

# International Organization for Migration Assessment of Return to Iraq

As displacement in Iraq has become limited to isolated incidents and return continues slowly, the focus turns to how best to assist the nearly 1.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country, whether they wish to return, integrate into the place of displacement, or go elsewhere. While IOM assessments show that approximately 53% of interviewed post-2006 IDPs wish to return, another 45% of those interviewed wish to integrate permanently into their places of displacement or move to a third location.

## INSIDE:

- Returnee figures and locations
- Places, dates, and reasons for return and displacement
- Returnee ethno-religious profile
- Humanitarian assessment & priority needs
- Return potential

Whether it is a matter of transport home, rebuilding property and livelihood or starting a permanent life in a different location, IDP and returnee families remain a vulnerable population in Iraq and are in urgent need of assistance to make their choices sustainable.

Since December 2007, families displaced by the sectarian violence which occurred in the wake of the February 22, 2006 Samarra mosque bombing have been returning in small numbers to Iraq both from internal displacement and displacement abroad. In cooperation with the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM), as well as local governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, IOM has identified approximately 58,110 returnee families and conducted in-depth needs assessment interviews with 4,061 of these families. This data is compiled into a database designed to aid the Iraqi government and other key stakeholders in assessing and reporting on the issue.

This collected information is explored in this report for a better understanding of key questions, such as where returnee families are, from where they have returned, why they have returned, and what they need in order to successfully restart their lives.

According to IOM assessments of 227,472 post-2006 IDP families in Iraq, almost 90% of post-2006 displacement originated in Baghdad, Diyala, and Ninewa governorates. The concentration of return is similar, with a high number of returns also occurring in Anbar.

Once families have returned, they are in need of assistance to rebuild. Many are searching for a reliable source of income. Nationwide, returnee families list food, non-food items, and fuel as their priority needs.



**40% of assessed returnees have sporadic access to PDS food rations, although there is increased support from humanitarian organizations.**

This document, along with a range of other IOM reports released on displacement in Iraq, can be found at <http://www.iom-iraq.net/library.html#IDP>.

# Methodology

Returnee information is gathered from MoDM, field visits conducted by IOM and MoDM monitors, local authorities, and other key stakeholders.

Working through the sources above, as of Oct. 7th, 2009 IOM field monitoring teams have identified 934 returnee locations comprising 58,110 returnee families (estimated 348,660 persons) in Iraq. Of these, IOM monitors have conducted in-depth interviews with a sample of 4,061 families (24,366 individuals). The table below outlines the locations and sizes of both identified and interviewed populations

The figure of identified returnee populations is not comprehensive, since not all returnees are immediately identified by monitors. However, it is likely that this list represents the majority of returnees.

Currently, IOM returnee monitoring methodology focuses on returnees who were displaced after the February 22, 2006 Samarra mosque bombing and the heightened sectarian violence which ensued. At this time, IOM does not focus its returnee monitoring program in locations where there was little or no post-2006 displacement, such as the three northern governorates in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

Governorate	Identified Returnee Families	Identified Returnee Families from Abroad	Number of Interviewed Families
Iraq	<b>58110</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4061</b>
Anbar	5553	18%	217
Babylon	306	8%	36
Baghdad	33521	5%	2196
Basrah	500	0%	26
Dahuk	6	0%	6
Diyala	10843	2%	331
Erbil	103	100%	103
Kerbala	298	21%	26
Missan	626	49%	77
Muthanna	64	88%	27
Najaf	221	60%	61
Ninewa	1732	1%	782
Qadisiya	44	45%	0
Salah al-Din	189	32%	10
Kirkuk	3873	3%	156
Thi-Qar	108	31%	0
Wassit	123	27%	7

Note that in some cases, for a deeper understanding of Iraqi return, in this report returnee interview responses are compared with those of IDPs interviewed by IOM. However, due to population size and the duration of monitoring, the interviewed IDP population is both larger than the interviewed returnee population (227,472 IDP families vs. 4,061 returnee families) and a different percentage of the overall estimated population (80% vs. 7%). In addition, IDPs are interviewed as groups of families or individual families, while returnees are always interviewed by individual family only. Therefore, comparisons between IDP interviews and returnees can add context, but should be understood within their differing methodologies.

## IOM Returnee Assessment Background

IOM has monitored internal displacement in Iraq since 2003. In 2007, IOM expanded its nationwide monitoring coverage to assess Iraqis who are returning from abroad and within Iraq to their places of origin, while continuing to assess recently displaced IDPs. IOM and MoDM are jointly implementing assessments.

IOM monitors to date have assessed only a fraction of the returnee locations identified. As capacity expands and assessments continue, new returnee locations will be identified and the in-depth assessments published by IOM will be based on an increasingly larger sample of the identified returnee population. However, for the time being, anecdotal reporting from IOM partners across the country does corroborate the humanitarian needs identified by IOM assessments thus far.

# Returnee Locations: A Summary

- The majority of identified returnees (33,521 families, or 58%) have returned to Baghdad governorate, while a significant proportion has also been identified in Diyala and Anbar.
- 54,451 of the returnees identified (94%) have returned from internal displacement, while the remaining 3,659 identified families (6%) have returned from abroad.
- Almost 90% of IOM-assessed post-Samarra IDPs were displaced from Baghdad, Diyala, and Ninewa, and almost 79% of identified returns are also located in these three governorates.



Identified returnee locations are mapped above. Please refer to Annex 1 for more detail.

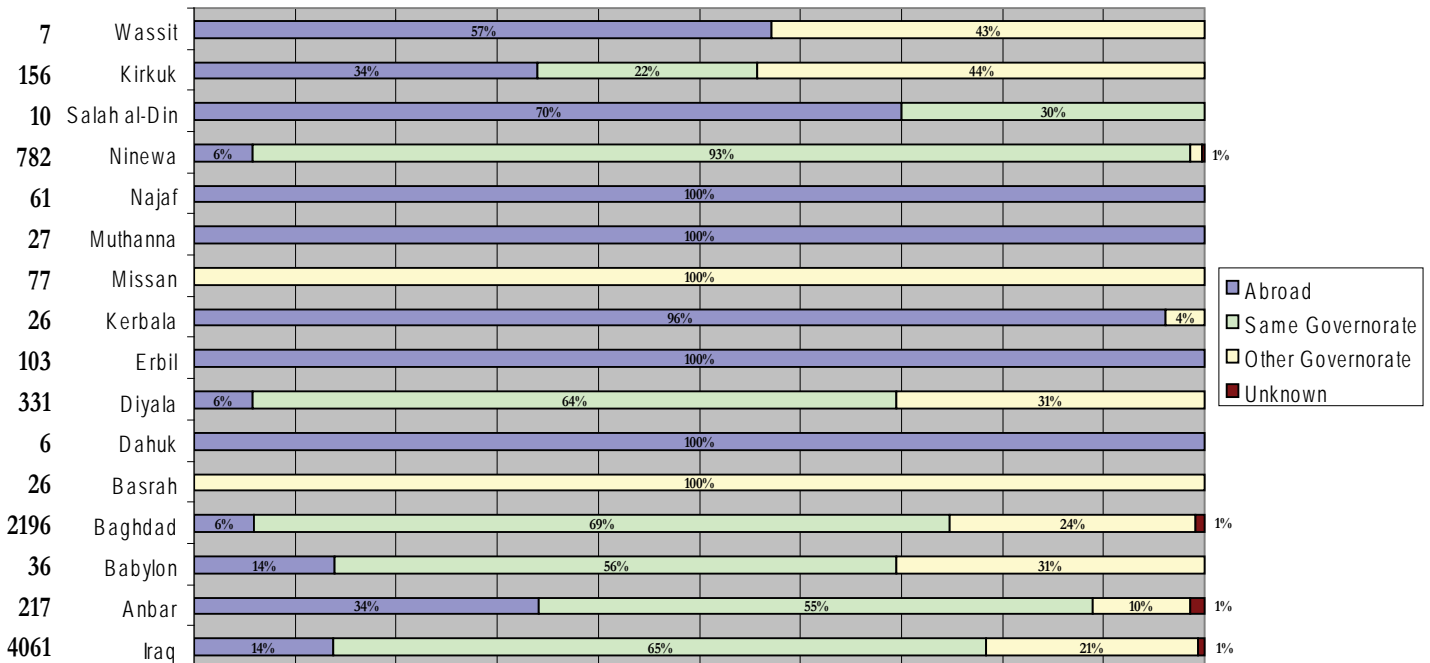
Returns continue to represent only a portion of the 282,251 IDP families registered in Iraq and the additional 250,000 families estimated to be displaced in neighboring countries.

The chart below shows from where interviewed returnee families are returning. Overall, 65% returned from within the same governorate, 21% returned from internal displacement in another governorate, and 14% returned from displacement outside of Iraq.

## Place of Return and Place of Displacement, Assessed Families

### Location of Displacement, By Governorate

Number of Families



According to previous IOM post-2006 IDP reports, 36% of all identified IDPs were displaced within their home governorates. The above chart indicates that, while representing only a third of the total IDP population, those who were displaced within their home governorates make up 65% of all interviewed returnees.

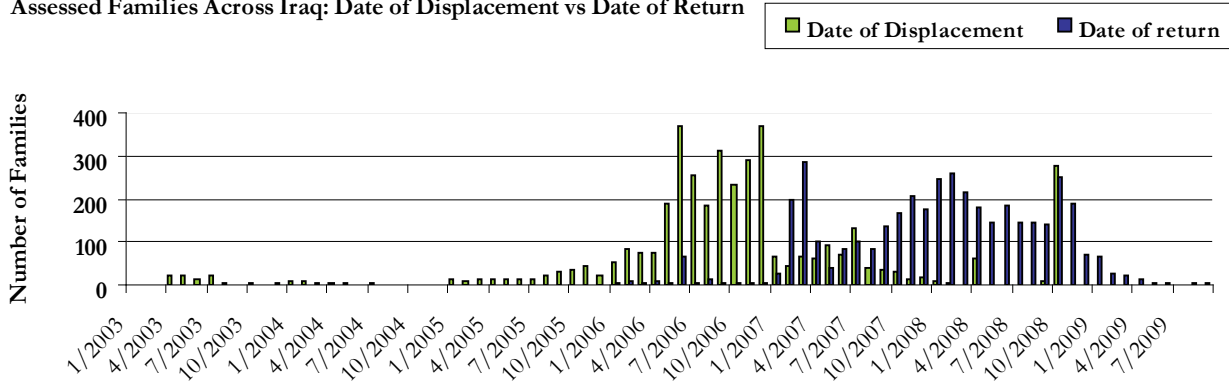
<sup>1</sup> According to MoDM Report 9, 31 December 2008 and DDM Registration.

<sup>2</sup> According to UNHCR's latest estimate.

# Dates of Displacement and Return

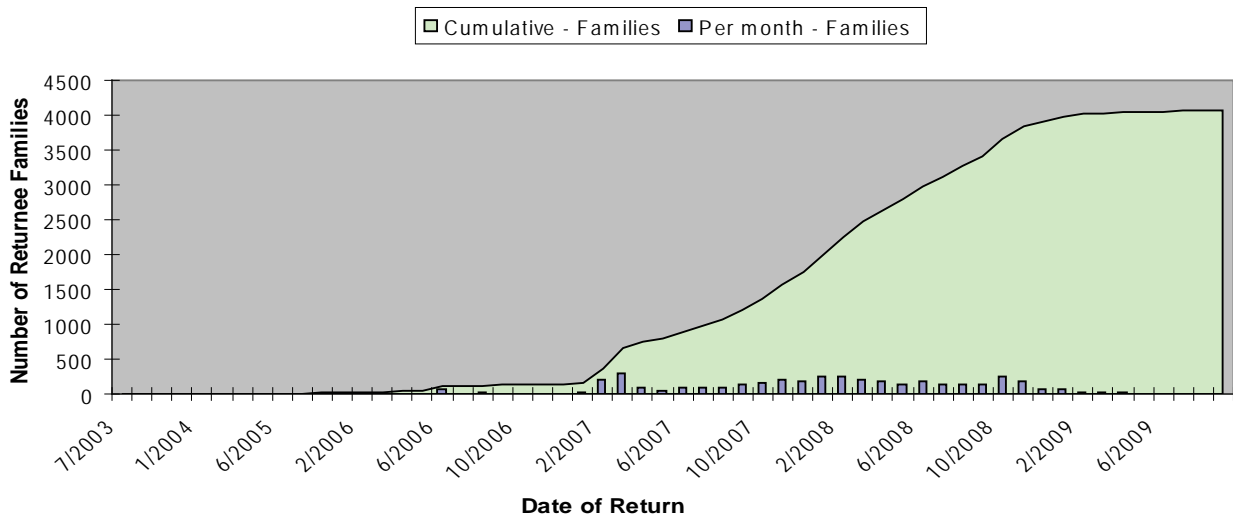
The majority of the interviewed returnee population (61%) was displaced in 2006 and returned after more than a year of displacement in 2007 or 2008.

Assessed Families Across Iraq: Date of Displacement vs Date of Return



As illustrated in the graph below, while monthly return figures vary according to the assessed population, return is slowly increasing. However, total identified return figures remain small relative to the IDP and refugee populations of Iraq.

Return of Families - Cumulative vs. Monthly Frequency



Until their return, the majority of interviewed families (58.1%) were displaced for more than one year:

Length of Displacement	Percent of Assessed Families
Less than 3 months	9.4%
3-6 months	15.4%
7-12 months	17.1%
13-18 months	19.1%
19-24 months	17.3%
25-36 months	14.7%
37-48 months	2.4%
49-60 months	0.4%
More than 60 months	4.2%



## Reasons for Displacement and Return

IOM returnee assessments focus on returnees who were displaced after the start of extreme sectarian violence in Iraq in February 2006. The majority of IDPs assessed by IOM report leaving their homes because of direct threats to their lives, generalized violence, and forced displacement from property. Returnees state similar reasons for having left, with the notable exception of those who were forcibly displaced from their property, who have returned in a smaller proportion.

Reason for Displacement	Percent of Assessed	Percent of Assessed
	Returnees	IDPs
Forced displacement from property	7.6%	23.6%
Armed conflict	5.0%	13.6%
Generalized violence	16.5%	14.3%
Direct threats to life	29.1%	10.5%
Left out of fear	21.7%	4.8%
Ethnic/religious/political discrimination	5.9%	0.0%
Other	14.2%	1.1%

According to IOM's interviewed population, return in Iraq is a combination of both "pull" and "push" factors. Many of the returnees assessed by IOM (43%) cited improved security as the main reason for deciding to return to their places of origin, while 33% said that a combination of improved security and harsh conditions in displacement brought them home. Such difficulties can include high rent, lack of employment opportunities, poor shelter and lack of basic services. However, this varies by governorate and district. For example, 56% of interviewed returnees in Ninewa cited only difficulties in displacement as the reason for returning home, while 85% of assessed families in Diyala returned because of improved security. Below are reasons for return by assessed returnee families.

Reasons for Return	Percent
Improved security in area of origin	43.17%
Improved security in area of origin and very difficult conditions in displacement	32.48%
Very difficult conditions in displacement	12.98%
Other	4.57%
Benefits from returnee payments	5.43%
Improved security in area of origin, very difficult conditions in displacement and benefits from returnee payments	2.58%
Very difficult conditions in displacement and benefits from returnee payments	1.14%

According to anecdotal reports from IOM field monitors, formerly displaced families feel a great deal of determination to avoid becoming displaced once again. The lack of employment and instability of displacement, sometimes combined with the "cultural" shock of moving between urban and rural locations, weigh heavily on IDP families. Other families state that they will avoid a second displacement at all costs because they fear that their homes and property will be looted.

In some cases, returnees are receiving governmental support to return. Some returnee families are eligible for a grant of 1 million Iraqi Dinar (\$840). In other cases, local policies are enacted to encourage return. For example, in Babylon children of returnee families are allowed to re-enter school at any time of the year, contrary to the standard rules. However, the documentation required to register as a returnee makes the process difficult, and not all returnee families register.

IOM returnee monitors in Baghdad report that return is encouraged by factors such as reinstatement of former employment, transportation assistance, repair of damaged homes and property, and renewed access to basic services such as water and electricity. Many families were particularly motivated by a desire to enroll their children in time for the start of the school year. In addition to these considerations, families in Diyala told IOM monitors that the returnee grants provided by the Government of Iraq (GoI) were helpful in encouraging their return.

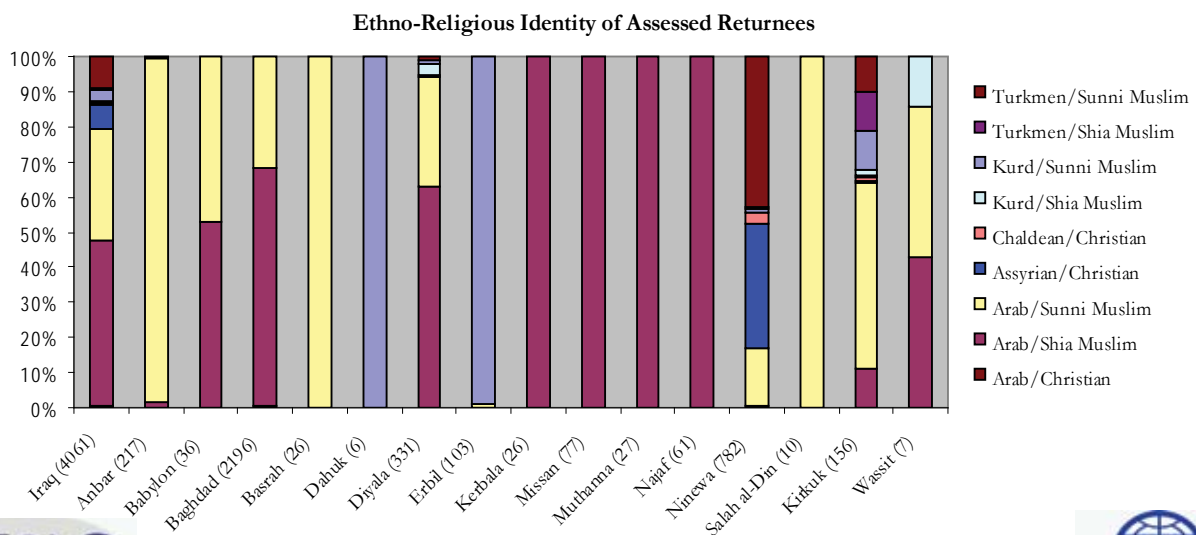
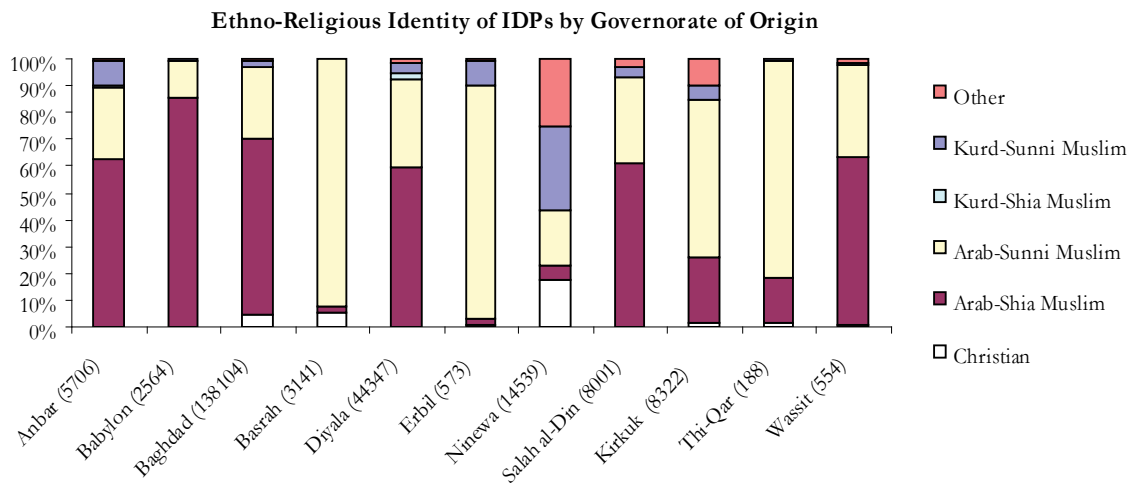
# Ethnicity and Religion

Post-2006 displacement in Iraq has been defined by the sectarian threats and violence at its roots. All ethnic and sectarian groups in the country have been affected by displacement to a certain extent. This can also be seen in the flows of assessed returning families.

Religious Identity of Returnees vs. IDPs	Percent of Returnees Assessed	Percent of IDPs Assessed
Arab Shia Muslim	49.4%	58.4%
Arab Sunni Muslim	31.0%	29.3%
Turkmen Sunni Muslim	9.7%	0.0%
Christian	8.9%	4.4%
Kurd Shia Muslim	0.4%	0.7%
Kurd Sunni Muslim	0.5%	4.4%
Other	0.2%	4.0%

The high percentage of Turkmen Sunni Muslims represents a large group of families, the majority of whom were displaced from Tel Afar district in 2005 and 2006 to other locations within Ninewa governorate. The majority of them returned to Tel Afar in 2008.

Ethno-religious identity of IDPs (according to the place of origin from which they fled) and returnees (according to their place of origin/return) are displayed in the two graphs below. A comparison shows that some ethnic and religious groups present among displaced populations in a particular governorate are absent until now among the returnee populations. For example, while 62% of IDPs displaced from Anbar governorate were Arab Shia Muslim, currently 1% of returnees are Arab Shia Muslim:



# Humanitarian Assessment of Returnees

## THIS SECTION:

- Security/Protection
- Shelter/Property
- Gender and Vulnerabilities
- Employment
- Water/Sanitation
- Fuel and Electricity
- PDS Distribution
- Health Care
- Education
- Priority Needs

## Security/Protection

The question of security in Iraq is key for both IDP and returnee families making decisions about their futures. Assessed returnee families overwhelmingly cite improved security as the reason for their return, and families who intend to return in the future say they are primarily waiting until they feel it is safe to do so.

76% of assessed returnees cited as the reason for their return either improved security in their place of origin or a combination of this and difficult conditions in their places of displacement. However, security still remains a concern for returnee families once they have come home. Among assessed returnees, 61% reported feeling safe all the time, and 38% reported feeling safe only some of the time.

Returnee families are using varying degrees of cooperation with local authorities to improve their security and mitigate threats once they return. In Baghdad and Diyala, local authorities are providing additional protection to returnee families who alert them of their arrival.

## Shelter/Property

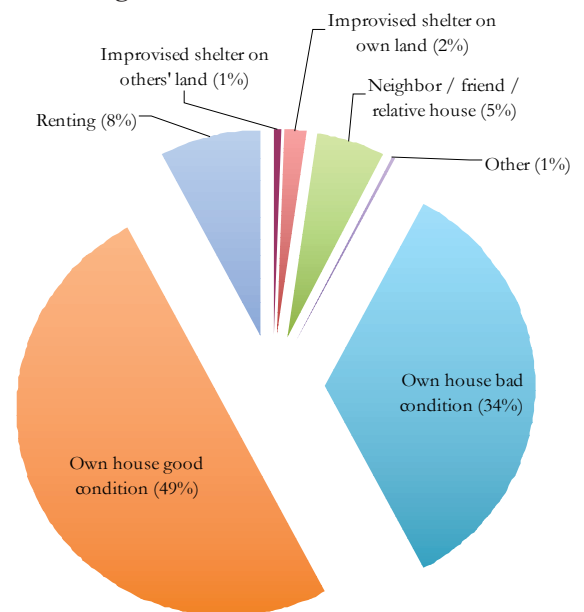
Former IDPs return home to reclaim, rebuild, and maintain their homes and other property, however many are in need of assistance to help them realize these goals. The graph of assessed returnees nationwide (right) indicates that 34% returned to find their homes in bad condition.

More specifically, in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, and Kirkuk governorates, the governorates with the highest numbers of returnees, 42.5% of assessed returnee families say their homes are partially or completely destroyed. In addition, 50% of returnees in these governorates no longer have their movable property, such as cars, due to loss or theft.

Home repair is also a serious consideration for potential returnee families. Of all IDP families assessed by IOM who say they would like to return in the future, one in five families have property that they know is partially or completely destroyed.

Property restitution remains a complex issue for returnees. There are currently several governmental and non-governmental initiatives to assist in this process, but it is still a serious concern. For example, in some cases during displacement families were forced to sign paperwork and contracts which now show that others are the rightful owners of the homes they fled. These trails of possession are difficult for assisting authorities to unravel.

**Housing Status of Returnees Nationwide**



## Gender and Vulnerabilities

Gender breakdown of the 4,061 assessed families (24,366 individuals) is as follows:

Of assessed households, 88% are headed by married men, 35% of whom are able to work but currently unemployed. Female-headed households number over 12% of assessed returnee families. Families supported by a female breadwinner are often some of the most vulnerable. Of those assessed, 70% are unable to work, and an additional 26% are able to work but have not found work.

Among assessed returnee female-headed households, food is consistently identified as a priority need (60% across Iraq) along with non-food items (NFIs) and fuel. In Baghdad, health and sanitation are major concerns for interviewed female-headed households. Access to legal help was also a serious issue, particularly in Diyala and Ninewa governorates.

### Employment

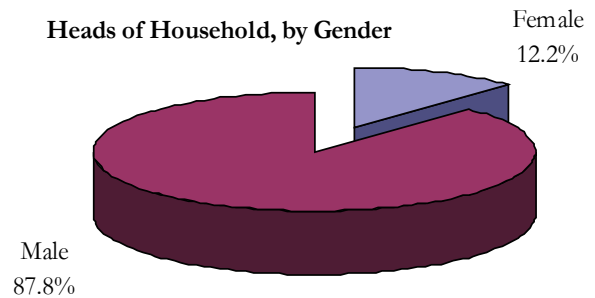
Of all IOM-assessed returnee families, 45% have at least one family member employed. Approximately one third (34%) of assessed returnee heads of household reported that they are able to work but cannot find employment.

Once returnees are home, finding employment is a key factor for promoting sustainable return. In Baghdad, some assessed returnees report worrying about having to move once again if they cannot find a source of income.

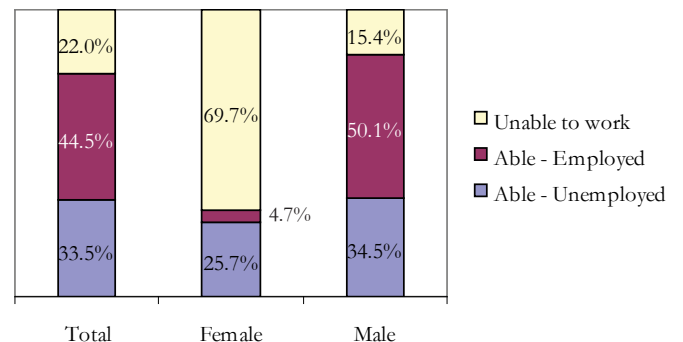
### Water and Sanitation

Access to potable water is a major concern of IDPs, returnees, and host community members alike because of the wider implications for health and disease prevention associated with clean water. 81.8% of assessed returnees have access to municipal water networks, although this does not guarantee that the water is potable.

**Heads of Household, by Gender**



**Employment Status by Head of Household**



**Water Source**

Water Source	Percent
Municipal water/pipe grid	81.8%
Rivers, streams or lakes	7.9%
Water tanks/trucks	4.4%
Open or broken pipe	2.6%
Public wells	2.2%
Other	1.1%



## Access to Fuel and Electricity

While 60% of the assessed returnee families mentioned fuel being accessible in their area, 59% of them said that it was too expensive for them to buy. Overall, IOM-assessed returnee families listed fuel as one of the highest priority needs. This is particularly serious in Ninewa governorate, where interviewed families listed it as a top need.

Daily Electrical Supply	Percent
1-2 hours	34%
3-6 hours	18%
7-10 hours	23%
11-18 hours	14%
More than 18 hours	2%
No electricity	4%
No answer	5%

## Organized Support: PDS Rations and Government Returnee Grants

98% of returnee families reported having a valid Public Distribution System (PDS) card. 40% of assessed returnees reported regular access to PDS rations, while 54% said they have intermittent access, and 6% said they have no access at all.

As part of its effort to encourage and support return, the Government of Iraq (GoI) currently offers a one-time grant of 1 million IQD (approximately US\$840) to eligible returnee families. Returnee families who qualify can apply for the grant as a follow-up to the process of registering as a returnee. In Baghdad, returnee families can apply through MoDM returnee centers that also offer property assistance and referral for other social services.

Of IOM-interviewed returnee families, 44% had registered as returnees and applied for the grant. Of these families, 39% had received the grant. Other than governmental support, 70% of returnee families interviewed in 2009 said that they had not received additional individual assistance.

## Health Care

Health care is reported as one of three top priority needs among IOM-assessed returnee families. Among the returnee families which IOM has assessed, 63% have access to health care. Lack of access is most often due to distance to the nearest health care center or lack of equipment and staff in the available medical facilities.

Over half (52%) of returnee families assessed in Baghdad say that they do not have access to health care. This is also a serious issue for 34% of returnees in Diyala and 86% of returnee families in Kirkuk.

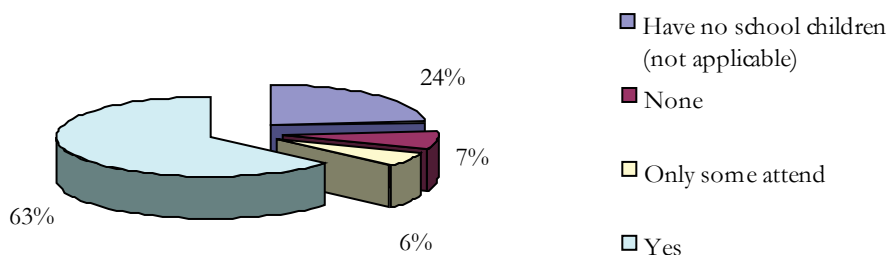
### Access to Health Facilities

Governorate	Do not have access	Have access
Total	36.6%	63.1%
Anbar	14.3%	85.7%
Babylon	38.9%	61.1%
Baghdad	51.8%	47.8%
Basrah	65.4%	34.6%
Dahuk	0.0%	100.0%
Diyala	34.1%	65.9%
Erbil	1.9%	98.1%
Kerbala	96.2%	3.8%
Missan	0.0%	100.0%
Muthanna	0.0%	100.0%
Najaf	3.3%	96.7%
Ninewa	1.4%	98.3%
Salah al-Din	0.0%	100.0%
Kirkuk	85.9%	14.1%
Wassit	14.3%	71.4%

## Education

Of returnee families assessed, 63% reported having school-age children and that their children were attending. A further 6% report that only some children attend, and 7% report that none of their children attend school.

### Do All of your School-Aged Children Attend School?



# Priority Needs of Assessed Returnees

When families return from both internal displacement and displacement abroad, they require varying types of assistance to rebuild their homes and their lives.

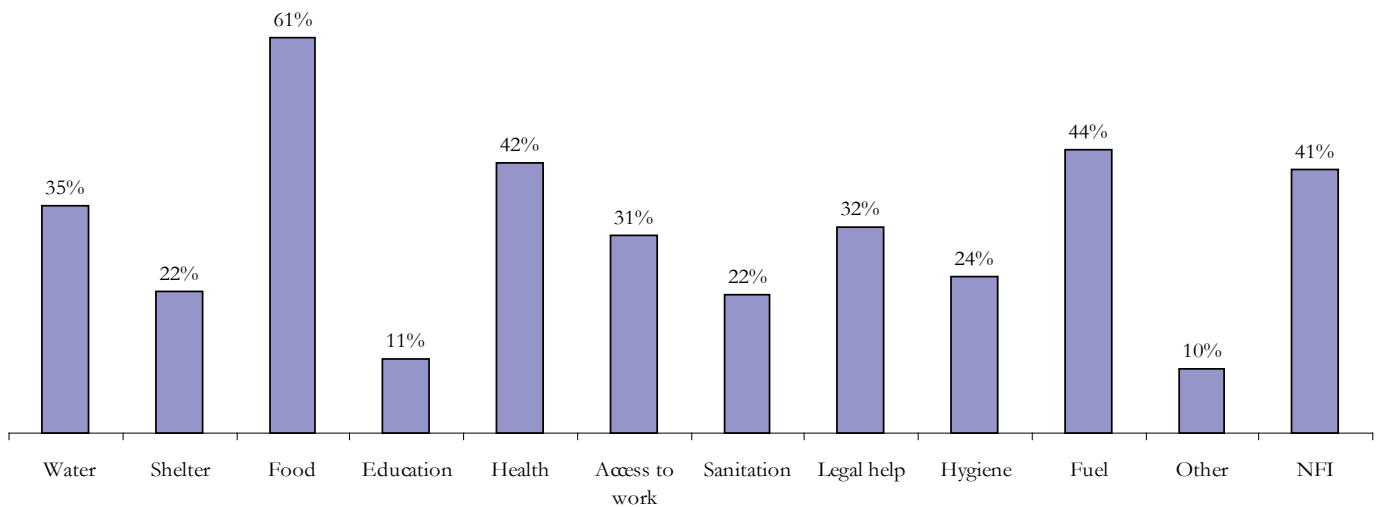
The most frequently reported priority needs among returnees are food (61%), fuel (44%), and health (42%). Non-food household items (NFIs), water, and legal help also rank high for returnee families, followed by hygiene and sanitation.

Housing is also a serious concern. Some returnee families have destroyed or damaged homes, while others do not have sufficient income to afford their monthly rent.



**35% of returnee families identified access to water as a priority need.**

**Priority Needs of Assessed Returnee Families**



## IOM Assistance to Returnees

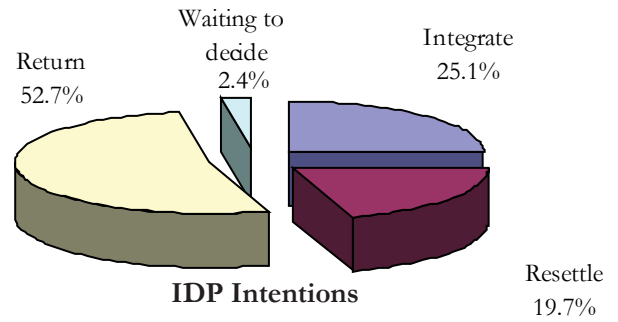
IOM currently has a variety of programs working to assist returnee families in Iraq. Among these is the Program for Human Security and Stabilization (PHSS) which provides income generation assistance through business start-up tools and training.

From January to March 2009, PHSS provided in-kind grants to help 200 returnee families start their own businesses. From July to September 2009, PHSS helped an additional 300 returnee families in Baghdad and Diyala with in-kind grants for businesses. Over the next 12 months, IOM will target an additional 6,500 individual returnee families with such assistance across the country.

In addition, IOM Iraq targets returnee families for assistance through emergency food and non-food item distributions and Community Assistance Projects (CAPs).

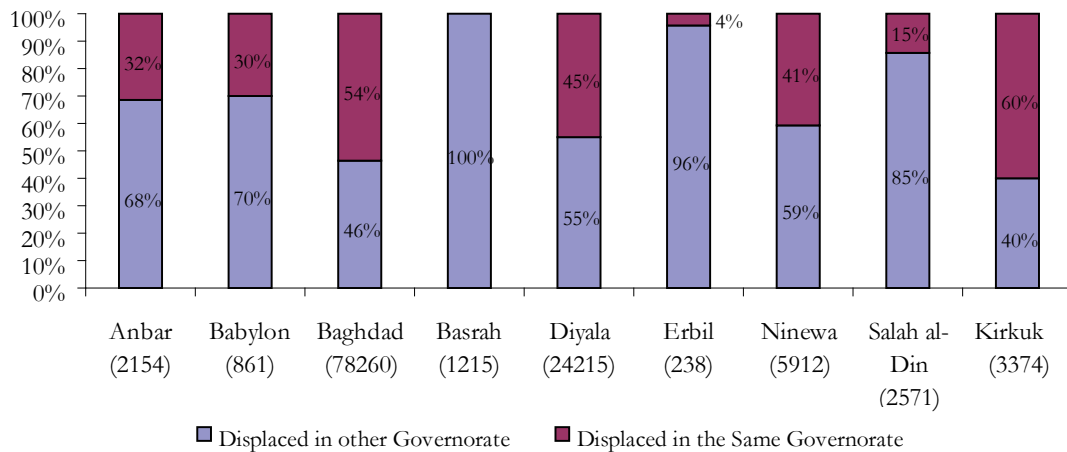
# IDP Intentions and Return Potential

According to IOM assessments of post-2006 IDP families, approximately 53% of interviewed returnee families wish to return to their place of origin, while 25% wish to integrate into their places of displacement, and 20% want to resettle in a third location.



The graph below details the 127,313 IOM-assessed families who intend to return, according to their governorates of origin. If conditions for return both persist and improve, Baghdad, Diyala, and Ninewa stand to receive large numbers of returnees, almost half of which would be from within the same governorate. However, while IDP families can state their intentions, the realization of these intentions depends on a variety of factors such as security, family finances, and access to property and basic services after returning.

**Breakdown of 127,313 IOM-assessed IDP Families Who Intend to Return (Population is 52.7% of Total Assessed)**



For additional governorate-specific information on return potential, please see IOM Governorate Profiles at <http://www.iom-iraq.net/idp.html>.

## Returnees and Return Potential: Baghdad

According to the the July 2009 IOM Baghdad Governorate Profile, Baghdad is currently receiving, and will likely continue to receive, the largest number of returnees of all Iraq governorates. The majority of current returnees in Iraq are from Baghdad, with particularly large numbers in the districts of Karkh and al-Resafa. These districts also have large numbers of IDPs who intend to return in the future, meaning that the returnee population is expected to continue to increase as conditions around Baghdad improve.

## Conclusion

While the total number of returns in Iraq continues to slowly grow since the end of 2007, it remains a small fraction of the total Iraqi IDP and refugee populations. In the face of uncertain security improvements, the future of return is also unsure. Many IDP families continue to say that they are waiting for security to improve in order to return.

IOM returnee assessments show that 'pull' factors such as improved security in place of origin are more encouraging of return than 'push' factors such as difficult conditions in place of displacement. However, as prolonged displacement makes life difficult for Iraq's internally displaced and refugees, this could change.

Returning home means facing a new set of challenges for Iraqi families. 34% of IOM-assessed returnee families report that they are able to work yet unemployed, 34% returned to partially or completely destroyed property, and 75% have less than 6 hours of electricity per day. In addition, the majority were displaced for more than one year, meaning that they return carrying the stress and financial debilitation of long-term displacement.

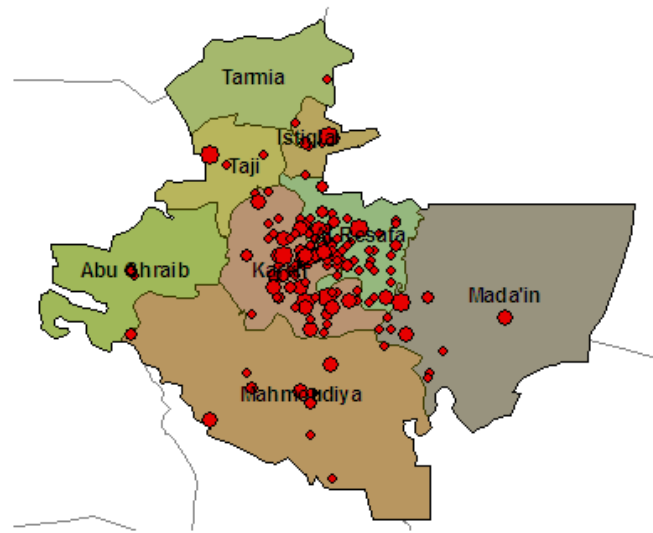
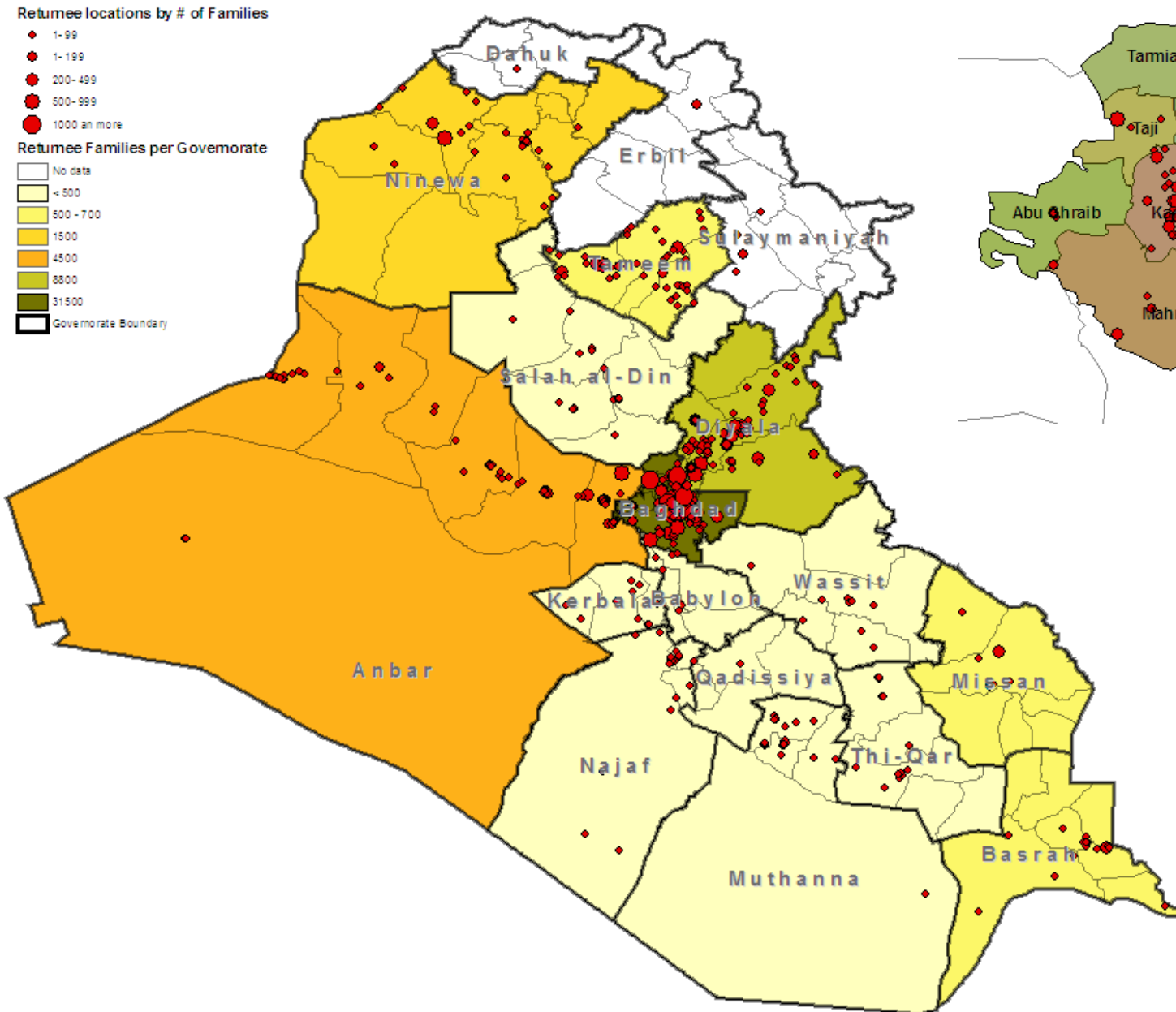
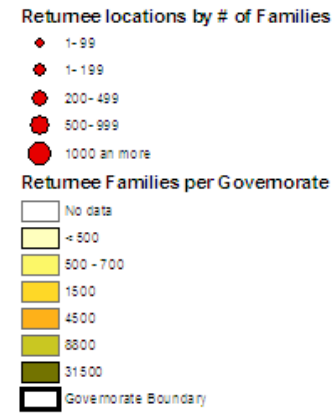
Priority needs nationwide for assessed returnees are food, non-food items, and fuel. Employment, difficult to find for many in Iraq, is of particular concern to returnee families when they come home. Some would like to regain old jobs, and others are looking for a new source of income to support their families. Returnee needs and conditions differ considerably from governorate to governorate and from district to district. Access to water and basic services such as legal help, health, and hygiene are also listed by many families as priority needs.

65% of interviewed returnees returned home from displacement within the same governorate, showing that return is more likely to occur for intra-governorate displacement. While intra-governorate displacement is less than half of total IDP displacement nationwide, it is often easier for these families to coordinate the move home.

*Returnee reports, along with IOM's regular reporting on displacement, including governorate profiles, monthly updates, tent camp updates, and yearly and mid-year reviews, are available at <http://www.iom-iraq.net/library.htm#IDP>.*

*For further information on IDPs and returnees in Iraq, please contact Rex Alamban, Head of IOM Iraq Joint Operations Cell at [ralamban@iom.int](mailto:ralamban@iom.int) or Liana Paris, IOM Monitoring Officer, at [lparis@iom.int](mailto:lparis@iom.int) (+962 6 565 9660 extensions 1067 and 1033).*

# Iraq - Returnee Families and Locations per Governorate October 2009



Governorate	Identified Returnee Families	Identified Returnee Families from Abroad	Number of Interviewed Families	Number of Locations
<b>Iraq</b>	<b>58110</b>	<b>3659</b>	<b>4061</b>	<b>934</b>
Anbar	5553	1001	217	186
Babylon	306	23	36	24
Baghdad	33521	1543	2196	192
Basrah	500	2	26	21
Dahuk	6	0	6	1
Diyala	10843	164	331	160
Erbil	103	103	103	1
Kerbala	298	63	26	17
Missan	626	305	77	14
Muthanna	64	56	27	30
Najaf	221	132	61	34
Ninewa	1732	9	782	104
Qadissiya	44	20	0	2
Salah al-Din	189	60	10	17
Kirkuk	3873	112	156	100
Thi-Qar	108	33	0	15
Wassit	123	33	7	16