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# CONFLICT SNAPSHOT

# Palestine

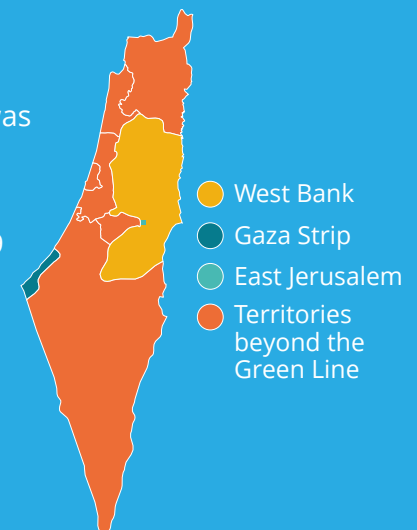
May 2021

## Introduction

For almost 71 years, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict has divided Palestinians living in different areas under different laws, social structures, and access to services. Within the historical Palestinian borders, Palestinians are divided across three regions: West Bank and Gaza Strip, mainly controlled by the Palestinian government and by Israeli military and civilian forces, and East Jerusalem and Territories beyond the Green Line, which fall under Israeli control. These areas are further fragmented politically; certain areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are divided between Fatah and Hamas. There is also geographical fragmentation, which has put many residents of East Jerusalem governorate and other areas outside the segregation wall and within the West Bank limitations (Area C), making them areas which lack security control as neither the Israelis or Palestinians have full control or accountability over these areas.

## Data collection and analysis

Data collection for the second conflict snapshot report for Palestine was conducted between 24 January and 1 February 2021. This report was prepared by an independent consultant and the Search for Common Ground (Search) Palestine team, with support from Search's COVID-19 Response Programming Team and Institutional Learning Team. For more information on the data collection methodology and tools used by Search for Common Ground for this research, click [here](#). This report is part of a series of regular COVID-19 conflict snapshots aimed at providing quick and actionable answers to a set of specific questions. The previous report for Yemen can be found [here](#).



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## Update: COVID-19 Measures and Impact on Conflict

As of mid-February 2021, there have been a total of 189,268 COVID-19 cases in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip combined, of which 176,559 have recovered, and 2,128 have died. In general there has been an increase in the number of infections, with **cases tripling over a 5-month period**.<sup>1</sup> According to a study conducted by the Palestinian Ministry of Health, more than 2 million Palestinians may have already been infected and recovered from the virus.<sup>2</sup> Many Palestinians chose not to get tested for COVID-19 given associated **stigma for those perceived as having the virus**, with some communities shunning businesses whose owners tested positive. Additionally, many Palestinians avoid testing due to protocols that require a two-week suspension of work permits in Israel of infected workers and their families.

Throughout the pandemic, there have been a series of lockdowns and governmental restrictions across all areas. Recently, Israel has gradually eased lockdown measures in Jerusalem and Territories beyond the Green Line, after launching the National Vaccination Campaign. As of February, more than 5 million residents have been vaccinated.<sup>3</sup> The Palestinian government has also started receiving vaccinations, but at a slower rate.

As a COVID-19 response measure, the Palestinian Authority stopped all security coordination with Israel, which meant that the majority of permit holders were no longer able to travel between the different regions. With a major increase in COVID-19 cases after October, both the Palestinian and Israeli government implemented restrictive procedures throughout December and January. In Jerusalem and Territories beyond the Green Line, a large-scale lockdown shut down all non-essential businesses, restricted movement beyond a 1-3 km radius from residences, and banned travel outside of the country. In the West Bank, curfew and weekend closures have been sustained, with limited travel in and outside of the country. Restrictions in Gaza Strip have been reduced since the beginning of January, with the reopening of mosques on weekdays and fewer travel restrictions in and outside of the country; however, weekend closures are still applicable.<sup>4</sup> During the reporting period (Nov 20 – Jan 21), the following measures were applied:

	West Bank and Gaza	East Jerusalem and Territories beyond the Green Line
	Schools open	Schools closed
	Teleworking not mandatory	Teleworking mandatory
	Borders partially open	Borders/airports open to citizens/residents only
	All services are open	Only essential services are open
	Mask wearing not mandatory	Mask wearing mandatory

Geographical, political, and governmental fragmentation and differences between areas have caused the emergence of multiple social dynamics and cultures. For example, in Territories beyond the Green Line, Palestinians have more access to various services provided by the government. On the other hand, Israeli human rights violations are more prevalent in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip. Furthermore, with the prolonged lockdowns and other pandemic-related restrictions, household tensions have increased over the past year, with an uptick in the number of reported instances of household violence in Palestine.<sup>5</sup> Home demolitions in Jerusalem and other areas recorded their highest rate in four years,<sup>6</sup> despite the danger of keeping people homeless during the pandemic. Furthermore, as Israel started vaccinating its citizens, it denied vaccines to Palestinian political prisoners under their care.

## COVID-19's Impact on Social Cohesion & Trust

### Trust in COVID-19 related information decreased while information sharing increased

On average, the top trusted sources to get information about COVID-19 among respondents are:



Facebook



TV



friends and family

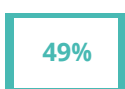
Facebook and TV are the top cited sources of information on COVID-19 in all areas but at varying levels:



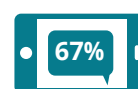
Territories beyond the Green Line



East Jerusalem



West Bank



Gaza



1. Ministry of Health, [Covid-19 data Portal](#), accessed in March 2021.

2. Ministry of Health, "A study in Arabic: Immunity against COVID-19 in Palestine has reached 40 percent", February 2021.

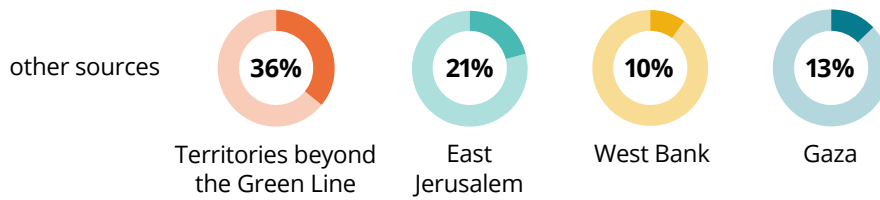
3. The Times of Israel, "Israel crosses milestone of 5 million fully vaccinated against COVID-19", April 2021.

4. OCHA, "COVID-19 Emergency Situation Report", March 2021.

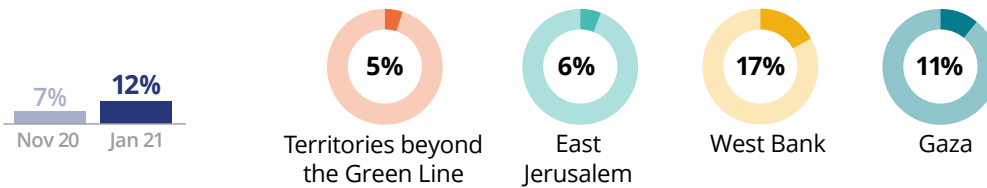
5. Razan Wazwaz, Oxfam blog, "On the Path to End Violence Against Women: Supporting civil society to combat GBV in the Occupied Palestinian Territory", December 2020.

6. Human Right Watch, "World Report: Israel and Palestine events in 2020", 2021.

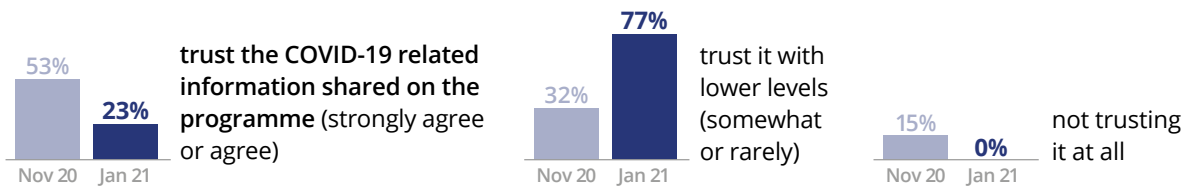
Importantly, people from Territories Beyond the Green Line and East Jerusalem obtain trusted information more frequently from “other” sources such as the Ministry of Health website or health workers, indicating that those respondents look for more official or expert sources of information. The Israeli government has an efficient national communication campaign on COVID-19, giving all residents daily updates on the situation. On the other hand, the Palestinian government provides only weekly updates on the government’s response.



Only 12% listen to our media programme<sup>7</sup>



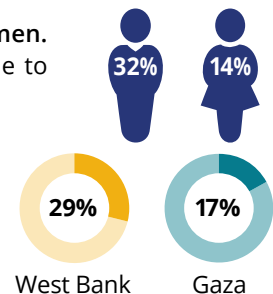
Of those who listen to our program:



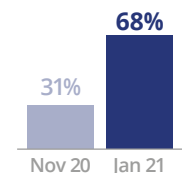
Compared to our first snapshot report, trust levels have noticeably shifted. The programme might lack social credibility given its limited visibility and socialisation across various social media platforms.

**Men trust information disseminated by the radio programme more than women.** Men are often more exposed to various news sources, and therefore may be able to verify different information received.

Trust levels in information disseminated by the radio programme vary at the regional level. In the West Bank, respondents trust (mostly, very much) it more compared to the Gaza Strip. Respondents located in East Jerusalem and Territories beyond the Green Line trust information provided through our programme less and prefer to follow the official channels, as explained above.<sup>8</sup>



**The majority of respondents share information about COVID-19 obtained from trusted media outlets with friends and family.**<sup>9</sup> Media coverage on COVID-19 has generally decreased along with limited official information, while cases have increased, possibly contributing to higher levels of information sharing among respondents.

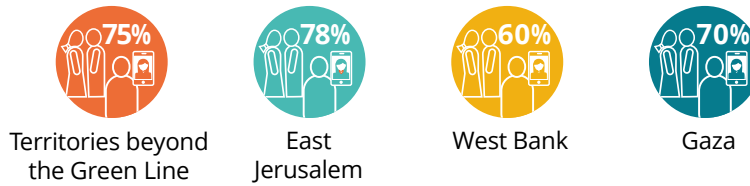


**More women share information, compared to men.** Despite lower levels of trust in COVID-19 related information shared by the media, women are sharing pandemic-related information more than men. Social structures in Palestine might explain this, as women tend to have smaller circles of friends and family with whom they engage more regularly (compared to men), giving them more opportunities to share information and communicate relevant news.



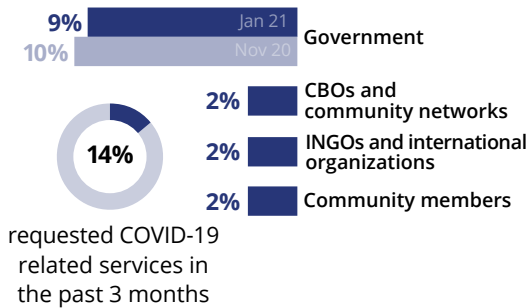
7. Search produces a radio programme “Community Cohesion in the Time of Corona”, aired on [Nisaa FM](#).  
 8. Considering the very low percentage of people listening to our media programme in East Jerusalem and Territories beyond the Green Line, statistically it is not significant to look at the trust level there (High level of trust in those regions was 0% and 20%, respectively).  
 9. We cannot entirely compare these figures, as in November 2020 the question was asked about sharing information heard on our Nisaa FM specifically, not trusted media channels in general.

Respondents from the West Bank share information less with friends and family than Gaza, Territories beyond the Green Line and East Jerusalem.



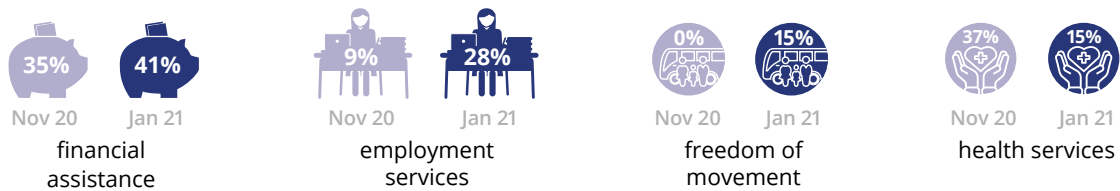
The significant difference in sharing information may be relative to the number of trusted sources noted by respondents from each region. For instance, the majority of those from the West Bank use only Facebook and TV stations, so they may be exposed to the same type of information, finding it less noteworthy to share. On the other hand, the exposure to a variety of information sources in other regions, may increase information credibility and contribute to the respondent's willingness to share with those around them.

### Trust in the government continues to decrease while pandemic-related needs rise



Despite increasing needs and worrisome living conditions in Palestine, there was a slight decrease in governmental services requests between rounds. The government remains the top-requested service provider. The prolonged COVID-19 lockdown may have limited access to many governmental units for a period of time. In comparison, requests from non-governmental service providers were even lower. It is worth noting that Palestine has the lowest rate of service requests, including requests from government requested COVID-19 services among our six research countries.<sup>10</sup>

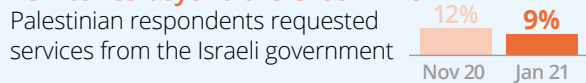
Between the first and second report, there were notable shifts in the types of services requested from the different governments; there was a general increase in those seeking financial assistance, employment services and freedom of movement, but a decrease in those seeking health services.



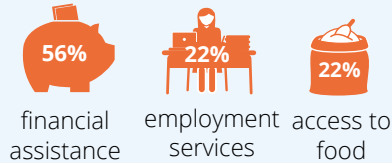
These trends might indicate rising needs brought on by the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. This is confirmed by our finding that 56% of respondents (or a member of their household) have fully or partially lost the main source of income during the pandemic.



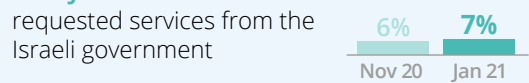
#### Territories beyond the Green Line



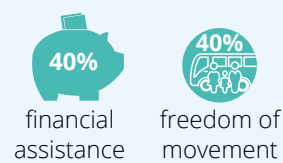
The top requested services are:



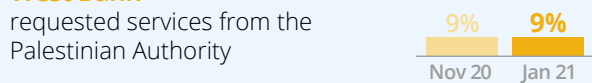
#### East Jerusalem



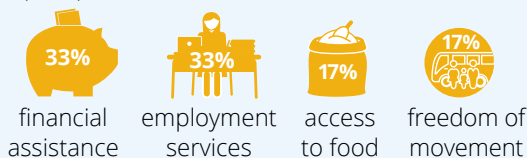
The top requested services are:



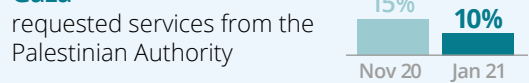
#### West Bank



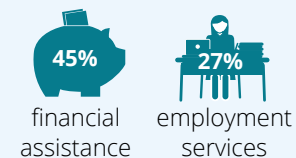
The top requested services are:



#### Gaza

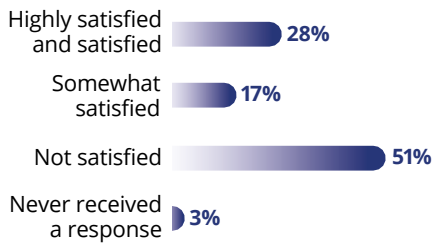


The top requested services are:



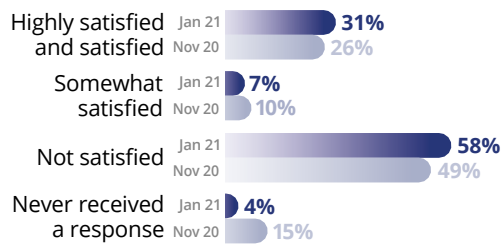
10. The other countries being Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Yemen. All country reports are available on our webpage <https://www.sfcg.org/working-together-against-corona/>.

**Satisfaction levels for service provision by all providers combined:**



The differences in satisfaction levels may be relative to the type of service received and age groups.

**Out of those who requested services from government:<sup>11</sup>**

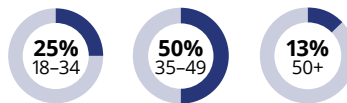


The slight increase in satisfaction levels is driven by an increase in satisfaction in Territories beyond the Green Line, where some services are more difficult to provide due to the high demand and budgetary and administrative challenges.

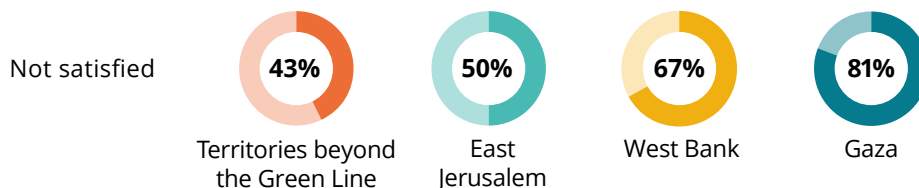
Overall, more women are satisfied (satisfied or highly satisfied), compared to men. More men (11%) did not receive a response to their requests compared to women, which might be a reason for lower satisfaction among men.



Adults have the highest satisfaction levels

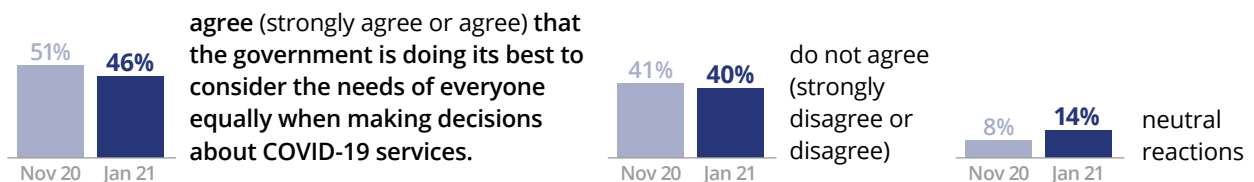


Respondents from the West Bank and Gaza Strip were the least satisfied with the requested governmental service. Moreover, none of the respondents from the West Bank and Gaza Strip are highly satisfied with governmental service provision. Low levels of satisfaction might be because these regions are governed by the Palestinian government, which has less capacity and resources to respond to needs.

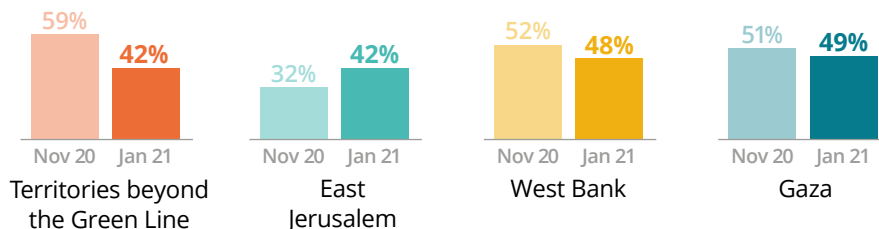


The governmental response to different service requests was uneven, which might have affected satisfaction levels. For example, the majority of service requests were related to employment and financial assistance, straining the governments' ability and capacity to adequately manage these requests.

The level of trust in the government as well as other actors working on COVID-19 response, has generally decreased since our first report. This may be related to the general frustration due to lockdowns and economic difficulties. Overall, trust in the different governmental entities has decreased.

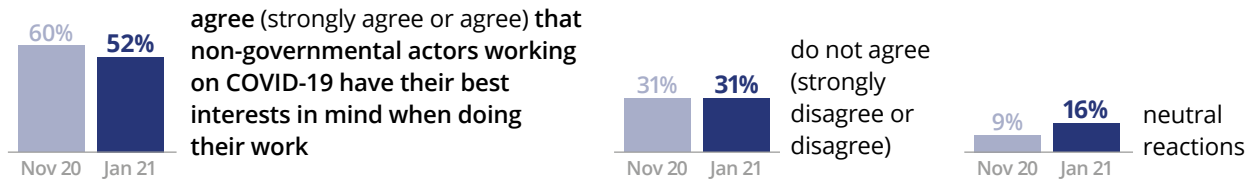


There have been notable shifts among the regions, with trust in the government (highly agree, agree) going down in all regions, except East Jerusalem:



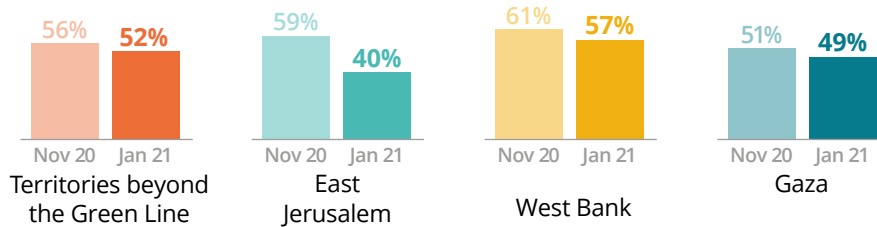
This increase in East Jerusalem could be related to increased pandemic response measures such as lockdowns and movement restrictions, signaling that the government is prioritising the health and wellbeing of citizens. However, as other needs rise, trust levels may decrease.

11. Satisfaction levels with services provided by the second service provider were not further analysed in this report, in contrast with other country reports, as a mere 2% of respondents sought COVID-19 related services from each of the non-governmental service providers, which is a statistically un-representative percentage.



The decrease in trust could be due to the limited capacity of many institutes and organisations to provide continuous and sustainable support. Additionally, many organisations rely on the government for decisions or instructions, further limiting their capacities and responsiveness.

The West Bank recorded the highest level of trust in non-governmental actors.



### Only one Palestinian out of four interacted regularly with someone from another region in the last 3 months

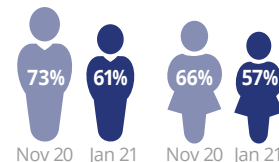
There has been a general decrease in the levels of valuing collaboration and actual interaction between individuals from different regions. These shifts may be due to increased pandemic related movement restrictions between regions. Interaction between regions is largely based on economic interaction, except for Gaza, where the political context severely affects the ability of people to interact between regions.



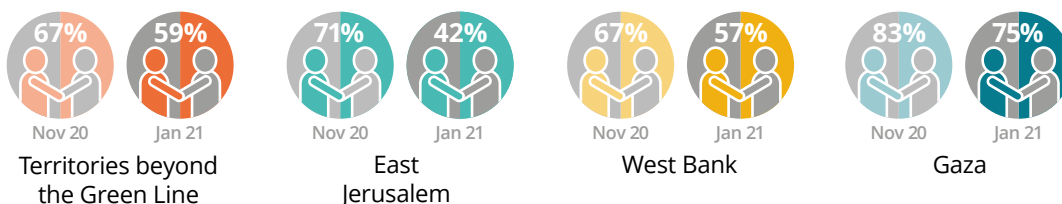
This decrease might be attributed to increased movement restrictions and closures, which reduced trade between regions, thereby lowering the financial incentive to collaborate. Additionally, those who had previously valued community collaboration to respond to the crisis, may have either been unsuccessful in doing so because of the increased movement restrictions or found that the interaction was unsustainable and therefore not worth pursuing.



More men value collaboration than women, but there has been a drop for both groups.

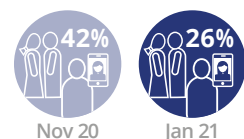


Gaza reported the highest level of valuing collaboration compared to the other regions:



This could be directly related to the fact that the Gaza Strip is under Israeli siege and has less access to outside communities and support networks, which means that they would benefit the most from collaboration. The largest decrease in the level of valuing collaboration with other regions was in East Jerusalem, which faced much stricter movement restrictions from both the Palestinian and Israeli authorities during the past reporting period.

Only 26% of the respondents report that they interacted<sup>12</sup> with individuals from other regions, either remotely or in-person, in the past three months. This is a sharp decline and very different from the other countries where we conduct this research, where interactions have gone up these past months. The impact of increase in COVID-19 cases and the closures and movement restrictions over the last 3 months is seen across all regions.



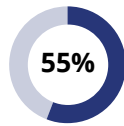
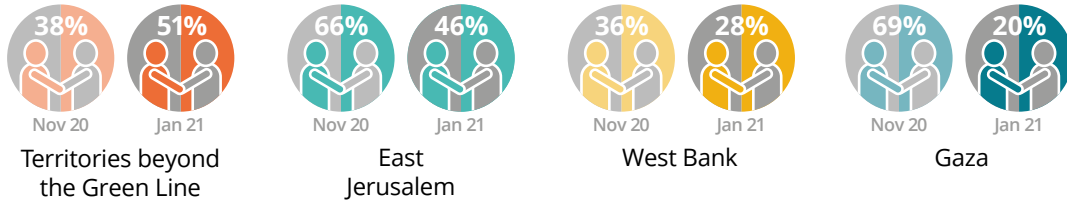
12. The question was asked on a daily, weekly, monthly, or on a quarterly basis.



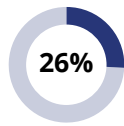
Men interact much more frequently with individuals from other regions compared to women.



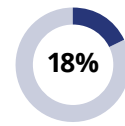
The highest level of interaction was reported in territories beyond the Green Line, and the lowest level was reported in Gaza.



agree or strongly agree that they feel safe interacting with people from other regions

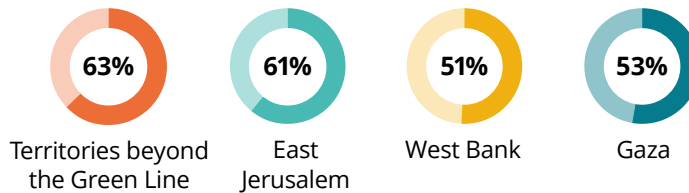


disagree or strongly disagree



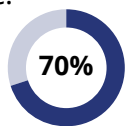
neutral

There are notable differences between regions. Overall, respondents in Territories beyond the Green Line report the highest level of feeling safe when interacting with people from other regions:

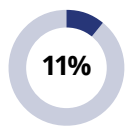


In general, there is a correlation between actual interaction and feelings of safety – the higher the feeling of safety, the more interactions.

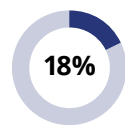
Respondents also generally feel safe interacting with someone from the other sex inside their household or private sphere:



agree and strongly agree that they feel safe during this kind of interaction



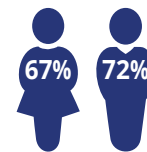
disagree (disagree or strongly disagree)



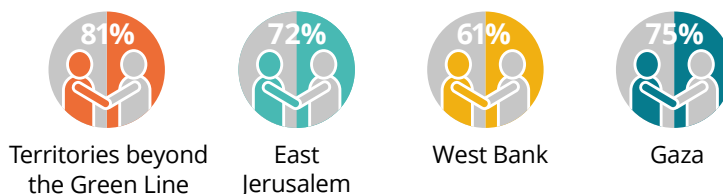
neutral

However, these trends do not seem to correlate with the general uptick in domestic violence seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, nationally and internationally.<sup>13</sup> As such, self-censorship or other factors may be influencing the way respondents report feelings of safety in the private sphere with the opposite sex.

Overall, 67% of women and 72% of men feel safe in this kind of interaction.



The West Bank recorded the lowest levels of safety, compared to the other regions:



Socio-cultural dynamics in Territories beyond the Green Line, where interaction between sexes is more frequent and acceptable, might contribute to greater feelings of safety, both when interacting with someone from the other sex as well as from a different region. Additionally, Territories beyond the Green Line have greater security and protective services compared to communities in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem.

## Next Steps For COVID-19 Response Efforts

### **Response providers should integrate a multi-pronged communication strategy to ensure COVID-19 related information reaches all citizens via outlets they trust most**

- Our data shows that most respondents in Palestine rely on Facebook and TV to find information about COVID-19. Those working on COVID-19 information dissemination should ensure they are tapping into these channels. Additionally, family and friends remain another important source of information, especially for women, creating a need to ensure information is disseminated across these informal channels. Integrating women-led communication strategies and training women leaders and influencers on communication techniques should be considered within wider communication initiatives.
- Radio outlets remain a critical resource for many citizens, particularly for those who lack access to online platforms and TV. Radio outlets could strengthen their social media presence in low-cost ways, by establishing a Facebook presence to generate more awareness about existing radio programming and create new entry points for engagement with listeners. Additionally, radio stations can be supported to develop content for online platforms (video clips, pictures, etc.). Content and messages could use references from TV stations (broadcaster, journalists), to increase information credibility.

### **Effective interventions are urgently needed to improve the deteriorating social cohesion**

- Our data shows a significant decline in horizontal cohesion, including the way respondents value collaboration to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and an even steeper decline in actual interaction across regions. While much of this might be explained by the prevailing socio-political and security context and increased pandemic-related restrictions, the trends remain worrisome. As vertical cohesion also decreased, these reductions might signal trigger points for violence, tensions, and conflicts across communities. Response providers should monitor these early warning signs and adopt response strategies that promote social cohesion. For instance, media outlets can provide space for citizens from different areas to connect, voice their needs, and identify areas for collaboration during lockdown. Participatory, citizen-led response strategies can strengthen vertical cohesion between citizens and authorities, e.g. religious and women leaders can be integrated into vaccination awareness raising efforts or lead dialogue sessions at vaccination sites.

### **As needs increase, response providers should work to strengthen both governmental and non-governmental service provision**

- Despite rising needs, the number of service requests has slightly decreased between our first and second report, while dissatisfaction level increased. As case numbers continue to rise and the secondary effects of the pandemic become more acute, citizens require access to trusted services that are responsive to their needs. Moreover, response providers should communicate existing capacities and resources to manage expectations and lower frustrations. Additionally, to improve trust in the pandemic response, providers should include citizens and community leaders more closely to ensure all needs are being considered and to identify community-based solutions to emerging challenges.