RETURNS IN IRAQ: 2021 OVERVIEW

DECEMBER 2020 (ROUND 11) TO DECEMBER 2021 (ROUND 14)

FEBRUARY 2022

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 "Methodological Overview" for more details on the methodology.

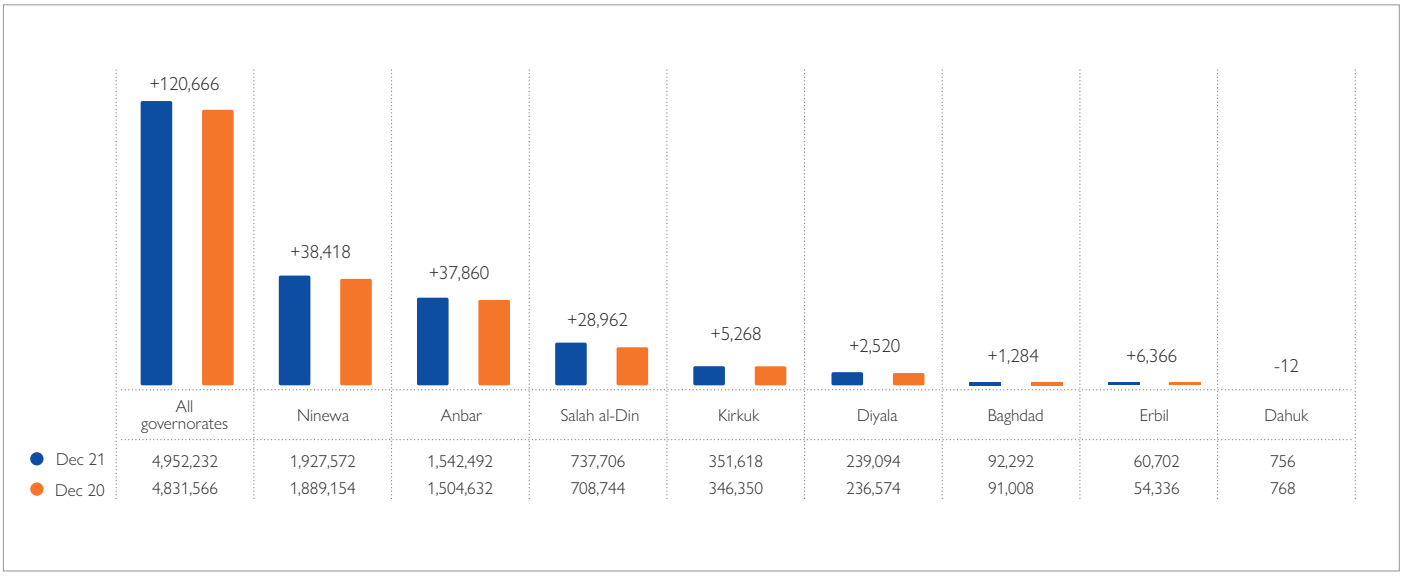
The Returns in Iraq: 2021 Overview provides an analysis of returns across the country. The first section of this report presents an overview of returns in 2021. The second considers conditions for returnees across all governorates of return at the end of 2021 and examines the relationship between the rate of return and the severity of those conditions. The third section outlines the areas of no return and newly assessed locations recorded by IOM's Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RARTs), and the returnee population living in critical shelters. The final section presents a more granular analysis of the factors driving severity in subdistricts of return which are designated as 'hotspots', and how these factors changed between December 2020 and December 2021.[1]

OVERVIEW OF RETURNS

Between December 2020 and December 2021, the returnee population grew by 120,666, equivalent to roughly 20,111 households (Figure 1). This is around half the number of returnees recorded in the previous year, when 235,116 individuals returned (December 2019 to December 2020). The rate of change, that is, the percentage change in the returnee population between rounds of data collection, also slowed significantly in 2021 (2.5%) compared with 2020 (5%) and 2019 (10%).

Around a third of returns between December 2020 and December 2021 were to Ninewa Governorate (32%, 38,418 individuals) and Anbar (31%, 37,860). Salah al-Din accounted for around one in four returns during 2021 (24%, 28,962) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Changes in returnee population by governorate[2]



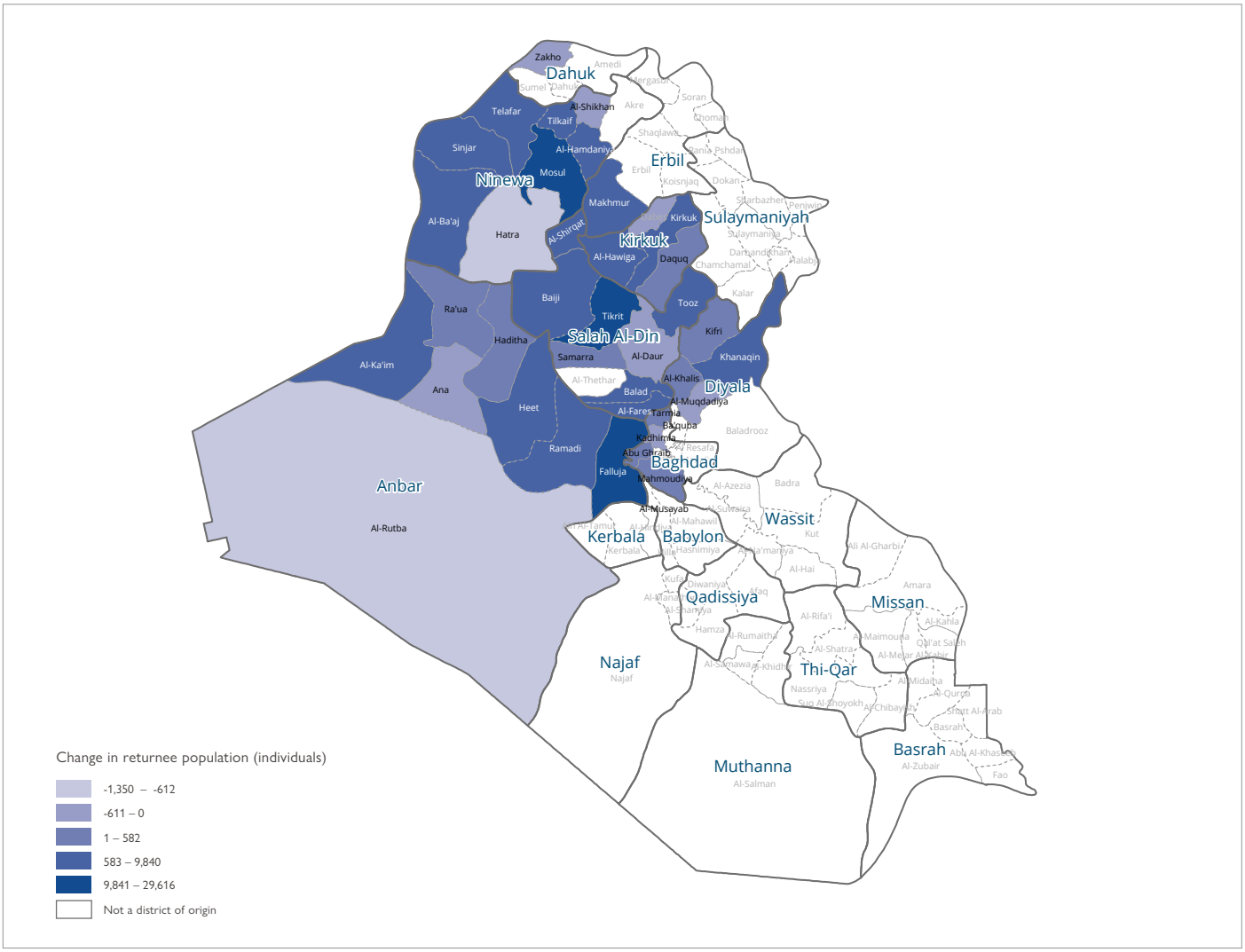
Between December 2020 and December 2021, the district of Falluja in Anbar Governorate recorded the highest increase in returnees, with 29,616 individuals returning. Mosul (17,526), Tikrit (14,394) and Sinjar (9,840) districts all recorded significant increases in returnees. Also notable was Hatra district in Ninewa Governorate, which recorded a decrease of 1,350 returnees, driven by security concerns and drought conditions in rural areas.[3] A reduction in the number of returnees was also recorded in Al-Rutba (-612) and Ana (-306) districts in Anbar Governorate, associated with a lack of job opportunities, with greater availability of job opportunities in other districts.

1 *The return index classifies a subdistrict as a hotspots if it scores highly in terms of severity on at least one of the two return index scales. A sub-district can also be considered a 'hotspot' if the area is scored as medium severity in one or both scales, but also hosts a relatively large number of returnees.*

2 *Data collected: November – December 2020, Master List Round 119 and October – December 2021, Master List Round 124.*

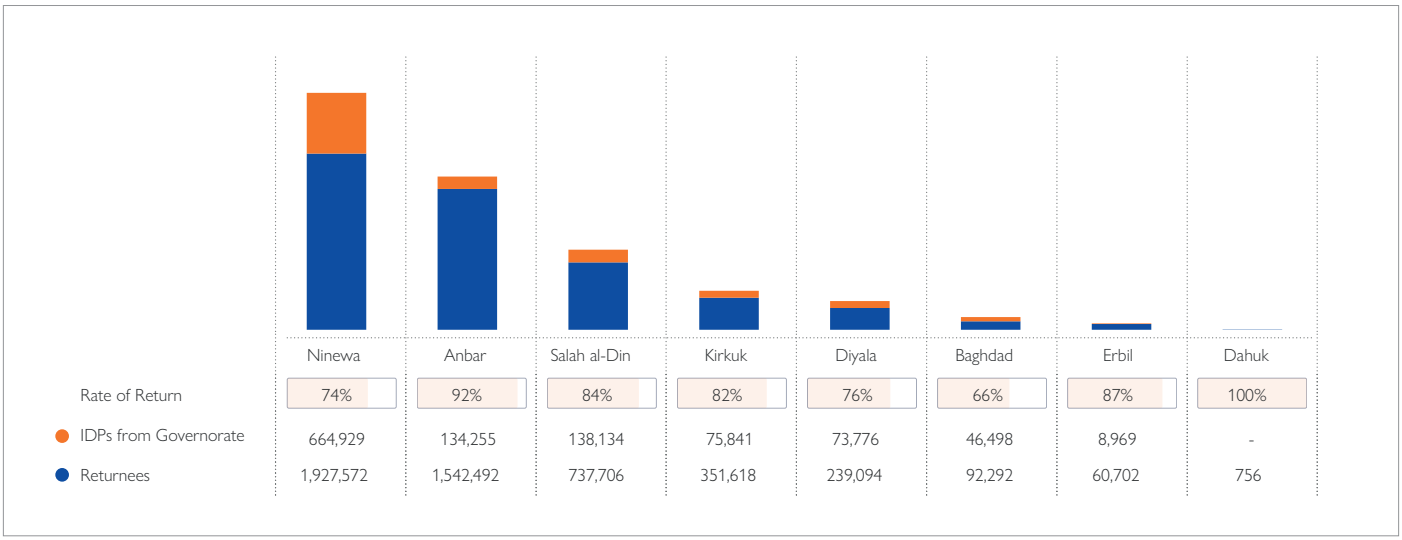
3 *Reporting on displacement driven by drought conditions in Hatra can be found as part of IOM DTM Emergency Tracking.*

Map 1. Change in returnee population per district in 2021[4]



As of December 2021, Ninewa hosted the largest number of returnees (1,927,572 individuals), with 74 per cent of the population displaced from that governorate having returned (Figure 2). Nearly all of Anbar's displaced population has returned (92%), with 1,542,492 returnees. Salah al-Din, with the third largest returnee population of 737,706 individuals, has a rate of return of 84 per cent.

Figure 2. Rate of return per governorate[5]



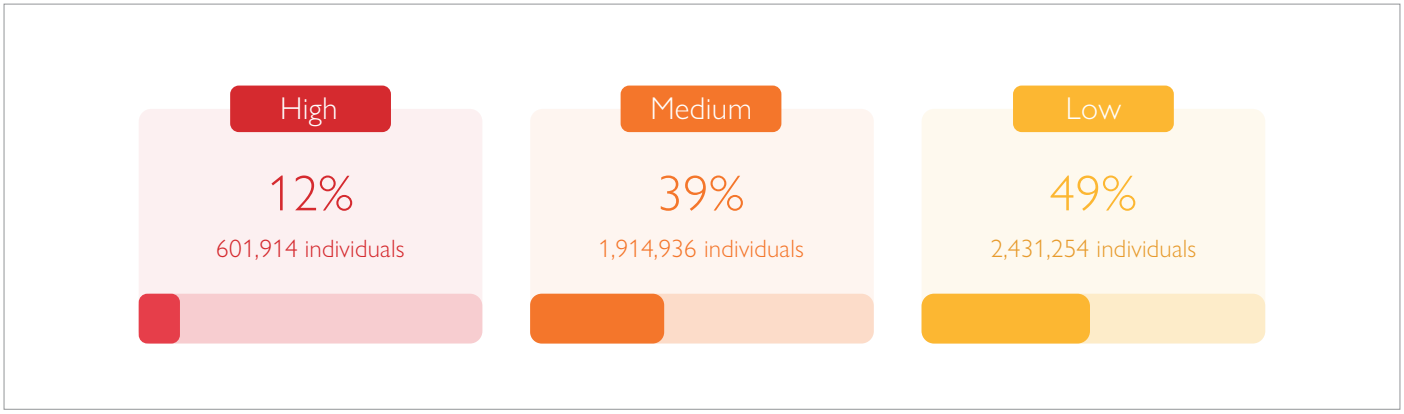
4 *Data collected: November – December 2020, Master List Round 119 and October – December 2021, Master List Round 124.*

5 *The rate of return calculated here divides the number of returnees per governorate by the total number of returnees and IDPs originating from that governorate. Data collected: October – December 2021, Master List Round 124.*

RETURNEE POPULATION IN SEVERE CONDITIONS

During the Return Index Round 14 collected from October to December 2021, a total of 2,165 locations of return were assessed. Out of these assessed locations, 459 presented severe conditions.[6] Twelve per cent of all returnees in Iraq live in severe conditions, equivalent to 601,914 individuals. However, just under half of all returnees in Iraq live in locations of low severity (49%, 2,431,254) (Figure 3). Between December 2020 and December 2021, the proportion of returnees in locations of high severity rose from 10 to 12 per cent, an increase of around 117,000 individuals.

Figure 3. Proportion and number of returnees by category of severity, as of December 2021



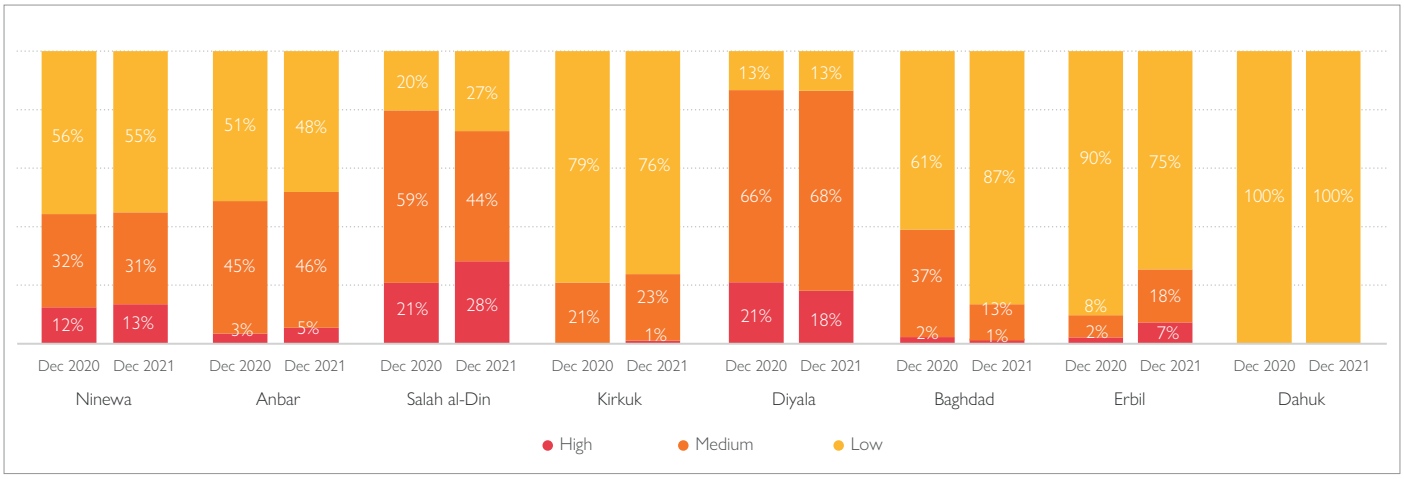
In absolute terms, the governorates with the highest number of returnees living in severe conditions are Ninewa (260,070 individuals) and Salah al-Din (207,114 individuals) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Number of returnees by category of severity for all governorates of return (December 2021)

In terms of proportion of returned population, Salah al-Din and Diyala have the highest percentages of returnees living in severe conditions with 28 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively (Figure 5). Salah al-Din also recorded the largest increase in the proportion of returnees living in the most severe conditions (from 21% to 28%). Diyala and Baghdad were the only governorates to have witnessed a reduction in the proportion of returnees living in locations of high overall severity (from 21% to 18%, and from 2% to 1%, respectively).

6 *The wording 'severe' or 'poor' conditions in this report refers to conditions in the locations classified as high severity.*

Figure 5. Proportion of returnees by category of severity for all governorates of return (December 2020 and December 2021)

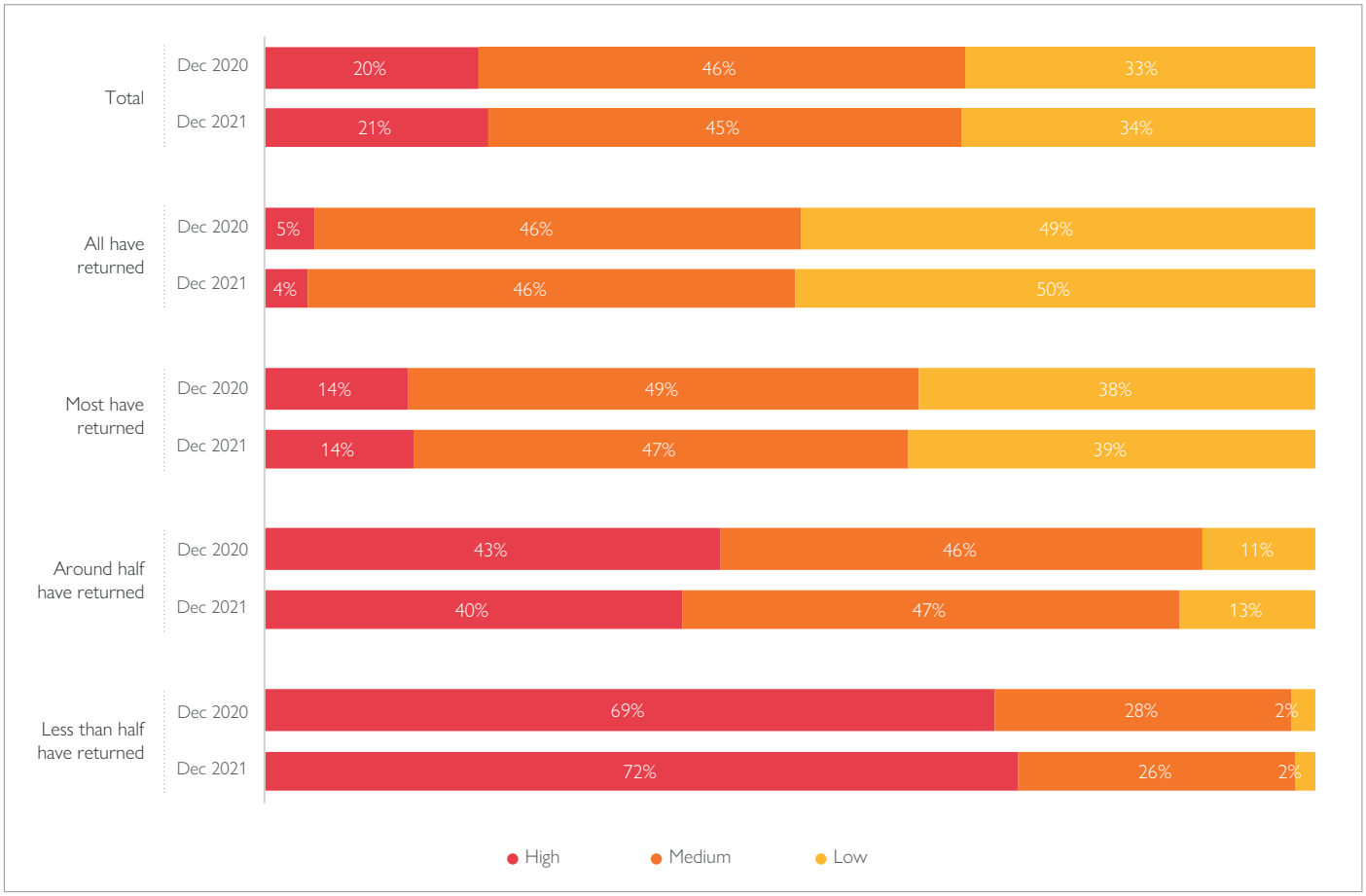


RETURN RATE PER CATEGORY OF SEVERITY

Analysis of Return Index data from December 2020 to December 2021 indicates a moderate association between the return rate and categories of severity (Figure 6).[7] Locations classified as low severity have more often witnessed the return of all of the displaced population while locations classified as high severity more often witnessed the return of less than half its displaced population. Likewise, locations with high severity have more often witnessed the return of less than half of the displaced population.

The proportion of locations that were high severity and where all the displaced population had returned reduced slightly in 2021 (from 5% in December 2020 to 4% in December 2021). As of December 2021, almost half of all locations with full returns are medium severity (46%) and half are low severity (50%).

Figure 6. Rate of return by overall severity (% of locations)[8]



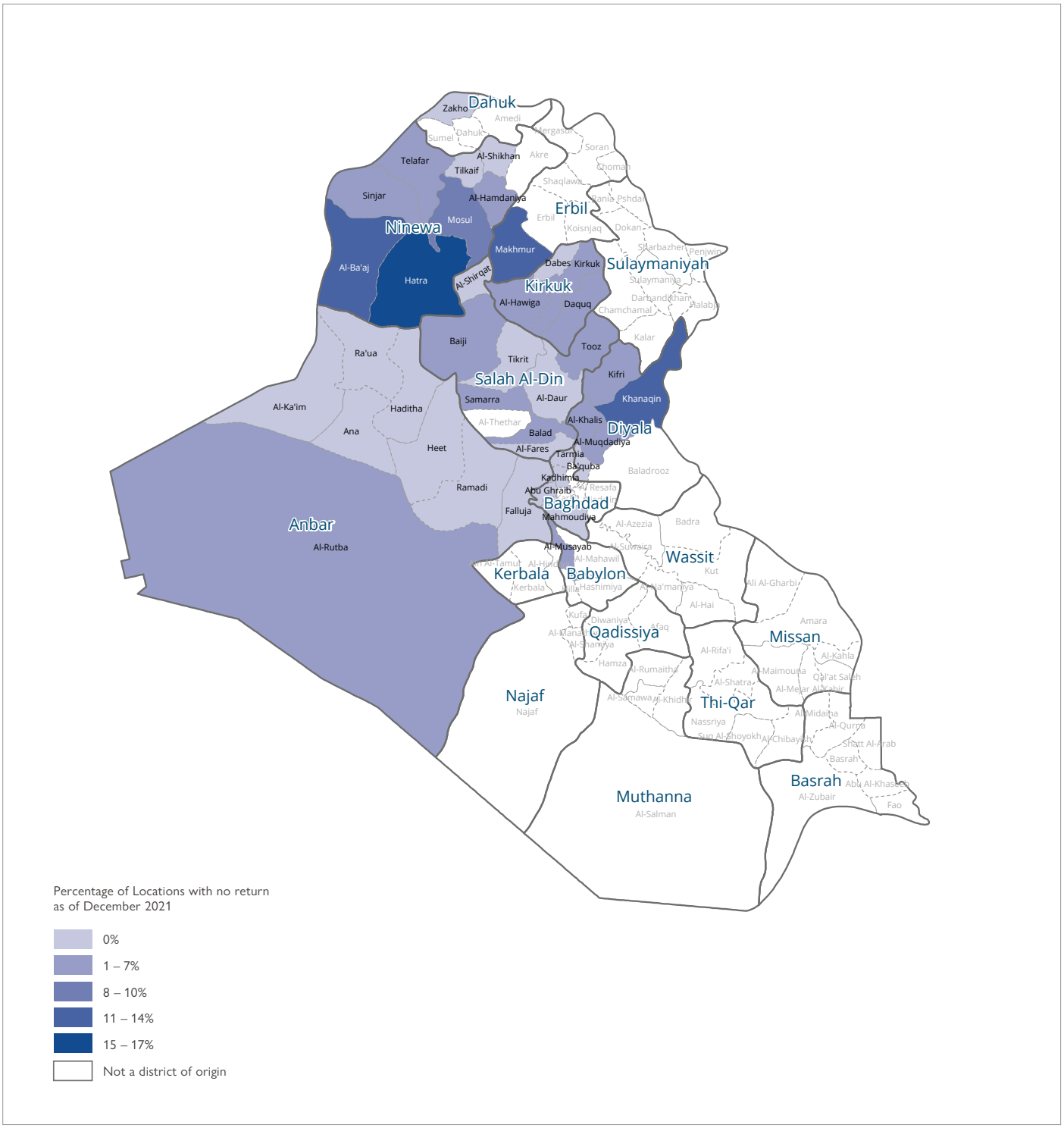
7 *Moderate association (Cramer's V = 0.337, p < .000 in Round 11 and Cramer's V = 0.327, p < .001 in Round 11).*

8 *Here the rate of return is calculated as part of the return index, in which a key informant is asked how many households have returned in each location, according to the categories shown in the chart.*

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.[9] As of December 2020, DTM identified locations 287 locations with no returns. Over the course of 2021, 26 of these locations witnessed returns. However, DTM identified an additional 18 locations of no return during the year, two of which subsequently witnessed returns in 2021. As a result, as of December 2021, there were a total of 281 nationwide locations of no return.

Map 2. Percentage of locations of no return per district

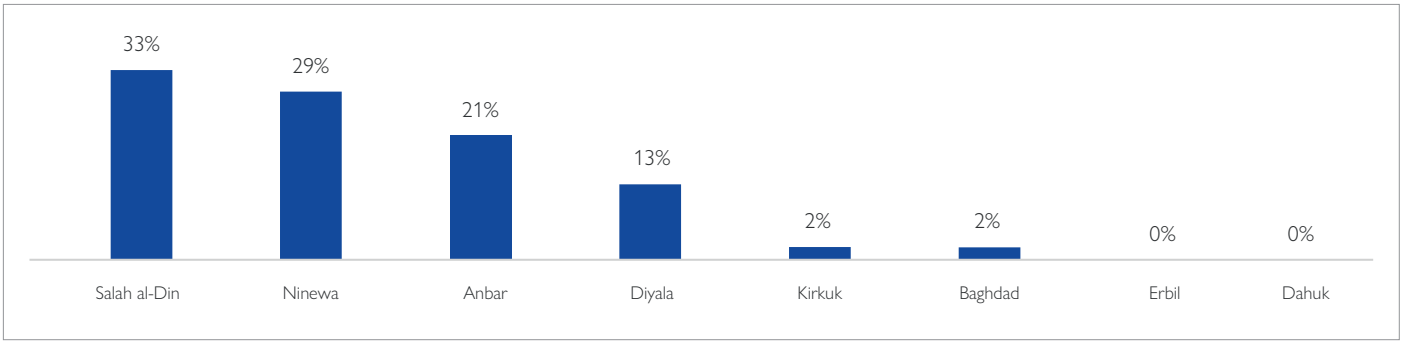


9 *These locations, having no key informants and no population, are difficult to record and monitor and are generally identified through word-of-mouth.*

RETURNEE POPULATION IN CRITICAL SHELTERS

As of December 2021, 193,494 returnees reside in shelters in critical condition, representing around 4 per cent of the total returnee population nationwide.[10] Specifically, most returnees in critical shelters reside in destroyed or heavily damaged pre-conflict residences. Between December 2020 and December 2021, the number of returnees residing in critical shelters rose by 16,398 (9%). Around a third of returnees in critical shelters reside in Salah al-Din Governorate (33%), followed by Ninewa (29%), Anbar (21%) and Diyala (13%) (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Returnee population in critical shelters by governorate (December 2021)



DRIVERS OF SEVERITY IN KEY AREAS OF RETURN

The analysis presented in this section focuses on five thematic areas of the Return Index indicators: residential destruction, livelihoods, access to essential service, social cohesion, and safety (Figure 8). To provide a more granular understanding of severity and obstacles to return, the Return Index indicators are grouped into five 'drivers of severity', which track problematic aspects that particularly contributing to severe conditions.[11] This section presents an analysis of how the severity for each driver has changed across 'hotspots' between December 2020 and December 2021.[12] As of December 2021, 30 hotspots were identified across five governorates. Three hotspots displayed in the figures below were designated as hotspots in December 2020 but were no longer designated as hotspots by December 2021 due to improvements in severity.

Figure 8. Drivers of severity and composite indicators

DRIVER	RESIDENTIAL DESTRUCTION	LIVELIHOODS	ESSENTIAL SERVICES	SOCIAL COHESION	SAFETY AND SECURITY
INDICATORS	Residential destruction	Recovery of agriculture	Provision of government services	Daily public life	Concerns regarding mines and unexploded ordnance
		Recovery of business	Electricity sufficiency	Community reconciliation	Concerns about sources of violence
		Access to employment	Water sufficiency	Illegal occupation of private residences	Presence of multiple security actors
			Access to basic services	Blocked returns	Checkpoints controlled by other security actors

10 *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 residences of origin that are unfit for habitation (having the characteristics of unfinished or severely damaged buildings). Data collected: October – December, Master List 124.*

11 *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.*

12 *Subdistricts are classified as 'hotspots' if they score highly in terms of severity on at least one of the two scales (either livelihoods and basic services, or safety and social cohesion) or if they score medium in terms of severity but also host relatively large numbers of returnees, at least 60,000 returnees in a subdistrict.*

RESIDENTIAL DESTRUCTION

Overall, the extent of residential destruction and the presence of reconstruction efforts in most hotspot subdistricts is categorized as low severity (67% of all hotspots). This means that, while there may be variation at the location level, in general, fewer than half of the households in these areas are destroyed, and reconstruction efforts are ongoing. Nevertheless, only four hotspots witnessed an improvement to residential destruction during 2021.

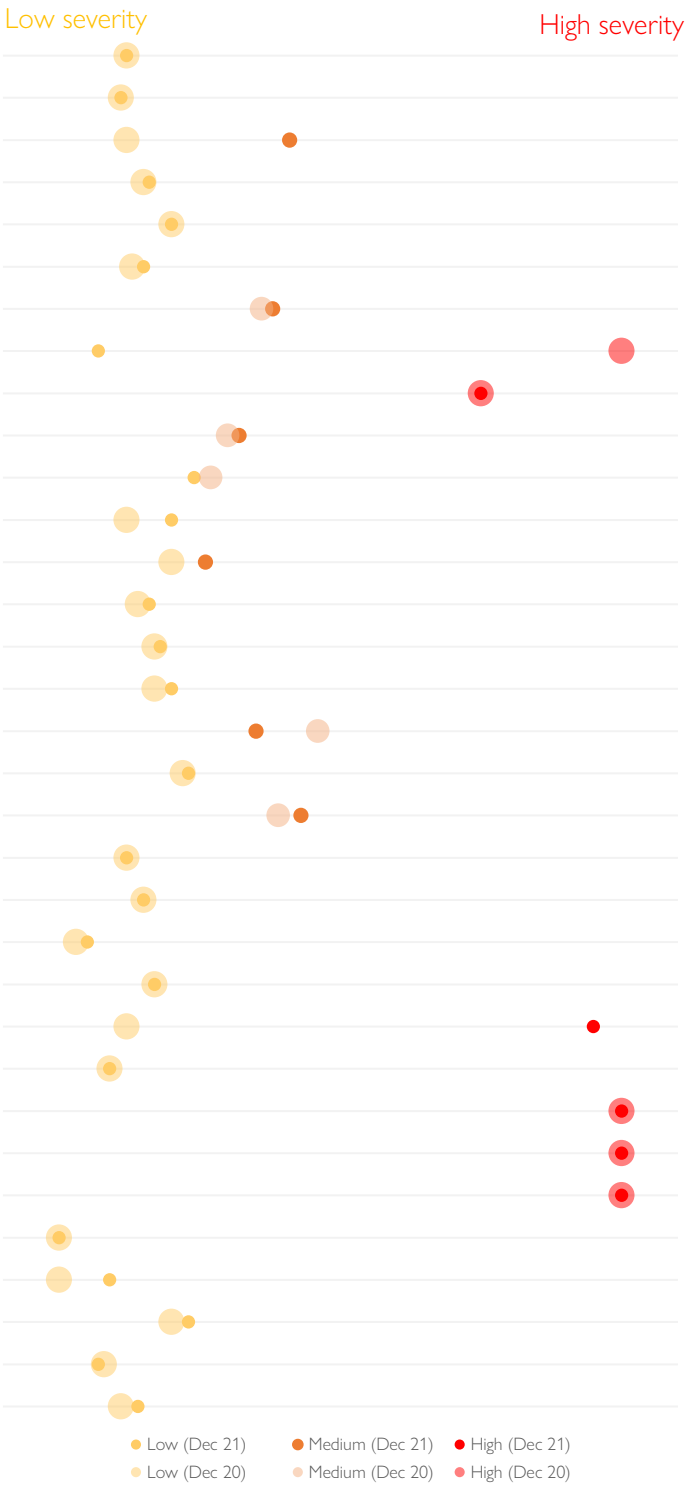
In Balad district, Salah al-Din Governorate, there are three hotspots with high severity for residential destruction, and no improvement over the course of the year. This was also the case in Abo Sayda in Al-Muqdadiya district in Diyala Governorate.

A significant increase in severity was recorded in Al-Siniya in Baiji district, Salah al-Din Governorate. A worsening in the category of severity for residential destruction was also noted in Al-Garma in Falluja district, Anbar Governorate and Al-Qahtaniya in Al-Ba'aj district, Ninewa Governorate. In each cases, returns to locations with extensive residential destruction and few reconstruction efforts resulted in the worsening category of severity.

Notably, Al-Nasir Walsalam in Baghdad Governorate, saw significant improvements in residential destruction, moving from high to low severity in 2021. Al-Nasir Walsalam was one of the subdistricts that was no longer classified as a 'hotspot' by December 2021, driven in part by significant improvements in the rehabilitation of housing.

Figure 9. Variation in severity for residential destruction in all hotspots (December 2020 to December 2021)[13]

GOVERNORATE	DISTRICT	SUB-DISTRICT
Anbar	Al-Ka'im	Markaz Al-Ka'im
	Falluja	Al-Amirya
	Falluja	Al-Garma
	Heet	Al-Baghdady
	Heet	Al-Forat
	Heet	Markaz Heet
	Ramadi	Husaibah Al-Sharqiah
Baghdad	Abu Ghraib	Al-Nasir Walsalam
Diyala	Al-Muqdadiya	Abo Sayda
	Al-Muqdadiya	Markaz Al-Muqdadiya
	Khanaqin	Jalula
	Kifri	Qara Tabe
Ninewa	Al-Ba'aj	Al-Qahtaniya
	Al-Ba'aj	Markaz Al-Ba'aj
	Mosul	Hamam al Aleel
	Sinjar	Al-Shamal
	Sinjar	Markaz Sinjar
	Sinjar	Qaeyrrawan
	Telafar	Ayadiya
	Telafar	Markaz Telafar
	Telafar	Zummar
Salah al-Din	Al-Daur	Markaz Al-Daur
	Al-Shirqat	Markaz Al-Shirqat
	Baiji	Al-Siniya
	Baiji	Markaz Baiji
	Balad	Al-Eshaqi
	Balad	Markaz Al-Balad
	Balad	Yathreb
	Samarra	Al-Moatassem
	Samarra	Markaz Samarra
	Tuz Khurmatu	Al-Amerli
	Tuz Khurmatu	Markaz Tuz Khurmatu
	Tuz Khurmatu	Suleiman Beg



13 An interactive dashboard presenting data on drivers of severity and rate of return for hotposts can be found at http://iraqdtm.iom.int/ReturnIndex. In addition, a detailed analysis of how drivers of severity varied across all subdistricts of return can be found in the respective governorate profiles, available at http://iraqdtm.iom.int/ReturnIndex#GovProfiles.

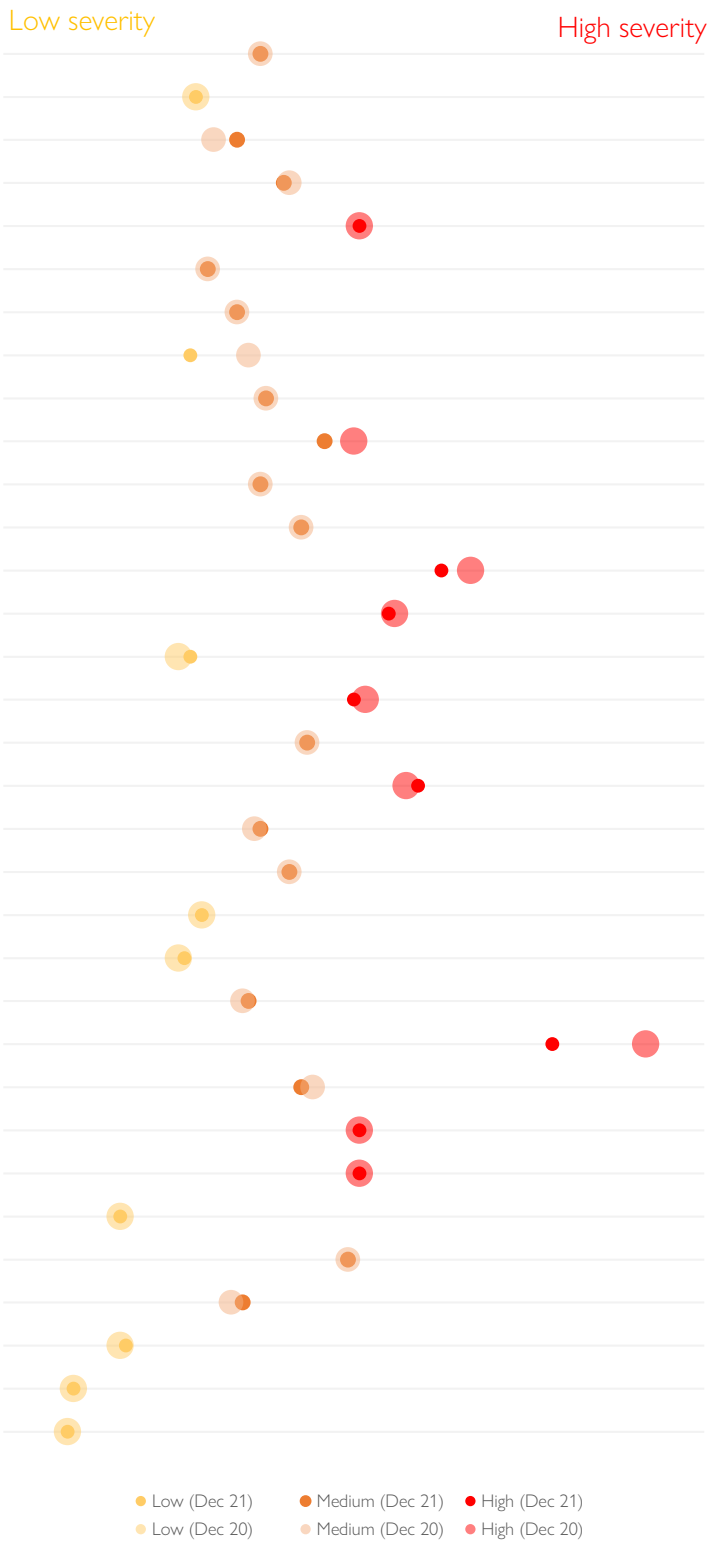
LIVELIHOODS

There was little variation in the livelihood driver of severity for hotspots in 2021, with only eight hotspots recording an improvement over the course of 2021 (24%). Markaz al Muqdadiya, in Al-Muqdadiya district, Diyala Governorate was the only hotspot to change category of severity, from high to medium. This was driven by the recovery of agriculture in the area and improved access to employment. Small improvements were also notable in Al-Qahtaniya in Al-Ba'aj district, Ninewa Governorate and Al-Siniya in Baiji district, Salah al-Din Governorate.

Nearly half of all hotspots are considered to be medium severity with regard to livelihoods (48%), with the remaining hotspots being low severity (27%) and high severity (24%). The lack of variation in livelihoods scores suggests that underlying market factors such as lack of investment, uneven access to vocational and school education and limited (re-)construction of infrastructure continued to impact upon returnee livelihoods in 2021.[14]

Figure 10. Variation in severity for livelihoods in all hotspots (December 2020 to December 2021)

GOVERNORATE	DISTRICT	SUB-DISTRICT
Anbar	Al-Ka'im	Markaz Al-Ka'im
	Falluja	Al-Amirya
	Falluja	Al-Garma
	Heet	Al-Baghdady
	Heet	Al-Forat
	Heet	Markaz Heet
	Ramadi	Husaibah Al-Sharqiah
Baghdad	Abu Ghraib	Al-Nasir Walsalam
Diyala	Al-Muqdadiya	Abo Sayda
	Al-Muqdadiya	Markaz Al-Muqdadiya
	Khanaqin	Jalula
	Kifri	Qara Tabe
Ninewa	Al-Ba'aj	Al-Qahtaniya
	Al-Ba'aj	Markaz Al-Ba'aj
	Mosul	Hamam al Aleel
	Sinjar	Al-Shamal
	Sinjar	Markaz Sinjar
	Sinjar	Qaeyrrawan
	Telafar	Ayadiya
	Telafar	Markaz Telafar
	Telafar	Zummar
Salah al-Din	Al-Daur	Markaz Al-Daur
	Al-Shirqat	Markaz Al-Shirqat
	Baiji	Al-Siniya
	Baiji	Markaz Baiji
	Balad	Al-Eshaqi
	Balad	Markaz Al-Balad
	Balad	Yathreb
	Samarra	Al-Moatassem
	Samarra	Markaz Samarra
	Tuz Khurmatu	Al-Amerli
	Tuz Khurmatu	Markaz Tuz Khurmatu
	Tuz Khurmatu	Suleiman Beg



14 *The impact of these factors, among others, on displaced and returnee households was detailed in the 2021 Iraq Humanitarian Needs Overview.*

SERVICES

Around half of all hotspots were categorised as low severity with regard to access to services (48%), with the remainder medium (27%) and high severity (24%). During 2021, ten hotspots recorded an improvement in access to services (30%).

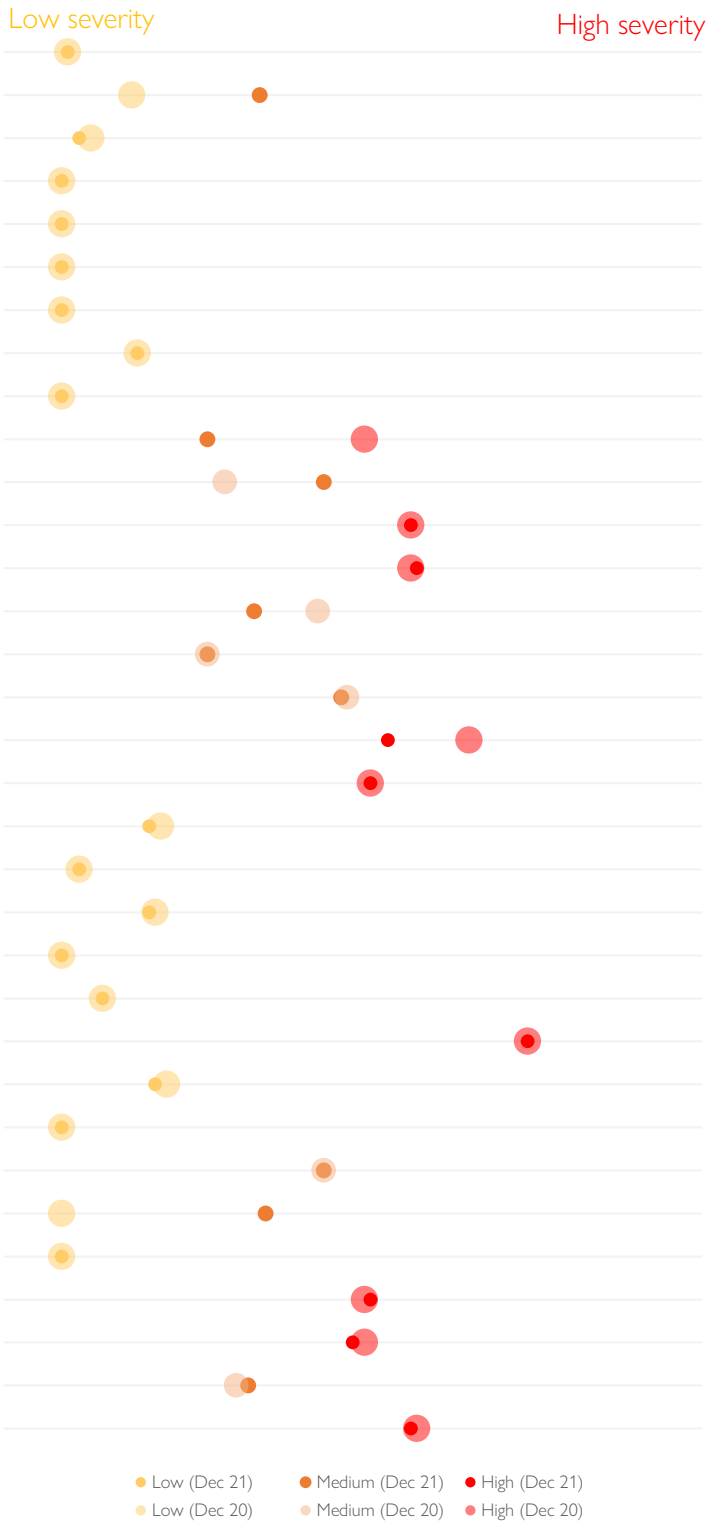
Access to services remained good among all hotspots in Anbar and Baghdad governorates, and in Telafar district, Ninewa Governorate. Access to water and electricity remain poor in Al-Amerli and Suleiman Beg within Tuz Khumatu district, Salah al-Din Governorate. Similar issues affected Qara Tabe, in Kifri district, Diyala Governorate and Al-Qahtaniya in Al-Ba'aj, Ninewa Governorate.

Access to services worsened notably in Yathreb in Balad district, Salah al-Din Governorate, during 2021 due to issues accessing sufficient water for drinking and domestic purposes. Similar issues affected Al-Amirya in Falluja district, Anbar Governorate and Jalula in Khanaqin district, Diyala Governorate.

Markaz Al-Muqdadiya in Muqdadiya district, Diyala Governorate was the only hotspot to record a notable improvement in 2021, moving from high to medium severity as a result of improved access to water and electricity.

Figure 11. Variation in severity for services in all hotspots (December 2020 to December 2021)

GOVERNORATE	DISTRICT	SUB-DISTRICT
Anbar	Al-Ka'im	Markaz Al-Ka'im
	Falluja	Al-Amirya
	Falluja	Al-Garma
	Heet	Al-Baghdady
	Heet	Al-Forat
	Heet	Markaz Heet
	Ramadi	Husaibah Al-Sharqiah
Baghdad	Abu Ghraib	Al-Nasir Walsalam
Diyala	Al-Muqdadiya	Abo Sayda
	Al-Muqdadiya	Markaz Al-Muqdadiya
	Khanaqin	Jalula
	Kifri	Qara Tabe
Ninewa	Al-Ba'aj	Al-Qahtaniya
	Al-Ba'aj	Markaz Al-Ba'aj
	Mosul	Hamam al Aleel
	Sinjar	Al-Shamal
	Sinjar	Markaz Sinjar
	Sinjar	Qaeyrrawan
	Telafar	Ayadiya
	Telafar	Markaz Telafar
	Telafar	Zummar
Salah al-Din	Al-Daur	Markaz Al-Daur
	Al-Shirqat	Markaz Al-Shirqat
	Baiji	Al-Siniya
	Baiji	Markaz Baiji
	Balad	Al-Eshaqi
	Balad	Markaz Al-Balad
	Balad	Yathreb
	Samarra	Al-Moatassem
	Samarra	Markaz Samarra
	Tuz Khurmatu	Al-Amerli
	Tuz Khurmatu	Markaz Tuz Khurmatu
	Tuz Khurmatu	Suleiman Beg



SOCIAL COHESION

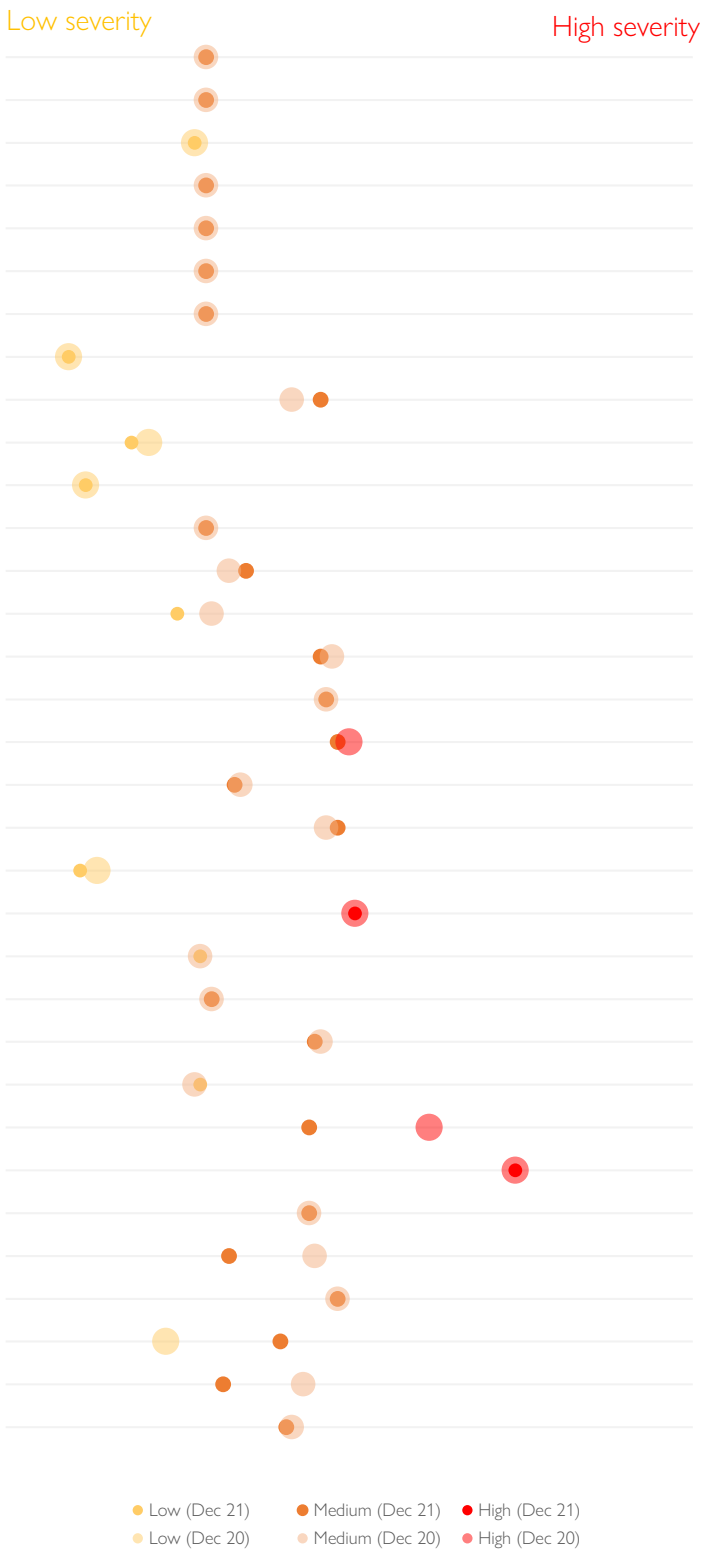
Only two hotspots recorded high severity related to social cohesion indicators as of December 2021 (6%). The majority of hotspots recorded medium severity (70%), with the remainder low severity (24%). Overall, severity driven by social cohesion indicators improved across 33 per cent of hotspots.

Hotspots in Anbar governorate witnessed no notable improvements, remaining low or medium severity throughout 2021. In Salah al-Din Governorate, Al-Eshaqi in Balad district recorded a reduction from high to medium severity, as did Markaz Sinjar, Sinjar district, Ninewa Governorate.

As of December 2021, Markaz Al-Balad in Balad district, Salah al-Din Governorate and Zimmar, in Telafar district, Ninewa Governorate are the only hotspots classified as high severity for social cohesion. However, a worsening of social cohesion conditions was recorded in Al-Amerli in Tuz Khurmatu district, driven by the need for but lack of community reconciliation.

Figure 12. Variation in severity for social cohesion in all hotspots (December 2019 to December 2020)

GOVERNORATE	DISTRICT	SUB-DISTRICT
Anbar	Al-Ka'im	Markaz Al-Ka'im
	Falluja	Al-Amirya
	Falluja	Al-Garma
	Heet	Al-Baghdady
	Heet	Al-Forat
	Heet	Markaz Heet
	Ramadi	Husaibah Al-Sharqiah
Baghdad	Abu Ghraib	Al-Nasir Walsalam
Diyala	Al-Muqdadiya	Abo Sayda
	Al-Muqdadiya	Markaz Al-Muqdadiya
	Khanaqin	Jalula
	Kifri	Qara Tabe
Ninewa	Al-Ba'aj	Al-Qahtaniya
	Al-Ba'aj	Markaz Al-Ba'aj
	Mosul	Hamam al Aleel
	Sinjar	Al-Shamal
	Sinjar	Markaz Sinjar
	Sinjar	Qaeyrrawan
	Telafar	Ayadiya
	Telafar	Markaz Telafar
	Telafar	Zummar
Salah al-Din	Al-Daur	Markaz Al-Daur
	Al-Shirqat	Markaz Al-Shirqat
	Baiji	Al-Siniya
	Baiji	Markaz Baiji
	Balad	Al-Eshaqi
	Balad	Markaz Al-Balad
	Balad	Yathreb
	Samarra	Al-Moatassem
	Samarra	Markaz Samarra
	Tuz Khurmatu	Al-Amerli
	Tuz Khurmatu	Markaz Tuz Khurmatu
	Tuz Khurmatu	Suleiman Beg



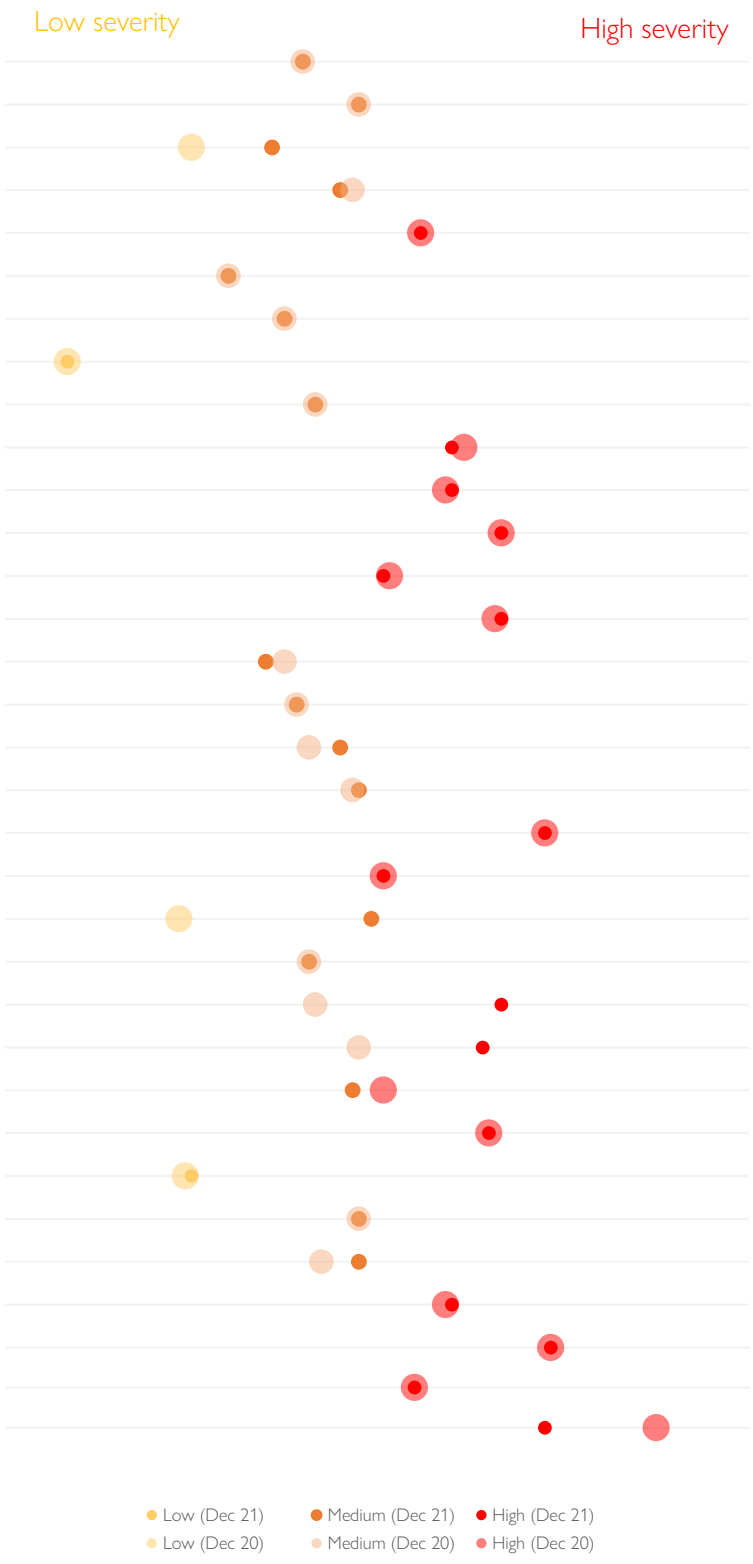
SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety and security indicators continued to be a key driver of severity in hotspots throughout 2021. Overall, more hotspots recorded high severity for safety and security driver than for any other driver (45%). Further, only six hotspots recorded any improvement in severity over the course of 2021(18%).[15]

In Salah al-Din Governorate, all hotspots in Tuz Khurmatu district remained in high severity, due to the number of security forces and prevalent concerns of violence between or from those forces. Two hotspots, Markaz al-Shirqat in Al-Shirqat district and Al-Siniya in Baiji worsened from medium to high severity during 2021. In Markaz Al-Shirqat, this deterioration is related to the number of security actors and in Al-Siniya concerns related to unexploded ordnance grew over the course of 2021. Hotspots in Ninewa remained largely stable, however, Zummar in Telafar district worsened from low to medium severity, driven by concerns related to violence between and from security forces. The same occurred in Al-Garma, in Falluja district, Anbar Governorate driven by the number of security actors present as of December 2021.

Figure 13. Variation in severity for safety and security in all hotspots (December 2020 to December 2021)

GOVERNORATE	DISTRICT	SUB-DISTRICT
Anbar	Al-Ka'im	Markaz Al-Ka'im
	Falluja	Al-Amirya
	Falluja	Al-Garma
	Heet	Al-Baghdady
	Heet	Al-Forat
	Heet	Markaz Heet
	Ramadi	Husaibah Al-Sharqiah
Baghdad	Abu Ghraib	Al-Nasir Walsalam
Diyala	Al-Muqdadiya	Abo Sayda
	Al-Muqdadiya	Markaz Al-Muqdadiya
	Khanaqin	Jalula
	Kifri	Qara Tabe
Ninewa	Al-Ba'aj	Al-Qahtaniya
	Al-Ba'aj	Markaz Al-Ba'aj
	Mosul	Hamam al Aleel
	Sinjar	Al-Shamal
	Sinjar	Markaz Sinjar
	Sinjar	Qaeyrrawan
	Telafar	Ayadiya
	Telafar	Markaz Telafar
	Telafar	Zummar
Salah al-Din	Al-Daur	Markaz Al-Daur
	Al-Shirqat	Markaz Al-Shirqat
	Baiji	Al-Siniya
	Baiji	Markaz Baiji
	Balad	Al-Eshaqi
	Balad	Markaz Al-Balad
	Balad	Yathreb
	Samarra	Al-Moatassem
	Samarra	Markaz Samarra
	Tuz Khurmatu	Al-Amerli
	Tuz Khurmatu	Markaz Tuz Khurmatu
	Tuz Khurmatu	Suleiman Beg



15 One of these hotspots, Al-Baghdady in Heet district, Anbar Governorate was no longer categorised as a hotspot by December 2021.

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