

The Impact of Governance and Administrative Patterns on Urban and Regional Development in Iraq

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijdes.13/vol14n25275>

Published August 10, 2026

Citation: Hasan A.M. (2026) The Impact of Governance and Administrative Patterns on Urban and Regional Development in Iraq, *International Journal of Development and Economic Sustainability*, 14 (2),52-75

Abstract: *This study provides a comprehensive and detailed examination of the "Pattern of Urban and Regional Governance and Administration in Iraq." It offers an in-depth analysis of the constitutional and institutional framework of governance and administration in Iraq, explores the challenges and opportunities in urban and regional management, and presents practical recommendations for improving governance, transparency, and accountability. The study begins by analyzing the constitutional framework and the political system of the state. It reviews the historical evolution of Iraq's political system and analyzes the 2005 Constitution, which established the principles of decentralization and the distribution of powers among the federal government, regions, and governorates. The study also examines the institutional structure of the state, including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, the local governance system, and decentralized administration. It then moves on to present the general characteristics of the country, providing information on geography, area, topography, climate, demographic composition, natural and economic resources, infrastructure, and public services. It also addresses the socio-economic challenges Iraq faces, such as unemployment, poverty, and weak public services. A dedicated chapter offers comparative case studies, examining Basra and Salah al-Din governorates in terms of geographic and demographic characteristics, administrative and institutional structures, and urban management challenges and opportunities. It also compares governance models in these governorates with the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, offering a deeper understanding of the variations in governance and administrative models across Iraq. The study includes a chapter on the use of spatial and economic data in policymaking, highlighting the role of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in urban planning and the importance of integrating spatial and economic data into decision-making processes. It presents models and applications of data use in urban planning in Iraq, such as poverty and deprivation maps and spatial decision support systems. A specific chapter addresses the challenges and opportunities in urban governance and administration in Iraq. It analyzes institutional, legal, financial, technical, and environmental challenges, as well as challenges related to urban expansion, population growth, internal migration, and informal settlements. The study also explores opportunities to enhance transparency and accountability through e-governance, citizen engagement, community monitoring, digital transformation projects, smart city concepts, and e-services. Furthermore, it highlights opportunities for international cooperation with programs from the United Nations, the World Bank, and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). The study concludes with a chapter on findings and recommendations. It provides key conclusions regarding the*

constitutional and institutional framework, decentralization, local governance, data use, planning, and challenges and opportunities. It also offers practical recommendations to improve transparency and accountability at the legislative, institutional, and capacity-building levels. Additional recommendations are provided to enhance the use of spatial and economic data through data infrastructure development, improved coordination among stakeholders, and technical capacity building. The study presents a roadmap for administrative and governance reform, including short-, medium-, and long-term objectives. The study draws upon a wide range of Arabic and international sources, including books, scholarly articles, official reports, statistics, and online resources, giving it a scientific and credible foundation. It uses APA style for referencing, enabling readers to easily trace original information sources. This study offers a comprehensive framework for understanding urban and regional governance and administrative patterns in Iraq, an in-depth analysis of associated challenges and opportunities, and practical recommendations for improvement. It serves as a valuable reference for researchers, policymakers, and those interested in governance and urban management in Iraq.

Keywords: urban governance, regional administration, decentralization, urban development, Iraq.

INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to analyze and understand the mechanisms and patterns of urban and regional governance and administration in the Republic of Iraq from the adoption of the Federal Constitution in 2005 up to the end of 2024. The study aims to:

Research Problem and Significance

The research problem lies in the need to understand the governance and administrative system of urban and regional development in Iraq, particularly after the political and administrative transformations that took place following 2003. It also seeks to assess the effectiveness of the new system in achieving balanced and sustainable development across the country's cities and governorates. The significance of this study lies in its provision of a comprehensive overview of this system, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, and offering development-oriented recommendations aligned with Iraq's National Development Plan 2030.

Research Objectives

The study aims to:

1. Highlight the constitutional framework and legal requirements set forth by the Constitution and provincial laws to promote administrative and financial decentralization.
2. Review institutional structures and conceptual frameworks related to urban and regional governance and administration.
3. Analyze geographic, administrative, and planning divisions at national, regional, and local levels.
4. Compare the roles and planning and financing mechanisms of local councils across selected governorates.

5. Propose practical recommendations to enhance transparency and accountability and to improve the use of spatial (GIS) and economic data in policymaking and development planning.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a descriptive-analytical approach, combining a review of official documents (Constitution, laws, development plans), analysis of recent statistical data published by the Central Statistical Organization and the Ministry of Planning, and examination of reports from international organizations such as UNDP, UN-Habitat, and the World Bank.

Interpretive Philosophy

The study adopts an interpretive philosophy aimed at understanding social phenomena through the interpretation of their meanings and contexts. This approach provides a deeper understanding of Iraq's governance and administrative system and its impact on urban and regional development.

Inductive Method

The research applies an inductive analytical approach that derives generalizations and conclusions from specific observations and data. This method allows the identification of patterns and trends in Iraq's regional governance and administrative system through the analysis of available data and information.

Data Collection Tools

The study relies on a variety of data collection tools, including:

- Analysis of official documents and government reports.
- Review of academic studies and previous research.
- Analysis of statistical data on urban and regional development in Iraq.
- Interviews with a group of Iraqi officials and experts in planning and urban and regional development.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the governance and administrative system as it relates to urban and regional development in Iraq in the current period, with a particular focus on post-2003 developments and transformations in governance and administration. The study covers all 18 governorates of Iraq, with selected areas highlighted as case studies to illustrate specific aspects of the governance and administrative system.

Structure of the Study

The study is structured into six chapters:

- Chapter One: General introduction and methodological framework.
- Chapter Two: The constitutional framework and political system structure.
- Chapter Three: The fundamentals of regional governance and administration in Iraq.
- Chapter Four: Geographic and administrative divisions, and mechanisms for planning, implementation, and oversight.

- Chapter Five: Case studies and comparative models—Basra vs. Salah al-Din vs. Federal vs. Regional government.
- Chapter Six: Conclusions, recommendations, and references.

FOUNDATIONS OF GOVERNANCE AND REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION

This study addresses the system of governance and urban and regional administration in the Republic of Iraq, starting from the principle of a multi-level federal state (2005) and extending to the current realities of planning and local development. The data and statistics have been updated to include information up to the year 2024, and the conceptual framework has been enhanced with modern approaches to governance, decentralization, and integrated urban management (UNDP, 2023).

Governance and General Administrative Framework of the Country

Governance is defined as the methods and processes through which relationships between the government, the private sector, and civil society are managed to ensure accountability, transparency, and participation. Administration is defined as the structural, organizational, and executive functions that regulate government operations and implement public policies.

A new political and administrative system was established in Iraq after 2003, based on the principle of democracy and the peaceful transfer of power, with administrative decentralize (World Bank, 2023)tion as the foundation for governance and administration. The features of this new system can be identified through an analysis of several articles from the 2005 Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, especially Articles (1, 5, 6, and 47). Article 1 states: "The Republic of Iraq is a single federal, independent, and fully sovereign state. Its system of government is republican, representative (parliamentary), and democratic, and this Constitution guarantees the unity of Iraq."

Iraq is divided into 18 governorates, including three located in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (Al-Hamdani, 2023). The distribution of powers between the central government and local governments is outlined in the 2005 Iraqi Constitution, which mandates the application of administrative decentralization and the enhancement of the role of governorates not incorporated into a region, while preserving specific federal authorities. Accordingly, it defines the roles of the central government, local governments, provincial councils, and municipalities, especially concerning urban planning and service delivery (Al-Zubaidi, 2022).

Administrative Division (Number of Cities, Districts, and Subdistricts)

- Number of governorates in Iraq: 19 governorates
- Number of districts in Iraq: 120 main districts (Wikipedia)
- Number of subdistricts (municipalities) in Iraq: 394 administrative subdistricts (including 128 in the Kurdistan Region) (Wikipedia)
- Number of cities: The number of cities usually equals the number of district centers (120 cities), in addition to numerous subdistrict centers that are considered small towns or rural towns.

Table 1: Of Population Figures for The Largest Cities in Iraq for The Year 2023

Governorate	Population estimation 2023
Baghdad	9,126,000
Ninewa	4,238,733
Erbil	2,107,755
Basrah	3,175,000

Distribution of Powers According to the Iraqi Constitution (Articles 115–122)

The governance and administrative system in Iraq is built upon four interrelated dimensions:

1. **Institutional Dimension** – Represented by the domains of: Government – Administration – and Governance (Al-Saadi, 2023).
2. **Administrative Levels** – Represented by the three levels: Federal – Regional – and Local (Al-Obaidi, 2024).
3. **General Principles of Governance and Administration** – These include: Sustainability – Decentralization – Participation – Transparency – and Accountability.
4. **Sectorial and Spatial Integration** – Represented by: Linking planning, investment, and services across sectors and levels to ensure comprehensive and balanced development.

A. Government

Governance in Iraq refers to the set of legislative and institutional mechanisms that link the government to civil society institutions and the private sector in order to ensure:

- **Transparency and accountability** (through performance indicators and budget disclosure),
- **Citizen participation** (through provincial councils and community committees),
- **Rule of law** (by promoting the independence of the judiciary and administrative justice).

The Iraqi Constitution (2005) stipulates that the state is a federal, parliamentary republic, with powers distributed among:

1. **The Federal Center (Baghdad):** Oversees general policy, defense, foreign affairs, and national security (Al-Azzawi, 2023).
2. **The Region (Autonomous Kurdistan Region):** Possesses its own parliament and government, with legislative and executive independence within the federal framework (Al-Kaabi, 2022).
3. **The Governorates (19 in total):** Each has an elected council that manages its local affairs under the Law of Governorates Not Incorporated into a Region (Law No. 21 of 2008).

The constitutional distribution of powers related to education, health, municipalities, and water is implemented through executive decrees issued by the federal government in coordination with the provincial councils and the region.

Table 2: Conceptual framework for the distribution of powers between the central government and local governments

Authority	Power
Federal (Central) Government	– General public policies and international agreements – Security and military policies – General financial policies (including the federal budget) – Management of sovereign resources (e.g., oil, border crossings, Central Bank).
Governments of Governorates Not Incorporated into a Region	– Managing the affairs of the governorate within its administrative boundaries – Implementing developmental and service policies – Preparing local plans – Providing basic services: health, education, water, electricity, roads.

B – Administration

Public administration in Iraq is an institutional system that includes:

- **Federal Ministries** (e.g., Planning, Finance, Health): Responsible for setting sectoral policies and programs.
- **Independent Offices and Commissions** (e.g., Federal Board of Supreme Audit, National Commission for Integrity): Promote transparency and accountability.
- **Subnational Administrations in the Governorates**: Implement local plans and deliver services (urban planning, water, sanitation).

The government, with support from the **UNDP**, has launched a “**Public Administration Reform Roadmap (PAR Roadmap)**” aimed at modernizing public sector performance. The roadmap sets strategic goals for capacity building and improving operational efficiency to reduce duplication and control public spending. info.undp.org [UNDP IEO Evaluation Resource Center](#).

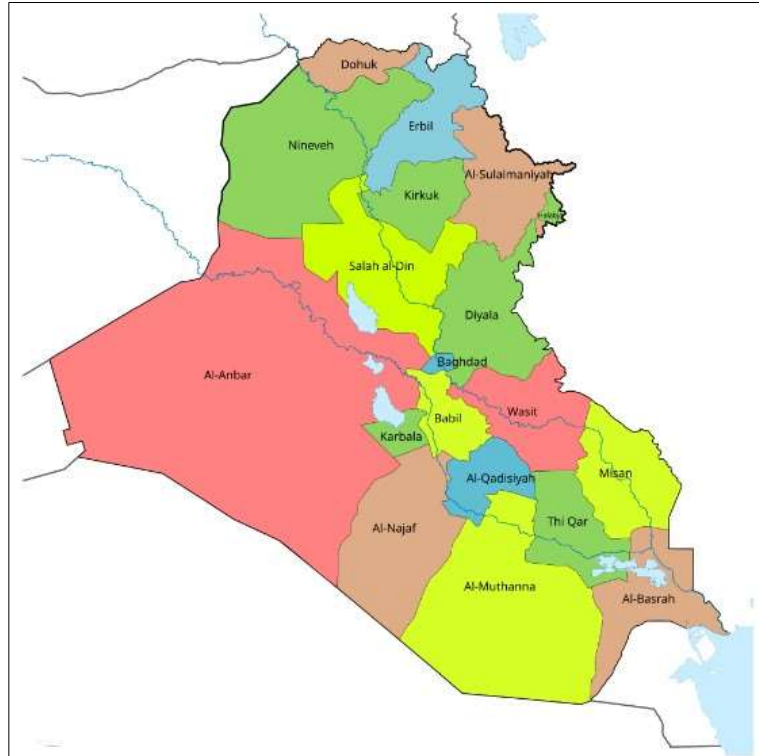


Figure 1: Iraqi Administrative map

Administrative Structure and Decentralization

- Iraq follows a decentralized administrative system, granting provinces significant authority in managing their local affairs, according to the Provincial Law No. 21 of 2008 and its amendments (Al-Hashimi, 2024).
- Some provinces suffer from a lack of clear organizational structures, leading to overlapping powers between the central and local governments, which affects the efficiency of service delivery.
- The Ministry of Planning is working on the "Enhancing Inclusive Local Governance" project, which aims to improve coordination between local and central governments and develop institutional capacity at the provincial level (UN-Habitat, 2024).

The Role of Provincial Councils

Provincial councils enjoy broad powers that enable them to perform oversight and supervision over local government activities, service providers, policymaking, budget approval, and prioritization of service projects while ensuring local community participation.

Below are the roles and responsibilities of provincial councils:

Table 3: Distribution of the Roles and Responsibilities of Provincial Councils

Council	Tasks
Provincial Councils	- Formulating the general policies of the province
	- Monitoring project implementation
	- Approving local budgets
	- Overseeing the performance of executive departments in the province
	- Setting service priorities and urban planning
Municipal Councils (districts and sub-districts)	- Proposing service projects
	- Coordinating with local administrations
	- Monitoring the provision of essential services

Integrated Urban Management

Integrated urban management is defined as the coordination of policies and programs between various sectors (housing, transportation, environment, social services) and across administrative levels (local, regional, central). It relies on the "Iraq 2030" vision by the Ministry of Planning (Ministry of Planning, 2023), which focuses on coordinating policies and programs across sectors (environment, infrastructure, social) and levels (local, regional, central), with central follow-up units and development committees at the provincial level to ensure integrated project and investment implementation (University of Karbala, 2023).

Governance Model, Regional Administration, and Decision-Making

Regionalism is defined as the study of geographical spaces between the national and local levels, focusing on economic, social, and environmental integration. The regional environment refers to all natural, human, and economic characteristics that distinguish a specific regional area and influence planning and development processes. Localities represent the smallest level of decentralization, represented by municipalities and local councils that implement policies and are responsible for providing direct services to citizens.

Constitutional Framework and Decentralization

Decentralization is defined as the process of transferring powers, responsibilities, and resources from the central to the regional and local levels; political decentralization involves legislative powers, while spatial decentralization refers to the distribution of services across space.

1. The Iraqi constitution (2005) provides for a federal system, granting provincial governments limited legislative and executive powers within the framework of federal laws, with one region (Kurdistan) enjoying broader self-governance.
2. The central government approved the Provincial Law No. 21 of 2008 and its amendments, which regulates the relationship between the center and the provinces and facilitates the practical implementation of decentralization in all provinces, except the Kurdistan Region.

Decision-Making Mechanism in Planning and Budgeting

1. The Ministry of Planning sets public policies and national plans (medium-term and long-term) and publishes spatial development plans for the provinces (e.g., the 2024–2028 plan).
2. The Ministry of Finance prepares draft budgets (current and investment) based on the directives of the Federal Financial Management Law, in coordination with the Ministry of Planning (investment budget).
3. The Cabinet discusses the budget drafts and then submits them to the Parliament for review and voting, where final allocations are determined and the law is published in the official gazette.

Bodies and Subordinate Departments:

1. **Provincial Councils:** Composed of elected members, they oversee the implementation of local projects within allocated budgets.
2. **Planning and Budgeting Departments in Provinces:** Coordinate with the Ministries of Planning and Finance to implement plans and budgets at the regional and provincial levels.
3. **In the Kurdistan Region:** Similar institutions exist (Kurdistan Parliament, Kurdistan Government, Regional Ministries) that operate within the framework of the federal constitution with a partially independent budget.

Civil Society and Citizen Participation:

1. Local governance programs aim to enhance citizen and civil society organization participation in decision-making by establishing community dialogue platforms and activating the role of local councils in oversight, accountability, and monitoring service delivery.
2. Citizen participation is considered essential for achieving inclusive and sustainable local development, contributing to building trust between local government and the community.

Planning Process and Average Investment Budget Percentage:

Medium-Term Planning (MTFF):

Since 2013, the Iraqi government has applied a medium-term financial planning framework (2023–2025), linking investment plans with the annual budget. This ensures that priorities for social, infrastructure, and security programs are set over three years, with updated expenditure tables for each year before it starts (Atlantic Council).

Average Investment Percentage:

Between 2005 and 2011, public investment averaged about 17% of total government expenditure, showing an increased focus on infrastructure projects after 2003 (World Bank).

Annual Investment Budgets (2014–2024):

The size of the investment budget varies each year based on oil prices and revenue levels, ranging between 25-35% of the total national expenditure. Segregated spending tables for current and investment budgets are updated each year before being voted on by Parliament.

Local governments suffer from weak financial resources and significant dependence on transfers from the central government, limiting their ability to implement development projects independently. The Iraqi government, in cooperation with the World Bank, is working on improving public financial management,

enhancing transparency, and accountability in resource utilization through the Country Partnership Framework for the period 2022–2026 (World Bank).

Table 4: Annual Budget Tables for 2014–2023-2024:

Year	Total Federal Budget (Trillions IQD)	Investment Budget (Trillions IQD)	Investment Percentage of Total
2014	164.5	59.3	36%
2023	198.9	≈ 52.1 (26.2%)	26.2%
2024	211.9	52.7	24.9%

Source: Researcher's work based on Ministry of Finance data: <https://mof.gov.iq>

Urban Planning and Services:

Urban Planning:

Urban plans and service provision planning are prepared through coordination between:

- Ministry of Construction, Housing, and Public Municipalities (sets national policies).
- General Directorates of Urban Planning in Provinces (implement urban plans at the local level).

The planning process relies on:

- Data from the Central Statistical Organization.
- Studies from international organizations, such as reports from UN-Habitat, the World Bank, and reports from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Basic Services

Services are provided by the government at both the federal and local levels and are managed and delivered jointly according to the type of service, as shown in the table below:

Table 5: Service Management and Delivery by Level (Federal – Local):

Service	Responsible Entity
Water and Sewage	Directorate of Municipalities – Ministry of Municipalities
Electricity	Ministry of Electricity in coordination with provincial directorates
Education	Ministry of Education – Education Directorates in provinces
Health	Ministry of Health – Local Health Departments
Roads and Infrastructure	Ministry of Construction and Municipalities + Provincial Councils (previously)

Source: Researcher's work.

Urban Planning and Sustainable Development:

Iraq faces significant challenges in urban planning, including the spread of informal settlements. There are more than 1,552 informal settlements across all provinces (excluding the Kurdistan Region), which make up approximately 7.7% of the population. The Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation, in collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), is working to support the application of urban planning, land management, and improvement of urban services, with a focus on decentralization and local service delivery (unhabitat.org).

Challenges in the Distribution of Powers

A range of problems and obstacles have emerged in the administration and governance process due to the shift to administrative decentralization, stemming from disputes over powers and authorities between central government institutions and local governments (Al-Taie & Al-Ansari, 2023). These issues include:

- **Overlapping Authorities:** Between federal ministries and provinces.
- **Weak Local Funding:** Heavy dependence on the federal budget.
- **Delays in Law Approvals:** Such as the Financial and Administrative Decentralization Law.
- **Ineffectiveness of Provincial Councils:** Which has impacted local decision-making.

Urban and Regional Policies:

After the successful transition to administrative decentralization in Iraq, several questions have arisen regarding how cities are planned and the distribution of the population under this new system. Key questions include whether there is a national or regional urban policy in Iraq and how much planning relies on data and studies (Batty, 2023).

Iraq has a national and regional urban policy that handles urban and regional planning and implements developmental and promotional projects as follows:

National Urban Policy (NUP)

Iraq, in collaboration with UN-Habitat, has been working since 2015 on preparing a National Urban Policy. The aim is to achieve a balance between urban and rural development, reduce informal settlements, and improve services and infrastructure in cities (Brenner & Schmid, 2022). These policies are part of the national development plans prepared by the Ministry of Planning, which include visions, orientations, and objectives to guide development at both the national and local levels.

Regional Policies:

There is no comprehensive regional policy in Iraq. However, efforts are being made by the Ministries of Planning, Construction and Housing, Municipalities and Public Works, and provincial governments (local governments) to prepare structural development plans based on the national development plan issued by the Ministry of Planning every four years. The Kurdistan Region differs in that it has some specific regional development plans coordinated with its own authorities.

1. 5.2 Urban Planning Models in Iraq:

The Ministry of Planning, in collaboration with the Ministry of Construction and Housing, is trying to adopt urban planning principles for cities and direct growth towards suburbs or new cities. However, implementation faces challenges and is slow. In general, cities are planned and populations are distributed in Iraq according to the following model:

- Through the Urban Planning Directorate of the Ministry of Construction and Housing and Public Municipalities, in collaboration with provinces.
- Master Plans are prepared for cities, determining land uses, infrastructure, and urban functions.

There is no model for population distribution, as settlement tends to be random (partly due to internal displacement caused by conflicts, political instability, and economic issues that arose after 2003). Some cities, such as Baghdad, Erbil, and Basra, have seen significant population growth, leading to:

- Increased unplanned areas.
- Pressure on services and facilities.

The Ministry of Planning occasionally conducts socio-economic surveys aimed at gathering data and studies, such as poverty mapping or service mapping. It also receives assistance in some modern planning projects (especially those supported by international organizations) that use geographical and spatial data analysis tools (e.g., UN-Habitat and GIZ projects). The 2024 population census will be the first comprehensive census since 1997 and will provide accurate data for planning services and infrastructure. Additionally, socio-economic surveys are conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Planning and the Statistics Authority in the Kurdistan Region, providing information on poverty, education, and health, relying on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for spatial data analysis to determine development priorities and service distribution.

However, there is a lack of accurate and updated data due to:

- Weak GIS systems in most municipalities.
- Lack of regular updates for the population census (the last full census was conducted in 2014 and its data is still under review and auditing).
- Weak coordination between ministries and provinces in sharing data.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS

Location, Borders, and Area

Location:

Iraq is located in the heart of the Middle East, bordered by Turkey to the north, Iran to the east, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to the south, and Jordan and Syria to the west. Its total area is approximately 437,072 km², which is divided between the plains of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the south and center, and the Zagros Mountains in the north. The total length of the land borders is 3,650 km, distributed as follows: (Turkey 352 km, Iran 1,458 km, Kuwait 240 km, Saudi Arabia 814 km, Jordan 181 km, Syria 605 km).

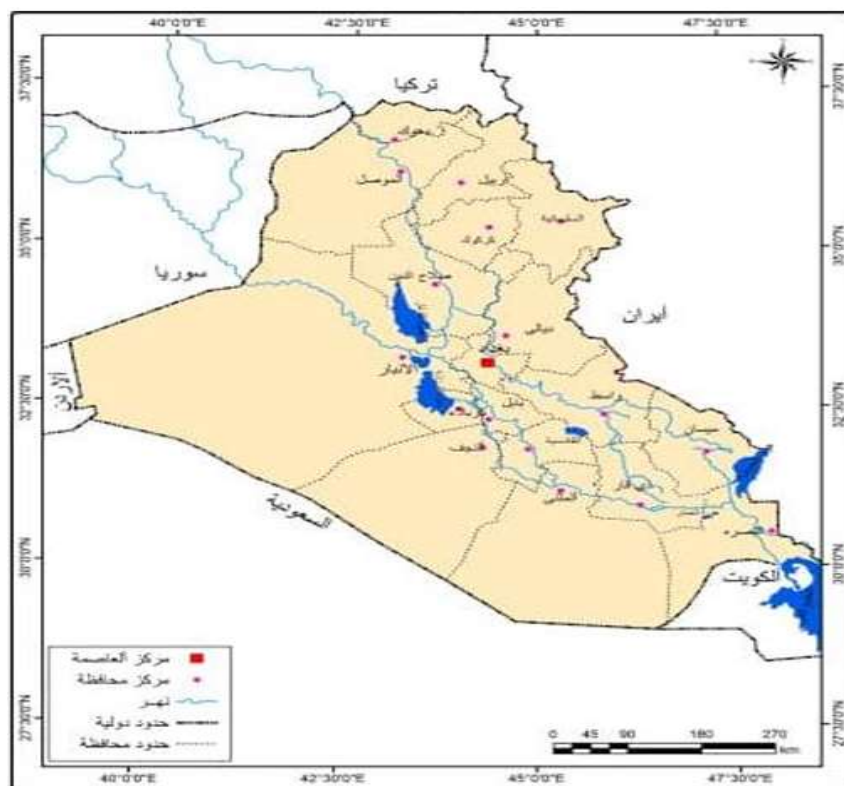


Figure 2. Administrative Map of Iraq

Source: Republic of Iraq – Ministry of Water Resources, General Authority for Survey, Baghdad, Map Production Department, Administrative Map of Iraq, 2017, Scale: 1/1,000,000.

Historical Characteristics

- Iraq is considered the cradle of civilizations (Mesopotamia): Sumer, Akkad, and Babylon since the 4th millennium BCE.
- It was later ruled by the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, followed by the entry of Islam in the 7th century CE.
- In modern times, Iraq was part of the Ottoman Empire (1534–1918), then placed under British mandate (1920–1932), establishing a monarchy and later a republic (1958). This was followed by the Ba'ath regime until the American invasion in 2003 and the subsequent process of state institution rebuilding.

Social Characteristics

Population:

- The population as per 2024 statistics: 46.1 million people (Wikipedia).

- The population growth rate in 2024: approximately 2.0% annually (Wikipedia).
- Labor Force and Unemployment: The labor force participation rate is approximately 58% of the population aged 15 and older, with an unemployment rate of approximately 8.3% (2022 estimate) according to the World Bank.
- Gender Ratio: The male to female ratio is approximately 1:1.03 (Wikipedia).
- Age Distribution:
 - 0–14 years: 35.9%
 - 15–64 years: 60.0%
 - 65+ years: 4.1% (Wikipedia).
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Table 6: Population Indicators for Iraq in 2024

Indicator	Value (2024)	Source
Population	46,118,554 people	Wikipedia
Population Growth Rate	2.0% (2022 estimate)	Wikipedia
Labor Force Participation Rate	33.2% (2021)	Wikipedia
Unemployment Rate	15.45% (2023)	تداول الاقتصاد
Gender Ratio (Male/Female)	1.01:1	Wikipedia
Age Distribution	0–14: 35.9%; 15–64: 60%; ≥65: 4.1%	Wikipedia

Source: Researcher's work.

Population Estimates for 2024

According to the preliminary data from the general population census conducted in November 2024, Iraq's population reached approximately 46,042,015, including foreign nationals and refugees. Below are the population estimates by rural and urban environments from 1950 to 2024:

Table 7: Urban and rural population of Iraq

Year	Population		Urbanization (%)
	Urban	Rural	
2024	33,073,885	12,955,960	71.853
2023	32,130,222	12,745,184	71.599
2022	31,207,440	12,528,765	71.354
2021	30,305,174	12,307,036	71.119
2020	29,422,695	12,080,190	70.893
2015	25,252,255	10,863,394	69.921
2010	21,258,071	9,504,630	69.103
2005	18,572,494	8,435,932	68.766
2000	16,141,452	7,423,961	68.496
1995	13,899,288	6,309,099	68.780
1990	12,176,901	5,292,104	69.706
1985	10,711,364	4,865,031	68.767
1980	8,945,864	4,707,492	65.521
1975	7,171,852	4,512,737	61.379
1970	5,569,369	4,348,614	56.154
1965	4,242,440	4,133,353	50.651
1960	3,127,214	4,162,547	42.899
1955	2,447,031	4,055,626	37.631
1950	2,008,691	3,710,501	35.122

Table 8. Urban and rural population of Iraq

Iraq population by Age Group (2024)					
Age group	Male	Female	Total		M per 100 F
			Persons	Share (%)	
00-04	2,876,398	2,733,908	5,610,306	12.19	105.212
05-09	2,850,552	2,711,417	5,561,968	12.08	105.131
10-14	2,905,604	2,764,911	5,670,516	12.32	105.089
15-19	2,446,293	2,333,269	4,779,561	10.38	104.844
20-24	2,173,161	2,083,456	4,256,618	9.25	104.306
25-29	1,952,305	1,891,460	3,843,765	8.35	103.217
30-34	1,710,226	1,673,555	3,383,781	7.35	102.191
35-39	1,402,832	1,395,421	2,798,253	6.08	100.531
40-44	1,196,528	1,209,714	2,406,242	5.23	98.910
45-49	1,032,282	1,057,174	2,089,455	4.54	97.645
50-54	855,839	902,093	1,757,932	3.82	94.873
55-59	644,921	727,018	1,371,939	2.98	88.708
60-64	422,457	517,168	939,625	2.04	81.687
65-69	258,824	342,284	601,109	1.31	75.617
70-74	202,725	289,308	492,033	1.07	70.072
75-79	108,838	166,750	275,588	0.60	65.270
80-84	51,615	89,273	140,889	0.31	57.817
85-89	16,639	34,074	50,712	0.11	48.832
90-94	2,822	7,753	10,575	0.02	36.399
95-99	211	887	1,098	0.00	23.788
100+	7	43	50	0.00	16.279
Total	23,111,079	22,930,936	46,042,015		100.786

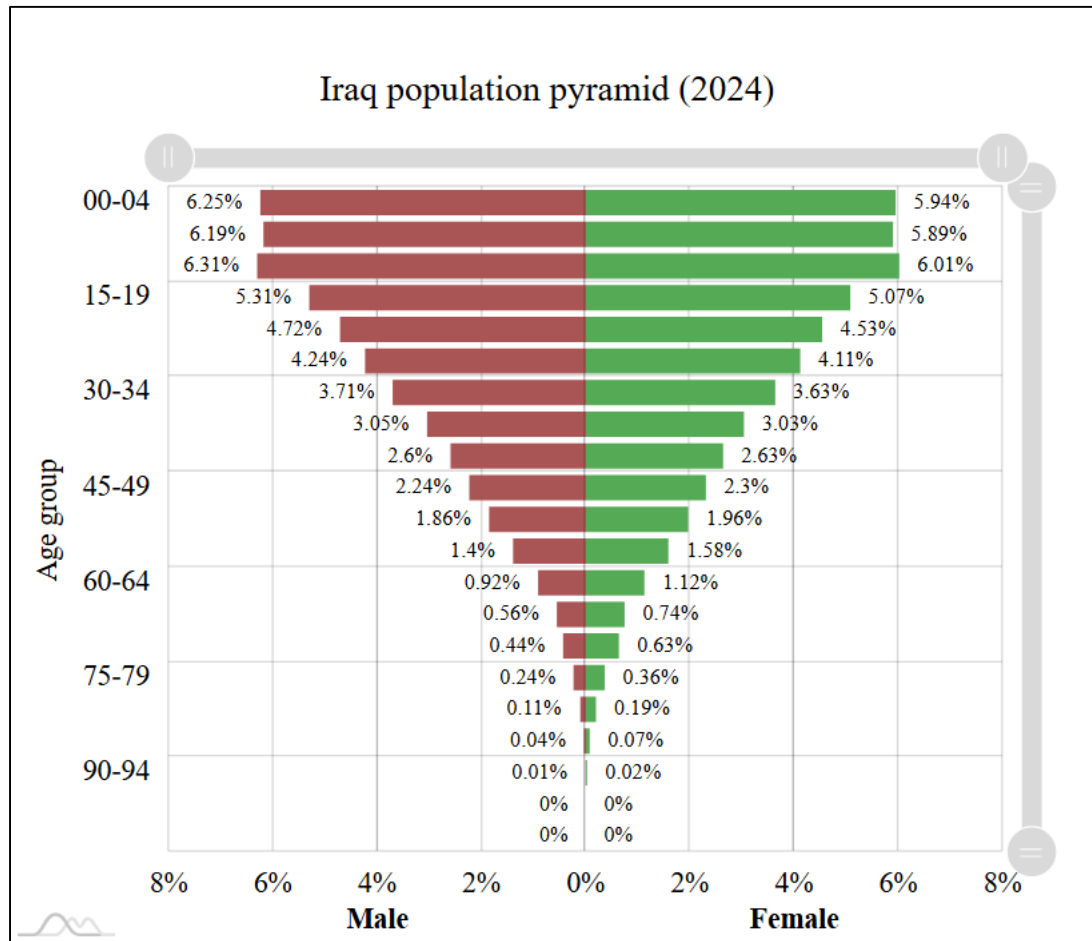


Figure 3.
Iraq
demographics
2024

www.StatisticsTimes.com

Economic Characteristics

Labor Distribution by Sectors:

- **Agriculture:** 8.2% (World Bank Gender Data Portal)
- **Industry (including oil):** 27.58% (TheGlobalEconomy.com)
- **Services:** 64.22%

Gross Domestic Product (GDP):

- **Nominal GDP for 2023:** 258.2 billion USD (World Bank)

National Income per Capita:

- **GDP per capita for 2023:** ≈ 5,600 USD (Wikipedia)
- **Poverty Rate:** 2.82% living below the national poverty line (< 1.90 USD per day) (2024) (Wikipedia)
- **Human Development Index (HDI) for 2023:** 0.720 (Wikipedia)

- **GDP for 2023:** 250.843 billion USD (Worldometer)
- **Economic Growth Rate for 2023:** 2.94% (Worldometer)
- **GDP per capita for 2023:** 4,176 USD (Worldometer)
- **2025 Projected GDP:** 270.87 billion USD with per capita GDP = 5,923 USD (Wikipedia)

Sectorial Share in GDP:

- **Agriculture:** 2.8%
- **Industry (Oil):** 55.6%
- **Services:** 42.3% (Wikipedia)

Physical Characteristics

Land Use:

- **Arable Land:** 21.8%
- **Forest Areas:** 1.9%
- **Other Uses (Desert, Urban, Water):** 76.3% (TheGlobalEconomy.com)

Infrastructure Services:

- **Water and Electricity Networks:** Electricity coverage $\approx$ 98% of households; urban water services are available to about 80% of the population.
- **Sanitation:** Urban sanitation services cover $\approx$ 60% of the population.

Transport Network Structure:

- **Roads:** The total road network in 2018 was approximately 58,600 km (main and secondary, paved and unpaved) (lca.logcluster.org)
- **Railways:** The total length of railways is approximately 2,800 km (currently being updated).
- **Airports:** 25 civil airports, the most important being Baghdad International Airport.
- **Ports:** Umm Qasr Port and Khor Al-Zubair Port in Basra.

Natural Environmental Characteristics

Geology:

Iraq's land consists of thick sedimentary deposits (limestone and clay layers) between the desert of the sedimentary plain and the Zagros Mountains to the north. The central and southern parts of Iraq are mainly composed of recent river deposits (clay and sand layers), while the Zagros Mountains to the north consist of sedimentary rocks □ (Clos, 2023).

Topography:

Iraq consists of five geomorphological regions: the Western Desert, Upper Mesopotamia, Northern Plateaus, Lower Mesopotamia, and the Sedimentary Plain extending to the Gulf (Wikipedia).

Soil:

Iraq's soil is fertile clay-loam along the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (the fertile crescent), with increasing salinity issues in the south. Sandy soil is prevalent in the western and southwestern parts, along the borders with the Western Desert and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Climate:

- **Semi-arid/Continental Climate:**

- **Winter:** Cold to mild
- **Summer:** Hot to extremely hot (> 50°C)
- **Rainfall:** From 1,200 mm in the north to < 100 mm in the south (climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org)

Water:

- **Tigris and Euphrates Rivers** are the primary source (> 90%) of surface water.
- **Water Flow Reduction:** 30–40% decrease in water flow over the last decade due to upstream dams and climate change (Kurdistan24).
- **Key Hydrological Structures:** Mosul Dam, Haditha Dam, and Diyala Dam (Arab Center Washington DC).

Vegetation:

- **Wetland Plants:** Reeds and papyrus in the southern marshes, and palm groves (50 million date palms) along riverbanks.
- **Desert Areas:** Salt-tolerant shrubs and drought-resistant desert plants.

Environmental Hazards:

- **Desertification:** Affects 39% of the land (International Committee of the Red Cross).
- **Dust and Sandstorms:** Increased frequency and severity due to drought and declining green areas (CIA).
- **River Flooding:** Resulting from rainfall or sudden dam releases (weatheringrisk.org).
- **Soil Salinization and Erosion:** Due to water projects and climatic factors.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFERENCES

Main Conclusions:

Regarding the Constitutional and Institutional Framework:

After studying and analyzing the constitutional and institutional framework of urban and regional governance and administration in Iraq, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- **Evolution of the Constitutional Framework:** Iraq has witnessed significant development in its constitutional framework for governance and administration since 2005, as the Iraqi constitution established the principles of decentralization and the distribution of powers between the federal government, regions, and provinces. However, challenges remain in applying these principles effectively in practice.

- **Overlap of Powers:** There is an overlap in powers between various administrative levels (federal, regional, local) and between different ministries and bodies, which complicates administrative processes and hinders the implementation of projects. For instance, the powers of the Ministry of Construction and Housing may overlap with those of municipalities in urban planning (Goodchild, 2022)
- **Weak Institutional Coordination:** There is a lack of coordination between the various institutions responsible for urban governance, leading to duplication of efforts and lack of integration in projects. This is evident in infrastructure projects, where one agency may implement a project without coordinating with other entities.
- **Outdated Legislation:** Many laws and regulations related to urban governance are outdated and do not meet current requirements. For example, some urban planning laws date back to the 1970s and do not consider modern developments in urban planning.
- **Weak Enforcement of Laws:** There is a lack of enforcement of laws and regulations, leading to violations and infringements. This is evident in the spread of informal construction and encroachments on public land, despite laws that prohibit such actions.

Regarding Decentralization and Local Governance:

After studying and analyzing the decentralization and local governance experience in Iraq, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- **Disparities in Decentralization Implementation:** There are disparities in the implementation of decentralization across different provinces, with some enjoying greater autonomy in managing their affairs, while others suffer from central government interference. For instance, Basra province enjoys more autonomy in managing its financial resources compared to other provinces.
- **Weak Local Capacities:** Local governments suffer from weak technical and administrative capacities, which affects their ability to effectively exercise their powers. This is seen in the lack of qualified staff in areas such as urban planning and project management.
- **Financial Dependence on the Central Government:** Local governments are heavily reliant on financial allocations from the central government, which limits their autonomy and impacts their ability to execute projects. In most provinces, local revenues account for less than 10% of their total budgets.
- **Weak Community Participation:** There is a lack of community involvement in decision-making and project implementation, which affects how local governments respond to citizens' needs. This is evident in the limited consultation mechanisms with local communities in planning and executing projects.
- **Kurdistan Region Experience:** The Kurdistan Region offers an advanced model of self-governance within the federal framework, where the region enjoys broad powers in managing its affairs. This experience can be beneficial in developing local governance models in other provinces, while taking local specifics into account.

Regarding the Use of Data and Planning:

After studying and analyzing the use of data in urban planning and governance in Iraq, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- **Lack of Updated Data:** Iraq suffers from a lack of updated data, which affects the accuracy of planning and decision-making. For example, a comprehensive population census has not been conducted since 1997, leading to reliance on population estimates that may not accurately reflect the current situation.
- **Weak Coordination in Data Collection:** There is poor coordination between the different entities responsible for data collection, leading to duplication of efforts and lack of integration of data. This is reflected in the multiple agencies that produce economic and social data without a coordinated mechanism for aligning these efforts.
- **Limited Use of Technology:** There is limited use of modern technology in data collection and analysis, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing. This is due to factors like a shortage of qualified personnel and weak technological infrastructure.
- **Weak Data-Driven Decision-Making Culture:** There is a lack of a culture of data-driven decision-making, where many decisions are still made based on personal experience or political considerations, without relying on data and evidence. This is seen in the scarcity of studies and analyses based on data in the decision-making process.
- **Potential for Data Integration:** Despite the challenges, there is significant potential for integrating spatial and economic data in urban planning through models such as spatial decision support systems and poverty maps. Experiences like the "Poverty Map of Iraq" demonstrate the potential of using this integration to guide policies and programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Legislative Level:

To enhance transparency and accountability in urban governance at the legislative level, the following recommendations are made:

- **Updating Legislation:** Updating laws and regulations related to urban governance to align with current requirements and modern developments. For example, updating urban planning laws to include concepts of sustainable planning and smart cities.
- **Clarifying Powers:** Clearly defining and delineating powers between different administrative levels (federal, regional, local) and between ministries and bodies to avoid overlaps and conflicts. For example, clearly defining the powers of municipalities in urban planning.
- **Enhancing the Legal Framework for Transparency:** Strengthening the legal framework for transparency and accountability through enacting laws that guarantee citizens' right to access information and require governmental institutions to publish information and data. For example, enacting a Freedom of Information Law.
- **Enhancing the Legal Framework for Participation:** Strengthening the legal framework for citizen and civil society participation in decision-making by enacting laws that guarantee the right to participate and define its mechanisms. For example, enacting a Participatory Planning Law that requires municipalities to engage local communities in the planning process.
- **Strengthening the Legal Framework for Oversight:** Enhancing the legal framework for oversight and accountability by strengthening the role of independent oversight bodies and

clarifying accountability mechanisms. For example, empowering the Financial Monitoring Bureau to oversee public spending.

Institutional Level:

To enhance transparency and accountability in urban governance at the institutional level, the following recommendations are made:

- **Enhancing Institutional Coordination:** Establishing effective coordination mechanisms between the various institutions responsible for urban governance to ensure integrated efforts and avoid duplication. For example, creating joint coordination committees between ministries and bodies.
- **Enhancing Institutional Transparency:** Enhancing transparency in government institutions by regularly publishing information and data, and clarifying procedures. For example, regularly publishing budgets and financial reports.
- **Enhancing Accountability Mechanisms:** Strengthening accountability mechanisms within government institutions by activating internal control systems and enhancing the role of internal audit units. For example, activating a performance evaluation system for employees and managers.
- **Enhancing Citizen Participation:** Creating institutional mechanisms for citizen participation in decision-making processes, such as advisory councils, public hearing sessions, and electronic communication platforms. For example, establishing advisory councils for neighborhoods with representatives from local communities.
- **Enhancing Community Oversight:** Supporting the role of civil society organizations and media in overseeing government performance by providing information and data, and facilitating access to officials. For example, holding regular meetings between government officials and civil society organizations.

Capacity Building Level:

To enhance transparency and accountability in urban governance at the capacity-building level, the following recommendations are made:

- **Training Government Personnel:** Implementing training programs for government personnel in areas such as transparency, accountability, data management, and communication with citizens. For example, organizing training courses on the principles of good governance.
- **Enhancing Technical Capacities:** Strengthening the technical capacities of government institutions in using technology to enhance transparency and accountability, such as management information systems and open data platforms. For example, providing training on using GIS in urban planning.
- **Promoting a Culture of Transparency:** Promoting a culture of transparency and accountability within government institutions through awareness and education campaigns, and encouraging good practices. For example, organizing awareness campaigns on the importance of transparency and accountability.
- **Empowering Local Communities:** Implementing programs to empower local communities and civil society organizations by building their capacities in areas such as community oversight and

decision-making. For example, organizing workshops on how to monitor public project implementation.

- **Enhancing International Cooperation:** Benefiting from international cooperation programs in capacity building by exchanging experiences and best practices with other countries. For example, participating in knowledge exchange programs organized by international organizations.

Using Spatial and Economic Data:

To improve the use of spatial and economic data in urban governance, we recommend developing the data infrastructure through:

- **Creating a National Spatial Data Infrastructure:** Establishing a national spatial data infrastructure that includes integrated geographic databases, spatial data services, and standardized protocols. For example, creating a national portal for spatial data that provides access to spatial data from various sources.
- **Regularly Updating Data:** Establishing mechanisms for regularly updating spatial and economic data to ensure its accuracy and relevance for planning and decision-making needs. For example, regularly updating topographic maps and aerial imagery.
- **Standardizing Data Protocols:** Standardizing protocols for collecting, storing, and sharing spatial and economic data to ensure compatibility and interoperability. For example, adopting standardized protocols for encoding spatial data.
- **Enhancing Data Security:** Strengthening data security and protection from unauthorized access or manipulation by implementing appropriate security measures and technologies. For example, implementing encryption systems and identity management.
- **Developing Data Storage and Retrieval Systems:** Developing effective systems for storing and retrieving spatial and economic data that allow quick and easy access. For example, using cloud computing technologies for data storage.

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