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[National Endowment for Democracy](#)

## Executive summary

### The National Index for Democratic Transformation in Iraq 2023

#### (Democracy in Iraq: Another Threshold)

Country	The National Index for Democratic Transformation in Iraq 2023		Economist Democracy Index 2022		Freedom House 2023	
	Score	Regime type	Score	Regime type	Score	status
 <a href="#">Iraq</a>	4.2	<b>Partly authoritarian</b>	3.13	<b>Authoritarian</b>	29	<b>Not Free</b>

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The National Index for Democratic Transformation in Iraq 2023 was produced through field research in Iraqi provinces.

September 2023

Governance Center for Public Policies

[www.iqgcpp.org](http://www.iqgcpp.org)

## • An overview of the [Governance Center for Public Policies](#)

The "Governance Center" is a research institute and think tank that supports entrepreneurial innovation activities to benefit the advancement of law and institutions. Its activities are focused on studying and developing public policies to help Iraq meet the criteria of democratic change based on good governance principles.

Since its inception, our center has worked to create numerous initiatives in Baghdad and many governorates throughout Iraq on various national and local strategic concerns. Policy papers and qualitative studies performed by specialized academic research teams were presented. It has successfully formed working groups of specialists and activists in various subjects and topics. At many levels, to bridge the gap between those with innovative ideas, stakeholders, and policymakers.

To learn more about our activities, please visit our [website](#) or contact us by email at [Governancecenter82@gmail.com](mailto:Governancecenter82@gmail.com).

### • introduction

On October 27, 2022, Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani assumed the position of Prime Minister of Iraq. After more than 12 months of political competition between the Sadrist movement and the Coordination Framework Forces (to which the new prime minister belongs), the appointment of Al-Sudani was a major advance. The work began in a dynamic but relatively positive environment. Tensions between Iran and the United States in Iraq had reached their lowest point, and at

the same time, only a low-level insurgency by ISIS remained.

On the other hand, the internal conflict between Iraqi political elites, which took some violent turns between November 2021 and August 2022, has since declined to dimensions that can be more easily controlled. Al-Sadr withdrew from political participation, while Baghdad and Erbil intensified their dialogue to find solutions to the budget, oil/gas, and security differences. Finally, the rise in oil prices has led to revenues flowing into the Iraqi treasury, and with the general budget relying more than 90 percent on oil revenues, this gives the Prime Minister financial space to accommodate various interests.

Al-Sudani began his term by appointing 21 ministerial positions out of 23, which is a relatively high number compared to previous prime ministers, as his choices for ministerial positions passed without major parliamentary obstruction, and two ministries remained vacant at first due to a dispute between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) over how to divide the "share" "The Kurds are in the government, and the ministerial cabinet was completed later on December 3, 2022, in equal sharing between the two parties.

The government inherited many crises from previous stages, such as the electricity crisis, the deterioration of public services, corruption, unemployment, etc.

In addition, the government was dealing with the fallout from a major fraud scandal, in which one of the outgoing Prime Minister's advisors, Mr. Mustafa al-Kadhimi, the head

of the Tax Authority, and a prominent businessman, among others, was involved in the theft of approximately \$2.5 billion from the accounts of the General Tax Authority at Rafidain Bank. During the period from September 2021 to August 2022.

The relationship with the Kurdistan Region also witnessed new tension three months after the formation of the new government following the Federal Supreme Court's decision to prevent the federal government from transferring funds to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) until accounts are settled and its oil sales from Baghdad are supervised. It was followed by the issuance of a decision by the International Chamber of Commerce arbitration panel on March 23, 2023, which led to the cessation of the export of crude oil from the Kurdistan region via Turkey.

Another pressing issue was the escalating decline in the value of the Iraqi dinar (since November 2022), which was caused by the implementation of updated and digital compliance procedures by the US Treasury and the Central Bank of Iraq aimed at reducing money laundering, terrorist financing, and sanctions evasion, resulting in an immediate dollar shortage in addition to liquidity issues.

The government took many measures to reform various sectors. The issue of combating corruption was on the government's agenda, as a supreme anti-corruption body was established (mid-November 2022); Assigning all ministers to submit a monthly report on their efforts to combat corruption (end of November 2022); It urged the Integrity Commission to

announce the tightening of the anti-corruption regulatory framework (mid-December 2022). As for what was called the "theft of the century", the three prominent "faces" were detained and banned from traveling, and some of the stolen money was returned. Criminal investigations are still ongoing, but no other significant names have been revealed.

Al-Sudani did not wait for the 2023 budget to be approved to commit to appointing 370,000 new employees in the public sector, to implement the promises made by previous governments that government contractors would eventually become permanent employees in the public sector. Which increased government spending. This makes the public budget more rigid and increases the risks of its exposure to significant declines in oil prices due to the budget's heavy dependence on oil revenues.

In the same context, the government sought to expand social welfare programs targeting the poor, as Mr. Al-Sudani announced in a press conference on January 3, 2023, his desire to increase the number of Iraqis benefiting from state-run social welfare systems from 5 million to 10 million, estimated to be They live below the poverty line (about 25% of the population), in addition to other measures such as providing an additional food basket for those covered by social welfare (as well as to the ration card).

Regarding the energy sectors, the Prime Minister is making efforts to conclude a long-term memorandum of understanding with Siemens to improve the electricity situation

in Iraq, and to salvage a major oil and gas investment/exploration deal with Total.

The government has also begun to address the severe traffic congestion crisis in the capital, especially by quickly starting to construct several bridges and tunnels at major intersections, in addition to other measures.

In terms of foreign policy, despite the complexities in the international environment and their extension at various levels, the prime Minister foreign movement demonstrates its intention to maintain good and balanced relations at all levels, free of polarizing discourses, and thus achieve a balance among the interests of various external actors. Bringing a measure of calm to Iraq on the international stage.

It is worth noting that the survey was conducted from 7/19 to 8/8/2023, so citizens' perceptions of the government's performance were dominated by the most prominent concern related to addressing the unemployment and poverty crisis through appointments and expanding the protection network, which generated Relatively comfortable in this regard.

In terms of other aspects, relative optimism remains limited due to the lack of results from other government measures on the ground, which take time, as well as citizens inherited negative expectations of successive governments, resulting from previous governments' bad legacy and unfulfilled promises.

• Methodological framework:

The Democratic Transformation Index, which was released for the sixth year in a row (2017-

2023), was developed after studying global indicators and attempting to localize them through numerous discussion sessions with prominent academics in the relevant specializations (political science, law, media, and statistics) to arrive at indicators that are close to the reality of Iraq's democratic experience. Five major axes have been adopted as the foundation for studying democracy in Iraq, taking into account previous research, the uniqueness of Iraqi society, the effective factors in establishing democracy, and the negative and positive effects. The axes of the 2023 index were the same as those of the previous year, 2022, with some modifications due to political, economic, and legal variables, namely:

- Government performance
- Rule of law
- economic stability
- Electoral reform
- Rights and freedoms

The axes were distributed to the work team, each according to its specialization, to identify the variables related to the relevant axis and to determine the questions through which these variables can be measured, provided that each question has three options with weights ranging from (0, 0.5, 1).

Given the diverse nature of governance among autocratic, authoritarian, transitional, democratic, and cohesive democratic, the working group decided to use a cumulative index with ten values ranging from 0 to 10 to achieve a more accurate classification of Iraq's democratic experience, as shown in Table No. (1).

Assuming that all of these axes and questions were equally important in the evaluation, the arithmetic average was used to calculate the

cumulative average for each axis, and then the cumulative average for the entire study.

A preliminary exploratory study of the index, which was applied to a sample of individuals, was conducted to confirm the validity, clarity, and absence of ambiguity of the questions. All questions were found to be clear and understood by the sample.

**Table No. (1):** National Index Scale for Democratic Transformation

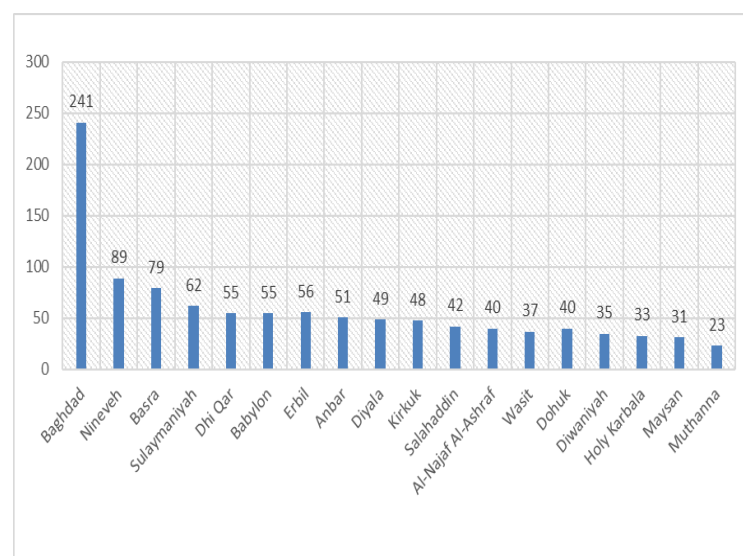
Category	Values
Fully Consolidated Democracy	9.1 – 10
Preliminary Consolidated Democracy	8.1 – 9
Full Democracy	7.1 – 8
Preliminary Democracy	6.1 – 7
Fully Transitioned	5.1 – 6
Partially Transitioned	4.1 – 5
Partially Authoritarian	3.1 – 4
Total Authoritarian	2.1 – 3
Partly totalitarian	1.1 – 2
Total totalitarian	0 – 1

The study is based on a survey of (1067) citizens who are eligible to vote, aged 18 years and over, in all the Iraqi governorates covered. The sample achieves a margin of error of (+ 3%) and a confidence level of (95%). The interviews were conducted by telephone based on the phone number base.

The interviews were conducted by phone from 7/19 to 8/8, using the phone number base available to the Iraqi Media and Communications

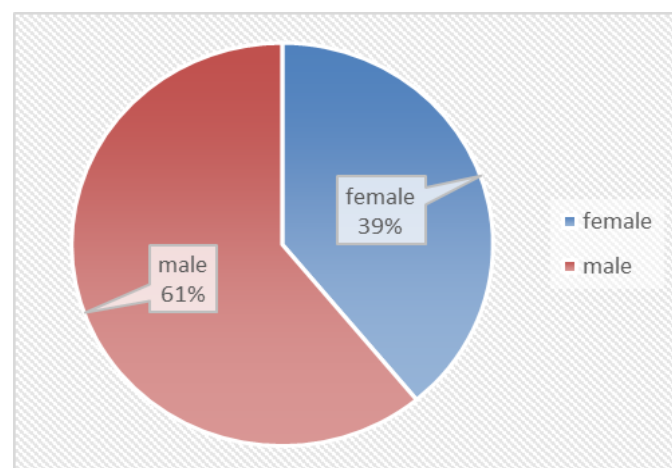
Commission, by a team of 10 political science graduates who had been trained in a workshop to ensure randomness and representation. as shown in Chart No. (1).

**Chart No. (1):** Distribution of the sample according to the population ratios for each governorate



In terms of gender, the sample is divided into (651) males and (416) females, with the estimated percentages of the Iraqi Ministry of Planning for the year 2021 being 51% males and 49% females.

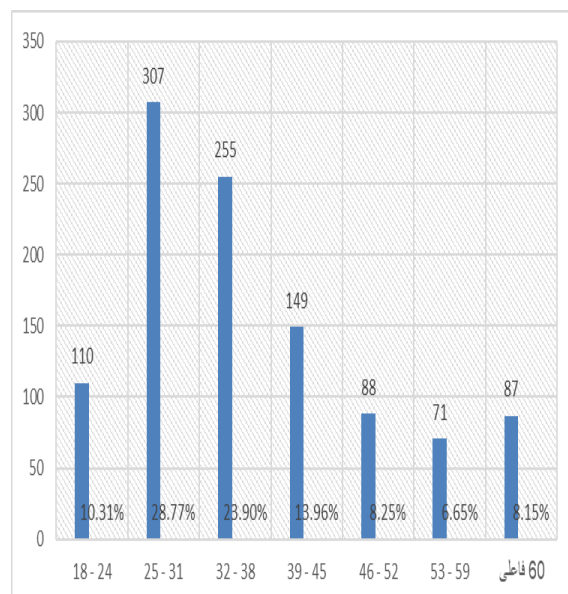
**Chart No. (2):** Prevalence of the sample by gender





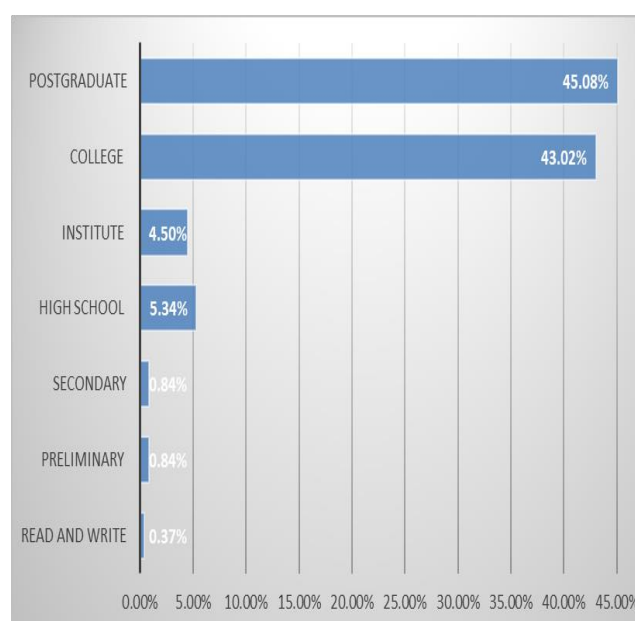
The research sample covered different age groups, as shown in Chart No. (3).

**Chart No. (3):** Sample prevalence by age groups

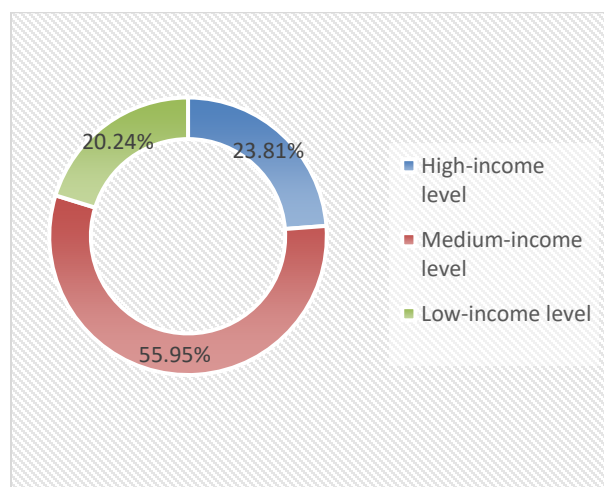


The research sample also covered all societal groups at various levels of study, as shown in Chart No. (4).

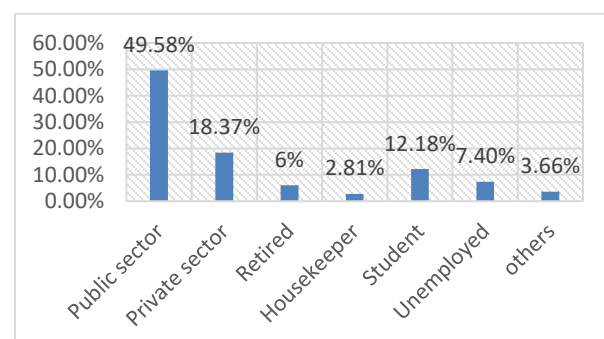
**Chart No. (4):** Sample spread by educational level



**Chart No. (5):** distribution of the sample by standard of living



**Chart No. (6):** Distribution of the sample by occupation



As shown above, the research sample matches the research community in terms of geographical spread and gender, allowing its findings to be generalized and used to learn about Iraqi society's perceptions of the democratic experience in Iraq.

#### • A summary of the findings:

##### - Government performance:

The basic axes of the government's work at the service and security levels indicate relative optimism, which is consistent with

the results of the economic axis later, given that the government is still in the second half of the first year while conducting the survey and the results of its government program have not yet been visible to citizens. This made the answer to the question “The citizen feels the government’s effort to provide services” split 50/50 between agreed and neutral. The percentage of people who are satisfied with the government program has increased compared to the previous government.

The percentage of those satisfied with the government program rose to 31.40% shortly after the formation of the Al-Sudani government, compared to 12% under the Al-Kadhimi government.

It is noted that the response of the respondents to the question about the Sudanese government’s possession of a clear strategic vision and service program was positive, taking into account the number of repetitions (31.40%), which is a high percentage compared to the results of the previous year or the previous government of Al-Kadhimi, which was only (12%), which it reflects the state of stability in the work and performance of the government.

The reason for this is due to the accumulated experience of the Prime Minister and his holding of several positions in previous governments on the one hand, and the good reputation that the public’s memory maintains of him as a person with a degree of integrity and sincerity in performing the tasks previously entrusted to him. added to this is his broad understanding of the country's

problems, as he did not leave Iraq before 2003 and lived through the crises and suffering in all their complexities, and the policies pursued by Mr. al-Sudani's government during the first year of its existence left a favorable impression, which helped raise the percentage of agreed answers.

Despite the government's inability to fulfill everything stated in the government program during its first year of existence, the majority of people who disagreed with the content of the question did not vote against it, preferring to remain neutral, with a percentage of (39.64%). It motivates the government to make more efforts to satisfy the public and move the percentage of neutrals to agree in the future if it can meet their needs.

The results also showed that the highest percentage of respondents (43%) indicated that the security forces succeeded in achieving security effectively. This is essentially due to the success of the security forces in stopping the activities of terrorist gangs and imposing their control over all areas that were described as hot, especially the Counter-Terrorism Service, which has gained a good reputation among the Iraqi citizens, as well as all other military and security agencies.

The question was that “the improvement in the relationship between the center and the Kurdistan region reflected positively on government performance,” revealing a different trend in the answers to the previous year’s index, as the percentage of neutrals increased to (40.21%) and the percentage of those who agreed reached (36.18%), which are percentages that reflect a degree of The

respondents expressed hope that the government could organize and improve the relationship with the Kurdistan Regional Government by the contents of the constitution, given the recent positivity of the relationship between the two parties in oil and gas issues and the ongoing dialogues to legislate its law; and understandings about imports, border crossings, customs, financial policies, and other issues.

The performance of the Federal Parliament during the current year was disappointing at the legislative and oversight levels.

In contrast, when asked about Parliament's performance, which stated, "The Federal Parliament is productive and effective legislatively and supervisory," the responses were negative at a rate of about (73.38%). This percentage represents a popular consensus that the Parliament's work is plagued by obstacles in its effectiveness and legislative performance.

The survey found that municipalities are failing to fulfill their mandates, which highlights the need for the government to focus more on maintaining a clean environment.

As for the question about the clean environment, is it considered one of the government's priorities? Taking into account the number of repetitions, the answers were negative (49.11%), which is an expected percentage due to the decline of municipalities in performing the roles

assigned to them, and the spread of waste in the streets and alleys.

In addition to the failure to find solutions to the problem of the electricity generators that supply the alleys and shops with electrical energy and the pollution resulting from their exhausts that threaten the environment, in addition to the communications towers that are also now threatening the lives of Iraqis due to the harmful waves that they emit.

In addition to the failure to find solutions to the problem of the electricity generators that supply the alleys and shops with electrical energy and the pollution caused by their exhausts that endanger the environment, as the communications towers endanger the lives of Iraqis due to the harmful waves that they emit.

Add to this the decline in wastewater treatment capacity, which the Municipality of Baghdad and municipal departments in the governorates are content with disposing of by discharging it into the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. In light of the obvious government service delays, these factors cast a shadow on citizens' opinions on the issue of the need for a clean environment.

It is worth noting that the percentage of neutrals (25.96%), accounting for one-quarter of the sample, is a swing percentage. In this regard, they may find success in some of the services provided, such as the establishment of some green spaces or sports fields, but they are dissatisfied with other aspects, prompting voters to remain neutral rather than vote affirmatively.



The results regarding the performance of the governors also highlighted a decline in acceptance, as the answers were “agreed” at a rate of (15%), while the percentage of disapproval was “disagreed” at (50.42%). This is due to the state of dissatisfaction experienced by citizens in those governorates regarding the defective performance of their governors, and their need for more empowerment, efficiency, and benefit from the capabilities of the governorate’s administration.

The findings highlight the necessity of conducting a rapid review of the performance of the executive branch in the Iraqi governorates to address the pressure of the local communities and its repeated objection to the poor quality and decline of services.

#### - Rule of law:

While they are still below the required level, some of the survey results for the current year in this axis showed better positive impressions than those from the previous year.

The respondents agreed with the statements "Citizens are equal before the law" and "Citizens know the rights and duties guaranteed by Iraqi laws" with a higher percentage than the previous year, by about 10%. Similarly, the percentage of those who agreed with the statement "Law should be the benchmark for all citizens, without distinction in terms of the sect, or tribe" increased by approximately 16% compared

to the previous year. However, these indicators were still below the desired level. The percentage of respondents who selected "agree" for the three statements was 17.24%, 23.34%, and 28.96%, respectively.

Although some progress has been made compared to the previous year, certain survey results related to the rule of law axis are still below the required level.

Certain responses yielded comparable outcomes to those of the previous year's survey. About 15.65 % of respondents agreed with the statement that public employees have the requisite legal knowledge to apply and enforce the law correctly. Additionally, the statement "The public prosecution's role is effective and influential in enforcing the law" received a response rate of 20.06 percent.

the requirement to re-establish the public prosecution's role, bolster its authority, address its issues, and overlap authorities with other entities.

According to the survey results, 40.49% of respondents chose "neutral" when asked about the fair application of transitional justice laws, while 50.23% answered negatively. On the other hand, the majority of respondents (52.48%) agreed that approving a general amnesty law that includes innocent people and those who have not caused harm to Iraqis would have positive effects on criminal justice.

There is a clear indication that the public is moving towards approving a general amnesty law (Without including those whose hands are stained with the blood and money of Iraqis) as a way to achieve true national reconciliation, end tensions, and move toward peace and societal stability.

In general, the above results in this axis can be attributed to several factors, but the most significant among them are the inadequate implementation and enforcement of the law, lack of legal awareness among the public, and a high percentage of corrupt officials within government agencies. As the government becomes weaker, people tend to rely on narrow loyalties for protection. Moreover, unequal distribution of public costs and responsibilities, such as taxes and other duties, creates the perception of discrimination and inequality before the law. In essence, constitutional equality must translate into genuine equality, that is, equal treatment of all members of society before the law. This can only be achieved through a just and impartial judiciary.

#### - **economic stability:**

The current government, led by Mr. Al-Sudani, has implemented a package of economic decisions that have contributed to creating economic stability and optimism among the public. One of the decisions made was the creation of approximately 710,000 new jobs in the public sector for graduates. The value of the Iraqi dinar was also increased to 1320 dinars per US dollar, which

is a 9.6% increase in value. The government has also expanded social care and benefits by including an additional 1 million people in the social protection programs, in addition to the previous 1.5 million.

The survey showed optimism about the economic measures followed by the Al-Sudani government.

The government's efforts to combat corruption and find solutions to structural issues such as providing electrical energy, addressing traffic congestion, and resolving the housing crisis are appreciated. These are crucial problems that need urgent attention and solving them would improve the government's performance, reduce tensions, and increase public satisfaction.

The government's ability to maintain momentum in building on the economic decisions and program followed by the Al-Sudani government represents a great opportunity to obtain high satisfaction from the public.

The survey showed optimism about the economic measures followed by the government, as one-third of the sample is optimistic about the government measures and the government program. It is found that (30.7%) are confident in the government measures regarding economic trends, and a sample of (42.5%) remains neutral. The ability to maintain a neutral and supportive level of satisfaction of up to (73.2%) of the public would pave the way for gaining popular support for the Sudanese government and enhance the chances of continuing to win

over the street further, leading to the neutralization of parties that push to the contrary towards government performance.

The government is encountering several challenges in executing its economic strategies, particularly the surge in the parallel exchange rate due to the actions taken by the US Federal Reserve. This has had an adverse impact on the expansion of expenditures made by the Iraqi government to fund its activities.

However, many difficulties face the smooth implementation of these decisions. The US Federal Bank resorted to applying a package of measures to transfer the dollar currency to Iraq, through a new mechanism represented by the opening of an electronic platform for currency transfer, and this procedure contributed to the emergence of the so-called parallel exchange rate, which rose to record levels that had not been witnessed before, although The government set the exchange rate at (1320) dinars for every one dollar, but the exchange rate in the currency markets has reached an average of (1550) dinars, more or less, depending on the general conditions and the decisions of the US Federal Reserve Bank.

The current government program has the potential to diversify the economy, create job opportunities, and provide essential services.

The survey results recorded the conviction of a significant percentage of respondents that the current government can diversify economic activities, create job opportunities, and provide services through the current

government program. (30.7%) of the sample finds that the current government can diversify economic activities and create opportunities. Work and provide services through the program and government policies followed, and 36.6% remain neutral, which is a percentage larger than approximately one-third. This group may not have an opinion about the government's ability, or it may prefer to monitor matters due to the difficulty of governance, or that governance requires more. They have more time, and this is an opportunity for the government, as it can transform this neutral group into supporters, and create more popular support from an economic point of view, given the importance of the economic dimension. This will pave the way towards converting a large group of people, which is more than a third, to be supportive. To government decisions, the level of support reached (67.3%) from the Iraqi public in all its categories.

#### - Electoral reform:

The results of the index showed a “neutral” position for about (40%) of the respondents that merging the two laws for electing governorate councils and the Federal Parliament will lead to stability in the electoral process, in addition to (22%) others who believe that stability will not happen, compared to a percentage (38%) who support the option—merging the two laws. In this regard, only (40%) of the respondents believe that returning to electoral districts at the governorate level achieves electoral justice. This indicates that approximately 60% of the sample is “neutral” and rejects Iraq's return to multiple districts at the governorate level. these results reflect a remarkable match with

the percentage of participants and boycotters in the previous elections in 2021, and the one that preceded in 2018.

Stability in the percentage of expected voting behavior for the upcoming elections compared to the 2021 and 2018 elections.

The above indicates several results, including that there is an expected fixed percentage of voting behavior in the upcoming elections, and on the other hand, it indicates the dangers of moving towards a “semi-fixed” percentage of public boycott of the elections, which requires radical and realistic solutions to change. Finally, the percentage of those who are “neutral” position or who have not decided on their electoral choice, which constituted a rate close to (37%), may change the voting equation if the course of political performance and electoral administration were more convincing.

The percentage of “neutral” or those who have not decided on their electoral choice, which constituted a rate close to (37%), may change the voting equation if the course of political performance and electoral administration were more convincing.

The results showed a high percentage of support (59%) for the presence of international observers, which reduces the manipulation of the vote, compared to (18%) who reduce the importance of the presence of international observers, which reflects the public’s views of weak confidence in the transparency procedures that accompany the

upcoming electoral process, Which sends a message that the largest percentage of voters are not confident about the measures taken to limit manipulation and influence the wills of voters, and therefore they believe that resorting to international monitoring is the most appropriate solution currently to reduce the interference of influential actors in the electoral process.

The respondents believe that resorting to international monitoring is the most appropriate solution currently to reduce the interference of influential actors in the electoral process.

The biggest problem lies in the percentage of those who reject and have reservations about the ability of the Saint-Lego mechanism to achieve political stability, which exceeded (80%), which indicates the continued need for electoral reform, and that manifestations of rejection of the electoral law may be renewed at any moment.

#### - **Rights and freedoms:**

The increasing disclosure of cases of domestic and community violence against children by the media, particularly social media, constituted a clear shock to public opinion, which was reflected in respondents' opinions. In general, the responses were negative, with only 12% of the sample agreeing that “children's rights are guaranteed in Iraq” and 68% disagreeing. This is due to living conditions and a societal environment that are unsuitable for ensuring children's rights, as well as an increase in cases of murder, kidnapping, rape, and the



emergence of the phenomenon of begging and child trafficking.

The respondents stressed the need to guarantee children's rights and protection from mistreatment and harm.

As for the role of women in the political process and the percentage of their participation without obstacles, it was positive at a rate of (33%), in line with the previous year's indicator for 2021-2022. This reflects the continuation of the relatively favorable environment that allows women to be given a better role in political participation at the level of legislative authority through their representation in the Federal Parliament, as well as in the executive authority by assuming ministerial and administrative positions in state institutions.

The continuation of a relatively favorable environment allows for a better role for women in political participation.

According to the latest index, there has been a noticeable increase in the positive percentage regarding the performance of civil society organizations. In the current year, 22% of the sample agreed on the growing role of these organizations, compared to 13% in the previous year. The most influential group in this sample are those who are more aware of the role of civil society organizations and interact with their activities. This increased awareness is reflected in the positive answers that came from holders of graduate and university degrees.

Despite some positive progress, the overall percentage of success is still relatively low

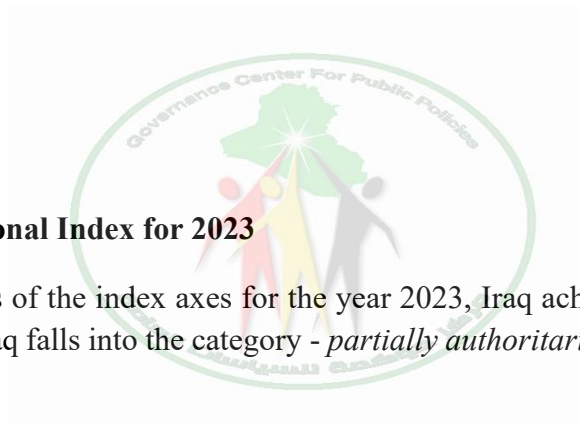
for civil society organizations. This is due to the challenges they face, including political obstacles and a lack of social awareness. The survey found that 42% of respondents disagreed with the statement that civil society organizations have a role in developing government plans to solve public problems. This highlights the difficulty these organizations face in contributing to public policy decisions, despite their potential to provide valuable input. However, civil society organizations have played a crucial role in filling the void left by the lack of political opposition. They have also been instrumental in building capabilities and fostering innovation among members of society.

Civil society in Iraq still operates inconsistently and faces obstacles in the political environment.

As for the role of the media in communicating people's demands and needs to decision-makers, the results of the index for this year were close, as the sample agreed with this statement at a rate of (34%) and was equal in terms of neutrality and disagreement at a rate of (32%). The reason for this convergence was the growing role of the media in Meeting people's demands and the age diversity of the sample, which reflected positively on this year's results compared to the previous year's index.

The results reflect the clarity of the growing role of the media in meeting people's demands and needs.





### Iraq Classification: National Index for 2023

Based on the final results of the index axes for the year 2023, Iraq achieved a cumulative score of 4.2 out of 10. Hence, Iraq falls into the category - *partially authoritarian transitional*, as shown in the **Chart** below.

**Chart No. (7):** Iraq Democracy Accumulative Score

