IOM IRAQ

ACCESS TO DURABLE SOLUTIONS AMONG IDPS IN IRAQ:

SIX YEARS IN DISPLACEMENT

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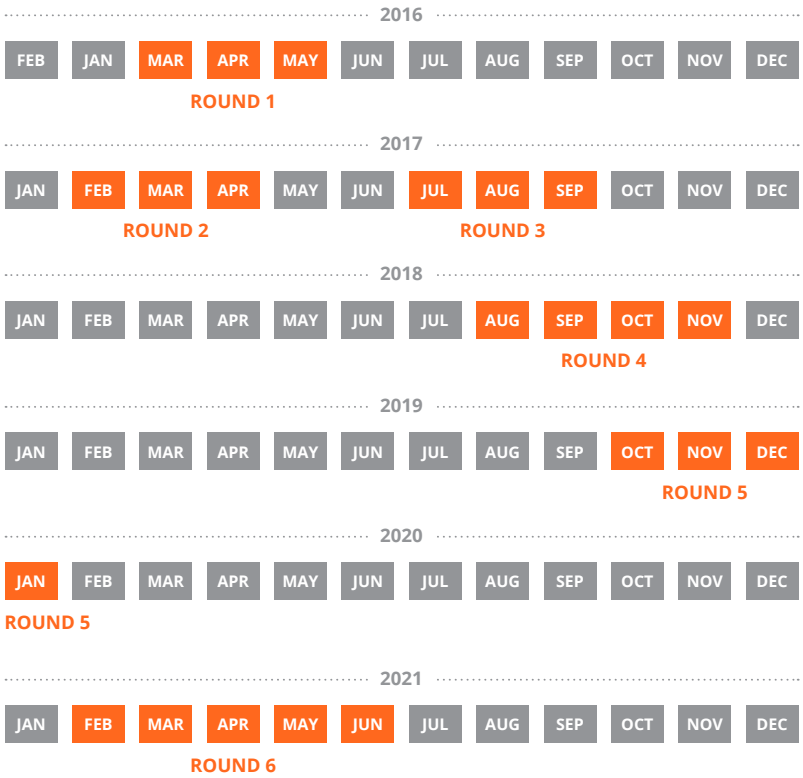
PART I INTRODUCTION AND KEY FINDINGS

What happens to households experiencing protracted displacement during a global pandemic? This is not a question that *Access to Durable Solutions Among IDPs in Iraq*, a panel study conducted by IOM and Georgetown University, initially anticipated answering at its inception six years ago.[1] Yet this question is one the study is uniquely positioned to answer. The mixed-method project collects data from surveys and interviews to understand how the same Iraqi IDP households displaced by the conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) try to access a "durable solution" to their displacement as defined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Framework on Durable Solutions.[2]

Conducted among the non-camp population of IDPs displaced between 2014 and 2015, the study operationalized the eight criteria that collectively measure a durable solution: safety and security, standard of living, livelihood, housing, access to documentation, family reunification, participation in public affairs, and access to justice. Using each of these criteria over six rounds of data collection, the study has tracked changes in what challenges IDP households face and the solutions they engineer as they search for a durable solution to their displacement.

Based on findings from the newest, sixth round of data collection, this report details not only how COVID-19 affects IDPs, but specifically, and in keeping with the purpose of the study, how the COVID-19 pandemic affected IDP households' abilities to achieve a durable solution. This latter endeavor entails two tasks: first, to identify what challenges persist because they existed pre-COVID-19 (and are thus primarily displacement-related), and second, to identify what challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has created or made worse. The longitudinal nature of the *Access to Durable Solutions* study and its ability to compare current findings with past trends using the same indicators facilitated disentangling and completing these two tasks.

To date, six rounds of data have been collected



1 For more information on the study methodology, please visit the study website at: http://iraqrecovery.org/durablesolutions/Methodology.php#Methodology. In a departure from past rounds of data collection and to ensure the safety of all interviewers and IDP households, data collection for Round 6 was conducted entirely by telephone.

2 Durable solutions are generally considered to be return, integration, or resettlement/relocation. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) 2010's "Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons" identifies a durable solution to displacement when IDPs "no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement." United Nations General Assembly. Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Walter Kälin: Framework on Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, A/HRC/13/21/Add.4, (9 February 2010), p. 1. Available from http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/HRC/13/21/Add.4

As of September 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) has recorded almost 2 million cases of COVID-19 (5% of the population) and 22,000 deaths in Iraq out of a population of 41 million. Over 6.6 million vaccine doses have been administered.[3] Although the pandemic struck Iraq in March 2020, the periods with the highest reported illness were in 2021, with a smaller peak in mid-April (during the survey fielding) and its largest peak in July (after fielding was completed). The early curfews, lockdowns, and online education of 2020 likely kept people more at home early in the pandemic and thus lessened the early spread of the disease, although there was a smaller wave of illness that peaked in September 2020.

This timeline provides the contextual background for understanding IDP households' key COVID-19-related concerns and which of the eight criteria were most impacted by the pandemic. One of the key findings from previous reports in this series was that over time, IDPs' progress towards attaining a durable solution had at worst stagnated; as of Round 5 (October 2019-January 2020), IDP households' overall circumstances had not gotten worse. In Round 6, this finding changes slightly. This report finds that the COVID-19 pandemic did not affect the majority of trends previously observed in each of the eight criteria for reaching a durable solution, with the exception of two: standard of living and access to justice—specifically, compensation for housing that was damaged or destroyed during the ISIL crisis.

Longitudinal trends suggest that COVID-19 has had a particularly negative effect on the overall need to change food consumption patterns and lower expenses. Commensurately, the economic strain COVID-19 has caused and ensuing effects on daily living expenses appears to have heightened the urgency for IDP households to receive compensation. While the number of IDP households applying to compensation has stagnated for the first time, there is a noticeable shift and an emergent, coherent narrative regarding IDPs' vision of justice with compensation at its core.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic affected the same sectors—healthcare, the economy, and education—as it did in many other countries, the accompanying oil crisis in Iraq exacerbated its effects. The oil economy weakened due to less oil demand globally and "adherence to OPEC+ production cuts agreement which led to a 17.6 per cent contraction in oil GDP".[4] Furthermore, the pandemic-related curfews and closures resulted in a nine per cent contraction of the non-oil economy, hardest hit being the religious tourism and service sectors. Combined with the fall of the Iraqi dinar in relation to the US dollar, prices for basic goods in Iraq rose dramatically. According to the World Bank, in 2020 the Iraqi economy experienced the largest contraction since 2003.[5]

Lockdowns and curfews stifling economic activity affected the poor and IDPs more than others due to their reliance on informal and day labor as their primary source of income. As of April 2021, unemployment was more than "10 percentage points higher than the pre-pandemic level."[6] Little was offered by the government in assistance, other than food baskets and other in-kind goods. The southern and northern parts of Iraq remain the part of the country with the highest levels of poverty; in the north, "the poverty rate among displaced households was more than two times higher than non-displaced households" while the southern parts are the areas with the lowest numbers of IDPs but with slightly higher levels of poverty overall.[7]

After highlighting key findings from Round 6, this report proceeds with four additional sections. Part II focuses specifically on trends among IDPs who remain displaced in the same location to which they were first displaced at the inception of the study in 2016.[8] Across each of the eight criteria, this section of the report presents findings over six rounds of data collection in progress made—or stalled—in IDP households' achieving a durable solution with particular attention given to the trends that were most likely to be adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Part III then provides a summary of progress towards achieving a durable solution among sampled returnee households who returned to

3 World Health Organization, Iraq, https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/iq, accessed 20 September 2021.

4 World Bank, Republic of Iraq MPO 157, April 2021. https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/866ae3150fd383da11ade2640546e17f-0280012021/original/6-mpo-sm21-iraq-irq-kcm2.pdf.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 World Bank, "Iraq Economic Monitor: Protecting Vulnerable Iraqis in the Time of a Pandemic, the Case For Urgent Stimulus and Economic Reforms," Fall 2020, p. 20 https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34749/154260.pdf

8 Findings from the 1,526 households in the study generalize to a population of approximately 52,000 IDP households who remain in displacement from the original sample population of those displaced from Anbar, Babylon, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din (seven governorates of origin) displaced to one of four governorates where the study was fielded: Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk, and Sulaymaniyah. The margin of error on reported findings in Part II is 2.6 percentage points. The study tracked a subset of households who moved from one district to another but who never returned home. These "movers" have been excluded from this report.

their districts of origin in Round 6.[9] Given that not all households returned at the same time, and that some criteria are time-dependent, this chapter summarizes where things stand among each of the eight criteria in Round 6 only. Once again, looking only at IDPs who have remained in their initial places of displacement, Part IV focuses on the effects of COVID-19 and delves more deeply into IDPs' perceptions of how the pandemic has affected the economy, healthcare access, and children's education. The report concludes in Part V with overall recommendations that follow six years' worth of data collection and reports from *Access to Durable Solutions Among IDPs in Iraq*.

KEY FINDINGS FROM ROUND 6

- Of the eight criteria, three have never posed a central challenge to the non-camp population the study tracks. Since Round 1 (March-May 2016), a very small minority of IDP families have lost documentation (less than 7%), been separated from family (less than 5%), or participated in public affairs (less than 8%).
- Nearly all households in this IDP population satisfied a fourth criterion—safety and security—upon their initial displacement. By Round 6 (February- June 2021), 99 per cent of IDPs report feeling completely or moderately safe since their first year in displacement. That non-camp IDPs feel safe, have not lost or have been able to replace documentation, and are not separated from their families is a significant accomplishment of IDPs, of the host community, and of and for Iraq.
- The share of IDP households reporting they have faced discrimination in accessing employment, housing, civil status services, health services, and education has decreased considerably since Round 3 (July-September 2017) and reached an all-time low in Round 6 (February-June 2021). This suggests that IDPs are experiencing more acceptance in their communities over time.
- Challenges remain for IDPs in meeting their basic needs as well as for their standard of living. Though the majority (70%) are able to provide for their basic needs, households have had to adopt at least one negative coping strategy, particularly as it relates to food consumption. This change in food behavior appears largely linked to the pandemic-related economic fallout.
- In light of the challenges with providing for basic needs, IDPs' overall assessment of their standard of living has fallen for the first time since the beginning of the study. In Round 6 (February-June 2021), more IDPs say they are worse off than they were prior to displacement than the share that said the same in Round 2 (February-April 2017).
- As previously reported in *Access to Durable Solutions Among IDPs in Iraq:* Three Years in Displacement, fields of employment and labor for households living in displacement continue to be dynamic. In Round 6 most households are employed in a sector different from those in which they were employed in Round 1. Despite this fluidity at the household level, informal labor continues to be the dominant sector in which most IDPs acquire employment.
- While receiving aid was critical to IDP households in the first several years of displacement, just under 10 per cent report getting aid in Round 6. The type of aid received has also changed in later rounds, with more households reporting getting food and water rather than cash and nonfood items. This shift is in keeping with the source of the aid: local charities and individuals, rather than the government or NGOs.
- Borrowing money remains critical to IDP households' survival, and those closest to displaced households continue to bear the burden of support. Nearly two thirds of all households in Rounds 3 through 6 (July-September 2017 through February-June 2021) report having borrowed money in the previous calendar year. While overwhelming majorities are able to borrow the money, in Round 6, more than 80 per cent do so from relatives or friends.
- Displacement outside of camps means additional costs for housing, which represents one of the greatest financial burdens for IDP households. In Rounds 4, 5, and 6 (August-November 2018 and February-June 2021), rent consistently represented approximately 25 per cent of their monthly expenses and was second only to the amount spent on food.
- The more time that passes with IDPs absent from their homes in their places of origin, the worse the conditions of their homes become, making return considerably more challenging. As more IDP households have gained access to their homes and learned of their condition, IDPs increasingly report that their homes are heavily damaged or destroyed, peaking at 77 per cent in Round 6 (February-June 2021), up from 64 per cent who said the same Round 5 (October 2019-January 2020).

9 *Access to Durable Solutions Among IDPs in Iraq* is a prospective study and not designed to be representative of future returnees when the study sample was initially constructed. Findings about returnees apply only to sampled households and are not representative of all returnees in areas of return.

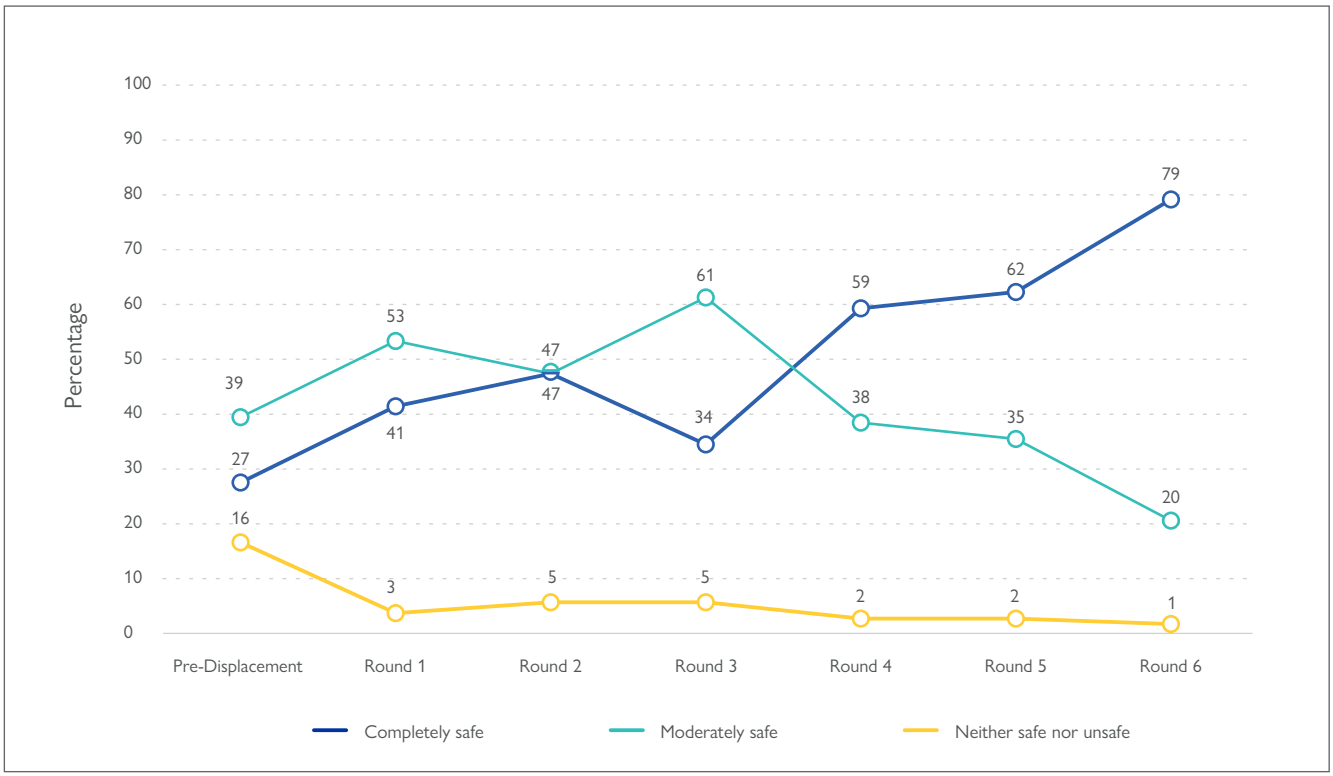
- IDP households' ideas about justice changed radically over time. The concern with the prosecution of criminals as key to achieving justice expressed in earlier rounds of the study has instead shifted to two elements related to IDPs' losses: compensation for violations and restoration of livelihoods. Over time, the share of households suggesting compensation is the most important aspect of achieving justice has risen from just two per cent in Round 2 (February-April 2017) to 33 per cent in Round 6 (February-June 2021).
- The compensation that IDP households define as a key element of achieving justice, however, has been slow to come from the government. While 58 per cent of IDP households in Round 6 had applied for compensation, four out of five households (79%) that did apply say their claim is still pending. Just three per cent of those who applied have received money.

PART II IDPs IN DISPLACEMENT: SIX-YEAR TRENDS IN EACH CRITERIA MEASURING THE ATTAINTMENT OF A DURABLE SOLUTION

CRITERIA 1: SAFETY & SECURITY

An overwhelming majority of IDP households (99% in Round 6) report feeling completely or moderately safe, suggesting that safety is critical to why displaced persons stay in displacement. The majority of this share in Round 6 (February-June 2021) reported that they feel "completely" safe (79%). No one in Round 6 reported facing a security threat, in line with the post-displacement findings from the previous rounds.

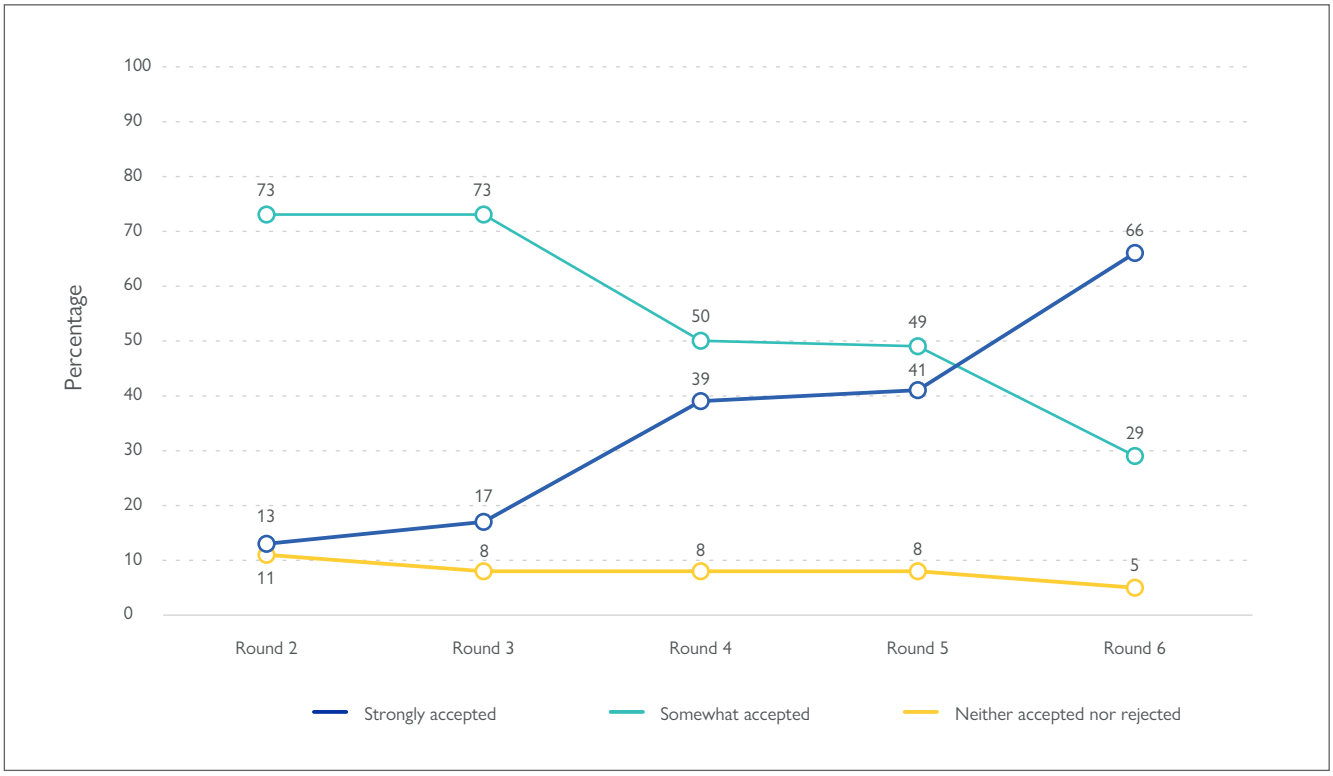
Figure 1. Do you and your family feel safe in this community?



> **The father of a family from Baghdad now living in Sulaymaniyah** responded that, "there is good safety in the city. I can say that everyone can leave their house door open and sleep in peace."

Most IDPs (67%) report that the primary reason they feel safe is because their area is peaceful where conflicts are few, and the host community is welcoming. Likewise, IDPs' reports of feeling accepted by the host community have increased with each round. The share of households who say they feel strongly or somewhat accepted has risen over time, reaching 95 per cent in Round 6 (February-June 2021). In fact, those who say the feel strongly accepted dramatically increases from just 14 per cent in Round 2 (February-April 2017) to 66 per cent in Round 6.

Figure 2. Do you and your family members feel accepted as members of this community?

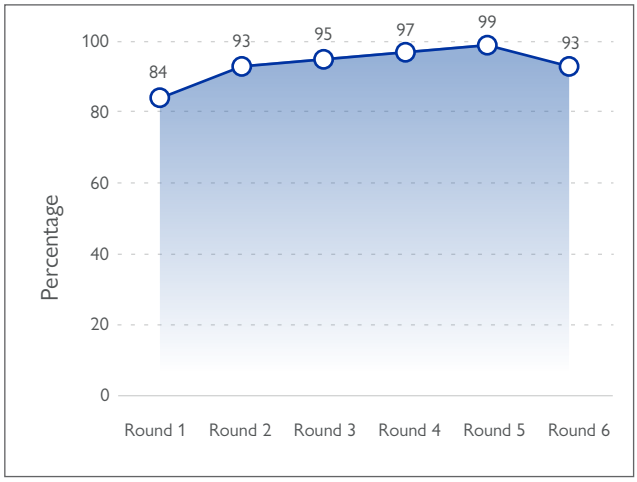


IDPs often compare their situation and sense of safety with what they see or hear about their places of origin.

> **The father of a family from Anbar living in Sulaymaniyah described the situation of people returning to their places of origin:** "There are many people who return to Baghdad and Salah al-Din governorates, however, they eventually leave again because of the presence of the militias. I do not trust the security of the situation [...] as long as there are militias present."
>
> **Another man who had returned and then moved said that** "I live in Erbil as an IDP since I do not trust the safety and security in Jalawla [Diyala governorate]."

IDPs also comment on the ability of the majority of them to move with freedom. Upwards of 90 per cent over time say they can move freely, a pattern that also holds in Round 6 (February-June 2021). Of the seven per cent who said they could not move freely in Round 6, all noted it was due to COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions.

Figure 3. Ability to Move Freely: % of IDP households saying they can move freely

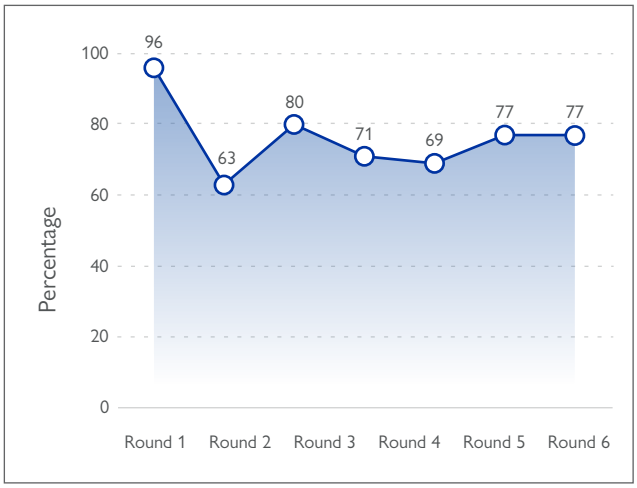


Overall, the pandemic has not affected IDPs' sense of safety and security. Instead, IDP households report greater integration into the communities in which they were initially displaced.

CRITERIA 2: STANDARD OF LIVING

The share of IDP households reporting they can provide for their basic needs has never returned to pre-displacement levels. Since Round 2 (February-April 2017), more than 70 per cent of IDP households report that they are able to provide their families with housing, health care, education, food, and water. As such, while the pandemic has not seemed to affect this trend, it has impacted the ways in which households provide for their needs.

Figure 4. Providing for Basic Needs: % of IDP households saying they are able to do so



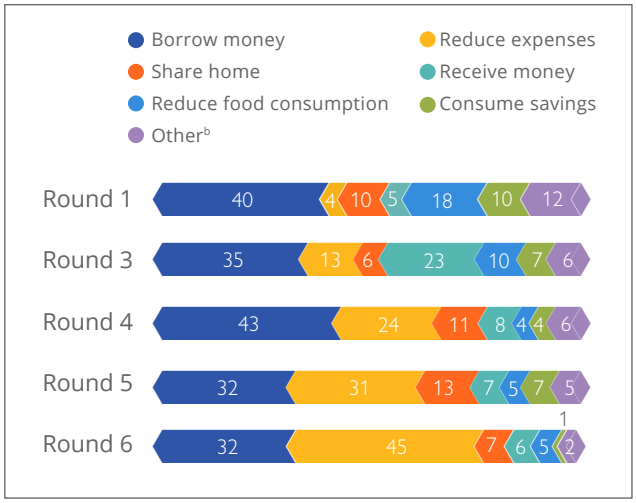
> **Father of a family from Anbar living in Basra:** "The challenge is the pay cuts of the monthly salary for the employees, because of the pandemic crisis and the inability of people to work and earn enough money to provide the daily requirements. I became one of the thousands of people whose salary was cut off, and when we needed, we could not borrow because most of the people went through this crisis. The challenge was how to get money and provide food for the children and medicine for my father and mother."

The share of households that need to borrow money to make ends meet continues to hover at just under one third (32%), a substantial minority. But there is an 11-fold increase in the share reporting they need to reduce their overall expenses, climbing from just four per cent of households in Round 1 (March-May 2016) to 45 per cent in Round 6 (February-June 2021). This reported need to reduce expenses is reflected in changes in households' monthly expenses over time. Between Rounds 4 (August-November 2018) and Round 6, IDPs' overall average monthly expenses decreased nearly 13 per cent from 731,612 IQD (502 USD) to 639,381 IQD (439 USD).[10] Across the board, IDPs are spending less on housing, food, transportation, medical care, and school-related expenses. These decreases range from five per cent in what households spend on food to a 23 per cent decrease in what they spend on medical expenses. This decrease in expenses happened at the same time that there was a notable rise in the cost of food and goods (see quotes below). The only expense that increased is the cost of utilities, which rose 19 per cent from IQD 76,816 (53 USD) to IQD 91,730 (63 USD).

> **The son in a family from Ramadi, living in Basra:** "Of course, the thing that affected us the most were the high prices. Simple materials we used to buy in the past now have multiplied in price, like cooking oil. I used to buy it for 1,000 Iraqi dinars (0.70 USD), and now I buy it for 2,500 Iraqi dinars (2 USD). Thank God, I can manage my affairs, but there must be other people who have been greatly affected by this situation, and this is the biggest thing I faced in this period, and it caused me financial difficulties."

> **The father of a family internally displaced within Kirkuk:** "We have a stable income but it is limited. The prices have increased because the value of the Iraqi dinar to the US dollar has been lowered by the treasury ministry. This has affected the market directly and people's ability to buy things because most goods in the market are imported; therefore, their prices are influenced by the dollar rate. For example, I bought a freezer which cost me 300,000 [Iraqi] dinar last month (206 USD). Its price was 250,000 Iraqi dinar before the increase of the dollar rate (171 USD)."

Figure 5. Main Strategy to Provide for Basic Needs[a]



a. Question not asked in Round 2

b. Includes employing children under 16, stop sending children to school, limiting medical care, and selling assets or property

10 Treasury Reporting Rates of Exchange, https://fiscal.treasury.gov/files/reports-statements/treasury-reporting-rates-exchange/treasury-reporting-rates-of-exchange-as-of-june-30-2021.pdf, accessed 27 September 2021.

Figure 7. Monthly Expenses over Time[a]

EXPENSE	ROUND 4 (IN IQD)		ROUND 5 (IN IQD)		ROUND 6 (IN IQD)	
	Average	Median	Average	Median	Average	Median
Food	248,892	250,000	249,364	250,000	236,958	250,000
Housing	179,689	150,000	176,612	150,000	169,242	150,000
Utilities	76,816	50,000	93,188	100,000	91,730	90,000
Transport	72,240	50,000	82,614	75,000	53,917	50,000
Medical care	72,902	50,000	75,551	60,000	56,489	50,000
Schooling	81,073	50,000	63,439	60,000	31,045	20,000
TOTAL	731,612	600,000	740,768	695,000	639,381	610,000

a. During this time period, 1,000I IQD is equal to 0.69 USD.

Although the per cent reduction in food expenditures (5%) is smaller relative to other decreases, IDP households appear to be compensating by also changing their food consumption behavior. Overall, 82 per cent of households report relying on less preferred and less expensive foods between one and seven days a week. The share that needs to do so every day more than doubled from 13 per cent in Round 5 (October 2019-January 2020) to 29 per cent in Round 6 (February-June 2021). Equally dramatic is the increase in those having to limit portion size at mealtimes on a daily basis, rising from 6 to 16 per cent, with those who have to do so "some days" rising from 17 to 25 per cent. At least one day a week, 22 per cent of households have to restrict consumption of foods among adults so young children can eat, and 34 per cent need to reduce the number of meals they eat a day (both these percentages are increases in Round 6 from Round 5). The rise in the cost of prices explains some of these changes.

> **Father of a family internally displaced within Kirkuk:** "[There has been] a negative impact on citizens because food in the markets is imported, because it has to be. No one can stop himself from eating and drinking. For example, if you want to buy eggs for breakfast, the ones in the market are imported from Turkey, and the flat (36 eggs) was 3,000 [Iraqi] dinar (2 USD), and now it has become 5,000 dinar (3 USD). There are no other alternatives. If you want to support local products, the prices are even higher."

Figure 8. Changes in Food Consumption Patterns Among IDP Households

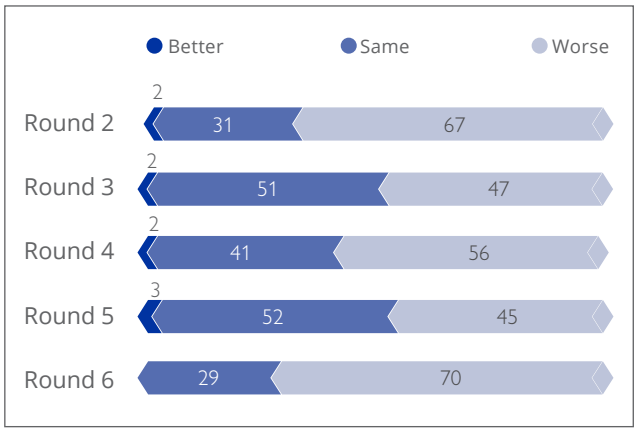
Frequency of having to rely on less preferred and less expensive foods			Frequency of having to limit portion size at mealtimes		
	Round 5 %	Round 6 %		Round 5 %	Round 6 %
Every day (7 days)	13	29	Every day (7 days)	6	16
Most days (4-6 days)	19	16	Most days (4-6 days)	5	3
Some days (1-3 days)	35	37	Some days (1-3 days)	17	25
Never (0 days)	33	18	Never (0 days)	72	56
Frequency of having to restrict consumption by adults in order for small children to eat			**Frequency of having to reduce number of meals eaten in a day**		
	Round 5 %	Round 6 %		Round 5 %	Round 6 %
Every day (7 days)	2	2	Every day (7 days)	1	11
Most days (4-6 days)	3	4	Most days (4-6 days)	4	4
Some days (1-3 days)	9	15	Some days (1-3 days)	8	18
Never (0 days)	86	78	Never (0 days)	86	66

These findings contextualize why 68 per cent of households in Round 6 (February-June 2021) suggest their standard of living is worse than it was prior to displacement. This 68 per cent share is still better than the 85 per cent who said the same in Round 1 (March-May 2016), but it is a marked increase from the 54 per cent who said so in Round 5 (October 2019-January 2020).

More telling, perhaps, is the change in how IDP households perceive their standard of living in comparison to members of the host community around them. While the share who said their standard of living was worse than the host community was between 45 and 56 per cent in Rounds 3 through 5 (July-September 2017 through October 2019-January 2020), in Round 6 (February-June 2021) the share rose significantly to 70 per cent, equaling or surpassing the share who said so in Round 2 (February-April 2017). Thus, for the first time since the beginning of this study, IDPs describe that in respect to standard of living, they are worse off six years into their displacement than they were just two years into it.

Figure 9. Standard of living now compared to before displacement

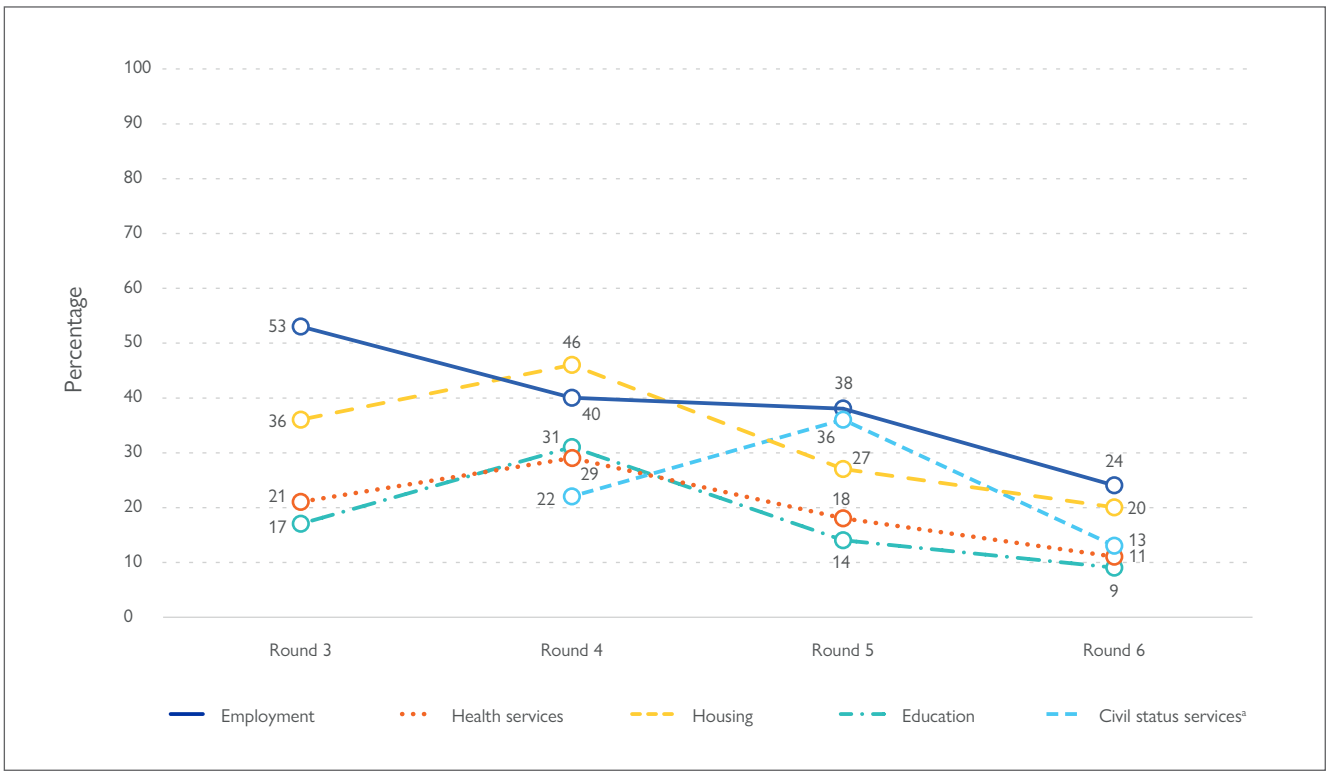
Figure 10. Standard of living compared to host community



Despite these economic hardships, the numbers of IDP households reporting they often or sometimes have been limited in or excluded from accessing employment, housing, civil status services, health services, and education are the lowest they have ever been. Notably the shares facing discrimination in accessing employment and housing have fallen 29 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively between Rounds 3 and 6 (July-September 2017 and February-June 2021).

As such, COVID-19 does appear to have hampered progress made toward achieving equal standard of living, despite the fact that shares reporting facing discrimination have decreased.

Figure 11. Households reporting they often or sometimes face discrimination in accessing



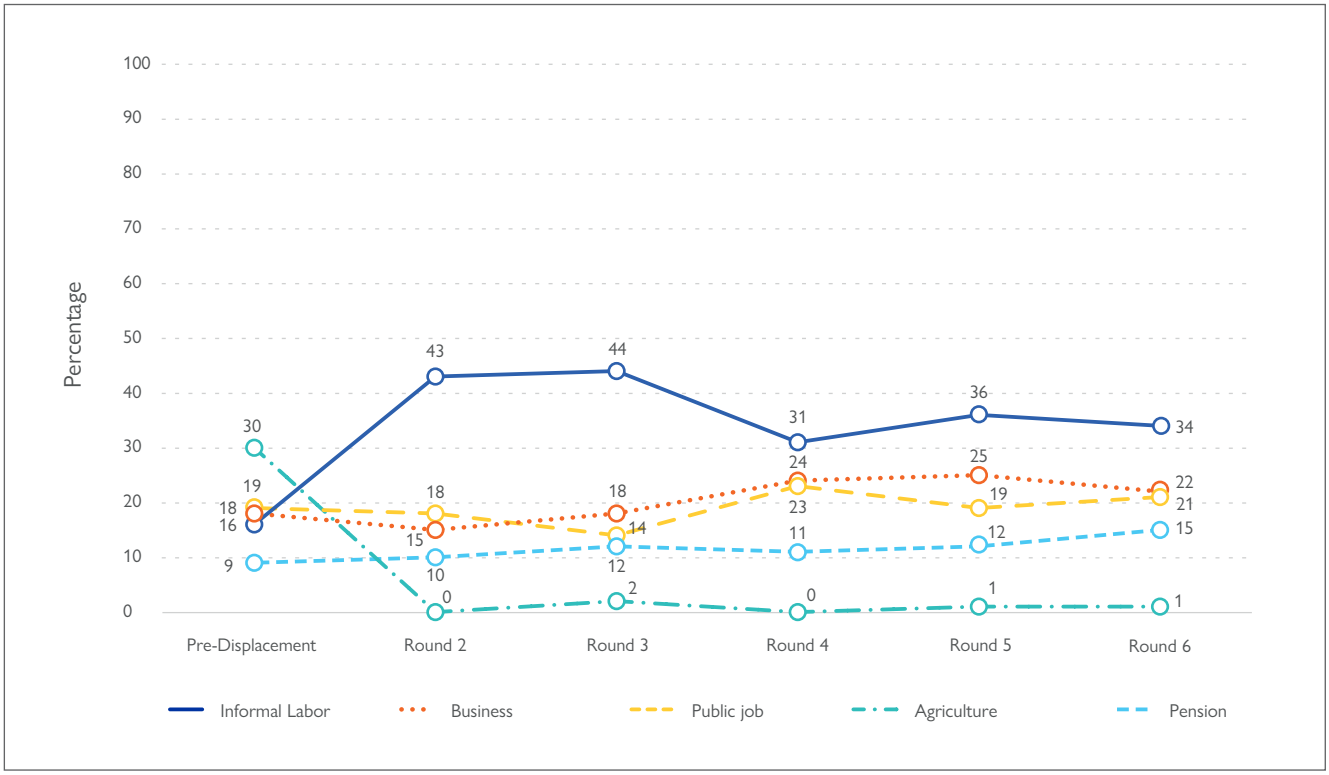
CRITERIA 3: LIVELIHOOD & EMPLOYMENT

IDPs' ability to secure an income to provide for their families has been a challenge in general, and more particular during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of the sector in which they worked, 79 per cent of households said that it was the household head who was the person who brings in the most important source of money.

> **The father of a family from Anbar living in Baghdad:** "The biggest challenge is the days where there is a curfew because it prevents me from providing essential necessities that are needed in the process of planting and harvesting, and others. In addition to the difficulty of marketing and other difficulties and thus there has been a lack and sometimes absence of financial returns. This caused me a lot of stress and mental exhaustion and so it has directly affected my family and made things even more difficult than they were. This is in addition to the rise of gas and food prices as well as most daily life belongings due to the rise in the American dollar in terms of the Iraqi dinar. What is more important is the fear from the future and what 'unknowns' it carries."

Over time, Access to *Durable Solutions among IDPs in Iraq* has shown there is considerable change in what households do to get that most important source of money. For three out of four households (74%), that source is different in Round 6 (February-June 2021) than it was in Round 1 (March-May 2016). Informal labor continues to be the dominant sector in which IDPs find employment: the plurality of households (34%) said it was work in this sector that provided for the family's livelihood.

Figure 12. What is your family's most important source of money?*



* In Round 1, the question wording in Arabic was "income," which respondents understood as a steady, consistent salary. As such, in subsequent rounds, the question wording was changed to ask about the primary source of "money."

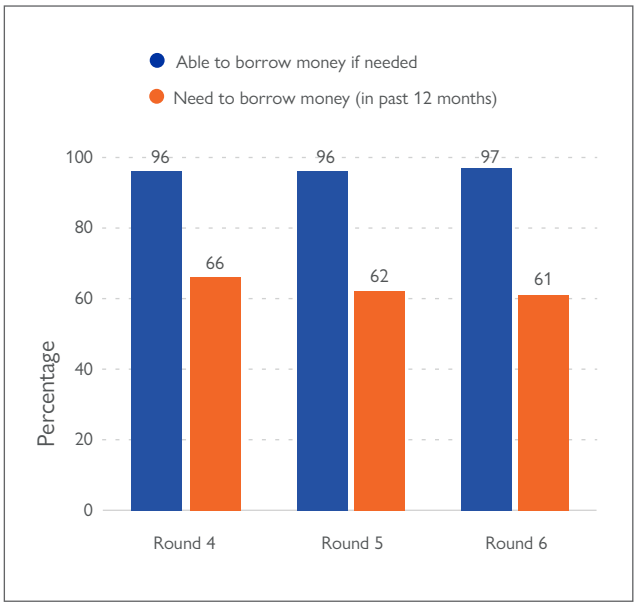
The shares of IDPs working in business and in the public sector had approached, and eventually surpassed, the shares that worked in those sectors prior to displacement; however, those who reported receiving their main source of income from business and the public sector prior to displacement are not all the same households who report doing so in Round 6 (February-June 2021).

Of the 19 per cent whose main source of income was a public sector job prior to displacement, only 41 per cent of households still say in Round 6 (February-June 2021) that public sector work provides for the household's most important source of money. Similarly, of the 18 per cent whose income came from business prior to displacement, only 38 per cent say that remains true in Round 6.

Households have had to supplant income regardless of what sector it has come from. In Round 6 (February-June 2021), 75 per cent suggested they no longer had any savings left, and an additional 20 per cent say they had none when they left home. Instead, households have continued to borrow money. Nearly two thirds of all households in Rounds 3 through 6 (July-September 2017 through February-June 2021) report having borrowed money in the previous calendar year. While overwhelming majorities are able to borrow the money, in Round 6, 46 per cent do so from relatives and 36 per cent from friends. Thus, rather than the government or aid organizations shouldering the burden of relieving IDPs from financial strain, that burden continues to rest mainly on IDPs' innermost circle of relatives and friends.

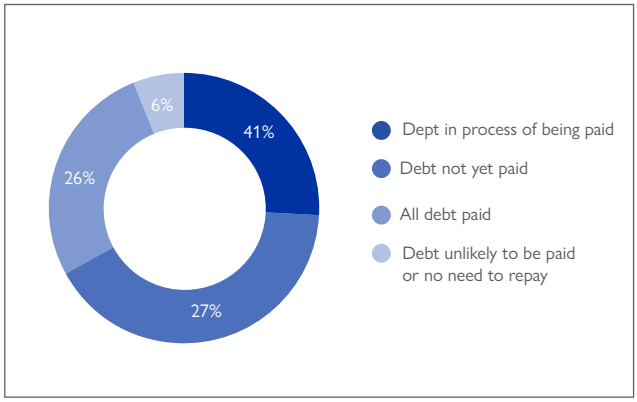
> **Mother of a family from Salah al-Din living in Basra:** "I borrow money constantly from my brother's wife and for various purposes sometimes because I have no financial income. Therefore, I had to borrow in order to provide food and drink, but the last amount of money I borrowed was in order to rent this room and furnish it."

Figure 13. Need and Ability to Borrow Money Over Time



Repaying borrowed money is a considerable problem that has long-lasting ramifications for IDP households. In Round 6 (February-June 2021), of households who said they had borrowed money at some point during their displacement, 26 per cent say that have fully paid off their debt while 41 per cent are in the process of paying off the. An additional 27 per cent say they have not yet begun to pay it back. The constant need to borrow in order to supplement income positions households to continue to feel the effects of displacement, even if they attain a durable solution to it.

Figure 14. If you borrowed money at any time since 1 January 2014, have you been able to pay back this debt?



Compounding this problem is a simultaneous decrease in humanitarian assistance. While aid played a significant role for IDP households in the first several years of displacement, only a few have received it in the past three years. Between Rounds 5 and 6 (October 2019-January 2020 and February-June 2021), the small increase from 9 to 12 per cent saying they received aid is statistically insignificant. Of the12 per cent who are still receiving aid, there has been a shift from the central and local government providing it in Round 1 (March-May 2016) to a person or NGO doing so in Round 6. The type of aid received has also changed. A greater number of households are reporting getting food and water rather than cash and nonfood items.

> **Mother of a family from Salah al-Din living in Sulaymaniyah:** "There is no assistance except from the MOMD, which provides us with a food basket every three to four months. The food is not good quality and oftentimes it is food which has expired before it gets to us."

Figure 15. IDP Households Receiving Humanitarian Aid

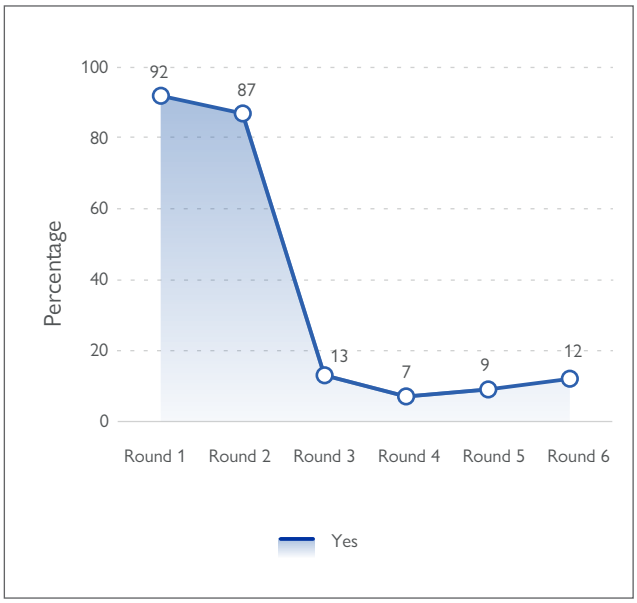
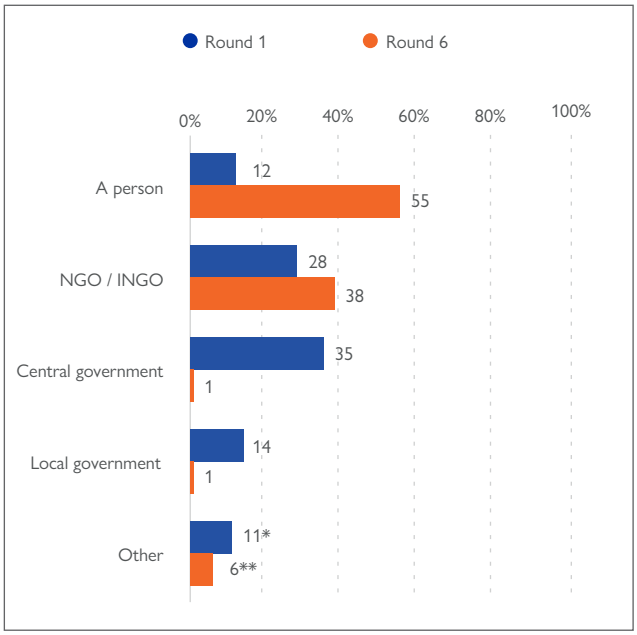
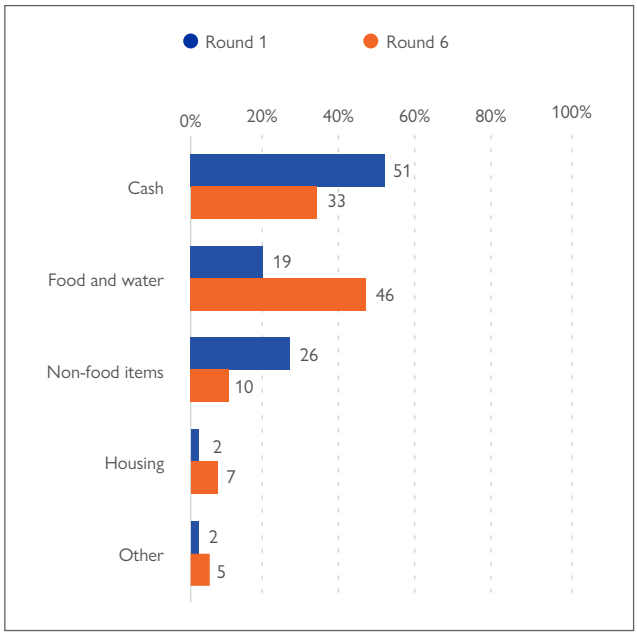


Figure 16. Provider of Aid Among Households Receiving It



*Includes 2% from a religious organization and 9% from other sources.
**Includes 5% from a religious organization and 1% from other sources.

Figure 17. Type of Aid Among Households Receiving It



In sum, the COVID-19 pandemic has not greatly affected the types of livelihood activities in which IDPs engage, or the sources upon which they are reliant to supplement income earned from jobs. Instead, previously reported trends relating to job movement, borrowing money, who they are borrowing from, and decreased aid remain largely unchanged.

CRITERIA 4: HOUSING, LAND, & PROPERTY

Housing in displacement represents one of the greatest financial burdens that IDP households must bear: between Rounds 4 and 6 (August-November 2018 and February-June 2021), it consistently represented approximately 25 per cent of their monthly expenses and was also one of the highest costs, second only to food. Furthermore, while few households have bought houses in the areas in which they were displaced, the vast majority—nearly 80 per cent in all rounds—have rented their homes. Among the 86 per cent who report renting in Round 6 (February-June 2021), 97 per cent pay the rent themselves. Very few (5% in Round 6) say they have been excluded from accessing housing in displacement.

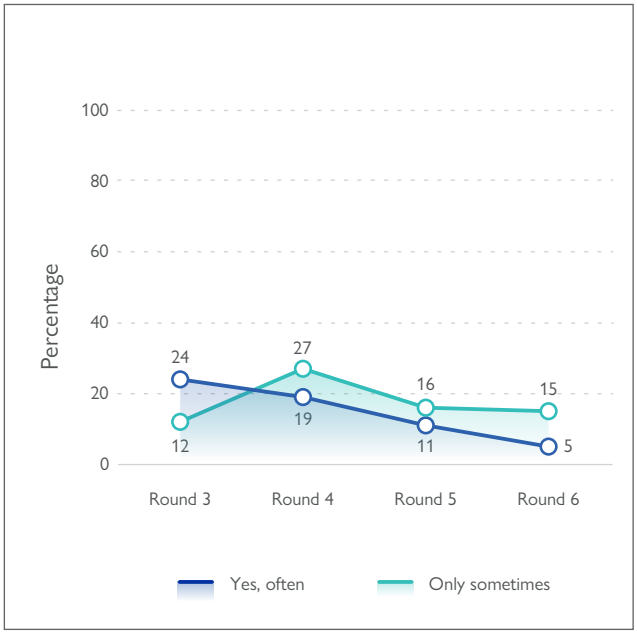
Figure 18. Shelter Type in Displacement

	Pre-Displacement %	Round 1 %	Round 2 %	Round 3 %	Round 4 %	Round 5 %	Round 6 %
Owned home[a]	80	4	6	6	15	13	11
Rented home[a]	17	80	79	81	81	84	86
Hosted	1	6	5	8	2	1	1
Other[b]	2	10	10	6	2	2	2

a. With immediate or extended family

b. Includes camps, unfinished building or housing, religious building or institution, hotel/motel, school or other government building.

Figure 19. Did you or any member of your family ever face exclusion from services or limitation in accessing housing since you were displaced?



Despite having access, the quality of housing IDPs have been able to attain has not always been suitable, though some have been able to improve their situations:

> **Mother of a family internally displaced within Kirkuk:** "I used to live in a small house which consists of two rooms, a corridor which I used as a kitchen, and a small yard. The rent was 250,000 Iraqi dinars (171 USD). It was infested with mold, bugs, and mice. We moved to a one-floor house, which is bigger in terms of its space. It is located in a compound. It consists of two bedrooms, a living room, and a large kitchen with a spacious yard. We feel comfortable here. The owner kept a room for himself in the house to use as a storage space. Despite that, I miss my old neighbourhood and my neighbors who used to support me a lot."

> **Father of the family from Diyala, living in Baghdad:** "Currently, I live in a small, rented apartment for 600,000 [Iraqi] dinars (412 USD). It is not enough to house my whole family, but we have to live in it because it is affordable. Previously, the house was large enough for the family. It was not comfortable, but it was enough. The other thing is that the previous neighbourhood was crowded and completely not medically safe because of the very large number of people and the incredible spread of the Coronavirus, as most residents are not committed to the health instructions, such as wearing masks and social distancing. Hence, it was the family's decision to move to a less crowded and cleaner area. [We now live] in Hay Al Jameaa, and it is really good in every way. The neighbourhood is elegant. Its people and residents are also elegant as well as aware of the issues and well-read."

IDPs consistently rank housing as the most important requirement for their return to their places of origin. In Round 6 (February-June 2021), the share of IDPs reporting this requirement hit 50 per cent, surpassing the share (29%) that cited a good security situation, which was previously mentioned as the most important requirement for return. Rather, 55 per cent of IDP households assess the current safety conditions in their areas of origin as completely or moderately safe. Yet housing remains a key part of what makes the majority of IDPs still feel like they are displaced:

> **A father of a family from Diyala:** "I live in a rented unit in Al-Sulaymaniyah. I used to have a house in Babylon, but the house is completely destroyed. I see myself as a homeless person because I do not have a house and I am renting while my financial situation is very difficult. My house in Babylon was owned by me and it was a big house."

The condition of IDPs' property in their areas of origin may be an impediment to return home. As of Round 4 (August-November 2018), upwards of 70 per cent of IDPs say they can access their homes. But as more time elapses and they have learned more about the condition of their homes, IDPs increasingly report that their homes are heavily damaged or destroyed, peaking at 77 per cent in Round 6 (February-June 2021), a significant increase even from Round 5 (October 2019-January 2020) where 64 per cent reported the same. There has been a commensurate change in who reports their houses are only partially damaged, suggesting that the more time that passes with them absent from their homes, the worse the conditions of their homes become.

> **A female family member from Mosul, living in Sulaymaniyah:** "I have visited our village and our house is the same and has not been totally damaged; however, there are broken windows and doors, and thieves came into the house and destroyed the electrical system."

Figure 20. IDP Households Able to Access Property in Governorate of Origin

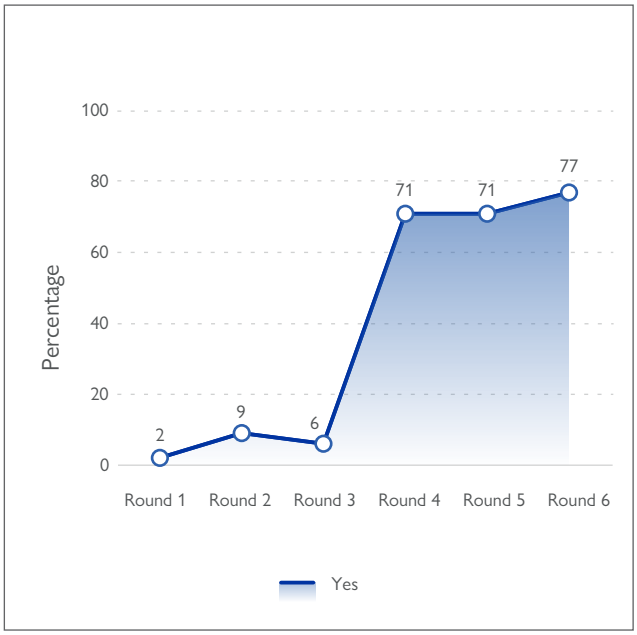
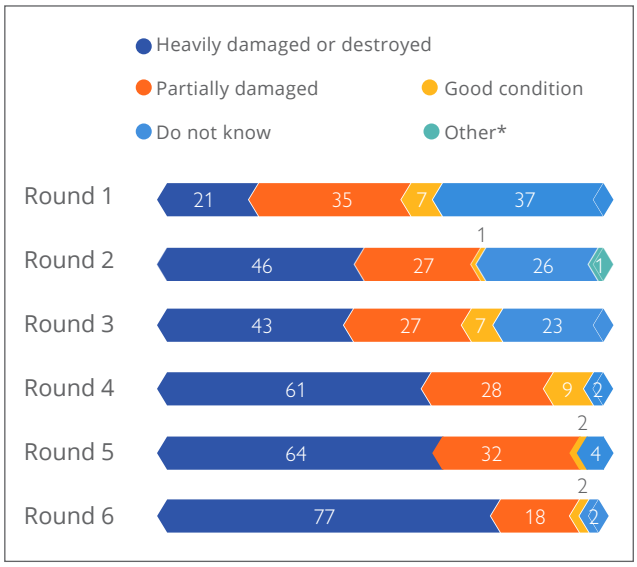


Figure 21. Condition of Property in Governorate of Origin?



* Category not asked in in Rounds 1, 4, 5, and 6. The value in Round 3 was 0%

CRITERIA 5, 6, & 7: PERSONAL AND OTHER DOCUMENTATION, FAMILY SEPARATION & REUNIFICATION, & PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

In general, after more than five years in displacement, most non-camp IDPs no longer have issues with replacing official documents or reuniting with family. As in previous rounds, very small minorities of IDP households over time have lost any personal documentation. Of the two per cent who have in Round 6 (February-June 2021), 62 per cent have replaced all or some of those documents. Similarly, very few IDP households living in displacement report having usual members of their households separated for a period of more than three months. In Round 6 (February-June 2021), of the four per cent who were separated at any time over the last 12 months, the vast majority (80%) say they have no plans on reuniting. Previous rounds of data have suggested that this lack of intention to reunite is because the movement was for reasons like marriage or pursuing education.

Participation in non-family civic life such as clubs and groups was low and remains low.

Figure 22. IDP households whose members lost personal documents

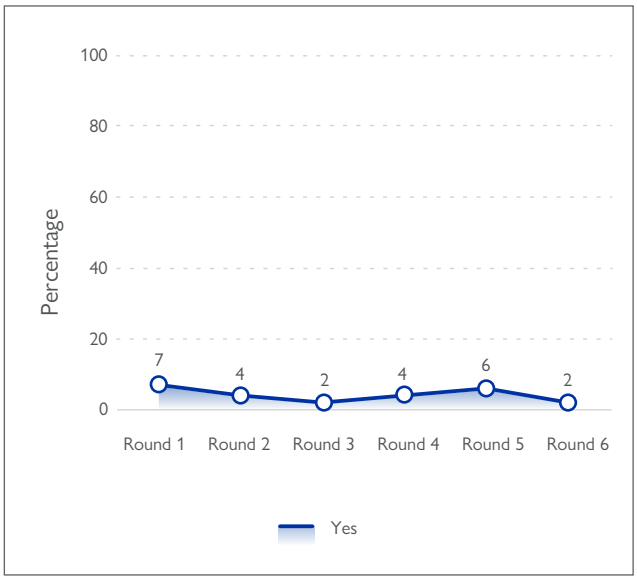


Figure 23. IDP households whose usual members of the family were separated in the past 12 months

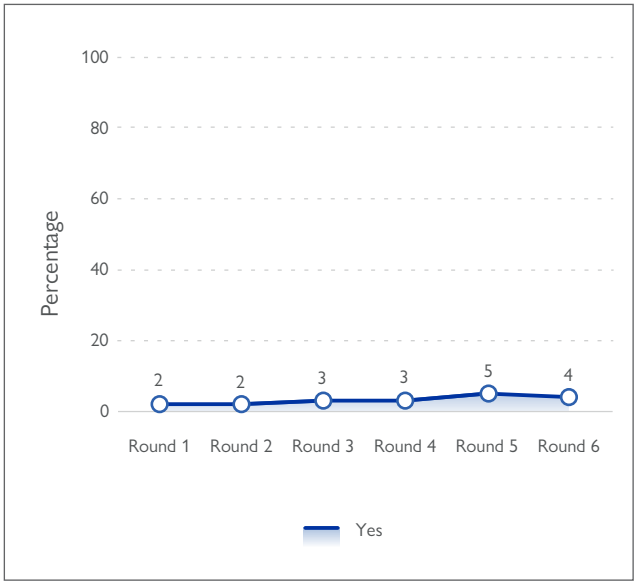
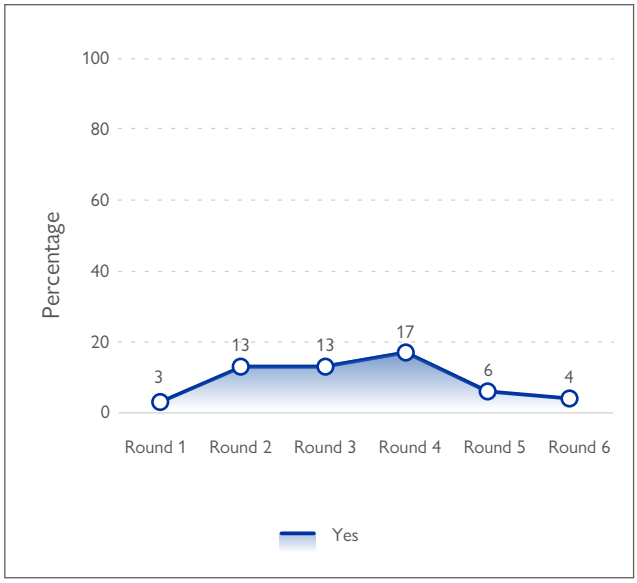


Figure 24. IDP households that participated in civic life



Mother of a family from Anbar, living in Basra: "First, we are afraid of forced return. Second, we suffer from the problem of not being issued a Basra residence card and a voter card, which are considered among the most important documents for conducting any transaction, the most important of which is the issuance of an identity card for my 17-year-old son, who is facing a problem in issuing it because his father and I do not have a voter card and a Basra residence card, so he cannot go out to distant places for fear of crossing checkpoints. The concerned authorities in Basra do not accept our request to issue an identity card because the residence card is Al-Fallujah, and the concerned authorities in Al-Fallujah do not allow us to issue the identity because we are still displaced and we have no right to issue it unless the file of displacement in Basra is closed and we return to Al-Fallujah."

Father of a family from Babylon now living in Baghdad: "The most difficult challenge since the beginning of the spread of the virus and until now was when there was a total lockdown imposed. We are daily wage workers and we need work on a daily basis to provide living needs such as water, food, and others. There are days where we leave for work even on Fridays when roads are closed and citizens cannot go out. This has a negative impact on us and so we beg the government to reconsider this decision or at least exclude those who work daily."

CRITERIA 8: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Compensation for damaged and destroyed housing has increasingly come to the forefront of what "justice" means for IDPs. Between Rounds 2 and 5 (February-April 2017 and October 2019-January 2020), majorities had reported that the prosecution of criminals was the most important aspect of achieving justice. For the first time, this is no longer the case. Instead, the share of households suggesting compensation is the most important aspect of achieving justice has risen from just two per cent in Round 2 to 33 per cent in Round 6 (February-June 2021). Similarly, compensation committees, to which IDP households previously had attributed less of an important role, have become as favored as regular courts as the preferred means of achieving justice. Part of the importance that IDP households ascribe to compensation is its role in facilitating their return home, particularly for households who previously worked in agriculture.

> **Father of a family from Mosul, now living in Basra:** "I have the intention next summer to go back to Mosul. I want to work in agriculture, we are tired of working as day laborers. The children despair of the day labor, they asked me to return to the land and cultivate it. I am currently thinking about the matter and I need to sell my house in Basra to rebuild my house in Mosul. The idea of returning depends on selling the house as well as the security and economic situation in Mosul."

Figure 25. What is the most important aspect of achieving justice for your family?

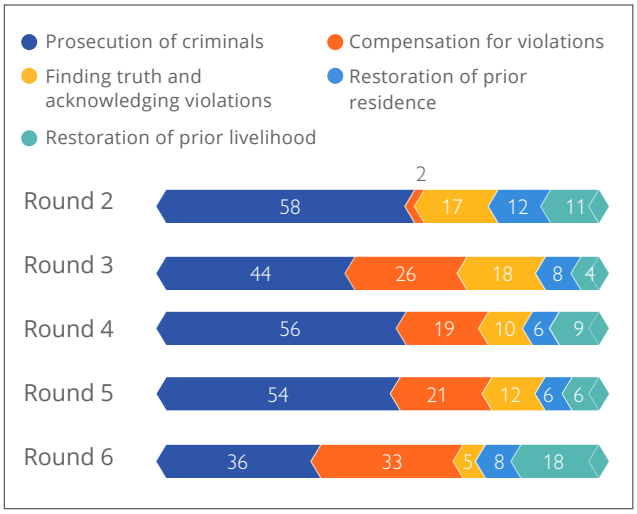
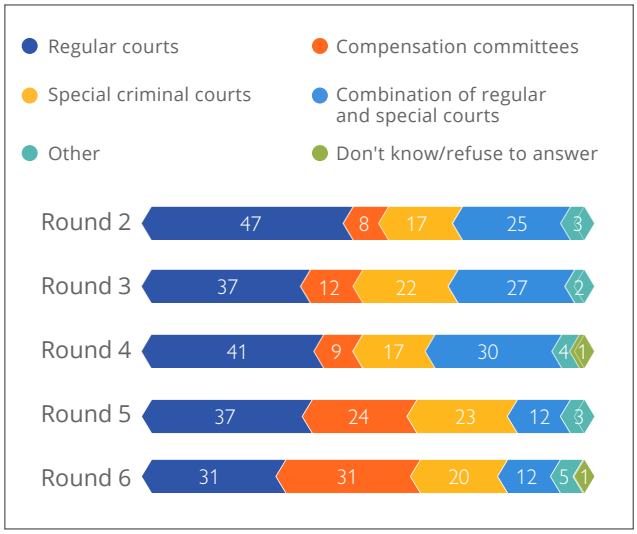
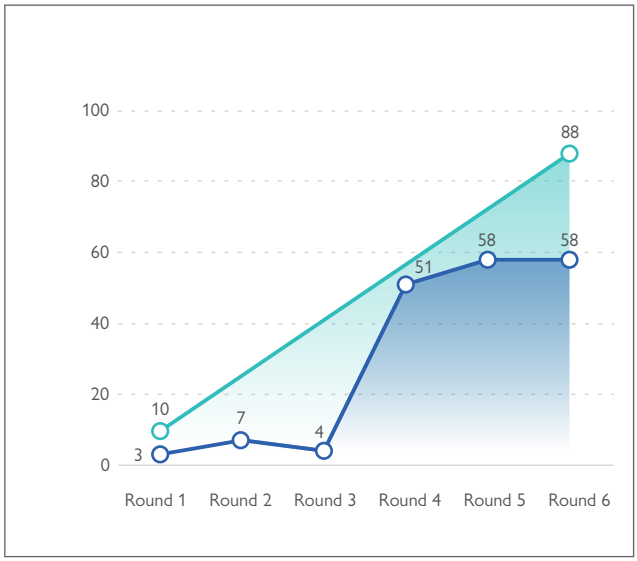


Figure 26. What is the best means of achieving justice?



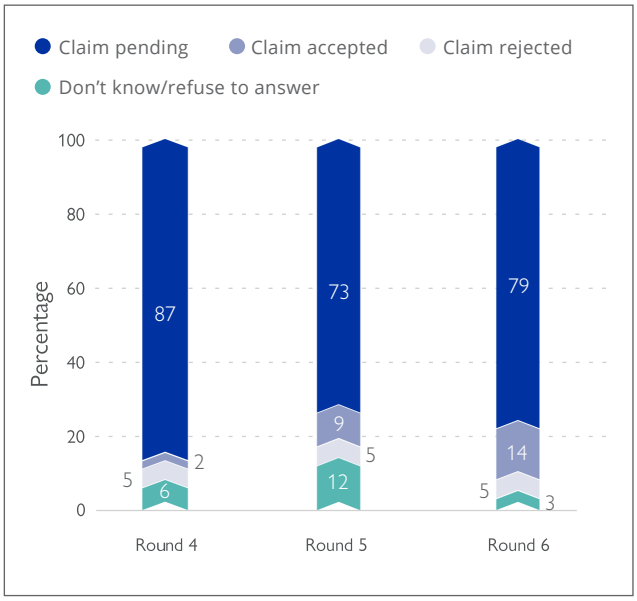
As compensation has increased in its importance for IDPs, so too has the share of those who know about it and have begun applying for it. The share of IDPs who have become aware of compensation committees has increased more than eight-fold over the past six years, reaching 88 per cent in Round 6 (February-June 2021) up from just 10 per cent in Round 1 (March-May 2016). The share of IDP household who have reported applying to compensation also rose dramatically between Rounds 3 and 4 (July-September 2017 and August-November 2018) but has since remained relatively constant at just under 60 per cent. Of the 58 per cent of IDP households who report they applied to compensation in 2021, the vast majority—93 per cent—did so more than 12 months before, that is, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Just six per cent did so between seven and 10 months before Round 6 was fielded (February-June 2021).

Figure 27. Compensation Applications for Destroyed or Damaged Property



Just as the share of the IDP households applying to compensation has stagnated, compensation itself has been slow to come. Four out of five households (79%) say their claim is still pending. While those who say their claim has been accepted increased five percentage points between Rounds 5 and 6 (October 2019-January 2020 and February-June 2021) to 14 per cent, just three per cent of them say they have received the compensation money.

Figure 28. Status of application?



Yet compensation alone, though now at the forefront of achieving justice for IDPs, is individually necessary but not sufficient in allowing them to do so. Instead, "compensation" understood more broadly appears to additionally mean that public services, and not just personal property, are restored:

> **Father of a family from Salah al-Din, now living in Kirkuk:** "Nothing has changed because my property has been completely destroyed since liberation. I could not renovate and fix my house. I am waiting for the government to provide my compensation in order for me to be able to fix my house and return to my neighbourhood. However, the neighbourhood lacks basic services such as drinking-water supplies and electricity. In addition to that, there are no job opportunities. All these reasons prevent me from returning to my original place."

PART III SAMPLED RETURNEES: LIFE IN GOVERNORATES OF ORIGIN IN 2021

RETURNEE EXPERIENCE

In Round 6 (February-June 2021), the share of sampled households who had returned to the district from which they were originally displaced peaked: 41 per cent, or 1,338 of the 3,257 households participating in *Access to Durable Solutions Among IPDs in Iraq*, were study-defined returnees. Almost all of these returnee households–91 per cent–returned to the very neighborhood in which they were living before displacement, with 75 per cent reporting returning to jobs they had prior to displacement. Returnee households suggest that better and cheaper houses (37%) and wanting to join relatives (31%) were the primary reasons motivating their return. The overwhelming majority (89%) intend to still be living where they are now after three years, with the most important requirements for them to stay being the creation of job opportunities (39%), roads (22%), and electricity (10%). The following provides a snapshot across each of the IASC eight criteria for findings from the sample.

CRITERIA 1: SAFETY & SECURITY

In Round 6 (February-June 2021), the vast majority (92%) of returnees report feeling either completely or moderately safe, and only one per cent of returnees report facing a security threat. The main factor that returnees report made them feel safe in their community was the presence of security forces or police keeping the area safe (50%), while 36 per cent of returnees report that the primary reason was that it is a peaceful area with a welcoming community.

> **The father of a family from Mosul governorate:** "Yes, I feel 80 per cent safe because there are no security events or threats based on my knowledge. Even though most of the neighbourhood's residents are related to each other, [we do experience] raids by security forces responsible for the neighbourhood sometimes. For example, there are security measures for inspecting non-registered weapons. There is a difference in how security forces handle the countryside and cities when it comes to transportation or lack thereof as a result of the imposed lockdown. In the countryside, measures are very strict but most of us are farmers and need transportation to sell crops. Therefore, we face difficulties in crossing checkpoints and we stop for a long time."

> **The father of a family in Anbar:** "Yes, we feel completely safe and thank God because the neighborhood is peaceful. Its people are peaceful, and there are no problems in the neighbourhood in addition to the presence of security forces from the army and police who maintain security and stay up to ensure that we are always protected."

> **The father of a family from Diyala:** "To be honest, I do not feel safe because of the limited security in the village. Moments prior to our meeting, there was a helicopter in the village. The safety in the area is inconsistent and ISIL is also present around the village. I hope and plan on going back to Al-Sulaymaniyah after two or three months."

Returnees also largely feel accepted in their communities, with 97 per cent of returnees responding that they feel either strongly or somewhat accepted and no returnees reporting feeling rejected. A substantial minority (41%) of returnees say that are unable to move freely in their community, with nearly all attributing it to Coronavirus-related lockdowns mandated by the government.

CRITERIA 2: STANDARD OF LIVING

In Round 6 (February-June 2021), 55 per cent of returnees think that their standard of living is the same as others in their community, while 37 per cent believe that it is worse. Just over 80 per cent of returnees in Round 6 report that they can provide for their basic needs. Those who have been returnees for the past three rounds (since late 2017 or 2018) have the highest share reporting being able to provide for their needs at 84 per cent, compared to 72 per cent of those who were returnees for the past two rounds (since late 2018 or 2019) and 79 per cent of those who only became returnees in Round 6 (since 2020 or early 2021). The main strategies returnees say they adopt to meet basic needs are borrowing money (43%) and reducing other expenses (33%). In addition, 74 per cent of returnee households report relying on less preferred and less expensive foods at least once in the previous seven days, and the same percentage report having to purchase food on credit at least once in the previous seven days.

The father of a family that returned to Diyala as of Round 6: "The economic living situation is very difficult. My son and I work in selling sweets from morning until evening in order to provide sufficient income to pay the rent and provide daily sustenance. The family's living conditions are the same as the general condition of this country from year after year, going from bad to worse. This is the reality of the situation; we have no choice but to accept it, even if hunger kills us. This is our reality unfortunately."

The mother of a family in Kirkuk: "Our living situation is very bad after we returned. Before we returned, the organizations used to visit us and provide assistance. However, after the return, we do not see anything from the organizations and the number of job opportunities is very low. We do not have a welfare allowance which would make things easier for us. We do not have enough income for the family. After my husband's death, my immediate relatives and my brothers in Diyala brought all sorts of assistance, such as food and clothes for my children. They would drive to my home to bring me the household essentials because they know that I won't be able to earn a decent income."

On average, households who were returnees in Rounds 4, 5, and 6 (August-November 2018, October 2019-January 2020, and February-June 2021) paid less in rent, medical care, and school than the other returnees, and slightly more on food and transportation. However, there is not a clear correlation between the duration of return and expenses: for five of the six types of expenses, returnees for the past two rounds have either higher or lower expenses than both returnees for the past three rounds and returnees for only Round 6. For example, both the oldest and the newest groups of returnees spend around 83,000 IQD (57 USD) on utilities, whereas the middle group of returnees spend 68,000 IQD (47 USD).

Figure 29. Expenses of Sampled Returnees by Duration of their Return (in IQD)[a]

Returnee in:	Rent	Utilities	Food	Transportation	Medical Care	School
Rounds 4, 5, & 6	18,068	82,461	281,008	58,232	49,908	31,979
Rounds 5 & 6	35,044	68,303	277,243	47,039	55,418	40,377
Round 6	28,984	83,746	266,989	57,147	51,324	37,881

a. During this time period, 1,000I IQD is equal to 0.69 USD.

Few returnees in Round 6 (February-June 2021) report being excluded from or limited in accessing employment or services. The largest share report facing discrimination in accessing employment (8%) while only three to four per cent report facing discrimination in accessing civil services, health services, or education.

The father of a family that had returned to Mosul by Round 4: "The biggest challenge we faced was the high prices in the market. Food prices began to rise significantly, and also the price of the medicine that I bought for my treatment increased, and this was difficult for me, because I was unable to work, and the care salary that I receive is only 120,000 Iraqi dinars (82 USD), which is not enough. Therefore, my children sometimes help me and this is how I was able to secure what I need."

CRITERIA 3: LIVELIHOOD & EMPLOYMENT

In Round 6 (February-June 2021), returnees primarily find employment through informal labor (34%) and through public sector employment (31%). In 84 per cent of returnee households, the head of household is the most important source of money. Very few returnee households (7%) have savings in Round 6, and 70 per cent of them needed to borrow money, with virtually all being able to do so primarily from relatives (58%) and friends (27%). Only one per cent borrowed from banks or microfinance institutions. Of those who borrowed, 75 per cent have either paid it back or are in the process of doing so. Only six per cent of returnees in Round 6 report that they are receiving humanitarian assistance; the primary providers are either individuals or NGOs and INGOs with recipient returnees reporting receiving food and water (51%) as well as cash (29%).

> **The adult son in an extended family in Baghdad:** "The impact of the virus was significant on my work as I used to work around 15 days a month. However, after the Corona crisis, I work only seven days in the best of circumstances. My income used to reach 250,000 to 300,000 [Iraqi] dinars (171 to 206 USD) and it currently reaches around 50,000 to 150,000 [Iraqi] dinars (34 to 102 USD) because people aren't willing to build, fearing that an economic crisis will happen. Therefore, this income is not enough for my family's expenses. To compensate for this decrease, I work on a small land of half a dunam [500 square meters] that I grow some vegetables in for the house only. We do not sell them. It helps a little with feeding the family's needs."
>
> **The father in the family that returned to Anbar:** "The biggest challenge for us is the lack of work due to Corona and the total lockdown. I work as a day-laborer and my brother works as a day-laborer. There are many people other than us who work as day-laborers and on daily wages. I earn 15,000 Iraqi dinars per day (10 USD). If I do not go to work, I do not receive any wages, and when they impose a total lockdown, we cannot go to work consistently, so how will I earn what supports me and my family? This lack of work was accompanied by a noticeable increase in the prices of materials. For example, baby diapers rose from 5,000 to 6,000 [Iraqi] dinars (3 to 4 USD) and cooking oil from 1,000 to 2,000 [Iraqi] dinars (0.70 to 1.40 USD) and many other materials, especially food. We can barely provide food and basic needs. This problem continued even after the end of the lockdown. The prices remained the same and did not return to what they used to be. Shop owners raise prices, and there is no control over them, and no one holds them accountable for that. And only the poor are harmed by this thing."

CRITERIA 4: HOUSING, LAND, & PROPERTY

The majority (75%) of returnees in Round 6 (February-June 2021) are living in a home the family owns, while 19 per cent live in rented accommodation for their family. On average, returnees paid 22,568 IQD (15 USD) per month on rent and housing. Of returnees who owned property before displacement, 96 per cent say they can still access that property. That said, 84 per cent of returnees report the condition of their property is either partially or heavily damaged or destroyed (it is worth noting this property may not be where they are currently living).

> **The father of a family living in Mosul:** "As you know, when we returned to Mosul, we found our houses were destroyed and nothing remained of them as a result of the explosions and the battles that took place near them, so I had to borrow money in order to rebuild and restore it. I often borrow from my father, mother, or one of my brothers and people close to me, and thank God none of them pressured me and demanded their money, and so far I am continuing to pay back the remaining amount, which is approximately seven million Iraqi dinars I say, praise be to God, this remaining debt must end one day and the important thing is that we were close to fully restoring the house, which is habitable now."
>
> **The father of a family in Diyala:** "We have lived in the same house since our return. I told you in the previous interviews that the situation of my house is not good. The roof is built of mud. The roof leaks during rainy winter days."

CRITERIA 5, 6, & 7: PERSONAL AND OTHER DOCUMENTATION, FAMILY SEPARATION AND REUNIFICATION, AND PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Only three per cent of returnee households in Round 6 (February-June 2021) have lost personal documents, with 86 per cent of them having replaced all or some of them. Similarly, very few returnee households in Round 6 were separated at any point over last 12 months, with 74 per cent having no concrete plans to reunite. The lack of intention to reunite may be due to that fact the majority (65%) of separation is due to demographic movements such as marriage, while an additional 17 per cent is due to death. A small minority (8%) of returnee households in Round 6 report either volunteering, attending meetings of, or donating money to a civic group, cultural club, or social or professional association, or being actively involved in local reconciliation and confidence-building initiatives.

> **The mother in a family living in Diyala:** "We experienced a family separation, and I considered it temporary, despite the length of time, because my husband joined his military duty in the capital, Baghdad, where his rest and vacation coincided with the days of the total lockdown, which made it difficult to return home, due to the lack of means of transportation to transport him to Jalawla. Our communication was limited to the phone and video calling via the internet. We went through challenging days because of my husband's absence."

CRITERIA 8: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The majority (84%) of returnees in Round 6 (February-June 2021) are aware of compensation committees, with 61 per cent of them having applied to compensation. Almost all of them–96 per cent—applied more than 12 months prior, while 75 per cent of returnees report that their claims remain pending. Of the 15 per cent who report their claims were accepted, 92 per cent say that they have not received the money. Compensation is important to returnees, with 39 per cent reporting that it is the most important aspect of achieving justice, compared to 24 per cent reporting the restoration of livelihoods and 22 per cent reporting prosecution of criminals. Similarly, the plurality of returnees in Round 6 (32%) say that compensation committees are the best means of achieving justice.

> **The father of a family who returned to Anbar since Round 2:** "Yes, we have applied for compensation. We reached its final stage in which we have to take oath in court. They asked us to wait for their call. However, we have not received any calls up until now."
>
> **The father from a family in Anbar:** "Yes, I applied for compensation, and nothing has happened so far, and we have not been compensated for my house, which was destroyed due to military operations during the liberation of the neighborhood from ISIL."

RETURNEE EXPERIENCES WITH COVID-19

While 79 per cent of returnees in Round 6 (February-June 2021) report being either very or somewhat concerned about the spread of COVID-19, 60 per cent believe that the economic situation is the most important challenge facing Iraq today rather than the spread of the Coronavirus. In fact, 56 per cent of returnees say that the biggest challenge caused by the spread of COVID-19 is either the loss of household income or the negative impact on the economy, with 58 per cent of returnee households reporting temporarily losing a job due to the pandemic.

The pandemic reached returnee households, with 22 per cent reporting the death or sickness of a household member. Of these households, many report they had difficulty getting tested (35%), getting medical treatment at a private or public facility (59% and 61% respectively), and affording medication (80%). Returnee responses suggest they are both skeptical of the COVID-19 vaccine and their ability to access it: 39 per cent would not want members of their household to get it if it became available to them, and only 42 per cent believe it will be easy to access if it becomes available.

The biggest challenges facing children's education during COVID-19 for returnees were related to access to electronic classes. Of returnees with school-aged children in Round 6 (February-June 2021), 36 per cent cited no internet connection as the biggest challenge facing children's education, while 23 per cent cited not having computers, smartphones, or tablets. Another 33 per cent mentioned no computers, smartphones, tablets as the second biggest challenge. Nearly all (94%) of returnees with school-aged children intend to send their children back to school when schools reopen for in-person classes.[11]

> **A father from Mosul:** "I have three children in school: my eldest son is in the first grade of middle school, my daughter is in the fifth grade of elementary school, and my other son is in the third grade of elementary school. At the time of the total lockdown, the school was completely closed, so I made a school for them at home where I divided all the subjects into certain days and every day, they had to study two pages of this material, and thus their education continued, with help from me and their mother. When the schools opened, they began to go to school one day a week, but of course this is not enough, so I continued with the old schedule that I put together for them. As for e-learning, it is never successful for children, as they cannot focus a lot like for university or middle school students, instead they need a teacher who stands with them in class and explains the material for them to understand it well. However, they attend the electronic lessons offered by the school, but I am not sure of their ability to absorb everything. As a percentage of their understanding of the subject, I can say that it is less than 50 per cent compared to the situation before Corona, and the teachers in the school are unable to explain everything because the work is only one day and all they do is send homework through communication apps, and the student must read by himself and do the homework.

11 The survey was fielded in the spring and summer of 2021, before schools fully reopened for in-personal classes.

> In some subjects, the teacher records a video explaining the subject, but in scientific subjects such as mathematics, it is difficult for the student to comprehend everything in this way, so their mother and I invest more of our time in teaching them during this period and now schools are closed again with the return of the lockdown measures and they continue to study at home."

PART IV SPECIAL REPORT: IDP EXPERIENCES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

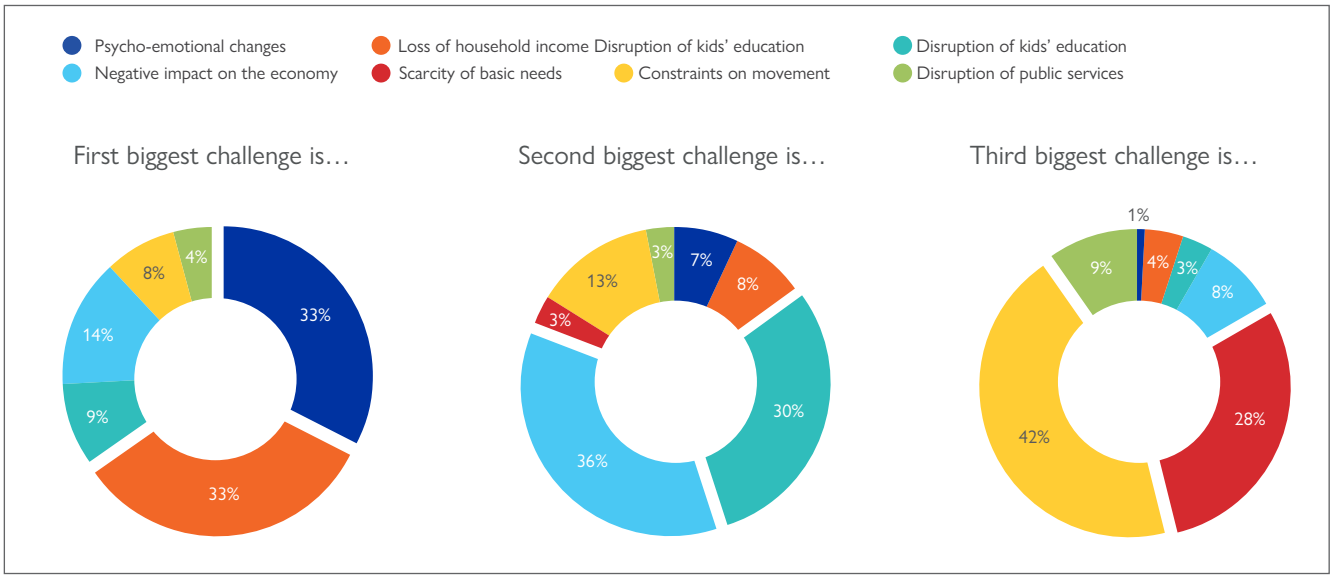
While Round 6 of *Access to Durable Solutions Among IDPs in Iraq* continued to focus primarily on indicators tracked over the past six years, the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 began to reveal how those most deeply affected were disadvantaged or vulnerable populations, including IDPs. Therefore, in addition to wanting to shed light on if and how the pandemic altered households' paths towards achieving a durable solution to their displacement, the study introduced a battery of questions specifically on how IDP households viewed and experienced the pandemic.

As has been the case globally, the pandemic's effects have been most pronounced in three areas: the economy, health and healthcare, and education. These three issue areas are, for the greater part, encompassed under the banner of the IACS's second criterion—standard of living—in measuring attainment of a durable solution. As discussed in Part II above, this criterion is one of the two where changes in trends between 2016 and 2021 were most visible. When asked specifically about the effects of COVID-19 on their lives, IDP households themselves confirm this fact.

OVERALL CONCERNS AND THE ECONOMIC FALLOUT OF COVID-19

The vast majority of IDP households (82%) say they are very or somewhat concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic. The first, second, and third biggest challenges households face because of COVID-19 are variously linked to income and livelihoods, such that a preoccupation with the pandemic's economic fallouts is what appears primarily to fuel the high level of concern.

Figure 30. Biggest Challenges Caused by COVID-19: % of IDPs reporting the three biggest challenges, by type of challenge



IDPs who have remained in displacement are evenly split on what constitutes the first biggest challenge the COVID-19 pandemic has caused: 33 per cent say it is the effects on their psychological and emotional state and 33 per cent say it is the loss of household income. IDP households are also rather evenly split on what the second biggest challenge is: the plurality (36%) report it is the pandemic's negative impact on the economy while 30 per cent say it is the disruption of children's education. Finally, 42 per cent say the third largest challenge is the constraint on movement, though only eight per cent of households report that the pandemic caused a delay or change of any plans to return home. Lockdowns causing individuals to stay home meant interruptions in being able to work, especially given that 34 per cent of IDP households work in the informal sector which almost entirely requires in-person work.

> **The father of a household displaced from Babylon to Baghdad:** "The most difficult challenge since the beginning of the spread of the virus and until now was when there was a total lockdown imposed. We are daily wage workers, and we need work on a daily basis to provide living needs such as water, food and others. There are days where we leave for work even on Fridays when roads are closed and citizens cannot go out. This has a negative impact on us and so we beg the government to reconsider this decision or at least exclude those who work daily."
>
> **The father of a household displaced internally in the governorate of Kirkuk:** "COVID-19 has affected our ability to move around because after imposing the lockdown in the city the security forces, police, and the health department impose fines on those who disobey the law. This has reduced our ability to move from our place of living to work or to shopping. I am about to return. There are a few weeks left before returning to my original region. The lockdown during the epidemic has played a great role in changing and delaying the return's plan. However, hopefully, I am going to return to the town in the next couple of weeks. There is also a problem with regard to the work hours in the governmental departments. Those who work there work halftime. This is an obstacle to IDPs who want to get the approval permit from the departments to return to their regions."

Reported disruptions to work partially explains what the loss of household income is among the main problems caused by COVID-19. While only a small minority (8%) of IDP households reports that the pandemic caused one or more household members to permanently lose their jobs, 64 per cent say it caused one or more household members to temporarily lose their jobs. Such interruptions in livelihood likely underpin the reason for which 45 per cent of households—the highest share reported over the course of the study—who say they have had to reduce their overall household expenses to meet their basic needs.

HEALTH AND ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

The financial fallout of the pandemic has had ripple effects on accessing healthcare, regardless of whether it was needed for illnesses related to COVID-19. Just over half of all IDP households (56%) suggest that household members needed to access healthcare for illness not related to the Coronavirus, and among them, 52 per cent are for chronic conditions. A substantial minority (39%) of those who needed to seek medical attention for reasons other than the Coronavirus say they faced problems in accessing healthcare, and of them, 82 per cent say it is because they lacked the financial means to do so. Notably, no IDP households in Round 6 (February-June 2021, prior to the peak of cases in Iraq) said they faced difficulty accessing care because the clinic or hospital did not have beds or capacity, a problem frequently encountered during the pandemic in other parts of the world.

These financial difficulties also pervade experiences of households who report having to seek medical attention for COVID-19-related illnesses. Among IDP households who have remained in displacement, 21 per cent report that a household member contracted COVID-19, and among them, 93 per cent report they required seeking care at a health facility. Among this group (19.5% of all IDP households who remained in displacement), 62 per cent did so at a public hospital followed by 22 per cent who did so at their family doctor. For the most part, accessing healthcare was not a problem for those 19.5 per cent of IDP households who both had a family member with COVID-19 and needed medical attention: 61 per cent were able to do so without facing obstacles. Of the remaining 39 per cent who did encounter problems, 89 per cent report that financial barriers served as their main impediment.

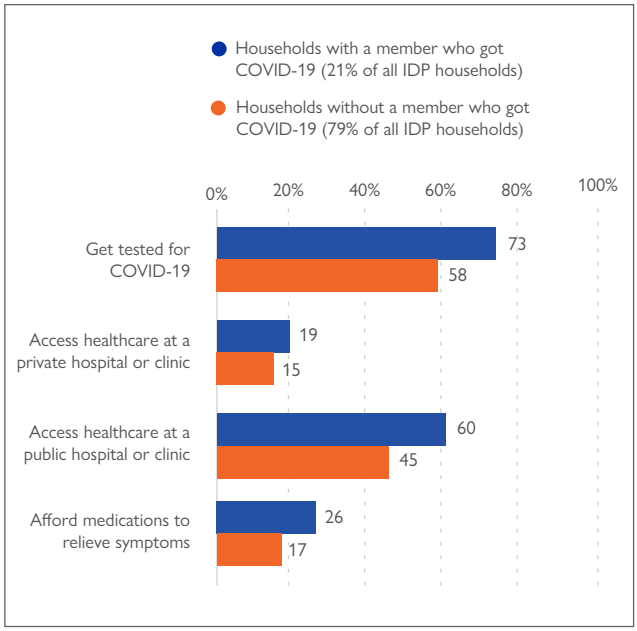
Importantly, when it comes to accessing needed healthcare for Coronavirus-related illnesses, there is a significant divide between IDPs' actual ability to access healthcare and the perception of being able to access care. Getting tested for COVID-19, accessing healthcare at either private or public facilities, and affording medication to relieve symptoms were mostly more attainable with ease (as reported by households who did have family member fall ill or die) than doing so appears (as perceived by households who did not have a family member fall ill or die).

Among households with members who got COVID-19, 73 per cent report it was very or somewhat easy to get tested; in

comparison, a significantly lower 58 per cent of households without a member who fell ill with COVID-19 thought testing was easily attainable. While small shares of both groups report that access at a private hospital or clinic was or would be possible, there is a 15-point gap between those households who were able to access healthcare for COVID-19 at a public hospital or clinic (60%) and those who perceive they could access healthcare if there were a family member to fall sick with COVID-19 (45%). Finally, affording medication to relieve symptoms follows a similar pattern, though in both cases, only a minority of each group said it was or would be easy to do so.

> **A household displaced from Diyala to Bagdad:** "Yes, my older daughter got infected with the Coronavirus and she suffered a lot but thank God she recovered. Getting medical treatment was an individual effort which means we, the family, worked for her care and a private doctor was called to the house to inspect her. We bought medicine for treatment and of course we suffered to get the medications because most of them were expensive as they are specific for Corona and private pharmacies have small quantities of them. Of course, I do not forget how terrible the service was at the public hospital which forced my daughter to get her treatment at home. To be honest, it was a long journey of constant treatment for more than a month and a half. No one offered any help whether it was a relative or a friend. I do not blame any of them because the disease is contagious, and everyone has their own issues and problems in life."

Figure 31. Ability vs. Perception in Accessing COVID-19-Related Health Services: % of IDP households saying it is very or somewhat easy to…



Differences between households with and without a member who got COVID-19 persist in their likelihood of getting vaccinated. Overall, 58 per cent of all IDP households say they would want their household members to get the vaccine if it were to be made available for free. But among households who had a family get COVID-19, the share rises to 67 per cent. Still, and regardless of whether they would want to get the vaccine, IDP households are evenly divided on whether they would be able to get it: 41 per cent suggest it would be very or somewhat easy to access the vaccine; 43 per cent suggest it would very or somewhat difficult; and 16 per cent do not know.

Figure 32. If the COVID-19 vaccine becomes available to members of your household for free, would you want them to get it?

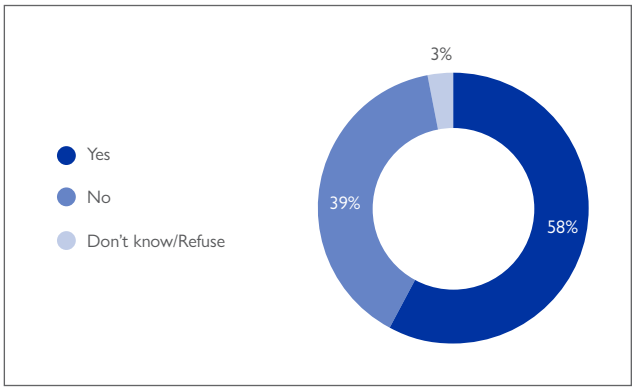
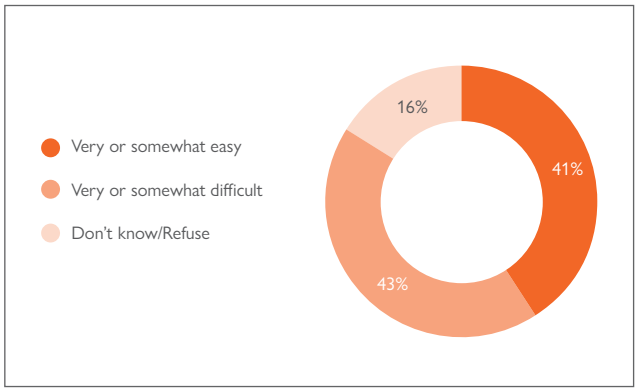
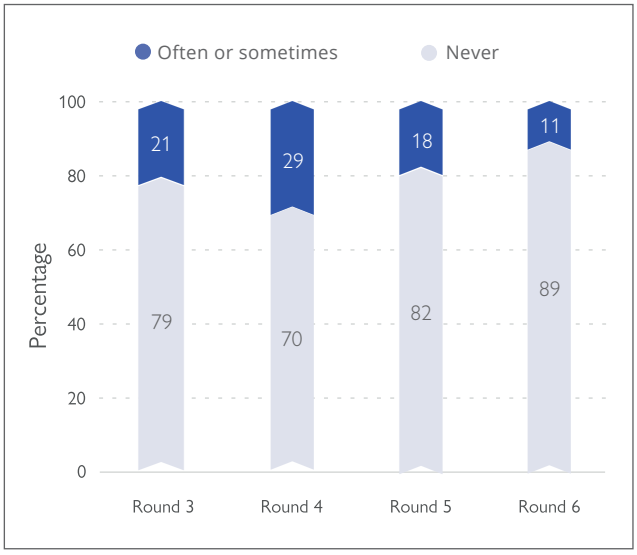


Figure 33. If the COVID-19 vaccine becomes available in Iraq, how easy do you think it will be for members of your household to have access to it?



While the Coronavirus pandemic introduced structural and social impediments to accessing care, discrimination was not one of them. The share of IDPs reporting they faced discrimination in accessing health services reached a six-year low, with just 11 per cent of households in Round 6 (February-June 2021), down from 29 per cent in Round 4 (August-November 2018), saying they faced exclusion or limitations.

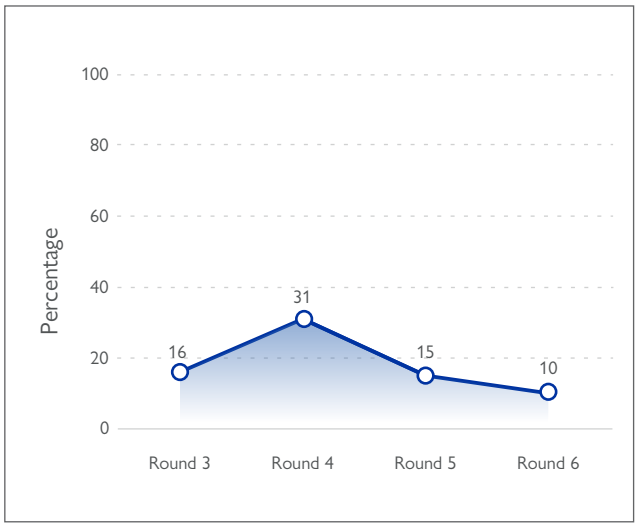
Figure 34. Did you or any member of your family ever face exclusion from services or limitation in accessing health services since you were displaced?



CHILDREN'S EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

As with healthcare, discrimination in accessing education was not a key concern among the approximately 77 per cent of households that have school-aged children between the ages of 6 and 20. Among these households in Round 6, the share reporting they were excluded from or faced difficulty in accessing education for their children because they are IDPs is at an all-time low of 10 per cent, down from the high of 31 per cent in Round 4.

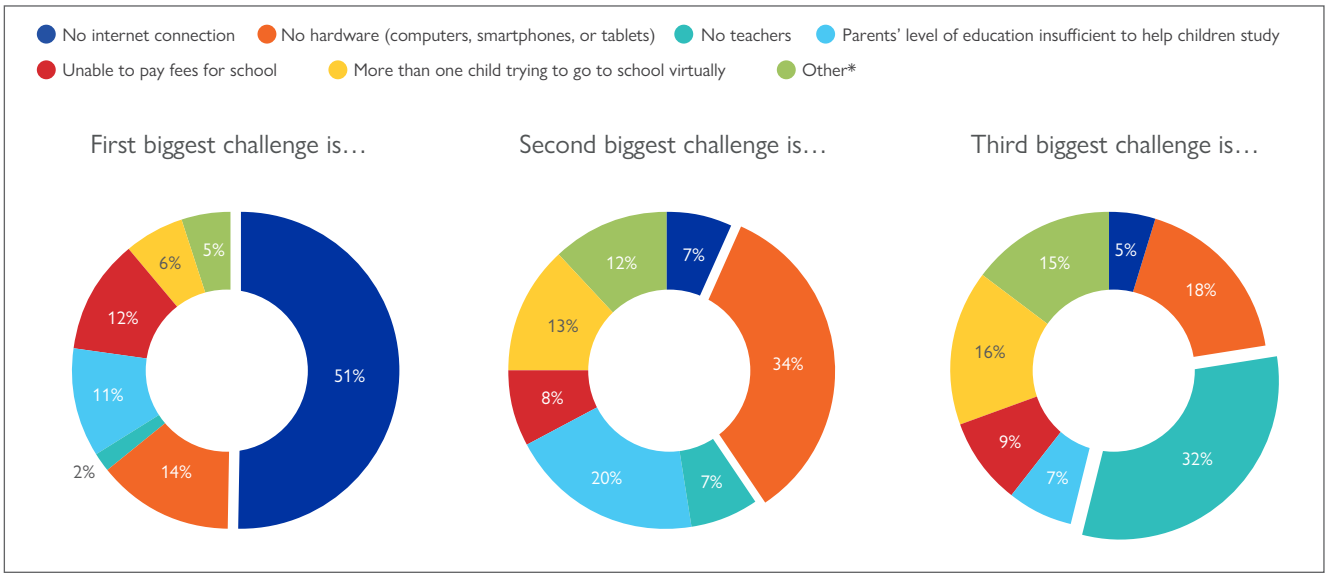
Figure 35. IDP households with children ages 6-20 in Round 6 who faced discrimination in accessing education often or sometimes



However, because of the pandemic, problems accessing education abound for households with school-aged children. IDP households point to endemic structural—or infrastructural—problems that were key hindrances to transitioning to remote education. A slight majority (51%) report that a lack of an internet connection is the key problem facing their children's education; the plurality (34%) say the second largest challenge is a lack of computers, smartphones, or tablets; and finally, almost one third of households (32%) say that a lack of teachers has proved a significant impediment to their children's education. Yet some evidence underpins these most proximate hindrances are financial difficulties that might otherwise be alleviated with government intervention in IDPs' lives or the education system.

> **The parent of a family displaced from Salah-al-Din to Sulaymaniyah:** "The school situation was very difficult last year. I have five children that go to school and internet expenses are very high. We cannot afford to buy electronics and internet. I have five children in school and only had one cell phone and I bought another used device so my children can use it in turns. For example, one child uses it for one hour and then the next child uses it the next hour. It was very difficult. I can say that distance learning for IDP students was a difficult experience, and it continues to be hard and costly. Children probably only get 30% of what they were taught."

Figure 36. Biggest Challenges to Children's Education Caused by COVID-19: % of IDP households with children reporting the three biggest challenges, by type of challenge



*Includes no television, no books, and no place to study

Financial underpinnings of hardship become particularly acute among households that have more than one child in school. As households get larger, the overarching theme of infrastructural impediments remains but is mitigated as financial undercurrents become clearer. A lack of internet connection is a key concern across all households, but an overwhelming majority (66%) of those with only one child as compared to just under half of households with two or more children cite it as the first biggest challenge to education. Instead, there is more variation among households with more children: for example, with 16 per cent of households with four to five children and 19 per cent of households with six or more children saying a lack of hardware presents the largest challenge rather than internet connection.

While households are in agreement on what poses the first biggest challenge, households with more children instead cite different reasons for their second and third biggest challenges. Households with four to five children are evenly split between lack of hardware (25%)—the second biggest challenge for households with three or fewer children—and having more than one child virtually attend school (25%) as the second biggest challenge. In households with six or more children, 32 per cent suggest that the parents' level of education is the second biggest impediment, likely because older children are advancing to grade levels their parents did not reach. This variation suggests that education policy requires additional nuancing beyond simply addressing infrastructural deficiencies.

Despite these challenges, the vast majority (87%) of households overall with school-aged children want to send their children back to school for in-person learning once it commences.12 Notably, though, there is more hesitance among smaller households: only 78 percent of parents of only one child plan to send their children back to school, while the share who wishes do so reaches over 90 per cent in larger households. Where IDP households only have one child, the child tends to be younger, which will likely have a negative impact on the educational attainment of this group.

12 The survey was fielded in the spring and summer of 2021, before schools fully reopened for in-personal classes.

Figure 37. Biggest Challenges to Children's Education Caused by COVID-19 by Number of Children in the Household

THE LARGEST SHARE OF IDP HOUSEHOLDS WITH…	FIRST BIGGEST CHALLENGE IS…	SECOND BIGGEST CHALLENGE IS…	THIRD BIGGEST CHALLENGE IS…
1 child (20% of all households)	No internet connection (66%)	No hardware* (36%)	No teachers (47%)
2-3 children (47% of all households)	No internet connection (49%)	No hardware (40%)	No teachers (37%)
4-5 children (24% of all households)	No internet connection (45%)	No hardware (25%) More than one child virtually attending school (25%)	Parents' level of education is insufficient (48%)
6 or more children (9% of all households)	No internet connection (42%)	Parents' level of education is insufficient (32%)	No hardware (31%)

*Computers, smartphones, or tablets

PART V OVERARCHING THEMES OF THE STUDY & CONCLUSION

OVERARCHING THEMES

The longitudinal nature of this *Access to Durable Solutions* study offers a unique opportunity to see not only change over time with the same families, but also some of the issues these same IDP households were dealing with both before and during the pandemic. Below are some overarching themes that have emerged in the findings of the panel study over six years and some reflections on the international and standardized framework on durable solutions used by the international community.

1. The overwhelming majority of IDPs (85% in Round 6) still consider themselves displaced, and among those who report feeling this way, 57 per cent say it is because they have not returned to their physical homes and an additional 27 per cent say it is because they have not returned to their districts. Durable solutions are geographic in nature (return, integration in displacement, or resettlement elsewhere) while the international, standardized metrics of the eight criteria are rights-based. The majority of these IDPs may not face any discrimination or lack of rights based on their status as IDPs and thus meet the criteria of "integration" as a durable solution, but the vast majority of them say they are still displaced. This raises the question, who decides when displacement ends?
2. Of the 15 per cent who say they no longer feel displaced, the majority (64% in Round 6) say it is because they have a network of family and friends around them, followed by 18 per cent who say it's because they have a job and 14 per cent who say they have a home in the governorates to which they were displaced. This speaks to the ability of IDP households to integrate into new areas in Iraq—one of the IASC-defined durable solutions—and to the importance of the relationships they forge with the host community members and accessing resources in achieving that solution.
3. The governmental compensation process for destroyed property is consistently and extremely slow. Of the 60 per cent of IDPs who applied for compensation, four out of five households (79%) say their claim is still pending. While those who say their claim has been accepted increased

five percentage points between Rounds 5 and 6 (October 2019-January 2020 and February-June 2021) to 14 per cent, just three per cent of them say they have received the compensation payment. While it is unclear why the process is so slow, the qualitative interviewees attribute it to corruption, thus revealing their weakening confidence in the government to provide them with justice.

4. In addition to the delays in compensation provision, the corresponding costs of living in displacement saps limited resources and keeps people in limbo. Housing is the largest expense that IDP households incur, which has ripple effects when it constitutes 25 per cent of monthly expenses and needs to be diverted to housing and away from other needs.

5. Nearly two-thirds of IDP households in Rounds 3 through 6 (July-September 2017 through February-June 2021) have needed to and been able to borrow money in displacement. However, they are borrowing from relatives (46% in Round 6) and friends (36%), as they have throughout this study period. Thus, the burden of supporting households is being borne by those nearest to them.

6. Return is not just an individual family going home; it is a community being rebuilt and service networks being re-established. Households question the viability of returning home if there is no functioning clinic or school in the location or nearby and if roads to get agricultural products or other goods to market are badly damaged or central warehouses are destroyed.

7. Overall, the challenges presented by the destruction of the educational infrastructure, additionally strained by COVID-19, may negatively impact the educational attainment of children. Educational infrastructure must be rebuilt, and teacher support needs to be put in place for schools all over Iraq, including in host communities where IDP children are studying at lower rates than their non-displaced peers in Iraq, and in return areas where educational infrastructure suffered extensive damage.[13]

8. Many students during COVID-19 had trouble accessing lessons, due to the online nature of the emergency pandemic response. Many households did not have internet at home, nor did they have enough devices for children to access their lessons on. Additionally, children who were just starting school likely missed out both on learning and on building social skills. Consequently, as is the case in other countries facing the same challenges as Iraq, students are likely to repeat years or be chronically behind or dropout.

9. People move around in jobs; even if in total the percentage of those working in sectors like business or government jobs in Round 6 (February-June 2021) is nearly equal to that of Round 1 (March-May 2016), they are not the same households. This adaptability and willingness to learn new trades that IDPs themselves have shown provides an opportunity to both the government of Iraq and NGOs to train people in new jobs and open up new sectors of employment, including grants to support training and enterprise.

10. Not all of the results from these indicators make sense in isolation or are predictable, as they vary according to context. In general, the takeaways from this study suggest that one, the views and experiences of the displaced persons should be front and center to best inform research and policies aimed at their situation; and two, the context of what caused displacement and who the major actors are in supporting displaced populations should be taken into account.

13 REACH Iraq and AWG, "Iraq Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment: Round VI." Humanitarian Response, September 2018, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/reach_irq_report_mcna_vi_sept2018_1.pdf; IOM Iraq and Georgetown University, Access to Durable Solutions Among IDPs in Iraq: Five Years in Displacement, November 2020, https://iraq.iom.int/publications/access-durable-solutions-among-idps-iraq-five-years-displacement.

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