



FIT TO DEFEND

ANALYSIS OF STANDARD COMBAT KIT PROVISION
FOR SERVICEWOMEN IN THE ARMED FORCES OF
UKRAINE

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant challenges in integrating women into the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) has been providing servicewomen with appropriate military uniforms, footwear and personal protective equipment. Following Russia's full-scale invasion, this issue became substantially more pressing as the number of women in the military increased dramatically: by 40%¹ since 2021. As of January 2024, the AFU comprised 66,900 women, including 47,200 servicepersons.² Of these, 6,500 held leadership positions, while over 5,000 were deployed on the front line.³

It was only in 2023 that summer field uniforms and underwear specifically designed for women began to be procured, whilst in 2024, the first two models of female body armour were certified, though they are not yet being supplied through centralised channels. The remaining items of the Standard Combat Kit (SCK), which comprises field uniforms, footwear, equipment and personal protective gear, are procured according to universal specifications that do not account for female anatomy and are often unsuitable for servicewomen. However, throughout 2024, the Ministry of Defence has begun testing new designs of women's mid-season and winter uniforms, as well as thermal underwear.

The data collection system for sizing and uniform distribution also has significant shortcomings. Most servicewomen do not undergo proper measurements before receiving their equipment, and the submitted size data is often disregarded during uniform issuance. Even when female uniform items are fully stocked in warehouses, women do not always receive items in their correct size, which points to problems in the needs assessment and supply logistics system.

The issue of personal hygiene supplies requires additional attention, particularly in field conditions. Most servicewomen are forced to purchase necessary items using their own funds or receive them from volunteer organisations.

As of early December 2024, the following issues remain unresolved in the provision for servicewomen:

- 1. Absence of centralised supply of body armour for women;**
- 2. Failure to account for female anatomy in certain items of the Standard Combat Kit;**
- 3. Ineffective system for collecting size data and distributing equipment;**
- 4. Problems in planning and logistics systems;**
- 5. Insufficient provision of personal hygiene supplies.**

For this research, StateWatch analysed the technical specifications (TS) of the Standard Combat Kit (SCK), as well as the procurement of various SCK items and specific hygiene-related elements carried out by the MoD from July 2023 to December 2023 and by the State Logistics Operator (DOT) from January to October 2024.

This research does not cover the analysis of everyday uniforms and other clothing items intended for women, nor does it include procurements not reflected in the Prozorro system.

INTRODUCTION

To analyze the experience of using the Standard Combat Kit, StateWatch, in cooperation with the public organization Brave Ukraine (Smilyva Ukraina), which implements the social initiative Arm Women Now, conducted 6 in-depth interviews and a questionnaire with 64 active-duty female servicewomen from various branches of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, **the absolute majority of whom are in the combat zone.**

The brief version provides information on uniforms, personal protective equipment, footwear and undergarments.



Analysis of the remaining Standard Combat Kit items will be shortly available via QR code.

PROVISION STATUS FOR SERVICEWOMEN

SUMMER FIELD UNIFORM

The commencement of centralised procurement of **women’s summer field uniforms** in Ukraine in 2023 marked a long-awaited step towards equal provision conditions for servicewomen. The Technical Specification (TS) for the uniform features a cut and fit distinct from the male model and encompasses important parameters to ensure the comfort and functionality of clothing items, including a comprehensive size range. The specification covers two fullness groups (2 and 3)⁴ and a wide range of sizes: chest circumference from 40 to 64 (80-128 cm) and hip circumference (88-140 cm).

Additionally, it accounts for varying heights of servicewomen – from 146 cm to 188 cm, enabling the accommodation of women with diverse anthropometric characteristics.

From January to October 2024, the State Logistics Operator (DOT) fully met the requirement for women’s summer field uniforms for 2024, having procured 65,000 sets.



In 2023, the MoD delivered 50,000 sets, though their size distribution cannot be analysed due to classified data in Prozorro. **The total quantity of summer uniforms procured over two years amounts to 115,000 sets. Since each servicewoman is entitled to two sets with a two-year service life, the procured quantity fully covers the needs of servicewomen (47,200).**

Although 90.6% of servicewomen surveyed by StateWatch received summer uniforms (both women’s specific and universal models procured throughout 2022), nearly two-thirds of them face issues with size mismatch. This is particularly critical, given that the summer uniform is a basic equipment element necessary for daily service.

*“The uniform was of course men’s. There weren’t any sizes available, so I had to have it altered or buy it myself. For instance, I’ve never heard of women’s uniforms being available in our brigade... Combat functionality should have been the top priority, but our uniform has nothing of the sort,” said a respondent who currently serves in the Ground Forces.*⁵

PROVISION STATUS FOR SERVICEWOMEN

WINTER UNIFORM (WIND AND WATER-RESISTANT JACKET AND TROUSERS)

The absence of adapted women's winter uniforms in the AFU remains a significant obstacle to servicewomen's comfortable and effective performance of their duties. The winter clothing elements currently supplied by the Ministry of Defence have been designed based on male body structure. Specifically, **wind and water-resistant jackets^{6,7,8} and trousers^{9,10}** are procured according to universal TS for all personnel regardless of gender. All specifications only account for 1 out of 5 types of chest-to-hip ratio parameters (third fullness group), which fails to reflect the diversity of female anatomy.

The sizes in the specifications for winter jackets and trousers start from size 42, which has fundamental discrepancies with the minimum parameters for height, hips, and waist measurements found in the TS for servicewomen's summer uniforms. For instance, the women's field uniform accommodates individuals from 143 cm in height, whereas this parameter in the mentioned universal uniform items starts from 158 cm. Similarly with chest circumference – while the women-specific TS begins at 80 cm, in universal specifications this parameter starts from 84 cm.

Moreover, the smallest waist circumference in the TS for wind and water-resistant trousers is 72 cm,¹¹ which indicates certain limitations in the size range for women. The absence of detailed hip circumference parameters has resulted in trousers that may fit well at the waist but are too narrow in the hip area for some women.

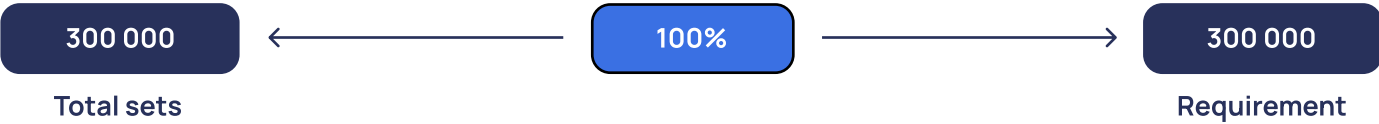
The procurement analysis has shown that winter trousers and jackets in smaller sizes are being procured in critically low quantities. Although the DOT managed to contract 100% of the requirement within three quarters, the size distribution indicates ineffective consideration of women's needs in the military.

For example, only 141 pairs of trousers in the minimum size were procured for personnel of various heights, while sizes 44-46 totalled 7,036 units. The situation with jackets¹² is similarly concerning: only 212 units were purchased in the smallest cut (size 42), compared to 11,340 in sizes 44-46. Notably, only 77 pairs of trousers and 131 jackets were procured for all military personnel shorter than 158 cm, while individuals with smaller measurements were not considered at all.



Winter Jackets Procurement
January-October 2024

Total Sum	42	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58	60-70
816,2 M UAH	212	1 956	9 384	38 660	58 062	55 950	39 490	29 856	20 441	45 989



PROVISION STATUS FOR SERVICEWOMEN

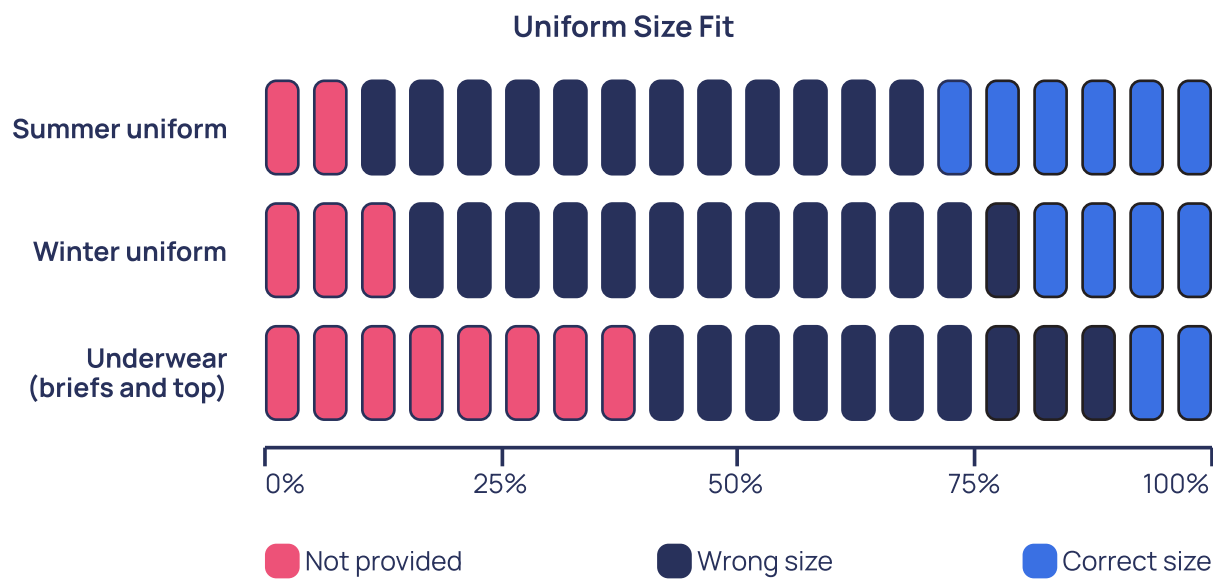


Winter Trousers Procurement January-October 2024

Total Sum	42	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58	60-70
446,8 M UAH	141	1 126	5 910	26 328	37 768	37 257	25 209	19 890	13 721	32 650



Of the servicewomen who received winter field uniforms and were surveyed by StateWatch, 81.8% reported that the size did not fit them. According to respondents, servicewomen are either forced to purchase uniforms using their own funds, alter issued ones, or turn to volunteer organisations. Those surveyed also added that the provision situation for women improved in 2023, whereas at the start of the full-scale invasion, some servicewomen had to accept uniforms several sizes too large.



"They (ed. in 2022) were giving out winter jackets and trousers to everyone. And I used to joke that they hadn't given me a jacket but a coat. I mean, it was so large, down to my knees, that's if you managed to get into it..." said one of the interviewed servicewomen.

PROVISION STATUS FOR SERVICEWOMEN

WOMEN'S UNDERWEAR (TOP AND BRIEFS)

In 2023, women's underwear (top and briefs) was approved for provision, with requirements regulated by corresponding TS.¹³ The underwear sizes range from XS to XL, where chest circumference varies from 84 to 104 cm, and hips from 88 to 108 cm respectively. It should be noted that the TS for such underwear do not account for women with larger hip and chest sizes, which are quite common (this is confirmed by the size range in the TS for women's field uniforms).¹⁴

In 2024, the DOT procured **100,000 pieces each of women's tops and briefs**, which covers 100% of the MoD's requirement for 2024 (the requirement being two sets per year for each woman). In 2023, women's underwear procurement was conducted under defence procedure, therefore information about the quantity and sizes of goods remained classified.



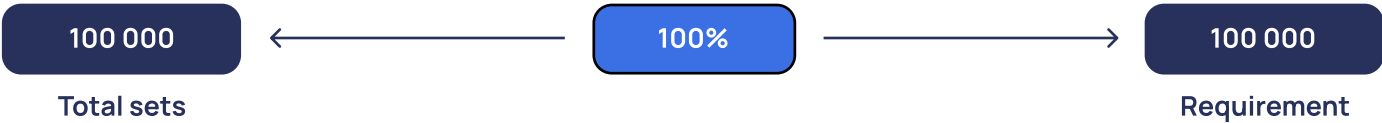
Women's Tops Procurement January-October 2024

Total Sum	XS	S	M	L	XL
18,6 M UAH	10 000	20 000	30 000	25 000	15 000



Women's Briefs Procurement January-October 2024

Total Sum	XS	S	M	L	XL
10,99 M UAH	10 000	20 000	30 000	25 000	15 000



However, the actual sizes of many women often exceed the largest available size XL, of which only 15,000 units were procured. Thus, the range limited to hip circumference up to 108 cm and chest up to 104 cm effectively excludes a significant proportion of women from receiving appropriate underwear.

Almost half of the surveyed respondents (42.2%) did not receive any women's underwear from the state. And among those who received underwear, only 10.8% received it in their correct size.

Moreover, according to MoD data provided in response to an information request from Ukrainian MP and head of the Arm Women Now initiative Iryna Nykorak, as of 18 October 2024, the receipt rate of underwear is about 10% of the purchased amount: 11,484 tops and 10,716 briefs.¹⁵

PROVISION STATUS FOR SERVICEWOMEN

FOOTWEAR

As of late October 2024, the DOT had procured 84.63% of the total requirement for **summer boots**¹⁶, and 100% of the requirement for **winter high-ankle boots**¹⁷ – 550,000 and 450,000 pairs respectively. Notably, the final 100,000 pairs of winter boots were only contracted in October. Considering the total personnel numbers and the most common sizes (36-40) of winter boots that would fit most women, too few units (28,711) were purchased during the analysis period.

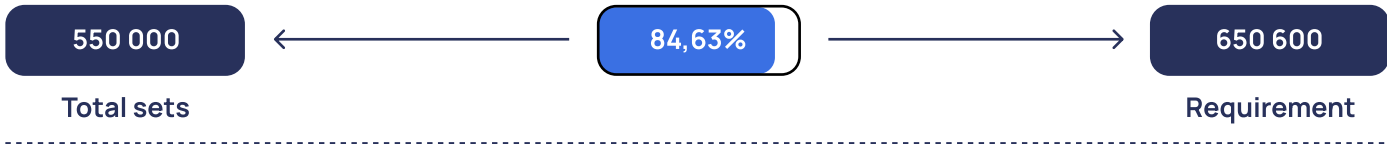
The situation is markedly better with summer boots, where procurement of smaller sizes (EU 35-37) was six times higher than winter boots over the same period. However, by the end of September, just over half of the required summer boots had been purchased (340,000 out of 650,000)¹⁸, suggesting possible procurement planning issues. In 2023, the MoD purchased over 101,800 pairs of summer boots and 25,000 winter boots. While some contracts and the full size range details remain classified, this indicates a clear disparity between summer and winter footwear procurement.

It is noteworthy that while the size range in the TS for summer and winter high-ankle boots starts at EU sizes 36 and 35 respectively, it ends at 47 and 48. However, in practice, both models are being procured in sizes 35-52, which means adjustments to the TS are needed.



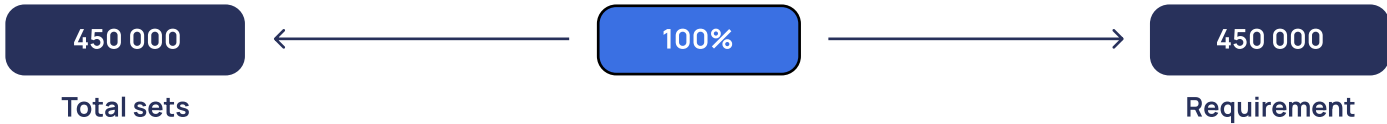
Summer Boots Procurement January-October 2024

Total Sum	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44-52
1,29 B UAH	3 155	7 501	11 466	14 146	18 381	32 515	58 243	10 6418	117 447	181 388



Winter Boots Procurement January-October 2024

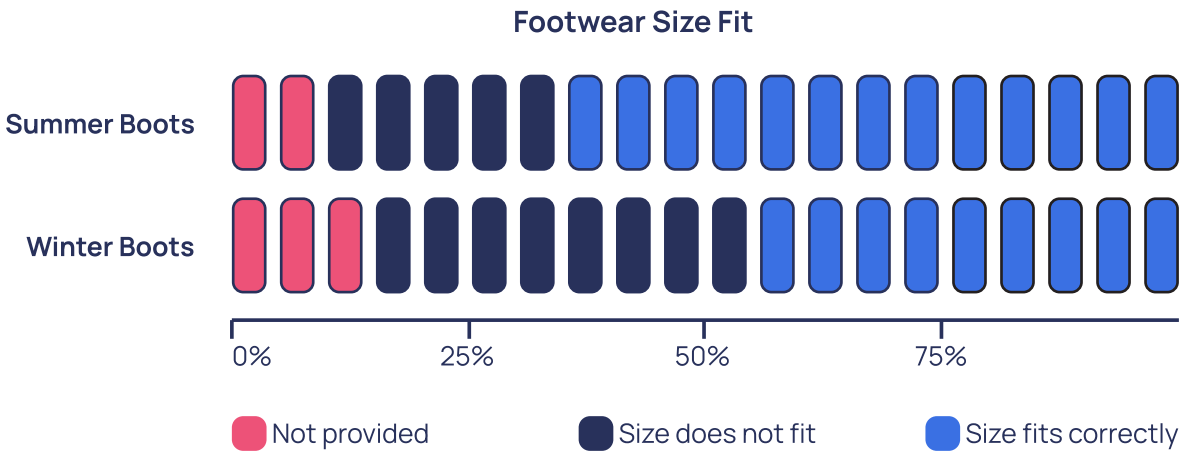
Total Sum	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44-52
1,1 B UAH	551	1 151	1 645	2 595	6 520	16 800	43 240	78 800	100 255	198 443



Data on the number of wind and water-resistant suit elements purchased in 2023 is hidden for security reasons.

Servicewomen surveyed by StateWatch also frequently face difficulties in obtaining footwear of the appropriate size. Survey results show that 23.4% of respondents did not receive summer boots in their size, whilst 10.9% were not provided with this type of footwear at all. For winter high-ankle boots, these figures are even lower – 40.6% and 12.5% respectively.

PROVISION STATUS FOR SERVICEWOMEN



“There was no footwear in my size 37 available [in 2022], so I had to buy everything myself. They said I could take size 40 and exchange it later... The winter boots were size 39, and I managed to exchange them for 37 through contacts,” commented one of the respondents.

BODY ARMOUR

As of early 2024, the MoD has approved two models of modular body armour for female service members,¹⁹ developed according to the MoD’s TS from 2023.²⁰ While there is no separate TS for women’s body armour, the current specifications for both modular and lightweight body armour include an additional element under code «X» that provides shock-absorbing, cushioning inserts on the inner walls of the chest carrier or other design solutions that adapt the body armour to female anatomy.

The first modular body armour model was developed by Ukrainian Armour LLC. It features an outward-curved plate carrier, narrowed shoulders, and a widened lower section to accommodate female anatomical features. The second model, developed by Research and Production Enterprise Temp 3000 LLC, is equipped with shock-absorbing cushions that allow for individual adjustment of the body armour to fit the female body shape.

The modular body armour weighs at least 10.5 kg, whilst the lightweight version starts from 7.5 kg, depending on the configuration. According to the specifications, the women’s models maintain the same ballistic characteristics as the men’s body armour.

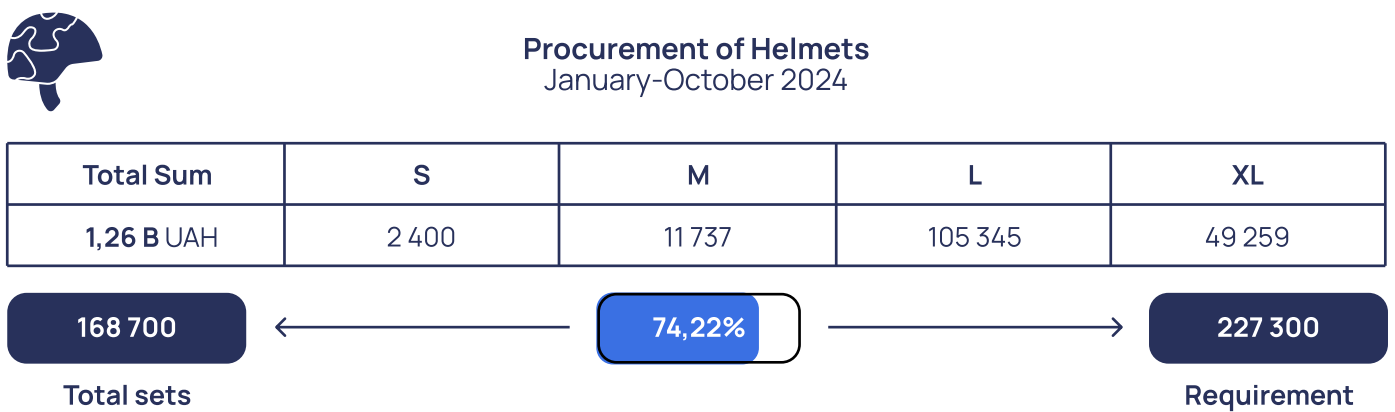
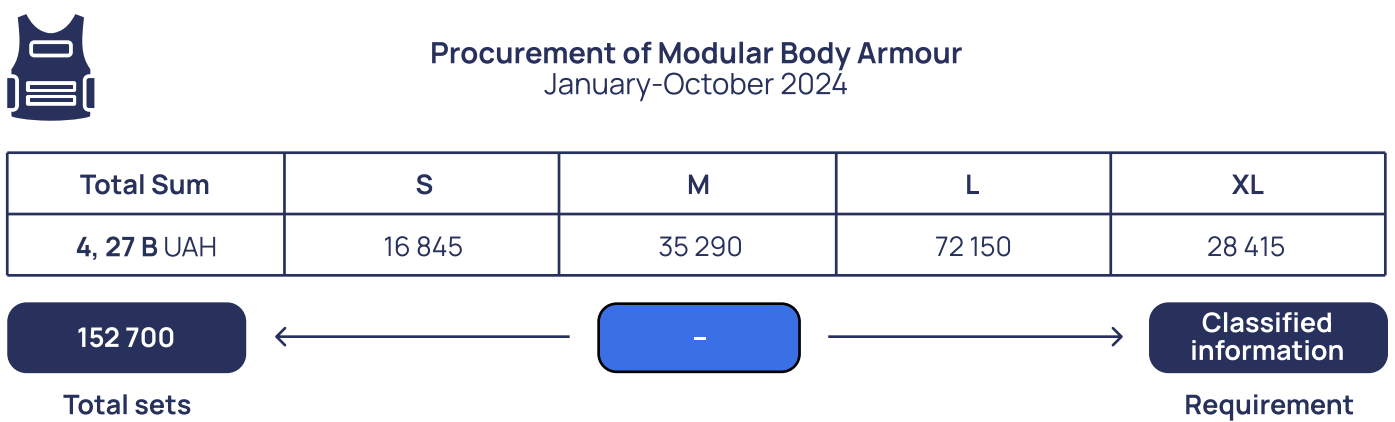
By the end of 2024, the procurement of women’s body armour models was not included in the Procurement List and Volumes. As a result, the DOT was purchasing the same modular body armour models for service members of both sexes, which not only created discomfort but also reduced the combat effectiveness of female personnel and increased the risk of injury during combat operations. Furthermore, the procurement of the lightweight model was not included in the 2024 Procurement List and Volumes.

PROVISION STATUS FOR SERVICEWOMEN

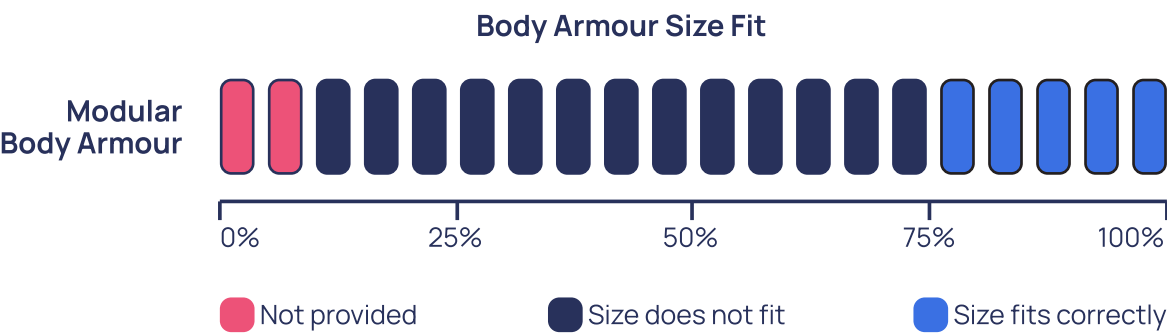
According to the TS,²¹ the modular body armour size range varies from S to XL. The total weight of the body armour in the basic configuration 1-5 (most common) is 10.5 kg for size S, 12 kg for size M, 13.5 kg for size L, and 15.5 kg for size XL.

Over the first 10 months of 2024, the DOT awarded 12 contracts for the supply of 152,700 modular body armour units. As shown in the table, 16,845 sets were purchased in the smallest size S, and 35,290 in size M, which is insufficient considering the number of women and male personnel of smaller build in the AFU.

Most data regarding body armour procurement in 2023 remains classified for security reasons, with information about only 21,000 contracted body armour units being made public.



The research revealed critical issues with body armour for women in the AFU, relating to size, poor fit and excessive equipment weight. 70.3% of respondents indicated that their body armour did not match their size, whilst 6.3% were not provided with any armour at all. Moreover, 56.2% rated the quality of their issued body armour as 'low' or 'very low'.



PROVISION STATUS FOR SERVICEWOMEN

“The last body armour I received was a Korsar-3, weighing 11 kg with steel plates (quite heavy for my 50 kg weight). They have no anatomical curves, so it doesn't matter whether you're a boy or a girl - they're uncomfortable by default. It only came in one size; there were no size options when it was issued. I had to buy a different one myself. I'm now on a waiting list of the volunteer organisation ArmWomenNow”.

HELMET

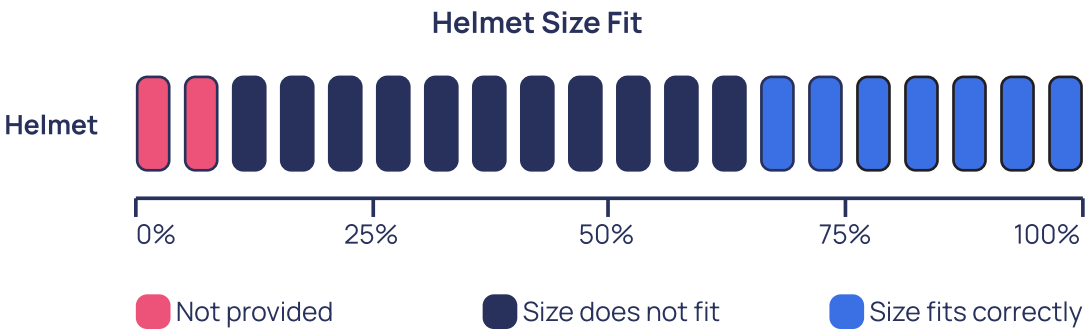
The **combat helmet** is also part of personal protective equipment, issued at a rate of one unit per person every two years. According to TS,²² the DOT procures two types of ballistic combat helmets: full-cut and high-cut versions. The size range runs from the smallest size S (head circumference 51-53 cm) to XL (head circumference 60-62 cm). Helmet weight varies by model: the full-cut helmet weighs from 1.45 kg in size S to 1.75 kg in size XL, while the high-cut version is lighter, ranging from 1.35 kg (S) to 1.65 kg (XL).

By the end of October 2024, the DOT had contracted for 168,741 helmets. Notably, no size S helmets were procured before August 2024, and by October, only 2,400 units had been contracted in this size. Meanwhile, 11,737 units were purchased in medium size M (head circumference 54-56 cm), with the majority scheduled for delivery in the second half of 2024.

Overall, while this procurement approach demonstrates efforts to supply various categories of service personnel, the absence of smaller helmet sizes in the first half of the year indicates a need for more precise planning.

The 2023 procurement was conducted under classified contracts for security reasons, therefore no analysis of contracted quantities and sizes was undertaken.

According to the survey, 67.8% of respondents who received helmets reported size mismatches. This issue significantly affects protection effectiveness and may lead to an increased risk of injury during combat operations. Half of the female service members rated the quality of their issued helmets as 'low' or 'very low'.

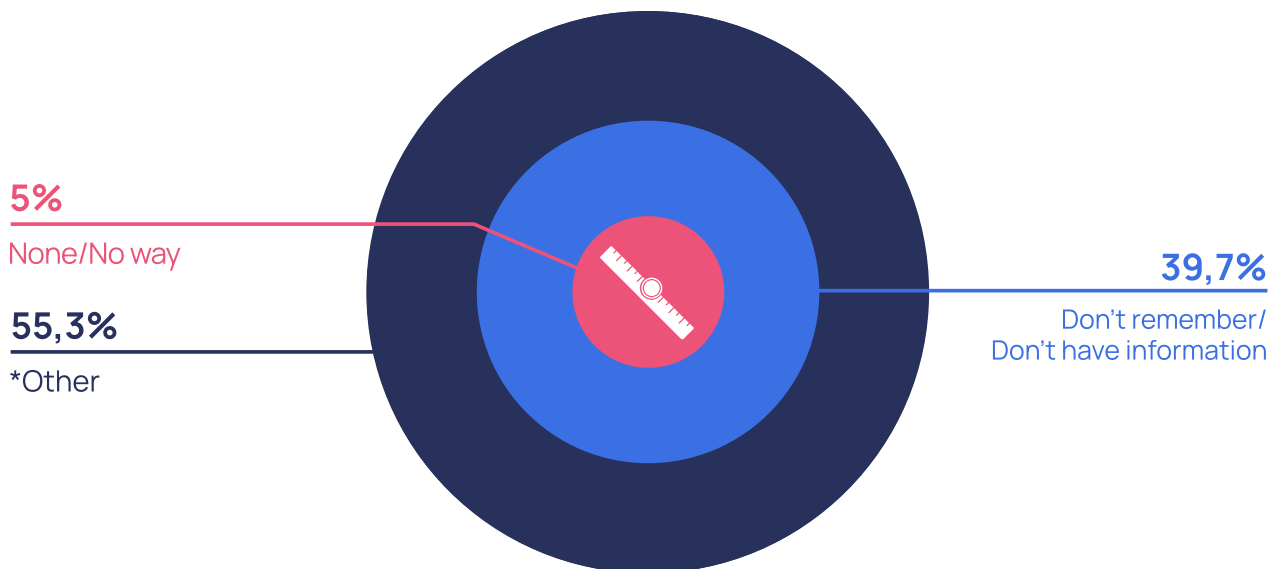


DATA COLLECTION, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS IN PRACTICE

The proper formation of material support requirements, which takes into account individual service members' parameters, follows a specific algorithm. Military unit commanders submit their requirements to the Joint Supply Centre (JSC) of the AFU Logistics Forces Command. The Chief of Material Support is responsible for collecting information about sizes and inventory of personal requirements. Their duties also include receiving the necessary items of material support from the JSC warehouse and ensuring their timely distribution to personnel.

However, the research revealed significant discrepancies between the established procedure and actual practice. The vast majority of surveyed female service members (86%) reported that they did not receive body, head, and foot measurements before being issued equipment. A considerable proportion of respondents (40%) either lack information about or cannot recall the size data collection procedure in their military unit. 5% indicated a complete absence of size-related enquiries, whilst the remainder communicate this information through various channels – either directly to staff members or to the unit commander.

How is your size communicated to the unit command?



Other:

- Through senior officer
- Information is collected by sergeant
- None/No way
- Through report, SMS
- Commander asks
- We compile a list

Among the barriers to proper material support, respondents cited limited availability of required sizes in warehouses, as well as insufficient motivation from chiefs of material support to provide women with properly sized combat kit items.

"No one took my measurements; they just asked for my sizes... The chiefs of material support told me 'you understand that we'll need to find a special size for you, but when I go to the warehouse, they just give us whatever they have in stock'" – noted a respondent from the Ground Forces.

DATA COLLECTION, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS IN PRACTICE

The research also revealed a disruption in the logical sequence of size information collection. According to one respondent, enquiries about sizes often come only after items have already arrived at the warehouses.

"Here's how it happens. The person responsible for material supplies calls from the unit, 'Send over your sizes for head, uniform, boots and everything else'. So we send them through some messenger, Signal for example. But this happens not before the deliveries, but after they've already arrived".

Analysis of the collected data indicates significant shortcomings in the logistics support system for female service members. StateWatch suggests there is a communication gap in the chain between military formations, the Joint Supply Centre and AFU Logistics Forces Command. The paper-based data accounting system creates additional risks for errors when processing information on sizes.

The research showed that despite female service members providing accurate information about their sizes, they often do not receive appropriate items. It is telling that the majority of respondents did not receive the correct size even of those items (women's field uniforms and underwear) which were procured in full quantities. This indicates that the problem extends beyond the simple absence of small sizes in procurement.

Additional evidence of the system's inefficiency is the practice of trying on items directly at the warehouse before receiving them, without prior collection of size data. StateWatch analysts suggest that uniforms may be held up at various stages of the logistics chain: either at Joint Supply Centre warehouses, where chiefs of material support may not collect women's items, or at military units where they are not issued to female personnel.

As a result, the vast majority of respondents (86%) believe that the AFU Logistics Forces Command does not properly take into account the needs of female service members. Only a few survey participants noted some positive changes. These respondents indicated that "they're trying now, but it's still early days" and that "improvements are noticeable".

HYGIENE SUPPLIES

The provision of hygiene supplies remains an urgent issue for many Ukrainian service members, particularly women. The Ministry of Defence provides only basic items: soap and towels, as well as access to shower facilities in field conditions. However, the centralised procurement for 2024 covers the needs of only a small portion of military personnel – 300,000 bars of soap at the standard allocation would suffice for approximately 8,300 people per year, whilst 850,000 towels do not meet the full requirements of personnel.

An important step was the order of 500 mobile shower units for field use, which are due to be delivered by the end of 2024. However, service members, particularly women, are still forced to provide for themselves or rely on volunteers for most necessary hygiene items, including toilet paper and menstrual pads, which creates additional difficulties whilst serving in remote positions and field conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS



to the Ministry of Defence:

1. Conduct an audit of the provision level of Standard Combat Kit items for women in the AFU, considering different positions and branches through centralised surveying (for example, using the Army+ system);
2. Develop and approve women's specifications for winter uniform elements including windproof and waterproof trousers and jackets, insulated special suit (jacket and trousers), camouflage suit, as well as winter and mid-season undergarments;
3. Expand the size range by adding smaller sizes for such SCK items as winter gloves, combat shirts, fleece jumpers, as well as larger sizes for women's underwear specifications (tops and briefs);
4. Approve reference samples of lightweight body armour for women, winter and mid-season jackets and trousers, and thermal underwear;
5. Implement legislative mechanisms to reimburse servicewomen for hygiene products, underwear, and mid-season and winter undergarments purchased with personal funds, and simplify the reimbursement process for purchased military equipment;
6. Clarify provisions of MoD Order No. 232 by adding the concept of "Summer Field Uniform (Type 2)" instead of "Summer Field Uniform" (currently the order only uses the term "Summer Field Uniform", which doesn't cover the women's model);
7. Develop guidelines for personnel responsible for issuing uniforms regarding the specifics of sizing for servicemen and women.



to the AFU Logistics Forces Command:

1. Initiate systematic collection of data on actual uniform sizes chosen by servicewomen for further analysis and improvement of the supply system, and implement individual data updates;
2. Review procurement planning for timely delivery of seasonal items;
3. Include in the List of Goods and Volumes for 2025 new items of women's winter uniforms, bulletproof vest, thermal underwear, as well as personal hygiene kits, and also provide for a sufficient number of items of the Combat Uniform Kit, which are purchased according to universal Technical Specifications;
4. Provide for a 10% reserve stock of SCK items for servicewomen during martial law to ensure appropriate size availability;
5. Initiate inventory counting of products delivered to Joint Supply Centre warehouses, particularly in sizes designated for women;
6. Implement a feedback system for continuous monitoring of uniform suitability for servicewomen's needs;
7. Conduct training for personnel responsible for uniform distribution regarding size selection specifics for servicewomen;

This research was prepared by the StateWatch think tank in collaboration with the NGO “Brave Ukraine” (Smilyva Ukraina), which implements the Arm Women Now initiative. The research is a part of the support programme led by the UK Special Defence Advisor Team (SDA), implemented by the EDGE Foundation and StateWatch.

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