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Administrative Crime and Policing Trends in Ukraine 2019–2024 Under Wartime Disruption Offenses

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This study examines the behavior of policing-relevant administrative indicators in Ukraine across 2019–2024, spanning pre-escalation conditions and the period following the large-scale escalation of armed conflict beginning in February 2022. Using a measurement-aware, mixed-method descriptive design, we compile indicators across five domains: crime-processing backbone (registered and solved crimes), domestic-violence reporting, missing-persons caseload, institutional workload/service demand, and public trust in police. The evidence shows a clear discontinuity around 2022, where several domains stop behaving like extensions of pre-war patterns and begin reflecting a different measurement environment. Registered and solved crimes reverse direction after 2021 and expand through 2024, while the clearance proxy rises overall but does not move smoothly. Domestic-violence reports show volatility followed by post-2021 elevation, missing-persons magnitudes expand in post-2022 snapshots, and trust softens from 2023 to 2024. Cross-domain comparison reveals both convergence (multiple indicators shifting together around 2022) and divergence (clearance and trust moving differently from crime volumes). We interpret these patterns through an institutional-output lens: observed series are jointly shaped by changing reporting conditions, recording practices, coverage, and case processing constraints, not just by underlying prevalence. The study demonstrates a crisis-ready approach where indicators are reported faithfully to their public form, discontinuities are made explicit, and conclusions avoid over-claiming. Recommendations include pairing numbers with coverage/definitional metadata, treating cross-domain divergence as an audit trigger, and strengthening multi-source triangulation to distinguish changes in harm from changes in measurement.

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Public Interest Statement

This study shows how wartime disruption changes the meaning of policing indicators in Ukraine. Using the 2019–2024 administrative and survey series, we document a clear discontinuity around 2022 and show why recorded trends should be read as institutional outputs shaped by reporting, recording, and coverage conditions, not direct prevalence measures. We propose a replicable monitoring approach: report each indicator in its observed form (annual totals, point estimates, or ranges), use cross-domain convergence/divergence to flag measurement breaks, and publish metadata on definitions and coverage alongside numbers to support accountable crisis-era governance.

Introduction

States are expected to protect life and health by maintaining effective legal and institutional mechanisms for investigating and prosecuting crimes (Ablamskyi et al., 2020, 2022; Sokurenko et al., 2023). This task increasingly

depends on the information systems that shape the manner in which incidents are recorded, processed, and cleared. In Ukraine, a period of declining recorded crime prior to 2022 was followed by a sharp rupture after Russia's full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, which altered offence patterns, investigative priorities, and institutional conditions. These changes compelled the adaptation of legal mechanisms and technological solutions for documenting war crimes, safeguarding human rights, and responding to new criminal opportunities during wartime disruptions.

Policing and public security debates frequently rely on administrative indicators—police-recorded offences, calls for service, case clearances, and complaint volumes—to describe trends and infer institutional performance. However, a substantial body of criminological research shows that police statistics are best understood as a joint institutional and social output of offending, public reporting, and organizational recording practices rather than as a transparent measure of underlying prevalence (Aebi, 2019; Błachut, 2000; Skogan, 1977). This perspective matters because the gap between experienced victimization and recorded events—the "dark figure"—is not random; it varies systematically across offence types, places, and time, and can be large enough to distort policy interpretation when recorded trends are treated as prevalence trends (Skogan, 1977; Xie & Baumer, 2019).

Empirical research goes beyond treating these issues as generic caveats by showing that reporting propensity, and recording and classification rules vary in measurable ways that can reshape apparent trends. Long-run analysis of victim reporting in the National Crime Survey/National Crime Victimization Survey demonstrates that reporting to the police changes over time and is patterned by offence and social context, implying that the same level of victimization can generate different recorded volumes across periods (Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010). Simultaneously, organizational incentives, procedures, and definitional thresholds can shift what becomes a "recorded" case, particularly for categories that depend on discretionary classification and documentation (Aebi, 2019; Mason and Moran, 2019). Multi-source comparisons further show that police records may capture only a fraction of underlying violent events. Studies using health and emergency response data have illustrated substantial mismatches between police incident records and ambulance/EMS-derived violence signals, underscoring the value of triangulation when interpreting recorded crimes as a social indicator (Hibdon et al., 2021; Simmonds et al., 2023). Reporting dynamics can also react to institutional legitimacy shocks; time-series evidence indicates that highly publicized police violence can reduce citizen reporting and calls for service, thereby decoupling recorded statistics from underlying incidents, even without any real decline in victimization (Desmond et al., 2020). Methodological work on measurement errors likewise demonstrates that plausible under-recording scenarios can change substantive inferences in statistical models, reinforcing the need for explicit robustness checks rather than implicit assumptions of accurate recording (Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023a).

This empirical landscape has generated an active methodological debate on how police-recorded data should be used and interpreted. One approach reframes administrative series as indicators of institutional workload and service demand rather than direct measures of social incidence (Aebi, 2019; Błachut, 2000). The second approach develops tools to quantify the uncertainty arising from under-recording and measurement errors, including sensitivity analysis and measurement error modeling (Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023a). The third approach models multi-series dynamics to separate latent shifts in reporting/recording from offence-specific changes by exploiting correlations across categories, providing a structured way to interpret observed fluctuations without overclaiming prevalence (Garton & Niemi, 2019). Complementing these, recent modeling work explicitly targets underreporting in spatiotemporal crime series, illustrating a growing "estimation" strand that treats underreporting as a parameter rather than an unobservable nuisance (Riascos Villegas et al., 2023). Across these strands, the shared point is that administrative indicators can be analytically powerful but only when their institutional production and measurement discontinuities are made explicit.

Against this broader measurement problem, Ukraine offers a salient case for examining how policing-relevant administrative indicators behave over a period that includes both pre-crisis conditions and the large-scale escalation of armed conflict, beginning in February 2022. Crisis governance plausibly changes (i) the demand placed on police services, (ii) public willingness and ability to report, (iii) territorial coverage and organizational capacity, and (iv) classification priorities and documentation practices during a crisis. Official reports indicate sustained and complex operational pressures on policing services during wartime (National Police of Ukraine 2024). Concurrently, administrative indicators of vulnerability and harm, particularly domestic violence-related reports, have been highlighted in official communications, while missing-person caseload documentation has expanded through institutional and humanitarian tracing systems (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2025a, 2025b; International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 2022, 2025a, 2025b; Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, 2024). These developments make Ukraine an analytically useful setting not only to describe "what changed' but also to demonstrate why responsible trend interpretation requires an explicit measurement framework.

Despite the growing relevance of administrative indicators in crisis settings, two empirical gaps remain in the literature. First, many discussions treat indicator domains in isolation—conventional crime registration in one lane, domestic violence reporting in another, and missing persons in a third—making it difficult to assess whether observed changes reflect system-wide shifts in workload and access or category-specific recording/reporting effects. Second, even when administrative series are used longitudinally, interpretive principles for handling definitional breaks (e.g., counting rules and classification changes), geographic discontinuities (territorial access), and reporting dynamics (help-seeking constraints) are often implicit rather than clearly articulated, which invites over-interpretation and politicized readings. Building on the institutional-output perspective and empirical measurement literature, this study addresses these gaps through a multi-indicator analysis of Ukraine (2019–2024), which treats police-recorded series primarily as signals of operational demand and institutional functioning, interpreted with explicit attention to measurement discontinuities and triangulation logic (Aebi, 2019; Hibdon et al., 2021; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023b; Simmonds et al., 2023).

Accordingly, this study pursues three objectives: (1) to document trends in key policing-relevant administrative indicators from 2019 to 2024; (2) to assess convergence and divergence across indicator domains to detect potential structural breaks and category-specific distortions; and (3) to derive cautious, non-causal implications for monitoring and governance that avoid treating recorded trends as direct prevalence trends under crisis conditions. The guiding research questions were as follows: What trend patterns emerged across major policing-relevant administrative indicators in Ukraine from 2019 to 2024? To what extent do the indicator domains converge or diverge across the observation window, particularly around the wartime period? Which reporting/recording and definitional discontinuities are the most salient for the responsible interpretation of these trends?

Literature Review

Classic studies on crime statistics confirm that police data cannot be treated as a direct reflection of victimization rates in society. The concept of the dark figure of crime places recorded crime figures as a result of social-institutional selection: an event only becomes a statistic when the victim (or a third party) reports it, and the authorities decide that the event is worthy of being recorded in a certain category (Skogan, 1977). This framework was later enriched by a more institutional reading: crime statistics are not merely a summary of "events," but rather a bureaucratic output produced through organizational procedures, legal definitions, recording thresholds, and institutional work logic (Blachut, 2000). Consequently, administrative trends can shift because of changes in the reporting and recording processes, even when the level of harm experienced by the community does not change.

Subsequent developments show that "reporting" mechanisms can be measured empirically and vary enough to alter policy interpretations. A long-term analysis of victimization survey data in the US shows that the tendency of victims to report to the police changes between periods and differs between types of crime; that is, changes in the volume of "recorded crime" may reflect changes in reporting behavior—not merely changes in victimization (Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010). A systematic review of victims' decisions to contact the police also confirms that reporting is a social decision influenced by the severity of the case, the victim-perpetrator relationship, perceptions of the effectiveness of police responses, and barriers to access; these factors can shift rapidly in times of social disruption or institutional pressure (Xie & Baumer, 2019). Thus, "police figures" are most safely interpreted as a combination of harm and access/willingness to report incidents.

In Ukraine, full-scale invasion has produced a high-disruption environment in which offence patterns, institutional capacity, and public access to law enforcement can change quickly. Military aggression, humanitarian pressure, and transformed economic and social ties jointly reshape the nature and scale of criminal activity (Ablamskyi et al., 2023). Nosach et al., 2023). In such settings, police-recorded figures are particularly sensitive to shifts in reporting, intake capacity, and recording practices, and not only to changes in victimization.

However, even when reporting occurs, variations in recording and classification practices within the police can create significant additional distortions. Cross-country comparative studies show that differences in definitions, counting rules, and administrative practices affect the comparability of official statistics and have the potential to produce breaks that appear to be social changes when they are, in fact, administrative changes (Aebi, 2019). At the category level, studies on crime bias show how internal procedures, officer interpretations, and organizational frameworks shape what ultimately counts as a "recorded case" (Mason and Moran, 2019). More recent measurement literature reinforces this argument quantitatively: uncertainty due to measurement error in police-recorded crime can alter analytical conclusions, so the assumption that "recorded data = correct data" needs to be replaced with robust reporting and sensitivity testing (Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023). In other words, recording distortions are not merely methodological footnotes; they can determine the direction of conclusions.

Another crucial impetus comes from studies that compare police data with external sources, particularly health and emergency service data. EMS-based research shows that patterns of violence gleaned from medical/ambulance data

can differ significantly from police data, including in the identification of locations and temporal trends, such that a single police-based reading risks underestimating and mismapping the burden of harm (Hibdon et al., 2021). Similar findings emerge from the use of location-based ambulance data to address unreported violence, confirming that some harm is "visible" in the health system, but does not enter the police system (Simmonds et al., 2023). This evidence points to a more rigorous methodological logic: when available, multi-source triangulation is not an accessory, but a means of examining whether administrative trends reflect harm or primarily reflect changes in administrative visibility.

The literature also suggests that administrative statistics can change due to legitimacy shocks, not because harm has decreased. Quasi-experimental evidence shows that publicly exposed police violence can reduce citizen reporting of crime and decrease calls for service, thereby lowering administrative figures because citizens are reluctant to interact with the police and not because the situation has become safer (Desmond et al., 2020). These findings are important because they place trust/legitimacy as a mechanism that is "within" the data production process: changes in trust can alter reporting and ultimately change recorded statistics.

Finally, the current wave of research has transformed many of these classic warnings into operational analytical tools. Multivariate time-series modeling with dynamic linear models offers a way to read multiple series simultaneously to detect shared shocks and distinguish systemic from category-specific changes (Garton & Niemi, 2019). Spatio-temporal modeling also begins to treat underreporting as a process that can be parameterized and estimated under explicit assumptions, so that "unrecorded activity" is no longer merely acknowledged but incorporated into the estimation framework (Riascos Villegas et al., 2023). At the practical level, a sensitivity analysis of the measurement error provides a transparent way to show the stability of the findings when under-recording rates vary within a reasonable range (Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023). This methodological direction reinforces the general conclusion of the literature that police-recorded indicators remain highly valuable, but that value emerges if we treat them as institutional indicators interpreted with appropriate tools.

Although the evidence above consistently shows that reporting/recording distortions can be large and measurable, three limitations of the literature remain relevant to the crisis context. First, many reporting and recording studies are rooted in relatively stable institutional settings. In situations of major disruption, several mechanisms may move in tandem: reporting access declines, recording capacity changes, and territorial coverage fragments, making trend interpretation more complex than simply "up = more crime" or "down = safer" (Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023). Second, the strongest triangulation evidence is often concentrated on violence categories and the availability of EMS/ambulance data; for other categories, multi-source approaches are not always available, so interpretation strategies need to emphasize convergence/divergence across administrative indicators and the transparency of assumptions (Hibdon et al., 2021; Simmonds et al., 2023). Third, the most sophisticated modeling tools demand granularity and strong assumptions; therefore, defensible empirical contributions in administration-based studies often lie in careful multi-indicator readings, explicit discontinuities, and measurable robustness checks (Garton & Niemi, 2019; Riascos Villegas et al., 2023).

Drawing on this literature, in this study, we place administrative indicators primarily as signals of workload and institutional demand, and then read trend changes through two steps: (i) testing whether several indicators move in tandem (indicating a systemic shock) or diverge (indicating a reporting/recording or definitional shift), and (ii) explicitly stating the limits of inference so that the findings do not slip into prevalence claims that are not supported by the nature of the data (Aebi, 2019; Desmond et al., 2023; Desmond et al., 2020).

In sum, because recorded indicators may shift due to changes in reporting, recording, coverage, and definitions, especially under wartime disruption, this study adopts a cautious descriptive strategy. It documents 2019–2024 trends, tests convergence/divergence across domains to flag potential structural breaks, and extracts non-causal interpretive implications by identifying the most salient reporting/recording and definitional discontinuities.

Materials and Methods

This study adopts a measurement-aware, mixed-method descriptive design to examine how policing-relevant administrative indicators in Ukraine behave across 2019–2024, spanning pre-escalation conditions and the period following the large-scale escalation of armed conflict beginning in February 2022. The methodological starting point is that administrative indicators are institutional outputs rather than direct mirrors of the underlying crime or harm prevalence. Observed movements may reflect a joint product of incident occurrence, public reporting propensity, recording/classification rules, territorial coverage, and institutional capacity, factors that can be severely disrupted during a crisis. Accordingly, this study prioritizes accountable interpretation over causal attribution, following established cautions in the crime-measurement literature (Skogan, 1977; Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010; Xie & Baumer, 2019; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023).

The unit of analysis is the calendar year (t = 2019…2024). The unit of observation is a national-level annual statistic, or where annual consolidation is not available, a documented public register snapshot that can be placed in a specific year. The wartime period is treated as a measurement-disrupted phase rather than a clean "treatment" interval.

To address the study objectives, the quantitative component compiles five policing-relevant indicator domains selected to capture distinct institutional outputs and enable cross-domain comparison:

1. Crime-processing backbone: Annual counts of registered criminal offences and solved offences from unified national administrative reporting (e.g., prosecutorial/unified crime-statistics series), providing the most consistent backbone from 2019 to 2024.
2. Domestic violence administrative signal: Annual recorded statements/reports/contacts (when consolidated), treated as a help-seeking/recording indicator in a vulnerability-relevant domain.
3. Missing persons register caseloads: post-2022 public register caseload snapshots explicitly treated as caseload reporting with definitional heterogeneity.
4. Institutional workload/service demand: Where available (e.g., emergency call volumes), included to separate service-demand outputs from recorded offences.
5. Trust in police (survey): Public trust percentages from survey reporting are used as contextual legitimacy information that may co-vary with reporting propensity, rather than as a mechanical performance metric (Desmond et al., 2020).

The inclusion criteria were as follows: (a) public provenance, (b) aggregated statistics (no personal data), (c) traceable documentation, and (d) temporal placement within 2019–2024. If a year cannot be responsibly consolidated (e.g., intermittent press statements without definitional continuity), the observation is retained as missing rather than being imputed.

Registered offences denote annual totals recorded by the responsible authority under the relevant reporting framework; solved offences denote annual totals designated as solved/cleared within the same framework. From these, the solved share (clearance proxy) is computed as follows:

$$SolvedShare_t = \frac{Solved_t}{Registered_t} \times 100$$

This ratio is interpreted as an administrative processing outcome that may be sensitive to procedural/definitional choices, not as a direct measure of deterrence or "true crime reduction' (Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023).

For domestic violence, the annual total is treated as a composite of harm exposure, reporting channels, and institutional accessibility, consistent with evidence that reporting rates and institutional responses can shift independently of the underlying incidence (Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010; Xie & Baumer, 2019).

For missing persons, publicly reported figures are treated explicitly as register caseload snapshots rather than annual incidences. When multiple public figures exist for a given year from different institutional communications, the study preserves multiplicity as a bounded range and documents the definitional context rather than collapsing into a single "true" number.

For trust in the police, this study used the reported percentage from the relevant survey released in that year. Given the potential gaps and instrument changes, trust is reported descriptively and used primarily to contextualize potential shifts in reporting behavior and legitimacy (Desmond et al., 2020).

All series were standardized into a common annual panel (2019–2024) with explicit metadata notes attached to each indicator-year cell. Three transparency rules guide harmonization.

1. No forced merging of non-equivalent series: Conceptually distinct crime-statistics streams (e.g., unified national series vs. police ERDR-style registrations) do not collapse unless definitional equivalence is explicitly documented; they are presented as parallel outputs when needed.
2. No imputation of missing years: missing observations remain to avoid manufacturing continuity under disrupted measurements.

3. Measurement caveats travel with the numbers: coverage scope, definitional notes, and consolidation limits are recorded alongside each series to keep the results auditable and to support measurement-aware interpretation.

Because wartime displacement makes population denominators unstable, cross-domain comparisons rely on indexed series with 2019 = 100 (along with raw levels). Indexing supports proportional comparisons without implying per capita prevalence.

For each indicator, the study reports (i) annual levels, (ii) year-to-year changes, and (iii) phase summaries comparing 2019–2021 to 2022–2024, where coverage permits. This establishes an empirical baseline prior to cross-domain interpretation.

To summarize whether the post-2022 period departs from the pre-2022 trajectory, this study applies an interrupted time-series (ITS) descriptive structure with a pre-specified breakpoint in 2022.

$$Y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 time_t + \beta_2 post2022_t + \beta_3 timeAfter2022_t + \varepsilon_t$$

where $time_t$ increases annually from 2019, $post2022_t$ equals 1 for 2022–2024 and 0 otherwise, and $timeAfter2022_t$ equals 0 before 2022 and increases by 1 thereafter. Here, β_2 summarizes an immediate level shift at 2022, and β_3 summarizes a change in slope after 2022. Given the short annual series and unstable measurement conditions, ITS outputs were treated as descriptive structures and not causal identifications (Wagner et al., 2002; Bernal et al., 2017).

This study compares the direction and timing of changes across domains (registered offences, solved offences, DV contacts, missing-persons caseload, workload/service demand, and trust). Convergence is suggestive of system-wide shifts in institutional workload/visibility, while divergence is a signal to examine domain-specific reporting/recording mechanisms rather than forcing a single prevalence narrative. This triangulation follows evidence that single-source police statistics can diverge from other harm-sensitive sources and that multi-source readings improve interpretive validity (Hibdon et al., 2021; Simmonds et al., 2023). Two checks were performed to avoid overconfident inferences.

1. Breakpoint sensitivity: Segmented summaries are re-estimated with an alternative breakpoint in 2023 to account for lagged consolidation effects.
2. Representation sensitivity: The analysis verifies whether core conclusions depend on raw levels vs. indexed series; patterns that hold under both are treated as more robust.

No claim is made that these checks deliver causal validation; they function as conservative guards against interpretive fragility.

We conducted a documentary measurement audit to complement the descriptive trend analysis and ensure that the interpretation of year-to-year changes is anchored in documented definitional and coverage statements rather than in the author's conjecture. This audit treats the indicator series as institutional outputs that can shift with changes in territorial coverage, recording rules, reporting channels, and operational prioritization —drivers widely recognized in the official crime-statistics literature (Aebi, 2019; Eurostat, n.d.; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023).

The audit corpus comprised publicly available documentation associated with the indicator domains used in this study, including (i) methodological notes and public descriptions of survey-based trust indicators, which commonly specify population coverage and exclusions; (ii) official descriptions of the missing persons registry (institutional scope, reporting basis, and access channels); and (iii) official communications describing domestic violence recording outputs and related administrative/legal framing.

We applied focused qualitative content analysis at the statement level (sentence/paragraph units containing definitional, methodological, or scope clarifications). The statements were coded into four predefined categories aligned with common sources of administrative distortion: (1) territorial/coverage scope, (2) counting/classification rules, (3) reporting channels and accessibility constraints, and (4) institutional prioritisation/workload and triage. The coded outputs were then used to annotate quantitative patterns (e.g., abrupt level shifts or cross-domain divergences) by identifying which discontinuities were plausibly consistent with documented scope/rule/channel changes, and therefore required heightened interpretive caution.

This study used only aggregated public data and documentary sources and did not involve interviews, case file access, or identifiable information. The results are reported at the National Annual Resolution, and this study avoids attributing the intent or responsibility to specific actors. Interpretations are bounded by indicator definitions, and uncertainty is made explicit when measurement conditions are unstable, reducing both academic overreach and political sensitivity.

Results

We examined policy-relevant indicators for Ukraine from 2019 to 2024 across several domains. The evidence base supports full annual reporting for the crime-processing backbone—registered and solved crimes—so we report year-by-year levels, year-on-year changes, and a clearance proxy (solved/registered).

For the remaining domains, we report the indicators in an empirical form in which they are publicly consolidated. Domestic violence reporting is available as annual totals for 2019–2023 (a consolidated national annual figure for 2024 is unavailable in the assembled series). Missing-person figures appear as post-2022 register snapshots reported by multiple sources; therefore, we present them as ranges rather than as a single harmonized annual series. Trust in the police appears as survey point estimates (observed for 2020, 2023, and 2024); therefore, we report point-to-point movement rather than a continuous year-by-year trend for the full window. This domain-specific reporting aligns the results with what each indicator can legitimately support under crisis-era measurement disruption.

Registered crimes and solved crimes: levels, growth, and clearance dynamics

Based on our analysis, the registered crime series shows a two-phase pattern: a pre-2022 contraction, followed by a post-2021 expansion. Registered crimes fell during 2019–2021, dropping from 418,000 (2019) to 335,000 (2020) and 326,000 (2021), before rising to 457,000 (2022), 515,000 (2023), and 573,000 (2024). Solved crimes move in the same broad direction, but the post-2021 expansion is stronger: solved crimes decline modestly from 186,200 (2019) to 164,000 (2020) and 162,700 (2021), then rise to 243,900 (2022), 263,500 (2023), and 329,300 (2024). When we express solved crimes as a share of registered crimes (a clearance proxy), we see an overall rise with a brief post-2022 interruption: 44.55% (2019) → 48.96% (2020) → 49.91% (2021) → 53.37% (2022) → 51.17% (2023), and 57.47% (2024). The discontinuity around 2022 is therefore visible in both volumes and, more cautiously, in their ratio. A phase summary underscores this break: the mean registered crimes rose from 359,667 (2019–2021) to 515,000 (2022–2024) (+43.2%), whereas the mean solved crimes rose from 170,967 to 278,900 (+63.1%). The clearance proxy increased from 47.80% to 54.00% (+6.20 percentage points). Table 1 shows the year-by-year levels, year-on-year changes, and clearance proxies (solved/registered) for the period 2019–2024.

Table 1. Registered crimes, solved crimes, and clearance (2019–2024)

Year	Registered crimes	YoY	Solved crimes	YoY	Clearance	Δ clearance
2019	418,000		186,200		44.55%	
2020	335,000	-19.9%	164,000	-11.9%	48.96%	4.41 pp
2021	326,000	-2.7%	162,700	-0.8%	49.91%	0.95 pp
2022	457,000	40.2%	243,900	49.9%	53.37%	3.46 pp
2023	515,000	12.7%	263,500	8.0%	51.17%	-2.20 pp
2024	573,000	11.3%	329,300	25.0%	57.47%	6.30 pp

Domestic-violence administrative reports (National Police)

Related to domestic violence administrative reports, we examined the annual totals of domestic violence administrative reports provided in the assembled file. Reporting is available as annual totals for 2019–2023 (a consolidated 2024 annual total is not present in the compiled series); accordingly, we treat 2019–2023 as the DV observation window for the results. Across the available years, the phase contrast was substantial; the mean DV reports increased from 164,997 (2019–2021) to 267,905 (2022–2023) (+62.4%). Table 2 shows the annual totals and year-on-year changes for the domestic violence administrative reports for the observed 2019–2023 window.

Table 2. Domestic-violence administrative reports (2019–2024)

Year	DV reports (National Police)	YoY
2019	141,814	
2020	208,784	47.2%
2021	144,394	-30.8%
2022	244,381	69.2%
2023	291,428	19.3%

Missing persons: post-2022 register snapshots reported as ranges

In relation to missing persons, we examined missing-persons figures as they are publicly reported in our compiled sources, which enter the evidence base as post-2022 register snapshots rather than a single harmonized annual series. Therefore, we report the magnitude as a range. The compiled snapshot for 2022 was 18,811. For 2023, the available snapshots span from 28,000 (lower bound) to 35,114 (upper bound). For 2024, the range widens further from 42,000 (lower bound) to 60,000 (upper bound). The key result is the size and widening of the post-2022 register magnitude in a way that remains faithful to its multisource public form. Table 3 shows the post-2022 missing-person register magnitude, reported as bounded ranges for each year.

Table 3. Missing-persons register snapshots (range reporting)

Year	Lower estimate	Upper estimate
2022	18,811	18,811
2023	28,000	35,114
2024	42,000	60,000

Trust in police (KIIS): partial series with a post-2023 softening

In this section, we examine trust in the police, as observed in the available survey points. As trust is observed here as discrete survey points rather than a continuous annual series, we interpret the changes point-to-point and treat the series as contextual triangulation rather than a continuous 2019–2024 trend line. Table 4 shows the available survey points for trust in the police.

Table 4. Missing persons

Year	Trust in police
2020	34%
2023	41%
2024	37%

Cross-domain convergence and divergence: where indicators move together, and where they split

We then compared the domains to assess whether the indicator movement converged (multiple domains shifted in the same direction over the same interval) or diverged (movement split across domains), particularly during the wartime period. A directional comparison highlights a strong upward co-movement from 2021 to 2022 in the core administrative series (registered crimes, solved crimes, clearance proxy, and DV), followed by a period in which volumes continued to rise, but the clearance proxy temporarily softened. From 2023→2024, registered and solved crimes rise again, the clearance proxy increases, the missing-persons range expands, and trust declines (−4 pp). Table 5 shows the aligned interval changes across domains using an empirically comparable form for each indicator.

Table 5. Cross-domain change summary (aligned intervals)

Interval	Registered (Δ%)	Solved (Δ%)	Clearance (Δ pp)	DV reports (Δ%)	Missing persons register	Trust (Δ pp)
2019→2021	-22.0%	-12.6%	+5.36 pp	+1.8%	—	—
2021→2022	+40.2%	+49.9%	+3.46 pp	+69.2%	First post-2022 reference point (18,811)	—
2022→2023	+12.7%	+8.0%	-2.20 pp	+19.3%	Range shifts to 28,000–35,114	—
2023→2024	+11.3%	+25.0%	+6.30 pp	—	Range shifts to 42,000–60,000	-4 pp

To organize the discontinuity around the prespecified 2022 breakpoint without making causal claims, we report segmented descriptive summaries as an organizing device (not as causal identification). The fitted segments showed a negative pre-2022 slope with a marked positive level shift in 2022, followed by a positive post-2022 slope for both registered and solved crimes. Similarly, for DV, the fitted segment captures volatility before 2022 and the positive level shift in 2022 within the available 2019–2023 window. Table 6 shows segmented descriptive summaries around the 2022 breakpoint (organizing device only, not causal identification).

Table 6. Segmented summaries (breakpoint at 2022)

Indicator	Pre-2022 slope / year	Level shift at 2022	Post-2022 slope / year	R^2
Registered crimes	-46,000	+189,333	+58,000	0.98
Solved crimes	-11,750	+88,733	+42,700	0.98
DV reports (2019–2023)	+1,290	+76,804	+47,047	0.83

Measurement and comparability under wartime disruption

The documentary audit provides a measurement context for reading the 2019–2024 trends and explains why the 2022 breakpoint should be treated as a comparability challenge rather than a clean behavioral shift. Table 7 summarizes the documented cues and shows that the main cross-domain patterns in this study are plausibly shaped by four recurring mechanisms: territorial coverage, counting/classification rules, reporting accessibility, and institutional workload.

Table 7. Documentary audit cues and interpretive implications

Domain	Documented cue (what the documentation says)	Audit category	Description
Trust (survey)	Coverage limited to reachable respondents in government-controlled territory; standard exclusions apply	Coverage/scope	Treat changes as within-frame shifts, not population-wide wartime prevalence
Missing persons	Registry entries depend on formal reports and institutional processing; dedicated reporting channels are emphasized	Reporting channels + institutional workload	Treat counts as registry/intake outputs sensitive to access, capacity, and standardization
Domestic violence	Police-registered "cases"; policy/legal emphasis on strengthening responsibility/enforcement	Counting/classification + prioritization	Treat DV as recorded enforcement/service outputs; interpret increases cautiously
Recorded crime (general)	Statistical documentation flags occupied-territory registration mechanisms as a comparability factor	Coverage + counting rules	Reinforces structural-break framing; cross-year comparability is not uniform

For the trust indicator, the documented coverage frame implies that the 2020→2023 increase and 2023→2024 softening should be interpreted as a within-frame movement among reachable respondents rather than as population-wide shifts for all residents under displacement and territorial loss. In practice, this means that the trust series functions as contextual triangulation: its divergence from administrative volume growth in 2023→2024 (Table 5) is analytically meaningful but should not be generalized beyond the covered survey population.

For missing persons, Table 7 clarifies why we report post-2022 magnitudes as ranges and why their expansion is best read as a registry intake outcome shaped by reporting channels, verification procedures, and institutional capacity. Interpreting the widening 2023 and 2024 ranges (Table 3) as registry expansion and intake dynamics is methodologically safer than treating them as a single harmonized prevalence series, particularly when the wartime environment plausibly changes both accessibility and institutional processing load.

For domestic violence, the documentation's framing of DV as police-registered cases embedded in an administrative/legal response context implies that the sharp post-2021 elevation (Table 2) may reflect changes in victimization and shifts in reporting opportunities, enforcement focus, and institutional mobilization. Consequently, DV is interpreted here as a recorded service demand/enforcement output, and increases are treated cautiously as potentially reflecting both harm and changing institutional visibility.

Finally, for recorded crime statistics, documentation highlighting occupied-territory registration mechanisms directly supports the paper's central stance that cross-year comparability will not be uniform around 2022. Therefore, the sharp post-2021 expansion in registered and solved crimes and the movement of the clearance proxy (Table 1) are presented as robust descriptive changes in recorded outputs, whereas causal or prevalence claims are explicitly avoided in this study. Taken together, the documentary cues in Table 6 justify interpreting the post-2022 period as a measurement-disrupted phase and reinforce the study's emphasis on cross-domain diagnostics rather than single-series storytelling.

Discussion

In this study, we examined policing-relevant administrative indicators in Ukraine from 2019 to 2024 and found a phase discontinuity centered on 2022, visible most clearly in the crime-processing backbone and echoed—though not uniformly—across other domains. Registered crimes declined from 2019 to 2021 and then rose sharply from 2022 onward, while solved crimes rebounded even more strongly post-2021. The clearance proxy (solved/registered) rises overall, with a one-year interruption in 2023, before reaching its highest level in 2024. Taken together, the post-2022 period does not resemble a linear continuation of the pre-2022 trend; it behaves in a different measurement phase.

Outside the backbone, we observed domain-specific patterns that resisted reduction to a single "crime up/down" narrative. Domestic violence administrative reports were volatile before 2022, and then increased markedly from 2022 to 2023. Missing-persons figures enter our evidence base as post-2022 register snapshots reported by multiple sources; therefore, the most responsible representation is a range that expands from 2022 through 2024. Trust in the police was observed as survey point estimates, rising from 2020 to 2023, and then softening in 2024.

Crucially, cross-domain comparisons show both convergence and divergence. The 2021–2022 transition is the strongest moment of convergence (several administrative indicators move up together). After 2022, volumes often move upward, but divergence appears in ratios (clearance) and contextual legitimacy (trust), reinforcing that crisis-era administrative indicators behave like the outputs of a disrupted institutional system and not as direct prevalence meters (Skogan, 1977; Aebi, 2019; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023).

We interpret these trends through the established insight that police statistics are produced through a multi-stage pipeline—from incidents to reporting, recording/classification, and case processing—so that shifts in any stage can reshape the observed series, even when the underlying harm changes differently (Skogan, 1977; Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010). Under wartime disruption, several channels can move simultaneously: territorial coverage and accessibility, changes in reporting costs and opportunities, organizational capacity and workload, enforcement priorities, and definitional or procedural practice. This is why we treat 2022 as a measurement-disrupted phase rather than a clean "treatment," and why we avoid reading recorded trends as prevalence trends without triangulation (Aebi, 2019; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023).

First, the sharp shift around 2022 in the core crime-processing indicators is best read as a structural discontinuity in the administrative system. Registered and solved crimes change direction and magnitude in a way that is difficult to reconcile with a simple continuation of pre-war dynamics. In measurement terms, this type of synchronized change is consistent with system-level reconfiguration: what enters the recording system, what is prioritized for documentation, how cases are processed, and how outcomes are coded can all change under crisis governance (Aebi, 2019). As comparability can be compromised by re-specified recording conditions, we treat the break as an empirical fact to be described, rather than a causal effect to be claimed (Bernal et al., 2017; Wagner et al., 2002).

Second, the clearance proxy should be read as throughput under changing constraints and not as a direct safety or effectiveness signal. Clearance/processing ratios are sensitive to shifts in case mix, triage decisions, workload saturation, and procedural changes, which can be intensified by disruptions (Aebi, 2019; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023). The post-2022 pattern— an overall increase with a temporary dip—fits a scenario in which volumes and processing capacity do not adjust smoothly in tandem, making it analytically safer to interpret clearance as an administrative processing outcome rather than as an indicator of deterrence or underlying harm reduction.

Third, domestic violence reporting behaves as a visibility-and-access indicator, which explains its volatility and post-2021 increase. DV administrative counts reflect a composite of underlying harm, willingness and ability to seek help, and operational accessibility of reporting and response channels. Prior research has repeatedly shown that these channels can change independently of prevalence, so the DV series can move sharply when reporting conditions shift (Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010; Xie & Baumer, 2019). This is consistent with the reason we treat DV as an administrative signal that is informative but not a direct prevalence meter in crisis conditions.

Fourth, the missing persons domain is structurally multi-sourced and definitionally heterogeneous; therefore, ranges are the responsible empirical representation. During a crisis, missingness is documented through evolving institutional and humanitarian registration practices rather than one stable statistical production process. In such contexts, forcing a single harmonized annual series can create false precision; preserving bounded ranges is closer to the comparability logic recommended in measurement-oriented studies (Aebi, 2019; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023). Therefore, the key descriptive result is the expansion of the post-2022 register magnitude and not the illusion of a single exact annual count.

Finally, trust in the police operates as a contextual mechanism within the measurement pipeline. Legitimacy and trust influence cooperation and reporting propensity, which can decouple administrative volumes from the underlying

incidence (Desmond et al., 2020; Garton & Niemi, 2019). The observed softening of trust from 2023 to 2024, alongside rising administrative volumes, illustrates this decoupling: administrative indicators may intensify, while public legitimacy does not, and this divergence is diagnostically meaningful in a measurement-aware interpretation.

Our findings are theoretically significant because they reaffirm—with evidence that is very "visible" in the 2019–2024 Ukrainian data—that police-recorded indicators are institutional-output indicators, not transparent "thermometers" of crime prevalence (Skogan, 1977; Aebi, 2019). However, the theoretical point is not simply to reiterate that "statistics are biased." More importantly, bias and distortion are patterned such that they can be read diagnostically. In our data, the diagnostic pattern is a combination of (i) simultaneous discontinuity around 2022 in several administrative outputs and (ii) post-2022 co-movement in volume, but a split in the processing (clearance) ratio and legitimacy (trust) indicators. This configuration is in line with the arguments of measurement error and comparability research: when data production conditions change unevenly throughout the reporting–recording–processing pipeline, some series will move together, while others will "lag behind" or move in the opposite direction (Aebi, 2019; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023).

In practice, these findings point to a useful approach for monitoring. First, we demonstrate the need to report levels and ratios simultaneously and to treat ratios (e.g., clearance) as throughput under constraints, rather than as indicators of public safety or police effectiveness that can be celebrated outright (Aebi, 2019; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023). Second, we demonstrate the added value of reading indicators as a multioutput system. When multiple domains move in the same direction at a single point in time (e.g., 2021→2022), this should trigger an examination of coverage, definition, and recording practices before the public/researchers lock into a narrative of prevalence. Conversely, when domains diverge (e.g., volume increases but trust declines or clearance declines when volume increases), such divergence should be read as a signal for auditing mechanisms—whether there are shifts in reporting access, recording priorities, or processing burdens—rather than being forced into a single narrative (Hibdon et al., 2021; Simmonds et al., 2023). Third, the findings on DV and missing people reinforce the argument for triangulation in policy practice. DV counts are known to be sensitive to access, reporting costs, and institutional responses, while the magnitude of missing persons in times of crisis is often determined through multi-source registrations, whose definitions are not singular.

Therefore, a "safe but still useful" approach is to read administrative series alongside survey measures (trust/victimisation), health/EMS proxies when available, and independent documentation/humanitarian tracing for specific domains (Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010; Hibdon et al., 2021; Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, 2024).

The literature has long pointed to the dark figure of crime and the fact that police data are affected by reporting propensities and recording practices (Baumer and Lauritsen, 2010; Skogan, 1977). More recent literature has expanded this into an agenda of comparability and measurement-error sensitivity, emphasizing that differences in definitions, procedural changes, and institutional variations can alter apparent trends, even when the "true" behavior in society has not changed much (Aebi, 2019; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023). Meanwhile, applied work increasingly emphasizes multi-source triangulation and the risks of making grand claims from a single administrative series (Hibdon et al., 2021; Simmonds et al., 2023).

Building on measurement and comparability literature, this study makes three main contributions. First, we make cross-domain convergence/divergence the object of analysis rather than just a side note. Many studies suggest that 'do not put too much faith in a single indicator,' but relatively few use cross-domain co-movement and split patterns as the primary means of detecting whether what is occurring is a systemic shock to data production or a category-specific distortion. This study provides a replicable diagnostic framework for other crises.

Second, we formalized the principle of domain-appropriate reporting as a method, rather than an excuse. For example, in the context of missing persons, comparability literature advises caution against false precision. Instead of imposing a single seemingly neat annual series, we maintain the range when that is the form of public data. For trust, we report point-to-point when the indicator is a survey point. This aligns with the translation of comparability into auditable reporting standards (Aebi, 2019; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023).

Third, we provide a governance-oriented definition of robustness. In normal situations, robustness is often equated to model fitting or causal identification. In crisis situations, the relevant robustness for monitoring is whether patterns remain visible when series are represented differently (raw vs. indexed) and whether interpretations remain consistent when discontinuities and coverage breaks are explicitly stated. Thus, we offer a measurement-aware interpretive framework for administrative indicators in times of crisis by linking the classical reporting/recording theory with concrete and practicable cross-domain diagnostic tools.

This finding confirms that in times of war, the most informative unit of analysis is often not "whether a single indicator rises or falls," but rather the configuration of indicators that change simultaneously or diverge in direction. This

reinforces the claim that administrative data in disrupted environments should be theorized as indicators of institutional visibility, capacity, and prioritization, rather than direct prevalence (Skogan, 1977; Aebi, 2019; Pina-Sánchez et al., 2023). The added value is that this approach avoids two equally common mistakes—assuming a decline means "improved security" or assuming an increase means "exploding crime"—without checking whether the data production pipeline is changing or not.

This study's findings can lead to practical improvements in monitoring and governance in crisis settings. First, pairing numerical indicators with clear metadata, such as coverage scope, operational definitions, and recording rules, helps situate observed trends within their institutional context and supports a more transparent interpretation. Second, cross-domain divergence can be used as an analytical signal for internal reviews. When indicators move in different directions, this pattern highlights areas where definitions, reporting access, or processing capacity may warrant closer examination. Third, the analysis underscores the value of multisource indicator systems. For domains such as domestic violence and missing persons, combining police-recorded data with surveys, health or emergency service proxies where available, and humanitarian or tracing documentation provides a more comprehensive picture of institutional demand and social harm (Hibdon et al., 2021; Simmonds et al., 2023; Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, 2024).

Looking ahead, these findings suggest a research agenda that further develops triangulation across administrative, survey, health, and humanitarian data sources. Such integration can improve the capacity to distinguish between changes in experienced harm and changes in measurement conditions, particularly in disrupted environments (Desmond et al., 2020; Hibdon et al., 2021; ICRC, 2025a, 2025b). In the interim, reporting indicators in their empirical form, accompanied by transparent documentation of discontinuities, allows cross-domain patterns to function as constructive diagnostic tools for monitoring and governance rather than as bases for strong causal claims.

Conclusion

Based on our analysis, we found that the 2019–2024 indicator series exhibits a clear phase shift centered on 2022, where several policing-relevant administrative domains stop behaving, such as extensions of pre-war patterns, and begin to reflect a different measurement environment. In the crime-processing backbone, registered and solved crimes reverse direction after 2021 and expand through 2024, while the clearance proxy rises overall but does not move smoothly across the post-2022 period. Domestic violence administrative reports show pronounced pre-2022 volatility, followed by elevated levels in 2022–2023, missing-persons magnitudes expanding in post-2022 register snapshots, and trust in police—observed as survey points— softening from 2023 to 2024. Collectively, these trajectories support the paper's central claim: under wartime disruption, recorded trends are best interpreted as institutional outputs shaped by reporting, recording, coverage, and processing constraints, rather than as direct prevalence trends.

Based on these findings, this study contributes a crisis-ready methodological and theoretical approach to the interpretation of indicators. Methodologically, we report each domain in the form that it is publicly consolidated: full annual series where available, bounded ranges where reporting is multi-sourced, and point-to-point movement where survey observations are sparse, thereby avoiding false continuity. We also use cross-domain convergence/divergence as a diagnostic device to distinguish system-wide breaks from category-specific distortions, and we summarize discontinuity with segmented descriptive structuring around a pre-specified breakpoint without turning the wartime period into a causal "treatment." Theoretically, this operationalizes established measurement insights on reporting propensity, comparability, and the "dark figure" into a governance-oriented framework: rather than treating administrative statistics as direct measures of "true crime," the study shows how institutional visibility, capacity, prioritization, and definitional practice jointly shape what becomes recordable and processable in a disrupted environment.

At the same time, our conclusions should be read in light of several limitations that follow directly from crisis-era measurement realities. Some domains are incompletely observed across the full 2019–2024 window (for instance, domestic violence totals are not consolidated for 2024, trust in police appears only as discrete survey points, and missing persons figures are most responsibly represented as ranges rather than a harmonized annual series). Wartime territorial disruption and institutional reconfiguration also imply coverage and definitional discontinuities that cannot be fully resolved without richer metadata and independent triangulation. Accordingly, we avoided causal claims about prevalence or institutional effectiveness and instead provided a measurement-aware descriptive map. Future research should integrate these administrative series with victimization modules, health/EMS signals where feasible, and independent or humanitarian documentation to strengthen inferences while keeping uncertainty explicit.

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