



Human Security Survey

Basra, Iraq — 2017

Summary of Key Findings

The **HUMAN SECURITY SURVEY (HSS)** is a methodology developed by PAX’s Protection of Civilians (PoC) team to **collect data and facilitate constructive dialogue about civilians’ experiences, perceptions, and expectations in situations of conflict.** The intended purpose is threefold: 1) to increase the understanding of local security dynamics and trends; 2) to enhance the ‘claim-making capacity’ of civilians to identify their priorities and hold security providers and decision makers accountable; and 3) to inform evidence-based advocacy that enables international stakeholders to design and implement protection activities that reflect local realities. PAX implements all aspects of the HSS in Iraq in close collaboration with its partners on the ground, the **IRAQI AL-AMAL ASSOCIATION** and the **IRAQI AL-FIRDAWS SOCIETY.**

The survey in Basra took place over 2 weeks in **March-April 2017.** Twelve enumerators completed **683** surveys across the governorate’s 7 districts. Target numbers were allocated across sub-districts based on population density, and specific research sites were selected or omitted based on security, physical accessibility, and with an eye to ensuring demographic diversity. **Communities, households, and individual respondents were selected to participate as randomly as possible using a set of systematic procedures in order to maximize generalizability.** Participation is entirely voluntary and data are kept strictly confidential.

12 ENUMERATORS CONDUCTED 683 INTERVIEWS WITH 528 MEN & 155 WOMEN

Basra is not a region of Iraq often associated with conflict, particularly not in comparison to other regions within the country that are more often in the news. However, PAX and its partners see Basra as an important place to track and discuss conflict dynamics for a number of key reasons. First, many of those who are currently fighting in the front-lines against Daesh (also known as the Islamic State or ISIS) are men from Basra who joined one of the more than 50 different Popular Mobilization Forces. Referred to in Arabic as the *Hashd al-Shaabi*, these often sectarian (typically Shia) armed groups fall formally under Federal Iraq’s Ministry of Defence, although many are funded and equipped by external actors, including the government of Iran. When the military campaign against Daesh is complete, it is unclear whether and how these fighting forces will be

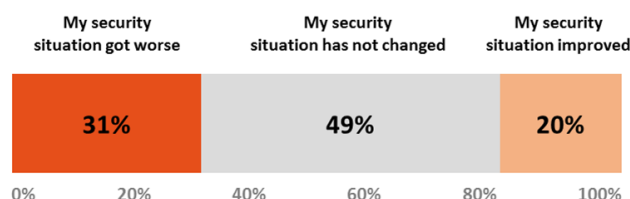


Number of surveys completed per district

disbanded, further integrated into formal Iraqi security forces, or take on another more localized security role. Another key reason that Basra may be a future flashpoint for conflict or instability is the increasing rate of violent crime reported in the governorate, often related to the smuggling of drugs or other illicit goods across regional borders.

What we see in the HSS data is that **civilians in Basra are relatively pessimistic about both their current and future security environment.** While nearly half of our respondents said that their personal security situation had not changed significantly over the previous year, **31%** said that theirs had gotten worse, compared with only **20%** who said their security situation improved. For the nearly **1/3** of people who spoke about security *worsening*, the main impacts that they reported included: **higher rates of violence (42%), more presence of weapons (38%), increased corruption (32%), more crime (27%), loss of job or fewer livelihood opportunities (14%), and/or less access to basic services (14%).** For those who experienced their security situation as *improved*, they point to many of these same dynamics, though in reverse. The majority of these individuals (**64%**) indicated that there is now less violence in their communities.

HOW HAS YOUR PERSONAL SECURITY SITUATION CHANGED IN THE LAST YEAR?



Across Basra, **22%** of households reported directly experiencing *one or more* types of insecurity in the previous year. Most common incidents included **assault with a weapon or attempted murder (30%** of affected households), **robbery/seizure of property (29%), murder (18%), extortion or payment of protection money (9%), abduction/disappearance (9%)** and/or **intimidation or harassment, in person or via phone/online (6%).** This is in comparison with **66%** of households reporting *no incidents* and **12%** who did not know or preferred not to answer.)

153 HOUSEHOLDS (22%) REPORTED THE FOLLOWING MOST COMMON TYPES OF INSECURITY (AMONG OTHERS), AND THE MINIMUM # OF TIMES THEY EXPERIENCED EACH INCIDENT. AVERAGE INCIDENT RATES:

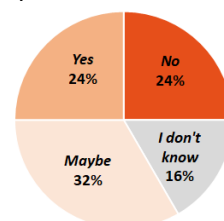
Assault with a weapon or attempted murder (1 in 10 households)		Robbery or seizure of property (1 in 11 households)	
Murder (1 in 18 households)		Extortion (1 in 31 households)	
Intimidation or harassment (1 in 34 households)		Abduction or disappearance (1 in 68 households)	

Notably, residents of Abu Al-Khaseeb had the highest likelihood of becoming victims of violence (33% of households compared to the governorate-wide average of 21%). When asked about changes they or household members have had to made in their daily lives as a result of insecurity, **43%** of respondents said that they now **rely more on**

formal security forces. Another **11%** said that they have **acquired or used early warning tools**, and **10%** pointed to **procuring weapons or fortifying their homes.** In contrast, nearly **1 in 5** people said that they have made *no* significant changes in their daily lives as a result of insecurity.

As practitioners, we often see in conflict contexts that **perceptions about security can affect behaviour as much as lived experiences of insecurity.** It is critical to note that only **24%** of respondents in Basra said “no” when asked whether they expect to be a victim of violence in the next year whereas the rest either said “yes” or were unsure.

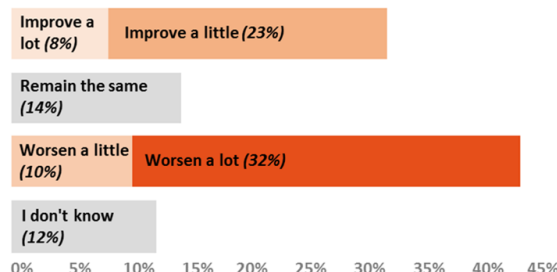
IN THE NEXT YEAR, DO YOU PERSONALLY EXPECT TO BECOME A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE?



Despite that people in Basra may experience slightly or significantly lower rates of violence relative to civilians in other regions of Iraq, many people perceive the security context as tenuous, and even worsening. Further bolstering this finding: the majority of households that experienced security incidents (**71%**) also reported a perception that the types of violence they experienced have become *more frequent* in their communities.

Respondents across Basra generally believe that the security situation is likely to worsen in the coming year. This was true for men and women, both of which reported that security was likely to get either *much worse* or *a little worse* at a rate of **42%**. There were, however, some differences across districts. Respondents in Abu Al-Khasib, Al-Qurna, and Al-Zubair were more likely to have negative expectations (with **43-49%** of respondents reporting that security will worsen). People in Al-Midaina and Shatt Al-Arab were slightly less pessimistic, with fewer than **1/3** of respondents fearing that the situation will deteriorate. Those from Al-Basra and Al-Faw fell in between.

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO HAPPEN WITH SECURITY IN YOUR COMMUNITY IN THE NEXT YEAR?



When asked about likely perpetrators of violence against them, people spoke in relatively general terms. The most common groups mentioned were **criminals (41%), members of another community (28%), terrorists or Daesh (21%), members of the same community (15%), or armed political parties (9%).**

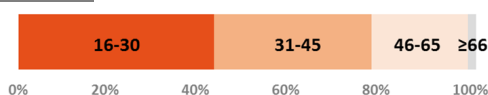
OUR RESPONDENTS IN BASRA:

Participation in the survey was completely voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. Randomization procedures were used to identify communities, households, and individuals, although the sampling and participant selection processes were structured so as to maximize the likelihood of gender balance and an appropriately diverse representation on the basis of ethnic and religious identity. **Even with these efforts, we found it difficult to achieve equal participation of women in Basra, particularly in more conservative areas.** Below is some data about our Basra sample:

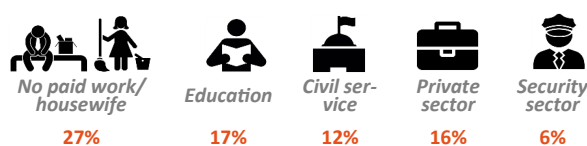
Gender balance:



Age distribution:



Livelihoods:



Ethnic and religious identity:

When asked openly to describe their identity group(s), **88%** of respondents said Iraqi and **25%** said Muslim. Smaller percentages identified more specifically as either Shia (**16%**) or Sunni (**3%**), and there were a number who identified as members of minority groups: Assyrian, Christian, Kurdish, or Mandaean.

Respondents in Basra appear to view the causes of conflict and insecurity in their region as rooted in deep, systemic issues related to economic opportunities and governance. When asked about the main factors that are most likely to cause conflict in their community in the next year, **64%** of respondents pointed to **poverty**. Another **36%** of people referred to **poor governance at either the national or governorate level**, and nearly **1 in 3** people saw **sectarian tensions** as a potential future cause of conflict. (As you can see in the table to the right, **82%** of respondents argued that sectarianism has a big impact on their security at the local level.)

When looking at responses more overtly related to physical security, we found that **1/4** of people believe that easy **access to weapons** will result in more violence. This tracked closely with a number of other survey findings about the perceived inverse relationship between the proliferation of arms and one's sense of security. A full **78%** of our respondents argued that "handing in all of our weapons would reduce violence and crime in this community," and **65%** of respondents agreed more with the statement that "disarmament is needed for security in this governorate," over "people need arms to provide for their own security in this governorate."

Interestingly, just **7%** of our respondents pointed to **terrorism** as a potential cause of insecurity in their communities in the next year, which again supports the overarching sense in Basra that civilian populations are more vulnerable to violent crime than to armed conflict.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PHASE OF THE HSS:

One of the key components of the HSS methodology is the process of bringing the data back to the communities where we conducted interviews for constructive, facilitated dialogue. **The key purpose is to create or leverage opportunities for civilian populations to articulate and advocate for their security priorities with relevant local authorities.** We hope the survey findings can also be utilized by local people and civil society to raise the collective voice of victims of violence—particularly those from often marginalized populations—to hold authorities accountable for fulfilling their protection responsibilities for all people without sectarian or gender bias.

We ask in our survey how to best share the results with local populations. In Basra **53%** said that we should **organize community meetings**, **37%** suggested **posting findings on social media**, and **23%** recommended **local radio**. Our partner in Basra has been very busy meeting these requests, facilitating to date **16 local events** with **420 participants**, performing **30 advocacy meetings** with local governmental and non-governmental bodies, and distributing **2,000 pamphlets** with findings. A **podcast series** is also in the works.

SECURITY PERCEPTIONS

	AGREE	DISAGREE
Sectarianism has a big impact on security in this community	82%	13%
I generally feel safe from violence or crime in my community	33%	64%
Handing in all of our weapons would reduce violence and crime in this community	78%	18%
The national government in Baghdad is taking clear steps to reduce violence in our community	26%	64%
There should be more women serving in the police to address security issues facing women	64%	33%

Nearly 2/3 of respondents said that they generally do not feel safe from violence or crime in their community.

Respondents also felt strongly that achieving lasting peace in Iraq will require concentrated efforts at political reform. We saw that **64%** of people called for **improved governance at the national level (56%) and/or governorate level (33%)**, followed by **18%** who see a need for **improved access to basic services** (such as education or health care). Another **14%** said that **disarmament or security sector reform** is needed, and the same number called for **better functioning police**. A further **12%** of people responded to this question by arguing that a **national transitional justice program** should be implemented, demonstrating an interest in local and national reconciliation as a means for addressing grievances. Finally, **just 2% of respondents in Basra said that military victory over Daesh is a viable solution for lasting peace in Iraq.**

88%

RESPONDENTS WHO SAID THAT THEY WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE SURVEY AGAIN IF WE WERE TO RETURN IN THE FUTURE

PAX's PoC team will continue putting out periodic summary reports about different thematic topics for each of the 3 governorates where we currently conduct the HSS in Iraq (Basra, Kirkuk, and Salahaddin). Other forthcoming reports in this series will cover: *Gendered Security Dynamics*; *Experiences and Perceptions of Vulnerability*; and *Civilian Relationships to Security Actors and Other Authorities*. We will also make available a more detailed overview of our survey methodology. Please check out our website for more information (see below), and feel free to be in contact with questions or comments. For information regarding the Iraq program please visit: www.paxforpeace.nl/our-work/programmes/iraq.

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