

# Baghdad Governorate Profile



Source map: [Joint Analysis and Policy Unit](#)

## Baghdad at a Glance

### Fast Facts

- Area: 4555 km<sup>2</sup> (1759 sq mile)
- Average High Temperatures: 15,5°C (January) to 44°C (July)
- Population: 6,696,596
- Capital City: Baghdad
- Average Low Temperatures: 3,8°C (January) to 25,5°C (July)
- Population Distribution Rural-Urban: 13%-87%

## Geography and Climate

Located in the Tigris alluvial plain in central Iraq, Baghdad is the smallest governorate of the country. The climate of Baghdad is characterized as hot and arid. The governorate receives between 4 and 7 inches of rain annually between November and March. During the summer, temperatures often exceed 40°C and dust storms frequently blow into Baghdad from the west.

## Population and Administrative Division

Despite being the smallest governorate, Baghdad has the largest population of all Iraqi governorates and is also the location of Iraq's capital, Baghdad, the most populous city of the country. The governorate is divided in 14 districts. The districts of Adhamiyah, Karkh, Karadah, Kadhimyah, Mansour, Sadr City, Al Rashid, Rusafa and 9 Nissan are part of Baghdad city, while the districts of Al-Mada'in, Taji, Tarmiya, Mahmudiya and Abu Ghraib comprise the rest of the governorate.

The governorate's population is primarily urban. The governorate and Baghdad city itself are one of the few areas with a mixed population of Shia and Sunni Muslims, next to a number of smaller Christian communities.

## Economy

Baghdad city is Iraq's main economic hub. The city is the center for commerce, banking and the financial sector, and is a crucial location for the petroleum industry. The governorate's eastern Baghdad oil field is Iraq's largest proven reserve of crude oil. Other industries like leather, cement and tobacco are also found in the governorate. Baghdad is well connected to other parts of the country by both road and rail, and is home to the Baghdad International Airport, one of the most important airports in Iraq. The capital also hosts four universities and a large number of primary and secondary schools, and technical institutions for research and education.

## **Historical Introduction**

The area comprising the Baghdad governorate has a long and illustrious history, stretching back thousands of years. To understand the unique place that Baghdad has in the current humanitarian situation, it is important to take a look at the recent history.

During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), Baghdad was hit by several Iranian missiles and suffered from the general diversion of funds towards the military which caused the neglect of public services and infrastructure. The First Gulf War (1991) caused even more damage and loss of human life in the governorate. Baghdad's military industry, a lot of its transportation infrastructure, power plants and water treatment plants, as well as many civilian homes and businesses were destroyed in the aerial campaign of the US-led coalition.



Haifa street in Baghdad. Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Although the governorate was in dire need of foreign assistance to rebuild its infrastructure after more than a decade of war, the economic sanctions imposed by the UN in the wake of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait deprived the country of the much needed resources for reconstruction. Chlorine and other dual-use chemicals necessary for sewage treatment for example were barred from importation. The government also lacked the resources needed to repair the national power grid, leaving many parts of Iraq in the dark. Child and

infant mortality rates rose steadily in the 1990s, reaching nearly double the average rate of the 1980s. Between 200,000 and 1.5 million deaths have been attributed to the sanctions, which were only lifted in May 2003.

The US-led invasion of 2003 again targeted Baghdad from the air, and the city saw heavy fighting during the "fall of Baghdad". Acts of looting and crime were rampant during the first months of the American occupation. Occupied Iraq was ruled from the so called "green zone", an area of central Baghdad insulated by heavy security measures. Baghdad had been one of the cities with a mixed population of Sunni and Shia Muslims, and became one of the major battlegrounds in the sectarian strife that engulfed Iraq between 2006 and 2007. After the February 2006 bombing of the Al-Askari mosque in Samarra, an important Shia shrine, the Shia Mahdi army and other Shia militias forced many Sunnis to leave the city. Sectarian inspired bombings and assassinations soon ripped through the governorate, leading many of its inhabitants to resettle along sectarian lines, thus creating homogenous Sunni or Shia neighborhoods. Others left the governorate altogether and fled to other parts of the country.

In January 2007, the Bush administration attempted to quell the sectarian violence by launching the "New Way Forward" strategy, commonly known as "the Surge". As part of the surge, more than 20,000 additional American troops were deployed in Iraq, especially in the Baghdad area. At the same time an American-Sunni alliance known as the Sahwa (Awakening) movement was formed. The Sahwa movement tried to incorporate Sunni fighters from different Sunni communities in the fight against the sectarian violence.

The US Army also erected a wall around the predominantly Sunni neighborhood of Adhamiya in Baghdad to seclude it from the neighboring Shia areas, thus reinforcing the sectarian division and homogenization of the city. By August 2007, Muqtada Al-Sadr, a Shia cleric and leader of the Mahdi

army, declared a unilateral ceasefire. The Mahdi army had lost considerable strength and influence, primarily due to military pressure from American and Sahwa forces. The period of sectarian conflict and cleansing however had already succeeded in significantly changing Baghdad's balance of power in favor of Shia-affiliated political groups and militias. Mixed neighborhoods had all but disappeared in favor of a city divided on sectarian lines, and Baghdad's once sizeable Sunni community had dwindled to a mere 10 to 15% of its population.

## Humanitarian Issues

Since 2003, Baghdad governorate witnessed a number of attacks directly targeting NGOs and humanitarian actors. The bombings of the UN and ICRC headquarters and the kidnapping and killing of a number of humanitarian workers led to the exodus of many NGOs from the country's capital. As of today, the UN and many international NGO's still limit their activities in Baghdad to the heavily protected Green Zone. The improving security situation in Baghdad governorate after the sectarian fighting in 2007 enticed many NGOs to resume their activities in Baghdad. The security situation in Baghdad however remains tense: bombings, firefights and kidnappings still occur almost daily in the city.

	Population under the poverty line	Unemployment	Enrollment primary education	Enrollment secondary education	Literacy
<b>Baghdad Governorate</b>	2,8%	9,7%	92,1%	50,7%	88,1%
<b>National Averages</b>	11,5%	11,3%	90,4%	48,6%	79% <sup>1</sup>

Concerning development parameters, Baghdad governorate ranks above the Iraqi average. Only 2,8 percent of the governorates population lives under the national poverty line of \$2.5 a day, compared to 11,5% nationwide. The unemployment rate of 9,7% is also lower than Iraq's average unemployment rate of 11,3%, but it should be noted that large numbers of urban youth are left without a job.

The net enrollment rate for primary education reaches 92,1%, while the enrollment rates for secondary education are 50,7%. The Iraqi averages are lower at respectively 90,4% enrollment rate for primary education and 48,4% for secondary education. Literacy rates at ages above ten in Baghdad are also significantly higher at 88,1% compared to the country's average of 79%. It should be noted that development parameters differ between different districts in the governorate. Public services like electricity, drinking water and sewage are also less reliable or even completely unavailable for residents of certain areas.

<sup>1</sup>As by UNICEF, *State of The World's Children 2015 Country Statistics Table*, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq_statistics.html) , 25/02/2015. All other data are from JAU, Baghdad Governorate Profile 2013, <http://www.jauiraq.org/documents/475/GP-Baghdad%202013.pdf> , 24/02/2015.

The most acute humanitarian challenge faced by the Baghdad governorate is the large number of IDPs hosted in the area. The governorate already witnessed a large IDP influx in the years following the 2003 invasion, but an even bigger number of IDPs entered Baghdad fleeing the violence that broke out in late 2013 in neighboring Anbar. The IS onslaught in 2014 and 2015 also drove inhabitants of other governorates like Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Babel, Kirkuk and Diyala to the relative safety of Baghdad. For an up to date overview of the numbers and locations of IDPs, refugees and camps in the governorate please consult [IOM's displacement tracking matrix](#) or [REACH Iraq's resource center](#).

Baghdad's central location, the relative cheap cost of living and the presence of earlier arrived IDPs are all factors that are pulling new arrivals to the governorate. The majority of IDPs is residing with family or friends in the governorate or is renting housing. Others have sought refuge in religious buildings, schools, military camps, informal settlements or abandoned buildings. A smaller number is residing in camps. IDPs that are living in rented housing often have difficulties paying the rent. Others who are residing in so called vulnerable housing like schools or unfinished buildings, are at risk of being expelled from these locations and are often excluded from basic services and health care.

## Presence of NGOs

Please see the [members' area](#) on NCCI's website for full access to our weekly field reports, which include an up to date humanitarian situation overview. NCCI's [online NGO mapping](#) gives an oversight of local and international NGO presence on a governorate level.

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