

RETURN DYNAMICS IN NINEWA GOVERNORATE

MAY 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 Ninewa 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). This section also outlines the areas of no return recorded by the 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 devoted to the mass arrivals from camps due to its closures which began in mid-October pointing out the living conditions of new arrivals either they returned to villages and neighbourhoods of their origin or arrived in new displacement locations. The third section of this report 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 Ninewa Governorate stands at 1.89 million individuals out of 4.83 million nationwide, dispersed across eight districts and 926 locations.¹ This is the largest returnee population compared to other governorates, 39 per cent of all returns in Iraq (Figure 1). Between December 2019

and December 2020, the returnee population in Ninewa increased by 122,820 individuals, which is a lower number of returns compared to the previous year, during which 152,184 individuals returned (December 2018 to December 2019).

Figure 1. Proportion of returnees per governorate



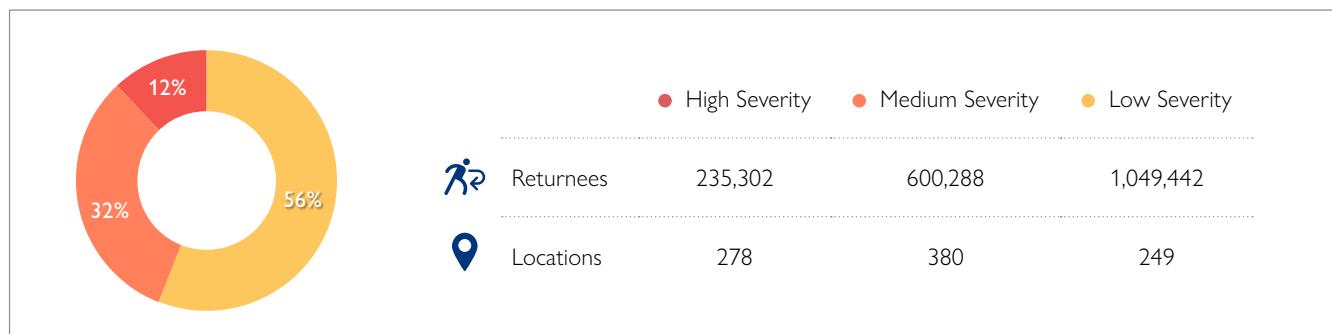
¹ Master List Round 119 (November–December 2020)

RETURNEE POPULATION IN SEVERE CONDITIONS

During the Return Index Round 11 collected in November and December 2020, a total of 907 locations of return were assessed. Out of these 907 locations assessed, 278 present severe conditions.² Ninewa Governorate hosts the largest number of returnees living in severe conditions with 235,302 individuals. In relative terms, this means that around 12 per cent of the returnee population in Ninewa

has returned to locations classified as high severity, followed by 32 per cent to medium severity, and 56 per cent to low severity. This distribution of returnees per severity category is higher than the national average, with 10 per cent living in high severity locations (Figure 2).

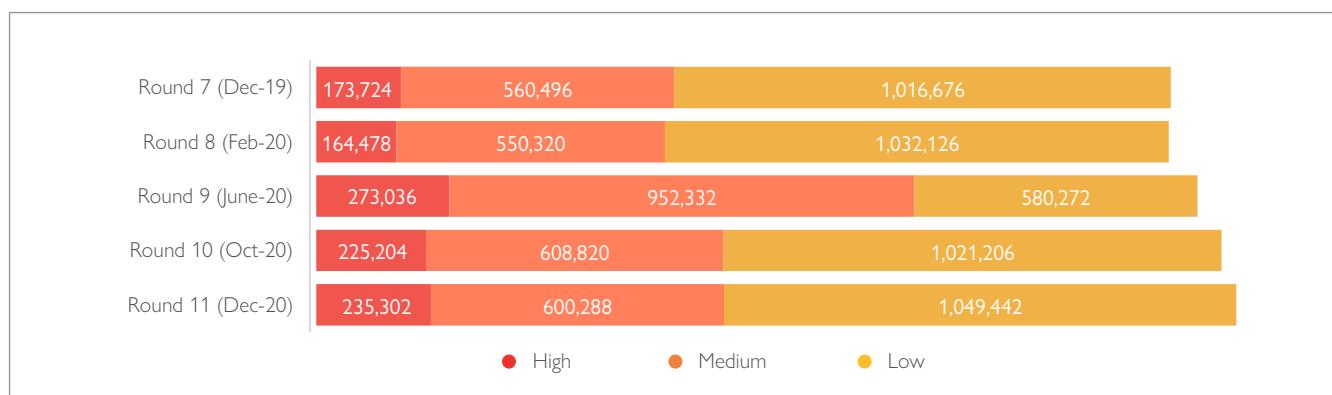
Figure 2. Proportion and numbers of returnees by category of severity in Ninewa Governorate



Over the course of 2020, Ninewa Governorate witnessed a gradual increase in the numbers of returnees living in locations classified as high severity (Figure 3). Between December 2019 and December 2020, an increase of 61,578 individuals living in severe or poor conditions were recorded. There was a spike 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, when an increased concern about different sources of violence was recorded mainly in Telafar, Mosul and Al-Ba'aj together with worsening of the employment situation and changes in daily public life. However, the numbers went back down 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 Ninewa Governorate



LOCATIONS WITH NO RETURN AND NEWLY ASSESSED LOCATIONS

A location is recorded as having had no returns if it witnessed a displacement of all its pre-2014 population and none of it has returned yet.³ As of December 2019, DTM identified 138 locations with no returns in Ninewa Governorate, mainly in the districts of Hatra (53), Al-Ba'aj (24) and Sinjar (24). Out of these 138 locations, 58 witnessed returns over the course of 2020 after families received the security clearance; rehabilitated their houses; the security situation improved; or due to sentimental reasons. Over the course of 2020, DTM identified another 49 locations with no returns in

Ninewa, bringing the total number to 129 locations recorded as of December 2020. The main reasons for these locations having witnessed no returns remains security situation, housing damage and lack of services and infrastructure.⁴ Besides, due to gaining access to new areas throughout the year, an additional 201 locations of return were assessed in Ninewa Governorate since December 2019. Newly assessed locations were mainly in the districts of Al-Ba'aj (87 locations), Mosul (36), Hatra (34) and Sinjar (33). Out of these 201 locations, 112 were classified as high severity.

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

3 It should be noted that these locations, having no key informants and no population, are difficult to record and monitor and are generally identified through word-of-mouth.

4 Refer to the report “[Areas of No Return](#)” for more details on the locations with no returns.

RETURNEE POPULATION IN CRITICAL SHELTERS

As of December 2020, 56,670 returnees arrived at shelters in critical condition in Ninewa, representing 3 per cent of the total returnee population in the governorate.⁵ Specifically, nearly all arrived at destroyed or heavily damaged pre-conflict residences, with a few

returning to unfinished or abandoned buildings and other informal shelters. Around 60 per cent (32,556 individuals) of returnees in critical shelters are concentrated in Mosul district, followed by Sinjar (14%), Telafar (13%) and Al-Ba'aj (9%).

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs) IN NINEWA

Between December 2019 and December 2020, Ninewa Governorate witnessed a decrease in the numbers of IDPs, from 334,788 individuals to 273,056. Of the 61,732 decrease in the displaced population between December 2019 and December 2020: 37,270 were from camp settings (60%) and 24,462 were from non-camp settings (40%). Despite this decrease, Ninewa remains the governorate hosting the largest number of IDPs in Iraq (22% of all IDPs), with

the majority (210,966 individuals or 77% of IDPs in the governorate) living in out-of-camp settings. Mosul and Al-Shikhan districts host the largest population of IDPs in the governorate, respectively accounting for 40 per cent (109,282 individuals) and 16 per cent (43,534 individuals) of IDPs in Ninewa. Some locations in Mosul and Sinjar currently host more IDPs than returnees (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of returnees and IDPs per district in Ninewa

District	Average Severity (return locations)	Total Returnees (individuals)	Total Non-camp IDPs (individuals)	Total Camp IDPs (individuals)	Locations with more IDPs than Returnees
Akre	n/a	0	28,116	850	n/a
Al-Ba'aj	High	50,130	6,810	0	0
Al-Hamdaniya	Low	168,396	198	27,170	0
Al-Shikhan	Low	2,142	20,274	23,260	0
Hatra	Medium	48,900	3,138	0	0
Mosul	Low	1,050,726	98,472	10,810	11
Sinjar	High	111,192	35,922	0	14
Telafar	Medium	355,722	9,450	0	0
Tilkaif	Low	101,946	8,586	0	1
Ninewa Total		1,889,154	210,966	62,090	26

ARRIVAL FROM CAMPS AND CORRELATION WITH SEVERITY⁶

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

Between November and December 2020, DTM tracked a total of 26,646 individuals (4,441 households) that arrived in non-camp settings in Ninewa after departing from camps across the country.⁷ Three quarters of those movements were a consequence of the camp closures and consolidation, which began in mid-October 2020. A total of 22,242 individuals (83%) returned to their district of origin, while the remaining 4,404 individuals (17%) moved to new locations of displacement, thus becoming out-of-camp IDPs. Besides 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 as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. These restrictions, which

limited ability of IDPs to work outside camp settings or to move freely between area of origin and area of displacement, pushed returns to their area of origin.

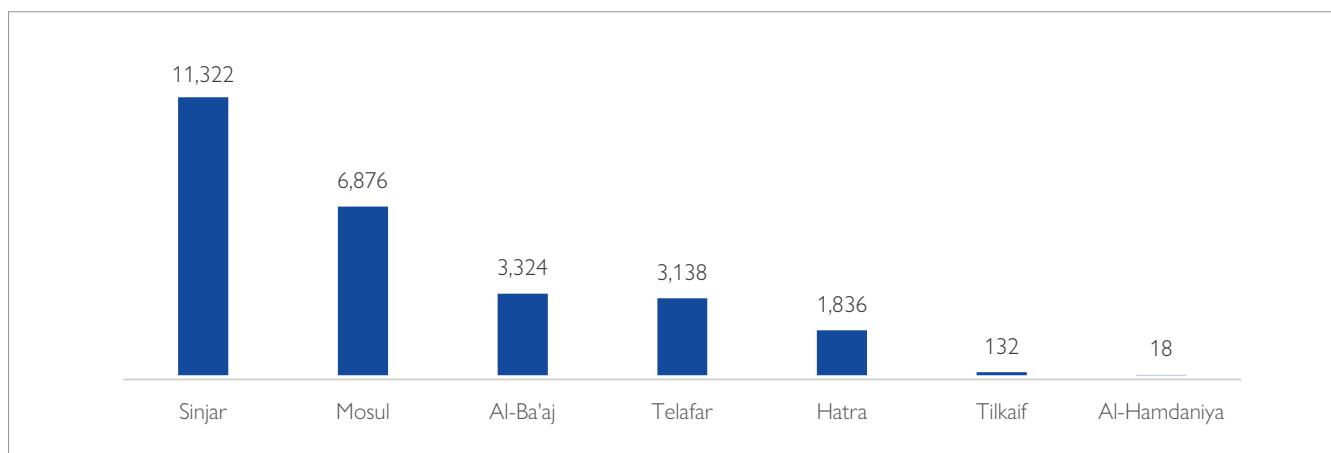
The districts with the highest arrivals from camps are Sinjar and Mosul, both accounting for two thirds of camp arrivals to Ninewa (Figure 4). In both Sinjar and Mosul, the vast majority (85% and 77%, respectively) of those arriving from camps have returned to their areas of origin, with the remaining arriving to new locations of displacement (15% and 23% respectively) and therefore considered out-of-camp IDPs.

5 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).

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

7 Master List Round 119 (November–December 2020)

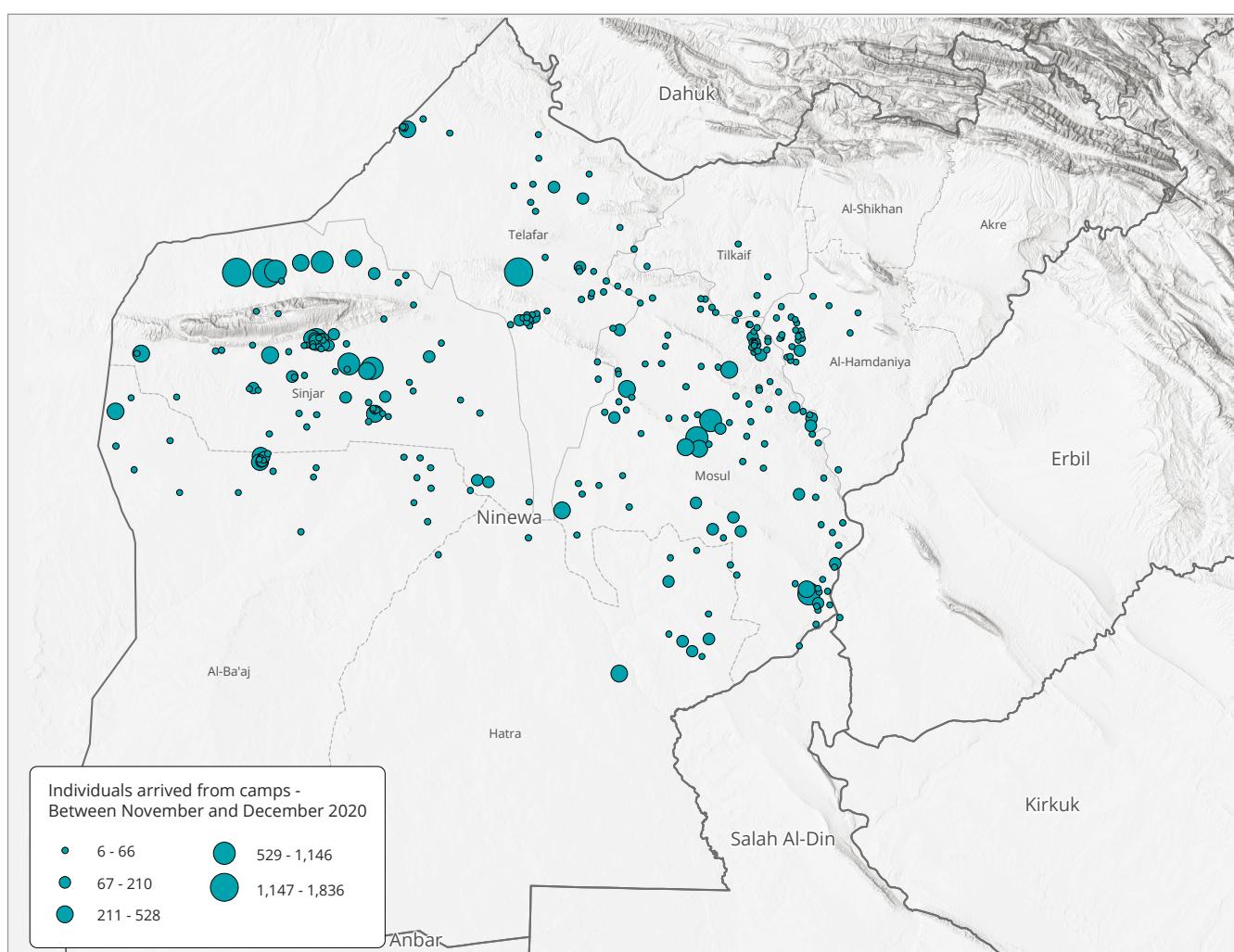
Figure 4. Number of individuals arriving from camps to districts in Ninewa (November to December 2020)



Additionally, between 8 June and 31 December 2020, a total of 45,239 IDPs (8,483 families) were recorded arriving mainly from camps in Dahuk Governorate to Sinjar and Al-Ba'aj districts. Among this group, 41,405 IDPs arrived to Sinjar (92%) and 3,834 IDPs arrived to Al-Ba'aj (8%). In addition, 34,765 were recorded as

returnees (77%) while 10,474 were recorded as IDPs (23%). While the majority came from Dahuk Governorate (36,160 or 81%), a significant number also arrived from other parts of Ninewa (8,022 or 18%). These movements were tracked in a separate Emergency Tracking for Sinjar movement.⁸

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



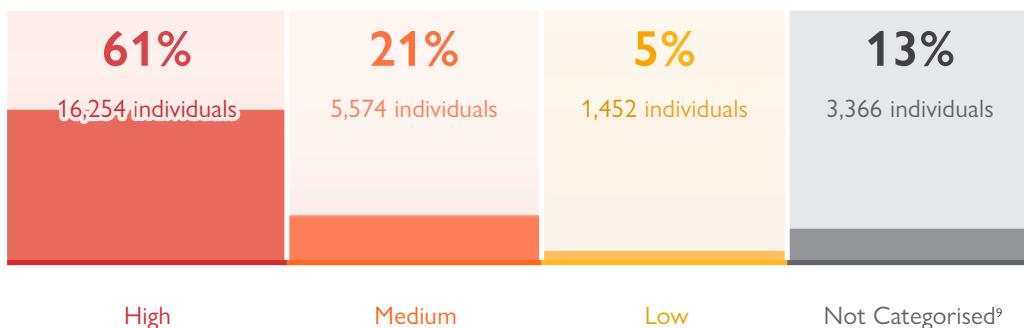
⁸ Refer to the Emergency Tracking reports on "[Sinjar Movements](#)" for more details on returns to Sinjar and Baaj districts.

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

At least 61 per cent (16,254 individuals) of the new arrivals from camps to non-camp locations in Ninewa settled in locations classified as high severity (Figure 5). The data points to a likely critical situation for these newly arrived households from camps into relatively poor conditions. The fact that most of the new arrivals were

to high severity areas is also indicative of why they remained in protracted displacement in camps previously; in the absence of living conditions conducive to return in their areas of origin, remaining in displacement seemed to be the preferred option for IDPs until camp closures took place.

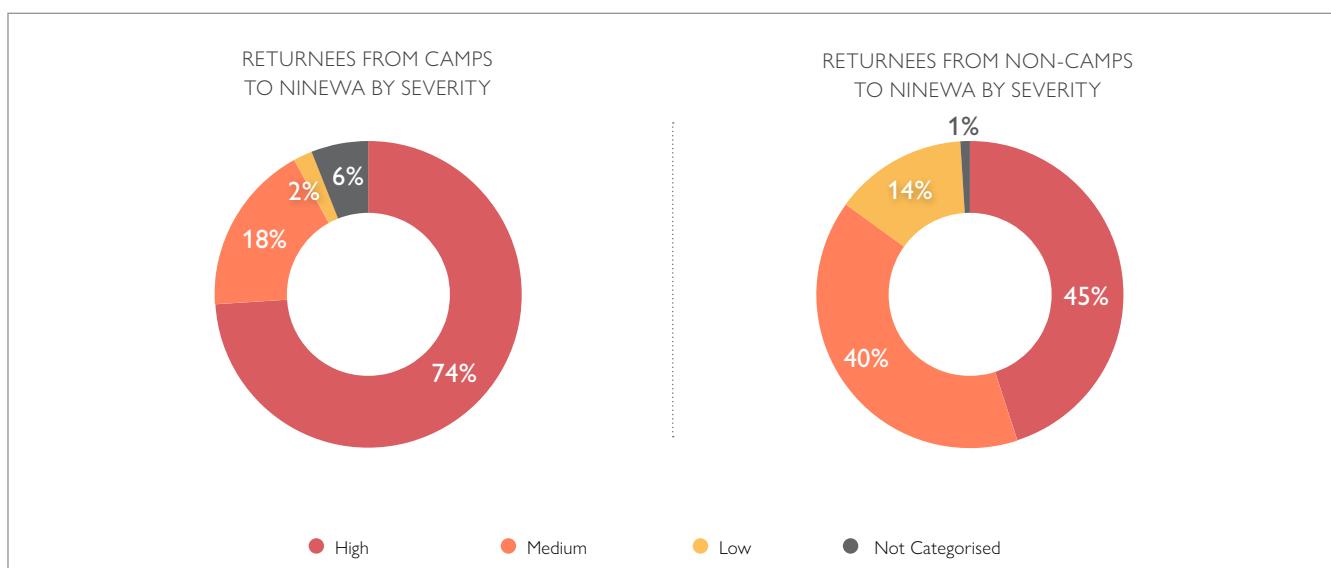
Figure 5. Distribution of new arrivals from camps to non-camp locations in Ninewa by category of severity



Over the course of 2020, a total of 49,662 returnees (8,277 households) arrived from camps to their respective districts of origin in Ninewa while 92,898 returnees (15,483 households) arrived from non-camp locations to Ninewa. However, the situation appears to be more critical for returnees from camp settings, with 74 per cent (36,558 individuals) who returned from camps in 2020 currently living in high severity conditions as compared to 45 per cent of returnees from non-camp locations to Ninewa (Figure 6). In Sinjar

district, almost all the returnee individuals (92%) who arrived from camps in 2020 settled in locations classified as high severity. These individuals account for almost half of all the arrivals from camps as of the end of 2020. The other district with a high proportion of arrivals in highly severe conditions is Al-Ba'aj, with 83 per cent of individuals from camps in high severity locations, followed by Telafar district (63%).

Figure 6. Distribution of returnees from camps vs returnees from non-camp locations in Ninewa by category of severity (December 2019 – December 2020)



⁹ These locations are not Categorised in terms of severity, as they consist of newly inhabited returnee places not assessed as part of the Return Index.

SEVERITY OF CONDITIONS AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

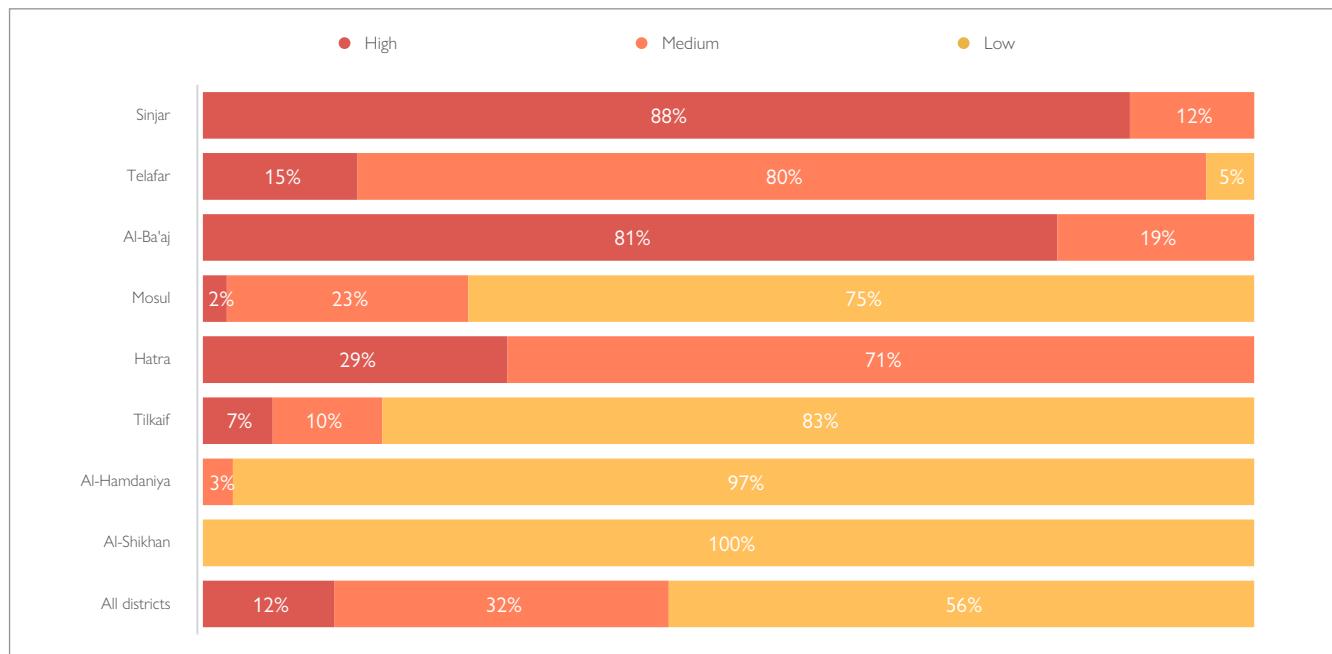
As of December 2020, Sinjar is the district in Ninewa that hosts the largest number of returnees living in severe conditions (97,668 individuals), followed by Telafar (52,362) and Al-Ba'aj (40,590) (Table 2). In relative terms, Sinjar and Al-Ba'aj districts also host the highest proportions of returnees living in severe conditions: 88 per cent of the returnee population in Sinjar and 81 per cent of the returnee population in Al-Ba'aj (Figure 7). In other words, most of the returnee population of these districts returned to severe conditions, with only small proportions having returned to locations classified as medium or low severity, which is unsurprising considering that only one assessed location in Sinjar and none in Al-Ba'aj

were classified as low severity. Hatra and Telafar districts also host substantial proportions of returnees living in severe conditions (29% and 15%, respectively). These proportions of returnees in highly severe conditions are higher than the governorate average of 12 per cent. In contrast, Mosul District, which has the largest returnee population in the governorate, has 23,814 individuals or 2 per cent of the district returnee population living in high severity locations. Most of the returnee population in Mosul lives in locations classified as low severity, where (such as in the centre of the governorate), employment opportunities, provision of water and safety situation are better.

Table 2: Number of returnees per district and category of severity in Ninewa Governorate¹⁰

DISTRICT	HIGH SEVERITY	MEDIUM SEVERITY	LOW SEVERITY	NUMBER OF RETURNEES
Sinjar	97,668	13,080	18	110,766
Telafar	52,362	287,142	16,218	355,722
Al-Ba'aj	40,590	9,348	0	49,938
Mosul	23,814	240,804	782,922	1,047,540
Hatra	14,082	34,500	0	48,582
Tilkaif	6,786	10,602	84,558	101,946
Al-Hamdaniya	0	4,812	163,584	168,396
Al-Shikhan	0	0	2,142	2,142
All districts	235,302	600,288	1,049,442	1,885,032

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



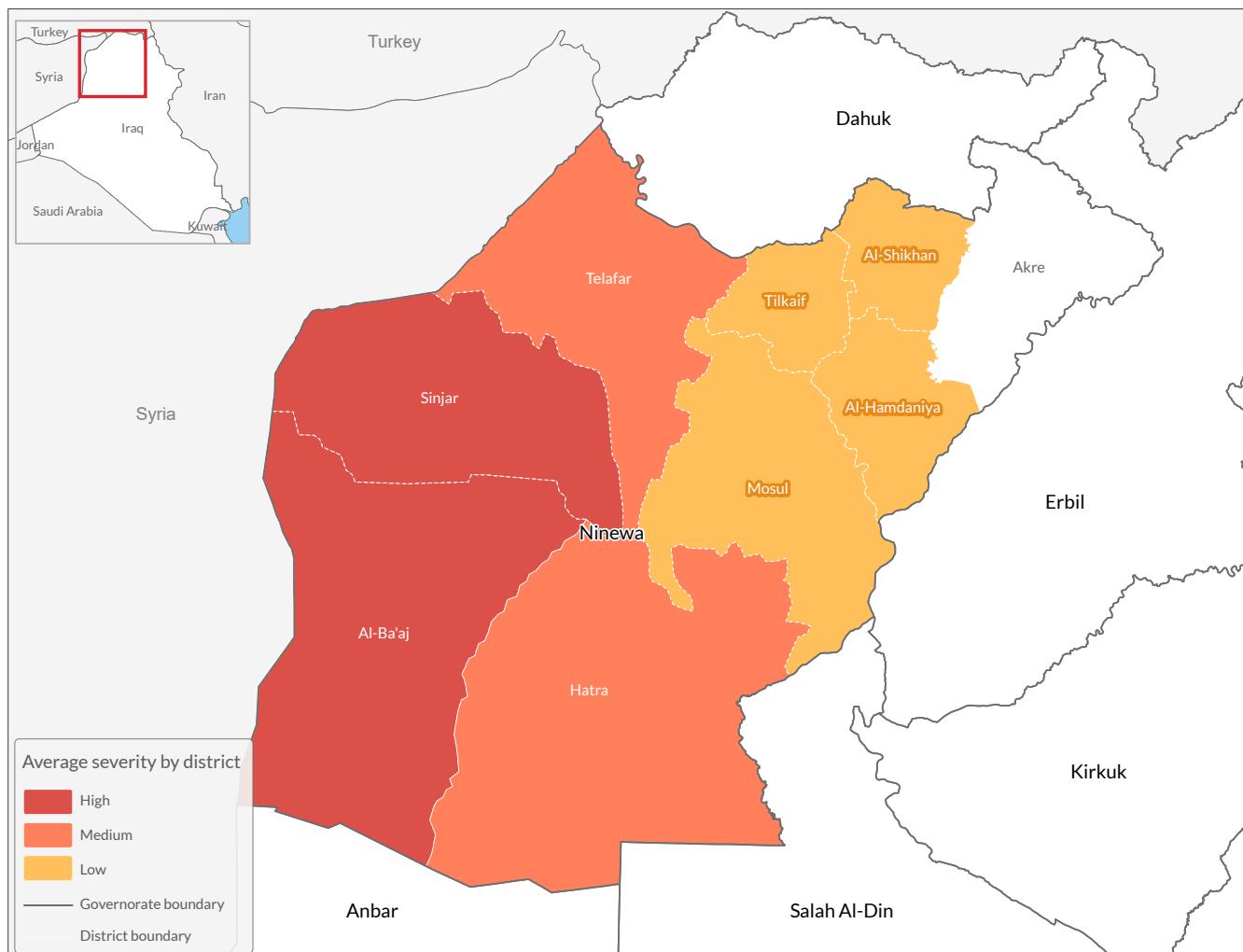
¹⁰ This total only includes returnees in locations assessed for the Return Index and does not constitute the total number of returnees in Ninewa, as some locations have not been assessed.

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 Ninewa, as well as the main drivers¹¹ that

contribute to particularly high severity conditions and changes that occurred between December 2019 and December 2020.

Map 2: Districts in Ninewa by category of severity

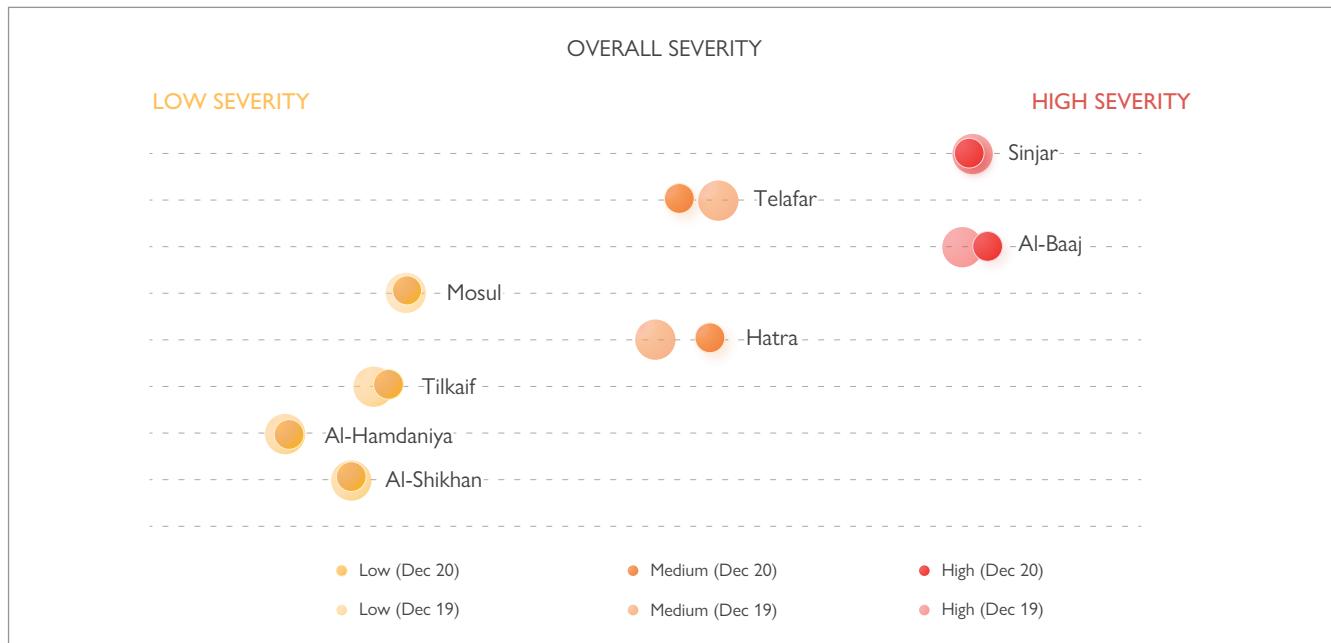


On average per district, a worsening of overall severity was recorded in Al-Ba'aj, Hatra and Tilkaif between December 2019 and December 2020, while a slight improvement was recorded in Telafar (Figure 8).

These changes were not substantial enough to move a district from one category of severity to another. Thus, despite recorded improvement, Telafar district remained in the medium severity category.

¹¹ Drivers of severity are calculated at the subdistrict level and provide information on living conditions that contribute to severity to better inform interventions. It is built on the Return Index indicators, and considering the impact of each of the indicators in facilitating or preventing returns and the size of the returnee population in a subdistrict.

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



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

Sinjar District

Over the course of 2020, the overall severity of conditions in **Sinjar District** remained in the high category. However, some variation in drivers of severity was observed across subdistricts. **Markaz Sinjar**, where severity is mainly driven by the poor provision of essential services and problems related to social cohesion, also witnessed a worsening of electricity supply. At the same time, **Markaz Sinjar** also recorded some improvement in residential destruction and the security situation, as more houses were reconstructed, and the number of security actors decreased in some locations. In **Qaeyrrawan** subdistrict, main problems are related to the provision of essential

services and livelihood, for which a worsening was recorded since December 2019. Poor conditions were recorded in the locations first assessed during 2020, in relation to residential destruction, agricultural or livestock activities and businesses, as well as with the absence of reconciliation processes and tense public life. However, an improvement of the security situation was observed due to presence of a smaller number of armed groups in the area and fewer checkpoints. The main driver of severity in Al-Shamal subdistrict is livelihood and poor situation with agricultural activities and businesses; no changes were observed in this regard in the subdistrict.

Sinjar	Overall Security	Residential Destruction	Livelihoods	Essential Services	Safety and Security	Social cohesion
Al-Shamal	High	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Markaz Sinjar	High	Medium ▲	Medium	High ▼	Medium ▲	High
Qaeyrrawan	High	Low ▼	High ▼	High	Medium ▲	Medium ▼

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

Telafar District

Despite the overall improvement in **Telafar District**, all subdistricts remained in the same category of severity over the reporting period. An improvement in overall severity was recorded only in **Markaz Telafar**, as more of the displaced population was allowed to return and cases of illegally occupied residential property by other residents, armed groups, etc. decreased. In **Ayadiya** subdistrict, the overall situation has not changed, and it continued to be classified as high severity. Severe conditions in this subdistrict are mainly caused by poor security situation. There are widespread concerns about various sources of violence such as ISIL attacks, acts of revenge, clashes between security forces or ethno-religious-tribal tensions, presence of four different armed groups in control of security provision in the area,

and presence of Population Mobilization Units (PMUs) or other groups in control of checkpoints in addition to the Iraqi army, the local police and the federal police, combined with concerns about harassment. In addition, compared to December 2019, the employment situation has deteriorated. However, a slight improvement was reported in recovery of agriculture and water supply. For **Rubiya** subdistrict, there were few noticeable changes, with high severity associated with livelihoods and poor provision of services provided by civil servants, teachers, nurses and police, among others. The same applies to **Zummar** subdistrict, where the primary issues are related to the absence of reconciliation processes, and an increasing difficulty among residents to find employment.

						
Telafar	Overall Security	Residential Destruction	Livelihoods	Essential Services	Safety and Security	Social cohesion
Ayadiya	High	Medium	Medium ▼	Low ▲	High	Medium
Markaz Telafar	Medium ▲	Low	Medium	Low	High	Low ▲
Rubiya	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low	Low
Zummar	Medium	Low	Low ▼	Low	Low	High

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

Al-Ba'aj District

Generally, a worsening of the overall situation was recorded in **Al-Ba'aj District**; both subdistricts remain in the high severity category, while variations in drivers of severity were observed. Main problems in the subdistricts are related to livelihoods, the provision of essential services, security, and to a lesser extent social cohesion. In **Al-Qahtaniya** subdistrict, poor conditions were reported in the locations first assessed during 2020 related to residential destruction,

provision of electricity, daily public life, reconciliation processes and blocked returns. However, some improvement was observed in terms of employment and recovery of businesses. Over the course of 2020, in **Markaz Al-Ba'aj**, a worsening of agricultural activities, businesses and employment was recorded, while cases of illegal occupation of private residences were reduced and more of the displaced population was allowed to return.

						
Al-Ba'aj	Overall Security	Residential Destruction	Livelihoods	Essential Services	Safety and Security	Social cohesion
Al-Qahtaniya	High	Low ▼	High ▲	High ▼	High	Medium ▼
Markaz Al-Ba'aj	High	Low	High ▼	Medium	High	Medium ▲

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

Mosul District

The overall situation in **Mosul District** remains the same as one year ago. Al- Muhalabiya, Al-Qayara, Al-Shura and Hamam al Aleel subdistricts remain in the medium severity category while Baashiqa and Markaz Mosul subdistricts are in the low severity category. Over the course of 2020, in **Hamam al Aleel** subdistrict, an improvement was recorded in relation to the provision of electricity and water, together with reduced concerns about various sources of violence. Despite that, the overall situation in the subdistrict is classified as medium severity. The provision of government services, daily public life and cases of

blocked returns remain critical. Poor provision of government services and tense daily public life were also reported in **Al-Qayara** subdistrict together with increasing residents' difficulty in finding employment. A worsening was also recorded in **Al-Muhalabiya** subdistrict, related to the security situation due to increased concerns about various sources of violence. Furthermore, it was reported that only some of the agricultural and/or livestock activities are taking place as before and, in most locations, none of the residents have enough water.

Telafer					Safety and Security	
Al- Muhalabiya	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium ▼	Low
Al-Qayara	Medium	Low	Medium ▼	Low	Low	Low
Al-Shura	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Medium
Baashiqa	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Hamam al Aleel	Medium	Low	Low	Medium ▲	Medium ▲	Medium
Markaz Mosul	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

Hatra District

Generally, in **Hatra District**, a worsening of overall severity was recorded compared to December 2019, although Altal and Markaz Hatra subdistricts remain in the same category of severity and are classified as medium severity. The main drivers of severity in **Altal** subdistrict are related to the provision of essential services; the situation is critical in relation to provision of government services and water supply. To a lesser extent, the severity is driven by security, due to checkpoints controlled by other security actors other than the Iraqi army, the local police and the federal police, as well as by livelihoods. Over the course of 2020, a worsening in the agricultural and/or livestock activities was recorded in most locations, only some activities are taking place as before. Residents experience difficulty in finding employment; in half of locations in the subdistrict, none of the residents can find employment. Furthermore, half of the displaced

population in the subdistrict returned to the locations with no functioning businesses; most of these locations were assessed for the first time during 2020. The main problems in **Markaz Hatra** subdistrict are related to livelihoods and to a lesser extent to the provision of government services, water supply and security situation. In all locations in the subdistrict, only some of the agricultural activities are taking place as before; more people returned to the locations with no functioning businesses and in most locations in the subdistrict residents cannot find employment. Between December 2019 and December 2020, increased concerns about different sources of violence were recorded in the subdistrict, together with increased cases of blocked returns. The presence of armed groups in control of checkpoints other than the Iraqi army, the local police and the federal police, combined with concerns about harassment, remain critical in the subdistrict.

Hatra					Safety and Security	
Altal	Medium	Low	Medium ▼	High	Medium	Low
Markaz Hatra	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Medium ▼	Low ▼

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

Tilkaif District

The overall situation in **Tilkaif District** is classified as low severity and remains relatively the same as one year ago. However, lack of access to employment and slow recovery of businesses have a moderate impact on the severity in **Al-Qosh** and **Wanna** subdistricts. Between December 2019 and December 2020, an improvement in the

provision of government services was recorded in **Markaz Tilkaif** subdistrict, while **Wanna** subdistrict witnessed a worsening of the security situation due to the presence of other armed groups in control of checkpoints apart from the Iraqi army, the local police and the federal police.

Tilkaif	Overall Security	Residential Destruction	Livelihoods	Essential Services	Safety and Security	Social cohesion
Al-Qosh	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Markaz Tilkaif	Low	Low	Low	Low ▲	Low	Low
Wanna	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low ▼	Low

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

Al-Hamdaniya District

The overall situation in **Al-Hamdaniya District** remains in the same category of severity as one year ago and is classified as low severity. Between December 2019 and December 2020, an improvement of the water supply was reported in **Al-Namroud** and **Bartalla**

subdistricts, while in **Al-Namroud** subdistrict increased cases of blocked returns were recorded. Despite the overall low severity, checkpoints controlled by other security actors remain critical for all subdistricts in Al-Hamdaniya.

Al-Hamdaniya	Overall Security	Residential Destruction	Livelihoods	Essential Services	Safety and Security	Social cohesion
Al-Namroud	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Bartalla	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Markaz Al-Hamdaniya	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

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

Al-Shikhan District

The overall situation in **Al-Shikhan District** is classified as low severity and remains relatively the same as one year ago. The main driver of severity is related to livelihood as only some businesses are

open and less than half the residents can find employment in most locations in **Markaz Al-Shikhan** subdistrict.

Al-Shikhan	Overall Security	Residential Destruction	Livelihoods	Essential Services	Safety and Security	Social cohesion
Markaz Al-Shikhan	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low

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

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