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GROUND

# CONFLICT SCAN

# Palestine

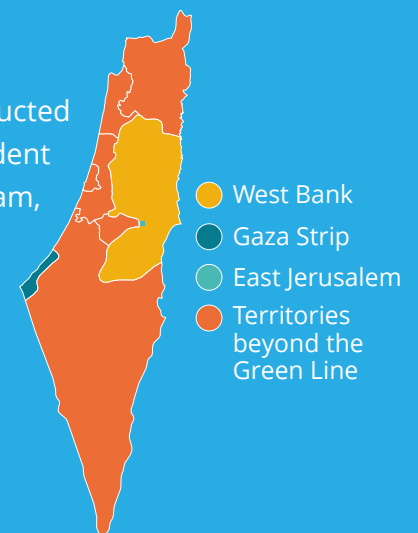
December 2021

## Introduction

During the recent round of data collection, political instability and insecurity played a major role in the trends in our findings from the different regions. Early in the summer, Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem faced home demolitions, heavy policing, and invasions and barriers at the Al Aqsa Mosque by Israeli settlers and military.<sup>1</sup> The clashes in Jerusalem led to heavy media coverage all over the region and internationally. In the Gaza Strip, Gazans suffered 11 days of constant bomb shelling by Israel in May which led to the death of over 200 civilians and countless home destructions.<sup>2</sup> While COVID-19 responses implemented by different government entities continued to vary widely across Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and territories beyond the green line, restrictions gradually loosened overall, and the administration of vaccines slowly increased. Yet, positive test numbers and active COVID-19 cases began to increase again in July and August 2021.

## Data collection and analysis

Data collection for the third conflict scan report for Palestine was conducted between 15 and 24 July 2021. This report was prepared by an independent consultant and the Search for Common Ground (Search) Jerusalem 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 scans aimed at providing quick and actionable answers to a set of specific questions. The previous reports for Palestine can be found [here](#) & [here](#).



**To cite this report:** Search for Common Ground, Palestine Conflict Scan, December 2021.

\* This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Search for Common Ground and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

1. Al Jazeera, "Israel is trying hard to erase Jerusalem's Palestinians", May 2021.
2. Al Jazeera, "Gaza: Daunting rebuilding task after 11 days of Israeli bombing", May 2021.



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

As of 9 November 2021, there have been a total of 456,188 COVID-19 cases in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip combined, out of which there are 447,696 recoveries and 4,733 deaths.<sup>3</sup> In general, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of cases in the last 7 months, with the number of cases more than doubling.<sup>4</sup> Alongside the occupation and the protracted humanitarian crisis in Palestine, the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the socio-economic situation, particularly for women. Gender-based violence has soared 300 per cent since the pandemic began.<sup>5</sup> During the period January through June 2021, the following COVID-19 prevention measures were applied:

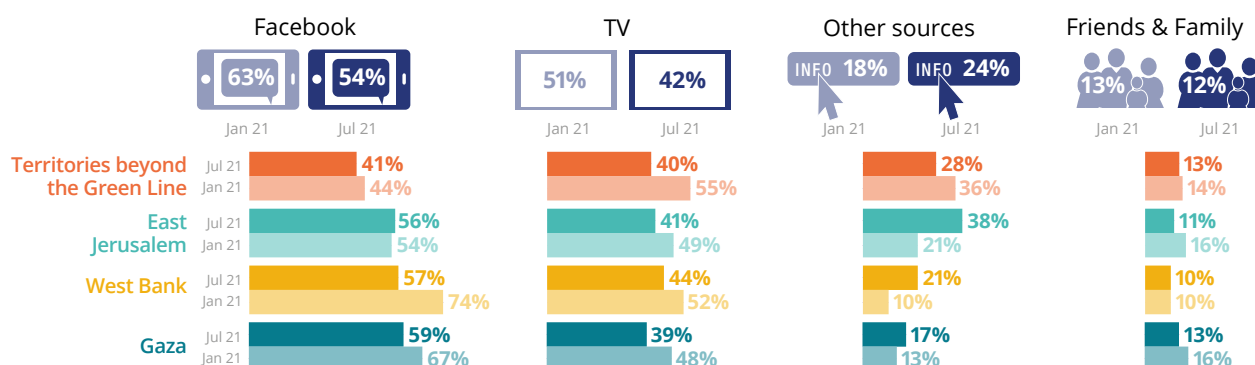
	West Bank and Gaza	East Jerusalem and Territories beyond the Green Line
	Gaza: Schools closed since May 2021	Schools reopened April 2021
	Teleworking not mandatory	Teleworking not mandatory
	Open only for citizens/residents	Open to citizens/residents only
	All services are open	All services are open
	Mask wearing mandatory	Mask wearing mandatory

Through international support, the Palestinian Ministry of Health received over thousand vaccines these past months and started a vaccination programme for all communities in need.<sup>6</sup> However, due to the geographical, political, and governmental fragmentation, the vaccine rollout was done unevenly. Recently, the vaccination process in Palestine improved and by early November, 25% of the Palestinian population was fully vaccinated, up from 8% in September. This is still very uneven compared to Israel, where 66% is vaccinated.<sup>7</sup> Earlier this year, UN experts criticized Israel's failure to extend its vaccine rollout to the Palestinians.<sup>8</sup> On top of the lack of vaccines in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinians received almost expired vaccines from Israel in June (around 90,000 doses), which the Palestinian Ministry of Health rejected.<sup>9</sup>

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

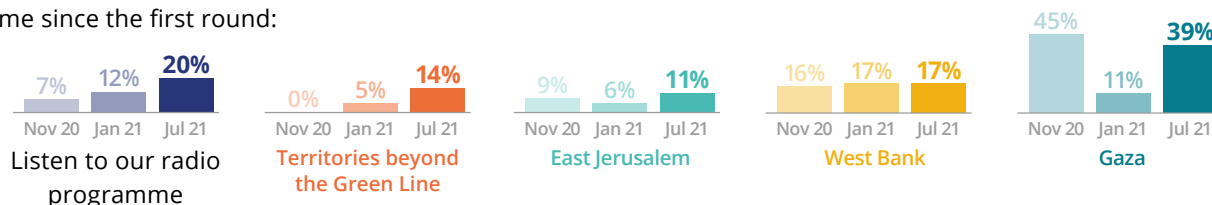
Trust in COVID-19 related information increased and people are getting information more from official sources

On average, the top trusted sources to get information about COVID-19 among respondents are:<sup>10</sup>



Compared to the previous report, Facebook and TV are cited less frequently, and people are increasingly relying on "other sources", such as the Ministry of Health website, WHO website, UNRWA, and Ministry of Education, indicating respondents are seeking out more official or expert sources of information.

While only 20% of respondents listen to our radio programme,<sup>11</sup> this percentage has increased significantly over time since the first round:



3. Ministry of Health, [COVID-19 data Portal](#), accessed on 20 September 2021.

4. In mid-February 2021, there were 189,268 reported cases, as a total.

5. UNSCO, "[SECURITY COUNCIL BRIEFING ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, REPORTING ON UNSCR 2334 \(AS DELIVERED BY SPECIAL COORDINATOR WENNESLAND\)](#)", March 2021.

6. Ministry of Health- Palestine, "[National Deployment and Vaccination Plan](#)", January 2021.

7. WHO "[COVID-19 Portal](#)", November 2021.

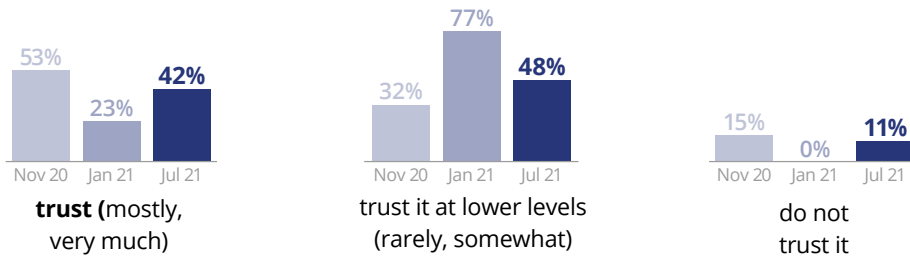
8. UN Human Rights, "[Press Release: UN experts call on Israel to ensure equal access to COVID-19 vaccines for Palestinians](#)", January 2021.

9. BBC, "[Covid: Palestinians cancel vaccine swap deal with Israel](#)", June 2021.

10. Compared to our other target countries under the Working Together Against Corona project, we found the radio listenership is low in Palestine (8% overall in round 3 and 5% in round 2).

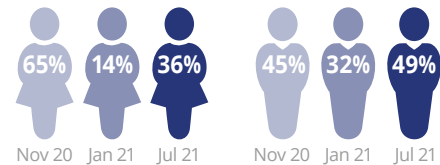
11. Search produces a radio programme "Community Cohesion in the Time of Corona", aired on [Nisaa FM](#).

Out of those who listen to our radio programme, more respondents report trusting (very much or mostly) COVID-19 information shared on the programme compared to the previous round; however, there was also an increase in the percentage of respondents who do not trust the information.



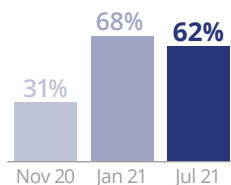
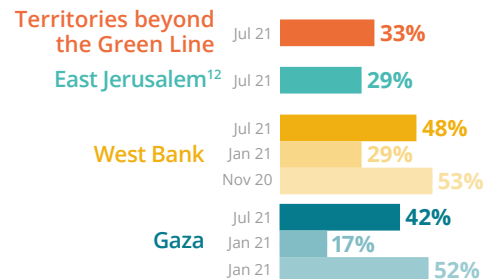
**Men trust information disseminated by our radio programme more than women.**

Men are often more exposed to news sources than women, and may be able to verify information from different sources more easily, hence leading to higher credibility of the COVID-19 related information on our programming among men. Moreover, men access information on COVID-19 through Friday prayers (where women attend in much lower numbers). Frequently, specialists are giving people at the mosques information about the virus. Sometimes, these specialists are on a voluntary basis but in many situations they were nominated officially by the governments.



**Trust levels in information disseminated by our radio programme vary at the regional level.**

In East Jerusalem and Territories beyond the Green Line, trust in information provided through our programme is less and respondents there prefer to follow official channels.

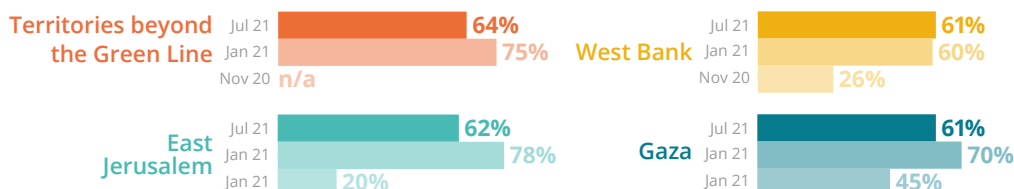
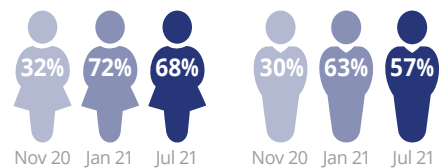


Share COVID-19 information obtained from trusted media outlets with friends and family<sup>13</sup>

This is a slight decrease from the previous round. Media coverage on COVID-19 has generally decreased these past months, along with limited information dissemination from official sources, which is likely due to the prevailing political and security climate in Palestine.

**Consistent with the previous round and despite lower levels of trust in COVID-19 related information shared by the media, more women share information compared to men.**

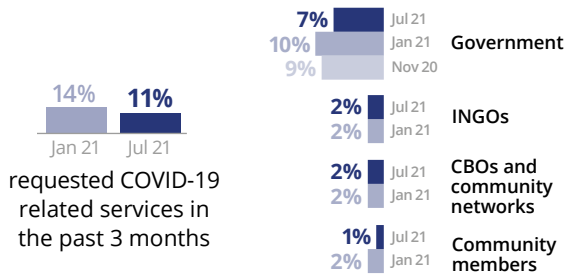
Social structures in Palestine might explain this, as women tend to have smaller circles of friends and family with whom they engage more regularly (compared to men), and spend more time at home giving them more opportunities to share information and communicate relevant news within the family circle.



12. Low listenership rates for our media programme in East Jerusalem and Territories beyond the Green Line during the first and second rounds of data collection in November 2020 and January 2021, means that it is not statistically significant to report trust levels in those regions.

13. In the first report, this question was about sharing COVID-19 related information heard on the partner radio station. The listenership in the territories beyond the green line was almost 0%.

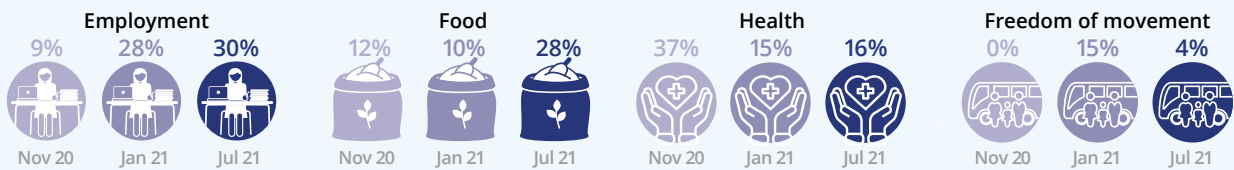
## Trust in the governments is increasing while pandemic-related service requests decline



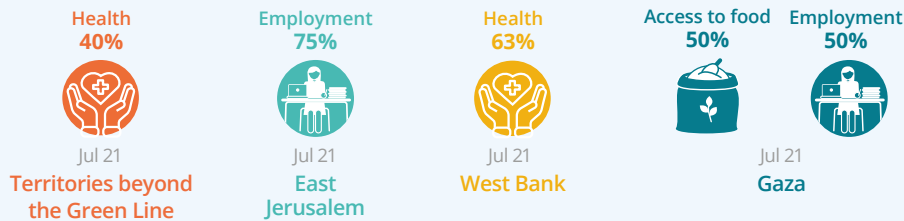
Despite increasing needs and worrisome living conditions in Palestine, there was a slight decrease in COVID-19 related service requests since the last round. It is worth noting that Palestine has the lowest rate of service requests among our six research countries for all rounds of data collection.<sup>14</sup>

### Top requested services from the Governments

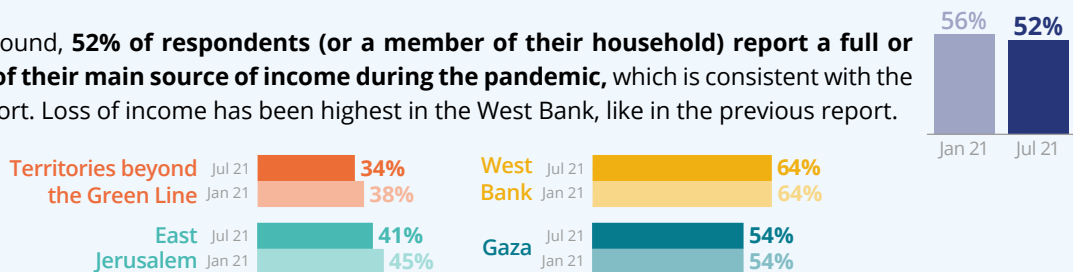
Between the second and third report, there were notable shifts in the types of services requested from the different governments. For instance, employment remains the most requested service, but there was a major increase in requests for food support, especially in certain regions. At the same time, freedom of movement requests declined, signaling the reduction in lockdown and movement restrictions.



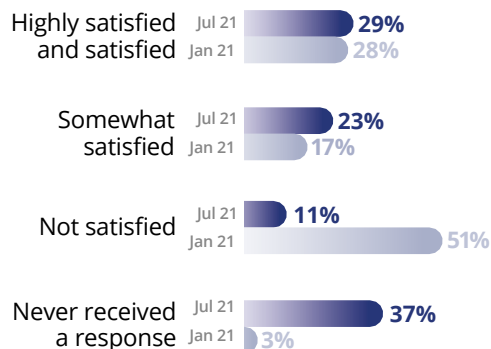
### Top requested service per region



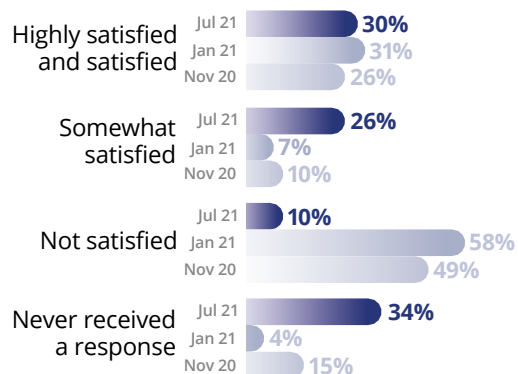
During this round, **52% of respondents (or a member of their household) report a full or partial loss of their main source of income during the pandemic**, which is consistent with the previous report. Loss of income has been highest in the West Bank, like in the previous report.



### Satisfaction with COVID-19 Services provided with all Services combined

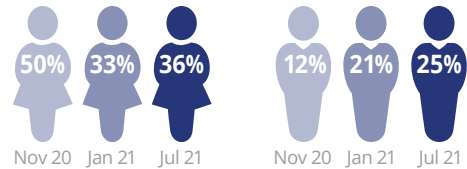


### Satisfaction with COVID-19 Services provided by the government<sup>15</sup>

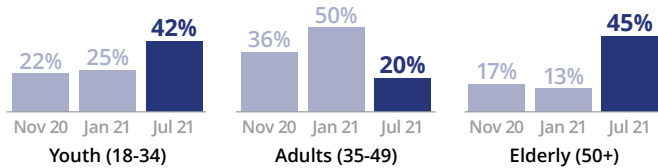


14. The other countries being Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Yemen. All country reports are available on our webpage [www.sfcg.org/working-together-against-corona/](http://www.sfcg.org/working-together-against-corona/).

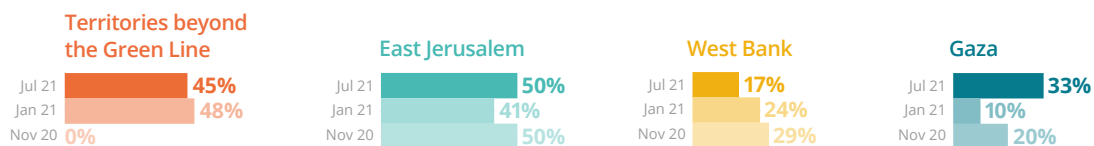
While women continue to maintain higher levels of satisfaction with governmental services, satisfaction levels among women have drastically decreased over time. Moreover, while levels are still relatively low, satisfaction among men has steadily increased over time, thereby closing the gender gap in satisfaction level.



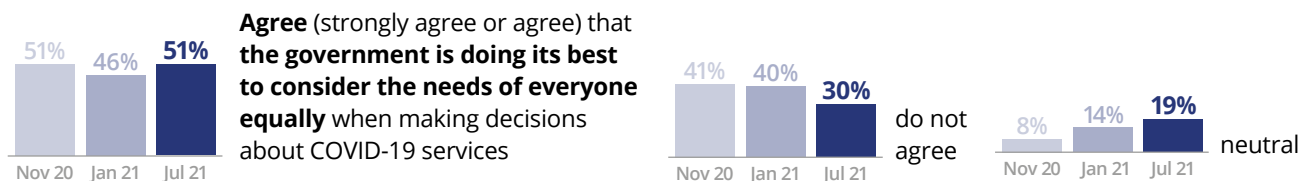
Satisfaction levels among elderly and youth respondents notably increased between rounds and notably decreased among adult respondents. It's not clear why this is the case.



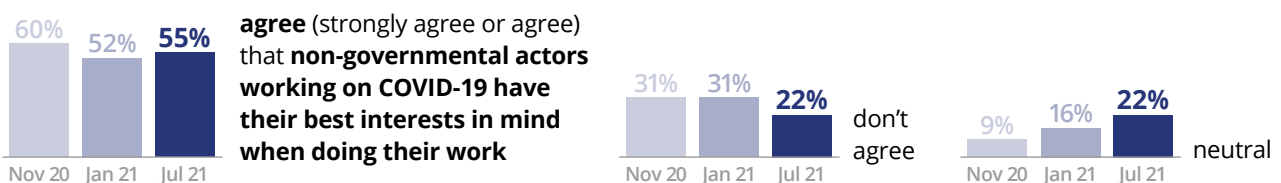
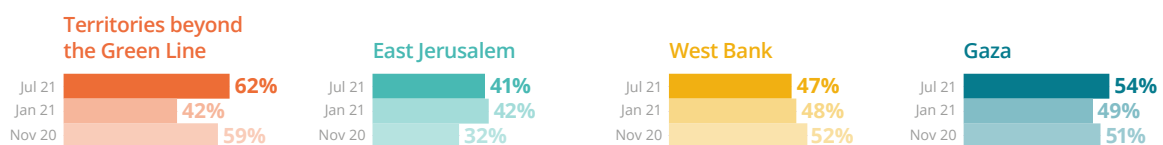
Respondents from the West Bank and Gaza Strip were the least satisfied with governmental services. Lower levels of satisfaction are likely because these regions are governed by the Palestinian government, which has less capacity to provide services. However, compared to the previous round, the Gaza Strip's level of satisfaction actually increased. This may be due to increased humanitarian aid in the region due to the escalating conflict.<sup>16,17</sup>



**Overall trust in the government as well as in other actors working on COVID-19 response has gone up again since the previous round.** This improvement can be seen in light of the easing of movement restrictions and the improved vaccination process.



There have been notable shifts among some regions: Territories beyond the Green Line and Gaza recorded an increase in trust level, whereas trust levels stayed largely the same in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Improved trust in Gaza might be attributed to the government's increased vaccination efforts. In Territories beyond the Green Line, this could be attributed to the lifting of pandemic-related restrictions. In the West Bank, criticisms, rumors and misinformation circulated around the vaccine roll-out regarding corruption in prioritizing certain groups, or the expiry date of doses.

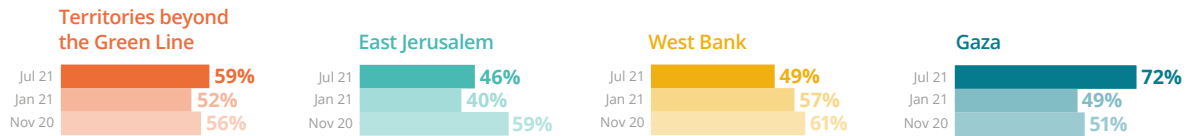


15. Satisfaction levels with services provided by the second service provider was not estimated in this report, in contrast with other country reports, as a mere 2% of respondents sought COVID-19 related services from each of the non-governmental service providers, which is a statistically unrepresentative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

16. UN, Gaza: Humanitarian response underway, but political solutions still needed, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1096602>, May 2021.

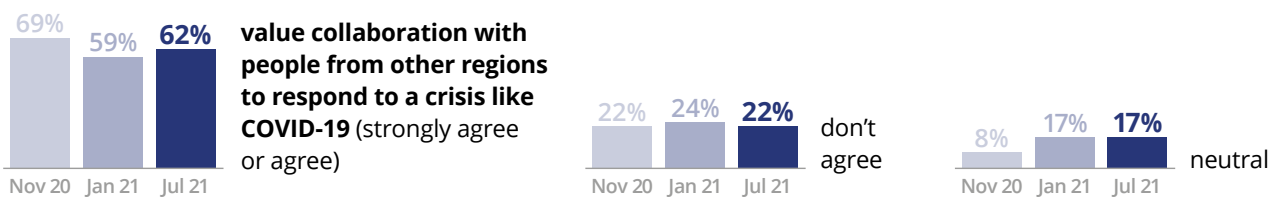
17. During the recent escalations, distribution centers for humanitarian aid in Gaza Strip operated at full speed and new centers were opened in several places to ensure the accessibility to beneficiaries. Also, mosques and local organisations were distributing food and non food items, besides the usual humanitarian actors.

All regions, except the West Bank, saw improved trust in non-governmental actors working on COVID-19. The largest increase was in Gaza, where the recent war has led many to rely increasingly on non-governmental actors for the provision of humanitarian aid, which may in turn have contributed to increased trust in these actors.<sup>18</sup> At the beginning of the pandemic, ten thousands Palestinians from the West Bank crossed into Israel and the illegal settlements every day to work. Many of them were forced to spend extended periods in Israel without being vaccinated to keep on working, while others returned illegally to avoid quarantine. Vaccination efforts started slowly at some check-points between Israel and the West Bank earlier in the year. This gave the impression to people from the West Bank that they were being left behind in the COVID-19 response, particularly by international organisations.

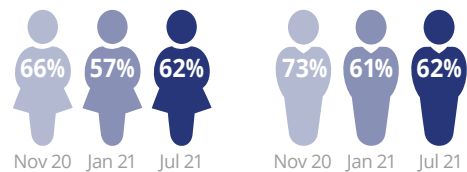


### Horizontal Cohesion is influenced by political instability

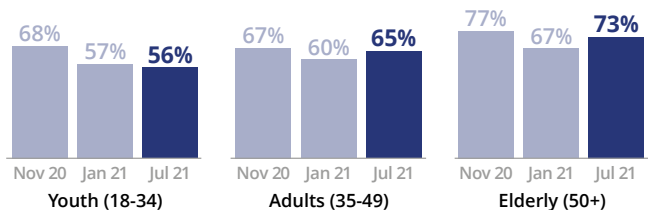
There has been a slight increase in the percentage of respondents who value collaboration.



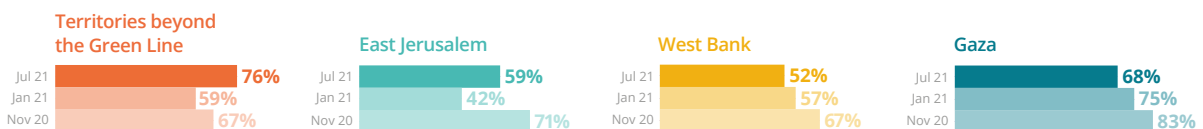
Unlike the previous rounds, men and women now value collaboration equally. In past rounds, men valued this kind of collaboration more than women.



Young respondents value collaboration less than older age groups, and their value for collaboration has declined over time. Elderly respondents continue to value this kind of collaboration the most.

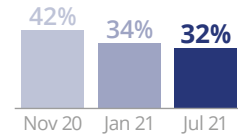


People from the Territories beyond the Green Line value collaboration most, a significant increase from the previous round. In May, the security situation was not stable in the Territories beyond the Green Line and large scale clashes occurred between Palestinians and Israeli police forces for the first time since the second Intifada in 2020. This may have led to more people from Territories beyond the Green Line valuing collaboration with Palestinians in other regions. On the other hand, the value for collaboration continues to decrease in the Gaza Strip. 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. Moreover, people's priorities in Gaza were focused on other issues than COVID-19 due to the recent security developments in Gaza.

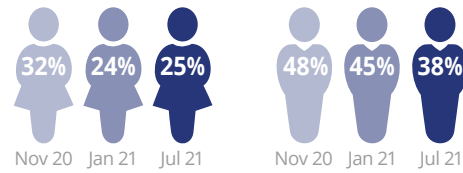


18. UN, "Gaza: Humanitarian response underway, but political solutions still needed", May 2021.

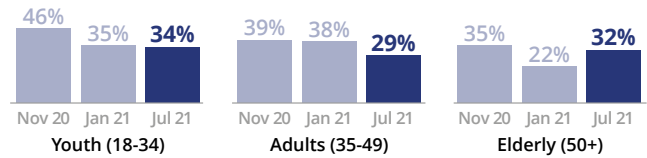
Only 32% of the respondents report that they interacted<sup>19</sup> with individuals from other regions, either remotely or in-person, in the past three months, a continued decrease since the first round.



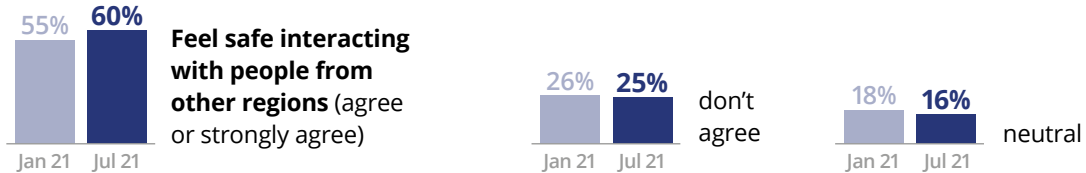
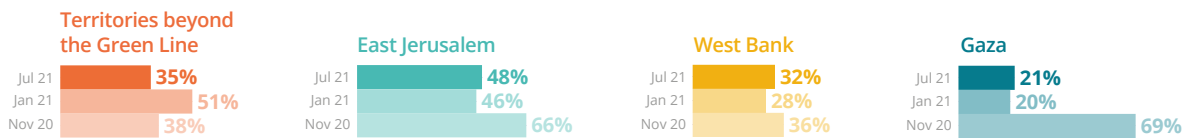
As in previous rounds, men interact much more frequently with individuals from other regions compared to women. Moreover, actual interaction has declined over time for both sexes.



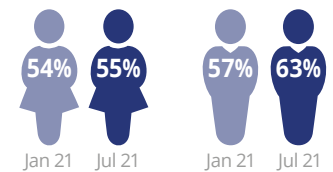
Both youth and adults show a decreasing trend of interaction over time, with lowest interaction figures reported in this latest round. Among elderly, there was an increase in interaction since the previous round, which may be attributed to increased vaccination among older people combined with reduced lockdown measures and other restrictions.



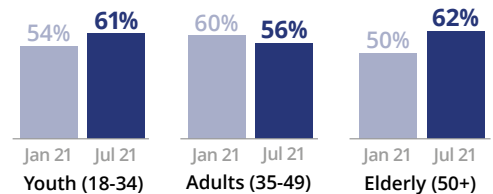
Interaction between people from different Palestinian regions is largely driven by economic interactions, but there are important variations between regions. The lowest level of interaction is reported in Gaza, a big drop from in round one. Clearly, the recent security deterioration severely affected people's ability to interact with other regions. The highest level of interaction is recorded in East Jerusalem, most likely due to the easing of COVID-19 movement restrictions, which allowed trade to somewhat resume between regions; however, this is still a significant decrease from round one. The easing of COVID-19 measures has also contributed to increased interaction for people in the West Bank. In the Territories beyond the Green Line, interaction had increased in the previous round but dropped back this round. These patterns are possibly due to the increasing spread of the Delta variant.



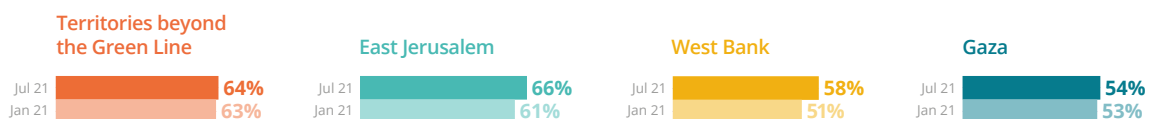
Women feel considerably less safe when interacting across regions, compared to men, and feelings of safety during interactions have increased more for men.



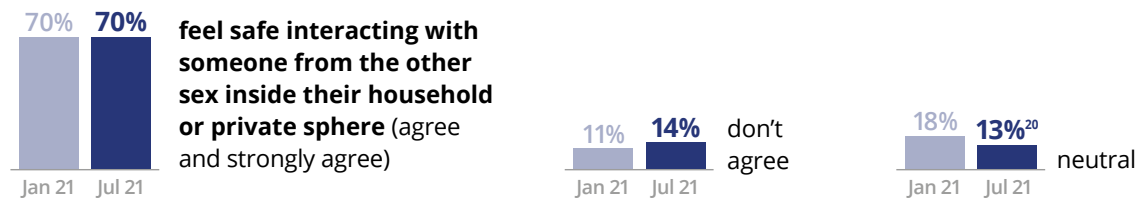
Elderly respondents report a significant increase in their feelings of safety when interacting across regions, which may be partly due to their increased vaccination coverage.



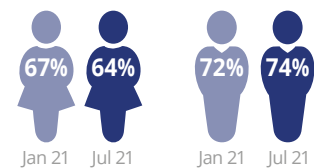
There are notable differences between regions. Overall, respondents in Territories beyond the Green Line and East Jerusalem report the highest level of feeling safe when interacting with people from other regions. These trends stayed largely the same since last time. The previous report notes the potential correlation between actual interaction and feelings of safety; however, while actual interaction drastically declined in the Territories beyond the Green Line, this did not negatively affect feelings of safety.



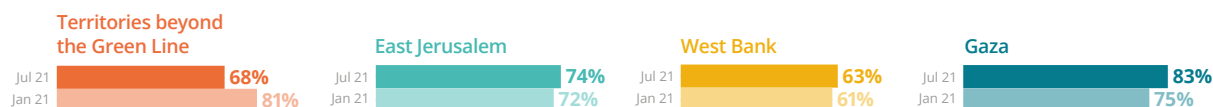
19. The question was asked on a daily, weekly, monthly, or on a quarterly basis.



Overall, 64% of women and 74% of men feel safe in this kind of interaction which is relatively consistent with the previous round.



The West Bank continues to have the lowest rate of respondents who report feeling safe during this kind of interaction, but we actually saw the biggest decrease in Territories beyond the Green Line. The change in this trend needs more research to be understood.



## Next Steps For COVID-19 Response Efforts

### Response providers should focus on the most popular information channels to ensure all groups, especially women, are accessing accurate COVID-19 related information

- Facebook was cited in all regions and by all age and gender groups as the top source to get information on COVID-19. This provides a key opportunity; COVID-19 responders should utilize Facebook more effectively to share reliable, up to date information about the spread of the virus, prevention measures and vaccination efforts, and to tackle the circulation of rumors and misinformation around COVID-19.
- Besides Facebook and TV, we see that friends and family and “other sources” are often cited as top trusted sources. Actors relaying COVID-19 information should make information more available through these channels. In particular, health and educational facilities are key channels to reach women, as women still face important obstacles to access COVID-19 information, while at the same time they play a very active role in spreading COVID-19 information to their families and communities. This role of women as information disseminators and community influencers should be strengthened by providing them with reliable and easily accessible information.

### To improve the pre-pandemic, deteriorating relationships between Palestinians from different areas, effective social cohesion interventions are urgently needed

- Our data shows a slight increase in people who value collaboration across regions to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, but that actual interaction is still much lower than in round 1. Since the start of our research, Palestine has consistently had the lowest rates among the six research countries on the horizontal cohesion indicators. Peacebuilding actors should urgently deploy social cohesion efforts across Palestinian regions, with a particular focus on the Gaza strip. This can be done through (online and traditional) media campaigns, grassroots community peacebuilding, and collaborative initiatives. Peacebuilders should also work more closely with COVID-19 responders to integrate measures that actively promote social cohesion through the pandemic response.

### Governmental and non-governmental actors should collaborate to strengthen service provision to mitigate the secondary impacts of the pandemic

- The socio-economic consequences of COVID-19, further aggravated by the military operation against Gaza which led to large-scale destruction of vital infrastructures, made the situation there very dire. This recent deterioration in the situation in Gaza, combined with pre-existing high unemployment levels and a significant drop in GDP might contribute to more escalations and violent confrontations in the future, especially if the situation in East Jerusalem remains unstable. Governmental and non-governmental actors, with support from the international community, should work together to prevent further deterioration and escalations, and to start the rebuilding and recovery phase in Gaza, aiming to “build back better”.
- Governmental and non-governmental actors should work more closely together to increase vaccine coverage and vaccine acceptancy in the different Palestinian areas. Targeted efforts should be made to make the COVID-19 vaccine available for the thousands of Palestinian workers who cross into Israel every day from the West Bank. Their livelihoods have been severely impacted by the quarantine measures in the West Bank and Israel's refusal to vaccinate them. As a consequence, these workers have felt neglected during the COVID-19 response, and their trust in governmental and nongovernmental responding has declined.

20. 3% of respondents preferred to skip this question for security reasons. We may assume they fall under the category “do not feel safe”, bringing that total to 17%.