджень, купівлю продуктів харчування в кредит, пошук додаткової роботи, скорочення витрат на охорону здоров'я та освіту та використання джерел доходу, що приносять гідність. *Методи дослідження.* У дослідженні застосовувалася методологія збору кількісних даних, розроблена REACH, використовуючи як особисті опитування домогосподарств, так і телефонні інтерв'ю за допомогою комп'ютера. Набір даних охоплював 10 434 інтерв'ю, проведені на рівні домогосподарств у 23 областях, з цільовим рівнем достовірності 95% і похибкою 8%. Гіпотеза дослідження. Дослідження, здається, припускає, що існують значні регіональні відмінності у прийнятті стратегій подолання, причому райони, розташовані ближче до зони конфлікту, відчувають більш серйозний економічний стрес і вдаються до більш екстремальних заходів подолання. *Виклад основного матеріалу.* Дослідження виявило десять різних стратегій подолання та проаналізувало рівень їх застосування в різних регіонах України. Східні та південні регіони, зокрема Донецька, Харківська, Запорізька, Херсонська та Сумська області, стабільно демонстрували вищі показники прийняття різних стратегій подолання. Епіцентром економічного стресу виявилася Донецька область, де 50% домогосподарств повідомили про продаж майна або витрачання заощаджень. Запорізька область лідирувала у купівлі продуктів харчування в кредит (18,63%) та скороченні витрат на оздоровлення (55,28%). Спостерігалися значні регіональні розбіжності, причому в деяких областях рівень впровадження стратегії подолання значно перевищував середні показники по країні. *Оригінальність та практична значущість дослідження.* У цьому дослідженні представлено комплексний регіональний аналіз стратегій подолання ситуації домогосподарств в Україні під час триваючої кризи, пропонуючи цінну інформацію для цілеспрямованих втручань. Практичне значення дослідження полягає в його потенційному застосуванні для соціально-економічного управління, включно з розробкою цільових мереж соціального захисту та програм економічної підтримки, ефективним розподілом ресурсів на основі потреб регіону та підтримкою розробки індивідуальної політики в галузі охорони здоров'я та освіти. *Висновки та перспективи подальших досліджень.* Він забезпечує базову лінію для моніторингу та оцінки ефективності майбутніх втручань і інформує про довгострокові стратегії регіонального розвитку та планування реагування на кризу. Пропонуючи детальне розуміння того, як різні регіони справляються з кризою, це дослідження дозволяє політикам розробити більш ефективні локальні підходи до вирішення складних гуманітарних проблем України.

Ключові слова:

стратегії подолання домогосподарств, регіональний аналіз, гуманітарна криза, вплив конфлікту, економічний стрес, соціально-економічне управління.

Formulation of the problem. Over two years after the intensification of the conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, the ongoing humanitarian crisis persists and continues to affect the total population of the country, resulting in 14.7 million individuals requiring humanitarian aid by 2024 [1]. The consequences of the intensification of the war on the whole population, irrespective of their displacement status, are most severe in geographical regions near the frontline and border of the Russian Federation. Active battles persist in Northern, Eastern, and Southern

Ukraine, accompanied by ongoing allegations of civilian casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure. In 2023, Ukraine saw over 47,000 recorded occurrences of armed conflicts, airstrikes, and other forms of attacks, which represents a growth of more than 12,000 compared to the previous year. Escalated attacks since the beginning of 2024 have caused significant damage to residential properties and vital civilian infrastructure, resulting in substantial interruptions of essential services, including electricity and heating, as well as limited availability of



healthcare and education [1]. The ongoing conflict has resulted in a marked decline in the socioeconomic conditions of the Ukrainian population. The Russian Federation's bombardment of Ukrainian ports and grain infrastructure sites, together with widespread damage and loss of productive assets, have significantly endangered the socioeconomic stability of Ukraine, especially in the agricultural sector. In addition to protection, livelihood difficulties were identified as a significant factor contributing to severe or increased multi-sectoral requirements in Ukraine, as indicated by 56% of households across the country [2, 3]. Within this particular framework, formerly marginalized populations residing in Ukraine have also been encountering intensified challenges in obtaining fundamental services, such as healthcare, primary education, and social protection.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The problem of forming coping strategies presented in the context of our study is the subject of ongoing discussions among the academic community and government officials. The works of the Israeli network of social resilience researchers are interesting in the context of Ukrainian events. For the first time, the results of this discussion have been tested as a primary quantitative model for assessing social coping strategies at the level of local communities [4].

Extreme acts of terrorism are a period of challenge to the resilience of Israeli society, an impetus that prompts the government to reassess the potential of institutional strength - the ability to withstand a long and severe shock. In essence, the reconstructed model of Israeli researchers is designed for Israeli circumstances, namely to study the social consequences of the problems associated with the ongoing struggle against various manifestations of terrorism. It is based on the assumption that terrorism is a tool for psychological warfare against civilians in order to finally demoralize the enemy. Terrorism is designed to create an atmosphere of instability and fear, which leads to social and political unrest, which is what the perpetrators seek to achieve. The ultimate response to terror, therefore, is to strengthen the national resilience of society; this will prevent terrorists from achieving their political goals, even in the face of terrorist attacks [5].

However, although this model is primarily designed to deal with a terrorist-prone environment, it is believed to be fully functional to other hazards, including man-made and natural disas-

ters and their impact on the resilience of the affected society.

Social well-being is a concept that is constantly changing depending on the social environment of a society and is related to economic stability, health and education. According to European researchers, improving the well-being of poor households is linked to the coping strategies used by these households [6, 7].

In other words, coping strategies are a form of individual or family effort to control and reduce the various demands or pressures of problems faced by households. Thus, coping strategies can be used to study the impact of the crisis and to get an understanding of household savings policies [8]. It is in this aspect that the need to study the main determinants of food security at the household level arises. Thus, it is necessary to develop priority measures to ensure the food security of households in a state of food insecurity.

According to Maxwell D, economic survival strategies used by families to meet their food needs are particularly common, namely (a) reducing the amount of favorite foods and buying cheaper foods; (b) borrowing food or money to buy food; (c) buying food on credit; (d) asking relatives or friends for help; (e) limiting and sharing food at mealtimes; (f) setting aside a small amount of money by family members to buy food outside; (g) limiting personal food consumption by adults to ensure that children are well nourished; (h) reducing the amount of food consumed on holidays; and (i) without eating whole day [9]. We fully agree with Maxwell D. that economic strategies for overcoming difficulties can be grouped into two categories: cost-cutting strategies and revenue optimization strategies [9].

Various studies have examined the relationship between household characteristics and the choice of economic coping strategies. The results of the study Castilhos R.B., Fonseca M.J., & Bavaresco V. [10]. have shown that the livelihood strategy is determined by the location of the settlement in which the household lives. The livelihood strategy chosen by households in remote areas tends to be the same type of strategy (agricultural). In contrast, households located in villages closer to the city tend to choose a mixed strategy (agricultural and non-agricultural).

Research of Mahfouz J [11]. in has shown that social support, health problems, the personality and age of the head of the family, and the





number of family members influence the choice of economic coping strategies.

The review of scientific publications of different research scholars shows that there is a consolidation of the general need to study household food insecurity and to develop effective coping strategies to improve food security.

The purpose of the article is to provide policymakers with a data-driven basis to develop targeted interventions, allocate resources more effectively, and implement customized socio-economic policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by different oblasts. The ultimate goal is to enhance the effectiveness of crisis response and long-term recovery efforts by analyzing household coping strategies in Ukraine, with a focus on regional variations and identifying areas of greatest need.

Presentation of the main material.

While macroeconomic indicators such as GDP growth, trade statistics, and public revenues have provided a clear picture of the crisis at the aggregate level, understanding its impact on individual households has proven more challenging. This gap in our understanding is critical, as the effects of economic downturns are multidimensional and often manifest in complex ways at the household level. In response to these challenges, policymakers and researchers are seeking more appropriate indicators to measure the crisis's impact on families and individuals. These indicators need to offer comprehensive coverage, be readily available, and respond quickly to changing conditions.

One crucial aspect of household responses to economic shocks is the adoption of various coping strategies. These adaptive behaviors are particularly evident among vulnerable households and can provide valuable insights into the immediate impacts of a crisis [12]. However, it's important to note that short-term coping mechanisms may sometimes lead to long-term negative consequences for human development, effects that may only become apparent much later. The effectiveness of these coping strategies can vary depending on the duration of the crisis and the frequency of such events. When crises occur in rapid succession, households may not have sufficient time to recover between shocks, potentially weakening their resilience over time. This dynamic underscores the importance of understanding not just the immediate impact of a crisis, but also the long-term implications for household recovery and resilience.

The investigation of domestic coping mechanisms in Ukraine utilized a rigorous and thorough quantitative data collection methodology, specifically developed to capture the intricate reality of many locations around the country. This methodology, devised by REACH, was specifically designed to address the distinct difficulties presented by the continuing conflict, giving priority to gathering data in localities along the front line and the Russian border [2].

This study is based on primary qualitative data collected in Ukraine during January 2024 [3]. A dual-pronged sampling technique was key to the data collection design. The objective of this method was to attain a significant level of precision, targeting a 95% confidence level and an 8% margin of error throughout all strata. The data-gathering process consisted of two main mechanisms: face-to-face (F2F) household surveys and computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI). In the 10 oblasts located along the front-line and border, both CATI and F2F surveys were employed, providing adaptability in data gathering according to the specific circumstances of each locality. Conversely, the 13 oblasts in the West, Center, and Zhytomyrska oblast were only polled by face-to-face interviews, which indicates the higher level of stability and ease of access in these areas. The used dataset is of significant magnitude, encompassing a total of 10,434 interviews performed at the household level in 23 oblasts [2, 3].

The dataset [3] presents ten distinct coping strategies that households may adopt:

1. Selling household assets/goods;
2. Spending savings or consuming stocks;
3. Purchasing food on credit or borrowing food;
4. Getting an additional job;
5. Selling productive assets;
6. Reducing essential health expenditures;
7. Reducing essential education expenditures;
8. Selling housing or land;
9. Using degrading sources of income;
10. Asking strangers for money.

These strategies range from relatively mild measures, such as spending savings, to more severe actions like selling housing or land. The adoption rates of these strategies provide insight into the level of economic stress experienced by households across different regions [13].

This analysis examines the coping strategies adopted by households across different regions of Ukraine, contextualized within the ongoing conflict and its far-reaching socioeconomic impacts. The consequences of the war are most severe in regions near the frontline and the border with the Russian Federation, primarily in Northern, Eastern, and Southern Ukraine. This geographical disparity in conflict intensity likely exacerbates regional differences in adopting coping strategies (Figure 1).

Selling Household Assets/Goods. The adoption of this strategy reveals significant re-

gional disparities. The South leads with 3.35% of households resorting to selling assets, closely followed by the East at 3.17%. These rates are notably higher than the overall average of 2.52%, indicating more acute economic pressure in these regions. The North follows at 2.82%, slightly above the average, while the Center (2.07%) and West (1.70%) show lower rates. The West's significantly lower rate suggests either less economic pressure or a stronger aversion to liquidating household goods compared to other regions.

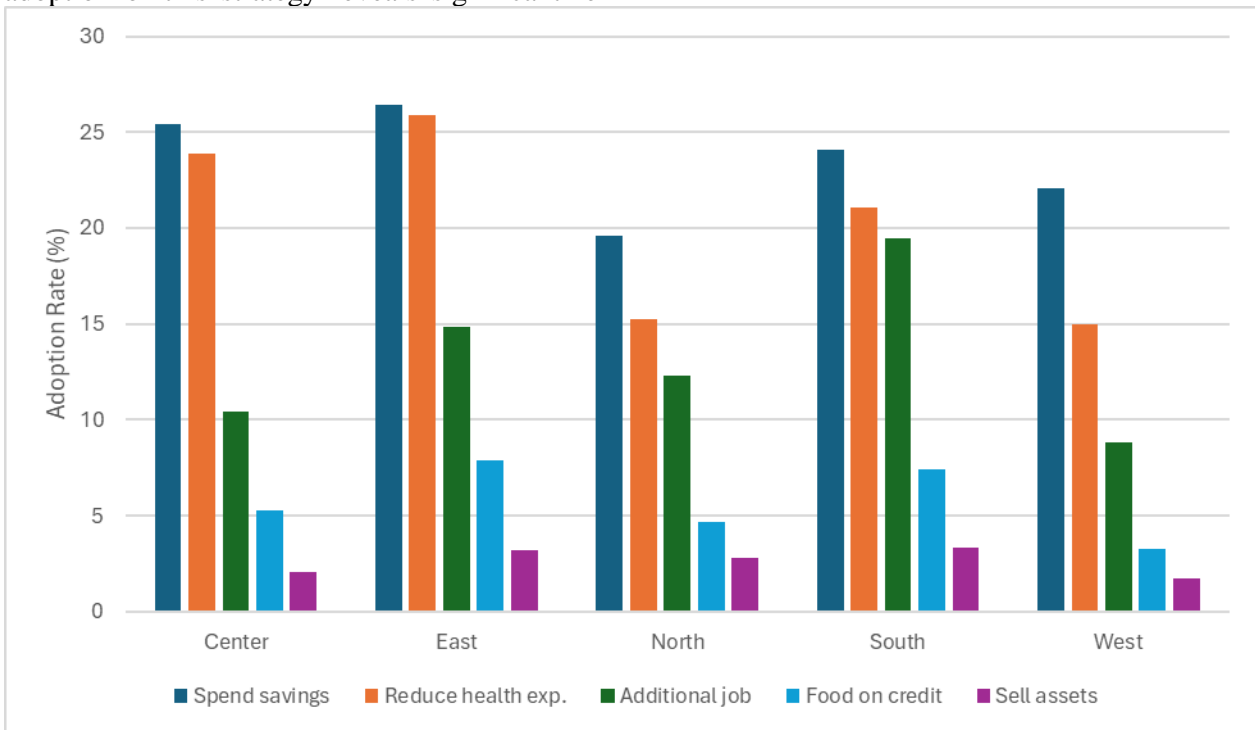


Figure 1 - Coping Strategies Adoption Rates by Region

Source: compiled by authors based on information from the REACH dataset report [3]

Spending Savings or Consuming Stocks. This strategy stands out as the most widely adopted across all regions, with an overall rate of 22.89%. The East leads with 26.39% of households employing this method, followed closely by the Center at 25.41%. The South is not far behind at 24.05%, while the West (22.06%) aligns closely with the overall average. The North shows the lowest rate at 19.57%, yet this still represents a significant portion of households. The high adoption rates across all regions indicate a widespread reliance on personal financial buffers, with the East's elevated rate suggesting either larger savings or more acute financial pressure compared to other regions.

Purchasing Food on Credit or Borrowing Food. Regional variations in this strategy are

particularly striking. The East leads with 7.87% of households resorting to this measure, closely followed by the South at 7.42%. These rates are significantly higher than the overall average of 5.28%. In contrast, the West shows the lowest rate at 3.28%, less than half that of the leading regions. The Center (5.30%) and North (4.69%) fall between these extremes. This wide gap between the highest and lowest rates points to substantial disparities in food security and credit accessibility across regions.

Getting an Additional Job. The adoption of this strategy reveals stark regional differences in labor market conditions or the necessity for multiple income streams. The South stands out with a remarkably high rate of 19.46%, significantly above the overall average of 12.26%. The East follows at 14.82%, while the North (12.32%)





aligns closely with the average. The Center (10.39%) and West (8.81%) show lower rates, with the West's figure less than half that of the South. These disparities suggest varying economic opportunities and pressures across regions.

Selling Productive Assets. While the overall adoption of this strategy is low at 1.15%, regional variations are notable. The South shows the highest rate at 1.86%, followed by the East at 1.52%. These rates are significantly above the average, indicating more severe economic stress in these regions. The Center (1.13%), West (0.88%), and North (0.92%) show lower rates, with the latter two falling below 1%. The South's higher rate suggests that households in this region may be more frequently forced to compromise future income-generating capacity to meet immediate needs.

Reducing Essential Health Expenditures. This strategy shows alarming adoption rates across all regions, with an overall average of 19.09%. The East leads with a concerning 25.87% of households reducing health expenditures, followed closely by the Center at 23.85%. The South is not far behind at 21.07%. In contrast, the West (14.97%) and North (15.22%) show lower rates, though these are still significant. The wide gap between the highest and lowest rates suggests substantial regional disparities in healthcare accessibility or the severity of economic pressures forcing this trade-off.

Reducing Essential Education Expenditures. While the overall adoption rate for this strategy is relatively low at 1.79%, regional variations are noteworthy. The South shows the highest rate at 2.91%, followed by the East at 2.24%. These rates are significantly above the average, suggesting greater economic pressure on education spending in these regions. The North follows at 1.95%, while the West (1.25%) and Center (1.18%) show the lowest rates. Despite these variations, the generally low adoption rates across all regions indicate a strong prioritization of education, even in the face of economic challenges.

Selling Housing or Land. This strategy shows the lowest overall adoption rate at 0.48%, indicating it's a last resort for most households across all regions. However, regional variations are still evident. The North shows the highest rate at 0.79%, notably above the average, followed by the Center at 0.60%. In contrast, the South has the lowest rate at 0.12%, with the East (0.17%) and West (0.45%) also showing low rates. The North's higher rate warrants further

investigation into regional housing market dynamics and the factors driving this difference.

Using Degrading Sources of Income. While the overall adoption of this strategy is low at 2.18%, regional differences are apparent. The South shows the highest rate at 2.86%, followed by the North at 2.40% and the West at 2.29%. The East (1.97%) and Center (1.39%) show lower rates. The South's higher rate suggests that more households in this region are driven to less desirable income sources, potentially indicating more severe or prolonged economic stress.

Asking Strangers for Money. This strategy shows the second-lowest overall adoption rate at 0.84%, indicating it's a last resort across all regions. However, some regional variations are noticeable. The East shows the highest rate at 1.17%, followed by the West at 0.97% and the South at 0.92%. The North (0.74%) and Center (0.35%) show lower rates. The East's slightly higher rate might reflect more acute economic distress or different social norms regarding this practice.

The analysis of coping strategies across Ukrainian oblasts reveals a striking pattern of economic stress concentrated primarily in the eastern and southern regions of the country. Five oblasts - Donetska, Kharkivska, Zaporizka, Khersonska, and Sumska - consistently demonstrate higher adoption rates of various coping strategies, indicating more severe and widespread economic challenges among their populations (Table 1). This pattern aligns closely with the regions most affected by the ongoing conflict, suggesting a strong correlation between conflict proximity and economic hardship. The data paints a stark picture of households resorting to increasingly desperate measures to manage their economic situations, with implications for both immediate well-being and long-term development.

Donetska oblast emerges as the epicenter of economic stress, with alarming rates across all coping strategies. Here, 50.00% of households report the sale of household assets or goods, the highest rate in the country. An equal percentage have resorted to spending savings or consuming stocks, far exceeding the national average of 22.89%.

The situation in Donetska oblast is further exacerbated by 10.42% of households purchasing food on credit, 22.96% seeking additional employment, and a staggering 35.12% reducing essential health expenditures.

Table 1 – Coping Strategies in High-Stress Oblasts

Coping Strategy	Avg. High-Stress Oblasts (%)	Highest Rate (%)	Oblast with Highest Rate	National Average (%)
Selling assets/goods	41.68	50	Donetska	2.52
Spending savings	41.68	50	Donetska	22.89
Purchasing food on credit	11.39	18.63	Zaporizka	5.28
Getting additional job	21.08	22.96	Donetska	12.26
Reducing health expenditures	38.51	55.28	Zaporizka	19.09
Using degrading income sources	6.39	15.02	Khersonska	2.18

Source: compiled by authors based on information from the REACH dataset report [3]

Perhaps most alarmingly, 7.74% of households in Donetska oblast report using degrading sources of income, one of the highest rates nationwide, while 4.17% have even reduced essential education expenditures. These figures indicate a population under severe economic strain, with potential long-lasting consequences for health, education, and overall well-being.

While not reaching the extreme levels seen in Donetska oblast, other oblasts show significant signs of economic distress. In Kharkivska oblast, 39.45% of households have sold assets or goods, with an identical percentage having spent savings or consumed stocks. The oblast also sees 9.10% of households purchasing food on credit, 20.68% seeking additional employment, and 29.40% reducing essential health expenditures. Moving southeast, Zaporizka oblast leads all oblasts in two critical categories: 18.63% of households are purchasing food on credit, and a worrying 55.28% have reduced essential health expenditures. Additionally, Zaporizka oblast has the highest rate of households asking strangers for money at 6.21%. In the south, Khersonska oblast shows particularly high rates in certain categories, with 46.98% of households having sold assets or goods and, most concerning, leading all oblasts in using degrading sources of income at 15.02%. The inclusion of Sumska oblast as a northern outlier suggests that economic challenges are not solely confined to the immediate conflict areas. In Sumska oblast, 37.20% of households have sold assets or spent savings, and it leads in reducing essential education expenditures at 6.84%, suggesting families are making difficult trade-offs in their children's education.

When compared to national averages, these oblasts show significantly higher stress levels across all coping strategies (Figure 2). For instance, while the national average for selling assets or goods is 2.52%, Donetska oblast sees a rate of 50.00%. Similarly, the national average for reducing health expenditures is 19.09%, but Zaporizka oblast reports a rate of 55.28%. The national average for using degrading sources of income is 2.18%, yet Khersonska oblast reports 15.02%. These stark contrasts highlight the disproportionate economic stress in these regions and underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions.

The consistently high rates of reducing health expenditures across these oblasts, ranging from 29.40% in Kharkivska oblast to 55.28% in Zaporizka oblast, are particularly concerning. This trend points to potential long-term health consequences that could further exacerbate economic challenges in the future. Similarly, the high rates of selling assets and spending savings, reaching up to 50.00% in Donetska oblast, indicate a significant depletion of household resources. This depletion could have long-lasting impacts on economic recovery and resilience in these regions. The reduction in education expenditures, while less prevalent, raises concerns about the future human capital development in these areas.

Conclusion and prospects for further research. As Ukraine continues to navigate the complex challenges of conflict and economic instability, understanding these regional disparities in coping strategy adoption is crucial for developing effective, targeted interventions.



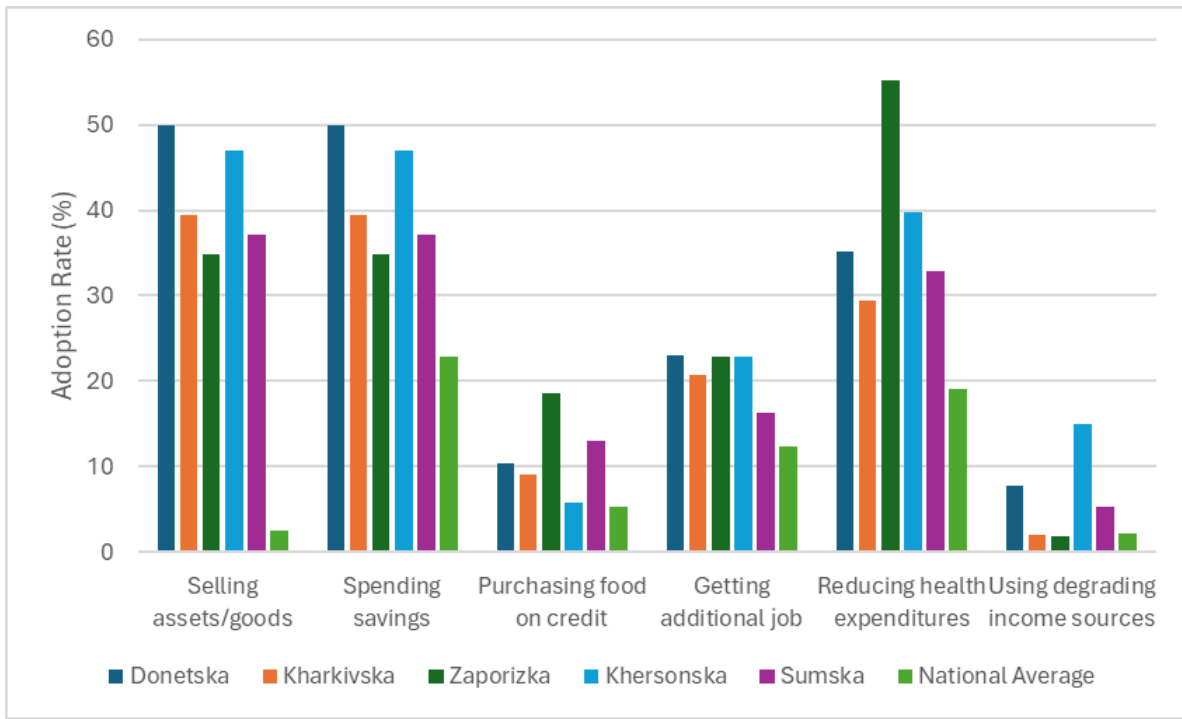


Figure 2 – Coping Strategies Adoption Rates in High-Stress Oblasts
Source: compiled by authors based on information from the REACH dataset report [3]

The stark figures presented here underscore the urgent need for comprehensive support in these high-stress oblasts. Policymakers and aid organizations should consider these regional variations when designing support programs, ensuring that resources are directed to the areas of greatest need. Moreover, the potential long-term consequences of these coping strategies, particularly in health and education, call for interventions that not only address immediate needs but also safeguard future development and well-being. The ripple effect of economic stress, as evidenced by Sumska's inclusion in this high-stress group, suggests a need for broader economic stabilization efforts across Ukraine. By addressing the acute needs in the most affected oblasts while also implementing wider economic support measures, Ukraine may be better positioned to mitigate the spread of economic hardship and build a more resilient economic future.

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Стаття надійшла до редакції : 30.07.2024 р.

Стаття прийнята до друку: 30.09.2024 р.

Бібліографічний опис для цитування :

Burlutskia Sv., Burlutskiy S. Coping strategies in the context of crisis management. *Часопис економічних реформ*. 2024. № 3(55). С. 51–59.

