

COVID-19 CASES IN THE GAZA STRIP

Weekly epidemiological bulletin from (10/01 TO 16/01 2021) AND (17/01 TO 23/01 2021)

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

GENERAL

Reporting Period	Weekly cases		Cumulative
	10-01-21 16-01-21	17-01-21 23-01-21	accumulative since 23/8/2020
# of samples tested	total 13,964	13,573	302,129
# of positive cases	total 2,434	1,853	49,644
# of closed cases	total 41,377	44,474	
Classification of positive cases by severity*	40,893 (99%) recovered		43,966 (99%) recovered
	484 (1%) deaths		508 (1%) deaths
	mild	2,412	1,831
	moderate	9	14
	severe	2	6
Positivity rate	total	17.43%	13.65%
	contacts	25.4%	23.4%
	suspect	26.8%	21.6%
	surveillance	5.6%	5.5%

* 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.

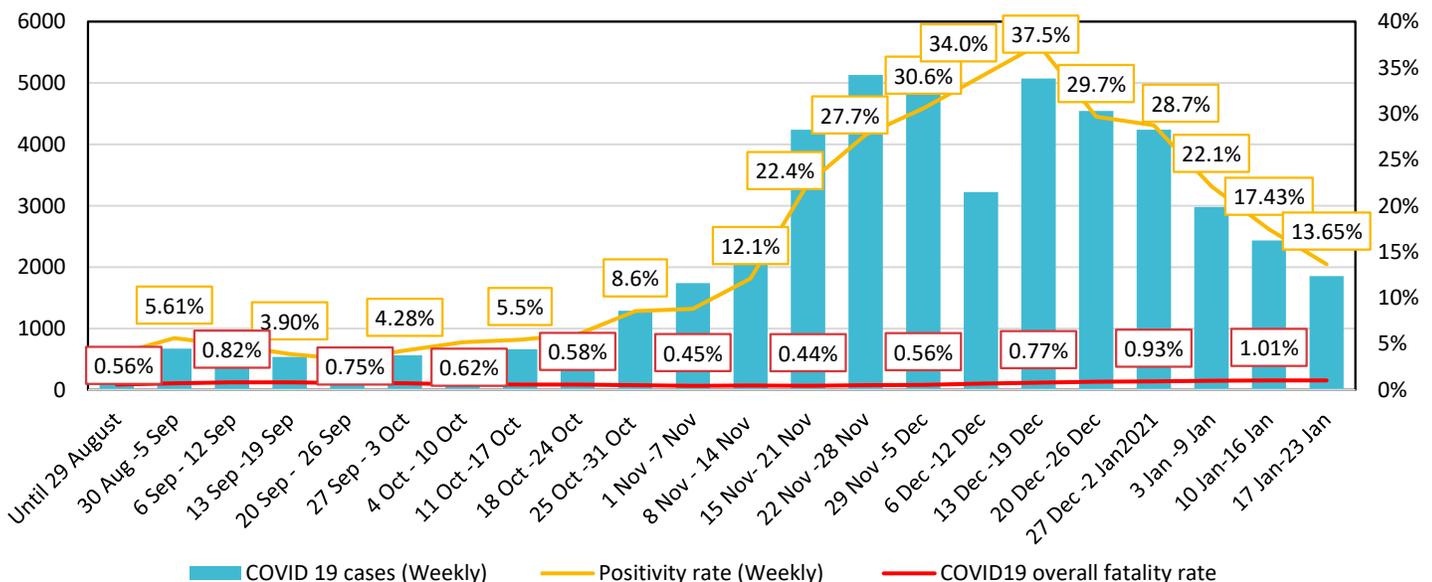


Figure 1: Reported weekly COVID-19 cases, positivity rates and overall fatality rates

- Gradual decrease in positivity rates and number of newly reported COVID-19 cases during the last five weeks (Figure 1).
- Total number of conducted tests decreased to 13,573 between 17-23 January from 13,964 between 10-16 January 2021. Decrease can be partially attributed to reluctance among people with mild symptoms to get tested to avoid mandatory quarantine. To reach out to possibly suspected cases, MOH started conducting random testing at PHC centres.
- Newly reported COVID-19 cases and incidence per 100,000 populations decreased at all districts in the Gaza Strip to 1,853 cases between 17-23 January from 2,434 between 10-16 January 2021 (Figures 2 and 3).

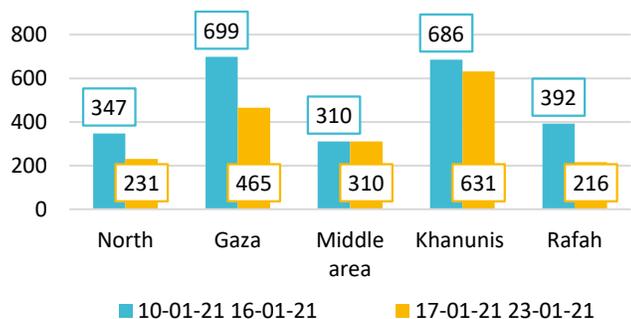


Figure 2: Newly reported weekly COVID-19 cases in Gaza Strip districts

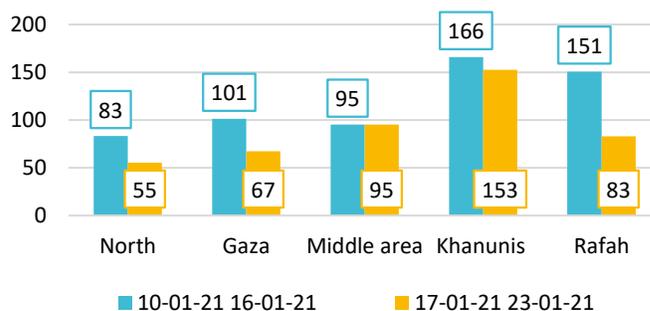


Figure 3: Incidence of weekly COVID-19 reported cases per 100,000 population in Gaza Strip districts

- Decrease in the number of red coded areas to 22 on 19 January, from 39 on 12 January 2021 (Figure 4). Most red areas are located in the Southern Area (Khanunis and Rafah).



12 January 2021



19 January 2021

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

POSITIVITY RATES

- Continued decrease in overall COVID-19 positivity rates to 13.65% between 17-23 January from 17.43% between 10-16 January 2021. Decrease occurred in four districts, with a slight increase in Khanunis to 22% between 17-23 January from 20% between 10-16 January 2021 (Figure 5).
- Positivity rates also decreased among the three testing categories (as shown in the table on page 1: close contacts, suspected cases, and random testing or surveillance).
- Overall positivity rate up to 23 January reached 16.4%.

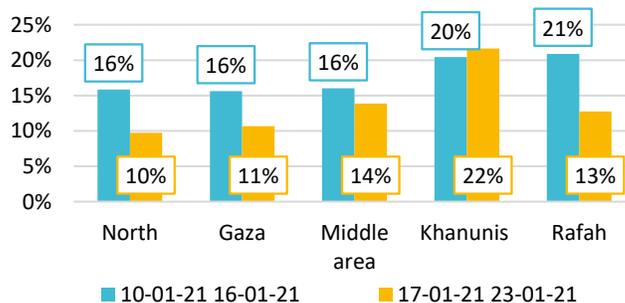


Figure 5: Reported COVID-19 weekly positivity rates in Gaza Strip districts

DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 CASES AMONG AGE GROUPS AND GENDER

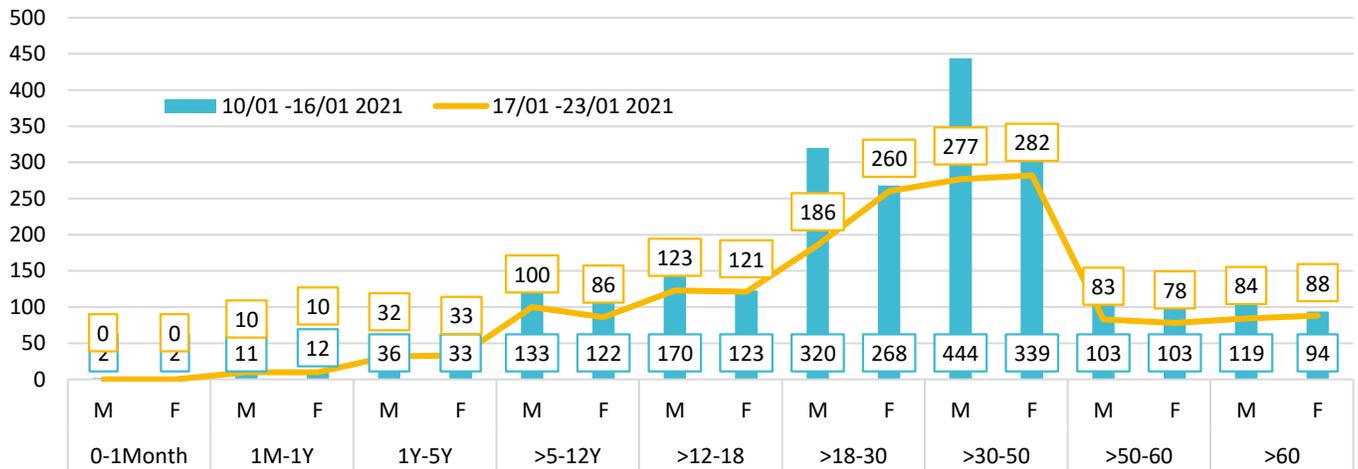


Figure 6: Weekly newly reported COVID-19 cases distributed by age groups and gender

- Decrease in reported COVID-19 cases among all age groups and genders between 17-23 January and 10-16 January 2021 (Figure 6). This trend has been observed in the last five weeks.
- Highest reported COVID-19 cases are among people aged 18 to 50 between 17-23 January and 10-16 January 2021. A decreasing trend in the number of cases in this age group has been observed since mid-December 2020.

DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 DEATHS

- In line with the decreasing trend in the number of cases, reported deaths continue to decrease in the last five weeks: 24 COVID-19 deaths between 17-23 January compared to 43 between 10-16 January (Figure 7).
- Two deaths were reported among people aged 50 to 60 between 17-23 January compared to 5 deaths between 10-16 January.
- Majority of reported COVID-19 deaths are from people aged 60 years and older. A total of 22 COVID-19 deaths (20 male and 2 female) were reported between 17-23 January compared to 37 deaths (23 male and 14 female) between 10-16 January.
- Total reported deaths since the start of COVID-19 outbreak in the Gaza Strip until 23 January 2021 reached 508 with an accumulative COVID-19 fatality rate of 1.02% (508 deaths out of 49,644 COVID-19 cases).
- Out of the 508 deaths, 287 were male (56%) and 221 were female (44%).

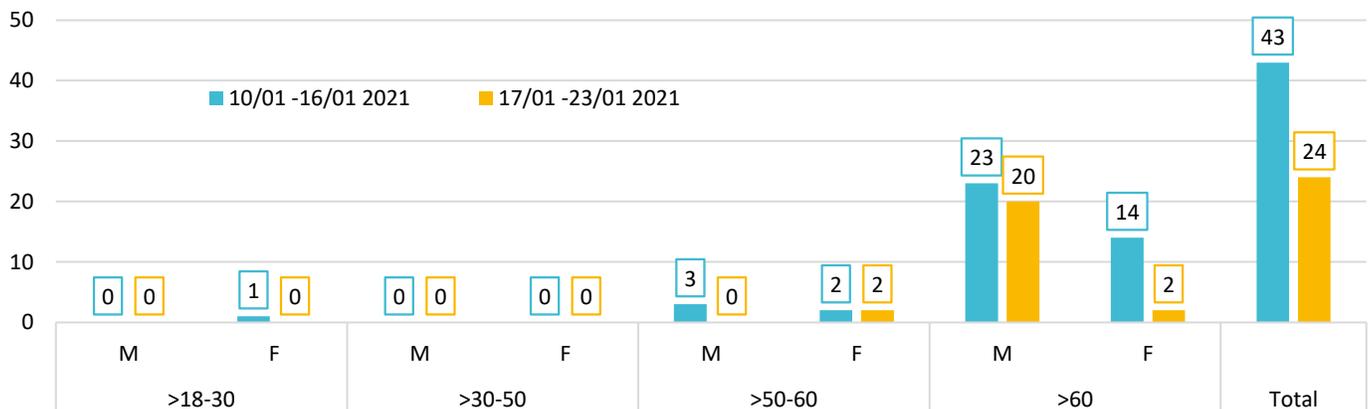


Figure 7: Distribution of reported COVID-19 deaths by age groups and gender

DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 CASES BY SEVERITY

- Moderate cases admitted to hospitals decreased to 36 on 23 January compared to 54 cases on 16 January 2021 (Figure 8).
- Severe cases admitted to hospitals decreased to 54 cases on 23 January compared to 73 cases on 16 January 2021.
- Critical cases admitted to hospitals decreased to 14 cases on 23 January compared to 17 cases on 16 January 2021.
- Decrease is in line with the lower number of newly reported COVID-19 cases and deaths. Number of admitted cases at severe level is still higher than moderate, which may indicate inadequate access to care at early stage before deterioration to severe and critical symptoms.

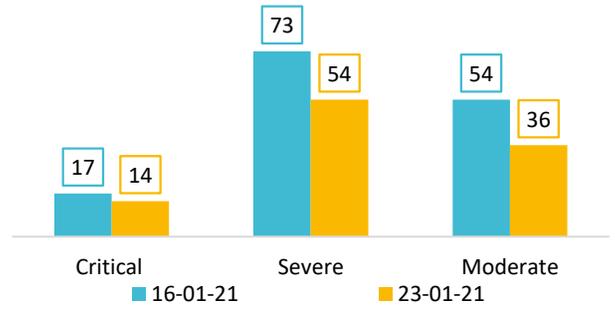


Figure 8: Classification of cumulative hospital admitted COVID-19 patients by severity

HEALTH SYSTEM CAPACITY (COVID-19 MANAGEMENT)

- In line with the gradual decrease in number of hospital-admitted COVID-19 patients, the total bed occupancy rate and high dependency and ICU unit occupancy rate continues to decrease since the last five weeks.
- Total COVID-19 bed occupancy rate decreased to 27% on 23 January compared to 36% on 16 January 2021 (Figure 9).
- High dependency and ICU occupancy rates decreased to 28% on 23 January from 38% on 16 January 2021.

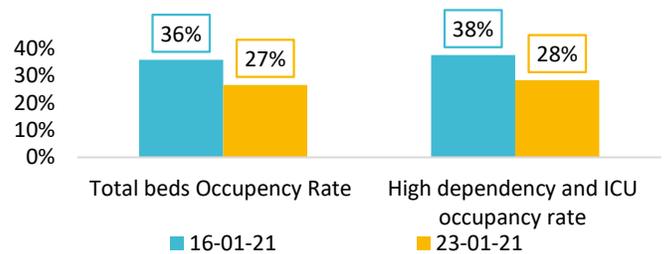


Figure 9: Occupancy rates of COVID-19 beds classified by type of bed

HEALTH CARE WORKERS INFECTIONS

- Decrease/no change in number of active COVID-19 cases among all health workforce categories, both male and female (Figure 10).
- Total number of active COVID-19 cases decreased to 101 on 23 January from 166 on 16 January 2021. The decrease is in line with the overall decrease of reporting new COVID-19 cases at the community level.
- Decrease in number of newly reported COVID-19 infections among health workforce to 32 between 17-23 January from 69 between 10-16 January 2021 (Figure 11).
- Most of the newly reported weekly COVID-19 cases among health workforce were in hospital settings (Figure 11).

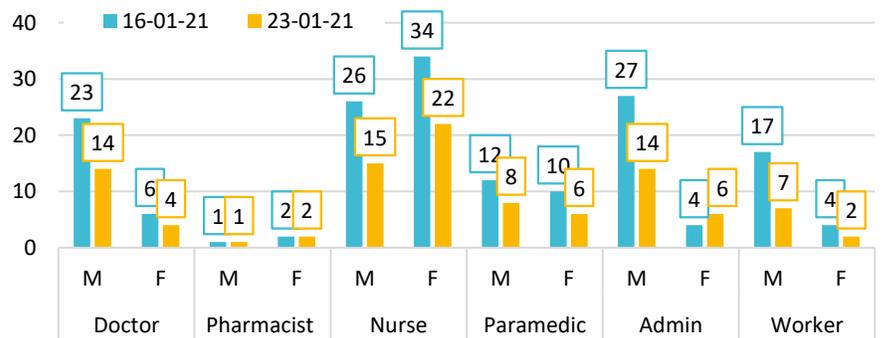


Figure 10: Active reported COVID-19 cases among health workforce distributed by gender and profession

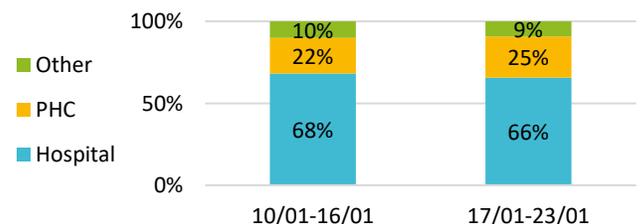


Figure 11: Distribution of newly weekly reported COVID-19 cases among health workforce distributed by work setting

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Total newly reported COVID-19 cases and positivity rates continue to decrease since the last five reporting weeks among both males and females, in all age groups, and in all governorates. Similarly, number of COVID-19 patients admitted to hospitals in severe and critical health conditions, as well as bed occupancy rates continue to decrease, indicating a flattening of the curve of COVID-19 infections after implementing stricter public health measures.
- Gaza authorities declared further easing of public health measures by allowing community members to walk on Friday and Saturday without using any transportation means. The Ministry of Education informed that preparatory and secondary schools will reopen soon. Clear monitoring, strong surveillance and trend analysis, and contact tracing should remain in place to evaluate the results of easing the measures during the coming weeks, combined with maintaining strict adherence to COVID-19 mitigation measures.
- 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.
- As COVID-19 cases are decreasing, health facilities can refocus their efforts on revitalising the provision of essential health services and elective care. Maintaining robust IPC measures in all health facilities is vital to sustain the before mentioned achievements.
- While the COVID-19 situation is clearly improving, the health system in the Gaza Strip remains fragile with MOH reporting 45% of all essential medicines and 33% of essential disposables at zero stock levels. Strengthening of the health care system and supporting vulnerable communities in the Gaza Strip should be the main goal.
- As part of the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP), Gaza health authorities supported by WHO, UNICEF and UNRWA, are making the necessary preparations for the future arrival of COVID-19 vaccines, in line with the agreed prioritisation of vulnerable groups, including training of health workers to correctly receive, store and administer vaccines, as well as adequate response to potential Adverse Effects Following Immunization (AEFI). Preparations are also ongoing to inform the broader public on future vaccination, and to address potential vaccine hesitancy.