

## Situation in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) a public health emergency of international concern. As of 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020, there were 15,185,918 cases and 626,813 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 8,121,700 confirmed cases and 325,625 deaths.

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

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### The Bahamas

Since 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020, there were 150 newly confirmed cases and no deaths from COVID-19. There have been no new deaths since 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

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 newly confirmed cases:

- Four new islands/cays have reported cases: Berry Islands (4), Cat Island (2), Great Guana Cay (1), Moore's Island (3).

Laboratory testing

- 3,845 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

#### Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020, there were 12 newly confirmed cases and no deaths from COVID-19.

Among the newly confirmed cases:

- 2 persons are hospitalized.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 50 (55.6%) are female and 40 (44.4%) are male;
- The age distribution of all cases is 0-5 (3.3%), 6-19 (16.7%), 20-29 (14.4%), 30-39 (27.8%), 40-49 (18.9%), 50-59 (12.2%), and 60-79 (6.7%);
- 236 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 1,075 persons have been tested for COVID-19 to date.

#### The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	119	8
Grand Bahama	120	2
Berry Islands	4	0
Bimini	17	0
Cat Cay	4	0
Cat Island	2	0
Great Guana Cay	1	0
Moore's Island	3	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>11</b>

#### Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Parrot Cay	2	0
Providenciales	88	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>2</b>

## SITUATION IN NUMBERS

### TOTAL CASES

**274 Bahamas**  
**90 Turks & Caicos**  
Confirmed

**170 Bahamas**  
**61 Turks & Caicos**  
Active Cases

**91 Bahamas**  
**26 Turks & Caicos**  
Recovered

**13 Bahamas**  
**2 Turks & Caicos**  
Hospitalized

**2 Turks & Caicos**  
Positive Cases that Left Country

**11 Bahamas**  
**2 Turks & Caicos**  
COVID-related Deaths

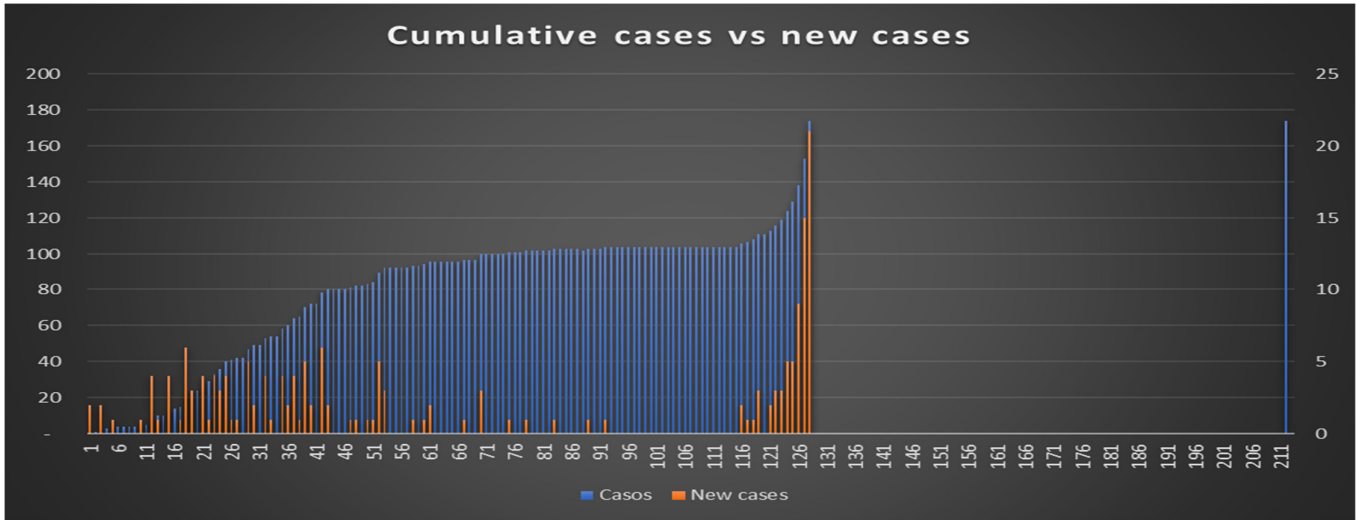
**2 Bahamas**  
Non-COVID-related Deaths

### 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

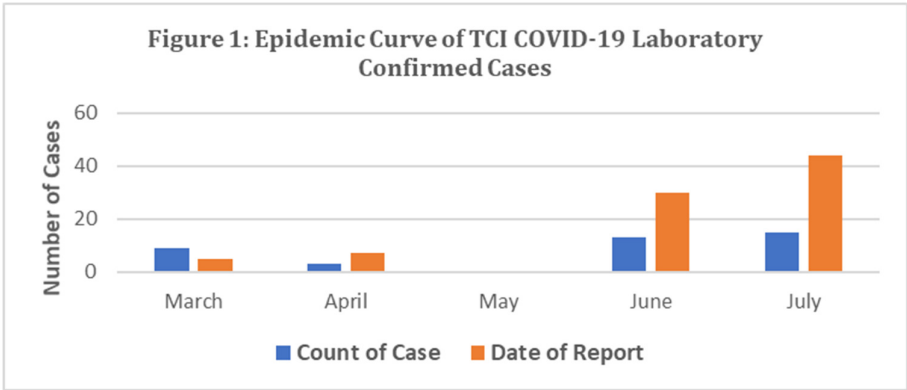
- Emergency Orders have been extended through 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020. A 10pm to 5am curfew remains in effect, Mondays through Sundays for all islands except Grand Bahama where a new 7pm-5am daily curfew came into effect in Grand Bahama starting 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020.
- The island of Grand Bahama has been placed on a 2-week “lockdown” from 7pm 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020 to 5am 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020 following a surge in the number of confirmed cases and designation as a new “hotspot”.
- All businesses except restaurants are to close by 8pm daily. Restaurants are permitted to operate until 9 pm with mask and physical distancing protocols. Indoor dining is not permitted.
- Public beaches and parks on Athol Island, Grand Bahama, New Providence, Paradise Island, Rose Island, and cays surrounding New Providence have been closed effective 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020.
- Ferry boat operations between East End, Grand Bahama and Crown Haven, Abaco are not permitted.
- Effective midnight 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020, the borders were closed to international commercial flights and commercial vessels carrying passengers from the United States of America (USA). Outgoing flights to the USA are only permitted to accommodate the return of current visitors scheduled until 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020. Private flights and charters, pleasure crafts, and yachts are still permitted from the USA throughout the islands except Grand Bahama.
- Effective 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020, the national carrier has discontinued outgoing flights to the USA. Repatriation flights from Florida were permitted 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 to return Bahamian nationals and residents.
- Travelers from Canada, the United Kingdom and the European Union are currently permitted to enter with a negative RT-PCR test result taken no more than 10 days prior to travel.
- Inter-island travel continues, except to and from Grand Bahama where only emergency and essential travel for goods and services will be permitted.
- Punishable offenses have been announced as follows: falsification of COVID-19 laboratory test results, deliberate exposure of another person to infection, breaching mandatory self-quarantine protocols, and allowing passengers to board a vessel without a facemask.
- The Ministry of Social Services and the National Food Distribution Task Force continues to issue food and food vouchers.
- Public schools are scheduled to reopen 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020, under one of the proposed modalities—face-to-face, online learning, or a hybrid – and in accordance with public health protocols.
- The Government launched an extended Tax Deferral and Tax Exemption programme for all Value Added Tax (VAT) registered businesses and hotels to withhold VAT and business license taxes to provide payroll support.
- The Economic Recovery Committee made recommendation to the Government for a work visa initiative allowing persons to live and work remotely in the country for up to one year.



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

**Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)**

- Effective 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 borders re-opened to international flights. The Royal Navy HMS Medway also arrived in country to provide support for COVID-19 and for hurricane preparations.
- A donation of sanitization equipment was made to the transportation sector by the Premier and Minister of Home Affairs.
- Providenciales has transitioned to Phase 3 of reopening and the nightly curfew was lifted. Businesses reopened, and economic activity resumed.
- 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.



\*The last four cases are not reflected in this Epidemic Curve.

**NATIONAL RESPONSE**

**The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)**

- There has been a significant surge in newly confirmed cases. Preliminary data analysis suggests that approximately 40% of all new cases were among Bahamian nationals or residents who traveled to

abroad to countries experiencing large outbreaks. Contact tracing for newly detected cases is ongoing.

- The Princess Margaret Hospital has suspended elective admissions and surgeries except for emergency surgeries, until further notice.
- A new Minister of Health has been named effective 20th July 2020.
- The Chief Medical Officer now leads the COVID-19 Emergency Operations Committee, with effect from 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020, following the end of the appointment of the former coordinator.
- Grand Bahama has been identified as a COVID-19 “hotspot” after a significant surge in confirmed COVID-19 cases in the two weeks after the country re-opened its borders for international travel - 112 cases were reported on Grand Bahama since the borders reopened on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020. A lockdown came into effect on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020 and will last until 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020, with emergency public health measures implemented to attempt to halt COVID-19 transmission.
- A seven-member team was mobilized by MOH and sent to Grand Bahama to assist the health authorities with contact tracing, collection of laboratory samples and characterization of the epidemiological situation on the island.
- New cases have been identified in previously COVID-19 free islands, namely Cat Island and Berry Islands.
- MOH continues the provision of telepsychology and mental health and psychosocial support services nationally.

#### **Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Ministry of Health**

- Contact tracing for newly detected cases is ongoing.
- In-country COVID-19 PCR testing is ongoing by the National Public Health Laboratory, where 1,061 tests have been performed to date.
- 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.
- MOH collaborated with Airport Officials to implement safety protocols including posting of signs, installation of sanitizing stations, identification of a quarantine room, and conducting of simulation exercises.

#### **PAHO/WHO RESPONSE**

- PAHO continues to provide both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands with access to updated technical guidelines and technical assistance.
- PAHO Country Office (CO) continues to provide technical assistance to The Bahamas’ Ministry of Health to assist with the transition to the WHO Go Data surveillance platform, and to support the MOH TCI to troubleshoot challenges with the platform.

#### **The Bahamas**

- PAHO CO personnel remain embedded within The Bahamas’ MOH Emergency Operating Centre (EOC) to provide technical advice.

#### **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.
- Contact tracing efforts are being challenged due to limited human resources in both countries.

### **The Bahamas**

- Limited capacity of the health care facilities to accommodate severe cases.
- Centralized COVID-19 testing is becoming a logistical challenge, now that cases are being confirmed on multiple islands and in larger numbers.

### **Turks and Caicos Islands**

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