

Monthly COVID-19 Bulletin

December 2021

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Epidemiological Overview

Data as of 31 December 2021

Descriptive analysis of epidemiological data for the Whole of Syria (31 December 2021)

A total of 180 424 confirmed cases of COVID-19 were reported in Syria between 22 March 2020 and 31 December 2021. Of which, 51.52% (n=92,957) were reported from north-west Syria (NWS), 27.87% (n=50,278) from areas of Syria controlled by the government (GoS), and the remaining 20.61% (n=37,189) from north-east Syria (NES). During the same period, a total of 6,721 related deaths were reported, of which 43.1% (2,897) from GoS, 34.5% (2 319) from NWS, and 22.4% (1,505) from NES. The overall Case Fatality Rate (CFR) in November was 3.7%.

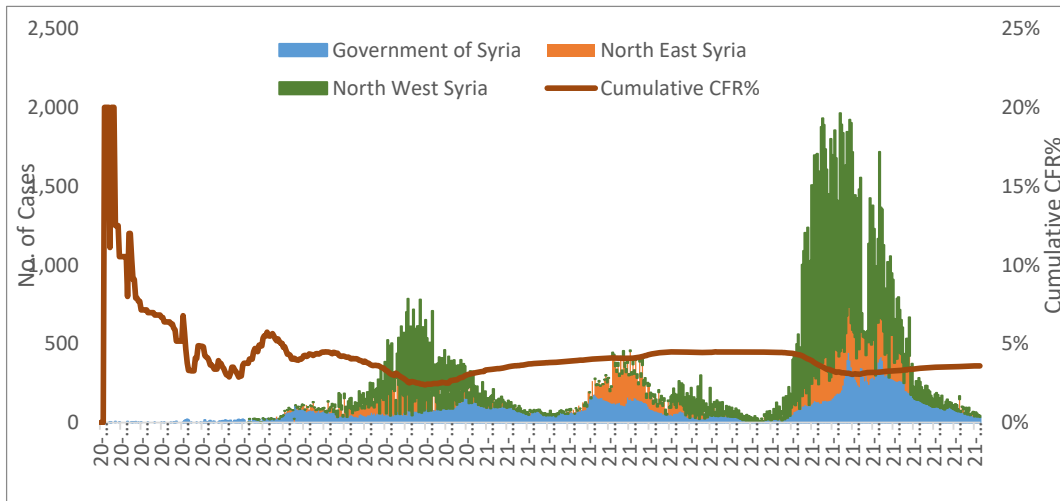
The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported across the Whole of Syria decreased by 69.29% in December (n=3,065) compared with previous month (n=9 982). The decrease was the sharpest in NWS, where cases declined by 80.87% in December (n=728) compared to November (n= 3,806). Cases reported in GoS also decreased by 55.77% in December (n=2,108) compared to November (n=4,766).

NES resumed lab testing for COVID-19 suspected cases after being suspended for one month between 10th November and 16th of December due to shortage of PCR kits. As a result of this interruption of the lab testing kits, the COVID-19 cases dropped by 83.76% in December (n= 229) compared to November (n=1,410).

The monthly incidence rate of COVID-19 in WoS decreased from 46.1 /100,000 in November to 14.2/100,000 in December. Case incidence rate in December was 9.7/100 000 in GoS, 3.4/100 000 in NWS, and 1.1/100,000 in NES. The highest monthly incidence rate was reported in September 221.4 per 100 000.

The declining trend in December was observed in all Syrian governorates except in Hama and Tartous where cases increased by 17.8% in Hama and 2.2% in Tartous; this increase could be attributed to enhancement of lab testing in Tartous and Hama during December 2021. The number of reported cases of COVID-19, and the percentage of the national total, across all 14 governorates of Syria during the month of December is as follows: Aleppo (662) 21.6%, Idleb (370) 12%, Tartous (331) 10.8%, Homs (315) 10.28%, Damascus (283) 9.23%, Hama (278) 9%, Lattakia (211) 6.88%, As-Sweida (190) 6.2%, Dar'a (96) 3.13%, Rural Damascus (77) 2.51%, Quneitra 65 (2.21%), Deir-ez-Zor 60 (1.96%), Deir-Ez-Zor (181) 1.81%, and Ar-Raqqa (22) 0.72%.

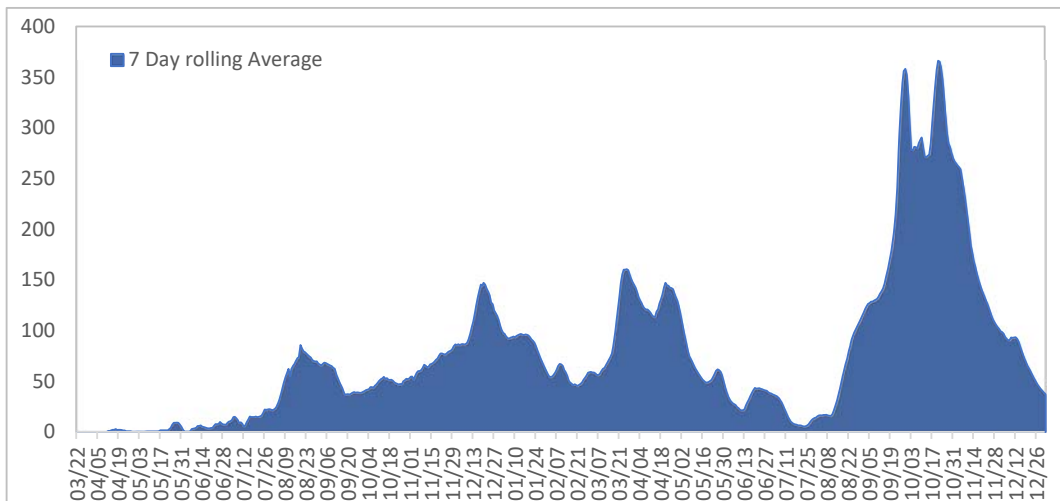
Figure 1. Cases of COVID-19 reported each week in areas controlled by the government (GoS), north-east Syria (NES) and north-west Syria (NWS) up to 31 December 2021



Descriptive analysis per region

Government of Syria

The highest monthly incidence rate reported for GoS since the start of the outbreak was in October 2021, when the rate was 42.5 new cases per 100 000 of the population. The 7-days moving average of daily new cases peaked at 366 on 21 October and has since declined to 39 in December, indicating a regression in the fourth wave of COVID-19 in GoS areas. The number of new cases of COVID-19 reported in December (n= 2,108) was down by 55.77% compared to November (n= 4,766).



Figure, 2 The 7-days rolling average of COVID-19 cases in GoS.

North-east Syria

The number of cases reported per month in NES peaked in September 2021. The 7-days moving average of daily new cases peaked at 303 on 21 September and has significantly declined in December, due to interruption of lab testing, the current 7-days moving average of new cases is 7 cases. The number of new COVID-19 cases in December (n= 229) was down 83.7% compared to November (n= 1,410).

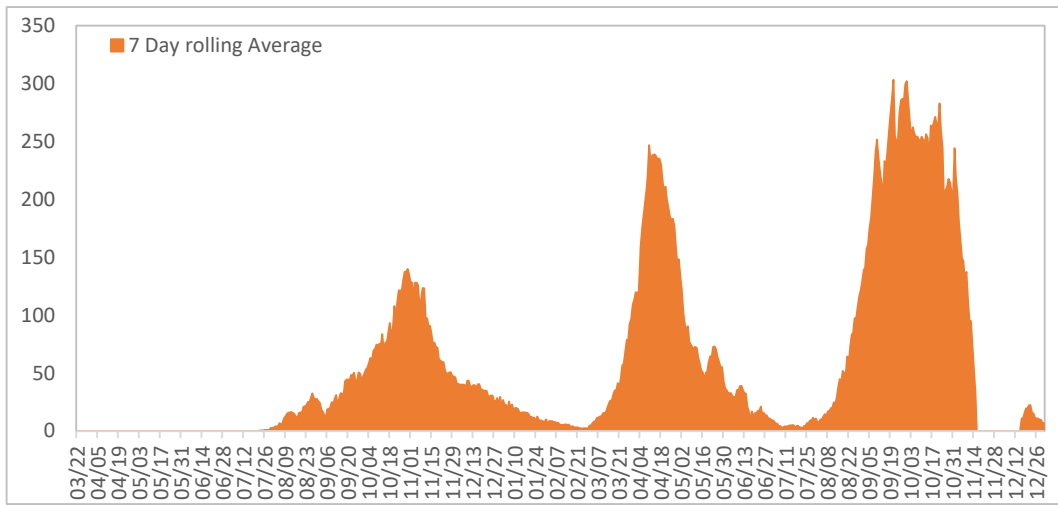


Figure 3 The 7-days rolling average of COVID-19 cases in NES.

North-west Syria

The number of cases reported per month in NWS also peaked in September 2021. The 7-days moving average of daily new cases peaked on 8 September at 1,278. The current 7-days moving average in NWS is 11. A remarkable decrease in monthly cases in December also indicates a regression of the fourth COVID-19 wave. The number of new COVID-19 cases in December (n= 728) was down 80.8% compared to November (n= 3,806).

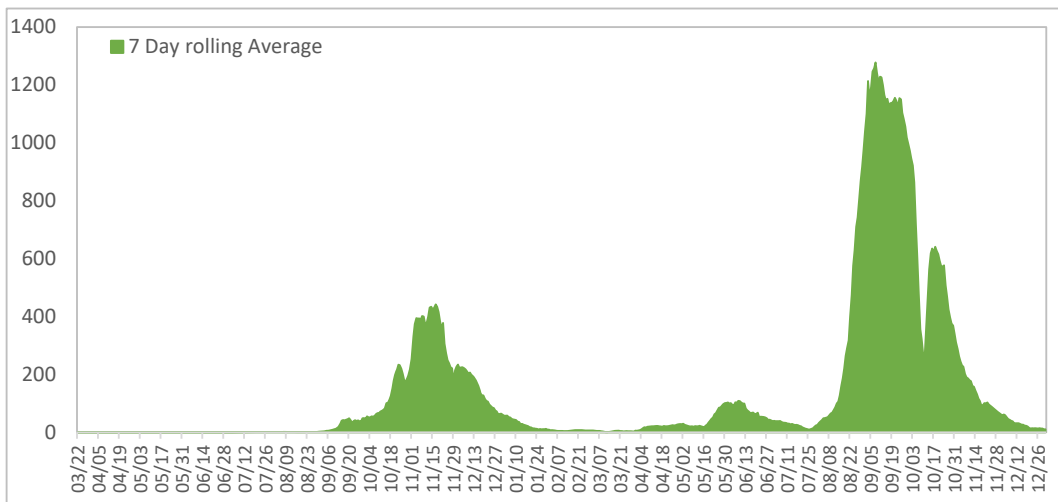


Figure 4 The 7-days rolling average of COVID-19 cases in NWS.

Deaths

In December, the number of newly reported deaths associated with COVID-19 (n=250) was down 65.22% compared to October 2021 (n= 719). The cumulative mortality rate has increased to 31 deaths per 100 000 cases, and the case fatality rate is 3.7%. The highest number of COVID-19 associated deaths reported in December were in GoS (n=148) where deaths accounted for 59.2% of the national total. A total of 75 deaths (30%) were reported in NWS, and 27 deaths (10.8%) were reported in in NES.

6,721
Total COVID-19 related deaths reported to date

29
30-day average number of deaths (November)

9
30-day average (December)

69%
Decrease in 30-day average since last month

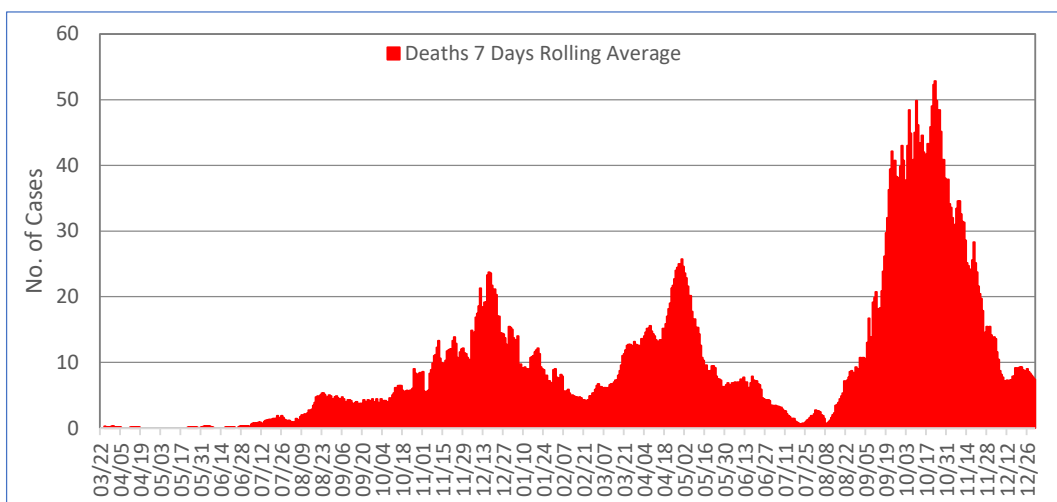


Table 1. Newly reported and cumulative cases of COVID-19 and associated deaths, by region, up to 31 Dec 2021

Area	New cases in December 2021(%)	Change in new cases last 31 days*	Cumulative cases (%)	New deaths in December	Change in new deaths in last 31 days *	Cumulative deaths (%)
Government of Syria	2 108 68.8%	-55.8%	50 278 27.9%	148	-19.1%	2 897 43.1%
North-east Syria	229 7.5%	-83.8%	37 189 20.6%	27	-77.7%	1 505 22.4%
North-west Syria	728 23.8%	-80.9%	92 957 51.5%	75	-81.9%	2 319 34.5%
Whole of Syria	3 065	-69.3%	180 424	250	-65.2%	6 721

* Percentage change in the number of newly confirmed cases and deaths during the past 30 days compared to the previous month

Figure 2. Total number of COVID-19 cases per 100 000 of the population reported in each governorate, as of 31 Dec 2021

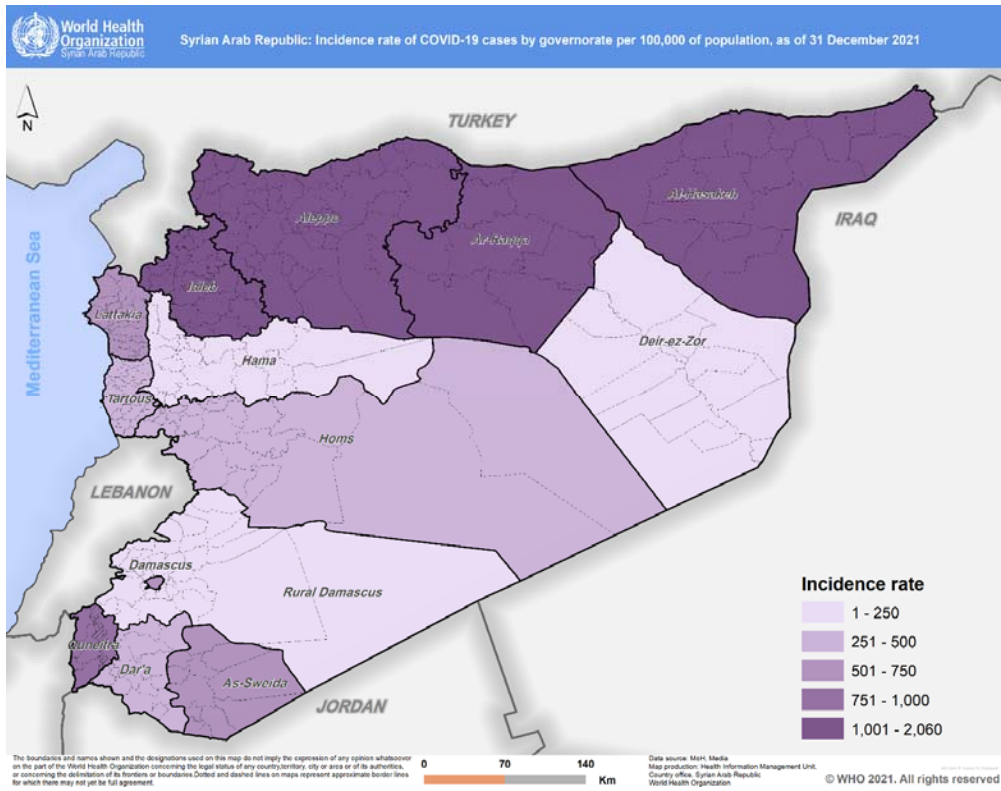
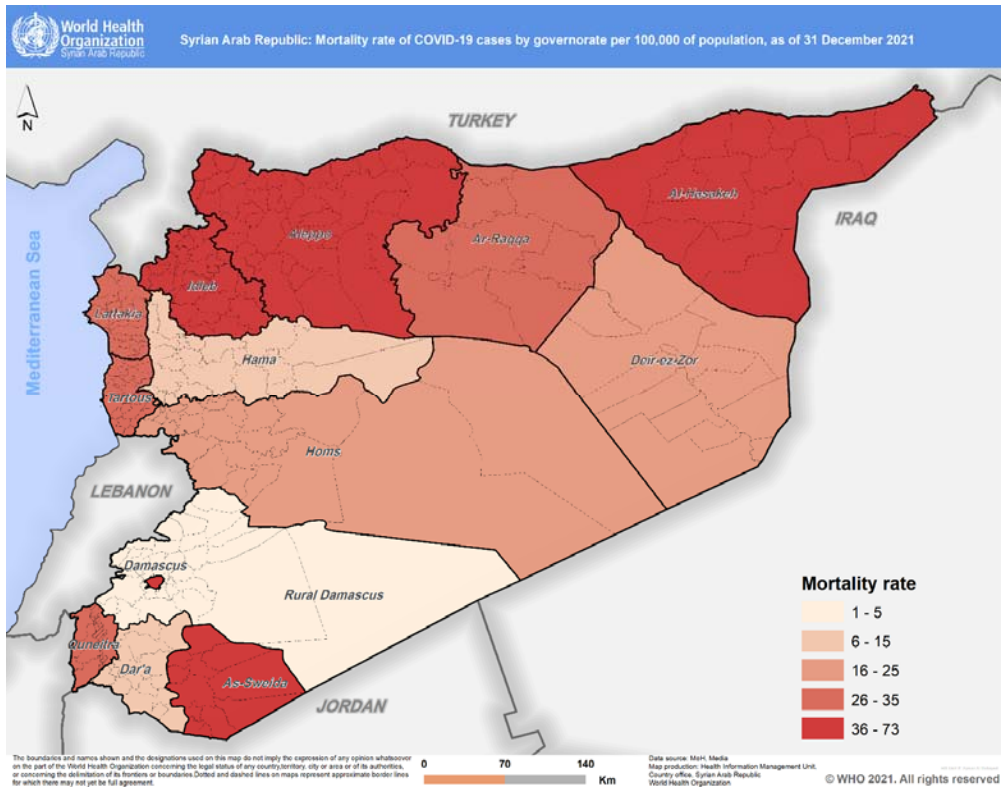


Figure 3. COVID-19 related deaths per 100 000 of the population reported in each governorate, as of 31 Dec 2021



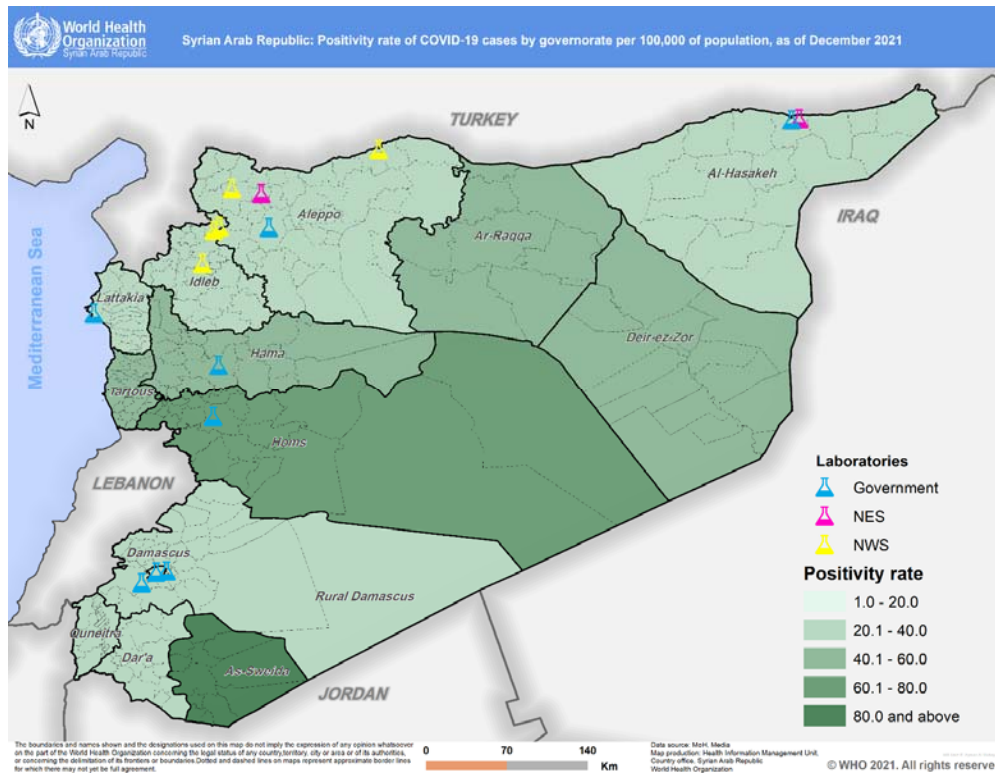
Testing

The percentage of samples testing positive for COVID-19 has decreased from 28.0% in November to 10.6% in December, reflecting an actual decrease in the number of cases, as the testing strategy has not changed.

The number of tests conducted in December 2021 was 28,888 down from 35,648 in November.

575,536 - Total number of tests conducted in WoS up to 31 December .

Figure 4. COVID-19 Laboratory Positivity Rate by governorate, as of 31 Dec 2021



28,888
Number of tests conducted in December 2021

10.6 %
Testing positivity rate in December 2021

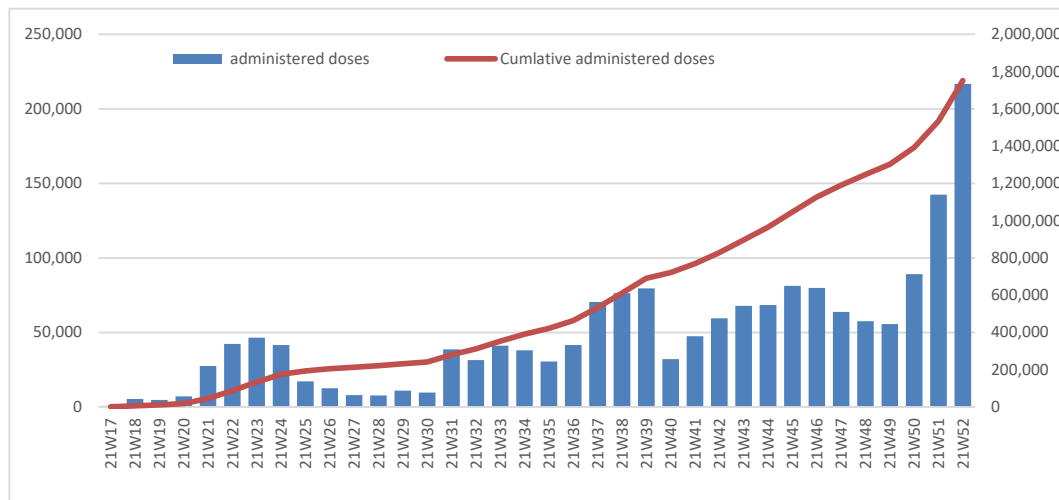
28%
Previous average positivity rate

62%
Decrease in average positivity rate since last month

Vaccinations

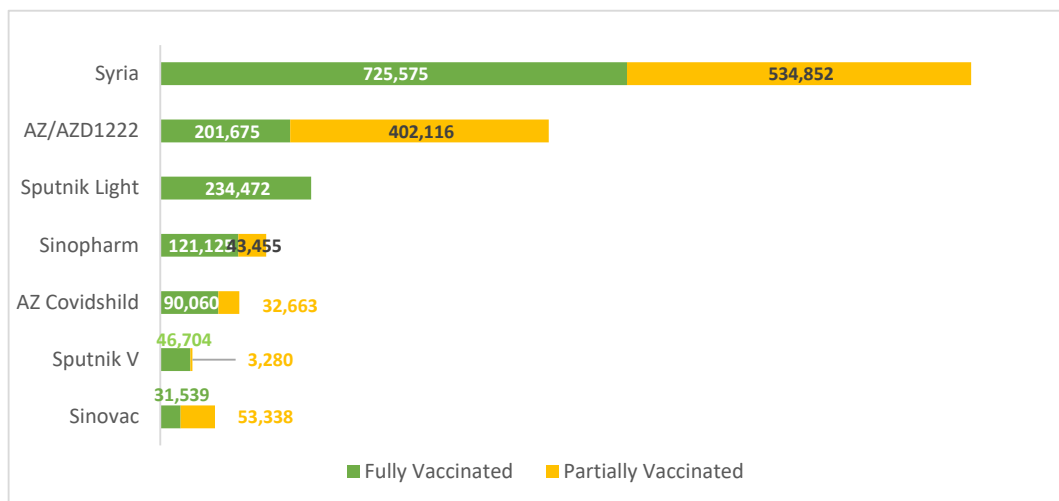
- Vaccination activities continue across Syria at both fixed health facilities and through mobile medical teams in rural areas.
- An additional 503,979 doses were administered by MoH and 1,743,300 doses were delivered to MoH warehouses during December 2021 as listed in below shipments:
 - On 1 December, 96 000 of AZ/AZD1222 delivered from through COVAX (donation from Switzerland).
 - On 1 December, 112 800 of AZ/AZD1222 delivered from through COVAX (donation from Greece)
 - On 1 December, 200 900 of AZ/AZD1222 delivered from through COVAX (donation from multiple countries)
 - On 3 December, 204 000 of AZ/AZD1222 delivered from COVAX (round 4).
 - On 16 December, 129,600 doses of AZ/AZD1222 delivered from COVAX (round 7).
 - On 31 December, 1 million doses of Sinopharm donated from China.
- The available vaccines are sufficient to cover 12% of total population.

- 5 538 500 doses of AZ in addition to 3.1 million J&J vaccine were allocated to Syria through COVAX expected to be delivered in Q1 2022.
- Vaccines in the pipeline will be sufficient to cover additional 39.5 % of the population.
- In Dec, the government imposed mandatory vaccination in many public sectors, to raise vaccination coverage rates and to control the infection. This was reflected in increasing the vaccinated population number from 75 K in average to more than 200K per week.



Vaccination coverage:

- 7.8% of the total population received at least one dose of the vaccine, and only 4.5% are fully vaccinated.
- A total of 1,751,530 doses of different vaccines were administered in GOS (a total number of vaccinated people 1,260,427)



Vaccination coverage per region:

Government of Syria

1,751,530	
Vaccines Administered	
1,260,427	725,575
People who received at least one dose	People who are fully vaccinated*
7.8 %	4.5%

Percentage of the population that has received at least one dose	Percentage of the population that has been fully vaccinated*
2.6%	1.5%
Percentage point increase from last month	Percentage point increase from last month

North-west Syria:

368,731	
Vaccines Administered	
246,258	122,473
People who received at least one dose	People who are fully vaccinated*
5.7%	2.9%
Percentage of the population that has received at least one dose	Percentage of the population that has been fully vaccinated*
1.2%	0.8%
Percentage point increase from last month	Percentage point increase from last month

Whole of Syria:

2,120,261	
Vaccines Administered	
1,506,685	848,048
People who received at least one dose	People who are fully vaccinated*
7.3%	4.1%
Percentage of the population that has received at least one dose	Percentage of the population that has been fully vaccinated*
2.3%	0.9%
Percentage increase from last month	Percentage increase from last month

WHO Syria operational updates by other pillars

Pillar One: Coordination

- A joint MoH and health sector technical consultation to discuss key achievements, challenges and plans related to COVID-19 response and preparedness took place on 9 December in Damascus with estimated 112,344,183 USD as immediate funding requirement by key operational organizations in Syria.
- WoS WHO 2022 Appeal, including COVID-19 priorities, was launched.
- An update (a snapshot) of overall health sector COVID-19 response, including WHO specific, for 2021 is being under the process.
- Technical consultations are in place to address the situation with further enhancement of support to COVID-19 laboratories and availability of consumables and tests.
- Prepared and disseminated weekly COVID-19 EPI updates for UNCT, HCT and health sector dissemination.
- Carried out Northeast Syria inter-hub call bringing together main health coordination partners in NES, with a focused discussion on COVID-19.
- Coordinated inter-agency participation with COVID-19 supplies for the cross-line convoy (Sarmada 2) in NWS. 13-tons of basic IPC supplies were delivered for the distribution of supplies through 4 PHCs and 3 hospitals in Idlib.
- Followed up on bi-lateral agreements of COVID-19 vaccine donations between Syria and Oman.
- Preparations are in place for a joint WHO/UNICEF convoy to Ras Al Ein and Tal Abiad for COVID-19 vaccination. Approvals are pending.
- Technical follow up in place with EMRO and UNICEF on the latest published joint report (UNICEF/MoH) "Community Engagement and Demand Generation Assessment for COVAX roll-out".
- WHO report on COVID-19 response (2020-2021) is under a final stage of preparation.
- Health sector strategy is developed for a possible funding opportunity under CERF.
- Technical updates provided to RC/HC office on Omicron variant.

Pillar Two: Risk communication and community engagement

WHO, UNICEF, other UN sister agencies, the Syrian Ministry of Health and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, held a technical meeting on 2 December aiming to generate vaccine demand and improve uptake among different target groups. During the meeting, partners mapped their RCCE activities on the ground to ensure increased coordination and set up the operational plan which would facilitate to scale up the COVID-19 vaccination during the next phase.

A series of meetings were held with local NGOs, governorate focal points and influencers to amplify messaging about COVID-19 vaccines and the importance of precautionary measures to generate vaccine demand among target groups.

WHO continued to communicate messages about COVID-19 through social media platforms to highlight the importance of getting vaccinated, adhering to public health and social measures, as well as the role of vaccines in combating Omicron, the new variant of concern.

Pillar Three: surveillance

Within the objective of strengthening community involvement in the surveillance of COVID-19; case detection, contact tracing, rapid testing, and raising awareness on COVID-19 precaution and safety measures by implementing, and to enhance surveillance systems by closing the gap between health facility and community reporting; WHO in coordination with MoH facilitated a training workshop for one of community initiative which is supporting MoH in the response for COVID-19. The training included reporting on EWARS reporting including COVID-19 case definition, through MoH /DoH reporting mechanism. In addition to training, the medical team volunteers were instructed on the use of antigen RDT, and provide antigen RDTs to the medical team.

WHO continues to support the operations of Rapid Response Teams through securing the transportation and communication of RRTs, in addition to covering the cost for transporting COVID-19 specimens from the governorates of Dar'a, Qunit, As-Swiedaera, and Deir Ez-Zor to COVID-19 laboratory in Damascus.

Pillar Four: Points of entry, international travel and transport

To strengthen country health emergency preparedness and implementation of international health regulations, a high-level workshop was conducted from 12 to 14 December. During the workshop all related ministries were involved in drafting public health emergency contingency plans for ground crossing seaports and airport. The coordination initiated and the mentioned plans will enhance alignment among national authorities and stakeholders at national and sub-national levels to ensure optimal public health emergency response at designated PoEs.

The establishment work of three MoH medical points is ongoing in the following ground crossing PoEs; Abu Kamal in Deir-ez-Zor, Judeidet Yabous in Rural Damascus, and Jousiya in Homs.

Pillar Five: Laboratories and diagnostics

WHO supported the training of two senior laboratory specialist on SARS-CoV-2 sequencing and molecular phylogenetic from 5 -9 December in Abu Dhabi. In order to establish national sequencing capacity, WHO has procured a full set of sequencing equipment devices and supplies and are under shipping process.

Rehabilitation process of Deir-Ez-Zor public health laboratory started in the begging of December and is estimated that it will be finalized by February.

Two training workshops were conducted as a continuous support from WHO to strengthen the testing, biosecurity, and biosafety capacities

Pillar Six: Infection prevention and control

Conducted three workshops on prevention of Antimicrobial Resistance and Infectious diseases surveillance at hospitals, targeted 50 trainees from DOH Aleppo and Lattakia.

Dispatched,1,481,728 IPC/PPE supplies under SW response: MOH Readiness and ambulance system department, MOH-Central in favor of Polio & COVID-19 , MOE school health, Akemah initiative , DAF NGO Lattakia, DOH Lattakia, DOH Tartous , DOSA Tartous, DOSA Latakia, 6 NGOs in Tartous and 12 NGOs in Lattikia namely (SSSD, Al-Batoul, Smart Women, We, Fadaa and Annes Saadeh NGOs in Tartous and GoPPA , SYC , Al-Ekha, Kebarona , Ayadina , DAF, Mosaic , Al-Twahoud , Al-Zahraa , CCA, Syrian Association for Children with Special Needs, Heart Giving NGOs in Lattakia) NWS

response (WFP WH in favor of Sarmada IA convoy, DOH Aleppo , Albaath Hospital -Homs University,) hub in favor of NWS convoy . Moreover, contingency stocks of IPC/PPE were delivered to hubs in Homs and Aleppo.

The distributed supplies list namely: (1,100,480 masks, 40,200 Respirators, 91,110 gown protective, 233,100 gloves examination , 1605 Goggles, 200 Cover shoes , 10 COVERALL size M / , 9800 bottles Antiseptic soap,500 ml bottle with pressor , 5180 bottles of Alcohol hand rub sanitizer 70%,1000 ml bottle , 23 bottles of Disinfectant for the exterior of buildings in 1L Bottle and 20 kits of Personal Protective Equipment Kit size L and M.

Pillar Seven: Case management, clinical operations and therapeutics:

To fill the huge shortage of oxygen supplements in public hospitals designated to treat covid 19 patients, WCO procured and delivered three oxygen generators to Al Basel Hospital in Tartous, Damascus Hospital and the Cardiac Surgery Hospital in Aleppo.

Over 33,300 treatments of life-saving medicines were delivered to health partners in Damascus, Hama, Homs and Al-Hassakeh. In addition to the delivery of over 2100 medical equipment including 44 Defibrillators with Monitors, 5 Physiologic Patient monitors, 52 Ventilators Adult/Pediatric and 2000 Ventilators' Patient Circuit -Single Use for Adults) to Aleppo, Damascus, , DEZ, Lattakia, Tartous, As-Sweida and Rural Damascus. These deliveries are part of enhancing the capacity of the public health facilities for timely and appropriate response for COVID-19 cases.

50 health workers from As-Sweida, and Damascus were trained on "Management of ICU patients " ,and " Hospital Major Incident Medical Management and Support". The targeted groups for those courses are health professionals (doctors, nurses, and anesthesia technicians) working in isolation centers and ICU and emergency departments.

Pillar Eight: Logistics and operations

WHO has provided approximately 91 tons of medical and lab supplies, kits, equipment, and haemodialysis sessions to 14 governorates as of December 31st. distributed to the Ministry of Health, governorates (DOH), MOHE-affiliated Health Facilities, non-governmental HF, NOGs, INGOs, and SARC.

One airlifting shipment sent to NES (routine and COVID-19 vaccines).

On the 9th of December 2021, 1 XL shipment including PPEs (Soap-sanitizer-masks and gloves) was delivered to NWS (Sarmada) with a total weight of roughly 13 tons and a total volume of around 50 CBM.

Pillar Nine: Maintaining essential health services and Systems

WHO supported HeRAMS continues to provide the trendline of essential health services in the 1790 Primary Health Centres and 114 hospitals where a clear indication of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the health services. Mitigation measures have been taken by some programmes such as EPI where WHO provided capacity building to EPI teams and continued to cover the operational cost of the vaccination programme.

With technical support from WCO, the Ministry of Health has finalized drafting of the national guideline on maintaining essential health service in the health centres. Printing and dissemination will be finalized after a technical consultation meeting with MoH programme directors planned in January 2022

Technical guidance and other resources

- [WHO Syria Site](#)
- [WHO technical guidance](#)
- [WHO COVID-19 Dashboard](#)
- [WHO Weekly Operational Updates on COVID-19](#)
- [WHO COVID-19 case definitions](#)
- [COVID-19 Supply Chain Inter-Agency Coordination Cell Weekly Situational Update](#)
- [Research and Development](#)
- [OpenWHO courses on COVID-19](#) in official UN languages and in [additional national languages](#)
- [WHO Academy COVID-19 mobile learning app](#)
- [The Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan](#) (SPRP) outlining the support the international community can provide to all countries to prepare and respond to the virus

Recommendations and advice for the public:

- [Protect yourself](#)
- [Questions and answers](#)
- [Travel advice](#)
- [EPI-WIN: tailored information for individuals, organizations and communities](#)

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