

SEPTEMBER 2021

WHOLE OF SYRIA

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Attack rate	MoH	Ministry of Health
CFR	Case fatality rate	NES	Northeast Syria
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019	NWS	Northwest Syria
GoS	Government of Syria	PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
MoE	Ministry of Education	WoS	Whole of Syria

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- As of 30 September 2021, a total of 135 774 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 4 432 related deaths have been reported in WoS, putting the CFR at 3.3%. The number of newly reported cases in September 2021 was 186% greater than the previous month, and AR was the highest since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in all three differently controlled areas of Syria.
- A total of 868 people died in WoS as a result of COVID-19 in September 2021, taking the monthly death toll to its highest to date.
- A total of 94 379 samples were tested for COVID-19 in September, an increase of 88.3% compared to August. The positivity rate also rose in September to 50.8%, up from 30.9% the previous month.
- WHO delivered two new PCR machines to establish public health laboratories in the governorates of Deir-ez-Zor and Latakia. Another PCR machine is being processed for shipment to Al-Hasakeh.

MONTHLY EPIDEMIOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

DATA AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

Between 22 March 2020 and 30 September 2021, a total of 135 774 confirmed cases of COVID-19 were reported in WoS. Of them, 54.1% (n=73 455) were reported in NWS, 25.1% (n=34 205) in GoS controlled areas, and the remaining 20.7% (n=28 114) in NES. During the same period, a total of 4 432 related deaths were reported, of which 50.7% (2 247) were reported in GoS, 28.2% (1 250) in NWS, and 21.1% (935) in NES. The overall CFR is 3.3%.

The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 across WoS was 47 939 in September 2021, up 186% from August when 16 751 cases were reported. The surge in case numbers was particularly significant in NES, where case numbers rose 281% from 1 960 cases in August to 7 465 cases in September. In areas controlled by GoS, cases of COVID-19 increased by 222%, up from 1 952 in August to 6 290 in September 2021. Cases in NWS increased by 166% month on month, up from 12 839 in August to 34 184 in September 2021.

Case numbers and percentages for September 2021 in each of Syria's 14 governorates were as follows: Idleb (21 474) 44.8% of total cases, Aleppo (14 234) 29.7%, Al-Hasakeh (5 631) 11.7%, Lattakia (1 561) 3.3%, Ar-Raqqa (1 271) 2.7%, Damascus (973) 2.0%, Rural Damascus (633) 1.3%, Deir-ez-Zor (614) 1.3%, Homs (555) 1.2%, Tartous (308) 0.6%, Hama (266) 0.6%, Dar'a (192) 0.4% ,As-Sweida (145) 0.3%, and Quneitra (82) 0.2%.

High case numbers may reflect high transmission of the disease, but they may also reflect a high testing rate, as is the case in Idleb where 4 589 people per 100 000 are tested compared to the national average of 2 116. Testing rates are highest in Idleb, Al-Hasakeh and Aleppo. Positivity rates are however higher than 60% in As-Sweida, Tartous and Homs, where samples are only collected and tested from hospitalized and symptomatic cases.

The surge of COVID-19 cases in September 2021 may be linked to the Delta variant which was identified in NWS in the last week of August 2021 as well as in the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, and Jordan. Ongoing circulation of the virus reflects the low vaccination coverage, and the insufficient adoption of personal COVID-19 preventive measures (physical distancing, mask wearing, and regular hand washing) which is exacerbated by the absence of a national policy for imposing personal and public preventive health measures against COVID-19.

Figure 1. COVID-19 cases reported weekly by geographically controlled areas of Syria as of 30 September 2021

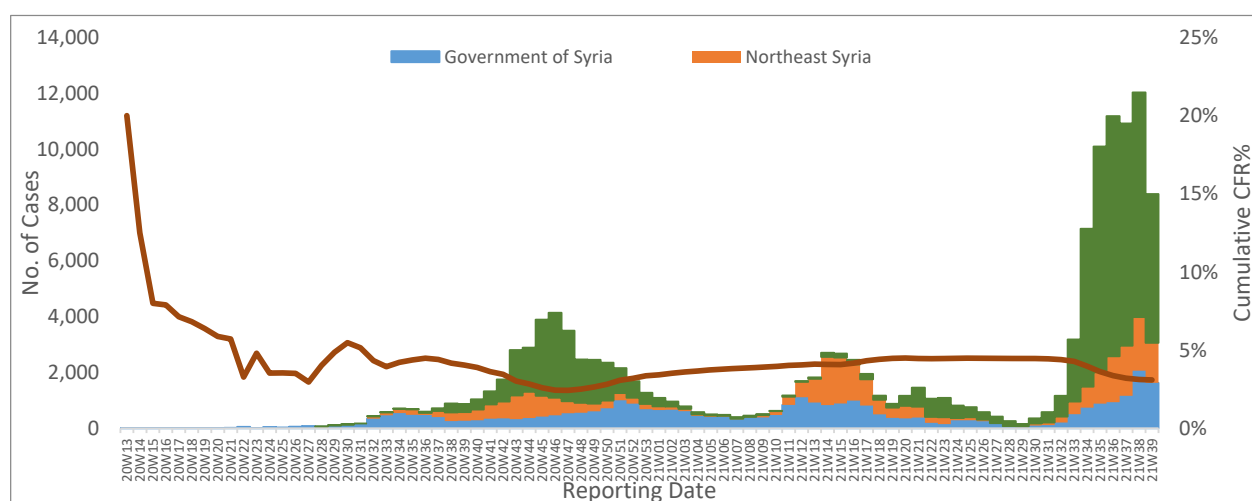


Table 1. Newly reported and cumulative COVID-19 cases and deaths, by geographically controlled areas of Syria as of 30 September 2021

Area	New cases in September 2021(%)	Change in new cases last 30 days *	Cumulative cases (%)	New deaths in September 2021	Change in new deaths in last 30 days *	Cumulative deaths (%)
GoS	6 290 (13.1%)	+222%	34 205 (25.2%)	234 (27.0%)	+136%	2 247 (50.7%)
NES	7 465 (15.6%)	+281%	28 114 (20.7%)	147 (16.9%)	+635%	935 (21.1%)
NWS	34 184 (71.3%)	+166%	73 455 (54.1%)	487 (56.1%)	+1148%	1 250 (28.2%)
WoS	47 939 (100%)	+186%	135 774 (100%)	868 (100%)	+449%	4 432 (100%)

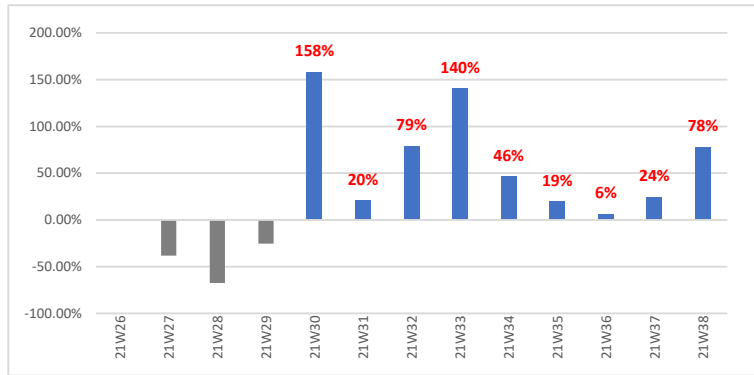
*Percent change in the number of newly confirmed cases and deaths in past 30 days, compared to previous month

GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA

GoS reported the highest AR in week 38 (10.1 per 100 000) since the beginning of the outbreak. This surge indicates a fourth wave of COVID-19 in GoS during August and September 2021. The number of daily cases peaked on 25 September 2021, when 442 were recorded.

Figure 2 shows the percentage change in the number of newly confirmed cases week on week. Cases of COVID-19 reported in weeks 35, 36, 37, and 38, were up from the previous week by 19%, 6%, 24%, and 78% respectively.

Figure 2. Weekly case count change ratio from July to September 2021 in GoS

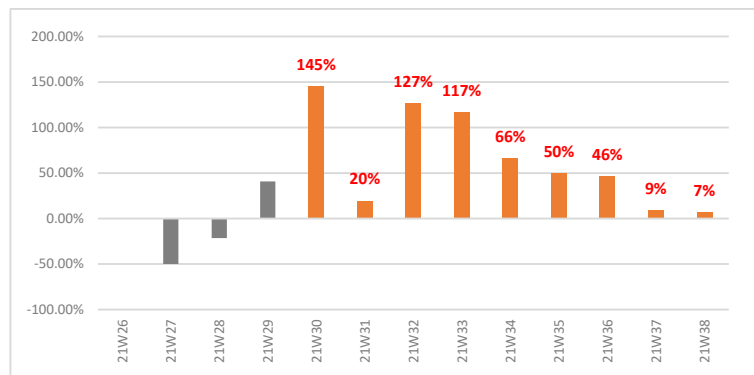


NORTH-EAST SYRIA

NES reported the highest AR in week 38 (9.4 per 100 000) since the beginning of the outbreak. The surge in cases indicates a third wave of COVID-19 in NES during August and September 2021.

Cases have increased week on week throughout August and September, as indicated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Weekly case count change ratio from July to September 2021 in NES



NORTH-WEST SYRIA

In NWS, AR was the highest in week 36 (42.2 per 100 000) since the beginning of the outbreak. Daily cases peaked on 6 September, when 1 554 were reported.

Figure 4 shows the percentage change in the number of newly confirmed cases week on week. The number of cases reported in weeks 35 and 36 increased by 43% and 6% respectively, compared to the previous week.

Figure 4. Weekly case count change ratio from July to September 2021 in NWS

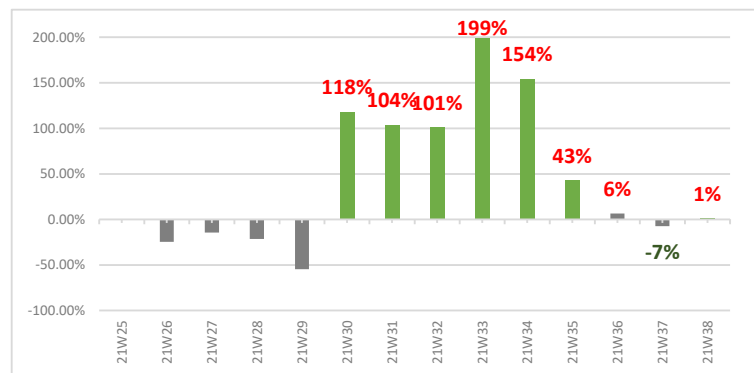


Figure 5. COVID-19 cases per 100 000 of the population, reported by governorate, as of September 2021

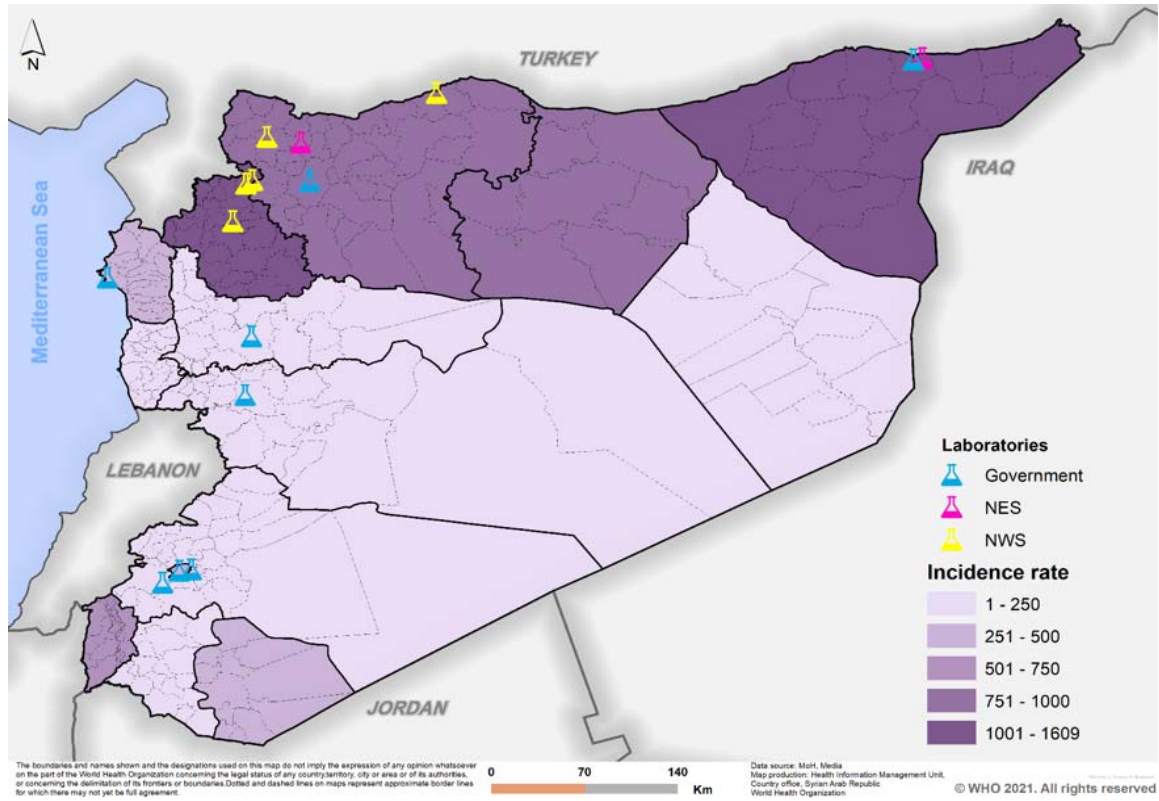
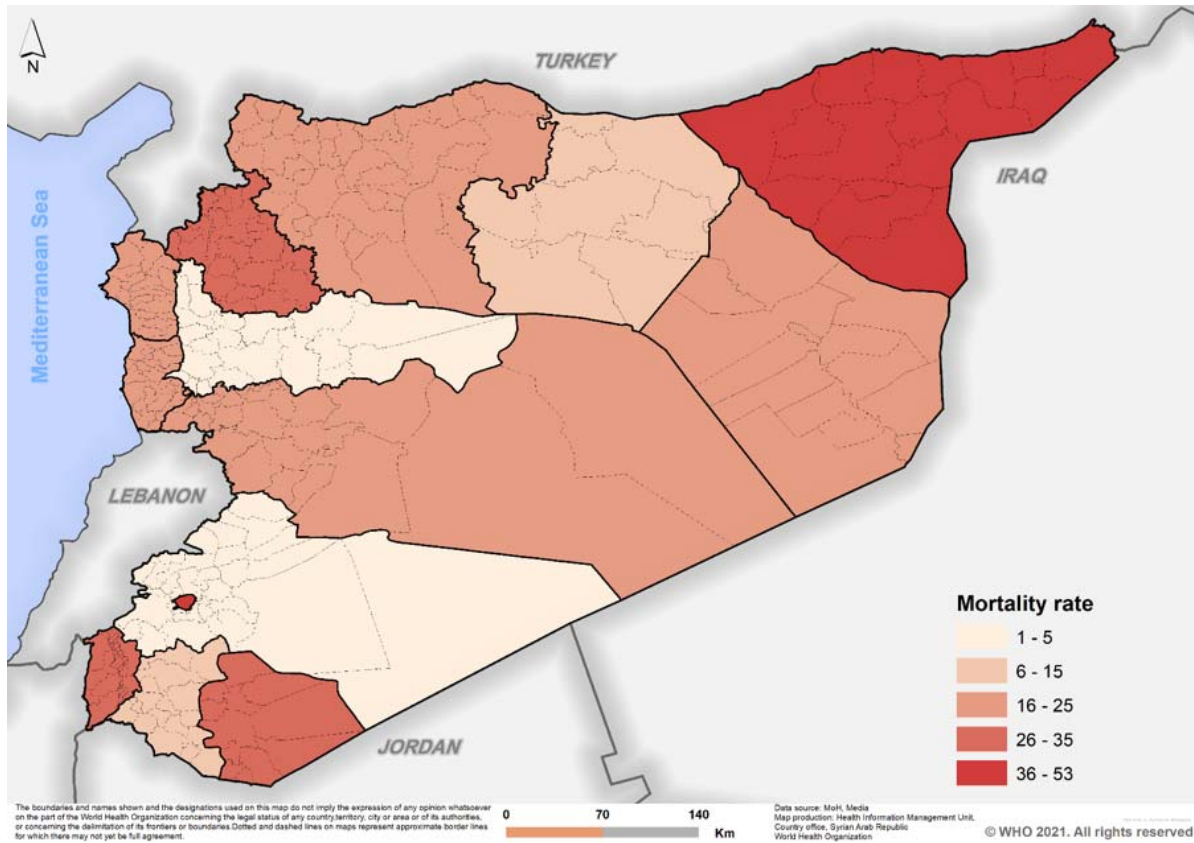


Figure 6. COVID-19 deaths per 100 000 of the population, reported by governorate, as of September 2021



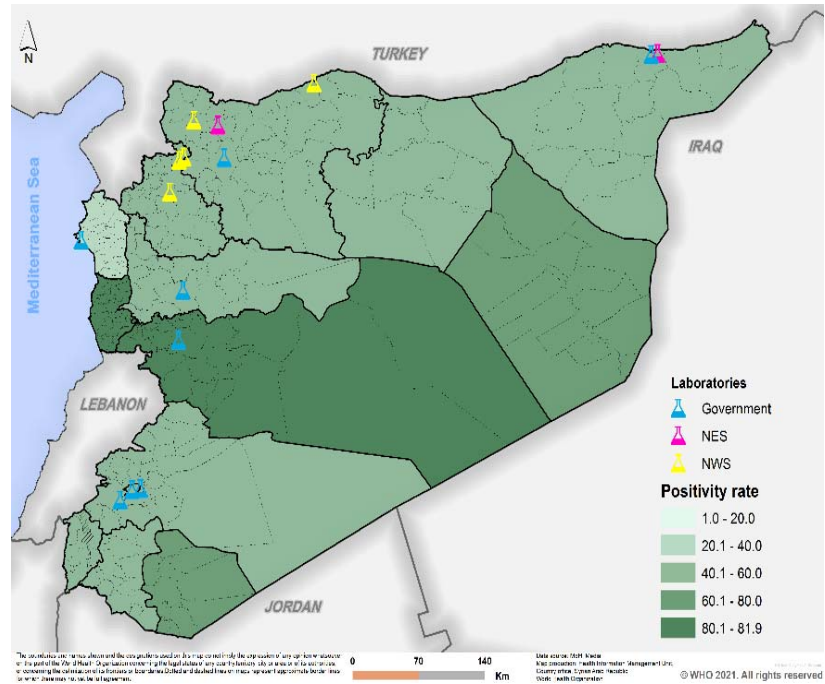
TESTING OF COVID-19 SAMPLES

The percentage of the positive COVID-19 cases increased from 30.9% in August to 50.8% in September 2021. This reflects an actual increase in the number of cases, as the sampling strategy has not changed.

A total of 94 379 tests were reported during September compared to 50 114 in August.

449 875	
Total tests reported as of 30 September 2021 in WoS	
94 379	50.8 %
Number of tests reported in September 2021	Positivity rate in September 2021
30.8%	64.9%
Previous average % positivity	Change in average % positivity since last month

Figure 7: COVID-19 Laboratory Positivity Rates, by Governorate, September 2021

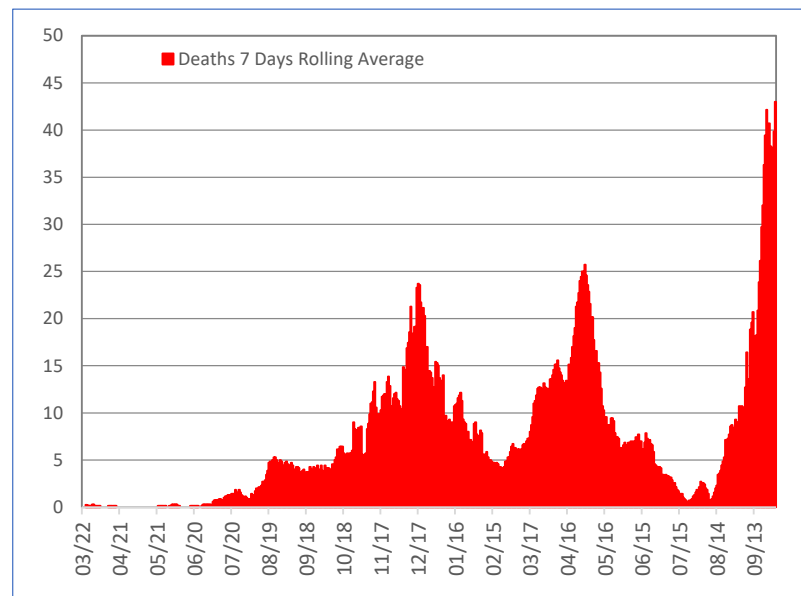


COVID-19 RELATED DEATHS

The number of newly reported deaths in September (n=868) was 449% higher than August 2021. As a result, the mortality rate increased to 20.9 deaths per 100 000, and the CFR to 3.3%. Of the 868 deaths, 487 (56.1%) were in NWS, 234 (27%) were in GoS areas, and 147 (16.9%) were in NES. The number of COVID-19 deaths recorded in September 2021 was the highest in any one month since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Syria.

4 432	29
Total deaths reported	30-day average in September 2021
5	449%
30-day average in August 2021	Change in 30-day average since prior month

Figure 8: Daily Trends in Number of COVID-19 Deaths in WoS, as of 30 September 2021



COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

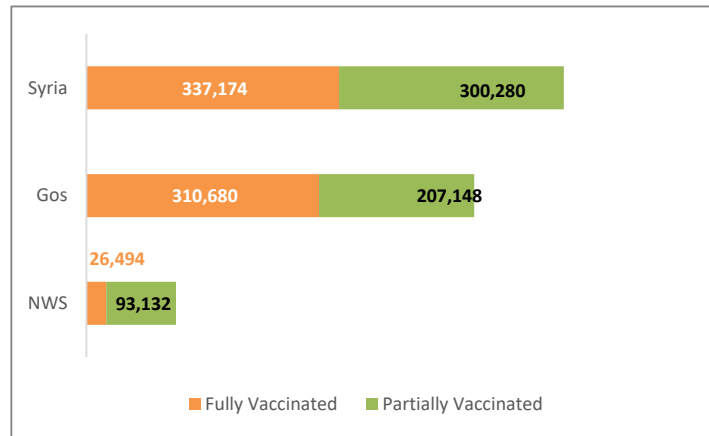
COVID-19 vaccination began in GoS areas on 17 May 2021 and in NWS on 1 May following delivery of the first batch of vaccines facilitated through the COVAX mechanism.

The MoH Syria ran a second nationwide vaccination campaign on 5-16 September 2021. A total of 180 458 people above 18 years old received vaccines through 199 fixed facilities (hospitals and health centres) and 197 mobile teams in all governorates.

As of 30 September 2021, 517 828 people (2.8% of the total population) have received at least one vaccine dose in GoS and NES. Of them, about 310 680 people (1.7%) have received two and are fully vaccinated. In NWS, a total of 121 988 people have received at least one dose of the vaccine, of which 27 043 have received two. To date, 2.84% of the population is vaccinated.

689 797 Vaccines administered in WoS	
517 828 People who received at least one dose	310 680 People who are fully vaccinated
2.8% Percentage of the population that has received at least one dose	1.7% Percentage of the population that has been fully vaccinated
54% Percentage increase from last month	+47% Percentage point increase from last month

Figure 9: Number of Vaccinated Populations in WoS, as of 30 September 2021



TRAVEL MEASURES

- All travellers above 12 years of age arriving to the Syrian Arab Republic from a foreign country are required to present at the point of entry proof of a negative COVID-19 PCR test performed no more than 96 hours prior to their departure. Those who are fully vaccinated are exempt from this requirement if they can present proof of vaccination. All travellers are subject to a mandatory quarantine at home for five days from the date of arrival.
- Royal Jordan Airlines flights between Damascus and Amman resumed on 3 October 2021.

OPERATIONAL UPDATES

RISK COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

WHO supported the Ministry of Education in the development of video messages by the ministry, teachers and students on the importance of adherence to preventive measures in preparation for the reopening of schools on 5 September 2021 and to ensure safe school environments.

WHO continues to advocate for vaccinations on its social media channels, targeting priority groups including the elderly, people with chronic diseases and teachers, as well as all residents over 18 years of age. The national mass media campaign launched on 25 August by the Ministry of Health in coordination with WHO and UNICEF continues to deliver messages to generate vaccine demand and reduce vaccine hesitancy and supported the national COVID-19 vaccination campaign of 5-16 September 2021.

POINTS OF ENTRY

WHO has supported MOH during the establishment of a medical point at Abu Kamal ground crossing in Deir-ez-Zor through the provision of medical equipment and devices to ensure the safety of travellers in line with International Health Regulations (2005). WHO has also worked with MOH to build a medical stations at each of Judeidet Yabous ground crossing in Rural Damascus and Jousiya ground crossing in Homs.

PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORIES

WHO delivered two new PCR machines to establish public health laboratories in Deir-ez-Zor and Lattakia governorates. Another PCR machine is being shipped to Al-Hasakeh. To date, WHO has supported MoH to launch eight public health laboratories across seven governorates (Damascus, Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Lattakia, Homs, Hama, and Al-Hasakeh) through the provision of 11 PCR machines and one GeneXpert machine, as well as the training of more than 350 laboratory technicians.

TECHNICAL GUIDELINES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WHO Syria

- [News](#)
- [Information Resources](#)
- [WHO Syria COVID-19 Dashboard](#)

WHO HQ

- [WHO technical guidance](#)
- [WHO COVID-19 Dashboard \(WHO HQ\)](#)
- [WHO Weekly Operational Updates on COVID-19 \(WHO\)](#)
- [Research and Development](#)
- [OpenWHO courses on COVID-19](#) in official UN languages and in [additional national languages](#)
- [WHO Academy COVID-19 mobile learning app](#)

Recommendations and advice for the public

- [Protect yourself](#)
- [Questions and answers](#)
- [Travel advice](#)

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