

RETURN DYNAMICS IN KIRKUK GOVERNORATE

JUNE 2021

The Return Index is a tool designed to measure the severity of conditions in locations of return. The Return Index is based on 16 indicators divided into two scales: Scale 1, on livelihoods and basic services, and Scale 2, centered around social cohesion and safety perceptions. A regression model is used to assess the impact of each of the indicators in facilitating or preventing returns. The index ranges from 0 (all essential conditions for return are met) to 100 (no essential conditions for return are met). Higher scores denote more severe living conditions for returnees. The scores of the severity index are grouped into three categories: low, medium and high (which also includes very high). Refer to the report "[Methodological Overview](#)" for more details on the methodology.

The Return Index Governorate Profiling provides an analysis of returns in a specific governorate. This report focuses on the return dynamics in Kirkuk Governorate. The first section of this report

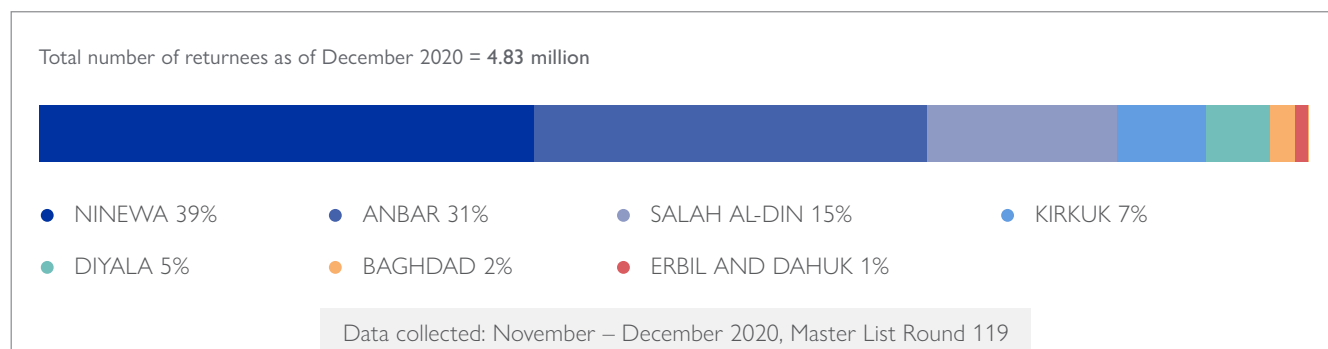
presents the overview of conditions across the governorate at the end of 2020 with a comparison of figures and the severity of living conditions over the course of 2020 (from 31 December 2019 to 31 December 2020). It also outlines the areas of no return recorded by IOM's Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RARTs) as well as the newly assessed locations, the returnee population living in critical shelters and the displaced population hosted in the governorate. The second section is devoted to the mass arrivals from camps due to their closure, which began in mid-October, and highlights the living conditions of new arrivals either when they returned to their villages and neighbourhoods of origin or arrived in new locations of displacement. The third section provides an analysis of conditions at the district level and focuses on the main drivers of severity across subdistricts and changes that occurred between December 2019 and December 2020.

CATEGORIZING CONDITIONS IN AREAS OF RETURN

As of December 2020, the total number of returnees in Kirkuk Governorate stands at 346,350 individuals out of 4.83 million nationwide, dispersed across four districts and 217 locations.¹ This is the fourth largest returnee population compared to other governorates, with 7 per cent of all returns in Iraq (Figure 1). Between December

2019 and December 2020, the returnee population in Kirkuk increased by 8,640 individuals, a lower number than that of the previous year, during which 18,372 individuals returned (December 2018 to December 2019).

Figure 1. Proportion of returnees per governorate



¹ Master List Round 119 (November–December 2020)

RETURNEE POPULATION IN SEVERE CONDITIONS

During the Return Index Round 11 collected in November and December 2020, a total of 208 locations of return were assessed in Kirkuk. Out of these 208 locations assessed, only two present severe conditions.² Kirkuk Governorate hosts the lowest number of returnees living in severe conditions, with 204 individuals. In relative terms, this means that less than 1 per cent of the returnee

population in Kirkuk has returned to locations classified as high severity, followed by 21 per cent to medium severity, and 79 per cent to low severity. This distribution of returnees per severity category is significantly lower than the national average, with 10 per cent living in high severity locations (Figure 2).

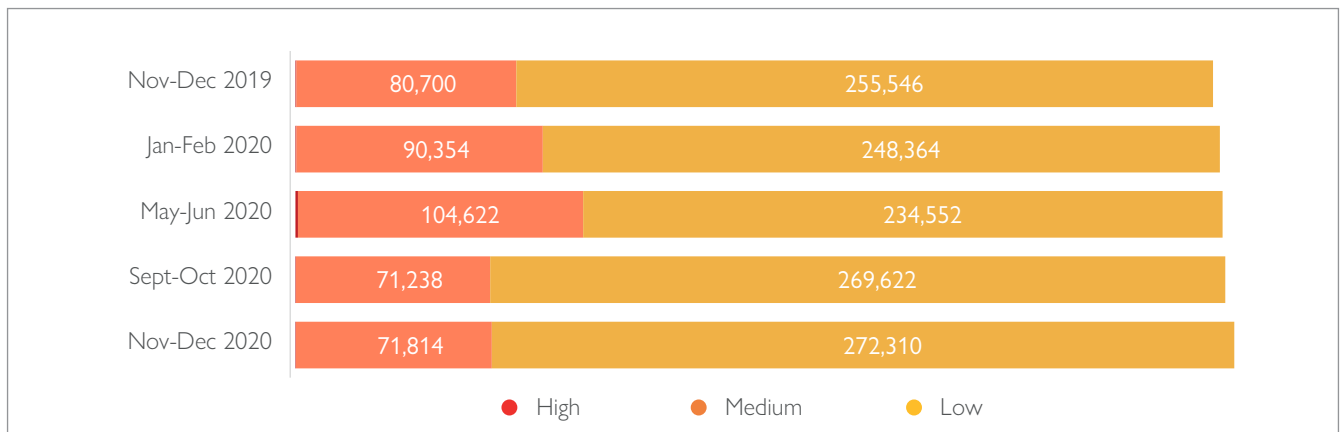
Figure 2. Proportion and numbers of returnees by category of severity in Kirkuk Governorate



Over the course of 2020, Kirkuk Governorate witnessed a very slight decrease in the number of returnees living in locations classified as high severity (Figure 3). Between December 2019 and December 2020, a decrease of 102 individuals living in severe or poor conditions was recorded. There was a moderate increase in the number of returnees living in severe conditions in the round collected in May–June 2020 due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

outbreak and ensuing lockdown, which led to the worsening of the employment situation and changes in daily public life. However, the number of individuals living in severe conditions dropped significantly in the round collected in September–October 2020, when the lockdown measures were lifted and the employment situation and daily public life stabilized.

Figure 3. Yearly trend of returnees by category of severity in Kirkuk Governorate



LOCATIONS WITH NO RETURN AND NEWLY ASSESSED LOCATIONS

A location is recorded as having had no returns if none of the population displaced since 2014 has returned to date.³ As of December 2019, DTM identified 20 locations with no returns in Kirkuk Governorate. Out of these 20 locations, 2 witnessed returns over the course of 2020 after families returned to rehabilitate their

houses. Over the course of 2020, DTM did not identify any additional locations with no returns in Kirkuk. As a result, 18 locations of no return were recorded as of December 2020. These locations are in the districts of Daquq (7), Al-Hawiga (6) and Kirkuk (5).

² The wording 'severe or poor conditions' in this report refer to conditions in the locations classified as high severity.

³ These locations, having no key informants and no population, are difficult to record and monitor and are generally identified through word-of-mouth.

RETURNEE POPULATION IN CRITICAL SHELTERS

As of December 2020, 5,004 returnees arrived at shelters in critical condition in Kirkuk, representing 1 per cent of the total returnee population in the governorate.⁴ Specifically, nearly all arrived at destroyed or heavily damaged pre-conflict residence with only a

few returning to unfinished or abandoned buildings. Around 55 per cent (2,730 individuals) of returnees in critical shelters are concentrated in Al-Hawiga district, followed by Daquq (27%), Kirkuk (14%) and Dabes (4%).

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs) IN KIRKUK

Between December 2019 and December 2020, Kirkuk Governorate witnessed a decrease in the numbers of IDPs, from 100,446 individuals to 90,846. Of the 9,600 IDPs who departed, 95 per cent (9,090 individuals) departed from camp settings, with no IDPs in camp settings remaining by December 2020. Despite this decrease, Kirkuk remains the governorate hosting the fifth largest number of

IDPs in Iraq (7% of all IDPs). Kirkuk and Daquq districts host the largest population of IDPs in the governorate, respectively accounting for 91 per cent (82,386 individuals) and 7 per cent (6,498 individuals) of IDPs in Kirkuk. Some locations in Kirkuk, Daquq and Dabes currently host more IDPs than returnees (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of returnees and IDPs per district in Kirkuk (December 2020)

District	Average Severity (return locations)	Total Returnees (individuals)	Total Non-camp IDPs (individuals)	Total Camp IDPs (individuals)	Locations with more IDPs than Returnees
Al-Hawiga	Low	166,992	534	0	0
Dabes	Low	7,236	1,428	0	1
Daquq	Low	17,520	6,498	0	1
Kirkuk	Low	154,602	82,386	0	13
Kirkuk Total		346,350	90,846	0	15

ARRIVAL FROM CAMPS AND CORRELATION WITH SEVERITY⁵

ARRIVAL OF IDPs FROM CAMPS TO NON-CAMP SETTINGS IN NINEWA GOVERNORATE

Between November and December 2020, DTM tracked a total of 5,346 individuals (891 households) who arrived in non-camp settings in Kirkuk after departing camps across the country.⁶ Most of those movements were a consequence of the camp closures and consolidation that began in mid-October 2020. A total of 2,364 individuals (44%) returned to their district of origin while the remaining 2,982 (56%) moved to new locations of displacement, thus becoming out-of-camp IDPs. In addition to the camp closures and a desire for some IDPs to return home due to improved security in their area of origin, a notable push factor for departures from camps was related to movement restrictions imposed because of the COVID-19

pandemic. These restrictions, which limited the ability of IDPs to work outside camp settings or to move freely between the area of origin of displacement, pushed returns to their areas of origin.

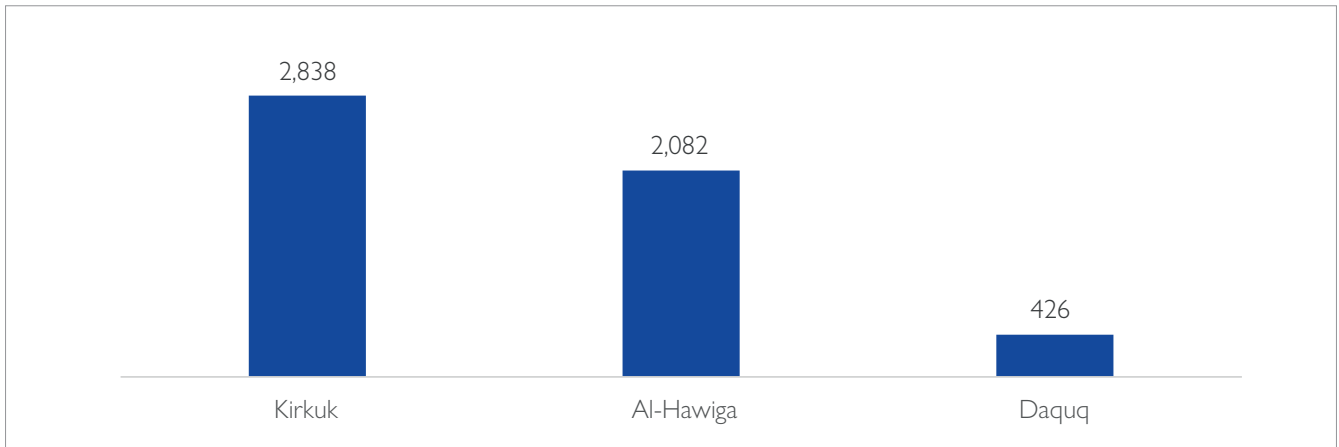
The districts with the highest number of arrivals from camps were Kirkuk and Al-Hawiga which, combined, accounted for 92 per cent of camp arrivals to Kirkuk (Figure 4). In Al-Hawiga district, most (95%) of the arrivals from camps have returned to their areas of origin, with the remaining arriving to new locations of displacement (5%) and therefore considered out-of-camp IDPs.

⁴ Critical shelters include collective shelters (such as religious buildings, schools, or other public buildings), unfinished or abandoned buildings, tents, caravans and other temporary, sub-standard or makeshift shelters; as well as severely damaged or destroyed habitual residences and long-term rental accommodations that are unfit for habitation (having the characteristics of unfinished or severely damaged buildings).

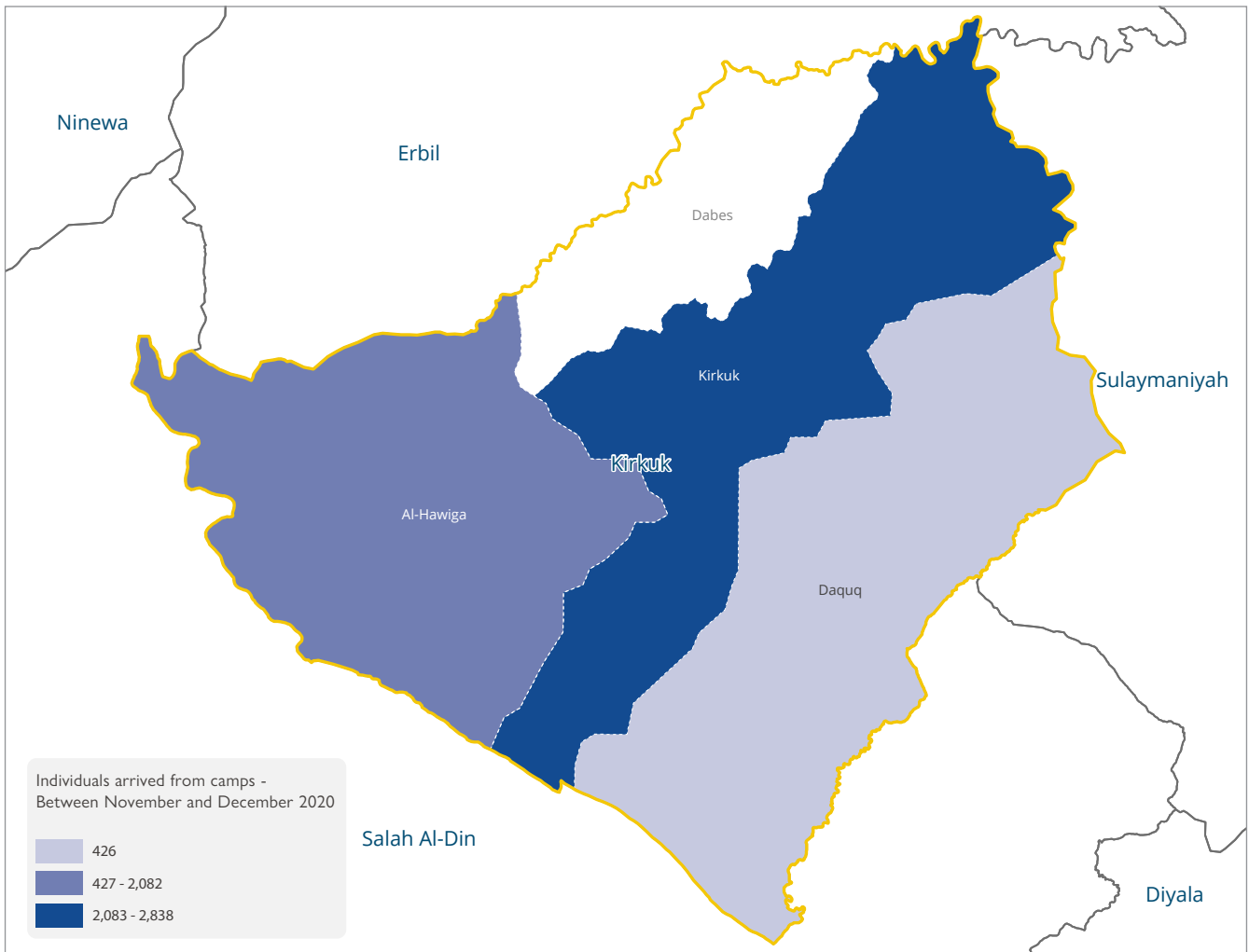
⁵ Refer to the Emergency Tracking report on "[Movement of Camp IDPs](#)" for more details on new arrivals since camp closures began in mid-October.

⁶ Master List Round 119 (November–December 2020)

Figure 4. Number of individuals arriving from camps to districts in Kirkuk (November to December 2020)



Map 1: Locations in Kirkuk that recorded new arrivals from camps, by number of individuals between November and December 2020

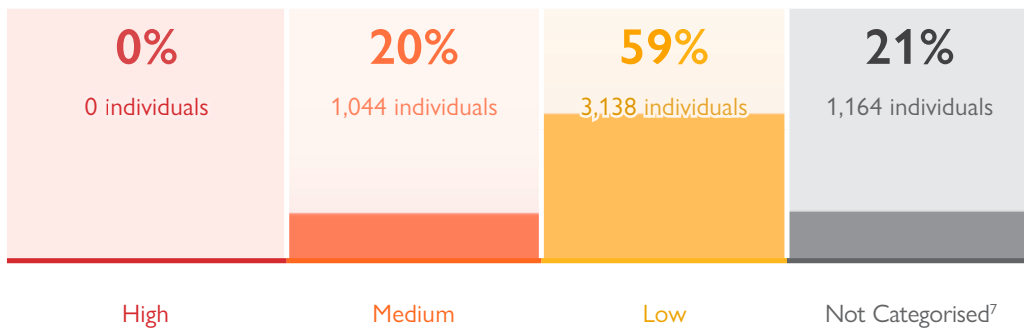


SEVERITY OF CONDITIONS IN LOCATIONS WITH ARRIVALS FROM CAMPS (NOVEMBER TO DECEMBER 2020)

At least 20 per cent (1,044 individuals) of the new arrivals from camps to non-camp locations in Kirkuk settled in locations classified as medium severity (Figure 5). All the individuals who settled in

medium severity locations were in Al-Hawiga district, while 59 per cent (3,138 individuals) settled in low severity locations in Kirkuk, Al-Hawiga and Daduq districts.

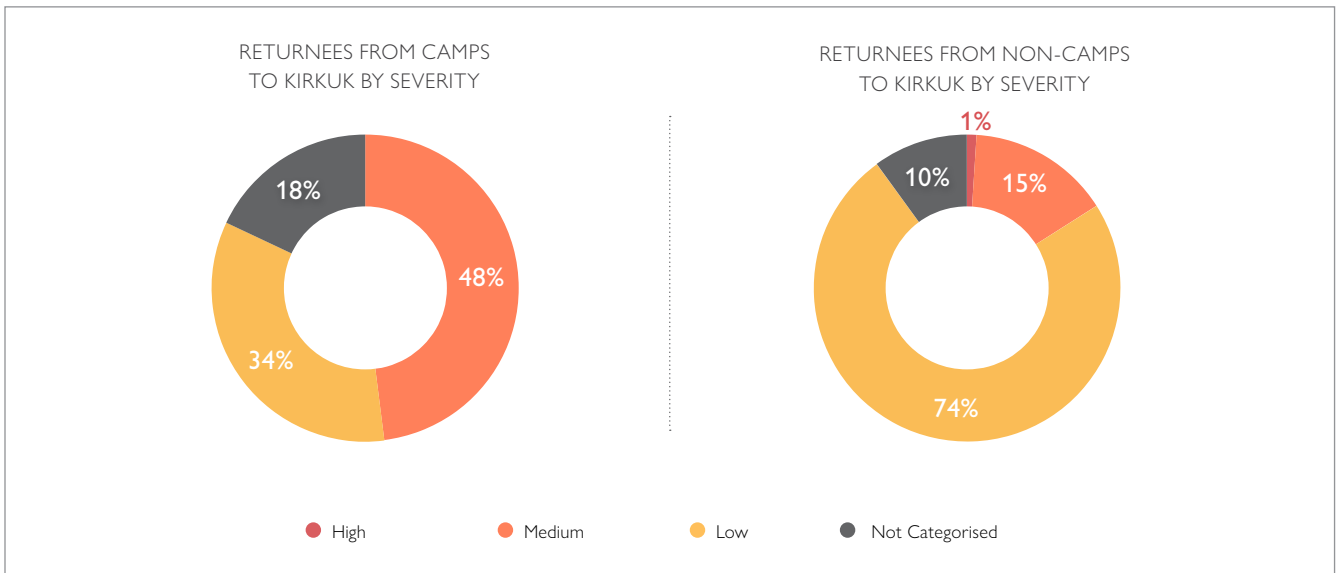
Figure 5. Distribution of new arrivals from camps to non-camp locations in Kirkuk by category of severity



Over the course of 2020, a total of 2,874 returnees (479 households) arrived from camps to their respective districts of origin in Kirkuk while 5,766 individuals (961 households) arrived from non-camp locations. No returnees from camps settled in high severity locations, while 1 per cent of returnees from non-camp settings (72 individuals) resided in high severity locations. Daquq district hosts all the returnees from non-camp locations (72 returnees) living in high

severity locations. In addition, 48 per cent (1,386 individuals) who returned from camps in 2020 settled in medium severity conditions, compared to 15 per cent of returnees from non-camp locations; (Figure 6). Al-Hawiga district was the only district hosting returnees from camps living in medium severity locations with 56 per cent of returnees from camps residing in these medium severity locations.

Figure 6. Returnees to Kirkuk from camp and non-camp locations by category of severity (December 2019 – December 2020)



⁷ These locations are not Categorised in terms of severity, as they are newly inhabited returnee locations not assessed as part of the Return Index.

SEVERITY OF CONDITIONS AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

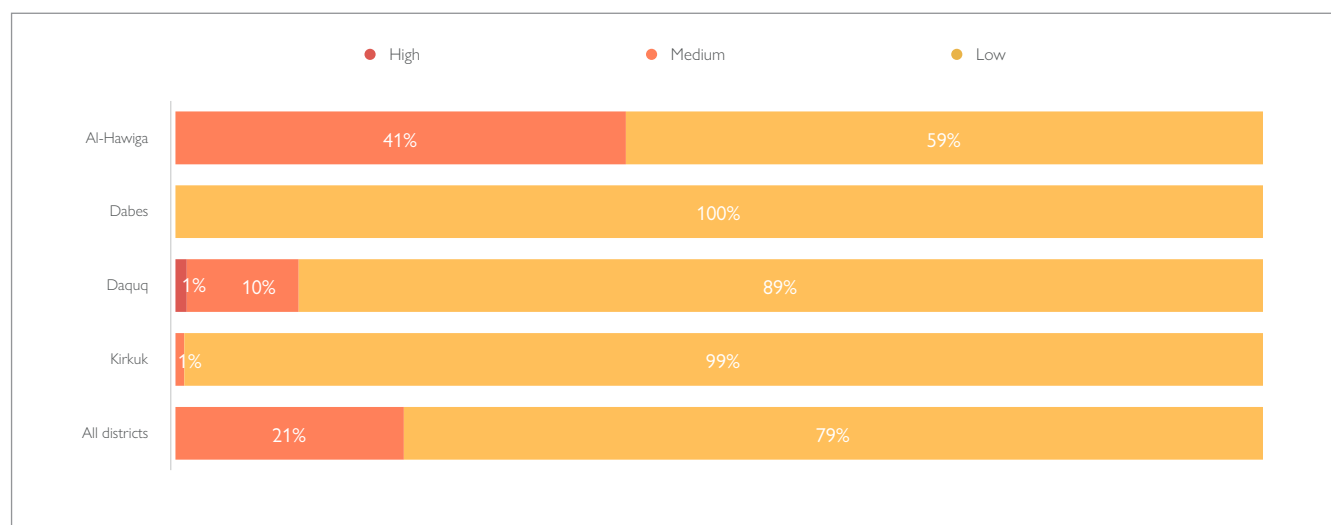
As of December 2020, Daquq is the district in Kirkuk that hosts the largest number of returnees living in severe conditions (180 individuals), followed by Kirkuk (24 individuals); (Table 2). In relative terms, Al-Hawiga and Daquq districts host the highest proportions of returnees living in medium severity conditions: 41 per cent of the returnee population in Al-Hawiga and 10 per cent of the returnee population in Daquq (Figure 7). In other words, the vast majority of the returnee population in districts across Kirkuk returned to low

severity conditions (79%) with only 21 per cent having returned to locations classified as medium severity. Dabes and Kirkuk districts have all or nearly all returnees living in low severity conditions (100% and 99%, respectively). The proportion of returnees in medium severity conditions is higher than the governorate's average of 21 per cent in the district of Al-Hawiga only, which has the highest number of returnees in the governorate.

Table 2: Number of returnees per district and category of severity in Kirkuk Governorate⁸

DISTRICT	HIGH SEVERITY	MEDIUM SEVERITY	LOW SEVERITY	NUMBER OF RETURNEES
Al-Hawiga		68,790	97,278	166,068
Dabes			7,236	7,236
Daquq	180	1,806	15,534	17,520
Kirkuk	24	1,218	152,262	153,504
All districts	204	71,814	272,310	344,328

Figure 7. Proportion of returnees per district and category of severity in Kirkuk Governorate



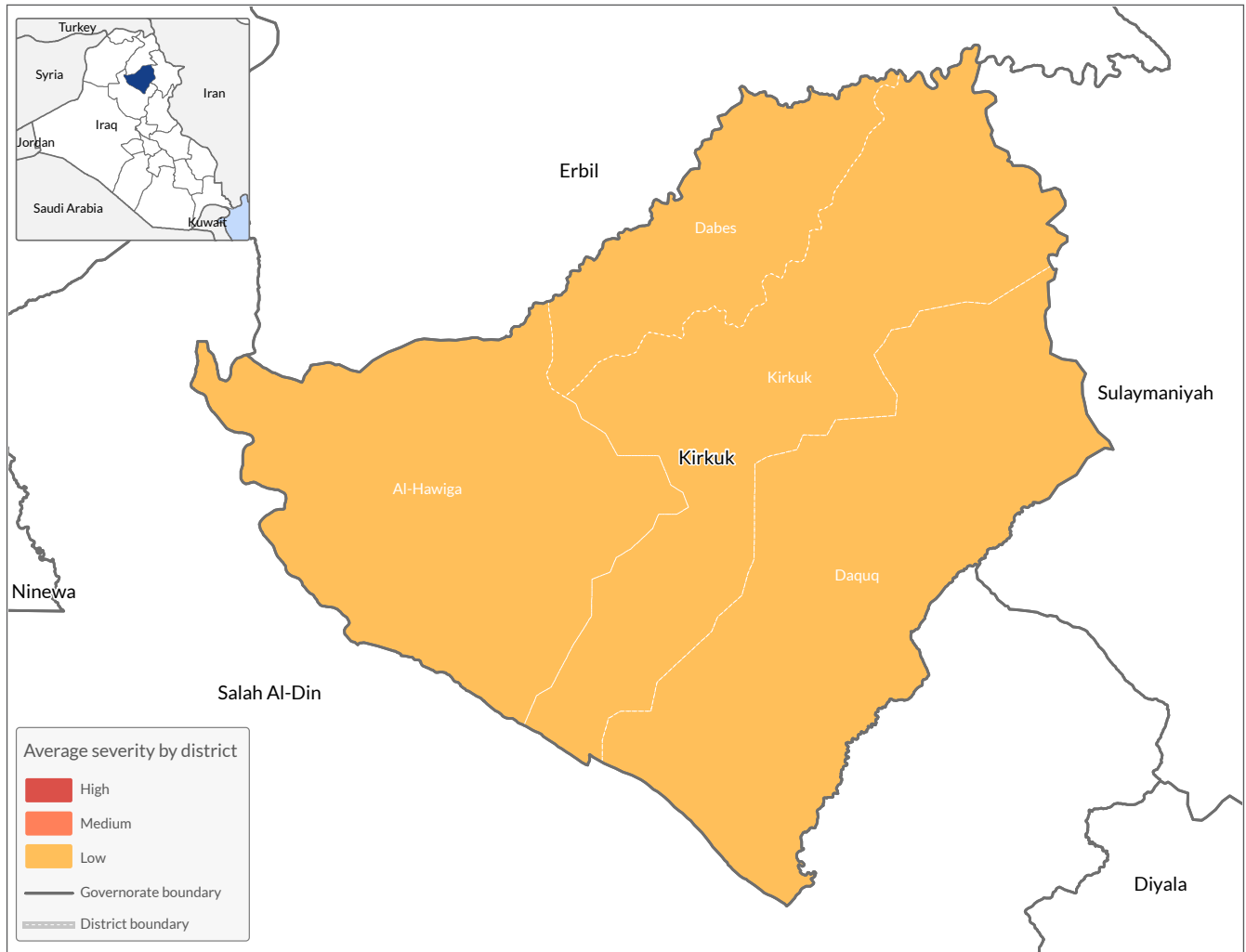
⁸ This total only includes returnees in locations assessed for the Return Index and is not the total number of returnees in Kirkuk, as some locations have not been assessed.

VARIATION AT DISTRICT LEVEL BETWEEN DECEMBER 2019 AND DECEMBER 2020

The analysis presented in this section focuses on the overall severity in each of the districts in Kirkuk, as well as the main drivers that

contribute to particularly high severity conditions and changes that occurred between December 2019 and December 2020.⁹

Map 2: Districts in Kirkuk by category of severity

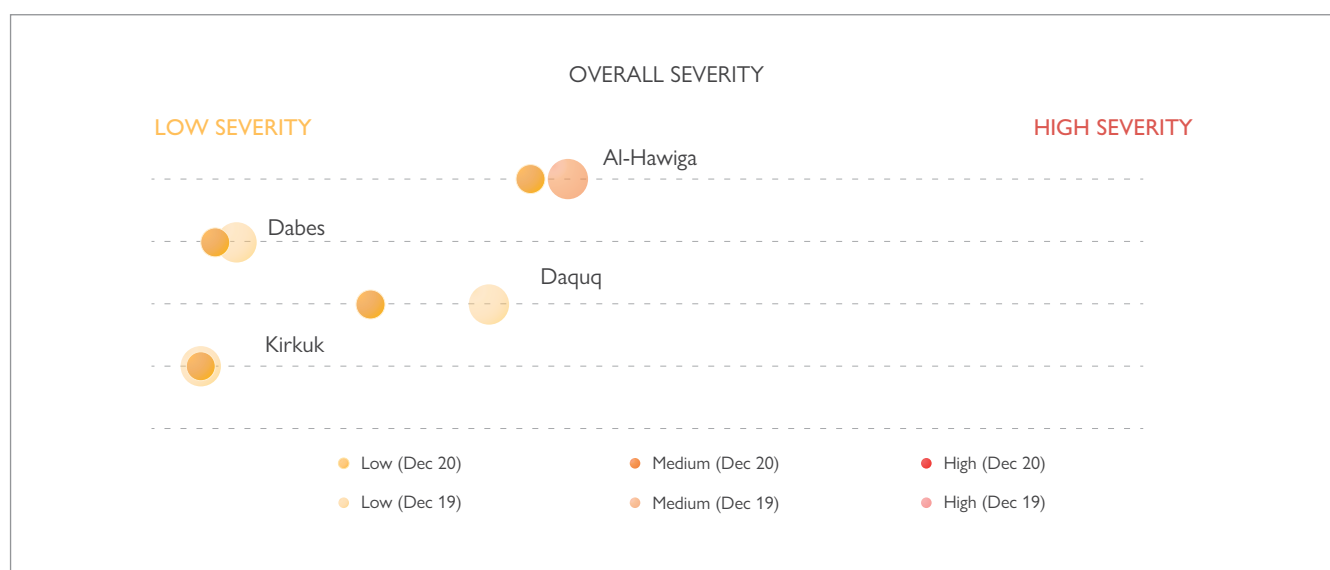


With the exception of Kirkuk district, which remained stable in its severity between December 2019 and December 2020, all districts recorded an improvement in severity (Figure 8). Al-Hawiga

progressed from medium to low severity between December 2019 and December 2020. However, the largest absolute improvement was in Daquq, which remained in low severity.

⁹ Drivers of severity are calculated at the subdistrict level and provide information on living conditions that contribute to severity to better inform interventions. Each driver is comprised of several Return Index indicators and considers the impact of each indicator in facilitating or preventing returns and the size of the returnee population in a subdistrict.

Figure 8. Overall severity per district in Kirkuk in December 2019 and December 2020



VARIATION IN THE DRIVERS OF SEVERITY AT SUBDISTRICT LEVEL BETWEEN DECEMBER 2019 AND DECEMBER 2020

Al-Hawiga District

Over the course of 2020, the overall severity of conditions in **Al-Hawiga District** reduced from medium to low severity. However, some variation in drivers of severity was observed across subdistricts. **Al-Abassy**, where severity is mainly driven by the poor provision of essential services, remained relatively stable throughout 2020. **Al-Riyad**, which is the other sub-district with medium overall severity, witnessed a worsening in the delivery of essential services, but also a significant reduction in severity related to safety and security, which was driven by a decrease in concerns regarding violence

among the returnee population. In **Al-Zab** subdistrict, the poor delivery of essential services worsened, with electricity and running water not available to many returnees. Safety and security concerns also worsened, with concerns about non-state security actors operating checkpoints reported. The main driver of severity in **Markaz Al-Hawiga** subdistrict is the availability of essential services, particularly water and electricity. The recorded improvement in livelihoods was driven by a gradual improvement in the number of returnees able to find employment throughout the year.







Al-Hawiga	Overall Security	Residential Destruction	Livelihoods	Essential Services	Safety and Security	Social cohesion
Al-Abassy	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Al-Riyad	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium ▼	Low ▲	Low
Al-Zab	Low	Low	Low	Medium ▼	Low ▼	Low ▲
Markaz Al-Hawiga	Low	Low	Low ▲	Medium	Low	Low

▲ – Improvement; ▼ – Worsening compared to the round collected in November – December 2019

Dabes District

Both sub-districts in **Dabes District** remained at low severity, with only a marginal reduction in severity. Conditions in **Altun Kupri** remained at the lowest possible levels of severity across all drivers. In **Markaz Dabes**, there were moderate improvements in the levels

of residential destruction and the recovery of agricultural activities in the sub-district. Concerns about non-state security actors operating checkpoints remains the area's highest severity indicator.







Dabes	 Overall Security	 Residential Destruction	 Livelihoods	 Essential Services	 Safety and Security	 Social cohesion
Altun Kupri	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Markaz Dabes	Low	Low ▲	Low	Low	Low	Low

▲ – Improvement; ▼ – Worsening compared to the round collected in November – December 2019

Daquq District

The overall situation in **Daquq District** improved significantly over the course of 2020. In **Laylan**, severity increased with regard to the availability of essential services, mainly the low number of returnees able to have electricity supply throughout the day. There were no significant shifts in severity in **Markaz Daquq**, where concerns about non-state security actors operating checkpoints and the availability of electricity remain the primary drivers of severity. **Qara Hanjeer** recorded no changes in severity over the course of 2020 and records the lowest possible severity across all indicators except for the availability of electricity, which is moderately severe. **Taza Khurmatu**

was the only sub-district to record improvements in Daquq. The improvement in residential destruction was significant, with severity remaining very high up until September–October and then falling sharply in November–December. Access to electricity remains the primary driver of severity related to essential services, as do concerns about non-state security actors operating checkpoints with regard to safety and security. The improvement in safety and security was driven by a sharp decrease in concerns regarding mines and unexploded ordnance, which was recorded in September–October.







Daquq	 Overall Security	 Residential Destruction	 Livelihoods	 Essential Services	 Safety and Security	 Social cohesion
Laylan	Low	Low	Low	Medium ▼	Low	Low
Markaz Daquq	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Qara Hanjeer	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Taza Khurmatu	Low ▲	Low ▲	Low	Medium	Low ▲	Low

▲ – Improvement; ▼ – Worsening compared to the round collected in November – December 2019

Kirkuk District

The overall situation in **Kirkuk District** remains the same as one year ago. Al-Multaqa, Markaz Kirkuk and Schwan remain in the low severity category, while Rashad is in the medium severity category. Over the course of 2020, in **Al-Multaqa** subdistrict, an improvement was recorded related to the levels of residential destruction and the provision of essential services, specifically electricity. While not significant enough to affect the severity of the safety and security driver, the reporting of concerns about non-state security actors operating checkpoints did rise moderately in November–December 2020. While severity in **Markaz Kirkuk** remained stable over the course of the year, daily public life, sufficient electricity and the recovery of small businesses

all saw sharp increases in May–June, which returned to low severity by September–October. The severity of conditions in **Rashad** is driven primarily by blocked returns, concerns about non-state security actors operating checkpoints and concerns around sources of violence. In November–December 2020, access to electricity decreased significantly, while access to running water improved steadily from May–June 2020. Concerns regarding various sources of violence rose sharply in January–February 2020 and remained high throughout the rest of the year. **Schwan** sub-district recorded the lowest possible severity score across all drivers throughout 2020.

Kirkuk	 Overall Security	 Residential Destruction	 Livelihoods	 Essential Services	 Safety and Security	 Social cohesion
Al-Multaqa	Low	Low ▲	Low	Low ▲	Low	Low
Markaz Kirkuk	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Rashad	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium ▲	Medium ▼	Medium
Schwan	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

▲ – Improvement; ▼ – Worsening compared to the round collected in November – December 2019

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