

## Key Messages: **UPDATED**

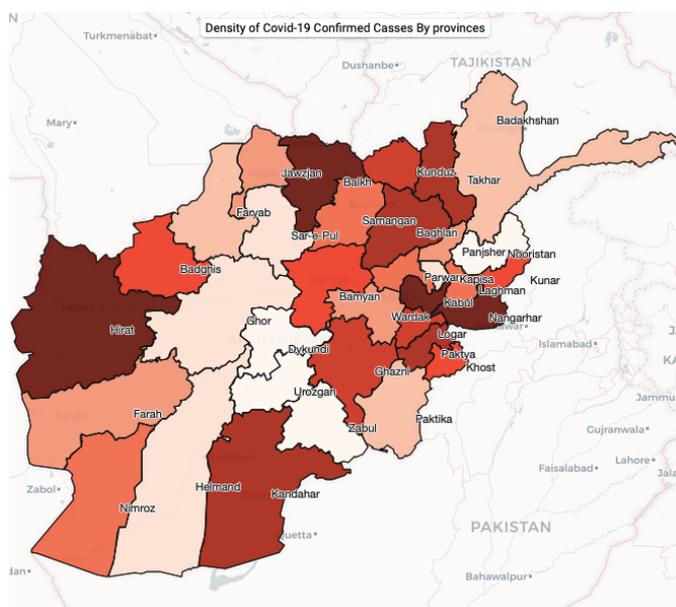
- **People confirmed to have COVID-19: 28,833** (as of 2pm, 21 June. Source: Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health - MoPH)
- **Deaths from COVID-19: 581**
- **Samples tested: 64,958**

**Key concerns: Border crossing areas, in-country testing capacity, protective equipment for frontline workers, commodity prices, messaging and rumour management, international air services**

## Situation Overview: **UPDATED**

MoPH data shows that 28,833 people across all 34 provinces in Afghanistan are now confirmed to have COVID-19. Some 8,764 people have recovered, and 581 people have died (18 of which are healthcare workers). 64,958 people out of the population of 37.6 million have been tested. Afghanistan has a test-positivity-rate – positive tests as a percentage of total tests – of more than 44 per cent. More than five per cent of the total confirmed COVID-19 cases are among healthcare staff. The majority of the deaths were people between ages of 40 and 69. Men in this age group represent more than 54 per cent of all COVID-19-related deaths. With a fragile health system, a developing economy and underlying vulnerabilities, the people of Afghanistan are facing extreme consequences from the COVID-19 pandemic. Cases are expected to continue to increase over the weeks ahead as community transmission escalates, creating grave implications for Afghanistan’s economy and people’s well-being. Kabul remains the most affected part of the country in terms of confirmed cases, followed by Hirat, Balkh, Nangarhar and Kandahar. The spread of COVID-19 has added to serious concerns for the humanitarian situation in view of continued conflict-related displacement, population returns, poverty and food insecurity.

Hospitals report challenges maintaining or expanding their facilities’ capacity to treat patients with COVID-19. These challenges are related to supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), testing, staffing, medical supplies and durable equipment; maintaining or expanding facility capacity; and financial concerns. Humanitarian partners urge the Government of Afghanistan to ensure healthcare staff have adequate personal protection and that distribution plans for medical equipment and PPE be shared with humanitarian partners.



Source: MoPH

	Age 0-19		Age 20-29		Age 30-39		Age 40-49		Age 50-59		Age 60-69		Age 70-79		Age 80+		Unspecified	Total
	Girls	Boys	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men										
# people confirmed with COVID-19	688	811	2,028	4,631	1,271	5,080	1,073	3,401	903	2,154	498	1,325	201	435	55	180	4,099	28,833
# deaths from COVID-19	2	3	2	7	5	31	12	65	24	63	22	97	10	35	5	28	170	581

**Funding: UPDATED**

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Afghanistan, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has contributed \$20.6 million in COVID-19 assistance which includes more than \$7.1 million for health and IDA (International Disaster Assistance) humanitarian assistance to support the detection and treatment of COVID-19, as well as protection and health support, for IDPs, and nearly \$3.1 million in MRA (Migration and Refugee Assistance) humanitarian assistance for returnees (citizens of Afghanistan). In addition, the United States has redirected \$10 million in existing resources to support the United Nations Emergency Response Plan for COVID-19 to conduct disease-surveillance, improve laboratories, manage cases of the disease, prevent and control infections in health facilities, engage with local communities, and provide technical assistance to the Government of Afghanistan, and \$500,000 to procure COVID-19 prevention and control supplies for correctional facilities.

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the EU has provided its humanitarian partners with over €6.1 million euros for case investigation, medical equipment, training, awareness raising activities, and other critical programming. Additional €15 million will be allocated this year to help treat coronavirus patients and prevent further spread of the virus.

Reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in humanitarian settings is essential to ensure the continuation of humanitarian assistance. The UN plans to establish a five bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at the UN Operations Centre in Afghanistan (UNOCA) in Kabul, to deal with COVID-19 cases among aid personnel and ensure humanitarian partners are able to access adequate level of care in order to stay and deliver. The Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund – through its fourth reserve allocation to the COVID-19 response in 2020 – has allocated funds to help kick-start the ICU. However, co-funding opportunities are being sought to ensure a rapid set up of this facility and to allow a scale-up so that more people in the aid community can be served.

### Attacks on Healthcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic - UNAMA (21 June 2020)

**KABUL - The United Nations in Afghanistan is gravely concerned by recent deliberate attacks on healthcare personnel and facilities, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

A new special report released today by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) presents the findings of its monitoring of all incidents of the armed conflict affecting healthcare from 11 March, the date on which the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a global pandemic, to 23 May, the start of a three-day ceasefire between the Taliban and the Government of Afghanistan.

The report, 'Attacks on Healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic,' documents the harm to healthcare workers, damage to healthcare facilities and other ways in which parties to the conflict have interfered with necessary healthcare, both as a result of targeted attacks as well as from ongoing fighting. UNAMA earlier raised concerns about such incidents in its [protection of civilians report](#) for the first quarter of 2020. Since then, the situation deteriorated: the Taliban continued abducting healthcare workers and attacked a pharmacy; the Afghan national security forces carried out deliberate acts of violence and intimidation affecting a healthcare facility, workers and the delivery of medical supplies; and unknown gunmen perpetrated an attack on a maternity ward in a hospital in Kabul, resulting in dozens of civilian casualties.

"At a time when an urgent humanitarian response was required to protect every life in Afghanistan, both the Taliban and Afghan national security forces carried out deliberate acts of violence that undermined healthcare operations," said Deborah Lyons, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA. "There is no excuse for such actions; the safety and well-being of the civilian population must be a priority." The report documents 15 incidents affecting healthcare provision, where 12 were deliberate attacks and the remaining incidents involved incidental harm.

The report emphasises that deliberate acts of violence against healthcare facilities, including hospitals and related personnel, are prohibited under international humanitarian law and constitute war crimes. "Perpetrating targeted attacks on healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time when health resources are already stretched and of critical importance to the civilian population, is particularly reprehensible," said Fiona Frazer, UNAMA Chief of Human Rights. The report underscores that the harm caused by attacks on healthcare, particularly during a health pandemic, extends well beyond the direct victims of those incidents. It stresses that even with an ongoing conflict, the people of Afghanistan have the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health under international human rights law. The enjoyment of such a right is severely compromised by the incidents described in this report.

The United Nations condemns all deliberate attacks, threats, abductions and other intentional acts against healthcare facilities and personnel, as outlined in the report. In a situation in which the entire population in Afghanistan is at risk from COVID-19, there can be no greater priority than ensuring that health services can continue to operate without interference, interruption, and with sufficient resources. The report sets out that parties are obliged under international humanitarian law to protect healthcare facilities and personnel from harm and urges them to immediately cease such deliberate attacks.

This is crucial at any time, but even more so when all efforts should be focused on increasing capacity, efficiency and support of the healthcare system in Afghanistan, particularly when demands are increasing. Moreover, the UN in Afghanistan urges the parties to heed the Secretary-General's [call for a global ceasefire](#) so all attention and resources can be directed toward fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and prevent further harm being caused to the people of Afghanistan.

The special report, 'Attacks on Healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic,' can be read here: [English](#), [Dari](#), [Pashto](#)

**Response Activities: UPDATED**

Humanitarians have rapidly scale-up services to support the Government's response to the pandemic, reaching millions of people with life-saving assistance for new and existing needs. On 17 June, the European Commission Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) in collaboration with UNICEF, [flew in a shipment](#) of over 26 metric tons of

[www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org)

The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.

vaccines in support of the expanded programme on immunization, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This is part of the European Union's emergency humanitarian air bridge in support of most vulnerable children and women in Afghanistan.

### **Cross Border:** UPDATED

The Milak crossing (Nimroz) is officially open to commercial traffic and documented citizens of Afghanistan. The Islam Qala-Dogharoon land border crossings (Hirat) remain open on both sides for documented travellers and commercial traffic. According to [UNHCR](#), there is a sharp increase in the number of deportees compared to May. Reportedly, relaxation of movement restrictions has led to many citizens of Afghanistan departing to Iran irregularly with the help of smugglers given the increased livelihood opportunities in Iran. The trend was observed during the monitoring interviews where many interviewed deportees stated that they went to Iran recently but were arrested by the police and immediately deported to Afghanistan.

According to [UNHCR's latest border monitoring report](#) (covering the period between 7 and 13 June), 34 per cent of returnees interviewed at the Islam Qala and Milak border crossing points said that they faced problems during the COVID-19 outbreak, such as lost work/wages, discrimination/stigmatisation by local communities, lack of access to markets, pressure by Iranian authorities to return to Afghanistan, movement restrictions related to the lockdown, and lack of access to medical services. Moreover, 83 per cent of the respondents stated that they had received information about COVID-19 in Iran, mainly through TV, radio and local communities. 22 per cent of returnees interviewed at the Milak border crossing point and 29 per cent at Islam Qala stated that they had not received information about COVID-19 upon arrival in Afghanistan. The information gap at Milak border crossing has improved (from 42 per cent to 22 per cent) since UNHCR's follow-up with partners in early May. However, the monitoring findings shows that the information gap at Islam Qala slightly increased compared to early May.

On 16 May, the Government of Pakistan announced that passenger movements of stranded nationals of Afghanistan and Pakistan are officially allowed once a week (Saturday) with a maximum of 500 people allowed to pass through the Torkham and 300 through the Spin Boldak crossing to facilitate return to their respective countries. Similarly, on 20 June, the Government of Pakistan [announced](#) that it will open Ghulam Khan border crossing site on Saturdays to facilitate pedestrian movement, effective 22 June. On 20 June, 5,762 citizens of Afghanistan returned from Pakistan through the Torkham border. The process was reportedly orderly and health screening procedures were followed. Spin Boldak crossing point remains closed since 6 June for pedestrian movement of stranded citizens of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Pakistan continues to facilitate the movement of cargo trucks and containers into Afghanistan. On 16 May, the Government of Pakistan announced that the Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points would open six days a week (except for Saturday) for commercial purposes. An unlimited number of trucks are being allowed to pass per day. Similarly, responding to the Government of Afghanistan's request, [Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) confirmed on 20 June that Pakistan would facilitate the movement of cargo trucks and containers into Afghanistan through the Ghulam Khan border crossing point six days per week (Sunday to Friday) from 22 June onwards. Humanitarians emphasise the critical importance of maintaining a reliable flow of traffic for humanitarian cargo and are advocating for special consideration to expedite humanitarian food and relief items through border crossings.

According to [UNHCR](#), 49 per cent of returnees interviewed at the Spin Boldak and Torkham border crossing points said they faced problems in Pakistan during the COVID-19 outbreak, mainly lost work/wages, movement restrictions due to the lockdown, lack of access to markets, and lack of access to medical services. 95 per cent of those interviewed stated that they had received information about COVID-19 in Pakistan, mainly through TV, radio, mosque/religious leaders and local communities. Almost 93 per cent of returnees interviewed at Torkham border crossing and 33 per cent at Spin Boldak stated that they had not received information about COVID-19 upon arrival in Afghanistan. The monitoring findings shows that the information gap at Spin Boldak slightly increased compared to early May, while the information gap at Torkham remains very high.

Borders with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan remain open only for commercial traffic and crossings of passport holders back into Afghanistan.

### **Operational Issues:** UPDATED

The Government of Afghanistan announced on 6 June that it was extending the **nationwide lockdown** for three more months, issuing new health guidelines for citizens to follow in a bid to contain the spread of the virus. According to the latest measures, people must: wear a face mask in public places at all times; maintain a 2-meter social distance; avoid gatherings of more than 10 people; disinfect all workplaces; and ensure older people stay at home. The Government has extended the closure of schools for three months. Additionally, all hotels, parks, sports complexes and other public places will remain closed for three months, while public transport facilities, such as buses carrying more than four passengers, will not be allowed to travel. Restaurants and coffee shops will only be allowed to carry out service delivery and take-aways. According to [reports](#), while lockdown measures have officially remained in place, the enforcement of COVID-19 lockdown measures have been lenient. Measures to contain the spread of the virus continue to differ across provinces,

with provincial authorities maintaining the authority to decide on and implement their lockdown measures. In light of the newly announced nationwide preventative measures, provincial authorities are currently reviewing their lockdown measures.

While provincial lockdown measures continue to impede humanitarian movement, in the last few weeks, the situation significantly improved, with less obstructions reported. This is mainly due to the above-mentioned leniency in the enforcement of lockdown measures as well as due to previously established provincial solutions to facilitate movement. Humanitarian partners remain active in responding to crises throughout the country and continue to urge the Government to employ a national approach to these movement issues so that individual negotiations are not required on a case-by-case basis. For additional information on access constraints, please see the [C-19 Access Impediment Report](#).

On 2 May, the Government of Afghanistan announced the suspension of all commercial domestic flights until the end of June. Kam Air has announced that it will resume its domestic flight operations starting 1 July. On 20 June, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) announced that it will adjust the frequency of regular flight days from five to four days a week, due to low passenger demands in the past weeks. Effective Tuesday, 23 June 2020, UNHAS will not conduct regular flights on Mondays anymore; however, all locations will be served during the week. UNHAS will adjust the schedule based on user demands changes. Also, UNHAS will continue to support any required evacuation and relocation flights during all days of the week.

On 9 June, Emirates (airlines) announced that it had received approvals to carry passengers on flights to Kabul in Afghanistan, starting from 25 June. Passengers can book to fly between destinations, with a connection in Dubai, as long as they meet travel and immigration entry requirements of their destination country.

UNHAS airbridge connecting Kabul and Doha is operating regularly on Sunday, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Flights into Doha accommodate transiting passengers only. On 31 May, Qatar Airways authorities announced that they will approve up to 36 hours transit at Hamad International Airport (Doha) for inbound and outbound passengers with immediate effect. This service is planned to continue until the end of September 2020, or until regular commercial international flights resume. The next flight is planned for Tuesday, 23 June.

## [More Information – Links:](#) **UPDATED**

### WHO

- [WHO's latest information on COVID-19](#)
- [WHO COVID-19 Global Dashboard](#)
- [COVID-19 Partners Platform](#)

### Government of Afghanistan:

- [Ministry of Public Health: COVID-19 Dashboard](#)

### Inter-Agency Standing Committee

- [IASC-endorsed COVID-19 guidance – new materials available](#)
- [Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19 Outbreak \(available in English, Dari, Pashto\)](#)

### UN and others

- [UN: Global Humanitarian Response Plan: COVID-19 \(April – December 2020\) – GHRP May Update](#)
- [Relief Web: COVID-19 Response Page](#)
- [OCHA: Asia Pacific COVID-19 - Humanitarian Data Portal](#)
- [OCHA: Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2018-2021 \(June 2020 Revision\)](#)
- [OCHA: Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2018-2021 \(June 2020 update\) - Infographic](#)
- [UN: Battling COVID-19 misinformation hands-on](#)
- [UN: The world of work cannot and should not look the same](#)
- [UN: End conflict that drives 'appalling' displacement numbers](#)
- [UN: Resolving Forced Displacement at Heart of Security Council's Mandate to Maintain International Peace](#)
- [UNFPA: A Blight on Humanity's Conscience](#)
- [UNDP: World Refugee Day 2020 - Every Action Counts](#)

- [ODI-HPG: The future of the Grand Bargain – a new ambition?](#)
- [UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO: Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children 2020](#)
- [ICRC: How ICRC plans to help children affected by pandemic](#)
- [IFRC: New research demonstrates dramatic impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable refugees](#)
- [UN Women: Including widows in the work to "build back better" from COVID-19](#)
- [IPI: What Happened to the Nexus Approach in the COVID-19 Response?](#)
- [OSRSG Sexual Violence in Conflict: International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict](#)
- [FHI 360 +8 more: Home-Based Care - Guide for COVID-19](#)
- [SRSG VAC, UNICEF: Keep the well-being of children at the centre of COVID-19 response and recovery](#)
- [World Bank: Simulating the potential impacts of COVID-19 school closures on schooling and learning outcomes](#)
- [FAO: The effect of COVID-19 on fisheries and aquaculture](#)
- [WFP: Afghanistan Country Brief, May 2020](#)
- [UNICEF, WASH Cluster: Afghanistan Humanitarian Response – Wash Cluster Updates, Cluster Achievements](#)
- [HRW: School Closures Hurt Even More in Afghanistan](#)
- [UNICEF: Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic UNICEF takes services closer to the children and women in Afghanistan](#)
- [ECHO: Factsheet – Afghanistan](#)
- [UNDP: Afghanistan COVID-19 impact](#)
- [EU: EU humanitarian aid jets in \(Afghanistan\)](#)
- [UN GA, UN SC: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security](#)
- [OCHA: Humanitarian Access Snapshot \(Afghanistan\)](#)

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