



# Health

Although the **right to health** is a basic, universal human right upheld in the WHO Constitution (1946), Declaration of Alma Ata (1978), World Health Assembly (1998), the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art. 12), and in General Comment 14 by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Palestinian health sector suffers from its **dependency on Israel** in terms of tax transfers, authorization of medical personnel, import of medicines, access and movement restrictions for patients, personnel and ambulances, and construction/rehabilitation of health infrastructure. Key problems include a **shortage** of medications, equipment (sometimes as basic as syringes or rubber gloves), specialist physicians and other medical personnel, and funding. In **Gaza**, fuel and power shortages further limit the operation of emergency generators and ambulances.

**Health service provision** in Palestine is divided among public providers (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Interior), multiple private (hospitals, clinics) and NGO providers, incl. UNRWA.

## Main Health Indicators

	WBGS	WB	GS
<b>Hospitals (2016)</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>30</b>
of which: Government (Min. of Health)	27	14	13
NGO	34	20	14
UNRWA	1	1	0
Military Medical Services	3	0	3
Private	16	16	0
of which: General	43	29	14
Specialized	21	8	13
Rehabilitation	4	3	1
Maternity	13	11	2
<b>Hospital Beds (2016)</b>	<b>6,146</b>	<b>3,747</b>	<b>2,399</b>
Hospitals beds per 10,000 pop. (2016)	12.8	12.6	13.2
<b>Bed Occupancy Rate (%) (2016)</b>		<b>92.2</b>	
<b>Average Duration(days)</b>		<b>2.2</b>	
<b>Number of Primary Health Centers (2016)</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>152</b>
of which: Government (Min. of Health)	466	417	49
NGO	189	112	77
UNRWA	64	43	21
Military Medical Services	20	15	5
<b>Population per Primary Health Centers</b>	<b>6,159</b>	4,549	12,376
<b>Number of Physicians (general and specialist)</b>	<b>10,439</b>	7,760	2,679
<b>Physicians per 10,000 population (2016)</b>	21.7		
<b>Number of Dentists</b>	<b>3,202</b>	2,989	213
<b>Dentists per 10,000 population (2016)</b>	6.6		
<b>Number of Pharmacists</b>	<b>4,833</b>	4,269	564
<b>Pharmacists per 10,000 population (2016)</b>	10	14.5	
<b>Number of Nurses / Midwives</b>	<b>10,050/955</b>	6,482/704	3,568/254
<b>Nursing/Midwifery per 10,000 pop. (2016)</b>	20.9/2.0		
<b>Number of Laboratories</b>		<b>203</b>	
<b>Crude Birth Rate per 1,000 population (2016)</b>	<b>30.9</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>35.8</b>
<b>Crude Death Rate per 1,000 population (2016)</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<b>Infant Mortality Rate (&lt;1 year) per 1,000 live births (2016)</b>		<b>10.5</b>	
<b>Child Mortality Rate (&lt;5 years) per 1,000 live births (2016)</b>		<b>12.2</b>	
<b>Maternal Mortality Rate per 100,000 live births (2016)</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>15.5</b>
<b>Life Expectancy at Birth male - female (2016)</b>	<b>73.7 (72.1–75.2)</b>	<b>73.9</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Cancer Incidence Rate per 100,000 (2016)</b>	<b>86.4</b>		

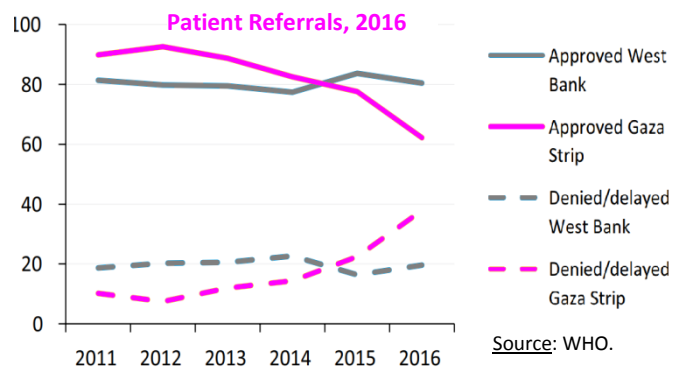
Sources: Ministry of Health, *Health Annual Report Palestine 2016*, July 2017; PCBS, *Press Release on Mothers' Day 2017*, 21 March 2017; PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of 2016*, Dec. 2016.



**Facts & Figures**

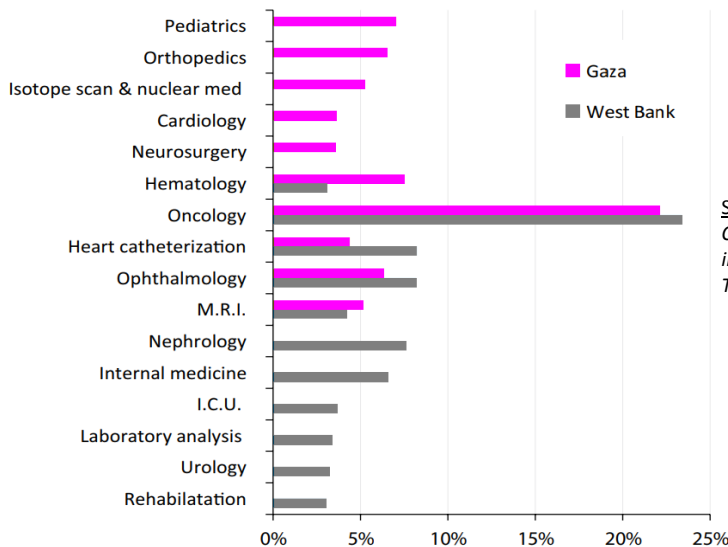
- As of June 2017, Health and Social Work contributed **3.1%** to the **GDP** (excl. East Jerusalem) (WB: 2.4%, GS: 5.3%) (PCBS, *Quarterly National Accounts*, Q2-2017).
- **Health expenditure** in 2016 totaled NIS 1.3 billion, 58.8% of which for salaries and wages, and 34.3% for use of goods and services (Palestinian Ministry of Finance, monthly report for December 2016).
- Over 80% of the population is covered by at least one type of **health insurance** scheme (WHO, *Palestine - Health Profile 2015, 2016*).
- While the *absolute number* of approvals for **patient referrals** has increased since 2012, the *rate* of approval has declined steadily (from 92.5% in 2012, to 88.7% in 2013, to 82.4% in 2014, to 77.5% in 2015 and to 62.1% in 2016). In 2016, 91,927 **medical referrals for patients** were reported (WB: 67,311, GS: 24,616), of which 83.7% were referred to Palestinian medical centers (52% of them to East Jerusalem), 14.3% to Israeli hospitals, and 2% to Egypt and Jordan. (WHO, *Right to Health - Crossing Barriers to Access Health in the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2016, 2017*).

• The approval rate for **Gaza patients** to cross Erez checkpoint in 2016 was with 62% the lowest since 2008 (15%-drop over 2015). Some 6.6% of the requests were denied, and 31.4% did not receive a response in time for their medical appointments. In the **West Bank**, 80.34% of 190,733 permit requests (patients and companions) were approved, 3% less than 2015 (*Ibid.*).



- The approval rate for permits for **patient companions** was even lower (53%). The most frequent reason given for permit denial is security (*Ibid.*).

**Major Medical Reasons for Referrals, 2011-2016**

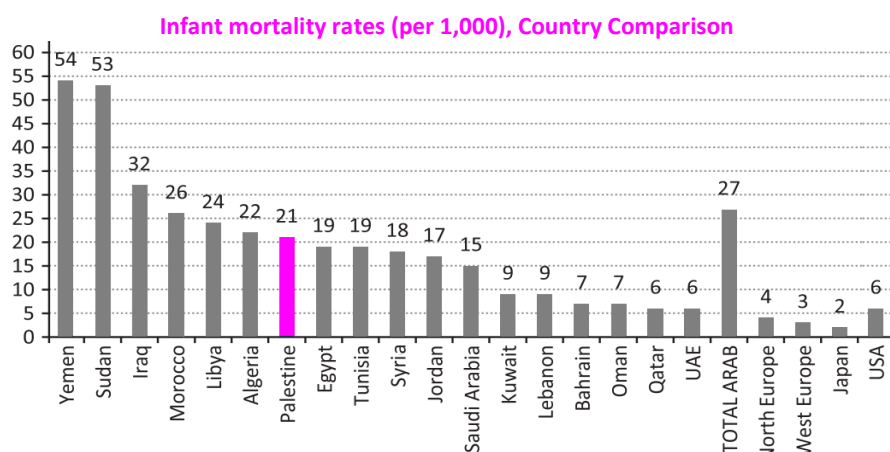


Source: WHO, *Right to Health – Crossing Barriers to Access Health in the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2016, 2017*.

- Of the **East Jerusalem hospital staff** required to apply for a permit (total: 1,288), 28 were denied, 10 were approved after 3 months, and 1,250 after 6 months in 2016 (WHO, *Right to Health 2016, 2017*).
- Since the beginning of 2017, 15 **patients** have **died** as a direct result of Israel’s systematic delay and denial of patient requests to travel for medical treatment outside of Gaza. Further, four patients and their accompanying relatives were **detained** at Erez crossing, despite having received the permits from the authorities (Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, 29 August 2017).



- In 2016, only 9.1% of **PRCS ambulances** from the West Bank were allowed **direct entry** to East **Jerusalem**, while 90.9% were denied access, i.e., patients had to be moved to another ambulance (Palestinian Red Crescent Society, 2016).
- There were 466 **attacks against PRCS teams** and ambulances between 3 October 2015 and 31 August 2017, in which 172 staff and volunteers were injured, 116 ambulances sustained various types of damage, and 186 incidents of denied access occurred (PRCS, OPS reports).
- As of August 2017 in **Gaza**, 204 (=40%) out of the 516 **medications** on the essential medicines list as well as 293 (34%) out of the 853 items on the essential medical **disposables** list were at zero stock levels, while 190 critical and life-saving medicines were at less than one month's supply, out of which 46 medicines were already depleted (WHO, Situation updates on Gaza – July to August 2017 updates).
- In 2016, the **main leading cause of deaths** in Palestine was cardiovascular disease (30.6%), followed by cancer (14%) and stroke (12.8%) (Ministry of Health, *Health Annual Report Palestine 2016, 2017*).
- The main **causes of infant mortality** are premature and low birth weight (24.6%), respiratory system infections (17.6%), congenital anomalies, incl. heart diseases (17.1%), and of **child mortality** (<5 years) conditions in the prenatal period (64.7%) and congenital malformations (19.2%) (Ministry of Health, *Health Annual Report Palestine 2016, 2017*).



Source: UN Population Division, World Population Prospects, 2015 revision, New York, 2016.

- 95.5% of women aged 15-49 receive **ante-natal health care** during pregnancy at least 4 times. 99.3% of **births** take place in health institutions, and 90.7% receive **post-natal** services (PCBS, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 – Final Report*, Dec. 2015).
- Some 96.6% women **breastfed** their babies and 57.2% of married women aged 15-49 used some form of **family planning method** (WB: 59.8%, GS: 53.4%) (*Ibid.*).
- **Outlook:** Maintaining the current ratios, it is estimated that by 2030, the number of physicians has to **increase** to 11,700, that of nurses to 20,800, and that of hospital beds to 11,000, while an **additional** 36 hospitals and almost 350 primary health care are needed (Prime Minister's Office, State of Palestine & UNFPA, *PALESTINE 2030: Demographic Change*, December 2016).

### Recommended Research Sources:

<http://www.moh.ps> (Ministry of Health)  
<http://www.emro.who.int/palestine> (WHO)

<http://pniph.org> (Palestinian National Institute of Public Health)  
<http://www.palestinercs.org> (Red Crescent Society)

**Lancet Series:** *Health in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2009-2015*, <http://www.thelancet.com/health-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory-2015>.

**Ministry of Health,** *Health Annual Report Palestine 2016*, July 2017.

**Physicians for Human Rights,** *Divide and Conquer: Inequality in Health*, January 2015.

**Prime Minister's Office, State of Palestine & UNFPA,** *PALESTINE 2030: Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development*, December 2016.

**WHO,** monthly reports on referral of patients from the Gaza Strip.

**WHO,** *Palestine – Health Profile 2015, 2016*.

**WHO,** *Right to Health – Crossing Barriers to Access Health in the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2016*, July 2017.