

# BETWEEN FRAGILITY AND RESILIENCE

AN EXPLORATION OF HUMAN, SOCIAL, NATURAL,  
PHYSICAL, AND FINANCIAL CAPITALS IN THE  
SOUTH OF IRAQ

APRIL 2023



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Communities' experiences of fragility or resilience sit on a spectrum dependent on the capacity, accountability, or legitimacy of the state or institutions to mediate relations between citizen groups and between citizens and the state to make them less vulnerable to violence.<sup>1</sup> This framing focuses not only on service provision, legitimacy, or accountability of the international community, but also on the state for arbitrating vertical (state-citizen) and horizontal (citizen-citizen) relationships. It further underscores that fragility and resilience are a function of the strength of civil society and other networks, safety nets, and resources available to people both individually and communally.<sup>2</sup> This frame can help to identify and explain pockets of fragility in contexts where state functioning is relatively strong and pockets of resilience

in areas where state institutions are weak.<sup>3</sup>

These dynamics are particularly useful to explore in a context like southern Iraq, specifically Basra, Thi-Qar, and Missan. These areas have experienced significant development neglect, inequity, and growing criminal and political violence. They also contain considerable natural resources, and on the surface seem to have relatively cohesive ethno-religiously homogenous communities. As such, the following analysis of conditions in these governorates – using statistically representative profiling data – will examine the factors which affect individual and collective resilience and fragility: human, social, natural, physical, and financial capitals.

This brief is part of a larger research project, *A Climate of Fragility*, carried out by IOM Iraq and Social Inquiry, that provides the first detailed profiling of southern governorates in Iraq in a decade, exploring population demographics, housing, access to services, socio-economic situation, agriculture, migration, wellbeing, governance, security, and social cohesion. The profiling is based on a large-scale household survey.

The survey included a household module (applicable to the overall household situation), a personal module (gathering perceptions of the respondent), and a roster module (collecting personal characteristics of each household member). A total of 3,904 respondents were surveyed between December 2020 and January 2021 across the 18 districts in Basra, Thi-Qar, and Missan governorates. Thus, the sample is statistically representative at the governorate and district level, with district-level sampling stratified by urbanicity and gender, generating a representative sample for urban and rural respondents and male and female respondents separately. The outputs of this project also include a household profiling report of Basra, Thi-Qar, and Missan governorates, two additional thematic briefs on employment and marginalization, and an [online portal](#) that includes all reports and analysis, key findings, a dashboard, and public datasets for use.

1 World Bank, *World Development Report: Conflict, Security and Development* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2011), xvi.

2 Nadia Siddiqui, Roger Guiu, and Aaso Ameen Shwan, *Reframing Social Fragility in Areas of Protracted Displacement and Emerging Return in Iraq: A Guide for Programming* (Baghdad: IOM, 2017).

3 Ibid.; Ami C. Carpenter, *Community Resilience to Sectarian Violence in Baghdad* (New York: Springer, 2014); and Par Jean-Luc Dubois, Patricia Huyghebaert and Anne-Sophie Brouillet, "Relating Fragile States to Social and Human Fragilities," *Ethique et Economique*, 7 no. 1 (2010): 1-18.

## HUMAN CAPITAL

Human capital comprises the knowledge, skills, ability to labor, and good health that enable individuals and households to realize their potential as productive members of society.<sup>4</sup> People seek to invest in and accumulate these conditions throughout their lives. Ensuring that they all have access to education, healthcare,

jobs and skills, and necessary accommodations to be able to work are critical to ending poverty and creating more inclusive societies.<sup>5</sup> Human capital for Basra, Thi-Qar, and Missan governorates is examined in greater detail here, with focus on knowledge, ability to labor, and health.<sup>6</sup>

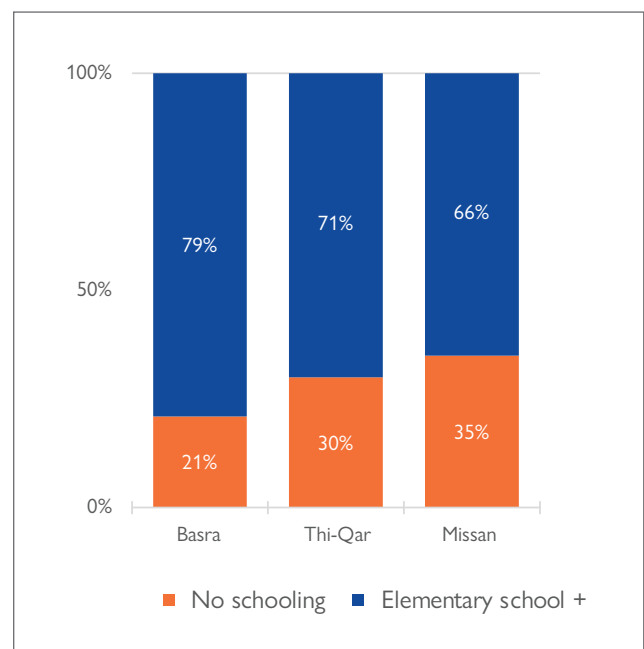
**Key takeaway:** Human capital is improving mainly because education access and attainment is increasing among younger generations. There is the untapped human potential for women to become an active part of economic sectors, especially as they are becoming more educated. The ability to receive the level of care necessary to address medical concerns is also a key limitation. Basra is in a better position regarding human capital levels as compared to Thi-Qar and Missan.

## KNOWLEDGE

Education and more to the point, access to education, is a critical component to human capital. This is especially true in contexts that have experienced prolonged and historical development neglect as in southern Iraq. Evidence of this neglect and its gradual improvement over time – though particularly unequal – can be seen in exploring education attainment. Education attainment here refers to the completion of at least primary school. Data on this comes from the profiling survey, where every respondent was asked the highest level of education completed for each member of their household who is 12 years of age and older.

In comparing education levels across the three governorates, the critical distinction is that **Basra has a considerably lower proportion of households with no educational attainment** at all among members older than 12 years old (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percentage of individuals with no education attainment compared to those with at least elementary education



4 World Bank, Human Capital Index 2020 Update: Human Capital in the Time of COVID-19 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2020). For updated definition of human capital used here, see: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital/brief/the-human-capital-project-frequently-asked-questions#HCP2>

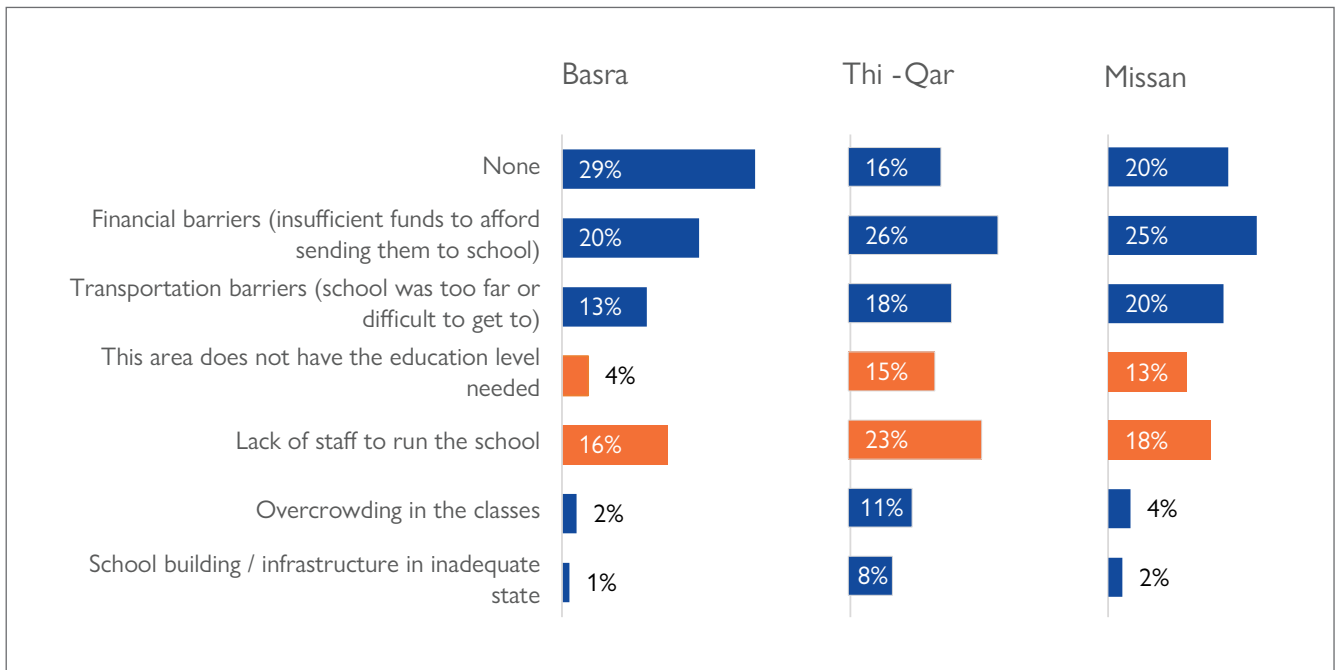
5 Ibid

6 Employment and livelihoods will be explored in detail in a separate thematic brief for this project.

This gap is starker when comparing urban and rural households in Thi-Qar and Missan in particular. Specifically, **the proportion of rural households with no educational attainment in Thi-Qar and Missan is approximately one and a half to almost twice as large as their urban counterparts** (35% versus 22% in Thi-Qar, and 45% versus 26% in Missan). On the other hand, the

differences between urban and rural households in Basra is relatively negligible (18% versus 23%). Some factors driving this lack of education attainment are related to state neglect, particularly in rural areas of Thi-Qar and Missan, such as the lack of sufficient staff to run schools, the physical absence of schools, and the limited education levels available (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Obstacles to accessing education

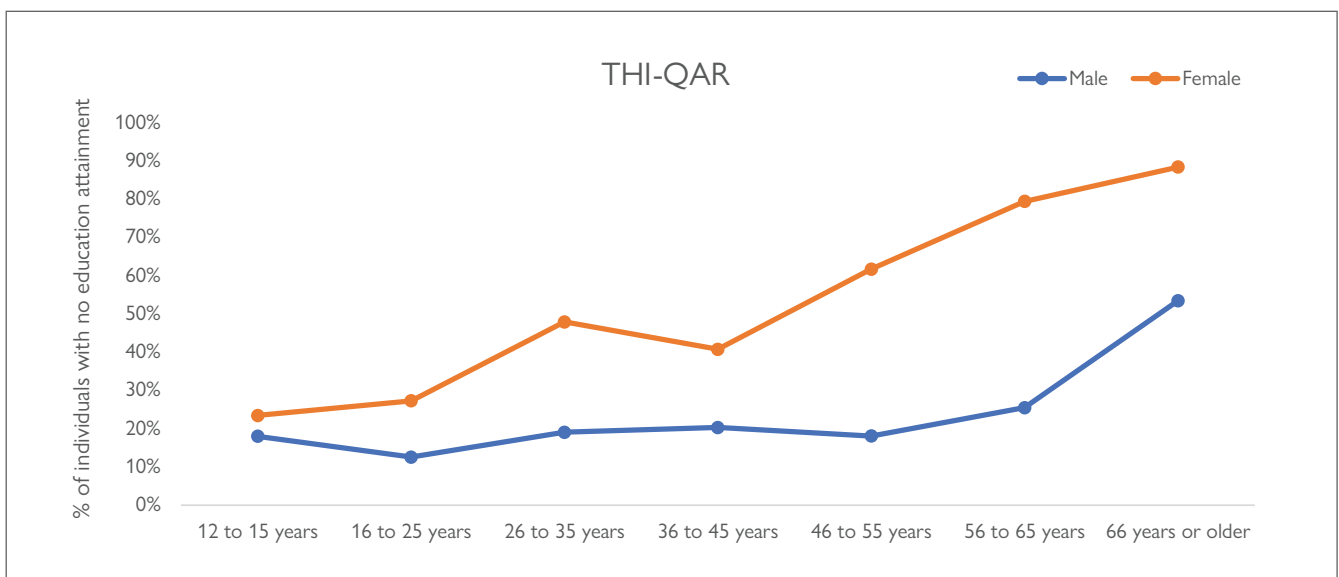
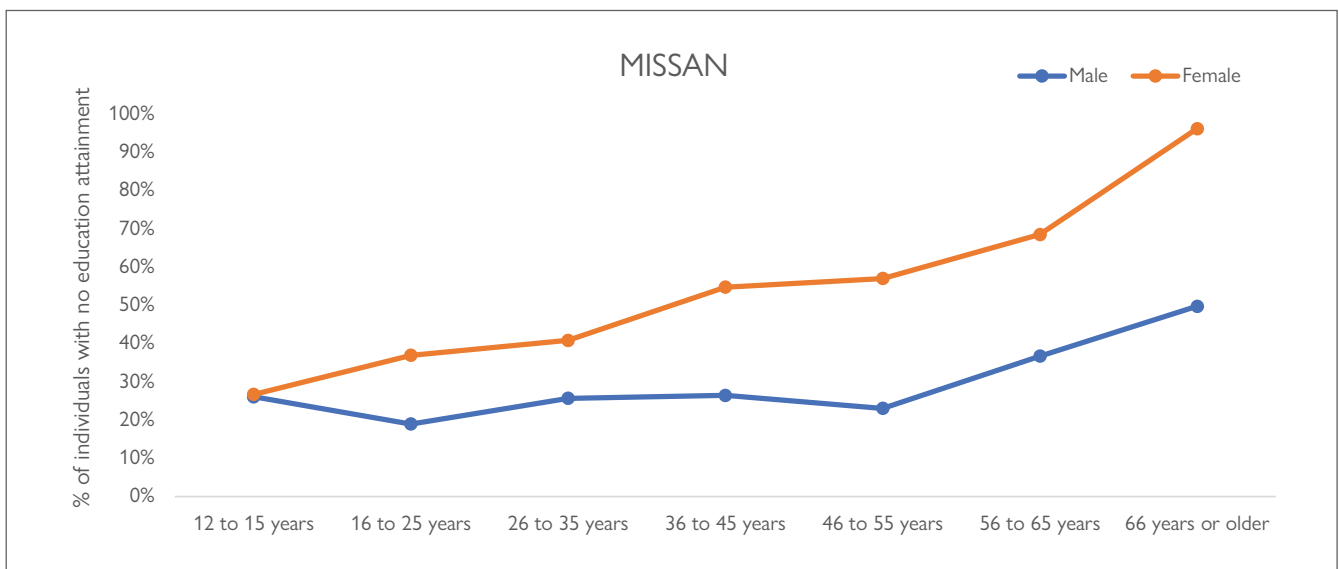
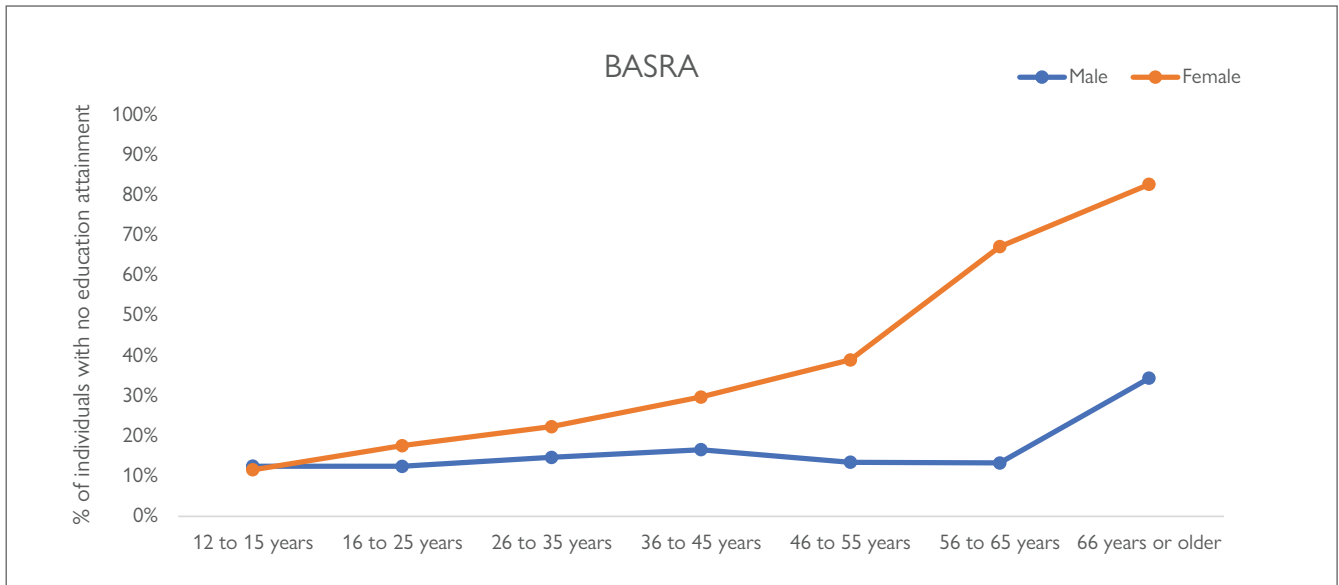


Note: multiple choice responses

At the same time, educational attainment in these governorates has increased over time (Figure 3). **Within two generations, women in Basra especially and Missan have caught up with men in terms of educational attainment at the governorate**

**level.** This finding pertains to urban women in these governorates; rural women here still lag behind. The gender gap in education is still prominent in Thi-Qar however across location types.

Figure 3. Lack of education attainment by age and gender per governorate



It should be noted however that **women’s ability to participate in the workforce remains particularly limited** even with these stark gains in education. Between 5 and 7% of working age women across governorates have paid jobs as compared to approximately 53% of men overall. This inability to join the paid labor market relates to norms and customs, the unequal share of household responsibilities they carry, and a legacy of low to no educational access.

These dynamics are explored in more detail in the brief, **Employment in the South of Iraq: Challenging Prospects for Women and Youth**.

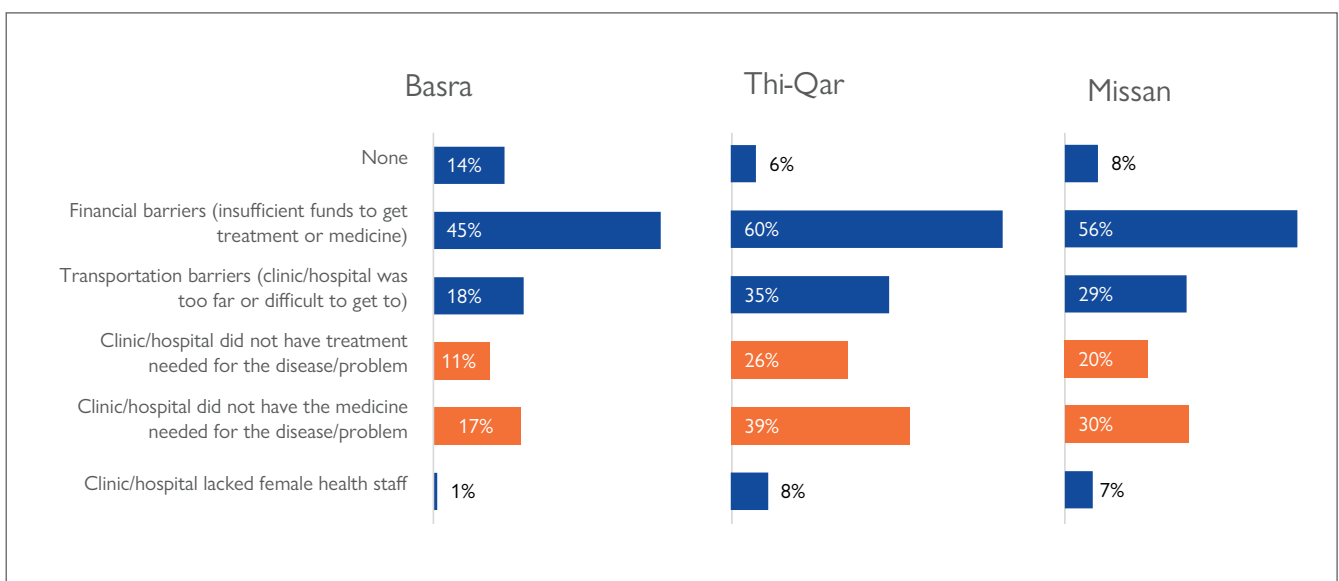
Finally, despite these gains, across governorates and gender, **at least 1 in 10 young people (12 to 25 years old) still have no reported schooling completed**.

## HEALTH

Good health is fundamental for overall wellbeing and productivity, including educational attainment. Over three-quarters of respondents across the three southern governorates indicate that a member of their household required medical care in the last year, with little difference between governorates or urban and rural populations. Among those who needed healthcare, nearly **all were able to access medical facilities** indicating their physical presence across locations, even if sometimes far away. Half received care from a private doctor or clinic, followed by public primary health centers and public hospitals.

This high rate of access, however, does not mean that households necessarily received the level of care they needed. Of those households that needed and accessed healthcare, this **lack of sufficient care** was reportedly due in large part to **financial cost**, but also critically to the fact that the **facilities did not have the necessary medication or treatment** available (Figure 4). These latter issues were reported most acutely in Thi-Qar followed by Missan and then Basra, with little variation between rural and urban respondents.

Figure 4. Obstacles to receiving level of needed healthcare



Note: multiple choice responses



## SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital here relates to those features of society such as networks, norms of reciprocity, and trust in others, that facilitate cooperation between citizens for mutual benefit.<sup>7</sup> This type of capital can be developed through vertical or horizontal networks and connectedness that increase people's trust and ability to work together and expand access to wider institutions (e.g., political or civic bodies); membership of more formalized groups which often entails adherence to mutually-agreed or commonly accepted rules, norms, and sanctions; and relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchanges

that facilitate cooperation and informal safety nets.<sup>8</sup> While these elements are critical for a pluralistic and democratic society, such capital can have negative effect if networks and norms are hierarchical, exclusionary, and even xenophobic, biasing themselves toward the established social and political order and to cultural and social homogeneity.<sup>9</sup> Social capital in Basra, Thi-Qar, and Misan governorates is explored here via networks and connections (trust in institutions and participation) and relationships of trust (in the wider community and more immediate community).

**Key takeaway:** There is some polarization between vertical and horizontal connections and relationships. People in specific neighborhoods and villages trust and help one another and there is a moderate level of organizing for community work and collective action. This organizing may be a response to a particularly weak vertical social capital, given the lack of confidence in and reliance on formal and customary institutions. Trust in the wider community is also relatively low as well.

## NETWORKS AND CONNECTIONS

Confidence in state, customary, and civic actors is not particularly high across governorates (Figure 5). Even the most trusted actors – tribal leaders and religious leaders – garner only about 14% to 18% of the population reporting complete trust and 43% to 44% reporting a lot of trust in them. **Residents have particularly low levels of confidence in their respective**

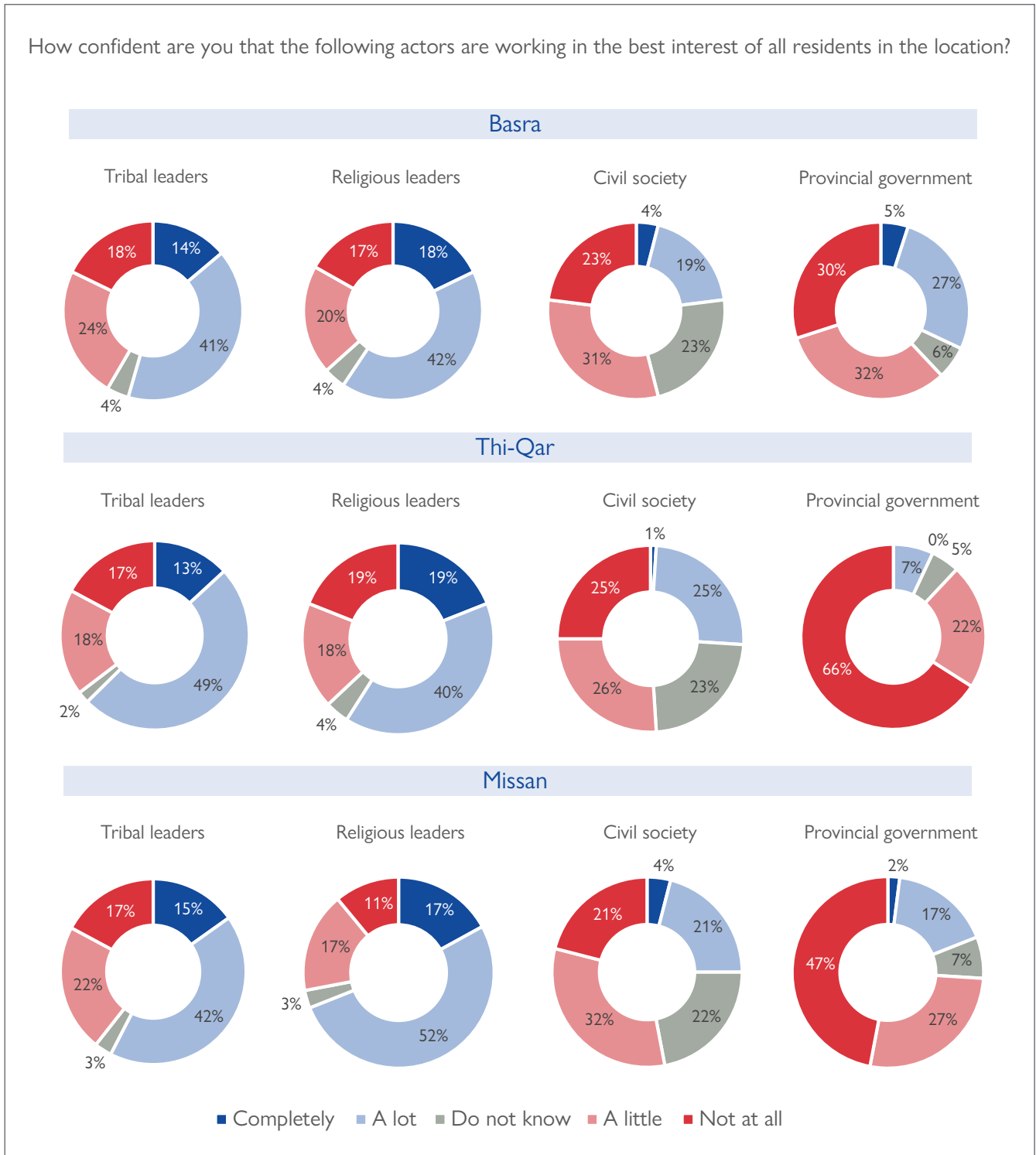
**provincial authorities;** this holds especially true in Thi-Qar. Similarly, the **low levels of confidence in civil society are striking** – if they have an opinion at all, considering the high rate of “do not know” responses in relation to this actor. This may reflect a weak or co-opted civil society or a limited presence of such organizations.

7 Robert Putnam, “The Prosperous Community,” *The American Prospect*, 4 no. 13 (1993): 35-42.

8 DFID, *Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets* (London: DFID, 1999).

9 Andrew Norton and Arjan de Haan, “Social Cohesion: Theoretical Debates and Practical Applications with Respect to Jobs,” *Background Paper for the World Development Report 2013* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2012).

Figure 5. Confidence in state, customary, and civic actors by governorate



A critical gender divide emerges here, with women reporting “no confidence at all” considerably more frequently than men for the above actors. Furthermore, rural populations in Thi-Qar and Missan hold more negative views of their provincial governments while urban populations are less inclined to trust tribal and religious leaders. **These findings reflect a context**

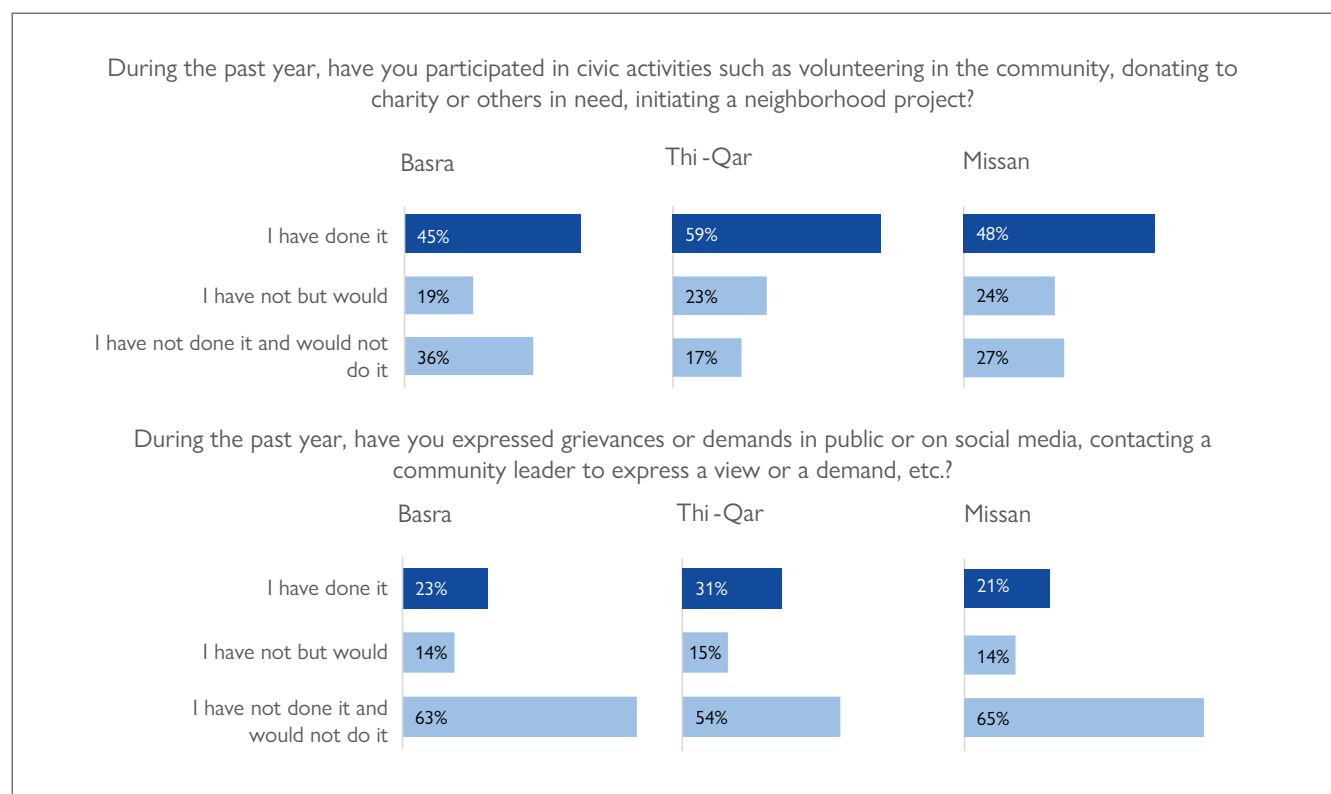
**in which existing power structures likely limit women’s representation and participation, where rural populations feel neglected by the state, and where urban populations feel that tribal and religious leaders hold undue sway.** While the data show moderate to low levels of institutional trust, the respondents are

nevertheless reportedly engaged in civic activities<sup>10</sup> and to a lesser extent to public affairs.<sup>11</sup> The most active residents in both regards are in Thi-Qar, followed by Missan in terms of civic activities and Basra in terms of public affairs (Figure 6). This civic engagement seems driven by notions of mutual aid, helping those in need directly where people can, and improving living conditions for all. Participation in public affairs here, often in the form of protest, also links to this aim of improving current conditions and prospects and as such, may be seen in some ways as a response to the limited trust people have in institutional actors and in seeking to change them to better serve all members

of the community. While residents in these southern governorates appear active, engaged, and motivated in their communities and on the street even in the face of violence and repression, they have particularly negative views that elections – a more conventional form of public participation – will bring positive change.<sup>12</sup>

This may further underscore **their desire for real shift in the status quo and the potential for growing apathy, despair, or a shrinking away from civic space** if windows for it seem to be closing through the means people have available to them so far: community engagement, protest, and voting.<sup>13</sup>

Figure 6. Participation in civic activities and public affairs by governorate



10 For example, volunteerism, charity, or initiating a neighborhood project.

11 For example, expressing grievances or demands in public or on social media, or contacting a community leader to do so

12 Nearly all respondents (86%) report having little to no confidence in elections translating people's expectations into positive change. See, IOM and Social Inquiry, *A Climate of Fragility: Household Profiling in the South of Iraq Basra, Thi-Qar, and Missan* (Baghdad: IOM 2022).

13 Louisa Loveluck and Emilienne Malfatto, "Roar of Hope. Silence of Despair," *Washington Post*, April 21, 2021; and Nadia Siddiqui and Khogir W. Mohammed, *Movements Before Mechanisms: Community Grievances and Windows of Opportunity for Restorative Justice in a Transitional Justice Context* (Erbil: Social Inquiry, 2022).

## RELATIONSHIPS OF TRUST

Trust between community members follows a similar pattern to that of institutions. Remarkably, slightly over half of respondents report positive views (Table 1).

These differences do not vary by governorate, but urban populations tend to express less trust in others than their rural counterparts.

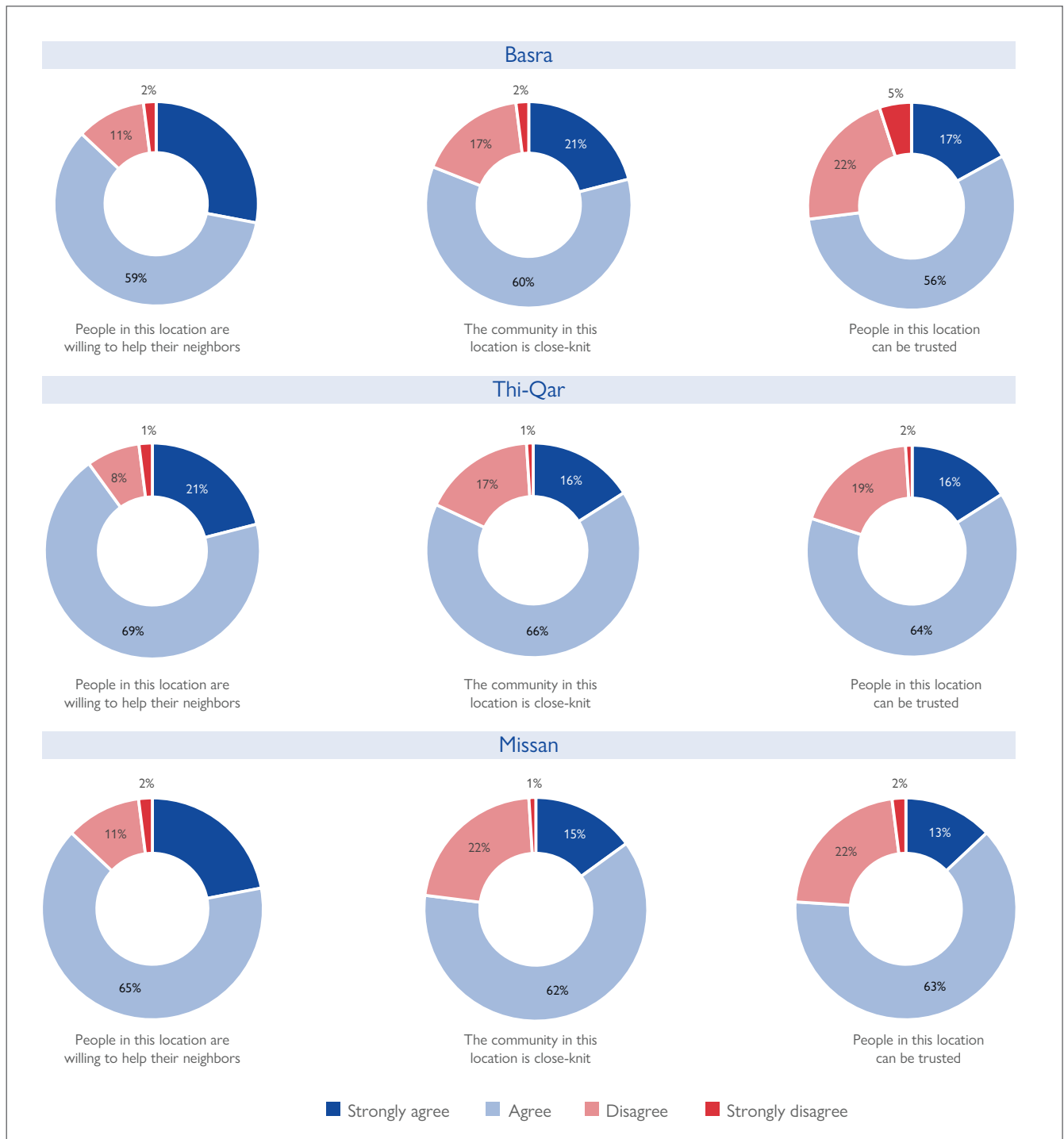
Table 1. Levels of inter-personal trust among the wider community by governorate

How much do you trust people from other groups, tribes, or communities in your subdistrict?	Basra	Thi-Qar	Missan
Completely	13%	9%	9%
A lot	41%	40%	47%
A little	37%	37%	35%
Not at all	9%	13%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%

While **residents seem to have moderate to low trust in the wider community of their subdistricts**, their relationships of **trust within their specific neighborhoods or villages is particularly high**. Respondents commonly report that neighbors willing to help each other, that the immediate community is close-knit, and that people

in the community can be trusted (Figure 7). This likely reflects the reported prevalence of civic and public affairs participation (as detailed above). The two, trust in one's immediate community and participation, may be mutually reinforcing in that the more people trust each other, the more they participate and the more they participate, the more they trust each other.

Figure 7. Relationships of trust and reciprocity by governorate



The findings here thus indicate **strong horizontal social capital between immediate community members** including for the mobilization of that community to help one another and express grievance together. However, there is **particularly weak vertical social capital between citizens and institutions** and to each other in a broader sense.

There seems to be a pervasive sense of the failure of institutions to uphold the public's trust or to act and operate responsibly. The need to staunch and rectify these feelings is critical as their perpetuation has the capacity not only to reduce state legitimacy but also to engender apathy and weaken social cohesion and other forms of social capital as people retreat from society.<sup>14</sup>

14 Liesel Ashley Ritchie, "Individual Stress, Collective Trauma, and Social Capital in the Wake of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill," *Sociological Inquiry* 82, no. 2 (2012): 187-211.

## NATURAL CAPITAL

Natural capital is the stock of renewable and non-renewable natural resources that provide a flow of benefits to people and the economy. There is a wide variation in the resources that make up natural capital, from intangible public goods such as the atmosphere and biodiversity to divisible assets used directly for production (e.g., land or trees).<sup>15</sup>

Critically, in assessing this form of capital, of importance is not only the existence and quantity of different types of natural stocks, but also access to them, their quality, and how they combine and vary over time.<sup>16</sup> Natural capital in Basra, Thi-Qar, and Missan governorates is explored here through the state of water resources, air quality, and environmental conditions more broadly.

**Key takeaway:** This is in general the worst among all capitals explored, with little in the way of positive trajectories or conditions. The poor quality and quantity of water resources negatively affect the performance of agriculture. It also has consequences on public health, with a relatively high proportion of people reporting illness due to water-borne diseases. The air and environment are similarly polluted and in poor condition. Thi-Qar and Missan are particularly affected by the poor state of water resources linked to their impacts on agriculture and health.

## STATE OF WATER RESOURCES

The quantity and quality of the water found in the rivers and canals that flow through Basra, Thi-Qar, and Missan are of growing concerns and a focus of research and reporting in recent years.<sup>17</sup> This study shows that the situation has become more dire. **In the past five years, over one in ten households have abandoned farming altogether.** Overall, 22 percent of households across the three governorates still engage in farming land, but most farming households (72%) indicated a reduction in production and yield over the last five years. With respect to livestock, 8 percent of all households abandoned livestock entirely; for the 31 percent of households that still engage in

this activity, most (86%) have had to reduce their herds over the last five years. Finally, 4 percent of all households abandoned fishing or fish farming in the past five years. Of the 5 percent of households that currently engage in fishing or fish farming, 90 percent reported reduction in activity over the last five years. The reasons that households engaged in agriculture give for either their **abandonment or reduction of farming, livestock, and fishing pertain precisely to water quantity and quality:** lack of water, salinization, and water contamination (see Figure 8 for farming).<sup>18</sup>

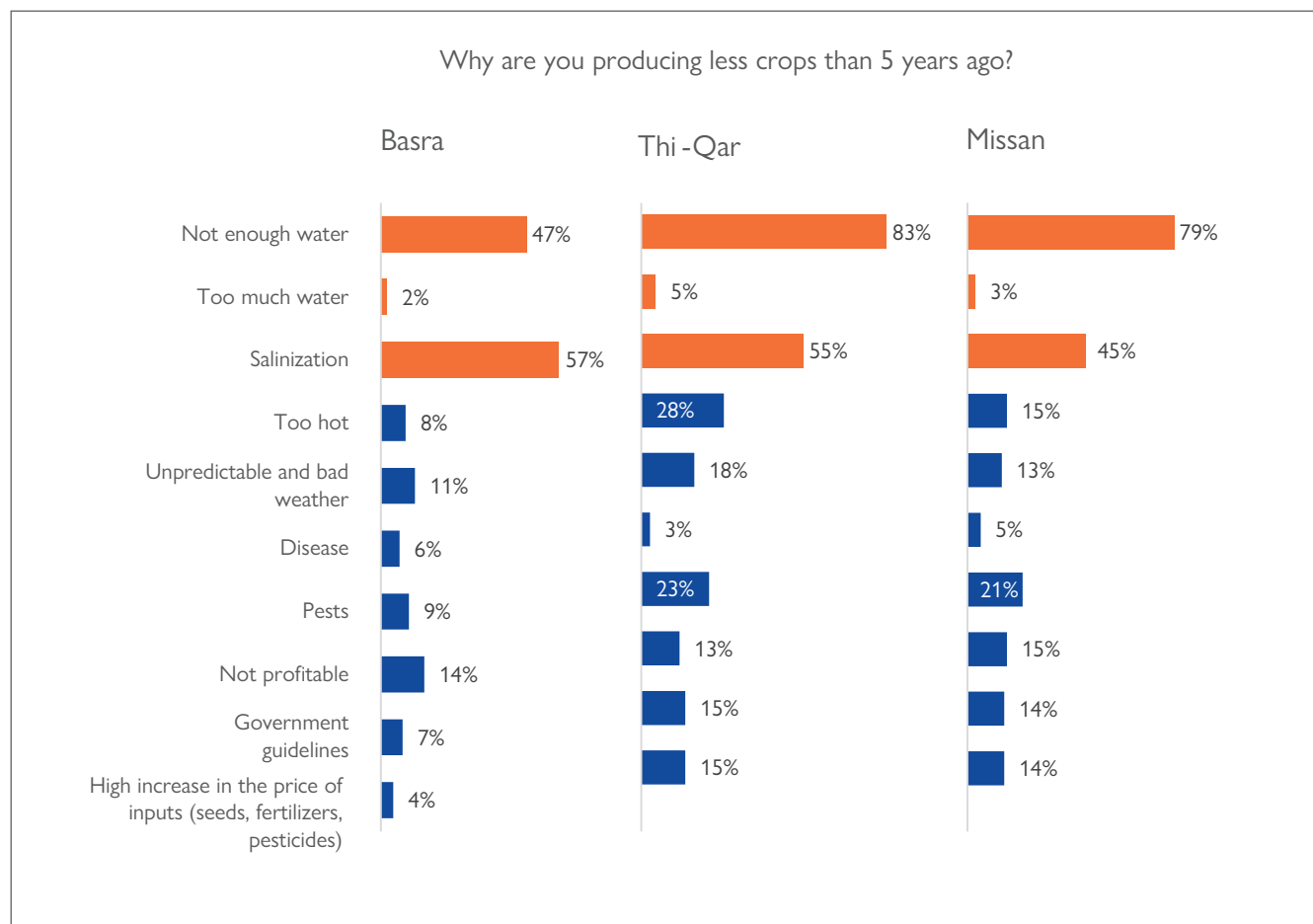
15 DFID, Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets.

16 Ibid

17 See for example, Roger Guiu, *When Canals Run Dry: Displacement Triggered by Water Stress in the South of Iraq* (Geneva: IDMC / NRC, 2020); and Belkis Wille, *Basra is Thirsty: Iraq's Failure to Manage the Water Crisis* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2019).

18 IOM and Social Inquiry, *A Climate of Fragility*.

Figure 8. Water-related reasons for reduction in farming production and yield



Note: multiple choice responses

The exposure to contaminated water seems to have contributed to public health concerns as well. **Nearly one in five households indicated that a family member required medical attention for a water-borne illness in the past year.** While the rates of water-borne illness reported in Basra was the roughly the same and relatively low for urban and rural households at 13%, rates were higher with more significant differences between urban and rural households in Missan (15% versus 30% respectively) and Thi-Qar (16% versus 25%). It is likely that the cause of illness for urban households may be due to improperly treated water coming into their homes for domestic use;<sup>19</sup> however, rural households may be more directly exposed to untreated water from rivers and canals. As

such, rural areas more reliant on agriculture tend to bear the brunt of the effects of contaminated water, both economically and on their health.

Furthermore, **rural households feel the effects of limited water supply more acutely**, particularly in areas more reliant on agriculture for their livelihoods. The lower water supply is a result of environmental issues currently existing upstream as well as downstream, both climate-triggered (e.g., decreasing rainfall at the origin of the Tigris-Euphrates Basin, pushing neighboring countries to build dams and reservoirs to preserve their own water supply, and increasing temperatures) and man-made (e.g., poor investment and maintenance in the canal network). Urban areas are less effected by this as they are prioritized for water supply by the state.

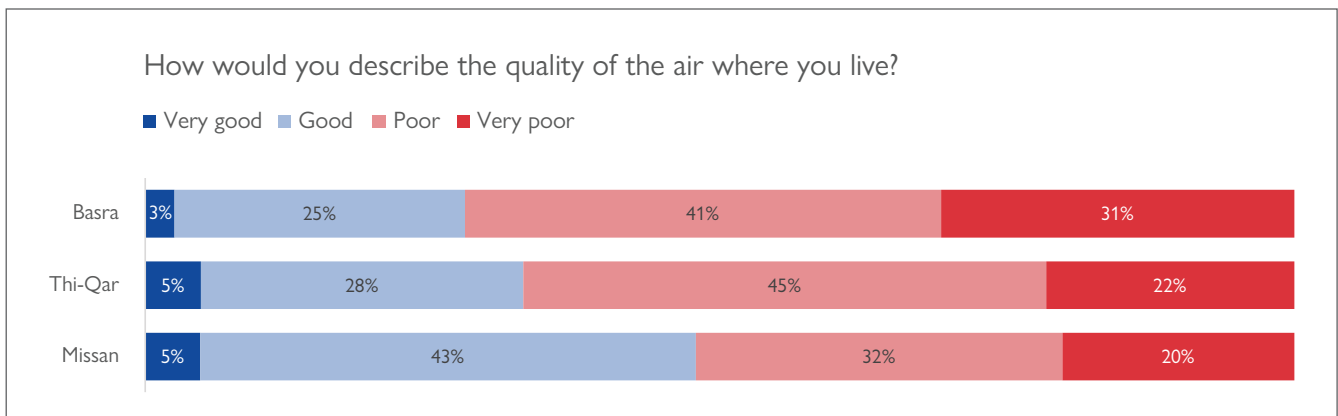
19 Wille, Basra is Thirsty.

## AIR QUALITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

**Most respondents in these southern governorates report poor to very poor air quality**, with little variation between governorates (Figure 9). Of note here however is that residents of Basra Governorate report very poor air quality in higher

proportion than their counterparts in Thi-Qar and Missan. This may in part be attributable to the relatively high number of active oil fields in Basra surrounding the urban center, bordering rural areas. These governorates have more frequent and out of season sandstorms which also impacts the quality of the air.<sup>20</sup>

Figure 9. Air quality by governorate



With respect to environmental conditions, respondents were asked to rate the condition of their general natural surroundings overall. This included any waterways, canals, rivers, marshland, grasslands, greenspace, and plant and animal life around them that are hallmarks of these areas. The **overwhelming majority overall (86%) reported poor to very poor condition of their natural surroundings**, across governorates and location types. This is unsurprising given the state of

water and air reported above as well as a pervasive lack of sewage and sanitation service provision<sup>21</sup> leading to extensive litter and refuse found in streets, greenspaces, and waterways. This highlights a general trend of the deteriorating state of renewable resources in these governorates. As such, these areas' declining natural capital – linked to climate change, past and present environmental degradation, and neglect – urgently needs to be rectified and where possible reversed.

20 The desertification of these governorates due to the reduction in farming and the effect of climate are contributing to this wave of sandstorms. See, Hassan Khalil and Maha Yassin, "Sandstorms and Desertification: Instability in the South of Iraq," Planetary Security Initiative, August 30, 2022.

21 WFP and Social Inquiry, Prospects for Resilience Amid Fragility: Conflict Analysis of Al-Qurna and Al-Dair Districts in Basra Governorate (Baghdad: WFP, 2022).



## PHYSICAL CAPITAL

Physical capital refers to the basic infrastructure and man-made goods needed to support wellbeing and livelihoods. Infrastructure consists of changes to the physical environment that help people meet their basic needs and be more productive.<sup>22</sup> This can include both public and private goods, including for example, affordable transport, secure shelter and buildings,

adequate water supply and sanitation, and access to information (communications). Man-made goods are tools and equipment that people use to function more productively and again are either collectively or privately owned. Physical capital in Basra, Thi-Qar, and Missan governorates is explored by examining shelter, public utilities, and agricultural land.

**Key takeaway:** This is moderate and maybe less of a concern than the other detailed here. Everyone seems to have access to public utilities, but at varying levels of quality, satisfaction, and safety (in terms of water). Residents have housing (which tends to be of a decent quality), though there are issues in the formality of the land tenure upon which they are built, especially in Missan. Finally, land access for purposes such as farming seem not to highlight any significant issues as farmers tend to own their farmland. Only in Missan is there a larger percentage of people renting land or working others' land, which could point to localized issues with land distribution and availability.

## SHELTER

An important aspect of a secure shelter in this context is not only the quality of housing and ownership status of the physical structure, but the land tenure status on which the shelter sits as well. Approximately two-thirds of people reside in standard built housing, with the remaining third in rudimentary mud brick or cinder block houses. The latter **lower quality structures are predominantly found among households in rural Missan (70%) and Thi-Qar (59%)**. Basra overall (urban and rural) has the highest proportion of households living in standard built dwellings (68%), while Thi-Qar has the highest proportion of urban residents living in such housing (78%). Thi-Qar also has the highest rate by far of both urban and rural

residents who indicate they own their homes outright (83%), while **Missan has the highest proportion of irregular housing** across location types (23%).

Even with the relatively high proportion of households reporting that they own their homes (72%), only a plurality (45%) has formal and official tenure over the land on which they are built (Table 2). **Missan has the highest rate of the informal land tenure** (i.e., housing built on public land without official permission) among urban populations (20%). Among rural populations, highest rates of informal tenure (i.e., housing built on agricultural land without land purchase) are in Missan (59%) and Thi-Qar (39%), respectively.

22 DFID, Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets.

Table 2. Land tenure status by governorate<sup>23</sup>

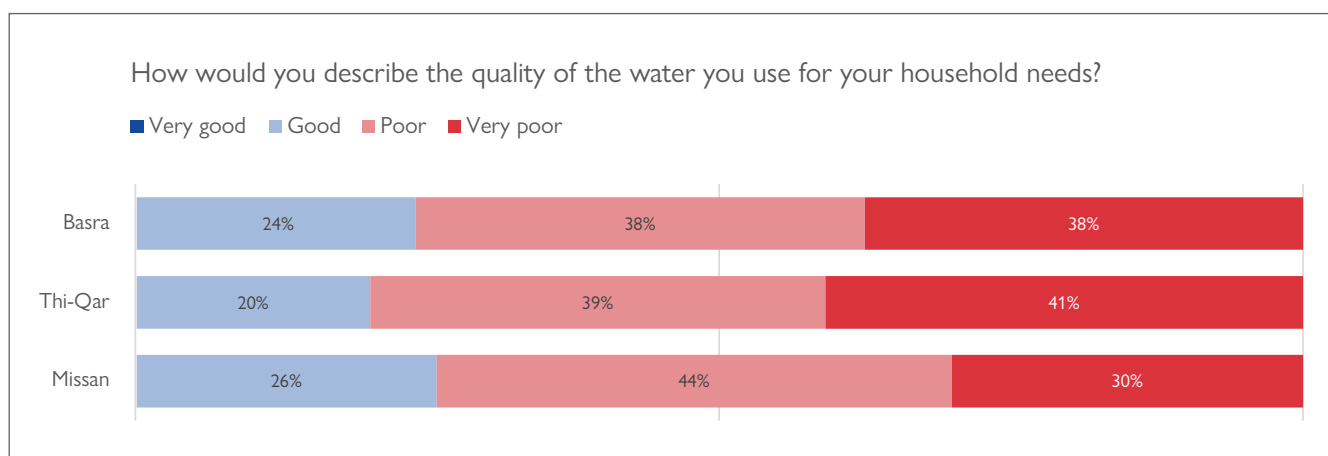
What is the ownership status of the land your current house is built on?	Basra	Thi-Qar	Missan
Private residential land (purchased and registered)	43%	46%	47%
Private residential land (not purchased)	8%	3%	3%
Agricultural land (purchased or gifted)	24%	25%	12%
Agricultural land (not purchased)	8%	18%	16%
Public land (given to us officially by the government)	3%	0%	3%
Public land (purchased or gifted)	2%	1%	2%
Public land (built on it without official permission)	9%	5%	15%
Do not know	3%	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

## PUBLIC UTILITIES

This section examines the public water and electricity supply in surveyed areas. **Water supply is markedly poorer than electricity.** Indeed, a little over

three-quarters of respondents indicate that the quality of the water they use for household needs is poor or very poor (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Water quality for domestic use by governorate



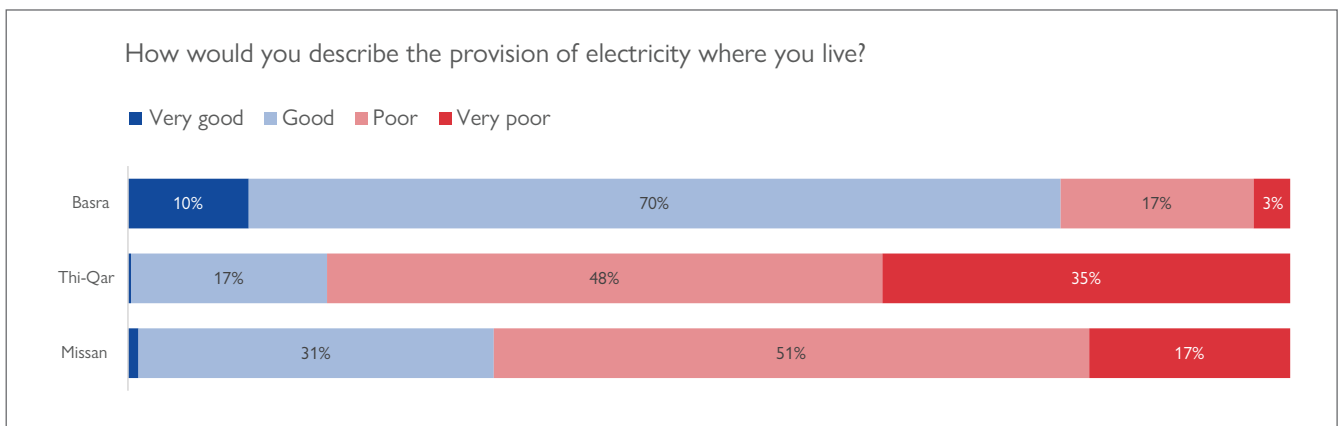
<sup>23</sup> The most formal land tenure option in the table is private residential land (purchased and registered), referring to houses built on land zoned for residential use which the homeowners own and is registered in the cadaster under their names. Building on public land when it has been given by the government is also a formal form of land tenure. Any other land tenure option involves some degree of informality. Residential houses cannot be built on agricultural land, even if owned. Building on public land that was purchased from a third party or without permission to do so also involves a high degree of informal tenure and it may even imply a higher level of vulnerability in the face of evictions.

Of note is that that **half of rural households in Thi-Qar and Missan report very poor water quality** for daily use (54% and 48% respectively) As such, the primary source of drinking water for most residents across governorates is not from the public tap water supply, but rather private water trucking – which adds an additional financial burden on households.

Public electricity supply in these governorates is somewhat better than that of water. Nearly all residents across governorates and location types are officially connected to the public electrical grid, with the remaining small minority connected unofficially. In other words, no one reported having no access to the public supply.

Furthermore, a plurality of respondents indicate good to very good electricity provision. This is highest across all locations in Basra, followed distantly by Missan, and then Thi-Qar with particularly low levels of satisfaction with this provision (Figure 11). This is concerning as limited electricity provision can make life considerably more difficult. It limits the ability of households to carry out daily activities, can pose health risks if it is not possible to regulate indoor temperatures in response to extreme heat or cold, and can impact the provision of other critical services as well (e.g., healthcare). It also adds a financial burden on households who seek to use generators when the public supply cuts out.

Figure 11. Quality of electricity provision by governorate

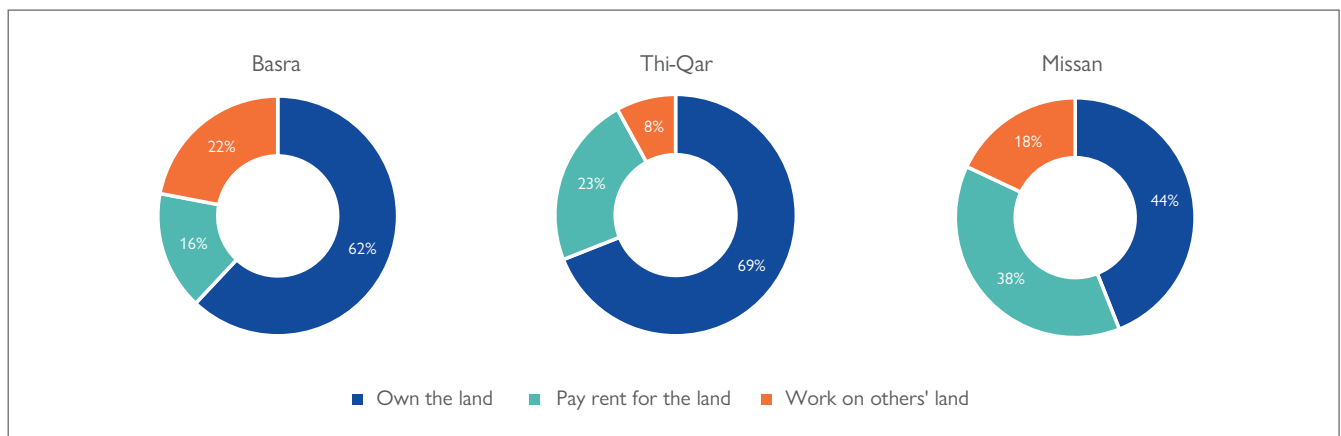


## AGRICULTURAL LAND

Access to and right of use of agricultural land is obviously critical for households who farm, and it is closely linked with wealth and related inequalities. Among the 1 in 5 households who do farm across these three governorates, a majority owns the land they use (70% in urban areas and 57% in rural areas). It is striking, however, that in Missan a critical proportion of rural households who farm are renting the land they use (41%) and in Basra, rural households who farm

more often work on others' land (27%) (Figure 12). This belies a particular rural dynamic; these findings indicate **a potential inequality in access to land, where the ownership and control of land may be concentrated among a politically powerful few families or tribes**. This seems less of an issue in Thi-Qar where the majority own their farmland and a smaller proportion pay rent for use.

Figure 12. Farmland ownership status by governorate



## FINANCIAL CAPITAL

Financial capital relates to the financial resources that households use to meet immediate needs and achieve long-term goals. In this context, it includes monetary inflows as well as available stocks and access to financial resources.<sup>24</sup> Such inflows consist of earned income, pensions or other transfers from the state,

and remittances. Available stocks are related to savings, liquid assets, and access to credit-providing institutions, among others. Financial capital in Basra, Thi-Qar, and Missan governorates is explored through secure income sources and access to safety nets.

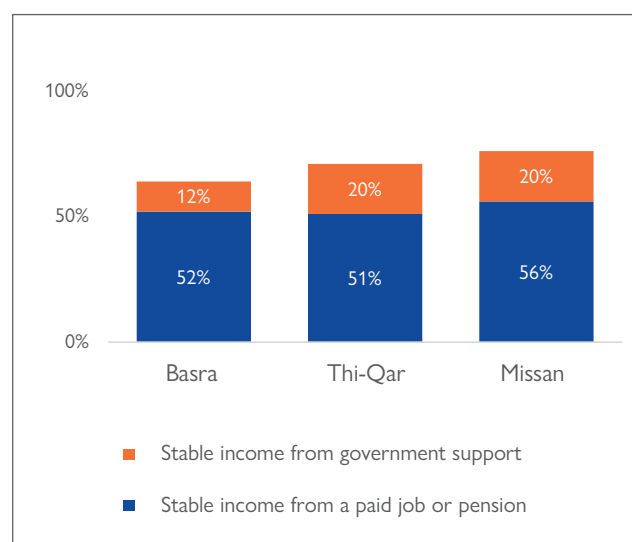
**Key takeaway:** This capital also has mixed levels, trending more to the low side especially in Thi-Qar and Missan. While half the population overall seem to have stable revenue from work and pensions (as well as a smaller number relying on regular government support), there is still a sizeable proportion of the population that has no access to financial resources or support (either through savings or borrowing) in case of an unanticipated expense. There is thus an extended risk for a considerable number of families to not be able to cope with shocks.

## SECURE INCOME SOURCES

In these three governorates, the most steady and secure forms of revenue for a household commonly come from government employment, a paid company job, working in the security forces, a pension, and/or government safety nets. Nearly three-quarters of households (70%) have revenues generated from at least one of these sources (Figure 13). The higher proportion of such households Thi-Qar and Missan is due to their greater reliance on government safety nets, which are generally relatively small in amount. Remittances do not play much of a role in household revenue overall. Only 2% of households report receiving such income and when they do, it is sporadic at best.

At the same time, 30% of households indicate daily labor or informal commerce as a source of household revenue (i.e., particularly insecure sources of income).<sup>25</sup> Deeper analysis of specific livelihood dynamics and unemployment rates are explored in the brief, **Employment in the South of Iraq: Challenging Prospects for Women and Youth.**

Figure 13. Secure income by governorate and type



Note: multiple choice responses

24 DFID, Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets.

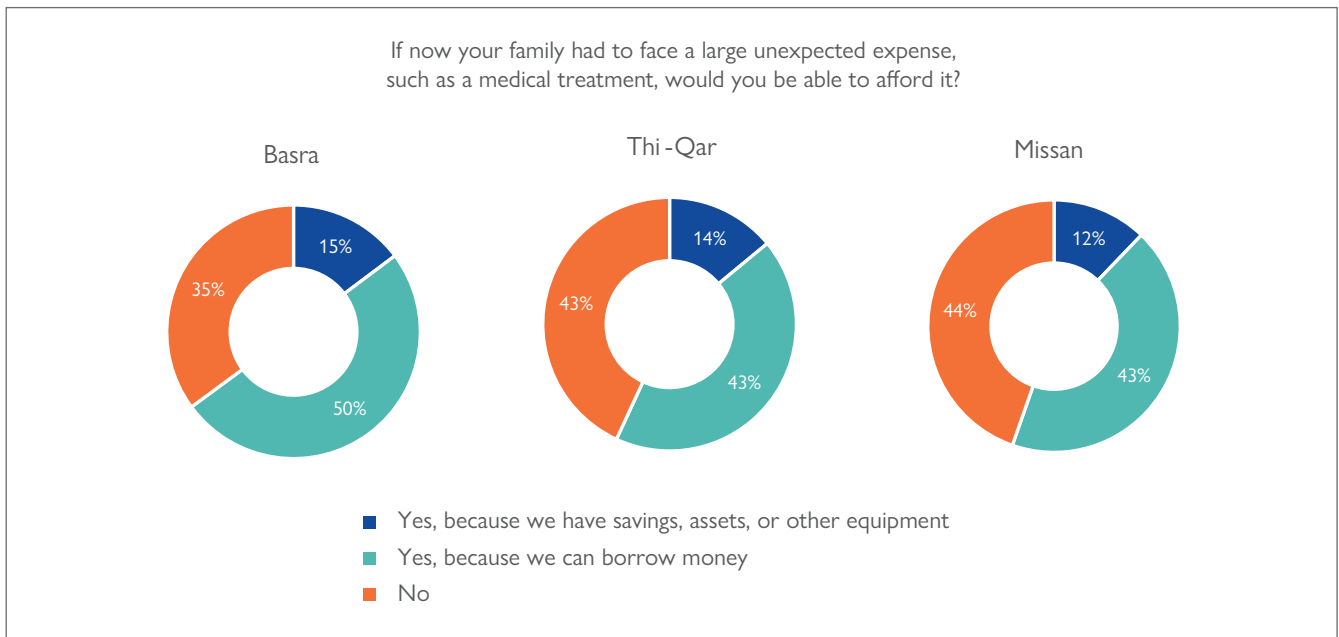
25 Most households tend to have more than one income source, so it is possible that one member of a household has public sector employment while another is working in daily labor – this is one of the critical generational disparities in livelihoods between older and younger members of the same household.

## SAFETY NETS, CREDIT, SHOCKS

The ability to access financial resources in some fashion in the face of unexpected shocks is a critical aspect of financial capital. The inability to do so can sharply increase households' vulnerabilities and potentially multiply the effects of said shocks. For a plurality of residents of Basra, Thi-Qar, and Missan, if faced with a large unanticipated expense these resources would come from borrowing from their wider networks, indicating they have some form of a safety net (Figure 14). These networks may comprise their friends, close

relatives, and immediate neighbors but likely also tap into wider, reciprocal familial and tribal networks as well. This includes connections to those with more wealth and power than the household in need. Access to and use of savings, however, is quite limited. A relatively large proportion of the population overall has no resources at all in the face of such expenses. The absence of any form of safety net is most pronounced in Thi-Qar and Missan.

Figure 14. Resources to withstand shocks by governorate



The lack of any kind of safety net coupled with limited secure income sources makes it harder for households to meet their basic needs. This includes obtaining proper healthcare and education given that cost is the critical barrier reported for accessing the quality of provision that households seek under ordinary conditions, let

alone when faced with an unexpected expense. The same holds true in terms of being able to access more secure forms of land tenure; the lack of financial capital makes it considerably more difficult to do so and as such, households seek other less costly, less bureaucratic, and, in turn, less formal alternatives.

## TAKING STOCK OF CAPITALS

The picture is mixed overall when considering human, social, natural, physical, and financial capitals across the three southern governorates within this profiling. While there are some factors that are at positive levels or improving within society, there are other considerable shortfalls with Basra faring the best overall and Thi-Qar and Missan lagging behind. These findings seem to indicate **that all the good found in these governorates** – including increasing education levels, high rates of localized community trust and public participation, decent quality housing for most of the population, and relatively high rates of households with stable income sources – **is being undermined by pernicious factors** including pervasive gender bias, institutional mistrust and neglect (the latter especially in rural areas), declining environmental conditions, low quality service provision, insecure land tenure, and particularly limited access to safety nets. Even though the needs are great across types of capitals, **the fact that residents are still engaged is perhaps their biggest asset** in working toward sustainable solutions to improve conditions for all.

The positive and negative factors identified are summarized per capital as follows:

- **Human capital:** Human capital is improving mainly because education access and attainment is increasing among younger generations. There is the untapped human potential for women to become an active part of economic sectors, especially as they are becoming more educated. The ability to receive the level of care necessary to address medical concerns is also a key limitation. Basra is in a better position regarding human capital levels as compared to Thi-Qar and Missan.
- **Social capital:** There is some polarization between vertical and horizontal connections and relationships. People in specific neighborhoods and villages trust and help one another and there is a moderate level of organizing for community work and collective action. This organizing may be a response to a

particularly weak vertical social capital, given the lack of confidence in and reliance on formal and customary institutions. Trust in the wider community is also relatively low as well.

- **Natural capital:** This is in general the worst among all capitals explored, with little in the way of positive trajectories or conditions. The poor quality and quantity of water resources negatively affect the performance of agriculture. It also has consequences on public health, with a relatively high proportion of people reporting illness due to water-borne diseases. The air and environment are similarly polluted and in poor condition. Thi-Qar and Missan are particularly affected by the poor state of water resources linked to their impacts on agriculture and health.
- **Physical capital:** This is moderate and maybe less of a concern than the other detailed here. Residents have housing (which tends to be of a decent quality), though there are issues in the formality of the land tenure upon which they are built, especially in Missan. Everyone seems to have access to public utilities, but at varying levels of quality, satisfaction, and safety (in terms of water). Finally, land access for purposes such as farming seem not to highlight any significant issues as farmers tend to own their farmland. Only in Missan is there a larger percentage of people renting land or working others' land, which could point to localized issues with land distribution and availability.
- **Financial capital:** This capital also has mixed levels, trending more to the low side especially in Thi-Qar and Missan. While half the population overall seem to have stable revenue from work and pensions (as well as a smaller number relying on regular government support), there is still a sizeable proportion of the population that has no access to financial resources or support (either through savings or borrowing) in case of an unanticipated expense. There is thus an extended risk for a considerable number of families to not be able to cope with shocks.

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