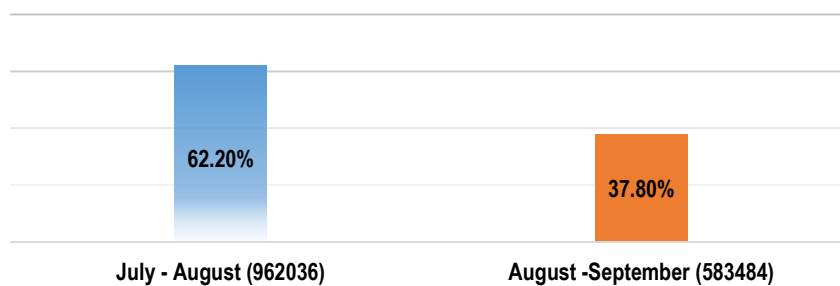


# ZIMBABWE DEMOCRACY INSTITUTE (ZDI) ACCESS TO PUBLIC HEALTH MONITORING REPORT

## SEPTEMBER 2021

### THEFT OF COVID-19 VACCINATION CARDS: DISTORTION OF COVID-19 DATA & INFORMATION

#### A DROP IN COVID-19 VACCINATIONS BETWEEN JULY & SEPTEMBER 2021 IN ZIMBABWE



Source: ZDI 2021, Dataset from Ministry of Health and Child Care Covid-19 daily Situation Reports, July – September 2021

#### About the Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (ZDI)

The Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (ZDI) is a politically independent and not for profit public policy think-tank based in Zimbabwe. Founded and registered as a trust in terms of the laws of Zimbabwe in November 2012, ZDI serves to generate and disseminate innovative ideas, cutting-edge research and policy analysis to advance democracy, development, good governance and human rights in Zimbabwe. The institute also aims to promote open, informed and evidence-based debate by bringing together pro-democracy experts to platforms for debate. The idea is to offer new ideas to policy makers with the view to entrenching democratic practices in Zimbabwe. The ZDI researches, publishes and conducts national policy debates and conferences in democratization, good governance, public policy, human rights and transitional justice, media and democracy relations, electoral politics and international affairs.

Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (ZDI) - 66 Jason Moyo Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Bothwell House,  
Harare, Zimbabwe

## Summary

The Covid-19 vaccination rate during the month of September 2021 showed signs of going down, taking into cognizance the number of vaccinations between July 2021 – August 2021 and August 2021 – September 2021. The continued delivery of Covid-19 vaccines into the country is commendable. However, the distribution of these vaccines to different vaccination centres appears to be hamstrung.

Theft of Covid-19 vaccination cards at vaccination centres as reported in mainstream media is an indicator of a bad state of affairs in the health sector in as far remuneration of healthcare workers is concerned. These unfortunate incidences distort the county's Covid-19 vaccination data and information and give a wrong impression on vaccination progress.

## Introduction

In September 2021 the government of Zimbabwe reviewed the Covid-19 lockdown measures. The country moved from level 4 to level 2 as announced by President Mnangagwa.<sup>1</sup> This relaxation of Covid-19 lockdown entailed the

extension of business operating hours up to 1900hrs; intercity travel permission and an adjustment of the curfew hours from 2200hrs to 0500hrs among others. At a time of this Covid-19 lockdown review, Zimbabwe had recorded more than 125 thousand new Covid-19 infections and over 4 thousand deaths.<sup>2</sup> This represented an increase in infections and deaths by 8.8% and 18% respectively from the previous month on the same date.<sup>3</sup>

## Theft of Covid-19 Vaccination Cards and attendant effects

The government's failure to address incapacitation of healthcare workers in Zimbabwe is proving to be catalyst of corrupt activities across many health centres in Zimbabwe. The requirement of Covid-19 vaccination evidence in form of vaccination cards in some employment and leisure spheres has seen members of the public scrambling for vaccination cards without necessarily going through the normal and accepted vaccination process. Cases of Covid-19 vaccination cards' theft and disappearance from

---

<sup>1</sup> On 7 September 2021 President Mnangagwa made a live televised nation address announcing the relaxation of Covid-19 lockdown from level 4 to level 2. The Herald reports: *President Mnangagwa relaxes Covid-19 lockdown*. Available at: <https://www.herald.co.zw/president-mnangagwa-relaxes-covid-19-lockdown/>

<sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Health and Child Care Zimbabwe Covid-19 Situation Report of 6 September 2021 revealed that the country

had to date recorded 125 671 cases of Covid-19 and 4 493 deaths. Available at: <https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1434995807774822407>

<sup>3</sup> As per the Ministry of Health and Child Care Zimbabwe Covid-19 Situation Report of 6 August 2021, Zimbabwe had recorded a cumulative total of 115 445 cases of Covid-19 and 3 805 deaths. On 6 September 2021 the infections and deaths had risen to 124 671 and 4 493 respectively.

vaccination centres have found their way into mainstream media in Zimbabwe.<sup>4</sup>

An enquiry carried out by the Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (ZDI) revealed that details of people buying Covid-19 vaccination cards are entered into the official vaccination database. It therefore suffices to say the reported number of people vaccinated by 30 September 2021 consists of a figure of people who bought the vaccination cards and have their details entered into official data base. There's a risk of chasing a dummy Covid-19 herd immunity if the rot in the public health sector is not urgently addressed.

### **Covid-19 vaccines delivery and distribution**

Zimbabwe continues to take delivery of Covid-19 vaccines in line with its Covid-19 vaccination programme. By 10 September Zimbabwe had received 4 million doses of Sinopharm, 5.2 million Sinovac, 35 000 doses of Covaxin and 65 thousand Sputnik V doses<sup>5</sup>. On 14 September 2021, the country received additional 1 million Sinovac vaccines to bring the total of purchased and donated vaccines to 11.8 million.<sup>6</sup> With all

these vaccines in Zimbabwe, equitable distribution remains a challenge.



**Government spokesperson Nick Mangwana highlighting Zimbabwe's Covid-19 vaccines delivery schedule**

As vaccines continue to be delivered into the country, there are some communities still asking for adequate vaccination centres. In Bulawayo, the informal traders continue to call for more Covid-19 vaccination centres.<sup>7</sup> The continued supply of vaccines in Zimbabwe ought to be characterised by setting up of vaccination centres across the country for easy accessibility by communities.

---

<sup>4</sup> On 27 August 2021, the *NewsDay* newspaper reported that 331 Covid-19 vaccination cards "went missing from various public health centres amid fears they could have been sold to people evading vaccination." Available at: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2021/08/331-covid-19-vaccination-cards-go-missing/>

<sup>5</sup>This was said by the Deputy Minister of Health and Child Care Dr John Mangwiro on 10 September 2021 upon receiving 500 000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine at Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport. Available at:

<https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1436352500899196931>

<sup>6</sup> The Ministry of Health and Child Care on 14 September reported that Zimbabwe had received 1 million Sinovac vaccines and the country's total number of vaccines from purchases and donations now stands at 11.8 million. Available at: <https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1437801499934011396>

<sup>7</sup> This was reported by CITE following a Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (VISET) community briefing meeting held in Bulawayo. Available at: <https://cite.org.zw/byo-informal-traders-call-for-more-covid-19-vaccination-centres/>

## Government's health facilities visits: Action is what matters most

The government through deputy Minister of Health and Child Care Dr John Mangwiro this September has visited a number of public health facilities across the country. This comes against a background of an unprecedented deterioration of the country's healthcare infrastructure coupled with healthcare personnel brain drain.<sup>8</sup> The major contributing factors to this situation are severe social and economic challenges that continue bedeviling Zimbabwe.<sup>9</sup> Of much concern is the state of public healthcare facilities in the rural areas. The 2020 Health Budget Brief by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) identified the critical need to need to boost government spending on rural health centres to avoid dependence on donor financing to be able to better cater for over 70 percent of Zimbabwe's population that lives in the rural areas.<sup>10</sup> On 14 September 2021, Dr Mangwiro toured Hauna District Hospital on what the ministry said was a visit "to familiarise with the hospital's operations and challenges being encountered."<sup>11</sup> The deputy minister visited the Victoria Chitepo Provincial Hospital on 16 September 2021 to assess the

health facility's Covid-19 isolation centre and other issues of



Ministry of HealthZW @MoHCCZim · Sep 14

Today, @MoHCCZim Deputy Minister, Dr John Mangwiro visited Hauna District Hospital in Mutasa District, Manicaland Province to familiarise with the hospital's operations and challenges being encountered.



1

2

19



*Dr Mangwiro's visit of Hauna District Hospital in Honde Valley, Mutasa District*

A visit at Hauna District Hospital was followed by a visit to Mutambara Mission Hospital on 15 September as highlighted by the Ministry of Health and Child Care.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> This is further explained by World Health Organisation (WHO) Zimbabwe. Available at: <https://www.who.int/workforcealliance/countries/zwe/en/>

<sup>9</sup> See 8 above

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF Zimbabwe Health Budget Brief. 2020. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/6501/file/UNICEF-Zimbabwe-2020-Health-Budget-Brief.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> This was indicated by the Ministry of Health and Child Care here: <https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1437868039362519056>

<sup>12</sup> On 15 September 2021, the Ministry of Health and Child Care highlighted that deputy Minister Mangwiro visited Mutambara Mission Hospital

**Ministry of HealthZW** @MoHCCZim · 19h ...  
 @MoHCCZim Deputy Minister, Dr John Mangwiro today continued with his visits to health facilities which took him to Mutambara Mission Hospital & was impressed by management of the hospital's pharmacy where very few drugs had expired.



1 1 4

**Deputy Minister of Health Dr Mangwiro's visit to Mutambara Mission Hospital**

**Ministry of HealthZW** @MoHCCZim · 31m ...  
 @MoHCCZim Deputy Minister, Dr John Mangwiro is today visiting Victoria Chitepo Provincial. His tour of the hospital would cover theatres and COVID-19 Isolation Centre, among other areas



2

**Deputy Minister of Health Dr Mangwiro's visit to Victoria Chitepo Provincial Hospital**

It is imperative that these visits' findings culminate into interventions aimed at addressing the rot that is currently prevalent in Zimbabwe's public health sector.

<sup>13</sup> More details are further explained by the Public Service Commission. Available at: <https://twitter.com/psczimabwe/status/1438404197947432967>

<sup>14</sup> On 16 September 2021, the Ministry of Health and Child Care announced a Covid-19 vaccination update of 38 929 people

**Covid-19 Vaccinations**

As Covid-19 vaccines continued to be delivered in Zimbabwe during the period under review, the government resorted to an indirect mandatory vaccination drive. In achieving this, the government through the Public Service Commission gave a directive to have all civil servants vaccinated without delay.<sup>13</sup> This is an apparent move to push the number of vaccinations in view of achieving herd immunity by end of this year.

**Public Service Commission - Zimbabwe** @psczimabwe ...

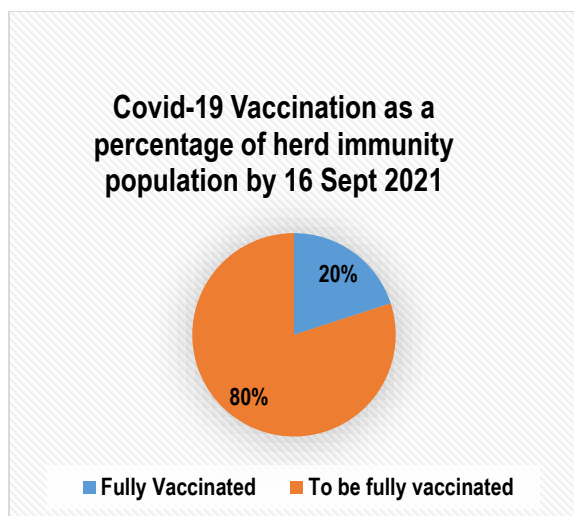
In line with Cabinet decision, all civil servants should be vaccinated without delay & unvaccinated members shall not be allowed to report for duty. All ministries are urged to cooperate as we remain alert in combatting this pandemic. @nickmangwana @jamwanda2

9:27 AM · Sep 16, 2021 · Twitter Web App

**Public Service Commission directive on Civil Servants Vaccination**

By 16 September 2021, Zimbabwe had fully vaccinated slightly above 2 million people.<sup>14</sup> This represents a 20% of the total population (10 million people) that needs to be fully vaccinated to reach herd immunity. This is diagrammatically shown below:

receiving their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose and thereby bringing cumulative for 2<sup>nd</sup> dose to 2 001 987. Available at: <https://twitter.com/MoHCCZim/status/1438640903363702784/photo/1>

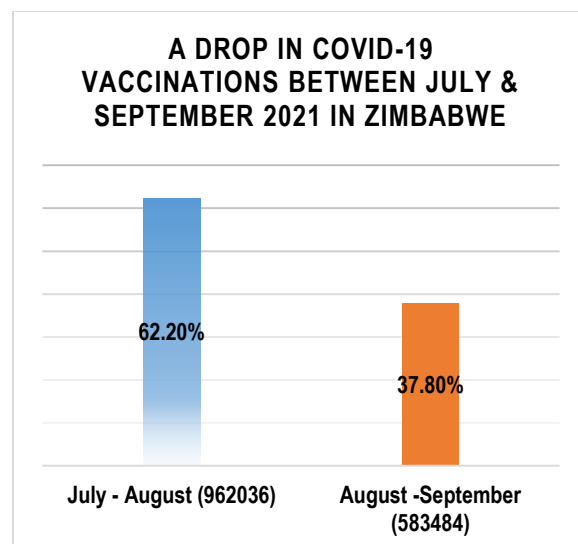


ZDI 2021: Dataset: Ministry of Health and Child Care Covid-19 Situation Report – 16 September 2021

### Covid-19 Vaccination slows down

The achievement of Covid-19 herd immunity in Zimbabwe by December 2021 appears to be facing a challenge of a significant drop in vaccine uptake. Between 26 July 2021 and 26 August 2021 there was an increase of 962 036 vaccinations done in Zimbabwe<sup>15</sup>. However, during the same period from 26 August 2021 to 26 September 2021 an increase in vaccinations stood at 583 484.<sup>16</sup> This drop in vaccination rate can be attributed to lack of a strategy to break the existing rural-urban divide in terms of information and awareness on Covid-19 vaccination and the need to reach a target of herd immunity.

<sup>15</sup> The Ministry of Health and Child Care Covid-19 Situation Report of 26 July 2021 and 26 August 2021 revealed that 1 491 493 and 2 453 529 people had been vaccinated respectively.



### Conclusion

The period under review came in a context in which Covid-19 vaccination rate is dropping amid uncertainty over the attainment of herd immunity by December 2021.

### Recommendations

In view of a crucial role played by a well-organized public healthcare delivery system in advancing sustainable development, the ZDI in line with its aim to advance democracy, development, good governance and human rights in Zimbabwe recommends the following;

### Government of Zimbabwe

- ✓ Intensify Covid-19 vaccination awareness both in urban and rural areas to boost the vaccination uptake as the country eyes to

<sup>16</sup> The Ministry of Health and Child Care Covid-19 Situation Report of 26 August 2021 and 26 August 2021 revealed that 2 453 529 and 3 037 013 people had been vaccinated respectively.



achieve herd immunity by December 2021.

- ✓ Putting in place adequate security measures and close loopholes in the issuance of Covid-19 cards.
- ✓ Immediately address challenges faced by public healthcare centres visited by Deputy Minister John Mangwiro
- ✓ Ensuring a robust distribution process of Covid-19 vaccines across all vaccination centres.

- ✓ Report on the country's state of public healthcare institutions particularly in rural areas where the population's majority stays.

### Civil Society

- ✓ Deepen the watchdog role and continuously expose the incapacitation of healthcare workers that is fueling unethical behavior in the sector such as stealing Covid-19 vaccination cards.
- ✓ Track down, monitor and report Covid-19 vaccines' distribution across Zimbabwe.

### Media

- ✓ Research and report on the country's progress towards achieving Covid-19 herd immunity.