

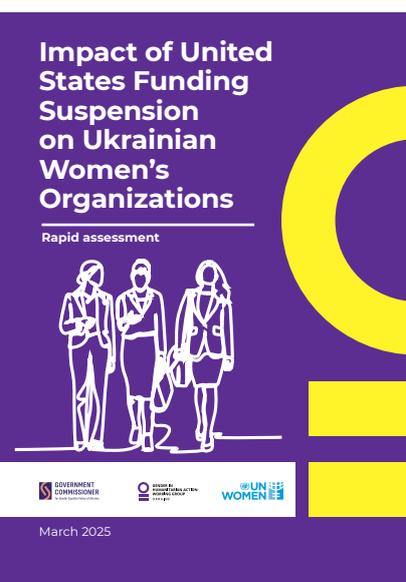
# The Impact of Foreign Assistance Cuts on Women's Rights and Women-Led Organizations in Ukraine

**The survey was conducted by the  
Gender in Humanitarian Action Working  
Group in Ukraine, co-chaired by NGO  
Girls, CARE International, and UN  
Women, financially supported by the UN  
Women National Committees.**



# The Impact of Foreign Assistance

## Cuts on Women's Rights and Women-Led Organizations in Ukraine



In January 2026, the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG) in Ukraine—co-chaired by UN Women, NGO Girls, and CARE Ukraine—assessed the evolving and cumulative impacts of foreign assistance cuts on women's organizations. The assessment builds on a rapid impact assessment carried out by the GiHA WG in February 2025 following the United States' decision to cut foreign assistance, enabling a comparative analysis of trends, risks, and sustainability challenges over time. The survey examined emerging risks, organizational coping strategies, and programmatic implications, with a particular focus on the ability of women's organizations to sustain lifesaving and gender-responsive services<sup>1</sup>.

Foreign assistance cuts had a substantial and widespread impact in 2025 on the 108 women's led and women's rights organizations in Ukraine that responded to the second round of the survey.

### **Seventy-nine percent of surveyed women's organizations reported that funding reductions had either a severe or moderate impact on their operations.**

Nearly half of all respondents (50) experienced a severe impact, citing major scale-downs of activities or the suspension of one or more programmes as a direct consequence of funding reductions or suspensions.

Women's organizations anticipate an even more challenging operating environment in 2026. A large majority (85%) expect the impact of funding cuts to remain severe or moderate. More concerningly, over half of organizations (58 out of 108) anticipate a severe impact, including significant programme scale-downs or suspensions, underscoring heightened concerns around organizational sustainability and the continuity of services in the year ahead.

<sup>1</sup> The GiHA WG in Ukraine extends its sincere appreciation to its Funding Task Force members who contributed to the design of the survey questionnaire: ActionAid, Care Ukraine, FAO, Gender Bureau, NGO Girls, Oxfam, REACH Ukraine, Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF) administrated by OCHA, UNFPA Ukraine Country Office, and UN Women Ukraine Country Office.

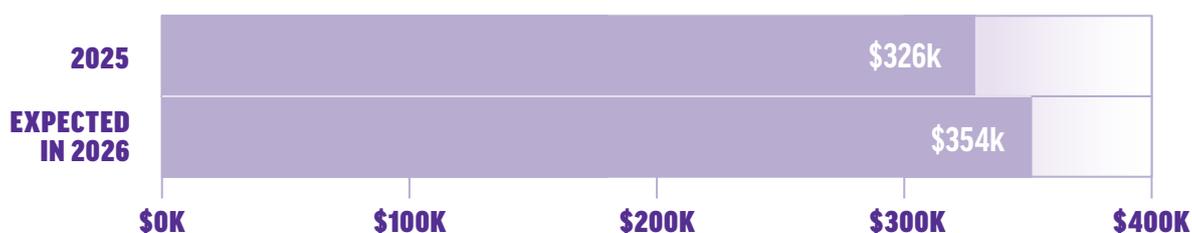
# Funding Situation of Women's Organization in Ukraine

Women's organizations in Ukraine lost an estimated USD 27.4 million in foreign assistance in 2025, including approximately USD 14.2 million from U.S. funding reductions and USD 13.2 million from other foreign donors. In 2026 they expect to lose approximately USD 25.5 million in foreign assistance in 2026, including around USD 12.4 million in U.S. funding and USD 13.1 million from other foreign donors<sup>3</sup>.

This reduction has had a massive effect on programming due to women's organizations' reliance on foreign assistance. In 2025, the overwhelming majority of respondents (68%) reported that more than 75% of their overall programme portfolio was funded through foreign assistance. A further 17% indicated that foreign assistance accounted for 51-75% of their programming. Together, this means that 85% of organizations relied on foreign assistance for more than half of their programme portfolio. However, reliance on foreign assistance among women's organizations in 2026 appears to be declining slightly, reflecting early but incremental efforts to diversify funding sources. Despite this shift, dependence on external funding remains high: 78% of organizations anticipate that foreign assistance will continue to finance more than half of their programme portfolio in 2026, compared to 2025.

**On average, women's organizations lost approximately USD 326,000 per organization in 2025 and expect to lose an average of USD 354,000 per organization in 2026, indicating a sustained and intensifying financial shock despite early diversification efforts.**

## Average Women's Organizations Funding Losses per organisation



<sup>2</sup> Estimates are based on midpoint values for funding ranges; the "USD 1,000,000 and above" category was conservatively estimated at USD 2 million. Organizations reporting no expected funding loss or unable to estimate were excluded.

# The Impact of Foreign Assistance Cuts on Women and Girls

Foreign assistance cuts have most severely constrained organizations' ability to reach women and girls facing intersecting vulnerabilities. The groups most affected include refugee and internally displaced women, women and girls living in remote or rural areas, elderly women (60+), single mothers and female-headed households, and women and girls with disabilities, highlighting how funding reductions are deepening exclusion risks for those already facing significant barriers to accessing humanitarian and recovery support.

## The groups most affected by the Assistance Cuts



REFUGEE AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED WOMEN



WOMEN AND GIRLS LIVING IN REMOTE OR RURAL AREAS



ELDERLY WOMEN (60+)



SINGLE MOTHERS AND FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS



WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

Nearly seven in ten organizations (68%) reported having to introduce waiting lists or turn away beneficiaries due to capacity constraints resulting from foreign assistance cuts in 2025.

## Women's organizations are projected to be unable to serve an estimated 63,000 direct beneficiaries in 2026<sup>3</sup>.

This corresponds to an average of approximately 740 beneficiaries per affected organization. As these estimates exclude organizations reporting no expected funding suspension as well as those unable to quantify anticipated impacts in 2026, the actual number of beneficiaries likely to be left without support in 2026 may be substantially higher.

<sup>3</sup> Estimates are based on midpoint values for beneficiary ranges; the "more than 1,000" category was estimated at 2,000 beneficiaries. Organizations reporting no expected funding suspension or unable to estimate were excluded.

Women's organizations overwhelmingly agree that foreign assistance cuts have had a serious and multidimensional impact on the situation of women and girls in Ukraine. The most widely cited consequence is increased vulnerability, with 83% of organizations reporting that more women and girls are becoming vulnerable as essential services, protection mechanisms, and targeted programmes are reduced or suspended. At the same time, 64% of respondents observed a slowing of progress or outright regression in achieving gender equality, signaling setbacks across rights, participation, and access to services.

Respondents also highlighted broader systemic effects, with 63% noting that the government's attention is increasingly shifting to other priorities, often away from gender equality and women-focused interventions amid competing crises. In parallel, 62% reported declining donor interest in funding gender equality work, further constraining the ability of women's organizations to respond to growing needs. Only 1% reported that foreign assistance cuts had no impact on the situation of women and girls, underscoring the near-universal perception that funding reductions are deepening gender-specific risks.

# The Impact of Foreign Assistance Cuts on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Programmes

**The comparison between 2025 and 2026 reveals a consistent and troubling pattern: the same core Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programme areas remain most affected, underlining structural underfunding rather than temporary disruption.**

In 2025, nearly half of organizations (45%) reported reductions in women's economic empowerment and GBV prevention and response (44%) programming, alongside widespread impacts on advocacy (39%), MHPSS (38%), and women's political participation (37%). These cuts directly affected programmes central to women's protection, recovery, and voice during the war.

Looking ahead to 2026, expectations point to continued pressure on the same critical areas. Women's economic empowerment is projected to remain the most affected programme area (reported by 40% of organizations), followed closely by advocacy for women's and girls' rights (35%), GBV services (33%), political and civic participation (33%), and MHPSS (31%). The consistent identification of these programme types the most affected suggests a shift from acute disruption toward a prolonged erosion of services that are essential for women's safety, resilience, participation, and long-term gender equality.

## Share of organizations that reported reductions in the thematic programmes



### WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

45%

2025

40%

expected in 2026



### GBV PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

44%

2025

33%

expected in 2026



### ADVOCACY

39%

2025

35%

expected in 2026



### MHPSS

38%

2025

31%

expected in 2026



### WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

37%

2025

33%

expected in 2026

# The Impact of Foreign Assistance Cuts on Humanitarian Assistance

In 2025, women's organizations were most frequently forced to reduce their delivery of GBV services, affecting 33% of organizations, followed closely by reductions in other protection services (32%). Substantial disruptions were also reported in MHPSS, where 27% organizations reduced or suspended activities, and in food security and livelihoods support (26%). In addition, 26% of organizations (28) reported reductions in assistance linked to gender equality and gender mainstreaming within humanitarian response.

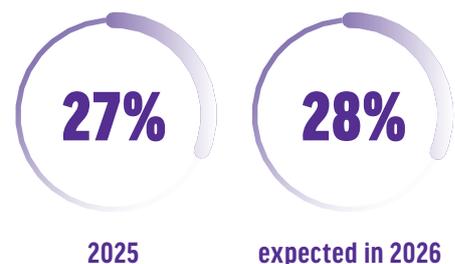
Looking ahead to 2026, women's organizations expect continued and widespread reductions in the same core areas. GBV response and prevention assistance remains the most affected area, with 30% of organizations (32) anticipating further reductions or suspensions of services, followed by MHPSS (28% / 30), food security and livelihoods assistance (27% / 29), and protection services (25% / 27).

## Share of women's organizations reporting funding reductions

### GBV PREVENTION AND RESPONSE



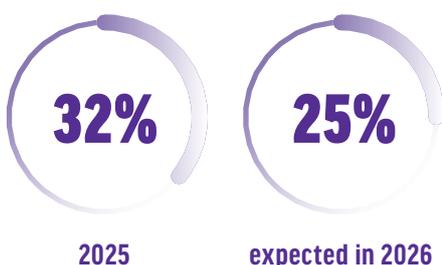
### MHPSS



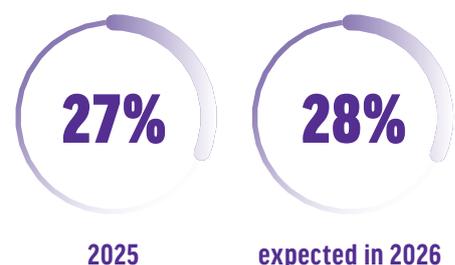
### GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING



### PROTECTION SERVICES



### FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS ASSISTANCE



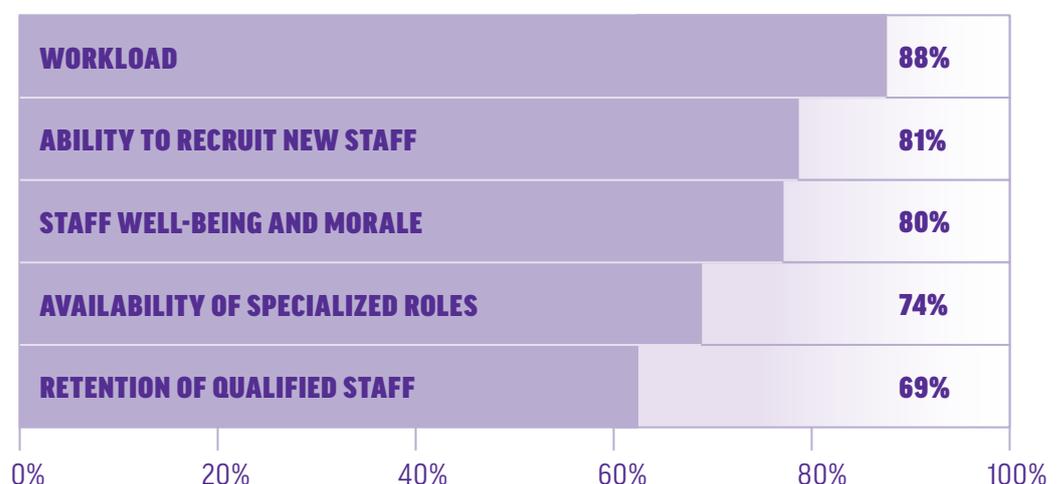
# Impact Human Resources of Women's Organizations

Based on conservative estimates, foreign assistance cuts resulted in the loss of approximately 570 full-time or part-time staff positions across women-led and women's rights organizations in 2025. Among organizations that experienced layoffs, this represents an average reduction of around seven staff members per organization, reflecting a significant erosion of institutional and operational capacity.

Survey findings suggest that staffing impacts are expected to persist in 2026. Organizations that anticipate layoffs and were able to provide an estimate, projected the loss of 330–340 staff positions, corresponding to an average of approximately six staff members per affected organization. While this projected average is slightly lower than in 2025, the findings nevertheless point to a continued weakening of organizational capacity, with more than half of organizations either expecting further layoffs or unable to predict staffing outcomes due to ongoing funding uncertainty.

**The consequences of staff reductions are already evident: nearly seven in ten organizations report that staffing losses have significantly constrained their ability to deliver programmes and uphold their mandate, underscoring the compounding operational impacts of sustained funding cuts.**

## Share of Women's Organizations with Reported Negative Impact on Operations:



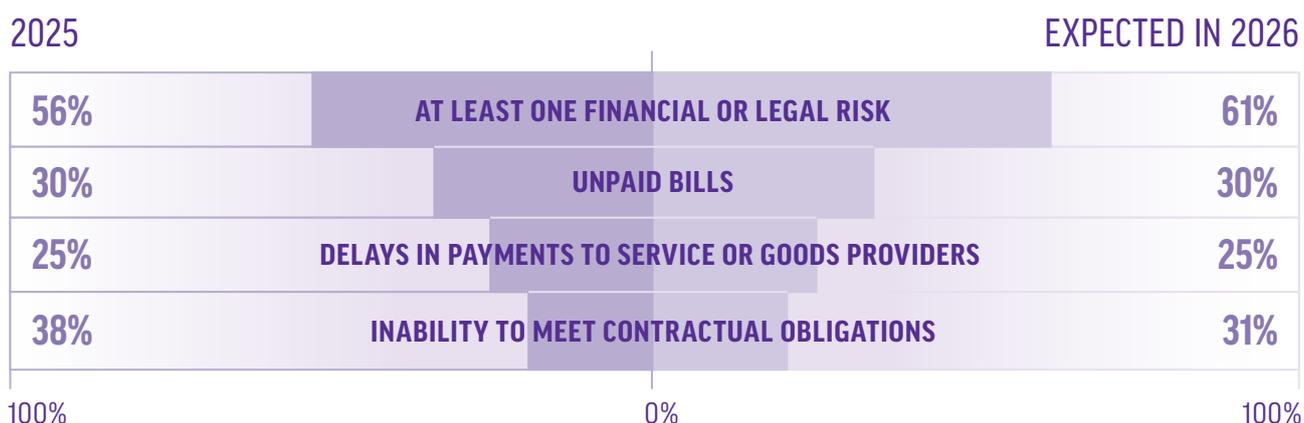
Staff losses resulting from foreign assistance cuts have severely constrained organizational capacity across all core human-resource dimensions. The impact was most acute on staff workload and burnout, with 88% of organizations reporting that funding reductions affected workload to a moderate (30%) or large (58%) extent. Ability to recruit new staff was similarly affected, with 81% of organizations reporting moderate or large impacts (26% and 55%, respectively), limiting organizations' capacity to replace lost personnel. Staff well-being and morale have also been significantly affected; 80% of organizations reported moderate (33%) or large (47%) impacts. Constraints in the availability of specialized roles, including GBV, MEAL, and safeguarding functions, were reported by 74% of organizations (34% moderate; 40% large), raising concerns about programme quality, accountability, and risk management. Finally, 69% of organizations indicated that funding cuts affected the retention of qualified staff to a moderate or large extent, underscoring the cumulative erosion of institutional capacity caused by sustained funding reductions.

## Impact on Financial and Legal Risks of Women's Organizations

**A comparison between 2025 and 2026 points to a worsening financial and legal risk environment for women-led and women's rights organizations as foreign assistance cuts continue.**

In 2025, 56% of organizations reported experiencing at least one financial or legal risk, compared to 61% that expect to face such risks in 2026. The share of organizations reporting unpaid bills remains unchanged at 30% in both years, while delays in payments to service or goods providers persist at 25%. The proportion of organizations reporting an inability to meet contractual obligations has risen from 19% in 2025 to 22% in 2026, indicating growing legal exposure.

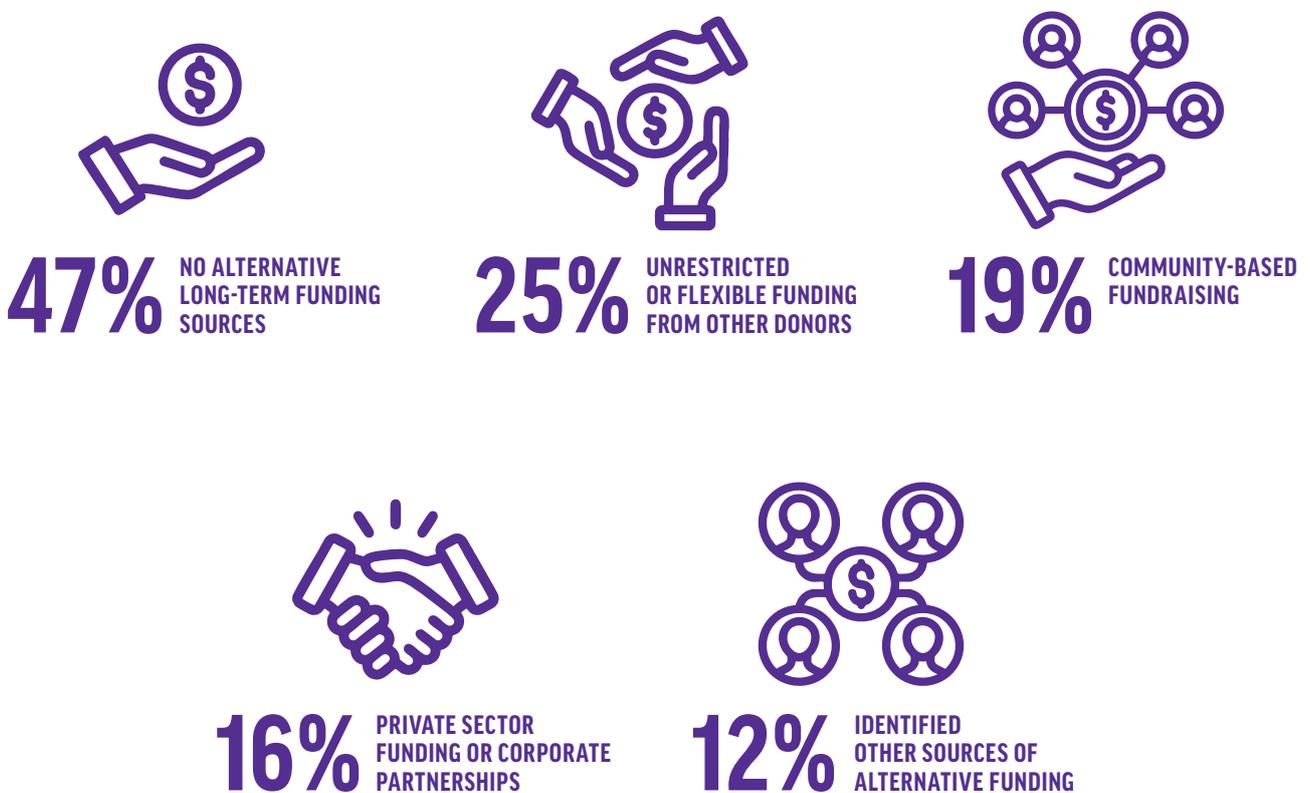
### Share of Women's Organizations Reporting Related Financial and Legal Risks Increase:



# Women's Organizations' Access to Alternative Funding Sources

Findings indicate that access to alternative funding sources remains limited for many women's organizations. Nearly half of respondents (47%) reported having no access to alternative funding sources to address long-term funding gaps, highlighting a high level of financial vulnerability. Among organizations that reported some degree of diversification, 25% indicated access to unrestricted or flexible funding from other donors; 19% relied on community-based fundraising mechanisms such as crowdfunding or membership fees; and 16% reported access to private sector funding or corporate partnerships. A further 12% identified other sources of alternative funding.

## Reported Use of Alternative Funding Sources by Women's Organizations



Among organizations that are seeking to diversify their funding base, efforts are primarily oriented toward international sources, underscoring continued dependence on external support despite waning foreign assistance globally. The most commonly explored option is international non-governmental organizations, cited by 78% of respondents, followed by international governmental donors (51%). A smaller but notable share of organizations are attempting to broaden their resource base through private sector businesses and foundations (42%) and membership fees or individual donations (33%). Fewer organizations reported exploring social entrepreneurship (29%) or government and local authority funding (22%). Taken together, these findings suggest that **while many organizations are actively pursuing alternative funding, diversification efforts remain largely concentrated within the international aid ecosystem, reinforcing the limited availability of sustainable and flexible long-term financing options.**

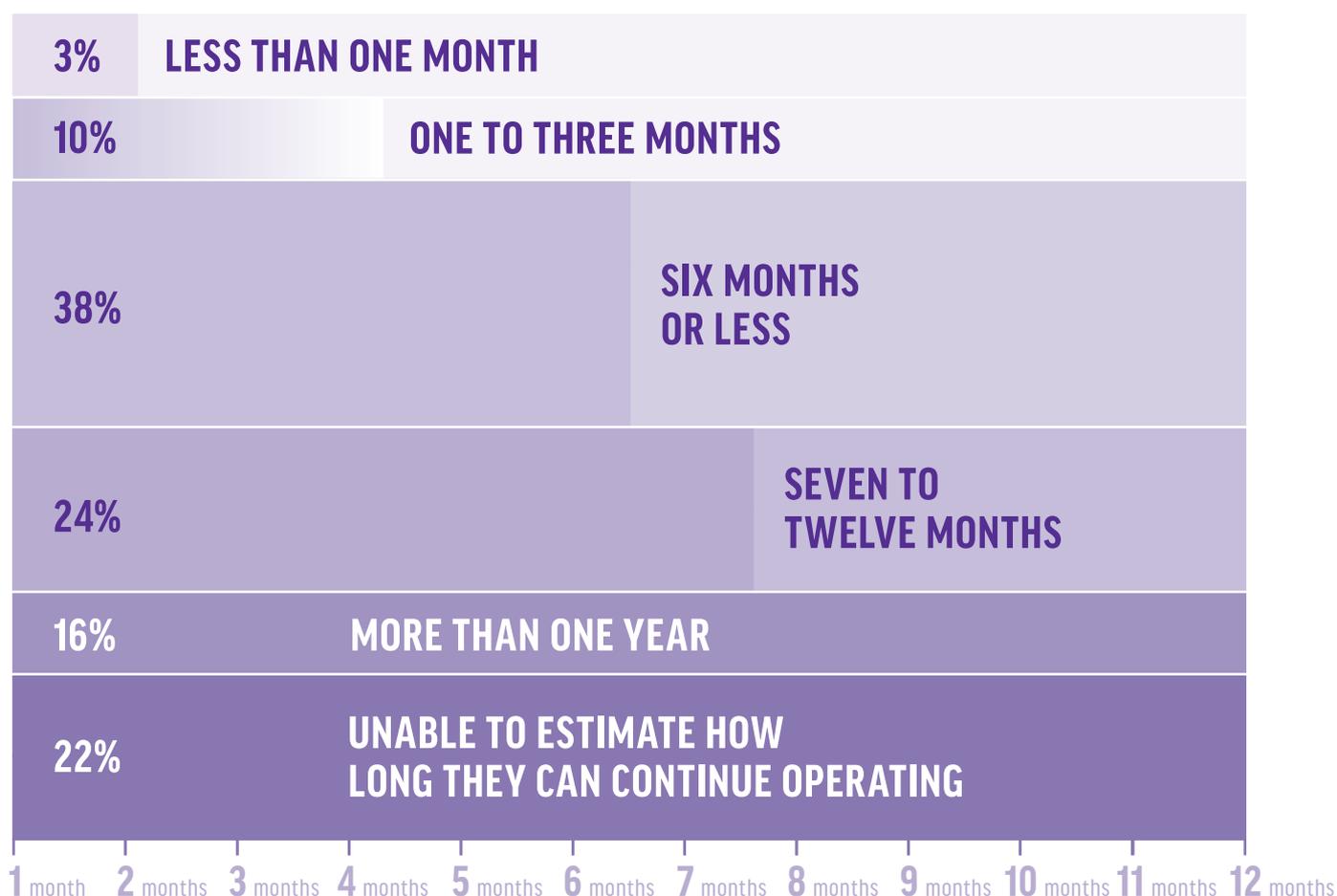
# Sustainability of Women's Organizations

**Women's organizations report a narrow financial runway and significant uncertainty about their ability to sustain operations at current funding levels in 2026.**

More than a third of organizations (38%)—expect to be able to continue operating for six months or less, including 3 organizations (3%) that anticipate sustaining operations for less than one month and 11 organizations (10%) that expect funding to last only one to three months. A further 27 organizations (25%) project that their current funding will support activities for four to six months, underscoring how quickly operational capacity may erode.

In contrast, 26 organizations (24%) report that they could sustain operations for seven to twelve months, while only 17 organizations (16%) expect to maintain activities for more than one year. At the same time, 24 organizations (22%) remain unable to estimate how long they can continue operating. The findings portray a sector operating under tight horizons and mounting uncertainty, with many organizations approaching a critical point where service continuity and organizational survival are increasingly at risk.

## Organizations' Financial Runway



# Donor Practices Undermining Organizational Resilience in a Constrained Funding Environment

Survey findings send a clear and consistent message to the donor community about which practices most undermine the resilience of women-led and women's rights organizations during funding reductions. The most frequently cited challenge is the use of short-term grants, reported by 76% of organizations. This practice imposes constraints on strategic planning and undermines staff retention and programme continuity. A large majority (69%) identified donors' preference for large international NGOs over local actors as a major constraint, reinforcing long-standing concerns about a lack of localization and unequal access to funding and decision-making power.

More than half of organizations (51%) reported that funding tied to narrow outputs with limited flexibility significantly constrained their ability to adapt to rapidly changing needs, while 46% pointed to delays in contracting or payments, exacerbating cash-flow pressures and operational risk. Structural constraints within grant modalities were also highlighted, including reduced overhead coverage (41%) and reduced donor risk tolerance toward local organizations (40%), both of which directly weaken institutional sustainability of women's organizations. In addition, 38% cited increased reporting and compliance requirements as placing disproportionate administrative burdens on already stretched teams. Only 4% reported that none of the listed donor practices had a negative effect.



**76%** USE OF  
SHORT-TERM  
GRANTS



**51%** LIMITED  
FLEXIBILITY



**46%** DELAYS  
IN CONTRACTING  
OR PAYMENTS



**41%** REDUCED  
OVERHEAD  
COVERAGE



**40%** REDUCED  
RISK  
TOLERANCE



**38%** INCREASED  
REPORTING  
REQUIREMENTS

**Women's organizations are increasingly concerned that donors are moving away from longer-term, more flexible, and locally accessible funding, with adequate overheads, predictable disbursements, and proportionate compliance requirements. Without these meaningful localization and sustainability commitments cannot be realized.**

# Impact of Foreign Assistance

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## Cuts on the Women's Movement

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### in Ukraine

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**Compared to 2025, the latest findings suggest that the structural pressures facing the women's movement in Ukraine have not eased and, in some areas, have intensified.**

While 65% of respondents in 2025 anticipated increased competition among women's organizations for scarce resources, the current survey shows this concern has grown to envelop 74% of organizations. This indicates a more crowded and competitive funding environment that disproportionately threatens smaller and grassroots organizations. Concerns about the declining influence of civil society organizations remain consistently high in both 2025 and 2026, with 62% and 55%, respectively.

Similarly, fears of a reduction in the number of independent women's organizations persist, though at a slightly lower level (57% in 2025 compared to 49% currently), pointing to ongoing risks of organizational closure and loss of professional capacity.

At the same time, adaptive responses identified in 2025 continue to shape the movement's strategy. The formation of consortia and coalition-building, viewed by 27% of respondents in 2025 as an opportunity to strengthen resilience, is now reported by 46% of organizations, indicating a significant shift toward collective approaches as a survival mechanism rather than a strategic choice.