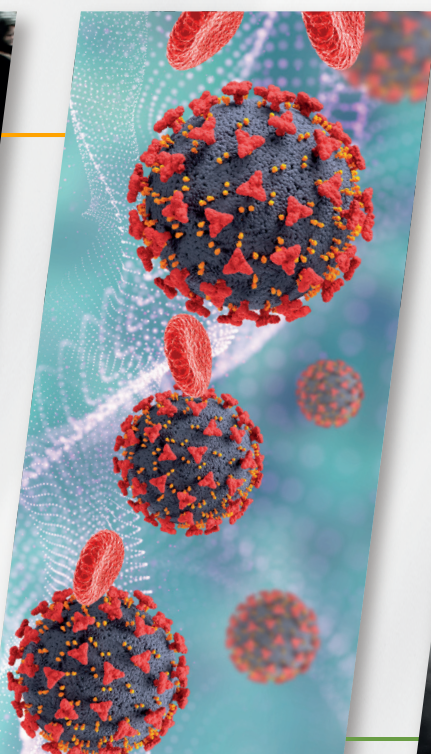


# IRAQ SITUATION REPORT

A monthly situation report aimed at combating  
COVID-19 rumors to debunk the infodemic



December 2022

## About Rooted in Trust

Rooted in Trust is collecting, analyzing, and responding to rumors in 10 countries with generous support from USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA). We focus on equipping journalists and humanitarian communicators with the tools they need in the languages they prefer, to combat rumors and misinformation during the COVID-19 crisis.

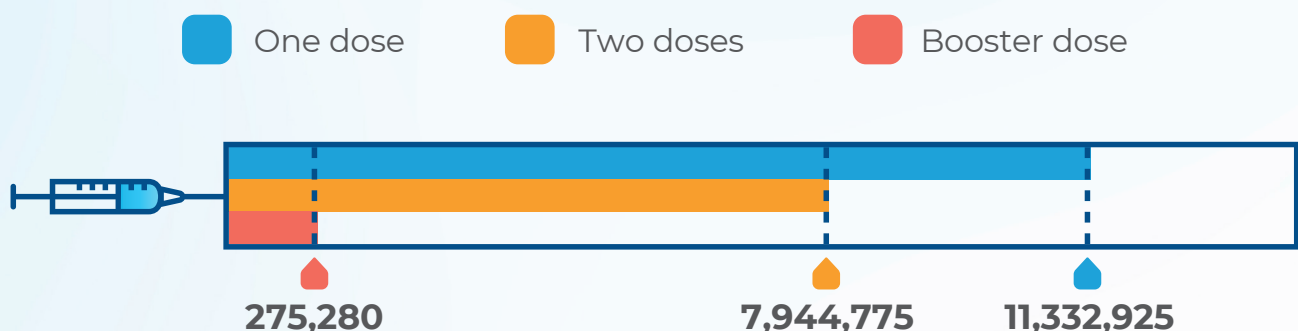
## How do we do it?

We identify and analyze rumors to help humanitarian actors and health workers better inform their Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE) strategies.

### Situation by the Numbers (WHO)<sup>1</sup>

- Positive Covid-19 cases reported during December 2022: **1,057** (42.7% decrease compared to November 2022)
- Number of total cases: **2,465,545**
- Total of vaccine doses administrated until December 2022: **19,552,980**
- Total number of fully vaccinated people: **7,944,775** (19.8%)
- Death cases reported during December: **9**
- Total death cases reported until December: **25,375**

### Vaccination Uptake Per Dose until December 2022





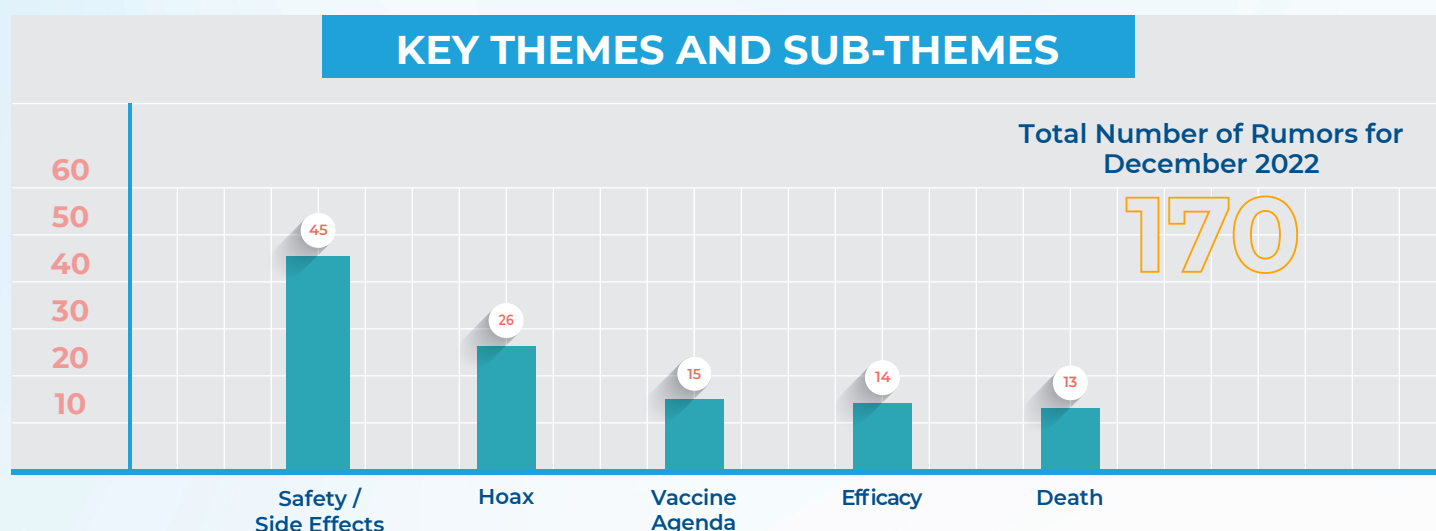
## Introduction

According to the WHO Iraq dashboard, Iraq reported 1,057 confirmed COVID-19 cases in December 2022, a 42.7% decrease compared to November. However, until December 25, 2022, the Ministry of Health in Iraq reported 1,074 confirmed cases of COVID-19<sup>2</sup>. Usually, there are different data from WHO and the Ministry of Health regarding the COVID-19 confirmed cases on a monthly basis. This causes considerable confusion about the overall situation of COVID-19 in the country. Death cases increased in December compared to November, in which there were nine death cases by the COVID-19 virus during December. Vaccination coverage remains low, with only 19.8% of people fully vaccinated. According to the WHO dashboard, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases was 2,465,545, and 25,375 deaths by the end of December 2022<sup>3</sup>. Also, a total of 19,552,980 vaccine doses had been administered countrywide. Out of these, 11,332,925 people had received their first dose, 7,944,775 people has received their second dose and 275,280 people had received a booster dose.

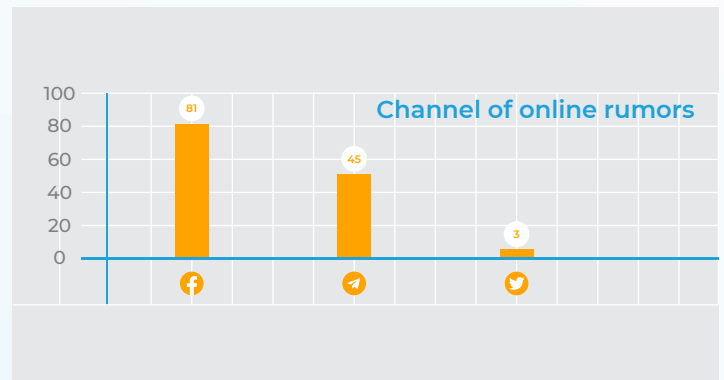
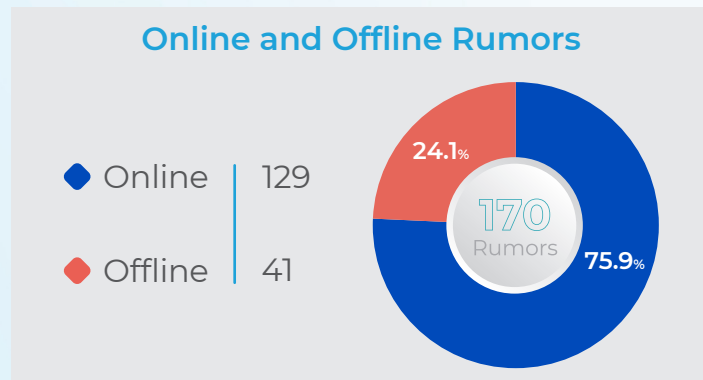
Riyadh Alhilfi, Director General of Public Health at the Ministry of Health - Iraq, stated to the local media that "the doctors specializing in epidemiology in the Public Health Department are monitoring the situation in China," noting that "the increase in cases in China is the result of the Omicron strain and its variants, and it has high speed of transmission." He explained that "the Omicron mutant has become endemic in Iraq, and there is no concern about the mutated entry again, being the same mutant, but the new strain transmits faster than the previous strains," noting that "almost half of the influenza cases are Omicron, and the remaining are influenza (A) and (B)". He concluded by saying, "If a citizen is vaccinated and wears a mask, he will achieve 90% protection from infection with the coronavirus, even if he is in crowded places."<sup>4</sup> It is worth mentioning that Iraq ranks 1st in the Arab world and 43rd globally in COVID-19 cases.<sup>5</sup>

## Data Overview

With a total of 170 rumors collected during December 2022, we have noticed that misinformation trends are revolving around the top subtheme of "safety/side effects"; they mainly stated the risk and danger of taking the vaccines. Rumors linked to death, hoax, efficacy, and vaccine agenda also continue to circulate among different communities in Iraq, especially IDP communities in northern Iraq. Out of the 170 collected rumors, 41 of them were collected from IDPs inside and outside the IDP camps in Erbil Governorate. On the other side, Facebook is one of the top online sources for spreading false information, out of 129 online rumors, we collected 81 rumors on Facebook public accounts, groups, and pages during December 2022, which shows that more than %60 of the total online rumors was collected on Facebook. Also, Telegram ranked the second social media platform for spreading rumors in Iraq with 42 collected rumors only from public accounts and groups. The majority of both online and offline rumors were in the Arabic language, in which more than %80 of collected rumors during December were in Arabic.



## Channels



## Analysis

Despite the decrease in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in December compared to November, rumors and false information on COVID-19 (mainly on the COVID-19 vaccines) still spread daily basis among Iraqi communities through online and offline practices. The rumors are also associating the COVID-19 vaccine with other outbreaks and diseases such as seasonal flu. At the same time, people constantly develop thoughts and theories against the COVID-19 vaccines. All the theories have generally one main purpose, which they work on deepening people's hesitancy in taking the vaccine.

Recently, the provision of health services in the camps through humanitarian organizations has decreased significantly, and some organizations have withdrawn their services in the IDP camps. This has affected IDPs in terms of a lack of trust in humanitarian organizations and their services. This once again paves the way for the creation and spread of misinformation about the various crises and on top of them the health outbreaks.

Under the activities of Rooted in Trust 2.0, Internews Iraq team continues to collect and analyze the trend rumors and false information that spread in Iraq. Then, several publications including Community Bulletin, Humanitarian Bulletin, Media Bulletin, and social media content are produced every month as a response to the trending rumors. These publications provide the fact-check and recommendations for various target groups. These publications can be found on [Iraq – Rooted In Trust](#).

### Sources

1. <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/iq>
2. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=549647933872248&set=a>
3. [https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/iq\\_](https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/iq_)
4. <https://www.ina.iq/174510--.html>
5. <https://shafaq.com/en/Iraq-News/COVID-19-one-death-and-283-n>

## Contact

Director of Programs  
**Sara Sofiwan**  
[ssofiwan@internews.org](mailto:ssofiwan@internews.org)

For more information on the project, please visit:

[Internews In Iraq \(Facebook Page\)](#)  
[Iraq – Rooted In Trust](#)