

USIP Project - Web Content Compilation

Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework

Waves 1-3

April 2020

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Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework

The Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework (CSMF) is a data collection tool adapted to the Iraq context from USIP's [Measuring Progress in Conflict Environments](#) framework. CSMF collects data directly from Iraq's conflict-affected communities using a set of 48 indicators tied to four core conflict and stabilization dynamics: community security, rule of law, governance, and livelihoods. The CSMF was created to establish a robust evidence base for peacebuilding in Iraq using systemic, longitudinal data. The data provides nuanced insights that can inform efforts to mitigate violent conflict and sometimes **challenges commonly held assumptions** about barriers to peace. By collecting data directly from Iraqi people living in conflict-affected communities, the CSMF supplements other qualitative sources of information such as civil society actors, government and political stakeholders, and traditional and social media.

CSMF findings can inform both policymakers and peacebuilding practitioners. CSMF looks deeply and objectively at how Iraq's complex and fluid conflict dynamics change as a result of political and security variables in combination with peacebuilding and development interventions. The data can be used to:

1. Establish a baseline before interventions, and aid design thereof;
2. Measure results of interventions; and
3. Monitor dynamics for potential destabilization—and hopefully trigger preventive action.

The CSMF reflects USIP's commitment to monitoring as a tool for [adaptive institutional learning](#). In Iraq, USIP is using this data to adjust its [programs](#) to the changing conflict environment. CSMF findings inform the design of USIP's ongoing local dialogue processes in Nineveh which address tensions that discourage the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from minority communities. The findings help USIP understand what issues may be ripe for attention, and thereby calibrate its approaches to specific conflict drivers. Finally, each additional round of data collection allows deeper analysis to link changes in the conflict environment to USIP and its partners' past and current work. This means both adjusting our work in response to the data and evaluating whether our work has contributed to changing dynamics.

USIP [welcomes feedback](#) on the CSMF: How is this data being used? How could it be improved or expanded to address gaps in existing data?

Since September 2018, USIP and [Social Inquiry](#), a nonprofit research organization, have collected three waves of CSMF data from IDPs and residents of communities across Iraq's Nineveh

province. A microcosm of Iraq's social mosaic, Nineveh is home to Christians, Yazidis (Ezidis), Shabaks, Kurds, Turkmen, and both Sunni and Shia Arabs. These communities have undergone intense disruptions and violence since the self-styled Islamic State's (ISIS) incursion in 2014. Despite the territorial defeat of ISIS, thousands remain displaced from towns and villages across the province, unable or unwilling to return to their homes. The complex interplay of political and security factors in ISIS's wake has also contributed to intercommunal tensions between ethnoreligious groups.

CSMF data collection currently occurs in Nineveh province, but may be expanded to other locations in the future. Three additional waves of data collection are planned, with the next wave scheduled for mid-2020. USIP will publish forthcoming data and analysis as it becomes available.

Findings represent data collected through household surveys in four districts—Hamdaniya, Sinjar, Tal Afar, and Tal Keif—in February 2018 (sample size 1,100), August 2018 (sample size 1,505), and April and May 2019 (sample size 1,851). The sample sizes increased across waves because data collection expanded to areas that were previously inaccessible due to security dynamics. Round two expanded to Sinjar Center, and round three expanded to the Ayadhiya subdistrict of Tal Afar. In round three, the Hamdaniya sample size was also expanded, but the Rabia subdistrict was not covered.

USIP recognizes the data has limitations. The survey tools also cover extremely complex issues, often subjective in nature. And because CSMF reaches local Iraqis living in these communities, conflict dynamics and conditions on the ground sometimes present heavy challenges for data collection.

Locations

Hamdaniya

Located about 20 miles east of Mosul, Hamdaniya is one of 14 districts contested by the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). It is home to Christian and Shabak communities and to smaller populations of Yazidis, Kaka'is, Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen. Both the Christian and Shabak communities have historically been targeted by terrorist groups, with towns such as Qaraqosh—a historical stronghold of the area's Christians—suffering greatly. In ISIS's wake, tensions between Christians and Shia Shabaks have increased over land, political representation, security, and cultural identity.

Sinjar

Located in western Nineveh and populated by [Yazidis](#), Sunni and Shia Arabs, and Kurds, Sinjar district—which includes the Yazidi town of Sinuni—is also disputed between the KRG and the Government of Iraq. The district's populations have suffered greatly in the aftermath of ISIS's

genocidal campaign against the Yazidis. ISIS crimes—including mass execution, enslavement, and forced displacement of thousands—have severely strained the relationship between Sunni Arabs and Yazidis, who feel the need for accountability and compensation.

Tal Afar

Tal Afar is located in northwestern Nineveh, between Sinjar and Mosul, and is home to a sizeable population of ethnic Turkmen, mostly located in the two major population centers: Tal Afar Center and Ayadhiya subdistrict. Approximately 60-70 percent of Turkmen in Tal Afar district are Sunni and the remainder are Shia. The towns of Rabia and Zummar have sizeable Sunni Arab and Kurdish populations. While Tal Afar's entire Shia Turkmen population was displaced in the wake of ISIS, most have returned, due in part to the strong presence of Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in the area. A large portion of the district's Sunni community remains displaced, fearing that upon return they will be targeted for revenge violence by local Shia or PMF-affiliated armed groups due to their perceived affiliation with ISIS.

Tal Keif

North of Mosul, Tal Keif is a predominantly Christian area, but is also home to Yazidis and a small Sunni Arab population. Post-ISIS, the relationship between Sunni Arabs and their Christian and Yazidi neighbors has frayed. Demographic changes and the division of control between the Iraqi government and KRG has left many of Tal Keif's Christians scattered across northern Iraq, hesitant to return because of uncertain security conditions. With local security provisions split between the Iraqi Security Forces, PMF, and KRG, ISIS threats loom given Tal Keif's two ISIS detention centers and terrorism court. Tal Keif Christians are also concerned about permanent changes to the demographic composition in traditional communities. The large number of displaced Sunni Arab families that resettled in Tal Keif after ISIS took over Mosul are playing increasing roles in local governance.

Methodology

Because the CSMF directly samples Iraqi respondents from the conflict-affected target communities, data collection is challenged by constantly evolving security and conflict dynamics. Many of the themes are also highly subjective, so that while indicators were designed to be as clear and specific as possible, in some instances the CSMF uses vocabulary that is subject to interpretation. Limitations inherent to the data are described below, but USIP [welcomes feedback](#), including questions and recommendations, to improve the CSMF and address gaps in existing data.

Developing the Framework

To inform the framework, USIP conducted a literature review on each of the target locations—Hamdaniya, Sinjar, Tal Afar, Tal Keif—to get a thorough understanding of each area, relationships within and between communities, past experiences with conflict, and the dynamics in the post-ISIS period. The literature review highlighted the following main issues impacting target location dynamics: land disputes; lack of effective governance and service delivery; displacement, returns, and demographic shifts; security concerns; and lack of inter-community trust.

USIP then developed a set of conflict indicators based on these conflict themes identified across locations. The aim is to compare perceptions on the conflict environment between different population groups in the areas and track how such perceptions evolve with time, so that stakeholders can identify how to best address group grievances.

Survey Sampling

- The 48 CSMF indicators were measured using quantitative population surveys. Despite the quantitative nature of the survey, questionnaires were designed to engender detailed responses.
- The scope of the population survey aimed to cover the most relevant ethno-religious groups in northern and western Nineveh, specifically subdistricts of Hamdaniya, Sinjar, Tal Afar, and Tal Keif districts.
- Given that a significant proportion of some population groups were still in displacement at the time of the CSMF's establishment, in addition to returnees, the survey targeted IDPs originally from these areas but displaced elsewhere.
- The data collection design consists of on average between 90-100 interviews with the different major ethno-religious groups living in the target subdistricts. These figures would guarantee a sufficient statistical significance of the data, enabling an analysis at group level (in each district) with a 90% confidence interval (10% margin of error).

Waves

Data collection occurred through household surveys in four districts—Hamdaniya, Sinjar, Tal Afar, and Tal Keif—over three waves. The breakdown of sample sizes for each round is below. Note that the breakdown is at the district, and not community (subdistrict), level.

- Wave 1 – February 2018 – sample size 1,100
 - Hamdaniya (including IDPs): 257
 - Sinjar (including IDPs): 273
 - Tal Afar (Rabia and Zummar sub-districts): 390
 - Tal Keif: 180
- Wave 2 – October 2018 – sample size 1,505
 - Hamdaniya (including IDPs): 294
 - Sinjar (including IDPs): 475
 - Tal Afar: 468
 - Tal Keif: 268
- Wave 3 – May 2019 – sample size 1,851
 - Hamdaniya (including IDPs): 693
 - Sinjar (including IDPs): 542
 - Tal Afar (Zummar and Ayadhiya): 437
 - Tal Keif: 179

Differences across Waves

- The sample sizes increased across waves because data collection expanded to areas that were previously inaccessible due to security dynamics. In particular, Sinjar Center (Sinjar district) became accessible in wave two, and Ayadhiya subdistrict (Tal Afar district) became accessible in wave three. To add Ayadhiya, another location had to be dropped, so Rabia subdistrict (Tal Afar district) was not covered in wave three.
- In wave three, the Hamdaniya sample size was expanded to focus on dynamics between Hamdaniya residents to inform a local dialogue process implemented by USIP and its partners. The sample size increased from 294 in wave two to 693 in wave three.
- In Rabia, given the tribal dynamics in the subdistrict, the target populations were from two of the major tribal groupings, the Johesh and the Shummar.
- For some of the data, communities from Zummar and Wana were included in one sample given the linkages between Arab and Kurdish population groups. Where noted, data from only the Zummar sample is also highlighted.

Limitations

- Findings from Tal Keif are inconsistent. This is likely a result of the unique context, in which the two population groups under study—Christians and non-Christians, including Arabs—are physically separated and under two different government administrations. This demographic division seems relatively fixed and unchanging.
- Findings from Ayadhiya are inconsistent at best, particularly in relation to more sensitive topics, and do not match more qualitative assessments. This may be due to the fact that the population assessed may not have felt comfortable enough to answer accurately at the time.
- Some survey questions are group-specific and were therefore only asked of respondents from the relevant group. For example, only the IDP groups were asked whether IDPs feel intimidated by security actors in their areas of origin.
- Questions about security actors or armed groups did not specify which security actors or armed groups, and respondents were not asked to distinguish.
- Female enumerators noted that many women within the target locations did not feel comfortable participating in a survey, particularly as it did not relate to the possibility of their households receiving aid. This seems to be the norm across Iraq in terms of quantitative data collection.
- Because of the change in security configuration for most locations in October 2017, and the ensuing influx of returning populations—primarily Sunni Arab—enumerators expressed concern about entering some areas given the uncertain security situation. As such, the geographical scope in terms of specific villages and towns shifted a bit for data collection. The changing security and administrative authorities in these locations also necessitated beginning fieldwork later to ensure proper permissions to carry out the work.

Findings

The Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework (CSMF) findings below focus on challenges to **social cohesion**—a situation in which basic human needs are met and communities are able to coexist peacefully—and its two basic underlying factors of **governance** and **security**.

This research touches on the complex and evolving situation of minority communities in Iraq. USIP intends these findings to inform, but recognizes that the data has limitations. The findings below attempt to let the data speak for itself, avoid value judgements, and in some places supplement with brief suggestions for interpretation. USIP welcomes feedback from experts and other stakeholders to improve future waves and address gaps that exist in current data.

USIP recognizes that terms such as social cohesion and reconciliation can mean different things to different people. Many of the findings below use the vocabulary of reconciliation—the long-term process by which the parties to a violent dispute build trust, learn to live cooperatively, and create a stable peace—because this is how the CSMF survey questions are framed.

For readability, the findings below also use terms such as community, identity group, and component interchangeably. These terms refer to the major ethno-sectarian groupings as denoted in the infographics.

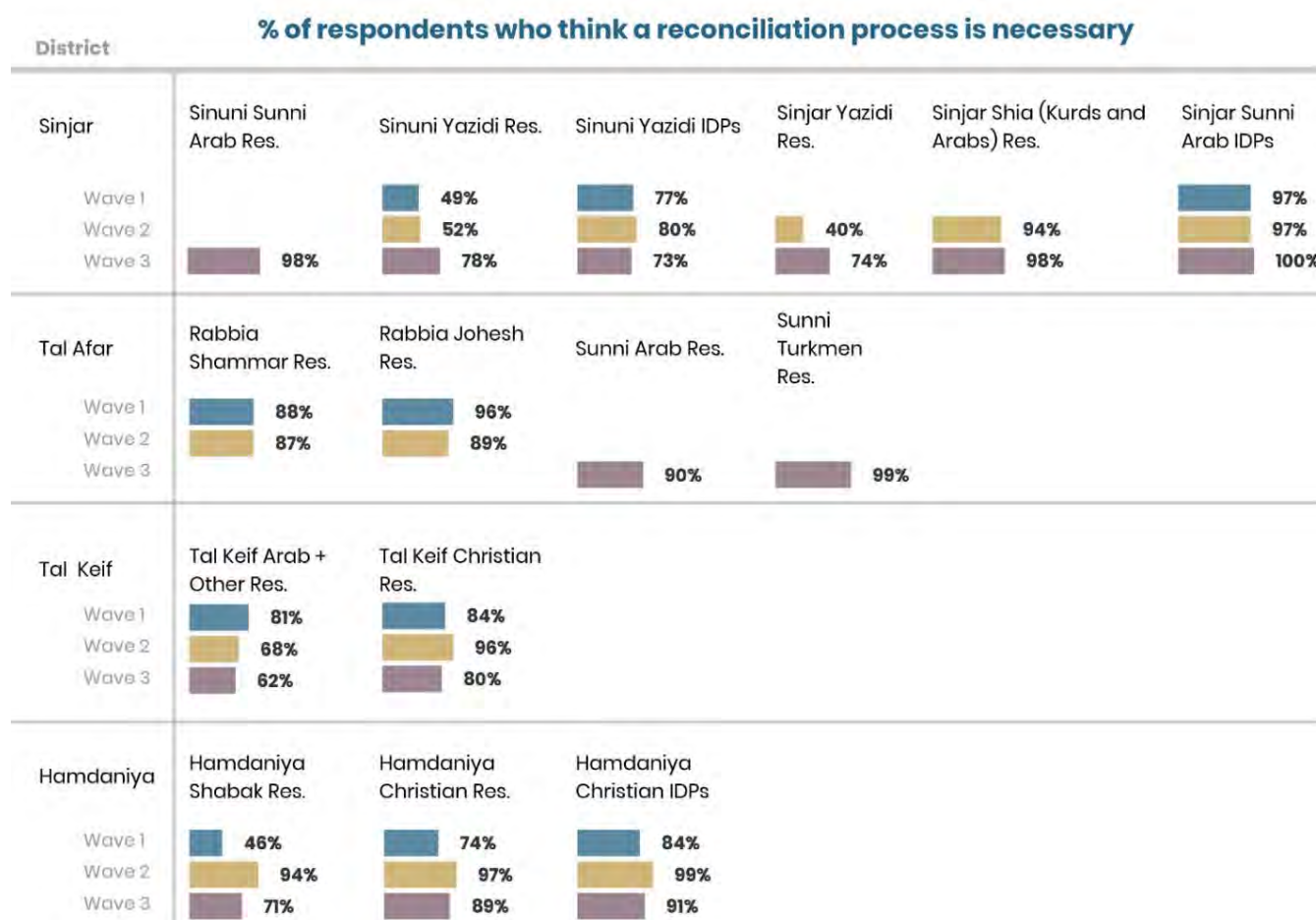
A majority of respondents acknowledge the need for reconciliation, but Christians and Yazidis have significant doubts that it is possible, likely due to lack of trust post-ISIS and long-standing grievances as minority communities.

Across locations, each community's perceptions of obstacles to reconciliation are highly specific to the local context and each community's particular grievances. But across all locations and communities, the most significant obstacle to reconciliation is lack of political will. This likely stems from the interaction communities have had with government actors tasked with advancing reconciliation, which, despite rhetoric about catering to their grievances, has engendered little progress.

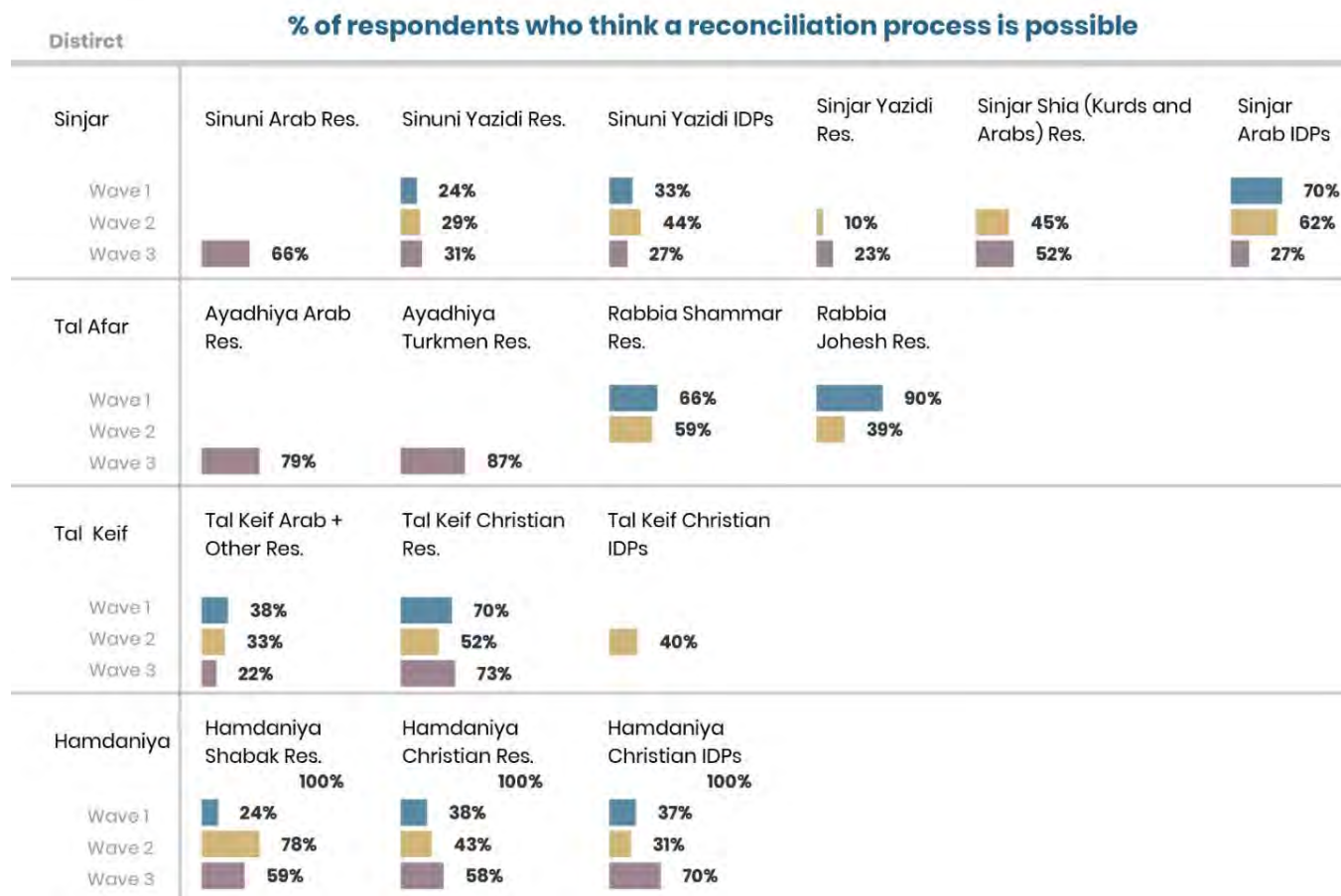
- **In Hamdaniya, majorities of both Christians and Shabaks increasingly believe that reconciliation is both necessary and possible. However, Christians perceive that although reconciliation is possible, lack of knowledge and incompetence in current approaches are significant obstacles.** These perceptions have caused many Christians to be dismissive of reconciliation processes, regardless of their desire to reconcile. This in turn has led to a general dismissive attitude towards reconciliation and has caused some Christian leaders and community members to withdraw from processes spearheaded by the government and international community.
- **Most Yazidis from Sinjar district—both IDPs and those in their home communities—see reconciliation as necessary, but not possible.** A significant obstacle they

CONFLICT AND STABILIZATION MONITORING FRAMEWORK: WAVES 1-3

identified is lack of tribal will, signaling that Arab tribal leaders have not done enough. Many also believe that local people do not want to reconcile. This supports qualitative data indicating that Yazidis perceive reconciliation with the Sunni Arab community as contingent on several preconditions, including criminal prosecution, truth-seeking, and compensation and reparations for ISIS crimes.



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CONFLICT AND STABILIZATION MONITORING FRAMEWORK: WAVES 1-3

% of respondents indicating their perceived main impediments to reconciliation

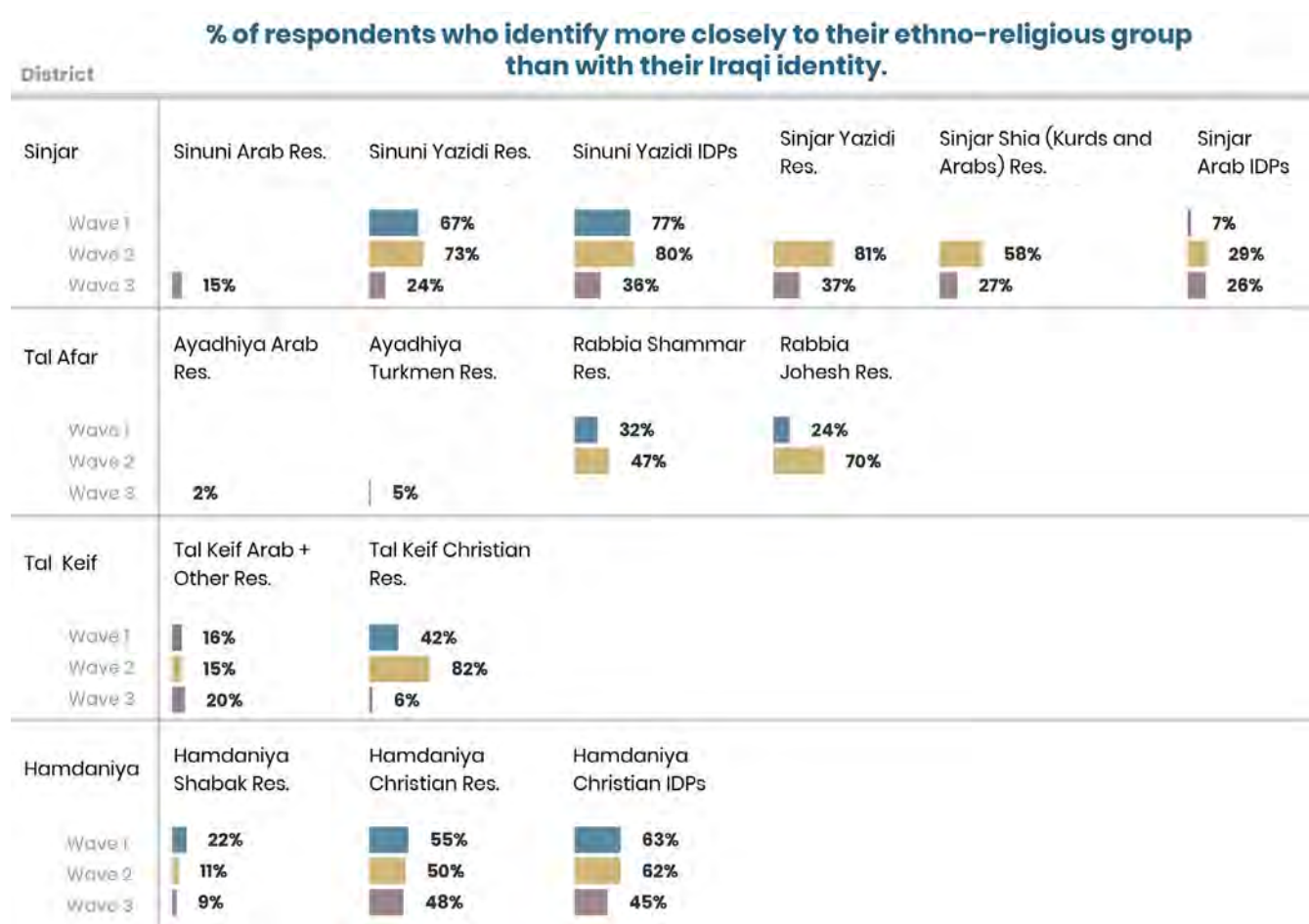


- **Sinjar Yazidis living in their home communities overwhelmingly believe that reconciliation requires a discussion of past violence and abuses**, and this inclination increased significantly over time (in Sinuni, from 26 percent in wave one to 84 percent in wave two, and 82 percent in wave three; in Sinjar Center, from 56 percent in wave two to 82 percent in wave three).
- **This contrasts starkly with Sinjar’s Sunni Arabs (both IDPs and residents) and Yazidi IDPs.** Sunni Arabs living in Sinjar Center and IDPs from Sinuni feel the best way to move on is to leave the past behind without a truth-seeking process. Of Yazidi IDPs from Sinuni, only a third (31 percent) expressed a preference for talking about previous experiences of violence.
- **In Tal Keif, both the Christians and other residents (which includes Arabs and Shabaks) believe reconciliation is necessary, but in contrast to Hamdaniya, Arabs and Shabaks are less confident that it is possible.** Arab and Shabak responses identifying main impediments to reconciliation were varied and did not show strong identification with any one obstacle. Tal Keif Christians—though they do believe reconciliation is necessary and possible—identified most strongly with lack of political will and lack of knowledge and competence as the main impediments.

Christians and Yazidis tend to identify more completely with their ethno-sectarian community than a broader Iraqi identity. Recent grievances—as opposed to primordial hatred—may be fueling growing ethno-sectarian isolationism among these communities.

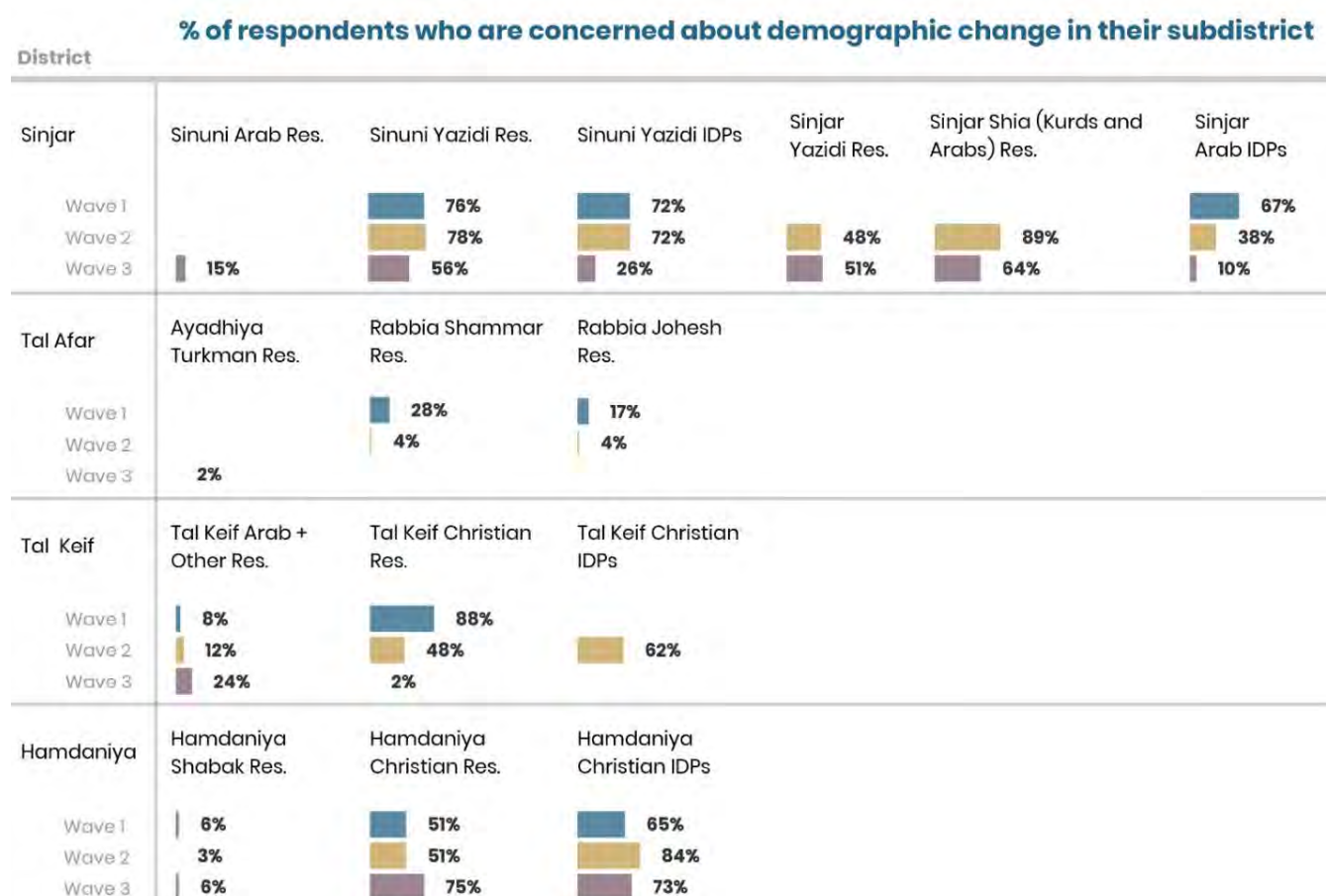
- **Further analysis is needed on the apparent drop in Yazidis’ (IDPs and residents) and Tal Keif Christians’ closer identification with their ethno-sectarian component.** This could be a real trend but could also be an issue with sampling and/or changes in the survey methodology for this indicator. Wave four data will also help clarify the apparent drop.

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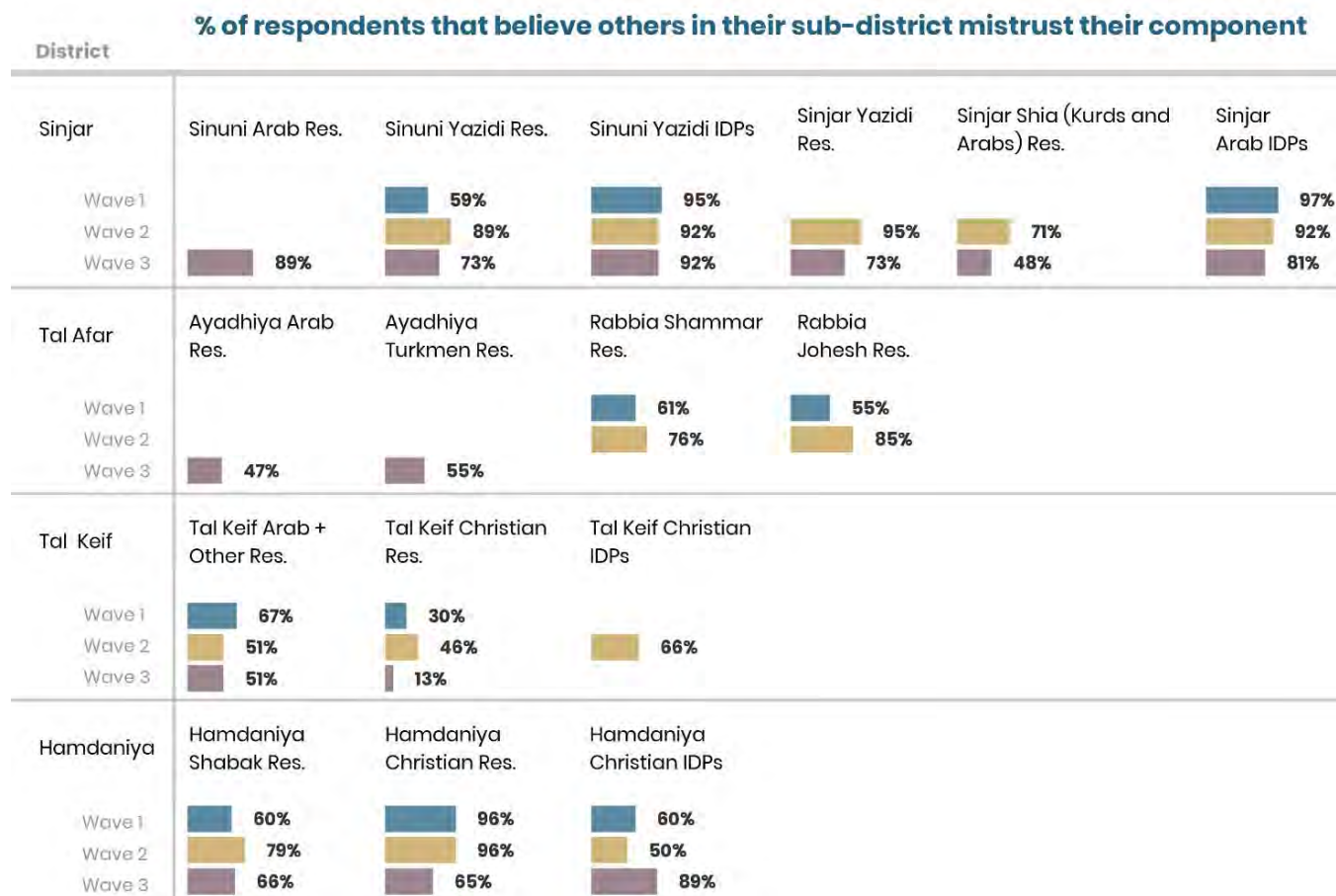
- Yazidi and Christian respondents are concerned about demographic changes in their districts and see it as a source of harm.** They believe their interests would be better advanced by ethno-sectarian political parties and local (district and subdistrict) councils composed of their co-religionists. A majority of Hamdaniya Christians do not want IDPs from other communities to return. These positions should not be seen as subscribing to an ancient hatreds narrative as, for example, Christians in Tal Keif hold more positive views on ethno-sectarian diversity. Rather, in Hamdaniya these perceptions likely spring from institutional grievances and imbalances in local power dynamics as the Hamdaniya Christians continue to feel threatened by demographic changes caused by the exodus of Christians and influx of Shabaks from surrounding areas.



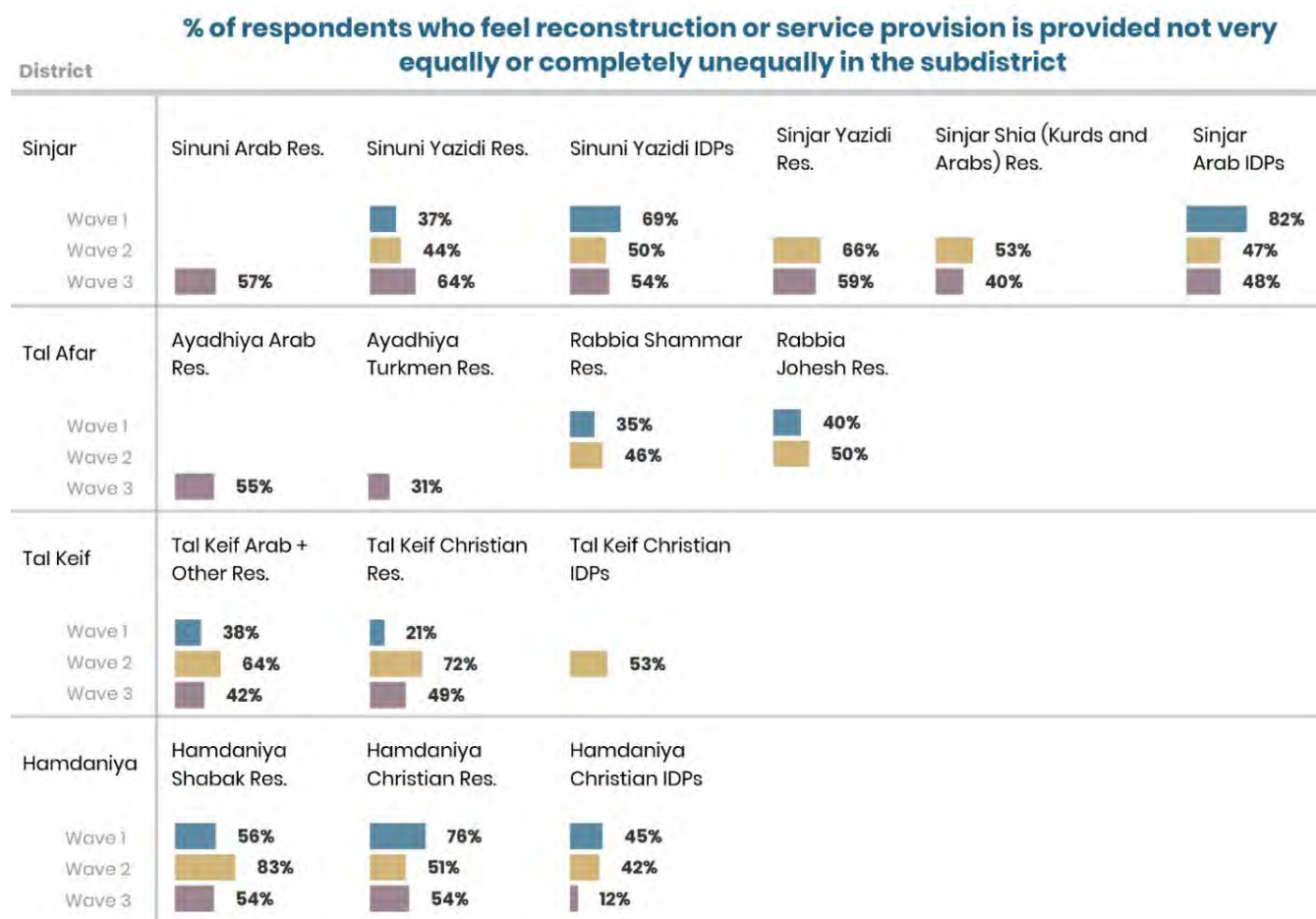
- **The majority of Hamdaniya Christian respondents believe that a more representative district council would help allay tensions in the district, a view largely rejected by the majority of Shabak respondents.** Issues of local representation are key to understanding the grievances of the Christian community in Hamdaniya, considering the district's growing Shabak population.
- **Although a majority of respondents across all locations feel politically or socially marginalized, the Hamdaniya Christians and Yazidis from Sinjar district are distinguished in that both communities overwhelmingly rank the central government first in who they blame for their marginalization and neglect.** This perception may strengthen the appeal of ethno-sectarian political representation and locally homogeneous administrative (district and subdistrict) councils.

Perceptions of mistrust are common across identity groups. Respondents from almost all groups believe that they are marginalized and misunderstood compared to others. However, most acknowledge other communities have legitimate grievances.

- **Majorities of Arabs and Yazidis in Sinjar district, as well as both Christians and Shabaks in Hamdaniya believe that members of other local ethno-religious communities mistrust them.** In Hamdaniya, only in wave three, mistrust was probed further by asking whether respondents trust other communities: 83 percent of Shabak respondents noted that they trust others, whereas only 55 percent of Christians do. Perceptions of being mistrusted by others appear to be lower overall in Tal Keif, particularly with Christian residents.

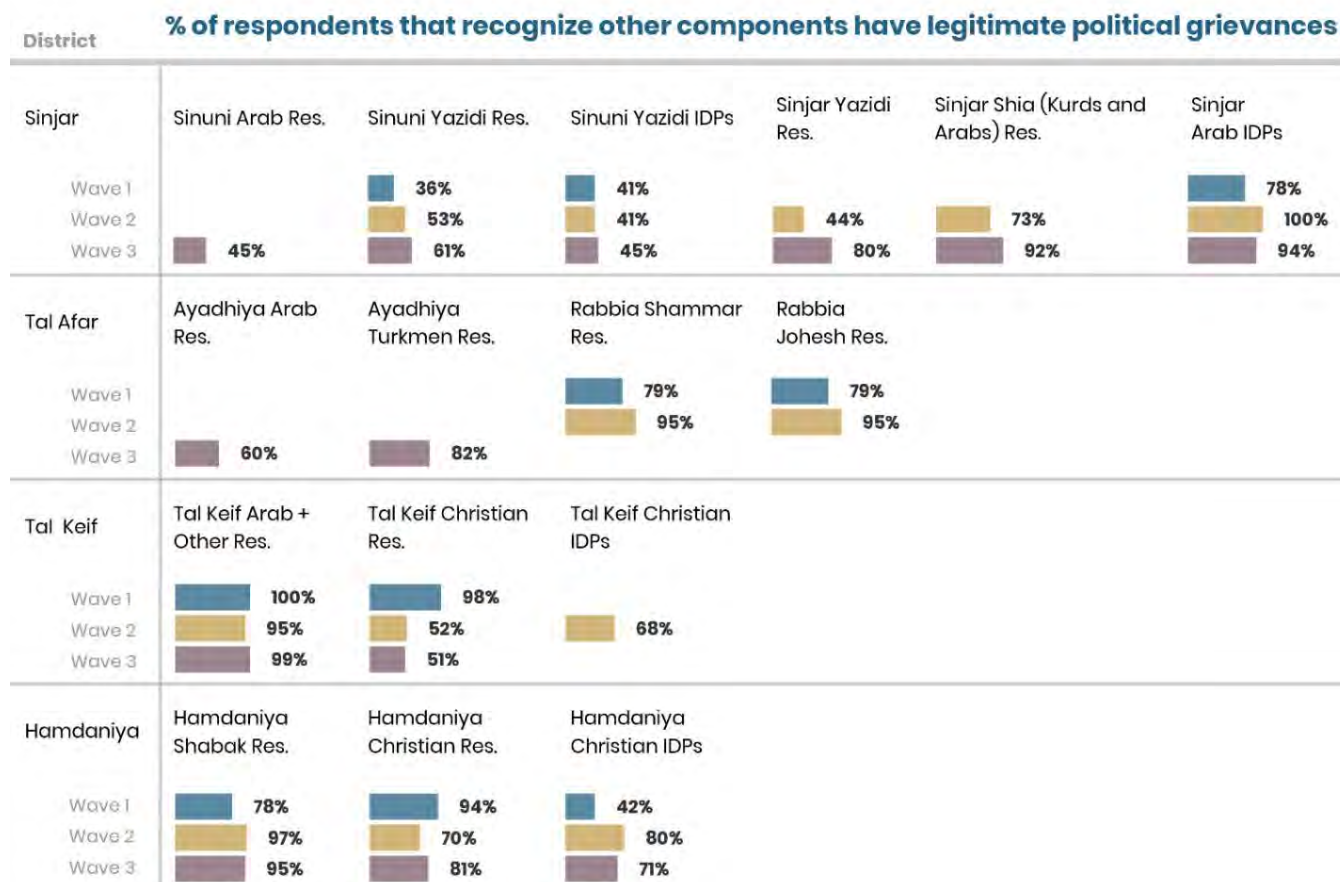


- **Majorities of respondents from almost all communities persistently perceive their community's grievances are misunderstood by other communities, and that they are more marginalized than others.** Most respondents stated that their communities are "very" or "somewhat" marginalized and that other communities do not completely acknowledge their suffering. Conversely, the majority of respondents from all communities believe that other communities in their area are only "somewhat" or "not at all" marginalized—in other words, very few believe that other communities in their areas also face very serious marginalization and neglect.
- **Respondents from across communities (between 30 and 60 percent in each with few exceptions) believe service provision and reconstruction efforts are not distributed evenly in their areas.** This probably reinforces perceptions of marginalization and that government actors favor some communities over others.



- **Most respondents also display awareness of the potential for progress toward social cohesion.** With only a few exceptions, majorities of each population in Ninewa acknowledge that other local components have legitimate political grievances. Most respondents agreed there are issues on which their community should compromise to achieve peaceful outcomes with other groups in their areas.

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% of respondents perceiving other components in the subdistrict as being either very or somewhat marginalized

District						
Sinjar		Sinuni Arab Res.	Sinuni Yazidi Res.	Sinuni Yazidi IDPs	Sinjar Yazidi Res.	Sinjar Shia (Kurds and Arabs) Res.
						Sinjar Arab IDPs
	Wave 1		28%	28%		45%
	Wave 2		45%	35%	58%	75%
Tal Afar	Wave 3	27%	55%	51%	64%	67%
		Rabbia Shammar Res.	Rabbia Johesh Res.			
	Wave 1	42%	36%			
	Wave 2	67%	65%			
Tal Keif	Wave 3					
		Tal Keif Arab + Other Res.	Tal Keif Christian Res.	Tal Keif Christian IDPs		
	Wave 1	59%	20%			
	Wave 2	51%	58%	31%		
Hamdaniya	Wave 3	55%	27%			
		Hamdaniya Shabak Res.	Hamdaniya Christian Res.	Hamdaniya Christian IDPs		
	Wave 1	55%	43%	52%		
	Wave 2	56%	61%	42%		
	Wave 3	52%	58%	49%		

% of respondents who are ready and willing to compromise with members of other identity components in their district

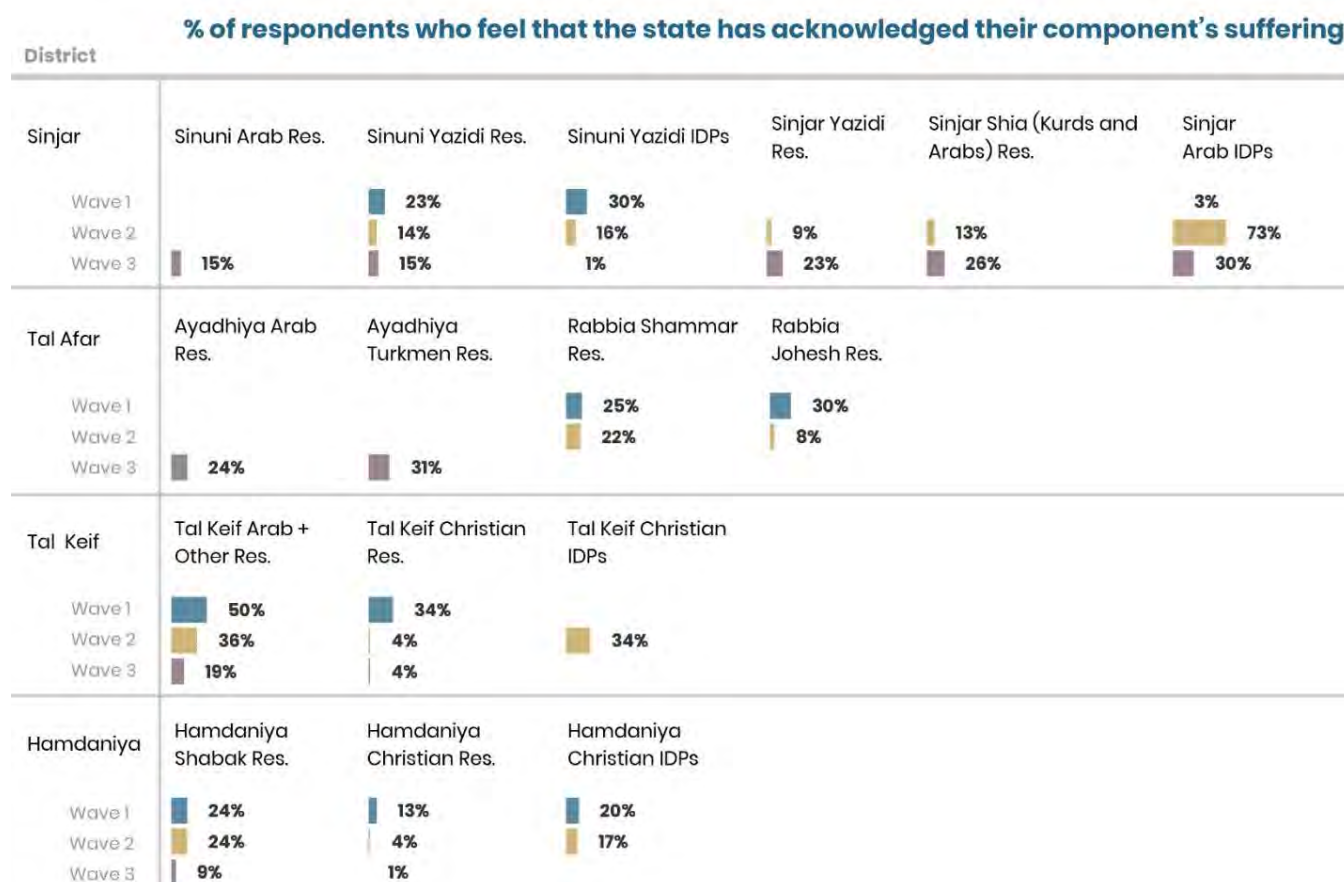
District						
Sinjar	Sinuni Arab Res.	Sinuni Yazidi Res.	Sinuni Yazidi IDPs	Sinjar Yazidi Res.	Sinjar Shia (Kurds and Arabs) Res.	Sinjar Arab IDPs
	Wave 1	58%	83%			75%
	Wave 2	59%	74%	33%	84%	79%
	Wave 3	89%	31%	60%	32%	72%
Tal Afar	Ayadhiya Arab Res.	Ayadhiya Turkmen Res.	Rabbia Shammar Res.	Rabbia Johesh Res.		
	Wave 1		63%	72%		
	Wave 2		75%	68%		
	Wave 3	58%	98%			
Tal Keif	Tal Keif Arab + Other Res.	Tal Keif Christian Res.	Tal Keif Christian IDPs			
	Wave 1	49%	72%			
	Wave 2	53%	86%	76%		
	Wave 3	59%	74%			
Hamdaniya	Hamdaniya Shabak Res.	Hamdaniya Christian Res.	Hamdaniya Christian IDPs			
	Wave 1	59%	66%	46%		
	Wave 2	75%	49%	52%		
	Wave 3	56%	42%	57%		

- **Notable exceptions included Yazidi residents of Sinjar Center and Sinuni, and Christian residents of Hamdaniya. Majorities from both communities expressed limited or no willingness to compromise with other identity groups and became less likely to want to compromise over time.** For the Yazidis living in their home communities, unwillingness to compromise is likely a function of perceptions that compromise cannot happen in the absence of justice for genocide perpetrators. It may also coincide with the Yazidis' growing dominance in local security provision, such that they have less incentive to compromise with Sunni Arab neighbors they perceive as somewhat complicit in ISIS atrocities. The opposite dynamic manifests in Hamdaniya, where Christians feel increasingly dominated by Shabaks, both politically and in terms of local security. Given the relative power imbalance, Christians eschew compromising from a weaker position and on issues—such as demographic change—they see as externally imposed against their will.
- **Another notable contrast is that the majority of displaced Yazidis and Christians do favor compromise with other identity groups, although these majorities have dwindled over time.** The reasons for this vary and are likely linked to displacement dynamics. Displaced communities might feel compromise could help facilitate their return, whereas returnees may be less likely to see compromise as desirable based

on their local dynamics. It may also be that displaced Christians and Yazidis are living farther removed from the conflict environment, whereas those who have returned to locations where social tensions are aggravated by “the other”—as in those who may have supported or sympathized with ISIS genocidaires—next door

Many in minority communities feel that the state has ignored their suffering and that it is not acting in the interest of communities in Ninewa.

- **Most respondents view the responses, decisions, and policies of both the central and provincial governments as insufficient in addressing their needs—particularly in disputed areas.** Disillusionment with government performance is particularly acute in Sinjar district, where the Government of Iraq (GoI) and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) are still embroiled in a dispute over jurisdiction. As a result, respondents feel neither GoI nor KRG are providing basic services to the people of Sinjar.



- **Non-Christians (including Sunni Arabs and Shabaks) in Tal Keif are satisfied with the performance of both federal and provincial authorities in comparison to Christians—another indicator of how salient the Gol-KRG dispute over territories is for communities in Ninewa.** The contrast may correlate with the division of Tal Keif between two distinct administrations, one federal and another under KRG authority. The Christians of Tal Keif live in areas in which Gol is not present, and thus perceive the central government as not responding to any of their needs.
- **Across all locations, the vast majority of respondents feel the state either acknowledges the hardships impacting their community only ‘a little’ or ‘not at all.’** Percentages of respondents who feel the state acknowledges their communities’ suffering are not only extremely low, they decreased over time

% of respondents that perceive their local political elites / leaders to be polarizing communities on the basis of identity

District						
Sinjar		Sinuni Arab Res.	Sinuni Yazidi Res.	Sinuni Yazidi IDPs	Sinjar Yazidi Res.	Sinjar Shia (Kurds and Arabs) Res.
	Wave 1		39%	44%		
	Wave 2		53%	32%	45%	58%
	Wave 3	73%	18%	48%	23%	32%
Tal Afar		Ayadhiya Arab Res.	Ayadhiya Turkmen Res.	Rabbia Shammar Res.	Rabbia Johesh Res.	
	Wave 1			45%	55%	
	Wave 2			46%	55%	
	Wave 3	19%	25%			
Tal Keif		Tal Keif Arab + Other Res.	Tal Keif Christian Res.	Tal Keif Christian IDPs		
	Wave 1	40%	41%			
	Wave 2	51%	43%	48%		
	Wave 3	67%	57%			
Hamdaniya		Hamdaniya Shabak Res.	Hamdaniya Christian Res.	Hamdaniya Christian IDPs		
	Wave 1	55%	73%	52%		
	Wave 2	84%	58%	73%		
	Wave 3	58%	68%	30%		

Data from wave three shows that views are mixed when it comes to whether political leaders are perceived to be fomenting ethno-sectarian divisions in their districts to gain support.

- **In Sinjar and Sinuni subdistricts, the vast majority of Sunni Arab respondents believe political leaders in the district stir up sectarian divisions to mobilize support—in contrast to Yazidi, Shia, and Kurdish respondents who feel political leaders work across the ethno-sectarian divide.** The dynamics of Sinjar district gives some perspective on these views: Yazidi political and security factions dominate, the relationship between Yazidis and their Sunni neighbors is strained following ISIS' crimes, and an ongoing political rapprochement is occurring internally in the Yazidi community.
- **In Hamdaniya, the majority of both Christian and Shabak residents feel political leaders stoke sectarianism to mobilize support.** Between waves two and three, the number of Shabak respondents who feel leaders foment sectarian divisions decreased (84 percent to 58 percent), whereas the number of Christians who see district leaders as being divisive increased (58 percent to 68 percent). One outlier is the Christian IDP community from Hamdaniya, whose perceptions of political leaders' sectarian stoking first spiked in wave two (from 52 to 73 percent) and then decreased sharply in wave three (to 30 percent).
- **The majority of Christian and non-Christian residents in Tal Keif also feel political leaders are spurring ethno-sectarian divisions to gain support—a view that has become more prominent across waves.** The increase was consistent across both resident communities—rising from approximately 40 percent in the first wave to around 60 percent in the third wave.
- **In Tal Afar, the views are mixed.** In the subdistrict of Zummar, a slight majority of Kurdish residents feel that district leaders work across the ethno-sectarian divide, a view not shared by the majority of Sunni Arab residents. In the subdistrict of Ayadhiya, the majority of both Sunni Arabs and Turkmen residents feel that political leaders do not stir up sectarian sentiments but instead work across communities to gain support.

As of May 2019, perceptions of local physical security generally seemed to be improving—including among ethno-religious minority communities.

- **By May 2019, a majority of residents in most communities felt comfortable moving around their areas (between 68 and 98 percent), compared to February 2018 (when the lowest was 12 percent, among Sinjar Center Yazidi residents, and highs were in the 70s and 80s among primarily Sunni Arab communities).** In Hamdaniya, both Christian and Shabak residents demonstrated a sharp increase in comfort moving around their areas safely over time, with 92 percent of *both* Christian and Shabak respondents reporting comfort moving around by May 2019, up from 49 percent and 70 percent in February 2018, respectively. Responses from Yazidi residents of Sinjar district also showed a significant increase in perceptions of safe movement. *Future data collection may reflect changes in perceptions based on developments in late*

2019 and early 2020, including changes to power dynamics and positioning of prominent Popular Mobilization Forces in Hamdaniya and Tal Keif, and an increase in ISIS attacks and several Turkish airstrikes in Sinjar.

- **The majority of communities in the areas surveyed feel that they can express their ethno-sectarian identity without fear of violence against them.** This trend was consistent for all communities—with one exception—over the course of the three waves. This indicates that intimidation and physical actions by security actors are not focused on restricting religious practice or voices and are more political in nature. The one community for whom this sentiment did not prevail was Sunni Arabs in Sinuni.

Many communities still feel local security forces or armed groups treat them unfairly compared to other communities. Respondents from all IDP communities surveyed also feel intimidated by security forces or armed groups in their areas of origin

Note that data collection did not distinguish between particular security actors or armed groups.

- **In Sinjar district, both Yazidi residents and IDPs are unlikely to perceive that security actors treat them fairly. However, Yazidi IDPs from Sinuni feel intimidated by security actors in their areas of origin, whereas Yazidis living in their home communities do not.** This difference could be explained by the Yazidis' ties to KRG and the dramatic changes in Sinjar political and security actors since 2014. Prior to this, KRG's Peshmerga units and local affiliates controlled the district. Following the defeat of ISIS and changing political dynamics after KRG's independence referendum in 2017, Peshmerga units and local affiliates withdrew as federal forces entered, leaving federal forces and PMF-aligned local units in control of much of the district. Rather than a preference for the status ante, Yazidis living in Sinjar are now (a) concerned that security is divided such that escalation of violence could occur quickly, and (b) intimidated because the security forces present are connected to non-local centers of power such as Baghdad, Iran, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), or the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) versus Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)-aligned Peshmerga.
- **For Shia and Sunni Arabs from Sinjar district, perceptions that security actors treat them fairly are higher than other communities—but still fairly low.** A plurality of Shia respondents (Kurds and Arabs) from Sinjar subdistrict do feel security actors treat them fairly. For Sunni Arabs from Sinjar district, there is a significant difference between IDPs and residents: In wave three, only 7 percent of Sunni Arab IDPs from Sinjar Center perceive fair treatment by security actors or armed groups, whereas 57 percent of residents from Sinuni do perceive fair treatment.
- **In Hamdaniya, there is no sharp discrepancy between Christians' and Shabaks' perceptions of equal treatment by security actors or armed groups.** In fact, in wave three, Christian residents of Hamdaniya were 20 percent more likely to feel they are treated fairly by security actors (63 percent) by security actors/armed groups than both Christian IDPs and Shabaks (43 percent and 42 percent, respectively).

- **In Tal Keif, Christians are generally more likely than their Arab and Shabak neighbors to perceive equal treatment by security actors—but both communities displayed a sharp drop in perceptions of being treated the same.** Christians' perception of equal treatment dropped from 82 to 41 percent, whereas Arab and Shabak perceptions of equal treatment dropped from low to lower (26 to 10 percent).

Generally, Sunni Arabs from Sinjar district display higher indicators of feeling directly targeted for physical violence than respondents from other communities, and that security actors or armed groups are deliberately blocking IDP returns.

- **The majority of Sunni Arab IDPs from Sinjar Center overwhelmingly blame their continued displacement on security actors purposefully blocking their returns and feel intimidated by security actors in their areas of origin.** Averaged across waves, approximately 80 percent of Sunni IDPs felt intimidated. By contrast, Christian IDPs from Hamdaniya and Yazidi IDPs from Sinuni are less likely to feel intimidated by security actors in their home communities (averages of approximately 35 and 50 percent, respectively).
- **Sunni Arab residents of Sinuni do not feel that they can express their ethno-sectarian identity without fear of violence against them.** These feelings likely stem from the traumatic aftermath of ISIS and the damage it did to community relationships. Yazidis and other communities, as well as security actors, continue to harbor mistrust towards the Sunni Arab community. This has manifested in various ways, including IDPs being blocked from returning, collective punishment against whole families or tribes where one member was convicted of being an ISIS supporter, and, in some cases, acts of revenge violence.
- **In May 2019, neither Yazidi IDP respondents from Sinuni nor Christian IDP respondents from Hamdaniya perceive security actors in their areas of origin to be deliberately blocking their return.** Christian IDPs from Hamdaniya put lack of services, the absence of livelihood opportunities, and not wanting to return as the main reasons for not returning. Yazidi IDPs from Sinuni rank the lack of livelihood opportunities, lack of services, destruction of property, and lack of safety/poor security as the main factors keeping them displaced. For the Yazidi IDPs who do not perceive deliberate blockage as a barrier to return but do perceive poor security as a main impediment, this likely relates to a general fear of ISIS reconstituting and the multiplicity of politically aligned security actors in the district. The instability generated by strikes from Turkey against PKK-affiliates is also part of the IDPs' overall concern.