CONTEXT

The Return Index is a tool designed to measure the severity of conditions in locations of return. Data collection for the Return Index Round 11 took place during the months of November and December 2020 across eight governorates, 38 districts and 2,076 locations in Iraq. As this round is the last of 2020, some of the changes recorded throughout the year are presented. Since the Return Index Round 7 (collected in November – December 2019), an additional 322 locations of return were assessed (21 locations since Round 10 collected in September – October 2020).

RETURNEE POPULATION IN SEVERE CONDITIONS

- Out of the 2,076 return locations assessed, 423 present severe conditions; they host 10 per cent of the returnee population, or 484,548 individuals.

- A decrease of 37,542 returnees living in severe or poor conditions has been observed since the round collected in November – December 2019, when 12 per cent of the returnee population (522,090 individuals) were in severe conditions (11 % or 531,918 individuals in Round 10 collected in September – October 2020).

- Between December 2019 and December 2020, the largest decreases were recorded in Salah al-Din (54,768) and Anbar (47,448), while the largest increase was observed in Ninewa (61,578) governorates. In Salah al-Din, the largest decreases were recorded in Tikrit and Tuz Khurmatu, where more agricultural and/or livestock activities took place as before, more businesses were open, more residents could find employment and reconciliation efforts between the different ethno-religious groups in the district took place in more locations. In Anbar, the largest decrease was observed in Falluja due to the improvement of the situation as regards daily public life, agricultural activities, and businesses. In Ninewa, the largest increases were recorded in Sinjar and Al-Ba'aj as poor conditions were recorded in the newly assessed locations related to agricultural or livestock activities, businesses, electricity sufficiency and services provided by civil servants, teachers, nurses, and police, among others, together with the absence of reconciliation processes and tense public life.

- Ninewa and Salah al-Din remain the governorates hosting the highest number of returnees living in severe conditions, with 235,302 and 143,682 individuals respectively.

- Salah al-Din and Diyala host the highest proportions of returnees living in severe conditions (21% in both governorates).

MOST SEVERE LOCATIONS OF RETURN

- Sixty-seven locations hosting 59,964 returnees were identified as having the most severe return conditions in this round. The top five of these locations remain in Tuz Khurmatu District in Salah al-Din Governorate (900 returnees).

- An additional 24 locations were observed with the most severe return conditions since the round collected in November – December 2019, when 46,164 individuals were living across 43 locations with the most severe return conditions.
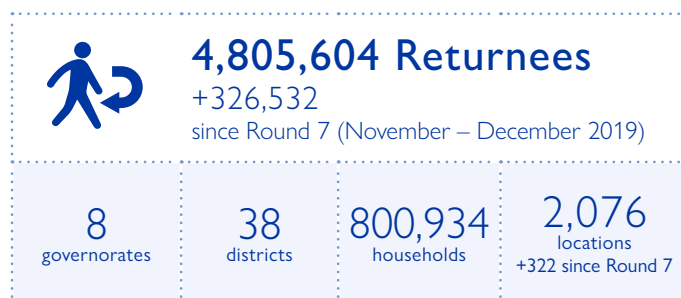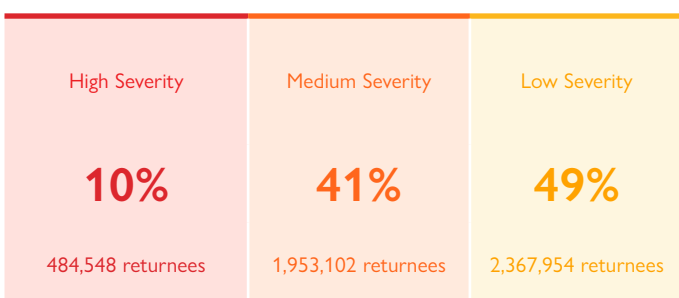
METHODOLOGY

The Return Index is based on 16 indicators divided into two scales: Scale 1, on livelihoods and basic services, and Scale 2, centered around social cohesion and safety perceptions. A regression model is used to assess the impact of each of the indicators in facilitating or preventing returns and to calculate scores for two scales. For example, the model tests how much less likely a location where no agricultural activities have recovered is to have returns compared to a location where they have recovered. To compute an overall severity index, the scores of the two scales are combined.

The index ranges from 0 (all essential conditions for return are met) to 100 (no essential conditions for return are met). Higher scores denote more severe living conditions for returnees. The scores of the severity index are grouped into three categories: low, medium and high (which also includes very high).

Refer to the report "Methodological Overview" for more details on the methodology.

Figure 1. Proportion of returnees by category of severity

High Severity	Medium Severity	Low Severity
10%	**41%**	**49%**
484,548 returnees	1,953,102 returnees	2,367,954 returnees

4,805,604 Returnees
+326,532
since Round 7 (November – December 2019)

8	38	800,934	2,076
governorates	districts	households	locations +322 since Round 7

Data collected November – December 2020

Table 1. Number of locations and returnees per governorate by category of severity

Governorate	HIGH		MEDIUM		LOW		TOTAL	
	No. of returnees	No. of locations	No. of returnees	No. of locations	No. of returnees	No. of locations	No. of returnees	No. of locations
Anbar	52,350	19	680,196	196	769,926	110	1,502,472	325
Baghdad	2,088	5	33,450	54	55,470	63	91,008	122
Dahuk	0	0	0	0	768	1	768	1
Diyala	49,752	49	155,310	130	31,272	43	236,334	222
Erbil	1,170	12	4,128	21	49,038	34	54,336	67
Kirkuk	204	2	71,814	61	272,310	145	344,328	208
Ninewa	235,302	278	600,288	380	1,049,442	249	1,885,032	907
Salah al-Din	143,682	58	407,916	120	139,728	46	691,326	224
Total	484,548	423	1,953,102	962	2,367,954	691	4,805,604	2,076

GOVERNORATE HOTSPOTS OF SEVERITY

Subdistricts are classified as 'hotspots' if they score highly in terms of severity on at least one of the two scales (either livelihoods and basic services, or safety and social cohesion) or if they score medium in terms of severity but also host relatively large numbers of returnees, at least 60,000 returnees in a subdistrict.

Thirty-three hotspots were identified across five governorates in this round. Compared to the round collected in November – December 2019, nine subdistricts were added to the list, Abo Sayda (Al-Muqdadiya District, a newly assessed subdistrict) in Diyala Governorate, Al-Amirya (Falluja District), Sharqiah (Ramadi District), Al-Baghdady, Al-Forat and Markaz Heet (Heet District) in Anbar Governorate, Al-Eshaqi (Balad District), Al-Moatassem (Samarra District), Husaibah Al-Markaz Al-Balad (Balad District) in Salah al-Din Governorate. In Anbar, subdistricts were classified as 'hotspots' due to an increased concern about mines and different sources of violence such as ISIL attacks, acts of revenge, clashes between security forces or ethno-religious-tribal tensions. Al-Amirya (Falluja District) was added due to the worsening of the situation with the provision of government services, and Markaz Heet (Heet District) due to residents' difficulty finding employment. In Salah al-Din, Al-Markaz Al-Balad (Balad District) was identified as 'hotspot' due to the worsening situation with employment, businesses and provision of government services, Al-Eshaqi (Balad District) due to poor access to employment, and Al-Moatassem (Samarra District) due to the presence of blocked returns.

SALAH AL-DIN: 456,954 returnees in hotspots

- Al-Amerli
- Al-Eshaqi
- Al-Moatassem
- Al-Siniya
- Markaz Al-Balad
- Markaz Al-Daur
- Markaz Al-Shirqat
- Markaz Baiji
- Markaz Samarra
- Markaz Tuz Khurmatu
- Suleiman Beg
- Yathreb

NINEWA: 512,520 returnees in hotspots

- Al-Qahtaniya
- Al-Shamal
- Ayadiya
- Hamam al Aleel
- Markaz Al-Ba'aj
- Markaz Sinjar
- Markaz Telafar
- Qaeyrrawan
- Zummar

ANBAR: 382,680 returnees in hotspots

- Al-Amirya
- Al-Baghdady
- Al-Forat
- Al-Garma
- Husaibah Al-Sharqiah
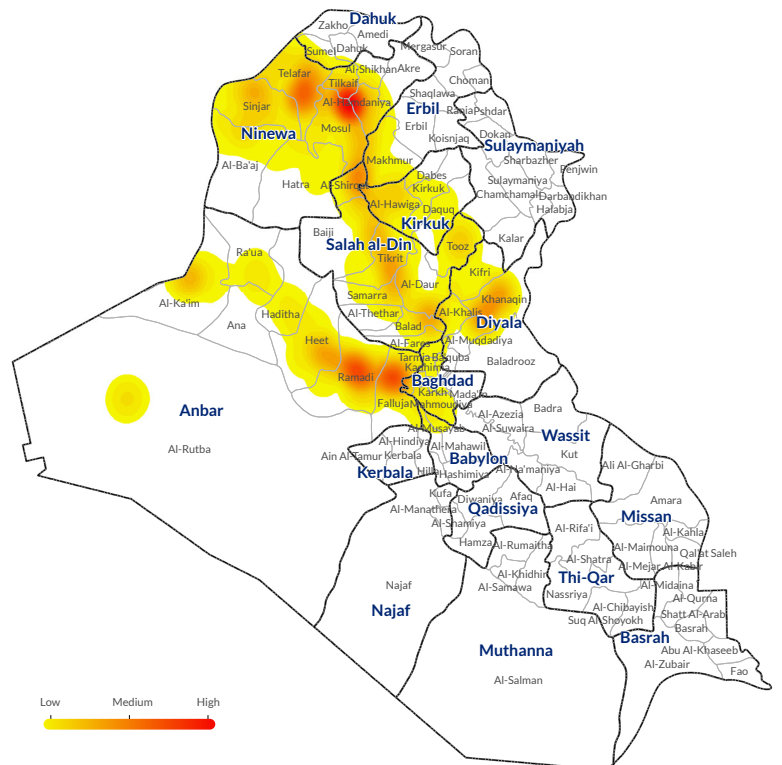- Markaz Al-Ka'im
- Markaz Heet

DIYALA: 139,302 returnees in hotspots

- Abo Sayda
- Jalula
- Markaz Al-Muqdadiya
- Qara Tabe

BAGHDAD: 6,264 returnees in hotspots

- Al-Nasir Walsalam

Map 1. Returnee population density by overall severity score

This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

The map shows conditions of severity based on population size and severity score of each assessed location. The darker colours indicate a larger concentration of families living in severe conditions of return, while the brighter colours indicate lower severity conditions or areas with low levels of returns.