

Policy Brief: Public Perception Survey on Local Safety and Security in Iraq

1 July 2022

Highlights

-  **Strong majority (96%) across the country felt safe in 2022.**
-  **Main factors contributing to feelings of safety** include **people living peacefully**, strong presence of **Iraqi Security Forces**, and **no presence of ISIL**.
-  **Respondents want the government to prioritize** improving **local police services**, **improving access to security and justice services** for the local population, and **supporting community security interventions** at the local level.
-  **Local Police** are the **most trusted security service provider** in **all governorates**, followed by the Iraqi Security Forces.
-  **Strong majority agree** that the **government should control and regulate all firearms** and that immediate action to remove all armed manifestations in public spaces is a priority.

In April-May 2022, UNDP conducted a survey on public perceptions of safety and security in Iraq. The survey is intended to inform the Government of Iraq's Security Sector Reform Programme and is a follow-up from surveys undertaken in 2016, 2018 and 2021 to allow for comparison and assessment of changes on the ground.

The 2022 survey was undertaken against a background of the COVID-19 health pandemic, continuing government deadlock and inability to form a new government, and ongoing security incidents, including attacks by the Islamic State in the Levant. Despite these challenges, the survey was administered to a random sample of 6,000 respondents that was representative of community members across six governorates (Anbar, Baghdad, Basra, Karbala, Ninewa and Salah al-Din).¹ The survey was structured around nine key questions, which sought to ascertain public perceptions of safety and security in the six governorates and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on feelings of security.

¹ Of the 6,000 respondents in the 2022 survey, 68% (4097) were male and 32% (1903) were female. The 2021 survey was administered to 1,200 respondents (200 from each governorate), 70% (835) of whom were male and 30% (365) were female. The 2018 survey was administered to 1,200 respondents (200 from each governorate), 59% (703) of whom were male and 41% (497) were female. The 2021 and 2018 surveys covered the same six governorates. The 2016 survey was administered to 1,200 respondents, 65% (784) of whom were male and 35% (416) were female. In 2016, Diyala and Erbil were included instead of Ninewa and Basra.

Key Findings

|  General Perception of Safety and Security |  Improving Safety and Security at the Local Level |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Feelings of safety continued to improve in 2022, with 96% feeling safe across the country, compared to 90% in 2021, 89% in 2018 and 48% in 2016. ❖ Feelings of safety: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ increased substantially in Baghdad (63% in 2021 to 96% in 2022) and Karbala (83% in 2021 to 96% in 2022) and slightly in Anbar (99% in 2021 to 99.7% in 2022) and Ninewa (95% in 2021 to 100% in 2022); ❖ decreased substantially in Basra (99% in 2021 to 85% in 2022) and slightly in Salah al-Din (100% in 2021 to 99.7% in 2022). ❖ In 2022, the main factors contributing to feelings of safety were people living peacefully (25%), strong presence of the Iraqi Security Forces (19.5%), and no presence of ISIL (14%). ❖ In 2022, the main reasons people felt unsafe in their locality were because of the lack of local police services (30%), absence of community cohesion (22%), and the presence of other armed groups (13%). ❖ In 2022, 45% of respondents felt that having a safe and secure locality would increase their sense of well-being and quality of life to a somewhat high degree. The highest impact was noted in Anbar (81% very high extent), while the lowest impact was noted in Basra (55% moderately). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In 2022, respondents want the government to prioritize the following areas to strengthen safety and security in their locality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ improving local police services (36%) ❖ improving access to security and justice services for the local population (25%), especially in Ninewa (77%) ❖ supporting community security interventions at the local level (23%) ❖ The same priority areas were identified in 2021 and 2018 and similar areas in 2016, except that fighting ISIL away from the locality was also a top priority. ❖ There are differing opinions across governorates about what community members can do to improve security in their localities. Prominent responses include advocating for social cohesion/conflict prevention at local level (29%), supporting government efforts to reform the security and justice sector (27%), supporting local police to increase local safety and security (26%). The same contributions were identified in 2021 and 2018. |



Public Perception of Security Service Providers

- ❖ In 2022, the **Local Police were the most trusted security service provider across all governorates**, especially in Ninewa (98%), followed by the Iraqi Security Forces.
- ❖ Similar to previous years, there is a strong sentiment that **public trust in security sector service providers can be increased** through the **eradication of corruption** in the sector (28%). In **2022, additional actions** include putting in place **more laws and policies to allow such providers to act more efficiently** (21%), and engaging in medium- long-term security sector reforms to improve effectiveness, efficiency and accountability (19%).



Firearms control

- ❖ In 2022, **97% of all respondents agree that the government should control and regulate all firearms** and that immediate action to remove all armed manifestations in public spaces is a priority, with the **main reasons as to why** being to:
 - ❖ help **maintain stable security** in the community and crime rate and cases of murder (40%)
 - ❖ **eliminate cases of illegal use** of firearms (17%)
 - ❖ **restrict the use of firearms** to the state officials only (15%)
- ❖ In **Basra**, the **highest percentage of respondents disagreed** (13%) that the government should control firearms, with the **primary reasons** for disagreement being to **protect livestock** (33%), followed by to use them for **self-defence** (27%).
- ❖ In 2022, **84% of respondents want their locality to be free from firearms**, compared to 70% in 2021.
- ❖ In 2022, respondents were asked in what way can **local communities contribute to their locality being free from firearms**. The top responses were:
 - ❖ **assist in the enforcement of the rule of law** to protect the community from acts of violence and instance of firearms use (30%)
 - ❖ **spread awareness** on the dangers of gun use and enforce strict punishment (24%)
 - ❖ **assist in eliminating** the spread and use of illegal firearms (17%)



- ❖ The **COVID-19 health pandemic did not negatively impact the feelings of security** of the **majority of respondents** and their families, with the **exception of Ninewa** where **99.5% of respondents were negatively impacted**.
- ❖ **In 2022, the highest percentage** of respondents were **impacted by non-criminal incidents** due to COVID-19.
 - ❖ In **Anbar** (81.7%), **Baghdad** (67%), **Karbala** (59%) and **Ninewa** (59.8%), the **highest percentage** of respondents were impacted by **non-criminal incidents**.
 - ❖ In **Basra** (36%) and **Salah al-Din** (51%), the **highest percentage** of respondents were impacted because a **family member or friend was held in remand custody**.
- ❖ The **majority** of respondents were **satisfied** with **services received** in relation to **criminal incidents** and **family member/friend held in remand custody**.
- ❖ The **majority of respondents (75%) did not seek services from the courts/justice sector** during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - ❖ In **Baghdad** (45%), **Basra** (40%) and **Salah al-Din** (46%), the **highest percentage** of respondents sought **court/justice sector services** for **birth/marriage registration cases**.
 - ❖ In **Anbar** (27.5%) and **Karbala** (42%), the **highest percentage** of respondents sought **court/justice sector services** in relation to **commercial cases**.
 - ❖ In **Ninewa**, the **highest percentage** of respondents (47.5%) sought **court/justice sector services** in relation to **compensation from the government**.
- ❖ During COVID-19, the **majority of respondents** were **very satisfied or satisfied** with **courts/justice sector services in all areas**.