

OBSTACLES TO RETURNEE REINTEGRATION IN IRAQ: SAFETY, SECURITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Safety, security and social relations as major barriers to reintegration	5
Report objectives	5
Report structure	5
Methodology	6
Research approach: safety, security and social relations as measurable reintegration outcomes	6
Indicator selection	6
Indicator list: safety, security and social relations	7
Limitations	8
Context overview: returns and reintegration	8
Rates of return	9
Returnee movement intentions	10

Analysis: safety, security and social relations as barriers to reintegration	11
1. Risk of violence	11
1.2 Physical protection	19
1.3 Freedom of Movement	21
Conclusion	25
Summary of findings	25
Recommendations for filling information gaps	26
Annex 1. Summary Table: EGRIS Reintegration Framework Criteria 1 – Safety, Security and Social Relations, October 2020 vs. September 2021	27

INTRODUCTION

During the period of conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) between 2014 and 2017, a total of 1,027,523 Iraqi families became displaced from their homes – amounting to 16 per cent of the country's entire population.¹² As of September 2021, a total of 204,344 families remain displaced, while 823,179 families – 80 per cent of all those who became displaced during the conflict – have returned to their area of origin.³⁴ Those families who have returned home face significant challenges in reintegrating, especially due to issues related to safety, security and social relations.

SAFETY, SECURITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS AS MAJOR BARRIERS TO REINTEGRATION

In February 2021, IOM Iraq, the Returns Working Group and Social Inquiry produced a report, *Home Again? Categorising Obstacles to Returnee Reintegration in Iraq*. It analyzed the sustainability of reintegration for families who had returned to their area of origin after being displaced due to the ISIL conflict.⁵ In line with the durable solutions framework developed by the Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS), the report examined the extent to which sustainable reintegration had taken place across five areas.⁶ Persistent issues related to safety, security and social relations were found to represent the most significant barriers to achieving sustainable reintegration amongst returnees in Iraq.

REPORT OBJECTIVES

The objective of this report is to inform strategy development and planning in support of the sustainable reintegration of returnees in their area of origin. It provides a snapshot of the key reintegration challenges that returnees face related to safety, security and social relations, and highlights areas where these challenges are most prevalent. Where there is longitudinal data, the report also demonstrates how conditions have changed in the period between October 2020 and September 2021.

The report analyses these issues and is structured around three sub-criteria from the EGRIS framework, as follows:

1. The risk of violence;
2. Physical protection; and
3. Freedom of movement.

REPORT STRUCTURE

Under each sub-criteria, a range of quantitative indicators are presented to understand the extent and severity of each issue, including the challenges they pose to reintegration amongst returnees. The analysis highlights how conditions in return locations vary across governorates and districts. It also includes comparisons of findings between October 2020 and September 2021. Data visualizations, including graphs and maps, display key findings as well as the variation in data across governorates and districts of return across the country.

The report is comprised of the following sections:

- First, an overview of the methodology employed in producing this report is detailed. This includes a summary of the research approach taken, a list of the indicators that are used in the analysis section, as well as an overview of the limitations of the report.
- Second, a brief overview of the current situation relating to returnees across the country is provided. This includes a summary of the number of returnees across governorates and districts, including changes to population numbers between October 2020 and September 2021.
- Third, the report provides a comprehensive analysis of issues related to safety, security and social relations as they relate to sustainable reintegration. This analysis is structured around the three sub-criteria (risk of violence, physical protection, and freedom of movement).
- Fourth, and finally, the report concludes with a summary of key findings.

1 Since April 2015, Iraqi families have been returning to their area of origin, with the majority of returns taking place following the declaration of the defeat of ISIL by the Government of Iraq in December 2017.

2 IOM (2021). DTM Master List Dataset: Round 123. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/MasterList#Datasets>

3 Ibid.

4 This is commonly referred to as the national return rate

5 The Home Again? report recognized that sustainable reintegration is conceptually measured by the progress that returnees make, and the provisions put in place by authorities, in overcoming barriers following their arrival back to their area of origin

6 The additional five criteria examined in the Home Again? report include: 1) safety and security and social relations; 2) adequate standards of living; 3) access to livelihoods; 4) property restitution; and 5) access to documentation

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH APPROACH: SAFETY, SECURITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS AS MEASURABLE REINTEGRATION OUTCOMES

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework for Internally Displaced Persons (the IASC Framework) highlights three different ways in which displaced communities may achieve a durable solution.⁷ These include integration in areas where IDPs are displaced; integration in a location other than where IDPs are displaced or their place of origin; or reintegration in IDPs' place of origin.

Upon the realisation of any of these durable solutions, the framework devised by Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS) can assist in monitoring the extent that a given solution is sustainable.⁸ With 81 per cent of all Iraqi families who became displaced now back in their area of origin, identifying barriers to sustainable reintegration is central to informing strategy development and activity prioritisation in areas of return.

This report provides a snapshot of the current situation related to safety, security and social relations, as part of the wider objective of the humanitarian response in Iraq to support families to sustainably reintegrate into their area of origin, if they intend to do so. It does this by drawing on a range of secondary data collected in return locations as

part of the regular data collection activities of IOM Iraq's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), namely the Return Index and the Integrated Location Assessment, which respectively are implemented on a bi-monthly and annual basis.

INDICATOR SELECTION

In the analysis section of this report, under each EGRIS criteria, a range of aggregable quantitative indicators are presented. The EGRIS framework is interpreted in the context of the Iraq displacement crisis. All indicators presented in the analysis section are adopted from datasets produced by DTM. Most indicators are adopted from DTM's Return Index Round 13 (August-September 2021), with comparisons made with Round 10 (September - October 2020).⁹ The remaining indicators are adopted from DTM's Integrated Location Assessment Round 6 (May-July 2021).¹⁰ All population figures are derived from DTM's Master List Round 123 (August-September 2021),¹¹ while the returnee intentions data is from REACH Initiative's Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment Round 8 (July 2021).¹² All additional information is referenced throughout the report. The indicators used in the analysis under each of the EGRIS criteria and sub-criteria are included in the table below.

⁷ Inter-Agency Standing Committee & The Brookings Institution (2010). Framework on Durable Solutions For Internally Displaced Persons. See: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/iasc-framework-durable-solutions-internally-displaced-persons>

⁸ Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (2020). International Recommendations on IDP Statistics. See: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/51st-session/documents/BG-item-3n-international-recommendations-on-IDP-statistics-E.pdf>

⁹ IOM (2020-21). DTM Return Index Datasets: Rounds 13 and 10. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/ReturnIndex#Datasets>

¹⁰ IOM (2021). DTM Integrated Location Assessment Dataset: Round 6. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/ILA6#Datasets>

¹¹ IOM (2021). DTM Master List Round Dataset: Round 123. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/MasterList#Datasets>

¹² REACH Initiative (2021). Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment Dashboard: Round 8. See: <https://reach-info.org/irq/mcna2021/>

INDICATOR LIST: SAFETY, SECURITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

CRITERIA	SUB-CRITERIA	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCE
1.1 Risk of violence	1.1.1 ISIL Attacks	% of returnee households in locations where there are concerns of ISIL attacks	Return Index Rounds 10 and 13
	1.1.2 Violence related to the presence of security forces or armed groups	% returnee households in locations where there are concerns about violence from or between security or armed groups	
	1.1.3 Concerns related to revenge attacks	% of returnee households in locations where there are concerns about revenge acts	
	1.1.4 Concerns related to tribal or ethno-religious tensions	% of returnee households in locations where there are concerns about ethno-religious or tribal tensions	
	1.1.5 Unexploded ordnance	% of returnee households in locations where there are concerns about unexploded ordnance	
	1.1.6 Community reconciliation	% of returnee households in locations where reconciliation activities are needed but not taking place	
1.2 Physical protection	1.2.1 Configuration of security forces	% of returnee households in locations where there are different numbers of security actors present	Return Index Rounds 10 and 13
1.3 Freedom of movement	1.3.1 Movement restrictions	% of returnee households in locations where there are movement restrictions in place	Return Index Rounds 10 and 13
	1.3.2 Permission to move	% of returnee households living in locations with different freedom of movement rules in place	Integrated Location Assessment Round 6
	1.3.3 Forced returns	% of returnees in locations where some families were forced to return	

LIMITATIONS

There are two main limitations of this report, as follows:

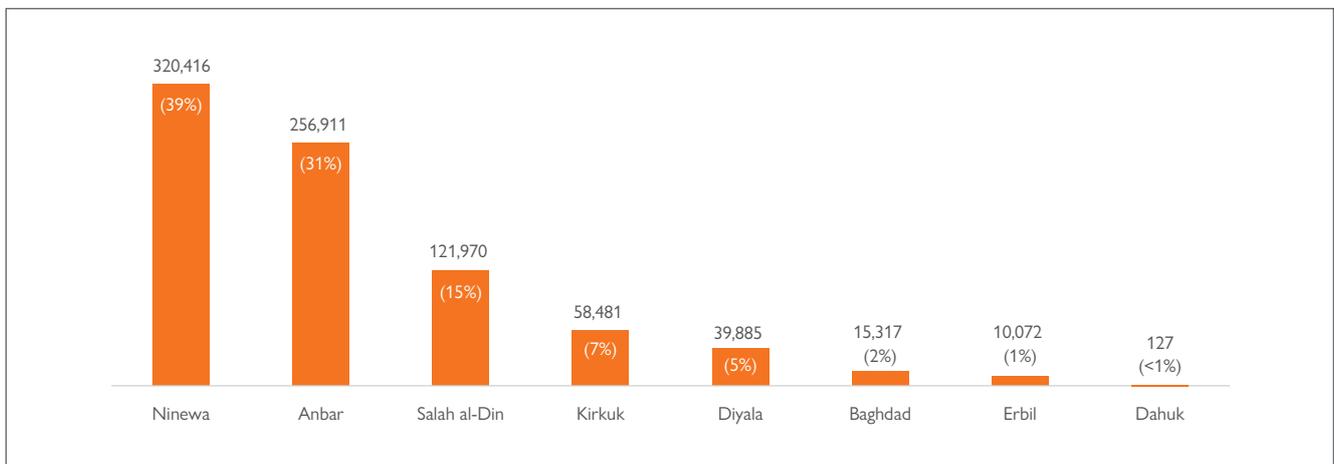
1. Secondary data: the information presented in the analysis section has been adopted from secondary sources – that is, datasets that were produced as part of separate assessment activities with their own clear objectives, that do not necessarily relate to the reintegration of returnees. Both assessments that produced the data featured in this report – the Return Index Rounds 10 and 13 and the Integrated Location Assessment Round 6 – had clear objectives of understanding the challenges faced by returnees across the country. However, the questions included in the assessment tools did not ask respondents specifically about the ways in which certain issues pose challenges to reintegration that returnees may face, and instead asked more broadly about the types of issues faced. The indicators have been selected based on their relevance to the reintegration criteria and sub-criteria that the analysis section is structured around. As such, the interpretation of findings should be made bearing in mind how the data has been aggregated as relevant under each of the sub-criteria.
2. Location level data: all data presented in this report was collected at location level. This means that Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) enumerators interviewed key informants about the conditions faced by returnees in a number of locations, which correspond to a village for rural areas or a neighbourhood for urban areas (i.e. a fourth administrative division). While this approach allows extensive national wide coverage over a short period of time, it relies often on one representative per location, mainly mukhtars and community or local council representatives, who report on the views of a potentially large and diverse population, which might lead to limited representation for smaller groups with distinct characteristics, or discrepancies caused by social desirability bias. Additionally, key household characteristics – including socio-demographic indicators such as the number of family members, and vulnerability factors (i.e. gender of the head of household, or number of members living with a disability) – are not accounted for in the datasets.

CONTEXT OVERVIEW: RETURNS AND REINTEGRATION¹³

As of September 2021, a total of 823,179 families who became displaced during the ISIL conflict have returned to their area of origin. The highest number of returnees reside in Ninewa Governorate (320,416), followed by Anbar

(256,911) and Salah al-Din (121,970). Figure 1 below displays the total number of returnees who have arrived in the eight governorates across the country.

Figure 1: Number of returnee families, by governorate

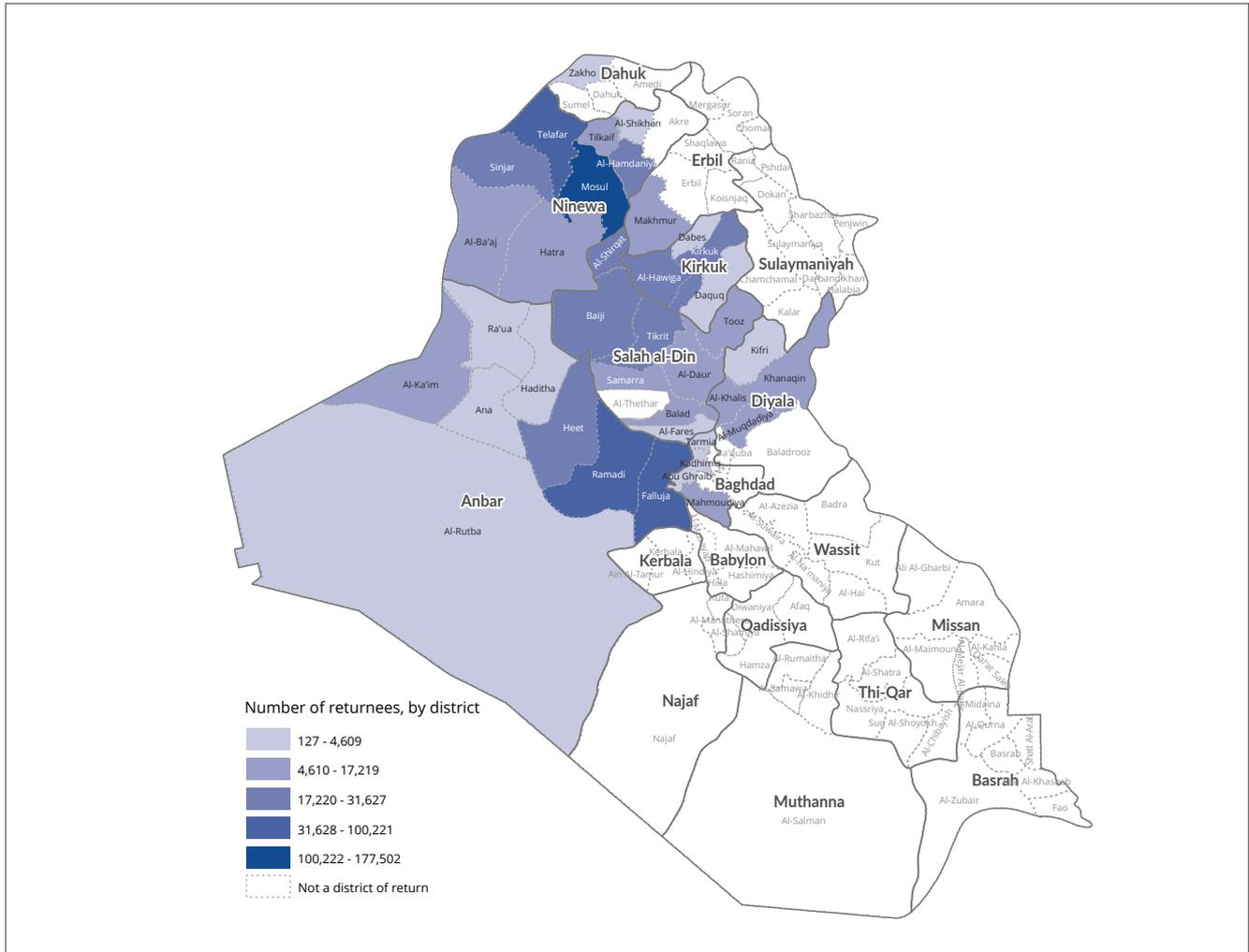


¹³ All information presented in this section is derived from DTM's Master List 123 dataset, which includes a full overview of the number of returnees across the country, including the locations, sub-districts and districts to which they have returned. IOM (2021). DTM Master List Dataset: Round 123. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/MasterList#Datasets>

At the district level, the highest number of returnee families are in Mosul District (177,502) in Ninewa Governorate, followed by Ramadi (100,221) and Falluja (95,100) in Anbar Governorate. The next largest returnee populations are

in Telafar (60,066) and Tikrit (31,627) in Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates, respectively. Map 1 below displays the distribution of returnee families across all districts of return across the country.

Map 1: Number of returnee families, by district



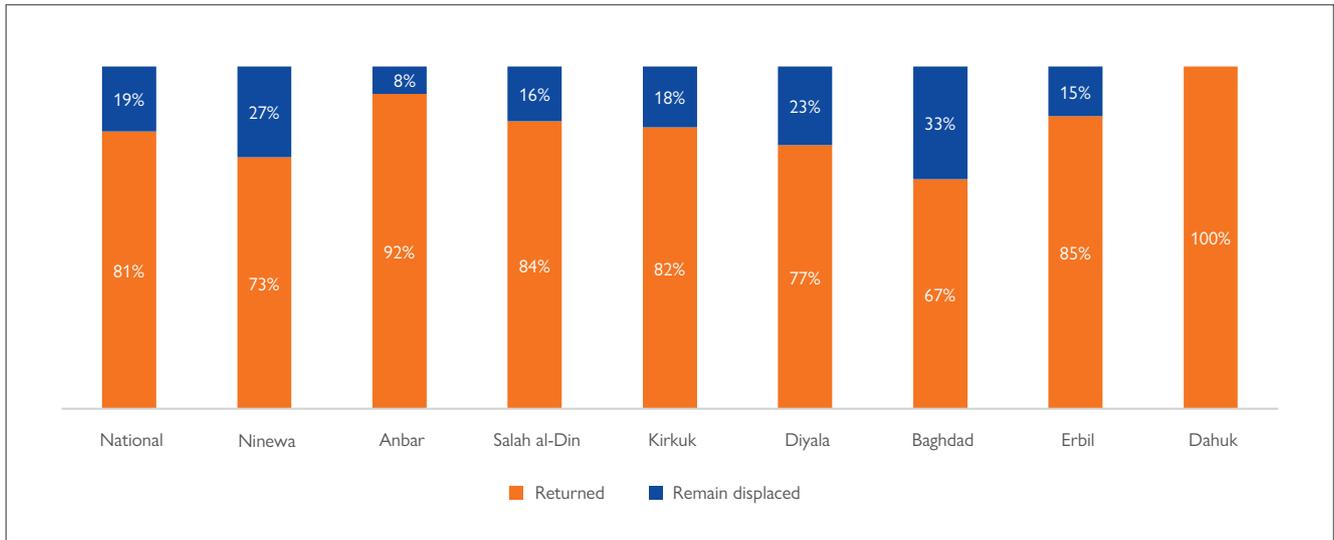
RATES OF RETURN¹⁴

One important metric for analysing the severity of conditions in return locations is the rate of return – that is, the proportion of families who became displaced during the ISIL conflict who have returned to their area of origin. Overall, 81 per cent of all families across the country who became displaced during the conflict have returned home. The return rates at

governorate level range from the lowest in Baghdad (67%), to Dahuk where all families (100%) have returned home. At district level, the lowest return rates are recorded in Sinjar (36%) and Al-Ba'aj (35%), followed by Tuz Khurmatu (61%), Al-Fares (64%) and Balad (70%).

¹⁴ All information presented in this section is derived from DTM's Master List 123 dataset, which includes a full overview of the number of returnees across the country, including the locations, sub-districts and districts to which they have returned. IOM (2021). DTM Master List Dataset: Round 123. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/MasterList#Datasets>

Figure 2: Return rates, by governorate of return

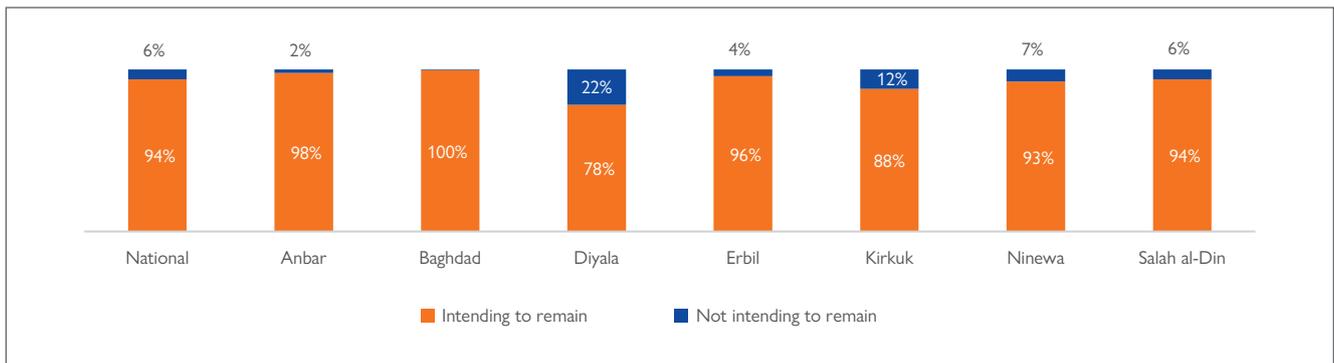


RETURNEE MOVEMENT INTENTIONS

Across the country, most families who have returned to their area of origin (97%) intend to remain there for the next 12 months.¹⁵ The remaining families are either undecided as to their movement intentions (5%), or intend to relocate to another area within Iraq (1%). In most governorates, at least 94 per cent of returnee families intend to remain in their current location in the next 12 months. Diyala is the

only exception, where 78 returnees intend to return, while 21 per cent are undecided and 1 per cent plan to move to another location within Iraq. At district level, a notably low proportion of returnee households in Al-Khalis in Diyala (45%) report intending to remain in their current location. The next lowest return rates are recorded in the districts of Sinjar (78%) and Al-Hawiga (81%).

Figure 3: % of returnee households intending to remain in their location in the next 12 months, by governorate of return



The next section of the report explores the different types of barriers to reintegration that returnees face after arriving to their area of origin.

¹⁵ All information presented in this section is derived from REACH Initiative’s Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment (MCNA) Dashboard: Round 9. The 12-month period that the intentions indicator refers to is from July to June 2021. REACH (2021). MCNA Round 9 Summary Tables. See: <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/reach-iraq-multi-cluster-needs-assessment-round-ix-2021>

ANALYSIS: SAFETY, SECURITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS AS BARRIERS TO REINTEGRATION

1. RISK OF VIOLENCE

The risks of violence in areas of return are often multi-faceted. Although the conflict with ISIL has ended, violence takes place in many places, affecting those who intend to or have returned. Violent incidents involving ISIL and other non-state armed groups have continued up to 2021, in addition to ethno-religious and tribal tensions that often pre-date the period of ISIL conflict. The situation is further complicated by the fragmented nature of Iraq's security landscape, with a multiplicity of non-state armed groups vying for territorial, political and economic control. Remnants of conflict with ISIL, most notably in the form of unexploded ordnance, also pose security risks in some areas of return. Finally, the return of displaced communities to areas of origin can also engender violence or threats towards those that have returned in the absence of community reconciliation and other peacebuilding initiatives.

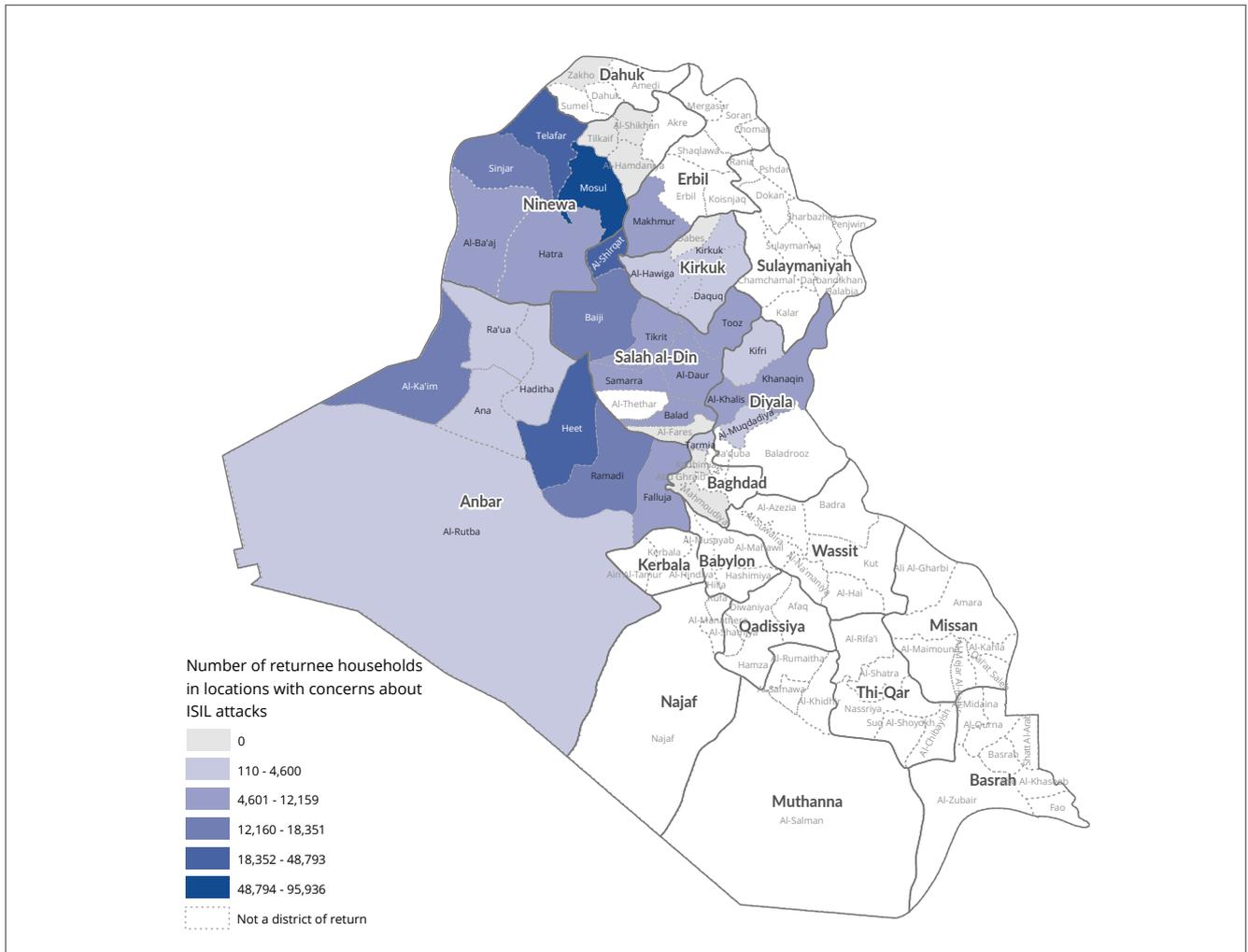
The risk of violence – that is, the presence of violence and the absence of reconciliation activities - is measured here across six indicators. These indicators relate to fears of ISIL attacks; violence related to the presence of security forces or armed groups; conflict related to revenge attacks; concerns related to tribal or ethno-religious tensions; risks of unexploded ordnances; and need for community reconciliation.

1.1.1 ISIL Attacks¹⁶

Although the conflict with ISIL has ended, threats and acts of violence from ISIL-affiliated groups continue in many areas of Iraq. As of September 2021, 392,647 returnee households live in locations where there are concerns of ISIL attacks (48%). The highest number of returnees living in such locations is in Ninewa (179,230), amounting to 56 per cent of all those who have returned to the governorate. Additionally, many returnees are living in locations with concerns of ISIL attacks in the governorates of Salah al-Din (93,497; 77%) and Anbar (83,470; 32%). Notably, 27,547 returnee households in Diyala Governorate reside in locations with concerns of ISIL attacks (69%). Districts with high numbers of returnee households facing this threat include Mosul (95,936) and Telafar (48,793) in Ninewa Governorate, as well as Heet (29,972) in Anbar Governorate. Map 2 below depicts the variation in the proportion of returnees living in areas where there are concerns related to ISIL attacks.

¹⁶ All information presented in this section is derived from DTM's Return Index datasets (Rounds 13 and 10). See: IOM Iraq (September 2021 and October 2020). Return Index Datasets: Rounds 10 and 13. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/ReturnIndex#Datasets>

Map 2: % of returnee households living in locations where there are concerns related to ISIL attacks, by district



The number of returnee households living in locations where there are concerns of ISIL attacks increased marginally between October 2020 (389,527) and September 2021 (392,647). During this 12-month period, Ninewa Governorate recorded the largest increase in the number of returnee households residing in locations with concerns of ISIL attacks (13,013; 8%). The largest decrease was recorded in Salah al-Din Governorate (-9,763; -9%). Notably, the number of returnee households in Erbil Governorate increased from 590 in October 2020 to 6,184 households in September 2021 – an increase of 5,594 households (948%), all of whom reside in Makhmur District.

Figure 4: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where there are concerns of ISIL attacks, October 2020 to September 2021

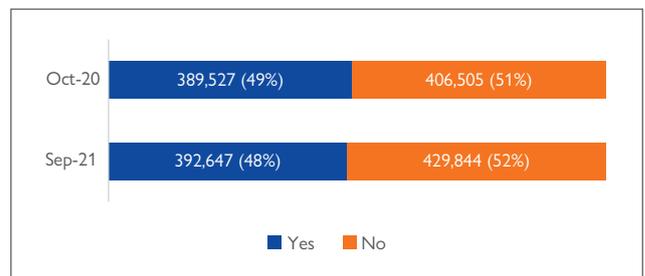


Figure 5: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where there are concerns of ISIL attacks, October 2020 to September 2021, by governorate

GOVERNORATE	# RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WITH ISIL CONCERNS (OCTOBER 2020)	# RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WITH ISIL CONCERNS (SEPTEMBER 2021)
Ninewa	166,217	179,230
Salah al-Din	103,260	93,497
Anbar	89,751	83,470
Diyala	26,434	27,547
Erbil	590	6,184
Kirkuk	3,031	2,466
Baghdad	244	253

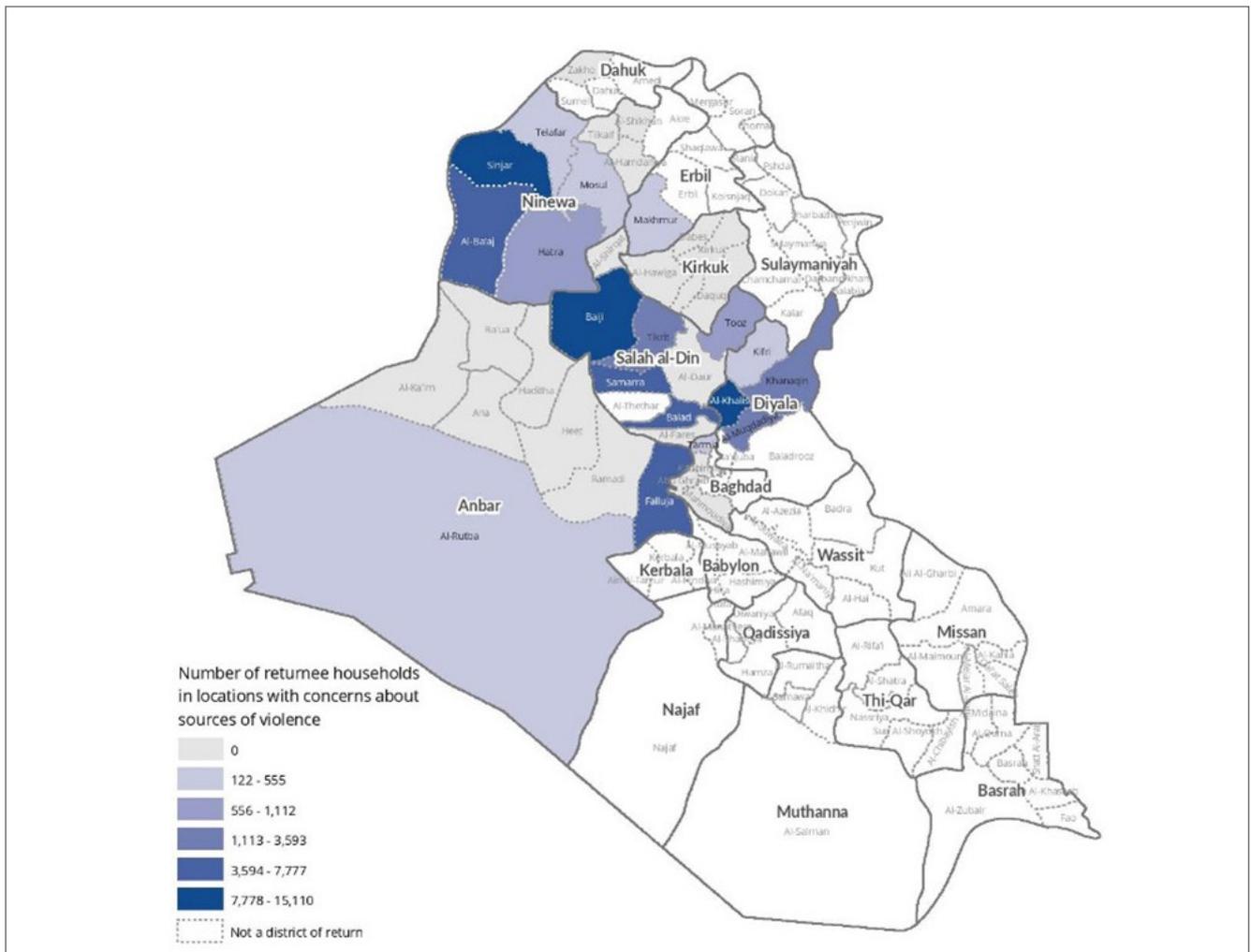
1.1.2 Violence related to the presence of security forces or armed groups¹⁷

Violence related to the presence of security forces and other armed groups take place in some areas of return, compromising the safety of returnees and posing challenges for their reintegration. Overall, a total of 78,081 returnee households (9%) are living in locations where there are concerns regarding violence from or between security forces and armed groups. The highest number of returnees living in such locations is in Salah al-Din (30,391), amounting to 25 per cent of all those who have returned to the governorate.

Additionally, a significant number of returnees are living in locations with concerns about violence from or between security forces or armed groups in the governorates of Ninewa (22,831; 7%) and Diyala (17,119; 43%). In Al-Khalis District in Diyala Governorate, 11,727 returnee households reside in locations concerned about violence from security forces or armed groups – amounting to 94 per cent of all returnees in that district. Other districts with high numbers of returnees with these concerns includes Sinjar in Ninewa Governorate (15,110; 76%) and Baiji in Salah al-Din Governorate (11,145; 55%). Refer to Map 3 below for an overview of the variation in the proportion of returnees living in areas where there are concerns of violence from or between armed groups.

¹⁷ All information presented in this section is derived from DTM's Return Index datasets (Rounds 13 and 10). See: IOM Iraq (September 2021 and October 2020). Return Index Datasets: Rounds 10 and 13. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/ReturnIndex#Datasets>

Map 3: % of returnee families living in in locations where there are concerns about violence from or between security forces or armed groups



The number of returnee households living in locations where there are concerns regarding violence from or between security forces or armed group has increased between October 2020 (56,009) and September 2021 (78,081). During this period, Salah al-Din Governorate recorded the largest increase in the number of returnee households residing in locations with concerns regarding violence from or between security forces or armed groups (13,452; 79%), driven by increases in the number of families in Baiji, Samarra and Balad districts. A notable increase was also recorded in Ninewa Governorate (4,754), due to a rise at district level in Sinjar (3,593), Al-Ba’aj (1,028), and Mosul (226).

Figure 6: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where there are concerns related to violence from or between security forces or armed groups, October 2020 to September 2021

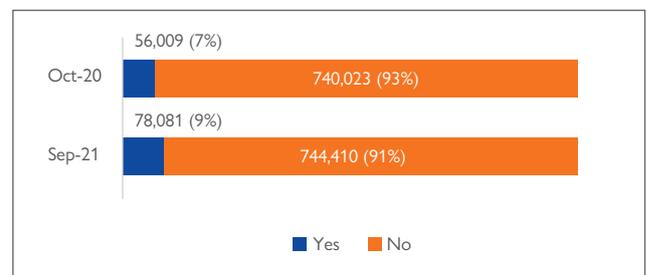


Figure 7: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where there are concerns of violence from or between security forces or armed groups, October 2020 to September 2021, by governorate

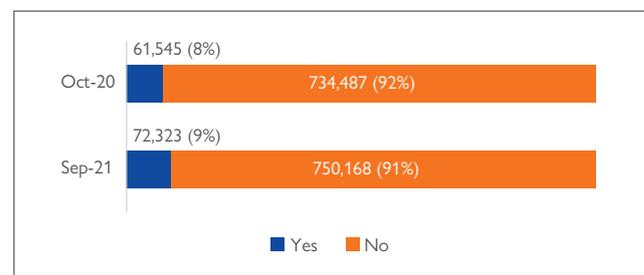
GOVERNORATE	# RETURNEES IN LOCATIONS WITH CONCERNS OF VIOLENCE FROM/BETWEEN SECURITY FORCES/ARMED GROUPS (OCTOBER 2020)	# RETURNEES IN LOCATIONS WITH CONCERNS OF VIOLENCE FROM/BETWEEN SECURITY FORCES/ ARMED GROUPS (SEPTEMBER 2021)
Salah al-Din	16,939	30,391
Ninewa	18,077	22,831
Diyala	16,312	17,119
Anbar	4,372	6,986
Erbil	65	501
Baghdad	244	253

1.1.3 Concerns related to revenge attacks¹⁸

Formal mechanisms for transitional justice, including prosecution and compensation for acts of violence, vary widely in their implementation and availability to communities affected by the ISIL conflict. As a result, cyclical acts of violence by individuals or groups seeking for acts that took place during the ISIL conflict remain a persistent threat in many areas of return.¹⁹ Overall, a total of 72,323 returnee households (9%) are living in locations where there are concerns regarding revenge attacks. The highest number of returnees living in such locations is in Salah al-Din (34,589), which amounts to 28% of those who have returned in that governorate. Additionally, a significant number of returnees are living in locations with concerns related to revenge attacks in Ninewa (18,710; 6%) and Anbar (13,364; 5%). Key districts where concerns related to revenge attacks are most prevalent include Sinjar in Ninewa Governorate (10,372), amounting to over half of all returnees in the district (52%), along with Falluja in Anbar Governorate (8,764; 9%). High numbers of returnees also reside in locations with these concerns in three districts in Salah al-Din, namely Baiji (9,862; 49%), Balad (8,406; 72%) and Samarra (8,172; 85%).

The number of returnee households living in locations where there are concerns of revenge attacks increased between October 2020 (61,545) and September 2021 (72,323). During this time, Salah al-Din Governorate recorded the largest increase in the number of returnee households residing in locations with concerns of revenge attacks (10,328; 43%). The largest decrease was recorded in Anbar Governorate (-1,176; -8%). At the district level, there was large variation within Salah al-Din Governorate, with Tuz Khurmatu recording 1,954 fewer returnee households in areas with concerns of revenge attacks. By contrast, the districts of Samarra (6,945) and Baiji (4,615) in Salah al-Din both recorded large increases.

Figure 8: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where there are concerns of revenge attacks, October 2020 to September 2021



18 All information presented in this section is derived from DTM’s Return Index datasets (Rounds 13 and 10). See: IOM Iraq (September 2021 and October 2020). Return Index Datasets: Rounds 10 and 13. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/ReturnIndex#Datasets>

19 The potential for criminal accountability to limit acts of vigilante violence and reduce the perception of impunity for perpetrators of such violence is elaborated by Boduszynski (2019) in: Navigating the narrow spaces for transitional justice in Iraq. See: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330890945_navigating_the_narrow_spaces_for_transitional_justice_in_iraq_gender_art_and_memory

Figure 9: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where there are concerns of revenge attacks, October 2020 to September 2021, by governorat

GOVERNORATE	# RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WITH CONCERNS OF REVENGE ATTACKS (OCTOBER 2020)	# RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WITH CONCERNS OF REVENGE ATTACKS (SEPTEMBER 2021)
Salah al-Din	24,261	34,589
Ninewa	17,021	18,710
Anbar	14,540	13,364
Diyala	5,417	5,307
Baghdad	244	253
Kirkuk	62	100

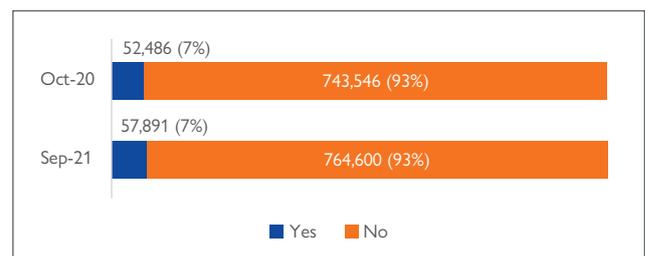
1.1.4 Concerns related to tribal or ethno-religious tensions²⁰

Ethno-religious and tribal tension, particularly in areas that have heterogeneous population groups, contribute to feelings of insecurity among returnees and can hinder reintegration. Overall, 57,891 returnee households (7%) are living in locations where tribal or ethno-religious tensions exist. The highest number of returnees living in locations with concerns about tribal or ethno-religious tensions are in Ninewa (42,567), amounting to 13 per cent of all those who have returned to the governorate. Additionally, a moderate number of returnee households are living in locations with these concerns in Salah al-Din (9,511; 8%) and Anbar Governorates (4,831; 2%).

Notably, the three districts with the highest number of returnees that reside in locations with concerns related to tribal and ethno-religious tensions are in Ninewa Governorate. As of September 2021, there are 20,442 returnees living in locations with these concerns in Telafar District, related to the return of families perceived as ISIL-affiliated. In Sinjar (15,046; 75%) and Al-Ba’aj (6,929; 78%) Districts, returnee households are more likely to be concerned by tensions related to the Yazidi community.

The number of returnee households living in locations where there are concerns of tribal or ethno-religious tensions increased marginally between October 2020 (52,486) and September 2021 (57,891). During this period, Anbar Governorate recorded the largest increase in the number of returnee households residing in locations with concerns of tribal or ethno-religious tensions (4,831) where previously there had been none. These increases all occurred in Falluja District. The largest decrease was recorded in Salah al-Din Governorate (-2,291; -19%), followed by Diyala (-1,445, -60%).

Figure 10: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where there are concerns of tribal or ethno-religious tensions, October 2020 to September 2021



²⁰ All information presented in this section is derived from DTM’s Return Index datasets (Rounds 13 and 10). See: IOM Iraq (September 2021 and October 2020). Return Index Datasets: Rounds 10 and 13. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/ReturnIndex#Datasets>

Figure 11: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where there are concerns of tribal or ethno-religious tensions, October 2020 to September 2021, by governorate

GOVERNORATE	# RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WITH CONCERNS OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS OR TRIBAL TENSIONS (OCTOBER 2020)	# RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WITH CONCERNS OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS OR TRIBAL TENSIONS (SEPTEMBER 2021)
Ninewa	38,257	42,567
Salah al-Din	11,802	9,511
Anbar		4,831
Diyala	2,427	982

1.1.5 Unexploded Ordnance²¹

Unexploded ordnances (UXOs) left behind from the conflict with ISIL and earlier cycles of conflict pose a threat to the safety of a small yet significant number of returnees across the country. Overall, a total of 52,095 returnee households (6%) are living in locations where there are concerns regarding the presence of UXOs. The highest number of returnees living in such locations is in Anbar (21,741), amounting to 8 per cent of all those who have arrived in that governorate. Additionally, a significant number of returnees are living in locations with UXO related concerns in the governorates of Salah al-Din (13,502; 11%) and Ninewa (8,099; 3%). Notably, 6,207 returnees in Erbil – 62 per cent of those who have returned there – live in locations with UXO concerns, all of whom have arrived to the district of Makhmur. Other districts with high numbers of returnees with this issue include Heet (8,566) and Falluja (5,978) in Anbar Governorate, as well as Mosul (5,302) in Ninewa Governorate.

The number of returnee households living in locations with concerns of UXOs increased between October 2020 (43,437) and September 2021 (52,095). During this 12-month period, Erbil Governorate recorded the largest

increase in the number of returnee households residing in locations with concerns of UXO attacks, concentrated in Makhmur district (5,666; 1047%). In Salah al-Din Governorate, there was an overall increase of 2,419 returnee households (22%), which took place mainly in the district of Baiji (1,909). The only decrease in the number of households living in locations with UXO concerns was recorded in Diyala Governorate (-120 households; -5%).

Figure 12: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where there are concerns of unexploded ordnance, October 2020 to September 2021

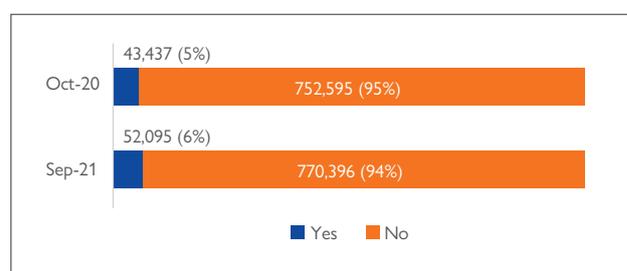


Figure 13: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where there are concerns of unexploded ordnance, October 2020 to September 2021, by governorate

GOVERNORATE	RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WITH CONCERNS REGARDING UXOS (OCTOBER 2020)	RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WITH CONCERNS REGARDING UXOS (SEPTEMBER 2020)
Anbar	21,332	21,741
Salah al-Din	11,083	13,502
Ninewa	7,858	8,099

21 All information presented in this section is derived from DTM's Return Index datasets (Rounds 13 and 10). See: IOM Iraq (September 2021 and October 2020). Return Index Datasets: Rounds 10 and 13. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/ReturnIndex#Datasets>

Erbil	541	6,207
Diyala	2,598	2,478
Kirkuk	25	68

1.1.6 Need for Community Reconciliation²²

Areas of return have undergone decades of cyclical violence and tensions between groups continue to disrupt communities in these areas. As of September 2021, 101,476 returnee households reside in 362 locations where there is a need for community reconciliation activities. Over half of these households reside in locations where some reconciliation initiatives take place (59). However, 41,805 returnee households reside in locations where reconciliation is needed but not present, representing 5 per cent of the total returnee population in Iraq. The highest number of returnees living in such locations is in Ninewa Governorate (37,916), amounting to 12 per cent of all those who have returned to the governorate. Additionally, a moderate number of returnees are living in locations that need but lack community reconciliation in Salah al-Din (3,035; 2%). Notably, the two districts with the highest number of returnee households in locations in need but lacking community reconciliation were Telafar (20,187) and Sinjar (16,260). Both districts also ranked highly in terms of the number of returnee households in locations concerned by tribal or ethno-religious tensions.

The number of returnee households living in locations where there was the need for but a lack of reconciliation stayed relatively constant between October 2020 (43,866) and September 2021 (41,806). Between October 2020 and

September 2021, Salah al-Din Governorate recorded the largest decrease in the number of returnee households residing in locations with the need for community reconciliation (-4,997). Ninewa Governorate also recorded a significant increase of 4,138 additional households in locations needing reconciliation, especially in the districts of Sinjar (2,836), Telefar (740), and Al-Ba'aj (562). There was also a reduction in the number of returnee households in locations that needed reconciliation in Diyala Governorate (-1,232, -60%).

Figure 14: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where reconciliation activities are needed but not taking place, October 2020 to September 2021

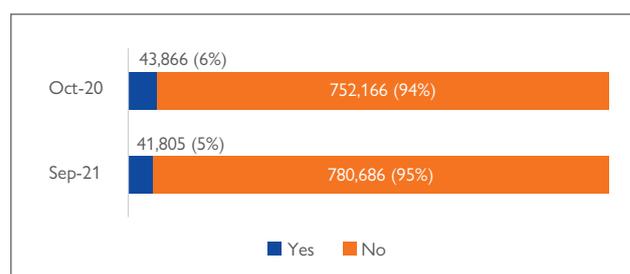


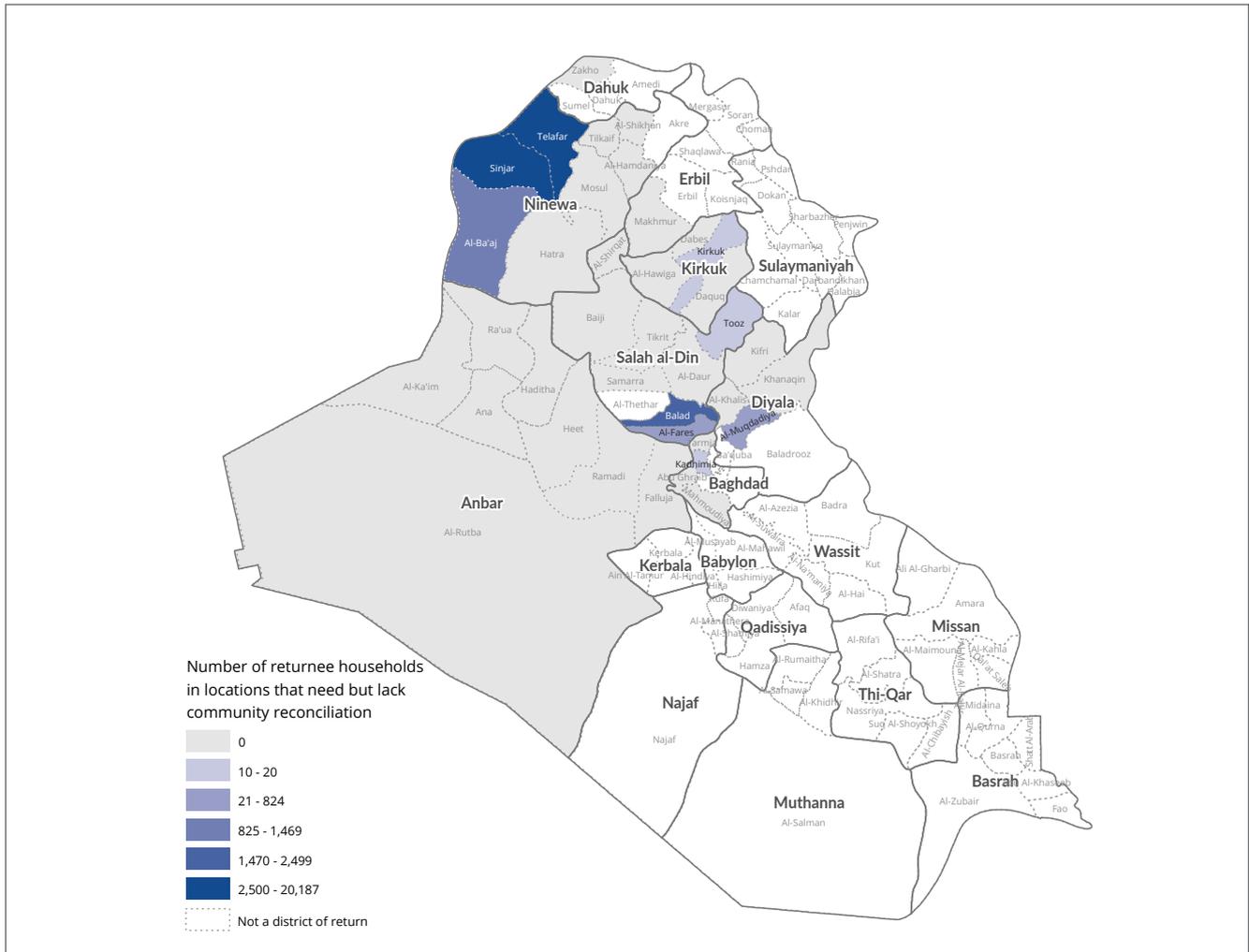
Figure 15: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where there was the need for but lack of community reconciliation, October 2020 to September 2021, by governorate

GOVERNORATE	RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS THAT NEED BUT LACK COMMUNITY RECONCILIATION (OCTOBER 2020)	RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS THAT NEED BUT LACK COMMUNITY RECONCILIATION (SEPTEMBER 2021)
Ninewa	33,778	37,916
Salah al-Din	8,032	3,035
Diyala	2,056	824
Baghdad	0	20
Kirkuk	0	10

²² All information presented in this section is derived from DTM's Return Index datasets (Rounds 13 and 10). See: IOM Iraq (September 2021 and October 2020). Return Index Datasets: Rounds 10 and 13. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/ReturnIndex#Datasets>

The varying number of returnee households in locations that need but lack community reconciliation activities is displayed in Map 4 below.

Map 4: Number of returnee households in locations that need but lack community reconciliation, by district



1.2 PHYSICAL PROTECTION²³

The configuration of security forces in the areas where returnees live can have a significant impact on the feelings of physical safety of returnees as they reintegrate. These groups can include the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), Tribal Mobilization Units (TMUs), local police, or groups associated with the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). In some cases,

the presence of security actors in return locations can assist in ensuring the safety of families, particularly in the face of continued threats of violence and conflict with ISIL-affiliated groups.²⁴ However, a multiplicity of different types of security actors often causes confusion amongst returnees as to whom is responsible for mandating and enforcing security

²³ All information presented in this section is derived from DTM’s Return Index datasets (Rounds 13 and 10). See: IOM Iraq (September 2021 and October 2020). Return Index Datasets: Rounds 10 and 13. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/ReturnIndex#Datasets>

²⁴ This is reflected in the movement intentions of IDPs, who commonly report a perceived lack of physical protection as a main reason for not returning to their area of origin. However, in some cases, families are less likely to return to their area of origin due to the presence of different types of security actors present. For more information, refer to: See: <https://iraq.iom.int/publications/protracted-displacement-iraq-revisiting-categories-return-barriers>

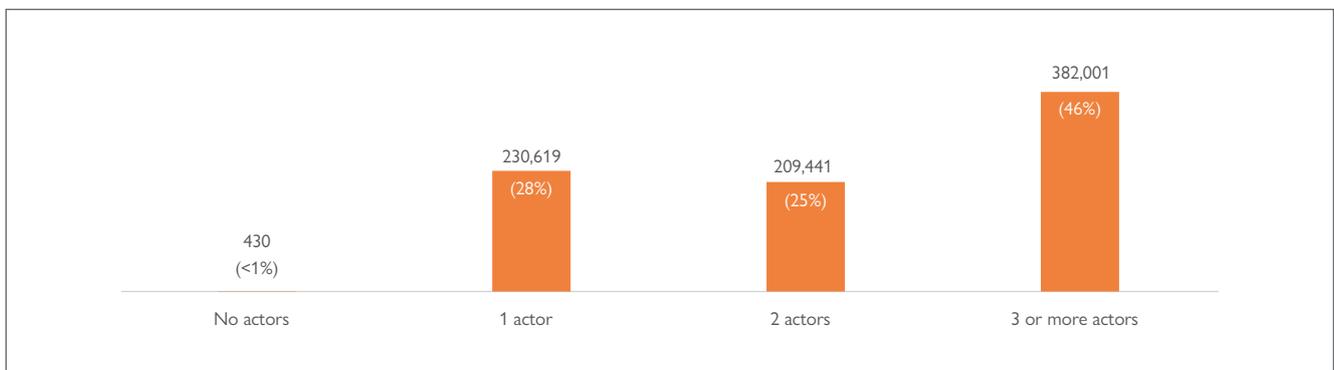
protocols.^{25,26,27} Additionally, returnees are reported to sometimes feel unsafe or uncomfortable when actors in charge of their security come from a different area. Tensions that arise in areas of return between different security groups also commonly lead to security issues that affect the wider community.

Configuration of security forces

As of September 2021, across the country, only 430 returnee families (<1%) are living in locations where there are no security actors present, making this group vulnerable to safety and security issues. A further 230,619 returnee families are in locations with one actor, while 209,441

families (25%) are in locations with two different actors. The remaining 382,001 returnees (46%) are living in locations with three or more different security actors present.²⁸ These returnees living in areas with a multiplicity of actors are likely to experience high levels of security concerns. This can be due to confusion amongst returnees regarding which actor is responsible, while in other cases rivalries between actors related to differing political agendas can also compromise the security of an area. No significant differences in the proportion of returnees living in locations with different numbers of security actors present were recorded in the period between October 2020 and September 2021.²⁹

Figure 16: Returnee households living in locations, by number of security actors present



At district level, there is significant variation in the number of returnee families who live in locations with different numbers of security actors present. Across the country, there are only 11 locations where there are no security actors present, which are all within Hatra District within Ninewa Governorate. A total of 430 returnee families reside in these locations (<1%). Otherwise, districts hosting the highest numbers of returnee families living in locations with one actor present include Mosul (118,205 families; 67% of all who have returned to that district), as well as Ramadi (56,337; 56%) and Tikrit (27,016; 85%).

Additionally, a significant number of families live in locations with two different actors present in the districts of Falluja (53,072; 56%), Mosul (30,185; 17%) and Kirkuk (25,625; 99%). Finally, a high number of returnee families reside in locations where a multiplicity (three or more) different security actors are present in the following districts: Telafar (58,679, amounting to 98% of all returnees in that district); Falluja (42,028; 44%); and Ramadi (36,209; 36%).³⁰ Map 5 below shows the distribution in the number of returnee families living in locations with different numbers of security actors present.

25 A high number of security actors in locations generally means there is a combination of Iraqi army and local police, along with Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs) or Tribal Mobilization Units (TMUs). This configuration of actors commonly leads to competition between actors for the control of territories, with different actors representing the interests of different groups living in a particular community.

26 Observing return rates suggests that families may be less likely to return to locations where there are high numbers of security actors present compared with locations where there are lower numbers.

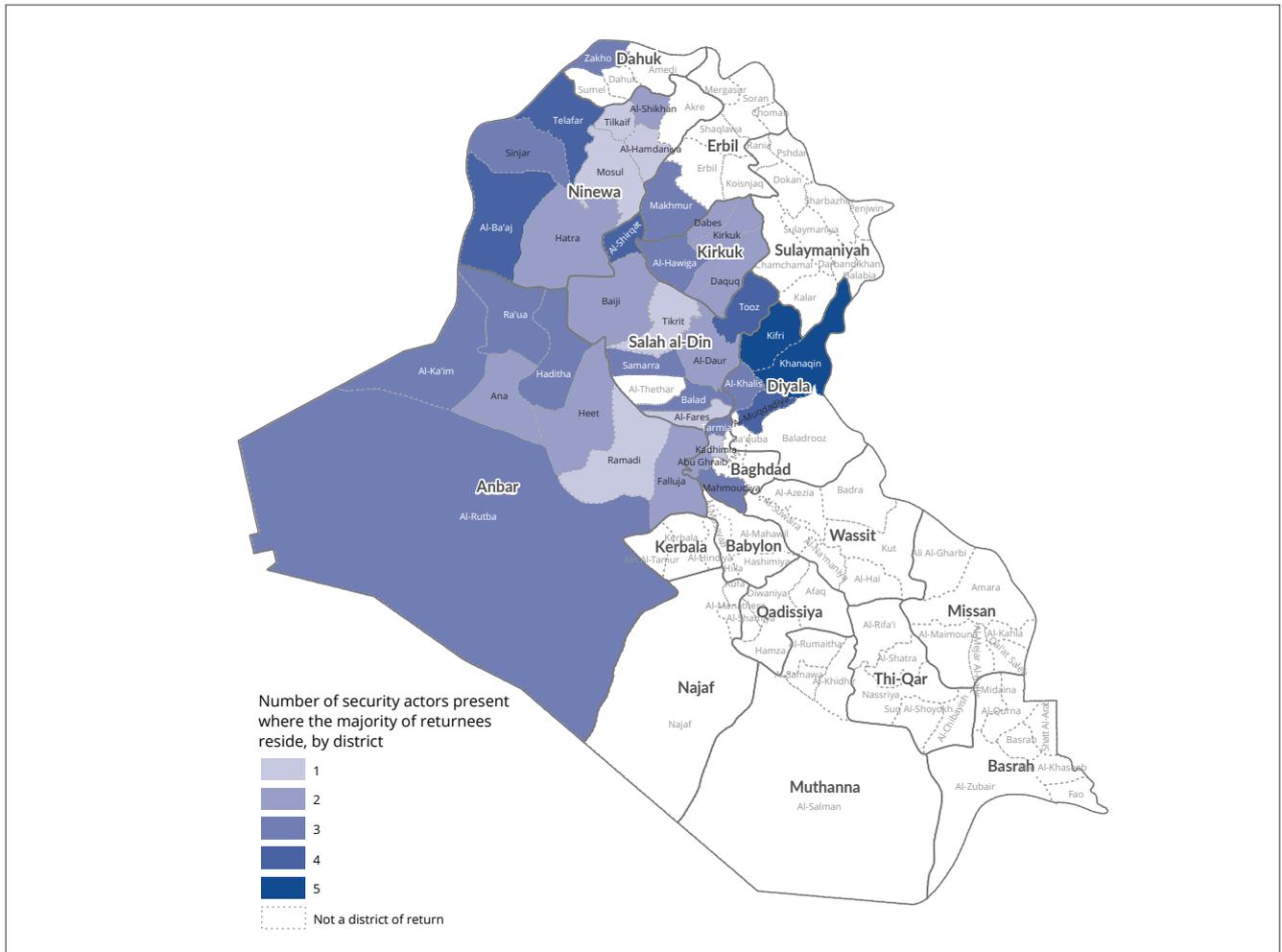
27 It should be noted that available data does not allow for an understanding of how the number of security actors may support or hinder reintegration. However, the information presented below can assist in understanding how the configuration of security forces varies across the country.

28 The breakdown of the 382,001 returnees living in locations with three or more actors present is as follows: three actors (251,120), four actors (107,749), five actors (22,122) or six actors (1,010).

29 In October 2021, the proportion of returnees were living in locations with the following number of security actors present: no actor (<1%); one actor (29%); two actors (29%); three actors (31%); four actors (8%); five actors (2%); and six actors (<1%).

30 There are only two districts – Khanaqin and Kifri in Diyala governorate – where most returnees are living in locations with five different types of security actors present

Map 5: Number of security actors present where the majority of returnees reside in locations, by district



At national level, the proportion of returnee households living in locations with a three or more different security actors present increased marginally between October 2020 (42%) and September 2021 (46%). This is due to a rise in certain governorates, including Dahuk, where all returnee households (100%) live in locations with three or more security actors present in September 2021, compared with no households in October 2020. Notable increases were also observed in Erbil Governorate between October 2020 (4%) and September 2021 (67%), as well as Salah al-Din Governorate, where the proportion of households jumped from 25 per cent to 45 per cent during the same period.

1.3 FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Restrictions on freedom of movement can inhibit returns and undermine the ability of returnees to sustain livelihood activities, social relations and feelings of safety. Restrictions imposed on the movement of some or all residents are most commonly temporary measures put in place by local authorities or security forces to reinforce control of an area after conflict or prevent residents from entering into unsafe areas. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Iraq has imposed a range of movement restrictions to curb the spread of the virus.³¹ However, in most areas these restrictions were eased by the time the assessments referred to in this study were implemented. In some cases, restrictions on movement that remain may serve as part of a deliberate policy against the certain population groups, or as an arbitrary measure for political control and extortion. In addition, returnees' movements are at times limited due to concerns related to security issues in areas nearby their area of origin.

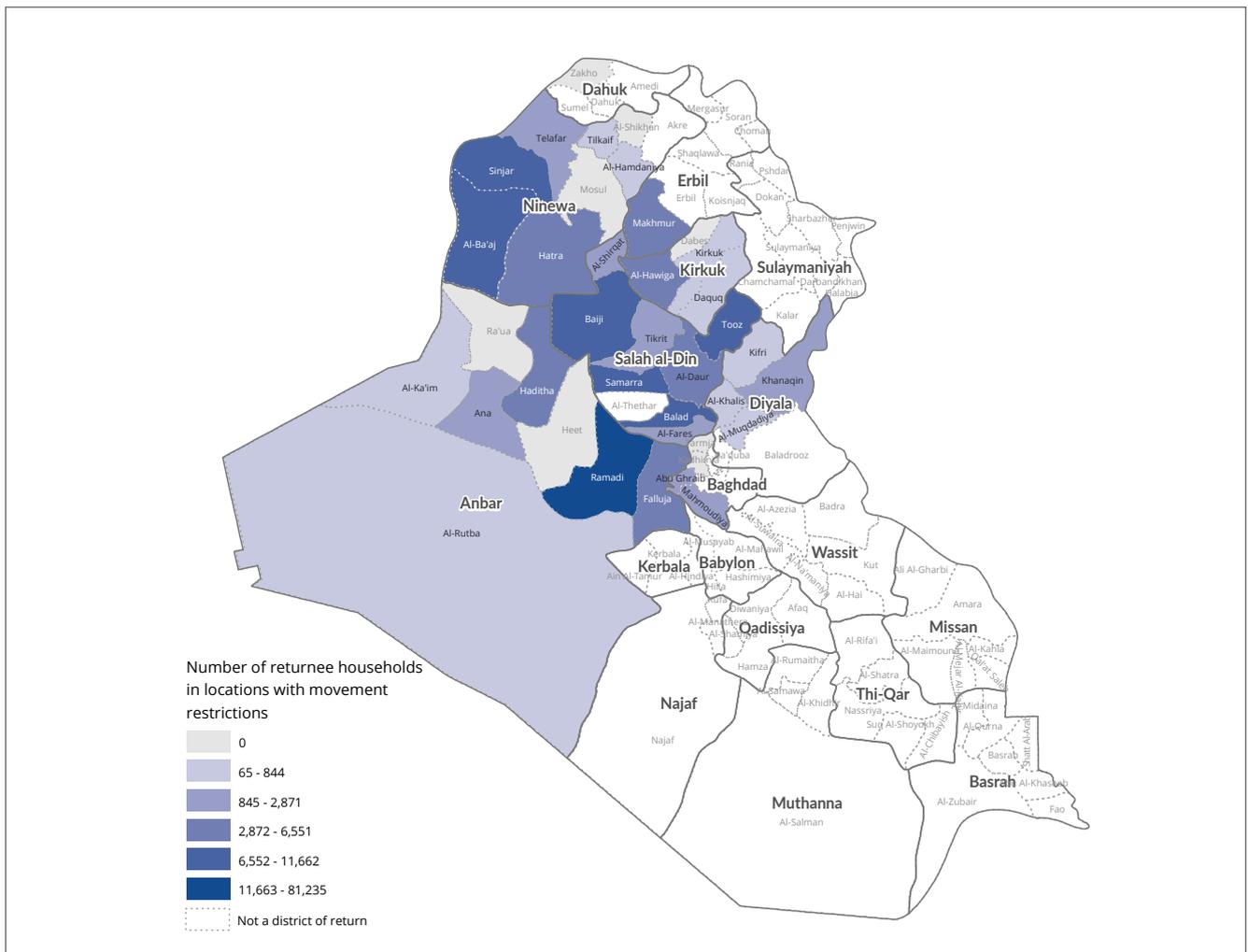
31 Most restrictions were imposed during the first year of the pandemic, in 2020. For more information about the restrictions, refer to: IOM (2020-2021). COVID-19 Mobility Restrictions and Public Health Measures. See: https://iraqdtm.iom.int/COVID19/MovementRestrictions_HealthMeasures

1.3.1 Movement Restrictions

As of September 2021, a total of 182,113 returnees were residing in locations with movement restrictions (22%). The highest number of returnees living in such locations was in Anbar Governorate (93,519), amounting to 36 per cent of all those who have returned to that governorate. Additionally, a significant number of returnees are living in locations with movement restrictions in the governorates of Salah al-Din (46,789; 38%) and Ninewa (26,779; 8%). Notably, 4,462 returnee households in Erbil – 44 per cent of those who have returned there – reside in locations with movement

restrictions, all within Makhmur District, which has witnessed several security incidents throughout 2021. By far, the highest number of returnee households living in locations where there are movement restrictions is in Ramadi district (81,235) in Anbar Governorate, followed by Baiji (11,662) in Salah al-Din Governorate and Sinjar (10,349) in Ninewa Governorate. Refer to Map 6 below for an overview of the variation in the proportion of returnees living in areas with movement restrictions.

Map 6: Number of returnee households in locations where movement restrictions are imposed, by district



Between October 2020 and September 2021, Ninewa Governorate recorded the largest increase in returnee households living in locations with movement restrictions (7,329; 38%). Significant increases were also recorded in Salah al-Din Governorate (3,430), although these are commensurate with the increase in the overall returnee population in the same period. Most notably, Erbil Governorate recorded 3,152 additional returnee households living in locations during the period – an increase of 241 per cent between October 2020 and September 2021. The largest decrease was recorded in Anbar Governorate, falling by 5,749 (-6%) during this period.

Figure 17: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where movement restrictions are imposed, October 2020 to September 2021

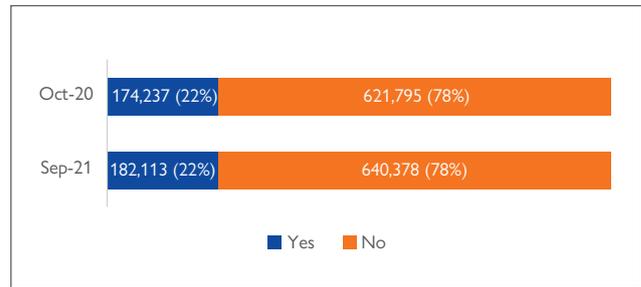


Figure 18: Change in the number of returnee households in locations where movement restrictions are imposed, October 2020 to September 2021, by governorate

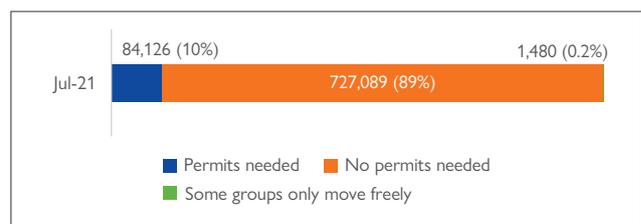
GOVERNORATE	# RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WHERE THERE ARE MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS (OCTOBER 2020)	# RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WHERE THERE ARE MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS (SEPTEMBER 2021)
Anbar	99,268	93,519
Salah al-Din	43,359	46,789
Ninewa	19,450	26,779
Kirkuk	5,924	5,810
Erbil	1,310	4,462
Baghdad	2,679	2,683
Diyala	2,247	2,071

1.3.2 Permission to Move³²

As of July 2021, 84,126 returnee households (10%) lived in locations where most or all residents can move freely but require a special permit from local authorities or security forces. The highest number of returnee households living in such locations is in Salah al-Din (53,044), amounting to 45 per cent of those who had returned to the governorate. Additionally, a moderate number of returnee households are living in locations that require a permit for movement in Anbar Governorate (21,756; 9%) and Erbil (5,662; 62%). Districts in which a large proportion of residents require permits to move include Al-Ka'im, in Anbar Governorate (11,983) as well as Baiji (10,732), Al-Daur (10,113) and Samarra (9,645) in Salah al-Din Governorate.

There are a further 1,480 returnee households (0.2%) that reside in locations where some groups require face restrictions on their movement while others move freely. Of these 1,390 households reside in Sinjar District, in Ninewa Governorate, where tribal or ethno-religious tensions remain highest (see section 1.1.4).

Figure 19: Number of returnee households in locations, by type of permission needed to move freely, July 2021



³² All information presented in this section is derived from DTM’s Integrated Location Assessment (Round 6). See: IOM Iraq (2021). Integrated Location Assessment Dataset: Round 6. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/ILA6#Datasets>

Figure 20: Number of returnee households in locations where most or all residents can move freely but need a permit from authorities, by governorate, July 2021

GOVERNORATE	MOST OR ALL RESIDENTS CAN MOVE FREELY BUT REQUIRE A PERMIT FROM AUTHORITIES	MOST OR ALL CAN MOVE FREELY WITHOUT A PERMIT	SOME GROUPS MOVE FREELY WHILE OTHERS FACE RESTRICTIONS
Salah al-Din	53,044	65,769	90
Anbar	21,756	229,998	0
Erbil	5,662	3,465	0
Kirkuk	2,048	56,167	0
Ninewa	1,616	316,476	1390
Baghdad	0	15,273	0
Dahuk	0	128	0
Diyala	0	39,813	0

1.3.3 Forced Returns³³

Some families are forcibly returned to their location of origin by authorities, most commonly following the closure of an IDP camp, or the destruction of an informal site in which displaced families were living.³⁴ Forced returns can undermine the achievement of reintegration as a durable solution to displacement, with households commonly unprepared, unable or unwilling to return and reintegrate in their area of origin. The forcible return of displaced communities to areas of origin can also contribute to increased community tension, in the absence of community reconciliation and other peacebuilding initiatives.

As of July 2021, 138,120 returnee households (17%) reside in locations where some families were forced to return. The highest number of returnee households living in such locations is in Ninewa (79,206), amounting to 25 per cent of all those who have returned to that governorate. Additionally, a moderate number of returnee households are living in locations where some families were forced to return in Salah al-Din (32,906; 28%) and Kirkuk Governorates (16,203; 28%). Districts in which a large proportion of residents live in locations where some families were forced to return include Telafar (35,397 households) and Mosul (32,585) in Ninewa Governorate, and Al-Shirqat (21,415) in Salah al-Din Governorate.

Figure 21: Number of returnee households in locations where some families were forced to return, July 2021

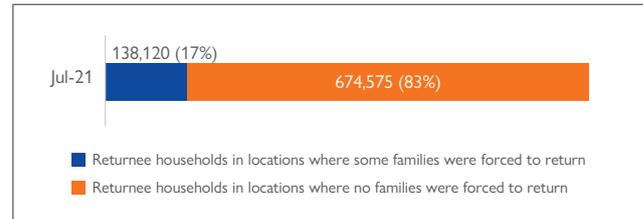


Figure 23: Number of returnee households in locations where some families were forced to return, by governorate, July 2021

GOVERNORATE	NO. RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS IN LOCATIONS WHERE SOME FAMILIES WERE FORCED TO RETURN
Ninewa	79,206
Salah al-Din	32,906
Kirkuk	16,203
Diyala	7,577
Anbar	2,228

33 All information presented in this section is derived from DTM’s Integrated Location Assessment (Round 6). See: IOM Iraq (2021). Integrated Location Assessment Dataset: Round 6. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/ILA6#Datasets>

34 Between October 2020 and February 2021, a significant number of IDPs (7,204 households) were recorded moving from camps to non-camp settings, following the closure or re-classification of camps by government authorities. For more information regarding these movement, refer to: IOM (2021). DTM Emergency Tracking: Movement of Camp IDPs. See: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/ldpMovements>

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Since the Government of Iraq declared defeat over ISIL in December 2017, most Iraqi families who became displaced during the conflict have returned to their area of origin. However, issues related to safety, security and social relations pose a significant threat to their sustainable reintegration in their area of origin. As demonstrated in this report, these issues can be categorized under 1) risks of violence, 2) physical protection, and 3) freedom of movement. Key findings under each of these categories, as they relate to the reintegration of returnees, are summarized below.

1. Risk of violence

- The fragmented nature of Iraq's security landscape poses significant challenges to the sustainable reintegration of returnees, with various state and non-state armed groups vying for control and legitimacy in areas of return.
- Although the territorial conflict with ISIL has ended, around half of all returnees reside in a location where there are concerns of attacks from ISIL or affiliated splinter groups (48%). As recently as October 2021, ISIL attacks on several villages in Muqdadiya District, Diyala Governorate resulted in the displacement of 327 families from areas in which some families had previously returned ([source](#)).
- Additionally, risks of violence from and between security forces and other armed groups affect nine per cent of all returnee households – including in areas where threats of ISIL-related violence are not significant. Notably, over a third of all households living in locations with such threats are in Salah al-Din, after a significant increase was recorded in that governorate between October 2020 (16,393 households) and September 2021 (30,391 households).
- Tensions between and within communities, many of which predate the conflict with ISIL, continue to threaten sustainable reintegration, particularly in areas with heterogeneous ethno-religious communities. Concerns of revenge attacks and tribal and ethno-religious tensions were present in locations where respectively nine and seven per cent of all returnee households reside.
- Across the country, six per cent of all returnees live in locations where there are concerns regarding the presence of UXOs. Almost half of this group are residing in Anbar Governorate.

- Dialogue and reconciliation in communities of return are likely to reduce concerns over sources of violence and support sustainable reintegration. Over half of all returnee households reside in locations where some reconciliation initiatives were present (57%). However, reconciliation is needed but not present in locations where five per cent of all returnee households reside.

2. Physical protection

- The configuration of security forces can impact the overall security of return areas. In some cases, the presence of security actors assists in making returnees and neighbouring communities feel safe. In other cases, a multiplicity of actors (defined in this report as three or more actors from different groups) can cause confusion as to which actor has overall authority on matters of security. Returnees are also commonly reported to feel unsafe in the presence of actors who come from different parts of country.
- The breakdown of returnees living in locations with different numbers of security actors present is as follows: no actors (<1%); one actor (28%); two actors (25%); and three or more actors (46%).
- Hatra District in Ninewa Governorate hosts the only returnees (430 households) living in locations with no security actors present. A notably high number of returnee households reside in locations with a multiplicity of different actors in Telafar (58,679) – amounting to 98 per cent of all households in the district.

3. Freedom of Movement

- Restrictions on freedom of movement undermine the ability of returnees to sustain livelihood activities, social relations and feelings of safety.
- Overall, 22 per cent of returnees reside in locations where movement restrictions are imposed. Notably, a total of 46,789 returnee households in Salah al-Din Governorate live in locations facing movement restrictions.
- Movement restrictions can also negatively affect reintegration in cases where some returnees are blocked from returning due to their perceived affiliation with ISIL. However, this is only the case in locations where less than one per cent of returnees reside, predominantly in Sinjar District in Ninewa Governorate.

- Nationwide, 10 per cent of all returnees reside in locations where there is a requirement to carry a special permit from local authorities or security forces in order to travel. Over half of this group are in Salah al-Din Governorate, while about a quarter are in Anbar Governorate.
- Additionally, forced returns can undermine the achievement of reintegration as a durable solution to displacement, with households unprepared, unable or unwilling to return and reintegrate in their area of origin. Around one in five returnee households reside in locations where some families were forced to return (17%), but this proportion is highest in Ninewa where one in four returnees face this issue (25%).

A summary table showing the change in the rates of returnee households facing each of the different barriers to reintegration is displayed in Annex 1.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FILLING INFORMATION GAPS

As Iraq moves into its fifth year since ISIL was officially defeated, the humanitarian response is transitioning towards peacebuilding and development programming with a focus on achieving long-term durable solutions for the 1.2 million Iraqi families who became displaced during the conflict. With over one million of this group having returned to their area of origin, and with many of the remaining IDP

families intending to return home upon the improvement of conditions, a strong understanding of the barriers that returnees face in reintegrating to their area of origin is critical in informing durable solutions strategy in areas of return.

This report has examined the types of challenges related to the first criteria in the *EGRIS framework for reintegration*, which relates to safety, security and social relations. To continue strengthening the evidence base for returnee reintegration in Iraq, further research is recommended to be conducted into the other barriers that are faced. This can be achieved by examining further reintegration issues in line with the remaining EGRIS criteria, including:

- Access to livelihoods and economic security;
- Adequate standard of living;
- Property restitution and compensation; and
- Documentation.

In 2022, IOM Iraq will produce a report that will analyse livelihoods and economic security challenges in settings of returnee reintegration. Further research into the other three EGRIS criteria would complement the growing body of research related to reintegration in Iraq. This would support the wider objective of working towards the realization of durable solutions for all families who were displaced during the conflict.

ANNEX 1. SUMMARY TABLE: EGRIS REINTEGRATION FRAMEWORK CRITERIA 1 – SAFETY, SECURITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS, OCTOBER 2020 VS. SEPTEMBER 2021

SUB-CRITERIA	OCTOBER 2020 %	SEPTEMBER 2021 %	SOURCE
1.1 Risk of violence			
% of returnee households in locations where there are concerns of ISIL attacks	49%	48%	Return Index 10 and 13
% returnee households in locations where there are concerns about violence from or between security groups	7%	9%	Return Index 10 and 13
% of returnee households in locations where there are concerns about revenge acts	8%	9%	Return Index 10 and 13
% of returnee households in locations where there are concerns about ethno-religious or tribal tensions	7%	7%	Return Index 10 and 13
% of returnee households in locations where there are concerns about unexploded ordnance	5%	6%	Return Index 10 and 13
% of returnee households in locations where reconciliation activities are needed but not taking place	6%	5%	Return Index 10 and 13
1.2 Physical protection			
% of returnee households in locations where there is a multiplicity of different security actors present (three or more)	42%	46%	Return Index 10 and 13
1.3 Freedom of movement			
% of returnee households in locations where movement restrictions are imposed	22%	22%	Return Index 10 and 13
% of returnee households living in locations where most or all residents can move freely but need a permit from authorities	-	10%	Integrated Location Assessment
% of returnees in locations where some families were forced to return	-	17%	Integrated Location Assessment

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