

# COVID-19 CASES IN THE GAZA STRIP

Weekly epidemiological bulletin from (15/06 TO 15/07 2021) AND (16/07 TO 15/08 2021)

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

## GENERAL

Reporting Period	Weekly cases (Biweekly for this report)		Cumulative
	15/06/2021 15/07/2021	16/07/2021 15/08/2021	accumulative since 23/8/2020
Total No. of samples tested	21,955	20,144	632,669
Total No. of positive cases	3228	3,458	119,003
Total No. of closed cases	114089	116545	
Total No. recovered cases (%closed)	113010 (99%)	115433(99%)	
Total No. reported deaths (%closed)	1079 (1%)	1112(1%)	
Classification of positive cases by severity*	<b>Mild</b>	3147	3,318
	<b>Moderate</b>	35	55
	<b>Severe</b>	32	67
	<b>Critical</b>	14	18
Positivity rates (weekly)	<b>total</b>	14.7%	17.17%
	<b>contacts</b>	23.7%	18.1%
	<b>suspect</b>	13.0%	20.4%
	<b>surveillance</b>	2.0%	1.0%

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

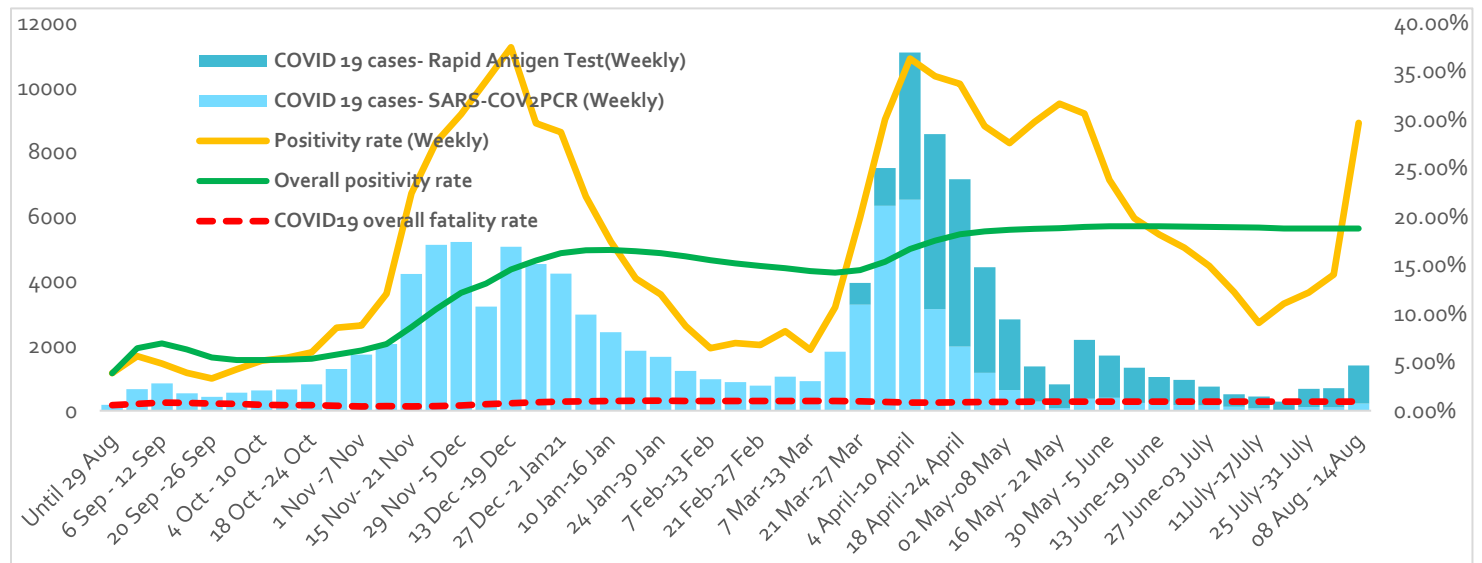


Figure 1: Reported weekly COVID-19 cases, weekly positivity rates, overall positivity rates and overall fatality rate

- This report compares two months: the period 15 June to 15 July 2021, to the period 16 July to 15 August 2021.
- Ministry of Health (MOH) stopped random testing in areas with high previous infection rates or high vaccination coverage, while focusing on testing suspected cases, and a small number of contacts.
- MOH has increased the use of rapid test for suspected cases while SARS-COV2-PCR is currently used mainly for unconfirmed cases and for travelers.
- Decrease in total number of conducted tests (both COVID-19 Antigen Rapid test and SARS-COV2-PCR test) from 21955 between 15 June-15 July 2021, to 20144 between 16 July-105 Aug.
- Despite the decreasing in number of tests performed, there is an increase in number of newly reported COVID-19 cases: from 3288 between 15 June-15 July 2021, to 3,458 between 16 July-15 Aug.
- Increase in incidence rate of COVID-19 infection per 100,000 population in three districts (North, Gaza, and Khanunis districts) while decrease in incidence rate in Rafah and Middle districts (Figures 2 and 3).
- Since the MOH stopped random testing, they stopped working on traffic light system and the distribution of cases on a map.

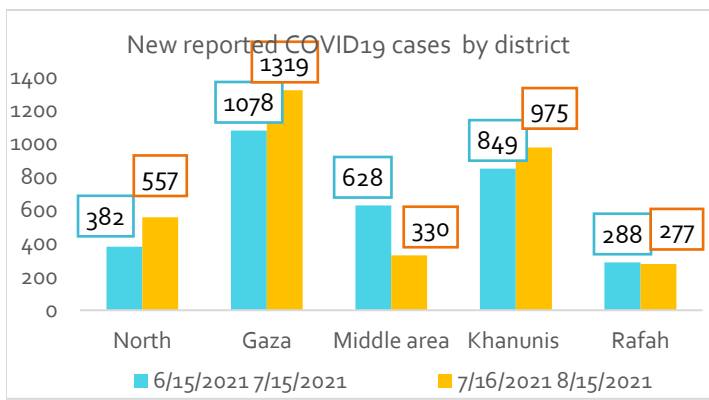


Figure 2: Newly reported weekly number of COVID-19 cases in the Gaza Strip districts

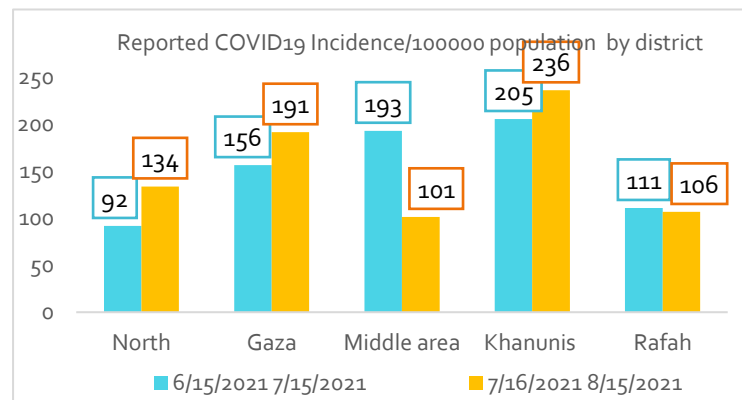


Figure 3: Incidence of weekly COVID-19 reported cases per 100,000 population in the Gaza Strip districts

## POSITIVITY RATES

- Increase in total positivity rate from 14.7 in first period to 17.2 in the second period (Table on page 1).
- Increase in COVID-19 positivity rate in three districts (North, Gaza, and Khanyonis) where it reached 26% between 15 July-15 Aug compared to 18% between 15 June- 15 July 2021 in khanyonis with the highest positivity rate in all districts (figure 4).
- Comparing between the two periods, positivity rates decreased among contacts while increased among suspected cases (Table on page 1).

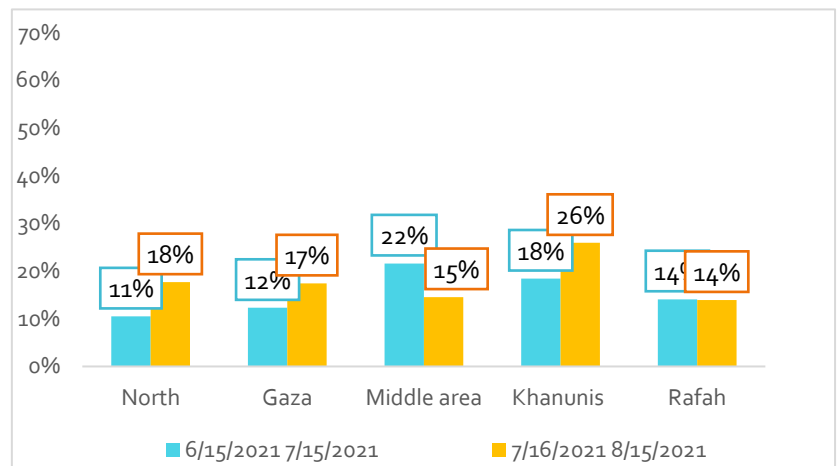


Figure 4: COVID-19 weekly positivity rates distributed by districts

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

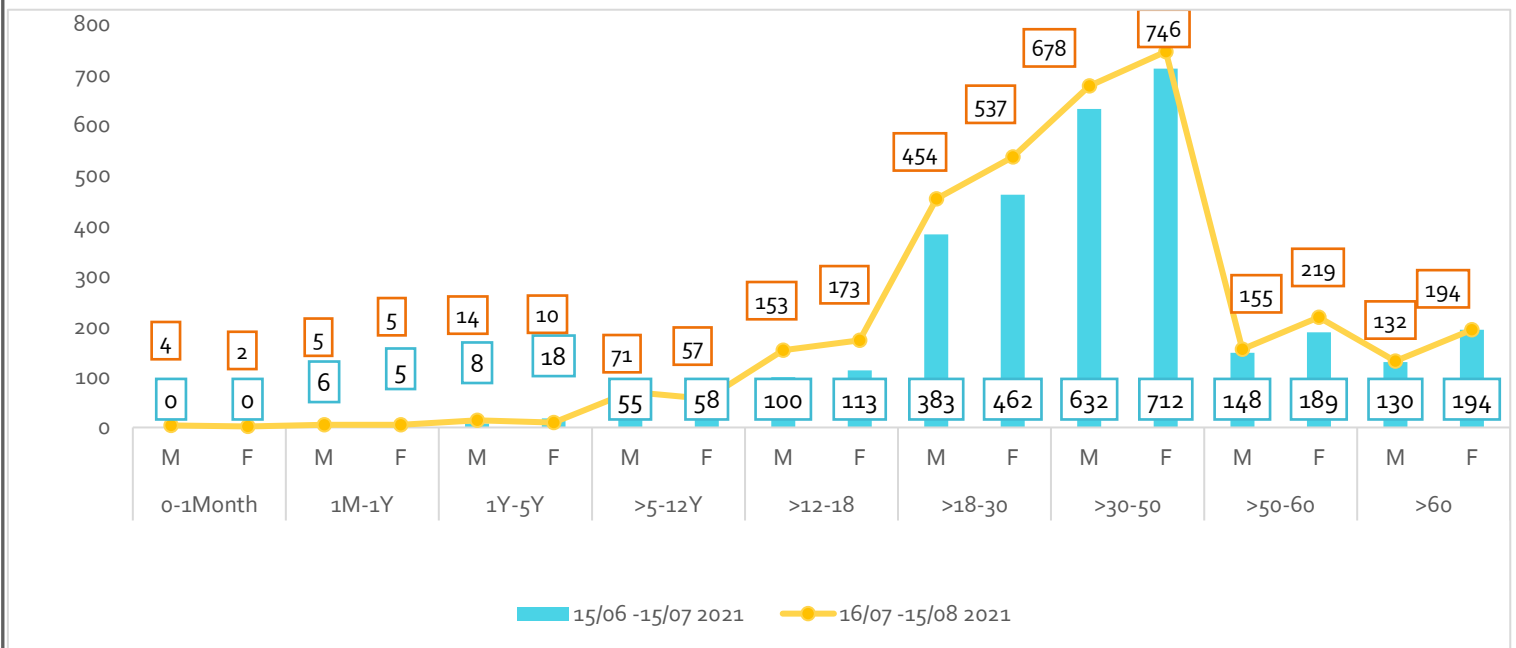


Figure 5: Weekly newly reported COVID-19 cases distributed by age groups and gender

- Figure 5 shows an increase in the reported number of cases among all age groups between 16-July-15 -Aug 2021 compared to the period between 15June-15 July 2021.
- Highest reported number of COVID-19 cases was among males and females between the ages of 18 to 50.

## DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 DEATHS

- Despite similar numbers of COVID19 deaths in the two period; (32,33) respectively, there was an increase in the number of males from 16 in the first period to 20 in second period. However, but there were a decrease in number of females deaths from 16 in the first period to 13 in the second periods.
- The majority of reported COVID-19 deaths were among males and females aged 60 years and older (Figure 6).
- Since the beginning of COVID-19 outbreak in the Gaza Strip until 15 Aug, the total number of reported deaths was 1112 with an accumulative COVID-19 fatality rate around 1%. Out of the 1112 COVID19 reported deaths, 655 were males (59%) and 457 were females (41%).

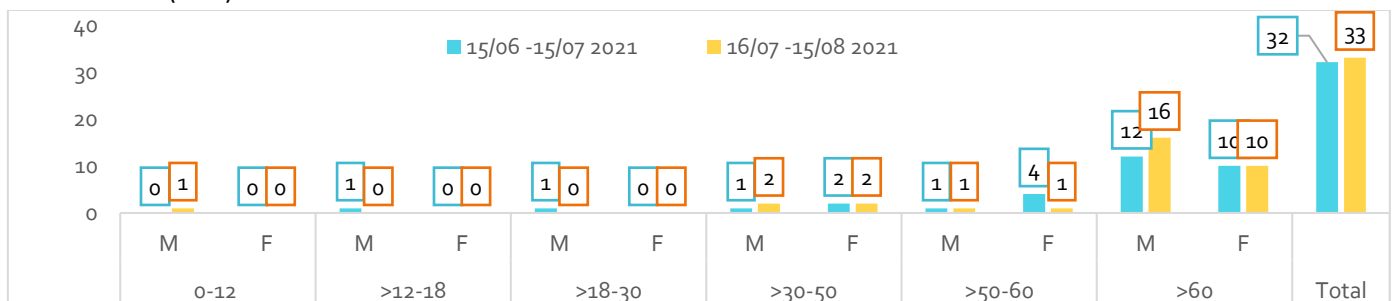


Figure 6: Distribution of reported COVID-19 deaths by age groups and gender

## DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 CASES BY SEVERITY

- Proportion of admitted cases that severe and critical was lower in the second period, from 82% to 62%, respectively (Figure 8).
- Cumulative number of critical and severe cases admitted to hospitals increased from 32 in the first period to 62 cases in the second period (Figure 7).

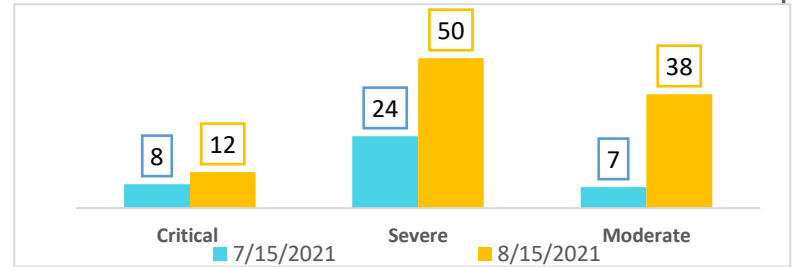


Figure 7: Classification of cumulative hospital admitted COVID-19 patients by severity

## HEALTH SYSTEM CAPACITY (COVID-19 MANAGEMENT)

- As a response to the increase in COVID-19 reported cases since beginning of August 2021, the MOH has increased the COVID-19 bed capacity at the governmental hospitals from 180 beds to 470 beds (85 ICU, 270; High dependency and 115 for mild and moderate cases).
- Total COVID19 bed occupancy rates increased slightly from 22% on 15 July 2021 to 23% on 15 Aug 2021 (Figure 8).
- Despite the increase in reported cases during the second period, the occupancy rate at high dependency and ICU units decreased from 46% on July 15, 2021 to 17% on Aug 15, 2021 (Figure 8) as result of the increase in the number of beds especially for critical and severe cases.

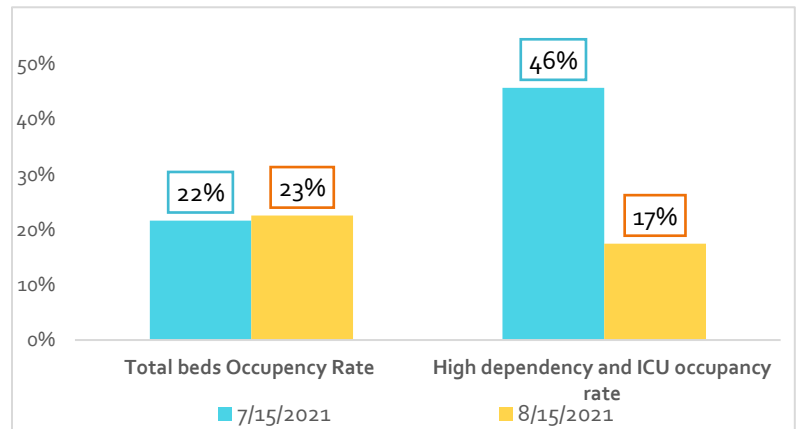


Figure 8: Occupancy rates of COVID-19 beds classified by type of bed

## HEALTH CARE WORKERS INFECTIONS

- As most of health workers are vaccinated, the total number of newly reported COVID-19 cases among health workers significantly decreased from 60 on July 15, 2021, to 44 on Aug 15, 2021. Figure 9 shows the distribution of cases by sex and profession of health workers.
- Decrease in infected health workers was observed in all professional categories except Nurse category where increase in reported cases was observed especially in female.

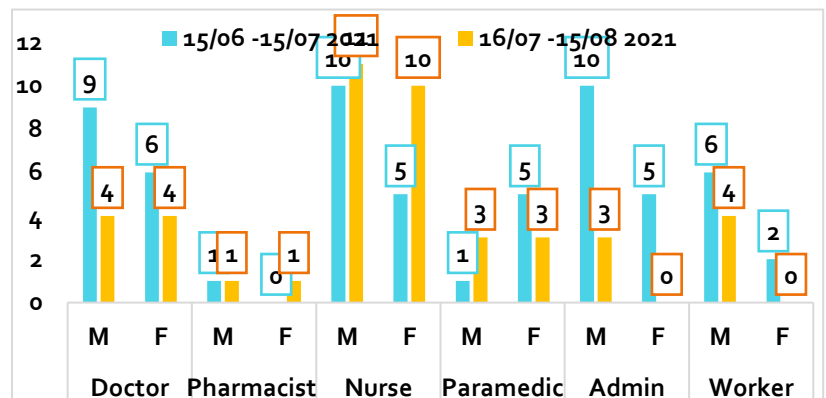


Figure 9: newly reported COVID-19 cases among health workforce distributed by gender and profession

## COVID19 VACCINATION

- MOH in Gaza Strip received 336,300 doses of COVID-19 vaccine until 25<sup>th</sup> Aug,2021.
- Recently, the Ministry of Health has expanded the vaccination campaign to include all ages above 18 years.
- MoH increased the number of awareness campaigns through the social media and direct communication with people in markets or mosques.
- Since the beginning of new wave and the detection of delta variant in the Gaza strip, the MoH announced a financial award for 10 vaccinated persons above 55 years selected randomly at the end of each day as an incentive. This incentive has led to increase in the vaccination of persons above 55 years.
- Until July 15<sup>th</sup>, 96,691 received their first vaccination dose and 54,038 received their second vaccination dose. Until Aug 15, 119,670 received their first vaccination dose and 67,799 receiving their second vaccination dose
- Compared to 46,254 persons who received their first vaccination dose with average 1,541 per day during 15June-15July, 22,979 received their first vaccination dose with average 741 per day during 16-July to 15 Aug. This decrease in vaccination prompted the Ministry of Health to intensify its efforts to motivate people to get vaccinated. These efforts succeeded to raise the number of vaccinated people in the last ten days to 34,393, with an average of 3.439 per day on 24 Aug.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- MOH has increased its bed capacity from 180 to 470 in order to manage anticipated increase in hospitalization. MOH need to increase capacity of human resource and closely follow on the availability of medicine, supplies and equipment.
- There was a clear success of the health system's plan in increasing the uptake of vaccination. Need to monitor adherence to guidelines during vaccination to prevent infections.
- Strengthening of RCCE efforts to address vaccine hesitancy among the population and raise awareness about the need to get the vaccine, even if already got infected to decrease the risk of re-infection.
- Protection of the most vulnerable COVID-19 population such as elderly and patients with known co-morbidities is critical at this stage. Timely hospital admission for these patients should be enforced to prevent complications.
- Increasing COVID-19 testing capacity is critical to breaking transmission chains at community level.
- Further enforcement of IPC measures should be implemented in all hospitals and PHC facilities to avoid further increase in COVID-19 infections among health workforce.