



Human Security Survey

Basra, Iraq — 2018

Gender Security Dynamics

In **March and April 2018**, PAX and its local partner, the Iraqi Al-Firdaws Society conducted a survey across Basra governorate about the experiences of civilian populations with issues of insecurity and conflict. **The following discusses the key survey findings that relate specifically to gender dynamics, including the different ways in which men and women in Basra perceive and are affected by their security environment.** (See below for more information about the project, and please visit our website for additional reports in this series.)

The results detailed herein were drawn from interviews with **359 men** and **397 women**. Note that conservative gender norms in this part of Iraq can make it difficult to gain access to women or to discuss issues perceived as relating to family honour. We therefore anticipate some level of under-reporting of certain incidents, particularly sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Further, it can be risky to openly express critical opinions of those in power, particularly armed actors, thus increasing the potential for positive response bias in how respondents reflect upon key security actors or the general security environment.

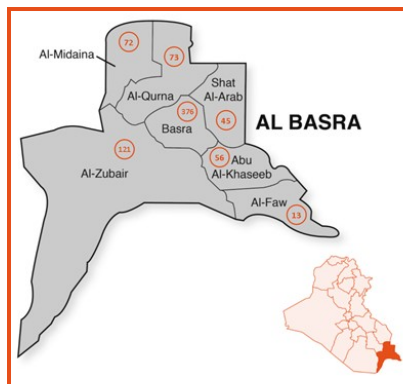
About the Human Security Survey:

The **HUMAN SECURITY SURVEY (HSS)** is a methodology developed by PAX's Protection of Civilians (PoC) department 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 HSS is currently also conducted in Kirkuk and Salahaddin governorates. This is the second year in which the survey is being conducted in Iraq.

The survey in Basra took place over 3,5 weeks in **March-April 2018**. Fourteen enumerators completed **756** interviews across the governorate's 7 districts. Communities, households, and individual respondents were selected to participate through a systematic and approximately random procedure in order to increase the likelihood of generalizability.

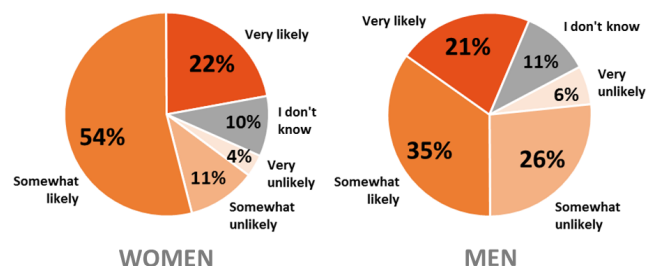
Despite these limitations, there remain many deeply interesting findings related to gendered experiences of (in)security arising from the HSS.

One of the more striking findings is that **the vast majority of women see**



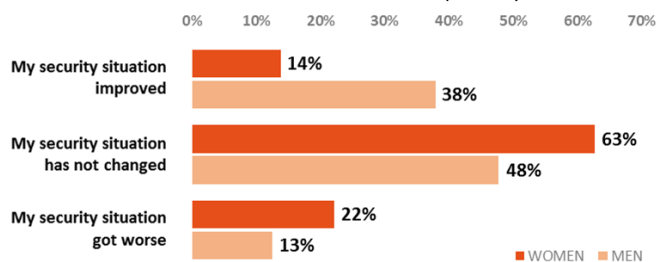
themselves as likely to become victims of violence in the near future. In Basra, **76%** of women anticipate that they are likely to experience violence in the next year, in contrast with **56%** of men.

IN THE NEXT YEAR, DO YOU EXPECT THAT YOU ARE LIKELY TO BECOME A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE? (N=756)



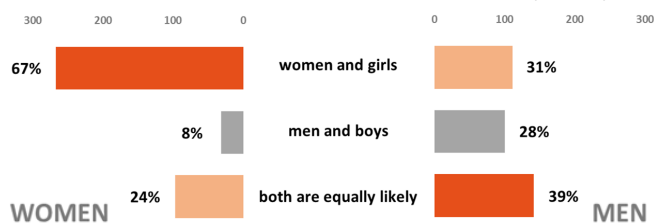
This is the case despite the fact that over **3/4** of female respondents report their personal security situation having either improved (**14%**) or remained the same (**63%**) over the previous year. Male respondents reflect somewhat more positively on current trends, including nearly **4 in 10** saying that their security situation improved. Just **13%** of men report that their personal security situation is **worse** than one year ago, compared with **22%** of women.

HOW DID YOUR OWN PERSONAL SECURITY SITUATION CHANGE IN THE LAST YEAR? (N=756)



(See the end of this report for a brief discussion about how protests in the summer of 2018 may affect perceptions.)

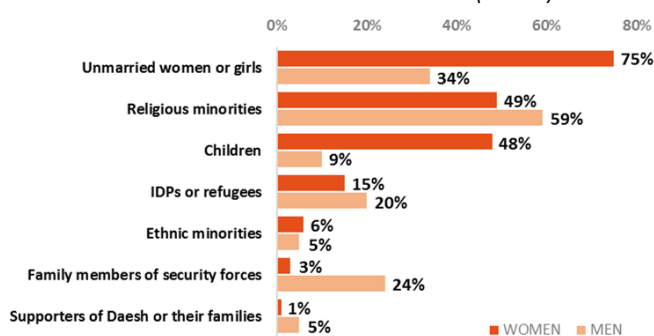
DO YOU THINK THAT MEN AND BOYS OR WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE? (N=756)



Perceptions of others' vulnerability are also gendered. Men agree in larger numbers with the statement that "all types of people in this community are equally likely to be exposed to violence" (49% of men vs. 40% of women). On the other hand, a higher proportion of women say that "some people in this community are more likely to be exposed to violence than others due to their age, religion, ethnicity, or other factors" (58% of women vs. 44% of men). In general, **women are much more likely than men to see one's gender as a cause of vulnerability**. Over **two-thirds** of female respondents (67%) argue that women and girls are more likely to be exposed to violence, as contrasted with just 8% who say that men and boys are more likely. Male respondents are more evenly distributed, with 31% arguing that women and girls are more likely to be exposed to violence, and 28% pointing to men and boys. A further 24% percent of women and 39% of men report that "men/boys and women/girls are *equally likely* to be exposed to violence."

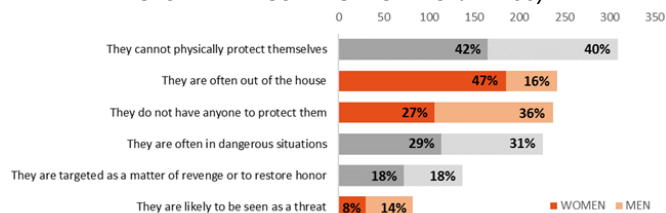
There are also interesting differences in who men and women identify when asked which types of people are most likely to be exposed to violence. Female respondents are much more likely to say "unmarried women and girls" (75% of women vs. 34% of men) or "children" (48% of women vs. 10% of men). In contrast, male respondents are more likely to point to "religious minorities" (59% of men vs. 49% of women) or "family members of people in formal security forces" (24% of men vs. 3% of women). Males and females identify further vulnerable groups (such as ethnic minorities or displaced persons) in relatively equal numbers. (Note that this question was only asked to those who said that some people are more likely to be exposed to violence than others.)

WHICH PEOPLE OR GROUPS ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE IN THIS COMMUNITY? (N=422)



When asked about the reasons that men/boys or women/girls are likely to be exposed to violence, there were some differences between respondents by gender. While both male and female respondents agree that men and boys are victims of violence because they "cannot physically protect themselves" (40% vs. 42%), far more women than men (47% vs. 16%) perceive that the fact that men and boys "are often outside of the house" is a reason for their vulnerability. More men than women argue that men and boys "do not have anyone to protect them" (36% vs. 29%).

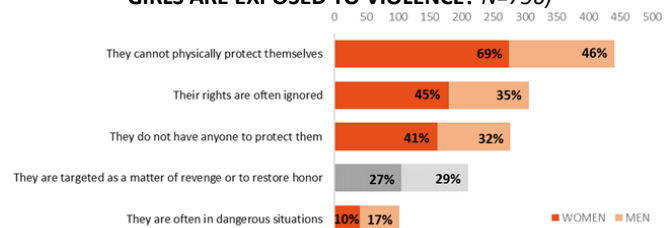
IN GENERAL, WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS THAT MEN AND BOYS ARE EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE? (N=756)



There were more differences in perspective when it came to assessing the causes of vulnerability for women and girls. Female respondents are much more likely to point to the fact that women and girls "cannot physically protect themselves" (69% vs. 46% of men), that "their rights are often ignored" (45% vs. 35% of men), and that they "do not have anyone to protect them" (41% vs. 32% of men). Male respondents argue that women and girls "are often in dangerous situations" (17% vs. 10% of women).

It is worth noting that both men/boys and women/girls are perceived as being "targeted as a matter of revenge or to restore honour." Though in general, more respondents argue that women and girls are likely to be victims of violence for this reason (28%) than men and boys (18%).

IN GENERAL, WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS THAT WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE? (N=756)



Male and female respondents also have different perceptions about *where and when* they feel vulnerable to violence. When asked whether they generally feel safe from violence or crime "in their community," a full 85% of women say no, as opposed to 66% of men. This means that fewer than 2 in 10 women *do* generally feel safe in their own neighbourhoods or towns. When posing the same question about feeling safe "within the household," a majority of females (69%) also say no. In contrast, most males (55%)

report that they *do* generally feel safe in their households.

Men and women also perceive potential perpetrators differently. While a plurality of both men and women name “criminals” as the most likely perpetrators (49% of men and 43% of women), 42% of women point to “member(s) of their own community,” compared with 24% of men. Men are twice as likely to perceive “armed political parties or militias” as potential threats (20% of men vs. 9% of women). **Women are four times more likely to anticipate that “member(s) of their own family” could commit violence against them (16% of women vs. 4% of men).**

Across the entire survey sample, 65% of respondents (492 households) reported that at a member of their household had experienced **at least one incident of violence** in the previous year. The most common types of violence included: *verbal abuse or harassment* (284 households); *robbery or seizure of property* (136 households); *forced marriage* (97 households); *assault with a weapon or attempted murder* (83 households); *beating, physical abuse, or torture* (58 households); or *killing or murder* (51 households).

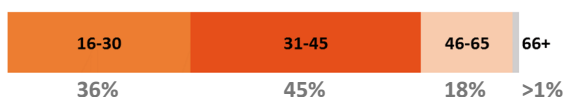
OUR RESPONDENTS IN BASRA:

Participation in the HSS is entirely voluntary and data are kept strictly anonymous and confidential. Communities, households, and individuals are approached for the survey through systematic and approximately random procedures, although the sampling and participant selection processes are structured to maximize the likelihood of gender balance and an appropriately diverse representation on the basis of ethnic and religious identity. (Note that our research protocol determines that female enumerators interview women, and male enumerators interview men.) Below is some information about our Basra sample:

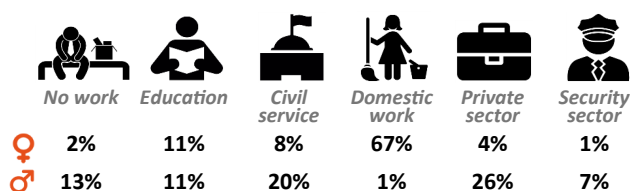
Gender balance:



Age distribution:



Livelihoods:



Ethnic and religious identity:

Our respondents included 94% Arabs and 6% from 6 other ethnic minority groups (Afro-Iraqi, Armenian, Assyrian, Chaldean, Mandaean, or Syriac). When asked about religious identity, 94% said Muslim, and just over 5% identified as a member of a religious minority group (Baha’i, Christian, Darwish, Mandaean, or Yezidi).

We also asked respondents about specific types of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) experienced by members of the household. The most common of these incidents was *forced marriage*, with 13% of respondents (97 households) reporting that at least one member of their household experienced this in the previous year. Among those households, forced marriage occurred on average 3.5 times per family over the course of the year. Just over 1% of respondents (11 households) reported incidents of *honour killing or forced suicide* (occurring on average 1.2 times per family), and fewer than 1% of respondents (4 households) reported incidents of *sexual assault or unwanted sexual contact* (one average 1 time per family).

Note that **given the strong cultural taboos surrounding these types of violence, PAX and its partners believe these figures to reflect considerable under-reporting of SGBV**. Recognizing that it is often easier for people to talk about these types of experiences at the community level, rather than about themselves or their families specifically, we also asked respondents to reflect on what they know about SGBV occurrence more broadly. When asked if they knew whether any people in their neighbourhood had experienced these types of incidents in the previous year, 11% of all respondents (17% of females and 4% of males) said they had heard of incidents of *sexual assault or unwanted sexual contact*. Of those who said yes, respondents said they knew of 3-4 incidents over the last year. In addition, 22% of respondents (30% of females and 14% of males) said that they knew of incidents of *honour killing or forced suicide* in their neighbourhoods. Of those who said yes, they had heard of 2-3 incidents over the previous year. Lastly, a smaller proportion of respondents (3% overall, including 4% of females and 2% of males) knew of *forced recruitment into security forces or armed groups*. Of those who said yes, females on average reported knowing of 21 instances, and males of 14 incidents.

There are also interesting differences in how male and female respondents discuss other types of violence. Female respondents are much more likely than male respondents to report that a household member was a victim of *verbal abuse or harassment*, including 42% of women and 32% of men. Women are also more likely to report *robbery or seizure of property* (23% vs. 13% of men), whereas it is more often that men report *assault with a weapon or attempted murder* (14% vs. 9% of women), or *unlawful imprisonment or detention* (8% vs. 2% of women). These figures may indicate that the experiences or perceptions of different types of violence may be gendered in potentially unexpected ways.

In addition to asking about *actual* incidents experienced at the household level in the previous year, respondents also provided their own *perceptions* of why and how often sexual and

gender based violence occur in Basra:

<i>It is common in this community for men to discipline women or girls in their household through the use of physical and/or verbal violence.</i>		
	WOMEN	MEN
I mainly agree	54%	24%
<i>Honour killing or forced suicide can be an effective way to restore a family's honour.</i>		
	WOMEN	MEN
I mainly agree	25%	23%
<i>With which statement do you more agree?</i>		
	WOMEN	MEN
An early marriage when girls are still young is a way to protect them from violence.	35%	37%
Early marriages do not provide girls with more protection from violence.	62%	60%

How one responds to being a victim of violence is also gendered. For instance, this also has implications for perceptions of masculinity. Both **65%** of female respondents and **60%** of male respondents agree that “men are judged by their ability to protect their families.”

Respondents were also asked to reflect on whether men or women are equally likely to receive helpful assistance when reporting a security incident to the police. Women were less likely to agree (**35%**) than men (**54%**). (Notably, **15%** of female respondents say they do not know, compared with **6%** of male respondents.)

Further, when asked specifically about the impact of the police on the respondents’ personal security situation, a majority of both female and male respondents refer to a positive effect (**61%** of women and **58%** of men); however, **31%** of women and **24%** of men say that the police have **no** effect on their security. (Note that these answers came only from respondents who said that police were “nearly or always present in their communities.”)

One often-suggested way of improving the relationship between women and law enforcement agencies is to increase the proportion of women serving in the police. We asked respondents for their perspectives and found discrepancies in how people responded depending on whether they were asked about women in general, versus a hypothetical female member of their own family. When presented with the statement, “*There should be more women serving in the police to help with security issues facing women*,” **58%** of women and **53%** of men agreed. The answers were different regarding their own family members:

<i>With which statement do you more agree?</i>		
	WOMEN	MEN
I would support my sister if she wanted to apply for a position in the police force.	40%	23%
Women in my family should not be serving in the police.	50%	52%

Both experiencing violence and perceiving oneself as vulnerable to violence can have significant effects on the behaviour of those living in conflict-affected environments. We asked about a set of protection strategies and whether members of respondents’ households had engaged in them in the previous year as a result of insecurity. There were some interesting and statistically significant differences depending upon the respondent’s gender.

Notably, **36%** of men and just under **10%** of women report that they or another household member “sought assistance from formal security forces” (e.g. military, police, Hashd al-Shaabi). Male respondents are also more likely to report having “provided money, food, or services to security forces or other armed groups” (**11%** vs. **4%** of women). In contrast, female respondents are more likely to report that they or household members “acquired or used weapons” (**27%** vs. **19%** of men), “used early warning tools like phones, radios, or binoculars” (**19%** vs. **9%** of men), or “joined formal security forces” (**14%** vs **7%** of men).

A full **37%** of female respondents and smaller **18%** of male respondents say that their households have made no significant changes in their daily lives as a result of insecurity.

We conducted the HSS in Basra in April-May 2018, just weeks before large public protests erupted across the governorate in early July. Members of the public, frustrated by acute water and electricity shortages and the lack of effective basic services in general, took to the streets. Protesters attacked government and political party offices, as well as facilities of various oil companies. Baghdad sent military forces to break up the protests, which only fuelled greater tension. As of the time of writing, more than 16 protesters were confirmed killed and hundreds injured. We anticipate that these events will have a dramatic effect on the local security environment for a time to come, and negatively impact civilians’ trust in both political and security institutions to uphold their protection responsibilities. PAX and its partners will work to facilitate constructive dialogue on these issues through the HSS project and other initiatives at this critical time.

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). Please check out our website for more information (see below), and feel free to be in contact with questions or comments.

The HSS is made possible with the generous support of the **Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs**.

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