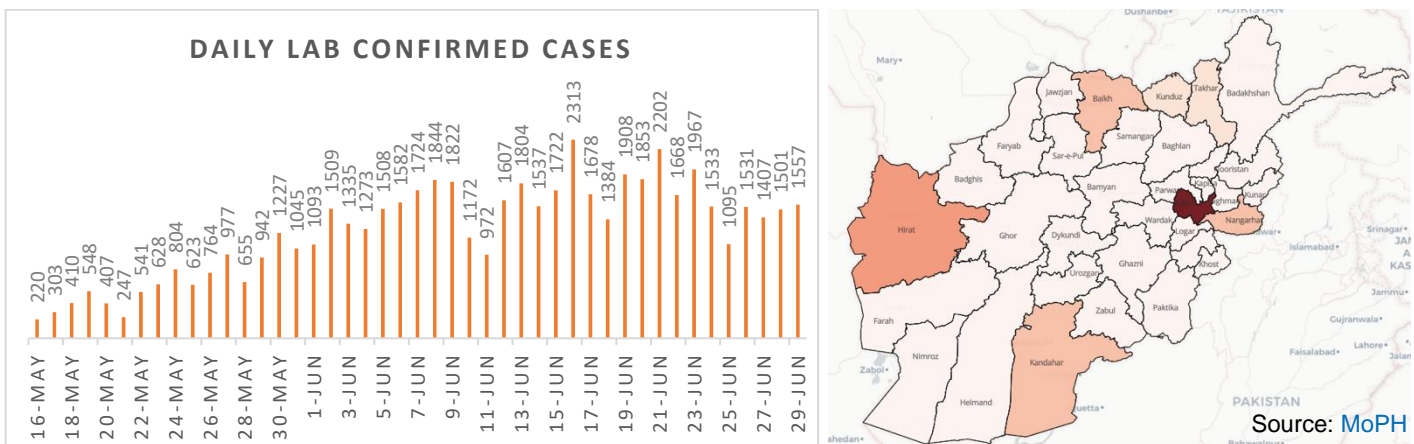


The next Strategic Situation Report will be released on 15 July

Situation Overview: **UPDATED**

MoPH Figures: As of 1 July, **MoPH data** shows that 120,216 people across all 34 provinces in Afghanistan are confirmed to have had COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. An additional 23,685 people have tested positive since the last update two weeks ago. Of the total cases since the start of the pandemic, some 71,012 people have recovered, and 4,962 people have died – at least 92 of the fatalities have been healthcare workers. Since the start of the pandemic, only 612,112 tests have been conducted for a population of 40.4 million.



Cases have steadily risen to alarming levels over the post-Eid period. The daily average number of new cases now far surpasses figures seen during the peak of the first and second waves last year. On 16 June alone, 2,313 new cases were reported – the highest number of new cases recorded in a single day since the onset of the pandemic. Overseas testing has confirmed the presence of the variants in Afghanistan. While Afghanistan lacks in-country facilities to test for the Delta variant, concern over the variant’s spread is high. Afghanistan now has a daily test-positivity-rate – positive tests as a percentage of total tests – of 42 per cent as of 30 June, suggesting overall under-testing of potential cases. 30 laboratories are now operating in Afghanistan – with plans to scale-up to at least one laboratory per province – with a testing capacity of 8,500 tests per day. Due to limited public health resources, lack of people coming forward for testing, as well as the absence of a national death register, confirmed cases of and deaths from COVID-19 are likely to be under-reported overall in Afghanistan.

WHO warns that despite the new surge, widespread complacency and failure to follow public health advice in Afghanistan is creating grave risks in the community with people generally not observing physical distancing or mask-wearing protocols. There is particular concern about the upcoming Eid al-Adha period and the need to promote personal protection measures during this holiday. Given the rapid rise in cases, the Government of Afghanistan has extended closure of all schools, universities and training courses that started on 29 May. The school closure will be in effect across 16 provinces, including Kabul. Most government offices have moved to essential staff because of the outbreak. The Government has also announced other preventative measures across these 16 provinces, including the banning of mass gatherings and weddings. No other nation-wide lockdown measures are currently in place.

Vaccination: Since 8 March, Afghanistan has received 1,668,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines – 468,000 from the COVAX facility, 500,000 directly from the Government of India, and 700,000 from the government of the People's Republic of China. The contribution from China of Sinopharm vaccines arrived in Afghanistan on 10 June. COVID-19 vaccinations through MoPH are open to all those above 18 years of age. Vaccination is currently available in select health facilities and through mobile vaccination teams. People are reminded that mixing of vaccines between doses is not recommended. More than 898,000 people have been vaccinated in Afghanistan through the MoPH programme to date, including some 133,000 health workers, 91,000 teachers and 51,000 people with co-morbidities. Of those vaccinated, 63 per cent were men and 37 per cent women. Around 21 per cent of those vaccinated have received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. The United States has recently announced its intention to provide around 3 million doses of the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine to Afghanistan to support the vaccination campaign. Afghanistan is also expected to receive 468,000 additional doses of vaccines from the COVAX facility. Both contributions are expected to arrive in Afghanistan around mid-July. Similarly, a new contribution of 124,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine by the Swedish Government is anticipated to arrive in Kabul in the coming week.

According to a recent public perception survey on COVID-19 vaccines in Afghanistan conducted by the Afghanistan National Public Health Institute (ANPHI) and UNICEF, 71 per cent of respondents reported that they are yet to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. However, some 69 per cent of all respondents noted that they wish to be vaccinated if given the opportunity, compared to just 17 per cent who said they do not want to be vaccinated. Around 14 per cent did not respond to the question. The majority of all respondents listed the radio, masjids and religious leaders, TV and health care providers as the most trusted means of communication for COVID-19 information.

Overall, there remains strong concern regarding equitable access to vaccines for Afghans, especially vulnerable groups such as IDPs, returnees and nomadic populations and people living in hard-to-reach areas. IOM continues to report that vaccination coverage is extremely limited among all migrant populations due to negative perceptions and barriers to accessing care. Greater focus is needed to ensure mobile populations are vaccinated on pace with settled populations given the impact mobility has as a vector for transmission, especially with the more contagious viral variants present in neighbouring countries. Additional efforts are also needed to reach women and people living in non-government-controlled areas with vaccines. Risk communication and community engagement efforts are needed to ensure high-risk populations and frontline staff understand the benefits of the vaccine and can effectively dispel misinformation. Countering negative rumours about the vaccine is a priority as well as promotion of preventative measures during the upcoming Eid holiday. As cases increase, humanitarian partners continue to urge the Government to ensure laboratories and frontline staff are appropriately equipped and that procured supplies – including vaccines – go to under-resourced health centres across the entire country in a transparent manner, so that life-saving support can be delivered to those most in need.

As Afghanistan grapples with surge in COVID-19 cases, one midwife shares her strength – UNFPA (23 June 2021)

HIRAT – Mastura Zia, a 27-year-old midwife in Hirat, does not mince words when describing the hardships of the global pandemic: “2020 was the hardest year of my life,” she said. Ms. Zia is a frontline responder at the Gazargah Transit Centre, providing reproductive health services to deportees who have returned to Afghanistan from Iran. When the pandemic struck, around February 2020, tens of thousands of undocumented Afghans were deported, overwhelming the transit centre. “Everybody was scared and the camp received thousands of deportees daily,” Ms. Zia remembered. “There were many deportees who were pregnant women and in critical situations in need of urgent support. I had to support them.”

The health centre in the Gazargah Transit Centre is supported by UNFPA, providing many essential reproductive health services. But Ms. Zia said many of her cases were serious and in need of specialised care. “The service seekers, particularly the pregnant women whose situations were critical, needed to be referred to the provincial maternity hospital,” she explained. “But it wasn’t only pregnant women who were in need. Many others had signs of COVID-19. Those I referred to the Hirat COVID-19 hospital for testing.” It wasn’t long before she fell ill herself. Last July, she tested positive for COVID-19. “I followed the preventative measures to protect myself from infection, but close and daily interaction with patients resulted in my eventual infection.” She spent three weeks in treatment and isolation – but the health needs of returnees continued. “The services didn’t stop while I was in quarantine. Another midwife supported my function during this period.”

To date, there have been over 120,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Afghanistan, and cases have risen steadily in recent weeks. In addition to the sexual and reproductive health care they provide, staff at the Gazargah Transit Centre also ensure returnees receive psychosocial services, part of UNFPA’s humanitarian response to the crisis. The centre and its partners also provide shelter to those who need it, as well as case management, assistance for unaccompanied minors and other support. “This is emergency response work,” Ms. Zia said. “Although I am usually overloaded with cases, I feel proud to see the good result of my work at the end of the day.”

Socio-economic impacts: In addition to pre-existing challenges, the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and drought have translated into a food insecurity crisis. The recently released IPC analysis estimates that 12.2 million people – almost one third of the population - are in crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity. Food prices are already higher than normal due to COVID-19 may increase further in some places due to conflict and water scarcity. Water scarcity is already being seen in a number of areas and a significantly reduced wheat harvest is expected.

On 24 June, the World Bank approved a [USD\\$132 million grant](#) from the International Development Association (IDA) to help Afghanistan continue implementing critical reforms to improve public spending and fiscal transparency, strengthen governance, and mobilise private investment toward economic recovery. The grant will “Today’s Board approval reaffirms the World Bank’s strong commitment to helping the Afghan people recover and build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Henry Kerali, World Bank Country Director for Afghanistan.

Cross Border: **UPDATED**

Border Crossings: Since 29 April, the Iranian Government has imposed an indefinite lockdown with border closures. The border remains open only to commercial traffic and movement of documented nationals returning home to Afghanistan. According to the Border Monitoring Team of the Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR), a total of 22,009 Afghanistan nationals returned from Iran through the Milak and Islam Qala border crossing sites between 18 and 24 June. Of these, 15,589 people returned voluntarily and 9,420 were deported. Since the start of the year, a historically significant influx of 584,249 people returned to Afghanistan from Iran sparking new concerns about

transmission of COVID-19 variants and overall absorption capacity of existing health resources. A sharp drop in remittances to Afghanistan has also been observed.

The border with Pakistan remains open. Between 18 and 24 June 2021, a total of 176 undocumented Afghans returned from Pakistan through the Torkham and Spin Boldak borders (169 returned voluntarily and 7 were deported). The total humanitarian returns from Pakistan in 2021 remain low with 6,523 total undocumented and refugee returns.

More Information – Links: **UPDATED**

WHO

- WHO's latest information on COVID-19
- Weekly Epidemiological Update (22 June 2021)
- Weekly Epidemiological Record (WER), 25 June 2021
- Weekly Operational Update on COVID-19 (28 June 2021)
- 5 Steps for Managing patients with COVID-19 at home: For the Public
- Managing COVID-19 at Home: Checking Blood Oxygen Levels
- Managing COVID-19 at Home: What medicines to take (and not take)
- Directors General of WHO, WIPO and the WTO agree on intensified cooperation in support of access to medical technologies worldwide to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic
- Recommendations for national SARS-CoV-2 testing strategies and diagnostic capacities Interim guidance

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)
- Frequently Asked Questions: The COVAX Humanitarian Buffer

UN and others

- Relief Web: COVID-19 Response Page
- OCHA: Global Humanitarian Overview 2021, Mid-Year Update (as of 21 June 2021)
- OCHA: Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19 Progress Report: Final Progress Report, 22 February 2021
- UN: Comprehensive Response to COVID-19 (September)
- OCHA: Asia Pacific COVID-19 - Humanitarian Data Portal
- OCHA: Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2018-2021 (2020 Year End Monitoring Report)
- OCHA: Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan - 2020 Quarter Three Dashboard (Jan - Sep 2020)
- OCHA: Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021 (December 2020)
- OCHA: Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2021 (January 2021)
- OCHA: Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Planned Response 2021
- UN: First mRNA vaccine tech transfer hub a 'great step forward'
- UN: Pandemic Challenges Compounded for Women, Deputy Secretary-General Tells Political Leaders Summit, Citing Violence, Economic Struggles
- UN: Alongside COVID lies an 'equally horrific pandemic' threatening women
- OSRSG Children and Armed Conflict: Vulnerability of Girls & Boys in Armed Conflict Exacerbated by COVID-19 Pandemic
- UN HRC: Vaccines against COVID-19 Must Be Considered as a Global Public Good, High Commissioner for Human Rights Tells Human Rights Council as it Opens its Forty-Seventh Regular Session
- UN HRC: UN expert strives to make right to health a reality for all

- UN HRC: Limiting Patent Protections for COVID-19 Related Medical Products Will Facilitate Access to Lower-cost Generic Versions of COVID-19 Vaccines
- UNODC: UNODC World Drug Report 2021
- WFP: UNHRD Humanitarian Response Depot: 2020 in review
- IOM, UNAIDS: People on the Move Living with HIV Must Have Access to COVID-19 Vaccines
- UN Women: Gender Equality Post COVID-19
- UNHCR: UNHCR warns of vaccine gap risk for world's stateless
- UNHCR: Regional Breakdown of Inclusion in Vaccination Campaigns
- UNICEF: Health sector contributions towards improving the civil registration of births and deaths in low-income countries
- UNESCO, WHO: UNESCO and WHO urge countries to make every school a health-promoting school
- UNHCR: The impact of COVID-19 on stateless populations
- UNHCR: UNHCR calls on states to remove barriers to access to COVID-19 vaccines for refugees
- US DOS HIU: Refugees' Countries of Asylum, World Refugee Day, June 20, 2021
- Govt. US: Biden-Harris Administration Announces Allocation Plan for 55 Million Doses to be Shared Globally
- Govt. Germany: Germany is contributing 2.2 billion euro to global efforts to fight the pandemic
- Qatar Red Crescent: Three months after he launched his global campaign, Qatar Red Crescent chief calls for the support of equal vaccination against Covid-19
- DI: 19 million more people in need of humanitarian aid as funding drops, world's most comprehensive study reveals
- MSF: MSF calls on BioNTech to immediately share COVID-19 vaccine technology and recipe
- MSF: Ahead of Gavi's board meeting, MSF urges critical look at COVAX shortcomings: Drastic change of model is needed for possible future pandemics
- CARE, UN Women: Gender and COVID-19 Vaccines
- ESCAP: The Covid-19 Pandemic and Violence Against Women in Asia and the Pacific
- SC: More than 5.7 million children under five on the brink of starvation across the world
- USAID: Strengthening Peace Building, Conflict Resolution, And Governance in Afghanistan
- SC: Afghanistan: Thousands of children losing access to education as schools are caught in crossfire in escalation of violence
- Cordaid: Responding to the displacement crisis in Kunduz
- HRW: Children Detained, Tortured for Insurgent Links
- UNAMA: Briefing to the United Nations Security Council by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ms. Deborah Lyons
- UNAMA: Helping protect children's rights in Southeastern Afghanistan
- World Bank: World Bank Helps Improve Higher Education in Afghanistan and Bangladesh
- World Bank: New Grant to Sustain Afghanistan's Reforms toward COVID-19 Recovery
- World Bank: Helping Afghanistan Fight the COVID-19 Pandemic
- UN SC: Swift Withdrawal of International Troops Sparks Widespread Fear in Afghanistan, Experts Tell Security Council, Sounding Alarm over Taliban Military Gains

- [UNFPA: As Afghanistan grapples with surge in COVID-19 cases, one midwife shares her strength](#)

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