

# COVID-19 CASES IN THE GAZA STRIP

Weekly epidemiological bulletin from (21/03 TO 27/03 2021) AND (28/03 TO 03/04 2021)

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

## GENERAL

Reporting Period	Weekly cases		Cumulative
	21-03-2021 27-03-2021	28-03-2021 03-04-2021	accumulative since 23/8/2020
# of samples tested	<b>total</b> 19,814	24,973	458,655
# of positive cases	<b>total</b> 3,955	7,508	70,435
# of closed cases	<b>total</b> 56,962	58,701	
# recovered cases (%closed)	56,363 (99%)	58,071(99%)	
# reported deaths (%closed)	599 (1%)	630 (1%)	
Classification of positive cases by severity*	<b>Mild</b>	3,870	7,420
	<b>Moderate</b>	37	27
	<b>Severe</b>	37	41
	<b>Critical</b>	11	20
Positivity rates (weekly)	<b>total</b>	19.96%	15.4%
	<b>contacts</b>	36.0%	38.9%
	<b>suspect</b>	31.3%	42.9%
	<b>surveillance</b>	3.3%	3.2%

\* 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.

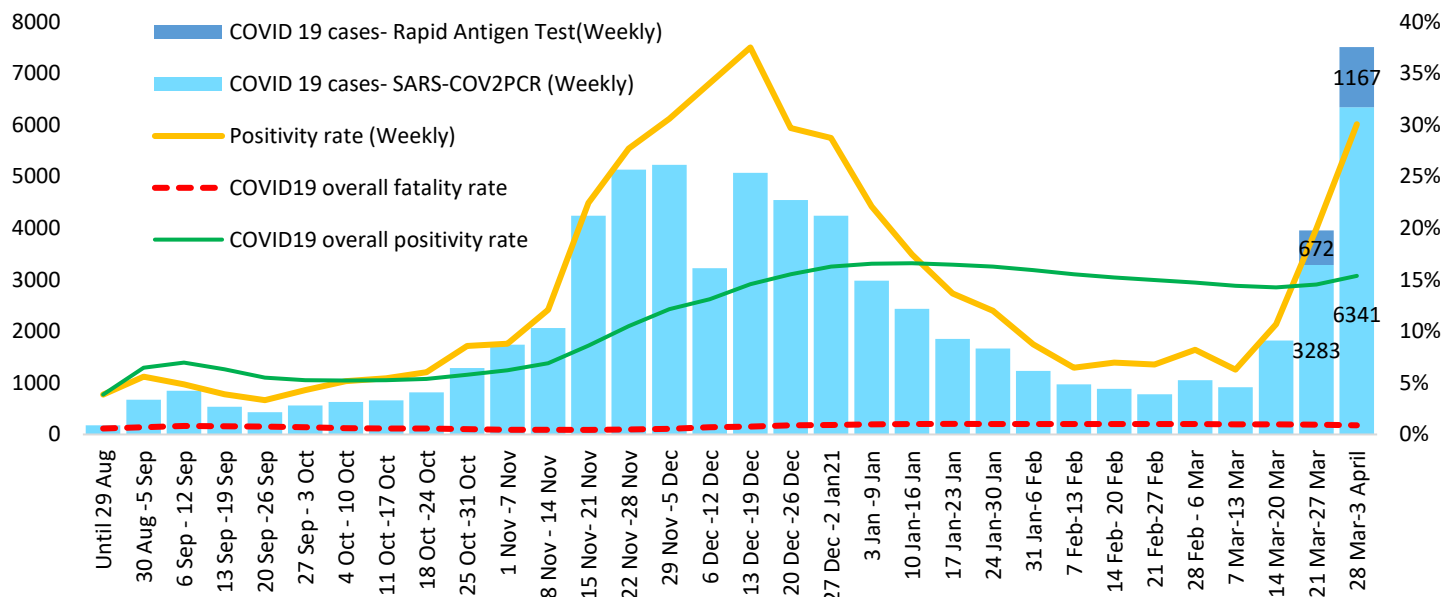


Figure 1: Reported weekly COVID-19 cases, weekly positivity rates, overall positivity rates and overall fatality rates

- Increase in total number of conducted tests to 24,973 between 28 March-3 April 2021 from 19,814 between 21-27 March 2021. Since 21 March, tests results include COVID-19 antigen rapid tests as well as SARS-COV2-PCR tests (Figure 1).
- Jump in number of newly reported COVID-19 cases to 7,508 between 28 March-3 April 2021 from 3,955 between 21-27 March (Figure 1).
- Increase in newly reported COVID-19 cases and incidence per 100,000 population along all five Gaza Strip districts (Figures 2 and 3).

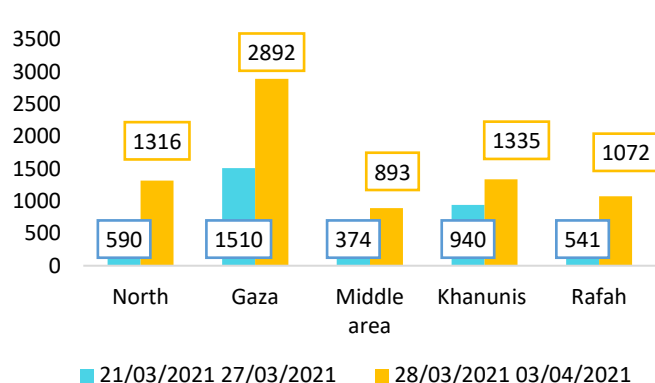


Figure 2: Newly reported weekly COVID-19 cases in Gaza Strip districts

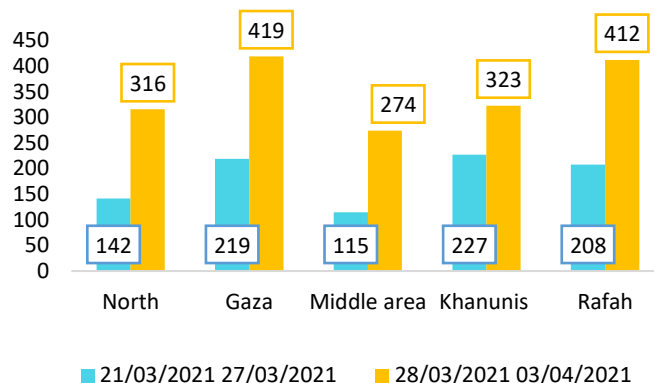
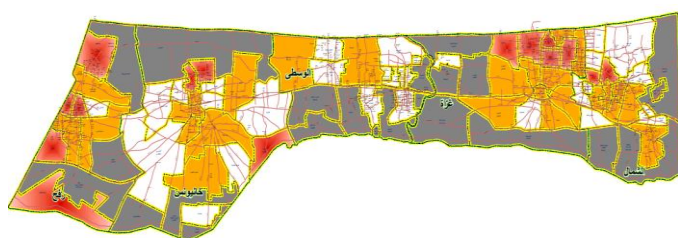


Figure 3: Incidence of weekly COVID-19 reported cases per 100,000 population in Gaza Strip districts

- Almost all areas in Gaza Strip are coded red on 2 April compared to 15 areas in Rafah and Gaza districts on 23 March 2021 (Figure 4).



23 March 2021



02 April 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 30.06% between 28 March-3 April from 19.96% between 21-27 March 2021.
- Increase in weekly positivity rate along all Gaza Strip districts (Figure 5)
- Increase in weekly positivity rates among the three testing categories, especially among suspected cases comparing between the two weeks (Table on page 1).
- Increase in overall positivity rate to 15.4% on 3 April from 14.5% on 27 March 2021.

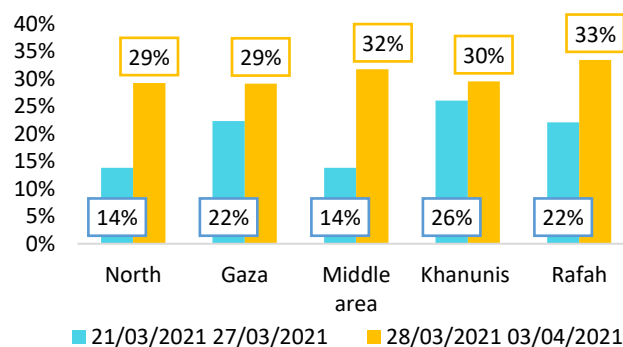


Figure 5: COVID19 weekly positivity rates distributed by districts

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

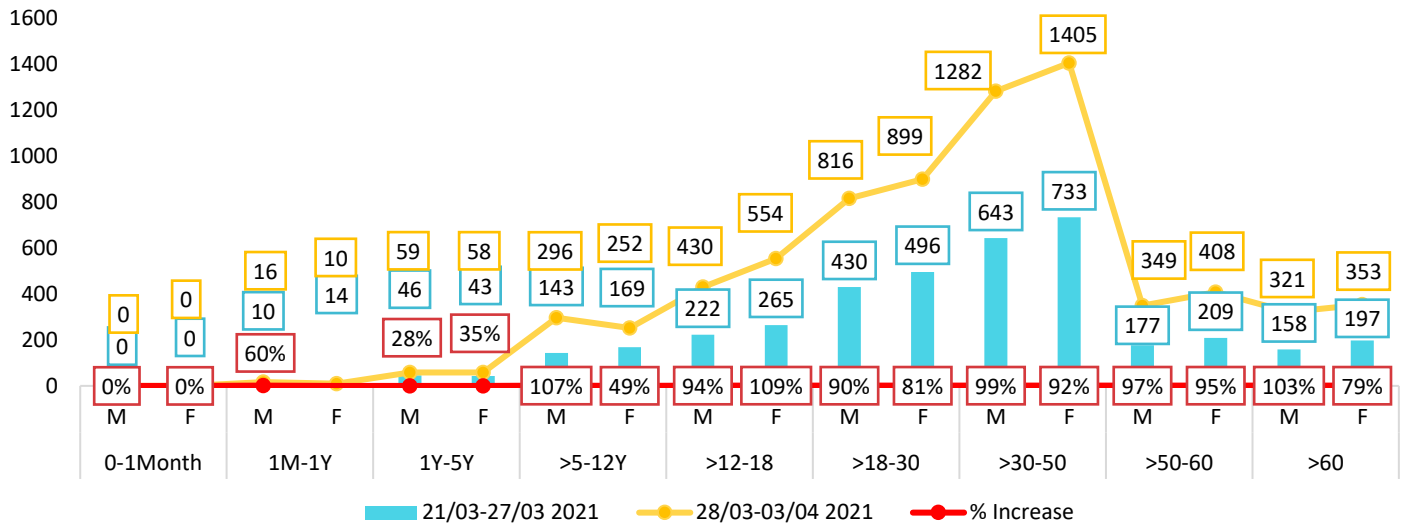


Figure 6: Weekly newly reported COVID-19 cases distributed by age groups and gender

- Increase among all age groups between 28 March-3 April 2021 compared to 21-27 March 2021.
- Highest reported COVID-19 cases among people aged 18 to 50 among males and females in the two reporting periods.
- Highest percentage of increase in reported COVID-19 cases among females aging >12-18 (109% increase) and males aged >60 years (103% increase) as presented in red boxes in figure 6.

## DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 DEATHS

- Increase in number of reported COVID-19 deaths to 31 (21 males, 10 females) between 28 March-3 April 2021 from 17 between 21-27 March 2021 (Figure 7).
- Majority of reported COVID-19 deaths are from people aged 60 years and older (Figure 7). 15 male and 6 female deaths reported between 28 March-3 April compared to with 7 male deaths and 6 female deaths between 21-27 March 2021.
- Increase in deaths among younger age groups (>30-50) to 5 deaths between 28 March-3 April 2021 compared to 1 death between 21-27 March 2021.
- Total reported deaths since the start of COVID-19 outbreak in the Gaza Strip until 3 April reached 630 with an accumulative COVID-19 fatality rate of 1%. Out of the 630 COVID-19 reported deaths, 362 were males (57%) and 268 were females (43%).

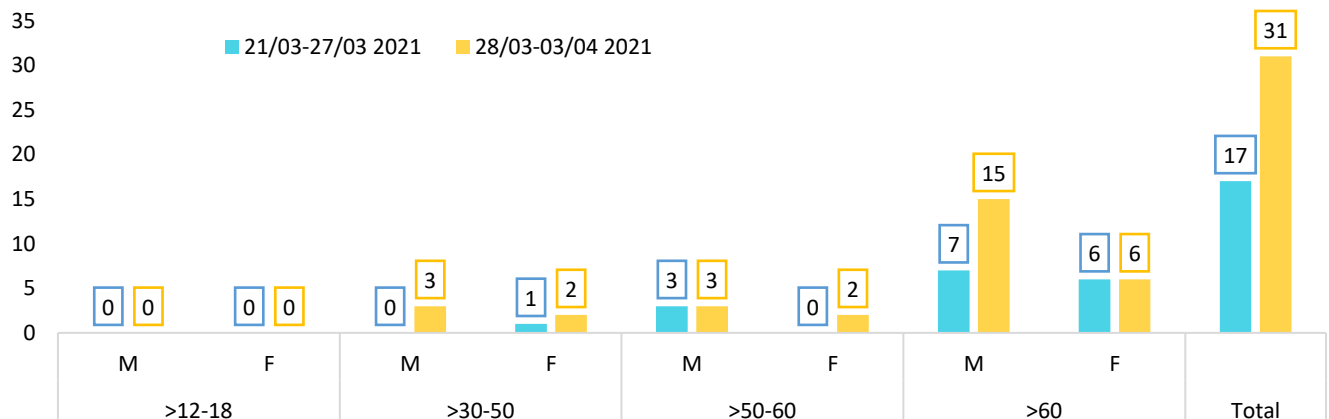


Figure 7: Distribution of reported COVID-19 deaths by age groups and gender

## DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 CASES BY SEVERITY

- Increase in cumulative moderate cases admitted to hospitals to 66 on 3 April compared to 50 cases on 27 March 2021 (Figure 8).
- Increase in cumulative severe cases admitted to hospitals to 124 cases on 3 April compared to 88 cases on 27 March 2021 (Figure 8).
- Increase in cumulative critical cases admitted to hospitals to 42 cases on 3 April compared to 22 cases on 27 March 2021.

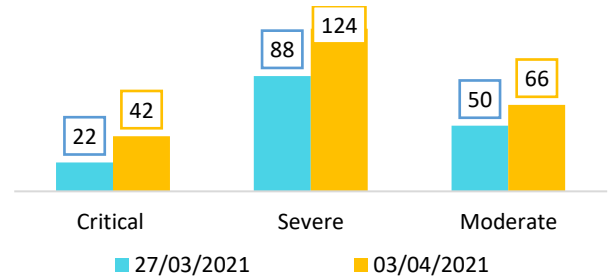


Figure 8: Classification of cumulative hospital admitted COVID-19 patients by severity

## HEALTH SYSTEM CAPACITY (COVID-19 MANAGEMENT)

- MOH increased COVID-19 bed capacity at governmental hospitals to 501 beds including 238 high dependency and 61 ICU beds.
- Based on new bed capacity, increase in total COVID-19 bed occupancy rate to 55% on 3 April 2021 compared with 49% on 27 March 2021 (Figure 9).
- Due to the increase in high dependency and ICU beds for severe and critical COVID-19 patients from 190 to 299 since last week, the occupancy rate at high dependency and ICU slightly decreased to 56% on 3 April compared to 58% on 27 March 2021.

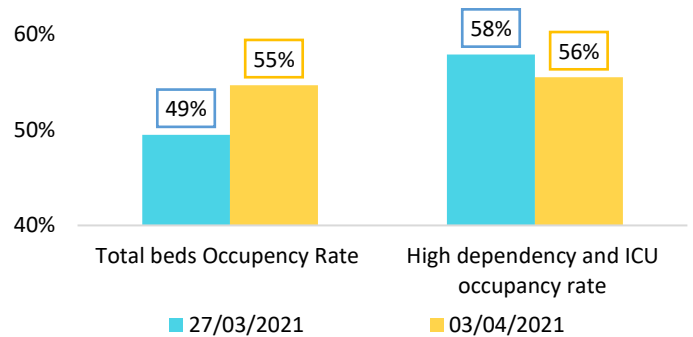


Figure 9: Occupancy rates of COVID-19 beds classified by type of bed

## HEALTH CARE WORKERS INFECTIONS

- Increase in total number of active COVID-19 cases among health workers to 244 on 3 April from 135 on 27 March 2021. The increase is among all health workforce both among males and females (Figure 10).
- Increase in newly reported COVID-19 infections among health workforce to 156 between 28 March-3 April from 88 between 21-27 March 2021.
- Around 50% of the newly infected workers between 28 March-3 April were working at hospitals (Figure 11).

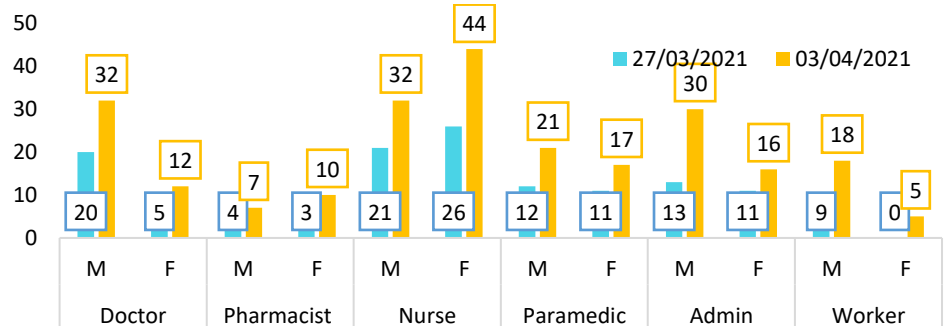


Figure 10: Active reported COVID-19 cases among health workforce distributed by gender and profession

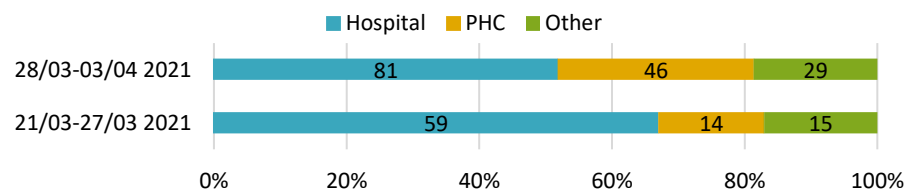


Figure 11: Distribution of newly weekly reported COVID-19 cases among health workforce distributed by work setting

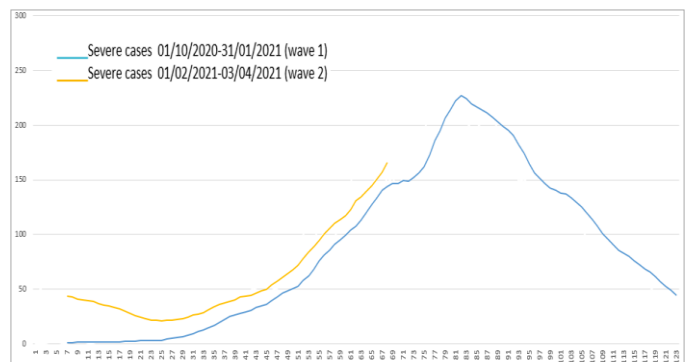
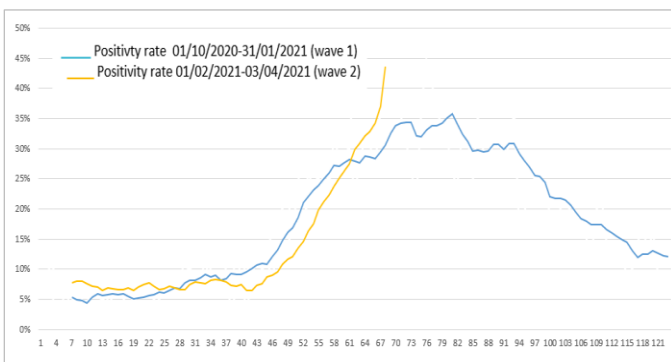
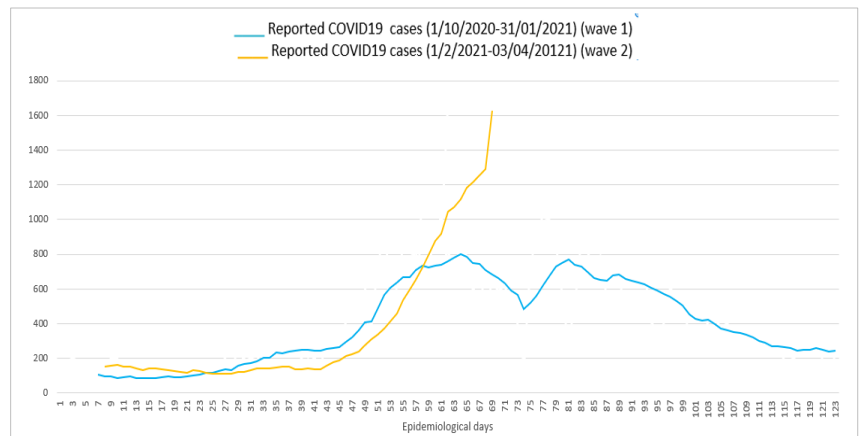
## COVID-19 VACCINATION

- National vaccination campaign was 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.
- On 21 March the first shipment of COVAX vaccines reached Gaza Strip and the next shipment is expected end April 2021.
- Up to 3 April 2021, 24,154 frontline health workers and community members received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccinations (1,268 at 4 MOH hospitals, 11,534 at 7 PHC clinics, 11,350 at 7 UNRWA clinics). 5,547 people received their second dose of vaccine (2,396 at MOH, 3,151 at UNRWA clinics)

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

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COVID-19 TRANSMISSION WAVES

- The following charts present a hypothetical comparison between the first COVID-19 community transmission wave (1 October 2020-31 January 2021) with the second wave (1 February-3 April 2021 and ongoing).
- The comparison reflects number of reported COVID-19 cases, positivity rates and admission of severe cases. It appears that the second wave is taking the same pattern as the first wave but with a higher steepness in number of new reported cases and positivity rates.
- 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 28 March-3 April 2021 among both males and females and all age groups along five Gaza Strip districts. Almost all of areas are coded with red colour reflecting the wide range of COVID-19 community transmission at this stage.
- Alarming increase in total admitted COVID-19 patients in severe condition, and in reported COVID-19 deaths.
- MOH declared new preventive measures starting 1 April 2021 with closure of wedding halls and preventing similar gatherings such as funerals in addition to prevention of transportation movements each Friday and Saturday of the week. Further 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.
- Alarming increase in reported COVID-19 infection among health workers during the last four 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.
- 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.
- 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