

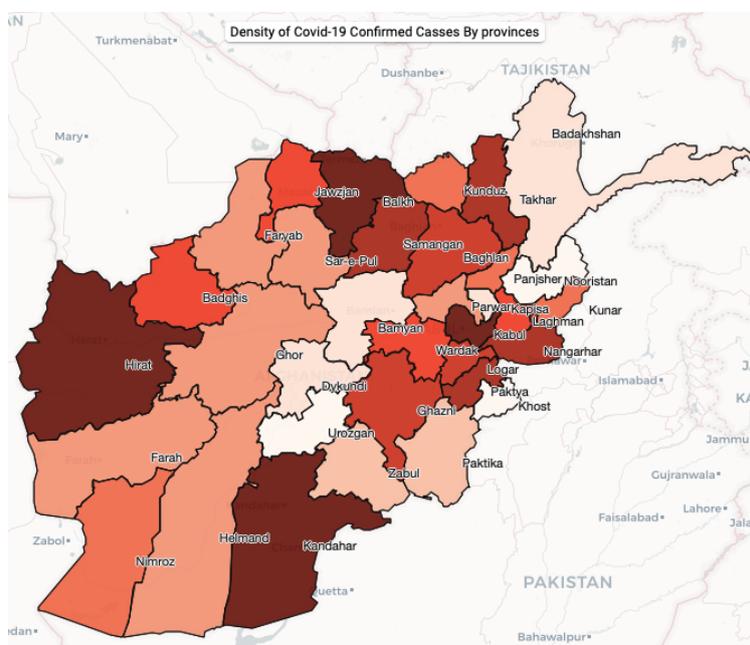
Key Messages: **UPDATED**

- **People confirmed to have COVID-19: 6,635** (as of 2pm, 17 May. Source: Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health - MoPH)
- **Deaths from COVID-19: 169**
- **Samples tested: 22,592**

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

Situation Overview: **UPDATED**

MoPH data shows that **6,635** people across all 34 provinces in Afghanistan are now confirmed to have COVID-19. **Some 778** people have recovered and **169** people have died. The majority of the deaths were people between ages of 40 and 69. Men between the ages of 40 and 69 represent more than half of all COVID-19-related deaths. 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, Kandahar and Balkh.



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+		Total
	Girls	Boys	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	
# people confirmed with COVID-19	180	215	465	1127	283	1160	256	775	187	510	108	282	41	76	14	43	6635
# deaths from COVID-19	2	2	1	1	2	13	4	26	4	21	8	31	2	11	3	13	169

Response Activities: **UPDATED**

According to UNICEF's latest [situation report](#), UNICEF's COVID-19 media campaign continues to be broadcast across 167 local channels in Afghanistan. This campaign is expected to reach more than 6 million people overall with key risk communication messages. In order to strengthen and build community resilience to the threat of COVID-19, as well as other complex humanitarian crisis in the country, UNICEF provided 10,520 people affected by conflict and natural hazards in Samangan, Jawzjan, Balkh, Laghman, Nuristan, Takhar and Kunduz with emergency family hygiene kits between 7 and 13 May. UNICEF continues to support health services, including through mobile health teams, to provide

continued delivery of services for children and women. Between 7-13 May, a total 11,935 children and women benefited from basic health and nutrition services.

For a detailed update of all Cluster response activities in Afghanistan please see the latest [operational Situation Report](#).

UN Secretary-General António Guterres on the launch of the Policy Brief on COVID-19 and Mental Health

Mental health is at the core of our humanity. It enables us to lead rich and fulfilling lives and to participate in our communities. But the COVID-19 virus is not only attacking our physical health; it is also increasing psychological suffering.

Grief at the loss of loved ones. Shock at the loss of jobs. Isolation and restrictions on movement. Difficult family dynamics. Uncertainty and fear for the future.

Mental health problems, including depression and anxiety, are some of the greatest causes of misery in our world.

Throughout my life, and in my own family, I have been close to doctors and psychiatrists treating these conditions. As prime minister of my country, Portugal, and as High Commissioner for Refugees, I became acutely aware of the suffering they cause. This suffering is often exacerbated by stigma and discrimination, which is absolutely unacceptable.

After decades of neglect and underinvestment in mental health services, the COVID-19 pandemic is now hitting families and communities with additional mental stress. Those most at risk are frontline healthcare workers, older people, adolescents and young people, those with pre-existing mental health conditions and those caught up in conflict and crisis. We must help them and stand by them.

Even when the pandemic is brought under control, grief, anxiety and depression will continue to affect people and communities. This is the background to the [policy brief on COVID-19 and mental health](#) that we are launching today.

Mental health services are an essential part of all government responses to COVID-19. They must be expanded and fully funded. Policies must support and care for those affected by mental health conditions, and protect their human rights and dignity. Lockdowns and quarantines must not discriminate against those with poor mental health. As we recover from the pandemic, we must shift more mental health services to the community, and make sure mental health is included in universal health coverage.

The United Nations is strongly committed to creating a world in which everyone, everywhere, has someone to turn to for psychological support. I urge governments, civil society, health authorities and others to come together urgently to address the mental health dimension of this pandemic. And I call on governments in particular to announce ambitious commitments on mental health at the upcoming World Health Assembly.

- **António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations**

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.

Afghanistan's frontier with Pakistan at Spin Boldak and at Torkham remains mainly closed due to COVID-19-related restrictions, however on 1 May, the Government of Pakistan announced that both crossing points will allow pedestrian movement of stranded Afghans and Pakistanis once a week (Saturday) to their respective countries. On 17 May, 13,550 citizens of Afghanistan returned from Pakistan through the Torkham border and 16,710 through the Spin Boldak border crossing. According to IOM, the high rate of return on Saturday was linked to upcoming holidays, as many Afghans go back to their home towns at the end of Ramadan to celebrate Eid with their families. The process was reportedly orderly and health screening procedures were followed.

Pakistan continues to facilitate the movement of cargo trucks and containers into Afghanistan. On 15 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 will now be allowed to pass per day. 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.

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 2 May that it was extending the **nationwide lockdown** until 24 May in a bid to contain the spread of the virus. However, a number of provinces began easing lockdowns with the arrival of Ramadan. Humanitarian personnel, who have received permission to continue their duties amid the movement restrictions, are encouraged to monitor the situation closely. 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 recently announced that it will facilitate exceptional domestic flight operations during the suspension period to three locations: Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar and Hirat. The flights began operation on 7 May with one flight to Mazar-e-Sharif. The next roundtrip flights are scheduled to depart from Kabul to Mazar-e-Sharif on 20 and 22 May, Kandahar on 20 and 22 May, and to Hirat on 27, 28, 29 and 30 May. Additionally, two exceptional flights operated by Kam Air will carry stranded nationals of Afghanistan from Ankara and Islamabad respectively to Kabul on May 22.

On 17 May, [Qatar Airways](#) announced it is planning two special Doha-Kabul flights. Flights into Doha will connect passengers to further destinations through the Qatar Airways network. These two round-trip charters will be departing from Doha to Kabul and back to Doha on the 23rd and on 30th of May, respectively.

The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) airbridge service connecting Kabul and Doha is operating regularly on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. Flights into Doha accommodate transiting passengers only. The next flight is planned for Tuesday, 19 May. This service is planned to continue until regular commercial international flights resume. UNHAS will not operate domestic flights or flights to Doha during the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr holidays on 24th and 25th May. However, UNHAS will remain on operational standby for any medical or security situations.

More Information – Links: **UPDATED**

WHO

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

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 \(now available in English, Dari and Pashto\)](#)
- [A holistic and coherent response to COVID-19 across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#)

UN and others

- [UN: Global Humanitarian Response Plan: COVID-19 \(April – December 2020\) – GHRP May Update](#)
- [ReliefWeb: COVID-19 Response Page](#)
- [UN Women: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women's Burden of Care and Unpaid Domestic Labor \(Afghanistan\)](#)
- [UN Women: Violence against women and girls & COVID-19](#)
- [UNHCR: The role of the Global Compact on Refugees in the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

- [UNHCR: COVID-19 preparedness and response plan](#)
- [Amnesty: Responses to COVID-19 pandemic must not ignore the climate crisis](#)
- [Afghanistan GBV Subcluster: Bi-Quarterly Newsletter](#)
- [IFRC: COVID-19 and contact tracing](#)
- [UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia: COVID-19 Situation Report](#)
- [UNICEF: GBV Service provision during COVID-19](#)
- [UNICEF: Humanitarian Action for Children](#)
- [UNICEF: COVID-19 and Young Girls Vulnerability to Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in Afghanistan](#)
- [World Bank: How Low-Income Countries Can Tailor Their COVID-19 Response](#)
- [IOM: COVID-19 Disease Response | Situation Report](#)
- [World Vision: COVID-19 & Risks to Children's Health and Nutrition](#)
- [SOS: International Global Humanitarian Appeal in response to COVID-19](#)
- [GPEI: Polio eradication programme continuity – implementation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [UNSDG: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health](#)
- [BMJ: Gendered implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for policies and programmes in humanitarian settings](#)
- [UNDGC: COVID-19 – UN counters pandemic-related hate and xenophobia](#)

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