FACTSHEET

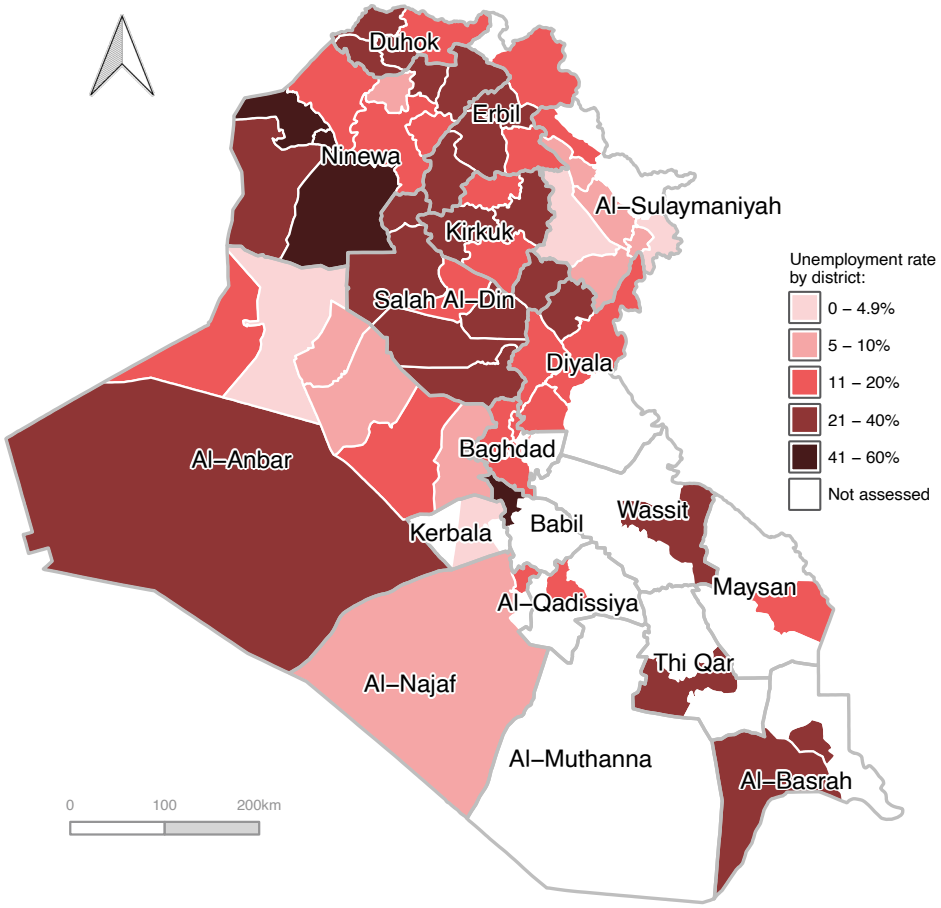
MCNA X: Livelihoods by age, gender and disability

April, 2023
Iraq

KEY MESSAGES

- Female-headed households and households with a head of household with a disability among IDPs and returnees in the Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment (MCNA) X were reportedly worse off in terms of securing paid work and having an adequate income, and more often reported to rely on negative coping mechanisms.
- Unemployment rates and participation in the paid labour force among female internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees vary significantly based on age, marital status, and type of disability.

Map 1. Adult unemployment rates among out-of-camp IDPs and returnees by district:



CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Women, older people and people with disabilities often face additional barriers to finding refuge and recovering from conflicts and crises.[1]

Yet, while it is widely acknowledged that they often find themselves in a vulnerable position when displaced, the specific impact and ways in which gender, age, and disability influence people's needs, priorities, and coping mechanisms are not yet fully understood.

As the international community moves from humanitarian action to development[2] and durable solutions, access to sustainable livelihoods and increasing household resilience becomes increasingly important.

This factsheet draws on data from the MCNA X to shed light on how gender, age and disability affect the livelihoods of IDPs, returnees and host community members in Iraq.

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Understand how age, gender and disability affect livelihoods among IDPs, returnees and non-displaced persons.

Identify which segments of the IDP and returnee population are mainly unemployed.

METHODOLOGY:

MCNA X was implemented through a statistically representative nationwide household-level survey among IDPs returnees and host community members. Data was collected between June 5 and August 16, 2022. See also Methodology on page 4.

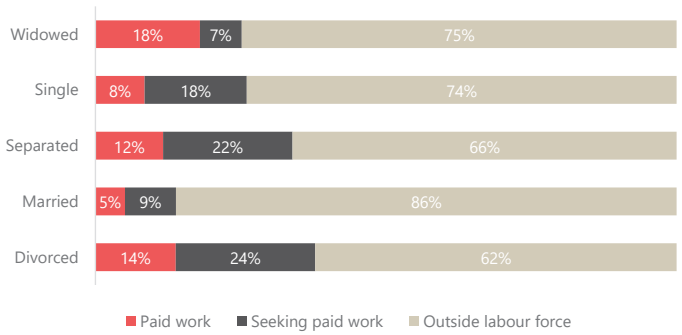
Employment

Female IDPs and returnees in their twenties more often than other age groups reported being part of the paid labour force,[3] meaning they either reported doing paid work or reported actively seeking paid work (see Graph 2). However, as shown in graph 3, reported unemployment rates[4] are also the highest in this age group, standing at 74% among female IDPs and returnees between the age 20-24.

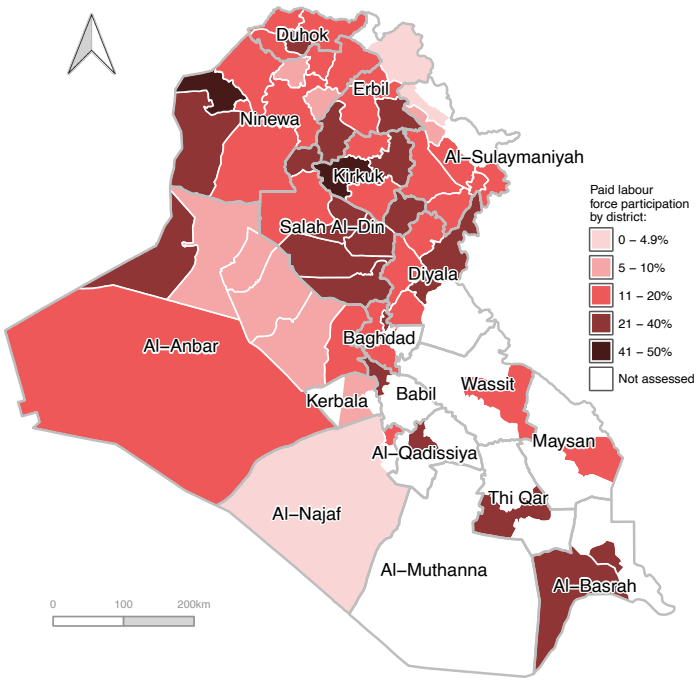
Aside from age, marital status also seems to be associated with female participation in the paid labour force. Around 86% of married female IDPs and returnees reported being outside the paid labour force, meaning they reported not doing paid work, nor actively seeking paid work, as indicated in graph 1. Districts with the highest reported overall unemployment rates often also reported the highest participation rate of women in the paid labour force, as shown in Maps 1 and 2 and further detailed in Annex A.

The reported unemployment rate among people with disabilities (between the ages 18-60) is the same as those without disabilities (24% and 23%, respectively). However, this can be mainly attributed to the low participation in the paid labour force among persons with disabilities in the first place. Persons who reported having a lot of difficulty or cannot walk at all more often reported being unemployed compared to persons with a hearing or visual impairments.

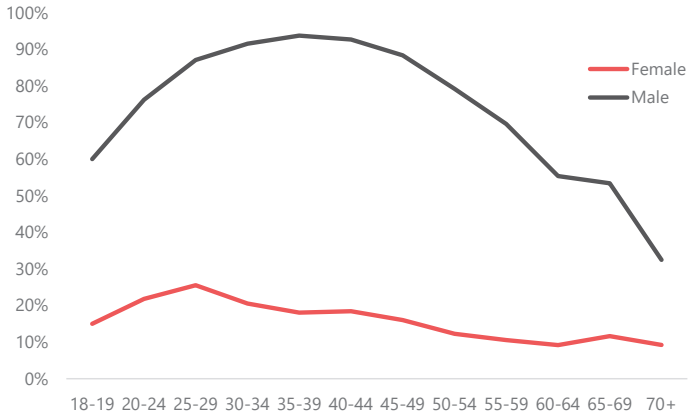
Graph 1. Female paid labour force participation rate among IDPs and returnees by marital status:



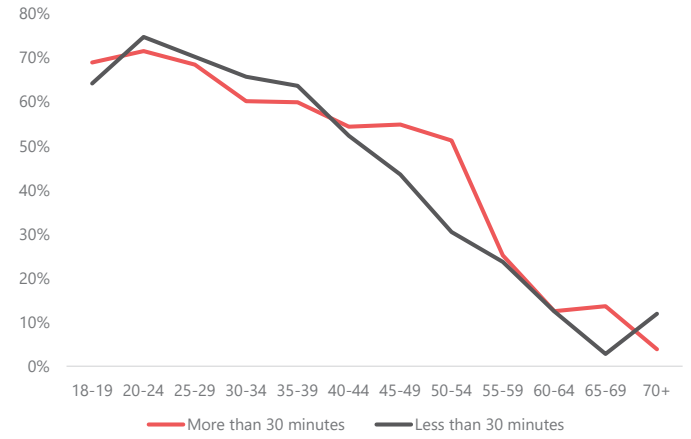
Map 2. Paid labour force participation rates among female out-of-camp IDPs and returnees by district:



Graph 2. Paid labour force participation rate among IDPs and returnees by age and gender:



Graph 3. Unemployment rates among female IDPs and returnees by age and city accessibility:[5]



Source: Malaria Atlas Project. See also Annex B

Graph 4 Paid labour force participation among IDPs and returnees with a disability between the ages 18-60:

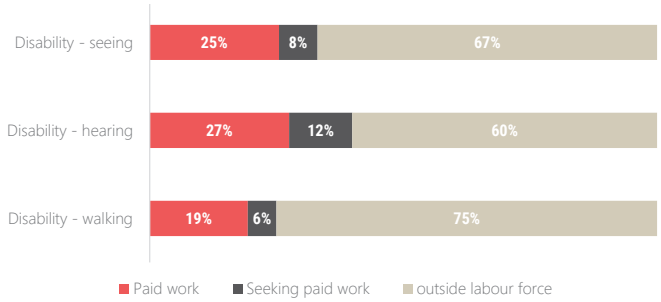


Table 1. Primary reported barriers to employment:

	Nationwide	HoHH +60	Female HoHH	HoHH with disability
Competition/not enough jobs	78%	77%	68%	76%
Lack of personal connections	25%	28%	32%	25%
Distance to available jobs	18%	13%	21%	13%
Lack of livelihood opportunities for women	17%	13%	33%	27%
Under-qualified for available jobs	14%	10%	16%	14%

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Income

Between the MCNA IX and the MCNA X, returnee, IDP and host community household income from employment and retirement or pensions reportedly decreased by 8% from 454,000 IQD to 418,000, while the prices of basic food and non-food items increased.[6]

Among households who reported having income from employment, pensions or retirement, IDP, returnee and host community households reported a median income of 350,000 Iraqi Dinars for their entire households in the month prior to data collection, as evidenced in Table 2.

In contrast, the Labour Force Survey of 2021,[7] the median monthly earnings of Iraqi employees at their main job was 614,000 nationwide, with women reporting a higher income (713,200), as those active in the paid labour force in Iraq are primarily highly educated.

Table 2. Reported median and average household income by displacement status in 30 days before data collections:

	Average	Median
In-camp IDP	375,000	300,000
Out-of-camp IDP	413,000	350,000
Returnee	433,000	350,000
Host community	492,000	400,000

Data from the MCNA X provides indicative insights into how demographic characteristics also affect both households' primary sources and levels of income. Among all population groups surveyed in MCNA, a higher proportion of female-headed and heads of households with a disability reported earning less than 440,000 IQD (see Graph 6 & Table 3).

Compared to the MCNA IX, households during the MCNA X more often cited a reliance on negative income sources such as loans and debts, NGO or charity assistance and support from the community, friends and family. Households with a head of households with a disability also more often cited loans and debts as one of their primary source of income than other surveyed households, whereas a disproportional part of the female-headed households compared to male-headed households reported to primarily rely on support from the community, family and friend (Table 4).

Interestingly, as shown in Table 4, households with a head of household with a disability did not cite NGO or charity assistance more often as a primary income source. However, as households with a head of household with a disability also more often indicated that they relied on negative coping mechanisms (see next section), this may be indicative of how the needs of persons with disabilities are under-served in Iraq.

Table 3. Reported median and average IDP and returnee household income by head of households in 30 days before data collections:

	Average	Median
HoHH with disability	355,870	300,000
Female HoHH	312,716	250,000
Single female HoHH*	305,056	250,000
HoHH 60+	425,727	400,000

Single female HoHH can refer to either divorced, single, separated or widowed.

Graph 5. Most commonly reported primary income source, by displacement status:

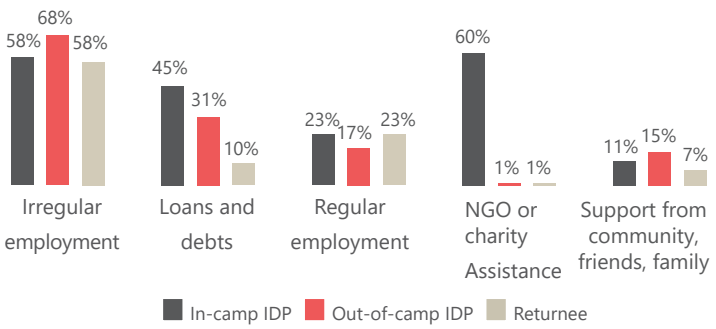
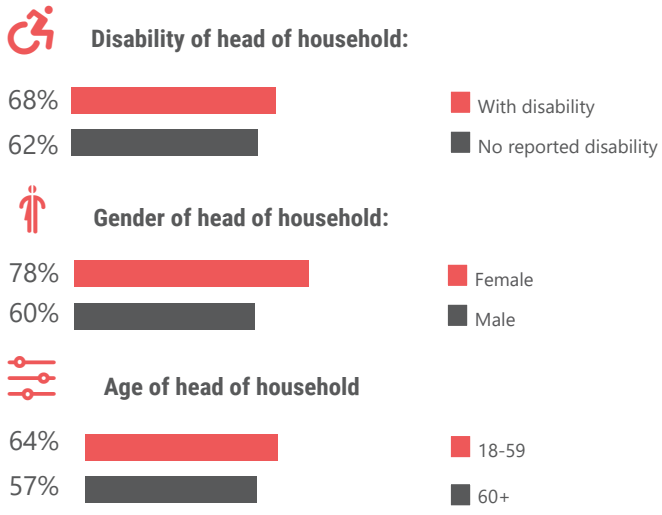


Table 4. Most commonly reported primary income source nationwide compared by demographic group:

	Nationwide	HoHH over 60+	Female HoHH	HoHH with disability
Irregular employment	62%	47%	50%	50%
Loans and debts	27%	29%	30%	38%
Regular employment	21%	17%	8%	11%
NGO or charity assistance	12%	16%	15%	11%
Support from community, friends, family	11%	18%	23%	21%
Savings	8%	10%	6%	9%
Retirement fund or pension	7%	23%	13%	11%
Income from renting out house, land or property	1%	1%	0%	1%

Graph 6. Proportion of households whose average monthly income from employment and pension was less than the 2022 SMEB value of 440,000 IQD/month, per demographic group:[8]



Coping mechanisms

As the average household income decreased and prices have gone up between MCNA IX and MCNA X, it is unsurprising that households increasingly reported relying on negative coping mechanisms to make ends meet. While economic hardship affects all population groups, both displaced and non-displaced, data from MCNA X shows that the use of negative coping mechanisms is more prevalent among female-headed households and households with a household head with a disability.

As shown in Table 5, female-headed households slightly more often reported than other surveyed households to take on debts primarily to purchase food. Households with a head of household reporting a disability or over the age of sixty more frequently reported healthcare costs as their primary reason for taking on debt.

Table 5. Primary reported reasons to take on debt, by demographics:

	Nationwide	HoHH +60	Female HoHH	HoHH with disability
Basic household expenditures (rent, utilities)	32%	27%	30%	28%
Food	28%	25%	34%	22%
Healthcare	23%	33%	23%	38%
House repair/ reconstruction	9%	10%	6%	7%
Income-generating activities	5%	3%	3%	2%

The reliance on negative coping mechanisms reduces these households' ability to cope with future shocks. This is particularly true for households with a head of household with a disability, for whom a relatively high proportion already reported relying on crisis and emergency livelihood coping strategies such as engaging in high-risk behaviour or being forced to migrate with the whole family (Table 6).

Table 6. Proportion of households reporting having applied livelihood coping strategy within 30 days of data collection:

	Nationwide	HoHH +60	Female HoHH	HoHH with disability
Buying food on credit or through borrowed money from relatives and friends	83%	81%	84%	88%
Reducing expenditure on non-food items	54%	55%	54%	72%
Engaging in high risk behaviour	9%	4%	4%	16%
Whole family are migrating	3%	2%	3%	10%
Children or adult forcefully marriaged	1%	0%	1%	3%

Conclusion

The MCNA X shows that households overall have become less economically resilient compared to MCNA IX (2021). This while securing access to sustainable livelihoods is critical for a successful transition from a focus on humanitarian assistance to more development aid.[9] Findings from this factsheet show that not only important variation in needs and livelihoods exists between districts and population groups, but also across age, gender and disability. Survey results from the MCNA testify that female-headed households and heads of households with a disability fare much worse in terms of securing paid work and having an adequate income and much more often reported to rely on negative coping mechanisms and taking on debt.

According to ILO, Iraq reported the second-lowest female paid labour force participation rates in world in 2021.[10] However, this factsheet illustrated that examining participation of women in the paid labour force is still important for understanding unemployment rates among the displacement-affected population at the district level. Participation of women in the paid labour force turns out to be correlated with unemployment rates at the district level. Further research, however, is needed to understand how other factors such as city accessibility, time of arrival in current location or return to area origin affect livelihoods opportunities differently depending on age, gender and disability.

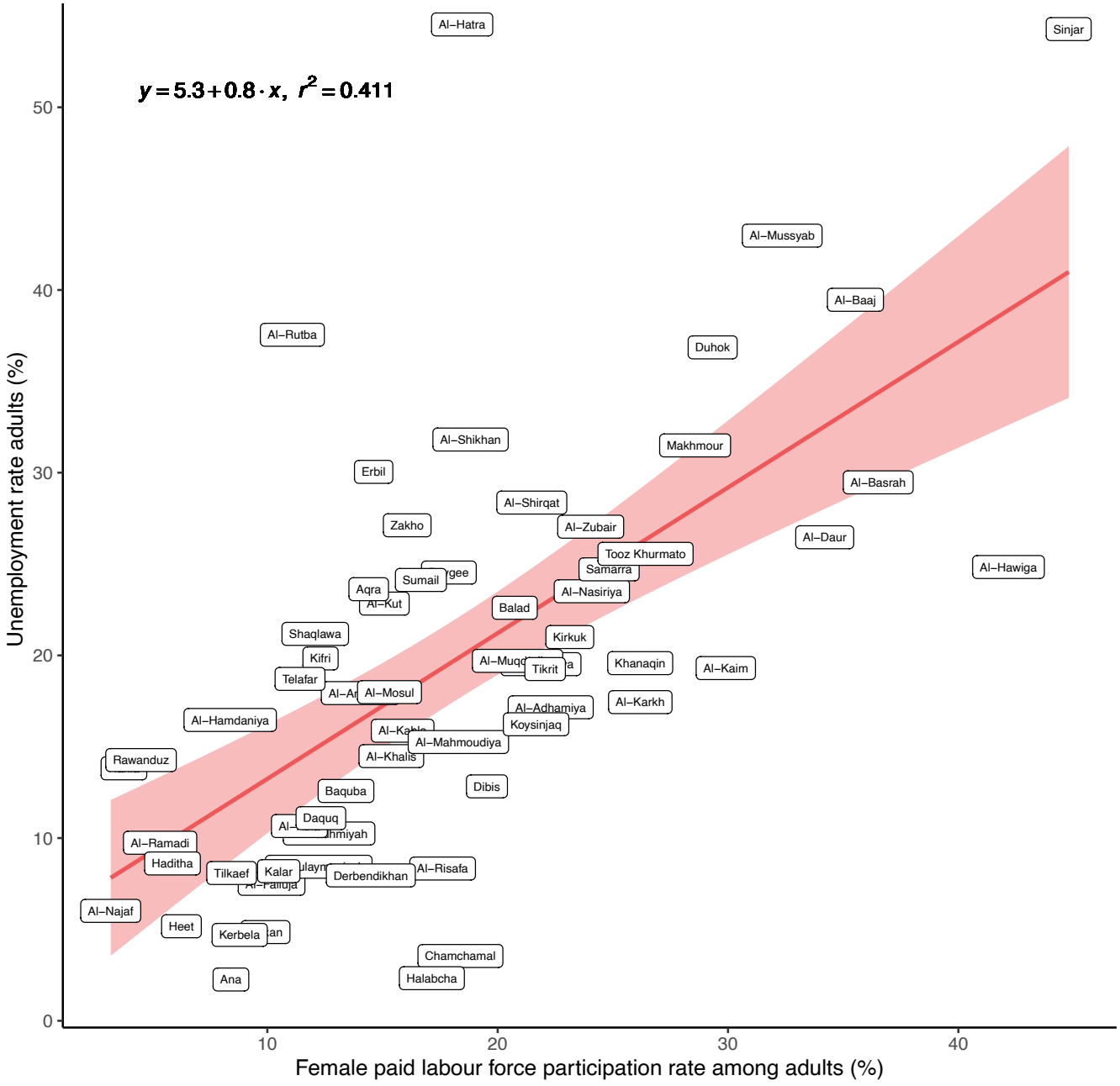
METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The MCNA X was implemented through a nationwide household-level survey, which was conducted between June 5 and August 16, 2022. For all out-of-camp samples, a two-stage stratified cluster sampling approach was employed (with 90% level of confidence and a 10% margin of error at population group and district level). Based on the population figures from the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Master List,[11] sampling frames were developed for all districts with a minimum of 200 IDP or returnee households and adjusted to align with OCHA-defined administrative boundaries. Within each location, a set of geo-points was randomly generated and provided to enumerators who would then interview an eligible household nearest to a given geo-point. The in-camp IDP population was sampled through a simple random sampling approach (95% level of confidence, 10% margin of error). The adjacent Camp Profiling assessment was conducted using an expanded MCNA questionnaire in all formal IDP camps with at least 100 households (all 26 camps). Districts for host community coverage were selected based on 2021 HNO findings on high number of people in need and/or high severity scores. As such, findings on host community needs should not be considered representative of the host community across the entire country.

Annex A: Regression analysis

Iraq's female paid labour force participation rate stands among the world's lowest. [11] As indicated in Graph 3 above, this gender disparity also extends to IDPs and returnees. Although women make up a small fraction of the paid labour force among IDPs and returnees in Iraq, the MCNA X nevertheless shows that variability in district-level female paid labour participation can potentially explain a considerable portion of the differences in district-level unemployment rates among IDPs and returnees. Regression analysis demonstrates a positive correlation (r = 0.641) between district-level female paid labour force participation rates and overall unemployment rates among IDPs and returnees. Female paid labour force participation rates account for 41% of the variability in district-level unemployment rates, while a single regression with male paid labour force participation rates (not visualised here) can only account for 12% (r = 0.344).

Although further research is needed to understand the relationship between female participation in the paid labour force and overall unemployment two potential explanations can be: if men fail men fail to secure work in certain districts, it may prompt women to start seeking paid work, too. Conversely, districts with higher female paid labour force participation rates may consequently experience inflated overall unemployment rates among IDP and returnees due to increased competition and the legal, social, personal and economic barriers that women face to secure employment.



		B	Std. Error	t value	Sig.
R = 0.641 R2 = 0.412	Intercept	5.269	2.474	2.130	0.037
	Female paid labour participation rate	0.797	0.122	6.530	<0.001

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Annex B: Participation in the paid labour force by city accessibility

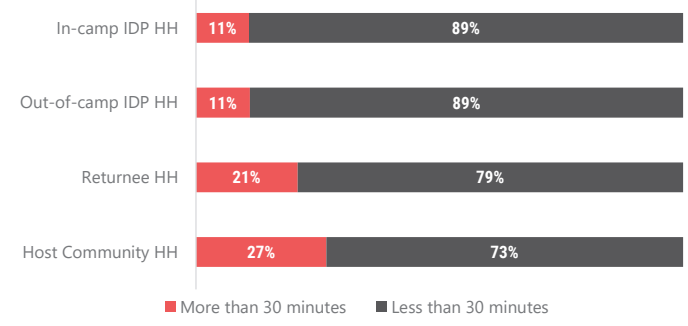
Living in rural or urban areas may offer returnees and IDPs different livelihood opportunities. Although more in-depth research is needed to fully understand how city accessibility is related to livelihood opportunities among the displacement-affected population in Iraq, this Annex provides some preliminary insights into how unemployment among IDPs and returnees may be linked to the distance from urban centres.

Although MCNA X respondents were not classified as residing in rural or urban areas, it is possible to estimate their travel time to urban centres using remote sensing. To do so, the travel time required to the nearest urban centres by surface transport was calculated using households GPS points and a datatset developed by Oxford's Malaria Atlas Project, the Joint Research Centre of the EU, Google, and the University of Twente in 2015. Urban centres in the study are defined as contiguous areas with 1,500 or more inhabitants per square kilometre or a majority of built-up land cover with a population centre of at least 50,000 inhabitants. The dataset contains raster data with a one-by-one kilometre spatial resolution. Underpinning the dataset are transportation networks captured by Open Street Map and Google, as detailed in the Nature article by Weiss et al.

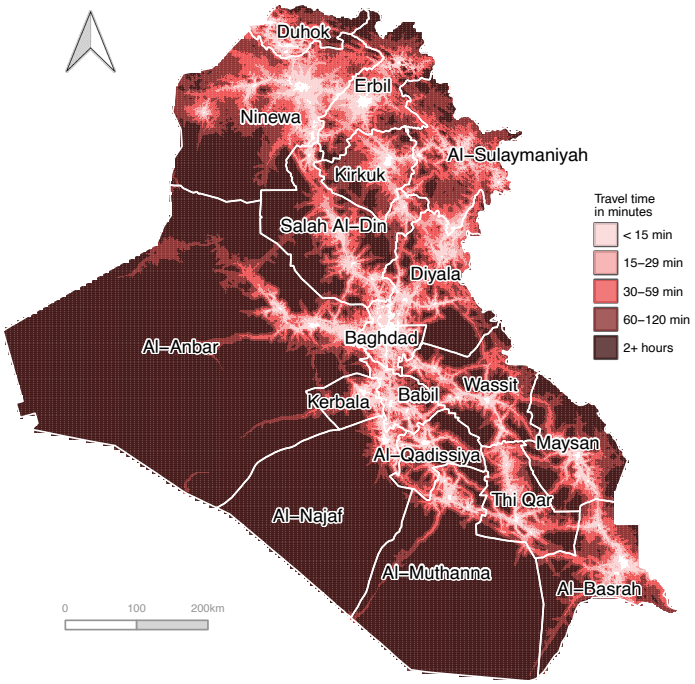
Graph 7 illustrates that one in five returnee households in Iraq resides more than thirty minutes away from urban centres, considering travel by car, foot, or public transport. This is only the case for one in ten IDP households. Adult female IDPs and returnees who reside more than 30 minutes travel time away from the city more often reported participating in the paid labour force than those living within 30 minutes travel time from the city (22% versus 18%). This pattern holds for all age groups, as depicted in graph 8. No noticeable difference in paid labour force participation was observed among adult men, regardless of whether they lived within or beyond 30 minutes away from the city (both 80% for male IDPs and returnees).

When examining overall reported unemployment rates, IDPs and returnees living more than half an hour away from urban centres (30%) displayed higher rates than those living within a half-hour travel time (22%). Among adult men, the unemployment rate stands at 21% for those residing further away from urban centres and 14% for IDPs and returnees living within a 30-minute travel distance. As shown in Graph 9, the disparities in unemployment rates between men living within or beyond 30 minute travel distance were particularly salient among youth (below 25 years) and men aged 35-55. In contrast, no differences in unemployment rates were found among displacement-affected women (both 61% for women living within or beyond a 30-minute travel distance), see also Graph 3. However, when specifically considering out-of-camp IDPs, the unemployment rate was higher for those living further away from urban centres (73% versus 65%).

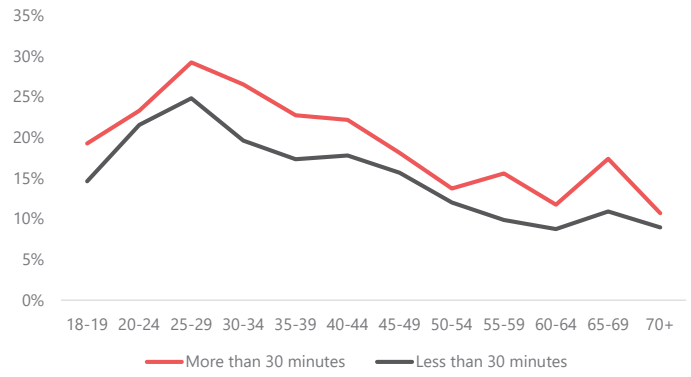
Graph 7. Proportion of households living more than 30 minutes travel time to city:



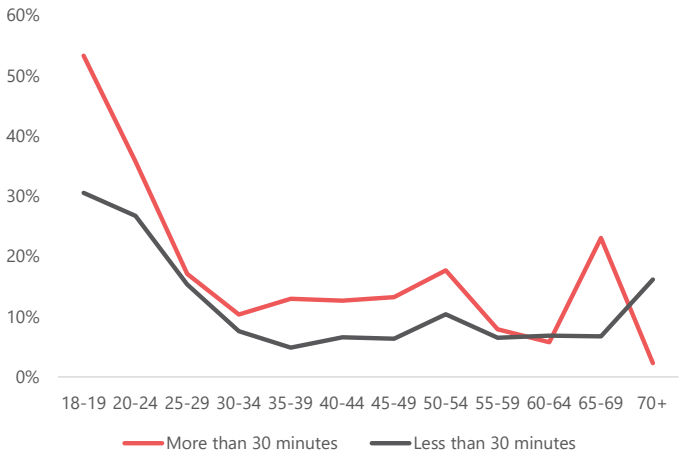
Map 3. City accessibility by estimated travel time to urban centres in minutes:



Graph 8. Female labour force participation rate among IDPs and returnees by travel time to city:



Graph 9. Male unemployment rate among IDPs and returnees by age and travel time to city:



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Endnotes

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1 See for instance: IOM on durable solutions for person with disabilities, DRC on the specific challenges women and Mosneaga and Vanore on the challenges for older persons.

2 OCHA, Iraq Humanitarian Transition Overview 2023, February 2023.

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3 Paid labour force participation rate is defined here as the proportion of people who reported to do paid work or actively contributing to the household income, as well as those reported actively seeking paid work. Paid labour force participation rates were calculated for every IDP and returnee over the age of 18.

4 Unemployment rate here is defined here as the proportion of people actively seeking paid work among those who reported being part of the paid labour force. Unemployment rates are only calculated for adults (18+)

5 Weiss, D., Nelson, A., Gibson, H. et al. A global map of travel time to cities to assess inequalities in accessibility in 2015. Nature 553, 333–336 (2018).

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6 REACH Initiative, Joint Price Monitoring Initiative (JPMI) dashboard, February 2023.

7 ILO, Iraq Labour Force Survey 2021.

8 In 2022, the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) value was IQD 440,000

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9 See footnote 2.

10 ILO, Iraq Labour Force Survey 2021. See also: UNDP, Gender Inequality Index (GII)

11 IOM-DTM datasets Round 125, March 2022

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12 See footnote 2.