

## Situation in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands 18<sup>th</sup> September

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 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020, there were 29,857,161 cases and 940,804 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 15,215,110 confirmed cases and 521,872 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 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020, there were 363 newly confirmed cases and 4 deaths from COVID-19.

Among the new cases:

- Eighty-seven percent were from New Providence;

Among total confirmed cases:

- 1241 (48%) are female and 1344 (52%) are male (data to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020);
- The age distribution of all cases (data to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020) is 0-19 (4.4%), 20-39 (41.4%), 40-59 (37.2%), 60-79 (11.0%), 80 and over (1.8%), unknown (4.2%).
- 16,386 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

#### Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020, there were 25 newly confirmed cases and no deaths from COVID-19.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 316 (48%) are female and 343 (52%) are male (data to 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020);
- The age distribution of all cases (data to 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020) is 0-5 (4.5%), 6-19 (11.8%), 20-29 (18.7%), 30-39 (25.0%), 40-49 (22.5%), 50-59 (10.0%), 60-79 (6.2%), 80 and over (0.6%), unknown (0.2%);
- 301 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 2990 persons have been tested for COVID-19 to date.

#### The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	2186	49
Grand Bahama	607	14
Abaco	104	1
Berry Islands	15	1
Bimini	54	2
Cat Island	8	0
Eleuthera	17	1
Exuma	25	1
Inagua	18	0
Acklins	7	0
Long Island	11	0
Crooked Island	5	0
Andros	4	0
Mayaguana	3	0
Pending	113	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3177</b>	<b>69</b>

#### Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Providenciales	616	4
North Caicos	19	0
Parrot Cay	11	0
Grand Turk	16	1
South Caicos	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>5</b>

## SITUATION IN NUMBERS

### TOTAL CASES

**3177 Bahamas**  
**663 Turks & Caicos**  
Confirmed

**1456 Bahamas**  
**92 Turks & Caicos**  
Active Cases

**1626 Bahamas**  
**565 Turks & Caicos**  
Recovered

**72 Bahamas**  
**1 Turks & Caicos**  
Hospitalized

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

**69 Bahamas**  
**5 Turks & Caicos**  
COVID-related Deaths

**9 Bahamas**  
Non-COVID-related Deaths

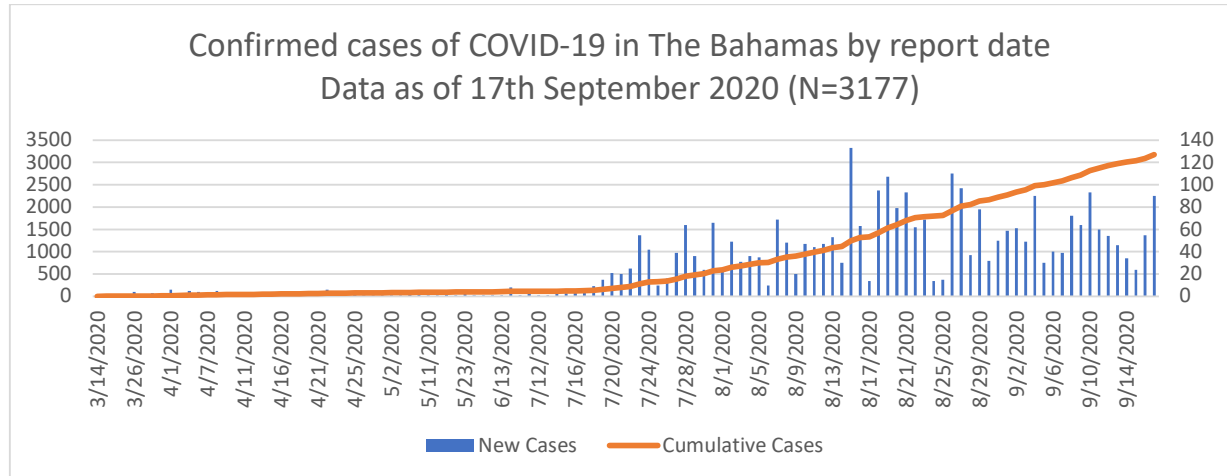
**17 Bahamas**  
Deaths under investigation

### 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

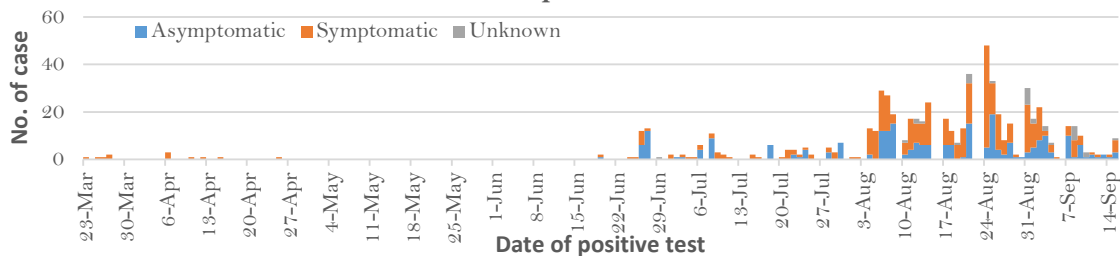
- Emergency Orders have been extended through 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
- While the Ministry of Tourism announced 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020 to reopen the tourism sector, several hotels have indicated opening dates later in the year and early next year. Vacation in Place guidelines call for visitors to quarantine for 14 days or the duration of their stay at their accommodation facility with no activity outside of that facility except that which is offered by the facility.
- The Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development disbursed funds through special grants to organizations rendering food assistance.
- On 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020, the Ministry of Education commenced National Exams and several private schools started school via face-to-face and online mechanisms.



## Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

- New Emergency orders commenced 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020 until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and include the following:
  - Daily curfew from 6 pm to 5 am on Grand Turk and South Caicos and 8 pm to 5 am on the other islands. Only essential workers and persons accommodating late flights and international passengers will be permitted to traverse during curfew;
  - Business closure on Grand Turk and South Caicos is 5 pm and 7 pm on the other islands;
  - Customers in bars and restaurants are limited to a maximum of 10 persons on all islands;
  - Construction workers must receive approval from the Chief Medical Officer and Permanent Secretary of Infrastructure for travel between islands.
- Phase 2 of the Ministry of Education's phased reopening of schools commenced 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and includes all schools operating through virtual means.
- The following assistance programs were announced this past week:
  - A Cash Stimulus for Non-Hospitality Employees;
  - A Special Stimulus for Licensed Public Service Operators;
  - A Full Waiver of Duties on Importations of laptops and tablets for students;
  - A National Food Assistance Programme for all households;
  - A Temporary Unemployment Benefit under the National Insurance Plan.

**Symptomatic and Asymptomatic TCI COVID-19 cases by date of positive test**  
**March 23 - September 16, 2020**



## NATIONAL RESPONSE

### The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)

- Heightened concern remains due to steady reports of new confirmed cases and deaths, increased hospitalizations and limited bed capacity in New Providence.
- COVID-19 transmission investigations are on-going in two hospitals, the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) and Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre (SRC).
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, some “boarders” (long stay persons who have social support rather than serious medical needs) from PMH have been relocated to assisted living facilities thus freeing up bed space in PMH.
- Daily laboratory testing continues at the National Reference Laboratory, Princess Margaret Hospital and private facilities. The Rand Memorial Hospital commenced COVID-19 testing using the GeneXpert System on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
- The Contact Tracing Command Centre continues and the on-line contact tracing course offered through the University of The Bahamas was launched and 380 students registered to date.
- MOH received a donation of cellular phone devices from ALIV, a mobile phone service provider.
- 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 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.
- MOH has initiated work to launch a communication campaign to increase immunization coverage.

### 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 continue to close daily at 1pm to allow staff to assist with contact tracing efforts.
- The National Public Health Laboratory continues to conduct COVID-19 PCR testing and 2990 tests were completed to date. Daily laboratory testing workload has increased in parallel with increased case detections and contact tracing.
- A new travel portal was launched for persons wishing to travel between islands to make application to MOH.

- Cabinet approval was obtained for the following MOH recommendations:
  - Revised criteria related to quarantine and isolation discharge of confirmed cases and primary contacts;
  - Extension and addition of public health measures;
  - Amendments to COVID-19 Regulations to address State Funerals;
  - Follow-up with PAHO for the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility to secure COVID-19 vaccines when available.

## **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 6<sup>th</sup> 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, work-flow 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 Personal Protective equipment.

## **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**

- Limited capacity of the health care facilities to accommodate 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 and infection of healthcare workers and 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.
- Increase in the number of infected healthcare workers.