



## 3. Humanitarian and socio-economic situation

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### 3.1 Overview of the humanitarian and socio-economic situation

According to the World Bank classification, Iraq is considered an upper middle-income country, [1079](#) with upper middle-income economies defined as those having a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita between USD 4 496 and USD 13 935. [1080](#) The country has one of the fastest-growing regional populations, [1081](#) as the 2024 population census recorded an increase from 27.9 million in 2004 to approximately 45 million in 2024. [1082](#) Population growth projections estimate that Iraq's population will reach 74.5 million by 2050. [1083](#) 60 % of the population is under 25 years old, with 40 % below the age of 15. [1084](#) The census was described as an essential step towards enhancing the accuracy of economic planning and resource allocation. [1085](#)

At the economic level, Iraq relies heavily on oil and petroleum products, [1086](#) which account for around 60 % of its GDP and are the primary source of government revenue and foreign exchange earnings. [1087](#) This dependence makes the economy vulnerable to shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, electricity shortages, and water scarcity. [1088](#) While there were signs of economic recovery in 2024, [1089](#) supported by high oil prices and non-oil revenue growth, Iraq experienced negative GDP per capita growth in five of the past ten years. [1090](#) Moreover, inflation and Iraqi dinar's devaluation during the covered period have reduced household purchasing power, therefore worsening poverty and food insecurity. [1091](#)

Systematic corruption across the country [1092](#) triggers rising anger among citizens. [1093](#) Iraq's public sector remains a dominant actor of the economy and service delivery, accounting for nearly all formal sector jobs and 40 % of all jobs, [1094](#) and consuming significant public resources. However, it is marked by overemployment, inefficiency and outdated administrative systems, largely due to limited private sector development and weak institutional capacity. Reliance on oil revenues has sustained this model but discouraged reforms. Economic pressures and oil price volatility have exposed these structural weaknesses, underscoring the urgent need for diversification and public sector reform. [1095](#) In the KRI, the public sector also dominates, while the private sector remains limited and average incomes are generally low. Although the

energy sector is lucrative, only a small share of the population benefits from it. The economy is shaped by 'party patronage networks' of the KDP and PUK, reportedly making it difficult for individuals outside these networks to secure employment or maintain business operations.[1096](#)

The unemployment rate stood at 15.5 % in 2024, [1097](#) with women disproportionately affected (30.4 %) [1098](#) compared to men (13.3 %). [1099](#) Youth face challenges due to an oversaturated public sector, limited private sector opportunities, and a disconnection between education and labour market needs. Young women encounter additional barriers linked to conservative norms and discrimination. [1100](#) In the KRI, unemployment remains high, especially among youth and university graduates, within a system dominated by party patronage networks. [1101](#) In September 2024, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani warned that the state could no longer sustain continued public sector hiring, calling for a diversification of economic drivers. [1102](#)

Since May 2025, Baghdad suspended salary payments to civil servants in the KRG, citing the latter's alleged non-compliance with the federal budget law and its unilateral oil production and export activities. [1103](#) Negotiations between the federal government and the KRG over salary payments continued, amid disputes over fund transfers and federal audits of payroll data. [1104](#) In July, the two parties reached an agreement on oil and non-oil revenue sharing, [1105](#) leading to the payment of May salaries shortly after. [1106](#) Although the poverty rate decreased to 17.5 % in 2024, [1107](#) challenges remain in healthcare, and environmental sustainably domains. [1108](#) Socioeconomic disparities persisted, [1109](#) especially in conflict-affected areas like Anbar and Ninewa, where poverty rate exceeded 40 %. Women and individuals with disabilities face higher poverty levels, with female-headed households experiencing rates up to 30 % above the national average (See [section 2.6 on Women and girls](#)). [1110](#) The southern and northwestern governorates have the highest poverty incidence. [1111](#) Iraq's Social Protection Law guarantees cash benefits and social services to individuals or families below the poverty line. Two main social assistance programs exist: the Public Distribution System (PDS), providing food rations, and the Social Safety Net (SSN), a poverty-targeted conditional cash transfer. [1112](#)

As of November 2024, 1.5 million people experienced insufficient food consumption. [1113](#) The most affected governorates include Ninewa, Salah al-Din, Babil, Kirkuk, Dohuk, Thi Qar, Wassit, Sulaymaniyah, Baghdad, Najaf, Qadissiya, Diyala. [1114](#) Iraq is heavily dependent on food's import, [1115](#) particularly from the United States and neighbouring countries such as Türkiye and Iran, [1116](#) making access to food susceptible to price fluctuations driven by global oil and food prices. [1117](#) The increasing cost of a nutritious food basket means that access to a healthy diet is challenging. [1118](#) The shift to the electronic food ratio card system announced by the Minister of Trade is expected to streamline the food distribution process and improve efficiency across Iraq's food ration program. [1119](#)

Access to healthcare in Iraq does not formally require civil documentation, except for inpatient treatment, yet in practice proof of identity is often necessary, although practices vary throughout the country. [1120](#) The health system has been weakened by decades of conflict, instability, and the COVID-19 pandemic. [1121](#) Among the challenges identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) is the departure of many skilled health professionals, limiting access to quality basic healthcare. [1122](#) Access to medicine is declining, due to the a significant reliance

on large-scale import of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment.[1123](#) The healthcare system faces continued shortages of medicines, infrastructures and qualified personnel.[1124](#) Healthcare access is particularly challenging for IDPs (See [section 3.3 on Situation of the IDPs](#)).[1125](#) In response, between 2023 and 2025, the Ministry of Health inaugurated 15 new hospitals,[1126](#) including Baghdad's first public hospital in 40 years.[1127](#) It also announced, in July 2024, plans to construct 16 new 100-bed facilities to strengthen national healthcare coverage.[1128](#) A nationwide school health initiative, launched in November 2024, included the deployment of mobile health teams and the establishment of the first of 2 000 planned school health units, aimed at facilitating access to necessary health services and raise awareness about maintaining a healthy environment in schools.[1129](#)

According to estimates, more than 200 000 children remain out of school. While primary education enrolment in Iraq exceeds 91.6 %, access to preschool remains low. Gender disparities persist, with girls facing additional barriers such as early marriage and greater domestic responsibilities. The government's closure of IDP camps during 2024 further disrupted education, especially for children dependent on schools within or near the camps.[1130](#) (See [section 2.7 on Children](#)).

Despite being one of the world's richest gas and oil countries,[1131](#) Iraq suffers from shortages in gas[1132](#) and electricity supply, with Iraqis relying on costly and polluting private generators.[1133](#) The country relies heavily on imported natural gas from Iran, and supply disruptions have caused significant power losses and widespread outages,[1134](#) notably triggering protests across the country in July 2025.[1135](#) Deterioration in water quality is a major health threat at country level, with rivers said to be polluted.[1136](#) The United Nations Global Environment Outlook 6 (GEO-6) ranks Iraq as the fifth-most vulnerable country to decreasing water and food availability and extreme temperatures.[1137](#) Iraq suffers from a housing supply shortage,[1138](#) resulting in high rental costs amid population boom.[1139](#) Based on data gathered by the latest census and reported in an article published by Shafaq in May 2025, over nine million people lived in informal settlements.[1140](#) As of 30 June 2025, over 301 670 Syrian refugees were present in Iraq, with 89 % residing in the KRI and placing additional pressure on public services and infrastructure.[1141](#)

Despite stabilisation and reconstruction efforts, the situation in Iraq remains fragile,[1142](#) with protracted humanitarian and development needs.[1143](#) Ongoing instability, displacement, and poor public services characterise the situation.[1144](#) Nearly half of Iraqi children are experiencing multidimensional poverty, lacking access to food, water, shelter, education, and healthcare.[1145](#) Families with disabled members or many children are especially vulnerable.[1146](#) (See [section 2.7 on Children](#)).

## **Impact of climate change**

Iraq is among the top 15 countries most impacted by climate change[1147](#) and ranks fifth in vulnerability according to UNEP's GEO-6.[1148](#) Iraq's vulnerability to climate change[1149](#) intensifies existing challenges such as water scarcity,[1150](#) desertification, rising temperatures[1151](#) and declining agricultural productivity.[1152](#) Increased salinisation, desertification, reduced water flows in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and declining rainfall have resulted in the loss of 120 000 square kilometres of arable land, drastically affecting agricultural production.[1153](#)

Agriculture is a crucial sector of Iraq's economy, being the second largest contributor to Iraq's GDP after hydrocarbons.[1154](#) Drought and water shortage are severely affecting farms in central Iraq.[1155](#) The country experienced intensified droughts, and flooding.[1156](#) Sandstorms are becoming more frequent and intense, leading to increased hospitalisations and flight disruptions.[1157](#) The repercussions of the climate change crisis have disproportionately affected the most vulnerable communities,[1158](#) particularly displaced persons.[1159](#) Additionally, those living in Southern Iraq,[1160](#) Mesopotamian Marshes[1161](#) and near oil fields[1162](#) faced severe climate-related challenges, leading to distress and heightened food insecurity.[1163](#)

Effects of climate change threaten public health, agriculture, water resources and social cohesion, particularly in the Al-Jazira region.[1164](#) In southern Iraq, reduced water flow and high salinity in the Shatt Al-Arab have degraded arable land. [1165](#) Armed conflict also continued to degrade the environment.[1166](#)

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