



# Iraq

## The Republic of

MAL FACT SHEET

### SUMMARY

The Republic of Iraq is located in the Middle East, bordering the Persian Gulf, between Iran and Kuwait. It was formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, occupied by the United Kingdom during World War I, and was declared a League of Nations mandate under UK administration in 1920. Iraq attained its independence as a kingdom in 1932.

Chief of State: Nazir Amidi (since April 2026)

Capital: Baghdad

Other notable cities: Mosul, Basrah

Gov Type: Federal parliamentary republic

Population: 46 million (2024)

History: The ancient cities of Baghdad and Erbil were at the center of the Arab world for many years. The Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad ruled the Muslim world from the 8<sup>th</sup> century to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In 1258, the Mongols captured Baghdad and ruled this part of the Arab world until the empire's collapse. In 1534, the Ottomans captured Iraqi territory from the Safavid Iranian Empire, governing the region until the end of World War I.

### GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Iraq has a total area of about 438,317 square kilometers and 950 square kilometers of water.

Iraq's geography is divided into four main zones: the desert to the west and southwest, the fertile, rolling upland between the Tigris and Euphrates, the highlands in the north and northeast, and the alluvial plain where the rivers run in the south.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Noun: Iraq(s)

Adjective: Iraqi

Ethnic Groups: Arab 75-80%, Kurdish 15-20%, other 5% (includes Turkmen, Yezidi, Shabak, Kaka'i, Bedouin, Romani, Circassian, Sabaeen-Mandaean, Persian)

Languages: Arabic (Official), Kurdish (official); Turkmen (a Turkish dialect), and Syriac (Neo-Aramaic) are recognized as official languages where native speakers of these languages are present

Religion: Muslim (official) 95-98% (Shia 61-64%, Sunni 29-34%), Christian 1% (includes Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Assyrian Church of the East), other 1-4%

Literacy: 85.6% (Male 91.2%, 79.9 Female %)

Population growth is at 1.99%

## ECONOMY AND GDP

Iraq's economy is described as an oil-dependent economy in the Middle East. The country has faced several challenges, including the COVID-19 disruption, fragility of the domestic economy post-US presence, rising poverty, currency devaluation leading to inflation, and import dependence across most sectors.

Real GDP (Purchasing Power Parity): \$665 billion (2024)

Real GDP Growth Rate: -1.5% (2024)

Real GDP Per Capita: \$14,464 (2024)

GDP (Official Exchange Rate): \$279 billion (2024)

Inflation Rate (Consumer Prices): -12.3% (2024)

GDP - composition, by sector of origin: agriculture: 3.3% (2017 est.), industry: 51% (2017 est.), services: 45.8% (2017 est.)

Unemployment Rate: 15.5% (2025)

Youth Unemployment: 32% (2025)

Population below poverty line: 22.5% (2019 est.)

## MAIN POLITICAL CONTENTIONS

Iraq's political landscape has been shaped by its strategic location in the Middle East, its shared borders with Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, and Turkey, and its own internal dynamics. The Republic of Iraq has had a series of strongmen ruling the country until 2003. Iraq's invasion of Iran led to a costly war from 1980 to 1988. In 1990, over oil quota disputes and acquisitions of slant drilling, Iraq seized Kuwait but was expelled by US-led UN coalition forces during the two-month-long Gulf War of 1991.

After Iraq's expulsion, the UN Security Council (UNSC) required Iraq to scrap all weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles and to allow UN verification inspections. Despite Iraq detonating its chemical weapons in the desert and the complete absence of any evidence of weapons of mass destruction, the US controversially invaded Iraq in 2003 to oust Saddam Hussein.

In 2005, Iraqis approved a constitution in a national referendum and elected a 275-member Council of Representatives (COR). Iraq's constitution also established the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), a semi-autonomous region that administers the governorates of Erbil, Dahuk, and As Sulaymaniyah. Despite these efforts of democratic reform, Iraq remains in a state of warlordism, where powerful Iranian proxies and other gang leaders wield tremendous influence over the country, undermining the authority of the central government.

Between 2014 and 2017, Iraq fought a military campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS) to recapture territory the group seized in 2014. In 2017, then-Prime Minister Haydar al-Abadi publicly declared victory against ISIS, although military operations against the group continue in rural areas.

# Economy and Politics

# Iraq: A Timeline

