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 18 took place during January and April 2023 across 9 governorates, 39 districts, and 2,157 locations in Iraq. During this round, 41 fewer locations of return were assessed.

RETURNEE POPULATION IN SEVERE CONDITIONS

- Out of the 2,157 return locations assessed, **465 present severe conditions hosting 12 per cent of the returnee population**, or 596,136 individuals.

- **An increase of 3,798 returnees living in severe or poor conditions** has been observed since the round collected in October – December 2022, when the share of returnees in severe conditions was also 12 per cent (592,338 individuals).

DETERIORATION OF CONDITIONS

- The largest increases were recorded in **Diyala** (8,058 individuals), followed by **Salah al-Din** (3,744) and **Ninewa** (2,148) governorates.

- In Diyala Governorate, the most noticeable increase was observed in **Khanaqin District** driven by an insufficiency of electricity and water supply. This is related to an interruption in the transmission line, fewer hours of electricity and water are available per day.

- In Salah al-Din Governorate, the most noticeable increase was recorded in **Tuz Khurmatu District** due to the worsening of social cohesion in Al-Amerli subdistrict where a reconciliation process is not taking place anymore. Overall, severe conditions in the district are related to the poor provision of electricity, the presence of multiple security actors, concerns about violence and harassment at the checkpoints, Illegal occupation of private residences, and cases of block returns.

- The increase in Ninewa Governorate was notably observed in **Sinjar District** due to new returns to locations with severe conditions. Overall, the severity in the district is driven by poor conditions of livelihoods, services, and security. Specifically, the slow recovery of agriculture and businesses, poor provision of government services and water supply, presence of multiple security actors, concerns about violence and harassment at the checkpoints, need for reconciliation, and cases of block returns in Qaeyrrawan subdistrict.
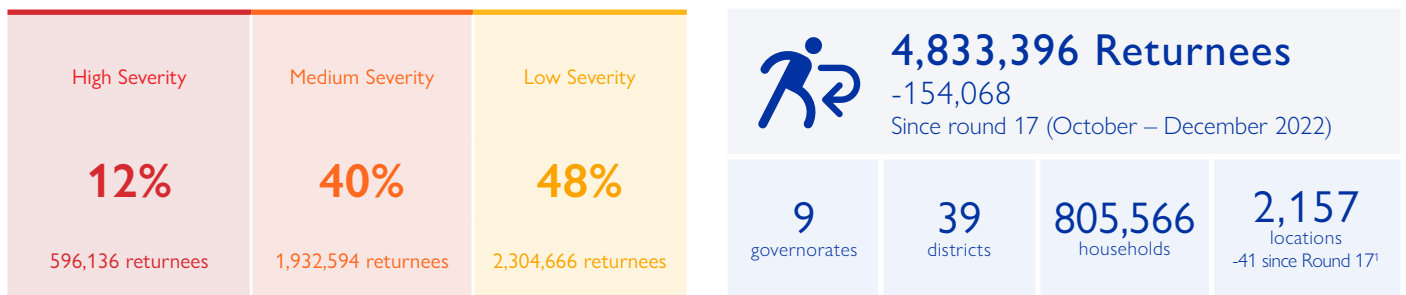
IMPROVEMENT OF CONDITIONS

- The largest decrease in the number of returnees living in severe conditions was recorded in **Anbar** Governorate (-9,846 individuals). The decrease was mainly observed in **Heet District** due to reconstruction efforts and **Al-Rutba District** due to the improvements in the water supply. This is related to the rain and the increase in groundwater and well water that residents use for drinking and domestic needs. Despite some improvements, the severity in the district is still driven by the poor security situation, namely concerns about different sources of violence, harassment at the checkpoints, and cases of block 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

High Severity	Medium Severity	Low Severity
12%	**40%**	**48%**
596,136 returnees	1,932,594 returnees	2,304,666 returnees

4,833,396 Returnees
-154,068
Since round 17 (October – December 2022)

| 9 governorates | 39 districts | 805,566 households | 2,157 locations -41 since Round 17[1] |

Data Collection Period: **January – April 2023**

1. Following the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's (KRI) independence referendum in 2018, approximately 27,300 families were displaced from and subsequently returned to Kirkuk. As this displacement was not linked to the 2014-2017 conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the displacement period was short in duration, this group of returnees has been removed from the caseload and locations were not assessed this round.

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

Governorate	HIGH No. of returnees	HIGH No. of locations	MEDIUM No. of returnees	MEDIUM No. of locations	LOW No. of returnees	LOW No. of locations	TOTAL No. of returnees	TOTAL No. of locations
Anbar	67,314	18	727,146	203	752,568	110	1,547,028	331
Babylon	1,860	2					1,860	2
Baghdad	1,116	4	13,290	16	79,632	102	94,038	122
Dahuk					744	1	744	1
Diyala	46,308	46	162,804	123	31,734	55	240,846	224
Erbil	4,506	15	11,520	28	45,666	24	61,692	67
Kirkuk	2,742	10	73,224	70	114,678	112	190,644	192
Ninewa	259,422	288	628,122	442	1,059,360	251	1,946,904	981
Salah al-Din	212,868	82	316,488	92	220,284	63	749,640	237
Total	596,136	465	1,932,594	974	2,304,666	718	4,833,396	2,157

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-one hotspots were identified across five governorates in this round. Compared to the round collected in October – December 2022, one more subdistrict was added to the hotspot list, Al Qayara in Mosul District, Ninewa Governorate. The subdistrict was classified as a hotspot due to the increase in the number of returnees from 59,766 to 60,636 individuals. This increase is mostly related to the returnees from the Jeddah 5 IDP camp caused by its closure on the 19th of April. Overall, the severity in the subdistrict is driven by a slow recovery of agriculture and businesses, poor provision of government services, tense public life, and harassment at the checkpoints.

SALAH AL-DIN: 497,490 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: 606,456 returnees in hotspots

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

ANBAR: 400,344 returnees in hotspots

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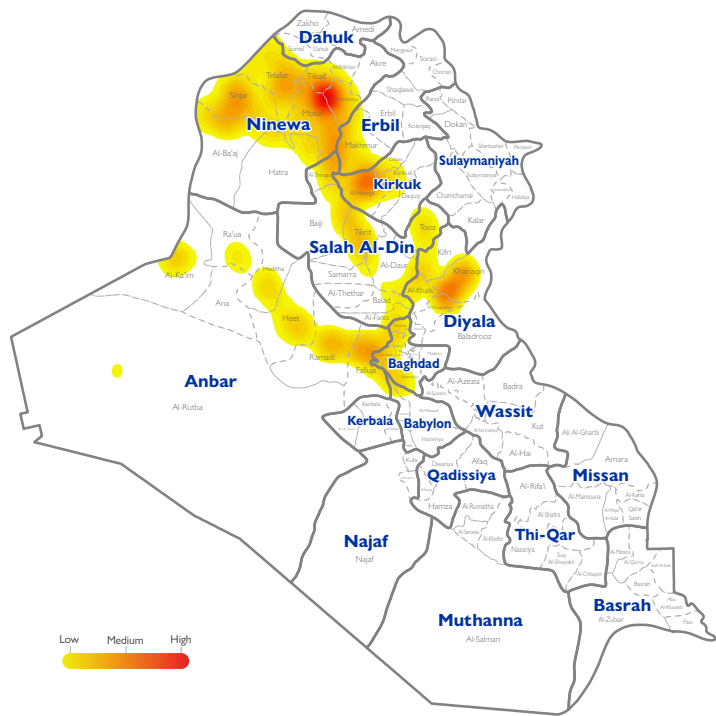- Husaibah Al-Sharqiah
- Markaz Al-Ka'im
- Markaz Heet

DIYALA: 83,508 returnees in hotspots

- Jalula
- Qara Tabe

BABYLON: 1,860 returnees in hotspots

- Al-Iskandaria

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.