

# Understanding the Needs and Vulnerabilities of Climate-Induced Migrants in Iraq

Climate Vulnerability Assessment

*June 2025*



GLOBAL DATA INSTITUTE  
DISPLACEMENT  
TRACKING MATRIX

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# UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS AND VULNERABILITIES OF CLIMATE-INDUCED MIGRANTS IN IRAQ

CLIMATE VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

MAY 2025



## Introduction

- Background
  - This assessment builds on a previous Climate Vulnerability Assessment by shifting focus from areas of origin to areas of displacement
- Objective:
  - Understand living conditions in areas of displacement for climate-induced migrants
- Themes:
  - Top needs
  - Conditions in areas of origin
  - Displacement dynamics
  - Livelihoods
  - Housing and services
  - Social cohesion
  - Future movement intentions

# Methodology

- Approach:
  - Key informant interviews
  - Focus group discussions (FGDs) with climate-induced migrants and stayees. One FGD was conducted with female climate-induced migrants.
- Coverage:
  - 473 locations of displacement across 12 governorates in central and southern Iraq
  - Locations were identified using DTM's Climate Displacement Tracking activities
  - 4 FGDs took place in Nassriya District, Thi-Qar Governorate and Najaf District, Al Najaf Governorate with a total of 30 participants
- Data collection period:
  - September – October 2024

*Map: Number of locations assessed by governorate*



# Key Findings

## TOP THREE NEEDS OF CLIMATE-INDUCED MIGRANTS (PERCENTAGE OF LOCATIONS)



85% Employment



51% Housing



40% Infrastructure and services

## LIVELIHOODS



IN **21%** OF LOCATIONS,  
more than half of climate-induced migrants  
did not have enough money for basic,  
non-food items.

## HOUSING



**55%** of families rely on irregular  
housing arrangements



**56%** of families do not have  
permission to reside on  
the land

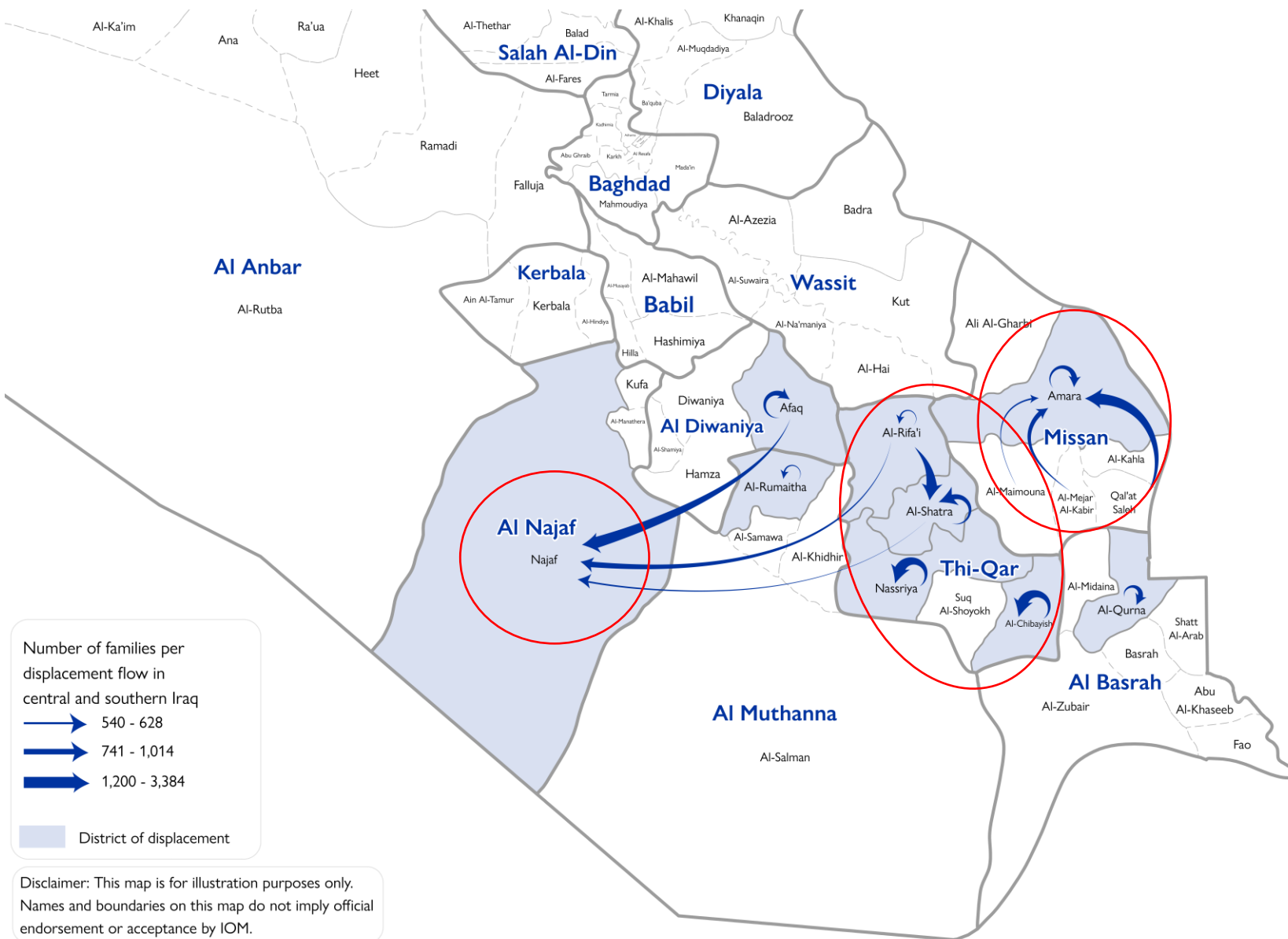
## Areas of origin

Themes	Top factors
Challenges	Water scarcity, land degradation, reduced yields and livestock herds
Coping strategies	Selling livestock or other assets, reducing spending and sending household members to another location for work
Push factors	Lack of livelihoods, economic impacts of the drought
Pull factors	Price of land, access to services, availability of assistance
Reasons to stay	Alternative livelihood opportunities or lack of funds to move

*‘It was not an easy decision, but we tried everything; we worked in construction but failed; then we tried to buy a taxi but we faced the same problem, which is a lack of work, which prompted us to make the decision to migrate to an area close to the city.’*

– FGD participant, Al-Haydariya subdistrict, Najaf District, Al Najaf Governorate



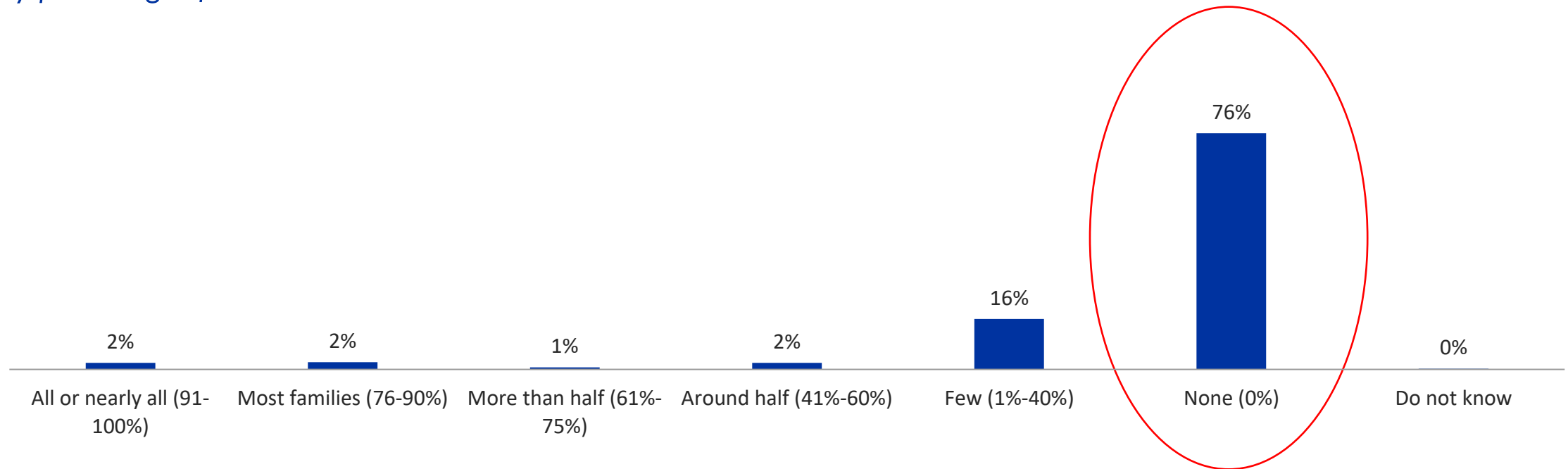


## Displacement dynamics

- Displacement flows are concentrated in a small number of districts in **Thi-Qar, Missan** and **Al Najaf** governorates.

## Displacement dynamics (continued)

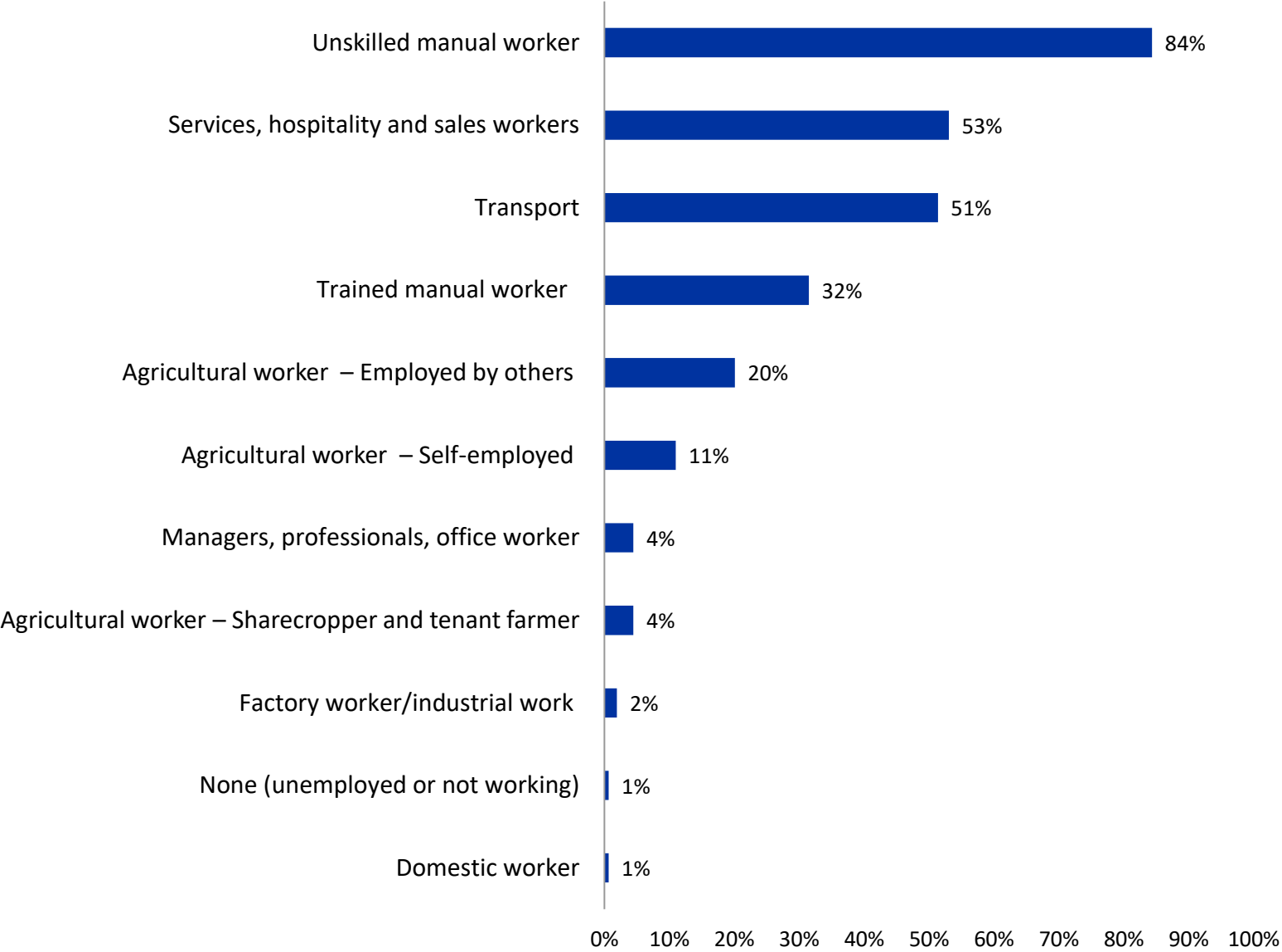
*Figure: Share of climate-induced migrants who returned to their location of origin to plant or harvest in the last agricultural season by percentage of locations*



- In three quarters of locations, **no families returned to plant or harvest** in their areas of origin this past agricultural season, according to key informants.



Figure: Top livelihoods by percentage of locations (up to three answers permitted)



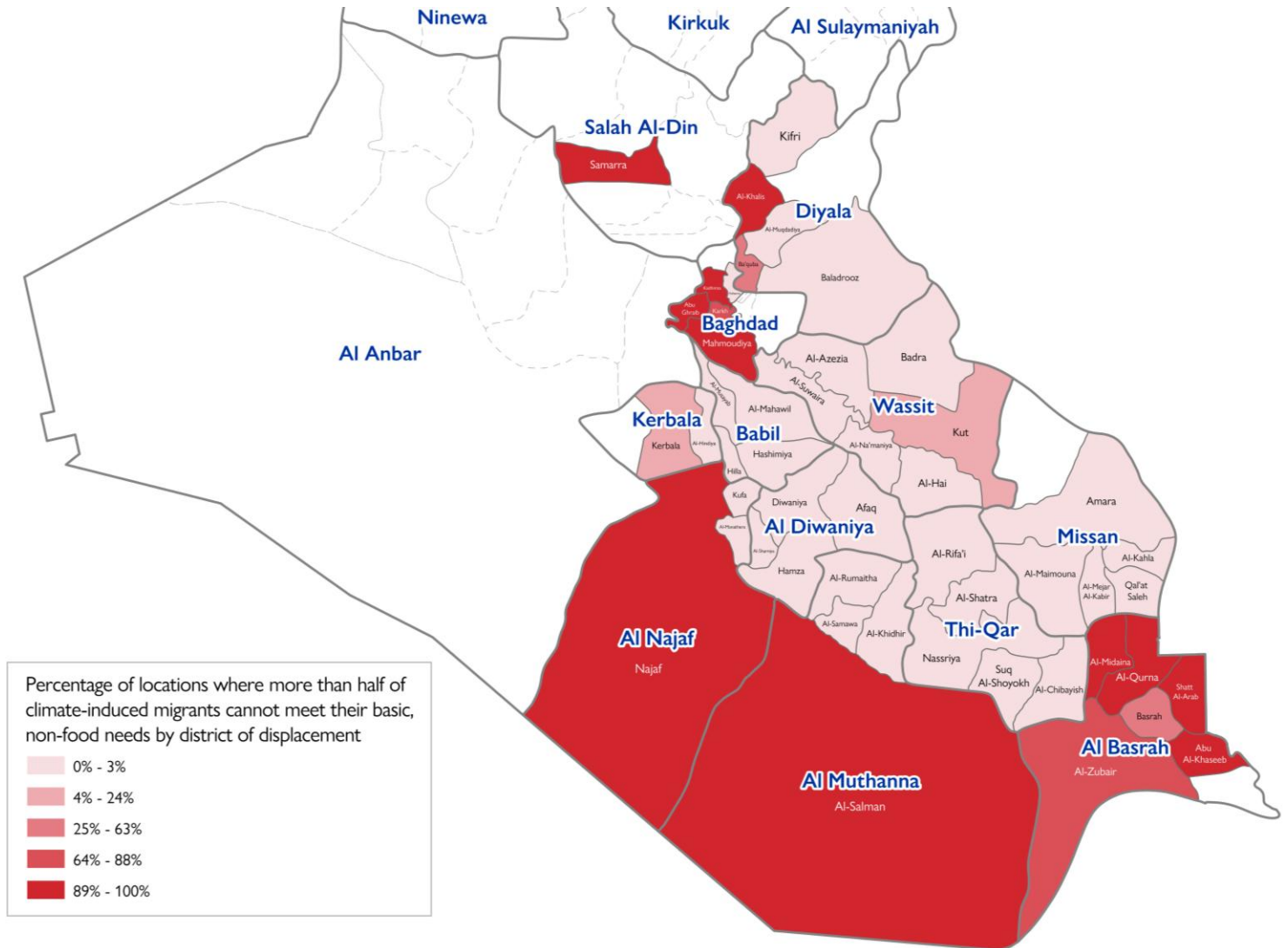
## Livelihoods

- The most common livelihoods were **low-skilled manual work**, **services** and **transportation**.
- Continued engagement in agriculture is more common in central Iraq, as well as in Al-Diwaniya.

## Economic precarity

- Food insecurity is more common in **rural areas**.
- In a fifth of locations, more than half of climate-induced migrants did not have enough money for basic, non-food items.

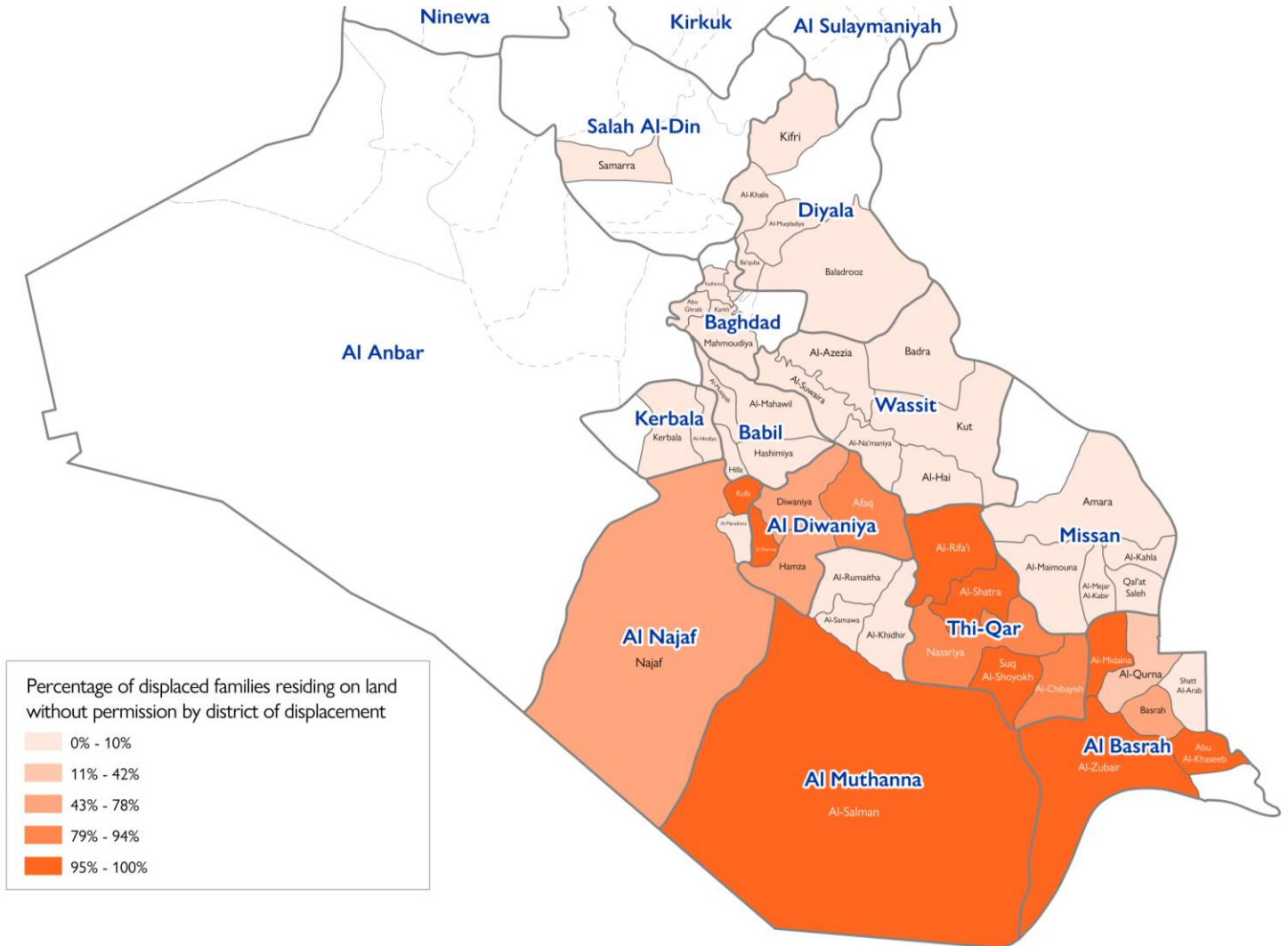
*Map: Percentage of locations where more than half of climate-induced migrants did not have enough money for basic, non-food items (district level)*



# Housing

- Climate-induced migrants living in **critical shelters** are mostly in Al-Diwaniya, Al Basrah and Wassit governorates.
- Around half of climate-induced migrants rely on **irregular housing arrangements**, especially in southern Iraq.
- More than half of climate-induced migrants **do not have permission to reside on the land**.
- This housing precarity may increase the risk of eviction.
- However, few instances of eviction or threats of eviction were reported.

Map: Share of families residing on land without permission by district



## Services

Figure: Share of climate-induced migrants who are connected to the public water supply (% of locations)

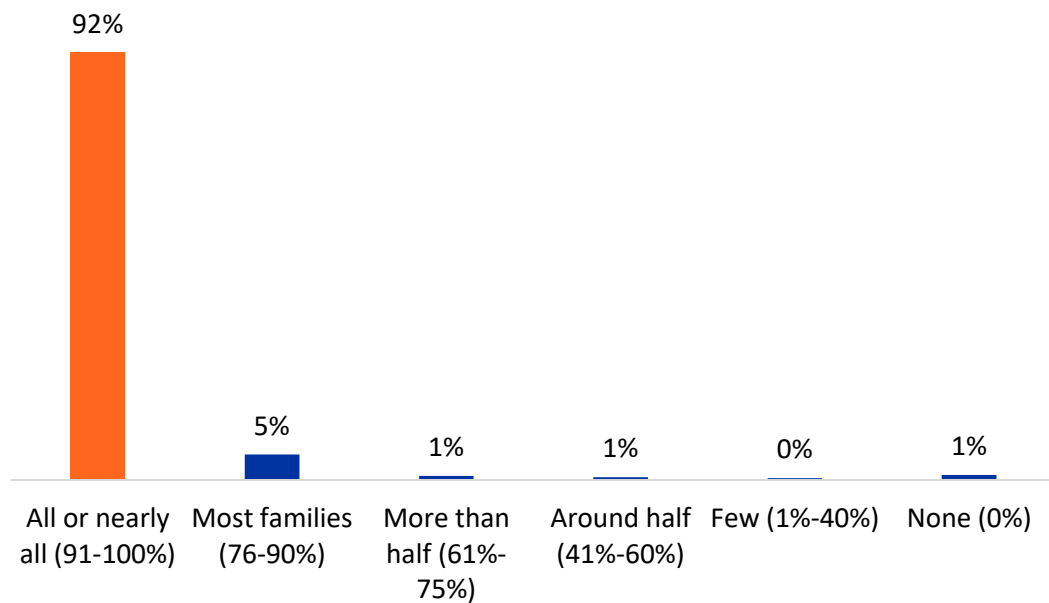
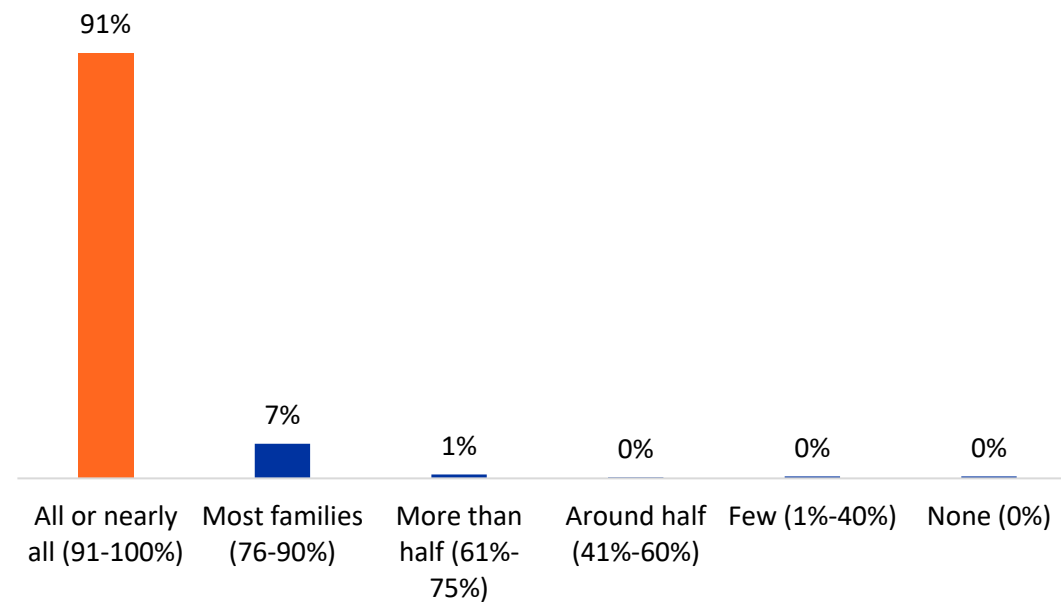


Figure: Share of climate-induced migrants who are connected to the public electricity supply (% of locations)

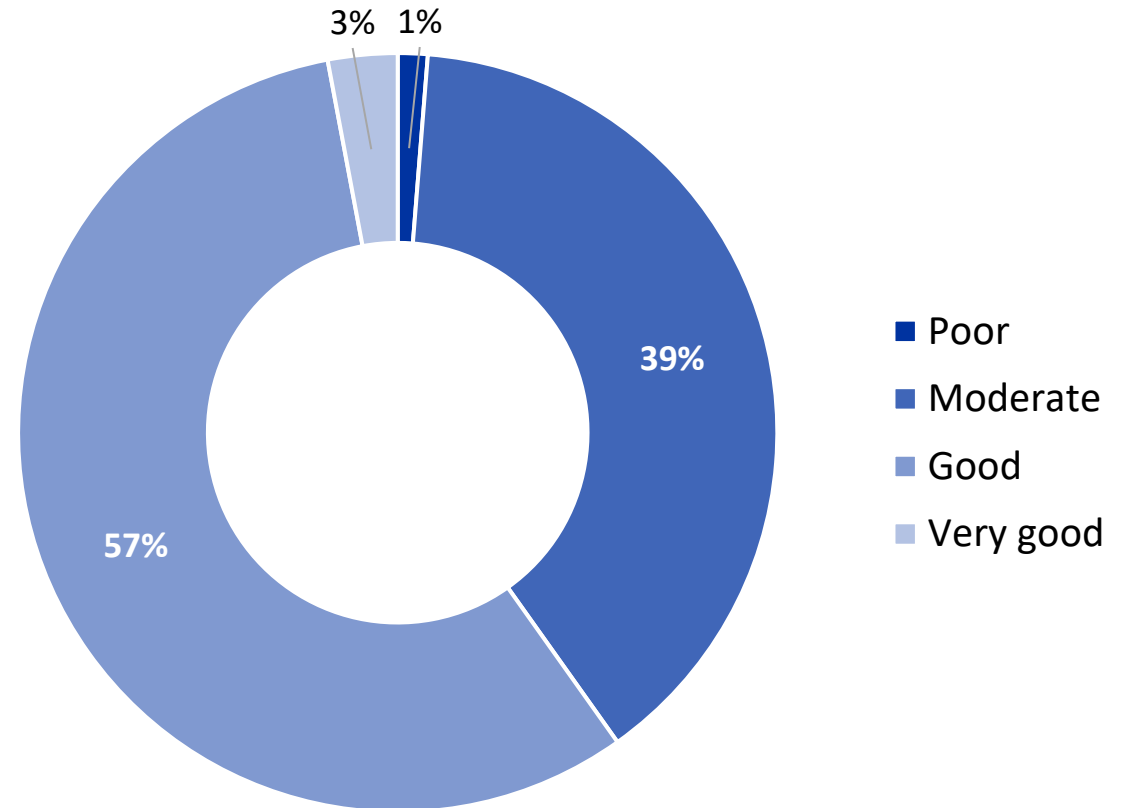


- Climate-induced migrants generally have access to the public water and electricity supply.
- However, access is slightly lower in parts of central Iraq, especially Salah Al-Din, Kerbala, Babil and Diyala.

## Social cohesion

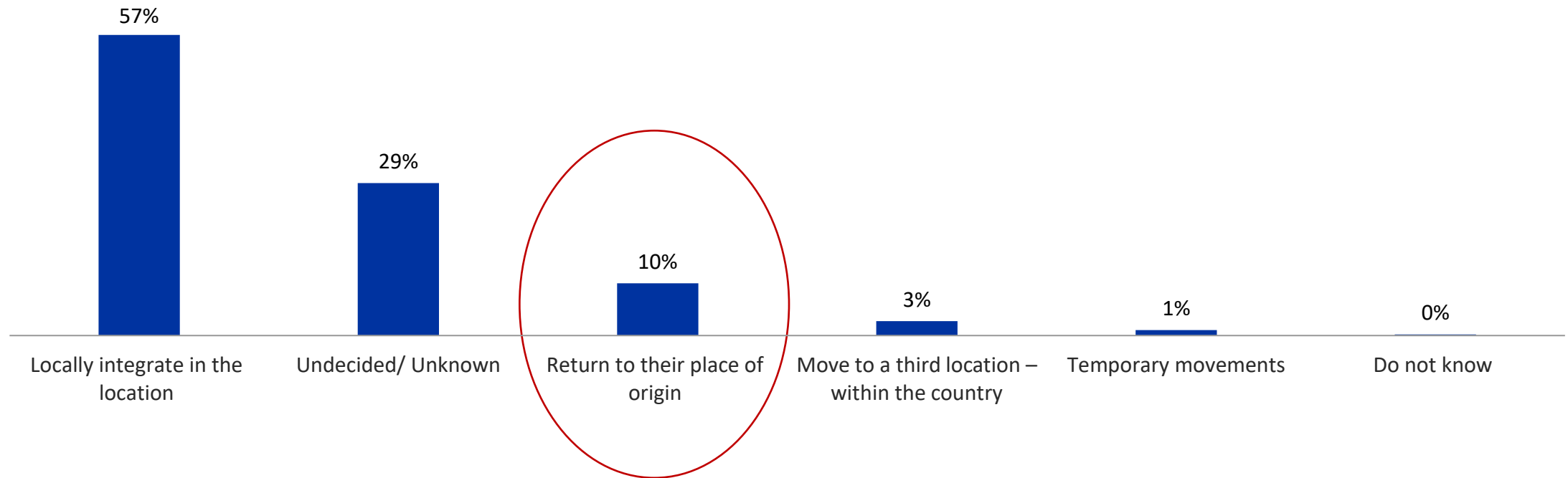
- Key informants suggest relations between climate-induced migrants and the host community are **generally positive**.
- However, relations appear more strained in select districts like **Al-Qurna** and **Basrah** in Al Basrah Governorate and **Nassriya** in Thi-Qar Governorate.
- Additionally, certain female FGD participants indicated that weaker community ties in locations of displacement **constrained the freedom of movement of women and girls**.

*Figure: Level of acceptance of climate-induced migrants by share of locations*



# Intentions

*Figure: Movement intentions of most climate-induced migrants by share of locations, according to key informants*



- In roughly half of locations, key informants indicated that climate-induced migrants intend to stay where they are.
- On the other hand, intentions to return were reported in only 10 per cent of locations.
- This highlights the **need for programming in areas of displacement**.



# Key takeaways

- Livelihoods, shelter and infrastructure and services are the top needs.
- Climate-induced migrants are **struggling to afford food and other basic items** in Al Basrah, Diyala and Baghdad.
- **Housing informality** is a widespread challenge for climate-induced migrants.
- According to key informants, **most migrants will not return**, suggesting a need for investment in locations of displacement.





## Programmatic recommendations by governorate

Priority Governorates	Programming
Al Basrah	Strengthen economic resilience, expand access to adequate housing and promote social integration
Thi-Qar	Manage displacement flows, address housing informality and strengthen community cohesion
Salah Al-Din	Enhance access to basic services and bolster economic stability
Al-Diwaniya	Upgrade shelter conditions and formalize housing tenure arrangements



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