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## With New COVID Policy, Israel Redefines What It Means to Be Vaccinated

Starting today, Israel's Green Pass, which grants access to public spaces, won't be available to over a million Israelis who received their second vaccine shot more than six months ago. The reason: waning immunity

Sam Sokol Oct. 4, 2021 🔔 Follow



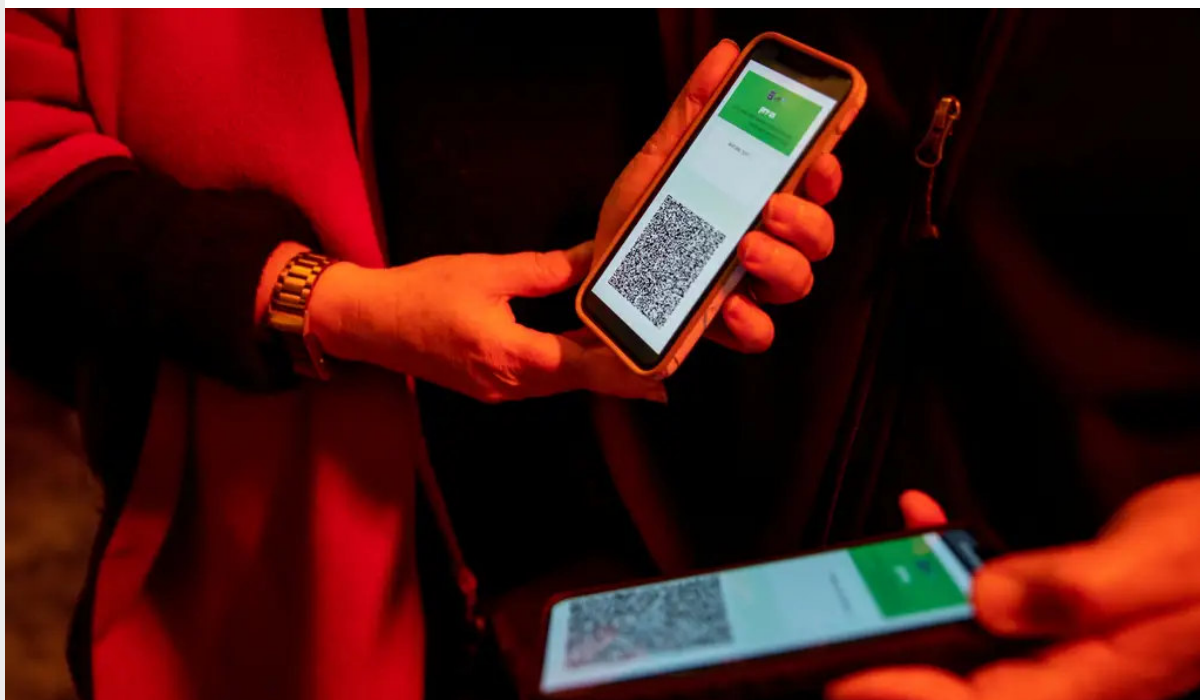
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**Approximately 1.5 million people will lose their Green Pass as a result of the new policy** Credit: Ohad Zwigenberg



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Israel became on Sunday the first country in the world to no longer provide its vaccination certificate, known locally as the Green Pass, to citizens who had received their second vaccine dose more than six months ago – a move that reflects growing recognition of the vaccine's waning immunity over time and the need for booster shots to maintain high levels of protection against COVID.

The new policy, which comes two months after Israel began its national booster vaccination campaign, will lead to more than a million Israelis losing their Green Pass certificates. These are Israelis who received their second dose of the vaccine more than six months ago, and have so far not gotten their third shot. The loss of their Green Pass certificates will prevent them from fully participating in social and commercial activities across the country.

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All previously issued Green Passes were slated to expire on Sunday, with those qualifying for new passes required to get them reissued via the Health Ministry website or the Ramzor app.

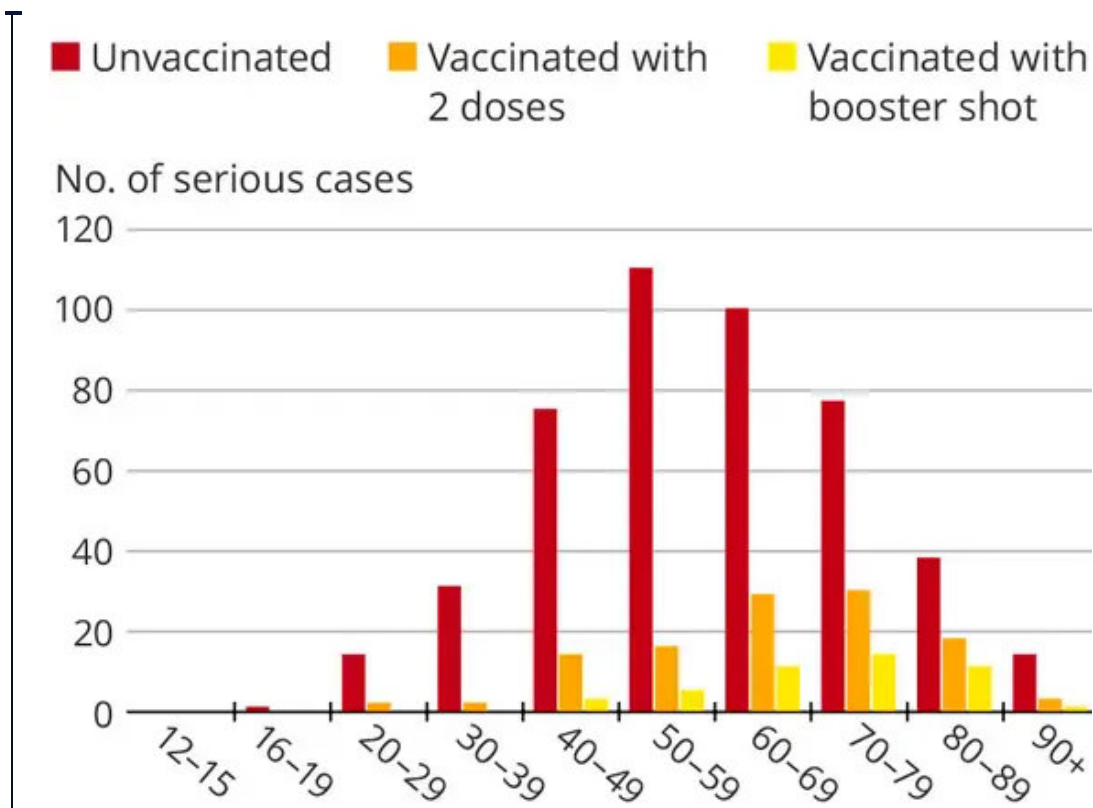
[Under the revised guidelines](#), only those who have received their third shot of the coronavirus vaccine, or their second dose in the past six months, will be considered fully vaccinated and eligible for the new pass.

The new Green Pass includes a unique QR code, which

business and facility owners are supposed to scan before granting holders entry to public amenities.

In August, Israel became the first country globally to make booster shots widely available, as it became apparent that the protection provided by the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was waning over time and Israel was suddenly in the midst of a fourth wave caused by the more contagious delta variant.

Prof. Nadav Davidovitch, head of the Israeli Association of Public Health Physicians said requiring Israelis to receive the booster in order to be considered fully vaccinated and eligible for the Green Pass was “the right decision.”



#### The unvaxxed Israelis fueling the COVID catastrophe

- 10% unvaxxed are 89% of ECMO patients, 60% of deaths

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According to Davidovitch, who is also director of the School of Public Health at Ben-Gurion University of the Desert, Be'er Sheva, the Green Pass is “not a prize or punishment” but rather a public health measure based on consideration of clinical and epidemiological data.

Israel changed its policy regarding vaccination status earlier than other countries because it began vaccinating earlier (last December), and enough time has passed “to see a sharp rise in community transmission,” Davidovitch explained.

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He added that the data indicated that the increase in protection following a third shot could “be 10 times and up, compared to people who got the second dose.”

[A recent joint study](#) by the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa, and KSM – the Maccabi Research and Innovation Center, found that about six months after someone receives the second dose of the vaccine, its effectiveness at reducing viral load dissipates. But a third dose slashes viral loads by a factor of four, thereby restoring the vaccine’s effectiveness to what it was shortly after the second dose was administered.



A nurse about to administer a booster shot at a medical center in Jerusalem last week. Credit: Ohad Zwigenberg

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According to data published by the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last month, the protection afforded by the Pfizer vaccine begins to decline around 4 months after the vaccination date. The CDC recently endorsed the rollout of a booster shot to several at-risk demographic categories, although there has been some disagreement about the scope of the proposed campaign.

Key metrics have suggested that Israel's current wave of coronavirus infections is on the decline, with the unvaccinated accounting for nearly all of the country's serious infections and deaths, despite being only 15 percent of the country's vaccine-eligible population.

On Sunday, the number of patients in serious condition

stood at 588 (two days after the number hit an almost six-week low of 586), with 254 of them in critical condition. According to the available data, despite their relatively small representation among the general population, 75 percent of seriously ill patients were unvaccinated. Further 19 percent are vaccinated but haven't received a booster shot, while 6 percent have received the third shot.

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