

IOM IRAQ

# HOME AGAIN?

CATEGORISING OBSTACLES TO RETURNEE  
REINTEGRATION IN IRAQ



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## OVERVIEW OF CRITERIA BY PROPORTION OF RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS FACING OBSTACLES ACROSS INDICATORS

This report examines the prevalence of key obstacles for reintegration that returnee households face in Iraq as of mid-2020. These obstacles are grouped into five main criteria, as follows (ranked from most to least prevalent and critical).

### SAFETY, SECURITY & SOCIAL RELATIONS

More returnee households face obstacles in relation safety, security, and cohesion across multiple indicators as compared to other criteria. 49% live in locations at risk of violence, 44% experience restrictions of movement, and 32% have a female member who feels unsafe moving around.



### ACCESS TO LIVELIHOODS & ECONOMIC SECURITY

Following safety, a relatively substantial portion of returnee households face obstacles across indicators related to employment and economic security. 39% live in locations with inoperative businesses and other 22% live in locations with inoperative agriculture.



### DOCUMENTATION

The major obstacle in this regard affecting 46% of returnee households has to do with the lack of courts of law in their places of origin. While 21% lack necessary legal documents.



### PROPERTY RESITUTION & COMPENSATION

Owing in part to the complexity of making restitution claims, 34% of returnee households are awaiting compensation for property damage or destruction due to conflict.



### ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING

Returning households do not report significant issues with housing or water, electricity and education provision. The main obstacle of note relates to healthcare where 32% of returnee households indicate difficulties in accessing it.



## INTRODUCTION: EXAMINING SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION

As of December 2020, Iraq has witnessed the return of 4.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their places of origin in the aftermath of the ISIL conflict.

This is a significant returnee population and, while the movement home is a first step toward reintegration, it is not necessarily an indication of longer-term sustainability per se.<sup>1</sup>

The analysis in this report, by IOM Iraq, the Returns Working Group (RWG), and Social Inquiry, builds upon and complements previous assessments on durable solutions, mainly with regards to obstacles to return as well as progress toward local integration for IDPs. The focus here is specifically on returnees and obstacles to their sustainable reintegration upon return.

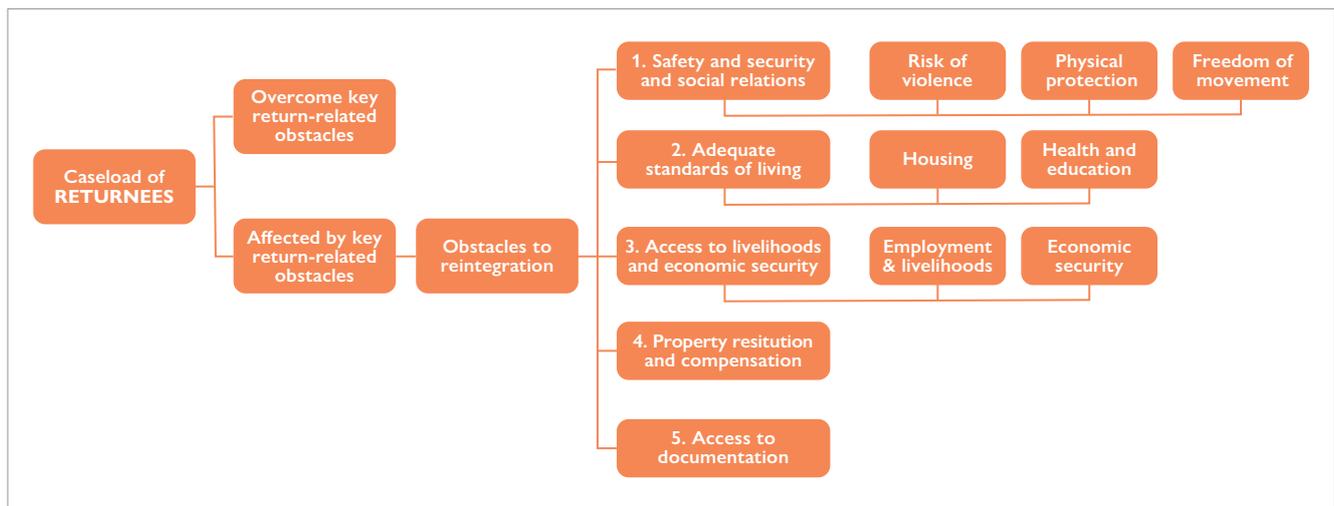
The criteria used to examine returnee advancement towards reintegration is based on the *International Recommendations for IDP Statistics* indicators framework developed by the Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS) in 2020. Reintegration is conceptually measured by the progress returnees make (and the provisions authorities put in place) in overcoming key return-related obstacles faced in their places of origin, as defined by the *IASC Framework for Durable Solutions for IDPs* and complementary components from the durable solutions indicator library and analysis

guide *Sustainable Development Goals, and International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics*.<sup>2</sup>

In practical terms, this analysis gathers existing indicators from secondary datasets recently produced in Iraq to compile a composite view of 24 key obstacles for reintegration based on a context-relevant version of priority criteria as proposed by EGRIS (Figure 1), with the aim of identifying which obstacles affect returnees more severely and where.

This introduction is followed by a review of data sources used for analysis, an evaluation of how to measure sustainable reintegration as an outcome through proxy measures, and finally, a compilation of indicators, presenting both household- and district-level analysis. A conclusion highlights potential ways forward to build a more comprehensive monitoring of advancement towards sustainable reintegration for returnees. Before starting the analysis, a summary table provides an overview of all criteria, sub-criteria, and indicators designed and extracted from existing data, and overall prevalence percentages for each.

Figure 1. List of Criteria and Sub-Criteria Examined in This Report as Obstacles to Reintegration in Iraq



Note: Created from EGRIS (2020).

- 1 Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, 2010).
- 2 Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics, *International Recommendations on IDP Statistics, background document to fifty-first session of the UN Statistical Commission*, 3-6 March 2020.

**BOX 1. ADAPTATION FROM EGRIS FRAMEWORK**

While the EGRIS-proposed criteria are designed to be applicable to a wide range of contexts in general, specific adjustments were made here to better match the displacement and return dynamics of Iraq. In particular, indicators on food security criteria were removed based on the existent data among returnees in Iraq where this is not a pervasive issue. Instead, additional elements related to social cohesion were added to the first criterion (renamed here, 'Safety, security, and social relations') because return reintegration in Iraq at present is strongly dependent on the ability of communities to rebuild social relations and trust between and among themselves and civic trust between themselves and the state. This is critical because the ISIL conflict in the country interacted with and exacerbated many existing socio-political fault lines in society as well as creating new ones.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, it is in line with the evolving understanding of IDPs' right of return as a political process wherein IDPs make complex, often intertwined claims, including for redress of past wrongs and recognition as equal and legitimate members of the local and national political community in which they live.<sup>4</sup>

**BOX 2. MEASURING SOCIAL COHESION**

While it was possible to pull more social cohesion-oriented indicators and criteria from existing Iraq datasets, the focus of that which is collected at this moment is primarily on physical protection. A gap exists in Iraq-wide returnee data and indicators related to social relations, trust, acceptance, or marginalization, among others.<sup>5</sup> As will be discussed in subsequent sections, these factors seem to matter for ensuring the sustainability of return and reintegration once back and should be developed and collected accordingly in future large-scale assessments.



3 IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *The Growing Role of Reconciliation in Return Movements: Snapshots from the Return Index*, Return Index Thematic Series Briefing 2 (Erbil: IOM, 2019).

4 Megan Bradley, *Durable Solutions and the Right of Return for IDPs: Evolving Interpretations*, International Journal of Refugee Law, 30 no. 2 (2018): 218-242.

5 One example of more extended and robust social cohesion indicators is the United States Institute for Peace and Social Inquiry (USIP), *Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework*. Data collection for this framework is currently limited to Ninewa Governorate.

## DATA SOURCES AND DATA ORGANISATION

The indicators and data to fill the criteria are extracted from recent rounds of three existing representative datasets of the returnee population in Iraq. They are the following:

- Integrated Locations Assessment Round V (ILA), completed by IOM DTM Iraq in August 2020.
- Return Index Round 9 (RI), completed by IOM DTM Iraq in June 2020.
- Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment Round VII (MCNA), completed by REACH in July 2019.

The MCNA is a household-level survey with data collected from a statistically representative sample of the returnee population in all districts of return. The ILA and RI cover virtually all of the returnee population in Iraq through location-level data based on local key informants, thus complementing the

MCNA with another set of indicators not based on individual households' situation or perceptions. The combination of both household- and individual-level data is therefore optimal, given that some obstacles are centred around individual households (e.g., living in a destroyed or damaged house) and others depend on the location in which they are living and affect the whole of the community (e.g., schools not operational).

In order to allow for a full integration and comparison of datasets collected at different levels and different time periods, the district population weights for the MCNA have been adapted to match the actual population numbers extracted from ILA V, which is the latest and most updated large-scale dataset.

### BOX 3. COMPARING INDICATOR RESULTS BETWEEN RETURNEES AND OTHER GROUPS SUCH AS STAYEES

The EGRIS guidelines recommend the need to compare “the situation of IDPs to that of other population groups in [their area] to make an assessment of whether the vulnerabilities they suffer from are related to their displacement (through discrimination for example) or not.”<sup>6</sup> While this is also critical to measure the success of reintegration and put in context the indicators measured here, this comparison suffers from two key limitations for the case of Iraq.

The optimal comparison group should be stayees, those in the areas of origin that did not displace (the equivalent of a host community in IDP contexts). However, the scale of conflict in Iraq meant that, in a significant proportion of the districts affected, the vast majority of people, if not all, displaced. Displacement took place in different waves, either at the arrival of ISIL in 2014, during their control of the area, or during the later military operations of Iraqi security forces (or even afterwards due to hostile relations between returnees and those who had stayed until that point). Those displaced in all the aforementioned periods, not only during 2014 at the emergence of the conflict, and later returned are registered as returnees.<sup>7</sup>

Some districts do feature stayees, especially in big urban areas such as Mosul or Kirkuk (this last district was not affected by conflict, but rather had displacement linked to political violence in 2017 between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government). However, when stayees are present, none of the large-scale representative assessments survey them specifically. There is thus no quantifiable information on them.

This means that there is no actual benchmark to compare the experiences of returnees recorded in this framework, as it is recommended by EGRIS—either because there is no stayee or local community to compare to, or because no data is available for them. This limits the ability to understand to what extent these obstacles and challenges for reintegration specifically accrue for returnees because of their return situation or it is general for everybody (stayees, pre-conflict levels, or other population in the rest of Iraq).

6 Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics, *International Recommendations on IDP Statistics* (2018, pp. 50).

7 See IOM Iraq, *Protracted Displacement in Iraq: Revisiting Categories of Return Barriers* (Erbil: IOM, 2021) for a review of displacement and return waves.

Data extracted for each indicator is organized and presented in two formats across this report: first, as a country-wide indicator for all returnees (e.g., percentage of returnees with no access to healthcare), and second, by disaggregating the

country-wide percentage by district, but focusing on the top 15 districts with the largest returnee population in order to better facilitate a clearer and more focused interpretation of the data. These top 15 districts are listed below:

Table 1. Returnee Figures in Iraq as of August 2020 and Top 15 Districts of Return

RANK	DISTRICT	GOVERNORATE	# OF RETURNEES	% OF RETURNEES
1	Mosul	Ninewa	1,037,856	22
2	Ramadi	Anbar	595,362	12.6
3	Falluja	Anbar	511,056	10
4	Telafar	Ninewa	350,910	7.5
5	Heet	Anbar	176,142	3.7
6	Tikrit	Salah al-Din	175,236	3.7
7	Al-Hamdaniya	Ninewa	166,866	3.5
8	Al-Hawiga	Kirkuk	162,816	3.5
9	Al-Shirqat	Salah al-Din	159,756	3.4
10	Kirkuk	Kirkuk	152,988	3.2
11	Baiji	Salah al-Din	114,414	2.4
12	Tilkaif	Ninewa	100,848	2.1
13	Khanaqin	Diyala	98,010	2.1
14	Al-Ka'im	Anbar	96,990	2.1
15	Sinjar	Ninewa	83,238	1.8
Remaining districts in Iraq			725,040	15.4
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>4,707,528</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ILA V

## REINTEGRATION AS A MEASURABLE OUTCOME

The key criteria presented above in Figure 1 are regarded, from a normative perspective, as conditions in a place of origin that contribute to the reintegration of IDPs returning there. Thus, as far as any one criterion is not met, a returnee should not be considered sustainably reintegrated.

This situation should also be put in context through considering to what extent stayees in areas of return do not meet any of the criterion (see Box 3 about this issue). In addition, in the case of Iraq, measuring the proportion of returnees affected by all, some, or none of the return-related obstacles to reintegration is difficult given the need to rely on different datasets for different indicators, which capture data at different levels.

### BOX 4. ESTABLISHING LINKS BETWEEN INDICATORS AND OUTCOMES

Assessments on the severity of living conditions upon return<sup>8</sup> and on the local integration of IDPs<sup>9</sup> have been successful in applying regression modelling to assess what individual factors are associated with higher rates of return, in the first case, or positive integration feelings, for the second case. They both also elucidated how much each individual factor mattered towards the outcome considered. The factors explored in these assessments included measurements linked to the Durable Solutions criteria complemented with other contextual indicators relevant for Iraq.

A complementary approach to assessing reintegration, however, can consist of measuring the observable *outcomes* that occur in the absence of sustainable reintegration. This can be done, for example, through proxy indicators such as returnees' actual behaviour upon return. The assumption is that, if severe obstacles to reintegration persist in a specific

area, then returnees would attempt to re-displace. This implies a causal relationship. Measures for these outcomes are presented below in the form of actual re-displacement figures and future movement intentions (past and future behaviour) among returnees by district.

The use of such reintegration outcomes also provides the basis to consider that different obstacles may have different impacts on sustainable reintegration. The application of statistical analysis would thus show whether there is a causal relationship between obstacles and reintegration, with some obstacles impeding reintegration more severely than others.

### Measuring Re-Displacement of Returnees

Re-displacement is a category of secondary displacement referring specifically to "IDPs who return to their areas of origin but are unable to achieve sustainable solutions and are consequently displaced again to their first place of displacement or to a new location of displacement."<sup>10</sup> This is measured here as the percentage of returnees in an area who displaced again after return (more information on its measurement using MCNA data is provided in Box 5 below). The average rate of re-displacement across areas of return in Iraq is estimated to be around 2.6%, which means that almost 3 of every 100 displaced households that at some point attempted to return to their places of origin left again. In other words, this indicates that 1 of every 38 returnees in Iraq has re-displaced.

This overall re-displacement rate can be perceived as objectively low, meaning that, by and large, the vast majority of returnees has been able (or willing) to remain in their areas of origin. There are, however, important geographical variations by district (see Figure 2). Some districts present particularly high re-displacement rates, like Ana, where it is estimated that almost 1 of every 4 returnee households

8 IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *Building Blocks of the Return Index in Iraq* (Erbil, IOM: 2020).

9 IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *Cities as Home: Understanding Belonging and Acceptance Among IDPs and Host Communities in Iraq* (Erbil, IOM: 2020).

10 Iraq's Inter-Agency Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) agreed upon and accepted this definition in June 2018. The wider concept of "secondary displacement" is usually used to refer to movement of IDPs between different areas of displacement, without attempt to return. Re-displacement is thus used here to distinguish specifically those cases where the IDP attempted to return to their place of origin.

has displaced again. Other districts with high rates, such as Al-Ba'aj, Sinjar, Debes, Tooz Khormatu, or Balad, are also regularly assessed as containing some of the most severe social and material living conditions upon return and, thus, re-displacement could be anticipated.<sup>11</sup>

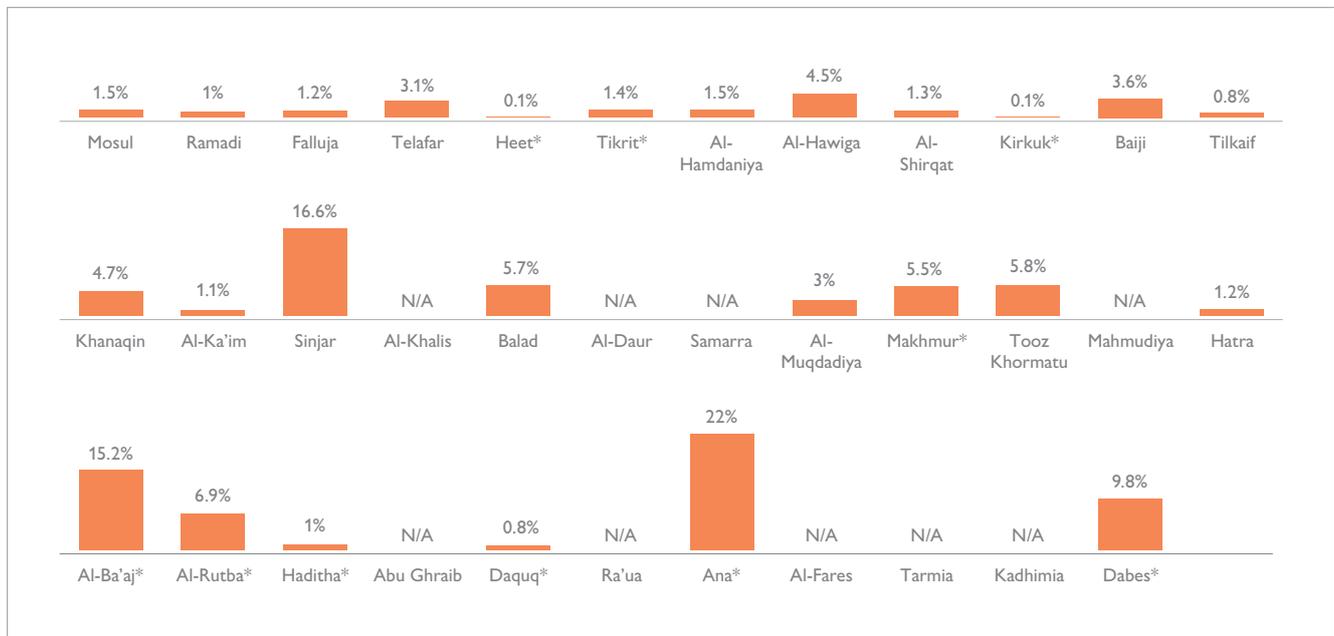
These findings also align with previous analysis assessing the dynamics that lead to re-displacement from places of origin,

in particular high levels of residential destruction, followed by involuntary returns, insufficiency of security actors, and tension in community life.<sup>12</sup> The impact of essential services and livelihoods in this regard was found to be quite low, perhaps pointing to the fact that these indicators are often deemed less critical when compared to the absence of social stability and security.

**BOX 5. CALCULATING RATES OF RE-DISPLACEMENT**

It is complex to track and register secondary displacement of this type given the sudden nature of this movement and the high proportion of out-of-camp displacement in Iraq. However, approximate figures can be extrapolated using district-level representative household data of both returnees and IDPs, such as MCNA. This is measured, first, through identifying the number of respondents in the IDP sample that reported having attempted to previously return to their places of origin. Sampling weights (by district of displacement) are applied to estimate the actual number of households that these re-displaced respondents represent. This number is regrouped by their stated district of origin and added to the actual pool of estimated returnees, thus providing an estimate of the total number of households that attempted return at some point. The actual rate of re-displacement is calculated as the proportion of re-displaced households over this total number of returnees. Given that this is based on survey data, any figure provided is subjected to a margin of error.

Figure 2. Percentage of Returnees Who Re-Displaced by District of Return



Note: Districts are ordered by total number of returnees in the district. N/A indicates that no data is available for that district; an asterisk (\*) next to the district name indicates that the data is only indicative due to sample size limitations.

Source: Calculated from MCNA (2019)

11 IOM Iraq DTM, *Return Index Dataset*, Round 8, March 2020.

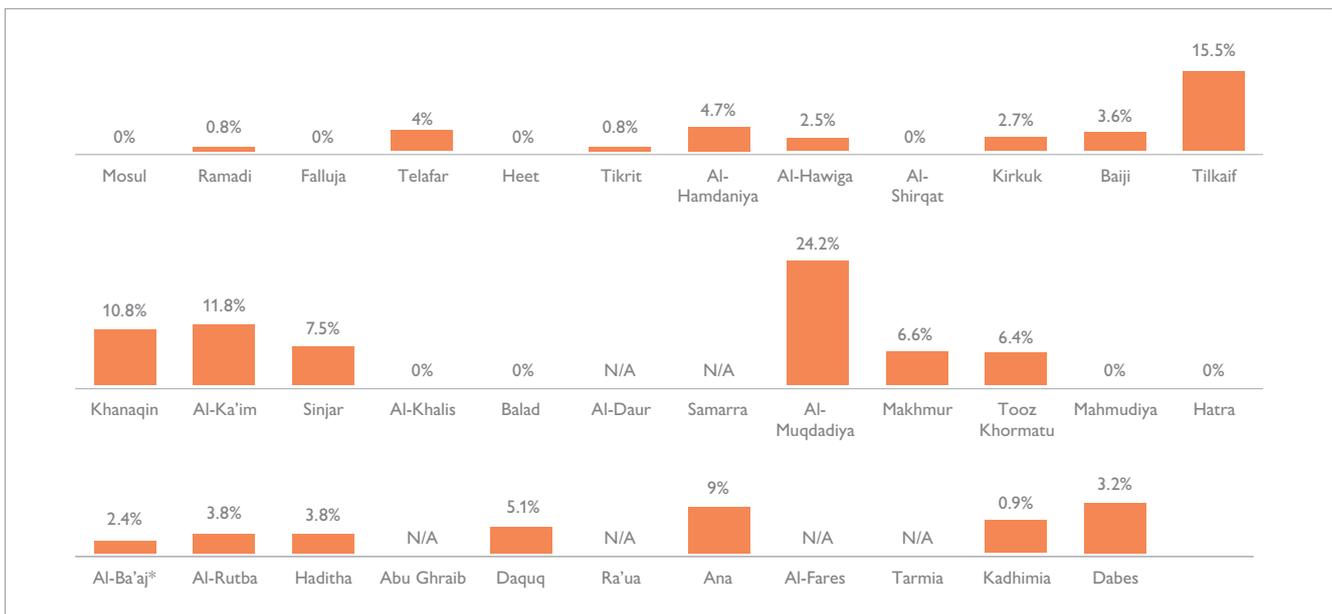
12 IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *Re-Displaced: An Exploration of Displacement after Attempted Return in Iraq, Return Index Thematic Series Briefing 3* (Erbil: IOM, 2020).

### Measuring Stated Movement Intentions of Returnees

This indicator is based on the movement intentions for the following 12 months reported by returnees surveyed in the MCNA. For the whole returnee population, as high as 97.6% indicate having the intention to remain in their place of return. For the remaining 2.4%, the majority of respondents (almost two thirds) stated that they are waiting to decide what to do and only a minority had intentions to move elsewhere, primarily within Iraq's borders.

Figure 3 disaggregates the percentage of returnees with intentions other than remaining in place by district of return. In general, the rate remains significantly low across most districts (or sometimes even estimated to be 0%) but tends to increase in those districts with relatively low numbers of returnees. The districts with a relatively high rates of intentions to move elsewhere tend to match with those with the highest re-displacement rates, as reported above.

Figure 3. Percentage of Returnees with Intentions Other Than to Remain in Place of Origin



Note: Districts are ordered by total number of returnees in the district. N/A indicates that there is no available data or not enough respondents for a statistically representative sample for the district; an asterisk (\*) next to the district name indicates that the data is only indicative due to sample size limitations.

Source: Calculated from MCNA (2019)

### Limitations

The outcomes presented here seem to point to sustained returns in terms of movement, given that a vast majority of returnees have not or do not express willingness to displace again. However, this should not be taken as sustainable reintegration. Re-displacement and stated movement intentions as an indicator for this purpose present some limitations. Some returnees may prefer to live somewhere else given obstacles to sustainably reintegrate, but may not express intentions to do it or may not be able to do so due to constraints (financial, social, risk-averse, etc.). Displacing again, or being forced to migrate, for the same matter, should thus be seen as the last resort option for those returnees not sustainably reintegrated.

An alternative method to measure reintegration as an outcome would be to focus on aspects such as feelings of marginalization and neglect among returnees. If they are sustainably

reintegrated (and comply with all or most of the criteria, including the more long-term elements linked to justice and redress), levels of alienation felt by returnees vis-à-vis the government or other population groups should not be prevalent. This situation may not only indicate a durable solution, but also that some measure of redress of root causes of conflict has taken place. However, these types of measurements are not available for the whole of the returnee population in Iraq.

For this reason, this report does not attempt to correlate movement intentions with the presence of obstacles to reintegration as a way to measure the severity of each obstacle. The measurement of obstacles, based on EGRIS criteria and using the most representative indicators available from external datasets, are presented in absolute terms in order to provide an understanding of which ones are more prevalent than others.

## Summary Table of Indicators for Selected Obstacles and Percentage of Returnee Households Affected

CRITERIA 1: SAFETY AND SECURITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS		
<b>1.1. Risk of Violence</b>	IRAQ %	SOURCE
% of returnee households in locations at risk of violence	50%	RI (2020)
% of returnee households in communities that require a local reconciliation process	12%	RI (2020)
<b>1.2. Physical Protection</b>	IRAQ %	SOURCE
% of returnee households in locations without presence of security actors	<1%	RI (2020)
% of returnee households in locations with a multiplicity of security actors	10%	RI (2020)
<b>1.3. Freedom of Movement</b>	IRAQ %	SOURCE
% of returnee households experiencing movement restrictions	44%	MCNA (2019)
% of returnee households with a female member feeling unsafe to move around	32%	MCNA (2019)
CRITERIA 2: ADEQUATE STANDARDS OF LIVING		
<b>2.1. Housing</b>	IRAQ %	SOURCE
% of returnee households living in uninhabitable housing	2%	ILA (2020)
% of returnee households in housing at risk due to / contaminated by explosive hazards	3%	MCNA (2019)
% of returnee households at risk of eviction	4%	MCNA (2019)
% of returnee households in locations with insufficient water supply	6%	ILA (2020)
% of returnee households in locations with insufficient electricity supply	4%	ILA (2020)
<b>2.2. Healthcare and Education Provision</b>	IRAQ %	SOURCE
% of returnee households in locations where primary health facilities are unavailable	1%	ILA (2020)
% of returnee households in locations where hospital facilities are unavailable	2%	ILA (2020)
% of returnee households reporting difficulties in making use of healthcare provision	32%	MCNA (2019)
% of returnee households in locations where primary education facilities are unavailable	<1%	ILA (2020)
% of returnee households in locations where secondary education facilities are unavailable	<1%	ILA (2020)
% of returnee households reporting difficulties in making use of education provision	6%	MCNA (2019)
CRITERIA 3: ACCESS TO LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC SECURITY		
% of returnee households in locations with inoperative businesses	43%	RI (2020)
% of returnee households in locations with inoperative agriculture	22%	RI (2020)
% of returnee households with no (or unstable) income source	53%	MCNA (2019)
CRITERIA 4: PROPERTY RESTITUTION AND COMPENSATION		
% of returnee households awaiting property compensation	34%	MCNA (2019)
% of returnee households living in property under dispute	12%	MCNA (2019)
CRITERIA 5: DOCUMENTATION		
% of returnee households lacking key family or personal identification documentation	21%	MCNA (2019)
% of returnee households in a property lacking tenure security	4%	MCNA (2019)
% of returnee households in locations where courts of law are unavailable	46%	ILA (2020)

ILA = Integrated Locations Assessment; RI = Return Index; MCNA = Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment.

## CRITERIA 1:

# OBSTACLES TO SAFETY, SECURITY, AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

The links between security and reintegration are crosscutting, connecting protection, stabilization, rule of law, and several key dimensions of social cohesion.

The following sub-criteria linked to social and security elements are examined here:

- Risk of violence (including from social tensions).
- Physical protection.
- Freedom of movement.

### 1.1 RISK OF VIOLENCE

#### *What Does Risk of Violence as an Obstacle Entail?*

All returnee places of origin in this analysis have experienced the ISIL conflict and its effects. Although the conflict is over, sources of violence remain in many places and can affect the population as they return. In some cases, violence may even be stirred by the actual return of diverse populations into a given location as many return movements have preceded reconciliation or peacebuilding interventions attempting to ease grievances within and between groups that have emerged from or were exacerbated by the conflict.

This is why risks of violence need to be looked at from multiple fronts. This includes external threats like continuing attacks from ISIL or other armed groups, but also social conflicts in the form of ethno-religious or tribal tensions and violence, including revenge cases as well. Political competition also plays a role in this risk as different security actors vie for territorial dominance amidst the fragmented post-conflict security configuration in Iraq.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, it is important to consider whether such risks remain unaddressed, either because mechanisms are not in place to resolve them or because the mechanisms in place are not effective in doing so, further entrenching the problem. The importance of this is further underscored by the fact that conflict-affected people themselves frequently see the need for formal justice proceedings and/or local reconciliation processes in order to allow for more peaceful and sustainable returns.<sup>14</sup> As such, a number of local processes or agreements have been initiated across areas of return—Telafar

district being one example—to better facilitate returns and address social and security grievances, among others.<sup>15</sup>

#### *How Is Risk of Violence Measured?*

Based on the above—that is, understanding risks of violence through the presence of sources of violence and the absence of solutions—the indicators used to measure are listed below. All of them are measured at the location level, as opposed to representing individual perceptions, which means that, as indicated in the methods, the information is gathered from a key informant in each location.



Source: Return Index (2020)

Source: Return Index (2020)

#### *How Widespread Is the Risk of Violence in areas of Return and Where Is It Found?*

Risks of violence are a pervasive obstacle across areas of return, affecting half of the families that sought to return to their place of origin. This is the most prevalently faced obstacle for reintegration, in comparison to the others examined in this report. Further discussion for both indicators is presented below.

<sup>13</sup> Erica Gaston and András Derzsi-Horváth, *Iraq After ISIL: Sub-State Actors, Local Forces, and the Micro-Politics of Control* (Berlin: GPPI, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> USIP and Social Inquiry, *Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework*, Rounds 1-3.

<sup>15</sup> USIP, *Amid Iraq's Turmoil, Tal Afar Builds Peace*, USIP, 5 November 2020.

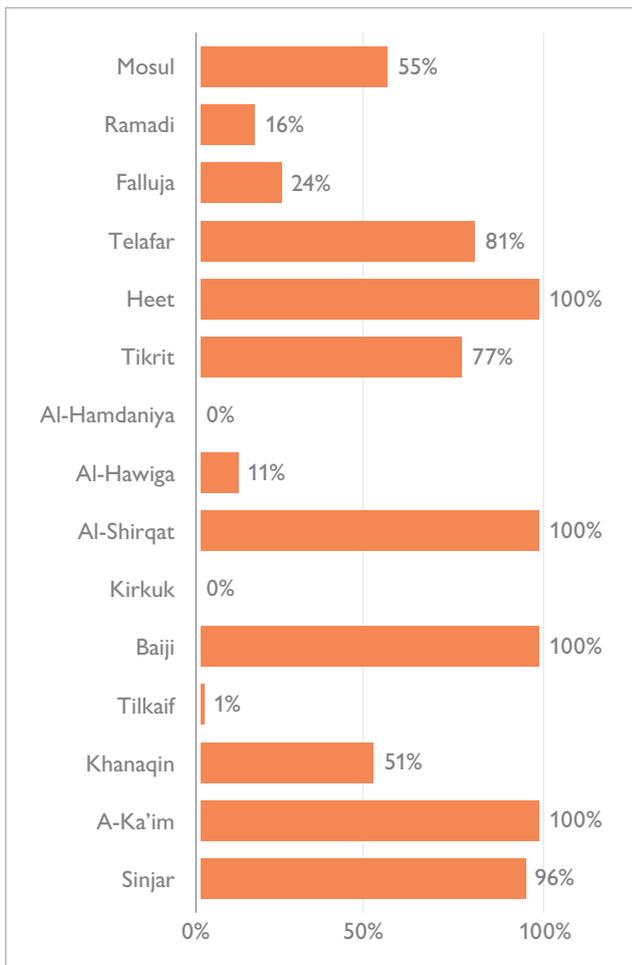


**INDICATOR 1:  
RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS AT RISK OF VIOLENCE**

This indicator provides an idea of whether the population in each location assessed is generally concerned about violence taking place, either due to external attacks or social tensions. The finding that half of the returnees in the sample live in areas where such concerns remain present is quite indicative of the fact that violence has not disappeared from daily life in areas of return.

Security concerns are more concentrated in some areas (Figure 4). Six out of the top 15 districts of return show percentages higher than 80%, indicating sentiments that the vast majority of the returnee population live in locations under pervasive feelings of insecurity. Only about four districts show extremely low rates of security concerns.

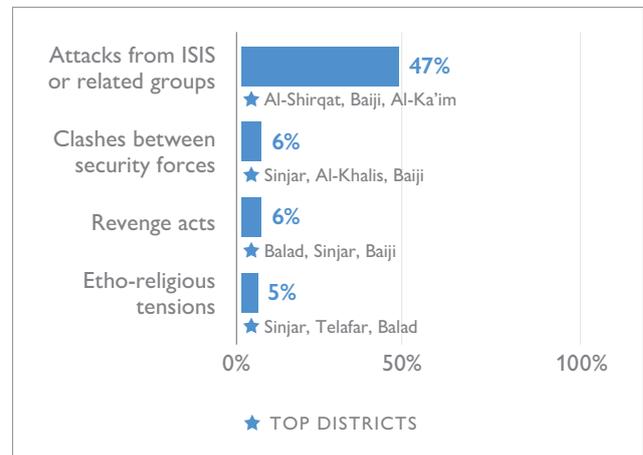
Figure 4. Percentage of Returnees in Locations at Risk of Physical Violence by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: RI (2020)

Another element to consider is the source of the perceived lack of safety. As mentioned, these sources can include external threats (like ISIL-related attacks), social conflicts (revenge and retaliatory acts as well as tensions between ethno-religious and tribal groups in a community), and security-related fault lines (clashes between security actors due to political and territorial competition). Among these, the most widespread and generating most of the reported concern relates to the threat of ISIL attacks. The other sources play a relatively minor role in violent acts and are mostly clustered in specific districts with ongoing local context that explain their prominence.

Figure 5. Percentage of Returnees in Locations at Risk of Physical Violence Disaggregated by Source of Violence



Source: RI (2020)



**INDICATOR 2:  
RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN COMMUNITIES THAT REQUIRE A LOCAL RECONCILIATION PROCESS**

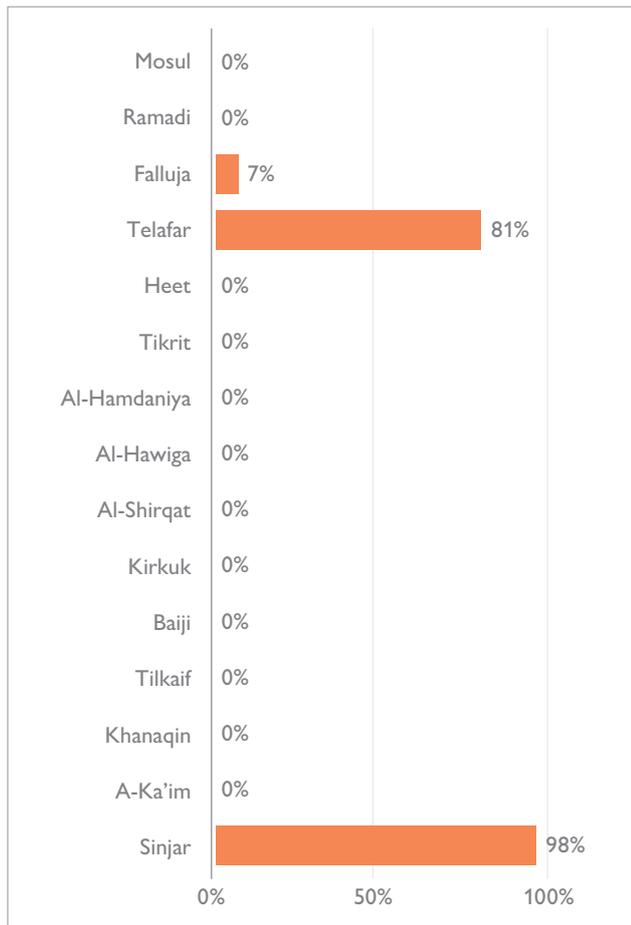
This indicator captures communities' need for local reconciliation between the groups inhabiting the area in order to restore or maintain peace and co-existence. By definition, it is a *localized* indicator, in the sense that whether there is a need for reconciliation or not is rooted in particular local dynamics, which need to be examined individually.<sup>16</sup> That explains why this indicator is only flagged in a relatively small number of districts. As in Figure 6, these districts include Telafar, Sinjar, and, to a lesser extent, Falluja.<sup>17</sup> In addition to those three, other districts in the top 15 feature the need for local reconciliation—this includes Balad, Tooz Khormatu, Muqdadiya, and Al-Ba'aj. These additional

16 IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *The Growing Role of Reconciliation in Return Movements: Snapshots from the Return Index*, Return Index Thematic Series Briefing 2 (Erbil: IOM, 2019).

17 Other districts where this is a concern but that have fewer returnees include Tooz Khormatu, Muqdadiya, and Al-Ba'aj.

districts have fewer returnees, a factor that puts reconciliation into context: such processes frequently mean that there are significant numbers of IDPs from these areas that cannot or do not dare to return until reconciliation is effectively conducted.

Figure 6. Percentage of Returnees in Communities That Require Local Reconciliation by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: RI (2020)

Reconciliation is a long-term and often ongoing process to re-establish and maintain peaceful co-existence. The key consideration thus is not whether there is a need for reconciliation, but whether it is actually taking place or not.

Data on this latter aspect shows that reconciliation is only partially occurring in Telafar but not in Sinjar.<sup>18</sup> Out of the top 15 districts, reconciliation is reportedly not happening either in Tooz Khormatu nor Muqdadiya, and only partially in Balad. This is important, as the absence of reconciliation is found to be an important barrier to return for many IDPs. Reconciliation efforts may facilitate the return of IDPs who are currently not allowed to return (i.e., blocked) either by the other returnee community or by tribal and security actors.<sup>19</sup>

## 1.2 PHYSICAL PROTECTION

### *What Does Physical Protection as an Obstacle Entail?*

Lack of physical protection is often referred to as a key obstacle for return as many IDPs have previously reported that the lack of security forces in their places of origin, and in turn the potential for exposure to attacks, as one of the reasons for not planning to return within 12 months.<sup>20</sup> This aspect of security can be examined inversely as well. Results from the Return Index indicate that a location with the presence of a multiplicity of security actors is significantly less likely to have returns than a location with a smaller number of actors.<sup>21</sup> Multiplicity often brings confusion as to who is in control of locations and which protocols residents need to follow, and furthermore it may increase the potential for clashes between actors competing for power.

These issues related to security configuration are ultimately linked to whether communities feel protected from renewed violence and thus are important elements for the durable reintegration of returning households (as a key to prevent further violence or conflict and further displacement as a result). Other factors linked to protection should be considered beyond the number of security actors, which entails exploring the comfort that returnees express with regards to the type of actor present in their place of origin. In some instances, the presence of security actors perceived to be sectarian can be felt as a risk for returnees that may drive re-displacement or deter willingness to return in the first place.<sup>22</sup>

18 These findings for Sinjar district may change over time in light of the October 2020 agreement signed between the Federal Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government on the status of the district. Similarly, in Telafar district, the February 2020 signing of a local peace agreement in Zummar subdistrict and the August 2020 signing of a local agreement in Telafar Centre may also shift views. This being said, whether or not key informants or residents feel reconciliation is taking place is dependent on their perceptions of its content and implementation, see for example, Nonviolent Peaceforce, *Al-Ayadiya Pact of Honour: A Study* (Erbil: Nonviolent Peaceforce, 2020) and IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *The Growing Role of Reconciliation in Return Movements*.

19 Roger Guiu and Nadia Siddiqui, *Why Has Nobody Come Back Here? Monitoring Physical and Social Conditions in Place of Origin to Understand IDP Return Patterns in Iraq*. Background paper for the IDMC Global Report on Internal Displacement (IDMC: Geneva, 2020).

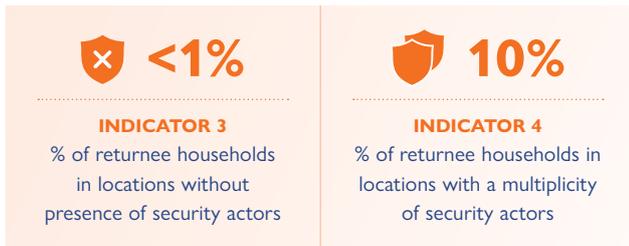
20 IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *Reasons to Remain: Categorizing Protracted Displacement in Iraq* (IOM: Erbil, 2018).

21 Per the Return Index and given standard security configurations in the country, it is usual to find 2 to 3 operating in a location; challenges emerge when more than 4 are present. See for example, IOM Iraq DTM, *Return Index: Findings Round Three* (March 2019).

22 IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *When Affordability Matters: The Political Economy and Economic Decision Making of Iraqi IDPs* (IOM: Erbil, 2019).

### How are Obstacles to Physical Protection Measured?

While there is no available data from nationwide assessments to better elucidate how physically protected people feel and how comfortable they are with the security configuration in their place of origin,<sup>23</sup> there are other indicators linked to security actors within these datasets. These indicators allow for a partial measure of protection in the manner outlined above in locations of return.



Source: Return Index (2020)

Source: Return Index (2020)

### How Widespread are Obstacles in Physical Protection in areas of Return and Where are They Found?

Both indicators examined are not widespread and mostly confined to specific areas (particularly with regard to having no security actors present). A more detailed discussion of each indicator is provided below.

#### INDICATOR 3: RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WITHOUT PRESENCE OF SECURITY ACTORS

This indicator is rather positive in the sense that virtually all locations of return feature at least one security actor in charge of protecting the area, as reported by local key informants in the Return Index. Only in the Hatra District (and more precisely within Al-Tal subdistrict) are there some locations in the vast desert expanse of southern Ninewa Governorate that reportedly have no security actors protecting the area.

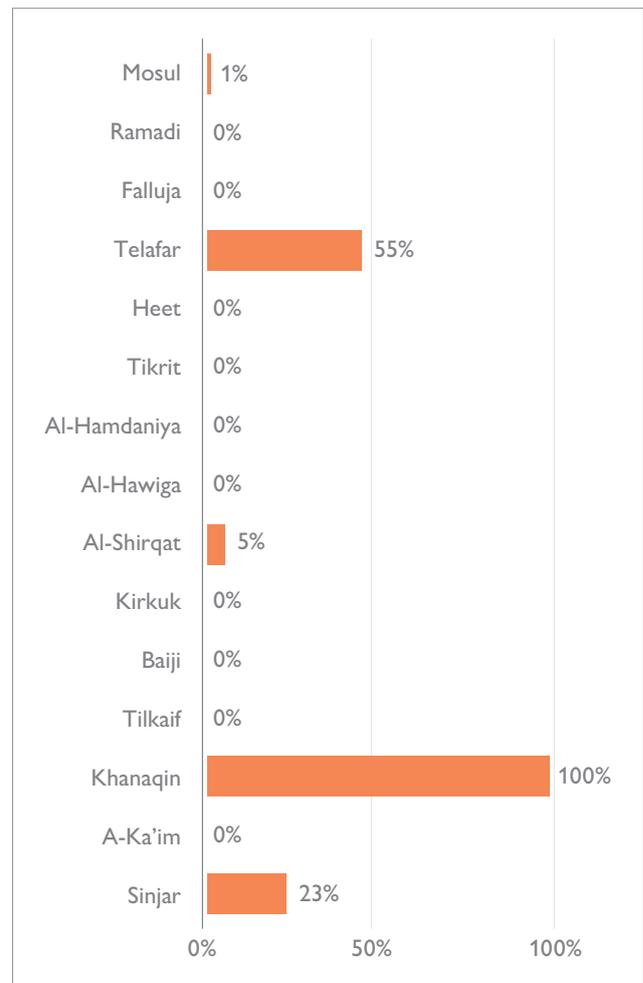
#### INDICATOR 4: RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WITH A MULTIPLICITY OF SECURITY ACTORS

This indicator captures locations in areas where key informants report the presence of four or more different security actors. Having four or more groups, in practice, means

that multiple Popular Mobilisation Units (PMUs), Tribal Mobilization Units (TMUs), or other associated actors are present in a location in addition to the Iraqi Army and local police. As noted above, this level of fragmentation may be seen as an obstacle to return as it is often associated with competition between actors for control of territory, in many cases with different actors representing the interests of different groups living in a particular community.

Among the top 15 districts of return, only four feature some level of multiplicity. Telafar and Khanaqin are the districts most affected by this dynamic. Sinjar and al-Shirqat are only partially affected (i.e., some individual locations report the presence of multiple security actors and some do not). The remaining districts feature between one and three security actors.

Figure 7. Percentage of Returnees in Locations with a Multiplicity of Security Actors by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: RI (2020)

<sup>23</sup> As noted, the USIP and Social Inquiry *Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework* contains indicators in this regard but covers Ninewa Governorate specifically. Other assessments such as protection monitoring conducted by individual actors is also specific to individual cases and do not provide a generalizable view to extract data from for all districts.

### 1.3 FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

#### *What Does Freedom of Movement as an Obstacle Entail?*

Freedom of movement (or lack thereof) is an important element in returning because it can impact where returnees can live once back, their ability to pursue livelihoods, and social relations and feelings of safety.

Two elements are explored among the nationwide datasets that hinder freedom of movement. The first relates to restrictions imposed on the ability of some or all residents to move around a geographical area. These are usually temporary measures put in place by local authorities or security forces as a way to reinforce control of an area after conflict or prevent people from entering into unsafe areas. These measures, however, may serve as deliberate policy against certain population groups.<sup>24</sup> They may also be put in place arbitrarily as a further means of control or for monetary incentive.<sup>25</sup> The second relates to self-imposed limitations on movement by residents due to concerns over their own safety. This is seen if, for example, family members of a household do not feel comfortable moving around their place of origin in general or fear going to certain places therein.

#### *How are Obstacles to Freedom of Movement Measured?*

There are some indicators covering the different dimensions of movement restrictions previously discussed. The following are considered from the available datasets. Restrictions of movement and low feelings of safety are measured at the household level through self-reported experiences.



Source: MCNA (2019)

Source: MCNA (2019)

#### *How Widespread are Obstacles to Freedom of Movement in areas of Return and Where are They Found?*

Restrictions of movement and low feelings of safety are relatively widespread across districts, with a significant proportion of returnees reporting being affected by these

situations. It is important to note that available datasets only cover returnees' experiences as a whole, without distinguishing between population subgroups that may be disproportionately affected.



#### **INDICATOR 5. RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCING RESTRICTIONS OF MOVEMENT**

This first indicator measures the percentage of returnee households that reported facing restrictions in their ability to move freely in their areas of origin. This is a common feature of post-conflict contexts as security forces attempt to exert control and limit the action of armed groups. However, as mentioned above, it also brings with it (unintended) negative consequences for the reintegration of the population affected by the movement restrictions, especially if it is a deliberate measure targeting some groups over others. While this last qualifier is not possible to assess with the data available, the results from the MCNA indicate that almost half of all returnees are experiencing restrictions in their movement.

The presence of these restrictions is relatively spread across all main districts of return (Figure 8). The most affected districts range from large relatively urban areas such as Mosul and Hamdaniya to more isolated and deserted districts including Heet, Al-Kaim, and Al-Hawija. Restrictions in these locations relate to limiting risks linked to ISIL exposure and attacks as well as more political dynamics linked to who can return and where they can go.<sup>26</sup>

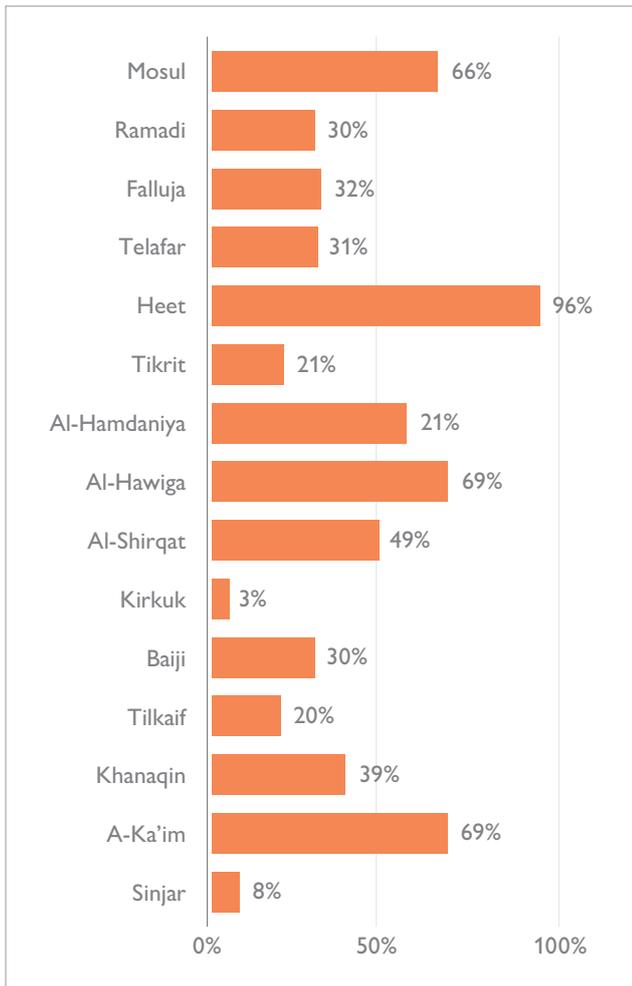
It is important to detail the methods by which these movement restrictions are enforced. They include measures like the need to obtain ad hoc security clearance from relevant authorities, time restrictions on when leaving and returning can take place, or the need to provide specific reasons for movement (e.g., for employment, medical treatment, or school attendance). The frequency of each of these different types of restrictions is provided in Figure 9. The most common restriction returnees face is the need to obtain security clearance for travel. What is missing from this data is how much these restrictions infringe on the daily lives of residents in a given location, particularly because of how strictly such processes are implemented and the requirements needed to meet them tend to vary by location.

24 Belkis Wille, *Iraq: Not a Homecoming*, Human Rights Watch, 14 June 2019.

25 Roger Guiu and Sogand Afkari, *Post-Conflict Political Economy in Sinjar: What the Aftermath of Conflict and Historical Neglect Mean for Recovering the Local Economy*, Policy Brief (Erbil: Social Inquiry, 2019).

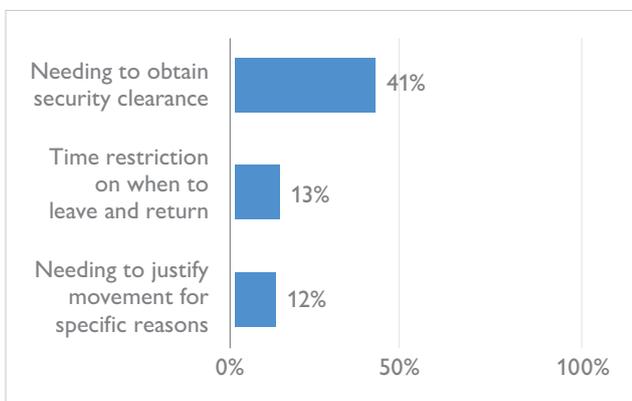
26 See a case study in Anbar featuring these elements in IOM Iraq, *Managing Return in Anbar: Community Responses to the Return of IDPs with Perceived Affiliation*, (Erbil: IOM, 2020).

Figure 8. Percentage of Returnees Experiencing Restrictions on Freedom of Movement by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: MCNA (2019)

Figure 9. Percentage of Returnees Experiencing Restrictions on Freedom of Movement Disaggregated by Cause of the Restriction



Note: Multi-select question. The figure does not include the percentage of people who did not identify any movement restriction.

Source: MCNA (2019)

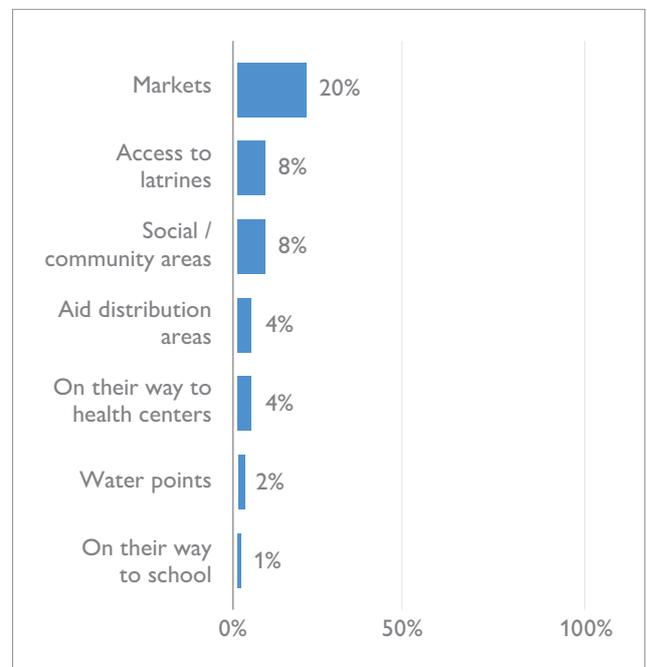


**INDICATOR 6**  
**RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS WITH A FEMALE MEMBER FEELING UNSAFE TO MOVE AROUND**

This indicator captures more subjective perceptions of freedom of movement through assessing the extent to which returnees report that members of their households (specifically women and girls) limit their movements to specific areas because they feel unsafe. About a third of respondents reported this situation. The indicator can be disaggregated into different locations where women and girls do not feel safe, such as markets, public service access points, latrines, bathing facilities, and water points, among others. This disaggregation is shown in Figure 10, with markets being the foremost unsafe location.

Geographically, returnees in the largest districts of Anbar tend to report these restrictions more frequently (this includes Falluja, Al-Kaim, Ramadi, and Heet districts, all of which stand above the total average). Other areas of concern include Tilkaif and Baiji, while the rest of districts tend to be relatively unaffected by such restrictions.

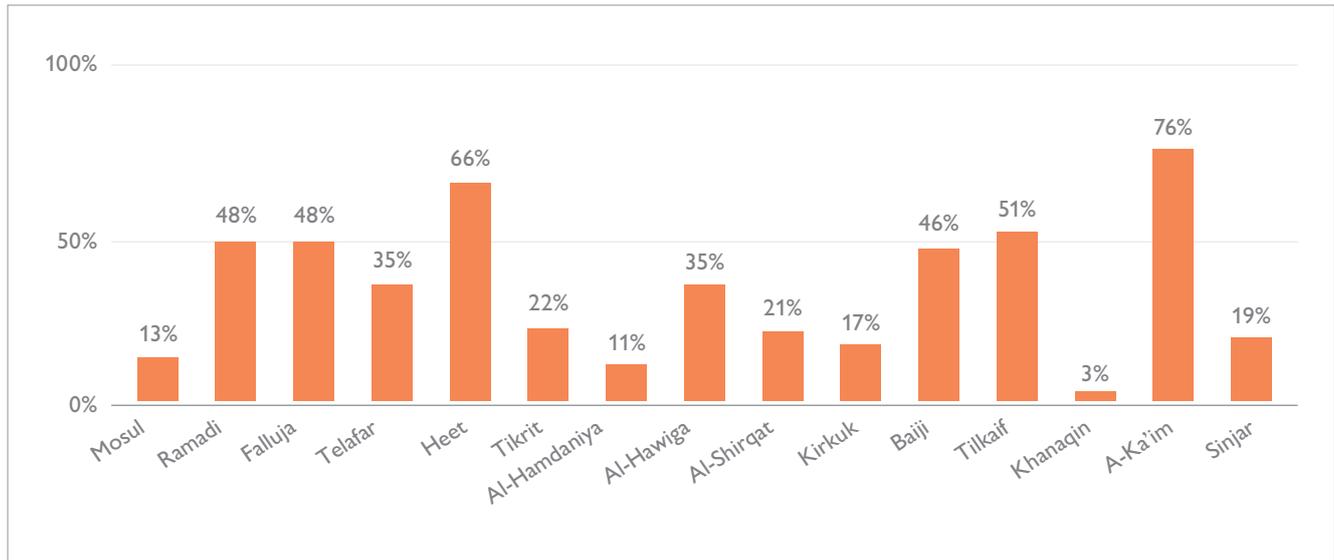
Figure 10. Percentage of Returnee Households with a Female Member Feeling Unsafe Disaggregated by Source of Unsafety



Note: Multi-select question. The figure does not include the percentage of people who did not report any unsafe area for female household members to go to.

Source: MCNA (2019)

Figure 11. Percentage of Returnees with a Female Member Feeling Unsafe to Move Around by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: MCNA (2019)

## CRITERIA 2:

### OBSTACLES TO ADEQUATE STANDARDS OF LIVING

Considering that adequate standards of living and material wellbeing are predominantly linked to housing quality (especially after conflict where residential areas may have been largely affected).<sup>27</sup>

**The provision of public services, the sub-criteria examined here include:**

- Housing, including access to basic utilities.
- Healthcare and education, both in terms of facilities and ability to use them.

#### 2.1 HOUSING

##### *What Does Housing as an Obstacle Entail?*

Quality of housing was identified as the main driver behind the absence of returns across conflict-affected Iraq, as locations with high levels of residential destruction tended to have significantly lower rates of return.<sup>28</sup> Destruction thus prevents return, but lack of information

in displacement about the condition of homes, inability to afford being in displacement, or camp closures have forced many IDPs to return to their homes even if uninhabitable (in many cases though investing resources to repair it). Houses have also been affected by UXO contamination,

<sup>27</sup> IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *The Physical and Social Dimensions of Housing in Conflict-Affected Areas* (Erbil: IOM, 2019).

<sup>28</sup> IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *Building Blocks of the Return Index in Iraq*.

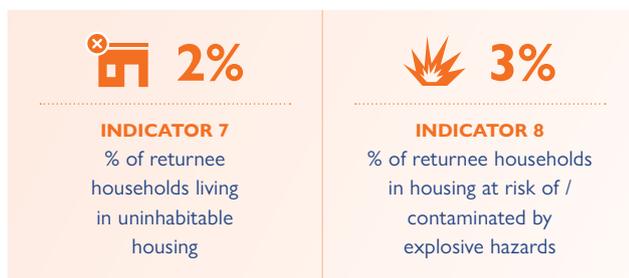
with people returning before demining operations have covered the areas.<sup>29</sup> Returnees in these situations may have had to arrange critical housing solutions and many may be at risk of eviction, posing an extra challenge on their ability to reintegrate sustainably. These three issues (living in a destroyed house, living in housing affected by explosive hazards, or being at risk of eviction) are evaluated here as individual indicators.

It should be noted that interventions that focus on remedying house destruction involve filing housing claims for compensation as stipulated in the Iraqi regulatory framework. This is included in a dedicated discussion later in the framework given that it is an obstacle for reintegration in itself (see Criteria 4, property restitution and compensation).

Finally, in addition to the physical state, other housing issues linked to adequate standards of living include the provision of electricity and water, and thus they are also analysed in this section. Again, current levels of provision are linked to public infrastructure destruction due to conflict (and its subsequent restoration) but also pre-conflict development neglect. It is important for reintegration, in any event, that the returnee population have sufficient provision guaranteed in both services.

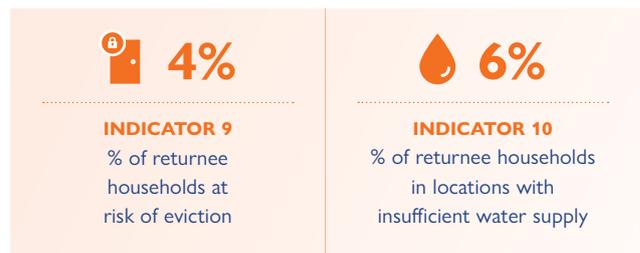
### How are Obstacles to Adequate Housing Measured?

The different elements comprising quality and sustainability of housing discussed above are broken down into five different indicators from different datasets, as specified below. Those related specifically to the state of housing are measured as household-level indicators, and those related to water and electricity provision are available from location-level measurement.



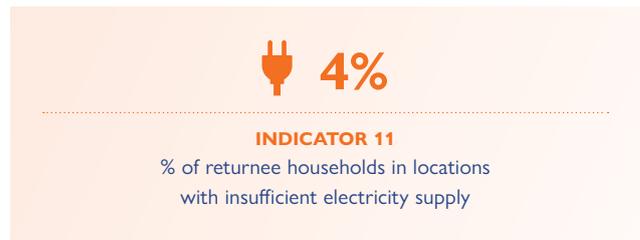
Source: ILA (2020)

Source: MCNA (2019)



Source: MCNA (2019)

Source: ILA (2020)



Source: ILA (2020)

### How Widespread are Obstacles to Adequate Housing in areas of Return and Where are They Found?

The overall state of quality of housing is rather positive, as the prevalence of these indicators is relatively low across the country. Further discussion for these five indicators is presented below.

#### INDICATOR 7: RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN UNINHABITABLE HOUSING

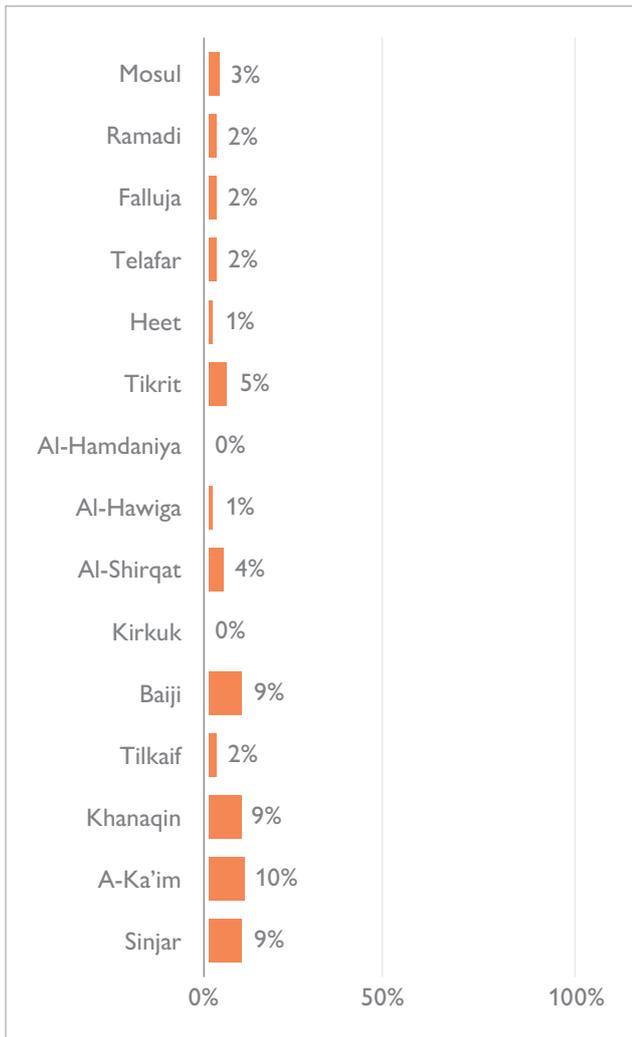
This indicator captures the returnee households that returned to their habitual residences which are categorized as uninhabitable or critical due to the physical condition. It thus excludes other returnees potentially living in informal shelter, such as in makeshift shelters or being hosted in public buildings. Cases of informal shelters are almost non-existent in return settings and thus excluded from this analysis (it remains an issue for IDP settings). This indicator thus shows that slightly more than 3% of returnees are currently returned to an uninhabitable residence.<sup>30</sup>

In terms of prevalence across the top districts of return, only a few districts feature some level of returnees in this situation (Figure 12). Baiji, Khanaqin, Al-Kaim, and Sinjar are the districts with around 10% of returnees living in destroyed or damaged houses.

<sup>29</sup> Mining Action Group, *Returning refugees find ISIL landmines in their homes*, June 2019.

<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that this indicator only measures the proportion of returnees in destroyed houses and it does not evaluate the level of residential destruction in a location or district. There may be a higher percentage of houses destroyed in a given area but, as they likely remain uninhabited, they are not counted in this percentage. Locations with a low rate of returns are likely to have high destruction levels.

Figure 12. Percentage of Returnees Living in Uninhabitable Housing by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: ILA (2020)



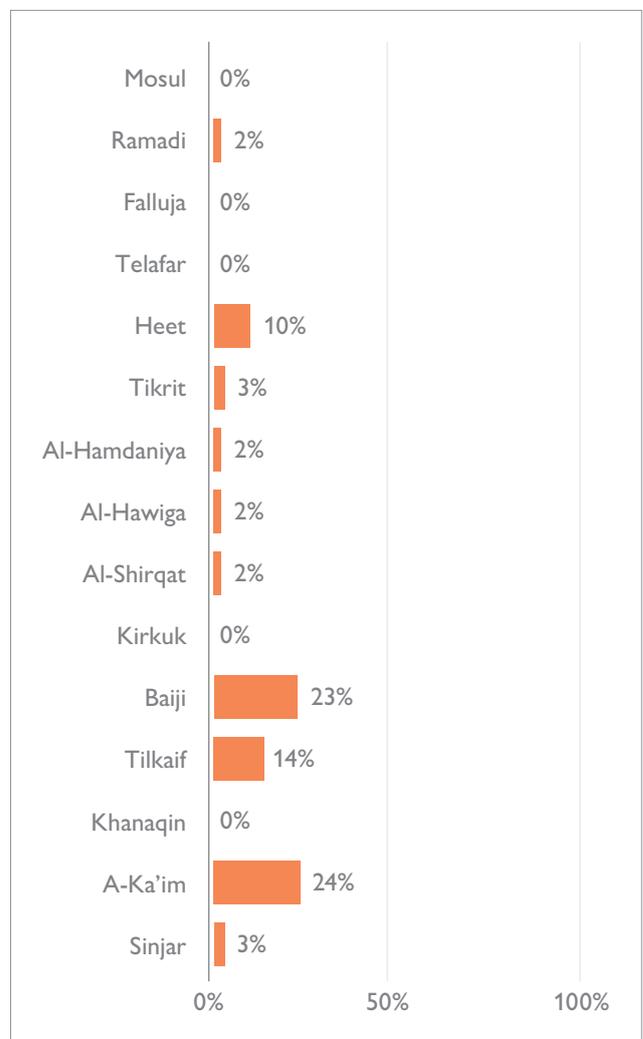
**INDICATOR 8:**  
**RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN HOUSING**  
**AT RISK OF / CONTAMINATED BY**  
**EXPLOSIVE HAZARDS**

This indicator is based on self-reported exposure or risk of explosive hazard, in this case reported by the returnee as the immediate issue they face with their current housing situation. It is important to highlight that it does not record the actual presence of mines based on a technical assessment (only partial assessments of return areas exist by demining actors)<sup>31</sup> but whether residents are concerned by the perceived risk posed by UXOs and IEDs in their

residential surroundings. Based on this framing, around 3% of the returnees reported that contamination from explosive hazards was one of the top issues related to their housing and shelter situation.

Such concerns are strongly reported in particular by returnees in four districts (Al-Kaim, Baiji, Tilkaef, and Heet, in this order), with the rest of districts showing little to no concern at all. For the case of Al-Kaim and Baiji, the potential presence of explosive hazards thus compounds housing destruction levels reported in the previous indicator.

Figure 13. Percentage of Returnees in Housing at Risk of / Contaminated by Explosive Hazards by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: ILA (2020)

31 While data exists on the level of contamination of specific locations in Iraq, collected by mine action actors and related humanitarian clusters, it is not a large enough data to conduct this type of district-by-district measurement and comparison.

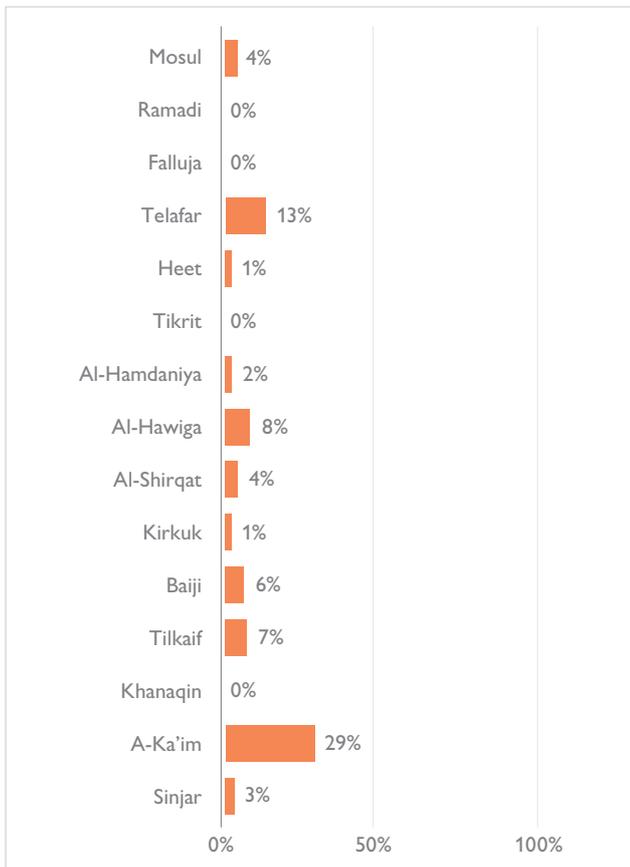


**INDICATOR 9:  
RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS  
AT RISK OF EVICTION**

This indicator at the household-level presents the percentage of returnee households that reported being at risk of eviction from their current housing setting. This percentage is relatively contained, standing at 4% across districts. This is likely attributable to the fact that more than 90% of returnee households are homeowners and only less than 10% are currently renting—indeed, being at risk of eviction is 8 times more likely for those returnees who rent compared to homeowners, based on the data collected in MCNA. The rate of households that report risk of eviction is particularly high in Al-Kaim (Figure 14), which is also a district relatively affected by residential destruction and presence of mines, as seen previously.

Most of the self-reported reasons for being at risk of eviction are linked to lack of funds and pressure from property owners (mostly in relation to those who are renting). It is noteworthy that a proportion of these affected families also report being pushed out by authorities, with such situations usually linked to informal property tenure.

Figure 14. Percentage of Returnees Self-Reportedly at Risk of Eviction by Top 15 Districts of Return



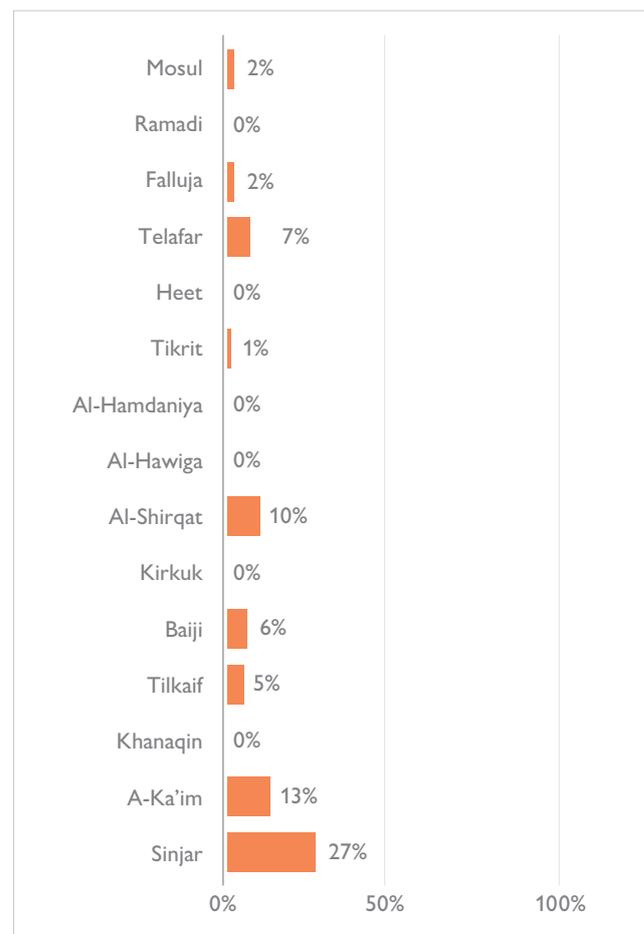
Source: MCNA (2019)



**INDICATOR 10:  
RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS  
IN LOCATIONS WITH  
INSUFFICIENT WATER SUPPLY**

This indicator captures locations with insufficient water supply, measured by whether half or less of residents have enough water to satisfy their needs as reported by local key informants. Based on this definition, around 6% of returnees live in locations categorized as such. Some districts that show levels above this country average are Sinjar, Al-Kaim, Al-Shirqat, and Telafar (Figure 15). It should be noted that the most water insecure districts are located out of the top 15 districts of return, especially affecting rural and isolated areas (with few returns) like Al-Ba'aj, Al-Rutba, or Hatra.

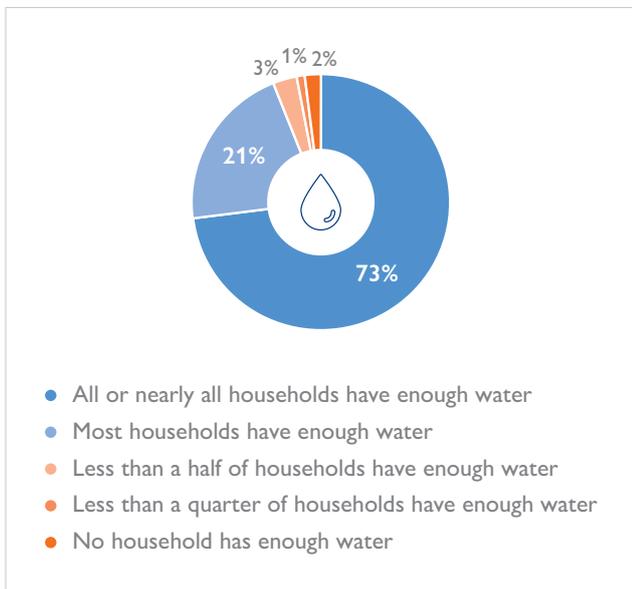
Figure 15. Percentage of Returnees in Locations with Insufficient Water Supply by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: ILA (2020)

Delving into more detail for this indicator, water provision can be disaggregated into different levels of sufficiency for residents. A positive factor is that most returnees live in locations where all or nearly all residents have sufficient water provision (Figure 16). Frequently, this still implies that water supply may only be available for certain hours of the day but deemed sufficient for people’s needs as per the local key informants. For the small proportion of locations that are water insufficient, only 2% of the total are categorized as not having any water supply at all.

Figure 16. Percentage of Returnees Across All Districts of Return Disaggregated by State of Water Supply

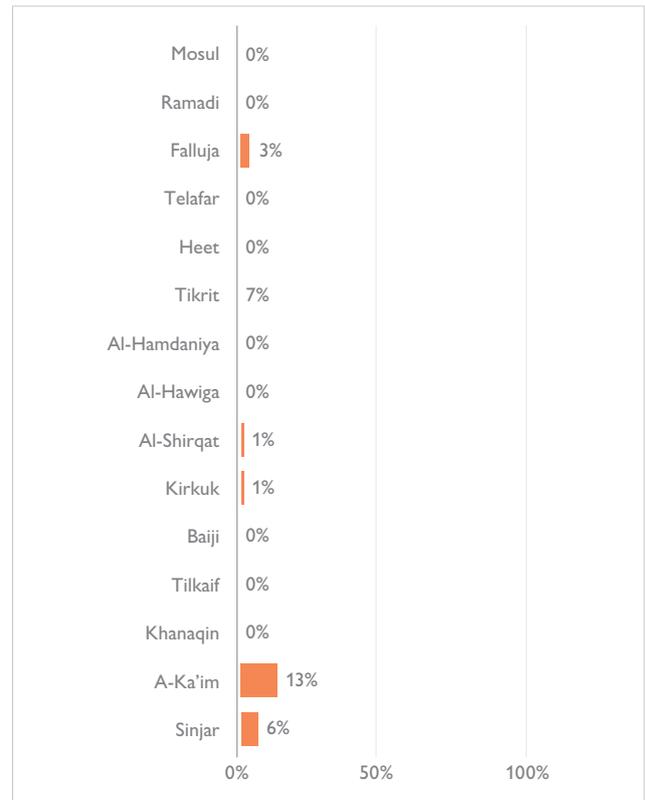


Source: ILA (2020)

**INDICATOR 11:**  
**RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN**  
**LOCATIONS WITH INSUFFICIENT**  
**ELECTRICITY SUPPLY**

This indicator follows the same structure as the one above for water supply. It categorizes locations of return by sufficiency of electricity provision. Based on this definition, slightly less than 4% of returnees live in locations with insufficient provision as reported by local key informants. For this indicator, Sinjar and Al-Kaim also feature a value above the all-district average, as was the case in the previous indicator. Overall, values remain relatively low across districts (Figure 17).

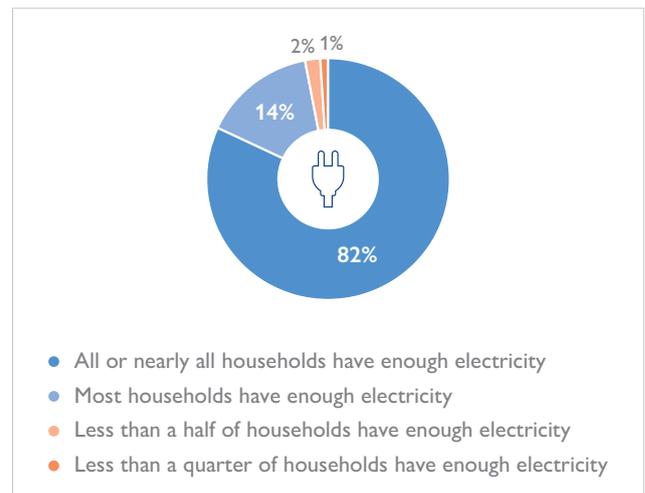
Figure 17. Percentage of Returnees in Locations with Insufficient Electricity Supply by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: ILA (2020)

Again, disaggregating electricity provision into different levels shows that the large majority of returnees live in locations with sufficient provision (Figure 18). This does not assume a full 24-hour provision in these locations, but that most residents can satisfy their needs as reported by a local key informant.

Figure 18. Percentage of Returnees Across All Districts of Return Disaggregated by State of Electricity Supply



Source: ILA (2020)

## 2.2 HEALTHCARE AND EDUCATION

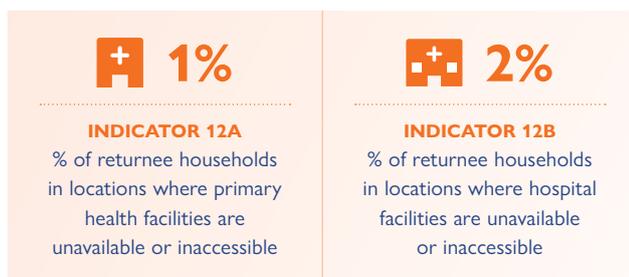
### *What Do Healthcare and Education as an Obstacle Entail?*

As healthcare and education are key elements for an adequate standard of living upon return, the evaluation of whether they can represent obstacles to reintegration considers two dimensions here: the presence of their corresponding facilities (and thus ability to reach them in case of need) as well as barriers to make actual and proper use of the services.

For the first dimension, Iraqi authorities and international stakeholders have placed importance on the need to repair and rehabilitate health and education infrastructure in locations of return as areas emerged out of conflict. The main objective was to guarantee access for returning families.<sup>32</sup> For the second dimension, obstacles to be able to make use of these services, even when the facilities are rehabilitated, still can apply to returnees for many reasons, ranging from protection issues (e.g., discrimination or lack of documentation) to low quality or quantity of provision.

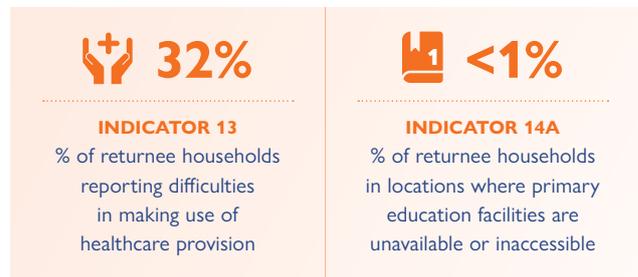
### *How are Obstacles to Healthcare and Education Measured?*

The two dimensions of service provision listed above (availability of facilities and access/usage obstacles) are evaluated through separate indicators first for healthcare and next for education. Availability of facilities is measured as a location-level indicator, while reported obstacles are assessed at the household level—only considering those households that needed to make use of these services in the recent months before the assessment. Furthermore, healthcare is broken down into primary healthcare and secondary/tertiary healthcare (most often referred to hospitals), while education is also disaggregated into primary and secondary education.



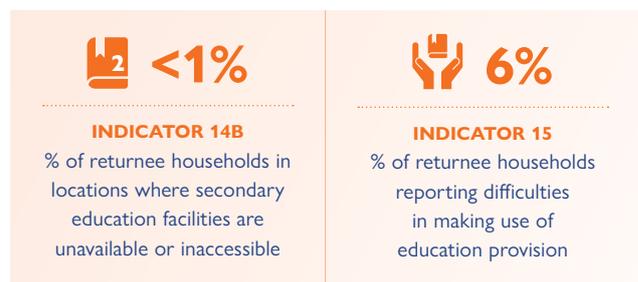
Source: ILA (2020)

Source: ILA (2020)



Source: MCNA (2019)

Source: ILA (2020)



Source: ILA (2020)

Source: MCNA (2019)

### *How Widespread are Obstacles to Healthcare and Education in areas of Return and Where are They Found?*

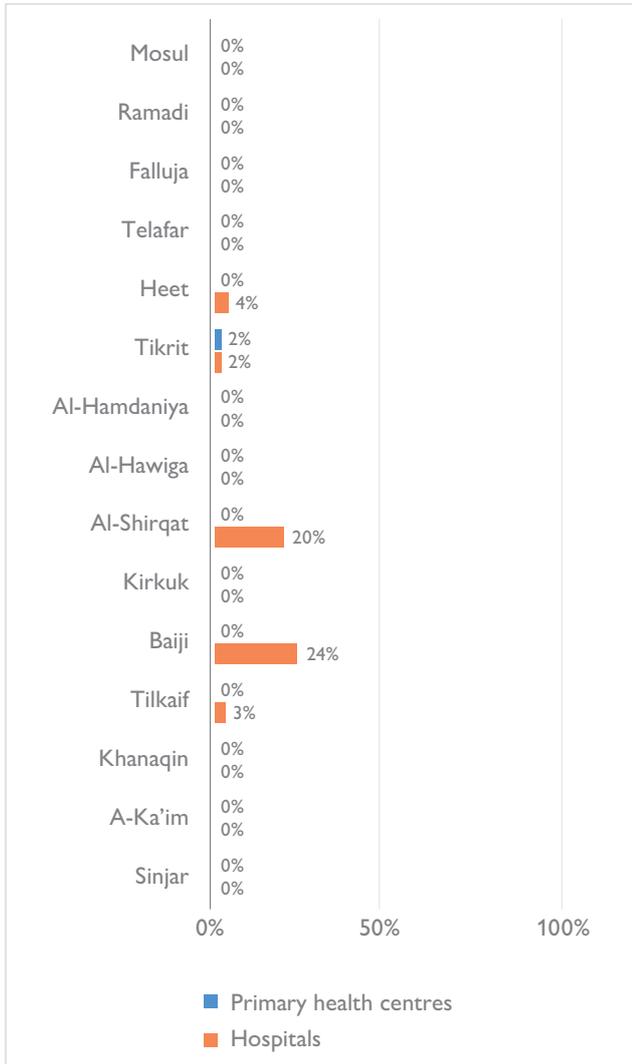
Indicators related to location-level facilities are largely positive (in some cases indicating that less than 1% of returnees no access at all). However, the physical access is sometimes impeded by other obstacles, especially in healthcare use, linked to quality and operating capacity of the services. Further discussion for these indicators is presented below.

#### **INDICATOR 12: RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WHERE PRIMARY HEALTH FACILITIES AND HOSPITALS ARE UNAVAILABLE OR INACCESSIBLE**

These two indicators measure the ability of returnee households to access health facilities, either in their location or nearby. By and large, such access is spread, as only 1% to 2% of returnees live in locations where access to either primary a health centre or a hospital is reported impossible. None of the top districts of return show any significant constraint regarding primary healthcare. Regarding hospital facilities, Baiji and Al-Shirqat, both neighbouring districts in Salah al-Din governorate, have relatively significant pockets of population without access to them.

<sup>32</sup> On this topic, see United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, *The Right to Education in Iraq: The legacy of ISIL territorial control on access to education*, (Baghdad: UNAMI, 2020).

Figure 19. Percentage of Returnees in Locations Where Healthcare Facilities Are Unavailable or Inaccessible by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: ILA (2020)

It should be noted, however, that these indicators only evaluate physical access to the facilities—their existence, in other words (provided they are not destroyed or empty). It does not provide information regarding whether centres are well provisioned or the adequacy or quality of their services. This is extra dimension is partly covered in the next indicator.

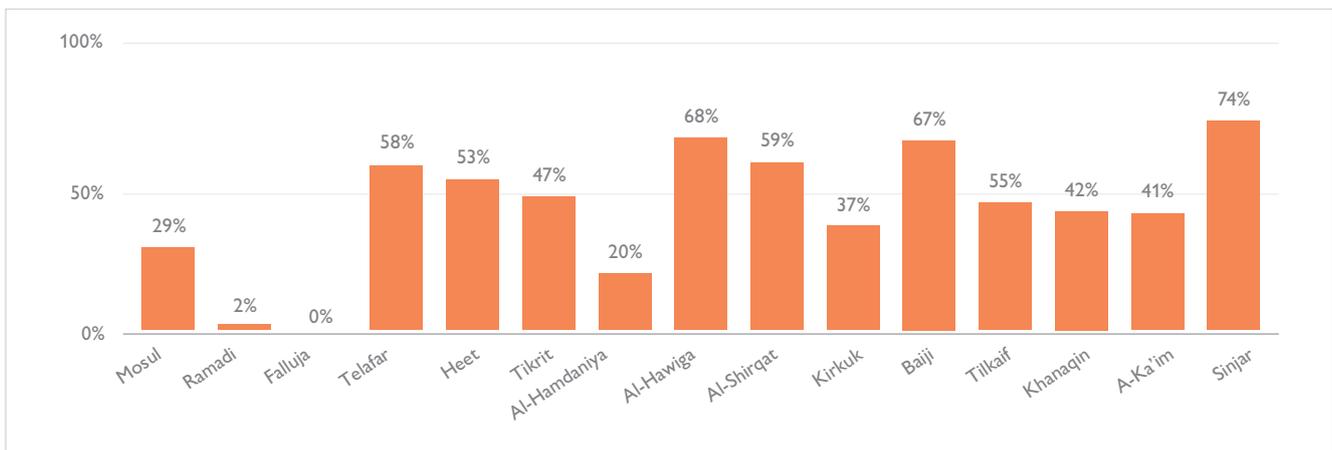


**INDICATOR 13:**  
**RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS**  
**REPORTING DIFFICULTIES**  
**IN MAKING USE OF**  
**HEALTHCARE PROVISION**

This indicator identifies the proportion of the returnee population that reported difficulties in using health services or treatment. It thus distinguishes between residents who needed and did not need healthcare during the previous three months to the assessment. As such, while 32% of households self-reported usage difficulties, another 24% did not report any issue at all, and the remaining 43% did not need to make use of healthcare. This points to a rather negative situation, however, in which more than half of healthcare users did face difficulties.

This relatively prevalent issue across districts helps nuance the previous indicator on physical access that showed few obstacles for returnees. Thus, there may be a facility in the return location or nearby, but a significant proportion of the population face issues obtaining the (adequate) service from it. This may be a more accurate representation. In addition, many of the top 15 districts of return feature more than half of its population reporting issues, with Sinjar district showing the highest percentage of people affected.

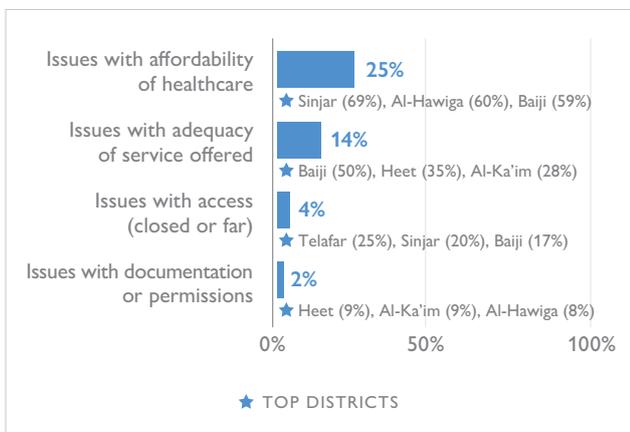
Figure 20. Percentage of Returnees Reporting Difficulties in Making Use of Healthcare by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: MCNA (2019)

The type of difficulties faced in using healthcare can be disaggregated with the data available and grouped into some key categories. These are represented in Figure 21. There are two prominent categories: issues with affordability of healthcare services, with 25% of people affected (although this mostly refers to those trying to access private healthcare instead of public<sup>33</sup>), and issues with the adequacy of services offered, with 14% of people affected (this type of issue mostly referring, in first place, to lack of available medicines, and secondly, to the inability to provide the required treatment).

Figure 21. Percentage of Returnees Reporting Difficulties in Making Use of Healthcare Disaggregated by Issue



Note: Multi-select question. The figure does not include the percentage of people who did not report any access issue.

Source: MCNA (2019)

**INDICATOR 14:**  
**RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WHERE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION FACILITIES ARE UNAVAILABLE OR INACCESSIBLE**

This set of indicators measures the ability of returnee households to access education facilities, either in their location or nearby. This includes both primary schools as well as secondary schools (without disaggregation by gender education). For both levels, less than 1% of households live in locations where access to schools is reported impossible. Only a handful of districts report issues, mainly centred around Tikrit, Tilkaif, and Tooz Khormatu but, again, with less than 2% of returnees affected.

As with the case of healthcare-related indicators, this set of indicators is limited to evaluating physical access to the facilities, without going into quality-of-service considerations, which are partly assessed in the next indicator.

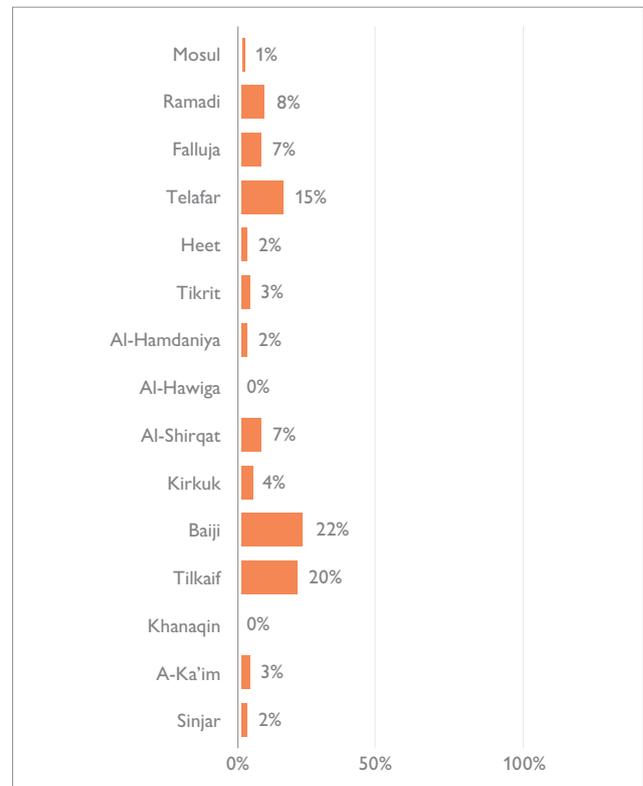


**INDICATOR 15:**  
**RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS REPORTING DIFFICULTIES IN MAKING USE OF EDUCATION PROVISION**

This indicator identifies the proportion of returnee households that reported difficulties in accessing education for their children aged 6 to 17 years old. The MCNA reports that 11% of households have at least one child not attending education regularly (at least four days a week). This percentage is further disaggregated into situations where kids involuntary cannot attend school for external reasons (6%) and other situations where the reason for not attending school is voluntarily (5%), either due to reported family responsibilities, lack of interest, lack of affordability, or a trade-off with livelihoods.

This indicator thus only considers involuntary reasons (listed in more detail below), as it captures specifically accessibility issues that can help better understand shortcomings in education provision and structural barriers for households upon return. There is a small number of districts that feature relatively high obstacles in this sense (Figure 22), mostly centred around Baiji, Tilkaif, and Telafar.

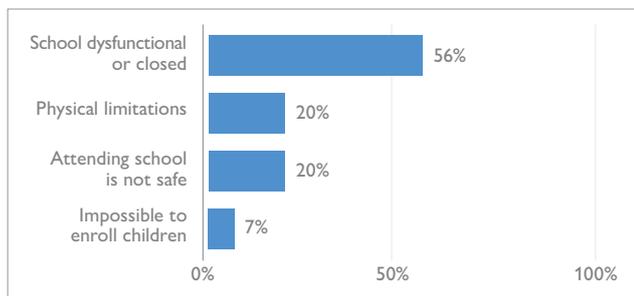
Figure 22. Percentage of Returnees Reporting Difficulties in Making Use of Education Provision by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: MCNA (2019)

33 Reliance on private healthcare can come from both lack of the treatment needed in public healthcare or preferences due to expected better quality of service provision. Attitudes of respondents regarding public healthcare are not available in the data.

Figure 23. Percentage of Returnees Reporting Difficulties in Making Use of Education Provision Disaggregated by Most Frequently Reported Barriers



The obstacles that force children in these families to involuntarily miss schooling are clustered in three main categories. In more than half of the cases reported, the obstacles referred to school facilities being not operational (either due to damage, to being occupied, or to lack of students). This was followed by physical limitations (including barriers linked to disability) and lack of safety while accessing school.

Note: Data showed as a percentage of those households with at least one child not attending formal education involuntarily. Multi-select question. Source: MCNA (2019)



### CRITERIA 3:

## OBSTACLES TO ACCESSING LIVELIHOODS

Reintegration often occurs in circumstances of fragile or disrupted economies and high unemployment affecting the returning population, especially after conflict. The obstacles examined here thus combine macro-level information, such as availability of labour opportunities in areas of return, and micro-level information, looking at the potentially fragile economic situation of households.

**In particular, the sub-criteria are the following:**

- Access to livelihoods, based on the state of local economic activities.
- Economic security, based on the revenue sources households rely on.

### 3.1. EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

#### *What Do Employment and Livelihoods as an Obstacle Entail?*

IDPs strongly take into account the potential for livelihood opportunities ahead of considering returning to their places of origin; the importance of livelihoods as an obstacle to return has increased in Iraq over time.<sup>34</sup> Households thus explore their economic prospects upon return and ponder their expected ability to cover basic needs, especially for those who used to rely on the formal and informal private sector for their livelihoods. Households relying on public employment may be less affected in this regard as far as they are often able to retain their jobs.<sup>35</sup>

Many returnee households are thus dependent on the proper post-conflict recuperation and well-functioning of the traditional economic sectors in their places of origin. This mostly includes agriculture and small business sectors often relying on daily labour. While household economic security is explored later, this part looks at the availability of labour opportunities as a factor for reintegration through examining the state of key economic sectors in areas of return.

<sup>34</sup> IOM Iraq and Georgetown University, *Access to Durable Solutions Among IDPs in Iraq: Livelihoods and Economic Security in Displacement* (Erbil: IOM, 2020).

<sup>35</sup> Governorate authorities have sought to bring their populations back from displacement in some instances through instructions from the Federal Government recalling displaced government employees to return or risk losing their positions. See, IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *Cities as Home*.

### How are Obstacles to Employment and Livelihoods Measured?

Availability of livelihoods and employment is evaluated through specific indicators for key economic sectors, agriculture and small businesses (most often small workshops and markets). They are measured at the location level, thus considering the extent by which returnees are living within fragile economic conditions.



Source: Return Index (2020)

Source: Return Index (2020)

### How Widespread are Obstacles to Employment and Livelihoods in areas of Return and Where are They Found?

The majority of returnees, by and large, live in areas where economic activities have been mostly restored similar to pre-conflict levels, as reported by key informants for the Return Index dataset. However, significant pockets of economic fragility remain where business owners and farmers struggle to restart, thus affecting their own livelihoods as well as limiting the provision of job opportunities. The pervasiveness of this situation is nevertheless limited. Further discussion for both indicators is presented below.

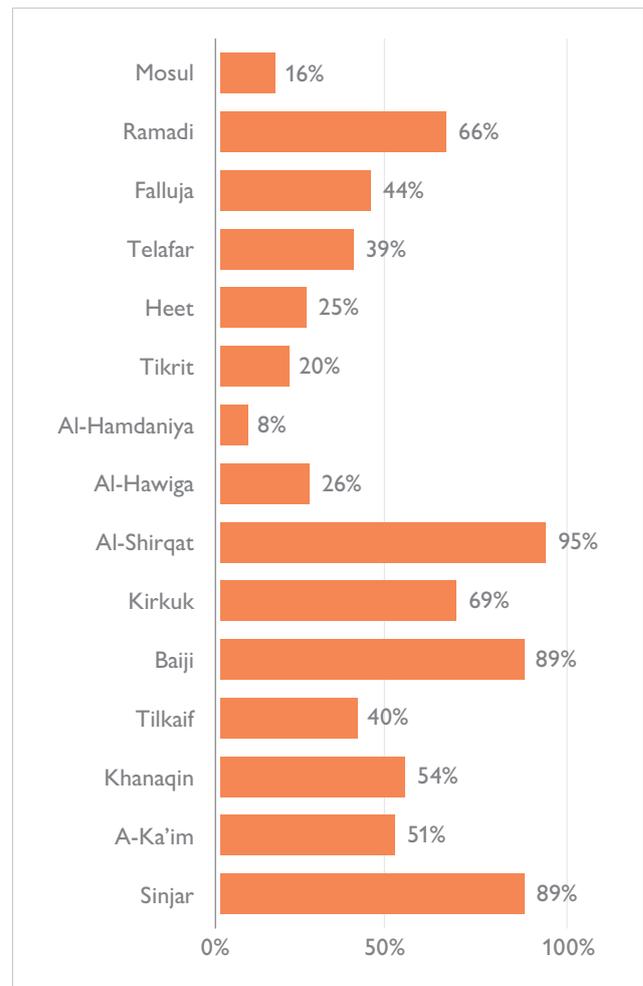


**INDICATOR 16:**  
**RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WITH INOPERATIVE BUSINESSES**

This location-level data captures the presence of inoperative or partially operative business landscapes in areas of return. This refers to small shops, workshops, and markets, rather than large enterprises or companies (e.g., concrete factories). The former types of businesses are the most commonly found in Iraq's private sector, especially in small urban areas. In this regard, 43% of returnees live in locations with inoperative businesses, that is, that a significant part of the business fabric remains destroyed, dysfunctional, abandoned, or closed down. In addition to this, it must be noted that, as the data for this indicator was collected in June 2020, many businesses may have since been reported as closed down or negatively affected by COVID-19-related restrictions and curfews.

This obstacle is found to be relatively significant across most top districts of return. Few exceptions exist where the business fabric has been either not strongly affected or has been able to rapidly recover.

Figure 24. Percentage of Returnees in Locations with Inoperative Businesses by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: RI (2020)

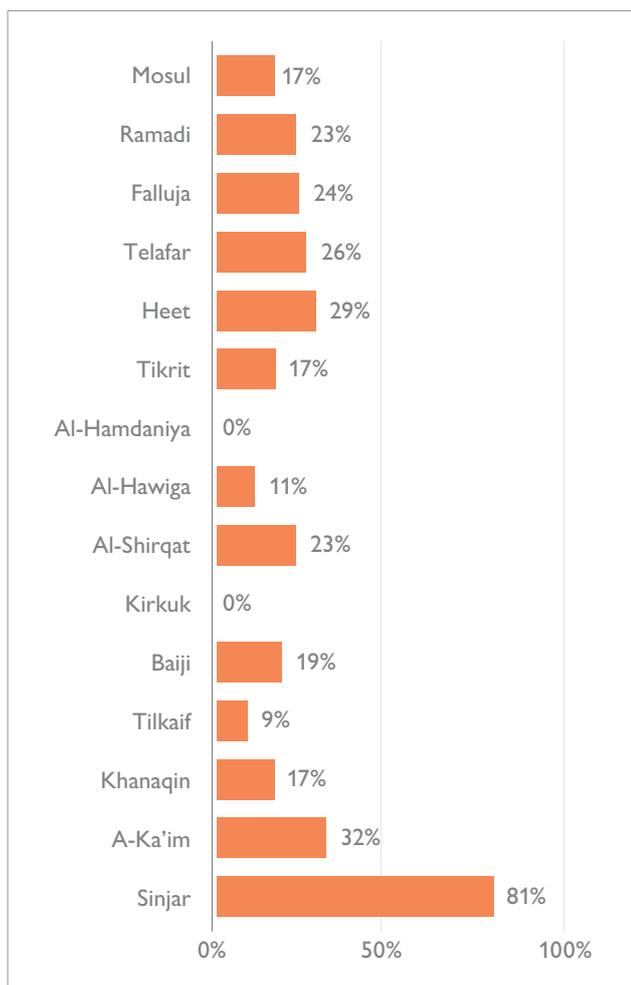


**INDICATOR 17:**  
**RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WITH INOPERATIVE AGRICULTURE**

Similar to the previous indicator, this one identifies the proportion of returnees in locations where agricultural activities and employment is partially inactive. In this regard, 22% of returnee households were affected by these dynamics, that is, families returning to areas that engaged in agriculture before the conflict and have not seen a full recovery of those economic activities. For the remaining population, 53% returned to locations with no agriculture

before conflict (frequently found in urban areas) and 25% returned to locations where agricultural activities took place before conflict and have fully recovered, as reported by key informants. These obstacles to agriculture appear to be evenly spread across the majority of districts of return (Figure 25), with some like Sinjar and Al-Khalis significantly more affected than the rest.

Figure 25. Percentage of Returnees in Locations with Inoperative Agriculture by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: RI (2020)

Issues in restoring agriculture are frequently linked to barriers to accessing land (for example, due to the presence of explosive hazards or security issues), lack of money to reinvest, or dysfunctional institutions (for example, relevant public departments not operating or with its technical staff still displaced).

### 3.2. ECONOMIC SECURITY

#### *What Does Economic Security as an Obstacle Entail?*

Economic security is an important aspect for returnees as it guarantees they have sufficient ability to cover basic needs in the long term upon return. Economic security thus is mainly determined by the income sources that households can tap into. Some sources are more sustainable than others: public employment or selling assets would be at the two extremes of economic security, for example. The possibility to obtain durable income sources is largely dependent on the post-conflict economic situation of the areas of return, as examined in the previous set of indicators. Here, this sub-criterion takes a more household-level approach to evaluate the prevalence of economic insecurity among returnees.

#### *How are Obstacles to Economic Security Measured?*

The household-level datasets available list the different income sources that households relied on in the month before the assessment. These sources are classified into (relatively) stable and unstable income sources, including households that report no income at all and thus rely on other sources. To construct this indicator, households affected by economic insecurity are those that rely on the following income sources: seasonal employment,<sup>36</sup> savings, remittances, selling assets, selling assistance received, borrowing, MODM cash assistance, support from community, NGO assistance, and socially degrading activities such as begging or unlawful sales. As such, households relying on income from stable employment, property renting, retirement pensions, or government allowances (e.g., disability) are not considered economically insecure; however, some caveats apply as discussed below.

 **53%**

#### **INDICATOR 18**

% of returnee households with no (or unstable) income source

Source: MCNA (2019)

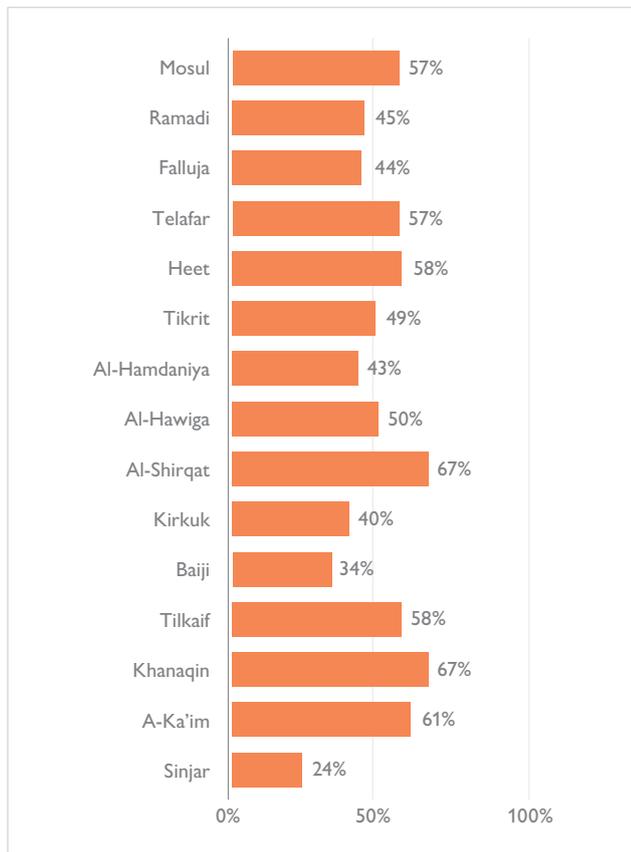
#### *How Widespread are Obstacles to Economic Security in areas of Return and Where are They Found?*

More than half of returnee households fully rely on some sort of unstable income source as defined above. Such economic insecurity levels are almost evenly spread across

36 This is usually linked to daily labour, but not specified in the MCNA which this indicator draws from.

all districts, with most of them featuring the same rate either slightly above or below 50%. It is thus a significant obstacle returnees face in every return setting.

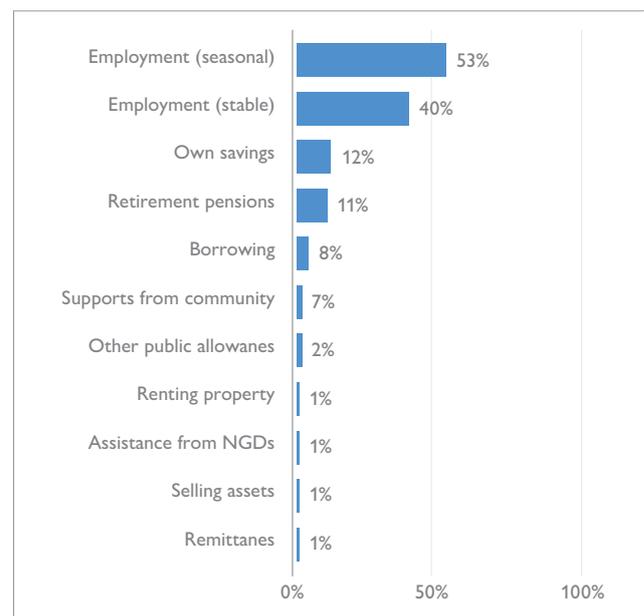
Figure 26. Percentage of Returnee Households with No (or Unstable) Income Source by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: MCNA (2019)

Figure 27 provides a disaggregation of income sources as reported by returnee households. Seasonal employment is, by far, the main source for households—more prevalent than stable employment (e.g., government or formal private sector employees). Other unstable sources (and likely more critical than daily labour) are still present in 1 out of 10 returnee households, the most relevant one being the reliance on own savings (12%), followed by borrowing (8%), and receiving support from community (7%).

Figure 27. Percentage of Returnee Households Disaggregated by Reported Household Income Sources Across All Districts



Note: Multi-select question.

Source: MCNA (2019)

## CRITERIA 4:

# OBSTACLES TO PROPERTY RESTITUTION AND COMPENSATION

## *What Do Property Restitution and Compensation as an Obstacle Entail?*

The set of indicators for this criterion looks at other obstacles beyond physical destruction of residences that can prevent returnees from settling back into their homes. Obstacles to property restitution and compensation are closely linked to *housing, land, and property* issues (HLP), which as a whole tend to be embedded in or connected to accountability and redress

processes. As such, HLP mechanisms are not only focused on protecting the access of returnees to their homes, but also on compensation in case of HLP losses due to conflict.

HLP issues have been at the centre of previous post-conflict cycles in Iraq and have proven difficult to properly resolve due to inherent institutional challenges.<sup>37</sup> It is in part for this

<sup>37</sup> Deborah Isser and Peter Van der Auweraert, *Land, Property, and the Challenge of Return for Iraq's Displaced*, Special Report 221 (Washington DC: USIP, 2009).

reason that HLP is singled out as a specific protection issue to contend with. Interventions that focus on remedying house destruction through compensation and on dealing with property disputes are frequently interlinked as they both involve filing housing claims with relevant authorities. With respect to compensation, Iraq’s Law 20, adopted in 2009 and amended in 2015, applies retroactively starting from 20 March 2003 through the present day and covers harm caused by ISIL or during military operations against ISIL. It seeks to compensate citizens for deaths, injuries, and damage to property, work, and study.<sup>38</sup>

**How are Obstacles to Property Restitution and Compensation Measured?**

As the criterion title implies, property issues are principally evaluated through obstacles in two main elements: compensation to households for house destruction during the conflict, and restitution of property in case of illegal occupation or dispute with third parties. The first element is covered by looking at the current property compensation mechanisms in Iraq. The second is measured indirectly, looking at whether returnees are currently facing any sort of property dispute upon return that can jeopardise their ability to remain where they are in the near future. Both indicators are thus measured at the household level.

 <p><b>34%</b></p> <p><b>INDICATOR 19</b></p> <p>% of returnee households awaiting compensation for property destruction</p>	 <p><b>12%</b></p> <p><b>INDICATOR 20</b></p> <p>% of returnee households living in property under dispute</p>
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Source: MCNA (2019)

Source: MCNA (2019)

**How Widespread are Obstacles to Property Restitution and Compensation in areas of Return and Where are They Found?**

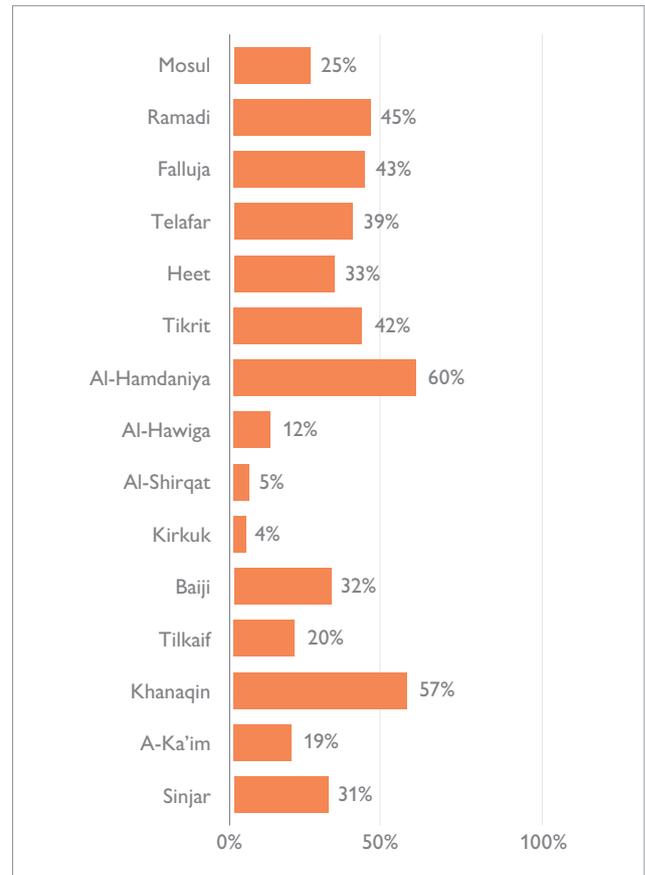
There are significant differences in both indicators in terms of prevalence. Property disputes are relatively low across areas of return, but still not negligible, and property compensation emerges as a significant factor affecting returnees overall. The following paragraphs outline additional details for both indicators.



**INDICATOR 19:  
RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS  
AWAITING COMPENSATION  
FOR PROPERTY DESTRUCTION**

Taking into account that house destruction has been one of the main obstacles for IDPs to return (and many relied on their own means to reconstruct their dwelling), it is not surprising to find that 1 of every 3 returnee households have applied for property compensation—and many additional households could still potentially apply for compensation as they are eligible (see below). The disaggregation by top districts of return also shows that most districts feature relatively high percentages of households pending the award of compensation, with the exception of Kirkuk (which experienced very limited house destruction and therefore few households qualify) and Al-Shirqat (which has a very high percentage of people with the right to apply but who have not done so).

Figure 28. Percentage of Returnee Households Awaiting Compensation for Property Destruction by Top 15 Districts of Return

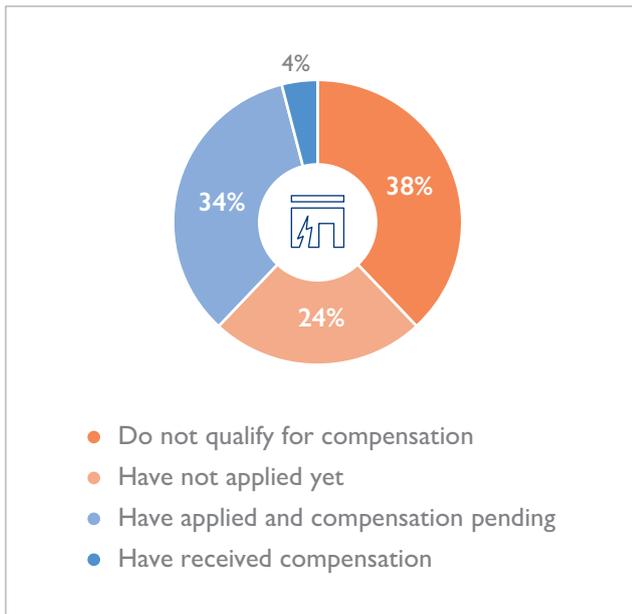


Source: MCNA (2019)

38 Caroline Baudot, *“We Hope, But We Are Hopeless:” Civilians’ Perceptions of the Compensation Process in Iraq* (Erbil: CIVIC, 2018).

Thus, it may also be important to disaggregate households by application stage and eligibility in terms of property compensation, such as whether they have already received compensation, have applied and are awaiting the resolution (which forms the indicator evaluated here), have not yet applied but qualify for it, or do not qualify to apply for compensation because their property was not affected. In this sense, for the total returnee population, 38% do not qualify for compensation, 24% have not yet applied, 34% have applied and are awaiting the resolution, and only 4% have already received the compensation due. This portrays a situation in which only 1 of every 10 that applied have received compensation to date. In addition, for those who have pending applications or are eligible to apply in the future, there is no guarantee that they will receive compensation in a timely manner. Institutional backlogs in processing these claims can delay the allocation of compensation for years.<sup>39</sup>

Figure 29. Disaggregation of Status of Property Compensation Claims Across All Districts of Return



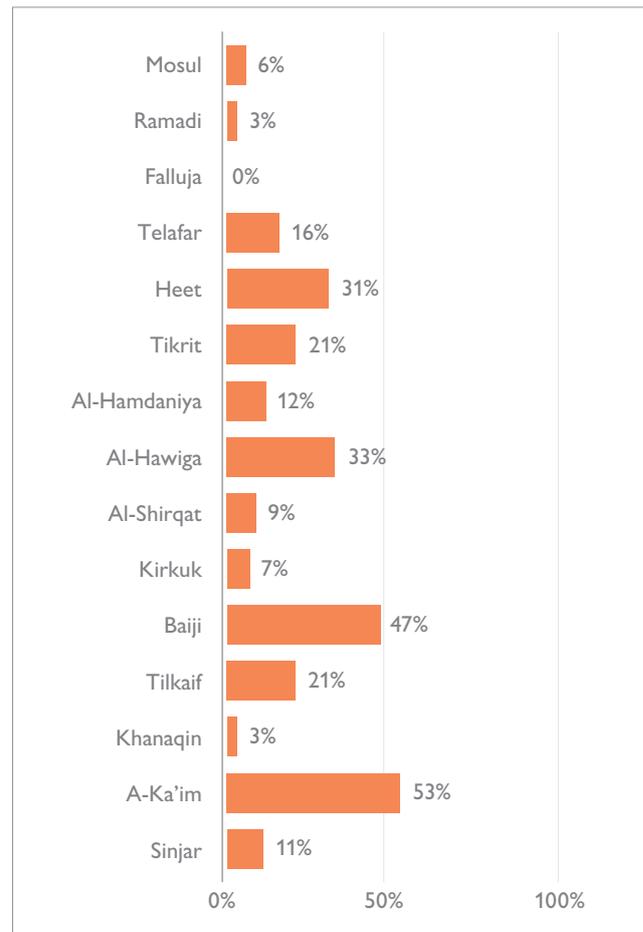
Source: MCNA (2019)



**INDICATOR 20:**  
**RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN PROPERTY UNDER DISPUTE**

This indicator is based on returnee households reporting that their property is under some kind of dispute, such as households currently living in property not owned by them, lacking property ownership documents, and other cases. As such, 12% of the total returnee population is currently affected by these types of disputes. There is, in addition, a significant variability by district of return, with Al-Kaim, Baiji, Heet, and Al-Hawija featuring the highest percentages of returnees with disputed properties. The assessment, however, does not further disaggregate into specific causes for these disputes neither it is possible to discern to what extent they pose a short- or long-term challenge, if at all, for the durable return of these families.

Figure 30. Percentage of Returnee Households Living in Property Under Dispute by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: MCNA (2019)

39 Ina Rehema Jahn et al., *Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Issues facing Returnees in Retaken Areas of Iraq*, IOM Iraq, September 2016. Also, Baudot, "We Hope, But We Are Hopeless".

## CRITERIA 5:

# OBSTACLES TO LEGAL DOCUMENTATION

### What Does Legal Documentation as an Obstacle Entail?

This last types of obstacles to reintegration cover aspects linked to legal documentation for both family individuals as well as property. Documentation, especially the personal one, plays a crucial role in the process of returns as they are key in obtaining security clearance for households willing to return, in addition to implications on households' ability to access government services, justice, or apply for jobs or assistance. Throughout the course of displacement, families may face issues with documentation due to loss and lack of recognition, among other issues. In the event of return without full legal personal or property documentation, families could be exposed to security and protection risks.

For this reason, another important element to examine obstacles to legal documentation is whether returnee households have adequate access to courts to resolve their legal issues. In areas of return, this access may be hindered because designated legal and administrative offices where returnees would normally retrieve documentation are not yet functional.

### How are Obstacles to Legal Documentation Measured?

Based on the description above, there are three main obstacles to examine with reference to legal documentation. Two of them deal with the actual possession of the necessary legal documentation by returnees and the last one looks at the general population's access to courts that would facilitate resolving legal and protection issues through administrative means.

 **21%**

**INDICATOR 21**  
% of returnee households lacking key family or personal identification documentation

Source: MCNA (2019)

 **4%**

**INDICATOR 22**  
% of returnee households in a property lacking tenure security

Source: MCNA (2019)

 **46%**

**INDICATOR 23**  
% of returnee households in locations where courts of law are unavailable

Source: ILA (2020)

### How Widespread are Obstacles to Legal Documentation in areas of Return and Where are They Found?

The general situation shows that, while legal issues are limited to a relatively small percentage of households, the means to resolve these issues (or any future that may appear, including conflict-resolution) seems to be largely hindered by the absence of available or functional legal courts in the immediate surrounding of returnees. A discussion of each indicator with additional insights is provided below.



### INDICATOR 21: RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS LACKING KEY FAMILY OR PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTATION

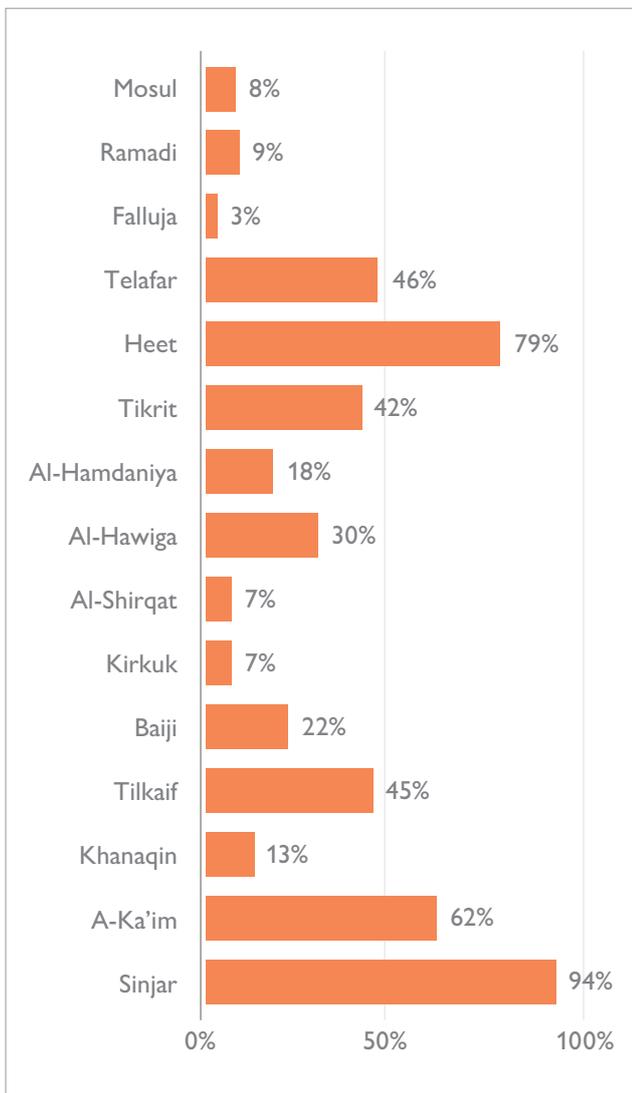
This indicator covers the percentage of households that are missing any of the key legal documentation, namely the household PDS card,<sup>40</sup> the ID card and/or the citizenship certificate for adult household members, and the birth certificate for household members under 18 years old. As such, 21% of households are missing at least one of these documents. The most prevalent issue, which affects 18% of the households, is when the adult household members do not possess either the ID card or citizenship certificate. This is followed by 4% of households whose under aged members are missing birth certificates, and 2% of households missing their PDS card.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> The PDS card stands for Public Distribution System and refers to the state-run food rationing system and related family identification card.

<sup>41</sup> The percentage adds to more than 21% because some families may be missing more than one documentation.

Many districts feature percentages of households affected significantly above the national average. Among them, the most rural and isolated districts feature the highest percentages. These districts comprise Heet, Al-Kaim, and Sinjar. This latter case is particularly critical as almost every returnee (most of them Yazidis) is missing the national ID card, a structural situation that has historically disproportionately affected this minority.<sup>42</sup>

Figure 31. Percentage of Returnee Households Lacking Key Family or Personal Identification Documentation by Top 15 Districts of Return



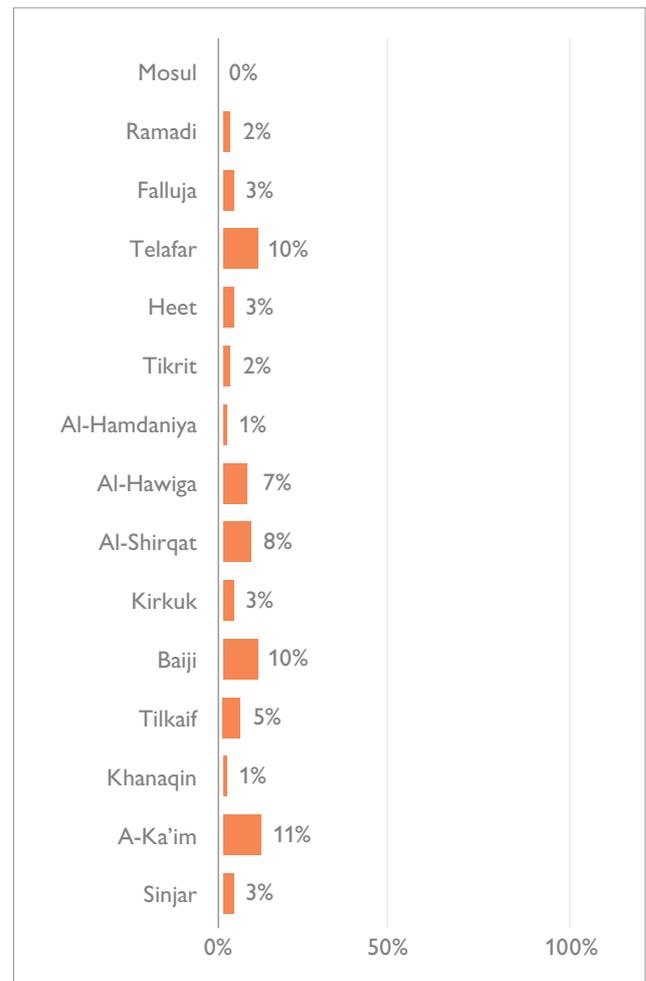
Source: MCNA (2019)



**INDICATOR 22:**  
**RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS**  
**LIVING IN A PROPERTY**  
**LACKING TENURE SECURITY**

This indicator covers households reporting that one of their most immediate issues with their current housing is the lack of security of tenure. This situation is thus reported by only 4% of returnees, with most districts reporting generally relatively low percentages. Lack of tenure, in this case, can arise due to loss of ownership documents during the conflict and subsequent displacement or, in some cases, because the families never possessed the documents in the first place. This last case is frequently the consequence of unresolved property issues from previous periods of conflict in Iraq as well as from population relocation policies by the former regime.<sup>43</sup>

Figure 32. Percentage of Returnee Households in a Property Lacking Tenure Security by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: MCNA (2019)

42 Ina Rehema Jahn et al., 2016.

43 Ibid.

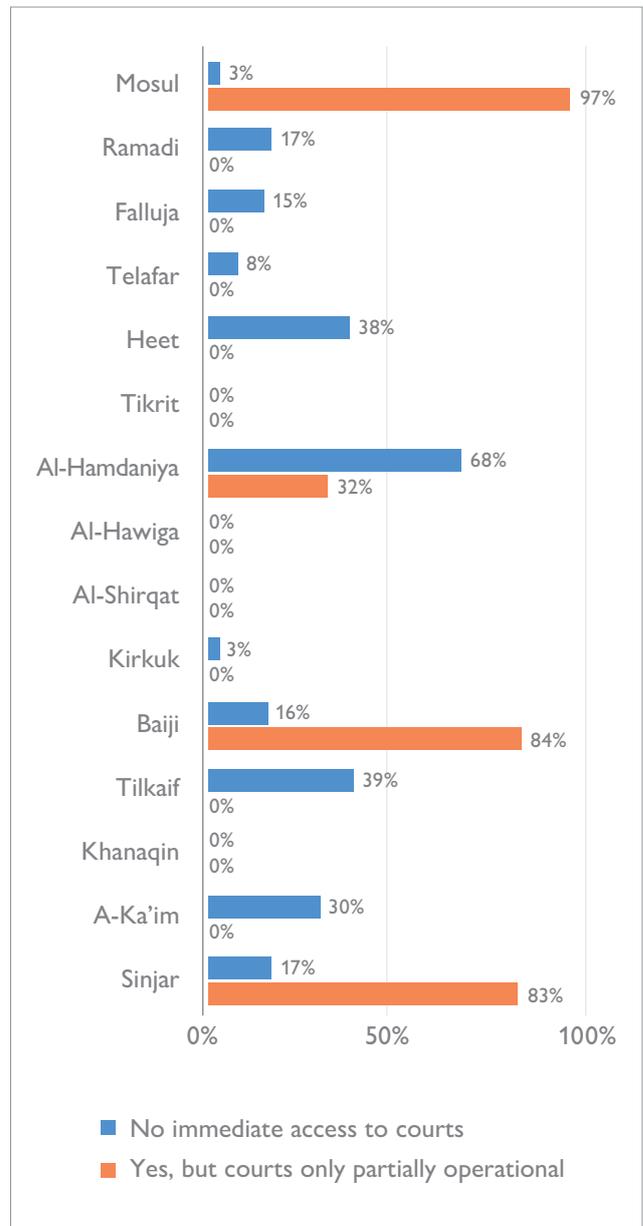


**INDICATOR 23:**  
**RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN**  
**LOCATIONS WHERE COURTS**  
**OF LAW ARE UNAVAILABLE**

This indicator evaluates whether returnees in certain locations have access to a legal court in the subdistrict. Importantly, it disaggregates access, first, into the court being open and fully operational; second, into the court being only partially operational; and finally, into the court being closed or not accessible at all in that area. As such, 31% of returnees live in locations with only partially operational courts and 15% in locations with no access at all, meaning a total of 46% of returnees potentially experience issues in making use of legal courts for cases of protection needs, such as the legal documentation issues examined before.

This level of access differs significantly by district. Some districts like Tikrit, Al-Hawija, Khanaqin, or Al-Shirqat present full access to legal courts for their population. Others like Hamdaniya, Baiji, Sinjar, or Mosul have a significantly undermined access to legal courts, with returnees in Hamdaniya facing full issues.<sup>44</sup>

Figure 33. Percentage of Returnee Households in Locations Where Courts of Law are Unavailable by Top 15 Districts of Return



Source: ILA (2020)

44 It must be noted that courts of law are frequently located in the district capitals. Thus experiences may be different for returnees in urban settings or rural settings – this factor cannot be explored with the dataset available.

## CONCLUSION

This report examined the prevalence of key obstacles for reintegration that returnee households face in Iraq as of mid-2020. These obstacles were grouped into five priority criteria following the analysis framework proposed by EGRIS and contextualized for Iraq: (1) safety, security, and social relations; (2) adequate standards of living; (3) access to livelihoods and economic security; (4) property restitution and compensation; and (5) documentation. Individual indicators were populated from the three main large-scale assessments available on returnees: Integrated Locations Assessment, Return Index, and Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment.

The main obstacles presented here that seem to affect the most returnees relate to more structural (and social) concerns. Based on the datasets analysed, returnee households reportedly have been able to rebuild and restart their lives and sustain material wellbeing in their places of origin, in many cases thanks to the individual actions of returnees themselves in combination with support from authorities and the international community. The obstacles that largely remain (e.g., risks for violence, inoperative business or agriculture, unavailability of courts of law, receipt of compensation) are beyond individuals' control and require more structural and institutional interventions to address.

Through examining the situation in Iraq in particular using existing large-scale datasets, this report also highlights current shortcomings in monitoring the advancement toward reintegration as a durable solution and provides guidance below in capturing the complexity of this process, recognizing that it entails a combination of individual objective and subjective factors as well as structural and place-level factors as well:

- Comparing returnee indicators against other population groups (e.g., stayees) in a given location is crucial to understanding the extent to which any obstacles found are linked to displacement identity rather than structural factors that impact all residents. However, unlike with IDPs where progress toward local integration can be measured against host community outcomes, there is not always a comparable group against which

to measure returnees. Most districts in Iraq do not have large stayee populations as such, since nearly the entire population displaced at one point or another during the conflict and, where there are such populations, they are usually left out of representative data collection. To remedy this, efforts should be made to include stayee populations in data collection, where possible. In the absence of this, the minimum common denominator, however, would be to evaluate indicators for return areas against other comparable non-conflict-affected areas of the country through large-scale national socio-economic surveys.<sup>45</sup>

- Once considerations are made for comparison groups, it is important to explore the gaps that exist in measuring obstacles for reintegration specifically. Security and social relations seem to fall at the forefront of obstacles for reintegration, but the capacity to accurately measure them remains inconsistent and sparse. Better indicators for social relations and interactions, focusing for example on neighbourhood trust, comfort/protection, and public participation, should be considered for development and incorporation into durable solutions surveys in Iraq.
- While it is important to measure the prevalence of obstacles to durable solutions, as done in this report, more research is needed to measure the severity or impact of these obstacles on, in this case, reintegration. That is, what outcomes are expected for

<sup>45</sup> See for example, Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Planning, Government of Iraq, and World Bank, Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey datasets. Two rounds exist (2007 and 2012) and a third round was scheduled for 2019-2020.

those returnees significantly affected by obstacles. The current emphasis, at least within the Iraqi context, is to evaluate successful reintegration outcomes through stated intentions to stay in return locations or actual rates of re-displacement after unsuccessful returns, but data shows that less than 3% of returnee households engage in either, regardless of the obstacles they may have where they currently live.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, because many of the obstacles measured here remain relatively high, this would indicate a relatively moderate or low advancement towards reintegration. Furthermore, qualitative findings indicate that, even if people do not plan to leave, they do express feelings of neglect, marginalization, and alienation upon return, again indicating reintegration may not be advancing smoothly. Because return is increasingly understood as a socio-political, not only geographic, process involving intertwined claims for redress and recognition, better proxies to measure reintegration outcomes that reflect this should be developed and tested. Thus, updated measurements for reintegration outcomes should consider directly surveying returnee households' attitudes and preferences on belonging, acceptance, marginalization, perceived ability to resume life, and confidence in institutions, among others (and compare these outcomes with those of other non-conflict-affected population groups as mentioned above).<sup>47</sup>

- In addition, indicators on obstacles for reintegration should combine household- and location-level measurements (MCNA and ILA, respectively, for example). It is important to have both levels in a framework because some obstacles are centred around individual or household experiences (e.g., living in a destroyed or damaged house) and others depend on the location in which they are living and affect the conduciveness of reintegration for the whole community (e.g., functioning of institutions and public services).<sup>48</sup> Location-level assessments, in addition, help to compensate for representativeness shortcoming of household-level assessments (in that not all locations in a district are usually surveyed).

- Improvements on comparison groups, reintegration outcomes, and individual- and local-level integrators would then enable empirical analysis to determine which obstacles have a bigger impact on reintegration than others—in other words, their severity. The framework presented here is static, in that it reports how pervasive every obstacle is across return areas but cannot indicate severity because there is not a diversity of findings within the current reintegration proxies being used (intentions and re-displacement) to incorporate into this type of statistical analysis.
- Finally, such evaluations of reintegration could take advantage of more advanced quantitative measurements, such as panel data or longitudinal designs (i.e., measuring a representative sample of displacement-affected people in different contexts over time).<sup>49</sup> These designs can be useful to track individual returnee factors (and those of the locations in which they stay) in driving or hindering reintegration and evaluate different approaches or processes for reintegration – including the possibility of conducting impact evaluations on specific programming or interventions linked to a durable solutions strategy.

These points provide new lines of inquiry to better understand reintegration as a concept and assess returnee households' progress over time. What makes such endeavours particularly promising in the Iraqi context is that longitudinal explorations of the end of displacement, severity indices, and multi-level analysis of objective and subjective household and place factors that shape local integration outcomes with comparison groups have already begun. These ongoing efforts can lay the basis for innovation around the particular ways in which to design research and interventions to specifically address the unique obstacles returnee households face on their way to sustainable reintegration in their home locations and communities.

<sup>46</sup> Outcome here refers to the expected consequence of being affected by or being able to overcome challenges for reintegration or, in other words, whether or not reintegration is sustainably achieved. Following the reasoning in this sentence, in the presence of severe challenges, returnees would not be willing to remain in return.

<sup>47</sup> See IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *Cities as Home*; and Danwadaag Durable Solutions Consortium, *Local (Re)Integration Assessment (LORA) Report* (Nairobi: Danwadaag Durable Solutions Consortium, 2020).

<sup>48</sup> IOM Iraq, RWG, and Social Inquiry, *Cities as Home*.

<sup>49</sup> IOM Iraq and Georgetown University, *Access to Durable Solutions Among IDPs in Iraq: Five Years in Displacement* (Erbil: IOM, 2020).

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