

Situation in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands 14th August 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 20,598,296 cases and 748,890 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 11,109,443 confirmed cases and 402,734 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 7th August 2020, there were 328 newly confirmed cases and one new death from COVID-19.

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.

Laboratory testing

- 7242 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 7th August 2020, there were 118 newly confirmed cases and no deaths from COVID-19. There have been no new deaths since 29th June 2020.

Among the new cases:

- Five are healthcare workers.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 105 (40.7 %) are female and 153 (59.3 %) are male;
- The age distribution of all cases is 0-5 (3.1%), 6-19 (9.7%), 20-29 (14.3%), 30-39 (26.7%), 40-49 (25.6%), 50-59 (12.4%), 60-79 (8.1%);
- 507 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 1631 persons have been tested for COVID-19 to date.

The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	546	9
Grand Bahama	440	6
Abaco	31	0
Berry Islands	12	0
Bimini	45	0
Cat Island	8	0
Eleuthera	1	0
Exuma	5	
Inagua	1	0
TOTAL	1089	15

Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Parrot Cay	9	0
Providenciales	237	2
North Caicos	12	0
TOTAL	258	2

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

1089 Bahamas
258 Turks & Caicos
Confirmed

934 Bahamas
203 Turks & Caicos
Active Cases

138 Bahamas
52 Turks & Caicos
Recovered

31 Bahamas
2 Turks & Caicos
Hospitalized

1 Turks & Caicos
Positive Cases that Left Country

15 Bahamas
2 Turks & Caicos
COVID-related Deaths

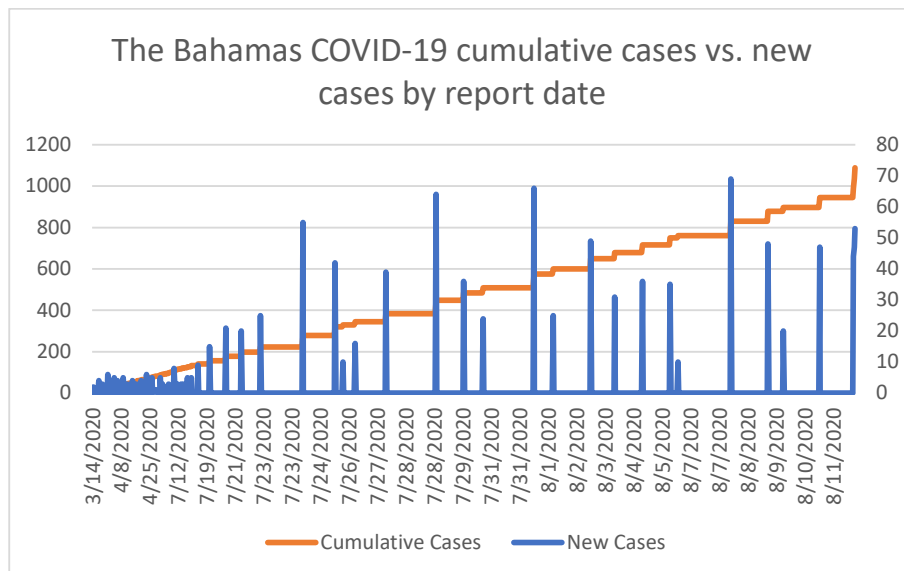
2 Bahamas
Non-COVID-related Deaths

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.
- The national lockdown continues for all islands of The Bahamas except Acklins, Crooked Island, Inagua, Long Cay, Long Island, Mayaguana, Ragged Island, and Rum Cay. These islands were permitted to resume regular activities and inter-island travel between these islands only on 10th August 2020 at 5 am.
- On Abaco and its surrounding cays, construction, gas stations, grocery stores, non-governmental organizations distributing food and water, and restaurants for takeaway and curbside services are permitted to operate daily, while under the national lockdown.
- Grocery store open for the public on Abaco and Grand Bahama from Monday to Friday and for essential workers only on Saturday. On all other islands, opening hours have been extended to 7pm on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and 6 pm on Saturdays. Only restocking is allowed on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays.
- The National Food Distribution Task Force continues to provide food assistance and will utilize a needs category (most vulnerable, moderately vulnerable, and least vulnerable) to prioritize persons for food distribution.
- A COVID-19 Enforcement Unit under the control of the Royal Bahamas Police Force monitors persons in quarantine.
- A Bahamas Extended Stay Visa has been approved for persons from abroad including university students to carry out remote work or study in The Bahamas for up to a year. This is a recommendation from The Economic Recovery Committee.

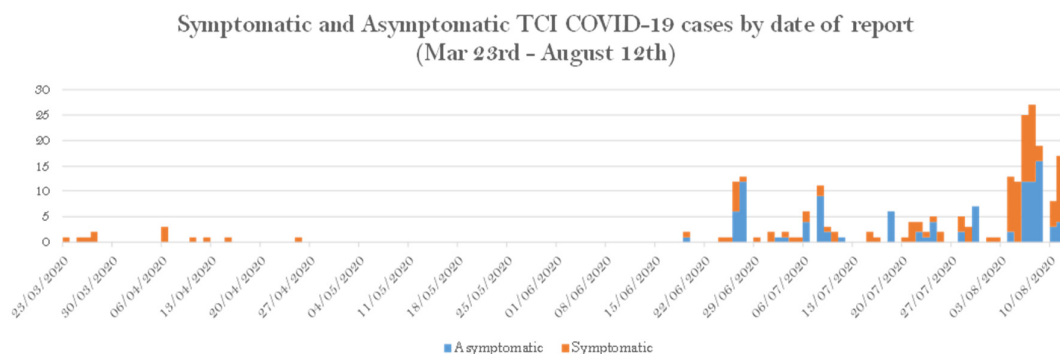


Bahamas EPI Curve of cumulative cases vs. new cases of COVID-19 by report date

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

- Local economic activity has resumed and borders have been re-opened to international flights since 22nd July 2020.
- In response to the recent surge in cases, a three-week curfew commenced on 10th August 2020 from 10 pm to 5 am on Providenciales and 8 pm to 5 am on North Caicos and Parrot Cay.

- Inter-island travel was suspended on 10th August 2020. Travel for essential services is permitted. An Interisland Travel Authorization is required for interisland travel. Application for such authorization must be made 48 hours prior to travel with the Ministry of Health and must be presented to the travel carrier before departure.
- Social gatherings including funerals and church services will be limited to 25 persons maximum on all islands except North Caicos, Parrot Cay, and Providenciales where they will be limited to 10 persons.
- Breach of COVID-19 protocols are ticketable offenses.
- Applications for Government Stimuli packages continue to be reviewed. 1,144 applications have been processed for the MSME/Self-employed Stimulus Grant to 8th August 2020 and 6,755 approvals were made for Employee Stimulus Cash Grant to 10th August 2020.
- A National Economic Council will be launched in the next two weeks to address plans and policies to assist with economic reform.
- Protocols for school reopening are being developed in consultation with both private and public sector personnel. CARICOM and UNICEF protocols are reference resources which will be adapted for schools.
- Ministry of Education will commence training next week on e-learning. E-learning guidelines are also being developed for remote teaching and learning.



NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)

- The surge in newly confirmed cases continues.
- COVID-19 transmission investigations are on-going in 2 hospitals (Princess Margaret and Sandilands Hospitals), where Health Care worker infections have also occurred.
- A Contact Tracing Command Centre has been setup at one of the local hotels on New Providence. The Contact Tracing Task Force continues to identify contacts of confirmed cases.
- A SharePoint platform is being for multiple user data entry for contact tracing and will be updated to include data collection for case investigation and laboratory test results. A subset of data variables will be exported into GoData.
- A National Response Facility has been identified at another hotel on New Providence for care of mild to moderate cases of COVID-19. This facility will reduce patient load at the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) freeing up beds for persons in more serious and critical conditions.
- Visiting hours, elective admissions and non-emergency services remain suspended at both PMH and Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre.

- Small numbers of mild to moderately ill suspected and confirmed cases are treated at the South Beach Health Center whilst moderate to severe suspected and confirmed cases are treated at PMH or Doctors Hospital West.
- The Public Hospital's Authority continues to distribute personal protective equipment across all public hospitals and clinics.
- MOH continues to provide telepsychology and mental health and psychosocial support services.
- MOH is working to digitize data collection for case investigation, contact tracing and laboratory test results.
- Training of laboratory personnel to perform GeneXpert COVID-19 tests was completed and verification of assay performance is anticipated to be completed by close of business on 14 August.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Ministry of Health

- Contact tracing for newly detected cases is ongoing.
- The National Public Health Laboratory continues to conduct COVID-19 PCR testing and 1631 tests have been performed to date.
- Newly confirmed cases are related to a workplace cluster.
- The Ministry of Health (MOH) continues to work with Ministry of Education to develop protocols for the reopening of schools. Additionally, MOH is developing a policy to address incoming travelers who do not have the prerequisite health requirements for entry.
- Public education campaigns continue and this week highlighted contact tracing, wearing masks, and asymptomatic carriers.

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, assisting with coordination of data entry for cases, contacts and laboratory tests and with standardizing of analysis and reporting. An Infection Prevention Control Training commenced on 6th August 2020 with physicians and nurses from the Ministry of Health, 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 pose a risk to COVID-19 response efforts,
- There is a backlog of samples pending laboratory testing, mainly caused by over-zealous collection of samples from contacts in Grand Bahama, in contravention of the national testing policy.

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.
- Exposure of healthcare workers and frontline workers to COVID-19 who are in quarantine.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- Contact tracing has been challenging due to lack cooperation by some identified as cases.