

RETURN INDEX

FINDINGS ROUND 1 | IRAQ

SEPTEMBER 2018

ABSTRACT

As more people return to their places of origin than remain displaced in Iraq, it is necessary to know the severity of conditions in the locations to which they are returning, how this changes over time, and finally, which locations have limited returns and why, to shape strategies for intervention and resource allocation. The new Return Index is a tool developed to measure this in over 1,400 return locations in the country. This briefing report highlights the tool, its methods, initial findings, and uses of data.



HIGHLIGHTS

While population and location figures highlight the significant number of returnees in Iraq, they do not shed light on what type of assistance is needed, who needs it, and where, to prevent secondary displacement or prolonged residence in poor physical and/or social conditions.

The Return Index correlates all data available on returnee population numbers with indicators on (a) livelihoods and basic services and (b) social cohesion and safety perceptions to create a score at location level (i.e., individual village, town or neighbourhood) that measures the severity of conditions or quality of return.

Each of the 1,427 assessed locations are classified into four different categories based on a score estimating severity of conditions: very high, high, medium and low.

52 locations have a very high severity of conditions score, with an estimated 7,833 families (approximately 1.2% of the total population of

returnees) living in them as of July 2018. Another 238 locations have high severity conditions, with an estimated 65,906 families (approximately 10.3% of the total population of returnees) living in them as of July 2018.

The Return Index is best used to identify geographical clusters of nearby locations where high or very high severity conditions are concentrated. Individual actors can use this to gauge if they are targeting locations most in need through their interventions.

Hotspots of severity include Sinjar Centre, Telafer Centre, West Mosul, Al-Ba'aj, and the desert strip of Al-Tal, Hatra, and Muhalabiya in Nineva Governorate; Baiji, Tooz Khormatu / Suleiman Beg, and Balad / Duloeiya in Salah al-Din Governorate; Taza Khormatu, Hawija Centre, and Al-Abassy in Kirkuk Governorate; Al-Adheim and Saadiya / Jalawla in Diyala Governorate; and the Falluja-Ramadi strip and Ana Centre in Anbar Governorate.

INTRODUCTION

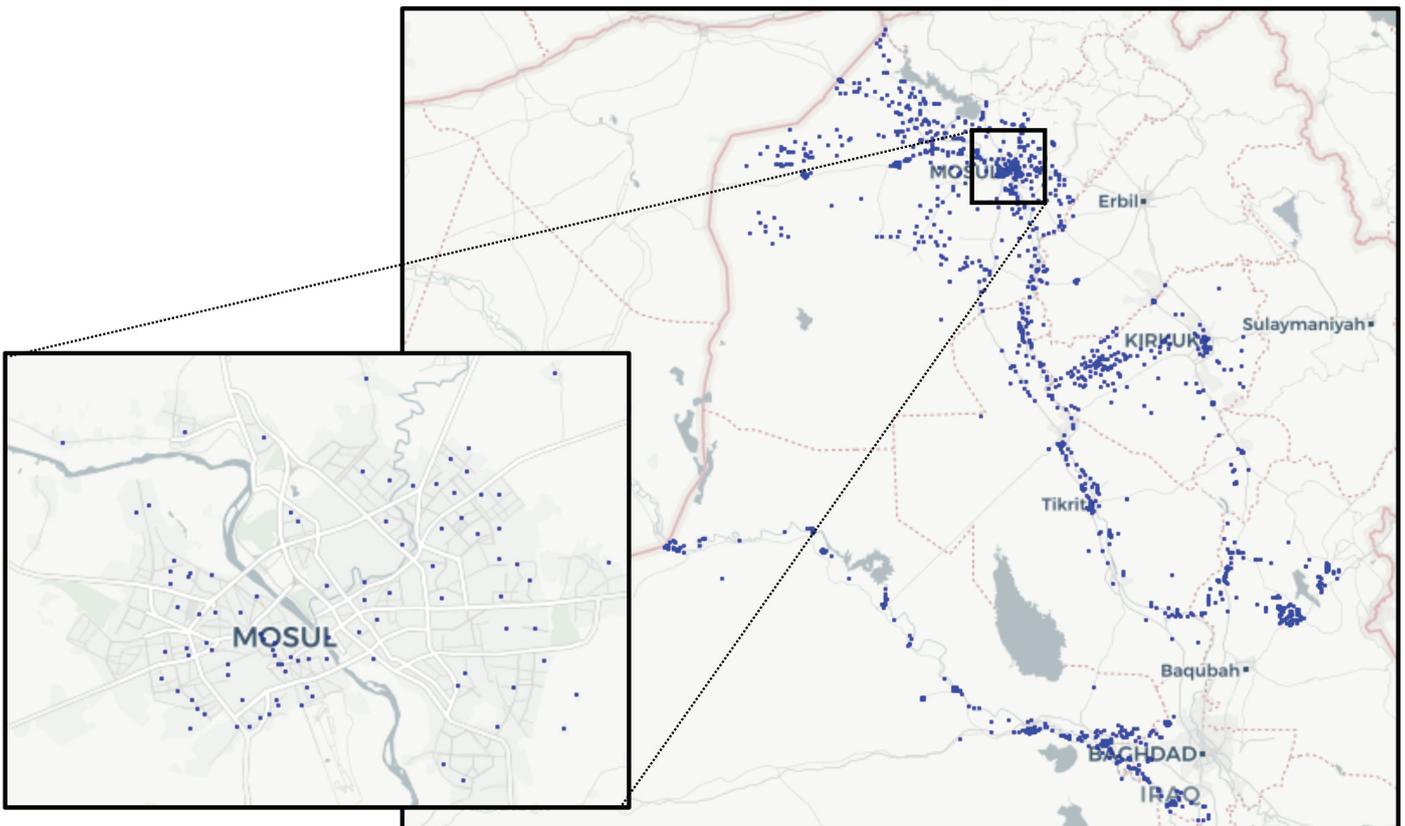
As of June 2018, more than 3.8 million people have returned to over 1,400 locations of origin spread across the country. The return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is often seen as a significant and critical step toward durable solutions in the aftermath of conflict. It also signifies, however, that the context may require a shift in response from humanitarian to recovery-oriented policies, interventions, and funding.

While population and location figures highlight the significant number of people in Iraq who may be in need of assistance on return, they do not shed light on what type of assistance is needed, who needs it, and where, to prevent secondary displacement or prolonged residence in poor physical and/or social conditions. In other words, this data alone cannot answer two critical and inter-linked questions necessary for strategizing, advocating, and operationalising responses for returning populations in Iraq:

- What are the conditions in areas of return and how do they evolve over time?
- Which locations have limited returns and why?

Thus, a more precise tool is needed to understand the “quality of returns” in Iraq and to this end IOM DTM, the Returns Working Group, and Social Inquiry developed the Return Index. This tool serves as a means of measuring severity of conditions in areas of return to allow partners the ability to better strategize for resources and operations in vulnerable areas or to mitigate risks of push/pull factors for a more specific set of coherent interventions that bridge humanitarian, recovery, and stabilisation needs.

Figure 1. Example of DTM data available on return areas at the location level



METHODOLOGY FOR THE INDEX

The guiding principle of the Return Index is to correlate all data available on returnee population figures with indicators on (a) livelihoods and basic services and (b) social cohesion and safety perceptions in order to create a score at location level (i.e., individual village, town or neighbourhood). This score measures the severity of conditions or quality of return.

The tool consists of a manageable number of indicators that are collected periodically for each of the +1,400 locations recorded in the DTM by interviewing community representatives. The specific indicators were selected based on recent quantitative and qualitative research on post-conflict return dynamics in Iraq. The approach taken was to define an initial set of *minimum* or *critical* living conditions that are necessary to make a place *adequate enough* to sustain returning populations.

The premise is that locations that have all populations back and are not experiencing secondary displacement are likely to have a good quality (or good conditions) for return.

These indicators were then formulated into a survey format with the aim of being comprehensive but simple enough for a 'key informant' type interview per location of return. This method has the advantage of allowing coverage of a large number of locations in a short duration of time, but its key limitation is relying on one representative transmitting the views of a potentially large and diverse set of returnees.

The survey collects different levels of severity for each indicator (see next page). Responses are then combined to generate a location score: **the higher the score, the more dire the situation is for returnees in that particular location.** That is, the conditions there may prevent returns, trigger secondary displacement, or subject people to protracted poor conditions.

*The higher the score,
the more dire the
situation is in that
particular location*

How is the score specifically calculated? Because each indicator may matter differently in facilitating or preventing returns, the Return Index uses a logistic regression model to test their individual impact on the likelihood of returns and, then, provide a specific value per indicator. This model helps answer, for example, the following question: how much less is the likelihood of a location with no open primary schools to experience returns compared to a location with an operating school, controlling for other factors?*

This relationship between returns and indicators is measured through the model's odds ratio. These ratios are not directly applied to calculate a score but they help evaluate which indicators have a larger statistical impact than others to explain returns.

The final result is that every indicator has a value associated with it so that it is possible to calculate a "livelihoods and services score" and a "social cohesion and safety score". These two scores are then combined to create an overall severity index. The index goes from 0 (*all essential conditions to return are met*) to 100 (*no essential conditions to return are met*). The overall score can also be disaggregated to identify which particular conditions are not met and how they change over time.

Data from round 1 is compiled here and serves as the basis for adjusting indicators and the model for future iterations.



19 Data collected June 2018

Returnees (assessed in the Return Index as of June 2018)

3,847,530
Individuals

641,255
Families

*While the index takes high return rates in locations with low severity conditions as a positive development, an important aspect to consider is the role of premature returns and forced returns. These topics are part of future focus in coordination with stakeholders.

INDICATORS: LIVELIHOODS & SERVICES INDEX

HOUSE DESTRUCTION

Which of the following statements best describes the housing situation in this location? (House damaged due to the 2014 conflict onward)

- There are no houses destroyed or severely damaged.
- Less than 50% of the houses in the location are still destroyed or severely damaged, but reconstruction is taking place.
- Less than 50% of the houses in the location are still destroyed or severely damaged, and no reconstruction is taking place.
- 50% or more of the houses in the location are still destroyed or severely damaged, but reconstruction is taking place.
- 50% or more of the houses in the location are still destroyed or severely damaged, and no reconstruction is taking place.

LARGE PRIVATE EMPLOYERS

Which of the following statements best describes the current situation of the private sector in the location? (i.e., factories or big companies)

- All or most of the large private sector employers in the area are operational again and employing residents.
- Few of the large private sector employers in the area are operational again and employing residents.
- There are no large employers in this location (not applicable).
- The large private sector employers are still not operating.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Which of the following statements best describes primary education provision in the location now?

- The primary school in the location is open and functioning.
- There never was a primary school in the location but children are able to attend schooling nearby.
- There never was a primary school in the location and children are not able to attend schooling nearby.
- The primary school in the location is closed or not functioning but children are able to attend schooling nearby.
- The primary school in the location is closed or not functioning and children are not able to attend schooling nearby.

PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRES

Which of the following statements best describes the basic / primary health provision in the location now?

- The primary health centre in the location is open and functioning.
- There never was a primary health centre in the location but residents are able to receive medical care nearby.
- There never was a primary health centre in the location and residents are not able to receive medical care nearby.
- The primary health centre in the location is closed or not functioning but residents are able to receive medical care nearby.
- The primary health centre in the location is closed or not functioning and residents are not able to receive medical care nearby.

LOCAL MARKETS

Which of the following statements best describes the current state of the markets and bazaar in the location?

- Local markets and small shops are opened and stocked regularly and reliably.
- There is scarcity of items in the local markets and small shops.
- Most of the markets and small shops are still closed.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

During this month, on average, how many hours per day is public electricity available?

- If location is at the top two thirds from sample
- If location is at the bottom third from sample

WATER SUPPLY

During this month, on average, how many hours per day is public water available?

- If location is at the top two thirds from sample
- If location is at the bottom third from sample

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

Which of the following statements best describes the situation of public employees (i.e., civil servants, teachers, nurses, police, etc.) in the location?

- Most or all of the public-sector employees are reincorporated in their job and paid regularly.
- Most or all of the public-sector employees are reincorporated in their job but not paid regularly.
- Some of the public-sector employees are reincorporated in their job.
- None of the public-sector employees are reincorporated in their job.

AGRICULTURAL LAND

Which of the following statements best describes the current situation of farming in the location?

- All land is being farmed again.
- Some land is being farmed again.
- No land is being farmed.
- There is no farming or land in this location (not applicable).

INDICATORS: SOCIAL COHESION & SAFETY PERCEPTIONS INDEX

HLP ILLEGAL OCCUPATION

Do you know if there are private residences occupied without permission (not family or friends) in the location?

- No, not at all.
- Yes, many (private residences occupied without permission in the location).
- Yes, a few.

DAILY PUBLIC LIFE

Which of the following statements best describes normal public life in the location now?

- Streets are busy with residents carrying out daily activities and it feels calm (going to market, kids playing, tea shops, picnics, etc.).
- Streets are busy with residents carrying out daily activities but it feels tense (going to market, kids playing, tea shops, picnics, etc.).
- Streets are sparsely populated and people leave their homes only when they have to.

PRESENCE OF MINES

Which of the following statements best describes the situation about mines in this location?

- The location is clear of mines.
- There is significant presence of mines, UXOs, IEDs within the residential areas but there are demining operations ongoing.
- There is a small presence of mines, UXOs, IEDs within the residential areas but there are demining operations ongoing.
- There is a significant presence of mines, UXOs, IEDs within the residential areas and nothing is done.
- There is a small presence of mines, UXOs, IEDs within the residential areas and nothing is done.

MULTIPLICITY OF ARMED ACTORS

How many security actors are present in the location?

- There are less than 4 armed groups present in the location.
- There are 4 or more armed groups present in the location.

SOCIAL CAPITAL WITHIN COMMUNITY

If there is a water supply problem in this location, how likely is it that all neighbours will cooperate to try to solve the problem?

- Very likely
- Somehow likely
- Somehow unlikely
- Very unlikely

RESTRICTIONS OF MOVEMENT

Which of the following statements best describes the freedom of movement now for current residents within the district (excluding IDPs)?

- There are no restrictions of movement.
- Restrictions of movement are not impacting the normal life of current residents.
- Restrictions of movement are significantly impacting the normal life of current residents.
- Restrictions of movement are somewhat impacting the normal life of current residents.

SAFETY CONCERNS

How concerned do you think residents (excluding IDPs) are about any of the following happening in the location? (i.e., revenge, kidnapping, clashes between security forces or armed groups, attacks from ISIL or sleeper cells, property disputes or deliberate destruction of property, ethno-religious / tribal tensions)

- Not concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Very concerned

INTER-COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

Which of the following statements best describes the need for inter-community dialogue in the district?

- There is no need for dialogue for this community with other ethnic-religious-tribal communities in the subdistrict.
- This community needs dialogue with other ethnic-religious-tribal communities in the subdistrict and it is taking place.
- This community needs dialogue with other ethnic-religious-tribal communities in the subdistrict but it is not taking place.

SECURITY CHANGE

Has the main actor in charge of security in this location changed in the last month?

- The main security actor has not changed from the previous month.
- The main security actor has changed from the previous month.

CATEGORIZING QUALITY OF RETURNS

Each of the locations are classified into four different categories based on score estimating severity of conditions: very high, high, medium, and low. The 52 locations with very high severity of conditions are considered outliers from the remaining locations and thus separated from them. An estimated 7,833 families (approximately 1.2% of the total population of returnees) are living in these 52 locations as of June 2018. Those locations falling into the other three categories are then organised into three proportional segments.

This classification shows that, for example, while Ninewa Governorate has the largest caseload of returnees living in very high severity conditions in absolute number, Diyala Governorate has the largest proportion of its returnees living in such conditions. In other words, a returnee in Diyala is more likely to encounter severe conditions upon return, but the governorate has a relatively lower amount of returns; most of the population currently living in severe conditions reside in Ninewa. This may be a starting point for decision-making in terms of response, however governorate-level analysis alone hinders understanding of more complex dynamics given that conditions are hyper-localised and vary significantly within governorates.

For this reason, the following sections offer a more targeted and nuanced geographical analysis as the best practice for using the Return Index instead of focusing on macro-level data.

Table 1. Absolute number of returning families per governorate and category of severity

Governorate	Very high	High	Medium	Low	Total number of families
Anbar	0	5,170	84,627	120,327	210,124
Baghdad	0	1,957	7,256	3,628	12,841
Diyala	866	9,542	11,576	14,589	36,573
Erbil	185	273	1,550	4,448	6,456
Kirkuk	150	2,822	15,839	28,891	47,702
Ninewa	4,772	36,678	129,074	67,877	238,401
Salah al-Din	1,860	9,464	51,554	26,280	89,158
Total number of families	7,833	65,906	301,476	266,040	641,255

Figure 2. Proportion of returning families by category of severity over total returning families in the governorate

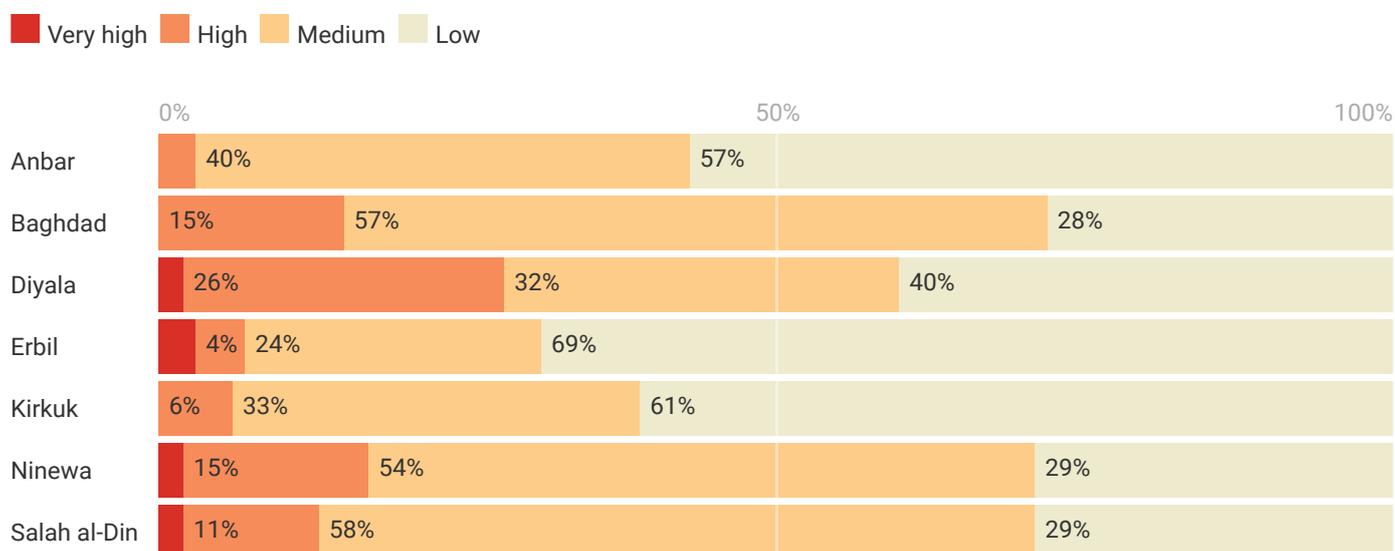


Table 2. Disaggregation of the 52 locations ranked with very high severity

Score	Name of locations	Area	
Between 70 and 79	Hay Yarmok	Neighbourhoods in Sinjar town	
	Hay Alnaser		
	Hay Barbaraj		
	Hay Azadi		
	Tal Abu Jarad		
Between 60 and 69	Albo Henayhen	Village in Al-Adheim subdistrict	
	Om Shaeefa	Village in Duloeya subdistrict	
	Alfarhaneya	Village in AlHshaqi subdistrict	
	Almalha Algharbiya	Neighbourhoods in Baiji town	
	Hay Altameem		
	Bab Albeeth		
	Almansuria	Neighbourhoods in Masul Old City	
	Almashahda		
	Hay Alqadissiya	Neighbourhoods in Sinjar town	
	Hay Alshuhada		
	Qandil	Village in Mount Sinjar	
	Sulaiman Beg	Entire subdistrict	
	Between 52 and 59	Abu Rasen	Village in Al-Ba'aj subdistrict
		Muftiya	Village in Hamdaniya Centre subdistrict
Makhoul Centre		Subdistrict centre town	
Alrihewat		Village in Makhoul subdistrict	
Hay Alnour		Village in Baiji Centre subdistrict	
Hay Alaskari 2		Neighbourhoods in Baiji town	
Hay Alaskari 1			
Hay Tal Alzatar			
Hay Alrisalah			
Jwezerat		Village in Duloeya subdistrict	
Aziz Balad		Outskirts of Balad town	
Wahda		Villages in Daqq Centre subdistrict	
Saad Bin Waqqas			
Alturkmaniya Alshimaliya		Villages in Al-Tal subdistrict	
Bothah			
Khweila			
Ashkej			
Tal Faris Shimali			
Bani Weas		Village in Saadiya subdistrict	
Jomila		Villages in Jalawla subdistrict	
Shekh			
Al Teneraa			
Alnassiriyah		Village in Al-Multaqa subdistrict	
Mahana		Village in Makhmur Centre subdistrict	
Agnetrah		Village in Hamam al-Aleel subdistrict	
Al-Khazraj		Neighbourhoods in Masul Old City	
Hay Al-Shifaa			
Sinuni Centre		Subdistrict centre town	
Hardan and Girshabak		Villages in Sinuni subdistrict	
Khana Sor			
Rozh Halat		Outskirts of Sinjar Centre town	
Alsalihiyah		Village in Ayadhiya subdistrict	
Alrahma		Outskirts of Talafar Centre town	
Aljazeera	Village in Zummar subdistrict		
Gir Ishaq	Village in Tel Kaif Centre subdistrict		

GEOGRAPHICAL INSIGHTS

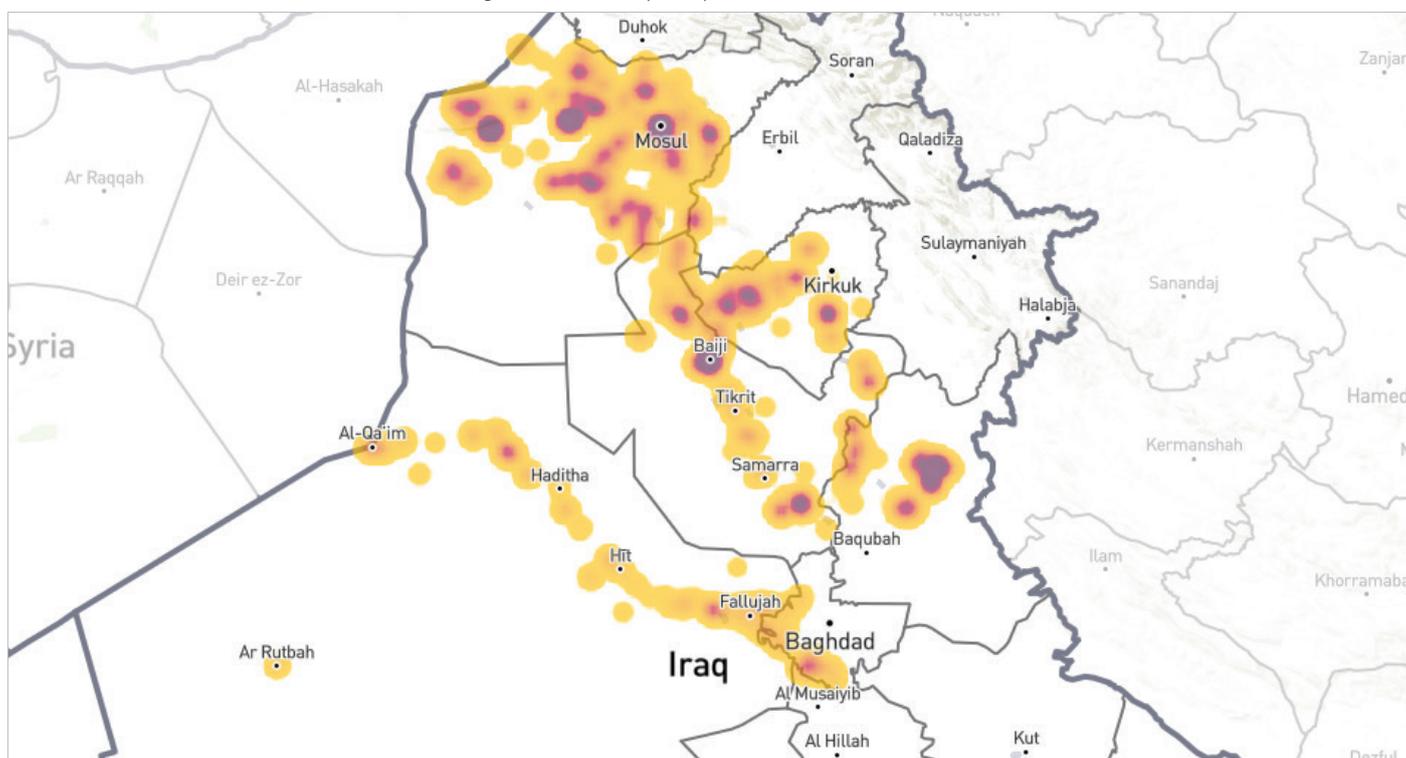
Figure 4 on the next page shows the results of the Return Index by district, where every dot is a location in that district, ordered from most (high scores) to least (low scores) severe conditions based on the district mean value. Sinjar, in particular, is the district with the highest number of locations with very high severity of conditions over the total of this sample. Highly populated areas such as Mosul or Ramadi, on the other hand, also appear with a handful of locations with high levels of severity but, given that they both also have many locations with low severity, their district averages remain relatively moderate. The figure also highlights outlier locations among areas of low severity as in Kirkuk.

While significant variation is seen within districts, this visualization is further used in identifying geographical clusters of severity for each governorate, synthesized in the key hotspots listed in Table 2. These clusters consist of several locations close to each other where high or very high severity conditions are concentrated, creating a whole social ecosystem in which returns are extremely limited or run the risk of triggering secondary displacement. Baiji district in Salah al-Din Governorate is one such cluster, followed by Al-Ba'aj, Hatra, and Sinjar districts in Ninewa Governorate, the western areas of Kirkuk Governorate, and the centre of Diyala Governorate. The map below provides an Iraq-wide visualization.

Table 3. Geographical clusters of severity hotspots

Ninewa	Salah al-Din	Kirkuk	Diyala	Anbar
Sinjar Centre	Baiji	Taza Khormatu	Al-Adheim	Falluja-Ramadi strip
Talafar Centre	Tooz Khormatu / Suleiman Beg	Hawija Center	Saadiya / Jalawla	Ana Centre
West Mosul	Balad / Duloeiya	Al-Abbasy		
Al-Ba'aj				
Desert strip of Al-Tal, Hatra and Muhalabiya				

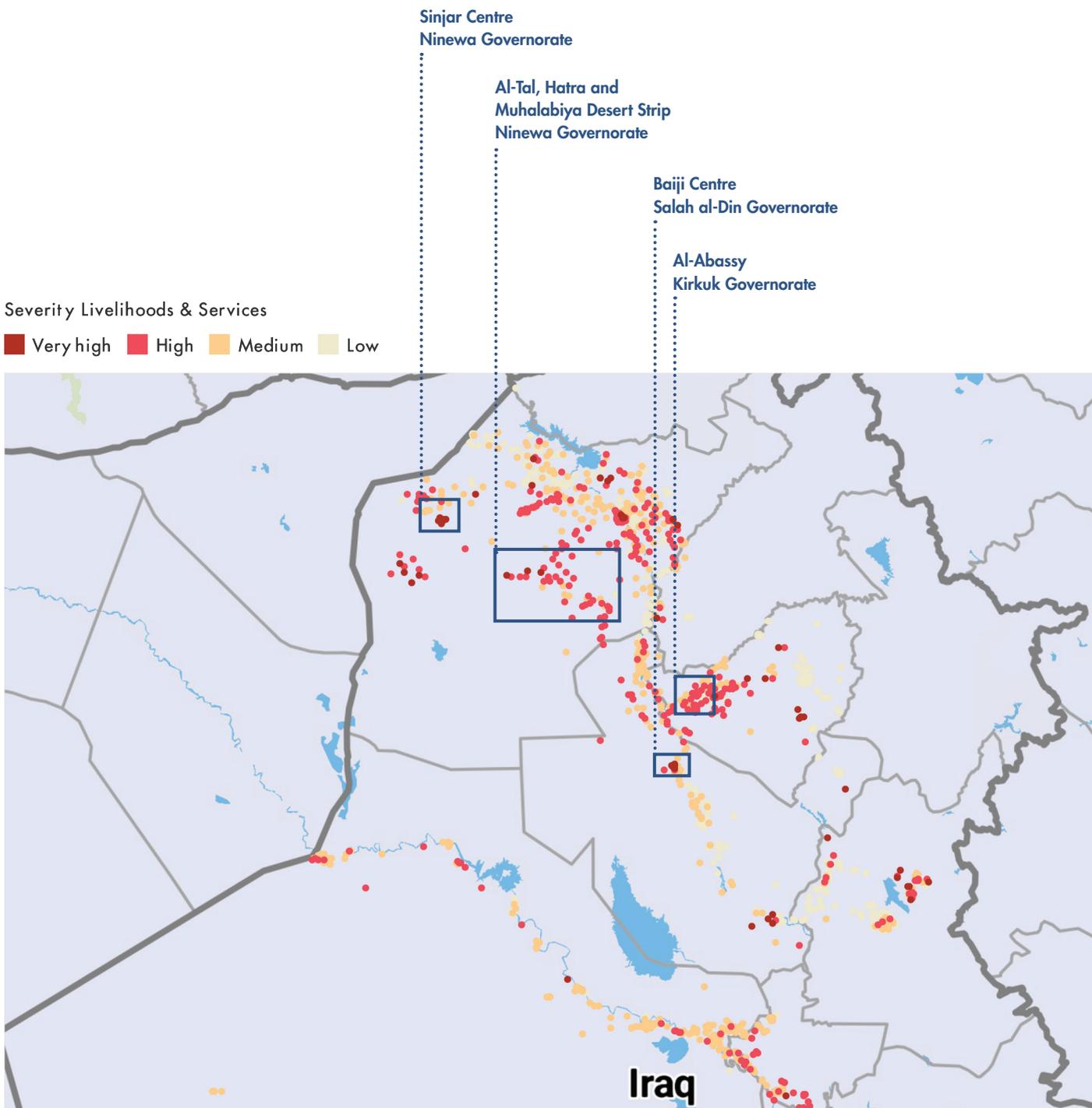
Figure 3. Density map of all index scores*



*Concentration of locations with high scores are shown in darker colours, indicating higher severity of living conditions.

SELECTED HOTSPOTS: LIVELIHOODS & SERVICES INDEX

These four key hotspots, which are analysed in greater detail in the subsequent pages, were selected on the basis of their aggregate scores while also seeking to show geographical diversity.

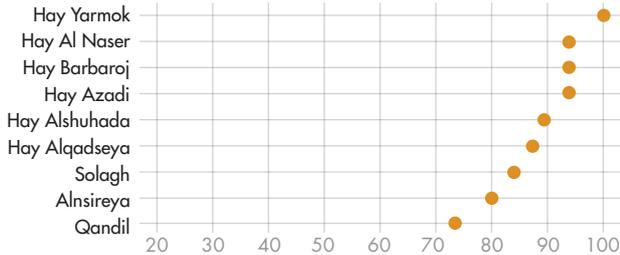


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Cluster Profiles

● Livelihoods & Services Index

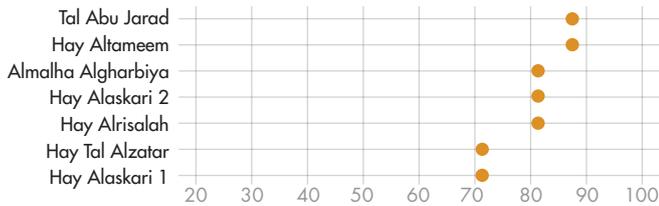
VERY HIGH



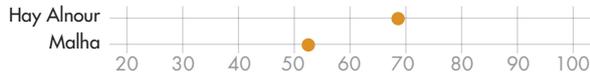
HIGH



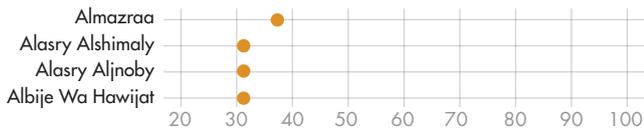
VERY HIGH



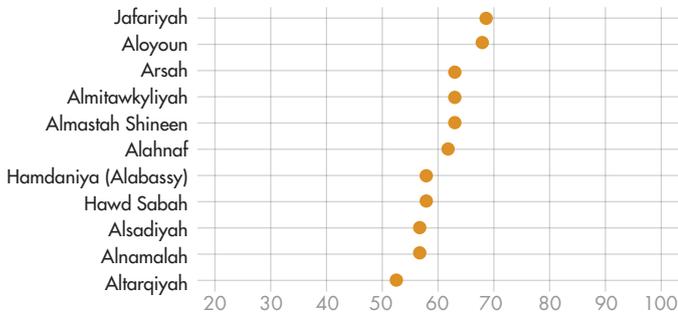
HIGH



MEDIUM



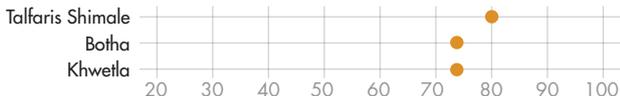
HIGH



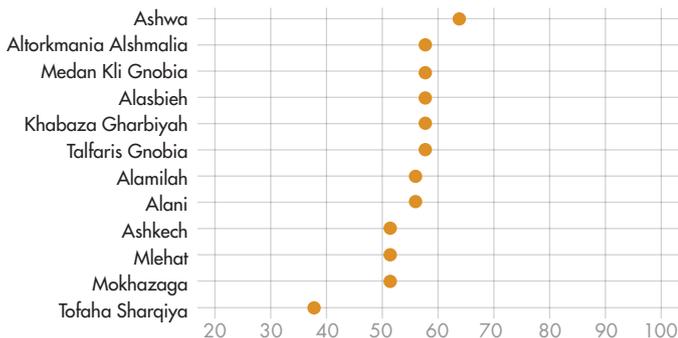
MEDIUM



VERY HIGH



HIGH



Sinjar Centre (Ninewa)

In general, less than half of the pre-conflict population has reportedly returned. Residential destruction remains widespread with more than half of the neighbourhoods severely destroyed and the remaining moderately destroyed; no reconstruction is reportedly taking place. 70% of locations suffer from scarcity of goods in markets and in 20% of locations markets remain closed. Not all primary schools are operational but children are able to attend schooling nearby.

Baiji Centre (Salah al-Din)

Population returns remain low. All neighbourhoods and villages report significant house destruction, although reconstruction is reportedly taking place in 90% of locations. However, half of the neighbourhoods are reported to have a small presence of mines, UXOs and IEDs. All locations remain in the bottom of the sample for electricity (< 4 hours/day) and water supply. 45% of the locations report that markets operate normally, 40% report scarcity of goods, and 5% report that markets remain closed. While not all primary health centres and primary schools are operational again, residents are able to still access those that are.

Al-Abassy (Kirkuk)

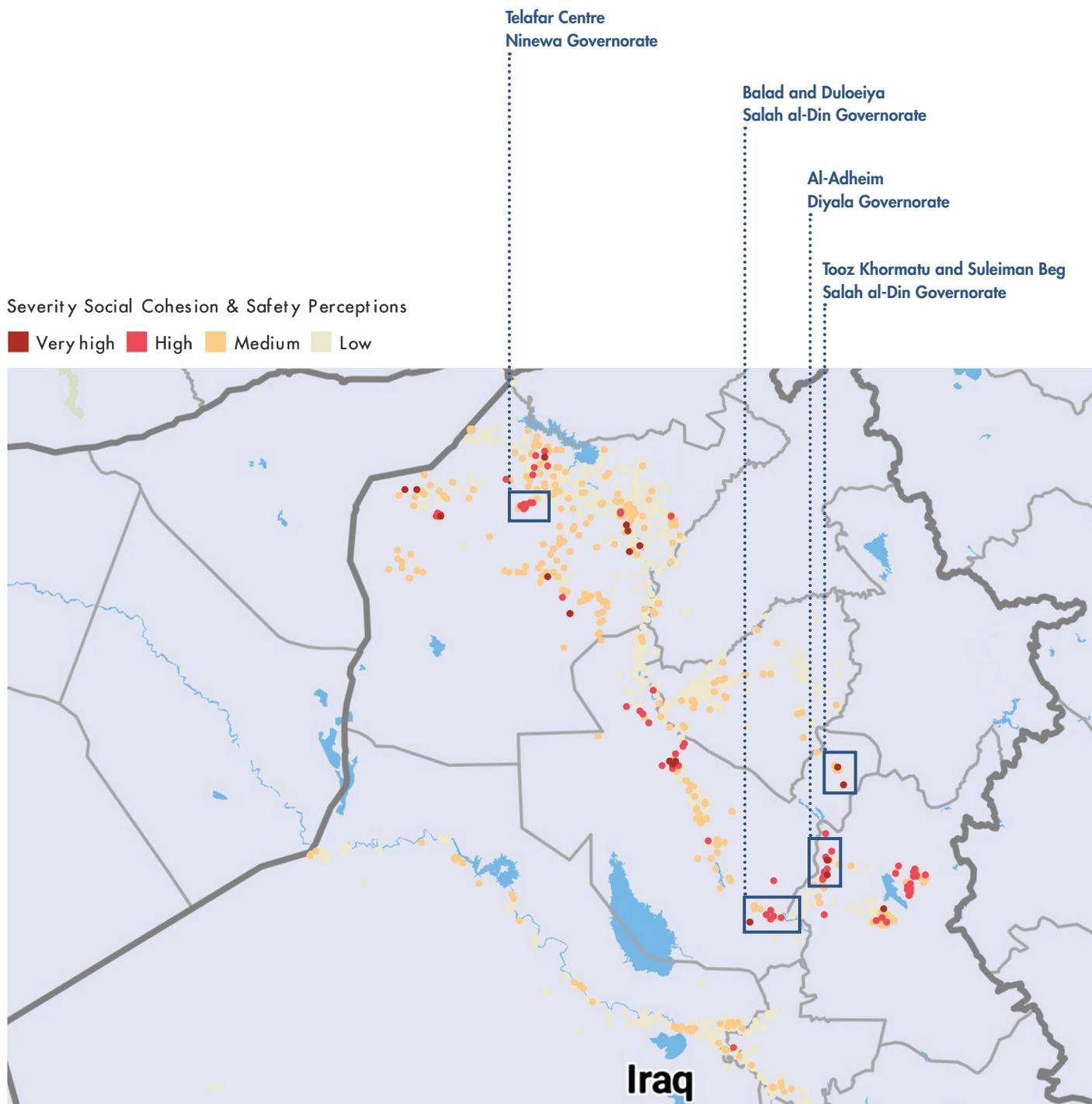
This mainly rural area south of Hawija Centre remains severely impacted in terms of infrastructure destruction, while still being perceived as at risk of ISIL attacks. Livelihood opportunities reportedly remain non-existent in the more rural locations and low in the urban centre, while agricultural activities have only partially re-started. Water supply is severely limited across locations. All primary schools are reportedly open but residents face restrictions in terms of access to primary health services.

Ninewa Desert Strip (Ninewa)

This remote territory in central Ninewa is the last inhabited and southernmost part of the governorate, bordering the desert (Al-Tal, Hatra, and Muhalabiya subdistricts). The locations here are very rural and livelihoods are reportedly stalled, with few opportunities; all markets are reportedly closed. There seems to be widespread but limited damage to residential infrastructure, with lack of reconstruction reported in half of the locations. No locations have functioning public water supply and electricity is only available in one-third of these. Residents can reportedly access primary education and health facilities nearby though this infrastructure has never existed in many of the locations.

SELECTED HOTSPOTS: SOCIAL COHESION & SAFETY PERCEPTIONS INDEX

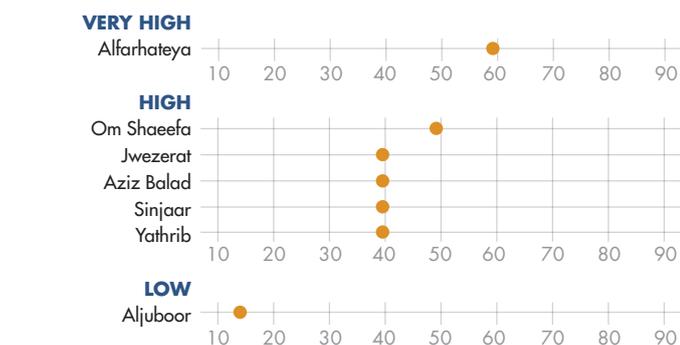
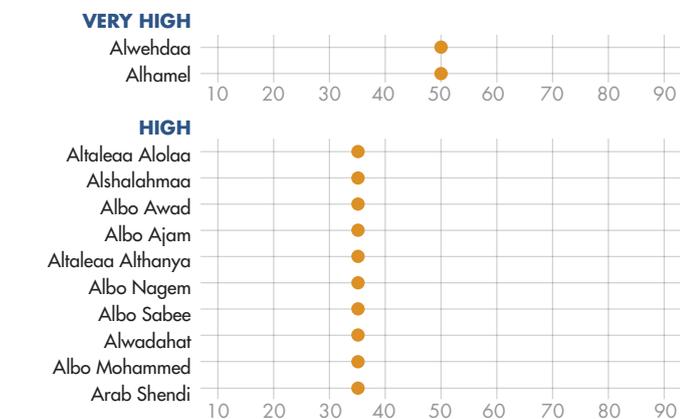
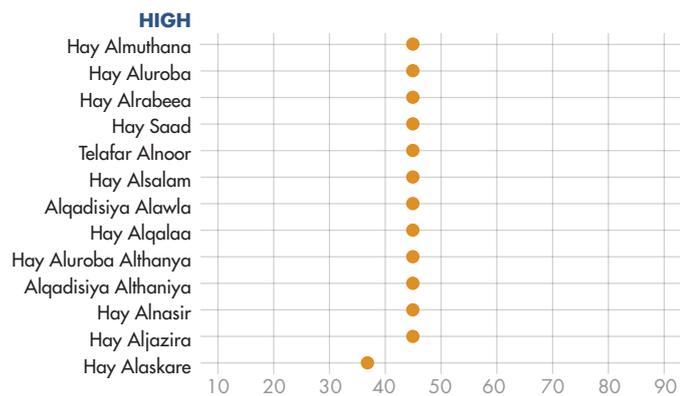
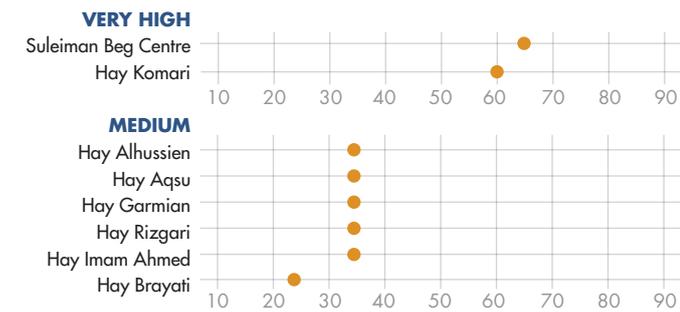
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Cluster Profiles

● Social Cohesion & Safety Perceptions Index



Tooz Khormatu & Suleiman Beg (Salah al-Din)

These subdistricts have significant ethno-religious cleavages. As such, there is a reported widespread concern over ethno-religious tensions and to a lesser extent, revenge acts and property disputes. Key informants across all locations indicate inter-community dialogue is necessary, but critically, not taking place as of June 2018. Social capital is also very low. Movement restrictions are somewhat impacting daily life in all locations but Suleiman Beg, where they are heavily impacting daily life. Finally, there are still no returns in Amerli subdistrict and it is completely inaccessible.

Telafar Centre (Ninewa)

Population returns started recently, with 18,000 families reportedly back. No location however reports its full pre-conflict population returned. Social cohesion remains a paramount challenge in this area, even though conditions related to livelihoods and services are also of a high severity. More than half of the neighbourhoods here report cases of house occupation, there is a multiplicity of security actors operating in this area, and concerns remain over potential for ISIL attacks. At the same time, no daily life tensions nor restrictions of movement were reported. Furthermore, key informants across all neighbourhoods indicated that inter-community dialogue needed to facilitate peaceful returns was taking place.

Al-Adheim (Diyala)

While returns have been relatively steady into locations here, this remote area remains affected by security concerns. These include very widespread fear across locations of inter-community revenge, kidnappings, clashes between security forces, and, particularly, ISIL attacks. In about half of these locations, streets are reportedly sparsely populated or feel tense. Approximately one quarter of locations have up to five different security actors operating in them, and some have four. Finally, community dialogue is reportedly necessary in all locations but one – though it is not taking place.

Balad & Duloeiya (Salah al-Din)

These locations also face impediments due to identity-based community relations. Moderate concerns related to revenge acts and ethno-religious tensions were reported across all locations. Related to this, inter-community dialogue is reportedly necessary across all locations, but not taking place. Key informants also indicate that residents only leave home when they have to, with streets sparsely populated. Restrictions of movement have significantly impacted daily life in all but one location. This is particularly concerning in Yathrib, where most of the returnees in this area are located.

POTENTIAL FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This initial round of Return Index data collection has been followed by successive tests to ensure the reliability of the data over time. The majority of the indicators used in the tool have been found to be statistically significant to explain conditions of return. The next steps are then focused on introducing temporal analysis in order to monitor living conditions across time, while expanding and improving the depth and breadth of current indicators. New analysis will focus on the evolution of hotspots of severity and emergence of new geographical areas of concern related to returns. Further on, the tool will also encompass a mapping of partners operating within these locations.

Discussion with partners on improvements and future directions for the Return Index has already started, with a number of useful and critical suggestions for improving the quality, reliability, and utility of the tool going forward. These include:

- *Extending window of data collection from monthly to every two to three months to ensure higher quality information and the ability to better measure improvement or deterioration of conditions over time. Many of the indicators (e.g., destruction levels) may not change within a very short timeframe, but it is worth highlighting lack of positive updates in high severity areas across time.*
- *Further disseminating the Return Index, especially to high-level Iraqi authorities, to assist in their prioritisation of reconstruction efforts. The tool may also be of use in developing a durable solutions strategy, particularly with regard to better understanding conditions in places of origin and the challenges for remaining displaced families.*
- *Tailoring communication strategies and methods for the general population with a view that the Return Index may be used by IDPs themselves to make informed choices related to returning to their places of origin.*
- *Expanding the Return Index to cover severity of conditions across Iraq. This means not limiting the data collection to areas of return, but expanding it to the rest of districts and governorates in the country, recognizing that Iraq's challenges are not only limited to displacement and that social fragility is a key issue to tackle with the appropriate information.*

To find more detailed breakdowns, movement trends, and databases, please consult the DTM Iraq website: iraqdtm.iom.int. You can also find our latest analyses in the new interactive dashboards under the 'IDP & Returnee Master Lists' tab. For further details also see the Iraq Returns Working Group website: iraqrecovery.org/rwg.

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