

Situation in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands 28th 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 27th August 2020, there were 25,156,648 cases and 825,466 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 12,869,643 confirmed cases and 454,818 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 21st August 2020, there were 410 newly confirmed cases and 27 deaths from COVID-19. There were also 3 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:

- Sixty five percent were from New Providence, and cases were reported from two new islands: Acklins (4), Crooked Island (2).

Laboratory testing

- 10,625 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 21st August 2020, there were 148 newly confirmed cases and no deaths from COVID-19. There has been one new death. Report reflects data to 26th August 2020.

Among the new cases:

- One new island reported cases: Grand Turk (2);

Among total confirmed cases:

- 219 (45.4%) are female and 263 (54.6%) are male;
- The age distribution of all cases is 0-5 (3.5%), 6-19 (11.6%), 20-29 (16.4%), 30-39 (25.3%), 40-49 (23%), 50-59 (12.9%), 60-79 (6.6%);
- 752 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 2278 persons have been tested for COVID-19 to date.

The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	1218	20
Grand Bahama	543	11
Abaco	67	1
Berry Islands	15	1
Bimini	53	1
Cat Island	8	0
Eleuthera	5	1
Exuma	19	0
Inagua	8	0
Acklins	4	0
Crooked Island	2	0
Andros	1	0
Pending locations	77	16
TOTAL	2020	50

Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Providenciales	451	0
North Caicos	18	3
Parrot Cay	11	0
Grand Turk	2	0
TOTAL	482	3

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

2020 Bahamas
482 Turks & Caicos
Confirmed

1221 Bahamas
376 Turks & Caicos
Active Cases

742 Bahamas
102 Turks & Caicos
Recovered

82 Bahamas
2 Turks & Caicos
Hospitalized

1 Turks & Caicos
Positive Cases that Left Country

50 Bahamas
3 Turks & Caicos
COVID-related Deaths

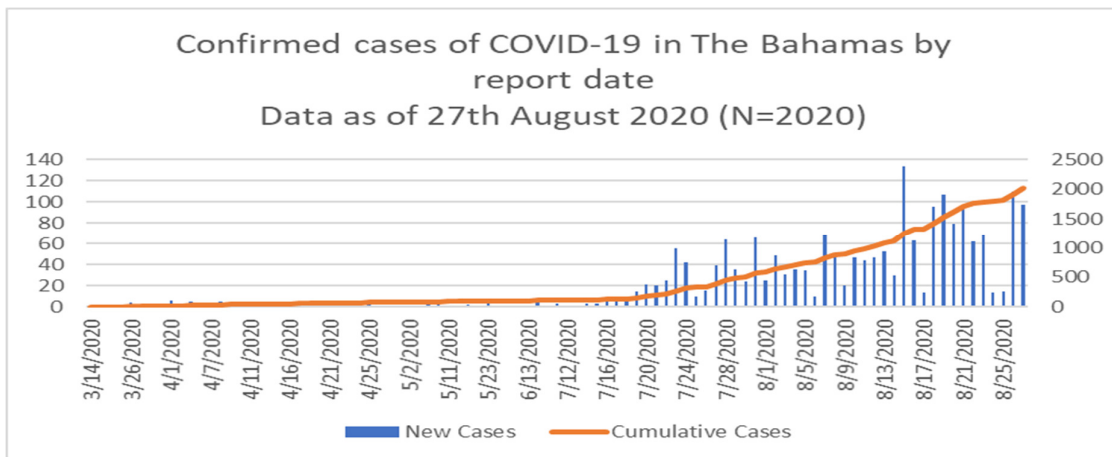
7 Bahamas
Non-COVID-related Deaths

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

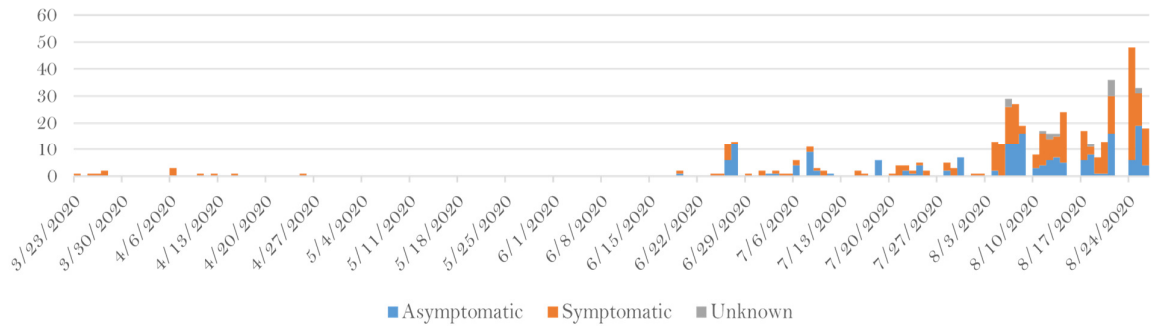
- Emergency Orders have been extended through 30th September 2020.
- Until 31st August 2020, New Providence will remain under curfew from 10 pm to 5 am with only banks, construction, food wholesalers and manufacturers, gas stations, grocery stores, hardware stores, insurance companies, the National Insurance Board, pharmacies and water depots operating.
- Effective 31st August 2020 at 5 am, additional businesses will be permitted to operate. These businesses include curbside, takeaway and delivery food services for all restaurants, retail stores for curbside and delivery services only, offices and other businesses. Exercise and beach activity will be permitted between 5 am and 9 am daily.
- The National Food Distribution Task Force continues to provide food assistance. SuperClubs Breezes, Grace Food, and GraceKennedy Money Services donated clothes, toiletries and food goods respectively to the Prime Minister and Minister of Health on the 27th August 2020.



Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

- Local economic activity resumed on 22nd July 2020.
- Tropical Storm warnings were discontinued for TCI on 23rd August 2020.
- While a curfew continues from 10 pm to 5 am on Providenciales, effective 28th August 2020, the curfew will change from 8 pm to 5 am daily. Essential workers will be exempted.
- Other changes to go into effect 28th August 2020 include business closure by 7pm, restriction on social gatherings, limiting restaurants and bars to 10 persons maximum, and closure of all summer camps.
- Suspension of inter-island travel continues except for travel for essential services and travel of tourists between Providenciales and South Caicos and Grand Turk.
- Persons in violation of protocols for wearing masks and face coverings will be ticketed.
- The Cruise Port will remain closed until 1st January 2021.

Figure 1: Symptomatic and Asymptomatic TCI COVID-19 cases by date of positive test (Mar 23rd - August 26th)



NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)

- While the surge in newly confirmed cases has slowed in both Grand Bahama and New Providence, there is concern about increased hospitalizations and limited hospital bed capacity in New Providence.
- COVID-19 transmission investigations are on-going in two hospitals (Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) and Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre (SRC). SRC recorded 56 persons confirmed for COVID-19 including staff and patients, including geriatric patients. One health care worker with reported comorbidities from SRC died.
- Daily laboratory testing has increased in parallel with increased case detections and contact tracing. The expansion of national lab capacities has assisted in reducing a backlog of samples that were pending testing.
- On 27th August 2020, The Prime Minister and senior MOH personnel toured an Alternative Medical Care Site (AMCS) being established at a local hotel on New Providence. This facility will be used to care for mild to moderate cases of COVID-19, as will an upgraded Primary Health Care Clinic at South Beach Health Center. Planning is on-going to ensure sufficient resources and equipment for the AMCs.
- The 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 utilized for multiple user data entry for contact tracing, case investigation forms and laboratory test results whilst Go.Data is used for epidemiology analysis of a subset of exported data variables.
- 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, mental health, and psychosocial support services.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Ministry of Health

- Contact tracing for newly detected cases is ongoing. Public health clinics on Grand Turk, North Caicos, and Providenciales will close daily at 1pm to allow staff to assist with contact tracing efforts.
- One new island, Grand Turk, reported its first confirmed case of COVID-19 on the 24th August 2020. Contact tracing has commenced for staff and clients of the facility where the confirmed case was found. 44 nasal swabs were collected from 30 staff and 14 clients. RT-PCR results are pending.

- The Cheshire Hall Medical Centre laboratory located on the island of Providenciales was closed since 26th August 2020 for cleaning and sanitization after an employee from the laboratory was exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case.
- The National Public Health Laboratory continues to conduct COVID-19 PCR testing and has performed 2278 tests to date. Daily laboratory testing workload has increased in parallel with increased case detection and contact tracing.
- One private lab has commenced RT-PCR testing for COVID-19 and this past week collected three nasal swabs. MOH encourages persons desirous of testing for personal reasons including travel abroad to utilize the services of the private lab and to allow the NPHL to prioritize tests for confirmatory purposes, contact tracing and public health.
- MOH released updated Standard Operating Procedures for the release of persons from quarantine and for classifying person as recovered in accordance with recommendations of the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Any visiting military aircraft and vessels entering TCI must receive approval from the Chief Medical Officer prior to arrival.

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 Country Office 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 for 36 physicians and nurses participating from the Ministry of Health, Public Hospitals Authority, and Department of Public Health.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- A meeting was held with the TCI MOH COVID-19 team on 21st August 2020 to discuss contact tracing capacity, challenges and practices. PAHO provided data management tools, flow chart, access to an on-line training course, and advice on expanding capacity and documenting standard operating procedures. .

GAPS/CHALLENGES

- Public compliance with and enforcement of public health protocols are challenges in both countries.
- Surges in travel-related cases occurred in both countries.
- Tropical storms and hurricanes pose risks to COVID-19 response efforts,

The Bahamas

- Reduced capacity of the health care facilities to accommodate increasing number of severe cases.
- Centralized COVID-19 testing continues. Two additional testing sites have been added in New Providence and a backlog of samples pending testing is being cleared. Equipment is available for two additional test sites, which will hopefully be brought on line within 1 to 2 weeks
- 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. Capacity and processes for contact tracing are being strengthened to cope with the increasing demand.
- COVID-19 exposure of healthcare workers is an emerging concern.