

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 17 took place during the months of October, November and December 2022 across 9 governorates, 39 districts and 2,198 locations in Iraq. During Round 17, an additional seven locations of return were assessed.

RETURNEE POPULATION IN SEVERE CONDITIONS

- Out of the 2,198 return locations assessed, 463 present severe conditions. These locations host 12 per cent of the returnee population (592,338 individuals).
- A decrease of 6,240 returnees living in severe or poor conditions has been observed since the previous round in July – September 2022, when the share of returnees in severe conditions was also 12 per cent (598,578 individuals).

DETERIORATION OF CONDITIONS

- In certain locations, the number of returnees living in severe conditions has increased. This is particularly the case in **Al-Musayab District, Babylon Governorate** (1,860 individuals). This round, DTM gained access in two locations in Al-Iskandaria subdistrict in Al-Musayab, where it recorded the return of families between 2015 – 2021 from Al-Musayab, Erbil, Abu Ghraib and Sulaymaniyah districts. There are still 12 locations of no return in Al-Musayab District, where returns of the population displaced during or since the 2014-2017 conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) are blocked by security forces.
- In addition, increases in the number of returnees living in severe conditions were recorded in Kirkuk (864 individuals) and Ninewa governorates (690). In Kirkuk, the largest increase was observed in **Al-Hawiga District**, driven by a reduced water supply linked to low rainfall and illegal occupation of private residences by security forces.
- In **Ninewa**, the largest increases were recorded in Telafar, Tilkaif, and Al-Ba'aj districts. In **Telafar District**, more returns were observed in the locations with poor security conditions, namely the presence of multiple security actors in the area, concerns about violence and harassment at the checkpoints and the need for community reconciliation. Other factors contributing to high severity conditions include the weak recovery of agriculture and businesses, lack of government service provision and insufficient public water supply. Despite these challenges, some improvements were reported in electricity provision as the number of hours of electricity per day increased.

- In **Tilkaif District**, residents observed the worsening of agricultural activities in the area, with some families who engaged in this sector migrating abroad. Furthermore, access to livelihoods remains poor and harassment at checkpoints continues to pose problems for residents.
- In **Al-Ba'aj District**, families returned to locations with severe livelihood, service and security conditions. With respect to livelihoods, employment opportunities remain significantly limited and recovery of the agricultural and business activities remains weak. Additionally, only some government services are being provided and residents are struggling to obtain enough water. Furthermore, numerous security challenges were observed, including harassment at checkpoints, concerns about violence and blocked returns.

IMPROVEMENT OF CONDITIONS

- The slight decrease in the number of returnees living in severe conditions is primarily attributable to changes in Anbar (-7,650 individuals) and Salah al-Din (-1,698).
- In **Anbar**, the decrease was mainly observed in **Heet District** due to reconstruction efforts and the reopening of some small businesses. In **Al-Ka'im District**, improvements in the water supply reduced the severity of living conditions. The gas power plant in the district has started operating and the power network has been linked with the public electricity network after the rehabilitation and installation of the damaged towers. These efforts have resulted in more hours of electricity per day and improvements in water access, as residents who are relying on water in wells were able to extract more water using electric pumps. Nonetheless, violence, harassment at the checkpoints and blocked returns remain concerns in both districts.
- In **Salah al-Din**, the largest decrease was observed in **Al-Shirqat District** due to some improvements in agricultural activities, even as the main drivers of severity remain unchanged. These underlying contributors to severity include weak recovery of businesses, the presence of multiple security actors in the area, harassment at the checkpoints, concerns about violence and blocked returns.

METHODOLOGY

The Return Index is based on 16 indicators across two domains: (1) livelihoods and basic services, and (2) 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. The scores of each domain and overall index are grouped into three categories: low, medium, and high severity of living conditions. For more information on the methodology, please refer to the [Methodological Overview](#).

Figure 1. Proportion of returnees by category of severity

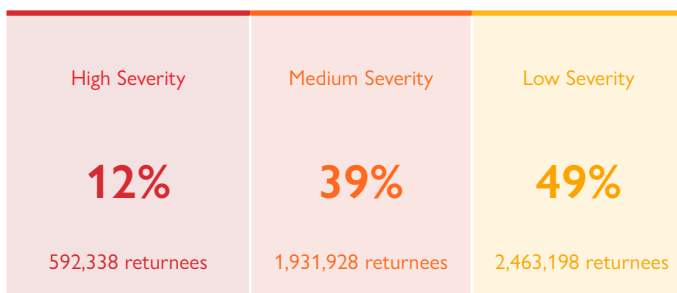


Table 1. Number of returnees and locations per governorate by category of severity

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	77,160	21	711,276	199	758,244	111	1,546,680	331
Babylon	1,860	2					1,860	2
Baghdad	1,440	5	21,342	20	71,046	97	93,828	122
Dahuk					744	1	744	1
Diyala	38,250	41	177,696	131	24,600	51	240,546	223
Erbil	4,500	15	11,832	29	45,012	23	61,344	67
Kirkuk	2,730	10	71,820	70	279,246	157	353,796	237
Ninewa	257,274	288	623,928	437	1,059,966	253	1,941,168	978
Salah al-Din	209,124	81	314,034	92	224,340	64	747,498	237
Total	592,338	463	1,931,928	978	2,463,198	757	4,987,464	2,198

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 hotspots were identified across five governorates in this round. Compared to the round collected in July – September 2022, Markaz Tikrit (Tikrit District) in Salah al-Din Governorate was removed from the hotspot list. The subdistrict was no longer classified as a hotspot due to improvement in the water and electricity supply in the area. As observed in other areas, a greater amount of electricity per day increases the capacity for water pumping. On the other hand, the newly assessed Al-Iskandaria (Al-Musayab District) in Babylon Governorate was added to the list of hotspots. The severity of conditions in the subdistrict is driven by the weak recovery of agriculture and businesses, lack of government service provision, insufficient public water and electricity supply, as well as concerns about violence in the area, including harassment at the checkpoints controlled by security forces, which contributed to tensions in public life, blocked returns and a need for community reconciliation.

Information on all drivers of severity for other hotspots is available on the sixth page of the Return Index Dashboard on the Iraq DTM website.

SALAH AL-DIN: 496,164 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: 542,250 returnees in hotspots

- Al-Qahtaniya
- Al-Shamal
- Ayadiya
- Hamam al Aleel
- Markaz Al-Ba’aj
- Markaz Sinjar
- Markaz Telfarj
- Qaeyrrawan
- Zummar

ANBAR: 400,224 returnees in hotspots

- Al-Amirya
- Al-Forat
- Al-Garma
- Husaibah Al-Sharqiah
- Markaz Al-Ka’im
- Markaz Heet

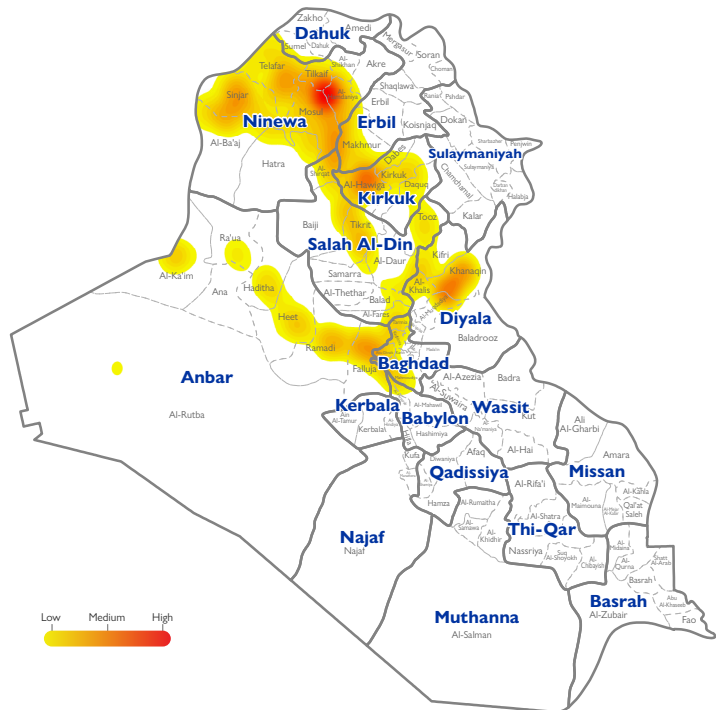
DIYALA: 83,316 returnees in hotspots

- Jalula
- Qara Tabe

BABYLON: 1,860 returnees in hotspots

- Al-Iskandaria (new)

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.

DISCLAIMER

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