



### Context

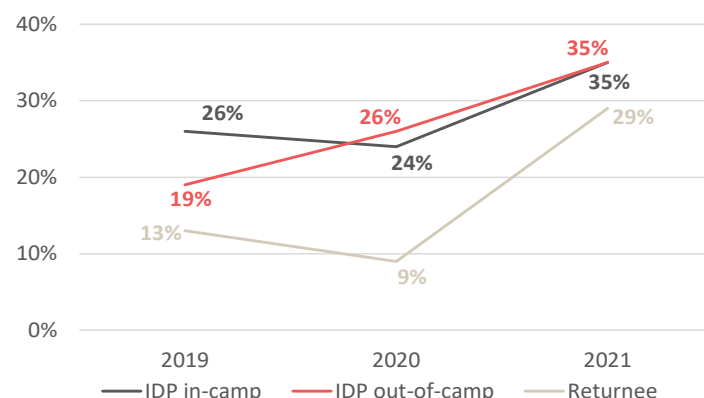
The violence and destruction caused by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), as well as the military operations against them, have caused the displacement of nearly **6 million** people since 2014.<sup>1</sup> As of March 2022, **1.18 million** people remain displaced throughout 18 governorates of Iraq, of which **180,000** were living in 26 formal camps established for internally displaced persons (IDPs).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, **4.96 million** people have returned to their area of origin.<sup>3</sup> According to the 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) **approximately 681,000 IDP and returnee children were in need of education support, 157,000 of which were in acute need**, implying additional child protection concerns.<sup>4</sup> The COVID-19 related lockdowns and school closures have negatively impacted access to education for vulnerable girls and boys, exposing them to **increased protection risks and stress levels**.<sup>5</sup> Although remote learning programmes have been implemented, they are not easily accessible to all IDP and returnee children, compounding certain already critical education needs, and impacting children who have already lost years of school due to conflict. The Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment (MCNA) IX was, in 2021, conducted for the ninth time in Iraq, for which **11,645 returnees, out-of-camp IDPs and in-camp IDPs were interviewed between June 9 and August 16, 2021**. This factsheet summarises key findings from the MCNA IX relating to education in Iraq, and focuses on priority locations and the primary barriers faced by in-camp IDPs, out-of-camp IDPs and returnees.

## KEY FINDINGS

In comparison to the [MCNA VIII](#) (2020) findings, the **proportion of households (HHs) who reported that at least one child was not attending education regularly has increased**.<sup>6</sup> Nationwide findings from [MCNA IX](#) show that **30% of HHs reported having at least one school-aged child (SAC) not attending school regularly**, with little variation between in-camp IDPs, out-of-camp IDPs and returnees.

**A higher proportion of children from female-headed HHs** were reported to not have attended formal education regularly in the 2020-2021 school year while schools were open (**32%**) compared to the proportion of children from male-headed HHs (**22%**).

**% of HHs reporting at least one SAC not attending formal education regularly, by year:\***



**% of SAC reportedly not enrolled in school for the 2020-2021 school year, by population group:**

🏠 **18%** in-camp IDP      🚶 **21%** out-of-camp IDP      🚶 **15%** returnee

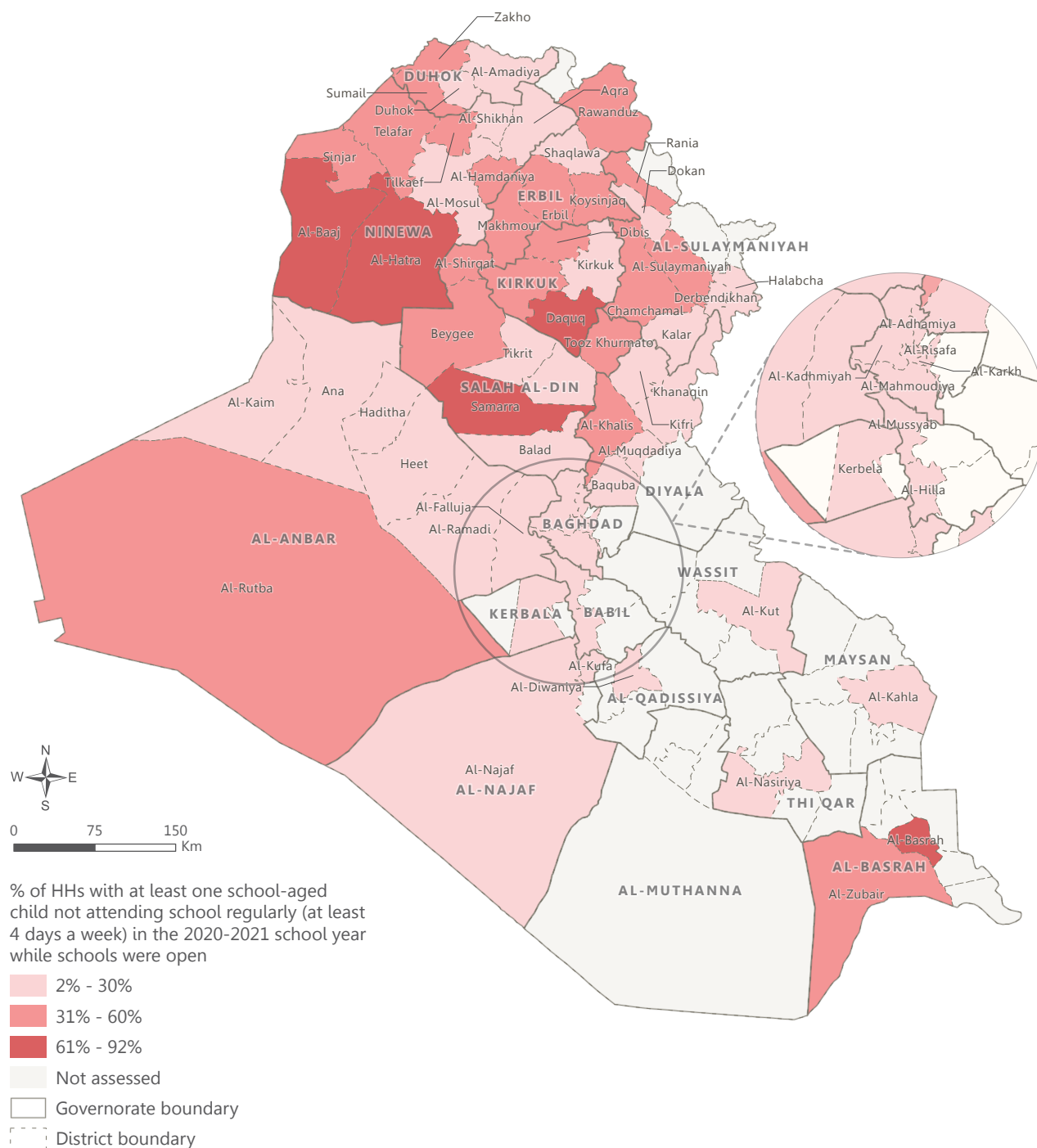
**% of SAC reportedly having dropped out of school in the previous academic year, by population group:**

🏠 **6%** in-camp IDP      🚶 **8%** out-of-camp IDP      🚶 **12%** returnee

SAC in vulnerable situations, particularly those living in rural and remote areas, might have faced barriers in accessing distance learning due to gaps in telecommunications infrastructure and access to digital devices.<sup>7</sup> **More than one third (37%) of HHs nationwide reported that at least one child was not accessing distance learning while schools were closed**, with a substantial **50%** of in-camp IDP HHs having reported the same. The districts with the highest proportion of HHs having reported at least one SAC not accessing distance learning regularly were Al-Basrah (**92%**), Al-Hatra (**92%**) and Chamchamal (**86%**). Among all HHs with at least one child reportedly not attending (distance) education, **4%** reported that the school was not offering alternatives to in-person learning and, similarly, **4%** reported that they lacked household resources to facilitate alternatives as main barriers.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> IOM-DTM, [Displacement Overview](#) (March 2022). <sup>4</sup> According to the JIAF analysis methodology included in the [2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview](#) annexes <sup>5</sup> Relief Web, [Humanitarian Situation Overview 2020](#) <sup>6</sup> Due to serious health risks that COVID-19 posed to both enumerators and respondents, MCNA VIII data was collected through a hybrid of face-to-face and phone-based interviews. Therefore, results were partly indicative. <sup>7</sup> UNDP, [Impact of Covid-19 on the Iraqi Economy \(2020\)](#) <sup>8</sup> In the subset of HHs who reported at least one SAC unable to access distance learning regularly, HHs in Falluja (23%), Khalis (20%) and Baquba (15%) most commonly reported the lack of household resources (e.g., internet, laptop) to facilitate alternatives. HHs in Shirqat (29%), Falluja (22%), and Sinjar (16%) most commonly reported that schools did not offer alternatives. \*2019 findings included child attendance to both formal and informal education regularly.

**Map: Proportion of HHs who reported having at least one school-aged child not attending school regularly (at least 4 days a week) in the 2020-2021 school year while schools were open, by district.**

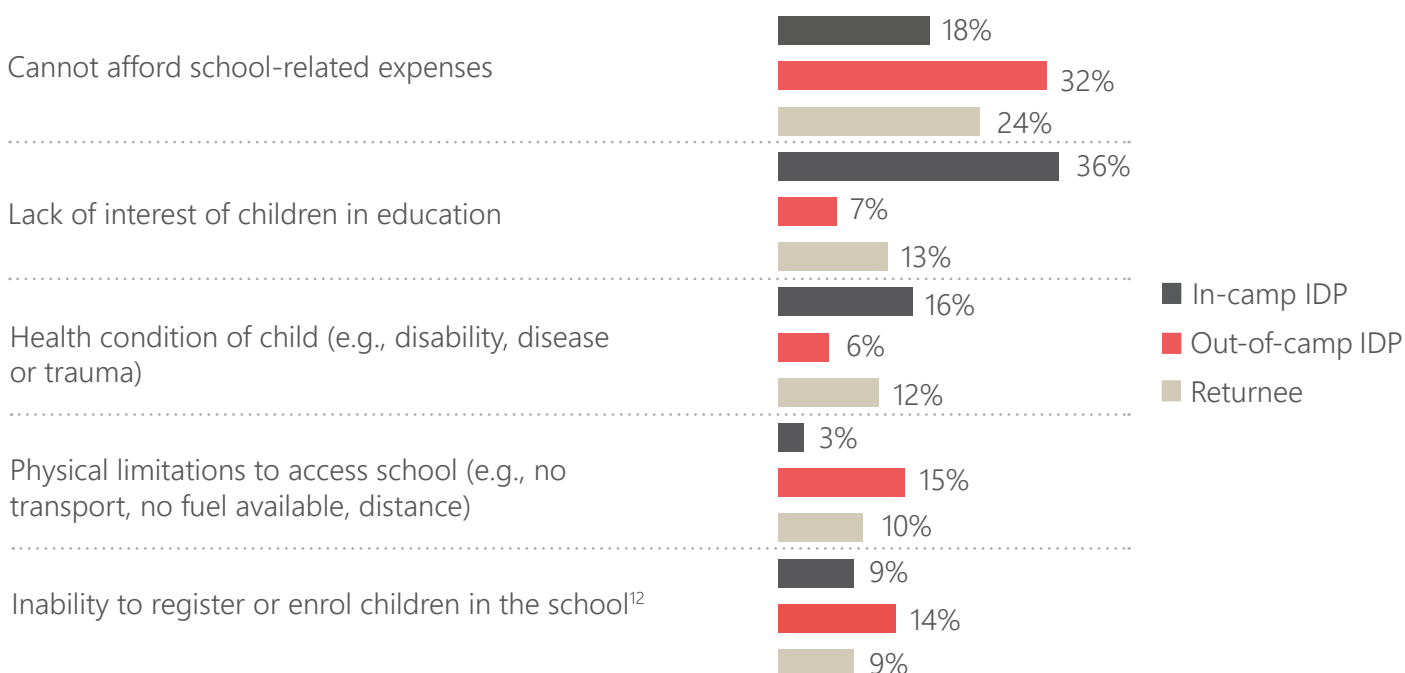


Among HHs who reported at least one SAC not attending school in **Al-Basrah**, **Al-Hatra** and **Al-Baaj**, most reported the **cost of education** and **poor infrastructure** as the main barriers. When looking at child protection findings, **Al-Basrah** and **Al-Hatra** were part of the top 5 districts with the **highest proportion of HHs who reported the presence of child marriage in their own household (5% and 4% respectively)**. MCNA IX child protection findings also showed an **exponentially higher proportion of HHs in Al-Basrah reporting having at least one person under 18 working (42%)**, compared to the nationwide average proportion (**6%**). Both the presence of child marriage and prevalence of child labour in Al-Basrah are factors that likely interact with children's lack of access to education in the district in the 2020-2021 school year; this would support findings from the World Bank indicating that **out-of school children were found to more likely face a range of child protection concerns** due to a reduced access to protective environments, such as schools.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, [Breaking out of Fragility](#) (2020).

MCNA IX findings on reported barriers to education are consistent with those reported in 2020, with the most commonly reported barriers to education during both years being that **families could not afford the costs associated with schooling, and a lack of reported interest in education among children.**<sup>10</sup> Lack of interest of children in education appears to have specifically impacted in-camp IDP HHs, potentially indicative of a perceived opportunity cost of education. Additionally, a substantial proportion of returnee HHs reported that schools stopped functioning (**13%**), compared with **4%** and **3%** of in-camp and out-of-camp HHs respectively, which may indicate **the slow rehabilitation of education infrastructure and services in areas of return.**<sup>11</sup> There are several noteworthy differences in reported barriers to education across districts, such as in **Al-Mahmoudiya**, where **65%** of the HHs with at least one SAC reportedly not attending education regularly reported dysfunctional/closed schools as the main barrier.

## Most commonly reported barriers to education, among HHs with at least one child not attending education regularly, by population group:\*



MCNA IX findings have also highlighted cross-cutting vulnerabilities that are likely to aggravate SAC's access to education, such as physical and/or cognitive disabilities.<sup>13</sup> Of the HHs reporting at least one SAC not attending school, **52% were HHs with reportedly at least one member with a disability**, potentially due to the disability of a child itself preventing their access or due to caregiving and/or income support that is expected of children within HHs with other members with a disability. Similarly, **a higher proportion of children from HHs residing in informal sites had reportedly dropped out of school in the 2020-2021 school year (16%).**

## Concluding notes

MCNA IX findings indicate that **in- and out-of-camp IDP and returnee children's access to education remains fragmented**, considering the increasing proportion of HHs who reported that at least one SAC was not attending education regularly. Livelihood concerns appear to have impacted education attendance, as **costs were cited as a key barrier to education, and HHs frequently reported use of negative coping strategies related to school drop-out or child labour.** Cross-cutting household vulnerabilities, such as disability, gender, residence in informal sites and missing civil documentation are likely to have compounded barriers to children's access to education, and requires more in-depth research.<sup>14,15</sup> Finally, children who are deprived of the protective environments that schools provide may be more exposed to child protection risks such as child labour and child marriage.

<sup>10</sup> Note, the reported lack of interest in education should be carefully interpreted, as it may indicate broader HH concerns about the opportunity cost of education or protection concerns related to school attendance. <sup>11</sup> Schools reportedly stopped functioning for reasons such as occupied by armed forces, partially/totally damaged, occupied by displaced persons and lack of students. <sup>12</sup> HHs reported that the primary reasons for children not being able to enrol were the child having missed or failed too many years of education, lack of documentation to enrol the child, and inability to enrol due to discrimination. <sup>13</sup> [MCNA IX Education Presentation](#) (April 2022); comparisons are indicative only. <sup>14</sup> Civil documentation is legally needed for school registration, and the lack thereof impacts certain IDP and returnee children's education trajectory. <sup>15</sup> World Bank, [Breaking out of Fragility](#) (2020). \*This was a multiple choice question; findings may exceed 100%.