

# COVID-19 CASES IN THE GAZA STRIP

Weekly epidemiological bulletin from (14/03 TO 20/03 2021) AND (21/03 TO 27/03)

DATA SOURCES: MINISTRY OF HEALTH (MOH) DAILY REPORTS ON COVID-19 IN GAZA STRIP

## GENERAL

Reporting Period	Weekly cases		Cumulative
	14-03-2021 20-03-2021	21-03-2021 27-03-2021	accumulative since 23/8/2020
# of samples tested	<b>total</b> 17,067	19,814	433,682
# of positive cases	<b>total</b> 1,822	3,955	62,927
# of closed cases	<b>total</b> 56,068	56,962	
# recovered cases (%closed)	55,486 (99%)	56,363 (99%)	
# reported deaths (%closed)	582 (1%)	599 (1%)	
Classification of positive cases by severity*	<b>Mild</b>	1,773	3,870
	<b>Moderate</b>	12	37
	<b>Severe</b>	35	37
	<b>Critical</b>	2	11
Positivity rates (weekly)	<b>total</b>	10.68%	19.96%
	<b>contacts</b>	29.7%	36.0%
	<b>suspect</b>	29.0%	31.3%
	<b>surveillance</b>	2.7%	3.3%

\* The reported classification of positive cases by severity reflects the status at first day of admission at the last day of the reporting week. This classification may change over time according to progression of COVID-19 infection among patients.

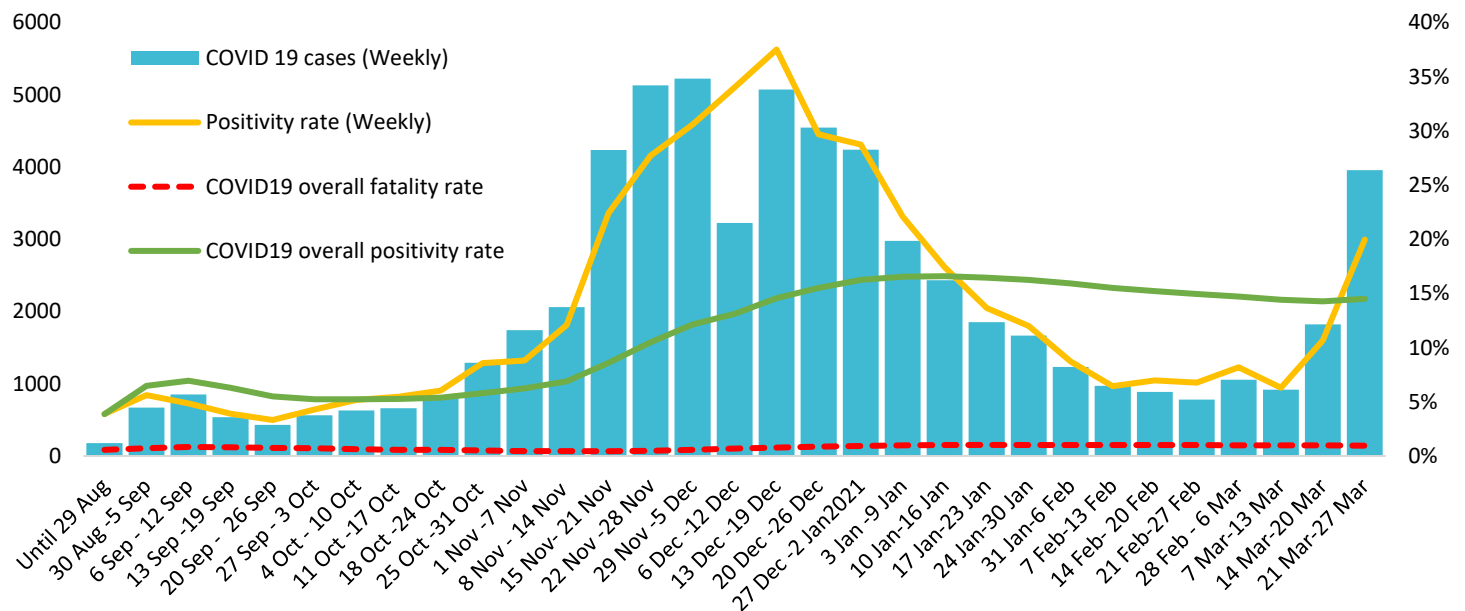


Figure 1: Reported weekly COVID-19 cases, weekly positivity rates, overall positivity rates and overall fatality rates

- Increase in total number of conducted tests to 19,814 between 21-27 March from 17,067 between 14-20 March 2021. These include COVID-19 antigen rapid test as well as SARS-COV2-PCR test results, explaining the increase in number of conducted tests and reported positive COVID-19 cases.
- Increase in number of newly reported COVID-19 cases to 3,955 between 21-27 March from 1,822 between 20-21 March (Figure 1).
- Disaggregated by district, newly reported COVID-19 cases and incidence per 100,000 are presented in Figure 2 and 3.

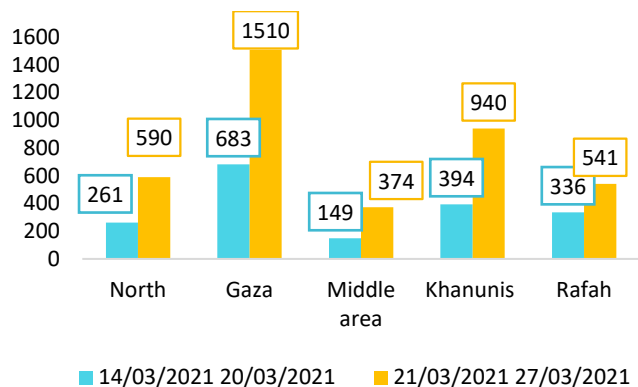


Figure 2: Newly reported weekly COVID-19 cases in Gaza Strip districts

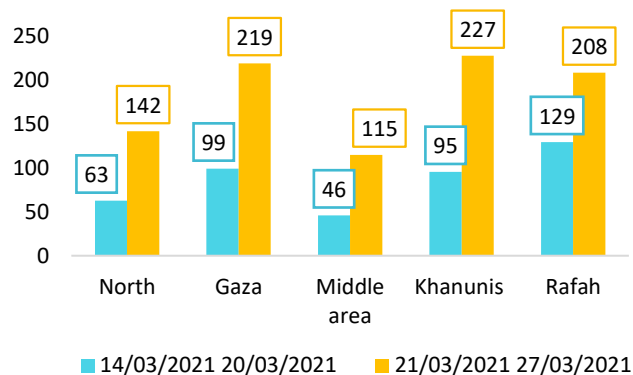


Figure 3: Incidence of weekly COVID-19 reported cases per 100,000 population in Gaza Strip districts

- Approximately 15 areas are currently coded red, mostly in Rafah and Gaza districts. Approximately 25 areas are coded yellow distributed along the Gaza Strip.



15 March 2021



22 March 2021

Figure 4: Geographical distribution of newly reported COVID-19 cases (7 days average) in Gaza Strip neighborhoods

## POSITIVITY RATES

- Increase in weekly COVID-19 positivity rate to 19.96% between 21-27 March compared to 10.68% between 14-20 March 2021.
- Increase in weekly positivity rates among the three testing categories (Contacts, surveillance, and suspected cases) comparing between the two weeks (Table on page 1).
- Increase in weekly positivity rates along all five Gaza Strip districts (Figure 5).
- Overall positivity rate reached 14.5% up to 27 March 2021.

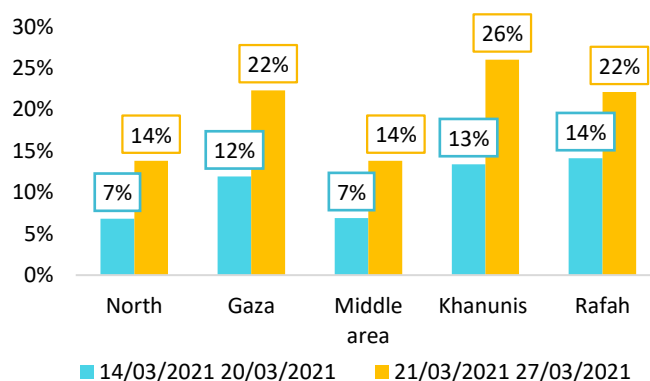


Figure 5: COVID-19 weekly positivity rates distributed by district

## DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 CASES AMONG AGE GROUPS AND GENDER

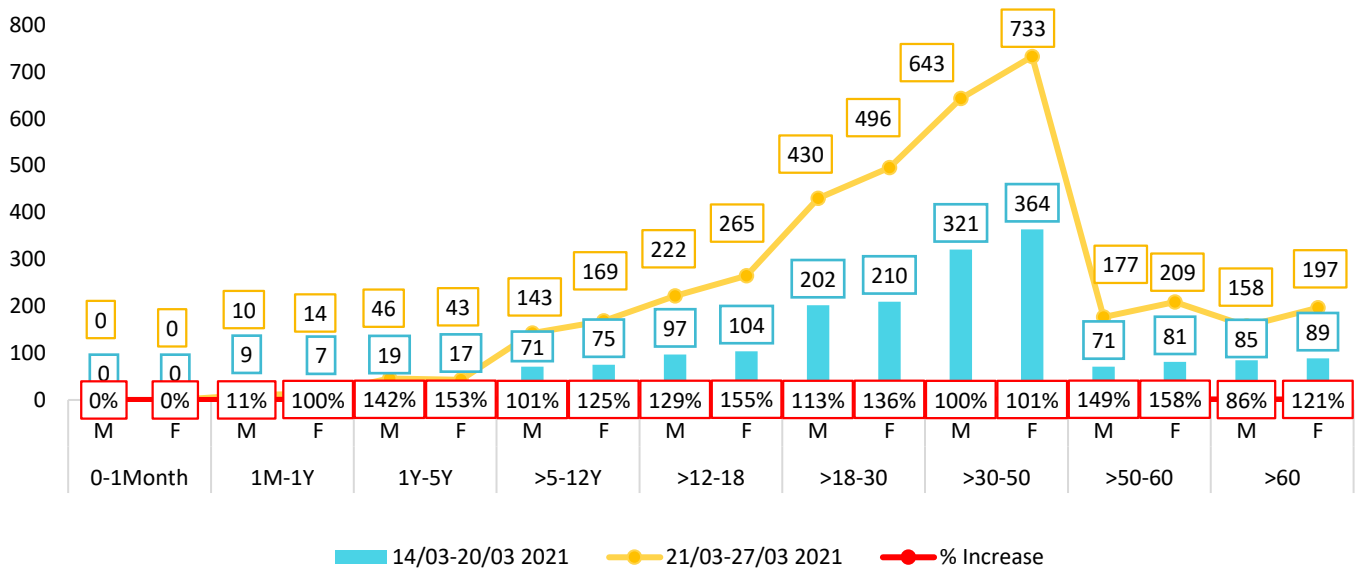


Figure 6: Weekly newly reported COVID-19 cases distributed by age groups and gender

- Increase among all age groups between 21-27 March compared to 14-20 March 2021.
- Highest reported COVID-19 cases among people aged 18 to 50 among males and females in the two reporting periods.
- Highest percentage increase in reported COVID-19 cases among people aged >50-60 years both among males and females (Red boxes in Figure 6).

## DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 DEATHS

- Increase in number of reported COVID-19 deaths to 17 (10 males, 7 females) between 21-27 March from 16 deaths between 14-20 March 2021 (Figure 7).
- Majority of reported COVID-19 deaths are people aged 60 years and older (Figure 7).
- Total reported deaths since the start of COVID-19 outbreak in the Gaza Strip until 27 March reached 599 with an accumulative COVID-19 fatality rate of 1%. Out of the 599 COVID-19 reported deaths, 341 were males (57%) and 258 were females (43%).

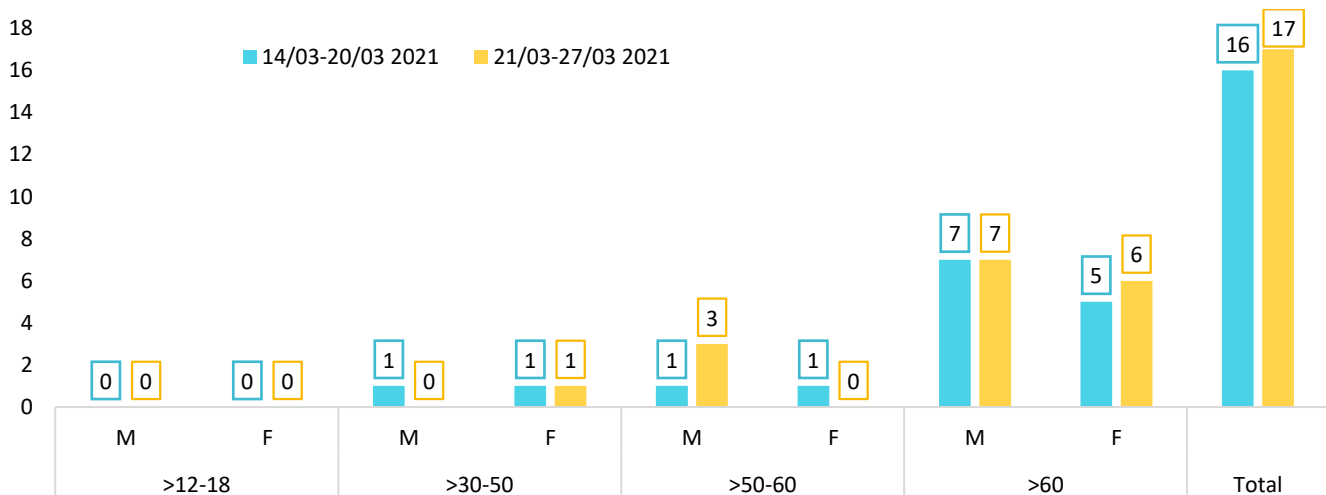


Figure 7: Distribution of reported COVID-19 deaths by age groups and gender

## DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 CASES BY SEVERITY

- Increase in cumulative moderate cases admitted to hospitals to 50 on 27 March compared to 22 cases on 20 March 2021 (Figure 8).
- Increase in cumulative severe cases admitted to hospitals to 88 cases on 27 March compared to 58 cases on 20 March 2021 (Figure 8).
- Increase in cumulative critical cases admitted to hospitals to 22 cases on 27 March compared to 14 cases on 20 March 2021.

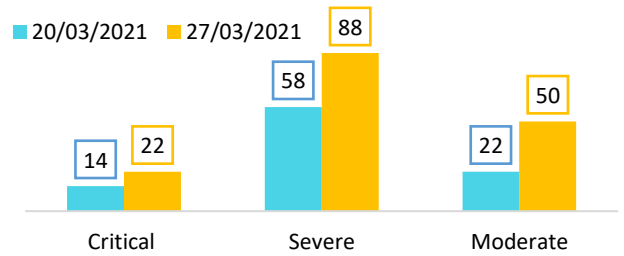


Figure 8: Classification of cumulative hospital admitted COVID-19 patients by severity

## HEALTH SYSTEM CAPACITY (COVID-19 MANAGEMENT)

- Increase in number of available COVID-19 beds to 392 (145 high dependency, 45 ICU and 202 normal beds) as per MOH preparedness plan. A further increase up to 292 high dependency and ICU beds is ready for emergencies.
- Increase in total COVID-19 bed occupancy rates to 49% on 27 March 2021 compared with 30% on 20 March 2021 (Figure 9).
- Increase in occupancy rate at high dependency and ICU to 58% on from 38% on 20 March 2021 (Figure 9).

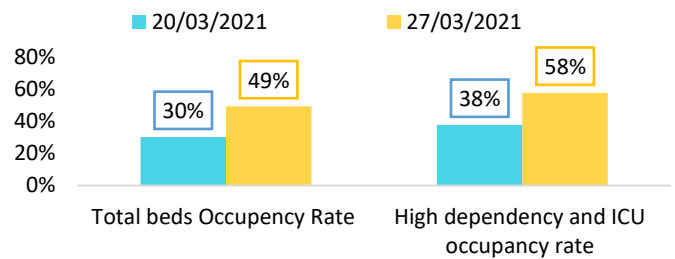


Figure 9: Occupancy rates of COVID-19 beds classified by type of bed

## HEALTH CARE WORKERS INFECTIONS

- Increase in total number of active COVID-19 cases among health workers to 135 on 27 March from 81 on 20 March 2021. The increase is mainly among both male and female doctors, nurses and paramedics (Figure 10).
- Increase in newly reported COVID-19 infections among health workforce to 88 between 21-27 March from 47 between 14-20 March (Figure 11).
- Around 50% of the newly infected workers between 21-27 March were working at hospitals (Figure 11).

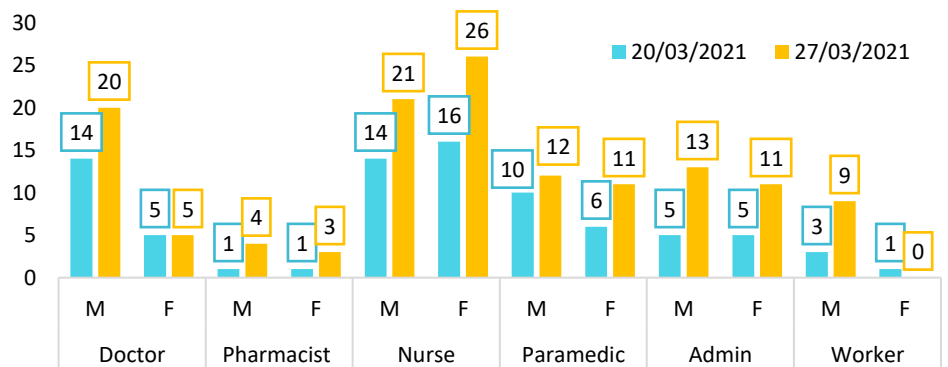


Figure 10: Active reported COVID-19 cases among health workforce distributed by gender and profession

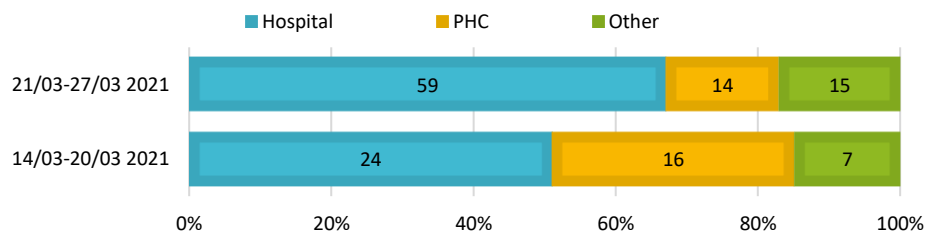


Figure 11: Distribution of newly weekly reported COVID-19 cases among health workforce distributed by work setting

## COVID-19 VACCINATION

- National vaccination campaign launched in Gaza Strip on 22 February 2021 in parallel with established specific vaccine distribution criteria for elders with chronic health conditions, frontline health care workers and other patients with life-threatening health conditions.

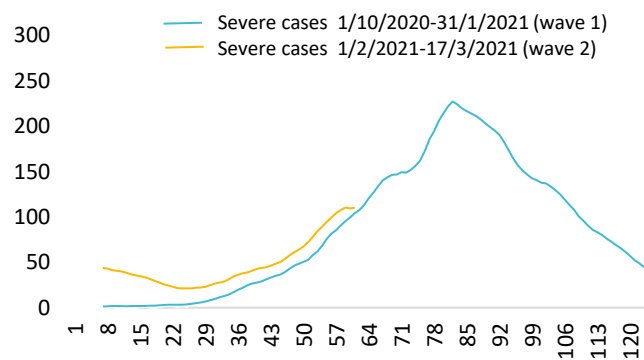
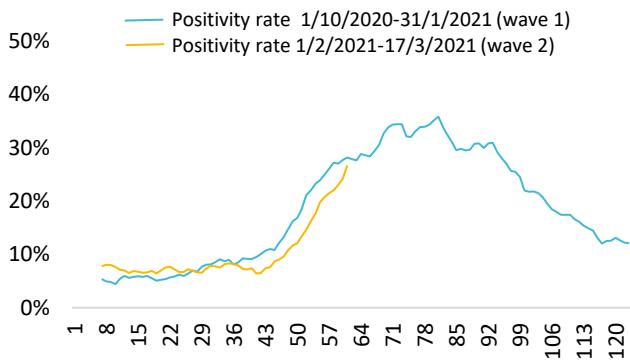
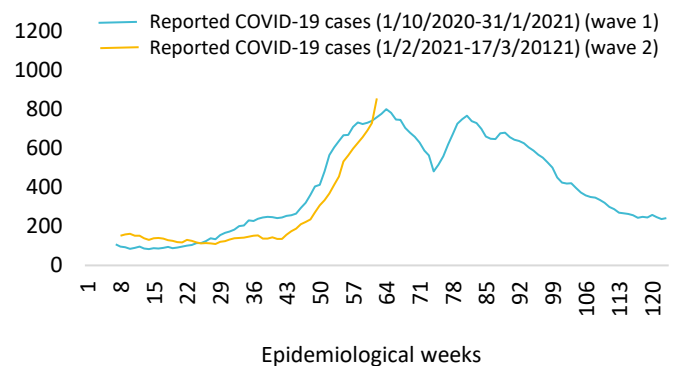
No	Date	Vaccine route	Delivered vaccine doses
1	February 2021	Palestinian Authority	2,000
2	February 2021	Donations from UAE	20,000
3	11 March 2021	Donations from UAE	38,700
4	21 March 2021	COVAX	11,700 + 9,600
<b>Total</b>			<b>82,000</b>

- On 21 March the first shipment of COVAX vaccines reached Gaza Strip with the next anticipated shipment by end April 2021.
- Both MOH and UNRWA are jointly running the vaccination process at three MOH clinics and four UNRWA clinics. MOH also started vaccination for elders and people with specific health conditions at two MOH hospitals. Until 27 March 2021, 18,454 frontline health workers and community members received COVID-19 vaccinations (774 at MOH hospitals, 8,792 at PHC clinics, 8,888 at UNRWA clinics).

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COVID-19 TRANSMISSION WAVES

When comparing the current wave of COVID-19 transmission (1 February-27 March 2021) with the first wave of COVID-19 community transmission (1 October-31 January), the second wave is taking the same pattern as the previous one, looking at the number of reported COVID-19 cases, positivity rates and presence of severe cases (see Figures). This shows the urgent need for the reinstatement of public health interventions to prevent further community transmission to “flatten the curve”.

In addition, MOH capacity should be prepared to respond to the new wave of COVID-19 cases and apply lessons learned from the previous period.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase in total newly reported COVID-19 cases and weekly positivity rates between 21-27 March 2021 among both males and females and all age groups along five Gaza Strip districts.
- Alarming increase in total admitted COVID-19 patients in severe condition, and in reported COVID-19 deaths.
- Reinstatement of public health interventions to reduce exposure among population is urgently needed.
- Protection of the most vulnerable COVID-19 patients such as elderly and patients with known co-morbidities remains vital. The process of early hospital admission for these groups should be enforced to provide early supportive care to prevent the deterioration of their health conditions and late access to lifesaving care.
- Supporting health care system for proper management of COVID-19 patients and all patients is essential at this stage to prevent further deterioration of situation.
- Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) messaging on public health measures among the broader population need to be urgently stepped up to prevent further deterioration in COVID-19 figures and resurgence of cases considering the easing of restrictions and the witnessed low compliance with safety measures at the community level.
- Increase in reported COVID-19 infection among health workers during the last three weeks. Further enforcement of IPC measures at health facilities levels is needed, joined with extensive awareness campaigns among health workers to further encourage COVID-19 vaccine uptake.
- Strengthening of RCCE efforts to address vaccine hesitancy among the population and raise awareness of the urgency to get vaccinated including for those previously infected by COVID-19 in view of the unknown duration of immunity and the risk of re-infection.