

COVID-19 CASES IN THE GAZA STRIP

Weekly epidemiological bulletin from (04/04 TO 10/04 2021) AND (11/04 TO 17/04 2021)

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

GENERAL

Reporting Period	Weekly cases		Cumulative
	04-04-2021 10-04-2021	11-04-2021 17-04-2021	accumulative since 23/8/2020
# of samples tested	total 30,525	24,812	513,992
# of positive cases	total 11,088	8,565	90,088
# of closed cases	total 62,393	69,149	
# recovered cases (%closed)	61,716 (99%)	68,388 (98.8%)	
# reported deaths (%closed)	677 (1%)	761 (1.1%)	
Classification of positive cases by severity*	Mild	10,930	8,454
	Moderate	10	51
	Severe	132	40
	Critical	16	20
Positivity rates (weekly)	total	36.32%	34.52%
	contacts	41.1%	47.0%
	suspect	68.3%	43.1%
	surveillance	1.0%	0.7%

* 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.

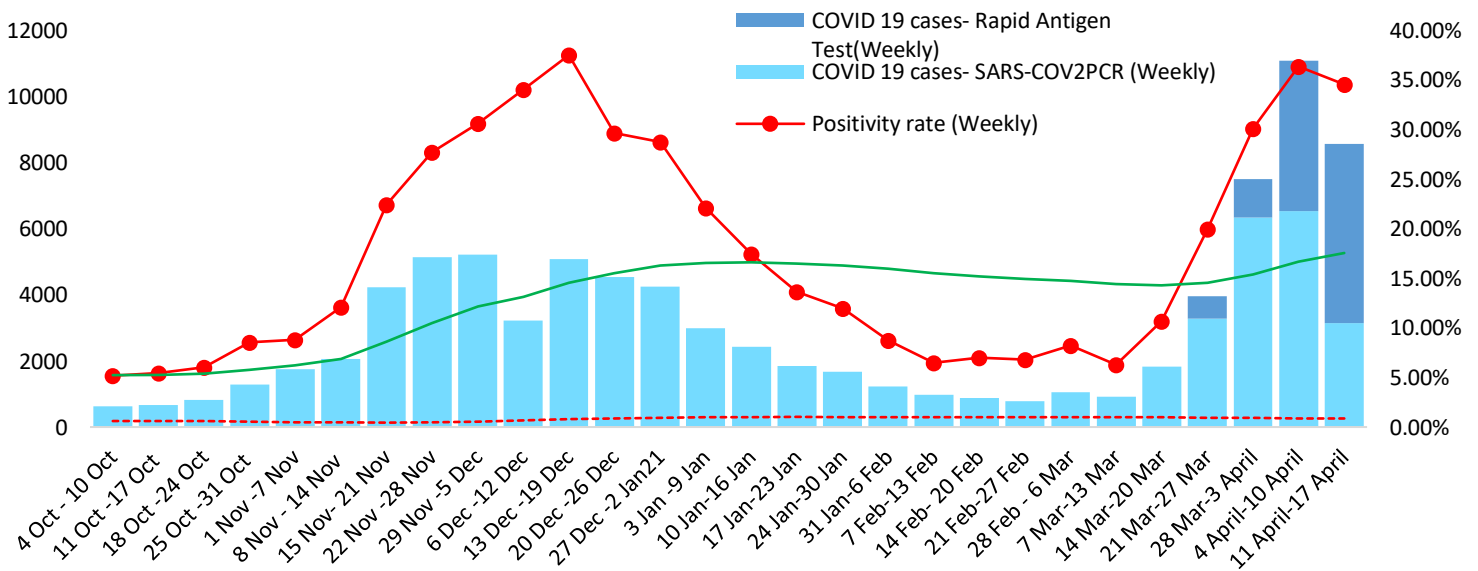


Figure 1: Reported weekly COVID-19 cases, weekly positivity rates, overall positivity rates and overall fatality rate

- Decrease in total number of conducted tests (COVID-19 Antigen Rapid test and SARS-COV2-PCR test) to 24,812 between 11-17 April 2021 from 30,525 between 4-10 April 2021.
- Decrease in number of newly reported COVID-19 cases to 8,565 between 11-17 April from 11,088 between 4-10 April 2021.
- Decrease in newly reported COVID-19 cases and incidence per 100,000 population along all five Gaza Strip districts.
- Explanation for decrease in newly reported cases may be due limited laboratory reagents resulting in reduced number of tests among close contacts and suspected cases.

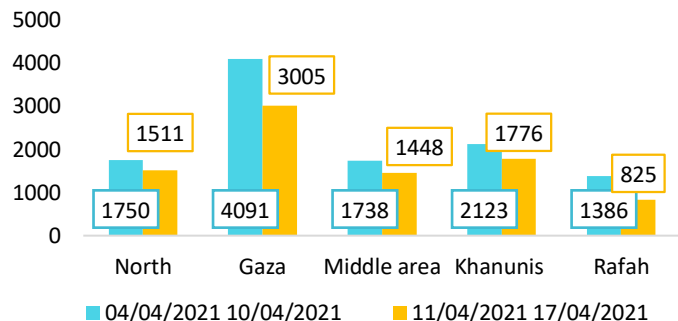


Figure 2: Newly reported weekly COVID-19 cases in Gaza Strip districts

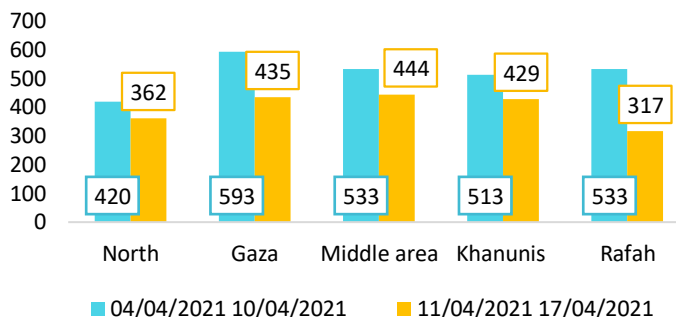
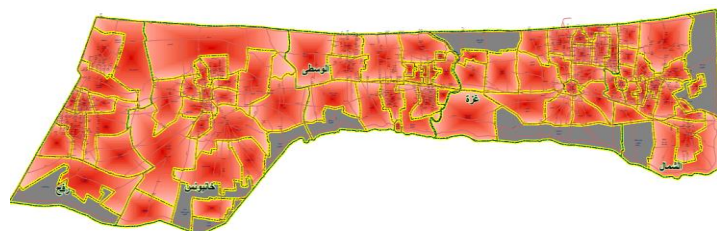
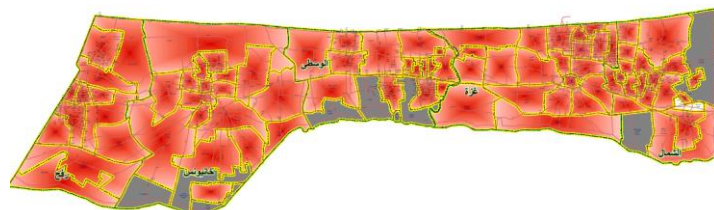


Figure 3: Incidence of weekly COVID-19 reported cases per 100,000 population in Gaza Strip districts

- All Gaza Strip areas remain red on 16 April similar to 9 April 2021 (Figure 4). The red areas represent high risk neighbourhoods based on a traffic light system (TLS) developed by PNIPH/WHO which distributes the ratio of newly detected COVID-19 cases (7 days average). This system classifies the neighbourhoods by color (Red, Yellow, Green).



09 April 2021



16 April 2021

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

POSITIVITY RATES

- Decrease in weekly COVID-19 positivity rate to 34.52% between 11-17 April from 36.32% between 4-10 April 2021.
- Slight decrease in weekly positivity rates in Gaza, Khanunis and Rafah districts, and slight increase in North and Middle area districts comparing between last two weeks (Figure 5).
- Increase in weekly positivity rates among contacts and decrease among suspected cases and surveillance comparing between the two weeks (Table on page 1).
- Increase in overall positivity rate to 17.5% up to 10 April 2021.

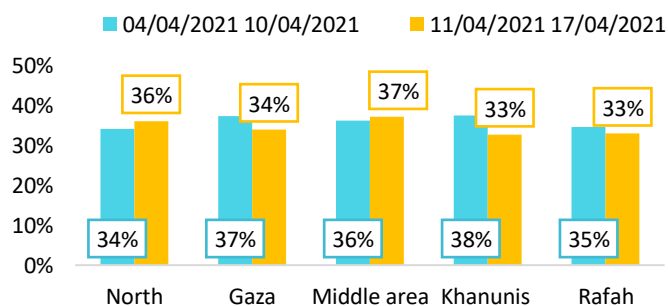


Figure 5: COVID-19 weekly positivity rates distributed by districts

DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 CASES AMONG AGE GROUPS AND GENDER

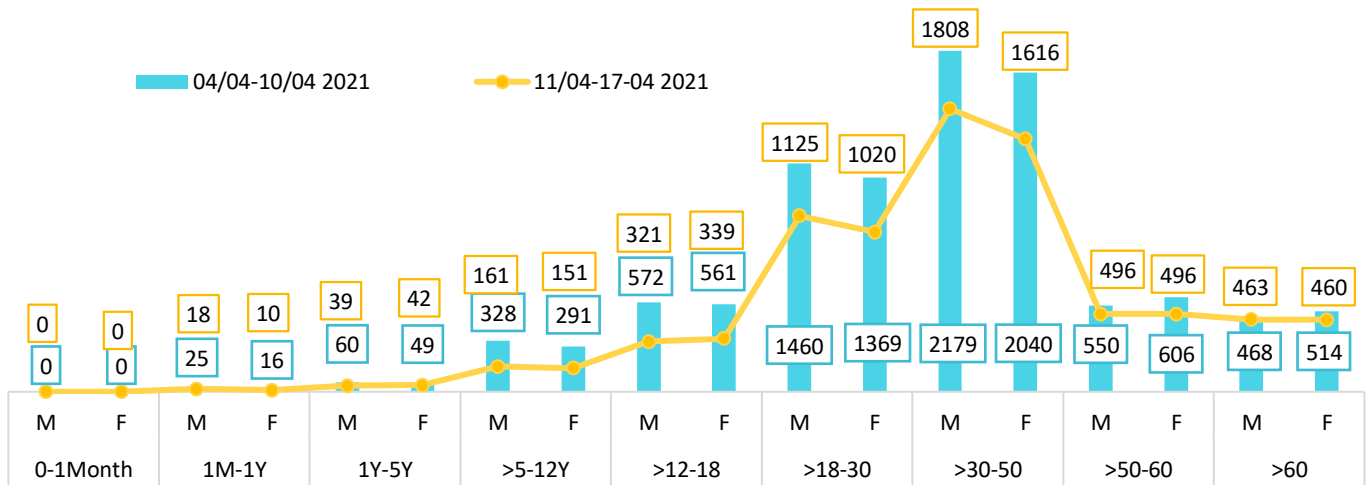


Figure 6: Weekly newly reported COVID-19 cases distributed by age groups and gender

- Decrease in cases among all age groups between 11-14 April 2021 compared to 4-10 April 2021.
- Highest reported COVID-19 cases among people aged 18 to 50 among males and females in the two reporting periods.

DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 DEATHS

- Increase in number of reported COVID-19 deaths to 83 deaths (56 males, 28 females) between 11-17 April from 47 deaths between 4-10 April 2021 (Figure 7). This is the highest number of weekly reported deaths since the beginning of COVID-19 community transmission in Gaza Strip.
- Majority of reported COVID-19 deaths are among people aged 60 years and older (Figure 7). 52 male and 20 female deaths were reported between 11-17 April compared to 28 male deaths and 8 female deaths between 4-10 April 2021 (Figure 7).
- Five deaths among younger age groups (>30-50) reported between 11-17 April compared to 7 deaths between 4-10 April 2021.
- Total reported deaths since the start of COVID-19 outbreak in the Gaza Strip until 17 April reached 761 with an accumulative COVID-19 fatality rate of 1.1%. Out of the 761 COVID-19 reported deaths, 451 were males (59%) and 310 were females (41%).

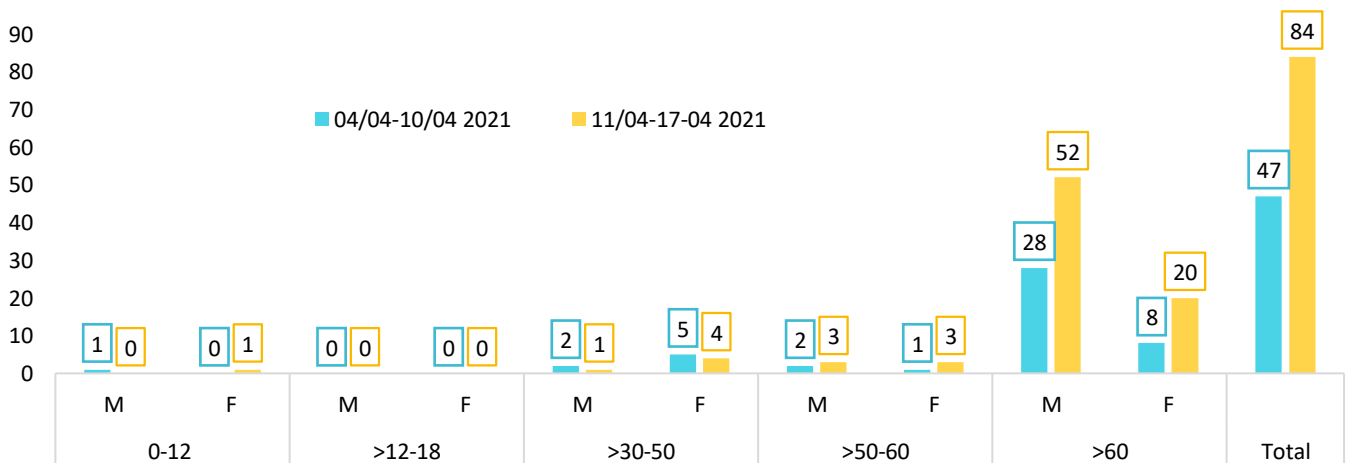


Figure 7: Distribution of reported COVID-19 deaths by age groups and gender

DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 CASES BY SEVERITY

- Increase in cumulative moderate cases admitted to hospitals to 87 on 17 April from 77 cases on 10 April 2021 (Figure 8).
- Increase in cumulative severe cases admitted to hospitals to 242 cases on 17 April from 223 cases on 10 April 2021.
- Increase in cumulative critical cases admitted to hospitals to 63 cases on 17 April from 51 cases on 10 April 2021.

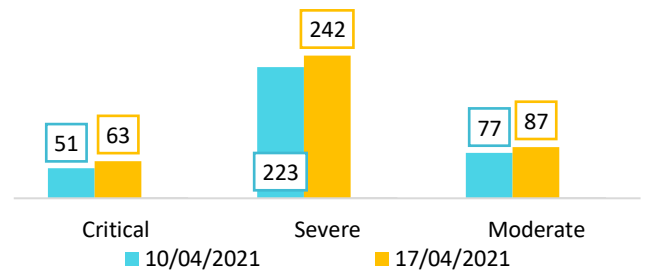


Figure 8: Classification of cumulative hospital admitted COVID-19 patients by severity

HEALTH SYSTEM CAPACITY (COVID-19 MANAGEMENT)

- Decrease in total COVID-19 bed occupancy rate to 72% on 17 April from 77% on 10 April 2021 (Figure 9).
- Decrease in occupancy rate at high dependency and ICU units to 79% on 17 April from 92% on 10 April 2021.
- MOH increased the COVID-19 bed capacity at governmental hospitals on 11 April 2021 to cope with the continuous increase in admitted cases. There currently are 587 of COVID-19 beds available in Gaza, including 308 high dependency beds and 77 ICU beds.

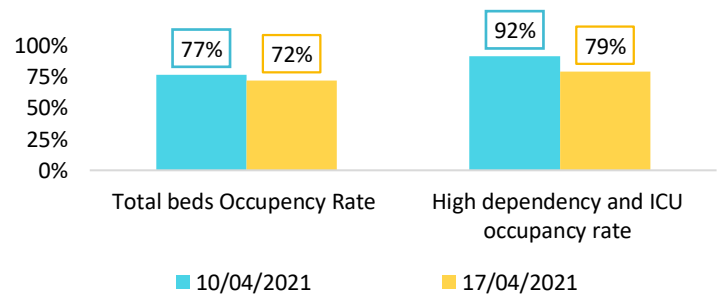


Figure 9: Occupancy rates of COVID-19 beds classified by type of bed

HEALTH CARE WORKERS INFECTIONS¹

- Increase in total number of active COVID-19 cases among health workers to 437 on 17 April from 434 on 10 April 2021.
- Decrease in newly reported COVID-19 infection among health workforce to 159 between 11-17 April from 278 between 4-10 April 2021 (Figure 11).
- Around 45% of the newly reported infected health workers worked in hospital settings between 11-17 April 2021 (Figure 11).

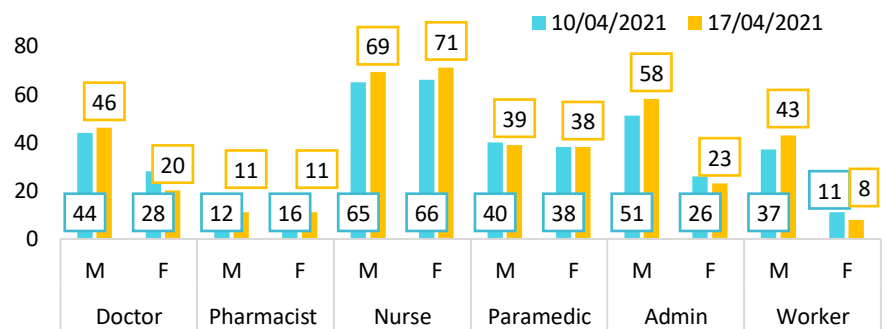


Figure 10: Active reported COVID-19 cases among health workforce distributed by gender and profession

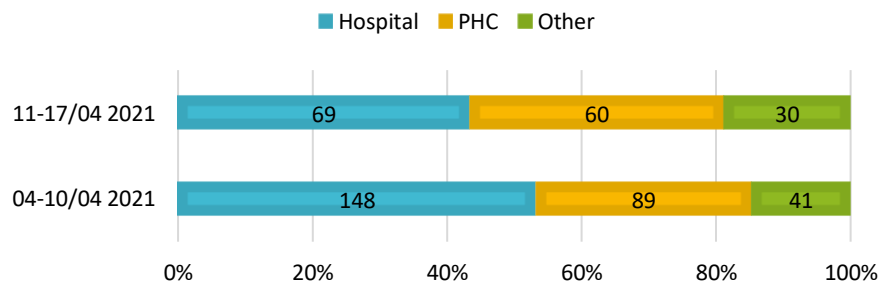


Figure 11: Distribution of newly weekly reported COVID-19 cases among health workforce by work setting

¹ Number of reported COVID-19 infections among health care workers between 4-10 April 2021 was corrected by MoH.

COVID-19 VACCINATION

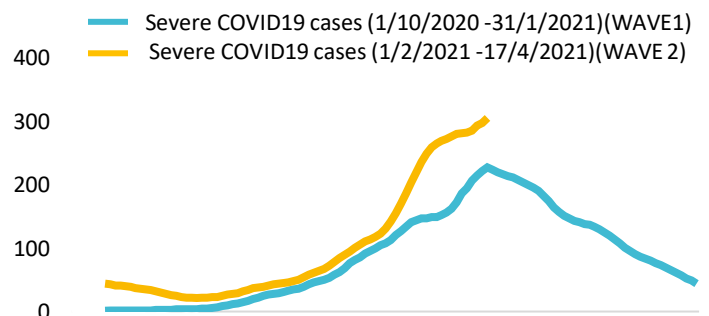
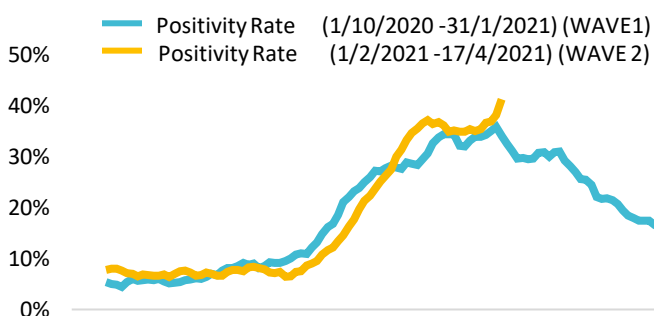
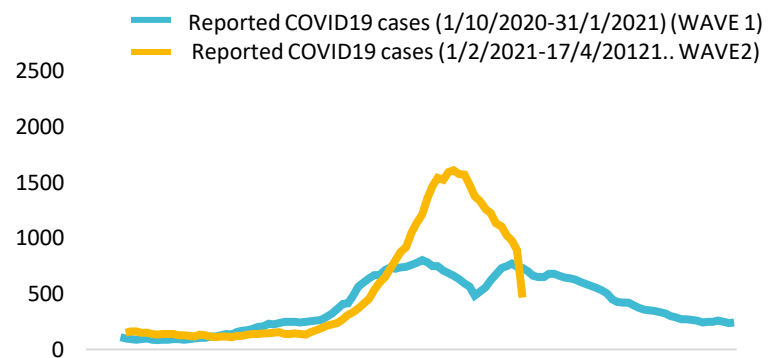
- National vaccination campaign was launched in Gaza Strip on 22 February 2021 in parallel with established specific vaccine distribution criteria for elders with chronic health conditions, frontline health care workers and other patients with life-threatening health conditions.
- Up to 18 April 2021, 33,213 frontline health workers and community members received the first dose (2,387 at 12 MOH hospitals, 15,586 at 11 MOH PHC clinics, 15,240 at 11 UNRWA clinics). Another 18,190 received their second dose of vaccine (9,651 at MOH, 8,539 at UNRWA clinics).

Table: Delivered COVID-19 vaccine doses in Gaza

No	Date	Source	Delivered vaccine doses
1	February 2021	Palestinian Authority	2000
2	February 2021	Donations from UAE	20,000
3	11 March 2021	Donations from UAE	38,700
4	21 March 2021	COVAX	21,300
5	19 April 2021	COVAX	28,800
Total			110,800

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COVID-19 TRANSMISSION WAVES

- When comparing the number of reported COVID-19 cases, positivity rates and admission of severe cases in the first wave of COVID-19 community transmission (1 October 2020-31 January 2021) with the second wave (1 February-17 April 2021 and ongoing), the number of reported COVID-19 cases started to decline in the last days and reached near figures to the first wave. Positivity rates are showing almost a similar trend in the two waves.
- The second wave is seeing a steeper increase in severe COVID-19 cases admitted to hospitals, after seemingly following the same pattern at first.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Decrease in newly reported COVID-19 cases and weekly positivity rates among both males and females and all age groups along five Gaza Strip districts. Almost all areas are coded red reflecting the wide range of COVID-19 community transmission at this stage.
- Alarming increase in reported COVID-19 deaths and admitted COVID-19 patients in severe conditions. 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 to prevent further deterioration. In response to the alarming increase in high dependency and ICU bed occupancy rates, MoH increased COVID-19 beds capacity which is very critical at this stage to provide appropriate care for COVID-19 patients.
- Alarming increase in reported COVID-19 infection among health workers during the last five 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.
- Gaza authorities maintained most of the preventive measures in place in Gaza, with closure of kindergartens, schools, universities and wedding halls and prevention of gatherings such as funerals and transportation movement during weekends. Further reinstatement of public health interventions to reduce exposure among population is urgently needed.
- During Ramadan, 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 specially where people gather more frequently than other seasons during the year. WHO produced the **Safe Ramadan Practices Guide**:
English: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331767/WHO-2019-nCoV-Ramadan-2020.1-eng.pdf>
Arabic: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/340661/WHO-2019-nCoV-Ramadan-2021.1-ara.pdf?sequence=9&isAllowed=y&ua=1>
- 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.