

Situation in The Bahamas & Turks and Caicos Islands 16th October 2020

On 30th January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) a public health emergency of international concern. As of 15th October 2020, there were 38,519,669 cases and 1,091,904 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 18,312,080 confirmed cases and 599,169 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 9th October 2020, there were 653 newly confirmed cases, 12 deaths from COVID-19, and 4 non-COVID-19 related deaths.

Among the new cases:

- Eighty-nine percent were from New Providence;

Among total confirmed cases:

- Seventy-nine percent of deaths (90) were from New Providence;
- 26,150 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 9th October 2020, there was one newly confirmed case which was reported on 10th October 2020.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 335 (48.1%) are female and 361 (51.9%) are male (data to 14th October 2020);
- The age distribution of all cases (data to 14th October 2020) is 0-5 (3.9%), 6-19 (12.2%), 20-29 (19.0%), 30-39 (24.9%), 40-49 (22.1%), 50-59 (11.1%), 60-79 (6.0%), 80 and over (0.7%), unknown (0.1%);
- 90 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 3770 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	4239	90
Grand Bahama	661	17
Abaco	161	2
Berry Islands	26	1
Bimini	56	2
Cat Island	9	0
Eleuthera	32	1
Exuma	34	1
Inagua	19	0
Acklins	7	0
Long Island	12	0
Crooked Island	5	0
Andros	11	0
Mayaguana	3	0
Pending	242	0
TOTAL	5517	114

Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Providenciales	640	5
North Caicos	19	0
Parrot Cay	11	0
Grand Turk	25	1
South Caicos	1	0
TOTAL	696	6

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

5517 Bahamas
696 Turks & Caicos
Confirmed

2164 Bahamas
16 Turks & Caicos
Active Cases

3201 Bahamas
673 Turks & Caicos
Recovered

107 Bahamas
0 Turks & Caicos
Hospitalized

1 Turks & Caicos
Positive Cases that Left Country

114 Bahamas
6 Turks & Caicos
COVID-related Deaths

23 Bahamas
Non-COVID-related Deaths

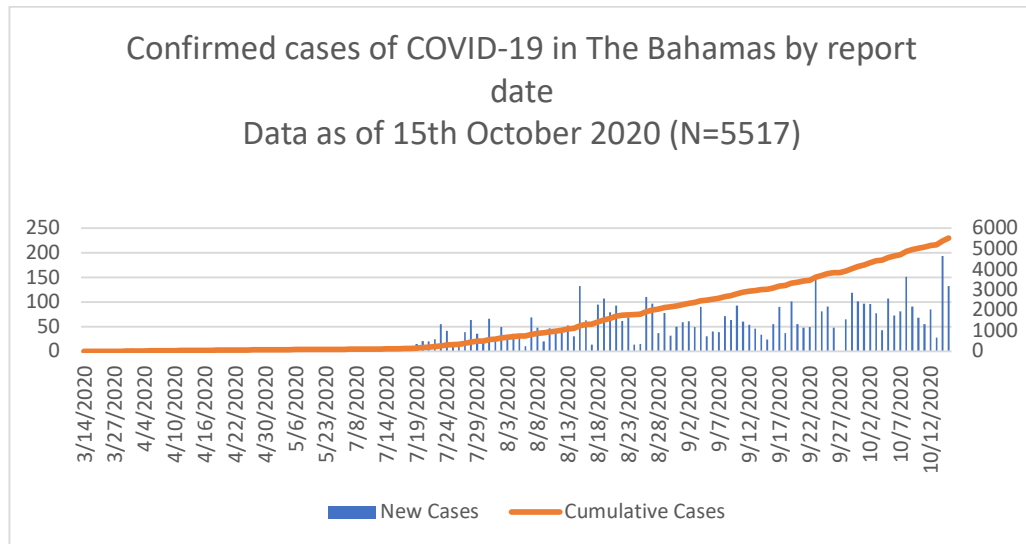
15 Bahamas
Deaths under investigation

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

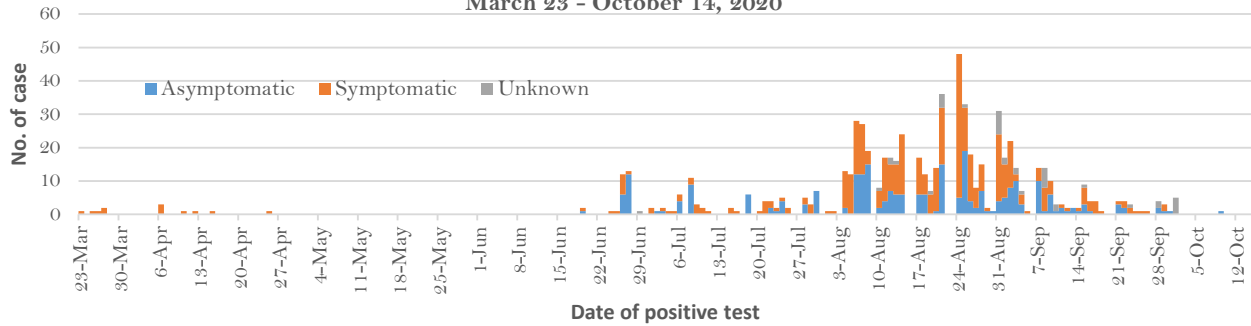
- Emergency Orders have been extended through to 31st October 2020.
- Weekend lockdown will continue this weekend from 7 pm Friday, 16th October 2020 to 5 am Monday, 19th October 2020.
- The 511 COVID-19 hot line has been reinstated to address any COVID-19 related issues.
- The National Food Distribution Task Force announced the end of phase 1 of the food assistance program for 31st October 2020. An additional \$10 million will be provided to carry out an additional phase.



Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

- Emergency Orders have been extended through to 2nd November 2020.
- Amendments to the Public Health Control Regulations include the following:
 - From 14th October 2020, a curfew for islands from 10:00 pm to 5:00 am;
 - Business closures by 9:00 pm daily;
 - Places of worship to maintain maximum occupancy inside of 30%;
 - Outdoor funeral services only with a maximum of 25 persons excluding officiant and mortuary staff;
 - Only essential travel between islands;
 - Only outdoor public gatherings restricted to a maximum of 25 persons;
 - Public beaches remain open with no more than 6 persons outside of a household gathering at one time.

Figure 1: Symptomatic and Asymptomatic TCI COVID-19 cases by date of positive test
March 23 - October 14, 2020



NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)

- Currently, New Providence is the epi-center for COVID-19 in The Bahamas. Heightened concern remains due to on-going reports of new confirmed cases and deaths, increased number of hospitalizations and limited bed capacity in New Providence.
- Workplace exposures to COVID-19 are increasing and often results in closure for cleaning and sanitization and the quarantine of all or some employees.
- The international Nongovernmental Organization, Samaritan's Purse, will setup a tented inpatient facility to accommodate step-down care to 28 COVID-19 positive patients at Princess Margaret Hospital. They will also provide thirty staff and coordinate training in Infection Prevention Control.
- Daily laboratory testing continues at the National Reference Laboratory (NRL), Princess Margaret Hospital, Rand Memorial Hospital and private sector laboratories.
- The Contact Tracing Command Centre continues operations and an on-line contact tracing course is being offered through the University of The Bahamas (UB). Additional contact tracers will be added the Public Service Department, Ministry of Tourism, and Bahamas Air, to augment the current pool to approximately 100 persons.
- A SharePoint platform is utilized for multiple user data entry for contact tracing, case investigations 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, Doctors Hospital West and Rand Memorial Hospital.
- The Public Hospital's Authority continues to distribute PPEs across all public hospitals and clinics.
- MOH continues to provide telemedicine, telepsychology, mental health, and psychosocial support services.
- MOH has launched a communication campaign to increase immunization coverage.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Ministry of Health

- There has been a decline in the daily number of new confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- The National Public Health Laboratory continues to conduct COVID-19 PCR testing and 3378 tests were completed to date. Testing has been expanded to include testing of frontline workers.
- Go.Data is being utilized for field data collection and contact tracing investigations.
- A Cuban health contingent of 20 persons continues to operate in medical facilities though a bilateral agreement between the two countries.

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.
- Three staff members provide data management support to MOH, assisting with coordination of data entry for cases, contacts and laboratory tests and with standardizing of analysis and reporting.
- A PAHO led 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.
- PAHO's regional and country office HSS and EOC groups are advising the MOH on expanding acute care services in three hospitals and adjusting workflow and workplace layout to minimize risks of COVID-19 infection.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- PAHO continues to provide technical assistance and access to technical guidelines, information and communication products, has advised on contact tracing and data management and made donations of PPE.

GAPS/CHALLENGES

- Public compliance with and enforcement of public health protocols are challenges in both countries.
- Surges in travel-related cases and virus transmission among nationals and residents occurred in both countries after the re-opening of international borders, however, endemic transmission of COVID-19 currently accounts for most of the confirmed cases in both countries.
- Tropical storms and hurricanes pose a risk to COVID-19 response efforts.

The Bahamas

- The tented patient facility donated by Samaritan's Purse increases health care capacity in New Providence. However, there are still concerns about insufficient capacity for handling severe cases.
- COVID-19 testing has been expanded in both the public and private sectors to cope with increased demands for testing. Coordination and timely receipt of results from all laboratories are new challenges.
- Impact on service delivery due to COVID-19 exposures/infections/quarantine of frontline health, security service and other sector workers.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- The decline in confirmed cases has relieved the workload burden for contact tracers. The Ministry of Health is considering expansion of community based testing.
- Increase in the number of infected healthcare workers.
- Stigma and discrimination by public towards COVID-19 confirmed and suspected cases.