

Situation in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands 21st 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 20th August 2020, there were 22,397,924 cases and 786,923 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 12,028,928 confirmed cases and 430,964 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 14th August 2020, there were 521 newly confirmed cases and 8 deaths from COVID-19. There were also 2 non-COVID-19 related deaths.

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 new cases:

- One new island reported a case: Andros (1)

Laboratory testing

- 8449 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 14th August 2020, there were 80 newly confirmed cases and no deaths from COVID-19. There have been no new deaths since 29th June 2020.

Among the new cases:

- Six are healthcare workers.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 141 (43.1%) are female and 190 (56.9%) are male and 3 gender unknown;
- The age distribution of all cases is 0-5 (3.3%), 6-19 (9.3%), 20-29 (15.9%), 30-39 (26.0%), 40-49 (26.0%), 50-59 (12.3%), 60-79 (7.2%);
- 506 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 1949 persons have been tested for COVID-19 to date.

The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	950	14
Grand Bahama	515	7
Abaco	44	0
Berry Islands	14	0
Bimini	45	1
Cat Island	8	0
Eleuthera	5	1
Exuma	6	0
Inagua	2	0
Andros	1	0
Pending locations	20	0
TOTAL	1610	23

Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Parrot Cay	11	0
Providenciales	311	2
North Caicos	12	0
TOTAL	334	2

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

1610 Bahamas
334 Turks & Caicos
Confirmed

1372 Bahamas
229 Turks & Caicos
Active Cases

211 Bahamas
102 Turks & Caicos
Recovered

62 Bahamas
2 Turks & Caicos
Hospitalized

1 Turks & Caicos
Positive Cases that Left Country

23 Bahamas
2 Turks & Caicos
COVID-related Deaths

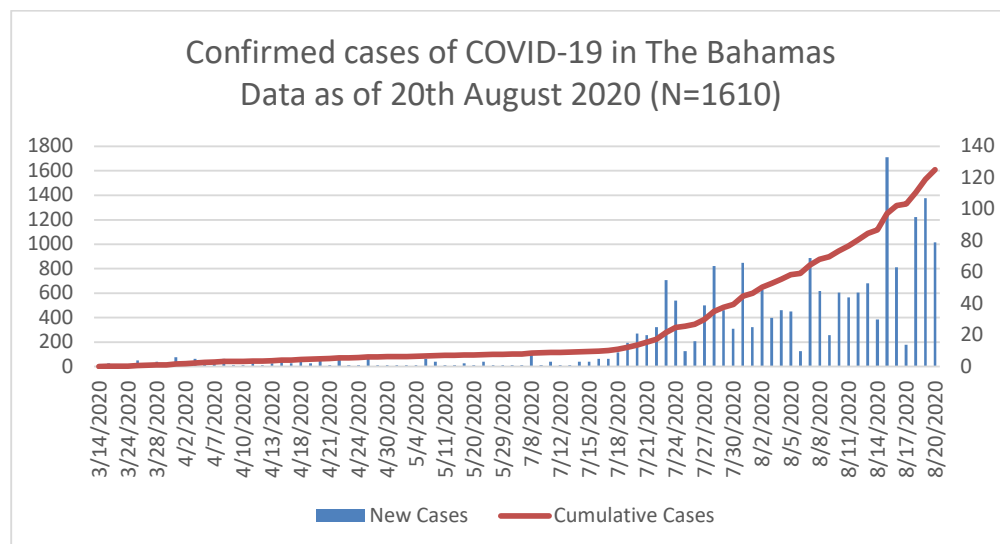
4 Bahamas
Non-COVID-related Deaths

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

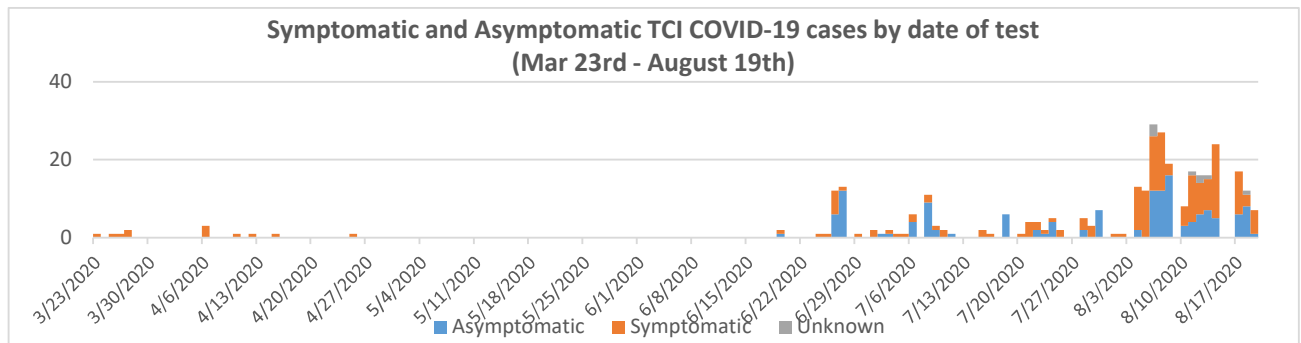
- Emergency Orders have been extended through 30th September 2020.
- The national lockdown which was scheduled to end Wednesday, 19th August 2020, was extended for a seven-day period for the islands of Grand Bahama and New Providence and relaxed for all other islands. While the Grand Bahamas lockdown would permit operation of gas stations, grocery stores, pharmacies and water depots, the New Providence lockdown took effect immediately on 17th August 2020 and only permitted essential services.
- Effective 19th August 2020, the lockdown measures for New Providence were modified until further notice to allow citizens and residents to better prepare for the lockdown given its immediate effect and due to a tropical storm expected to impact the islands over the weekend. Businesses permitted to operate are banks, construction, food wholesalers and manufacturers, gas stations, grocery stores, hardware stores, insurance companies, the National Insurance Board, pharmacies and water depots
- The National Food Distribution Task Force continues to provide food assistance. The Lyford Cay Foundation pledged \$1.5 million in food aid this past week for the country.
- The HUBCATT mobile App platform was launched this past week by the Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF) to monitor persons in quarantine. The COVID-19 Command Centre which is also under the control of the RBPF uses the platform to onboard persons at airports in New Providence and for geofencing purposes.
- About 85 police officers are currently in quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure.
- The Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture released COVID-19 guidelines for the sporting industry.



Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

- Local economic activity resumed and borders were re-opened for international commercial flights on 22nd July 2020.
- A three-week curfew continues from 10 pm to 5 am on Providenciales and 8 pm to 5 am on North Caicos and Parrot Cay, locations with confirmed COVID-19 cases..
- Suspension of inter-island travel continues except for travel for essential services.

- Religious and social gatherings and funerals are limited to 25 persons maximum on all islands except North Caicos, Parrot Cay, and Providenciales where the limit is 10 persons.
- TCI has been removed from the United Kingdom’s Travel Exemption List.



NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)

- While the surge in newly confirmed cases has decreased in Grand Bahamas, it continues on New Providence.
- COVID-19 transmission investigations are on-going in two hospitals (Princess Margaret and Sandilands Hospitals), where Health Care worker infections have occurred.
- Princess Margaret Hospital “boarders” (long stay patients) were transferred out to other locations freeing up beds for patients needing in-hospital admission.
- A Contact Tracing Command Centre operates at one of the local hotels on New Providence, providing national coordination, identification and follow up of contacts of confirmed cases.
- A SharePoint platform is being utilized for multiple user data entry for contact tracing and has been updated to include data collection for case investigation and laboratory test results. A subset of data variables is exported into GoData for epidemiology analysis.
- 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 is aimed at reducing patient load at the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) freeing up beds for persons with more serious and critical conditions. However, there are significant challenges with assigning human resources and providing equipment for the hotel venue.
- 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 continues digitization of data collected from case investigations, contact tracing and laboratory test results.
- Training of laboratory personnel to perform GeneXpert COVID-19 tests was completed and verification of assay performance was completed.

- Extra cleaning and sanitization of healthcare facilities continues and was strengthened because of increase in number of COVID-19 cases and exposures at these sites.
- MOH released the document 'Workplace guidelines during COVID-19' for access by employers via their website.

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 1649 tests have been performed to date. Daily laboratory testing workload has increased in parallel with increased case detections and contact tracing.
- Testing has mainly focused on suspected cases, contacts of positive cases, those travelling abroad for treatment, and clearing persons from quarantine. A shift in emphasis back to frontline staff and other categories of vulnerable persons is forthcoming.
- While 54 new cases diagnosed within the past two weeks was related to a workplace cluster, about half of the total new cases are not epidemiologically linked. Further, the 22-44 age group accounts for most of the new cases.
- Public health education campaigns continue.

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 course commenced on 6th August 2020 with 36 physicians and nurses participating from the Ministry of Health, Public Hospitals Authority, and Department of Public Health.

GAPS/CHALLENGES

- Public compliance with and enforcement of public health protocols are challenges in both countries.
- Surges in travel-related cases have occurred 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.

The Bahamas

- Limited capacity of the health care facilities to accommodate severe cases.
- Centralized COVID-19 testing is becoming a logistical challenge, and workload has become unmanageable causing longer turnaround time for results, now that cases are being confirmed on multiple islands and in larger numbers.
- Exposure of healthcare workers and COVID-19 infection in frontline health and security service workers and large numbers of these sector workers in quarantine.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- Contact tracing has been challenging due to lack cooperation by some identified cases and limited human resources to track the growing number of contacts.
- Exposure of healthcare workers continues.
- Delays in testing equipment supplies has delayed testing.