

INFORMAL SITES ASSESSMENT 2024

JANUARY 2025



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ACRONYMS

CCCM Camp Coordination and Camp Management

GoI Government of Iraq

HCT Humanitarian Country Team

HTO Humanitarian Transition Overview

IDP Internally displaced person

ISIL Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

IOM-DTM International Organization for Migration-Displacement Tracking Matrix

MoMD Ministry of Migration and Displacement

RART Rapid Assessment and Response Teams

INTRODUCTION

Displaced and returnee families residing in informal sites are vulnerable and face considerable challenges in achieving durable solutions to displacement. Living conditions in these sites are particularly difficult, especially concerning critical shelter types and land ownership.

In light of the humanitarian transition, the Iraq Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) developed the Humanitarian Transition Overview (HTO) for the second consecutive year. The 2024 HTO highlights ongoing humanitarian efforts, focusing on residual needs and significant gaps that require continued attention from both the Government of Iraq (GoI) and the humanitarian community. The GoI announced plans to close the remaining internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps and withdraw services by 30 July 2024, which raised concerns about an increase in families residing in informal sites, particularly those with limited access to essential services. Following 30 July 2024, no new deadline for the closure

of the camps has been provided. According to the Movement of Camp IDPs report, 3 per cent of the population leaving camps remain IDPs in informal sites or collective shelters, while 19 per cent are returning to their areas of origin but still living in informal sites or collective shelters.¹ While the proportion of families in informal sites remains low (6% of IDPs and 0.001% of returnees), focused research and programming are essential to address the unique vulnerabilities of this population and ensure their needs are met.

This report provides an overview of informal sites across 40 districts in 15 governorates of Iraq, highlighting the number of sites and the population residing in them. It also offers thematic analysis, structured around key factors such as critical shelter types for both IDPs and returnees, land ownership, areas of origin of IDPs and last areas of last displacement for returnees.

METHODOLOGY AND COVERAGE

The International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) assesses all informal sites in 15 governorates of Iraq. The data were collected from May to August 2024 and covered 285 locations, reaching **62,742** IDPs and **6,792** returnees, representing **6 per cent** and **0.001 per cent** of the total IDP and returnee populations in Iraq, respectively.

The Informal Sites Assessment was carried out by IOM's Rapid Assessment Response Teams (RARTs) using a combination of **key informant interviews** and **direct observation**. The data were collected at the aggregate level, focusing on the majority of IDPs or returnees living in the site rather than individual households.

Informal sites are defined by the following criteria provided by the Iraq Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster: (1) areas not built to accommodate displaced and returnee families but serving that purpose; (2) authorities are not responsible for management or administration; (3) services and assistance may be absent or provided irregularly; (4) there are at least five households in the site.²

The Informal Sites Assessment identifies all critical shelters for IDPs and returnees, where five or more households reside in either 1) tent/caravan/makeshift shelter/mud or block house; 2) unfinished/abandoned building; 3) public buildings or collective shelters; 4) religious building; 5) school building or 6) other critical shelters are labelled as the informal site.

Critical shelters also include the following categories: 7) apartment/house (not owned and uninhabitable - IDPs only); 8) residence of origin (owned and uninhabitable - returnees only).

The Informal Sites Assessment also identifies whether the informal site contains: (1) families displaced from their neighbourhood or village of origin as a result of Iraq's war against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), who are defined as IDPs; (2) families that have been displaced and subsequently returned to an informal site in their neighbourhood or village of origin, who are defined as returnees; or (3) both IDPs and returnees.

IOM DTM assesses the total number of displaced and returnee families across Iraq every four months and calculates the number of individuals by multiplying the number of families reported in a site by six, the average family size in Iraq.

IOM DTM's caseload includes those who were displaced as a result of the war with ISIL in 2014 and its aftermath and also those who returned. Those displaced before 2014 and the stayee communities³ are not included in these assessments.

The informal sites assessment was conducted in the location, population, shelter type and land ownership of all informal sites that was collected in 15 governorates.

1 [Movement of Camp IDPs report](#), published on DTM's website on 30 December 2024.

2 [Technical Guidance on Informal Site Definition](#). CCCM Cluster Iraq (V.2 Sept 2020).

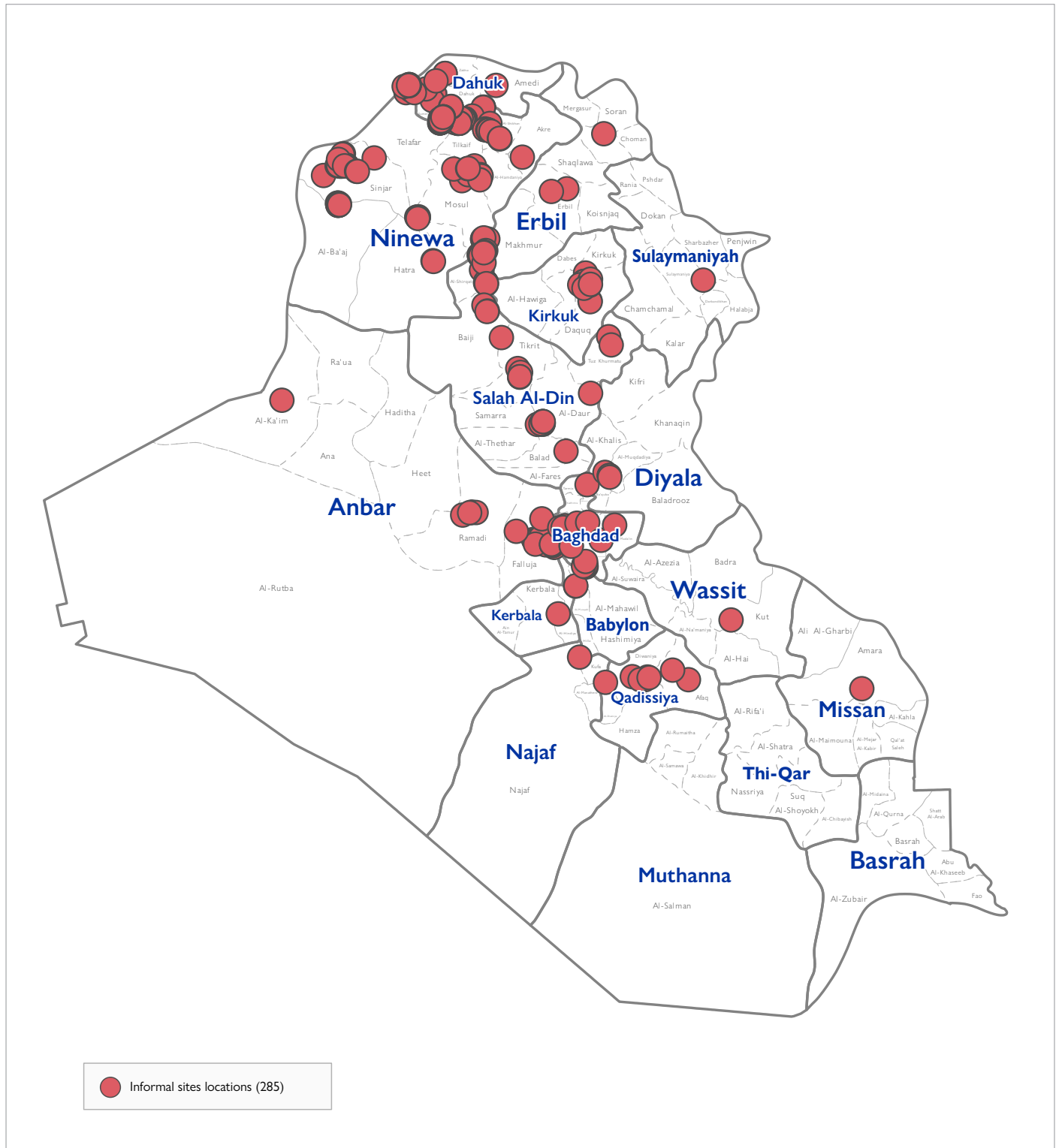
3 Stayee communities are defined here as families residing in their area of origin who were not displaced because of Iraq's conflict with the ISIL or its aftermath.

INFORMAL SITES: FIGURES AND POPULATION

As of August 2024, DTM recorded a total of **285 informal sites**.⁴ IDP families were present in 260 informal sites, while returnee families were present in 28 sites.⁵ This result reflects a reduction compared to August 2022, when 401 informal sites were recorded, with IDP families residing in 376 sites and returnee

families in 27 sites. Informal sites have decreased since the last report in 2022 mostly in Dahuk Governorate (47 sites) due to IDPs returning to their areas of origin, relocation of some IDPs from informal sites to camps as space became available and the merging of nearby informal sites.

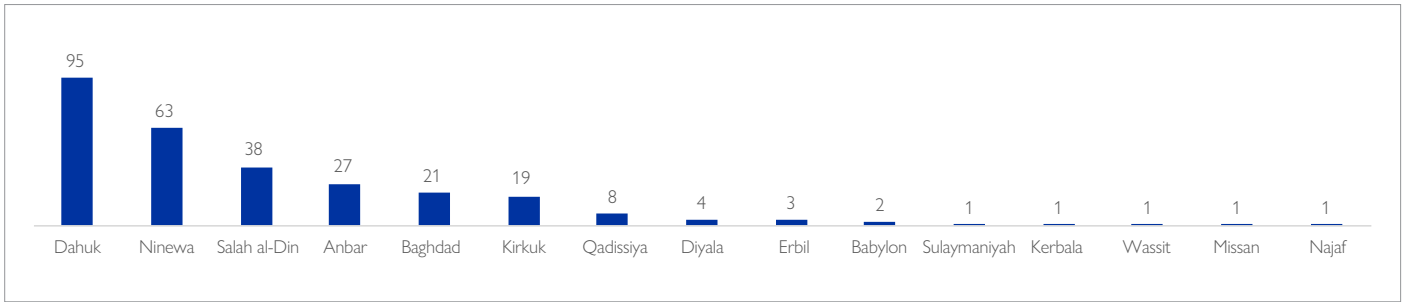
Map 1: Informal sites locations



4 For further information about the informal sites list, please contact dtmiraq@iom.int.

5 There are two sites in which both IDPs and returnees are present. The first site is located in Al-Ka'im district, Anbar Governorate and the second site is located in Sinjar district, Ninewa Governorate. In both sites, the majority of individuals are returnees rather than IDPs.

Figure 1: Governorates of informal sites



Dahuk Governorate contains 33 per cent of the informal sites nationwide (95 sites), with Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates accounting for a further 22 and 13 per cent, respectively (63 and 38 sites). At the district level, Sumel

District accounts for 27 per cent of all informal sites (78), with Falluja District containing a further 7 per cent of Iraq’s informal sites (21).

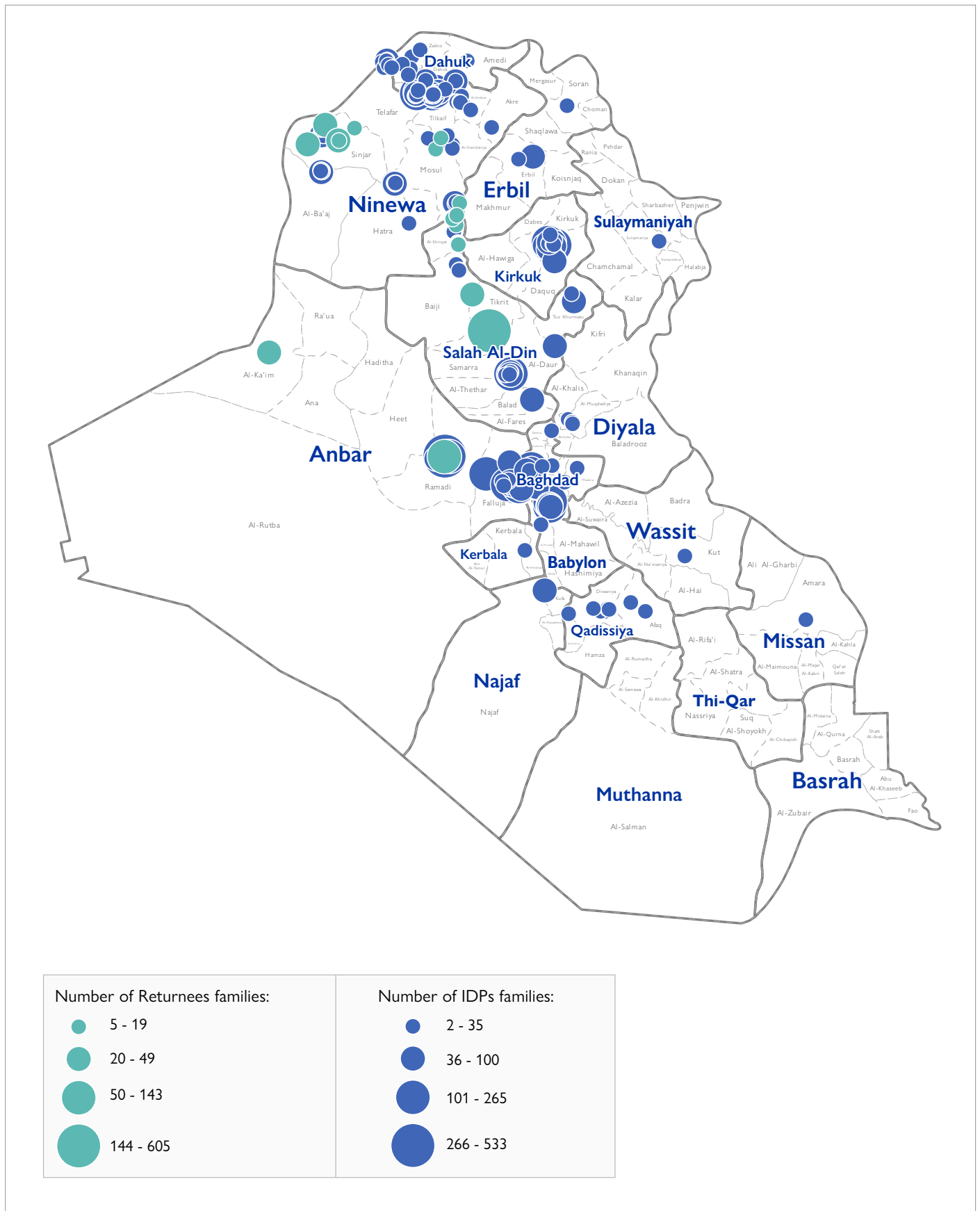
Figure 2: Population of informal sites



Overall, **17,196 families** were recorded as residing in informal sites (10,457 IDP families, 1,132 returnee families, 5,322 stayee families and 285 families that were displaced before 2014). The largest share of this population is in **Anbar Governorate (27%)**, followed by **Dahuk (21%)** and **Salah al-Din (15%)**. By

district, the largest share of the IDP population in informal sites reside in **Sumel District, Dahuk Governorate (20%)**, **Falluja District, Anbar Governorate (19%)** and **Kirkuk District, Kirkuk Governorate (13%)**.

Map 2: IDPs and Returnees population in Informal Sites

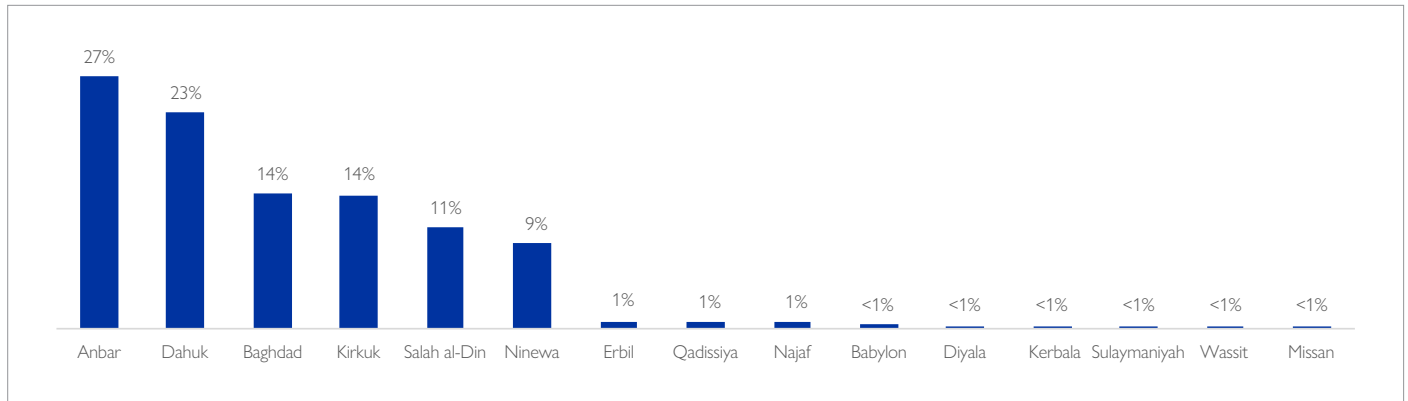


IDP POPULATION IN INFORMAL SITES

A total of **10,457 displaced families (62,742 individuals)** residing in informal sites were recorded in this report. **Anbar Governorate** hosted **27 per cent** of these families (2,777 families), followed by **Dahuk (23%, 2,381 families)**, **Baghdad Governorate (14%, 1,478 families)** and **Kirkuk Governorate (14%,**

1,467 families). Districts with the highest IDP population in informal sites include **Sumel and Falluja** districts, which account for **20 per cent and 19 per cent** respectively (**2,067 and 1967 families**) of the total count.

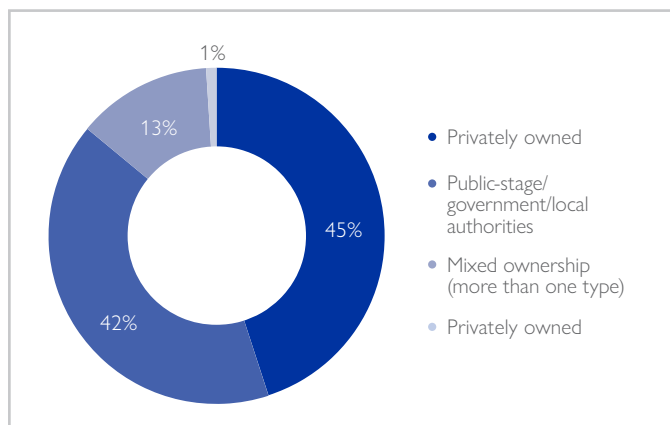
Figure 3: Governorates of IDP families in informal sites



LAND OWNERSHIP OF THE IDP INFORMAL SITES

The analysis of land ownership across 260 informal sites with IDP populations reveals a diverse range of ownership type. A significant portion of these sites (**45%**) are on **privately owned land**, indicating that many IDP families reside on land held by individuals or private entities. This can present challenges to long-term stability, as private ownership increases eviction risks or informal rental agreements that affect the housing security arrangements. Meanwhile, **42 per cent** of these sites are located on land owned by **public entities, including the state, Government or local authorities**. The majority of these lands are owned by government entities, such as district municipalities and various ministries. In some cases, the Directorates of Municipalities in these areas seek to reclaim the land to develop facilities like schools or roads. In other cases, eviction is based on the irregular nature of the informal settlements. In addition, in **13 per cent** of the sites, land ownership is mixed, involving **more than one type of owner**. This structure can lead to complex management and coordination challenges, as multiple stakeholders with differing interests may be involved in decisions affecting the land use. A smaller proportion of sites (**1%**) are on land owned by **religious authorities**, illustrating a limited but distinct role of religious organizations in providing land for displaced families.

Figure 4: Land ownership of the Informal Sites with IDP population



DISTRICT OF ORIGIN OF THE IDPs IN INFORMAL SITES

In each of the 260 assessed IDP sites, key informants were asked about the districts of origin for the **10,457 displaced families (62,742 individuals)**. Notably, **27 per cent** of the IDPs (14,094 individuals) originated from **Al-Musayab District in Babylon Governorate**. Due to blocked return areas in Al-Musayab, most have resettled in informal sites in **Mahmoudiya and Fallujah districts**, with populations of **6,726 and 6,690 individuals**, respectively. Additionally, **19 per cent** of the total IDP population (10,218 individuals) is originally from **Sinjar District in Ninewa Governorate**, with the majority now residing in informal sites in **Sumel District, Dahuk Governorate**. Another significant group of 7,740 individuals (**15%**) from **Al-Ba'aj District in Ninewa Governorate**, also primarily displaced to informal sites in **Sumel District**. Finally, 6,378 IDPs (**12%**) are originally from **Fallujah District in Anbar Governorate**, with the majority (79 %) displaced within the same district.

Figure 5: District of Origin of IDPs in Informal Sites

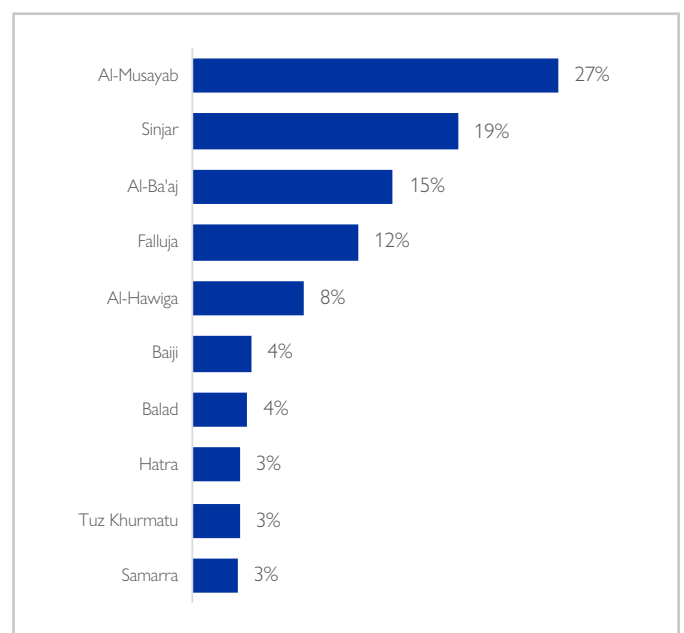
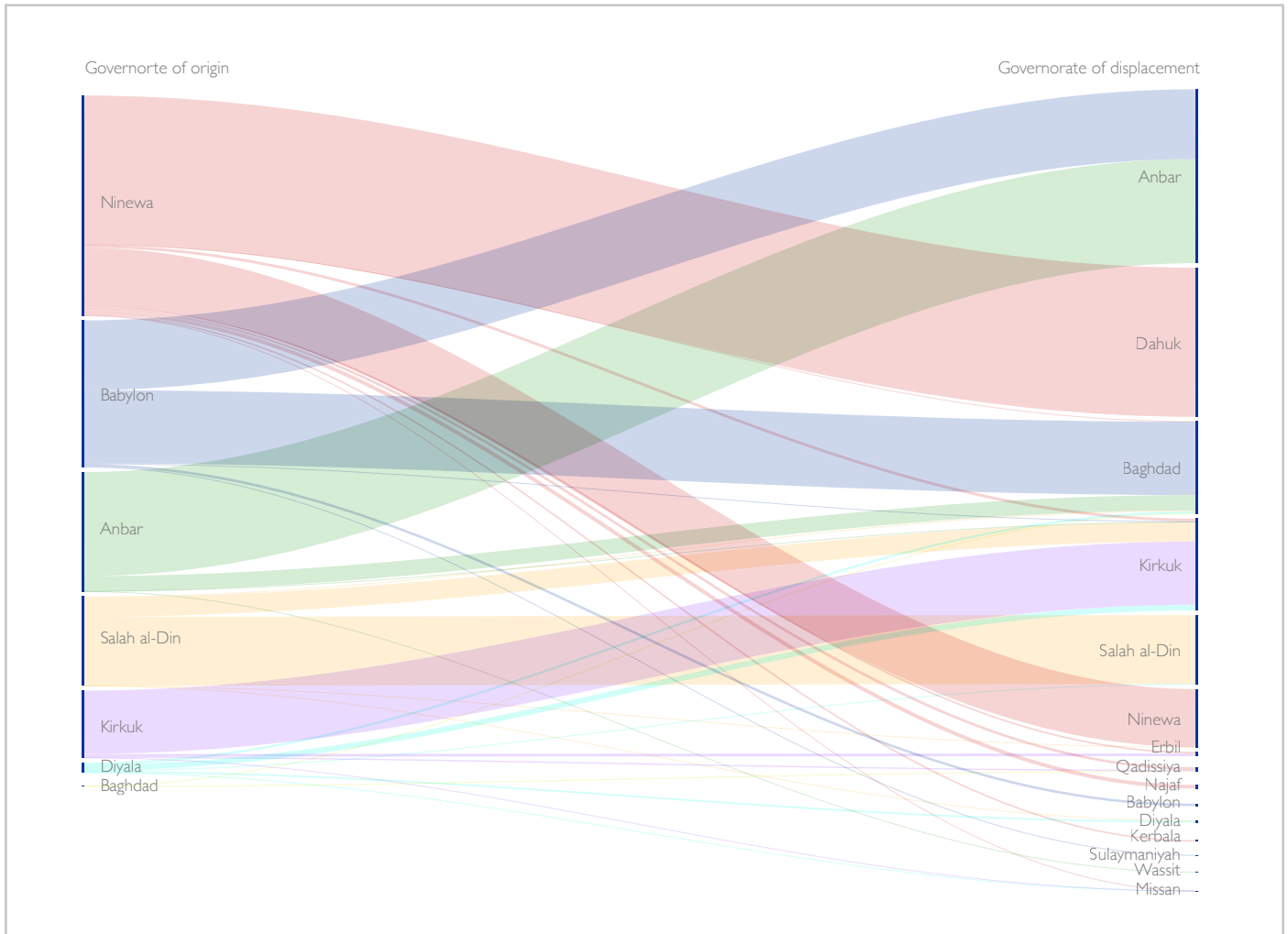


Figure 6: IDPs Flow



SHELTER TYPE OF IDPs IN INFORMAL SITES

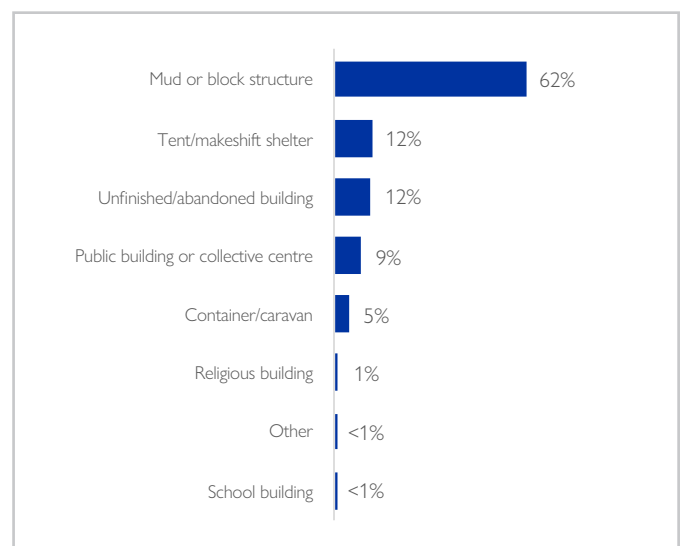
In the 260 assessed IDP sites, key informants provided detailed information regarding the critical shelter types for individuals residing in these locations. The findings reveal that the majority of individuals (62%) were living in **mud or block structures**, primarily concentrated in **Baghdad and Kirkuk governorates (22% each)**. These structures, while offering more stability than other shelter types, are typically basic and often lack essential facilities, providing limited protection against extreme weather conditions.

Tents or makeshift shelters housed 12 per cent of IDP individuals in informal sites, with the highest concentration in **Dahuk Governorate (44%)**. These temporary structures offer minimal protection, are highly prone to damage in harsh weather, and tend to deteriorate over time, leaving families exposed to significant vulnerabilities.

Another 12 per cent of individuals resided in **unfinished or abandoned buildings**, mostly in **Dahuk Governorate (64%)**. These structures, with incomplete construction and no access to basic utilities like water, sanitation or electricity, present severe safety and health risks for the occupants.

Additionally, 9 per cent of families were found in **collective centres or public buildings**, such as schools or community centres, primarily in **Anbar Governorate (90%)**. These settings often accommodate multiple families within shared spaces, resulting in overcrowded conditions and a lack of privacy.

Figure 7: Shelter type of IDPs in Informal Sites

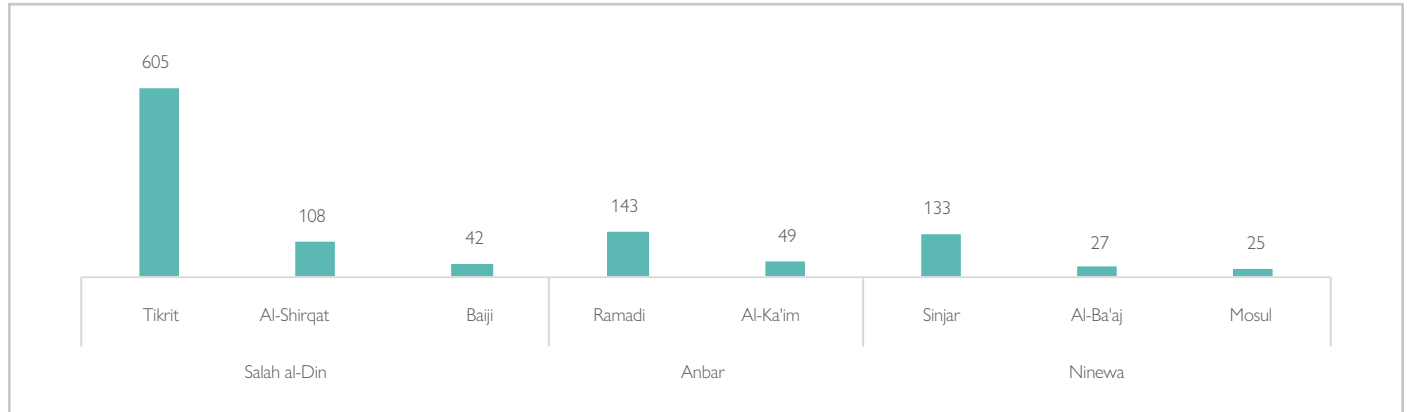


RETURNEE POPULATION IN INFORMAL SITES

As of August 2024, DTM recorded **1,132 returnee families (6,792 individuals)** residing in informal sites. **About two thirds (67%)** of the returnee population in informal sites reside in **Salah al-Din Governorate**, with **80 per cent in Tikrit District** alone (605 families). A further **17 per cent** of returnee families reside

in informal sites in **Anbar Governorate**, mostly in **Ramadi District**. Additionally, **16 per cent** of the returnee families are staying in informal sites in **Ninewa Governorate**, mostly in **Sinjar District**.

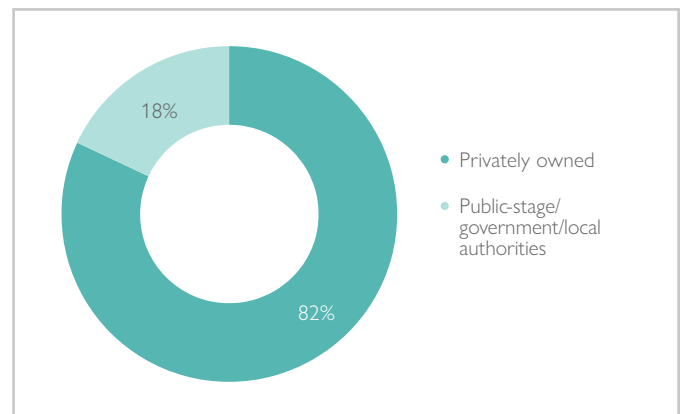
Figure 8: Governorates and districts of returnee families in informal sites



LAND OWNERSHIP OF RETURNEE INFORMAL SITES

The analysis of land ownership across the 28 informal sites with returnee populations highlights a substantial majority of these sites (**82%**) are located on **privately owned land**, suggesting that most returnees are relying on land held by individuals or private entities. This introduces potential challenges related to land tenure security, as these families may face risks associated with eviction or changing rental conditions, which could impact the sustainability of their resettlement. In contrast, a smaller portion of the sites (**18%**) is situated on land owned by **public entities, including the State, Government or local authorities**. This distribution indicates limited but important access to publicly managed land, where coordination with government agencies may support greater stability for some returnee families.

Figure 9: Land ownership of the Informal Sites with returnee population

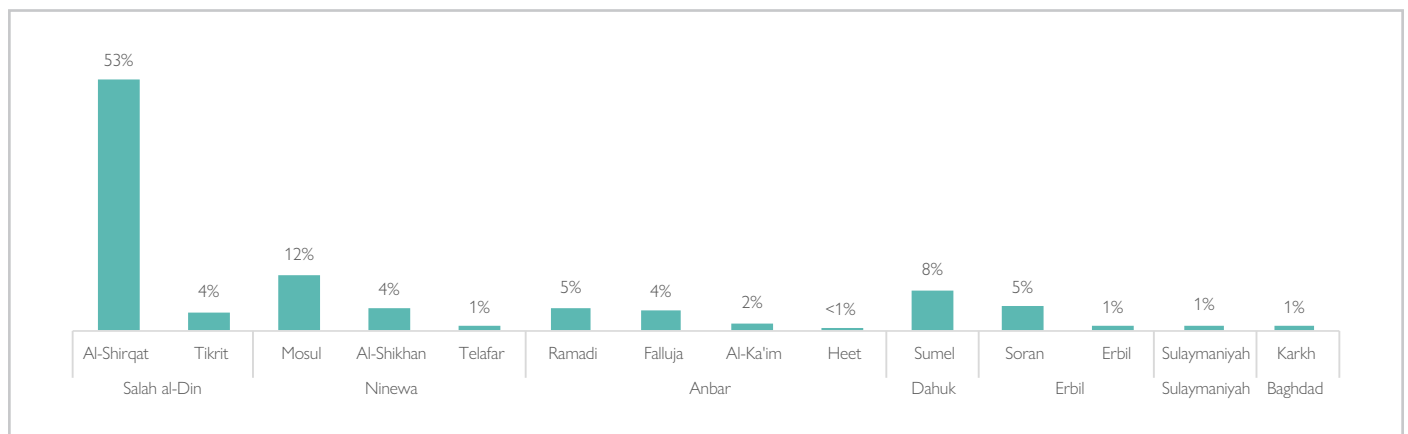


RETURNEES' DISTRICT OF LAST DISPLACEMENT

Among the 6,792 returnee individuals assessed in informal sites, a significant proportion (**57%**) were displaced from **Salah al-Din Governorate**. Within this share, the majority (**53%**) originated from **Al-Shirqat District**, with all families from this district returning to **Tikrit District** within the same Governorate.

A smaller share of returnees came from **Ninewa Governorate (17%)**, with **Mosul** accounting for 12 per cent and **Al-Shikhan** contributing 4 per cent.

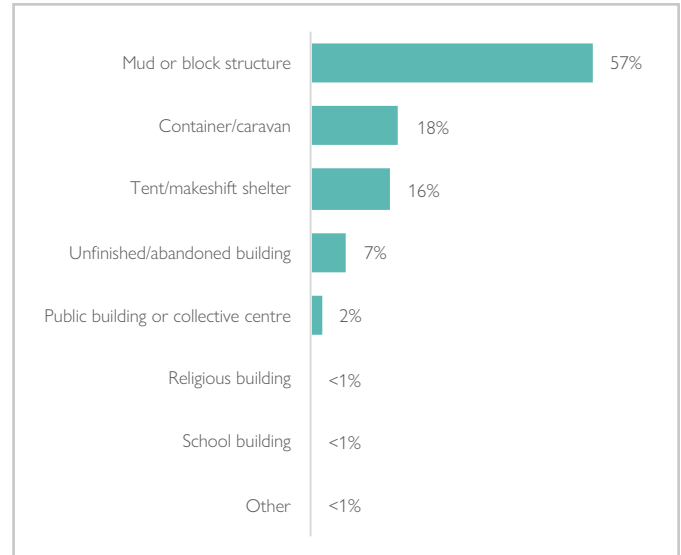
Figure 10: Returnees' district and governorate of last displacement



RETURNEES' SHELTER TYPE

The analysis of shelter types in informal sites housing returnee populations reveals a diverse range of living conditions. The majority of returnees (**57%**) reside in **mud or block structures** mostly in **Salah al-Din**, which may lack essential facilities and infrastructure to support sustainable living. **Container or caravan shelters** are mostly found in **Anbar Governorate** and considered as home for **18 per cent** of the returnee population, offering a more structured and durable alternative to other temporary housing options. However, **16 per cent** of returnees live in **tents or makeshift shelters**, which are highly vulnerable to weather conditions and deterioration, posing important challenges to the safety and well-being of residents. A smaller proportion of returnees (**7%**) reside in **unfinished or abandoned buildings**, which often lack basic utilities and present risks to both health and safety. Additionally, **2 per cent** are housed in **public buildings or collective centers**, including repurposed spaces like schools or community halls, which are shared by multiple families and provide limited privacy.

Figure 11: Shelter type of Returnees in Informal Sites



CONCLUSION

While IDP and returnee families residing in informal sites make up only a small share of the total IDP and returnee populations in Iraq, their vulnerability merits special focus considering the challenges they face to achieving durable solutions while living in such sites. The closure of formal camps has further compounded the challenges these populations face, as many families that departed from camps have relocated to informal sites, often lacking adequate support and resources. This report has provided an overview of conditions for IDP and returnee families in informal sites and highlighted governorates and districts where further investigation and, potentially, programmatic intervention may be required.

Areas with a high concentration of either informal sites or IDP or returnee families living in such sites were highlighted to flag potential locations of concern. Most informal sites recorded were located within three governorates: Dahuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din. The share of IDP families residing in informal sites were spread within Anbar, Dahuk and Baghdad. Returnee families in informal sites were even more highly concentrated, with two thirds residing in Salah al-Din Governorate and one third divided between Anbar and Ninewa governorates.

This report highlights the critical challenges that displaced and returnee families residing in informal sites across Iraq face. The findings emphasize the precarious living conditions, diverse shelter types and complex land ownership patterns that shape the experiences of these vulnerable populations. While progress has been made in understanding the dynamics of informal sites, significant gaps remain in providing durable solutions that ensure stability, security and dignity for affected families.

The report underscores the urgent need for sustained and coordinated efforts by humanitarian and durable solutions actors, government authorities and other stakeholders to address these challenges. Investments in improving shelter conditions, securing land tenure and supporting long-term recovery and reintegration are essential. As the humanitarian response in Iraq transitions, targeted programming and policy interventions must prioritize the unique needs of families in informal sites to prevent further displacement and promote sustainable recovery. The insights from this report provide a foundation for informed decision-making and the development of strategies that will contribute to a more stable and inclusive future for displaced and returnee populations.

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