

Situation in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands 31st July 2020.

On 30th January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) a public health emergency of international concern. As of 31st July 2020, there were 16,984,747 cases and 666,662 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 9,152,173 confirmed cases and 351,121 deaths.

On 15th March 2020, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported in The Bahamas. On 23rd March 2020, the first confirmed case was reported in The Turks and Caicos Islands.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Bahamas

Since 24th July 2020, there were 234 newly confirmed cases and 3 new deaths from COVID-19. Prior to the recent increase, there had been no deaths since 24th April 2020.

The gender and age distribution of new and total confirmed cases are not reflected in this report pending completion of on-going follow up investigations.

Among the total confirmed cases:

- Two new islands reported cases: Abaco (1), (Exuma (3));
- Three deaths in Grand Bahama.

Laboratory testing

- 4167 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 24th July 2020, there were 14 newly confirmed cases and no deaths from COVID-19. There have been no new deaths since 29th June 2020. The last four cases reported on 30th July 2020 are not reflected in this report.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 55 (52.9 %) are female and 49 (47.1 %) are male;
- The age distribution of all cases is 0-5 (2.9 %), 6-19 (16.3 %), 20-29 (15.4 %), 30-39 (28.8 %), 40-49 (18.3 %), 50-59 (10.6%), and 60-79 (7.7 %);
- 195 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 1,168 persons have been tested for COVID-19 to date.

The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	205	8
Grand Bahama	247	6
Abaco	1	0
Berry Islands	6	0
Bimini	21	0
Cat Cay	4	0
Cat Island	3	0
Exuma	3	
Great Guana Cay	9	0
Moore's Island	9	0
Abaco	1	0
TOTAL	508	14

Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Parrot Cay	2	0
Providenciales	102	2
TOTAL	104	2

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

508 Bahamas
104 Turks & Caicos
Confirmed

401 Bahamas
64 Turks & Caicos
Active Cases

91 Bahamas
37 Turks & Caicos
Recovered

19 Bahamas
3 Turks & Caicos
Hospitalized

2 Turks & Caicos
Positive Cases that Left Country

14 Bahamas
2 Turks & Caicos
COVID-related Deaths

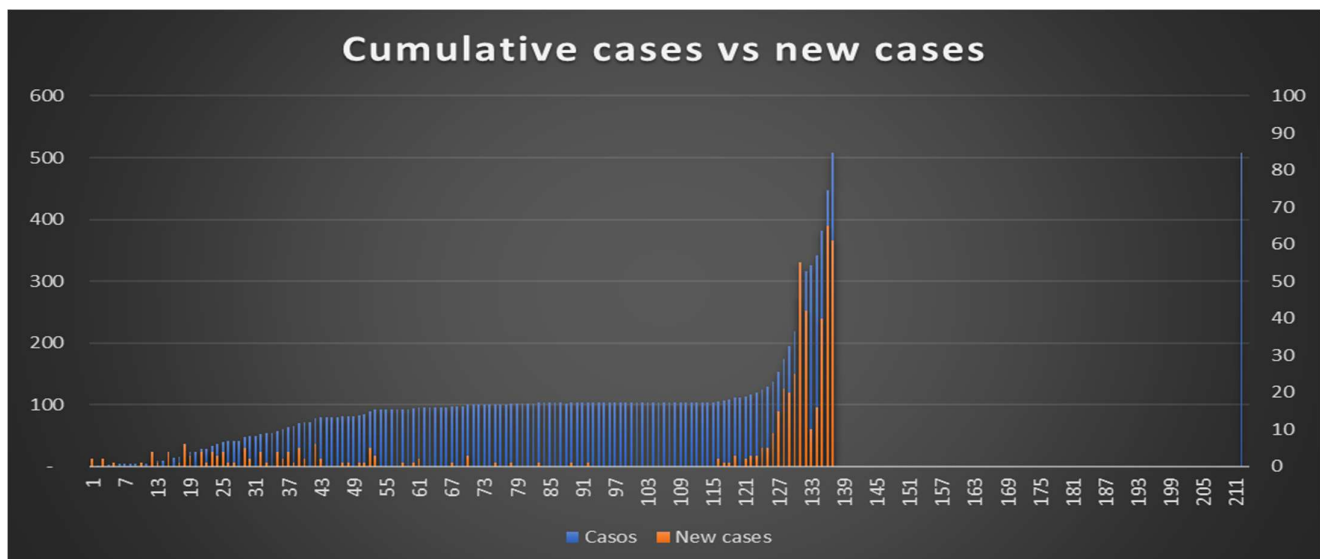
2 Bahamas
Non-COVID-related Deaths

PAHO RESPONSE

- ✓ Donation of laboratory supplies
- ✓ Risk assessment and situational analysis
- ✓ Technical guidance
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Support to local authorities on surveillance and health systems planning

The Bahamas

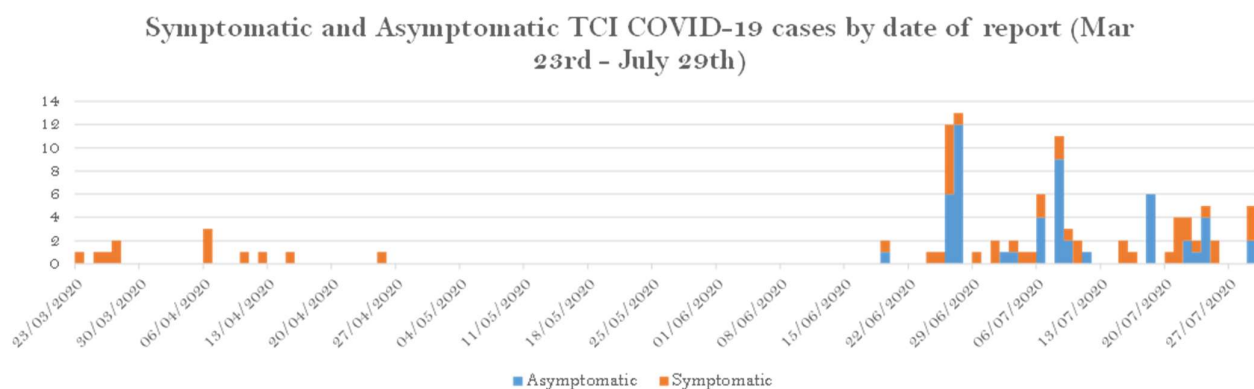
- Emergency Orders have been extended through 30th September 2020. A 7:00 pm to 5:00 am curfew, Mondays through Sundays, commenced 27th July 2020 for all islands except Grand Bahama.
- Grand Bahama remains on a two-week lockdown which commenced 23rd July 2020 and will end 7th August 2020 following a surge in the number of confirmed cases and its designation as a new “hotspot”.
- The National Emergency Operation Centre was activated on 30th July 2020 due to Tropical Storm Isaias which is expected to pass through The Bahamas as a category 1 Hurricane on the weekend of 31st July 2020.
- Weekend lockdown restrictions originally planned for this weekend will be relaxed to facilitate hurricane preparations. A curfew will come into effect 31st July 2020 from 10pm to 5 am until further notice.
- Hardware stores, gas stations, grocery stores, pharmacies, and water depots will be permitted to operate on Saturday, 1st August 2020 until 8pm.
- Indoor and outdoor dining, congregate activities including religious events, social gatherings, gym activity, and public transportation are not permitted until further notice.
- Take-away, curbside and delivery food services will continue. Barbershops, salons, and spa services will also continue but restricted to one customer per service provider at a time.
- Public beaches and parks on Athol Island, Grand Bahama, New Providence, Paradise Island, Rose Island, and cays surrounding New Providence remain closed.
- Inter-island travel was suspended for all islands except Acklins, Crooked Island, Long Cay, and Mayaguana on 28th July 2020. Transport of essential goods and services, and emergency-related travel are permitted.
- Restrictions were lifted on international commercial flights and commercial vessels carrying passengers from the United States of America (USA). All incoming travelers must apply for a health visa, present a negative RT-PCR test result taken no more than 10 days prior to travel, and undergo a mandatory 14-day quarantine at home, government facility, hotel, or Air BnB.
- Public schools are projected to reopen on 21st September on virtual platforms until further notice.



Bahamas EPI Curve of cumulative cases vs. new cases of COVID-19 by days

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

- The local economy activity has resumed activity and borders have been re-opened to international flights since 22nd July 2020.
- Incoming travelers must make application to the TCI Assured Authorization Portal and submit a negative COVID-19 PCR test result taken within 5 days of travel, proof of medical insurance including Medical evacuation provisions, a completed health screening questionnaire, and certification of having read the conditions of privacy.
- Since COVID-19 there has been an increase in the number of small businesses offering essential services including face mask production.
- Airport operations and Government operations, except essential services, were suspended on 29th July 2020 and noon on 30th July 2020 respectively, due to the impending Tropical Storm Isaias. The Disaster Management Plan has been activated.
- The Premier, the Minister of Education, and Ministry of Education officials continue discussions on the reopening of schools.
- A second stimulus programme is to be implemented for persons outside the hospitality sector.
- The United Kingdom (UK) Royal Air Force ended their mission on 24th July 2020. They increased and strengthened healthcare capacity and to facilitated transportation of supplies between the UK and TCI, among other notable tasks.



*The last four cases reported on 30th July 2020 are not reflected in this EPI Curve.

NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)

- The surge in newly confirmed cases continued. Contact tracing has expanded and is ongoing.
- Both the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) and Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre (SRC) have suspended visiting hours until further notice. PMH has also suspended elective admissions and surgeries (except for emergency surgeries), C-sections, Oncology and Vascular services, until further notice.
- The wards of PMH, RAND Memorial Hospital and SRC have been re-configured in accordance with infection prevention and control protocols to reduce risks of exposure of employees and patients to COVID-19.

- The Public Hospital's Authority continues to distribute personal protective equipment across all hospitals.
- Grand Bahama continues to be a COVID-19 "hotspot" due to a significant surge in confirmed COVID-19 cases. In the two weeks after the country re-opened its borders for international travel, 239 cases were reported on Grand Bahama. The epidemiological situation is complicated with infections in travelers, contacts of cases and persons who attended mass gathering events. Investigations are ongoing to completely characterize the risk factors for infection.
- New cases have been identified on two previously COVID-19 free islands, namely Abaco and Exuma.
- Approximately 100 law enforcement officers are in quarantine in Bimini, Grand Bahama and New Providence, as a result of exposure to positive COVID-19 cases.
- MOH continues to provide telepsychology, mental health and psychosocial support services.
- MOH is working to digitize data collection instruments to improve efficiencies in collection, collating and analysis of case, contact tracing and laboratory test data.
- In response to the recent surge in cases, MOH has accepted 34 volunteers to be trained to augment the contact tracing capacity. Volunteers are expected to commence duties on 3rd August 2020.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Ministry of Health

- Contact tracing for newly detected cases is ongoing.
- The National Public Health Laboratory continues to develop. In-country COVID-19 PCR testing is ongoing and to date 1,168 persons have been tested.
- Testing is ongoing for frontline workers, suspected COVID-19 cases, contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases, persons desirous of inter-island travel, and travel outside of the country for medical purposes and other reasons.
- Preventative measures for COVID-19 after re-opening of TCI's borders was presented to the public by the Minister of Health.
- MOH personnel at the health screening checkpoint at the airport identified one asymptomatic traveler. Reports were refuted of fraudulent documentation presented by the traveler.

PAHO/WHO RESPONSE

- PAHO continues to provide both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands with access to updated technical guidelines and technical assistance.

The Bahamas

- PAHO CO personnel remain embedded within The Bahamas' MOH Emergency Operating Centre (EOC) to provide technical advice. Two staff members have been stationed at MOH to provide data management support.
- PAHO will offer an Infection Prevention Control training course via a virtual platform, starting on 6th August 2020 for approximately 35 physicians and nurses from MOH, Public Hospitals Authority, and Department of Public Health.

GAPS/CHALLENGES

- Compliance and enforcement of public health protocols are challenges in both countries
- Surge in travel-related cases is a challenge in both countries.
- Tropical storms and hurricanes threaten COVID-19 response efforts including testing and contact tracing, and represent other public health risks.

The Bahamas

- The country's hospital and ICU capacities are being overwhelmed by the increasing volume of cases.
- Centralized COVID-19 testing is becoming a logistical challenge, now that cases are being confirmed on multiple islands and in larger numbers. PAHO will be assisting MOH to decentralize testing to at least 3 additional sites, using rapid molecular test platforms.
- The country is again experiencing COVID-19 exposure and quarantine of large numbers of healthcare workers.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- Contact tracing has been challenging due to lack of information given by persons identified as cases.